



It had been a couple of days of the Night Hag anchored over the sunken island, and Cyan Bloodbane was growing restless. The island was not far from the southern coast of Travance. Once a lighthouse, the island had sunk during an underwater earthquake. The fact that it was underwater, and the proximity to Alok Malagan meant he, and his abyssal crew, were particularly well suited to this journey. However, despite the efforts of his summoned demons, and other heroes such as Feladryn Al'Meara, they had found nothing of note.

Certainly there were treasures, but they were trinkets really, nothing worth more than a hundred gold altogether. The tower was a ruin. It wasn't magical, it didn't have any notable markings aside from those that identified it as a lighthouse, and yet it was significant enough that the Red Glove had come here. They had found clues that pointed to this island as being important for something. No doubt that they, like he, had been as frustrated by the lack of information. He was rather put out that none of them were here. At least then he'd have someone to kill, and liven things up a bit. He finally resolved to head ashore, and hoped that if the rest of the group he had joined were running into dead ends, at least they weren't as boring as this.

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There were few taverns in Coast Haven that could be considered to have a good reputation. The Naughty Gnome, where the force of heroes Django assembled found themselves was no different. A hole in the wall dive with enough space for five tables. A second floor that had roughly three rooms, none of which were fit for sleeping, and a one eyed bartender who spit in

his mugs to clean them. And yet, despite all of that, the place was nearly full of dangerous looking folks who were very likely pirates. There was a hope, as Django, Cobus, Marci had tracked the fleeing crews of *the Black Omen*, and *the Ragged Blade* here. They had been joined by Bharash, and Delton, both of whom wanted to help hunt pirates. Along with the newcomers came news that Jun had claimed *the Bloodletter*, and the town had captured Captain Humphrey Toomes, leaving only two ships, plus *the Silent Doom*, Bloody Bess' flag ship. The remaining two, along with the Bloodletter, were Bess' largest ships, and their full crew complement was not yet accounted for. They had tracked sightings of Red Glove pirates to this tavern, and discreetly asked around, hoping to find information about the pirates from, or most of all, Bloody Bess.

Bloody Bess, they had discovered, was a Master of the Black Flag, a title earned by the most powerful and dangerous pirates in Arawyn. They were also often the most violent and bloodthirsty. It turned out there were certain taverns in which invoking the name of such a dangerous criminal, was grounds for starting a bar fight. Some of the Travancians were unsure if it would start a bar fight because the patrons wanted to protect her, or because they hated her. Unfortunately, it's hard to ask that question when one is in the middle of a bar fight, which at that point, they were.

It was one of several bar fights currently going on in Angst, so few of the denizens took notice. Darius, and Donnie, both of whom were following the Red Glove. Also Ib, who was following the two of them recalling vaguely that some of his friends were in Coast Haven helping Django. Finding several of their own mixed up in a bar fight was actually quite delightful for the three of them, who quickly joined the fray. All of the Travancians fighting together meant the patrons in the bar weren't an exceptional challenge. Especially once Marci turned into a bear. Things took a dramatic turn when demonic imps rushed in and began attacking people. They also began lighting the place on fire. The response from the patrons was a call out that made it clear they had experienced this on several occasions. While much of Travance was confused it was Cobus, newly minted Captain who pointed out that to a ramshackle tavern covered in booze, full of people who didn't bathe and spent their days working with gunpowder, fire was a very very bad thing.

The demonic incursion suggested that Cyan had returned, though it seemed less controlled than he had shown in the past. Django had fully expected to question him about the choice, however what those from Travance found when they rushed outside, were the Hardwick brothers of all things. Chesta was adamant that he could have put the fires out, but as the tavern burned down, that seemed less and less likely. Still the fight was over, and Travance had won, but it seemed they had all followed the same trail to what was now a dead end.

As the heroes regrouped, they attempted to brainstorm a new plan. Chesta put forward the suggestion to pose as black market sellers, since the Red Glove collects artifacts. Chet tried to shush him, but Django recalled that Elysia had actually met Bloody Bess, doing just that. She was one of the few from Travance who had met the pirate. It was at a place called the Shadow

Emporium, a den of trade for illicit goods and services. Perhaps if usual methods were growing cold, they could find an invitation, and get some answers.

It was at that moment that Miss Demeanor arrived, having been sent to search for information about the Red Glove. She was dragging a man with messy dark hair, and narrow, harsh features. His body was lithe, but taught, even though he was dressed like a dandy. She explained that she caught the man following her. He introduced himself as Ulysses Serpent, a man in the employ of a pirate named Lady Mercy. Mercy was another pirate who had earned the title of Master of the Black Flag. An agreement existed to prevent those who had earned the title from fighting each other. (It left no time for killing and stealing from the innocent you see) However, Lady Mercy has her eyes on the areas Bloody Bess operates in, and is willing to offer aid to those who might dispose Bess of her current holdings, as long as such aid could be done quietly. The offer was the kind that would leave a bad taste in ones mouth, but it was a more solid one than seek an invite to the Shadow Emporium. It seemed like either was a good lead to follow. With luck, the group would pick the right one.

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Elsewhere on a ship headed south Lira Ninnyhammer sat on deck, her eyes closed as she felt the gentle rock of the waves, and smelled the sea air. The feeling was one a rare sense of calm for her, and one she used to channel her energy to reach out to Rota Gibde. She had prepared all of the usual offerings, and her connection to the Ma'khet She had done this prayer three times before, and each time it seemed she was successful. This time however, things were different.

Her clothes suddenly felt heavy, her hair felt as though it was drifting. Her whole body felt like it was underwater. She felt the cold touch of the sea even though she could still feel the deck of the ship beneath her. A voice whispered in her ear, a voice she recognized as belonging to the Anteries Siren.

"Those you pray for... have sent many souls to me. Souls who had made deals in the past, souls who had helped me expand my domain. I find it favorable when people help me get that which is mine. They chase one who has made many deals. I am watching, and should they succeed, I am ready to make a new deal."

It is time for your first choice. Please hit reply (Do not hit reply all) and respond with one of the options below. You may coordinate if you wish before making your selection. If multiple people choose the same option it is assumed they are teaming up. If you choose different options you will follow that path. You have until Monday at 11:59 PM to reply.

1. Try to find an invitation to the Shadow Emporium
2. Take the Offer from Lady Mercy, and help one pirate to defeat another
3. Group up and Think of another plan

4. Return to Travance and end your Adventure



It took a bit for the party to debate their next plan, drawn out even more by the discussion of how the group would go to this meeting with one of the Masters of the Black Flag. After it was determined which ship would be taken, who would travel via ship and what methods would be used by those forbidden from doing so they were ready to go. Perhaps it was because he was imprisoned, or perhaps it was because he was an asshole, Uslysses Serpent waited until they had finished the lengthy argument before effortlessly escaping from the methods they had trapped him with, took a step back and informed them that the meeting would be taking place a short ways away - on land.

The naval contingent followed Serpent to a different, and more intact tavern then they had left. It was called "The Dead End." It's looming exterior was tall, dark and lit by flickering torches. The sea air had turned its wood exterior a sickly green, and the ramshackle plank bridge built over the water that led to it looked like one wrong step would bring the whole thing down. The interior of the Dead End tavern was no less unnerving. Lit by small lamps, in the dim light it was hard to tell if the discolored spots on the dark wood interior was dirt or dried blood. There were heavy curtains and draped fabrics in deep reds and purples that obscured various parts of the tavern from which strange noises drifted. Serpent lead them to a back room, Encouraging entry, but neglected to go in himself.

The party entered what felt like an almost certain trap. Inside was a tall, almost plain looking man. He wore the well made clothes of a merchant, and sat at a table on which a number of meats, cheeses, and fruit were laid out. He waved them in, and offered them a drink, pouring a

dark liquid into cups that was hard to identify. Django thought better of it, as did Donnie and Bharash. Cyan gave the man a confident glare, sitting and picking up the drink, commenting that whatever it is, he's had worse, before downing it. Feladryn sat as well, and Peaches followed suit drinking curiously. Demeanor sat and drank, unafraid. Elias also agreed that he's probably had worse, and took a drink, Chesta drank too, but likely because he probably didn't know better.

