

THE DM TOOL CHEST

# THE CHEST OF THE DECADENT LORD



A SIMPLE DELIVERY TURNS INTO A RACE AGAINST TIME  
TO FIND A THIEF HIDDEN IN A PARTY OF NOBLES



## THE CHEST OF THE DECADENT LORD

**T**he *Chest of the Decadent Lord* is a Fifth Edition adventure intended for **three to five characters of 1st to 3rd level** and optimized for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 2**. A simple delivery job is hijacked by a thief who gets away with the goods. Tracking them leads to a noble party in full swing and no way of knowing where the thief is hiding or their true motivations.

This adventure occurs in the Freelands campaign setting but fits any existing campaign with only a few modifications and name changes.

### BACKGROUND

War has been a constant companion for many throughout the continent of Astaria for centuries, and most have lived their entire lives without knowing peace. Occasionally, there are brief lulls, but some will always take advantage when they last for too long. The elven city-state of Nyquist is one such example, which for generations has enjoyed a rise in mercantile prosperity since it won the last war with the tiny island nation Olumbica across the Western Sea.

Like much of the Z'hing-Tao Empire, Nyquist's lands are filled with rolling hillsides, broad rivers, and verdant woods that make up part of the Shimmering Forest. It is a lush, green land with a charming habit of mist clinging to lowland areas on cold, clear evenings. It is a land filled with rich, natural resources that are sought after from coast to coast.

Over the past decade, Olumbica has observed Nyquistian society and how it has changed. A conspiracy of exiled officials has devised a plan to exert control by means other than force and put their plans into motion.

### ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The characters are hired to take a chest to the Lord of Nyquist's country estate, but the goods are stolen before they take possession. The thief is tracked to a noble manor in the city, where a party is currently in full swing. The characters are sent in to retrieve the goods without making a fuss. They navigate the party, gaining clues as to the identity of the thief. Eventually, the thief is unmasked, and the characters must decide on how to handle the situation.

## GETTING THE QUEST

As new adventurers starting their careers, the characters have only recently begun to make a name for themselves. The party's patron is keen to find work for them and keep their pockets full of gold. As a favor for a merchant friend and as a way to introduce them to more prominent employers, the patron has asked the characters to report to Carlos Draper at the Bode Consortium for a simple delivery mission. It's for the Lord of Nyquist, and they stress that discretion is paramount. They direct the characters to meet with Carlos at the Consortium's warehouse in the city of Nyquist for further instructions.

## NYQUIST

The city of Nyquist is a predominantly elven and human city that has remained prosperous for several decades, which has led to many people flocking to it. There are plenty of jobs that focus on servicing the increasing number of aristocracy that compete to put on the most lavish parties and give unique favors to their guests. The north-eastern quarter of the city is dominated by mansions and wealthy estates, separated by intersecting canals filled with ornate boats ferrying revelers between parties. Beneath the etiquette and smiles, though, there's only one game worth playing in Nyquist: Control.

### THE MERCHANT GUILDHALL

A decade ago, an Earl auctioned his old manor in the city center to the council after purchasing a grander estate in the northeast quarter. The council allocated it to The Bode Consortium, a merchant guild who had been clamoring for more space as trade thrived. The guild transformed the manor house into offices full of clerks and the stable complex into a warehouse used for trading and loading goods. Laborers and quartermasters of many merchant groups marshal wagons and cargo all day and night.

### PRECIOUS CARGO

Carlos Draper is the quartermaster for the Bode Consortium. He is plumper than most other quartermasters, with a thick and silvering mustache. He seems to be under a great deal of strain as he organizes the various wagons and cargo. The adventure starts with the characters arriving at the main gate of the guildhall. Carlos greets them and whispers to an associate to bring out the "precious cargo." While waiting, he reiterates to the characters the importance of delivering the cargo safely to the Lord of Nyquist's country estate. The job pays 150 gp upon completion. He is sending the shipment with them in secret to protect it from being ambushed by bandits or any other merchant groups that would benefit from tarnishing the reputation of The Bode Consortium. Carlos' associate returns

carrying a small chest with sturdy metal reinforcements and a large metal lock on the latch.

