

NOBILISGAME SESSION #1 - NIGHTBOAT TO HADES

HG: The scene is set - Midnight party on Delta Queen cruising through night sky on current of dreams. Dark Magister and Blues Musician Robert Johnson hosts, providing entertainment, all-pervading musical accompaniment.

HG: "Now ladies and gennlemen it be my great pleasure to introduce to you a very good friend 'o mine - Johnny boy!" His hands stop playing, he throws them up in celebration, but the music continues. He is not singing, but his voice is swimming with the Essence of song, of passion and intensity. "Now John here, let me tell you boys and girls, let me tell you he got the gift of the gab! For that reason I'd like him to get up on the stage here and say a few words in his defence, tell us a little about hisself. Come on up now Johnny boy!" The crowd applauds and their eyes turn to John.

HG: John, what do you do? And the rest of you, how do you react to Robert's speech?

John McDaniels: "Thank you. Now..."

J.J. Gittes: "Heh. Is he on trial?"

John McDaniels steps onto the stage.

Excalibur: "We always are. Every day of our lives."

John McDaniels: "I am... a simple kind of man. One of few tastes."

John McDaniels: "One of which is, of course, the lyrical prowess of my good friend Robert Johnson."

John McDaniels: "Let's give 'im one more round of applause, huh?"

HG: A skeleton draped in an enormous snake elbows JJ, ruby eyes glinting. "Y'aint far off, boy", he chuckles quietly

HG: The crowd applauds and a good number of them grin at you, wrapped around your words

HG: Johnson removes his hat and takes a small bow

John McDaniels tips his head to Johnson.

John McDaniels: "We're all here to have a good time, maybe loosen up your angry bones, grin a little."

John McDaniels: "It's what I'm here for, after all. Ha, haha."

HG: A small crowd of people gathers in the back of the room, hustling noisily. Excalibur, Lyudmila, JJ, you want to see what's going on or keep your eyes on the speech?

Lyudmila is sitting on a secluded part of the room, keeping her eyes open to both the speech and any interesting things that are being talked about.

J.J. Gittes: "What's going on back there, eh?" JJ casually moves to see what kind of hustle is going on here.

John McDaniels: "But my heart rests in the hands of all of yours, so I ask that, no matter how..."

John McDaniels: "...rambunctious you might become..."

Excalibur, seeing attention being drawn behind it, takes a look behind it for a brief moment.

John McDaniels: "You stay on your feet, and you try and keep these memories, because it's going to be..."

HG: Lyudmila: You hear the odd word from the back table - "15, 21... I got long odds, short odds... up ante... up the ante!"

John McDaniels: "One night you don't want to forget."

John McDaniels: "Thank you, and God bless."

HG: JJ: The back table is a crowd of odds and ends, towering ghosts and child-sized skeletons scampering around the table, waving dead coinage and shouting noisily.

John McDaniels bows his head and waves a hand as he starts stepping to the left edge of the stage.

J.J. Gittes Goes to examine the game; Do I know the rules to this one? Is anyone cheating?

HG: John: Johnson speaks up - "Well hey now, Johnny, before you get down I got a question for you..."

HG: Excalibur: You see the same sight JJ saw

John McDaniels: "Alright, shoot.

Excalibur has gone to look back to John and Robert at the moment, seeing that there isn't much to do in that regard. This is a party, after all. Such things happen.

John McDaniels returns to center.

Lyudmila takes a slight peek back and notices the same as JJ, the gambling ghosts and skeletons. Huh, wonder what kind of profit she could make from a game...

HG: JJ: Seems like straight blackjack, but it could just as easily be craps, poker, chess, horse racing... you can't get a grip on it. A pint-sized skeleton rushes up and clings to your ankle: "You bettin', sir?"

J.J. Gittes: "Er....This is blackjack, yes?"

HG: John: "Now tell me, son, tell the whole crowd here where you think you're goin' with a speech like that?? You ain't near done! Tell 'em what you love, son, tell 'em what makes you HUNGER. What are you after, and how can my fine guests here help you along with it?"

