

# Show Notes

Mina begins her exploration of the Underpipes, and makes a surprising discovery that makes her reassess her quest. But she'll need to avoid being discovered herself if she's going to survive...

## Links

### Transcript

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1n568c4YkbsuKocfV-V0TWqrNtEpxrTAS-KXM3P9ALeI/edit?usp=sharing>

Mina's character sheet:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JGnbhd25G18rT\\_vAqkAUInVhukGgsvRLe960o\\_bUsi8/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JGnbhd25G18rT_vAqkAUInVhukGgsvRLe960o_bUsi8/edit?usp=sharing)

Cadmus' character sheet:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1iXvGMribhEAZnn5SixCj3G8ZLz\\_OK4jBEo\\_hg8DKgKc/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1iXvGMribhEAZnn5SixCj3G8ZLz_OK4jBEo_hg8DKgKc/edit?usp=sharing)

Apocalypse World: <http://apocalypse-world.com/>

Ironsworn: <https://www.ironswornrpg.com/>

Dungeon World: <https://dungeon-world.com/>

FATE: <https://www.evilhat.com/home/fate-core/>

Mythic Magazine Volume 1:

<https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/342536/Mythic-Magazine-Volume-1>

Donjon: <https://donjon.bin.sh/>

## Mechanics

### SCENE 10

#### Chaos Factor 4

SCENE ALTERED? 1 Altered (Extremely hot)

Common, Discovery: Heating pipes, find supplies

Investigation vs DC 16 Clues?: 12+2 (Guidance) Fail forward (Complication)

DESCRIPTION: 49 Healthily 43 Harsh

Complication Table

1. Use a monster, danger, or location move
2. Reveal an unwelcome truth
3. Show signs of an approaching threat
4. Deal damage
5. Use up their resources
6. Turn their move back on them
7. Separate them
8. Give an opportunity that fits a class' abilities
9. Show a downside to their class, race, or equipment
10. Offer an opportunity, with or without cost

11. Put someone in a spot
12. Tell them the requirements or consequences and ask

3: Show signs of an approaching threat

Description: 43 Imprison 15 Innocent

Healer? (50/50) 27 Yes

Human? (50/50) 15 Yes

Imprisoned how long? 1d4 (Days to years) months

Sleight of Hand Vs DC 10: lockpicks +3 +3 (Guidance): 19 Success

NPC Behaviour Check

Context: Investigating the Piperunners

Cadmus: starting Disposition 2d10+-2 10 Active

Cadmus First Action: 2d10+2 16 Act out of Self Interest (runs), change context (Escape incarceration)

Cadmus Action: 2d10+2 17 Take something (food/ water), change context (tend to Cadmus)

Context Modifier: -2 (Disposition 8, Passive)

FATE: does he know when they are coming back? (50/50) 27 yes

When? 1d4 (now, minutes, tens of minutes, hours) 4 hours

FATE: Does he know another way out? (No Way) 12 No

| Result     | Action                       | Context                                              |
|------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 or less  | TALKS, EXPOSITION            | Character's Action changes the current Context       |
| 5          | PERFORMS AN AMBIGUOUS ACTION |                                                      |
| 6-7        | ACTS OUT OF PC INTEREST      |                                                      |
| 8          | NPC CONTINUES -2             | The Character's Action is within the current Context |
| 9-10       | NPC CONTINUES                |                                                      |
| 11         | NPC CONTINUES +2             |                                                      |
| 12         | CONTEXT ACTION               |                                                      |
| 13         | GIVES SOMETHING              | The Character's Action changes the current Context   |
| 14         | SEEKS TO END THE ENCOUNTER   |                                                      |
| 15-16      | ACTS OUT OF SELF INTEREST    |                                                      |
| 17         | TAKES SOMETHING              |                                                      |
| 18 or more | CAUSES HARM                  |                                                      |

