

Focus on Freeport #11: Deus Ex Machina

A d20 System Freeport Adventure in three parts for four 5th to 6th level characters.

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Part One: Nothing is Sacred

In which the adventurers become acquainted with the rooftops of Drac's End.

Clerics around the city have been losing their holy symbols for the last few weeks, and various relics and worship implements have gone missing from some temples. A group of rogues and clerics in service to the Trickster God have been pulling the majority of the heists. They have their systems and escape routes completely mapped out. Their next targets are the PCs.

In the jumble of small buildings on the western arm of Drac's End near the merchant district, worshipers of the Trickster God steal the party's cleric's holy symbol. The worshipers are Resseka (a female human cleric/rogue), Harcourt (a male halfling rogue), Claret (a female gnome cleric), and Chemb (a male human cleric/fighter/rogue).

If the party has no cleric, then poor Brother Egil happens to be along with the party, and the Trickster clerics steal his symbol while he's with the party. The thieves then lead the party on a merry, somewhat dangerous, chase across the rooftops. The chase leads into the temple district, where the thieves disappear down the belfry of an abandoned temple of the God of Retribution.

Encounter 1: The Heist (EL 5)

At some point, lead the PCs into the western arm of Drac's End, near the Merchant and Temple Districts. They might be returning at the end of an adventure from some important person's house to spend fresh reward money, or going to visit someone in the government, or they might just be in the area on an unrelated investigation.

The Trickster clerics have set up an elaborate con to pick up one last holy symbol. When the PCs enter the rogues' zone of attack, Resseka, acting as a prostitute (having changed her features and clothing with *change self*), begins soliciting. She targets the person farthest from the cleric in an attempt to draw attention away from the real target.

Once the PCs talk to her, she drags negotiations out, and tries to draw her mark away from the party if possible. PCs must make a Sense Motive check opposed by Resseka's Bluff to sense that she might be more than a simple businesswoman.

Harcourt hides in the shadows of the eaves of the building across the street from Resseka, above and behind the PCs if the "prostitute" does her job well. Harcourt waits for the party's cleric to move into a position where he can sneak down and take his or her holy symbol. If after several rounds the cleric does not give him an opening, Harcourt climbs down quietly and gets the cleric's attention. He tries to pull the cleric aside and talk "confidentially." He tells the cleric that this woman spends a lot of time here and that she lost one of her children at sea more than year ago, and has no money. He tries to watch out for her, but sometimes she goes a little too far with her propositions. During

the course of the conversation, he attempts a Pick Pocket roll to steal the holy symbol from under the cleric's nose.

If trickery doesn't seem to be helping, Harcourt just makes a blatant grab for the symbol. Once he has it, he makes a double move with his *slippers of spider climbing* up the side of the nearest building and onto the rooftops. If the struggle to steal the holy symbol took him away from his building of choice, he heads back there immediately to begin the chase.

Chemb and Claret watch the theft in secret from a block away (about 60 feet). Claret has a readied action to cast *sanctuary* on Harcourt (Will save DC 14) as soon as he has the holy symbol in his hand. She then uses her *silence* scroll on any spellcaster who seems aggressive.

The Back-up Plan

If Harcourt completely fails his Pick Pocket attempt, or doesn't get enough of a head start, Claret and Chemb charge down the street toward the PCs, shouting "Stop, thief!" to try to buy him some time.

Claret acts the part of a robbed cleric, and tries to engage the party in conversation for a couple of rounds shouting about the loss of her holy symbol. Again, PCs must make a Sense Motive check opposed by her Bluff check to get an idea that Claret might be in on the scam.

Meanwhile, Chemb attempts to climb the building to chase Harcourt down. Actually, he just gets in the PCs' way, climbing slowly, and falling on anyone who comes up behind him. Claret and Chemb continue to act aggrieved for as long as the con is useful to them.

In the confusion, Resseka slips away from her mark and climbs a nearby rooftop where she has a light crossbow and thieves' tools stashed. She drops her *change self* spell, drinking her *potion of cat's grace* if she has time. Her role for the rest of the encounter is to act as a troubleshooter to clear Harcourt's exit. She tries to stay one rooftop away from the action, above it if possible, firing her crossbow on anyone with abilities, spells, or magic items that allow him or her to catch up with Harcourt. If Harcourt gets in trouble, Resseka is also his backup. He tosses the holy symbol to her and she continues running with it.

If Harcourt Gets Away Clean

If Harcourt makes his Move Silently and Pick Pocket checks so well that no one notices him take the holy symbol, give the party another Spot check a few seconds later. Those who beat DC 10 notice a halfling running straight up the side of a nearby building. Those who beat DC 15 notice that he is holding a holy symbol in his right hand that looks like the party's cleric's symbol.