When the discussion began, the man introduced himself as Alphonse Abernathy, the captain of a ship called the Royal Vagrant. He explained that he had no idea who this "Lady Mercy" was with all the air of someone who knew exactly who Lady Mercy was. He claimed that as a legitimate ships captain, he was so pleased to be in the company of naval sailors and pirate hunters, terms he said unable to keep the sneer out of his voice. He admitted to being aware of some of the particulars of the agreement between these powerful criminals (as a legitimate sailor who feared pirates ought to) These dangerous folks were known by many names. "Masters of the Black Flag," "The Arms of the Kraken." Powerful pirates tended to earn fearsome reputations. The most powerful, the most dangerous, they earned titles that marked them as an enemy of the world. When the whole world hates you, you must earn friends where you can. The Masters, had made certain arrangements and had certain customs to prevent killing each other. . It was very clear that Captain Abernathy was being very careful about what and how he discussed. A fact Demeanor dismissed, declaring that she had never followed any rules. Abernathy replied that while she had a dreaded reputation, she had kept more refined company. As blood thirsty as she was, she had never reached the point where she had earned the title. If she had, Travance would have killed her, not recruited her.

Questions were asked as to how many of these "Arms of the Kraken" there were, and where they sailed. Abernathy only replied that they were good questions. His coy responses earned some ire from the group some offering implied threats should the man not cooperate, some offered direct threats should the man not cooperate. Abernathy replied that they could choose violence or they could make certain arrangements.

Django finally asked what Abernathy offered, and what would one of the Arms of the Kraken get out of the deal. Abernathy explained that when one Master of the Black Flag died, either their territory would pass to another vile and wretched soul worthy of claiming the title, or a current Master could claim it. Such an action could not be accomplished until the current Master died. Wherever this Lady Mercy was she very much wanted to see Bloody Bess dead. He admitted however, that as a law abiding ships Captain, he was offering nothing. In fact once this meeting was concluded, they would not hear from him again. However, if on the way out, they spoke Zevek, a well known goblin snitch, they might learn of a robbery being planned this very moment by one of Bloody Bess' Captains, a robbery that could help them cut Bess' fleet apart.

Though the group pressed him for more information, Abernathy continued to be evasive. Eventually he excused himself, which did little to prevent those present from trying to stop his escape, but to no avail. He slipped into the night leaving them to only vent their frustrations on

Zevek, which they did. Cooler heads prevailed, but Zevek was frightened enough to reveal that the Captain of the Ragged Blade, Azul The Katogeist, was taking his crew to rob a Quito family owned vault in Faust and there they would find Bess crew to hunt. Finally, the group had an opportunity to chase another of Bess' ships, still on land.

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Rumor had it, the Shadow Emporium was the place to get whatever you wanted. Information, goods, drugs, weapons, even people, Overseen by a man known only as the Broker, a man of suspect morality. However he simply provided a place to trade, and made no judgement on what was traded there. He was just as likely to sell information to heroes as to the scum of Arawyn. The Emporium is where several Travancians first met Bloody Bess, and the Halfling Dr Seigfried. If anywhere would have real information about the Silent Doom and what Bess was up to, it'd be that place. Assuming they could find it.

Lucky, Chet, and Ninnyhammer made an odd grouping. Odder still when joined by Raine and Moostrave, both of whom were excited by the possibility of an illicit smuggling house. Tales of the lavish underground parties had already reached several Travancians. After a thorough combing of the city, including taverns, gambling halls, and smugglers dens, they had learned of Oberon Casterfoe, one of Faust's many nobles. He was a man who liked expensive things. Ninnyhammer had reached out to a ship's Captain named Clement Barker who had given her the name, along with the fact that he bought and sold antiquities, weapons, expensive silks, all the things one would get via the Shadow Emporium. Lucky had discovered through his visits to several gambling halls that Lord Oberon had a very large gambling problem, and owed a great deal of money.

The Lord's home was a tall building, done up like the finest estates in Septufas. Painted marble columns flanked the entrance, and what looked like an elaborate waterfall snaked its way through the exterior ending in a fountain surrounded by statues that were potentially Eodran gods, Ma'khet, or some unknown greater beings, they were not recognizable enough to tell. The Lord when they met him also styled himself off of the latest high class Coast Haven fashions. Draped cloths of purple and gold, multiple bracelets and rings, with an ornate rapier at his side hanging from a loosely tied red sash. They had secured a meeting under the pretense of offering very unique goods and services, and admittedly Moostrav did spend a good deal of time trying to convince the Lord that the random items being sold were exactly as described. Lord Oberon was confused, but also on some level intrigued. The discussion eventually made its way to the Shadow Emporium, and the possibility of getting an invitation. After some back and forth, Lord Oberon asked if they knew of the Forsythe Syndicate. None of them had heard of it before, and the Lord explained that it was an up and coming organization with legitimate backing of a rival noble. They had purchased his gambling debts, and rumor was that they were planning to blackmail him. Should this hassle go away, the group would have proved they could be trusted with an invitation to one of the most notorious and exclusive black market establishments.

The Forsyte Syndicate was small, and just starting out. They supposedly had their hands in every pot, they had people everywhere, and their agents were the most dangerous criminals Coast Haven had ever seen. This it turned out, was merely a carefully constructed reputation, and they were in fact, roughly twelve people in a warehouse. A force that had little chance against a team of Travancians. In fact it was harder to take a few days to track them down then it was to actually remove them as a threat, and upon returning to Lord Oberon, the group had an invitation for one buyer, and their entourage to the Shadow Emporium.

It is time for your second choice. Please hit reply (Do not hit reply all) and respond with one of the options below. You may include a brief sentence if you want to add flavor. You may coordinate in chats if you wish before making your selection. If multiple people choose the same option it is assumed they are teaming up. If you choose different options you will follow that path. You have until Monday at 11:59 PM to reply.

1. *Attend the Shadow Emporium and trade for information*
2. *Follow the Lead to find Azul and attack!*
3. *Try to follow Captain Abernathy and chase Lady Mercy instead*
4. *Return to Travance and end your adventure*



It was night time when the group arrived at the Shadow Emporium, it only operated during certain hours. The ragtag band had made it a point to dress appropriately, and filled out the Invitation. Moostrav was the buyer, Lucky, Chet, and Ninnyhammer would serve as his (or their) entourage. The entrance was in a back alley, up a set of stairs and set on a balcony overlooking a small enclosed courtyard composed mostly of cobblestone. It was decided at random by Moostrav that Chet would announce him. Making sure to refer to Chet as "Sasha" as the plan was to have all of them referred to as Sasha. To give an air of indifference. Chet knocked, and the door cracked. A man with short dark hair, chiseled features and piercing blue eyes leaned into the crack and asked what their business was. Chet explained that they were there for the Shadow Emporium. He asked if they had an invitation, and they presented it. Finally he asked if they were buying, or selling, and Chet said they were buying.

The man opened the door, and allowed them, announcing Moostrav, and declaring he was there to buy. Inside the small set of rooms was lavishly decorated. Elegant fabrics, and brass molding. The building was lit by soft lanterns and candles and faint music could be heard. On a nearby table sat a tray of various exotic foods, and small glasses of sparkling wine. There were multiple rooms, though It was smaller than they expected. It had clearly been set up in a temporary location so it could move when necessary. There were various couches and chairs, and places to sit, and the second room was set up for meetings, with a desk to oversee them.

The man who opened the door was the Broker, the proprietor of the place. He seemed to float between groups, chatting and checking in. Encouraging people to indulge in the food and conversation. In one corner sat a very friendly woman who called herself Mad'am Z. It seemed she was selling various contraband substances. Another elegantly dressed person was lamenting the end of the Kormyrian civil war, having been selling weapons to both sides. There were others, information traders, smugglers, gamblers. Most had names that were obvious aliases. Every once in a while the Broker would take a group into the meeting room where deals were apparently made. The party began talking to the various guests, and each other to see who they could make a deal with.

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Demeanor and Bharash had set off after Captain Abernathy. The general feeling seemed to be that they wanted Lady Mercy to fight Bloody Bess, and were willing to do so by any means necessary. Unfortunately it seemed Abernathy had come to the meeting prepared. He had known a good deal about the fleet and heroes from Travance, and thus he expected to be attacked, he expected to be followed, and had taken precautions. Fortunately he was cocky. He was so sure during the meeting that he held all of the cards, and thus did a piss poor job of covering his tracks.

By the time they had caught up to him, his ship, the Royal Vagrant, had sailed. But they had found its dock, and thus had information on the ship itself. It was owned by a Qunarian magistrate, and according to its cargo manifest, the ship was on its way back to the magistrate. A fast ship could in theory catch up to them. However, unlike attacks on the Red Glove, Abernathy clearly knew about the fleet, and would not be caught unaware. Attacking the Royal Vagrant would also be done without the support of the fleet. That was unlikely to be a winning battle. It was up to them though, if they wanted to pursue, and risk it, or be satisfied with the fact that they sent Captain Abernathy running from them as fast as he could go, and knowing that he could be dealt with later.

