

Chapter 8 Show Notes

Summary

Tatters, in an attempt to forge an alliance with the vampire nation, has infiltrated the Mustang, the fallen casino that Lord Tortemus has claimed as his headquarters.

With battle raging between the Bluecoats and the nightspawn, can Tatters avoid getting caught in the crossfire? And if she does, what secrets might lie waiting to be discovered?

Links

Transcript:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1q7gA-Ta33nbBMYaC-SliFjLaIPNwTK1LH8RilJaXhg/edit?usp=sharing>

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Chasing Adventure: <https://chasingadventuregame.com/>

Perchance TLA Random event Oracle: <https://perchance.org/tla-randomevent>

Perchance TLA Tatters Ritual Generator: <https://perchance.org/tla-tatters-ritual-generator>

Mechanics

Intro scene (S03E07 scene 3 interrupt)

The event relates to a Remote Event

Action and theme: *Imitate Emotion*

Descriptor and Focus: *Offensively Important*

Alexis Montisario is having a difficult meeting

CEO *Something positive happening to Voice of the Machine*

They are meeting secretly at the House of Whispers. The Cult have taken the south of the city, including Chaintop and the Lavenders. Alexis is colluding in a coup against the Arch Dominar.

Scene 1

Chaos factor: 6

Scene Description: Infiltrating the Mustang

Scene Test: Interrupt: *a Connection: Inquisitor Fonseca. The event relates to a Starforged Action and Theme: Remove Phenomenon*

More screams: The battered body of Fonseca strung up, being tortured by vampires.

Examine Move: When you closely investigate a charged situation, ask the GM one question about it and roll+WIS

- What does Fonseca know that is useful to me? 4+1+1=6 **(1XP)** MISS

Unable to assess the situation:

GM Move: *Hit the Ground Running/ Take Something Away*

Bluecoats arrive, Fonseca knows something, but is close to death

Scene 2

Chaos factor 7

Scene Description: Battle in the Mustang Steakhouse

Scene Test: Altered (dangerous environment - floor/ ceiling collapsing)

Chase vs Bluecoats for Fonseca

Tatters 0 Edge

Bluecoats 0 Edge

Chase Move: Start the Chase When you enter a chase, either in pursuit or escape, you and your adversary form separate 'sides' that both start with 0 Edge.

Chase Move: Gain the Edge When you try to get ahead in a chase, say how much Edge you risk (2), and roll +INT if you distract or misdirect (Tatters uses prestidigitation to create distracting illusions).

- $2+2+1=5$: MISS

Tatters 0 Edge

Bluecoats 2 Edge

GM Move: *Introduce Something New*

The event relates to a Starforged Descriptor and Focus: Barren Vault

Floor collapses, revealing a vast drop, and blocking her path. It looks like the Mustang's secure vault has been cleaned out.

Chase Move: Gain the Edge When you try to get ahead in a chase, say how much Edge you risk (1), and roll +DEX if you sprint, hide or manoeuvre (Tatters leaps, ducks, sprints).

- $2+3+1=6$: MISS

Tatters 0 Edge

Bluecoats 3 Edge

Chase Move It's Over When any side in a chase has 3 or more Edge, the chase comes to an end. Whoever has the most Edge succeeds in escaping or catching their quarry. If multiple sides tie for the most Edge, the side with the most PCs wins (just barely). If that is also tied, then the PC that last Gained the Edge chooses one side to win, with the other tying sides gaining +1 Edge for the purposes of spending it below.

Losing sides can spend their Edge 1-for-1 to:

- Learn something about another side (where they will go, who leads them, how to escape them now, etc.)
- Have the chase end somewhere advantageous for them (reinforcements, a trap or lair, an intervening third party, etc.)
- Grant Advantage Forward to all PCs on their side.
- Inflict Disadvantage Forward on all PCs on an opposing side.

GM Move: *Have It Backfire*

This means taking what the PCs did and twisting it. The Adventurers aren't incompetent, so don't portray this as them being inept. Instead this backfiring should be due to freak accident, unforeseeable consequence, active sabotage, or the frightening power of an enemy.

Tatters' decision to abandon the Blue comes back to bite her. The Bluecoats recover Fonseca, and force a sacrifice.

Teaser

“Enough prevarication. The Great Machine does not wait on the frailties of the flesh. You promised us results; I would see them. And I would see them now.”

The Voice of the Machine stands, facing Alexis Montisario, who is seated behind his desk. To the Whisperer’s credit, his smile never wavers. Nothing in his conciliatory aspect betrays the seething resentment he feels at being upbraided by this lowly upstart. He opens his hands, palms up, a gesture of appeasement.