SCENE 11

Chaos Factor 5

SCENE ALTERED? 8 No

Themed, Common, Discovery, Danger (Water, Cooling Pipes, condensation, slashing trap)  
Donjon random Trap generator, CR 2  
(<https://donjon.bin.sh/5e/random/#type=trap;trap-level=2>)  
Guillotine Blade: DC 15 to find, DC 15 to disable; +8 to hit against one target, 2d10 slashing damage; heroic tier, dangerous  
Target: Mina d20+8 17 hit 10hp (22/38hp remaining)  
FATE: does Cadmus heal her? (Likely) 73 Yes (just)  
Healing Word (3HP)  
FATE: was he kidnapped (very likely) 98 extreme no (he came here willingly)  
FATE: is he willing to talk? (50/50) 26 Yes  
EVENT: why did he come here? 3 Neglect 32 Plans  
FATE: Are they all bad? (Unlikely) 22 Yes  
EVENT: Remote Event 2 Starting 21 Messages (knocking pipes)

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# CHAPTER 5: Caged

## TEASER

The air is stifling; it's almost unbearably hot down here, in this cramped and dingy walkway. Mina Montisario's heavy boots clang on the black iron grating, which seems somehow impervious to rust. The passageway is lined with tangled copper pipes that radiate heat; Mina is sweating before she's taken ten paces. These are the Underpipes then; the hidden plumbing, heating and sewage system that lies beneath the city of Kyras. The home of the Piperunners.

The passageway angles downward for a stretch, then levels off. At the bottom of the incline it widens into a small chamber. The pipes here cover the ceiling and the walls, and there are all manner of dials, pressure gauges and valves. To one side is a large box, perhaps a meter to a side. A storage crate, Mina speculates, perhaps some sort of supply cache.

She takes a curious-looking monocle from a breast pocket that whirrs and rotates as she fits it to her eye, the lens telescoping out and magnifying her view as she begins to study the box, trying to determine how such a thing might open, and what it can tell her of her quarry. As she looks closer, she is surprised to see a series of vents around the top edge. And more surprised still when a face appears from within, wide-eyed and desperate, and a cracked voice beseeches her, "Please! Please, you've got to get me out of here! Hurry! They're coming back!"

## INTRO MUSIC/ VOICEOVER

Hello and welcome to The Lone Adventurer, an actual play solo RPG podcast with me, Carl White. I will be your narrator, your Game Master and your guide as we follow our hero, Mina Montisario, on her journey into the unknown. For this game I will be using the D&D 5e ruleset, as well as a variety of other systems, tools and tables, as they take my fancy.

A word of warning; the following scenes may contain mature themes and disturbing imagery. Listener discretion is advised.

The adventure continues.

## RECAP

Last time on the Lone Adventurer, Mina visited the Necropolis beneath the temple to Brahn, hoping to find out more about the deal the Machine Cultists had struck to secure Infernal Powder. But a public ceremony dashed all hope of finding clues. Instead, she was forced to follow her other lead and descend into a deep water-filled shaft in pursuit of the suppliers of the barrels; the Piperunners. Surviving an underwater attack from two fire snakes, she made it into the Underpipes, and set off in search of her quarry.

## SCENE 10

This is no storage crate, Mina realises with lurching horror; it's a cage. The Piperunners have imprisoned this man in a space so small he can barely move. Whatever positive preconceptions she might have had of these people, they are shattered now; this cruelty is unspeakable.

"It's all right, let me see if I can get this open..." Mina chatters, as much to calm her own nerves as his, as she tinkers with the lock. "Who are you? What happened to you?"

The man's fingers poke through the vents. "My... my name is Cadmus... please, please let me out..."

The lock proves no match for her delicate tools and dextrous fingers; it springs open and Mina levers the top of the cage open. She reaches out to Cadmus, then recoils as the unbearable stench hits her. Cadmus' fingers reach up over the lid of his cage, but he seems incapable of moving.

Mina activates her breathing bubble once more, and mercifully the foul smell cuts off. "It's OK, give me your hands..."

The man that emerges from the cage is horrifying to behold. He is emaciated, caked in filth, his tattered robes near black grime, and his beard and hair long, tangled and matted. Every movement appears to be agonising. From the look of him he must have been down here for months. He's in a bad way, and that's just physically. Keys know what this experience has done to the poor man's mind.

"That's it, take it gently..."

Cadmus, freed of his prison, takes a long, despairing look into Mina's eyes - and then he runs for it. He makes it only three or four tottering paces before his legs give way from under him and he falls, crying out in pain as muscles long unused go into painful cramp.

Mina is at his side in an instant. "Cadmus, I'm here to help you, d'you understand? I'm going to get you out of here, I'm going to get you away from these people, but you're going to have to trust me."