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Azul the Katogeist was one of Bloody Bess top captains. A lean angry man who wielded a pair of curved daggers, their guards polished steel and in the shape of skulls. His face and shoulders sported wicked tattoos, and he wore dark red clothes save for a pale head wrap he liked to dip in his victims blood. His crew was likewise a lawless band of cutthroats, cruel and terrible. His band slipped through the streets of Faust on the way to the Quito family vault. There was often murder in the air in Faust, but with Azul and his crew on the prowl, now it was more so.

Bess had sent them to retrieve an old antiquity, a block of stone with symbols carved into it. She said she needed it to help the Red Glove get access to their great weapon. Azul liked the idea of having a great weapon that would make everyone fear him. He liked all the people he'd get to

cut, maim and kill to get it even more. The guards at the Quito family vault were of little resistance, cut down like paper dolls. Pulling acid they began to eat through the vault. It took a long time, and Azul felt as though he was being watched every second of it. When they were finally through, he pulled out his prize, and looked with excitement. That was when Travance appeared. Suddenly Azul's crew had less people with him. There was a crack in the air, and a man dropped. Another moment there was a strange man in the midst of his crew fighting three at once. There was a Sylph and a man with a sword of darkness. It was overwhelming, and several of his crew turned to flee. Azul... was delighted. Spells came at him quickly and he was forced to side-step and counter them. He quickly slipped the stone tablet into the sash around his waist, and climbed to the second floor of the vault. He watched two of his crew crumple to the ground, a woman standing nearby. He could not tell what she had done to them. He quickly let out the call to split and regroup. He could see a man in a fancy hat, and dark coat, and another man in dark fabrics charging him with swords and spells. He turned to pass off the tablet to one of his men, but a bullet sliced through the other pirates neck.

Azul cursed and turned to leap through a window. The two pursuing him came after just as quickly. The fight had spilled into the streets, with spells shooting back and forth and blades clanging. Local enforcers were sure to be by soon. Azul continued to be hounded as he moved across the Faustian balconies. He was defending, attacking and being defended. Finally they managed to land a solid blow that sent him spiraling to the ground. He got up to see, as predicted, the Local Enforcers charging. They were not attacking his crew though, they were attacking his attackers. Never one to look a rescue in the mouth, especially considering he had never deserved a rescue, Azul let his attackers fight off the Enforcers, while he made his getaway. Once long out of sight, he chuckled, then reached down to his sash, and that is when he realized he had made his getaway, but without his prize.

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Django was sure Cyan had meant to do far more damage to the local authorities for attacking them. The authorities had apologized profusely once things had cleared up. It seemed in Coast Haven it was often hard to figure out who was the bad guy, and the Travancians were by far the scarier of the two groups. Azul had escaped, but at least he had dropped the stone tablet he was trying to steal. It had a series of markers on it, arcane symbols from the look, but they had come across Weavesmith clues in the past, and without context it was hard to derive meaning.

They had taken captives, but they refused to talk. Torture was suggested, and controlling them. However, when Chesta, with Django's help had tried to influence them to share where Azul had gone, it turned out Azul had placed some kind of blood curse on his crew to prevent betrayal, and their hearts exploded. They had the tablet, but were no closer to finding Bess, or her other ships.

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The Shadow Emporium served as a delightful party, and those in attendance had earned an invite back should the doors ever again be opened. However, Moostrav, and Sasha, Sasha, and Sasha or Ramona Gallo as Ninnyhammer was introducing herself when not around Moostrav, had yet to locate anyone with a solid amount of information about Bloody Bess. It had occurred to them that there was one person in the Shadow Emporium who sat in on every trade: The Broker.

The group informed him that they were ready to make a trade, and followed him back into the meeting room. He was confused to discover that no one else followed them. When they told him they wanted to make a trade with him, he informed them that wasn't how it worked. They attempted to convince him, and tried to come up with something he would want. They offered the opportunity to come to Travance, a place full of wealth and secrets, but little could be done to sway him. Until they mentioned the Red Glove.

He explained that there weren't many rules in the Shadow Emporium. If someone wants to lie they can lie, if someone wants to sell fakes, that is on the buyer. People have a great deal of freedom... however no one is allowed to start trouble in the Emporium, and no one is allowed to disrespect him in his own home. An agent of the Red Glove posed as his butler, and told everyone he was racist. She disrespected him, and thus they broke one of the only two rules. He further went on to say that when you break the rules you do not get banned. The punishment is the Broker sells your secrets. The Broker agreed to sell, in exchange for two hundred gold, and the chance at further business.

He related a story in which A few weeks back the Broker over saw a deal in which Bloody Bess was sold a location. He told them that she assumed it was a piece of that lock she's always going on about. The location is a town the locals call "the Pit." An abandoned mining town, built in the dried up bed of a dammed river. Bess sent one of her last two ships there. Apparently she could not send the Silent Doom, as it is moored in some secret port for some important mission.

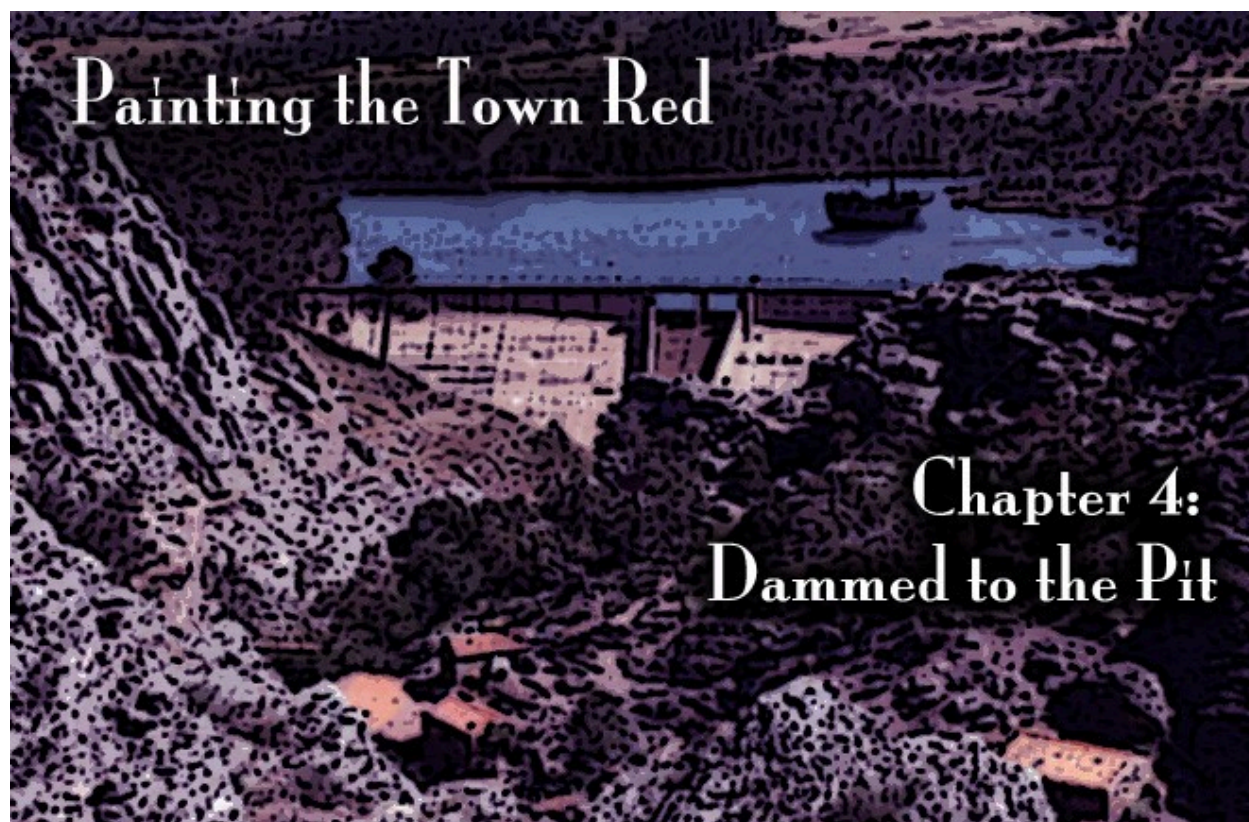
As they departed, the Broker asked them about Travance. Hurriedly they said that they had heard it was a place of great opportunity. The Broker nodded, admitting that one of his clients, Jonas Kane, had an Inn there, and perhaps it was worth a visit. It was at that point that everyone in the group realized they could have simply asked Jonas for an invitation.

