

Conspiracy in the Shadows

Introduction

This is a Wheel of Time adventure suitable for six 1-2 level characters. It can accommodate characters of higher or lower level with some adjustment. It may also be tailored for fewer adventurers. While it is not necessary for adventurers to have completed the introductory adventure in the Core Rulebook, it is recommended as the adventure begins with the characters lost in the Ways. If DM does not plan to run that adventure, some adjustment must be made. Further, it is presumed that the characters will get lost while attempting to make their way out of the Ways instead of being able to retrace their steps to Caemlyn.

To run this adventure the DM will need the Wheel of Time RPG sourcebook. While helpful, other sourcebooks are unnecessary.

Boxed text with light blue shading like this is to be read aloud or paraphrased to the players.

Adventure background

This adventure takes place in Baerlon, at about the same time as Rand al'Thor is fighting Ba'alzamon at the Eye of the World. Once again, the Cloak (or other suitable MacGuffin as established by the GM in the introductory adventure) has a role, although it is quite a bit less significant than in the previous adventure. By this time, the characters are aware that there is something special about this item, although they may still be unaware of its properties. The adventure presumes that they remain ignorant of them.

Baerlon has been in a state of chaos since the burning of the Stag and Lion Inn, with several near riots being barely contained by the overworked and harassed City Guard. During the riots, Caleb Nolan, the most powerful Darkfriend in Baerlon, arranged for the abduction of Governor Heran Adan's young niece and, through intermediaries which concealed his identity, managed to blackmail the Governor into banning the Whitecloaks from the city. It is a sad irony that the Children of the Light were actually doing good work in Baerlon, having begun to suspect Nolan as a Darkfriend, but were forced out.

Hoping to avoid problems with the city guards, Nolan arranged for his nephew, also a Darkfriend, to become one of the officers. When Aeron Nolan was unable to subvert the captain of the guards, Caleb arranged for the abduction of the captain's daughter, hoping to use her as a bargaining tool. Unfortunately, Aeron had a crisis of faith and fled the city with his young wife. Fearing they would reveal too much, a team of assassins was sent to hunt down the man. As of the beginning of the game, they are still looking for Aeron, unaware that he is already dead.

Caleb needs only a few more pieces to be in place before he can make an open grab for power. He has already set into motion a plan to abduct the son of his primary competitor and has plans for the further subversion of the Governor. Things are going exactly as he had planned them.

When the characters arrive in Baerlon, however, he panics. The character wearing the Cloak is similar in appearance to a man Nolan suspects to be a Tar Valon agent, perhaps even a Warder on a covert mission. Not having actually seen a Warder's Cloak before, Nolan mistakenly assumes that the character in question is wearing one since it is (to his eyes), obviously Power-wrought.

Story Summary

Following their harrowing journey through the Ways, the characters emerge through a Waygate in the broken city of Shadar Logoth. They are quickly drawn to a damsel in distress and save her from Trollocs (separated from the massive group sent by Ishmael after al'Thor). Morella Nolan reveals that her husband (a Baerlon City Guard) had accepted a contract in Caemlyn and they were traveling there when the monsters attacked. She begs them to provide her an escort back to Baerlon.

Upon arrival in the city, the characters meet Morella's uncle who is secretly a Darkfriend and fears that his nephew has hired the characters to kill him. He covertly arranges for an assassination attempt upon the PCs, unaware that they have never even met his nephew. When

the assassins fall upon the characters, it is meant to appear like they (the assassins) are common thugs or footpads but the reappearance of a familiar face makes the characters begin to wonder. A chance encounter with a man in the street allows the characters to realize a conspiracy is afoot.

In the climatic act, the characters have the opportunity to stamp out the infestation of Darkfriends by tracing it to its source.

SCENE 1: OUT OF THE WAYS

The first scene begins in the Ways, as the characters have spent the last several days trying to backtrack their path to Caemlyn. Unfortunately, none of them were paying enough attention to their original route so they have discovered themselves thoroughly and completely lost. Now, quite a bit later – they assume it is probably a couple of days as they have been forced to rest – they have discovered another of the doors out of this place.

After several long and hungry days of wandering this unusual place, you have found the door. Or at least, you think you have. Finding your way in this place has been nothing short of impossible and you cannot tell if this is actually the same way you entered or not, but it sure looks the same. Hoping against hope, you move the odd Leaf-like object and wait with anticipation as the door slowly opens. Instead of the cellar, however, you find yourself looking out into a ruined city. Not wanting to stay in this dark and haunting place any longer, you brave the door and exit.

