

The Auction of Unlived Years



Dungeon Master's edition

Ilya Sedge represents six hundred Low Lantern residents whose wages, homes, and even childhood recollections are collateral for debts they inherited. She has learned that proof of the original fraud survives as Lot 17 in tonight's private auction. At sunset she offers the party three possible covers-wealthy buyers, contracted servants, or brokers presenting a counterfeit memory-and promises 2,000 gp, safe lodging in Bellwater, and one legal favor from Low Lantern if they return with either Nara Vey's testimony or evidence strong enough to force a provenance hearing.

OPENING READ-ALoud

Auction lanterns hang from Saint Orra's bell tower. Her weathered statue holds a brass price board above the flooded steps, where masked guests disembark. The shrine doors grind open. Behind your boat, Low Lantern's families wait in silence. Which promise do you make before crossing the water?

Credits

Contains material from the SRD 5.1, © Wizards of the Coast LLC, available under CC BY 4.0. Bespoke archive procedures and enemy profiles are homebrew.

Overview

A D&D 5e-compatible one-shot for 4-5 characters of levels 8-10

Runtime: About 5 hours

Primary play: Social infiltration, leverage, uncanny exploration, consequential choice

Setting: Bellwater, an old canal city where memories can be bottled, inherited, mortgaged, and sold

For one night, the flood doors beneath the Shrine of Saint Orra open onto the Drowned Archive. The exclusive Mnemonic Concord is auctioning memories whose owners are dead, missing, or unable to object. Its closing slate contains three prestige lots with compromised histories. **Lot 17, "The Rain That Counted Twice,"** contains registrar Nara Vey's suppressed testimony that the inherited debts binding Low Lantern Ward began as a fraud. Proving false provenance across the entire closing slate can force the auctioneer to suspend the sale, but Low Lantern's freedom depends specifically on authenticating Lot 17.

The characters enter the masked auction on behalf of ward advocate **Ilya Sedge**. They must establish Lot 17's true owner, trace how it was stolen, and show what it proves. The Archive is a living host: courteous, literal, and offended by unattributed memories. Its rooms follow declared desires rather than ordinary geometry.

DM Introduction

The crime: Forty-seven years ago, House Doss falsified rainfall and flood-loss records, then sold public relief back to Low Lantern as hereditary loans. Nara Vey recorded the scheme. Her testimony was seized, relabeled, and hidden among luxury memories. Auctioneer **Celandra Quill** suspects the lot has a broken chain of custody but has chosen institutional survival over investigation.

Why the Archive's ruling matters: Bellwater's Founding Compact names the Drowned Archive as final witness to the ownership and lawful transfer of recorded memories. Courts may dispute an ordinary copy, but an Archive-authenticated memory controls any contract founded upon it. House Doss's hereditary notes therefore collapse if the Archive certifies Nara's testimony.

Run the night: Give Ilya's rain ledger before entry. Keep separate notes for the true holders of Lots 9 and 17, Hessa's seal, the six-bell clock, and each surviving retainer. There are four retainers total; never replace defeated or departed ones. The three final proofs can be established without possessing Lot 17. At Bell 6 the hearing continues in the nave, preserving every earned proof and actual object holder. Ilya can pay the final memory price, so a player need not accept a permanent narrative loss.

Endings: Three supported proofs plus a freely given cherished memory free the ward. If Quill pays, the Concord also confesses and reforms. Refusing the price with at least two proofs buys a thirty-day foreclosure freeze; one proof preserves a future case but no immediate reprieve.

Winning the vial while concealing the fraud permits the purchased-truth compromise, forfeiting the ward's favor. If Doss keeps the vial and its provenance, seizures proceed and Ilya proposes a future ledger theft. See Resolution Paths for the epilogues.

Prep: Read the clue web, clock and Scene 6; copy the catalogue leaf; mark the A-F route diagram. Use the complete homebrew enemy profiles in the appendix if violence occurs. Broad consent to a haunting does not require disclosure of a player's real memories.

Runtime Budget

SEGMENT	TARGET
Briefing and approach	20 minutes
Scene 1	35 minutes
Scene 2	40 minutes
Scene 3	45 minutes
Scene 4	50 minutes
Scene 5	50 minutes
Scene 6 and epilogues	60 minutes

If time runs short, let Pell disclose the service route in Scene 2, reduce Scene 3 to two successes before two failures, and begin Scene 5 with Lot 17 already on the block.

Hook

Ilya Sedge represents six hundred Low Lantern residents whose wages, homes, and even childhood recollections are collateral for debts they inherited. She has learned that proof of the original fraud survives as Lot 17 in tonight's private auction. At sunset she offers the party three possible covers—wealthy buyers, contracted servants, or brokers presenting a counterfeit memory—and promises **2,000 gp**, safe lodging in Bellwater, and one legal favor from Low Lantern if they return with either Nara Vey's testimony or evidence strong enough to force a provenance hearing.

The doors close at dawn. Murdering the bidders or simply stealing the vial cannot clear the ward's debt: the party needs the Archive itself, the city's oldest accepted record keeper, to authenticate what Lot 17 contains.

Stakes

- **Low Lantern's freedom:** Authenticated testimony voids the founding debt. Two supported proofs freeze foreclosures for thirty days; one clue preserves a future case without stopping tomorrow's seizures.

- **The party's identities:** Exposure does not end the adventure, but it converts hospitality into surveillance and strengthens Lord Doss's hand.

- **The Archive's integrity:** Violence or careless magic can rupture bottled memories. Destroyed memories cannot testify and leave fragments in everyone nearby.
- **A treasured memory:** Full authentication requires one willing person to give the Archive an authentic cherished memory. This is a narrative loss, not a class-feature penalty; never require a player to disclose a real-life memory.
- **Dawn:** The threat is local and human. Failure preserves an unjust debt, enriches House Doss, and teaches the Concord that truth can still be priced-not that the world ends.

Factions

Low Lantern Delegation

Ilya Sedge, ward advocate, wants the founding debt erased before sixty-three homes are seized tomorrow. She fears becoming another respectable official who asks the poor to wait. She carries forged invitations, a copied rain ledger, and a genuine memory of her daughter's first song, which she will sacrifice if no character volunteers.

Voice: Precise until anger breaks through. "Do not bring me justice in a bottle. Bring witnesses."

The Mnemonic Concord

Celandra Quill, masked auctioneer, wants the sale completed without exposing that the Concord accepted stolen civic evidence. She fears the market collapsing more than she fears House Doss. Proper provenance procedure, proof that Doss deceived her, or a way to preserve buyers' confidence can move her.

Voice: Soft, formal, and never hurried. "Price is vulgar. Provenance is sacred."

Pell Aven, junior appraiser, wants promotion and release from a private debt to House Doss. Pell knows Lot 17 arrived under a false name and can supply a service key or testify to the relabeling. Pell fears being made the scandal's sole culprit.

Voice: Whispers catalog numbers when nervous. "Seventeen was thirteen when it came in. That is not a clerical error."

Pell also suspects that Lot 9 is a living person's contract deposit and that Lot 23 combines several unrelated civic celebrations into a counterfeit victory. Proof involving either lot makes Quill more likely to believe the Concord itself was deceived.

House Doss

Lord Merrow Doss, holder of Low Lantern's inherited notes, wants to buy Lot 17 and dissolve it in his private still. He fears the Archive recognizing his grandfather's fraud. He offers money freely, threatens through implication, and refuses to admit that memory sellers deserve ownership rights.

Voice: Affable contempt. "History is merely debt whose collector arrived late."

His four **velvet retainers** avoid lethal force inside the shrine. They isolate witnesses, block doors, and start violence only if Doss's control of the lot is threatened.

