

# CAKE WALK

## MURDER ON THE GOURMET EXPRESS

OR: THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE BATTERED BROWNIE



# CAKEWALK

*Cakewalk* is a colorful setting where the rules of reality are a bit loose. On the Island of Yumm, people of all shapes and sizes live alongside foodfolk, like the brash gummies and the humdrum crumbkin. The residents of Yumm live in preposterous harmony, hindered only by the rumblings of Mt. Monterey and the antics of mischievous foodfolk.

# CREDITS

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# INTRODUCTION

*Murder on the Gourmet Express* is a mini-adventure for 3rd-level characters for the *Cakewalk* campaign setting in which the characters solve a complex murder mystery on a train in an Agatha Christie-inspired detective thriller. A mini-adventure is a bite-sized adventure that can be slotted into any larger campaign for a diversion and change of pace.

## OVERVIEW

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The adventure begins as the characters are called to dinner on the Gourmet Express, a first-class luxury train. Before they can eat, they are asked to corral a growlic belonging to one of the other passengers. The growlic, however, discovers that a terrible murder has occurred in the passenger cabin!

The conductor places the characters in charge of the investigation, as they are among the only passengers who couldn't have committed the murder. First, the characters must investigate the scene of the crime, and then they must interview each suspect. When they have finished their initial review of the passengers, they can check the baggage car for additional clues.

When the characters, at last, arrive at the conclusion of their investigation, the guilty suspects flee to the front of the train and attempt to escape on the locomotive, destroying the train in the process! If the characters manage to save the Gourmet Express, they can recover another of the Onion King's rings.

## SET UP

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The characters settle into their first-class cabins aboard the Gourmet Express and do their best to tidy up before rubbing shoulders with the upper crust of Yumm's foodfolk. Pick from the scenarios below or invent your own explanation as to how they came to this situation.

### A LOCOMOTIVE VACATION

Because of the characters' past heroics in the Kingdoms of Candia, a wealthy pastryarch has gifted them a set of tickets for the Gourmet Express, ostensibly for them to take a vacation. Though the train ride is hardly equivalent to a resort, it is among the most comfortable forms of travel and includes every amenity of a fine hotel.

### A NANCY ROUX MYSTERY

The cherry gummy teenage detective, Nancy Roux, has been sniffing out a mystery that began with a nearly fatal falling light on a movie set. Since then, she has uncovered no shortage of cinematic scandals but has gotten no closer to the answer. She has stowed away on the train and asked the characters to help her solve this star-studded mystery!

### THE ONLY AVAILABLE TRAIN

Due to a myriad of scheduling issues and a credible bombing threat, only one train was scheduled to arrive at the desert town of Aygo for over a week. Thankfully, there were just enough empty cabins for the party.

## IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

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More so than other *Cakewalk* adventures, *Murder on the Gourmet Express* relies on a cast of central nonplayer characters to drive the plot. Use the information in this section to inform your descriptions of the characters and your roleplay with them.

**MRS. CHAMPIGNON (SHE/HER).** The portofello Mrs. Champignon possesses all the expected traits for a long-standing conductor for the Gourmet Express: austere temperament, stately attire, and resiliently humorless outlook. Such qualities ensure that the train arrives on time and that its high-profile guests are kept comfortable for the duration of the journey. When complications arise, Mrs. Champignon delegates her staff responsibly and ensures that problems are solved before the train arrives at the station.

**CARA MELL AND ROCKIE ROW (SHE/HER AND HE/HIM).** Though ostensibly a young frostling couple on holiday to the Big Apple, the two can always be seen quarreling over the most insignificant details of their planned trip. The amber-colored Cara wants to do a tour of the stars, visiting movie sets and celebrity homes, whereas the chocolate-colored Rockie would prefer to see more traditional tourist traps, like parks and monuments. With everyone else, the couple is perfectly jovial. And though they seem miserable around one another, neither frostling acknowledged they have any friction in their relationship.



**MR. BIG DILL (HE/HIM).** Pungent with brine and cigar smoke, Mr. Big Dill is off-putting before even entering someone's line of sight. Visually, he's not much better. With an unbuttoned shirt, single diamond earring, and wide, yellowed smile (with a single gold tooth), the pickle veggie is the very picture of an unsavory business partner or low-rent bartender. However, he's actually a highly-influential agent for some of the biggest names in motion pictures, including Robert Brownie Jr. This fact has inflated his self-worth and degraded his manners.

**THE PUMPKIDS: ANDY, BRANDY, MANDY, AND SANDY (HE/HIM, SHE/HER, SHE/HER, SHE/HER).**

This family of four pumpkids is a dynamo of chaos wherever they travel. Even before getting on the train, they pickpocketed the conductor and another passenger, and one even managed to sneak into the baggage car. Largely, they're just trying to entertain themselves for the journey, so when a literal murder happens on the train, they collectively switch modes to watch the unfolding drama. That being said, the pumpkids are endlessly mischievous and collectively afraid of getting in trouble, and so sheepishly avoid questions about their conduct on the Gourmet Express.

**MS. FLORETTE LEEDS (SHE/HER).** In a pencil skirt and plain-looking blouse, the broccoli veggie, Ms. Florette Leeds, seems practically underdressed for a voyage on the Gourmet Express. Moreover, she uses a wheelchair to move around the train, which the attendants are happy to accommodate. Much of Ms. Leeds's personality is plain to see: she loves reading books -- with a particular love of mysteries -- and has expert knowledge in alchemy. However, she conceals much more beneath the surface.

While working as a special effects technician on a film starring Robery Brownie Jr., Ms. Leeds fell in love with the famous actor. Together, the two conspired to fake Brownie's death, escaping his obligations to the studio and his wife in one fell swoop, in order to retire on some distant tropical island together. This plot even called for faking a disability and placing Ms. Leeds in a wheelchair for the journey, as a smokescreen for the plot. Everything seemed to be watertight until the characters boarded the train and started asking questions.

**ROBERT BROWNIE JR. (HE/HIM).** A glamorous and renowned crumbkin actor, Robert Brownie Jr. has starred in dozens of movies across his meteoric career. However, as he nears fifty years old, Brownie has desperately searched for a path to retirement. Pressure from the studio and legions of fans has made this all but impossible, to say nothing of his venomous wife (a coffee cake crumbkin), who would divorce him in an instant if he retired.

To complicate matters, in his most recent film, Brownie recently fell head-over-heels in love with a special effects technician, Ms. Florette Leeds, who had the task of alchemically creating controlled explosions, convincingly faking deaths, and crafting realistic-looking murder scenes. Together, the two concocted a plot to fake his death and run off together, all in a single journey on the Gourmet Express.

**HEFF T. BOYD (HE/HIM).** Overweight even by puft standards, Heff T. Boyd comically has the same shape as his perfectly round pet growlic, which he carries everywhere he goes, including on the Gourmet Express. When Heff T. isn't enjoying the finest dining in the land, he's selling a convoluted pyramid scheme that centers on selling "health-rejuvenating potions" of his own concoction. As Heff T. isn't an alchemist, these are nothing more than snake oil. The real hook of the scheme is that sellers gain a larger portion of the profits the more they enlist others to sell, a premise that has made Heff T. extraordinarily rich. Looming regulations threaten to destroy his empire of fake potions, but in the meantime, Heff T. will take every opportunity to live well and sell his scam products.

**DOCTOR BAKENSTEIN (HE/HIM).** The characters might have already encountered the mad crumbkin scientist, Doctor Bakenstein in the previous adventure, A Game of Scones. Even if they haven't, he has all the hallmarks of an evil scientist: a magnificent laugh, white lab coat, and a slate of completely amoral experiments that go wrong around him wherever he goes. The doctor might be elitist, cynical, and canonically evil, but he's not behind any crimes on the Gourmet Express. To that end, he takes delight in mocking the characters and leading them astray.

## ALL ABOARD!

The adventure begins as each character emerges from their cabins on the Gourmet Express, a luxury passenger train that crosses the breadth of Yumm. To introduce this new environment, read or paraphrase the following:

The scenery flies past your window, accompanied by a rocking sensation and a distant mechanical chugging. Indeed, were it not for the gentle, persistent rocking, you could be forgiven for thinking you secured a night in a luxury hotel. Your room has a bed with silken sheets, a personal water closet with gilded faucets, and mahogany flooring. In fact, your cabin is on the Gourmet Express, the most extravagant passenger train in all of Yumm.

Suddenly, a knock sounds at your door!

