

The Gentlemen Bastards



Books by Scott Lynch, Jump by Aehriman

"I only steal because my dear old family needs the money to live!" Locke Lamora made this proclamation with his wine glass held high; he and the other Gentleman Bastards were seated at the old witchwood table.

The others began to jeer. "LIAR!" they chorused

"I only steal because this wicked world won't let me work an honest trade!" Calo cried, hoisting his own glass.

"LIAR!"

"I only steal," said Jean, "because I've temporarily fallen in with bad company."

"LIAR!"

At last the ritual came to Bug; the boy raised his glass a bit shakily and yelled, "I only steal because it's heaps of fucking fun!"

"BASTARD!"

Imagine, if you will, a gaggle of priests lounging on the steps to the temple of Perelandro, the Lord of the Overlooked, god of beggars and lepers. But these men aren't priests of

Perelandro, that's their cover. By night, they are a gang of burglars and priests to the Crooked Warden, a heretical thirteenth and forgotten god, the god of thieves.

Only... they aren't really cat burglars, that's their cover to keep Capa Barsavi, the local crime lord, from feeding them to the sharks. Rather, their faith and deceased mentor Chains, have made the Gentleman Bastards into premier con artists fleecing the nobility of Camorr. The one crime Barsavi cannot permit, for it violates the Secret Peace he struck years ago - the various thieves of the city leave the nobility alone and the guard don't crack down like in the bad old days.

Events are about to overtake them, the one thing thieves can never get is complacent... but that may not even be any of your business. For now, have **1,000 crime points** (cp) to get by in this unforgiving low fantasy world.

ORIGINS

People are so seldom just one thing. Pick one background for free, and a second for -200 cp.

Thief - One of the Right People of Camorr, or possibly elsewhere. No two ways around it, you take things that belong to other people, whether you're convinced you deserve them more, or that the owners deserve an ill turn.

Cleric - Most of the continent worships the twelve gods. The thirteenth, a secret god of thieves, is widely regarded as a heresy. You are one of the better educated of this world, trained to minister to people's needs and inspire them.

Noble - Some are born to serve, others to lead. One of your ancestors did something important, and those who followed added to it until your bloodline became known as reputable, reliable.

Bondsmage - All spellcasters in the known world belong to this one secretive mages guild. One which broke the Therin throne for trying to control them and will avenge any slain with the deaths not just of the killer but all their relatives and acquaintances. Bondsmages are

for hire, but charge a thousand white-gold crowns a day, have the right of refusal to any job, and only allow those approved by their leadership.

Pirate - Or perhaps a sailor, in truth the line gets thin way out to sea, away from the eyes of men and gods. You sail the high seas, a most dangerous profession.

Performer - While nobles and mages and thieves scheme, some of us are trying to get through this next season, or bring a little joy and culture to people's lives.

AGE, RACE, SEX, ETC.

That's between you and the Twelve. Keep what you were given or change it.



LOCATION

Pick a starting location or roll for +100 cp

- 1) **Camorr** - The Serene Duchy. A city of 88,000 on a series of islands, shot through with canals, once the prize port of the Therin Empire. Camorr is commanded from five elderglass skyscrapers, one belonging to each of the city's chief nobility. You may wish to visit the Shifting Market, a lake where barge shops intermingle, though the wealthier shopper prefers the Videnza. Coinkisser's Row holds the oldest banks and

counting-houses on the continent. Culturally, Camorri are known to be hot-tempered, fierce lovers with long-running vendettas, and for excellent seafood.

- 2) **Tal Verrar** - An island port of the Western edge of the map, seven crescent islands of elderglass surrounded by an artificial reef (with three more, tiny and incidental islands) forming a rose shape. The highest tower, the Sinspire, is a casino infamous around the world.
- 3) **Karthain** - A city of 70,000 souls, mostly islands and peninsulas linked by bridges, where the river Cavendria meets the great lake called the Amathel. There is a magnificent elderglass suspension bridge over the Cavendria. Karthain is most famous as the home to the world's sole known magic guild, the Bondsmagi, who serve as protectors and shadow rulers to the city. Karthani are very good at not worrying about what the Presence, as they call the Bondsmagi, are up to. In theory ruled by an elected *konseil*, in truth the two political parties (conservative Deep Roots and progressive Black Iris) are all puppets and proxies for the Bondsmagi to settle disputes.
- 4) **Emberlain** - One of the cantons (city-states) of the Kingdom of Seven Marrows. Seven great rivers and seven cantons. Emberlain is at the foot of the Austerhalin Mountains, the source of world-famous Austerhalin brandy. Emberlain has recently been making bank on entrepreneurship and speculation, their banks and merchant houses are doing four times the business of the next biggest canton, but their success is drawing both corruption and envious eyes.
- 5) **Lashain** - Sister-city to Karthain, also on the Amathel. Famously a city where anything can be had for the right price, particularly a noble title. With so many nobles (and orders of knighthood) in such a tight space, manners tend to be extreme and ritualized. The ruler of Lashain is called the *regio*.
- 6) **Port Prodigal** - A pirate port on the Sea of Brass, and the sole city in the Ghostwind Islands. Theoretically ruled by a loose and shifting council of the five strongest pirate captains. In practice, the best way not to get knifed is to very publicly be part of a crew willing to avenge you. The larger, simpler approach to the port is guarded by a

mysterious figure that commands the mist and tries to lure people into suicide.
Fantastic place to fence goods though.



FRIENDS

You can't always put power before friends, and no one can put a price on friendship.

Old Friends - Feel free to bring in any friends with 800 cp of their own to spend, plus the item stipend. Companions cannot take drawbacks for more points.

New Friends - You never know who you might meet, and get along with. Recruit anyone you like from this world.

