

Down and Out in Middenburg

A LARP for 12 players

by

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Introduction

Down and Out in Middenburg is a LARP for 12 players. The setting is the city of Middenburg in a stereotypical fantasy world. The players play members of the “court” of the Prone Lady at the annual feast of Adversa, the Goddess of Misfortune. The LARP is intended to run for two hours.

Cast-list

The following is a list of the characters in Middenburg. For most characters the genders can be swapped with minimal rewriting. Black Cat and Lame Jake are involved in a romance plot and Noisome Nell's background is somewhat more typical for a female character, so some GM's may prefer to keep the genders of these characters as written. Suggestions for alternative names are given in parentheses.

- The Prone Lady (The Prone Man) - the beggar "queen".
- Englebert (Hildegard) the Benighted - "priest" of Adversa, goddess of misfortune and patron of beggars.
- Agnes (Otto) the sot - has drunk away several fortunes.
- Noisome Nell - A beggar so disgusting people will pay them to go away.
- Crazy Harry (Harriet) - claims to have been an alchemist once.
- John (Jane) Lackhand - a non-recidivist thief.
- Unlucky Sam - a recent victim of misfortune new to the begging life.
- Black Cat - can foretell people's misfortunes. Unfortunately there's no profit in it.
- Vermin - a beggar with an affinity for rodents.
- Grashnak the half-orc - an unfortunate veteran of the Dark Lord's army.
- Festering Sally (Pestulent Pete) - a medical wonder. Proud bearer of many diseases.
- Lame Jake - descended from a long line of beggars.

The Rules

Middenburg is intended to be a fairly "rules lite" game. Players should be able to achieve most things by social interactions with the other players characters. Some characters will have special items and abilities which are explained on their character sheet. In the case of a physical confrontation between characters then paper-scissors-rock should be used to determine the result.

John Lackhand has the ability to pick pockets. This is physically represented by the player of Lackhand putting a sticker on the intended victim without being noticed. If he manages this then the GM should ask the victim to hand over anything interesting that they are carrying and hand any goodies over to Lackhand's player (preferably without the other players seeing).

Agnes the Sot carries a magic ring that makes her invisible. She will need an “I'm Invisible” badge to wear when she is using the ring. As a former creature of darkness Grashnak will become inclined to serve whoever carries the ring. A red sticker on the name badge is used to identify the ringbearer to Grashnak (who does not realise the reason for his desire to obey).

The Prone Lady is a former wizard and still retains some ability to cast spells. The effects of the spells, and what needs to be done to cast them are described on “spell cards” that should be printed and included with the Prone Lady's character sheet.

Some players have access to information sources and items outside the site of the feast (e.g. Vermin is able to send out rat spies and John Lackhand has contacts in the thieves Guild). The GM will need to handle requests from these players on a case by case basis. As a rule of thumb, anything that will introduce more chaos (and make the game more fun) should be allowed, unless common sense dictates otherwise.

Envelopes

Some players have envelopes containing instructions that are to be read and followed only under specific circumstances. The front of the envelope will state under what circumstances the instructions should be read. In some cases the player will be directed to give the envelope to another player. The following table lists the envelopes and their contents, which characters start with the envelope and under which circumstances they should be read.

Character that starts with the envelope	Instructions on front of envelope	Instructions inside the envelope
Noisome Nell	Give this to Black Cat if you talk to her	Noisome Nell's misfortune: She has recently suffered a great loss
Grashnak	Give this to Black Cat if you talk to her	Grashnak's misfortune: A shadow from his past has returned to haunt him
Agnes the Sot	Give this to Black Cat if you talk to her	Agnes the Sot's misfortune: Evil is seeking her
Grashnak	Read this whenever you talk to someone wearing a badge with a red sticker on it	You feel an overwhelming urge to obey and be subservient to this person (the one wearing the badge with a red sticker on it). The feeling disappears if the sticker disappears from their badge. If the red sticker moves to someone else's badge, your loyalties transfer to them.
Agnes the Sot	Instructions for the Magic Ring (to be read by whoever possesses the magic ring)	You have a magic ring, which turns the wearer invisible. To use it, replace your badge with the substitute invisibility badge provided. As long as you have the ring, whether you are wearing it or not, you must wear a red sticker on your badge. If you lose the ring for any reason, you must pass on the red sticker, the substitute badge, these instructions, and the attached envelope to the new owner.
Ringbearer (initially Agnes the Sot)	If you are the Prone Lady and you have received this, open it now	[This envelope contains two notes. The second note should be sealed so that it cannot be read until after the first note] Note 1, read me first : You sense that this is an object of great power. Either drop it immediately or read note 2

		<p>Note 2, do not read before note 1: You hold the Ring of Power, which contains a fragment of the Dark Lord's soul. You can feel your powers reawakening after their long dormancy - for who needs a mere staff when you have such a ring? You will of course use it for good, to finally destroy the Dark Lord and bring about a new age of peace and plenty. But you will have to raise an army to fight the last remnants of evil and smite those who would stand against you.</p> <p>You can never surrender the ring voluntarily, for it is precious to you.</p>
Crazy Harry	Give this to anyone who drinks your potion	As you drink the potion you feel your skin change in unpleasant ways. Pustules and boils form on your hands as you watch - and then your hands fade from view! Your appearance is clearly so horrible that you cannot stand to see yourself - and neither can other people. For the next five minutes, you are invisible. Replace your badge with the substitute invisibility badge provided.

