

# CITY of MIST

NIGHTS OF  
PAYNE TOWN:

# THE PERSONAL VEIN

FREE PREVIEW

## SPOILER ALERT

This book contains case information intended for the Master of Ceremonies (MC). If you intend to play as a player in one of the Nights of Payne Town cases, reading the information here may spoil your sense of mystery and enjoyment.

This is an excerpt from Carnival of Machines, the second case from the Personal Vein



When a Rift love triangle ends in a tragic car crash at a Downtown junction, the crew must trace the chain of events back to its source. Was this just another sad story, so common in this City, or did a guiding hand have a part in this? The more they learn, the more the crew members sense that they are being led down a path from which they can't escape, towards the same end as the victims of the crime they are investigating.

*Carnival of Machines* starts out as a neo-noir murder investigation but pivots mid-case into a classic comic book "death trap" scheme. In its investigation-heavy, moody first half, the crew unfolds the personal misfortune of three Rifts whose Mythoi caused them to become involved with one another. In the second half of the case, the crew reveals the scheme behind the tragedies and must survive a creepy, forsaken, and boobytrapped funfare, designed solely to kill them and those like them. The case also features an NPC on a crash course, Goldie, whose fate is determined by the PCs actions.

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*MECHANISM n. The philosophical doctrine that all natural phenomena, including life and thought, allow mechanical explanation by physics and chemistry.*

## THE MECHANIST

**Maximilian Drake** used to think he had the capability to understand anything. For him, the universe, life, and people were nothing more than complicated machines who could be understood through analysis. He was a genius of applied sciences, making groundbreaking discoveries at Helix Labs, before he awakened as the Rift of **Hephaestus**, Greek God of blacksmiths, craftsmen, and volcanoes. Sight beyond the Mist exposed him to phenomena he could not explain, and he became more and more anxious. This was exasperated by the fact his awakening came in the wake of a lab accident which injured his spine, leaving him with a walking disability. His spirit and body broken, he left Helix Labs, sentencing himself to exile from his beloved sciences.

In his darkest hour, Drake sought the help of what he referred to as a "brain mechanic": the psychiatrist **Archibald Tennant**, a member of **Mending the Broken** (see pages 47, and 50-52). The psychiatrist seized the opportunity and poisoned Drake's mind, stoking his obsession with understanding through logic and empowering him to regain control over his life "by *eliminating* the unpredictable variables in the equation". For Drake, those unpredictable variables are the wielders of legendary powers: Rifts, whose 'magic' he both mocks and detests. Drake sidelines his own Rifthood, convincing himself his powers are a form of intellectual evolution, capable of bringing order to a chaotic world.

## THE CARNIVAL

As an expert engineer, Drake applied his genius to studying and deconstructing Rifts. Researching folklore and comparative myths, he was able to discover the patterns that govern legends. He came to understand the logic in Rifts' powers, and most importantly, the driving force of their legend. Based on this knowledge, he surmised that **Rifts can't help but follow their Mythos**, and devised a plan based on this law: to build a fairytale fairground that will attract Rifts into customized death traps that will kill them when they take the mythic bait.

To that end, he teamed up with an impoverished traveling carnival set up just outside town, the **Lemnos Carnival**, and its members, who refer to themselves as "**Carnies**" (the Sintians, a folk of plunderers who tended to Hephaestus after his fall from Olympus). Touched by Drake's Mythos, the Lemnos Carnies accepted him as their messiah and worshipped him as a god, and he gifted them the uncanny science that would bring their funfair devices and mannequins to life.

To help him collect information on potential Rift targets, Drake hired **P.I. Chuck Holliday** (Sleeper) and equipped him with a camera with a lens that can see through the Mist. He sent the private investigator to find and profile Rifts for him. He then used his Carnies and their lifelike mannequins to lure hapless targets into the death trap fairground.

