

WYRD MINIATURES

MALIFAUX



STORM OF SHADOWS

Malifaux

- 1 Malifaux 1.5: A Character-Driven Skirmish Game Set in the World of Malifaux
 - 2 Malifaux: Rising Powers
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- Malifaux: Rules Manual



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STORM OF SHADOWS

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Wyrd Miniatures would like to thank everyone for their hard work and dedication in completing this latest book. We owe a special thanks to the creativity of the writers for excelling in their efforts. Game developers, artists, sculptors, painters, playtesters - we appreciate everything you've done for us. And to our families and all those whose personal friendship and support has helped us through some stressful times, you have our heartfelt love and gratitude for just being who you are and helping in all the little ways.

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DESIGNER'S NOTE

A BIG WELCOME TO THE TEN THUNDERS!

You may notice some familiar characters in this book. Yes, Misaki is finally getting the respect all you Outcast fans were hoping for, as well as the storyline that all the Ten Thunders lovers have been asking for. That's right. The Ten Thunders hung around in Book 1 & 2, they teased us a bit more in Book 3, and now, they're a new faction.

So how do you make a sixth faction in Malifaux when there are only four suits in a card deck. Well, it turns out we couldn't answer that question because, apparently, the entire world history didn't want to change how card games are played just for one miniatures game. So we just guessed.

I kid. I kid. We actually have a plan, and a pretty good one if I'm any judge. I'm a pretty good judge. (Wow – my ego just personified itself and typed some words all on its own. Sorry everyone had to be a witness to that, but hey! Go take a look at Book 4? It's awesome.)



We developed a plan where the new faction fits in anywhere and everywhere it wants. Is it Guild? Yes. Resurrectionist? Yes. Arcanist? Yes. Neverborn? Yes. ... and no. It's any of those, but it can also be its own faction, the Ten Thunders.

I've really enjoyed watching the storylines and character histories being created. There's background information to help you understand why the Ten Thunders are in Malifaux, and there's even more to explain how each person plays a key role.

With our change to plastic manufacturing, we wanted the Ten Thunders characters to really highlight the advantages and characteristics that plastic minis provide. We also wanted to highlight the characters in the book with fiction and art focused specifically on their specialties and the new faction. The focus on art was important to us because with plastics, that art translates seamlessly into the model's look. And we wanted the models to look amazing, but we also wanted to have some fun with it and try to achieve poses and detail that weren't possible before. You might also notice that some of the fiction has a lighter tone to provide a little fun with the new faction and new gaming possibilities.

So go ahead and try out the Ten Thunders, I dare you! They expand your possibilities for game play in Malifaux by about...20% if my math serves me correctly. With all new Schemes, and a long list of strong personalities, let's give a warm welcome to the Ten Thunders.

Eric Johns

Eric Johns
Game Designer

P.S. Oh, and we also added rules for horsies.

THE FINAL WORD



The Final Word

"Reality," observed Arthur Van Stoker as he bent over the murdered man, "does not have any obligation to be interesting."

He heard the soft scuff of silk slippers. The scene of the crime momentarily forgotten, he rose to his full, imposing height and turned sharply, a smile of permanent self-satisfaction underlining his black, piercing eyes. The heavy tweed cape snapped as he turned, revealing for a moment the paired crossbows that swung from his belt. The woman who had interrupted him took an involuntary step back.

"But in this case," he announced, "reality might just oblige."

He noticed the woman was holding his business card. Edged in guilt, it proclaimed him the pre-eminent Freelance Investigator and Neverborn Hunter of the age. And not just in the city or, for that matter, the world of Malifaux. He made no pretensions of false modesty in his advertising. Van Stoker was only ever called upon by the powerful and the wealthy, and his discretion and insight were as renowned as his bravery and tenacity in the hunt.

"You are surprised," Van Stoker said to the young woman, looking from her to the blood-stained corpse. "But not at the dead man. This is nothing – you live in Malifaux, where death is no man's distant uncle, but a dour and unloved neighbor. Specifically," he went on, taking in her elegant purple silks and the waxed, black hair piled meticulously atop her pale but lively face, "you live quite nearby as you have had time to dress in this elaborate manner on such short notice, but the mud on your shoes indicates you did not arrive by carriage. You frequently work for the Guild as you were able to find your way here, deep within Guild headquarters, without trouble or delay. Given your nationality, I would say you are also an occasional informer for Lucas McCabe, that he has almost certainly asked you to report back to him on my activities and my movements and that the reason you are surprised is that Lucas McCabe had told you when he gave you my card that I was on the other side of the city and that you expected to arrive before I did."

There was a pause, which confirmed everything for Van Stoker. The young woman was very adroit at giving

nothing away, save for a formal bow. "Denise Chen, interpreter, at your service. Lucas McCabe wants answers, and at the price you charge, he also wants a little insurance."

"And he thinks that I will find you fair and be less likely to object." Van Stoker shook his head. "Transparent and banal, but as I mentioned, reality is often terminally dull. Now to business. Tell me why we are here."

"A dead man," she said. She walked around him and circled the small store-room, avoiding the trail of blood. "Someone brought him here, tied his hands and cut his throat."

"In the bowels of the Guild, no less! What an affront to law and order!" Van Stoker laughed. "But notice what you say. You tell it as if it were a story. Who did what to whom. That is something every criminal wants, and every policeman craves. A nice, neat story to wrap things up. Policemen-like stories that end with them as the hero. Criminals like stories to hide the plain fact that their mark on the world is blood or greed. Stories can have enormous power over us, can make us see things that are not there, believe things that are not true. A sufficiently powerful story can change the world. So! Ignore the story and deal only in absolutes. Those are my methods. They have not failed me yet."

"He is not Guild," Chen said. "He is tall and broad, yes, but as fat as a chef and has a wooden leg. His hands are tied with rope, not handcuffs. So, not a prisoner, either."



"Trite, but not untrue. I would say he was a sailor, if it were not for the lack of a sea around here. See the rope burns on the forearms and the salt blisters on the back of the neck. But can you see what it was that led Lucas McCabe to engage my services?"

She paused, glanced at him, and then back to the body. "His chest. Something under his shirt?"

Van Stoker knelt and, handkerchief in hand, carefully opened the blood-soaked shirt for her to see. In the flesh, a symbol of the Three Kingdoms had been carved. "Do you recognize it?"

She nodded, her face impassive. "It is the Long Dragon."

"Exactly. A myth of the Three Kingdoms. A dragon who served the people of your land and who turned into a river as a last act of beneficence. Another story that purports to shape the world. This symbol is why Lucas McCabe offered me your services, but it is not why he sought mine. Can you do better, my little insurance? Hmm?"

She looked around the store-room, and shook her head.

Van Stoker stood and cracked his knuckles noisily. "He was not killed here. Not enough blood on the floor for that. No, the blood on the floor is a trail. He was killed somewhere else. Somewhere close by, and dragged here."

"But..." Chen gestured uncertainly. "If that is a trail, then..."

"Exactly." The blood trail the corpse had left led not to the door, but right up to a brick wall. Van Stoker slammed his fist against it. "On the other side of this is a busy corridor, and not a trace of blood. Our murderer dragged this old rum here through a door that does not exist."



The second murder took place two nights later. Van Stoker arrived at the Malifaux Museum of Natural History in the early hours of the morning. Two Guild guardsmen were posted on the main entrance, and Denise Chen awaited him inside. Lucas McCabe stood off to one side, talking in a viperous drawl to a dusty, bespectacled man Van Stoker took for the curator.

Lucas McCabe was the black sheep of a wealthy Earthside family, whose exploits in Malifaux were shrouded in rumors of death and scandal. That he had acquired a position of influence in the Guild was a surprise to many, but he had a growing power base, a loyal band of vicious idlers and wastrels and an enemies list to match.

McCabe glanced at Van Stoker, dark eyes hooded like a hawk. Van Stoker took his time shedding his dripping wet cloak and wiping dry his equipment case. He overheard the curator talking about protection, and money, and murders that shouldn't be happening on his property. The little man was angering McCabe, and his protests petered out until he was apologizing to the Guild man for having dragged him out in the rain. The curator knew nothing about whatever had happened here, Van Stoker was certain of it.

"They said you were good," McCabe said, his lean, angular face split by shadows. There was a sinister calm about the man, as if violence was always just a twitch of the eye away.

"No," replied Van Stoker. "They said I am the best."

"Two murders. No suspects. The best don't look good enough."

"Feel free to hire the Argentinian. I hear she is looking for work. Or Le Savant Noir, if he is out of the asylum."

McCabe smiled slowly, and Van Stoker could not imagine he ever smiled any other way. "Dodge will show you to the body." He whistled and a large dog ran to his heels. He left, tucking his hat down low.

The corpse lay in the Hall of Antiquities. Sprawled in a pool of light cast by a gas-lamp, it was watched over by shadowy suits of ancient Three Kingdoms armor, lacquered gold and polished ebony glinting in the darkness, surrounded by display cases full of savage-looking weapons. The body was a man, small and wiry, with skin like cured leather and a tangled beard sodden with blood from the red smile in his throat.

"The same trail of blood!" exclaimed Chen, pointing to the gory smears on the parquet floor that vanished at a plastered wall.

Van Stoker knelt to inspect the body. It still had some warmth in it. A belt held a number of eight bore shells and a maker's mark. Holland of Bond Street – this was no casual big-game hunter.

"But the wall, Mr. Van Stoker!" Chen said. "It's completely solid!"

He waved a hand dismissively. "It was impressive the first time. I am interested in what is new about this one." He laid his case down, opened it, and removed tweezers, scalpel, and magnifying glass from the clutter within. The man's clothes were of good quality, but well-worn. There was red dust on his shoes and gaiters. It smelled of baking plains and a hammering sun. This man was far from home. A small leather pouch held delicate brass optics, protected from dust with an oiled hide. "This man was a marksman. An artist." He severed the buttons on the man's waistcoat, prying the blood-soaked garment apart. The murderer had carved another character in the language of the Three Kingdoms.

"What do you make of that?" Van Stoker asked.

"It is the Yellow Dragon. But what does it mean?"

"It means an excess. Of clues. Of theories. Of misdirection. I have not yet decided. I will not fall prey to whatever story the murderer has crafted for himself. Whatever occult practice he believes justifies his crimes. Let that be his delusion. We will see with clearer eyes than that." He took another look at the man's ammunition belt. There was something stuffed into one of the leather loops. Conscious that in this dark hall anyone could be watching, he palmed what turned out to be a scrap of paper, and secreted it in a pocket. "Who found the body?"

The curator introduced a wizened old man who walked with a stick. He looked as sour as week-old milk, and the paper-thin skin of his face was as full of lines as a street map of the slums. "This is Yan Lo," the curator said. "He consults with us from time to time on relics and rare antiquities. We have both been here all night, cataloguing a new shipment. Mr. Lo had left to compare some bindings when he found this unfortunate man."



Van Stoker asked him what time he found the body, and the old man thought for a long time before holding up three fingers and speaking a few words of Nipponese.

"The honored elder says he found-" Chen started, but Van Stoker interrupted.

"Yes, three o'clock. The curator would also have offered to translate if he spoke Nipponese, but he did not. And since Mr. Lo works with him, I am going to assume he can speak English perfectly well. Is that so, Mr. Lo?"

The old man straightened up and nodded once at Van Stoker. The light from the gas-lamp flared momentarily, and all around the towering statues of the empty suits of armor loomed large. Van Stoker was just thinking that there was more to this Yan Lo than met the eye, when over the old man's shoulder he saw something that gave him a chill. It could just have been a trick of the light here in the crowded museum hall full of strange artifacts, but for a moment he had seen what looked like a woman's head, floating in the shadows. His fingers touched the scrap of paper in his pocket. It was time to go.

"I may have some questions for you later, Mr. Lo."

Yan Lo nodded again. "Quite so." He gestured to the hall. "Now I must tend to the ancestors."

"You mean the exhibits."

Yan Lo smiled and hacked a short laugh. "Quite so."

Van Stoker and Chen left, as workers from the morgue arrived to collect the body, and the curator, Dudge, fussed about them.

Outside the museum, the rain was still falling steadily. The two stone lions flanking the entrance shone wetly under the gas streetlamps. Van Stoker decided not to mention the scrap of paper for now.

"You know," he asked, clipping a fresh cigar and lighting it from an emberbox. "I must be more tired than I thought. I imagined I saw a woman back there, in the Antiquities Hall. You didn't see anything, did you?"

Chen opened up her waxed umbrella and stepped into the downpour. She had put on raised wooden sandals to stop her silks from dragging in the puddles. "No, Mr. Van Stoker. I didn't see anyone."



For the first time since he had met her, Van Stoker was certain he had caught her in a lie.

His favorite cafe was close to the river, and kept market hours, which meant it was open day or night. A cup of treacly Arabian sat on the table before him, laced with laudanum and spices from Morocco. Van Stoker unfurled the scrap of paper.

It had words printed on both sides, and had clearly been torn from a larger page. None of the words were bisected, however, which was either an enormous coincidence or the scrap of paper had been torn much more carefully than it appeared.

The paper itself was not paper at all, but wafer-thin vellum: a painstakingly treated animal skin used only by the finest bookbinders. The words on it were worse

than useless however, a few sentences from some pot-boiler by Mademoiselle Verne, the French scientific writer. He turned the scrap over and was surprised to see that the sentence he had just read continued on the other side. "Curious," he muttered to himself, taking a sip of coffee.

He flipped the piece back to check, and nearly dropped his cup. The words had changed. Now, they continued the sentence he had just read on the other side. He turned it over again and again, and every time he did, the words had changed. Sentence by sentence, turn by turn, the whole book unfurled before him.

He finished his coffee and, on a memory of a myth heard long ago, tore the scrap in two.

Different sentences resolved on each piece. One was the Verne, the other he didn't recognize.



He rose and pocketed the pieces. "*Every piece of the Library is the Library*," he murmured. Could it be true?

Two nights later, Van Stoker was dressed and ready for Denise Chen when she came.

"I expected you earlier," he said, putting his violin beside the breakfast dishes.

"I got here as quickly as I could," she replied. "I came as soon as I heard."

"I assume they only just found the body?"

"You mean you didn't know?" Chen looked puzzled. "Then why did you expect me earlier?"

"Simple. We have seen two dragons. I dare say today we will see the third. The legend tells of four dragons, so it is not hard to posit three and four from having seen one and two already. As for the time," he gestured to a sheaf of papers on the Ottoman in his study, "McMourning's reports put the one-legged chef's time

of death at around three o'clock in the morning and the African hunter at around two o'clock. No-one has yet come forward to claim them. I wager we will learn that this latest victim died at one o'clock this morning. The number of days between the first two killings being the same as the number of days since the last killing, and this one was pure guesswork on my part, but it is clear we are dealing with a structured ritual of some kind. Rituals are just another kind of narrative control over the world, with a form that can be observed, learned, and predicted." He smiled. "Or subverted, if one has the means."

"You think there will be a fourth murder?"

"Certainly. Everything points to it. Two nights hence, at midnight. The stage is set, the challenge is clear. But remember my methods. Recognize the story the killer is seeking to wrap his actions in. He is the hero in his sordid tale of blood. Only by denying him the power of his narrative can we hope to get ahead of him and bring him to book."

"Bring him to book?" she repeated. "Why do you say that?"

"What?" He opened a case and threw a few tools and investigative implements into it. He clipped a small crossbow to his belt, checking it was loaded. "A desk sergeant has a log book of all the criminals brought in during his shift. The areas of your ignorance are alarming. Come now, where are we bound?"

"We need to catch a train."



The third murder was at a rail yard on the outskirts of the city, and Van Stoker commandeered an engine with his Guild warrant and papers to get them there. He and Chen arrived to find that the body had been moved and the scene of the crime completely disrupted by rail workers, steam-powered carts, and cargo-hauling constructs. Nonetheless, the dried blood was still

evident on the dusty concrete, as was the featureless concrete silo wall the trail came from.

A few guardsmen were in evidence, but with nothing obvious to do and no commanding officer yet on the scene, they were ill-disciplined and chatting idly with some of the female workers.

Van Stoker avoided them, preferring not to reveal his presence quite yet. He tasked Chen with finding the body, then retreated to a quiet corner. Chen returned shortly, having spoken to some of her countrymen. The body was on a pallet in a nearby warehouse. Van Stoker found an unwatched and only lightly-locked entrance, which quickly succumbed to his skill with a pair of steel picks.

The warehouse was packed with pipes, girders, and miles of iron track, but a clear space in the middle held a single pallet with a grimy tarpaulin over it. Underneath lay the body of a grotesque-looking old man, a hatchet face twisted by a life of spite and miserly conduct. "I have rarely seen an individual better suited in appearance to a charge of base villainy and evil disposition," commented Van Stoker. "I suspect the world is better off without this one, but look. Throat cut. Hands bound. And, as expected, the third Dragon on his chest. The Pearl Dragon, if I am not mistaken."

"What do they hope to achieve?" Chen asked. "What will happen when the fourth Dragon is inscribed?"

"I have my suspicions," Van Stoker replied, "but hush. We have company."

From the far end of the warehouse came the sound of many footsteps, some of them heavy and metallic against the bare concrete floor. A woman was at the head of them, short and athletic. Her bare arms were covered in tattoos and she wore long, dark gloves with steel tips on the fingers. She had all the poise and arrogance of a gang leader, and her dark eyes flashed with a fierce temper kept close to the boil. She stopped when she saw Van Stoker. "You," she spat, with no attempt to conceal her contempt. A scathing glance took in Chen. "McCabe said you would come. But you sneak around my yard. Like a thief. The last thief we had left empty handed."

The men and women at her back laughed unpleasantly, and Van Stoker was fairly sure the thief had also left without any hands, if he had left at all. The muscle were



all rail workers, many of them with rough-cast mechanical limbs to replace the ones they had lost in accidents. Steam hissed from numerous hydraulics and miniature boilers, shrouding the whole ensemble in a fine haze.

"That is Mei Feng," Chen whispered to Van Stoker. "We're lucky. We seem to have caught her in a good mood."

Van Stoker glanced at her in surprise, but it was clear Chen was not attempting an irony. He turned back to see Mei Feng approaching, shoulders rolling like a boxer on the prowl. She stopped a few paces from him.

"If I stabbed you," she asked, pointing with one slender, razor-tipped finger at his heart, "right here, would you bleed?"

Denise Chen made to step forward, but Van Stoker put a hand on her arm. She was trembling. So much for the good mood. Something was going on here he did not understand.

"The question is not whether I would bleed, Miss Mei. The question is, are you fast enough to even reach me?"

The tip of Van Stoker's small crossbow poked out from his tweed cape. He raised it slowly, watching Mei Feng

the whole time. He was an experienced fighter, which is why he expected to see some subtle change in her expression, some forewarning of what came next. He did not.

With a motion so fast he had no time to react, Mei Feng brought her right leg sweeping up and hammering down, shattering the crossbow in his hand. He dropped the pieces with a gasp, and flexed his fist, feeling the pain shooting up his arm. He had only brought one crossbow, leaving him just a knife in a forearm sheath. He drew it and took a step back.

Mei Feng sneered, turned and walked away. "This is a waste of time. We will try my way." She led her rail workers out without further explanation.

Chen looked aghast. "We should go."

Van Stoker snatched up his equipment case. "I agree."

They hurried out of the warehouse, back the way they had come. The noise and activity of the packed rail yard surrounded them in dust and confusion, all the way back to the engine, which Van Stoker drove himself, in silence, back into the city.



Van Stoker set the wine glass beside Denise Chen, and then handed her one of the scraps of paper. It still had a fragment of the Verne story on it.

They were at his apartments. Chen had been gone for the whole day and had returned when night fell, her composure regained. Van Stoker's hand was sore but uninjured, and he had been making sure of that fact with some practice on his violin. Chen, polite as ever, did not appear to mind his amateurish scratchings. "What do you make of this?"

Chen took a sip of her wine while Van Stoker resumed playing, the fire burning in the grate a welcome relief from the dark and driving rain outside. She turned it over, frowned, and Van Stoker could barely hold in a

laugh as she turned it over again and gasped. After a few moments of turning it over and over, she put it down.

"Well?"

"Well," she said, with a genuine smile. "It is *The Dream of The Red Chamber*. It is the book that taught me how to read."

"In English or Nipponese?" He picked up the fragment and put it back in his pocket.

She gave him a puzzled look. "Surely you can tell the difference?"

Van Stoker resumed playing. So the scrap showed different tales to different people, tales that had some connection with where they were from. Could this be from the Library? There was only way he knew to find out.

At that moment, a change in the sound of the rain caught his attention. His voice hardened as he spoke quickly. "Miss Chen. For my next recital, I am going to play something with an aggressive arpeggio. It would be best listened to from that chair by the bookcase." He pointed with his bow, making jabbing motions. "Now. Quickly, if you please. While the muse is on me."

Perplexed, Chen changed seats. Just as she sat down, the study window burst inwards in a shower of glass and rain. As it did so, similar sounds came from the dining room and his bedroom. A black-clad figure rolled through the torn curtains, hit the floor, and sprang to its feet, a sword flashing in the firelight. There was a flash, and thick smoke billowed out.

Van Stoker kicked the chair Chen had been sitting in, and it flew backwards at the intruder, who leapt over the writing desk and raced around the far side, sword poised.

Van Stoker twisted a stud on the scroll of the violin. With a hefty clunk, a gleaming blade shot out the other end. He lunged with it, like a fencer, and the blade extended even further as he did so, taking his surprised assailant neatly in the throat.

Barely had Van Stoker pulled the violin free when another black-suited figure appeared in the dining room doorway. Van Stoker dropped behind the ottoman as tiny red-feathered darts whistled through the air above him. His violin was still making clockwork clunking noises, and a

handle now extended from the side. He reached up onto the table, grabbed the bow and notched it onto the violin strings like an arrow. A lever caught the strings and pulled them back along the newly extended handle. Van Stoker stood, turned sideways to avoid another brace of poison darts, raised the violin and fired. As the bow hurtled through the air, a barely audible click sounded.

With a horrified gasp from Chen, the second intruder caught the bow inches from his masked face.

"Duck!" Van Stoker yelled. As he and Chen dove for cover, the tip of the violin bow exploded.

When Van Stoker got to his feet, the headless corpse of the assassin was barely visible through the thickening smoke. He pulled Chen to her feet.

"There was another," she gasped. "In your bedroom."

"I don't think we need to worry about him. I have many enemies, a comprehensive knowledge of traps, and I never sleep in a bed." He opened the bedroom door. The third intruder's feet had been severed by a giant toothed trap by the window, and his remains were impaled on a series of spikes that emerged from the floor. Van Stoker sighed. "The landlady is going to have kittens when she sees this."

"This is madness!" Chen exclaimed, looking around her in a panic.

"I think we know what Miss Mei's way looks like, now." Van Stoker took her arm. "Come with me. We need to disappear."

Talking to the Lane was going to be risky.



Van Stoker had been there once before and had barely made it out alive. This time, with Chen in tow, it might go smoother, but you never could tell what mood you would catch the Lane in. Dangerous as it was, first he had to find it.

"It actually moves around?" Chen asked, as Van Stoker led her deep into the small alleys and twisting passages of the slums. A glimmer of dawn sketched black rooftops against the sky.

"Yes and no. I think it might actually exist in a fixed place within the city, at least most of the time. If you spent enough time in the Lane, you might even be able to work out roughly where it was. Mostly, the ends of the Lane can connect anywhere in the city. But that is not the problem."

They continued walking for a few minutes, and Van Stoker had to marvel at Chen's patience, but eventually she gave in.

"What is the problem, then?"

"Widdershins Lane is alive. Do you know where you are?"

"No.. Wait." She turned around. "No. Where are we? Alive?"

"Good, I'm lost, too. Which is not easy, I might add. If I start looking at the color of the dirt, the types of brick, or the patterns of moss on the walls, I might work out where we are, and we'll never find the Lane that way. We can only stumble upon it if..." Van Stoker put a finger to his lips, and then pointed that finger at a cobblestone street that he was certain had not been there a moment ago. He took Chen's arm and led her quietly towards it, keeping his eyes on it. "It has many mouthpieces. If it is the Desiccated Man, well, he won't tell me anything, but he won't kill us either. Well, probably not. If it is the Bezoar Dog, and any of its mouths start to pant, run. If it is the Automatic Maiden, then..."

The crooked, cobbled alley stood before them. About half the way down a yellow lantern burned over the picture window of a nameless shop. Van Stoker stepped onto the cobbles, taking Chen with him. He felt his heart race and realized he was sweating.

"It is the Automatic Maiden. Damn." He thought for a frantic moment. "Do you have any paper? We're only going to get one shot at this, and you need to distract it while I talk to it. I know that doesn't make any sense, but you need to slow down its mechanism so it doesn't realize what I'm asking it. At least not straight away."

Chen pulled her diary from her handbag, and Van Stoker nodded, his throat painfully dry. It would do no good to tell Chen the danger they were both in.

"Tear out a sheet, and make a crane," he hissed. "I assume you know origami?"

Chen nodded as they walked towards the shop window. She ripped a page loose, and started folding.

"When you've finished one, put it down on the ground and start the next one immediately. Do not stop. For anything."

Within the shop window, a wooden mannequin watched the Lane. Carved from smoothly polished wood in a feminine form, only the upper body was visible. The lower body, if it existed at all, was hidden in an ornately lacquered box. The wooden limbs twitched. The Maiden's face was made of porcelain parts, manipulated by clockwork mechanisms just visible between the pieces.

Van Stoker stopped directly in front of it, and the Automatic Maiden rotated to face him. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Chen finish the first crane and set it down on the cobbles. The Maiden's eyes click-clacked and settled on it.

Van Stoker held up the fragments of vellum. "I need to know if these are from the Library of All Things."

The porcelain lips moved, although the eyes did not turn from the paper crane. "**They are the Library of All Things.**" The voice was sweet and dreamlike, with a clockwork whirr of distant bees in a summer garden.

He heard a sharp intake of breath from Chen and did not need to look down to know that the intricately folded paper crane was unfolding all by itself. "Do not stop," he whispered. "I implore you."

"So it's true. It does exist," Van Stoker said to the Maiden. Chen set another crane down. The first was almost entirely unfolded, and the second started unfolding the moment she released it. She gasped as if she had had an electric shock and quickly tore another sheet from her diary.

"I need to reach the Library." He stopped. Every part of the Library was the Library. That is what the Maiden had meant. Given time, every book in the Library would appear on these scraps. He had to ask his questions very carefully or the Maiden would tie him in knots. "No, I need to enter the Library. How do I do that?"

Chen had finished her third crane. It started unfolding before she had even set it down. The first two were perfectly flat rectangles of paper.

"Make something else," whispered Van Stoker. "It's learning too fast!"

"There is only one way in or out of the Library of All Things," the Maiden said.

Chen was racing now, a low moan escaping her lips as her fingers flew. She placed a frog on the cobbles just as the third crane opened itself out flat. The frog's head split and began to unfold.

"Where is it?"

"It is never in the same place twice."

Chen cried out. She had dropped her second frog and the half-formed sculpture had begun unfolding before it hit the ground. With trembling fingers she started on another. "I can't do this," she whimpered. "I can't remember how to make them. I think she's taking it from me."

"Where will the door be tonight?" Van Stoker yelled. "Where will it be tonight?"

"In the basement of the Honeypot Casino."

Van Stoker grabbed Chen. "Run!"

They raced off down the smooth, cobbled lane. Behind them, Chen's final effort, a flower, drifted down, unfolding as it went. It was flat before it hit the ground. The Maiden lifted her porcelain eyes to them, opened its porcelain mouth to scream – and they were out of Widdershins Lane.



The Honeypot Casino was warm and welcoming. Piano music played bright and cheerful over the sounds of whoops and hollers from the dice pits and the catcalls and whistles aimed at the working girls. Thick, blue smoke hung heavy in the air and formed glowing coronas around the hundreds of candles and gas-lamps.

And yet to Van Stoker, there was something different about this casino. Every casino hid undercurrents of desperation beneath a surface of innocent entertainment, but there was something urgent about the pursuit of pleasure at the Honeypot. Something raw and ragged in the air that seemed to drive many of the clientele to greater heights of elation at a win or greater depths of despondency at a loss. There was a mania of the soul here Van Stoker couldn't explain, and yet outwardly all seemed normal.

It was the second night after the third killing. Chen had been keen to report back to McCabe about the attack at Van Stoker's apartment and the whereabouts of the Library, but Van Stoker had refused. Instead, they had spent the day in hiding and had now donned disguises, Van Stoker in the greys and dun of a travelling preacher and Chen in a sober suit of black linen and a veil. They blended into the hustling crowd as Van Stoker took in the lie of the place and searched for the entrance to the basement.

"Welcome to the Honeypot Casino, sir and ma'am!" A tall, rake-thin man in grey coattails, a starched shirt with a black silk scarf, and a fairground smile that would have impressed a circus clown, greeted them with a tip of his hat. "Jakob Lynch is the name, proprietor of this humble establishment, and it is always a pleasure, a gen-you-wine pleasure, to see new faces, especially," he took Chen's hand and planted a kiss on it, "one so blessed with an abundance of fairness. Well, you could knock me down with a feather right about now, sir, you keep a close eye on that one or I might just steal her away my own good-self!" He laughed and did not seem to mind that neither Chen nor Van Stoker laughed with him. Behind him, a mountain of muscle stuffed into a skin-tight suit and waistcoat looked idly around for something to hit. "But I do go on, sir and ma'am, whereas you good folks are rightly here for some entertainment and ree-lax-ayshun, so I will take my leave of you and wish you both a pleasant evening. And if there is anything you need, why you just holler, and Jakob Lynch will see you right, and right quick!" Jakob Lynch tipped his hat again, flashed a lightbulb smile and pushed off into the crowd.

"What an imbecile," Chen said under her breath, shaking her head so that her veil danced alluringly. "What is your plan?"

Van Stoker guided her towards the far wall of the casino. "The fourth dragon, the Black Dragon, will be invoked

tonight. Four dragons, four murders. Two days between each one, and this one will occur at midnight, one hour before the previous one." He checked his pocket watch. "Which is in twenty minutes."

"And what does the Library have to do with this?"

"Everything." He looked around, ducked under a crimson rope and opened a nondescript side door. "Quickly!"

They slipped through the door, down a dusty flight of steps, and into a long, barrel-vaulted brick cellar. He doused a few gas-lamps, and he and Chen slipped into the shadows between some wine barrels with a good view of the cellar. Van Stoker turned to Chen. "All three murders so far have taken place in the Library. That is how the killer, or killers, have been able to deposit the bodies around Malifaux. By the time the bodies are found, the door to the Library of All Things has moved on, and it is never in the same place twice."

"Then, if the fourth murder is about to take place and it will happen in the Library, we may only have moments from the opening of the door to try and prevent it."

Van Stoker shook his head slowly. "You forget my methods. These killings, the theatricality, the count-down to midnight, the predictable nature of them – they are an invitation to partake in the killer's story. We try and save this poor unfortunate fourth victim, and we will play right into the killer's hands. Possibly quite literally."

Chen looked shocked, as he had expected. "You do not mean to even try and save him?"

"The common criminal has one fatal weakness, and you, my dear, have one glorious attribute. The common criminal plans his crimes with the reactions of the upstanding, the moral, and the righteous firmly in his sights. I need only look at you to see the bullseye he is aiming for and know that I must expend my efforts in the opposite direction to thwart him. The heart of the matter lies in the Library. It is there I intend to go." He put a finger to his lips. "Although I strongly suspect the fourth victim will be dead before the door opens. It begins."

The bricks of the far wall were moving. Inducing an alarming sense of vertigo, the bricks fell directly away from Van Stoker, as if he were above them, and they above a black and bottomless well. When all the bricks in a roughly man-sized portion of wall had fallen into



darkness, a handle appeared in midair, made of worn and tarnished brass. Wooden planks, black with age, appeared around it, as if growing from a crystal in suspension. In a few heartbeats, a weighty and solid door stood, at one with the bricks on either side.

The door opened. A dimly lit room lay beyond. Two figures in dark robes appeared. They wore masks of white, with faces painted on them in the Three Kingdoms style. Between them, they dragged the body of a man, his hands bound and his lifeblood trailing in his wake.

They dropped him on the packed dirt floor of the cellar. Van Stoker could see that the fourth Dragon character had already been cut into his chest. His throat was cut, and there was no possibility he was still alive.

The two masked figures returned through the doorway, but it did not close behind them.

"Now!" whispered Van Stoker. Darting across the floor of the cellar, he stopped for a moment to get a look at the fourth and final victim. The man wore a barber's smock with various implements of the trade hanging from a leather belt. His hair glistened with thick pomade, but even in death, his staring eyes had something of the demon about them. Another twisted character the world would not miss.

"Someone's coming!" Chen hissed, tugging at Van Stoker's cape. Footsteps sounded from the stairwell, and Van Stoker hurried after her through the door.

The minute he stepped over the threshold he knew this was indeed the Library. The air was cooler, and drier, than even the cellar had been, and the smell of books, that sweet and dusty tang, hung in the air like an enticing perfume. This place was old, he knew, much older than mankind in Malifaux. There was a power here, a very subtle but undeniable power.

They were in a circular room with a domed ceiling and no windows. Packed bookshelves lined the walls and numerous doors and stairways led off at irregular intervals around the circumference. Shuttered oil lamps cast pools of golden yellow. On a table, two books lay open. The sight of the books made Van Stoker's heart skip a beat, although why, he could not say, and he had no time to look at them. The footsteps were still approaching.

He and Chen pressed themselves against the walls of an unlit alcove and watched the door to the cellar.

A single figure appeared, wearing the same robe and mask. It entered, and the door to the cellar closed behind it. It was the only way out of the Library, and Van Stoker knew that if he opened that door, it would no longer lead to the cellar.

Four other masked and robed figures appeared in the other passageways and then, to his horror, Chen put a pistol to his head.

"Over here!" she called, then put some pressure on the pistol while her other hand relieved him of his crossbows. "Let's get this over with."

There was nothing for it. He was trapped. He squared his shoulders and walked out.

Chen had him stop in the middle of the floor while she walked calmly to the table. The masked figures did not react.

"If you wanted me dead," Van Stoker said, "you had ample opportunity, Miss Chen."

"Some of us thought that was the solution," said a cold, hard voice from the masked figure to his left that Van Stoker recognized as Lucas McCabe. "And nearly ruined the whole thing."

The second shortest of the figures snorted but said nothing. Even that briefest of sounds was enough to tell him she was Mei Feng.

Van Stoker turned to the figure at the door. "Jakob Lynch, I assume." The man gave an exaggerated bow.

The shortest of the figures was holding a staff. "Mr. Lo. Looks like my questions will have to wait. Which leaves..."

The fifth figure removed its mask. It was a Nipponese woman, dark haired with jade green eyes that held not a trace of mercy.

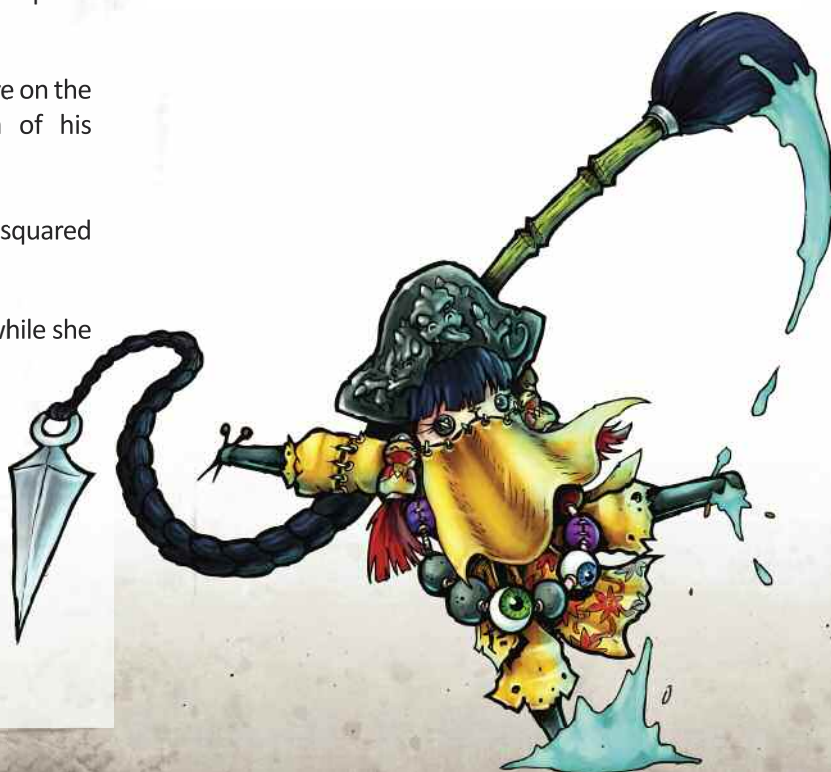
"Misaki Katanaka, mistress of the Ten Thunders Trading House," Van Stoker said, as the other figures followed suit and removed their masks. "This is quite an assembly. What the Guild would not give to know you share a common purpose."

"Remember your methods," Chen said. "We, that is, the Ten Thunders, were relying on them. It had to end here, and you had to return of your own free will. And it is not Denise Chen. My name is Chiaki."

"Return? Your odd little games are making less and less sense. I have never been here."

"Do you know where you are?" Misaki asked.

"The Library of All Things," he replied. "It is mentioned in the oldest texts found in Malifaux. A place of great



arcane power and unknown origin. It is said to contain all the myths and legends of this world, of the Nephilim, the Neverborn, and those who came before them."

"It also contains the myths and legends of mankind," said Misaki. "When humans came here, they brought those with them. Not just in books, but inside them as well. And the Library collects everything. Mankind now has his own wing in the Library of All Things. And stories have power, in Malifaux of all places, and none more so than in the Library."

"Stories can have enormous power over us," said Chiaki, and Van Stoker remembered saying those words to her six days before. "Stories can make us see things that are not there, believe things that are not true. A sufficiently powerful story can change the world. The myths and legends within these walls shape the world outside. That is the true power of the Library. But none of the myths and legends in the Library are of the Three Kingdoms."

"We could wait," said Misaki. "It would happen, given time. The Library collects everything."

"But," growled McCabe, "we are not the waiting kind."

"So," said Van Stoker, "you did what no human or Neverborn has done before, and found your way in. I must admit, I am impressed. But what is my role in this?" But he was starting to realize just what it might be.

"The kind of changes we wanted to make to the Library were too radical," said Lynch.

"If we were going to get our own wing in here, something would have to go," said Misaki. "Some of your people's tales were going to have to be...disposed of. Surely you've put it together by now?"

Van Stoker had, and the thought led only to one conclusion, one that he was struggling to avoid thinking of.

"The four victims," Misaki went on. "A pirate with a wooden leg. A big game hunter from Africa. A master of pickpockets and child thieves from Old London Town. A bloodthirsty barber. Recognize any of them? You won't find their stories here anymore. Instead," she gestured to a bookshelf full of bamboo scroll tubes, "the legends of the Four Dragons. And many others still to come."

"But something went wrong, didn't it?" Van Stoker said. "Something got out of the Library that you didn't realize was gone."

Misaki nodded, picking up the two books on the table. "And we could not complete the task until that something, or someone, came back."

"What are those books?"

"Do you remember coming through the Breach, Arthur Van Stoker?" McCabe asked, with a cruel laugh.

"I slept through it. What are those books?"

"Do you remember what you were doing in Malifaux before I offered you this job?" McCabe demanded.

"Freelance Investigator and Neverborn Hunter. *What are those books?*"

"I think you know what they are." Misaki placed one back onto the table. "Consulting detective." And the other. "Hunter of vampires. Two stories that, in their panic, created one single chance at survival. Mr. Van Stoker."

"You had to return of your own free will," Chiaki said. "You would never have come if you had not convinced yourself this was your idea. I am sorry, Arthur Van Stoker, but your time here is at an end. You fought well, and bravely, but this is the time of the Ten Thunders."

Leering, McCabe drew a vicious hunting knife and slid one finger across his throat. Misaki stayed his hand. "Not this time. This one deserves a better fate." She nodded to Chiaki.

Chiaki turned her back on Van Stoker and flipped one of the books closed. It jumped beneath her hand, and she heard a cry from behind her that was almost human. With a shudder, she flipped the second book closed. The cry died, and when the echo had faded, she turned, and there was no sign of Arthur Van Stoker.

"Put those two back on the shelf," said Misaki. "They've earned their place."

The Malifaux Orphanage

for Sick Children

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12TH

It writhed and squirmed like a mess of wriggling worms in a flowerpot — blue, glowing worms, all struggling to escape. The other kids were afraid of it. Everyone was crying and little Bess peed herself.

Back at the start of the journey everyone squealed and held their noses whenever someone couldn't hold it any more and had to go onto the cold, iron floor of the train car, but by the time we got to the Breach, it had happened enough times that everything stank already, and everyone was too afraid of the glowing portal to take much notice.

The others are all scaredy-cats. The Breach was beautiful. I could see it in the distance through the window for a long while as we got closer and closer. Then the tracks turned, and we started heading straight for it. Now I can hear its crackling growing louder and louder. I can even hear it over the crying and screaming of the other kids. It feels like when there's a real bad thunderstorm coming. Sometimes you can just feel it coming, you know?

Joshua says it's a prison train that we're on, one of the ones they use to take away all the criminals. He says he's seen this exact train going into the tunnel that leads to Gorham County Jail and come out again loaded with prisoners. He says he's seen them reaching out between the bars, like they're trying to grab hold of all the sunshine and freedom they can. His dad told him that the criminals were being taken away to Malifaux to get what was coming to them. But these other children don't seem like criminals. They seem like stupid, scared little orphans.

I think I'm the only real criminal here.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13TH

Mrs. Birchbark and Mr. Grievous met us at the station. Mr. Grievous had a long length of chain with him. At first I thought he was going to tie us up with it, but he didn't

do that. He untangled the chain and stretched it out into a long line. Then Mrs. Birchbark told us to line up along the chain, and she counted us and ticked our names off her list. We all had to hold onto the chain so that we didn't get separated while we marched to the orphanage. We were like a big, long snake, each of us holding onto that chain for dear life. "Don't let go," said Mrs. Birchbark, "or you'll get lost, and Malifaux is not kind to lost little children."

We wound our way through the station and out into the narrow, twisted streets. Mrs. Birchbark walked fast, and she had long legs, so some of the littler kids had to run to keep up. Little Bess was in front of me, holding the chain with one hand and picking her nose with the other. She's always got a finger up there, especially when she's nervous. At one point she tripped on a broken cobble and skinned her knee. The kids in front of her didn't see, so they just kept going, but even then she didn't let go of the chain. She was too scared to let go. She didn't want to get lost and swallowed up by the City, so she got dragged along a little way before she found her feet again. After that, she began to cry, and kept crying for most of the way to the orphanage, even though Mr. Grievous shouted at her to shut up.

You could see why they needed the chain. The streets were all a-hustle-and-bustle with odd-looking folk hurrying this way and that. If we hadn't been holding onto that chain it would have been easy-as-anything to get separated in the crowds. But we reached the orphanage eventually, without anyone getting lost.

Malifaux Orphanage for Sick Children is a big wooden building. Everything's a bit crooked, and it's full of creaky boards and broken windows that let in the cold air. We all have to sleep on dusty mattresses on the floor of a big, drafty dormitory. I don't know why we're here. Only a few of us are sick, but in a place like this, it shouldn't be long until we all catch something. There are some scratchy blankets that are full of bugs, and Joshua caught a millipede that he keeps in an old jar. Sometimes he takes it out to scare the girls. He thinks he's tough, but he doesn't know what tough is. I don't think he's ever done anything really bad. Not like me.

I think we should build a fire to keep warm, but the other kids are all too scared to try something like that.

"Don't be stoopid, Iggy," said Joshua. "You'll burn the whole place down."

I want to punch him when he calls me stupid, but then the shaking comes back, and I can hardly control my muscles, let alone throw a punch. My hands feel like they're on fire.

I've found a loose board where I'm going to hide this journal so that it doesn't get stolen. Now if only Bess would stop crying I could get some sleep. I wish she'd stop picking her nose too. It's disgusting.

I'll write again tomorrow.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15TH

Dr. Lorkus came today to give us our shots. Mrs. Birchbark made us all wait outside the infirmary door, and Dr. Lorkus called us in one at a time. Joshua was the first to go in, and he came out crying, clutching his arm. Everyone thinks Joshua is a tough kid, so after that they were all scared. Bess was crying before she even went in, of course. One by one, each of us went into the office, and each kid came out balling their eyes out. What a bunch of wimps.

When it was my turn, I tried to look bored to show I wasn't scared. Dr. Lorkus was sitting there wearing a long gray coat. He's an odd looking fellow. He wears a crazy monocle over one eye, with wires and tubes sticking out of it. His other eye seems to bulge from his head, like he's got no eyelids. He held a strange thing in his hand. It was a long, sharp needle with a glass ball at one end, full of some sort of nasty-looking black liquid. It reminded me of the body of a spider, all bulbous and full of venom.

"Now, son," said Dr. Lorkus, even though I'm not his son. "This might hurt a little bit, but it will keep you from getting sick, so be good and don't move."

Mr. Grievous was there too. He grabbed my arm and held me still while Dr. Lorkus jabbed me with the needle. It was true, it did hurt, but I didn't cry. I'm tougher than Joshua. I'm the toughest kid here, and I want everyone to know it, so I came out dry-eyed and grinning, and Dr. Lorkus said what a good boy I was. What does he know?

Everyone is feeling sick tonight, and we are all having bad dreams. I keep being woken up by kids screaming in fear. Even I had a bad dream earlier tonight. That's why I'm writing this now—I didn't want to forget it. I dreamed that I was walking in a tunnel underground, when suddenly something grabbed me from behind, a dark thing made out of shadows and smoke. I fought to escape, but I wasn't strong enough. Then I saw a huge rat crawling towards me. It had big, red eyes and huge fangs that dripped with black poison. It moved slowly, but there was nothing I could do to get away. It bit me in the arm, right at the place where Dr. Lorkus gave me that jab, and when I woke up that spot was burning and stinging like anything.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17TH

They keep us locked up in the orphanage like criminals. We're never allowed to go out. Every day, Mr. Grievous takes us down to the workshop, where we spend all day making tiny parts for clockwork machines. I guess Mr. Grievous' hands are too big and clumsy to do the jobs himself, and that's why he needs little kids to do them. I bet that's why he runs an orphanage in the first place.

None of us know what we're making in the workshop. We each just do our own little job, over and over again, all day, every day. When the contraption gets to the end of the line it looks a bit like a pocket-watch, but it doesn't have a face or any hands, just a lot of tiny machinery inside a brass case. Gord is last in line. It's his job to pack the machines in wooden boxes, with sawdust to cushion them. We make hundreds of these things every day. Mr. Grievous says they're parts that go inside much larger machines. He says that there's something called the M&S Union and that they pay good money for these things, but us kids never get any of the money. He never pays us for our work in the basement. He says we should be thankful to get food and shelter and medicine.

The food is slop, and a fat lot of good the medicine does! Some of the kids are getting sicker and sicker. Simon has a high fever and can't stop vomiting. It stinks in the dormitory. Tobias went to tell Mrs. Birchbark about it, but she just told him to mind his own business.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3RD

They took Simon away today. He was as pale as a ghost and too weak to stand. Mr. Grievous had to carry him out. Nobody knows where they took him, but we know he's somewhere in the orphanage because sometimes,

when it's quiet, we can hear him wailing and groaning. Joshua told Bess that it was Simon's ghost, just to scare her. The sounds echo out of the grate in the dormitory wall. It must open onto the chimney because sometimes smoke comes out of that grate and sometimes a weak heat. At first we took it in turns sleeping in front of the grate, but when my turn was over I didn't give up the spot, and nobody tried to make me. I don't like the cold, and they're all too scared to challenge me.

It's getting colder and colder in the house, but no one wants to take Simon's blankets in case they contain whatever illness is killing him. Plus, they're all covered in puke.

Mikey is showing signs of the sickness too. He has big, black spots on his arm where he took the needle. Some of the kids are saying that those shots that Dr. Lorkus gave us caused the sickness, but Benjamin says shots are supposed to prevent sickness. Benjamin is pretty smart. He's done more school than most of us and tends to know what he's talking about.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14TH

I'm in big trouble. I haven't got long to write. I can hear Mr. Grievous calling for me, and he's in a real fury. I stole one of the machines from the basement. I took it from the box while everyone was cleaning up. I wanted to figure out what it was, but now, Mr. Grievous must have noticed it's missing.

The others are all saying he'll skin me alive. Maybe I should just make a break for it, but the front door is locked and only Mrs. Birchbark's key can open it. She keeps that key in a pocket in her coat, and she wears the coat all the time. When she leaves the house she locks the door behind her, locking us in.

What if there was a fire?

The windows on the ground floor have bars, and the ones up here in the dormitory are too high off the ground. I guess I've got to face the music. I'll write more later if I survive.



I survived! Mr. Grievous was angry, but not very scary. I think he's not as tough as he pretends to be. I had to give him the machine back, and he gave me a few smacks around the ears. Then he took me down a flight of spiral stairs, underneath the workshop, and handed me a big brush. There was a big cast-iron coal furnace down there and he made me climb up into the chimney to clean it out. That was my punishment. It was disgusting, scary work, and now I'm covered in soot and black sludge, but I discovered a brilliant secret: the chimney branches into different sections, like an old twisted tree, and each section ends in a grate. I guess those grates are supposed to let the hot air into different parts of the house. They don't work very well, but when I was up in that chimney, I could see into every room in the orphanage: the kitchen, the hallway, a study with lots of books, the dining hall, our stinky dormitory, Mrs. Birchbark and Mr. Grievous' rooms. Then at the very top of the chimney is a nice-looking attic bedroom. I saw Simon in there! I rattled the grate and called his name, but he didn't wake up. He looks real bad. I think he'll be dead soon.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16TH

I've got good news and terrible news. First, the good! I've figured out how to open the chimney grate from the dormitory side, so I can get into the chimney whenever I want. I pried it open with a butter knife that I stole from the dining hall. The screws were so rusted that they turned into a red dust, and then the grate swung open on hinges.

It's scary going in there, because I can see the fire burning in the furnace at the bottom. If I fall, I'll be burned up as quick-as-anything, but it's worth it. With a bit of work, I managed to get all the grates open, so now I can shimmy my way down to the ground floor and sneak into the kitchen for food. Sometimes I go to the study and just sit in the big leather armchair for a while, sit somewhere without the stench of sickness and kids crying all the time. I like the study, with its fancy bookshelves and grandfather clock. I hid this journal on one of the shelves. The best hiding place for a book is with a bunch of other books, right? I'm in the study now writing this at the big, oak desk with Mr. Grievous' fountain pen. I feel real important. If he finds out, he'll kill me, but he's not going to find out. I'm pretty good at opening the grates and closing them again behind me, as if I'd never been there at all.

