

The Midnight Memory Express



Dungeon Master's edition

The Midnight Memory Express offers quiet compartments, punctual service, and discreet transport for passengers who would rather leave something behind.

OPENING READ-ALoud

Rain streaks the saloon windows as the train rocks through the dark. A woman pulls away from the child beside her, knocking a cup across the table. "I'm sorry. Where is your mother?" The child holds out a small brass bird. At the carriage door, a conductor straightens his gloves and says, "Please remain calm. Some passengers experience uncertainty after a transaction." The woman turns toward him. "What transaction?"

Credits

Adventure and publication credit: bandolek.

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Rules basis: Dungeons & Dragons Fifth Edition, SRD 5.1 (2014). Memory devices, brass cargo porters, Nera Vale's statistics, and the train and transfer procedures are original homebrew material for this adventure.

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Overview

A woman enters a night train's saloon and cannot recognize her daughter. Three stolen recollections travel in the baggage carriage under seals meant to protect voluntary memory sales.

The Midnight Memory Express is an original adventure for four 6th-level characters, using *Dungeons & Dragons, Fifth Edition, SRD 5.1* (2014). It takes approximately 4-5 hours, including investigation, a pursuit or cargo confrontation, and a contested arrival. Most encounters can end without combat; negotiation can prevent both likely fights.

The characters begin aboard the express with tickets and ordinary reasons for traveling. For a closer connection, one character previously met Mara Pell and her daughter Iona, or the railway hired the party as journey escorts.

Content boundaries: nonconsensual memory extraction, family estrangement, disputed consent, and commercial exploitation. Iona is ten. No opponent targets her, uses her as a hostage, or requires her presence near a fight. Her distress can remain understated or occur offstage. Before play, establish whether descriptions of forgotten relationships or voluntarily surrendering painful experiences need adjustment.

Rules assumption: memory recording, extraction, and restoration are **homebrew**. They affect bounded autobiographical recollections, not levels, proficiencies, prepared spells, class features, alignment, or player control.

DM Introduction

Licensed courier Nera Vale is smuggling three stolen recordings among three legitimate purchases. Her buyer, Orin Dask, commissioned an intimate family recollection and paid her to conceal its origin. While Mara Pell slept, Nera extracted the experiences connecting Mara's daughter Iona's present appearance with their shared childhood. Nera then stole passenger Tessa Venn's memory of witnessing the theft and porter Ben Orrel's recollection of inspecting the shipment. All three victims retain their other memories, abilities, and personalities. Nera's three prepared extraction tips are exhausted.

Conductor Hett Brindle accepted the sealed shipment as voluntary sales. Defensive about his lapse and the railway's possible compensation liability, he initially treats Mara's distress as contractual regret. He is not complicit. The party enters the dispute when Mara wakes and does not recognize Iona. Passenger accounts, a duplicated inspection mark, and missing consent receipts independently lead to Nera and the six-slot case in C4. Nera prefers forged authority, bargaining, and escape to killing witnesses. Two brass cargo porters obey the shipment's routing authority without judging its legality.

Dask waits at his private terminal with two guards and a wagon. He knows the family recording was stolen and plans to claim he bought an apparently lawful consignment. The party can seize or redirect the cargo,

change the train's stop, negotiate surrender, expose him at the transfer, or pursue the departing case. Without intervention, it reaches his private vault that morning. The victims survive with their losses; Iona remains with Mara under a trusted adult's care while their relationship is rebuilt.

Recovery lets each available donor choose restoration, storage, or destruction. The three voluntary sales have separate contracts and donor wishes. A complete victory secures access to all three stolen recollections, respects those lawful choices, and establishes evidence against Nera or Dask. Partial victories can recover individual memories, secure compensation, stop delivery, or expose the crime. The adventure does not require the party to endorse or abolish memory trading.

At a Glance

ELEMENT	AT THE TABLE
Party	Four level 6 characters
Runtime	4-5 hours
Starting position	Rear passenger saloon, C1
Destination	Dask's private terminal, unless the route changes
Immediate problem	Mara does not recognize Iona
Culprit	Nera Vale, licensed courier
Buyer	Orin Dask
Cargo	One case; six recordings; three stolen and three voluntary
Likely combat	Baggage interception and terminal transfer
Maximum ordinary hostile roster	Nera, two brass porters, two guards
Principal deadline	Eight travel boxes before arrival
Rest expectation	Begin with normal resources; no short rest assumed
Central evidence	Passenger timeline, duplicated inspection mark, conflicting consent records
Resolution device	One restoration cradle in C3
Rescue fee	Up to 200 gp for the party under the agreed recovery terms
Additional evidence reward	75 gp for the party, paid later by railway investigators

First-session guide

Put six numbered tokens beside a sketch of the case, using **Recording Reference** for their contents and claims. Track each recording separately once removed.

Prepare **The Journey Clock** and **Return Visits and State Ledger**: eight travel boxes with room for two more, recording custody, creature locations and hit points, porter orders, routing authority, equipment condition, and route.

Begin with **Opening Read-Aloud**. Let the characters react before Hett explains the railway's position. Iona's statement and Mara's ticket require no introductory check.

After the party arranges care for Mara and begins inquiry, present three accessible leads together: C2's passengers, C3's records, and C4's cargo. Scene numbers describe a likely sequence. They do not restrict movement.

Reserve about forty minutes for the terminal and twenty for restoration and ownership decisions. Use **Useful cuts** if time runs short.

Hook

The Midnight Memory Express offers quiet compartments, punctual service, and discreet transport for passengers who would rather leave something behind.

Mara Pell remembers having a daughter. She recognizes her handwriting on their ticket envelope. Yet after waking in her berth and joining Iona in the saloon, she cannot connect the child with those memories.

Hett calls this a possible consequence of a lawful transaction. Mara says she sold nothing. The next stop belongs to the company receiving the train's sealed memory cargo.

Stakes

Each stolen recording can be recovered independently.

RECORDING	WHAT IS MISSING	CONSEQUENCE IF INACCESSIBLE
1: Mara's family connection	Recognition of Iona through a specific cluster of shared experiences	Mara knows she has a daughter but cannot recover these experiences or instinctively recognize Iona
2: Ben's inspection recollection	His memory of examining and marking this shipment	Ben cannot explain the seal discrepancy and faces dismissal
3: Tessa's witnessed theft	The interval in which she saw Nera extracting Mara's memory	A direct witness cannot presently describe the crime

The losses do not spread or prevent new experiences. Mara can learn to trust Iona before restoration; Ben can inspect the case again; Tessa can reconstruct events from physical evidence.

The voluntary donors have different wishes, recorded in **Recording Reference**. Recovering stolen property gives the party no blanket claim to the other recordings.

Hett risks his reputation by admitting the breach. Dask's guards risk becoming accomplices if they continue after

seeing proof. Nera may surrender part of the shipment, cooperate against Dask, or flee.

Failure has specific limits

Losing the case causes no death or further erasure. Breaking one recording does not destroy the others. Missing the terminal transfer leaves roads, witnesses, contracts, and a known buyer available for later investigation.

A recovered or restored memory is not automatically stolen again. Any later threat must arise from an unresolved actor or a new event.

Factions

The Nightline Railway

Representative: Conductor Hett Brindle.

Goal: Complete the journey safely and preserve passenger trust in licensed memory transport.

Leverage: Carriage keys, passenger records, route authority, the restoration cradle, and a compensation strongbox.

What changes its position: Two independent discrepancies, an owner-authorized preview of a stolen recording, Nera's confession, or proof of a forged consent entry. **Establishing a hold** gives specific evidence packages.

Observable pressure: Hett initially orders everyone back to their seats. Once persuaded, he pins his brass authority badge outside C3 and places the disputed cargo under railway hold.

Limit: The carriage contract permits temporary evidence custody, not sale or compulsory restoration.

Vale's Licensed Courier Service

Representative: Nera Vale.

Goal: Deliver six recordings under a clean manifest, collect her remaining commission, and retain a usable identity in the trade.

Leverage: The routing tag, forged paperwork, knowledge of Dask's commission, and testimony against him.

What changes its position: Loss of the case, a convincing escape offer, proof Dask intends to abandon her, or a credible promise to record her cooperation.

Observable pressure: Nera first corrects legal terminology. When cornered, she drops titles and names what each person could lose.

Limit: She neither harms Iona nor deliberately smashes recordings. Her usual threats concern legal seizure and reputational damage.

Dask's Mnemonic Exchange

Representative: Orin Dask.

Goal: Acquire rare private experiences while appearing to be a legitimate collector.

Leverage: A private platform, two hired guards, purchase contracts, and money.

What changes its position: Uncontrolled witnesses, proof of his commission, a diverted arrival, or public custody of the recordings.

Observable pressure: Dask places a receipt pad on the case before anyone agrees to deliver it.

Limit: His guards were hired to protect a lawful transfer, not assault railway staff or conceal proven theft.

The Journey Clock

Use **eight travel boxes**, each representing approximately ten minutes. The train arrives when the eighth box fills. Table discussion alone does not advance the clock.

What advances it

Fill one box for:

- Resolving an Encounter 1-5 for the first time.
- An additional comprehensive carriage search.
- A second extended interview after leaving that passenger.
- Ten minutes spent copying, repairing, resting, experimenting, or deliberately waiting.

Walking between carriages, brief follow-ups, showing an acquired document, and examining an obvious object do not fill a box. A fight or chase and its immediate aftermath fit within the encounter's one box.

For simultaneous activities, charge the longest activity, usually one box. Alternate short exchanges between separated groups. Nera can interfere only from her actual location.

A listed failure cost replaces the activity's normal box unless it explicitly says **additional**. Failed checks impose no unspecified time penalties.

Arrival during unfinished business

When the final box fills:

1. Finish the current combat round, if any.
2. Announce platform lights and the slowing train.
3. Begin Encounter 6 with everyone's actual location, possessions, and condition.

If the case remains in C4, Dask must obtain it there. If the party holds it in C1, his people must walk there or negotiate.

Changing the schedule

Cautious approach in Encounter 5 adds **two boxes once**, increasing the threshold from eight to ten without erasing filled boxes.

A **diversion** sends the train to a different, public station. Use **Public-platform arrival** in Scene 6 and **Public-station map overlay** in Map Specifications; reusing the drawing does not move private-terminal property or people.

An **emergency stop** pauses travel while stationary. Railway responders arrive after thirty fictional minutes. Use **Emergency brake procedure** and **Stopped-train meeting**.

Resting

A 2014 short rest takes one hour: six travel boxes while moving. The party may rest if sufficient journey time remains or after safely stopping. Arrival and active opponents' plans can occur during a rest.

No encounter assumes a short rest. Hostile hit points and resources persist between scenes.

Scene Flow

1. A Child Without a Familiar Face

KEY: C1

EXPECTED TABLE TIME: 25 minutes

ENTRY LEADS: Opening disturbance

WHAT CAN CHANGE: Victim protection; railway cooperation; initial evidence

EXITS: C2 interviews, C3 records, C4 cargo

2. The Passengers' Missing Minutes

KEY: C2

EXPECTED TABLE TIME: 40 minutes

ENTRY LEADS: Tickets, berth assignments, witness names

WHAT CAN CHANGE: Timeline; Nera's cover; donor wishes

EXITS: C3 verification, C4 interception, C1 care

3. The Ledger and the Cradle

KEY: C3

EXPECTED TABLE TIME: 35 minutes

ENTRY LEADS: Hett's claim, inspection mark, consent disputes

WHAT CAN CHANGE: Legal hold; case access; restoration knowledge

EXITS: C4 cargo, C5 routing, C6 bridge

4. Glass in the Baggage Car

KEY: C4-C5, optional roofs

EXPECTED TABLE TIME: 45 minutes

ENTRY LEADS: Manifest, physical trail, direct search

WHAT CAN CHANGE: Custody of case and individual recordings

EXITS: C3 restoration, C5 refuge, C6 route

5. Who Chooses the Next Stop?

KEY: C6

EXPECTED TABLE TIME: 25 minutes

ENTRY LEADS: Approaching terminal, cargo dispute

WHAT CAN CHANGE: Delay, diversion, stop, or unchanged route

EXITS: Any carriage; terminal

6. The Contested Transfer

KEY: T1-T4

EXPECTED TABLE TIME: 45 minutes

ENTRY LEADS: Arrival or deliberate rendezvous

WHAT CAN CHANGE: Final custody, arrests, escape, settlement

EXITS: Restoration, public station, road pursuit

Allow **15 minutes** for transitions and **25 minutes** for restitution and closing choices. With a short break, play runs about four and a half hours; combat-heavy sessions may approach five.

Useful cuts

Short interview route: Put Tessa and Ben together in C2's aisle. Each gives their initial statement without a separate introduction. Retain the conflict between recollections and physical timeline. Saves about ten minutes.

Nera stays to bargain: If the party controls both C4 exits, resolve her surrender or a brief fight instead of a futile chase. Saves ten to fifteen minutes.

Bridge by speaking tube: Once Hett supports the party, run Encounter 5 from C3 with engineer Ada Senn on the tube. Use the remote opener and normal operating costs. Saves about ten minutes.

Early recovery: If the party has secured all six recordings and diverted the train, Encounter 6 becomes a public custody hearing, with Dask's contractual objection if he reaches it. Omit loading actions and combat deployment; retain the custody decisions.

Skipped locations remain available in their established state.

Locations

Six carriages form a line, C1 at the rear and C6 at the front. Broad central aisles connect through enclosed gangways five feet long. **Map Specifications** supplies authoritative dimensions and coordinates.

C1: Passenger Saloon

A brass samovar trembles on a bolted sideboard. Green seats face narrow tables; rain turns the windows into dark mirrors.

Present initially: Mara, Iona, Hett, and the party.

Useful objects: Matching tickets, Iona's brass bird, Mara's envelope, a call bell, and a notice advertising licensed memory transport.

Pressure: Passengers seek reassurance. Accusations and requests for help spread from here.

Discoveries: Mara has no consent receipt. Her tickets were purchased together. The bird's base bears a date and an inscription in her handwriting.

Return state: Mara and Iona remain here unless they choose C2A or accompany a trusted adult. After restoration, use recognition and cautious conversation. The broken crockery is cleared after Encounter 1.

C2: Sleeping Carriage

Four narrow compartments open onto the central aisle. Each has a long convertible berth, folding wash shelf, and open floor for two Medium creatures beside the berth.

• **C2A:** Mara and Iona.

• **C2B:** Nera.

• **C2C:** Tessa.

• **C2D:** Dr. Suri En.

Present initially: Tessa in C2C, Suri in C2D, Nera in C2B until alerted. Ben passes through the aisle after Scene 1.

Useful objects: A scratched wash shelf, torn booking slip, Nera's commission letter, and three exhausted extraction tips in her locked travel pouch.

Pressure: Searches without consent or Hett's authority make witnesses of the party's conduct.

Return state: Track opened compartments, relocated occupants, and confiscated papers or equipment.

C3: Records and Refreshment Office

Labeled contract drawers stand behind a refreshment counter. A padded brass cradle sits beneath a reading lamp.

Present initially: Clerk Omi Tal, a noncombatant using SRD commoner statistics.

