

# St. Kruskiev's Gold

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A Specularum adventure for 4-6 characters of levels 2-4

## Summary

A group of down on their luck low-level Karameikan adventurers (two thieves, a wizard, a fighter and a gnome) steals the treasure of St. Kruskiev, a set of holy items (the vestments, ring, tiara and knurdel) made of (or covered in) pure gold. The monks of St. Kruskiev's monastery know they need to recover the relics before the thieves melt them, and cannot let the public know of the incident (as the Veiled Society would snatch the thieves, kill them, and return the items, thus gaining a degree of favor with the devoted Traladaran people – or worse, the Oderbry faction of the Church of Karameikos might capture the relics and destroy them). Thus, thrustworthy PCs associated with the Church are contacted to solve the case.

The theme for this adventure is based on classic Italian movie “Operazione San Gennaro”.

The adventure is divided in three Acts. In the first, the PCs get involved in the theft as investigators, and have the opportunity of gaining some insights on the thieves by examining the crime scene. In the second act, the party progresses in the investigation, while in the third and last act they close down on the thieves, while fending off the Veiled Society.

The adventure is suitable for a party of 4-6 characters of levels 2-4. A balanced mix of character classes is recommended, and the presence of a cleric of the Church of Traladara will make the setup easier. On the other hand, Thyatian characters of the Oderbry faction and thieves belonging to the Iron Ring or the Veiled Society are not appropriate (and would not be trusted with the mission, unless their allegiance is a well kept secret). The adventure is written to make use of my skill system update, but would work with

any skill system with minimal modifications.

## Act I: St. Kruskiev's Monastery

In the first act, the PCs are summoned by the Abbot of St. Kruskiev, and asked to help in the investigations.

### Scene I: Getting Involved

The best opportunity to lead the party into this adventure is a Traladaran cleric PC. The PC is probably well known as an adventuring priest, who has resourceful friends. He is therefore asked to summon them for a confidential job.

Another good option is given by PCs who are part of the Karameikan military – either the Duke's Guard, the Elvenguard, or the Phorsis Guard. In all cases, the military PCs also have authority as police officers, and they are assigned to the case by their superior officers.

Finally, if the PCs have befriended a Traladaran priest in previous adventures (or as part of their background), or are relatives of one, they could still be trusted enough to be asked to investigate.

The adventure may also serve as a starting point for a new group, where each character (or small group of characters) has one of the above motivations.

In any case, the PCs are summoned by a novice of the Church of Traladara. Attentive PCs (Wisdom check or appropriate skill check) will notice that the novice wears the device of St. Kruskiev. The novice leads the party to the Monastery of St. Kruskiev in the Old Quarter. The Monastery is a severe build-

ing with an associated church. The PCs are led to a small courtyard, where they meet the Abbot, a short, nearsighted man in his early sixties. The Abbot tells the party that the Church needs their assistance in a highly confidential business, and swears them into secrecy. After this preliminary matter is settled, the Abbot reveals that the fabled treasure of St. Kruskiev has been stolen. He asks the PCs to recover the treasure before news of the theft leak out – the Abbot is especially concerned that the Veiled Society or the Oderbry fanatics could capture the treasure for their own evil goals if news of the theft get out to the public. The Church does not care about the fate of the thieves – the PCs are free to let them go or bring them to justice, according to the circumstances, as long as the treasure is recovered.

## Scene II: Crime Scene Investigation

The Abbot personally leads the PCs to the vaults of the monastery – not even all the monks have been told of the theft, to reduce the possibility that the news get to their ears of the Veiled Society or other enemies of the Church of Traladara.

There are a number of important clues that the PCs can gather by visiting the monastery and its cellars.

Interrogating the monk who was keeping watch at the doors, the PCs do not learn much more than what the abbot told them: the guardian was overcome by sleep, and did not hear or see anything. If the PCs search the guardian's post, they can find (on a simple Search check or a Wisdom check) some rose petals. A magic-user with the Sleep spell (or another PC on a Spellcraft check) can correlate this finding with the casting of a Sleep spell.

