

# THE BIG BOOK OF ROGUES

*FROM THE STREET TO PRISON TO THE GUILDSMAN'S HIGH SEAT*



*WRITTEN BY MATT HARRIS  
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**Introduction:** I've had a lifelong fascination with rogues, grifters, burglars, assassins, and thugs, and that has translated into using them in my D&D games over the 4 decades I've been playing the greatest roleplaying game of all time. I hope that you find your way into the alleyways, secret hideouts, and fronts and discover uses for the ubiquitous "thief" that you never even considered. Enjoy!

BY MATT HARRIS (/U/FAMOUSHIPPOPOTAMUS)



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# CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCING ROGUES

Having a rogue or rogues in your party is probably going to happen quickly, maybe even in your first campaign or session. Rogues present special considerations for both worldbuilding and in-game, ranging from needing to understand how criminal elements act and interact, to realizing varying types of “loot” will be needed to prevent boredom, to managing that wealth, to criminal shenanigans you never planned for, all the way to players wanting to form gangs and guilds. It can be overwhelming at first, and it is my hope that this document will present enough choices and options that you can take what you want and drop them into your games without too much trouble. It all starts with Session 0.



## ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

A rogue can be just a “rogue”, that classic Jack-of-all-Crimes, and the 5e version game is designed to support that play style, but the game is going to be a lot more fun for your player and for you if you ask the right questions when the idea is being discussed. You want options, so your players feel that they can create characters that suit their vision.

### “WHAT IS GOING TO BE YOUR SPECIALTY?”

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Every rogue has their passions/talents, and providing a list of ideas can spur more focused character ideas, beyond the bland “everythief” class base.

Here's a list of rogue specialties:

- **Burglar** – Breaks into locations
- **Fence** – Sells stolen goods
- **Forger** – Creates false documents and fake items
- **Grifter** – Confidence artist
- **Kidnapper** – Holds others for ransom/demands.
- **Pickpocket** – Street thief who steals from individuals
- **Pusher** – Drug dealer (can produce, transport and sell drugs)
- **Spy** – Covert information gatherer
- **Smuggler** – Moves illegal goods in secret
- **Thug** – Muscle, Mugger, can upgrade to Assassin

These will be discussed at length in Chapter 2. For now, I've provided a thumbnail only so you don't bog down looking stuff up during the conversation. If they want more details, check Chapter 2.

## “WHY ARE YOU A ROGUE?”

What happened to you that caused you to live outside the law?” - Understanding the motivation behind the character will help you create a network of NPCs and organizations that both support and oppose the character in line with their backstory. Ask questions about the rogue's early life. Write the answers down.

Here's a list of Backstory Questions to get you started. Feel free to add others as the player talks, and the story opens up.

### THE FIRST 10 QUESTIONS - THE EARLY YEARS

These questions are meant to build a picture of the character as a child, where they live, and who their family, friends, and rivals are. You can ask more than these listed ones, of course, feel free to drill as deep as you see fit, but these are the 10 basic ones that should always be covered.

- Tell me where you see this character as a child? What does their home look like?
- Who else is in the home? Any animals?
- And the area. Where is your home? Is it a village? A farm? A city? Something else?
- What does your family do to make money?
- How religious are you and your family?
- Tell me about a rumor you heard about the surrounding area.
- Tell me a rumor you heard about one of your parents.
- Tell me what you believe about yourself?
- Tell me about your friends. (at least 2)
- Tell me about your enemies. (at least 2)

### THE SECOND 10 QUESTIONS - THE MATURING

This set of questions is meant to flesh out the character as a teenager/young adult, and



should build upon the questions answered in the Early Years.

- What do you do for fun? What are your hobbies and pastimes?
- What kind of work are you required to do? Do you have an apprenticeship? Or education?
- Tell me about your teachers/mentors/masters. How was your relationship with them?
- Have you had any romantic liaisons? How did they turn out?
- What are you interested in outside of your work or studies? What are your passions?
- Which of the divine faiths have caught your attention and why?
- Tell me a rumor about one of your rivals.
- Tell me about a tragedy that you experienced.
- What are your ambitions/life goals/dreams?
- What are your fears/addictions/flaws?

That's a lot of information in only 20 questions. Try to encourage the character to think smaller rather than larger. This is about mundane, not epic.



## “DID YOU SURVIVE ON YOUR OWN, OR DID YOU JOIN OTHERS LIKE YOU?”

This is a very important question, and it feeds directly into the idea that a rogue that grew up alone is going to be able to survive even without support, and that means setting up stashes and safehouses/areas in the character's backstory that can be used in the present campaign. If the rogue ran with a gang, then they are going to have allies and enemies from that world that will carry over into the present campaign. Understanding who the rogue is and how they grew up allows you to lay foundations from the backstory that resonate in the campaign. This creates realism.

Write a quick list as the player talks of allies, enemies, safe areas, and other items of interest that seem relevant. This is your basic “map” of ideas, NPCs, and worldbuilding cues that you can build between Session 0 and Session 1.

Once you start getting answers to all the questions you are asking, and the character starts to take shape you will begin to see how the life of the character is shaped and why becoming a rogue seems a natural progression and you will start to think about the way this criminal is tied to the other criminal elements in the world.

Session 0. Most important thing you can do. Don't skip it.



# CHAPTER 2 – ROGUES’ GALLERY

In Chapter 1 we discussed “specialties” for your rogue PC. There is a lot of information to follow, and I have tried to balance theory and practical as much as possible, but you will be required to fill in some gaps yourself, as I cannot make worldbuilding decisions for you!

- **Burglar** – Breaks into locations
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- **Scout** – Covert information gatherer
- **Smuggler** – Moves illegal goods in secret
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## THE BURGLAR

### HISTORY

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Burglary, also called breaking and entering, and sometimes housebreaking, is an unlawful entry into a building or other location for the purposes of committing an offense (usually theft).

### METHODS

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Burglary primarily relies on exploits to gain entrance into a location. That may be an unlocked door or window, a stolen key, a duped/blackmailed accomplice, some form of

magic, or any number of things that allow easy access.

The primary concerns for a burglar are Security, Personnel, and Escape.

Security refers to the physical and magical - these could be locks, traps, Alarm spells, or anything of that nature. Locks can come in basic, moderate and advanced versions that require a higher DC to beat, or perhaps involves multiple steps to open/bypass the lock.

Personnel refers to people, animals, constructs, or some other form of "guard". Guards should be of a level commensurate with the Location Security Level (see below), and animal guards can be highly trained, or even magically-enhanced. Guards don't always need to be Fighters. Rogues, Mages, Paladins, or any other class that makes sense could serve as a guard - get creative!

Escape refers to how easy it is for the burglar to leave the premises without being detected. Without a viable means of escape, no burglar will agree to a job.

All three concerns are generally planned for before the burglary, and a smart burglar will have multiple contingencies for when things inevitably go wrong.

### EXPERTISE

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Stealth and a high-level of understanding on how to bypass traps, locks, and other forms of security are key to the success of the burglar.

Lots of tools are available to the burglar to accomplish their goals - lockpicks, pry bars, bags of flour, bags of pepper, poisoned meat (for animal guards), magical items to bypass magical security, acids, drills, glass-cutters, or any number of items – See “Chapter 7: Security & Tools” for practical examples.

There are 10 NPC levels for burglars, and these directly correlate with the levels of Security/Personnel on a particular location.

These are only a \*rough guide\*, so feel free to create your own versions!

Locations also have 10 levels of Security, which will be listed below:

Burglar Level	Location Security
1	1 or 2 basic locks/barred doors
2	1 or 2 basic locks/barred doors, 1 security personnel
3	Multiple moderate locks/barred doors, 1-3 security personnel, low-level magical security
4	Multiple moderate locks/barred doors, 1-3 security personnel, mid-level magical security
5	Multiple moderate locks/barred doors, 2-4 security personnel, high-level magical security
6	Multiple advanced locks/barred doors, multiple security personnel, low-level magical security
7	Multiple advanced locks/barred doors, multiple security personnel, mid-level magical security
8	Multiple advanced locks/barred doors, multiple security personnel, high-level magical security
9	Multiple advanced locks/barred doors, multiple security personnel, high-level magical security, coordination with Government/Security Forces
10	All points of access with advanced locks, high level magical security, many personnel, very fast response time with coordination with Government/Security Forces/Magic Guilds

The NPC level of the burglar directly correlates with the level of Location Security with regards to penalties or bonuses to activities related to committing the burglary.

### THE BASIC MECHANIC

If the NPC burglar is the same level as the Location Security level, there is no change to any skill checks.



If the NPC burglar is above the level as the Location Security level, skill checks are made with Advantage, and if the NPC burglar level is 5 levels above the Location Security level, the Advantage'd checks also gain a +5 to the result.

If the NPC burglar is below the level as the Location Security level, skill checks are made with Disadvantage, and if the NPC burglar level is 5 levels below the Location Security level, the Disadvantage'd checks also gain a -5 to the result.

## THE FENCE

A fence, also known as a receiver, mover, moving man, or thiefspawn, is an individual who knowingly buys stolen goods in order to later resell them for profit. The fence acts as a middleman between thieves and the eventual buyers of stolen goods who may not be aware that the goods are stolen. As a verb, the word describes the behavior of the thief in the transaction: "The burglar fenced the stolen radio". This sense of the term came from thieves' slang, first attested c. 1700, from the notion of such transactions providing a defense against being caught.

The Fence is the linchpin in the complicated web of the black market. Thieves sell their illicit acquisitions to the Fence, for some amount of money below their actual value. The Fence then resells the "hot" goods on the black market. If the city in which he operates is large and the goods are minor enough (not the crown jewels of the local royalty), they may be sold directly to local buyers. If the Fence thinks they're "too hot," though, he will probably arrange to have them smuggled and sold elsewhere. To acquire or retain an extensive network, a Fence needs much cunning and experience—which may coincidentally result in a high character level. The most powerful Fences keep their identities secret, and may never see their clients, neither thieves nor buyers. They coordinate things from behind the scenes, and have minor Fences to serve as intermediaries. Even a close contact may never have seen the face of a great Fence—at least, not knowingly. A Fence may secretly play the role of an underling in his own network—or even that of a rival or freelancer!

The fence is able to make a profit with stolen merchandise because he/she is able to secretly pay thieves a very low price for "hot" goods that cannot be easily sold on the open markets. The thieves who patronize the



fence are willing to accept a low profit margin in order to reduce their risks by instantly "washing their hands" of the black market loot and disassociating themselves from the criminal act that procured it. After the sale, the fence recoups their investment by disguising the stolen nature of the goods (via methods such as repackaging and altering outward appearances) and reselling the goods as near to the white market price as possible without drawing suspicion. This process often relies on a legal business (such as a pawnshop, flea market or street vendor) in order to "launder" the stolen goods by intermixing them with legally-purchased items of the same type. In some cases, fences will transport the stolen items to a different

city to sell them, because this lessens the likelihood that the items will be recognized.

The fence is able to make a profit with stolen merchandise because he is able to pay thieves a very low price for stolen goods. Thieves agree to this because their alternatives may present a greater risk of the thief being caught. As well, selling stolen goods takes a great deal of time and effort, as the thief would have to try to contact a number of potential buyers and show them the merchandise. Some habitual thieves are so well known to police that if the thief were to attempt to sell any used goods, this would quickly draw the attention of law enforcement.

The prices fences pay thieves typically depend both on norms and on legitimate market rates for the items in question. Vulnerable sellers, such as drug addicts or casual thieves, may receive less than 20% of an item's value. Higher prices, sometimes as high as 50% of an item's value in a legal market, can be commanded by a professional thief, especially one who concentrates on valuable items. At the same time, fences will often take advantage of thieves by deceiving them about the value of an individual item and the relevant market conditions. For example, a fence may falsely tell a petty thief that the market for the type of good which the thief is selling is flooded with this type of merchandise, to justify paying out a lower price.

Research on fences shows that they view themselves as entrepreneurs, relying on networking with and patronage by prominent criminals to become successful in their word-of-mouth-based "wheeling and dealing". They occupy the middle ground between the criminal world (thieves, burglars and shoplifters) and the legitimate world (e.g., everyday people who purchase used goods). Some active fences go farther in their business, maintaining longstanding contacts

and even teaching thieves how to practice their craft, whether by identifying specific products or by teaching them tools of the trade.

There are a number of different types of fences. One way of categorizing fences is by the type of good in which they trade, such as jewels, coins, or artefacts. Another way of categorizing fences is by their level of involvement in buying and selling stolen goods; for some, fencing is an occasional "sideline" activity, while it is an economic mainstay for others. At the lowest level, a hustler or drug dealer may occasionally accept stolen goods. At the highest level would be a fence whose main criminal income comes from buying and selling stolen items. At the broadest level, two tiers of fences can be distinguished. The lower level of fences are those who directly buy stolen goods from thieves and burglars. At a higher level are the "master fences", who do not deal with street-level thieves, but only with other fences.

## TYPES OF FENCES

The majority of fences will be straight rogues, but as you move upwards in the expertise levels, many will have a second class - mostly Mage, but the odd Cleric level will be seen. This allows the fence to cut down on costs for Detect Magic, Identify, Legend Lore and other divinations. Its up to you what kind of Fence you want to create, so get creative!

## FENCE CHARACTERISTICS

There are varying degrees of expertise, prestige, and attitude when it comes to your fences.

A fence has an "NPC Level", which ranges from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.

Level	Expertise & Prestige Levels
1	Will buy items for 80% of their value. Can appraise items up to 50 coins in value. Fence is virtually unknown. No allies.
2	Will buy items for 70% of their value. Can appraise items up to 100 coins. Fence is virtually unknown. 1 ally.
3	Will buy items for 60% of their value. Can appraise items up to 250 coins. Fence is known. 1-2 allies.
4	Will buy items for 60% of their value. Can appraise items up to 500 coins. Fence is known. 2-3 allies.
5	Will buy items for 60% of their value. Can appraise items up to 750 coins. Fence is well-known. Guild protected.
6	Will buy items for 50% of their value. Can appraise items up to 1000 coins. Fence is well-known. Guild protected.
7	Will buy items for 40% of their value. Can appraise items up to 2500 coins. Fence is well-known. Guild protected.
8	Will buy items for 40% of their value. Can appraise items up to 5000 coins. Fence is well-known. Guild protected.
9	Will buy items for 30% of their value. Can appraise items up to 10000 coins. Fence is famous. Government protected.
10	Will buy any items for 30% of their value. Can appraise items up to ANY coins in value. Fence is famous. Government protected.

- Fences with a level of 1-3 will only purchase mundane items.
- Fences with a level of 4-6 will only purchase mundane and high-end mundane items.
- Fences with a level of 7-9 will only purchase high-end mundane, and low-end magic items.
- Fences with a level of 10 will purchase all items.

## SKILLS

Each fence will have their own set of skills that allow them to do their jobs, but most share the same ones, in some degree. Its up

to you as to the level of the skill, and you can make your own skill set, but these are some examples:

- History (Local, Ancient, Racial, Warfare, Magic, etc...)
- Arcana
- Appraise (all fences will have this, obviously)
- Knowledge (Coins, Politics, Heraldry, etc...)

## ATTITUDE

Every fence has their good days and their bad days. This will affect both their relationships, and the manner in which they conduct business. You may choose a starting attitude, or roll at random. For every Charisma Skill Check used against the fence, a success will raise the attitude level by one degree, and a failure will lower the attitude level by one degree.

- **Angry:** Refuses to do business, and will not agree again for 1-2 weeks.
- **Grumpy:** Will only purchase 25% of the offered goods. Will subtract an additional 10% from the value.
- **Moody:** Will only purchase 75% of the offered goods. Will subtract an additional 5% from the value.
- **Indifferent:** May or may not buy 100% of the goods. Flip a coin. If its a "losing toss", then the fence will only purchase 50% of the items.
- **Content:** Will purchase 100% of the goods and add an additional 5% to the value.
- **Delighted:** Will purchase 100% of the goods and add an additional 10% to the value. Will give a "hot tip" about a possible theft opportunity (75% reliable).
- **Friendly:** Will purchase 100% of the goods and add an additional 15% to the value. Will

give a "hot tip" about a possible theft opportunity (100% reliable).

### PLOT HOOKS FOR FENCES

- A fence is looking for a specific set of items, an order has been placed by someone important. These items are in a dangerous location.
- A fence has been robbed and beaten quite badly. Until the culprits are found, no one will be able to sell their goods in the area.
- Next time you go looking for a fence you are ambushed by several thugs who demand to know who you have been talking to - the fence thinks the party has squealed on them.
- A Paladin has come sniffing around, posing as a Rogue, and the fence has gotten nervous but doesn't know the "rogue's" true identity. A bounty has been placed on the Paladin's head.
- A fence had a problem with another client, he asks you to take care of this issue. If successful, promises to introduce the party to his boss, who can give them more work.
- The strongest local Guild has declared the Fence a rat, and has demanded their head. A high bounty has been placed, and the gratitude of the Guild will be forthcoming.
- A fence is gone, a second is there to inform you he hasn't seen the fence in a week. Investigation might reveal that a local gang has kidnapped him and is demanding a Guild ransom.
- The local fence has suddenly tanked their prices, claiming a glut on the market.

Investigation might reveal there's an adventuring party in the area with a lot of loot.

- The local fence has suddenly raised their prices on narcotics, claiming an "interested party" is willing to pay top coin. There is no buyer. The fence has become an addict.

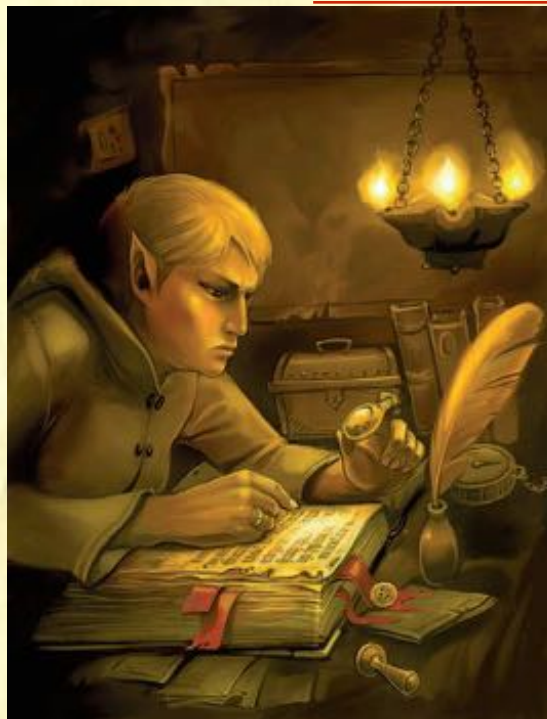
## THE FORGER

### HISTORY

The world of forgery (facsimile documents) and counterfeiting (facsimile objects) is almost as old as humanity itself. In D&D, the role has traditionally fallen to Rogues who have too much time on their hands :) This post will attempt to outline the methodologies and mechanics that your PCs and NPCs can use to dip their criminal fingers into. I know that counterfeiting is traditionally used when creating false currencies, but in this post, its to mean anything that isn't a document, and I've included paper currencies under forgery (just to make things more confusing).

### PREPARATIONS

Copying a document and copying a painting or sculpture are very different things. Each of the two "fraud" branches have their own methods, problems, and set of mechanics to govern the creation of these items and how difficult they are to detect to the observer. In each case, the use of a "kit", as per 5e rules, will be required to carry out the activity.





## FORGERY

In 5e there is the "Forgery Kit". This small box contains a variety of papers and parchments, pens and inks, seals and Sealing wax, gold and silver leaf, and other supplies necessary to create convincing forgeries of physical documents. Proficiency with this kit lets you add your proficiency bonus to any Ability Checks you make to create a physical forgery of a document. Before any forgery can take place, a number of things need to be addressed, and there are concerns that need to be addressed about the actual documents as well:

- An original sample of a person's handwriting, or signature, or a copy of a document being copied/alterd will be required. - Getting a rogue's hands on these are adventures in and of themselves. Sometimes they can be purchased from other rogues, but this can be dangerous as other rogues may have poor forgeries themselves, or have deliberately given a sample with errors so the rogue gets caught or killed.
- Time, adequate lighting, and a writing surface are necessary. A rogue cannot write a "night pass" while running from the Watch, scribbled on some barrel top in a dark alley. No. Forgery is always a "long" game. Documents must be prepped first.
- The lie that sells the forgery is often as important as the document itself. With access to common paperwork, a good Disguise skill, and a fast tongue, a Rogue can move at will through the environment if they are cautious and clever.
- How complex is this particular item to forge? A document with intricate printing, custom paper, metal woven into the paper, specialty dyes or other devices to prevent forgery is far more complex than a note written in somebody else's handwriting. It takes time, and potentially money to duplicate expensive documents. You may

have to find a source for the correct papers/ inks if a government or bank is issuing custom documents or paper currencies.

- How much scrutiny will it be able to withstand? A forged gate pass in torchlight during a rainstorm isn't going to be eyeballed as hard as a deed certificate for the old mansion on the hill in some lawyer's well-lit chambers.
- Are there other records to compare it to? - Documents are often created in duplicate or triplicate, and secured with various administrative bodies to keep a record of transactions. If the rogue has forged a Letter of Marque from the King, you can bet that the Royal Scribe will be consulted to ensure that there is an "official" copy on hand. The more important the document, the more likely there are many copies. Other problems are possible arcane bonds tying documents to locations or people, as well as any other possible law and judicial systems, such as Zones of Truth, and investigatory systems as people investigate the perjury. You might be able to scare a farmer off their land with a forged royal charter, but that doesn't stop them from going to a law enforcers. Or questions being raised elsewhere.

## COUNTERFEITING

There is no counterfeiting kit in the core, so we are inventing one. It is a large crate that contains tools and machinery, vials and stands, various arcane foci, and assorted bits that cannot be categorized, but are necessary for the creation of facsimile objects. Proficiency with this kit lets you add your proficiency bonus to any Ability checks you make to create a physical counterfeit of an object. Counterfeiting is a lot more involved than forgery. Anything can be copied, from paintings, to magic items, to machinery, to jewelry, to furniture. Literally anything, which makes this section a bit difficult to parse into something usable.

Much like forgery, however, having the item on hand to copy is going to ensure that the counterfeiter has the best possible chance of success. In the case of coin currency, this is going to be relatively simple to obtain. A painting in a museum, not so much. The process of obtaining some way of getting a good look at the object to be counterfeited is an adventure in and of itself.

Nearly all of the things mentioned in the forgery section, above, apply here. Adequate space, time, light and materials are needed to complete the task, and the scrutiny involved once the counterfeit is in place are important. Keep these in mind.

## METHODS

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### FORGERY

Forgery requires writing materials appropriate to the document being forged, enough light or sufficient visual acuity to see the details of what you're writing, wax for seals (if appropriate), and some time. To forge a document on which the handwriting is not specific to a person (military orders, a government decree, a business ledger, or the like), you need only to have seen a similar document before, and you gain a +8 bonus on your check. To forge a signature, you need an autograph of that person to copy, and you gain a +4 bonus on the check. To forge a longer document written in the hand of some particular person, a large sample of that person's handwriting is needed.

The Forgery check is made secretly, so that you're not sure how good your forgery is. As with Disguise, you don't even need to make a check until someone examines the work. Your Forgery check is opposed by the Investigation check of the person who examines the document to check its authenticity. The examiner gains modifiers on his or her check depending on certain

factors. (see "Investigation Modifiers" table, below)

**Action:** Forging a very short and simple document takes about 1 minute. A longer or more complex document takes 1d4 minutes per page. The Forgery check is Dex-based.

Try Again? Usually, no. A retry is never possible after a particular reader detects a particular forgery. But the document created by the forger might still fool someone else. The result of a Forgery check for a particular document must be used for every instance of a different reader examining the document. No reader can attempt to detect a particular forgery more than once; if that one opposed check goes in favor of the forger, then the reader can't try using his own skill again, even if he's suspicious about the document. The reader might have been told it's a forgery, but to his eyes, it doesn't look like one.

**Restriction:** Forgery is language-dependent; thus, to forge documents and detect forgeries, you must be able to read and write the language in question. A barbarian can't learn the Forgery skill unless he has learned to read and write.

**Special:** If you have the Observant, Diplomat, Silver-Tongued, or Investigator feat, you get a +2 bonus on Forgery checks. If you have an example of the item in question (a handwriting sample, a copy of a deed, etc.) the DC to copy it is reduced by -4.

#### DCs

- A note on plain paper that's written in somebody else's handwriting might be a DC 8-10.
- A travel document/visa/(forged) accounting book/deed to property/other document that is common and written on readily available materials might be a DC 12-15.
- A writ/official government issued document/bank certified check might be a DC 20 (or more).

### ONE LAST WORD ON FORGERY

Official documents can provide an excellent means for a rogue to prove themselves,

reinforce a point, argument, or attempt to persuade someone. With properly forged documents - created with a normal use of the Forgery skill and opposed by the viewer's Investigation check - the rogue can gain special bonuses to certain skills due to synergy.

At the DM's discretion, the rogue can forge documents that grant a +2 circumstance bonus on a specific Deception, Intimidate, or Persuasion check. These false credentials become, in effect, the perfect tool for the job and provide a bonus much like the bonuses provided to other skills by masterwork tools. Unlike other bonuses, these apply only when the rogue presents the documents and the creature they are interacting with does not detect the forgery. If they present forged documents and they are detected as a forgery, the check the rogue was attempting to use the documents for automatically fails. The DM is also free to rule that there are other repercussions in such situations.

## COUNTERFEITING

Much like forgery, a check is made to determine the quality of the reproduction, but this is never tested until the object is observed by someone who has interest in the item.

**Action:** Counterfeiting is not a short process. Even for coinage, you will need time to create something that doesn't look like a child did it.

- A single coin takes 6 hours.
- A small painting takes a week.
- A large painting takes a month.
- A small sculpture takes a month.
- A large sculpture takes 6 months.
- A magic item can vary between 1 month and 1 year.
- A piece of jewelry takes 2 weeks.

These are only sample time-frames, so feel free to tweak to your desires and use the

base for things not listed to get some kind of table you can use in the future. The Counterfeiting check is Dex-based.

**Try Again?** Usually, no. A retry is never possible after a particular observer detects a particular counterfeit. But the object created by the counterfeiter might still fool someone else. The result of a Counterfeit check for a particular object must be used for every instance of a different observer examining the object. No observer can attempt to detect a particular counterfeit more than once; if that one opposed check goes in favor of the counterfeiter, then the observer can't try using his own skill again, even if he's suspicious about the object. The observer might have been told it's a counterfeit, but to his eyes, it doesn't look like one.

**Restriction:** If there are special materials needed to complete the counterfeit, the Kit does not include them, and they must be obtained by the rogue. This would include unique things like a certain kind of metal, wood, jewel, or other decorative item, or anything that makes the object stand out.

**Special:** If you have the Historian, Perceptive, or Quick-Fingered feat, you get a +2 bonus on Counterfeit checks. If you have an example of the item in question the DC to copy it is reduced by -4.

### DCs

- Modern coinage might be a DC 8-10.
- A small painting or sculpture might be a DC 12-15.
- A famous artefact or piece of art might be a DC 20 (or more).

## DETECTION

A specialist in forensics has advantage to detect counterfeits. A complex object or one designed to be difficult to counterfeit may be easier to examine than to create. A simple object may be harder to examine than to fake.

To discover a counterfeit with an Intelligence (Investigation) check could depend on how much you beat the DC by when you create the object. I use 10+difference to determine how hard the counterfeit is to detect.

If you have a gold piece of the local kingdom, and use that to create a counterfeit duplicate (DC 10, you roll a total of 19), the DC to detect the counterfeit is 10+9 (DC+Roll Result-DC) which results in a final DC of 19 to detect

Essentially, it's an opposed check; Int (Investigation) can discover whether the object is authentic; Cha (Deception) allows you to give credence to a lie on the counterfeiter's part. If you're replacing an object in situ, then it's the object that's going to be checked, rather than the integrity of the lie. Which can be discovered if it was Int (History) or Int (Investigation).

An object that is found in the wrong location, or doesn't fit the observer's expectations can increase that character's suspicion (and thus create favorable circumstances for the checker's opposing Investigation check - these could range from +1 to +8 or whatever you decide is appropriate).

#### Condition Investigation Modifiers

- Type of object unknown to observer -2
- Type of object somewhat known to observer 0
- Type of object well known to observer 2
- Type of object intimately known to observer 4

### TYPES OF FORGERIES

Bureaucracies are rife with licenses, paperwork, deeds, writs, manifests, lists of every conceivable kind, travel passes, identification, and more. A skilled forger can move at will through these environments, and one based in an urban environment with a restrictive government can become wealthy very quickly selling documents to the

criminal underworld and the oppressed citizenry alike.

