

||||| HEAD

Paldeen Sharo

Born September 23, in the year 252.

What is worth more - gold, or a king's praise? You don't know for sure. But as long as you can have both, why should you care? As far as you're concerned, most royalty is good for exactly thing: making you richer. You come from a family of Assyrian intellectuals, brilliant men and women who could outthink almost anyone in the fledgling republic. Compared to them, most kings and queens were nothing but inbred dunces. When you first left your childhood home and settled down in Etruria to join a trading company selling luxury goods, you thought you could crack the fledgling market wide open. But the royal family of Etruria - well, offer them enough newfangled opulence, and their coffers might as well be yours. After all, inbred dunces are easy to manipulate. That was the theory, anyways.

As it turned out, Etruria's present king, a cruel and uncompromising tyrant named Hiems, proved to be anything but an inbred dunce. In fact, you grudgingly admitted, he was nothing short of brilliant. And, though you soon struck up a brisk business with Etruria's citizens - who could, you earnestly believed, use a little bit of luxury in their lives - you never could persuade Hiems and the royal court to invest in your products. Before now, your only contact with the royal treasury has been... less official, to say the least. When your branch of the business was at risk of going belly-up, you finagled an "interest-free loan of indefinite duration" from in your contacts the Etruscan coffers. Was this dubiously legal? Yes. Would you be severely punished if the authorities ever found out? Yes (imprisoned for life, as you recall). Did it work? Yes. So when you heard the news of a royal wedding, you jumped at the chance to secure some noble patronage. Etruscan, Scythian, it really didn't matter - just make one big sale, and you would be set for a long, long time.

Your brother Izdubar confounded your plans, though. Twice as brilliant as you ever were on your best days, it always seemed that he solved every problem that got in his way. You tried to tell yourself you weren't jealous, that you could be as smart as he was. If you could just get him on your side, whatever projects you embarked upon would be a rousing success. But he threw a wrench in things. he'd always proved as stodgy as he was brilliant, always sticking his nose into musty tombs and worn-out tomes while you watched the money roll in. Truth be told, though, it was his scholarly expertise that drove you into business. You always wanted to be an astronomer - when you gazed into the sky, you saw universes laid out before you. But it was Izdubar who aced every test, remembered every constellation, traced the path of every planet. Galled by your inability to match his skill, you plunged into more practical fields of work instead. You sometimes wonder, if it weren't for Izdubar, if you wouldn't have chosen the scholar's path yourself - but that's all irrelevant now. By the time you left, he was headed straight for a tenured professorship at a prestigious Assyrian university, and dedicated himself to research. Waste of a good mind, you always told him.

Your last conversation was not a happy one. He accused you of caring about nothing more important than profit, and insinuated that you were little better than a common peasant. Stung, you put on an arrogant facade and walked away - but, deep down, you worry that you've lost your brother's respect forever. And then you discovered that he'd be attending the royal wedding. It was your best chance to see him again. Perhaps it can even be something more than that: perhaps it's an opportunity for you to prove yourself to him, to show him that you're worthy of his admiration, to finally impress the imperturbable Izdubar.

So, driven by both profit and brotherly pride, you graciously accepted your invitation to the royal wedding, held on the distant (and politically neutral) isle of Cos. You packed up a valise (shame they wouldn't let you bring three) full of your most innovative and fascinating wares, including a lavish gift for the happy couple- a cinnamon-flavored distillation of a rare vintage mead imported from Iberia, packaged in filigreed gold. You, of course, prefer a simple hard cider, but these fancy drinks will be impressive to this crowd. Still, your most important offering is a unique piece of history, tailored to the desires of all the Sabine royalty.

Ever since you were a child in Assyria, you'd heard rumours of an ancient artefact known only as the Diadem, a magical token of royalty that was lost when the Sabine empire crumbled. Wouldn't it be a wonderful achievement if you managed to

uncover the Diadem and parade your discovery before the assembled royals? Of course it would, and so you persuaded your best employees - a talented crew of artificers - to make you the next best thing. They acquired an ornate diadem that matches historical descriptions of the Diadem, then painstakingly enchanted it to give special powers to every royal of Sabine descent who would be attending the wedding, Etruscan and Scythian alike. Yes, you've read of obscure rumors that the real Diadem may be hidden on Cos by "golden veils," but that's no hardship. You plan to take bids on the Diadem, showing your fake to anyone who demands proof of your find, and in between you'll explore the island. If you find the treasure, you will simply destroy your fake and hand off the real Diadem to whoever offers the highest bid.

Unfortunately, you're not the only merchant attending the festivities. An old rival of yours, a Scythian arms dealer named Fresi, has managed to worm his way into King Cryseon's retinue. Every time you attend a trade summit or Assyrian bazaar, you find yourself seated across the table from him in a game of Bluffmaster - you're certain the man cheats, because you recall losing to him as often as you won. This simply will not do. Clean Fresi out at the gambling tables and show him up for the greedy weakling that he is.

You're familiar enough with this bastard of a man to know that, where he travels, conflict is never far behind. This is, to put it bluntly, bad news. Nobody buys luxury goods in the middle of a war - austerity measures are the worst - so, if Fresi manages to push the two nations into direct conflict, you're out of luck. What's worse, it seems like they might not even need Fresi's warmongering to push them over the brink. Oh, the two kings are reasonable enough in their own right - Cryseon of Scythia's a kindly old man, so obsessed with preserving life that he'd never spark a war on his own initiative, and Hiems of course is too cunning to act rashly. But rumour has it that the border clashes between the two nations have been escalating.

What's even worse, one of your contacts in King Cryseon's court has reported that Etruria managed to plant a spy right under his nose, feeding information straight to Hiems. Perhaps if you can figure out who the spy is and reveal their identity to the Scythian monarch, you can defuse some of Hiems's leverage on the proceedings, ingratiate yourself with the Scythians, and push for a peaceful resolution.

In addition, you've put together a contingency plan of sorts. Your sources have managed to locate one of the most talented thieves in any of the Sabine states, a daring rogue who goes by the name of Delia, and break her out of the Assyrian jail she was languishing in. You reached out to her anonymously, got her admitted to the wedding under the guise of a Scythian fortuneteller, and commissioned her to stage a daring heist. But she's not going to be robbing Fresi - she's going to be robbing you. Little does she know that all of your goods (especially the Diadem) have been magically warded and trapped by your artificers. With any luck, anyone who touches them will be knocked unconscious. That's when you'll arrive on the scene, discover the "treacherous thief," and pin the crime on Fresi - who, everyone knows, is notoriously underhanded in his own right. With the value of your wares reinforced by the attempted theft, and Fresi hopelessly discredited, you hope to steer the two nations away from war and towards something infinitely better - mutual profit.

Notes

- As part of the etiquette of presenting your gift to the happy couple, you should ask them to try the liquor immediately. Do not be offended if they reject your offer, though; they may decide quite reasonably that they should limit their alcohol consumption at this rather tense occasion.
- You're confident that your fake Diadem will have no negative effects upon royals. However, you're not as sure that its positive effects exactly match those of the original Diadem.
- You have stored your fake Diadem and the two bottles of alcohol that you have brought as gifts in your trunk.

Goals

- Discredit that bloodthirsty scoundrel Fresi by framing him for the theft of the Diadem.
- Make sure a war doesn't break out between Scythia and Etruria.
- Sell your Diadem to one of the nations present for a sum of at least 1.5 million.
- Root out the person who's been spying on the Scythian court.

- Prove your mental superiority by annihilating Fresi at Bluffmaster.

Contacts

- Izdubar Sharo (Peter Lofgren): Your brother, a brilliant astronomer and your longtime rival.
- Meizon Agathos (Amanda Stowers): The puritanical and austere queen of Scythia.
- Hiems Coronus (Skylar Cohen): The Etruscan king, a cunning ruler and potential customer.
- Fresi Nea (Peter Spradling): A greedy arms dealer and old enemy of yours.
- Delia Armata (Matthew O'Connell): A burglar you've hired to steal your Diadem, enabling you to pin the crime on Fresi.

Memory/Event Packets

- If you ingest Item 0010, open this.

Bluesheets

- A History of the Sabine Realms of Assyria, Scythia, and Etruria
- The Rituals and Beliefs of the Sabine Nations
- Who's Who in the Sabine Kingdoms

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- Appraise
- Bluffmaster

Abilities

- Knock Out
- Assist
- Restrain
- Truthing Resistance (1x)
- Defensive Technique
- Offensive Technique
- Destroy Item

Items

- 170 Coins

Stats

- Psychic Health Max: 5
- Combat Rating: 2

=====

Cryseon Agathos

Born July 12, in the year 253.

The legends tell of an ancient Scythian king named Damocles the Just who commanded his smiths to fashion him a sword keener than a lion's fangs. When it was completed, his advisers feared that he would lash out against his neighbors, fueled by mad dreams of conquest. Instead, he stood before them, unspooled a single silken thread, and wound it about the hilt. The sword would not be used for war, he decreed. Instead, it would hang above his throne until the day he died. Whenever he or his descendants gazed up at the hanging blade, he hoped that they would be reminded of everything that is at stake whenever a ruler acts - that even a single reckless misstep or careless blunder could bring bloodshed and disaster crashing down upon the kingdom. A ruler should live out every day as if his life, his people, and his domain hang in the balance - and he should do everything in his power to preserve them.

You learned this lesson from your grandfather, who learned it from his grandfather, who, the stories say, learned it from King Damocles himself. For too long you thought it was nothing but a foolish children's story, just more outdated prattle about "duty" and "responsibility." And then your grandfather died, and then your father - and then it came time for you, not Cryseon the boy but Cryseon the King, to take the throne of Scythia yourself. You remember all too well the first moment you looked up and saw that lethal sword, still hanging suspended above you by a single timeworn thread. The gilded marble of your throne suddenly felt cold as death beneath you. And you realized the crushing weight of the power you now wielded.

You have borne that weight for more than thirty years now, borne it gravely and with pride. And the people of Scythia have always loved you for it. Your citizens trust, admire, respect, and cherish you, and you have always strived in turn to keep them safe and content. You were married with great aplomb to an old acquaintance, Meizon, and bore two children with her, your beloved Thoesi and Eidolos. You were happy. And, more importantly, you kept the great nation of Scythia stable and peaceful for years.

Then, one day, something unexpected happened. You found yourself falling in love for the first time in your long life. A commoner in the royal court, Musa Astea, caught your eye, captivating you with her mischievous smile and her incredible intellect. Musa was never the most beautiful or most proper of Meizon's ladies-in-waiting, but she was undeniably the most fascinating. An irrepressible practical joker, she loved to get the better of her stuffy colleagues, engaging in juvenile but brilliant pranks at their expense. You loved nothing more than hearing the clarion of her laughter echoing through the halls.

Whenever Assyria sent emissaries to your court, geniuses and academics all, Musa loved to match wits with their most renowned archaeologists and poets, whiling away her spare time in games of Bluffmaster. She almost always won. A venerable Assyrian scholar, watching her play, once pulled you aside with words of praise, remarking, "If she had only been born in Assyria, my lord, she would be one of the greatest scholars our nation has ever seen."

You kept yourself from acting on your affections - you were a king, after all, and a king never imposes himself upon his subjects - but you always wondered what might have happened if you had expressed your feelings. Then, one cold autumn night, when Meizon was off in Assyria on a diplomatic mission, there came a shy knock on the door of your bedchamber. It was Musa. You couldn't keep from laughing, warm and genuine, more than you had in years. Then she joined in, warming the cold marble stones of the palace with her amusement. It was the first night you shared with her, but not the last. You wished sometimes, in your most tender moments, that you could abandon the charade, abandon even the throne, marry Musa, and retire to a distant home. But the kingship - your duty to Scythia - weighed on your shoulders more heavily even than love. And so your moments with Musa were limited to those nights, too few and far between, when Meizon was away and the palace was quiet.

Then you overheard a Soulblade attendant, a pompous but well-meaning man named Epidotis, mention that one of Meizon's attendants was with child. The woman he spoke of was Musa. Epidotis neither knew nor cared who the child's father was, but

you did. If you were revealed as the father, your reputation as a just and moral king would collapse in an instant, and you feared Scythia's stability would crumble with it. You knew the choice you had to make. So you saw to it that Musa was married off to another minor noble several years her junior, Polutrupon, and sent off to a remote town on the Etruscan border, the prosperous hamlet of Achillea. Meizon, an old friend of Musa's husband, told you when their first child was born, a son named Maxene. No one - perhaps not even Polutrupon - ever suspected that Maxene was your son.

Your feelings for Musa were soon the least of your worries. The peace between Etruria and Scythia - a peace that you had worked for years to maintain - was beginning to crumble. The nations were still far from all-out war, but a series of border skirmishes and assassinations began to plague your citizens. One of the first towns to be destroyed was Achillea. Etruscan raiders burned it to the ground one fateful autumn day, leaving Musa and her husband dead in the wreckage. Then, in defiance of your explicit wishes, Queen Meizon ordered Scythia's own troops to retaliate, in an attack that destroyed the border settlement of Hero and claimed the life of the Etruscan queen, Cerintha. Only weeks later, your eldest daughter, Thoesi, vanished, kidnapped and slain by Etruria's nefarious agents. So much death, hanging above your head. Meizon, if anything, seemed even more scarred by these tragedies than you: once a wise and gentle woman, she appeared to go half-mad with grief and rage. You could tell that she couldn't bear your presence, and so you left her to grieve alone for days. It was only when you forgave her in your heart for her rash decision, opening your arms to her without question or judgement, that she finally emerged. You could tell that something kind in her had broken and been replaced by cold fury. To see such bloodlust, such vengeance, in the heart of someone once ruled by reason and compassion, has shaken you deeply.

One good thing did emerge from the rubble. Despite the devastation wrought on Achillea, Musa's son Maxene, little more than four years old, somehow managed to survive. Desperate to see your son, you took advantage of Meizon's friendship with Musa's dead husband and convinced her to adopt Maxene as your own child. In point of fact, it was her idea, a shard of kindness born of grief - and you were quick to support her. On other matters, however, you disagreed. After the destruction of Achillea and your daughter's death, Meizon wanted war, wanted to crush the upstart Etruscans at any cost. But you would have none of it - you never wanted so much blood on your hands. Broken by sorrow, torn between your duty to Scythia and your duty to your wife and remaining son, you found solace in glass after glass of wine, until strong drink and stupor were the only things that could truly dull your agony. Your wife, always a stickler for upright and moral behavior, would condemn you for your weakness, so you've taken pains to conceal it from her.

For his part, Maxene proved to be both a blessing and a curse. Like his mother, he proved mischievous, yet his humor tended more towards bitter sarcasm. He never did learn to like Meizon - he joined the Soulblades to spite her, and you barely convinced your wife not to eject him from the palace. Really, he could never accept either of you as his adoptive parents. Openly, you claimed to dislike his talent for chaos - inwardly, however, he reminded you all too much of Musa. His defiance of your authority was frustrating at best, and heartbreaking at worst. So you distanced yourself from him, lest Meizon realize that you had once loved his mother. When you sent Maxene off to school in Assyria, it was a weight lifted from your shoulders.

Sadly, Maxene seemed prone to bad habits of his own - he shared Musa's capacity for troublemaking, but never betrayed any hint of the sheer intelligence that had made his mother so beautiful. The royal court of Scythia had seen fit to provide them with a stipend while he studied in Assyria, to provide for his basic well-being. A few weeks ago, you decided to take a look at the receipts Maxene was sending back - and what you saw surprised and dismayed you. According to the documents accumulated by the court, one of two things was true. Either Maxene was squandering all his money on strong drink and lavish parties, or the records were fake, suggesting something more sinister: that he was embezzling money from the crown for his own shady and suspect purposes, a blatant violation of Scythian law that you could not condone. You're not sure which is worse. Seeing your son indicted for criminal behavior would be shameful - but watching him mirror your own descent into alcoholism would be heartbreaking. You've been a slave to drink for too long - you could not bear to see him bound by the same shackles. If you can convince him to give up his studies and return home from Assyria, perhaps you can keep him from sliding too deep into the pit of drink and despair.

But perhaps you have a chance to make things right. Now, with King Hiems's offer to seal a peace by marrying his daughter Felicia to your remaining son Eidolos, you've been given a chance to make things right, to salvage the decaying relationship between the two nations. You truly want to believe he's had a change of heart. You'd like nothing more. But no negotiation with Etruria is ever as simple as it seems, and things have only grown more complex once Hiems ascended to the throne. As cunning as he is cruel, you suspect that he'd like nothing more than to crush Scythia beneath the heel of his boot - and you cannot allow him to catch you off guard.

The Scythian court is already far more vulnerable than you would like. Despite your best efforts to fill it only with trustworthy and reliable advisors, recent events have suggested that an Etruscan spy has managed to infiltrate your retinue: it seems that Etruria's one step ahead of you at every turn. Every time you contemplate waging war against Etruria with a spy in your midst, your heart becomes ice and your ribcage turns to ash. Unless you can root out the spy and stop their nefarious betrayal, any war with Etruria will cost too many lives, too much defeat, to even be an option.

Thankfully, you already have some idea who the culprit might be. Your chief steward, a soft-spoken but reliable man named Prymniesie, has been too quiet and inconspicuous of late, almost as if she fears you. Perhaps it's nothing, just a shy young woman awed by her king - but perhaps she's tied to Hiems. Another potential suspect is the most recent member of your retinue, a fortuneteller named Delia with a suspiciously nondescript background. Or - oh gods, what if it's Maxene? Can you even trust your own son? It would serve you right, for keeping his parentage a secret - but you must not assume the worst. You are a king, and kings do not act on gut feelings and nervous whims. You have to know for sure who is responsible: as long as the leak remains, the lives of your fellow Scythians are in grave danger.

If worst comes to worst, the power to launch a pre-emptive strike against Hiems rests in your hands. You will do everything you possibly can to prevent this outcome - so much senseless hate, so much bloodshed - but if Hiems's machinations prove too dire, then rallying Scythia's forces before it is too late may well be your only option. To put it bluntly, you suspect that he's only indulging in this wedding ritual at all to lull you into a false sense of security as he prepares an attack on all fronts. To prepare for this eventuality, your nation's greatest artificers have crafted an arcane communications device with which you might inform your generals of your decision. If you decline to use the communicator, nothing will change: no armies marshaled, no battle plans drafted, no swords sharpened or armor girded. If, however, relations between the two factions should deteriorate, you have two further options. If tensions escalate, but a chance for reconciliation remains, you have the power to increase Scythia's border defenses, preparing for the worst (and risking further escalation) without acting aggressively. But if all else fails, one option still remains: the metaphorical sword of war yet hangs above your head, and all you need to do is sever one thread to unleash it.