Broken paving stones crunch underfoot as you emerge from the odd place, and you involuntarily squint at the unexpected brightness of the sun. A cool breeze carries a hint of rain to you as you look around the shattered city. Nothing moves here, and weeds, mostly old and dead, sprout from cracked walls and pavement. Few buildings have their roofs intact, and immense towers rise up into the sky but abruptly stop, like shattered sticks. This was once a grand city, a city the likes of which even Caemlyn would have envied. But now, it is a silent and desolate place, and you can feel the oppressive weight of centuries pushing in on you.

Suddenly, a distinctly feminine shriek of terror breaks the silence. It echoes through the hollow city but you can easily tell that it originated from outside the city. The guttural howl of a Trolloc follows closely and the woman, still distant and unseen, screams again.

Have the heroes make **Listen checks** (DC 12) to realize that the screams are originating from the east. Even if the characters do not want to rush toward the location, they can feel a sense of danger all around them. Characters may make a **Knowledge (history) check** (DC 15) to recognize this city as Shadar Logoth; anyone who makes this check will also want to get out quickly since it has a terrible reputation.

While in the city, channeling characters must make a **Concentration check** (DC 15) simply to maintain their grip on the One Power. Male channelers feel the Taint particularly strong here; at any time in which he overchannels, he receives an additional 1d4 Madness Points instead of the usual 1.

To get out of the city, the characters must make their way east for 400 feet. When they reach the edge of the city, they can see a single man fighting with three Trollocs about 100 feet away; a blonde woman is cowering behind the man and screaming like a banshee. Two Trollocs are already on the ground, dead from their wounds. As the Trollocs are facing away from the city, the heroes may get the opportunity to strike them with surprise; in this case, the Trollocs do not get the benefit of their Dexterity to Defense. If, on the other hand, characters bellow out war cries or announce their presence in some other fashion, the Trollocs suffer a –2 to all actions against them since the characters are appearing from Shadar Logoth. In any event, it is essential that the man be killed before the characters arrive.

GM Note: If a character made his Knowledge (history) check regarding Shadar Logoth and knows the Olde Tongue, he may make an Intimidation check against the Trollocs with a +4 circumstance bonus. Should this beat the DC of 13, the Trollocs are shaken to the point that they suffer a –4 to all actions (attacks, defense, saves, and skills) for the duration of the combat.

Trollocs: hp 18, 15, 17.

Trolloc Tactics: They aren't very clever and attempt to overpower their opponents with brute strength. If two of them are killed, the third attempts to flee.

Aftermath: Even as the battle is dying down (whether it be with the death of the last Trolloc or his escape), the woman is throwing herself on the body of the dead man, wailing with anguish and pain. She pleads with the characters to save him, to keep him from dying, but even a rudimentary glance at his wounds reveals that he is too far gone for anyone's help. With another wail, she collapses on him, sobbing and shaking. A **Diplomacy** check (DC 20) is required to calm the young woman down so that the heroes can attend to the deceased man's body.

GM's Note: *It is possible that the characters will choose not to get involved at all by hiding in the city until the battle is over. If that's the case, replace the section that follows with the characters being set upon by the same band of Trollocs sometime later. Alternatively, you can introduce them to Mashadar the hard way; although no rules are presented, you could easily judge that any character touched by the mist must make a Fortitude save at a ridiculously high DC (natural 20 only?) or die. That will teach them to screw up the adventure by being cowards.*

SCENE 2: TO BAERLON WE GO

After having calmed the young woman down (although she still chokes up every time she looks at her husband's body), the characters learn some of her history. Her name is Morella Nolan and her husband was named Aeron. She is a potter by trade and her husband was a Baerlon city guard; they were traveling to Caemlyn when they were set upon by the terrible creatures; their horses were killed and they fled from the road, eventually arriving here only to be set upon by the creatures once again. If any character reveals that the creatures were Trollocs, she looks at them with wide eyes and a squeak before commenting in a quiet voice that she thought they were just legends. She further asks the heroes if they could escort her back to Baerlon where her husband's Uncle, a prominent merchant, is sure to reward them for rescuing her. She will also solemnly ask that they take her husband's Warder's sword and chain shirt (both Masterwork) as gratitude; "Aeron would want you to have them," she whispers before beginning to cry again.

According to Morella, it is about four days on horseback to Baerlon using the Caemlyn road; however, if the characters are on foot this will equate to about 8 days (at a regular speed of 30; it becomes 12 days with a 20' movement rate). For every two days on the road, roll 1d8 and consult the following chart - if characters make it to Baerlon without running into the Tinkers (Scene 3) go directly to Scene 4.