Now for the terrible part. Sometimes I climb all the way to the attic room and look in at Simon. Today, I saw a

strange woman sitting by Simon's bed. She wore a black cloak and her eyes were dark like the night. I didn't like the look of her one bit. She held out a glowing, blue stone. It glowed dimly at first, and I thought I saw shadows swimming about inside it. As I watched, I saw something rising up out of Simon's body towards the stone. It didn't go easy. It looked like it was being dragged out of him, that flickering ghostly thing, but it kept coming, a stream of bright blue. And as the stone fed, it grew brighter and brighter until it looked like sunlight. And by the end of it, Simon wasn't breathing any more.

The woman smiled, but not in a nice way, and before she left, she looked up at me, directly into my eyes. She couldn't see me, I knew she couldn't see me. It was dark as pitch in that chimney, but she looked at me nonetheless and nodded once: "You're next," she seemed to say.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23RD

Things are getting scary here. Mikey and Daphne have both been taken to the room in the attic. I know, because I've seen them there. With my face to the grate I called out to them, which scared them half to death, but Daphne recognized my voice and tip-toed up to the grate. "How did you get in there?" she said, but I told her it was top secret. Then I told her about the woman with the glowing stone that had sucked away Simon's life.

"You're just trying to scare us," said Daphne, but I think she knew I was telling the truth.

"I'm going to try to help you," I told her. "I'm going to get us all out of here."

Now I've just got to figure out how to do that.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 26TH

I saw that lady again today. While Mr. Grievous was leading us down to the workshop, the lady in black was waiting in the hall. "Oh, are these our young charges?" she said when she saw us. Mr. Grievous made us all stand in a line while the woman inspected us. "Very pleased to meet you all," she said, sounding nice, but I knew she was faking.

"Miss Dora is our bennyfactor," said Mr. Grievous. "Without her, you'd all be out on the streets."

"Indeed," said the lady, "but we're not going to let anything like that happen, are we Mr. Grievous? Children like you are simply too precious. You may not realize it, but inside each one of you lies great potential, just waiting to be released. Don't forget that."

This made me very angry. She thinks we're stupid. She thinks we don't know what she's talking about, but I know. She was probably going up right then and there to suck the life out of Mikey and Daphne with her evil stone. I could feel my hands burning, like they were about to catch fire.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 27TH

Last night I snuck into the chimney again and peeked into the attic bedroom. Mikey was gone! Only Daphne was left, looking very pale. I rattled the grate and called her name, but she didn't wake up, she just let out a moan. I think it's too late to save her, but I have to tell the others. I'll tell them in the morning, and we can all escape together.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1ST

I'm scared, and I don't know what to do. Maybe writing it all down will help me think it through, help me decide...

It all began early this morning, when Mr. Grievous called us down to the front hall. "There's a nasty sickness going round," he said, "so just to be safe Dr. Lorkus is coming again to give you some more shots. I want you all to be on your best behavior for the doctor."

I could feel my hands getting hot, and I began to tremble. That always happens when I'm angry. It's what happened the night my parents died. I wanted to shout, to warn everyone not to let Dr. Lorkus touch them. I wanted to fight, but I just stood there, trembling, with my hands getting hotter and hotter.

I stood there like a pathetic baby, while the other kids were led into the infirmary, one by one, and came out crying, with that black poison in their veins. Then it was my turn. Mr. Grievous pulled me through the door, and Dr. Lorkus prepared the needle, grinning like a maniac. "No!" I managed to shout. "No, I won't take it."

"Now Iggy," said Mr. Grievous, holding my arm tight. "Dr. Lorkus just wants to make sure you don't get sick like the others."

"Poppycock!" I yelled. I could feel the white-hot fury spilling out of me, exploding like bottle full of oil thrown onto a fire. "He means to kill us. You means to kill us all."

"Hold him down," said Dr. Lorkus, quietly, still grinning, and Mr. Grievous grabbed my wrists with both hands.

The fire began in my fingertips, but quickly spread to my palms. It spat and sparked, and then began to rage with flames that somehow did not burn me. My fists became angry balls of fire, and I grinned as Mr. Grievous screamed in pain. He pulled his hands away from me quickly. I could smell his flesh burning.

"What the devil?" cried Dr. Lorkus. He was scared, and I reached for his face. I felt his monocle cracking with the sudden heat, his flesh melt away at my touch.

Something very heavy hit me in the side. The last thing I remember was Mrs. Birchbark holding the heavy marble statue from the hall.

After that, nothing for a long time.

When I woke I couldn't move. It was dark and I wondered if Mrs. Birchbark had broken my spine and left me paralyzed, but then I felt metal cuffs around my wrists and ankles.

"Mrs. Birchbark says you tried to kill Dr. Lorkus," came a voice from the darkness. "Is it true?"

"Who is that?" I asked. "Where am I?"

"It's Bess," said the voice. "They took us up to the attic. It's nice in here. We have proper beds and everything. They brought me here because I'm sick. They brought you here because..."

"Bess, listen to me," I interrupted. "We've got to get out of here. The woman in black will come and kill us. We have to escape."

"What happened to your mummy and daddy, Iggy?" Bess asked.

"What? Weren't you listening? There's no time for that. We have to escape." I tried to wriggle my arms out of their restraints, but they were too tight.

"I heard you crying out for them in your sleep," said Bess. I heard her feet approaching, and then felt her sit down on my bed, near my feet. "I know what it's like to miss

your mummy and daddy. My mummy was a thief. She got taken away by the police. That's how I ended up here."

"Useless," I whispered. "You're just a useless, scaredy-cat." But just as I said it I felt a fumbling of fingers on my wrist, a clicking of a hairpin against metal, and then I felt the cuffs spring open.

"I've been picking locks in the dark almost as long as I've been picking my nose," said Bess.

I jumped up laughing and gave Bess a hug. It's funny, I don't remember anyone ever hugging me before, but I knew how to do it, and it felt good. Bess trembled in my arms and nearly fell over when I let her go. My eyes were beginning to adjust to the dark by then.

"Can you open this door to get us out of here?" I asked Bess.

"No. It's dead-bolted from the outside." Her voice was very weak, and sounded distant, as if she were a long way away.

"Never mind. I know another way."

It was tricky in the dark, but I managed to push a bedside table against the wall and wrench the grate open with a good, hard tug. It clanged open in a shower of rust.

"Climb in, quickly," I said to Bess. "The chimney will take us anywhere in the house." But just as I said it I heard voices, feet clomping on stairs, a key in the lock.

I've thought about that moment a lot. Perhaps I should have stayed and fought, but I only had a second to decide, and panic made it impossible to think. I scrambled into the chimney and closed the grate behind me, just as Mr. Grievous burst into the room. He held a lantern, and I was blinded by the sudden light.

"What was that noise?" He demanded. Then, looking shocked and furious, he said: "Where's Iggy? How the dickens did he escape?"

Safe in the darkness of the chimney, I smiled to myself. But then I saw Bess clearly for the first time and horror filled me. Until now she had just been a shadow in the darkness, but Mr. Grievous's lantern revealed a terrible sight. Her eyes and cheeks were sunken in, and her flesh

was covered in dark, black splotches. The sickness was getting her.

"Bess, what happened to Iggy?" said Mr. Grievous, but just at that moment she collapsed onto the floor.

"Mrs. Birchbark," yelled Mr. Grievous. "Run and get Miss Dora. This one's on her last legs. She'll pay double for a nice young one like this."

I hurried down the chimney and burst into the dormitory where the other kids were sleeping. I woke them all up, babbling in panic. I pleaded with them, and I threatened them, and I tried to talk sense into them, but they wouldn't listen. Joshua told me to stop scaring everyone, and then I felt the rage begin to kindle inside me and the shaking began. My hands got hot again. I thought about burning Joshua until he screamed, but I knew that wouldn't help. It would only turn the other kids against me, so I climbed back into the chimney and came down here, to the study.

I'm sitting here now, with the big grandfather clock ticking away, trying to calm down. And I don't know what to do. I have to do something. I have to save Bess. But how? Or should I just escape? But I don't know how to do that either.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11TH

I have a lot to write. I can't believe this book survived the fire. I found it under a pile of charred wood that might have once been the grandfather clock. I don't know why I came back here, to the ruins. Maybe to find this book and to write this entry.

Here's what happened that day: I climbed back up the chimney, and I waited. The woman in black entered the room alone. I could hear Mr. Grievous and Mrs. Birchbark banging about the house, waking the other kids, trying to figure out where I had gone. Joshua probably told on me, like the coward that he is. Well, never mind about him. He got what he deserved.

Bess was asleep, but her eyelids were flickering. The woman in black put a hand on Bess's forehead and pulled the eyelids open to check her pupils. She smiled her hideous smile, and pulled out another one of those glowing stones from a pocket of her coat.

"Not long now, my pretty," she hissed. I wasn't sure whether she was talking to Bess or to the stone.

The shaking had stopped by then. All I could feel was the fire in my hands and the smoldering anger in my heart. I kicked the grate right off its hinges and leapt into the room with a scream. My fists were fireballs, and I hurled myself at the woman, reaching for her flesh, wanting to smell her burn.

But before I could reach her, she *looked* at me. She didn't touch me, she didn't even raise her hands to defend herself, she just looked at me, and I stopped dead. Her eyes were like mirrors, like pools of oil. I saw myself there, in her dark, glistening eyes, and I felt myself plunge into them, as if I were falling into deep, deep water.

I was sitting in the basement of my old home, shivering and crying, calling for my parents. There was no response. They had left me alone again, without food or heat. I wondered how many days they would be gone this time, how many nights I would have to spend locked in that basement, shivering and hungry. I found the matches and old newspapers in a cupboard. I only made the fire to try to keep warm...but I was still taken away to Malifaux like a criminal...

But then things twisted and changed, and I saw that this was a lie. I saw the truth reflected in Miss Dora's eyes, the truth that I had always kept hidden, deep inside myself. My parents had come home that night stinking of liquor and smoke, and when I tried to speak to them, my father screamed at me, and my mother threw an empty bottle at my head. I made the fire knowing that they were passed out upstairs, knowing that they could barely stand, let alone run, knowing exactly what would happen.

I felt like I had been kicked in the gut. I crumpled to the ground at her feet, the fire dying from my hands. I suddenly felt very cold, unable to raise my head. I hated myself, and that thought filled me with disgust. I curled into a ball and began to cry like a baby. I knew the woman was smiling down at me, but I couldn't bring myself to look at her. I was too ashamed.

Then I heard Bess let out a shuddering breath. It was such a feeble, pathetic sound, no more than a tiny gasp, and I knew that it might be her last. I looked up, at last, to see the woman holding that milky stone over Bess's body between her thumb and forefinger, ready to draw out her life. Now that I was no longer trapped by her gaze, I felt the warmth returning, but I was too weak to move.

But then Bess moved with sudden, furious energy. She slapped at the stone, hard and fast, like a trap snapping shut. The woman gave a screech of shock and as the stone flew from her hand, it arced across the room and landed with a crack and a tink on the uneven floorboards and rolled underneath the bedside dresser, coming to rest against the wainscoting.

I saw a glimmer of a smile on Bess's lips, and then I saw that glimmer die, and I knew that it was over. The rage returned, fiercer and hotter than ever before. The fire blazed in my hands again, and I leapt at the woman, reaching for her eyes. She recovered quickly from her surprise, raising a boot to kick me in the chest, but I've been in too many schoolyard fights to fall for that. At the last moment, I ducked and went for her legs instead, throwing my whole weight at them. She was already off-balance from the kick, and her knees crumpled beneath her. As she struggled to stand, I sent a pillar of flame into her, setting her coat and hair alight. She screamed again and opened her eyes wide-wide-wide.

They were like the twin mouths of some grotesque beast, roaring at me. I knew they would devour me if I looked into them, but I found myself unable to resist. I stared at my reflection, and I saw a scared, angry child, laughing and crying as my family burned, and as her gaze forced its way into me, it unearthed another detail of that night that I had always kept hidden. It wasn't just my parents who died in the burning house. My little sister was there as well. My innocent sister.

I had murdered her, too.

The woman kicked me to the floor and fled from the room, her coat smoldering and smoking. The bedroom was ablaze. The flames of my anger had consumed the curtains and sheets, and Bess's bed had become a funeral pyre. I knew she was already dead, but I reached for her anyway, intending to drag her from the burning room. In my waking nightmare I thought she was my sister, and I was being given one last chance to save her. But as I grabbed at her, I smelled her flesh charring at my touch. My hands still burned with rage. The more I tried to save her, the faster she burned.

I abandoned Bess there and sprinted down the stairs in Miss Dora's wake. The fire was already spreading, creeping up the walls, down the bannisters and crawling across the moldering carpet. As I passed the dormitory door, I could hear the other kids screaming for help, but the door was locked tight. I left them to their fate.

From the upper floors above, I heard a crash. The building was beginning to collapse as its supporting pillars turned to ash. The front door was locked when I reached it, but my hands blazed with rage as I reached for the knob, and the metal melted under the heat. I forced my way out into the street.

I've been living on the streets of Malifaux ever since. It's rained every day since the fire, a heavy, cold rain that drives the homeless under bridges and into the catacombs and sewers beneath the city, but my anger keeps me warm. Had it not been for that rain, the fire would have spread to the nearby buildings. I wish it had. It would make me happy if everyone in this city burned, cleansed of its million sicknesses.

The woman in black watches me. I see her from time to time, lurking in the shadows, with her eyes like oil-slicks, her sickening smile. I don't know what she wants from me. I don't hate her any more. She is cruel and twisted, like everything in this world.

I don't know why I returned to the wreckage of the **Malifaux Orphanage for Sick Children** tonight. Maybe I wanted to find the charred corpses of Mrs. Birchbark and Mr. Grievous, confirmation that they had perished in the flames. Maybe I wanted to find Bess's bones and lay them to rest.

The only thing I found amidst the wreckage was this diary, my story written down in blue ink on blackened pages. A record of my past that refused to burn with the rest of it.

The Rising Sun

All my life, I have believed in science and the pursuit of knowledge, that knowledge is the light that burns away the shadows of the world and brings happiness and prosperity. But the events of the past few days have shown me the truth. Knowledge will not save us, science will not show us the way, and light is not our salvation. All of us, we're just creatures of darkness, reaching hopelessly for the stars but driven to achieve them by such base desires. So, if you can hear me, beware; do not hope for the coming of the dawn or rejoice in the rising of a new sun, flee from the poisonous rays of light for if they touch you, like they did me, you will be revealed for what you truly are: dust and shadow of evil desire. This is Herman Croft, signing out...

A Few Days Earlier

I had been toiling for hours, but I still hadn't made any progress. Who am I lying to? I had been toiling for years and still hadn't made any progress.

Of course, I'm good with machines. There's a certain sensibility and order in how they work, and I understand them. It's as if I can communicate with them, look at the components and see how they needed to be assembled. What needs tweaking, oiling, replacing. It's enough of a talent that it's earned me a meager living repairing odds and ends and afforded me this musty apartment in the slums of Malifaux.

I looked up from work at all of the schematics pinned to my walls. I had such grand designs. My professors always said they were brilliant and that I would change the world. "Ha!" I laughed out loud. If only building them were so easy. Speaking the language of machines already built and fixing them was one thing, but inventing an entirely new language was another. At least I have my machines and my aethervox to keep me company during these late nights. I modified the aethervox to send as well as receive, and its droning provides distraction, when necessary. I flicked it off when I heard my door creak open, still staring at the new machine.

"Up late again, Herman?" Mary's familiar voice asked.

I picked up my screwdriver and continued to adjust the capacitors. "Yes. I think I almost have it this time."

"Keep up this pace and you'll be nothing but skin and bones," she paused. "I brought you some soup."

I turned to face her. Her coarse, chestnut hair framed her hardened face. She was prettier than most people gave her credit for, tall with a nice figure and striking brown eyes, but she never tried to accentuate it after her husband died in the mines. I sighed. "Thanks for worrying about me, but what about you? What is such an elegant lady doing out of her apartment and wandering the halls at this time of night?"

"Elegant? Ha!" Mary smiled. "I saw the light under your door, and you never lock it. Figured you were probably up late again making new toys and neglecting your dinner. Don't know why you bother though, fair money in repairing."

"I want to do more than just repair things!" I put my face in my hands and ran them through my hair. "Look, look around you. All of those schematics and designs on the wall, those are my designs. My machines. My creations that I want to bring into the world!" I got up and shut the door, leaning my face in close to hers. "Do you really want to know what I'm working on?"

She nodded.

"A machine that can open a new breach with the pull of a lever and close it down just as easily." I held my breath, trying to read her face.

"But there's already the Breach."

"Imagine it, though. Imagine if the Guild no longer controlled passage Earthside. Imagine if any citizen of Malifaux could flip a switch and go home. Get supplies, see relatives. Imagine if anyone who wanted could come to Malifaux!"

Mary's eyes brightened as she realized what it could mean for her. "I see."

I turned back to my workbench and picked up my tools. "I suppose I should get back to work."

Mary lingered. "The Union is throwing a ball tomorrow night, and I was hoping you would go with me. I love to dance, and it's been a long time..."

I shook my head. "I wish I could, I do, but I'm so close." I turned and was surprised. Were those tears in her eyes?

"Of course, I understand." She began to leave but turned back. "Herman, please be careful."

Then, she was out the door, and I was alone with my machines again.



Later, I went for a walk to clear my mind. The summer air was warm, and walking was one of the few things that happily took me away from my workbench. Malifaux wasn't the safest city at night, but it wasn't during the day either. It was quieter though, and that's what I wanted.

I passed by several bars, quiet, dark places which seemed to serve only one purpose, to help miners, and everyone else with an equally difficult job in this place, drown the sorrows of the day.

And then I passed the Honeypot. I heard the laughter before I even rounded the corner. Light from the windows illuminated the street. The pleasure spilled out of the doors, with groups of people talking and joking. The shutters of one of the second floor windows flung open, and a scantily clad woman hung out of it laughing, before being pulled in by a man.

As I crossed to the opposite side of the street, I ran into a well-dressed man in a gray suit and top hat, with a neatly trimmed black beard.

"Sorry," I nodded. "Didn't see you there." I started to walk around him.

He held out a gloved hand. "No need to apologize. It's quite a dark night out tonight. But before you go, do you

mind me asking, what brings you out? Are you looking for something? If you are, I believe you will be able to find it in the Honeypot."

I shook my head. "What I'm looking for isn't in there."

"Oh, you don't think so, do you? Money, drink, women. Those are the things most men are looking for, and you could certainly find them there. But there is much more than that inside."

"Like what?"

"Inspiration!" he said with a grin.

I looked at the happy people through the windows and tried to imagine finding inspiration there. When I turned back to tell him the idea seemed ludicrous, he had gone.

I stood there for a moment perplexed and then headed back towards the Honeypot. Inspiration had been found in stranger places. I pushed through the swinging, wooden doors to see a world of drunken laughter and half-dressed women. Groups of people were crowded around tables, playing cards or shooting dice, laughing and cheering each other. Girls dressed in nothing but lace and good humor moved expertly through the crowd, delivering drinks or chatting with customers.

I looked around, unsure of where to go or what to say. I shook my head, what was I doing here? My answers were not in a place like this. I went to leave, but a girl caught my arm.

"What are you looking for tonight?" she said with a smile.

I was caught off guard, so I gave her the only answer I could think of. "Inspiration."

She winked. "I know just where to find that."

Her answer surprised me, but I let her lead me through the masses to a hallway in the back past room after room blocked off with only a curtain. We stopped in front of one, and she gestured for me to have a seat inside. I sat on the long shelf along the back wall, which had been repurposed as a bench, covered in velvet. The room was hardly the size of a closet.

"Inspiration will be with you shortly," she said with a giggle, and left.

A moment later the curtain parted again and another woman entered. She was breathtaking, wearing only a corset, knee-high boots and stockings. Judging by her features, she was obviously from the Three Kingdoms, and her black hair was cut short, hanging just below her chin. She paced in front of me and looked me up and down before grinning and sitting next to me, leaning her cane, fashioned as a serpent, against the bench next to me. As she did, I caught a glimpse of the tattoo on her back, a crane plucking a snake out of a pond.

"Are you...are you Inspiration?" I stuttered.

She gave me a half-smile and a cock-eyed look. "No. Most of my customers call me The Rising Sun, but you may call me Inspiration, if you like. But, to be honest, my real name is Dao-ming."

"Dao-ming? You don't look like a Dao-ming."

"Perhaps, but you don't look like a customer. Hands too soft to be a miner. A politician would have better clothes. So would a criminal." She squinted at me. "Definitely not a Guard." She clapped her hands. "Aha! I've got it! You're an explorer!"

"An inventor, actually," I mumbled.

"Not so different." She smiled, I thought it was probably supposed to be friendly, but some smiles just show teeth. "You discover, that's what matters. You open up new worlds and new possibilities." She leaned close to me, one hand on the back of my head, grabbing a handful of my hair and pulling my face towards hers. "You reach for the stars."

As she said this, her mouth hovered over mine, and I saw a flash of light. Her eyes glowed, and it felt like my lungs were on fire. The burning spread from my chest to my entire body. And then, for the first time in my life, I could see. The world worked, there was an order to it, and I knew my place in it. I could understand the language it had been written in.

I stumbled out of the Honeypot with the laughter of its patrons fading behind me as I began my mad dash home, afraid of losing all those wonderful ideas. I could see the machine in my head; I could see how it all went together. Wires, cogs, shafts, bearings, electrodes, tubes. As soon as I sat at my workbench, my hands worked on their own to bring everything together and to make it whole. Random scrap and forgotten parts

came together to make a single entity. Everything was falling into-

"Herman?"

"Can't you see I'm busy?" I shouted, rounding on Mary. Why did she think it was appropriate to just barge into my apartment?

Mary took a step back. "You know my name, you don't need to call me 'she.' And your door was open. It's morning, Herman. You've been working all night."

"Did I say that out loud? I'm so sorry. I...I don't know what got into me. But look, look what I accomplished." I stood aside so she could see my creation: the two nodes attached to the power supply and capacitors with wires feeding to the main control lever.

Mary forced a smile. "That's nice."

"Just watch," I sighed, pulling the lever.

The machine began a hum which built up to a low rumbling. The nodes sparked, and then an arc of blue light danced between them. The light grew brighter and brighter until the whole room was bathed in it. Between the nodes, the light formed a pool, and we gazed through it.

Together we beheld a world unlike any human eyes have ever set upon before. The landscape shimmered in pale light and stretched as far as I could see. Alien vegetation, or what I took to be vegetation, grew in strange patterns and sprouted from the sides of rolling hills. In the sky blazed an unforgiving, red sun.

"It's beautiful," Mary sighed. "But how..."

"Everything is connected, don't you see? Like beads on a string. And when we apply the correct frequency, give them the correct push, we can part them."

Mary's face shimmered with the light of the machine. "That's not Earth. You said you wanted to create another breach, to go Earthside."

"No, apparently it is not. Creating a breach is one thing, determining exactly where it will be, that's another."

"Can we go through?"

I smiled. "No, not yet. I need to make some changes first. But soon, I think, very soon." I pulled the lever, and the machine gave a high-pitched whine as it powered down.

"But how did you do it? All of a sudden, in one night?"

I hesitated, but then I told her. I told her everything; the enigmatic stranger, the Honeypot, the woman who breathed light.

Mary listened to all of it, nodding. I could tell she didn't approve, but she remained stoic and waited for me to finish. As I did, she just came up to me and put her hands on my face. "Herman, please never go back there again. When I came in earlier you were...you were different. Your eyes, they were...off."

"I won't," I promised. "I know how it all works now; I'll never need to go back again."

Mary smiled; I loved it when she smiled. "Thank you. Well, I should be about my day."

After she was gone, I closed my door and slept as the morning light filled my room.



I awoke at dusk and immediately set to work. I needed to complete my machine, to touch the wonders I had only been able to glimpse. My hands flew, and my tools became extensions of my body. I adjusted, tweaked, replaced. And, when I was ready, I pulled the lever.

The machine sputtered and sparked, and then died miserably. I spent the next few hours recalculating, readjusting. I needed to give it life once more. But no matter how hard I tried, the results were always the same. I let out a groan. Whatever language I could speak last night; whatever divine light of understanding that had been breathed into me, was now gone.

I tried to fight the urge to go back to that place. I knew that whatever had happened to me there had changed

me, and not entirely for the better. The words Mary had spoken to me bounced around my skull like a stray bullet. "...you were different." I had been different, hadn't I? For the first time in my life, I achieved success. I became more than just a petty repair man. I opened up planes of existence never seen by human eyes and beheld alien wonders beyond imagination. Who was a miner's widow to keep the greatest scientific discovery since the opening of the Breach from humankind?



This time, I didn't hesitate outside the Honeypot, I knew exactly where to go. I pushed through the doors and past the weary gamblers, grumbling about the day's losses. I dodged the girls and found the curtained room in the back, where I waited for The Rising Sun. I knew she would find me there. I don't know how I knew, but I knew. And I was right.

Before long, she threw the curtains back and moved towards me with the grace of a cat. "Back for more?"

I nodded.

She grabbed a handful of my hair, forcing my head back and breathed the sweet, ravenous light into my chest once more. Again, the understanding overtook me. I saw the world not just how it was, but how it could be. I saw the substance and the potential. I saw how everything was connected. I saw...brilliance.

The Rising Sun smiled and left, allowing me a view of her tattoo of a crane swallowing a snake.

Soon I was home, working. Everything was coming together. I could see it, I could feel it, I could breathe it. Every piece fit into its proper place. It was a work of art. Somewhere in the distance I thought I heard Mary's voice. Mary, that irritating woman who tried to stop me from living up to my potential. Mary, the insect in the way of progress. Mary, who brought me soup after I worked all day.

I couldn't hear what she was saying, she was so far away. I think she wanted me to stop. But stop what? I was so close to completing my masterpiece; so close to seeing the fruits of my labors. I pulled the lever and heard the hum of the machine, saw the glow of the electrodes. The alien world opened up once more, and then there was nothing.



I woke up sometime the next day. It felt like someone had tried to split my skull open with a relic hammer. I shook myself off and looked around my apartment. Spare parts and tools were scattered everywhere. A pile of hastily scratched notes were next to my bed. And, in the center of it all, was my machine, complete and glorious. I forced myself up and crawled over to it. Licking my lips, I pulled the lever. There was a faint whirr which slowly faded and died. Of course, why would it be that easy?

Slowly, pieces of the night before started fading into my memory. Mary, she had been here last night, hadn't she? I stumbled to the window and pulled aside the curtain. It was already starting to get dark; she should be home by now. I rushed out the door and over to her apartment, knocking frantically. Her door swung open. "Mary!" I called. "Mary!" I quickly searched the apartment. She wasn't there, but there was a pot of soup sitting out and getting cold.

I sat on my bed and started sifting through my notes. Schematics, equations, things I was hardly in the mood to think about, much less look at. I got up and reached for the aethervox on top of the wardrobe, perhaps there was some event keeping her out which would be on the news. As I turned the dial, I saw the writing on the side of the wardrobe. It was my handwriting, scrawled frantically.

mary inside

I looked around my room in disbelief and caught the bowl of soup on the floor. Mary's inside. Mary's inside

what? Suddenly, I had a vision of the alien world and began to wretch. I had been trying to go there, hadn't I?

The news faded on my aethervox, replaced with the hollow cackle of static. I put my face in my hands and began rocking back and forth.

"Hello? Hello? Is anyone out there?"

It was Mary's voice. I vaulted up and looked around. "Mary! I was so worried, I thought the silliest thing. Where are you?"

"I...I don't know. It's cold here, and dark."

My heart sank and my hands began to shake as I made the terrible realization. Mary's voice was coming from the aethervox.



"What happened?" I pleaded, even though I already knew.

"Last night I came over. And you...you weren't yourself. You turned your machine on, and I was pulled in. Oh, Herman, I'm so scared!"

I could feel hot tears streaming down my face. "Don't worry. I'll get you out of there. What does it look like?"

"It's not how it was before. It's just, it's just...darkness. And cold. And there's something here with me. I can feel it, it's so...hungry."

I desperately tried flipping through my notes from the night before, trying to discover what I had done. "I'll go back to the Honeypot, just one more time. I just need to get the machine to work one more time and I can get you-"

"No!" Mary's voice rang through the aethervox sharp and clear. "That hasn't done any good yet. And besides, what if you lose yourself?"

I started heading for the door. "I have to. It's the only way. I did this and I need to get you out."

As I closed the door behind me I heard Mary screaming. "Wait! Don't leave me here alone! Without your voice, there's nothing here. Nothing! And it's so hungry..."

Crying, I ran through the streets until I came to the Honeypot. I pushed aside the miserable gamblers squandering their hard-earned money, the drunks squandering their minds, and the girls who were selling it all. I stumbled into the little room in the back and waited for The Rising Sun.

She advanced over to me and grabbed a handful of my hair, tilting my head back. This time, she paused to whisper in my ear. "At least try to fight temptation. It makes giving in so much sweeter." With that, she pressed her mouth to mine and breathed the scorching light into my body.

Once more I was given a vision of the world. I looked around myself, and I could see the walls decaying. I looked at my hands, and it was as if they were rotting away. I saw the world not just as it was but as it was doomed to be, shrouded in the vast emptiness of uncaring infinity.

The Rising Sun laughed and turned to leave, letting me see the image tattooed on her back, a crane flying away.

Before long I was bolting through the empty streets, scrambling up the stairs, and bursting through the door of my apartment. "I'm here, Mary! I'm here, and I can fix it."

Her voice came in a whimper. "You left me alone. You left me."

"I didn't want to, but I needed the light to get you out. Now I can do it. Just a few more minutes, I'm coming for you."

The static cackled. "Please hurry. It's so cold. And I'm so hungry."

"Don't worry, I can see it now, I can make it work."

I worked in desperation, my hands guided by some unknown force. The designs and schematics from the night before began making sense, and I prepared my machine for one final glimpse into the impossible.

I pulled the lever, and nothing happened; just a feeble whirr and hum that slowly faded into oblivion.

"What is it?" Mary demanded through the aethervox.

I ran my hands through my hair. "It's not working. I just need some more—"

"Get me out of here! You got me in here; you get me out of here! Go get some more of your precious light if you need it, just get me out. I don't care if it burns you up, you did this, you! Now get me home!"

I stood, stunned, looking at the aethervox.

Mary began to sob. "I didn't mean it. I'm so sorry, I'm just so scared, and I want to go home."

"I know. I can see how it works, still. I don't need to go back to the Honeypot. It's the power supply that's the problem. I need more energy to hold it open long enough, I'm going to need some soulstones."

There was the pop of static. "Will I have to be alone here, again?"

"Just one more time. Be brave; I'll be back soon," I said as I slipped out the door.



It was the darkest hour of the night as I crept through the streets, looking to steal the most valuable commodity in Malifaux. Soulstones, the things miners died trying to get and the guards killed to protect.

Luckily, I knew of a Guild safehouse along the train tracks. I did some repair work there once, and I saw where they stored the soulstones. Their aethervox stopped working, and it was the sort of sleepy outpost that saw little enough action for boredom to be a major problem. Even so, I needed to be cautious. They were experienced guards, and I was not an experienced thief.

Light flooded through the windows as I stood on a spare crate I found near the side of the building to peer up into them. I saw two guards in the small station. One sat in a chair filing some reports, and the other was opening the safe.

The one in the chair looked up and spotted me. "Outside!" he yelled, pointing at me. Not an experienced thief at all.

Both guards ran out the door, and I rushed to meet them. I suppose they weren't expecting that, guards are probably used to people running away from them. The first guard went to draw his weapon, and I plowed my fist into his face. Blood splattered the wall, and the guard dropped to the floor with a sickening crunch. The second guard rushed me, and I grabbed him by his coat and threw him across the room. Before he could get up, I had grabbed as many soulstones from the safe as I could carry and was running out the door.

As I fled across the empty streets and back to my apartment, I could hear the remaining guard behind me, shouting. He wasn't close, but I wasn't going to lose him, either.

I careened into my apartment and slammed the door, throwing the board across it and pushing my bookshelf over in front of it. I slumped against the wall, letting the soulstones scatter across the floor as I looked at my hand. I had no idea I was capable of that. Perhaps the light, it had given me-

"Herman?" Mary's voice crackled with static.

"It's me, I'm here," I said, barely catching my breath. "I got the soulstones. I have everything I need to get to you now." I gathered up the loose stones and immediately set to work, fastening them into position along the sides of my machine.

The guard was pounding on the door, demanding it be opened.

"Herman?"

"Yes, Mary?" I responded, wiping sweat from my brow as I continued working.

"When I get out of here, will you take me dancing?"

I laughed. "Of course I will! Every night from now on," I said, cranking a bolt into place. "Just you and me, every night." Behind me, the guard managed to shatter part of the door. "It's going to be divine.

"Oh, Mary?"

"Yes?" She said through the static.

"Is there still something there with you?"

There was a pause. "No, I'm the only one here now."

"Good," I breathed a sigh of relief as I pulled the lever one last time. The engine began to hum and whirr as sparks shot between the electrodes, opening up into the vast pool of brilliance. "I'm coming for you!"

As the room shimmered with the pale blue light, the guard stopped pounding.

The soulstones flickered as the pool grew larger and larger. Not just a window, but a gateway to a new and alien world. But more than any of that, it was the key to getting my Mary back. And as it opened, I saw for the first time the creature I had been conversing with, and I laughed. I was finally a part of this delightful joke.

With the last of my strength, I dragged myself to my aethervox and sent out one last warning.

And there was only Darkness. Sweet, merciful Darkness...

GUARD'S REPORT

On the night of the 27th, my partner and I were assailed by a man now identified as Herman Croft. He attacked us, killing my partner in a single blow before making his escape with five of the Guild's soulstones. I followed him back to his residence, where he had blocked the door. As per protocol I went for assistance in breaking down the obstacle.

Upon entering the room, we found a withered husk, which almost appeared human, writhing in the center of the floor. Its skin was stretched tight over its bones and strange tentacles and protrusions grew where fingers should have been. Although seemingly weak, the

creature was almost certainly Neverborn, so we dispatched it with caution. We searched the premises and retrieved the soulstones. Inside the wardrobe, we found the body of a woman who was identified as one Mary Langford. She had been a resident of the building, and she had been killed by human hands. It seems her body had been there for at least a day. Neighbors said they heard her and Croft fighting around the time of her disappearance, so it is likely she was killed in some sort of domestic struggle. Herman Croft was nowhere to be found, and he is expected to be very dangerous, possibly with ties to the Neverborn. It is my strong suggestion that a citywide bulletin be put out to aid in his capture.



NEW RULES



NEW RULES



NEW FACTION - TEN THUNDERS

Storm of Shadows adds the Ten Thunders Faction to the game of Malifaux.

The Ten Thunders Faction is represented by the orange Faction color and the Clan Katanaka crest. All rules that apply to Factions and Faction models apply to the Ten Thunders Faction as well.

DUAL-FACTION MODELS

Upon its arrival the Ten Thunders began inserting its spies and agents into the myriad organizations vying for control of Malifaux. Where they have been able, the Katanaka family has also blackmailed or otherwise subverted people in positions of authority to operate with the Ten Thunders' best interests in mind. These individuals are collectively known as Dual-Faction models in the Malifaux game.

A Dual-Faction model can be identified by the two Faction colors present on its border and the two Faction symbols on the front of its Stat Card.

Model Update: Ten Thunders Brother

- Ten Thunders Brother models are now Dual Faction Outcasts/Ten Thunders models.
- Replace Companion (Ten Thunders) with Companion (Ten Thunders Faction)

Hiring Dual-Faction Models

A Dual-Faction model can be hired by either of its two Factions and is friendly to members of its own Crew as normal. Effects that affect either of its two Factions affect the model as normal.

Example: Phil declares he is running a Ten Thunders Faction Crew during Encounter Setup. As Jakob Lynch is a Dual-Faction Neverborn/Ten Thunders Master Phil can choose Jakob to lead his Ten Thunders Crew. Jakob is also a Neverborn model when it comes to game effects. For instance, he would ignore the damage inflicted by the **Black Blood** Ability.

Example: Nicodem is leading a Resurrectionist Crew. He hires Yin, the Penanggalan from the Resurrectionists/Ten Thunders. Yin is friendly to Nicodem's Resurrectionist Crew but also retains the Ten Thunders Faction.

Example: Mei Feng is leading Ten Thunders Crew. She can hire Metal Gamin even though they possess the Arcanist Asset Ability as she is both a Ten Thunders Master and an Arcanist Master.

Dual-Faction Masters and Schemes

A Crew containing a Dual-Faction Master may only choose Faction Schemes from the Faction they announced for the Crew.

Example: Bruce announces he is running a Ten Thunders Crew lead by Lucas McCabe. Because the Crew is a Ten Thunders Crew, Bruce cannot choose the **Raid!** or **Round Up** Schemes even though McCabe counts as a Guild model.



Example of a Ten Thunders Stat Card



Example of a Dual Faction Guild/Ten Thunders Stat Card

NEW MODEL TYPES – MOUNTED AND DISMOUNTED

Storm of Shadows introduces two new model types: Mounted and Dismounted. These model types are in addition to the model's standard type, for example in Storm of Shadows Lucas McCabe has two model profiles: Mounted Master, and Dismounted Master.

While riding his trusty steed (Mounted Master), McCabe's model type is Mounted and Master, meaning any game rules that reference the Master model type or the Mounted model type will affect McCabe. While McCabe is Dismounted he is affected by rules that reference Masters and Dismounted models.

Crews hiring a Mounted model automatically include its Dismounted version at no cost. The Dismounted version of the model cannot enter the game until it Replaces the Mounted version (see below).

The following rules also apply to Mounted and Dismounted models.

Mounted

A Mounted model has two **Wounds** stats, separated by a slash (such as 8/5). The number before the slash is the model's **Wounds**, while the number after the slash indicates the mount's **Wounds**. The model's stat card also possesses two **Wounds** tracks.

When a Mounted model suffers 1 or more wounds its Controller decides which **Wound** stat will suffer each point, distributing them as he or she sees fit. If the wounds inflicted on the mount exceed its current **Wd** the model suffers any remaining wounds.

Example: The Mounted Lucas McCabe suffers 3 wounds. His Controller decides to inflict two of those wounds on his mount, while McCabe suffers the remaining wound. Later on McCabe suffers 5 wounds. McCabe assigns all 5 wounds to his mount, which only has 2 wounds remaining. The mount is killed and McCabe suffers the leftover 3 wounds.

Effects that reduce a mounted model's **Wd** to a fixed amount total the number of wounds needed to reach that amount and then assign the wounds as normal for a mounted model. Effects that kill a model outright, such as Headshot, can be assigned to the mount instead of the rider.

Example: McCabe (4 **Wd**/Mount 2 **Wd** remaining) is hit by Whispers from Beyond. McCabe suffers 3 wounds, which reduces his **Wd** to half: $(6/2 = 3)$.

When a Mounted model heals 1 or more **Wd** it distributes each point to either the mount or the rider as its Controller sees fit.

When a mount's **Wd** is reduced to 0, the Mounted model is immediately Replaced with its Dismounted version. A Mounted model can be Replaced with its Dismounted version either by its Mounted version being killed, or by performing its **(0) Dismount** Action. Once Dismounted, a model cannot regain its Mounted version.

Dismounted

When a model becomes Dismounted, whether through the Dismount Action, or by its mount being killed, immediately Replace the Mounted version of the model with the Dismounted one.

Only Talents and Spells which specifically state they carry over from the Mounted version of the model to the Dismounted one do so.

The Dismounted version of a model cannot be Summoned by any means.

LUCAS MCCABE, MOUNTED
BLACK SHEEP

Wk/Cu	Ht	Wp
8/12	3	6
Ca	Dr	Wd
6P	5	8/5

WOUNDS

SABRE	TRAMPLE	NET GUN
Rd 1	Rd 2	Rd 8
Ch 6P	Ch 5	Ch 4
Dc 1/3/4	Dc 2/3/5	Dc 1*/2*/2*

Abilities: Bearskin Armor, "In the thick of it!", Companion (Black Sheep), Officer of the Law, Relic: Cache

Actions: (+1) Ranged Expert, (0) Dismount, (0) Keep Up!, (2) Ride Down










Weapons: Net Gun, Sabre

Spells: (1) Braying of the Hounds (CC: 13P Wp / Rst: Wp / Rg: 0/10), (1) "Stunner" (CC: 14P / Rst: Df / Rg: 10)

Talents: Ch (#) Critical Strike, Ch (#) Flailing Hooves

Example of a Mounted Model

STORM OF SHADOWS HIRING GRID

		Luna	Clockwork Trap	Guild Rifleman	Guild Pathfinder	Sidir Alchibal	Wastrel		Soul Porter	Ashigaru	Chiaki, The Niece	Izamu, The Armor	Toshiro, the Daimyo	Yin, the Penangalan		Emberling	Kang	Metal Gamin	Rail Gamin	Rail Worker	Willie	
Lucas McCabe		X	X	X	X	X	X			*			X	X			X			X		
		X	X	X	X	X	X															
Yan Lo			X				X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X			X		
									X	X	X	X	X	X								
Mei Feng			X				X			*			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
																X	X	X	X	X	X	
Jacob Lynch			X				X			*			X	X			X			X		
																						
Misaki			X				X			*			X	X			X			X		

	Hungering Darkness	Jezebel	Mr. Graves	Mr. Tannen	The Depleted	The Illuminated		Shang	Ototo	Ten Thunders Archer	Torakage	Yamaziko		Oiran	Ten Thunder Brother	Special
			X	X					X	X	X	X		X	X	May also at no additional cost: models with the Guardsman Characteristic.
														**	**	
			X	X					X	X	X	X		X	X	May also hire at no additional cost: Punk Zombies, and Onryo.
														**	**	
			X	X					X	X	X	X		X	X	May also hire at no additional cost: Fire Gamin. In Scraps, may not hire models with the Frozen Heart Ability.
														**	**	In Scraps, Crew may not include models with Frozen Heart Ability.
	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X		X	X	May also hire at no additional cost: Sorrows, Stitched Together, and Ht 1 Woes.
	X	X	X	X	X	X								**	**	
			X	X				X	X	X	X	X		X	X	May also hire at no additional cost: Desperate Mercenaries, Hans, Ronin, Taelor. These models gain the Ten Thunders Faction.

* May be included in Crews hiring Toshiro.

** May be included as a Mercenary.

NEW SCHEMES

NEW FACTION SPECIFIC SCHEMES

Infiltrate Malifaux (Ten Thunders Only)

We are the wind and the shadow. Our influence shall spread throughout Malifaux yet none will know our name. – Baojun Katanaka, Oyabun of the Ten Thunders

Special

Insignificant models do not count toward the Victory condition. This Scheme must be announced.

Victory

At the end of the Encounter, if your Crew has at least two Dual-Faction Minions in play, you score **1 VP**.

OR

At the end of the Encounter, if your Crew has at least two Dual-Faction Minions in play and has more models in play than your opponent does, you score **2 VP**.

Saving Face (Ten Thunders Only)

Salvage what you can, let the rest burn in their dishonor. – Izamu Katanaka

Special

This Scheme must be announced.

Victory

If you and your opponent each score fewer than **4 VP** for your Individual or Shared Strategies, you score **2 VP**.

NEW MASTER SPECIFIC SCHEMES

Bring 'Em Back Alive (Lucas McCabe Only)

Subdue and capture your enemies. It's easier to interrogate a living captive than a warm corpse. – Lucas McCabe

Special

This Scheme must be announced.

Victory

If McCabe's Crew killed three or more enemy models during the Encounter while those models were either **Slow** or **Paralyzed**, you score **2 VP**.

Walk With Me (Yan Lo Only)

More exists beyond heaven and hell than what your paltry imagination can conjure. – Yan Lo

Special

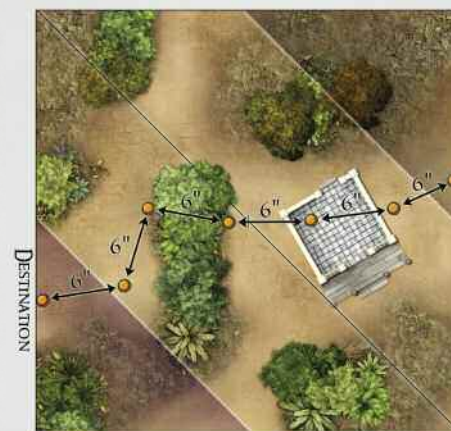
This Scheme must be announced.

Victory

If at any point during the Encounter Yan Lo had a Level 4 Path completed and had at least two Relic cards placed with him, you score **2 VP**.

Alternate Route (Mei Feng Only)

When a destination cannot be reached, the wise man finds an alternate path. – Three Kingdoms Proverb



Example Route

Setup

After all models have deployed, place one 30mm Embarkation Marker completely within your Deployment Zone. The Marker must be touching a table edge within the Zone. Then place a second 30mm Destination Marker completely within your opponent's Deployment Zone. That Marker must be touching the opposite table edge.

Special

During the Encounter, non-insignificant models in your Crew may perform the Action: **"(0) Building the Line:** This model places a 30mm Route Marker in base contact with itself." This Scheme must be announced.

Victory

If at the end of the Encounter you can trace a line from the Embarkation Marker to the Destination Marker and that line passes through Route Markers no further than 6" from one another your Crew placed, you score **2 VP**.

Emptied Pockets (Misaki, Mistress of the Ten Thunders Only)

"She Took My Stones!!" – Theft Victim #55

Special

This Scheme must be announced.

Victory

If Misaki Pilfered more Soulstones from the opposing Crew during the Encounter than that Crew has remaining in its Soulstone Pool at the end of the Encounter, you score **2 VP**.

"Read 'Em And..." (Jakob Lynch Only)

Unless you're willing to lay all your cards on the table you don't really know what risk is. – Jakob Lynch

Special

This Scheme may only be selected if you do not begin the Encounter with Hungering Darkness in play. During the Encounter, if you have a "straight" of at least five Cards in sequential value (example: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) at the end of any Turn's End Closing Phase, and Jakob is in play, you may reveal those Cards to your opponent. This Scheme must be announced.

Victory

If you revealed the straight during the Encounter, you score **2 VP**.

Spread the Light (Jakob Lynch Only)

It is much easier to devour those who are unaware of their fate.

Special

This Scheme may only be selected if you begin the Encounter with Hungering Darkness in play. This Scheme must be announced.

Victory

If all enemy models in play at the end of the Encounter have the Brilliance Characteristic, and there are at least two enemy models left in the game, you score **2 VP**.



THE GUILD



LUCAS MCCABE - MASTER

A key rattled in the lock outside, signaling his wait was over.

Finally. Lucas McCabe had watched the splash of light the room's tiny window provided slide slowly across the floor and up the wall, tracking the time with its progress. Nearly five hours had passed. The shackles around his wrists and ankles chafed, and the small wooden chair was not the most comfortable he had ever sat in, but as far as sweating out a prisoner went, the Guild were novices.

In walked two men. The softer of the two, McCabe's interrogator, sat across from him, setting a portfolio of papers on the scarred and stained table which separated him from their prisoner. The other closed and locked the door, the look in his eyes daring McCabe to try something, anything, that would let him pay back the broken nose he had received. McCabe winked at him.

The soft man settled a pair of spectacles on his nose and flipped through the portfolio for a few minutes, glancing up at McCabe over the rims from time to time. Sighing, he closed the portfolio cover.

"Mr. Lucas McCabe, I am Special Inspector Franklin. You are in a good deal of trouble. Smuggling Old Malifaux artifacts through the Breach is a very serious crime, the punishment is quite severe."

Franklin paused. If he was expecting a reaction out of McCabe, he was disappointed.

"Very well. According to your entry papers, you arrived in Malifaux a month ago. Your stated purpose for visiting was, ah, 'sightseeing'. Since that time, you, or one of your associates, have been arrested for drunken disorder or assault seven times. Your little band had already made it on to our watch list, Mr. McCabe. It's the sort of attention you don't want here in Malifaux.

"We get plenty of your type here, McCabe. Rich, bored sons and daughters who come through the Breach to find some new vice to waste their lives on, or who ran here when their pasts caught up with them and daddy couldn't or wouldn't protect them any longer. Which one are you, McCabe? A deviant or a coward?"

McCabe shifted in his seat, the chains of his shackles rattling. Both guardsmen tensed, ready for his move. He scratched his nose.

"Have it your way." Franklin shrugged. "I can see we won't be getting anywhere with you for a while. I have questions you will answer, McCabe. What was that thing our men found? Who were you selling it to? Answers I'm sure you will be overjoyed to share with me very soon. Maybe you need some more time to think about your situation."

Franklin gathered up his papers and crossed to the door. He and the brute exchanged a nod as he exited. The brute locked the door and grinned.

When the door opened again, it was not Franklin who entered. The golden mask the visitor wore told Lucas all he needed to know about the man's identity. He was going to be questioned by the Governor's Secretary himself.

Lucius surveyed the scene as he closed the door. McCabe sat quietly in his chair, lip and knuckles bloody. The guardsman lay face down on the floor, one of his arms twisted at an awkward angle. From where Lucius stood, he thought he could see the guardsman breathing. "What happened here?"

"He slipped."

Without paying the unconscious guardsman another glance, Lucius sat down across from McCabe. He also carried a portfolio of documents, but this one was much thicker than Franklin's. He set it on the table and placed his well-manicured hands on top.

"Lucas McCabe," he began, his voice tinny and muffled behind the mask, "born to Sarah and Tomas McCabe, an ancestral name with a long and proud history. Youngest of four. Attended Oxford. Historian. Explorer. Malcontent. Arrested for the death of your fiancée, Karen, was it, in Cairo. Several encounters with the law after that, mostly minor, but many unproven accusations of tomb desecration and robbery. Left Egypt for Malifaux a few steps ahead of some very angry, very powerful people. But I won't bore you with the details, we both know them."

"What I don't know is," Lucius opened the portfolio to the last page. It was blank. "Why would a *thief* of your caliber commit such an obvious mistake? I'm no fool, Mr. McCabe, what game are you playing at here?"

Lucas shrugged. "Everyone makes mistakes, guess it was time for mine."

"Here's what I think. I think something spooked you. Maybe the men who you stole from back Earthside have sent someone here looking for you. You are obviously someone who won't ask for assistance. Instead, you attempt to smuggle antiquities out of Malifaux like a novice. I think this is as close as you get to asking for help. Am I close? I cannot help you if you won't speak to me, Lucas."