With arrangements made, Moostrav conveyed to Django the news of the Pit, they had a location and what Bloody Bess was up to. Azul would have nowhere left to run.

It is time for your next choice. Please hit reply (Do not hit reply all) and respond with one of the options below. You may include a brief sentence if you want to add flavor. You may coordinate in chats if you wish before making your selection. If multiple people choose the same option it is

assumed they are teaming up. If you choose different options you will follow that path. You have until Monday at 11:59 PM to reply.

- 1. Travel to the Pit on land, it will be faster, and you are sure to arrive*
- 2. Attempt to find a water route to the Pit, it will take longer, but you will have ships to back you up.*
- 3. Chase Abernathy and the Royal Vagrant - this option has the possibility of character death*
- 4. Return to Travance and end your adventure*



It had been a tense moment when the Crimson Trident caught up to Royal Vagrant. Guns had been rolled out, and the crew aboard had been ready for the possibility of a dramatic final stand. In the end he had relented to the parlay. Perhaps because Abernathy had certain rules, or perhaps because he had sworn up and down that he was a legitimate sailor, and legitimate sailors didn't go around attacking vessels of the Kormyrian navy. He had still joined a convoy of rough looking ships that now outnumbered the Trident. Those ships were crewed by people who looked an awful lot like pirates.

Demeanor and Bharash had come aboard under their flag of truce simply to talk. It was clear that Abernathy's crew had little love for either of them, especially the very prolific pirate hunter. They pleaded their case, saying that if Lady Mercy truly wanted Bloody Bess gone they should help. They offered a share of the wealth they would find, plus the Lady would have killed Bess, and it was often the way amongst cut throats that you keep what you kill. Abernathy explained that was often how it worked. However when powerful cut throats go at it, it becomes a war. It becomes a waste. No one has time for the murder of innocents and the claiming of their goods when killing each other. There was a strong implication that he realized this was on some level exactly what Demeanor was trying to encourage.

He explained that the rules he represented were part of an agreement made to prevent such conflicts. Lady Mercy may want Bess dead, but in doing so she would be breaking these agreements, and some people were not so willing to anger every legendary pirate on the sea.

Demeanor scoffed, and replied that some people were not so afraid. Abernathy bristled at the comment, but he avoided getting into a protracted debate. He reiterated that Lady Mercy would not be getting directly involved, since she knew that Travance would be killing Bess either way, it cost her nothing to sit it out, and everything to join in. However, in honor of the villain Demeanor once was, before she started killing pirates for Travance, he would only take a barrel of food, as tribute and send them on their way. Bharash and Demeanor were loaded back onto the Trident. Disappointed that they had not secured Lady Mercy's help, but they also hadn't been killed trying, which in and of itself was impressive.

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Moostrav, Ninnyhammer, and Lucky were the first to arrive. The three of them working together, plus some additional help had managed to make a small rowboat hover. They were further from the Pit than those coming from Faust and the flight would let them make up the difference. It had still taken them a solid couple of days to travel however. They arrived at the outskirts of the town, as the sun had begun to set. They stood on a rocky hill overlooking the dried riverbed and the town built there. The last rays of sunlight hung on the rocks around them, but in the valley it had begun to grow dark. There were about 12 small buildings nestled at various points around the valley. They looked like they had been built from the local stone and almost blended into the surrounding landscape, save for the brightly painted roofs and decorative trim. The paint had faded significantly from sun damage, and harsh weather. Even from this distance they could smell various raw minerals in the rock they stood on. At the edge of town they saw why it was called "the Pit." The hillside had been blasted away, and a large mineshaft carved deep into the rocks straight down.

At the edge of the valley sat a large wall and behind it a large reservoir full of deep blue water, with at least three wide waterways extending off of it. Sitting in the reservoir was a massive ship that had been slapdash painted with crimson to look blood splatters. It's sails were down and it sat patiently. Though there was only one ship, and they couldn't make out what ship it was. The buildings in the abandoned town were of various sizes, but the three largest were not so abandoned. Lights and music drifted up from one, and smoke poured from its chimney. Torches were lit between the main building and the mine shaft, which they encircled. From in the Pit itself an eerie arcane light flickered in blues and reds. The group of them began making their way down the hill towards the town.

Django, Chesta, and Peaches had made their way across the countryside. Acquiring horses had been easy, and they rushed to the Pit. Once they were close enough they began to summon creatures to aid in the coming battle. They dared not waste more than a day summoning, which gave them a small force. Hardly an army, but enough to make up for their smaller numbers. Peaches and Django summoned shadow creatures, and Chesta to summoned a group of fire elementals. The shadow creatures and fire elementals spooked the horses, and the group had to continue on foot. They managed to make their way up the rocky hills until they found the Pit nestled in the valley. Here they had to split their forces. Shadow creatures made excellent

stealth attackers, and the three of them could get into the town with little problem. Chesta's fire elementals would be very noticed, especially now that it was getting dark. He sent them around the long way, and told them to start attacking the ship when they did.

They finally made their way down the hill towards the town. At the edge of the structures they found Lucky and Ninnyhammer. The two brought Django, Peaches, and Chesta to where Moostrav was. He had found a pair of sentry's at the edge of town and immediately attacked. Both pirates had been ill prepared for the assault, and absolutely slaughtered. Though they were already dead, it didn't stop him from rending their bodies to pieces. That was where the group found him, curiously watching their blood soak into the ground. Thankfully it seemed he hadn't alerted the pirates in the town yet. Moostrav was ready to charge onto the next group, hell he was ready to blast the whole town apart, but Django stopped him. He pointed out that there was only one ship there, and Bloody Bess still had three, which meant two were unaccounted for. Ninnyhammer pointed out that there was also a strange glowing light in the pit, which Lucky Peaches and Chesta were very enthusiastic about.

Django and Peaches commanded their shadows to move through the town scouting. They found roughly a hundred pirates in the town, and another sixty on the ship. The shadows and fire elementals helped even the odds, not completely, but better than nothing. The fire elementals would be especially handy if they wanted to start destroying the ship. The plan was floated to alternately seize the ship and use its cannons to level the town and kill those within. A more manageable plan, especially with Cyan and hopefully Demeanor to help back them up, but they'd risk damaging whatever was in the Pit itself.

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The Night Hag had worked her way along the coast carefully until finding a river. Coordination from Django, and Cyan and Feladryn's own metaphysical abilities had made it much easier to find a small inlet big enough to accomodate the ship. The journey was slow going, not because the Hag lacked speed, it was super naturally fast, but unlike the ocean they were confined to the turns that followed the river. They sailed through verdant forests fed by the river, which eventually became mist filled swamps, and at the edge of those swamps was when the ship came close to Bloody Bess, if only briefly.

Three days into the journey, the trees broke, and a look out spotted a further series of rivers. On the largest one sailed a huge black ship, filled with crew. Grabbing a spyglass Cyan saw a woman on deck that resembled the description of Bloody Bess, though she did not appear to be captaining. Wasting no time, he had his cannons loaded, and sent several demons to launch an attack on the ship. The Night Hag's guns fired, aiming to disable the other ship so he could attack in full. They traded fire, until the separation of the two rivers made it difficult to line up shots. Unfortunately the break in the trees that marked the end of the swamp also marked the point where the surrounding landscape shifted to ever growing rocky hills and cliffs. Even the Night Hag couldn't kill a ship when mountains were between them.

Another day passed, and the demons sent to attack the ship had not returned. The Black Omen had managed to slip away, for now. They knew the ship was close, Bloody Bess was close. Cyan summoned several shadow creatures to begin searching the surrounding landscape for their target. In the meantime, the Hag had gotten close to where the Pit was supposed to be, and well ahead they saw the opening that led to the reservoir.

It is time for your next choice. Please hit reply (Do not hit reply all) and respond with one of the options below. You may include a brief sentence if you want to add flavor. You may coordinate in chats if you wish before making your selection. If multiple people choose the same option it is assumed they are teaming up. If you choose different options you will follow that path. You have until Thursday at 11:59 PM to reply.