You hope against hope that the wedding will not come to such a disastrous end, however. A large part of this result, you know, depends on you - so long as you can learn the identity of the spy at your court, remain aware of Hiems's attempts to manipulate Scythia, and keep your wits about you, you may well be able to forestall any Etruscan treachery and keep the peace between the kingdoms. What's more, the merchant Paldeen has rediscovered the lost artifact known as the Diadem, and the Scythian treasury has authorized you to purchase it from him and add it to the nation's treasure vaults. It could be a great asset to your nation. But with war looming, the burden of rulership is heavier than ever upon your shoulders, and you can scarcely endure it unaided. Loath as you are to acknowledge it, the fire of a strong drink will ease your fears, if only for a moment. You need it - gods be cursed, how you wish you didn't - to keep yourself from breaking down utterly. No one must discover you in a moment of weakness, however, or the people will know how frail and desperate you have become. They must see the strong and noble king you strive to be, not the mortal man you are. And you have a personal duty as well: make sure your family stays safe, no matter how chaotic this wedding gets. You cannot bear to lose another loved one.

Goals

- Prevent war from erupting between Scythia and Etruria if you possibly can.
- Ensure that the planned marriage between your son and Felicia occurs without a hitch.
- Make sure everyone in your family remains safe and happy.

- Figure out just what Maxene is doing with his stipend, and convince him to return home to Scythia.
- Root out the spy among your retinue and ensure that no more information leaks to Etruria.
- Make sure no one finds out about your alcoholism.
- Buy the Diadem from Paldeen, and make sure it doesn't fall into Etruscan hands.

Contacts

- Hiems Coronus (Skylar Cohen): A coldly brilliant monarch, the ruler of Etruria and your greatest adversary.
- Felicia Coronus (Dana Murphy): The woman slated to marry your son.
- Meizon Agathos (Amanda Stowers): Your wife, a morally upright and heartbroken woman.
- Eidolos Agathos (Daniel Grazian): Your oldest living child and heir, slated to marry the Etruscan crown prince today.
- Maxene Astea (Bobby Pragada): Your bastard son by Musa Astea, a disobedient and rebellious child.
- Fresi Nea (Peter Spradling): An arms dealer and a close friend of your wife.
- Prymniesie Olethron (Lily Chen): Your chief steward, a diligent and quiet young woman.
- Sirasu Noon (Maitree Banerjee): A master Assyrian diplomat and your best hope for resolving this conflict peaceably.

Memory/Event Packets

- If you hear about the date "June 2," open this.

Bluesheets

- A History of the Sabine Realms of Assyria, Scythia, and Etruria
- The Rituals and Beliefs of the Sabine Nations
- Who's Who in the Sabine Kingdoms

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- Scythian Diadem Negotiations
- Bluffmaster
- Truthing
- Scythian Communication Machine

Abilities

- Knock Out
- Royal Truthing Magic (1x)
- Assist
- Alcoholism
- Restrain
- Offensive Technique

Items

- Scythian Treasury Check (in-game document)
- 50 Coins

Stats

- Psychic Health Max: 5
- Combat Rating: 3

Eidolos Agathos

Born March 3, in the year 279.

I feel like a shadow of a person, constructed from lies. Admirers swarm around me, whispering that my beauty is pure as an angel's, yet my soul is ash. My parents call my agreement to this wedding "self-sacrificing," but it's nothing more than calculated self-preservation. Everyone around me thinks I am carefree, yet I am drowning in panic and pain. Scythia thinks I am their loyal, guileless crown prince, yet I am Etruria's most valuable spy.

I doubt any diviner could have foretold my predicament. When I was six, Thoesi, my only blood sibling and Scythia's ten-year-old crown princess, was abducted and murdered shortly thereafter. Everyone with any sense knew the Etruscans were responsible, for they wanted revenge for the recent death of their own Queen Cerintha, killed by accident when Scythians attacked the border town Hero. The Etruscans have caused countless other Scythian catastrophes in the last three centuries, so many around me considered Etruria the root of all their problems. My mother, most of all, thought Etruria was evil incarnate— I can still see the loathing in her eyes, every time she mentions their land. By all rights, I should have hated Etruria too, but, after a few crying fits as a child, I could never muster up such heated feelings. After all, Scythia has dealt Etruria many blows as well . . .

Regardless, Thoesi is dead, another casualty of the Scythia and Etruria's vicious circle of violence, and, as the only remaining child of the current monarchs, I became first in line to the Scythian throne. Though most future rulers study the arts and sciences— which make for a cultured monarch, but not necessarily a competent one— I have prepared diligently for my future career, exploring economics, rhetoric, political science, warfare, and many other relevant topics. Seeing my zeal, my parents let me into official meetings even as an adolescent, allowing me to speak up and offer my own thoughts on crucial issues. When I was eighteen, I went off to Nineveh, Assyria's greatest school-city, to study law for a year. And there, in Nineveh, I met the woman who would change everything— Salo, the younger child of Etruria's king. She was a poet, a spirited romantic with exquisite dreams of art and true love, of beauty and hope and peace. I didn't care that she was princess of a land I was supposed to hate. No, I lingered in a fantasy as she strolled beside me through Nineveh's streets and sang me poems and promised to love me always, and I vowed I would love her always, as well. We were the star-crossed lovers of a grand tragedy, she joked. We spent our days together, and the nights . . .

Indeed, misfortune struck, though not the sort we would have expected. When I finished my studies just weeks later and returned to Scythia, I found a letter from King Hiems of Etruria awaiting me. A letter that phrased my relationship with Salo in bare, sordid terms— as an affair that would leave my reputation in tatters, for Scythians reject anyone who agrees to sex outside wedlock. Chances are that Salo betrayed me by accident— for all her brilliance, she could be foolish and loose-lipped from time to time— but the king never explained how he knew. Instead, he quite simply stated that he could ruin me by releasing this information. He gave me two options— 1.) have my indiscretions disclosed to the public, or 2.) feed him secrets from within the Scythian palace. I chose the latter option out of self-preservation. Over the past few years, I have granted him access to highly classified information about economics, politics, court intrigue, and the military. He has asked for my own opinions, on certain occasions, and I have advised him to the best of my ability. As a result, my affair has remained safely secret.

However, Option 2 comes with its own perils, for anyone who trades away such sensitive risks being caught. Hiems has actually protected me to some extent, evading Scythian inquiries about how he gets his information. Nonetheless, Scythia murmurs about spies in the highest echelons of its government. And every time I hear the rumors, I feel a breathless panic in my lungs; fear of being discovered has goaded me through many insomniac nights. Whenever I do manage to snatch some sleep, I dream of teetering on a cliff's edge, and someday I will surely fall . . .

I fell into alcoholism for several months, drinking to mask the horror. Stumbling through a groggy haze, I floundered in every sort of shame, certain that I was worthless, that nobody who knew my true self could possibly love me. Then one day I snapped out of it, because self-pity wasn't helping. Only apathy and cool, rational thinking can rescue me now.

I'm not doomed. I'm an excellent spy and an even better politician, and my value to Etruria may yet extricate me from this mess. Hiems has arranged my marriage to his older child, Felicia, because he wants to steal my political acumen for the Etruscan royal family. He himself has ruled Etruria with calculated pragmatism, shepherding it through its countless crises, though everyone I know denounces him as ruthless and cruel. I alone recognize his actions are necessary, given Etruria's troubles, and I admire his brilliance. Etruria is a great challenge for any ruler, and I would like to tackle it one day myself. He can rely on neither of his own offspring to continue his legacy— his older child is a tad too guileless, and the younger far too impulsive and emotional, as I know well— and so he wants me as his successor. I indeed believe that I can rule well, and marrying into the Etruscan royal family would solve many of my immediate problems, for I could stop spying on Scythia and at last serve Etruria openly. My lies— or at least some of them— would become truth!

I've never met my new fiancée, but we have corresponded on-and-off during our engagement. She strikes me as open and generous, like the rumors say, but I have one minor concern— she specifically mentioned in two of her letters that she values truthfulness above all other qualities. Does she suspect me of dishonesty? If so, I must charm all her doubts away. I will bat my eyes at her and flirt ever so subtly— most people melt simply at the sight of me.

Meanwhile, I have not written to Salo at all.

She must be seething over my engagement, but I try not to think of her too much. I fear much more than our romance is in danger. My contacts among Scythia's intelligence corps suspect that Etruria will launch a large-scale invasion into Scythia immediately after my wedding, and they warn that my parents are now considering military action as well. I have not had the chance to obtain more information, but I reported this much to Hiems. The suspicions that he wants to attack are no doubt true, though he has neither denied nor confirmed them himself; Etruria would benefit greatly from striking while Scythia is off-guard (and vice versa). However, if a battle should break out while both nations are prepared for conflict, Scythia and Etruria would end up embroiled in a lengthy war that would drain money and lives from both— the very nightmare that this wedding is officially supposed to prevent. Personally, I don't want either country to be crippled by violence. Thus, I will probe both my parents and Hiems for more details about their military plans, and I must do my best to steer them all towards peace.

My mother will no doubt want to attack Etruria, as revenge for my sister's death. Her bloodlust will likely be roused further by Fresi, Scythia's top arms dealer. As Scythia's richest non-royal, Fresi will attend the wedding as the "representative of the commoners," and, from the few times I've met him, I've gathered that he would attack Etruria in an instant. He claims that his hatred of Etruria stems from the death of several cousins in a fight at a small border town, but I suspect him of more mercenary motives— as a weapons dealer, Fresi would profit greatly from conflict.

Cryseon, father, is more hesitant to go to war, while my betrothed, Felicia, is said to be a thorough supporter of peace. There's a few more decided pacifists that I know of— Paldeen, an Etruscan luxury goods merchant with as much to gain from peace as Fresi does from war, and I hear he has found the Diadem, which I could perhaps be turned against war somehow. The Assyrian peacemakers wish for peace, obviously. I especially look forward to working with Sirasu, Assyria's brilliant secretary of international relations and likely my most useful ally in this quest for harmony.

War is a terrible threat, yet I worry as much about another danger. Just yesterday, the Soulblades of Scythia sent a letter to me and Felicia, warning that their historical rivals, the Blackguards, may once again be on the prowl. The Soulblades recently intercepted a lengthy Blackguard-style message but were able to decode just four words: "contract," "two," "royal" and "engaged." "Contract" implies that someone has hired the Blackguards for assassination. "Two," "royal" and "engaged" suggest that Felicia and I are the targets.

I haven't yet decided what to do about this letter. Though the Blackguards were once world-renowned assassins, they have long since faded into fiction; they haven't been heard of in Scythia since Sabine times. But I cannot dismiss the message from my mind, for I already know who the murderer might be.

Prymnesie is the steward of the Scythian palace. Though born to Soulblade parents, she turned her back on them at a young

age, renouncing her magical heritage, eagerly distancing herself from the Blackguards' main enemies. She has since wormed her way up the palace hierarchy with astonishing speed and become our head steward, yet I have always felt odd around her. Prymnesie has watched me, tracking my movements, showing up near my quarters at the oddest of moments, and whenever she has discussed preparations for the wedding I have discerned a frightening false joy in her eyes. She resembles a bird of prey, circling, preparing to swoop in for the kill. Since I will depart for Etruria soon, she may well strike today, at the wedding.

I need more proof before making a formal accusation, since I'd hate to seem paranoid. But, in truth, I am frightened out of my mind— the two countries to which I am loyal are heading towards war, my steward is probably planning to kill me, I'm about to marry someone whom I've never met, and all I really want is a drink!

And I'll see Salo again. After all these years, I've realized that we are wrong for each other. She thought of me as her muse, a model of virtue and beauty and perfection, but I can never match that image. On the other hand, I want to have a fine leader for my partner, yet her intelligence is not meant for politicking. She is talented at a great many things, but diplomacy is undoubtedly a weakness of hers, thanks to the same high spirits that make her poetry so lovely. Strangely, I think I have outgrown her . . .

Yet I still long for her romantic ideals. I can't help but want true love.

Notes

- Maxene's birth parent were named Musa and Polutrupon. Polutrupon was a minor noble, descended directly from the Sabine royal family. Musa was a commoner, but she worked as Meizon's lady-in-waiting before her marriage. Because she was older than Polutrupon, both Maxene and Polutrupon took her last name.
- Memnon, Prymnesie's father, was one of the most powerful Soulblades ever. Meizon, a bastion of anti-Soulblade sentiment, had Memnon jailed for life for practicing illegal magic. You suspect Meizon has personally verified that Prymnesie no longer has any sympathies for the Soulblades, or else you doubt she would tolerate her presence.

Goals

- Marry Felicia to become prince of Etruria
- Keep the peace between Scythia and Etruria
- Prevent Hiems from exposing your affair by complying with his orders
- Avoid being destroyed by the Blackguards, perhaps by destroying them first
- Keep away from the temptation of alcohol to avoid relapsing into addiction

Contacts

- Salo Coronus (Rachael Monosson): Your ex-lover, who still adores you in all likelihood, though you fear she is too reckless to actually be a good longterm partner.
- Felicia Coronus (Dana Murphy): Your betrothed, whom you know mainly through letters. She seems to value honesty.
- Hiems Coronus (Skylar Cohen): Etruria's sole monarch, who controls you through blackmail. Your original bitterness towards him has slowly turned to respect.
- Meizon Agathos (Amanda Stowers): Your mother, who is still angry about Etruria's many transgressions. Meizon disapproves strongly of both drinking and sex before marriage, so it's lucky she doesn't know too much about your doings.
- Cryseon Agathos (Joel): Your father. His compassion is admirable, but it is also his weakness.
- Prymnesie Olethron (Lily Chen): The frightening head steward of the Scythian palace.
- Maxene Astea (Bobby Pragada): Your younger brother, whom your parents adopted soon after Thoesi's disappearance. An Etruscan attack on the border town Achillea wiped out his own family. Honestly, you've never paid much attention to him; he's always been rather immature. He makes a point of never getting along with Meizon, dabbling in Soulblade magic for the express purpose of irritating her.

Memory/Event Packets

- Open this the first time you consume alcohol.
- If you hear about the date "June 2," open this.

Bluesheets

- A History of the Sabine Realms of Assyria, Scythia, and Etruria
- The Rituals and Beliefs of the Sabine Nations
- Who's Who in the Sabine Kingdoms

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- Bluffmaster
- Truthing

Abilities

- Knock Out
- Assist
- Restrain
- Royal Truthing Magic (2x)
- Truthing Resistance (2x)
- Offensive Technique
- Addictive Tendency
- Lockpicking

Items

- 100 Coins

Stats

- Psychic Health Max: 5
- Combat Rating: 3

Meizon Agathos

Born April 3, in the year 256.

You went into her room. Her stuffed bear still smiled on her pillow, and her yellow robe was still folded on her dresser. Only she— Thoesi, your ten-year-old daughter— was missing.

It was your fault, Meizon, of course. You had refused to forgive Etruria for sacking and burning Achillea, the border town where you had spent vacations as a child. Back then, before you married Cryseon, you were only a minor noble, not famous at all, so the Etruscans likely didn't know how attached you were to Achillea and its townspeople. They may not have meant the attack to be personal, but it wounded you nonetheless. Secretly thirsting for revenge, you decided a few months later to go after Hero, an Etruscan border town of the same size as Achillea. Scythian intelligence warned you that Cerintha, the queen of Etruria, had considered visiting Hero, but you kept that information from your husband and went behind his back, signing off on the attack yourself. Cerintha had indeed arrived at Hero by the time of the attack, and she was caught up in the battle and killed. And, in the tradition of violence that has bound your two lands for so long, Etruria cruelly retaliated, abducting your daughter, Thoesi, from her own palace bedroom. You knew full well what would happen next— the ice-hearted King of Etruria would have her killed, perhaps in secret, or perhaps at a grisly public execution, as punishment for Cerintha's death.

There was no public execution, but, in the next few days, your land's Soulblade doctors searched for your daughter's soul and found it was no longer among the living. All of Scythia mourned for the lost child, yet you were isolated in your sorrow, for you were crushed by a guilt that you could admit to no one, not even your husband. He stopped talking to you and moved out of your bedroom, while you turned your back on the world and wept day and night. But someone reached out to you before you went quite mad with grief . . . Memnon, then the greatest doctor among the Soulblades. He came to you in a dream and revealed that he practiced not only healing, but certain illegal arts besides. He offered to call on the black magic that had first won the Soulblades their fame, and he swore that you would speak with your daughter once more. And your broken mind believed him.

He demanded money for "rare, arcane ingredients," and he fed you drugs to "open your mind." Looking back, you recognize it was all dangerous quackery, but you were under his thrall, your sanity crumbling as you drank potion after potion. You saw zigzagging black shapes everywhere and heard sounds that weren't there, malicious, ghostly whispers that pursued you through nightmares and clung to you even when you awoke. For weeks you tottered, half in reality, half in a world of imagined evils. Countless voices all pressed upon you— but never the one voice you craved.

Finally, your husband came back to you. His warmth gave you the strength to break free from Memnon's influence. You stormed into the Soulblades' quarters and summoned the wicked "doctor" before you, and he came, quivering, sputtering that you would be "vulnerable to the spirits" if you left him now. But you had had enough. You threw him into prison and had his research confiscated. Furthermore, you had the whole Soulblade Quarter searched, and you discovered that they had all sorts of horrors packed away— boxes of human bones, bottles brimming over with blood, shriveled hearts and lungs, and chests of dried poppies. They whined that they used the items only for official medical work, that they studied the tissues to treat diseases and used the poppies only to relieve the pain of the dying. On the other hand, you were positive Memnon wasn't the only Soulblade who practiced black magic in defiance of Scythian law. Eventually, you imprisoned the most flagrant transgressors, but you couldn't shut down the whole lot— their legitimate medical research is too valuable for that. But you and the Soulblades are no longer on good terms. You avoid their healing as much as you practically can, and you have realized that their cultish necromancy is useless at best and madness-inducing at worst.

When you finally recovered from Memnon's abuse, you turned your thoughts back to Achillea. One of the only survivors of Etruria's attack was a young boy, Maxene, the only surviving member of a noble family you had stayed with as a child. His entire family and estate had been wiped out by the Etruscans, and you pitied him, especially since his father, Polutrupon, had been your childhood friend and his mother, Musa, was one of your ladies-in-waiting before her marriage. Still grieving for your

own child, you and your husband decided to become Maxene's official guardians. Though you never adopted him into the official line of succession, he is still an honorary prince, with the title, the stipend, the room in the palace and all the other accouterments of royalty. You and Cryseon had little direct involvement, since the child was cared for mainly by tutors and nurses, so you simply watched with horror as Maxene grew first into a bratty kid and then into a wretch of a teenager, a thoughtless rake who is utterly ungrateful towards you and your husband. First, he joined up with the Soulblades to study healing, just to spite you—you would have kicked him from the palace immediately, if Cryseon hadn't intervened. Then, this past year, he went off to the Assyrian school-city Nineveh to "study," but you heard rumors that he was doing the exact opposite. Worst of all, you've seen the bills! He's been hosting drunken parties, gambling away his state-provided stipend . . . It's a miracle he hasn't gone bankrupt or quite flunked out yet! Now, you're perfectly well aware that young people hold their own festivities at a wedding—complete with disgusting alcohol and reckless gaming—and you're sure Maxene, as the sibling of the betrothed, will be heading the debauchery this time around, humiliating Scythia's royal family, and perhaps causing further catastrophes. You've made up your mind to squash all such troublemaking. This is one wedding that can do without it.