Some common documents include the following:

- **Identification:** Since photography isn't available, handwriting is used to establish identity, and the state will often keep files of all its citizenry's signatures to check for people trying to commit fraud.
- **License:** These can be anything from weapon licenses, to a merchant's right to trade, to a freelance hunter or mercenary operating in a foreign territory.
- **Military ID:** Much like citizen's IDs, the military also requires paperwork for its armed forces.
- **Deed:** Paperwork establishing ownership of property is done by nearly all governments, to prevent fraud and disputes.
- **Will:** A final will & testament declares who is to own the deceased person's personal property upon their death.
- **Cargo Manifest:** Merchants have to include a detailed list of goods being transported to ensure that what is shipped arrives at its destination intact, and without being stolen by the merchants!
- **Certificate:** Guild membership includes embossed, ornate paperwork showing the owner's inclusion in the Guild. These are almost always kept by the Guild itself.
- **Letter:** Communication between people. A rogue can do a lot of damage with forged letters.

In places where travel, trade, and war at sea are common-place, governments naturally develop various licenses, letters, and documents in order to regulate and administer the activities of those who travel by sea. A skilled forger can be a valuable asset, especially for a captain or crew who wish to pass off a stolen ship as their own vessel.

Some common nautical documents include the following:

- **Bill of Sale:** If you are in possession of valuable property you didn't pay for, you can forge a bill of sale to make it appear that you bought and paid for the property legally.
- **False Chart:** You can falsify a chart in order to lead someone using it into dangerous waters or to hide the location of something you don't want that person to find. The navigator making use of your phony chart is entitled to a Knowledge (geography) check (DC equal to your Forgery result) to detect the chart's false nature; if the navigator's check fails, she accepts your chart as genuine (and takes a significant penalty on any course setting she attempts based on your false chart).
- **Letter of Marque:** A letter of marque is a document issued by a government that gives a private citizen the right to attack that government's enemies at sea and confiscate their property. It's often a thin veneer legalizing piracy against the ships of a particular kingdom or realm. Your fake letter of marque testifies that you have been given the right to attack certain ships.
- **Cargo Manifest:** A manifest lists the cargo and passengers for your current voyage. If you have something you really don't want to declare to the customs officers, a fake manifest could be helpful (although it's more common to just omit to list all your cargo on your real manifest).
- **Owner's Papers:** Most civilized kingdoms require a ship to carry papers naming its owner, home port, or licenses for special trades, if any. You might find it convenient to draw up convincing facsimiles of these documents as you need them, instead of dealing with time-consuming and costly paperwork.

## THE GRIFTER

### HISTORY

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A confidence trick (also known as a con game, a con, a scam, a grift, a hustle, a bunko, a swindle, a flimflam, a gaffle or a bamboozle.) is an attempt to defraud a person or group after first gaining their confidence, used in the classical sense of trust. Confidence tricks exploit characteristics of the human psyche, such as credulity, naivete, compassion, vanity, irresponsibility, and greed. Although general expectation is that con artists are untrustworthy, their particular ability is actually to be able to gain the trust of their victims. They play on people's selfish desires, greed and the desire to obtain much with minimal effort. Victims often do not report con men due to their own complicity in an activity of dubious, if not criminal, nature, and their embarrassment at having been tricked.

Con artists are charismatic, intelligent, have good memories, and know how to manipulate people's hopes and fears. They attempt to blend in, to look and sound familiar, and often work diligently at appearing to be smooth, professional, and successful. A con man may wear expensive clothes and appear to work in a high class profession. Or, conversely, a con artist may put him or herself in a weaker position to play on a victim's sympathies: They may take on the role of illegal immigrant, a likable man down on his luck, or a woman with a small child who needs to use the bathroom. From city official to beggar, the con artist can appear to be just about anyone.

### THE MARK

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The "mark," or victim (also known as suckers, stooges, or rubes), may also be just about anyone who wants something. Con artists prey on human desires for money,

health, happiness, and even the desire to help others. Some may argue that con artists are a sort of Robin Hood, nobly cheating the greedy and dishonest out of their money; hence the old adage, "you can't cheat an honest man." In many cases, this holds true, as many cons exploit the greed and willingness to go "around the law" in their victims. Many cons dangle the prospect of "something for nothing (or very little)" in front of their marks.

A short con or small con is a fast swindle which takes just minutes. It typically aims to rob the victim of everything in his or her wallet. Many victims of confidence games are embarrassed to admit they fell victim to a scam, feeling foolish and stupid for being taken in by the con artist's game. Sometimes, the con artist is so convincing with the pitiful tales he tells the mark about his family, children, and so forth, that, even though the mark knows he has been swindled, he still feels bad for the con man and fails to report him. Other times, the con artist will manipulate the situation so that the mark cannot go to the authorities without admitting that he has committed a crime. Because of this surefire way to escape punishment, many confidence games include a minor element of crime. For example, the victim may be encouraged to use money concealed from the tax authorities to invest in the con artist's scheme; if they go to the authorities, they must reveal that they have committed tax fraud. Similarly, the mark who buys stolen weapons off the back of a wagon, only to find he has bought an empty barrel filled with bricks, cannot report the seller without admitted to attempted purchase of stolen goods.

A long con, big con, or big score is a scam that unfolds over several days or weeks and are meticulously planned and carefully rehearsed "plays", involving a team of swindlers, as well as props, sets, extras,

costumes, and scripted lines. It aims to rob the victim of huge sums of money or valuable things, often by getting him or her to empty out banking accounts and borrow from family members.

### HOW DO THESE SCAMS WORK?

1. Some cons rely on the gullibility of their victims. (Too naive to be suspicious).
2. Some cons depend on the dishonesty of their victims. (Too blinded to see the trap).
3. Some cons exploit the intelligence of their victims. (Too arrogant to think they could be hoodwinked).
4. Often, the mark tries to out-cheat the con men, only to discover that they have been manipulated from the start.
5. All cons have one thing in common—they employ the victim's greed or need as a lever to success.
6. You don't have to be cynical 24/7. But if you're not even slightly suspicious, you're prime for the picking.
7. A "get rich quick scheme" or "too good to be true" investment is easy to spot from the outside. But when you're right in the middle of it, your critical thinking skills are thrown out the window.
8. In the most sophisticated cons, the victim never realizes he's been conned. He thinks he was just involved in a failed gambit.
9. The con man can't be classed in the same group as "thieves", since he doesn't actually do any stealing—the victims willingly hand over the money.
10. A clever play of the con man is to make you think the scheme was your idea.
11. In a traditional con, the marks are encouraged to believe that they will obtain money dishonestly and are stunned to find that due to what appears to be an error in pulling off the scam they are the one who loses money.

12. Very few con men are ever brought to trial. The victim must admit his own criminal intentions if he wishes to prosecute.

### LONG CON EXAMPLE

The opening scene is the catch, when the mark is lured into the first stage of the long con by a lugger or a roper. The mark's interest in the scheme is then excited in the build up, with promises of easy money—from glowing recommendations by a fellow member of the crew known as a boost or singer. Or perhaps tipped through an intentionally overheard conversation between two members of the team known as the crossfire.

Next, the customer is allowed to invest a moderate amount of money and naturally succeed, proving the efficacy of the scheme being sold. The money won at this stage of the game is known as the convincer or the kickback. The next stage is sending the mark home or to the bank to get more money, known as putting in the send. The head con man now appears to invest his own money into the scheme for further proof of its worth—giving this stage of the game its name: the last hurrah. Just when it all seems too good to be true—it is! The customer/mark gets the surprise of all surprises—the gold was not gold, the diamonds were not diamonds, the telegraph operator made a mistake in reporting what horse had won a race. Imagine that! Welcome to the sting. Finally, when the customer and his money have been successfully separated, it's now time to get rid of him with the blow off or the cool off. This is accomplished through a number of dramatic embellishments, such as a false arrest (the button), the destruction of a mark's check (the tear up), or an incredibly dangerous maneuver that gets the mark arrested (played against the wall).

### LIST OF CLASSIC GRIFTS

NOTE I've not included all of the ones I've found, as some are more technology-based nowadays, and I've had to do some obvious rewording for these to fit into a D&D scenario ("The Accident", for example, is an insurance fraud involving cars, usually, so I had to change that to wagon, etc...). I've also changed some of the names of the classic scams as they didn't really fit the D&D vibe. Forgive me, fellow rogues.

**Salting:** Salting or "salting the mine" are terms for a scam in which gemstones or gold ore are planted in a mine or on the landscape, duping the mark into purchasing shares in a worthless or non-existent mining company.

**The Hoard:** This scam takes advantage of the victim's greed. The basic premise involves enlisting the mark to aid in retrieving some stolen money from its hiding place. The victim sometimes believes he can cheat the con artists out of their money, but anyone trying this has already fallen for the essential con by believing that the money is there to steal.

**The Curse:** One traditional swindle involves fortune telling. In this scam, a fortune teller uses his or her cold reading skill to detect that a client is genuinely troubled rather than merely seeking entertainment; or is a gambler complaining of bad luck. The fortune teller informs the mark that he is the victim of a curse, and that for a fee a spell can be cast to remove the curse. In Romany, this trick is called bujo ("bag") after one traditional format: the mark is told that the curse is in his money; he brings money in a bag to have the spell cast over it, and leaves with a bag of worthless paper.

**Pig in a Poke (Cat in a Bag):** The con entails a sale of a (suckling) "pig" in a "poke" (bag). The bag ostensibly contains a

live healthy little pig, but actually contains a cat (not particularly prized as a source of meat). If one buys the bag without looking inside it, the person has bought something of less value than was assumed, and has learned first-hand the lesson caveat emptor.

**Fun Facts:** Pig in a poke originated in the late Middle Ages. "Buying a pig in a poke" has become a colloquial expression in many European languages, including English, for when someone buys something without examining it beforehand. In some regions the "pig" in the phrase is replaced by "cat", referring to the bag's actual content, but the saying is otherwise identical. This is also said to be where the phrase "letting the cat out of the bag" comes from, although there may be other explanations.

**Gem Dealers:** This phony gem scam involves layers of con men and helpers who tell a tourist of an opportunity to earn money by buying tax-free jewelry and having it shipped back to the tourist's home country. The mark is shown around the city by one of the con men, who ensures that the mark meets one helper after another, until the mark is persuaded to buy the jewelry from a store also operated by the swindlers. The gems are real but significantly overpriced (usually 1000% or more).

**The Badger:** This is extortion that is often perpetrated on married men. The mark is deliberately coerced into a compromising position, a supposed affair for example, then threatened with public exposure of his acts unless blackmail money is paid. This also works well on anyone in positions of power or prestige or fame.

**The Clip Joint:** A clip joint (or Fleshpot) is an establishment, usually a strip club or entertainment bar, typically one claiming to offer adult entertainment, in which customers are tricked into paying money and receive poor, or no, goods or services in

return. Typically, clip joints suggest the possibility of sex, charge excessively high prices for watered-down drinks, then eject customers when they become unwilling or unable to spend more money. The product or service may be illicit, offering the victim no recourse through official or legal channels.

**The Accident:** The con artist tricks the mark into damaging, for example, the con artist's wagon or cart, or injuring the con artist, in a manner that the con artist can later exaggerate. One relatively common scheme involves two wagons, one for the con artist, and the other for the shill. The con artist will pull in front of the victim, and the shill will pull in front of the con artist before slowing down. The con artist will then try to rein up to "avoid" the shill, causing the victim to rear-end the con artist. The shill will whip the horses and pull away quickly, leaving the scene. The con artist will then claim various exaggerated injuries in an attempt to collect from the victim.

**Pigeon Drop:** The pigeon drop involves the mark or pigeon assisting an elderly, weak or infirm stranger to keep a large sum of money safe for him. In the process, the stranger (actually a confidence man) puts his money with the mark's money in an envelope or chest with which the mark is then entrusted. The container is then switched for an identical one which contains no money, and a situation is engineered where the mark has the opportunity to escape with the money. If the mark takes this chance, he is merely fleeing from his own money, which the con artist will have kept or handed off to an accomplice.

**Fun Fact:** This scam is depicted early in the film *The Sting*.

**The Fiddle:** The Fiddle uses the Pigeon Drop technique. A pair of con men work together, one going into an expensive restaurant in shabby clothes, eating, and



claiming to have left his wallet at home, which is nearby. As collateral, the con man leaves his only worldly possession, the violin that provides his livelihood. After he leaves, the second con man swoops in, offers an outrageously large amount (for example 1000 gp) for such a rare instrument, then realizes he is late and runs off to an appointment, leaving his card for the mark to find him when the fiddle-owner returns. The mark's greed comes into play when the "poor man" comes back, having gotten the money to pay for his meal and redeem his violin. The mark, thinking he has an offer on the table, then buys the violin from the fiddle player who "reluctantly" agrees to sell it for a certain amount that still allows the mark to make a "profit" from the valuable violin. The result is the two con men are richer (less the cost of the violin), and the mark is left with a cheap instrument.

**Fun Fact:** This is depicted in the TV series *Better Call Saul* where James McGill and a friend sell a Kennedy half-dollar to a mark for a very high price, claiming the coin is a rare and valuable misprint.

**Glim-Dropper:** The Glim-Dropper scam is a variation of the Fiddle It requires several accomplices, one of whom must be a one-eyed man. One grifter goes into a store and pretends he has lost his glass eye. Everyone looks around, but the eye cannot be found. He declares that he will pay a 1000 gp reward for the return of his eye, leaving contact information. The next day, an accomplice enters the store and pretends to find the eye. The storekeeper (the intended griftee), thinking of the reward, offers to take it and return it to its owner. The finder insists he will return it himself, and demands the owner's address. Thinking he will lose all chance of the reward, the storekeeper offers 100 gp for the eye. The finder bargains him up to 250 gp, and

departs. The one-eyed man, of course, cannot be found and does not return.

**Fun Fact:** Variants of this con have been used in movies such as *The Flim-Flam Man*, *Hustle*, *The Traveler*, *Shade*, and *Zombieland*, and also in books such as *American Gods*.

**Three-Card Monte:** The trickster shows three playing cards to the audience, one of which is a queen (the "lady"), then places the cards face-down, shuffles them around, and invites the audience to bet on which one is the queen. At first the audience is skeptical, so the shill places a bet, and the scammer allows him to win. In one variation of the game, the shill will (apparently surreptitiously) peek at the lady, ensuring that the mark also sees the card. This is sometimes enough to entice the audience to place bets, but the trickster uses sleight of hand to ensure that he always loses, unless the con man decides to let him win, hoping to lure him into betting much more. The mark loses whenever the dealer chooses to make him lose. There is a variant of this scam. The shill says loudly to the dealer that his cards are fake and that he wants to see them. He takes the card and folds a corner and says in a hushed voice to the audience that he has marked the card. He places a bet and wins. Then he asks the others to place bets as well. When one of the audience bets a large sum of money, the cards are switched.

**The Art Student:** The art student scam is common in major cities. A small group of 'students' will start a conversation, claiming that they want to practice their Common. After a short time they will change the topic to education and will claim that they are art students and they want to take you to a free exhibition. The exhibition will usually be in a small, well hidden rented office and the students will show you some pieces which they claim to be their own work and will try to sell them at a high price, despite the

pieces usually being nothing more than an counterfeit of other lesser-known works.

**The Big Store:** The Big Store is a technique for selling the legitimacy of a scam and typically involves a large team of con artists and elaborate sets. Often a building is rented and furnished as a legitimate and substantial business. (The "betting parlor" setup in the film, *The Sting* is an example.)

Fun Fact: In 2014, a rural co-operative in Nanjing, China constructed an entire brick-and-mortar fake bank with uniformed clerks behind counters; the unlicensed bank operated for a little over a year, then defaulted on its obligations, swindling Chinese savers out of 200 million Chinese yuan.

**Quick Change:** Change raising, also known as a quick-change, is a common short con and involves an offer to change an amount of money with someone, while at the same time taking change or bills back and forth to confuse the person as to how much money is actually being changed. The most common form, "the Short Count". For example, a con artist shopping at a gas station pays for a cheap item (under a dollar) and gives the clerk a ten dollar bill. The con gets back nine ones and the change and then tells the clerk he has a one and will exchange ten ones for a ten. This is what the scam artist is doing: getting the clerk to hand over the \$10 before handing over the \$1 bills. Then the scam artist hands over nine ones and the \$10. The clerk will assume there has been a mistake and offer to swap the ten for a one. Then the con will probably just say: "Here's another one, give me a \$20 and we're even." Notice that the scam artist just swapped \$10 for \$20. The \$10 was the store's money, not the con's. To avoid this con, clerks should keep each transaction separate and never permit the customer to handle the original ten before handing over the ten ones. Another variation is to flash a

\$20 bill to the clerk, then ask for something behind the counter. When the clerk turns away, the con artist can swap the bill he is holding to a lesser bill. The clerk might then make change for the larger bill, without noticing it has been swapped.

Fun Fact: This has been featured prominently in several movies about grifting, notably *The Grifters*, *Criminal*, *Nine Queens*, and *Paper Moon*

**The Jam Auction:** In this scam, the confidence artist poses as a retail sales promoter, representing a manufacturer, distributor, or set of stores. The scam requires assistants to manage the purchases and money exchanges while the pitchman keeps the energy level up. Passersby are enticed to gather and listen to a pitchman standing near a mass of appealing products. The trickster entices by referring to the high-end products, but claims to be following rules that he must start with smaller items. The small items are described, and 'sold' for a token silver piece amount - with as many audience participants as are interested each receiving an item. The pitchman makes an emotional appeal such as saying "Raise your hand if you're happy with your purchase" and when hands are raised, directs his associates to return everyone's money (they keep the product). This exchange is repeated with items of increasing value to establish the expectation of a pattern. Eventually, the pattern terminates by ending the 'auction' without reaching the high-value items, and stopping midway through a phase where the trickster retains the collected money from that round of purchases. Marks feel vaguely dissatisfied, but have goods in their possession, and the uplifting feeling of having demonstrated their own happiness several times. The marks do not realize that the total value of goods received is significantly less than the price paid in the final round. Auction/refund rounds may be

interspersed with sales rounds that are not refunded, keeping marks off-balance and hopeful that the next round will refund.

**Fun Fact:** The Jam Auction has its roots in Carny culture.

**The Money Exchange:** This scam occurs when exchanging foreign currency. If a large amount of cash is exchanged the victim will be told to hide the money away quickly before counting it ("You can't trust the locals"). A substantial amount will be missing.

**Rain Making:** Rainmaking is a simple scam in which the trickster promises to use their power or influence over a complex

system to make it do something favorable for the mark. The trickster has no actual influence on the outcome, but if the favorable outcome happens anyway they will then claim credit. If the event doesn't happen of course then the trickster may be able to claim that they need more money until it finally does. This can be stretched out over a long period, depending on the greed of the mark.

**Fun Fact:** Classically this was promising to make it rain, but more modern examples include getting someone's App 'featured' on an App Store or a politician implying that they can use their influence to get a contract awarded to the mark (as illustrated by Clay Davis in Season 3 of TV show *The Wire*).

**The Rip:** The Rip is essentially a Pigeon Drop confidence trick. In a typical variation scammers will target, say, a jeweler, and offer to buy some substantial amount of his wares at a large markup provided he perform some type of under-the-table cash deal, to avoid taxes and export fees. This exchange goes through flawlessly, at considerable profit for the mark. Some time later the scammers approach the mark with a similar proposition, but for a larger amount of money. His confidence and greed inspired by the previous deal, the merchant agrees—only to have his money and goods taken, by sleight-of-hand or violence, at the point of exchange.

**Fun Fact:** This scam was depicted in the movie *Matchstick Men*. The same term is used to describe a crime where a vendor (especially a drug dealer) is killed to avoid paying for goods.

**The Dropped Coin Purse:** The Dropped Purse scam usually targets tourists. The con artist pretends to accidentally drop his coin purse in a public place. After an unsuspecting victim picks up the coin purse and offers it to the con artist, the scam



begins. The artist accuses the victim of stealing money from the coin purse and threatens to call the Watch, scaring the victim into returning the allegedly stolen money.

## THE KIDNAPPER

In criminal law, kidnapping is the unlawful carrying away and confinement of a person against his will. The abduction element is typically but not necessarily conducted by means of force or fear. Kidnapping may be done to demand for ransom in exchange for releasing the victim, or for other illegal purposes.

### TYPES

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Kidnapping has been done for all sorts of reasons throughout history - for money, for "love" (or the facsimile thereof, in the case of stalkers), for blackmail, for political expediency, or even just for the evil fun of it.

**Bride kidnapping** is a term often applied loosely, to include any bride "abducted" against the will of her parents, even if she is willing to marry the "abductor". It still is traditional amongst nomadic peoples.

**Groom kidnapping** is when eligible bachelors are abducted by the bride's family and later forcefully married, to avoid heavy dowry costs. Considering the traditional regard for the marriage sacrament, most such marriages are not annulled.

**Express kidnapping** is a method of abduction where a small ransom, that a company or family can easily pay, is demanded.

**Tiger kidnapping** is taking a hostage to make a loved one or associate of the victim do something: e.g. a child is taken hostage to force the shopkeeper to open the safe. The term originates from the usually long

preceding observation, like a tiger does on the prowl.

**Fake kidnapping** is kidnapping that has been staged by the victim. ("She kidnapped herself, Dude")

**Political kidnapping** is conducted to obtain political concessions from security forces or governments.

**Shanghaiing** is the practice of kidnapping people to serve as sailors by coercive techniques such as trickery, intimidation, or violence. This is also known as "press-ganging".

**Extraordinary rendition**, also called irregular rendition or forced rendition, is the government-sponsored abduction and extrajudicial transfer of a person from one country to another.

**Forced disappearance** (or enforced disappearance) occurs when a person is secretly abducted or imprisoned by a state or political organization or by a third party with the authorization, support, or acquiescence of a state or political organization, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the person's fate and whereabouts, with the intent of placing the victim outside the protection of the law.

### THE PERPETRATORS

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**Individuals:** Certainly this is the most common type of kidnapper. 1 or 2 rogues who specialize in this type of crime can earn a lot of money and gain a good reputation in the criminal underworld if they are cautious and careful. The kidnapped victim is usually held in the criminal's home or safe-house, or in some remote, but small location (like a cabin in the mountains or a cleaned-out ruin).

**Gangs:** This refers to both gangs of individual rogues working in concert, or street gangs (although this happens rarely with these organizations). Gangs tend to kidnap multiple persons at once, usually those who are known to one another and whose abductions are required to happen

simultaneously. Gangs tend to hold their victims close to their powerbase, and rarely go to remote operations, as the number of rogues involved would draw too much suspicion if the traffic is noticed.

**Guilds:** Rogues guilds are the most common ones to commit these crimes, but Merchants guilds have also been known to do this in order to stop/start/or intervene in a dispute with a rival or rivals. Rogue guilds nearly always do this for political reasons, in order to force concessions from rivals or governments, and they almost never hold their victims nearby. Guilds can afford privacy and they nearly always hold the victim in some strong location far from their powerbase.

**Governments:** The state always has a good reason to conduct kidnappings. Political maneuvering is as natural as breathing, and the wise political animal has myriad protection to guard against unwanted snatchings-from-the-street, but the crime is still rampant, and although extortion is the primary reason, there are plenty of reasons for the State to play rough, and non-compliance from the target often results in the death of the kidnapped victim. The State has no reason to hide, and often houses its victims directly in State-run facilities such as prisons, asylums, hospitals, laboratories, and even private residences.

## METHODS

Secrecy in a kidnapping is most often desired by the rogues who commit the crimes, but there are political or terrorist intentions that feel that public abductions carry more social weight, if perfectly timed and executed. In the first case, as is most common, the victim is taken while they are alone, whether by design or having been separated from a group by purpose (by the kidnapper) or chance (went for a piss). This most often occurs while the victim is walking or standing, isolated. However, abductions from

vehicles or mounts is not unheard of, if more difficult. In the latter case, unless the rogue has powerful magic or a foolproof plan, they are going to need help. Most carriage-kidnappings are carried out by groups on horseback, and most waterborne ones are carried out by those with the ability to fly.

The kidnapper's biggest enemy is the Eyewitness. Places that eyewitnesses can spy the crime are myriad, and a wise kidnapper takes extra precaution with regards to evasion and deception after the abduction to lose any possible pursuit and foil descriptions by any potential eyewitnesses. A foolish witness can become a dead witness, so there will not be many who would intervene, and that possible number depends on the personal beliefs of the people in that area. A Lawful Good village is going to have more people willing to call for the Watch than a dreary Neutral Evil port.

The idea is to snatch the victim and then move them to a secure location. The quickest method of doing this is to take the victim while they are near the place to be imprisoned, but this is extremely difficult to do, logistically, and a lot of research and preparation is needed to be done before this can be attempted. Finding the perfect location, near where the victim walks at night, is going to have to be undertaken carefully!

Most often the victim is transported by vehicle or mount, with wagons, carriages, and the like being the most reliable and fastest common method. Knock the victim out, put a bag on their head, bundle them into a waiting carriage and off you go. That's the preferred way for the common rogue without many resources. However, rogues in D&D have access to magic items, magic spells, and various potions, poisons, and who-knows-what-else-that-you-homebrewed, and these can dramatically change the methods available to a kidnapper. A rogue

with the ability to teleport is going to be a very successful kidnapper against a victim without magical defenses.

Once snatched, the victim is moved to a secure location and either imprisoned in a cell or secure room, or shackled/tied to some fixed object like a wall or post or bolted-down chair. The victim's treatment largely depends on the kidnapper's goals. If particularly cruel, the kidnapper might remove appendages to send as "messages" to the target, and other physical ill-treatment is likely. The victim might or might not be fed, but most often is, depending on the estimated length of the ordeal. Bathroom facilities could be provided, as well as bedding, or the callous rogue might house his victim in a pit, or dangling cage, or some other noisome place.

In any case, the victim will need to be attended to, and eventually transported a second time, to the exchange (see below). The wise kidnapper never leaves his victim alone and does not engage in communication unless absolutely necessary, but how many people are truly wise? The opportunity for escape is ever-present unless carefully guarded against, and a victim that can get into their kidnapper's psyche can sometimes win their freedom peacefully.

## RANSOMS

The delivery of money, goods, or information from the real target of the kidnapping - someone related to the victim - is the point of the enterprise, and has its own perils. Many a kidnapper has been foiled during the ransom exchange. Many elaborate plans often fail to come to fruition, and many simple ones are too simple, and the use of magic has changed the entire process and made things much more complicated.

The exact price of the ransom is going to depend on what the kidnappers actually want, and while this is going to be informed

mostly by the narrative, it is possible to create a base of value for various figures purely based on social and economic and political status. It is just that, a base, and should not be expected to be inserted into your game without your own modifications that fit your own campaign paradigms. So, caveat DM.

This is super basic, and can be expanded to include particular factions or important groups that inhabit your campaign world(s). This is just monetary value, and does not reflective any narrative ransoms that would fit the current arc.

NOTE: If children are revered in a particular society, the values could be swapped for the adult versions.

- Street Person/Child: 25 coins
- Laborer: 50 coins
- Laborer's Child: 25 coins
- Farmer: 75 coins:
- Farmer's Child: 25 coins
- Poor Merchant: 100 Coins
- Poor Merchant's Child: 50 coins
- Wealthy Merchant: 400 coins
- Wealthy Merchant's Child: 200 coins
- Clergy: 600 coins
- Clerical Elite: 800 coins
- Noble: 1000 coins
- Noble's Child: 750 coins
- Royal: Multiple 1000s of coins
- Royal's Child: Multiple 1000s of coins

## EXCHANGES

As explained above, setting up the exchange is even more dangerous than the initial crime, because there is now a reward at stake. The kidnapper has to account for the victim's transportation to the exchange site, and hold them securely during the exchange. They have to consider their own safety and the intentions of the target who has brought the ransom. Eyewitnesses could still be a problem, but most exchanges are designed to be in areas where no one can see the activity. The rogue also has to secure the ransom in their possession and then leave the area

unharmed and unseen. Not an easy set of tasks.

Magic, again, does change the methodology and considerations, so you should look at the options available to your kidnappers and adjust accordingly.

An exchange can, and sometimes does, result in a betrayal. This can come from many directions - the target, the victim, the target's companions/security, the kidnapper's own companions/security, or even some outside party that has been clandestinely involved or watching. The number of ways of getting screwed are enough to make a rogue's head spin. Kidnapping is the most dangerous of all crimes because an exchange is involved instead of simply a theft of some kind (goods, information, or life).

Kidnappers often demand a "dead drop", where the ransom is placed somewhere that the kidnapper's can pick up with relative security and then agree to release the victim afterward, but this is always a bad idea for the target. The chances of the victim being killed escalate in this scenario, and a smart kidnapper can get away clean without any way for the target to pursue or glean any information on where the rogue(s) escaped to. Sometimes these dead drops can occur off the side of bridges, or into deep pits, or in some crowded location like a fountain or locked chest. Sometimes the drop must occur magically, with teleportation being the easiest, but potentially the most dangerous, method. (Sire, the note reads, "Teleport the gold to the foot of the great waterfall at midnight." What shall we do, my lord? - "Assemble 40 of my best men. Let's give these bastards a surprise.")