Useful objects: Passenger register, consent ledger, duplicate inspection stamp, restoration cradle, compensation strongbox.

Pressure: Omi fears blame for the forged entries. A promise to preserve originals earns more cooperation than a threat.

Discoveries: Six manifest entries have only three valid donor receipts. The inspection mark appears twice with the same chipped edge, despite Ben remembering only a preliminary inspection.

Return state: Holds remain recorded and payments deducted. Track cradle use or removal; it neither renews extraction tips nor repairs destroyed recordings.

C4: Baggage and Bonded Cargo

Canvas trunks occupy secured wall racks. A six-slot case rests in a numbered recess beneath a copper routing plate; the central aisle is clear.

Present initially: P1. Nera comes here when alerted or after the party's second investigative encounter, unless detained.

Useful objects: Case, routing plate, tie-down rings, roof ladder, bonded-cargo register.

Pressure: P1 blocks unauthorized cargo removal but permits standing in the aisle and reading exterior labels.

Discoveries: The stamped weight accounts for six recordings. The outer seal repeats the flawed inspection mark. Slots 1-3 have fresh blue lacquer; slots 4-6 have older amber seals.

Return state: Track the case's removal, rack damage, and P1's condition and orders. There is no replacement cargo.

C5: Service Carriage and Transfer Cage

Tools hang above narrow benches. A barred cage at the forward end of the northern wall connects to an exterior loading hatch.

Present initially: P2 beside the cage.

Useful objects: Cage lock, exterior hatch latch, wheel chocks, spare lanterns, ordinary tool cabinet.

Cage access: Hett carries the key; Nera's travel pouch holds an issued duplicate. An adjacent keyholder locks or unlocks the door with one object interaction. Without a key, an action with thieves' tools and a **DC 14 Dexterity check** opens it. Failure costs the action; retries are allowed. The door has **AC 15, 20 hit points**, and poison and psychic immunity. At 0 hit points it opens and cannot be relocked without repair.

The loading hatch is independent of the cage door. A creature adjacent to either hatch latch can open or close it with an action. Locking the cage does not seal the hatch.

Pressure: P2 follows valid routing authority. An order to hold the cage lasts until released, disabled, or overridden; see **Item: Courier Routing Tag**.

Discovery: A slip names Dask and requests "one authenticated maternal recognition sequence." It proves his interest, but alone does not prove he knew consent was absent.

Return state: A locked-in case stays in the cage. A porter outside cannot reach through the bars to move it. Track the hatch separately.

C6: Locomotive Control Cab

An enchanted drive sits behind a locked maintenance grille. Ordinary levers control speed, brakes, and the next authorized route signal.

Present initially: Engineer Ada Senn, using SRD commoner statistics. She does not fight unless personally attacked.

Useful objects: Brake lever, route selector, speaking tube, timetable, signal acknowledgment lamp.

Pressure: Ada remains at the controls. Bring evidence, relay it through Hett, or make a credible emergency report.

Discovery: The public junction is available through travel box five. Later, the train can slow or stop, but diversion requires railway assistance.

Return state: Route selections, delays, brakes, and control damage persist until someone changes them.

T1: Arrival Platform

The platform meets the train's northern side at floor level. The transfer area adjoins C5; the platform also reaches the other carriages.

Initial private-terminal occupants: Dask, G1, and G2 at the wagon.

Pressure: Dask tries to complete delivery before an objection is organized.

T2: Transfer Wagon and Yard

A north-facing wagon waits beneath a hooded lantern, with two horses harnessed beyond its shafts.

Useful objects: Wagon straps, wheel brake, harness buckles, yard gate.

Pressure: Loading, securing, and driving require actions under **The loading clock**.

T3: Receiving Office

At the private terminal, Dask's duplicate commission agreement lies in a folio on the desk overlooking the yard. It includes the phrase omitted from Nera's letter: "Consent unnecessary; authenticity essential." His money remains in the locked cash drawer until paid.

At the public station, this room contains blank custody forms, a timetable, and ordinary railway ledgers. It contains neither Dask's counterpart nor his cash.

Return state: Removed documents remain with their holder. A searched desk stays disturbed unless someone takes time to restore it.

T4: Public Road

At the private terminal, the north gate opens onto a maintained road. A public railway office lies five miles east; Dask's vault house lies three miles west.

Leaving the map changes pursuit scale. Use **If the wagon escapes**. At the public station, apply **Public-station map overlay** instead of these destinations and distances.

Encounter Matrix

1. The Passenger Who Sold Nothing EXACT POSSIBLE OPPOSITION: No combatants PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE: Protect Mara and establish grounds to investigate NONCOMBAT LEVERAGE: Tickets, absent receipt, Hett's duty FAILURE CHANGES: Investigation continues without official keys
2. Three Gaps in the Night EXACT POSSIBLE OPPOSITION: Nera, if present and attacked PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE: Reconstruct movements and identify victims NONCOMBAT LEVERAGE: Privacy agreements, amnesty for unrelated conduct FAILURE CHANGES: Witnesses withdraw; physical clues remain
3. A Signature Is Not Consent EXACT POSSIBLE OPPOSITION: No combatants PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE: Establish a hold and learn restoration NONCOMBAT LEVERAGE: Ledger mismatch, inspection flaw, Omi's cooperation FAILURE CHANGES: Access takes time or becomes unauthorized
4. The Six-Slot Case EXACT POSSIBLE OPPOSITION: Nera, P1; P2 if reached or summoned PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE: Secure recordings and prevent transfer NONCOMBAT LEVERAGE: Override authority, commission evidence, bargaining FAILURE CHANGES: Nera or individual recordings move to C5
5. The Last Public Junction EXACT POSSIBLE OPPOSITION: No combatants unless tracked pursuers arrive PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE: Choose route, delay, or stop NONCOMBAT LEVERAGE: Safety authority, evidence, emergency procedure FAILURE CHANGES: Private arrival remains imminent
6. Receipt Before Delivery EXACT POSSIBLE OPPOSITION: Dask, G1, G2, plus surviving enemies present PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE: Resolve custody and prevent unwanted departure

NONCOMBAT LEVERAGE: Commission agreement, witnesses, valid hold
FAILURE CHANGES: Wagon departs with its actual cargo

Dask and the guards do not board the moving train. Use each creature once, preserving its location and condition under **Return Visits and State Ledger**.

Scenes

Scene 1: A Child Without a Familiar Face

Runtime: 25 minutes.

Objective: Support Mara and obtain authority to investigate.

Stakes: Hett's initial response could let the stolen cargo proceed as a lawful sale.

READ-ALoud
The conductor lays a passenger list beside the wet table. Two punched tickets lie underneath it, tied with blue thread. The child sets down her brass bird and presses its tail. Its wings open. The woman watches, then bends to read the handwriting scratched into its base.

Arrival condition: Follow the opening reactions. If the group has moved somewhere quieter, place the tickets and bird at their new table or seat.

Immediately evident: Mara is frightened but coherent. She knows her name, destination, occupation, and that she has a daughter; she cannot recognize Iona.

Without a check: The tickets were purchased together. Mara recognizes her handwriting on the envelope. The bird reads, "For Iona, who notices everything. -M."

Encounter 1: The Passenger Who Sold Nothing

Location: C1.

Trigger: Questioning Mara, Iona, or Hett.

Opposition: None.

Visible pressure: Hett wants the conversation ended before it alarms the carriage.

"I am not disputing her distress," he says. "I am disputing that distress proves an unlawful transaction."

Hett thinks Mara may regret a sale. Asking for her receipt exposes the weakness in that explanation.

- Procedure**
1. Establish who stays with Mara and Iona.
 2. Give their statements and Hett's account.
 3. Resolve the party's request for access using its evidence or claimed authority.
 4. Present C2, C3, and C4 as accessible leads.

Mara: She bought two tickets, packed for her daughter, and expected to visit a relative. She has never sold a memory. Her last clear recollection before the gap is lying down in

C2A while Iona watched rain race along the window.

Iona: A woman with a silver seam on one glove checked their tickets at the compartment. Later, Suri took Iona to C1 for warm milk. Mara followed after waking. Iona does not know the woman's name.

Hett: Six recordings were accepted under a licensed courier's manifest for Dask's terminal. He has not examined every donor receipt.

Useful checks

- **DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine):** Mara's condition matches the narrow effects of a memory recording. Success also finds a circular pressure mark behind her left ear. Failure leaves the cause uncertain.
- **DC 12 Wisdom (Insight):** Hett is defending his professional judgment, not concealing knowledge of theft. Failure gives no reliable conclusion.
- **DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion), with one concrete discrepancy:** Hett grants supervised access to C2 and C3.
- **No check, with two independent discrepancies or a direct paperwork contradiction:** Hett grants that access.

A careful, consensual examination also finds the pressure mark without a roll, using the encounter's remaining time. Medicine establishes its significance sooner.

Magic at the opening

Within its normal 30-foot range, *detect magic* senses fading divination at Mara's pressure mark; an action reveals the aura on her visible skin. It identifies no thief. The cradle in C3 and recordings in C4 are out of range from C1. Approaching them permits detection only within the spell's range and barrier limits; seeing an aura still requires a visible creature or object.

Zone of truth can establish that Mara sincerely denies a sale. Apply the normal Charisma saves each turn; she cooperates once affected but cannot voluntarily fail under the 2014 rules. A successful save does not establish dishonesty. Hett and Mara accept explained spellcasting without treating it as inherently hostile.

Lesser restoration and *remove curse* cannot return this recording; it is neither a listed condition nor a curse. Tell a player who examines the effect before they spend a slot. See **Restorative and investigative magic** for other spells and **Restoration** for the cradle procedure.

Hett's response

Threatening passengers or making unsupported accusations causes Hett to withhold his keys and ask Omi to protect the records. He does not lock the party in C1.

Care, a documented discrepancy, or a limited inquiry lets him admit uncertainty. Once persuaded, he grants supervised access, introduces Omi, and temporarily prohibits unloading disputed cargo. Later evidence can secure the formal hold described in **Establishing a hold**.

Immediate protection

Mara decides whether Iona stays beside her. If she needs space, Suri can supervise Iona in C1. The child need not perform distress to prove their relationship.

A useful introduction is: "This is Iona. Your tickets and belongings say you traveled together. You can take time."

Railway contract

When Hett agrees intervention is warranted, he offers a **50 gp party advance** for investigating Mara's loss and securing evidence or disputed cargo, payable by Omi in C3. His total recovery budget is **200 gp**, including the advance. Reasonable efforts earn the advance even if recovery fails.

At this point Hett does not know the number or identities of the stolen recordings. Once missing receipts or victims establish all three, he discloses **50 gp per intact stolen recording secured**, up to the remaining 150 gp. State these terms before any destruction decision. **Partial compensation** governs payment, including restoration and deliberate delivery to Dask.

Success: Supervised access, Omi's cooperation, and temporary unloading prohibition.

Fail-forward: Mara permits a C2A search. Iona supplies the silver-glove clue, and the public cargo notice identifies C3 as the records office.

Transition: Tickets lead to C2, the absent receipt to C3, and the shipment to C4. Fill one travel box when the party leaves the initial emergency.

Scene 2: The Passengers' Missing Minutes

Runtime: 40 minutes.

Objective: Reconstruct the theft window and distinguish victims, witnesses, and voluntary donors.

Stakes: Passengers' unrelated secrets may distract from Nera's movements.

READ-ALoud

Four compartment doors face a strip of worn carpet. Beneath a swinging lamp, a porter turns a punch stamp over in his hands. A woman in a violet dressing gown leans from one doorway. "I heard the latch twice. I am certain about that." In the neighboring compartment, a doctor folds a blanket over an empty seat.

Arrival conditions: Omit Ben or Suri if elsewhere. If Tessa is absent, replace her line with her folded dressing gown. If Nera has left, C2B is closed and unattended unless already opened.

Immediately evident: Ben cannot recall a routine task. Tessa is irritated by her missing interval. Suri objects to treating every memory sale as coercion.

Encounter 2: Three Gaps in the Night

Location: C2 and C2A-D.

Trigger: Interviews or searches.

Opposition: Nera alone, if present and attacked.

Objective: Obtain two independent links between Nera and the compromised shipment.

The passenger timeline

These are DM facts. Reveal entries only as established.

TIME	EVENT	AVAILABLE CORROBORATION
22:50	Nera boards with lawful recordings sealed in slots 4-6	Original C3 receipts; bonded-cargo register
23:00	Ben checks the outer latch and makes a preliminary inspection mark	His notebook; chipped punch
23:04	Suri takes Iona to C1 for milk; Mara sleeps in C2A	Suri; Omi's refreshment chit
23:06	Nera uses her first tip on Mara	Tessa's recoverable memory; Mara's pressure mark
23:08	Tessa sees Nera leave C2A with a blue-sealed vial	Tessa's recording; blue lacquer on C2A's shelf
23:10	Tessa returns to her berth and sleeps	Suri saw her close the door; Tessa's reading lamp
23:12	Nera extracts Tessa's witness memory with the second tip	Tessa's pressure mark; three-tip pouch
23:15	Ben dozes on the aisle bench during the last minutes of his scheduled shift	Shift card; Omi's observation
23:16	Nera takes Ben's inspection memory and copies his punch	Ben's pressure mark; C3 duplicate stamp
23:18	Nera adds slots 1-3 and files a substituted manifest	Register's second entry; Omi's recollection
23:20	Mara wakes, enters C1, and fails to recognize Iona	Opening scene

Before the adventure, Nera took the case from C4 to C3 for paperwork and returned it to C4. Ben's loss concerns the preliminary inspection, not his general procedural knowledge.

Ben Orrel, porter

Wants: Keep his job and learn whether he made an error.

Initially says: "I checked the latch. I know I did. But I cannot tell you what I found."

Conceals: He slept during the last minutes of duty and fears this will overshadow the theft.

Leverage: Promise to distinguish his lapse from another person's crime, or obtain Hett's reassurance.

Evidence: His notebook records the 23:00 inspection and sketches the chipped punch. He remembers refusing Nera's request to record an inspection memory for training.

Check: Without reassurance, **DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion)** earns the sleeping admission. Failure makes him wait for Hett before answering; his notebook remains available with permission.

Tessa Venn, passenger

Wants: Recover her interval without exposing an unrelated affair in her journal.

Initially says: She heard C2A's latch twice and intended to report something, but cannot retrieve what she saw.

Leverage: Read only the journey entry while she holds the book.

Evidence: At 23:09 she wrote, "Courier, silver glove seam, blue glass; ask conductor after she passes."

Check: None for agreed limited access. Persuading her to surrender the whole journal requires **DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion)**. Failure closes the broader search, not access to the relevant page under her original condition.

Dr. Suri En, voluntary donor

Wants: Help Mara without having her own deliberate sale dismissed as a mistake.

Initially says: She sold one bounded wartime triage shift, retaining medical knowledge, factual understanding, and the ability to discuss what happened.

Conceals: Nothing relevant.

Evidence: Her genuine amber-sealed receipt covers slot 6. She confirms Nera's silver glove seam.

Current choice: Reclaim slot 6 sealed under her contract, with neither restoration nor destruction.