Ah, this wedding. You can't believe that, in the end, Etruria may steal both your children. You know that a wedding between a top-ranking noble from Scythia and another from Etruria is needed to keep the peace, but do you really want peace? No, you want revenge—for your dead daughter, for Achillea, for the generations of Scythians terrorized by Etruscan evil.

The time for peace is over, and Scythia and Etruria should finally enter the war they've tiptoed around for centuries. Scythian intelligence suggests that the king of Etruria has had similar thoughts and is considering attacking Scythia. Regardless of whether the rumors are true, you want to go on the offensive against Etruria, invading them and conquering them once and for all, and your military leaders have drawn up plans to do so. However, your husband has so far refused to order the attack, because he wants to first talk with Hiems, Etruria's king, at the wedding. He claims that he simply wants to prevent Hiems from preparing Etruria for the war, and indeed you would like catch Etruria off-guard with your attack. However, you suspect Cryseon has another reason for the delay—he's too soft-hearted to finally commit Scythia to the war predicted by the prophecy. He'd rather preserve the peaceful status quo; that's why he arranged the wedding in the first place. Your ever-practical son, Eidolos, has quietly voiced her support for peace, and he therefore did not complain about being married off to an Etruscan.

Alas, there's peace-supporters all around. On the Etruscan side, an obnoxious merchant named Paldeen has been quite vocal in his dovishness, as war would no doubt interfere with his profits. You can't entirely avoid that haggling snake, sadly, since according to rumors he has dug up the ancient Diadem! You and your husband have got to get the Diadem back into Scythia's possession, or else be forever condemned by history. You've already met with the treasurer and figured out the maximum price Scythia can pay Paldeen for that artifact—it's no doubt much higher than anything that dirt-cheap Etruria will offer. Hopefully, that transaction will be over quickly—you've only met Paldeen a few times, yet you really can't stand him. Then there's the Assyrian peacemakers, who are explicitly dedicated to preventing war and thwarting your aims; Sirasu Noon, the Assyrian secretary of international relations, will likely be the greatest threat among them.

The main supporter of war, as far as you know, is Fresi, a Scythian weapons dealer. Of course, his opponents would say he's also motivated by his pocketbook, but you know Fresi's hatred for Etruria is sincere—much of his family was wiped out at the battle of Achillea. Furthermore, you both find Paldeen distasteful, and have traded quite a few stories about his oily politicking. You feel quite close to Fresi as a result.

Between the two of you, you'll stop these peacemakers from persuading your husband to keep the peace, for you want nothing less than war. Ideally, you'll somehow prevent Etruria from preparing for war and convince Cryseon to order the attack, though you doubt things will turn out quite so perfectly. In the worst case, you could just order the attack yourself, though that would be a serious betrayal of Cryseon's trust.

Of course, there's the dreaded possibility that peace will prevail, and the wedding will go on. You've got one decent option in this case—you must simply marry off your troublesome ward instead of your own child. Switching out the betrothed this close to the wedding is unorthodox, to be sure, but there's no obvious reason for Etruria to object. Moreover, you've got an increasingly

tempting reason to send him away, beyond the fact that you can't stand the fool. Just before leaving for Cos, you overheard your ladies-in-waiting gossiping about Musa Astea and Cryseon! Now, when you pressed your servants for more information, they immediately fell silent, but the suspicions have been planted in your mind. You want to trust your husband, and he's innocent, in all likelihood. But if Cryseon has indeed betrayed your marriage vows for your old attendant, he'll suffer your full wrath, for the only things you hate more than sexual impurity are gambling, alcohol and Etruria itself. You'll observe his interactions with Maxene, and, if you observe any undue fondness, you'll openly confront your husband. If your worst fears are confirmed, then you'll send Cryseon's precious bastard packing to gloomy Etruria and make the lives of both father and son hell. And you might just order up a war to finish things off...

Notes

- Polutrupon was a minor noble, descended directly from the Sabine royal family, while Musa was a commoner. Because she was older than her husband, both Polutrupon and her blasted son took her last name.

Contacts

- Hiems Coronus (Skylar Cohen): A cruel and ruthless monarch, the ruler of Etruria and your greatest adversary.
- Felicia Coronus (Dana Murphy): The woman slated to marry your son.
- Cryseon Agathos (Joel): Your husband.
- Eidolos Agathos (Daniel Grazian): Your oldest living child and heir, slated to marry the Etruscan crown prince today.
- Maxene Astea (Bobby Pragada): Your disobedient and rebellious ward.
- Fresi Nea (Peter Spradling): An arms dealer and a close friend.
- Prymniesie Olethron (Lily Chen): Your chief steward and the daughter of Memnon. You personally interviewed her before offering employment and confirmed with truthing magic that she resents the Soulblades as you do.
- Sirasu Noon (Maitree Banerjee): A master Assyrian diplomat and everyone's best hope for resolving this conflict peaceably. You're no fan, but you sadly don't have any leverage over him.

Goals

- Destroy Etruria by declaring war.
- Obtain the Diadem for as low a cost as possible
- Save Eidolos from this marriage by sacrificing Maxene instead.
- Oppose all Soul Magic.
- Learn whether Maxene is really Cryseon's child; if so, take revenge.
- Shut down gambling, drinking, and all related debauchery.

Memory/Event Packets

- Illness of the Soul
- If you hear about the date "June 2," open this.

Bluesheets

- A History of the Sabine Realms of Assyria, Scythia, and Etruria
- The Rituals and Beliefs of the Sabine Nations
- Who's Who in the Sabine Kingdoms

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- Scythian Diadem Negotiations
- Bluffmaster
- Truthing
- Scythian Communication Machine

Abilities

- Knock Out
- Restrain
- Assist
- Royal Truthing Magic (1x)

Items

- 50 Coins

Stats

- Psychic Health Max: 5

- Combat Rating: 2

Delia Armata

Born May 20, in the year 272.

Any book of Etruscan history can tell you how their nation rose to power. Less than a century ago, the Coroni, a tribe of petty and low-ranking nobles from the eastern deserts who still laid claim to royal bloodlines, rose up against the Etruscan lords who had welcomed them in. Led by their would-be king, Hyperion Coronus, they crushed Etruria's peasant militia, sacked its capitol, and put the Etruscan Queen, her retinue, and her family to death. In the years that followed, King Hyperion relentlessly tracked down every trace of the old Etruscan dynasty, seeking to erase their name forever. One by one, the scions of that ancient family were slaughtered, until at last no one was left to avenge the fallen queen - no one who could carry on her lineage, no one who could reclaim her throne. Now, the Coroni rule unchallenged, and the Etruscans that came before them are nothing but a memory.

But you believe that all those history books are wrong. And you yourself are living proof. You tell the others that you are Delia, the no-name fortune-teller. But you know the truth - you are the last remnant of a royal house that can be traced back to the Sabine Empire itself, in the mythic era of your nation's birth. Those are the stories you tell yourself in your daydreams - that you are the proudest and most regal of the old warrior-queens reborn, that you will single-handedly strike down Hiems the usurper-king and his bloody-handed dynasty and restore Etruria's honor. Do you know any of this for sure? Of course not. But hope is headier and more intoxicating than the strongest drink.

But other things, sadder things, you know are true. Your mother died stinking of filth and despair, wracked by the pangs of childbirth and dishonored by the brutal squalor of King Hiems's prison camps. His soldiers, unaware of your true identity, cast you out on the rugged slopes of Mount Morophon as food for the vultures and the jackals, hoping that the elements would finish what the Coroni started. As far as King Hiems was concerned, that was the end of the line: the Etruscan queens were dead and gone forever. But you didn't die.

A gang of roustabouts, grifters, and ne'er-do-wells, who had made camp on the mountain's slopes after being cast out of Etruria's capital city, proved themselves that day kinder and more noble than any in the Coroni's royal court. They plucked you from among the jagged cairns and raised you as one of their own. As your adoptive father Cynesios used to fondly say, "We're all outcasts here, child. The least we could do was take care of another like us." As you grew into a young woman, his wife, the kind but sharp-witted swindler Neumia, always remarked on how much you resembled Etruria's half-forgotten Queen.

Your adoptive family wandered from place to place, camping in sparse forests and dewy vales, and you grew older with the seasons. Unwelcome in cities and shunned by even the poorest farmers, they made a living however they could - performing, begging, stealing. An old fortuneteller, a woman who always claimed to have royal blood, taught you the basics of divination, and you took to it with a startling aptitude - you mastered the art of seeing truth in the chaotic fates of those around you in less than a year. You also took to the art of thievery as soon as you tried it, and became quite skilled indeed at sneaking into the homes and bank-vaults of the rich and depriving them of their dusty treasures. You loved the thrill of the profession, the way your pulse pounded as you crept through empty halls or slipped between the bars of a high window. Even after Cynesios died peacefully in his sleep one moonlit November night, and the troupe drifted apart in sorrow, you stuck to your chosen profession.

And you made a pretty penny for yourself along the way - not to mention a reputation for competence and stealth across the Sabine states. You were one of the best - perhaps the best. As time passed, you found yourself highly sought-after by wealthy clients looking to 'liberate' a rival's prized trophy or ancient heirloom. You seldom failed to fulfill a contract - and, though you're wanted for dozens of high-profile burglaries in Scythia, Etruria, and Assyria, the law has only been able to touch you once. And that wasn't your fault. You were infiltrating an Assyrian museum of art with a team of local sneak thieves, only to realize that they'd been paid off to set you up and turn you in to the Assyrian authorities. The death penalty awaited you, if you could not escape. You always knew there was a reason you preferred working alone.

Thankfully, it seems you have as many friends as enemies. As you cooled your heels in a prison cell (day seventy-three of your imprisonment, as you recall), one of the guards slipped you a scroll alongside your daily gruel. The anonymous letter advised you that a job awaited you once you escaped: it recommended that you insinuate yourself into the retinue of Scythia's king as a diviner, and attend the royal wedding. Whoever your patron was, they'd done their homework - you hadn't practiced divination in years, except when you used it to plan the occasional job on the side. You'd always had a knack for it, though. Oh, and it mentioned that the guard who'd slipped you the scroll had been bribed to assist in your escape. So escape you did - and as you made your way towards Scythia, more of the unsigned letters followed, filling you in on the details of the robbery.

Your instructions were simple. One of the wealthiest people attending the wedding is an Etruscan merchant of luxuries named Paldeen. He's bringing many of his most expensive wares with him, including the fabled Diadem of Smaragdos, lost for generations. So, naturally, it's the Diadem that you're supposed to steal. What a surprise. Your benefactor also provided you with a set of skillfully forged documents establishing you as a Scythian commoner with a talent for fortunetelling, making it child's play for you to join the hangers-on and sycophants of the royal court. Now you're on your way to the wedding.

Once you saw the guest list, you realized that this caper would give you the chance to acquire a vast fortune - enough to return to your ancestral homeland of Etruria. To rob this hapless merchant blind under the noses of royalty will be oh so very satisfying - and what's more, you suspect you know who your employer is. One of the attendees is a Scythian arms dealer named Fresi, a man you've heard is an old rival of Paldeen's and is most likely your patron - and, more importantly, he has the power to make you a very rich thief indeed. Your payment for this job has already been tendered - after all, your patron freed you from Assyrian justice, and you owe him at least this favor. But maybe you can persuade him to shell out a little extra for your assistance - between what you can extract from him, and whatever wealth is not tied down (not to mention whatever you can pick up while gambling), you should be able to piece together enough of a nest egg to pay the customs fee of the Etruscan border guards and return home at last. Favors and offers of eventual payment are no good at all, though - you need to be set to enter Etruria by the time this wedding comes to an end. You've been in the wind, a wanderer with neither nation nor home, for long enough - and now, you have nowhere else to go. You fear Assyrian justice will catch up with you unless you can take refuge as a true citizen of Etruria.

Finally, the king of Etruria, Hiems, will also be in attendance, as will his two children, Felicia and Salo. It was his family that imprisoned your mother, brought about her death, and left you to die on a distant mountainside. You have no love for this heartless bastard of a man, and quite a bit of hatred. If you can find any way at all to get back at Hiems for his father's crimes, you'd very much like to make him pay however you can. But you're not sure how - you're a robber, after all, not an assassin. And revenge, however justifiable, always seems to get people in more trouble than it's worth - so you'd like to focus on the task at hand first. But once you return to Etruria, if the authority of the Coroni has been shaken, perhaps you can slowly reclaim the throne that is your birthright. Vengeance and redemption are at last within your grasp.

Goals

- Steal the Diadem from Paldeen without anyone noticing.
- Get your hands on enough money to meet Etruria's steep customs fee of 500 coins and re-enter the country.
- Use whatever means you can to undermine the authority of King Hiems.
- Tell the fortunes of the nobles assembled at the wedding until you are able to discern the greater truth hidden beneath the veil of the future.
- Figure out who hired you to steal Paldeen's Diadem.

Contacts

- Hiems Coronus (Skylar Cohen): A coldly brilliant monarch, the child of Hyperion Coronus and a usurper of the rightful throne of Etruria.

Memory/Event Packets

- Delia - Fortunetelling

Bluesheets

- A History of the Sabine Realms of Assyria, Scythia, and Etruria
- The Rituals and Beliefs of the Sabine Nations
- Who's Who in the Sabine Kingdoms

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- Appraise
- Bluffmaster
- Fortune Telling

Abilities

- Knock Out
- Assist
- Restrain
- Improved Lockpicking
- First Aid
- Lockpicking
- Offensive Technique
- Chaotic Technique

Items

- Etruscan Immigration Papers (in-game document)
- 200 Coins

Stats

- Psychic Health Max: 5
- Combat Rating: 4

Maxene Astea

Born January 5, in the year 281.

My hometown, Achillea, had been in Scythia's possession for decades, though it was only a few miles from the Etruscan border. Etruria decided to burn Achillea down to ground, and they torched the manor of my family, the residing nobles. Being a hyperactive four-year-old at that point, I had run away from naptime and was hiding in the garden when everyone inside went up in smoke—my parents, the servants, four cats . . . And that, everybody, is why I don't talk about my childhood much.

Most of the kids who survived the fire ended up in orphanages or on the streets. I got scooped up and saved by the official palace of Scythia, because I've got a speck of royal blood in me and because my dear Queen Meizon knew my parents way back when. Possessed by a fleeting charitable instinct, the monarchs adopted me, but not really, so now I'm a prince, but not really, and I'm their son, but really not.

I lived in the Scythian palace, in a room that was larger than any of the servants' yet still smaller than the wine cellar. I had a retinue of governesses and tutors, and I find it telling that "retinue" comes from the old word "retinere," meaning "to hold back." They seemed like wardens, dedicated mainly to keeping me out of the real royal family's sight, and they never taught me much of anything besides how to wheedle out of punishment. I never even got the same wardens—I mean, "tutors," as Eidolos, my inhumanly perfect non-brother brother whom I never saw, even though we supposedly "grew up together." Everything Eidolos had was better—better rooms, better tutors, better books. I swear he even had better tantrums.

For a while, we both threw tantrums. My whole family burned to death when I was four. Not long afterwards, Queen Cerintha died at Hero, and Eidolos's sister Thoesi got abducted from the palace in the middle of the night and executed by Etruscans. We're both screwed up. Of course, darling Eidolos had his parents to run to for comfort, while I settled for chucking books out the windows, being scolded by both teachers and gardeners, and chucking more books. I ended up arrogant while having low self-esteem, spoiled without getting a thing I wanted, a bratty ball of contradictory emotions.

You think I'm stupid, right? Of course you do, and my younger self would have agreed with you. But after a few years, I decided to laugh instead of crying, and I realized that, if I was going to be asininely rebellious, I should at least direct my asininity into productive outlets. While angelic, flawless Eidolos always irritated me the most, his mother Meizon was my least favorite adult; I could sense her loathing every time we met, which was rarely, since she kept out of my way and I was forcibly kept out of hers. It was fairly well known that she was feuding with the Soulblades, Scythia's highly-respected mages-turned-healers. Naturally, I decided to become a Soulblade, just to see her reaction.

She was furious. She would have likely thrown me out of the line of succession; fortunately, the monarchs had never deigned to put me in, as if I needed more assurance our "child-parent" relationship was a sham. Lacking that option, she threatened to kick me out of the palace, but her husband decided to pay attention, for once, and shut that idea down. And so, I joined the Soulblades. I began to dedicate myself to my studies, more out of spite than any legitimate desire to learn. That was when the strangest thing happened, something nobody could have predicted—it turned out I was a genius.

For the first time, I escaped regimented palace life, as I spent my days in the Soulblade Quarter. For the first time, I felt free, strangely happy as I studied for the qualification exams. Though I had only a limited background in science or medicine, I learned quickly from the healers there, and I scored perfectly on the exam, as only three other students ever had before. Once I entered into the program, I progressed rapidly, and my mentors called me an "intellectual powerhouse." This was something of a shock to me, and it would have been to my adopted family, had I told them. But I didn't tell them, mainly because they never asked.

Soon, it was time for me to follow the typical path of royal young adults and head off for school in Assyria. I left off my Soulblade training and switched from medicine to astronomy, just to see if I could get any nerdier, and I settled down in the

school-city Nineveh. I aced the introductory classes and found myself in an advanced seminar just as a first-year.

Somewhere along the way, I realized Assyria was my own personal paradise. Even with all the exams and problem sets and unpaid internships, life there was infinitely less stressful than back at the palace. I collapsed into an existential-angst-ridden identity crisis for a full hour. Then, I decided I was done being Scythian.

Ideally, I'll spend my future studying in Assyria, then researching in Assyria, then being a seemingly stuffy, secretly awesome professor in Assyria. Unfortunately, as long as I have Scythian citizenship, I am legally bound to return to Scythia once every year, and I also can't hold a decently paying job anywhere else. Thus, I need to switch my citizenship as soon as humanly possible. I also need money to then support myself until I can get work as a researcher or teacher.

As far as switching citizenship goes, I'm afraid I procrastinated until finals were over. But now I finally did my legal research and purchased the necessary magical form from a low-level enchanter just before leaving for Cos. I need two signatures to complete it— one from a Scythian monarch, one from an Assyrian who will “sponsor” me. Both have to sign off within the same day. The form will change colors once it's been properly completed, and then I can file it once I get back to Nineveh. To make things a bit more complicated, both signatories must verify that I'm virtuous and highly productive. Queen Meizon probably wouldn't sign it even under pain of death, so I'll be relying on Cryseon instead.

In addition to documentation, I need the money to survive until I find work. So far, I've saved up about money from two different sources. While I remain a proper Scythian prince, I can request up to 500 gold coins a year from the Scythian treasury to pay “personal expenses.” I requested all 500 last year, claiming I needed some of it for tuition and housing and the rest for parties (read: liquor), and they actually approved the request, though I shouldn't count on that happening again. Now, I didn't spend (most of) it on liquor; I put it in a bank like a sensible person, but that's technically embezzlement, so . . .

