

WINDOW OF THE SOUL FOR THE DEE SANCTION

A Short Adventure in Southwark, early 1572

THE DILEMMA

THOMAS HOWARD, the 4th DUKE of Norfolk, has the means to escape his cell in THE TOWER OF LONDON through sorcery. So he has hatched a plan to secure release—by enchanting a cask of fine wine to be gifted to the QUEEN. But, alas, the enchantment has tainted barrels of ale, driving those poisoned to acts of madness that attract the DEE SANCTION's attention.

THE TASK AT HAND

Agents witness patrons, freshly emerged from THE GORGON INN ❶ on TOOLEY STREET, set upon the occupants of a cart. The brutes attempt to wrestle a baby from the arms of the driver's wife. While calling for help might seem wise, the Agents see that the left eye of each attacker glows with unearthly fire. If Agents involve THE WATCH, they're likely to be blamed for the sorcery as soon as thanked.

DEEP BACKGROUND

THE QUEEN had THOMAS HOWARD imprisoned for his part in the RIDOLPHI PLOT. She had intended to execute the DUKE but is hesitant to do so. So instead, CECIL has left HOWARD to the mercies of PETER CRISP, a cruel jailor with no redeeming features.

HOWARD sought to use sorcery to achieve release, utilising two rites. One allows him to swap bodies for a brief period, and the other imbues those who drink a TAINTED DRAUGHT with the essence of the caster's soul.

The first ritual allows HOWARD to swap bodies with CRISP, but only for brief periods; he rarely gets twenty minutes a day before the hex dissolves. The second ritual involved his creation of a POULTICE. The packet contains sweet herbs and flowers mixed with HOWARD's blood,

hair and fingernails. While in possession of CRISP, HOWARD inserted the package into a barrel of fine wine and had it returned to BREWHOUSE, in SOUTHWARK, along with a note. The note, and a supporting promise of money, requested delivery of the barrel to the Queen herself, suggesting it was misdelivered to THE TOWER.

Unfortunately, JOHN BRISKYN, the vintner, sampled the wine, experienced the side effects, and chose to open it instead—taking the POULTICE for himself. He placed the package in a batch of beer, resealed the small cask, and then forgot about mostly of what happened when the enchantment wore off. However, BRISKYN has continued to use the POULTICE in new barrels to add piquancy to his new, most popular brew—HAY'S GOLD.

THE POULTICE

Consuming anything TAINTED by the POULTICE causes a short-lived attitude change attuned to the soul of those who created it.

The effect kicks in after 1D6+9 MINUTES and lasts 4D12+12 MINUTES (or an hour, whichever you prefer).

Those affected become singular in purpose with deadened senses—almost zombie-like.

The attitudes of those TAINTED mirror facets of HOWARD's desires at the time he cast the ritual.

Repeated use of the POULTICE will continue to cause the taint, but it will lose potency in 1D4+4 WEEKS.

Resist: Agents can resist, but must check UNRAVELLING. Whether successful or not, the Agent absently nibbles on their fingernails for the period of effect.

For the others TAINTED, roll 1D8:

1-3 EXECUTION. Protest for the immediate death of all traitors. Those who defy the Queen and country deserve nothing less. If possible, go to places where authorities secure traitors and protest in person—like outside the gates of the Tower.

Howard's Will: HOWARD can claim CRISP's body and freedom in perpetuity if he can convince someone else

to kill HOWARD. He cannot complete the act himself. The fundamental purpose of the POULTICE was to convince ELIZABETH to kill the traitors imprisoned on her request and put an end to it. HOWARD would swap souls with CRISP before the time of his execution and take permanent possession.

Clue: The WATCH has experienced an upswelling in unruly gathering—at TOWER HILL, south of LONDON BRIDGE, and outside THE TOWER. Crowds seek swift justice for traitors to the Crown and country. The WATCH has identified no specific organisation or driving cause; indeed, where arrested, the individuals are ordinary folk and peculiar in their confusion.

4 TAINT. Spike food. Add something into the mix to excite and enliven those who consume.

Howard's Will: The purpose of the POULTICE itself and the reason that the madness has become so widespread.