Props and other things needed

- A play area large enough to fit the players and GM
- Name badges for the Player Characters (these are out of character, but it is useful for players to know who they are talking to. Also some special abilities are indicated by altering the name badge)
- Food for the feast
- Ale from the Drunken Pig (a “Drunken Pig” label is included which can be stuck onto a bottle of ginger beer).
- The One Ring
- A bag of badges for Englebert (for maximum entertainment there should be fewer badges than players)
- 2 Invisibility badges (one to be worn by anyone using the Magic Ring, and one for anyone who drinks Crazy Harry's potion)
- Red sticker (or other marker – we suggest coloured post-it tags) to be worn by the owner of the Magic Ring
- Other stickers, to be used by John Lackhand to indicate theft.
- At least 29 Marks (the local currency)
- A fake treasure map
- One copy of the player's introduction per player

What's Really Going On?

There are a number of plotlines simmering beneath the surface. The following is a quick summary for the GM. The character sheets contain the information known by the different characters.

The Prone Lady used to be Esmerelda the White, a wizard who was influential in the defeat of the Dark Lord twenty years ago. However, after the Dark Lord's defeat she decided to disguise herself as a beggar as a way of avoiding all the people who still expected her to help them with their problems.

Lame Jake is from a long lineage of beggars. He recently was able to acquire enough money to buy an inn called The Drunken Pig. However, he is forced to live a double life by his love for *Black Cat*, a fellow beggar. Little does he know that *Black Cat* is also leading a double life and is moonlighting in disguise as a waitress at The Drunken Pig.

Recently there was a brawl at The Drunken Pig involving a band of rowdy adventurers. During the brawl a Magic Ring was dropped and later found by *Agnes the Sot*. *Agnes* discovered the ring's ability to turn the wearer invisible and has since been using this power to steal beer from the cellars of The Drunken Pig. However, the ring is actually The One Ring of Power that will allow the Dark Lord to rise again. Minions of the Dark Lord are now descending upon Middenburg to seek the ring's return.

The adventurers have offered a reward of 20 Marks for the ring's return. The thieves guild have heard of this reward and decided that if the ring is that valuable then they want it for themselves. To this end they have kidnapped *Ratikins*, a favoured companion of *Vermin* and refuse to return him unless *Vermin* helps them find the ring. Unfortunately *Ratikins* himself was *Vermin's* main method of finding lost things. *John Lackhand*, as a former member of the thieves guild is aware that there is a large reward for the lost ring.

Englebert the Benighted is a devout follower of the Goddess Adversa. He is somewhat dismayed that some beggars (who he believes are the blessed of Adversa) are stooping to base chicanery and theft. To this end he has had some badges made and is planning to use them to indicate which of the beggars are genuine.

Festering Sally is also a devout (if somewhat confused) follower of Adversa. She believes that by actively causing misfortune to fall upon others she is doing Adversa's work. She convinced *Noisome Nell* to help her destroy the business of *Unlucky Sam*. *Noisome Nell* decided to refine these tactics as a method for extorting money from local business owners. She recruited *Grashnak* to help with this enterprise and together they have extorted 10 Marks which they have hidden in a secret location. Both *Grashnak* and *Noisome Nell* believe they have stolen the money from the other. However, unbeknownst to both of them *Vermin* (with the help of *Ratikins*) discovered the stash and took the money. The Thieves Guild have noticed that someone is running an unsanctioned extortion racket in the city and have asked *John Lackhand* to investigate. The Drunken Pig is the current target of *Grashnak* and *Nell's* scheme.

Since his business was ruined *Unlucky Sam* is looking for a new business venture (and some start up capital). He had the idea of selling fake treasure maps to gullible adventurers, but he then had to hide when the angry adventurers returned to town. *Englebert* was the eventual victim of the adventurers

wrath (they were not very good at telling beggars apart). Neither *Sam* nor *Englebert* realise the part the other has played in this incident.

Crazy Harry is an alchemist fallen on hard times. He is looking for enough money to help him rebuild his lab (about 20 Marks). In the meantime he has created an experimental potion that should make the imbiber appear to be hideously diseased. He just needs a volunteer to test it on... (in reality it makes the imbiber so ugly that people's eyes will refuse to look at them – effectively an invisibility potion).

Prop Ale Label:

(Fits just fine on a bottle of ginger beer)



Player's Introduction

Welcome To Middenburg

Middenburg: a pile of refuse at the mouth of the river Siel. According to legend, Middenburg is where the gods took a dump. That certainly explains the human refuse who clog the streets.

But that refuse has tales of its own. Every year on the day of Adversa, Goddess of Misfortune, the beggars of Middenburg gather for a feast paid for by the more charitable citizens of the city...

Middenburg

Since the war with the Dark Lord twenty years ago, Middenburg has become a cosmopolitan city with citizens of many races and a popular destination for bands of adventurers returning from their quests with pockets full of gold. The city is ruled by a council consisting of the heads of each major Guild (even the Thieves Guild is represented), who are rightly proud of their competitive tax rates and the many works of civic art that have been commissioned...

