

The Copycat

A One-round Living City Adventure

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This is a standard RPGA Network tournament. A four-hour time block has been set aside for this event. It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

The actual playing time will be about three hours. Make sure you use the last 20 to 30 minutes of the event time block to have the players capsule their characters for each other and vote. The standard RPGA Network voting procedures will be used. Complete the Judge's Summary before you collect the players' scoring sheets. This way you will not be influenced by their ratings and comments.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying.

A note about the text: Some of the text in this module is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in bold italics. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

Tier Structure

Add the levels of the PCs to determine which tier they are on. Tiered events and foes are marked throughout the text.

Tier 1:	Total levels 4-13
Tier 2:	Total levels 14-25
Tier 3:	Total levels 26-37
Tier 4:	Total levels 38-56
Tier 5:	Total levels 57+

GM Background

Back during the late part of the war, Minister of Wild Magic Glora Varro betrayed the city by creating random wild magic zones which hampered defensive spellcasting efforts. This took place in the adventure *A Walk on the Wildside*. It was also revealed to some that she had arranged for the disappearance of the Lord Marshal, her cousin Gaius Varro, by spiriting him off to some other dimension. During the aforementioned adventure, Gaius made a brief ghostly appearance to accuse his cousin.

Just recently the Circle of Four, a group of elemental wizards and terrorists, took full credit for manipulating Glora Varro and for dominating her mind so that she would do what they wanted. Brave PCs rescued her from this state of control in the adventure *Elementally Speaking: Air's Looking at You*. From that time forward, she has been working on a way to free her cousin from the prison into which she put him. The problem is that his imprisonment is the result of a calculated wild surge, and she does not know where he is. She really had no control over where he went, just when he was trapped.

In her zeal, Glora has exceeded even her own expectations. In consultation with the extremely unpredictable wild mage Gideon, she has found a way to recreate the wild surge that sent the Lord Marshal away. Neither Glora nor Gideon knows whether such a surge will return Gaius to the present world, but they hope that someone can contact him. Glora plans to cast the spells required to recreate the surge tonight, and wants some brave PCs on hand in case something unforeseen happens, because she knows that something unforeseen will happen (she just does not know what it is). Therefore, she hires the PCs to attend the casting and do what is required to free Gaius while she tries her best to control the spells. She will cast the spells at her own mansion, in her laboratory. This room is prepared with defenses against wild magic, and Glora hopes that any surge effects will be limited to the room.

To protect the city, she has asked Emellin of Ravens Bluff, the Transmuter Minister, and Gideon to watch from outside and make sure that any stray magic is contained. They have agreed, and will monitor the casting from a nearby restaurant via divination.

Intro first complication, an extremely sinister one. Gaius Varro was swept up into a negative pocket dimension between the Ethereal Plane and the Negative Material Plane. When this happened, one of the denizens of this pocket dimension was released into the Ravens Bluff area. This creature is a vampiric doppelganger, a being that uses its powers of shape changing to steal the life essence of its victims. See the Appendix for complete details on this creature.

When it first arrived, it was disoriented and weak, and it spent the months of the war adapting to this plane. In doing so, it caused the deaths of many soldiers on both sides, and these deaths were attributed to magic of some kind. As the war ended, the creature moved into the sewers, where it wreaked little havoc and escaped mostly unnoticed for a year. Now, it is fully adapted to this plane, and wants to explore the world of humans. From the memories of its victims it can act like a human, and is now prowling the streets of Ravens Bluff. Several deaths attributed to gang violence were actually caused by this creature. The doppelganger can assume the form of anyone it has

seen who is within a mile of itself, or any being in the negative pocket dimension from which it comes. During the adventure, it will assume the form of Gaius Varro, some random NPCs, and even the PCs.

Intro second complication. Marcus Arvidis, called Shadowborn and King of Thieves, is a resident of Ravens Bluff and well known to the authorities. He is almost a folk hero, though most people won't talk much about him and no one really can prove that he has stolen anything. You see, he has never been seen or left any mark on his thefts. In fact, many people in Crow's End who publicly blame clever thefts on the King of Thieves doubt that any such real person exists. Marcus has taken on the mystique associated with the King of Thieves, but in fact the thefts could be perpetrated by any number of people not including Marcus, at least as far as the law is concerned. Marcus is treated as if he were the King of Thieves (who is known only to rob from those with wealth, unique items, or who offer challenges to his skill), and so the legend perpetuates.

In fact, Marcus is responsible for the thefts and the legend. He knew that by having such a public mystique he would naturally be less suspect. He does get blamed for some crimes that he does not commit, but he never confirms or denies whether he actually commits a crime. Therefore, people do not know what to make of him. Some think he commits them all, and others think he does not commit any of them. The Watch has stopped arresting him, as there is never any proof. He has created a public secret identity, which has served him very well. He truly is a master thief, and can get past almost any security, magical or non-magical.

Marcus became a thief for a reason, that being revenge against the Red Wizards of Thay who killed his family. He has been seeking for the means to exact his revenge for most of his life, and he has finally found it. The wizards he wishes to be revenged on have been recalled to Thay, but the item he needs was left at the Thayan embassy in Ravens Bluff. To bypass the Thayan magical security, he must first steal two other magical items, and these have taken him months to locate. One is in the house of a noble of the city, and the other is in the possession of Glora Varro. While the PCs are trying to save Gaius Varro, the King of Thieves will be getting in the way, just as swashbucklers do.

The first three encounters have several parts. There is a piece involving the PCs' mission to rescue Varro, a piece involving the doppelganger, and an appearance by the King of Thieves. The mood of this adventure should be light and full of swashbuckling fun, except in regards the doppelganger. The horror of this creature should stand in sharp contrast to the rest of the events.

Pacing note: This is a fast-paced adventure. You must keep the PCs moving for the adventure to "feel right." To do this, bring in the next element of the story as soon as things start to drag. Sometimes time notes are placed in the text, to help you know when to introduce the next encounter section. If you keep these in mind, you will do fine.

There is no tiering for this adventure. The King of Thieves is what he is, and the doppelganger's strength is determined by the PCs' strength without need for tiering. Enjoy the adventure.

Encounter One: The Beginning

In this encounter, the PCs are summoned to meet with Glora Varro, and she explains what she wants. While she does, the King of Thieves breaks into the house of Lord Carstair, a not well liked noble. Then, evidence of the doppelganger sidetracks them yet again.

To start the adventure, present the following:

Your message was strange, but you have gathered at the Inn of the Pheasant Roasted as requested, bringing the note with you as requested. Glora Varro, Minister of Wild Magic, called you here to help her rescue the Lord Marshal, Gaius Varro. The Lord Marshal disappeared on the way to Belgard's Stand during the first battle of the long war. According to rumor, it was Glora herself who trapped him. Others say that she was manipulated and controlled by the Circle of Four, a group of elemental wizards bent on taking over the city. Whatever you have decided, you have come to hear her story and possibly help.

The Inn of the Pheasant Roasted is a new restaurant located near many of the townhouses of the nobility. Reputed to serve fine fare, the Pheasant clearly caters to the upper classes. This is your first visit to the place, and with your wide experience of eateries in Ravens Bluff you are not expecting much. But then, you did not come for the food.

You enter the Pheasant Roasted and see several patrons here, mostly adventurers. The tables are arranged circularly around a central roasting spit, and you can see a man presiding over the roasting of a number of fowl there. Tables against the wall have partial booths, and at one of these you see a tall, thin woman sitting with several adventurers, eating and talking. You know she is Glora Varro. Others come in about the same time you do.

The Inn of the Pheasant Roasted is just a restaurant. No rooms are available for the night. It is rather typical of restaurants, though this one has the tables

surrounding a circular pit in the center of the room. In this pit roast pheasants and other birds, and patrons may choose their bird from amongst those in the pit. It's kind of like one of those "choose your own lobster" places. The inn is tastefully decorated, with small booths around the walls and open tables more inward. The booths offer a feeling of privacy, though no real privacy. Perception is everything, though.

The staff consists of eight people. Two men cook in the kitchen, and three waitresses work the tables. There is a spitmaster in the center of the room, whose job it is to manage the flow of birds through the roasting process. One bartender stays behind a small bar in the back and prepares all drinks. The owner, Gloss Shlapel, or the manager, Terdin Wainwright IV, supervise all. Today, Terdin is on duty. The personalities of these people are completely unimportant to the adventure, so you may do what you want. Just keep in mind that they are all friendly to customers.

Let the PCs talk and get to the table. Glora's description and personality are given in the Appendix, since she is a recurring character. Once all the PCs are there, she will get down to business. Here are the main points that Glora covers:

- During the war, she acted against the city by creating random wild magic zones to hamper defensive spellcasting. She is honest about this admission, and not ashamed. She claims that she was controlled by some elementalists called the Circle of Four. This statement is also true.
- She also caused a wild surge which transported Gaius Varro, the Lord Marshal, into some nether-dimension. She does not know where. The men with him were slaughtered by soldiers in Jelan's army, as far as she knows.
- She wishes to rectify the situation and rescue the Lord Marshal. In this effort, she has consulted with Gideon, a fellow wild mage, and has determined how to recreate the wild surge that trapped Gaius. She does not know what the result will be, but she expects that either he will be freed, some communication will be established, or she and the PCs will be trapped as well. Then again, if things get out of control, monsters could be summoned or strange magical effects could be released.
- The PCs? Yes, she wants to hire the PCs to help her. Wild surges are dangerous, and she must spend her total concentration on keeping it in control. She wants the PCs to stand watch and deal with any complications.