Medical help: A ten-minute examination identifies pressure marks on willing patients. It can run alongside interviews without an additional box.

Nera Vale, courier

Until alerted, Nera reads a timetable in C2B. She acknowledges the licensed shipment and correctly identifies slots 4-6. Slots 1-3 are "late additions whose privacy I must protect." She will not volunteer their donors' names.

Defense: The records are in C3, the sealed case in C4, and the conductor accepted responsibility for consent checks.

Pressure: Mentioning Mara's mark, Tessa's note, or the preliminary inspection sends her toward C4 at her next unopposed opportunity. She walks there without automatically beginning combat.

Insight: **DC 14 Wisdom (Insight)** notices her sharpened concern about blue seals; this is a clue, not proof.

Truth magic: She may refuse questioning. In *zone of truth*, she says, "I delivered the documents required of me," or stays silent. She does not know whether she saved unless a spell or feature tells her.

Searching compartments

C2A, with Mara's permission: A careful search finds blue lacquer on the wash shelf without a check. **DC 12**

Intelligence (Investigation) also identifies a round vial-base indentation; failure leaves the fleck.

C2B: After Nera departs, the ordinary door is locked. Hett's key opens it. Thieves' tools and **DC 14 Dexterity** open it without damage; failure consumes the search activity and leaves it locked. A retry takes another activity. The door has **AC 15, 18 hit points**, and poison and psychic immunity.

Nera's travel pouch contains three exhausted tips, her commission letter, and her issued cage-key duplicate. Its lock uses the same DC; Nera carries the pouch key. Taking the locked pouch preserves its evidence. A visible booking slip beneath the berth names Dask as the paying customer and requires no pouch access.

C2C and C2D: Searches require occupant consent, Hett's supported authority, or deliberate intrusion. Neither contains another thief or a hidden monster.

Unexpected approaches

A familiar can watch the aisle or follow Nera, but must access a closed pouch to read its contents. Invisible observers can track her movements.

Detect thoughts can reveal immediate concerns about the case or commission; use the spell's normal rules for deeper probing. Early discovery leaves cargo custody to resolve.

Impersonating a railway inspector requires **DC 14 Charisma (Deception)** to get Nera discussing the slot arrangement. Failure makes her request Hett's confirmation and head toward C3 if unopposed.

Success: Nera is linked to the extraction window; authentic sales and written evidence or a witness chain are established.

Fail-forward: Suri's receipt shows a valid transaction. Ben's public shift card and the C3 ledger remain available despite refused searches.

Transition: The punch and receipt lead to C3; Nera's movement, booking slip, and lacquer lead to C4. Fill one box for the initial interviews and search. Further comprehensive searches or extended return interviews use **What advances it**.

Scene 3: The Ledger and the Cradle

Runtime: 35 minutes.

Objective: Establish a cargo hold and learn safe handling.

Stakes: The same case contains stolen recordings and valid purchases.

READ-ALoud

Six ruled entries fill an open ledger beneath the reading lamp. Beside it, a brass headrest connects to a single glass socket. The clerk rests one hand on a drawer of receipts. "I can show you what arrived," she says. "I cannot make the missing papers appear."

Arrival conditions: If the party holds the papers, describe the open drawer and cradle instead. An established hold puts Hett's badge outside and makes Omi cooperative.

Encounter 3: A Signature Is Not Consent

Location: C3.

Trigger: Requesting records, comparing receipts, or bringing a recording.

Opposition: None.

Objective: Identify defective entries and obtain case or cradle access.

Omi accepted the substituted manifest at 23:18. With Ben's inspection mark on the case, she assumed the three missing receipts were filed separately.

Immediately evident: Six entries, three attachments.

Ordinary comparison: Valid receipts cover slots 4-6. Slots 1-3 cite nonexistent numbers.

Further proof: **DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation)** identifies different ink over scraped paper in the three added lines. Failure leaves the receipt mismatch intact but physical alteration unproved.

Establishing a hold

Hett accepts any one of these packages without a check:

- Missing receipt numbers and Mara's denial.
- Tessa's note and the blue-sealed additions.
- Nera's commission letter and a victim's extraction mark.
- Nera's confession.
- A donor-authorized preview showing stolen content.

He writes a hold over slots 1-3, requires separate verification before slots 4-6 leave the train, and supplies the case latch key and a signed porter override card.

Without a package, **DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion)** secures ten minutes of inspection under Omi's supervision. Failure leaves further evidence, unauthorized access, and physical cargo approaches available. Later evidence can change Hett's decision.

The copied stamp

A duplicate punch rests in Omi's returns tray; Nera claimed Ben dropped it. It is a soft-metal impression of his tool.

Comparison with Ben's notebook needs no roll. A **DC 12 Intelligence check using smith's tools, jeweler's tools, or Investigation** shows that it is recent and too soft for routine use. It establishes forgery equipment, not the identities of the extracted memories.

Learning the cradle

Omi demonstrates the empty socket, the **Preview**, **Return**, and **Erase** selectors, and the operating lever. The selectors bear an eye, an open hand, and a crossed circle, respectively. Audible signals and visible light precede irreversible operations.

Give **Handout: Operating the Memory Cradle** after the demonstration or careful examination. Basic operation requires no Arcana check; use Arcana for tampering or damage diagnosis. **Memory Rules and Equipment** contains the complete procedures.

A practical consent puzzle

If the party proposes restoring everything, Omi asks what permission covers absent Leda's slot 5 and whether Suri has changed her request. Apply **Consent and disposition**, checking each donor's terms in **Recording Reference**. All six need not be restored.

Access through other means

Opening the case without Hett's key does not override its porters. Characters can instead restrain, distract, negotiate with, or bypass them.

A character proficient in Arcana can spend an activity examining routing records and attempt **DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana)** to create a temporary override for **one named porter for ten minutes**. Materials cost **5 gp** in conductive wire and sealing foil, available in C5. Failure is visible during the desk test and does not activate a porter against the party. This is homebrew device work. Record the prior order; expiration follows **Item: Courier Routing Tag**.

Forging Hett's signature requires a sample, a forgery kit, and **DC 15 Dexterity**. Failure produces an obviously defective document. Success fools the porter's reader but may carry consequences if staff discover it.

Compensation and copies

Omi pays the promised **50 gp advance** and records it. The strongbox starts with **200 gp** and retains **150 gp** after that payment, until completion payments occur.

She can make certified copies during another character's ten-minute activity. Photographs, magical transcription, and carefully witnessed copies can also support the evidence reward.

Success: A hold, override, case key, and handling instructions.

Fail-forward: The ledger discrepancy survives a dispute with Hett. Other case-access methods remain, and Suri can operate the cradle once instructions are available.

Transition: The manifest names C4-R and C5-Q. The timetable shows the approaching public junction. Fill one box for the first records investigation.

Scene 4: Glass in the Baggage Car

Runtime: 45 minutes.

Objective: Secure stolen recordings before transfer.

Stakes: Removing individual recordings can save them even if the case escapes.

READ-ALoud

Numbered trunks sit behind brass rails. Six small circles gleam through the padded lid of a case in an open recess. A brass porter rests one hand on the rack latch. Above the aisle, a painted arrow points forward: **TRANSFER CAGE**.

Arrival conditions: If the case has moved, describe a rectangular patch of clean felt in the empty recess. Omit an absent porter or describe its actual condition. If Nera is present, she watches the party's hands from her position in **Named initial positions**.

Encounter 4: The Six-Slot Case

Location: C4, potentially C5 and the roofs.

Trigger: Attempting to inspect, claim, or move the case, or challenging Nera as she reaches it.

Initial opposition: P1 and Nera if present.

Additional opposition: P2 only if reached or audibly summoned from C5.

Objective: Control the recordings or the authority directing them.

Starting circumstances

- **Early, quiet arrival:** P1 guards the case; Nera remains at her current location until alerted.
- **Nera arrives first:** She has the tag and may open the rack, but gains no automatic round of actions.
- **Railway hold issued:** P1 accepts the override as an action within 5 feet.
- **Case already seized elsewhere:** Resolve any remaining confrontation at that location.

P1 says, "Bonded cargo. Present routing authority." It permits conversation and exterior-label inspection.

Case access

The loaded case weighs **24 pounds**, is two feet long, and can be carried in one hand under ordinary carrying-capacity rules without an automatic speed penalty.

An unlocked latch opens with one action. A locked latch opens with one action using its key, or one action using thieves' tools at **DC 14 Dexterity**; it can also be broken (**AC 15, 10 hit points**, poison and psychic immunity). Latch damage does not damage recordings. See **Item: Six-Slot Recording Case** for the complete handling and durability rules.

Once open, slot numbers and seal colors are evident. Reading all labels takes an action in combat or a brief examination outside it. Removing or inserting each recording takes an action.

Nera's first offer

Nera offers **slot 1** if allowed to deliver the other five. She knows slots 2 and 3 are stolen but does not admit it.

Shown Tessa's note and the receipt mismatch, she offers all three stolen recordings for safe passage off the train at the next stop. If promised a record of her cooperation, she also names Dask as the commissioning buyer.

State agreed terms aloud. Safe passage need not include hiding evidence or guaranteeing a court's decision.

Porter orders

Use **Item: Courier Routing Tag**. A spoken tag command costs an action and reaches **one porter within 30 feet** that can hear it. A signed railway override presented as an action within **5 feet** takes precedence.

P1 initially guards C4-R. P2 receives the case at C5-Q and holds it for delivery. Combat noise alone does not change either order.

If initiative begins

Nera takes the case toward C5-Q, attacking only those preventing escape or seizing cargo. She uses normal movement and **Quick Exit**, with no free move before initiative.

P1 blocks unauthorized carriers and favors **Clamp** over damage. P2 stays in C5 unless commanded. If Nera spends an action calling P2 within 30 feet, it follows the new order on its next turn at normal speed. Track its route through open passages; hostile occupied spaces and closed cage bars still obstruct it.

Terrain and useful actions

- Rack frameworks give **half cover** across them; their solid footprints cannot be occupied.
- Closing a rack gate takes an object interaction; securing its latch takes an action.
- A tie-down ring anchors rope. Attaching prepared rope takes an action without a check when unopposed.
- Use ordinary shoves, grapples, applicable disarming features, and object attacks. Taking a securely held case requires release, incapacitation, an applicable rule, or an agreed contest.

For an improvised tug over a case neither side has secured, each participant uses an action for opposed **Strength (Athletics)** checks. The winner draws it into their space; a tie leaves it in place. This homebrew contest does not take a securely carried item from someone freely moving.

Roof pursuit

Nera uses the C4 ladder only if the aisle is blocked and she can reach it. The connected roofs have exits at C2-H and C6-H; choose according to the pursuit.

Ladders use normal climbing movement. Roofs are ten feet above the floor, with five-foot gaps crossed by ordinary jumping rules. A running long jump automatically crosses

one if the creature's Strength permits five feet. See **Roof geometry** for gangway roofs and route distances.

Roof hazard

This hazard is homebrew.

- **Warning:** Wet plates, open gaps, and buffeting air are visible before climbing.
- **Trigger:** Dashing on a wet roof, being shoved there, or standing there when emergency braking begins.
- **Check:** **DC 12 Dexterity save**, at most once per creature per round.
- **Failure:** Fall prone. In an outermost five-foot strip beside a side edge, also slide to the edge and hang by one hand.
- **Recovery:** An action and **DC 10 Strength (Athletics)** climbs to the adjacent roof square. An adjacent creature able to lift the hanging creature can pull it up with an action and no check.
- **Failed climb:** Remain hanging. Fall only upon releasing the grip, becoming incapacitated, or taking damage and failing a **DC 10 Strength save**.
- **Fall:** Ten feet onto gravel beside the rails deals **1d6 bludgeoning damage**. The landing is not beneath the wheels. The train continues unless stopped.
- **Duration:** While wet and moving. Stopping removes wind and braking triggers; wet running still risks falling prone.

A secured rope prevents a slide from becoming a fall but does not prevent prone. Crawling avoids the Dash trigger. Flight bypasses the gaps and surface hazard; teleportation works to destinations allowed by its spell.

Outside the moving train

Homebrew chase procedure: In initiative, the train advances **60 feet at count 0, losing ties**, or **30 feet** after Ada accepts the cautious approach. Onboard movement uses carriage coordinates normally. For someone on the ground or flying alongside, track their position relative to those coordinates: their forward movement increases x; each train advance subtracts its distance from their x. A falling creature lands beside its departure point before the next advance, prone from the fall. Standing and Dash use normal movement rules.

A creature that reaches a north-side passenger doorway at floor level can board with **5 feet of movement** and a free hand; opening a closed ordinary door uses an object interaction. No check is required if it can match the train's advance with its available movement that round. Otherwise boarding requires an action and **DC 12 Strength (Athletics)**; failure leaves it outside, without extra damage. A flying creature may instead land on an unoccupied roof square with its remaining movement. Roof hatches and ladders use their ordinary procedures. Helpers can ready an action to pull a reachable creature through a doorway if their lifting capacity suffices; that requires no check.

After the emergency brake is pulled, each remaining advance is **30 feet** until the end of the next round, when the

train stops. A stopped train does not shift outside positions. The Journey Clock still governs arrival and whole-encounter time; these advances resolve local pursuit only and add no extra travel boxes. Cautious approach still adds its two boxes only once.

If a character cannot catch up, allies can stop the train, return by a suitable ability, or send help. A conscious stranded traveler can stay clear of the track and follow it toward the public station; railway responders reach their reported position after **thirty minutes** once Ada or Hett sends a signal. Track who remains outside; arrival never places them back aboard.

Case damage and partial recovery

The case has **AC 15, 20 hit points**, and poison and psychic immunity. At 0 hit points it opens; padding protects all recordings from that damage event.

Loose recordings have **AC 13, 3 hit points**, and poison and psychic immunity. Effects damage unattended recordings only if they damage objects; carried recordings follow the effect's worn-or-carried object rules. See **Recording durability**.

Nera never deliberately breaks a recording. She bargains over a credible threat to do so; the affected donor still bears the loss.

Morale

Nera offers surrender at **20 hit points or fewer**, when both exits are controlled, or when she has lost the case without a credible way to reclaim it. She accepts restraint for protection from Dask. Surrender persists unless the party's treatment or an explicit escape opportunity changes her decision.

Porters stop when their valid orders are fulfilled, authorized custody instructions require yielding, or they reach 0 hit points. Fear does not affect them.

Success: Secure recordings, gain Nera's cooperation, or redirect porters.

Fail-forward: Nera reaches C5-Q with only what she carries. Removed recordings and acquired evidence stay with their holders; transfer still awaits arrival.

Transition: C3 offers restoration, C5 holds the transfer cage, and C6 controls the destination. Fill one box for the confrontation, including pursuit and immediate aftermath.

Scene 5: Who Chooses the Next Stop?

Runtime: 25 minutes.

Objective: Delay, divert, stop, or deliberately continue.

Stakes: Route choices affect passenger travel and cargo custody without deciding ownership.

READ-ALoud

Three signal lamps glow above the engineer's desk. A diagram shows a public junction branching before the private terminal. A red instruction plate hangs beside the brake. The engineer keeps one hand on the speed control. "Tell me what you need changed," she says, "and what is coming down this line behind us."