...Not that any of that matters to you. You are a beggar, lowest of the low. Reduced to grovelling for a crust of bread to eat. The beggars are not part of the power structure of Middenburg. There is, however, an informal power structure among the beggars. The Prone Lady (in return for a modest percentage of the beggars' takings) looks out for the interests of the beggars of the city and settles disputes where they arise. It is also said by some that beggars are the chosen people of Adversa, Goddess of Misfortune. It may be a cold comfort, but beggars can't be choosers.

The Feast of Adversa

Today is the Feast Day of the Goddess Adversa, the one day of the year all beggars can expect to eat well. The townsfolk willingly donate food for the beggars' feast lest they draw the attention of Adversa upon themselves. The feast is an opportunity for the beggars to get together, eat well, share their tales of woe and bring their disputes to the Prone Lady. However, come midnight the City Watch will break up the gathering, so that the local residents may once more return to ignoring the beggars.

The Rules

Middenburg is intended to be a fairly "rules lite" game. You should be able to achieve most things by social interactions with the other players characters. Some characters will have special items and abilities which will be explained on their character sheet. If you absolutely *have* to get involved in a physical confrontation with another character then you can resort to paper-scissors-rock. GMs will also be on standby should you wish to attempt something beyond the scope of these "rules"

Agnes The Sot

You pity the fools who work for their living. As a beggar you are free from all cares and responsibilities. When it comes to convincing the citizens of Middenburg to part with a bit of ale or cash you know every scam in the book (and a few that aren't). Faking madness, disease, or crippling injury; simple confidence tricks such as the old "lead into gold" scam; outright deceit such as pretending to be a sailor left behind by their ship, or pretending to be a mendicant priest. The last one got you into some trouble - one can fleece the gulls, but mocking the gods is bad luck - and so you have gone back to an oldie but a goodie: hanging around taverns and getting the locals to pay you to drink until you pass out or puke. This earns you a few coins, plus all the ale you can drink, while the locals get to indulge their sadism and wager on how long you'll last. Your favourite haunt for this at the moment is a place called the Drunken Pig.

Several weeks ago you found a ring on the floor of the Drunken Pig after a brawl between adventurers. Naturally you took it. Fortunately, you tried it on before you went to sell it at the pawnshop, and so discovered that it was a magic ring which turns the wearer invisible. So, you did what anyone would do with such a ring: you used it to steal beer. Every day, you don the ring and sneak into the basement of the Drunken Pig and drink your fill from the kegs. Sometimes you even fall asleep there. You know its theft and a violation of Guild jurisdiction, but the Thieves' Guild wouldn't concern themselves with a little missing beer - would they?

Lately Noisome Nell and Grashnak the Half-Orc have started aggressively begging outside the Drunken Pig and they're putting off the customers. Fortunately your magic ring means that you still have access to the ale cellar.

Goals

- Keep living the good life

Items

- Magic ring - turns the wearer invisible (this is represented by replacing your badge with the one that says "invisible". If you give the ring away or lose it, pass on the extra badge).
- Flagon of ale from the drunken pig. Today is a feast day after all.

Others

Crazy Harry - you have seen him do the old "lead into gold" routine, and he is very convincing. You've tried that one yourself, but you could never pronounce the long words. Maybe he can give you lessons?

Englebert the benighted - is always berating you about your schemes, and says you're not really unfortunate. He needs to loosen up a bit.

Unlucky Sam - is a new beggar, having recently lost his business. You tried to take him under your wing and point out all the advantages of the begging lifestyle, but he seems determined to try to *work* for a living.

Black Cat

You are a prophetess, blessed by Adversa with the ability to see misfortune. But you have found it to be more of a curse than a blessing. Constantly seeing the bad things that are about to happen to people has ruined your life and forced you onto the streets.

Because of your gift, you find it difficult to make money as a beggar, and so you secretly work as a barmaid in a local inn, the Drunken Pig, under the name of "Molly". Despite some of your fellows begging right outside the inn, they do not recognise you when you are cleaned up, while those who normally see you as Molly the barmaid do not recognise you when you are dressed in beggar's rags. The work is not difficult, and at least you are able to tell when people are going to be sick.

Recently a band of adventurers have been hanging around the Pig, hassling the staff about a ring they lost in a tavern brawl there. They say that the ring is of "sentimental value", but given the enormous reward they are offering - twenty marks, almost enough to buy the place - you presume it is magical. The reward would allow you to leave the begging life for good, maybe even let you set yourself up in the Street of Charlatans as a respectable fortune-teller.

For the past several weeks beer has mysteriously been going missing from the storage kegs in the Pig's basement. Jack, the innkeeper, initially suspected you as you were the most recent hire - but he recognised his error when you pointed out that you didn't have time to drink on the job and weren't sneaking a bucket of ale out of the inn every evening. You have tried watching the kegs, but no-one has seen or heard anything. It is very puzzling, almost as if someone was using magic. You know the Thieves' Guild would never bother with a crime so trivial, but beggars see all sorts of things. Maybe one of your fellows knows something?

Recently Noisome Nell, Grashnak and some of their friends have started hanging around outside the inn, begging loudly and harassing the customers for coin. It's driving people away, and Jack the innkeeper has complained about it ruining his business. If the Pig goes under, you will have to go back to begging. You need to find some way of making them stop, preferably without revealing your double life.

