

THROUGH THE BREACH

A NIGHT AT THE STAR

A ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE FOR THROUGH THE BREACH

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TAROT TIE-INS

CRSC 11♥: "If you know the dimming of the lanterns" could describe the dimming of the gaslight lanterns in the theater, which signals the transition of the "real world" to the world of the theater. It hints that what happens isn't actually reality and suggests that if the Fated are aware that they're still in a theater, then nothing is actually real.

CRES 10♣ "An empty grave will fill with melody" is a good clue that nobody is actually dead - the grave is empty. Instead, it's filled with music, insubstantial, ephemeral, and exactly the sort of thing one would find during a production at the Star theater.

PROLOGUE

The adventure opens as the Fated arrive at the Star Theater for a performance. This might tie into one of their earlier adventures – perhaps they're meeting a contact here or were rewarded with some tickets for a job well done – or they might simply be interested in catching a show. The Star is famous for a reason!





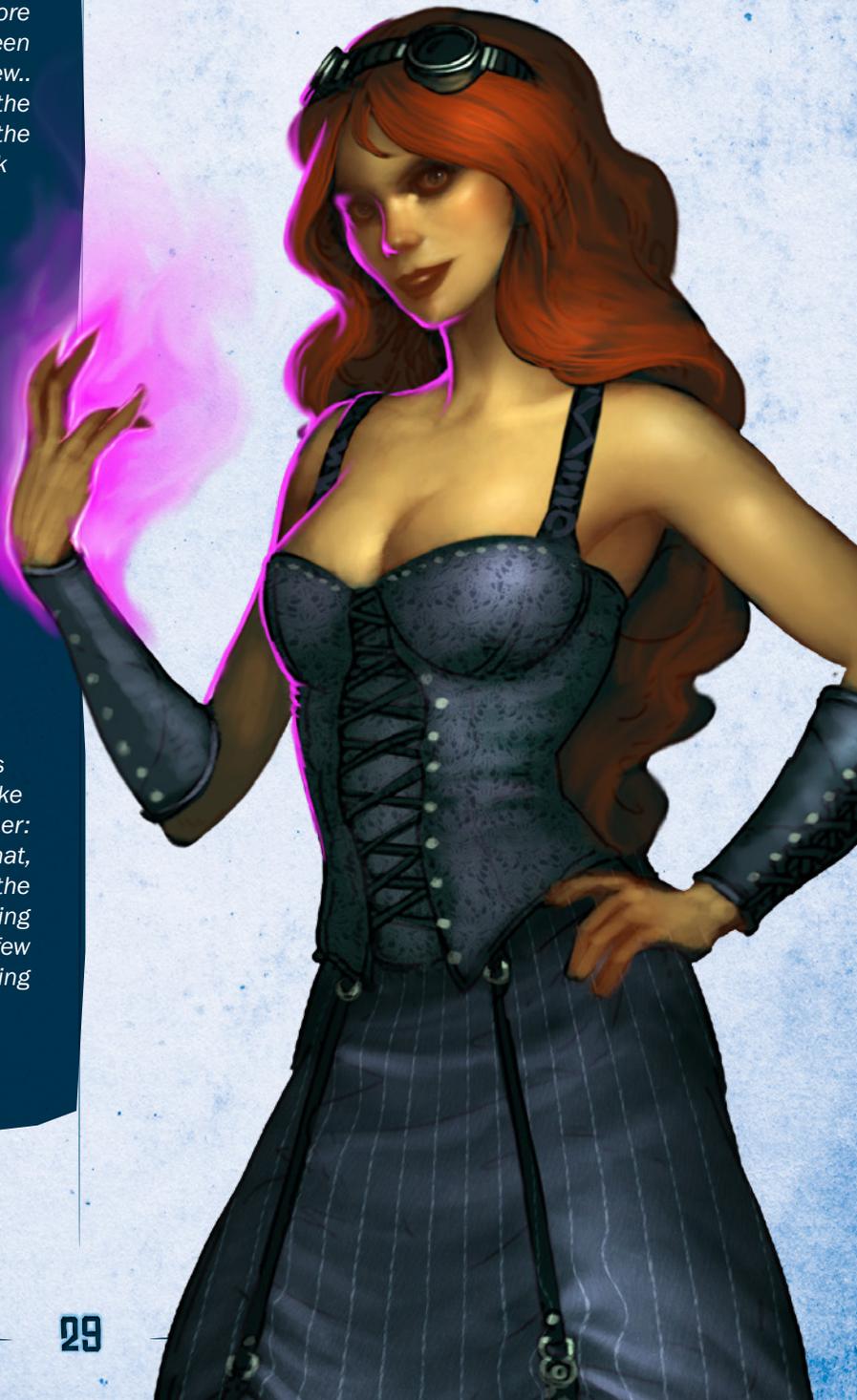
Read the following text to the players:

The Star Theater is easily the most prestigious theater in Malifaux City, outshining the city's other vaudeville shows in the way that the afternoon sun outshines a dim lantern. The walls of the lobby are decorated with carved cherubim and luxurious red velvet curtains, and the motif continues as you pass with the crowd into the main auditorium.

The wide stage is flanked to either side by more crimson curtains, and the main curtain has been pulled across the stage, hiding it from view.. What draws the most attention – other than the sparkling crystal chandelier which hangs in the center of the room – is the exposed clockwork device built into the stage just above the curtain. The central gear is nearly seven feet in diameter, and a series of successively smaller gears radiate out from it to form an unexpectedly complex piece of machinery. The entire room is lit with elegant gas lamps which run along the walls, casting everything in a warm yellow glow.

There aren't any seats to be seen – they're all on the second floor balcony, while the ground floor has been designated as standing room only – but you're soon able to find a place next to your companions. The crowd is decidedly blue collar, and many of them seem to be miners and laborers, as the scent of dried sweat and cold earth is inescapable. The distinctively low-class appearance of the crowd only serves to make the man nearest you stand out even further: he's dressed in a full suit, complete with top hat, cane, and monocle. He seems to be regarding the unwashed masses around him with something akin to disdain and revulsion, and he takes a few subtle steps towards your slightly-better-smelling group as more people filter into the theater.

The suited man is Benjamin Keith III, a businessman and inventor. Within about an hour, he'll be a dead businessman and inventor. He heard stories of the Star Theater and expected a “clean” vaudeville show, but as the showgirls at the Star perform, he'll realize how mistaken he was and grow progressively grumpier, right up until the moment of his death. Or at least, that's the persona that he's playing. In actuality, Benjamin Keith III is Brett Colton, a Dutch actor who has been hired by Colette Du Bois to help her try a bit of interactive theater – specifically, a murder mystery. Keith plays his part to the hilt, never breaking character no matter what.





SCENE 1: ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

This scene is intended to give the players a bit of the “Star Experience,” which should make Keith’s subsequent death all the more sudden and shocking.

BENJAMIN KEITH AND HIS MARVELOUS TRUTH MACHINE

Benjamin Keith will make small talk with the Fated if they initiate the conversation and seem at least somewhat respectable. Characters dressed in “worker’s clothing” or anything that hasn’t been washed in a few days earn little more than a disapproving look and a few muttered words about “knowing your place.” If the characters are dressed in a more sophisticated manner (formal dresses for the women and suits for the men) or are clearly agents of the Guild, he’ll be more friendly and talkative. If this is the case, read the following text:

The man looks you up and down, his expression becoming one of relief as he steps a bit closer. “I say, it’s comforting to finally see someone else with a sense of class and good taste.” He holds out his hand. “The name is Benjamin Keith the Third, inventor and philanthropist.”

If the Fated ask about Keith’s inventions, he explains his work as an improvement upon the “crude lie detection machine” built by Cesare Lombroso some twenty years ago. If the Fated seem at least the slightest bit interested (which includes merely nodding their heads and offering a noncommittal “that’s nice”), he’ll launch into a very technical and in-depth explanation of the device and the principles upon which it is based. The Fated can attempt TN 12 Artefacting or Doctor Challenges to realize that he’s mostly just talking about measuring blood pressure and checking for abnormalities that might indicate a person is lying. He’s also using very big words in an attempt to make the subject sound more complicated than it really is.