Just before the chest is handed to the characters, the guildhall is attacked by five hooded rogues with dark cloaks and rapiers (they use the **bandit** stat block), but it's just a distraction. Once half the rogues are defeated, the others flee. When the dust has settled, the characters see a hooded thief carrying the chest through the nearby gate, fleeing north into the city streets.

### THE CHASE

Members of the merchant guild pursue the thief through the busy streets of Nyquist, and Carlos breathlessly beseeches the characters to join them as he stops, winded, after just a few steps. Eventually, the chase leads to the outskirts of the Godalm estate, where sounds of a party can be heard from the mansion. The Bode Consortium merchants hastily form a perimeter around the bordering canals to ensure the thief can't escape. If the characters don't join the pursuit, a runner sends word back to the guildhall.

After catching up with the characters, Carlos explains that The Bode Consortium has invitations to the party but wasn't attending because of this shipment. He asks the adventurers to go to the party and retrieve the stolen chest. The quartermaster refuses to say what is inside but will double their fee if pressured or the characters need additional encouragement. He provides the characters with genuine invitations and a strange object that the thief dropped during the attack. It looks like a tiny shield, just the size of a small coin, made of bright silver with delicate inlaid scrollwork. It has a curved outer face and a bar on the back with a ribbon that forms two tails, each 4 inches long. A character that is proficient with jewelers' tools recognizes the item as a cufflink. As the characters are about to set off, Carlos will remind them that the merchant groups all depend on the nobles for their livelihoods stemming from parties like this - so it would be best not to make a scene.



# GODALM MANSION

One of the more prominent families in Nyquist, the Godalm's made their wealth in the shipping industry. Their ships ply the waters all the way to the Holy Ignis Empire—their former enemies in the five-hundred-year-long Great War—on the eastern half of the continent and even to Olumbica, their closer and more direct adversaries. The multi-story Godalm Mansion is an opulent structure surrounded by a well-kept estate and lush gardens.

## GENERAL FEATURES

These general features are prominent throughout the Godalm Mansion unless otherwise noted in the area descriptions:

**Ceilings, Floors, and Walls.** Fine marble is used throughout the mansion, and the walls are adorned with art, heraldic imagery, and ornamental items. Ceilings are 20 feet high, and the floors are spotlessly clean.

**Doors.** Doors are 3 inches thick and finely crafted from dark hardwood.

**Lights.** The mansion is brightly lit from ornate braziers on the walls.

**Climate.** The early evening air is cool with a slight breeze that carries the smell of flowers from the gardens and rich meats from the kitchen and dining room.

**Party Guests.** All guest areas are crowded with finely dressed, mostly elven and some human aristocrats and busy staff in smart uniforms.

## SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

The mansion offers a lot of opportunities to discover the identity of the culprits. Most of the area descriptions below give both rumors and complications. It is recommended that characters automatically find out the rumors detailed in a manner appropriate to whatever actions they describe. The DM may choose whether the characters experience the complication or not. The guest rumors and any complications occur before any NPC encounters.

- After each NPC encounter, as described in the location description text, the NPC moves to the ballroom (area 9) once the encounter is complete.
- Hostility is not encouraged before "The Unmasking" (see page 9). Staff and guests will attempt to calm characters if things look like they are getting out of hand. Any actual violence is stopped as soon as it begins with estate guards (two per character, they use the veteran stat block) restraining the characters and escorting them into an adjacent room. If the characters injure any guests, the other guests will shout, and after a short time, another

guest will push through, saying, "Let me through, I'm a cleric!" before attending to the injured.

## SIGNIFICANT NPCs

The characters can interact with many important NPCs found in the mansion. The following information below is common knowledge to all guests except that which is marked as secret.