Drake's hypothesis turned out to be true. Fascinated with Rifts' nearly-mechanic, predictable behavior, Drake devised traps for each victim, deriving a twisted sense of control and pleasure out of the victory of science and logic over his legendary prey. He killed as many as a dozen Rifts before P.I. Holliday sent him three profiles of interconnected Rifts (and one Sleeper), who posed an interesting jigsaw for Drake's intellect to solve.



## A DOWNTOWN LOVE TRIANGLE

Drake's new targets were the following.

- **Pauline Woodworth** (Paul Bunyan, a giant lumberjack in American folklore) was a private construction contractor who possessed immense strength as well as the power to grow bigger. She had her own business, **Woodworth Builders**, and a beautiful wife, **Ellie Woodworth** (Sleeper). Her Mythos urged her to settle the wilderness, so she was interested in construction projects outside town.
- **David Nguyen** (Rift of King David) was a high-flying executive in Orimaka Finance. His Mythos allowed him to slay giants (David and Goliath), but also pushed him to covet someone else's wife (as the Biblical king did).
- Samantha Goldstein, or **Goldie** (Rift of Goldilocks) was a master thief with the power to get into any home, bypassing locks, security systems, etc. and the drive to take what other people own.

Drake set in motion the machinations that would lead them to their deaths:

- He lured Pauline with a project of rebuilding the abandoned fairground at the edge of town (settle the wilderness).
- He arranged for David to have a bad date at the same diner where Pauline and Ellie dined, predicting that the adulterous king would set his heart on Ellie.

- During that date, he had P.I. Holliday tip Goldie off about a rich man in the Downtown diner who could be an interesting mark. Naturally, she showed up, and started casing David, planning to steal his money.

## THIS FATEFUL NIGHT

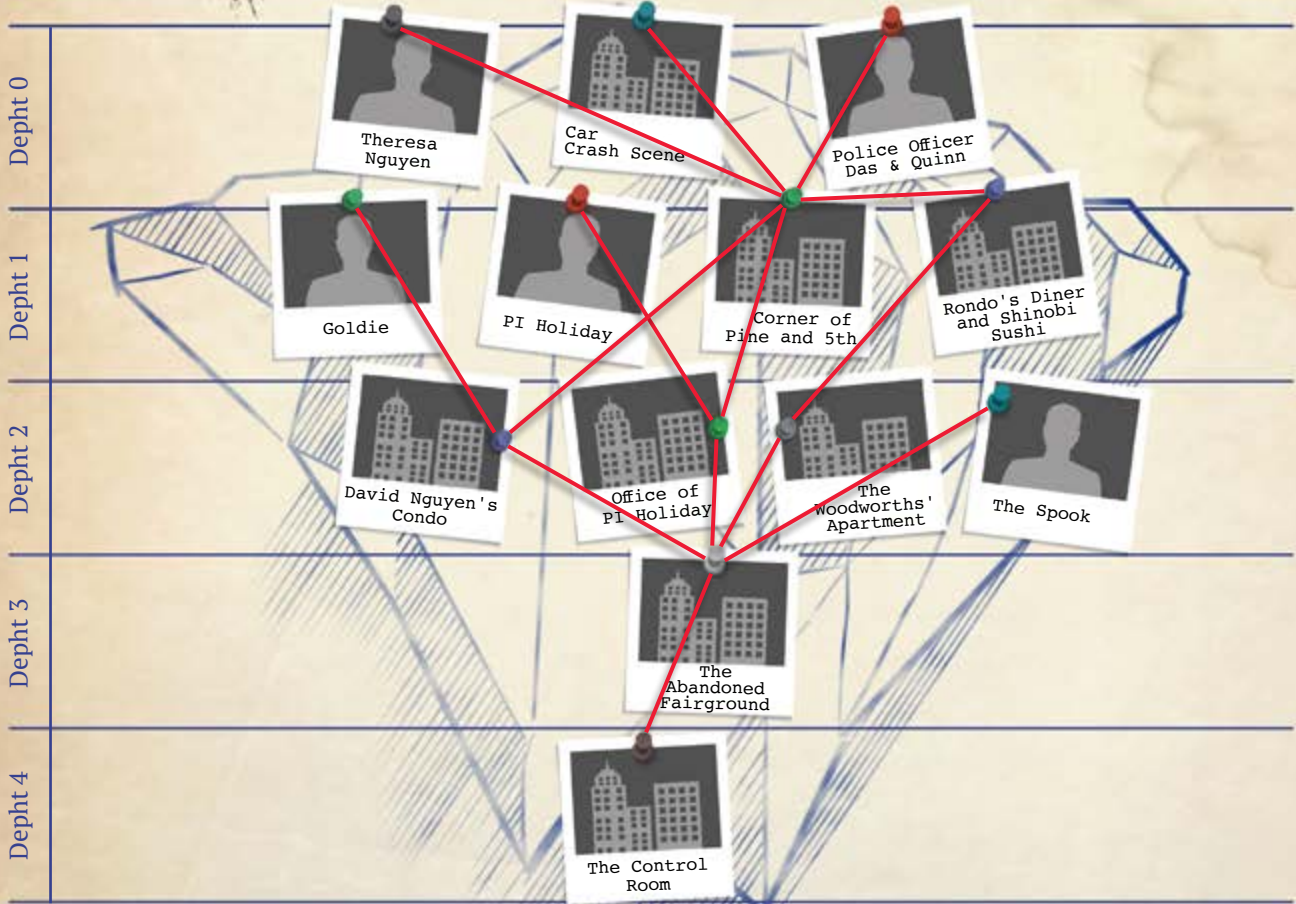
A few weeks passed, with David harassing the Woodworths and Goldie sizing up David and trying to establish where he kept his fortune. Tonight, Drake's plan came to fruition.