The thieves had to first enter the cellars, bypassing a locked door – the lock was picked, and a Thief can detect the tampering with an Open Locks check at +30

A second door leads from the cellar to the vaults. This door was locked with a wizard lock spell, which was countered with a Knock spell. The last door, a massive stone door with a complicated lock (-20A dwarf or gnome can (on a successful Mining check) recognize this as the work of a stonedrill, a specialized

tool used by Highforge miners. Other characters can do the same on a heroic Mining check.

Finding tracks of the thieves is difficult, due to the passage of several monks. However, the Diocletian, the wizard, was less careful than his fellows, and Berwus Deepburrow's tracks are distinctive for their size.

A Difficult Tracking skill check yields the following information: on a marginal success, the PCs find Diocletian's and Deepburrows' tracks. These tracks seem to belong to a man (or man-sized humanoid) and a child, or other small sized character. On a complete success, the tracks can be attributed to a man about 1.75 m tall, and a child or other small character about 1 m tall, both wearing soft shoes.

## Act II: Legwork

In the second act, the party must gather information from all sources to identify the thieves, without giving off their actual motives.

Contrary to the other Acts, the Scenes of Act II do not necessarily happen in the order given here. The three Scenes proposed are just three points in the investigation where the PCs may get important clues, or face significant challenges. This part of the adventure is otherwise mostly driven by PC actions.

Additional scenes may be designed based on the actions of the PCs, and those of the NPC thieves, described in the *NPC capsules* Section.

### Scene I: The Veiled Society

Given the location of St. Kruskiev's monastery, it is possible that the thieves are still within the Old Quarter or the Nest. Moreover, someone in the immediate neighborhood might have seen the thieves.

However, if the PCs start asking questions in the Nest, they are met with indifference, and soon confronted by a group of Veiled Society thugs. The Veiled Society does not know what the PCs are up to – they just do not appreciate people nosing in "their" neighborhood.

Veiled Society thugs (3 x number of PCs): F2 or T2, AC 7, attacks 1 dagger, damage 1d4; morale 9.

The PCs may talk their way out of this encounter (with difficult Charisma checks), but they should not give away the true reason of their actions.

## Scene II: Library Use

The PCs may also think of checking out how the thieves got the layout of the church. There are few libraries in Specularum, so it is quite easy to find that only the library of the Traladaran Cathedral and the public library of the Scrivener's Guild have maps of St. Kruskiev's monastery. Basilius Diocletian and Marian Codrea checked out the map at the Cathedral's library – an error, since the Cathedral's library is smaller, and mostly used by Traladaran priests.

Thus, the librarian, Barris Strolojca, can provide a description of the two men – he remembers them quite well, since collecting maps of the Traladaran churches is a personal project of his, and therefore he handled the request personally.

The PCs may try also the library of the Magician's Guild. Tullia Frinius, the librarian, is a busy magic-user with little time for questions – especially by people who are interested in finding other people rather than books. However, if a PC is a member of the Guild in good standing, he will be directed to the Guild offices for further information. Basilius Diocletian is also a member of the Guild, and is late with his guild dues payment. The clerks will only tell this to someone with official credentials (i.e., a member of the Phorsis Guard), or to a persuasive Guild member (helped by a complete success on a Charisma check, or a marginal success and a small tip). The clerks, in addition to identifying Basilius, can also tell the PCs that he specializes in enchantments and illusions, and that he lives somewhere in the South End.