1. *Direct Action! Attack the Ragged Blade or the Pirates in the Town*
Those with ships choosing this option will bring their ships into the bay, and risk potential significant damage. (The Crimson Trident may choose this option and arrive later)
2. *Caution and Cunning. Thin their numbers and attempt to Seize the Ragged Blade*
Those with ships choosing this option will remain at a distance, able to aid but in a less direct manner. (The Crimson Trident may choose this option and arrive later)
3. *Explore the town and the Mine - Find out what Bloody Bess is looking for. This one is risky and will have a dice roll to determine if you are caught*
4. *Return to Travance and end your adventure*



Faedith had arrived on the Black Omen a day and a half before. She had done time at the Red Glove's castle, having gone undercover there. While she had learned a great deal, she was still not much closer to Bloody Bess and information about the famed Captain. It took blowing up Tari and other Travancians to get them to buy her as a viable ally. That had earned her a trip to Coast Haven, and gotten her aboard the Black Omen. That was where, finally, she was brought before Bloody Bess herself.

The Master of the Black Flag was imposing. Dressed in black leathers, and a long coat, A pair of swords at her hip, She looked over Faedith with care as the spy promised to serve her and do whatever it took to prove herself. She expressed great interest in the Silent Doom, having heard so many tales of it. Bess admitted that the Silent Doom was in a hidden port far to the north, fulfilling a request of Ser Osric. That was why she had joined Red Roger on the Black Omen, to continue her business in the Pit.

Faedith asked about the stories about Bloody Bess ship, and Bess replied that she would see in time. Right now, a fleet of ships out of Kormyre was hunting her. She compared it to the old days, before famed pirates like her had to be a little more quiet. Bess told Faedith that the Silent Doom had to be protected until their job was done, all of the pieces of the Lock Eternal collected, and the tower opened. Once that was done they would be untouchable. Until then hey couldn't risk bringing new blood to the ship, not while they were being hunted.

Faedith thought for a moment, and decided to take a risk. She knelt, and asked if it would prove her loyalty if she helped Bess destroy those hunting her. Bess interest was piqued, and she bid Faedith to continue. The spy began telling her about the fleet, about Django, and the ships in it,

how they had found her ships, and the fact that they were very likely at the Pit at this very moment.

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Doing anything unnoticed took time. You had to go slowly, and carefully keeping a watch out for those you were trying to avoid. Doing all of that at night under the cover of darkness helped, but also made the work much slower if it was very intricate and required you to see what you were doing. Demolition work, was very intricate, and did require you to see what you were doing. Demolition work for large structures also required you to be slow and careful, Both in terms of planning and locating structural weak points, and not blowing you or your friends to pieces. Thankfully Raine was an accomplished technician. He and Chet had been working for a solid few hours, placing charges at the base, and climbing the sloped smooth surface of the Dam. Dams were, by design, not fragile things. They didn't want to blow the thing and only have chunks blast out, or a small trickle of water. They wanted to flood the whole town, and that required work. They just had to hope the pirates in the town hadn't noticed them yet.

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Chesta was sure he had conjured hundreds upon hundreds of fire elementals. He had done the math of the extent of his limits, and worked out that in a single day he could probably get upwards of five hundred, maybe more. He had never actually tried to summon and control that many until today. It was in theory possible to pull off. However, casting for several hours straight, invoking magical qualities to gain more summons, then resting only long enough for the magical energy to replenish and doing it again, had an impact. Attempting to metaphysically exert control over that many summons had an impact. Chesta counted several hundred fire elementals, but in the moment he was having some trouble thinking, and seeing straight.

Those in the group not delirious from expending enough magical energy to summon a legion of magical creatures could hardly count the numbers either. Never mind that the flickering flames made individual elementals difficult to discern, but the more that were summoned, the further back they had to stand. By the time they realized that the concentration of heat was beginning to melt the rock in the area the elementals stood on, those watching had to stand thirty feet back to not feel the overwhelming heat. Getting as close as Chesta was would result in horrible burns.

By that point, those present could tell that it wasn't a great idea to try and have this many fire elementals outside of the plane of fire, and got Chesta to stop. In truth he was well short of his five hundred goal. With the numbers they had, it was still obvious that the elementals were generating a massive quantity of light. Before Raine had left to set the charges, Peaches had suggested using copper to mask the glow since it makes fire burn blue. Raine had informed them that copper salt did that, which was an entirely different substance. He admittedly had

copper salts, but not nearly enough to change the color of the fire elementals. Plus, at that point the sun had gone down completely, so the glow would be obvious no matter what color it was. The only hope they had was to set the elementals to surround the town, and hope the pirates assumed sun set had lasted a lot longer than they thought it would.

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On the Ragged Blade, the pirates couldn't help but notice as the sun dipped below the horizon and waited there for an additional hour. Then the sunset began to spread out around the valley to encircle the town. That was not the kind of strange thing that went unnoticed. The crew began turning the ship, and angling their guns. The sound of rolling thunder filled the valley as the cannons roared, and a large chunk of hill where a group of fire elementals were exploded. Moments passed, and then another blast from the cannons fired into the hillside. The pirates continued to blast away at the fire elementals over and over, assuming correctly that this was some manner of attack.

What they didn't notice was Ninnyhammer, Cyan, Peaches and Feladryn carefully climbing aboard with a handful of summoned shadows. Things began quietly, with them picking off a few of the crew unnoticed. Ninnyhammer They had set the shadows to go after the look outs while everyone else was worrying about the fire. There was no way to weigh the anchor unnoticed, so they began cutting the anchor chain. The sound of blade on metal is what gained attention. Particularly Azul who saw Peaches and Ninnyhammer working on the chain. He called the crew to arms. Cyan climbed on deck, and rushed Azul while Feladryn began cutting into the crew. Peaches went on the offensive as well, while Ninnyhammer finished cutting the chain, setting the ship to drift.

The plan was to try and get the ship closer to the Night Hag so boarding parties could join. Azul was making it particularly difficult to gain control of the direction the ship was moving. It was drifting more to the middle of the reservoir than the edge. If the Night Hag, which until now was holding in the adjacent river, sailed into the reservoir the ship could be taken, but both ships would be at risk if the dam blew.

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The Crimson Trident was also keeping to a safe distance. Both the Trident and the Night Hag had stayed in one of the three separate run off rivers that fed the reservoir. From the deck of the ship Demeanor and her crew, along with Bharash watched the Ragged Blade begin firing into the distance, and then utter chaos erupt on the deck. Bharash and several of the crew felt the need to join in, but Demeanor had no intention of putting her ship in danger. Plus she knew Bess was in the area and was determined to keep an eye out for when she reared her head so they could cut it off.

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In the town below, if the ring of orange light hadn't put the pirates on alert, the sound of cannonfire certainly did. They began to arm up, and looked toward where the Ragged Blade was, assuming the attack was on their ship. This also meant looking towards the dam. They were just about to find Raine and Chet working when Moostrav burst into town, viciously attacking pirates, casting magical attacks and cutting into them. He was screaming insults, and it was clear from the insults that he had no idea who he was insulting, and had no intention of finding out. While a large number of pirates began running to defend their ship, those that remained in the town thought to stop Moostrav first.

Django and the handful of creatures he had summoned were following Moostrav, hoping to prevent him from disrupting the sneaking mission. It turned out such action was unnecessary. He shifted his attention from trying to contain Moostrav to trying to keep him alive. He was picking off some of the stragglers, and trying to remain unnoticed. An easier task given how noticed Moostrav was trying to be. He needed to find out what was in the mine so they could get out of there. Chesta was nearby, attempting to dominate some of the pirates to guide him to treasure and valuables. Still a little out of it from the massive summons, the orders that stumbled from his mouth was the same ones he gave the elementals, to surround the town and make sure the pirates didn't escape.

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Deep in the Pit, Lucky had been carefully making his way into the mine. He was more of a strike it rich kind of guy than a engage in violence one. He didn't like the potential of being trapped in a flooded mine, but thankfully had brought his own methods of escape, just in case. The pit had a long spiraling wooden walkway leading down. The strange glow they had seen coming from the mine looked like it was shining from a side room about halfway down. Lucky carefully made his way to the room, and there he found a wide circular door covered in glowing runes. The were arrayed around the door, and flashed blue and red in random patterns. Lucky quickly realized they were the same runes on the tablet that Azul had tried to steal, the tablet Django currently had. And Lucky knew a vault combination when he saw one.

It is time for your next choice. Please hit reply (Do not hit reply all) and respond with one of the options below. You may include a brief sentence if you want to add flavor. Longer messages may be discounted by the needs of the story. You may coordinate in chats if you wish before making your selection. If multiple people choose the same option it is assumed they are teaming up. If you choose different options you will follow that path but it will continue to be documented in the same story. You have until Monday at 11:59 PM to reply.