- David followed Pauline to the fairground where they battled it out, David and Goliath style, and he killed her, shooting her with a revolver.
- Drake and his Carnies had a death trap waiting for David, a lifelike mannequin made to look like Ellie. When David kissed her, his lips started burning. The mannequin's lips were glazed with poison.
- Realizing he was deceived, David raced back to town to find the real Ellie and get medical help but it was too late. The poison killed him and he crashed his sports car close to the diner where they first met.
- Goldie was present at the car crash site, where she realized David was involved in something bigger and that in order to find out more, she must find out where he came from. A customized death trap already awaits her at the fairground.

The case begins with the car crash.







## DEPTH 0: THE HOOKS

The most cinematic way to open the case is by having **crew members present at the corner of Pine and 5th** that night, when David Nguyen's sports car comes hurtling down 5th Street. As the crash takes place in a busy Downtown junction, some of the crew members may be there as part of their daily routines and start the scene as accidental bystanders. Precognitive Rifts could have had a vision of the impending crash, arriving at the scene in time to try and prevent it. Perhaps the crew sits down for a late dinner and conversation, in a diner close to the junction such as Rondo's Diner or Shinobi Sushi.

Those at the scene first hear the rumbling growl of a sports car engine, then spot the out-of-control vehicle running rampant on 5th street, about to crash. The driver seems to be unconscious, head against the steering wheel. **Even if the crew brings the car to a safe stop, David Nguyen is already dead**, killed by fake Ellie's poison kiss.

### OUT-OF-CONTROL CAR ★/★★★

#### SAFELY BRING TO A STOP 5 / CRASH 2

- **Sports Car:** When Out-of-Control Car enters the scene, give it *speeding-4*.
- **Collision Course:** When *crash:2* maxes out, the Out-of-Control Car crashes into whatever hard barrier is in its path.
- Speed towards an impact point (*about-to-crash-1*)
- +★★: Hit someone who isn't being careful or who can't get out of the way in time (*hospitalized-5* or **Make Something Horrible Happen**)
- Speed down the street, engine growling
- Pass a bystander, creating a doppler effect sound



The crew may also become involved in the case in the following ways:

- If the crew has a reputation of working on the wrong side of the law, David Nguyen’s grandmother, **Theresa Nguyen**, may contact them an hour after the accident. Icy cold on the phone, the elderly and extremely wealthy lady offers a substantial bounty to anyone who could bring her the head of whoever is responsible for her grandson’s death on a literal silver platter. If the crew doesn’t take her up on her offer, she’ll move on to another crew, but she can still be convinced to pay for information about her grandson’s killer.
- **Downtown beat officers Das and Quinn**, who feature in *Killing Her Softly* (page 14), will be called to handle the crashed car and the surrounding commotion. If the crew has established a working relationship with them, they may call upon the crew for help with investigating David Nguyen’s death.