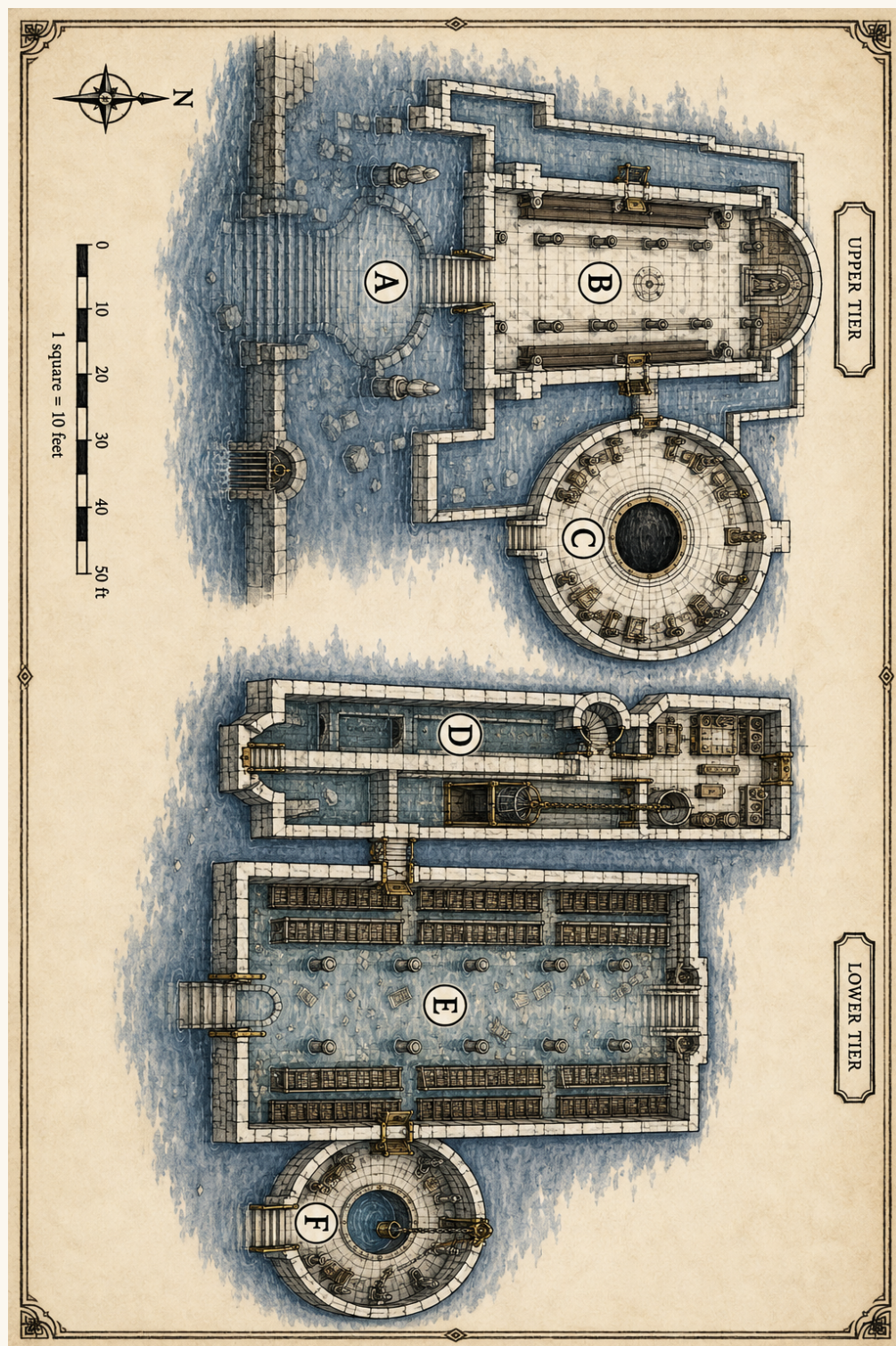
Independent Buyers

Lady Hessa Mere, collector and former canal captain, believes Lot 9 is her missing son Tavian's last sight before death and has no loyalty to Doss. Proving Tavian's true fate or helping her win Lot 9 earns her bidder's seal, public support, and her boat for escape.

Brother Caldu Fen, keeper of Saint Orra's repurposed shrine, wants the Concord to respect the old sanctuary rule: anyone may challenge the ownership of an offering before it leaves the saint's sight. He fears eviction if he speaks openly.

Locations

Location Map: The Drowned Archive

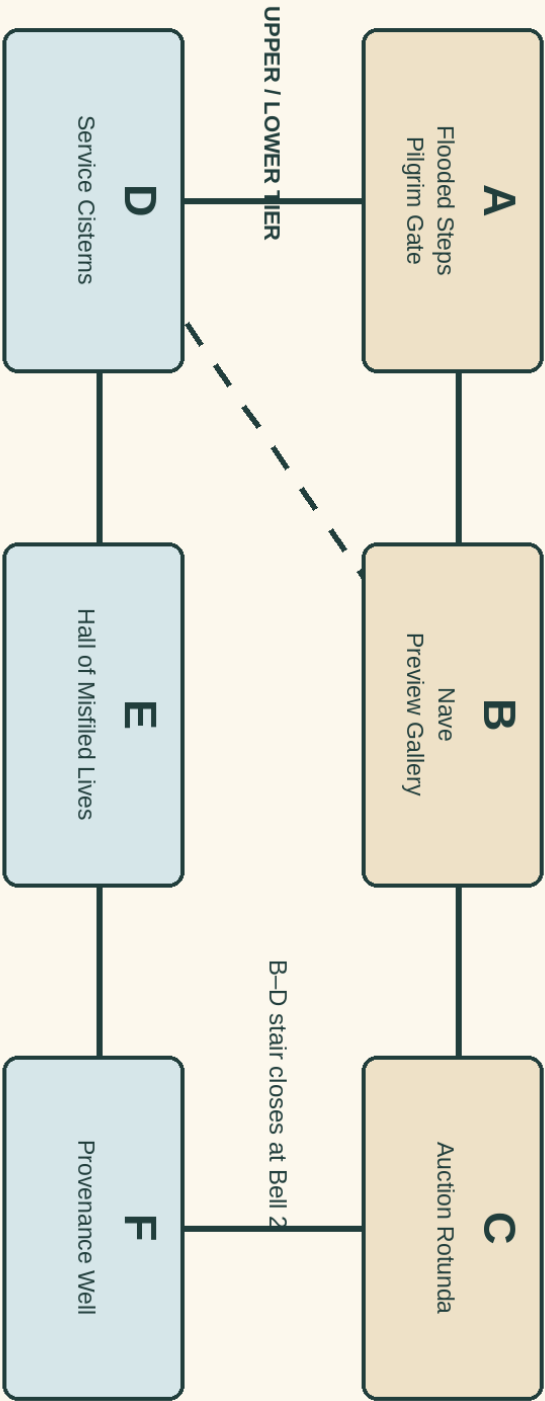


Map key: use the keyed location descriptions on the following pages.

Ilya's old architectural plan uses keys A-F and may be shared on arrival. It establishes the known two tiers, but omits the Archive's changing links. Keep the following DM route diagram private; it supplies all connections and future closure/reveal timing. The Archive's changing corridors make this a schematic, not a measured battle grid. Use Scene 6's stated combat positions.

SAINT ORRA'S DROWNED ARCHIVE

DM route diagram • keep private • corridors are not to scale



Solid line: ordinary connection. Dashed line: B-D service stair until Bell 2.
A-D: servants' route or canal grate. C-F: basin stair revealed at the hearing.
After the stair closes, return through A to enter D. A-B, D-E and E-F stay open.
Combat positions and changing water levels are given in the adventure text.

Map key: use the keyed location descriptions on the following pages.