Cadmus closes bloodshot eyes for a long moment, then lets out a long, shuddering sigh. "Water..." he croaks. "Food."

Mina could kick herself for not offering them immediately. "Of course, I have both in my pack; here, take it slowly..."

She waits patiently as Cadmus greedily devours her rations, turning the situation over in her mind. She is desperate to investigate the Piperunners, and how they are involved in the supply of illicit Infernal Powder. But this man is clearly in no fit state to proceed; left alone he will probably die, or perhaps worse, get captured again. She has to get him out of here, and quickly. If he's to be believed the Piperunners will be back soon, and they need to be gone

before that happens. But there's only one way out that she knows of, and it involves ascending perhaps 150 feet through hundreds of thousands of gallons of water. With only enough breathing apparatus for one. And she doesn't think he'll make it alone.

"You said they were coming back, Cadmus. Is that right?" she asks. "Do you know how long we have?"

The bearded man nods, still chewing. "An hour? Perhaps two?" His hands are shaking; this all looks to be too much for him. They need to get to safety. But how?

An insane idea occurs to her, an idea so dangerous and stupid that she almost laughs out loud. If she could open both chamber doors she could flood these pipes, then simply climb up the rungs. She dismisses the idea almost at once; there must be 800 thousand gallons of water in that pool shaft. Even assuming she could open both doors at once, the water would take several minutes to drain, during which they would still have to avoid drowning, with the added complication of being blasted with water under several tons of pressure. Not to mention the fact that the resulting flood would likely destroy large sections of the much-needed Underpipes, and would almost certainly result in the deaths of who knew how many Piperunners. She's seen firsthand the results of a stupid plan, executed to perfection, and she wants no more innocent deaths on her conscience.

"I don't suppose you know a way out of this place, do you?" She asks, with little hope. Cadmus shakes his head.

That means there's only one thing for it. They'll have to press on, into the stifling heat and claustrophobic pipes, in the hope of finding a diving suit with which they can make the ascent, or of miraculously finding some other way out.

She stands and offers Cadmus her hand. "Come on then, Cadmus. My name's Mina, and together we're going to get you out of this place. Or die trying."

## BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Time to talk about what happened behind the curtain in that scene. As it turns out, quite a lot.

Let's start with a brief discussion about skills.

D&D has a binary approach to a lot of things. You succeed or you fail. Simple. I try to hit that orc and I roll above its AC? Great, I hit. I want to pick that lock and I miss the target DC? That door stays closed. And if all the adventure is on the other side of the door? Well, that's kinda too bad.

Powered by the Apocalypse games take a different tack. There, the math is skewed so that most results end up as a weak hit rather than a miss or strong hit: that's a success, but with consequences. Flat out success or failure is usually narratively less interesting. Games like Apocalypse World, or Powered by the Apocalypse-adjacent games, like Ironsworn do this, and it's the driving force behind the way stories emerge in those games.

I tend to miss that when I play more traditional RPGs like D&D. So I've decided to trial something for a while, which I think would work perfectly well in a group game of D&D, and something that should suit my solo game just fine as well. Again, this is one of the reasons I love solo RPGs: you get to tinker and experiment with rules systems, adjusting and hacking the on the fly to suit your needs.

In Dungeon World, when a player fails or makes a weak hit, the GM gets to make one of 12 GM moves. My plan is to port that list, kicking and screaming, into 5e. If fail at a skill check, I will give myself the option to succeed, but with a consequence, as you can in FATE for example. There are optional rules similar to this on page 242 of the DMG. The greater I fail the check by, the harsher the interpretation of the consequence will be. And the nature of the consequence will be determined by up to two rolls. First, a d12, to see which GM move is made. For example, Reveal an unwelcome truth, Use up their resources, or Put someone in a spot. And then, if the detail is not immediately obvious, a description roll on the Mythic table, to provide a prompt as to the nature of that move.

So in this scene Mina attempted to intuit some information about the Piperunners by examining their supply cache. She failed her Investigate check by two, even with the addition of her Guidance cantrip, which took the form of a magical monocle. So I elected to succeed with a consequence.

For the Investigation success I rolled a Mythic description of Healthily Harsh. That had me puzzled until I rolled for the consequence; I rolled a GM move of Show signs of an approaching threat, and a description of Imprison Innocent.