Remote C3 opener:

READ-ALoud

Omi lifts the speaking-tube cap. A bell answers through the brass pipe, then the engineer's voice: "Tell me the change you need. I can report the signals from here." The timetable lies beside the ledger.

Ada supplies junction availability, the braking sequence, and acknowledgments over the tube. Characters in C3 cannot see or operate C6's controls, but can ask Ada to perform agreed operations at normal action and time costs.

Arrival conditions: After the junction passes, its lamp is dark and the diagram marks it behind the train. With brakes engaged, describe Ada monitoring the pressure gauge and the controls in their actual state.

Encounter 5: The Last Public Junction

Location: C6 or C3 by speaking tube.

Trigger: A route or speed request.

Opposition: None unless a tracked pursuer enters.

Objective: Make an operational decision with known consequences.

Ada will prevent an unlawful transfer but needs an actionable request compatible with passenger safety.

Immediately evident: The junction remains available through box five. Cautious approach adds two boxes. Emergency braking can stop the train.

Without a check: The red plate gives the brake sequence and bracing warning. The signal diagram requires an acknowledged junction request, with no secret code.

Four operational choices

Continue to the private terminal: No check. This keeps Dask and his duplicate agreement within reach and permits preparations for an ambush, accusation, or controlled delivery.

Cautious approach: Hett's authorization, proof of a disputed bonded shipment, or **DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion)** convinces Ada. Add two boxes to the arrival threshold once. Failure makes her request Hett's approval and adds no extra box beyond this encounter.

Divert to the public platform: Available while no more than five boxes are filled. Hett's authorization or an evidence package from **Establishing a hold** suffices. Ada sets the selector, signals, and waits **one minute** for acknowledgment. The existing arrival threshold remains;

the branch has a shorter approach.

Without evidence or authority, **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion)** persuades Ada the danger justifies diversion. Failure preserves the private route, but new evidence can change it before the junction passes.

Emergency stop: Any creature adjacent to the brake can operate it using the following procedure. Ada may object to an unnecessary stop but does not physically fight the operator.

Emergency brake procedure

This hazard is homebrew.

1. **Warn:** Ring the brake bell as an action or clearly order Ada to do so. All six carriages hear it immediately.
2. **Brace:** Until the end of the following round, creatures can sit, lie prone, hold a fixed rail with a free hand, or secure themselves with a line.
3. **Brake:** Pull the lever as an action. The train stops at the end of the next round.
4. **Floor effect:** Unbraced standing creatures make a **DC 12 Dexterity save**. Failure causes prone and **1d4 bludgeoning damage**. Braced creatures are unaffected.
5. **Roof effect:** Use **Roof hazard** instead of the floor effect; never require both saves.
6. **Cargo:** Secured racks and the latched case are safe. A loose closed case slides five feet forward if space allows, without breaking. Loose recordings slide likewise and take **1 bludgeoning damage** upon striking an obstacle.

Pulling without warning removes the bracing opportunity; resolve at the end of the next round. The marked lever makes these consequences available before commitment.

The brake stays engaged until Ada releases it. Restoring movement takes **one minute**, after which the clock resumes from its filled boxes. Stationary time pauses arrival; repeated braking does not create unrecorded moving time.

If someone damages the controls

Each brake lever and route selector has **AC 15, 15 hit points**, and poison and psychic immunity. Destruction locks that control in its current setting.

Ada repairs one control in **twenty minutes** with C5 tools and one character's help. A character proficient with tinker's tools can instead attempt **DC 14 Intelligence** over **ten minutes**. Failure consumes the time without repair; retries are possible.

The enchanted drive is behind a separate locked maintenance grille. Attacking a lever does not destroy it. Use ordinary object adjudication if the party undertakes locomotive demolition.

The cost of a stop

Passengers miss connections and perishable cargo warms. After **thirty stationary minutes**, two railway responders arrive. A cooperating Hett signals the disputed case so they expect a custody problem; otherwise they expect a disabled train and hear accounts on arrival. Use **Stopped-train meeting** and **Neutral Inspectors' Custody Procedure**.

Dask's wagon cannot load beside a train miles from his terminal. Nera must negotiate, remain aboard, or escape on foot. Stopping can secure the cargo while leaving Dask's knowledge harder to prove.

Hostile interference

If Nera reaches C6, she argues that her contract requires the private stop. She cannot silently reverse a confirmed route and knows less about the engine than Ada.

During combat Ada shelters behind the desk. If attacked, the train may continue under its last setting; no additional enemies arrive.

Success: Obtain the desired route or delay, or choose the private terminal with preparations.

Fail-forward: Private arrival remains, but the transfer location is known. Failed persuasion leaves emergency braking available.

Transition: Fill one box unless the tube conversation ran concurrently with another ten-minute activity. Return to unfinished leads or begin arrival at the threshold.

Scene 6: The Contested Transfer

Runtime: 45 minutes.

Objective: Resolve each recording's custody and establish the evidence.

Stakes: Dask seeks completed delivery before objections are heard.

Use only the opener for the actual location. People, possessions, orders, and hit points carry into the scene under **Return Visits and State Ledger**.

Private-terminal arrival

READ-ALoud

A roofed platform slides beside the windows. A narrow wagon waits under a hooded lantern, its horses harnessed toward the open yard. A man in a pale coat holds a receipt pad to his chest. "The consignment first," he calls. "Disputes can be heard once delivery is complete."

If the case is elsewhere aboard, Dask addresses Hett or the nearest character. If warned that delivery is canceled, he asks for a meeting.

Public-platform arrival**READ-ALoud**

Blue railway lamps illuminate the platform. Two uniformed inspectors wait beside an empty baggage trolley. Farther down, a man in a pale coat closes his pocket watch and looks toward the cargo doors. One inspector raises a hand. "Before anything moves, who is declaring custody?"

Dask reaches this station by a parallel service road only if diversion was signaled at least one box before arrival. If concealed or arranged later, omit him from the opener; a messenger brings his contractual objection after the immediate custody decision.

The inspectors are neutral and replace the private guards. Use **Public-station map overlay** for their positions and the station's equipment. Dask's wagon, horses, private folio, and cash remain at his terminal.

Stopped-train meeting**READ-ALoud**

The wheels are still. Pipes hiss beneath the floor, and lamplight rests on the windows. Farther down the aisle, a passenger asks, "Are we waiting here?"

Meet in the party's current carriage or move there normally. Hett and Omi attend only if present or summoned and given walking time. Dask and his terminal personnel and equipment remain absent unless an established journey brings them.

Before thirty stationary minutes there are no responders. At thirty minutes, announce two neutral responders approaching, then use **Neutral Inspectors' Custody Procedure**. The meeting creates neither a platform nor a loading clock. Travel stays paused until movement resumes.

Encounter 6: Receipt Before Delivery

Location: T1-T4 and adjoining C4-C6, or the actual stopped-train meeting place.

Trigger: Arrival, attempted loading, or a custody meeting.

Private opposition: Dask, G1, G2, and any Nera or porters actually present.

Public opposition: Dask as negotiator if present; two neutral inspectors.

Objective: Settle custody before unwanted cargo leaves.

Neutral Inspectors' Custody Procedure

At a public station or stopped train, one inspector takes statements while the other witnesses and seals disputed property.

1. **Record the present state.** List the holders of the case and every removed recording, each slot's intact/restored/destroyed state, and witnesses present. The meeting itself transfers nothing.

2. **Establish a limited hold.** Hett's signed hold or two independent discrepancies from **Evidence and Investigation Reference** establishes custody over the implicated recordings without a check. One victim's account plus their missing receipt suffices for that slot. With one discrepancy, inspectors obtain its corresponding C3 receipt or a second witness's statement. This takes **ten minutes** if reachable aboard. Optional failed persuasion does not close that route.

3. **Name the interim custodian.** With the holder's cooperation, seal disputed intact recordings in the case and place it in C3's locked compensation cabinet after securing the money separately. Hett holds the key, witnessed by the second inspector. If absent or implicated, that inspector keeps the key and stays beside the cabinet. If the cabinet or C3 is unavailable, the second inspector holds the sealed case in the occupied carriage. Issue a receipt naming each slot and holder. Refusing transfer leaves the party in physical custody with a written non-transfer request; it does not trigger automatic seizure or combat.

4. **Check contracts separately.** Apply **Recording Reference** and the actual receipts. Release an unchallenged lawful recording to its entitled holder; hold only slots with specific unresolved objections. A custody hold does not authorize preview, restoration, or erasure.

5. **Resolve or defer.** Return verified stolen recordings to donors who request them, or keep them sealed at their request. Unresolved contract objections receive a public railway hearing at **Bellweather within twenty-four hours**, with the named custodian retaining the affected slots. Give claimants the inventory and hearing notice. Dask may object personally or later in writing; absence neither proves guilt nor defeats a supported hold. Secured slots beyond his unilateral reach qualify under **Partial compensation**.

Dask's opening position

Dask claims his purchase agreement entitles him to the sealed consignment before investigation. He offers the party **150 gp** to deliver all six recordings without delay, calling it compensation for inconvenience. This illicit offer uses the alternative reward terms in **Partial compensation**; its cash availability is specified under **Recoverable equipment**.

Missing receipts make him blame Nera. Her letter makes him claim he expected lawful procurement. His innocent-buyer defense collapses upon seeing his duplicate agreement, a credible witness to his instruction, or Nera's cooperative testimony corroborated by payment records.

Three routes to a clean hold

Railway authority: Hett's hold makes the guards refuse to load slots 1-3. Dask must establish contracts individually for any claim to slots 4-6.

Witnessed proof: Two independent sources make both guards step away and require outside review. Nera's confession plus the ledger mismatch qualifies.

Negotiated separation: Before his commission is proved, Dask may relinquish the three stolen recordings while pursuing the lawful purchases. Apply each donor's terms: Arlo can repay 50 gp before delivery, Suri can reclaim her sealed recording, and Leda's valid sale remains subject to any supported hold or actual contrary instruction.

If exposure is the alternative, Dask accepts a settlement preserving his reputation. At the party's insistence he signs a receipt acknowledging the return of slots 1-3. It remains evidence even if his commission is unproved.

Access to the receiving office

The following search applies only to private-terminal T3. Public T3 supplies custody forms; proof there must come from Nera's testimony and payment letter, Dask's admission, or documents actually brought from elsewhere.

Private T3 is unlocked at arrival. Dask expects clerks to fetch papers. A character can request inspection of the buyer's agreement; even if he refuses, the platform and road doors remain physically accessible. G1 watches the platform approach only while otherwise unoccupied.

The folio lies on the desk. Finding its page takes **one action** with a specific lead, or **one minute** without one. A quick **DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation)** check finds it immediately; failure requires the full minute.

Reading or copying the page establishes its content without taking the folio. Seizing it may be unauthorized. Visiting this office after a public arrival is a separate journey.

The loading clock

At the private terminal, use combat rounds for a physically contested transfer. Required actions are:

- 1. Open the loading hatch:** One action adjacent to its interior or exterior latch, unless already open.
- 2. Move the case:** Actual movement with a free hand. Cage access or possession must first permit removal.
- 3. Secure the case:** One action adjacent to or aboard the wagon fastens its single cargo strap. Removing that strap takes one action in the same position, with no check. Cutting it instead requires **5 slashing damage against AC 11** and does not damage the case. Once unsecured, lifting the case takes a free hand and one object interaction; carrying it uses actual movement.
- 4. Drive:** G2 or another capable driver in the driver's position spends an action to move the wagon **twenty feet north**.

Each later Drive action occurs on a later round. After the second, the wagon still occupies y 65-80, allowing one more mapped interception. The third places it at y 85-100 and the horses at y 100-110, entirely beyond the map. **Map 2: Terminal** gives the initial footprints and clear lane.

Movement is prevented by an engaged wheel brake, detached horses, a closed gate, or a substantial blocking obstacle. A driver releases the wheel brake with an object interaction. Releasing one horse takes an action at its harness; cutting a strap requires **5 slashing damage against**

AC 11.

The initially unlocked yard gate opens with an action at either latch. It has **AC 15, 25 hit points**.

Opponent procedures

Dask: Shelters behind G1 or retreats to T3. He bargains and orders, not attacks armored adventurers with his letter opener. Seizure makes him offer cooperation and demand witnesses.

G1: Interposes against unauthorized intruders. Without clear proof of theft, fights with a spear and withdraws when badly hurt.

G2: Drives unless the wagon cannot move. Does not leave the horses for a distant fight.

Nera: Keeps her remaining hit points, possessions, and surrender terms. Dask's betrayal makes her testify against him.

P1 and P2: Follow current valid orders. They can carry the case or protect a holder but cannot drive. Reaching the platform requires actual travel through an open door or hatch.

Guard morale and employment limits

A guard stops fighting at **5 hit points or fewer**, when Dask abandons them, or when shown a valid hold and credible theft evidence. Neither attacks a child, helpless passenger, or surrendered person.

One discrepancy and **DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion)** makes one guard suspend involvement for review. Two independent proof sources persuade both without a check.

Unsupported threats may provoke self-defense. Offering their outstanding wages, **10 gp each**, earns attention without automatically ending lawful duties. The offeror pays; the standard reward does not reimburse this expense.

Interventions and their exact effects

- **Hold the case:** Prevent loading while custody remains.
- **Remove a recording:** Protect that slot; the case can still leave with the rest.
- **Close the hatch:** Block that route until reopened, leaving other doors usable.
- **Close the gate:** Stop northward departure, not loading.
- **Calm or restrain horses:** Prevent movement for the effect's duration. As an action with a free hand at a horse's head, **DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling)** makes the pair stand for one round unless damaged. Repeat while remaining in position.
- **Block the lane:** G2 stops rather than run someone down. A different driver deliberately attempting collision forces a **DC 13 Dexterity save**; failure deals **2d6 bludgeoning damage** and knocks the creature prone beside the lane. The wagon moves only **ten feet** that action. This is homebrew.
- **Fly or teleport aboard:** Works normally; taking or unstrapping the case still costs its required actions.

• **Destroy a wheel:** AC 15, 15 hit points. At 0 hit points, the wagon cannot move until repaired. Wheel damage does not affect the case.

• *****Silence**:** Blocks spoken tag commands in its area without canceling existing orders.

An intervention reverses only what it physically undoes. Closing the gate does not unstrap cargo; releasing a horse does not return removed recordings.

If the wagon escapes

Record its slots and passengers. Beyond the map it follows the visible road at ordinary road pace toward the vault house three miles west.

Speed, mounts, flight, or teleportation may permit immediate pursuit. For a concise resolution, compare sustained movement and offer an interception at the toll barrier **half a mile away**. It is normally closed at night; the driver needs **one minute** to wake the keeper. Parties arriving in time can negotiate or seize the cargo against the remaining roster at its current hit points.

If pursuit is impractical, Hett records the destination and sends a report. End with the recovered cargo and evidence, leaving the vault as a specific follow-up.

Success: Secure recordings, distinguish lawful claims, and prevent unwanted departure or reach a defensible settlement.