Clue: Traders and market-holders who deal in artisanal produce—from bread and cake to seasoned meats and honeyed turnips on a stick—have left customers nauseous, sick, or even dead. Folk have purchased food laced with all kinds of unenticing spices and sauces, including faeces, fine gravel, metal filings, and other unpleasant additions. The vendors swear they know nothing of it, and several apprentices have faced summary dismissal without evidence.

5 FINGERNAILS. Extract fingernails from others; just the pinkie nails will do. Wrestle strangers into submission and extract their nails. Then, combine them with tufts of your hair, blood, grass and mud.

Howard's Will: HOWARD required fingernails from his pinkies combined in the POULTICE for the second ritual. HOWARD's outer fingers are SCABBED and bloody. He removed them while body swapped with CRISP so as not to experience the pain himself.

Clue: The tainted ale has led to a rash of assaults in SOUTHWARK, where assailants have beaten strangers and pulled out their fingernails. Arrested and interrogated, none of those affected has had any notion or excuse for their actions.

6 SMASH. Destroy mirrors and other reflective surfaces, then grind them to dust.

Howard's Will: HOWARD hexed CRISP with a ritual that involved both parties ingestion of powdered mirror fragments. The pieces persist in CRISP's gut. The desire to destroy mirrors is an echo of HOWARD's action.

Clue: Any conference with the WATCH notes acts of vandalism, notably at the GLASS HOUSE, at the Crutched Friars, and amongst goldsmiths (at their workshops and storefronts, identifiable beneath the sign of the Unicorn), near ALDGATE.

7 PLEAD. Ask strangers for forgiveness for whatever slights come to mind; berate them if they refuse or claim ignorance. Consider everyone untrustworthy.

Howard's Will: HOWARD seeks release from his imprisonment and writes letters petitioning for freedom. Only recently has HOWARD realised that CRISP was taking but not delivering his letters.

8 ACRIMONY. Deal with others the way they deserve—distrust, disbelief, disapproval. They deserve harsh treatment and bitter words; they value none but themselves.

Howard's Will: After years of dealing with the dishonesty, HOWARD finally embraced the truth; he can trust no one and those whom he once trusted deserve his venom and spite. Don't believe them. Don't trust them. Don't support them.

A NIGHT ON THE TOWN

A GM can choose to run WINDOW OF THE SOUL as an open, self-contained adventure but could also decide to insert events—notably clues and observations relating to aberrant behaviour—into a campaign. As a one-off, Agents choose TRADECRAFT after the first encounter.

The “ideal” end game for the GM would see HOWARD free in the guise of CRISP, with the jailor himself executed while trapped in HOWARD's body. However, the DUKE fears that the longer it takes for his execution,

the greater the possibility that someone might uncover the plan—the Agents represent that sort of someone!

A **first encounter** plays out as an attack; the Agents witness the assault at night across the river. London has no street lighting, and roads serve both cart and pedestrian with a rutted, slurry-slick surface.

A cart and horse stand in the middle of **TOOLEY STREET**—running east from **LONDON BRIDGE**, moving away from the river along its course. A woman with a babe in arms stands on the back of the cart, calling for help. The cart driver, her husband, lies in the road, held down by two brutes, while a third extracts the poor fellow's fingernails. Finally, a fourth tries to mount the cart to accost the woman.

The brutes attacking might be just thieves, but the Agent with the highest **SUPERNATURALL** notes a baleful blue glow about their left eyes.

Baleful-eyed Brute, 2 Hits (none)

After **6 MOMENTS**, the **POULTICE**'s effect on the brutes fades; the glow dissipates and bewilderment sets in.

A DEVIL HAUNTS THEE

The GM should play up confusion, revulsion, fear and disgust in the survivors, especially if the **BRUTES** managed to disfigure someone. They're all locals; common traders Agents might suspect bewitchment,

possession or some other external force. An Agent making a **SUPERNATURALL** Challenge detects no lingering ensorcellment remains. A **FALTER** inflicts an **AFEARED** Consequence; the Agent suffers a wave of claustrophobia as if confined in a dark space.