However, even more disturbingly, you have been having terrible premonitions about a sleeping evil that is about to awaken and that the source of this evil will be present at the Feast of Adversa. It seems improbable, but your visions have never been wrong yet.

Goals

- Try to stop the evil that threatens the world.
- See if any of the beggars can help you locate the adventurers missing ring so you can claim the reward.
- Find out if any of the beggars have heard anything about people stealing from the Drunken Pig
- Find some way of getting Nell and Grashnak to move on and beg somewhere else.

Special abilities

You can see the misfortunes of others. Unfortunately this power does not come at your bidding.

Others

Agnes the Sot - a happy go lucky sort who hangs around in bars getting paid to drink herself into a stupor. You're glad she hasn't been to the Pig for a while, since you were sick of cleaning up her vomit.

Noisome Nell - Nell is harassing the customers at the bar where you secretly work, and the smell is putting the few who remain off their food.

Grashnak the half-orc - his current favourite begging spot is right outside the Drunken Pig, and this threatens to ruin the business. If only you could find some way of getting him to go away.

Crazy Harry

You were once a wealthy alchemist, producing potions and formulae for credulous nobles and merchants. You were one of the most skilled at the craft, and had even discovered the ultimate secret - the Philosopher's Stone, able to turn lead into gold! But then, just as you were on the verge of exploiting your discovery, misfortune struck. Your laboratory burned down in a freak accident, and you were reduced to penury. You were forced to take up begging to survive. You still dream of returning to your former life, and you have saved every copper you can in the hope of being able to refurbish a simple laboratory. But life is hard as a beggar, and so far you have not managed to save even a tenth of the sum required.

At first you tried asking people to lend you the money to rebuild your lab, but most people tended to react as if you were some sort of madman or charlatan. You have found that you are actually given more money if you simply pretend to be mad. Fortunately, you find this easy. All you have to do is start talking about the distillation of vital essences and quantum tunnelling, and people throw money at you while moving hurriedly on.

Some of the other beggars are charlatans, and use crude concoctions of herbs to help them feign the symptoms of madness (such as foaming at the mouth) or disease or injury (by raising impressive but entirely cosmetic welts, boils and scabs). You have studied their recipes and devised an improvement, which you think will produce a far better simile of disease. Given your lack of a laboratory, it is crude - old jam jars over the fire are no substitute for retorts and alembics - but you are sure it will work. All you need is someone to test it on.

Goals

- Find enough money to rebuild your laboratory and return to your previous life. 20 marks should be enough.
- Find someone to test your experimental potion on.

Items

- Experimental potion.

Others

Festering Sally - Sally is famous for having every disease known to man or elf (and a few which are mysteries even to them). As an alchemist, you once went to a demonstration at the College of Doctors where she was used as an exemplar of a dozen different diseases. So why did you see her surreptitiously gathering Boilwart the other day?

Noisome Nell - Nell is a great charlatan; you have seen her dunking her head in a chamber pot every morning to get her infamous smell. Perhaps she would be interested in testing your potion?

The Prone Lady - you have heard that she is secretly wealthy from the guild dues she collects from other beggars. Perhaps she could be persuaded to part with some of this wealth?

Englebert The Benighted

You are a devoted follower of Adversa, Goddess of Misfortune, and her unofficial "priest" among the beggars. You try and counsel them to accept their lot with humility as it is the will of the gods. But some are proud enough to try and undo what the gods have wrought. And some are not even unfortunate at all, but merely charlatans and tricksters, pretending to the blessings of Adversa so they can subsist on the charity of others.

You have decided to do something about this. Other guilds have "licences", and it is time the Beggars got one too, so that the public can distinguish between the truly worthy and the frauds. You have obtained some badges from a charitable merchant, and tonight you plan to distribute them to the other beggars. But only to the ones who are truly blessed.

You were recently falsely accused by a band of adventurers of selling them a fake treasure map, and badly beaten as a result. Apparently, all beggars look the same to them. You are horrified that any beggar would stoop to such base chicanery, and they must be held to account.

You have also heard that some believe that they should try and spread their bad luck around. They are fools. Those whose bad luck derives from mere human action are not truly blessed, and those who wish to "help out" Adversa by actively attempting to bring ill fortune on others are misguided.

Goals

- Spread the word of Adversa by counselling the other beggars to accept their misfortune.
- Implement your licensing plan to separate the worthy from the unworthy.
- Find out who has been selling fake treasure maps to adventurers and see them brought to justice.

Others

Agnes the Sot - the worst charlatan of the lot. From your observations, Agnes is not unlucky, but merely idle. She is not truly blessed.

Black Cat - her power is clearly a blessing from Adversa.

Lame Jake - Jake is from an old begging family, cursed by Adversa since the dawn of time. He is a good beggar.

