

WIDOW'S GAMBIT

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 4TH TO 6TH LEVEL



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WIDOW'S GAMBIT IS A FIFTH EDITION adventure for three to six characters of 4th to 6th level, optimized for a party of four 5th-level characters. A widow who was taken advantage of by an unscrupulous jeweller knows that she has no further recourse than hiring the party to steal back what should rightfully belong to her. Can the party infiltrate the jeweller's shop and locate her prized heirloom in time before being discovered? This adventure takes place in Cartosia, but the names of people and places can be changed to place this adventure in any urban environment across a variety of campaign settings.

BACKGROUND

In the bustling city of Dorran, Lorian's Jewels stands as a testament to refined craftsmanship. For decades, the store has offered fine jewelry, drawing the attention of those who appreciate the exquisite. Lorian, its owner and seasoned jeweler, has built his reputation on creating and trading pieces of unmatched beauty that attract Dorran's elite.

The widowed Lady Solvayne, one of Dorran's lesser nobles, recently faced a string of misfortunes. After a failed business venture and a series of poor harvests on her family's lands, she found herself in dire straits. It was during this time of vulnerability that Lorian, a past acquaintance, extended an offer to help by purchasing her treasured family heirloom, a necklace steeped in history and sentiment. Believing it to be a temporary solution, Lady Solvayne agreed, with hopes of reclaiming it in better times. These hopes were reinforced by Lorian, who assured her that he was happy to collect only a small interest rate on the loan once Solvayne was ready to repay.

As luck would have it, an old financial obligation to the Solvayne family was unexpectedly honored, granting Lady Solvayne the means to repurchase her cherished necklace. However, upon approaching Lorian, she was met with a refusal. Lorian, having recognized the immense value of the heirloom beyond its material worth, planned to auction it for a staggering profit.

Unbeknownst to Lorian, Joran, his young apprentice, had been privy to their dealings. Empathetic to Lady Solvayne's situation and disheartened by Lorian's change of heart and egregious avarice, Joran discreetly reached out to her. Sharing insider details, he hinted at the possibility of taking matters into more covert hands. Realizing the gravity of the situation and the limited time before the necklace is sold, Lady Solvayne has decided to seek out professionals — those skilled in stealth and strategy — to retrieve her family's

legacy. Will the party be able to step in and carry out a heist that holds the promise of justice just as well as reward?

GETTING THE QUEST

Whispers and rumors carry throughout Dorran about Lady Miranda Solvayne (NG she/her human **commoner**) seeking skilled professionals for a discreet operation. Whether the party stumbles upon this information through a well-connected informant or if one of them is somehow acquainted with Lady Solvayne herself or one of her servants, their journey into this tangled web begins when they are summoned to a meeting at Lady Solvayne's townhouse—a once grand estate showing visible signs of recent financial hardship.

Upon arrival, the party encounters Lady Solvayne, a middle-aged woman with distinguished silver streaks running through her raven-black hair. Her regal posture is sometimes broken by a wistful glance, hinting at her burdens. Beside her stands Joran (NG he/him human **commoner**), a lanky young man with freckled skin, curly red hair, and an ever-present habit of fidgeting with his sleeves when nervous. Together, they unfold the tale:

- Lady Solvayne, with an air of sorrow, narrates her plight – the painful decision to pawn her family's treasured necklace to Lorian during a period of unexpected debts and household misfortunes, and Lorian's assurances that she would be able to buy it back if and when the time came.
- Recently, having scrounged and saved enough to redeem the necklace, she was turned away by Lorian, who denied making such a commitment and now ostensibly intends to auction it to the highest bidder.
- Joran, swallowing hard and pulling at his sleeve, reveals his apprenticeship at Lorian's shop. He's grown disillusioned watching Lorian's dubious dealings. Though he knows the shop inside out – its layout, security, and the necklace's approximate location – his current position and fear of reprisal prevent him from acting on this knowledge.
- Lady Solvayne emphasizes her wish for a non-violent approach. Lorian's actions might be reprehensible, but she does not desire harm to come to him or anyone else.
- As a token of gratitude, Lady Solvayne offers a handsome reward for the necklace's safe return, implying a sum that promises to be quite generous. If pressed, she offers 100 gp up front, and another 200 gp upon completion of the heirloom's recovery. Furthermore, the party is encouraged to expand the scope of the heist and take whatever they can carry for themselves. Though Lady Solvayne seeks nothing more than her heirloom and believes stealing is wrong, too much suspicion may be drawn to her if only the heirloom goes missing.