If the Fated achieve a Margin of Success on this Challenge, they will also realize that Keith doesn’t really know what he’s talking about. He knows the technical words and has a rough understanding

of what they mean, but he’s likely taking credit for someone else’s invention (or, as it turns out, parroting back the technical information from a script; the machine doesn’t actually exist).

THE SHOW!

Once the Fated have exhausted their conversation options with Keith (or chosen to ignore him), the show begins! Read the following text to the players:

A great blast of whistling steam erupts from backstage, cutting through conversations and quieting the crowd. As one, the gaslights in the room begin to dim as the great gear above the stage slowly starts to turn, its needle-like teeth turning the increasingly smaller gears arrayed around it at progressively faster speeds. As they turn faster and faster, the glass bulbs arrayed around the stage slowly illuminate the theater, drawing gasps and murmurs of appreciation from the crowd.

Just as it seems the lights cannot get any brighter, an unseen organ strikes up a rising crescendo as another set of gears begins to turn above the stage. They pull the main curtain aside, revealing a line of ten beautiful women, each posed with one leg up, her foot resting upon the other knee, exposing their legs far up the thigh as their pleated skirts fall away.

The crowd whistles, hollers, and claps boisterously as the showgirls launch into a dance number, kicking and spinning in practiced unison. Their smiles never falter as they leap and kick across the stage, until finally they sashay off the stage and the song comes to an end.

If you wish, you can allow the Fated a few moments to react to the scene (and perhaps to discuss it with Keith, who seems nonplussed by the entire spectacle). If the Fated ask his opinion, he mutters something noncommittal, but a TN 12 Scrutiny Challenge reveals that he’s not really paying attention to the show and seems to instead be waiting for something (i.e. the attack that “kills” him).



There's not much time before the Star's Master of Ceremonies takes the stage, so read the following text once the players are ready:

Just as the crowd starts shouting for the return of the showgirls, a woman wearing a black dress, matching top hat, and crimson elbow gloves struts onto the stage, her hands held out in front of her to quiet the crowd. "Hold on, hold on," she shouts, drowning them out with her voice. "We have to give you folks a bit of a break to cool down, or the older gentlemen in the audience might not survive the next act!"

The crowd laughs at the joke, and the woman removes her top hat, rolls it down her arm, and then catches it with her gloved hand. "Now, for those of you who have been here before, you no doubt remember that my name is Angelica..." There's a sudden outburst of cheering and whistling, which she accepts with a gracious bow before continuing. "...but for those of you who are new to the Star, we've got a little initiation ritual to go through before we continue!"

The crowd erupts in more excited clapping and shouting as the showgirls return in new dresses, these ones in various shades of blue and purple with ample frills along the bottom. Angelica glances back at them, then turns and winks at the crowd before continuing, her voice carrying effortlessly over the shouting crowd. "So let's get started! All of you lusty gentlemen and curious ladies, get your bottoms up here on the stage and meet the girls!" She gestures to the showgirls behind her, who strike pouty poses as people in the crowd begin to good-naturedly push their friends and coworkers up towards the stage.

As this is likely the first time the Fated have been to the Star Theater, they will be under some pressure to head up to the stage with the others. Ideally, at least one of the Fated will decide to participate. Benjamin Keith notably does not go up on stage, no matter what anyone says to him; if pressed, he claims (truthfully, for both the actor and the character he's playing) that this isn't his first time in the theater. More importantly, he's making sure that he stays on his mark and is in place when it's time to die.

DANCING AT THE STAR

Any of the Fated who climb up onto the stage will be drawn into an impromptu stage show, in which the showgirls draw them into a line and try to get them high-kicking and dancing, often with amusing results for the crowd. Read the following text to the players on stage:

You've no sooner made it onto the stage than the showgirls pull you into a dance line, slipping their arms around your shoulders, ensuring that each new visitor has a showgirl to one side or the other. "Alright," Angelica shouts, stepping back and motioning for the unseen organ to belt out another tune. "Let's get those legs up and kicking!"