John McDaniels: "I only got all night."

HG: JJ: "Suits you, then yeah. You bettin', sir?"

HG: Lyudmila: A tall ghost looms over you and speaks in "Ah! You look like a woman who could appreciate a wager, a small gamble. Am I right, my lady? Am I right?"

HG: Lyudmila: "Tell me, what's that poking out of your pocket there? Something to risk, miss? Something to up our ante?" He points toward a glimmering object poking from your pocket. What is it?

Lyudmila: "A small gamble? Fuhuhu... Well, I guess I could spend something on that..." She mutters before noticing the glimmering object, quickly picking and examining it. "Wait, what is...?"

John McDaniels: "I want to make some friends tonight, Robert. And if your friends here--"

John McDaniels gestures to the dwindling audience.

J.J. Gittes: "What're the stakes?"

John McDaniels: "Can indulge me in their life, I can indulge mine."

John McDaniels: "We're only on this planet for so long. Why shut out the crowd? Come one, come all. I want to know:"

John McDaniels: "Who wants to get friendly?"

John McDaniels: "Who wants to get loving?"

HG: JJ: "Anything you like, sir. Money, kids, memories, property - coat o' yours there, anything." He gestures the the middle of the crowd, still imperceptible, soaked in midnight. "Right now we got a night's ecstasy on wager. You interested? You in?"

John McDaniels: "Who wants to share their life their their brothers and sisters, let them know--"

J.J. Gittes JJ realizes this is a terrible idea. But it sounds like fun! "I'm in."

HG: Excalibur: A man clad in the tightest jock strap you've ever seen approaches - or is it a woman in the tightest bodice? Or a third thing altogether, or a fourth, or a nun in an all-concealing habit? You feel drawn to it..."

John McDaniels: "Let them know that you're ready to let yourself be free, ready to put your heart in their hands!"

John McDaniels: Ready! To give a little trust to your fellows so they can give their trust right back to you?!

Excalibur: This was...interesting. It was cautious, but it turned to face the being that was approaching it. It stood up to face the being, long head of hair twirling in the breeze.

HG: John: What's left of the crowd is getting fired up - "Tell us! Tell us what should we do, o Johnny boy!"

John McDaniels: "Let's rock this river down! It's party time!"

HG: JJ: The skeleton releases your ankle and assumes a dignified pose: "What's your wager sir? You can check or raise the stakes as you like."

John McDaniels mimes rolling dice as he takes a step back.

Lyudmila does a quick flip of the tiny emerald on her hand. One of the many pieces of an ancient collar who was wore by a Mayan noble in ancient times. While it would be quite distressing if she lost it, it was one of the lesser collections and the only thing she considered valuable enough to be gambled yet not enough to be kept.

HG: The crowd bursts into applause, wild screaming, and runs off into the rest of the house. A few more join you on stage, embracing you, clawing at your clothes (What are you wearing?) Through the crowd, something catches your eye - by Excalibur over there, who is it?

John McDaniels is in a slick-looking black ensemble, with only a hint of a white collar.

J.J. Gittes JJ takes out a dented bullet and hands it over. "62 bullets penetrated the flesh of the late and great governor of this beautiful state, Gentleman Huey Long. I'll bet one."

John McDaniels pats his admirers on the forehead as he tries to part the crowd.

HG: Lyudmila: The ghost waves his hand over your emerald and it's gone. He waves his hand into the crowd, parting as if by magic, and grins down at you with a brand new, glimmering green tooth. "Please, step into the ring."

John McDaniels sees... a liar, something likening to his domain.

Lyudmila enters the ring, her eyes gleaming with curiosity. A game! Finally something fun to do on this dour party.

HG: John and Excalibur: The shimmering figure, all hips and swagger and shining eyes, gestures to you, looks over at you, John, and at precisely the same does the same to Excalibur. It beckons you closer.

Excalibur: It proceeds to approach this figure, curiouser and curiouser...

