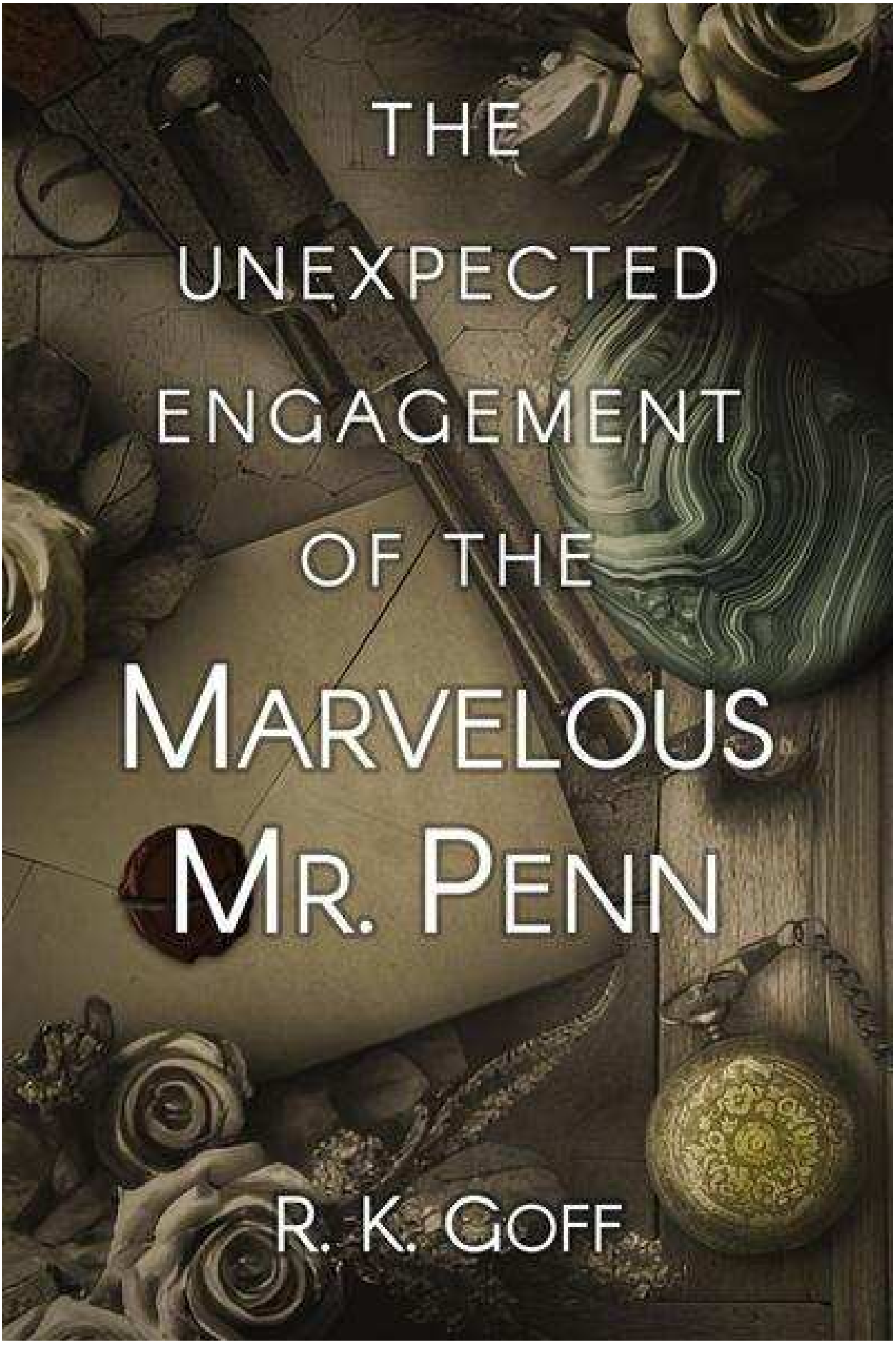

THE
UNEXPECTED
ENGAGEMENT
OF THE
MARVELOUS
MR. PENN
R. K. GOFF

***Novel by R. K. Goff, Jump by Aehriman.***
***Version 1.1***

*Dear sirs,*

*As always, I'm delighted by how gracious you are when handling my publicity, and considering the fact I've never had to pay for it, I feel ungrateful complaining, but I must point out that you have once again misspelled my name. It's not, as you printed, "an unknown thief." It's "Ryce Penn." No title, I'm afraid, but you may add esquire if you feel the need. The title is now defunct, and I suppose Her Majesty and His Honor, the Regent, wouldn't begrudge it.*