The showgirls begin kicking their legs up in time with the music, turning to the side and switching legs with each alternating beat as they encourage their new guests to do the same. Keeping up requires a TN 10 Acrobatics Challenge, and those who fail by five or more points end up losing their balance and falling down, much to the laughter of the crowd (and the showgirls). Any Fated who succeed manage to keep up and earn genuine words of encouragement from the dancers to keep going.

When the Fated on stage have finished their checks, read the following text:

The high-kicking continues for about a minute, until the music suddenly speeds up and the showgirls twirl out of their places, a guest in each hand as they begin a frantic dance of twirling dresses and twisting leaps. "I don't know about this," Angelica shouts to the crowd, her tone conveying just the right amount of skeptical concern and amusement. "This looks like it might be getting out of hand!"

The Fated on stage can attempt TN 10 Centering Challenges to maintain their composure throughout the dance; those who fail end up doing little more than standing there with a stupid look on their face as their showgirl appears and reappears amidst her fluttering dress. It's (intentionally) quite confusing,



and those who prove unable to follow along and keep up find themselves rudely returned to the audience. Read the following text to any players who fail the Centering Challenge:

The showgirl seems to flutter in and out of existence as the dress flashes all around her, leading your gaze one way just to disappear and reappear on your other side. At one point, you're almost certain that she missed a flip and is starting to fall towards the crowd, but when you turn to catch her, there's nobody there... and that's when you feel the kick to your bottom that sends you sailing out into the crowd and the arms of the waiting men and women. As they lower you back to your feet, one of them claps you on the shoulder and laughs in enjoyment. "Hell of a show, isn't it?"

Any Fated who pass their Centering Challenge are spun around by their showgirl, who winks at them and escorts them off-stage (the correct way) once the song is over. If any female characters performed remarkably well, they might even be approached by Colette Du Bois, the theater's owner, at a future date with an offer of an audition.

Once everyone has returned to the crowd, read the following text:

The showgirls bow to the crowd and then hurry off stage as the curtain draws closed and Angelica walks to the center of the stage in front of it. "That was quite the show, wasn't it?" she asks, grinning as the crowd cheers back to her. "Now, this next act is a new one here at the Star Theater, but I'm sure that it will be just as entertaining and shocking as..."

Before she can finish her sentence, she's interrupted by a gunshot that roars through the theater like thunder. The crowd is instantly shouting and on edge, but it gradually parts as the man next to you – the man dressed in the suit, top hat, and monocle – staggers forward, his hand pressed to his bloody chest. "I've...been murdered..." he croaks out, a tone of disbelief in his voice as he collapses forward onto the floor.

SCENE 2: A MURDER MOST FOUL

The Fated should have a few moments to react to Keith's murder. Read the following text to describe the reactions of the crowd:

The audience is shocked and surprised by the sudden murder of one of their number, and all throughout the crowd, people begin to draw and ready small pocket handguns or brass knuckles from their pockets. Murmurs of "murder" and "shot dead" begin to ripple through the crowd, and glancing up at the second story, dozens of curious faces can be seen peering down into the common area.

Just as it seems a riot might be on the verge of breaking out, a dark-haired woman wearing chaps and a long duster – who had someone managed to remain unseen up to this point – steps forward and fires a shot into the air, instantly quieting the crowd and drawing all eyes to her. "Listen up!" she shouts, her voice instantly commanding. "I'm Amanda Russell, Second Class Inspector with the Guild. I'll be taking charge of this investigation, and hopefully, with a bit of luck and some help from everyone present, we'll be able to get to the bottom of this murder."

She motions to the stage with her gun, sending showgirls dodging to either side out of fear of being shot. "You girls up there, go seal the doors to the Theater and start gathering people up in groups of five to seven people or so. We'll begin the questioning soon."

Amanda Russell is in her late 20s and presents herself as a rough-and-tumble Guild agent who cares more about results than the strict letter of the law. It's a persona that most of the theater's guests can easily relate to, which is why the character was written that way.



In reality, the actress playing Amanda Russell – Kitty Blake – is quite outgoing but had never fired a gun before she began practicing for this role. After several mishaps involving her gesturing at people with a loaded weapon, Colette sacrificed authenticity for safety and replaced all of her bullets with blanks... and then decided not to tell the other showgirls. The nervousness they feel when Kitty starts gesturing with her gun is therefore very real, though Kitty knows that the gun can't actually harm anyone.