Festering Sally

You are a medical wonder, blessed by Adversa with a great many obvious and disgusting diseases. Scrofula, Goblin Pox, the Shivers, Consumption, you've got them all. The College of Doctors would regularly pay you to serve as an exemplar for their students, while people on the street give generously because of your obviously pitiful condition. As a result, you are quite well off for a beggar. Or at least you *were*. One day when you were begging in your usual spot, a wandering paladin of Fortuna (goddess of good luck) happened by and took pity on you. Before you could dodge out of the way, he had laid hands on you and cured you - of *everything*. You spent all your money going to doctors trying to find out if there was still anything wrong with you, but they all told you that you were in perfect health. And so you have been forced to stoop to the level of the charlatans, applying herbs such as boilwort to your skin to raise rashes and pustules, the false symptoms of the diseases you used to have. You desperately want to be sick again, begging is all you know.

Followers of Adversa are usually fatalists. Bad luck is the will of Adversa, it happens whether you like it or not, and the best you can do is accept it. One cannot fight the gods, after all. But that doesn't mean that you can't help them out. Some months ago you and Noisome Nell decided to spread the blessings of Adversa by hanging around outside businesses in an effort to frighten away customers and drive them out of business, thus bringing misfortune upon them. You have also tried persuading Agnes the Sot to join you, but have been unsuccessful. Your greatest success was a bakery that you managed to bankrupt. The baker (Unlucky Sam) has now joined the ranks of Adversa's blessed.

Not everyone appreciates Adversa. But she is the only god who has ever paid attention to you, and you want to repay the favour. You are worried that Adversa thinks you have forsaken her by accepting the favour of her sister and rival. You are desperate to prove your loyalty somehow.

Goals

- Get sick again, so you don't have to fake it.
- Find other allies who might be interested in spreading the blessings of Adversa.
- Prove your loyalty to Adversa

Others

Englebert the benighted - as a priest of Adversa normally Englebert would be the first person you would ask for advice, but you're too ashamed given your current condition.

Noisome Nell - Nell is not particularly devout, but she is always willing to help out a beggar in need. Unfortunately she's a complete fake, who uses herbs every morning to get her terrible appearance, and whose smell comes from dunking her head in a chamber pot. You will need to be careful, lest she notices the signs of your fakery.

Vermin - you hear she's a were-rat. If you could get her to bite you, at least you'd have *something*.

Grashnak The Half Orc

Twenty years ago, when you were a young half-orc, you took the Dark Mark and became a footsoldier in the Dark Lord's army. But you deserted just before the Final Battle of Good and Evil in which the Dark Lord was defeated and his fortress cast down. You moved to Middenburg with the dream of opening an Orcish restaurant (ratisserie). However, you had no money and no-one wanted to hire a half-orc. Eventually you wound up living among the beggars of Middenburg. In the early days you worked as a beggar's surgeon amputating limbs for those beggars who wanted more convincing injuries. It was a sweet deal because not only did you get paid, but you also got a steady meat supply. Unfortunately beggars these days prefer to *fake* their injuries. Still, you're always prepared to offer your services to those who might need them.

Some months ago Noisome Nell approached you with a scheme to hang around outside businesses and frighten away customers until the owners pay you to go away. Some of the other beggars might disapprove of your methods, but what they don't know won't hurt them. Your scheme has been profitable and you have a shared stash of 10 marks kept in a small tin in a midden. Unbeknownst to her, you have moved it from its original hiding place. The money is almost enough to realise your dream of opening a restaurant, if only you could find the right location. All you need is two more marks...

Currently you and Nell are targeting an inn known as the Drunken Pig, and have had great success at reducing its custom. The proprietor has already offered you a generous sum to move on, but Nell pointed out that this must mean he has even more money than you thought. You have doubled the amount you're demanding.

In the past week, you've noticed strangers around the city. Dark men from the South, dressed all in black, who make your Mark throb every time they are near. Clearly they are minions of the Dark Lord, and from your surreptitious observations, they are searching for something - but what? You're not sure if you want to find out.

Your favourite foods are man-flesh, and rat.

Goals

- Avoid becoming a slave to the Dark Lord again.
- Find someone who can help you set up your restaurant

Items

- Money tin with 10 marks (hidden in a secret location nearby - tell a GM if you want to collect it).

Others

Noisome Nell is your closest friend, and always a source of good ideas to make money. She's also a sap who doesn't know you're stealing from her.

Lame Jake - you know he's only faking being lame. Perhaps you could convince him to let you remove one of his legs for real?

Crazy Harry is clearly a lunatic. Why else would anyone talk about "distilling vital essences" and "quantum tunnelling". You hope madness isn't catching.

John Lackhand

Once upon a time you were a thief, and a good one. But then your luck ran out, you were caught, and given the traditional punishment for thieves: your hand was amputated. This made your old career rather difficult, and the Thieves' Guild didn't exactly have a pension scheme (unless you count "becoming Upright Man and then running away to Corabund with the Guild's treasure" - but you hadn't risen *that* high). Honest work was impossible for one marked as a thief, and so you were forced to resort to begging.

Unfortunately, people don't exactly pity a poor ex-thief, and so you have been forced to supplement your income by another means: spying. Beggars see all sorts of things, and you pass on your observations to your former guild contacts, who use them for their own nefarious purposes. The Upright Man has also shown some interest in the other beggars - you suspect he is planning some sort of takeover - and over time you have told the Thieves' Guild most of what you know about your fellow unfortunates.

