

Salt and Silver

*A “Mystery and Lust at the Gilded Anchor” Adventure
A D&D 5e (2024) one-shot for a level 3 party of 4–6*

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Old brass bells bound in jasmine vine — a door that seems to be listening for something.

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1. Overview

- **System:** D&D 5e (2024 revision)
- **Level:** 3 (party of 4–6 characters), bring your own characters (no pregens)
- **Table:** 4–6 players, single session, ~4–6 hours
- **Setting:** The Gilded Anchor, a queer brothel and sanctuary in the Lower City of Baldur's Gate
- **Pitch:** Invited as guests of honor to the premiere of a new piece by the Anchor's star baritone, the party finds the house's genius fading fast — and something with a panpipe is listening in the dark.

2. Content Note & Safety Tools

This adventure is set in and around a queer brothel. Nudity, flirtation, and sensuality are part of the atmosphere throughout — no explicit sexual content occurs on the page; scenes fade to black or cut away at the threshold. The adventure also involves a missing/endangered NPC and a fey antagonist whose “art” comes at the cost of another person's autonomy and body.

Before running this adventure, hold a session zero or at least a quick table check-in. Confirm the table is comfortable with the content above, and consider using a safety tool — Lines & Veils, an X-card, or simply open communication — so anyone can flag discomfort during play without derailing the scene.

3. Background (DM Only — Spoilers)

Silas Vane, one of the Anchor's eight senior Wayfinders and its star baritone, has spent weeks composing a new piece for voice and harp — his

most ambitious work yet. In the past few days he's been seen only rarely, and hasn't eaten or had much to drink. The house chalks it up to “the mind of a genius at work.”

The truth: a fae satyr named **Zephyros, the Muse-Thief**, heard Silas composing and has been charming him day and night with lilting rowan-wood panpipes, compelling him to finish the piece for Zephyros and Zephyros alone. Zephyros doesn't want gold or power — he wants “perfect resonance,” and believes true art is only achieved at the moment of total surrender. He sees himself as a curator, not a thief. The moment the piece is complete, he intends to take Silas back to the Fey realm forever, enslaved as his personal muse.

Silas is still present in the house when the PCs arrive — fading, but reachable. This is a rescue in progress, not an aftermath. If the party doesn't intervene before the piece is finished, Silas is lost for good. If they succeed, he recovers cleanly.

4. Adventure Hooks

The Guests of Honor (primary hook). The PCs are invited to the Anchor as special guests for a night of music: the premiere of “**Salt and Silver**,” Silas Vane's new composition for voice and harp. They're guests of honor because, roughly two weeks earlier, they helped vanquish a nest of steam mephits infesting the Anchor's geothermal baths — a prior good deed that can be referenced as shared history rather than replayed as its own scene.

The hook arrives as a physical invitation, hand-delivered — hand it to the players as a prop, or read it aloud:

My dearest friends,

You are cordially — no, insistently — invited to an evening you will not want to miss: the premiere of Salt and Silver, a new work for voice and harp by our own Silas Vane, performed for the very first time this coming evening, at the Gilded Anchor.

You will, of course, sit at the finest table in the house, as our guests of honor — a small thanks for what you did for us and ours in the baths, which we have most certainly not stopped talking about.

Do dress for the occasion — nothing scandalous required, unless you're so inclined, in which case, please, be our guest.

With warmth, mischief, and no small amount of anticipation, Kaelen (and Milo, and Barakos, who send their regards in the form of a very large tab already opened in your names)

DM notes: Soft session-zero nudge — have the table quickly agree how their characters know each other before play starts. A house full of gossips gives a built-in in-fiction excuse to ask.

5. Synopsis

Beat-by-beat, spoilers included. Rough pacing for a 4–6 hour session in parentheses — real tables vary, especially in the first hour.

1. **The invitation.** (*Pre-session or opening minutes.*) PCs receive Kaelen's hand-delivered letter inviting them to the premiere of "Salt and Silver," as guests of honor for the mephit job.
2. **Arrival.** (*~10–15 min.*) Barakos welcomes them at the door like old friends; Kaelen greets them with an embrace and a kiss on

the cheek and seats them at the reserved table, an hour ahead of the show. Aris is mid-performance on a web of silks strung from the rafters — the evening's opening act — with Elian accompanying him on lute.

3. **The first hour.** (*~60–75 min.*) Free social time in the parlor — cards, drinks, flirtation with off-duty Wayfinders, a trip to the baths — while faint, easy-to-miss seeds of the mystery drift past (the panpipe melody, Kaelen's half-second hesitation, Milo's offhand comment).
4. **The turn.** (*~10–15 min.*) As showtime nears, the atmosphere frays — the melody returns more often and lingers longer, and Kaelen's composure starts to crack. Kaelen steps away "to check on something" and comes back badly shaken: something's wrong with Silas. The party is pulled in.
5. **The sealed door.** (*~5–15 min, depending on the puzzle.*) At the Lavender Suite, the party finds the door bound in living jasmine vines, magically sealed, the melody swelling from beyond. Solving [§7. The Jasmine Knot \(Puzzle\)](#) (a literal puzzle) opens it.
6. **Meanwhile, downstairs.** (*Concurrent — no added time.*) While the party works the door, the same charm reaches the parlor crowd below — conveyed through escalating sound cues, not a task for the party. The proprietors handle it themselves; the party's focus stays on the door.
7. **Not a suite at all.** (*~5 min.*) The door opens onto a path into a Fey pocket dimension — Zephyros's private stage, bled through into the Material Plane.
8. **Arming up.** (*~10–15 min.*) Before stepping through, the party reclaims anything checked at the Tidewrack, and Barakos supplements from his personal armory (Captain's Quarters) while Milo provides a portable bite that functions as a short rest.
9. **Into the Fey pocket.** (*~45–60 min.*) A short path with two encounters — the Glimmer-