1	1d4+2 brigands (use Thugs below). These men are dirty, mean and totally without redeeming characteristics. They will attempt to ambush the characters using ranged weapons before closing in on the survivors with melee weapons. Heavily armed characters (those wearing Heavy armor) will cause the bandits to reconsider their ambush, however.
2	1d4+1 wolves. They snarl ferociously for a moment, then sniff at the characters; if any of the players has expressed an intent to become a Wolfbrother, the wolves seem to look at him and he gets the impression that they are going to ignore him. On a Wilderness Lore check (DC10), characters will know that as long as they do nothing to the pack, the pack do not attack the group. GM Note: <i>This pack is actively hunting the Trollocs in the region; should PCs run afoul of said Shadowspawn and start getting their butts handed to them, feel free to have the wolf pack charge in to lend a hand.</i>
3	Peddlers. They are a standard group of traveling merchants who are heading toward Whitebridge from Baerlon and would greatly appreciate better directions. Characters may be able to purchase equipment from them. If the GM desires, he may instead substitute an encounter with Darkfriend assassins disguised as peddlers. No stats are provided for these characters.
4	Tinkers. Consult Scene Three: Tinkers on the Road.
5-7	No encounter
8	1d4 Trollocs. Originally part of the massive force sent into Shadar Logoth by Ishmael, these creatures were separated from the rest and have gotten lost in the surrounding countryside.

SCENE 3: TINKERS ON THE ROAD

This encounter can serve as a random encounter on the road back to Baerlon (see above), or it can be a scheduled one in which the characters will meet up with the Tinkers. If you intend to use Randy Madden's "*The Trouble with Tinkers*" adventure later, replace the following group of Tinkers with that group; in this way, the characters will have a history with Mahdi Eramis and Shivan.

In any event, the characters should run into the Tinkers a little before dusk. Allow each PC to make a **Listen** check (DC 10); on a success, they can hear the sounds of flutes and fiddles drifting toward them over the evening air. If the characters investigate, they encounter four immense mastiffs that begin growling and barking at the characters; any hero may attempt a **Handle Animal** check (DC 12) to calm the beasts. A brightly dressed man (red pants, obscenely bright yellow shirt) will step out of the woods and challenge them; with a rudimentary glance, characters will realize that he is a Tinker. If the heroes are badly injured (say, following an encounter with Thugs or Trollocs), he will quickly escort them to the main camp (of about ten wagons) where the wounds of the characters will quickly be attended.

If the characters are uninjured, the Mahdi of the Tinkers (Adolphus unless GM is planning on using tTwT later in which case he becomes Eramis) greets them in the traditional manner.

Mahdi: You are welcome to our fires. Do you know the song?

The characters may reply in any fashion they wish but the proper reply (known with a successful Knowledge (local) check at a DC 8) is *Your welcome warms my spirit, Mahdi, as your fires warm the flesh, but I do not know the song.* Unless a player can come up with a good reason as to why his character knows this reply, player knowledge is unacceptable.

Mahdi: Then we shall seek still, as it was, so shall it be, if we but remember, seek, and find. Welcome to our camp, strangers.

Characters will find themselves greeted stiffly, especially if they are heavily armed or armored. The Tinkers treat them with careful caution and observant heroes may notice that they always seem poised to run away; this is especially true of the previously mentioned characters equipped with the accoutrements of war.

There are several significant roleplaying opportunities here that I have only touched on. GMs are encouraged to use whichever ideas or tactics they desire to use:

- An attempt may be made by the Tinkers to convert one, or even all of the characters to the Way of the Leaf. For those unfamiliar with it, this totally pacifistic way of life preaches that violence is never the solution to anything and all people should live their lives with leaves as an example. "*For the leaf lives its appointed time, and does not struggle against the wind that carries it away. The leaf does no harm, and finally falls to nourish other leaves.*" Such a roleplaying opportunity exceeds this adventure's intent but could be an excellent opportunity for intense roleplay.
- If converting the characters is not an option, or the characters are belligerent, Morella is an excellent target instead, being both vulnerable and extremely gullible. By the end of the night, she may be extremely interested in remaining with the Tinkers and joining them. Characters who wish to talk her out of this should probably be urged to roleplay their attempt; alternatively, they could simply make a **Diplomacy** check (DC assigned by GM) to convince her otherwise. If she joins the Tinkers, she will compose a letter for the characters to present to her husband's uncle and beg the characters to present it to him. In this case, some alterations to the adventure may be necessary with Caleb Nolan's wife assuming Morella's fate.
- One or even two of the assassins hunting for Aeron Nolan may be among the Tinkers, perhaps recovering from wounds inflicted by bandits or hoping Aeron would seek refuge among them. They may attempt to ambush Morella at some point during the evening and kill her. Needless to say, should this occur, it could seriously jeopardize the adventure. Attempting to assassinate one of the characters that may be wearing Nolan's armor and carrying his weapon, however...