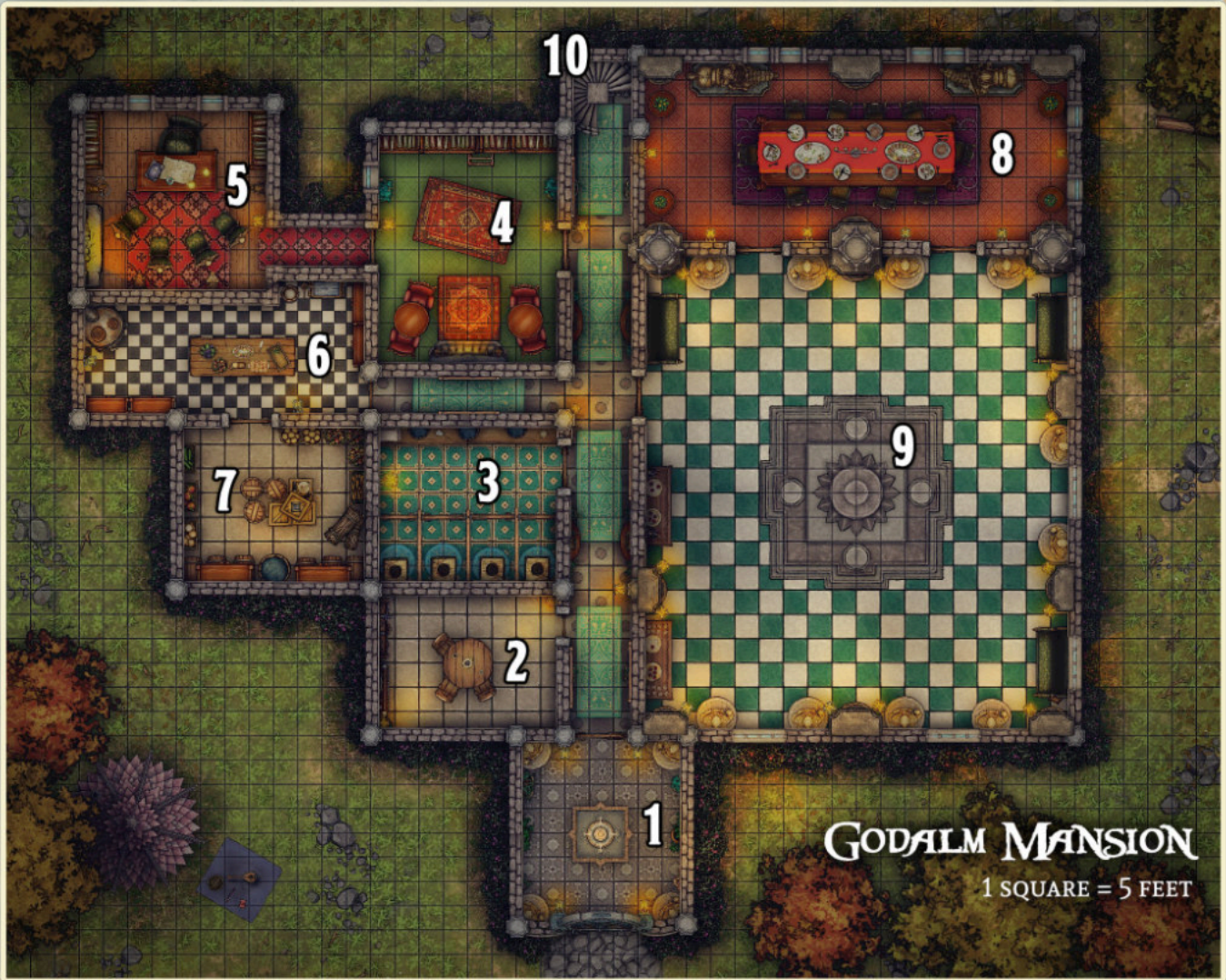
**Adam Swayne.** A newcomer to the high society of Nyquist, Adam is a middle-aged human male **agent** (see Appendix) and has just purchased a nearby mansion. He has foppish light brown hair that is cut short and neat and matches his nearly-athletic physique. He has adopted the city's fashion of wearing a tweed jacket, which he does not take off throughout the evening because he has lost his cufflinks (one of which the characters have before arriving at the mansion). Adam is polite but has little patience for those less intelligent than himself. He always looks out for his best interests and uses his cutting wit liberally against those that stand in his way. Adam claims to be investigating the best strategy for increasing sales for an undisclosed merchant group.