"Help me? I'm pretty sure you helping me means I help you. Sound about right? I asked around, heard the Governor was 'protecting' folks like myself, for a price."

"Like yourself ... oh, yes, the black sheep of the family. Well, that much is true. The Governor prefers his wealthy guests to be looked after. Sometimes, it is at your request; other times, it is as a personal favor for your families. Each according to his or her need and gifts." McCabe could feel the predatory grin behind Lucius' mask. "Here is what I am prepared to offer you."

"I'm listening."

"The Governor is in need of a historian with your unique talents. He would like you to recover a number of relics for his personal collection. I am willing to provide you with the resources to conduct your search and recovery. Anything else you discover is yours, to do with as you see fit. We have already released your associates; I anticipate their skills may be needed. You will be in the Guild's employ, Mr. McCabe, and as such, under our protection from your inquisitive Earthside friends. What say you?"

LUCAS MCCABE, MOUNTED - MASTER



SOMM BASE

SOULSTONE CACHE: 6

Dual Faction
Ten Thunders

BLACK SHEEP

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
8/12	3	6	6P	5	8/5

TALENTS:

Abilities

Bearskin Armor: This model may choose to ignore damage inflicted by (X), (P), and (S).

"In the thick of it!": This model receives +1 Df per enemy model engaged with it after the first, up to +3 Df.

Companion (Black Sheep)

Officer of the Law: Crews led by this model may always hire at no additional cost Sidir Alchibal, and models with the Black Sheep or Guardsman Characteristic.

Relic Cache: When hiring this model, select and pay the indicated cost from this model's Soulstone Cache for at least two of the following options. The selected options are considered printed on both the Mounted and Dismounted McCabe model stat cards for the duration of the Encounter.

Badge of Speed: Cost 3.

Gain the Spell **"(1) Black Flash:** (CC: 14W / Rst: - / Rg: 6) Target non-Master friendly model with the Black Sheep or Guardsman Characteristic gains **Reactivate.**"

Glowing Sabre: Cost 2.

Sabre Weapon gains Paired.

Hunter's Cloak: Cost 1.

Gain the **Hunter** Ability.

Invigorating Bridle: Cost 1.

Gain the Action **"(0) Settle Steed:** This model performs a Healing Flip which only heals the Mount's **Wd**. This Action may only be performed by Lucas McCabe, Mounted."

Staghorn: Cost 2:

Gain the Action **"(1) Horn Blast:** This model targets an enemy model within 12". Friendly models receive +2 Cg when **Charging** the target. This model may forfeit its **Ranged Expert** Action to pay the AP for this Action."

Strangemetal Shirt: Cost 3.

Gain the **Armor +2** Ability.

Weapon

Net Gun: If target is hit by this Weapon, before resolving damage place a 50mm round marker touching target. All other models touched by the must win a **Df → 13** Duel or receive **Slow**.

Sabre: Magical.

Actions

(+1) Ranged Expert

(0) Dismount: Replace this model with Lucas McCabe, Adventurer, then this model performs a Healing Flip.

(0) Keep Up!: (X)6. This model's Controller may Push friendly living models up to 4" toward this model.

(2) Ride Down: Push this model up to its **Cg** in a straight line. During this Push it may move over but not end on top of intervening models. Models that are moved over must perform a **Df → 14** Duel or they receive **Slow**.

Triggers

Cb (P) Critical Strike [Sabre]

Cb (P) Flailing Hooves [Trample]: After resolving this attack, if defender suffered 1 or more **Wds**, defender receives **Slow**.

SPELLS:

(1) Braying of the Hounds

(CC: 13P / Rst: Wp / Rg: (X)10) Enemy models losing their Resist Duel receive -2 Df and -2 Wp.

(1) "Stunner!"

(CC: 14P / Rst: Df / Rg: 10) Target **Slow** model replaces **Slow** with **Paralyzed**.

SABRE

Rg	/// 1
Cb	6P
Dg	1/3/4

TRAMPLE

Rg	/// 2
Cb	5
Dg	2/3/5

NET GUN

Rg	8
Cb	6
Dg	1+Slow/2+Slow/2+Paralyzed

LUCAS MCCABE, DISMOUNTED - MASTER



30MM BASE

SOULSTONE CACHE: D

Dual Faction
Ten Thunders

BLACK SHEEP

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/6	2	6	6P	6	8

TALENTS:

Abilities

Bearskin Armor: This model may choose to ignore damage inflicted by (X), (I), and (U).

"In the thick of it!": This model receives +1 Df per enemy model engaged with it after the first, up to +3 Df.

Relic Cache: The Relics purchased for the Mounted version of this model also apply to the Dismounted version.

Scout

Traps Stash [2]: This model begins the Encounter with the indicated number of Traps available.

Weapon

Sabre: Magical.

Actions

(+1) Melee Expert

(0) Desperation: This Action may only be performed when this model has 3 or fewer Wd remaining. This model receives +3 general AP. Sacrifice this model at the end of its activation. This model counts as killed by the enemy for VP conditions.

(0) Loot the Dead: This model may immediately perform this Action after it kills an enemy model with a melee attack. This model performs a flip which may be Cheated and gains the option indicated by the suit flipped.

- **Red Joker:** Gain one Soulstone.
- **X: Coup Necklace:** This model gains the **Terrifying → 11** Ability until the end of this model's next activation.
- **W: Sneak's Cloak:** This model counts as having soft cover against ranged attacks until the end of its next activation.
- **BB: Reset Trap:** Increase this model's **Traps Stash** by one.
- **P: Soulstone Medallion:** This model gains the **Stubborn** Ability until the end of this model's next activation.
- **Black Joker:** This model suffers **Poison 2**.

(1) Set Trap: Reduce this model's **Traps Stash** by one, and then Summon one Clockwork Trap completely within 4" of this model. This Action may only be performed during this model's activation, and only if this model has at least one Trap in its **Traps Stash**.

(2) Whirling Dervish: Discard a Control Card. This model immediately performs a Bullwhip **Strike** against every model within 2".

SABRE

Rg	/// 1
Cb	6P
Dg	1/3/4

BULLWHIP

Rg	/// 3
Cb	5
Dg	1/2+Slow/2+Slow

Triggers

Cb (P) Critical Strike [Sabre]

Cb (W) Stinging Crack [Bullwhip]: Model hit suffers **Pacify**: Target must activate after any other model in its Crew which has not been affected by **Pacify**.

Cb (P) Hogtie [Bullwhip]: Models hit with this weapon cannot move or be moved out of this model's melee range without first winning a Df → 13 Duel.

SPELLS:

(1) Braying of the Hounds

(CC: 13P / Rst: Wp / Rg: (X)10) Enemy models losing their Resist Duel receive -2 Df and -2 Wp.

(1) "Stunner!"

(CC: 14P / Rst: Df / Rg: 10) Target **Slow** model replaces **Slow** with **Paralyzed**.

"Hmmm, intriguing, but I think I'd rather spend some time in your jail. I could use a vacation."

"Another quip. In that case, I do believe we can arrange to have the charges against you dropped and put you on the next train back through the Breach. Of course, I'll take the liberty of notifying your friends that you'll be on it. It's always nice to have a warm welcome home after a long trip."

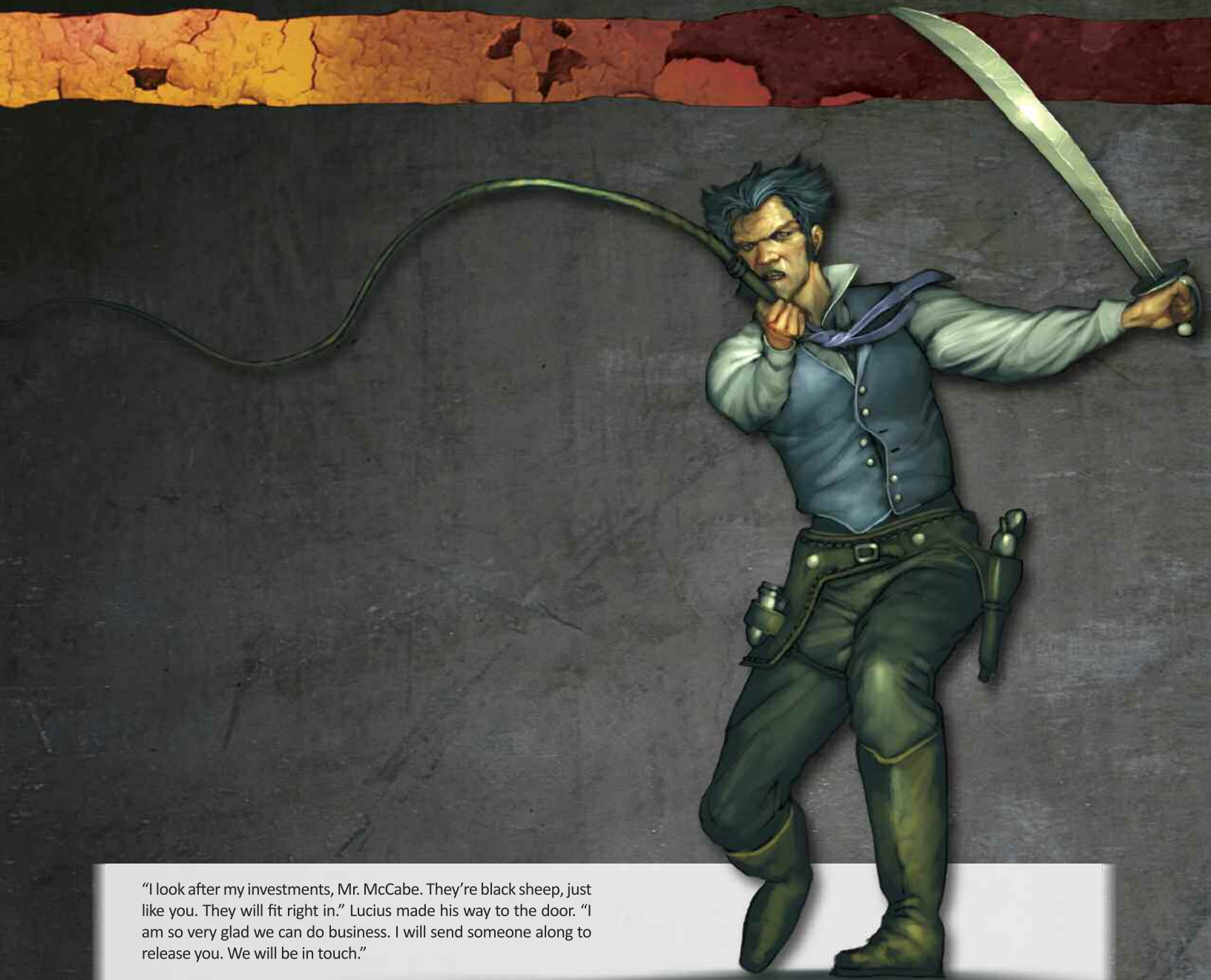
"I was wondering when the threats would start," Lucas shifted. The chair was damned uncomfortable.

"Not a threat, Mr. McCabe, a certainty."

"Well then, I suppose we have ourselves a deal, Mr. Matheson. I'd shake hands on it, but," Lucas rattled his shackles.

"Considering the circumstances, we'll forgo the pleasantries. Oh, and I will be sending some of the Governor's guests along with you. They could use some time away from the City."

"Starting out a relationship without any trust, such a shame," Lucas smiled.



"I look after my investments, Mr. McCabe. They're black sheep, just like you. They will fit right in." Lucius made his way to the door. "I am so very glad we can do business. I will send someone along to release you. We will be in touch."

It was well after dark by the time Lucas left the Gaol. A group of shifty looking men slouched nearby. "Whew, that was a close one. Eh, boss?" one of the wastrels grinned.

"Was no walk in the park, that's for sure," Lucas looked back at the Gaol. A single light burned in one of the windows. He was certain a man wearing a golden mask watched him from it. "Come on, lads, we have work to do."

Dawn teased the horizon's edge by the time Lucas reached his destination. Only two of Lucas' wastrels remained, the rest had drifted off as they walked. Some to watch for and delay anyone following them, others on errands he gave to them.

Entering a nondescript shop in the Little Kingdom, Lucas walked past the sleeping shopkeeper and into a small back room lit by a single candle. The masked figure who awaited him nodded and invited him to sit with a wave of its hand.

"Too damn many masks for one day," Lucas grumbled. "I'll stand, thank you."

"Very well," the female voice said.

"You were right. They are looking for something. He didn't tell me what, not yet. My guess is he'll have me running around on a few damned goose chases. Testing my loyalty and all of that rot. May be a bit of time before I start the real work he's hired me to do."

"Agreed. The Governor's Secretary is nothing if not cautious. Be wary of him, Lucas. He has eyes and ears everywhere."

"Wary is my middle name. You'll have regular reports, and samples of whatever writings I find."

"Thank you, Lucas. You have done well. The Ten Thunders appreciates your service."

Dual Faction
Ten Thunders



LUNA - TOTEM

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 3

BEAST, TOTEM (McCABE), UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
6/8	1	4	5P	5	5

VICIOUS BITE	
Rg	/// 1
Cb	5
Dg	2/3/4

Scout

Stubborn

Actions

(+1) **On the Trail:** This model receives an additional **Walk** Action if it activates within 3" of another friendly Guild Hound.

Triggers

Cb (P) **Critical Strike** [Vicious Bite]

SPELLS:

Magical Extension

(CC: * / Rst: * / Rg: *) This Spell may be cast only once per activation. Cast one of the connected Master's (1) Spells. During this casting, this model may use a Soulstone to change its starting total.

TALENTS:

Abilities

Companion (McCabe/Guild Hound)

Hunter

Leader of the Pack: This model counts as a Guild Hound for the purposes of Talents and Spells.

McCabe's Hound: This model and friendly Guild Hounds in play ignore any damage and effects caused by McCabe's Net Gun Weapon.



Lucas McCabe's sabre darted out, nicking the hide of the beast for what he thought was the hundredth time. The thing bled from a dozen small cuts the faintly glowing blade had landed in the minutes he had tried to keep it at bay.

The creature's hot breath was the only sound it made, it neither roared nor whimpered in pain at the cut. Lucas knew his time was running short. He was already feeling the dull throb of fatigue in his arm and the ankle he had twisted on broken masonry during their encounter barely supported his weight. One wrong move and one of the Nephilim's massive claws would crush an arm or his leg, or worse yet swipe the head from his shoulders as it had Dougal's, may the lad rest in peace.

McCabe's guard faltered, and the Nephilim lashed out. Lucas reacted an instant too late, the claws catching him in the side and throwing him to the ground. He felt blood oozing from the wound and knew the next blow would finish him. The Nephilim sensed it had the upper hand and bellowed in triumph; Lucas immediately wished it had remained silent. It moved in for the kill, still wary of his magical blade. It opened its mouth in what may have been a grin, its needle-sharp fangs descending...

...only to be bowled over by a large black shape which launched itself from the shadows.

"Luna!" McCabe shouted, trying to regain his feet.

The mastiff snarled and snapped at the Nephilim's neck, scrambling to hang on while she grabbed for a handful of fur. Its bellow of triumph turned into cries of pain as Luna's powerful jaws snapped shut on its neck and shoulder, even biting off a claw that strayed too close.

McCabe limped toward where the two bodies were locked in combat. He could see Luna's coat was matted with what he hoped wasn't only her blood, and that despite the savagery and surprise of her attack, the Nephilim was slowly gaining the upper hand. He leapt forward, sabre stabbing down into the creature's chest and stomach. Fresh howls, the kind that curdled blood, met each blow. With a final snarl, Luna delivered the killing blow, tearing the Nephilim's throat out. Both Luna and McCabe slumped down, lungs working like bellows.

"What would I do without you, girl?" McCabe asked, giving the bloody mastiff a scratching behind her ears before the two of them began the limping trek back to civilization.

GUILD RIFLEMAN - MINION



We was three days out from the City, bound for Town #28 – you know, Padre’s Grove, when they hit us.

It was me, the missus, and my boy, Jake. Along with us, another twelve families were making the run. We were eight wagons, a few on horseback, and a couple who thought they’d walk all that way. I had a couple of those idiots riding in our wagon, couldn’t let them fall behind, and we sure as sin weren’t going to slow down to their moseying speed.

What we’d been told by folks in the City was that the Padre’s Grove run was mostly safe. A few Neverborn sightings but nothing we should worry too much about. I took as much stock in those stories as you might guess and rode with the shotgun right next to me on the bench. My shotgun, plus the three rifles our escorts carried, made a total of... well... five guns. Hank Ketchum had his old breechloader with him. Still not sure if Hank got a shot off with it or not.

The three riflemen rode two up front, one to the rear, watching the trail for trouble. When we were camped, they kept to themselves. Those damned goggles and masks they wore sure kept the dust out of their faces, but it definitely made things a might difficult for a feller to want to strike up a conversation with any of ‘em. Maybe that was the plan all along.

Well, the sun was hanging low that third day, and we were just about ready to make camp when one of the riflemen held up a hand. We pulled up our wagons and horses and waited. My hands were already on the shotgun, I didn’t like how tense they looked, even in those long coats and hats. The rifleman at the rear came around, talked with his

pals and then they were off their horses, leading them back to the center of our little wagon train.

“Trouble’s coming. You folks better get ready for it.” The tallest of the three said as he rushed by, checking his rifle’s load.

I barely had time to get Jake and the missus inside the wagon before the monsters came flying out of the sun at us. Damned beasts were using its glare to hide their approach. The shotgun wouldn’t be much good until they got close, so I held tight to it and watched. Then a rifle cracked behind me, and another, and then a third. Three of the monsters wobbled in the air and then crashed to the ground. We all whooped at that, had us thinking we’d all survive.

The rifles kept firing, and the monsters kept dying. A few got close to the wagons, and we lost some souls. Jake... he... well... it was the riflemen who kept as many of us alive as they could that day, and when it looked like all was lost, the tall one shouted, “Grab the horses, people! Ride for the ridgeline and don’t look back. We’ll do what we can!”

I wanted to stay with them and fight, I did. But the missus... and Jake was hurt... all of us that was left cut horses loose and rode just like he told us. We didn’t look back, just rode and rode until we thought the horses would drop. The sound of the rifles slowed and was silent by the time we reached the ridge. I looked back, just as the sun died for the evening and saw three still forms, corpses around them. They had given everything so that we could live.

And I don’t even know their names...

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 4

GUARDSMAN, RARE 3

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
4/6	2	5	4	4	5

KNIFE	
Rg	/// 1
Cb	4
Dg	1/2/3

GUARD RIFLE	
Rg	11
Cb	5
Dg	2/3/4

TALENTS:

Abilities

Companion (Guild Rifleman)

Hunter

Actions

(0) **Take Aim:** This model’s ranged Weapon receives +3 Rg until the end of its activation.

(0) **Stand and Fire:** If a friendly Guardsman within 6” of this model is targeted by a **Charge**, this model may perform a ranged attack targeting the **Charging** model before it moves. This Action’s effect ends when this model performs the ranged attack, or at the start of its next activation.

(All) **Combined Arms:** This model performs up to three ranged attacks. This Action may only be performed if this model simultaneously activated with one or more friendly Guild Riflemen.

Triggers

Cb (P) **Firing Squad [Guard Rifle]:** Ignore **Hard to Wound**.

Cb (P) **Two Birds [Guard Rifle]:** After damaging defender with a Guard Rifle attack, the closest model within 3” of the defender suffers Dg 1/2/3, which cannot be Cheated.



CLOCKWORK TRAP - MINION

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 2

Dual Faction
Ten Thunders



CONSTRUCT, INSIGNIFICANT, RARE 3, TRAP

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
4/-	1	6	3	6	3

TALENTS:

Abilities

Arachnid

Evasive +2

From the Shadows: This model may be deployed after all other models, in or behind any terrain more than 12" away from an enemy, or the objective of any Strategy or Scheme. This model may not be targeted by **Charges** or ranged attacks until it performs an Action other than **Pass** if deployed this way. If multiple models with this ability are in play, players alternate deploying them using the deployment order for Crews.

Harmless

Immune to Influence

Tiny: Ranged Strikes and ranged Spells targeting this model receive $\frac{1}{2}$ to their Attack and Casting Flips. This model does not block LoS to other models.

Top Secret: Increase this model's Rare to 6 if its Crew began the Encounter containing McCabe or one or more Guild Trappers.

Unstable: If this model's starting Flip in any Duel is a Black Joker it immediately produces a (X)2 Dg 2 and is then sacrificed.

Weapon

Trapping Jaw: Models hit by **Strikes** with this weapon cannot attempt to disengage from this model until this model moves or is removed from play.

Actions

(0) Clamp Down: This model and target model within 2" perform a Cb → Wk Duel. If this model was **Harmless** when it declared this Action it receives $\frac{1}{2}$ to its Flip. If the target loses the Duel it receives **Paralyzed**. Sacrifice this model at the end of this Action if the target lost the Duel.

TRAPPING JAW

Rg	/// 1
Cb	4
Dg	1/2/2

(0) Primed: Performing this Action does not end **Harmless**. Until the start of its next activation, this model may perform the **Clamp Down** Action when an enemy model comes within 2" of this model.

Triggers

Df (W) Elusive: After attacker misses with a melee **Strike**, Push this model up to 3", ignoring terrain.

SPELLS:

(0) Dug In

(CC: 12 / Rst: - / Rg: C) This model receives **Armor +3** until it moves.

GUILD PATHFINDER - MINION

"People say livin' in the wild Earthside is rough. Well, livin' in the wild Breachside is pure hell," the Pathfinder said, pushing a long, metal cleaning brush down the barrel of his musket. "Every five feet you walk, somethin' is tryin' to eat ya, skin ya, pull your soul out through your nose, or some other kind o' nastiness." He pulled the brush from the barrel and dripped a bit of oil down the muzzle. "So ya gotta be prepared."

The Pathfinder picked up a damp cloth and began methodically polishing the wood on the stock. "Luckily, we got tools like ol' Bessy here," he patted his musket, "and ol' Clementine over there." He pointed to a confused, rusty pile of tentacles and teeth. "Heh, last week, funniest thing I ever darn saw. Ol' Clementine leapt up and grabbed a mauler right in the butt. Went whoopin' and a hollerin' for a full two miles 'fore I caught up." He paused and chuckled to himself. "Ate well that night."

Leaning over, he patted Clementine affectionately. It sprang to life, moving to his side in an oddly organic swirl of tentacles. "Guild magics," the Pathfinder grinned, "don't really understand 'em myself, but they sure do come in handy." He tapped it again, and it fell into a lifeless heap with a loud crash. "All I gotta do is keep the rust off it."

He stood up and dusted himself off, packed his gun cleaning kit, and tapped Clementine again, which promptly whirled to his side in perfect silence. "Goin' out for a month this time, be back with more skins when the trees turn." Slinging his pack over his shoulder, he started to walk away from the small Guild outpost before turning back one more time. "You need me before then, remember those signals I show'd ya. I'll see 'em."

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 6

GRAVEROBBER, GUARDSMAN, RARE 2

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
4/6	2	6	4	5	6

TALENTS:

Abilities

All Talk: This model receives -2 Wp when performing a Morale Duel.

Booby Traps: Immediately after this model has deployed it may Place up to two Clockwork Traps completely within 6". Lower its **Traps Stash** by one per Clockwork Trap Placed using this Ability. A Clockwork Trap Placed by this Ability immediately performs its **Primed** Action.

From the Shadows: This model may be deployed after all other models, in or behind any terrain more than 12" away from an enemy, or the objective of any Strategy or Scheme. This model may not be targeted by **Charges** or ranged attacks until it performs an Action other than **Pass** if deployed this way. If multiple models with this ability are in play, players alternate deploying them using the deployment order for Crews.

Hunter

Pointman: When this model is deployed using the **From the Shadows** Ability, ignore the restriction of deploying 12" away from any Strategy or Scheme objective. This model may not **Interact** with Strategy or Scheme objectives until Turn 3 if deployed outside of its Crew's Deployment Zone.

Ruthless

Scout

Slippery: After this model is hit by an enemy melee attack, but before resolving the attack's effects, if there is one or more other friendly models engaged with the attacker, flip one Card per friendly model engaged, including this one. The model with the lowest value Card suffers the attack's effects, including any Triggers. If there is a tie, the attacker chooses the model.

Traps Stash [2]: This model begins the Encounter with the indicated number of Traps available.

Weapon

Hunting Musket: This Weapon may only be used once per turn. This Weapon's **Dg** is 3/5♣/5♣ against targets within 4" of this model.

Skinnin' Knife: Ignores **Armor**.

Actions

(0) Guide: (X)4. Friendly models gain **Scout**.

(1) "Jerky Time!": This model discards any number of carried Corpse Counters. Heal this model 1 **Wd** per Corpse Counter discarded.

(1) Lie in Wait: The Guild Trapper model performs a Focused ranged attack, which receives +♣. This model loses this Action once it performs an Action other than **Pass**.

SKINNIN' KNIFE

Rg	/// 1
Cb	4
Dg	2/2/3

HUNTING MUSKET

Rg	♣ 8
Cb	5♣
Dg	2/3/5♣

(1) Set Trap: Reduce this model's **Traps Stash** by one, and then Summon one Clockwork Trap completely within 4" of this model. This Action may only be performed during this model's activation, and only if this model has at least one Trap in its **Traps Stash**.

Triggers

Cb (♣♣) Piercing Shot [Hunting Musket]: Ignore **Armor**.

SPELLS:

(1) Pit Trap

(CC: 13X / Rst: - / Rg: 10) Place a 3" diameter circle of Severe Terrain completely within this Spell's range. This Severe Terrain may not be ignored by any Talent or Spell except **Flight** or **Float**. The terrain piece remains in play until this model casts this Spell again or is removed from the game.

SIDIR ALCHIBAL - MINION



"Tell me about the tall, quiet one, the foreigner."

"Yes, sir. Our Earthside agents have had difficulties in corroborating the information, but here is what we know:

"Subject's name is Sidir Alchibal. Conflicting reports indicate he may or may not be a prince but dishonored and disowned for a crime. Unfortunately, we have had no success in separating fact from fiction when it comes to the nature of the crime. You can see the list of possibilities there on page sixteen. Family name does not correlate with any known dynasties or ruling classes, however, it is my belief that Alchibal may have adopted a false surname to distance himself from his family.

"Prior to Alchibal encountering McCabe in summer 1901, Alchibal served time in prison for a number of petty crimes, the nature of which seem to be missing. My agents suggest the information was purposefully omitted, most likely the subject was able to bribe himself down to a lesser sentence.

"Alchibal and McCabe met during one of their periods of incarceration, apparently a relationship of mutual benefit developed inside the prison, which continued once the pair was released. One interviewee suggested McCabe saved Alchibal's life in prison, and the subject was obligated to do the same. The two have been linked to several tomb robberies and thefts of antiquities throughout Egypt.

"As you are well aware, Mr. Matheson, Alchibal has made his way to Malifaux along with McCabe's band of miscreants. My men have watched him closely, per your request, and other than the small dustup you had us arrange to feel out his abilities, we have yet to witness him involved in anything that would draw the attention of the Guard.

"His capacity for violence is terrifying. I personally observed Alchibal's encounter with the three street toughs we hired. They, and I must admit I too, were unprepared for the savagery of his resistance. Weapons appeared almost instantly from somewhere within those robes he wears, and he left the trio battered and bleeding in the street within a handful of brutal seconds. He never looked back as he walked away, just left them lying there in the alley, writhing in agony. They all suffered injuries that will leave them permanently crippled, but all survived. I do not believe this was an error on Alchibal's part, he wanted them to live. The man's a savage monster; I worry more about him than McCabe, sir."

"Very well. Thank you, Agent. I look forward to reading your next report. In the meantime, I have another task for you. It seems the scoundrel I had placed with McCabe's wastrels has failed to report back to me. Look into it, please. Check the usual locations. Don't bother with the taverns and cathouses. I'm fairly certain you'll find him floating downriver or dumped in an alley somewhere in the Slums."

40MM BASE

BLACK SHEEP, UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
4/6	2	9	5	5	10

TALENTS:

Abilities

By Your Side: Once per turn, after a friendly Master within 5" of this model is targeted by an enemy attack, this model's Controller may Place this model so that it is in base contact with that model. If this model could be a legal target of the attack after the Place, this model's Controller may announce this model is now the target of that attack.

Immovable: This model may not be Pushed or have its Actions Controlled by other models unless the model is a friendly Master.

Life Debt: After a friendly McCabe within 5" suffers damage, this model's Controller may sacrifice it to prevent all wounds the friendly McCabe would have suffered.

Weapon

Machine Gun: This Weapon's Dg is 3/4/6 when attacking a target within 8". If this model flips the Black Joker for the Attack Flip it cannot use this Weapon for the remainder of the Turn.

Actions

(0) The Bigger They Are... [Machine Gun]: Discard one Card. This model's Damage Flips with this Weapon during this activation receive + when damaging a model with a base size of 40mm or 50mm.

(1) Always There: This model performs a Healing Flip which receives +.

Triggers

Cb (P) Critical Strike [Mrityu Blade]

Cb (P) Punch Through [Machine Gun]: After inflicting damage on defender with this Weapon, perform another attack. When declaring the target of the attack, trace a line between this model and the target. The line must pass over the defender's base, but the base is ignored for LoS purposes.

Df (P) Riposte: After attacker misses with a melee attack, this model deals damage using the Combat Duel total as if it had hit the attacker with a Mrityu Blade Strike.

SOULSTONE COST: 8

MRITYU BLADE

Rg	1
Cb	6
Dg	2/3/4

MACHINE GUN

Rg	12
Cb	5
Dg	2/3/5

SPELLS:

(0) Camouflage

(CC: 14 / Rst: - / Rg: 4) Target friendly model receives +2 Df.

(1) Empty Magazine

(CC: 13 / Rst: - / Rg: 12) Target model, and models within (X)4 of target must perform a Df or Wp, whichever is lower, → 12 Duel. Models losing the Duel receive Slow. Models already Slow are instead Pushed directly away from this model 3". This Spell may be cast once per activation.

(1) Hunting Blind

(CC: 13 / Rst: - / Rg: 3) Ht 5 Obscuring, for all models, including this model.

WASTREL - MINION



Wastrels are the sons of Earthside privilege. Each of them born into money and influence and groomed from an early age with an appreciation of the finer things in life. But somewhere along the way appreciation became expectation, and every last one of these sons of power squandered the gifts provided him by the luck of his birth.

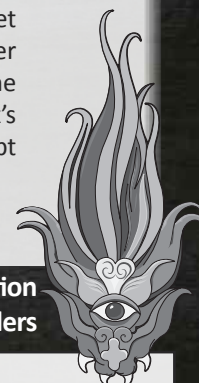
Their hubris made them liars, cheats, thieves, adulterers, even murderers. For some, escape to Malifaux became their only option when the invocation of their family name no longer shielded them from the law's grasp. For others, their mere presence was an embarrassment, and they were shipped across the Breach before their actions permanently tarnished the family's reputation.

These black sheep are the men the Guild has provided Lucas McCabe to aid him in his search for Old Malifaux's lost treasures. Where other Guild agents make use of organized manpower, the varied techniques by which McCabe's wastrels get results never cease to impress him. Men of low cunning and morals, the wastrels contribute a creative ruthlessness McCabe puts to good use in his search for Old Malifaux relics. Chains, clubs, mattocks, even grossly overpowered holdout pistols can be brought to bear at a moment's notice as the situation requires. Their cocksure

arrogance ensures wastrels fearlessly approach whatever situation McCabe throws their way, tearing down obstacles with a combination of brute force, low cunning, ruthless efficiency, and a good bit of drinking and cursing.

Because many of these wastrels serve the Guild in exchange for protection from the law or their families' reach Earthside, they have little to lose. McCabe knows he cannot turn his back on any of them for long in case someone decides McCabe's "turn" as their leader is over. Fortunately, the lure of treasure and his talent for finding it keeps challenges to McCabe's authority to a minimum, allowing the hunt to proceed with little fear of a pocketknife in the ribs while he sleeps.

After the standard shares are divided at the end of a successful expedition, McCabe makes an effort to divide the meaneast of his find between his men. He doles out the castoff relics as if they were alms among street beggars, buying his men's loyalty for another excursion. He is well aware that if any of the wastrels realized he was giving them Old Malifaux's mystic trash, a stab in the chest while he slept would be the least of his worries.



30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 4

Dual Faction Ten Thunders

BLACK SHEEP, RARE 3

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
4/6	2	4	2	4	6

GANG WEAPONS

Rg	/// 1
Cb	5
Dg	1/2/3

SMALL HANDGUN

Rg	8
Cb	4
Dg	1/3/4

Castoffs: When hiring this model, select one of the following options. The option is considered printed on this model's stat card for the duration of the Encounter. If more than one Wastrel is hired, each Castoff may only be chosen once.

- **(0) Earth's Elixir:** This model's current **Wd** may not be reduced below 1. This Action may be performed once during the Encounter.
- **(All) Petrified Feather:** Place this model up to 18" away from its current location and where it could legally be Placed. This Action may be performed once during the Encounter.
- **Soulstone Bullet:** Once during the Encounter, before inflicting damage with a Small Handgun attack, replace the Small Handgun's **Dg** with: 3/4♣/6♣, Magical.
- **Strangemetal Blade:** Replace Gang Weapons **Dg** with: 1/3 + Slow/4 + Paralyzed. Gang Weapons also receives Magical.

Harmless

Ruthless

Weapon

Gang Weapons: Paired.

Small Handgun: Paired.

Actions

(1) Secret Passages: Place this model up to 8" away. This Action cannot be performed if this model is in an enemy model's LoS or engaged with an enemy model. Performing this Action does not end **Harmless**.

Triggers

Cb (♣) Critical Strike [Gang Weapons]

Cb (X) Reload...twice [Small Handgun]: Replace this Weapon's **Dg** stat with **Dg 3/6/8** for the duration of this attack. After resolving this attack, end this model's activation. This model then gains **Paralyzed**.

TALENTS:

Abilities

Animosity [Zoraida]: This model cannot be hired by a Crew containing the indicated model.

Backstabber: Melee attacks declared while this model is **Harmless** receive +2 **Dg** to the Damage Flip.

RESURRECTIONISTS



YAN LO - MASTER

"Man. Ghost. Ancestor. Descendant. Cursed. Eternal. I am all these things, Niece, yet I feel as though I am nothing."

Yan Lo leaned heavily against his staff as he walked through the gardens with his niece, Chiaki, relishing the creak in his bones and the warm touch of her hand on his arm, helping him over a few stones in their path. He was currently clothed in the old man's form. It was the form he seemed to inhabit most often.

"You were ... are ... a great man, Uncle. We are honored you chose to accept the Oyabun's invitation and join us across the Breach. Your unique talents will serve the Ten Thunders well," Chiaki replied.

"Thank you, my child. I have walked the Paths for so long, I lost my way for a time. Tell me, how did you reach me?" They stopped and Chiaki helped her uncle sit on a stone bench that provided an excellent view. Walkways radiated from the small clearing where the bench sat. Each lined with plants bursting with colors found nowhere on Earth. Chiaki motioned at the walkways.

"It was not unlike this bench and these paths, Uncle. For years, Mother and Father told me the legend of Yan Lo, our ancestor cursed to walk the Paths between life and death for eternity. The legend changed a bit with each telling, they could not agree on how you came to be cursed or if the curse could be lifted. I wanted to know more and sought you out.

"What I found was the fading spirit of my ancestor, drifting between life and death, driven insane by the Paths. It took some time, but I was able to reach Yan Lo somewhere inside the tortured spirit I beheld. It was not easy, but as you know, my talents for speaking with our ancestors are unique. After that, I followed the paths you had walked and located the shattered pieces of your mind and brought them back to the eternal you. You called me your little *bikon*. Do you remember that?"

Yan Lo chuckled. He did remember each piece of his mind calling her their beacon and following her brilliant purity back to himself. Chiaki sat next to him. He basked in the simplicity of the moment, knowing it would not last.

"I have sought a way to break this curse for so long that I, like your parents, no longer remember what caused it. Am I a good man cursed by evil, or an evil man cursed by good?" He looked down at his hands; they already seemed less distinct than when he and his descendant had entered the garden. The change was upon him. "What I do know, Chiaki, is that I am beyond the moralities which bound me when I lived. I have walked beyond the walls of death and returned with some of the secrets hidden there. What concern are the laws and beliefs of the living to me? It is time. I must leave you now, dear one, but will return when I have rested and regained my strength."

As he spoke, Yan Lo's body continued to fade, until his Niece could see completely through him. She was used to these abrupt departures. His

ability to hold onto his current form required him to tap into the aether and concentrate on using it to help him remain grounded to that form. The effort took quite a bit out of him and eventually he had to let go and let his curse drag him along to the next form it chose for him. Chiaki waited for him to vanish completely then continued her walk in the garden. Her uncle would locate his little *bikon* when he was able.

Yan Lo found himself between worlds, at the crossroads of the Paths he had explored without finding a solution for his plight for centuries. Each stretched out before him in a convoluted maze of energies. He stepped off the Path of Bone, already missing its physical sensations. He resisted the pull of the Path of Ash, where his next incarnation would reside for a time. When he walked the Paths on Earth, they were faint, difficult to discern. He had walked them for so long, straining to understand their twists and turns, that he never considered that the lack of aether Earthside masked the true nature of the Paths.

Oh how his assumptions about the Paths were stripped away when he walked them in Malifaux. Here, the spirits shone brightly, illuminating the crossroads and each Path far better than anything Yan Lo had seen Earthside. He noticed details in each of the Paths he had missed all this time and marveled at how the Paths interconnected with one another at various points. He watched as spirits traveled between the Paths, using a combination of them in their journeys. Perhaps that was the key he needed - there was no single path leading to his freedom. He had to travel all of them in some sort of combination to reach a destination. The question was, what combination was the correct one?

The curse tugged at him again, and he let it pull him onto the Path of Ash. The pull of decay was stronger than it had been on Earth. He fought against it while watching for his chance to change to a different Path. One came soon, a fainter glimmer where a few spirits had left the Path and rejoined what appeared, from his vantage point, to be the Path of the Spirit. He left the Path of Ash exactly where the spirits had, following in their wake. He landed on the Path of Spirit and followed it for a time, then leapt to the Path of Bone again. He sensed Chiaki's spirit close by, the beacon calling to him.

Ignoring the distraction, he explored the Paths again, this time in a different order, wandering each for a different length of time. The curse tied him to the Paths, but he found that he was able to resist its pull thanks to Malifaux's aether. Then he attempted to straddle two Paths at once. For an instant, he walked both the Path of Bone and the Path of Ash, but the aether rebelled against this violation, hurling him back to the crossroads. Even in his incorporeal form, the rejection hurt, but he had walked two of the Paths simultaneously! Perhaps with more practice - and more aetheric power at his disposal - he could find a way to master walking two or all three of the Paths.

And with that, he began plotting at the crossroads, devising a plan that would ensure a steady supply of aetheric power and allow him to turn his curse into a perversion of the punishment it was intended to be.

Perhaps I've known which kind of man I am all along...

YAN LO - MASTER

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE CACHE: 5

Dual Faction
Ten Thunders



GRAVEROBBER

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
4/6	2	7	6X	5	10

TALENTS:

Abilities

Ancient Entourage: Crews led by this model may always hire the following models at no additional cost: Ashigaru, Punk Zombies, Onryo, and models with the Ancestor Characteristic.

Absorb Chi: This model gains one Chi “☯” point each time a controlled non-Ancestor model is killed within 8”. This model must immediately assign a gained Chi “☯” point to one of its three Paths. This model gains a Level’s Talent or Spell once it has assigned the Level’s total indicated number of Chi “☯” points. A Level of a Path must be completed, starting with Level 1, before moving on to the next Level.

Companion (Ancestor)

Gunfighter (Spirit Barrage)

Inhale Soul: After determining your starting Soulstone Pool, you may exchange up to three of your Crew’s Soulstones for an equal number of Chi “☯” points which must immediately be assigned to this model’s Paths using the **Absorb Chi** Ability.

Reliquaries: This model gains the Talents and Spells indicated on a stat card with the **Relic** Ability placed with it. Discard all of these cards if this model is removed from play. This Ability may not be copied or removed.

Shatter Reliquary: If this model is reduced to 0 **Wd**, its Controller may discard one of its placed **Relic** cards to perform a Healing Flip before being removed from the game. If this model is healed 1 or more **Wd** it is not killed and remains in play.

Weapon

Spirit Barrage: Magical, +1 **Dg** for each **Relic** card on this model.

Actions

(+1) Casting Expert

Triggers

Ca (X X) Lost to Time [Weight of the Ages]: This model gains one Chi “☯” when it kills an enemy model with this Spell.

Cb (X P) Souleater [Spirit Barrage]: After hitting a defender with this Weapon, do no damage. Instead, discard one **Relic** card on this model. Sacrifice defender unless its controller discards two Control Cards or two Soulstones. Only models with the **Use Soulstones** ability may discard Soulstones. If defender is sacrificed, this model gains one Chi “☯”.

Wp (X) Twisted Mind: After this model wins the Duel, the opposing model suffers 2 wounds.

KHAKKHARA	
Rg	/// 2
Cb	5X
Dg	2/3/4

SPIRIT BARRAGE	
Rg	~ 12
Cb	6X
Dg	1/3/5

SPELLS:

(0) Rebuild Corpus

(CC: 16X X / Rst: - / Rg: C) Discard one or more Corpse Counters within 6" and a **Relic** card placed with this model. Summon the discarded **Relic** card’s model. The model enters play with its current **Wd** equal to double the number of Corpse Counters discarded. The model’s current **Wd** cannot exceed its printed **Wd** stat when Summoned in this way.

(1) Repair Corpus

(CC: 10X X / Rst: - / Rg: 6) Target friendly model with the Ancestor Characteristic heals 2 **Wd**.

(0) Transcend the Physical

(CC: 14X X / Rst: - / Rg: (X)6) Friendly models with the Undead Characteristic gain the Spirit Characteristic.

(1) Weight of the Ages

(CC: 12 / Rst: Wp / Rg: 8) **Dg** 2/3/4. This Spell inflicts +1 **Dg**, per friendly model with the Ancestor Characteristic within 3" of the target model, up to a maximum of +3 **Dg**.

Path of Spirit

Level 1 - ☯: **Wk/Cg** +1/+1

Level 2 - ☯☯: Gains **Flight**.

Level 3 - ☯☯: Gains **Spirit**.

Level 4 - ☯: Gains **(2) Fury of the Yomi** (CC: 15X X / Rst: - / Rg: (X)6) All friendly Spirits, including this model immediately perform a **(1) Action** or a **Charge**. This model’s Controller declares the order in which the Spirits take their Actions before resolving the first Action.

Path of Ash

Level 1 - ☯: Gains **Regeneration 1**.

Level 2 - ☯☯: Receives **Df** +2.

Level 3 - ☯☯: Gains **(1) Rigor Mortis** (CC: 17X X / Rst: Wp / Rg: 10) Target model receives **Paralyzed**.

Level 4 - ☯: Gains **(1) Terracotta Curse** (CC: 15X X / Rst: Wp / Rg: (X)6) Each time an enemy model moves during its activation it suffers 2 wounds.

Path of Bone

Level 1 - ☯: **Khakkhara Dg** receives +1/+1/+2 and gains the **Cb (X) Brutal [Khakkhara]** Trigger.

Level 2 - ☯☯: Gains **(1) Fragile Bonds:** This model Pushes up to its **Cg** toward target enemy model that has suffered 1 or more **Wd**. This model then performs a **Khakkhara Strike** at the end of the move.

Level 3 - ☯☯: Gains **(+2) Melee Master**.

Level 4 - ☯: Gains **Cb (X P) Hunpo Assault [Khakkhara]:** This model performs a **Khakkhara Strike** and a **Spirit Barrage Strike** targeting each enemy model within 2". This Trigger may be used once per activation.

SOUL PORTER - TOTEM

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 2

Dual Faction
Ten Thunders



INSIGNIFICANT, SPIRIT, TOTEM (YAN LO)

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
4/6	2	5	4X	4	3

BLADED STAFF

Rg	/// 2
Cb	3
Dg	1/2/3

TALENTS:

Abilities

Companion (Yan Lo)

Recover Lost Souls: Before a friendly model with the **Reliquaries** Ability is removed from the game, place any Cards with the **Relic** Ability it would discard on a friendly model with the **Reliquaries** Ability within 6".

Actions

(0) Link

(0) Soul Cages: Kill friendly non-Master Ancestor with the **Relic** Ability within 6", then place its stat card with connected Master.

SPELLS:

(1) Empower Ancestor

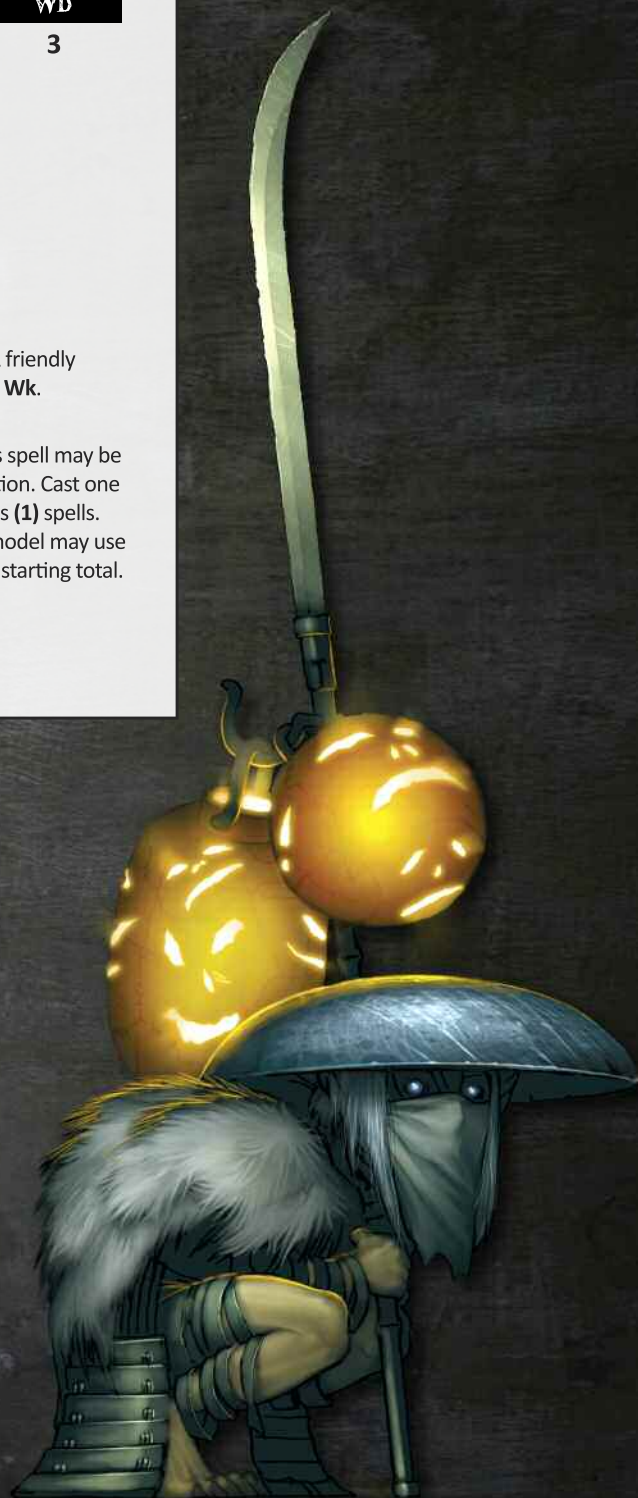
(CC: 11X / Rst: - / Rg: 6) A friendly Ancestor Pushes up to its **Wk**.

(1) Magical Extension

(CC: * / Rst: * / Rg: *) This spell may be cast only once per activation. Cast one of the connected Master's (1) spells. During this casting, this model may use a Soulstone to change its starting total.

Yan Lo found the porter wandering the Paths, silently leaping after drifting souls that flew like fireflies in the dark. The strange creature plucked them from the aether and released them into his lanterns, never speaking or giving any acknowledgment to Yan Lo's presence. After observing it over centuries, it seemed to have no other purpose. Like so many other entities on the Paths, it simply was – perhaps it was an end unto itself. Yan Lo saw in it another end.

He coveted the ability to gather souls, and envisioned infinite potential in the swirling gasses of its flickering, soul-filled lanterns. He quickly subjugated it to his will and forced it to walk the Paths alongside him. Its previous purpose, whatever it may have been, was forgotten. Now the porter stays with Yan Lo, and the ability to hold souls is Yan Lo's to command. Wherever Yan Lo treads, the porter stalks silently behind him, holding and releasing the glowing spirits at Yan Lo's behest. The lantern swells with Katanaka ancestors, waiting for a second rise.



ASHIGARU - MINION



History tells us that the fall of the house of Katanaka came swiftly, for the army that was meant to defend them was ultimately the army that defeated them. Dishonor had fallen upon the family for their brutal, uncaring treatment of their charges and civilians during their quest for prominence among the warring Shogunates. The wave of death that spread across the Three Kingdoms, known as the Katanaka Fire reached a flashpoint where the Katanaka's own army could no longer abide by the indiscriminate slaughter.

The war effort retracted on itself and began spreading backward as more and more Katanaka soldiers mutually convinced one another to rebel. Soon, Katanaka's own army stood at its door, and the majority of the clan was trapped helplessly inside. Only a small contingent of Ashigaru warriors stood in their defense. The clan had cast a spell on these soldiers to ensure their loyalty, and they marched against the Katanaka rebels, outnumbered at fifty to one, many say against their conscious will. Unofficial anecdotes say that long after they were slain, the bodies of these enchanted soldiers continued to shudder – that their bones were infused with an undying will to rise again and defend their masters.

The corpses of the dead Ashigaru were separated and scattered over Nippon by the rebels to ensure they would never reassemble. However, over decades, the bones discovered small

holes in the fabric of fate to find one another, sometimes being unearthed and transported to common historic repositories or curio collections. Mysterious happenstance occasionally saves one of the modern descendants of the Katanaka clan from a certain death, and it's speculated that the cause of these miracles is the undead wills of the loyal Ashigaru, defending the Katanaka family as an involuntary aetheric reflex.

With the powerful Resurrectionist arts in Malifaux, only a touch of magic is need to make these soldiers rise again – to separate their spirits from the aether and bind their unfailing curse of loyalty back to the clan. Yan Lo actively searches for lost bodies of the loyal Ashigaru and uses them as bodyguards and enforcers. They are ever present, ready for combat, intractable, and unquestioning. Their last moments are imprinted in their magical being, and deep within their mindless instinct, they recall the combat maneuvers that they used to defend the overrun house.