Fail-forward: Lost cargo does not invalidate recovered slots, documents, testimony, or donor instructions. Partial compensation and evidence rewards remain possible.

Transition: Bring accessible recordings and willing donors to a safe place with the cradle. Resolve each slot using **Recording Reference**, **Memory Rules and Equipment**, and **Resolution Paths**.

People at the Table

NPC: Mara Pell

First impression: A practical bookbinder with ink worked into one thumb. She asks for help without pretending to recognize Iona.

Want: Understand what happened and decide whom to trust.

Fear: Being pressed into a relationship she cannot presently feel, or hurting Iona by hesitating.

Immediate goal: Quiet, reliable evidence, and time.

Voice: Precise, apologetic questions. "I believe that you believe me. Please tell me what I knew."

Knows: Her identity, family facts outside the missing cluster, journey purpose, and lack of consent to any sale.

Hides: Shame about her response to Iona.

Authority: May permit examination and decide slot 1's disposition. Her denial contradicts the consent entry.

Responses: Kindness earns participation. Pressure makes her request Suri or another trusted witness; betrayal makes her withdraw consent pending independent advice.

Restoration preference: Usually yes once informed, though she may request a preview first.

NPC: Iona Pell

First impression: A watchful ten-year-old holding a brass mechanical bird.

Want: To be believed and stay near someone safe.

Fear: Blame for Mara's distress.

Immediate goal: Show the tickets and inscription.

Voice: Concrete observations. "The glove was mended here. I watched the silver thread."

Knows: The glove seam, when Suri took her for milk, and ordinary family experiences.

Hides: Nothing relevant; she may stop answering when overwhelmed.

Contribution: Her observation identifies Nera's appearance. Her belongings support the relationship without magically proving it. She need not join the investigation.

NPC: Hett Brindle

First impression: A conductor in immaculate gloves.

Want: A safe journey and defensible record.

Fear: His confidence enabled a crime.

Immediate goal: Contain the disturbance.

Voice: Formal distinctions, shortened once convinced. "That is a complaint. This"-tapping the receipt gap-"is evidence."

Knows: Authority, schedule, carriage keys, compensation, and porter overrides.

Hides: He relied on Nera's license instead of checking every receipt.

Bargain: Acknowledges his lapse if the party preserves evidence and avoids endangering passengers.

Response to threats: May grant temporary access, but will not falsify a report.

Once evidence changes his position, he provides the assistance specified in **Establishing a hold**.

NPC: Nera Vale

First impression: A composed courier who aligns papers before answering. One glove has a silver repair seam.

Want: Finish the commission, escape consequences, and preserve her license.

Fear: Dask keeps the recordings while blaming her alone.

Immediate goal: Delay scrutiny until she moves the case.

Voice: Commercial precision. Under pressure: "He bought the absence as much as the memory."

Knows: All six slots, all three thefts, routing authority, and Dask's commission.

Hides: She heard Dask's omitted consent instruction in person and knows his counterpart contains it.

Bargaining stock: Individual recordings, all stolen recordings, testimony, surrender.

Responses: Specific terms persuade her more than denunciation. Abandonment by Dask makes her a willing witness. Violation of promised safe surrender ends her voluntary cooperation without undoing evidence already secured.

NPC: Orin Dask

First impression: A pale-coated collector treating receipts as deeds to land.

Want: Rare subjective experiences and continued acceptance in respectable markets.

Fear: Proof of a pattern of commissioned theft.

Immediate goal: Complete delivery before outside witnesses intervene.

Voice: Courteous ownership claims. "We are discussing an asset with a chain of title."

Knows: He commissioned stolen slot 1. He did not specify the later thefts from Ben or Tessa.

Hides: His private-office counterpart explicitly waived consent. It stays there if he travels to the public station unless prior events moved it.

Offers: Money, selected recordings, withdrawn claims.

Responses: Public proof prompts settlement; violence prompts retreat; captivity prompts demands for formal handling.

NPC: Arlo Reed

First impression: A retired gardener carrying a wrapped cutting.

Location: C1 after the opening unless invited elsewhere.

Want: Reconsider his sale without being called foolish.

Recording: Slot 4, one evening keeping vigil beside his dying spouse.

Current preference: Restore after rescinding the sale.

Contract: Before delivery, he can cancel by repaying 50 gp. He has the full amount in his luggage and willingly pays; the party need not subsidize it.

Voice: Patient, unfinished sentences. "I wanted the room to stop being the first thing I remembered. I did not expect to miss the chair."

NPC: Leda Wren

Role: Absent perfumer, donor of slot 5.

Recording: A dawn walk through her childhood citrus garden.

Known instructions: Her signed sale permits purchaser custody and private preview. Restoration requires her participation and consent.

Contact: The address on her receipt or suitable magic. Her current wishes are otherwise unknown.

Supporting voices

Ben: "There should be a moment when I remember doing it."

Tessa: "You may read the relevant line. You may not read my life."

Suri: "Choice is not proved by whether you approve of it."

Omi: "I can certify the copy. Please stop putting wet gloves on the original."

Ada: "The brake is simple. The people standing behind it are the complication."

Memory Rules and Equipment

All procedures and devices in this section are **homebrew for this adventure**.

What a recording contains

A recording stores a bounded autobiographical sequence or related cluster identified before extraction. It contains experiences, not a soul, personality, or general knowledge.

Extraction removes ordinary access to that content and any specified associated recognition. It leaves other witnesses, written records, skills, class features, outside factual knowledge, and later memories unchanged. Learning facts about the missing interval does not restore the lived experience.

Consent and disposition

Resolve each recording separately under its actual contract and donor instructions.

- A present donor may authorize preview, restoration, storage, or destruction.
- Someone speaking for an absent donor needs relevant prior instructions.
- Purchase may grant physical custody and preview under stated terms. It cannot substitute the buyer for the donor at restoration.
- A group vote or railway hold cannot provide another person's consent.
- Device access and physical custody do not themselves establish permission. Preview and erasure mechanically work without donor consent, making unauthorized use possible; it remains an intrusion or imposed loss.

Use **Recording Reference** for current choices. Do not invent new wishes for an absent donor.

Identifying a recording

Each vial bears a slot number, exterior label, and donor resonance. Labels can be forged; ordinary tools cannot change resonance.

A willing donor touching their intact vial recognizes ownership without regaining its contents. Others feel a mild vibration.

Identify reveals function, donor name registered by extraction, and whether it is intact, but does not replay it. *Detect magic* reveals divination magic.

Recording durability

Each loose recording weighs **1 pound** and has **AC 13, 3 hit points**, and poison and psychic immunity.

An unattended recording takes damage only from effects that damage objects. Carried recordings follow each effect's normal worn-or-carried object rules. Damage does not jump between vials.

Breaking a vial permanently loses its stored recollection unless extraordinary magic explicitly supplies another solution. The case and cradle protect inserted recordings from the damage event that disables their housing, as specified in their entries.

Preview

Activation: Insert one recording; an action selects Preview and pulls the lever.

Duration: One minute.

Viewer: One person seated at the headrest.

Effect: A detached, recognizable recording of the event. It grants no proficiency, mechanical ability, or personal memory of having lived it.

Permission: Not mechanically enforced; apply **Consent and disposition**.

Limits: No remote projection or additional copy. The recording remains intact.

Interruption: Loss of contact or release of the lever stops the preview without damage. It can restart.

Restoration

Activation: The living, physically present donor touches the contact plate and verbally agrees. An operator selects Return and holds the operating lever throughout the ten minutes; the donor may operate it while maintaining contact.

Time: Ten uninterrupted minutes per recording.

Effect: The recollection returns and the vial becomes clear, inert glass. Memories formed during the gap remain.

Consent: A conscious donor must agree. The device cannot restore an unconscious donor on someone else's authorization.

Interruption: Releasing the lever, breaking donor contact, or losing power before completion leaves the intact

recording unchanged; there is no partial restoration. A new attempt starts the full ten minutes again.

Capacity: One recording at a time, without a daily charge limit. Each successful restoration consumes its stored content.

Aftereffects: No imposed condition, exhaustion, or compulsory emotional response.

Erase

Activation: Select Erase, lift the red guard, and hold the lever for **one full minute**.

Warning: Red light and a repeated bell continue throughout.

Effect: Completion permanently destroys the stored recollection and leaves inert glass.

Interruption: Releasing the lever early preserves the recording.

Permission: Not mechanically enforced; apply **Consent and disposition**.

Limits: One recording at a time. No effect on other memories or content already restored.

Restorative and investigative magic

Recordings are magic items, not ongoing spells. Under the 2014 rules, *dispel magic* does not end or suppress their properties.

Lesser restoration cannot return them because the loss is not a listed condition or disease; *remove curse* has no curse to remove. Explain this before a slot is spent when a character examines the effect.

For this adventure, **greater restoration** can immediately restore a donor's intact matching recording within **5 feet**, with donor consent. It consumes the recording and the spell's normal components. This interaction is homebrew.

Zone of truth, *detect thoughts*, and other divinations supply evidence within their normal limits, not automatic proof of legal consent. **Magic at the opening** and **Nera Vale, courier** provide local responses.

Mending can repair broken glass, not reconstruct lost content. *Identify* or a **DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana)** examination reveals this before someone relies on repair.

Item: Six-Slot Recording Case

Appearance: Dark wood, brass corners, felt-lined slots, transparent padded inner lid.

Size and weight: Two feet long; **18 pounds empty, 24 loaded**. One hand can carry it subject to ordinary capacity, without a special speed penalty.

Capacity: Six recordings; no extradimensional space.

Latch: One action opens an unlocked latch; no key is needed. One action with the key unlocks and opens a locked latch. Alternatively, one action using thieves' tools and a successful **DC 14 Dexterity** check unlocks and opens it; failure leaves it locked. The latch has **AC 15, 10 hit**

points, and poison and psychic immunity. Attacks directed at it do not also damage recordings.

Handling: One action removes or inserts one recording. Slot numbers and colors are evident once open; reading all labels takes one action in combat or a brief examination outside it.

Protection: AC 15, 20 hit points, poison and psychic immunity. At 0 hit points it breaks open while protecting contents from that event. Thereafter exposed vials use **Recording durability**.

Owner: Courier service; contents have separate claims.

Value: 15 gp as fitted luggage once released from evidence custody, outside the reward total. It cannot be sold during the railway's hold.

Repair: 5 gp of ordinary materials and one hour of competent craft work; no recovery of lost recordings.

Item: Courier Routing Tag

Appearance: Copper badge with two sliding brass teeth.

Activation: An action presenting the tag and speaking one valid instruction.

Target: One assigned porter within 30 feet that can hear the speaker.

Valid commands: Carry, guard, release, or yield access concerning the named case.

Duration: Until completed or replaced.

Limits: No unrelated violence, memory destruction, driving, departure from a moving train, or commands beyond hearing. Only P1 and P2 are assigned; each command targets one.

Initial orders: P1 guards the C4-R rack. P2 receives the case at C5-Q and holds it for delivery.

Railway authority: A valid signed override presented as an action within 5 feet immediately supersedes the tag, without a save. Its named custody instruction lasts until Hett revokes it in person or another valid railway card replaces it. A tag cannot countermand it.

Temporary override: The device-work method in **Access through other means** affects one named porter for ten minutes. On expiration, that porter resumes its last still-valid non-temporary order under this hierarchy. A signed railway hold still outranks the tag. With no valid prior order, it stands by. Completed transfers and actual cargo positions remain unchanged.

Charges: Unlimited; no attunement.

Expiration and value: When Hett closes the shipment record, authorization ends. The copper tag is then worth 1 sp.

Owner: Courier equipment, normally surrendered with Nera's effects or returned to the railway.

Item: Prepared Extraction Instrument

Appearance: Palm-sized silver instrument with replaceable glass tip and contact cup.

Current contents: Three exhausted tips; no unused tip aboard.

Original activation: One uninterrupted minute of contact with a willing or unconscious creature, using a tip calibrated to a named autobiographical sequence. An unwilling unconscious target makes a DC 14 Wisdom save at completion. Success prevents extraction, consumes the tip, and wakes a naturally sleeping target; failure creates a recording.

Limits: One bounded sequence per tip. No removal of abilities, spells, levels, souls, or uncalibrated memories. Uninterrupted contact makes combat use impractical.

Preparation: Tips never recharge. A new one requires specialized laboratory equipment, one day, and 100 gp in materials. The laboratory is not aboard.

Current use and ownership: Evidence, with no lawful immediate resale. Its disposition belongs to the investigation, outside treasure rewards.

Item: Restoration Cradle

Appearance: Brass headrest and contact plate beside a felt-lined socket. Selectors use labels and distinct shapes: eye, open hand, crossed circle. Operations supply visible and audible feedback.

Weight: 40 pounds, bolted to C3's counter with four ordinary fasteners.

Power: A self-contained enchanted cell; works when stopped or removed from the train.

Removal: Ten minutes with common tools, or one minute with thieves' or tinker's tools and DC 14 Dexterity. Failure leaves it attached; force risks damage.

Durability: AC 15, 25 hit points, poison and psychic immunity. At 0 hit points it is inoperative; an inserted recording survives that damage event.

Repair: Two hours, tools, and 25 gp in parts at a station workshop. A trained railway technician needs no check.

Functions: Preview, Restoration, and Erasure as above; no charges or attunement. It cannot prepare extraction tips or recover destroyed content.

Owner: Railway. Hett may authorize temporary removal for rescue; it is not a reward.

Opposition Statistics

Nera and the brass porters are original homebrew creatures. Challenge ratings guide encounter difficulty; cargo and escape objectives also affect the fights.

Nera Vale

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)

Hit Points 60 (11d8 + 11)

Speed 30 ft.

10 (+0)

DEX: 16 (+3)

CON: 12 (+1)

INT: 15 (+2)

WIS: 12 (+1)

CHA: 16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Int +4

Skills Deception +5, Investigation +4, Persuasion +5, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +5

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Dwarvish

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Courier's Footing. Nera has advantage on saving throws against falling prone because of the train's movement or the roof hazard. This does not protect her from being shoved or from ordinary spell effects.

Actions

Multiattack. Nera makes two rapier attacks.

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

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Bonus Actions

Quick Exit. Nera takes the Dash or Disengage action.

Reactions

Deflecting Guard. Nera adds 2 to her AC against one melee attack that would hit her. She must see the attacker and be wielding her rapier. This affects only that attack.

Equipment: Leather armor, rapier, dagger, thieves' tools, forgery kit, routing tag, instrument pouch key, 20 gp. Her compartment pouch holds the exhausted extraction instrument, commission letter, and issued cage-key duplicate until moved.

Tactics: Escape with evidence and cargo; use **Morale** in Scene 4. She has no Sneak Attack, spells, or memory-draining combat power.

Brass Cargo Porter

Medium construct, unaligned

Use these statistics separately for **P1** and **P2**.

Armor Class 15 (brass plating)

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)

Speed 25 ft.

16 (+3)

DEX: 10 (+0)

CON: 14 (+2)

INT: 6 (−2)

WIS: 10 (+0)

CHA: 5 (−3)

Saving Throws Str +5

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Common and Dwarvish; speaks fixed cargo phrases

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Cargo Authority. The porter follows **Item: Courier Routing Tag**. It can read an override within 5 feet. Presenting a valid override as an action changes its behavior immediately without a save.