1. *Aggressive Action! Battle the Pirates, and try to win the day. (This choice has the possibility of capture or character death. Dice will be rolled to determine the outcome with the difficulty based on the task)*
2. *Defensive Action. If not engaged in battle, avoid engaging in battle. If engaged in battle, focus on survival. You may not defeat the Red Glove, but you won't die.*
3. *Stealth Action. Attempt to achieve a goal that is not combat related. Dice will be rolled to determine if you are caught in the activity.*
4. *Return to Travance and End Your Adventure*



The Black Omen sailed lazily down the river. On her deck, Fadeth continued to question Bloody Bess. She asked more about the artifacts they were collecting and their overall goal. Bess told her that there was only one goal, to open the Tower of the Blinding Glory. Inside was stored something even the mighty Weavesmith feared, and if they had whatever weapon or power was inside no one could challenge them. As pirates they were used to getting into places that were locked up, so they were hunting for ways to open it. Chief amongst those ways was the original lock, the Lock Eternal. If they could find all of the pieces and reassemble them, whatever was in the Tower of the Blinding Glory was as good as theirs, just as soon as the things in their way were dealt with.

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In the abandoned town, the pirates who had heard the cannon fire had rushed up to the top of the dam. It wasn't an easy feat, and when they arrived they saw their ship drifting in the middle of the reservoir, shadows dancing around it, and the crew they had left behind in the midst of a furious battle. They ran to find what boats they could, to row out to her. Some of them choosing to swim out there in the hopes of joining the battle.

On the deck of the ship, Travance was having as much of a hard time getting reinforcements as the pirates were. Feladryn was attempting to cover Cyan with a sanctuary to give him the time to summon more shadows. Unfortunately Azul was there, able to slip between the cracks in the sanctuary, and bypass the protection. Feladryn pulled back to work to up their numbers, and Cyan was even more dedicated to killing Azul. With the enemy Captain busy, Ninnyhammer had climbed up to the rigging. A pirate sharp shooter was trying to pick them off, and once she got

up to him she kicked him from the sails. Seeing as she was there, she began to untie the sails and angle them to get them closer to the edge of the reservoir.

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Chesta had only been out of it for a little while, and slowly his senses were coming back to him. With those returned senses, he could see that Moostrav was essentially fighting solo against the pirates in the town. Knowing they needed to seize the town, which would let them focus on getting a ship, he called his fire elementals to march in the town and clear it of pirates. The summoned elementals began to march. A bright beacon of flame filled the streets of the abandoned structures. They engaged the pirates there, setting them alight.

At the edge of the town, Lucky had rushed from the mine, he ran into Django who was on his way there. Lucky quickly filled him in on the vault, and the runes. Fortunately, Django had grabbed the tablet, and the two of them descended the wooden walkway down to the room where the vault lay half buried. The Commodore placed his hand on each of the runes as listed by the tablet, which they had placed on the ground. The runes were warm to the touch, and when pressed they stopped pulsing and switched to a single steady glow. When each one was pressed in the correct order, the circular wall began to turn. It was sectioned small circles inside of smaller circles. When each of the three rings aligned, the door slid down into the floor, and they could enter the vault.

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In the reservoir, the reinforcements for the pirates had just about reached the ship. Those in boats had taken longer to get going, but were moving faster than most of the swimmers. The fastest of them were just about to reach the hull and climb aboard. Up on the deck, Azul the Katogeist, and Cyan Bloodbane battled. Azul was quick with his daggers, but relied a great deal on fighting dirty and hitting people when their guard was down. Cyan's guard was decidedly not down, and the number of pirates who could distract him was rapidly dwindling. One of Azul's pirates attacked, and the Captain of the Night Hag quickly enslaved his mind. Instead of distracting Cyan, the pirate distracted Azul as he tried to strike. Cyan drove his sword into Azul's shoulder, and put his hand to the man's abdomen. Twisted energy born of chaos rushed forth. Portions of Azul's skin became ashen and rotted, and Cyan jammed his fist in. He drew forth the man's corruption and consumed it. Azul had had corruption to spare. With Azul dead, they could turn their attention to finally taking the ship.

And that was when everyone on the reservoir, and in the valley below heard a loud series of consecutive booms, like distant thunder. Shortly after it was a series of cracks that grew louder and more frequent, before the structure of the dam broke into several large chunks, and began rushing, along with the water in the reservoir and its contents down into the town.

In the mine Lucky and Django heard the boom, and knew it could only mean one thing. They had no time to escape, let alone escape with the treasures. With only seconds to figure out how to not be buried under tons of water and rock Lucky looked to Django. He asked if the Commodore was feeling lucky, and if they wanted to see how strong this vault was. Leaving the tablet outside, the two of them rushed to the door, and closed themselves in, hoping their air would last.

The Ragged Blade, lacking any anchor or mooring lines, was quickly pulled along the current of the water. Feladryn watched, and on some level had to admire the audacity of it. Part of her wanted to ride the ship down to see what would happen. Cyan however had his shadows grab himself and what crew of his were on board. If they couldn't carry them to safety, they would at least be a hovering anchor point as they escaped the now doomed vessel. Ninnyhammer who was up in the rigging suddenly found herself much closer to the ground as the ship rushed between the broken gap in the dam. She had enough time and distance to jump as the dam moved past, and it was better than the alternative. She clipped the edge of the dam and rolled over it beginning to fall. Fortunately, Chet and Raine had sunk pitons and ropes in order to rig up the explosives, and she grabbed one for dear life. Her shoulders screamed in pain as the rope went taught in her arms, but she was left dangling over the edge of the now destroyed dam, still alive.

The same could not be said for the pirates who had worked so hard to make it to the Ragged Blade. Either on the hull, or in the water nearby, they were swept along with the ship down from the emptying reservoir, and into the flooding town. The pirates and fire elementals were quickly engulfed in the rushing water. The elementals were all quickly extinguished, and the valley filled with steam. The remaining crew of the Ragged Blade were drowned, or washed away. Moostrav, who was at the edge of town attempting to seduce the pirates with his violence, looked at the oncoming wave, extended his arms to the side and screamed "THE SOUTH SEA IS NOW RUM!" before the tide engulfed him too.

The flood filled the town. It took less than hour for the reservoir to empty, and run through the town, either draining into the mine, or continuing down river. The Ragged Blade struck several buildings, her hull splintering and splitting. Her masts cracking and sitting askew. The hulk of the wrecked ship came to rest between two buildings and there it remained.

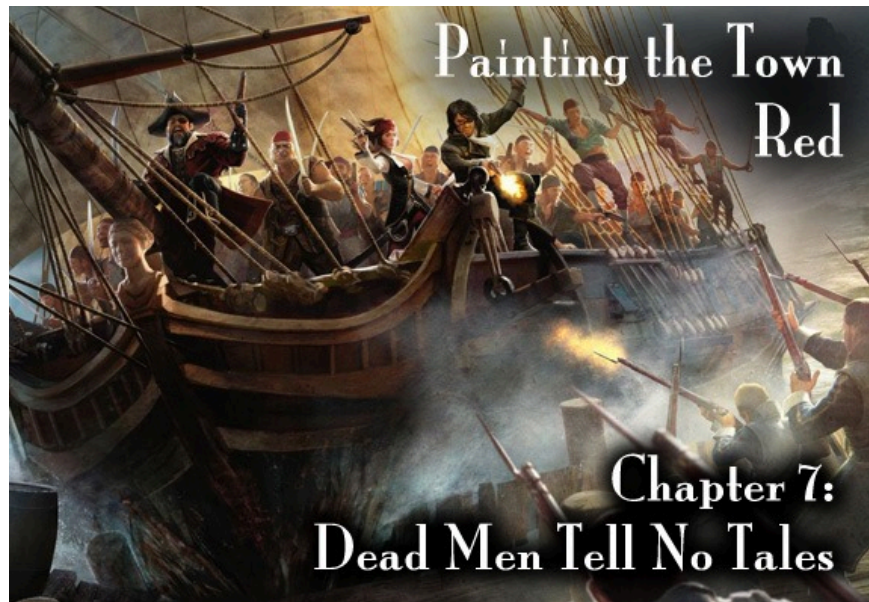
Demeanor watched all of this go down from the safety of the Crimson Trident, cackling like a mad woman. She was thankful that she had kept her ship safely out of the reservoir. The emptied space was still fed by three rivers which emptied into the town below. It was now more of a small lake, still big enough for a few ships, though they'd be quite close. Since it could no longer be drained any further, the Night Hag moved in to gather Cyan and the others. Demeanor was on some level sad to have not participated in the fight. That was about to change.

