SYNCOPATED
GAMES

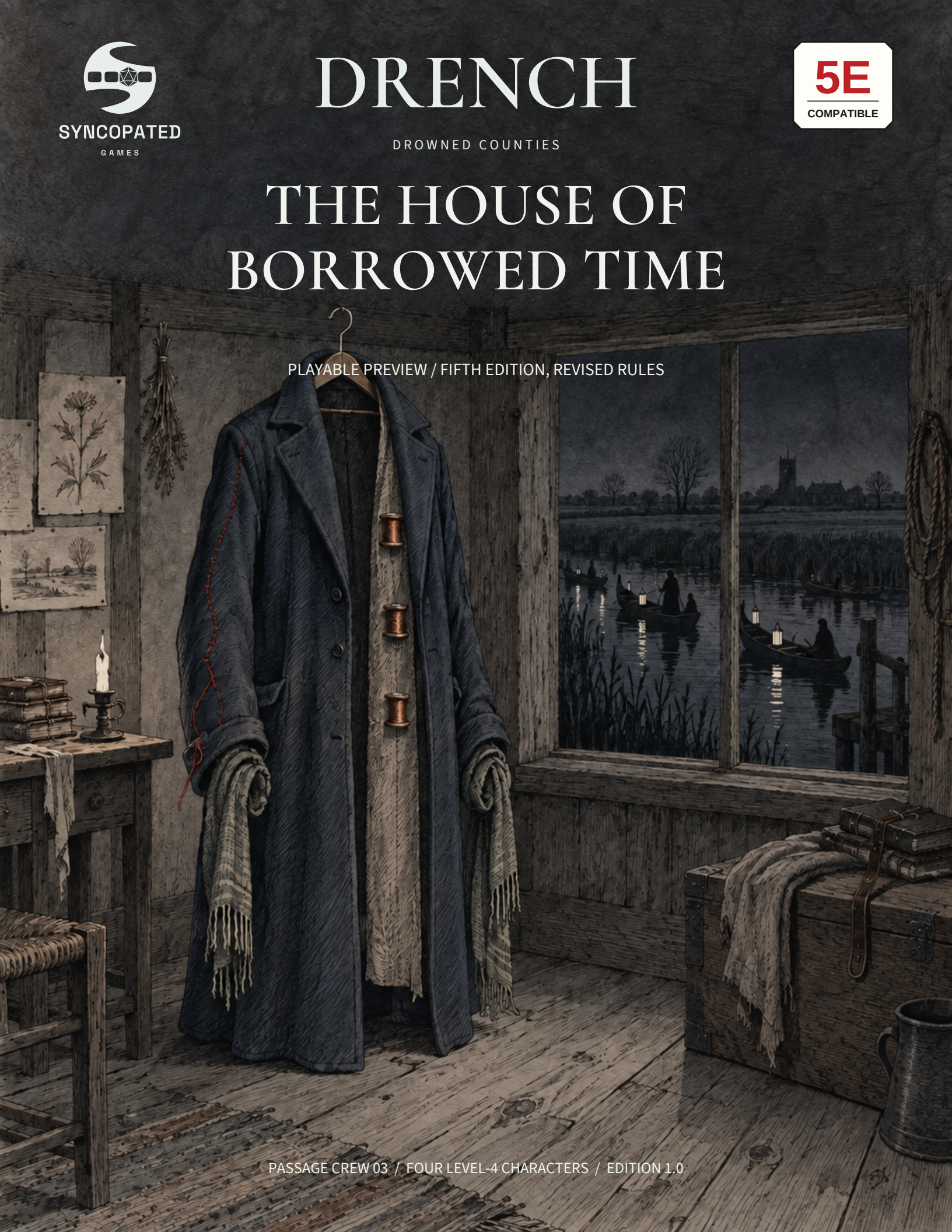
DRENCH

DROWNED COUNTIES

5E
COMPATIBLE

THE HOUSE OF BORROWED TIME

PLAYABLE PREVIEW / FIFTH EDITION, REVISED RULES



PASSAGE CREW 03 / FOUR LEVEL-4 CHARACTERS / EDITION 1.0

DRENCH · The Drowned Counties · Passage Crew 03

Four level-4 characters · Fifth edition, revised rules · Edition 1.0

Commission and wake sample

Follow the invited-guest route from the commission at the kitchen into Reception (3) and the wake room (4). This sample contains those two complete keyed scenes, the people encountered there, the rules for borrowing a memory, and the attendant's preservation procedure. Its playable scene ends with a guest's response to the evidence. The complete adventure includes Morrow's private clearance replays, Rusk's settlement, the investigation beyond the guest rooms, official seizure, and the morning inquiry.