Your Thieves Guild contacts have told you that some beggars are running an extortion racket, hanging around outside businesses and driving away the customers until they are paid to go away. The Thieves Guild takes a dim view of competition, and will pay well for the identities of the miscreants so they can inflict an unpleasant fate upon them.

You have also heard through your old contacts of a band of adventurers offering a large reward for a lost ring. Given the size of the reward - 20 marks - the ring is almost certainly magical. The Guild wants to find it, so they can sell it back to them at something more like its true value. Naturally, you'll get a large finder's fee if you get hold of it first.

You have also been asked to organise a "distraction" for your old friends at noon on the Feast of Fortuna (goddess of good luck) next Saturday. You don't know what the job is, but they'll throw a couple of marks your way if you can get the beggars to keep the watch well occupied. As some of the beggars worship (or at least pay lip service to) Adversa, Fortuna's sister and rival, it ought to be easy to find a few patsies.

You long to escape your current life and regain your former career as a thief. But hands don't exactly grow back. You've heard rumours of a Dwarven smith who may be able to make a silver one, but that would cost a small fortune. And where are you going to get one of those from?

Goals

- Find out who is running the extortion racket so you can dob them in to the Thieves Guild.
- See if any of the beggars can help you locate the adventurers missing ring so you can claim the Guild's reward.
- Recruit a couple of beggars to provide a suitable distraction for the Guild's big job.

Special abilities

Pick pockets: you've been practising with your off-hand, and while you're nowhere near as good as you used to be, you can probably lift something off a blind man or a beggar. To use this ability, you must physically place one of the yellow tags (in the envelope marked "thieves tools") on the victim *without being noticed*. If you succeed, come and talk to a GM, and we'll tell you what you find (if anything).

Others

Black Cat - Some sort of spooky psychic who can predict misfortune. Fortunately she hasn't seen anything about you... yet.

Englebert the benighted - This crazy old man thinks that being a beggar is actually a *good* thing. Can you believe it?

Vermin - Vermin likes to keep pet rats. She also has an uncanny ability to find things.

Lame Jake

You are descended from a long line of beggars, and your family has taken great pride in never having two copper pieces to rub together. You naturally followed in their footsteps, taking up the begging life, and learning all the tricks of the trade. And then one day your world was turned upside-down when a drunk adventurer accidentally gave you the wrong pouch. And all of a sudden, you were rich - not just rich enough to be able to afford to eat that night, but as rich as a merchant, as rich as some nobles!

You agonised for weeks over what to do. And then you cracked and spent most of the money on an inn: the Drunken Pig. But you couldn't betray your heritage and let your family down, so you lead a double life, running the inn under an alias ("Jack") while joining the beggars as often as you are able. Despite some of them begging right outside your establishment, they do not recognise you when you are cleaned up, while those who normally see you in the role of Jack the innkeeper do not recognise you when you are dressed in beggar's rags. But it is becoming harder and harder to juggle your two identities, and you are thinking of leaving the begging life for good.

The reason you haven't is Black Cat. You have secretly loved her for years, but have never been able to work up the courage to tell her. Giving up begging would mean never seeing her again - but asking her to retire with you to the Pig would mean revealing your double life. You are not sure what to do about this, and there is no-one you can turn to for help without being shamed before the begging community. Recently a band of adventurers have been hassling you about a ring they lost in a tavern brawl in the Pig. They say that the ring is of "sentimental value", but given the enormous reward they are offering - twenty marks, almost enough to buy the Pig - you presume it is magical. While you don't really need the money, neither do you need the trouble these adventurers represent; you'd like to find their silly ring so you can send them on their way.

For the past several weeks beer has mysteriously been going missing from the storage kegs in the Pig's basement. You initially suspected the new barmaid, Molly, or maybe one of the other staff, but there's no way they could remove so much beer without being seen. You have tried watching the kegs, but no-one has seen or heard anything. It is very puzzling, almost as if someone was using magic to steal beer. You know the Thieves' Guild would never bother with a crime so trivial, but beggars see all sorts of things. Maybe one of your fellows knows something?

Recently Noisome Nell, Grashnak and some of their friends have started hanging around outside the inn, begging loudly and harassing the customers for coin. It's driving people away, and ruining the business. You have offered Nell a generous sum (3 marks) to move on, but she immediately demanded twice as much money - more than you can afford at the moment. If this continues, you might have to beg for real! You need to find some way of making them stop.

Despite your name, you are not really lame - but a beggar has to earn a living somehow.

Goals

- Find out if any of the beggars have heard anything about people stealing from The Drunken Pig.
- See if any of the beggars can help you locate the adventurers' missing ring so you can get rid of them.
- Find some way of getting Nell and Grashnak to move on and beg somewhere else.

Items

- The Drunken Pig. Obviously this does not fit in your pocket.
- 3 marks cash in the till at the Pig (talk to a GM if you want to retrieve it).

Others

Agnes the Sot - used to hang around the Drunken Pig getting adventurers to pay her to drink herself into a stupor. Fortunately she never recognised you, and now she seems to have moved on to another tavern.

Black Cat - you love her, and would dearly love for her to leave the begging life and retire with you to the Drunken Pig, but have been unable to work up the courage to tell her.

Noisome Nell - A particularly foul beggar, Nell is harassing your customers, and the smell is putting the few who remain off their food.