Her look outs called out that a sail was on the horizon. She turned to see a large black ship slip down the unoccupied river. The Black Omen began firing on the Night Hag. The ship drifted into

the mostly dried up lake, making a beeline towards the Hag, and on the deck of the ship, Bloody Bess stood calling out commands. Demeanor, eager for the opportunity, ordered the Trident to sail into the lake, her guns ready. At long last, this band of pirate hunters would face Bloody Bess head on.

It is time for your next choice. Please hit reply (Do not hit reply all) and respond with one of the options below. You may include a brief sentence if you want to add flavor. Longer messages may be discounted by the needs of the story. You may coordinate in chats if you wish before making your selection. If multiple people choose the same option it is assumed they are teaming up. If you choose different options you will follow that path but it will continue to be documented in the same story. You have until Thursday at 11:59 PM to reply.

1. *Fight Bloody Bess Directly*
2. *Battle the crew of the Black Omen*
3. *Gather your forces first, and then as a full group attack.*
4. *Return to Travance and End Your Adventure*



Squire Odette Lucatiel had followed Jun to Coast Haven to search for information about Bloody Bess. The two of them had canvased the streets, combed through every rumor, and all of their leads had pointed them towards an abandoned mining town called “the Pit.” Unfortunately along the way they had discovered a feral cat colony and had gotten very, very distracted. The small colony was out in the dusty wastes deep in a low valley. They had managed to relocate most of the cats and somewhere along the way Jun had vanished. There was only a small handful left, and Odette was dedicated to the task of putting them all in a large box for transport. That was when she heard a low rumble begin. She turned to look as a tide of rushing water came barreling down filling the valley. Lighting quick Odette grabbed the last few cats and put them in the box. There was no way to outrun the water, and so she also climbed into the box, pulling the lid on tight. The water caught the box and lifted it, and while it shook it back and forth she managed to keep the lid on, and all of the kitties dry. The six or so cats dug their claws into the wood of the box and at least two dug into her leg, frantically meowing.

When the rapid shaking calmed down, and she thought the tide had calmed, Odette lifted the lid. She could see that they were drifting along the once again filled and rushing river. She petted the cats to calm them, and said she hoped they liked this, because it was a good example of what life with Jun would be like.

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It was cold and dark in the vault. Small trickles of water had dripped through the cracks in the door, but beyond that the room had stayed fairly dry. Lucky and Django realized that while the vault was water tight, that also meant that the air inside wouldn't last. They made a quick inventory of the room. The walls were smooth and dark like obsidian. The meager light they had created from cantrips didn't seem to reflect off of them and instead was absorbed. The vault got smaller as they moved into it, mostly only big enough for three people to stand comfortably side by side. On a long table in the back of the room was a number of artifacts. There were small stone coins that were familiar to Lucky. They were similar to the ones Isabelle had placed on the

table during their tea party. There was also a stone box, that looked like slate grey marble, A handful of small tokens that looked like glass beads, and a stone tablet with runes like the ones on the Arcane Crossroads.

Once they had everything in hand, Django told Lucky to take it all and return to Travance. It would take Lucky out of the action, but it would keep the artifacts safe. It was a drastic measure, but in this moment, trapped under tons of water, drastic measures were needed. For the Commodore's part, his drastic action would be finding a way to swim through all of that water, with no air to breathe. He was right about to runic door through the vault. when the door opened. Water rushed in, roughly a foot deep, but no more than that. Outside of the aperture stood Raine holding the tablet. .

Django was shocked to find the door open. Raine revealed that while the water had flooded the mine, it seemed it had drained into a deeper chamber. Once he'd seen that they had left the tablet outside he opened the door. The fact that they could leave almost changed the plan, until Raine told Django that Bloody Bess had arrived. Quickly he told Lucky to leave and protect the artifacts. Once Lucky had departed, Django and Raine set to try and escape the mine even though the walkway had collapsed.

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At the edge of town, Moostrav climbed from the water. He was completely unharmed, but drenched, and smelling vaguely of rum. Of course since only he knew what he smelled like it was quite possibly a hallucination. He could hear the sounds of cannon volleys, and delighted by the chance for more bloodshed, began making his way towards the broken dam. Much closer to the town, Chesta bolted upright. He had been outside the rushing water, but the feeling of that many summons dying at once was a huge shock to his system, but also kind of sobering. Clear headed, Chesta was once again sure that fire was the answer, and began making his way towards Bess' ship.

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In the emptied reservoir, the Black Omen was growing closer and closer to the Night Hag. Cyan, Feladryn and Peaches had gotten back aboard, and readied the demonic crew to prepare to board the enemy ship. Behind the Omen the Crimson Trident dipped into the lake. It seemed Bloody Bess was either eager to die, or a fool. She was facing a pair of warships, one well stocked for battle, and she had no idea what awaited on the other one. As the three on the deck of the Hag watched they realized there was something oddly familiar about the hull of the Black Omen. The pitch wood seemed to almost ripple as it moved through the water. Suddenly they realized how aptly named the Black Omen was. It seemed Red Roger, the ship's captain was a hexer, and the ships hull was lined with the hundreds and hundreds of shadows he had summoned. In an instant they peeled off, and swarmed the air. As they did so, the Omen turned putting itself directly between the Night Hag, and the Crimson Trident. Both ships could rake the Omen with cannon fire, but they also risked their shots penetrating the hull and hitting an ally. The Black Omen on the other hand could fire on either ship without worry, and did so. For Cyan and Demeanor, the only choice was a boarding action. In truth, both captains were pleased by this, they preferred a more personal touch.

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Elias Ashby had been following the naval convoy for some time. The Raunchy Respite was to be a rest and support for sailors. Unfortunately, Bloody Bess and her various crews had been driven to land months before so they hadn't had much of a reason to need a support ship. However, their recent task had taken them up river into Coast Haven. The Respite wasn't the only ship traveling in the convey. Several navy ships had been traveling along to provide what back up they could. The confinement of the rivers made it difficult for multiple ships to have the desired freedom of movement and weren't as much help as hoped, but they could see the Black Omen slipping into the reservoir, and knowing it was the last ship they needed to take to rob Bloody Bess of her fleet, it was judged that now was the time to help, and Elias was confident that he could navigate the river. Oakley and Hiromori all moved from their ship Cobus, and Axiana had been traveling along since the Sagauro was under repair after previous action against Bloody Bess. They all stood on deck as the Respite slipped into the emptied reservoir. With four ships, the area was getting hard to maneuver.

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Chet had seen Ninnyhammer fall, and be left precariously dangling over the side of the dam. Horrified he came running, and grabbed the same ropes that he had used to help wire up the explosives. He felt the strain in his shoulders as he helped pull her up. With his assistance it wasn't hard to get her onto the solid wall, and once she was, he began profusely apologizing. Ninnyhammer was busy watching the battle play out on the lake. An idea was forming in her head, and she realized with those aboard the Raunchy Respite they could make the Omen not a threat.

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The Crimson Trident had come up on one side, and the Night Hag the other. Both ships had swung grapples over the gunwales and had their crews charge aboard. Demons and shadows battled each other, as the various crews clashed. The Black Omen was out numbered, but the limited space meant she could fire blasts indiscriminately. Whereas Azul was a cunning rogue, Red Roger was a powerful caster, and an equal match for most of the naval contingent. Bloody Bess was simply a skilled fighter who delighted in violence. Even outnumbered she didn't seem to care that her pirates were getting slaughtered. Instead she seemed to be having the time of her life hacking and slashing through her enemies. Demeanor and Bharash had made a bet as to who could get a blade into Bloody Bess first. Even with Peaches help, that was proving far harder than had been anticipated.

Django and Raine had climbed onto the deck, Django eager to finally face the woman he had been chasing. He joined the fight, beelining for Bess. Thankfully Cyan and Feladryn were focusing on the Black Omen's crew, sweeping the deck and giving people the ability to focus on the Red Glove commander herself. Moostrav was the last to arrive, he shouted about how Bess was just a pirate, and a fool, and nothing to be feared compared to what the town usually fought. Bess didn't even let him finish, launching into a mad cackle at there being more opportunities to do battle, she charged him, and those attacking her followed after.

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Below deck, Chesta had managed to wiggle into the hold. He could hear the thunderous sound of the crew blasting cannons over and over. He went to find the gunpowder stores to start lighting the ship on fire. He found them in droves. The Black Omen, it seemed, was heavily stocked for a fight, loaded with barrels upon barrels of gunpowder, and a solid amount of rum too. Chesta thought he'd hit a gold mine and readied to set it alight. Unfortunately, that was also when the crew noticed him. Suddenly there were a dozen angry and vicious pirates all drawing weapons and approaching him. Chesta realized while he was quite skilled, without his summons, he was in trouble.