Gaze Pixies, then the Rose-Knots — before the party reaches the moonlit glade where Silas is writing and Zephyros is playing. See [§7. The Fey Pocket — Zephyros's Glade.](#)

10. **The Coda and the confrontation.** (~30–45 *min.*) Silas keeps writing regardless of the fight — one more line of “Salt and Silver” each round, seven lines to go. The party can fight Zephyros, guard Silas to stall the clock, or both. Resolution: defeating or driving off Zephyros before the coda completes = Silas recovers cleanly (confirmed). If Silas finishes the piece first = hard failure, Silas is lost for good, no fallback (confirmed).

6. Part 1 — Prelude

(Roughly 70–90 minutes of table time: arrival, the first hour, and the turn.)

This adventure runs in two parts, for ease of running at the table. Part 1 covers the house's static locations and the free-form first hour — read through in prep, dip back in as needed. Part 2 is the sequential action from the moment the mystery turns onward, meant to be read straight through without flipping back to Part 1 once it starts.

Ground Floor — The Parlor & Stage

The public heart of the house: parlor and performance stage, clothes check, bar, and kitchen. Large windows in the aft section look out over the harbor. Tonight it's packed — the whole Lower City turned out for the premiere, and the PCs have a reserved table with a prime view of the stage and the bay beyond, in recognition of the mephitis job.

The Tidewrack

Just inside the front door, guests check anything that doesn't fit "dress for the occasion" — weapons, armor, heavy travel gear — in exchange for a small tide-shell charm that gets it back later. Tonight it's minded by a rotating house hire, not a senior Wayfinder.

DM notes: A courtesy check, not a requirement. The party reclaims whatever they checked here before arming up at [§7, Captain's Quarters](#).

Arrival — Barakos at the Door

The Gilded Anchor rises over the harbor like a ship run aground on purpose — timber and lantern-glow crowned by an open roof deck, a very well-endowed, very naked triton for a figurehead. A queue winds down the block, but the towering tiefling at the door — horns wound in gold wire, eyes like molten gold — catches sight of you, and the queue stops mattering.

"Well, well." Barakos's voice is a low rumble, warm as the steam rooms below. "The mephitis-slayers." He steps aside with a look alone. "Go on. You're expected."

DM notes: Warm familiarity is house custom. Reference a specific mephitis-fight detail by name if you know one. He doesn't linger — the door's busy tonight.

The Parlor in Full Swing

Heat and noise roll over you — lantern-glow on brass, a murmur of a hundred conversations, laughter rising like surf. Leather settees packed three-deep, a dice game gone raucous. Past the open windows, the harbor glitters black and gold under the stars, and a small stage waits there, harp in place, unlit for now. The whole house smells of woodsmoke, salt, and Milo's cooking.

For just a moment — gone before you're sure you heard it — a thread of melody drifts down from somewhere above. Panpipes, small and reed-thin, played very far away.

DM notes: The first, easy-to-miss seed — don't call attention to it. See [§6, The Melody & the Haze](#) for PCs who go looking early.

Kaelen Seats the Guests

Kaelen finds you before you've taken three steps in — trailing lavender silk, already delighted. "There they are!" They fold each of you into an embrace, finishing with a warm kiss to the cheek. "The heroes of the house, right on time." They steer you through the crowd to a table with the best view in the room — a full hour still to go before the main event. Overhead, Aris swings from a web of silken ropes, shirtless and easy, flirting shamelessly with anyone who meets his eye; Elian coaxes a low melody from a lute at the stage's edge, giving the display its rhythm. "Right up front — you'll want to see this. Silas has been positively obsessive over this piece, even for him." A smile, easy and warm — but it holds a half-second too long. Then it's gone. "Drink. Eat. Enjoy yourselves. The night is yours."

DM notes: The second seed. Play it light — a player who asks directly gets a deflecting answer ("Oh, he's fine — geniuses just get like this.").

The Parlor & Its Patrons

A few glimpses of the room worth painting for the table as they settle in — read one or two aloud, or offer them up when a player asks what they see:

A broad-shouldered dockhand has talked his way into a game of the Hag's Wager, and is losing spectacularly — and happily — to a laughing half-elf who keeps "helping himself" to sips of his drink between hands, their fingers lingering a beat too long against his each time.

A trio near the bar has clearly been at Milo's "Siren's Kiss" a while; their conversation has drifted somewhere well past flirtation, hands finding waists and jawlines with the easy confidence of people who've stopped pretending they came here just for the music.

In a deep leather settee, a spry half-elf sits astride the lap of two enormous, furry patrons built like barbarians, his face tucked contentedly into the crook of one's armpit while the two of them kiss unhurriedly over his head, one massive hand splayed warm across his back.

DM notes: The point is a room that feels lived-in and unhurried — the calm before the turn.

Dorian Vell and **Peregrine Voss** (both under [\\$8, Notable Guests \(Premiere Night\)](#)) are worth seating nearby if you want recurring faces.

Milo Holds Court at the Bar

At the bar, Milo's a one-man storm of activity — pouring, garnishing, trading insults with regulars who clearly adore him. A jar of something the color of a bruise sits on the top shelf, hand-labeled in looping script: MOON-PICKLED RAMPS — DO NOT SELL TO SORENSEN. He catches your eye and grins, already pulling a bottle down. "Guests of honor drink for free tonight. Don't tell the owners." A beat. "I am one of the owners."