*If you explore the etymology of the word, you'll discover it was often bestowed on the young noblemen who aided the knights. I have a fairly noble bearing, if no actual nobility, and Sir Andrew will testify that, two nights ago, I was kind enough to help him unstick a window that had been shut so fast people assumed no power could open it.*

*On second thought, Sir Andrew might not be my best reference. I doubt he's feeling grateful.*

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*Dear sirs,*

*It pains me, but I must insist you check your sources! Imagine my consternation when I woke up this morning and read about how unhappy and disturbed Lady Mariselle was that her necklace had been stolen. "I can still feel the thief's hands about my neck!" Oh,* really.

*I assure you, gentlemen, you've been lied to. She had no such objection to my proximity at the time.*

*Yours, ever, Mr. Penn.*

*Dear sirs,*

*I agree with your editor about the rise of crime in this country. Disgraceful. However, I feel that he failed to point out the most frustrating aspect of the matter: our fences are now so wealthy, they're content to retire rather than pursue their chosen vocations!*

*What am I supposed to do with all these gems?*

*Your fellow concerned citizen, Mr. Penn.*

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*Dear sirs,*

*I appreciate your enthusiasm, but the break-in at Raverly Hall was not one of mine. I deplore violence.*

*Yours, ever, —*

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*Well!*

Master Thief, *you say? Far be it from me to argue with the good men of the press. Is there a certificate I can claim somewhere?*

*The Master Thief, Ryce Penn*

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*Thank you, sirs. It was an honor to see my name in type next to such a well-known scoundrel as Robin Hood. However, I should caution you against using his name as an epithet for myself.*

*I agree that, on a superficial level, we look similar, but he is supposed to have acted against a mean tyrant out of compassion for the poor—whereas I steal on a whim, primarily to gain fame, and I give it away for pretty much the same reasons.*

*And of course I steal from the rich. They're the only people with property worth stealing. They also try to protect it, which does add a little to the challenge.*

*Yours, ever, —*

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*Gentlemen of the press,*

*You've been listening to rumors again. I have not touched the baron's home. I would never have stolen those works of art; I think they're hideous.*

*I should have foreseen this. One gains a little bit of fame and now, if you're burgled, it won't do unless you've been burgled by the country's most notorious thief! But I'm only one man. I can't do* everything*.*

*I urge you not to compound the confusion. If you attribute every crime to me, the police will waste all their time failing to catch me when they could be failing to catch the real criminals.*

*Yours, ever —*

---

*Ah! Now, that's more like it!*

*The* Marvelous *Mr. Penn!*

*My compliments to you, Mr. Jones. That's an excellent title. It has a certain purr to it. You may dispense with esquire.*

*I will forever be faithfully yours,*

*The Marvelous Mr. Ryce Penn,*

*Master Thief.*

**- Letters to the editor of the *Quotidian*.**
**All originals seized by the police for evidence.**

It is May, 1899, in a country quite similar to, but legally distinct from, Great Britain.

One hundred and fifty invitations were sent out, to various members of high society, to the upcoming nuptials of Miss Eleanor Aubrey-Serres, a bookish young woman half society has given up to early spinsterhood, and Mr. Ryce Penn, the nation's most infamous master criminal, eight weeks hence. Most of the recipients stared in confusion, had a good chuckle and went about their day. The story is kept alive when the father of the bride, Count Erravold Serres, engages in a bombastic and furious exchange of public letters with the amused thief.

Some people, however, are not laughing. Like Eleanor, who had thought she'd escaped the prospect of a loveless marriage only to have the scab very publicly picked open. Her family, of course. And Penn's long-suffering nemesis, Chief Inspector Lucas Haley, who knows one thing for sure, the Marvelous Mr. Penn always has a plan and he usually starts by going one or two steps too bold and absurd to be predicted.

Have **1,000 crime points** (cp) to get you started.

## ORIGINS

*Pick one, any may be a Drop-In with no history.*

**Thief** - No gentleman, you are a scoundrel, a rogue, a taker of things that don't belong to you. Which is normally called 'taxation' and accepted with some good-natured grumbling, but governments object to private individuals doing the same thing they do. Perhaps they don't like competition?

