

# Ascolais & the Land of The Falling Wall

The Excellent Prismatic Spray DOUBLE ISSUE

An adventure supplement for the Dying Earth RPG

VOLUME I NUMBER 4/5 • \$24.99/£15.95



ADVENTURES, BACKGROUND MATERIAL & ADVICE of Supreme Quality, including:  
*Vance's Spell of the Ineffably Prolonged Hour and What It Did To Me*: Ed Greenwood on  
the effect of long exposure to the Dying Earth

*The Den-Phu Cranes*: Robin D. Laws sets an opportunity for adventure and advancement in Kaiin

*Efred, City of Sanctuary*: David Thomas is your guide to a city and its scenarios

*Forrell's Port*: return to the jewel of Sousanene in company with Lizard

*The Laughing Magician II*: an elegant instructional experience courtesy of Steve Dempsey

*The Encroaching Green*: a selection of scenarios suitable for almost any occasion

# ❧ The Excellent Prismatic Spray ❧

Being a *Commodious Compendium* of erudition, intelligence, advice, narrative and insight of inestimable value to those of a DISCERNING TEMPERAMENT and ADVENTUROUS INCLINATION

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

*Volume 1, Issues 4&5*

Editorial	1
<i>Jim Webster</i>	
From our readers...	2
FEATURES	
Vance's Spell of the Ineffably Pleasurable Prolonged Hour and What It Did To Me	4
<i>Ed Greenwood</i>	
The Den-Phu Cranes	7
<i>Robin D. Laws</i>	
The Dying Earth Needs You	17
<i>Lynne Hardy</i>	
<i>A Map of The Known World</i>	24
Efred, City of Sanctuary	26
<i>David Thomas</i>	
Mermelants Unite!	40
<i>Thomas Russell</i>	
ARCANA of Grashpotel	46
<i>Peter Freeman</i>	
The City of Lumarth	52
<i>Ian Thomson</i>	
Forell's Port	77
<i>Lizard</i>	
Home Brewed Heroes	85
<i>Ian Thomson</i>	
The Laughing Magician	91
<i>Steve Dempsey</i>	
The Sculpted Chair	109
<i>Lynne Hardy</i>	
The Luminarion	114
<i>Mark Baker</i>	
Ghosts of the Forgotten Past	117
<i>Kurt Brown</i>	
EXOTIC VISTAS & STRANGE ENCOUNTERS: The Encroaching Green	121
<i>Lizard &amp; Ian Thomson</i>	
COZENERS' EXPEDIENTS	135



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## ✿ Editorial ✿



It is with an air of more than conscious pride that we bring this combined Edition of the two magazines to your notice. A double issue allowed us to do many things that we otherwise would have been unable to even contemplate. By popular demand we have produced a map of the entire inhabited area of the Dying Earth. We can make no claims that the map is definitive, or even accurate. It does possess a certain elegance that we feel more than makes up for any cartographical irregularities. Finally, we have brought you articles by Robin D. Laws and Ed Greenwood, as well as work from well-respected regulars, with our first major article from Ian Tompson.

This volume of scenarios is merely one of many. Farsighted and mathematically literate individuals may subscribe for four issues (including postage) for a mere £35 in the UK, or \$56 US and Canada. Those from elsewhere please contact Pelgrane Press and we shall calculate as economical a rate as is possible to suit your convenience.

Those perspicacious individuals who subscribed to *The Excellent Prismatic Spray* when it first appeared will doubtless have noted that their subscription has run its course; it is time for them to once more pander to their cupidity and resubscribe. We trust that the next year will bring you as much satisfaction as the last. As always there are many wonderous, portentous, or even climacteric offers available to resubscribers who apply in person at our office in Kaiin. Bring at least two maid servants with handcars.