## Scene III: The Soothsayer

A final, if unexpected, source of information may be Alia of the Street of Dreams. As Flameflicker, she has an interest in avoiding that the Veiled Society bosses put their hands on the treasure, but does not want to risk the security of her organization to retrieve it – contrary to the Veiled Society, the Kingdom of Thieves is not interested in the political scene, and

does not want public exposure of any kind. However, thanks to their better relations with independent thieves, the member of the Kingdoms have been able to find out quite a lot by the time the PCs have completed their investigations. They know that a group of independent thieves led by one Marian Codrea has scored a major heist, and is hiding out in the South End, near the public granaries. Alia will related this information in a cryptic way, as part of a card reading or another type of divination.

## Act III: Into the South End

At this point, the PCs know that the criminals are hiding somewhere in the South End, probably in the area south of the Magicians' Guild Hall and east of the public granaries.

However, investigating in this area is made more difficult by unrest among the laborers of the South End, who are asking for representation among the guilds. The PCs cannot expect support from the police forces, and military PCs are advised to move in plain clothes to avoid aggressions.

Priest PCs will also be frequently stopped by angry laborers who want to bring their reasons to the hears of the Church.

## Scene I: Veiled Society Racket?

When the PCs first go to the South End, they discover that a building has been burned down during the previous night. An old woman who used to live in the building and had a small greengrocer shop died in the fire. Divination or an expert eye (Profession: Investigator or other appropriate skill checks) lead to the conclusion that it is a case of arson rather than an accidental fire. This modus operandi is typical of the Veiled Society racketeers (Knowledge of Specularum underground or similar skills provide this information if needed).

However, a heroic Information Gathering skill check reveals that the victim had no warnings from the Veiled Society. A difficult Wisdom check also allows the PCs to find the body of the victim. On a

complete success, they also find traces of a deadly dagger wound on the back of the woman.

In truth, the woman was murdered by Tonio Caridian, one of the thieves, who suspected (falsely) that she had seen their coming and going from their own hideout (a cellar under an abandoned shack neighbouring the old woman's house).

If the PCs investigate the neighbouring buildings, they find the thieves hideout, with clear signs of their presence. The thieves left in a hurry, leaving behind one of the silk handkerchiefs used to cover the relics.

## Scene II: The Confrontation

A difficult Information Gathering check allows the PCs to find a sufficient number of people who have witnessed the thieves moving to a new hideout to pinpoint their current location, one of the public granaries. On a complete success, one of the witnesses remembers that the short thief and one of the others were quarrelling furiously, while two others were trying to calm them down, and the last was walking on his own, muttering something (Berwus does not understand why Tonio is so tense, and Vladimir is thinking that this job is getting less and less acceptable).

If they fail, the PCs will need to use other means to find the treasure. If a guild magic user is present, he might rent a magic wand, able to find treasures. Since there is no great wealth in the South End, the wand should point out the location of St. Kruskiev's treasure. This costs as many charges as the points by which the PCs failed the Information Gathering check. The guild charges 200 royals per charge (note that the PCs do not have such an allowance for expenses from the Church – they will have to bargain with both the Magicians' Guild and the Church of Traladara to avoid paying this cost themselves).

Once the PCs find the hideout of the thieves, they can close down and capture them. It is possible to exploit the quarrels among the thieves to push some of them to surrender and/or betray their accomplices, thus making the final confrontation easier. Note that the thieves make up an NPC party that is more or less on par with the PCs, thus the final encounter is likely to start as a Risky encounter. Having at least

one of the thieves surrender or join the PCs will make survival much more likely for the PC.

## NPC Capsules

The five members of the gang that stole St. Kruskiev's treasure are detailed here to allow the DM to set the final combat scene, as well as to provide roleplaying hooks for the PCs to use in negotiating a non-combat-based solution to the adventure. Additional information is also provided to help the DM expand the encounters in *Act II*.

### Marian Codrea

Thief 4, N

Str 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Cha 13  
HP 10. AC 6. Morale 10

Languages: Traladaran, Thyatian

General Skills: Knowledge of the Specularum underground, Danger Sense, Escape Artist.