In any case, a rapid and stealthy exit is the kidnapper's best case scenario. Horses are the most common and cheapest option, with vehicles a close second. If magic is available,

so much the better - invisibility and teleportation are some optimal choices. The escape route is usually pre-planned, and if a group is involved they often split up to meet later to divide the spoils or to simply regroup in safety. A wise kidnapper will have multiple escape scenarios planned out, involving multiple routes-of-possible-escape in case things go wrong. Vehicle/mount changes, disguises or changes, and other methods of confusion might be utilized to avoid pursuit.

In any case, the reputation of any claims by the kidnapper after an exchange will rise or fall with factions with interest in the victim or target, it just depends on what happened and who had a stake in the outcome. Rumors are always rampant during a victim's imprisonment and afterward the truth is often manipulated about who perpetrated the crime and why - especially if the victim was a noble or royal.

### PLOT HOOKS FOR KIDNAPPERS

- A relative/friend of one of the party members has been abducted and a note delivered demanding ransom.
- The King/Queen's son/daughter has been kidnapped, and a lavish reward has been publicly posted.
- The local Guild has had its leader abducted and now there is a political war raging in the streets among competing factions.
- Someone is kidnapping orphans from the local temple. A few bloody clues have been found.
- An allied NPC of the party sends an urgent request to help with the kidnapped spouse of the NPC.
- One of the party members themselves has been kidnapped (good for those sessions where someone can't make it) and ransom demanded.



## THE PICKPOCKET

### HISTORY

Pickpockets and other thieves, especially those working in teams, sometimes apply distraction, such as asking a question or bumping into the victim. These distractions sometimes require sleight of hand, speed, misdirection and other types of skills.

### METHODS

In a standard scheme, the "stall" suddenly stops in front of the "mark" (victim) so that the mark bumps into him. The "pick" pretends to accidentally bump into the mark from behind and graciously apologizes while removing the mark's valuables. It might seem strange that the stall suddenly stopped, but the pick seems completely innocent, so the mark doesn't notice he's been robbed. Sometimes there will be layers of hand-offs from the pick to "runners" who serve to confuse the path of the stolen goods.

In the pickpocketing world, distraction can get pretty elaborate. Two members of a team

might stage a fight while the third member takes advantage of the inattentive crowd. Child pickpockets may try to show something to a mark, like a drawing or a toy, while other children sneak up from behind. Another common trick is to surreptitiously spray someone with bird droppings, or a convincing facsimile, and then offer to help clean it off.

One of the most effective distractions is sex: An attractive person, usually pretending to be drunk, will touch an unsuspecting victim affectionately, and lift their valuables while they are distracted.

Some pickpockets play on compassion in their distractions. They "accidentally" drop change or shopping bags on the ground so that someone will stop to help them. While the mark is kneeling on the ground with the first pickpocket, another member of the team steals his or her valuables. At the beach, one member of the team may pretend to be in trouble in the water. When the mark runs in to help out, another member of the team walks off with whatever the mark has left on the beach.

Sometimes, pickpockets don't want to distract you from your money; they want to bring your attention to it. For example, one member of a pickpocket team might yell out "Somebody just stole my coin purse!" in a crowded marketplace. Most people's automatic reaction is to make sure they still have their own valuables, so they'll pat whatever they have stashed them. This makes the pickpockets' job a lot easier -- it shows them exactly where to look.

Acting scams are common and can be difficult to spot. Fake tourists asking for directions, fake charity workers asking for donations, and fake attendants asking for your ticket can all be effective diversions for thieves.



It's difficult to spot every pickpocket, no matter how careful you are, because pickpockets generally camouflage themselves. They're very careful not to fit the common conception of criminals. Many dress like wealthy businessmen and women; others carry babies, who they use to hide what their hands are doing. Some even mimic tourists, their prime targets.

## METHOD EXAMPLES

**The Ride-By** - You're strolling down the sidewalk on a balmy evening. You hear the galloping of an approaching horseman behind you, but think nothing of it. The galloping gets louder, and suddenly your valuables are ripped from your arm as you see two thieves riding away with your coin purse, weapons, or anything else they can grab.

**The Good Samaritan** - You're grappling with your heavy cargo as you are unloading your wagon. A friendly stranger approaches and offers to help, so you hand them a chest to carry. Before you know it, the stranger has disappeared along with your goods into the crowd.

**The Sandwich** - You're standing on some stairs, waiting to get into the tavern, with the people in front of you blocking the way past. Unknown to you, the couple standing in front of you are acting as 'stallers', while the man behind you picks through your backpack.

**The Bottleneck** - You're disembarking a train/carriage at a busy station but a crowd of people on the platform are blocking the doors. The passengers in the carriage are squeezed together as they try to exit, and with the mass of bodies, you fail to notice the hand snatching your coin purse

**The Young Assassin** - You're exploring the sights and sounds of a tourist attraction when a group of children start dancing around you. As you watch them, a tiny hand is exploring the depths of your backpack.

**The Bump & Lift** - You're craning your neck to wonder at the Statue of Gyax when a man bumps into you. You both quickly apologize and go on your way. It's not until you sit down to lunch that you notice your amulet has been stolen from where it was hanging from your neck.

**The Slash, Grab & Run** - You're winding your way through a market when you feel a jolt on your back. A thief has taken a knife to your day bag, spilling its contents over the ground and taking off with your valuables. Pickpocketing isn't always a delicate affair or an art of distraction. In some cases, it's an aggressive case of slash, grab and run. Bag slashing is particularly dangerous because it involves a weapon - often small knives or scissors.

**The Romantic** - You're unwinding at the tavern after a long day in the sun, when a friendly person strikes up conversation. They insist on sharing a few drinks with you and slides closer. Just as you think you've met your holiday romance, they leaves suddenly. You grudgingly go to pay the bill, but find that your coins are gone.

**The Distraction** - You're exiting the restaurant as a brawl erupts on the street. You stand aside and watch the commotion, while a crafty accomplice works through the crowd and steals vulnerable items.

## EXPERTISE

Dexterity is obviously going to be the most important skill-set for a dip, but Charisma is often used for stalls and distractions - Diplomacy, Intimidation & Seduction all viable choices.

Low level pickpockets usually have a +1 to +3 Sleight of Hand skill modifier, while an expert could have +8 to +10 (or more!). Hiding and climbing could also be valuable skills to have.

# THE PUSHER

## THE PROCESS

Note: Normally in this section I put in some researched articles giving some history, but in the case of drug-dealing, I don't think this is necessary. Instead, we are going to jump right into the meat of the matter.

A rogue that has become a "pusher", that is a drug-dealer, can assist the operation at many levels, such is the depth of the production chain. There are 6 things we need to consider:

**Production:** Where raw goods are refined into finished products.

**Distribution:** Where finished products are delivered to the market area.

**Sales:** Where finished products are sold to the end-user.

**Security:** Where the entire production chain is protected from interference.

**Economics:** Where the local economy dictates the price of goods.

**Hazards:** Where the unexpected can happen.

## PRODUCTION

Note: Digging this deep into this subject requires us to use actual examples of narcotics, and there are a ton of supplements out there to sate your fantasy-drug needs, so I will not be creating any of my own for this book. I will, however, use generic- effects as names to illustrate the strata of outcomes you can introduce.

The production of narcotics is where it all begins. This is the first step in a long line of processes that gets the product to the end-user. The raw materials used in the production of narcotics can take one of two forms - Plant and Monster. Plant-based narcotics are created from refining natural materials. Monster-based narcotics are created from refining organic (dead)

materials. I have only detailed the Plant-based methods in this section.

## Agriculture

Growing plants to create drugs is not much different from food or resource crops. You need arable land, a water source, seeds or cuttings, tools, pesticides, fertilizers, and the labor to work the process.

The amount of land used dictates the output of the production process. Loss, of course, is possible, due to weather, natural phenomenon, incompetence from the farmers, outside interference, or other complications. The output of the farms is called "the shipment".

The shipment value is based on the raw good being refined and the loss of yield before market forces are applied. Shipments are always measured in "doses". The number of marketable doses will depend on the narcotic being refined. There is more information about this, below. If you prefer actual numbers, that is beyond the scope of this project, but I will point you towards the supplement, "Grain Into Gold" for yields of agricultural products that you can adapt towards narcotics production. Also note, that all costs are listed in "coins", as I don't know what kind of economic model you will be using.

## 5 types of narcotic effects that can be farmed

Stimulants: These drugs make you hyper-sensitive.

Depressants: These drugs make you relaxed.

Hallucinogens: These drugs make you hallucinate.

Analgesics: These drugs take away your pain.

Soporifics: These drugs make you sleep.

The type of plant you farm will require different growing times, and the outcome of the final drug's effect(s) can be altered with refining techniques.

Arcane Refinery: Affects spellcasting ability

Body Refinery: Alters physical capabilities

Combat Refinery: Affects battle prowess

Mind Refinery: Alters mental capabilities

Medicinal Refinery: Creates safe dosage  
 Party Refinery: Affects social experiences  
 Spirit Refinery: Alters metaphysical capabilities

Calculating how much the crop will yield is a simple matter:

- 1 acre of crop = 10 lbs (4.5kg) of raw material AND
- 10 lbs of raw material = 1000 doses of final product.

### Crop Time Requirements

1 acre of land costs 1000 coins to purchase. If the land can be obtained freely, so much the better!

### Crop Time

Analgesic	12 weeks
Depressant	10 weeks
Hallucinogen	12 weeks
Soporific	10 weeks
Stimulant	12 weeks

### Yield Event Table

These are events that can affect the final yield of the raw crop. It is strongly recommended that you include these to simulate the vagaries of the chaotic world, and so that there is never an "automatic" aspect to making money in this business. Sometimes there will be losses, and failure is a part of the drama we invest into in D&D.

Roll on the table once per growing cycle and once per acre farmed.

NOTE: If the Farmer/Rogue is proficient in Nature or Knowledge(Agriculture), you may roll on this table with Advantage. If they are not, roll with Disadvantage.

d20	Event	Yield Effect (in doses)
1	Fire	100%

2	Bird Flocks	20%
3	Insect Swarms	20%
4	Bountiful Crop	75%
5-6	Too Much Rainfall	20%
7-14	No Event	0%
15-16	Not Enough Rainfall	20%
17	Bumper Crop	50%
18	Frost	50%
19	Vermin	50%
20	Blight (Fungi)	100%

### Refining

Raw material is rarely sold as is. It must be refined first. This will reduce the number of final product doses, and comes with a time requirement and cost. If you want to sell material raw, you can use 2000 coins per pound as a rough estimate of value.

Refining carries a cost and time requirement, and this is factored into the shipment's final value, as illustrated in the table below:

Refinery	Cost (gp)	Time	# of Doses Lost	Final Value per Dose
Arcane	3000	2 weeks	50%	100 coins
Body	2000	1 week	20%	25 coins
Combat	4000	2 weeks	50%	50 coins
Mind	3000	2 weeks	50%	25 coins
Medicinal	2000	1 week	20%	20 coins
Party	1000	1 week	20%	10 coins
Spirit	3000	2 weeks	50%	75 coins

### Overhead

Overhead is the cost of doing business. It includes the cost of labor, water, raw materials, fertilizers, pesticides, and other assorted operating costs. 1 acre of farm from planting to final refinery is going to incur a 30% addition to the cost of production. This is calculated from the Shipment Value (If the value of the shipment after being refined is 20000 coins, then the overhead cost is 6000 coins).

Assume 4 laborers per acre to plant, work, and harvest the crop. They will be paid in the overhead costs.

That's a lot of tables, I know. Apologies. But necessary to introduce a bit of verisimilitude (feel free, of course, as always, to tweak any and all numbers to your own preferences).

Let's break down a single example as an illustration.

Farmer/Rogue Fred wants to start a stimulant farm, and sell GoJuice! to the local military.

He can only afford to plant one acre, so he starts with that. He pays 1000 coins to Farmer Bob for his field.

He grows Stimulants, which takes 12 weeks to grow, and Mother Nature decides that he is going to get a Bumper Crop, which increases the harvest by 50%, giving him 1500 doses to refine.

He chooses the Combat Refining technique, which takes 2 more weeks, costs him 4000 coins and reduces the dosage by 50%, giving him 750 refined doses to ship.

The Combat Refinery yields doses that cost 50 coins per dose. His 750 doses are worth 37500 at market, but he still has to pay his overhead. So  $37500 \times 30\% = 11250$ , which results in a shipment value of 26250 at market.

He sells the lot and then he pays his refinery costs of 4000 and that leaves him

with a profit of 22250 coins. Not too shabby for 3 months work.

To review:

Land Cost ---> Crop Growth ---> Refinery  
Time/Cost ---> Market Sale ---> Overhead  
Costs = Final Profit

### **Distribution**

Distribution is getting the narcotics to the places where they will be sold. It comes with its own process and hazards, which I will attempt to outline, below.

Moving narcotics into areas where it is illegal is fraught with peril. There are security risks both from law enforcement and other rogues. A distribution chain needs heavy security in order to insure its safety OR the goods must be smuggled in such a way that security would draw too much attention. Smugglers are experts at concealing items within other items or vehicles, so having some on the payroll is probably a good idea.

Distribution is a dull job, but necessary, and tends to attract Thugs to work the routes. Wagon-loads generally have a 4 or 5-man crew, with one driver, and 4 guards - sometimes they ride the wagon/carriage, and sometimes they act as outriders on mounts. Either way, they will be trained for fighting and carry both missile and melee weapons. The drivers sometimes carry Wands or Rings to aid in security.

These routes are usually run at night, but not always, and not always by land. Sea and Air routes are perfectly viable (as are Underground routes) and have the benefit of attracting less hazards on the way (usually).

A distribution crew is generally paid by the run, and the driver usually makes 100 coins per day and the guards make 50. Lost/

Robbed shipments tend to result in very harsh penalties/death.

A distribution network consists of known buyers who will buy in bulk and pay the shipment value all at once. They usually (but not always) have fixed locations to receive the shipments, and from there, they use internal networks to move the narcotics into the hands of the sales teams. These locations always have heavy security, and if magic is available, they will use it. Locations can include warehouses, businesses, abandoned locations, hidden coves/caves/groves, or anything else you can imagine.

### Sales

Sales are the exchange of narcotics for money to a customer base. This is where the drug network ends, and the point of its whole existence. Narcotics will be sold by the dose, generally, and to individual customers. The Pushers (ah, yes, remember the title of this post?) job is to make sales, and ensure the safety of themselves and the stash.

The sales network can be complex, but most of them are generally fairly simple. Sales teams work in groups of 5 rogues each. 2 lookouts, 1 runner, 1 guard, and 1 salesman.

The lookouts do just that, they watch for rivals, law enforcement, or anything out of the ordinary and they signal the salesman if trouble is coming. They do this by shouting, signaling, or some other method of communication.

The runner is the one who moves doses between the stash and the salesman. The salesman **\*\*never\*\*** has the product on his person. It is always stashed nearby, and watched over by the Guard. The salesman will signal the runner how many doses are wanted (usually by holding up fingers) and the runner delivers the goods to the salesman.

The Guard watches the stash and is always armed.

The salesman does the actual transactions and is in charge of holding the "take" (the profit made so far). Some crews that work for a gang or larger organization like a guild will periodically give the take to another runner to transport to a holding facility or "headquarters". This is to ensure that the day's take cannot be robbed. In the same vein, these runners will sometimes drop off new batches of product if the sales crew runs out. This is called a "re-up" and is the most likely time when a crew will be robbed by rivals or busted by law enforcement. (Omar not included)

The salesman is responsible for ensuring an accurate count and tally of product sold and profit taken. If these do not match, then the rogue will have some hard questions to answer.

Most sales crews are paid by the salesman himself, who is, in turn, paid by the gang, or guild, or out of his own pocket in the case of small crews working independently. The lookouts and runners are paid a small amount (5 coins per day) and the guard makes a bit more (15 coins per day). If the salesman is working for someone else, he makes 20% of the day's profit for himself. These numbers can change, obviously, as favor and status for the salesman changes within the organization.

### Security

Security is going to be found at every point in the chain - Production needs local guards to protect the crops and refinery areas; distribution need security to protect the goods, and the Pushers themselves are going to need protection from being robbed in the streets.

Security usually takes the form of Fighters or Rogue/Fighters, but not always. Arcane or Divine spellcaster multi-classes are common,

and they are able to mount defense and attack forms that the average junkie-thief isn't going to be thinking about when trying to rip off a stash house.

Fixed locations are good places for security - vantage points up high where marksman can pick off assailants with missile fire. Similarly, spellcasters also benefit from these raised locations.

More often, though, you are going to find Thugs with clubs and blades doing the heavy lifting. These guards are trained to kill first and ask questions later, and all of them are going to flee and alert their fellow rogues rather than fight to the death. That benefits no one. Guards with spellcasting abilities will often Wizard Mark anyone they can, so they can be followed later at their leisure. Invisibility, and other sight-obscuring spells are helpful to security forces, and they will employ as many illusions and trickery as they can to protect their charges.

#### Economics

The hard facts of capitalism are that market forces dictate price. If Farmer/Rogue Fred keeps dumping GoJuice! on the market, the price is going to fall as the supply increases. A smart drug farmer keeps his farms diverse, growing many kinds of narcotics, and rotating which ones are sold to the populace.

Rich areas are going to naturally have higher initial prices with a savvy sales team, and poor ones, lower. However, if a niche market can be found, and exploited, then profits from any area can become quite high. If Farmer/Rogue Fred discovers that the local dilettantes love Party Drugs that make you trip your face off, then he can charge a premium while the interest is high. The shipment value listed in the production section is the value just based on a "base price" - the Rogue is free to ask for whatever they like from whom the shipment buyer!

Prices can and should change to reflect the shifting market. Don't let the Rogue just get "X coins" every time they ship. Mix it up. There is drama in conflict.

#### Hazards

The hazards of running a drug network are myriad. From rival gangs/guilds/single rogues to law enforcement, to internal theft/betrayal, to natural disasters, to unpredictable chaos, the list seems to never end. The important thing is to remember to keep the pressure on! Never let a drug operation work without any problems. This should never be an "automatic money maker".

- Rivals rob the raw shipment
- Law enforcement has found the production facility
- A blight has wiped out the current farm crops
- Rivals rob the dealers
- Law enforcement arrests the dealers and seizes the product
- Someone has poisoned the raw goods
- A new rival is undercutting your prices
- Ankhhegs have discovered the farms and its mating season
- A "lone wolf" is ripping off all crews regardless of affiliation
- The producers inform the dealers that there is a snag/delay in the chain, and there will be no product for days
- An insider steals the finished product
- A rival is murdering dealers
- A crooked law enforcer is now blackmailing you
- A fire/storm has wiped out the production facility
- Monsters are ambushing the transportation
- A strange disease is killing off all the end-users

## THE SPY

Espionage or spying, is the act of obtaining secret or confidential information without the permission of the holder of the information. Spies help others (not themselves, usually) uncover secret information. Any individual or spy ring (a cooperating group of spies), in the service of a government, guild or independent operation, can commit espionage. The practice is clandestine, as it is by definition unwelcome and in many cases illegal and punishable by law. Espionage is a method of "intelligence" gathering which includes information gathering from public sources. Espionage is often part of an institutional effort by a government or commercial concern. However, the term tends to be associated with state spying on potential or actual enemies for military purposes. Spying involving commerce is known as industrial espionage.

One of the most effective ways to gather data and information about the enemy (or potential enemy) is by infiltrating the enemy's ranks. This is the job of the spy (espionage agent). Spies can return information concerning the size and strength of enemy forces. They can also find dissidents within the enemy's forces and influence them to defect. In times of crisis, spies steal technology and sabotage the enemy in various ways. Counterintelligence is the practice of thwarting enemy espionage and intelligence-gathering. Almost all nations have strict laws concerning espionage and the penalty for being caught is often severe. However, the benefits gained through espionage are often so great that most governments and many large corporations make use of it.

### ESPIONAGE ROLES

In D&D terms, the rogue fills the role of spy through a few different means. The fantasy

staple of the "beggar's network" of street folk who gather information is the most classic example, but any political or fantasy-flavored novel has spies, double- agents, and other "information brokers" that can throw the hero's plans awry. Indeed, the beggar is a good role for a low- level rogue, and selling information to more powerful rogues or guilds is a good way to gain income and a reputation of reliability and trustworthiness (until its convenient not to be).

Moles are spies that work in the area where the espionage is to occur, and is considered above suspicion and/or has access to sensitive materials beneficial to the spymaster. Sometimes these are "defectors" who never actually leave their homeland.

Operatives are those who work as traditional rogues - infiltrating places and gathering evidence or outright stealing it, and getting away without triggering any suspicion or security. This is the traditional "spy" role.

### SOME SAMPLE "AGENTS":

**Double Agent:** engages in clandestine activity for two intelligence or security services (or more in joint operations), who provides information about one or about each to the other, and who wittingly withholds significant information from one on the instructions of the other or is unwittingly manipulated by one so that significant facts are withheld from the adversary. Peddlers, fabricators, and others who work for themselves rather than a service are not double agents because they are not agents. The fact that double agents have an agent relationship with both sides distinguishes them from penetrations, who normally are placed with the target service in a staff or officer capacity.

**Redoubled Agent:** forced to mislead the foreign intelligence service after being caught as a double agent.

**Unwitting Double Agent:** offers or is forced to recruit as a double or redoubled agent and in the process is recruited by either a third-party intelligence service or his own government without the knowledge of the intended target intelligence service or the agent. This can be useful in capturing important information from an agent that is attempting to seek allegiance with another country. The double agent usually has knowledge of both intelligence services and can identify operational techniques of both, thus making third-party recruitment difficult or impossible. The knowledge of operational techniques can also affect the relationship

between the operations officer (or case officer) and the agent if the case is transferred by an operational targeting officer to a new operations officer, leaving the new officer vulnerable to attack. This type of transfer may occur when an officer has completed his term of service or when his cover is blown.

**Triple Agent:** works for three intelligence services.

**Intelligence Agent:** provides access to sensitive information through the use of special privileges. If used in corporate intelligence gathering, this may include gathering information of a corporate business venture or stock portfolio. In economic intelligence, "Economic Analysts" may use their specialized skills to analyze and interpret economic trends and developments, assess and track foreign financial activities, and develop new econometric and modeling methodologies." This may also include information of trade or tariff.

**Access Agent:** provides access to other potential agents by providing profiling information that can help lead to recruitment into an intelligence service.

**Agent of Influence:** provides political influence in an area of interest, possibly including publications needed to further an intelligence service agenda. The use of the media to print a story to mislead a foreign service into action, exposing their operations while under surveillance.

**Agent Provocateur:** instigates trouble or provides information to gather as many people as possible into one location for an arrest.

**Facilities Agent:** provides access to buildings, such as garages or offices used for staging operations, resupply, etc.





**Principal Agent:** functions as a handler for an established network of agents, usually considered "blue chip."

**Confusion Agent:** provides misleading information to an enemy intelligence service or attempts to discredit the operations of the target in an operation.

**Sleeper Agent:** recruited to "wake up" and perform a specific set of tasks or functions while living under cover in an area of interest. This type of agent is not the same as a deep cover operative, who continually contacts a case officer to file intelligence reports. A sleeper agent is not in contact with anyone until activated.

**Illegal Agent:** lives in another country under false credentials and does not report to a local station. A nonofficial cover operative can be dubbed an "illegal" when working in another country without diplomatic protection.

In military conflicts, espionage is considered permissible as many nations recognize the inevitability of opposing sides seeking intelligence each about the dispositions of the other. To make the mission easier and successful, soldiers or agents wear disguises to conceal their true identity from the enemy while penetrating enemy lines for intelligence gathering. However, if they are caught behind enemy lines in disguises, they are not entitled to prisoner-of-war status and subject to prosecution and punishment—including execution.

## TARGETS OF ESPIONAGE

Espionage agents are usually trained experts in a targeted field so they can differentiate mundane information from targets of value to their own organizational development. Correct identification of the target at its execution is the sole purpose of the espionage operation.

Broad areas of espionage targeting expertise include:

**Natural resources:** strategic production identification and assessment (food, energy, materials). Agents are usually found among bureaucrats who administer these resources in their own countries.

**Strategic economic strengths** (production, research, manufacture, infrastructure). Agents recruited from science and technology academia, commercial enterprises, and more rarely from among military technologists.

**Military capability intelligence** (offensive, defensive, maneuver, naval, air, space). Agents are trained by military espionage education facilities, and posted to an area of operation with covert identities to minimize prosecution.

**Counterintelligence operations** targeting opponents' intelligence services themselves, such as breaching confidentiality of communications, and recruiting defectors or moles.

## THE SMUGGLER

### HISTORY

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Smuggling is the illegal transportation of objects, substances, information or people, such as out of a house or buildings, into a prison, or across an international border, in violation of applicable laws or other regulations.

Smuggling has a long and controversial history, probably dating back to the first time at which duties were imposed in any form, or any attempt was made to prohibit a form of traffic. Smuggling is often associated with efforts by authorities to prevent the importation of certain contraband items or non-taxed goods; however, there has also

been smuggling based on illegally exporting goods.

In England smuggling first became a recognized problem in the 13th century, following the creation of a national customs collection system by Edward I in 1275. Medieval smuggling tended to focus on the export of highly taxed export goods — notably wool and hides. Merchants also, however, sometimes smuggled other goods to circumvent prohibitions or embargoes on particular trades. Grain, for instance, was usually prohibited from export, unless prices were low, because of fears that grain exports would raise the price of food in England and thus cause food shortages and / or civil unrest. Following the loss of Gascony to the French in 1453, imports of wine were also sometimes embargoed during wars to try and deprive the French of the revenues that could be earned from their main export.

In D&D, of course, smugglers have a lot more choices ranging from magic spells, to artefacts, to live monsters, to cursed objects, to anything your imagination can conjure!

The Smuggler plays a vital role in the underworld, moving goods from place to place. Without the Smuggler, Fences could only sell to local buyers, which would mean they couldn't deal in exceptionally valuable goods. This would greatly cut the profitability of theft. Guilds themselves might not even be able to function, at least not on a large scale.

Most bandits or humanoids, and even intelligent monsters, would be perfectly happy to let Smugglers through in return for a cut of their merchandise. Or they may tell

the Smugglers that they can pass safely through, and then renege on the deal. For such a situation, it is best for the Smuggler to have some powerful muscle behind him—like a guild. A great many Smugglers are part of guilds. Guilds that operate in more than one urban center, or in the countryside, usually employ a number of Smugglers just to move people and items within their own networks. They may also have Smugglers who specialize in dealing with other guilds; they serve as diplomats as well as businessmen. Finally, there are freelance Smugglers. They may operate between guilds, between guilds and freelance fences, or, on rare occasion, solely among freelance fences. Remember that a Smuggler operates between fences; he rarely, if ever, deals directly with thieves or non-"wholesale" customers. The fence or guild works out deals with prospective buyer fences, and then hires the Smuggler to make the delivery.

## METHODS

In smuggling, concealment can involve concealing the smuggled goods on a person's clothing, luggage or inside a body cavity. Some smugglers hide the whole transportation vehicle or ship used to bring the items into an area. Smugglers try to avoid border checkpoints by such methods as; by small ships; private carriages on overland smuggling routes; smuggling tunnels; and even small submersibles. Smuggling also applies for illegally passing a border oneself, for illegal immigration or illegal emigration. For illegally passing a

Factors	Poor	Struggling	Thriving	Rich
No law	0-1 coin per day	1-5 coins per hour	10-50 coins per hour	25-100 coins per hour
Militia only	0-3 coins per day	1-5 coins per day	5-25 coins per hour	10-50 coins per hour
City Watch	0-5 coins per day	1-3 coins per day	3-18 coins per day	5-20 coins per day

border oneself, another method is with false papers (completely fake, or illegally changed, or the paperwork of a lookalike).

There are two general methods of protecting contraband from discovery: Either you hide the goods within the transportation, or you hide the means of transportation itself. An example of the former would be a wagon or boat built with a false floor, beneath which the cargo is hidden. Hidden transportation would include sneaking oneself over the city wall late at night, with a pack full of stolen loot to be taken to a distant Fence; or, perhaps, a simple boat traveling late at night.

Plans for hidden transportation may become elaborate. The trick is to be small and fast. Small makes it more difficult to find you; fast makes it likely that you can get through or, at least, get away, even if you are discovered. Sometimes the best smuggling routes go through treacherous territory or difficult terrain. This means that a Smuggler must be flexible.

For instance, he may arrange to bring a canoe or even smaller craft to traverse a swamp or area of many small lakes and streams, portaging when necessary and leaving the canoe behind (and hidden, of course) when he has passed the natural obstacles. If the Smugglers will pass through dangerous territory (plagued by bandits, humanoids or monsters, for instance), it is best to work out some means of protection: Either bring along a couple of thugs or mercenaries for the difficult parts, or pay "protection money" to the dangerous parties. With the resources of a fantasy world, however, things change dramatically. There are a host of spells that can be used to hide the existence of things, as well as charms, illusions, and other trickery to distract and deceive the wary customs officer. There are magic items, such as the ubiquitous Container of Holding, and other pocket and

demi-spaces. There are magic items galore that can be used to smuggle, and the most successful of the smugglers employ as many of these assets as they can afford.