Locke Lamora - A smooth-talking con artist and master of disguise, decent thief & fighter and never more comfortable than when flying by the seat of his pants and frantically improvising a way out of certain doom. A skinny dirty blonde with a particularly unremarkable face, practically a blank canvas that lets him become anyone with the right clothes, accent and mannerisms. Is also a petty selfish bastard, a complete prima donna drama queen, and may or may not be an immortal body-surfing necromancer with amnesia. Mostly we root for him because he's loyal to his friends and generally the lighter shade of black in the room.

Jean Tannen - Locke's best friend, a prosperous merchant's son until his parents were killed in a fire when he was ten. Jean is chubby, with round red cheeks and a greasy mop of black

hair, he is far-sighted and wears spectacles. Jean is soft-spoken, patient and even-tempered, well-read, and partial to romance novels. He is also quite likely the deadliest fighter in Camorr, and a serious contender for the Therin continent. His weapon of choice is a pair of custom hatchets he named the Wicked Sisters.

Calo & Galdo Sanza - Twin brothers, tricksters and pranksters, card sharps and womanizers. Chains called the twins “silver in all trades, and gold in none.” They are fairly skilled thieves, but not outstanding in the way Locke, Jean & Sabetha are. The twins have dark skin and inky black hair, sharp and hooked noses. They also die in the last third of the first book, perhaps you can change their fate?

Bug - The Bastards’ twelve-year-old understudy, sneak-thief, lookout and gopher in the first book. We don’t know a lot about his background, but he’s impulsive and eager to prove himself. Also dies in the first book, if you don’t do something about it.

Sabetha Belacoros - The last Bastard, the Rose of the Marrows. Sabetha prefers a con to most jobs, is drawn to Locke but also annoyed that he appeared and became the default leader of the group. A hard-working and cautious planner, she resents Locke’s sloppy devil-may-care attitude and coasting on natural talent. Part of her caution is almost certainly linked to her lovely red hair, which marks her for death in several parts of the world.



PERKS

Sign of the Times (free) You are fluent in the five most common tongues of the world, literate as well. You are immune to all local diseases. In future Jumps, you retain this immunity and will immediately pick up five common languages, most definitely including the one of your starting location and at least one common trade/diplomacy language.

Glass Garden (-200 cp)

Whether you took lessons from a great swordsmaster or just did a seven year turn with the Blackjackets, you have built up considerable skill in the art of melee combat, such that five to one odds with ordinary soldiers or thugs isn't enough to make you sweat, and ten-to-one may be doable if you're tactical and lucky.

Gray King (-800 cp)

When Luciano began his revenge scheme, he took the identity of the mysterious Gray King, a man said to be invulnerable to all weapons. This is because he paid a thousand gold a day to the Falconer to maintain a mystic protection. You now share in this without the expense, your flesh turning aside blades and shot and arrows.

Of course, you could still be hanged, or drowned, suffocated or choked out. This is where the second part of the Gray King's legend comes in, also arranged through his pet mage. By willing it so, you can instantly strike dead any man or woman with a touch, making wrestling matches with you unwise.

Sobriquet (-100 cp, free Thief)

Like Locke “the Thorn of Camorr” and Sabeta “Rose of the Marrows” you have a name that people associate with your crimes. It could be threatening or silly, but the legend spreads, people will have heard of you. You won’t be doubted if you claim the title, but otherwise, it’s surprisingly hard for people to connect you to your legend.

Thieving Skills (-200 cp, discount Thief)

Won’t go far as a roofman if you can’t actually scale a wall, or a teaser if you can’t draw the Yellowjackets away. You’re skilled in all the essentials of taking away other people’s things, pick-pocketing, lockpicking, safecracking, sneaking, climbing, running, etc.

Liar (-400 cp, discount Thief)

You’re a skilled liar, with no readily visible tells, can disappear inside an assumed character. You can also keep your lies straight, never forgetting what you told someone, and skillfully improvising your way out of any issues.

Shuffle (-600 cp, discount Thief)

What in another world would be called the Kansas City Shuffle is just standard operations for the Gentleman Bastards. A con where the mark is aware they’re being conned, but thinks there’s a way to *win* and walk away rich, and so doubles down. You’re really good at anticipating how people, particularly proud and/or greedy people, think and are a pro at exactly these kinds of ‘I know that you know that I know that you know...’ games. With a little probing of someone’s character, you can easily imagine yourself in their shoes, examine their options, and it’s a short road from there to you calling the shots.

Strength of a Symbol (-100 cp, free Cleric)

Blind Father Chains chained himself to the altar of Perelando, so he could never go further than the temple steps where he exhorts the masses to pity the unfortunate and donate. It’s a well-known story in Camorr, and a lie on at least two counts, Chains isn’t blind, and always had a key to his manacles. But the old man understood the power of a symbol and a story. You know how to make a dramatic act out of anything, that will live in the minds of men long after you’re gone.

Well-Read (-200 cp, discount Cleric)

Chains didn't raise any fools. You have a first-rate education, able to quote noted philosophers and historians. You know which fork to use at a duke's table, and enough to pass for a minor nobleman, college student, banker, craftsman or cleric of the local faiths. You are exceptionally well-read, and this general knowledge will update in future Jumps.

Homemaker (-400 cp, discount Cleric)

It isn't the easiest thing to raise a bunch of traumatized orphans, but you are exceptional at teaching people what they need to know, giving good advice exactly when they need to hear it, general parenting skills. You take a simple building and make it a *home*. This also extends outward, knitting together a community so you can call upon your neighbor in your hour of need if, say, you need someplace a wanted man can hide out for a few days. Those you helped are always happy to help in turn.

Twelve Work in Mysterious Ways (-600 cp, discount Cleric)

I can't tell you if the Therin Gods are real or not, I don't think anyone can. But it sure looks a lot like *someone* is watching out for you from on high, given the number of miraculous escapes you've had would make a priest of Ada Guilla fall over in a fit of religious ecstasy. This doesn't mean you will never suffer hardship or loss, but as long as you keep moving forwards, things seem to work out for you in the end.

Privilege (-100 cp, free Noble)

You're from a storied bloodline, and thus obviously a Big Deal. People tend to assume you're more important or special than them, and afford you additional patience, grace, and consideration as a result.