A contingent of undead Ashigaru can hold territory far more readily than the average guardsman. When traversing the back alleys of Malifaux, Guild chases will occasionally be blockaded by two or three Ashigaru guards, a sure sign that Yan Lo was nearly missed. By the time a squad of Death Marshals can be deployed to clear the blockade, Yan Lo will have long since escaped their grasp.

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 4

OBJECT 1, UNDEAD

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/3	2	5	4	4	6

YARI	
Rg	/// 2
Cb	5
Dg	2/3/4

TALENTS:

Abilities

Hard But Brittle: Attacks causing Weak damage of at least 1 point to this model inflict -2 damage, minimum 1. Attacks causing Severe damage to this model inflict +1 damage and ignore this model's **Hard to Kill** Ability.

Hard to Kill

House Guard: This model gains +1 **Cb** while within 3" of one or more friendly models with the Ancestor Characteristic.

Actions

(0) Wall of Steel: When an enemy model further than 3" away from this model moves to within 3" of this model, this model may immediately perform a **Yari Strike** with a range of /// 3 targeting that model. If the **Strike** hits, it inflicts no damage. Instead, the target is Pushed away from this model until it is no longer within 3", and its Action ends immediately.

(1) Lunge: Declare a charge.

Triggers

Cb (X) Impale [Wall of Steel]: This **Strike** inflicts damage.



CHIYAKI, THE NIECE - MINION



They say I am too young to understand the intricacies of communicating with our ancestors, of even sensing the presence of their spirits all around us. They say it takes years to master the patience necessary just to hear their whispered voices on the wind as they struggle for us, their progeny, to heed their teachings. They say the children of today - such as me - do not care about our ancestors who worked so hard so that we might enjoy greater comforts. The young care too much for themselves, and are too impatient, they say. We cannot be bothered to take the time to learn the importance of our own lineage and even have difficulty remembering the importance of our own grandparents, much less the importance of those that walked generations earlier.

Perhaps they are correct.

However, there are a few that recognize the gift that some of us possess. The gift we have to hear the voices of our ancestors without resorting to years, if not decades, of teaching, a natural gift to communicate with our past and learn its lessons. Those who recognize this gift in us realize that perhaps the *old* ways are not necessarily the only ways. Fortunately, the Ten Thunders has

such vision and embraces it instead of scolding us for eschewing the time-honored ritual of mentorship. I have already demonstrated to my cousins that the old and the new ways can coexist, and the pair become stronger in the merging. By bringing my honored Uncle, Yan Lo, back from his insanity, I have demonstrated to my family that I am capable of walking both old and new paths. Ironically, my resistance to our traditional methods of teaching the arcane melts when I am at his side. I find myself hanging on his every word, intently watching his actions for clues as to how he can walk between life and death. In the short time we have been together, I have learned so much from Uncle, but to him, time has no meaning. He exists outside of its mortal shackles, and it may take a lifetime for me to learn all of his secrets.

Now that we are here, across the Breach in Malifaux, I hope Uncle will find the time to teach me more, or the stronger aetheric currents will amplify my own experiments based on what I have observed from Uncle.

Either way, they might have been right about one thing - I do not have the patience necessary to wait years.

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 5

ANCESTOR, UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/7	2	5	5X	4	8

TALENTS:

Abilities

Anchor Chi: Each time a controlled non-Ancestor model is killed within 8" of this model a friendly model with the **Absorb Chi** ability gains one Chi. This ability has no effect if a friendly model with the **Absorb Chi** Ability is within 8" of the killed model.

Harmless

Haunting Presence: If this model is Summoned by the Rebuild Corpus Spell it gains the Spirit Characteristic, and its **Wd** stat is reduced to 6.

Mortal Touch: Friendly models lose the Undead Characteristic while in base contact with this model.

Relic: When this model is removed from the game this stat card is placed with a friendly model with the **Reliquaries** Ability within 8". If no such model is in range, remove this card from the game. While this card is placed with that model it gains the **Pull of the Grave** Action.

Reliquaries: This model gains all Talents and Spells indicated on a stat card with the **Relic** Ability placed with it. Discard all of these cards if this model is removed from play. This Ability may not be copied or removed.

The Light: Friendly models within 2" of this model heal 1 **Wd** at the start of their activation.

Weapon

Sacred Knife: Magical.

Actions

(0) Fade: This model gains the **Harmless** Ability if it is within 3" of another friendly living model.

(1) New Vessel: This model may pass any number of its carried **Relics** to a friendly Yan Lo.

(1) Pull of the Grave: (X)8. Non-living enemy models must win a **Df** → 12 Duel or receive **Slow**.

Triggers

Ca (W) Face in the Crowd [Living Memories]: After this Spell is successfully cast, this model gains the **Harmless** Ability if it is within 3" of another friendly living model.

SACRED KNIFE

Rg	/// 1
Cb	4
Dg	1/2/3

Cb (X) Excessive Bleeding [Sacred Knife]: After hitting defender with this Weapon, defender receives the Insignificant Characteristic until the end of the Encounter. At the end of the Encounter models affected by **Excessive Bleeding** must win an uncheatable **Wp** → 12 Duel, or they count as killed for Encounter purposes.

SPELLS:

(0) Living Memories

(CC: 13 / Rst: - / Rg: (X)8) Friendly models lose the Undead Characteristic.

(1) Cleanse Spirits

(CC: 14X / Rst: - / Rg: (X)6) This model's Controller may discard one Token or non-sacrificing effect per X in the casting total on each friendly model, including this model.

(1) Purity

(CC: 12X / Rst: Wp / Rg: (X)6) This model's Controller Pushes all non-living models directly away from this model until those models reach the maximum range of this Spell.

IZAMU, THE ARMOR - MINION



"Traitors!" Izamu boomed as he reeled on his fleeing army. As far as he could see, there was only disloyalty, cowardice, and deceit. His thoughts swam with bloodshed, and no one would escape the coming massacre. The soldiers that dared turn on him were now trying to run past him like ants into the tall grass, but he was catching many. Swinging his dadao in a wide arc above his head, he brought it down and cleaved a peasant soldier in two. The world turned crimson for a moment, as if seen through a shimmering veil of blood, and he felt a flash of vigor.

Chasing another peasant into the rice paddy, he raised his dadao high and drove it through the peasant's back, pinning him beneath the murky water. Two more charged him from behind with swords held high, only to have their heads lifted from their bodies in one smooth motion. Izamu reveled in the slaughter. He would crush the twelve Shogunates himself if he had to, and make the Three Kingdoms kneel beneath him.

Yan Lo watched the animated suit from a distance, skeptical as to whether or not this was the right ancestor to call upon. It held an impaled Nephilim high above its head, laughing mercilessly as black blood leaked down the shaft of its polearm. Around it lie four Nephilim corpses in no less than nine pieces. He had doubts as to whether or not he could control his mad brother. Nonetheless, he would not be denied the secret magics he desired.

Behind, Yan Lo heard more of the Breach's strange natives approaching, their hooves clacking on the cracked and untended stones of Malifaux's outer districts. He put his hands to his mouth and whispered to the glowing mist that pulsed within the ancient armor. "Over here, Izamu. These are the ones that betrayed the Katanaka. These are the ones that murdered our family."

Izamu raised his gaze to the horizon and heard Yan Lo's voice floating on the wind. It came to him like a dream from somewhere across the river. He placed the body of the impaled peasant beneath his boot and peeled it off his dadao. Turning around, he saw the threat that the ghostly whisperings had spoken of. Three mutinous Katanaka samurai came charging through the brush, katanas raised, leaping over bales of unthreshed rice.

Growling with delight, Izamu met the first, batting his blade away with the blunt end of the dadao, then freeing his intestines from his stomach. The next two he pushed to the ground with one broad shove of his polearm, deftly executing each as they tried to regain their footing. At last he was alone, and the silence of the countryside dominated his attention. He felt the rush of battle fading and frustration starting to overcome him. He raised his face to the setting sun and bellowed out, "Yan Lo! It isn't enough! Bring me more!"

SOMM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 10

ANCESTOR, OBJECT 2, UNDEAD, UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
4/6	3	5	4	5 [☠]	10

TALENTS:

Abilities

Carve a Swathe: This model performs a Healing Flip after inflicting Severe damage with a melee **Strike** on an enemy model.

Immune to Influence

Relic: When this model is removed from the game this stat card is placed with a friendly model with the **Reliquaries** Ability within 8". If no such model is in range, remove this Card from the game. While this card is placed with that model it gains the **Spiritual Fortitude** Ability and **Eternal Warrior** Trigger.

Shove Aside: This model may move through **Ht 1** and **Ht 2** models.

Spiritual Fortitude: When this model Cheats Fate during its Defense Flips or Resist Flips, the attacker's Triggers requiring the Cheated Card's suit have no effect.

Weapon

Dadao: Damage Flips receive [☠].

Actions

(+1) Melee Expert

Triggers

Cb (☠) **Katanaka's Will [Dadao]:** This Weapon gains Magical for the duration of the attack.

Df (☠) **Eternal Warrior:** If this model Cheated its Defense Flip during this attack, this model's Controller Draws one Card after the Duel is resolved.

DADAO

Rg	/// 3
Cb	6
Dg	3/4/6

Df (☠) **Riposte [Dadao]:** After attacker misses with a melee attack, this model inflicts damage with this Weapon using the Combat Duel total as if it had hit the attacker.

TOSHIRO, THE DAIMYO - MINION



Time lost its meaning for me. The light, swirling, changing constantly through the rainbow, surrounds me and has lulled me to a strange calm. I am lost in its tranquility, slipping into the soup of sensation that pleases my every fiber. I am done, I realize. It is the only sensation that does not please me, this thought of rest. My instinct tells me that this is the natural order, that I am dead, and this place the afterworld.

My body is gone. With the realization slowly dawning on my slumbering mind, I struggle to react more fiercely, but I care little. I am nothing more than a wisp, a tenuous band of color amid the many that have come before me and will continue to come. I am incomplete here, without the po, the spirit that resides with my body in the grave. I must be the hun, awaiting heaven before slipping to the underworld where I might find rest.

"No, brother," a voice called from beyond me (its place and distance here I could not be certain). "There will be no heaven for us."

I did not need to answer at first. The effort to communicate was a weight upon me, and the pressure to rest suppressed my urge to reach out more and more. Then, my warrior spirit struggling against that weight of complacency, I called out feebly, "Who are you?"

"Yan Lo," he said in little more than a whisper. I could not remember him, but hearing the name stirred something within.

"Your po is desecrated," he said of my spirit, still residing in the body I had left behind. In the grave. As if answering the thought, Yan Lo said, "They did not bury you. They abandoned you. Left you to the enemy. It has been desecrated." I fought, now, violently against the lull of slumber and the blanket of bliss.

I remembered. The betrayal of my men.

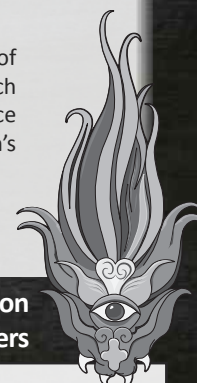
"I am weak," I said reluctantly. It was hard to admit, for a leader, a Daimyo, such as myself.

"You have slumbered for a long time. Your children forgot you. Their children never knew you. Your family lineage has never prayed for you."

"Why have you come? What is there for me to do?"

"I have found a way to rejoin your hun and po so that you may walk again. We may have vengeance against those that betrayed us. Shamed us and our Clan."

My mind slumbered no longer. I saw the vague form of his spirit in the surrounding glow of aether. It was a torch among candles, and I rushed to it, eager to lead once more and crush the descendants of the Katanaka Clan's enemies into dust beneath my foot.



40MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 8

Dual Faction Ten Thunders

ANCESTOR, UNDEAD, UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	CA	Df	Wd
4/6	2	6	6X	5	8

TALENTS:

Abilities

Daimyo: ④. Friendly non-Master models receive ④ to their melee Attack and melee Casting Flips.

Feudal Ties: Crews hiring Toshiro may hire Ashigaru and Punk Zombies at no additional cost.

Hard to Wound 2

Relic: When this model is removed from the game this stat card is placed with a friendly model with the **Reliquaries** Ability within 8". If no such model is in range, remove this Card from the game. While this Card is placed with that model it gains the **Daimyo** Ability and "Teki o jūden!" Action.

Undead Warlord: This model gains one Conflict Token when a friendly Undead model within 6" inflicts one or more damage on an

enemy model with a melee attack. If a friendly Punk Zombie or Ashigaru model within 6" is killed by an enemy model this model may gain two Conflict Tokens instead of that model dropping any Corpse Counters.

Actions

(0) "Teki o jūden!": This model's Controller nominates a model in LoS. Friendly models with the Undead or Spirit Characteristic within 3" of this model may then Push up to their **Wk** toward the nominated model.

Triggers

Cb (♥) Reposition [War Fan]: After damaging defender with this Weapon, Push this model up to 3".

KATANA

Rg	/// 1
Cb	6
Dg	2/4/5

WAR FAN

Rg	/// 1
Cb	6
Dg	1/2/4+Slow

Df (X) Bloated: If this model suffers 1 or more wounds from this attack, it generates a (X)1 after the attack is resolved. All models within the (X) suffer 1 damage.

SPELLS:

(1) Eternal Servitude

(CC: 15X X / Rst: - / Rg: C) AR: Discard four Conflict Tokens. Summon one Punk Zombie or Ashigaru.

YIN, THE PENANGALAN - MINION



"How dare you awaken me from my eternal slumber, Yan Lo!"

The spirit's anger was palpable, driving the two Brothers accompanying Yan Lo to their knees in terror. They wept as Yin's horrifying appearance completed its coalescing - the fury of centuries turned her once-beautiful features into a mask of pure hatred, the impossibility of her still-pulsating viscera trailing beneath, entrails waving with furious energy. Milky white eyes regarded the black magician with open contempt.

Yan Lo knew he needed to tread carefully when dealing with Yin. Her fury was an elemental force, as terrifying a weapon as her tentacle-like entrails. With the correct motivation, she would be a powerful ally in his plans. However, one misspoken word would, at the very least, send her retreating back into the reliquary he had brought with him from the Three Kingdoms.

"I apologize for rousing you from your sleep, but my need is great, and I can offer you a payment I believe will more than make up for the intrusion. Aid me in my search, and I will be able to free you from your curse as well."

Yin's agitated bobbing slowed slightly. She considered his words, her blind eyes narrowed slightly. "Continue."

"I have brought you - us - to this place under the guise of aiding our descendants. They have petitioned me to serve as an advisor here, thanks to my unique experience with the afterlife. Can you feel it? The barrier between life and death is so much thinner here."

Calming, she did sense it. The soul energy of a million souls swirled around her. It reminded her of a place, lifetimes ago, where she was happy and

in love. She chased the memory, but as always, its details eluded her. It was a phantom dream, something lost to the ages, something that scorched her soul like a hot brand.

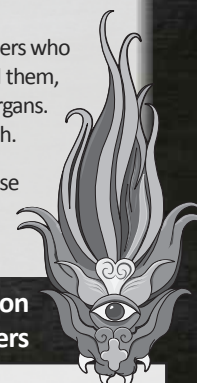
Yan Lo droned on about aetheric currents, alternate studies, and how this place gave birth to the art of raising the dead - necromancy, he called it. The Penangalan heard none of it.

As she chased the dream, the pain of her loss burned brighter. Everything had been stripped away from her in an instant; that much she did remember. An act of betrayal so vile it broke her heart at the same time it destroyed her body. Her white hot rage had transformed Yin into a murderous monster, destroying everything beautiful she found. It was hatred that drove her now, hatred of the living and all the potential they had which was lost to her so very long ago. She would do whatever it took to break this curse.

"Enough!" She hissed, entrails whipping into a frenzy. "Save your 'breath' for those who care, magician. I will aid you, but be warned. I walk the same Paths as you. Betray me and your soul cannot escape the suffering I will visit upon it."

Her entrails whipped out, wrapping around the two Brothers who were still frozen in terror. She constricted her guts around them, venomous bile leaking onto their skin from her exposed organs. The men screamed in silent agony, unable to draw a breath.

"I await your summons, magician. For now, I will take these lives as your apology for waking me. You may leave us."



40MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 8

Dual Faction Ten Thunders

ANCESTOR, SPECIAL FORCES (HORROR), UNDEAD, UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/7	2	6	6X	6	8

TALENTS:

Abilities

Anathema: This model's **Terrifying** Ability affects all enemy models that do not have the **Anathema** Ability. This model's **Terrifying** Ability ignores any immunity to Morale Duels.

Float

Harmless

Mass of Viscera: Attack Flips against this model receive \square .

Relic: When this model is removed from the game this stat card is placed with a friendly model with the **Reliquaries** Ability within 8". If no such model is in range, remove this Card from the game. While this card is placed with that model it gains the **Anathema**, **Terrifying** → 12 and **Wicked** Abilities.

Terrifying → 12

Wicked

Weapon

Entrails: Enemy models receive -1 **Wp** while engaged by this Weapon.

Triggers

Cb (X) Blood Poisoning [Entrails]: Poison 2

Cb (P) Murderous Rage: This Trigger may be declared when this model performs a Disengaging Strike. Damage Flips performed with the **Wicked** Ability receive \square .

Df (W) Drift: When an enemy model misses this model with a melee attack, this model may Push up to 3".

ENTRAILS

Rg	/// 2
Cb	5
Dg	2/3/4

SPELLS:

(0) The Gnawing Fear

(CC: 11XW / Rst: - / Rg: 6) Enemy models receive -1 **Wp** each time they lose a **Wp** Duel. The effects of this Spell stack.

(1) Constrict

(CC: 11X / Rst: Df / Rg: /// 2) Target small based **Ht** 1 or 2 model suffers 2 wounds and receives **Slow**. This model's Entrails **Strikes** against target receive P until the End Closing Phase, or until the target is no longer in this model's melee range.

(1) Inevitable Terror

(CC: 15XX / Rst: - / Rg: 8) Target friendly model with the **Terrifying** Ability gains the **Anathema** Ability.

ARCANISTS



MEI FENG – MASTER

Standing atop a nearby bluff, Mei Feng watched with pride as her rail crew brought progress to the barren Malifaux wasteland. From this distance, the growing rail line was merely a ribbon of metal while the workers were ants swarming across its surface. With each ring of a sledge or chuff of steam, her crew's efforts moved humanity – and her master – one step closer to conquering this savage land. For now, she was content to be part of the conquest, a cog in the Ten Thunders' machinery. Someday, however, she would rise to claim that which she deserved...

"Mistress..." The voice behind her was little more than a whisper.

"What is it?" She snapped impatiently, turning her back on the tableau.

"The Oyabun requests an update on your progress," the Torakage said, face covered to conceal her identity.

Mei Feng considered the Ten Thunders practice of disguising one's features and how her role in their schemes required she do exactly the opposite. Her "mask" was the very public persona it demanded.

She thought back to her arrival in Malifaux, disguised as a refugee escaping the oppressive Three Kingdoms. It was not a reach for her to take on the role, having grown up in poverty before her ambition and brutal streak drew the attention of the Ten Thunders. She sometimes wondered if they would have brought her in after beating two of their Brothers to bloody pulps if not for her magical training and the opportunities it created for them.

Mei's mastery of elemental magic, especially fire and metal, made her a valuable yet unreliable asset for the Ten Thunders. The elements raged within her, and her lack of control over them let her rebellious side run unchecked. She disobeyed orders, or intentionally misinterpreted them, until she was brought before the Oyabun himself. Her actions, he told her, could be forgiven if she could answer one simple question. Why was she, a lowly peasant in the Oyabun's eyes, touched with power when he was denied the Gift?

The absence of an answer and the defiance in her eyes resulted in a swift beating by his hand. After, she understood why she disobeyed; she had no respect for the Oyabun and craved what he had – power. She knew she was his better in every way, including the ability to wield magic. She realized the Oyabun saw her as a mystery and a danger and knew he would eliminate her the moment he thought she was a threat to his power. She struggled to bring both sides of her rebellious nature into peace with one another and mask her aspirations behind a façade of obedience. Eventually, the Oyabun began to trust Mei and sent her to Malifaux ahead of the Ten Thunders' arrival.

Finding work on the rail line almost immediately, Mei's infiltration of the Miners and Steamfitters Union was just the first step in the Ten Thunders' much larger plan. When Kang arrived through the Lesser Breach the Ten Thunders had discovered, she knew the time had

come and began to slowly manifest her magical abilities when M&SU bosses were watching. Her actions and successes moved her up slowly through the Union ranks at first. Impatience got the better of Mei, and instead of maintaining her slow ascent, she demonstrated just how much power was at her disposal when she summoned a metal gamin and then, not long after, a rail golem to aid her. At first she was worried her rashness may have the opposite effect, but when her Union brothers took her to see Viktor Ramos, she wondered exactly how long his agents had been watching her already.

Ramos was too smart to immediately bring her into the Arcanist fold, but he did recognize her talents and ambitions – both carefully parceled out so as to not scare him as they had her Oyabun – and gave her a position as an M&SU rail boss. She took to the position quickly, ever alert for eyes and ears on the work lines ready to report back to Ramos on her actions. These spies usually met with mysterious accidents on the line, the appropriate forms completed with the Union and shipped back to Ramos with the bodies. Between spies, Mei began to organize the already organized labor under her banner. She wooed their hearts with tales of her home country and stood with them as Kang's inspirational speeches drove steel into their spines and lit fires in hearts. Where the Union would "loan" an injured worker the funds necessary to replace a limb lost in an accident, funds that would take a lifetime to pay back at their wages, Mei would provide an identical replacement free of charge with the assurance that all she wanted was his loyalty. Her tinkering with the Ten Thunders' original goals had slowed her infiltration into the Arcanists, but the inroads she had made in gaining the workers' trust was an unexpected benefit.

Her subversion of the Union workers well underway, Mei had placed herself in a position to speed up or slow down construction of the rail lines the Guild desperately wanted to connect its numerous Contract Towns. Depending on the needs of the Ten Thunders, she could accelerate completion or halt it completely in key areas without arousing the Union's, and more importantly, the Arcanists', suspicions. She was currently tasked with dragging out the last four miles of track to Contract Town #26 for an additional two weeks over the deadline.

Mei felt a mischievous grin tug at her lips.

"Mistress?"

"Tell the Oyabun that I am on schedule. The rail line will be completed the two weeks late he requested." She turned so she could watch the work below but kept one eye on the Torakage.

"Yes, mistress." With a puff of smoke, the Torakage vanished.

"Too theatrical," she snickered, wondering if she should be two days early or late for the deadline. After all, a little rebellion was always good for the soul.

MEI FENG – MASTER

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE CACHE 5

Dual Faction
Ten Thunders



M&SU MEMBER

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/7	2	6	7	7	10

TIGER'S CLAWS	
Rg	/// 1
Cb	6
Dg	3/4/5

JACKHAMMER KICK	
Rg	/// 3
Cb	6
Dg	2/3/6

TALENTS

Abilities

Lifer

Price of Progress: After this model kills an enemy model with a melee attack, this model's Controller Draws one Card.

Roaring Boiler: After successfully casting **Vent Steam**, this model may cast **Superheat**.

Shapes in the Steam: This model ignores the obscuring trait generated by Auras and Markers.

Smoldering Metal: Crews led by this model may always hire the following models at no additional cost: Fire Gamin, Metal Gamin, Rail Golems, and Willie. In a Scrap, a Crew led by this model may not hire models with the **Frozen Heart** Ability.

Steel Resolve: ①6. Friendly models including this model receive +1 **Wp** when defending in a **Wp** Duel.

Unstoppable Industry: This model is immune to **Slow**.

Weapon

Jackhammer Kick: After hitting defender with this Weapon, Place this model touching the defender's base.

Tiger's Claws: Paired. This Weapon's Damage Flips receive ④ when inflicting damage on a model with one or more Burning Tokens. Models damaged by this Weapon gain one Burning Token.

Actions

(+1) Casting Expert

Triggers

Cb (X) Badass Pose [Jackhammer Kick]: After damaging defender, immediately cast **Iron Skin** on this model.

Ca/Cb (W) Condensation [Tiger's Claws, Scalding Breath]: After resolving damage with this Weapon, immediately cast **Vent Steam**.

Ca (W) Express Line [Railwalker]: Once in base contact with the second model, if there is a third friendly Rail Worker or friendly model with the Construct Characteristic within 5" Place this model in base contact with that model.

Ca (W) Terminus [Railwalker]: After resolving the **Railwalker** Spell, this model performs a **Jackhammer Kick Strike**.

Ca (W) Two Stroke Piston [Seismic Punch]: After resolving this Spell, immediately perform a **Jackhammer Kick Strike** targeting one of the models that lost its Resist Duel.

Cb (W) Tiger's Fury [Tiger's Claws]: After resolving a **Strike** that hits with this Weapon, Push this model up to 2" and perform a melee **Strike** against another target in melee range.

SPELLS

(0) Vent Steam

(CC: 12 / Rst: - / Rg: ④4) This ④ is **Ht** 4 obscuring for all models, including this model.

(0) Iron Skin

(CC: 12 / Rst: - / Rg: 6) Target friendly model gains **Armor +2**.

(1) Railwalker

(CC: 14 / Rst: - / Rg: C) Place this model in base contact with a friendly Rail Worker or friendly model with the Construct Characteristic within 5". After Placing this model, if there is a second friendly Rail Worker or friendly model with the Construct Characteristic within 5", this model may be Placed in base contact with that model.

(1) Scalding Breath

(CC: 14 / Rst: Df / Rg: /// 3) **Dg** 2/2/4, ignoring **Armor**. Target model gains **Easy to Wound 1** during the next **Strike** targeting it.

(1) Superheat

(CC: 13 / Rst: Df / Rg: (X)10) *AR: This Spell only affects enemy models within a friendly **Vent Steam** ①. Enemy models losing their Resist Duels gain one Burning Token.*

(1) Seismic Punch

(CC: 10 / Rst: Df / Rg: ①3) Push models losing their Resist Duels up to 3" directly away from this model.

EMBERLING – TOTEM

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 2

Dual Faction
Ten Thunders



INSIGNIFICANT, SPIRIT, TOTEM (MEI FENG)

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/-	1	5	4	6	3

TALENTS:

Abilities

Arcane Reservoir

Armor +1

Companion (Mei Feng)

Float

Weapons

Simmer: Models damaged by this Weapon gain one Burning Token.

Actions

(0) Fuel Source: Target model within 5" gains three Burning Tokens, then sacrifice this model.

(0) Link

SPELLS:

(0) Vent Steam

(CC: 12 / Rst: - / Rg: 4) This 4 is Ht 4 obscuring for all models, including this model.

SIMMER

Rg	1
Cb	3
Dg	1/2/4

(1) Magical Extension

(CC: * / Rst: * / Rg: *) This spell may be cast only once per activation. Cast one of the connected Master's (1) spells. During this casting, this model may use a Soulstone to change its starting total.



Of'times, you can hear the coals growl in the engine boiler on the Malifaux rail line, 'specially when you cross the Breach. That's when they get the loudest. Sure, you hear the regular sizzle and cracklin' of embers, but there's always a little somethin' else sprinkled in, like some kind o' snarlin'.

Heh, there's nothin' like that 'lectric spiders feelin' all over your skin when you cross Breachside, and the coals thought so too – the fire'd roar like the gates o' Hades. At first, we thought it a might bit strange that the flames seemed to lick our shovels clean as the coal piled higher, like it wanted to swallow them down – gulp 'em whole – but everythin's a might bit strange in Malifaux, so we didn't think much of it.

Wasn't till the coals plain up and left that we actually got concerned. Whole ton of 'em right up and rolled out of the boiler. Jonesy and I saw it. Rolled out, then slithered off along the ground like a snake made o' fire. Didn't hurt no one neither, just seemed like it had somewhere to go. Got sicka draggin' the train I suppose. To be honest, I do too sometimes, so I empathize.

Earthside, there were lots of stories about magical fire. Magicians used it back in the ol' world – the dark world. Most ill-tempered, unruly type of magic they say - angry, ancient magic. Most times, when you'd hear about magic and flames in the same sentence, the punchline is some poor old sod gettin' toasty and goin' up in smoke. These coals weren't nothin' like that though. They looked like some kinda lost puppy or somethin'. Stayin' low to the ground, mopin', kinda like a dog that just got left.

Not long after, lots o' reports of missin' coals came through the wires. Every once in a while a pile'd go missin' here, or some sooty pile of ashes would lift itself off the floor and whirl itself away. Ha, I'll never forget the day when the chimney sweep came in all jumpin' and a hollerin' that the smoke stacks had cleaned themselves.

A bunch o' guys started speculatin' that they were the great spirits of the locomotive. That Malifaux had brought 'em to life, some how, some way, and that they just wanted to find their way back home – that they were lost Breachside. I don't think so though. I think they were lookin' for someone. Compelled to move, as it were. Anyway, by now they should know the train'd take 'em back if they wanted to go ... Makes you wonder.

– Emmitt, Railroad Engineer

KANG – MINION



"Here friend," Kang offered a rock solid arm. The rail worker below grabbed it and heaved himself out of the trench. They shared a nod before Kang continued walking along what was soon to be Malifaux's farthest stretching rail line. To either side, workers plied their metal limbs to fastening pipe and riveting infrastructure. As he passed, they'd turn and wave, offering a "Yo, Kang!" or a "How's it goin', Kang?"

Kang knew he was a pawn, and he knew the rail workers were also pawns, but there can be some measure of dignity in servitude. At least he knew his master. These rail workers were routinely pushed around by Guild, Arcanist, and Ten Thunders agendas they had no hope of understanding. He'd like to see them achieve some dignity of their own. For himself, The Ten Thunders were tolerable masters for now, and Mei Feng he would follow to the grave.

Just as he reached the end of the line, he saw two sparrows fly from the brush several hundred yards away – the signal that new orders had come down from the Oyabun. He ducked behind a wooden shack at the end of the construction and knelt by the rear corner post. Digging dirt away from the base, he uncovered one of the hidden compartments through which secret messages were disseminated to Ten Thunders agents. Within lied a delicate scroll wrapped with twine.

The contents of the scroll were laid out in the complex cipher of the Ten Thunders, still uncracked by any outside entity, Breach or Earthside. "Delay project completion two days. Guild must not reach the Singing Mine before the second sun rises." He placed the scroll back in the hole at the base of the post and began to muster himself into a rousing speech.

Glancing back at the line, he quickly identified the hungriest, the most exhausted, and the most overworked on the rail. Three half-metal workers appeared to be buckling, increasingly unable to heft their mallets, dripping with sweat, and looking faint. Kang slipped half a loaf of bread from his satchel, and slung his huge shovel across his broad shoulders – creating an image of casual strength that he had carefully crafted to inspire confidence. The first of the workers turned to him, "Ho, Kang, how are you doing?"

"Better than you," he said, breaking off a tough chunk of bread and handing it to the man. "How long's it been since you've all had food?"

"Eight hours," he said.

"How about a break?"

"More than ten!" another chimed in.

"Well, I don't know about you friend, but that just doesn't sound right to me," Kang replied.

Three hours later, the entire encampment was up in arms, shouting curses at Guild overseers and hoisting signs for higher wages. Kang grinned at his handiwork. Sure, they were pawns, but the illusion of freedom would taste just as sweet.



40MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 8

Dual Faction
Ten Thunders

M&SU MEMBER. UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	CA	Df	Wd
4/6	2	6	4	5	8

TALENTS:

Abilities

Can't Keep Him Down: This model heals a number of **Wd** equal to the Turn number at the start of the Activation Phase.

Hard to Kill

Shapes in the Steam: This model ignores the obscuring trait generated by Auras and Markers.

Stubborn: This model receives +2 **Wp** in Duels where it is the defender.

Slow to Die

The Workers' Champion: When this model kills a non-living enemy model all friendly living Minion models within 6" and LoS receive 1 to Attack and Casting Flips when attacking non-living models.

Weapon

Hot Coals: A model suffering one or more wounds from this Weapon receives 1 to its Resist Flips.

Actions

(+1) Melee Expert

(0) **"Fight With Me!":** ①3. Friendly models with the M&SU Member Characteristic receive +1 **Cb**.

Triggers

Cb (X) Crack Casing [Shovel]: After damaging defending Construct with this Weapon, defender receives **Easy to Wound 1** until the end of its next activation.

Cb (M) Knockback [Shovel]: After damaging defender with this Weapon, Push the defender 3" directly away from this model.

SHOVEL

Rg	2
Cb	7
Dg	3/4/6

HOT COALS

Rg	6
Cb	5
Dg	2/2♣/4♣

Df (P) "You Can Try...": If this model is missed by an enemy model's melee attack, this model may immediately perform a melee **Strike** targeting that model.

SPELLS:

(0) Rousing Speech

(CC: 12 / Rst: - / Rg: ①6) Friendly Living models are immune to Morale Duels and immediately rally within this ①.

METAL GAMIN – MINION



The metal gamin swarmed around her, each misshapen monstrosity an individual nightmare that evoked the most primal of feelings in her adversaries. As Mei Feng moved toward her foes, so too did the metal gamin, moving to protect their mistress from harm. Their metallic bodies paced her steps with an unnatural fluidity, more akin to skin than steel. Bound within the heart of each burned a kernel of aetheric power which caused the surrounding air to shimmer with heat.

Their weapons were as varied as their bodies. Hooked claws, forearms that ended in blades, even rail ties and short lengths of track snatched up from the rubble were waved menacingly at the rail saboteurs Mei had surprised as they went about their business. She wondered who was behind the attacks on the rail lines her operatives were working on and hoped one of these men would be left alive to answer her questions.

Taking any of them alive seemed unlikely as a saboteur quickly lit and threw a stick of dynamite along the tracks when she came across them. The fuse sputtered and caught as it arced through the air toward her. In an unnatural burst of speed, one of her metal gamin rushed ahead and intercepted the tumbling stick. The explosion blew the gamin to bits but left Mei and her other gamin unharmed.

"Take them," she growled at her diminutive protectors.

If only the saboteurs had chosen to flee after throwing the dynamite, they may have escaped. Instead, they trusted the explosion would take care of her and stood grinning while they waited for the dust to clear. Their victorious grins turned to shock then panic as Mei and her remaining three minions burst through the dust and smoke thrown up by the explosion. While one of their numbers frantically tried to light another stick, his companions either broke and fled for the tree line or started shooting.

Mei ignored the gunshots; confident the gamin would anticipate and deflect the rounds before she could be hit. She ordered one of her gamin to take care of the dynamite, while she and the other two took off after the fleeing men. As she reached the tree line, a massive explosion nearly threw her off her feet. Looking back, she realized she should have been more specific on how the gamin should take care of the dynamite and hoped the capture of one of the remaining fugitives would make up for the massive crater her crews would now need to repair.

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 5

CONSTRUCT

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/6	1	4	6	5	6

TALENTS:

Abilities


Arcanist Asset: This model may only be hired by Crews containing Arcanist Masters.

Armor +2.

Companion (Protected Model)

Hard to Kill

Protective: At the start of the Encounter, or when this model enters play, this model's Controller must nominate one other friendly model to Protect. This model gains the Insignificant Characteristic while it is not within 4" of the Protected model. This model cannot Protect a model with the **Protective** Ability.


Resistant: This model's Resist Duels receive  to the Resist Flip.

Actions


(All) Another Chance: Nominate a target friendly model. This model is now Protecting that model. This Action may only be performed if this model's Protected model is no longer in the game.

(0) In Trouble: This model performs a **Charge** Action targeting an enemy model engaged with its nominated Protected model.

(1) Heat Metal: This model may discard a total of up to three Burning Tokens on it or on other models within 2". This model inflicts damage equal to the number of Tokens discarded on a target non-Construct model within 2".



(1) Reforge: This model performs a Healing Flip which receives . This Action may only be performed once per activation.

HEAD BUTT


Rg	 1
Cb	4
Dg	1/2/4

SPELLS:

(1) Hard Case

(CC: 10 / Rst: - / Rg:  3) Each time a friendly model in the  of one or more friendly Metal Gamin Hard Case Spells suffers wounds, that model's Controller may choose to inflict up to 2 of those wounds on one of the friendly Metal Gamin instead.

(1) Small But Fierce

(CC: 12 / Rst: Wp / Rg: 3) Attacks performed by target non-Master model must target this model. Target model's Attack Flips against this model receive . This effect ends either at the start of the Resolve Effects Step, or if this model leaves play, whichever occurs first.

RAIL GOLEM – MINION



Blending old world magic and modern materials, the rail golem is a formidable addition to the Arcanists' arsenal. The massive Construct stands head and shoulders above other Constructs and is shaped from what appears to be living metal. The massive boiler in its chest requires fuel almost constantly, but the Construct's magical nature is such that the more aggressively it behaves, the less fuel it requires to maintain full pressure.

Her ability to summon the rail golem and metal gamin was a primary reason for Mei Feng's acceptance as an Arcanist and her position as an M&SU rail boss. Combining her talent in manipulating the elements of fire and metal, she is able to make iron flexible enough to move as if it was skin yet retain the metal's strength. Even Viktor Ramos was visibly impressed when he witnessed the rail golem firsthand, swearing that such a creation would be the future of Construct technology.

Mei Feng demonstrated the flexibility of the golem's role almost immediately when her crew was attacked by a marauding band of Nephilim not long after she was placed in her position. As the Neverborn attacked, the rail golem dropped the load of tracks it carried and, with a speed seldom seen in a Construct, rushed to the source of the violence, furnace glowing brightly.

The first of the Nephilim it encountered stood little chance, and it sent their crushed bodies flying with a sweep of its massive arm. With a roar, a mature Nephilim leapt at the golem, the impact barely registering. The Nephilim's claws raked the golem, digging deep furrows into its frame before it pulled its attacker off. With each exchange of blows between the massive pair, the rail golem's furnace grew brighter, its attacks accelerating and increasing in brutality. Finally, when the broken body of the Nephilim lay at its feet, the rail golem let off a deafening whistle as it released some of the pent up pressure in its boiler. What Nephilim remained fled from the sound, terrified by the metal creature's war cry. Once the threat had passed, the rail golem strode calmly back to its spilled pile of rails and gathered them up before continuing with its original task.

Mei Feng continues to create rail golems for the Arcanists, but at a slow pace. She claims the creation of one requires not only considerable materials but also a lengthy summoning process. Ramos tasks these additional golems with supporting other rail crews or assigns specific duties as he sees fit. What Mei Feng has neglected to tell Ramos is that each rail golem is ultimately answerable to her commands, not his.

50MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 9

CONSTRUCT, RARE 1, SPECIAL FORCES (M&SU ASSET)

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
4/6	4	5	5	4	10

TALENTS:

Abilities

Armor +2

Cold Start: This model cannot gain Burning Tokens while affected by the **Frozen Heart** Ability.

Forged in Fire: This model is Immune to wounds and **Slow** inflicted by up to three Burning Tokens, and does not discard Burning Tokens in the Resolve Effects Step. If it has more than three Burning Tokens during the Resolve Effects Step it suffers 1 wound or receives **Slow**.

Hard to Kill

Ruptured Boiler: This model generates a (X)3, **Dg** 3 when it is killed. All models within the (X) gain one Burning Token.

Smoldering Heart: When declared the target of a Duel, this model may suffer 1 wound to receive +3 **Wp** until that Duel is resolved.

Stoke Fury: This model gains one Burning Token at the start of its activation, each time it performs two **Walk** Actions during its activation, and when an enemy model inflicts 1 or more wounds on it.

Weapon

Rail Bash: Paired.

Actions

(All): Cooldown: Discard all Burning Tokens on this model. Heal a number of **Wd** equal to the number of Tokens discarded.

(+1) Instinctual

(+1) Release Fury: Discard one Burning Token to perform one melee **Strike** Action. This Action may be performed once per activation.

(0) Build Pressure: Discard one Burning Token on this model. This model's next Damage Flip this activation receives +.

(0) Fierce Determination: Discard one Burning Token on this model. This model's next Attack Flip this activation receives +.

(1) Head of Steam: Discard one Burning Token. This model then performs a **Charge** Action targeting the nearest enemy model in LoS. This Action may be performed once per activation.

RAIL BASH

Rg	/// 2
Cb	5
Dg	3/4/6

Triggers

Cb () Knock Aside [Rail Bash]: After hitting an enemy defender with this Weapon inflict no damage. Instead, Push defender up to 4" directly away from this model. Charge another model within range. If the Charge is unsuccessful, this model's activation ends.

Cb () Redline [Rail Bash]: After hitting an enemy defender with this Weapon, this model gains one Burning Token.

SPELLS:

(0) Pain Train

(CC: 14 / Rst: - / Rg: C) *AR: Discard five Burning Tokens on this model. This model gains Reactivate.*

(1) Refuel

(CC: 15 / Rst: - / Rg: C) Remove any number of Burning Tokens from models this model is engaged with. This model gains an equal number of Burning Tokens.

(0) Vent Steam

(CC: 12 / Rst: - / Rg: 14) This is a **Ht** 4 obscuring for all models, including this model.

RAIL WORKER – MINION



Can't help staring at the arm, can you? I don't blame you. When I got it, I couldn't stop staring either. Does it itch? Sometimes, when the heat kicks up enough. I feel it more when it's cold out, though. The chill gets into the metal and makes my entire arm numb.

How'd it happen? Which, the arm or what took it? Both? Heh, you ask a lot of questions for a little one. Very well, I'll answer both. Work on the rail line is dangerous. Not only do we have to watch out for the same hazards we would have back home – breaking equipment, accidents with the track and ties, explosives used to cut the line through hillsides, and so on – we also have to worry about the Neverborn, sabotage, and a hundred other things that'll kill you just as easily as look at you.

Funny thing, what took my arm was one of those first things. We were laying down a rail, and I was one of the crew aligning the ties beneath it. Somehow, one of the ties had shifted and was crooked. I'd done it a thousand times before and knew it was foolish, but I was tired from the extra shifts the Union demanded we work, and before I realized it, I was reaching down to push the tie back, just as the rail was lowered into place.

Did it hurt? It hurt so bad I wanted to die. When I passed out from the pain, I guess I thought I had. When I woke up in the Union hospital, I didn't want to look down. I could feel something was missing and wept. I had two choices – accept a Union replacement

on credit and spend the rest of my life paying them back, or refuse the replacement and take to begging in the streets. Then I heard her voice, the rail boss we'd just started working with. She told me that everything would be all right and to open my eyes.

I did and looked down. My arm was gone at the elbow, but instead of the bloody stump I expected to see, a shiny new limb stared up at me from the bedsheets. She told me the limb was mine and that she expected no repayment in return, only to remember who my true friends were. Then I wept again, this time with relief and thanks.

Boy, only two things are certain on the rail line. One, everyone loses something before they leave this job. Two, the Union's 'hazard pay' is enough to drown a man's sorrows but not enough to replace what he lost.

Mei Feng has shown many of us there is now a third certainty on the rail line – someone out there who cares.

– Shao Hsu, Miners & Steamfitters Union Member



30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 5

Dual Faction Ten Thunders

MeSU MEMBER

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
4/6	2	5	4	5	6

TALENTS:

Abilities

More Metal than Man: This model can be targeted by Talents and Spells that may only target Constructs. This model gains the Construct Characteristic while resolving these Talents and Spells.

Shapes in the Steam: The model ignores the obscuring trait generated by Auras and Markers.

Slow to Die

Weapon

Replacement Limb: Choose one of the following when performing an attack with this Weapon. The effect lasts for the duration of the attack:

- A model killed with this Weapon cannot perform a **Slow to Die** Action.
- This Weapon's **Rg** is increased to 3".
- This Weapon ignores **Armor** and **Hard to Wound**.
- This Weapon gains Paired.

Actions

(2) Implacable Assault: Discard a Control Card. This model immediately performs up to two melee **Strike** Actions against a single target, these attacks receive to their Damage Flips.

REPLACEMENT LIMB

Rg	2
Cb	5
Dg	2/4/5

Triggers

Cb (🔥) Brutal [Replacement Limb]: This Weapon inflicts +1 **Dg** for each 🔥 in this model's Duel Total.

Df (🔥) Metal on Metal: This model receives **Armor +2** for the duration of this attack.

Cb (🔥) Pin [Replacement Limb]: A defender suffering one or more **Wd** from this attack cannot move or be moved by movement effects.

SPELLS:

(0) "Shovel Faster!"

(CC: 10 / Rst: Df / Rg: 5) Target gains one Burning Token.

WILLIE, THE DEMOLITIONIST – MINION



"If it calls for twenty, I use fifty," Willie said to the wide-eyed, slightly terrified trainee standing at his back, "and if it calls for fifty, I use two-hundred." He chewed his cigar. "That's just how I roll." Willie placed a boot on the enormous pile of dynamite and gave a smart tug to the leather strap that held the loosely bundled mess together. "There we go. That oughta make a hole."

Willie turned and grinned a giant, toothy smile at the hapless trainee, now fully ten feet away and looking slightly ill. "You get the best bit, 'cause I like you kid." He pulled the slobbery cigar from his mouth and held it out with genuine enthusiasm. The trainee shuffled forward, teeth clattering, and took it cautiously from the outstretched hand. Willie pointed toward the end of the very short fuse and motioned encouragingly.

The trainee, quaking and barely holding back the urge to vomit, put the cigar near the fuse and paused a moment before Willie clapped him hard on the back, pushing the lit end onto the fuse. A shower of sparks cascaded with a loud fizz, and the fuse started going up in smoke. "Hee hee hee, now we gotta run kid!" Willie yelled. The trainee looked over his shoulder to see Willie already halfway back to the blast wall, sprinting with an ungainly, high-stepping stride.

The trainee scrambled to find his feet and started to run while his life unfolded before him. He saw himself as a small, impressionable tot hanging around the M&SU mess hall, and he remembered looking up to his tough-as-nails miner pop. He recalled signing up at the Guild recruitment center with his brother and the exact moment his brother told him, "You should go into demolitions. They get the most scrip by far!" The trainee cursed his brother under his breath as he leapt for the wall. The earth-shattering explosion rocketed him from behind, sailing him over the top and planting him hard in the dirt on the other side. He promptly blacked out.

About a minute later, the trainee roused to the sensation of someone smacking him hard in the face. He opened his eyes to see Willie's ecstatic mug only inches from his. Willie's eyes were set in two distinct clean circles of skin, surrounded by a sooty charcoal blast that covered the rest of his face. He was grinning wildly. "See! See! What did I tell ya me'boy! Fun, right?!"

SOMM BASE

M&SU MEMBER, UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/7	2	5	4	4	7

TALENTS:

Abilities

Blast Resistant: Armor +3 against damage inflicted by (X), and .

Bombardier: This model may ignore LoS when performing ranged attacks. Ranged attacks without LoS performed by this model receive -2 Cb.

Dropped Load: When this model is killed by being reduced to 0 Wd this model's Controller places one in base contact with it before it is removed from play. Flip one Card, if the value is equal to or greater than a target number of 7 + the number of already generated by this Ability, place an additional touching the last placed. This flip may be Cheated. Continue to flip Cards and add additional until you fail to hit the target number. These flips may also be Cheated. After the model fails to hit the target number, each model touched by one or more of the suffers 3 damage. This model is then removed from the game.

Wheelbarrow of Doom: During each Walk

Action after the first this model performs in an activation this model may interrupt the move to place two touching but not overlapping its base. Models touched by one or both of the must win a Df → 12 Duel or suffer 3 damage.

Weapon

Demo Charge: This Weapon ignores Armor and Object. This Weapon may perform attacks on terrain and Markers with Hardness within 1" and inflicts +4 damage.

Actions

(0) Set Charge: Place a 30mm Charge Marker within 4" of this model. The first time each model moves within 2" of a Charge Marker during a Turn that model's Controller flips a Card. If the model is Willie, his Controller may Cheat the flip. If the Card's suit is the Marker detonates and generates (X)3 Dg 3 and is then removed from the game. Or, if the original Card flipped was a Joker, the Marker detonates and generates (X)5 Dg 5 and is then removed from the game. Charge Markers remain in play until they are detonated. This Action may be performed once per activation.

SOULSTONE COST: 6

CROWBAR

Rg	1
Cb	4
Dg	1/2/4

DEMO CHARGE

Rg	8
Cb	6
Dg	2/3/4

(1) Short Fuse: This Action may only be performed while this model is engaged with one or more enemy models. This model performs a Demo Charge Strike. For the duration of the Strike this model gains Gunfighter and + Cb.

Triggers

Cb () Slow Burn [Demo Charge]: All models damaged by this Weapon gain one Burning Token.

Cb () Fire in the Hole [Demo Charge]: After this Weapon hits the defender, but before the Damage Flip is made, friendly models within 2" of the defender may push up to their Wk directly away from that model.

Neverborn



Jacob Lynch

Depending on who you ask, Jakob Lynch is either the best gambler or worst loser Malifaux has ever seen. His fast hands, and even faster mouth, have gotten him into trouble more times than he cares to count, while his incredible streaks of luck always end in some spectacularly horrible fashion. In fact, he was unaware of it, but his winning of the Honeypot casino in a high-stakes poker game signaled the end of the best streak of his life and began a descent into desperation and dark dealings he has yet to see the bottom of.

Lynch, being far better at earning money at the tables than he was at running the house, quickly learned that, although the run-down casino and cighthouse wasn't losing money, it wasn't making much in the way of a profit either. A few bad decisions, and even worse investments, later, Lynch found himself about to lose everything when a backer offered to come in with him on the casino and front Lynch the money he needed to repay his debts and get the Honeypot back on track – for part ownership in the casino and the promise the loan would be repaid in a timely manner.

Things improved, but nowhere near fast enough for Lynch to have the money on hand to repay his partner, an Asian gentleman by the name of Cheng, when it was due. Cheng informed Lynch that he did not care where the money came from but that the gambler-turned-casino-owner would find it or the Ten Thunders would take full ownership and send his corpse on a trip down the River. Cheng told Lynch that they would much rather have him running the casino and passing them their share of the profits than have to bring in a new face (new faces mean questions), but business was business. "I like you, Jakob," Cheng said. "You have one day to find the money, that is more than I give anyone else."

Knowing full well there was no way to gather the money he owed in the next twenty-four hours, and lacking even seed money to try and win it at the poker tables, Jakob decided to save Cheng the effort and throw himself into the River. As he steeled himself to make the leap, he was grabbed and pulled away from the edge by a pair of gentlemen who introduced themselves as Messrs. Graves and Tannen and offered Lynch a means by which he could save not only himself, but also the Honeypot. They informed him they were well aware of his arrangement with Mr. Cheng and would see to that problem if Mr. Lynch (he thought Mr. Tannen called him Mr. Lunch at least twice) agreed to hear their proposal on behalf of their employer. Mr. Graves suggested that he could always throw himself into the River later if did not like what he heard.