- Pay? She will pay them 2,000 gp each just to stand watch. If complications arise, she will pay up to 2,000 more per PC to deal with them. They are also free to keep any treasure that may come their way.

First Distraction

Time Note: As soon as the PCs get the main gist of the points above, introduce this section. Don't spend more than 15 minutes on the meeting with Glora before introducing this element, even if the PCs are not getting down to business.

The PCs are most likely going to be concerned about what kind of wild surge effects there could be, and how best to prepare. Glora would be happy to tell them what she knows, but at this moment a distraction occurs. Lord Alvin Carstair runs by the outside of the inn screaming for the watch. His house has been broken into and a valuable item stolen, and he wants some action. The PCs are likely to respond, but one can never tell. They don't have to.

Lord Carstair's manor is down the street from the Inn of the Pheasant Roasted about a block and a half. The PCs can catch him and ask what happened, and then go investigate. Lord Cartair, an abrupt and impatient man of 46, bluntly tells them that some scoundrel stole a valuable personal item from his home and he wants it back. He wants the Watch, for which he pays taxes, to track down the thief immediately. If not stopped, he runs down the street towards the Uptown Watch Barracks (three blocks and then left half a block, then right and you are there). If any PCs claim to be City Watch members, he will demand hotly why they aren't doing anything, and then lead them to his house when it is pointed out that they cannot do anything until he lets them investigate. The PCs can investigate after Carstair leaves if there are no watchmen among them.

Lord Carstair is a victim of the King of Thieves, who stole an important family heirloom, a gold and emerald brooch. Beyond its value (more than 40,000 gp), it has the power to negate magic in a 10' radius around the wearer. Carstair would rather not reveal this, but will if there is no other option. It has been a secret that has kept him one step ahead of assassins for years. Lord Carstair is not well liked.

Make up such details of the Carstair mansion as are necessary. There are no clues AT ALL to be found, so not much time should be spent on it. The King of Thieves was as thorough as usual, and left no impression of his presence. Only the spell *thought capture* (1st level priest, *Tome of Magic*) or similar spells might give a clue. Though capture reveals the following thoughts, in the order listed:

- Only one more item to go
- This is too easy
- There it is. Now to bypass the magical ward.

There are no more thoughts of recent enough creation to have left a mark, as Carstair himself does not often visit the room. He only knew of the theft by accident—he felt like looking at the brooch tonight. Swashbuckler's luck.

Carstair is naturally furious when the PCs report no success in identifying the thief, and equally furious when the City Watch arrives and fails also. The Watch attribute the crime to the King of Thieves, "but there's no proof, as usual." He does not offer to reward anyone for returning his brooch, but demands that PCs and Watchmen alike do their utmost to find it. Everyone should leave Carstair's mansion angry or disgusted with him.

Second Distraction

Time note: This happens as the PCs return to the Pheasant Roasted.

After this distraction, the PCs can return to the Inn of the Pheasant Roasted. Glora waited for them if they asked her too, and did so even if they just rushed out. She did not tell them where to be, or when, and would not leave without at least arranging for her employees to be where she wants them.

As the PCs are returning to the tavern, present the following:

As you walk in the door of the Pheasant, (pick PC in the back of the group) sees a strange sight down the street, where the building ends. A man walking by the corner towards you suddenly collapses to the group, moaning in pain. You can see nothing that would have caused him harm.

The PCs will also check this out, or one will. The man's name is Cliven, and he was just walking down the street when he felt weak and suddenly could not stand. He is in severe pain, but does not know why. It seems as if his life force has been stolen from him in some way, probably by foul magic. This is just what happened. The doppelganger is three streets away, and saw this man pass about 15 minutes ago. The doppelganger assumed Cliven's form to enter a tavern and spy more victims, preferably powerful ones. Cliven has had half his lifeforce stolen, and would die if the doppelganger did this again. Treat it as a level drain, which is permanent until the doppelganger is killed.

Cliven is an ordinary man, with nothing much interesting about him. Make up whatever details are necessary based on PC questions, but don't tie him into

the main story in any way. He is just an innocent victim.

When the PCs get back to the tavern, they can do three things:

1. Finish their business with Glora Varro. She tells the PCs to be at her house at two bells past dusk this night, the time for the spellcasting. It is just before dusk now. When the time is set, and any details of payment arranged, she leaves to prepare.

2. Ask about robberies and collapsing people. Basically, they can investigate the two strange occurrences. Talk in the bar about the robbery attributes it to the King of Thieves, who is actually in the bar now. Marcus will be pointed out and he will gently disclaim the people's praise. He does not deny being the King of Thieves, but does not comment on the robbery. Marcus's description and personality are in the Appendix. Remember that he is a swashbuckler, a master thief, and very confident of himself. When he feels he is done with the PCs, he will exit the Pheasant and disappear into the night.

The PCs are likely to push for answers on the theft, and maybe cast some spells on Marcus. Coincidentally, Marcus has the brooch from Lord Carstair's mansion and so magic spells are negated within 10 feet of him. All spells, including divinations against him. This device kept Lord Carstair ahead of assassins many times, partly because they could not perform divinations about him.

If the PCs get violent, Marcus will challenge the most swashbuckling PC to a duel. If there are no swashbuckler types, he will not duel; the PCs are beneath him. No magic to be used in the duel, either as protection, on weapons, from friends, or to augment strength. No magic, or he won't duel. If he loses a fair duel, he will congratulate the PC and then tell that PC that he did not commit the crime, this time anyway. Since his lie cannot be detected, he will then dress again and depart, gaily. If he wins, then he gives them no information and leaves. If magic is used, he will know (he is a very good estimator of skill) and will decry the PC as a cheater, stop the duel, and depart in anger.

If the PCs try to arrest him, or beat on him, he will submit. While they are on the way to a Watch barracks (directions above), he will use his pick pockets skill to plant the brooch on some random passerby. He makes this roll and is not spotted, for plot continuance reasons. When he is later released, he will retrieve the brooch. The Watch will release him for lack of evidence.

The PCs may try to take him to the Temple of Tyr or other cooperative justice-oriented body. Marcus will

comply, and then calmly point out the appropriate authorities that they do not have the authority to arrest criminals and hold them. The group in question, seeing the force of his argument, will release him.

On the subject of collapsing people, the PCs can discover, through roleplaying with the Inn of the Pheasant Roasted clientele and staff, that two other people have collapsed and died of unknown causes in the past couple of days, all in the harbor district or in Crow's End. The bodies are not available, but people in the Inn or passers-by in the Harbor area can describe what happened to them as similar to what happened to Cliven:

"They just dropped in their tracks and died. It was strange, and we feared evil magic, but no one else died around them and the Watch never found out nuthin'."

3. Prepare for the spell casting. Divinations do not help, though an *augury* spell answers "weal" regarding the wild surge experiment scheduled for tomorrow night. They may also cast as many preparatory spells as they are capable of.

When the PCs are ready, move to Encounter Two.

Encounter Two: Not Again

Time note: No control here, but move ahead to this encounter as soon as the PCs begin to slow down in the bar.

This encounter involves the PCs at Glora Varro's house. As she prepares for the spellcasting, the King of Thieves steals the item he needs from Glora's house. As he makes his escape, report comes that Gaius Varro has been seen in Crow's End, and the PCs rush off to investigate.

To begin the encounter, present this:

At the appointed time you arrive at Glora Varro's house. She lives in a large townhouse on the south side of the Fire River, near the Ministry of Art. She answers the door herself, her slight frame enhancing the appearance that she is very tall, though she barely above six feet in height. "Fine night for some chaos," she jokes as you enter the house.

Glora does not expect the PCs will leave any equipment in the hall, but will make accommodation for it if they want to. After all, she hired them for danger, and expects they will want their equipment. Glora has cleared the house of servants as well, so that

no one would be in danger (she hopes) other than the PCs and herself. Present this when they leave the foyer.

Glora leads you to a large room on the third floor of her mansion, one which is clearly a room for working magic. Arcane symbols cover the floor in a chaotic pattern, and yet the pattern somehow converges on the center. The rest of the room is empty, and doors lead into other areas of the house from here. With a sharp word, Glora causes the doors to be locked and then turns to you. "The doors and walls are treated with spells to dampen the force of magic. This is where I do all my spell experimentation, and no spell has yet gotten through the walls."

Glora will tell them, if asked, that it was designed to curb the effects of wild surges by randomly placing symbols that might channel the flow of magic back into the center of the area. Glora leaves them to look around the room for a bit, while she retrieves some robes which are adorned with more of the symbols that grace the floor. The robe is for deflecting the wild magic from the wearer (who must be in the center of the symbols on the floor).