DM notes: A good gossip source at the bar. If asked about Silas, he's more candid than Kaelen: "Barely seen him in days. Had to chase him down with a sandwich yesterday." A third seed, for players who go looking.

The First Hour

Before the mystery proper kicks in, give the table roughly an hour of in-character downtime to enjoy the party. Mix and match:

- **Dice tables.** A rowdy game called "the Hag's Wager" runs most of the night — low stakes, high trash talk (full rules in the DM Lore guide; to run it fast, roll 2d6 each for a PC and their opponent, each chases one more die, and whoever lands closest to 13 without going over wins). Good for seating PCs with a couple of named regulars and some easy roleplay/light gambling.
- **Milo's specialties.** The ramps make a PC's mouth tingle pleasantly for a few minutes if they try them — flavor only, no mechanical effect, but worth a reaction. (Full drink menu in the DM Lore guide.)
- **Off-duty Wayfinders.** Silas is preparing for the stage, and Aris and Elia are both busy with the opening act (Aris aerial on the silks, Elia accompanying on lute) — but the rest circulate: Bram holds down a corner booth, mothering anyone who looks tired; Soren watches from the shadows near the stairs, saying little, smiling more; Toren and Vax keep an easy, watchful presence near the bar and door.
- **The baths.** A trip downstairs to the steam room — a nice callback to the mephitis fight. The stone carries sound strangely down here; the panpipe melody, when it drifts, seems to arrive from every direction at once. A good place for a PC to first go looking for its source.

The Melody & the Haze

Zephyros's charm bleeding through the house — stray, half-second snatches, never loud enough to pin down. Ambient color first, mechanical hook second:

- A PC who deliberately listens for a full minute can make a **DC 12 Wisdom saving throw**; on a failure, a brief, pleasant daze for 1 minute (disadvantage on Perception), harmless and passing. The same pull that's draining Silas, diluted almost to nothing here.
- A few background patrons drift into the same haze over the evening, unconcerned — normalizing it before the PCs clock that it isn't.
- Escalates later as the party gets physically closer to Silas and Zephyros — see [§7, The Lavender Suite — The Sealed Door](#).

Basement — The Baths

A steam bath carved directly into the cliff's granite and limestone, fed by geothermal steam — clothing-optional, sensual, thick with the smell of eucalyptus and spice. Site of the party's earlier mephitis fight. A good, low-key stop for any PC who wants a soak before the show.

The stairs down from the parlor turn to stone, the air changing with them — warmer, wetter, thick with eucalyptus and something spicier. Walls of raw granite and limestone glow faintly gold where lantern-light catches condensation. Bodies move through the haze in loose, unhurried shapes — a murmur of conversation, a splash from the cold plunge, someone laughing low in the cedar sauna. Nobody down here is in a hurry to be anywhere else.

The Kettle (mephitis callback): Near the back wall, a patch of pale new mortar stands out against the older stone — exactly where the mephitis nest burst through a fissure two weeks ago, during the fight that made the PCs guests of honor tonight. Milo commemorated the spot with a small, unevenly-lettered brass plaque: "HERE STOOD THE KETTLE — VANQUISHED BY FRIENDS OF THE HOUSE." Staff and regulars alike have called that corner "the Kettle" ever since, and PCs who ask around will find the story's already turned into

house legend, told slightly differently by everyone who repeats it.

Caspian. The Salt suite's Wayfinder practically lives down here between guests — a shape uncoils from the hot water bath as PCs settle in, easy and athletic, and folds new arrivals into whatever conversation is already happening rather than making a formal greeting of it. He'll needle the party good-naturedly about the Kettle if they haven't already heard the story.

Optional, light touch — Caspian on Silas: If asked about the show, Caspian's easy grin dims just a fraction. "Should be good. Silas usually comes down here to warm up before he sings — steam's good for the voice. Hasn't been down in days, though." A beat, a shrug that doesn't quite land. "I'm sure he's just busy."

The Melody, down here: Light-touch only — a stray note in the steam, gone before anyone's sure they heard it. Let this scene stay relaxation, not mystery.

(Silas himself never appears here or anywhere in the house tonight — he's confined entirely to the Lavender Suite, lost in the throes of composition. Any sense of him the PCs get downstairs comes secondhand, through people who miss him.)

Second Floor — The Suites

The **Lavender Suite** — Silas Vane's — is the key location for this adventure's climax; see [§7, The Lavender Suite — The Sealed Door](#) for what happens there once the mystery turns.

Tonight, the roof deck is closed for the premiere — every hand at the Anchor is working the parlor or the show, and Kaelen would rather the whole house be in one room for Silas's big night. No scene plays out up there.

7. Part 2 — Crescendo

(Roughly 2.5–4 hours of table time: the sealed door through the confrontation with Zephyros.)

From here on, run it straight through — this is the sequential spine of the adventure, from the moment the evening turns until the confrontation with Zephyros. Nothing in this part should require flipping back to Part 1.

As Showtime Nears — The Turn

As the hour winds down and Aris drops from the silks into his final bow, something in the room's easy rhythm begins to fray — subtly, if you're not looking for it. Kaelen's laugh comes a beat too quick; their eyes drift, more than once, to the stairs. The melody that's been teasing at your hearing all evening returns more often now, lingering longer each time. Not louder. Just closer. More insistent. Like a held breath.

DM notes: The last, clearest seed — a PC can notice something's off on a passive Perception alone, no roll needed. Kaelen then excuses themselves "to check on something."