“Our endeavour continues, and we move inexorably towards our joint goal. That much remains unchanged. Let us not forget, tonight you are in control of the south of the city. Chaintop is yours by the popular support we seeded for you, and the Lavenders are yours by conquest. You have provided us the means to achieve our goals, and in return we have provided you with the means to achieve yours.”

Seven save him, but Alexis hates these miserable peasants, these loathsome bottom feeders with their wild delusions of grandeur. He hates them with a passion that penetrates even his practised ennui. The attack on the wedding was a direct challenge to his authority, a power play intended to demonstrate who had the whip hand in this relationship, and it is a transgression he will never forgive. These fanatics serve a purpose, it’s true, but once that purpose is served, he will relish their utter destruction. He only wishes he could see the faces of his supposed allies. Hidden behind their impassive masks, they are unreadable.

The Voice of the Machine leans forwards, his posture communicating all the Whisperer needs to know. “We have supplied you with the ordinance you requested. That was our part of the bargain. Your part of that bargain was to pave the way to the overthrow of this decadent city. To the destruction of the Arch Dominar, and all that she represents. Only one part of that contract is currently fulfilled.

Pray that imbalance is rectified in short order.”

Intro

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 heroes on their journey into the unknown. For this game I will be using the Chasing Adventure 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, Tatters decided that her best chance of finding an ally in her battle against the Unseen, the Seekers, the Bluecoats, not to mention the combined power of Houses Montisario and Toreth, was to connect with the one power that had not sought their destruction to date; the undying vampires of Night Queen's 3rd Guild, under the command of Lord Tortemus.

Braving both the dangers of a city at war with itself, and the demon within her driving her magical powers, she had infiltrated the Mustang, the fallen casino that Lord Tortemus and his nightspawn minions had claimed as their own.

But her infiltration had come at a cost; in order to get into the fallen casino, she had chosen to let a young Bluecoat constable die so that she might continue her mission. That decision haunts her. And it may yet come back to bite her.

Behind the Curtain

Before we dive back into the action, there were a couple of things that happened in the last chapter that are probably worth revisiting.

First up, the Mythic GM Emulator threw up an interrupt for scene 3. My automated oracle informed me that this interrupt related to a remote event, with an action and theme of Imitate Emotion, and a descriptor and focus of offensively important.

Remote events in Mythic pull us out of the immediate action, and into another strand of the narrative. They invite us to explore something happening between people other than our main protagonist. And my gut reaction to those prompts was immediate and unmistakeable; I knew at once that this event was related to Alexis Montisario.

The next question I needed to answer was what slippery Alexis was up to. My auto-oracle told me that something positive was happening to Voice of the Machine, and my scene emerged organically from there. Rather than drop it immediately into last episode's running order at the point at which it emerged, I figured it would make an interesting opening to the following episode instead, and pushed it back a bit.

It is gratifying to me that we now have confirmation of Mina's suspicions; her cousin really is the self-serving traitorous little shit she believes him to be. I don't suppose there was ever that much doubt, but still, it's nice to know for sure.

With that interrupt out of the way, the next thing to explore last time out was scene 3. As a consequence of only a partial success on her Evoke a Spell move, Tatters found herself between a vampiric rock and a Bluecoat-clad hard place, and in response she chose to run like hell. Probably the wisest move, in the circumstances.

When you act despite an imminent threat or obstacle in Chasing Adventure, you take the Defy Move.

This could have gone smoothly, only Tatters rolled a 7. That is, just barely, a mixed success.

The move says that on a 7-9 the danger only abates if you make a costly sacrifice or ugly choice, the GM will tell you what. Well, here's what my automaton GM emulator threw up:

Choose one of the following options: Suffer a condition or inflict collateral damage

Tatters could get herself beaten and battered and save a young Bluecoat's life, or she could escape, and abandon him to his grisly fate.

Two points about this choice, firstly the mechanical. The move says you must make a costly sacrifice or an ugly choice, and so I built a function into my Perchance automata that would do precisely that: a 50/50 option of either a sacrifice or a choice, with the outcomes based on the guidelines in the rulebook. GM automation at its finest.

Secondly, the narrative. If you offer a tough choice as a DM, it needs to be a crap option, offered against another crap option. Tatters could have taken a mechanical penalty to her stats; instead, I chose to take a purely narrative one. Leaving that Bluecoat to his awful fate means that she is both haunted by the consequences of her actions, and vulnerable to subsequent Move failure consequences that may exploit her questionable choice.