During this conversation, a perceptive character might sense Lady Solvayne's unease. With a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check, they discern her embarrassment and shame over the situation she's found herself in. Pressing her on this with a DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check might get her to admit more about her past misfortunes and how she feels responsible for losing such a vital piece of her family's history.

GETTING INTEL

Assuming that the parties have come to consensus following initial discussion of the nature of the task, Joran can fill the party in on everything he knows about Loran's shop as well as the heirloom's location. He can provide all of the following information:

- The shop is divided into four areas: the sales floor, the back corridor, the safe room, and the workshop.
- Lorian closes up shop for the night at 6pm and heads to his home, a prominent gated town-house staffed by his faithful servants.
- After hours, the shop is protected by several powerful and automatically enabled alarm enchantments that ward all of the entrances. Joran suspects there are some inside the shop as well, but can't be sure. Lorian worked extensively with one of the most capable wizards in Dorran to establish this security protocol.
- If any enchantments are triggered, a security company named Blackthorn Sentinel Services contracted by Joran will be contacted and immediately begin its way toward the shop.
- Lorian has boasted previously that it takes no longer than ten minutes from the time at which an alarm is triggered to the point at which the security team arrives at the scene.
- Agents of Blackthorn Sentinel Services are rumoured to be quite capable. Joran estimates that the party might be able to handle them, but he can't be sure, and ideally, the party will be in and out before any security team is able to arrive.
- There are four suits of armor on the sales floor that are enchanted to animate and attack anyone who tampers with, or even touches inappropriately, the display cases.
- Joran knows that the heirloom is kept in one of the many deposit boxes in the safe room.
- The deposit boxes can be opened with a keyring that is found in the workshop. Each key on the keyring has a number on it matching its corresponding deposit box. Each box has a built-in safety protocol that demands a short waiting period of thirty seconds after a key is inserted before the lock disengages, to prevent quick tampering or forced entry.
- Joran doesn't know exactly where the keyring can be found within the workshop—Loran keeps its exact location known only to himself.

Joran is adamant that he cannot accompany the party on the heist, for obvious reasons. He also explains that he shares Lady Solvayne's wish for a non-violent approach, and further clarifies that he would strongly prefer if the party avoided any contact with Loran directly. Infiltrate the

shop, get the heirloom, and get out before security arrives to complicate things.

BLACKTHORN SECURITY TEAM

Once an alarm is triggered, it takes exactly ten minutes for a Blackthorn Sentinel Services security team to arrive on the scene. The team initially scouts the perimeter, trying to identify party locations through any open doors or through windows. They then quickly move in and attempt to subdue threats one at a time as efficiently as possible. They may, for example, attempt to converge on isolated party members keeping watch before dealing with the rest of the group. The team (two **veterans** and two **thugs**) is led by a captain, a wise-cracking former military man named Habeus Flinter (LE he/him **veteran** with 75 hit points) who relishes any opportunity to dominate and humiliate others at the slightest perceived justification. While Habeus and his team operate under a no-kill policy that they mostly strive to uphold, "accidents" have been known to happen. Should the party find themselves on the losing end of a confrontation with Blackthorn after having provoked or antagonized Habeus, he may be motivated to facilitate an accident. Conversely, if the security team falls significantly behind in combat, Habeus does not fight to the death. He will surrender and beg for mercy if necessary; immediately crumpling in the shadow of superior might.

TRACKING TIME

Unless the party can avoid triggering any of the alarms throughout the shop, Blackthorn Security Services will soon be arriving, and the GM will have to track time to account for the ten minutes that their journey takes. Here are a few notes to facilitate this process:

- If relevant, the time it takes to perform certain actions like searching a room or opening a deposit box will be noted in the applicable section of the adventure. These times will be reflected in minute or 30-second increments for ease of tracking.
- A single round of combat takes six seconds. If the party engages with the suits of animated armor, GMs can assume that combat and the moments of its immediate aftermath take approximately 30 seconds.
- Any party activities without particular timing specifications in the adventure, such as moving from room to room or otherwise interacting with the environment are left to the discretion of the GM, though GMs are encouraged not to worry too much about individual seconds. If the party stops to discuss something, make a reasonable judgement as to how long that discussion would have taken in-character, perhaps in the same increments as described above, and remind players of the time pressures.