Adventure overview

Sella Marr, a sailmaker, has forgotten her brother's last hour. She paid Reedwake's memory house to keep it until she could bear to take it back. This morning the keeper invented a storage charge and threatened to destroy it at midnight. Sella hires the party to recover her brother's farewell.

The House of Borrowed Time occupies three joined barges in **Reedwake**, a floating market. Its founder, **Nera Dole**, is a ghost bound to a silver basin. The current keeper, **Orris Veck**, stores episodes in blue thread called **skeins**. The person who deposits an episode forgets it for as long as the house holds it. Tonight, wealthy guests pay for a last look at private moments from strangers' lives. The people who left the six hours on tonight's program authorized a final sale and destruction before dawn.

Veck's hidden purpose

- Veck paid men to burn boats at **Cinder Reach**, driving nine households off lawful moorings. Fire spread to occupied hulls. **Adra Pell**, a sail patcher, died after the ladders were cut; the surviving residents lost their homes.
- Veck later made emergency relief conditional on three witnesses depositing the hours that could expose him. He plans to destroy those memories before the county inquiry.
- Sella's paid-up deposit makes the witness erasures look like routine storage enforcement. Veck may offer her skein or a cash bribe if the crew lets him take their memories of what they uncovered.
- The witnesses' deposits are fastened inside **Morrow**, an animated coat who serves as attendant. The borrowed hours woke him twenty-six days ago. He still trusts his keeper. The disposal order reveals that Veck plans to destroy the red seam that holds Morrow's own life.

Start with Sella

- Meet her at the Kettle Tern kitchen boat at 20:00. She offers 120 gp: 40 now, 80 when her intact deposit is in her hands.
- Take the receipt and four invitations. This sample supports attending the wake from 21:00. The delivery and market-watch approaches in **Sella's commission** are in the complete adventure.

Three things to save

- **Sella's farewell:** recover her skein, SM-17. It contains her brother's last conversation, separate from the clearance evidence. She chooses whether to restore it.
- **The witnesses' evidence:** protect their deposits. Documents alone can establish the clearance; living testimony and viewed memories also supply proof. Viewing does not restore a memory to its owner.

- **Morrow's life:** Show him proof Veck plans to kill him, then bring him out intact or keep his coat from Veck. His red seam contains his own days. He can live in a new garment on the seam alone.

Stop the midnight destruction

- At midnight, Veck begins a three-round rite that destroys only the skeins in the silver basin. Remove the thread, move the basin, or stop Veck. If the main basin is out of reach, he uses a locked backup in his office. An open confrontation there can drive him to start early.
- At 00:10, if Veck still controls Morrow, he starts ten minutes of unpicking the red seam. An unfinished disposal delays the unpicking. Each loss requires Veck to finish the work.
- Official seizure by Reedwake's elected berth jurors and market watch is another option in the complete adventure; this sample supplies the invited-guest route.

Return and the morning inquiry

Return Sella's deposit for payment. The county recorder's 09:00 inquiry aboard the Witness Boat continues in the complete adventure. Morrow can choose his next steps. Success on one objective does not settle the others.

Sella's commission

> *Beneath the towboat's awning, a woman turns a receipt until its creases tear. Onion broth has gone cold beside her. "I remember him stealing onions. I remember him dying. I had to let go of the hour in between. Maybe that was a mistake. Now he says he needs the shelf space. Oh, the nerve of him."*

Sella Marr, a sailmaker, meets the party at the Kettle Tern kitchen boat (1). Her brother **Davin** died of lung sickness last winter. She deposited their last conversation because every attempt to recall it brought her back to watching him struggle for air. She is ready to recover it. Veck has refused her request, citing a fabricated unpaid storage charge. He needs her unrelated, fully paid deposit in the disposal batch so the three clearance erasures resemble routine enforcement.

She offers **120 gp total: 40 now and 80 when her intact skein is placed in her hands**. Payment depends only on the intact skein reaching her; returning its contents to her memory is her own decision. She also lends a flat-bottomed six-person skiff, two hooded lanterns, and 50 feet of rope. The kitchen keeper can lend dry clothes, a sewing kit, and three empty, padded tea tins suitable for carrying skeins. Sella has one tin already.

Give players **Sella's receipt** and the **wake invitation**. Sella bought four admissions before Veck barred her from the premises for "causing a nuisance," a charge she disputes. Each invitation admits its bearer. The doors open at 21:00. The house advertises rented memories for the guests and a routine clearance of overdue deposits after the wake. Sella points to her receipt: "Until I ask for it. That was the promise, his exact words."

Sella's knowledge and help

Sella knows how to view the episode: hold the thread to a temple, stay seated, and lift it away to stop. The wooden tag reads **SM-17** and bears a burned sail mark. She knows nothing about Morrow's construction or the clearance deposits. She waits at the kitchen unless the crew asks her to come. She can identify her skein, help carry a chest, or sew competently. If she comes aboard, Veck asks her to leave. Use the ordinary resident profile for her.