## EXPERTISE

Smugglers tend to be Intelligent and Wise individuals. Quick witted and forward-thinking, they need to have some Charisma as well to fast-talk their way out of sticky situations. Most smugglers fall into the life, they do not choose it. Agreeing to move something for a bonded Guildsman when you are a nobody, with no protection on the mean streets, seems a simple task. Those who keep their curiosity to themselves and prove to be cunning and resourceful are given more and more responsibility, eventually becoming a valued member of any Thieves Guildhouse.

The kinds of goods a smuggler is entrusted with largely depends on their level of expertise. As with all of these NPC "classes", the smuggler has a level ranging from 1 to 10. The Expertise level has little to do with their own skills and more to do with the kinds of goods they are smuggling. In this way, this labeling system is slightly different to the others I've introduced, but I think it makes sense.

## SMUGGLED GOODS

This is a list off the top of my head, and its by no means exhaustive. Use your own ideas!

- Narcotics/Alcohol
- Gemstones/Coins/Currency
- Slaves/Refugees
- Weapons
- Magic Items
- Constructs
- Poisons
- Live Monsters/Animals
- Information
- Luxury Items
- Food/Water/Medicine

Smuggler Level	Goods Smuggled
1	Information
2	Food/Water
3	Medicine
4	Narcotics/Alcohol
5	Weapons
6	Poisons
7	Luxury Items
8	Slaves/Refugees
9	Magic Items
10	Live Monsters/Animals

NOTE - This isn't a complete list, and a high expertise smuggler could smuggle all the items on the list below their current level, but they would charge a premium.

## THE THUG

### HISTORY

Thugs (originally called thuggee) traveled in groups across the Indian sub-continent for six hundred years. There were numerous tradition about their origin. One recorded by D. F. McLeod traced their origin to seven Muslim tribes formed from those who fled Delhi after murdering a physician. Another traced it to seven great Muslim families who fled after murdering a favored slave of Akbar. According to other traditions by Thugs, they were Kanjars or descended from those who worked in the Mughal camps. Others have blamed the rise of Thuggees on the disbanding of armies in employment of Indian rulers after the British conquest.

The earliest authenticated mention of thugs appears in Ziya-ud-Din Barani's

History of Firuz Shah, dated around 1356. The earliest recorded traditions of their origins date from 1760. Thugs were a secret cult which worshiped the goddess Kali. They operated as gangs of highway robbers, tricking and later strangling their victims.

Of course, in D&D, and in English vernacular a thug is simply a brute. Someone who uses violence to achieve their goals. They are not a typical rogue, in that they do not use cunning to acquire wealth and power, and so they do not follow the usual thinking in their construction.

### EVOLUTIONS

A rogue that doesn't have much going for them in the Intelligence department, but excel in Wisdom and Strength are probably going to end up as "low level muscle" in any street gang, band of pirates, or thieves guild. These rogues will serve as soldiers, doing the dirty work that needs to be done in order to serve the collective. Thugs, at low level, tend to be one of a few things: Bodyguards, Muscle, or Muggers.

Bodyguards get a bit more specialized training in identifying threats and who's sole job is to protect their boss(es). They stand around a lot looking intimidating but don't often get to practice their trade.

Muscle consists solely of rogues with hands stained with blood. They beat up reluctant shopkeepers, dispose of bodies, knock around other rogues who get out of line, and generally throw their weight and intimidating nature around. These are the guys who laugh when taking you apart piece-by-piece.

Muggers are true rogues. They forcibly rob pedestrians, usually with a weapon (or two). They are not above murder if they have no other choice, but more street deaths generally means more interest from the Watch, so they will try and avoid bloodshed if

they can. As thugs level up, their areas of control sometimes change.

Racketeers are thugs who have graduated from street crime to providing "protection services" to local businesses and homeowners. The thugs agree to protect them from harm, and the locals, against their will, pay a fee in exchange for this service. If the local does not pay, the racketeer will harm the victim, their families, businesses, and other assets to ensure a return to compliance.

Thugs like this generally run crews to control a wide area, and they stop getting their hands dirty. These kinds of rackets rise and fall with regularity, as the thug will inevitably make too many mistakes and lose their life or position. If the thug finds a partner who has more intelligence than they do, they will become sidelined and lose any power they once had as they become a puppet or irrelevant.

Sometimes thugs find blackmail/extortion to be more lucrative, and will shift their focus to finding out secrets and exploiting them. The difference between a protection racket and extortion is negligible at the most basic level, except extortion tends to mete out physical punishment over property damage.

Thugs who have a higher-than-average intelligence, in addition to wisdom and strength, will sometimes rise to a level of real power, fueled by brute efficiency and swift retaliation to all who oppose them. These thugs become Bosses, sometimes known as Kingpins, and they tend to barricade themselves in high levels of security and rule their territory from a mostly hidden position.

Kingpins are often hard to dislodge, as their paranoia affords them a greater challenge against intrusion and espionage than the average rogue. They often control exterior assets, such as military or

government agents who can shield them from any credible threats.



## CHAPTER 3 – WEALTH AND COMMERCE

The stuff that adventurers acquire through the act of adventuring can seem overwhelming at first. How do you track it all? Thankfully you can break it down into a few categories:



### MONEY IN

**Coins:** Coin wealth is the staple of all campaigns and one of the top 3 cliches in the fantasy world. The chest of gold pieces. But not all gold pieces are the same. Create currencies for each region - "Oh these are silver ducats from Moronia". Split them into time periods - "Yes, but that's not King

Glamourpuss, that's Biggus Dickus". Only the currency that's official can be exchanged for goods and services. Other currency must be exchanged for local currency at a government or private money-changer's office. This incurs a fee. For currency that is not from the current era (such as ancient coins from a tomb), the seller might have to seek out a collector, as the coins might not be recognized by any administrative body as official currency. This sort of wealth might have to be stored somewhere, also incurring a fee.

**Aesthetic:** Treasure comes in many forms, and gems and jewelry, statuary, paintings, sculpture, and other mechanical, magical, or material means of artistic expression. The value of these are largely subjective, but there are antiquities dealers, collectors, museums, galleries and other possible

outlets for the overburdened adventurer.

Oftentimes the costs incurred in moving the artwork from the dungeon to the city outweighs the bother, or leads to ruinous outlays for disasters along the trip. Selling artwork could be accomplished via auction instead of a single buyer, with fees to list the item, of course, and a tax on anything sold as well. In either case, finding a buyer is the hardest part of the transaction. Costs could be incurred looking for one.

**Property:** This category makes one think of houses and businesses, primarily, and the ancillary costs associated with maintenance, upkeep and other potential overhead (like property taxes and wages for employees). However, including items such as mounts, wagons, and carriages, you can expand the range of what you can tax. Mounts and vehicles can be lost, stolen or destroyed both in-town and in the wilderness (and sometimes mounts will get eaten!). Clothing is an important consideration, and one that is missing from many games. Crawling through dungeons in sweaty armor coated in dead oozes and fungal spores leads to laundry issues. Armor, weapons and equipment all are fair game as well. Shoddy goods are often sold to adventurers with bulging pockets, and when these things break/shatter in the heat of the adventure, the fraudulent merchant is often long gone. Caveat rimor!

**Magical:** Arcane goods are largely subjective to your current campaign. If assuming 5e, then only collectors or scholars/researchers or powerful rogue guilds would deal in these sorts of items, and the cost incurred in finding this information to start with might be severe. Negotiations with the buyer could take some time, and



involve a lot of procedures and security measures. The buyer will never give "book value" and will usually start at 50% of that price, and only reluctantly move upwards.

Because you have a rogue in your party, all of this stuff is going to matter a lot more than in an adventuring party without one. Sure, all groups love loot, but the Rogue is built around it. So you need to get creative and start using all kinds of revenue streams for the rogue to tap into.

With wealth, comes commerce. And commerce is where the rogue spends most of his time when in urban areas. Casing shops, pulling heists, stealing shipments, and all manner of nefarious activities. The economy needs to respond to these events, and prices and supply/demand factors should change. Don't keep a static economy. That just encourages clever players to try and "game" the system.

## MONEY OUT

**Taxes:** Every time you look at a price on any list of goods either in the books or some homemade supplement, ask yourself, "How much animosity does this NPC have towards the PC right now, based on mood, prejudice



or circumstance?" and then increase the price accordingly. If the answer is "none" then skip the tax, but don't be afraid to charge wildly different prices based on merchant whim, as that was (and is in some places) the norm when dealing with an unregulated marketplace.

**Tolls:** Every bridge, entry-into-a-city, or paved/maintained/patrolled road charges a fee to each traveler based on the number of heads OR legs in the group. 5 to 10 coins is reasonable, and the cost of a long journey's tolls must be

factored in, or the party may find themselves forced to travel in dangerous wilderness or break the law and bypass the toll.

**Tariffs:** - Trade guilds will impose tariffs on goods that are imported into the city for the purpose of being sold. This can include treasures and artifacts from plundered tombs. The cost imposed can be whatever you like, but between 5% and 50% is common. The goods are allowed to be sold after the tariff is paid. If the tariff cannot be paid, the goods will be impounded (with a daily storage fee of course) until the tariff can be paid, or a bond worth half the goods can be paid to release the goods now but with the stricture that the merchant must leave the city immediately.

**Fines:** The cost of breaking the law in civilized places is directly proportionate to the corruption of those in charge in such



places. The various laws and rules imposed by these authoritative bodies often vary wildly from place to place, and ignorance of the law is no excuse. Fines can be of any amount and must be paid immediately or the lawbreaker will enter the justice system as a prisoner-of-debt (confined but not worked to death or beaten, usually). Fines can be paid with nearly any kind of wealth in certain jurisdictions, including narcotics, magic items, or other property.

**Fees:** The cost of doing business with a professional incurs a fee that pays for the labor of the work above the retail cost of the good itself. Any master craftsman, professional, scholar or sage will charge a fee. They range in price, but generally start at several hundred coins and can go into the thousands. Oftentimes a bond on the final fee must be paid for the work to even begin, with the bond held in trust via a third party (generally respected, but sometimes a scam in itself - caveat emptor!)

**Tithes:** All members of a local congregation pay a tithe to the temple for the upkeep and maintenance of the actual building, and to pay the living costs of the clergy. This is usually paid monthly, and almost always in coin. A good rule of thumb is 100 coins for every character level gained, so a Fighter 7/Cleric 3 would pay a tithe of 1000 coins a month, not just 300. Obviously you can change this per-level amount to whatever you like.

Don't forget corruption is a staple in most economies! Bribes are rife, and the smart rogue always keeps extra on-hand for when greasing a few palms is necessary. Rogues that operate in largely law-abiding areas will actually have less overhead, due to less corruption!



## COMMERCE

When it comes to deciding where the rogue is going to be operating, you need to consider how much wealth the area can support. Keeping things consistent and with an eye towards realism will ensure your worldbuilding efforts are appreciated.

Economic models can be as simple or as complicated as you like, and there are a lot of good 3rd party resources to help you in your design efforts that go far beyond the scope of what I would feel comfortable doing. I can, however, provide a simple model that you can adapt to your liking. Now please keep in mind this is a model to accommodate rogues, and not a comprehensive one, so it will only touch on the things that a rogue would be concerned with, and is designed to return an average value that a rogue could “earn” while performing “normal duties”.

There are a few things to consider. The wealth level, the amount of law enforcement, and competing interests.



## CHAPTER 4 – RACKETS

Rackets are the way rogues make money. They are illegal activities that are practiced by all rogues, from the lone thief, to the street gang, to the fully-fledged Guildhouses.

**Alchemy** - The creation of potions and poisons for personal use or for limited sale to others.

**Assassination** - The murder of others for political reasons.

**Blackmail** - The extortion of money from people in exchange for not revealing damaging secrets about them.

**Burglary** - This is simple theft of houses or businesses. (see later section on “Heists”)

**Confidence Games** (Grifting) - Convincing others to participate in illegal activities or being persuaded to hand over valuables. A Swindle is a “short” con, a Grift is a “long” con

**Fencing** - The purchase and resale of stolen or illegal items. Without fences, rogues cannot operate.

**Fraud (Forgery, Counterfeiting)** - This is a specialized activity, undertaken only by those with specialized knowledge. Forgery is the creation of false documents; identification papers, travel papers, weapon licenses, or other forms of official papers. Counterfeiting involves the creation of false items, usually artwork, or currency, but can also be used to create false magic items or weapons that don't have any actual powers, but have been enchanted to appear as if they do.

**Gambling** - These can take the form of a fixed location, like a casino, or street games, like shooting dice in an alley. The ones who run the games get paid a fee to participate, and the ones cheating make money for themselves :)

**Kidnapping** - The capture and imprisonment of people for the purpose of exchanging them for money or information or both. This

involves a lot of logistics and is quite dangerous for all involved.

**Narcotics** – The sale of illegal drugs and substances. Sales and distribution are the primary activities. Production is costly and time-consuming, but the most profitable part of the chain.

**Prostitution** – The sale of sex for money. Can take a few forms – street (act done in a nearby location), in-house (act done in a specialized location), or call-outs (act done at customer's home/location). Sex workers are protected and controlled by pimps and madams, who take a cut of the worker's profits.

**Protection** – This is the old classic. Homeowners or shopkeepers (or both) pay a weekly or monthly fee to prevent their homes, businesses or selves from being destroyed/robbed/beaten up.

**Slavery** – The illegal detention of someone against their will. This usually only has two forms – labor and sex, and slaves can be any sex, race or age, depending on the market forces.

**Smuggling** – This involves moving illegal goods in or out of population centers or across borders.

**Street Crimes** (Pickpocketing, Mugging) – These are generally crimes of “opportunity”. Pickpocketing is Stealth, Mugging is Assault.

### LIST OF MISSIONS FOR RACKETS

The following are d10 lists of easy, medium, and hard “tasks” for each of the rackets. These can be simple plot hooks, or part of a gang or guilds “work roster” that each member must undertake in order to move up in status.

#### ALCHEMY

The creation of potions and poisons for use by the Guild or for limited sale to others.

### ALCHEMY MISSIONS - (EASY)

1d10

1-2: Go and pick up some basic reagents and return to the Guild without getting caught.

3-4: Deliver a poisoned weapon without getting caught.

5-6: Create a basic poison in quantity, and deliver it to a customer, get paid, and return without getting caught.

7-8: Create a basic potion in quantity and deliver it into enemy territory. Return with the money.

9-10: Create a previously unknown potion or potion in your skill level.

### ALCHEMY MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)

1d10

1-2: Harvest intermediate reagents in enemy territory and escape.

3-4: Create a previously unknown potion or potion in your skill level.

5-6: Steal a shipment of enemy alchemical goods worth at least 500gp.

7-8: Create an intermediate potion in quantity and deliver it into enemy territory. Return with the money.

9-10: Destroy an enemy's alchemical laboratory and escape.

### ALCHEMY MISSIONS - (HARD)

1d10

1-2: Create a previously unknown potion or potion in your skill level.

3-4: Successfully mix two advanced potions and get a favorable result.

5-6: Create an advanced potion in quantity and deliver it into enemy territory. Return with the money.

7-8: Oversee the successful application of at least 40 poisoned weapons with an advanced poison.

9-10: Successfully reduce your creation time by 25%.

### ASSASSINATION

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The murder of others for political reasons.

### ASSASSINATION MISSIONS - (EASY)

1d10

1-2: Track a target to a location and observe for 4 hours. Do not get caught or be seen. Signal a contact and return.

3-4: Kill a target in ambush, through a fixed killzone and escape. Claim credit for it.

5-6: Deliver a contact poison to a target in a crowded location. Escape.

7-8: Track a target to a location and observe for 1 hour. Trigger a fixed trap and escape.

9-10: Deliver ingested poison to a target in an public area. Escape.

### ASSASSINATION MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)

1d10

1-2: Kill a political target. Escape.

3-4: Kill a target in his own home and steal goods worth at least 500gp.

5-6: Kill a target with ingested poison only, at a specific time and date.

7-8: Kill a group of targets with a fixed trap.

9-10: Kill a group of targets in a public location and claim credit for it.

### ASSASSINATION MISSIONS - (HARD)

1d10

1-2: Kill a royal target in a moving vehicle. Escape and claim credit for it.

3-4: Kill a political target at a public function with contact poison. Escape.

5-6: Kill a group of targets spread across several locations on the same day. Claim credit for it.

7-8: Kill a group of targets with ingested poison only, at a specific time and date.

9-10: Kill a group of targets with no visible means of assassination on the corpse.

## **BLACKMAIL**

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The extortion of money from people in exchange for not revealing damaging secrets about them.

### **BLACKMAIL MISSIONS - (EASY)**

1d10

1-2: Pick up a payment from a dead drop without being seen. Return to the Guild.

3-4: Follow target and observe for 4 hours without being seen. Obtain "dirt" on the target. Present blackmail terms worth at least 10gp/month. Escape.

5-6: Pick up a payment from a target in enemy territory. Escape and return to the Guild.

7-8: Collect evidence against a target in enemy territory. Escape.

9-10: Collect evidence on a target in a public location without being seen. Return to the Guild.

### **BLACKMAIL MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)**

1d10

1-2: Collect evidence on a political target without being seen.

3-4: Collect payment from a target, in public, and escape without being identified.

5-6: Follow target and observe for 24 hours without being seen. Present blackmail terms worth at least 100gp/month. Successfully blackmail for 6 months.

7-8: Pick up a payment from a political target in enemy territory. Escape and return to the Guild.

9-10: Collect enough evidence to blackmail 3 targets in one month.

### **BLACKMAIL MISSIONS - (HARD)**

1d10

1-2: Collect evidence on a royal target without being identified. Blackmail for at least 1000gp/month. Successfully blackmail for at least 3 months.

3-4: Maintain a group of at least 3 targets successfully for at least 1 year. Blackmail must be at least 500gp/month.

5-6: Successfully blackmail 1 target for 750gp/month. Maintain for at least 3 months.

7-8: Collect evidence to blackmail 3 political targets in one month.

9-10: Collect enough evidence on your allies to ensure a clean exit strategy, if needed.

## **BURGLARY**

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This is simple theft of houses or businesses.

### **BURGLARY MISSIONS - (EASY)**

1d10

1-2: Steal 10gp worth of goods from a home.

3-4: Steal 20gp worth of goods from a business.

5-6: Break into a safe and escape with goods worth at least 20gp.

7-8: Disarm 3 traps and retrieve the package. Escape.

9-10: Place a target location under surveillance without being seen for 4 hours. Return to the Guild.

### **BURGLARY MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)**

1d10

1-2: Break into a shop with magical defenses. Steal at least 500gp worth of goods. Return to the Guild.

3-4: Steal 250gp worth of goods from a home or business.

5-6: Break into a vault and escape with goods worth at least 500gp.

7-8: Steal an object guarded by constant physical surveillance. Object should be worth at least 250gp.

9-10: Steal an object from a political or royal location and escape. Object can be worth anything, but should be unique and memorable.

### BURGLARY MISSIONS - (HARD)

1d10

1-2: Break into a royal location and steal goods worth at least 1000gp.

3-4: Break into a location with physical and magical defenses, as well as constant physical surveillance. Steal an object worth at least 5000gp.

5-6: Steal an artefact from any location. Escape and keep in your possession for at least 48 hours.

7-8: Rob a moving vehicle of goods worth at least 1000gp and escape.

9-10: Break into a Guild House and steal an object that is unique and memorable. Keep it for at least 48 hours.

### CONFIDENCE GAMES (SHORT AND LONG CONS)

Convincing others to participate in illegal activities or being persuaded to hand over valuables. A Swindle is a “short” con, a Grift is a “long” con. See later section (“Grifts”) for practical examples.

### CON-GAME MISSIONS - (EASY)

1d10

1-2: Swindle a target out of 10gp or equivalent goods. Escape.

3-4: Swindle a target out of 20gp or equivalent goods. Escape.

5-6: Swindle a target and get the target to promise an additional 10gp later.

7-8: Swindle a target and retrieve your original investment back as well as keeping the target's money. Escape.

9-10: Swindle 3 targets in one day. Any amount over 5gp.

### CON-GAME MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)

1d10

1-2: Grift a target out of 500gp or equivalent goods.

3-4: Grift a target out of 500gp or equivalent goods and get the target to promise an additional 100gp later.

5-6: Swindle a target and get the target arrested before you escape.

7-8: Grift a target and retrieve your initial investment back as well as keeping the target's money. Escape.

9-10: Run a Grift that takes 3 months to finalize and take at least 1000gp or equivalent goods from the target.

### CON-GAME MISSIONS - (HARD)

1d10

1-2: Grift a target out of 1000gp or equivalent goods and get the target arrested before you escape.

3-4: Grift a political or royal target for at least 500gp or equivalent goods.

5-6: Run 3 successful grifts in 1 month for at least 250gp or equivalent goods each.

7-8: Swindle a target out of at least 1000gp or equivalent goods and escape without using a distraction.

9-10: Become accepted as a legitimate agent in the commercial/political/royal world in a Life Grift.

### **FENCING OF GOODS**

The purchase and resale of stolen or illegal items.

#### **FENCE MISSIONS - (EASY)**

1d10

1-2: Successfully identify and evaluate goods worth at least 10gp.

3-4: Successfully identify and evaluate a minor magical item.

5-6: Successfully identify a minor cursed item.

7-8: Identify 3 counterfeit items.

9-10: Sell onwards goods worth at least 20gp.

#### **FENCE MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)**

1d10

1-2: Successfully identify and evaluate goods worth at least 500gp.

3-4: Successfully identify and evaluate a major magical item.

5-6: Successfully identify a major cursed item.

7-8: Identify 3 counterfeit items and 3 forgeries in 1 month.

9-10: Sell onwards goods worth at least 500gp.

#### **FENCE MISSIONS - (HARD)**

1d10

1-2: Successfully identify and evaluate goods worth at least 1000gp.

3-4: Successfully identify and evaluate an artefact.

5-6: Successfully sell onwards a set of linked magical items.

7-8: Successfully identify and evaluate goods in enemy territory and return with the goods to the Guild.

9-10: Sell onwards goods worth at least 1000gp.

### **FRAUD (FORGERY, COUNTERFEITING)**

This is a specialized activity, undertaken only by those with specialized knowledge. Forgery is the creation of false documents; identification papers, travel papers, weapon licenses, or other forms of official papers. Counterfeiting involves the creation of false items, usually artwork, or currency, but can also be used to create false magic items or weapons that don't have any actual powers, but have been enchanted to appear as if they do.

#### **FRAUD MISSIONS - (EASY)**

1d10

1-2: Steal an official paper without getting caught. Return to the Guild.

3-4: Steal an official paper in enemy territory without getting caught. Return to the Guild.

5-6: Create a forgery or counterfeit item and successfully use it without getting caught.

7-8: Create 3 forgeries or counterfeit items worth at least 20gp.

9-10: Successfully use a forgery or counterfeit item 3 times.

#### **FRAUD MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)**

1d10

1-2: Create a royal or political forgery/counterfeit and sell it for at least 500gp.

3-4: Create a forgery/counterfeit object of artistic merit and sell it for at least 500gp.

5-6: Steal political or royal papers and use them to create at least 3 forgeries.

7-8: Create 3 forgery/counterfeit objects worth at least 250gp each.

9-10: Create travel documents for a secondary political body. (like another Kingdom)

### **FRAUD MISSIONS - (HARD)**

1d10

1-2: Create a royal or political forgery/counterfeit and sell it for at least 1000gp.

3-4: Create forgeries for at least 20 people to be used in one transaction.

5-6: Create royal identification papers.

7-8: Steal supplies to create travel, identity and official documents for at least 3 other political bodies.

9-10: Create a counterfeit that for an object that is normally displayed in a public location and switch them.

### **FENCE MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)**

1d10

1-2: Successfully identify and evaluate goods worth at least 500gp.

3-4: Successfully identify and evaluate a major magical item.

5-6: Successfully identify a major cursed item.

7-8: Identify 3 counterfeit items and 3 forgeries in 1 month.

9-10: Sell onwards goods worth at least 500gp.

### **FENCE MISSIONS - (HARD)**

1d10

1-2: Successfully identify and evaluate goods worth at least 1000gp.

3-4: Successfully identify and evaluate an artefact.

5-6: Successfully sell onwards a set of linked magical items.

7-8: Successfully identify and evaluate goods in enemy territory and return with the goods to the Guild.

9-10: Sell onwards goods worth at least 1000gp.

### **FRAUD (FORGERY, COUNTERFEITING)**

This is a specialized activity, undertaken only by those with specialized knowledge. Forgery is the creation of false documents; identification papers, travel papers, weapon licenses, or other forms of official papers. Counterfeiting involves the creation of false items, usually artwork, or currency, but can also be used to create false magic items or weapons that don't have any actual powers, but have been enchanted to appear as if they do.

### **FRAUD MISSIONS - (EASY)**

1d10

1-2: Steal an official paper without getting caught. Return to the Guild.

3-4: Steal an official paper in enemy territory without getting caught. Return to the Guild.

5-6: Create a forgery or counterfeit item and successfully use it without getting caught.

7-8: Create 3 forgeries or counterfeit items worth at least 20gp.

9-10: Successfully use a forgery or counterfeit item 3 times.

### **FRAUD MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)**

1d10

1-2: Create a royal or political forgery/counterfeit and sell it for at least 500gp.

3-4: Create a forgery/counterfeit object of artistic merit and sell it for at least 500gp.

5-6: Steal political or royal papers and use them to create at least 3 forgeries.

7-8: Create 3 forgery/counterfeit objects worth at least 250gp each.



9-10: Create travel documents for a secondary political body. (like another Kingdom)

### FRAUD MISSIONS - (HARD)

1d10

1-2: Create a royal or political forgery/ counterfeit and sell it for at least 1000gp.

3-4: Create forgeries for at least 20 people to be used in one transaction.

5-6: Create royal identification papers.

7-8: Steal supplies to create travel, identity and official documents for at least 3 other political bodies.

9-10: Create a counterfeit that for an object that is normally displayed in a public location and switch them.

### GAMBLING

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These can take the form of a fixed location, like a casino, or street games, like shooting dice in an alley.

### GAMBLING MISSIONS - (EASY)

1d10

1-2: Win at least 10gp in one day

3-4: Win at least 5gp from 3 different targets in one day

5-6: Successfully cheat and win at least 10gp.

7-8: Successfully bankrupt all opponents in one game.

9-10: Successfully cheat and win at least 20gp.

### GAMBLING MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)

1d10

1-2: Win at least 250gp in one day

3-4: Win at least 50gp from 3 different targets in one day

5-6: Successfully cheat and win at least 500gp.

7-8: Successfully bankrupt all opponents in one game and get the losers to agree to another game tomorrow.

9-10: Successfully cheat a professional gambler and win at least 100gp.

### GAMBLING MISSIONS - (HARD)

1d10

1-2: Cheat a gambling establishment of at least 1000gp.

3-4: Win at least 1500gp in 1 day.

5-6: Successfully cheat a professional gambler and win at least 500gp.

7-8: Successfully win a game with at least 19 other competitors.

9-10: Successfully rig a mechanical game or a racing competition to win at least 1000gp.

### KIDNAPPING

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The capture and imprisonment of people for the purpose of exchanging them for money or information or both.

### KIDNAPPING MISSIONS - (EASY)

1d10

1-2: Track a target for at least 4 hours without being seen.

3-4: Track and observe a target in enemy territory for at least 1 hour without being seen. Return to the Guild.

5-6: Abduct 1 minor target and hold for at least 48 hours. Demand a ransom of at least 10gp.

7-8: Abduct 2 minor targets and hold for at least 24 hours. Demand a ransom of at least 20gp.

9-10: Subdue a violent target and hold for at least 8 hours.

### KIDNAPPING MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)

1d10

1-2: Abduct a major target and hold for at least 24 hours. Demand a ransom of at least 500gp.

3-4: Track a target for at least 24 hours without being seen.

5-6: Abduct multiple targets and hold for at least 1 hour. Demand a ransom of at least 50gp per target.

7-8: Abduct a political target and demand a ransom of at least 250gp. Release the target alive.

9-10: Abduct a target from a moving vehicle.

### KIDNAPPING MISSIONS - (HARD)

1d10

1-2: Abduct multiple targets from a moving vehicle.

3-4: Abduct a royal target and demand a ransom of at least 1000gp. Release the target alive.

5-6: Abduct a political target from a public place and demand a ransom of at least 500gp.

7-8: Abduct at least 10 targets at the same time and hold them for at least 30 days.

9-10: Abduct an enemy target in enemy territory and demand a ransom of at least 500gp.

### NARCOTICS

The Guild may be involved in the narcotics production chain at any level. They may produce the product, distribute the product or both.