The survivors recall sitting in **THE GORGON** enjoying a drink together after a hard day at work. They drank their fill of **A JUG OF ALE**, but nothing so much as to become addled. Next, they woke to the events in the street.

Providing the cart-owner and his family survive, they have nothing to add; the **BRUTES** attacked at random. One is familiar—**CHRISTIAN BLOOM**, a wheelwright—but they bear no ill-will to each other or, at least, they didn't. The carter will back any call for arrest.

GM Note: Drinking from a common source inflicted them all with the need to extract **FINGERNAILS**. From a **TAINTED** mug of ale, the more common outcome would see a drinker afflicted with their own attitude change, rolled at random.

1 THE GORGON

Tapestry hung stone walls. Dark low ceiling. Smoke, piss and wet dog hair. Conversational buzz. Attentive staff.

- ▶ **Roger Wotton, Landlord.** Quid Pro Quo. Buying ale furnishes a loose tongue for gossip—the classic stance of an ex-waterman. **WOTTON** is a

remarkably narrow man with long black hair and a squint.

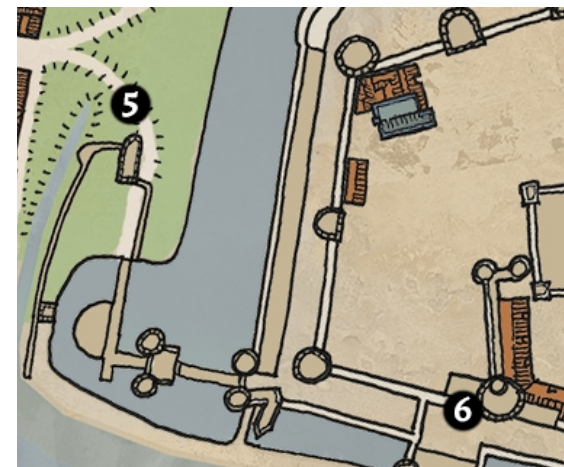
- ▶ **What of the Brutes?** They bought a fat jug of ale and pies all round. After finishing both, they left—though not before upsetting someone coming in when one grabbed their wrist and looked like they tried to break a finger.
- ▶ **Pies and Ale.** The pies were turnip and onion from **PELLETOOT BAKERY** 5 down Tooley, short of the bridge; the ale was **HAY'S GOLD** from the **BEER HOUSE** 6. Wotton has been serving both for the past week; the ale is notably expensive.

ONWARD: Wotton will withdraw the sale of the food for a day, with a favour promised or a bribe. Agents will need to consider the wider distribution of the taint; once they have determined the source, they need to expend time and effort tracking the barrels down.

2 THE MARKETPLACE

Open area around a well and a pair of stocks. Partial cobbling; drained and swept. Empty stall tables chained to anchor points—horse dung and rotten vegetables.

- ▶ **Fearful Parents.** Strangers in the market trigger occupants of surrounding properties to call in their children and relatives. Recent frequent assaults have left everyone on edge and afeared. Attackers have not always been



strangers; all forget their recent actions and misdemeanors as if possessed by demons or such.

- ▶ **Occupied Stocks.** A sleeping woman, her long hair crusted with drying fruit skins. **EUNICE BAILEY** is a herbalist by trade; she assaulted a barrow boy three days ago, tearing out a fingernail. She cannot account for her actions. She had drunk a half of **HAY'S GOLD**, at **THE TAPARD**, before the incident.
- ▶ **Discarded Food.** A search of scraps or rubbish around the market uncovers discarded food—loaves, hunks of meat, candied treats. In many cases, even the vermin don't touch them. An Agent inspecting the food finds it contaminated with inedible ingredients, like metal or gravel.

ONWARD: An Agent releasing **EUNICE** earns a favour from a capable herbalist. The market has no signage, but a query amongst any locals identifies several nearby traders who attend the market.