Grashnak the Half-Orc - is Noisome Nell's partner in harassing the customers of the Pig. While he's not quite as disgusting as Nell (which really says something), he can be quite intimidating.

Noisome Nell

You were once a wealthy merchant's daughter, but you were kicked out of home when you refused to marry the fat businessman your father had promised you to. At first the begging life was hard, but you were a fast learner. You are now infamous as a beggar for your disgusting appearance and your terrible smell. But it is all trickery - every morning you spend a good hour applying boilwart and other herbs, before dunking your head in a chamber pot full of a special mixture of brimstone and dogpiss. However, it is very *profitable* trickery - usually all you have to do is approach someone to get them to fling a few coins in your direction. People literally pay you to go away.

Some months ago Festering Sally approached you with a plan to spread the blessings of Adversa by hanging around outside businesses in an effort to frighten away customers and drive them out of business, thus bringing misfortune upon them. While you are by no means a devout follower of Adversa, you enjoy any opportunity to wreak vengeance on the merchant class. You readily agreed, and together you and Sally managed to drive an unfortunate baker out of business. Then you had a brilliant idea: why not get the businesses to pay you to go away? Sally is devout and wouldn't approve, but what she doesn't know won't hurt her. You were able to enlist fellow beggar Grashnak to help. This scheme has proven quite profitable and you and Grashnak have collected a total of 10 marks that you have hidden in a tin in a midden. Unbeknownst to him, you stole the money and left him a tin full of rocks.

You then hid the cash in a completely different midden which Grashnak didn't know about. You dream of eventually saving up enough money to be able to buy up your father's business and then you can kick *him* out of home.

Currently you and Grashnak are targeting an inn known as the Drunken Pig, and have had great success at reducing its custom. The proprietor, Jack, has already offered you a generous sum to move on, but this must mean he has even more money than you thought. You have doubled the amount you're demanding (to six marks).

Goals

- Make the merchants suffer
- Collect enough money to buy your father's business (20 marks should do it)
- Look after number one

Items

Money pouch with 10 marks (hidden in a secret location nearby - tell a GM if you want to collect it).

Others

Festering Sally - Sally may be devoted to Adversa, but she isn't a bad sort. She's always willing to help out another beggar, and you envy her collection of diseases.

Grashnak the half-orc - Grashnak is your closest friend, and a reliable ally in your moneymaking schemes. He's also a sap who doesn't know you're stealing from him.

Englebert the Benighted - a stuck-up snob who looks down on you for not being "truly unfortunate".

Esme, The Prone Lady

You were once Esmeralda the White, a mighty wizard, who had the ear of kings and could direct the affairs of nations. You were instrumental in uniting the forces of Good to defeat the armies of the Dark Lord twenty years ago. But once the Dark Lord had been cast down, the allies turned to squabbling among themselves. Worse, they expected *you* to sort out all their problems. You got sick of being bothered all the time with their petty disputes, so you hung up your hat, threw away your staff, and took up a life of freedom: the life of a beggar.

Now, twenty years on, you have risen to become the Prone Lady, the leader of the beggars of Middenburg. Sometimes you can't resist meddling for good in a small way, but you take care never to be discovered. Fortunately no-one thinks it is odd if a beggar gives "rumours" to a band of adventurers. You also try and take care of your fellow beggars, and do what you can to protect them from those who would abuse them.

As Prone Lady, you collect "guild dues" from the other beggars, which you use for things like clerics and funerals when there is the need.

You are aware that not all the beggars are victims of misfortune, and that some are tricksters and charlatans. You secretly admire this - half of wizarding is chicanery, after all!

You have heard that beggars have been extorting businesses, hanging around outside and driving away customers and demanding money to go away. While profitable, the Thieves' Guild takes a dim view of competition, and will exact an unpleasant revenge on those responsible - and on you. You need to shut this scam down before they hear of it.

Goals

- Protect and help the beggars of Middenburg
- Find out who is running the extortion racket and put a stop to it.

Special abilities

Your powers are limited without your staff, but more than sufficient for your current purposes. As they require very noticeable words and gestures, you use them only rarely.

To cast a spell, you must speak the required words and make appropriate gestures, then show the target the appropriate spell card. There is no limit on the number of times you can cast each spell, but power has its price, and some spells have drawbacks.

- *Curse of the Goblin's Affliction* - gives the target Goblin Pox, a non-fatal but highly disfiguring disease. Casting requires you to touch the target while saying "contagio". Casting this spell always gives you a splitting headache for five minutes.
- *Loss of but a Moment's Memory* - makes the target forget what happened in the last five minutes. To cast this you must loudly snap your fingers in front of their face while saying "oblivium mentem".
- *Opening the Tome of the Mortal Mind* - an extremely powerful spell, which allows you to read someone's mind as if it were a book. To cast, you must hold the target's head in your hands, look into their eyes, and say "intellego mentem". Unfortunately the connection is not entirely one-way, and the target may be able to steal some of *your* secrets.

Items

- 10 Marks in accumulated guild dues.

Others

Black cat - she has the gift of prophecy, and while it seems to be limited, who knows what she could find out?

Englebert the benighted - you're not particularly fond of Adversa, but Englebert is at least useful for keeping some of the rowdier beggars in line.