An austere portofello in a three-piece suit with tails (the conductor, **MRS. CHAMPIGNON**,) reminds each character in turn that dinner shall begin shortly in the dining car, and asks them whether they prefer “Espadon fumé,” “Canard à l’orange,” or “Gratin d’asperges au parmesan.” It is advised that you look up pronunciations of these French phrases and apply an outrageous accent for effect. A **DC 19 INTELLIGENCE (HISTORY) CHECK** discerns that these are fancy names for fish, chicken, and vegetable dishes, respectively. A character proficient in cook’s utensils has advantage on this check. For her part, the conductor scoffs at the character’s unfamiliarity with such fine dishes but says little else to reveal this opinion.

Note that the characters have packed away their weapons, armor, magic items, and adventuring gear for the trip. Spellcasters can retain component pouches and spellcasting focuses.

The characters can progress to the dining car with the *Follow Your Nose* section. Alternatively, you can first present a short flashback with the *Boarding in Style* section.

## RUNNING A MURDER MYSTERY

Unlike many other adventures, Murder on the Gourmet Express involves very little combat and an abundance of investigation. In order to run this adventure smoothly, follow these guidelines:

**GUIDED ANSWERS.** Because each NPC has only a limited amount of information assigned to them, you may have to twist their answers to reveal pertinent details. Essential details are marked with an asterisk (\*). Furthermore, you may have to gently inform players when an NPC is out of pertinent information.

**TAKE NOTES.** Encourage at least one player to write down the major characters and their important details. This is especially important if your group takes a long break between sessions.

**EXCELLENT QUESTION!** If a player asks a particularly insightful question or guesses something correctly, give them an automatic success or advantage on relevant checks.

**DEDUCTION, NOT MURDER.** Don’t let the players go around murdering their suspects! Most characters are red herrings, so temper the players’ impulses to attack everything in sight. Furthermore, encourage players to indulge in the fantasy of detective stories. Detectives use detailed interviews and sound reasoning to find the truth of the case, not intimidation or violence. The end goal is a sound denouement and seeing the guilty in custody.

## BOARDING IN STYLE

To help set the stage for the adventure, you can present this optional scene in flashback. Read or paraphrase the following:

As you proceed to the dining car, you recall your first moments boarding the train amounting to a small panic. The gummy conductor nearly fainted when you handed over your tickets and screeched at you with a whistle when you went to step aboard. Your attire, your possessions, and your **smell** were simply unacceptable on the Gourmet Express. They have certain appearances to maintain, you see.

Thankfully, the conductor is a resourceful woman, and brought a dozen replacement outfits and set many of the attendants to work overtime preparing you to journey in style. The tailor, specifically, was horrified.

Before boarding the Gourmet Express, each character was fitted with fine, rented clothing befitting the upper class of Yumm Island, whether that be a tuxedo, an outfit replete with fine furs, or a gorgeous dress. The tailor could fit any humanoid or foodfolk to any apparel and was able to do so before the train was scheduled to depart. Ask each player to describe how they decided to dress for this adventure. Much to the chagrin of rogues, the tailor didn't accommodate hidden pockets or weapons.

Once each character has described their fancy attire, proceed with the adventure in the present in the *Follow Your Nose* section.



## FOLLOW YOUR NOSE

The characters arrive in the dining car and are seated by an attendant. Shortly thereafter, their meal arrives, delivered by **MONSIEUR BOYSEN**, the berriar chef. Please read or paraphrase the following:

As you sit before an immaculately-arranged set of silverware, the chef personally delivers your meal in a domed, silver cover, which he removes in a flourish. You're met with a puff of steam and an engrossing, mouth-watering aroma. Sensing the upcoming feast, a small, round canine dashes across the cabin, knocking over you, the chef, and the table in one fell swoop!

Before the characters can react, a **growlic** knocks over one or more tables, steals an entire chicken in its mouth, and flees into the dining car. The chef shouts obscure French curses and brandishes a butcher's knife, vowing to catch and peel the growlic if given the chance! Meanwhile, the growlic's owner, an obese puft named **HEFF T. BOYD** profusely apologizes to the staff.

Because most of the meals have been knocked to the floor, dinner has been postponed for a few minutes and will be served in the passenger cabins. The characters are free to wander the forward cabins until their dinner is ready.

When the chef has calmed down and the tables have been replaced, Heff T. approaches the characters and asks them to help retrieve his pet growlic, **MINCEY**. He promises that the growlic can't be far, and is worried that, if the staff locate it first, it will be locked in the baggage car for the remainder of the journey. If the characters need extra motivation, Heff T. might surmise that they are adventuring types and offer them a bottle of "Heff T.'s Sparkling Restorative Elixir" as motivation. Heff T. will launch into a full-on sales pitch to explain his elixir as "better than a potion of healing and a week at the spa," but a **DC 15 WISDOM (INSIGHT OR MEDICINE) CHECK** discerns that this is probably nothing more than well-marketed snake oil.

Finding Mincey the growlic is a convenient pretense for the characters to explore the train, but it isn't mandatory. If the players decline to find the growlic, encourage them to explore anyway and potentially meet some other passengers. The characters can explore the frontmost two parts of the train: the *Passenger Cabins* and the *Locomotive*.

Ultimately, to progress the story, the characters must discover the murder that has taken place in cabin number three in the *Murder!* section.

## PASSENGER CABINS

A pungent scent of garlic lingers in the wake of Mincey the growlic, making it evident that the growlic entered the passenger cabins when some attendant opened the door between the train cars. Which cabin it might be hiding in, however, is another matter. When the characters enter this location, read or paraphrase the following:

Facing the front of the train, the passenger cabins line the left side of the train car in an orderly row, each adorned with a gleaming gold number plate, elegant door handle, and lock. Most of the cabins are closed up tight, and it seems rude to knock, but Mincey the growlic might have slipped in the first cabin or the last, both of which have open doors.

A **DC 14 WISDOM (PERCEPTION) CHECK** hears indistinct but argumentative talking from the first cabin, and detects the smell of cigar smoke wafting from the last cabin. The characters can speak with these passengers (Cara Mell and Rocky Row in the first cabin, and Mr. Big Dill in the last) or progress to the locomotive.

### CARA MELL AND ROCKIE ROW

When the characters knock or enter the cabin belonging to **CARA MELL AND ROCKIE ROW**, the two frostlings suddenly terminate an agitated conversation. The amber-colored frostling instantly switches demeanor and introduces herself as Cara, whereas the chocolate-colored frostling named Rockie seems irritable. She mentions that she and Rockie are students on vacation, and takes great interest in the characters' profession.

A **DC 14 WISDOM (INSIGHT) CHECK** discerns that the subject of the frostlings' argument was several papers laid out on the small writing desk. If a curious character wants to peek at them, a **DC 15 WISDOM (PERCEPTION) CHECK** recognizes the topmost paper as a map of the Big Apple, covered in handwritten notes.

Neither of the frostlings have seen the growlic and a **DC 12 WISDOM (PERCEPTION) CHECK** notices that the lingering garlic smell doesn't penetrate far into their cabin. Apart from their vaguely suspicious behavior, there is nothing to be found in their cabin.

## MR. BIG DILL

Instead of the distinct smell of garlic, the cabin of **MR. BIG DILL** reeks of a combination of cigar smoke and pickle brine. When the characters knock on the door or enter the cabin, read or paraphrase the following:

Curls of cigar smoke climb from a foodfolk obscured by a newspaper. Before you can speak, his gravelly voice begins, "About time you came to clean up this mess. I need another coffee while you're—"

The foodfolk, an off-putting pickle veggie wearing sunglasses and a single earring, lowers his newspaper and stops short.

"And just who the hell are you?" he croaks out, a fat cigar hanging from his mouth.

Mr. Big Dill at first looks ready to dismiss the characters out of his cabin without a second thought (as he initially assumed they were the train's attendants), but quickly sizes them up and changes tact. He introduces himself as "Mr. Big Dill, but you can call me Dilly" and provides business cards for "Dill Talent Agency." A **DC 14 INTELLIGENCE (HISTORY) CHECK** recognizes the name from the credits of big-name movies, but a check that beats a **DC 19** also recalls a news story about untrustworthy business contracts credited to the company.

Mr. Big Dill singles out the character with the highest Strength or Charisma score and makes a pitch:

"I see a lot of talent in my industry and, boy, you've got *'it!*' You should come down to my office in the Big Apple for an audition. I'll make you a star!"

It doesn't take an Insight check to be suspicious of a talent agent recruiting someone for vague starring roles in movies, but Dill refuses to make a more concrete offer until the audition.

A **DC 12 INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION) OR WISDOM (PERCEPTION) CHECK** notices a few canine footprints marring the otherwise spotless floor. The growlic clearly slipped into his cabin, ran around madly for a moment, and left. Dill confirms that there was some racket, but that the growlic left as soon as it entered.