Courtly Manners (-200 cp, discount Noble)

You are a master of manners, knowing how to seem appealing and kind and polite in all circumstances, with all audiences. You can insult someone so subtly they'll only figure it out hours later, if ever, and know how to flatter with the best of them.

You're also really good at spotting when someone is flattering you or feeding you a line.

Alchemist (-400 cp, discount Noble)

Many wonderful drugs and poisons can be produced using alchemy, as well as Wraithstone. It's considered an intellectually stimulating hobby, suitable for a young noble. It may even bring money and fame if you make significant discoveries.

Spider (-600 cp, discount Noble)

A noble in this world needs to be able to juggle a great many plots and schemes. You can run a whisper campaign like nobody's business, see the duke's favorite heir run out of town on a rail.

Lonely Throne (-100 cp, free Bondsmage)

The Therin Throne tried to control the Bondsmagi, now the Throne stands alone untouched in a desolate wasteland. It is known that if a man kills a Bondsmage, his guild will hunt down and kill that person, and their family, friends and acquaintances. You can choose to start with a similar reputation of Do Not Fuck With.

They Gave Me WINGS!! (-200 cp, discount Bondsmage)

You have a special bond with animals- wait, can I rephrase? You have an affinity for a kind of animal, like the Falconer does with birds by book three. You can mentally command, share the senses of, and even possess hundreds at a time, at a range that covers half a city.

Red Name (-400 cp, discount Bondsmage)

A lot of things a mage can do with a person's true name, in this case, what their parents named them at birth. You can bind someone's magic, paralyze them, or override their will. You are exceptionally gifted at this aspect of magic, and can even make sewn charms so others can exploit true names. Mostly though, you are immune to this and other kinds of true name or essence/sympathetic magic attack, and can carry this magic into future Jumps.

Master Mage (-600 cp, discount Bondsmage)

The magic wielded by the Bondsmagi is left terribly vague to the readers, as it is to anyone who wasn't born with the gift and studied it for decades. The Falconer was able to render Locke invulnerable to any weapon, and we've seen Bondsmagi control the weather, start fires, heal others, purge poisons, communicate telepathically over great distances, share memories, pilot a boat without going on deck or touching the rudder, and cause great pain. We know four hundred Bondsmagi working together were able to create and direct the firestorm that destroyed the Therin capital. They're also great at illusions, which complicates matters, did Patience teleport from a room, or just turn invisible? Well, now you have the answers having earned the five ring tattoos reserved for the strongest and most capable of mages.

Jack Tar (-100 cp, free Pirate)

You know all about sailing, like someone who grew up on a ship. How to set sail, tack and gib, how to anticipate the weather and tie a bedazzling number of knots for any circumstance.

Nose for Profit (-200 cp, discount Pirate)

You can spot vulnerability, whether it's a chance to make a killing in the Lashain textiles trade, or an understaffed fluyt fat with cargo. There's a million and one ways to get rich, just follow your nose!

Windy Weather, Stormy Weather (-400 cp, discount Pirate)

Sailors are superstitious, how could it be otherwise when they live at the mercy of the weather? A storm, or a week with no wind can kill a crew. Well, the weather always seems favorable to your endeavors, placing your enemies or victims downwind, and never sinking you with a storm. When inconvenient to your foes, that's when it rains.

Black Flag (-600 cp, discount Pirate)

The most precious thing a pirate can have is the kind of reputation that makes people strike sails immediately instead of trying to flee or fight. In a world where anyone who kills a Bondsmagi will have all their family and associates rubbed out, where Requin encased an enemy in concrete and let them rot slowly in their own excrement, your fearsome

reputation still stands out, with a little work. Stories of your power and fierceness spread like wildfire, each tale growing in the telling.

Stentorian Tones (-100 cp, free Performer)

The theater has trained your voice well. You can make yourself heard over a crowd, even project a stage whisper to the cheap seats. You know how to convey emotion, pitch your voice and generally have impressive stage presence.

You are also very good at promoting things. People have been trained to understand 'this is theater, this is culture, this is important.'

Glib Verse (-200 cp, discount Performer)

Not everyone can just improvise rhyming couplets, let alone slip in a few double meanings, but you can do tongue-twisters all day and still be ready for flyting. When it comes to quick and clever wordplay, you sit at the top of the heap.

When it comes time to get on stage, you disappear into the character and can easily improvise to any unexpected interruptions.

Backstage Support (-400 cp, discount Performer)

It takes a lot of work to get a production going. You need a venue, costumes, enough actors, places for them to stay, food and sundry expenses, stagehands, finding wealthy patrons and keeping them happy, promotion, ticket sales... It can be a lot to manage, but you are a seasoned professional. You can always find people and they will always be reliable and skilled, the best in the business or a few days of your tutelage from becoming the best. And not just stagehands and actors, but you find the best cooks, coachmen, and so on. Everyone you hire does fantastic work at premium prices, you can easily find investors or patrons who are generous and not too demanding, and have an amazing head for figures, being a fine accountant and manager on top of it all.

Great Writer (-600 cp, discount Performer)

There's a natural temptation, when you land in another world, to rip off the music and storytelling tradition native to you, but unknown in this world. That's fair, but creating your

own work is good too! You have the skills of a Moncraïne in the making, able to not just adapt, and arguably improve upon, your world's stories, but come up with wildly creative new ones. You know how to make an audience roar with laughter or weep for the tragic plight of your characters, and can invent tales that will still be told centuries hence. You can also slip in some political commentary or satire that won't be obvious enough for anyone to react without looking like a ham-handed tyrant, not always an easy line to walk.



ITEMS

Have +200 cp to spend just in this section.

Portrait (free)

A painting of yourself, worthy of one of the great masters. Might be a fun memento, or conversation piece.

Horse (-100 cp)

A good, solid horse. Never needs much in the way of care. You can choose if it's Gentled.