Kaelen's Alarm

Kaelen returns from "checking on something" faster than they left — and wrong, in a way you feel before you can name it. Silk still perfect, expression anything but. The wry warmth is gone entirely. "I need—" They stop. Start again, quieter. "Something's wrong with Silas. Please. Come with me."

DM notes: The hard pivot into Act Two — urgent enough that no PC has reason to stay behind. Kaelen leads them upstairs at a near-run.

The Lavender Suite — The Sealed Door

The Lavender Suite's door should be beautiful — carved sea-oak, its grain rubbed pale with age — but tonight it's wound in living jasmine, vines thick as fingers across every seam, blossoms trembling though there's no breeze. Beyond it, the melody isn't teasing anymore — swelling, layered, closer to song than the half-heard thing from downstairs. Kaelen presses a hand flat to the wood. It doesn't budge. "Silas," they call, voice cracking. "Silas, love, let me in—"

Nothing answers but the music.

DM notes: The vines won't yield to simple force (see below). Kaelen is frightened, not helpless — they'll share any Arcana or Nature they have, but this is the party's moment to lead.

The Jasmine Knot (Puzzle)

Five living jasmine vines have grown into knotted loops across the door, each cinched tight around a small brass bell shaped to a different musical figure — a staccato dot, a long sustained dash, a rising arrow, a trembling wavy line, a falling arrow. They pulse taut and slack in time with the music beyond — the true shape of the melody, scrambled by whatever's happening in that room. A bell only comes free on the *taut* beat; caught slack, the note rings sour.

Opening the door takes two things: reading the melody's true shape, then playing it back one note at a time. The true order is:

Sustained → Rising → Trembling → Falling → Staccato (— ↑ ~ ↓ •)

— the actual emotional shape of "Salt and Silver": a long opening note, a rise into hope, a trembling uncertainty, a fall into loss, and an ending cut short before it's ready. Not a coincidence.

Reading the shape. The party has to earn the order — no single check simply opens the door. Offer any of these:

- **Listening now.** A PC presses an ear or hand to the door and spends a round listening: **DC 13 Wisdom (Perception)** or **DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation)** to pick the true rhythm out of the noise.
- **Arcane insight.** **DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana)** recognizes the vines' magic is keyed to the melody, and that following the rhythm — not fighting it — is what unwinds them.
- **A musician's ear.** A PC proficient in Performance (or a bard) recognizes long-rise-trill-fall-short as a classic ballad shape and reads the order without a check — but still has to play it. Knowing the song isn't the same as landing every note.
- **Earlier attentiveness.** A PC who engaged with [§6, The Melody & the Haze](#) earlier (pass or fail) has advantage on the read, or simply knows the shape if they describe having listened closely back then.

Without the order, the party can still work it out by trial — but every wrong bell costs a note (below), so reading it first is the fast road.

Playing it, note by note. Resolve the five notes one at a time, in order. For each, a PC reaches into the knot and plucks the next bell on its taut beat: **DC 13 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand)** to time it, or **DC 13 Charisma (Performance)** to play along — player's call.

- **Success:** the loop unwinds and the note rings true, clicking into the real song. That loop is done — a freed vine never re-binds.
- **Failure:** the bell rings sour and its vine cinches, dealing 1d4 slashing to the plucker. The loop holds; they can try that same note again next round. No progress is lost and the order never changes — the only real cost is time (see [§7, Meanwhile, in the Parlor](#)).

A PC with a musician's ear plucks with advantage — fast and reliable, but never automatic.

If they give up on finesse: The door can also be broken down or burned through — AC 15, 30 hit points, resistant to non-magical damage (the jasmine hates fire). Slower and louder, and the parlor situation escalates regardless.

Meanwhile, in the Parlor

The same melody reaches the crowd below while the party works the door — tension and atmosphere, not a task for the party. Weave in escalating sound cues as the puzzle unfolds:

Somewhere far below, glass shatters. A voice — Milo's, unmistakably — barks something sharp and commanding, answered by a ragged cheer, like he's just wrestled the room back under control through sheer force of personality.

A swell of raised voices rolls up the stairwell, then cuts off abruptly, as if a door's been shut on it. Barakos, probably. Or just the sheer size of him.

For a moment the whole house seems to hold its breath — a hundred voices gone quiet at once, swaying to something none of them chose to hear. Then Kaelen's voice, pitched to carry, starts singing something bright and familiar, and the spell of it breaks into scattered, relieved laughter.

DM notes: The proprietors have this — these beats remind the table time still matters, without ever asking a PC to leave the door. If a player insists on helping anyway, the proprietors wave them back ("Go — we've got this.").

Beyond the Door

The last bell chimes free and the vines unwind all at once, blossoms scattering like an exhaled breath. The door swings open onto — not the Lavender Suite. A path of packed earth and moon-pale grass unspools ahead, hemmed by trees that are almost willows, hung with lantern-light that isn't fire. The music is achingly close now. Somewhere down that path, Silas is still singing.

DM notes: The threshold to Zephyros's private fey pocket. Give the players a moment to react before [§7, Captain's Quarters](#), their last chance to prepare.

Zephyros treats this pocket like a stage in combat once the party arrives, moving between water curtains and velvet-canopy shadows drawn from the Anchor's own baths and suites; he uses Rose-Knots and Pixies to pin down "his audience." See [§7, The Fey Pocket — Zephyros's Glade](#) for the full encounter.

Reclaiming Your Own

Before heading to the Captain's Quarters, anyone who checked gear at [§6, The Tidewrack](#) reclaims it — theirs again in moments, exactly as they left it. Barakos's armory fills gaps, not replaces it.