When Glora returns, she leaves the door open through neglect (she forgets to close it). When a PC goes to close it, he or she hears a small sound coming from a room on the floor below. It sounds like the gentle tinkling of broken glass, though muffled. If no PC closes the door, then pick a thief or other observant and smart character to hear the noise. It is the only clue they get that the King of Thieves is in the house, so make sure you mention it to someone.

The King of Thieves

The King of Thieves is in a parlor on the second floor. He entered the house just about the same time the PCs did, but from the rear. He knows that Glora keeps dangerous magical items in a special safe hidden in this parlor, and his goal is to steal a *ring of x-ray vision*. He does not know what to expect in the Thayan embassy, and so he feels he needs this item.

He has already bypassed the magical trap on the safe and extracted the item he seeks. As he turned to go, his hand slipped and he knocked over a glass statue (created by Johain, a discovery of Charis Stone—the statue was worth 2,350 gp because of the intricacy of detail) and broke it. Swashbuckler's luck.

If the PCs react immediately and seek out the sound, they arrive at the parlor just as Marcus is framed in the window, leaving. Present this:

You burst into the parlor, a small apartment away from the public rooms, and see a man framed

in the window. Moonlight shows you that his black outfit is just like that of any swashbuckler of the Grand Gauche that you have seen. The frilly shirt is black, the coat of velvet black, even the rapier at his side blackened. He doffs his black feathered hat to you as you enter.

They can recognize him from last night at the Inn of the Pheasant Roasted if they questioned anyone back then. Otherwise, they can make Fame checks against Marcus' general fame (14) to recognize him as Marcus Shadowborn, known as the King of Thieves.

If they do not react immediately, he gives them a jaunty salute and disappears out of the window. AS SOON AS HE DISAPPEARS, BRGIN THE LOUD KNOCKING ON THE DOOR DESCRIBED IN "DISTRACTION NUMBER 2" BELOW. The distraction of the woman knocking is supposed to confuse the chase and help the King of Thieves escape.

The PCs will not see Marcus once they get to the window—he is gone. This should be just as mysterious as the scene at the beginning of the movie *Batman* where the caped crusader jumps off a building and vanishes into thin air. Marcus' outfit, though not in the typical style for thieves, allows him to blend into shadows very well, and he is hiding at the base of the mansion until he has a chance to sneak away. If the PCs leap out the window, he uses his Move Silently and Hide in Shadows skills to edge around the building and across to the next mansion. There, he turns his coat inside out (it's a bright maroon on the other side), and even turns his hat inside out (maroon too). Then he walks onto the street and whistles as he departs the scene. It is possible he will be seen and pursued, but the next distraction should allow him to escape. If PCs pursue anyway, he nimbly runs off and eludes them in the alleys. Be clever at arranging Marcus' escape, because he would be.

The King of Thieves will not be caught by PC spells. First of all, a spell would have to have a casting time of 1 to even have a chance to affect him (using a *staff of rapid magery* will not help, since there is no combat). Then, he has the brooch from the last encounter, which negates magic within 10 feet of the wearer. It is under his jacket.

Distraction Number 2

Time note: The King of Thieves should drop out the window in the round after the PCs enter the parlor (above). AS SOON AS HE DOES, begin this encounter.

As the King of Thieves makes his escape, a woman runs up to the front of Glora's home and bangs on the door loudly. The PCs can go to her from wherever they happen to be. Glora will come down

from the third floor to answer the door. She is annoyed, but not overly so. Present this when the PCs appear at the door where the woman is:

A middle-aged woman stands at the door, clearly out of breath. Her bosom heaves and she tries to regain her breath, and the expression on her face shows her agitation. "Lady Varro! Oh Lady Varro! It's the Lord Marshal! We've seen him!" she shouts at you.

Clara (this woman) works at a chandlery near to the Rusty Nail Tavern, in the Harbor District. She has run about a long way to get to Glora's home, and will take a couple of minutes to recover enough to speak lucidly. Even so, she wanders from the point and dwells on any part of the story in which she figures prominently. This is her story:

- We was cleaning up at the chandlery when I saw a man walking past, toward the Rusty Nail.
- He looked the spitting' image of the Lord Marshal, who I used to serve back before he disappeared. I was his cook, but when he was lost in action I had to find other work. That was a sad day, because I cooked real good for him, and he really liked my roasted fowls.
- I called out to him, "Lord Varro!" just like that. He turned to look at me as I approached, and then he bent down a little and shuffled off, completely ignoring me. I never thought I'd be treated like that by his lordship, him as I served for all those years (5).
- I am positive it was him! You don't forget a face you see every day for five years, even after two have passed! Really! Here I come to bring you this news of your cousin, and you question my word.

If the PCs did not continue pursuit of the King of Thieves, he is gone by the time Clara's story comes out. Clara is a perfectly innocent person who happened to see the doppelganger walk by in the guise of Gaius Varro. She used to be Varro's cook, but went to work in the candlemaker's shop when he disappeared and did not return. She has been there two years, and has learned the trade of candlemaking quite well, though she does not like the work. If given the chance at genteel domestic service again, she'd take it.

If a PC thinks to ask her if she wants a job as his or her cook, she will look him or her up and down, and then say that she would like to see the home where she would work and learn about the PC before committing. She has worked for Gaius Varro, after all, and he is very important. She'd rather stay and the chandlery than work in a hovel. The PC can arrange with Clara to

meet the following day at the PC's home, for the "tour." If the PC is respectable, then Clara will take the job for 30-50 gp per month (her bargaining range, start at 50). If the PC cannot house her, then start at 100 gp, since a place to live is expensive. Should a PC hire Clara, give the player the appropriate certificate at the end of the event.

Gloria is not sure what to make of the story, but would like it investigated before she casts the wild magic spell. After all, if a wild surge can be avoided, it should be. If the PCs do not suggest a search, she does, and says that she will wait on the spell until they return with some news. She admits the possibility that Gaius Varro could be walking the streets with amnesia, since she does not know where she sent him. She can be overridden, and the spell cast now anyway, but she has doubts. It is really up to the PCs to decide what to do next.

When the PCs go to search, move to Encounter Three. If they want to have the spell cast first, and can override Gloria's reservations, then go to Encounter Four.

Encounter Three: Copycat Trouble

On the way to the Rusty Nail, one of the PCs is affected by the doppelganger. Then, the PCs are dragged into trouble at a festhall just down the street. On the way back to Gloria's, they see the King of Thieves breaking into the Thayan embassy.

Clara accompanies the PCs back to the Rusty Nail. Anyone they ask can tell the PCs that the man who looked like Gaius Varro went into the Rusty Nail. Most of them would not recognize the Lord Marshal on sight, but Clara made enough of a noise about him being there that they feel they are acting from sure knowledge. Anyone they ask, therefore, can tell them that Gaius Varro went into the Rusty Nail. The PCs should therefore go into that tavern of ill repute. It is located near the Foreign District in the Harbor area.

About one minute's walk from Gloria's mansion, and well before they get to the Rusty Nail, the doppelganger assumes the form of one of the PCs (chosen **randomly** - rolling 1d6 is a perfectly fair way to choose, and one which the players cannot complain about). When this happens, the PC suddenly collapses in pain and agony (both). The effect is a level drain, of half the PC's levels (a 1st level PC is reduced to a 0-level non-adventurer). This loss of lifeforce incapacitates the PC for several minutes, during which time no healing magic can aid the character. Further,

there are no wounds or any signs of what happened. The level drain lasts until the doppelganger is killed.

When they get into the street where the Rusty Nail is located, they hear shouting trouble from a festhall just down the street from the Rusty Nail. Present the following:

You walk down the street and see the colored light of "The Pleasure Patch" up ahead. At the same time, you see three City Watchmen running toward the establishment, and a small crowd of women outside all shouting.

When the chosen PC approaches, add this:

One of the women, the oldest one, looks at you as you approach and yells, "It's him! How dare you come back, varlet? After what you did to poor Jennie, and to Falkir, you should be horsewhipped. But killing Marie makes you a villain of the worst kind! Arrest him, Watchmen!"

The Pleasure Patch is a festhall (a brothel in Forgotten Realms lingo), and a very wild place, with dim colored light balls hinting at the pleasures to be found within. The doppelganger, in the form of the suffering PC, came here asking for eight dancing girls at one time. Then it proceeded to refuse all the girls because it did not like their dancing. It slapped three, beat one, and attack one of the customers. This was too much for the matron, Sally, who summoned the Watch. She pays her taxes. The doppelganger left the premises, and then took the form of one of the girls, killing her in the process. Naturally that death is also to be blamed on the PC.

Note: If there are no male PCs, then the doppelganger would use the form of a female PC. In this case you may want to change the gender of everyone at the festhall, though this is not necessary. Decide based on the sensitivities of your players. In fact, you may find that you have to gloss over several details and get right to the slapping, beating, and killing. This may be especially true if there are minors at your table. Use your best judgment.