**Police** - You're one of those sheepdogs protecting society from the wolves, whether you have a deep respect for the law or just wanted to bully people while hiding behind a uniform and a badge. A policeman's lot is not a happy one.

**Noble** - You were born to a life of wealth and privilege, and responsibility, to be sure. Mostly to obey the family patriarch and never act in a way that brings your illustrious family name into disrepute, even as so many of your peers are drunken louts who waste money because they can.

## LOCATION

*No cities are named, but this is a fictional country quite similar to Great Britain, save some small details like dollars as currency. If that is not to your liking, there is a nation called France across the channel, and America across the sea.*

## AGE, RACE, SEX, ETC,

*Makes no difference to me, become whatever feels like you, or remain the same.*

## PARTNERS IN CRIME

*Who can place a price on friendship?*

**Auld Acquaintance** - Import any number of Companions with 800 cp of their own to spend. Companions can take an origin, but cannot take drawbacks for more points.

**New Friends** - Feel free to recruit anyone interesting you meet. A few suggestions below.

**Eleanor Aubrey-Serres** - An extremely well-read young woman with morbid curiosity. At twenty-three she's pushing the boundaries of spinsterhood, having turned down three promising suitors who were either picked by her father or were courting her on a bet. Very clever, and brave in some particularly defined circumstances, tends to avoid confrontations.

**Lucas Haley** - A detective who left minor French nobility to become a copper in this country, under his mother's maiden name. He is unpopular with his fellows who suspect his family name and wealth had a lot to do with his rapid promotions - he never intentionally used family influence to get ahead, but his family sure chose to wield influence on behalf of his career, welcome or not. His superiors like his focus, commitment, comfort talking to street urchins and highest nobility, and general results. Of all the coppers, he's come the closest, many times, to cuffing Ryce Penn.

**Ryce Penn** - The Master Thief himself, if Ryce has a backstory beyond growing up in a poor part of his home city, he's never shared. He steals on a whim, or so he claims, but has a perverse sense of justice. His features are extremely bland and forgettable, allowing him to easily disguise himself as just about anyone, though he sometimes struggles in impersonating specific people.

## SKILLS

*Have 4 tokens that can be redeemed for any one 100 cp skill.*

**Sign of the Times** (free)
You are fluent in the six most common tongues. You are immune to all common mundane diseases. In future Jumps you retain immunity to diseases and fluency in half a dozen of the most widespread languages.

**Bavarian Fire Drill** (-100 cp)
If you show up and start barking orders, few people question who you are or if you have the authority. You have the leadership skills people look to in a crisis, and can easily wriggle your way into positions and situations where you shouldn't have authority, but people are just so relieved to have someone who seems like they know what they're doing, they won't really question it.

**The Biter Gets Bit** (-100 cp)

You know when someone is trying to pull a fast one on you, having an extensive knowledge of cons and scams, and can always find a way to turn the situation on the wise guy. Maybe the guy pushing a poor fake ID should have kept a better handle on his, or the kid reaching into your pocket finds a mousetrap.

**Career X** (-100 cp)
You have twenty years of experience in an exciting, or boring, career such as a lawman, technician, surgeon or an accountant. You have a resume to match and can probably find honest work easily enough, or find a more unconventional use for your professional skills.

**Clipboard Method** (-100 cp)
There are ultimately three forms of stealth; Can't See, when a night security guard doesn't notice the slightly deeper shadow ghosting in. Don't See, when the thief walks in the gate with a valid ID and a winning smile, whistling merrily and shakes the security guard's hand. Won't See, when the terrifying mob boss guns someone down in a room with fifty witnesses who must have all gone temporarily blind cause nobody saw nuthin'. You are a master of the second, blending in, appearing to belong.

**Codebreaker** (-100 cp)
You've studied the art and science of cryptography, secret messages, and know quite a bit about how to break codes and ciphers, as well as how to set them up yourself. You could even send coded messages to people you've never met, with a bit of knowledge of their history giving you knowledge of which references they'd likely get.

**Confidence** (-100 cp)
You have a natural and easy charming manner, finding it simplicity itself to make friends and sell things. A very important skill for a con artist.

**Fisticuffs** (-100 cp)
Yes, you got a free blackbelt but you'd be surprised how little your McDojo certificate matters when three guys corner you in the alleyway behind their favorite bar. Now you've

got the lived experience and fitness to actually throw down with 3-5 guys with a reasonable expectation of victory, it's all in flanking and using one guy as a shield or obstacle for his buddies. As a bonus, you've learned to karate chop people in the neck so they go down and stay down for an hour or two,  but have no lasting health consequences.