## LOCOMOTIVE

The frontmost car on the train is the locomotive, which houses the train's black-pepper-powered engine as well as its conductor and engineer. Usually, the engineer is preoccupied with monitoring the engine and driving the train, while at least one staff member shovels peppercorns into the engine's firebox. **MRS. CHAMPIGNON**, the conductor, alternates between the locomotive and the staff car to ensure everything is running properly. Currently, however, the conductor is frantically chasing **MINCY** the growlic around the cramped locomotive. Read or paraphrase the following:

Usually, the locomotive of such a prestigious train is a well-organized command center of levers and dials, watched over by Jamie Carr, the human engineer. However, the smooth operation of the train is impeded by a panicked growlic—a round onion-shaped canine—which is running in circles and yapping incoherently. For a brief moment, the growlic leaps onto the brake lever, causing a shrill screech of steel-on-steel and a momentary lurch of the entire train.

A **DC 16 WISDOM (ANIMAL HANDLING) OR DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) CHECK** catches the growlic. If the characters fail to catch it twice, the growlic retreats to the passenger car, where it remains until they manage to capture it. The conductor thanks the characters profusely and asks that they take Mincy as far from this car as possible. She equips them with a leash and lets them decide on the dog's fate: a kennel in the baggage car or the watchful grasp of her owner, Heff T.

Proceed to *Murder!*

# MURDER!

As the characters pass back through the passenger cabins, Mincy the growlic alerts them to a terrible crime, which kicks off a murder-mystery story in earnest. Read or paraphrase the following:

As you walk back down the long hall of the passenger cabins, Mincy the growlic begins to bark furiously at cabin number three. It whines and scratches at the door and nuzzles the gap beneath it. After a moment of getting the dog under control, you notice the sinister presence of a handkerchief stained with a dark liquid pulled partway underneath the door.

Pulling the handkerchief free reveals that half of it is drenched with a sticky substance, not unlike chocolate syrup. The handkerchief is monogrammed with “RBJ.” No one answers the door, which is locked from the inside. A **DC 11 WISDOM (INSIGHT) CHECK** intuits that something is very wrong inside cabin number three.

A **DC 15 DEXTERITY (THIEVES’ TOOLS) OR DC 20 STRENGTH CHECK** opens the door to the cabin, revealing a grisly scene. Read or paraphrase the following:

A brownie crumbkin wearing a once-white suit lies face down on the floor in a pool of blood. Evidently, there was a struggle and this unnamed brownie was bludgeoned to death. One clean blow at the back of the head has done most of the work.

The conductor appears behind you, takes one look at the cabin, and promptly faints.

A **DC 12 WISDOM (MEDICINE) CHECK** revives the conductor; otherwise, two attendants arrive a minute later to revive her. Once awoken, the conductor places two attendants outside cabin number three to keep it out of public view and collects the characters in the locomotive to discuss the situation. She reveals the following details:

- The Gourmet Express has never had so much as an accidental death, to say nothing of a murder.
- The train has been moving for less than an hour, and several hours of travel remain before reaching the first stop.
- The characters were the only passengers to board at Aygo, and never got near cabin number three

unsupervised, and so are the only passengers with a clear alibi at the moment.

- The victim is registered on the passenger list as one “Mr. Tony Starch,” and was traveling alone.
- The perpetrator of this crime must be on board!

The conductor, therefore, asks the characters to aid in the investigation. After all, they are adventuring types with a diverse array of skills. She believes the most fruitful approach is the following:

1. Investigate the crime scene
2. Interview the passengers
3. Search for physical evidence

The characters have some leeway in improvising these steps, but the conductor begins the process by collecting the passengers in the dining car. Proceed to *Investigating the Crime Scene* or the optional *Nancy Roux* introduction.

## NANCY ROUX

To give the characters extra guidance, you can implement one additional NPC, the brilliant teenage detective, Nancy Roux, who the staff discovers stowed away in the baggage car (stuffed into a very large suitcase). Read or paraphrase the following:

A dour crumbkin attendant marches into the room with a cherry red gummy, and both attempt to address the conductor at the same time. The attendant begins, “Mrs. Champignon, we’ve discovered a—”

“I’m Nancy Roux, teenage detective!” chirps the gummy, brandishing a magnifying glass.

“... a stowaway,” continues the attendant, undeterred.

“And I can help you solve this case!” Nancy continues.

The conductor lets out an exasperated sigh.

The conductor is more than happy to let the young Nancy Roux accompany the party, especially if it means that the murder is solved and none of you get into trouble.

Nancy is a small, cherry red gummy who carries a magnifying glass wherever she goes. More than anything, she loves solving mysteries and will follow the party along on their investigation, ensuring they don’t miss essential details (which are marked with an asterisk [\*]).

## INVESTIGATING THE CRIME SCENE

The characters have free reign to investigate cabin number three, as long as they disturb as little of the crime scene as possible. Instead of allowing the players to make broad ability checks to investigate the cabin, ask them to investigate very specific aspects of it. To introduce this scene in detail, read or paraphrase the following:

The cabin is in total disarray. The contents of a small suitcase has been spread chaotically across the bed, and the drawers of the small writing desk have been thrust open. A bloodied implement, a silver-handled cane, has been discarded next to the body. The window is cracked open, as is the door to the cabin's small water closet.

The following sections detail specific elements which will be fruitful for investigation. Players should indicate exactly which elements of the crime scene they investigate before making a relevant check.

### THE BODY

A **DC 12 WISDOM (MEDICINE) OR INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION) CHECK** discovers the following information regarding the body of Tony Starch:

- \* The body is still warm to the touch; the death must have happened since you boarded.
- \* The victim suffered blows to the face, but the blow to the back of the head killed them.
- \* The victim is wearing a fake goatee, for some reason.
- The body has no other injuries, but both hands have some blood on them.

If a character beats a **DC 15**, they also learn the following:

- There is a small patch on the victim's left ring finger devoid of blood.

### POCKETS

The victim's white suit is stained with chocolatey blood. A **DC 12 INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION) OR WISDOM (PERCEPTION) CHECK** reveals the following details:

- The victim's pockets are turned out. It seems someone already searched the body.
- \* The victim isn't carrying a wallet.
- \* The victim has nothing in their pockets except the key to their cabin.
- \* The victim has a small, empty glass vial hidden in an internal coat pocket.

### THE BED

The victim's possessions have been thoroughly and chaotically spread out on the bed. A **DC 12 INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION) OR WISDOM (PERCEPTION) CHECK** reveals the following details:

- The clothes look to be finely made, but many of the labels have been cut off.
- The towels, specifically, have been roughly cut up, removing a few inches from the center of each one.
- The towels are also smeared with blood. The perpetrator probably used them to clean up.

If a character beats a **DC 15**, they also learn the following:

- A business card for "Dill Talent Agency" can be found in the pocket of one pair of slacks.

### THE WINDOW, WATER CLOSET, AND DESK

A **DC 13 INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION) CHECK** finds some faint smears of blood on the inside of the window, indicating that some small, bloodied objects were tossed from the moving train. The water closet and desk contain no relevant clues.

### THE CANE

The conductor or an attendant can confirm that the cane found next to the victim belonged to them. It contains no obvious clues.

### WRAPPING UP

When the players are finished investigating the crime scene, the conductor secures the door and places an attendant in front of it to dissuade curious onlookers. Proceed to the *Interviews* section.

# INTERVIEWS

The conductor has gathered the passengers into the dining car for an announcement about the murder. This will then begin a series of interviews in the staff car. Read or paraphrase the following:

The dining car is crowded with anxious and perturbed faces, who fall silent as the conductor, Mrs. Champignon, emerges from the staff car.

"I sincerely apologize for the inconvenience, but there has been a shocking tragedy aboard our fair train. One of our passengers has passed away. We suspect... foul play."

Gasps and murmurs momentarily overtake the room. The conductor continues:

"I trust you that each of you will give honest testimony until such time as the authorities can take over. Thank you in advance for your patience and cooperation. Your safety is our top priority."

The players can choose the order in which to interview the suspects, and can simultaneously search the interviewee's cabin for evidence. The following people have booked passage on the Gourmet Express:

- **MR. BIG DILL.** A pickle veggie comping a cigar while ordering yet another coffee from the attendants. His unbuttoned shirt and diamond earring mark him out as one of the most sloppily-dressed among the passengers.
- **HEFF T. BOYD.** An overweight puft adorned in a luxurious crimson bathrobe, holding a pet growlic that is stinking up the cabin.
- **CARA MELL AND ROCKIE ROW.** A pair of frostlings nervously holding hands.
- **THE PUMPKIDS (ANDY, BRANDY, MANDY, AND SANDY).** Four pumpkids pile into two chairs and refuse to hold still for even a moment.
- **MS. FLORETTE LEEDS.** A bookish broccoli veggie with a cast on one arm who stirs uncomfortably in her wheelchair.
- **DOCTOR BAKENSTEIN.** A familiar and sinister face—Doctor Bakenstein—a crumbkin wearing a white lab coat and elaborate goggles, calmly sipping tea.