### NARCOTICS MISSIONS - (EASY)

1d10

1-2: Buy product from a rival worth at least 10gp and return to the Guild.

3-4: Collect money owed to the Guild by a non-paying customer.

5-6: Protect a product shipment from enemies for at least 24 hours.

7-8: Sell product worth at least 10gp.

9-10: Sell product worth at least 20gp.

### NARCOTICS MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)

1d10

1-2: Sell product worth at least 500gp for the month.

3-4: Buy product in enemy territory worth at least 500gp and escort it back to the Guild.

5-6: Ship product worth at least 500gp into enemy territory and collect the money and escape.

7-8: Set up at least 10 distributors for your product and maintain them for at least 30 days.

9-10: Start a production facility for your product and create raw goods worth at least 250gp per month.

### NARCOTICS MISSIONS - (HARD)

1d10

1-2: Sell product worth at least 1000gp for the week.

3-4: Destroy an enemy's production facility and escape.

5-6: Set up at least 20 distributors for your product and maintain them for 3 months.

7-8: Ship product worth at least 1000gp through enemy territory and sell the product. Return through enemy territory to the Guild.

9-10: Takeover a rival's production chain.

### PROSTITUTION

This can take three forms: Brothels, where the johns come to a fixed location; Streetwalkers who service johns in a nearby

location either indoors or out; and Call-Outs, where the prostitutes go to the homes/locations of the johns.

### PROSTITUTION MISSIONS - (EASY)

1d10

1-2: Earn at least 10gp in 1 day.

3-4: Successfully protect an employee from a violent customer.

5-6: Retrieve an employee from enemy territory and escape. Return to the Guild.

7-8: Earn at least 20gp in 1 day.

9-10: Recruit 1 new employee and earn at least 5gp from them in 1 day.

### PROSTITUTION MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)

1d10

1-2: Earn at least 250gp in 1 day.

3-4: Recruit at least 10 employees and earn at least 100gp from them in 1 day.

5-6: Retrieve at least 3 employees from enemy territory and escape.

7-8: Discovering the cure for an outbreak of disease among your employees.

9-10: Set up a base of operation and maintain it for at least 30 days.

### PROSTITUTION MISSIONS - (HARD)

1d10

1-2: Maintain 3 bases of operation for at least 3 months.

3-4: Earn at least 1000gp in 1 day.

5-6: Recruit at least 10 employees and earn at least 500gp from them in 1 day.

7-8: Acquire new employees in enemy territory and return them to your base of operations without being seen.

9-10: Discover who has been murdering your employees.

## PROTECTION

This is the old classic. Homeowners or shopkeepers (or both) pay a weekly or monthly fee to prevent their homes, businesses or selves from being destroyed/robbed/beaten up.

### PROTECTION MISSIONS - (EASY)

1d10

1-2: Intimidate a target into buying protection worth at least 10gp a week.

3-4: Intimidate a target into buying protection worth at least 20gp a week.

5-6: Retrieve stolen weekly earnings from enemy. Return earnings to the Guild.

7-8: Re-intimidate a non-paying customer.

9-10: Successfully assault a non-paying customer without getting caught.

### PROTECTION MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)

1d10

1-2: Intimidate a target into buying protection worth at least 250gp a week.

3-4: Negotiate an increase in a target's weekly payoff by 25%.

5-6: Destroy a rival's racket and escape.

7-8: Negotiate an increase in a target's weekly payoff by 50%, but decrease the payments to twice a month.

9-10: Set physical or magical traps to destroy a non-paying customer's home or business.

### PROTECTION MISSIONS - (HARD)

1d10

1-2: Intimidate a target into buying protection worth at least 500gp a week.

3-4: Intimidate a political target into buying protection.

5-6: Negotiate an increase in a target's weekly payoff by 75%.

7-8: Renegotiate an increase in at least 10 target's weekly payoffs by 50%

9-10: Destroy a rival's businesses and remove them from doing business ever again.

## **SLAVERY**

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This usually only has two forms – labor and sex, and slaves can be any sex, race or age, depending on the market forces.

### **SLAVERY MISSIONS - (EASY)**

1d10

1-2: Sell 1 slave worth at least 100gp.

3-4: Sell 1 slave worth at least 200gp.

5-6: Move 1 slave through enemy territory and return to the Guild with the slave unharmed.

7-8: Intimidate 10 slaves.

9-10: Acquire 1 new slave and sell it within 48 hours for at least 100gp.

### **SLAVERY MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)**

1d10

1-2: Oversee a successful sale of at least 10 slaves worth at least 1000gp.

3-4: Ambush a rival's goods and steal at least 3 slaves and escape.

5-6: Put down a minor revolt among the slaves. 25% rise up.

7-8: Secure a new source of acquiring slaves worth at least 500 gp/month.

9-10: Sell at least ten slaves and intimidate the target into giving at least 1 slave back.

### **SLAVERY MISSIONS - (HARD)**

1d10

1-2: Establish a secure base of operations doing at least 1000gp worth of trade a month.

3-4: Destroy a rival's operations and escape with as many goods as possible.

5-6: Put down a major revolt among the slaves. 75% rise up.

7-8: Oversee the transport, through enemy territory; and sale of at least 10 slaves for a profit of at least 1000gp.

9-10: Sell 100 slaves in one month and make a profit of at least 10000gp.

## **SMUGGLING**

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This involves moving illegal goods in or out of population centers or across borders. The goods can be anything that is outlawed, from narcotics, to weapons, to slaves.

### **SMUGGLING MISSIONS - (EASY)**

1d10

1-2: Move goods worth at least 10gp.

3-4: Move goods worth at least 20gp.

5-6: Move goods through a low physical-security checkpoint.

7-8: Pick up goods worth at least 20gp in enemy territory and successfully return to the Guild.

9-10: Move live cargo without being seen and return to the Guild.

### **SMUGGLING MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)**

1d10

1-2: Move goods worth at least 500gp.

3-4: Move goods through a high physical-security checkpoint.

5-6: Move goods through enemy territory at pick up goods worth at least 500gp and return to the Guild.

7-8: Move goods worth at least 250gp through moving magical surveillance.

9-10: Move goods worth at least 250gp via air.

### **SMUGGLING MISSIONS - (HARD)**

1d10

- 1-2: Move goods worth at least 1000gp.
- 3-4: Move goods worth at least 500gp through magical-security checkpoint.
- 5-6: Move goods worth at least 500gp inside a political or royal shipment.
- 7-8: Move goods worth at least 500gp via planar teleportation.
- 9-10: Move live cargo through enemy territory and return to the Guild.

### **STREET CRIMES (PICKPOCKETING, MUGGING)**

These are generally crimes of “opportunity” and are generally performed by the lowest level rogues in the Guild. Pickpocketing is Stealth, Mugging is Assault.

#### **STREET MISSIONS - (EASY)**

- 1d10
- 1-2: Pickpocket 10gp or equivalent goods.
- 3-4: Pickpocket 20gp or equivalent goods.
- 5-6: Pickpocket an official paper.
- 7-8: Successfully mug 3 targets in 1 day.
- 9-10: Mug a target for at least 30gp or equivalent goods.

#### **STREET MISSIONS - (MEDIUM)**

- 1d10
- 1-2: Pickpocket 250gp or equivalent goods
- 3-4: Mug a group of targets for 100gp or equivalent goods
- 5-6: Mug a political target.
- 7-8: Pickpocket 10 targets in 1 day.
- 9-10: Pickpocket a magic item.

#### **STREET MISSIONS - (HARD)**

- 1d10
- 1-2: Pickpocket a royal target of some valuable, personal or otherwise.

- 3-4: Mug a political target of 500gp or equivalent goods and escape.
- 5-6: Pickpocket 3 magic items in 1 day.
- 7-8: Mug a Guild Leader for at least 500gp or equivalent goods.
- 9-10: Pickpocket an artefact.

### **HEISTS**

A heist is a burglary of goods with a moderate amount of security. Analyzing the security and figuring out its weaknesses is the key to a successful heist.

I think there are 6 Factors that need to be looked at:

- The Prize**
- The Location**
- The Security**
- The Targets**
- The Escape**
- The Payoff**

We will also need to discuss Preparation. We will visit that at the end of the 6 Factors.

#### **THE PRIZE**

What exactly is being stolen? The type of object will determine every other aspect of the scenario. A painting is not going to be found in the same location as an artefact. Giving each Prize a history and a pedigree will go a long way in informing the rest of the details that you are going to have to create.

I'll include some loose categories, to get your mind turning. Customize to your own tastes.

**Art:** Paintings, statues, tapestries, bronzes, ornamental weapons, armor, or regalia.

**Jewelry:** Rings, necklaces, brooches, earrings, or any other body ornament. This includes gemstones without settings.

**Money:** Coins, ingots, banknotes, scrip, bonds, stocks, or any other meta-value currency.

**Rare Objects:** Artefacts, magic items, one-off specialty items (like books or letters), or any rare, unique thing.

**Personal Object:** This can be anything, from a key, to a code or password, to a keepsake or official credentials.

**Information:** Records of things come in many forms, from books and scrolls to magical devices.

**Illegal Goods:** Drugs, mostly would fall into this category, and poisons, or any illicit, valuable substance.

**Vehicles/Animals:** Tricked-out surreys and prize racehorses, to work-a-day carts and family pets.

**Weapons/Armor:** This also includes ammunition for ranged weapons as well as shields.

**Trade Goods:** Any commercial commodity, from food to clothes, medicine, alcohol and water, or any common item.

We'll need to create an example, so this doesn't become too confusing. OK, so we need a Prize. I happened to have written 10 categories, so lets roll <clatter> and I rolled a 6. Information. The Prize needs to be something of high value and with some history. Lets go with....a Primer of Necromancy.

It's cover is living tissue and has an enslaved chain devil's essence ritually bound to it.

You can see that might immediately answer your next category, Location, and probably fires off all kinds of ideas about the Security surrounding it and the Targets who are guarding it or own it. Some evil Temple, maybe, with death traps and alert guards protecting its underground vault. Or maybe some rich, corrupted nobleman's mansion, in a secret shrine secreted in the walls.

If I had chosen a book of History, perhaps, a contentious one, maybe the last of its kind, full of slander and political satire towards

the old Empire, then you would be thinking of a totally different place, a library maybe, locked in the vaults, with traps meant to delay and detain.

But the Primer of Necromancy it is. So let's roll with it.

## THE LOCATION

This is the area where the Prize is located. It will most likely be shaped once the Prize is decided, but sometimes (like the 10th time you've built a heist) you might want a random location, or at least a random idea, to spark something interesting in your mind. The Location should always make sense to the larger world context, and it should be relatively close to the characters' present location. No more than 2 or 3 days away would be best. A good heist runs on timing, and you need to keep the pace and the pressure high, to keep everyone focused and running hard.

The Location should also have its own history and its own life. The Location is just another NPC (non player chambers) in the story, and it can be an obstacle in and of itself. Very large, old buildings are hard to navigate, with rooms and hallways that can branch off into a confusing labyrinth of wood paneling and tired wall-hangings. A jewelry store has its owners living above it, most likely, in a light commercial district, and any noise created will be heard by many, many neighbors.

### Random List (by no means exhaustive):

- Personal Residence
- Place of Business
- Temple
- Museum / Gallery
- Bank / Vault
- Castle / Fort
- Sewers / Catacombs
- Tower
- Military Compound
- Monster Enclave

Let's put our Primer of Necromancy inside a Personal Residence. Some rich noble who spent a fortune to dabble in the Dark Arts. The residence is large, let's say 3 stories, 2 above ground and 1 below. Perhaps 20 rooms in total.

Location matters. It will give you the answers to your next category, Security.

## THE SECURITY

Security is the second most important aspect of the heist set-up. How you structure your security spells the difference between a fun, challenging adventure, and a boring, stifling one.

Security needs to be designed the same way you would design a series of traps in a dungeon - by looking at the physical space and imagining people walking around in the space. Are there places where the security/traps can't be bypassed, creating areas where no one can go? If there are choke-points, do the denizens have the ability to bypass the security, and if they do, how does it work? These can range from keys, to passwords, to combinations, to magic items, to spellcasting, to all or any combination of the above.

The security needs to be built logically, so that there is consistency in what the party faces, and so what they are seeing makes sense, and can be used to help them move around and interact with things - if they see a guard open a door with a key, and then go and knock the guard out and use his key, then the key should work, it shouldn't magically fuck the party over because they were clever (I've seen that wayyyy too often over the years).

### **Security can come in 3 forms, at least to my mind.**

1. Personnel. This would be the guards, and by guards I mean anything that is

guarding the location, regardless of class or race, including animals.

2. Physical. Locked doors, bars, gates, traps, or whatever.
3. Magical. Warded areas are vast and varied in their creative possibilities. I have always ruled, as a DM, that if there is a spell in the book, then I can pair that with Contingency and Permanency to create really interesting, and sometimes difficult, traps.

The simplest magical protection is the Alarm spell. It lasts for 8 hours, is customizable, and has 2 alarm types - silent (in the casters mind) and audible (60', for 10 seconds). Refreshed 3 times a day, its the ultimate watchdog. But it is suppressed fairly easily with Dispel Magic, and the audible ones at least can be countered with Silence.

Spells that detain or teleport intruders are great in theory, but sometimes they will just wreck the heist, and there are plenty of ways for the characters to wreck it themselves, so you don't need any help. That's not to say I don't still use them, because I love to teleport the unwary, the foolish, and the greedy, but you should refrain from doing this too much, and keep in mind how much fun/not fun it is to split the party for your DM-style.

OK, so let's set up the Security for our Personal Residence.

- All doors and windows are physically locked.
- The exterior doors are Alarmed (and these Alarms are refreshed so that they are active during the night hours only)
- 2 armed guards patrol the grounds during the night. They are 3rd level fighters, armed with sword and hand- crossbows, and they carry whistles to alert one another during a crisis. Any whistle-blasts will also call 2-4 security personnel from the nearby estates (who work together to keep everyone safe).

- The Primer is kept inside a locked safe inside the Master Bedroom. The safe is a combination lock, and its code is known only to the Primary Target (more on Targets in the next section). It is also warded with a Glyph of Electricity, which has a contingency that will trigger a silent Alarm that is keyed to alert the security personnel and the Primary Target. The Glyph can be deactivated with a keyword that is only known to the Primary Target.

## THE TARGETS

Targets are the people who own the object that is being stolen (Primary Targets), are connected to the Location (Secondary Targets), or have some personal relationship to the Primary Target (Tertiary Targets). Because the Targets are often the only ones who have primary knowledge about the Prize, The Location and the Security, they will be the ones who need to be either interrogated or neutralized (killed, captured, or incapacitated). These aspects will be dealt with in the Preparation step.

Let's list our targets

**Balthazar Kerm** (Primary Target): Human, male, 45, noble. Balthazar is a dilettante, who inherited into his family's merchant business. His net worth is upwards of 100,000 coins. He has few friends, who find him amusing, but dull. He has never married, and has no lovers, but occasionally disguises himself to visit one of the city's many brothels. He has no vices, and seems to be a rather boring person. In reality, he craves power and has a bloodlust that he is barely able to contain. On some of his brothel trips, he has let this murderous rage overtake him, and killed the prostitute hired to service him. These murders have been quietly covered up by Balthazar himself, who has paid hefty bribes to a man named Simon Fench, a mid-level Guild rogue under the

protection of the 29th Street Jump (moderately powerful Rogues Guild).

**Gyush Gizek** (Secondary Target): Head of Security for Balthazar's estate. Dwarven, male, 261. Ex-soldier. Only drinks on his nights off (Tuesday and Thursday) and occasionally gambles to excess at a local tavern. He suffers fools lightly, and would not normally work for a man like Balthazar, but the nobleman pays him triple a normal wage (which has highly raised his suspicions about him) and Gyush needs the money for his retirement, which is rapidly approaching. On cold nights, he limps.

**Hector Yukult** (Secondary Target): Watchman at Balthazar's estate. Human, male. 31. Ex-soldier. Hector does not drink and does not gamble, but does have a quite severe addiction to amphetamines, and spends nearly all his pay on the speed. He has been able to keep this from Gyush, but will not be able to much longer, and has even taken to extorting a local excommunicated cleric of the Deity of Love (whom he is blackmailing to keep the cleric's raging bestiality a secret). Hector has a large family that he does not talk to anymore and has several lovers who share his addiction.

**Uly Minsch** (Tertiary Target): One of Balthazar's friends. A noblewoman of some means, who shares Balthazar's interest in opera, and the two are often seen together at the theater. Uly puts up with dull Balthazar because she secretly wants him to marry her, so she can poison him (as she has done with 3 former husbands) and inherit his wealth. She is a plain woman, however, and Balthazar has no romantic interest in her.

You can create as many targets as you want of course, and they should all have some connection to the Primary Target, the Location or the Security.



## THE ESCAPE

This is the final important consideration. How will the burglar escape with the Prize?

The best heists should have several Escape options. Best is stealthy, worst is bloody and noisy, but all should be viable and all should have several challenges along the way. There should be multiple ways to overcome these challenges, and Diplomacy, Skills and Combat should be the primary means, but don't underestimate the ingenuity of the characters!

Let's set some escape options for Balthazar's Residence.

**The Roof:** The best option, as the private residences in the area are very close together, and the rogue can flee across the rooftops to a pre-planned point/rendezvous.

**The Basement:** Connects to the sewers. A good option, but without extensive planning and recon of the sewer system itself, this could be very dangerous.

**The Front Door:** The least desired option, this is the "run and gun" exit, very loud, very messy, and very dangerous.

## THE PAYOFF

The Payoff is when the Prize is either sold/traded to some third party, or when the burglar is able to make use of the Prize. Sometimes the heist was purely for personal gain, and the Prize will be kept.

A Fence is a person who will purchase the Prize for coin or some other form of currency (gemstones, magic items, spellbooks, etc.), and has a reputation for discretion. The Fence will never give the full value of the Prize to the rogue, and usually won't pay more than 50% of its "real-world" value.

In the case of a heist that was contracted, the Payoff comes when the rogue delivers the goods to his employer. The chance of betrayal (on both sides) is always a consideration, so

caution should be taken to ensure that the rogue can make the Payoff work for him while keeping his life.

## PREPARATION

A heist works best when the Rogue has done their homework and has spent time watching the Targets, the Location and the Security to learn as much as they can about the factors involved. A prepared Rogue is a cunning Rogue. Sometimes the Rogue will need to put a lot of preparation in place and these can take the form of:

- Bribes for information about the Target, Location, Security, or even the Prize itself.
- Disguises
- Forged documents (security passes, invitations, identification or other important papers)
- Escape vehicles/mounts
- Hired personnel (or simply allies) to distract, contain, or neutralize any roadblocks during the Escape phase.
- Specialized tools, weapons, poisons, or spells.

The Preparation phase can be played out over as individual sessions, where each aspect is prepared and can be "ticked off the list" before moving to the next phase. GTA V did this really well. Each heist had around 4 sub-missions that needed to be completed before the heist could be unlocked. These ranged from stealing vehicles for the getaway, to securing information.

## GRIFTS

A confidence game, also known as a con, scam, grift, or flim flam, is an attempt to win the trust and confidence of a victim, known as the "mark," in order to defraud them. There are two main categories of confidence games: The "short con" and the "long con." Sometimes called a "street con," the "short con" takes little set up and little time to

execute. The "long con," on the other hand, involves much more time to set up, more planning, more money, and often more accomplices. Unlike the short con, though, the long con usually scams the victim out of a sizable amount of cash. The long con is sometimes referred to as a "big store scam," where the "big store" is an elaborately set up fake bank, lawyer's office, betting parlor, and so forth.

## THE PLAYS

These confidence games are meticulously planned and carefully rehearsed "plays" with members of a team (the crew) assigned detailed parts and lines, which they practice assiduously so as not to speak out of turn. It's a fascinating form of theater.

The opening scene is the catch, when the mark (a.k.a. the customer) is lured into the first stage of the long con by a lugger or a roper. The mark's interest in the scheme is then excited in the build up, with promises of easy money—from glowing recommendations by a fellow member of the crew known as a boost or singer. Or perhaps tipped through an intentionally overheard conversation between two members of the team known as the crossfire. Next, the customer is allowed to invest a moderate amount of money and naturally succeed, proving the efficacy of the scheme being sold. The money won at this stage of the game is known as the convincer or the kickback. The next stage is sending the mark home or to the bank to get more money, known as putting in the send. The head con man now appears to invest his own money into the scheme for further proof of its worth—giving this stage of the game its name: the last hurrah.

Just when it all seems too good to be true—it is! The customer/mark gets the surprise of all surprises—the gold was not gold, the diamonds were not diamonds, the telegraph

operator made a mistake in reporting what horse had won a race. Imagine that! Welcome to the sting.

Finally, when the customer and his money have been successfully separated, it's now time to get rid of him with the blow off or the cool off. This is accomplished through a number of dramatic embellishments, such as a false arrest (the button) or the destruction of a mark's check (the tear up).

## LIST OF CLASSIC GIFTS

NOTE: I've not included all of the ones I've found, as some are more technology-based nowadays, and I've had to do some obvious rewording for these to fit into a D&D scenario ("The Accident", for example, is an insurance fraud involving cars, usually, so I had to change that to wagon, etc...). I've also changed some of the names of the classic scams as they didn't really fit the D&D vibe. Forgive me, fellow rogues.

**Salting** - Salting or "salting the mine" are terms for a scam in which gemstones or gold ore are planted in a mine or on the landscape, duping the mark into purchasing shares in a worthless or non-existent mining company.

**The Hoard** - This scam takes advantage of the victim's greed. The basic premise involves enlisting the mark to aid in retrieving some stolen money from its hiding place. The victim sometimes believes he can cheat the con artists out of their money, but anyone trying this has already fallen for the essential con by believing that the money is there to steal.

**The Curse** - One traditional swindle involves fortune telling. In this scam, a fortune teller uses his or her cold reading skill to detect that a client is genuinely troubled rather than merely seeking entertainment; or is a gambler complaining of bad luck. The fortune teller informs the mark that he is the victim of a curse, and that for a fee a spell

can be cast to remove the curse. In Romany, this trick is called bujo ("bag") after one traditional format: the mark is told that the curse is in his money; he brings money in a bag to have the spell cast over it, and leaves with a bag of worthless paper.

**Pig in a Poke** (Cat in a Bag) - The con entails a sale of a (suckling) "pig" in a "poke" (bag). The bag ostensibly contains a live healthy little pig, but actually contains a cat (not particularly prized as a source of meat). If one buys the bag without looking inside it, the person has bought something of less value than was assumed, and has learned first-hand the lesson caveat emptor.

Fun Fact: Pig in a poke originated in the late Middle Ages. "Buying a pig in a poke" has become a colloquial expression in many European languages, including English, for when someone buys something without examining it beforehand.

**Gem Dealers** - This phony gem scam involves layers of con men and helpers who tell a tourist of an opportunity to earn money by buying tax-free jewelry and having it shipped back to the tourist's home country. The mark is shown around the city by one of the con men, who ensures that the mark meets one helper after another, until the mark is persuaded to buy the jewelry from a store also operated by the swindlers. The gems are real but significantly overpriced (usually 1000% or more).

**The Badger** - This is extortion that is often perpetrated on married men. The mark is deliberately coerced into a compromising position, a supposed affair for example, then threatened with public exposure of his acts unless blackmail money is paid. This also works well on anyone in positions of power or prestige or fame.

**The Clip Joint** - A clip joint (or Fleshpot) is an establishment, usually a strip club or entertainment bar, typically one claiming to offer adult entertainment, in which customers are tricked into paying money and

receive poor, or no, goods or services in return. Typically, clip joints suggest the possibility of sex, charge excessively high prices for watered-down drinks, then eject customers when they become unwilling or unable to spend more money. The product or service may be illicit, offering the victim no recourse through official or legal channels.

**The Accident** - The con artist tricks the mark into damaging, for example, the con artist's wagon or cart, or injuring the con artist, in a manner that the con artist can later exaggerate. One relatively common scheme involves two wagons, one for the con artist, and the other for the shill. The con artist will pull in front of the victim, and the shill will pull in front of the con artist before slowing down. The con artist will then try to rein up to "avoid" the shill, causing the victim to rear-end the con artist. The shill will whip the horses and pull away quickly, leaving the scene. The con artist will then claim various exaggerated injuries in an attempt to collect from the victim.

**Pigeon Drop** - The pigeon drop involves the mark or pigeon assisting an elderly, weak or infirm stranger to keep a large sum of money safe for him. In the process, the stranger (actually a confidence man) puts his money with the mark's money in an envelope or chest with which the mark is then entrusted. The container is then switched for an identical one which contains no money, and a situation is engineered where the mark has the opportunity to escape with the money. If the mark takes this chance, he is merely fleeing from his own money, which the con artist will have kept or handed off to an accomplice.

Fun Fact: This scam is depicted early in the film *The Sting*.

**The Fiddle** - The Fiddle uses the Pigeon Drop technique. A pair of con men work together, one going into an expensive restaurant in shabby clothes, eating, and claiming to have left his wallet at home,

which is nearby. As collateral, the con man leaves his only worldly possession, the violin that provides his livelihood. After he leaves, the second con man swoops in, offers an outrageously large amount (for example 1000 gp) for such a rare instrument, then realizes he is late and runs off to an appointment, leaving his card for the mark to find him when the fiddle-owner returns. The mark's greed comes into play when the "poor man" comes back, having gotten the money to pay for his meal and redeem his violin. The mark, thinking he has an offer on the table, then buys the violin from the fiddle player who "reluctantly" agrees to sell it for a certain amount that still allows the mark to make a "profit" from the valuable violin. The result is the two con men are richer (less the cost of the violin), and the mark is left with a cheap instrument.

Fun Fact: This is depicted in the TV series *Better Call Saul* where James McGill and a friend sell a Kennedy half-dollar to a mark for a very high price, claiming the coin is a rare and valuable misprint.

**Glim-Dropper** - The Glim-Dropper scam is a variation of the Fiddle It requires several accomplices, one of whom must be a one-eyed man. One grifter goes into a store and pretends he has lost his glass eye. Everyone looks around, but the eye cannot be found. He declares that he will pay a 1000 gp reward for the return of his eye, leaving contact information. The next day, an accomplice enters the store and pretends to find the eye. The storekeeper (the intended griftee), thinking of the reward, offers to take it and return it to its owner. The finder insists he will return it himself, and demands the owner's address. Thinking he will lose all chance of the reward, the storekeeper offers 100 gp for the eye. The finder bargains him up to 250 gp, and departs. The one-eyed man, of course, cannot be found and does not return.

Fun Fact: Variants of this con have been used in movies such as *The Flim-Flam Man*, *Hustle*, *The Traveler*, *Shade*, and *Zombieland*, and also in books such as *American Gods*.

**Three-Card Monte** - Three-Card Monte, "find the queen", the "three-card trick", or "follow the lady" is essentially the same as the centuries-older shell game or thimblereg (except for the props). The trickster shows three playing cards to the audience, one of which is a queen (the "lady"), then places the cards face-down, shuffles them around, and invites the audience to bet on which one is the queen. At first the audience is skeptical, so the shill places a bet, and the scammer allows him to win. In one variation of the game, the shill will (apparently surreptitiously) peek at the lady, ensuring that the mark also sees the card. This is sometimes enough to entice the audience to place bets, but the trickster uses sleight of hand to ensure that he always loses, unless the con man decides to let him win, hoping to lure him into betting much more. The mark loses whenever the dealer chooses to make him lose.

Fun Fact: There is a variant of this scam. The shill says loudly to the dealer that his cards are fake and that he wants to see them. He takes the card and folds a corner and says in a hushed voice to the audience that he has marked the card. He places a bet and wins. Then he asks the others to place bets as well. When one of the audience bets a large sum of money, the cards are switched.

**The Art Student** - The art student scam is common in major cities. A small group of 'students' will start a conversation, claiming that they want to practice their Common. After a short time they will change the topic to education and will claim that they are art students and they want to take you to a free exhibition. The exhibition will usually be in a small, well hidden rented office and the students will show you some pieces which

they claim to be their own work and will try to sell them at a high price, despite the pieces usually being nothing more than an counterfeit of other lesser-known works. They will often try 'guilt tricks,' (e.g., introducing their "starving child") on people who try to bargain the price.

**The Big Store** - The Big Store is a technique for selling the legitimacy of a scam and typically involves a large team of con artists and elaborate sets. Often a building is rented and furnished as a legitimate and substantial business. (The "betting parlor" setup in the film, *The Sting* is an example.) Fun Fact: In 2014, a rural co-operative in Nanjing, China constructed an entire brick-and-mortar fake bank with uniformed clerks behind counters; the unlicensed bank operated for a little over a year, then defaulted on its obligations, swindling Chinese savers out of 200 million Chinese yuan.[37]

**Quick Change** - Change raising, also known as a quick-change, is a common short con and involves an offer to change an amount of money with someone, while at the same time taking change or bills back and forth to confuse the person as to how much money is actually being changed.

