

#1: Cause of Death

PCs investigate the death of a drowned soldier

Background

When Pieter found out his captain Braseis was complicit with the Prince in planning to abduct children and smuggle the sniffer into Fallcrest, he rode off to warn Lord Markelhay. However, Braseis and other redcoats intercepted him and hung him for “treachery.” The branch he hung on broke and he fell into the Nentir River and drowned.

Read-Aloud Text

The Lord Warden Markelhay has summoned you to a secret meeting at his manor. “I have a task for you that I cannot entrust to my guards. A redcoat’s body was dragged out of the Lower Quays before the break of dawn, and once word reaches his commanding officer it could prompt an extreme response from the redcoat squadron dispatched in the Vale, serving as a pretext for random detentions, soldiers patrolling the streets, or worse. I need you to determine what happened to this redcoat before his captain learns of his death. What was he doing in Fallcrest away from the rest of his squadron? Who is responsible for his death? If you find a likely suspect bring them to me alive, and report back to me with your findings. Most importantly, avoid gaining unwanted attention particularly among the Prince’s redcoats. Likewise, there are some of my guardsmen with sympathies toward the Prince, so it would behoove you to limit what information you share with them. I will compensate you each with 50 gold for your services. Are we in agreement? Excellent. You will find my reeve Qesin with the body at the Swiftwater Clan House. Now go.”

Redcoat Murder Investigation

Setup: The PCs investigate the death of a drowned redcoat amidst the seedy docks of Fallcrest’s Lower Quays without drawing attention to themselves.

Primary Skills (DC 18): Insight, Perception, Streetwise

Insight: You question dockworkers about the body.

◆ Several of the dockworkers eye you suspiciously as you question the Halfling porter named Fesk Swiftwater who found the corpse.

“I work the skeleton shift, and was just about to go home when my paddle hit something. I hauled the body up to shore. At first I figured he was just another drunk victim of thugs, but then I noticed he was dressed like a soldier.”

(The truth is Fesk needed help of several porters to haul the corpse ashore and they looted the body.)

◆ The dockmaster gruffly informs the PCs that some wine barrels that were being portaged accidentally fell over the falls from the Upper Quays around the same time Fesk found the body. The rest of the dockworkers agree just a little too quickly that the porters of the Upper Quays are responsible.

(The truth is the barrels were a decoy set up by the Queen’s Blade)

Perception: The PCs investigate the corpse and where it was found.

◆ The redcoat’s bloated corpse has a thin red line around its neck. Sure enough you find a piece of fine cordage made into a noose tangled in the reeds down river. It appears the branch he was hung from broke. (This unlocks the use of Nature)

◆ Judging by the bruising of the corpse it appears it fell over the falls. Peeling back the corpse’s undershirt you find a tattoo on its chest of a wyvern impaled on a sword. (This unlocks the use of History)

◆ The site of the crime is covered with hoof prints and you find a few strands of deep red thread ensnared on a blackberry bush.

Streetwise: You investigate potential suspects.

◆ Barstomun Strongbeard, head of the porters' guild, has been roughing up non-guild porters and intimidating merchants to use only guild porters. He's certainly capable of killing someone who gets in his way, especially if they wanted to move something downriver without paying his fee.

◆ The River Rats are a gang of street toughs haunting the Lower Quays, opportunists taking advantage of the downtrodden and drunk. However since the tiefling Kelson took charge the gang has become more focused, targeting more than just drunks and the destitute.

◆ Morae, a hermit witch, is the eldest of the Bright Veil witches, and a fierce opponent of the Prince who several merchants witnessed place a hex on a redcoat looking for the heir a few days earlier.

Secondary Skills (DC 18): Arcana, History, Nature, Intimidate

Arcana: The pentangle is a sign of witchcraft, and this particular symbol belongs to a local witch coven in Fallcrest called the Bright Veil.

History: The redcoat's wyvern tattoo is a symbol used among those soldiers who took a vow to the person of King Arath during an uprising against the crown led by Baron Fethayrn.

Intimidate: The PCs convince the dockworkers who looted the corpse to reveal what they found: a longsword, a silver badge of valor, and a necklace with a pentangle formed of an owl and a snake. (This unlocks Arcana)

Nature: There's only a few places upstream where trees overhang the river. Searching the riverbank reveals the site of the crime, unlocking a third Perception check.

Development; (7 successes): Just as the PCs learn of a chimney sweep who may have been a key witness, the chimney sweep makes a run for it. An Athletics check allows a PC to catch up with him.

"There was a terrible woman, dressed like a dockworker, but I knew her for a soldier when I saw her. She waded right up to the corpse and set out some floating candles and spoke words of magic before leaning over and breathing onto the corpse's face. Then she began asking the corpse questions, speaking of a buried

treasure from the witch hunt days. At last she angrily pushed the corpse away and turned to look right at me. I ran as fast as I could."

Victory (12+ successes): The PCs manage to perform their investigation without attracting the attention of the redcoats.

Partial Victory (10-11 successes): The redcoat captain Cadeyrn, while searching for his missing man, gets wind that there are a group of adventurers investigating the soldier's death – they are on his list of suspects. However, he doesn't connect the PCs to the Lord Warden. All Diplomacy checks with Cadeyrn are +2 DC.

Defeat (<10 successes): The redcoat captain Cadeyrn intrudes upon the PCs investigation and demands his man's body be turned over, promising to start his own investigation and bring the killer to justice. For the rest of the adventure redcoats are present in Fallcrest and have the cooperation of the town guard – together they move to apprehend all of the suspects. Diplomacy checks with Cadeyrn are +4 DC. Additionally, the Lord Warden doesn't give them the reward.

Treasure

Silver badge (+2 Bluff/Intimidate redcoats while disguised)

Amulet of Mental Resolve +1 (level 2)

Resolution

Morae is either apprehended by the PCs, is brought to the Lord Warden's manor, or approaches the PCs to ask their help. Her charge, Arslein, is the Crown Prince's illegitimate heir, and he has been taken by redcoats who will subject him to the sniffer soon. She asks them to go to the redcoat encampment in the Moon Hills and rescue him.