Letter of Introduction (-100 cp)

Simply how things are done here, I'm afraid. You have documents from several respectable figures, minor nobility, bankers, and clergymen, attesting to your identity, your good credit and character. All fakes, of course, but they'll stand up to all but the very closest scrutiny.

Rapier (-100 cp)

A good sword, never needs cleaning or maintenance, replaced in two days if lost or stolen.

Stiletto (-100 cp)

A hidden dagger not even the most careful search will turn up.

Wardrobe (-100 cp)

Something like the Bastards' starting wardrobe, a truly vast assemblage of clothing and costumes to fit any social class or circumstance, whether you want to be a beggar, a guard, or a noble at a masquerade.

Estate (-200 cp)

A lavish fortified villa in the countryside, or the city of your choosing. No worries about rent or (someday) utilities, blends in with the local aesthetic with all the amenities that can be provided. With a discreet switch hidden under a coat hook to allow more 'out of time' conveniences as desired. The main selling feature though, is this is a true place of refuge where you can be safe, your enemies will never find nor attack you here, nor while leaving for about twenty to thirty minutes.

Wraithstone (-200 cp)

A chalky white rock that burns, rather like coal but you won't want to use it the same way. Any beast that inhales the fumes from burning Wraithstone is Gentled, rendering them permanently mindless. A Gentled horse will move when prodded, but never run, never spook, making them ideal for cities. Criminals were once Gentled, but the practice was considered too cruel.

Gain a stockpile equal to what Luciano had, enough to gas thousands of people, that is replenished at the start of each new Jump.

Dreamsteel (-200 cp)

A metal prized by the Bondsmagi of Karthain. Dreamsteel is like normal steel, but responds to magic, flowing like water or sand into whatever shape is desired. The Bondsmagi keep a huge platform of the stuff in their big meeting room, that can model cities or display a

person, and the Falconer was able to fashion a new hand and tongue from the stuff. You get twenty ingots, and that same amount each month.

Ship (-300 cp)

The taste of freedom! She's a little advanced for the time period, but that just means she handles rough weather better, can sail further, farther, and closer to the wind. Has an NPC crew and never seems to need careening or yard time.

Riches (-400 cp)

The Bastards, at the start of the series, have a fortune of 40,000 white-gold crowns. Given some notes and author commentary, that probably translates out to about \$200 million. Which would barely (if even?) qualify someone as the 1% in 2026 Earth, though considering inflation from when it was written... We'll round up to \$300 million, you start with an equivalent fortune in local currency in each new world.



"Gods. What the hell happened to you?"

"Remember how she joked about twenty armed men being in the next room?"

There were twenty armed men in the next room."

DRAWBACKS

Fish Out of Water (+100 cp)

Forswear, at least for this Jump, the benefits of **Sign of the Times** and any similar perk for automatically knowing the local language(s) and protection from disease. Everyone else is brought into the world without these advantages and they mostly manage fine. You pays your money and you takes your chances.

Hello.... You. (+100 cp)

You are truly terrible with names. If you don't interact with someone near-daily for a couple months, expect to find nothing when you try to recall what they're called.

To the Bitter End (+100 cp)

You may take this drawback up to four times, and for each, add a fresh decade to your stay.

With a Midnighter (+100 cp)

You have a flamboyant personality that leads you to show off, overcomplicate things, and otherwise create problems for yourself. Like leaving a calling card at an otherwise perfect heist.

Ginger (+200 cp)

You are a natural redhead. Unfortunately, the fanatical Jeremite Redeemers consider such people prime candidates for their gruesome human sacrifices. Well, none of the starting locations are in Jeremite territory, but unfortunately, the whole world knows you can sell a ginger to the Jeremites for a life-altering fortune, making it really hard to trust people. It's also widely believed out in the sticks that the blood of a redheaded woman (which we'll extend to you irrespective of sex) is a folk remedy for all kinds of ailments.

Of course, hats and scarves, wigs and hair dye all exist in this world, but all the people who might sell you out know that too.

Wanted (+200 cp)

Your sketch is known in multiple cities, from the wanted posters. There is a reward for your capture and some of the more vigilant city guards may well be looking for you.

A Prize Worth Dying For (+300 cp)

You're an adrenaline junkie who is never happy unless you're risking it all, lives on the line, double or nothing!

Poor Victim Selection (+300 cp)

You have robbed, or there is strong evidence to suggest you robbed, an extremely powerful noble and/or crime lord. Like Capa Raza, they will happily dedicate the rest of their life to revenge, and they don't acknowledge any borders in doing so.

Robbed (+400 cp)

Alas, it seems you have been relieved of your otherworldly possessions and cannot so much as access your vaunted safehouse, or 'Warehouse.' However will you get by, with only your own resources?

Incapable (+600 cp)

Your perks and powers from previous Jumps are, for the moment, lost to you. You must survive with your wits, your skills and experiences, and your purchases above.



END

What now? Settle down, go home, or on to the next Jump in your chain?

Notes:

Yes there are two reputation perks. No it's not a mistake or (just) me being lazy. Lonely Throne is a reputation that leads people to not pick a fight with you. Black Flag is one that

has people falling over themselves to keep you happy and not making trouble. That said, if you take both, expect then to synergize really well.

Gods:

Perelando - patron of beggars & lepers, Lord of Mercy, God of the Overlooked.

Aza Guilla - goddess of death, black-veiled. Her priests court near-death experiences.

Iono - Lord of Grasping Waters, sea god. Stormbringer. Women and cats ward off his wrath.

Venaportha - Two-faced goddess of luck.

Azri - Lord of the sky, nature, and war, weaver of weather.

Sendovani - goddess of secrets, mystery, alchemy and forbidden knowledge.

Nara - the Plaguemistress, who keeps mankind humbled before the gods.

Preva - the Red Madness, goddess of love and art, inspiration, dreams and insanity.

Gandolo - Wealthfather, fat and sly god of commerce and money.