Russell's role is essentially that of host and authority figure. She's there to provide some structure to the "murder investigation" and to keep everyone from shooting each other. Despite her acting talent, however, anyone familiar with Guild practices – such as its agents – can attempt TN 9 Bureaucracy Challenges to notice that she's not following procedure when it comes to reporting murders in crowded locations. If confronted about this, Russell dismisses such claims with a quick "when you're a Second Class Inspector, you can run your investigations however you see fit." She then tries to avoid spending too much time around those questioning her, for fear of having her cover blown.

Eventually, the showgirls will arrange the theater's guests into small groups of six or seven people, each of which will then be tended to by a seemingly worried showgirl. In actuality, they're there to help guide their guests through the murder mystery investigation and to inform Russell once a group believes they have identified the killer. Read the following text to the players:

The showgirls bar the doors of the theater as Inspector Russell takes a moment to examine the body. Eventually, one of the showgirls comes to your group and gives you an apologetic smile. "I'm so sorry about this," she says, folding her hands in front of her. "This sort of thing usually doesn't happen at the Star Theater. I'm Anna Roberts, by the way."

After the Fated make introductions, she continues:

"To be truthful, I have a bit of an ulterior motive here." Anna lowers her voice as she steps closer. "You see, Ms. Du Bois is concerned that this Inspector Russell isn't very good at her job and might even finger the wrong person for the murder. If you'd like to help us get to the bottom of the mystery, she's willing to make you temporary Star Theater Security Consultants." She bites her lip as she waits hopefully for a response.

The same offer is being made to every other group; it's intended to get the theater's guests into an investigative mood and searching for clues on their own. If the Fated decide that they don't want to help out, then feel free to describe the events of the rest of the night as another group of guests unravels the mystery and are praised by Ms. Du Bois and the other showgirls. If the Fated decide to participate in the investigation, read the following text:

"Oh, thank goodness," Anna murmurs, clearly relieved. She glances over at the body, which another group of guests is just leaving. One of them has an open notebook and is taking notes as the others whisper among themselves. "Okay, it looks like there's an opening. Come on."

Anna leads you to the corpse of Benjamin Keith the Third, who has collapsed onto his back. A large red stain has spread out from his chest, and there's an obvious bullet hole in his shirt. "You only have a few moments to look over the corpse," Anna says as she looks around, no doubt trying to catch sight of Inspector Russell. "Make sure that you don't touch anything! We don't want them thinking that you did it."



Brett Colton – aka Benjamin Keith – is, of course, not actually dead. Anna doesn't want the Fated to touch him because it might obscure the clues for the other groups, and also because she doesn't want them attempting to perform an impromptu autopsy on a living actor. To assist with the charade, Colton bit into a capsule he had kept hidden in his mouth as he was shot; the chemical has sent him into a coma-like state for the next hour or so, allowing him to suppress his breathing and heartbeat to better play his role as a corpse.

If the Fated manage a TN 13 Notice or a TN 11 Doctor Challenge, however, they'll notice the slight rise and fall of his chest and realize that he's not dead; in fact, it doesn't even look like he has been shot!

Use the below call out box to handle Fated characters who are onto the elaborate ruse.

If the Fated bring up the fact that Keith is alive, Anna will panic and pull them aside to explain what's going on before they can ruin the game for everyone else.

"Please keep that to yourself," she whispers, before casting a panicked glance at the nearest groups to make sure they didn't overhear anything. "This is all a game...a murder mystery, you see? The victim, the murderer, even the Inspector...they're all actors. We're letting everyone have a bit of fun with trying to solve the mystery." Her brow furrows in concern. "Please don't spoil things for everyone else. We worked really hard to set this up."

If the Fated choose to spoil the murder mystery, there's some commotion from the crowd as confusion spreads through the groups, until eventually Colette is forced to step forward to salvage the evening. Read the following text:

"Now, now, don't get so upset over a bit of misdirection," comes a woman's chiding voice from above. All eyes turn upwards towards the woman in the rafters, her red hair standing out against her black and purple dress. The woman's arm is wrapped casually around one of the ceiling's wooden beams as she stands on another, but as you watch, she hops off, only to disappear in a cloud of colored smoke.