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### *THE SCHOLASTICARIUM*

Persons of quality desirous of advancing their education are invited to present themselves to Amserl Bassouc, admissions porter and battles overseer during the next few days to enroll in the extension courses on offer. As well as the usual array, there will be a series of lectures from persons of note over the coming weeks:

*Perrin:* Misfeasance, the inevitable fate of the parvenu

*Mistress Flook:* Morbid lasciviousness and dress sense

*Volume:* Eonism, frottage and their place in 16th aeon erotology

*Grashpotel:* The place of the remueur in oenology

*Myrna the Rootless:* ‘Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny’: on the relationship of Hoon and Gid

Guest Lecturer *Parouc the Cartographer:* Ferial excursions to the utmost East and what I did there

It is with some regret that the management notes a distinct lack of initiative among some of its readers. We have had several complain that when the articles are read aloud for their pleasure by their hand-maidens, the playing of the minstrel maiden drowns out the reading. As a result, if this should continue to be a problem, we have retained the services of Nordob, doorman of ‘The Pelgrane’, who will come round and break the fingers of your minstrel maiden.

# From our readers...

Sir:

I write to enquire as to the reason for the delay in publishing the 4th issue of the Excellent Prismatic Spray. Desirable as it may be, this delay is unconscionable!

Masmauldetides Cuka  
Gentleman

*The Editor replies:*

*It has been something of a chapter of incidents. Firstly one of our contributors was apprehended by the Vigils for incipient xenodocheionology. It was only rapid and judicious bribery which saved him from the deodand pit. Two of our typesetters were eaten by rare slotted erbs (hitherto believed to be extinct, so at least scholarship has gained from our loss). A third was singing a cavatina in her bath when she was overheard by a passing impressario. She is thought to have been kidnapped and I believe is now an odalisque singing salacious songs for the Feathered Princes. At this point things started to become complex. In a moment of desperation our last remaining typesetter drank the majority of our stock of ink. The remainder went off as it is prone to do if kept in quantities of less than a gallon. Searching for myrtle and gauze difono (difficult to obtain, but vital ingredients of the best quality inks) the copy editor won a bordello in Val Ombrio in a rigged card game and we have not seen him since. Yet in spite of these minor*

*tribulations we have endeavoured to complete our task. Deterred neither by the hired bullies of our less literate rivals, nor by the blandishments of the wealthy who feared we might expose their prurient peccadilloes we stuck grimly to our appointed task and are pleased to present this, the result, to our readers.*



Sir

Imbecile, simpleton, and dullard, these are but a mere sampling of the appellations the so-called author Grashpotel so richly deserves following the travesty of his article "Turgubut's Fatal Statistics"!

Following the buffoon's treatise, I found myself gripped by a spasm of incredulity, much to my (now chastened) sandestin's levity, for the vacuous poltroon has made the singularly inexplicable error of repeating one of Turgubut's own lamentable mistakes! There were eight hundred and thirty instances of Behemoth's Bounty being incorrectly cast, as researched by Turgubut and his assistants, not eight hundred and thirteen! As any true practitioner of the magical arts understands, the efforts of Turgubut's chief assistant, Filibous, were wantonly omitted by Turgubut following some infraction on the part of the latter.

Filibous' findings, are as relevant as any of Turgubut's other

presentations, and are provided here in order that your readership better comprehend the inherent risks in the miscasting of even this seemingly innocuous spell:

Filibous' Findings: "Among the failures ... 17 instances: the caster found himself trussed up, naked, lightly oiled and well-garnished, as the center-piece of the feast, albeit one thankfully uncooked." In future it is hoped that Grashpotel will experience a sudden and inexplicable blossoming of intellect and diligence, lest such oversight make him a laughingstock, and forever relegate him to the rank of mere dabbler.

Blarsiflag  
Provost, Thaumaturical and  
Didactic

Sir

*I deny –*

*First, your argument,  
Second, your existence.*

*Iunutharis Grashpotel  
Archmage*



Sirs

While I am scribing this missive to congratulate you on the quality of the periodical you and your esteemed staff publish, I also feel obliged to comment on another matter. I am a long-time user of the services of Wakdun the Panderer's establishment here in the city of Kaiin, and as such was pleased to note that you have

an advertisement on your “Internet” (whatever that term means) site devoted to your humble magazine. Yet it is with some dismay that I have noted an omission on your part that I believe requires correction. It appears that your “on-line” service praises various services and items that Wakdun sells (at prices he must find more than adequately remunerative), and yet there is no mention of the Ertomanic Priapist and Diestrus Nullifier. This device has been of great service in my household for a number of years.

Granted that Wakdun does, at times, inflate his prices on items intended to relieve obsolagnium or to encourage venery and even frottage, the lack of such advertising in your esteemed publication, print or otherwise, is likely to force the price up further thus reducing the numbers who may benefit from these devices.