Morgante - City-Father, Lawgiver. God of justice, patron of judges and city guards.

Callo Androno - God of travelers, lore and language. Shabby itinerant scholar priests.

Dama Elliza - Mother of Rains, goddess of agriculture.

The Crooked Warden - the Nameless Thirteenth, god of thieves, to whom the Bastards are clergy. Considered heretical by the official cults, especially Morgante's. Two rules guide the disciples of the Warden, *thieves prosper & the rich remember* (that no one is above justice/retribution) the latter being what set Chains and the Bastards against the Secret Peace.

Summary:

I. *The Lies of Locke Lamora* -

The story starts in the 77th year of Sendovani (the Therin calendar runs through twelve years dedicated to each god) when a five or six year old Locke is orphaned by a plague (Black Whisper, fatal only to teens and up) in the Camorr slum of Catchfire. He is taken in by

the Thiefmaker of Shade's Hill, who almost has him killed when he robs a noble, but instead sells him to Father Chains, a priest of Perelando and the leader of the Gentleman Bastards.

From then on, the story is mostly told in the present, twenty years later, with frequent flashbacks to Locke and the others' training when something needs explaining.

In the present, the Gentleman Bastards are con artists fleecing the nobility, pretending to be burglars, pretending to be priests. Well, they are also priests, each trained in two priesthoods enough to teach the others how to pull off infiltrating or impersonating a priest of each god. They are also actual clergy to the Crooked Warden, forgotten god of thieves who is considered a heresy by every legitimate cult, but whose clerical services are used by the Right People of Camorr.

Locke is the master of disguise, the man so generic he could become anyone. Jean Tannen is a bookworm schemer and legbreaker, the Sanza twins Callo & Galdo are the jacks of all trades, and Bug is their own apprentice and gopher. There is a sixth Bastard, Sabetha, who is doing an independent thing a thousand miles away in the Marrows after her and Locke had another of their famous fights.

The gang are preparing, after months of surveillance, to enact a huge scam on Don Lorenzo Salvara. First, the nobleman saved Locke from muggers (the rest of the group), then Locke introduces himself as Lukas Fehrweight, a ~~Nigerian Prince~~ Emberlain Merchant who needs a large sum of money to move his stock of the world-famous Austerlin brandy out of the city before political instability makes it impossible, and investors could be the only source of the brandy for a few years. Then, Locke changes up disguises and comes back in the evening as a Midnighter, Duke Nicovante's secret police who answer only to his anonymous spy master the Spider, to tell them 'Lukas' is really the Thorn of Camorr, the daring thief who has ripped off so many nobles before. He orders them, on behalf of the Duke and the Spider, to go through with the deal so they can catch the Thorn in the act, assuring the Salvaras that they'll have their money back in no time and should something somehow go wrong the duke will take care of them. Naturally they need to not mention this to anyone.

This is because Locke loves overcomplicating plans.

As the Bastards toast anticipated success, Bug shares rumors about the Grey King, a rival crimelord challenging Capa Barsavi, whom they say is invulnerable and can kill instantly with a touch. The other Bastards are skeptical. Technically the magic to pull it off exists, but only in the sole mage's guild and the Bondsmagi famously charge a thousand white-gold crowns a day, only they and the duke could hire a mage for the month or so the Gray King has been operating, and then only if they sank their entire fortunes into it.

Locke goes for his weekly check-in and paying the cut to Barsavi, who makes his lair in a long-beached hulk of a ship, and whose bodyguards, twin women, fight sharks for fun. Barsavi says Locke is his most trusted *garrista* (gang leader) because he's the only one honest or brave enough to come up short and say "it's been a bad week, boss." For this reason, he asks Locke to marry his daughter Nazca. Well "asks."

As Locke is walking home, his mind gets fuzzy, like he's drunk and he takes a detour, meeting the infamous Gray King who does have a hired mage, the Falconer. The Gray King says he has an appointment with Capa Barsavi in three days which he will be unable to make, so Locke the master of disguise will go in his stead. Or they could kill him horribly and then all his friends. For what it's worth, the Gray King says the Falconer will meet up with him beforehand and apply the same protection spells.

Locke immediately tells his friends, of course, and while they're brainstorming a way out, word reaches them that someone sent Capa Barsavi his beloved daughter's corpse in a barrel of horse urine, along with a note requesting a meeting in three days.

To avoid being part of Barsavi's squad, Locke takes an alchemical potion to make himself really sick, so when Barsavi's sons come they have to insist he stay behind. Then he takes the antidote and changes into his disguise, he and Jean encountering an adulterer climbing down a wall they climb up. The Falconer is a no-show.

Locke still meets with Barsavi and his garristas, plus an old man with debts and a family hired to test the 'anyone who touches the Gray King dies' part of his legend. When the man doesn't die, they swarm Locke and stuff him into a second barrel of horse piss which they drop down a deep hole and into the bay. Locke is just barely rescued by Jean and Bug.

Returning to their lair, the Bastards find their home ransacked, their vast fortune missing, and the corpses of the Sanza twins. An assassin appears with a crossbow and a magic charm to paralyze Jean (his true name, stitched into a dead man's hand) but apparently didn't reckon on Locke surviving and is overpowered and killed, but not before shooting Bug in the throat. The gang is now down to two men.

While Jean finds them a new hideout to lay low in, Locke dresses as a beggar to scout the streets. He joins a general flood of humanity to Barsavi's lair, where the Gray King makes a dramatic entrance and declares Barsavi's bodyguards to be his sisters. Said bodyguards swiftly dispatch first Barsavi's sons, then the Capa himself. The Gray King then declares himself the new master of Camorr's underworld, Capa Raza (Boss Vengeance). Maybe forty percent of the *garristas* bend a knee on the spot, the Gray King gives the fence-sitters three days to consider their options (but quietly starts the purges that same night).

Looking for Jean, Locke passes out from his injuries/exhaustion and spends two of those three days unconscious, fortunately Jean found him and got him to a back-alley sawbones.