"It's a mystery!" she shouts, this time from the stage, where she's now standing in a heavily modified and stylized inspector's costume. Angelica appears from the side of the stage as the crowd begins to applaud, gesturing towards the grinning redhead. "Ladies and gentlemen, the amazing Colette Du Bois!"

Colette bows to the crowd, then straightens up and makes a gesture with her hand as an oversized

magnifying glass appears out of nowhere. "We set up a little murder mystery for you folks tonight, but it seems that some of you were more clever than we had anticipated!" She raises the magnifying glass to her face, uses it to scan the crowd, and then twists it in her hand, somehow transforming it into a huge pistol. "It might not have been a real murder," she says, casually twirling the gun on her finger as she paces the length of the stage, drawing a few catcalls from the audience, "but you can still help us out by solving the crime."

Colette raises the gun to her lips, blowing across the barrel before she turns and fires the gun into the audience. People leap aside, but instead of firing a bullet, the gun just clatters to the ground as Colette herself explodes into a cloud of smoke.

"And who knows?" she continues, this time from about twenty feet to the left of where she had been standing. She's once again clad in her black and purple dress, and she's seated daintily on the edge of the stage, one leg crossed over the other. "Maybe the winning group will earn a special prize." There's a suggestive wink from the illusionist, and then the groups laugh and return to the business of solving the mystery with renewed enthusiasm.

Colette and her showgirls will be a bit annoyed at the Fated if they spoil the mystery after being asked not to do so, but if they do so without being warned against it, then there aren't any hard feelings. The one constant of show business is that nothing ever goes quite according to plan.



INVESTIGATING THE BODY

Investigating Benjamin Keith's body for clues is handled with an Ongoing Challenge.

Searching for Clues

Skills Allowed: Doctor, Notice, Pistol

Target Number: 11

Duration: 1 minute

Success Requirement: 8

Failure Requirement: 3

The Fated only have a limited amount of time to examine the body - three minutes - before Anna guides them away and the next group comes up to look Keith over.

At the end of each Duration, the Fated learn one Clue from the list below for each success they achieved. For every Failure, they learn one Mistake from the list below. If your players can easily separate player knowledge from character knowledge, feel free to give the Clues and Mistakes to them individually, perhaps even written down on small slips of paper they can reveal to the group. This allows them to each have an "Aha!" moment where they reveal their findings (or their false assumptions) to the group.

If your players find it difficult to separate what their characters know from what they know, however, you can just give the Clues and Mistakes to them all at the same time, ensuring that - like their characters - they're not easily able to separate the truth from their false assumptions.

If the Fated manage to successfully complete the Ongoing Challenge, they learn the Breakthrough, which should give them a solid push in the right direction. If they critically fail the Ongoing Challenge, however, then they learn the Red Herring, which is likely to pull them well off course.

CLUES (IN NO SPECIFIC ORDER):

* The entry and exit wounds on Keith's body suggest that he was shot from behind at a very sharp angle, as if by a very tall man. (The exit wounds are actually just stage makeup)

* There's a crumpled note clasped in Keith's hand; it's likely he was reading it in the moment he was shot. Anne (or one of the Fated) can fish it out and read the words, which are written in a delicate hand: "Ben, come to the Star tonight. We have to talk one last time. - J.S."

* The exit wound is very small, suggesting that Keith was shot with a small caliber weapon at long range. For it to have struck his heart as it did required a great deal of luck or an amazing aim.

* There's a small paper envelope sticking out of the inside of Keith's jacket. When pointed out, Anne will carefully remove the envelope and open it, revealing a small locket. Inside the locket are two small portraits - one of Benjamin Keith, and one of a dark-haired woman with a perpetual frown. "She looks familiar..." Anne will muse, before shrugging and carefully returning the locket to the envelope and jacket.

* There's a wedding ring on Keith's finger. The skin around the ring is slightly irritated, as if he hadn't quite gotten used to wearing it yet.