While I appreciate your fine publication efforts, I (and several other customers of Wakdun’s famed establishment) consider the omission of the Ertomanic Priapist and Diestrus Nullifier to be an affront of the first degree. I wholeheartedly suggest that this omission be rectified at your earliest convenience.

Your servant and humble patron,  
Gissimo Vereldane

*The Editor replies:*

*While I make no claim to understanding the mechanisms involved, I am informed by sundry subordinates that what we have done is placed a “link” from our “web site” to the “web site” of Wakdun the Pandarer. Thus any oversights would seem to be more of his doing than ours. I*

*will nonetheless broach this with him when I see him next in an attempt to ensure your complete satisfaction in this matter.*

*The same subordinates as previously mentioned insist that those who may not have realised that we have taken advantage of what is mockingly known as “the new technology” be informed that our web site may be found at <http://www.dyingearth.com/xpsonline/index.html>.*

*Wakdun’s online emporium is [http://www.dyingearth.com/xpsonline/XPSO\\_wakdun.html](http://www.dyingearth.com/xpsonline/XPSO_wakdun.html)*



Sir

As the authorities appear to refuse to interest themselves in this matter, I wish to bring to your attention a distressing situation which has developed as a result of sheer greed and lack of civic responsibility on the part of our current gambling magnates. It is now simply impossible to walk along the streets of Kaiin without being solicited by failed gamblers begging for money to pay their debts.

One’s ears are constantly assailed by the caterwaulings of cantabanks, one’s aesthetic senses troubled by the asymmetrical features of those proffering carnal services (I ask you, should a sadogue become a bawd?) and one’s intelligence insulted by the banality of the “Not available elsewhere, never to be repeated” offers of advice on runners and riders.

In my father’s day, the minute a punter’s liabilities exceeded their assets, the gambling magnate involved would sell the unfortunate fool as an indentured

labourer to recoup the loss. These hapless individuals then laboured for the good of their fellow citizens, patching roads, stoking the furnaces in the new baths, and removing any salacious abozzo from the walls of the public privies. After forty or so years of solid service their debts were declared discharged and they were allowed their freedom.

Now, due to the cupidity of the gambling magnates who prefer to revel in the thin stream of dinkets and trifles these panhandlers pay over, rather than enjoying the respect due to municipal benefactors, our glorious city is falling into decay and her citizens are assaulted on all sides by dissonance and unpleasantness.

Dumbfounded of Kaiin  
*Address withheld by request*



Sirs

Yours seems the appropriate publication in which to clarify a minor point of geographical inexactitude which caused some amusement at the Geographer’s Caucus last month. Kindly note that Sousanene (and by default the Sousanese Coast) lies to the west of the Songan Sea, rather than to the east, as was described in the estimable if clearly distracted Lizard’s account of the Regions of the Sousanene [sic] Coast in your last issue. Forrell’s Port itself is found in south Sousanene, on the shore of the well-named Sea of Slow Tides, where the fortunate may find shells of the rare Chaste Glass-snail amongst the jetsam.

Myrna the Rootless  
The Scholasticarium, Kaiin

# Vance's Spell of the Ineffably Pleasurable Prolonged Hour and What It Did To Me

*Ed Greenwood*

A great while ago (or so it seems), I became mighty in magic. To put it another way, I learned to read. Whilst still demanding bedtime stories be read to me (demonstrably exhibiting the cunning that has marked my every venture in the waking world from that moment forth), I was 'settled down with improving and approved books' for some hours each day—I then being still too young to darken the doors of what was then called then (and may still be, for all I know) 'kindergarten'(and may still be, for all I know).