Encounter 2: The Chase (EL 6) Building 4

The Trickster clerics know that stealing holy symbols is a touchy proposition, and that any cleric with friends will give chase. So, through cleverness and applied serendipity, they have arranged a set of rooftop tricks and traps to discourage pursuers. They all know every step of the way. Harcourt is probably the only one nimble enough to run it while being chased, but all of them know the tricks and traps, and none of the accomplices will fall for them.

Most of the buildings have pitched roofs. Any pursuer who chases Harcourt on foot across a normal pitched roof must make a Balance check (DC 10) each round. Characters who succeed can move at half speed for 1 round. (Movement in conjunction with Balance checks can be tricky, so DMs might want to re-read the skill description to make sure the encounter comes off as intended).

Note that a Balance check that fails by 5 or more means the character falls. Characters who fall must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 15) or slide off the edge of the roof. Characters who fall off a building take 1d6 points of damage for each story they fall.

If a PC somehow seems to be gaining on Harcourt, he drinks his *potion of expeditious retreat*.

Building 1

This building is where Harcourt starts. It is a two-story rough stone building with a drainpipe up the side. It is an easy climb (DC 10). The roof is pitched, and requires a Balance check (DC 10) each round to move across. A thin plank, about 4 inches wide connects this building with the next one. Crossing it requires a Balance check (DC 15), although Harcourt's *slippers of spider climbing* allow him to cross without a roll. If he has a round to spare, Harcourt uses a move-equivalent action to kick the board off the roof once he's across, forcing pursuers to jump the 10-foot chasm between buildings (PHB, p.70).

Building 2

This is a two-story stone building (Climb check DC 15) with a gentle slope to the roof (no Balance check required). The building is old and its roof is prone to collapse. Shaded areas on the map collapse under more than 50 pounds of weight. PCs on the roof who make a successful Knowledge (architecture) check (DC 10) can identify the weak areas and avoid them. A tightrope leads from the crest of this roof to the roof of the next building. Crossing this tightrope requires a successful Balance check (DC 25).

Building 3

This is a smooth, thin, three-story building with a flat roof (Climb check DC 20). A pigeon coop sits atop this roof, and as Harcourt runs by, he bangs on the walls of the coop to rouse the pigeons, and then flings the door open as he passes by. This creates two potential problems for pursuers. The explosion of pigeons when the door opens provides three-quarters concealment for Harcourt for one round. Second, pursuers must spend a move-equivalent action closing the door to the coop to continue the chase.

Building 4

This is a two-story wooden structure with a steeply pitched roof. Harcourt can jump and land on this building without fear of falling thanks to his slippers (although he does need to make a DC 15 Jump check to take no damage from jumping down 10 feet). Anyone attempting to follow him must make a Balance check (DC 20) to stay up after a leap onto this building.

Building 5

This is a bi-level building with an open courtyard in the lower area. Pursuers who don't follow Harcourt closely must make a Reflex save (DC 15) or fall 20 feet into the courtyard below. Pursuers who are moving quickly do not get a Reflex save, and just fall.

Building 6

This is a one-story stone building that adjoins the wall between Drac's End and the Temple District. The clerics of the Trickster God cut a door through the wall from this rooftop to one on the other side, allowing them to slip between the districts unnoticed. A fifth accomplice (a 1st-level human rogue) waits here with the door open wide enough for Harcourt to slip through. He then slams it shut and braces it. Pursuers must climb the wall, use magic, or simply bash through. The solid wood door is thick and barred, hardness 5, hp 20, Strength check DC 23 required to force it open.