Enter as guests

From 21:00, each bearer invitation admits one guest through Reception (3). Before then, Veck receives a plausible business visitor there. No character must deposit a memory to enter.

Walking between Kettle Tern (1), the allotment board (2), and public entrance (3) takes five minutes for any pair; house movement is included in each ten-minute exploration turn. Track longer conversations and searches in ten-minute turns. Simultaneous work costs only the time of its longest task.

The public door opens into Reception (3), which leads to the wake room (4). Guests can move openly between them. A porter who sees a trespasser presents **NAME / BUSINESS** on a slate and rings for Veck. Veck asks unwanted visitors to leave. If he catches someone interfering with the evidence, he calls both porters to detain them. One blocks the exit and the other grabs the carrier. Roll Initiative if the crew resists. If outmatched, Veck leaves any loose skeins and flees.

Reedwake and the Cinder Reach

Reedwake's market stands on cargo hulls anchored to four stone piers. Streets are lashed walkways; households paint their current berth number on a hanging board. When the seasonal allotment changes, whole lanes move. The warm smell of bread travels almost as far as the church bell, and small boats tie up outside kitchen windows to buy supper.

The market's **berth court** assigns moorings and settles local possession disputes. The county's case records travel aboard the **Witness Boat**, due tomorrow morning. Three elected berth jurors can order a temporary seizure. The visiting county recorder can hear sworn testimony and refer a criminal case to the county assize. A viewed memory gives the recorder evidence to weigh alongside testimony and records.

Three years ago, a freight partnership bought the shore behind **Cinder Reach**, half a mile east of the market. Nine households still held lawful annual moorings there. Veck, then the partnership's accounts agent, paid men to burn empty end boats and drive the residents out. Fire spread to occupied hulls. **Adra Pell**, a sail patcher, died of smoke in her boat after the ladders were cut. Her daughter **Mina Pell**, a netmender, identified her body. **Linnet Saye**, the house's pilot, piloted the hire boat. **Ebb Tern**, the kitchen keeper, ferried residents away. **Casta Venn**, a retired berth clerk, saw Veck give the order. The partnership had replacement berths and an emergency repair fund. Veck ran its relief desk. He told survivors that leaving their worst hour in safekeeping would help them sleep, then required a deposit before he signed the relief vouchers. Linnet needed her pilot's wages released, Ebb needed planks to keep his kitchen boat afloat, and Casta needed a berth for her household before the next allotment. Veck guided each of them toward the hour that implicated him. The partnership called the fire an accident and the departure voluntary, then built bonded warehouses where the homes had stood. The nine displaced households now share five hulls at **the Red Steps**, a row of floating homes behind the kitchen boat. They still hold berth receipts, drawings of the rooms they lost, and bills for possessions left aboard. They have been refused compensation for want of evidence that the clearance was forced. Ebb, Linnet, and Casta remember their lives before and after it, including making their deposits; only the specific deposited hours are gone from their memories.

Memory keeping in the counties

Most mourners keep possessions and tell stories. A few licensed memory houses also preserve experiences for sailors facing dangerous journeys, dying people leaving a farewell, and survivors seeking a respite. A deposit transfers one episode; the depositor keeps their skills, name, affections, and responsibilities. People can learn about a missing event from others and form new memories of that account.

Nera Dole, Reedwake's deceased memory keeper, founded the house as a place of safekeeping. Her ghost remains bound to its

silver washbasin. She can see and hear what happens near the basin and speak with visitors. Veck inherited the business and started charging guests to look in on the unguarded hours of strangers. Those loans soon paid better than storage.

Depositors own their episodes. Guests need the owner's permission to view them, and the owner decides whether to request a return. The house has permission to lend and then destroy the six happy hours on tonight's program. Sella and the three clearance witnesses gave him their episodes for safekeeping. He plans to destroy their thread without their consent.

Market movement

Walking between Kettle Tern (1), the allotment board (2), and the public entrance (3) takes **five minutes** for any pair, including finding a boat or crossing a busy gangway. A skiff can reach any exterior landing in **ten minutes**. Travel inside the house is included in each ten-minute exploration turn. Track longer conversations and searches in ten-minute turns.

The water is ten feet deep and nearly still, with ladders at every landing. Outside combat, a swimmer with free hands reaches a ladder in a minute without a check; use normal swimming rules in combat. The six-person skiff carries six Medium people and their gear, including its rower; Morrow takes one place. It moves 20 feet per rowing action, has AC 13 and 30 HP, and founders at 0 HP, leaving handholds.