KEY	AREA	PLAYER-VISIBLE IDENTITY	CONNECTIONS
A	Flooded Steps and Pilgrim Gate	Boat landing, public queue, three entry arches	B, D
B	Nave of Borrowed Faces	Masked reception and preview gallery	A, C, D
C	Auction Rotunda	Tiered bidding floor around a dry black basin	B, F
D	Service Cisterns	Kitchens, bottle lifts, staff passages	A, B, E
E	Hall of Misfiled Lives	Submerged stacks and the master intake ledger	D, F
F	Provenance Well	Archive's speaking chamber and old sanctuary floor	C, E

Spatial rules: Knee-deep water in A and B is atmosphere. Waist-deep water in D and E is difficult terrain once the clock reaches 3. Each foot of movement through difficult terrain costs an extra foot; rough swimming can call for Strength (Athletics). Rule: Difficult Terrain

The Archive as a Living Host

The Archive does not read minds. It responds to statements, names, displayed memories, and breaches of etiquette.

- 1. It follows declared desire.** A character who says what they seek causes the nearest passage to favor that desire, sometimes too literally.
- 2. It insists on attribution.** Speaking an owner's true name calms doors, shelves, and memory currents.
- 3. It remembers courtesy.** A sincere introduction, returned bottle, or corrected label can cancel one clock advance caused by the Archive, once per scene.
- 4. It dislikes bare hands.** Touching an uncorked memory without gloves triggers a sensory flash and risks contamination.

Encounter Matrix

1

SCENE: Masks at the Pilgrim Gate

INTENT: Choose an infiltration identity

PRIMARY PRESSURE: Forged credentials under live scrutiny

PEACEFUL ROUTE: Leverage, performance, or useful service

FAIL-FORWARD: Entry under a marked escort

SCALING: Normally one qualifying group check; five level-10 PCs: two

2

SCENE: The Preview of Borrowed Faces

INTENT: Acquire allies, seals, and catalogue clues

PRIMARY PRESSURE: Rivals compete for access

PEACEFUL ROUTE: Trade favors and reveal conflicts

FAIL-FORWARD: Pell slips the party a key while demanding protection

SCALING: Reduce required leverage pieces from 2 to 1 if behind schedule

3

SCENE: The Service Veins

INTENT: Reach the submerged archive unseen

PRIMARY PRESSURE: Rooms bend toward spoken wants

PEACEFUL ROUTE: Appease the Host and redirect staff

FAIL-FORWARD: Arrive soaked, marked, and one clock step later

SCALING: Require 3 successes normally; 2 for four level-8 PCs

4

SCENE: The Hall That Misfiled a Life

INTENT: Prove Lot 17's identity and chain of custody

PRIMARY PRESSURE: Living shelves reject false labels

PEACEFUL ROUTE: Restore three attributions

FAIL-FORWARD: The Archive ejects the party with a partial ledger rubbing

SCALING: Remove one bailiff for four level-8 PCs

5

SCENE: The Auction of Unlived Years

INTENT: Stop Doss from quietly acquiring the testimony

PRIMARY PRESSURE: Public bids, favors, and blackmail

PEACEFUL ROUTE: Win standing or call a provenance challenge

FAIL-FORWARD: Doss wins the vial but must carry it to the Well

SCALING: Start with 1 Influence if the party allied with both Pell and Hessa

6

SCENE: What the Archive Accepts

INTENT: Authenticate the truth and choose the sacrifice

PRIMARY PRESSURE: Closing doors and Doss's desperation

PEACEFUL ROUTE: Evidence, public argument, willing gift

FAIL-FORWARD: Partial proof freezes foreclosures but starts a legal campaign

SCALING: Use two bailiffs at level 8; three at level 10 or for 5 PCs

General Adjudication

The listed DCs assume capable level 8-10 characters. Grant automatic success when the party spends genuinely relevant leverage; roll only when the outcome remains uncertain. A typical check is **DC 14**, a guarded or technically demanding check is **DC 16**, and a desperate reconstruction without evidence is **DC 18**. Ability checks use the normal d20 test against a target number. Rule: Using Ability

Let a helper grant advantage only when that character could meaningfully perform the task. Rule: Working Together

Do not let one failed check block progress. Failure costs **time, position, trust, or an intact resource**, and the listed clue or transition still appears in a less favorable form.

Visible Escalation Clock: Six Bells Until Sealing

Place six tokens where everyone can see them. Begin at 0 and stop at 6. Advance once after Scene 2's second table-wide exchange, once when Scene 4 ends, and once after each completed auction round in Scene 5. Also advance for explicitly listed clock costs, a loud failure, a ten-minute detour, public violence, or a broken memory bottle. A listed advance replaces any generic advance for the same event; public violence advances the clock once per fight, not once per attack. Do not add another Scene 2 completion advance.

If Bell 4 sounds before Scene 5, finish the current exchange or exploration turn, resolve its immediate consequence and the current scene's fail-forward exit, then move to the auction. Keep recovered evidence; skipped scenes grant no additional evidence. If Bell 4 sounds during Scene 5, use that scene's final-round procedure. Bell 6 interrupts immediately: end the current action, preserve proof tokens

and actual custody of objects, and continue Scene 6 in B, the public nave. Skipped exchanges and rounds cause no completion advances.

BELL	VISIBLE CHANGE	OPERATIONAL EFFECT
0	Lanterns burn gold; water lies still	Guests mingle freely
1	Every mask whispers its wearer's declared name	False identities face focused questions, not automatic exposure
2	The B-D service stair folds into the wall	Reach D from A's canal grate or servants' arch; A-B stays open. D-E remains available
3	Black water rises to the waist below the nave	D and E become difficult terrain
4	The auction gong sounds early	Finish the current exchange or turn; Scene 5 begins with, or next proceeds to, its final round. Never skip that round's character actions unless Bell 6 interrupts
5	The exit arches fill with clear water	Once, after the current action, each character may reposition, ready evidence, contact a present witness, or cast a spell before play resumes; these preparations earn no Influence and cause no automatic clock advance
6	All bells ring beneath the water	Everyone is expelled to B, the public nave; actual holders keep their objects, all recovered evidence survives, and Scene 6 continues there

At Bell 6, do not end the scenario. Move the confrontation to Saint Orra's public nave. The Archive can still authenticate a complete proof spoken before the statue, but the speaker's memory sacrifice becomes audible to the crowd.

Redundant Clue Web

The party needs the three **Provenance Questions** in Scene 6. Each truth has at least three paths.

QUESTION	TRUTH	CLUE PATHS
Whose memory is it?	Registrar Nara Vey's	Lot 17's rain-scent bears her violet seal (Scene 2); Pell remembers receiving it as Lot 13 (Scene 2 or 3); Nara's intake echo names herself (Scene 4)

QUESTION	TRUTH	CLUE PATHS
How was it stolen?	Doss agents seized and relabeled it during a fabricated forgery inquiry	Doss's proxy chit uses the seizure docket (Scene 2); bottle-lift manifest shows 13→17 (Scene 3); master intake ledger records "compelled deposit" (Scene 4)
What does it prove?	Rainfall was counted twice to create fictitious flood damage and hereditary relief loans	Ilya's copied rain ledger has duplicate totals (briefing); Lot 17's sensory flash shows the two gauges (Scene 4); Doss's own bidding instruction calls the lot "the second rain" (Scenes 2 or 5)
How can it be heard?	Invoke Saint Orra's sanctuary rule and offer one authentic treasured memory	Caldus quotes the rule (Scene 1 or 2); marginalia in the service manifest names the price (Scene 3); the Provenance Well asks directly (Scene 4 or 6)

Optional closing-slate leverage: The master ledger also shows that Tavian Mere deposited Lot 9 voluntarily when he entered seven years of service as an Archive navigator; he is due to emerge at closing. Lot 23 is a composite of three parade memories sold as a battle. Either flaw gains Hessa's or Quill's support; exposing both plus Lot 17 can halt the entire auction.