## **INTERESTED PARTIES**

While the crew is investigating the scene of David Nguyen’s car crash, they are watched from a distance by two persons who take great interest in the accident. Alert PCs (and players) who **Investigate** to check if anyone is watching them, may notice either or both individuals spying on them. You can also let the players know they are being watched if you want to introduce these characters. Goldie may approach the crew and introduce herself, as explained below.

### **GOLDIE**

**Samantha Goldstein (Goldilocks)**, known as **Goldie**, plays the role of the **redeemable criminal**, an NPC who is on the wrong path and whose fate will be determined by the actions of the PCs. She is a hustler and thief who excels at breaking and entering and robbing people of their wealth. Goldie has a distinct 80s streetwear style: she sports a mane of blow-dried bleached hair, a torn jeans jacket, and lots of iridescent plastic bangles. She is able to shape inanimate objects by declaring they are “too hot”, “too cold”, “too big”, “too small”, “too hard”, or “too soft”, which then becomes true.

### **GOLDIE ★★★**

#### **HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / REDEEM 5 / CATCH 5**

- **Other People’s Things:** Once in the series, Goldie can stop holding back and transfer into her possession any single object, privilege, or power possessed by someone else, as long as she can see either the object or its owners. She then leaves town.
- **Too Hot, Too Cold:** Once per scene, Goldie can use her powers as an intrusion to defend herself, nullifying a single status of physical harm of tier-5 or lower by making it too hot, too cold, too hard, too soft, too big, or too small to be effective.
- Make her pursuers’ clothing “too hard”, “too big”, or “too small” (*entangled-3* or *can’t-breathe-3*), slow them down by making the floor “too soft” (*slowed-3*), or escape them altogether by making a passage “too small” for them to follow (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
- Steal something, or force someone to drop an object by making it “too hot” (burn up to two tags and give herself appropriate tags)
- Escape restraint, making an object “too big” to restrain or imprison her (remove up to 3 tiers of restraint statuses or burn up to 3 restraint tags)
- Expertly circumvent security measures, making locks “too small” and security systems circuitry “too hot” to function (give a security system *override-3* or burn 3 of its tags)
- Turn on a dime, shirking responsibility and abandoning all the progress she’s made (remove 3 tiers from any statuses on her *redeem* spectrum or guilt and responsibility statuses)
- Smile ear to ear and flick her hair joyously as she escapes

**Mythically attracted to other people’s things, Goldie craves a chunk of David Nguyen’s fortune and will do whatever it takes to discover where he hid something of value**, be it cash, gold, diamonds, bonds, whatever. This legendary kleptomancy already has her ensnared in Maximilian Drake’s trap, carefully designed to push all of her Mythos buttons. If she follows David’s trail and reaches the abandoned fair-ground, as Drake expects she would do, there’s a death trap waiting there just for her.

**Goldie will try to use the crew.** Once she sees them investigating the accident, her most obvious course of action is to team up with them. She will lie to, steal from, and eventually probably betray the crew, but only as long as no one gets badly hurt, since in



those cases her dormant conscience wakes up for a moment. For example, she may initially pretend to be Ellie Woodworth and try to get the crew to break into David Nguyen's Condo or to share what they discover about his recent whereabouts. Play her as a believable and friendly ally, who then shrugs sweetly when she screws the crew over, as if she can't help it and can't be expected to. Try to keep her betrayals taunting and humorous rather than grievous and play up her charm to get the crew to take interest in her fate.