## MR. BIG DILL

When the characters begin their interview with Mr. Big Dill, read or paraphrase the following:

Rather than distraught or afraid, Mr. Big Dill alternates between sipping a coffee, chomping a cigar, and furiously writing the bones of a screenplay.

"What a script! Now, who to cast... Robbie's gonna love this..." he murmurs between sips of coffee.

When pressed, Dill will cooperate with the investigation at hand by answering questions, but seems to think the murder is better fare for a movie plot than an actual threat to his life.

### DILL'S CABIN

The characters may have entered Mr. Big Dill's cabin earlier in the adventure. It remains untidy and plagued by the mixed scent of cigars and brine. A **DC 13 INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION) OR WISDOM (PERCEPTION) CHECK** discovers that Dill has a suitcase filled with contracts and financial papers among his possessions. Many have signatures, some do not. If the characters know to investigate "Robert Brownie Jr.," they find an unsigned contract to renegotiate his contract with the studio, extending his career by another five years in exchange for an incredible sum in payment. A **DC 15 INTELLIGENCE CHECK** reveals that the fine print of the contract includes well-hidden terms that heavily favor Dill himself, doubling his normal agent's rate.

### DILL'S INFORMATION

At the onset of the investigation, Mr. Big Dill knows that Robert Brownie Jr. is looking to retire from acting, but doesn't know that he was on the train, or indeed, that Brownie used a fake name. He won't dwell too much on information about Brownie until the characters make him aware that "Tony Starch" and Robert Brownie Jr. are one and the same.

A **CHARISMA (INTIMIDATION OR PERSUASION) CHECK** reveals details on a variety of topics, which are listed with relevant DCs and accompanying quotes:

**"TONY STARCH, WHO?" (DC 10).** Mr. Big Dill has never heard of a passenger named "Tony Starch." In fact, the only passenger he spoke with before being called to the dining car was Ms. Florette Leeds, who he was surprised to see on the train.

**“ON BUSINESS” (DC 10).** Mr. Big Dill is traveling back to the Big Apple to continue preparing for an upcoming movie.

**“I’M A TALENT AGENT, SO WHAT?” (DC 15).** Mr. Big Dill is a talent agent for dozens of big-name actors and actresses. Despite his slovenly appearance, Dill is an influential name in the movie-making business, and a wealthy one at that.

**“ROBBIE IS ONE OF MY CLIENTS” (DC 13).** If Mr. Big Dill is questioned about “Robbie” (but not specifically “Robert Brownie Jr.”), he says that it’s one of his big stars in need of a new role. For the story to progress smoothly, Dill doesn’t refer to “Robert Brownie Jr.” by name until the characters make him aware that, in fact, Brownie is the murdered party.

**“THAT LEEDS GIRL IS A BRIGHT ONE” (DC 15).** Mr. Big Dill has worked with Ms. Florette Leeds on a number of movies. Her specialty is various types of alchemical services: special effects like explosions, potions to make people look younger, makeup, and the like.

**“THOSE PUMPKIDS ARE ALWAYS UP TO NO GOOD!” (DC 8).** Dill suspects the pumpkids, Andy, Brandy, Mandy, and Sandy, of committing the murder, perhaps accidentally. He witnessed at least one of them attempting to steal a pocket watch from the conductor before getting on the train.

**“MY CARD? HOW IN THE DEVIL...” (DC 10).** If the characters discovered the card for “Dill Talent Agency” on the body of Tony Starch, Dill claims to be absolutely dumbfounded how it ended up there, though he’ll admit to giving it out liberally. A DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check believes his confusion to be genuine.

#### DILL’S INFORMATION ON ROBERT BROWNIE JR.

Once Mr. Big Dill is made aware of the fact that the murder victim is his client, Robert Brownie Jr., the characters can ask him more detailed questions about his relationship with the victim. Dill’s expression goes from that of a snickering opportunist to a jilted businessman. A **CHARISMA (INTIMIDATION OR PERSUASION) CHECK** reveals the following information, which Dill provides with a mixture of sadness and frustration.

**“ROBBIE WAS GOING TO RETIRE...” (DC 13).** Mr. Big Dill was recently made aware (by a tabloid journalist, of all people) that Robert Brownie Jr. was seeking retirement. As Brownie is his biggest client, this would be disastrous for Dill and his talent

agency. Dill, however, was confident that he could renegotiate the contract with the studio and entice Brownie to stay on for another slate of movies. As Dill puts it, “You don’t kill the golden goose!” A **DC 18 WISDOM (INSIGHT) CHECK** believes that Dill, at least, finds this reasoning convincing.

**“IT’S JUST BUSINESS!” (DC 15).** If the characters confront Dill with the potentially dubious contract written for Robert Brownie Jr., Dill argues that he was just getting the best possible deal, and what he was doing isn’t strictly-speaking illegal. A **DC 14 INTELLIGENCE CHECK** questions this fact: lying to your client about your rate is most definitely illegal.

## HEFF T. BOYD

Heff T. insisted on having his dinner served as promptly as possible and chomps at a multi-course meal while answering questions. When the characters begin their interview with Heff T. Boyd, read or paraphrase the following:

Heff T. Boyd is preoccupied scarfing down a meal, more so than answering questions. If the puft is nervous, the murder simply didn’t put him off his appetite. His answers come between crunching and slurping sounds.

Boyd agrees that the situation is “quite shocking” and “most appalling,” but orders seconds regardless.

#### HEFF T.’S CABIN

Cabin number two, belonging to Heff T. Boyd is right next to the victim’s cabin. The cabin is orderly and contains multiple carry-on bags, mostly empty. An **INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION) OR WISDOM (PERCEPTION) CHECK** reveals the following details:

**BOTTLES AND VIALS (DC 10).** Most of Heff T.’s carry-on bags are filled with innumerable vials and potion bottles, most of which are branded with “Heff T.’s” branding. Many vials are unlabeled.

**LOCKBOX LEDGERS (DC 10).** One case contains a locked box, which requires a **DC 13 DEXTERITY (THIEVES’ TOOLS) CHECK** to open. Inside are a number of extraordinary complex ledgers, containing hundreds of names and dense calculations. A **DC 15 INTELLIGENCE CHECK** deciphers the book as calculating profit shares, in addition to other things.

## HEFF T.'S INFORMATION

A **CHARISMA (INTIMIDATION OR PERSUASION) CHECK** reveals details on a variety of topics, which are listed with relevant DCs and accompanying quotes:

**"I'M HERE FOR THE FIRST-CLASS DINING EXPERIENCE!" (DC 8).** Heff T. claims he is travelling on the Gourmet Express specifically for the food.

**"I NEVER GO ANYWHERE WITHOUT MINCY!" (DC 8).** Heff T. can't imagine being apart from his pet growlic for even a moment.

**"SURELY THAT BAKENSTEIN FELLOW IS UP TO SOMETHING" (DC 8).** Heff T. claims that he gets a real "supervillain" vibe from Doctor Bakenstein, and insists that he must have something to do with the murder.

**"ONLY THE FINEST INGREDIENTS" (DC 10).** If questioned about his potions, Heff T. switches demeanor entirely, and even stops eating for a few minutes. Heff T. owns a line of bespoke potions which he claims can "restore your health and youth"! He is happy to rattle off the various things his potions can cure. A **DC 15 WISDOM (MEDICINE) CHECK** guesses that these potions couldn't possibly cure all of these diseases and ailments, even if they were properly magical.

Furthermore, Heff T. launches into a diatribe about how you can "get rich in only a few months and be your own boss" by selling his potions. This scheme involves purchasing potions to sell and recruiting other potion-sellers to also sell potions, increasing your potion of profits overall. Any character with a **WISDOM SCORE OF 8 OR LOWER** is enthralled by this proposal, but anyone else can easily recognize it as a scam.

**"MAYBE THAT POOR FELLOW WAS A FAN OF MY PRODUCTS?" (DC 13).** Heff T. reacts strongly to the assertion that one of his potions was found on the body of Tony Starch. The vial found on the body closely matches the type in Heff T.'s bags, but doesn't contain his branding. Furthermore, Heff T. asserts that nothing in his potions could possibly poison anyone.