Scenes

Scene 1: Masks at the Pilgrim Gate

READ-ALOUD

Beneath Saint Orra's feet, three arches divide the guests: jeweled masks at one, servants' crates at another, and an appraiser holding an empty vial at the third. Masks whisper their wearers' names. Which entrance do you take, and who leads the deception?

Runtime: 35 minutes

Objective: Enter the auction and establish a usable cover.

Stakes: A weak cover marks the party for surveillance; a strong one creates access and leverage.

Ilya waits in a curtained boat. She supplies one buyer invitation bearing the extinct **House Veylan**, two gray servant sashes, and a counterfeit memory titled *Walking Dry Beneath the Sea*. The party may split, combine covers, or invent another approach.

Encounter 1: The Three Invitations

Location: A, Flooded Steps and Pilgrim Gate. **Factions:** Low Lantern Delegation, Mnemonic Concord, House Doss.

Intent: Make infiltration a consequential choice rather than a single Stealth roll.

ROUTE	GATEKEEPER	WHAT WORKS	CHECK IF UNCERTAIN	FAILURE CONSEQUENCE
Buyers' arch	Celandra Quill	Name a plausible appetite and offer a valuable secret	DC 14 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion); History may establish House Veylan	Enter, but Quill inks one mask silver and advances the clock
Servants' arch	Quartermaster Senn	Repair a leaking bottle rack, present sashes, or replace absent gondoliers	DC 14 Dexterity with suitable tools, Intelligence (Investigation), or Charisma (Deception)	Enter assigned to Doss's table; one retainer watches them
Appraisers' arch	Pell Aven	Defend the counterfeit as art, satire, or disputed provenance	DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana or Investigation) or Charisma (Performance)	Pell identifies the fake, then admits them in exchange for future protection
Canal grate	No gatekeeper	Swim beneath the saint and open the rusted service latch	DC 15 Strength (Athletics) and DC 14 Dexterity with thieves' tools	Enter D soaked; advance the clock and lose one consumable to the current

Admission procedure: Declare the cover and everyone using it. One buyer invitation admits its named buyer plus a declared entourage; two servant sashes admit two apparent workers plus their declared crew; the counterfeit admits its presenter and assistants. Explain those roles to the gatekeeper. Relevant leverage from the route table admits the group automatically. Otherwise every entrant makes one listed check for their contribution; at least half succeeding makes one successful group check. Normally one successful group check secures the cover. For five level-10 characters, a second, different contribution is required; use another group check. If either required check fails, apply the route's failure once and admit the group under scrutiny. A split party resolves each chosen arch separately, and later reunites in B or D. The canal grate instead requires one swimmer's Athletics success and one latch-opener's tools success; its listed failure admits everyone but costs one consumable and one clock step, regardless of which check failed.

Caldus's intervention: If a character treats the shrine as sacred rather than commercial, Brother Caldus murmurs: "Before an offering leaves her sight, saint or no saint, ownership may still be challenged." This reveals the sanctuary rule without a check.

Combat contingency: If attacked, gate staff retreat behind the arches while two velvet retainers contain rather than kill. After 2 rounds, the Archive opens the floor and drops everyone into knee-deep water in B. Advance the clock; the party is inside but publicly compromised.

Success: The party enters with a chosen cover and may keep all three credentials not visibly burned.

Fail-forward: The party enters under scrutiny, and Pell privately offers help because their desperation makes them useful.

Transition: Masks tug gently toward music and amber light in the Nave of Borrowed Faces.

Scene 2: The Preview of Borrowed Faces

READ-ALoud

Glass memories circle the nave in silver cradles, reflecting borrowed childhoods across its flooded mosaics. Rain-scent escapes blue Lot Seventeen. A woman in a captain's coat grips Lot Nine's railing while Doss watches through an ivory mask. Who do you approach before the procession moves on?

Runtime: 40 minutes

Objective: Gain two useful pieces of leverage and identify Lot 17.

Stakes: The party can turn isolated bidders into witnesses-or let Doss control every public voice.

Run two table-wide exchanges. In each exchange, every character may lead one conversation or inspect one lot; characters may instead help another character. Resolve simultaneous approaches in an order chosen by the party. An NPC grants each listed benefit only once. After everyone has acted in the second exchange, resolve Doss's offer to Hessa, then advance the clock once; this is Scene 2's scheduled completion advance. The party may take one optional third table-wide exchange for another clock advance at its end, unless Bell 4 or Bell 6 has already redirected play.

Encounter 2: The Market of Other Selves

Location: B, Nave of Borrowed Faces. **Factions:** Mnemonic Concord, House Doss, Independent Buyers.

Intent: Reward specific offers and listening; no NPC changes allegiance because of a bare high roll.

NPC	WANTS NOW	LEVERAGE THAT SUCCEEDS WITHOUT A ROLL	CHECK WITHOUT LEVERAGE	WHAT THEY PROVIDE
Hessa Mere	Secure Lot 9	Promise to investigate Tavian's fate; expose Doss's plan to monopolize both lots	DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion)	Bidder's seal; later public support; escape boat
Pell Aven	Protection from being scapegoated	Written promise from Ilya, a plausible escape, or proof Doss forged the intake	DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation)	Service key; "17 was 13"; testimony in Scene 6
Celandra Quill	A sale no one can invalidate	Quietly identify the violet registrar's seal or cite sanctuary procedure	DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) or Charisma (Persuasion)	Catalogue access; she promises to hear a properly formed challenge
Lord Doss	Learn who hired the party	Feed him a false patron he can verify only after dawn	DC 16 Charisma (Deception)	His proxy chit or an admission that Lot 17 is "the second rain"
Brother Calvus	Keep sanctuary law alive	Ask what Saint Orra protected before the shrine became an auction house	No check	Full challenge phrase: "Name, taking, consequence; then offer truth for truth"

Pell can also disclose one collateral flaw: Lot 9 came from a living contract depositor, or Lot 23 contains three mismatched intake signatures. If promised protection, Pell reveals both.

Lot impressions: A gloved creature touching a vial's cradle receives a harmless sensory impression. Lot 17 gives wet slate, violet sealing wax, and two bells chiming over the same rainfall total. Touching the naked glass requires a DC 14 Wisdom save; on a failure, the creature takes 7 (2d6) **psychic damage** and blurts one true sentence about why it came. This is bespoke archive magic.

Doss applies pressure: After the second table-wide exchange, Doss instructs a retainer to offer Hessa unlimited credit for her bidder's seal. If the party has earned her help, she refuses and gives the party her seal if she has not already done so. Otherwise, she accepts and hands the seal to Doss. Her hesitation is visible; a DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that she expects betrayal. Record the seal's actual holder and update it after any later transfer. Earning Hessa's support later does not automatically retrieve a seal Doss already holds.

Success: Two allies or leverage pieces give the party a secure route through D and at least one public witness.

Fail-forward: Pell drops the service key into the water and loudly accuses the party of theft, allowing them to flee through D while preserving Pell's cover. Advance the clock.

Transition: The preview procession turns toward C. The service key vibrates toward a narrow door behind the musicians.

Scene 3: The Service Veins

READ-ALoud

Bottle lifts clatter inside the corridor walls. A polite voice repeats desires spoken in the nave. Ahead, three handleless doors reflect unfamiliar destinations above the warm water. How do you persuade this corridor to lead where you need to go?

Runtime: 45 minutes

Objective: Reach the Hall of Misfiled Lives and recover the transfer manifest.

Stakes: Failed navigation feeds the Archive personal information and brings Doss's retainers closer.