Remember, tracking to ten minutes with exact precision isn't going to be possible, nor is it necessary. With the guidelines above, use your best judgement to determine the exact

moment at which ten minutes have passed and the security team arrives on the scene.

GMs can refer to the following Time Costs table to quickly reference the amount of time various activities take for the purposes of this adventure:

TIME COSTS

Activity	Time Cost
Resolving Combat	Approximately 30 seconds
Opening a Deposit Box	Approximately 30 seconds
Quick Room Search	Approximately 60 seconds
Other Activities	GM Discretion

LORIAN'S JEWELS

As faithfully described by Joran, Lorian's Jewels is a small, single-story shop with only four rooms. The street on which it sits within the commercial district of the city becomes relatively quiet only shortly after 6pm, and empty completely by as early as 10pm, other than the standard nightly guard patrols which stroll by the shop every half hour. Unless otherwise stated, its features are described as follows:

Ceilings, Walls, and Floors. The shop has grand, 10-foot-high ceilings adorned with colorful frescos. Its walls are half a foot thick, made of sturdy stone to protect valuable merchandise. Its floors are mostly polished marble, save for in the workshop, which is hardwood.

Doors. The front entrance features an ornate double door made of reinforced mahogany with brass handles, with AC 15 and 30 hit points (damage threshold 10). It is unlocked during business hours but is secured at night with a sophisticated padlock requiring the key carried by Lorian or a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to unlock. The west entrance to the workshop is less grand but equally secure, requiring the same conditions to unlock it. Interior doors are unlocked at all times.

Light. Mounted oil lamps throughout the shop give it a soft, even light during operating hours. After closing time, the shop is unlit.

Windows. Tall, narrow windows allow light into both the workshop and connecting corridor areas of the shop. They have AC 13 and 12 hit points. The windows can be unlocked from the inside with a simple latch mechanism but are designed not to be opened from the outside.

Alarms. Several enhanced *alarm* spells protect the shop outside of its operating hours. Both of the exterior doors as well as all of the windows are protected by these spells, which trigger when breached. The door to the safe room and the two displays that front onto the street are also protected by alarms. Additional alarm locations are described in the relevant adventure sections. All of these spells are considered to be 5th-level spells, and can be dispelled with a successful casting of *dispel magic* (DC 15). A failed attempt to dispel an alarm triggers it, sending a mental ping to a member of Blackthorn Sentinel Services.

CASING THE JOINT

Though Lady Solvayne and Joran both strongly prefer that the party not show their faces around the shop during operating hours and perform all aspects of the heist after it has closed for fear of complications, the party may nevertheless choose to do some casing while it's open, especially if they have means to conceal their identities. While this adventure can't account for everything that might occur in such a scenario, the following notes provide some guidance:

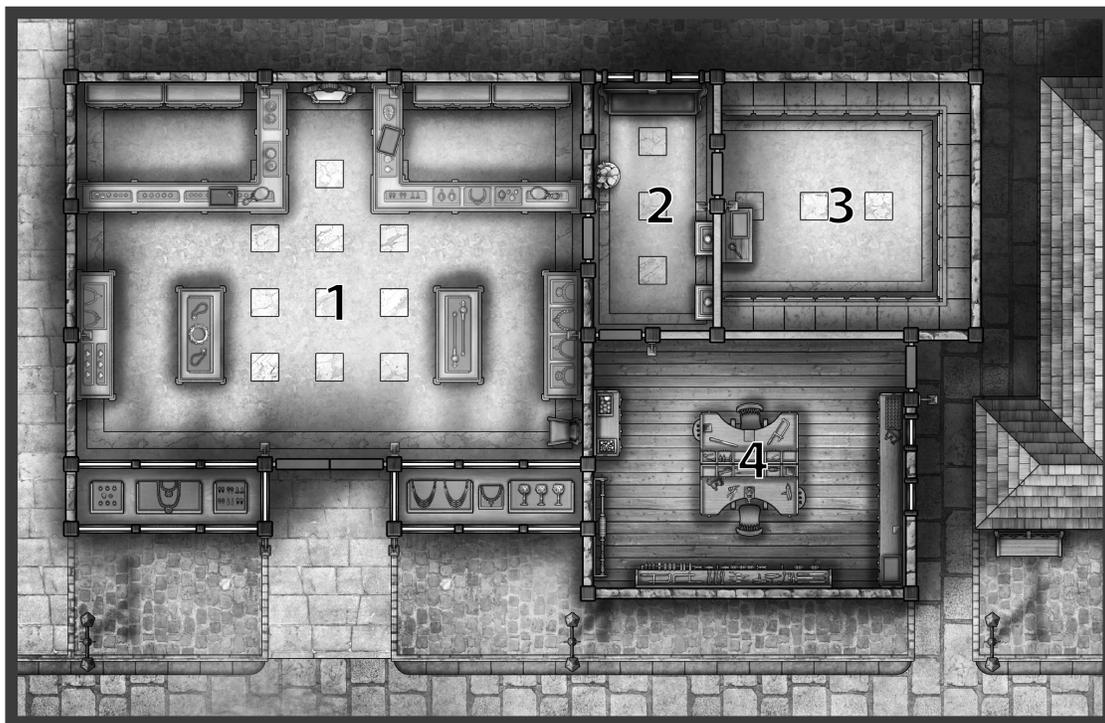
- During opening hours, the shop usually only has one or two customers inside of it at any given time at most; it wouldn't be unusual for members of the party to be the only customers for the duration of their visit.
- Lorian spends most of the opening hours on the sales floor. He spends a few hours both before opening and after close in the workshop.
- Lorian carries a keyring on his person that unlocks the shop entrances. This keyring can be pickpocketed with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check.
- Joran spends roughly half his time on the sales floor and the other half of his time in the workshop. He does not arrive before opening hours and leaves when the shop closes.
- Customers are not allowed in any shop rooms beyond the sales floor. Lorian issues only one warning; if it is not heeded, the suits of armor animate and attempt to haul any trespassers out onto the street. If the suits of armor are insufficient, Lorian can trigger an alarm spell behind the counter to discreetly call the Blackthorn Sentinel Services team.

The following areas are keyed to the provided map of Lorian's Jewels:

I. SALES FLOOR

Glass display cases, delicately framed in dark wood and gilded accents, form orderly rows within the main showroom of this shop. Each case is a small trove

LORIAN'S JEWELS



of sparking gemstones and meticulous metalwork, beckoning to those with a discerning eye and heavy purse. Against the far wall, a large mirror with an ornate golden frame presumably allows patrons to behold themselves adorned with the shop's offerings. Flanking the room's south wall stand four suits of armour, silent and imposing.

There are four groups of display cases throughout the sales floor—the countertop displays, the inner displays in the middle of the floor, the outer displays against the east and west walls of the floor, and the front window displays. Cabinets behind the countertops hold mundane items such as store inventory records and other documents, as well as cleaning supplies. The glass on all displays is reinforced—it has AC 13 and 20 hit points, with a damage threshold of 10, meaning it ignores any instance of 9 or less damage. A casting of detect magic reveals an aura of abjuration magic emanating from the inner displays and the front window displays, as well as from the suits of armor.

A character who searches the room finds a piece of paper resting on a shelf beneath one of the countertops bearing a neatly-written note. Written on the paper is the following:

*Order more silver filigree and emerald shards for the bespoke brooches. Check the current market prices first.
Draft responses to commission inquiries received this week.
Prioritize the Viscountess and the Guildmaster.*

*Sharpen the chisels and organize the workbench. Ensure all crafting tools are cleaned and properly stored.
Review Joran's progress on the latest settings. Schedule a lesson on intricate clasps and lockets.
Third row's charm tonight. The M.S keepsake demands a second glance to calm my nerves. No rest for the weary, I suppose.*

The note is Lorian's to-do list from the previous day. Discerning characters may take particular notice of the final item; M.S are Lady Miranda Solvayne's initials, and the "third row" refers to the southern row of deposit boxes, where Lorian has stowed the heirloom.

Countertop Displays. The left and right countertop displays hold a cumulative 100 gp each worth of gemstones and jewellery. These displays are not protected with an *alarm* spell.

Inner Displays. The inner displays hold a cumulative 200 gp each worth of gemstones and jewellery. Each of these displays is protected by a separate *alarm* spell that triggers if the displays are touched in any way after opening hours.

Outer Displays. The outer displays hold a cumulative 150 gp each worth of gemstones and jewellery. These displays are not protected with an *alarm* spell.