Suddenly the ship shuddered, and there was a burst from outside. The wooden hull cracked and water began to slip in through in steady streams. Not enough to flood the ship, not yet anyways. Just as Chesta was wishing even more that he'd had his summons, Ninnyhammer, Cobus, Chet, Hiromori and Oakley all appeared in the hold, soaking wet. There was a brief moment where everyone there was very confused, and then a rather sudden fight broke out, one that saw the Travancians successful.

Chesta thanked them for the save, and then explained that he'd come aboard to start setting the place on fire. One look around, and they realized how much any fire would cause this ship to be blasted to pieces. Ninnyhammer explained how the ship was crippled, and they set off to help end the battle up on deck.

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As the battle wore on, Bloody Bess had fewer and fewer pirates to fight for her. Finally she heard a shout and turned to see Red Roger held hostage by Peaches, with Django holding a sword to the defeated Captain's throat. He told her that the ship was taken, she had no fleet left. The treasures in the mine were gone. He told her the fight was over, and to surrender if she wanted to live.

Bess scoffed, commenting that living in captivity was hardly living. Nor did she consider the battle over simply because Red Roger had been captured. "People." She said "Are easy to replace." Then she drew her arquebus, and fired a shot that ripped through Roger's chest. Roger slumped in Peaches hands the hands, the life feaving his eyes. Bess smiled.

".... And dead men tell no tales." She reached to her belt pulling free a handful of what looked like firebombs. The act of pulling them lit the fuses. "However, I'm enamored with the violence of this little group. If we're going to die, let's die fighting, as all of these ships explode around us!" She lobbed the bombs toward the open hatches to the hold, and began cackling as several took off running to put them out. Django, enraged at what had transpired, ran towards Bess to finish her once and for all. He felt Fadeth slide the blade between his ribs before he even realized she was there, and exactly who the disguised pirate was.

Fadeth pulled the sword from his midsection and the already wounded Django collapsed to one knee. She had driven the sword in to the hilt, making it a point to step in close. That was when she slipped the small book into this hands, then stepped back to stand with Bess, who was once again surrounded. The fight had continued, with the hope being that it would end for good this time. Bess still had a good deal of fire left in her, batting aside the attacks launched at her. The

Travancians now turned on Fadeth as well, getting ready to attack. Bloody Bess laughed at the sight, and commented that Fadeth was too delightful to let die just yet. She then gasped almost as if she realized they could both depart and leave their enemies to die. She grabbed her newest recruit, and both were enveloped by a gate, vanishing from the deck of the ship.

Fire erupted below deck. The crippled Black Omen, full of rum and gunpowder was mere moments from exploding and sinking. Which would then blast apart and drag down all ships in proximity to it. The crews and heroes present would have to work quickly if they wanted to save both themselves, and their ships, crews, and the Black Omen, damaged as she was.

It is time for your final choice. Please hit reply (Do not hit reply all) and respond with one of the options below. You may include a brief sentence if you want to add flavor. Longer messages may be discounted by the needs of the story. You may coordinate in chats if you wish before making your selection. If multiple people choose the same option it is assumed they are teaming up. If you choose different options you will follow that path but it will continue to be documented in the same story. You have until Monday at 11:59 PM to reply.

1. *Save the Black Omen, (and yourselves)*
2. *Chase Bloody Bess! (Choosing this option has a HIGH possibility of character death or capture)*
3. *Return to Travance and End Your Adventure (Default for any characters who do not respond)*



By the time the various heroes from Travance had gotten below deck the flames had spread to a degree that it took effort to put them out. At the sight of Bloody Bess tossing the bombs into the hold, the surviving crew of the Black Omen had fled. Though there was only a fraction left, they all ran to the edge of the ship, and leapt overboard into the lake. Chesta and Peaches rushed down and began to extinguish the fires Bess had created. Axiana rushed to help, moving to get the powder away from the heat and hopefully save everyone.

Up on deck, Bharash began cutting the lines tying all of the ships together. He wanted to make sure he did right by D and save the ship he'd been on. Those on the Night Hag didn't seem worried, but the Crimson Trident crew worked to get the ships free to move away from the threat. Elias realized the Raunchy Respite wasn't going to get away in time, and instead ran below deck to put out the fires.

The efforts of the heroes was enough to stem the tide, and save the ship from explosion. It still had a great deal of hull damage, and Raine set to work trying to prevent it from filling and sinking. Ninnyhammer took the opportunity to find the Captain's cabin and rifle through the papers and maps there. She discovered a list detailing the handful of relics in the hold, ports they had been to, and directions to a spot in the middle of the ocean, east of New Gaaldron where the Tower of the Blinding Glory would manifest.

With the Black Omen no longer in danger of exploding or sinking, they were able to use the support ships to help tow and guide it out of the lake. It was followed by the Crimson Trident, the Raunchy Respite, and finally the Night Hag. One or two of the heroes declared their intent to claim the ship for themselves, however it was pointed out that the repairs were temporary. The ship would need to be in drydock to be fully seaworthy again, a task that would likely fall to the

ships new owner. Bharash had stayed long enough to make sure everything was well, and said his goodbyes before departing with a gate back to Travance to await his friends.

With all of the ships no longer in danger and able to travel, they took to the town. Most of the buildings papers, and belongings of the pirates were swept away or destroyed in the flood. There was about three hundred gold worth of treasure now scattered across the muddy ground in the town from the Ragged Blade which had spilled it's cargo like a wealthy pinata. The collective heroes began collecting it and loading it onto their own ships.

Feladryn, Cyan, Django, Demeanor, and Moostrav had all followed Bloody Bess and Fadeth through the gate. Their fates were unknown. However those who remained along with Cobus, Chet, Hiromori, and Oaley guided their ships through the river and out into the open ocean. Odette had found Jun, and the two of them along with their new cats had begun making their way back to Travance. Somewhere along the way Marci, Delton and Ib had all begun making the trek back to the town. Together they all began to make their way back to the Proper.

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Bloody Bess cleaned the blood off of her swords. The pirate hunters who chased her through her gate had far more fight in them than she would have expected. She liked that. The fight had lasted long, though not long enough by her estimation. They had followed her to the heart of the Red Glove stronghold, where they faced not only her crew, but the bulk of the Red Glove soldiers, the Obsidian Raptors, and even Osric, and the rest of the Red Glove commanders. Some had been captured or killed, some had escaped, she hadn't bothered to check which.

It had been some days since her escape. Enough time to get a full accounting of exactly what Travance had done to her fleet. The Harrower, The Bloodletter, The Black Omen, and The Rotted Dragon had all been captured. The Vile Wave, and the Ragged Blade had both been destroyed, and the Riptide had been *surrendered* of all things! Bess didn't care that she had lost ships or people. Ships and people were expendable and easily replaced. Especially once she had whatever was in the Tower of the Blinding Glory. What did not sit well with her is that Travance dared to take something that was hers. That they thought they could. They should fear her, and they would. Soon the Tower would be open, and what was inside would be theirs. Soon people would learn to fear the name Bloody Bess again. First though, she had a price in blood to extract from Travance.

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As the dust settled, the heroes of Travance took stock of what they had accomplished, and what they hadn't. Certainly they had struck a blow against the agents of the Red Glove. They had robbed them of key resources. They had thwarted their efforts, and uncovered their secrets. However, their enemy was far from defeated.

The various champions and heroes pulled themselves from the wreckage of the places they had been. They made their way back to Travance. There they began to hear wild tales of what other groups had been up to. They took accounting of who had managed to escape, and realized who hadn't returned. They had faced their foes, looked them in the eye, and seen what they were capable of.

Elsewhere, other heroes who had stayed in the town, or attended to other vital tasks prepared. Soon they would be making their way to the proper, where they would hear the tales, and learn of the Red Gloves plans. It would not be long before everyone knew what they were up against. They knew that the Red Glove would chase the pieces of the Lock Eternal with a precision focus. However, the Red Glove was no longer the only ones who knew where the pieces were. When Red Glove went looking, they would find Travance waiting. Within days it would be the 29th day of the 2nd month. The Tower of the Blinding Glory would be accessible, and the heroes Travance would ensure that it remained closed.

The Heroes of Travance have reached the last chapter of their adventures beyond the town. However, it is not the final chapter in the story of Travance or the Red Glove. Who will claim all of the pieces of the Lock Eternal? Will the danger within the Tower of the Blinding Glory be unleashed or remain sealed? It will be up to you. Now, there is only one option left to choose....

- *Return to Travance.... and Begin Your Next Adventure* -