**Secretly:** Adam has fallen in love with Lady Rozalba, who has persuaded him to focus his efforts on ruining The Bode Consortium for her. He stole the chest and is hiding among the revelers.

**Martin Gad'n.** One of the "Big Four" and proprietor of the Shimokita Trading Company for alchemical supplies, Martin is a middle-aged half-elven male **noble** with a slender frame that previously lived on the opposite side of the empire near the Freelands. He smokes a pipe and wears a tweed jacket adorned by a fine silk pocket-handkerchief. Martin wears his hair in a top-knot and can often be found telling tales of his time outside of the city. He has an easy manner with others and is well-liked.

**Mikael Rushvi.** One of the "Big Four" and owner of the Abden Group, high-end weapon merchants, Mikael is a middle-aged human male **berserker** who has reluctantly retired from adventuring. He is balding with a gruff voice. After gaining fame for engineering multiple battle victories during the Time of Strife, the fierce warrior found his battle rage tempered by love and was married during his last campaign. He is fussy about wine and ale but seemingly unworried by social politics in the city. However, his wife Teresa cannot abide missing a party, so he attends these gatherings at her behest. He wears poorly fitting formal attire and looks wistfully at the simpler uniforms of the guards.

**Russo D'Cheratomy.** One of the "Big Four" and regional manager for Body Slam which makes cosmetics for the aristocracy, Russo is a middle-aged half-elf **noble** with curly hair and animated hand gestures. His voice is soft but earnest when he speaks, and his passionate



interest in everything around him often leads him to get distracted and forget the point he was making.

**Lady Eliza Rozalba.** One of the "Big Four" and proprietor of the newly formed Arrow and Thorn company that imports the finest knitted children's garments from her native land of Olumbica across the Western Sea. Lady Rozalba is a statuesque, olive-skinned human female **noble** (a Contessa in Olumbica) in her early thirties.

**Secretly:** Eliza is the driving force behind a secret economic war being waged between Olumbica and Nyquist. She seduced Adam Swayne for the express purpose of making him the fall guy in her mission to ruin the Bode Consortium. She believes their fall would disrupt the economy in Nyquist as the other merchant groups jostle for the favor of the Lord of Nyquist.

## KEYED LOCATIONS

The following descriptions correspond to the keyed locations on the provided map of Godalm Mansion.

### 1. ENTRANCE HALL

A large fountain sits in the middle of this entrance hall. Golden statues stand in the four corners of the room, and potted plants are tastefully placed throughout. The guests here are engaged in hushed conversations, muffled by the burbling water, and pretending not to be watching who comes and goes.

There are several groups of men and women dressed in fine jackets and dresses. The style in fashion is tweed for men and embroidered details for women. The guests here are eager to share gossip and rumor but are suspicious of anybody who is rude and uncultured. Characters with noble backgrounds are warmly welcomed and find conversation to flow effortlessly with the other guests.

#### **Guest Rumours:**

- All of the usual prominent nobles are in attendance tonight. The "Big Four" are polite rivals who own or

operate the largest merchant groups in Nyquist, and they try never to be in the same room as one another to respect the host.

- A new arrival in Nyquist high society is here tonight. Of course, they arrived late to make a grand entrance.

### **Complications:**

- The other guests start asking the characters insistent questions about their family background, focusing on quieter characters. A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Charisma saving throw extricates the party from the situation gracefully. A character with a noble background gains advantage on this save. On a failure, the characters see these guests looking at them throughout the rest of the evening, whispering among themselves.

## 2. GUARD ROOM

Through an open door, you see a guard room with a weapon rack on the far wall. In the center of the room is a table with weapons and cups of water on it. Strangely, there is no sign of gambling amongst the half-dozen guards present. They are dressed in matching uniforms with studded leather armor and convey an air of professionalism. A single guard with a sash leaning against the doorway nods politely to any guests that catch his eye.