**"THE EFFECTS MIGHT BE... EXAGGERATED" (DC 20).** Heff T. remains steadfast on his assertion that his potions are of the finest quality until the discussion implies that Tony Starch was poisoned. At last, he sheepishly admits that his potions are "mostly water, with some juice additives." Even if the vial was one of his, it couldn't have poisoned anyone.

## CARA MELL AND ROCKIE ROW

The frostling couple endures the interview with locked hands. When the characters begin their interview with Cara and Rockie, read or paraphrase the following:

It would be quite impossible to separate the frightened frostlings from one another for separate interviews. The amber-colored Cara Mell is practically quivering with anxiety and repeatedly asks "Are we safe? How do you know the murder isn't coming after one of us next?"

Cara and Rockie are easily the youngest passengers, apart from the pumpkids, and have been riddled with anxiety over the events of the investigation. They can scarcely imagine that anyone on the train could be a murderer.

### CARA AND ROCKIE'S CABIN

The characters might have seen this cabin already, and find it tidied up from last time. An **INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION) OR WISDOM (PERCEPTION) CHECK** reveals the following details:

\* **PHOTOS OF THE VICTIM (DC 12).** An envelope of large, glossy, professional photos show the victim—Tony Starch—alternately smiling or looking serious in front of some vague photography backdrops. Unlike in the cabin, the victim isn't wearing a fake goatee. These headshots show the victim wearing a prominent ring with a gleaming rock candy emerald on their left hand.

**ALCHEMY TEXTBOOK (DC 10).** This textbook on alchemy is highlighted and annotated with margin notes. Every few pages have notes or homework pages closed between them.

**MAP OF THE BIG APPLE (DC 16).** The map of the Big Apple which the characters might have seen earlier was folded up and placed in the alchemy textbook. The map has dozens of circled locations, some with notes. One specific circle contains the note "Robert Brownie!"

### CARA AND ROCKIE'S INFORMATION

Cara and Rockie don't try to hide anything, but know some tidbits of information that might yet elude the party. A **CHARISMA (INTIMIDATION OR PERSUASION) CHECK** reveals details on a variety of topics, which are listed with relevant DCs and accompanying quotes:

**JUST ON VACATION (DC 10).** Cara and Rockie are en route to the Big Apple, where they intend to see some common tourist destinations, as well as the homes of some celebrities. Cara, in particular, would like to snag some autographs, whereas Rockie thinks that it's a waste of time. For a few moments, the couple's anxiety melts away, replaced with friction and argumentation that's a bit uncomfortable to listen to.

**"ARE YOU SURE IT'S NOT THAT DILL CHARACTER?" (DC 10).** Rockie points the finger at Mr. Big Dill. In their brief interaction, Mr. Big Dill tried to convince Rockie to come down to Dill Talent Agency in the Big Apple for an audition, which Rockie finds inordinately suspicious.

**\*"THAT'S ROBERT BROWNIE JR.!" (DC 10).** If confronted with their photos of the victim, Cara pushes back: that couldn't possibly be the victim! That's the famous actor Robert Brownie Jr.! If this is indeed true, then the actor was traveling under the alias of "Tony Starch" to avoid unwanted attention.

**A DEGREE IN ALCHEMY (DC 14).** Cara and Rockie are students. While Cara is getting a business degree, Rockie is working towards a degree in Alchemical Studies. He is shocked at the implication that he might have anything to do with the vial found on the victim's body. A **DC 13 WISDOM (INSIGHT) CHECK** discerns that he is telling the truth.

## THE PUMPKIDS

When the characters begin their interview with the four pumpkinid siblings—Andy, Brandy, Mandy, and Sandy—read or paraphrase the following:

The four pumpkinid siblings are a constant hive of giggling and movement, making it impossible to keep track of which one is Andy, Brandy, Mandy, or Sandy. To make matters worse, one of the pumpkinids begins humming loudly, starting an impromptu game of musical chairs, which the quartet begins playing almost as soon as the interview begins.

The pumpkinids aren't at all concerned about murders or murderers on the train. It's not clear whether they're extremely used to death or treating the entire matter like a game.

## THE PUMPKIDS' CABIN

It looks like a bomb went off in this cabin. The pumpkinids' possessions, as well as dozens of items they've acquired since boarding the train, are strewn everywhere about the cabin. An **INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION) OR WISDOM (PERCEPTION) CHECK** reveals the following details:

**\*Stolen Wallet (DC 14).** This leather bill fold contains no money, but does contain photo identification for one "Robert Brownie Jr." The picture looks eerily like the victim, minus the fake moustache or bruises.

**Pocket Watch (DC 16).** This gold pocket watch is engraved with an elaborate mushroom pattern and the name "Champignon." Surely, it belongs to the conductor.

**Adhesive Bottle (DC 21).** A few flecks of reddish-brown substance stain part of this small bottle of adhesive. A **DC 14 WISDOM (MEDICINE OR PERCEPTION) CHECK** identifies it as being the same color as the victim's blood. The bottle advertises itself as being "safe for skin application."

## THE PUMPKIDS' INFORMATION

The pumpkinids have been on a pickpocketing spree since getting aboard the Gourmet Express, and are resistant to answering any questions which might implicate them. A **CHARISMA (INTIMIDATION OR PERSUASION) CHECK** reveals details on a variety of topics, which are listed with relevant DCs and accompanying quotes. The characters have advantage on a Persuasion check to identify who the pumpkinids stole from if they first promise that none of the pumpkinids will get in trouble for the theft.

**Off to see family (DC 10).** The pumpkinids are traveling to see family in the Big Apple. Depending on which pumpkinid responds, they rattle off a different list of cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents who reside there.

**Haven't hurt anyone! (DC 13).** A **DC 13 WISDOM (INSIGHT) CHECK** can plainly see the pumpkinids acting guilty whenever the topic of their behavior on the train comes up. However, the oldest and most mature of the siblings, Sandy, insists that they haven't hurt anyone with any of their pranks. In stark contrast, one of the youngest, Brandy, jokes that they should set up some banana peels and see if they can get someone to fall out of the train.

**\*"We stole that from the brownie fella!" (DC 15).** The pumpkinids say that they stole the wallet from the "brownie with the goatee" when he

was boarding the train. This would confirm that the victim isn't "Tony Starch," but in fact Robert Brownie Jr. traveling under an alias. Perhaps the perpetrator searched for the wallet on the body to dispose of it, but the pumpkids had already stolen it. The pumpkids refuse to give back any of the money they took from the wallet.

**"Do we have to give that back to the mean conductor?" (DC 15).** The pumpkids stole the conductor's pocket watch in the hope that the train wouldn't be on time. Despite this, the conductor keeps a rigorous timetable for the journey.

**"That was in the baggage car!" (DC 15).** The unusual adhesive bottle was evidently taken from the baggage car. How or when one of the pumpkids managed to sneak through the staff car to plunder the baggage car is beyond you. The characters should investigate the baggage car after the interviews are finished.

## MS. FLORETTE LEEDS

An attendant escorts Ms. Florette Leeds into the staff car, as her wheelchair would otherwise be too tight to maneuver. When the characters begin their interview with him, read or paraphrase the following:

"What dreadful business," frets the veggie, "It's just like one of my mystery novels!"

From a pouch on her wheelchair, Ms. Florette Leeds produces a small hardcover book titled, "The Hound of Baskergrille."

Ms. Florette Leeds is keenly interested in the progress of the case and continually compares it to popular mystery stories.

### MS. LEEDS'S CABIN

Ms. Leeds's cabin is spotless and it doesn't contain any bags whatsoever.

### MS. LEEDS'S INFORMATION

A **CHARISMA (INTIMIDATION OR PERSUASION) CHECK** reveals details on a variety of topics, which are listed with relevant DCs and accompanying quotes:

**"I just love mystery stories!" (DC 10).** Ms. Leeds is thrilled to talk about the details of the case and compare it to stories she has read, like the "Hound of Baskergrille" she just recently finished. She offers advice laden with cliches, like "make sure one of the butlers didn't do it" and "are we certain the victim doesn't have a twin?"

**"I keep everything I need in this chair" (DC 10).** If the characters ask about Ms. Leeds's belongings, she remarks that most of her baggage is in the baggage car, and she keeps the bare essentials with her wheelchair. This seemed easier than dealing with carry-on luggage. With a further **DC 14 CHARISMA (PERSUASION) CHECK**, the characters can search the pockets on her wheelchair, discovering a romance novel and some hygiene products.

**"If there's a financial motive, I'd look into Mr. Dill" (DC 12).** Ms. Leeds directs the party to look into Mr. Big Dill, even if they're unaware of the victim's true identity. By her reasoning, someone like Mr. Dill pushes a lot of money around and could have something to gain from this victim. This reasoning might be tenuous, Ms. Leeds phrases it speculatively enough that she doesn't cast much suspicion upon herself.