Captain's Quarters

Tonight, it's exactly where the party ends up before stepping through the door into the Fey pocket.

Before anyone steps through, Barakos catches your arm. "Not like that. Not unarmed." He leads you at a near-run into the Captain's Quarters — warm, cluttered, unglamorous. A locked chest becomes a modest, well-kept armory. "Whatever you've got is yours. This is just in case it isn't enough."

Milo's right behind him, pressing a twist of waxed paper into each of your hands — something pickled and fragrant, tied off with kitchen string. "Low Tide, portable version. Eat it out there, once you've got a second to breathe." A beat, something almost fierce behind the joke. "Come back and tell me how it tasted."

DM notes: Barakos's armory is mundane only (nothing magical — see [§10, Treasure & Rewards](#)), supplementing whatever the party already reclaimed. Milo's parcel functions as a **short rest** whenever eaten, no in-game time cost — a natural moment is after the Rose-Knots, before the glade, but it's the party's call. Make this feel earned, not like a shop.

The Fey Pocket — Zephyros's Glade

Whenever they're ready, the party heads back down the hall to the Lavender Suite door and finally steps through. Once they do, the Lavender Suite is gone — replaced by a small, self-contained pocket of the Feywild, stitched to the Material Plane by the strength of Zephyros's working. It doesn't extend far: a single path runs from the threshold to a moonlit glade, with two encounters along the way before the climax.

DM notes: Built and balanced for a level 3 party of 4–6 characters — see the [§11, Appendix](#) for full stat blocks. Add or remove a monster or two to retune for a different table.

Encounter One: Glimmer-Gaze Pixies

The path narrows, hemmed by moon-pale grass and willow-like trees strung with lantern-light that isn't fire. Small shapes dart between the branches overhead — winged, naked, unmistakably muscular for their size, eyes glimmering like struck flint. Laughter drifts down, high and delighted, and then they're gone. You can still feel them watching.

Glimmer-Gaze Pixies (2–3 for a level 3 party of 4–6; see §11, Appendix) want an audience, not a body count — but they're not harmless. They flit in and out of sight, pressing enchanted kisses to any exposed skin they can reach (**The Kiss**) or blowing a shared, dizzying wave of them at once (**The Swirl**). The kisses draw real blood and leave heads swimming; this is meant to cost the party something before the real threats further down the path.

DM notes: A pixie must show itself for an instant to deliver its kiss — the intended counterplay is a readied action. At 1 HP each, one hit ends one for good. Accumulated poison builds the case for cashing in Milo's snack before the glade (see §7, Captain's Quarters).

Encounter Two: Rose-Knots

Further down the path, the willows give way to a thicket of woven, gnarled wood — trunks and roots twisted into the unmistakable shapes of entwined limbs, lovers locked in an embrace that never ends. Rose-quartz blossoms glint among the grain like scattered petals, and as you draw close, the wood shudders and begins, slowly, to unwind.

Rose-Knots (3–4 for a level 3 party of 4–6; see §11, Appendix) exist to slow the party down, not kill them — Zephyros wants an audience for his coda, not a battlefield. They grapple and restrain (**Lover's Knot**) and can blanket the path in

grasping wood and thorn (**Bed of Roses and Thorns**) to keep stragglers from reaching the glade in time.

DM notes: Where the ticking clock should start to feel real — time burned here is time the party won't have with Silas.

The Glade — Silas and Zephyros

The path opens onto a glade bathed in moonlight that has no moon to answer to. At its center, on a bed of moss and fallen silk, Silas Vane writes — feverish, bare-chested, sweat-soaked, dark circles bruising his eyes. His quill never stops moving. He doesn't look up.

Standing over him, panpipes at his lips, is a figure of lean, predatory elegance — cloven-hooved, curve-horned, naked but for stolen silks. His eyes are the color of a bruised sunset; his voice, when he lowers the pipes to speak, is warm and almost kind.

"Ah. An audience." He doesn't stop playing for long. "You're welcome to stay — truly, the coda is nearly worth the wait. But harm him" — the panpipes gesture at Silas — "and you'll never hear the end of it. Neither will he."

Zephyros (see §11, Appendix) is genuinely willing to let the party watch, right up until they try to stop him — at which point this becomes a fight to the finish. He doesn't want Silas hurt (a damaged instrument makes for a worse muse); if the party threatens Silas directly rather than Zephyros himself, he'll intervene to protect him, which can be a useful tell for clever players.

The Coda (the ticking clock): Silas is compelled to keep writing no matter what happens around him. At the top of each round, he pens one more line of "Salt and Silver." **Track this openly at the table** — seven lines to go is a good starting point for a level 3 party of 4–6 (adjust up if the fight's clearly going to run short, down if it's dragging). If

Silas completes the seventh line before Zephyros is defeated or driven off, the coda finishes: Zephyros vanishes back to the Feywild, Silas in tow, and the Lavender Suite (and the party) are returned to reality with Silas gone for good — the confirmed hard-failure ending.

A PC adjacent to Silas can try to physically stop him — no roll required; simply grappling or restraining him halts the writing for as long as the hold lasts, though Zephyros will make a point of targeting whoever's doing it. This gives the party a real choice: guard Silas and stall the clock, or throw everything at ending the fight outright.

DM notes — Silas's mumbling: Read one fragment aloud each round as a line lands, roughly in order, so the table feels the clock without a number:

- "...salt on the tongue, silver in the throat..."
- "...the tide takes what the tide is owed..."
- "...don't let the anchor hold too tight—"
- "...I can still hear you. I can still—"
- "...silver going out, salt going under..."
- "...one more line. Just one more. He says I'm almost—"
- "...and the harbor goes dark, and the anchor lets go—"

Skip, repeat, or ad-lib as needed — the point is the drift from dreamy toward fragmented, not a precise script. Cut off wherever the fight ends.