Window Displays. The window displays hold a cumulative 100 gp each worth of gemstones and jewellery. Each of these displays is protected by a separate *alarm* spell that triggers if the displays are opened after opening hours or if the display glass is breached.

Encounter: Animated Armors. The four suits of armor in this room are enchanted, and will surge to life and attack any who tamper with the displays. They fight until they are destroyed, or until the premises are vacant. They each use **animated armor** statistics, though they have 50 hit points.

2. CORRIDOR

The north end of this corridor is occupied by a plush lounge with velvet cushions. Along the eastern wall, secure display cases embedded into the very stone of the building present an array of gemstones and finished pieces. Doors exit in multiple directions.

The two displays in this corridor each hold a single gem worth 50 gp. These displays are not protected with an alarm spell.

3. DEPOSIT ROOM

The north, east, and south walls of this room are lined nearly two-dozen deposit boxes arranged in neat rows. A magnifying glass rests next to a tray atop a wooden table; the space is otherwise empty.

The deposit boxes in this room hold collateral, pieces that aren't currently for sale or are awaiting transfer to a buyer, and merchandise too valuable to risk leaving out on the sales floor. Starting with the left-most box in the north wall, the boxes are numbered 1 through 21. Lady Solwayne's heirloom is stored in deposit box 15 (right-most box on the south wall).

Opening Deposit Boxes. Each deposit box in this room can be opened with a DC 16 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or with the corresponding key from the keyring found in the workshop (area 4). An attempt to pick a lock open, which may be repeated upon failure, takes approximately thirty seconds; the same amount of time it would take the box to open if its corresponding key was used due to the delayed lock mechanism. There are twenty-one deposit boxes in total; with each box requiring thirty seconds to open, if the party has tripped an alarm, it will be difficult if not impossible for them to open every box within the ten minute window before the security team arrives. To determine the contents of any deposit boxes that doesn't hold Lady Solwayne's heirloom, GMs can roll on the Deposit Box Contents table or make a ruling at their discretion.

DEPOSIT BOX CONTENTS

d6	Box Contents
1	Empty
2	A piece of jewellery worth 25 gp
3	A piece of jewellery worth 25 gp
4	A pouch of gemstones worth 150 gp
5	A pouch of gemstones worth 200 gp
6	300 gp worth of gold and silver bars

#4. WORKSHOP

The rich scent of polished wood and resin fills the air. This room is a meticulous display of artisanship, the walls lined with racks and shelves that cradle the tools of a jeweller: files, hammers, and tiny pliers among them. The heart of the workshop is dominated by a robust workbench, its surface etched with the marks of labour and laden with an array of unfinished projects.

Though a portion of Lorian's inventory has been purchased from third parties, the bulk of it has been crafted by the jeweller himself in this workshop. Unfinished projects here are limited to settings, clasps, and fasteners; Lorian stores any more valuable components in the deposit boxes while he isn't working on them.

Hidden Compartment. Lorian keeps the keyring for the deposit boxes in a hidden compartment in his workbench. A character who searches the room for one minute and who makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check finds this hidden compartment. This check can be repeated upon failure with the same time requirement. The keyring is a robust loop of iron, each key permanently affixed to the ring at its non-cut end by a small, solid rivet, preventing keys from being removed from the ring by any convenient means.

AFTERMATH

The aftermath of this adventure varies depending on the actions of the party, particularly if they had an encounter with the security team. If the security team produces any living witnesses of the party's theft, the party will be the targets of a well-financed investigation that may or may not be successful depending on the evidence, if any, that the party left behind. This investigation will be more thorough if members of the security team were killed or "disappeared," or if the party stole a cumulative sum greater than 3000 gp from the shop. Without witnesses or significant evidence left by the party, however, they are likely to get away with the crime and without any suspicion tracing back to Lady Solwayne. If applicable, Lady Solwayne is disappointed to hear about any casualties and is subsequently unlikely to offer the party any future work as a result. As long as the party didn't do anything to implicate Joran, he is able to maintain his position at the shop without being suspected by Lorian.

REFERENCES

This work includes material taken from the System Reference Document 5.1 (“SRD 5.1”) by Wizards of the Coast LLC and available at <https://dnd.wizards.com/resources/systems-reference-document>. The SRD 5.1 is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.

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