3 TRADERS OF SOUTHWARK

Shallow, narrow stores and street-front stalls. Rowdy attention-grabbing. Spices, sweat, yeast, leather and turnips.

- ▶ **Pelletoot Bakery.** Owned by **ROLAND PELLETOOT**. He suspects that competitors have been spiking his loaves to ruin his business. An angry customer returns a round loaf, spoilt with animal faeces. **ROLAND** drank at **THE TABARD** yesterday.



Scale:
1 cm = 35 metres

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- **Seeds of Unrest.** Witness to the decline in civil interaction caused by those consuming **HAY'S GOLD**. **AGENTS** might have these experiences north or south of the river, as various inns have received barrels from the **BEERHOUSE**. Events might include:

- ❑ customers tampering with food;
- ❑ random acts of assault between unlikely individuals;
- ❑ attempts to shatter glass or polished metal;
- ❑ harsh acts of disapproval and distrust; and,
- ❑ folk walking away from their daily tasks to protest against traitors. They proceed to **THE TOWER** gates or beneath the traitors' heads on the south gate to **LONDON BRIDGE**.

4 BEERHOUSE NO. 1

A collection of buildings, patched and connected over time. A mix of wood and stone construction. A strong pleasant smell of beer and brewing. A copse of fruit trees out front. Cries and calls of dreyfolk rolling and loading heavy barrels.

- **Tainted Barrels.** The **BEERHOUSE** sells **HAY'S GOLD** in firkins to local inns, along with a varied collection of other ales, spirits and wine. **BRISKYN** only started selling this variety of ale a month past. Still, the complex honey flavours have been a winner amongst patrons. **BRISKYN** prepares each barrel himself; each is filled, the **POULTICE** steeped for twelve hours before removal, then the cask sealed for delivery. An Agent can break the current barrel open and find the offending **POULTICE** pouch.
- **Record of Sale.** **BRISKYN** keeps detailed records of the what, who, when and how much regarding every sale. It takes **10 MINUTES** to scan the pages and find the two score sales to both local inns and private individuals, some being repeat customers. Most worrying, the **QUEEN**'s household purchased a **FIRKIN OF HAY'S GOLD** two days ago, which dreyfolk delivered the same day.

- **John Briskyn.** Astute, plain-speaking, always open to a profitable "angle" on any agreement. Agents interrogating **BRISKYN** about the **POULTICE** find he lacks much backbone. A few robust dreyfolk in his employ will step in to temper any roughhousing. **BRISKYN** still has both the cask and letter received from **PETER CRISP** at **THE TOWER**. The note requests redirection of the cask, but as **BRISKYN** couldn't account for it, he unsealed it and found the cotton packet of the **POULTICE** secured inside. He persisted in using it in barrels of Hay's Gold because the taste worked, and folk have been buying it.

ONWARD: Take the **POULTICE** out of **BRISKYN**'s hands. Use the **RECORD OF SALE** to locate and destroy barrels.

5 TOWER HILL

Open ground of well-trodden sod, balding where locals congregate for a "show". Mouldering bodies of traitors and criminals. Seasoned, well-maintained gallows.

- **Protest.** **LOCALS** and the **WATCH** can confirm random acts of protest over the last month, on the hill and at **THE TOWER**. Protestors in situ cry for justice and the immediate death of all traitors to **QUEEN** and country. Bewilderment ensues when the **TAINT** wears off.
- **Hay's Gold.** After the **TAINT** wears off, talking to protestors will confirm **HAY'S GOLD** as a common thread, though the inn drunk at varies.

ONWARD: Consulting with innkeepers points to the **BEERHOUSE** in **SOUTHWARK**.