**"Partial paralysis, I'm afraid" (DC 14).** If asked why she uses a wheelchair, Ms. Leeds remarks that she is paralyzed from the waist down. She refuses to go into details about the cause of the paralysis. If pressed with a **DC 20 CHARISMA (PERSUASION) CHECK**, she remarks that the event was recent, and declines to say more.

**"I'm a freelancer. I work with a lot of clients" (DC 14).** If questioned about her relationship with Mr. Big Dill, Ms. Leeds explains that she works as a freelance alchemist on many projects. For one of Mr. Big Dill's movie productions, she made flash powder for dramatic fake explosions and potions to hide the stars' wrinkles on camera. It was a fun job, but required difficult hours.

## DOCTOR BAKENSTEIN

If the characters played previous adventures in Cakewalk, they might have encountered the evil Doctor Bakenstein, a mad crumbkin scientist. When the characters begin their interview with him, read or paraphrase the following:

"A murder?" scoffs the crumbkin Doctor Bakenstein. He chuckles, then laughs, then devolves into a mad cackle, "Muahahahaha!"

"But in all seriousness, I'm just transporting some of my experiments to the Big Apple. I'm sure one of these other kind people is your murderer."

Doctor Bakenstein has proven himself to be thoroughly evil in previous adventures, but he's happy to cooperate with the investigation. If the players break from their established roles as detectives and attempt to harm Bakenstein, he activates a teleporter device hidden in his lab coat, causing him to vanish in a flash of orange light, leaving behind the scent of toast.

### DOCTOR BAKENSTEIN'S CABIN

Doctor Bakenstein's cabin was directly adjacent to cabin number three, but thorough inspection fails to find anything of note in his cabin. It would appear that the evil doctor travels with no fewer than three white lab coats and a dozen pairs of warm socks.

### DOCTOR BAKENSTEIN'S INFORMATION

An **INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION) OR WISDOM (PERCEPTION) CHECK** reveals the following details, which are listed with relevant DCs and accompanying quotes:

***"Have you looked into that Leeds girl?" (DC 10).*** Doctor Bakenstein has a hunch about Ms. Florette Leeds but won't elaborate further.

***Bakenstein's Alibi (DC 14).*** At the presumed time of the murder, Doctor Bakenstein was in the baggage car with multiple attendants checking on his cargo. The attendants will confirm this story, but don't know precisely what the doctor is transporting.

***"Don't investigate my cargo" (DC 10).*** Doctor Bakenstein flatly refuses to tell the party what he's transporting on the Gourmet Express and insinuates that there will be negative repercussions if they investigate it. The characters should investigate the baggage car after the interviews are finished.

***"As if anyone would be fooled by that goatee!" (DC 14).*** If anyone mentions Robert Brownie Jr., Doctor Bakenstein readily admits to having noticed the celebrity on board. He's happy to see the party dumbfounded if they haven't discovered that the victim is actually Robert Brownie Jr. In his time, Doctor Bakenstein has met plenty of pastryarch celebrities and could tell that Robert Brownie Jr. was trying to travel incognito. However, Doctor Bakenstein adds that "he should have removed his signature ring if he didn't want to be noticed!"

## CARGO COMPLICATIONS

When the characters have finished passenger interviews, they can search the baggage car to uncover additional clues. When they enter this car, read or paraphrase the following:

In stark contrast to the opulent decor of the passenger cars, the baggage car is a strictly functional space: multi-tiered shelves on either side contain dozens of suitcases of various sizes, whereas the center space is stacked high with wooden crates and other heavy cargo, some belonging to the passengers, and others shipments that the railroad company has agreed to transport with the passenger line.

The baggage car is lightly obscured and contains little room to maneuver. The various tags and shipping labels affixed to packages and crates can only be read when a character is within 5 feet of a package. As the characters explore the baggage car, the following pieces of cargo prove to be interesting:

- **Bakenstein's Mysterious Cargo.** Frontmost in the baggage car is an imposing crate belonging to Doctor Bakenstein that the characters must squeeze around to avoid.
- **Tony Starch's Suitcases.** Two matching white suitcases with gold zippers have been loaded near the rear of the baggage car.
- **Ms. Leeds's Luggage.** Ms. Leeds has packed dozens of suitcases and shipped at least one large crate with her.

Encourage the characters to investigate the entire baggage car before leaving. Once the characters have uncovered the critical information (in Ms. Leeds's luggage) and leave the area, the plot progresses to *Dangerous Denouement!*

## BAKENSTEIN'S MYSTERIOUS CARGO

Doctor Bakenstein's cargo is a 10-foot-cube wooden crate marked with stamps and shipping labels from all over Yumm. Despite its sturdy construction, the walls are each secured by a single wooden bar. Prying one of these bars free with a **DC 15 STRENGTH (ATHLETICS) CHECK** reveals the following scene:

The contents of the imposing wooden crate are surprisingly sparse: a solitary cocktail table supporting an impressive wedding cake flanked by a perimeter of matching cupcakes. Four silver candelabras stand in the corners of the crate, each with candles matching those decorating the cupcakes.

The candelabras are elegant but nonmagical, as are their candles. A character that chooses to investigate the cake or cupcakes, or lights any candle, awakens the **CAKE MIMIC** and five **CUPCAKE MIMICS** that slumber on the table. **ROLL INITIATIVE.**

A character can retrieve their weapons, armor, and other equipment by using an action.

Two of the cupcake mimics and the cake mimic fight to the death, while the remaining two cupcake mimics attempt to flee towards the staff car. The cake mimic's sugary body contains a string of pearls worth 800 gp, which Doctor Bakenstein was evidently trying to smuggle away from the kingdoms of Candia.

If the fleeing cupcake mimics reach the staff car, they scurry into the kitchen and lie in wait among Chef Monsieur Boysen's dessert for the evening: dozens of red velvet cupcakes. A **DC 20 INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION) CHECK** discovers a critical clue that reveals which cupcakes are actually dangerous mimics. Otherwise, the characters must use a systematic approach to hunt down and destroy the remaining cupcake mimics.

## TONY STARCH'S SUITCASES

Tony Starch (who by now the characters likely know was actually Robert Brownie Jr.) checked two suitcases matching his spotless white suit. Each suitcase is secured with a small padlock, which can be removed with a **DC 15 STRENGTH (ATHLETICS) OR DEXTERITY (THIEVES' TOOLS) CHECK**. When the characters search these suitcases, read or paraphrase the following:

Atop a neatly folded pile of clothing and silken underwear is a crisp handwritten letter, reading in part:

“Never in my dramatic career have I witnessed a betrayal so foul. As my agent, you already take a generous 10% of my wage. Now you seek to have me killed!? Shall you slip cyanide into my drink or stab me in the back, I wonder? No matter your schemes, you shan’t get away with it, Dilly!”

It is signed, “Robert Brownie Jr.”

This letter in no uncertain terms implicates Mr. Big Dill for the crime of murdering Robert Brownie Jr. Furthermore, a second sealed letter contains a signed and updated copy of Brownie’s last will and testament. This document states that, in the event of Brownie’s untimely death, all of his assets should be transferred to “Ms. Florette Leeds, the kindest girl I’ve ever met in the movie business.”

If the players are completely convinced by this piece of evidence and wish to arrest Mr. Big Dill immediately, Nancy Roux or the conductor advises caution and implies that some of the facts don’t add up. The characters should at least investigate Ms. Leeds’s luggage before returning to the dining car.

## MS. LEEDS’S LUGGAGE

It would seem that Ms. Leeds packed for a very long journey: she checked a dozen bags, and one small crate containing personal belongings. Her bags include clothing, photo albums, books, and other mundane essentials. In addition, one of her bags is strikingly utilitarian, with a rigid frame and many small pouches: a portable alchemy kit. When the characters find this clue, read or paraphrase the following:

You’ve never seen such an ingenious storage solution: on the outside, dozens of pouches marked with alchemical symbols or short notes, and on the inside, all the essentials of an alchemy lab. Vials, beakers, burners, filters, and more in a single convenient package. Stranger still, it seems to have been recently used!

Truly, this case contains a dozen tricks of movie magic, but one clue stands out among the rest: a large glass jug that might have contained over a gallon of brownish blood, not unlike chocolate syrup. Now, it contains only the gory residue. However, a **DC 13 WISDOM (PERCEPTION) OR**

**INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION) CHECK** notices that the residue isn’t gory at all: traces of cocoa powder and copper compounds indicate that this is remarkably convincing fake blood!

