

THE ARCHIVIST

Campaign 2 · Session 7 · March 11th, 2026

Gerard's ship, Suzail's archives, and the airship ascent



Gerard finally explains the Curator: one mortal life, lived out of order.

At last, by firelight aboard his iced-in ship, Gerard told the story he had been dodging for weeks. Long before Cormyr, before the current maps, a civilization sat on the edge of magic and time itself. Not wizards throwing fire around, he said. Real study, good stuff: alchemy that could bend years like wire, libraries full of spells that could slow a heartbeat, freeze a moment, stretch a lifetime. They believed history itself could be understood like a machine.

THE CURATOR'S SHAPE

And in that civilization there was a man who was not a king, not a general, not a wizard. He was an **archivist**. A quiet fellow, a keeper of records, who spent his life cataloguing the rise and fall of everything around him, and who noticed what everyone else missed: history does not move slowly. It moves in moments. A single life, a death, a betrayal, a choice. He called these moments **artifacts**. The fall of his own civilization was one of them; too many clever people trying to hold the future still.

He survived the fall because he had already discovered something better than survival: a way to step sideways through time. Not travel, exactly. He anchors himself into important moments, a king's death, a war beginning, a revolution, for two minutes or ten depending on how major the moment is, then fades out and moves on to the next. At first he only watched. Then he began to

nudge things along. A conversation here, a delayed messenger there. Nothing obvious, just enough to make the moments sharper. Somewhere along the way, the archivist stopped being a man who studied history and became a man who curated it.

That is why he turns up in different centuries and different cities, always the same. People think he is immortal. He is not. He has one mortal life, start to finish, same as anyone; he simply does not experience it in order. Gerard met him at the very end of it, eight years ago: an old man on a beach chair, surrounded by the strangest collection of objects Gerard had ever seen, each one a tiny piece of history. They talked for days. Then, as Gerard left, the **Curator** died right there on the sand, perhaps because he had finally stopped jumping.

"I have already seen how your story ends."

THE CURATOR'S LAST WORDS, EIGHT YEARS AGO

And underneath the story, the warning. The Curator only appears where history turns, and he keeps anchoring to the **Blue Bloods**. Maybe it is them, maybe their impact on things, maybe something they have not done yet. If he is watching, something important must be about to happen. The table settled the metaphysics with movie homework ("so, Tenet, then") and reached the comforting conclusion that if the future is already written, they can do whatever they want. It does not matter.



Magistrate Lowen Trask, Form 17B, and one historically important chalk window.

THE PRICE OF A SHIP

The ride to the **Weeping Mercy's** festival would take months by road. Gerard's airship can do it in a day, and he would lend it for one task done first. He offered three. Retrieve a restricted book, **The Chronicle of the Crown**, from the royal archives; he suspects the Curator's fingerprints are pressed into its pages. Or dig into the gnome assassins working Suzail's underworld. Or, and he knew how this one sounded, handle a return at the **Apple Store**, made eighty-seven days ago. "Those guys freak me out," he admitted, suggesting they could spend the gift card while they were there. The party took the book.

THE WRONG CHRONICLE

Art's royal favor, it turns out, goes through bureaucracy. Behind a brass plaque reading **Office of Royal Favours and Informal Promises** waited a four-metre white box of filing cabinets and **Magistrate Lowen Trask**, a tired goblin with ink-stained hands and thirty-five years on the job. Her desk was buried in the king's generosity: royal favour, hunting trip. Royal favour, drunken banquet. Royal favour, a good time. His Majesty is extremely generous with these.

Irofine charmed her warmly while Trask recited the limits (no war declarations, no marriage arrangements, no tax exemptions) and produced **Form 17B**, Petition for Activation of Royal Favour. The quill was bad, the ink was worse, and the penmanship roll was a six. Somewhere on the form, crown slipped into croissant. The favor was duly recorded, categorized, approved, and delivered: a beautifully wrapped **Chronicle of Croissants**, the single most important history of baked croissant lore in all of Cormyr, bakers' names, doughs,

and ratios included, with a live **sourdough starter** hidden in a compartment in the cover. Favours, Trask explained when the party appealed, are not refundable. This is not the Apple Store.

On the way out, someone picked up a piece of chalk and drew Trask a window on her windowless wall. She has been filing Form 146, Judicial Window Installation, for years; they keep losing her documentation. She looked up at the chalk window for a long moment.