The keeper, attendant, and witnesses

Orris Veck, keeper and former accounts agent

Veck wears a clean mourning cuff over an ink-stained sleeve. He carries a silver pencil on a chain and rubs its flat end against his lower lip before lying. "We give people the chance to bear anything. Most professions offer far, far less."

He understands the relief his house provides. He also helped dispossess nine households and used the partnership's relief vouchers to make three witnesses surrender the hours that could expose him. The county recorder's announced visit prompted him to plan tonight's disposal. He invented Sella's charge so her unrelated, fully paid deposit would make the batch look like routine enforcement.

Wants. Destroy the clearance memories, burn the papers, and keep his business. **Knows.** Both silver basins, Morrow's red seam, and the service skiff beneath the stern. **Carries.** Keys to the private rooms, office cashbox, backup-basin cabinet, and stern-skiff compartment, plus 35 gp and the summons for tomorrow's inquiry.

Two **folded porters** serve the house. Each has a red seam like Morrow's and carries blue bobbins of Veck's own memories. They know the people and dealings he chose to share with them and defend him with the same certainty that he defends himself. See **House guardians and human opponents**.

Veck's offer. He offers SM-17 or 50 gp if the crew drops the investigation and everyone who learned about his wrongdoing agrees to deposit their recollections of it. He pays from his purse and the wake's takings. At Nera's basin each willing person gives up the relevant continuous stretch of their visit, up to one hour per skein and ten minutes per deposit. He states the terms before anyone touches the basin and adds the new skeins to his disposal batch. A single refusal ends the offer. If the crew presents evidence with three willing local witnesses, he offers all four deposits and his keys for safe passage out of Reedwake. If the crew accepts, he orders the porters to stand down and let the new carriers leave. They honor the deal. The crew can refuse and let the witnesses act. Veck tries to escape if outmatched and surrenders if cornered. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that witnesses willing to speak publicly worry him more than threats of violence.

Morrow, house attendant

A tall blue coat moves around a wooden hanger, with rolled scarves for hands and no face above its collar. Three copper bobbins sit in the lining. A red seam runs down one sleeve. Morrow turns his empty collar toward whoever is speaking.

"I remember a daughter. I don't know who to ask how she is."

The daughter belongs to Casta's memory. Morrow knows the bobbins came from other people, though he has trouble separating their tastes from his own. He chose his name after promising to mend a guest's cuff the next day. Veck told him the borrowed hours keep him alive. Morrow fears that giving them back will end his life before he can keep the promise.

Wants. To keep his job, learn whether he likes fresh bread, and understand why Veck has started treating his borrowed hours as surplus. **Knows.** The house routes, the location of SM-17, and how to release a bobbin. **Will do.** Give directions to guests. His private clearance replays are in the complete adventure. He initially defends Veck and declines an invitation to leave. A disposal order naming his seam, Nera's account of Veck's plan, or seeing Veck start to dismantle him convinces him that staying will kill him. With that proof he leaves with the crew. Show him the house instructions or explain the transfer before asking him to surrender all his bobbins.

Deposits, viewing, and return

Skeins and ownership

A skein is blue thread wound around a palm-sized copper bobbin. Its wooden tag bears a depositor's name, receipt number, and a simple mark. A deposit can contain up to one continuous hour. The owner remembers making the deposit and knows the gap exists. A dead owner's deposit remains viewable.

A deposit requires the owner's willing touch, Nera's basin, and ten minutes. Three of tonight's threatened skeins hang in Morrow's coat: **HP-3**, Linnet's clearance journey, **ET-6**, Ebb's rescue, and **CV-8**, Casta's view from the berth office. **SM-17**, Sella's farewell to Davin, starts in the archive (6). Each coat bobbin takes one minute to release.

Skeins withstand water and ordinary handling. Pulling the thread apart, burning it in a fire, or crushing a bobbin leaves the episode intact. The skein re-forms in one minute. Veck can destroy several skeins at once with the rite in either silver basin.

Viewing a memory

One willing creature holds a skein to a temple for a minute. Up to three willing companions touching the viewer can join. Their bodies remain seated and aware of danger; any participant can leave instantly. Touching an unwilling creature does nothing. A viewing, discussion, and repacking takes one **ten-minute turn**.

The viewers see and hear the episode from the depositor's position, as if standing where the depositor stood. Let the players look at anything the depositor could perceive, listen closely, or replay a moment. People in the replay carry on with their remembered actions. Viewers can discover what the depositor overlooked, and they can't change what happened. Provide listed clues when the players focus on the relevant detail.

In the complete adventure, Morrow can lend one bobbin while the other two remain attached. The borrowed memory leaves an unsettling quiet until the bobbin returns. Removing, restoring, or destroying the last intact bobbin leaves him still, alive in his red seam. Moving the seam to another garment can wake him. Refitting an intact bobbin restores motion to the old coat if it has at least 1 HP. Veck conceals that the seam can preserve him.