Grashnak the half-orc - Orcs are natural servants of Evil, but Grashnak isn't *bad* as such. And he does cook a mean rat curry.

Spell cards for the Prone Lady

Curse of the Goblin's Affliction

You have been cursed with Goblin Pox, a non-fatal but highly disfiguring disease.

This makes little difference to those of Orcish descent, but otherwise, you are disfigured.

Loss of but a Moment's Memory

You completely forget what has happened in the last five minutes, including the casting of this spell.

Opening the Tome of the Mortal Mind

The caster of this spell can read your mind as if it were an open book - but the connection is not entirely one-way, and you may be able to steal some secrets in return.

Give the caster your character sheet, and let them read it for 30 seconds. After this, you may ask them a single question about themselves, which they must answer truthfully.

Unlucky Sam

Until recently you were a successful baker, but you were driven out of business after your shop became a favoured loitering place for beggars. They would mob customers demanding coins, while one of them smelled so bad that your bread failed to rise. Eventually you were reduced to penury. You lost everything - your shop was sold to pay your debts, and your family left you as you couldn't support them. Finally you were reduced to begging yourself. In the process, you were forced to associate with the very people who ruined you in the first place: Festering Sally and Noisome Nell. You would dearly love to make them pay for dragging you down to their revolting level.

Your recent misfortune is a setback, but you won't stay down for long. You are a natural entrepreneur, and all you need is a little money to get you back on your feet. Twenty marks would be enough to see you back in your own shop, and you wouldn't have to hang around with these smelly beggars ever again.

But how to get twenty marks? You've made a start, selling a fake treasure map to a party of credulous adventurers for a tidy sum, but then you had to spend a week hiding from them when they got back to town. You have another, but you don't think you'll be able to do it again - unless you can find some other beggar to take the risk of selling it. For a man of your talents, the world is your oyster. All you have to do is find the right opportunity.

Despite being a beggar, you continue to worship Lucre, the god of commerce - though the priests won't let you in his temple.

Items

- 6 Marks (seed capital)
- Fake treasure map

Goals

- Restore yourself to your rightful place in society.
- Get revenge on Sally and Nell for dragging you down to their level

Others

Festering Sally - is one of the people who ruined your business and caused you to lose everything. You'd love to get revenge against her if you can.

Noisome Nell - is one of the people who ruined your business and caused you to lose everything. You'd love to get revenge against her if you can.

Black Cat - you hear that she can see people's misfortunes. If she'd work with you - and if you had some money - you'd know which ships to invest in.

Vermin - you hear she can talk to rats. Maybe you could go into business together as ratcatchers?

Agnes the Sot - took you under her wing when you were first on the street. She spends all her time drunk. No wonder she's a beggar.

The Prone Lady - you have heard that she is secretly wealthy from the guild dues she collects from other beggars. Perhaps she could be persuaded to invest some of this wealth?

Vermin

The rats of the city have always been your friends. They kept you company when even your own parents abandoned you and entertained you by whispering tales of the many strange sights they see. It was only as you got older that you realised that most people don't understand the language of the rats. One special rat, Ratikins, of all your rodent friends is particularly notable for his intelligence and loyalty. He has a particularly fine nose for sniffing out gold and other lost treasures, and on many occasions this skill has meant that you have been able to eat when you otherwise would have gone hungry.

You also enjoy listening to the storytellers at the marketplace. You could spend hours listening to the tales of heroes, magic and the overthrow of the Dark Lord. In fact, it was because you have heard so many stories that you came to realise that you must be a long-lost Princess. All the signs point to it, you were abandoned at birth, you have the ability to talk to animals - you even have an oddly-shaped birthmark. Unfortunately your attempts to get into the Nobles' district to search for your parents have been unsuccessful. Obviously the ignorant guards did not recognise you (perhaps you need to learn some posh manners)

Recently your world has been turned upside-down. The Thieves' Guild have kidnapped Ratikins! In return for his safe return they are demanding that you help them find a magic ring that has been lost in the city. You have tried to explain that you need Ratikins' skills in order to find things, but they will not listen.

Some of the other rats have reported that Ratikins has not yet been harmed. However, you have warned them not to get too close, the Thieves' Guild are notorious for their deadly traps.

A while ago Ratikins found a tin full of money - 10 marks, a decent pile of cash - in a midden. You are planning to use it to hire some adventurers to rescue Ratikins and take revenge on those who stole him. In the meantime you are keeping it close to your chest.

Goals

- See if any of the beggars can help you locate this missing ring so you can get Ratikins back.
- Protect the rats of the city
- Learn to act like a Lady

Special Abilities

- *Rat friends* - although Ratikins was your closest friend you can still ask the other rats to spy and perform simple tasks for you. If you wish to do this during the game, inform a GM of what you are requesting of the rats.

Items

- Money tin with 10 marks (carried).

Others

Grashnak the Half-Orc - you distrust him, as it is well known that orcs think rat is a delicacy.

Black Cat - although she takes the name of the mortal enemy of rodents, she is rumoured to be a seeress. Maybe she can help you?

Unlucky Sam - is new to the begging life and might need some help. He used to be a baker and the rats used to enjoy feasting on his flour stores.

Crazy Harry - is knows a lot of long words. Perhaps he can help you learn to talk posh.