**Forger** (-100 cp)
You are an expert forger. IDs, counterfeit cash, historical documents, art, you can do it all, and only the most obsessive of skilled professionals can spot the differences.

**Got Away Clean** (-100 cp)
You always have an escape plan, always know where the exit is and a backup exit besides. You remain calm even while being hunted, and know instinctively when you're being tailed or actively pursued.

**Honor Among Thieves** (-100 cp)
... Tends to be really selective, but Ryce's gang never rat him out. You find people are unlikely to rat you out or betray a deal, unless you betray them first or really abuse them. There's always that one in a thousand true psychopath, of course, but most of the time trust won't be punished.

**Instinct** (-100 cp)
You can tell when a situation seems too neat, too clean, and must be a trap. You are always aware when hungry eyes are watching you, whether it's a sniper, a stakeout, or that pickpocket sizing up marks. Your danger sense will keep you out of trouble, and hopefully, prison.

**I Don't Have A Problem** (-100 cp)
Weirdly, it's true. Drink has been the downfall of many a thief. But you never suffer habit-forming or undesirable side effects of booze or drugs you take.

**Just A Small Setback** (-100 cp)

You don't shut down when things don't go according to plan, you plan out the next step, and the next. In this way you're never really defeated until the last moment.

**One Born Every Minute** (-100 cp)
You can read people like a book, very convenient for spotting a mark. That guy with the really good posture? Undercover lawman. The slightly nervous looking woman who laughs a little too loud at her date? Having an affair. You could probably do a fake mind reading act with how good you are at cold reading.

**Regular Houdini** (-100 cp)
You can slip any bonds easily enough, cuffs or zip-ties or rope makes no difference. You're really good at escaping from prison, though it's always easiest if you can set things up beforehand, like bribing a guard or smuggling in a key. You can tunnel or swim with the best of them, and know all kinds of escapes people really made from the pokey and how to replicate them.

**Thousand Faces** (-100 cp)
You're a master of disguise, not just able to change your appearance, but which features people focus on that can then be discarded. Clearly you can't be that handsome devil with the mustache and/or distinctive scar. I think he went thataway!

**Theatricality** (-100 cp)
You understand there is secrecy in obviousness, in short, misdirection. People are trained to spot furtive movement, they never expect the wanted man to be making a scene. You're fantastic at creating diversions and hiding things in plain sight.

**Think Fast** (-100 cp)
You are highly resourceful and adaptable, and when necessary your thoughts just seem to flow with an instinctive quickness. If you could have potentially thought it up while calm and at leisure to plan, now you can think of it on the fly even as chaos erupts all around you.

**Up and At 'Em!** (-100 cp)
A good thief should always be ready to climb. To head up and out of an alleyway, to hide or run along the rooftops. You're as agile and sure-footed as any mountain goat, can dangle by your fingertips for a full hour, and never lose your balance.

**With Catlike Tread** (-100 cp)
You can actually move silently, and navigate a dark room with ease. You'd be surprised how essential these two skills are to stealth.

**You Can Open Any Door If You Only Have The Key** (-100 cp)
Or not. You are an expert at getting into locked spaces and through doors. A safecracker who can cut or pick or blast your way into anything, as appropriate, faster than most can fish out their keys.

**You CAN Find Good Help These Days** (-200 cp)
Whenever you go recruiting, whether for a clerk, secretary, cook, or a getaway driver, you easily find the perfect candidate. The best of the best who by sheer coincidence are now available, and are trustworthy figures besides.

**Count Your Blessings** (-100 cp, free Thief)
You have enviable health and physical conditioning, besides this, even in the lowest moments you can console yourself with your abilities and the exceptional life you've lived.

**Elan** (-100 cp, free Thief)
You're very glib and witty, always with a clever comeback or turn of phrase, and a sense for the theatric.

**Smooth as Silk** (-200 cp, discount Thief)
As it should be and always goes when you plan carefully and don't make rash decisions or stupid mistakes. Your schemes are armored against random chance. Nobody is gonna have a heart attack during your heist, no action hero cop will wander into the bank on his day

off. There may be variables you didn't plan for, but you'll always have a fair chance to have seen them coming.

**One of These Things Is Not Like the Others** (-100 cp, free Police)
You have a talent for spotting incongruity, inconsistencies. Why does the bank manager seem relieved, is he an inside man? Even, maybe especially in datasets and spreadsheets, the clues scream for your attention. This is also quite handy for seeing through Penn's various disguises, spotting the inconsistencies once you think to look.