"That was the moment the Curator spotted. Right there."

THE DM, ON THE CHALK WINDOW



The Royal Library is larger inside than outside, and some shelves know when to move.

THE INFINITE LIBRARY

At the **Royal Library**, **Master Howick**, Chief Archivist, was mid-gossip when Art charmed him into honesty. The real Chronicle had been moved to the **restricted section** long ago, and here Howick grew embarrassed: even he has never found it. The library is infinitely larger inside than outside. He granted permission to search on one condition, that the party tell him where it is.

The search became a quiet competition. Irofine cast enhance ability, raised **Rod the mouse** to eye level, and told him to find the books that no one wants found; Rod went scurrying through the stacks, sniffing for compartments that made no sense given the space. Art remembered the two or three books of his childhood village and began touching every spine on the wall, a slow performance that became, undeniably, a dance, reportedly far sexier from the outside. **Ferrick** simply persuaded the library itself. Between the three of them, a hidden door swung open behind a shelf of fakes, every one labelled Encyclopedia 1, Encyclopedia 2, Encyclopedia 3.



The Chronicle proves **Black Lotus** is not a Westgate accident. It is a century-scale program.

BLACK RESIN IN THE CROWN

The room behind the encyclopedias held four chronicles: Christmas, Kronenberg, a forgotten third, and the **Chronicle of the Crown** among its decoys. The shelves were worse. **The Silent Years of Netheril**, a study of years erased from the record. The feverish Catalogue of Unnatural Coincidences. And A Practical Guide to Noble Scandals, Affairs, and Discreet Coverups, which Irofine grabbed first. Howick's warning followed them out: these books contain secrets that would destroy the realm. **Balbi**, undeterred, handed him an Apple business plan.

They read it in the Brass House's Fur Room after evicting three sociable trolls. Three flagged entries, each annotated in the Curator's own hand. 127 years ago, the **Night of the Silent Crown**: a king collapsed mid-council and woke with prophetic dreams; an unknown **black resin** was found in his wine. Margin: a mind opened too early. 84 years ago, the Merchant Collapse: three Suzail houses ruined in one week, their guildmaster raving of a perfect market he alone could see. Margin: the substance spreads influence beyond intention. 42 years ago, the Vanished Advisor: a scholar who read intentions, talked a civil war down, then vanished, leaving dried black petals behind. Margin: refinement successful.

Black Lotus did not start in Westgate. It is a research program at least 127 years deep; Westgate was a culmination, not a beginning. A loose page dissolved into the reader's hand on touch, leaving behind **Moment of Anchor**, a ritual granting one question about the past of the place where it is cast. Ferrick, meanwhile, wears an **apple-slice wristwatch** he does not remember buying, fresh each morning, browning by nightfall, and in need of charging.



The airship rises: one day to the **Weeping Mercy**, hauled by pigeons with terrible manners.

THE AIRSHIP

Gerard received the Chronicle of the Crown with satisfaction and the Chronicle of Croissants with visible emotion. "You will" taste the perfect croissant, he promised. "Get back safe." Then the clouds shifted and his **airship** slid into view: a long wooden hull beneath a vast silk balloon the colour of midnight wine, blue arcane runes glowing along its seams, crystal rings humming at the stern. Borrowing privileges, said Gerard: don't scratch it, and don't fight the crew. The crew turned out to be roughly forty giant pigeons, one of whom leaned over the rail and screamed, "Get the fuck up here!"

Gerard's last message was for the Curator: "If you see him, tell him we're going to become friends one day." As for the **Weeping Mercy**, the way aboard has crystallized: the Brass House show was the audition, and the **Blue Bloods** are now the barge's booked entertainment. **Art's clock** stands at roughly four and a half months. The session ended mid-ascent, the last boarder still on the ladder.

GOING FORWARD

- **Revelation:** the Curator lives one mortal life out of order, and knows how this story ends.
- **Program:** Black Lotus is a Curator experiment at least 127 years old.
- **Debt:** Howick is owed the restricted section's location.
- **Cover:** the party boards as the Weeping Mercy's entertainment.
- **Clock:** Art has about 4.5 months.

✠ NEXT SESSION: NIGHT FLIGHT ✠