* A bullet is lodged into the floor near Keith (it was planted earlier that day). It looks like it was fired from a handgun, but the size is small, as if it was fired from a pocket handgun and not a full pistol.

* Keith's pocket watch snapped open when he fell to the ground. On the inside of the lid is an inscription: "To B.K. on our wedding day. Our love is eternal. -H.D."

* From where Keith was standing, there's a perfect view to the balcony behind him.



MISTAKES (IN NO SPECIFIC ORDER):

* There's no trace of stubble on Keith's chin or neck, which makes it easy to make out a small cut right next to his neck (Colton/Keith cut himself shaving before getting into costume).

* Despite his high-class clothing and manners, Keith's hands show signs of callouses and dirty fingernails (Colton/Keith forgot to wash his hands and is actually an actor and occasional stage hand, rather than a wealthy businessman).

* Keith's nose appears to have been recently broken; he was likely in some sort of bare-knuckled brawling match in the past few weeks (or, more accurately, he caught an opening door right to the face, much to the horror of Blake/Russell, his live-in girlfriend).



BREAKTHROUGH

Tucked into Keith's back pocket, just barely visible beneath his coat and body, is a flyer advertising Jean Shelby, a trick shooter who will be performing at the Star Theater. The flyer is old and crumpled, and if asked about it, Anne will state that she remembers Jean. "She was something else," she'll say, shaking her head. "She got in with some rich fellow about a year ago, though, and gave up the stage, saying she was going to get married. I don't really remember what happened to her, but she was a real bundle of matches, that one."

RED HERRING

There's a faint smudge of lipstick on Keith's lips (Colton/Keith is in a relationship with Blake/Russell and she gave him a quick kiss for good luck before the show started). In a startling moment of revelation, the Fated realize that the lipstick on Keith's lips is the same shade as that worn by Inspector Russell (which is certain to cause some unintended confusion for everyone involved).

THE SOLUTION TO THE MYSTERY

Depending upon the number of clues that they found, the Fated should be able to piece together at least part of the story: Benjamin Keith had a relationship with Jean Shelby, one of the Star's trick shooters, and promised to take care of her if she left her performing days behind. She did, only to have Keith turn around and marry someone else (the H.D. of his pocket watch). In her anger, she wrote Keith a note asking him to meet her at the theater and then used her expert marksmanship skills to shoot him from the upper balcony.



SCENE 3: A WOMAN SCORNE

Once the Fated have examined the body for clues, they can attempt to solve the mystery. There are essentially two ways the Fated can do this: either rush up to the balcony to confront Jean Shelby, or make an accusation from the ground floor.

If the Fated make their accusation from the ground floor, there's some commotion from the balcony crowd, and Anna encourages them to "get up there before the murderer can get away!" If they specifically name Jean Shelby, there will be shouts of "She's up here!" from the balcony crowd.

When the Fated head upstairs to the balcony, read the following text:

Inspector Russell is hot on your heels as you rush up the carpeted steps to the balcony. The crowd there is dressed much more formally than the laborers down below, with the men in partial suits and the women in semi-formal dresses. There's a great deal of scrip changing hands, and after a moment, you realize why – they're betting on which of the groups below will solve the mystery first!

They turn towards you as you enter, a few of the women raising masks to their faces as you become the center of attention. "I say," one of the men asks, his handlebar mustache twitching with each word. "What is all the commotion down below?" There are a few giggles and stifled chuckles from the others.

"There's been a murder," Inspector Russell states, her tone deadly serious.

The crowd on the balcony were informed that those down below would be taking part in a murder mystery early on and have been following the drama with interest and more than a little bit of wagering. They play along as best they're able, but aren't taking it too seriously (which might seem very odd if the Fated haven't worked out that it's not a real murder).

If the Fated have seen the locket on Keith's body, they can make out Jean Shelby's likeness from the portrait within. If not, they can ask for her, in which case the balcony audience will point her out.

LAST STAND

When the Fated confront Jean Shelby on the balcony, read the following text:

Jean Shelby clutches her purse to her chest. "I don't understand what this is all about," she insists. She's dressed in a modest cream-colored dress, and her dark hair is done up in a small bun. "I couldn't have shot anyone from up here. Someone would have seen me."