Through the Wall

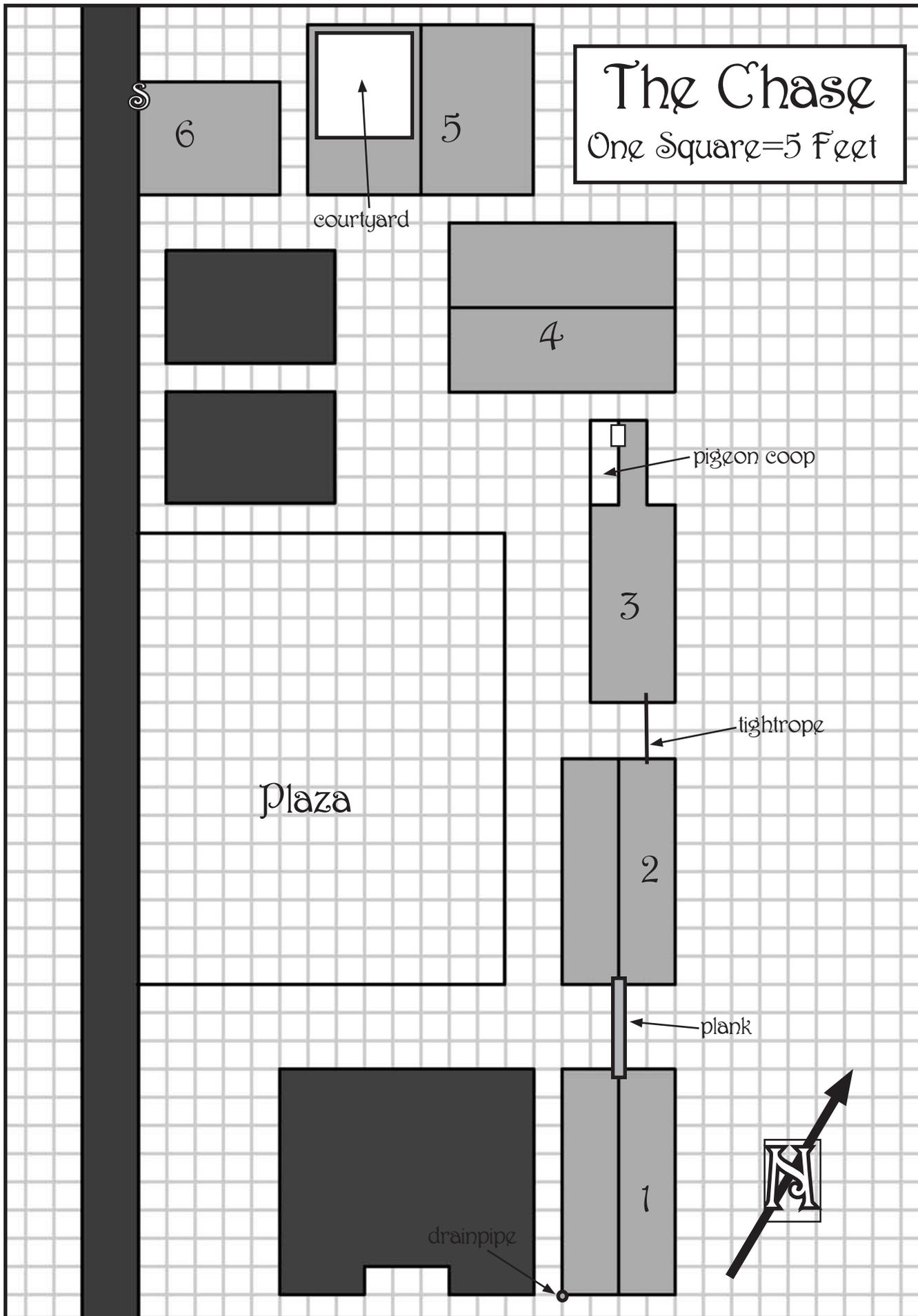
The tricks stop on the other side of the wall. Another building, little more than a shack, adjoins the wall on the Temple District side, but by the time anyone climbs over or smashes through, no one remains on that roof. Pursuers must clear one more 15-foot expanse to get to the rooftop of the old temple of the Retribution God. Unless pursuers take a very long time to get over, they just see two figures disappear down the temple's belfry as they land on the other side.

Remember that Resseka uses spells and her crossbow to deter anyone who comes too close to Harcourt during his escape.

Capturing a Trickster

PCs might capture Harcourt, or simply forego all the running and jumping about rooftops and catch one of his slower accomplices. This is a perfectly acceptable plan, although not as fun for the Trickster clerics. None of the Trickster worshipers are prepared to fight, but if necessary they will engage in one round of combat before trying to escape. If they get stuck in a fight, Chemb, having the most combat experience, tries to cover his compatriots' escapes. However, since the clerics aren't geared up for combat, they can probably be captured for questioning with minimal effort.

Though wily, these people are not made of stone. Any suitable application of Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidation can get them to reveal that they've been working on a rite to their god. The rite involves stealing holy symbols and religious relics. They don't know exactly why, just that it's part of the rite. Their recent base of



operations has been the abandoned temple of the Retribution God in the temple district. The temple is boarded up and barricaded from the inside. The only way in is through the belfry on the roof.

The PCs won't get the holy symbol back this way, and they won't get much experience, but they'll get all they need to reach Part 2 of the adventure.