The six **guards** here are relaxed but observant and politely greet any characters that approach. The guards respond to authority and rank, and characters with a military background find their conversation flows easily. They are suspicious of anybody who looks scruffy or overtly out of place.

### **Guard Rumours:**

- The guards have been asked to keep an eye on Lady Rozalba. She was refused a dance by the Lord of Nyquist at a ball last year and is said to hold a grudge.
- The guards have been with ensuring none of the serving staff loiter too much while performing their duties. There is always the potential of a spy amongst them.

### **Complications:**

- The guards ask the characters how they came by their invitations for this evening. A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Charisma saving throw can cause the guards to back down, and a character with a noble background gains advantage on this save. On a failure, the guards spend a further 10 minutes questioning the characters before letting them go.

## 3. GUEST BATHROOMS

These bathrooms consist of a series of clean stalls on one wall and a counter with basins and mirrors on the opposite wall. At the far end is a small half-elf girl in a smart black dress. She keeps her eyes down and offers clean towels to the guests that pay her no heed.

The guests here gossip amongst themselves in the short queue at the entrance and also at the basins. Some guests are discretely washing away food or drink they have spilled on their clothes. They respond to gossip and insights of the guests in attendance. They are suspicious of anybody trying to push in front of them in the queue.

### **Guest Rumours:**

- A new arrival in Nyquist high society is here tonight. He's more handsome in person than they had heard, but they haven't yet caught his name.
- That brute Mikael Rushvi hasn't been seen for over an hour, and his outfit looks like it was grabbed off a bedroom floor.

### **Complications:**

- A guest bumps into a character and takes a romantic interest in them.

**Bathroom Attendant:** Katerina Salis is the female half-elf **commoner** bathroom attendant on duty. She is nervous of guests speaking to her and only quietly shares the following information she knows:

- The new arrival that the guests mentioned was cursing to himself because he had lost something.
- The staff member who was here beforehand found a small wooden chest in one of the stalls they were cleaning. They said it reeked of a foulness, but Katerina never saw (or smelt) it, nor does she know where it is now.

## 4. LIBRARY

The library's northern wall is covered with bookshelves from floor to ceiling. There are two sets of chairs around low coffee tables on the southern wall, with a plush rug in front of a lit fireplace between them. The room is warm and cozy, with the nearest tables occupied by a pair of guests deep in conversation. A young girl with olive skin sits at the far table, deeply engrossed in a book.

The guests here are having hushed conversations about alchemy and perusing the bookshelves. They respond to intellectual topics, and they are suspicious of idle gossip. Characters who are proficient in Arcana or History find

conversation flows easily.

**Guest Rumours:**

- All of the usual prominent nobles are in attendance tonight. The “Big Four” are polite rivals and try never to be in the same room as each other.
- Having a new merchant group form in Nyquist has been disruptive to the other houses. The new Arrow and Thorn company has hinted at a coming paradigm shift but has not provided details.

**Complications:**

- One of the guests is drunkenly climbing a ladder to the top shelves of books. A character that steps near the ladder must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage as the drunken guest knocks a book squarely onto their head.

**Miss Penelope Godalm.** The young human girl is wearing a lovely pink dress adorned with lace and smiles politely whenever somebody comments on it. She does not engage in conversation with anybody for long, wishing only to continue reading her book, “The Duchess Diaries.” She toys with a small, red ribbon that she uses as a bookmark. A character speaking with Penelope with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 14 or higher or who succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception or Investigation) check notices that this is the same type of ribbon on the item that the thief dropped. Penelope hasn't seen her parents all night but says they frequently don't stay long at their parties—the nobles just take turns hosting.

## 5. STUDY

The ornately carved dark wooden door to this study door sits ajar, and the hum of conversation drifts through the gap. A fireplace burns brightly against one wall, and a large desk with maps scattered across it dominates the room. Candles and bottles of amber-colored spirits have been used as paperweights. Behind the desk rests a luxurious chair with a high back and intricate wooden supporting struts. Four no less impressive chairs face the desk, two of which are well filled out by middle-aged men smoking thick cigars. The room is filled with a gently shifting haze of smoke and the occupants' raucous laughter.