Combining those two results gave me Cadmus, and completely out of the blue Mina had someone to rescue, and, just maybe, a possible sidekick.

See how much more interesting that success with a consequence was than a straight "no"?

I mentioned back in Session Zero that I'd be introducing a sidekick when the opportunity presented itself, using the rules laid out in Tasha's. There are a few benefits to doing this. First off it helps provide a better spread of skills to my lone PC. They can play second fiddle to my PC in terms of story importance and mechanical complexity, but can plug skills gaps where my PC is lacking, particularly if I select an Expert, and the right base statblock. It will also help address the action economy issue I face as a lone PC. And of course a Sidekick would give Mina someone to talk to, which won't hurt!

Sadly Cadmus not in great shape; a random check reveals he's been in that cage for months, which even being super-generous means he has multiple levels of exhaustion. I decide on 4: he has disadvantage on ability checks, attacks, and saves, and his movement and HP maximum are halved. Still, he may prove helpful, let's wait and see.

To determine his actions I took a look at the NPC Behaviour Check rules in Mythic Variations 2, but I'll be honest, they made my tired old brain hurt. Thankfully I found a simplified version in Mythic Magazine volume 1, so I'll be trying those out to determine how Cadmus acts.

By the way, here's a fun fact: a 150ft high, 30ft diameter cylinder holds 793,150 US gallons of water, and would take approximately 200 seconds to drain through a 6ft by 3ft aperture, emerging under around 3.3 tons of pressure. Many thanks to my friend Russell for carrying out the necessary applied calculus. Whoever said RPGs weren't educational? For Mina to work out all that in her head just goes to show how gifted an Artificer she is. She does have an 18 intelligence after all.

But I've been rambling on for long enough.

Let's add Cadmus to the Character list, and Rescue Cadmus to the Thread list, as well as taking our Chaos Factor back up to 5.

It's time to find out how Mina and Cadmus are getting on.

## SCENE 11

Mina leads the way, stopping every now and then to help her stumbling, feeble companion along. The effort of the journey leaves Cadmus short of breath, and Mina is worried too much noise might betray their presence, so they travel in silence.

The oppressive heat gradually abates, the air growing first cooler, then positively chilly. Cooling pipes, Mina realises, noticing droplets of condensation coating the ducts and piping overhead.

And that's why she fails to spot the slender tripwire. She blunders into it, and a catch is released, sending a heavy steel blade plummeting towards her. She hurls herself desperately forwards, but the blade leaves a brutal gash across her thigh.

She curses, reaching into her pack to find something to bind the wound, but Cadmus puts out a restraining hand. "Let me see" he says, and for the first time his voice sounds calm and assured.

The wound is clean but deep, and bleeding freely. Cadmus holds a hand a few inches above it, and in a reverent tone recites a familiar invocation.

"Thrice-Blessed Ankhra, Bringer of Life, may You hear your servant's call."

Light, pure and soothing, flows from his outstretched hand, and the wound begins to close, but the light starts to fade before it is fully mended.

Mina stares at Cadmus in astonishment. Looking closer, she realises that his tattered, filthy robes must have once been orange. "You're a Devotant!"

Cadmus nods, sadly, the light in his hand fading away altogether. "A Most Tranquil Devotant of Thrice-Blessed Ankhra. Yes." He takes the bandage Mina had tugged from her pack and binds the wound gently and expertly.

“So, what? The Piperunners kidnapped you?” Mina asks, as this time Cadmus offers her a hand up. He’s moving a bit more easily now, she notices. “They snatched you off the street and brought you down here to be their captive healer?”

Camus shakes his head. “No, though I almost wish they had. The truth is, I came down here of my own volition. The fault lies with me as much as them. My order had a path mapped out for me, an assignment to a great house. I had... other ideas.”

Mina nods. Though most of the order are typically nomadic, she is very familiar with the practice of Devotants being assigned to prestigious institutions, such as the noble houses or the guilds. They serve as resident healers, and in turn the Devotant order is well remunerated.

Cadmus continues, eyes downcast. “I felt I had a greater purpose, a more noble calling than to be at the beck and call of some pampered princeling. I determined to walk the Underpipes, offering aid to those in need. I have had a long, long time to consider my hubris.”