Statistics for Part One

Chemb

Male human Ftr 3/Clr 1/Rog 1; CR 5; Medium-size humanoid; HD 3d10+6 plus 1d8+2 plus 1d6+2; hp 40; Init +4 (Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (touch 10, flat-footed 12); Atk +7 melee (1d8+4, +1 *morningstar*); SA Sneak attack; SQ Turn undead; AL CN; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 17, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +3, Climb +10, Intimidate +1, Jump +4, Listen +2, Open Lock +1, Spot +3, Ride +6; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Sunder.

Spells Prepared (3/2; base DC = 11 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, guidance* (2); 1st—*change self**, *shield of faith*.

*Domain spell. *Domains*: Chaos (chaos spells at +1 caster level); Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, Hide are class skills).

Possessions: 50 gp, belt pouch, thieves' tools, traveler's outfit, +1 *morningstar*, +1 *leather*, *potion of cat's grace*, *potion of hiding*, *potion of sneaking*, *potion of cure light wounds* (3).

Description: Chemb is big and strong. With blond hair, tan skin, and a perpetually startled facial expression, he seems like dumb muscle. He is, but he has a lot of surprises.

Claret

Female gnome Clr 5; CR 5; Small humanoid; HD 5d8+10; hp 34; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 13 (touch 13, flat-footed 12); Atk +5 ranged (1d8, light crossbow); SQ Cantrips, low-light vision, turn undead; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +7; Str 7, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +9, Diplomacy +9, Hide +5, Listen +7, Spot +5; Alertness, Brew Potion.

Spells Prepared (5/5/4/3; base DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, detect poison, guidance* (2), *mending*; 1st—*entropic shield**, *obscuring mist, sanctuary* (2), *summon monster I*; 2nd—*invisibility**, *darkness, lesser restoration, undetectable alignment*; 3rd—*protection from elements**, *bestow curse, meld into stone*.

*Domain spell. *Domains*: Luck (good fortune); Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, Hide are class skills).

Possessions: belt pouch, clerical vestments, light crossbow, +1 *bracers of armor*, *pearl of power* (1st level), *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of glibness*, *silence scroll*, 350 gp.

Description: An unremarkable gnome dressed obviously as a cleric. Claret is no rogue, but a great trickster. She can project nearly any emotion she needs to on demand.

What if the Party Cleric Worships the Trickster God?

This doesn't change much. You might give the cleric a bonus on Spot or Sense Motive checks to realize what's going on. If a Trickster cleric sees through Resseka's con job, you might have the cleric make a Knowledge (religion) check at DC 15 to recognize her. However, this impious crime wave is no respecter of religions. Trickster God holy symbols are as valid a target as any other religion's.

Harcourt

Male halfling Rog 6; CR 6; Small humanoid; HD 6d6; hp 25; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft.; AC 18 (touch 15, flat-footed 14); Atk +5 melee (1d4, dagger), or +10 ranged (1d4, dagger); SA Sneak attack; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +10, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 9, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +5, Balance +15, Bluff +8, Climb +2, Escape Artist +5, Hide +16, Jump +12, Listen +10, Move Silently +15, Open Lock +12, Pick Pocket +15, Search +11, Tumble +15; Improved Initiative, Iron Will.

Possessions: Traveler's outfit, belt pouch, thieves' tools, *potion of expeditious retreat*, +1 *silent moves leather armor*, *slippers of spider climbing*, 10 gp.

Description: Harcourt is a confident-looking halfling, and a working thief. His eyes roam all over his environment, as if constantly evaluating his surroundings.

Resseka

Female human Clr 2/Rog 3; CR 5; Medium-sized humanoid; HD 2d8-2 plus 3d6-3; hp 19; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (touch 13, flat-footed 10); Atk +7 ranged (1d8+1, +1 *light crossbow*); SA Sneak Attack; SQ Evasion, rebuke undead, uncanny dodge; AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 8, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Balance +6, Bluff +10, Climb +3, Disguise +10, Forgery +4, Innuendo +4, Jump +3, Pick Pocket +10, Profession (entertainer) +5, Read Lips +4, Sense Motive +4; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Toughness.

Possessions: Courtier's outfit, jewelry (100 gp), thieves' tools, +1 *light crossbow*, *potion of cat's grace*, *potion of cure light wounds*, 200 gp.

Description: Resseka has a natural beauty, which she uses to her advantage as often as possible.

Spells Prepared (4/3; base DC = 11 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, light, purify food and water* (2); 1st—*change self**, *sanctuary*.

*Domain spell. *Domains*: Luck (good fortune); Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, Hide are class skills).

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