Though I didn't throw parties myself, I certainly had my share of college “fun.” Princess Salo, the younger child of Etruria's King Hiems, is studying poetry in Nineveh. Now, she throws the most obnoxious bashes imaginable every weekend. The first time I showed up, she didn't throw me out for being a so-called Scythian prince, and that was the start of a glorious relationship. I drink her wine and beat all her other guests at Bluffmaster and say all manner of roguishly cynical things. She laughs and keeps letting me in. And cynicism's quite profitable— though Assyrians don't play for particularly high stakes, my Bluffmaster winnings have piled up nicely.

Still, the winnings and “party money” add up to no more than 200 gold coins. Even if I advance through the astronomy curriculum speedily, I won't be able to land real research jobs for at least two years, and I can't count on Assyrian Bluffmaster parties to tide me over. Thus, I need at least 500 gold coins in order to be financially secure. In fact, I wouldn't even be able to live on as little as 500 coins if I hadn't gotten preposterous lucky with apartment hunting. Just a few days ago, I found the loveliest little flat right off-campus, and the landlord has promised to give me quite a generous discount if I can deliver the deposit to him by tomorrow— I suspect his summer business will perk up considerably if a royal moves into one of his properties. If I can get the 500 coins, then I'll take the flat and start up my new life immediately. Otherwise, I can't risk surrendering my Scythian citizenship and the stipend that comes with it, and I will be a very sad prince . . .

Fortunately, Eidolos's getting married to Salo's sister Felicia today, and I have an excellent chance of completing both my immigration form and my financial goals during the festivities. I will get signatures both from Cryseon and one of the Assyrian peacemakers, so I can file the document as soon as I return to Nineveh and never have to visit Scythia again. As far as the money goes, I've got several options. As the little siblings of the betrothed, it's my and Salo's duty to throw the real wedding party, complete with plenty of drinks, and more drinks for when those run out. Seeing that most of the guests are tackily rich, the Bluffmaster game here will have higher stakes than anything back in Assyria, so I can make a tidy sum.

Of course, there'll be plenty of money thrown around even outside the game. Both of the representatives of the commoners will be bringing elaborate gifts, and I heard at one of Salo's parties that Paldeen, the Etruscan representative, has something special in mind, with “special” likely meaning “expensive.” All those precious goods just lying around . . . it would be simple

enough to pawn them off in the markets of Nineveh and make sure I have all the funds I need.

There'll be a few other points of interest at this wedding. With any luck, it's my last time seeing Eidolos, which means it's also means it's my last chance to poke a hole in his impeccable facade. I'd love nothing more than to catch him doing something, anything wrong. Nobody's allowed to be that perfect! Then, there's Izdubar, one of the Assyrian peacemakers. I know Izdubar only as a mousy professor from that third-year seminar I took, so I'm curious to see what he's like outside of class. Finally, there's the ominous warning the Soulblades just sent out to everyone who's ever studied with them— their ancient assassin enemies, the anti-magic Blackguards, are apparently on the prowl once again. As a Soulblade, I've probably got a target painted on my back, but I can hope the Blackguards haven't infiltrated the wedding, right? Right?

Fine, there may be a price on my head. I've brushed up on my acute poison remedies, and I'll try to avoid getting caught alone in a remote location— maybe I should stick to Salo as much as she'll let me. Nonetheless, I intend to get my money and my signatures and get out of Scythia forever. To everyone who stands in my way— screw you.

Notes

- Your birth parents' names were Musa and Polutrupon. Polutrupon was a minor noble, descended directly from the Sabine royal family. Musa was a commoner, but she worked as Meizon's lady-in-waiting before her marriage. Because she was older than Polutrupon, both you and he took her last name.
- Memnon, the father of the Scythian steward, was one of the most powerful Soulblades ever.
- You have six bottles of your favorite ale and a carton for carrying them in your trunk.

Goals

- Gain legal status to immigrate to Assyria
- Obtain at least 500 gold coins
- Run as many rounds of Bluffmaster as possible
- Ruin Eidolos
- Learn about Izdubar
- Investigate and disrupt any Blackguard activity

Contacts

- Salo Coronus (Rachael Monosson): The crown princess of Etruria - a friendly, roguish fellow.
- Cryseon Agathos (Joel): Your "father." He's never really been there for you.
- Meizon Agathos (Amanda Stowers): Your cold and aloof "mother." It seems she has despised you for your entire life.
- Eidolos Agathos (Daniel Grazian): The son of Cryseon and Meizon, annoyingly perfect and doted on by her parents.
- Prymnesie Olethron (Lily Chen): The head steward of the Scythian palace.
- Izdubar Sharo (Peter Lofgren): A mousy old professor of yours, summoned as one of the Assyrian peacemakers.

Memory/Event Packets

- If you hear about the date "June 2," open this.

Bluesheets

- A History of the Sabine Realms of Assyria, Scythia, and Etruria
- The Rituals and Beliefs of the Sabine Nations
- Who's Who in the Sabine Kingdoms
- The Ancient Order of the Soulblades

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- Appraise
- Bluffmaster
- Soul Magic
- Truthing

Abilities

- Knock Out
- Assist
- Restrain
- Food Tampering
- First Aid
- Royal Truthing Magic (1x)
- Lockpicking
- Offensive Technique
- Chaotic Technique

Items

- Assyrian Immigration Papers (in-game document)
- 200 Coins

Stats

- Psychic Health Max: 5
- Combat Rating: 3

Felicia Coronus

Born June 30, in the year 274.

I grew up as crown princess in the palace of Etruria– not the grandest of palaces, but certainly more comfortable than any other dwelling in my poor country. There were servants to dress me, cook for me, teach me . . . I appreciate these privileges, yet I could never help but wish for something more.

My mother, Cerintha, died when I was eleven and my younger sister, Salo, was six. Soon afterwards, I lost my sister as well– though we were both alive and safe, she seemed to slip away from the world, lashing out at me and everyone else around her. I mourned for my mother as well, but she seemed lost in an all-consuming grief I couldn't comprehend. My remaining parent– Hiems, King of Etruria– made matters worse. He chided me for even crying at his wife's funeral; he downright despised Salo's unending sorrow.

Father considers emotion the enemy of logic, and he considers logic the most important quality in a ruler. I've heard the stories of what he's done for logic– he's lied, manipulated, stolen, faked grief, faked love. He dismisses all traditional virtues as useless, prizing only the abilities to evaluate a situation and act efficiently to benefit oneself. I don't deny that his unflinching utilitarianism has helped Etruria, but I detest his proudly amoral brand of leadership. In defiance of him and his cruelty, I value honesty over all other qualities. Once someone loses my trust, they will likely never win it back. When I succeed to the throne, I suspect Etruria will find my straightforwardness a refreshing change.

I believe in integrity– a controversial position, during my father's reign. Even more controversially, I happen to believe in peace, for no child should ever feel the pain of losing a loved one to senseless violence. While conflict may benefit Etruria in certain cases, war is too risky, too deadly, too evil for me to ever condone. As a pacifist, I have never feared more greatly than I do now. Recently, our generals have begun to say Etruria would profit greatly from attacking Scythia in the near future, provided it caught its enemy off-guard. Recently, my father announced my engagement to the crown prince of Scythia with great fanfare, in the name of "avoiding war." I worry that Father's up to his usual tricks– namely, doing the opposite of what he claims. I must find a way to prevent any flare-ups between Scythia and Etruria.

I suspect the fiercest opponent to peace is Queen Meizon of Scythia, who reportedly has never forgiven Etruria for Thoesi's death. Her bloodlust will likely be roused further by Fresi, a parasitic Scythian arms dealer who, unfortunately, will attend the wedding as the "representative of the Scythian commoners." He pretends to genuinely hate Etruria, since several of his cousins died when Etruscans attacked their small border town; on the other hand, he likely has baser motives, as he could profit greatly from a conflict.

Fortunately, there's a few guests who support peace as wholeheartedly. First of all, the Assyrian delegation, of course, will also be a powerful ally in peacekeeping– especially Sirasu, whose political intellect is known far and wide. Then there's Paldeen, an Assyrian-turned-Etruscan luxury goods merchant, who has as much profit to gain from peace as Fresi does from war. What's more, I hear Paldeen has re-discovered the famed Diadem and may indeed bring it to Cos. Thus, the greatest artifact in the history of Scythia and Etruria may re-enter the world stage. Of course, many people would wish to get hold of such an item. It could make for a powerful political tool, enhancing the power of monarchs. It could be a stellar addition to some eccentric's collection, fetching fantastic prices in the black market. Personally, I appreciate the Diadem for its vast symbolic value. If Scythia and Etruria decided to openly share the Diadem, perhaps exchanging it every year or so, it would certainly reinforce the peace between our lands when combined with this wedding.

This wedding. This wedding . . . I know I should embrace it, since the prophecy claims it will help preserve peace. Yet I loathe it in reality. I've never understood why everyone around me is so intrigued by sex and romance– in recent years, Salo has thrown herself headlong into love poetry, and her resulting speeches about "true love" never cease to confound me. I always thought I would understand upon meeting "the perfect person." Indeed, Eidolos, my betrothed, is as perfect as a man can get.

He's divinely beautiful and smart to boot; we've begun corresponding since our engagement, and his letters to me are unfailingly courteous and elegant. I've tried to match his courtesy.

But that's all we'll ever be— courteous. Of course, ours is an arranged marriage, so it'd be odd if we were already madly in love, even though he seems to have every quality one could want. Yet I know that I can never love him as a husband. As a friend, as a ruler, perhaps, but never as a husband. Just thinking of performing my "marital duties" makes me profoundly uncomfortable.

Is there something wrong with me? Is this my father's coldness, passed on to a new generation? Salo is so hot-blooded by comparison— I've never been prouder of her than when a most condescending Scythian diplomat pounced upon Etruria some years ago and she hit him in the face during his pompous speech. My sister hates Scythia with a fiery passion, yet even she finds my lack of excitement over this wedding disturbing. The day the engagement was decided, she stormed up to me, accused me of near-criminal apathy, and raged that my marriage to Eidolos would clearly be a loveless farce. Before I could find anything to say in response, Salo had run from the room, clearly revolted, and she didn't speak to me before returning to school in Assyria soon after. There's been chilly silence between us, ever since.

I have to talk with Salo. I love her, and I don't want to lose her just because of this horrid marriage. She'll be coming to Cos directly from Assyria, and I must find a way to meet with her discreetly at my wedding. Perhaps I can catch her at the Bluffmaster party that will no doubt occur— Salo will likely be overseeing the revelries personally. I hope we can mend our relationship, despite the anger that seems to be simmering beneath the surface of Salo's emotions.

Honestly, I've got to escape this marriage— all marriage. Can I find some way out? Salo is my best chance, if I could perhaps compel Salo to take my place . . . No, she would likely hate the idea of an arranged marriage as much as I do, given her obsession with true love. Moreover, such an unconventional change— switching out fiances at the wedding!— would probably cause a great deal of shock.

If my groom-to-be expects a lovey-dovey romance, I'll panic. But I still have hopes we can build a non-romantic working relationship, at least for today. He is said to have a deep understanding of politics, having studied law in Assyria, as well as an innate gentleness, so we may be able to work together for peace. And even if he does not support peace, I hope he will tell me so straightforwardly; I've hinted in my letters that I value honesty.

I suspect we may make a powerful political team. Others seem to suspect this as well, for we are already under attack. Yesterday, the Soulblades of Scythia wrote to me, warning that the Blackguards— their old adversaries, thought ruined for centuries— have marked us out for destruction. The Soulblades recently intercepted a lengthy Blackguard-style message and were able to decode four words: "contract," "two," "royal" and "engaged." "Contract" implies that someone has hired the Blackguards for assassination. "Two," "royal" and "engaged" suggest that Eidolos and I are their targets. Indeed, there's been a series of strange incidents in my life, recently— incidents I'd dismissed as accidents, until now. There was a stray arrow that just barely missed my neck when I went hunting, four or five months ago. There was the cook who keeled over, apparently from a heart attack, while handling ingredients for my favorite dessert. And there was the tile that fell from the palace roof, just as I was walking by . . .

I'd bet anything that someone has been trying to murder me for months. While I've gotten lucky so far, both Eidolos and I must be on our guard, for the assassin— assassins?— may well strike again at this wedding. I want to know who wants us dead— someone who desires war between Scythia and Etruria, most likely. Alas, the body count may rise before any war even begins.

So, I've got to reconcile myself with my sister, maintain peace between two feuding countries, dodge an assassin, and dig up the Diadem, long shrouded in secrecy and powerful enchantments. And still, the possibility of getting married is the most frightening part . . .

Goals

- Make sure Scythia and Etruria remain at peace
- Get the Diadem and, if possible, use it to maintain peace
- Thwart the Blackguard assassination plot

- Escape marriage without triggering the foretold catastrophe
- Reconcile with your sister

Contacts

- Hiems Coronus (Skylar Cohen): Your sole remaining parent, forever shrouded in secrecy.
- Salo Coronus (Rachael Monosson): Your younger sister, whom you love despite her headstrong nature.
- Leda Mero (Nathalie Dahn-Singh): A loyal servant of the Etruscan palace, chosen to attend the royal family at this wedding.
- Eidolos Agathos (Daniel Grazian): Your betrothed, whom you know only through your letters.

Memory/Event Packets

- none

Bluesheets

- A History of the Sabine Realms of Assyria, Scythia, and Etruria
- The Rituals and Beliefs of the Sabine Nations
- Who's Who in the Sabine Kingdoms

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- Bluffmaster
- Truthing

Abilities

- Knock Out
- Assist
- Restrain
- First Aid
- Royal Truthing Magic (1x)
- Offensive Technique

Items

- 50 Coins

Stats

- Psychic Health Max: 5
- Combat Rating: 3

Hiems Coronus

Born December 20, in the year 251.

I was born into a blizzard and therefore named “Hiems”— “winter”— and I am as cold as the cruel world I live in. Put in my place, another ruler might have despaired and died off years earlier, but I have survived, dragging my Etruria with me.

I am king of Etruria, the westernmost fragment of the defunct Sabine empire and by far the poorest. Etruscans are a lean and hungry lot, racked by centuries of plague, blight, drought, attacks by barbarians, and— of course— ceaseless Scythian harassment, misfortunes that have broken the spirits of many citizens. In previous years, even our rulers have thrown their hands in the air, declaring that our land is cursed by the stars. But my parents, wealthy nobles and distant cousins of those gutless monarchs, held to a fiercer sort of optimism. They cut down the original dynasty and ushered in the era of the Coroni, who rule by pure pragmatism, and Etruria is better for it.

I have followed my parents’ example, calculating my every action, never hesitating to do what I deem necessary. Through logic and force of will, I have stood strong against both Scythia and the barbarians of the north. Within Etruria, I have formed an extensive information-gathering network to investigate my country’s most prominent figures, many of whom are corrupt. I send most of the offenders to prison camps, but three of the most noxious have had to be more permanently eliminated. Their deaths came secretly, at the hands of the Blackguards.

For centuries, the Etruscan branch of this band of assassins, whose roots trace back to the Sabine empire, has sworn allegiance to only the monarchs of Etruria. The Blackguards are frighteningly effective weapons; they have likely embedded their agents in every major Etruscan institution. I can only guess at the full extent of the Etruscan Blackguards’ reach, for I make contact with their leader alone— a mysterious figure traditionally called the White Rose— and even our communications are brief and infrequent. We correspond using artifacts from the distant past— two magical communicators, tuned to respond only to one another. Mine is a beautiful ebony machine, hidden in a secret room in Cerintha’s old quarters. inlaid with an ivory rose and passed down from the first monarchs of Etruria, who originally compelled the Etruscan Blackguards’ obedience. It has 26 keys, each embossed with a letter, allowing me to type in the name of the target and a deadline. I’d guess that White Rose’s communicator was more cheaply made and has a simpler interface, with only three buttons— “P” for “Preparing,” “C” for “Completed,” or “A” for “Aborted”— as all their messages contain only one of the three letters. The Blackguards have always prided themselves on their efficacy, so the White Rose has only resorted to the third option once during my reign, when the target official died of natural causes before he could be assassinated. Yet, for all the Blackguards’ obedience over the centuries, I still fear their power and call on them sparingly, assigning them only five missions in my thirty-year reign. On three of those missions, they were eliminating the corrupt Etruscan officials. For one assignment, though, I sent them to the east, into Scythia . . .

My own wife, Cerintha, died fifteen years back, when Scythians attacked Hero, the border town where she had been visiting. The Scythian diplomats who spoke with me claimed her death was an accident, that they had wished merely to sack the town, not to slay Etruria’s queen. But I and all of Etruria knew better. And though I didn’t love Cerintha— she was too impulsive and starry-eyed for my taste, and ours was an arranged marriage born from practicality, not sentiment— the public had doted on her and was clamoring for revenge. My subjects wanted war, but I chose instead to contact the Blackguards. I ordered them to abduct Thoesi, the ten-year-old crown princess of Scythia, and leave her at an Etruscan citadel. At first, I intended to transport her to the capital city and execute her publicly, yet when my soldiers dragged the girl before me, I realized I could not kill her. No Coronus has ever outright killed a child; it is the one limit we place upon ourselves, to prevent ourselves from becoming monsters.

No, I found a more prudent solution. My most trusted advisors quietly packed her off to a prison camp, and they then erased her records. The Scythian Soulblades divined that the frail child died a few days later, but I can promise that I did not order her death. Now, even divination magic would be hard-pressed to completely prove my guilt. Convenient, no?

The prison camps are lethal, hopeless places, and she could have died for any number of reasons— disease, cold, starvation,

suicide . . . I'd prefer suicide over wasting away there; it would have been kinder to simply kill Thoesi swiftly in the capitol, though her real fate allows me far more leeway with my words. This is why I have chosen to have the Blackguards assassinate their fifth target, rather than simply imprisoning her. I care for this target; I do not wish to cause her unnecessary pain. After all, she is my younger son.

She is a poet, adored by the crowds for her resemblance to Cerintha and her apparent magnanimity. In practice, however, she is an idealistic fool—more interested in spondees than strategy—and a dangerous one. She gambles whenever she can, drinks with abandon every time she's gone away to school in Assyria, and is prone to violent outbursts. She rails incoherently against both me and her brother, spouting nonsense about passion and literature and true love. And there was also the time that she punched a Scythian diplomat . . . Though I care for her, I recognize she is a loose cannon, too wild to ever rule a land as fragile as Etruria. There's a good chance he'll never ascend to the throne, especially if Eidolos also enters the line of succession, but the chaos that she would cause if she somehow became queen is too much of a risk for me to take any chances at all. On the other hand, she is too well-liked to disinherit outright, so I commanded the Blackguards to eliminate her before she can ever take the throne. In case anyone suspects foul play, I plan to pin the assassination on Scythia. Strangely, the White Rose sent me the message "P" only a few days ago, signifying that the Blackguards are planning to carry out the deed quite soon. Will they strike at the wedding, I wonder? Why would they target him at such a high-profile event? Exactly what game are the Blackguards playing? There are too many mysteries here for my taste.