A bald man gestures towards the balcony. "Yes, but you were at the edge, my dear."

"I was trying to watch the dancers," she sharply retorts. "There's no crime in that!"

In order to prove Jean's guilt, the Fated will have to make some claim to her having a gun, at which point Inspector Russell will seize her purse and turn it out, revealing a small handgun.

"The murder weapon!" Russell proclaims, a wide grin appearing on her lips as he looks towards you. "Congratulations, everyone! You've solved the mystery!" There are some grumblings from the crowd as money changes hands, but Jean Shelby, rather than looking upset over being captured, is positively beaming with delight.

"You did it!" she proclaims, clasping her hands together in joy. "Did you think it was too easy? What part did you like best?"



Inspector Russell will introduce herself as Kitty Blake, but Jean Shelby is playing herself in this little game; she actually is a trick shooter, but she's been off the circuit for the past year following the birth of her first child. She agreed to use her reputation as an excellent shot (as well as the old flyer on Keith's corpse) to help set up the murder mystery.

Once Inspector Russell announces that the murder is solved, two of the showgirls help Keith up, throwing his arms over their shoulders as they carry him out; it'll be a bit longer still before the drug wears off and he's back to functionality. He makes an appearance at the end of the show with the other girls, waving to everyone to prove that he's doing just fine.

EPILOGUE

With the mystery solved, Angelica takes to the stage to close out the act and introduce the next one. Read the following text to the players:

"Murder, intrigue, and adventure!" Angelica's voice carries across the theater, drawing all eyes back to center stage, where she's leaning forward onto a fancy cane. "Of course, nothing is quite what it appears in the Star Theater, but hopefully you all enjoyed our little brush with death?"

There's an answering cheer from the audience, and Angelica stands up straight and dramatically places a hand to her ear. "I'm sorry, I couldn't quite make that out." This time, the cheer is even louder, and she grins as she twirls the cane in her hand. "That's more like it! I'm sure that..."

Her voice is cut off by the sudden sting of organ music, which dissolves into a face-paced melody. Angelica feigns surprise, then starts walking backwards as she gestures to the showgirls twirling on stage from the other direction. "And who can resist cheers like that? Certainly not the girls of the Star! Show 'em what you've got, girls!"

The show continues as dancing girls and the famous Colette Du Bois take to the stage, each act upstaging the last until finally, late into the night, the curtain falls one final time. It's just another night at the Star Theater, but it's certainly one that you'll never forget.

A FALSE ACCUSATION

If the Fated are unable to solve the mystery, Anna will keep them company until another group eventually figures it out. If they accuse the wrong person, she'll shake her head, explain that they've "got it all wrong," and then pull them off to the side to explain that it's all a game. As above, another group will eventually solve the mystery.

COLETTE'S REWARD

If the Fated successfully solve the mystery, they'll earn a reward from Colette Du Bois, the owner of the Star Theater. This could be anything the Fatemaster wishes: backstage passes, a private performance for the characters, or even an offer of continuing employment as actual security consultants.

★★ BAD THINGS HAPPEN ★★

This adventure assumes that Brett Colton (as Benjamin Keith) is playing dead throughout the investigation of his murder, but what if things turned a bit darker? If you wish, you could have Jean Shelby actually murder Colton with her pistol and real bullets. He's the father of her child, and when she confronted him about it, he claimed that he was seeing Kitty Blake now and that it wasn't his responsibility. She replied by waiting until tonight and shooting him dead.

There will be a few odd pieces of evidence during the investigation – the presence of two entry wounds in his body, one real and one fake – as well as two bullets in the floorboards, despite only a single gunshot, but otherwise the adventure will continue as written.

The showgirls won't notice that Colton is really dead until near the end of the show, and they'll keep it a secret until then, for fear of alerting the guests. If the Fated were able to solve the fake murder, perhaps they'll be able to discretely solve a real murder as well? Of course, that will depend upon whether they can track down and defeat Jean Shelby, who really is pretty amazing with a pistol...