The venue for these quiet yet broadening times was my father's dim, cool, labyrinthine, darkly wood-paneled 'den.' It was furnished with a formidably upright piano which I was to come to know intimately—but not pleasantly—in the years to come, an ancient and sagging hide-a-bed couch, several radios of mighty power but largely rough and homemade construction (for my father happened to be a physicist specializing in radio and radar, already exalted in the secretive ranks of Cold War defenders of all Western freedoms), a black-and-white television that could receive nothing much in the bowels of the house beyond Indian-head test patterns and the frustrating but interesting sounds of shows that were never more than dancing squiggles on the screen—and walls upon walls of books. As Anthony Powell once wrote, 'Books Do Furnish A Room.' My father loved books—all sorts of books. He built his own bookshelves, measured precisely to fit paperbacks here and hardcovers there, to cram in every last possible tome. Crumbling wartime paperbacks ("give one to a friend in uniform"), many of them with lurid covers ("she was staked out naked in the desert sun to die!") and complete with "scene of the crime" maps on the back jostled for space with Winston Churchill's complete works and the sober four-inch-thick leather-bound proceedings of electrical engineers.

My very own treasure chest. I would spread out the books I was supposed to be perusing, lift a cushion of the chesterfield<sup>1</sup> so as to have a swift hiding-place, should a family member approach, for the books I wasn't supposed to be devouring,<sup>2</sup> and waded right in to all those waiting pages.

My father, may whatever gods there be bless him, was a fantasy and science fiction fan. Right beyond the collected Glencannon and a fine sampling of Wodehouse and Kipling's *Stalky & Co*, almost hidden in the permanent gloom of a corner far from any lamplight, were three nondescript volumes emblazoned with a single, staring black-and-red eye: early Unwin hardcovers of *The Lord of the Rings*, quite possibly the original editions of that landmark work.

Beyond them, in deeper shadows yet, were a handful of mysteries and a slightly greater number of SF books by one John Holbrook Vance (or so the mystery covers read) or Jack Vance.<sup>3</sup> After an initial wonder-struck pause, I

1. For so inhabitants of my formative environs referred to what others variously refer to as sofas, couches, or lounges.
2. For carpets were nigh-continuous, footfalls light, and calling out—or what more vulgar individuals refer to as "yelling"—was a weighty sin in that household.
3. As the SF and fantasy books heralded him—though the scanty and incomplete lists within of 'other books written by the same pen' confirmed, as if the awesome prose were not enough, that the writers were one and the same.

**To rent:** Stone column, comfortable top, sunny exposure, suitably close to devout villagers, very little use. Contact Trophander the Stylite at Madame Sponcule's Palace of Earthly Delights.



## ✿ Vance's Spell of the Ineffably Pleasurable Prolonged Hour and What It Did To Me ✿

fell into them with a sort of delight. That wonderment was akin to what I had felt a few months earlier, when on a lower shelf, I first chanced upon the works of Clark Ashton Smith. The *language!*

Yet, more than Smith or Dunsany or Lovecraft trying to be Dunsany in Kadath, this new master, whilst every bit as exotic as those three, was crafting *action* writing—people trying to kill or at least nastily best each other whilst being terribly polite. Cynically, menacingly polite. Lovely stuff, and then I sank into *The Dying Earth* and *The Eyes of the Overworld*—and then later into *Big Planet* and *Showboat World*, the Demon Princes and Planet of Adventure books, and the Alastor series, *Maske: Thaery* and the later chronicles of the Dying Earth, even unto shorter masterpieces such as “The Moon Moth” and “The Bagful of Dreams.” I was plunging into new worlds, vivid, *real*, wonderfully detailed worlds, with nuances and etiquette and odd, yet *fitting* customs and strange, crawling magic. Poetic prose (“Music sings within my brain/I think I may go mad again”), delicious insults and come-uppances...I was hooked.

For me (as for most people, I believe) loving fantasy has always been about exploring new worlds. Peeping *behind* that crumbling castle, finding out *why* the princess is weeping, delving into the feuds and secrets and lurking magics whilst being enthralled by spectacular, stirring sights such as monsters pouncing, towers toppling, wizards hurling fell spells, and heroes and heroines standing fast or seizing triumph. This Vance gentleman (for how could he not be a gentleman, to pen the phrases he did?) gave me worlds to explore!

This is not to say that I stopped opening books with other names on their covers. There were hundreds of fantasy and science fiction books in my father's den, and as many again stuffed onto shelves in hallways, in the basement, and on landings. I devoured them all, the tripe and the gems, ever hungry for new worlds. Eventually I settled (as most readers do) on a dozen or so solid favorites—writers whose new releases I could buy on sight, in hardcover, clutch like precious treasures, take home, and devour in a single sitting—and know before I opened them that I wasn't going to be disappointed. Surprised, mayhap; transported, surely...but never disappointed. Jack Vance was one of those stalwart few, and for the tales he told me and visions of strange worlds he unfolded before me, I can never thank him deeply enough. What price a dream?