Encounter 3: Corridors of Declared Desire

Location: D, Service Cisterns. **Factions:** Mnemonic Concord staff, House Doss retainers, the living Archive.

Intent: Present the living location as a negotiable obstacle, not an arbitrary maze.

Run exploration turns until the party reaches 3 **successes** or 2 **failures**, normally at most four turns. For four level-8 characters, or when using the shortened runtime option, require 2 **successes** before 2 **failures**, at most three turns. Each turn, one character leads one approach and the others may provide meaningful help. Rotate the lead when possible; a character may not repeat the same approach. Each resolved approach produces one success or one failure. Thus, two successes and one failure normally require a fourth turn; they do not end the encounter.

The route passes the manifest station before the final exit, whatever the results. Give the party its text without a check. Reaching the success threshold leads to the Success exit. Reaching two failures triggers the retainer interruption, then the Fail-forward exit after the party negotiates, fights,

or retreats into the bottle lift. Neither defeating the retainers nor retaining the original roll is required to reach E.

State a precise desire and a limit: "I seek Nara's record, not her life"

DC: 14 Charisma (Persuasion)

RESULT ON SUCCESS: A door opens toward E

FAILURE COST OR AUTOMATIC PAYMENT: The corridor displays an embarrassing but fictionalized temptation; clock +1

Read bottle-lift destinations and reconstruct the route

DC: 15 Intelligence (Investigation)

RESULT ON SUCCESS: Find the manifest station

FAILURE COST OR AUTOMATIC PAYMENT: A rack spills; take 10 (3d6) psychic damage or abandon one credential to catch it

Move through the maintenance culvert

DC: 14 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics)

RESULT ON SUCCESS: Gain 1 success and find dry footing

FAILURE COST OR AUTOMATIC PAYMENT: The leader is separated until the start of the next turn or the scene exit, whichever comes first; a retainer blocks the return passage

Offer the Archive a correctly attributed minor memory

DC: Automatic once

RESULT ON SUCCESS: Gain 1 success and ask the Archive one yes/no question

FAILURE COST OR AUTOMATIC PAYMENT: The offered memory's sensory detail is gone until dawn

Use magic to locate an object, read thoughts, or bypass a barrier

DC: No default check if the spell applies

RESULT ON SUCCESS: Gain the spell's natural benefit and 1 success

FAILURE COST OR AUTOMATIC PAYMENT: The Archive notices only if the effect damages, compels, or mislabels it

Manifest station: The paper roll reads: **CIVIC SEIZURE 4-13 / N. VEY / compelled deposit / thirteen received / seventeen offered**. Its margin repeats, "Name, taking, consequence; truth for truth." Taking the roll is obvious; making a charcoal rubbing takes 1 minute and leaves it in place.

Retainer interruption: On the second failure, two velvet retainers block the manifest station, including any retainer already encountered at the culvert. They can be misdirected with Doss's proxy chit, bribed with a credential, or convinced that Pell sent the party with a DC 15 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check. A failed check makes them demand the original manifest; the party

can surrender it and retain a rubbing, or retreat into the bottle lift. If combat begins, use the **Velvet Retainer** profile in the appendix. They use cords against the manifest's carrier, attempt to take an unattended or surrendered roll, and withdraw at half hit points. The lift remains accessible: boarding it and pulling its lever requires an action and ends the pursuit. If the retainers keep the original, the lift delivers a duplicate intake strip bearing the same essential text with the party.

Success: The party reaches E with the intact manifest or rubbing and may enter unseen.

Fail-forward: A bottle lift deposits the party noisily in E with the manifest wrapped around one character. Advance the clock; a Glass Bailiff awaits them.

Transition: Shelves breathe cold air beyond the last door, and every label turns blank as the party approaches.

Scene 4: The Hall That Misfiled a Life

READ-ALoud

Shelves descend beyond the reach of your light. Their chains flex like ribs as thousands of corks click in sequence. A current delivers three violet labels: NARA VEY, PROPERTY OF DOSS, and a blank. What do you examine or name first?

Runtime: 50 minutes

Objective: Recover proof of Lot 17's owner, seizure, and meaning.

Stakes: The Archive can become an ally, but forcing it risks damaging the only testimony.

Encounter 4: The Catalogue That Breathes

Location: E, Hall of Misfiled Lives. **Factions:** The living Archive, Mnemonic Concord, House Doss.

Intent: Turn research into a physical conversation with the environment.

Three chained shelf-ribs block the master intake ledger. Each opens when the party supplies a correct attribution. Evidence makes the answer automatic; otherwise use the listed check.

SHELF-RIB ASKS	EVIDENCE	CHECK WITHOUT EVIDENCE	FAILURE THAT MOVES PLAY
"Name the life."	Violet seal, Pell's statement, or Nara label	DC 16 Intelligence (History or Investigation)	Nara's intake echo appears and names herself, but a Glass Bailiff arrives
SHELF-RIB ASKS	EVIDENCE	CHECK WITHOUT EVIDENCE	FAILURE THAT MOVES PLAY
"Name the taking."	Manifest or Doss proxy chit	DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) using a	The shelf opens after marking the speaker's hand

SHELF-RIB ASKS	EVIDENCE	CHECK WITHOUT EVIDENCE	FAILURE THAT MOVES PLAY
		coherent accusation	UNPROVEN; Doss gains leverage in Scene 5
"Name the consequence."	Ilya's ledger or Lot 17 impression	DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation)	A memory current shows the double-counted gauges; everyone in the water takes 7 (2d6) psychic damage

Nara's intake echo: A translucent registrar repeats only what was recorded at intake: "Nara Vey. Civic registrar. Compelled deposit. Evidence of duplicated rain measures and relief notes issued against loss that did not occur." She cannot answer questions beyond that statement, but the Archive considers hearing it proof of identity and consequence.

Master ledger: The open entry establishes all three truths and bears the Archive's own pressure seal. Removing the page triggers a bailiff; making a rubbing takes one minute and is permitted if the party first says why it is needed.

Adjacent disputed entries: A character who asks about Hessa, Tavian, Lot 9, or the other closing lots finds these without a check after the ledger opens:

- **Lot 9: TAVIAN MERE / voluntary contract deposit / seven years' navigation / return at closing.** Hessa's son is alive within the Deep Index and is due to leave when the Archive seals. Showing Hessa a rubbing secures her support without requiring her to purchase her son's memory.

- **Lot 23:** Three intake names and three parade dates have been scraped beneath its single battle label. A DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check identifies the splice quickly; failure still reveals it after a memory of cheering crowds floods the hall and advances the clock.

Host's question: When the third rib opens, water forms the words: **WHAT TRUE MEMORY WILL STAND BESIDE THIS ONE?** The party need not answer yet. The Archive explains, if asked, that an accusation can be heard without payment, but authentication requires truth offered freely for truth restored.

Combat option: A Glass Bailiff rises when a listed failure summons one or the party attacks or forces a shelf-rib. Count any bailiff waiting after Scene 3 toward this encounter's total; repeated summons do not add more. Breaking a bottle or tearing out the ledger brings the total to two. For four level-8 characters, cap the total at one. Bailiffs stand between the party and the ledger, using Memory Wash against intruders who force the shelves and glass strikes against those damaging records. Each stops attacking if shown the manifest and addressed as "Keeper of Nara Vey's deposit." Characters may still resolve shelf questions during combat by using an action. Destroying all

active bailiffs opens the route and advances the clock once. Retreat toward C is always possible and invokes this scene's Fail-forward exit.

Success: The party gains the master-ledger rubbing and knows the full provenance challenge.

Fail-forward: The Archive expels them toward C with a pressure-seal imprint across one shield, book, or coat. The imprint proves seizure but not consequence; Nara's echo repeats within it during Scene 6.

Transition: The auction gong vibrates through the water. Lot 17 is moving toward the Rotunda.

