

VALERIOUS

Sample Scene: Escape the Mob

“There she is!” the drunken mob shouts as they chase Hadria down the street. Thanks to their drunkenness, she is able to duck behind buildings to lose them. However, after she pulls this trick for the third time, they realize her tactic and begin to split up.

She ducks into the tall grasses behind the remnants of an old barn, but as the mob splits up, one of the men spots her in the bush.

“Thar!” he shouts.

Like a dove from its nest, she leaps from the grass as the hunters charge through. They are relentless in their pursuit, like deprived hunters who finally have game to catch. She finds a ladder to the barn’s second story loft and climbs it as the man grabs at her. The rest of the mob catches up as he climbs after her, wolf whistling as he peers up her skirt. She climbs onto the loft and kicks the ladder over. He lands on the mob with a heavy crash, knocking them all into the mud. She easily jumps to the ground and makes her way to the mill.

“Miller!” she shouts as she bursts through the door. “I need your help. The angry mob outside thinks that I stole the bag of flour you sold me earlier. You need to tell them the truth.”

The miller looks up from the grindstone with his squinted, baggy eyes. “An’ how much are you willing to pay for that?”

“What?” she says as she finds her voice beginning to waver with hopelessness.

She hears the mob pass by outside. “Where is she?” “Where did she go?”

The miller smiles with the twisted grin of a black-toothed mouth. He holds a small knife in his hand, holding it before him defensively. Suddenly, his face gains a fake terrified expression. “Help!” he shouts. “There is a thief in my mill!”

“What are you doing?” she whispers desperately. “They’ll hear you. I’m not a thief!”

“How much are you gonna to pay?” he asks.

“I don’t have any money. I spent my last coins on that bag of flour.”

“Thief!” he shouts. “Scoundrel!”

The door bursts open. A tall, drunken man marches in with a broken beer bottle.

“Was someone calling me?” Valerious says as he stumbles inside.

“Valerious!” Hadria shouts with relief. “What have you been doing?”

“Help!” the miller shouts again. “There is a thief and a drunkard in my mill!”

“Drunkard?” Valerious asks with an angry step forward. “Don’t you be calling Lady Hadria a drunkard!” He wobbles as he steps forward offensively. “Now, have any of the four of you seen my beer wagon?”

A deafening clattering sound comes from outside before the wooden walls of the mill are struck by a heavy wagon full of beer barrels as the horses attempt to round the corner. The wagon rips through the wooden paneling, tearing a massive hole through the wall and shattering the windows.

“Never mind, I have found it!” Valerious shouts as he sprints after the wagon. The miller shouts with rage as shattered window glass rains down on his head.

“How much are you gonna to pay for that?” Hadria mocks the miller before chasing after Valerious, snatching a bag of flour as she runs through the wall.

Valerious pursues the out-of-control beer wagon behind the drunken townsmen, who stumble and trip trying to catch up to the spooked horses. It appears that the horses would have stopped long ago, if not for the constant angry hoard chasing them.

“What’s happening?” Hadria shouts to Valerious.

“I stole that wagon, but then I lost it. Now everyone’s chasing after it. Ironic, eh?”

“Why are you drunk?”

He purses his lips. “Um... we need to get that wagon back!”

The horses, not realizing how wide the wagon is, strike another building as they pass through a narrow alley. They emerge on the path that leads towards the butcher’s shop she visited earlier. The path curves around a hillock before ending at the shop. Hadria suddenly steers off the path and sprints up the hillock. If she can quickly cross the hillock and arrive at the butcher’s before the cart does, she will be able to stop the spooked horses and hop on.

She pushes through tall grasses and dodges molehills to climb the steep rise. Her foot catches on thorns, but she quickly regains her footing. Having grown up in a cliff-side castle with countless stairwells has made her used to such exercise.

The horses barrel round the hill as she reaches the top. She watches the townsmen fall behind as they grow tired from running. As they slow down, Valerious jumps against the embankment to dodge them and dashes past. For how drunk he is, he is surprisingly light-footed. The townsmen notice him run past and they start chasing him, though they strain to keep up with him.

Sprinting down the hillock, Hadria dodges the molehills and tangled weeds as she builds up speed. Her tunic flaps wildly between her legs, threatening to trip her. However, she has had practice running in a dress since she left the castle. The wind blows through her hair as she nears the road. The beer wagon rumbles into sight. It passes before her as she leaps off the embankment.

Horses and beer barrels whip under her feet. She lands in the back of the wagon, tumbling to the floor with the violent jostling of the cart. Grabbing a dangling chain, she heaves herself up and seats herself in the driver's seat.

"Yeah! — I mean, whoa!"

She yanks the reins. With a human master telling them to stop, the horses suddenly grind their hooves against the rough gravel. Dust flies into Hadria's eyes as she holds the reins firm. The immense weight of the wagon pushes the horses ahead. They are unable to stop.

The butcher shop comes into view. It sits right at the end of the road, right in their path. Hadria pulls the reins harder, but the horses can do nothing.

"Intelligent work, Hadria!" Valerious jumps onto the back of the wagon as it slows down. He falls onto the seat beside Hadria and yanks a lever on the side of the cart. Hadria grips the railing to hold on as the wagon grinds to a halt with a sudden squeal of metal breaks.

The wagon comes to a stop. "I see you have collected the cow lungs," he says.

"You stole a beer wagon?"

He holds his hands up defensively. "Well, not yet. I am working on it."

"There they are!" The townsmen come into view, holding pitchforks and broken bottles with red faces and bloodshot eyes. "They're trapped!"

The embankments on either side of the road are too steep for the massive beer wagon to drive over. The path is wide enough before the butcher shop for the cart to turn around. "What do we do Valerious?"

He looks to either side and seems to come to the same conclusion. "We are, undoubtedly, trapped."

"Yes, I can see that. Can't you use magic to get us out of here?"

He stands up in the seat and scans the landscape. "It is time for the phantom of Pax Thivio to make his move."

Without warning, he grabs the reins and whips them hard. "Yeah!"

Hadria grips the railing again as the cart surges forward. Valerious guides the horses in a wide circle, the front wheel grinding against the wagon. He rights the horses as they almost tip over, coming back towards the angry mob. He drops the reins in Hadria's lap and shouts, "fast as they'll go!"

She grabs the reins as he stands on the seat. With his magical staff in hand, his brazen eyes burn with flame.

"Iannuae magicae, maxime!"

Flaming sparks fizzle from his hands. Hadria whips the reins as the horses pull back, about to crash into the mob. Sparks burst from their hooves on the ground. The wagon wheels leave trails of fire in the gravel. They are going too fast now. They cannot stop.

“Iannuae, Iannuae, Maxime!”

A burst of flaming sparks, ear-piercing crackling, and they appear on the other side of the mob. The townsmen stop dead in their tracks as the wagon disappears in a burst of fire and reappears behind them. The horses speed on, leaving them in a cloud of dust.