The guests here are listening to the stories of Martin Gad'n, who is standing behind the desk. Each of the noble guests has a glass of a fine amber spirit in their hands. They respond to tales of foreign lands and are suspicious of anybody who refuses a drink. Characters

who share stories of their exploits find conversation flows easily.

**Guest Rumours:**

- The Lord of Nyquist is not in attendance tonight because he is at his country manor for at least another month.

**Complications:**

- The acrid cigar smoke catches in the back of the characters' throats. Any character who remains in the room for more than 1 minute must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or take 1 poison damage as they burst into a coughing fit. The nobles chuckle good-naturedly at any who fail their saving throw and pat them on the back.

**Martin Gad'n.** The characters are welcomed in by Martin, who offers them a glass of the spirits they are drinking from a bottle on the desk and continues telling stories. He knows that the favor of the Lord of Nyquist is valuable, and it's no secret that some of the merchant groups in Nyquist would go out of business without the high prices the Lord is willing to pay.

## 6. KITCHEN

This kitchen is busy, with servers carrying full trays of food and canapes while more is hastily prepared. A stove sits in the corner with a bubbling pan of a rich gravy bubbling on it. Vegetables are being peeled and chopped on a central table. There is a sideboard and cabinets full of cutlery and crockery that makes the environment even louder every time something is retrieved from them. The cooks scurry between the various cooking stations and the pantry.

The staff here are busy preparing food for the occasion and mildly surprised to see guests come into the kitchen. They respond to anybody treating them with respect, and they are suspicious of anybody who asks them personal questions. Characters with commoner backgrounds find conversation flows easily.

**Staff Rumours:**

- Mikael Rushvi is causing havoc just like last year and has ensconced himself in the pantry again.

**Complications:**

- As the characters move through the kitchen, a cook tries to move out of their way and bumps into a pan of boiling liquid near the center of the room. Any character within 5 feet must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 2 (1d4) fire damage.

## 7. PANTRY

The stores in the pantry are plentiful despite the impressive amount of food that has been served already. Crates, boxes, and barrels sit tightly packed in the center of the room, while shelves on each wall reach from floor to ceiling. A single lamp hangs from the center of the ceiling in this windowless room, casting sharp shadows around the various containers. In the middle of the room, sitting on a barrel, is a gruff and balding guest, with a plate of food and two bottles of wine lying empty on the crate next to him.

The staff enters the room frequently to gather what they need and work around Mikael Rushvi. They leave as quickly as possible, not stopping for conversation. The room has many different smells from the various foodstuffs, but the distinct smell of moldy cheese comes from a cupboard above the barrels. The source is actually the stolen chest - intact, open, and empty.

**Mikael Rushvi.** The party was boring to Mikael, and he came back here to find some decent wine and get a moment's peace. He is impatient but not aggressive. He knows that some of the servers overheard Lady Rozalba talking to the head of another merchant group about doing a deal but does not know their identity.

## 8. DINING ROOM

This dining room is filled with a long table with ornate place settings for ten. The servings of a feast are on the table, though many of the guests have finished their meals. Servers are pouring more wine for some guests and clearing the detritus left behind by others. Several guests are standing with drinks in hand at the far end of the table, crowded around a figure in a fine dark cloak. They bristle slightly as a server drops a fork from a pile of plates they are carrying, which interrupts the timing of the story they are telling.

The guests here form small gaggles of conversation, and servers move among the crowds with platters of yet more food. The guests respond to formal introductions, and they are suspicious of anybody who has spilled food on themselves.

### **Guest Rumours:**

- The food at this party was provided by the Bode Consortium, the current favorite of the Lord of Nyquist.
- Lady Rozalba seems keen to become more engaged in "certain groups" in the city.