Scene 5: The Auction of Unlived Years

Before reading: Use "Hessa Mere's seal" in place of "his own bidder's seal" only if Doss actually holds Hessa's seal. Otherwise, her seal remains with its recorded holder. This opener announces Lot 17 even when the clock has shortened the auction to its final round.

READ-ALoud

The gong sounds across the Rotunda. Silver arms lower blue Lot Seventeen toward the auctioneer's hand; masked bidders crowd its dry black basin. Doss raises his own seal and offers a decade of forgiven interest. Which lot, witness, or lie do you move first?

Runtime: 50 minutes

Objective: Gain legal standing to challenge Lot 17 or take custody of it.

Stakes: Doss wants a quiet purchase; the party needs the room to witness broken provenance.

Encounter 5: Bids Measured in Years

Location: C, Auction Rotunda. **Factions:** Mnemonic Concord, House Doss, Independent Buyers, Low Lantern Delegation by proxy.

Intent: Run a social set piece in which prior relationships matter more than accumulated gold.

Track **Influence** from 0 to 4, capped at 4. Begin with 1 Influence if both Pell and Hessa support the party. Normally run three auction rounds; each character may take one meaningful action per round. Each table row can award Influence only once for the whole party, although a failed attempt can be retried with another character action. Presenting several documents through the first row still awards only +1. A pause in bidding allows the action to resolve; it does not end the round.

Doss is the leading bidder until Quill awards the party custody at 4 Influence. Track **bid entitlement** separately from **physical possession**: Quill holds the real vial until she hands it over, and a successful swap changes possession without winning the auction. At 3 Influence, or if sanctuary interrupts bidding earlier, Doss remains the provisional purchaser while Quill retains any vial still in her hands pending the hearing. Custody never substitutes for proof.

ACTION	REQUIREMENT OR CHECK	EFFECT
Present the violet seal, manifest, or ledger rubbing	Automatic	+1 Influence and Quill pauses the bidding
Present Hessa's freely granted seal, return it to her, or expose Doss's purchase of it	Automatic with her support or evidence of the bargain; otherwise DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) if the claim is plausible	+1 Influence; Hessa becomes a witness, but a seal changes hands only if actually surrendered or recovered
Make Pell testify publicly	Automatic with promised protection; otherwise DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion)	+1 Influence; Doss loses his proxy defense
Counterbid	Offer 1,000 gp, a concrete future favor, or a voluntary minor memory; a credible offer succeeds automatically	+1 Influence; the accepted price is owed if Quill awards the party custody, and theft alone does not incur it
Swap Lot 17 with the counterfeit	DC 16 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand), tools, or suitable magic	The party gains the vial; clock +1 on failure, but the labels fall and expose the violet seal
Provoke Doss into naming "the second rain"	Use his proxy chit or threaten his debt monopoly; DC 15 Charisma (Deception or Intimidation)	+1 Influence; on failure he identifies Ilya as the patron
Expose the entire closing slate	Present the Lot 9 contract entry and Lot 23 splice alongside any valid Lot 17 proof	+2 Influence once; Quill freezes every sale and orders a formal challenge
Invoke Saint Orra's sanctuary rule	Know the phrase or gain Calvus's support	End bidding and move immediately to Scene 6

Securing Lot 9: Before Lot 17's rounds, Quill offers Lot 9 in one brief exchange. Hessa has 500 gp of her own committed to it. A character can name her as the buyer and either show Tavian's living-depositor entry, produce Pell's corroboration, or pass DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) to question the false death catalogue. Quill then awards Hessa the deposit for her 500 gp; no party gold is needed. If this attempt fails, Doss provisionally acquires the lot with a 1,000 gp bid. At the later hearing, supported proof of its living owner automatically cancels Doss's award, refunds Hessa's committed money, and assigns custody to Hessa pending Tavian's return. Record that transfer when the proof is presented, before offering Hessa's sacrifice. A stopped sale before this exchange leaves Quill holding it; the same supported challenge transfers it at the hearing. None of these transactions changes Tavian's survival or his return at closing. This exchange adds no scheduled clock

advance; an explicitly costly failure still does.

Auction rounds: Announce the round's prompt, let each character act once, then resolve its closing outcome.

1. **Appetite:** Quill asks what each bidder hopes to feel.

2. **Price:** Doss offers to erase one named person's debt for every rival who withdraws.

3. **Provenance:** After all character actions, 4 Influence earns party custody; 3 earns a formal challenge; at 0-2, Doss wins unless sanctuary has been invoked. Calvus calls out the sanctuary phrase here if the party has not learned it, so lack of that clue never blocks a challenge.

If Scene 5 begins at Bell 4 or 5, run only round 3, with every character receiving an action. If Bell 4 sounds during round 1 or 2, finish that round's remaining actions and make round 3 the next round. If Bell 4 sounds at a round's end, go directly to round 3 next. Never restart round 3 or remove its character actions merely because Bell 4 sounds.

Advance the clock once after each completed round, after resolving its outcome. Skipped rounds cause no advances. Invoking sanctuary or exposing the entire closing slate interrupts the auction: award any earned custody and proceed immediately to Scene 6 without a completion advance for the interrupted round. At Bell 6, end bidding immediately and continue Scene 6 in B. Preserve the actual vial holder and any custody already awarded; otherwise Doss remains the provisional purchaser.

Violence: Any attack makes the basin overflow and releases two Glass Bailiffs. Run initiative normally; each participant acts on its turn. Rule: The Order Of Combat Quill retreats toward F with any vial she actually holds. If Lot 17 is with a character or Doss, its holder keeps it; retreat, an award, or a counterfeit swap never transfers it for free. Only available retainers delay the party. A character can end the fight by using an action to present one piece of provenance evidence and succeeding on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check; with two pieces, no check is required.

Success: At 4 Influence, Quill grants the party temporary custody. At 3, she orders a formal challenge. Either result gives advantage on the first uncertain check in Scene 6.

Fail-forward: Doss wins Lot 17, but sanctuary law requires him to pass the Provenance Well before leaving. The party follows with every clue it has.

Transition: Unless Bell 6 has expelled everyone, the black basin opens like an iris, revealing steps to F as the next bell begins.

Scene 6: What the Archive Accepts

Choose the opener for the actual location. Neither opener moves Lot 17 or reveals its testimony. Describe the vial separately only if it is visible, with its actual holder. Use the nave opener if Bell 6 has already sounded; if it sounds during this scene, use that opener at the relocation and retain all progress.

At F, the Provenance Well:

READ-ALoud

Names glow beneath the well's water. Pale letters form across the wet floor: NAME, TAKING, CONSEQUENCE. A voice asks, "What claim do you bring before this witness?" Which evidence, witness, or question do you present first?

At B, the public nave:

READ-ALoud

Water streams from the arches beneath Saint Orra's statue. Families gather at the shrine doors as letters shine across the saint's board: NAME, TAKING, CONSEQUENCE. "What claim do you bring before this witness?" Who speaks first, and what do you show the crowd?

Runtime: 60 minutes

Objective: Authenticate Nara's testimony and decide who pays the Archive's price.

Stakes: The founding debt, the Concord's legitimacy, and one cherished memory are decided here.

Encounter 6: The Provenance of Truth

Location: F, Provenance Well, or B, Nave of Borrowed Faces, if Bell 6 has sounded. **Factions:** Low Lantern Delegation, Mnemonic Concord, House Doss, Independent Buyers, the living Archive.

Setup: Place the party within 20 feet of the Well or statue, with Quill and available witnesses nearby. Doss and any remaining retainers stand 20 feet away beside the nearest exit. Ilya arrives through the shrine's public route and is available to make her prepared offer. Keep Lot 17 with its actual holder. In B, the statue performs every adjudicating function assigned below to the Well; possession of the vial is not required for the Archive to authenticate supported testimony.