Jakob listened and liked what he heard. The Messrs.' employer was willing to provide him with the funds needed to repay the Ten Thunders' loan and keep the Honeypot running. The mysterious benefactor could guarantee repeat business to the Honeypot, both at the tables and in the "hospitality suites," and all it would cost Jakob was the use of his basement, no questions asked. It seemed like a good deal, compared to what Jakob was facing, and as always, he agreed to it before he could talk himself out of it. "Wonderful," his mismatched partners crowed together.



With his new partners' influence, Lynch's Honeypot began turning a profit. It was a meager profit to be sure, but one that kept his Ten Thunders employers happy and kept Cheng away. Jakob's luck had turned back around, which meant it would not be long before he sabotaged it.

At first he burned with curiosity to learn what it was that Mr. Graves and Mr. Tannen had moved into the basement, but his agreement with them still stood, and he overcame that curiosity until he no longer felt the urge to look. Until one evening he saw Mr. Tannen escorting one of the casino's regulars through the door that led into the basement. Lynch thought he caught a faint glow in the man's eyes. Unable to stop himself, Jakob followed them down.

What he found turned his guts to water.

Lynch gave the torn down wall leading to the Malifaux sewers beyond just a glance before his eyes and attention settled on the creature that dominated the room. It was easily twelve feet long, possessing twin rows of flailing hooked limbs and a massive mouth that seemed to absorb what little bit of light escaped a lantern Mr. Tannen held. Between the two of them stood the patron from upstairs, entirely calm in the presence of such evil. The thing of darkness bent forward and inhaled, drawing a glowing stream of energy from the man into its mouth. The man slumped over, but did not fall.

COME CLOSER, JAKOB LYNCH.

The thing spoke directly into Lynch's mind, instilling a compulsion to step out from his hiding perch he could not resist. He walked past Mr. Tannen, whose normally friendly grin looked positively predatory in the lantern's light.

WE MEET AT LAST. I AM SURPRISED YOU
HELD OUT THIS LONG. I HAVE A GIFT FOR
YOU.

The creature leaned forward, but instead of inhaling, it breathed out, enveloping Lynch in a faintly shimmering smoke. Surprised by the creature's actions, Lynch could not help but inhale a bit of the smoke before he held his breath. It burned his lungs, the pain lingering on the edge of pleasure, but never quite reaching it. He coughed up the smoke, Mr. Tannen gasped in surprise. "What the hell was that," Lynch demanded, tired of playing the fool.

FEW CAN RESIST MY GIFT, MR. LYNCH. IT
APPEARS YOU ARE ONE OF THEM. HOW
INTERESTING. PERHAPS IT IS TIME WE
ALTER OUR ARRANGEMENT.

Lynch sensed Mr. Tannen's approach, with the pocket knife he had out and was ready to use to cut Lynch down. With a flick of the wrist, Lynch had a derringer in his hand and its barrel pressed against Mr. Tannen's forehead before he could take a slash. "Perhaps not," he said.

MY SERVANT HAS MISUNDERSTOOD MY
MEANING, MR. LYNCH. I MEANT THAT
PERHAPS WE CAN ALTER OUR
AGREEMENT IN A WAY THAT FAVORS
BOTH OF US.



The creature went on to tell Lynch that it could no longer remember its true name but had been called the Hungering Darkness for those centuries it could remember. It explained that it was a creature of Old Malifaux and came into its own power when it and other mighty creatures it called Tyrants rose to dominance. Where the Tyrants were powerful and strode the land as gods, the Hungering Darkness preferred

to keep to the shadows. It was its aversion to attention that allowed the Hungering Darkness to avoid being imprisoned along with the other Tyrants. But, when it emerged from its hiding place, the damage wrought by the Tyrants was so extreme that the Hungering Darkness could find little to sustain itself. With its corporeal form long dead, the Hungering Darkness only existed as a spirit, tied to its remains until something released it. While it waited, it drifted into a state of torpor which would last for centuries.

There it remained until discovered quite on accident by two scavenging Neverborn. Donning human disguises, they sought a new home for their master, one where it could remain undiscovered by its enemies and regain its strength. After watching Lynch for a time, Mr. Graves decided that using the Honeypot would be a perfect hiding place as well as provide his master with a steady source of food.

The Hungering Darkness explained how its breath imbues the recipient with a small fraction of its own power, but oddly, the brilliant smoke had no effect on Lynch. Its breath enhances feelings of euphoria in its food which it then inhales once the time is right. The feeling is so incredible that those touched by the Hungering Darkness' power have come back again and again to feel it, thereby giving Lynch valuable repeat business. The man who stood with them, Mr. Tannen told Lynch, had already fed his master on four previous occasions.

What the Hungering Darkness was prepared to offer Lynch was a union of sorts. While it remained anchored to its remains, it was trapped in this basement until it could find something – someone really – that could bear its tremendous power without being consumed by it. Lynch's resistance to the brilliance demonstrated he could be such a vessel. By allowing the Hungering Darkness to anchor itself to him, Lynch would share some of its power, a power that grew with each feeding. Lynch knew he would not leave the basement alive if he refused the union. With those odds, he decided to go all in and agreed. He sensed the strands of their spirits merge as the Hungering Darkness anchored itself to him before releasing its hold on the mound of dirty bones in one corner. The bones collapsed into dust when the Hungering Darkness released its hold on them. Jakob could feel aetheric power flowing through his body. A trickle at first, but then he tapped into a more rapid flood as he tapped into the aetheric energy which made up the Hungering Darkness. It would take practice, Lynch knew, to master this newfound talent, but with an ancient spirit guiding his learning, he was sure it would not take long.

Jakob Lynch - Master

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE CACHE: 2

Dual Faction
Ten Thunders



Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
4/6	2	6	6	5	8

HOLDOUT PISTOL	
Rg	8
Cb	5
Dg	2/3/4

TALENTS:

Abilities

Ace in the Hole: When this model flips, or Cheats Fate with the 1 Card, that Card is treated as a Red Joker, not the 1.

Cheatin' Bastard: This model always Cheats Fate last in an opposed Duel.

Gunfighter

Mulligan: Once per Encounter, after drawing cards during the Draw Phase, this model's Controller may reveal and then discard his or her Hand and redraw the same number of Cards.

Never Touch The Stuff: This model cannot gain the Brilliance Characteristic.

Slave to Darkness: This ability may be used when a model with the Brilliance Characteristic is killed or sacrificed and there is no friendly Hungering Darkness in play. Discard two Cards of the same value and then Place a friendly Hungering Darkness in base contact with the killed or sacrificed model before it is removed from play. The friendly Hungering Darkness enters play with its current Wd equal to half the value of one of the discarded Cards and is connected to this Master. After it is Placed sacrifice any other Totems connected to this model. This ability may be used once per Turn.

Strange Bedfellows: Crews led by this model may always hire the following models at no additional cost: Sorrows, Stitched Together, models with the Brilliance Characteristic, and Ht 1 models with the Woe Characteristic.

Actions

(+1) Card Trick: This model's Controller discards one Card, then this model receives one general AP. This AP cannot be used to cast Spells.

(0) Quick Retreat: Push this model up to 4". This model must be in an enemy model's melee range to perform this Action.

Triggers

Cb (W) Malifaux Roulette [Holdout Pistol]: If this attack hits, inflict no damage. Instead, this model's Controller randomly chooses and reveals a Card in the target model's Controller's Hand. Target suffers an effect based on the suit revealed. The Card is then returned to the player's Hand.

- **Black Joker:** Target model's Controller chooses one effect, Jakob suffers that effect.
- **♠:** Weapon inflicts an uncheatable Dg 3/5/6.
- **♥:** Target receives **Paralyzed**.
- **✕:** Target gains **Poison 2**.
- **♣:** Target receives -2 Cb and -2 Ca.
- **Red Joker:** This model's Controller chooses one effect.

Cb (♠) Pip the Ace [Holdout Pistol]: This model's Controller may discard up to three Cards after hitting the defender. The attack's Damage Flip receives ♠ for each Card discarded.

Df/Wp (W) Five of a Kind: If this model successfully Resists a Spell that was Cheated during the Casting Duel it may perform a Ranged Strike targeting the casting model.

Df (W) "Squeel!": After This model is damaged by an enemy melee attack, Push it 4" directly away from the attacker.

SPELLS:

(1) Dead Man's Hand

(CC: 12 W / Rst: Ca / Rg: 10) AR: This Spell must have targeted an enemy model. Jakob's Controller flips three Cards. As each Card is flipped, if the Card is a 1 or 8 it is discarded. If not:

- If the Card is odd Jakob's Controller takes it into his or her Hand and target enemy model's Controller discards a Card if able.
- If the Card is even Jakob's Controller takes it into his or her Hand and target enemy model's Controller draws a Card.

This Spell cannot be cast using Magical Extension.

(1) The Source

(CC: 13 / Rst: - / Rg: 6) Friendly models with the Brilliance Characteristic receive +1 Wk at the start of their activation.





Hungry Darkness - Totem

50MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: ~

Dual Faction
Ten Thunders

SPIRIT, TOTEM (JAKOB LYNCH), UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/8	3	6	7	4	7

TENDRILS	
Rg	/// 3
Cb	6
Dg	2/4/6

TALENTS:

Abilities

An Ancient Evil: Immediately after this model is Placed using the **Slave to Darkness** Ability, enemy models within 5" must perform a **Wp** → 12 Morale Duel. Enemy models lose immunity to Morale Duels while performing this Duel.

Companion (Jakob Lynch)

Dark Pact: Crews led by Jakob Lynch automatically include this model. This model's Crew may elect to gain two Soulstones into its Pool during Crew Building instead of deploying it as normal.

Float

Empty Promises: Friendly The Depleted models lose the Insignificant Characteristic while they have LoS to this model.

Symbiote: This model counts as a Master for Talents and Spells and is worth 0 Soulstones for Strategy and Scheme purposes.

Terrifying → 12

Feast or Famine: At the end of the Activation Phase, if this model is within 5" of one or more models with the Brilliance Characteristic nominate one of those models. This model inflicts 1 wound on the nominated model and heals 1 **Wd**. If this model is not within 5" of one or more models with the Brilliance Characteristic at the end of the Activation Phase it suffers 1 wound.

Use Soulstones

Within You: This model's Casting Flips receive **+** when targeting a model with the Brilliance Characteristic.

Weapon

Tendrils: Paired. Magical. This Weapon's Damage flips receive **+** when damaging a model with the Brilliance Characteristic. Models wounded by this Weapon gain the Brilliance Characteristic.

Actions

(+1) Casting Expert

(0) Consume Brilliance: (X)6. Models with the Brilliance Characteristic must win a **Df** → 14 Duel or suffer 1 wound. Friendly models may choose to immediately lose this Duel before any cards are flipped. This model then heals itself number of **Wd** suffered by the models losing the Duel.

Triggers

Ca/Cb (W) You Are Mine [The Light Inside/Tendrils] The gained Brilliance Characteristic lasts until the end of the Encounter.

Cb (W) Enveloped in Darkness [Tendrils]: After this model inflicts damage with this Weapon, the defender performs a melee Weapon Cb → 13 Duel. If the defender loses the Duel it suffers the same damage again.

Cb (X) Essence Drain [Tendrils]: This model performs a Healing Flip after killing a living model with this Weapon.

SPELLS:

(1) The Light Inside

(CC: 11 / Rst: Wp / Rg: 10) Target model gains the Brilliance Characteristic.

(1) Magical Extension

(CC: * / Rst: * / Rg: *) This Spell may be cast only once per activation. Cast one of the connected Master's (1) Spells. During this casting, this model may use a Soulstone to change its starting total.

(1) Heed My Voice

(CC: 12 / Rst: Wp / Rg: 8) If target model has the Brilliance Characteristic, this Spell ignores immunities to **Wp** Duels. Target enemy non-Master model immediately performs a (1) Action or **Charge** controlled by you. The Action selected may not cause the model to be killed or sacrificed as part of the Action. This Spell may be cast once per activation.

(1) Serve Me

(CC: 14 / Rst: - / Rg: 12) Target friendly model with the Brilliance Characteristic receives **Reactivate**. Target model is removed from the game at the end of its second activation, and count as killed by the opponent for victory condition purposes. This Spell may only be cast once per Turn.

Beckoner - Minjon



The ladies of the evening workin' over at Lynch's Honey-pot are the prettiest whores to be found this side of the River. There's something about their smile that puts a man at ease, it reaches deep down and tickles him right where he likes to be tickled most.

As if that weren't enough to entice the customer to part with some of his hard-earned scrip, their voices are just about the most beautiful, melodious sound I've ever heard. I'd bet this dollar that angels don't have voices that sound half as pretty, but these ladies are about as far from angels as I am from meeting the Governor himself! If they weren't offering...ahem... *other services*, I'd be sore tempted to pay for an hour of their time just to sit and talk about the weather or the Pot's wallpaper colors.

Eh, what's that? A whore's a whore? You shut your mouth! I've been over to that place a half dozen times, spending the evening with a right fancy gal goes by the name of Destiny. Yeah, Destiny. I dunno, it might not be her real name. Maybe it's short for Destiny ... start this up again, and I'll be punching you out, Herb. Yeah, that's what I thought.

Anyhow, the last couple times I've been there, Destiny's been all over me, and while we're together, I feel like nothing can hurt me, life makes sense, and all my cares melt away. No, before it felt good to be with her. Now it feels good *all the way to my soul* when we're together. It's just that, well, at the end of the evening, I feel like I just plowed a hundred acres of land, with me pulling the plow!

I asked her what was going on, but she just laughed that sweet laugh of hers and said it's because we're meant to be together. What? Do I still have to pay for it? Herb, I told you! Ok, where were we, oh yeah. When she told me we were meant to be together, she also asked me if I had any friends who were looking for some "companionship" too. Of course, I thought of you gents. Yeah, and Herb, assuming he can keep up with that fresh busted arm of his. Told her I'd bring you lot around this evening so you could meet her friends too. She even promised me a special surprise I wouldn't want to miss. What? You don't want to go? Well, I'm heading over there now then. I thought you were my pals. Yeah, I need to see Destiny. I can hear her calling me. Let me go. Ow, come on, get off me, I need to see her. I need her. I need it! I can't live without it!! LET ME GO!! DESTINY!!!

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 5

BRILLIANCE, RARE 2

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/8	2	6	6	5	6

TALENTS:

Abilities

Don't Bite the Hand: Models with the Brilliance Characteristic receive $\square\square$ to Attack and Casting Flips when targeting this model.

Irresistible: Enemy Models must win a **Wp** → 12 Duel when targeting this model with an attack or the Action fails. This may not be ignored by any Talent.

The Party Never Ends: ①6. While a model is in the ① its Brilliance Characteristic cannot be removed and does not end during the Resolve Effects Step.

Weapon

Honeyed Words: Attacks performed with this Weapon use **Wp** instead of **Cb** and ignore cover. If this Weapon inflicts one or more wounds on a model, that model gains the Brilliance Characteristic.

Nail Rake: Poison 1.

Actions

(0) Know my Client: This model receives +2 to **Ca** and **Wp** when targeting a model with the Brilliance Characteristic.

(0) Seductive Swagger: Push this model up to 4" if it is currently within an enemy model's melee range.

Triggers

Ca (☞) **Gentle Caress [Come Hither]:** After both models are Pushed, if the target is in this model's melee range target gains the Brilliance Characteristic.

Ca (X) **Not that Kind of Girl [Come Hither]:** After both models are Pushed, if the target is in this model's melee range this model performs a melee Weapon **Strike** targeting that model.

Wp (♥) **First Taste's Free [Honeyed Words]:** After this Weapon inflicts 1 or more damage on the defender, the defender receives -1 **Df** or -1 **Wp**, this model's Controller's choice. These effects are cumulative and lasts until the start of this model's next activation.

NAIL RAKE

Rg	/// 1
Cb	5
Dg	1/2/3

HONEYED WORDS

Rg	↖ 12
Cb	*
Dg	1/3/4

SPELLS:

(1) Come Hither

(CC: 13♥ / Rst: Wp / Rg: 12) Target model pushes its **Wk** toward this model, **Cg** if the target has the Brilliance Characteristic. Then this model's Controller may Push this model up to its **Wk** toward the target.

(1) Sales Pitch

(CC: 14♥ / Rst: Wp / Rg: 6) Target model receives one fewer general AP at the start of its next activation for each ♥ in this model's casting total. This Spell may be cast once per turn.

Mr. Graves - Minion



To the uninformed observer, Mr. Graves appears to be the Honeypot's bouncer and Jakob Lynch's bodyguard. He certainly has the build for it. Mr. Graves towers over the Honeypot's employees and many of its patrons. Anyone drunk or foolish enough to argue with his orders or pick a fight with him leaves the bar with a few broken bones to remember him by.

Mr. Graves watches over Lynch obsessively. For the few moments he must take up his trusty fence post and leave Lynch's side to restore order on the casino floor or show an inebriated patron the front door, he keeps one eye on his employer. When Lynch has occasion to leave the Honeypot, Mr. Graves is always at his side, alert for any harm that may befall his employer. Some folks joke that Mr. Graves is more Lynch's jailer than bodyguard, a comparison nobody would ever share in Mr. Graves' presence. Mr. Graves is not known for his sense of humor, after all.

But a very different reality exists behind the scenes, namely, that neither Mr. Graves, nor his partner in crime, Mr. Tannen, are human. Both are Neverborn skinwalkers who have crawled inside human bodies, creating these personas from the residual memories of their victims. Neither actually works for Jakob Lynch, but instead, both serve Lynch's "partner", the Hungering Darkness.

Although Lynch would not call himself a prisoner, Mr. Graves does spend the majority of his time glued to his "employer's" side. The Darkness has a good thing going at the Honeypot and would prefer their front man remain safe and sound and has instructed Mr. Graves to keep him that way. Lynch knows the Darkness' orders regarding his well-being and enjoys taunting Mr. Graves, both giving him ridiculous orders and forcing his guardian into situations to test his patience and skill.

Mr. Graves suffers it all, waiting for the day the Darkness will give Lynch to Mr. Graves as a plaything. In the meantime, Mr. Graves enjoys his role as the Honeypot's bouncer. It allows him to publicly inflict pain on humans without anyone being the wiser, pretending each broken arm or smashed face is Lynch's. More than once Mr. Graves has had to stop himself from beating a transgressor to death on the casino floor. He also uses his role to watch the patrons as they enter and exit the Honeypot, looking for suitable "meals" for the Darkness. When Mr. Graves locates a potential mark, he sends a Beckoner or two over with a nod, letting the ladies do what they do best.



40MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 7

Dual Faction
Ten Thunders

BRILLIANCE, NEPHILIM, UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/7	3	5	5	4	9

TALENTS:

Abilities

Armor +1

Black Blood

"Not In Here": This model's melee attacks receive +♠ when targeting a model with the Brilliance Characteristic.

Ruthless

Shove Aside: This model may move through Ht 1 and Ht 2 models.

Slow to Die

Wicked

Weapon

Fence Post: This Weapon's Damage Flips receive ♠ against Ht 1 and Ht 2 models.

Actions

(1) Show Ya the Door: This model and a target enemy model within 1" perform a melee Cb → Df Duel. If this model wins the Duel its Controller may Push the target model up to 5". Then Push this model toward the target model until it is in base contact with the target.

(2) Flurry

Triggers

Cb (♠) "And Stay Out!" [Show Ya the Door]: After resolving this Action this model performs a **Strike** targeting the Pushed model.

Cb (♠) Broke Something [Fence Post]: After damaging defender with this Weapon, defender may not spend more than a total of two AP, general and specific combined, during its next activation.

FENCE POST

Rg	/// 2
Cb	6
Dg	3/4/5

SPELLS:

(0) "Bar's Closed"

(CC: 13 / Rst: Wp / Rg: (X)6) AR: Choose a point on the table within 6" and LoS of this model. This model's Controller may push other models losing the Resist Duel up to 4" directly away from the chosen point.

(0) Keeping the Peace

(CC: 14 / Rst: - / Rg: 16) Charging enemy models must win a melee Cb → 12 Duel before their starting Attack Flip or receive a ♠ to their **Charge** Damage Flip.

(1) Settle Tab

(CC: 12 / Rst: Wp / Rg: 6) Dg 1/3/5. Before the Damage Flip, this model's Controller discards up to three Cards. Target's Controller may then choose to discard up to the same number of Cards. The Damage Flip receives ♠ for each Card not discarded by the target's Controller.

Mr. Tannen - Minion



I tell you, there's something strange going on at that Honeypot casino. I can't quite put my finger on what it is, but I'm sure that creepy guy they have wandering the casino floor is involved. What's his name...Mr. Tagnen...Tarnen...Tannen...that's it, Mr. Tannen. I've been watching him for a while, trying to figure out what his angle is there.

For one, he's death for a winning streak. All he has to do is come up to you when you're winning big at Faro or roulette and strike up a conversation. I don't know if it's the way he talks or what he says, but if a man's luck is running hot, after a minute with this Tannen character, the chips start heading the wrong way across the table. It's not cheating, at least not that I've been able to tell. He's never anywhere near the game the mark's playing; he simply stops by and invites himself to chat for a spell.

Then there's the wicked pocket knife he carries. I watched him peel an apple with it once. The metal had this oily water shine to it, like nothing I'd ever seen before. Now, I understand that just being here in Malifaux the strange and unusual are normal, but something about that blade hurt my eyes when I looked at it. When I finally tore my eyes off his peeling and looked back up at his face, I'll be damned if I saw nothing but contempt even though the smile

plastered to his face was warm and welcoming. He even walked over and held it out for me to look at.

"Bone handle," he said, showing me the polished inlay. I swear the grin got wider, but the hate in his eyes was still there, bright as day. "Nice, huh?"

Tannen offered me a cut off the apple then, impaling a sliver with the knife and holding it out for me. I refused it as politely as I could. He shrugged. "No problem, mate. I always eat what I've cut as fast as I can. The fresher the better, I say."

I haven't been back to the Honeypot since that day. I still can't shake the feeling that somehow our quick exchange about a bit of apple soured my luck and only a trip back there can fix it. I truly hope I am wrong.



30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 6

Dual Faction Ten Thunders

WOE, UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
4/-	2	6	5	4	6

TALENTS:

Abilities

Cooler: ①6. An enemy model must discard a Card before it can Cheat Fate. If it cannot discard, it cannot Cheat Fate.

Equalize Fate: When an enemy model starts its activation engaged with this model, if the enemy model's Controller has more Cards in his or her Hand than this model's Controller, he or she must discard down to the same number of Cards.

Immune to Influence

Pitiful: Until this model activates each Turn, models targeting this model must win a **Wp → Wp** Duel or the Action immediately ends.

Shambling: This model ignores severe terrain movement penalties.

Actions

(1) Dampen Fate: ①6. Enemy models drawing one or more Cards during the Activation Phase draw one fewer Card. Enemy models lose the **Arcane Reservoir** Ability. This effect lasts until the end of the next Draw Phase.

(1) Lethargy: ①6. Enemy models receiving one or more ⚡ reduce the number of bonus flips by one.

Triggers

Ca (🗄) **"YAWN" [Bore to Tears]:** Defender also loses the **Use Soulstones** Ability until the end of its next activation.

POCKET KNIFE

Rg	/// 1
Cb	4
Dg	1/3/4

SPELLS:

(0) Luck's Turning

(CC: 12 / Rst: Wp / Rg: 12) If target's opponent Cheated Fate first during an opposed Duel, target cannot Cheat Fate with a higher value Card than the opponent's Card.

(1) Bore to Tears

(CC: 12 / Rst: Wp / Rg: 8) Target model receives -2/-2 **Wk/Cg** until the end of its next activation.

The Depleted - Minion



It's the last stop of a rocky ride. The many pleasures of the Honeypot cost their weight in scrip but few know the actual price they pay for an evening pushing chips or spent in the embraces of their favorite "entertainer." Every now and again, one of the Honeypot's regulars will just go missing. Not many questions are asked in Malifaux, and even fewer about Honeypot clientele. Husbands that regularly frequent the Honeypot have already been forgotten by wives. Women who spend their evenings there go unnoticed next to Lynch's brillianced beckoners, or end up becoming unwitting beckoners themselves. Youths that find their way here have long since been lost.

It all begins with a casual visit from Mr. Tannen, who pats you on the back, offers you a hand, and congratulates you on being such a good patron by extending a personal invitation to the VIP rooms in the back. The back rooms have their own legendary intrigues, and many a patron fantasizes about the excesses of sheer pleasure and decadence they must contain. They aren't wrong, for by the time the patron meets the Hungering Darkness in person, they are so enraptured with brilliance, they are oblivious to the threat. There, they are drained beyond return.

The end of the road is the sewers beneath the Honeypot, where all the Hunger's food goes to expire. Here, the Hunger lazily feeds on the last bit of their essence before

their lives are extinguished forever. The Depleted are too far gone to know or care that the end is near. Instead, they blindly wander Malifaux's old mazes, following the dim illumination given off by the brilliance bleeding through their skin. The sewer's twisting nature keeps them from wandering beyond the Honeypot's reach.

Every now and again, Graves, Tannen, or Lynch will need some fodder for a fight, and they'll scoop up some Depleted in a carriage and unleash them as a distraction on the unsuspecting. Completely unrecognizable and incoherent, most victims confuse them for Resurrectionist abominations. Although they look frail, The Depleted are literally burning with brilliance. Their grasp will melt through flesh and metal alike, and their own bodies are only kept from immolation by the aetheric forces coursing through them.

Recently, Mr. Tannen discovered an additional use for the Depleted. When they are slain, the aether containing their burning core extinguishes, creating an explosion of brilliance that infects everyone nearby in a shower of glowing pleasure. "Why make enemies when you can make clients?" Lynch always says.

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 4

BRILLIANCE, INSIGNIFICANT

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/-	2	4	2	3	6

TALENTS:

Abilities

Armor +1

Consumed by It: The **Consume Brilliance** Action inflicts 2 wounds on this model instead of 1. It also heals 2 wounds instead of 1.


Feels Nothing: Attacks against this model inflicting Severe damage inflict Moderate instead. Damage Flips with the Red Joker ignore this effect.

Hard to Kill

Immune to Influence

Shambling: This model ignores severe terrain movement penalties.


Weapon

Smoldering Grasp: Enemy models damaged by this Weapon gain one Burning Token. This Weapon's Damage Flips receive  against a model with the Brilliance Characteristic.

Actions

(0) Drawn to the Light: This model Pushes up to 5" toward a model with the Brilliance Characteristic.

SMOLDERING GRASP

Rg	 1
Cb	4
Dg	1/2/4

Triggers

Cb (🔥) Burnout [Smoldering Grasp]: If this model inflicts one or more wounds with this Weapon, defender's Controller must discard one Card if able.

Df (X) Reduced to Cinders: If this model is killed by a melee attack performed by an enemy model, this model generates a (X) 2 Dg 2 before it is removed from the game. All models within the (X) gain the Brilliance Characteristic.

The Illuminated - Minion



Over time, repeated exposure to the Hungering Darkness' brilliance begins to build up a residue of energy in a person's body. It permeates their being, saturating them on both a physical and spiritual level. As the saturation builds, it takes more for the Darkness to impart the euphoric effects of the brilliance on its victims, rapidly accelerating the saturation. Some of these individuals are able to manifest the saturation as an extension of their will, their eyes and breath glowing with power.

At first, these Illuminated souls can do little more with the brilliance than exhale it in smoky wisps or use it to form rudimentary shapes such as claws or vestigial wings. These shapes are formed not from the Illuminated's conscious thoughts but are instead manifested by their subconscious. But, over time, if the brilliance doesn't completely saturate and consume them first, the Illuminated are able to manipulate their brilliance into any number of beautiful and horrible manifestations. Some are able to spew forth great amounts of the stuff, infecting those around them with the brilliance's beautiful and terrible power.

These transformations do not seem to alarm an Illuminated. Some seem to welcome the feeling of power the brilliance gives them and pledge their weapons to the service of the source of that power, the Darkness.

It is rare, but not impossible, for the changes an Illuminated makes to his or her body to become permanent. As the saturation of brilliance continues to grow, it suppresses an Illuminated's ability to think freely and exert his own will over the changes he had previously made. Eventually, the Illuminated loses the ability to return to its completely human form. The permanent change can break through the malaise and touch an Illuminated's mind with the horrible truth of what he or she has done, driving some of them insane. The remainder are eventually overwhelmed by the saturations, their bodies burned out from the inside, becoming a depleted reservoir for the Darkness' brilliance.

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 6

BRILLIANCE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/8	2	6	5	5	6

HARDENED BRILLIANCE

Rg	/// 2
Cb	5
Dg	2/4/5

SCINTILLATING CLOUD

Rg	8
Cb	4
Dg	3/4/5

TALENTS:

Abilities

Armor +1

Regeneration 1

Ruthless

Stubborn

Weapon

Scintillating Cloud: Magical.

Triggers

Cb () Flay [Hardened Brilliance]

Cb () Filled With Stars [Scintillating Cloud]: After resolving a hit with this Weapon, place a 50mm round Marker touching the defender. All models touched by the Marker gain the Brilliance Characteristic.

Ca () Enveloped [Brillshaper]: This model may select two effects instead of one.

SPELLS:

(0) Brillshaper

(CC: 10 /Rst: - /Rg: C) This model gains one of the following effects until the start of its next activation:

- Its Scintillating Cloud Weapon receives +.
- Its Weapon Damage Flips receive +, or + if the target has the Brilliance Characteristic.
- Terrifying → 11, or Terrifying → 13 if the model performing the Morale Duel does not have the Brilliance Characteristic.
- Its Resist Flips receive +.

TEN THUNDERS



MISAKI, MISTRESS OF THE TEN THUNDERS

The explosion announced their arrival, seven shadows tumbling through the skylight, surrounded by the starglitter of broken glass. They landed on the warehouse floor in unison, baring weapons catching the moon's impassive gaze. For a breath's moment they paused, surveying their surroundings from behind masks created to not only hide identities but also instill fear in the hearts of their enemies.

"Thunders!" someone cried, and then all was chaos.

When the last of her enemies fell, Misaki pulled the veil from her face and surveyed the carnage her Brothers and Sisters had wrought. Over a dozen Guild operatives, each a well-trained remorseless killer, lay dead at their feet. Only a single Thunder, Dai-sen, lay unmoving among the Guild, cut down by a lucky pistol shot. Two of her Brothers picked up Dai-sen and carried his body toward the back doors of the warehouse.

The Mistress of the Ten Thunders touched Dai-sen's mask as they passed her. "I will remember your smile, Dai-sen. Your sacrifice will not be forgotten."

Misaki and the remaining Ten Thunders began a swiftly efficient search of the warehouse, knowing full well reinforcements could arrive at any minute. Her father's orders had been quite specific: *retrieve the weapon, kill any who stand in your way*. Boxes were opened, quickly scanned, and then pushed aside. This warehouse was where the Guild stored its arcane treasures, at least the ones they deemed too dangerous to place in the hands of their agents or too powerful to allow their Special Divisions to gain access to. At least, that's what Lucius told the Governor. Misaki had learned better from their reluctant agent within the Guild, McCabe. This was where Lucius stored his treasures; his private stockpile of plundered Old Malifaux artifacts.

After several precious minutes Misaki could not afford to spend, they eventually found the correct crate. It was larger than she'd expected but bore the proper numbers and imprint her father told her to look for. Inside the crate was a small, but thick, tome bound in rich leather, the origins of which she chose to not consider. It was heavier than it appeared when she lifted it from the hay it was packed in, an unexpected surprise.

"A book?" one of the Sisters huffed at her side, forgetting herself for an instant.

Misaki glared at her insolence while inwardly thinking the same thing. Suddenly one of her Sensei's most basic lessons came to her - *knowledge is as powerful as any blade*. She wondered what secrets the mysterious tome held. Shouts and the steam-driven clank of a Peacekeeper's stride from the street told her it was no time to unravel the book's mysteries. Tucking it under one arm, she ushered her small team out the rear doors just as the first blows to the front door began.

"Father, our mission was a success. This is the book you desired," Misaki bowed deeply, presenting the tome to the Oyabun.

They were alone in one of their stronghold's many rooms. Blooms of chrysanthemums brought across the Breach from their homeland spilled from vases throughout the room. Misaki always thought they looked out of place here, their beauty somehow tainted by the stronghold's alien architecture.

Her father stood there, his disappointment apparent.

"Success," he mocked as he snatched the book from her hands. "The death of a single Thunder is far from a success, daughter. At least this tome is intact. I half expected it to be in tatters after your flight from the warehouse. Tell me, why were you almost captured by the Guild?"

Trembling with both fear and anger, Misaki began her tale, weaving the details of their entrance into the warehouse and the search that followed, for the angry Oyabun. Her voice faltered as she described Dai-Sen's death but recovered its strength as she praised the efforts of her Brothers and Sisters. When she was finished, her father's frown deepened.

"At least your Brothers and Sisters were able to follow orders! Why my daughter continues to disappoint me I do not know. At least the book is in our possession now, the secrets it will tell me." With that, he strode past her and out the door without another glance, slamming it behind him. One of the vases near the door fell, shattering as it hit the floor.

"We were not 'almost captured'." Misaki snarled at the closed door. "And it took us too long to find the damned book because a senile old fool told us to look in the wrong place, *honored father*."

Days had passed since Misaki's exchange with the Oyabun. She had spent much of that time away from the stronghold, avoiding both her father and her duties. Empty rooftops welcomed her more than her own home, and the star-filled sky would not whisper behind her back like her father's retainers did when she had dishonored him. She watched the stars wheel in their nightly dance across the heavens, her mind conflicted between duty and freedom as always. Lost in thought, she did not hear the approaching footsteps until they were only a few feet away. The crunch of plaster under a boot heel caused her to leap up, bisento ready.

There were four of them. Two guardsmen, leveling pistols at her, while a shriveled creature brandishing a pitted sword and swaddled in filthy bandages danced from one foot to the other at the side of a woman whose hands were absolutely empty. The woman's confident grin and relaxed manner spoke volumes to Misaki's trained eye. *She is the true threat*.

"Ah, Here you are," the woman said. "It has taken us longer than I'd expected to locate the item you removed from our care. Claude here is usually quite good at tracking items of a ... unique ... nature. Aren't you, Claude?"

The bandaged creature wheezed something through its wrappings as it rubbed against the woman's leg. Scowling, the woman slammed the back of her hand into Claude's head, sending it reeling.

"Oh well. We are here now, and that's all that matters. I see you don't have the book in your possession, but as its spoor is quite faint and Claude seems to be malfunctioning, I would appreciate it if you could lead us to its location. My employer wishes it back, now."

Misaki's answer came with the swipe of her bisento. The surprised looks on the guardsmen's faces lasted for a moment, before their heads tumbled free from bodies collapsing onto the rooftop.

"Very well, if that is how you want to play this," the woman smiled. "Claude! Attack!"

Claude rushed at Misaki, its sword held high and ready to strike. She dipped the bisento down, splitting the unfortunate creature with her blade and using Claude's own momentum to heave the bisento up and

over her head, hurling Claude over the roof edge. Claude's wheezing cry ending when it struck the cobblestones far below.

She turned back to the woman, anticipating a flurry of blows or magical assault. Instead, the woman was making a hasty retreat back across the rooftop. "You just found me. Please don't rush off. We have so much to discuss..."

The next morning Misaki, Mistress of the Ten Thunders presented her father, Baojun Katanaka, Oyabun of the Ten Thunders, with a gift, the severed heads and corroded sword of the hounds sent by the Guild to recover his precious book. "Mission accomplished, father. I hope my previous failure can be forgiven."

This time, Misaki slammed the door.

MISAKI, MISTRESS OF THE TEN THUNDERS - MASTER

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE CACHE: 4

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/8	2	7	5	7	10

TALENTS:

Abilities

Bulletproof +2

Purchased Loyalty: Crews led by this model may always hire at no additional cost: Desperate Mercenaries, Hans, Ronin, and Taelor. These models gain the Ten Thunders Faction.

Wicked

Weapon

Bisento: Magical.

Actions

(+1) Melee Expert

(+1) Reckless

(0) **Save Face:** (X)8. Friendly models currently Falling Back suffer 1 wound then immediately rally.

(0) **Shadow:** Target an enemy model in LoS. Each time the target performs a **Walk** or **Charge** Action while in this model's LoS, this model may move up to its **Wk** toward that model after it completes the Action. Shadow lasts until this model performs this Action again.

(0) **"You're Mine":** This Action may only be performed after this model performs a **Strike** Action targeting an enemy model. Misaki receives 1 to melee Attack and Damage Flips against that enemy model. In addition, that model's Defense Flips receive 1 while disengaging from this model. Models other than this model and the enemy model receive 1 to their melee Attack Flips against both models until this Action ends. This Action ends when this model targets a different model or is no longer engaged with the enemy model.

(1) **Pilfer:** Misaki and target enemy model with the **Use Soulstones** Ability within her Bisento Weapon's **Rg** each flip a Card. If Misaki's Card value is equal to or higher than the target's, the target's Crew discards one Soulstone and this model's Crew gains one Soulstone. This Action may be performed once per Turn.

(2) **Diving Attack:** This model **Charges** an enemy model ignoring LoS, terrain and intervening models. If the **Charge** fails end this model's activation.

BISENTO	
Rg	2
Cb	7X
Dg	2/4/6

Triggers

Ca (W) **Deadly Dance [Downburst]:** If this Spell was successfully cast, Push this model up to 5" toward the Spell's target.

Cb (W X) **Cutpurse [Bisento]:** After resolving damage with this Weapon, this model performs the **Pilfer** Action targeting the defender if it has not already done so this Turn.

Cb (P X) **Decapitate [Bisento]:** When damaging defender with this Weapon, Kill defender unless its controller discards two Control Cards or two Soulstones. Only models with the **Use Soulstones** ability may discard Soulstones.

Cb (P) **Ten Thunders Strike [Bisento]:** When damaging defender with this Weapon, this model's Damage Flip receives 1 for each P in its attack Duel total.

SPELLS:

(1) Downburst

(CC: 13W / Rst: - / Rg: 8) Models within 3" of target enemy model must win a **Df → 13** Duel or be Pushed 4" away from this model.

SHANG - TOTEM



30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 3

INSIGNIFICANT, TOTEM (MISAKI), UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	CA	Df	Wd
6/9	1	6	4☹	5	4

CLAWS	
Rg	☹ 1
Cb	6☹
Dg	1/2/4

HEAVENLY BLAZE	
Rg	☹ 8
Cb	4
Dg	1/2/3☹

TALENTS:

Abilities

Companion (Misaki, Mistress of the Ten Thunders)

Flight

Lucky Charm: This model may suffer 1 wound immediately after its connected Master within 12" flips its initial Cards in a Duel. The Master may then reflip one of those Cards before choosing the starting Card. This model may be reduced to 0 Wd by this Ability. This Ability cannot be used if the one of the Cards flipped was the Black Joker.

Rush of Magic: Draw one additional Card when drawing Cards in the Draw Phase, then discard down to your Crew's Maximum Hand Size.

Weapon

Heavenly Blaze: Magical.

Triggers

Cb (☹☹) Flay [Claws]

SPELLS:

(1) Magical Extension

(CC: * / Rst: * / Rg: *) This spell may be cast only once per activation. Cast one of the connected Master's (1) spells. During this casting, this model may use a Soulstone to change its starting total.

The twisting fires of the kitsune have always trailed Misaki, even through childhood. As she trained in the martial arts, she could see faint flickers of the fox spirit rolling playfully beside her. It rarely appeared as more than a shimmer in the air – a ghostly heat wave barely perceptible at the edge of consciousness. She never knew why it chose her to follow, although she had a vague sense that its origin was rooted in her family's storied history. Every one of her acquaintances doubted its existence.

It wasn't until the Thunders assigned Misaki to Malifaux that her seemingly imaginary childhood friend was vindicated. Bathed in the aether of Malifaux, the kitsune Shang roared to life. Plainly visible, its nine tails flash and roar in a constant dance of heat and light. Following attentively like a pet hound, Shang is never far from Misaki, and as long as Misaki has Shang in sight, she feels an unexplained confidence that she can come to no harm.

OTOTO - MINION



I am Thunder. I am the harbinger of lightning. I fear nothing.

Brothers pushed past him, desperate to get as far away from the creature that had burst from the cobblestoned street and consumed two of their number in the blink of an eye. Its head had no features, other than the gaping fang-rimmed pit that passed for its mouth. It was more serpent than man, and each of its six arms ended in claws as long as wakizashis. Ototo could see the terror in his Brothers' eyes as they passed, discarding their weapons as they ran. He scowled at each from behind his mask, making note of who ran. He would deal with them later.

A few courageous Brothers stood against the horror, dodging or blocking the sweeps of its massive claws with equal measures of skill and survival-born luck. One of the Brothers danced in and scored a narrow cut with his sword along one of the creature's forearms. Its roar of pain stabbed needles into Ototo's mind, but he ignored it as he strode steadily toward his foe. The creature's backswing caught the Brother across the chest, and Ototo could hear bones crunch as the body went tumbling into the night. Ototo would tell his mistress of the man's bravery when he was home.

A shrug slid Ototo's massive tetsubo off his shoulder. He swung the iron-studded club slowly back and forth, feeling power start to gather around it. Cutting through the creature's charnel stench, the smell of ozone reached his nostrils, bringing a cruel grin to his face. He roared out a challenge to the creature as he slammed his weapon against the cobbles, the impact causing arcs of lightning to dance across the ground. His Brothers cheered.

"Little Brother! Ototo!" They cried in unison, pushing their attacks.

"I am here, Brothers, and I bring with me the Thunder," he shouted, aiming a powerful blow at the creature. It raised an arm almost casually to block the blow.

I am Thunder. I am the harbinger of lightning. I fear nothing. My foes shall know fear.

KATHOOM! With a peal of thunder and blinding flash of light, the tetsubo struck the arm, breaking it with one hit. Before the creature could gather the breath for a howl of terror-tainted pain, the tetsubo was coming down again, this time shattering another of its arms. Then, the screaming began.

Again and again, the studded club came down, thunder deafening them all and lightning searing ghostly afterimages into their vision. Ototo showed no mercy to this Neverborn nightmare, a creature from a hell he had yet to comprehend. His arrival in Malifaux, he decided, could not have been timelier. It was good that Little Sister had called for him. Too much of Malifaux remained hidden in the shadows. This could not stand. The Ten Thunders owned the shadows of the Three Kingdoms, and so it would be here, across the Breaches.

With a leap into the air, he brought the weapon down atop the crippled monster's massive skull, shattering it as he landed. The last flash of lightning faded, leaving Ototo and his courageous Brothers alone in the night.

I am Thunder. I am the harbinger of lightning. I fear nothing. My foes shall know fear. Then they shall die.

40MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 8

UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
4/6	3	4	4 ^P	4	11

TALENTS:

Abilities

Animosity [Zoraida]: This model may not be hired by Crews containing the named model.

Enraged: While this model is reduced to half of its **Wd** or less, it gains +2 **Cb** and replaces (+1) **Melee Expert** with (+2) **Melee Master**.

Hard to Kill

Shove Aside: This model may move through **Ht 1** and **Ht 2** models.

Weapon

Massive Tetsubo: Magical. This Weapon ignores the **Hard to Wound** and **Hard to Kill** Abilities.

Actions

(+1) Melee Expert

(0) Brace: Until the start of this model's next activation it cannot be moved by enemy models' Talents or Spells.

(0) Laugh Off: This model may substitute its Massive Tetsubo **Cb** for its **Wp** when resolving an opposed **Wp** Duel or **Wp** Resist Duel.


(1) Thunderstrike: (X)3. Non-Ten Thunders models within the (X) must win a **Df** or **Wk** → **12** Duel, using the lower of the two stats, or receive **Slow**.


(2) Flurry

MASSIVE TETSUBO

Rg	/// 2
Cb	6
Dg	2/4/6

Triggers

Cb (P) Staggered [Massive Tetsubo]: If this Weapon inflicts Weak damage on the defender, the defender receives **Slow**. If the defender was already **Slow**, it also receives  to its Attack and Casting Flips until the start of this model's next activation.

Cb (P) Pulverize [Massive Tetsubo]: This Weapon's Damage Flip against a non-living defender receives .

SPELLS:

(0) Batter

(CC: 10 / Rst: - / Rg: C) This model's melee Weapons inflict +2 **Dg** on **Objects** and **Breakable** terrain.

(1) Just a Flesh Wound

(CC: 12^P / Rst: - / Rg: C) This model performs a Healing Flip.

TEN THUNDERS ARCHER - MINION



The sightless eye inspires its own form of respect and awe in each of the Three Kingdoms. Rurally, the eye is known as the “shot before the shot,” for in days of old, simply seeing the sightless eye would scatter enemies as assuredly as arrows. In fact, if one saw the eye, it was considered a sign of great luck, or a great act of mercy, for only the living see the sightless eye, and the sightless eye only gazes upon the dead.

In legend, the eye was the insignia of an elite unit fielded by the bloody general Izamu. As his campaign bathed the countryside in bloodshed, and his rage plunged him deep into madness, it is believed to be the Archers of the Sightless Eye that were the first of his army to rebel, ending his life in a hail of fire. It is this legend that inspires modern archers of all stripes to add footwork and agility drills to their training regimens. So confident were the Archers of the Sightless Eye in their ability to kill at a distance that they never learned to evade a sword. Izamu butchered half the troops before the storm of arrows finally brought him down.

Today, guns are outlawed for all but the most prestigious nobility in the Three Kingdoms, making the bow the weapon of choice for outlaws and drifters. Any official association of the eye has long been lost, but it still carries the weight of prestige. Now, the eye is self-awarded – a status symbol and

public declaration of skill. Any child with ambition can wear the eye, but pretenders are quickly weeded out in the streets of Malifaux, either ridiculed into submission or killed by the city's many predators for their hubris.

Archers employed by the Ten Thunders all wear the eye with legitimacy and possess a demeanor and presence of discipline that precludes any explanation of their right to display it. They can sail an arrow through the most difficult winds like a raven flitting through a hurricane. They collectively form a tight-knit group of specialists who constantly push one another to figurative and literal supernatural feats. Each is a force of nature, with the abilities to execute silently or suppress an entire armed conflict through sheer volume of fire. None ask questions of their employer, and their loyalty is unwavering.

The Ten Thunders Archers are responsible for recruitment of new archers into their ranks, and many an aspiring youngster or street rough in Malifaux have sought to join simply through hearing rumors of their existence. In reality, their qualifications for hiring are as steep as Malifaux's streets are dangerous. It is said when your arrows have the fleetness of lightning, and they hit with the impact of thunder, the Ten Thunders will find you – not the other way around.

30MM BASE

RARE 3

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/-	2	5	3	5	5

TALENTS:


Abilities

Scout


Take Aim: This model's **Focus** Actions cost (1) AP. This model may only perform the **Focus** Action once per activation.

Threading the Needle: When this model performs a ranged attack it may ignore one intervening model when determining LoS to the target.



Weapon

Longbow: This model may not perform the **Defensive Stance** Action. This model's Defense Flips receive  when it is disengaging from melee.

Actions

(0) Reading the Wind: The next ranged attack this model performs during its activation receives  to the Attack Flip.

Triggers

Cb (📖) The Arrow's Path [Longbow]: If the suit on the Card used for this attack's Damage Flip is  or , this model may perform another Longbow **Strike** targeting the defender after resolving this attack.

Df (🔪) Hasty Retreat: This model may Push up to 3" after it is missed by an enemy model's melee attack.

SOULSTONE COST: 6

Longbow


Rg	12
Cb	6
Dg	2/3/4

SPELLS:

(0) Yajiri

(CC: 10 / Rst: - / Rg: C) Choose one of the following effects. Until the end of this activation, when this model performs a Longbow Strike it may choose to use that effect.

Blessed: Longbow gains Magical.

Hachinosu: Longbow's **Dg** gains /🔥/🔥.

Karimata: Non-living models suffering one or more wounds from this Weapon receive **Slow**.

Watakushi: Longbow's **Dg** becomes 3/4/6.

TORAKAGE - MINION



Called mercenaries by some, assassins by others, the truth is somehow more sinister than most are aware of. In the shadows of the Three Kingdoms' past, when Shogun ruled, they employed warriors of honor to protect their holdings and families. These well-armored and trained combatants met one another on the field with strict rules governing conduct and combat. As the Celestials gained in power, territorial disputes and open warfare between Clans and prefectures became common. So long as the warriors behaved honorably, their code of honor required the Shogun and landholders to reluctantly accept shifts in borders and in power and influence. This constant state of honorable war became normal life in the lands that would become the Three Kingdoms.

Which of these lords first broke the strict code of honor is unknown, the identity lost or suppressed to the annals of time. One, at least, employed a small, well-trained group of men with no honor to commit acts no honorable warrior would ever consider. They were called Torakage. Their covert methods of war went against everything a samurai, who observed strict rules about honor and combat, stood for. These shadowy killers quickly established themselves as an indispensable weapon in the Shogun's army, capable of infiltrating the

tightest strongholds and recovering the most intimate secrets, or eliminating the most secure target.

With their clandestine methods, power shifted radically in the Three Kingdoms. Eventually, however, more modern methods transcended the need for armored warriors and silent assassins. All of the old ways slipped into legend, and modern warfare was fought more with trade agreements and financial strength than with sword and poison.

Although the Torakage have slipped into legend throughout the Three Kingdoms, the Ten Thunders continues to employ them as clandestine killers. When negotiations fail, the Torakage settle business arguments for the Ten Thunders, eliminating a business rival or creating an opening for someone more *agreeable* to the Ten Thunders' proposals. They are a scalpel the Ten Thunders wields with restraint, lest their existence and techniques once more enter the spotlight and the Oyabun is forced to contend with other crime families resurrecting the practice of employing Torakage themselves. In Malifaux, the Torakage operate a bit more openly, the Ten Thunders confident that few, if any, of its residents have ever heard the legends or seen a Torakage ... and lived to tell the tale.

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 6

RARE 3

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	CA	Df	Wd
5/8	2	6	5	6	6

TALENTS:


Abilities

Agile Retreat: This model is immune to an enemy model's disengaging strikes during its activation if it began the activation within the enemy model's melee range.

Arachnid

One with the Crowd: This model gains soft cover while it is within 3" of one or more other models.


Ruthless

Works Best Alone: This model's melee attacks receive +1 **Cb** and its Damage Flips receive  if it is the only model in its Crew engaged with the defender.

Weapon

Shuriken: When this model performs a **Walk** Action it may interrupt the move to perform a **Strike** that receives -2 **Cb** with this Weapon. This **Strike** costs no AP.

Actions


(0) Faceless: This model's **Ca** receives + until the end of its activation.