The Watchmen are prepared to arrest the PC. We have here a situation of the word of the PCs against that of Sally, 12 girls, and three stout citizens. Well, one is not so stout anymore, as the doppelganger beat him a few times around the head for no apparent reason. It truly appeared to the people at The Pleasure Patch that the PC went berserk or evil, and delighted in causing trouble. They are not sure how he killed Marie, as he had left before she was discovered, but they are sure he is responsible somehow. Against this strong

testimony, the PC will have to use brilliant oration, some truth-divining magic, or good fast-talking. Bards can use their powers to influence reactions to aid the chosen PC. The PCs can also flee, or agree to be arrested (only the one PC has to be arrested).

The dead girl, Marie, was killed by the doppelganger. If a *Speak with Dead* spell is used on her, she can only reveal that she suddenly felt cold, as if her life were stolen from her. Then she died. She does not know who is responsible, or how it was done. The experience is exactly the same as that which the affected PC suffered a little while ago. Clever PCs can use this fact in their arguments.

The people at The Pleasure Patch are honest folks who are just getting a little fun. They are not against the PCs, and if they can be convinced that the chosen PC was not actually responsible, then they will be somewhat helpful. This is what the PCs can learn:

- The proprietor, Sally (Cha 16), welcomed the chosen PC (or his double) herself and was surprised that he requested eight girls. They were all dancers, because that's what he said he wanted. He was very choosy, however, and did not like any of the girls at the establishment.
- When he could not find any girls he liked, he turned ugly and started slapping the girls around. He actually beat Megan (Cha 14).
- When Falkir, a sergeant in the army, objected, the chosen PC attacked him with bare hands and knocked him almost unconscious.
- Several girls shouted for the Watch, and the chosen PC looked upon all with disdain as he carelessly walked out of the building.
- Just before the Watch arrived, and less than a minute after the chosen PC left, Marie suddenly shivered and then died. The girls think she was poisoned by the chosen PC, but they don't know how he managed it.
- If it can be shown that the chosen PC was not here, then Sally says that whoever was here was his exact double, even to the clothes he is wearing.

The PCs won't be able to track the doppelganger any further, as it has changed forms. The PC does not regain his or her levels. Their only real choice is to return to Glora Varro with their scant news, and proceed with the spellcasting. They will probably search fruitlessly through the streets for a while, or go to the Rusty Nail tavern, so gloss over this as if to imply that there is nothing to be found. From the festhall incident and other testimony, they should be figuring out that something is taking the forms of different people, and that is why Gaius Varro was seen at the Rusty Nail.

City Watchmen (3), hm F2: Int High; AL LG; AC 7 (leather and shield); MV 12; hp 13; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword); SA call for reinforcements, which arrive in 1d3 rounds; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 12.

Reinforcements consist of 10 more Watchmen with the same statistics.

The King of Thieves Again

The natural and most reasonable path back to Glora Varro's takes the PCs past the walls of the Foreign District. They can choose to go another route specifically, but if no choice is made, they go past the Foreign District. They passed it on the way here, without really noticing it, as they did with many buildings. When they pass the Foreign District, have the PCs all make Observation non-weapon proficiency checks at 1/4. Thieves may make the check at half, since they are accustomed to thinking in terms of what is being observed. Someone has to succeed, for the story to advance, so fudge as necessary. If fudging becomes necessary, then allow thief PCs who made the Observation check at normal to succeed. If there are no thieves, then let anyone who made the check by half succeed. In this case, pick one person only to succeed. Only if everyone rolls above 17 and fails should you let them bypass this scene, which is crucial. Sometimes people just miss the obvious.

The character who noticed something perceives someone climbing the wall of the Thayan embassy. This sighting occurs as the characters pass the gates to the Foreign District, the only place they could see anything inside. It is definitely the result of swashbuckler's luck; the only reason that the King of Thieves was seen at all was that he bypassed a magical ward during his climb, and for just a split second moonlight reflected off him. This is what the PC perceived. Present the following to the PC who noticed this:

As you walk past the gates of the Foreign District, you sense something not right with the Thayan embassy. You are not sure what, but you recall a flash of moonlight off of something on the wall, at the second floor level.

Do not present this to any PCs who did not notice it. That way, the observant PC gets to shine by reacting first, rather than the character whose player always jumps to the fore using out-of-game or in-game knowledge interchangeably.

The observant PC has seen the King of Thieves as he is about to break into the Thayan embassy. The City Watch patrolling the district has not noticed him at all,

nor have the Thayan guards which occasionally walk the perimeter of the embassy. Marcus is very good.

The PCs can easily stop the King of Thieves this time, as all they have to do is raise an alarm and he will fail in his theft anyway. Thus, if the PCs approach and do not raise an alarm, but threaten to do so if he does not desist, he will fall to the ground (unharmed, and with a flourish), and accompany them out of the district and to a local eatery (or to the Watch barracks, though the Watch will release him before the night is over). If the PCs stop him quietly, they can speak with him.

At a nearby place to talk privately (any bar will do), Marcus can be persuaded to tell them his story. If there are any swashbucklers in the group, he will be especially pleased. If the PCs seem touched by his plight, he will ask their aid in stealing the orb from the embassy. The PCs can refuse or agree, but later they may agree even if they refuse now. Marcus' story and personality notes are in the Appendix.

If they take Marcus to the Watch, then a sergeant interviews them about what they have seen. By luck, this sergeant, Gibbon Jans, is a "fan" of the King of Thieves, and will be prejudiced to getting him off. Have Gibbon ask if the PCs actually saw Marcus, and get very detailed. On the other hand, gloss over the details the PCs think are important. Finally, if the PCs are persistent, Gibbon will lock Marcus up for a while, and then release him after the PCs leave (lack of real evidence).

If the PCs get forceful and attack, or take Marcus elsewhere for justice, refer to Encounter One, the ending part, for how to handle it.

If they raise the hue and cry, he lets go of the building and falls (unharmed) twenty feet to the ground (gotta love that Tumbling proficiency). Then he slips into the night and is gone by the time the PCs can get through the gates of the Foreign District, and get to the embassy. Even flying over is not fast enough. The King of Thieves should be full of mysterious getaways and unlikely circumstances, as befits a swashbuckler.

Note: The foreign district is locked at night, so that Ravens Bluff citizens do not accidentally wander into areas where they don't know the local laws. The laws of Ravens Bluff apply everywhere in the city, but the embassies tend to enforce the laws of their own countries as well, sometimes painfully. It is better just to lock them apart from the rest of the city.

At the Thayan embassy, the PCs can raise some guards who will look around and not find anything, and a deputy ambassador named Belakira. Belakira was the temporary ambassador for a time before the war, but a new ambassador was sent just before the outbreak of hostilities. This man is currently in Thay. Belakira was

made deputy ambassador because the real ambassadors have a tendency to be recalled frequently, and her presence provides some stability. She does not mind living in Ravens Bluff, but misses her homeland. Her stats and personality are given in the Appendix.

Belakira, who was asleep, will not be pleased with the PCs for raising a false alarm. No thief was found, and none of the wards were triggered, so clearly they are trying something suspicious. In a cold and unfriendly voice she will ask the City Watchmen at the gate to escort them from the district, and then turn to the house and walk inside. The PCs cannot go inside the embassy, and there is nothing else for them to do here.

Time note: This encounter should not take very long, unless the PCs catch. The Thayans and the district guards are not going to let the PCs explore and ask questions to their hearts' content. Give them a couple minutes, and then shove them out of the area. If the caught Marcus, then talking with him will take longer. If the conversation drags, have Marcus insert a question about what the PCs are doing in this part of town.

Once they are done with the King of Thieves, or the embassy and Belakira, they can return to their previous intention. When they return to Gora Varro's to be at the spellcasting, continue with Encounter Four.

Encounter Four: Yuck!

The PCs return to Gora Varro's home for the casting of the spell. On the way, a second random PC is affected by the doppelganger and collapses. Again, choose this PC at random from amongst the ones who have not been affected yet. The idea is not to cripple a PC, but to bring home to them the danger and horror of the vampiric doppelganger. Describe the symptoms in the same way as for Marie and the first PC: coldness, a feeling of life draining away, extreme pain. The PC loses half his or her levels until the doppelganger is killed (1st level PCs are reduced to 0-level characters).

At the house, the spell is cast and communication with Gaius is established briefly. Gaius explains that the doppelganger has to come back into the dimension if he is to leave alive. They also find that they have to release him in the Thayan Embassy.

It is still the same night, and the spell should be cast tonight if at all possible. The weave is right for it. If the PCs desert Gora, she will wait until tomorrow, re-gather the PCs, and try again in the evening. She will not be pleased, and will tell them that the surge should be harder to control, but she must make do. She

will also dock their final pay by 500 gp each for the delay and subsequent effort she will have to make. Glora is selfish. Refer to the beginning of Encounter Two for the setup scenes at Glora's house.

Finally, the spell is ready to be cast. Present the following:

With surprisingly little ritual, Glora Varro prepares to cast the spell. "Wild surges are easy to create, it is only a matter of shaping the results that you want. I intend to cast the same spells that I cast when I first imprisoned the Lord Marshal, and Gideon has given me some advice on modulating the spell so that the same conditions are created. In addition, I will combine the spell with Hornung's surge selector, modified also for this purpose. The symbols on the floor should turn the magic back towards me, and thus I will be able to use the surge itself to create well, whatever. Your task is to watch from the edge of the room, and handle anything unusual which may occur. The chief dangers are accidentally summoning creatures, or letting the magic out of this room."