### **Complications:**

- A server presents the characters with a platter of steaming hors d'oeuvres. It is not any creature or dish that the characters recognize, but it has a distinct, tangy smell. The guests nearby are watching the characters. Any character attempting to eat the food must succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check or be splattered by dark juices from the sauce as the food comes apart unexpectedly.

**Russo D'Cheratomy.** People keep drifting into the circle where Russo is holding a circuitous discussion, the original purpose of which has been long forgotten. He knows that oddly it is almost impossible to get a seat in the ballroom tonight.

## 9. BALLROOM

The ballroom is opulent, with crystal chandeliers overhead providing shimmering brilliance to the room, particularly the green and white chequered marble floor. In the middle of the dance floor is a polished centerpiece with an image of the sun that is typical here amongst the nobles of Nyquist. Crowds admire the dancers from the room's edges, and a pair of tables sit against the western wall. Music is played by a quarter standing by the south wall. Servers move amongst the crowd topping up drinks. There



LADY ROZALBA



are large windows to the south and east which provide a magnificent view of the grounds which have been illuminated for the occasion.

The guests here respond to enthusiasm, and they are suspicious of people that refuse an offer to dance.

A character who looks around the room for anything out of place and succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check or DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check will notice a small wooden box hidden under one of the benches in the southeast corner of the room. There are people on the bench that make it difficult to get to without making a scene. The box is locked, and pulling it from under the bench without significant concealment will trigger "The Unmasking" (see below). A character that succeeds on a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check retrieves the box without drawing attention.

#### **Guest Rumours:**

- This room is the one place in the mansion where you'll see the "Big Four" grudgingly abide to be in the same room as one another.

#### **Complications:**

- A group of insistent guests asks the characters to dance, and the steps are unfamiliar to the party. Each character must succeed on a DC 12 Charisma (Performance) check or take 1 point of bludgeoning damage as they knock into other dancers or stumble. Successes are met with applause by the onlookers, while failures result in barely held back laughter.

**Lady Eliza Rozalba.** Many lingering gazes are on the Contessa, for her looks and complexion are striking in this land. Her presence makes less confident nobles uncomfortable, and she courteously dismisses any eager suitors that ask her to dance. She secretly knows that Adam Swayne is the thief, but if confronted, she will tell the characters that her money is on that brute Mikael.

## 10. STAIRS TO UPPER FLOOR

A set of stairs leads to the upper floor, with three guards blocking passage to it. In front of them stands a small circle of guests talking amongst themselves, and they occasionally break into a fit of laughter, causing the guards to roll their eyes.

The guests here have a dark sense of humor and are welcoming and informal. They respond to cheeky banter, and they are suspicious of characters who are very formal. A trio of **guards** stand at the bottom of the

steps and are not allowing anybody up. If a character somehow makes it past them, they find a magically locked door with no keyhole at the top of the stairs—it cannot be opened.

#### **Guest Rumours:**

- The Bode Consortium has lost some key contracts recently.

#### **Complications:**

- An insistent guest asks the characters to tell them a joke. Any character attempting to tell a joke must succeed on a DC12 Charisma (Persuasion or Performance) check. Consider giving advantage on this check for any attempt at a dark sense of humor.

**Adam Swayne.** Confidence exudes off the newcomer as he leans on a decorative cane topped with a silver wolf's head. He deflects any attempt to ask about his past as a bore to the guests who have already heard it. Secretly he is the thief who stole the chest from the Bode Consortium. He will tell the characters that he was hoping to speak to Mikael but hasn't seen him in quite some time. The guests and the guards block any accusation of Adam at the stairs. They suggest the characters enjoy the party elsewhere without bothering anybody, as Adam exits to the ballroom.

## THE UNMASKING

There are a few different ways in which the final showdown is initiated. Read one of the following options and then proceed to the encounter.

If the characters pull the box out from underneath the bench, read the following:

Adam Swayne stops dancing mid-step and says, "Oh, I wish you hadn't done that." His dance partner stumbles at his sudden movement, and she grabs at his arm to try to stop herself from falling, tearing something off his sleeve. You hear the clink of metal on stone and see a cufflink matching the one Carlos handed to you.