Furthermore, a **DC 15 INTELLIGENCE (ALCHEMIST’S SUPPLIES OR ARCANA) CHECK** can deduce what the rest of the alchemy kit was recently used for: a potion of paralysis that slows the heart rate and breathing to convincingly replicate death.

A compartment on the side of the case contains wax disguise props, including things like fake noses and ears, as well as fake injuries, like cuts and stab wounds. One of the included skin-safe adhesives might be used to attach it to a subject, where makeup can be used to match the skin tone. The case even includes a half-used case of cocoa-colored makeup.

With these clues in hand, the players are free to make their deductions and proceed to *Dangerous Denouement*.

# DANGEROUS DENOUEMENT

When the characters return from the baggage car, it is time to wrap up the mystery, addressing the collected passengers with the evidence collected. Note that the denouement scene is optional. If the characters wish to head to the passenger car and investigate the body of “Tony Starch” directly, the story progresses to the *Train Trouble* section early.

To begin the denouement, read or paraphrase the following:

The dining car falls to a hush as the conductor announces, “I believe we have reached a swift and decisive conclusion. Shall our investigators lay out the case?”

All eyes fall on you to explain the details of the case and arrive at a compelling conclusion.

This scene can be open-ended or more directed, according to the players’ temperament. For an open-ended scene, allow the players to lay out their evidence and arguments against their main suspect in any order they choose. For a more directed scene, go around the table asking players to answer the following questions (answers in parentheses), providing evidence where necessary:

- At first blush, what did the murder weapon appear to be, and how was the victim killed? (*The victim was bludgeoned to death with their own cane.*)
- What other clues were found on the body? (*A glass vial and a fake goatee.*)
- Who was the victim and why did he conceal his identity? (*The victim was actually the famous actor Robert Brownie Jr., who was traveling incognito to avoid being recognized.*)
- What did the pumpkids steal that proves this? (*They stole Brownie’s wallet, which contained positive identification.*)
- Why did Cara Mell have photos of the victim and the location of his house on a map? (*Cara Mell is an innocent, if obsessive, fan of Robert Brownie Jr.’s movies looking for an autograph.*)
- What does Robert Brownie Jr. wear in all of his autographs? (*An emerald rock candy ring.*)
- Why was Heff T. Boyd found with matching glass vials? (*Heff T. is a con man selling harmless, fake potions.*)

- What was Doctor Bakenstein’s purpose on the train? (*The doctor was transporting a cake mimic experiment, which contained smuggled pearls. He wasn’t involved in the murder.*)
- What was Mr. Big Dill’s relationship with the victim, and what did he want from him? (*Mr. Big Dill is Robert Brownie Jr.’s agent and wanted to coerce Brownie into signing an extended contract instead of retiring. He planned to make even more money on this with a crooked contract.*)
- Why didn’t Mr. Big Dill kill the victim? (*Mr. Big Dill doesn’t make any money if Brownie is dead. This is the opposite of what he wants.*)
- How does Ms. Leeds know the victim? (*She worked closely with Brownie on a movie, in which the two fell in love.*)
- Why isn’t she guilty of killing Robert Brownie Jr.? (*Because he’s not dead! Brownie faked his own death to finally retire and elope with Ms. Leeds. Ms. Leeds used a paralysis potion, fake blood, and plenty of movie magic to sell the effect.*)

When the characters have made this final point, proceed to *Train Trouble*.

## TRAIN TROUBLE

In this section, all is revealed in a dramatic battle! Read or paraphrase the following:

Just as you make your final accusations to the gasps of an enraptured audience, a slow clap punctuates the moment. A brownie crumbkin wearing a bloody white suit strides out of the passenger car and stands behind the wheelchair of Ms. Florette Leeds. He kisses her on the cheek and runs a hand through her broccoli hair, recovering an emerald ring hidden there.

“Well done, detectives!” announces Robert Brownie Jr., sardonically, “It would seem my performance wasn’t quite up to the task. But I’m afraid the show isn’t quite over. For if I can’t fake my death simply, we’ll have to make a bit of a mess in the process.”

At this announcement, Ms. Leeds stands out of her wheelchair, produces a small vial from the folds of her clothes, and tosses it, filling the room with a choking gas.

**ROBERT BROWNIE JR.** and **MS. FLORETTE LEEDS** flee the dining car toward the front of the train, beginning a short chase! The pair intend to disconnect the cars from the locomotive, which will cause the train to catastrophically derail. In order to stop them, the characters will have to make a series of group ability checks and play through a chase in three stages. If at least half the group succeeds a group check, the whole group succeeds. If the characters fail a group ability check, they suffer the consequences listed in the stages below. Let characters substitute making a check by employing clever tactics, and be liberal when awarding advantage or Inspiration for particularly canny solutions.

### STAGE 1: GAS!

The dining car fills with a sickly green cloud of choking gas that heavily obscures the area as Brownie and Leeds dash from the scene. Each character contributes to the group ability check by making a **DC 14 WISDOM (PERCEPTION) CHECK** to navigate the car blindly. If a character uses their action to break open a window, they automatically fail the check, but give each character following them advantage.

Characters can bypass this ability check by retreating from the dining car and climbing onto the top of the train with a **DC 11 STRENGTH (ATHLETICS) CHECK**. Those who choose to do this proceed to Stage 2.5 instead of Stage 2, performing a separate group ability check.

If the group ability check is a failure, the two characters with the lowest personal results are poisoned by the gas and have disadvantage on ability checks for the next stage of the chase.

### STAGE 2: FIRE!

As Ms. Leeds and Robert Brownie Jr. reach the far end of the passenger car, Ms. Leeds finishes mixing a firebomb and tosses it onto a cart loaded with linens in the narrow hallway, instantly sparking an inferno! Each character contributes to the group ability check by making a **DC 15 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) CHECK** to leap over the fire or a **DC 13 CONSTITUTION CHECK** to withstand the heat of the flames.

If the group ability check is a failure, the character with the lowest personal result takes 3d6 fire damage.

### STAGE 2.5: ATOP THE TRAIN

Wind whips past the characters who chose to run along the top of the train. They face a balancing act between speed and a perilous drop. Each character contributes to the group ability check by making a **DC 15 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) CHECK** to maintain their balance.

If the group ability check is a failure, any character with a personal result that failed to beat the saving throw DC slips from the train and nearly plummets onto the tracks. Such characters manage to cling to windows or elements of the cabin but are removed from the remainder of the chase.

### STAGE 3: JUNCTION JEOPARDY

The fleeing Robert Brownie Jr. and Ms. Florette Leeds pause at the open junction to the locomotive and work furiously to disconnect the cars. To this end, Ms. Leeds pours a hastily mixed acid concoction onto the junction connecting the cars, while Robert Brownie Jr. thrusts a shovel scavenged from the locomotive into the junction. Each character contributes to the group ability check by making a **DC 14 STRENGTH (ATHLETICS) CHECK OR DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) CHECK** to grapple the pair.

If the group ability check is a failure, the junction buckles, and the character with the lowest personal result that is still in the chase is left on the train cars as the locomotive separates and pulls away. If no characters are left on the locomotive, proceed to *Runaway Train!* Otherwise, proceed to *Locomotive Brawl*.

If the group check is a success, the train remains united. Proceed to *Ending the Chase*.

### LOCOMOTIVE BRAWL

The movie star and his mistress have managed to separate the train cars, but one or more characters remain on the locomotive, ready to stop them. Dozens of wrought iron tools, like fire pokers and shovels, can be used as improvised melee weapons that deal a d8 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage, as appropriate, on a hit. Robert Brownie Jr. and Ms. Leeds use the statistics of **FOODFOLK ADVENTURERS** with 15 HP each, wielding weapons that deal 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage on a hit.

When the couple is incapacitated, the characters can assist the engineer in the delicate task of slowing the locomotive to just the right speed to relink with the train cars. This process requires a **DC 13 INTELLIGENCE CHECK** as well as a **DC 13 STRENGTH**

**CHECK**, which can be performed by different characters or the same character, to pull the heavy emergency brake at just the right moment and with the right pressure. On a success, after a few minutes of screeching and sparks, the train cars glide neatly into position and the damaged junction can be temporarily repaired with heavy chains. On a failure, they slam into the locomotive, damaging the Gourmet Express, but allowing it to safely slow to a stop.

In either case, proceed to *Applecore Station*.

### RUNAWAY TRAIN!

The actor and his mistress have hijacked the locomotive and left the train cars to ride uncontrollably on the tracks. If nothing is done soon, the train will derail at the next bend!