Weapon Masteries: short sword, dagger

The leader of the thieves, Codrea is a charming Traladaran rogue – though he doesn't have the brains or experience to actually lead a group. He needs the gold for his family, and thinks St. Kruskiev would understand their actions. He can be pushed to surrender if he feels his leadership has failed – he loses 1 point of morale per ally that surrenders, and 2 if an ally turns against him.

Codrea is well known among the city's prostitutes as a gallant and flirtatious rogue. Kind at heart, he has helped more than one of them out of a sticky situation and many feel some gratitude towards him for that. As kind as he is however, Codrea is not a paying customer and the ladies have long ago given up earning any coin from him. They know that he sends what money he has to his family.

If PCs are persistent they can discover the following:

- Codrea frequents the area often flirting with the ladies on the street.
- Codrea hasn't been seen for over a week. The last time anyone noticed him he had rescued Vesna from a drunk brandishing a knife.

- Vesna doesn't know where Codrea is, but she does know his family. The PCs may be able to convince her to give up their location.

Codrea's family is poor and lives in some of the worst conditions in Specularum. After his father died, he vowed to take care of them the only way he knew how - through theft. Although he is a small time thief, Codrea steals enough coin to keep food on their table... most of the time. His family can not be convinced to betray Codrea by any means, although they may be tricked into revealing his location if convinced that his life is in danger (which may be true if the Veiled Society has found out about the theft).

Waiting for Codrea to return home won't help the PCs. He won't return until after St. Kruskiev's artifacts have been melted down and sold. However his sister will often meet Codrea at a prearranged location (one of the local inns). The PCs may be able to follow her to the meeting site at which point they can confront Codrea.

### **Berwus Deepburrow**

Gnome 2, N  
 Str 10, Int 14, Wis 9, Dex 13, Con 14, Cha 11  
 HP 16. AC 5. Morale 10.  
 Languages: Gnomish, Traladaran, Dwarven  
 General Skills: Stealth (Urban), Engineering, Fantasy Physics, Mining.  
 Weapon Masteries: warhammer, light crossbow, dagger.

A rogue gnome from Highforge, Berwus does not understand the political implications of the theft. He pushes for melting the treasure and selling the ingots. Even though he is not a killer, Berwus is not afraid of fighting his way out. He surrenders only if he is clearly outnumbered.

A pragmatist, and no stranger to the situation that he currently finds himself in, Berwus Deepburrow knows that he and his crew must fence their stolen goods and leave town as quickly as possible. His crew is reluctant to fence the goods outright however, and spend most of their time holed away in their hideout arguing amongst themselves what must be done. To Deepburrow the solution is simple. The gold must be

melted down into ingots and sold discretely, preferably in multiple locations. To this end Deepburrow has taken it upon himself to find the tools and material necessary for melting the gold down.

Deepburrows will spend two days casing out every goldsmith in the city, trying to determine which he can break into - either to steal the tools he needs or to smelt the gold down after hours. PCs who decide to investigate this track may run into Brewus during the day while he is investigating a particular smith. Those who are less discrete may tip Brewus off to the fact that they are searching for him. Should the PCs stake out several of the goldsmiths in town they will notice the same gnome approach each in turn.

The PCs can attempt to confront Berwus or they may decide to try and follow him back to his hideout.

### **Basilus Diocletian**

Magic User 3, C  
 Str 8, Int 16, Wis 11, Dex 12, Con 10, Cha 12  
 HP 7. AC 9. Morale 9.  
 Languages: Thyatian, Traladaran, Elven  
 General Skills: Spellcraft, Reading/Writing, Riding, Monster Lore.  
 Weapon Masteries: dagger, staff.  
 Spells: Sleep, Charm, Read Magic, Detect Magic; Invisibility, Knock.