(2) Rapid Fire


Triggers

Ca  **Delayed Release [Smoke Bombs]:**

The Spell lasts until the end of this model's next activation or if it is removed from play, whichever comes first.

Cb  **Relocate [Ten Weapons of Wxu-Sju]:**

After damaging an enemy defender, Place this model in base contact with defender.

Cb  **Silent Kill [Ten Weapons of Wxu-Sju]:**

After killing the defender with this Weapon, if this Strike was performed after successfully casting Mistaken Identity, the defender counts as sacrificed instead of killed for game effects. Defender still counts as killed for VP purposes.


Cb  **Treated Weapon [Shuriken]: Poison 1**

SPELLS:


(0) Smoke Bombs

(CC: 13 / Rst: - / Rg: 3) Place two 50mm Smoke Markers touching, but not overlapping, one another completely within 3" of the Torakage. These Markers are **Ht** 5 and obscuring and remain in play until either the Resolve Effects Step or this model is removed from play, whichever comes first.


THE TEN WEAPONS OF WXU-SJU

Rg	 2
Cb	5
Dg	1/3/5


SHURIKEN

Rg	 8
Cb	5
Dg	1/2/3

(1) Mistaken Identity

(CC: 12 / Rst: - / Rg: 12) Switch this model and target friendly Ten Thunders model. This model may cast this Spell once per activation.

(2) Shadow Stride

(CC: 11 / Rst: - / Rg: C) Bury this model. During the Resolve Effects Step simultaneously unbury all friendly Torakage buried by this Ability completely within 8" of a friendly Ten Thunders model. If no friendly Ten Thunders models are in play when this model would unbury, remove it from the game as killed instead.

YAMAZIKO - MINION



"Sensei, wha...what are you doing here?" Misaki could not believe her eyes, had Yamaziko actually made the journey to Malifaux? She rushed to embrace her beloved teacher.

Yamaziko stopped her pupil's rush with an upraised hand. "Your father has called for me. When the Oyabun beckons, I heed his wishes ... a lesson I apparently did a poor job of teaching you."

Misaki opened her mouth to protest and then closed it. Her cheeks flushed with shame. "Yes, Sensei."

Yamaziko strode around Misaki, hands clasped behind her back while she examined her student with an appraising eye. Every so often she would pause and make a *tsk* sound. Her circuit complete, Yamaziko stopped before her student and looked her in the eye, holding contact until Misaki looked away.

"Disgraceful. I come these many miles, through a *magic doorway* of all things, to see my favored pupil, and who do I find in her place? A little girl who has forgotten everything her Sensei taught her about poise, grace, combat, and most importantly – her station! Where is the Oyabun's heir? What has Misaki done with her? Look at you, your clothes, your hair, a shambles!"

"But you don't understand, Sensei. This place, it has changed me, I am stronger for the freedoms it provides, not weaker."

"Freedoms? Stronger? I have observed you for weeks - yes, weeks - although you never sensed my presence on your rooftop jaunts. I watched from the rafters as you led your Brothers into battle with the Dervish Swords, weeping tears of shame to watch my most accomplished student fight as if she was no better than the common thugs she fought against. Your father demanded I come and set your head on straight. No more foolishness of freedoms. Your duty is your freedom. Your obligation to the Clan, your strength."

Yamaziko gestured with the tip of her yari at the bisento Misaki had let drop to the floor when she entered the room. "I seem to remember a little girl who learned her lessons best through hours upon hours of practice. Shall we begin by *refreshing* your memory on a few of the more basic lessons I taught you? Good. Begin."

As the women took their positions, Yamaziko noted the ever so slight flare of defiance in her student's eyes. She grinned. *It is wonderful to see you, my child. I have missed you dearly. Perhaps we'll leave just a spark of the new you in there, just enough that the fire never fades completely. I am proud of who you've become Misaki, very proud.*

40MM BASE


UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
4/6	2	7	5	4	7


TALENTS:

Abilities

Companion (Misaki)

Honorable: This model receives  to its required Duel when attempting to target a model with the **Harmless** or **Pitiful** Ability.

Immune to Influence


The Spark of Youth: When declaring a melee attack, this model may suffer 1 wound to receive  to that attack's Attack and Damage Flips.


Trusted Mentor: While within 6" of this model, friendly Misaki, Mistress of the Ten Thunders models lose the **Reckless** Ability and gain the **Fast** Ability.

Use Soulstones

Willowy: This model drops one Corpse Counter when it is killed.



Actions

(0) Brace Spear: Models **Charging** this model receive  to the Charge's Damage Flip.

(1) Wise Counselor: 8. Friendly non-Master Ten Thunders models receive +2 **Wp**.



(2) Master Tactician: This model's controller discards one Soulstone to reveal one enemy player's unannounced Scheme. All details of the Scheme must be revealed, and it is not considered an announced Scheme for VP purposes. This Action may be performed once per Encounter.

Triggers

Cb () **Sweep [Yari]:** This Weapon gains  until the end of the attack.

SOULSTONE COST: 6

YARI



Rg	 3
Cb	5 
Dg	3/3/4

SPELLS:



(0) Invigorate

(CC: 13 / Rst: - / Rg: 6) Target friendly model performs a Healing Flip.

(1) Inspiring Presence

(CC: 13  / Rst: - / Rg: 5) Friendly models, including this model, are immune to **Terrifying**.

(1) Match Wits

(CC: 12  / Rst: - / Rg: 12) Each time an enemy model's Talent or Spell allows it to draw one or more Cards, this model's Controller may draw the same number of Cards.



OUTCASTS



AMA NO ZAKO - MINION



"Not every nightmare in Malifaux is born in Malifaux. Not many are aware, but Earth has its demons too." The fortune teller flipped a card displaying two ragged feathers onto a rough, red circle of chalk. Across, the Guild Captain wiped the sweat from his bald head, his normally steely demeanor very clearly rattled.

"Well, what is it then? What is that beast? Surely it's one of the Neverborn ... one of Lilith's disgusting vermin," the captain sputtered, trying to keep his composure. He glanced nervously over his shoulder at the thin velvet curtain that separated the seedy room from the nighttime streets outside. "I just want it gone."

The fortune teller flipped a card displaying a pile of books and placed it crosswise on the circle. "Ama No Zako is her name. She wandered from Earth into Malifaux long ago, without your knowledge, and she enjoys the taste of man and Neverborn alike," she said in a slow, even tone. The Captain squinted, grasping at comprehension. Outside, the normally boisterous sounds of the bar-lined street started to fade.

"Why do I see her everywhere?" the Captain responded, shaking now and visibly pale. His skin was clammy, and his sweat was cold. "She won't leave me alone. Every dark

corner I see that vile face! It was at my room last night! I saw it through my window, in the middle of bloody downtown!"

"She hungers for you," the fortune teller replied. An almost imperceptible smile crept across her lips. She flipped another card, this one displaying a carnival mask, onto the circle of chalk. A light of understanding wandered in the Guild Captain's eyes. "Why me? Why me?! Can't you stop her?! I'll pay anything! Two Soulstones!" The guard fumbled with a bag full of stones he had taken from the Guild vault.

"I can stop her, but I will not. She follows you because I told her to." The fortune teller flipped another card displaying a severed ram's head. The circle glowed, spewing a thick, crimson light, and a vision of terror erupted from the table.

The demon bobbed above the captain with an unnatural sway, legs dangling visibly beneath a rotting kimono. Its eyes rolled back into its head, and it closed its eyelids as it spoke. "Hungeerrrr." The voice boomed with a hollow rattle of locusts. The eyes snapped back, and the two yellow globes focused like spotlights on the squirming Captain. Its mouth cracked into a wide, jagged smile, and a stringy, boil-covered tongue unfurled from its mouth before darkness descended.

SOMM BASE

BEAST, MERCENARY, UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	CA	Df	Wd
4/7	3	7	5X	5	10

TALENTS:

Abilities

Flight

Hard to Wound 1

Oni: This model is non-living.

Terrifying → 13

Weapon

Teeth: After damaging defender with this Weapon, heal this model 1 **Wd** for each wound it inflicted on the defender.

Actions

(+1) Nimble

(0) Razor Sharp Teeth: This model's Devour can sacrifice any **Ht** 1 model.

Triggers

Cb (W) Embrace [Claws]: After this model inflicts damage on defender with this Weapon, Place the defender in base contact with Ama No Zako. This model may immediately perform a Teeth **Strike** against the same model.

SPELLS:

(0) Miasma of Boils and Flies

(CC: 15P / Rst: - / Rg: 13) Counts as Severe terrain to move through this 1. Enemy Models ending their activation within this 1 suffer 1 wound. This model heals 1 **Wd** for each **Wd** this 1 inflicted.

SOULSTONE COST: 8

TEETH

Rg	1
Cb	5
Dg	3/5/7

CLAWS

Rg	3
Cb	6
Dg	2/3/4

(1) Devour

(CC: 13X / Rst: Df / Rg: 2) Sacrifice target living **Ht** 1 model.

(1) Last Whisper

(CC: 14X / Rst: - / Rg: 14) *AR: This model's Controller discards one Card.* When a non-Master model is killed within the 1 that model must perform a **Wp → 14** Duel. If the model loses the Duel it performs a (1) AP Action controlled by this model's Controller and is then removed from the game. The model may not perform a **Slow to Die** Action if it lost the Duel.

OIRAN - MINION



Few things are as powerful as a whisper. It fascinates me to watch a face when I deliver a whisper – to see the flush of red in the cheeks in anticipation of A whisper can drive people to commit acts they'd never dreamed of before, send the unwitting after each other's throats, driven by lust or hate. I've heard whispers kill more assuredly than a blade and bind tighter than chains.

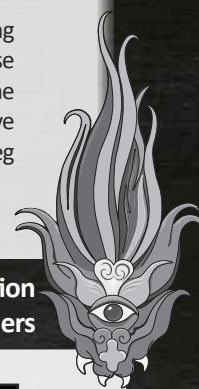
But here, in Malifaux, we are the masters of whispers. We gather them, invent, shape, and guide them. We coax them from our all-too-willing clients, under the influence of drink, in the gentle caress of ecstasy, or occasionally under less cordial terms. We capture them between moments, and pluck them from the small inches between conspirators, unraveling them like a ball of string. This power becomes our currency in Malifaux, enabling our clan to control its own destiny.

Even the power of the most innocuous pillow talk cannot be fathomed until woven into a larger web of whispers. Every whisper in Malifaux is an individual thread in a tapestry of fate that only few have seen in total, and fewer understand – a truth beneath the truth. The most influential forces in Malifaux only comprehend small glimpses of that picture at a time. Their practice of the art is imperfect

– they let whispers slip through their fingers like water. When one truly controls the flow of whispers in Malifaux, they can be manipulated like a fine instrument, creating any end one desires. For those of us that know this, we are ferocious in protecting our whispers. For as easily as they are manipulated, they are just as easily made worthless. A whisper in the open loses its power – it evaporates into the aether.

Most would not understand that Malifaux is fueled by whispers. Those with trained ears and eyes know that whispers are the lifeblood of this horrible place, and all can be bent beneath their will. Why battle in the streets when a passing word will do the same? Why work for Soulstone when twisting someone around your finger will bring it to you?

Even though we have only spent this one short evening together, I felt it was safe to share that with you. It is for these reasons that you must tell me what you know, for I want the power of your whispers. I am going to use them to enslave you, and to control those around you, and I will make you beg to give them to me, one way or another.
– Ten Thunders Oiran



30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 4

Dual Faction
Ten Thunders

MERCENARY, SHOWGIRL

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/8	2	6	6X/♣	5	6

CONCEALED WEAPON	
Rg	♣ 1
Cb	5♣
Dg	2/3/4

TALENTS:

Abilities

Adaptive Mind (Ca): When this model uses this stat, it can add either of the stat's suits to the total, but not both.

Eavesdropper: At the end of the Draw Phase, this model's Controller nominates an enemy model within 3" of one or more friendly Escorts. This model's Controller may look at one random card in that model's Controller's Hand. This model's Controller then chooses whether the enemy player discards that Card and Draws one Card, or the enemy player keeps that Card and this model's Controller looks at a second random Card. This Ability may be used once per Turn per Crew.

Expert Defense: While this model is affected by **Defensive Stance**, increase the Defense Flip modifier by an additional ♣ and reduce its **Wk/Cg** by only -1/-1. This model does not lose **Harmless** after performing the **Defensive Stance** Action.

Harmless

Weapon

Concealed Weapon: If this model is **Harmless** when it declares a **Strike** with this Weapon, this model's controller chooses the **Strike's** Attack or Damage Flip to receive ♣.

Actions

(0) Appealing: Ⓜ6. Friendly living models receive +1 **Wp**.

(1) Sultry: This model gains the **Harmless** Ability.

Triggers

Ca (♣♣) Defensive Dance [Tranquil Dance]: After resolving this Spell, this model performs the **Defensive Stance** Action.

Cb (X) Deadly Fan [Concealed Weapons]: Poison 1

Cb (♣♣) No Witnesses [Concealed Weapons]: This model gains the **Harmless** Ability if this attack killed the defender.

SPELLS:

(1) Lure

(CC: 12X♣ / Rst: Wp / Rg: 18) Push target model its **Wk** toward this model. If the Push ends with the target in this model's melee range it performs a melee attack against the target.

(1) Tranquil Dance

(CC: 13 / Rst: - / Rg: C) Nominate one of the following effects after this Spell is successfully cast. Casting this Spell does not end **Harmless**.

- Ⓜ4. Enemy models ignore any suits in their **Cb** and **Df**.
- Ⓜ6. Friendly models receive ♣ to **Wp** Resist Duels.
- (X)6. Friendly models currently falling back immediately rally.
- Ⓜ6. Models performing an attack during a **Charge** Action do not receive the ♣ to the Damage Flip.

FREIKORPS STRONGARM SUIT - MINION



A sharp electric pop split the air, followed closely by the thunderous snap of a load-bearing column. Von Schill stood at a distance from the entrance of the shuddering warehouse, scrutinizing the performance of his new tool. It was noon, but the sun shone dimly, straining through a cloud of dust that already hung over the devastated neighborhood. "I want this entire block leveled," he growled, "drive out every curr." Buildings either side of the warehouse already lay in ruin under the eerie, artificial twilight.

Inside, the Freikorpsmann charged his aetheric generator, catching whiffs of burning atmosphere. Three buildings ago, he unwittingly discovered the monstrous potential of his machine, failing to get out from under a cave-in. He now knew he needn't even attempt to escape the falling rubble. What concerned him more was what lurked in the surrounding dark. Behind century old boxes of food, piles of unused rail ties, and under every stained drop cloth, every shadow tittered and laughed.

A pale blue vortex began to swirl around the aetheric engine as its otherworldly hum escalated to a roar, and he raised his hulking fist in line with the next load-bearing straight. A loud crack blasted, and he drove the Strongarm deep into the surface of the three-foot-thick stanchion, creating a hail of shattered wood. The roof instantly buckled, and the warehouse began to fold inward.

A chorus of baleful giggles erupted from the creaking infrastructure, and a patter of tiny feet was the short warning before three gleeful Nephilim tots leapt into the slight glow of the generator, nearly toppling the Freikorpsmann as they twisted knives against the metal shell of his suit. Outside, a clatter of gunfire erupted as the Freikorps unit surrounding the warehouse opened fire.

The Strongarm reeled as the Nephilim banged relentlessly on his helmet and arms. He wrapped a massive fist around his back and grabbed one of the squirming tots, flinging it against the back wall before more piled on, tugging at hoses and covering his goggles. Above, a hail of bricks began to pelt him – one large chunk of stone crushing a tot against the metal frame of his generator, creating a sizzling black goo. He felt little teeth penetrate deep into his leg before everything went black.

Outside, the dust settled, and Von Schill signaled to cease fire. The Freikorps stood motionless, scanning the aftermath. The building lay in scrap and around it oozed a circle of slick black stains. Several minutes passed before another aetheric blast rang out, echoing against the horizon. A dome of debris rose as the Strongarm suit stood to its full height – cracked bricks and dust falling to either side. All else remained still.

HOMM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 8

MERCENARY, SPECIAL FORCES (FREIKORPS), UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/7	2	4	4	4	10

TALENTS:

Abilities

Armor +2

Enhanced Armor 2: If this model suffers two or less damage before applying **Armor**, it suffers no damage instead. Effects that ignore **Armor** also ignore **Enhanced Armor**.

Elite Mercenary: This model costs +2 Soulstones when hired as a Mercenary instead of +1.

Experimental Generator: When this model flips the Black Joker, its Controller must discard one Card or it receives Paralyzed.

Immovable: This model may only be moved or Pushed by friendly effects.

Interposing: This model provides soft cover for friendly models.

Reach Out: This model's Attack Flips receive +1 when it performs a disengaging **Strike**.

Shove Aside: This model may move through Ht 1 and Ht 2 models.

Stubborn

Weapon

Aetheric Projector: Magical.

Enhanced Fists: This Weapon ignores one point of **Armor** per ♠ or ✕ in the attack total.

Actions

(+1) Instinctual

(0) Get Back!: Place target friendly model within 4" of this model in base contact with this model. The target must be engaged with one or more enemy models to be affected by this Action.

Triggers

Cb (♣) Breach Burst [Aetheric Projector]: After inflicting damage on defender with this Weapon, this model uses the Damage Flip's Card suit to generate one of the follow effects. If the defender was killed by the attack, resolve the effect before it is removed from the game.

♣ **Repulse:** Push defender 3" directly away from this model. If it ends the Push in base contact with one or more other models, all of the models suffer 1 wound.

✕ **Soul Vortex:** Sacrifice all Counters not carried by models within 4" of defender.

♠ **Aetheric Crack:** Bury defender if it was not killed by the attack. Unbury defender within 6" of this model during the Resolve Effects Step, or if this model is removed from play.

♣ **Scramble Edicts:** Constructs within 4" of defender receive Slow.

ENHANCED FISTS

Rg	/// 2
Cb	6 ♠
Dg	2/4/6

AETHERIC PROJECTOR

Rg	♣ 12
Cb	4 ♠
Dg	2/3/4

Cb (♣) Haymaker [Enhanced Fists]: This Weapon's Damage Flip receives +1.

SPELLS:

(0) Charge Up

(CC: 10 / Rst: - / Rg: C) *AR: This model's Controller discards up to two Cards. This model gains one of the following effects per card discarded.*

- Increase **Armor** to **Armor +3**.
- Replace **Enhanced Fists Dg** with 3/5/6.
- This model may also move through Ht 3 models using the **Shove Aside** Ability.
- **Aetheric Projector** receives +2 **Cb** until the end of the activation.

(0) Leap

(CC: 10 ♣ / Rst: - / Rg: C) Move this model up to its **Cg**. This model receives **Flight** during the move. This spell cannot be cast if this model is in melee.

VANESSA, TREASURE HUNTER - MINION



Vanessa grew up entrenched within the deep shadow cast by her older sister, Viktoria. The elder sibling would challenge the boys to foot races, archery contests, and eventually wrestling or bare fisted boxing competitions (until she dislocated one too many shoulders).

Vanessa, try as she might, could do none of those things with close to half the skill of her sister. "You know what the problem is, sis?" Viktoria playfully chided once, catching her before she could impale herself with a dueling sword. "You just don't believe you're any better than your opponent."

"But," Vanessa protested, pointing to Thomas, a burly constable's son trying to teach her the basics, "he's so much bigger than me. Faster. Trained!"

Viktoria said nothing as she turned to face the muscular lad. He saw the predatory look in her eye, and the fight was over before Viktoria pounced upon him. She did not fight with her usual skill or grace. She simply unleashed hell and ruined his day. Vanessa watched in awe, more envious than ever. Viktoria left home soon thereafter. No one else heard from her again, but Vanessa received one letter from her errant sister not long after she left. The note simply read, "Look what I did," with a weathered wanted poster folded evenly behind it. The poster was a

bounty for a murderer and thief with a reward large enough to live off of for a year.

Vanessa wanted that life, the freedom her sister had but thought she would never have it. Like her sister had said, she simply didn't believe she was any better than her opponent. She was not the athletic one, but she continued to try to be the tough adventurer her sister had proven to be. When she left home, seeking fame and fortune, she thought she would grow into the life of a bounty hunter, but her feelings of inadequacy kept her from succeeding. She was too timid. Too weak.

But, she was smart. As good with a book as Viktoria was with a sword, she quickly realized. When she failed to capture even one bounty, she discovered, almost by accident, that the London Museum of Archeology and Artifacts had a small bounty for the reward of what many believed to be an impossible to locate piece pre-dating settlement to the island. She found it.

Then she found more. And still more. Until the lure of the Breach called to her and she found herself riding a train bound for Malifaux, research tools at her side. She knew that if she were to truly make a name for herself as a finder of lost treasures, she would have to do it where the risks were tremendous but the rewards even greater.

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 7

MERCENARY, UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/7	2	7	6	6	8

TALENTS:


Abilities

Arcanist Sympathizer: Crews containing this model may hire one non-living Arcanist model. That model gains the Mercenary Characteristic.

Aetheric Demands: Non-Neverborn Crews hiring this model must nominate one leader per model with this Ability they hire. Those leaders cannot attach Totems.

Intuition: At the start of the Alternating Activations Step, while this model is in play, its Controller may look at the top three Cards of his or her Deck and then place those Cards back on the top of the Deck in any order.

Magic Resistant (1)

Nemesis [Black Sheep]: This model's Attack and Damage Flips receive  when attacking a model with the indicated Characteristic.

"One More?": This model may be sacrificed as a Ronin for the "Another One?" Spell.

Sisters Reunited: This model may not be hired by a Crew unless it is led by Viktoria.

Weapon

Arcane Staff: Magical. After hitting an enemy model with this Weapon in a Duel where this model Cheated Fate, draw one Card.

Actions


(+1) Nimble

(0) Limited Understanding of Soulstones: Discards one Soulstone to draw three Cards, then discard one Card.

(0) Arcane Lore: This model receives +2 Ca.


(1) Another Sister in Spirit: This model counts as a friendly Viktoria model for purposes of a friendly Viktoria's **Sisters in Spirit** Ability.

Triggers


Cb (**) Arcane Fire [Arcane Staff]:** After inflicting damage, other models within 2" of the target suffer 2 Magical damage.

SPELLS:


(1) Activated Artifact

(CC: 15  / Rst: - / Rg: (X)5) **AR:** Choose one suit in the casting total. Friendly models, including this model, gain the chosen suit to their **Cb**. The model can activate one **Cb** Trigger using the suit. Once a Trigger has been activated using that gained suit, the model loses that gained suit.

KATANA





Rg	 1
Cb	5
Dg	2/3/4

ARCANE STAFF


Rg	 10
Cb	6
Dg	2/4/4

(1) Sisters in Need

(CC: 14 / Rst: - / Rg: 6) When this Spell is successfully cast, choose any one suit in its casting total. This model or target friendly Viktoria gains one of the following effects based on the chosen suit:

-  **Slow to Die**
-  **Hard to Wound 1**
-  **Armor +1**
-  **Hard to Kill**

(1) Stolen Memories

(CC: 13  / Rst: Wp / Rg: 6) Target enemy model's Controller discards one Card if able. This model's Controller draws one Card.

BURT JEBSEN - MINION



Nobody would argue that Bert Jebsen was a caring gremlin, or an honest gremlin, or even a friendly gremlin. Clanking through the swamp from village to village, he peddled scrap and junk collected or stolen from the previous places he'd stopped, and the nomadic lifestyle he'd chosen for himself did not provide much opportunity to worry about how other gremlins regarded him. The only beings other than himself Bert worried about were his trusty packsow, Gracie, and his kin, Obdiah, who tagged along for a spell when Bert was near Obdiah's village.

Bert's wandering lifestyle was not without its adventures, however. Whether caught stealing scrap metal from the Big Hat's junk shed, or giving Gracie one too many turnips before starting a campfire, every day brought some new mishap. Bert took each of these in stride, shaking his head as he muttered to himself about "a gremlin's luck." It was on a day when Bert thought his luck had turned sour that destiny showed up, locked arms with misadventure, and punched Bert in the face.

His small caravan had been delayed in reaching a village not more than a couple days from Obdiah's thanks to Gracie's belly wheel getting bogged down in the mud. While the two gremlins worked at freeing the packsow's wheels, they overheard voices. Shushing Gracie, Obdiah and Bert used their talent for camouflage and crept up on a group of

humans making their way through the swamp. They wore strange clothing from what Bert could see, flowing robes and wooden shoes. The two gremlins watched the group for a time, noting their bows and swords, wondering where all the guns were. Shrugging it off as not his problem, Bert went back to fixing Gracie's wheels once the people had passed. In no time, they were on their way.

When Bert reached the village, he found every gremlin was gone. Nothing stirred among the overturned shanties and scattered pots and pans. No livestock remained either; the pig pens were shattered, and their residents scattered or worse. The only clue Bert could find was a broken arrow shaft buried in a young gremlin's moss doll lying in the mud. Something about the finality of this raid against his kin snapped Bert out of his indifference. Where did humans get the stones to come into gremlin territory and steal up the menfolk, wimmen, and youths? He cursed himself and Obdiah for their cowardice when the humans had passed by and swore the humans would pay for what they'd done before he set off in pursuit of the raiders, waiting just long enough for Obdiah and Gracie to catch up.

Since that day, Bert, Gracie, and Obdiah – now Wong – have scoured the swamps and beyond for the Ten Thunders, standing up to any they can find, as long as the element of surprise is on their side.

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 5

GREMLIN, MERCENARY, UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/8	1	5	4	5	7

JACK KNIFE	
Rg	/// 1
Cb	6P
Dg	2/3/4

BACKWATER PEPPERBOX	
Rg	8
Cb	4P
Dg	2/3/4

TALENTS:

Abilities

Animosity [Ten Thunders Faction]: This model cannot be hired by a Crew containing the indicated model.

Big Talker: This model counts as two models or as worth 8 Soulstones for Encounter purposes.

Companion (Gracie/Wong)

Hard to Kill

Intractable: This model cannot be sacrificed or buried.

Right Gremlin in the Wrong Place: If an opponent has declared Ten Thunders as their Faction this model gains the **Comes Cheap** Ability.

Slippery: After this model is hit by an enemy melee attack, but before resolving the attack's effects, if there are one or more other friendly models engaged with the attacker, flip one Card per friendly model engaged, including this one. The model with the lowest value Card suffers the attack's effects, including any Triggers. If there is a tie, the attacker chooses the model.

Too Dumb to Run: If this model loses a Morale Duel it does not Fall Back but may not perform Movement Actions for the remainder of the Turn.

Weapon

Backwater Pepperbox: After resolving a **Strike** Action with this Weapon and any attacks generated by its **Trigger Happy** Trigger, Push this model directly away from the target a number of inches equal to the number of attacks performed during the Action.

Actions

(0) Feigned Bravado: This model's **Wp** flips receive . If this model loses a Duel using **Wp** it suffers 1 wound.

(0) Jerk It [Backwater Pepperbox]: This Weapon's **Cb** is 3P until the end of this model's activation.

(+1) Reckless: This model may suffer 1 wound to receive **Fast**.

Triggers

Cb (P) Critical Strike [Jack Knife]

Df (P) "It's All in the Reflexes": After attacker misses with a Ranged **Strike**, this model deals damage using the Combat Duel total as if it had hit the attacker with a Jack Knife **Strike**.

Cb (P) Trigger Happy [Backwater Pepperbox]: After damaging defender with this Weapon, immediately perform a Backwater Pepperbox **Strike** against defender.

SPELLS:

(1) Got Your Back

(CC: 12 / Resist: - / Range: 10) Place this model into base contact with target friendly model engaged by one or more enemy models.

GRACIE - MINION



The gremlin culture's reliance on pigs is well-known. They serve as a food source, fuel source, clothing source, and as beasts of burden. Fortunately for Gracie, Bert Jebesen uses her as the latter. She has faithfully served as Bert's packsow for years, carting his wares across the swamp and back again dozens of times.

The years have been less than kind to Gracie, her namesake gait slowing with age (and girth) until Bert was forced to fashion a wheeled sling that could bear her corpulence as the pair journeyed the gremlin trade roads. Where she used to easily keep up with her owner, Gracie now huffs and puffs her way along, dutifully following him through muck, sludge, and weeds, her back laden with teapots, pots and pans, tin siding, and any number of other equally heavy items Bert thinks he can get a few bent pennies or moldy vegetables for at each stop along the way. She bears this indignity with poise, never complaining to Bert, in case he starts considering her as one of the first two items on the "Gremlin Uses for Pigs" checklist.

On the occasion when Bert finds himself in trouble, Gracie is there by his side, throwing her ample weight around in his defense. Bert, too, has found himself defending Gracie's honor when the stray gremlin has called her too fat, a very low insult indeed.

Even fellow pigs can sense there's something special about Gracie. When the pair arrives in a new village, Gracie is always sized up as either a threat or target by her kind. Inevitably, the years of wisdom those pigs see in her red, rheumy eyes coveys them into silent obedience.

Gracie is sure this new fool errand Bert is on, chasing the Ten Thunders out of the swamp, will get them both killed, but she plods along heeding her master's wishes. She would follow him into the blackest depths of the swamp, if he asked, and probably will before all is said and done.

SOMM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 7

GRAVEROBBER, PIG, UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
4/8	2	7	5	5	8

GORE	
Rg	/// 1
Cb	6
Dg	2/4/5

TALENTS:

Abilities

Armor +1

Bulletproof +1

Clankin' and Bangin': (1) 3. Enemy models cannot simultaneously activate with other models.

Momma's Boy: When Bert Jebesen flips Cards using the Slippery Ability, this model's Controller may reduce the value of the Card flipped for this model to 1.

Not Without My Gal: Crews containing Bert Jebesen may hire this model at no additional cost, ignoring any hiring restrictions that would prevent it from being hired.

Old and Fat: This model may not perform both the **Snooze** and **Riled Up** Actions on the same Turn.

Shambling: This model ignores severe terrain movement penalties.

Short of Breath: This model suffers 1 wound if it performs a **Pigcharge**.

Slow to Die

Hitch on Up: While this model is in play, a friendly Bert Jebesen model gains (0) **Link**. That model may only target this model with the **Link** Action.

Weapon

Gore: Damage Flips during this model's **Pigcharge** Actions inflict +1 **Dg**.

Actions

(All) Snooze: This model performs two Healing Flips.

(0) Fill 'Er Up: This model may immediately perform this Action after it kills a model with a melee attack. Heal all **Wd** suffered by this model and immediately end its activation. This Action may only be performed if this model is in a Crew led by non-Gremlin models.

(0) Riled Up: This model may suffer 2 wounds to receive **Reactivate**.

(1) Stank Eye: Target another Pig within 6". That Pig is now **Stamped**.

(2) Pigcharge: Push this model up to its **Cg**. This model may interrupt the push to make 1 **Gore Strike** which receives ♠ for the **Damage Flip**. Continue the Push after resolving the attack.

Triggers

Cb (♥) Overbear [Gore]: This weapon's **Damage Flips** receive ♠ during a **Charge** or **Pigcharge**.

SPELLS:

(0) Vintage Swine

(CC: 12♥ / Rst: Wk / Rg: 10) Friendly **Stamped** Pigs may choose to target this Spell's target with their **Swine Dash** Actions.

(1) Eat Anything

(CC: 10♠ / Resist: - / Range: (X)5) Discard all non-Objective Counters not carried. Heal this model 2 **Wd** per Counter discarded.

WONG - MINION



“Lookee me, Bert, I’m a wizzerd!”

Obdiah spun in a circle, arms spread wide, showing off the brilliant blue robes and ridiculous hat he had “liberated” from the corpse nearby. They were far too long for him, tangling around his boots and sending him sprawling face first into the muck.

“Hawr!” Bert laughed. He leaned against Gracie’s ample flank, watching his partner in crime make a right ass of himself. He kicked at another body, flipping it over and admiring his handiwork with the pepperbox. “These guys ain’t so tough. Don’t get how they’s snatchin’ up our kinfolk without nobody making a fuss.”

“Dunno, Bert,” Obdiah muttered, now digging through the mess their ambush had made of this small party of humans far from home in the swamps. *Thems that wins gets the stuff*, his Pap had

told him, *thems that lose are too dead to care*. He tossed aside the trash, a wad of Guild scrip, a few scribbly books (Obdiah never put much stock in readin’), and a pocket watch with a bullet hole in it. He even tugged at the long moustache his “wizzerd” wore and exhaled a soft sigh of surprise when it popped off the dead face. He pressed it to his own face, marveling at the mystical power of spirit gum when it grabbed on.

“Yah look the part now, Obdiah, that’s fer sure. Too bad yah don’t know any magic worth knowin’!” Gracie snorted in agreement at Bert’s assessment.

Obdiah ignored Bert’s jab and continued to loot the body. He promptly cut himself on an iron fan with sharp edges the man had carried, tucking it into the robes before Bert could see it

and lay claim to it himself. The man had fallen on something Obdiah at first mistook for a rock or root. He pushed the body aside, revealing a small brass and leather valise.

He reached out for it, hand pausing for a moment a hair's breadth away as something primal in his mind screamed out a warning. Obdiah tended to ignore that voice more often than not and with a shrug grabbed the valise's handle.

WONG!!

Obdiah nearly dropped the valise when the voices hammered his mind; he winced at their touch but did not drop the bag. Instead, he slowly opened it and stared into the deep blackness inside. The three voices – he could make out the individuals now – whispered vile things to him, calling him “Wong,” and

promising him the sun, moon, and everything in between if he would only heed their tutelage. When they had uttered their last dire promise, the voices fell silent, waiting for an answer from their new student.

“Sure, why not,” he shrugged, and the voices cried out in unholy glee.

Bert watched Obdiah as he stood up, adjusted the hat on his head, and snapped the creepy bag the wizzerd had carried shut. His kin seemed taller, more self-confident, but the hat still looked ridiculous. “What’s in the bag there, Obdiah?”

“Obdiah’s gone, Bert. Mah name’s Wong now, and don’t you forget it.”

30MM BASE

SOULSTONE COST: 6

GREMLIN, MERCENARY, UNIQUE

Wk/Cg	Ht	Wp	Ca	Df	Wd
5/7	1	6	6W	4	7

TALENTS:


Abilities

Animosity [Ten Thunders Faction]: This model cannot be hired by a Crew containing the indicated model.


Glowy: During deployment, nominate one friendly Minion as it is deployed. That model's Weapons gain Magical until the end of the Encounter.

Harmless

Hears Voices: At the end of this model's activation this model must perform a **Wp → 12** Duel. If this model loses the Duel it must suffer 1 wound or receive **Paralyzed**.

Novice Counterspell: When this model or any model within 3" of it is targeted by a Spell this model's Controller may discard two Control Cards at random or one  suit Control Card before the Casting Flip to cancel the Spell.

Weapon

Iron Fan of Tsu Li: Magical. This weapon's Damage Flips receive  when damaging a model with the **Oni** Ability or Soulless, Spirit, or Undead Characteristic.

Three Demon Bag: Magical. Bury a model suffering Severe damage from this Weapon. Models buried by this Weapon are Placed in play within 6" of this model at the end of the End Resolve Effects Step or if this model is removed from play.

Actions

(+1) Reckless: This model may suffer 1 wound to receive **Fast**.

Triggers

Ca (img alt="lightning bolt icon" data-bbox="385 575 400 590") Fzzzap! [Lightning Jump]: The two lowest value Cards suffer the damage. Models tied for the two lowest values all suffer the damage.

Cb (img alt="bacon icon" data-bbox="385 635 400 650") Bacon Curse [Three Demon Bag]: If the defender was wounded by this attack, the defender must win a **Ca → 13** Duel or be Transformed into a Piglet until the end of its next activation. During the Transformation, the defender retains its **Wd** stat and is immune to the “Load ‘er Up!” Action. The defender cannot be buried by this Weapon if this Trigger is announced.

Cb (img alt="razor icon" data-bbox="385 763 400 778") Razor's Edge [Iron Fan of Tsu Li]: This weapon ignores **Armor**.

Cb (X) Rusty Edge [Iron Fan of Tsu Li]: After inflicting damage on defender, defender suffers **Poison 2**.

Df/Wp (img alt="bounce icon" data-bbox="385 841 400 856") Bounce Magic: After this model loses the Resist Duel for a Spell targeting it, the caster and this model both suffer the spell's effects. Use the difference in casting and resist totals if a difference is required. The bounced Spell has no effect on either model if the caster could not be affected by it.

IRON FAN OF TSU LI

Rg	/// 2
Cb	4
Dg	1/2/3


THREE DEMON BAG

Rg	8
Cb	5
Dg	1/3/3

Df (W) “Squeel!”: After this model is damaged by an enemy melee attack, Push it 4" directly away from the attacker.

SPELLS:

(1) Inspiring Presence

(CC: 13  / Rst: - / Rg: 15) Friendly models, including this model, are immune to **Terrifying**.

(1) Lightning Jump

(CC: 14 / Rst: Df / Rg: 8) **Dg 2/3/4.** This model's controller flips a Card for each model within 5" of the target. The model with the lowest flipped value suffers 2 damage. If more than one model is tied for lowest value, all of the tied models suffer the damage. If one of the Cards flipped is the Black Joker, this model suffers 2 damage instead.

A Long Night in Red Row

Marian turned the page avidly, his attention fixed.

The heroine, Daphne Pultroon, had managed to escape the clutches of the dastardly, yet charming, Sir Oswald Appleby, but in her distress, she had rushed out into the frigid night air. With the cliffs that surrounded Appleby manor on three sides lurking just beyond thick banks of sea fog, Marian feared for Ms. Pultroon's headlong flight. The plucky landowner's daughter – who was from simple hearty stock but had drawn the attention of her social betters through her earnest character and handsome looks – had only run a dozen yards before slithering on wet grass and almost falling to her death amid the rocks and crashing waves. Only her poor dead father's good luck charm snagging on a stony projection at the cliff's absolute lip arrested her fall.

Even as she hung there, the loose grip of her hands the only thing separating her from her imminent death, Ms. Pultroon contemplated her fate. Having unearthed the manipulative Sir Appleby's scheme to marry her, - while posing as a wealthy dilettante but actually being both impoverished and disowned from the Appleby estate - and by means of cruel deception intended to defraud her of the secret fortune that her father had amassed from his long life of diligent labor, which he had set aside in a trust fund until the day his darling daughter and sole living descendant had reached the age of twenty-one. Having secured her affections, he then planned to murder her in cold blood - divined from a whispered conversation she had overheard between Sir Appleby and his twisted half-sized manservant, Calico - and poor Daphne had fled the house, but not before she had toppled a vase of flowers and alerted her betrothed to the sound of smashing porcelain.

Marian read on, transfixed.

A shape was coalescing out of the yellow fog - the long-limbed and terrible shape of her once beloved husband-to-be and now

architect of her robbery and violent dispatch, Oswald Appleby. In his hand was a long, glinting knife. Daphne shrieked with fear but the sound was swallowed by the crashing waves below. The knife came ever closer until-

The door banged open and Deputy Portmanteau clumped into the office.

'Them cowboys is back,' he said by way of greeting.

Short and compact, Portmanteau's extremities seemed to have continued growing enthusiastically long after the bulk of him had reached a satisfactory size. His nose was a giant bulbous affair that, coupled with jug handle ears, made the remainder of his face seem like an afterthought. He carried a twin-barrel scattergun in his hands, his fat finger barely able to squeeze into the trigger-guard.

Marian reluctantly closed *The Cliffs of Appleby* and laid it on the desk. 'And?'

Portmanteau's expression never changed.

The Sheriff nodded, clucked his tongue and got to his feet. While a head taller than his Deputy, Sheriff Marian Barber seemed struck by the same inconsistency of proportion but to different effect. He possessed a huge barrel chest and uncommonly broad shoulders, supported on legs that were long but looked a shade too thin to prop up his upper half. Long ape arms and a round moon face with crammed features added to the notion that the Sheriff was a big man but by no means a handsome one.

Leaving his gun belt and pistol, Marian instead took a lead-cored billy club from his desk drawer and tucked it into his pants. In his experience as Sheriff, when men were not confronted by a gun they were less inclined to use one themselves.

With Portmanteau whistling casually behind him, Marian headed down the street to the Gold Tooth. Low-hanging potbellied clouds were scudding in from the south, and the freshening breeze smelled like rain. Even

though it was barely four o'clock with another two hours of waning sunlight, the gas lamps along Main Street were already lit against the encroaching gloom. It looked like a powerful storm was on its way.

Ivy's shrill shouting could already be heard some distance from the saloon. For those not familiar with the residents of Red Row, one could be forgiven for thinking a ruckus had already kicked off; however, Ivy's shouting was a common occurrence at the Gold Tooth. This shouting usually took place alongside the cylinder piano and was roughly in accordance with the music, although her pitch, not to mention her volume, were often at odds with the musical mechanism. Marian had been in the Gold Tooth many times to witness these performances and was still unclear whether Ivy was attempting to sing along with the piano or simply drown it out.

'And we'll meet you there...on that sunny sunny day...' she was shouting as Marian stepped up onto the saloon's porch and looked over the swing doors. *'My lovely Jackie...ohhhhhhh oooohhhh!'*

There she stood, red-faced and tendon-necked as she roared out the final syllables, wearing her only evening gown and enough face makeup to suggest her compact had exploded. Marian could see the cylinder of the barrel organ revolving, but any melody it might have been producing was inaudible against Ivy's passionate crescendo.

She ended – no doubt as abruptly as she had begun – and there was a smattering of applause from the poker table to her right. As she took her bow, Marian turned his attention to the gamblers. Four men, all dust and mud marked from cattle droving, were well-lubricated with Yeung's whiskey and wearing iron. They didn't look quite drunk enough yet to do something truly stupid, but Marian had a nose for this kind of thing and knew it was always better to intervene sooner rather than later.

He stepped into the saloon as the cowboys turned back to their game, approaching the bar where Vale and Sam and Grizzly Dick sat like three wise monkeys on stools, nursing their shot glasses. Yeung hovered behind the bar, his five-foot pleated pigtail wrapped twice around his thick neck and draped down his back. He screwed a spotless bar towel into a shot glass and stacked it atop a large pyramid of equally pristine others.

'Marian,' he said with a nod of greeting.

'Yeung,' Marian replied and slid onto the free stool alongside Grizzly Dick.

With limited information, one is inclined to make assumptions. When the name Grizzly Dick is mentioned, the mind is immediately filled with images of a titanic hirsute man with legs like tree trunks and an untamed beard festooned with bits of twig and the odd bird egg. Take the afore-mentioned twigs, form them into the crude shape of a stick-man and soak them in whiskey for fifty years. *That* is Grizzly Dick.

The withered prospector weighed sixty pounds soaking wet and most of that was his boots and a nose like a sickle blade. In the nine years Marian had been in Red Row, first as Deputy and then Sheriff, he had never once seen Grizzly Dick eat. Looking at the cadaverous oldster, it was easy to imagine that he hadn't.

At Dick's pointy shoulder sat Vale and Sam, very much two peas in a pod. Both were portly and generously humored and both ran stores in town – Vale the grain and feed store and Sam the barbers, dental practice, and surgery. They turned to welcome Marian and rolled their eyes at the sodden cowboys behind them.

'Back for more, eh?' Vale said.

'Hope not,' Marian said by way of replay.

'Oh, those boys won't be no trouble this time, Sheriff,' Vale laughed, showing multiple gaps where Sam had practiced his art. 'The lickin' they got last week took the fire right out of them.'

'Well,' Marian said, folding his big hands carefully on the scuffed bar. 'Whiskey has a way of putting the fire back into a man.'

Ivy arrived at the bar, resting a manicured hand on Marian's shoulder. 'Buy me a drink, Sheriff?' she breathed.

He waved a finger at Yeung, who produced a bottle of rich dark rum and poured the aging songstress a measure. Ivy took the glass, raised it in silent salute and tossed the contents down her neck.

'I caught the last few bars there, Ivy,' Marian said. 'I think your voice is improving.'

Ivy beamed. 'Why thank you, Sheriff. It's always nice to meet a fan.'

He smiled and touched his hat. He liked Ivy, despite her singing, and *technically* he had been telling the truth.

The saloon lit up momentarily and all eyes turned towards the windows. A second later, there was a vicious *crack-rumble* of thunder that rattled Yeung's glass pyramid. The air outside was still dry, but the clouds were crowding over the town now, and a downpour wasn't far away.

'Sheriff!' cried a delighted voice. Marian twisted on his stool and saw that all four cowboys were staring across at him. All grinning and aligned like they were, the accumulation of teeth he had knocked out of their heads the previous week made them a dead ringer for the cylinder piano's keyboard.

'Boys,' he said, touching his hat again. 'Having a good evening?'

'Yessir,' said the one he vaguely recalled as Dirty Ben or Dusty Bill or something. 'Only Cleetus here has me down to my last Guilder, and he'll have me down to my long johns any minute lessen' Lady Luck throws me a bone.'

'Well, I wouldn't want to see that happen, so how about I buy you boys a cup of coffee and you can re-think your strategy?'

'Powerful kind of you, Sheriff,' said Cleetus. 'I surely wasn't lookin' forward to seein' Bill in his dirty smalls.' The four of them laughed.

'Coffee, please, Yeung,' Marian said and then in a lower tone, 'make it strong.'

The Three Kingdoms native nodded with a smirk and took the cowboys four cups of steaming black.

There was another flash of lightning and boom of thunder. Marian took a cup of coffee for himself and toyed with the idea of heading back to the office before the rain hit. Portmanteau had been right to warn him of the cowboys being back, but this time they seemed much more at ease both with themselves and Marian's presence. Besides, if they were happy to drink coffee instead of whiskey, he doubted there would be a repeat of last week's ugly brawl.

If he got back to his office before the rain came on, he could get that last half-chapter of *The Cliffs of Appleby* finished – he surely hated leaving the story at such a

tense point. Gulping down the bitter coffee, he got to his feet, straightened his waistcoat and left a coin on the bar.

'You gentlemen have a good night, now,' he said to the cowboys. Their faces were flushed, but their moods were buoyant and showed none of the abrasive menace they had displayed the week before.

'Thank you, Sheriff' said Bill. 'We surely will.'

Marian had gotten as far as the doors of the saloon when someone upended a basin of water from the porch roof. Only it wasn't a basin, it was rain. Marian could have been standing behind a waterfall. He watched it blast the dust road into mud and thought of his rain slicker hanging on its hook behind the door of his office.

'Aw hell,' he muttered.



Out in the tempestuous night, a dark shape moved in the shadows.

Unnaturally tall and unnaturally long, this shape clambered slowly up a rise towards town. Two baleful yellow eyes threw scant illumination on the ground before it and its laborious progress was marked with a rasping hissing sound. White smoke, or perhaps steam, vented steadily from its hindquarters, becoming more visible as the pelting rain cooled the air. Eight iron-shod wheels, each the height of a man, revolved with grim determination, propelling the vehicle forward.

Atop the bizarre construct sat a man shrouded in a heavy waxed coat and wide-brimmed hat, perched on a bench seat at the vehicle's forefront, much like a wagon driver, and some fifteen feet off the ground. Only this wagon had no horses and no harnesses. Instead, a bewildering forest of brass levers, wheels, and brake handles sprang up around the driver in such profusion that it appeared he operated it more through guesswork than any identifiable skill.

Nevertheless, the tall wagon made its way into the town of Red Row, deftly avoiding potholes and the more defined rivers of muddy water that had begun to stream down the slope. As it rumbled past the first of the town's gas lamps, along its wooden flank became visible the livery

Witness the Wonder of Vertrim Venn! – Master Craftsman and Ingenious Designer of The Modern Age! – Purchase the Technology of Tomorrow at Yesterday's Prices! – no refunds or exchanges.

Creaking, rattling and hissing, the iron and wood oddity rolled into the center of town.



'Damn!' whistled Grizzly Dick.

The oldster had appeared at Marian's shoulder to regard the weather but instead was gawping at the wooden wall rolling up Main Street.

Marian himself was less impressed. A wagon that tall served no real purpose, and he had always been an advocate of technology in its proper place. Where a team of horses would have more than sufficed, here instead was a steaming and clanking device that *pushed* rather than pulled. Marian considered such invention to be a form of sly arrogance – to take the time to think up and build a machine that served the same purpose as a horse, only less well and with greater effort. Marian didn't doubt that this diminished return had been conveniently lost amid the mugging and back-slapping from the inventor's fellow intellectuals.

He watched the contrivance grind to a halt. The shape atop it yanked levers and wheels until the clunking and hissing died away and then scrambled deftly down a brass ladder to the muddy ground.

'Ho there!' the figure called as it waded through ankle-deep mud and up to the relative shelter of the saloon porch.

Marian stepped aside to accommodate the new arrival, now revealed in the gaslight to be a compact and weather-worn man. When he pulled off his soaked hat, Marian noted silver-gray hair scraped back into a rat tail and a sharp goatee dyed crimson.

'Welcome to Red Row,' the Sheriff offered along with his hand.

The smaller man took it and gave it a brief and insincere yank. 'Vertrim Venn,' he replied breezily. 'Unparalleled inventor. Travelling entrepreneur. At your service, sir.'

'I'm Sheriff Barber and this here is Grizzly Dick.' Normally, Marian would have introduced himself with his Christian name but something about this man made him want to keep the badge between them. The wagon driver seemed more concerned with shaking the rain off than acknowledging the town residents, but Marian had an inkling that there was one person on the porch that Venn would be interested in talking about. 'That's an unusual accent, Mr. Venn.'

'I travel extensively,' Venn said, busy unfastening the buckles on his slicker. 'My skills are much in demand, and I find myself drawn from one land to the next. I pick up a bit of this, a touch of that.'

'Well, sir, perhaps you should allow yourself to be drawn on into the saloon for a hot coffee. Tonight's not the night for porch conversations.'

'As you say. A fine idea,' he said as he flapped his wet hat and pushed through the swing doors.

Marian looked at Grizzly Dick. 'Apparently, he travels extensively.'

'Well lah-di-damned-dah,' the old man huffed.



When Marian woke, his first thought was *damn it, fell asleep in my chair again.*

Sitting up was an exercise in agony. His legs, propped up on his desk and crossed at the ankles, had gone to sleep and his spine felt like glass as he slowly edged his weight forward and began to roll his cramped shoulders.

With the driving rain, he had allowed Grizzly Dick to talk him into one last whiskey to fortify him against the elements. After that, his memory became increasingly smeared. He remembered a drunken sing-a-long with one arm around Ivy and the other around Yeung, and possibly arm wrestling Dusty Bill or Cleetus. Or both.