My daughter's folly has had only one benefit. Some years back, while studying in the Assyrian school-city of Nineveh, she seduced a young man; one of her servants revealed the affair to me in a signed statement. I would have taken no notice, had he not been Thoesi's younger brother, the new crown prince of Scythia. I contacted him, informed him that I knew of his indiscretions, and blackmailed him into spying on Scythian affairs and reporting back to me. I expected him to do something desperate—suicide is not an unheard-of occurrence in such affairs—but he instead reacted most reasonably and agreed to work for me. Since then, he has obeyed me faithfully, feeding me not only Scythian secrets but also advice on political and military strategy, remaining cool-headed in countless crises. I am thankful to have the loyalty of such a remarkable man, for he has proved himself quick-thinking, insightful, and utterly shrewd. Against all odds, I have found that a Scythian prince half my age is my equal. While my older child, Felicia, will make an adequate king, I suspect he would be the finest monarch Etruria could ever hope to have.

It is because of him that I have approved of this farce of this "peace-keeping" wedding. For the first time in its history, Etruria is now strong enough that we could win a large-scale military conflict with Scythia; we need not resort to marriage to keep this cold war from heating up. In fact, I have had my military leaders draw up a comprehensive plan to swiftly attack Scythia, loot its banks and treasuries, ruin its various garrisons, and then retreat as swiftly. Our plot hinges on hijacking a ship full of downright fascinating, experimental weapons due to set sail for Scythia no earlier than June 13th. As soon as the marriage secures Scythia's crown prince for Etruria, the attack can commence, swiftly crippling Scythia and taking its riches for my own, poor Etruria. However, if we face any resistance, Etruria and Scythia will at last be openly at war, embroiled in a long, ugly struggle that may well bleed us both dry. Unfortunately, my dear prince-spy says that his parents have heard rumors of my plans and may somehow respond, depending on the events of the wedding. I must instruct him to obtain specifics and report back to me. Regardless, I must meet with Scythia's monarchs during the wedding and convince them that the rumors are untrue, that Etruria means Scythia no harm. Perhaps I can also use the Assyrian peacemakers for this purpose, though I fear Sirasu—their uncannily perceptive international relations secretary—may question my sincerity.

There are other resources that I hope to gain at this wedding. Paldeen, the Etruscan representative of the commoners, is my nation's wealthiest luxury goods merchant. Under his slippery charm, he hides a clever mind, and, thanks to my intelligence network, I hear he's put it to good use, digging up an artifact thought lost for centuries—the Diadem. Obtaining the Diadem would be a great victory for Etruria, because of its historical significance as well as its magical power, and I have already met with our treasury to determine how much we could feasibly pay for it. Unfortunately, our highest offer would likely fall short of a Scythian bid, but I have a second way of persuading Paldeen—I have investigated him and learned he is guilty of embezzlement,

a crime punishable by life imprisonment. I am legally obliged to turn over such evidence immediately, but I'd rather stay silent and pressure him into discounting the Diadem. Perhaps I could even win it without paying a single coin.

Finally, I shall seek to exploit the knowledge of the fortune-tellers, who may uncover a great many secrets before this wedding is over. Fortunes are often vague and prone to misinterpretation, yet they can also give me insight into mysteries that might otherwise elude me. Indeed, if I had the time or the empathy to learn fortune-telling myself, I rather suspect I would be invincible . . .

But as things stand, I must tread carefully, for I am not only schemer at this wedding. Scythia may spy on me, just as I have spied on them— anyone who tries to worm their way into my confidence or into my country as a whole must be watched carefully. If I succeed in my aims, then Etruria will finally have the glory it deserves. If I fail, I may consider canceling the attack and settling for the status quo . . . But I do not fail.

Notes

- You have brought your sole copies of the blackmail against Eidolos and Paldeen with you. It's a risk, but you'll need them if Paldeen or— gods forbid— Eidolos demand proof.

Goals

- Attack Scythia and catch them off-guard
- Obtain the Diadem for as low a price as possible
- Make sure Eidolos becomes the next ruler of Etruria by marrying Felicia
- Learn the identities of the Blackguards
- Gather information through Eidolos and the fortune-tellers
- Prevent Salo from doing anything foolish before dying
- Thwart any Scythian attempt to spy on Etruria

Contacts

- Felicia Coronus (Dana Murphy): Your older child, who will marry Eidolos and bring Eidolos into Etruria's line of succession.
- Eidolos Agathos (Daniel Grazian): The brilliant crown prince of Scythia, whom you control through blackmail.
- Salo Coronus (Rachael Monosson): Your thoughtless younger child, whom the Blackguards will permanently eliminate, with any luck.
- Leda Mero (Nathalie Dahn-Singh): A diligent, if quiet servant of the Etruscan palace. You chose her to attend to the royal family at this wedding, due to her unmatched history of loyal service.
- Paldeen Sharo (Kirin Sinha): Etruria's richest commoner, and an oily, pro-peace serpent. You should be able to bring him into line, though, thanks to your blackmail.

Memory/Event Packets

- Open this if you hear the word "Achillea."

Bluesheets

- A History of the Sabine Realms of Assyria, Scythia, and Etruria
- The Rituals and Beliefs of the Sabine Nations
- Who's Who in the Sabine Kingdoms

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- Etruscan Diadem Negotiations
- Bluffmaster
- Truthing
- Etruscan Communication Machine

Abilities

- Knock Out
- Assist
- Restrain
- Royal Truthing Magic (2x)
- Offensive Technique

Items

- Contract (0020)
- Signed Statement (0023)
- Etruscan Treasury Check (in-game document)
- 50 Coins

Stats

- Psychic Health Max: 5
- Combat Rating: 3

Salo Coronus

Born June 28, in the year 279.

They say I look like Cerintha, my mother. I'm told I act like her, too. We both loved music and art and drama. We both thought about the world as we'd like it to be, a storybook land of passion and gallantry and people who hold to great ideals.

She was queen of Etruria, and she died when I was six. Scythia launched an assault against the town of Hero, where Mother was visiting, and she was caught up in the fighting. The Scythians claimed her death was "accidental," but I heard the whispers of the servants, the murmuring of the royal advisors— everyone claimed that Scythia had slain her on purpose.

Felicia, my older sister, "adjusted" well— I saw her weep once at the funeral and never again. The king— my father, I suppose, but I can hardly bring myself to call him that— never even shed a tear, as if he was happier alone. He retaliated, yes— Thoesi, the crown princess of Scythia soon disappeared and was declared dead— but the vengeance felt perfunctory. As he and Felicia carried on with their lives, I cried every night.

My grief was interspersed with rage. When my family's apathy became intolerable, I lashed out, calling out both the king and Felicia for their coldness. More publicly, I nourished a grudge against Scythia. One time, one of their diplomats came to Etruria and spoke to us in the most insulting terms, ordering us to "forget" all of Scythia's past offenses. I charged at him in the middle of a public speech and punched him in the nose. I'll never forget the cheer that went up among the masses . . .

The Etruscan public loves me, largely because of my resemblance to my mother; I offer a warmth that's all too rare in my family. At home, though, I spy disappointment in my sister's eyes, and the king downright hates me. When I was young, I had few ways to escape their stares. My salvation came in the form of a little book I found in a library, an anthology of poems collected from long-dead Sabine authors. Inside were meditations on life, dirges, odes to the sun and the stars and emotion itself. Contemplating those poems, I felt alive for the first time in years, and immediately I began to compose poetry of my own. Within those couplets, I found the happiness, the grand purpose that had so long missing.

And it was the poetry that finally led me to real-life bliss. Though both the king and my Felicia thought I was mad and silently scorned my newfound artistry, my father deigned to let me pursue it in the Assyrian school-city of Nineveh. I thus exchanged the petty intrigue and gray stagnation of Etruria for one of the most vibrant civilizations in human history. Among throngs of fellow scholars and writers, I practiced my art, realizing that, among all poetry, I adore love poems most. Every love poet has had a beloved who inspires them, and in Nineveh I found my own muse in the form of a law student. From the moment he stepped through the door, I was infatuated.

Then I learned his name— Eidolos. He was Eidolos, crown prince of Scythia. His parents had struck down my mother, and my father his sister. Like Pyramus and Thisbe, we had every reason to hate each other, but I loved him instead, for he was too lovely to be defined by his country. Inexplicably, he loved me back.

Eidolos looked beautiful, yes, but his qualities were not merely superficial. He was quick-witted and kind and generous of spirit, never holding my family's sins against me. And so, our romance transcended the hatred and politics that divided our countries. We two wandered over Nineveh's cobblestone alleys, across the wooden bridges, past temples fragrant with frankincense and myrrh, everything veiled in a dreamlike glow. We slept together, as well— Scythians wouldn't approve, but why should their backwards morality have stood in the way of our passion? After we made love, I composed verses upon verses of my finest poetry about him, joyously writing with an angel beside me. He finished school only few weeks later and had to return to Scythia, but he vowed to still love me, though we could not communicate any longer for fear of being discovered. I of course still adore him— how could I not? I have continued to write poetry about him, so that I feel like I have not been without him at all. Thanks to my poetry, I feel he has remained with me, and my admiration has only grown.

Even with my poetry and my still-continuing studies, I might have had too much time in Nineveh, and I spent that time

agonizing over the tragedy that lurked in my past and haunted my dreams. Fortunately, the mundane pleasures of university life have kept me from my former gloom. With sadly limited assistance from the royal treasury, I have hosted nightly festivities in my apartments, carousing with my peers, playing Bluffmaster through the night. Just last year, I was joined by a comrade in revelry—Maxene, adopted prince of Scythia. Maxene is a free spirit, painstakingly unprincipled and wickedly fond of gambling. He freeloads off of my parties, never hosting a thing of his own, and, more often than not, he walks away with all my guests' money when he plays Bluffmaster. Still, that scoundrel and I have great fun together. Maxene likes his family about as well as I like mine— which is to say, not at all— so we've both kept silent about our personal lives. Though we've had no "deep discussions"— honestly, I'm not sure whether he's got the requisite intellect— we enjoy one another's company a great deal.

I've been blessedly happy in Assyria, first with Eidolos, more recently with my parties and studies and Maxene. Etruria, however, will forever be linked to misery in my mind. A few months back, when I returned home for my winter vacation, I was greeted with the worst news I've heard since my mother's death. Eidolos and Felicia are betrothed.

My Eidolos— perfection in human form, the model of every virtue, the muse whom I adore with all my heart— is being married off by the powers-that-be to my emotionally dead older sister. I accept that there is a prophecy, and that Scythian royal must marry an Etruscan royal. But why them? Yes, as the oldest children of the reigning monarchs, they are the obvious choices . . . But why, why did it have to be them?

I swear I went mad. I didn't rage at my father, though he likely crafted this travesty of a marriage only to further some nebulous plan of his own. he would only spout needless justifications, hiding his true motives behind a shield of words. It would've done me no good. So I took my anger out on the one who would take my love from me - Felicia. When I looked into her dull and passionless eyes, I couldn't keep my fury bottled up any longer. She could never love Eidolos or make him happy. I called their loveless match a travesty, a disaster, a violation of the will of the gods. All through this, she just stared at me, not even condescending to reply, and I stalked out of the room.

I drank, waiting for the alcohol to numb me, but it only sharpened the pain. So I stumbled through the palace that night, tottering into my mother's old apartments. There, somehow, I found a secret passageway I'd never seen before. It led to a gorgeous magical communication machine decorated with a white rose— the sign of the Blackguards, an ancient guild of assassins I had read about in a seminar on Sabine political poetry. And I approached and pressed the keys and asked for Felicia to be eliminated before this twisted, horrific wedding . . .

Then I woke up in my own room. I went, searched my mother's apartments the next day and found nothing— no machine, no passageway. It could all have been a nightmare. And the machine with its white rose has continued to haunt my dreams, even after I returned to school, though the details of the visions have shifted. Now, instead of me ordering the Blackguards to assassinate Felicia, my father orders up the death of his wife, some fourteen years ago. "Make it look like the Scythians' fault," he orders.

Could it be true? Could the Blackguards still exist, now serving the monarchs of Etruria? I wouldn't put it past the king, whose cold-heartedness is renowned far beyond Etruria, to kill off his own family. And given that both he and Scythia's long-reigning monarchs will also be attending the wedding, I know I will soon be face-to-face with whoever caused my mother's death.

Oh, this wedding . . . Eidolos is no doubt heartbroken, and he has not written, for what can Eidolos say? And Felicia and I stopped talking after the night of my outburst, for what can I say to her? That her betrothed and I are in love? That I may have marked her for death? I am now sailing to Cos from Nineveh, and I hope to see her alive and healthy when I disembark. I don't want her dead, and certainly not because of me. But even if she is unharmed, I cannot let her go through with this wedding. I will meet with my beloved as soon as I can, and we must plot a way to break up this engagement. Hopefully, I can simply replace my sister, and our bond of love will be sanctified by marriage. No matter what, I won't let my father's plans take Eidolos from me, just as they may have taken my mother. This must all be a result of his heartless machinations - he must have some hold over my beloved, some way of forcing him into this lukewarm marriage of political convenience. This is not a choice that he would ever

make on his own.

Try as I might, I can't stop thinking about my mother's death. What really happened at Hero? Who was responsible for stealing her away from Etruria and from me? I know that whoever caused her death will be present, and I intend to learn the truth; I have limited divination powers to help me do so. And I manage to find out, then that person will not leave the island— while I normally shun violence in favor of verses, my wrath is fearful. I will avenge my mother, once and for all.

There's still more happening at this wedding, since Maxene and I— as the siblings of the engaged— are obliged by youthful tradition to run the real “wedding festivities,” involving plenty of alcohol and high-stakes Bluffmaster. I'll be bringing in money for my bets and some of the drinks; Maxene promised to buy some drinks himself, for once. To top everything off, I did some reading on Cos and discovered that, according to a number of ancient poets, this island offers special opportunity to poets, granting them the power to even save the sick through their art. I do not know quite how such a thing could be, but I fully intend to grasp my chance and prove the power of poetry. By right, anything that can enhance poetry's potential ought to be mine.

Alas, I have no idea what will happen at this wedding. At the very least, I'll have material for that novel I've always longed to write . . .

Notes

- Your dreams may not be entirely accurate. You should try and get confirmation before acting upon them.
- You have twelve bottles of your favorite hard cider and two cartons for carrying them stored in your trunk.

Goals

- Break up the engagement and marry Eidolos yourself
- Figure out why your beloved Eidolos has agreed to this farce of a wedding
- Take revenge for your mother's death
- Save the sick through poetry
- Enhance your own poetry's power
- Run as many rounds of Bluffmaster as possible, preferably winning more than you lose

Contacts

- Eidolos Agathos (Daniel Grazian): Your beloved muse.
- Hiems Coronus (Skylar Cohen): Your cold, detestable father.
- Felicia Coronus (Dana Murphy): Your older sister. You are not currently on good terms.
- Maxene Astea (Bobby Pragada): Your college drinking buddy, who will be helping you run today's Bluffmaster games.
- Leda Mero (Nathalie Dahn-Singh): A loyal servant of the Etruscan palace, chosen to attend the royal family at this wedding for her decades of obedience and dedication.

Memory/Event Packets

- none

Bluesheets

- A History of the Sabine Realms of Assyria, Scythia, and Etruria
- The Rituals and Beliefs of the Sabine Nations
- Who's Who in the Sabine Kingdoms

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- Truthing
- Bluffmaster

Abilities

- Knock Out
- Assist
- Restrain
- Fist of Wrath (1x)
- Poetry Bonus
- Royal Truthing Magic (1x)
- Offensive Technique

Items

- 100 Coins

Stats

- Psychic Health Max: 5
- Combat Rating: 3

Leda Mero

Born June 1, in the year 245.

No wise king travels unattended, and Hiems is no exception. At the subtlest gesture - a shrug, a nod, the twitch of a finger - a wordless, dutiful servant appears behind him, ready and willing to serve. It is for this purpose that the Etruscan court keeps a highly trained and disciplined staff, ready and willing to supply whatever the king should require. Though the royal wedding takes place on the remote isle of Cos, he has chosen you, his favorite attendant, to accompany him.

But you were trained to be far more than a mere attendant. That's nothing more than a cover story, meticulously rehearsed and years in the making. You are one of the most proficient of Etruria's nefarious and secretive order of Blackguards, and King Hiems' most reliable agent. In all of Etruria, you answer to only two people: the White Rose, the elusive commander of the Blackguards, and the King himself. To maintain the utmost degree of secrecy, even the King has no idea who you really are: he sends his commands to the White Rose via a hidden communications device, and the White Rose relays those orders to you.

Until recently, you didn't even answer to the two of them. You were happily retired, ready to while out the rest of your days at a Mediterranean estate. But you kept up with Etruria's political affairs, just to while away the time - and, let's face it, the next generation of Blackguards has been making a gods-awful mess of things. After reading reports of debacle after debacle, you lost all faith in those incompetents. So when the White Rose offered you an opportunity to accompany Hiems' retinue to the wedding, and deliver a royal death sentence to not one but two unsuspecting targets, you knew you had to accept. No more shame would be visited on your ancient and dreaded order. You will make sure of that. Though the years have begun to weigh on you, few are more skilled with the arts of poison and subterfuge than you. Soon those who have been marked for death will feel the sting of a deadly needle or the sizzle of poisoned fabric against their vulnerable skin.

Yet, if truth be told, the nature of the assassinations you have been tasked with is - peculiar, to say the least. The king, loveless and calculating at the best of times, nevertheless has brought his two heirs with him to the festivities - his eldest, crown Princess Felicia, the intended groom and perhaps the best chance for peace between Etruria and Scythia, and his younger daughter Salo, an impetuous rake more given to poetry and drink than any semblance of royal dignity. You have been tasked with killing both of these Etruscan heirs before sunset begins today, and the White Rose has assured you that these commands come from the king himself. It seems strange, to say the least, that the aging Hiems would be so keen to sever his own bloodline at the roots. Perhaps, sick of Felicia's lukewarm attitude towards the throne, and disgusted with Salo's improprieties, he decided that neither of them were worthy heirs. Or perhaps the prophesied conflict looming on the horizon appeals more to Hiems than another generation of stagnant and nervous peace. It doesn't matter to you. After all, who are you to gainsay a king? You'll do your job, and do it cleanly and secretly, arousing no suspicion.

Not that you've any love for Hiems himself. You remember his father, Hyperion, with nothing but bitterness, and long for the good old days when women of pure Etruscan blood sat upon the throne. But it's the worst form of dishonor for a Blackguard to act against their rightful ruler, no matter what their personal feelings might be. You're supposed to simply swallow your pride, and provide a shining example to the newer Blackguards of what it means to be a true professional. But is King Hiems your *rightful* ruler? Certainly his hands are stained with the blood of the ancient queens, who proved more noble than he and the rest of the Coroni have ever been. Rumor has it that despite the best efforts of the Coronus dynasty, at least one full-blooded Etruscan royal survived the coup. Perhaps some day the stain of the Coroni will be washed from these lands, and you can kneel before a true Etruscan queen once more. Perhaps some day.