Goldie has been casing David Nguyen and knows the clues listed under **Investigating David Nguyen on corner of Pine and 5th**. She also knows all the public details of his involvement with Pauline and Ellie Woodworth, given under Rondo's Diner and Shinobi Sushi, and can bring the PCs up to speed.

## **P.I. HOLLIDAY**

The other individual watching is **Private Investigator Chuck Holliday** (Sleeper), the gumshoe working for Maximilian Drake who nonetheless never heard his employer's name or met him (see sidebar). Always in the classic rain coat and fedora hat, P.I. Holliday is well-equipped for Downtown's rainy alleys. A heavy smoker, he leaves a scattering of cigarette butts wherever he's staking out a target.

**P.I. Holliday doesn't care who he's working for; in fact, he doesn't want to know.** He only wants to get paid at the end of the day. He doesn't see himself responsible for other people's problems ("nobody is innocent"), and he has seen enough dead bodies of people whose problems caught up with them to care. He's a sleazeball, but he's not evil; confronting him with hard proof that his work is used to hurt people would make him think twice about taking on additional work from his mystery employer.

## **P.I. HOLLIDAY'S TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT**

P.I. Holliday is employed strictly via mail correspondence and has been offered double his normal fee for profiling Rifts. He received a special camera, with a Mist-penetrating lens through which he can see and take pictures of a Rift's true form and powers (the photos he takes with the camera only reveal legendary phenomena to its bearer and to Rifts). Since then he has been shadowing Rifts all over Downtown at the behest of his employer, sending the report dossiers to an obscure mailbox.

The mailbox is checked twice a day by one of the Carnies who drives into town. Assume that P.I. Holliday is immediately reporting all findings to his employer, perhaps even using an emergency telephone number if he feels what he found was very valuable or pertinent (the same Carnie also answers the phone). Once Maximilian Drake receives the first reports of a new set of Rift targets – the crew – he sets out to build custom death traps for them.

## **PROFILING THE CREW**

Throughout the case, when the PCs score 7-9 on their **Investigate** score, use the counter question option to ask them about their Mythos and Mythos powers.

When a PC uses her powers and P.I. Holliday can see them, ask:

- What is the nature of your powers?
- What do you think could block your powers or contain them?
- Could your powers be turned against you?

When a PC displays a behavior related to their Mythos, ask:

- What does your Mythos really want from you?
- What does it wish for you to find out?
- Which character in your Mythos is most important to you?

**Note down the answers and use them when you describe the death traps Drake prepared for the crew at the abandoned fairground.** The character doesn't have to reveal the whole story for this to happen; you can assume that both P.I. Holliday and Drake do their research and extrapolate a great deal of information from just a few key details.

## **FOLLOWING P.I. HOLLIDAY**

Giving P.I. Holliday the slip and then following him isn't easy. His custom move **Street Smarts** and his familiarity with the alleyways Downtown, reflected by



the hard move **Deny Them Something They Want**, make him hard to shadow. If the crew manages to follow the private eye, they will find him at his office (Office of P.I. Holliday), following Goldie or spending time with her, or dropping a package into the mail collection box on the street.

### SHIPS IN THE NIGHT

To complicate things further, P.I. Holliday fell in love with Goldie while profiling her over the past weeks. He approached her, or rather, allowed himself to be seen by her, and the two now lead a no-strings-attached, on-and-off romantic affair. David Nguyen's car crash has P.I. Holliday worrying about what his employer plans for Goldie, and this concern for her may or may not be enough to drive him to cross his professional red lines and become involved.

Goldie can become a means for the crew to reach P.I. Holliday, but it works both ways: information about the crew, their powers, and their plans can leak through Goldie to P.I. Holliday, and from there to Drake himself.