After the robbery and the physik, they have only ten crowns to their name, which Locke immediately pledges to the cause of avenging their friends. After a couple abortive attempts to steal sufficiently fine clothing, Locke resumes the identity of Lukas Fehrwight and asks the Salvaras for money *now*, but they put him off, suggesting they give him the money tomorrow when he attends the duke's Day of Changes (new year's) party as their guest.

While this is going down, Jean revives an old disguise as a priest of the goddess of death to lurk at the docks. He learns of a quarantined plague ship, the *Satisfaction*, that is getting too-frequent shipments of supplies, investigating further he finds the boats going out are loaded down with gold coins. He also finds a warehouse full of bodies who didn't embrace the new order, and kills the Gray King's two sisters when they accost him, but is wounded and generally unavailable for the finale.

At the Day of Changes in Raven's Reach - the black elderglass tower owned by Duke Nicovante, the lord of Camorr - Locke barely bluffs his way through a confrontation with the gentleman whose clothes he stole, and exchanges tersely polite words with the Gray King, each man recognizing the other and unable to act in front of a crowd. Dona Salvara

leads Locke to a pirate room and introduces him to the elderly Dona Vorchenza, before excusing herself to get wine. The old lady then immediately stabs Locke with her knitting needle. Dona Vorchenza, it turns out, is the Spider. The Salvaras reached out to her asking her to contact the Spider for reassurances about the scam. The needle, naturally, was poisoned and Locke has very little time to earn the antidote by telling her where all his stolen money is, who his accomplices are and-

Locke punches out this little old lady, before searching her for the antidote and gulping down the first phial of mystery liquid he sees, then making a daring escape climbing down the outside of the tower and jumping into an elevator.

Locke returns to Jean at the doctor's, but the Falconer catches up with them, having been sent by the Gray King to tie up loose ends. The Falconer controls Jean to fight Locke with his true name, but decides it would be funnier to make Locke kill Jean. However, Locke isn't his real name, and he bluffs his way close enough to take down the mage, cutting off several fingers to remove the threat of his magic. Locke threatens to continue cutting bits off until he learns everything he wants to know. When the Falconer brings up his guild's famous policy on killing Bondsmagi, Locke replies the rules are fuzzier for maiming and torture.

The Gray King's real name is Luciano Anatolius, minor nobility once. Twenty-two years ago, Capa Barsavi had his parents and youngest siblings killed over a breach of the Secret Peace. He and his sisters dedicated themselves to revenge, on both Barsavi and the ruling nobility of Camorr. Most of it was spent amassing the ungodly fortune it took to hire a Bondsmage for the job, and he still came up a bit short, so decided to rob Locke and the Bastards and get some use from them in the process.

Phase two of the plan is a decapitation strike on the entire noble class, today at the Day of Changes. Special statues containing alchemical incendiary charges and wraithstone, a chalky white rock that burns like coal, but the fumes lobotomize any animal that breathes them in. Mostly it's used to make unmanageable horses extremely biddable, but it'll do for turning people into zombies or vegetables. The Falconer was able to mind-trick them past most security. Locke cuts out the Falconer's tongue and cauterizes it.

Returning to the party, Locke surrenders himself to the Spider's custody to explain and manages to probe her memory of being controlled and convince her to dump the statues in the canal. He claims all the money he stole from nobles over the years is in some manure barges. He also tells the Spider that the *Satisfaction* is carrying a particularly terrible plague as a backup attack and must be sunk immediately. This he does as a grave offering to the dead Bastards, probably the largest in the history of their faith.

The Spider gives Locke a head start, in gratitude, and a firm suggestion leaving town would be good for his health. Instead, he sends the Gray King the body of the Falconer's familiar with a note, "We're coming." Locke confronts the Gray King at Capa Barsavi's old lair, they duel and Locke gets his ass kicked until he remembers his fundamentals, looks over the man's shoulder and shouts "Get him, Jean!" before stabbing when he turns. So passes Luciano Anatolius, Capa of Camorr for three days. Jean actually stumbles in not long after and hauls Locke away to safety.

Two epilogues. In the longer one, Dona Vorcehnza realizes how Locke suckered her, not that she's calling off the search until all the manure barges are thoroughly checked. She orders her men to spread the rumor that the Thorn of Camorr never existed, and proclaims Don and Dona Salvara her successors. At least, they were the only nobles scammed by Locke to bother trying to reach out and confirm if they'd spoken to a real Midnighter, and she figures in a couple years she can train them into solid spymasters. In the short one, as they sail away from home Jean asks if Locke isn't Locke's real name, what is? Locke whispers five syllables we don't get to see, but whatever it is surprises Jean.

II. Red Seas Under Red Skies-

Two years later we open to Locke and Jean gambling in the world's most infamous casino, the Sinspire of Tal Verrar, playing a couple's game and losing, which is a shame since it's the kind of game where the loser has to drink a shot of strong liquor. Of course, it's a hustle. They've been tainting the cards they handle with a drug that one of the other players Izmila Corvaleur, consumes as she snacks on chocolate covered cherries. Then they just arrange one loss and she has to take a drink and passes out, handing them the victory. Though

really, it was a scheme to impress the boss of the Sinspire, Requin, so he'll admit them to the higher levels.

As they leave, various strangers start calling them, by their real names and not the identities they laboriously built up. They realize pretty quickly it's the Bondsmagi messing with them. A chorus of various people say they need to answer for the Falconer, then blink and go about their day. Jean suggests, having been mind-controlled to attack Locke once before, that he's a liability and should leave for Locke's safety, but Locke refuses to even entertain the idea.

A flashback shows that pretty much as soon as they got clear of Camorr, Locke crawled inside a bottle to cope with the loss of half the Gentleman Bastards. Jean lets him stew for two weeks before giving him a reality check, and while still blackout drunk Locke sets out to prove he's still a master thief by lifting, in no particular order: A pewter mug, two bottles of wine, four purses, two loaves of bread, a pair of earrings, a bolt of silk, a broach and the necklace of the governor's mistress, from her neck while she was sleeping next to the governor. Jean is almost as relieved to have Locke back as he is annoyed that they have to get a fast horse out of town.