The memory of those bloody days still haunts you - as does your own role in the massacre. Thoughtlessly following the orders of a past White Rose, now long-dead, you betrayed the dynasty you once swore to serve. It was at your hands that the rightful queen of Etruria met her end, mortally wounded as she tried desperately to escape the bloodshed. That act has weighed on you ever since. Only when you dedicate yourself to the orders before you, focusing stubbornly on the details of your job, can

you forget the blood that stains your hands. You tell yourself that you proved your loyalty to the Blackguards that day - but what was that loyalty truly worth, if it meant betraying your rightful sovereign?

Nor, astonishingly enough, are you the only Blackguard present at the wedding. A secret communique, sent along ancient and half-forgotten channels of communication, reached the White Rose some time ago, announcing that a Blackguard of Assyria would also be present at the ceremony, and willing to assist you if you required it. This is problematic, to say the least: the Assyrian order of Blackguards collapsed long ago, and with no White Rose to lead them, the few members who remain are chaotic and unpredictable loose cannons who make Etruria's assassins seem competent by comparison. You're not sure if seeking out this Blackguard will prove them an ally or a liability - but perhaps you ought to figure out who they are, just to make sure they don't interfere with your plans. But, if you care to find this mysterious assassin, following the ceremonial sign of the Blackguards - the rose - will lead you to them.

There are also larger fates at stake here. On this wedding rests the question of war or peace. Though you view King Hiems himself with little more than distrustful contempt, Etruria has always been your home, and you could not bear to see it ravaged by conquest. If war does break out, you would rather see Etruria prevail, even led by Hiems, than hear the baleful tramp of Scythian boots on Etruscan soil, as the fields lie fallow and the cities burn. Perhaps peace is the safer course - but, if at all possible, you would love to see a war that Etruria can win.

And you are not without desires of your own. Long ago, before you were first initiated into the Blackguards, your baby sister Cygna was taken with a terrible wasting illness, the Black Malady that sometimes ravages the lands of the old Sabine Empire. Driven to save her at any cost, your parents had her smuggled into Scythia, hoping that the death-obsessed mystics known as the Soulblades could stave off the ailment that threatened to devour her. You traveled with them, and watched as the Soulblades conjured inky tendrils of darkness from thin air to suffuse Cygna's veins and cloud her eyes - and you were there when she first screamed in agony. The ritual of the Soulblades saved her, true, but at terrible cost - she is trapped in the shell of her own body, unable to speak or move or even scream. But you can see the pain that wracks her every time you look in her eyes. She lives to this day, provided with every luxury you can afford. You have heard tell of an Assyrian alchemist who may be able to reverse the process that trapped Cygna's soul and left her writhing in unspeakable pain and crippling silence - but his price is far higher than you had hoped, and your coffers are nearly empty. Worst of all, he is set to leave Etruria for Assyria this week, and Cygna is too ill to ever travel there. Thus, you must find the money you require immediately, at the wedding, and use it to bring back the Cygna you once knew. Your talent for concealment and deception translates well to the game of Bluffmaster, a game that was once part of your training as a Blackguard. You have brought what little funds you have remaining with you to the wedding - hopefully you can multiply them into a sum great enough to heal your sister. You cannot bear to look your sister in the eye and admit that you failed her once again. You have to save her.

And, if you should chance upon any Soulblades at the wedding - their vile magic doomed Cygna to a lifetime of despair. No power is worth that risk. No power is worth inflicting that fate on another human being. Any who practice the magic of the Soulblades should be stopped, at any cost. Cygna would desire nothing less.

Notes

- You've got one of the Blackguards' greatest tools in your trunk-- a handkerchief that paralyzes anyone who touches it with their bare skin. You also have a needle you can use to dose someone with poison.

Goals

- Carry out your orders from the White Rose and assassinate Felicia and Salo before sunset.
- Use whatever means you can to undermine the authority of King Hiems.
- Root out evidence of Soulblade magic and quash their reckless, destructive rituals.
- Make contact with the Blackguard among the Assyrian delegation.
- Leave the wedding with enough money to heal your sister Cygna: 500 gold pieces.

Contacts

- Hiems Coronus (Skylar Cohen): A coldly brilliant monarch, the son of the usurper-king Hyperion Coronus.
- Felicia Coronus (Dana Murphy): Your secondary target, the dignified older daughter of King Hiems.
- Salo Coronus (Rachael Monosson): Your secondary target, the rakish younger daughter of King Hiems.
- Paldeen Sharo (Kirin Sinha): A merchant of luxury goods.

Memory/Event Packets

- Open this when you see the Scythian fortune-teller, Character 0015.

Bluesheets

- A History of the Sabine Realms of Assyria, Scythia, and Etruria
- The Rituals and Beliefs of the Sabine Nations
- Who's Who in the Sabine Kingdoms
- The Blackguards and their Deadly Arts

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- Appraise
- Bluffmaster

Abilities

- Knock Out
- Assist
- Restrain
- First Aid
- Acute Poisoning Resistance
- Killing Blow (1x)
- Food Tampering
- Sly Poisoning (2x)
- Improved Waylay
- Lockpicking
- Chaotic Technique
- Offensive Technique

Items

- Milky Pink Liquid (0016)
- Milky Pink Liquid (0016)
- Creamy Blue Liquid (0019)
- Creamy Blue Liquid (0019)
- 200 Coins

Stats

- Psychic Health Max: 5
- Combat Rating: 1

Fresi Nea

Born February 16, in the year 268.

War is good for business. That's what everyone says, at least. And you suspect that the old adage might well be true. But you'd like to put it more precisely: war is good for *your* business. That is to say, your business happens to be the sale of new and deadly weapons to the highest bidder. And if you want to get Etruria and Scythia to pay a premium for your newest innovations - well, then war could be quite profitable indeed. Now you just need to make sure a devastating conflict ensues - and since you've been invited to the royal wedding, alongside the rulers and heirs of both factions, it seems like an excellent time to manipulate the situation and make sure things go your way.

You've been attached to the royal court of Scythia for years now, trading military secrets with incautious generals and making sure the royal guard stays well-supplied and heavily armed. During this time, you've managed to develop a contact at the very highest levels of the Scythian government: you've cultivated quite a friendship with no less than Queen Meizon herself. You first bonded over your shared hatred for Etruria - yours has been feigned from a young age, ever since you realized that nothing sells weapons more convincingly than patriotism. But you'll never share that particular revelation with Meizon, since her loathing for that rival nation appears to be frighteningly, sometimes terrifyingly, real.

Thankfully, you've got evidence to back up your claims. Years back, when the Etruscans razed the border town of Achillea, three of your cousins were killed by King Hiems's troops. They were second cousins by marriage, and you never really liked them anyways, but that's not the point - and you certainly don't mention that last part when you're speaking to the Queen. Instead, you let a couple of tears fall - a wonderful talent, the ability to cry at the drop of a hat - and Meizon's ready to put reason aside and let her wrath take over.

Meizon, you suppose, has reason enough to despise Etruria. First they killed her childhood friends when they burned down Achillea, then they took her own daughter from her in the night. She's lost a lot. But try as you might, it's hard for you to imagine the white-hot emotions coursing through her veins. Profit and opportunity speak to you most dearly, not pathetic sentiment - but if you can use the Queen's emotions to sway her towards war, then you've no compunctions about doing so.

Unfortunately, not everyone agrees with you on that particular point. Also attending the wedding is the Etruscan merchant Paldeen, a purveyor of luxury goods and a pacifistic coward. Not that Paldeen's got any more moral compunctions than you do - as a matter of fact, he's a vile and avaricious termite of a man. He craves profit even more shamelessly than you - and he's not got an honest bone in his body. He's a conniver, a deceiver, a forger, a manipulative scorpion who will stop at nothing to quash the fledgling conflict between the Sabine factions and peddle his posh snake-oil trinkets to the rich and stupid nobles of both nations. You've encountered the man too many times before at Assyrian trade conferences. Even worse, he's gotten the better of you as often as not, "persuading" the nobles in attendance to tweak the import tariffs and trade laws in his favor. This is embarrassing, it's humiliating, and you'll never admit it to your customers. It's surprisingly difficult for you to damage his credibility - you've tried accusing him of being a dirty money-grubbing piece of slime who cares about nothing but profit, but he always manages to twist your words around and fire them back at you. No good, no good at all. What's more, every time you attend a trade summit or Assyrian bazaar, you find yourself seated across the table from him in a game of Bluffmaster - you're certain the bastard cheats, because you recall losing to him as often as you won. This simply will not do. You'd like nothing more than to clean Paldeen out at the gambling tables and show him up for the nefarious trickster that he is.

This time, though, Paldeen's overstepped his bounds, and if you play your cards right, you might well be able to destroy his reputation permanently. The fool's been bragging to anyone who will listen that he's come across an ancient relic - the legendary Diadem of the Sabines - and may bring it to this wedding. If it's true, he will no doubt attempt to auction it off to the highest bidder, which should lead to all manner of commotion. Perhaps you can accuse him of being unethical - after all, such a magnificent object should never be used for profit, unless you're the one using it - or perhaps the drama will develop some darker

side you can exploit.

You've also got no love lost for Hiems, Etruria's cruel genius of a king. You know he's brilliantly intelligent, but also suspect that he may have intercepted one of your recent arms shipments containing a powerful but unpredictable new explosive - the bireme conveying it disappeared without a trace several weeks prior. You think Etruria's planning to use the weapon to attack Scythia and catch Cryseon by surprise. Now, that's not necessarily a bad thing - after all, it could prove profitable in the long run - but you'd very much like to figure out exactly who's got their hands on your weaponry and why they plan on using it. After all, if there's going to be chaos, you want to know what's going to happen in advance so you can use it to your advantage. Besides, that's your merchandise they took. You'd very much like to get it back.

On the other hand, there's also a chance for real personal profit here - as there nearly always is at such gatherings. Explosives are all well and good for bulk sales, but you would be well served to invest in something a little more subtle. Your contacts within Scythia's order of Soulblades have informed you that the Blackguards, an ancient order of Etruscan assassins, might be targeting the wedding for their own nefarious purposes. You've interacted with the defunct Assyrian branch of the order before, and they're quite a rogues' gallery of nefarious individuals. Their presence at the wedding is good news, so long as you can avoid being on the receiving end of a knife in the back yourself - the Blackguards use a variety of esoteric and frighteningly effective poisons to carry out their missions. If you can get your hands on as many samples as possible - at least one of their delivery objects, impregnated with a full dose of poison, or a vial of the poison itself - your organization should be able to replicate them for mass production. You've heard rumors that the Blackguards use ordinary-seeming needles to carry out their hits - perhaps you should start there. If you can figure out who these Blackguards are, you might be able to go a step further - try to get in their good graces without risking your own life in the process. If you open up a line of contact now, you might be able to unearth even more secrets from their alchemists and artificers further down the line.

There's one last obstacle to your ambitions - the meddling Assyrian diplomat, Sirasu Noon. That man has an uncanny talent for sticking his nose where it doesn't belong. Obsessed with peace, he's interfered with your arms deals and carefully-laid plans before - which will just make it more satisfying when you drag the nations into war *right under his nose*.

No question about it, you could walk away from this wedding with full pockets and a smile on your face. All you need to do is outsmart that devil Paldeen, and goad the assembled royals into war and chaos, and the profits are yours for the taking.

Notes

- As part of the etiquette of presenting your gift to the happy couple, you should ask them to try ringing the bell themselves, as a sort of inauguration.
- The bell is currently stored in your trunk.

Goals

- Discredit that self-satisfied toad Paldeen however you can
- Provoke Queen Meizon and the other Scythian royals into declaring war with Etruria
- Get your hands on as many samples of Blackguard poison as possible
- Figure out what happened to your missing cache of explosives.
- Prove your mental superiority by demolishing Paldeen utterly and repeatedly at the Bluffmaster table

Contacts

- Paldeen Sharo (Kirin Sinha): An Etruscan luxury merchant and a greedy, money-grubbing piece of slime.
- Meizon Agathos (Amanda Stowers): The revenge-blind queen of Scythia, and an old friend of yours.
- Hiems Coronus (Skylar Cohen): The Etruscan king, a cunning ruler and potential customer who may well have stolen your prototype explosives.

Memory/Event Packets

- If you see Item 0007, open this.
- If you see Item 0016, open this.
- Open this if you successfully hack communication machine 6666.
- Open this if you successfully hack communication machine 7777.

Bluesheets

- A History of the Sabine Realms of Assyria, Scythia, and Etruria
- The Rituals and Beliefs of the Sabine Nations
- Who's Who in the Sabine Kingdoms

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- Appraise
- Bluffmaster

Abilities

- Knock Out
- Assist
- Restrain
- Hacking
- Defensive Technique
- Offensive Technique

Items

- 170 Coins

Stats

- Psychic Health Max: 5
- Combat Rating: 4

Prymnesie Olethron

Born November 7, in the year 276.

Nobody lives happily ever after, but I swear I'll still try.

I grew up cursed by my own talents. My father was Memnon, one of the celebrated Scythian Soulblades, but he proclaimed at my birth that I had more potential than any other mage, ever. He therefore inducted me into the horrors of life and death magic when I was still a small child, and my earliest memories were filled with the rattling of bells, the murmuring of malevolent ghosts, with black zigzags that stuck to me like bandages on a mummy. The dark magic, whose purpose I still do not understand, nearly drove me to madness, and I fled when I was just nine, running for miles to non-magical relatives on my mother's side. I never returned to Scythia's Soulblade Quarter, which was raided soon afterwards, thanks to the vigilant Queen Meizon. It turned out the Soulblades had been breaking the law, using human organs and other unsavory ingredients. Father was jailed for life, and I never saw him again.

Thus, a new chapter began. I dropped out of school at fifteen— though I still read widely and am hardly ignorant— with hopes of working in the palace. I was personally interviewed by Queen Meizon, and she asked whether I had indeed abandoned the Soulblades, whom she openly opposes; I promised I had left them entirely, and she verified my answer with royal divination magic. Soon afterwards, I began as a server in the dining halls and quickly rose through the ranks to the office of steward, working day and night, performing my duties as diligently and elegantly as possible. I am loyal to Scythia and glad to serve it, and the orderly nature of palace life was a comfort after my chaotic childhood.

But a few years ago, my world was thrown back into disarray. There was a ball at the Scythian palace, in honor of the crown prince Eidolos, who had recently returned from law school in Assyria. Before, I thought of him as a coltish adolescent, but I now saw an angel in white and gold robes, radiant with some inner joy. Enthralled, I continued to watch him. At first, I could do nothing but admire him, like a fine statue, for he seemed too perfect to be real. But I slowly discerned something underneath the brilliance— anxiety, and a depth of pain— and I fell in love.

Loving him hurts. The more I watched him, the more I grieved, for he clearly struggles with great burdens. His sister died, yes, but I can't help feeling that Eidolos's suffering from fresher pain as well. Soon afterwards, I was promoted to steward, the top position in the servants' hierarchy, so I had the freedom to move throughout the whole palace at all hours and observe him more closely. What I found stunned me— he was an alcoholic.

I immediately knew I had to help him. And so, after so many years of shunning Soulblade arts, I returned to magic. Though the Soulblades had never found a cure for alcoholism, I threw my not inconsiderable efforts into the search and, after a few months of experimentation, concocted a partial remedy; while I could not guarantee that he would be healed, I would at least increase his chances of recovery. So I slipped the cure into his soup at dinner, and, from the next day on, he ceased drinking. I rejoiced, thrilled to have helped him.

Then, six months ago, I learned that King Hiems of Etruria and King Cryseon of Scythia had arranged a marriage between Eidolos and the Etruscan crown princess Felicia, in order to fulfill an ancient prophecy and prevent civil war. Immediately, I could sense Eidolos's mental state deteriorating, though he hid the distress well from the rest of the world. I too began to dread this wedding, partially out of envy, more because of my concern for him.

I know only a few ways to help him now. I fear he will turn back to alcohol, and so I must remove undue temptation from his path. Upper-class weddings always come paired with loathsome revelries, festivities where noblemen can lose themselves to drunkenness and lose quite a bit of money gambling in the process. While I have always found these gatherings distasteful— it pains me to see nobles, normally so elegant and composed, debase themselves— I haven't stepped in. This time, though, I must be a spoilsport, for I won't let their carrying-on risk Eidolos's sobriety. In the case that I fail, I have brought in the ingredients for

the remedy I slipped him last time, but, as it is not a guaranteed cure, I would prefer to avoid a relapse in the first place.

These are small ways to help Eidolos, and I worry that I cannot even do this much, once he is married and moves to Etruria with Felicia, who is a few years older. Once he goes, I know I will never be happy again. Thus, for months now, I have dreamed of running away with Eidolos and eloping. I haven't gone through with this foolish notion— I suspect his disappearance would hinder Scythian political affairs, and, more importantly, I don't even know how Eidolos feels about me. But if this wedding threatens his health and sanity too greatly, I will confess my feelings for him. I'll ask him to break off his engagement with Felicia and perhaps consider me instead, though I am naught but a steward.

I wonder what other surprises will be lurking on this island. While I've never heard of Cos before, I remember the name "Acheron" from those horrific Soulblade chants inflicted on me as a child. The word "ghost" was always close by. Those two words have resurfaced in my dreams, and I intend to investigate any signs of the paranormal.

Moreover, I've recently received a message from the Soulblades, sent to anyone who's ever studied with them. It warns that the Blackguards, their ancient, anti-magic rivals, intend to strike once more; given the timing of their reemergence, they are likely aiming at this very wedding. As the Blackguards were long renowned as skilled assassins, Eidolos's life might very well be at risk, and I want to defend him. Yet, as a Soulblade, I may be a target as well. Thus, I should engage in magical activities quietly and try to avoid the Blackguards' notice, for even ex-Soulblades may incur their wrath.

If all goes fairly well, Eidolos and Felicia shall be married tomorrow. If all goes perfectly, Eidolos *will* be married - to me. But should the Blackguards strike him down, we may still have our "happy ever after," if not in this world, then in the next . . .

Notes

- You have brought a bag of brown sugar required for the alcoholism remedy. It's currently in your trunk.

Goals

- Win Eidolos's heart and his hand in marriage
- Make sure Eidolos stays safe, and protect him from alcoholism
- Shut down all debauchery, especially Bluffmaster parties
- Investigate and disrupt any Blackguard activity
- Explore Cos' connections to Soul Magic
- Serve the monarchs of Scythia

Contacts

- Eidolos Agathos (Daniel Grazian): the crown prince of Scythia, whom you adore with all your heart.
- Cryseon Agathos (Joel): King of Scythia, a kind-hearted man.
- Meizon Agathos (Amanda Stowers): Queen of Scythia. She showed you some kindness after you left the Soulblades, and was the one who hired you as a steward.
- Maxene Astea (Bobby Pragada): Cryseon and Meizon's adopted child. You know little about him, and he's always seemed like an outsider within the palace.