Let's see how that plays out for her.

Scene 1

Tatters stumbles through smoked-filled corridors, attempting to compensate for the marked tilt of the floor. Sections of the walls and floor have been shattered or fallen away. Lighting flickers, punctuating the darkness with sudden, disconcerting shadow. The young diabolist is breathing hard, but she presses on, determined to test her theory; if she can find Tortemus, perhaps she can find the ally she needs. And if he turns out to be yet another enemy? Probably best not to think too hard about that eventuality.

Up ahead, she hears a pitiful, agonized shriek, and unbidden, the memory of that young constable's face fills her inner eye. She forces the memory down, stepping as lightly as she knows how, and creeps to an open door. The sign above it announces this place to be the Mustang Steakhouse. She presses herself against the wall, and peers inside.

The sight that greets her makes her hands fly involuntarily to her mouth, attempting to stifle the groan of horror that squirms like bile up her throat. By the flickering of this battered dining room's single semi-functioning wall lamp she can make out four ivory-skinned nightspawn - no, there's one more, clinging like some grotesque spider to the extinguished crystal chandelier above them.

Suspended from this chandelier, hung upside-down by a tangle of chain wrapped around one leg, is the ruination of a man. He is stripped near-naked, and it seems that every inch of his flesh is wound. He bleeds from countless cuts, and one leg is bent behind him at an angle that suggests multiple breaks. What little flesh that remains not drenched in blood is horribly bruised, a startling swollen mass of green and purple against the black and scarlet.

Several heavy mahogany tables lie overturned about the room, some marred with scorch marks and deep gashes. Velvet-upholstered chairs, torn and singed, lie scattered about, their once plush cushions now spilling stuffing onto the sagging parquet floor.

The man, somehow still alive, lets out a choked sob of agony. "Please, please..." he stammers from between shattered, bloody teeth, "I'll tell you anything... please, no more..."

And in a moment of horror still more profound, Tatters realises that she knows him. This pitiful remnant of a human was once proud and certain in his purpose, unshakeable in his self-belief, and in the righteousness of his cause. There is little evidence that any of what made Inquisitor Fonseca the man he was remains.

Reason claws its way up from the depths of terror to which it had been consigned, and Tatters is struck by a thrilling realisation, even as she recoils, both physically and mentally, from the unspeakable tableau before her.

Fonseca is alive.

She follows the trail of that thought, fumbling for logical consequences that tantalise, infuriatingly beyond reach, and then she has it. Fonseca, who had been in the opera house when it collapsed, had survived. And if he had survived...

She needs answers, and either Fonseca or those vampires are going to give them to her. She grasps that the night spawn are questioning the Inquisitor, torturing him for information. Perhaps if she simply waits this out, the vampires will do her work for her.

Naturally, it is at precisely this moment of epiphany that, from the doors at far end of dining room, the Bluecoat squad open fire. Two vampires go down in the opening salvo, thrashing and snarling, and the room erupts at once into bloody violence.

"Take them down!" the Bluecoat sergeant bellows from behind the cover of an overturned table. "And secure the target. I want Inquisitor Fonseca alive!"

This time, the groan Tatters has to suppress is one of utter frustration. Of all the times for the bastard Blues to show up! Fonseca is perhaps her best chance of getting answers about what has happened to the Web. For the first time since the destruction of the opera house, a glimmer of hope has sparked within her, and she will be damned if she lets it die.

The combatants, intent as they are upon mutual destruction, are locked in furious battle. If she is ever to make a move, now is the perfect time. The only time.

Abandoning caution, and perhaps sanity along with it, Tatiana makes her decision. She takes a tentative step into the dining room, hoping against hope that she can get to Fonseca unnoticed before either side gets done with killing the other.

Behind the Curtain

I started this scene with the Chaos Factor at 6, and described it as “Infiltrating the Mustang”. Tatter’s goal here was to sneak inside the downed casino, bypassing any combatants, and find Tortemus in the hope of securing an alliance.

As usual, I began with a scene test, and this time it came up as an Interrupt. What sort of Interrupt, I asked, and my virtual GM replied that it was a connection, specifically the Seeker Inquisitor Fonseca, and that whatever was going on, it involved the words Remove Phenomenon.

I interpreted this as the disintegration of the inquisitor’s very essence; he was being broken down, and the most interesting way I could think to interpret that was to have him suffering the same fate he and his Enlightenment buddies were so keen on inflicting upon their own captives; the vampires were torturing him for information.