Intent: Make evidence and sacrifice-not hit-point depletion-the strongest route through the climax.

Place three proof tokens labeled **OWNER**, **TAKING**, and **CONSEQUENCE**. Resolve them in the party's chosen order. For each, presenting a clue that supports that question establishes its token automatically; a document supporting several questions can be cited separately for each. Without evidence, a character may reconstruct that truth with a **DC 18** relevant Intelligence or Charisma check. On a failed reconstruction, Nara's echo supplies the missing truth and establishes the token anyway; advance the clock and let Doss state a rebuttal. At Bell 6, instead of advancing, the character who attempted the reconstruction takes 7 (2d6) psychic damage from the echo. This cost applies on each failed unsupported reconstruction and cannot remove a proof; use ordinary resistance and hit-point rules. Evidence-backed proofs remain automatic and harmless. A rebuttal never removes established proof or demands another check.

Outside combat, resolve one proof exchange at a time. During combat, presenting or reconstructing one proof takes an action. When two tokens are established, Quill turns against Doss to protect the Archive. When all three are established, the Well asks for **one authentic cherished memory, freely given**, to bind the ruling. Offering that memory takes one action during combat and authenticates immediately. The party may also stop presenting proofs, withdraw with its evidence, or refuse payment; use the corresponding resolution.

The Sacrifice

Ask the group who, if anyone, offers the memory. The donor describes only a fictional character memory and chooses its boundaries. They retain factual knowledge that the event occurred but permanently lose one chosen sensory or emotional detail: a face, a voice, a feeling of safety, the taste of a homecoming, or similar. This has no numerical or class-feature penalty. Record the loss on the character sheet in words.

- **A character gives:** The Archive authenticates immediately. The donor's mask becomes clear glass, a visible mark of truthful standing in Bellwater.
- **Ilya gives:** She loses the sound of her daughter's first song. Low Lantern is freed, but her daughter knows what justice cost.
- **Hessa gives:** If Lot 9 has actually been transferred to her by auction or supported challenge, she gives her memory of Tavian's first command. She keeps his recovered memory deposit but loses the sound of that first command; the sacrifice does not change Tavian's survival or scheduled return.
- **Quill gives:** If shown that Doss deceived the Concord and offered a credible reform, she gives the pride she felt conducting her first auction. The institution survives under public restitution.
- **No one gives:** The Archive releases copies of the evidence but will not authenticate them. Foreclosures freeze for thirty days while Ilya begins a conventional case.

Never surprise a player with the scope of the loss or demand real autobiography. If no one wants this theme, use Ilya's prepared offer.

Doss's last resort: Once two proof tokens are established, Doss orders his remaining retainers to seize the vial. Before rolling initiative, let the party respond. Asking Quill to enforce her ruling, offering the retainers safe passage, or presenting valid attribution to the bailiffs ends the immediate threat without a check. Doss also offers to abandon his claim if allowed to depart; accepting does not erase established proof or prevent authentication.

If the party answers with force or lets the seizure proceed, roll initiative. Use two Glass Bailiffs and up to two surviving Velvet Retainers, adjusted by the appendix; defeated or departed retainers do not reappear. Place bailiffs beside the Well or statue and retainers beside Doss. Retainers use cords on the vial's carrier and move to collect it if surrendered or dropped. They cannot take a held vial

merely by hitting with a cord. Bailiffs protect the site, targeting creatures damaging records or visibly carrying an unattributed memory. An action naming Nara Vey and presenting one supporting clue attributes Lot 17 and pacifies them under Courtesy Bound. If no eligible target remains, they guard without attacking.

Proof exchanges remain available during combat. Doss is a noncombatant and surrenders if directly threatened with an attack, if his retainers fall or withdraw, or when the third proof is established. His surrender ends retainer aggression; bailiffs still obey Courtesy Bound. Combat cannot itself authenticate the testimony.

Bell 6: If the party is still at F, everyone is lifted into B in a column of water. Use the public-nave opener. Preserve proof tokens, hit points, initiative, relative positions, and actual object holders; the statue replaces the Well as the encounter's center. Continue before Low Lantern's waiting families. Once in B, do not repeat the expulsion. A sacrifice made here is audible to the crowd and cannot remain private.

Success: Three proofs plus the willing memory produce an Archive-authenticated copy of Nara's testimony. Doss's founding notes split down their false duplicated totals.

Fail-forward: Two proofs freeze foreclosures and expose the Concord's negligence. One or no proofs still lets the party preserve Nara's echo or the ledger rubbing for a future legal campaign, but Doss keeps immediate control.

Transition: Resolve the branch below, then ask each player what their character remembers when dawn light touches the canal.

Resolution Paths

If the party found Tavian's contract entry, he emerges from the Deep Index when the Archive closes: seven years older, alive, and carrying a navigator's brass pole. Hessa's reunion occurs regardless of who controls Lot 17, making her alliance a consequence rather than another version of the debt verdict.

The Ward Is Freed

With three proofs and a memory freely given, the Archive voids the founding debt in its own record. Low Lantern's derivative notes become unenforceable. Doss retains wealth and allies, but his monopoly is broken. The donor's loss remains real and is honored publicly or privately according to the group's choice.

The Concord Confesses

If Quill turns on Doss and makes the sacrifice, she publishes the intake ledger and suspends auctions of disputed memories. Low Lantern is freed, Pell becomes interim provenance keeper, and collectors flee Bellwater before dawn. Reform is possible, not guaranteed.

Thirty Days of Air

If no memory is offered but at least two proofs survive, Brother Calvus invokes sanctuary to freeze foreclosures for thirty days. Ilya has evidence, witnesses, and a difficult case. The party may stay to defend the ward or leave knowing they created a fighting chance rather than a clean victory.

A Purchased Truth

If the party wins Lot 17 but conceals the fraud, Ilya can sell it to another creditor for enough to save sixty-three homes while leaving the hereditary debt intact. She accepts only if the party insists, and their promised Low Lantern favor is withdrawn.

Doss Leaves with the Rain

If Doss retains both Lot 17 and its provenance, tomorrow's seizures proceed. Pell or Hessa can preserve one clue, and Ilya asks the characters to help steal the House Doss ledgers in a future adventure. The one-shot ends in defeat with a concrete next move, not apocalypse.

Rewards and Follow-Up

- **Ilya's fee:** 2,000 gp total if the party returns testimony or two valid proofs; 1,000 gp for one proof that survives.
- **Low Lantern's favor:** Safe houses, canal guides, and one introduction or civic service the ward can reasonably provide.
- **Clear-glass mask:** The memory donor's mask is recognized by the Archive and honest memory brokers. It has no inherent magical combat effect.
- **Optional campaign thread:** House Doss's current ledgers implicate respected families that unknowingly profited from the fraud.

Player-Safe Handouts

Handout 1: Catalogue Leaf - One Night Only

Visibility: player-safe

Give: During Scene 1 or on entering Scene 2.

PLAYER TEXT

LOT 9 - LANTERNS BELOW THE LOCK

A child's last view from the westbound night barge. Salt, lampblack, and an unfinished song.

LOT 17 - THE RAIN THAT COUNTED TWICE

Civic provenance withheld by lawful request. Wet slate, violet wax, two bells. No private tasting.

LOT 23 - THE VICTORY AT RED BRIDGE

The pride of a battle no living soldier recalls attending.

All bids are witnessed. All favors bind the bidder. Before the hammer falls, a claim of ownership may be heard beneath Saint Orra's sight.

Handout 2: Nara Vey's Recovered Testimony

Visibility: player-safe after discovered

Give: When Nara's echo speaks or the testimony is authenticated.