Fun Fact: The most common form, "the Short Count", has been featured prominently in several movies about grifting, notably *The Grifters*, *Criminal*, *Nine Queens*, and *Paper Moon*. For example, a con artist shopping at a gas station pays for a cheap item (under a dollar) and gives the clerk a ten dollar bill. The con gets back nine ones and the change and then tells the clerk he has a one and will exchange ten ones for a ten. This is what the scam artist is doing: getting the clerk to hand over the \$10 before handing over the \$1 bills. Then the scam artist hands over nine ones and the \$10. The clerk will assume there has been a mistake and offer to swap the ten for a one. Then the con will probably just say: "Here's another one, give me a \$20

and we're even." Notice that the scam artist just swapped \$10 for \$20. The \$10 was the store's money, not the con's. To avoid this con, clerks should keep each transaction separate and never permit the customer to handle the original ten before handing over the ten ones. Another variation is to flash a \$20 bill to the clerk, then ask for something behind the counter. When the clerk turns away, the con artist can swap the bill he is holding to a lesser bill. The clerk might then make change for the larger bill, without noticing it has been swapped. The technique works better when bills are the same color at a glance like, for instance, U.S. dollar bills.

**The Jam Auction** - In this scam, the confidence artist poses as a retail sales promoter, representing a manufacturer, distributor, or set of stores. The scam requires assistants to manage the purchases and money exchanges while the pitchman keeps the energy level up. Passersby are enticed to gather and listen to a pitchman standing near a mass of appealing products. The trickster entices by referring to the high-end products, but claims to be following rules that he must start with smaller items. The small items are described, and 'sold' for a token silver piece amount - with as many audience participants as are interested each receiving an item. The pitchman makes an emotional appeal such as saying "Raise your hand if you're happy with your purchase" and when hands are raised, directs his associates to return everyone's money (they keep the product). This exchange is repeated with items of increasing value to establish the expectation of a pattern. Eventually, the pattern terminates by ending the 'auction' without reaching the high-value items, and stopping midway through a phase where the trickster retains the collected money from that round of purchases. Marks feel vaguely dissatisfied, but have goods in their possession, and the uplifting feeling of having demonstrated their own happiness

several times. The marks do not realize that the total value of goods received is significantly less than the price paid in the final round. Auction/refund rounds may be interspersed with sales rounds that are not refunded, keeping marks off-balance and hopeful that the next round will refund.

Fun Fact: The Jam Auction has its roots in Carny culture.

**The Money Exchange** - This scam occurs when exchanging foreign currency. If a large amount of cash is exchanged the victim will be told to hide the money away quickly before counting it ("You can't trust the locals"). A substantial amount will be missing.

**Rain Making** - Rainmaking is a simple scam in which the trickster promises to use their power or influence over a complex system to make it do something favorable for the mark. The trickster has no actual influence on the outcome, but if the favorable outcome happens anyway they will then claim credit. If the event doesn't happen of course then the trickster may be able to claim that they need more money until it finally does. This can be stretched out over a long period, depending on the greed of the mark.

Fun Fact: Classically this was promising to make it rain, but more modern examples include getting someone's App 'featured' on an App Store or a politician implying that they can use their influence to get a contract awarded to the mark (as illustrated by Clay Davis in Season 3 of TV show *The Wire*).

**The Rip** - The Rip is essentially a Pigeon Drop confidence trick. In a typical variation scammers will target, say, a jeweler, and offer to buy some substantial amount of his wares at a large markup provided he perform some type of under-the-table cash deal, to avoid taxes and export fees. This exchange goes through flawlessly, at considerable profit for the mark. Some time later the scammers approach the mark with a similar proposition, but for a larger amount of

money (and thus a larger return for the mark). His confidence and greed inspired by the previous deal, the merchant agrees—only to have his money and goods taken, by sleight-of-hand or violence, at the point of exchange.

Fun Fact: This scam was depicted in the movie *Matchstick Men*. The same term is used to describe a crime where a vendor (especially a drug dealer) is killed to avoid paying for goods.

**The Dropped Coin Purse** - The Dropped Purse scam usually targets tourists. The con artist pretends to accidentally drop his coin purse in a public place. After an unsuspecting victim picks up the coin purse and offers it to the con artist, the scam begins. The artist accuses the victim of stealing money from the coin purse and threatens to call the Watch, scaring the victim into returning the allegedly stolen money.

## CHAPTER 5 – SURVIVAL IN THE STREETS

Creating a believable and challenging world for your rogues to interact with takes some work, but it can be very rewarding. Rogues operate outside the law, usually, and traditionally the poor and disenfranchised often operate in these same spheres due to necessity. The streets, and the people, and the mechanisms for survival are where you need to begin.

As with any community, no matter the size, there are people who have allegiances and biases that dictate whom they show loyalty and distrust towards. It is easy to gain enemies, and hard to gain allies. That is a truism that has persisted throughout history, and its no different for the rogue. The first ally any rogue is going to need is a Fence. Without access to a marketplace to offload stolen or illegally-obtained items, the rogue is not going to prosper. Stealing straight coin-wealth from the poor is folly, and most upper-class folks do not carry hard coin on their persons – settling for IOUs to be paid by lackeys at a later date, or with a simple handshake and a promise. The merchant class is where the coin-wealth can be found, and for a starting rogue, the security involved isn't worth the risk. Most of the rogues income will come from selling objects, either to a Fence, or to some other shady character.

Getting to know those in-the-know, should also be a priority. The local beggars, street kids, hedge witches, and barkeeps are a good place to start. Without information, a rogue is not going to be successful, and it pays to pay for sound intelligence – a good rogue always keeps money aside for this purpose,



and makes sure his contacts are kept happy and whole.

The local law enforcement is inevitable, regardless of skill – luck is a fickle mistress, and eventually every rogue gets caught. A criminal's life is full of law enforcement, and getting to know them, and their habits is key to a rogue's success. Knowing who they can bribe, who they must run from, who has secrets, and who doesn't is vital in staying out of prison as much as possible (when that happens, see Chapter 9, “Law and Prisons”). A rogue having allies in law enforcement is not unheard of, and mutual arrangements are often made to enrich both individuals.

These arrangements are often a death sentence if discovered by other rogues, of course, so the smart rogue takes pains to hide his allegiances.

Safe places to sleep and to recuperate from wounds and other injuries is a primary need. A smart rogue will often have multiple “safe houses” that they can move between and some go so far as to disguise themselves as a false identity before entering these places, to keep up appearances of this character they use to keep themselves safe. Knowing people with medical skills is also important, and plenty of complicit or corrupt clerics have been known to assist rogue packs and Guildhouses, not to mention the aid rendered by hedge witches and urban druids (often coerced) when concealment and distractions are needed to keep locations secret.

Food is most often stolen. A rogue who cannot purloin food from a marketplace has no business being a rogue. Drink, often alcohol, is most often purchased in the taverns where the rogue has a relationship with a barkeep, and narcotics purchased from street dealers whom the rogue also has good relations. All a rogue's activities are centered on keeping allies happy and keeping enemies at a minimum. Some rogues develop relationships with animals, the abundance of feral wildlife a constant in a urban environment. Trained animals can be used in theft and confidence-games, and sometimes are used to smuggle or pass messages/ materials to allies or contacts. A smart rogue will train a dog as soon as he can, and keep it well fed and well- trained. A good animal ally is hard to beat, and can often save the day.

The relationship the rogue has with local street gangs cannot be underestimated. A new rogue is invisible to a Guild's interests, and the local power is what dictates the life of a rogue, and power means ganglife. A

rogue's local area of operation will oftentimes be claimed by 2 or 3 gangs, the territory always changing hands, and understanding a gang's habits, leadership, and operations is something a good rogue will pay attention to, and a good DM will create deep, rich NPCs for the rogue to interact with, beyond simple black and white morality.

As DM, you have a lot of NPCs to create. Not going to lie. It becomes a lot, but they don't need to be all built at once. Like all campaigns, things are created as-you-go, and you will find yourself at the end of a campaign with a raft of new people and new areas that now exist in your world, and can be used again in another campaign – and will have their own real history and attitudes beyond the initial creation stage! How cool is that?!

Survival for a rogue in the streets revolves around people and places. You must create enough of them that the rogue does not feel trapped in a video-game, and can interact with dozens of buildings and denizens, so that they can feel like they matter in a world that feels rich and deep.





# CHAPTER 6 - GANGS AND COMMONERS

Gangs all have the same basic attributes:

- They claim a real world location as owned property
- They exploit that location according to the location's purpose - businesses are taxed, parks are used as an outdoor venue for business or pleasure, homes are used as "safe houses", etc...
- They will defend their territory with violence or diplomacy, but never just diplomacy. Gangs are violent entities.
- They give the gang a name, and members will choose a new name (their "blood name").
- They will adopt a symbol that is used to mark the members and their claimed territory.
- New members are tested before being allowed entrance. This can take myriad forms, from being physically beaten, to performing unlawful activities, to contests of strength, or cunning, or wit - or all of the above in a D&D version of Hellweek (or Month or Year).
- The only way to leave the gang is to die. Anyone who betrays the gang is marked for death.
- The members work towards a common goal, have common interests, and feel a sense of belonging. Betrayal is the ultimate sin.

From there, however, the way Gangs operate, their methods and motivations, their hierarchies, and their means of choosing new members are as myriad as the stars. Settle in. This is gonna be a long one.

## THUG LIFE

The Gang narrative is simple. Its an action film and while action films are all about high adventure and crazy individuals, you should



lay down your social contract with your group before you start to discuss running a campaign like this. Its going to be hard to take up the mantle of a street gang without discussing all the horrible shit that occurs in that lifestyle. No sexual violence is mostly a no-brainer for most groups, but I've been in stories where its occurred, and its powerful stuff if used correctly and with the right people, but you should have a talk beforehand. How much is too much street ugliness? What is not going to be part of the narrative? Get everyone in the same headspace and the tone of the setting will resonate with everyone, and you can all play on the same stage with the same narrative tools and easily keep out the dissonance. Nothing kills a game faster than players who bring noise to a harmonic game.

### ALL ABOUT THAT

- Money: "Get it"

- Reputation: "Protect it"
- Lifestyle: "Spend it"

Gangs all have the same primary motivation - life is all about the quick profit, the easy score, the no-brainer heist. Smash and grab is the fastest way to rob a business, and threatening a guard into leaving a door unlocked is the easiest way to heist. Gangs don't plan for the long term. They might not be alive tomorrow. Immediacy drives the street gang. If they are thwarted or diverted from their goals, they will generally keep trying until the gang, or the obstacle, breaks.

This is the reason that gang violence is as regular as the rising sun - without striving for more power, the gang's motivation (fast money, cheap thrills) sputters and dies. They are like sharks, these street gangs, they have to keep moving or they die. In the gang's case - moving up. If another gang is holding a set next to theirs and they can't push them away, they will just keep fighting until one side is wiped out.

Peace is a political tool, never a true state of affairs. Gang life is about perception. Who thinks what about you and your crew. That matters. It's the second primary motivation - reputation. Without it, the extremely vital mechanism that both drives gang violence and prevents it from consuming all the combined gang territory into a whirlwind of violence, cannot function. Reputation also serves a political goal - it makes your enemy spend precious time and resources worrying about you. The more badass people think you are, the more money, time, and manpower your rivals spend making sure they are safe from you. That's always worthwhile, and so Reputation with a capital R, is something that drives every gang member. They will always be thinking about how their actions impact the reputation of the gang first, and themselves second, and their set (territory) last. Violent clashes over disrespect keeps the gangs churning over

new members - chumming the waters for the smart members to survive and grow stronger. The OG in a street gang has been in the organization for a year, maybe 2. But that gangster is smart, tough, and cunning, and from their ranks come the true Rogues of a city.

What does money and reputation allow you as far as lifestyle is concerned? Gangs are born from poverty and disenfranchisement, and wealth and status symbols are direct refusals of that humble truth. No one wants to be poor, but if you're going to be rich, let everyone know just how rich you are - after all, wealth and reputation go hand-in-hand. Gangs are almost obsessed with symbolism. From their emblems that adorn bodies, clothing, weapons, armor, flags, banners, walls and any other place that can be tagged, to the secret symbol-languages (shadowmarks) that cover their own territory and the nearby territories of their rivals in tiny graffiti, to the complicated handslang that they use to speak internally and to throw shade at enemies or whoever they want to intimidate. Symbolism creates meaning to those who know what the symbols stand for, and that meaning is always a powerful one of belonging to the group. Almost everyone wanted to make up a secret language as a kid with a friend or two, yes for the sheer coolness of being able to speak in code, but also because you wanted to solidify your loyalty to your friends, even though you didn't know that's why you did it - wanting to belong is a primary driving force in the human psyche and that's a powerful bit of psychology to someone who has nothing, and no familial ties. Gang is family. Gang is life.

### LIKE A G-STER AN OG-STER

The fun part for your party will be creating the Gang itself. Do this BEFORE you start the first narrative session. After all, you need to set up all the pieces around them before

you begin. Here's the steps you should take, and that will be followed by the details of each list entry.

1. Pick a name. This is crucial and might take certain parties awhile to figure out. That old goblin, The Name. I've listed some generators that can help, below.
2. Pick a symbol. The crew's tag. This will be used to mark territory, bodies (in the form of tattoos, generally), clothing, and other items. There's an Emblem generator below if you want to fiddle with that, or if you have an artist in the party, that's even better. Part of the decision making about the tag is the color or colors of the gang. This will identify them through clothing and other items.
3. Choose the leadership. This is the first decision that will require your party to elect a leader. Yes. A leader. This is not something that's been seen in D&D very much, but I think the idea of it can work well in a Gang format, for a few different reasons. Firstly, there's no democracy on the street, and having someone step up and give orders is a concession that is practically a requirement. Secondly, the leadership can change, as the Gang's power and respect levels shift around. I'll talk about those later, but its a fun dynamic that I think you'll enjoy. Thirdly, and most importantly, the drama that's created by hierarchies in general is good for the tension it creates and the personal subplots that spring up because of it. I don't mean PVP, well, I do, but its a modified form. That comes later. Humiliation and loss of power is far better suited to a group activity over death, but DM's discretion as always. I'll talk about the actual hierarchies a bit later.
4. Choose the initiation test. None of the party members will have to undergo this test. They are the Original members and don't have to do that shit, unless your

group wants to. The Gang Leader would oversee these activities, but they are going to have to be largely bullshit, because the characters can't fail or they aren't in the gang. So use it as a cool opening montage if its used at all. The test will be for any NPCs OR new PCs OR existing player's new character. In the case of the NPC there is always the chance of failure, but there won't be for the PCs - that's just a cut scene. By that I mean they can't fail, although the DM can certainly foster the illusion that they could lose. This is mostly for narrative flavor. I've made up a short list of possible tests, below.

5. Decide on the makeup of the Gang's initial territory. This is the starting area of the Gang, and its holdings. This will be, at the start, a single street. It will be either all households, all businesses, or a mixture of the two. The DM should allow the party to decide for themselves what the territory is going to comprise, by informing them of the differences between the two. A Household pays less per week, but is less likely to refuse to pay protection, and will resist more if the weekly rate is raised. A Business pays more per week, but is more likely to refuse to pay protection, and will resist less if the rate is raised. How this plays out with dice is explained, below.

Let's recap. 1. Name 2. Symbol/Colors 3. Leadership 4. Initiation 5. Territory

## THE LIST DETAILS

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### NAME

- A GTA one - (<http://www.gtavwebsites.com/crew-name-generator/>). Its not terrible, but some of the choices are a bit too modern sounding. I did, however, have a good laugh at "Nutty

Irresistible" and pictured a thug of the forest gnome persuasion, all stylee, maybe a big glittery hat and a spiked, bloodstained baseball bat. Just click the "Generate crew names" button and the names appear at the bottom of the page. ("Hawkish Coercion" was another good one for the right group).

- A Fantasy one - ([http://fantasynamenamegenerators.com/gang-names.php#.WBxxyNR94\\_5](http://fantasynamenamegenerators.com/gang-names.php#.WBxxyNR94_5)). Not bad. Some are weird, but not really funny.
- A Shadowrun-inspired one - (<http://erebaltor.se/rickard/generatorer/crazyGangNames.html>). Probably my favorite. Got the right mix of swearing and cool sounding adjectives. "Baker Street Misery" and "Satanic Hamsterfuckers", I mean come on. Fantastic.

## SYMBOL

This site also has a pretty cool emblem generator - ([http://fantasynamenamegenerators.com/emblem-creator.php#.WBxzRdR94\\_4](http://fantasynamenamegenerators.com/emblem-creator.php#.WBxzRdR94_4)), but read the quick tutorial - ([http://fantasynamenamegenerators.com/emblem-creator-tutorial.php#.WBxz-NR94\\_4](http://fantasynamenamegenerators.com/emblem-creator-tutorial.php#.WBxz-NR94_4)) before you start, its a bit fiddly.

## LEADERSHIP

Modern day street gangs are fractured, complex things, and that won't do for D&D, and we need something a bit more medieval feeling anyway. I think the best kind of hierarchies are the simplest, where everyone has a designated task or tasks, and they are welcome to speak their opinions on the actions of the others, they each stick to their respective specialties when it comes to gang-related activity. In other words, the Dope King can talk all the smack he wants on the War Chief, but at the end of the day, The War Chief decides who the Gang's enemies are, and when its time to fight.

Trying to come up with titles that don't sound corny is difficult at the best of times, so its often beneficial to get the party to make these up for themselves. I'll list the generic positions that should/could be filled along with my own shitty names, and you can amend as you see fit. I'll keep the titles masculine for simplicity. Sorry, ladies.

- The Leader: The King, The Baron, The Emperor, The Boss
- The Second in Command: The Earl, The Prince, The Second
- Security: Warchief, Sargent-at-Arms, The Enforcer
- Treasurer: King Stacks, The Banker, The Cashman

These are optional (and listed in case your party is larger than 4)

- Wise Man: Memory, The Dreamer, Chief o' Dreams
- The Finder: The Procurer, The Provider, Chief Plenty
- Make Something Up That You Find Cool: Chief Whatever

By no means should this be the structure for every gang or even your first gang! This is just a very generic example, so please do something more creative!

## INITIATIONS

These are only examples, of course, and fairly tame. Go wild with these.

1. Jumped In - Survive a physical beating from the entire gang for 60 seconds.
2. Blood for Blood - Kill a rival member
3. Trophy - Bring back a valuable item from a rival
4. Street Marks - Tag the gang symbol in rival territory (usually in a prominent place)
5. Wilding - Kill 1 or more civilians
6. Spree - Destroy or cause a lot of physical damage to a location
7. Run the Pack - Kill a guard and get away

8. Renegotiate - Force 3 new marks to pay protection (minimum DC 15)
9. Burn the Witch - Kill a mage/cleric (of rank)
10. Rat Race - Take large amounts of drugs and alcohol, and be blindfolded and dropped far from home. Return alive.

## TERRITORY

### Taking turf

A household or business must be intimidated into paying a weekly protection tax in order for that location to be added to the Gang's territory. This location must be adjacent to existing Gang territory, or within 1 city block of it. The Intimidation can be roleplayed (best) or forced with a skill check. If a skill check is used, the DC for a household is 10 and for a business is between 12 and 17 (1d6 for a random DC), usually the higher DCs are for the more wealthy businesses. Government locations cannot be acquired, and neither can Guild Houses or Public Works. Once the payment is secured, the target will pay a weekly tax for as long as the Gang maintains its presence in the area.

Some targets will refuse to pay on certain weeks, and must be convinced to change their minds. If a target refuses to pay, then they must be Intimidated or Assaulted to force a new check. If Intimidated, the DC is between 10 and 15 (1d6 for a random DC) for a household and a DC between 12 and 21 (1d10 for a random DC) for a business. If the check succeeds, then the Chance to Raise Tax check is performed by the DM, by rolling a percentile. If the target number or less is rolled, the victim agrees to pay more weekly tax. This increase is between 1 to 5 coins per week. Each household or business can only have their tax raised once. If more money is extorted the household will be forced to move, or the business will be forced to close.

	Household	Business
Weekly Tax	1-5 coins	5-50 coins
Chance to Refuse	10%	25%
Chance to Raise Tax	20%	60%
Raised Tax	Additional 1=5 coins per week	

## MAKE MONEY TAKE MONEY

### RACKETS

Gangs are going to operate differently from a formal Guild, however. Was less bureaucracy, usually, and gangs generally don't involve themselves with any aspect of business from the production side of things. They also don't tend to split themselves up when there are less than 10 members. Its just too dangerous. All the work done by the gang is done by the gang as a whole. "Rollin less than 10 deep" isn't just a stupid idea, its bad business. The Gang is nothing without its reputation, and shows of force are simple-to-understand and don't cost anything. Gangs are all about that low overhead. When you live fast and die young, profit - easy and quick profit, is king.

Rackets are illegal activities that provide money for the Gang. The rackets list included in the Let's Build a Thieves Guild isn't fully appropriate for a Gang, as they are not a Guild, and will never have the resources and power as a true Guild House would. I am going to include the ones that are appropriate, modified for a Gang-centric campaign.

- **Burglary** – This is simple theft of houses or businesses. This racket is rare among Gangs, and usually only occurs when they have 100% reliable intelligence that something of immediate value to the Gang is present and

can be either sold or used immediately. As such, there is no weekly income.

- **Narcotics** – Corner sales and low-level distribution are the primary activities. Gangs never produce, and are the main source of distribution for true Guild Houses, or in the case of smaller areas, a few lone suppliers. Gangs make anywhere from 20-200 coins per week, depending on a number of factors - your campaign's economy, the size of the distribution areas, and non-interference from rivals. Getting ripped off is a hazard of street life, and there may be weeks where the Gang brings in zero income.

- **Prostitution** – Gangs generally never undertake any formal prostitution rackets, \*as a general rule\*, but there may be instances where new recruits are asked to provide services as part as their initiation process, or by forcing locals into the trade, or by members themselves. This is completely optional depending on your table's social contract, obviously. If this is included, the weekly income could be between 5 and 50 coins per week, with the same factors as mentioned in the Narcotics racket.

- **Protection** – This is the old classic. Homeowners or shopkeepers (or both) pay a weekly or monthly fee to prevent their homes, businesses or selves from being destroyed/robbed/beaten up. This is the main source of income for a Gang, and is the only way that a Gang can gain new territory. Every protected building enlarges the Gang's influence. The price of protection varies, based on who is being strong-armed, but a good rule of thumb is 1-5 coins per week from a homeowner, and 5-50 coins per week from a business. There is a 10% chance that each week a different "protectee" refuses to pay, and must be intimidated or physically threatened in order to continue the payment. If this fails, then the mark gets enraged and attacks the bagman/men. Anyone who protests and is successfully intimidated will agree to pay 1-5 coins more per week out of

fear. There may be instances where they cannot pay anymore coin, and will offer some trade instead.

- **Smuggling** – This involves moving illegal goods through the Gang's territory, for a price. This is always an outsider wishing to smuggle goods, not the Gang's themselves. There is a 10% chance each week that a Smuggler will approach the Gang and ask for safe passage. The smuggler's goods will be worth between 50 and 500 coins and is willing to pay 5-20 coins for protection through the Gang's area. If the smuggler is killed/assaulted for their goods, there is a 100% chance that the one who hired the smuggler will send one or more persons to find out what happened. The power level of this unknown employer is, of course, up to you, but I wouldn't make it someone too powerful. After all, the idea is that the Gang stays in this territory and isn't driven out.

- **Street Crimes** (Pickpocketing, Mugging) – These are the other main staple for a Gang. Harassing travelers is practically a pastime for a Gang member, and its done almost without thinking. Everyone pays coin and respect. This generally nets a small amount per week, from 5-20 coins.

Need a table? When do you not need a good table?

Racket	Weekly income
Narcotics	20-200 coins
Protection	1-5 coins per homeowner; 5-50 coins per business
Street Crimes	5-20 coins
Smuggling	10% chance, 5-20 coins
Prostitution	5-50 coins

## JUICE - AN OPTIONAL INCLUSION

This is all a new rule-set. I urge you to at least give it a read and consider my arguments. If it's shit, by all means, amend or toss. I don't mind. This is a gift, not a lecture :)

This is the addition of a new Statistic for your individual PCs. We are going to create a simple points based system that will be used as votes by the PCs at the end of each gaming session. This will reflect a shifting leadership dynamic based on in-game actions. The actual points count will be kept secret from the party, but the DM will advise when things have shifted, and when Challenges can be made. Follow.

Respect is earned. Daily. Every day you gotta prove yourself. Prove your worth. Prove your loyalty.

The DM creates a new meta-value called Respect (or Juice, or Sand, or Balls, or whatever). This number value is never revealed to the players, but only the players are the ones who can change this value, the DM cannot.

At the end of every session, the DM asks the players to "Show Respect" to the other members of the gang. They then assign a number to each player, giving a score between 2 and 7. This is a public declaration. This score is based on how much the player's character acted in line with the values of the gang during the session. This is added to the running total. A Gang Leader starts with 30 Respect. The 2nd in Command (if there is one) starts with 15 Respect. Soldiers start with 5.

When a Soldier's respect is equal with a Leadership member's respect, the Soldier can challenge the member for the position in the gang. The winner claims that position. The loser becomes a Soldier with 5 Respect, and loses all other previously gained respect. This means that if you challenge, and lose,

you have to gain the Respect of your crew again, but for real. Sure, your group could game the system but that's no fun for anyone, and should be strongly discouraged.

So here's how this looks at the table.

The Gang, the Stone Axe Killerz, has just successfully beaten off a rival crew who tried to invade their set. Trophies are gathered up and the bodies dumped. Everyone is celebrating and carousing. The Tale begins. Someone brings up the fight again and the encounter is rehashed, in real time, by the party, as they remember it right then. They mention the other crew members who impressed them, and throw them some props - using the number in the praise of the crew member. Does that make sense? "And when Lothar knocked that fuckin toe-head's teeth out?! Oh man, that shit was five alive! And Little Spark! Blew those Green meatheads away was so cool man, but missing their Chief, Zod, with that last bolt? Sorry but that was three strikes, man. You should have fried his Green ass!"

If that's all too corny, by all means, just have the PCs say what impressed them, simply, and then they give the number to each party member. Simple.

The DM keeps a running total. The DM never reveals this total except to announce that a challenge may be made. This announcement can be private, if you like, but secret planning and scheming is not in a Gang member's repertoire. Live fast, die rich, that's the thuglyfe. Once the challenge is announced, the actual event must occur within 7 days or the challenger loses all his respect and drops to 5. This causes a constant churning of responsibilities and chances at all the positions in the gang, including leadership, and maybe leadership more than once. By creating a gang hierarchy and assigning each rank a Respect level, you can control the administrative roles



within the gang, and that gets real fun, real fast. The party has to be well-advised, in advance, that this is the kind of campaign dynamic that is going to be used. It is PVP, but its PVP with a purpose, and its never to the death, only to the first blood, or whatever criteria is set. And the near-immediate aspect of regaining the approval of the gang members who had previously lost all of their respect because the PC failed, is a powerful reinforcement that the group is worth keeping alive, and (should) cut down on vendetta-mindsets that inevitably spring up in PVP campaigns. Also, since 2 is the lowest Respect you can throw, its an advertising dodge that makes it seem more valuable. Similarly with having 7 at the top, instead of 6, reinforces the existing mythology that humanity has with 7, and lends it more weight, serving as further reinforcement that the gang is someplace where you can be someone worthy, of respect, and of belonging. Very important with us nerdy types. I digress.

There's an alternate rule-set that should be considered. Instead of violent challenges for leadership where lots of respect is lost (and earned), the challenged gang member can peacefully step aside and lose only half their current respect score. This would allow for more politically minded groups, and should be considered for an add-on to the method I mentioned above.

Perhaps the gang has a mix of active and passive challenge "modes" that can be utilized to change the leadership around. Worth considering, I think.

You can set the values of each gang rank as you like, but starting with "some" is always better than 0. Play around with my numbers (30,15,5) and see what works for you. You can always change the values after the game gets rolling. Who's to know but you?

One last comment. This aspect of forcing leadership on everyone is only going to strengthen the group as a whole. If everyone fills every role, then all are more efficient as players interacting with the game, but more importantly, they will be more immersed, and more invested in the mythology and power of the gang. Imagine the first PC to get patched in as the new Prez. Or the old Prez, who took a chance and nearly won, but now is bloody and beaten and still a fuckin Soldier, still alive, but now has to look at the world from a new place. How is that ever a bad thing in a narrative?

## STREET FIGHTING MEN

Conflict with other gangs is going to occur on a regular basis for your gang's members. Fighting to expand, fighting to protect, fighting just to survive, sometimes. The level of lethality in these conflicts is going to depend largely on the group's decision before play begins. Straight up brawling without weapons with characters with 5 or more levels is going to get tediously slow, so I would advise against going that low on the violence scale. But I can see not fighting to the death as a valid middle ground. To the death is common, but perhaps this area's gangs don't all play like that. Maybe its more about show and lots of bruises, with the occasional unfortunate accident. Or perhaps it's total murdercity out there. You'll have to find your own level of settling gang clashes, and what works for the narrative you all want to explore.