“How could you have known?” Mina asks. “I’d always thought the Piperunners were decent people, noble even; how could you have know they’d turn out to be such monsters?”

Cadmus is about to answer when he’s cut off by a hollow, metallic knock, reverberating down one of the pipes. His face goes slack with terror as a rhythmic pattern of knocking begins.

“What is it? Cadmus! What?”

The healer turns terrified eyes to Mina.

“They’re coming!”

## BEHIND THE CURTAIN

So Cadmus turns out to be useful after all.

Back in Scene 10 there was some information I learned about Cadmus that I didn’t share at the end of that scene. I mentioned that I rolled Healthily Harsh as a prompt. Well, that prompt suggested to me that this NPC might be a healer in a bad way, and checking the Fate Oracle confirmed that.

Other than briefly touching on Brahn, the Deathwalker, we’ve yet to dig into the established pantheon of this world. I’ll let that emerge organically, rather than subjecting you to a massive ecclesiastical infodump. But for now, suffice to say that I have an obvious choice in creating this healer, based on my pre-existing knowledge of the setting. The Chained World is home to a group of monastic worshippers of Ankhra, the LifeBringer, and Cadmus is one of them. A healer monk.

So I built Cadmus as a Sidekick. Mechanically I mashed a Sacred Stone Monk, from the 5e adventure Princes of the Apocalypse, together with the Healer Spellcaster Sidekick template, and I'm good to go. And I've perhaps been a little cheeky in the way I've built him; none of the spells I've chosen for him are effected by those multiple levels of exhaustion.

That said, he'll struggle in a fight; his maximum hit points have been reduced to a measly 11, so if things get nasty my healer might not be around for long. And that's even assuming he stands and fights; given that I'm using an NPC action generator it's perfectly possible that our traumatised devotant will simply turn tail and run, leaving Mina to face the music alone. We'd better hope they avoid whoever is knocking at those pipes...

I held back on announcing the fact that Cadmus was a healer because I wanted that to emerge in the narrative first, before mentioning it in the commentary. Again, there was no guarantee that Cadmus would volunteer that information; if he'd decided to keep quiet I had wanted his identity to remain mysterious.

The guillotine trap proved the perfect way to introduce his calling. I'd rolled a danger as part of my dungeon exploration, and then a further roll on the Perilous Wilds danger table had given me a slashing trap. That meant a trip to one of my favourite solo RPG tool sites; Donjon (that's D O N J O N). Donjon is up there with the best of the many random generator sites out there, and it was perfect for this task.

I went to the 5e trap generator, set the level to 2, and the danger level to random, then scrolled down the list of randomised traps Donjon provided me with until I found a slashing one. Easy.

Mina got hit for a chunky 10 hp, taking her down to 22 of 38, and I asked the oracle if Cadmus would heal her. As a devotant of the Colossus of healing I figured this was likely, but I just squeaked by on the dice, rolling a 73. Just barely a yes; all that time imprisoned has clearly left him conflicted. It's also left him out of touch with Ankhra; I rolled a 1 on my Healing Word die roll, burning a valuable spell slot and only healing Mina for a measly 3 hit points.

The next exchange was also largely driven by Mythic. I asked if Cadmus was kidnapped, and got an extreme no; he clearly decided to come here of his own free will. And the reason? Neglect Plans, Mythic informed me. That sounded as if he had disobeyed orders and gone rogue. I then asked about his experiences with the Piperunners, but rolled a double. An Event. The Event Focus was remote, meaning that whatever was going on, it wasn't here; the characters learn about it remotely. I rolled Starting Messages as my event description, and figured that tapping messages on pipes was the obvious way people would communicate at a distance down here. And it has the added benefit of scaring the bejesus out of Cadmus, which ramps up the tension a notch.

So whatever Cadmus has to say on the subject of the Piperunners will have to wait.

Until next time.

## OUTRO MUSIC

You have been listening to the Lone Adventurer, a solo RPG podcast, played, written and performed by me, Carl White.

If you've enjoyed this episode please consider leaving a 5 star review on iTunes, or telling your friends. That really is a huge help.

You can find shownotes at the [loneadventurer.podbean.com](http://loneadventurer.podbean.com); I include any links mentioned on that site, as well my interactions with the Mythic GM Emulator and any mechanics information. The story will continue in next episode of the Lone Adventurer.

Thank you for listening.