The conductor directs the characters to a heavy emergency brake installed at the rear of the baggage car. A **DC 18 STRENGTH (ATHLETICS) CHECK** pulls the emergency brake hard enough to stop the train cars safely. A failure causes the train to derail and topple several times over. All of the passengers escape the catastrophe, but the Gourmet Express is left in ruin.

In any case, Robert Brownie Jr. and Ms. Leeds have escaped. The conductor eventually finds a curious item among the wreckage: Brownie's emerald ring, which upon close inspection, is actually one of the Seven Rings of the Onion King! At least the party is one step closer to uniting the set of rings.

### ENDING THE CHASE

The actor and his mistress are no match for a party of adventurers -- even unarmed adventurers. After a minute of scuffling and a few quick blows, Robert Brownie Jr. and Ms. Leeds are fully incapacitated. Their hasty plan to derail the Gourmet Express and escape on the locomotive meets a decisive end.

The conductor and staff restrain the pair in the baggage car for the remainder of the journey, which proves to be uneventful and comfortable, as most journeys on the Gourmet Express are. Proceed to *Applecore Station*.

## APPLECORE STATION

As the train pulls into Applecore Station, the conductor pulls the characters aside to thank each of them personally. She rewards the party with a cache of 1,600 gold pieces which was hidden in a secret compartment in Ms. Leeds's cargo. Additionally, the portofello hands each character a shiny golden train card, granting free admission on The Gourmet Express for life (starting whenever repairs from this ordeal are completed). To conclude the adventure, read it paraphrase the following:

Robert Brownie Jr. puts on his best performative outrage as the police escort him and Ms. Leeds from the train in handcuffs. At this, the conductor chuckles and says, "We never did recover his emerald ring. Could be anywhere."

The portofello draws their eyes to the bloody handkerchief, that first essential piece of evidence, which has been neatly folded on the dining car table. She knowingly returns her gaze to you and then proceeds on her business. Inside the folded handkerchief, to your amazement, is Brownie's ring!

Against all odds, Brownie's emerald ring is one of the Seven Rings of the Onion King! The party is one step closer to completing the set of rings.

### RINGS OF THE ONION KING

You didn't misread anything: the Seven Rings of the Onion King haven't been introduced yet. They're a set of magic items that the characters will be pursuing across various Cakewalk adventures. Stay tuned, and you'll learn more about them in *Game of Scones*.

# MONSTERS AND NPCs

This chapter includes the statistics and descriptions for monsters and nonplayer characters (NPCs) featured in this adventure.

## NPCs

The following statistics can be used to represent any humanoid or foodfolk NPC the characters encounter which does not have a bespoke stat block.

### FOODFOLK ADVENTURER

For a region of its size, Yumm Island plays host to a staggering number of quests, adventures, and perilous dungeon dives. The wide array of dangerous food monsters might have something to do with it. As such, the island supports a bustling economy of adventuring companies who take on jobs ranging from monster-fighting to world-ending-disaster-stoppers. Any foodfolk or humanoid in Yumm can become a self-branded adventurer if they're willing to risk life and limb. Use foodfolk adventurer statistics whenever the story calls for a background character with some combat training.

### FOODFOLK COMMONER

Yumm Island is home to a preposterous variety of foodfolk, from the hale and hearty veggies to the adventurous frostlings. However, most foodfolk are too preoccupied with the goings-on of day-to-day life to go on perilous, breathtaking adventures. Use foodfolk commoners whenever the story calls for the statistics for a background character without adventuring experience.

### FOODFOLK COMMONER

Medium humanoid (any foodfolk race), any alignment

**ARMOR CLASS** 10  
**HIT POINTS** 4 (1d8)  
**SPEED** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

**SENSES** passive Perception 10  
**LANGUAGES** any one language (usually Common)

**CHALLENGE** 1/8 (25 XP)

#### ACTIONS

**FORK.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

**SLINGSHOT.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

### FOODFOLK ADVENTURER

Medium humanoid (any foodfolk race), any alignment

**ARMOR CLASS** 14 (studded leather armor)  
**HIT POINTS** 26 (4d8 + 8)  
**SPEED** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

**SENSES** passive Perception 12  
**LANGUAGES** any one language (usually Common)

**CHALLENGE** 1/2 (100 XP)

#### ACTIONS

**MULTIATTACK.** The adventurer makes two attacks.

**JAWBREAKER MORNINGSTAR.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

**HEAVY SLINGSHOT.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

# MONSTERS

The following monsters feature prominently in this adventure.

## CAKE MIMIC

On the Island of Yumm, the devious, shape-changing mimic takes on the conspicuous guise of a cake to ensnare hungry passersby. Foodfolk would be wise to suspect a delicious, multi-tiered cake sitting out unaccompanied, but strange food-related phenomena occur frequently on Yumm Island, from the pixie stickbugs to wild animal crackers, so a cake hardly seems out of the ordinary.

**POISONED FROSTING.** This species of mimic conceals its adhesive skin just beneath a thin layer of poisonous frosting that puts whoever eats it to sleep. Once it has the upper hand, the mimic springs into action, producing its tell-tale tendrils, teeth, and red eyespots, as it goes in for the kill.

**CUNNING CAKE.** Cake mimics are much cleverer than their dungeon-inhabiting kin. If injured and unlikely to win out against their prey, the mimic will flee and try a different tactic. Perhaps it will disguise itself as a piping hot plate of cookies, a low-hanging branch of scrumptious apples, or a pile of chocolate coins. No matter what form it takes, this mimic will never try the same variety of food twice.

In rare circumstances, a cake mimic might even try to emulate a foodfolk. Even shifted into the form of a crumbkin or frostling, it can't speak or walk, and so might appear as an injured traveller or a far off maiden that vanishes into the treeline. Not all cake mimics know how to perform this trick, and fewer still can be at all convincing at close inspection. Perhaps the cake mimics that can masquerade as foodfolk are as intelligent as people, and could be reasoned with, if one were brave or foolhardy enough.

## CUPCAKE MIMIC

The cake mimic's diminutive cousin is the cupcake mimic. Though far less massive than their kin, cupcake mimics are more social and are prone to gathering together in groups of six or twelve at a time.

## CUPCAKE MIMIC

Tiny monstrosity (shapechanger), neutral

**ARMOR CLASS** 11

**HIT POINTS** 21 (6d4 + 6)

**SPEED** 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)

**SKILLS** Stealth +5

**DAMAGE IMMUNITIES** acid

**CONDITION IMMUNITIES** prone

**SENSES** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

**LANGUAGES** —

## CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

**SHAPECHANGER.** The mimic can use its action to polymorph into an object or back into its true, amorphous form. It can only take the appearance of Tiny objects and prefers the form of cupcakes and other baked goods. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

**ADHESIVE (OBJECT FORM ONLY).** The mimic adheres to anything that touches it. A creature that picks up the mimic can't drop it unless it succeeds a DC 9 Strength check, made with disadvantage. The mimic can only adhere to one creature at a time. The mimic has advantage on attack rolls against any creature adhered to it.

**FALSE APPEARANCE (OBJECT FORM ONLY).** While the mimic remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary object.

**POISONOUS FROSTING.** A creature that ingests the mimic's frosting must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the target is also unconscious while poisoned in this way. The target wakes up if it takes damage or if another creature takes an action to shake it awake.

## ACTIONS

**BITE.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) acid damage. If the mimic is in object form, the target is subjected to its Adhesive trait.

## CAKE MIMIC

Small monstrosity (shapechanger), neutral

**ARMOR CLASS** 15 (natural armor)  
**HIT POINTS** 50 (9d6 + 18)  
**SPEED** 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)

**SKILLS** Stealth +5  
**DAMAGE IMMUNITIES** acid  
**CONDITION IMMUNITIES** prone  
**SENSES** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11  
**LANGUAGES** —

### CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

**ADHESIVE (OBJECT FORM ONLY).** The mimic adheres to anything that touches it. A Large or smaller creature adhered to the mimic is also grappled by it (escape DC 13). Ability checks made to escape this grapple have disadvantage.

**FALSE APPEARANCE (OBJECT FORM ONLY).** While the mimic remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary object.

**GRAPPLER.** The mimic has advantage on attack rolls against any creature grappled by it.

**POISONOUS FROSTING.** A creature that ingests the mimic's frosting must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the target is also unconscious while poisoned in this way. The target wakes up if it takes damage or if another creature takes an action to shake it awake.

**SHAPECHANGER.** The mimic can use its action to polymorph into an object or back into its true, amorphous form. It can only take the appearance of Small objects and prefers the form of cakes, plates of cookies, and other desserts. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

### ACTIONS

**BITE.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) acid damage.

**PSEUDOPOD.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the mimic is in object form, the target is subjected to its Adhesive trait.

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