Memory/Event Packets

- none

Bluesheets

- A History of the Sabine Realms of Assyria, Scythia, and Etruria
- The Rituals and Beliefs of the Sabine Nations
- Who's Who in the Sabine Kingdoms
- The Ancient Order of the Soulblades

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- The Mysteries of Cos (out-of-game notebook)
- Bluffmaster
- Soul Magic

Abilities

- Knock Out
- Assist
- Restrain
- Food Tampering
- First Aid
- Whisperer

Items

- none

Stats

- Psychic Health Max: 5
- Combat Rating: 4

Phantom

Note: You are a capricious NPC ghost. You must help Izdubar and Prymnesie complete ghost-related research plots. Prymnesie can hear and see you even at game start, and you should both talk to her and talk through her to Izdubar. Otherwise, you should not assist any particular character or cause, except for the express purpose of accomplishing one of your goals.

Three hundred years ago, you were Smaragdus, the first monarch of a nation called Scythia, stalwart enemy of another nation called Etruria . . . But that was long ago. Three centuries back, you died of sudden sickness on this godforsaken island, doing something you don't remember for some purpose you no longer care about, and you became a ghost. After countless decades bound to Cos, you don't remember much of anything from your life beforehand. Post-death, only a few people have ever visited you on this island. There were the architects who came here at some point to refurbish the old castle here. There's the rich guests who have rented out the buildings for a day at a time, hosting fancy events. There's the cleaning crews who scour the place afterwards. But nobody ever stays for any period of time. They always flee too soon, leaving you lonely and bored - not that they could ever perceive your spectral form to begin with. Such a shame, really. Such a shame. Something interesting happened today, at least. A cleaning crew came, along with a self-important official from an eastern country called Assyria that you vaguely recall, and naturally you started eavesdropping on them. They said there would be a royal wedding, between a prince of Scythia and a princess of Etruria, Scythia's old rival! You heard some more snatches of conversation, something about a prophecy. One of the cleaning crew was a shifty type- you liked him especially- and you saw him trying to conceal a sketchy-looking parcel. You never got to investigate more closely, though. The official accompanying the cleaning crew suffered some sort of distracting fit, and you couldn't focus on that interesting parcel. You could immediately tell he was doomed to die within hours, and for a lovely moment you thought you would have a fellow ghost on this island! But alas, the cleaning crew dragged his trunk and his still-twitching body into their boat and sailed away, and he must have kicked the bucket off at sea somewhere. No new friend for you . . . But you still have something else to look forward too- the wedding itself. There'll be drinking and gambling and drama and fortune-telling and more drinking . . . This is the most interesting thing that's happened to you in decades, and you plan to take full advantage. You've thought up some scenes you'd like to see, and you'll try to set those scenes up today and watch the chaos unfold, so that the lovely memories can sustain you through the years to come. If you're really lucky, maybe you'll finally get another ghost to keep you company.

Goals

- Get someone to die and become a ghost
- Watch someone steal or hide an emerald
- Watch someone pilfer herbs from the altar
- Watch someone lose at least 100 coins in one set of Bluffmaster
- Watch someone pass out from drinking alcohol
- Watch someone break into the kitchen and tamper with the food
- Watch one of the betrothed parties try and back out of the wedding
- Watch an argument between two spouses
- Watch someone have their fortune told without their consent
- Watch someone be successfully waylaid
- Watch someone fail to open a lock marked by a golden sigil. You suspect you actually made the sigil lock yourself before dying, but you don't know how or why . . .

Memory/Event Packets

- none

Bluesheets

- none

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- Ghost
- Bluffmaster

Abilities

- Soul Attack (2x)

Items

- none

Stats

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----|------------------|---|
| - Psychic Health Max: | N/A | - Combat Rating: | 2 |
|-----------------------|-----|------------------|---|

Semirami Ramina

Born January 10, in the year 281, or so my somewhat dubious birth certificate says.

I was an orphan, passed around by different government institutions, but my unfortunate reality never stopped me from being happy. Since I was young, I've dreamed of strolling through the old Palace of Lavinium and holding the majestic Diadem. I've pretended to stare down my friends and family and know their intentions immediately, through quintessentially royal truthing magic. I've wished to attend a royal wedding, consorting with mystical fortune tellers, approaching the altar that shall burn only during the sunset of the first day of summer with that regal, sacred flame . . .

Have I mentioned I'm a fan of the Sabine royal family?

Sadly, I'm from Assyria, which has long since disassembled its monarchy. And while I appreciate the education-fueled meritocracy we've set up in its place, I still fantasize about the golden age of the Sabine Empire, along with its unforgettably glorious rulers. It was that passion for royal history that drove me to become an archaeologist, dedicated to the discovery and preservation of magnificent artifacts from Sabine times. I've built up quite a reputation for myself, too. Despite my youth, I've already participated in five groundbreaking digs—pun not intended—and personally discovered a cache of letters between military officers, a long-lost book of verses by great poetesses, and a secret treasure room underneath an ancient temple. These findings have established me as a brilliant archaeologist, and all the schools of Assyria have fought to have me as a student. I've studied mainly in the school-city Ashur, with brief excursions to its neighbor, Nineveh.

Even as I've worked and studied, the Sabine royal family has never been far from my mind. A few years ago, as I wandered the streets of Nineveh, I came across a treasure finer than any relic I've ever found—Eidolos Agathos, crown prince of Scythia, directly descended from the ancient rulers. And he was gorgeous, elegant, lovelier than any legends could convey. But I couldn't even bring myself to approach him, because I was too stunned to move!

Well, I wilted with embarrassment, but my hopes of meeting the royals weren't crushed forever. Just six or so months ago, the news of the royal engagement struck Assyria—Eidolos and Felicia, the first in line to the throne of Etruria and Scythia, respectively, will be married in order to thwart of prophecy of war and assure peace. They'll be bound together by love for each other and for the greater good. Now, what could be more splendid?

The best part of all, of course, was when the details of the agreement were released, and we realized that, in addition to Assyria's utterly brilliant international relations secretary Sirasu, two high-ranking Assyrian scholars were asked to attend as "peacemakers"—neutral third-parties who could resolve the disputes that inevitably arise where Etruscans and Scythians meet. Immediately, I was determined to get one of those positions.

I fought tooth and nail, assuaging academic egos, even switching schools and taking on an onerous job as a teaching assistant. Yes, I even moved for this, because the administration at Nineveh was so happy to steal away one of Ashur's star students that they threw their full support behind my candidacy for the position of "peacemaker." Scholarly shenanigans aside, I was quite a reasonable choice. I'm young, like about half of the guests. I'm enthusiastic, as you can probably tell. And, as Assyrians go, I'm quite well-versed in Scythian and Etrurian affairs. Eventually, I won the position, and I've never been so excited! The other peacemaker is some odd Nineveh astronomy professor named Izdubar; he seems rather useless and unmotivated, and I can't help but wonder how he gained this position. But I won't let some old curmudgeon dampen my zeal.

So it falls to Sirasu and me to keep the peace. This might be difficult, since the Scythian and Etruscan royal families have nothing if not a tense history. Scythia and Etruria have always been at odds, ever since the days of the Diadem. There was a flare-up several years ago, when Queen Cerintha, the wife of King Hiems, was killed during a battle at Hero, a hotly-contested border town then in the possession of Etruria. Soon afterwards, Thoesi, the ten-year-old crown princess of Scythia, was kidnapped, in what was widely understood to be Etruria's retribution. The Scythian palace declared that Thoesi had passed away;

the Soulblades, powerful sorcerers who now serve the Scythians, had used Soul Magic to ascertain that she was dead. Those few weeks altered both families forever. Meizon, Thoesi's mother, and Salo, Cerintha's somewhat erratic younger child, have seemed to take the loss hardest, while the famously cold-hearted Hiems, now Etruria's sole monarch, weathered the tragedy with his trademark endurance. Lingered grief over the whole affair will likely cause at least some disturbances during the wedding, but I'll try to de-escalate any conflict. Even if I fail, Sirasu, famed for his canny diplomatic ability, will no doubt step in and keep the peace.

Then there's the issue of the war mentioned in the prophecy. Hopefully, the wedding will prevent violence, but the fact stands that, under Hiems's guidance, Etruria is for the first time strong enough to possibly beat Scythia in a military conflict. I wouldn't be surprised if Hiems is planning to attack Scythia. While I likely shouldn't ask him outright whether he intends military action, I should still communicate with other Etruscans to determine whether there's any real risk of war. Alternatively, the Scythians may know of Hiems's plans through their non-negligible intelligence corps, so they could also provide valuable insight. But I'll have to be careful even with the Scythians, for they've had some trouble with information leaks recently, and I wouldn't want them to get the wrong idea about me. I suspect my greatest ally in peacemaking will be Princess Felicia, who's known as something of a pacifist, quite unlike her father. Eidolos's political acumen could also make him a helpful comrade, but I don't yet know his position on war.

My official mandate is diplomatic, but I, of course, have plenty of other plans for this event. After so many years of dreaming, I'm going to a royal wedding! While I've fought off the impulse to start collecting autographs, I still intend to enjoy myself to the fullest. There'll be a Bluffmaster party, of course, with higher stakes than any game I could find back in Assyria. I've scraped quite a bit of disposable income together from tutoring less advanced students, so I can place a few wagers while sipping a cool drink and mingling with princes and princesses.

While I'd of course like to win at Bluffmaster— if I beat the royals, that'd be a story for the ages!— I've got an even greater game in mind. Yes, it's the wedding of Eidolos and Felicia. . . But why can't I do some matchmaking for myself? There'll be two young, single royals at the wedding— Salo of Etruria and Maxene of Scythia, and technically Hiems is also unattached. Now, I can't imagine any greater bliss than marrying one of them and being officially inducted into the world of the royals. Thus, I want to woo one of them— or maybe all of them! Perhaps, as Eidolos approaches the altar, walking with Felicia, I'll also stride forward, walking with whoever I can get . . .

I'm intelligent, good-looking, and reasonably likeable, but I admit arranging my wedding within the span of another person's wedding is a long shot. Still, I'm aiming for a guaranteed entrance onto the royal stage, and I know just how to obtain it. Marriages of convenience are a long-established tradition; my background as an archaeologist will provide all the leverage I need.

You see, Queen Smaragdos, child of Mel, was the first monarch of Scythia, a wondrous nihilist renowned for her ambition, daring, prodigious magical skill, and obsession with emeralds. She 's perhaps my favorite royal of all, and I've done quite a bit of research on her. I uncovered a dusty tome in a minor library in Ashur, a history book of the lowest sort, filled with bizarre theories and rumors. Most of the contents were mere hearsay, but one bit stands out in my mind— it claimed that Smaragdos had visited Cos in the days before her death at sea, and that she had brought along the Diadem, the item that originally sparked the Scythia-Etruria feud, in order to hide it on the island where no Etruscan would ever get it. It sounded like something the great queen would do; her competitiveness was unparalleled. Furthermore, a professor of mine who visited Cos a few decades back reported seeing golden sigils, which Smaragdos frequently used as part of her magic, so it seems increasingly possible that she's concealed the Diadem on the island with her magic. I don't dare believe the last part of that old book's claim— that Smaragdos herself was still somehow preserved on the island— but it's thrilling to even think that I might be near the Diadem.

Of course, any good archaeologist near the Diadem would have to investigate further, and I will certainly be doing so. For one thing, it'd be the find of the century, and my fame as an archaeologist will be eternal. Also, I've got to rescue the Diadem from money-grubbing merchants like Paldeen— he sells off all manner of fine artifacts to private collections, forever stealing them from worthier schools and museums! Secondly, and maybe more importantly, it makes for great leverage in my matchmaking!

Marriages of convenience are the norm among the royals, and what could be more convenient than marrying a man who will grant his spouse the Diadem? Third, I could use the Diadem for my peacemaking duties, perhaps convincing Scythia and Etruria to share it as a symbol of their burgeoning friendship. But I don't really trust them to share well, and this last option's too boring for my taste anyway . . .

So I'm going to step into the world of royals, with all its drama, magic, and fantasy. I will keep the peace between two great countries, and I will also retrace Queen Smaragdos' last steps and perhaps recover one of the most fabulous relics of history. Most importantly, I shall gamble, drink, and party with all the nobles, and I'll cozy up to one of them— or maybe more. Here I go!

Notes

- While in Nineveh, you looked into the proper laws that would govern a long-lost artifact like the Diadem. As it turns out, such an artifact is initially owned by whoever finds it. Legally, it can only be handed over to a country— not to another individual— because items of such significance should really be dealt with at a national level. You've brought a copy of the proper contract for handing over the Diadem to the possession of one or more countries.
- Assyria is an expensive place to live and study, though fortunately your own costs are comfortably covered by a scholarship you won back in high school. Anyone who intends to move there from Scythia or Etruria would have to have a lot of money, a lot of earning potential, or both.

Goals

- Find the Diadem, lost by Queen Smaragdos
- Marry a royal (the higher-ranking, the better)
- Help Sirasu keep the peace
- Play Bluffmaster, making sure that your winnings outpace your losses

Contacts

- Sirasu Noon (Maitree Banerjee): The brilliant Assyrian secretary of international relations. You look forward to working with him!
- Izdubar Sharo (Peter Lofgren): A boring old astronomy professor and your fellow peacekeeper.

Memory/Event Packets

- none

Bluesheets

- A History of the Sabine Realms of Assyria, Scythia, and Etruria
- The Rituals and Beliefs of the Sabine Nations
- Who's Who in the Sabine Kingdoms

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- Bluffmaster

Abilities

- Knock Out
- First Aid
- Assist
- Defensive Technique
- Restrain
- Offensive Technique

Items

- Contract for Diadem (in-game document)
- 100 Coins

Stats

- Psychic Health Max: 5
- Combat Rating: 3

Izdubar Sharo

Born May 1, in the year 258.

What you would do to feel alive . . .

The feeling of emptiness started when you were young. Your brother, Paldeen, wasn't born until you were four, and yet he always seemed to livelier than you. As you sat still and gazed off at horizons, he scampered around the markets of Ashur, the Assyrian school-city where you both grew up. You excelled at the rather quiet subjects of physics and philosophy, while he was the best at debate and sports and drama, declaiming at the top of his lungs even into the night. He would come home from school with armfuls of ribbons and trophies— he asked you to carry them, they were so heavy— and you had to content yourself with a single astronomy prize every year.

Education meant everything in Assyria, and, while you did fairly well, Paldeen was thriving. One of the greatest students in his year, he was on track to become an advanced researcher in Ashur, or perhaps a well-respected administrator, or perhaps a star professor. He stole your parents' attention— all of the world's attention, really— but you forgave him, because you knew he would selflessly channel all those acclaimed talents into the education system. You put up with him for the greater good. All the while, you worked yourself almost to death, studying fiercely, clawing for some successes of your own, but you had lost that rivalry long ago.

Then he announced, one day, that he had no interest in academia. That he couldn't care less about essays and books, because money was all he really valued. Within a few weeks, he had packed up his bags and joined a trading post, and a few years later, he ran off to Etruria to manage "the international branch" of his company. What a fraud!

You fumed at him, and you haven't contacted him since he left home. By that point, you were next to dead, weary from years of panicked, jealous studying. Though the panic slowly subsided, you remained a diligent scholar and eventually became an astronomy professor in the school-city of Nineveh. You found calm as you looked at the stars, for your troubles felt miniscule compared to the infinite depth of the night sky.

Infinity's always held a strange attraction for you. Even as a child, you contemplated the infinite enormity of death, and you fantasized about being one of the ancient Soulblades, mages who personally faced the forces of life and death. That was an empty fantasy, since the Soulblades had long since abandoned Assyria. Yet about ten years ago, you were approached by the Soulblades' greatest rivals— the Blackguards.

The Blackguards, too, dealt with death. But where the Soulblades timidly requested strength from non-human forces, the Blackguards seized power through frighteningly, purely human talent. Where the Soulblades tinkered with all manner of risky magicks, the Blackguards depended only on long-perfected mundane methods. The Blackguards, fundamentally, were a proud and ancient league of assassins, forging political alliances by offering their murderous skills. You heard their call and joined them, and there was finally some meaning to your pathless life.

Sadly, the Blackguards have fallen on hard times since their heyday in the Sabine era. While the Soulblades consolidated power in Scythia and lived openly as "harmless healers", the Blackguards were driven underground. The Scythian Blackguards withered away, unable to survive in the Soulblades' new stronghold. The Etruscan Blackguards were shamefully dominated by Etruria's royal family, reduced to mere servants, forced to commit assassinations only at the monarchs' beck and call. The Assyrian Blackguards were rather isolated in the aftermath of the Empire's fall, and they never regained any serious political influence at all. They still passed down the beliefs and methods of the Blackguards, but they rarely had any cause to use them. Filled with talents they couldn't utilize, cut off from all their old power, the Assyrian Blackguards turned bitter over time.

In between your days as a professor and nights doing research, you trained in some of the Blackguards' methods, becoming a Half-Blackguard, skilled with roughly half of the Blackguard arts of death. But you never had much opportunity to use your

skills outside of the practice rooms. The Blackguards took advantage of your professional position on occasion, asking you to pass messages and deliver special packages at conferences and the like, but you were not called on to carry out a hit.

You had resigned yourself to never realizing your full potential— until you got the news, one year ago. You had been poisoned by something without your knowledge, perhaps by some toxin in the natural environment, perhaps by the venoms used in your Blackguard training. The toxicity had built up in your system to dangerous levels, and you will deteriorate and die within a year. Already, your body is weakened. Your mind, though, is strong as ever as it despairs over your imminent demise.

You can't just die and be forgotten. You refuse to fade away! You initially turned to the arts of the Soulblade— secretly, of course, because the Blackguards would ostracize you for ever contemplating the use of Soul Magic. You reviewed old Blackguard reports of Soulblade experiments, and the results were fascinating. For one thing, several Soulblades recorded the existence of ghosts, souls of the dead which still dwell in the world of the living, communicate with humans, and even manipulate physical material. The Soulblades claimed to find ghosts all over the Sabine Empire, but they noted that such shades were most common in a few places— near the River Cocytus, the Stygian Lake, and the Bay of Acheron. Most intriguingly, they reported that it is possible to gain ghostly power oneself. According to the records, it is possible to summon ghosts by ringing a bell, but you've rung and rung throughout Nineveh, with no result. While you haven't quite given up the hope of surviving as a ghost, you've had to start looking at other options. You came across one other remarkable fact in your research; the Soulblades asserted that one of their most sophisticated remedies could stave off some of the effects of poisoning. However, since your case is so severe, you won't be entirely saved from your early death; the magic would merely restore some of your strength in the meantime.