Well, one paltry payment for such pleasure, to my mind, is to add at least one world to the rest, or to add color and verve to existing ones, by telling new tales of them. I have done both, but not alone. Jack Vance, Fritz Leiber, Roger Zelazny, J.R.R. Tolkien, Lord Dunsany, and a host of others (albeit unwittingly) helped me, as did my role-playing group. Early on in my campaign they discovered that I had studded the Realms liberally with magical *gates* that led to “otherwhere” ... specifically, to a lot of other fantasy worlds first seen in the works of my favorite fantasy writers. If they were bold (or unlucky) enough to venture through such portals, and thereafter managed to figure out which world they'd arrived in, it might well befall that they could profit from what they knew of it, sometimes gaining just what they needed to prevail against foes back in the Realms ... and at the same time cut loose and have fun in a place that was different from the Realms.

One such ‘other place’ was a setting that was really the Dying Earth—but recast to sport the myriad jumbled islets of *Trullion: Alastor 2262*, and the city-studded river of *Showboat World*. Many inhabitants of those cities wore masks and accompanied their every utterance on curious musical instruments, like the characters in “The Moon Moth.” Others were rogues like Cugel or arch-magicians like Rhalto—but almost all of them were both cynical and elaborately polite.

It did not take my players (most of them fantasy fans every bit as avid as your humble raconteur) long to catch on. Yet knowing they walked a Vancian realm did them no good. Jack Vance has never been so unsubtle as to give a sovereign solution or ‘master key’ secret to any of his settings. Instead, he scatters blandishments before visitors.

My players were fascinated, hooked into letting their characters tarry beyond prudence—baited by the insolent words of the personages they met, hungry to gain the IOUN stones of various new and curious sorts that I'd created and set into orbit about the heads of serenely striding magicians seen at a distance,<sup>4</sup> and lured by danger in the form of deodands gliding from ruin to ruin behind them, seen only fleetingly out of the corners of their characters' eyes.

4. So as to lay before my players new mysteries and not instantly-seized-upon weapons.

## ❧ Vance's Spell of the Ineffably Pleasurable Prolonged Hour and What It Did To Me ❧

One player thought to gain spells from an apparently ailing magician, one Arauncu, but another hit upon the idea of goading or luring that magician's long-time rival in magic into an attack upon the enfeebled Arauncu—and plundering the rival's abode of its magical wonders whilst the two battled. Perhaps with a little forgery of documents, the PCs could end up owners of at least one and possibly both magicians' mansions.

Of course, my players hadn't reckoned that lesser magicians of that land of Myrmaskalon might well have thought of such stratagems for themselves, and already put similar schemes into play—nor that Arauncu's frailties might be no more than a ruse to lure foes of whom he'd grown tired into prepared traps of his making. One of the latter was a spell that set a strangely clumsy, shuffling deodand tirelessly upon the trail of the character who triggered the trap.

Once detected and slain, the deodand was replaced by a second—and upon its demise, by a third. At least one of my players discerned all too clearly the fell details of that trap-magic...but by then, it was too late.

Another somehow became hunted by seemingly endless masked citizens, who cornered him repeatedly in the most remote and unlikely places, and at length—but no, that tale is too painful to recount, and I recall promising never to do so without a pressing reason.

I can say that my formerly bold players at length began—at first with grim purpose and then with an increasing frenzy of that bone-bright sort born of desperation—to seek a *gate* back out of the coils of Myrmaskalon of the masks and cloaks and dimmer sun. It was then that they discovered that certain arch-magicians regarded such things as under their own rightful control, and that others who so much as knew of the existence of such things should not be permitted to live—for such gates were both the source of power to the magicians,<sup>5</sup> and their own intended avenues of escape when the sun should fail at last.

In short, my players found their surviving characters fighting for their very lives—with more than one of them caged, or humiliated, or magically reduced to a state less than human—and when (as heroes do) they found a way back to the Realms, they were followed by more than a few slyly lurking masked men, who considered the Realms a new prize to be plundered...and the PCs creatures who must still be slain lest they warn local rulers of the danger now sidling into their midst.