### PI. HOLLIDAY ★★

#### HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / BRIBE 4 / THREATEN 4

- **Powers of Deduction:** When P.I. Holliday surveys the scene for the first time or as a hard move, the MC will ask you one question. You must reply with a straight answer or a solid lead. P.I. Holliday knows your answer, even if your character didn't speak it.
- **Street Smarts:** Whenever you try to follow or fool P.I. Holliday, first give him *alert-2*. This status cannot exceed tier 3.
- **Thinks On His Feet:** When P.I. Holliday takes a status he can avoid or soften with common sense or resourcefulness, reduce its tier by 1.
- **Professionalism:** The first time in a scene you try to get information from P.I. Holliday about his employer, if *bribe* or *threaten* have not maxed out, first give him *my-lips-are-sealed-3*.

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- Draw out his revolver and threaten someone to back off, or he'll shoot (*wary-2* or *gunshot-wound-3*)
- Dash down a smokey alley and disappear or fool someone trying to shadow him (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
- Grease someone's palm when they're giving him a hard time (give them *wad of cash* if they get out of his way)

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- Watch silently from a distant street corner, smoking

## DEPTH 1: DOWNTOWN DISASTER

### CORNER OF PINE AND 5TH

Steam rolls up from the engine of the crashed sports car and the acrid smell of burnt tires fills your breath. The car lights flash in tandem with a restaurant's neon sign on the side of the building, drowned in the cacophony of alarms from nearby cars. The streetlight above the signpost of Pine Street and 5th Street flickers and then dies. The windshield, smashed into a million glass pieces, still desperately holds onto its frame, hiding everything behind it except for a big, round, blood stain.

The corner of Pine and 5th street is a bustling Downtown junction with a few businesses, including some popular cheap eateries. This is both the scene of David Nguyen's car crash and the setting for his one-sided love triangle with Pauline and Ellie Woodworth, whom he first noticed at one of the local joints, Rondo's Diner. The Woodworths' Apartment is only a block away; this area used to be their go-to destination for a quick bite, and people here know them, at least by their looks.

Following the accident, an influx of curious bystanders swarms the crash site, soon followed by an ambulance and then the police (possibly officers Das and Quinn), who mark out the crime scene and push onlookers back. If the crew members are there first, they can **Investigate** the car and the driver before the police arrive, but they are seen doing so (unless they first **Sneak Around** or create an equally dramatic diversion).

### DEATH BY GLASS

If the car crashed, David Nguyen's body is found in a gruesome state, with a large shard of windshield glass embedded in his skull. Modern windshields don't break like this, a fact which you can mention for added creep factor.

**The driver is dead.** It's hard to tell what exactly killed him, especially if the car crashed. Careful examination will show his lips have traces of lipstick on them, seemingly from a kiss.



According to the driver's license, this is David Nguyen. He is clearly a wealthy person, wearing an expensive suit, watch, and shoes and driving that fancy sports car.

There is gunshot residue on Davids' hands. He recently fired a firearm.

Considering tire tracks, the collision course, and additional dents on the car, Crime Scene Investigation analysis would show David lost control of the car a few moments before it crashed.

It's impossible to determine where exactly the car came from. Extensive and tedious CCTV cameras research or magical means of tracking may show that it drove in from out of town, but that's where the trail goes cold.

A careful investigator would notice David's shoes have mud on them. The same mud can be found in the car's tire grooves. Analyzing the mud can indicate it came from out of town, but sending it to a lab could take one to several downtimes to get results (if the Mist doesn't make the lab lose the samples).

If the deceased's memories or mind are accessible by magical means, the last image he recalls is the sight of Ellie Woodworth when he kissed her (not knowing it was her mannequin clone).

Beyond the Mist, David Nguyen's spirit is still in shock and is *transitioning-3* to the afterlife, or the void. When he comes to, if he's still around, he will become obsessed with Ellie Woodworth and seek her out, possibly going to the Woodworths' Apartment, but he won't willingly share any information about what he had done earlier that night, and, either way, he doesn't know. (Unless he is aided by a Rift, his spirit cannot affect Ellie in any way.)

Beyond the Mist, the Lemnos Carnies' poison which David breathed in gives off a vague Mythos footprint of Greek pirates and plunderers.

Further beyond the Mist, there is an almost impalpable trace of malice in the broken windshield. It's impossible to associate it with anything or anyone related to the case at hand, only with some faraway malintent.