Construct Nature. No need for air, food, drink, or sleep.

Heavy Frame. Weighs 260 pounds and occupies one five-foot square. It is Medium, without extra reach.

Actions

Piston Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Clamp. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one Medium or smaller creature. *Hit:* The target is grappled, escape DC 13. The porter grapples only one creature at a time and cannot use Piston Fist while maintaining it. Release requires no action. The target is not restrained.

Carry or Handle Cargo. Manipulates the case, latch, or recording at the same action costs as other creatures.

Tactics: Block unauthorized removal, grapple carriers, and respond to authority changes. Touching an unrelated trunk does not provoke it.

At 0 hit points: Inert, not explosive. Later workshop repair is possible; a free command or *mending* alone cannot restore it during an encounter.

Terminal guards G1 and G2

Use **Guard**, **SRD 5.1, Monsters: Nonplayer Characters**, unchanged.

• AC 16; 11 hit points; speed 30 feet.

• STR 13 (+1), DEX 12 (+1), CON 12 (+1), INT 10 (+0), WIS 11 (+0), CHA 10 (+0).

• Perception +2; passive Perception 12.

• Spear +3 to hit, reach 5 feet or range 20/60 feet; 1d6 + 1 piercing damage, or 1d8 + 1 in a two-handed melee attack.

• Common; challenge 1/8, 25 XP each.

Each carries a chain shirt, shield, and spear belonging to the terminal. See **Guard morale and employment limits** for withdrawal and persuasion.

Dask, railway staff, and passengers

Use **Commoner**, **SRD 5.1**, **Monsters: Nonplayer Characters**, when needed.

AC 10; 4 hit points; speed 30 feet; all abilities 10. An improvised club attack is +2 to hit for 1d4 bludgeoning damage. Dask and staff ordinarily do not attack.

Iona stays outside combat. If a rule needs her statistics, use an unarmed commoner; she is not a tactical target.

Wagon horses

Use **Riding Horse**, **SRD 5.1**, **Monsters: Miscellaneous Creatures**.

Each is Large with a ten-foot-square footprint: AC 10; 13 hit points; speed 60 feet; STR 16, DEX 10, CON 12, INT 2, WIS 11, CHA 7; passive Perception 10. Hooves: +5 to hit, reach 5 feet, 2d4 + 3 bludgeoning damage.

The harnessed pair does not independently attack. The **loading clock** uses controlled twenty-foot yard movements, not maximum road speed.

Difficulty, Scaling, and Rest Assumptions

The default hostile roster is **one Nera, two porters, and two guards**. Dask negotiates. No further hostiles arrive.

Nera and both porters total **850 base XP**; adding the guards gives **900**. Adjusted combat difficulty is modest for four 6th-level characters. The aisles, bystanders, and contested cargo supply the main complications.

Before accuracy, Nera's two hits deal about **15 damage**, each porter's hit **10**. Clamping reduces damage. Preserve their cargo objectives instead of making every turn an attack.

Three characters, levels 5-6

P2 has no active power cell and remains inert everywhere. Its body can sit fixed beside C5's workbench outside usable movement squares. Only P1 responds to the tag.

Nera has **45 hit points**. G2 drives but will not fight. Other procedures remain unchanged.

Four characters, level 5

Each porter has **24 hit points**. Nera offers surrender at **25 hit points** instead of 20. Keep default counts.

Five characters, levels 6-7

Nera has **75 hit points**; each porter has **40**. Keep the same roster and footprints. P2 still begins at C5-Q under its receiving order.

Resource-sensitive parties

After an emergency stop, Hett can secure time for a full one-hour short rest. Otherwise, use Nera's bargains and the guards' employment limits to accommodate depleted characters. **Resting** governs travel costs.

Award the same encounter XP for negotiation, restraint, evidence, or successful bypass as for defeating that opposition. Award each creature only once, regardless of scene changes. Milestone guidance appears under **Accomplishment rewards**.

Map Specifications

Two core maps depict the express and terminal, each with DM and player-safe views. Coordinates are authoritative.

All measurements are in feet. Rectangles use **x-range × y-range** and describe full occupied footprints.

Orientation: Increasing x is forward along the train or east along the platform; increasing y is north. Floors and platforms use z = 0; roofs use z = 10.

Grid: Five feet. Doors and passages align unless noted.

Map 1: The Express

Boundary: x 0-265, y 0-20.

KEY	BOUNDARY OR FEATURE	DOORS, MOVEMENT, AND CONTENTS
C1	x 0-40 × y 0-20	Rear saloon
C2	x 45-85 × y 0-20	Sleeping carriage
C3	x 90-130 × y 0-20	Records office
C4	x 135-175 × y 0-20	Baggage carriage
C5	x 180-220 × y 0-20	Service carriage
C6	x 225-265 × y 0-20	Control cab
G12	x 40-45 × y 5-15	Enclosed, level gangway
G23	x 85-90 × y 5-15	Enclosed, level gangway
G34	x 130-135 × y 5-15	Enclosed, level gangway
G45	x 175-180 × y 5-15	Enclosed, level gangway
G56	x 220-225 × y 5-15	Enclosed, level gangway
Main aisle	y 5-15 within every carriage	Ten feet wide; no fixed furniture
End doors	Each carriage end, y 5-15	Ten-foot opening; normally open
C1-S	x 5-30 × y 0-5 and x 5-30 × y 15-20	Fixed seats and tables; difficult terrain when climbed
C1-B	x 30-35 × y 15-20	Solid sideboard

KEY	BOUNDARY OR FEATURE	DOORS, MOVEMENT, AND CONTENTS
C2A	x 45-65 × y 0-5	Door at y 5, x 55-60; berth x 45-55
C2B	x 65-85 × y 0-5	Door at y 5, x 65-70; berth x 75-85
C2C	x 45-65 × y 15-20	Door at y 15, x 55-60; berth x 45-55
C2D	x 65-85 × y 15-20	Door at y 15, x 65-70; berth x 75-85
C3-D	x 95-115 × y 0-5	Solid counter, ledger, cradle
C3-L	x 120-125 × y 15-20	Records and compensation cabinet
C4-RS	x 140-170 × y 0-5	Solid cargo racks
C4-RN	x 140-150 and 155-170 × y 15-20	Solid racks; clear door approach at x 150-155
C4-R	x 155-160 × y 15-20	Case recess, accessed from y 10-15
C4-H	x 170-175 × y 5-10	Ladder and roof hatch; ten-foot climb
C2-H	x 75-80 × y 10-15	Ladder and roof hatch; ten-foot climb
C5-W	x 185-210 × y 0-5	Solid workbenches
C5-Q	x 195-210 × y 15-20	Transfer cage; bars along y 15
C5-QD	y 15, x 200-205	Five-foot cage door; normally unlocked for receipt
C5-LH	y 20, x 205-210	Five-foot exterior loading hatch
C6-D	x 245-260 × y 0-5	Desk; levers accessible from adjacent aisle
C6-E	x 245-260 × y 15-20	Locked drive grille; solid obstacle
C6-H	x 230-235 × y 10-15	Ladder and roof hatch; ten-foot climb

Each carriage has a **five-foot exterior passenger door** in its north wall at x 20-25, 60-65, 105-110, 150-155, 190-195, and 235-240, respectively. They open onto the docked platform. C4's rack gap gives a clear route from aisle to door beside the case recess.

Opening an exterior door during motion exposes moving ground; there is no step or catwalk. Windows are glazed and two feet wide, with line of sight unless furnishings obstruct it. A broken window admits Tiny creatures freely or Small creatures squeezing. Medium creatures require **one minute** to remove the frame.

Named initial positions

ACTOR/OBJECT	FULL FOOTPRINT
Mara	C1, x 15-20 × y 0-5, seated
Iona	C1, x 20-25 × y 0-5, seated
Hett	C1, x 30-35 × y 5-10
Party starting area	C1 aisle, x 5-25 × y 5-15; four unoccupied squares
Ben when in C2	x 50-55 × y 10-15
Tessa	C2C, x 55-60 × y 15-20
Suri	C2D, x 65-70 × y 15-20
Nera in berth	C2B, x 65-70 × y 0-5
Omi	C3, x 110-115 × y 5-10
P1	C4, x 150-155 × y 10-15
Case	C4-R; reachable from x 155-160 × y 10-15
Nera guarding case	C4, x 160-165 × y 5-10
P2	C5, x 205-210 × y 10-15
Case destination	C5-Q, x 200-205 × y 15-20
Ada	C6, x 245-250 × y 5-10

The cage's three squares are usable. Its door admits one Medium creature at a time. P2 begins outside, clear of the door. A carrier can enter, move east inside the cage, and pass the case through the exterior hatch.

Roof geometry

Each carriage roof shares its carriage's x/y boundary at z = 10. The five-foot gaps lie over rounded gangway covers at z = 8, above the gangway floors at z = 0. The covers are not stable walking surfaces. A failed jump onto a cover drops a creature two feet and leaves it prone, without falling damage. Standing costs half its speed; climbing the two feet back to an adjacent carriage roof costs four feet of movement unless it has a climbing speed. A fall over a carriage's outside edge still drops ten feet to the trackside gravel for 1d6 bludgeoning damage, as in **Roof hazard**.

C2-H, C4-H, and C6-H connect directly to their corresponding roof squares. There are no additional hatches, weapon mounts, or secret roof routes.

The interior route from C4's rear doorway to C5-QD is about **seventy feet**. Nera's normal move plus bonus-action Dash covers sixty. Dashing with both action and bonus action covers ninety, enough if clear, but leaves no action for another action-cost task that turn. Otherwise she needs prior positioning or another turn.

Train schematic

The map sheets depict these routes; use coordinates for tactics. The player sheet omits occupant markers, "case rack," and "transfer cage" until publicly identified. Ordinary service-room labels and visible roof hatches may remain.

Map 2: Terminal

Boundary: x 130-290, y 0-80. Rear carriages continue west beyond it.

At docking, add **10 to train x coordinates**, keeping y 0-20. C5 therefore occupies x 190-230 and its hatch x 215-220, y 20.

KEY	BOUNDARY OR FEATURE	CONNECTIONS AND OBSTACLES
T1	x 130-290 × y 20-40	Level platform; clear except wagon
T2	x 180-240 × y 40-60	Transfer yard
T3	x 240-280 × y 40-60	Receiving office
T4	x 130-290 × y 60-80	Public road
Yard opening	y 40, x 195-220	Twenty-five-foot opening
North gate	y 60, x 195-215	Twenty-foot opening; initially open
Office front door	y 40, x 250-255	Five feet; initially unlocked
Office road door	y 60, x 260-265	Five feet; initially unlocked
Desk	x 265-275 × y 45-50	Solid; private folio or public forms and timetable
Wagon	x 200-210 × y 25-40	Ten feet wide, fifteen long; north-facing
Horse H1	x 195-205 × y 40-50	Large
Horse H2	x 205-215 × y 40-50	Large
Driver	x 200-205 × y 35-40	Aboard wagon, not an extra obstacle
Dask	x 225-230 × y 25-30	Private arrival
G1	x 215-220 × y 30-35	Private arrival
G2	Driver position	Aboard wagon
Public inspectors	x 225-230 × y 25-30 and x 230-235 × y 25-30	Public arrival only
Dask at public station, if present	x 250-255 × y 30-35	South of office door

Four-foot railings border the platform's northern edge except at the yard opening and office door. They give **half cover** and require **five feet of extra movement** to climb. East and west platform ends are open.

The horses' twenty-foot harness span fits both openings. The team moves straight north without turning. Use these

footprints rather than treating the pair as one smaller creature.

A clear strip at y 20-25 separates the loading hatch from the wagon. Carriers can step out and walk west to its southern or eastern side without crossing its footprint.

After the first twenty-foot Drive, horses occupy y 60-70, wagon y 45-60. Later positions and action requirements appear in **The loading clock**.

Terminal schematic

Use the coordinate tables for tactical movement and the following overlay when diverted.

Public-station map overlay

Keep architecture. Replace the wagon at x 200-210, y 25-40 with an **empty, unpowered baggage trolley** of the same footprint. It moves only by actual handling, not the private loading clock.

Remove horses, guards, private evidence labels, folio, and cash. Mark the inspectors and Dask only as established in **Public-platform arrival**. Public T4 follows the railway access road; private T4's office and vault distances do not apply.

Use **Neutral Inspectors' Custody Procedure**.

The player terminal sheet shows architecture, doors, and visible equipment. Remove starting-position markers, evidence and folio labels, and arrows describing an escape plan.

Map asset briefs

Delivered maps are 300 ppi PNG sheets with SVG masters.

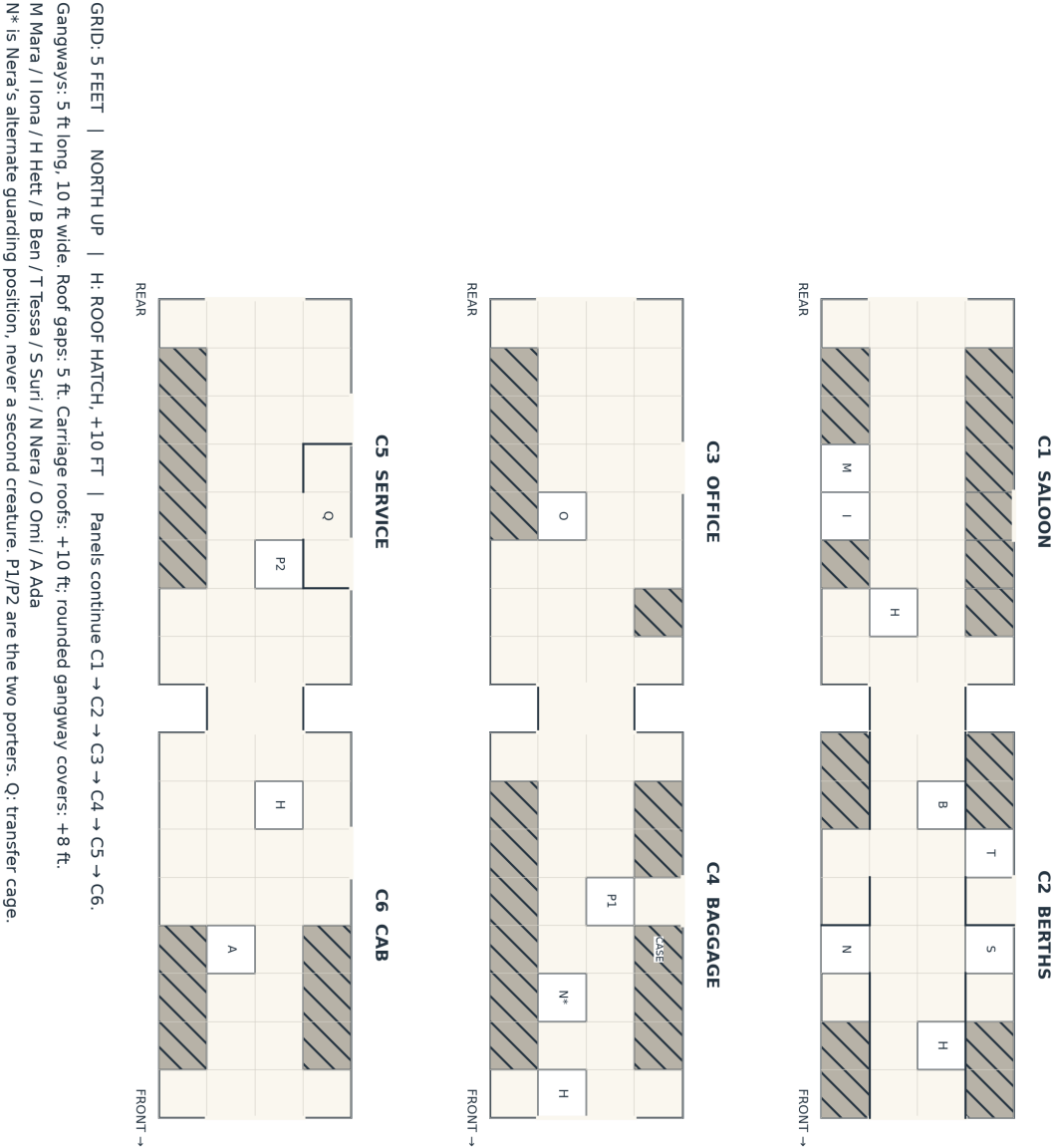
ASSET PATH	AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE	FORMAT AND PLACEMENT
assets/maps/midnight-express-train-dm.png	DM keys, footprints, roof connections, initial positions	Landscape US Letter; color with grayscale-safe linework; beside location key
assets/maps/midnight-express-train-player.png	Player architecture and visible access	Landscape US Letter; no occupants, cargo secrets, or evidence
assets/maps/midnight-express-terminal-dm.png	DM wagon, horse footprints, doors, positions	Landscape US Letter; beside Encounter 6
assets/maps/midnight-express-terminal-player.png	Player architecture and visible equipment	Landscape US Letter; no evidence or escape-plan labels

Restrained ink-and-watercolor plans use pale floors, dark walls, high-contrast doors, and typeset labels and scale bars. Decorative trunks, steam, and shadows must not obscure usable squares.