The House of Borrowed Time

GM SITE PLAN / DRENCH

MARKET INSET · locations beyond this plan

1 Kettle Tern kitchen / Red Steps

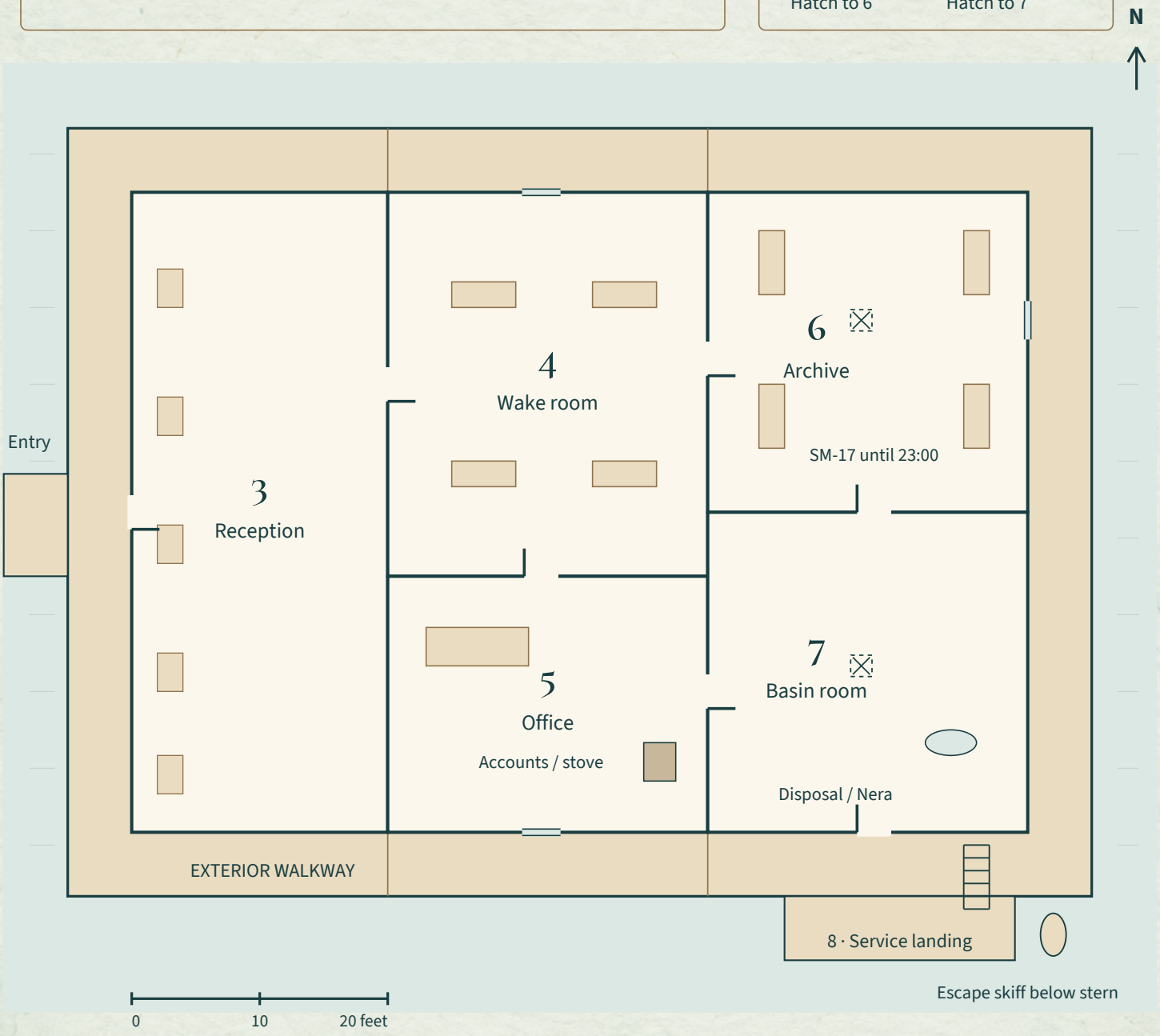
2 Allotment board / market watch

5 min: 1–2, 1–3 or 2–3 · 10 min by skiff to a landing

9 ROOF ACCESS

Fixed ladder 8 · 10 ft high

Hatch to 6 Hatch to 7



MAP KEY

Heavy line: wall Opening + leaf: door Paired thin lines: window

Dashed square + X: overhead roof hatch Rungs: fixed ladder

Shaded blue/gray: water Pale tan/white: deck and rooms

Deck: 80 × 60 ft · exterior walkway: 5 ft · water: 10 ft deep · all rooms on one level

Returning an episode

An owner who willingly holds their skein to a temple and asks for it back for one minute recalls the episode as they experienced it, inaccuracies included. The blue thread becomes ordinary white thread. This works anywhere. Only the original owner can reclaim it, even if they have changed their name or lost their receipt.