Now the gray morning sun was streaming in through his office window and there was a taste of old whiskey on his tongue. Strangely, he didn't feel hung over, merely disconnected. *The Cliffs of Appleby* still sat where he'd left it on his desk – he'd been too tired and drunk last night to finish it. He was half-tempted to pick it up, but his stomach growled like an angry bear. He fetched his hat and slicker (which had spent the night on the hook behind the door) and stepped down onto the street to find breakfast.

The air was much fresher out here and carried an unseasonable chill, but behind the thick cotton of the clouds he could sense the sun struggling to break through. The rain had quit at some point during the night, but the street was waterlogged and awash with deep muddy puddles. The houses looked glossy and slick, their timber darkened with moisture.

Down by the Gold Tooth, Venn's wagon was still parked, and a modest crowd had gathered around it. Venn himself was standing on a platform, ringed by watching eyes, and was making some ostentatious declaration or other in a long-sleeved flannel gown. Whatever he was boasting, it would no doubt involve a necessary separation of the audience from their scrip.

Sure enough, as he drew nearer, he began to make out the play.

'...quite like this one. Have you ever seen such craftsmanship? Have you ever seen such vibrancy? And rest assured, esteemed ladies and gentlemen, that the intricacy and ingenuity contained within this trinket is every bit as breathtaking as its exterior.'

Venn was holding up a tin toy, a carousel that nestled in the palm of his hand. Marian could see a dozen tiny ponies and riders, each articulated separately and

connected to the central axis by silver rods as fine as hairs. The entire device was enameled and lacquered in bright primary colors that shone in defiance of the brooding sky above. There was even a delicate metallic tune tinkling from the toy as the minute riders bobbed around and around.

'Awful expensive for a toy, ain't it?' asked Skeet Miller. His grimy blacksmith hands were stuffed deeply and self-consciously into his overall pockets, well away from the delicate objects on display.

'My wares are not cheap,' acknowledged Venn, 'but were you to travel to Malifaux or to Paris, you would not find wares to rival their quality. Why, you would pay *twice* as much for something *half* as good. Notice if you would, ladies and gentlemen, how the clockwork music box within holds no less than twelve melodies, each and any of which are immediately accessible by turning the relevant pony and rider *so*.' With a thin gold rod somewhere between a pencil and needle, Venn turned one of the glittering carousel riders. Immediately, the device began to play *The Duke and the Lady*.

There was a pleased murmur from the crowd.

'And here we have Begging Billy,' Venn continued, turning their attention to a painted metal dog only four inches or so high at the shoulder. 'A faithful and loving spaniel whose only wish is to perform tricks for the child. See how he begs for favor.' He lifted a tin bone painted white and waved it before the dog's nose – the artificial animal rose up on its hind legs and bobbed in time with the bone. With each movement, the dog made a metallic clap that sounded eerily like a bark.

Little Bessy Miller squealed and yanked on her father's overalls. 'Daddy! Look at him!'

Venn's eyes glinted at her reaction. Leaning low over his carefully laid-out table, he handed her the metal bone. 'With some training,' he said, 'Begging Billy shall perform all manner of tricks, sweetling.'

Bessy shook the bone in front of the bobbing tin dog. It bobbed and barked and then flipped head over heels. The blacksmith's daughter squealed even louder, and there were gasps and laughs from the crowd.

'Clever,' Marian admitted.

'Magnets and mechanisms,' Venn said dismissively, 'but the children love them so.'

'Are toys the only things you build?'

'The only things I choose to,' Venn corrected. 'I have dallied with other devices in my time, but there is no equal to the pleasure my craft brings to the little ones.'

Sure enough, Bessy seemed totally enchanted with the mechanical dog. He was about to ask Venn how much he wanted for it when Ivy burst through the Gold Tooth's swing doors behind them with crimson hands raised over her head.

'Blood!' she shrieked.



The four cowboys were dead.

Their boots and hats lay where they'd been discarded across the floor. All four men lay in the huge guest bed, top to tail with two heads and four feet at either end. There had apparently been very little struggle judging by the fact that they were all still *in* the bed, though more jumbled and tangled than if they had slept the night through undisturbed.

The feather comforter was drenched in blood. It had soaked clean through the mattress and pooled under the bed.

'No one gets in here but me and Portmanteau,' Marian told Yeung. There was a gaggle of onlookers downstairs, but the deputy was standing on the bottom step with his scatter gun, and for the moment, he had the scene to himself. 'And send Sam up when he gets here.' Yeung nodded, his face abnormally jaundiced.

Treading carefully, Marian reached the bed and pulled back the cover. It was heavy with clotting liquid and made a wet peeling sound as it came away from the corpses. Their long johns were as saturated as the sheets they lay on. From neck to knees, he mused. *A hell*

of a lot of blood. Marian had seen blood and death before, but never quite like this. He'd shot a handful of men in his time as Sheriff – one he'd killed with a scatter gun – and had seen a man cut open at the shoulder with a corn scythe back in Duke's Quarry. They'd bled a lot, or so it had seemed at the time. But not like this.

Sam Ford arrived a minute or two later, and his mouth became a thin worried line when he saw the cowboys. Marian watched the surgeon painstakingly roll both striped sleeves up before checking each man in turn, looking in their eyes and mouths, lifting an arm and checking rigidity.

'What do you think, Sam?' he asked at length.

'Hell, I don't know, Sheriff,' the portly man said. 'You want a tooth pulled or a cut sewn up, I'm your man, but this is...is...'

'...murder,' Marian finished for him.

Sam poked a finger at the closest corpse's chest. It was Cleetus. Six or seven hours ago they'd shared a drink.

'Something here,' Sam said, pulling down the sodden fabric of Cleetus' long johns. He bared a hairy chest smeared with blood that was turning black and crusty. A small triangular cut sat on the left hand side, just below the nipple. 'See this?'

'Looks like a knife wound, maybe.'

'Funny sorta knife to leave a mark like that. Three edges? Who'd have a knife like that?'

'I aim to find out, Sam.'

The surgeon went along the four men. Each one had a slender stab wound in his chest, almost identically placed. 'Well, that's how it happened. That's where all this blood come from. Straight in – straight through the heart. *Scccctttukkk.*' Sam jabbed with a single index finger. 'They'd have died real quick – bled out in twenty, maybe thirty seconds.'

Marian mused while Sam washed his hands in the water bowl on the dresser. 'Sam, keep this under your hat for now. I don't want people getting jumpy. These boys were a real handful last time they were in town – who knows who else they've wronged before they came here last night. Could be this was an old score.'

'Could be, Sheriff.' Sam was rolling down his striped sleeves and re-buttoning them.

'Get Vale and Grizzly Dick, and get Skeet – we'll need his wagon. Tell him to bring it around back. And tell Ivy we'll need basins of water and some old sheets to wrap them in. And find somebody with a horse – I want to send a rider out to the Bar T. McCullen will want to know what's happened to four of his boys.'

'Will do.'

When the surgeon had left, Marian stood with his hands on his hips and a scowl on his face. *A hell of a thing to happen*, he thought. Snatches of the cowboys' laughing faces came to him, blurred with whiskey. They had been rough boys, but after that first spat, he'd rather taken a shine to them. They sure didn't deserve to die in their long johns, crammed into an old bed like hairy sardines.

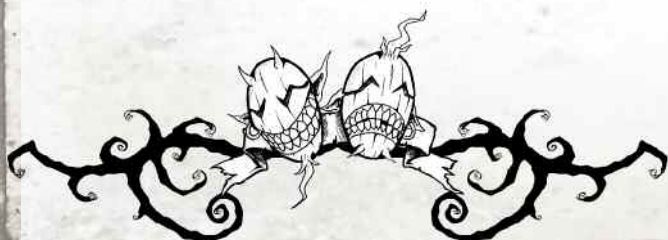
Marian's gaze had fallen to the floor and had settled on something curious. There were bloody marks on the wood that looked out of place. He got down on a knee and took a closer look. Little oval splats of blood, like prints a child would make with paint and a carved-up potato. Hunkering down lower, he looked under the bed and immediately made a face. The coppery stink was much stronger down here.

More strangeness. Four clean spots under the bed. Four angular spaces on the wooden floor while all around was awash with sticky clotting blood. The prints, the *tracks* came from here, pattering across the floor in a run of overlapping circles. They formed an erratic trail from the bed to the wall under the window. He saw scuffs and beads and dribbles of blood on the cheap gilded wallpaper and more on the window ledge.

The window stood open.

Outside was a knot of excited laughing townsfolk and an unnaturally tall wagon. In the midst of it was a stranger. He looked up at the Sheriff momentarily and touched his brow.

Who'd have a knife like that, Sam had asked. Who indeed?



While Vertrim Venn stood up beside the bar with an inch of whiskey, waxing lyrical to his captive audience, Marian slid out through the swing doors and down to the wagon.

It had been no effort at all to get him talking when the distinguished salesman and inventor retired to the Gold Tooth for supper. Marian had asked the first question and allowed the townsfolk's natural curiosity to do the rest. Venn was only too happy to talk about himself. Marian suspected he'd be just as happy talking to a mirror.

It was growing dark outside. The clouds were back although not the same purple and black curds that had drenched Red Row the night before. Tonight they were more like smoke, blotting out the fading sun and lending stealth to Marian's endeavor. Although the wagon wasn't more than ten feet wide, it was thirty feet long and at least half that in height and more than likely two stories inside. The only entrance he could find was a narrow door on the back wall made of plain wood with an inset gold hoop for a handle.

Venn had folded away the table and carried his unsold treasures back into the wagon when the crowd began to thin, but Marian had been watching from the saloon porch and hadn't seen any sort of lock on the wagon door. Sure enough, when he plucked out the hoop with a finger and twisted it, the door unlatched and swung outwards. He struck a sulfur match and lit his bulls eye lantern, leaving the brass cover closed until he had stepped inside and pulled the door to behind him.

When he lifted the lantern cover, he found himself in a claustrophobic enclosure that seemed more like a deep wardrobe than the interior of a wagon. The floor and walls were smooth planed wood that softened the lantern's harsh glow to amber. The ceiling was a bare inch above his head. To his right were layers of clothing hanging on rails, mostly silks and expensive cottons. To his left was lipped and padded shelving holding the unsold toys and devices. A narrow gangway ran the length of the wagon, less than two feet wide. Marian moved slowly forward, scuffing his shoulders against cabinets and setting hanging bric-a-brac to swinging and jangling. He passed a small cast iron safe, a coal bunker and a trapdoor in the wooden floor that was streaked with soot, a run of shiny copper piping and valves, and more pairs of shoes than he'd ever seen in one place. At the end of the gangway was a narrow spiral staircase made of raw knotwood.

Feeling like a giant in a child's house, Marian managed to squeeze up the staircase to the upper floor although for one perilous moment he thought he'd jammed himself at the halfway mark. The upper floor was marginally more spacious. There was a small workbench sporting racks of precise metal tools and a lantern as well as dozens of tiny boxes holding all manner of springs, rods and cogs. Beyond that was a narrow cot and bookshelves full of old and well-thumbed tomes. Rolls of yellowed paper were held against the wall with shiny brass hooks and across from them another shelf with a row of porcelain-faced dolls. Odder and odder, but as Marian swept the bulls eye lantern back and forth he found nothing resembling a three-bladed knife.

He gave the dolls a mistrustful glare as he passed them – smooth, almost featureless faces with rosy lips, arched brows and big blue glass eyes, but there was nothing child-like or innocent about them. Five of them, all in a row. And there was an unpleasant, musty odor coming from them. It smelled a bit like-

'Lost something, Sheriff?'

He almost dropped his lantern. Vertrim Venn was standing behind him, smiling genially. *He sure moves quiet*, Marian thought. I never heard him on the staircase.

'Mr. Venn,' he said. He wasn't an anxious man by nature, but he was suddenly very conscious of the fact that Venn stood between him and the way out. 'Well, this is awkward.'

Venn raised his eyebrows expectantly.

'I owe you the truth of it, I suppose,' Marian continued. 'You'll know by now about the four cowboys Ivy found dead this morning.'

The red goatee waggled. 'Yes. Those poor boys.'

'It struck me as mighty peculiar the manner of their passing, almost as peculiar as your arrival the evening before. And not only that, but something else I found in their room that was...well...'

'Peculiar?' offered Venn.

'That's it, Mr. Venn. Peculiar. That's just the word I wanted. And I got to thinking to myself that so many peculiar things all falling in the space of one day...well,

could be that they might be connected. So I took it upon myself to find out.'

Venn bobbed his head again. His face was amiable, cool and ultimately unreadable. 'And what did you find out, Sheriff?'

'Aside from you not being able to swing a cat in here, you mean? Not a whole hell of a lot.'

'I see.' Venn considered the floor for a moment. 'Well, what happens now?'

'I suppose that depends on you, Mr. Venn,' Marian countered. 'You got anything you want to tell me?'

'Only that I'll do everything I can to help your investigation. Such a tragedy.'

Marian's attention had drifted to the shelf. *Were those dolls facing me when I came in?* He seemed to remember them looking towards him when he'd come up the staircase.

'Well, that's good to know. If I think of anything I'll let you know. Have a good night, now.' He touched the brim of his hat and stepped forward. For just an instant, he thought Venn was going to bar his path, but then the smaller man smiled and slid aside.

Marian felt eyes on his back as he went down the stairs. Six pairs of eyes.



He'd been determined to sit behind his desk and watch the wagon. He'd planned on watching it the whole night, if necessary. He'd even got a pot of coffee ready to keep him awake. All he had to do was lean back in his chair with the lamp off and watch the wagon for Vertrim Venn creeping out in the dead of night.

He didn't remember closing his eyes, but when a rough hand shook him awake it was pitch black outside and he had drooled down the front of his shirt. *Damn it – fell asleep in my damned chair again.*

'Sheriff.' He recognized Portmanteau's voice behind the glare of his lantern. 'You'd best come see this.'

Marian took his slicker down from its hook and made to follow his deputy, until Venn's face and the bloody bed swam into his mind. He went back to his desk drawer and took out his gun belt, buckled it in place and lifted a double-barrel scatter gun from the gun rack. Portmanteau watched him without a word.

The body was face-down in the alley between Vale's feed store and the Marley place. As Portmanteau's lantern approached, Marian saw a glistening ruby slick spreading out in the mud. He didn't need to roll the corpse over – the striped shirt was enough.

'Oh hell,' he swore.

'Saw something moving in the alley mouth,' Portmanteau said, 'otherwise I'd never have found him till morning. It was Foster's dog. He must have smelled the blood.'

Marian looked down at Sam's body unhappily. The cowboys in the Gold Tooth had died badly but somehow this seemed worse. Sam Ford had been a good man and a responsible member of the town. He deserved better than this. Marian caught himself thinking back to his dry office and the book sitting unfinished on his desk. It suddenly seemed very far away.

Portmanteau lifted one of Sam's arms to roll him over. The mud gave him up reluctantly and the dead surgeon flopped onto his back. His shirt and pants were covered in mud but it only took seconds for them to locate the stab wound – triangular and under Sam's left pectoral, straight into the heart.

'Here too,' Portmanteau grunted, pointing a thick finger at the back of Sam's knee where his pants were torn. Closer inspection revealed another triangular puncture. 'The cowboys have that?'

'Not in the leg,' Marian said, sucking his teeth as he pondered. Why stab him in the leg? The cowboys had been lying down already, but Sam must have been attacked when he walked through the alley. Whoever murdered him wanted him on the ground, but they'd had to stick him in the back of the knee to do it. If Venn had bushwhacked Sam, why not just stab him in the back? Why the knee?

'Blood's still warm,' Portmanteau said, rubbing his fingers together.

'We have to get him off the street. We'll take him to the Gold Tooth and put him on one of the tables. Then I want you to wake –'

A loud gunshot drowned the rest of his sentence – across the street, one of the veiled Gold Tooth windows on the upper floor flashed like lightning. A second and third shot followed like whip cracks and the window blinked twice more. Marian was already running.



The sucking mud and the staircase took some of the wind out of his sails, but Marian was still moving fast when he shouldered in the guest bedroom door and brought the scatter gun to his shoulder.

Ben Hathaway was standing in the middle of the room with his back to Marian, naked but for a pair of filthy gray socks. He was holding a revolver in his right hand, pointing it at his rumpled bed; his left was clutching his stomach. There were two black and smoking holes in the mattress that could have been mistaken for cigar burns if the room hadn't stank of gunpowder.

'Ben?' Marian ventured when the other man didn't turn. 'Ben? You okay?'

The carpenter finally craned his head around and his eyes were large and white as hen eggs. 'Tried to kill me,' he whispered. The hand gripping his stomach was bloody.

But there was no one else in the room. No en-suite bathroom in a place as ramshackle as the Gold Tooth, no closet or cabinet to hide in. The window was half-open – perhaps Venn had...

A tiny white hand appeared on the far side of the mattress.

Marian stared at it, dumbfounded. It was much too small to be a man's – even a child's hand would be

bigger. Just the same it gripped the mattress and hauled. A lacy bonnet followed and then a round face, shiny and pale as milk. Big blue glass eyes. A cute button nose. The Sheriff watched as the porcelain-faced doll clambered up onto the bed. It straightened to its full height and looked up at both of them. There was a round hole in the center of its chest where Ben's third bullet had struck home. A cockroach squirted out of it and scuttled away, craving a shadow to lurk in. *That's one of Venn's dolls*, he thought. *Am I losing my mind?*

In its other hand, the doll clutched a long thin object somewhere between a cactus spine and knife – it was easily as long as the doll itself and triple-edged like a rapier. A stabbing weapon that glinted like a razor in the lantern light.

'Uh...' Marian said.

The doll marched across the mattress towards them, raising the long knife with unmistakable intent. Never one to stand on ceremony, Marian gave it both barrels of the scatter gun. The double report nearly deafened him and his teeth clicked painfully from the impact against his shoulder, but the doll was blasted to shreds, spinning off the bed and slamming against the far wall. The mattress fabric exploded in his face, filling the room with a whirl of goose feathers and bits of smoldering lace.

The remnants of the doll thumped to the ground out of sight behind the bed, but its carcass had left an unpleasant oily smear on the wall.

When the maelstrom had begun to settle, Marian broke open the scatter gun and rummaged in a pocket for spare shells. There were none – when he'd taken the scatter gun he hadn't expected to need more than two rounds. He turned to Portmanteau but the chunky man shook his head before he could ask.

'Tried to kill me,' Ben said again.

There were shouts and rapid footsteps outside and Marian knew things would unravel quickly unless he was quicker.

'Port,' he said. 'Get everyone downstairs and keep them there. Most of the town ought to be awake by now – if you see anyone on the street tell them to spread the word. And tell them to arm themselves. I saw five of those things in Venn's wagon.'

'Right.' The heavy man turned to go.

'And Port,' Marian added. 'If that son of a bitch shows his face, don't hesitate. Kill him.'

Portmanteau nodded and left. A second later, Marian heard him barking orders to the confused rabble flooding out of the upstairs rooms.

'Let me see,' he said to Ben, turning the man gently with a hand. Trying to ignore his nakedness, Marian peeled back bloody fingers to examine the carpenter's abdomen. There was no neat stab wound, but rather a long shallow slash in the flesh. It would leave a nasty scar, but wouldn't kill him.

'I woke up and it was standing on my chest,' he said.

'Lucky you did,' Marian said. 'If you hadn't moved, that thing would have skewered your heart. A couple of stitches and you'll...'

A dirty white hand appeared on the other side of the mattress.

The doll was climbing up again, but this time its lacy clothing had been all but annihilated and the filthy shreds that still clung to it looked more like the bandages of some miniature mummy than a child's toy. Everything else was gristle and bird bones and wire and seething movement. Marian could see beetles and maggots spilling from its insides as the animated doll got to its feet. Pellets from the scatter gun had smashed the lower part of its porcelain face, leaving a jagged edge that looked uncomfortably like teeth. Somehow, despite the close range shot, the limbs of the thing were still intact and its bright blue eyes rolled until they fixed on the two men.

It raised the long knife and began to trek across the mattress again, each step pattering carapaces onto the linen.

'Sweet Lord,' mumbled Ben. He half raised his pistol and then seemed to think better of it.

Marian swung the empty scatter gun by the barrels, cracking the horrid thing across the head and knocking it into the iron bedframe. It kicked and squirmed, trying to right itself and smearing black ichor on the pillows.

'Out,' Marian ordered, shoving the staring carpenter back to the doorway. 'Out! Right now!'

Ben stumbled into the hallway, dazed and naked and still clutching his bleeding stomach. Marian had just enough presence of mind to snatch the key from the inside of the door lock before lunging out at the carpenter's back. He twisted, gripped the door handle with both hands and slammed the door shut just as the thing was launching itself from the bed. It hit the other side of the door with a hard bang, but Marian kept the door pulled to while he jammed the key in the lock and twisted it.

The door banged again. Whatever it was, it didn't like being locked in.

'Make sure that door stays closed,' he hissed at Ben and hurried downstairs. When he drew his revolver, he found his hands were shaking.



Grizzly Dick hadn't been sleeping anyway, so the distraction was welcome. He found that the older he got, the harder it was to sleep and the more likely he'd awake at odd hours and for unfathomable reasons.

He sat up in bed, letting the thin scratchy blanket drop to his waist. Clad in his wooly long johns, he peered around the dark cabin with a mild expectation. It wasn't uncommon for a ragged-eared old tabby to slither between the splintered boards behind his door on cold or wet nights and curl up on his bed. He hadn't done anything to discourage the animal despite the fact it would sometimes gnaw his jerky or spray on his blanket – truth be told, he rather enjoyed the company. The cat was content to sit on his lap and regard him with huge green lamp eyes while he did the same. Dick didn't care much for conversation and that was an arrangement that suited the tabby just fine.

But it wasn't the cat. It was a doll, about two feet high and sporting a pink lace dress and pigtails, and it was walking slowly across the shadowy floor towards him. As it passed the single cabin window, the moonlight reflected on its porcelain face and briefly illuminated big glass eyes and little cherry red lips.

'Oh, don't mind me,' Dick muttered grumpily. 'You just come on in.'

The doll's head turned to follow him as it walked the length of his bed, its tiny round feet tapping on the floorboards. In its hand was a chunk of crystal, irregularly cut and dark as smoke.

'Well, well,' Grizzly Dick mused, watching the doll's progress. 'I know what that is, sure enough.' He'd seen soulstones before, charged and spent, and that one was the latter. Quite small, but then he supposed there was a limit to how much an animated doll could carry.

He watched the doll reach the top of his bed, where it dropped on all fours and scuffled underneath. He heard some rustling and a clink as the soulstone was placed on the floor – by the sound it must have been directly under him.

'So *that's* your game,' he said as the doll reappeared and began to clamber up the side of his bed. 'You crafty little varmint.'

The doll made no reply. He was reminded of the cat when its big solemn glass eyes caught the moonlight again. It was now standing on the edge of his bed and began to march purposefully towards him. One little fabric hand went around its back, reaching for something.

'Now then, missy,' Dick said conversationally as the doll drew a long glinting knife no thicker than his pinkie from the lacy folds of its dress. 'You must have me confused with some other old fart, 'cuz if you think I'm gonna sit here and let you stick ol' Grizzly Dick with that thing-'

The doll's head exploded. It flew backwards off the bed while shards of porcelain and grit and bits of bone and insects rained down everywhere. Dick drew back the hammer on his ancient single-action Dragoon pistol to re-cock it.

'-you're dumber than I thought,' he finished and picked a squirming maggot out of his beard.

The doll was thumping and clattering about on the floor in an effort to regain its feet, but it had dropped its quirky looking knife and Dick wasn't slow in scooping that up.

'*Damn* animated goddamn dolls,' he growled, clambering out of bed and shooting the jittering toy in

the chest. The .44 caliber slug blew a fist-sized hole in the center of its body, destroying the pink dress and skittering what looked like bits of chicken vertebrae across the floor. 'Comin' in here and making a damn mess. Tryin' to stick me with some crazy damn knife. An old man can't get no sleep in this damn town.' The last part wasn't strictly true, but Dick wasn't the sort of man to let a truth get in the way of a good gripe.

He shot the doll again, sending it sliding across the floor to thump against the wall. There was a slick of something black and unpleasant on the boards.

'Look at that damn mess,' he grouched. 'An' who's gonna have to clean that up? That's right - ol' Grizzly Dick with his creaky joints an' his bad back. Down on my damn knees like some old washer woman. Damn animated dolls.'

He shot it again to emphasize his displeasure. The doll, now a ragged indecipherable mass of jittering parts and black smears, didn't seem to know which way was up. Beetles and worms were swarming from the broken thing like rats deserting a sinking ship.

'Thought you'd do me in and fill that stone up, didya?' He snorted. 'Well, that didn't work out so good, did it? Guess your boss didn't figure an old raccoon like me would put up much of a fight.' He lifted a galvanized metal bucket and dropped it over the squirming thing and sat on it. He could feel the doll's struggles, but his weight - scrawny as he was - proved too great to budge.

'Yeah,' he chuckled, breaking open the pistol to check the remaining rounds. 'Bet you didn't think you be trapped in a bucket when you got up this mornin', did ya?'

The bumping and struggling continued unabated.

'Prob'ly as good a time as any to mention I don't got no out-house,' he said. 'Don't need one when I got me a bucket...'



Marian had come to the conclusion that the dolls just wouldn't die.

After getting most of the townsfolk into the Gold Tooth, he had been forced to station another two men at the door to Ben's room. The thing inside had been resolutely stabbing at the door since he'd locked it and the wood was already beginning to splinter.

They'd found another one downstairs - it had attacked Yeung and stabbed him through the hand before he'd been able to knock it away. Portmanteau had pinned it to the saloon floor with a pickax and there it remained, twisting and straining mutely to get at them. Its big expressionless glass eyes followed them wherever they went while it lay in a creeping puddle of black ichor. The lights in the saloon were better, and Marian had been able to get a look at what was under the lacy clothing.

Chicken bones and metal wire and other less identifiable things formed the limbs. The fabric fingers tore away to reveal jagged metal points. The body seemed to be a bag of wet soil swarming with life: pulpy white worms and glistening chitin bugs welled steadily from the pickax wound. The doll itself seemed none the worse for being impaled - its tiny hands wrestled with the ax blade, tiny legs drummed on the floor. Port had tried stamping on its head to kill it, but only succeeded in cracking its porcelain face.

'That thing is unholy,' Ivy said as she wound a towel around Yeung's bleeding hand. 'We should take it outside and burn it.'

'We will,' Marian said. 'When we find the rest of them. We'll have ourselves a bonfire.'

The townsfolk were huddled as far from the doll as they could get, seated around the tables at the far end of the room and were as quiet as nervous cows - all pale faces and big eyes. Most of them were in nightshirts and long johns. Only a few had had the presence of mind to bring a weapon but that suited Marian fine. Jumpy men and guns were poor bedfellows.

He was about to order Portmanteau to gather a dozen likely men into a posse to comb the town for Venn when the one thing he hadn't expected happened. The swaggering inventor stepped in through the saloon doors.

'Good evening, Sheriff,' he said.

Marian didn't hesitate. He drew his pistol, aimed and fired. The gun report was loud, but not so loud as to completely mask the metallic *spang* of the bullet striking Venn's chest. The red-goateed man was knocked back a step but otherwise seemed untroubled. A wisp of smoke curled from the finger-sized hole in his waistcoat.

'You seem upset,' he said pleasantly.

Marian fired again. A second shot into Venn's chest – a second *spang* and this time the bullet ricocheted and smashed a bottle behind the bar. *What the hell is this?* A murmur of disbelief rippled through the townsfolk.

'If I might be allowed to-' Venn began.

'Port!'

The good thing about Portmanteau was that he was always able to predict the Sheriff's next thought. He fired his scatter gun, hitting the unnatural vendor square in the chest and blasting him backwards into the swing doors. Venn was almost propelled out into the street but managed to grab on to the doors, leaning back on the porch like a drunk.

He found his balance, grinning ruefully at the deputy as he came back into the lamp light.

'Now, now, deputy,' he scolded gently. 'Is this any way to treat an honored guest?' The front of his waistcoat and silk shirt had been shredded. Underneath was a brass plate shaped and sculpted into the likeness of a human torso. The burnished metal was dimpled and dented from the bullet impacts but otherwise undamaged.

'What the hell are you?' Marian growled.

'A genius,' Venn said casually. At his back, two moon-faced dolls slipped under the swing doors and moved to their master's flanks. Both carried thin blades and both had copious bloodstains on their linen dresses. At their arrival, Venn glanced down and a wide grin split his features. 'Ah! Elsbeth and Dominique. Don't be shy – come in. I see by your gowns that you have something for me.'

They both raised their free hands. Marian caught a glitter of something as each doll passed Venn a small stone that sparkled with an inner light.

'Oh, how delightful. Well done, my dears.' Venn raised one soul stone between thumb and forefinger and examined it. 'Yes. Very well done indeed.'

'You're a fool if you think you're going to get out of this

alive,' Marian said, although in truth he had expected two pistol rounds and a scatter gun cartridge to have done the trick.

'Alive?' Venn looked disappointed. 'Sheriff, clearly you have no idea what you're dealing with. Besides, by morning there will be no one left to tell the tale now that you've kindly gathered most of the town into one place for me. My girls have already cleaned up the rest.'

'What are those things?'

Venn continued as if he hadn't heard. 'I usually prefer to take my time, you know. A body here, a body there. It usually takes *weeks* for people to figure out who's doing the killing. I must say, I was quite disconcerted when I found you looking at my dolls earlier this evening. I didn't think you'd make the connection quite so quickly. So I thought it'd be safer to finish you all off tonight.' He smiled charmingly. 'You're really much too smart for your own good.'

'I still can't believe you think you can kill over thirty people all by yourself.'

'Well, seeing is believing, as they say,' Venn said. 'I admit I may not look the type, but there is more to me than meets the eye. Very much more. As a matter of fact, I might go so far as to-'

A metal bucket clanged down over Venn's head, muffling the rest of his sentence.

'Well don't just stand there gawpin',' snapped Grizzly Dick as he kicked one of the dolls across the room. 'Give an old man a hand, why don't'cha?'

Marian and Portmanteau were the first to leap into the fray, but others quickly followed. Grizzly Dick clung to the bucket like a drowning sailor as Venn staggered around the saloon, his howls of protest echoing hollowly. Despite the Sheriff, his deputy, and three others trying to wrestle the inventor to the ground, they found their opponent had the advantage in strength. His limbs were hard as iron and when a flapping hand gripped Tom Silvers, it squeezed so hard his collar bone snapped.

'What's the matter with you fools?' Grizzly Dick was shouting as Tom fell away. 'Git the stones outta him!'

Marian's brain was in turmoil, and old Dick wasn't making any sense. No matter how hard they heaved, they couldn't seem to overpower the stocky merchant.

More townsfolk rushed forward to help, but Venn's flapping arms cracked one man across the head, knocking him senseless, and shoved another so hard he skidded twenty feet on his backside and knocked over a stack of chairs.

'The stones, you damn fools!' Grizzly Dick was rasping, his oversized boots trailing as he was dragged along after the blind, flailing inventor. 'The stones!'

Other people were trying to keep Venn's malevolent dolls at bay. Ivy was repeatedly slapping one with a broom she'd fished from behind the bar and the other had been pinned to the wall with a chair held by two women. It was busy hacking at the legs while they screamed.

A rock hard elbow slammed into Marian's chest and the world spun violently. He found himself crumpled against the bar with stars winking in his eyes and a weight pressing against his lungs like an anvil. As he watched, Venn threw off another two men – only Portmanteau and Grizzly Dick remained. One of the buttons holding up the trapdoor of Dick's long johns had popped off and the old man's skinny butt flashed as he dropped to his knees, finally relinquishing his hold on the bucket handle just as the deputy was peeled off and thrown across the room like an old coat.

Venn yanked the offending bucket off his head and crushed it, his face a mask of indignant fury. Grizzly Dick's nightsoil had smeared the pompous inventor's face and his sharp crimson goatee now looked like someone had used it to grease a wagon axle.

'How *dare* you...' he hissed, swinging around to tower over the wrinkly prospector. 'For this outrage, I shall.'

Dick reached up and yanked on his chest plate. The brass front levered open on two articulated arms and a star-shaped metal disc fell out of the cavity behind, hitting the hard floor between Dick's knees. The winking stones that nestled in its recessed surface scattered in every direction, bouncing like glass dice.

Venn opened his mouth to scream but only managed a ghostly sigh. His legs buckled and he sat down hard, almost splintering the floorboards with his weight. Around him the dolls collapsed, marionettes with their strings cut. Ivy continued to beat hers with the broom, nevertheless.

Marian could feel broken ribs grating in his chest. 'Dick?'

he asked.

'Not so tough now, are ya?' the prospector grunted, getting slowly to his feet.

Inside Venn's opened chest, wheels and levers could be seen moving and, behind those, twin pumps working up and down. The mechanisms were slowing, though; their momentum draining away.

'Not like this,' Venn whispered as his arms dropped to his sides, hands open and lifeless. 'Not like this...I'm a... genius.' His head slumped forward as a last weak hiss of air escaped him.

'Crushed my bucket,' muttered Grizzly Dick, shuffling over to inspect it with one corner of his trapdoor hanging like a dog's tongue. 'Damn mechanical damn sonofabitch...'

Portmanteau sat up with a groan, scattering broken furniture. Townsfolk went to help him to his feet.

'Dick?' Marian said again. 'How did you know?'

'It was the stones,' Dick said, scratching himself. 'The soulstones. He was...' the old man grasped for the words, making unclear gestures. 'He was takin' the life out of others and puttin' it in himself. Soon as I saw that doll puttin' the stone under my bed, I knew it.'

Marian remembered the lake of blood under the cowboys' bed and the four gaps.

'That's where it all came from,' Dick continued. 'The kiddie toys. Those dolls. Even his own damn *body*. It all ran off the life he'd been suckin' out of other folks. Must have been doin' it for years. Like a...a damn *vampire*.'

'Well, you sure showed him, Dick,' Ivy piped up before looking at the inert doll suspiciously and swatting it again with her broom.

'Damn right I did,' the old man grunted.

Marian felt very tired and very bemused, but there was one thing left to do. One thing he'd promised to himself when this whole mess hit the fan. He used the bar to get himself upright and began to shuffle painfully to the door, holding his chest.

'Where you going, chief?' asked Portmanteau.

'I'll be back,' he said, pushing through the doors.

The others looked at each other.

Daphne Pultroon watched the glinting knife



coming closer and closer. She screamed again, but it was useless – there was no one to hear her plight.

And then a shape came out of the mist directly behind Osmond. He was given an almighty shove and his vindictive grin dissolved into a startled gasp as he topped over the edge of the cliff. Daphne heard him shriek all the way down.

A strong hand reached for her and she latched to it with all her strength. She felt herself being lifted and suddenly muscular arms were wrapped around her, and a handsome face filled her vision, brimming with concern. It was Blake! Dashing, modest Blake Farrenhall, the groundskeeper!

'Oh Daphne!' he cried. 'Are you injured? What did that beast do to you?'

'You saved me!' Daphne breathed, her limbs turning to water in his passionate embrace. 'I thought I would surely die!'

'Daphne – oh Daphne, I love you,' Blake blurted, squeezing her tighter still. 'I love you! I know I'm only a groundskeeper and have no manor or lands to offer you, but my heart and soul are yours to do with as you will!'

'Oh Blake! My heart swells at your words! I love you also and as well!'

'You do? Say you'll marry me, sweet sweet Daphne! Take my hand and we shall live together in my cottage as husband and wife! I wish only that I could give you the home you deserve.'

'Oh Blake, but now that evil Oswald has gone, I

am come into my inheritance! We shall have money and lands and more besides! Oh happy day!'

'Oh Daphne!'

'Oh Blake!'

'Oh Daphne!'



Marian closed *The Cliffs of Appleby* and smiled to himself.

'Finally,' he said to no one in particular.



The next morning, the Sheriff went to fully investigate Venn's wagon, but it had disappeared. Assuming the conflict had not, in fact, come to an end, he quickly began searching the town for Venn and his dolls. He soon found Pat Milliken's boy, Pete, who said he awoke to the sound of clanking gears outside his window deep in night and looked out to see the wagon roll out of town. The boy said it *looked* like Venn's wagon, but the words on its side were different. There was a pasted poster, hung crooked in apparent haste or laziness, of a marionette's wooden head painted in shades of purple and blue with the words *Collodi's Miniature Carnivale*.

Thankful to have the accursed business put behind him, and not knowing who else to warn, Marian decided to retire to Yeung's for a much-deserved drink.

Blind Man's Iron

'Mister? Hey, mister?'

William Hiccup glanced down. A small boy stood at the foot of the porch, grubby and blonde-haired. Hiccup hadn't noticed him when he'd stepped out into the fresh morning and filled his lungs with the cleanliness of it. The boy was clutching a tree branch that been hacked inexpertly into the shape of a firearm.

'An urchin, is it?' he inquired.

'You got them guns made special, dincha?' the boy said, his large brown eyes on the supple calf-leather holsters on Hiccup's thighs.

'These fine ladies?' Hiccup asked, resting his tasseled gloves on the twin mother-of-pearl and chrome pistol butts. 'My Mary-Beth and Marjory-Ellen?' He knew that they were a pretty sight and caught the eye of men and boys alike. Compliments flowed like water around his ladies.

The boy's eyes glowed. 'My brother Bart says you killed a hunnerd men. I bet it's twice that.'

Hiccup chuckled and took the opportunity to stand a touch more extravagantly. 'Is that so?'

'He says you're so fast that you can't see your hands movin' when you gun a feller down.'

Hiccup threw his head back for a boisterous laugh, conscious of several bystanders on the street listening to the boy and admiring his finery. And why shouldn't they, when he had spent many a scrip on a monogrammed silk shirt, embroidered waistcoat and pants with a crisp new navy pea coat, and fawn-colored boots so shiny you could check your teeth in them. He cut a dashing figure and no mistake. 'It's true I'm fast,' he said in acknowledgement of the boy's comment.

'C'n I see you draw, mister? I'd dearly like to see that.'

'Draw my ladies?' he said. 'My sweet beauties? Well, where's the harm in that?'

He took his time over it, of course. If something is worth doing, his pappy had said, it's worth doing right. The gloves were tugged tight, the belt settled over the hips, the brim of the hat set at a rakish angle. He wasted another moment smiling at the gathering crowd, especially that girl with the long coal-black hair and the eyes like melted chocolate.

And then he drew his pistols in a quick and supple motion – the way he'd practiced a thousand times before a mirror. The crowd murmured. His ladies were plated in the highest-quality chrome and polished to a brilliant shine. Both were heavily customized Colt Single Action Army revolvers with enlarged nine-chamber drums, delicately engraved with rose motifs and his initials. The front sights were removed to improve draw speed and to combat the additional drum weight. In the bright morning sun, they flashed like steel lightning.

The urchin just stared, his jaw open.

'40 caliber,' he said to the boy. 'Very rare.'

'Them's mighty fancy,' a spectator piped.

Hiccup spun one revolver and then the other. The light from them played across the goggling urchin's face. 'My ladies always draw an admiring crowd,' he said. This was what he loved, the theatrics of danger. These common townsfolk saw his splendor and his wealth and they feared him. And they were right to.

'You a lawman?' a voice asked.

'Naw, he's one o' them riverboat gamblers,' said another. 'Dresses like a gent. Got money, I reckon.'

Hiccup preened in the adulation. He imagined his teeth were sparkling as much as his boots.

'He's no gambler,' cut in a harsh female voice. 'That there's 'Wild-Eye' Hiccup.'

An uncomfortable silence followed during which the crowd's admiration curdled into nervousness. More than a few began to shuffle away. Hiccup peered sharply through the dissolving bodies and spied a familiar face.

'Well, well,' he said. 'Miss Calamity Chance.'

The raccoon hat and fur coat were as matted and bedraggled as ever, but her face had somehow become even more pointy and vinegary than he remembered. There was an elusive handsome quality to her that was almost lost among the sharp planes of her cheeks, chin and nose but the effect was ultimately ruined by small and spite-filled eyes.

'Still flashin' those gaudy things?' she asked, putting her hands on her hips. The action spread the wings of her fur coat and revealed a web of tatty leather strapping and holstered pistols. Hiccup counted seven without even trying.

'Still compensating with quantity over quality?' he shot back.

Her eyebrow arched at the long polished barrels in his hands. 'Compensatin'? Funny you should choose that word specifically...

He frowned in annoyance. Of all the people to show up in Low Craw the day after he rode into town, she was the last one he would have wished for. Miss Calamity Chance was known across every square inch of Malifaux as a bullet-slinging liability. She fancied herself as a gun fighter but her reputation was not built on the men she'd killed but rather the carnage she'd wrought on innocent persons and property. By all accounts an utterly appalling shot, she made up for this by blasting at her opponents with a near endless succession of pistols secreted about her person. There was a persistent rumor that, to date, she had inadvertently shot over thirty stray cats in her efforts to hit her intended targets.

'I like your coat,' he scoffed. 'Catskin, is it?'

Calamity glowered. How she loathed that man, with his fancy European clothes and his shiny guns and his shiny boots. He swanked about the place like he was something special, but she knew the truth of it. Hiccup was a farm boy from Earthside who'd stumbled over a riderless horse and two saddlebags full of stolen gold bars. The dirty-handed youth had disappeared overnight and in his place appeared this ridiculous peacock who crossed the Breach to create a name for himself.

'It was *one* cat,' she said. 'Like I told you before, *one* cat. Rest o' that story's just plain hot air. Pretty much what's comin' out of you now.'

Hiccup seemed unmoved. He gave his guns a last ostentatious spin and slid them back into their holsters. Calamity would have dearly loved for him to drop one.

'Much o' that stolen gold left, Wild-Eye?' she asked, watching him blanch slightly. She knew that it irritated him to have his dirty laundry aired in public, almost as much as it irritated him being called '*Wild-Eye*'.

'My name is *William*,' he stated.

'Wild-Eye suits you better, I reckon,' she sniffed. 'Yeah, them fancy pants oughta have set you back a few, them shiny guns too. Can't be all that much stolen gold left now with all the drinkin' and the hotels and the gamblin' and what have you. And it ain't like you can *earn* any more, now is it?'

'I can charge more money per day than you earn in a year, woman,' he said, his voice harsh with annoyance. 'I've lost count of the sheriffs and marshals I've assisted with my skills.'

'That be 'bout two?' Calamity rolled her eyes 'An here's me thinkin' you wuz an educated man.'

Hiccup stiffened his neck. 'The Lady Justice herself commented on my aim.'

Calamity snorted. 'I bet she did – she prolly said "why the hell you shootin' that way, you blind fool? We fightin' them guys over there!"'

Hiccup was a despicable coward and a fraud and everyone realized it sooner or later. The man moved from town to town, using his image and fearsome aspect to impress the little folks but sooner or later his reputation always caught up with him. The stories that he'd killed fifty men were completely true, but only four of them had been opponents – the other forty six were innocent bystanders who were cut down in Hiccup's frantic hail of gunfire. She'd heard about a tussle way down in Creaky Brook where Hiccup had called out a cowpoke over a card game then hid behind a barrel firing his pistols over his shoulders and screaming. He'd shot six men and a woman that day. Meanwhile, the cowpoke escaped on Hiccup's stolen horse.

'Very amusing, I'm sure,' he said. 'Who has commended you for your work, I wonder?'

'*That's for commendin'.*' She spat in the dirt. 'I let my guns do my talkin' for me.'

Hiccup smiled maliciously at the comment. *Is that a fact?* he thought to himself.

He stepped down off the porch, brushed past the few remaining bystanders and walked to the fence across the street, where he slipped a silver hip flask from his waistcoat pocket and stood it on one of the posts. 'There you are. Let's see your guns talk their way out of this.'

Calamity was looking at him with a touch of uncertainty. He could have laughed at the trap she had talked herself into. That hip flask had cost him thirty scrip but there was more chance of it being struck by lightning than by that shaggy-clothed harridan's aim.

'Go on,' he goaded her. 'Let's see you put a bullet through my flask. *If* you think your linguistic skills are up to the challenge.'

She glowered at him, her sharp face creasing with anger and perhaps a shade of embarrassment to boot. She understood that there was no way for her to back out without losing face.

'That flask ain't gonna hold much liquor with a hole in it,' she grunted but there was no conviction behind it.

'A risk I'm willing to take,' he sneered.

Calamity glanced about her at the watchers in the street. There were more of them now that something interesting seemed to be going on. She set her jaw and drew a tarnished and rusty pistol. 'Your loss, 'Wild-Eye.'

'It's William,' he corrected patiently.

She raised the pistol and cocked it, half-closed one eye to sight down the length of the barrel. A handful of seconds passed and then she lowered it again.

'Hold on, there,' she said. 'This is some sorta trick. You'll get me to put a hole in that thing and then you go runnin' to the sheriff sayin' I took a pop at you.'

'In front of all these witnesses?' he countered. 'Come, Ms. Chance. You're stalling.'

She continued to glare at him but made no effort to raise her pistol again.

'I don't trust you,' she said. 'No more'n I'd trust a rattler.'

'Well then, let me sweeten the deal.' He drew a big silver coin from his waistcoat pocket and spun it in the air. 'There's scrip for you. *If* you can make the shot.'

She watched the coin, but there was a corner of her mouth that had begun to curl up, as though something had just occurred to her.

'Mighty keen to see someone *else* do some shootin',' she said, loud enough for the spectators to hear. 'I'm thinkin' maybe you're awful eager to draw attention away from yourself.'

'Stalling again, Chance?'

She shrugged, her insolent grin widening. 'Seems to me that a man carries smoke-wagons like those, he oughta be able to use 'em.'

Hiccup didn't like the direction this conversation was taking – he tried to dismiss it. 'My skills are not in doubt, here.'

'No?' The harridan looked around the gathering. 'Anybody here ever saw Wild-Eye shoot off anythin' other'n his mouth, before?'

There were some blank expressions and a few shaken heads.

'Thought not,' she continued. 'Well, why doncha show me how it's done, big man?'

Hiccup ground his teeth. There were an awful lot of people watching now – albeit from a respectful distance. If he took the shot and hit the flask his triumph would be complete, but that was a big *if*. He wasn't under any illusion about his skills – he *looked* the part, that was for certain, but he'd never been especially good at the actual shooting aspect of the gun fighter lifestyle.

'You want me to shoot my own flask?' he asked.

'A bullet hole's a bullet hole, Hiccup,' she said. 'Don't make much nevermind whether it wuz my bullet or yours. Less'n of course you're saying you can't hit it.'

'You must be joking,' he snorted. 'I shot Bill Trantor through the eye at a thousand paces a year ago, in Saltwood.' This wasn't precisely true. He'd been thirty feet away and still missed Bill by a good ten yards. He'd accidentally shot the town sheriff instead who also had his gun trained on the outlaw and it was the sheriff's surprised misfire that had hit Trantor in the eye.

'I heard that story, too,' Calamity Chance nodded, her pistol now hanging loosely at her thigh. 'Heard Bill Trantor was unarmed when you drew down on him. Heard the sheriff got killed that night, too.'

'The man was a savage,' Hiccup said, conscious of how defensive he sounded. 'He killed the sheriff before I could fire.'

'Must have been a born killer, takin' out an armed lawman like that empty handed.' She grinned at Hiccup's reddening face. 'Funny thing, though. My cousin's husband, he's the undertaker over in Saltwood. Says he picked a bullet outta Sheriff Cotton's chest – a .40 caliber bullet, no less. Pretty rare.' She shrugged as though it was a trivial thing. 'Who knows – maybe ol' Bill just *stabbed* it right into the sheriff's chest, bein' such a savage and all...'

There were a few chuckles from the watching townsfolk and Hiccup felt his hackles rise.

'If reminiscing is your game, perhaps we should tell the good people about Cinder Hill, eh?' he declared hotly, thrusting his thumbs in his gun belt and turning to address the interested faces. 'I wonder whether Ms. Chance has ever seen fit to recount *those* tragic events.'

Chance swore under her breath. This was rapidly dissolving into a mud-slinging contest but at least the pompous fool seemed to have forgotten about his hip flask.

'Yes, as I recall you'd gone up against the Clarke brothers of Jamestown. Some sort of dispute over a dead cat, I believe.'

Calamity bared her teeth. 'What would you know, Wild-Eye? You wuzn't even there.'

'No, but the bartender at the Five Aces saloon was. He said it was the strangest thing he ever saw.'

Calamity remembered it only too well. She'd crashed in through the door, hoping to take them by surprise. She already had a revolver in her left hand but when she tried to draw the pistol tucked into her belt with her right it snagged. She stumbled and fell through the door with one gun caught in her underwear and the other waving over her head. It went off as she hit the deck and shot a leg off the card table, toppling it and Jack Clarke (who'd been leaning on it) to the floor. Big Tug Clarke had started to laugh and Lyle Clarke went for his scatter gun. She managed to rip the other pistol free, but her pantaloons came with it – frilly pink things she'd had sent from Paris, hanging from the gun barrel like a flag. Lyle took aim with his scatter gun and she panicked. She fired on reflex and missed, but her pink underthings shot through the air and hit Lyle full in the face – he toppled over backwards and knocked himself out on the hardwood floor. Big Tug laughed so hard he had a heart attack and dropped dead.

'I won that gunfight fair an' square,' she snapped, jabbing a thin finger at him.

'And all without hitting a single one of your opponents,' Hiccup sneered. 'I wonder why you would have needed a gun at all – a bag of dirty laundry would have served just as well.'

'Oh yeah? Well I heard you fired eighteen rounds at Curly Rob Jackson at a distance of less'n fifty yards and nobody never seen no sign of *any* of 'em *ever again* 'cept for the one they found in Preacher Dobson's mule's *ass*!' she shrieked, all pretense of civility gone.

'Not like the time *you* tried to bushwhack Rusty Cullen's gang and the only thing you shot was the town hall! I heard a feller say the tower still rings nineteen o'clock to this very day!'

The two of them were inches apart, screaming in each other's faces while the townsfolk stared, mouths open.

Finally, Hiccup took a step back, trembling with indignation.

'There's only one way to settle this,' he hissed. 'I demand satisfaction.'

'Well, I'd be more'n happy to shoot you dead, if that's what you mean,' she growled back at him. 'That'd be plenty satisfyin', I reckon.'

'Friday at dawn,' he intoned. 'Right here.'

Calamity spat ferociously and wiped her mouth. 'Works fer me.'

Hiccup spun on his boot heels and stalked away, brimming with righteous anger and vim. He'd show that cat-slaying windbag who was the *real* gunman around here. He'd covered fifty yards before he realized what he'd done and his guts dropped. *Oh hell*, he thought, *I'm for it this time*.