An impoverished magic-user of Thyatian descent, Basilus risks being expelled from the Magicians' Guild for missing payments of the guild dues. He could not care the less for St. Kruskiev and all the superstitious talk of the Traladarans, but does understand the risk of revealing their identity to the Veiled Society. Basilus only surrenders if offered money and the assurance (from a trustworthy PC) that he will not be prosecuted. However, he has no qualms about betraying his comrades, and can be persuaded to join the PCs (at minimum, this requires a bribe of 200 royals).

Not only is Diocletian late on his guild dues, he also owes money all over town including several standing debts at the local gambling halls. Diocletian's fellow gamblers (many themselves also regulars at the gaming halls) have begun to miss him - mostly because he owes them money as well.

The gambling bosses are starting to get worried now that they haven't seen Diocletian for several days. They fear that he has skipped town and skipped paying his debts (or that someone else has beat them to the deadbeat and already extracted everything worth taking from him). Any inquiries as to local thieves or missing regulars in the gambling halls will immediately draw the attention of the bosses. PCs who pursue this line of investigation can discover the following:

- A Thyatian wizard, and sometimes drunk, Basilus Diocletian frequents several of the local gaming halls and owes a considerable amount of coin to each of them.
- One of the regulars, a Thyatian drunk named Stefanus Karamikios (no relation to the Duke, though most folks refer to him by that moniker) overheard Diocletian gloating about a big score. The wizard was gloating over the drunk, believing him to be unconscious at the time.
- Some of the patrons know where Diocletian lives and can point the PCs in that direction.

Unfortunately for the PCs, Diocletian hasn't been home in several days and has no plans of going back. Their inquiries do draw the attention of the gaming hall bosses who send thugs after the PCs in the hopes of finding the deadbeat wizard. If the thugs track the PCs back to Diocletian's abode they will assume they are in league with the wizard and attempt to extract Diocletian's debts from them. Should the thugs find out about Diocletian's "big score" they will sell that information to the Veiled Society.

### **Vladimir Mikhailov**

Fighter 3, N  
Str 15, Int 10, Wis 11, Dex 13, Con 11, Cha 9  
HP 14. AC 5. Morale 9.  
Languages: Traladaran  
General Skills: Stealth (Urban), Muscle, Climbing, Riding.  
Weapon Masteries: Long sword, dagger, hand axe, short sword.

Vladimir Mikhailov is muscle, pure and simple. A Traladaran former soldier and bouncer, he takes on the job because he needs money for his family, but is worried by the blasphemous nature of the theft. Vladimir considers surrendering if a priest of the Church of Traladara appeals to his moral and religious sense. He will not fight against his comrades.

### **Tonio Caridian**

Thief 3, C  
Str 13, Int 12, Wis 8, Dex 14, Con 10, Cha 9  
HP 6. AC 6. Morale 8.  
Languages: Thyatian, Traladaran  
General Skills: Disguise, Acrobatics, Information Gathering, Loot.  
Weapon Masteries: Long sword, dagger.

A thuggish rogue of mixed descent, Tonio is the more unpredictable member of the group – he is also the one who is more likely to lose his head and act irrationally in an emergency. Tonio is the disguise specialist of the group, and did the survey work to ensure no one would see the thieves arriving at St. Kruskiev. Tonio only understand strength – he will never surrender, but will try to flee if confronted by a clearly superior opponent (a fighter with at least Str 15, or a magic user that looks powerful).

## **Conclusion**

Once the PCs have recovered the treasure, they are commended by the Abbot of St. Kruskiev. The priests are poor, so there is little in terms of material wealth that they can give to the PCs, but the Abbot's word carries significant weight with Patriarch Nikelnevich, as well as with several Guildmasters and high ranking guild members of the Radu faction (those of the Apothecaries, Grocers, and Leathersellers especially).

Each PC will also receive a holy symbol of St. Kruskiev, as well as the symbolic present of a candle, and will be able to call in favors from the monks (within reason). Each candle radiates faint magic. When lit, a candle provides effects equivalent to a Protection from Evil spell cast by a 5th level cleric.