The Tinkers are heading north, so the heroes cannot hitch a ride from them. Since they are planning on leaving tomorrow, the heroes are not expected to stay with them any longer than

a single evening. This is intended to be a light encounter with no combat; at the first sign of violence, every Tinker will immediately flee into the woods and hide. Some information may be gathered from the Mahdi should PCs wish to talk to him. Some of examples of things that may learned:

- A riot occurred in Baerlon a few weeks ago, one that culminated in the burning of an inn. The Governor blamed the Children of the Light and banned them from returning to his city.
- There are rumors of Aiel having crossed the Spine of the World, although only in small groups. No one has verified this, of course.
- False Dragons are popping up all over the place. Why they just had one in Caemlyn...oh, you saw him? What was he like?
- Strange things are occurring around Baerlon. Unusual shapes have been sighted flying overhead and some people even claim to have seen Trollocs this far south!
- Feel free to substitute any rumor that you wish that better fits your campaign style or goals.

If PCs prove to be trustworthy, the Mahdi will reveal they are planning to head toward Falme for the summer since things are getting too hot here in Andor. (This is important if you plan to run tTwT at a later date.)

SCENE 4: A TIMELY ARRIVAL

The characters should arrive in Baerlon a little before dusk. They quickly learn that the city guards are keeping a close eye on new arrivals. They are challenged by a serious-looking man who asks to know their business in Baerlon; at sight of Morella, his face gets dark and he glares at the characters, demanding to know where “Captain Nolan” is. He and his men exchange grim looks when it is revealed that their onetime captain is now dead. When Morella explains that the heroes rescued her, the men allow the characters entry.

Morella quickly leads them to her uncle’s merchant shop. It is a well-kept two-story building with a large loading platform in the back. As the characters are arriving, several farmers depart, muttering under their breath; if any characters wish to eavesdrop, they must make a **Listen check (DC 10)** and learn that the sheepfarmers consider Caleb Nolan to be a tightwad. The below should be read or paraphrased to the characters, and the last bit (fear) should be directed toward the character wearing the Cloak.

The smell of wool is thick in the shop and you are momentarily taken aback by its sheer intensity. Shaking your head, you follow Morella deeper into the shop, noticing that it appears to be more of a warehouse than an actual merchant’s shop. There are several different kinds of wool here, but all stacked in neat, orderly rows. Morella’s voice snaps your attention back to her and she falls into her aunt’s arms, the story of her husband’s death tumbling from her lips. The sound of someone climbing down the stairs draws your eyes as a lean man of middle years approaches, his face filled with surprise. His gaze flickers past you for a moment, then darts back. Although he concealed it well, you are sure that you saw fear in his eyes.

But why would he fear you?

Caleb Nolan greets his nephew’s wife and listens to her tale with obvious sorrow on his face but keeps his eyes on the characters. Should a character ask to make a **Sense Motive check**, he must make a roll against Nolan’s Bluff check; for purposes of the adventure, presume that Nolan’s **Bluff result is a 25**. Should the character succeed, he may gather that Nolan is unsurprised about the death of his nephew, but is very surprised at the manner in which he died. The flicker of surprise is so quick that the character(s) should not be totally sure he actually saw it. When Morella finishes her tale, Nolan turns to the character wearing the Cloak.

“I must thank you for your bravery, kind sirs,” he says with sorrow etched on his face. “Had you not happened along when you did, I hate to think of what would have happened to lovely Morella.” He draws a deep breath and starts to speak but just as quickly chokes up. After a few moments, he recovers his composure and produces a purse that jingles with coins. “This cannot bring my nephew back, but I would ask that you accept these coins as thanks for bringing Morella back to us safely. Would that I could do more but this winter has been hard...”

There are two options with the purse, both of which are designed to eventually cast suspicion on Nolan and cause the characters to begin investigating him. They are:

- **OPTION ONE:** Inside the leather purse are 20 gold crowns. Later, the characters may learn through roleplay or **Gather Information** checks that Nolan is a notorious tightwad from whom the least copper must be pried. Should someone learn that the characters received gold from him, they will be extremely surprised.
- **OPTION TWO:** Inside the leather purse are 4 gold crowns. The claim that it was a difficult winter appears to be true. However, characters may learn through roleplay or **Gather Information** checks that Nolan apparently had a surprisingly good year, despite the winter. Many of his competitors have been unable to discern how he always manages to make money in recent years, given his money troubles a decade ago.