Were it not for the tentacled menace of the Malaugrym (simultaneously engaged in one of their own furtive and fitful assaults upon Faerûn), the arch-magicians of Myrmaskalon might have succeeded in eliminating both the PCs and divers local rulers. As it was, in my original Realms campaign, 'the Masked' still lurk in the cities of Amn, Calimshan, Sembia, Estagund, and the lands about the Golden Water, acquiring what magics they can and covertly learning ever more about this new world ripe for their plunder.

I can but admire those silkily polite masked men, for I, too, love to walk new worlds.

So I turn, with yet another gate before me, and make a salute long overdue, to a true master.

Thank you, sir.

Why cry I such trumpet?

Well, Mister Vance has given me such rich worlds in which to play. And so politely, too.



### WANTED

A party of dedicated, enthusiastic hunters wishes to hire an expert tracker to assist them in a Hoon hunting expedition. Ask for Peredrix Moane, Kwibbermen Inn, Zoken village.

5. Both indirectly, as ways to places where magic was more plentiful, and could with fell cleverness and deadly malice be seized, and directly, as they drank of the life-energies of creatures using them without utterance of the precise counter-words.



# ❖ The Den-Phu Cranes ❖

*Robin D. Laws*

“By and large Cugel was disappointed by what seemed a lack of innate competence.”

*‘The Den-Phu Cranes’ is an adventure for use with The Player’s Guide to Kaiin. Assuming your intimate knowledge of the contents of this estimable volume, it features characters and places found therein, with handy page references. To state the obvious, adventures should be read by GMs only.*

*‘The Den-Phu Cranes’ is best suited for Cugel-level characters, though Turjan-level characters might work, perhaps with some adjustment to game statistics. You will need to add additional levels of arcane complication to make it work with Rhialto-level characters. The tone of this adventure tends towards the grim and gritty side of the Dying Earth, though your players will probably inject a humorous note to the proceedings.*



## **Premise**

In several days time, the city’s potentate, Prince Kandive the Golden (*Dying Earth Role Playing Game* p157), will perform an annual ritual in which he frees a sextet of white-feathered cranes, to fly serenely across the waters of the Sanreal Bay and out of sight. This ancient ceremony is said to bring prosperity and protection to the royal family, and perhaps even to the city’s general population. Whenever the ritual has gone awry, a disastrous year has followed. On the flying of the cranes a century ago the cranes refused to leave the cage and Prince Hulwi was murdered by a madman as the unfortunate prince attempted to chase the cranes out of the cage using a stick.

One or more PCs learn that the royal aviary was penetrated by an unknown intruder, just the night before the ritual. The cranes appear unharmed, but the event remains puzzling. Through diligent investigation, the PCs may learn that the cranes have been magically altered by the heedless magical prankster Xerceju the Variable. He intends to sabotage the ceremony, to the delight of the gambling magnate Anersi, who intends to profit from misfortune by wagering heavily on the event.

The PCs can earn the palace’s gratitude by preventing the ceremony from devolving into chaos as the birds turn monstrous and begin pecking onlookers. Or they can cement an alliance with Xerceju, or profit alongside Anersi.

## **Worksheet**

The Den-Phu Cranes includes the following worksheet elements.

### **ODD CUSTOMS**

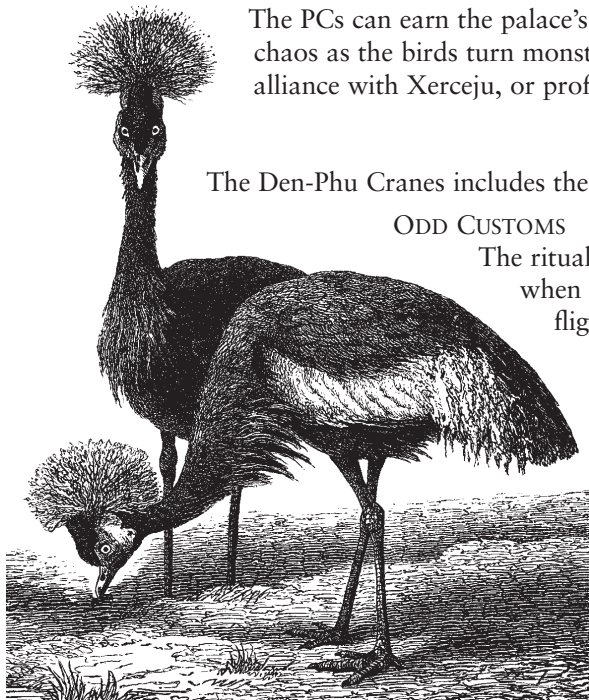
The ritual of the cranes, central to this adventure, is a very odd custom when you consider the great political importance attached to the flight of a group of birds.