## INVESTIGATING DAVID NGUYEN

Once they put a name to the victim, the crew may try to gather more information about David.

Someone local would recognize David or his car, saying they have seen him hanging around recently at Rondo's Diner or Shinobi Sushi.

David Nguyen is a filthy rich high-flying executive in his 30s, an Associate Partner at Ori-maka Finance. His success seems to be ascribed as much to his family connections as it is to his talent and hard work.

He is single, and has been active on dating sites / speed dating cafes / newspaper personals. About two weeks ago this activity stopped after he had one last date with Emma Bailey, a flight attendant who also hangs out at Shinobi Sushi.

He owns a luxury condo in one of the fanciest apartment buildings Downtown (David Nguyen's Condo).

Later, if the crew has access to the morgue and/or the coroner report, they will learn David died from respiratory failure caused by a poison, most likely ingested or breathed.

## RONDO'S DINER AND SHINOBI SUSHI

Standing in the rain on the corner of Pine Street and 5th, you notice two bustling eateries on opposite sides of the road. On one side, with red booths lined with pink neon, Rondo's Diner looks like the joint that will serve you a greasy meal or a pancake stack and watery coffee any hour of the night. On the other side, under a blue-lit sign, Shinobi Sushi looks like a place for people who are trying too hard to be seen. Both places seem packed, though, so you figure someone around here must have seen or heard something.



The two local eateries at Pine and 5th can help the crew unravel David's past and point at his connection to Pauline and Ellie. The Woodworths' were regulars in both the diner and the sushi place, so other regulars know who they are and what they've been through recently.

David Nguyen was first seen around these parts on a date at Rondo's Diner with Emma Bailey, a mousy flight attendant (who is eating tonight at Shinobi Sushi). The date night was ruined because he couldn't stop staring at Ellie Woodworth. Emma mentioned to him that Ellie was spoken for, that she's with Pauline, but David didn't seem to lose interest.

David Nguyen started stalking Pauline and Ellie and on some occasions tried to impose himself and join them at dinner. He made overt advances at Ellie in front of Pauline. They refused him politely at first, but at some point Pauline threatened to hurt him if he didn't leave them alone. He kept stalking them, hanging around this part of town more and more often.

It was Emma's request to have the date at Rondo's Diner, a curious choice because Emma doesn't usually frequent the diner. She didn't plan on staying in 'that cheesy place', preparing to be picked up there and move on to a nicer restaurant, but then David saw Ellie.

Questioning Emma reveals a mysterious third party wanted David and Ellie to meet. Someone (P.I. Holliday) who knew she had a date with David left her a note, promising to take care of next month's rent for her if they went to the diner first. She was tight for money so she agreed, thinking it was a publicity stunt, and then forgot about it. After the date, next month's rent was paid.

The Woodworths live just around the corner, less than a block away (the Woodworths' Apartment).





## WHAT'S NEXT?

The Personal Vein features three cases trailing the personal tragedy of the victims of a scheme to slowly and painfully destroy the very fabric of society in the City.

It is the first vein from *Nights of Payne Town*, which also contains:

**The Mystical Vein.** Three cases following a magical arms race, where a mystery collector will stop at nothing to gather every form of magical object and being in the City.

**The Criminal Vein.** Three cases involving the rise of an unstoppable crime baron, a violent self-proclaimed monarch, and the struggle for power over the City streets.

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*Nights of Payne Town* is a story arc book, a collection of ten cases (adventures) that can be run individually or as an ongoing series (campaign), following the insidious operation of an all-powerful Avatar.

Each case contains everything you need to run a game of City of Mist, including a teaser for your players, the backstory, locations, clues, NPCs, Danger descriptions and maps.

At the culmination of the story arc, these three veins combine into a single super-plot.

Find *The Personal Vein*, *Nights of Payne Town*, and other City of Mist products on our website at

[www.cityofmist.co](http://www.cityofmist.co)

and on [DriveThruRPG](#).