If he is asked about someplace to stay, he will direct the characters to the White Stallion and give them a quick note for the innkeeper; paranoid characters may opt to read the note in which case it simply states: *These men require rooms. Help them and you help me. Caleb Nolan.* If asked about someplace to purchase supplies, he will inform them that they must wait until the morrow since the majority of the shops have already closed for the day, but he can direct them to the best shops of the city. As the characters are exiting the shop, one of them bumps into a man entering it. He is instantly recognizable with a massive scar that cuts across his face from temple to opposite jaw, and he gives the character a sullen glare before apologizing and entering the shop.

It is possible that characters may attempt to **Gather Information** regarding Caleb Nolan, or the Nolan family. Here are some things they may learn:

DC 10-14: Caleb Nolan is one of the wealthiest men in Baerlon and has a thriving shipping business, trafficking exclusively in wool. He has recently been expressing political aspirations and is often at odds with the Governor. His nephew Aeron was a Captain of the Guard but recently left for Caemlyn.

DC 15-19: Caleb Nolan had some money troubles about ten or fifteen years ago. His first wife died and a nasty illness nearly destroyed the local sheep stock; I heard he named the Dark One. Anyway, he traveled to Caemlyn and returned a fairly wealthy man with a pretty new wife. He bought out his competitors and hasn't had money troubles since.

DC 20-24: You know, it's odd that Caleb Nolan had such a good year and all, what with the hard winter we had. There's not a single merchant in the city that didn't have a lean winter save Nolan. Wish I knew where he got his money.

DC 25-29: I heard Nolan had something to do with the Governor kicking the Whitecloaks out of the city. Some nut went and scratched the Dragon's Fang on Nolan's door and the Children were poking their noses into his business, bullying him around and accusing him of being a Darkfriend. Then the Stag and Lion was set on fire – Nolan loved that place – and the Governor kicked the Children out.

DC 30+: I heard that Aeron Nolan got into a shouting match with his uncle before he left for Caemlyn, something about Aeron marrying that cute little lady of his. This friend of mine claims Aeron actually named the Dark One, said Caleb would get swallowed up or some such nonsense.

The White Stallion is filled nearly to the rafters with rowdy miners and visitors. If anyone asks why the inn is so full, there are two reasons. First, the Stag and the Lion burned down several weeks ago, and second, the Stallion has a live gleeman tonight! Initially, the characters are informed that there are no vacancies, but upon providing the innkeeper with the note from Nolan, they are quickly provided rooms – at no charge for one night. The Innkeeper will act as if the characters are nobility; characters may make a **Sense Motive check (DC 5)** to realize that the fat innkeeper thinks they work for Nolan in some capacity and he wants to get in good with the wool merchant. As the characters settle in for the evening, presumably with full bellies and listening to the gleeman, choose a character and read or paraphrase the following to him:

The warm glow of the fire feels good after your travels and the gleeman is amazing. With simple words and gestures, he has made the Great Hunt for the Horn come alive; you can almost

see Rogosh Eagle-Eye and Gaidal Cain as they fight the forces of the Dark One. A glance around the room reveals no one not riveted to his words. No one save a single man.

He is sitting in the deepest shadows of the inn, a heavy cloak wrapped around his body and bound with an oddly shaped pin, but his eyes are staring at you and your friends. With a start, he realizes that you have caught him studying you and he quickly gets up and leaves the inn, prompting several muttered complaints from those he jostled. He seemed familiar somehow...

Then it hits you. He was the man that you ran into outside Caleb Nolan's shop. But why would he be staring at you?

The characters have several options here. First, they can ignore the man and continue enjoying the evening. In this case, proceed directly to Scene 5: Scene of the Crime. Alternatively, one (or even all) of the characters could pursue him. This is what he is hoping for and the characters are easily able to track him deeper into the city. He rounds a sharp corner and disappears into an alleyway. If the characters pursue him around the corner, they find themselves running into an ambush. Five armed thugs are waiting in the shadows and they jump the heroes the moment they round the corner. If three of the thugs fall, the rest will flee without hesitation, even if this means being the targets of Attacks of Opportunity.

Thugs: hp 7, 6, 6, 5, 4.