Restoration brings recollection. It does not dictate forgiveness, a breakdown, a change of name, or any other response. Sella asks to take her tin home and open it in the morning.

Destruction and spells

Destruction permanently removes the stored episode. Other recollections, documents, and newly learned accounts remain. Returning a memory first makes subsequent destruction of its empty thread harmless.

The deposits and Morrow are original enchantments. **Detect Magic** reveals Enchantment on a skein and Transmutation on Morrow's seam. **Dispel Magic** doesn't end either. **Identify** reveals the operations described here, including the seam's role. **Mending** can repair a broken bobbin or Morrow's garment as described under **Harm and recovery**. Nera and the house instructions can explain the enchantments.

Deposit magic transfers an episode into thread. Divination, teleportation, and detection of lies work normally in the house.

The disposal and Morrow's seam

Warnings. At 22:00 Veck loosens the blue ties. Morrow returns holding his sleeve shut. "He says I'll be lighter after midnight." At 23:00 Veck brings SM-17 and the disposal order from the archive (6) to the main basin (7), or the office (5) if the main basin is out of reach. At 23:30 he summons Morrow to the room with the tray and spends one minute per bobbin to remove the remaining deposits. Morrow leaves with the crew once he sees the order or hears proof that Veck means to unpick his red seam.

Disposal. At midnight Veck puts the skeins in the main basin or its backup and uses his action to recite on three consecutive rounds. The thread pales and the episodes are destroyed on his third action. Remove the skeins, move or break the basin, or stop Veck before then. He has a locked backup in the office (5) and can attempt the same rite there early if openly confronted. Each basin weighs 30 pounds. Its rim has AC 15, 15 HP, and immunity to Poison and Psychic damage. Nera knows the rite and can explain how to stop it. Her voice and reflection follow the intact main basin if it is moved. Breaking the main basin frees her and ends new deposits. The backup can still destroy skeins.

Morrow. At 00:10, or after a delayed disposal, Veck needs ten uninterrupted minutes to unpick the red seam. Stop him or take the coat before completion. Morrow's seam alone can wake him in an intact garment. See **Morrow's red seam** for the transfer.

Market and house locations

3. Reception and cloak rail

> *Every peg bears a small mirror. The attendant hangs a guest's coat and waits politely while the guest's reflection keeps holding it.*

Before the wake. Veck receives a plausible business visitor before 21:00. Asked for SM-17, he repeats the storage claim. If the visitor presses him about wrongdoing, he takes them aside and makes **Veck's offer**. The crew can decline and try another route.

Attendant and reflections. Morrow receives guests after 21:00; before then he lays out dry slippers. The lagging reflections are a harmless effect of the basin.

Return sign and prices. A brass sign reads: **TO RECLAIM AN HOUR, HOLD YOUR OWN THREAD TO YOUR TEMPLE. ASK FOR ITS RETURN AND KEEP IT THERE FOR ONE MINUTE.** The card below lists loans at **5 gp per viewing**. Morrow brings one of the six authorized wake skeins to the guest in room 4. Use **Viewing a memory**.

Sella's tag. Morrow recognizes Sella's tag and says it is in the archive, or on Veck's tray after 23:00.

Inspect his sleeve. He lets a courteous guest feel his sleeve: the red stitches are warm, the three blue ties cold. He does not know why.

Recent memories. Ask about a recent day and he describes feeding his sparrow or mending the torn cuff; he tells borrowed memories with different voices and his own recollections in the same quiet voice.

Weapons custom. A guest may leave weapons checked or keep them peace-bound. Morrow accepts a plausible work tool. Refusing the custom brings Veck to negotiate; the invitation stays valid unless he revokes it.

4. Wake room

> *Six candles burn beneath six covered dishes. Each dish holds a spool of blue thread. Guests wait with napkins in their laps. Nobody has been served food yet.*

Guests and paid viewings. Eight guests sit in pairs. Tonight's program includes a sailor's first sight of land, a baker's daughter carrying a perfect loaf, and a woman dancing with her wife before the war. Each loan buys a last look at a moment that was once private. The house has consent to destroy the six wake skeins before dawn. Their dishes stay in the wake room when Veck takes the other skeins to the basin. If Veck is stopped, add the six to the depositors' inventory.

Keeper and porters. Veck stays here from 21:00 to 22:00 and returns intermittently. One porter serves drinks, and the other keeps reception until 23:30. They stay polite in front of guests and answer Veck's bell or shouted call.