The PCs did not get to ask insightful questions back in encounter one or encounter two, so they may do so now. Here are some:

- *What might happen to you?*

Glora replies that the robe and a preparatory spell should keep the surge from affecting her. However, she could transform in some way, or be teleported to somewhere. The PCs should deal with whatever happens.

- *If some monsters come, should we kill them?*

Not necessarily. If they attack, or try to escape the room, then killing them may be the only option. Otherwise, the PCs could contain the creatures for later return to wherever they came from.

- *How do we handle the magic if you disappear?*

Well, a casting of *dispel magic* might stop whatever is happening. They can also just exit the room and close the doors. Gideon and Emellin are across the street in a restaurant, waiting in case something nasty escapes the room.

- *Gideon and Emellin?*

Gideon is a skilled wild mage, though unpredictable. Emellin serves on the Ministry of Art in the Alteration seat, and very much has the interests of the city at heart. Glora feels she can rely on Emellin to take whatever means are necessary to stop the spread of magic.

- *Can we be killed by this surge?*

Highly unlikely. It did not kill Gaius, and none have killed Glora yet. The PCs might turn some color, or be pulled into the dimension where Gaius is, but death is a remote possibility.

Once everyone is ready, present the following:

With arcane words, Glora summons forth a shimmering haze of magic, which races quickly through the room in twisting patterns. The streams of magic seem to follow the symbolic trails, swirling near you and then back towards the center at amazing speeds. They swirl around Glora, but she appears as an eye in the storm. With a flourish, she completes the spell. A great black gulf opens in the space around her, seeming to swallow her completely. The swirling magic frames the gulf, flaring as it impacts the edges of darkness.

From within the gulf, you begin to see the form of an old man emerge. You recognize him as Gaius Varro, the Lord Marshal, but just barely. He seems even older than possible for a human, and tries weakly to form words.

"Where is my cousin?" the figure gasps out. "She is responsible for sending me to this hell beyond imagination."

Gaius can hear and understand the PCs, but as if across a great gulf. The PCs have about two minutes to get as much useful information as possible from him. They cannot reach him physically or bring him home just yet. The PCs are not drawn into the strange dimension where he is.

He can answer questions according to the following:

- He was cast into some unknown dimension by his cousin Glora on the way to Belgard's Stand after the first attack.
- The dimension is populated by some dark humanoid beings that drain life energy by changing into the form of the victim.
- One of these creatures was thrust into the real world when Gaius was forced into their world.
- Apparently the creatures can feed from those in their own dimension when they are not themselves there.
- Others of the creatures have told him that he remains their captive for as long as their fellow-creature remains captive in the real world. He is not sure if that means that they creature must be returned alive, or just returned. He is not really sure if the creatures can die.
- The dimension they are in is very close to the Negative Material Plane. The negative energy is

very strong. Somehow the negative energy there prevents his death due to the draining by the creatures. Gaius is not an expert on this topic, and cannot explain it well.

- He can be freed, but the "point of closeness" between where he is and where the PCs are shifts. It is currently at a point near the docks, about 20 feet above the ground. He cannot perceive the location, but knows that there is a lot of magic centered there. Whether this is the presence of wizards, or active spells, or powerful item, he does not know. He can also sense the nearness of the sea somehow, as if that much water makes a physical or psychic impact on the dimension. He cannot be more precise. (The place he describes is the Thayan embassy, second floor.)

After the two minutes are up, the gulf closes with a crackle of magic. Glora remains in the center of the area, almost unconscious from contact with the negative energy of the dimension.

While the PCs were thus busy, Glora was in direct contact with the dimension. Not completely, as the "point of closeness" is not here, but enough to see enough. She, with her more recent knowledge of the city (and having been there), identified the place that Gaius was trying to describe. It is a room in the Thayan embassy, on the second floor in the back of the building. She also began to understand the cold place that is the dimension, knowledge she keeps to herself.

This can be seen as a *deus ex machina* way of giving the PCs the information they need. However, that need not be the case. You can decide that if the PCs did not ask about where the point of closeness is located, Glora could not identify it. Or, you could make them question Glora for a bit until she can describe it accurately. Do whatever seems to make the story advance.

When this encounter is over, continue to Encounter Five.

Encounter Five: Gaius Again

The doppelganger kills a street walker near the Rusty Nail, and the PCs are hot on the trail. They eventually find "Gaius Varro" wandering in the alleys, and they have to capture it alive. Not an easy task.

Once the PCs have questioned Gaius, they will undoubtedly try to figure out how to get to the Thayan embassy. Here are some options:

1. **Ask.** Glora will do this through the proper channels. Belakira, the Deputy Ambassador, will say no (except

see Encounter Six below, in the "running out of time" section). She suspects Ravens Bluff duplicity, as the story is not at all credible. She is especially suspicious if the PCs awakened her last night. In addition, Thay has no reason to help the Lord Marshal of Ravens Bluff back to his post.

2. **Sneak into the Thayan embassy.** This is the course that Glora will want to pursue once she has tried asking. Remember that she is essentially selfish, and puts her own interests above the law or the interests of others.

The PCs may object to sneaking into the Thayan embassy. This is fine, but they will in the end have only the choices of sneaking in, using force, or giving up on the mission. If the PCs decide to sneak, they will have to discover how to sneak in. Here they have a couple options:

- If they have high level thieves in the group, they may decide to go on their own. This is fine, and the various obstacles are described in Encounter Six.
- They can get help from the King of Thieves, Marcus Arvidis. Marcus wants to sneak in anyway, and if they don't get his help they will encounter him in the embassy. They can find Marcus easily enough by going to the Inn of the Pheasant Roasted, where they met him earlier (or any reasonable inn will do for getting the word to him). He does not hide, and will meet them there if they leave word with just about anyone. If they meet him and ask for his help, he happily agrees and will meet them at midnight on the night they choose to make the attempt.
- They can use some pretense to get into the foyer of the embassy, and then later teleport into the foyer and make their way to the correct room. Some PCs might even have been in the embassy, and can teleport without the pretense. The embassy is protected from scrying, but not from teleporting (since the Thayans do it so often).
- They can cause a diversion in the front, and then have lesser skilled members sneak in. If the diversion is good, and lasts long enough, this will work as well as the sneaking in option, though some notoriety will attach to the PCs.

Some important information:

- There are no floor plans of the embassy available. They know (probably) where the room is, though. It has its own window, and they can sneak into it directly.
- Sneaking around in the Thayan embassy is a bad idea. Hence, Glora (and Marcus, if involved), will

push for a quick-in, quick-out approach. Such an approach has the best chance of success.

- By watching the embassy during the day, the PCs can learn the guard shifts and routes. The routes do not vary at night.
- There are no doubt magical protections on all the windows, as well as protection from scrying. If present, and this seems an insurmountable problem, Marcus will explain the brooch from Lord Carstair's mansion, and that he borrowed it for this very reason.
- Marcus plans to seek for the orb while the PCs are busy. He is easily able to bypass magical wards and will have no problem sneaking quietly through the mansion. He is not the King of Thieves for nothing.

3. **Use force**, blasting their way into the embassy and overpowering the guards. Only high-level groups could attempt this, as Belakira is a powerful wizard and there are other wizards at the embassy. If they do this, they will create a major incident. The consequences are dire, and are explained in the conclusion. Stats for the defenders are given in Encounter Six.

The Doppelganger

Whatever they decide, they will have to track down the doppelganger first. Now it is time for luck to work on the side of the PCs. Someone brings the PCs a report late the following morning. Choose the appropriate person from the order below:

1. If Marcus the King of Thieves is free, and he knows about the PCs' mission, then choose him.
2. Thief PCs with contacts on the street receive a visit from one of the contacts. This is especially appropriate for PCs who are Silent Network members, or who have the information gathering proficiency.
3. City Watch PC members are summoned to the Harbor Watch Barracks by a superior.
4. If none of these criteria are met, have a PC notice a story about another murder in the Trumpeter the afternoon following the spell casting from Encounter Four.

In any case, the gist of the report is that another mysterious death has occurred in the Harbor District, near the Rusty Nail. If the information comes from a live person, then that person says the death is like those that the PCs have been investigating. This should mystify all PCs except Silent Network members (how did they know?). If it is a Trumpeter article, then convey that the death is the latest in an apparent series of strange deaths, caused by unknown means. "The

Watch", says the article, "is working on the case, but have no comment at this time."

The PCs may decide to investigate the deaths and see if there are more. The City Watch has a record of all the deaths, and once the PCs describe the particular features of the cases, the Watch can produce a list of 18 deaths in the past few months (dates unimportant except the ones which have been previously mentioned in the adventure). The deaths are attributed to gang violence or magic, and the perpetrators are unknown. The bodies have all been buried, but can be exhumed if the characters really insist. This takes several hours, so that the exhumation and investigation end just at dusk. The bodies offer no clues, and only one can be reached via a *speak with dead* spell (the rest have been dead too long). This one describes the sudden cold and then death just like the previous victim did, and exactly like the experiences of the affected PCs.