Development: It is possible that the characters may capture and interrogate one of these thugs, but they will learn very little from them. They were hired by a man in a dark cloak to jump the characters and kill them. None of the thugs know who the man was or why he wants the characters dead. Attempts to further locate the scarface man prove to be fruitless. Characters may attempt to determine his identity; a **Gather Information** check (DC 15) at the White Stallion will reveal him to be a man named Gaelin and the fact that he was once suspected to be a spy for the Whitecloaks who remained in the city following their departure. Very few in the area actively trust him but he has not yet done anything to warrant banishment from the city. To figure out exactly what he does requires a **Gather Information** check (DC 20); characters may learn that he is a merchant guard for Caleb Nolan.

SCENE 5: SCENE OF THE CRIME

The following morning dawns early and is crisp. The following assumes the characters have business in the many shops of the city; if the characters simply depart from the city, skip directly to the City Gates.

MARKETPLACE: While they are purchasing supplies, have all characters make a **Spot** check (DC 15); on any successes, that character notices Gaelin speaking with a city Guardsman at the edge of the market. The character(s) is too far away to make out any words, but the scarred man hands the guards a small purse that is obviously full of coins and several papers before turning away and leaving the market. The Guard goes in the opposite direction.

The Guardsman proceeds directly to a guardhouse where he speaks with several others; in order to get close enough to overhear what is said, a character must make a **Hide** check (with a +2 circumstance bonus for the crowd) which is opposed by the Guardsman's Spot check (+0), followed by a **Listen** check (DC 12 – due to the noise of the crowd). The Guardsman's comments (GM should include a description of at least two characters at the appropriate point):

"I've just come from headquarters to pass on an alert. There are several Darkfriend travelers in the city who are wanted for the murder of Morella Nolan. Here is a description of them; arrest them at once, should you see them. They are considered very dangerous."

In the event that one (or more) of the characters follows Gaelin, he returns directly to Caleb's shop. Immediately afterward, the wool merchant locks his door and pulls the shades, an indication that he is closed for the day. **Listen** checks may be attempted but have a base DC of 25 due to the size of the building. On a success, they will hear the sounds of keys rattling, a door opening and Caleb speaking: *They are getting too close. We must move quickly.*

Should the characters not learn that they are wanted for murder until the Guards come looking for them, GMs are encouraged to allow the Guards to narrowly miss the heroes and ask

about them where the characters can hear. Any character that is an outlander (i.e., not a Andoran) should be immediately recognized by anyone they attempt social interaction with (Bluff, Gather Information, etc.) The alarm will be sounded immediately.

CITY GATES: The gates of the city have been closed and there is a huge mass of farmers and miners waiting for them to be opened again; these men are muttering angrily and it is possible that the characters may learn of the manhunt for them in this manner. No less than six guards are stationed at each of the gates.

CALEB'S SHOP: The obvious place to check is Caleb's shop; regardless of whether they have visited it today or not, they find it closed up. This is something of a surprise and characters may learn from some angry sheepfarmers that Caleb NEVER closes early. The main door has an average lock on it (requiring an **Open Lock check of 25**), and the rear door has a simple lock on it (requiring an **Open Lock check of 20**). A **Search check (DC 20)** around the rear of the building will allow the characters to locate a spare key, hidden in a hanging plant. Alternatively, the characters may attempt to force the door open; a **Strength check (DC 15)** will easily force the rear door but will make a great deal of noise.

On the first floor, characters must make a **Search roll (DC 25)** to locate an extremely well hidden entrance to the cellars below. If they don't make this check initially, they will when one of the Darkfriends comes upstairs. Characters with looting in mind can find pretty much anything the GM deems feasible, although it is extremely unlikely (read: almost impossible) that these people will have Power-wrought equipment or *angreals/ter'angreals*. Upstairs are the living quarters and, although they are abandoned, heroes can instantly tell which room was Morella's from the overpowering smell of perfume. There is evidence of a struggle and a **Search check (DC 15)** will locate an oddly shaped cloak pin that characters recognize as belonging to Gaelin; it appears to have been ripped or torn from a black cloak.

As the characters are going over the upper level of the building, two Darkfriend cultists exit through the cellar entrance and enter the ground floor. If there are any characters downstairs (standing guard or something like that), they have plenty of time to find shelter or places to hide (+5 circumstance bonus to any Hide checks.) Use the standard Thug template for these characters; clever characters may be able to utilize stealth to neutralize one or even both of the villains before they are even aware of the attack.

Darkfriends: hp 7, 6

Tactics: If the Darkfriends outnumber the number of attacking characters in the first round (and are thus unaware of the presence of other characters), they will both attack the sole hero present. If the number of the characters present is equal to the villains and they don't appear to be too heavily armed (medium or heavier armor), they will each attack a hero. If they are outnumbered, one of the villains will attempt to block the characters from entering the secret passageway while the other flees down it, hoping to warn his allies. If he escapes, 4 additional thugs will reinforce him within 1d6+1 rounds (not including Caleb and Gaelin.) GM may choose to have the Darkfriends set up an ambush instead of making a frontal assault.