**Law** (-100 cp, free Police)
You know the law, you understand each code and why they exist, and maybe when it's better to let the little things slide. You are well-acquainted with Robert Peel's writings and so long as you serve the community you enjoy a positive reputation that encourages witnesses to come forwards.

**I Have To Chase You** (-200 cp, discount Police)
You have a hunter's instinct when t comes to the criminal element. You understand how crooks think, and the more you study the MO of a particular criminal, the better a profile you'll develop of them. You can read a crime scene like a broadsheet, reconstructing from a few scuffs and stains where people stood, how they moved.

**Business Sense** (-100 cp, free Noble)
Having money gives you a lot of opportunities to make more,  and a lot of chances to lose what you have, encouraged by people who want a piece of your wealth. When it comes to speculation and investment, you have a firm sense of which opportunities are safe, which are risky but perhaps worth it, and which are a sucker's game. At least you'll never lose your shirt investing in a fictitious diamond mine.

**Etiquette** (-100 cp, free Noble)

You know how to behave in polite society. Besides being a font of truly useless information on good manners, you can be a gracious host and set anyone at their ease. As a final bonus, you never lose composure no matter how dangerous or ridiculous a situation.

**Exceptionally Well-Read** (-200 cp, discount Noble)
Now where does a proper young lady learn such ghastly things? Why, from books of course! You're extremely well versed in forensics, ballistics, engineering, chemistry, mathematics, astronomy, photography, philosophy, politics, geography and the social sciences. Maybe not to the limits of the very top experts, but more than enough for a graduate degree in each field, and this knowledge updates in future Jumps and matches any further study or self-improvement you achieve.

## TOOLS

*Have +400 just for this section.*

**Cabbie!** (-100 cp)
You can always find a cab, or a train, bus, ship, some kind of commercial transport to get you where you need to in a hurry. You will, however, still need to pay.

**Safehouse in Every City** (-100 cp)
A residence like an apartment or a hut with all the utilities paid up, a small bag of cash and a first aid kit. Nobody seems able to follow you here, tails getting quite turned around. It's basic, but hidden and safe, and you have one or a few in every city or town.

**Underworld Services** (-100 cp)
No matter how 'enlightened' or 'civilized' a country, you can always find a fence and a money launderer.

**Money** (-200/400 cp)
Enough passive income to enjoy a middle-class lifestyle with a spouse and 2.54 children, a white picket fence, and an annual holiday. If you want to live so boringly.

For an extra 200 cp, you have a fortune equal to that of Duke Erravold Serres, more than most corporations.

**Sprawling Estate** (-200 cp)
A secure and luxurious mansion, worthy as a retirement home for the truly, filthy rich. All the utilities and expenses taken care of, with grounds expansive enough to be larger than most towns.

**Kit** (-100 cp, free Thief)
A few disguises, some lockpicks, a blackjack, a prybar, some rope, everything an enterprising individual needs to seek their fortune in the world!

**Badge** (-100 cp, free Police)
A badge, and with it some high rank in the police like Chief Inspector. Can serve to grant you membership in law enforcement or military organizations in future Jumps.

**Noble Title** (-100 cp, free Noble)
You're some form of nobleman, or lady, like a Count or Countess. Impresses the masses, and opens doors.

## PROBLEMS

**Supplement** (+0 cp)
You can supplement this Jump to any setting in Victorian times, or anywhere there is mystery and crime or, well, really just anywhere.

**Health and Long Life** (+100 cp)
You'll be staying here for a while, an extra decade. This may be taken up to three times.

**Pretentious** (+100 cp)
You have 'resting smug face' and whether you mean it or not, often give people the impression you're patronizing or condescending to them.

**Two Left Feet** (+100 cp)
Unlike Ryce Penn and Lucas Haley, you can't dance to save your life. How very embarrassing.

**Debt** (+200 cp)
You owe an outrageous sum of money to one of the four great guarantors of the country. Their reach is very long, and they're not accepting money from Items, though money gained through investing such is allowed. Best get busy or get gone.

**Wanted** (+200 cp)
It seems you're known to local criminals or the police, and they want a piece of you bad. This can be taken twice to be in the ill graces of both officialdom and the underworld, if you're feeling particularly brave.

**Impotent** (+300 cp)
None of your perks or powers from previous Jumps function here, leaving you to rely on local purchases.