If the characters accuse Adam Swayne while in the ballroom, read the following:

Adam Swayne is dismissive, saying, "Clearly, this isn't important." As he does so, he flicks his hand in a shooing motion, and you hear the clink and roll of a single coin that spins to a stop a few feet away from you. You can see that it is a cufflink matching the one Carlos handed to you. "Well, that's unfortunate."

If the characters are seeking to accuse someone or have run out of ideas to investigate while not in the ballroom, read the following:

Suddenly a wave of murmuring spreads from the ballroom, and all the guests start to move quickly in that direction. When you enter, you can see that Adam has his cane at a man's throat near Lady Rozalba. "The contessa said no!". Seeing you and the other guests flooding into the ballroom, he waves for you all to stay back with his free hand, and in doing so, you hear the clink and roll of metal that spins to a stop a few feet away. You can see that it is a cufflink that matches the one Carlos handed to you. "Well, that's unfortunate," Adam sighs.

**Encounter: The Thief Revealed.** Adam Swayne (he uses the **agent** stat block, see Appendix) twists the top of his cane and pulls at the handle to reveal a rapier, and moves menacingly towards the characters. Alarmed cries break out amongst the guests and staff, and the room clears quickly. The guards cannot make it to the room through the fleeing crowd, leaving the characters to deal with Adam. If the characters have not already taken possession of the hidden box, Adam maneuvers himself between the characters and its hiding place.

## THE BOX

Adam's hidden box is engraved with the Arrow and Thorn company symbol and is locked with an *arcane lock* spell. A character proficient with thieves' tools who succeeds on a DC 25 Dexterity check can pick the lock. Inside the box is an extremely pungent round of cheese.

## CONCLUSION

The guards burst into the room after the battle and quickly take control of the situation. They seal the room and send a runner to call on the city guard, who will handle it from here. They allow the characters to leave with the small box after taking their statements. Carlos is waiting for news at the perimeter of the Godalm estate.

**Rewards.** Carlos pays the characters 200 gp in coin, a jewel-encrusted bangle (50 gp), and a painting (50 gp). He also gives them a *mithral chain shirt* for the added risk they took.

**If the characters kill Adam Swayne,** they are unable to expose the more significant threat to Nyquist. They return the wooden box to Carlos, who immediately sends for a sorcerer to open the lock. Once the lock is opened, he slowly opens the lid and breathes a heavy sigh of relief. A wide smile crosses his face as he spins the chest round to show the characters the contents, but they can already smell it—inside is a round of extremely pungent cheese. "It's the Lord's favorite," says Carlos.

**If the characters spare Adam Swayne,** he breaks down after realizing that his beloved Contessa, the Lady Rozalba, has fled the city and abandoned him to his fate. Adam tells the city guards everything he knows about the Olumbican conspiracy. The chest is instantly forgotten, and soon the City of Nyquist is on a war footing with Olumbica for the first time in generations.



# APPENDIX

Agents are the spies of the aristocracy. They frequently have focused training in specific arcane tricks to augment their abilities and achieve their ends while evading detection.

## AGENT

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 15 (chain shirt)

**Hit Points** 88 (16d8 + 16)

**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 10 (+0) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 10 (+0) | 16 (+3) |

**Skills** Deception +5, Investigation +5, Perception +4, Persuasion +5, Stealth +5

**Senses** passive Perception 14

**Languages** any two languages

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Innate Spellcasting.** The Agent's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day each: *misty step*, *knock*

1/day each: *major image*

**Cunning Action.** On each of its turns, the Agent can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

**Sneak Attack (1/Turn).** The Agent deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 ft. of an ally of the Agent that isn't incapacitated and the spy doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The Agent makes two melee attacks.

**Rapier.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.  
*Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

**Hand Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

## REACTIONS

**Cutting Quip.** The Agent makes an offputting quip that distracts an attacker. The Agent adds +3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the Agent must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon. If the attack misses then the Agent may immediately make a Rapier attack as part of this reaction.

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