John McDaniels stares at the tempter and smiles a wicked smile.

HG: JJ: The tiny skeleton grabs it, bites it and tosses it inside its eye socket for safe keeping. "Good enough, sir. You get yourself into the ring now." It grabs you by the hand, shoving and biting its way through the crowd, leading you into the ring. You're face to face with Lyudmila.

John McDaniels steps rhythmically closer, in time to the song.

J.J. Gittes: ".....The ring?"

J.J. Gittes: "Fuck it. I'm a man."

HG: JJ and Lyudmila: In the centre of the ring, the midnight lifts - an immensely bearded man with eyes of dice and a thousand arms receives wagers, passes them out, rolls dice, deals cards, screams odds. He hold an emerald, a bullet, and a small purse from which a pink mist wafts. He tosses cards to you, JJ, and you, Lyudmila, and a third man - what appears to be a naked Julian Assange.

Lyudmila: "Ah, the detective." Lyudmila gives a slight grin as she waves to JJ.

J.J. Gittes JJ straightens his tie, adjusts his jacket, and steps into the ring

J.J. Gittes "The...connoisseur of odd objects, I recall?"

Lyudmila: "Yes, I remember you came to my humble abode on one of your previous cases, no? It doesn't matter now, though. It seems it's time for us to play."

J.J. Gittes: "There's just one problem, sister."

J.J. Gittes: "NO ONE KNOWS THE RULES OF THE GAME!"

HG: John and Excalibur: The figure meets you both, drifting back, just out of reach. "And who, may I ask, are you? What business have you with me?" The androgynous figure seems untouchable - a nun's habit reappears over its features and you feel the urge to move closer, but you know you mustn't touch it. "What do you want from me?"

Lyudmila: "...That is indeed a problem." Maybe if she at least knew what exactly they would play, perhaps Lyudmila could grab something from her library of game rule handbooks.

Excalibur: "I could ask you the same." Excalibur states. "For if I were not mistaken, I saw you beckon to me and asking me to approach. Was I mistaken?"

John McDaniels: "I, too, seem to have been summoned by your gestures."

HG: Excalibur: It balks, and speaks in a voice sweet as milk & honey. "Certainly not! I stand here asking for no interruption, no advances from men such as you. What brings you here? What is it you want from me? Both of you!"

Excalibur: It steps back, bowing a bit. "My apologies, then. May you enjoy the festivities unhindered." It then takes a step back further. It doesn't mention that as a sword it doesn't have a gender.

John McDaniels stands still.

John McDaniels raises a hand.

John McDaniels: "You really shouldn't bluff with me. I have the nastiest poker face either side of the Mississippi."

John McDaniels snaps his finger.

J.J. Gittes I attempt a lesser enchantment on the wager slip, so fine print will appear defining the game's win and loss conditions.

Lyudmila waves at the thousand-armed bearded man. "Excuse me! What are we playing today?"

John McDaniels twirls his index finger, methodically reeling out the lies into his hand. (Lesser Sacrifice)

HG: John and Excalibur: The flickering, Lustful images peel away and sit themselves on John's finger. Underneath, a small, handsome (though not supernaturally so) person in a delicate, ruffled shirt with tight jeans. It screams and clutches its face. "How dare you! HOW DARE YOU DO THIS TO ME!! HAVE YOU NO HONOUR? HAVE YOU ANY IDEA WHAT YOU'VE DONE!?" She reels and raises a hand at John, making a strange sign...

John McDaniels hides his terror behind a stone gaze.

HG: JJ: You reverse the slip - the following words materialise on the back: "THE HOUSE ALWAYS WINS". Assange peers over at the card, and, in an incredibly self-satisfied tone he says "Well, I could have told you that. You deserve it, though - you've hardly said a word to me all game."

John McDaniels: "You can have it back if you tell me what it is I'm holding here."

Lyudmila: "Detective! Did you found something you want to share?"