The fights between gangs are rightfully called Wars, because all available members are involved and all resources of the respective gangs are spent on winning. When there's a gang beef in the streets, people know it, and sometimes (often times), civilians get hurt or killed. The Law gets involved, sometimes. Or other interests, with uncertain intentions.

Gang Wars generally are trying to accomplish one or more of the following:

There are other reasons of course, some of them shrewd, others insane, but this is only a short example to give you inspiration for your own lists.

- **Gain Territory** - Winning the War means instant access to new income from protected locals, and oftentimes resources left by the losing gang are recovered.
- **Defend Territory** - Winning means survival. Losing means a loss of area, income, resources, and influence.
- **Prosecute a Grudge** - Beefs are as old as mankind. They build up and explode. You don't need my help of thinking of ways to get angry.
- **Terrify the Locals** - Gang Wars will force all protected civilians to check to see if they want to refuse paying protection. This causes havoc and distracts the invaded gang's leadership from focusing on the War. This check is done 1/week during a War.

## CAMPAIGN HOOKS

You should create a chart with all the local gangs listed and their respective relationships with one another, and perhaps even the corrupted Powers That Be in the area, if they exist. A simple matrix will give you an at-a-glance look at who's cool and who's got beef. You can use a tickmark, dash, and x for positive, neutral, and negative relationship statuses, or smiley faces, or whatever symbolism you like. But keep it on your shield and keep it updated. This is your Map O' Drama Fun, and should drive the whole damn over-narrative.

The hooks should write themselves from there. Decide which gangs control which resources, and start moving them around and watch what your gang does with information that you give them from the street or from their own observations.

The campaign could literally start with the gang hanging out in some alleyway, shooting dice, when that shithead, Dunka Moane, little snot nose from upstreet says he saw a rival gang's wagon over on X Street. The gang reacts. The city reacts to the gang's reaction and that's all you need. The Engine Has Begun.

Decide on how many gangs and power players/factions in the area and flesh them out. That's going to be the most work. The party will build their own gang, so don't even consider them when you are planning out the "milieu", just roll 3d4 and think of as many funky ideas as you can and then pare them down to something that won't be impossible to track. I think an area number of 6 would be manageable. You could of course use more or less, depending on how good your scheduling/project management genes are in your family history.

So yeah. I'm not giving you any hooks. You only need to create 1. The Catalyst. Get that Great God a'Mighty Steamshovel moving and the world will build itself.



## CHAPTER 7 - SECURITY AND TOOLS

Large amounts of currency and other valuables will require taking measures to ensure they remain secure. From personal vaults with arcane defenses to a hidey-hole under the floorboards, any place there is wealth, there are people trying to take it. Security does not come cheaply, be it from personal guards, arcane shielding, physical traps or offloading the whole mess to a storage facility like a bank or other fantastical method found in D&D campaigns. These do not come cheap, and most come with a daily/weekly/monthly/yearly ongoing fee, and the best of the best should cost the most of the most. Don't be shy with putting a price on everything. You are The World and The World is a greedy so-and-so. The less

money they have means the more adventuring they are required to do in order to keep up with the Cost of Living (in a Fantasy World).

**Safes/Vaults:** By material and then size might be best. Small/Large Iron/Steel/Mithral?/Other. Maybe 25/50 for small/large and add 25/250/2500 for material type.

**Lock Mechanism Upgrades:** Gnomish - add 250, Elven - add 100, Halfling - add 50, Dwarven - add 500.

**Arcane Upgrades:** Fucked if I know. Start with a base of 5000 and maybe charge X for every spell level involved (1000?2000?5000?). Permanency should add 50000.

**Wages, housing, food, medical care for any security personnel** (adjust as needed if monster guards involved) - 50 per week for adequate guards, maybe 500 for elite.

## GADGETS AND TOOLS

**Chalk:** For marking things - from messages to showing if an area has been used recently.

**Oil:** For rusty hinges and locks, to making floors slippery, to creating fire.

**Flour:** Good for showing invisible/hidden things, if a floor has been walked upon, and explosive if dispersed first and then set to a spark.

**Crowbar:** Gives Advantage on Strength checks, where appropriate.

**Twine & Bell:** Good for stringing makeshift alarms.

**Flint & Steel:** For making fire.

**Collapsible Pole:** For testing floors, setting off traps from out of range, and assembly into makeshift gadgets.

**Small Block & Tackle:** With rope, to move really heavy things short distances. Usually assembled with a hook to hang from.

**Parchment & Charcoal:** For making rubbings of important carvings.

**Hand Mirrors:** For spoofing light based traps, peeking around corners, and handling petrifying monsters.

**Paper, Pen, and Ink:** For notes, forgeries, maps, or any number of reasons.

**Grappling Hook:** For climbing, hauling, and pulling distant objects.

**Smokebombs:** Expensive, but good for obscuring an area.

**Dog Treats:** For rogues who don't feel comfortable killing animals, this is a non-lethal alternative.

**Glue:** For blocking locks, gumming up machinery, or hanging false communications, like posters.

**Limewood Strips:** These are strips of wood, usually around 4 to 6 inches long and an inch or so high, and very thin. Limewood strips are slipped between a door and its door frame so that the thief can raise a latch on the other side of the door and open it normally.

**Tar Paper:** This is simply any kind of heavy paper or (more usually) cloth which has been soaked in tar, honey, treacle, or anything suitably sticky. The thief usually uses it by slapping it on a window before breaking the glass in a window-pane. The sticky surface keeps all the fragments together as the glass breaks. Noises is considerably reduced, both from cushioning the impact of a hammer on glass and by preventing broken glass from scattering all over the floor beyond the windows. Tar paper can be used with a glass cutter, being affixed to the center of the area of glass to be cut out, so that it can be simply pulled out when the cutter has done its work.

**Blinding Powder:** A powder which is highly abrasive, irritating to the eyes, and disabling to the victim as a result. Powdered stone, pepper, dust soaked in onion juice, and strong ammonium salts--blinding powder can be made from many ingredients. Blinding powder is only useful if it is thrown right into the eyes of a victim. Attacks are made with Disadvantage unless circumstances negate this penalty.

**Manacles/Shackles:** Good for locking up victims, guards, or anyone you want to incapacitate.

• **Whistle/Dog Whistle:** For manipulation of people and dogs.

• **Lodestone:** Good if you want to manipulate metal latches and levers without touching them.

• **Solvents:** Used to dissolve adhesive, wash away poisons, and neutralize acids.

• **Small Bladder:** In case you need to hold your breath, you can take an extra gulp of clean air.

• **Acid:** When thieves tools fail you, acid can solve a lock problem, and it can do it quietly. Can also disable a lot of different forms of traps.

• **Pin Ring:** This simple weapon is a ring with a flip-up lid, below which is a needle

capable of delivering a dose of poison (or knock-out drug, etc.)

- **False Scabbard:** Thieves can employ stout scabbards which are slightly longer than the swords which fit into them, leaving a length of scabbard at the end which is a separate, hollow compartment. Usually, this can be accessed via a sliding panel at the end of the scabbards. This hollow compartment can be used to conceal a great many kinds of things, either to smuggle them in (poisons, dog pepper, blinding powder, etc.) or smuggle them out (gems and such). Some are so well-designed that the compartment can be entered from above or below, so that the thief can use the false scabbard as a snorkel (or, more correctly, as an underwater breathing tube) if he has to stay concealed in the water for any reason.

- **Wired Cane :** a rigid wire and leather wristband straps this cane to the wrist, allowing a pick-pocket to feign infirmity until close enough to strike. Then by bumping into the target, the cane-bearing hand can perform the pilfering and return to the cane before it is noticed. The wired cane's handle contains a long-bored hole sized for coins of most types and most jewels. This gives Advantage on the Sleight of Hand check.

- **Mini-Blade:** This little blade—so small that it hides easily between the knuckles of a thief—has given the cutpurse his name. Masters of this tiny and keen blade can garner a day's wages in a mere hour. Of course, novices may end up missing a finger or two. Gives a +1 to the Sleight of Hand check.

- **Rosin And Powder:** For thieves whose pocket-picking fingers do not seem sticky enough, rosin applied to the tips can boost sticking power. Those who have trouble slipping their hands into and out of purses and pockets might use our powder to facilitate movement. Using rosin on the fingertips and powder on the edges produces

a particularly useful combination. +1 to Sleight of Hand check.

- **Garottes:** Constructed of strong wire and hardwood handles, these are designed to choke a victim to death. If used from Stealth or with Surprise, grants a +2 Attack bonus (otherwise the Attack penalty is at -2). Target is Restrained, and after 3 consecutive hits the target dies.

- **Glass Cutter:** A diamond-tipped tool used to score glass. Place the cutter in the center of a pane of glass and score a circle around it. A gentle tap creates a hole from mouse-size to wagon-wheel size. Requires Dex check at -2; failure means the cut section of window slipped and shattered.

- **Hinge-Removing Set:** Doors have two sides—if you can't pick the lock, you might try removing the hinges. The hinge-removing set contains all the tools you need to remove hinges on anything from jewelry boxes to castle keeps. Requires Dexterity checks made per round: 1 round for small hinges, 5 rounds for door-sized, and 10 rounds for large hinges.

- **Keymaking Set:** This expensive item allows a thief to make duplicates of keys he holds in his possession or from impressions of keys made using a wax pad. The keymaking set is a number of molds, files, small blades, metal-working instruments and the like. It also uses a small oil-burning apparatus for softening and molding metal, so its use is usually restricted to a safe, secure lair where the thief will not be disturbed. Duplicating a key takes 1d4 hours, depending on the size and intricacy of the original. The keymaking set permits the manufacture of poor-to-fair quality soft-metal replicas of keys, which are rough in appearance and do not resemble the work of a professional. However, the duplicate key will open the same locks as the original if the thief makes a successful Dexterity test. The thief always thinks his duplicate is a successful piece of workmanship, of course. Only when it is

actually tried on the appropriate lock(s) will the thief find out for sure.

• **Hacksaw:** Where lockpicks require finesse and time, hacksaws only require time. Blades are constructed by dwarven craftsmen and made of fire-hardened steel. A small lock takes 3 rounds to saw through, a medium lock takes 6 rounds, and a large lock takes 9 rounds or more.

• **Sleep Gas:** There are three levels of potency for our sleeping gas, for small, medium, and large-size creatures. All come in sturdy stoppered flasks that break easily on impact. In liquid form when stoppered, these vials contain enough punch to lay low one creature of the indicated size - Constitution Saving Throw vs DC 14 (or whatever you choose) to avoid the effects.

**Lockpicks:** This allows the rogue to roll with Advantage when attempting to pick a lock.

**Noisemaker:** These are tiny segments of bamboo that contain ordinary salt. When a string on the noisemaker is set on fire and the salt heats up, the device splits apart with a loud smack. Best used when thrown.

**Silent Shoes:** Much stray sound comes from poor shoes. These soft leather shoes are coated with a thick, stretchy substance from the deep jungle. The silent shoes work well in thick forests as well as wet dungeons. +1 bonus to Stealth checks when moving.

**Silk Bodysuit:** Any noise not made by shoes must come from clothes. This black, tight-fitting bodysuit helps thieves hide in shadows. +1 to Stealth checks when moving.

**Gnomish Cloaks:** Unlike cloaks of Elvenkind, these garments are not magical. Their neutral gray color and ingenious gnomish design make their wearer blend readily into shadows. +1 to Stealth checks when NOT moving.

**Climbing Irons:** These bent rods strap comfortably to the legs, allowing a thief to sink the barbed ankles into most any wood surface. Traditionally used by lumbermen,

climbing irons also work very effectively on the corners of wooden buildings. Of course, though they aid climbing, they hamper getaways — I've seen many a thief running bow-legged from a crime scene to avoid bloodying his ankles. Advantage on climbing checks; -10 movement speed while worn.

**Rope Set:** Set includes 200 yards of high-quality, triple-stranded silk rope of Elven manufacture, two foldable grapples, and the spikes and pulleys needed for serious climbing. All of this comes in a lightweight pack. +2 to climbing checks; cannot be used with other climbing gear.

**Earblade:** Though many thieves carry these handy gadgets, most hope never to use them. The earblade is an incredibly keen blade mounted on a spring hinge and resting unobtrusively behind the ear. The earblade's sole use is to deeply score a nooseline placed over a thief's head. Thus, when the gibbet block is dropped, the rope will snap and the thief can escape. Since none can guess which side the noose will be placed on, most thieves buy two of these. 15% chance of discovery; 50% chance of success.

**Spider Poles:** This odd and gangly assortment of metal poles can be collapsed into a small, lightweight bundle. When unfolded, however, the spider-poles can be snapped variously together to form a semi-rigid ladder or articulated frame for scaling walls. +3 bonus to Climb Walls; requires Dex check for assembly/fold up; cannot be used with other climbing equipment.

**Files:** These thin and sturdy files can be easily sewn into the hems of clothing before any thievery is attempted. Then if captured, the thief has a ready means for making an exit from his cell. These files are not to be swallowed and regurgitated under any circumstance. Cut through 1/4 inch square of iron or lesser material in 10 rounds.

**Bladeboots:** Captured thieves are typically stripped of their weapons, but not of their

shoes. If a thief has a shoe for a weapon, odds for escape improve significantly. Solid leather construction, a broad steel blade, and a heel- click trigger mechanism add kick to any escape. Damage is 1d6.

**Marbles:** Pursuers move at 1/2 speed or Dex check for slipping; failed check means they fall prone for 1 round.

**Aniseed:** Stops dogs from tracking for 1d4+1 hours; successful save vs. poison lets trained dog pursue after 1d4+1 rounds.

**Foot Traps:** Pursuers move at 1/2 speed or Dex check; failure means pursuer steps on trap and takes 1d4 damage and reduced movement by 5'.

**Caltrops:** Pursuers move at 1/3 speed or Dex check; failed save halts movement and does 1d4 damage.

• **Disappearing Ink:** Varieties disappear within the hour, day, week, or month, and there is an ink that is invisible until heated over a candle.

## POISONS

I won't be attempting to homebrew any poison systems, as there are plenty of good ones out there. Here's a short list of links:

[https://www.reddit.com/r/DnDBehindTheScreen/comments/87plzk/heres\\_a\\_random\\_poison\\_generator\\_i\\_found\\_a\\_nd/](https://www.reddit.com/r/DnDBehindTheScreen/comments/87plzk/heres_a_random_poison_generator_i_found_a_nd/)

[https://www.reddit.com/r/DnDBehindTheScreen/comments/6r1zpr/pc\\_wants\\_to\\_run\\_a\\_plague\\_doctor\\_need\\_help\\_with/](https://www.reddit.com/r/DnDBehindTheScreen/comments/6r1zpr/pc_wants_to_run_a_plague_doctor_need_help_with/)

[https://www.reddit.com/r/DnDBehindTheScreen/comments/72b6sm/lets\\_build\\_an\\_illegal\\_substance/](https://www.reddit.com/r/DnDBehindTheScreen/comments/72b6sm/lets_build_an_illegal_substance/)

[https://www.reddit.com/r/DnDBehindTheScreen/comments/6umxob/an\\_automated\\_spreadsheet\\_for\\_herbalism\\_al\\_chemy\\_v12/](https://www.reddit.com/r/DnDBehindTheScreen/comments/6umxob/an_automated_spreadsheet_for_herbalism_al_chemy_v12/)

<https://www.reddit.com/r/DnDBehindTheScreen/comments/637an8/>

[the great big random d100 list of poisons dd5e/](#)





# CHAPTER 8 - LAW AND PRISONS

## WORKING ON A CHAIN GANG

Your party has been found guilty of the crimes they committed (or not, everyone loves a good frame-up) and has been given an unusual sentence. Instead of a fine, public shaming, servitude or the gallows, they have been ordered to serve their time in a Penitentiary. Penance, you see, is good for the soul, and increases moral fiber.

They are transported, in chains, and under magical suppression if necessary, under heavy guard to the Place of Punishment. This can take whatever form you'd like, and location is very important to set the tone. Here's a short list of ideas to prime your imagination. Get creative!

**The Island** - Set on a remote island, this place is half prison, half work-camp. The guards are on horseback, and the surrounding terrain is formidable and deadly - a jungle perhaps, or a fell swamp.

**The Underground Hellhole** - A place of stone and metal, without softness or soul. A vast underground complex half prison, half mines. The work is brutal and the guards, unforgiving.

**The City** - A baroque compound in the heart of a bustling city or capitol, the sounds of the streets serve as a constant goad to the imprisoned who labor on behalf of their free neighbors.

**The Barrens** - A wooden compound in the vast wilderness, remote and subject to harsh winters and sweltering summers. The work here is largely heavy labor, and there is nowhere to run.

Once they have arrived, they will be met by more guards, mages, dogs and archers, just

to name the basics. An overwhelming show of force will be necessary to communicate to the party that escape is not an option, and that any attempts will be met with deadly force. "Show, don't tell" is our maxim as DMs, and showing some new fish making a break for it and being cut down (especially if its a magical attack) will go a long way into impressing the impotence of their situation.

## MEET THE CELLIES

Prison is about survival, and like any good D&D campaign, it needs strong NPCs to keep the drama moving. Factions of prisoners, grouped for survival, is the most common thing we've all seen a million times in our media, and its a viable conceit. What's more fun than some gangs? Hell, I wrote a massive post on them, so I'm right there with you. But don't neglect the lone wolves. Those prisoners that everyone either defers to, or brags about killing, or whispers about in fear. Sprinkle a few throughout your Dramatis Personae to give it a bit of spice. Don't neglect the hapless ones either, or the weirdos, or the sycophants. Not everyone is a thug, and it would be boring if they were.

I'd create a nice list of factions and solo NPCs. Maybe 4-6 factions and maybe 6-10 solo. Then I'd make a nice flowchart showing who's on top, who are allies, who are enemies, who owes whom, and connect it all together into a web of relationships. Think about the dynamic of this web. What's the history here? What has led up to the current state-of-play? Where does this web of power and relationships stand, right now, as your PCs walk into it? Figure that out, and the story will write itself. Introduce one NPC and let the party react and you are off to the races. You need do nothing but simply \*react\*. Knowing the web, you can react with some semblance of authority, and won't feel like you are making too much up on-the-fly. A simple flowchart! Use them in all your

campaigns, and you'll look like you actually know what you are doing ;)

### WHAT WE HAVE HERE, IS FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE

We've talked about the prisoners, and now we need to talk about the authorities. The Warden, the Guards, and whomever else you'd like to drop into the mix. Depending on the setting and tone, you could have any number of interesting NPCs be a part of the prison staff. Torturers, psychologists, clerics of interesting deities, mages with specialized spell packages to help protect the prison, or minister to the prisoners, or any paradigm in-between.

There will be cliques within the staff, as their are with any organization. Make a new flowchart. The Staff Roster. Then start linking their relationships and cliques. Maybe Tom Terrington and his night staff take it a bit easier on the prisoners than the day staff does. Maybe Tom himself has a beef with another guard, or doesn't get along with his boss. Whatever. Create the web.

You'll need to figure out one more thing about the Powers That Be - their prejudices. Oh yes. This is the most important bit of information you can have. This allows you to know, at-a-glance, how the guards will treat the prisoners, and most especially, how they will treat your PCs. Maybe ol' Tom really fuckin hates Dwarves, and doesn't trust any of them, and even though your PC's Dwarf is a really nice guy, he's about to have a bad time of it. How will the party react to feeling helpless?

### I'M NOT LOCKED IN HERE WITH YOU, YOU'RE LOCKED IN HERE WITH ME!

You know the state-of-play now. All your webs are in place. Now how do you make this fun? Most people will claim that rolling dice, killing things, and getting treasure is all

players care about, but we know that's mostly bullshit. People are a lot more flexible and clever than you think, and there is fun to be found in the most unlikely of places.

A prison session (or two) won't have much dice rolling. There can be fights, of course, mostly of the unarmed, or improvised-weapon variety, but skill checks will be uncommon, I think, and life as a felon will be mostly roleplay, I think.

Prison life is harsh and is probably a lot like war - boredom and routine punctuated by moments of sheer terror. You should set a schedule for the prison. A timetable of daily life. When to get up, when to eat, when to work, when to sleep. Repeating this schedule, daily, over and over again, mixed with whatever roleplay occurs, is the key to creating this idea of being locked in one place. You should strive to make this experience unpleasant. Does this contravene that mantra of Must Be Fun? Possibly. What's important here, is that the party hates being in prison, and never wants to go back.

This is the key, you see? Curbing the reckless, the thoughtless, and the stupid actions of our parties isn't done with time-skips, avoidance, or handwaves. It requires penance, paid in full.

### GET BUSY LIVING OR GET BUSY DYING

So how long do you leave them in prison? In game-time? Months? Years? Well that depends on the crime, of course, and now much you want to impress upon your players that actions have consequences. What about real-time? I'd say no more than three sessions, tops. After you've established the day-to-day routine of the mundane and harsh life inside the prison, you can start to time-skip a bit. Yes, I know what I said, but if you are going to be using this as penance, then time becomes very important, but serving Fun still remains. A session of the

mundane makes the narrative come alive. It shows the party that penalties have weight. But after you've put them through that grinder, you can start to speed up, and introduce moments of drama, shock, suspense, and comedy as the weeks, months, and years tick by. Whatever the methods and time used, there will come a time when the party has served its time and is being released.

Freedom. How very sweet it is. You as the DM need to have advanced the world in their absence. Things have changed. The world keeps turning, and the party may be coming out to a very different world indeed. Make sure you make these changes, so the party understands that not only have they had to pay penance, but that the world moved on without them.

Now you can have gobs of storylines that can play out. Who comes to meet them at the gates? What do they want? Maybe no one shows up. Maybe enemies are waiting for them. Maybe lovers and friends and family has died or endured radical change. Maybe the villain has already won and the party missed it. Whatever occurs, they have to live in this new paradigm, and one thing is certain - your players will never forget the experience.



## CHAPTER 9 - GUILDS

Thieves Guilds are very iconic in this game. Never mind that they probably didn't exist in history (that we know about. Illuminati confirmed?). They are fun to run as a DM and fun for players, too, because they generally get fed missions that can have a mix of all the story elements offered by the game; stealth, combat, intrigue and puzzle-solving.

### SO WHAT ELEMENTS COMPRISE A GUILD?

Well, as usual, we have to ask ourselves some questions.

- What is the organizational structure of the Guild?
- How much control does the Guild exert over the society in which it's found?
- What are the Guild's activities?

- What kind of security does the Guild have in place to protect itself and its assets?
- How does the Guild gather information?
- What kinds of assets does the Guild control?
- Does the Guild have any conditions of entry for new members?
- What kinds of activities can I have my Rogues do while working for the Guild?

## GUILD STRUCTURE

These can take many forms. There is the traditional "Mafia" style Guild where the bosses have been in power for a long time; there are loose collections of street thieves that change leadership very often; there are "blind" Guilds where you never know who you are working for (a lot of Assassins Guilds work like this); or any other organizational structure that you see fit. If you are looking for a more "Mafia" type Guild (probably the most common, as we are familiar with it), then you could possibly structure it like this:

**Level 1** – These rogues are not officially part of the Guild as of yet. They haven't proven themselves, and as such usually work in Street Crimes or as runners for Narcotics rackets. Sometimes they work as muscle for Protection, Prostitution or Gambling rackets.

**Level 3** – These rogues are now officially part of the Guild and are given jobs in one of the rackets at an entry level. They must give up a cut of any profits they earn to their immediate boss(es). This can be upwards of 75% of the take.

**Level 5** - These rogues are now trusted members. They are generally given roles in one or more of the rackets, and are in charge of overseeing the lower level rogues that work for them. They still pay a cut of their profits to the Guild, but this is generally at a lower rate, say 40% or 50%.

**Level 7** - These are the mid-level bosses. The "Sergeants" of the Guild. They generally serve as advisers to the Level 9s and oversee all

the smaller rackets. They pay 30% to the Guild.

**Level 9** - These are the racket bosses. They oversee the actual logistics of the Guild activities and make sure they are profitable and secure. They pay around 10% to the Guild.

**Level 13** - These are the real bosses. They don't pay profits and they oversee usually more than one of the rackets and usually run the Security and Intelligence branches

**Level 17** - These are the advisers to the Guild leader. They don't pay profits and they generally split the running of the Guild branches between them. If there are any Assassins, they run these as well.

**Level 20 (or higher)** - This is the Guild leader. They know all the pieces of the puzzle and control all the lower level bosses and ultimately decide the direction of the Guild and reap the most profits. Most guild leaders strive for anonymity and even their own Guild do not know who they are. Some are masquerading as political leaders or businessmen(or women). The character of Gus from "Breaking Bad" is a great example of this.

If you wanted to run a more loose style, you could have maybe 2 or 3 levels of participation, and give them names to keep them straight. Let's just make something up right now.

Let's say you've decided your guild will be a street gang, called the 9th Street Razorbacks. Any newcomers and those who have only been hanging around for a year or so are called Swine, and are treated pretty poorly, and given the worst jobs. These could be your Level 1s and 2s. Those who have stuck around and stayed loyal are called the Bloody Boars and have varying degrees of autonomy to make sure the guild makes money. These could be your level 3s to 8s. The really smart and cunning Rogues that are still around and have "made their bones"

would run the guild in a loose confederation of leadership, called The Hogs, with a lot of squabbling, and sometimes some killing to keep everyone sharp. Once a year they elect The Razor, who gets to decide how the yearly take is split up among all the members, and gets to review any rules (if any) that the Guild has, and make changes. After that, The Razor's title is purely honorary, and he (or she) can be challenged on decisions by any of the other Hogs.

A more compartmentalized, Assassins-type Guild could work like a "blind ladder" of power. With one powerful "Grandmaster of Assassins" (as called in the 1e PHB) controlling a whole network of assassins while keeping their identity secret from the others. Lower assassins would be controlled by the one above them in the "ladder". Orders would trickle down from the Grandmaster and contracts would be either provided by the Grandmaster or any of the others in the ladder (who would be sourcing their own from the populace). Below a certain level, say level 5, are the low-level assassins, who just do as they are told and only raise in rank when one of the higher-level assassins is killed and a spot opens on the ladder. All communication would be clandestine, either through a dead drop (a neutral, usually secret, location that can hold written messages in secret until picked up), or through spells like Message or Sending or some other means of distant, anonymous communication.

Really the choice is up to you. Be creative and think like a criminal. What's going to be the safest, easiest way to make money and stay safe?

## GUILD CONTROL

You need to decide how much power your Guild has. Are they brand new, scrambling for power and influence? Maybe they have been around awhile, but not secure, fighting

for more territory and wealth among a host of others doing the same? Or is it an old and powerful Guild, that has the city sewn up, with politicians and wealthy patrons under their control?

The decisions you make about your Guild's control will dictate how much security they have, the types and amount of information it receives and the types of activities it does to make money. Remember that your Guild does not have to be static, it can become more powerful or it can lose power, and running several Guilds in the same area amid a shifting "political" landscape can be extremely rewarding and provide entire campaign arcs worth of story or at least be a driving force in the background of others.

**The New Meat** - What organization? This is just one local, loosely affiliated gang. Their power even over their own members is limited. Surely there are other similar gangs around, and perhaps larger criminal organizations on the rise/fall. These Guilds, if they can truly be called that, come and go with surprising (and bloody) speed. Only the strong and the smart survive. Any PCs wishing to start their own Guild should begin at this level. Let them fight for survival, and it will make a great story whether they rise to the top, or go down in flames.

**The Upstarts** - The Guild is getting large and organized enough to cover a larger area. They probably have a small headquarters, maybe the basement of a seedy tavern, or the backroom of some Inn or shop. Authorities know that the Guild exists and are willing to try and stop them. Most watchmen don't hesitate to intervene, but some are already on the take. There may be multiple rival organizations. They might try and absorb these others or go to bloody war for a bigger slice of the pie.

**The Locals** - The criminal organization is getting more serious now. A whole area of



town is known to be theirs, or their influence is more diffusely felt across the entire town. There are 2-3 Guild houses in the area, but the population also knows to stay away from them. Protection rackets abound. They actively (and violently) encourage fences and independent criminals to join up or stay away. The Watch start having second thoughts about responding to incidents in areas known to be controlled by the group. If there are still rival organizations, they know the boundaries of their territories. Border clashes are probably frequent, unless some form of truce is put in place. People who live in the Locals zone of control actively protect

the Guild by informing on any activity that might hurt them, or report on any strangers in their streets. They will mostly refuse to help the Watch, but if pressured heavily, might turn on the Guild, but will beg for protection.