6 THE DUKE'S REPOSE

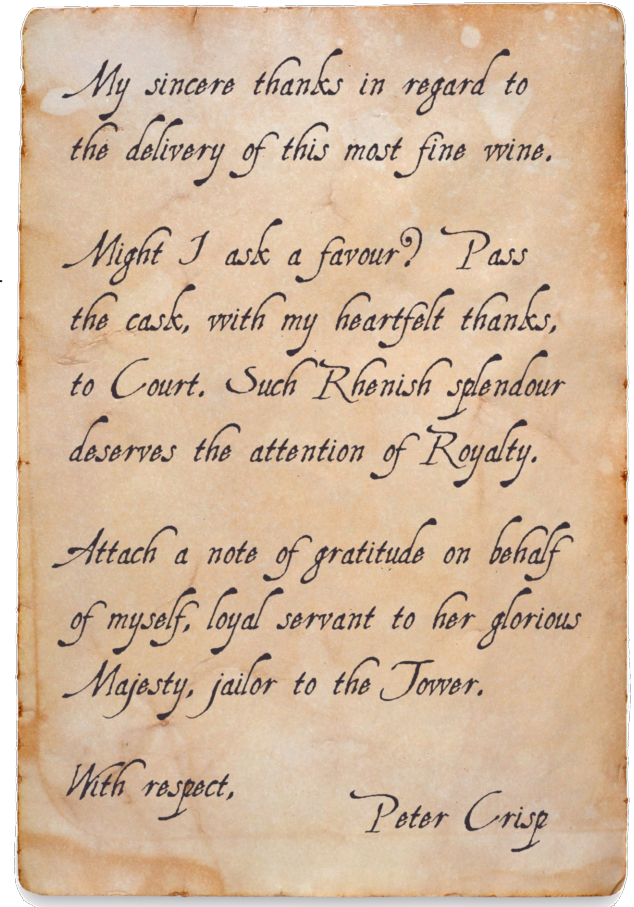
Ancient stone. Shadows thrown by torchlight. Incense and sweat. Basic wooden furniture, simple food. Aspects of fallen nobility.

- **Body Swap.** Access to **HOWARD** or the room he inhabits requires permission from **CECIL**, so a random visit will be difficult. However, **WALSINGHAM** can request access on the Agents' behalf. Forewarned, **HOWARD** will always control

the right body at the right time, but he can only effect the swap once a day and only for **20 MINUTES**. **HOWARD** will engage in discussion with Agents as **CRISP**, in an ideal scenario, and then hand off to guards to take them to his cell to meet him restored to his body—allowing time for the switch to happen.

- **Hex Education.** The ensorcellment of **CRISP** presents with no outward evidence to the naked eye. Someone gifted with **AURA READING** would see a shadow that doesn't match the mortal form, but that vision presents only while **HOWARD** has control. Investigation of **CRISP**'s **ENTRAILS** would find them embedded with **FRAGMENTS OF GLASS**—an unlikely discovery!
- **Peter Crisp.** A gruff, mean-tempered man. No tolerance of any who question his loyalty or his faculties. **CRISP** denies any blackouts or periods of imperfect recollection; he works hard, so he sometimes dozes off. He might admit to having nightmares about being locked in a cell, but only if drunk or under some bewitchment.

- **Crisp's Letter.** The real **CRISP** has no recollection of the **LETTER TO BRISKYN**. **HOWARD**, in possession of **CRISP**, will admit to writing it and enquire whether the present reached the **QUEEN**. He will deny knowledge of the **POULTICE**, suggesting instead that **BRISKYN** must be responsible.
- **Thomas Howard, the 4th Duke of Norfolk.** Tattered noble, proud, a sharp wit; **CHRISTOPHER ECCLESTON** without the accent (reference: *Elizabeth* [1998]). Thomas Howard presents himself with good humour and honesty that might catch the Agents off guard. He recognises his wrongdoing but refuses to recant and wishes the end would



come. However, he has no outward evidence of sorcery or possession of materials that would support it. **HOWARD** initially concealed the items—a slim **GRIMOIRE** with a crimson cloth cover and a **MIRROR** frame without glass—amongst things in **CRISP**'s personal possession. But, early on, he threw them in the ditch beyond **THE TOWER** walls.

- **Execution.** **HOWARD** wants his execution brought forward in the present situation but realises that such requires the sway of the **QUEEN** herself. **CRISP** will be present at **HOWARD**'s execution, and he intends to slip his soul away safely before his head tumbles from the block.