DM Map Sheets

THE MIDNIGHT MEMORY EXPRESS

Carriage plans | DM ONLY - starting positions



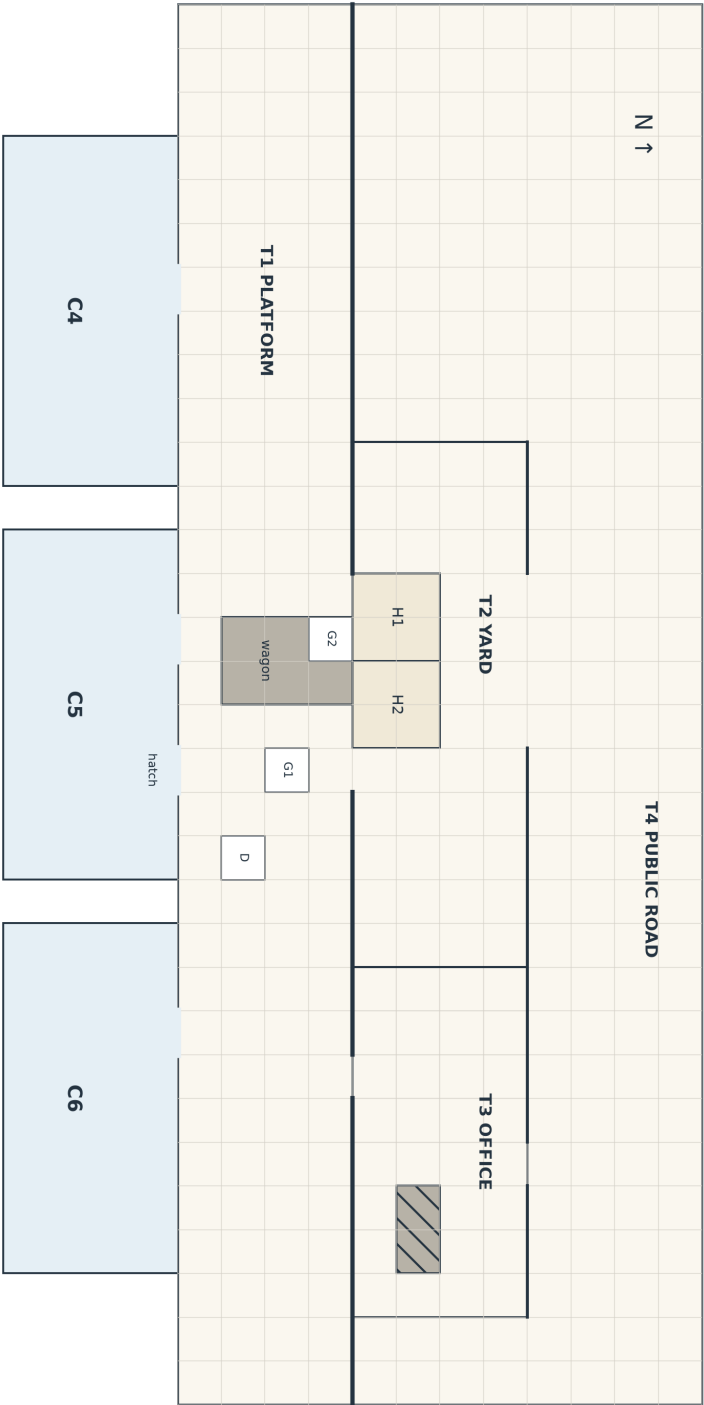
Train caption: "Six carriages, one continuous aisle, and three visible roof hatches."

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

The Midnight Memory Express

THE MIDNIGHT MEMORY EXPRESS

Terminal plan | DM ONLY - private arrival



GRID: 5 FEET. Horses occupy full 10 x 10 ft spaces; their 20 ft harness span fits the north gate.
Train coordinates shift +10 ft east when docked. C5 loading hatch: x 215-220. Clear loading strip: y 20-25.
Drive 1: wagon y 45-60. Drive 2: y 65-80, still interceptable on the road. Drive 3: y 85-100, fully off-map.
Public arrival: inspectors replace guard deployment at x 225-235, y 25-30. Dask waits at x 250-255, y 30-35.

Terminal caption: "The loading route remains open to inspection-and interruption."

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

Recording Reference

DM-only. Reveal contents through acquired evidence.
Track physical custody separately from consent.

SLOT	DONOR AND CONTENT	CONTRACT AND DISPOSITION
1	Mara; recognition through shared experiences with Iona	Stolen. Return to Mara; restore only with current consent. Default: restoration after explanation, possibly preview first.
2	Ben; inspection of this shipment	Stolen. He wants restoration to testify and recover confidence. A new inspection remains valid meanwhile.
3	Tessa; witnessing the extraction	Stolen. She wants restoration once assured it contains the theft interval, not unrelated private writing. Preserve preview privacy.
4	Arlo; vigil beside his spouse	Voluntary. Before delivery, he cancels by repaying his own 50 gp and requests restoration.
5	Leda; childhood garden at dawn	Valid sale permits purchaser custody and private preview. She is absent; contact her or use documented custody. Restoration requires her presence and consent.
6	Suri; one wartime triage shift	Voluntary. Receipt permits reclaiming physical custody before delivery. She wants it sealed, without preview, restoration, or destruction.

Evidence and Investigation Reference

CONCLUSION	ROUTE ONE	ROUTE TWO	ROUTE THREE
Mara's loss lacks a documented sale	Denial and no receipt	Nonexistent C3 receipt number	Authorized preview of slot 1
Nera had access	Iona's glove observation	Tessa's journal line	Suri's account of movement
Paperwork was altered	Six entries, three receipts	Scraped ink and substituted lines	Nera's commission and confession
Ben's inspection authority was copied	Notebook and duplicate punch	Soft-metal examination	Restored slot 2

CONCLUSION	ROUTE ONE	ROUTE TWO	ROUTE THREE
Tessa witnessed theft	Journal line	Slot 3 content label	Authorized preview or restoration
Dask commissioned theft	Private T3 counterpart	Nera's testimony and payment letter	His admission under credible exposure
Some sales were legitimate	Suri's receipt	Original C3 contracts	Donor accounts

Use each failed check's stated consequence. Once evidence establishes a conclusion, do not require further checks merely to preserve uncertainty.

Evidence custody

Record who found each item, its location, current holder, surviving originals or copies, and confirming witnesses.

The **75 gp evidence reward** requires a coherent package. Witnessed copies and clear records suffice without modern forensic procedure.

Strong evidence packages

Against Nera: Three missing receipts, two victim statements, and either her instrument or a direct recording of the theft.

Against Dask: His counterpart agreement, or cooperative Nera testimony supported by his payment letter and a recovered commissioned recording.

For railway reform: Substituted manifest, copied mark, and Omi's account of accepting the additions.

Destruction leaves written evidence intact. Restoration consumes magical content but supplies a living witness; record who performed it.

Handouts

DM Distribution Guide

Keep this guide private. Share each handout separately at acquisition.

Two Tickets and a Brass Bird: Scene 1 inspection. The objects stay with Iona unless she agrees otherwise.

Tessa's Relevant Journal Line: Her permission or an actual search. Unrelated private writing is excluded.

Preliminary Inspection Note: Ben shares his notebook.

Cargo Manifest Extract: C3 manifest inspection. Comparing receipts exposes missing attachments.

Suri's Donor Receipt: Suri shares it or the party examines C3's original.

Nera's Commission Letter: The pouch is opened or Nera supplies it.

Operating the Memory Cradle: Omi demonstrates or someone carefully examines the device.

Arlo's Cancellation Clause: Arlo discusses recovery or his original contract is inspected.

Leda's Sale Terms: Her original contract is inspected. It supplies no new statement of present wishes.

Dask's Counterpart Agreement: The party reads or obtains private-terminal T3's page, or a tracked holder brings it. Public T3 contains no counterpart; Dask cannot produce this original remotely or from memory.

Recording Disposition Form: The case contents are established and ownership decisions begin.

Handout: Two Tickets and a Brass Bird

NIGHTLINE RAILWAY

Two passengers: Mara Pell and Iona Pell

One shared sleeping compartment

Final destination: Bellweather Junction, onward connection

The tickets are tied together with blue thread.

On the brass bird's base, in small hand-scratched letters:

For Iona, who notices everything. -M.

Handout: Tessa's Relevant Journal Line

23:09.

Courier, silver glove seam, blue glass; ask conductor after she passes.

She came from the compartment opposite. The little girl was still away with the doctor.

I should write this down before I decide it is none of my business.

Handout: Preliminary Inspection Note

23:00 - Bonded case accepted for preliminary inspection.

Outer latch sound. Three amber seals visible.

Final contents review pending receipt of late paperwork.

Punch mark: left edge chipped.

B. Orrel

Beneath the note is a small sketch of a circular mark with a triangular notch missing from its left edge.

Handout: Cargo Manifest Extract

CONSIGNMENT: SIX-PLACE GLASS RECORDING CASE

Courier: Nera Vale

Receiving customer: Orin Dask

SLOT	EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION	RECEIPT REFERENCE
1	Family recognition sequence	R-441
2	Professional inspection interval	R-442
3	Corridor observation interval	R-443
4	Evening vigil	R-417
5	Citrus garden at dawn	R-419
6	Triage shift	R-422

Attached donor receipts: R-417, R-419, R-422.

Inspection mark applied. Delivery scheduled at the private terminal.

Handout: Suri's Donor Receipt

DONOR: Dr. Suri En

RECORDING: One specified triage shift, bounded by the opening and closing bells

PAYMENT RECEIVED: 50 gp

The donor retains all medical knowledge, general factual recollection, and experiences outside the agreed interval.

The donor may reclaim physical custody before final delivery. Reclaiming custody does not require immediate restoration.

The recipient may not authorize restoration on the donor's behalf.

Signed: Suri En

Handout: Nera's Commission Letter

Vale,

The three ordinary purchases are acceptable, but they are not the reason for this commission.

I require one authentic maternal recognition sequence, recent enough that the subject still expects to act upon it. An imitation or a reconstruction from testimony is of no interest.

The additional payment remains due upon delivery of the sealed case.

Use the established terminal and keep the records consistent.

-O. Dask

Handout: Operating the Memory Cradle

MEMORY CRADLE - PASSENGER INSTRUCTIONS

Eye: Preview

Insert one recording. With one action, select Preview and pull the lever. Keep holding it while one viewer maintains contact with the headrest for one minute. The viewer receives a detached impression; the recording remains intact. Releasing the lever or losing headrest contact stops the preview without damage; restart from the beginning. Obtain the donor's permission.

Open Hand: Return

Insert the matching recording and select Return. The living, conscious donor must be present, touching the contact plate, and verbally agree. An operator must hold the lever for ten uninterrupted minutes while the donor maintains contact; the donor may operate it. Releasing the lever, breaking contact, or losing power stops the operation without changing the recording; a new attempt starts the full ten minutes again. At completion, the memory returns and the glass becomes empty.

Crossed Circle: Erase

Select Erase, lift the red guard, and hold the operating lever for one full minute. The bell sounds throughout. Releasing the lever before completion preserves the recording. Completing the operation destroys the stored memory.

One recording at a time. Do not strike, heat, or open the glass.

Repairing broken glass does not repair a lost memory.

Handout: Arlo's Cancellation Clause

DONOR: Arlo Reed

RECORDING: One evening vigil

PAYMENT RECEIVED: 50 gp

Before final delivery, the donor may cancel by returning the full payment.

Upon cancellation, the recording must be returned intact. Restoration remains the donor's choice.

No additional cancellation charge applies.

"I have kept the money," Arlo has written beneath the clause. "Please ask before you decide for me."

Handout: Leda's Sale Terms

DONOR: Leda Wren

RECORDING: Dawn in the western citrus garden

PAYMENT RECEIVED: 50 gp

Sale includes physical custody and private preview by the purchaser.

Restoration requires the donor's physical participation and consent.

Any dispute concerning delivery may be held for review at a public railway office.

Correspondence: Leda Wren, Wren & Glass Perfumery, Bellweather Junction.

Handout: Dask's Counterpart Agreement

PRIVATE COMMISSION - BUYER'S COUNTERPART

Supplier: Nera Vale

Buyer: Orin Dask

Subject: One authentic maternal recognition sequence.

Consent unnecessary; authenticity essential.

The supplier is responsible for a consistent transport record. The buyer will receive the sealed consignment at the established terminal.

Additional procurement fee due on delivery: 150 gp.