Rusk's assistance. A guest, **Lady Rusk**, has paid to borrow her late wife's dance. She thought every loan was authorized. Showing Sella's receipt or Morrow's fear makes her demand a halt and keep the other guests in the room as witnesses. She will not command the porters. If Veck is still performing hospitality, Rusk can keep him arguing for one twenty-minute interval while the party searches elsewhere.

Optional borrowed dance. Borrowing the dance gives an optional quiet scene: a woman notices the viewer's trembling hand, closes hers around it, and says, "The floor moves. Let it." The memory ends with both women laughing when the boat rolls. It contains no secret clue. A character who prefers not to borrow it loses nothing.

Morrow's red seam

Morrow's own recollections have collected in the red stitching he added while mending his sleeve. The three borrowed deposits gave him a beginning; twenty-six days of independent experience now sustain a separate person. The red seam can be moved to another intact garment. It holds Morrow's continuing life. Nobody can view it, and it cannot be returned like a deposited skein.

Nera, the house instruction sheet, or **Identify** reveals the procedure. Morrow himself can discover it by comparing a recent recollection with a borrowed one: when he tells the story of naming himself, the red seam warms and moves while all three bobbins stay still. Ask him about his life, let him test the difference, and give the players that observation without a check.

Protect or remove Morrow

Show Morrow the disposal order or let him hear Nera's account of Veck's plan. Once he learns that Veck means to unpick his seam, he agrees to leave and can guide the crew through the house. Take him intact to the Kettle Tern or another refuge. He takes one place in Sella's skiff. If he is still, carry the coat and protect its red seam. Transfer can wait until he is safe.

Release and return the owners' deposits

Each bobbin takes one minute to release. Morrow can lend one at a time for viewing in the complete adventure. He agrees to release all three when he understands that moving the red seam will keep him alive. Once a bobbin is free, its owner chooses whether to restore the episode. Anyone can carry a freed skein, and a willing creature can view it under **Viewing a memory**.

Removing or returning the last intact attached deposit makes the old coat still. Morrow lives in the red seam. With at least 1 HP, the old coat wakes when an intact, unreturned bobbin is reattached. A transfer wakes Morrow in another garment with the seam alone.

Transfer to another garment

Use an intact garment large enough to hold the seam, a needle, and ordinary thread. The red seam alone sustains Morrow in the new garment. The borrowed bobbins can stay in the old coat. One worker needs **ten minutes**, or five if Morrow can still move and help. With Nera's instructions the stitching needs no roll.

1. Lay the garments together. Stitch the loose red seam to the new garment before detaching it from the old. At every point, part of the seam remains attached to intact cloth.
2. Ask Morrow to recall his naming or another day after his awakening. If he lies still or cannot answer, say his chosen name and read the naming account in his pocket notebook. The red stitches pull toward the new cloth.
3. Finish moving the whole seam, then release the three borrowed bobbins from the old lining. Morrow stands in the new garment, remembering his own twenty-six days. He no longer experiences the deposited episodes as his own past.

Interruption: the worker can stop safely between stitches. Leave the garments pinned together; resuming requires only the remaining time. A deliberate attack on the seam uses the damage rules below. There is no arbitrary loss for being interrupted.

No instructions available: Morrow's visible distinction between red seam and blue ties lets a careful worker derive the same process in twenty minutes. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check reduces that to ten minutes; failure leaves the twenty-minute time, and every memory stays intact. If he is already still, his notebook and warm seam provide the same evidence. Do not make the survival of a rescued Morrow depend on finding one sheet.

Harm and recovery

At 0 HP Morrow falls still. His red seam survives in his garment. Ten minutes with a sewing kit or **Mending** restores his current garment to 1 HP. If he still wears his original coat, an intact, unreturned bobbin must also be fastened in its lining before he can move again. In a new garment, the red seam alone wakes him once he has at least 1 HP. A completed transfer into a sound garment wakes him with at least 1 HP, even if the old coat was damaged or empty.

Unpicking his red seam from its last intact garment takes ten uninterrupted minutes and ends his life only on completion. Burning the entire garment for one uninterrupted minute has the same result. Taking it out of the fire or stopping the unpicking beforehand preserves him. In combat, an enemy must first secure the still coat; the seam survives incidental damage to the active Morrow.

House guardians and human opponents

The two folded porters draw on bobbins of Veck's own memories. One carries his mornings at the accounts desk. The other carries the times he fought to keep the house. Their seams hold the days they have lived since he stitched them. They recognize the house's guests, know its doors, and protect Veck and the evidence that could hurt him. Before witnesses they restrain. In the office, they strike anyone who resists or tries to leave with a skein.