Victory: Reducing Zephyros to 0 hit points (or otherwise driving him off — DM's call) breaks the charm on Silas instantly. The writing stops, the glade dissolves, and everyone is standing back in the very real, very ordinary Lavender Suite — Silas included.

How it actually ends depends on what happens in these next few seconds — read whichever coda below applies.

Zephyros Falls — Silas Saved

The moment Zephyros drops — or flees, or simply isn't there anymore — the glade goes with him. Moonlight without a moon gutters out; willow-shadow and packed earth dissolve into familiar plaster and lavender-papered walls. You're standing in the Lavender Suite, ordinary and real, jasmine withering harmlessly around a door that isn't sealed anymore.

Silas blinks up at you from a bed of moss that isn't moss anymore — just his own rumpled sheets, quill still in hand. For a moment he doesn't seem to know where, or when, he is. Then his eyes focus, properly focus, on you, and something in his face crumples with relief.

"You're—" His voice cracks; he hasn't used it, not really, in days. "You're really here. I thought I was still—" He looks down at the pages scattered around him, half-finished lines steadying the further back they go. "Oh, gods. How long was I—"

DM notes: Let this breathe — the emotional payoff matters more than the mechanical one. Kaelen, Milo, and Barakos arrive within moments for an unguarded reunion; give the table a beat to sit in it. His panpipes are left behind regardless of how Zephyros fell (see *Treasure & Rewards*); Silas recovers cleanly with time, no fey bargain, no fine print. If the table returns to the Anchor, this is the night everyone's still talking about — and eventually, the night Silas performs "Salt and Silver" whole.

The Coda Completes — Silas Lost

The seventh line lands. Zephyros's panpipes swell to a note that sounds less like an ending than a door closing — full, resonant, final. He lowers the pipes, looks almost sorry. "Perfect resonance," he says, quiet, like a prayer. "Thank you. Truly."

Silas doesn't fight him. His eyes are fixed on something past the tree line, already somewhere else. Zephyros offers a hand; Silas takes it without hesitation, the quill slipping silent into the moss.

"Do give my regards to the house," Zephyros says — and the glade folds in on itself like a held breath released. You're standing in the Lavender Suite. Empty. Pages scattered on the floor, ink still wet on the last line. No Silas. No door to follow him through.

DM notes: A real loss — weight, not despair; a rescue that failed, not a horror story. The proprietors don't blame the party; the coin from Treasure & Rewards still comes, quieter and more bittersweet than celebratory. Milo keeps the bar open later that night for anyone who wants to sit with it.

One thread doesn't have to close. The jasmine withers everywhere except a few stray blossoms near the frame, still pulsing faint and slow. Kaelen notices first, and says nothing — a hook worth keeping in your pocket if this becomes the first adventure in a longer campaign.

8. NPC Roster

The Proprietors & Senior Wayfinders

Full descriptions of Kaelen, Milo, Barakos, and all eight senior Wayfinders live in the DM Lore guide

— nothing below repeats them. What's specific to tonight:

- **Elian** is accompanying Aris on lute for the opening act rather than dancing himself.
- **Aris** performs the evening's opening act on the aerial silks.
- **Silas Vane** (Lavender) is the adventure's center: charmed and drained by Zephyros, visibly exhausted, withdrawn, barely eating — see [§3. Background \(DM Only — Spoilers\)](#) for the full situation.

Notable Guests (Premiere Night)

Dorian Vell (he/him) — A modestly successful Lower City composer and Silas's nearest thing to a rival, here tonight because not attending would look worse than attending and stewing. Reed-thin, overdressed, drinks quickly and talks faster — a stream of backhanded compliments about "how brave" it is for Silas to attempt something so ambitious. Not a suspect, not a villain, just genuinely and pettily insecure, and more than a little in awe of the man he can't stop needling. Good comic tension, and a harmless misdirect for any table that goes looking for a human culprit before the truth comes out.

Peregrine Voss (they/them) — A Lower City socialite, dressed to the nines in sharp, masculine-cut finery, who treats their invitation like a personal triumph and has already decided this is the story they'll be dining out on for months. Charming, a little exhausting, name-drops constantly, and tells the Kettle story wrong on purpose because their version is funnier. Harmless, delightful, and a good vehicle for exposition or gossip if the party needs a nudge toward something they've missed.

Antagonist

Zephyros, the Muse-Thief (he/him) — Medium Fey (Satyr), Chaotic Neutral. Predatory elegance: cloven hooves and curved horns, lean build draped in stolen Material Plane finery (sheer silks,

emerald velvets) that mimics the Anchor's own patrons. Eyes the color of a bruised sunset. Carries rowan-wood panpipes that seem to breathe even when not played.

Motive: not gold, not power — “perfect resonance.” Believes true art is only achieved at the moment of total surrender, and harvests the creative breath of masters like Silas to fuel his own eternal sonata. Doesn't see himself as a villain — a curator of souls too beautiful for the mundane world.

Combat style (“Ethereal Skirmisher”): never stationary. Treats the Lavender Suite like a stage, weaving between the geothermal baths' water curtains and the suite's velvet canopy shadows. Deploys Rose-Knots and Pixies to pin down “his audience” while he moves in to take a “sip” of their inspiration.