The Soulblade options failed to stave off your death, so you began to think of the Blackguards once more. And six months ago, when the royal engagement was announced, the Assyrian Blackguards instantly masterminded a daring plan. Both Scythia, with their alliance to the Soulblades, and Etruria, presumptuously grinding their Blackguards into submission, have established themselves as enemies to the Blackguards. And you, between your fatal illness and your fairly lofty status in Assyria's educational system, were perfectly positioned to wreak the Blackguards' revenge. What you and your comrades have in mind will shock the whole world, and the Blackguards, of course, claim credit for the chaos. The Blackguard order will take back its power and splendor and punish its oppressors, and your name, specifically, will be repeated for eternity.

You shall trigger the prophecy and sink the world into war.

The plan is an elegant one. By twisting the arms of the right school administrators and winning some well-timed donations, you obtained a position as one of the three Assyrian "peacemakers," invited to resolve conflicts at this wedding. "Peacemaker," ha— if you wish, you can do exactly the opposite, working to set off the prophecy by breaking up the engagement. However, that would be somewhat difficult, given how competent your fellow peacemaker Sirasu Noon is. At any rate, you have a more dramatic plan for preventing the wedding, a plan that appeals to you far more than mere politicking.

You see, a crew of Assyrians will visit the island of the wedding venue just before the event itself, in order to clean and decorate. One of those Assyrians, a servant of the Blackguards, shall find an unassuming closet somewhere and hide a powerful new powdered explosive, stolen from a shipment of experimental weapons belonging to Fresi, a Scythian arms dealer. You are no stranger to lockpicks yourself, so you can liberate the explosive— a bag of white powder that can be passed off as flour or sugar— and pack it into the wedding altar, set to start burning ten minutes before sundown. Then, when all the monarchs and nobles and businessmen crowd around for the ceremony . . .

Well, you've always wanted to go out with a bang. And you can't imagine any ending more brilliant than a fiery explosion, one that brings down those fools who dared to subjugate the Blackguards. Your fame will be immortal, as the Blackguards resurge once more in the ensuing chaos.

Interestingly, the Etruscan Blackguards will also be doing some business at this wedding. The Assyrian Blackguards received an encrypted magical communication from the head of your Etruscan counterparts, the White Rose: "One of our members has been engaged to commit two assassinations at the wedding, per our wearying contract with the monarchs of Etruria." They

hesitated to send more details, since Scythia's Soulblades may very well have been listening in, but you know how to find your fellow Blackguard. Once you have made contact your comrade, you should discover what their assignments are, for it is your duty as a Blackguard to assist them in all such doings.

You are excited to help them and perhaps use your deadly skills at last, but you must also be careful around the other Blackguard. The Assyrian Blackguards have long been radical, out-of-the box thinkers, while the Etruscan Blackguards are known as purists, obsessed with avoiding accidental casualties during their assassinations. As a result, your fellow Blackguard might not approve of the plot with the explosives. Furthermore, you're tempted to re-try Soulblade magic at this wedding. There will be many distinguished Scythians present, and there might well be find a Soulblade among them. Perhaps you can find one and convince them to give you the chronic poisoning remedy, since additional strength will no doubt be useful if you take part in the assassinations. However, the other Blackguard will likely despise such magical dabbling, so you should conduct those activities as stealthily as possible.

You have other magical plans, of course. After all, Cos is in the Bay of Acheron, so you may finally find a shade to bless you with ghostly immortality; you've brought along a bell, just in case.

Most of all, you cannot wait to set your explosive trap for the guests. You have no concerns about knocking off most of your victims, though you don't hate them personally. One of the guests, though, is Paldeen. He's wormed his way in as the 'representative of the Etruscan commoners'—a fancy phrase to say that he's the richest non-noble in Etruria. Even after all these years, you still resent him for making your childhood miserable, and you'd love to ruin his reputation before he burns to death. According to rumors, he's tackily, filthily wealthy and just as phony as ever, so destroying his credibility shouldn't prove too difficult.

On the other hand, there's one guest whom you don't want hurt. Maxene is a Scythian royal, the adopted brother of the betrothed, but you know him simply as the quiet, first-year astronomy student who excelled in your third-year seminar last semester. He's clearly talented, a scientific prodigy, and he's also a careful student with a seemingly genuine passion for knowledge. You'd rather not waste such a love of learning, so you'll look for ways to save him from the bomb. Perhaps you can convince him to leave the area during the ceremony, or you can forcibly remove him. But in the worst case scenario, he'll simply perish. And you will go up in flames alongside him, this empty life of yours justified by its ardent, glorious conclusion . . .

Notes

- Though Blackguard training required you practice Bluffmaster, you never studied it deeply—Paldeen played it constantly as a child, and so you could never enjoy the game much yourself. However, if you wish to identify the Etruscan Blackguard for some reason, you would do well to look among the most talented players of Bluffmaster.
- You've stashed the bell you'll need to summon spirits in your trunk, along with a needle you can use for your Blackguard duties.

Goals

- Cause chaos, prevent the royal marriage, and trigger the prophecy
- Find the other Blackguard, and assist them in their assassinations
- Hurt Paldeen, perhaps by ruining his reputation
- Learn more about ghosts and gain power in the afterlife
- Find someone to give you a Soulblade remedy for chronic poisoning

Contacts

- Sirasu Noon (Maitree Banerjee): the Assyrian secretary of international relations. He is irritatingly good at preventing conflict.
- Semirami Ramina (John Schwartz): a talented archaeology student and your fellow peacekeeper. He seems enthusiastic about his position, but also rather inexperienced.
- Paldeen Sharo (Kirin Sinha): The bane of your existence.

Memory/Event Packets

- If you ingest Item 0010, open this.

Bluesheets

- A History of the Sabine Realms of Assyria, Scythia, and Etruria
- The Blackguards and their Deadly Arts
- The Rituals and Beliefs of the Sabine Nations
- Who's Who in the Sabine Kingdoms

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- The Mysteries of Cos (out-of-game notebook)
- Bluffmaster

Abilities

- Knock Out
- Assist
- Restrain
- Killing Blow (1x)
- Food Tampering
- Sly Poisoning (2x)
- Improved Waylay
- First Aid
- Chronic Poisoning
- Acute Poisoning Resistance
- Lockpicking
- Offensive Technique

Items

- Milky Pink Liquid (0016)
- Milky Pink Liquid (0016)
- Creamy Blue Liquid (0019)
- Creamy Blue Liquid (0019)

Stats

- Psychic Health Max: 5
- Combat Rating: 0

Paldeen Sharo

Born September 23, in the year 252.

What is worth more - gold, or a king's praise? You don't know for sure. But as long as you can have both, why should you care? As far as you're concerned, most royalty is good for exactly thing: making you richer. You come from a family of Assyrian intellectuals, brilliant men and women who could outthink almost anyone in the fledgling republic. Compared to them, most kings and queens were nothing but inbred dunces. When you first left your childhood home and settled down in Etruria to join a trading company selling luxury goods, you thought you could crack the fledgling market wide open. But the royal family of Etruria - well, offer them enough newfangled opulence, and their coffers might as well be yours. After all, inbred dunces are easy to manipulate. That was the theory, anyways.

As it turned out, Etruria's present king, a cruel and uncompromising tyrant named Hiems, proved to be anything but an inbred dunce. In fact, you grudgingly admitted, he was nothing short of brilliant. And, though you soon struck up a brisk business with Etruria's citizens - who could, you earnestly believed, use a little bit of luxury in their lives - you never could persuade Hiems and the royal court to invest in your products. Before now, your only contact with the royal treasury has been... less official, to say the least. When your branch of the business was at risk of going belly-up, you finagled an "interest-free loan of indefinite duration" from in your contacts the Etruscan coffers. Was this dubiously legal? Yes. Would you be severely punished if the authorities ever found out? Yes (imprisoned for life, as you recall). Did it work? Yes. So when you heard the news of a royal wedding, you jumped at the chance to secure some noble patronage. Etruscan, Scythian, it really didn't matter - just make one big sale, and you would be set for a long, long time.

Your brother Izdubar confounded your plans, though. Twice as brilliant as you ever were on your best days, it always seemed that he solved every problem that got in his way. You tried to tell yourself you weren't jealous, that you could be as smart as he was. If you could just get him on your side, whatever projects you embarked upon would be a rousing success. But he threw a wrench in things. he'd always proved as stodgy as he was brilliant, always sticking his nose into musty tombs and worn-out tomes while you watched the money roll in. Truth be told, though, it was his scholarly expertise that drove you into business. You always wanted to be an astronomer - when you gazed into the sky, you saw universes laid out before you. But it was Izdubar who aced every test, remembered every constellation, traced the path of every planet. Galled by your inability to match his skill, you plunged into more practical fields of work instead. You sometimes wonder, if it weren't for Izdubar, if you wouldn't have chosen the scholar's path yourself - but that's all irrelevant now. By the time you left, he was headed straight for a tenured professorship at a prestigious Assyrian university, and dedicated himself to research. Waste of a good mind, you always told him.

Your last conversation was not a happy one. He accused you of caring about nothing more important than profit, and insinuated that you were little better than a common peasant. Stung, you put on an arrogant facade and walked away - but, deep down, you worry that you've lost your brother's respect forever. And then you discovered that he'd be attending the royal wedding. It was your best chance to see him again. Perhaps it can even be something more than that: perhaps it's an opportunity for you to prove yourself to him, to show him that you're worthy of his admiration, to finally impress the imperturbable Izdubar.

So, driven by both profit and brotherly pride, you graciously accepted your invitation to the royal wedding, held on the distant (and politically neutral) isle of Cos. You packed up a valise (shame they wouldn't let you bring three) full of your most innovative and fascinating wares, including a lavish gift for the happy couple- a cinnamon-flavored distillation of a rare vintage mead imported from Iberia, packaged in filigreed gold. You, of course, prefer a simple hard cider, but these fancy drinks will be impressive to this crowd. Still, your most important offering is a unique piece of history, tailored to the desires of all the Sabine royalty.

Ever since you were a child in Assyria, you'd heard rumours of an ancient artefact known only as the Diadem, a magical token of royalty that was lost when the Sabine empire crumbled. Wouldn't it be a wonderful achievement if you managed to

uncover the Diadem and parade your discovery before the assembled royals? Of course it would, and so you persuaded your best employees - a talented crew of artificers - to make you the next best thing. They acquired an ornate diadem that matches historical descriptions of the Diadem, then painstakingly enchanted it to give special powers to every royal of Sabine descent who would be attending the wedding, Etruscan and Scythian alike. Yes, you've read of obscure rumors that the real Diadem may be hidden on Cos by "golden veils," but that's no hardship. You plan to take bids on the Diadem, showing your fake to anyone who demands proof of your find, and in between you'll explore the island. If you find the treasure, you will simply destroy your fake and hand off the real Diadem to whoever offers the highest bid.

Unfortunately, you're not the only merchant attending the festivities. An old rival of yours, a Scythian arms dealer named Fresi, has managed to worm his way into King Cryseon's retinue. Every time you attend a trade summit or Assyrian bazaar, you find yourself seated across the table from him in a game of Bluffmaster - you're certain the man cheats, because you recall losing to him as often as you won. This simply will not do. Clean Fresi out at the gambling tables and show him up for the greedy weakling that he is.

You're familiar enough with this bastard of a man to know that, where he travels, conflict is never far behind. This is, to put it bluntly, bad news. Nobody buys luxury goods in the middle of a war - austerity measures are the worst - so, if Fresi manages to push the two nations into direct conflict, you're out of luck. What's worse, it seems like they might not even need Fresi's warmongering to push them over the brink. Oh, the two kings are reasonable enough in their own right - Cryseon of Scythia's a kindly old man, so obsessed with preserving life that he'd never spark a war on his own initiative, and Hiems of course is too cunning to act rashly. But rumour has it that the border clashes between the two nations have been escalating.

What's even worse, one of your contacts in King Cryseon's court has reported that Etruria managed to plant a spy right under his nose, feeding information straight to Hiems. Perhaps if you can figure out who the spy is and reveal their identity to the Scythian monarch, you can defuse some of Hiems's leverage on the proceedings, ingratiate yourself with the Scythians, and push for a peaceful resolution.

In addition, you've put together a contingency plan of sorts. Your sources have managed to locate one of the most talented thieves in any of the Sabine states, a daring rogue who goes by the name of Delia, and break her out of the Assyrian jail she was languishing in. You reached out to her anonymously, got her admitted to the wedding under the guise of a Scythian fortuneteller, and commissioned her to stage a daring heist. But she's not going to be robbing Fresi - she's going to be robbing you. Little does she know that all of your goods (especially the Diadem) have been magically warded and trapped by your artificers. With any luck, anyone who touches them will be knocked unconscious. That's when you'll arrive on the scene, discover the "treacherous thief," and pin the crime on Fresi - who, everyone knows, is notoriously underhanded in his own right. With the value of your wares reinforced by the attempted theft, and Fresi hopelessly discredited, you hope to steer the two nations away from war and towards something infinitely better - mutual profit.

Notes

- As part of the etiquette of presenting your gift to the happy couple, you should ask them to try the liquor immediately. Do not be offended if they reject your offer, though; they may decide quite reasonably that they should limit their alcohol consumption at this rather tense occasion.
- You're confident that your fake Diadem will have no negative effects upon royals. However, you're not as sure that its positive effects exactly match those of the original Diadem.
- You have stored your fake Diadem and the two bottles of alcohol that you have brought as gifts in your trunk.

Goals

- Discredit that bloodthirsty scoundrel Fresi by framing him for the theft of the Diadem.
- Make sure a war doesn't break out between Scythia and Etruria.
- Sell your Diadem to one of the nations present for a sum of at least 1.5 million.
- Root out the person who's been spying on the Scythian court.

- Prove your mental superiority by annihilating Fresi at Bluffmaster.

Contacts

- Izdubar Sharo (Peter Lofgren): Your brother, a brilliant astronomer and your longtime rival.
- Meizon Agathos (Amanda Stowers): The puritanical and austere queen of Scythia.
- Hiems Coronus (Skylar Cohen): The Etruscan king, a cunning ruler and potential customer.
- Fresi Nea (Peter Spradling): A greedy arms dealer and old enemy of yours.
- Delia Armata (Matthew O'Connell): A burglar you've hired to steal your Diadem, enabling you to pin the crime on Fresi.

Memory/Event Packets

- If you ingest Item 0010, open this.

Bluesheets

- A History of the Sabine Realms of Assyria, Scythia, and Etruria
- The Rituals and Beliefs of the Sabine Nations
- Who's Who in the Sabine Kingdoms

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- Appraise
- Bluffmaster

Abilities

- Knock Out
- Assist
- Restrain
- Truthing Resistance (1x)
- Defensive Technique
- Offensive Technique
- Destroy Item

Items

- 170 Coins

Stats

- Psychic Health Max: 5
- Combat Rating: 2

Moenia Sol

Fate. Fate was never a myth to you. The winds of prophecy and the distant agonies of your half-forgotten past drive your very existence. For as long as you can remember, you have been able to reach into the currents of legend and mystery and pull forth glimpses of possible futures - you can read the currents of destiny as the strands of the Fates unfurl. Yet sometimes you feel that you know little more than what the spirits whisper to you on the wind - for your own past is a great and terrifying void. When you cast your memory back to your childhood, you can only glean the barest snippets of what your life was like before - the golden contentment of youth, your terror as the cold-eyed kidnappers snatched you from your bed and caged you in a dismal cell far from your home, and a moment of agony so great that your mind refuses to grasp it. The horror of being taken from the safety of your home and imprisoned was enough to break your spirit and shatter your memories.

You call yourself Moenia, a wandering fortuneteller, but your own name - your true name - has been lost to you for so long that you fear you would not recognize it if you heard it spoken. And when you gaze within yourself, trying to fill in the missing pieces, things only get worse. There is a great ice-pale hollow where your soul should be. You don't know how you know this, but the same whispering voices of Fate that tell you the fortunes of others on the wind have confirmed it: your immortal soul no longer resides in your body. You are nothing but an empty husk, without a past, without a spirit. But not without a future. When you close your eyes and welcome the oblivion of sleep, the voices of the spirits that guide you still hiss in your ears, offering you hints and snippets of your own destiny. If you seek out the fleeting scraps of memory they have offered you, there is a chance your soul might still be restored to you. And you will not stop until your identity and your strength of will reside within your mortal shell once more.

One thing you do remember, even in the darkness of amnesia. You may not recall exactly what happened to you after you were taken - or even who you were before - but you know, clear as day, who is to blame. It was in the prison oubliettes of Hiems, the cruel and calculating king of Etruria, that your spirit was broken and your mind was tormented. It was his agents that snatched you from your childhood forever, and his cold-hearted soldiers who discarded you like a broken doll when your willpower finally died. And it is Hiems who brings you here today - you attend the wedding in his retinue, masquerading as an itinerant seer. Your talent for seeing the crystal of truth in the lode of possibility was so great that even the royal bureaucracy could not deny your powers. So you have been brought here, to bring good fortune to the happy couple, and offer the gift of insight to the wedding's other guests. But your presence here is also a chance, at long last, to undermine King Hiems and all his vicious machinations. If you could, you would take the fiend's life here and now, but you have not the power to strike him down yourself - but perhaps, if you can recall who you once were and the specifics of what befell you, revealing the atrocities Hiems and his minions inflicted on you will be enough to snatch his authority from beneath his feet.

But your fortuneteller's robes are more than a petty disguise for the sake of revenge alone. The power you possess is real - and you have felt greater and more dire destinies moving at the edges of your consciousness. You know, if you can tap into the destinies of enough of the wedding's guests, that this mysterious truth will be revealed to you, prophecy within prophecy. So you will tell fortunes as if you were nothing more than a wandering seer, pandering to one haughty guest after the next, and if you seek out enough of them perhaps the clouds on the horizon will clear and you will understand the greater destiny that awaits the three nations.

Yet the spirits do not only whisper of darkness and vengeance. If your will is strong, and you cling to what hope you have, there is a chance at a happier ending. If the man you hate and the memories you seek await you on this remote island, so too does someone you could love - the voices of fortune, normally so nebulous, are always clear on this point. Someone present on this island is one you might well marry, one who is fated to bring you bliss. Though you have never before traveled to the lonely shores of Cos, the island's name has long resonated through your dreaming mind: for it is here that you will be given a chance at vengeance, a chance at restoration, a chance at prophecy, and a chance at love. All four are within your grasp, if you should only reach out and claim them.

Goals

- Pursue the lost echoes of your memories.
- Reclaim your missing soul.
- Use whatever means you can to undermine the authority of King Hiems.
- Tell the fortunes of the nobles assembled at the wedding until you are able to discern the greater truth hidden beneath the veil of the future.
- Find the true love that has been promised to you.

Memory/Event Packets

- Fragments of Memory
- Moenia - Fortunetelling

Bluesheets

- A History of the Sabine Realms of Assyria, Scythia, and Etruria
- The Rituals and Beliefs of the Sabine Nations
- Who's Who in the Sabine Kingdoms

Greensheets

- Wedding Ritual
- Fortune Telling
- Bluffmaster

Abilities

- Knock Out
- First Aid
- Assist
- Soullessness
- Restrain
- Offensive Technique

Items

- none

Stats

- Psychic Health Max: N/A
- Combat Rating: 1

~~~~~ origin/master