J.J. Gittes: "May have been wiser to sit this one out." He turns to the strange naked man. "Well, I didn't know you, and thought you might not want to talk in your current state of affairs. The name is J. J. Gittes, friend to all those who seek the truth."

HG: Excalibur: How do you react to all this? Do you move to protect John?

Excalibur: It is shocked, confused, and stepping back in. "What is the meaning of these acts?"

Lyudmila: "Oh. Well, that is bad to hear. *Sigh* Getting that emerald back will be quite a bother it seems. Still, I might at least have some fun."

HG: John and Excalibur: "My veil, you venomous oaf! You tore my veil! THE NERVE! I should lay a curse on you! GIVE IT BACK! NOW!!"

John McDaniels: "It sure is, isn't it."

John McDaniels carefully plucks the veil from his finger and offers it in his left hand.

John McDaniels: "I prefer stoicism, myself."

HG: JJ: "Then you and I, JJ? We're friends." He wraps his naked arm around your shoulders. "You and I have a lot in common, you know. Did you know I'm Marquis of Exposure now?" He looks you in the eyes and grins. "I guess all my good work has finally paid off - it got me all this, didn't it?" He waves his hand down his body - pasty white and supremely vulnerable. You're incredibly uncomfortable!

J.J. Gittes: "Marquis of Exposure. So that's the reason for the getup." JJ edges away from the pale scandinavian, then asks him a pointed question. "You're not going to expose that the game is rigged, though?"

HG: Lyudmila: The hugely-bearded man waves one of his thousand arms at you, wrenching a card from your hand. A mad, skittering eye reads it for half a second and secrets it into the beard. It grunts at you - "Loss, double-fine, secret double, colour blue, double or nothing. Up the stakes, double or nothing??"

Lyudmila: "Nothing." If she is going to lose, it's better to cut it as soon as possible! And playing with the naked man is already making Lyudmila quite uncomfortable, as much as she doesn't want to admit.

HG: John and Excalibur: With its raised hand, it snatches the veil from your finger and dons it once more - shimmering lust-figures appear in its place and you feel drawn to it once more. It mutters loudly to itself and to everyone around it: "This won't do, you know, this simply will NOT do." It stares pointedly at John through the veil. "It won't do, you know. I demand reparations! This is simply too much to bear!!"

Excalibur: "It would be the proper thing to do." Excalibur states. "After all, you were rather intrusive in this being's privacy, were you not John?"

John McDaniels notices Excalibur for the first time since his speech.

John McDaniels: "You're absolutely right."

HG: "See? See!? One of you speaks some sense, at least! Listen to him!!"

John McDaniels: "How much will repay my intrusion?"

HG: "What am I worth?"

John McDaniels fumbles in his pockets for a receipt, sure not to pull it out just yet.

HG: "Make me an offer," it demands. "Hurry up!"

John McDaniels: "You look like a million bucks to me."

HG: "A MILLION!!?!??"

John McDaniels rubs a little on the receipt and pulls out an I.O.U. for \$1,000,000.

Excalibur: "..."

Excalibur: "That...was not only inappropriate, but a bad pun."

Excalibur: "I somehow doubt this is proper repayment, in any case."

HG: "YOU'RE BLOODY RIGHT IT'S NOT PROPER PAYMENT!!" It grabs the receipt, tears it up, spits on it and stomps on it repeatedly.

John McDaniels blinks.

HG: "I was wrong to stay my hand. I was wrong to listen to your stupid, stupid offer!! I NEVER WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN!"

John McDaniels: "Very well."

John McDaniels no longer looks recognizable. (Lesser Enchantment: Mask, Coat and Cover)

HG: It lunges forward and rips the veil from your body, ignoring your words. "AND NOR SHALL I EVER!" It grabs at your face, clenches and you feel your face flooded with miraculous power. What do you do?

John McDaniels glares menacingly at the being, gripping their arms. From the fringe of their magic, John's face takes on the air of something inhumanely Glorious, skin almost-literally glowing.

John McDaniels: "Do you dare wish to hide your gaze of this most-awesome visage?"