Full stat block, the Coda ticking-clock mechanic, and the two lead-in encounters (Glimmer-Gaze Pixies, Rose-Knots) are detailed under [§7, The Fey Pocket — Zephyros's Glade](#) and the [§11, Appendix](#).

9. Clues & Solution

This mystery resolves through structure rather than a whodunit web — there's no competing suspect list, just Zephyros, and the “investigation” is really about noticing something's wrong in time to act. Kept deliberately lean:

- **The melody.** A lilting panpipe audible from the parlor and the baths — first sign something's charming Silas. Confirmed as ambient, easy-to-miss color throughout the first hour (see [§6, Part 1 — Prelude](#)).
- **The melody's true shape.** Long-rise-trill-fall-short is both a clue and a literal mechanism: it's the solution to [§7, The Jasmine Knot \(Puzzle\)](#) at the Lavender Suite door. PCs who paid attention to the melody earlier get a mechanical edge (advantage) solving it later — a built-in reward for investigation.

- **Guidance if clues are missed:** The Jasmine Knot has multiple solve paths (Perception, Investigation, Performance, Arcana) and a brute-force fallback, so missing the melody clue entirely never hard-blocks the party — worst case, it costs time, which raises the stakes via [§7, Meanwhile, in the Parlor](#) rather than stopping the adventure outright.

10. Treasure & Rewards

Nothing extravagant — this is a rescue, not a heist. The real reward is relational, in keeping with the tone of the whole module.

Coin. Barakos presses a purse of 50 gp per PC into their hands afterward, brushed off as nothing, meant as everything. If the party thinks to collect any rose-quartz florets from the defeated Rose-Knots, they're pretty, sellable curios worth about 10 gp each.

Friends of the House (the real reward). From this night on, the party has a standing welcome at the Gilded Anchor: free food, drink, and lodging whenever they want it, a permanently reserved table, and the fierce personal loyalty of Kaelen, Milo, and Barakos. Worth more than gold in a game about found family and sanctuary — lean into it if the Anchor ever becomes a recurring location.

Silas's Thanks. Once he's recovered enough to speak, Silas gives the party a hand-written page of “Salt and Silver” — the true, unstolen ending, finished properly and dedicated to them by name. If there's ever a future game night at the Anchor, this is the night he finally performs it whole.

Zephyros's Panpipes (magic item, uncommon, requires attunement). If Zephyros is driven off rather than destroyed outright, he doesn't stop to grab his pipes on the way out. Recovered from the glade, they're rowan-wood, warm to the touch, and never quite stop breathing even in silence.

While attuned to these pipes, you have advantage on Charisma (Performance) checks. Once per long rest, you can spend an action to play a low, calming refrain: choose any number of creatures you can see within 30 feet. Each target must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be calmed for 1 minute — while calmed, a creature can't take the Attack action or cast spells, though it can still move, ready an action, or defend itself. The effect ends immediately if the calmed creature takes damage.

DM notes: Written as calming rather than charm — handing the party Zephyros's own trick felt too close to what made him the villain. Swap for something punchier if that doesn't bother you.

11. Appendix

Glimmer-Gaze Pixie

Tiny Fey, Neutral

AC 15

HP 1 (1d4 – 1)

Speed 10 ft., Fly 30 ft.

Initiative +5 (15)

STR 2 (–4, save –4)

DEX 20 (+5, save +7)

CON 8 (–1, save –1)

INT 10 (+0, save +0)

WIS 14 (+2, save +2)

CHA 16 (+3, save +3)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +9

Senses Passive Perception 14

Languages Sylvan (can't speak; communicates through shifting light and color)

CR 1/2 (100 XP; PB +2)

Traits

Magic Resistance. The pixie has Advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Invisibility. The pixie has the Invisible condition. Landing *The Kiss* or unleashing *The Swirl* ends this condition until the end of its turn, after which it becomes invisible again.

Actions

The Kiss. Ranged Attack Roll: +7, range 30/120 ft. Hit: 1 Piercing damage from a swooning kiss. Constitution Saving Throw: DC 13. Failure: The target takes 3 (1d6) Poison damage and has the Poisoned condition for 1 minute. Failure by 5 or more: the target also has the Unconscious condition while Poisoned this way; it wakes up if it takes damage or another creature takes an action to shake it awake. Success: No additional effect.

The Swirl (1/Day). Wisdom Saving Throw: DC 13, each creature within 10 feet of the pixie. Failure: The target has the Charmed condition for 1 minute, wandering harmlessly and unable to take hostile actions; the target repeats the save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Rose-Knot

Medium Plant, Unaligned

AC 12 (natural armor)

HP 26 (4d8 + 8)

Speed 10 ft.

Initiative –1 (9)

STR 15 (+2, save +4)

DEX 8 (–1, save –1)

CON 14 (+2, save +2)

INT 5 (–3, save –3)

WIS 10 (+0, save +0)

CHA 3 (–4, save –4)

Damage Vulnerabilities Fire

Condition Immunities Blinded, Deafened, Prone

Senses Blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), Passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Sylvan (can't speak)

CR 1/2 (100 XP; PB +2)

Traits

False Appearance. While motionless, a Rose-Knot — gnarled feywood limbs locked in an embrace, rose-quartz florets in the grain — passes for a tangle of thornwood.

Actions

Lover's Knot. Melee Attack Roll: +4, reach 10 ft. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) Bludgeoning damage, and the target has the Grappled condition (escape DC 12) and the Restrained condition. The Rose-Knot can't make this attack again until it releases the target.

Bed of Roses and Thorns (Recharge 5–6). Strength Saving Throw: DC 12, each creature within 15 feet of the Rose-Knot. Failure: The target has the Restrained condition until the end of its turn.