**The Family** - At this level, the guild can commit crimes and make sure they get no follow-up from the authorities. Extremely high-profile incidents still get investigated, but the Guild and the Watch have a mutual understanding. Townspeople are acutely aware of the problem, but live in fear. There are at least a dozen Guild houses that everyone knows about. The organization's priorities and activities are felt throughout the city. Corrupt or fearful authorities downplay the problem. Over half of the businesses are directly or indirectly controlled by the Guild and their wealth is formidable. There may only be 1 or 2 other Guilds at this level and they most likely have long-standing truces in place, but war is inevitable and probably breaks out every few years, just to keep things tight. New Guilds are actively hunted and destroyed and no new Rogues can operate in the city without them finding out and either recruiting or killing the newcomers.

**The Institution** - The government knows that cooperation with the Guild ensures relative peace in the city. Some idealistic guards and authorities still think they're free from the Guild's influence, but they are in the minority and tend to vanish mysteriously in the night. At this point, there are few or no rival criminal organizations in town. Nearly 100% of the businesses are controlled by the Guild and nothing goes in or goes out that they don't know about and make a profit from. New Rogues are recruited or killed and informers are rampant. Protection paid to the Guild is no longer thugs at the door. The Guild simply takes its cut from the annual taxes collected by the government.

There is little bloodshed, and any new Guilds are squashed immediately and publicly. People don't live in open fear, for the Guild has been there for so long that they don't realize there is any other way to live, and they instinctively avoid places that they should and any criminal shenanigans are quickly reported to "known persons" in the Guild. The Guild members have no need to hide and the upper echelon often live lavish, open lifestyles and are seen as benevolent members of the populace. Guild houses abound and members are never more than a few blocks from a place of safety and welcome.

## GUILD SECURITY

Security simply means the guards and physical (and magical) protections in and around the Guild house itself. The more control a Guild has, the more security they will need. For New Meat, this is nothing more than a couple of bruisers outside the tavern, but at the other end of the spectrum, like the Family or the Institution, there are hundreds, maybe even thousands of security personnel scattered around the area, protecting Guild houses, important businesses and other areas of importance.

Guards can take the form of any class or combination of class. Rogue/Wizard is particularly effective as backup to the main units of Fighters or Fighter/Rogues. Rogue/Clerics work to keep the troops healthy, and some Rogue/Barbarians are on hand when shit gets real. Dogs and other wild animals also might serve as shock troops.

Physical security includes reinforced metal doors, bars on windows, and architecture that provides safety, like lookout posts, murder holes, portcullises, and traps. Traps abound in Guild Houses, mostly death-type or confining-type traps. Some Guilds have entire sections that serve as false entrances and are laden with traps. They are usually

very well hidden and have a high DC to disarm. Magical traps are very likely. Simple Alarm spells, refreshed 3 times a day, can sometimes provide more security than all the stone walls and poison-arrow traps in the world.

## INTELLIGENCE

There are many ways to gather intelligence. All of it is vital and all of it can be used and manipulated by a cunning Guild leader to keep the Guild healthy, wealthy and wise.

**Hometown Eyes** - Locals who are afraid of the Guild provide invaluable intelligence on Watch patrols, strange newcomers, any criminal activity not perpetuated by the Guild, and anything else that seems like it would be important.

**The Fearful** - Those who pay protection to the Guild or who are being blackmailed or have a kidnapped ally will provide intelligence to the Guild in exchange for many things - not being killed, not being embarrassed or the return of a loved one.

**Spies** - These are sometimes high-level Rogues that are embedded into various areas of the government, other Guilds (other Thieves Guilds, too), and the military. These spies are almost always "deep operatives", in that they have been planted in their areas for a long time and are usually above suspicion. Inserting new spies is a dangerous and tricky proposition. They work directly for the Guild and are in positions to assassinate powerful figures, so most have assassin's skills as well as Rogue's. Not all spies are actual rogues though. Some are just people who are in no position to say no to the Guild, or are doing so for money, power, revenge, or some other reason. These spies are sometimes highly trusted, but because they are not full Guild members they will always be suspect if things go sour, and these types of spies often vanish and meet messy ends in such cases. These intelligence networks take



time, influence, and money to set up and constant vigilance to control. New Guilds get their intelligence from the people they intimidate and threaten, while more powerful Guilds use all their wealth and clout to accomplish the same ends.

## GUILD ASSETS

These will also directly tie in to the level of control exerted by the Guild. Assets, in this definition, encompass actual cash money, or other treasure-type wealth, magic items and weapons/armor, but also the myriad goods produced or secured by the businesses they control. They can take endless forms, from ships, to horses, to wagons, to food and water and alcohol, all the way up to being able to call upon government troops for the very powerful Guilds, who treat the military as their own private armies. The list is endless. How many assets the Guild has means how many things they need to protect. The larger the Guild, the more ways to bring them down, but also the more ways they have of stopping you.

## CONDITIONS OF ENTRY TO THE GUILD

Every time I see someone wanting to design a Guild they always talk about tests. What they want to make the new Guild members do to prove they should belong. I have done this myself. I don't know where we get these ideas, but I have discovered that they are pointless because they are toothless. If your Rogue fails the test, will you do what a real Guild would do an either "jump them out" (beat the hell out them and kick them out) or kill them? We all know that's probably not going to happen. Even if they fail, DM's will often devise another test for the Rogue, in hopes that they do pass. The DM wants them to join the Guild, because that is the whole point.

So dispense with the tests altogether. Time and loyalty should be the "test". If the Rogue hangs around, and does what they are told,

and don't bring the heat down too hard on the Guild, then they are in. I have kicked Rogues out of Guilds for bringing half the City Watch to a Guild house on occasion but that is a rare thing to happen, and actually worked in the long run, so if this does happen, be prepared to roll with it and take the hard line.

## GUILD MISSIONS

So you've got your Guild in place. You've figured out the Security, the Rackets, the Intelligence and the Structure. So what do you do with it? How do you turn all that into stuff for your Rogues to do?

You should devise missions/quests/jobs based on the Guild's activities. A Guild that doesn't run narcotics isn't going to send your Rogue on a mission to pick up 50 bales of trenchweed. They need to make sense, so random stuff won't really work. At least, not totally random. Devising escalating lists of missions dependent on Rogue level, and activity type is probably the easiest to do, and each level of escalation can have a random element to it if you desire. See Chapter 4 – Rackets, for specific plot hooks.

# APPENDICES: NPCs AND PLOT HOOKS

This is a compilation of all the NPCs and plot hooks found throughout this guide, as well as a bunch of new ones that I created to ensure that you have a well-rounded toolbox!

## NPCs

**Enchen Misk:** Enchen is an old hand at the game, and has worked some big jobs in his storied past. He takes his jobs with care, and does his due diligence, making sure he has multiple ways in and out of a location. His true expertise is safe-cracking, though he would qualify as a Master Trapsmith if he was ever stupid enough to get himself saddled to a Guildhouse. He is a brute-force cracker - using acids, drills, and magical items to bypass the boxes he is trying to break into. If he cannot complete the job safely, in situ, then he has a large Sack of Holding that he will use to spirit the box away in (if its possible to remove from the location). He knows a few high-level Fences that take his goods and keep his name off the street. Quirk - He refuses to kill animals (has developed some sleeping potions that he uses instead)

**Bob Dabalina:** Bob has a taste for danger, and often goes after locations that have unusually high levels of traps or magical security. Styling himself as a Master Evader, he does have a nose for bypassing and breaking traps, but his recklessness sometimes means he's burnt the location before he can even get to the goods. This reputation has started to haunt him, and the Guilds have been warned to keep him out of their "pickup crews", lest the whole organization go down with him. Quirk - He is a true kleptomaniac and cannot help but pick up items that are either well-guarded,



important-but-misplaced, or on someone's actual person.

**Wuloo Upp** - Wuloo is new to the game, but has some serious physical skills. Once a trained dancer, he has honed his skills to allow him to climb and hide in nearly any location he wants, for hours at a time. He once spent 6 hours inside a clothes chest just to gain access to a politician's study (and her hidden jewels). His lockpicking and trap-removal skills are still lacking, and as such, he relies more on his physical prowess and social engineering to gain access to the goods he wishes to steal. Quirk - He cannot stand the sight of blood and will avoid all violent confrontations, if possible. If not possible, he will faint in fear for 1d6 rounds.

**Maggy the Rat** : A scrawny woman that can always be found in the same booth of the

same tavern in the same damn town. It seems she never moves. Still. Somehow. She manages to be one of the most well-connected people in the region. She can get you anything, and she will buy anything. **Quirks:** She talks as if she is the town itself, the town is her blood and soul. She always bites the second coin she is handed, and she smells everything else that is handed to her. They say she can smell magic, and especially foul magic. **Motivation:** Not moving, for the rest of her life, she is content where she is. She manages this by using all the usual bar patrons as mules for the goods, in return they receive settlements on their tabs.

**Herriot Gunther the Fifth :** Young son of some lowly noble family that fancies being a badboy. He is a real brat, doesn't care about money really, as long as it sounded like a good barter. He has no limit as to what he thinks is "too hot", and he can be sold any high-end goods, he doesn't deal in small low-value products though. **Quirks:** He wants code names, if you don't use them you pay double, or get half. He wears a mask and you can only meet them in what a noble brat assumes to be a "shady" place, but most are quite rich still. **Motivations:** He wants to have cool stories with his friends, and the thrill is the only thing that counts. He has some really powerful friends and he can get rid of any high-end item you can get your hands on. Nobles always want fancy stuff, regardless of who it once belonged to - someone who pays in favors instead of gold and someone who is unknown and only uses a drop box system and mouth-to-mouth messages

**Chen :** Most fences are unwilling to deal with magical items due to their volatile nature and that their powerful owners often have the means to track them. When one steals such an item Chen is the one to contact. He/she/it? only deals in magic items and nothing is too hot or too

dangerous for them. If the item is interesting enough they will even come to you. **Quirks:** Chen never shows their face or even their skin. They dress in hooded robes with scarves and gloves as well as magical means of concealment, and speak with a mellow androgynous tone. Due to this mystery rumors abound as to

Chen's true identity and what they want with these items. While they are most likely just a very cautious dealer, if you ask in any tavern in the seedier parts of town you'll get rumors of all sorts claiming they are a worm-that-walks, a lich, a dragon, or a construct that eats the items. **Motivations:** Chen's motivations are unclear, but its interest in items is quite unpredictable. Some seemingly bland items fetch large offers from him while others that seem nearly identical receive lower. Everything he buys goes into a small bag of holding, never to be seen again. All sales to Chen are final, but unfortunately it turns out that an item that was sold to them is needed by the party. Chen is obviously resistant, but may be willing to trade, however the item he requests seems almost impossible to procure.

**Jeremiah Mole:** This young human has a deft hand and a keen eye for forgeries. He was kidnapped by a rogue's crew and bargained his way free by agreeing to forge withdrawal slips for his father's bank account for the thieves. They kept him around and appreciated him (unlike his father) and so he stayed with them and now is forging paperwork for them on a daily basis. He is naive and eager-to-please, and doesn't know that eventually someone is going to get caught and he is going to be killed for his mistake.

**Melly Seph:** This gnomish woman has been making counterfeit art pieces for decades and working with a crew who swaps them for real art out of museums and private collections. She has become very wealthy

selling the real goods to shady buyers, and is getting set to retire. She has a few bad habits and a weakness for handsome Elves, and flattery will get you everywhere with her. She has stopped working heists and now only takes custom contracts from a select clientele.

**Also Unwinch:** This dwarven engineer is the finest metalsmith of his generation. He could have run his own Forgeclan if he desired, but instead he slept with the Clan Chief's daughter and was exiled from his homeland. He now plies his trade in one of the larger cities and creates counterfeit presses for coin currency. His work is among the finest of the Royal Coinsmiths, and in the last 10 years none of his work has ever been detected as anything but genuine. He gambles, however, and owes a lot of money to a local Rogues Guild, and he has been secretly counterfeiting his debt-sum to pay them off and then he plans on fleeing.

**Elena Valentine:** This "mack" is a stunning 18 Charisma Elven woman who's beauty and style makes her the center of attention wherever she goes. This makes her the perfect grifter, and her marks are cheating husbands and wives, foolish young men and women, and those who cannot keep their heads when they drink. She "loves 'em and leaves 'em", taking their valuables and making sure a record of their dalliance is saved and can be used for future blackmail. She will sometimes "sing" for other grifters that she knows, and she has a real knack for storytelling, but often has to play down her looks so as not to distract the mark. Her weakness is her arrogance. She believes herself to be infallible. She mistrusts other Elves.

**Hooley Dooley:** This grifter is a true flim-flam man. He's human and old, and has forgotten more scams than he's invented. He is a master of disguise and mimicry and enjoys taking down the rich and haughty. He

has run many crews over the years, some more successful than others, and done some prison time now and again. Now, he's ready to retire and looking for that last big score. His weakness is his nostalgia and he's getting soft and maudlin about his life as an outlaw. He mistrusts children.

**Eightrock Valley:** This halfling man runs short cons strictly, not having the patience for the big store games. He is quick-witted and quick-tongued and often disguises himself as a disabled child to garner more sympathy from his marks. He has a lot of friends, and generally knows all the local Fences and he pays handsomely for tips about new merchants in town - he hates all businessmen (including the Fences he sweet talks, but needs) and will sometimes let emotion cloud his judgment. He mistrusts Humans.

**Jerah Minx:** is an old and crafty "dip". He usually plays the victim of some disability and will often do "bump & lifts" as he staggers down the street, oftentimes pretending to be intoxicated. If confronted, he feigns injury and calls out for help against his "attacker".

**The Muddle:** are a street gang of children under the age of 12. They move as a pack, pretending to play (usually with a ball or some other distracting object). They will surround victims and bump and shove them as hands and knives lift and slash at valuables and purses. The goods are passed through multiple layers of "runners", so if one is caught, the goods are long gone.

**Alaysia Kresh:** is a former actress turned pickpocket. Her crimes revolve around seduction and distraction. She hones in on drunken, wealthy patrons and lets them flirt with her while she surreptitiously goes through their pockets. If caught, she cries out that she has been assaulted and demands that someone defends her honor.

**Melly Finch:** is a low-level street dealer. She is a tweaker, and has taken to skimming from the doses. She runs a 4-person crew, and none of them trust her. When she is angry or jonesing, she gets delusional and has killed a few people based on her crumbling sanity. When she's relaxed, she lies a lot, making herself seem more important. She flops in an abandoned warehouse and is hard to wake.

**Setaya Uusch:** is a mid-level street boss, who runs 4 crews. He is a cruel and impatient man, prone to gutting anyone who pisses him off, and has no time for excuses or mistakes. He has grown wealthy at the expense of creating a huge amount of enemies. He has a weakness for drink and can often be found in the arms of one of his favorite prostitutes.

**Xavier Green:** is a wealthy drug lord who owns over a dozen farms and brings tens-of-thousands of gp to market every week. His patience is as legendary as his temper, and he has been systematically converting or destroying all who would rival his market share. When angry, he goes into full CE behavior, murdering and destroying in a swath of outrage. When relaxed, he is a kindly and gracious host, and has given back to the communities that he controls with outreach programs, education and health services, and throws a lavish block party several times a year.

**Ashok Mob:** "King" Mob, as he styles himself, is an upstart smuggler, who thinks he is better than he is. His expertise level is 4, and he specializes in the smuggling narcotics across the Empire's borders, and has mostly gotten lucky, but has attributed that to his skills. The problem is, he is pilfering from the goods he smuggles and is now a full-blown junkie. He has friends in very low places, and if things continue the

way they are, he is going to end up dead or worse.

**Cariana Ketch:** Cariana is a smuggler with an expertise of level 8. She deals primarily is "live trade" - people smuggling (mostly slaves). She is a cruel and capricious master, and often murders anyone who steps out of line (this includes clients). Her reputation as a lunatic has only served to heighten the mythology surrounding her, and she charges a premium for her services, as she has access to individuals that most do not get the chance to even get near - her brother is a high-ranking politician and he funnels prisoners who have committed minor crimes into her smuggling network.

**Garth Miller:** Despite the nerdy sounding name, Garth is a level 10 smuggler, and specializes in smuggling live creatures - mostly dangerous monster types, for the wealthy and the odd. His rates are exorbitant, citing the high cost of security and care (mostly food), but he has never lost a shipment, and has never been caught. He employes a half-dozen adventuring groups to secure "beast flesh" for him, and they go through several layers of "blinds" so they never know exactly who has employed them. Garth has one weakness - he cannot say "no" to a child.

**The Notorious D.O.G.:** This thug is a local legend and is both revered and feared by the local population. The rogue controls a fairly large territory and makes a nice living running protection and extortion rackets. The thug owns a large pack of dogs trained to attack upon command and uses these to terrify those who would defy him. He often lets the pack run loose through the neighborhoods at night in order to keep the population in check. He has a major flaw - he cannot resist a pretty face.

**Markham Dubbs:** This rogue was once a bodyguard for the Grandmaster of the Twin

Hills Guild but after his charge was murdered and the Guildhouse razed, he has fallen on hard times and now survives mugging rich patrons who stagger home drunk. He is a quiet, intense man, and has no compunctions against murdering a victim who is recalcitrant. His major flaw is that he has an unnatural hatred for Elves, who he believes were behind the attack on his Guild.

**Nick the Pig:** This thug is a towering human, over 7' tall and upwards of 400 lbs. His Kingpin-dom comprises nearly half the city and his favorite method of executing people is dropping them from the tops of tall buildings in pairs and betting on who will hit the ground first. His rackets are innumerable, but include prostitution, narcotics, smuggling, and slavery. He has a loud booming voice and a hearty laugh, which he saves for those he is about to murder. His major flaw is his vanity.

**Grak Deplak:** This halfling "beggar" is the nuisance of the neighborhood and is not well-liked. However, he secretly runs the spy network and has intel on nearly all the major and intermediate players in the city's power struggle. He has a high-pitched, nasally voice, and can be quite rude. This is all a show, and in reality he is a thoughtful, deeply insightful person with a high intelligence and an eidetic memory.

**Mister Smith:** This mid-level spy is as unassuming and generic looking as you can get. He excels in infiltration and social-engineering. Most people can barely remember his face, let alone his name. Mister Smith is a master of disguise, but rarely needs to use his skills, as he has a host of magic items that allow him to create illusions and prestidigitations to aid in his role.

**Andrea Greywall:** This double-agent is both a rogue and a politician, and feeds information back to the Guilds about

political maneuverings and occasionally tells the government about shady Guild-dealings. She hasn't been caught yet, but the circle of suspicion is closing in on her, and she is getting ready to run. She has too much value to be killed, so a kidnapping is in the works, once the evidence of her betrayal is clear.

## PLOTHOOKS

### PLOT HOOKS FOR BURGLARS

- The party rogue has been contacted by a local rogue to assist a burglar on a dangerous heist. The PC's reputation precedes them, of course, and this will in no way go pear shaped.
- A number of prominent locals have had their wealthy estates burglarized and a large bounty has been posted. The burglar, maddeningly, has not left behind any evidence except for a single drop of dried blood on a windowsill.
- The Tinker's Guild has announced the "Titanium2000", an "unbreakable" safe, and has placed it in the town square, bolted to a large hunk of iron, and inside has been placed 10 bars of platinum. The Guild has said anyone who can crack the safe, can keep the valuables. The safe will be on display for the next 7 days. The local Thieves Guild is beside themselves with competition-fever.
- The local bank/money-changer has been robbed and there is suddenly a financial crisis in the area, as the loan records have gone missing in addition to a vast sum of reserve currency.
- The party's base of operations has been burglarized! All stashed/hidden items have been taken and the local Thieves Guild has no idea who did the job, as it was not sanctioned.
- Someone's been robbing tombs of their valuables and leaving cursed objects in their place. Traps have been turned around or twisted, so that they are now designed to

keep any intruders inside the location, and not out.

### PLOT HOOKS FOR FENCES

- A fence is looking for a specific set of items, an order has been placed by someone important. These items are in a dangerous location.
- A fence has been robbed and beaten quite badly. Until the culprits are found, no one will be able to sell their goods in the area.
- Next time you go looking for a fence you are ambushed by several thugs who demand to know who you have been talking to - the fence thinks the party has squealed on them.
- A Paladin has come sniffing around, posing as a Rogue, and the fence has gotten nervous but doesn't know the "rogue's" true identity. A bounty has been placed on the Paladin's head.
- A fence had a problem with another client, he asks you to take care of this issue. If successful, promises to introduce the party to his boss, who can give them more work.
- The strongest local Guild has declared the Fence a rat, and has demanded their head. A high bounty has been placed, and the gratitude of the Guild will be forthcoming.
- A fence is gone, a second is there to inform you he hasn't seen the fence in a week. Investigation might reveal that a local gang has kidnapped him and is demanding a Guild ransom.
- The local fence has suddenly tanked their prices, claiming a glut on the market. Investigation might reveal there's an adventuring party in the area with a lot of loot.
- The local fence has suddenly raised their prices on narcotics, claiming an "interested party" is willing to pay top coin. There is no buyer. The fence has become an addict.

### PLOT HOOKS FOR FORGERS

- Someone has been changing birth records and due to a death in the nobility, there is a crisis about succession.
- A law-enforcement officer, a stranger, and a lawyer show up at a party member's house claiming that the property belongs to this stranger. The stranger has a deed with his name on it, and ID papers with the same name as the party member.
- The party tries to spend some currency they had stashed in the bank and discover half of it is counterfeit.
- The party's travel pass (purchased legally), upon being examined by a patrol, is found to be forged.
- A party member buys a piece of expensive art, only to discover that its counterfeit when an expert comes to appraise it.
- A party member's magic item doesn't work the next time they go to use it. Its a counterfeit, the real one stolen and swapped some time in the recent past.

### PLOT HOOKS FOR GRIFTERS

- A friend of the party has been scammed and has discovered where one of the grifters is living. He sends a letter asking for help. Little does he know this con-man is part of a large group (20 rogues) who are here for the season.
- A party member is approached by a child who runs a short-con, and if the kid gets away with it, will attempt to hit the same party member again the next day.
- A party member overhears the catch for a Big Store game, and if ignored, the grifters instead attract a local NPC (who will later be seen leaving town with no possessions).
- Local law enforcement has uncovered a grifter ring in the city and has put up warning posters in the neighborhoods. A local doppelganger decides to have some fun and implicates a party member in the ring by planting false evidence and then tipping off

the authorities. The doppelganger has already replaced one of the ring members.

- A party member is approached by a mack and is subject to a seduction attempt. If successful, the rogue will flee with all the coinwealth he/she can carry. If caught, the rogue will fight back to the death.
- Someone scammed the King! Wanted posters, "Dead or Alive" for a sizable reward, have been posted both in the local population centers and in the wilderness, nailed to trees. There are 3 names listed on the poster and general descriptions.

### PLOT HOOKS FOR KIDNAPPERS

- A relative/friend of one of the party members has been abducted and a note delivered demanding ransom.
- The King/Queen's son/daughter has been kidnapped, and a lavish reward has been publicly posted.
- The local Guild has had its leader abducted and now there is a political war raging in the streets among competing factions.
- Someone is kidnapping orphans from the local temple. A few bloody clues have been found.
- An allied NPC of the party sends an urgent request to help with the kidnapped spouse of the NPC.
- One of the party members themselves has been kidnapped (good for those sessions where someone can't make it) and ransom demanded.

### PLOT HOOKS FOR PICKPOCKETS

- A team of dips has been working a tavern patronized by the wealthy. One of them has stolen something valuable, rare, and very, very dangerous. A countdown has now started.
- A member of the party discovers that one of their valuables has been stolen and replaced by a counterfeit. An accidental clue has been dropped nearby by the thief.

- An assassin has taken a bold approach and has started \*reverse-pickpocketing\* poisons and explosives into victim's belongings, and then hiding nearby to confirm the kill. (Idea stolen from Fallout? Perish the thought!)
- A party member catches a pickpocket in the act of stealing from them. The dip bursts into tears and relates a sob story about how they have no choice and offers to lead the victim to their boss. This is a lie. There is no boss.
- A party member sees a pickpocket lift a key from a person of authority. The person is not well liked in the area, and there have been rumors surrounding them of clandestine activities.
- A group of pickpockets is discovered to be hiding in the sewers/abandoned areas of the city. They are not human and will become violent if confronted.

### PLOT HOOKS FOR PUSHERS

- A PC's relative owed a lot of money to a dealer, but that relative has died and the dealer has shown up to collect.
- The local monster population has been hooked by the local ruler to keep them in line. But now the supply has dried up and the monsters are getting ready to attack the populace.
- A dealer offers a "free taste" of a new drug to the PCs. It is highly addictive and has psychic effects.
- A local dealer has set up shop right outside the PCs home/business and is attracting all sorts of unwelcome visitors.
- The local ruler has declared that drugs are now legal. Users flood the location and law enforcement is overwhelmed.
- A NPC ally of the party has become a junkie and their life is spiraling out of control.

### PLOT HOOKS FOR SMUGGLERS

- A local museum was just robbed and many valuable artefacts have been stolen. There



are rumors that they are being smuggled out of the city via the sewers, but none of the City Watch is brave (or stupid) enough to venture into the Undercity to find out. The museum proprietor is offering a hefty sum for their return. There is just one (secret) catch - the smuggled items went out through the gate, not the sewers, and a deadly ambush is waiting.

- A distraught man, disheveled and beaten bloody is frantically calling for help on a busy city street. If questioned, he says he escaped from a slave-smuggler and his wife is still being held. He begs for aid and says he has some wealth saved up that he would freely give in exchange for his wife being freed. If he is ignored, a crossbow bolt from a hidden rooftop cuts him down a few rounds later.
- A drug smuggling operation has gone (literally) up in flames, and half of a city block is now ablaze. The smoke from the fire is wafting powerful narcotics into the air and soon the area will be plagued with hallucinations and manic activity. The Watch refuses to investigate (corruption and bribery) and a few locals have died from the toxic fumes.
- A local war has cut off food and aid to a nearby city, and the word has gone out that the city will pay handsomely for anyone who can run food and medicine past the blockade. This is a lie, and is a "honeypot" to catch traitors.
- A Beholder has been captured, subdued, and is being transported via heavy wagon to a rich dilettante who enjoys watching his slaves being killed and eaten by weird creatures. The Beholder's wagon is disguised as a prison wagon and is currently stopped in a street with thick traffic. The Beholder takes its chance and begins to break loose.
- A powerful magic item is being smuggled into a prison, at the request of a powerful rogue who has had enough of incarceration. The party learns of the item's ultimate

delivery destination and has some choices - to inform the authorities, to do nothing, or to try and steal the object for themselves.

### PLOT HOOKS FOR SPIES

- A spy has been hired to steal the "amazing technology" that the party is carrying. The spy will attempt to rob the entire party at once while they sleep.
- A mole has reported that a double-agent is in the city and is looking to foment a rebellion. The PCs overhear the agent stirring up trouble.
- The "beggars network" informs the party that there are many agents of the enemy looking for them.
- A spymaster is looking to retire, but "knows too much". The local government hires the party to eliminate him before he can talk or disappear.
- A rival guild is getting detailed information on a critical resource and crippling the city's economy. The party must find the agent before the economy collapses.
- The party finds a dead spy in the wilderness with critical information, but there's a time-limit before the information becomes useless.

### PLOT HOOKS FOR THUGS

- A party member, separated from the party, is accosted by a mugger who appears to be on some kind of stimulant. The rogue is jumpy and more than likely will turn to violence at the first sign of resistance. This rogue is not alone however. 3 more of his accomplices (also junkies) are hidden in the shadows - 2 with hand crossbows and one with a poisoned blade. If the mugging goes south, the other rogues will attack immediately. If they are killed, the locals (and the law) turn a blind eye. This group of rogues were related to a local politician who disowned them years ago, but upon hearing

of their death, will make it their mission to apprehend the culprits.

- The party spots a group of thugs harassing a local businessman. The man resists and the thugs begin beating him mercilessly. If the party intervenes, the thugs flee and inform their Guild. The party will be paid a visit by some burglars the next night.
- A racketman comes to the party's business or base of operations and tries to sell them "protection". If the party complies, the cost is 100 coins per week. If the party resists, they will find their business or base of operations vandalized upon their next visit. If they still refuse to comply, and unless measures are taken to prevent it, their property will be burned/destroyed.
- A blackmailer has some dirt on the party or one of the party members. They will demand a monthly payment lest the secret get out. If they are assaulted, the blackmailer's crew will show up in force for revenge.
- A local Kingpin has taken notice of the party and has decided they are too dangerous to be allowed to operate in the area. The Kingpin sends crews at the party 3 times. If the party defeats all 3 crews, the Kingpin will begin to hire assassins - each being more deadly than the last.
- A local Kingpin has taken the rare risk of being seen in public. The Kingpin is seen by the locals as a "benefactor". The party and the thug find themselves in the same venue/area. The Kingpin is attacked by rivals and the crowd panics and flees. If the party intervenes, the Kingpin will offer them further work in addition to an award. If the party doesn't, the Kingpin is killed and the power in the local area shifts.

## AFTERWORD

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I hope this book provides you with hours of entertainment and information so that you can run your games in ways that will blow your players' minds. It's been fun writing it.

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