They may also try divination magic targeted at extra-planar creatures. Such efforts reveal a couple in the city, and the PCs could use this method to trace the creature. However, it takes about six hours to cover all of Crow's End thoroughly, including accounting for the creature going to areas which have been checked. If the characters have spells which last this long and detect extra-planar beings, then they find the doppelganger as described below. Skip the next murder report and proceed to the battle.

The most recent murder: A street person (Burde) who was walking near the Rusty Nail tavern saw a certain person (named Silkar) walking down the street on the adjacent street. Burde called to him, but Silkar did not answer. The two men know each other. About half an hour later, when Burde was scrounging in the alley behind the Rusty Nail for scraps, he found the body of Silkar underneath some rubbish. He called the Watch, who came to investigate. The contact heard about what happened, thought of the PCs, and came to tell his PC friend.

What really happened was that the doppelganger assumed the form of Silkar, who died and collapsed under the rubbish. Burde saw the doppelganger but does not know it.

The PCs can also find out from asking people in the Rusty Nail and around there that Silkar was seen well after Burde saw him, but disappeared shortly before the PCs arrived. Silkar is not an unusual sight in the Harbor District. At this time, coincidentally, the doppelganger changed form to that of Gaius Varro, so the PCs can find it if they ask about Varro or use divination magic relating to Varro or the doppelganger. Only if they think of Varro will they get a lead.

Once they make the connection to Gaius Varro, a simple interrogation of the surrounding neighborhood reveals that someone looking like Gaius Varro was seen walking towards the docks. By asking people on the street as they follow the trail, they can find "Gaius Varro" in a dead-end alley about two blocks from the harbor, resting. I told you that things were working in the PCs' favor.

The PCs' goal is to capture the doppelganger alive, not kill it. They may want to kill it, so that their companions will recover, but they may think that they cannot save the real Gaius unless the doppelganger is alive. Thus, they have to ensnare it, or at least they think so. Here are some options:

1. Use nets or other trapping devices in a direct approach. It fights to defend itself, using its power to assume the form of a different PC each round. This means that the affected PCs lose half their levels immediately, and collapse for two rounds in agony. If the creature lasts long enough to affect the whole group, then it will escape and they will have to track it. PCs who are at half levels drop to first level. Those at 0-level are killed, so choose the PCs who have not been affected first.

2. Attack it. See above.

3. Negotiate, or use guile. The creature can communicate, but is not willing to go home. It spent a lot of time adjusting to this plane, and wants to explore. It will not agree to go back. It can be charmed, but this won't make it choose to return home. It can be dominated, and this tactic will work provided the PC keeps control until the right time.

If they want to try and trick it, they can lead it into a trap, or lead it to the Thayan embassy somehow. Give reasonable plans a good chance of success.

The creature is not tiered. Its power depends on how many levels it has absorbed and eaten. The creature "digests" a level per day, but can absorb many more. In this adventure, it has killed three people, and spent two days. This gives it 1 level, plus however many were absorbed from PCs. Once you determine its level, you can work out its stats:

Vampiric Doppelganger: Int High; AL NE; AC 5 - level; MV 15; HD 2+level; hp 6 per HD; THAC0 20-level; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (negative energy in hand); SA level drain by assuming the form of the victim, possible spell use, saves as fighter; SD immune to enervation, strength drain, level, drain; SW negative plane protection will keep at bay but not damage; MR 50%; SZ M; ML 11.

If the creature drained levels from a wizard or bard, it drained some of the spells too, and can cast them as innate powers. Check the victim PC's character sheet for the spells lost when the levels were drained, and give them to the doppelganger.

When the creature has taken half its hit points in damage, it will try to flee.

If the PCs capture it, go to Encounter Six. Use variations on this encounter until the PCs catch it, die, or give up.

Encounter Six: Fast Break!

Time note: This encounter can go a couple of ways, depending on how much time is left in the game session.

The PCs enter the Thayan embassy, cast the spell, recover Gaius, and get out.

Part A - Little game time remaining

If there is not much time left at all, you can almost completely bypass this encounter. Belakira at the Thayan embassy reconsiders and allows the PCs and Glora to cast the spell, under heavy guard of course. She watches, and finds the existence of the pocket dimension very interesting. She will most likely exploit it later, if she can contact it.

If using this option, present the following:

No one is more surprised than yourself when Glora Varro tells you that she received a visit from the Thayan deputy ambassador while you were gone. "She was really more conciliating than I expected. She thought about my request, but decided that she could not be so inhuman as to prevent the reunion of myself with my cousin. I think personally that she thinks she is doing the city a favor, and will expect a favor in return someday soon. Nonetheless, I mean to use her good graces. She says that we should come just after dusk, and she will have us escorted to the place we need."

Let the PCs react to this and prepare for the coming spell. When the players are ready, continue.

Glora knocks on the large doors of the Thayan embassy, and they are opened to her. "Welcome," says Deputy Ambassador Belakira. "Please come this way." She turns, and escorts you regally into a large hall, up a wide flight of stairs, and toward the back of the embassy. As you proceed, you are "joined" by a large following of Thayan guards. After a couple minutes of walking, you arrive in a small room in the

back of the building. Along the way you passed many doors, all of them closed. The room has been cleared of furniture.

"Thank you again, Deputy Ambassador," says Glora. "We will finish as quickly as possible."

The PCs may wonder about protections from the wild surge, since so much effort was taken in the first casting. Glora assures them that it will not spread, though different effects might manifest. Belakira calmly says that she can handle anything that might occur, and that the embassy is not without magical protections. The guards watch the PCs the whole time, and don't let them wander off.

Glora moves to the center of the room, and begins the spell. "When he is visible, you must pull him through the void," she tells you. Seconds later the wild magical flows appear again, and streak outward. Not contained by the symbols, they seem to penetrate the walls and spread through the embassy. All too soon, the dark void grows and obscures Glora, and the image of Gaius Varro comes into view.

At this point, the PCs should grab Gaius and pull him through. Oh, and toss the doppelganger into the void. That is all that is required. Once he is brought through, and the doppelganger cast into the void, the darkness disappears and the room returns to normal. The PCs, however, should roll a random result on the wild surge table in the *Tome of Magic*. This effect should be non-lethal, but interesting. Belakira seems unaffected.

Part B - Plenty of time remaining

This is a hit-and-run mission. The PCs must get in, rescue Gaius, and get out without attracting attention if they are sneaky. If they are attacking the embassy, then use the defending forces below to keep them outside, or to kill them. Bring in five City Watchmen on the second round, and every round thereafter.

Find out how the PCs want to get into the embassy. If the King of Thieves is with them, then he can bypass the wards on the windows and get them into the exact room they want to reach. If there is a powerful thief in the group, he can do the same, if the right skill rolls are made. The thief must climb the wall to the window, open the lock, bypass a *glyph of warding* (8d8 electrical damage), and enter the room. Then he or she can lower a rope or otherwise help the other PCs and Glora into the room.

Once they are in the room, proceed with the spellcasting paragraph above, modified so that Belakira and the Thayan guards are not present. Once they are done, they should attempt to sneak out and get away.

If the PCs decide to explore the embassy, then they are detected. There are wards that detect the presence of invisible (and visible) intruders in every hallway, and these wards activate *magic mouth* spells that shout the alert throughout the embassy. One round after a magic mouth has been activated, three Red Wizards arrive to deal with the intruders, and five guards arrive at the end of that round to attack the following round. Bring in as many Red Wizards as seem to be needed to expel the PCs from the embassy. Use the most damaging, killing spells you want.

Red Wizards (as many as needed), human W14: Int Exceptional; AL LE; AC 0 (*bracers of defense AC 4, ring of protection +3, Dexterity*); MV 12; hp 32; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (staff); SA spells; SD spells; MR nil; SZ M; ML 16.

Items: three have *staves of the magi*, with enough charges.

Spells: The wizards get 5 1st, 5 2nd, 5 3rd, 4 4th, 4 5th, 2 6th, and 1 7th level spells per day. Pick the nasty ones, and unload on the PCs. Do your best to kill them. *Dispel magic* is especially good, as it negates magical items such as scarabs of protection which give saving throws to other spells.

Note: The PCs may not acquire any items from these wizards.

Thayan Guards (as many as needed), human F8: Int High; AL LE; AC -5 (*chain mail +4, ring of protection +3, Dexterity*); MV 12; hp 65; THAC0 8 adjusted; #AT 2; Dmg 1d8+7 (*long sword +3*); SA specialized in long sword; SD nil; MR nil; Str 18; SZ M; ML 16.

The PCs cannot loot these guys either. They are Thayan killing machines, but they fight intelligently and are used to teaming with wizards in battle. They will concentrate on PC spellcasters to prevent them from casting, while the wizards lay waste to the fighters and thieves.

The King of Thieves

Let's not forget Marcus. While the PCs are spellcasting and rescuing Varro, Marcus is either breaking into the embassy to steal the orb, or off stealing it while the PCs are busy. He is not detected by the wards due to the amulet he stole from Lord Carstair. He successfully steals the orb, and then departs. His departure is timed so that the PCs see him, whatever they are doing. With a jaunty wave and a "thanks," he falls to the ground from a second floor window, then disappears into the shadows. The PCs may decide to pursue him, but they will have the usual trouble catching him. He has a clever escape planned, as usual. Improvise, but make it look like it was planned.