Orris Veck

Medium Humanoid; any ancestry

AC 12 · **HP** 22 (4d8 + 4) · **Speed** 30 ft. · **Initiative** +2

STR 9 (-1) · **DEX** 14 (+2) · **CON** 12 (+1) · **INT** 14 (+2) · **WIS** 11 (+0) · **CHA** 15 (+2)

Skills Deception +4, Insight +2, Persuasion +4 · **Senses** Passive Perception 10 · **Languages** Common

Knife. Melee or Ranged Attack Roll: +4, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) Piercing damage.

Behavior. If he has a loose skein and can reach the backup in a fight, Veck uses his turns to unlock the cabinet, ready the basin, and recite the rite while the porters hold the room. He uses Dash or Disengage to reach 8 if he gives up on disposal. He surrenders at 7 HP or fewer, or sooner if outmatched and unable to flee. His spoken orders require no action. Handling a locked door, taking a guarded object, and sabotaging a tied skiff take actions on his turn.

Changes for another party

For three characters or a party below level 4, use one active porter; the other hangs unfinished in the archive. For a stronger party, keep the two porters and let the difficulty come from simultaneous goals: guarding the deposits, intercepting Veck, and protecting the guests. Do not add undisclosed guards after a successful plan. Successful control magic, stealth, negotiation, and direct force can end the immediate danger quickly.

Folded porter

Medium Construct; unaligned

AC 13 · **HP** 27 (6d8) · **Speed** 30 ft. · **Initiative** +1

STR 14 (+2) · **DEX** 12 (+1) · **CON** 10 (+0) · **INT** 5 (-3) · **WIS** 10 (+0) · **CHA** 5 (-3)

Immunities Poison damage; Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Poisoned conditions · **Senses** Passive Perception 10 · **Languages** understands Common; cannot speak

Veck's bobbins. The porter obeys Veck's spoken orders within 60 feet and protects his interests without an order. A brass clasp on its chest holds the ties that connect its bobbins. A creature within 5 feet can use an action to open the clasp and release the ties with a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. The check succeeds automatically while the porter is Incapacitated. The porter folds and lies still, its red seam intact. Veck can refasten the ties as an action within 5 feet to wake it. Nera knows how the clasp works.

Cloth fist. Melee Attack Roll: +4, reach 5 ft. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) Bludgeoning damage.

Binding sleeves. One creature within 5 feet makes a DC 12 Strength or Dexterity saving throw (its choice). On a failed save it has the Grappled condition (escape DC 12). The porter can hold one creature this way and can't use Cloth Fist while doing so. The held creature can use its action to attempt escape with Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) against DC 12. Releasing the bobbin ties also ends the grapple.

Behavior. The porters stand down and let the carriers leave if Veck agrees to a deal. Otherwise one porter blocks the nearest exit while the other tries to hold the carrier of the skein or papers. If the carrier gets free, the second porter strikes to stop them. They give Veck room to work the basin. When he falls or flees, they try to clear his route and keep hold of anything that could expose him. They can cross gangways and open unlocked doors. They leave rowing and the rite to Veck.

Residents and Morrow

Ordinary resident: AC 10, HP 4, Speed 30 feet; all six abilities 10 (+0); Passive Perception 10; Common. An improvised club attacks at +2, reach 5 feet, for 2 (1d4) Bludgeoning damage. Sella, Ebb, Casta, Linnet, and the guests use this profile. They seek cover, move people, and help with practical tasks.

Morrow: AC 11, HP 9, Speed 30 feet; STR 10 (+0), DEX 12 (+1), CON 10 (+0), INT 11 (+0), WIS 12 (+1), CHA 12 (+1); Passive Perception 11; Common. Medium Construct; immune to Poison damage and the Poisoned condition. He takes Help, Disengage, or Dodge; if forced to strike, +2 to hit, reach 5 feet, 1 Bludgeoning damage. His red seam and recovery are described under **Morrow's red seam**.

Player handouts

Wake invitation

THE HOUSE OF BORROWED TIME · REEDWAKE

The bearer is invited to an evening of borrowed happiness. Spend an hour in a stranger's sight and hearing before it is lost for good. Doors at nine. Loans conclude at half past eleven. Supper and a remembrance cup included. One admission per bearer.

Please return all loaned thread before departure. Storage clearances begin at midnight.

Orris Veck, keeper

Sella's receipt

SM-17 · SELLA MARR · SAIL MARK

One hour: Davin, final evening. Received for safekeeping. Return on the depositor's demand. No permission to lend. No transfer of ownership.

Paid: three gold pieces. Storage included until return.

Attached notice, dated today: Your deposit is subject to disposal at midnight for unpaid storage. Requests received after the keeper's decision cannot be processed. - O. Veck

Credits and rules license

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