John McDaniel's hands grip just a tiny bit tighter as he attempts to counter their power with his own. (Lesser Enchantment: Imbuing Peace of Mind)

John McDaniels: "I merely desired to gaze on your true beauty."

HG: It retracts its hand and gazes in wonder at John - suddenly, its visage cracks and settles into a featureless mask. It stands stock-still, devoid of passion.

HG: Miraculous power oozes from its body.

HG: A clipped, monotone voice drifts from the mask. "I will do no such thing. I will do no such thing. I will not gaze. I will not expose myself. I will do no such thing." It shifts. "Something is telling me you are very lucky. Something tells me this. You have made a grave error. You are very lucky. You will let me go now."

John McDaniels: "Let us both part ways, then."

HG: "I need nothing from you. I need nothing from anyone. I will meet you tomorrow. You will meet me tomorrow. You are very lucky."

HG: "You will meet me tomorrow."

John McDaniels: "I will."

HG: "You will."

John McDaniels: "I look forward to it."

Excalibur: "I believe if you do not let go this conversation will continue."

John McDaniels releases his grips and brushes his hands together.

HG: Lyudmila, you no longer want to play. Are you leaving the ring?

Lyudmila: Indeed! Although she watches how JJ will deal with that.

HG: JJ: "And what good would that do? Everyone knows casinos are rigged, unless you're an idiot." He laughs at his own joke. "And I'm Australian, by the way - you've got nothing to fear from me!"

J.J. Gittes: "Casinos are supposed to have odds, not be rigged. We'll see what he tries."

HG: JJ: Julian Assange, Smartest Guy in the Room, shakes his head in disbelief. "Honestly JJ, it's not like those things are mutually exclusive. You've got all the evidence you need right there." He points to the slip. "Don't come crying to me when you lose everything."

J.J. Gittes: "Well, I already placed a bet, buddy. It'd be bad form not to see it through, and this isn't my first rodeo."

HG: "Hmph! Suit yourself, then." The beard swipes your cards, Lyudmila departed from the game, and begins a new round. It waves its hand over the ground between you and two cocks with knife-sharp spurs appear circling each other in the middle of the ring. "Place bets, up stakes. Up ante. Check? You?" It glances toward Assange for a moment.

Lyudmila: "Ah! So are you saying I got cheated, detective? Well, work your magic and collect your prize then."

Lyudmila: "Keep the emerald if you win it, I'd rather see it with you than with the house."

J.J. Gittes: "Noted."

HG: Assange sits thinking for a moment, and asks himself what he has to lose. "Well, I suppose I don't need this any more..." He meets the beard's eyes and it reaches down into his skull with a free hand, plucking out a small vial of blue liquid. "My dignity." The beard glares at JJ. "Up stake? Check? Up ante? Up stake?"

J.J. Gittes: "Check."

HG: One of the cocks leaps across the ring and strikes the other with its spur - its neck is nearly severed, its head hangs limp, spurting blood. Assange, leaning forward to watch on all fours, smacks the ground with his fist. What sounds like a slot machine rings out and the beard holds forth a hand, presenting JJ with the bullet, the vial, the emerald, and a pouch of night's ecstasy. Another hand swipes immaterial through your skull - the beard shouts "Concession"

and drops the contents of its hand before you. The tiny skeleton arrives to gather up all the goods for you and lead you out of the ring. Assange lays face down, dejected - he's not responding to anything.

J.J. Gittes J.J. picks up the vial of dignity and tosses it to Assange with positively cinematic nonchalance. "Buddy, you need this more than I do."

J.J. Gittes "Exposure has a purpose. It means something. It's more than a punchline for some fratty coeds. I think you know that deep down."

HG: He clutches his head and waves you away. On some level, you get the sense he appreciates it. You may just have made a new friend!

Lyudmila: "Exposure is also not that literal. Seriously, it could help to wear some clothes."

J.J. Gittes "I just hope he's around when something matters needs to be exposed."

HG: Lyudmila: Assange seethes wordlessly at you

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