The heroes may question captured or incapacitated thugs. With a successful **Intimidate check (DC 13)**, they will force the man to slip up and curse them, declaring: "You cannot win! The Great Lord will consume you in the end!" Instantly, he recoils in fear at this as it reveals he is a Darkfriend. If characters search their bodies, they find a single iron key.

GM Note: It is necessary for the GM to determine exactly why these two Darkfriends were leaving their cellar hideout. Suggestions range from going home to grabbing wine casks or getting food. This is important since the Darkfriends in the cellar may react differently if they hear the key turning the lock when the two upstairs Darkfriends were not coming back.

SCENE 6: INTO THE SHADOW

Should the characters follow the now-open passageway, it leads down a narrow set of stairs (only one hero at a time) for at least thirty feet, ending at a thick wooden door that has been closed. Should GMs wish to be especially devious, a simple bell trap may be concealed on the stairs, doing nothing but warning the downstairs Darkfriends of someone's approach. A **Search check (DC 20)** is required to locate the trap (at about the mid-point) and a **Disable Device check (DC 10)** is required to keep it from ringing. Should it be set off, the downstairs Darkfriends will be waiting in ambush.

A **Listen** check (DC 10 if villains are unaware of characters, DC 20 if ambush is waiting) may be made to detect noise on the other side. The door is locked but it can be picked (**Open Lock** check [DC 25]) or smashed in (**Strength** check [DC 15]), but hopefully the characters have brought the key acquired from the Darkfriends upstairs.

The secret lair of the Darkfriends is a large cellar, over fifty feet in width and length. There is a single large table in here and numerous chairs; a bookshelf in one corner has a number of books on heretical subjects. Another door is set in the west wall. When the characters enter, there are at least 4 Darkfriends within (use standard Thugs); what these men are doing is entirely up to the GM but the following assumes the DFs were dicing. If characters move carefully and cautiously (**Move Silently** checks with +2 circumstance bonus since the DFs aren't actively paying attention), two of them may get surprise actions on the seated DFs. If the villains have set up an ambush for the heroes, the layout will need to be adjusted as the Darkfriends will usually use the tables as cover and fire ranged weapons (short bows) at targets entering the cellar. Further, should an ambush be set up, Gaelin will be present and ready to attack.

Darkfriends: hp 4, 5, 8, 6

The door leads to an "off-limits" area where Gaelin and Caleb are planning their next move to assume control of Baerlon; from this room, there is also a dark tunnel that leads directly to a nearby warehouse believed to be empty and owned by one of Caleb's rivals. They will enter the battle as soon as they here the sounds of combat; it will take them 1 full round to exit the room at which time they will be able to join the battle. Should the GM wish to make Caleb a long-term enemy, he will make his escape instead of exiting the room and entering combat.

There are three prisoners in the "off-limits" area that will be able to clear the names of the heroes; they are: the Governor's niece (12 years old), the daughter of the Guard Captain (15), and the son of a prominent merchant (6). All three have been captured to provide bargaining chips in the coming coup.

Tactics: This is a battle to the death. The Darkfriends cannot allow the characters to escape with knowledge of their true allegiances and they know that they cannot expect mercy from the populace of Baerlon. Should Caleb or Gaelin be killed before the remaining DFs, his death will so demoralize the others that they suffer a -2 to their Defense for the remainder of the combat.

WRAPPING UP: With the Darkfriend plot foiled and the hostages freed, the characters must now clear their names. The GM can make this as easy or as difficult as he wishes. If the GM wishes to be lenient, the heroes can emerge from Nolan's shop to find the City Guard having surrounded the building. By dusk, everyone in the city has heard of their great deeds (and GM may opt to grant them a Reputation point for their actions). In this case, the city will provide healing for them and pay for their stay in the city. A reward may also be in the works...

As an alternative to the above ending, the GM could allow Caleb to make a discrete exit during the final combat through a hidden tunnel in the "off-limits" area so that he may return to plague the heroes again in the future. If you don't like that idea, perhaps his body simply mysteriously disappears...

Characters:

Morella Nolan

A beautiful young woman, Morella is the widow of the recently deceased Aeron Nolan, the fleeing Darkfriend. With brilliant golden locks and sparkling blue eyes, she is captivatingly attractive and has an amazing ability to talk about absolutely nothing for hours on end. Many (including her Uncle) believe that this inane chatter secretly conceals a razor-sharp mind, but she is actually as dull as she appears.