**Impoverished** (+300 cp)
None of your items from previous Jumps may be used. Your Warehouse is sealed against you for the duration of this Jump.

## END

*What now? Go home, stay here, or the next Jump?*

Notes:

Changelog 1.1: added You CAN Find Good Help These Days, Cabbie. Removed extra Noble Title.

*Part of the joy of a mystery is discovering it* for oneself*, no?*

....

....

Fine! If you *must* have the tldr;
150 invites are sent out to the wedding of Eleanor and Ryce Penn in eight weeks time. Her father, Erravold, is quite outraged and gives a statement to press, leading to an entertaining week of back-and-forth as Count Erravold Serres and Ryce Penn write open letters to each other. Eleanor's elderly aunt Helena comes to stay with her, and eventually her son, Eleanor's cousin Eddie.
Lucas also investigates the situation, and is surprised to learn the bookish Eleanor turned down three suitors.
Ryce Penn breaks into the house, leaving Eleanor an engagement ring. She later tracks him down, recalling he smelled of flour and knowing where there's an abandoned mill nearby, to ask him a simple question: did he send the invites? He did not, and had assumed *she'd* done so to sell an inappropriate lover to her father by announcing a worse alternative.
Lucas and Ryce each investigate the three suitors. Earl Massey was the first, picked by Eleanor's father, then Marquis Gervase Fitzmon, and finally an American businessman, Mr. Dominic Winfield. Each assumes one of the others sent the invites in a club meeting Ryce spies upon.
While investigating the makers of the invites, Eleanor is kidnapped by a crook named Farnham with a grudge to settle against Penn, Eddie who was watching her is beat up, and Eleanor sustains dangerous wounds to her arms. Ryce Penn rescues her that night, utilizing Haley's men as a diversion and to storm the place, the two enemies working together to save Eleanor.
While this was going down, Dominic Winfield was murdered. Smashed over the head with a marble egg he kept on the mantlepiece. Haley is able to identify Winfield's manservant as the man who ordered the invites, and the man overheard half of a phone conversation in which Dominic urged going to the police before agreeing to meet his caller in person before

doing anything rash. Penn is easily able to locate the murder weapon, in a pawnshop, and track down the mudlark who brought it in and makes questioning the lad an odd sort of date with Eleanor.

Further probing reveals that Eleanor's father was quite put out when Massey started to look for other young women while he felt there was a chance his daughter would change her mind. Fitzmon works for Duke Serres, in construction, and understood the same proscription to be in effect. After Eleanor turned down the men her father picked for her, Cousin Eddie who was friends with both bet a couple hundred that Dominic Winfield, who was looking for a wife but not especially attached, could woo her to the altar and he caught genuine feelings just as planned, but his suit was going too well and a jealous Fitzmon put the skids on Dominic by informing Eleanor of the bet.

Eddie, friends with all three men, had them start weekly get togethers of the Broken Hearts Club.

All of them had been discussing the idea for most of a year of forcing Eleanor to choose one of them by sending invites to her wedding to a wholly unacceptable man, even making a game of trying to find the most outrageous name.

Penn asks the writer of the Quotidian to reference some guarantors of money-lenders, coming up with a Mr. Altis as the most discreet. He breaks into Altis' home and office, but Haley shows up tipped off by a snitch at the newspaper. Penn flees with the real secret ledger from Altis' bedroom, and Haley nearly falls to his death pursuing over the rooftop, obliging Penn to save him and get nicked.

Penn does salvage something by claiming the ledger is a book he stole from Eleanor. Thus Haley can show it to Eleanor and unravel the whole thing. Penn later escapes before his trial.

The ultimate culprit was Cousin Eddie. His mother's will specifies that Eleanor gets her half of the family fortune if she is unwed upon Helena's death. But Eddie has deep debts after borrowing money to invest in a foreign diamond mine that fell through. Altis was willing to be patient, but when Eddie learned his mother was dying, getting Eleanor married off

suddenly became terribly urgent and he talked Dominic into the invites he couldn't afford himself.

Then when Eleanor was kidnapped, Dominic wished to confess to the police. Fearful of being disinherited, Eddie tried to talk him out of it, and the dispute escalated to violence.

The epilogue is the wedding of Ms. Eleanor Aubrey-Serres to Mr. Lucas Haley. Naturally Ryce Penn shows up in disguise to wish the couple well and tweak Haley's nose.