Now, I figured the most natural reaction from Tatters to this discovery would be to gain newfound hope that her friends might be alive. And I also figured she would be willing to go to some risk to determine if that were the case or not.

There is another aspect to this situation that is apparent to me, the player, but not, I think, Tatters, my character. I think her sudden wave of hope has superseded any wider or longer-term considerations, blinding her to anything but that immediate hope. But from my player perspective, I find this interrogation quite interesting for another reason. It suggests that the Enlightenment of Dhrume have information that the vampires want or need.

Does that support Tatters’ theory that the Unseen stand against the conspiracy, just as the Web did? On face value, it would seem to. I share my character’s desire to find out more, even if it is for slightly different reasons.

In order to find out more, I was going to have Tatters carefully spy on proceedings, and that was the trigger for a game move.

The Examine Move states “When you closely investigate a charged situation, ask the GM one question about it and roll+WIS.”

The question I asked was “What does Fonseca know that is useful to me?”, and I made my roll.

You may remember that back in the last season, Tatters ended up pretty badly damaged as the result of pushing herself beyond her limits. Specifically, under the Blades in the Dark rules system, she ended up with two traumas: Haunted and Paranoid.

In Chasing Adventure, there are no Hit Points like you’d find in D&D or similar games. When someone suffers a wound, becomes fatigued, feels enraged, or more, that is represented via Conditions, which impose a penalty to a player’s rolls but offers XP in doing so.

When a PC receives a condition, their player chooses one unmarked stat, such as STR or WIS, and marks it with the condition. Then they decide and write down the narrative reason for the condition on that stat.

If all stats are marked with a condition, the character Crumbles: they are down and out of the fight, and must make the Crumble move. And one of the options when you take that move is to Lock a condition of your choice, which can't be removed until you level up.

So I decided to lock in a condition against Tatiana's WIS, and combined the two Blades in the Dark traumas into a single locked condition called Haunted.

All of this is a longwinded way to explain that when I made that Examine move, I made it with disadvantage: I rolled 3d6, picked the worst two results, and then added my WIS bonus of +1.

The good news is that when you roll against a marked condition, you gain 1 XP.

The bad news is that rolling with Disadvantage significantly reduces your chance of success, and sure enough, I ended up with a straight miss.

Tatters was unable to assess the situation, and it was time for a GM move. Consulting my virtual GM informed me that the move was Hit the Ground Running: it was time for action. This move says it is often used in tandem with another move, so I rolled again, and got Take Something Away. I interpreted this as Tatters losing her opportunity to hear what Fonseca had to say, and when combined with the context of a vengeful Bluecoat squad on the loose, furious at the murder of their youngest team-mate, I had my setup. The stakes had risen for Tatters once again.

Let' see how she deals with this latest peril.

Scene 2

Tatters has no shortage of arcane tricks that do not rely on her demonic patron. She calls upon one now, reaching out to the shadows that shroud the corners of the room and drawing them to herself. Wreathed in concealing whips of darkness, she makes her way towards her quarry.

There's an ear-piecing shriek from the far end of the room, and a tearing sound that belongs in an abattoir. Someone is bellowing, "Gas! Gas!", and suddenly it is the vampires who are howling in agony as the garlic clouds billow out. It's now or never, Tatters knows.

She has barely taken three steps before it becomes apparent just how ill-considered this plan is. She had noticed the tilting, sagging floor from her vantage point at the doorway, of course. It is only when she puts her full wait on the that floor that she discovers how treacherous it truly is.

The joists beneath her let out an alarming crack, the floor drops perhaps four inches, and she freezes in place. Thankfully, it seems as though the battle raging at the far end of the room has everyone else too occupied to notice her, but her path to Fonseca has become infinitely more treacherous. Sensing no further movement beneath her, she lifts one foot experimentally, then sets it down a few inches forward, and tests her weight. So far, so good.

When the floor collapses, it does so almost completely without warning. She has barely enough time to fling herself backwards, scrambling desperately at the near-vertical surface behind her to gain purchase, before a good portion of the floor crashes into the room below. She finds herself dangling above a vertiginous drop. A part of her mind registers that she is looking down into some sort of vault or secure room, though it seems devoid of any valuables. A much more pragmatic part of her mind informs her, in rapid succession, that (a) she is hanging on for dear life above a drop that will almost certainly kill her, (b) the battle between the Bluecoats and the vampires seems to have reached some sort of conclusion, and (c) she is, unfortunately, very, very visible.