Later, he returns the brooch to Lord Carstair and the ring to Glora.

Conclusion

The ending of this adventure depends largely on the choices the PCs made.

A - Successful rescue

You meet at Glora Varro's house the following day, after everyone has had a chance to rest and lay low. The Thayans have not lodged a complaint with the government, nor reported an attempted theft. It seems you have gotten away with it. The Lord Marshal, Minister Glora Varro, and Lady Mayor Thoden sit with you at Glora's home.

"Well done, all. I knew I had hired the right group."

"It is good to have the Lord Marshal back. Though I never met him, I am glad that he can resume his duties. His presence should quiet the Blacktree controversy.

"Indeed, though I am weak still, I will be happy to get back to work. Clearly much has happened during the time I was in that foul hell. Glora has shown me that she was not completely responsible, and I suppose I will forgive her in time. For now, tell me of what has taken place in the city since I last saw her."

This is the time for the PCs to relate the history of the war and subsequent year. If the players do not know it, then you can relate it to them as Mayor Thoden. If you don't know it all, then gloss over it to the rewards. The Lord Marshal is over 70 years old, but sharp as a tack, and he will ask questions about details. You can make this last as long as you like.

Glora turns to you. "I promised you 4,000 in gold each if you rescued my cousin, and you have indeed earned it. I can give you the gold, or I can give you potions of extra healing. Your choice, but I know how adventurers always need healing."

"I also would like to reward you," says the Lord Marshal in his deep but weak voice. "I have considerable wealth, and can afford to be generous at this time. Please accept these gems as tokens of my thanks. I know that adventurers have expenses." He puts a bag on the table in front of you.

There are 3,000 gp worth of gems in the bag.

The players will be concerned about the levels lost to the doppelganger. The stolen levels were not digested

by the creature, and return at the rate of one per day. By the next adventure, the PCs are up to snuff again. However, you can let them worry a bit and try for *restoration* spells before you tell them this, as they won't know for a whole day that the levels will return at all.

B - Unsuccessful rescue

The only reason that the PCs would fail would be if they started a fight at the embassy. If they got away without anyone identifying them, then present the following:

You meet at Glora Varro's home the next day. The Thayans have not lodged a complaint with the Watch, probably due to the fact that you were not identified. "Due to you bungling, I will have to wait a while before trying to rescue my cousin," Glora says without preamble. "I promised you 2,000 gp, and here they are." She drops a bag in front of you. "I suggest you forget about what happened in the past couple of days. Now, if you don't mind, I have things to do."

Glora escorts the PCs out of her home. What happened to the doppelganger? Unless the PCs remembered to bring it with them, it was left at the embassy. It was killed by Red Wizards when it started assuming their forms. Its body is at the embassy, under study. During the previous night the PCs who were drained got all their levels back, which they may not notice until later in the day. They were asleep, after all.

If the PCs could be identified at the embassy, then they are arrested the following day, charged with various crimes related to the attack, and imprisoned in Ill-Water without further ado. Belakira wants swift justice, and the city does not want an incident with the Red Wizards at this time. PCs can buy their way to the Compter, but that would cost them five permanent magical items worth 1,000 exp or more (or however many items they have if they have fewer than five). PCs in the Compter still have to spend their lives in prison, or be killed and reincarnated into a new form. They can arrange the killing and reincarnation, but it will cost the rest of their magical items and possessions, land, whatever. Soak them for everything they have, since the alternative is permanent retirement. They are associated with this incident, and their presence in the city as themselves will not be allowed.

The End

Experience Point Summary

Experience is calculated as follows for Living City events.

1. Sum the experience listed below for objectives.
2. Assign discretionary role-playing experience (0-500 points). These should reward accurate character portrayal throughout the adventure, not just how well the PC interacted socially.
3. Finally, multiply the total by the tier according to this chart:

Levels 6-13	Tier 1
Levels 14-25	Tier 2
Levels 26-37	Tier 3
Levels 38-56	Tier 4
Levels 57+	Tier 5

PCs should get the experience points of the tier for which they qualify, regardless of which tier is actually played. For example, if you have a Tier 3 group and you have to bump the combats by one tier to challenge them, they still get the experience points for a Tier 3 group, not for a Tier 4 group.

Encounter One:

Investigating the theft 25 xp

Encounter Two:

Catching the King of Thieves alive 100 xp

Asking detailed questions about the spellcasting 25 xp

Encounter Three:

Stopping the King of Thieves without attracting any notice 100 xp

OR

Causing a disturbance to stop him 25 xp

Talking their way out of the problem at the festhall 50 xp

Encounter Four:

Asking the right questions of Gaius Varro in the first 5 questions 50 xp

Encounter Five:

Capturing the doppelganger alive without losing any levels 100 xp

OR

Capturing it with some levels lost 75 xp

OR

Killing the doppelganger 25 xp

Encounter Six:

Breaking into the embassy by relying on stealth 100 xp

OR

Breaking in by relying on a distraction 75 xp

OR

Breaking in by using magic 50 xp

Getting out without causing a political incident 100 xp

Total for objectives 550 xp

Roleplaying 0-500 xp

Total possible experience 1,050 xp

For Tier 2: 2,100 xp

For Tier 3: 3,150 xp

For Tier 4: 4,200 xp

For Tier 5: 5,250 xp

Treasure Summary

If it's not on this list, the PCs cannot keep it.

4,000 gp or one *potion of extra healing* per PC from Glora Varro

3,000 gp worth of gems from Gaius Varro

Clara, a cook, if a PC hired her

Fame Award

None. Would you want anyone to know about this? Glora is happy to keep it quiet.

Appendix: People and Creatures

Minister Glora Varro, hf 18th-level wild mage: AL CN; AC -5; MV 12; hp 48; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA spells, 50% chance to use charges from *wand of wonder* to cast a spell not memorized (charges used = spell level), level variation, chance of wild surge; SD active *stoneskin* (10 hits left), active *contingency* which will *teleport* her to her home if she is rendered unconscious or completely immobilized and unable to cast spells; MR nil; S 12, I 18, W 15, D 16, C 15, Ch 15; SZ M; ML 14.

Magical items: *Bracers of defense AC 2, ring of protection +3, ring of free action, wand of wonder* (20 charges), dagger, jeweled scarab (3,500 gp value).

Spells Currently Available: *color spray, magic missile (x2), Nahal's reckless dweomer(x2), unseen servant, alter self, chaos shield, Hornung's baneful deflector, mirror image, stinking cloud, web, alternate reality, fireball, flame arrow, slow, dimension door, ice storm, minor globe of invulnerability, unluck, wall of fire, chaos, feeblemind, safeguarding**, teleport, vortex, chain lightning, mass suggestion, wildstrike, repulsion, Hornung's surge selector, prismatic spray, Abi-Dazim's horrid wilting, Hornung's random dispatcher, maze, wildfire*

** - a variation that protects Glora only

Glora is relatively young for her power and authority; she is 34 years of age but appears younger. She stands 6' 1" tall and, although broad-shouldered, has a build so slender that it makes her appear taller still. Her auburn hair is always cut in a stylish fashion and her expression varies between amused and perturbed, depending on the situation. Her voice is so deep that it is often mistaken for a man's voice. She gained her position mostly because of name and family connections, but really is the most powerful wild mage in the Ravens Bluff region, though few people know it; only Chester D'Marke, the Lord of Mysteries, is aware that she has attained arch-mage rank.

Glora is very sharp-witted and is an enormously quick study; very little slips past her notice. This has allowed her to rocket through levels with incredible speed. It also means that she will instantly recognize exactly how powerful the PCs are and thus will not underestimate them in a fight. She takes her wild magic very seriously, regarding it as a path to enlightenment on the basic fundamentals underlying how spells work and are controlled. Unfortunately, few others take this view. She does not revel in wild surges as many others do, instead strategically using it to her advantage.

Glora is very self-absorbed. She places her own self-interests above all others (even the defense of Ravens Bluff), but is neither cruel nor vindictive about it. Even in redemption, she is essentially selfish, and she is rescuing Gaius not for the good deed or for the Lord Marshal, but to convince others that she was merely a puppet. She tries to sound casual and friendly in conversations, and is known for a dry and rather odd sense of humor, but sometimes her act slips and she can be condescending.

Belakira, Thayan Deputy Ambassador, hf W14: AL CN; AC -7; MV 12; hp 40; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (staff); SA spells; SD spells; MR nil; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 19, Wis 15, Cha 17; SZ M; ML 15.

Spells: 1st level- *magic missile x3, detect magic, read magic*; 2nd level- *web x2, Melf's acid arrow x2*; 3rd level- *lightning bolt, hold person, slow*; 4th level- *fumble, stoneskin* (precast for 12 attacks), *Evard's black tentacles*; 5th level- *chaos, cloudkill, wall of force*; 6th level- *death spell, flesh to stone*; 7th level- *power word stun*.