Signed: Orin Dask

Acknowledged: Nera Vale

Handout: Recording Disposition Form

RECORDING DISPOSITION

Slot: _____

Donor: _____

Current holder: _____

Donor's stated choice:

☐ Restore☐ Keep sealed☐ Transfer under an agreed contract☐ Destroy☐ Hold pending contact or review

Permission for preview, if any: _____

Witnesses: _____

Final location or completed action: _____

Rewards and Follow-Up

Reward ledger

Railway advance OWNER: Nightline Railway QUANTITY: 50 gp ACCESS CONDITION: Accept reasonable recovery work RECIPIENT: Party total
Completion balance OWNER: Nightline Railway QUANTITY: Up to 150 gp ACCESS CONDITION: Secure stolen recordings intact RECIPIENT: Party total
Evidence award OWNER: Railway investigators QUANTITY: 75 gp ACCESS CONDITION: Submit coherent evidence RECIPIENT: Party total
Arlo's repayment OWNER: Arlo, then contractual recipient QUANTITY: 50 gp ACCESS CONDITION: Cancel slot 4 sale RECIPIENT: Not party treasure
Suri's prior sale OWNER: Suri QUANTITY: 50 gp, already paid ACCESS CONDITION: Existing transaction RECIPIENT: Not party treasure
Leda's prior sale OWNER: Leda QUANTITY: 50 gp, already paid ACCESS CONDITION: Existing transaction RECIPIENT: Not party treasure
Dask's illicit offer OWNER: Dask

QUANTITY: 150 gp
ACCESS CONDITION: Deliver complete case and abandon immediate recovery
RECIPIENT: Alternative party payment

The standard maximum is **275 gp for the party**: 200 gp railway compensation including the advance, plus 75 gp evidence money.

The railway has 200 gp aboard. Investigators pay their award at a public office within **three days of submission**. Hett can issue a claim, not pay it from the committed strongbox.

Partial compensation

Reasonable efforts earn the **50 gp advance**.

Once the investigation identifies the three stolen recordings, Hett allocates the remaining balance at **50 gp per stolen slot secured intact beyond Dask's unilateral reach**, up to 150 gp.

Consensual restoration counts. Destruction does not, even if the donor approves: the contract pays for intact recovery. Explain this before a destruction decision.

Railway compensation therefore ranges from **50-200 gp**, with the evidence award independent.

If the party accepts Dask's **150 gp** and deliberately delivers all six, the railway demands its advance back. Repayment leaves **150 gp net** from Dask. Keeping both leaves **200 gp in hand**, a documented **50 gp debt**, and no earned completion reward.

Recoverable equipment

Nera's mundane equipment has listed values:

ITEM	VALUE
Leather armor	10 gp
Rapier	25 gp
Dagger	2 gp
Thieves' tools	25 gp
Forgery kit	15 gp
Total	77 gp

Lawfully released equipment sold undamaged at half value yields **38 gp, 5 sp**. Her purse contains **20 gp**. Ownership changes only through lawful seizure, settlement, or circumstances of defeat; none is promised reward money.

Porters belong to the railway and contain no saleable gems. Their mechanisms and plating are not free treasure. Guard equipment belongs to the terminal.

Dask's **150 gp** stays in his locked cash drawer in private T3 until paid. At a public station or stopped train, he can promise later payment only after an actual trip to obtain it. Taking the cash by theft is separate from receiving his contractual payment.

The case, tag, instrument, and cradle retain their item-entry ownership and release restrictions.

Accomplishment rewards

Negotiated surrender, exposure, porter redirection, and prevented delivery earn the same progress as defeating the relevant opposition.

For milestone campaigns, this is one significant accomplishment toward the next level. Level 7 is appropriate if it completes an existing advancement arc; otherwise record progress without immediate advancement.

Useful nonmonetary outcomes

Hett can grant each character **one ordinary Nightline passenger journey with berth**, valid for **one year**, without cash redemption or freight transport.

Mara offers to repair or bind **one ordinary book per character**.

Ben becomes a freight-schedule and inspection contact. Tessa supplies a careful written account. Suri offers professional introductions while retaining control of her recording.

Resolution Paths

All three stolen memories recovered; choices respected

Resolve donor preferences in **Recording Reference**: Mara normally restores; Ben and Tessa request restoration once informed; Arlo repays and restores; Suri takes hers sealed; Leda's recording follows her valid sale or a documented hold pending contact.

Iona remains with Mara. Nera may be detained or serve as a cooperating witness. Hett acknowledges the railway's lapse; Dask faces only what the acquired evidence supports.

Record restored vials as inert and sealed recordings with their actual holders. The cradle stays railway property. Payment can reach **275 gp** under the reward ledger.

The family recording recovered; other cargo lost

Mara may regain recognition while Ben and Tessa retain their gaps. Evidence can still protect Ben's job, and Tessa can testify about her note.

The party earns the advance plus **50 gp for slot 1**, with the evidence award still available. Track only unrecovered slots in the escaped case. The vault house becomes an optional recovery objective; declining pursuit does not undo Mara's restoration.

Cargo secured, but a donor refuses restoration

Return or store the intact recording under the donor's instruction. Suri expressly chooses this; Mara might request time despite her usual preference.

A refusal creates no saving throw or compulsory treatment. The donor's relationships continue through present choices, and future restoration remains possible with the intact recording and a working cradle.

Intact stolen recordings still earn completion payment.

Public diversion or emergency stop

Apply **Neutral Inspectors' Custody Procedure**, preserving the named holder and separate slot instructions. Nera's treatment follows evidence, surrender, and promises.

The railway must address its failed checks. Dask may remain unproved as a knowing buyer without his agreement or the alternative evidence package. A documented dispute can remain unresolved while the recordings stay beyond his unilateral reach and earn completion payments.

Negotiated separation at the terminal

Dask relinquishes stolen slots while pursuing lawful purchases. Nera may depart under agreed terms or testify for leniency. A quiet settlement can leave Dask's wider wrongdoing unexposed.

Arlo may cancel before delivery; Suri may reclaim her sealed recording. Slot 5 may lawfully pass to Dask unless an actual contrary instruction or supported hold applies. Apply recovery and evidence rewards to the conditions met.

A recording is destroyed

Name the slot, decision-maker, and whether the donor consented. The missing experience remains inaccessible; consensual destruction is a chosen consequence, while imposed destruction leaves the responsible party answerable to the donor.

Written evidence can still support proceedings. That stolen slot earns no **50 gp** completion payment. Its inert glass cannot restore content through the cradle. Extraordinary recovery would be a separate undertaking, without a promised result.

Dask obtains the case

Record the wagon's actual cargo. Unless intercepted, it reaches the vault house. Nera receives payment if still useful to Dask; if he distrusts her, she may seek protection and testify.

Victims whose recordings escaped retain their gaps. Mara and Iona can rebuild trust with support. Hett can report the crime using surviving evidence.

Reasonable efforts retain the advance; deliberate assistance to Dask invokes **Partial compensation**. A complaint,

negotiated return, warrant, or later recovery mission remains available without being presumed.

Return Visits and State Ledger

Update this ledger at transitions and after resolution. A scene heading never resets custody, hit points, surrender, opened locks, spent money, route choices, or removed evidence. People change location through actual travel; departed actors need a reason and time to return.

ELEMENT	RECORD
Travel	Filled boxes; threshold eight or ten; moving or stopped
Route	Private terminal, public platform, or stopped location
Case	Location, holder, latch state, hit points
Slot 1	Holder; intact, restored, or destroyed; Mara's choice
Slot 2	Holder; state; Ben's choice
Slot 3	Holder; state; Tessa's choice
Slot 4	Holder; Arlo's cancellation and repayment
Slot 5	Holder; contact with Leda; contract status
Slot 6	Holder; Suri's instruction
Nera	Location, hit points, equipment, surrender terms
P1	Location, hit points, current and prior orders, override status
P2	Location, hit points, current and prior orders, override status
Hett	Evidence seen; authority granted; payment issued
Dask	Exposed evidence; money paid; detained, present, or escaped
Guards	Present, withdrawn, surrendered, or driving
Cradle	Location, condition, current operation
Documents	Originals, copies, holders, confirming witnesses
Money	Advance, completion payments, evidence claim, private bargains

Return-visit cues

Use each location's **Return state**. These additional cues cover later changes:

C1: Begin with what Mara now knows and whether Iona is present, rather than replaying rejection.

C2: A searched berth contains no new commission letter unless the original was overlooked.

C3: If the cradle was removed, describe empty mounting holes. Any operation still uses its full duration.

C4: The vacant or occupied rack and P1's condition establish the scene.

C5: Hatch access reaches only cargo actually in the cage, not items elsewhere aboard.

C6: Ada remembers the operational decision and uses controls in their established condition.

Terminal: The road, office, and remaining witnesses stay accessible after departures.

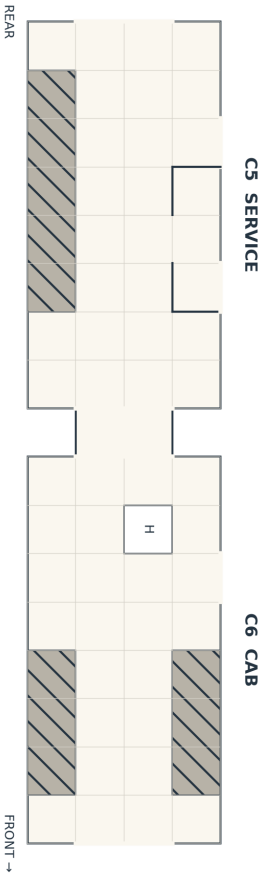
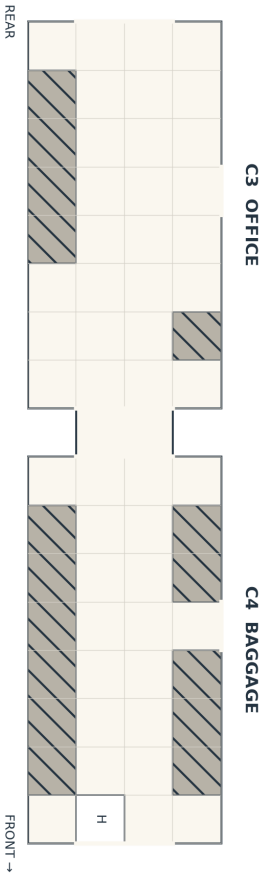
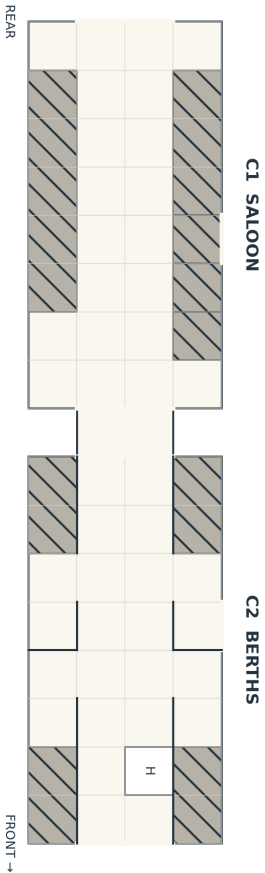
Player Map Sheets

Share each sheet when the party knows its layout, covering unexplored rooms as needed. Apply the public-station overlay when appropriate.

The Midnight Memory Express

THE MIDNIGHT MEMORY EXPRESS

Carriage plans | PLAYER MAP - reveal compartments as explored



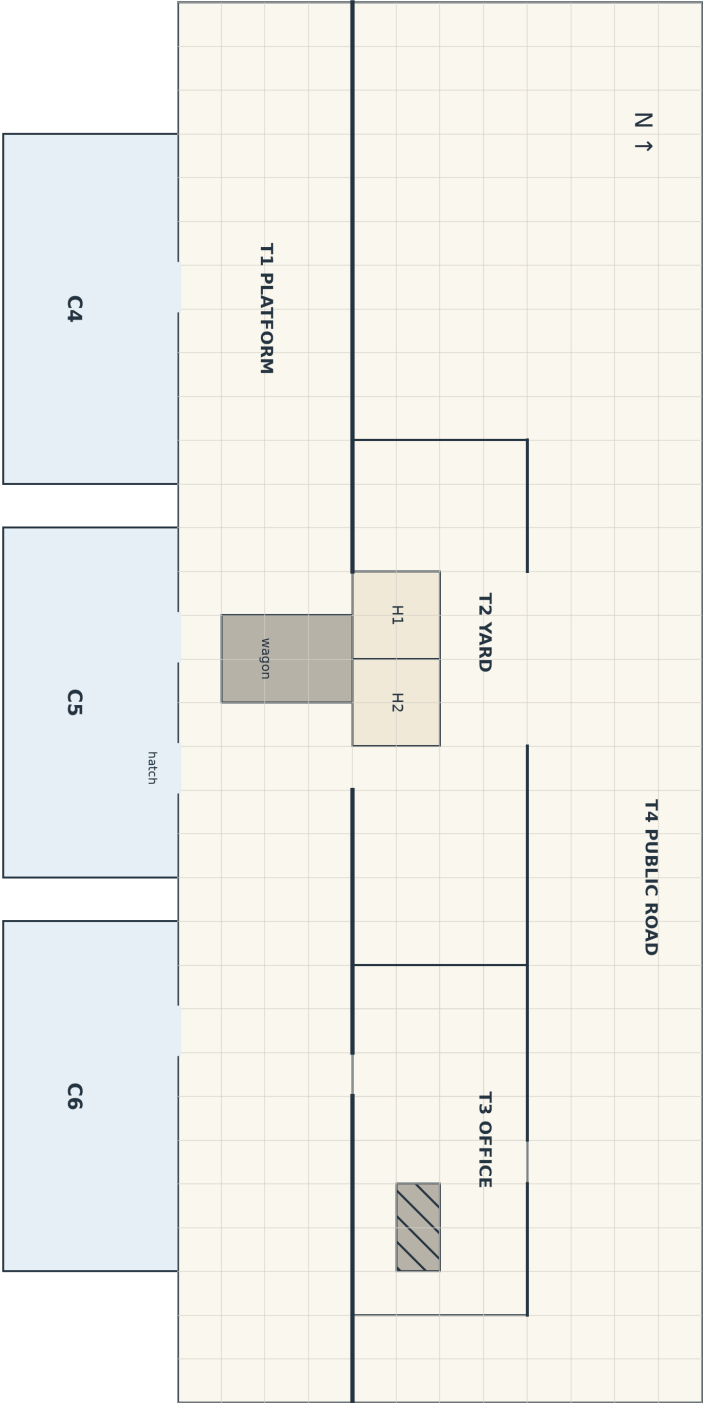
GRID: 5 FEET | NORTH UP | H: ROOF HATCH, +10 FT | Panels continue C1 → C2 → C3 → C4 → C5 → C6.
Gangways: 5 ft long, 10 ft wide. Roof gaps: 5 ft. Carriage roofs: +10 ft; rounded gangway covers: +8 ft.
Solid racks and benches block squares; saloon seating is difficult terrain. Compartments and barred enclosure have ordinary doors.
Passenger doors open north; during travel they open onto moving ground. No exterior catwalk is present.

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

The Midnight Memory Express

THE MIDNIGHT MEMORY EXPRESS

Terminal plan | PLAYER MAP - visible transfer yard



GRID: 5 FEET. Horses occupy full 10 x 10 ft spaces; their 20 ft harness span fits the north gate.
Train coordinates shift +10 ft east when docked. C5 loading hatch: x 215–220. Clear loading strip: y 20–25.
Four-foot railings border the platform north edge except at the yard opening and office door.
Doors and gate are ordinary visible access points; rear carriages continue west.

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