Calamity kept the fierce scowl on her face, but inside her heart was rattling like a pea in a can. *Facing down Wild-Eye Hiccup in a gunfight? In two days??*

She spun about and marched the other way before the audience could see how pale her face had become. With all the blustering and insult-throwing, it was inevitable that Hiccup would have taken the hump. And now that his nose was out of joint, there was no way she could go back on her word, not with half the entire town having heard the exchange and the other half likely knowing by sundown.

Going toe-to-toe with Hiccup would be a disaster – it was very likely that they'd kill each other in the blaze of gunfire as well as most of the town in the process. That wouldn't do – she needed to come up with a plan and she needed to do it quick.

Calamity ran her tongue around her dry mouth. Actually, she needed a plan and a drink.



Hiccup stalked purposefully along the main street, up the side alley and around behind the horse stables, where he

immediately dropped on his haunches and dry-heaved into the dirt.

'What have I done?' he whispered to himself as soon as his roiling stomach quit its convulsions. 'What have I done??'

'You gonna shoot that Calamity lady, then?' chirped a near voice.

Hiccup struggled to his feet, wiping at his mouth with one glove and trying to dust the seat of his pants with the other. The urchin had re-appeared – the one with the wooden gun. He must have followed Hiccup from the guest house.

'I said I would, didn't I?' he snapped in a pricklier manner than he'd intended.

'Bet you kill her dead before she even clears her holster,' the boy boasted, yanking his knotwood sidearm from his pocket and jabbing at the air.

Hiccup's stomach gurgled at the thought and he pulled a queasy face. 'Yes, I'm sure I will.'

'This is gonna be a great fight,' the kid continued. 'I bet even old Bark Hooper will come to watch this one.'

Hiccup was reaching out to cuff the boy's ear and see him off, but he froze. 'Bark Hooper? *The* Bark Hooper?'

'That's right, mister,' the boy said proudly. 'Caleb who works in the stables overheard a teamster tellin' his daddy that he saw Hooper in Bronze Gulch a couple days back. Said he saw him in the saloon drinkin' and playin' cards.'

Hiccup knew about the infamous gun fighter, but his stories were *old*. 'Nonsense, boy. Bark Hooper's dead. He was a legend when my daddy was a boy.'

The kid shook his head stubbornly. 'He saw him, he says. Large as life. Had that fancy revolver on him, too. Says he saw it with his own eyes.'

'The Blind Man's Iron,' Hiccup said. He remembered those stories too – a strange three-chambered pistol that Hooper had worn on his hip for nearly a century. The story went that Hooper scratched the name of his enemy onto a bullet and, when fired from that gun, it *always* hit its target. 'That would come in handy for Friday, I have to admit.'

'If you ask him, he might let you borrow it,' the boy said.

'Borrow it? I doubt it,' Hiccup said. 'However...'

He wandered away, forgetting about the kid as an idea began to take shape. If Hooper *was* still alive, he must be ancient. He suspected that the old man was unlikely to lend him the Blind Man's Iron, but what if Hiccup was just to *take* it? Someone so old would be no match for a younger, quicker man and he certainly wouldn't have time to scratch Hiccup's name onto a bullet. Not if Hiccup approached him as a friend.

Chewing his lip and breaking into a grin, Hiccup began to pace in a circle. Yes, he thought, *it could work*.



Calamity knocked back the shot and placed it on the bar for the fourth time. Her mouth was well lubricated now but it was becoming evident that plans were not as easy to come by as liquor. No matter how much she drank, she was still going to have to face Hiccup in a real gunfight on Friday. Unless she could think of something very quickly.

'Gun fighters comin' out of the woodwork around here,' grunted the barman gently as refilled her glass.

'How so?'

'There's you and Hiccup here in town, we had Clancy Shaw come through here a week past with a bunch o' convicts for the railroad. And now I hear old Bark Hooper is across the way in Bronze Gulch. Been there a couple of days, they say.'

'Bark Hooper?' Calamity lifted the glass and downed it. 'The same Bark Hooper that killed the Farrell Twins and Pierre the Bull?'

'And Two-Barrelled Pete and Xiang Chi and probably half of Texas if you listen to everything they say about him,' nodded the barman, refilling her glass again.

'He's gotta be dead,' she said. 'My pappy used to tell me bedtime stories about him. Hooper's been in the dirt thirty years or more.'

The barman shrugged. 'I'd have agreed, but that's the rumor just the same.'

Calamity lifted her full shot glass but this time she just held it, watching the cloudy amber liquid. If Bark Hooper was by some happenstance still kicking, he had to be positively decrepit by now. Likely a man of his notoriety had gotten by on reputation alone the last few decades. No one would have the sand to call him out because of that damned gun of his – the Blind Man's Iron. But the legend said he had to carve your name on a bullet before it would work, and just how fast a draw can you be when you're over a hundred years old, anyway?

She felt the germ of an idea taking root in the back of her mind. What if she could somehow get that gun away from him? Shouldn't be that hard – the old guy was probably as brittle as a clay pot and a good shove down a flight of stairs would do the trick. She could collect the pistol and then that peacock Hiccup was as good as dead.

Well, whadya know, she thought to herself. *Guess plans ain't so hard to come by after all.*



Hooper always placed three bullets on the table when he sat down in a saloon. He'd been doing it for as long as he could remember and although there was no particular significance to the ritual, it scared the hell out of the patrons and always guaranteed him a quiet drink.

He sat in a choice corner table, sipping a mug of cool milk and watching the afternoon sun lance through the windows to turn the upright cartridges to fingers of brass fire. He'd been in town for four days and today was the first day the barman hadn't broken into a sweat when he walked through the door. That was progress of a sort.

Hooper had decided he quite liked the town of Bronze Gulch – it was quiet and unassuming and had nothing in it to draw trouble. No bank, no railroad, no nearby ranch full of bawdy cow hands, just a handful of decent folks scratching a modest living from the dry earth. This far into his dotage, Hooper was appreciative of the tranquility. At the ripe age of one hundred and twenty,

he slept four hours a night and existed on a diet of soup and soft fruit. He'd travelled a lot of rough road and had experienced his share of excitement. These days he was happy with a juicy peach and some shade from the midday sun.

The barman came over with a clay jug of milk. 'A refill, Mr. Hooper?'

The ancient gunslinger shook his head. 'This is fine, son.'

The man nodded, glanced nervously at the bullets and forced a smile. 'My wife's got some barley and onion soup on the stove. Should be ready in a half hour or so.'

Hooper smacked his old purpled lips. 'Sounds good. Put me down for a bowl.'

The barman retreated, looking relieved that the old gunslinger was so easy to placate. It was true that most everyone was respectful when they found out who he was; with the Blind Man's Iron on his hip it was difficult not to be recognized. The distinctive triangular bullet drum and the glowing butter-colored soulstone set into the knotwood grip made the gun almost impossible to miss.

He drew it surreptitiously and regarded it under the table. The grip was worn smooth and fitted his hand perfectly from almost a hundred years of use. The engravings that had once covered the barrel had all but vanished with the erosion of time but the potency of the weapon was stronger than ever – he could feel it prickling against his skin like static. Hooper didn't remember how many men he had killed with the pistol, but he knew that it drew strength from every death, and over the decades, its power had magnified.

He slid it away almost shamefully, pushing it deep into its holster and going back to his milk. Legends were funny things, utterly detached from the truth and yet it was the legend that everyone remembered.

A man stepped into the saloon. He looked utterly out of place with expensive clothing and an ornamental gun belt. He was resting his gloved hands on his pistols in what he wanted to be a casual manner, but to the old gunslinger, it looked more like insecurity. Hooper's eyes met this new arrival's, and he knew in that instant that his pleasant stay in Bronze Gulch was drawing to a rapid close.

That had to be him – that wrinkled old bald guy in the corner. A good gun fighter would always sit with a view of the door. The way he met Hiccup's gaze was another clue – no curiosity, no fear, just cool appraisal.

And there were the three bullets standing on the table. Hiccup swallowed at the sight of them. *What's that all about?* The Blind Man's Iron only held three rounds – was he suggesting he was available for hire? Or that he'd unloaded the gun? If so, Hiccup's luck was improving.

Still, the bullets sitting there openly on the table made him unaccountably nervous, and he went to the bar rather than directly to the old man. The bartender had a guarded expression of disapproval on his face but made no outright mention of the guns on Hiccup's hips.

He took a bottle of whiskey and two glasses and walked back across the room. The old man watched him come. He was drinking from a mug, but he set it down as Hiccup drew near.

'Help you, youngster?' the old man grunted when he reached his table.

Hiccup wasn't certain how to respond. Would it be considered rude if he sat down uninvited? Should he be cordial? Obsequious? Should he use bravado? Would Hooper respect a show of strength as befitted a fellow gun fighter? Would he take it as an insult?

'You lost, kid?' the gravelly old man asked. Hiccup realized he was standing there with his hands full and still hadn't spoken. He sat down abruptly, realized what he'd done and almost stood again.

'Kid?' The old man leaned forward a touch on his seat. 'You okay?'

Hiccup licked his lips and cleared his throat. 'You Bark Hooper?'

The old man watched him for a while, not in any hurry to speak. 'Heard o' him,' he commented eventually.

Hiccup cleared his throat again. That wasn't the answer he expected. 'Are you Bark Hooper?' he asked again.

The old man crinkled his face. 'What's the matter, kid? He owe you money or somethin'?'

'Money?' Hiccup was confused. 'No.'

'You sure seem in an awful rush to meet him.'

'I have a job for him.'

The old man settled back in his chair and took another drink from his mug. 'He's retired.'

'So you *are* Bark Hooper.'

'Not me, kid,' he said. 'You just bought your whiskey from him. He runs this place.'

Hiccup twisted in his seat. *The bartender?* That guy looked no older than fifty and would probably have jumped ten feet in the air with a good *boo!* He turned back to throw scorn at the old man's deception and found a finger pointing at his face, the gnarly thumb cocked back like a hammer.

'Bang,' Hooper said dryly.

Hiccup felt his face flush. Here he was thinking about just pistol-whipping the old fool and strolling out with his famous revolver and he'd been blind-sided like it was the easiest thing in the world. He banged the whiskey bottle down on the table hard enough to rattle the bullets. 'What in blazes was that for?'

'That there's a free lesson in how to get as old as me,' the wrinkled man said, lowering his 'gun'. His hands were so wrinkled and calloused they looked like dried wood, but his long fingers were steady when he set them on the table. There was no hint of a tremor. That also worried Hiccup.

'That's the only one you get,' Hooper continued.

Hiccup thrust out his chest, hoping to salvage some dignity. 'Do I look like I need a lesson?'

The old man looked at him over the rim of his mug. 'Yup,' he said.

'I'd come here to offer you a deal,' Hiccup said, setting a shot glass in front of Hooper. 'Thought you'd join me in a drink.'

'Can't drink that rotgut no more,' Hooper grumbled, pulling a face. 'Too many cheap bottles in too many backwater towns. Milk's all I take, these days. That and a little prune juice to keep me reg'lar.' He grinned for the first time.

Hiccup uncorked the bottle and poured himself a shot. 'I have a job for you, Mr. Hooper. A very lucrative one.'

'Ain't interested,' the old man said at once. 'I've retired.'

'You haven't even heard my proposal yet.'

'Ain't interested, I told you.'

'But-'

'Son,' the old man cut in, annoyance beginning to squeeze his wrinkled face. 'Right now you're fast-talkin' your way into a pine box. I'm sittin' here tryin' to enjoy my afternoon and you're beginnin' to bother me. Two ways I c'n see to get my afternoon back – you c'n move to another table or I c'n put a bullet in you. I don't care much whether you're outta that chair or dead in it so long as you quit your jawin'.'

Hiccup wanted to speak, but he found that his tongue had turned to glue. Bark Hooper had a discouraging expression on his face – namely one of mild annoyance, like he was about to swat this annoying fly and go back to his milk.

'Right,' he murmured, scraping to his feet. He half-walked to the next table, remembered the whiskey bottle, retrieved it and pulled out a chair at the next table. Then he remembered the whiskey glasses and gathered them up with trembling fingers. 'Right,' he said again, subsiding to the other chair, unable to meet Hooper's eye.

The old man settled back and took another sip of milk. He used a long finger to adjust one of the bullets in front of him – returning them to a perfect line once more and his expression softened, like everything was right with the world again.

Damn it, damn it, damn it, Hiccup thought to himself, hunched over his table. That arrogant, wrinkled, doddering old fool. How dare he dismiss him like some sort of schoolboy? Didn't he know who he was dealing with?

The trouble was, he probably didn't. Bark Hooper came from an era of legends like Black Dog Gangrel and Gunter Klegge and the Mountain Man. *I'll be a legend too,* Hiccup thought, *just as soon as I get that damned revolver away from him.*

He was still scheming on a way to catch the old buzzard off guard when Calamity Chance stepped into the saloon.

That had to be him – that shriveled old prune in the corner with the clay mug. He didn't look like much, more like somebody's grand-paw than a gun fighting legend, but old age stripped the dignity from everyone in the end. And looky there – Wild-Eye Hiccup sitting at the next table, looking like a kid caught with his hand in the cookie jar.

Calamity grinned. Well, well – she wasn't the only one to figure old Hooper was ripe for the plucking, then. She strode confidently across the room until she noticed three bullets lined up carefully on the table in front of Hooper and the steam leaked out of her strides. *What's that mean?* She ground to a stop in the middle of saloon. *Does that mean he'll kill anyone that comes close? That's he's gunnin' for somebody?*

She wiped her damp palms on her ratty furs and hovered indecisively. In the end, it was Hooper himself that broke the spell. 'Help you, ma'am?' he asked.

'Hooper? *Bark* Hooper?' she asked.

The old man took his time observing her. 'Heard o' him,' he said.

'Mr. Hooper, my name's Calamity Chance, and I wuz hopin' to take up a moment o' your time.'

'You've done that already,' he said. It was difficult to read the old man – his face was very still and she couldn't be quite sure whether he was gently pulling her leg or suggesting she should be someplace else. She glanced at those bullets again and swallowed. *Well*, she thought. *I'm here now.*

She slid into the chair that was already pulled out from Hooper's table and leaned forward, giving him her most earnest grin. 'Mr. Hooper, I-'

'I ain't him,' the old man interrupted, nodding over her shoulder. 'You want that feller over there.'

She twisted in her seat, feeling suddenly like a fool. *Of course*, Bark Hooper wouldn't have looked so old and worn-down. He'd be like she'd always imagined, with a

long mane of silver-gray hair and a chin like a piece of rock. Only, when she examined the other patrons in the bar, two fat cowboys and a pasty-faced bartender didn't quite seem to fit the bill. 'I don't see-' she began, but when she turned back, there was a calloused finger pointing at her face.

'Bang,' the old man said.

Calamity heard Hiccup sniggering behind her. 'Uh...' she said.

'Like I told your friend, there,' Hooper said. 'You wear iron, you'd best not turn your back on anybody else who does the same. That's why I'll be eatin' soup later today instead o' mud.'

Calamity was utterly mortified. This old guy *had* to be Bark Hooper and he'd just blind-sided her with no effort whatsoever and, to make matters worse, he'd done it in front of her arch-enemy, Wild-Eye.

'Waitamminute, now,' she began.

Hooper held up a big pale hand. 'You get yer free lesson like everyone else,' he said. 'You're on your way to bein' a better killer. Ain't that what you come here for?'

'No, I-'

'Excuse my frankness, ma'am, but you lie worse than you shoot, if all them long-irons is any judge. Never understood the need to have more guns than hands, 'less you plan to do a lot o' missin'.'

'Well, I-'

'In case you hadn't noticed, missy,' Hooper said, leaning close, 'this conversation is now over. I'd be duly grateful if you vacated my table.'

Calamity stared slack-jawed. This wasn't how it was supposed to happen. Hooper was meant to be a trembling, trusting old fool who'd fawn appreciatively when she helped him up to his room where she could club him like a seal. He wasn't meant to ridicule her in front of that chuckling rodent Wild-Eye and then dismiss her like she was some sort of servant. She rose to her feet, indignant. 'Now just a darn-'

'Y'get the same choice as yer friend, there,' he interrupted. 'Y'can walk out, or I'll have the undertaker drag you out. Either way is fine by me.'

Wild-Eye was giggling at her back and she immediately did what all cowards do in such circumstances – she rounded on the weaker opponent. ‘You think this is funny, you varmint?’

‘Why don’t you do like Mr. Hooper says and get on out of here?’ Hiccup sneered. ‘Leave the men to talk business.’

Calamity deliberately reached out and took Hiccup’s shot of whiskey, necked it and dropped his empty glass on the floor. ‘Friday’s such a long way off,’ she growled at him. ‘And here you are, plain as day.’

Wild-Eye’s sniggering choked off. He had evidently become aware of the fact that he was sitting behind a table with no easy draw on his side-arms, while Calamity was standing with her hands dangling at her hips, inches from iron. ‘You weren’t so eager this morning,’ he said.

‘Changed my mind,’ she replied. ‘A lady’s prerogative to be fickle.’

‘Like the time you lit out on Sheriff Crabtree and his posse when they went up against Ned Straw’s gang,’ Hiccup said. ‘*After* you were paid, of course.’

‘Well then, we’d best mention your own hasty exit when you found out Red Tree Hill was lookin’ for you after you took advantage o’ one o’ his daughters,’ she said with a nasty smile. ‘As I heard it, you almost outran your horse, *after* you fell off it.’

Hiccup rose slowly to his feet, his face pale and angry. ‘Didn’t you *eat* yours while you were hiding from Fat Tom Beef? I recall that was after he found out you’d been boasting to anyone who’d listen that you’d killed him in Greenrock.’

‘I thought he *wuz* dead,’ she snarled. ‘Just turns out he wuz so fat the bullet didn’t go deep enough.’

‘That’s the trouble with small calibers,’ Hiccup commented. ‘Fine for killing cats, but not so good when you’re up against an opponent your own size.’

Hooper watched the two of them bickering. There was obviously bad blood between them, but this arguing

was making his head ache. And to top it off, his milk was getting warm.

Frowning and muttering, he drew the Blind Man’s Iron and broke the barrel to check the load. Two chambers were loaded, the third empty – the ancient revolver had a hair trigger and he’d learned long ago to leave the hammer on an empty chamber. Well, two ought to be enough. He snapped the gun closed and struggled slowly to his feet, old knees trembling with the effort.

The peacock was the first to notice him rising with the gun in his fist and took a terrified step back. Hooper felt the Blind Man’s Iron throb in his hand and the other man’s eyes washed over with a honey glaze in the same instant. Him first, then, he thought.

Hiccup saw Bark Hooper getting to his feet. And then he saw he had drawn his legendary pistol. It was right about then that he panicked.

He went for his guns as fast as he could, but the sun seemed to come through the window right at that instant and his vision turned the color of wheat. Even as he was clearing Mary-Beth and Marjory-Ellen from their holsters the old man was moving. Unnaturally fast for such an oldster, he somehow got around to the right, almost to the bar before Hiccup could draw a bead.

Calamity’s face turned from a puckered frown into a gape of horror as he skinned his irons: she staggered backwards clawing for a pistol of her own, half-drawing it along with a handful of fur coat. Hooper was the real threat, however, and Hiccup fired at the old coot as he danced up on to the bar. His first shot blew splinters from the wood at Hooper’s feet and the second shattered a bottle between his legs. The sun was making things, difficult – his entire field of vision swam like heat distortion and Hooper was the flame at the center of it, flickering and jittering along the bar with more agility than anyone in his dotage had a right to.

Hiccup tracked the leaping mirage, blasting with both his ladies. Glass shattered and wood chips zipped through the air while the other startled patrons of the saloon threw themselves out of the way.

Hooper watched the peacock swing about with both his absurd pistols up – he tracked right past the terrified woman in the raccoon hat and started shooting holy hell out of the bar.

That was the way with the weaker ones, he mused as he drew back the Blind Man's Iron's hammer. The power of the weapon had always given him an edge. With strong or determined men it wouldn't have been more than a flicker or shimmer, just enough to throw off their aim for a second – back then that was all the edge he needed. But as the years had passed, the power in the stone had grown exponentially and whatever it was his opponents saw (or *thought* they saw) became so much more defined. Especially the weak and the cowardly ones. More than once he'd simply walked away while they shot all over creation at ghosts and mirages. But these two idiots had got his hackles up. And his milk was warm.

He took careful aim.

Calamity tripped over her chair as she backed away from Wild-Eye. She went for the big clockwork .44 in her belt, but snagged her coat and ended up with a handful of both as she fell on her butt.

For an instant she thought she was dead, but Wild-Eye had already swung past her and was blasting at the far side of the room with both guns, his mouth open in a scream. She glanced that way and saw flying glass and wood splinters and cowering patrons, but no evidence of an ambush.

Bark Hooper was on his feet and he had drawn the Blind Man's Iron. She stared at it with naked avarice. There was a buttery yellow light flaring from between Hooper's fingers as he drew down on Wild-Eye and pulled back the hammer with a calloused thumb. She watched the triangular barrel revolve as the weapon prepared to fire.

And she saw her chance. With the old man *and* Wild-Eye distracted, she was in a perfect position to kill them both. She fought her big clockwork revolver free of her coat and raised it to take Hooper out.

Right at that moment, the old gun slinger leapt into the air like a cat. Higher and higher he went, his thin old man limbs working like a boat's oars. *Lord Almighty*, she gaped, *he's climbing up the wall!*

She started shooting.

Hooper was pretty happy with his aim – more or less dead center of the peacock's chest. He used to go for the head shot but these days his eyes weren't so good. Either way, the Blind Man's Iron chambered a custom .50 black-powder round; head or chest made little difference in terms of lethality – it'd put a hole in him the size of a blacksmith's fist.

And then the soulstone pulsed in his hand again and that silly mare in the fur coat opened up – shooting all the way up the wall and across the ceiling. Debris rained down as her big pistol smashed grapefruit sized holes in the plaster.

Hooper squinted through the billowing plaster dust and was about to take his shot when a big chunk cracked him on the head and he sat down hard, dazed.

Hiccup watched in astonishment as old Hooper leapt from the bar to the nearest table. He couldn't believe such an old man could be so nimble.

'Damnit, there he goes!' he shrieked, firing again. He smashed another whiskey bottle and hit the fleeing bartender in the leg, but Hooper somehow seemed to come through unscathed.

The sun was still in his eyes, which didn't quite seem to make sense as he now had his back to the windows. He squinted and tried to shield his face with one hand, still shooting with the other. Hooper zigged and zagged, infuriatingly slipping clear of his every shot. Instead, Hiccup hit the bartender again, a few inches higher on the same leg.

'Damnit!' the man screeched, clutching his injured leg. 'He's over that way!'

Hiccup pivoted and, sure enough, there was Hooper jiggling like a candle flame in front of the window. He fired again, putting a hole in the plate glass. Across the street, someone screamed and toppled off their horse.

Marjory-Ellen clicked dry, but there were still a couple of rounds left in Mary-Beth. He kept shooting until she too was empty.

Bullets were coming at her from somewhere. She could hear them zipping through the air like angry hornets. She rolled over and got to her knees. There was Hooper – standing right there in the middle of the room in a fancy waistcoat and waving two Blind Man's Irons. Nobody had ever said anything about there being two. The old goat was desperately reloading with twitching fingers. This was her chance.

The heavy clockwork pistol was empty – she dropped it and drew two revolvers from underarm holsters and blazed at him. Bullets hit the tables and chairs around him; wood chips swirled in the air like dust through a sunbeam. Old Hooper flinched and almost dropped one of his pistols. She kept shooting and suddenly both pistols were empty, but Hooper had jerked back and there was a smoking hole in his silk waistcoat.

Hiccup had no idea where Hooper had got that raccoon hat from, but the old buzzard had just shot him through the shoulder. The pain was tremendous, but he'd managed to reload Marjory-Ellen and now there would be a reckoning. He steadied the glinting revolver with both hands as the old gunslinger got to his feet and fired with the sight set square between Hooper's eyes.

Calamity shrieked when the toe of her boot was shot off – there was no time to discover if any toes had gone with it. She yanked the twin pistols on her hips free and emptied the little .30 caliber chambers into her foe.

Wild-Eye felt like he was being repeatedly punched in the stomach and thighs. He staggered back and dropped into his chair while Marjory-Ellen barked one last time.

He saw old Hooper take the shot high up in his chest and reel backwards, slamming into the bar and sliding down it to the floor. *Got you, you dirty old trickster*, he thought. That was when he noticed his waistcoat was full of holes.

The little .30 caliber revolvers were still clicking impotently as Calamity slithered down the bar. She had felt that heavy impact from the Blind Man's Iron in her chest – it wasn't painful as such, but she couldn't seem to get a decent breath in. Her legs had turned to rubber, too, so she thought it best to have a sit down.

Hooper was glaring at her in a mixture of triumph and pain, but she wasn't quite done. *One final surprise, old man*, she thought. Grunting with the effort, she reached behind her to grip her final pistol – a long-barrel Dragoon. As much as she struggled, however, the weapon wouldn't budge.

Hiccup sat there, feeling the life draining out of him. He felt incredibly heavy, and both his pistols were empty. They seemed such a long way away on the end of his arms that he decided it would be too much effort to reload them again. He was fairly certain that Hooper was dead and so he allowed himself to relax into the chair. The room was starting to whirl around his ears and so he thought that letting his head flop back and his mouth hang open might be a good idea, too.

Calamity strained with the last of her strength and, with a loud ripping of fabric, triumphantly drew her Dragoon pistol. Along with her pantaloons hanging from the end of the barrel.

'Oh darn it,' she bubbled. 'Not again.'

She slumped over quite dead and as she hit the floor, the Dragoon fired. The bullet punched another hole in the ceiling, but her silky drawers snapped high into the air, whereupon they spiraled lazily down to settle delicately over Hiccup's upturned face.



Hooper groaned as he righted himself, delicately touching the raw knot on his head. For several minutes he thought he was having a nightmare – screaming and gunfire were often all he remembered in the morning – but when he opened his eyes he was sitting in a chair and all around him was carnage.

The walls and furniture were all bullet-chewed and there was hardly a mirror or piece of glass left in the place. A mist of gunpowder smoke hung in the air and... and there was a feller over there in a chair, dead as a nail with a woman's pantaloons on his face. Hooper had seen a lot of strange stuff in his time, and he was pretty sure that ranked up there with the best of them.

The raccoon woman was slumped against the bar a little way off, just as dead.

'Oh well,' he said to himself and struggled to his feet.

As he was dusting plaster off his clothes, he noticed a young dirty-blond boy peering in at the wreckage with big round eyes.

'Get on out of here, boy,' he grunted. 'No need for young'uns to see this.'

'They said Friday,' the boy complained. 'They wuzn't gonna fight till Friday.'

'I suppose one day is as good as another to get yourself killed,' the old man mused.

'Mr. Hooper. C'n I see your gun?'

The old gunslinger was picking the bullets up from the table. 'What ever for?'

'So's I c'n see them dead folks' names scratched in the bullets.'

'Oh that?' Hooper snorted. 'I made that up.'

The boy looked aghast. 'So the stories? They ain't true? About you killin' Two-Barrel Pete and Pierre the Bull and all them others?'

'Oh, I killed them alright,' Hooper acknowledged, shuffling towards the door. 'Only, I didn't scratch their names into nothin'. Didn't even know who I was gunnin' against half the time, not 'till later, anyways. No, I just started that ol' tale up to keep people off my back. Not many men willin' to speak up against you when they think you got a bullet with their name on it.'

The boy was still looking at the bodies. Hooper patted him on the shoulder. 'Smoke and mirrors, son. Misdirection beats a quick gun hand every time. Besides, when you're thick as a tree stump like them two over there, they're more than capable of doin' themselves in without me even gettin' involved.'

'So,' the kid was frowning with concentration. 'If you don't scratch people's names into bullets, what does the Blind Man's Iron really do?'

The old gun slinger grinned. 'Ah,' he said. 'Now *that* is another story.'

And with that, Bark Hooper hobbled out into the afternoon sun to find a nice peach.

The Rifleman

Percival Jones reached into the pouch on his belt and pulled out some chewing tobacco. He rolled it between his fingers for a moment before depositing it between lip and gum. He made no attempt to chew quietly as he studied the woman in front of him. Ellsa Milles was clearly a woman of money; she wore the sort of long dress that would be ruined doing a day's work, especially out here on the frontier town where he had been dispatched to retrieve her. Why she was this far from civilization wasn't his concern, and he was already a little irritated that it had taken him several days to even track her down.

She batted her painted eyes and adjusted her hat, clearly uncomfortable to be sitting in a saloon. Compounded upon the unsavory nature of the place, it meant sitting across from such an intimidating member of the Guild. Percival was tall, but that wasn't what made her nervous. It was that the gun he carried was larger than any she had seen before. The casual way he spun it around to lean barrel against the table warned everyone that it was for more than show.

Percival spat, and she jumped as the wad hit the side of a cup on the floor. The cup spun around for a moment, filling the room with the sound of ringing metal. "Mr. Jones—" She began, with her lips pressed together in a sign of disgust.

"Percival. Too many Jones out here." Percival rolled his tongue in his mouth, leaned back and continued to chew without taking his eyes off her.

"Percival, then." She shifted her shoulders as if saying his name somehow made her even more uncomfortable. "I was assured of Guild cooperation. It is imperative that I reach Promise safely."

"Assured?" He leaned back and rolled the tobacco around in his mouth. "How much assured?" His yellow grin was confirmation enough that while she could count on help, it was by no means going to come free of expense.

"Assurance enough." Ellsa let out her breath and reached into her bag for the scrip she had budgeted for the occasion. She placed a few strips of the colorful

paper on the table, looked at him, then added another note. Each bill had been laid with the Guild's Ram facing up and pointed towards him. The rifleman nodded, and they stood. Percival swept the papers off the table and tucked them into a pocket.

"We got a deal, then." He spat, and once more the cup on the ground spun, filling the air like a tiny bell.

Ellsa was hesitant to shake his hand and confirm the deal yet. "I won't have any of that while we're riding together, Percival." She eyed the spit cup, then looked back at him. He was pulling out another wad of chew and stuffing it into his mouth. "I won't have it all over my wagon."

"You don't have to worry about that, Miss Milles." He gave her a smile that was fouled by shreds of tobacco stuck between his teeth. "I don't ever miss."



"They're gaining." The cracking voice came from one of the riders on his left. Percival looked over at the Guild guard and shrugged. The dust cloud behind them had been growing larger for the past hour, and they could smell the rotted flesh of their pursuers on the heat of the desert wind. When the horde had first appeared, it had seemed that they were moving much too slowly to have a chance of catching the small caravan, but after a few hours, they realized that they had underestimated the speed of the undead.

"They been gaining. Don't stop. We got time." Percival pinched some of the loose tobacco from the pouch resting on his knee and stuffed it in the side of his mouth. Even in the heat of the desert, he wore a long leather jacket and wide brimmed hat. A bandanna covered his face to protect against the grit kicked up by the horses and the ancient cart dragging behind them.

"We don't have that much time, Percival." Ellsa sat on his right, looking wilted and out of place. As she spoke, she covered her mouth with a white hanky and wrinkled her nose. "They'll be on us even before we reach the old Red River."

He chewed thoughtfully for a moment, then pushed the wad against one cheek with his tongue. Barely glancing back at the dust cloud, he shrugged again. "Yep."

The lady shifted in the seat on the front of the wagon and placed a hand on the brown paper package cradled in her lap. It was wrapped loosely in paper and twine, and it hadn't left her sight in the three days of hard travel. "I certainly didn't come all this way just to—" She stopped talking as Percival rose and dropped the reins in her lap. "What is this?"

"Don't let 'em fall." He passed her the pouch of chewing tobacco and picked up the long-barreled gun that had been resting by their feet. There wasn't much room in the back of the cart, but he stepped around the expensive trunks that held the woman's luggage and sat on one of the Guild's supply crates. The lady's protests died when he lifted the gun and took aim at the shapeless horde.

Percival licked his lips, spat some of the chew over the side of the cart, and waited for the right moment. Through the scope of his rifle, he counted silhouettes to himself. With a bit of mental accounting, he could tell that they would need all the ammo on board, and maybe more, to put down so many. Undead don't usually die with a single bullet.

The echo of his first shot slammed through the otherwise quiet terrain. Ellsa inexpertly recoiled at the report, crying out and pulling back on the reins in surprise. The horses reared, and the cart pulled to a fast stop. The luggage slid towards the front, fouling the gunman's position and forcing him to brace himself to avoid a fall.

"I was surprised." Ellsa patted her forehead with her handkerchief, and then began to adjust the bobby pins holding her hat and veil in position.

Percival stepped over the divider and snatched the reins back from her. He muttered something, and then turned back to line up another shot. Bracing against the seat, he snapped the reins and the horses began to move again. He crouched to prevent pulling up on the horses'

bits, slowly let out a breath, and fired again. In the distance, one of the undead toppled over. His fingers moved rapidly, working the rifle. Another shot, it wounded but left the undead walking. Percival swore, earning himself a sidelong glance from Ellsa. That undead took another bullet to his chest and fell to be trampled by his companions.



The horses began to tire. They couldn't ride indefinitely. The undead were starting to catch up, despite Percival's efforts, and night was coming. Once he lost the light, he couldn't stymie their advance at all. He kept shooting them, reducing the horde's numbers one by one. The undead ran hard, and without the bane of exhaustion.

Now that the beasts were closer, he could make out someone in the pack riding the corpse of a once great stallion. This was the only shape in the horde without the putrid, rotting flesh that commonly marked the monsters. He tried to line up a shot, but the Resurrectionist wasn't taking any chances. A clean line of sight never materialized, perhaps a trick of the dust.

Without warning, the horses drew up short again, and Ellsa screamed. Percival looked over at her, his eyes narrowed. "I tell you—" He began, but she pointed ahead of them. Her gloved hand was trembling as it clutched the little brown package against her chest. Even before he finished turning to see what had scared her, one of the guards on horseback unleashed a pair of shots. The body fell to the ground with a thud, and it was clear even before the dust settled that this wasn't the first time that stranger had died.

Percival spat the last of his chew over the side of the cart as he saw a second dust cloud rising in the distance in front of them. "Hold on." He warned and snapped the reins. The horses charged forward and he sat facing forward, peering down his sight at the new threat. His hands moved quickly to discharge the few remaining shots in his gun and replace the cartridge with one of many pouches under his coat.



The wagon crested a small dune just as the sun began to threaten twilight, and Percival pulled them to a stop. "We'll do what we can here, while we have high ground. Then...well you'll know." He spoke to the three guardsmen who had brought their horses to stand beside him. They knew what he had left unsaid. They would need to engage the undead up close if there was to be any hope of getting through.

Percival counted about fifty undead shuffling their way towards the small crew. Most of the zombies were once men and now carried improvised weapons: hammers, axes, shovels, or in one case, the giant core of a cactus which appeared to be attached by only its thorns to the dead man's hand. They couldn't be more than a hundred paces away and were closing fast.

"I'd get down from there if I were you." Percival raised his rifle and took aim. With a short clucking noise from Percival as their cue, he and the guardsmen opened fire simultaneously. The air was filled with the smell of gunpowder and rotten flesh baking in the sun. Ellsa ducked her head and covered her mouth with her handkerchief, in a futile attempt to block out the smells of carnage. The only break in the onslaught of noise came when the Guild agents stopped to eject their spent ammo and replace it with fresh loads.

Corpses littered the sandy ground, but there were still dozens of undead moving steadily forward. More than one of them that had been put down rose up again, fighting on with half severed limbs or torsos that could no longer support the weight of their upper bodies. They were far enough back not to be a threat, but the standing zombies were getting too close for comfort.

As if driven by living intelligence, two of the undead broke through the crowd and charged at the rider nearest to the front of the cart. Percival lifted the rifle to aim and fired off two shots in quick succession. One of the undead fell in the path of the second, forcing it to stumble. It was an easy task for the well-trained guard to finish him off. One of the guards shouted, and as a group, they raced forward to engage.

Percival didn't see any more than that as several undead approached from the opposite direction. He leapt from the cart, still holding the over-sized rifle in one hand while he drew the large knife at his waist with the other. With the practiced quick movements used to reload during a gunfight, the rifleman sliced the blade through a decaying chest. He pulled it free in a shower of thick blood only to burst through the rotted head of another zombie on the back swing. "Hold this." He muttered to the creature through a self-pleasing chuckle.

Ellsa cried out and Percival shot a glance towards the woman. She was holding a shoe that she had been using to beat back a wounded zombie climbing up the side of the cart. The undead was once an older man with a big bushy mustache, now falling out in clumps. His head exploded. It took Ellsa a moment to realize that it had been Percival's shot rather than her own attack that had ended the creature's existence. The zombie fell twitching to the ground, and Percival could spare no more moments on the subject.

A slimy hand grabbed his arm, and he spun, knocking the attacker back with the butt of his rifle. There was a moment of hesitation as he realized this zombie wasn't like the others. Instead of a broken man risen from the dead, this one was an elderly woman wielding a knitting needle in place of a club. He blinked. One shot obliterated her, just as the others.

He reclaimed his knife from the fallen zombie with a "Thanks, friend" and turned to face the last of them. There were only three left, but they were spreading out to circle him. "Got half a brain left between y'all?" Without bothering to sight, he lifted the rifle and fired his last shot.

"Coulda' been more than half," He judged, taking a moment to study the grey matter suddenly splayed on the sand. One of the other zombies looked to see what he was talking about. Percival chuckled to himself, realizing the man had just enough mind left to get distracted. Its head kept going as the butt of Percival's rifle slammed into its temple. The creature spun backwards, landing face down in the sand, its neck twisted so far around that it broke open in a spray of blood.

The last zombie's eyes gleamed with dark intelligence. It approached Percival slowly, reaching out with a massive hand. In life, he would have been large and imposing, but bloated by death, he was nothing short

of terrifying. Fear flashed through the rifleman but passed as quickly as it came. The gore-covered knife flew from his hand and landed squarely in the middle of the zombie's chest. Instead of falling over, it reached down and tugged at it curiously. Percival took his chance and flew in with the rifle swinging. It caught the side of the zombie's face, but it might have hit solid rock for all the effect it had. Percival realized he had put himself in a very bad position.

The dead man's iron-like hands wrapped around Percival's throat and lifted him up as his rifle fell to the ground. He didn't have a chance to worry about it. Finesse lost, he tried to dig the hands away from his throat but succeeded only in pulling bits of flesh away from bone. He reached out to grab at the knife in its chest but found it wedged too tightly into bone. Percival's lungs were burning, and his vision began to narrow. The zombie shook him, encouraging him to die faster. As the world began to go black, he heard the echo of two more pistol shots. The hands loosened enough for him to gasp a pull of air and he desperately yanked the fingers from his throat. He hit the ground moments before the massive zombie did.

"Not your normal resser." He muttered, allowing himself a moment to sit on the ground to catch his breath. The guard nodded his agreement as he reloaded his pistol.

The trampled bodies littering the ground let off a greasy stench. More than half were unrecognizable chunks of meat, while others rendered a disturbing portrait of bodies cut. The hot dirt began to mix with pools of blood.

Percival recovered his rifle as he rose. He checked the sight and made a small adjustment. The knife was still too tightly bound in the behemoth's chest to extract. With a shrug he shouted to his crew, "Keep moving." The dust behind them was larger than ever.



Ellsa was paler than normal as she sat next to Percival on the bench, still holding one shoe through the

bouncing of the wagon. She pinched it between two fingers, touching it as little as possible. Percival looked at the shoe, then reached across her to reclaim his tobacco pouch. Ellsa flinched and pressed the small package against her chest protectively. "Thanks," he said as he pulled out a thick wad to chew on while he went about the process of reloading and checking his rifle's mechanisms. The terrified horses pulled eagerly at their bits, unused to combat like the mounts of the Guild guards.

He worked in silence for a while, cleaning and reloading the weapons of the rest of the crew, from his vantage on the wagon bench. "Didn't meet no ressessers on the way in, did we, boys?" The forced conversational tone was enough to make Ellsa sit straighter in her seat. She had sacrificed her handkerchief to clean her shoe and was fully shod once again. "There's gotta be something real special to raise so many zombies for it." This time he looked at her, dispelling the illusion that his observations weren't questions.

"I don't recall agreeing to tell you my secrets when we made this deal, Mr. Jones." Ellsa wrapped her thin hands over the brown paper package. The terrified look she had worn earlier was fading, as if all she had needed was both shoes on her feet to recover her poise.

Percival spat, ignoring the use of his proper name in the face of his curiosity. He opened his mouth to press the matter further when one of the other guards spoke. "They're in range for you." The rifleman nodded and prepared his weapon to start firing again.

"You'll tell me when we're done with this, Miss Milles, or you can walk to Promise." He tossed the reins into her lap again and stepped into the back of the cart. Over the next half hour, he had shot more undead than he cared to count, considering the size of the mob still gaining on them. He looked ahead and saw that they were approaching a man-made passage through one of the taller mountains. There would be a small supply outpost inside that could keep them stocked with enough ammo to take care of the horde, and the small entrance would bottleneck them. The impossible fight was suddenly less hopeless than it had been a moment before.

Night was pressing in, the last glimmering of daylight fading like a dream. "In there." He ordered, stepping back to take control of the cart. He didn't bother to sit, but guided the horses from a standing position. He whipped the reins, and they surged ahead. Lathered in sweat and

panting pitifully, the horses labored their way inside the pass. A small wooden lean-to marked a defensive position, nearby would be a hidden supply... if someone hadn't found it already.

"Find the ammo stores, then come back here. Miss Milles, I want you to wait inside that room and don't come out until I give you the all clear." He nodded to the small shack. Ellsa looked at it and frowned.

Placards were posted throughout the small area, detailing the best way to take out some of the more common Neverborn in the area. Years before, the sheriff of Promise had hired the Ortega family to create these outposts as a measure of safety for travelers.

When she turned to protest being stuck in the dark room, Ellsa saw that Percival was already busy setting up for the onslaught. One of the guards had found a second rifle, which was shorter and rustier than his own, but would allow him to shoot twice as much before stopping to reload. A large box of shells sat on his other side, and she saw now that one of the guards had been hurt in the last fight. His arm was torn open and inflamed as if it was already rife with infection. Instead of shooting, he would sit by Percival's side, reloading whichever rifle he wasn't using at the time. The other two guards prepared to take turns shooting and reloading their own guns, keeping up a continuous stream of fire at the entryway. "Let them come." Percival spat again, rolled his shoulders, and then took aim at the door.

The zombies didn't take long to catch up, and soon he was shooting them down in ones and pairs as the fastest creatures made their way into the defensive position. The bodies were piling up, making footing even more difficult for their incoming allies. Percival entertained the idea that they might be able to pile up enough bodies to blockade their enemy on the other side of the pass. Forcing them to go around the small mountain would give his crew a significant lead.

He had gone through three repetitions of switching guns when a strange breeze blew into the small shelter. It wasn't cold or even wind as far as he could tell, but it made the hair on their arms and the backs of their necks stand on end. The zombies they had already gunned down gave out pitiful groans and rose upwards as if they were puppets on strings. Each time they managed to shoot one down, it rose again as soon as there was space between its rotten companions.

Four ranks deep, the zombies moved towards the crew. There was enough room for two carts to pass side by side, but the mass of dead bodies still fought over each other, each attempting to get to the front of the mob. Despite the futility of it, Percival and the other guards continued to fire. He hoped, for a brief moment, that Ellsa would have the presence of mind to run for it. The horde was upon them. Percival could smell the stench of the rotting flesh in their teeth as he reloaded and fired as fast as possible.

Then, the entire mob stopped moving at once. They stood impossibly still. Percival stared at them for a moment before looking over to one of the guards. With a shrug he fired point blank at the nearest target. It collapsed to the ground, and then pulled itself up again, worse for the hit, but still moving.

"Amelee!" A man's voice echoed in the small through-way and the Guild members looked at each other in confusion.

"No one called that here..." Percival yelled back. He still had his gun trained on an immobile zombie, so when they moved again, he fired without thinking. Two shots went off in quick succession as the other two armed guards followed suit. They kept shooting until they had spent their loaded ammo. Percival was reaching for the second gun when he realized the zombies had cleared a path in the center.

"No need for that." A man walked between the parted undead. He was humble looking, but the cut of his clothes suggested that he was not without means. Beneath a small bowler cap, his hair was pin straight and exactly the same color as Ellsa's. "Where is my sister? I know she's here, I can feel it in her bones."

"Don't you be coming one step closer, now." Percival raised the rifle at him, and the Resurrectionist paused. Luck would have it that his personalized rifle would be the one out of ammo, but he was a good enough shot with any gun, assuming a straight barrel.

The man looked at the old long arm, then at the uniformed guards still dumbly holding their expended pistols. "Guild." His lips peeled back in disgust and the undead shifted, more eager than ever to tear their flesh apart. "This hasn't got anything to do with the Guild." He took another step forward. "Get on out before my pets here decide they haven't had enough to eat."

Percival adjusted his grip on the rifle and was raising it to his eye when Ellsa flew from the shelter, her expensive shoes causing her to run unsteadily in the dirt. "Percival, don't!" His trigger finger twitched as he jerked, the shot meant for the man went wide, blowing the head off the zombie to his left. Ellsa turned her attention to the well-dressed gentleman. "Trevyr, you better listen to this gent here. He is obligated to keep me safe."

The man looked at his sister and scratched at a bit of stubble growing in on his chin. "I would let all go off, if you gave me what was mine, Ame." His winter-blue eyes flicked down to the brown package she never set down.

"Father left it in my hands. He knew you'd abuse it. It's a treasure, not a tool." She held the small item so tightly that the wrapping threatened to tear.

Trevyr took another step towards them and another shudder rolled through the zombie horde as they sensed the tension of their master. "This is your last chance. If you weren't my sister..."

"Percival, if he takes one more step..." She was trembling now and retreated further behind her protector. Still the man came forward, but this time instead of shuddering, the horde moved with him.

The single shot rattled the pass walls, nearly burning through the air. Trevyr reached up to touch the hole in his chest, then looked at the rifleman in disbelief. His zombies' froze in place. Many of them fell to the ground, returned to the peace of death, but some were made of sterner, hungrier stuff.

"Go," shouted Percival Jones. As one, the four Guild members turned and fled. Behind them came the sounds of flesh meeting flesh. It seemed that without a master, such constructs would turn even on their creator.



Several miles beyond the pass Percival called for a stop so they could re-arm the weapons and bandage the now pus-filled wound of his fellow. They built no fire, despite the rapidly dropping temperature. Ellsa wore a heavy horse blanket like a cloak, as the Guild members huddled in their own coats. "That man called you something else." He had dug out a few supplies and let the other guards figure out the best way to treat the wound.

"I used to go by my middle name when I was younger. My brother never grew out of our childhood it seems." Her voice was softer now, shaking. Perhaps seeing her brother shot while leading an army of zombies had broken something inside her. Percival nodded, not pressing the point. He understood wanting to be called something else. It didn't take much longer until they were on their way again, rushing before the infected wound turned septic. "Do you think he might have lived?" Her voice was small, and he couldn't tell what she wanted for an answer.

Either way, it didn't change the outcome. "I don't ever, miss."

The rest of the ride to Promise passed without event. Each man, and the lady, walked or rode a beleaguered horse in silence. Percival and his crew saw Ellsa off at the edge of Promise where she could manage to find a room for herself. She paid extra, for their troubles, and Percival accepted it without additional words. Then, as per protocol, they were to talk to the sheriff ... after a drink.



The sheriff was a large man, tall, wide-shouldered, and big around the belly. Working in a place like this, you had to be physically imposing. Promise was on the edge of civilization, but that also meant it was on the edge of frontier. "Where the hell you been, Percival?" He rose to his feet so quickly that his chair fell over backwards.

"Been taking Miss Milles 'cross the badlands." Percival frowned and crossed his arms. "It weren't easy; she got one hell of a brother." He pulled out a chair and sat, but the captain wasn't ready to calm down.

"Ellsa Milles ain't got no brother." The words hung in the air, and Percival felt a slow horror begin to creep into his stomach. It wasn't just that revelation but the way the sheriff was worked up. You didn't last long in a town like this if you let every setback rile you. On top of that, the Milles were a rich family, though fresh through the Breach, they had money, but few knew them well. They would be perfect for...

"Where's the real Ellsa Milles?" Percival stood and began to reach for his rifle, though he knew there was no one handy to shoot that would fix this mistake. The two men looked at each other, and then together, they ran for the door. There was only one person in town who could answer that question, and she had just been left out of their sight.



Ellsa or Amelee could not be found. She had stepped into the local inn and then slipped right out the back door. Two streets down, she stopped at a house that had the Guild's Ram symbol above the door. At a glance it seemed to be a show of support, but looking closer, she could see there were small symbols carved into the wood beneath. She knocked twice, hesitated, then knocked again. A female voice answered from inside. "Who's there?"

"The new moon, under which all our dreams will come true. Let me in, Stella." After everything she had been through, she didn't have the patience for secrecy games. The door opened to reveal a hooded figure. Through the shadows, her stark white hair stood out, a

shocking burst of pale around her dark face. She motioned Ellsa in before closing the door behind her guest and drawing two locks for safety.

"Let me see it." She threw back the hood of the cloak and reached out a grasping hand, but Ellsa drew it back.

"We had a deal." She reminded her. Stella frowned and reached into her pocket, handing over something wet and meat-like, wrapped in wax paper. Ellsa took the object and studied it. It seemed to be what she wanted. She passed the brown package into the white-haired woman's eager hand.

"The Milles stone." The old lady breathed and undid the string. Brown paper fell away, leaving a bright soulstone in her hand. It was pale purple and glowed with the trapped power of dozens of souls. "The Milles never knew what they had. They were Earthside when the Breach originally closed." She moved the soulstone into her other hand and drew out the chain attached to it. "They passed it down from parent to child but traditionally only on death. You see they didn't believe in magic." She pulled the chain over her head, and the stone settled on her chest. Her hair began to sway in the air like kelp on a wave. The lanterns in the room flickered. "A hundred years..." Ellsa took a step back. "What difference will one more soul make?" There was a sudden crack as the lantern erupted into blue flame. A whip of blue fire lashed out, striking Ellsa in the chest.

The air smelled of burning pork as Stella stepped over to the body of the woman most recently called Ellsa Milles. The stone glowed a brighter purple for a moment as it drew in the younger woman's last moments. The difference was small, but Stella could feel it. "Hm. Even a lost soul like yours...." She left the room by the rear door, locked it behind her, and tossed the key into dust.



MALIFAUx



The Ten Thunders have come to Malifaux.

Having extended its reach across the Breach, the Katanaka Clan is no longer content to skulk in the shadows as it did in the Three Kingdoms. It craves power, the kind of real power that has eluded the Clan since its dishonor hundreds of years ago. As the shadows gather, the Ten Thunders has its agents in places of power and influence throughout Malifaux.

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