Zephyros, the Muse-Thief

Medium Fey, Chaotic Neutral

AC 14 (natural; fey grace)

HP 105 (14d8 + 42)

Speed 40 ft.

Initiative +3 (13)

STR 11 (+0, save +0)

DEX 16 (+3, save +5)

CON 16 (+3, save +3)

INT 13 (+1, save +1)

WIS 15 (+2, save +2)

CHA 20 (+5, save +7)

Skills Perception +4, Performance +7, Persuasion +7

Damage Resistances Psychic

Condition Immunities Charmed

Senses Passive Perception 14

Languages Sylvan, Common

CR 4 (1,100 XP; PB +2)

Traits

Magic Resistance. Zephyros has Advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Legendary Resistance (2/Day). If Zephyros fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Ethereal Skirmisher. Zephyros doesn't provoke Opportunity Attacks when he moves out of a hostile creature's reach.

Actions

Multiattack. Zephyros makes two Hooves attacks, or uses Beguiling Refrain.

Hooves. Melee Attack Roll: +5, reach 5 ft. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) Bludgeoning damage, and if the target is Medium or smaller, it's pushed up to 10 feet away.

Beguiling Refrain. Wisdom Saving Throw: DC 15, one creature within 60 feet that can hear Zephyros's panpipes.

Failure: The target has the Charmed condition until the end of Zephyros's next turn. While Charmed this way, the target uses all of its movement on its next turn to move as close as it can to Zephyros.

Bonus Actions

Fey Step (Recharge 5–6). Zephyros teleports up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space he can see.

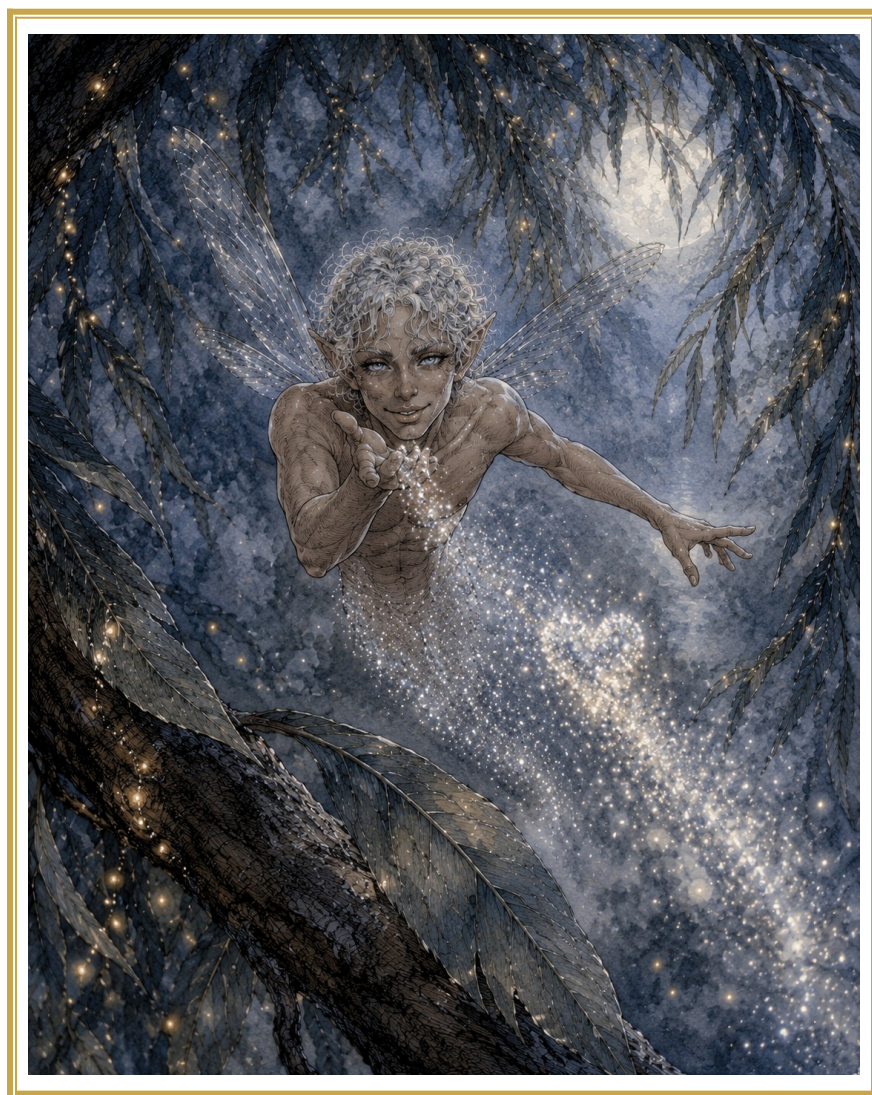
Legendary Actions

Legendary Action Uses: 3. Immediately after another creature's turn, Zephyros can expend a use to take one of the following actions. He regains all expended uses at the start of his turn.

Discordant Step. Zephyros moves up to half his Speed without provoking Opportunity Attacks.

A Single Note. Zephyros makes one Hooves attack.

The Chorus Insists. One creature that has the Charmed condition from Zephyros's Beguiling Refrain must repeat the saving throw.



Small, sharp, and entirely pleased with itself — already half-gone before you've decided whether to be charmed or wary.



A knot of many limbs, muscular and thorn-studded, rose-quartz blooming where they lock together — patient as driftwood until it isn't.



An audience, at last. He lowers the pipes just enough to smile — warm, unhurried, and not remotely done with you.