PLAYER TEXT

I am Nara Vey, registrar of canal relief. The north and shrine gauges recorded one storm. House Doss entered them as two floods, issued relief against the invented second loss, and bound repayment to descendants not yet born. I copied both measures. I refused correction. This memory is my testimony, deposited under protest, and it belongs first to those made debtors by it.

Compact Reference Appendix

DCs at a Glance

DC	USE
14	Plausible cover, basic archive courtesy, physical service route
15	Guarded witness, misdirect retainers, auction maneuver
16	Technical provenance, hard deception, unsupported shelf answer
18	Reconstruct a final proof without evidence

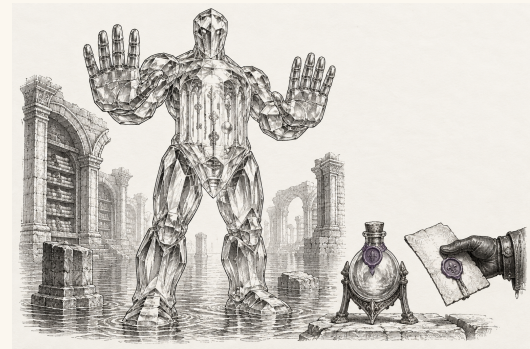
NPCs at a Glance

NPC	WANTS	FEARS	BEST LEVERAGE
Ilya Sedge	Free Low Lantern	Becoming patient with injustice	Tangible evidence and immediate action
Celandra Quill	Preserve credible auctions	Market collapse	Proper process; proof Doss deceived her
Pell Aven	Promotion and safety	Being scapegoated	Protection and shared evidence
Morrow Doss	Destroy Lot 17	Archive-auth enticated fraud	Threat to monopoly or public exposure
Hessa Mere	Learn Tavian's fate and recover his deposit	Buying a comforting fake	Lot 9's intake entry, honest news, independence from Doss
Caldus Fen	Preserve sanctuary law	Eviction	Respect for the shrine's old civic role

Evidence Checklist

- [] Ilya's duplicate rain ledger
- [] Violet registrar's seal or Nara's intake echo
- [] Doss proxy chit
- [] Transfer manifest or rubbing
- [] Master-ledger rubbing or pressure-seal imprint
- [] Caldus's sanctuary phrase
- [] Pell or Hessa willing to testify
- [] Tavian's living-depositor entry
- [] Lot 23's three-source splice

Combat Profiles



Glass Bailiff - Reference Art

Homebrew assumption: These are complete bespoke encounter profiles, not player options. Listed hit points are fixed encounter values. Use normal 5e actions, opportunity attacks, grappling, and shoving. Saving throws and unlisted skills use the printed ability modifiers; neither creature has saving-throw proficiency. Neither has additional damage resistances, vulnerabilities, condition immunities, special senses, bonus actions, or legendary actions beyond those stated. Challenge ratings are homebrew estimates; use the encounter adjustments below for this adventure.

Glass Bailiff - Large construct, lawful neutral

AC 16 (glass armor); HP 68; Speed 30 ft., swim 40 ft.; Initiative +1; Proficiency Bonus +3; Challenge 5 (1,800 XP).

STR 18 (+4), DEX 12 (+1), CON 18 (+4), INT 10 (+0), WIS 16 (+3), CHA 12 (+1).

Skills: Athletics +7, Perception +6. **Senses:** Passive Perception 16. **Languages:** Common.

Damage Immunities: Poison, psychic. **Condition Immunities:** Charmed, frightened, poisoned.

Construct Nature: Does not need air, food, drink, or sleep.

Multiattack (Action): Makes two Glass Strike attacks.

Glass Strike (Action): Melee weapon attack, +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) force damage.

Memory Wash (Action; Recharge 5-6): Each creature in a 15-foot cone makes a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) psychic damage on a failure or half as much on a success. A creature that fails cannot take reactions until the start of its next turn. The ability begins available; after use, roll a d6 at the start of each bailiff turn, recharging on 5-6.

Courtesy Bound: A creature may use an action to present valid provenance and address the bailiff's custodial duty. With evidence this succeeds automatically; otherwise require a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The addressed bailiff ceases attacking and allows attributed records to pass. It resumes guarding by force only if someone damages a memory or removes an unattributed lot.

Velvet Retainer - Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral

AC 15 (reinforced velvet); HP 45; Speed 30 ft.; Initiative +4; Proficiency Bonus +2; Challenge 2 (450 XP).

STR 14 (+2), DEX 18 (+4), CON 16 (+3), INT 10 (+0), WIS 12 (+1), CHA 10 (+0).

Skills: Athletics +4, Acrobatics +6, Insight +3, Perception +3.
Senses: Passive Perception 13. **Languages:** Common.

Multiattack (Action): Makes two Cane-Sword attacks. Restraint Cord cannot replace one of these attacks.

Cane-Sword (Action): Melee weapon attack, +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) **piercing damage**. When this melee attack reduces a creature to 0 HP, the retainer normally knocks it unconscious and leaves it stable.

Restraint Cord (Action): Ranged weapon attack, +6 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one Large or smaller creature. On a hit, the target takes no damage and its speed becomes 0. This does not impose the restrained condition or prevent actions. The cord lasts until the target or an adjacent creature uses an action and succeeds on a DC 14 Strength or Dexterity check, or until it is cut. Each cord has AC 10, 5 HP, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. Each retainer carries two cords; throwing one expends it until recovered. Multiple cords do not further reduce speed, but each must be removed.

Morale: At 22 HP or fewer, when Doss is discredited, or when offered safe passage, the retainer stops attacking, releases any grapple, and uses Disengage to withdraw if necessary.

Encounter adjustment: Scene 6 normally uses two bailiffs and up to two surviving retainers. For four level-8 characters, give each bailiff 52 HP and use no more than two retainers at once anywhere in the module. For any level-10 party or any five-character party, use three full-HP bailiffs in Scene 6 instead, matching the Encounter Matrix. These are total encounter counts, including creatures already present. For five level-10 characters only, on initiative count 20, losing ties, a loose memory current targets the unsecured creature nearest the Well, or the statue in B; break ties randomly. That creature makes a DC 14 Strength save or moves 10 feet toward the center, stopping at its edge without falling. A creature holding a fixed rail, chain, or statue base is secured; taking hold within reach requires a free object interaction. The current ceases when the bailiffs are pacified or the testimony is authenticated. Never increase proof DCs to compensate for character level.

Rules References

- Ability checks, advantage, and disadvantage: Rule: Using Ability
- Meaningful assistance and group checks: Rule: Working Together
- Flooded movement and rough swimming: Rule: Difficult Terrain
- Initiative and combat turns: Rule: The Order Of Combat

Five-Hour Pacing Cues

- **90 minutes:** Party should know Lot 17 is Nara's and have entered D.

- **3 hours:** Party should possess at least two proof types and be leaving E.

- **4 hours:** Lot 17 should be on the block.

- **Last 45 minutes:** Move to F even if Doss holds the lot; evidence, not custody, drives the climax.

Session Notes

Decisions, discoveries, and the next adventure.

Session Notes

Decisions, discoveries, and the next adventure.

Session Notes

Decisions, discoveries, and the next adventure.

Session Notes

Decisions, discoveries, and the next adventure.

Session Notes

Decisions, discoveries, and the next adventure.

Session Notes

Decisions, discoveries, and the next adventure.

Session Notes

Decisions, discoveries, and the next adventure.

Session Notes

Decisions, discoveries, and the next adventure.

Session Notes

Decisions, discoveries, and the next adventure.

Session Notes

Decisions, discoveries, and the next adventure.

Session Notes

Decisions, discoveries, and the next adventure.

Session Notes

Decisions, discoveries, and the next adventure.

Session Notes

Decisions, discoveries, and the next adventure.