In the present, the two Bastards are summoned to the office of the Archon, commander of Tal Verrar's navy, Maxilan Stragos, who poisons both of them and offers an antidote that will put off their deaths for two months if they help him in his struggles with Requin the crimelord, and the Priori, a wealthy council that nominally rules Tal Verrar.

Jean and Locke try looking up every alchemist on the island for a more permanent antidote, no luck. Jean also visits the woman who designed the Sinspire's vault, and she laughs in his face at the idea of crossing Requin in any way. Back at the Sinspire, Requin's girlfriend/enforcer Selendri escorts Locke to a meeting with the headman who wants to know what Stragos wanted. Locked tells him more or less the truth, that he's been poisoned and blackmailed for antidote, but says Stragos wants him to rob Requin.

Leaving, Locke and Jean are nearly killed by an old beggar woman with a poisoned stiletto, but are saved by Stragos' right hand woman, Merrain, who takes them to her boss. Now that his fish see they aren't getting off his hook, Stragos waxes philosophical about the

power of technology and how much he dislikes magic. He also notes that when he first became Archon, he had all the resources and funds he could ask for and the love of the populace. But the long years of peace have seen the naval budget wither. Anyways, he's giving Jean and Locke a ship and he wants them to raise the black flag and a little hell, creating a pirate menace that will justify his power grab.

He assigns a grumpy old sailor, Caldris, to teach them how to sail and for three weeks they go out in a little sailboat, rain or shine. Caldris will really be in charge while Locke shall be pretending to be captain, and Jean his first mate. There is an incident in a tavern, a swaggering captain buys everyone a round of drinks, Locke and Jean pass theirs to a girl at the next table, preferring their wine to the ale, and the girl swiftly dies of poison.

Pursuant to their original heist plan, Locke commissions four fancy chairs as a rush job and gifts them to Requin. This will be important later.

The crew of their ship come from prison, and they're a sorry lot. Locke flubs his one job of getting a cat, an essential good luck charm, so the trio bluff by pretending there's a ship's cat, she's just really shy around new people, hoping to get one at port. However, there's a big storm, Caldris gets washed overboard and without him whispering in Locke's ear, it quickly becomes apparent that Locke is no shiphandler. Immediately after, there's a mutiny and Locke and Jean are cast off in a rowboat with no food or water.

They are rescued by the *Poison Orchid*, a pirate ship crewed mostly by women. The two are taken on as provisional deckhands and told to impress if they want to be real crew.

The first ship they overtake is full of Jeremite Redeemers, fanatic warrior-priests. The pirates decide to take it anyway. Locke is astonished as for once Jean isn't fighting by his side and watching his back, but is sticking close to the first mate, a small but athletic woman named Ezri. Luckily, Locke winds up dueling the captain, who loses his balance and more-or-less falls onto Locke's sword. Still, it wins him a lot of renown with the pirates and while Jean is in Ezri's cabin seeing to her wounds and... other needs, Captain Drakasha grills Locke who decides to give her most of the truth of what he's doing, and that he's being blackmailed via slow poison.

The ship puts in at Port Prodigal to sell their loot and discuss Locke's plan for some pirate raids with the Council of Captains. Drakasha opts to go in past the suicide ghost as the safest option for the entire ship, the old hands warn the newcomers and they manage to not lose anyone. Locke is able to sell the captains on his plan, more or less, one man, Rodanov, votes for it but later passes an alchemic thermite bomb to his spy aboard the *Orchid*, a man named Utgar. Ezri is annoyed that she had to learn about the poison in the council meeting and invites Jean to stay with the crew once he clears that issue up. Jean is smitten enough to ask Locke about inviting her to join them, once they get over the poison and complete the Sinspire heist.

The *Orchid* takes them back to Tal Verrar for their temporary antidote, having been away for seven weeks. They tell Stragos they got some pirates on board for a campaign of terror, but did have to tell them a bit of how and why, which doesn't thrill him but he figures he can make it work. He calls in his hooded staff alchemist to give them another two months of life, but pointedly does *not* let the two thieves engage the man in conversation or see his face. Requin they tell they discovered a clockwork prodigy in Port Prodigal and ask for a letter to try and tempt him to move to Tal Verrar.

Not long after departing, the *Orchid* is set upon by Rodanov's ship. Utgar tries to set fire to the ship with his thermite bomb, Ezri manages to catch him and throw the thing onto Rodanov's ship, ending the battle, but is so grievously burned that Jean is forced to mercy-kill her.

Returning to Tal Verrar with blood in their eyes, Locke and Jean lead the pirate crew into Stagos' estate via the secret passage they were let in a couple days ago. Stragos they quickly capture and lash to the prow of the *Orchid* as a living figurehead. His alchemist dies resisting capture, leaving no notes and exactly one dose of the permanent antidote. A consultation with a local alchemist reveals they can't analyze it for ingredients well enough to reverse engineer, and taking half a dose won't work either, one will be saved and the other... not.

Before they can grapple with that, they decide to settle all outstanding accounts and complete the Sinspire heist they spent two years planning and preparing for. They're in a

hurry, so they get into Requin's office on a pretense, smash the chairs Locke gifted him to reveal a handful of weapons and tools, then subdue Selendri. Having primed her and Requin to expect an attack on the vault, they instead quickly and efficiently cut ten priceless paintings down, roll them up, and rappel down the tower.

When he gets back to his office, Requin can only marvel at the skill and daring of the thieves, before reassuring Selendri that the paintings he displays are all fakes, duplicates of the real ones in his vault, and orders an extra set of them brought up.