Morella, female Midlander Expert 1; HD 1d6; hp 6; Init +0; Defense 10; Spd 30 ft.; Attack +0 Melee (1d4); SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +4; Rep 0; Str 11 (+0), Dex 10 (+0), Con 11 (+0), Int 7 (-2), Wis 11 (+0), Cha 18 (+4).

Skills: Craft (pottery) +2, Diplomacy +8, Profession (potter) +4, Ride +4, Search +2, Sense Motive +4

Feats: Bullheaded

Possessions: Dagger, 5 gold marks

Thugs & Darkfriends

Standard Issue Mook. These guys have few (if any) redeeming qualities and can usually be found in any city.

Thugs and Darkfriends, male Midlander Warrior 1; HD 1d8; hp 7 (average); Init +0; Defense 13 (+3 studded leather); Spd 30 ft.; Attack +3 melee (1d8+2 longsword), +1 ranged (1d6, shortbow); SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +0; Rep 0; Str 14 (+2), Dex 10 (+0), Con 15 (+2), Int 10 (+0), Wis 10 (+0), Cha 12 (+1).

Skills: Intimidate +4, Jump +4

Feats: Great Fortitude, Run

Possessions: 1d4 silver

Caleb Nolan

Ostensibly a top wool merchant in Baerlon, the uncle of Aeron harbors a dark and deadly secret. For nearly thirty years, he has been a Darkfriend and has become the most powerful of those in Baerlon. He recruited his nephew into the circle and has long harbored a thirst for power. With the riots instigated by the Whitecloaks now but a memory, he sees his chance. He desperately hopes that his actions in Baerlon will be recognized by the Chosen when they return but is terrified that agents of Tar Valon may be in the city, hunting for him. There are indications that his nephew spoke with such an agent...

Caleb, male Midlander Wanderer 2/Noble 2; hp 18; Init +2; Defense 18 (+2 Dex, +8 class, -2 multiclass); Spd 30 ft.; Attack +3 melee (1d6 short sword), +4 ranged (1d4, dagger); SQ: Bonus Class Skill (Move Silently), Call in a Favor, Illicit Barter, Inspire Confidence +1, The Dark One's Own Luck; SV Fort +0, Ref +6, Will +6; Rep 4; Str 10 (+0), Dex 15 (+2), Con 9 (-1), Int 14 (+2), Wis 13 (+1), Cha 12 (+1).

Skills: Bluff +8, Balance +6, Escape Artist +8, Gather Information +5, Innuendo +5, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +6, Pick Pocket +8, Profession (merchant) +7, Ride +6, Sense Motive +8, Tumble +6, Use Rope +6

Feats: Luck of Heroes, Nimble, Persuasive

Possessions: 50 gc, masterwork short sword

Gaelin

Long a Darkfriend, the man known only as Gaelin has had many jobs throughout his life but his most successful one to date has been as a spy for the Whitecloaks. Shortly after Lord Captain Bornhald arrived in Baerlon, Gaelin was put in touch with a member of the Captain's retinue. He remained in the city when the Whitecloaks were banished and has got a job as a merchant guard. On rare occasions, his allegiances are invoked and he does special jobs for Caleb Nolan. Gaelin is easily recognizable due to the immense facial scar that crosses his entire face from one temple to the opposite jaw. He rarely smiles.

Gaelin, male Midlander Armsman 2/Wanderer 1; hp 26; Init +2; Defense 15 (+3 studded leather, +2 Dex) or 17 (+3 leather, +2 large steel shield, +2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; Attack +4 melee (1d8+2 long sword), +3 ranged; SQ: Illicit Barter; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +3; Rep 0; Str 15 (+2), Dex 14 (+2), Con 13 (+1), Int 12 (+1), Wis 10 (+0), Cha 8 (-1).

Skills: Climb +7, Handle Animal +5, Heal +5, Hide +6, Intimidate +7, Jump +6, Move Silently +6, Ride +7

Feats: Bullheaded, Luck of Heroes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (Long sword)

Possessions: 65 mk, long sword, dark clothes

Baerlon City Guard, male Midlander warrior 1; hp 7 (average); Init +0; Defense 13 (+3 studded leather); Spd 30 ft.; Attack +3 melee (1d6+2, quarterstaff), +1/+1 melee (1d6+2, quarterstaff); SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0; Rep 0; Str 14 (+2), Dex 10 (+0), Con 15 (+2), Int 10 (+0), Wis 10 (+0), Cha 12 (+1).

Skills: Intimidate +4, Jump +4

Feats: Ambidexterity, Two Weapon Fighting

Possessions: 1d6 mk