Magic Items: *bracers of defense AC 2, ring of protection +4, cloak of protection +3, wand of frost* (25 charges), *3 beads of force*, amulet with contingent *teleport no error* (trigger = mortal danger), *wand of petrification* (26 charges), *ring of invisibility, robe of elemental resistance* (counts as rings of warmth and fire resistance), *necklace of adaptation* (in case the golems need to use their breath attack at point blank range).

Belakira is a striking woman with ice blue eyes and a long pony tail of jet black hair reaching the small of her back. In keeping with the traditions of the Red Wizards, her head is shaved (with the exception of the pony tail) and intricate tattoos adorn her pale skin. The tattoos are symbols of Mystra (the Goddess of Magic), Azuth (the God of Spellcasters), and a white dragon. She normally dresses in red and when the PCs first see her she will be in formal red wizard's robes complete with gold hem and a silver belt. She hides her emotions well, and her face is often expressionless except for her eyes, which appear to be taking everything in. Although she appears much younger (she looks about 25), Belakira is actually 37 years old.

Belakira is not a typical Red Wizard and her relative lack of ruthlessness has caused her to leave her homeland. Belakira's recent arrival in Ravens Bluff is only semi-official and the main reason she has decided to leave Thay is that one of her fellow wizards has recently learned the truth regarding Belakira's slave.

Many years ago, when she was just beginning to gain power in the ranks of the wizards she was tricked into drinking a *philter of love* by one of her fellow students. The results of the potion backfired on the wizard and Belakira fell in love with a powerful mercenary who later killed the offending wizard when he learned of the joke. Despite the fact that Belakira's love was magically induced, the two truly fell in love and pledged their love together, calling on the gods of magic to witness their vows. In the years that followed the two lived their secret lives and had a daughter. One of her rival wizards learned the truth about her daughter and Belakira has fled Thay for Ravens Bluff, claiming truthfully to be a diplomat, with her constructs and daughter in tow. She suspects the worst regarding the kidnapping of her daughter.

Since she has been here, she has served as a stable element in the Thayan embassy. She does not want to go back to Thay, and the other Red Wizards are happy to have someone around when they have to recall an ambassador (which happens all too frequently).

Marcus Arvidis, the King of Thieves, hm T15: Int Genius; AL N; AC -5; MV 12; hp 60; THAC0 13; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 1d6+2 (short sword of speed +2) or 1d4+3 (*daggers of returning* +3); SA thief skills; SD thief skills; MR nil*; Dex 18, Cha 15; SZ M (5'8"); ML 17.

Items: *bracers of defense AC 4*, *ring of protection +3*, *cloak of protection +3*, *short sword of speed +2* (works as scimitar of speed), *daggers of returning +3* (daggers return to thrower's hand at end of round if they miss), *girdle of many pouches*. He also carries any clever device to aid thieving skill attempts, and most of his rolls fail only on a roll of 00 due to some aid.

Thief skills: PP 40%; OL 95%; F/RT 95%; MS 95%; HS 95%; HN 95%; CW 90%; RL 75%.

Marcus grew up on the streets. When he was just a year old, he lived with his parents in the poorer section of Ravens Bluff, and would have grown into an uninspired future had not the Red Wizards of Thay intervened. He was destined for the swashbuckling life. His parents went on a sea voyage to Sembia, and left him in the care of a sister. A certain Red Wizard, Yothar Fiendspawn, ordered the capture of the ship and the enslavement of his parents. Word came that the ship had sunk, but years later Marcus and his sister Alcia learned the truth. From that time, they vowed vengeance on Yothar.

Marcus devoted his life to thievery, developing skills beyond those of most thieves. He adopted the extravagant ways and dress of a swashbuckler, and created the "king of thieves" persona to deter suspicion from him. It has worked well, and many people think he is just a pretender with an attitude rather than the mastermind behind the most daring thefts in the city.

Alcia eventually got work in the Thayan embassy, and learned more about Yothar. Of these things, the most important was the existence of an orb. This device, no doubt magical, is of key importance to Yothar, and his status within the Red Wizards is built on it. Should it be stolen, he would lose face and perhaps his life at the hands of cruel superiors. Finally, the means of revenge were at hand. Alcia was caught spying at the embassy, and disappeared soon after the two had made their plans, and so Marcus added the burden of her fate to Yothar's account.

In the years following, he has sought the location of the orb within the embassy, and honed his skills considerably. He has also adventured and collected some magic that helps him a lot. Just before this adventure, he determined the location of the orb, and is beginning his campaign to steal it. Yothar was suddenly recalled to Thay three days ago (Yothar is not the ambassador, but serves as an adjunct and general dirty deed person), and Marcus sees his chance. During the adventure he plans to steal the amulet from Lord Carstair, which negates magical spells within 10 feet of it, and the ring of x-ray vision from Glora Varro, to see through walls and find the orb's hiding place quickly.

Marcus is a jaunty fellow, full of mirth and good cheer. This mask hides his grim determination to make Yothar pay for every death accounted to him amongst Marcus' relatives. Polite to all, friendly to a fault, he never forgets his purpose, nor will he put the interests of others above his vengeance.

Marcus wears black swashbuckler-style clothes. Think "Three Musketeers," but all in black: shirt, coat, pants, hat, everything. Sometimes he changes coat colors, but usually as part of a disguise. He is a master of insinuation, getting himself into wherever he needs to. He owns a *girdle of many pouches*, and carries almost all types of thieving equipment that can be imagined. Anything in the *Complete Thief's Handbook* that he needs, he has in a pouch somewhere within easy reach. He also carries spring-loaded grappling hooks.

New Monster: Vampiric Doppelganger

Climate/Terrain:	Pocket dimension
Frequency:	Very rare
Organization:	None
Activity Cycle:	Any
Diet:	Life energy
Intelligence:	High
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	NE
No. Appearing:	1-4
Armor Class:	5 - current level
Movement:	15
Hit Dice:	2 + current level
THACO:	20 - current level
No. of Attacks:	1
Damage/Attack:	1d4
Special Attacks:	Life energy drain, assume form of others
Special Defenses:	Immune to enervation, level drain, strength drain
Magic Resistance:	50%
Size:	M (about man-sized)
Morale:	11
XP Value:	???

The vampiric doppelganger is a twisted creature from a negative pocket plane on the Ethereal Plane, close to the borders of the Negative Material Plane. The creature resembles a normal doppelganger in its natural state, but its skin is dark, almost black. These creatures live in their pocket plane, fed by the Negative Material Plane itself and by the occasional being that is trapped in their demi-plane.

Combat: The vampiric doppelganger does not engage in combat in its natural state. Its main power is that of assuming the forms of others. It is better than a normal doppelganger in this respect because it actually drains life essence from the target creature, along with memories and personality. It can, in effect, become the target creature for a short time. When forced to fight, it can slap for 1d4 points of damage, that coming from a negative material effect similar to some undead. It can also use spells if it drained levels from a spellcaster. Each spell lost to the target spellcaster due to level drain is absorbed by the doppelganger, and it can use them as innate powers in successive rounds. It can only use each spell once, as if they were cast by the creature.

The creature drains levels as follows. Normally, it drains half the levels from a target creature. If the target is 1st level, then the target is lowered to a 0-level status. Creatures of 0-level which are drained die. The creature accumulates levels as drained, with each draining of a 1st level or 0-level target counting as one

level. The creature digests one level per day, so it must constantly feed unless it can drain some powerful adventurer.

If the creature is killed before the stolen levels are digested, then the stolen levels return to the victims over the hour after the creature dies. If the levels were digested, they are lost forever. Victims killed by level drain are not restored to life, and can only be restored to life through the use of the *resurrection* or *reincarnation* spells; *raise dead* is not powerful enough. If the creature is returned to its own dimension, then the stolen levels return to the victims at the rate of one level per day. A *restoration* spell will speed up the return of levels in this case.

Once the creature has assumed the form of something, it must change forms and then return to the target's form to drain that target again. Each form change takes one round, but is an innate ability and the creature can still use spells or defend itself during a transformation.

The doppelganger can always assume the form of any Prime Material being currently in the home pocket plane, and such transformations drain the target normally. However, target creatures in the pocket plane cannot be killed by transformation draining, as the Negative Material Plane does not permit the death. Thus, any Prime being on the doppelgangers' home plane is a cache of food which does not run out. Each Prime person can only feed one doppelganger without being destroyed, however.

The creature is naturally immune to draining from any other creature. The spell *negative plane protection* prevents the doppelganger from draining levels from the protected target, but does not prevent the assumption of the target's form.

Habitat/society: Nothing is known of how these creatures live or interact in their pocket plane, but Elminster guesses that they have some loose hierarchy.

Ecology: Very little is known about the creatures' ecology, but it has no part in the normal ecology of the Prime Material Plane. It is a parasite on the Prime, and beings there can only be glad that the creatures do not escape their home plane very often. Some sages theorize that there must be a conservation of beings on the negative pocket plane, so that if a Prime being is taken to the plane, then one of the doppelgangers is loosed on the Prime. Perhaps this explains why the creatures are so rarely encountered outside their own plane.