The Bastards' buyer immediately clocks the paintings as fakes, but since they're really good fakes he offers 8% of the agreed-upon fee. Locke and Jean see little choice but to take it, and a fast ship off this island. As they sail away, Jean and Locke get into an argument over the antidote, each arguing why the other needs/deserves it more until Locke admits the argument is pointless anyways, because he spiked Jean's wineglass with the stuff an hour ago. So we leave the Gentleman Bastards, with Locke Lamora weeks from death.

III. ***The Republic of Thieves*** -

Locke is running out of time on the whole 'slow poison' thing and Jean has taken him to every back-alley doctor and reputable physician, even kidnapping one, to no avail. Suddenly, an older woman appears in their chambers, introducing herself as Achadema (Archmage) Patience, of the Bondsmagi, and the mother of the Falconer. She says she can save Locke from the poison, but there's something she wants from them. Not vengeance, she hastens to add, she wants them to rig an election.

While in Karthain every truly important decision is made by the Bondsmage Guild, they have a *konseil* for day-to-day matters, one representative for each of nineteen districts, all members stand for election every five years (though there are only five thousand qualified voters in a city of seventy thousand). The Bondsmagi enjoy the puppet theater and use the elections as a proxy conflict to settle their own internal disputes. Consequently, they monitor extremely carefully for any magical tampering, but mundane ballot-box stuffing and chicanery is fine.

This election, the missing Bastard, Sabetha Belacoros, the Rose of the Marrows, has been brought in as a special consultant for the Black Iris, the progressive middle-class party who unknowingly champion the mage-supremacist faction in the Guild. So Patience is bringing in Jean and Locke to steal the election for her conservative old-money Deep Roots party, and her faction of magic-separatists.

All the books have heavily featured flashbacks to Locke and the Bastards growing up and training under Father Chains, but this one is slightly more than half-flashback. Mostly to one summer when puberty bit the gang particularly hard and Chains banished them to a theater troupe in Espara until they can work together as a unit without all the complaining and backchat he's had to endure lately. The Bastards actually manage a half-decent production of *the Republic of Thieves*, a Shakespearean tragedy in which a Therin prince infiltrates the underworld beneath his father's glittering throne and falls in love with the bandit queen. In and around getting the director out of prison, arguing, Locke's first experiences in almost ending up with Sabetha before jamming his foot firmly in his mouth (a recurring pattern for decades), fending off the handsy producer, theft, blackmail and covering up the murder of the handsy producer when he tried to force himself on one of the stagehands. It was a great summer.

In the present, Patience extracts the poison on the voyage to Karthain, it's an ugly experience. In Karthain, she introduces them to the Deep Roots election manager, Nikoros, and explains everyone involved in the election has been mind-whammied to not question where the special consultants came from, nor their merest whim, and that this effect will expire the minute the votes are counted.

Almost as fast as they can get some new threads, an old woman bumps into Locke and accuses him of stealing her coinpurse. He's able to fast-talk the guards while reverse-pickpocketing the purse back into the woman's coat, which just gives Sabetha a chance to plant a note on *him*, inviting them to catch up in a ritzy tavern. Sabetha grieves with them for the loss of the Sanza twins, and Bug whom she never met, but takes this as further validation of her belief that thieves aren't meant to lay down roots. She sends out Jean and her and Locke resume making out, but when he kisses a particular spot on her

neck, Locke is drugged and quickly passes out, waking in the luxurious cabin of a yacht hired to take him and Jean on a scenic tour and return the day after the election. The two stage a daring escape, secreting a piece of glass they use to cut loose a rowboat and dive in during a storm.

Back in Karthain, the bribes and blackmail and maneuvering comes thick and fast, but Sabetha and Locke still find time to renew their tempestuous romance, even while struggling for any scrap of advantage.

Finally the big day, the three Bastards watch from the nosebleed seats as the votes are counted. The Black Iris wins out by one seat, but per Locke's plan one of the reps immediately stands up and renounces his party allegiance, claiming to be an independent tie-breaker. There's some kind of explosion at the Bondsmage Guild HQ, and the thieves all slip away in the chaos, Locke and Sabetha finally consummating their love.

When Locke wakes, though, Sabetha is gone and Patience is sitting in the corner with a portrait. She says they're not getting paid, and Sabetha is probably never coming back. The elections, she says, were a necessary pressure relief valve for the Bondsmagi's internal politics, but it was also set up to be a distraction when really needed. She believes the Eldren, who left their broken indestructible elderglass structures everywhere, were a race of archmages and attracted *something* that destroyed them. That to survive, magic must be small and subtle and hidden. So, they carried out in ten minutes the violent purge of the mage supremacist faction. Tomorrow, the world will wake to find the Bondsmage Guild has vanished from the world, and in a surprisingly short amount of time they will have faded into legend. She suggests they leave town before the world remembers Karthain has no walls and no standing army.

She also claims, and she told Sabetha as much, that Locke is actually Pel Acanthus, also known as Lamor (Shadow) Acanthus, a renegade Bondsmage who went off the deep end doing forbidden research into necromancy after a personal loss. She says Acanthus created the plague that made so many orphans in Camorr, and managed to transfer his soul to a kid but joke's on him, the new body doesn't have the Gift and his memories got scrambled. She

shows the portrait she had, Acanthus and wife, whom Locke recognizes as his parents and also looking extraordinarily like him and Sabetha.

Patience says Locke will never be able to prove one way or another that he is or isn't Pel Acanthus, the evidence looks pretty squarely even, and if the wondering drives him mad? *Good*. She's still mad at him for crippling her baby boy, and might have undersold her desire for revenge. But now, goodbye forever.

In the epilogue, Patience goes to say a final farewell to the Falconer, her vicious, misguided, blind and crippled, near-comatose son. She offers telepathically to kill him, if he'd like. If not, she has arranged for a caretaker for the rest of his days, though the Bondsmagi will be gone. However, the Falconer manages to forge a new hand from malleable dreamsteel, and having mastered the Silent Spell feat during his years of incapacity is able to warg into a huge flock of crows and kill his mother in a most Hitchcockian manner, before vowing his revenge on Locke and Jean.