On the far side of the yawning chasm that had once been the dining room floor, a figure emerges, blinking, from the roiling cloud of garlic gas. Behind him his men have reached Fonseca, and are doing their best to cut him down from. The Bluecoat sergeant locks gazes with Tatters, his eyes going wide with recognition.

"I know you!" he snarls, raising his pistol in a shaking fist. "You're with the Web! You're the one who left Constable Hawksmoor to be butchered! Time's up for you, you terrorist bitch!" He opens fire.

At this range, the clumsy weapon lacks accuracy, but it surely only a matter of time; the bullet smashes into the wood a foot to the left of Tatters, showering her in splinters. A second bullet hits to her right, closer this time.

She is out of time, and out of options. She doesn't think she has the strength to climb, and even if she could summon it, the Blue would surely shoot her long before she made it to safety.

Lacking any other choice, She lets go.

Behind The Curtain

Goodness, Tatters is really determined to hit every branch on the way down. She's not doing this the easy way, by any stretch.

As you've seen throughout the Lone Adventurer to date, there are times in a solo RPG when luck turns against you, and the dice decide to give you one kicking after another.

When that happens in a game like D&D this typically represents you losing more HP, or other resources, in a steady decline towards, ultimately, death. D&D is, at its heart, a game of resource attrition. Success and failure are binary, and failure is bad. The goal of the game is to succeed before your stuff runs out.

That's not true in a Powered by the Apocalypse game, at least not to the same extent, and not in the same way.

In a Powered by the Apocalypse game, and in this game in particular, failure is often much more interesting than success. Failure, and even partial success, results in consequences, but more often than not those consequences are narrative, rather than resource-related. Things get worse in the fiction, which means the action gets more intense, the stakes get higher, there are new revelations or challenges to overcome.

For a solo game in particular, I find this a lot more satisfying. I want my story to be unpredictable and high-stakes. I want explosions and chaos and jaw-dropping reveals.

Don't get me wrong; I want success too. I want my PC to have agency in the story, and look like a badass as they make their way through it. But the joy of this sort of game is that I get my dopamine hit of satisfaction whether I roll well or poorly. Blessed if you do, blessed if you don't.

Anyway, to resolve this scene I decided to use the Chasing Adventure Chase mechanics. These mechanics are made up of three moves, which are Start the Chase, Gain the Edge and It's Over. The chase is simple: both sides start with zero edge, and the first side to 3 edge wins.

We kicked off with Start the Chase: my two sides were Tatters versus the Bluecoats in a race for Fonseca, with the vampires and the treacherous state of the room's structural integrity as environmental hazards for both sides.

I decided to use INT as my stat of choice for my first Gain the Edge move, using Tatter's Prestidigitation to explain her approach, and boldly wagered 2 Edge. Naturally, that was a straight miss, and my GM move of Introduce Something New came with the descriptor Barren Vault. Given the context, the floor had collapsed, revealing a strong room below.

I made another Gain the Edge move, wagering 1 this time. Given the stakes, I pondered Push Yourself move. This move allows you to roll with advantage, at the cost of condition. But I figured, I've missed my last two rolls, what's the chance of missing a third in a row?

100%, as it turns out.

The race was lost, concluding an ignominious 0 to 3. I wasn't even able to spend any accumulated Edge to do any of the useful stuff the It's Over move describes.

And there was still the matter of the GM move that needed to be made. In the circumstances, this was going to be a hard move.

The Perchance GM Emulator supplied me with my Move: Have It Backfire.

The Have it Backfire move takes what the PCs did and twists it. The move is at pains to emphasise that the Adventurers aren't incompetent, and that they shouldn't be portrayed as being inept. Instead this backfiring should be due to freak accident, unforeseeable consequence, active sabotage, or the frightening power of an enemy.

And so, in addition to a collapsing floor and a deadly drop, Tatters' decision to abandon that Blue constable last episode comes back to bite her. The Bluecoats recover Fonseca, who will no doubt provide them with important intel, or prevent that intel falling into the wrong hands.

And on top of that, they force Tatters into making a sacrifice: finding herself between a rock and a hard place, she is forced to accept one of two unacceptable outcomes.

We'll see how that works out for her. Next time.

Outro

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

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You can email me at TheLoneAdv@gmail.com, or follow my blog at carlillustration.wordpress.com/

You can find shownotes for this episode and all the others at the loneadventurer.podbean.com, where I include any links mentioned in the episode, as well as mechanics information. I also include a link to a full episode transcript. The story will continue in the next episode of the Lone Adventurer.

Thank you for listening.