### **CRAFTY SWINDLES**

The sadistic gambling magnate Anersi (*Kaiin* p147) gets wind of Xerceju’s plot, but, rather than warn the prince, chooses to make a killing betting on the ceremony’s outcome.

### **HEATED PROTESTS & PRESUMPTUOUS CLAIMS**

If Xerceju’s trick works and the cranes become monstrous, large numbers of impoverished Kaiinese will rush towards them, hoping to be pecked, in order to later claim compensation from the royal treasury.



#### CASUAL CRUELTY

Dire fates befall various minor characters unlucky enough to earn the wrath of the adventure's more powerful individuals. Legend has it that the last person to be Chancellor when the ceremony produced ill omens took several weeks to die.

#### WEIRD MAGIC

Xerceju's magic, unless counteracted, will transform the beautiful cranes into hideous pecking creatures, at an inopportune moment.

**STRANGE VISTAS:** the adventure takes place mostly within Kaiin, though the GM is free to embellish details of a possible journey to a forlorn, crane-ridden swamp near the Thamber Meadow.

#### EXOTIC FOOD

Certain foods are traditional as Crane Day approaches, including:

*Goose paté drizzled in sourberry coulis, with assorted seeds.*

*Spicy durum mound with hazeweed and thask.*

*Fillet of spined halibut with fennel and tarragon (best served while fish is still screaming).*

*Gilded stuffing with shellfish and wild mushroom.*

*Dry-rubbed quelo haunch .*

*Fermented figs in a caramelized Mnutocaster sauce.*

*Tongue-peeler pudding (recommended only for the daring).*

#### FOPPISH APPAREL

The days leading up to the ceremony provide the city's dandies and fashion doyens the opportunity to wear elaborate, crane-themed garments, such as:

*A pewter helmet, wreathed in a crown of metal feathers.*

*A cape of crane feathers.*

*A necklace adorned with half a dozen artificial, but highly lifelike, crane beaks.*

*Boots cuffed in white feathers.*

*Tunics embroidered with crane emblems.*

*Cameo jewelry depicting realistically rendered cranes.*

*Dark make-up applied around the eyes, mimicking the rings around a crane's eyes.*

### *Structuring the Adventure*

This adventure assumes that your players will twist the story line beyond recognition, and therefore gives up on any attempt to force them into a linear plotline. Instead, it presents a number of scenes, which can occur in one of three possible arrangements. Doubtless your players will throw the plotline for further loops, requiring you to rearrange the scenes into yet another pattern, but, with luck, the variant plotlines should provide an example to help you envision this.<sup>1</sup>

Your PCs may or may not work together as a matter of course. If they typically tend to pursue their own independent agendas, do not shoehorn them back into a cohesive group just for this adventure. You could give each PC a separate thread of the story line, leading them all together for the climax: one PC might find a reason to investigate the grim fate of the vigils guarding the cranes, while a second might work on Chancellor Pertrij's behalf, while a third is invited to join Xerceju's organization. You can give them all independent reasons to try to nullify the spell on the cranes, or could set them at cross-purposes.

Another option when your PCs work independently is to use this adventure as merely one of a number of ongoing threads in your game. You can use it to occupy one or more of the PCs while others follow up entirely unrelated plot elements.

1. It is a truism in adventure design that the adventures which are the most fun to read are often the toughest to actually run. They present exactly the kinds of straightforward, gripping plotlines that the typical band of DERPG characters will tear to ribbons within moments. This is especially true if the players are using the vast storehouse of potential tangents that is the Kaiin book. This adventure, on the other hand, may be a more challenging read, but should prove more flexible in practice.

### *Tag lines*

*“Ancient ancestral rights entitle me to double compensation.”*

*“Behold my prowess, dung-barons!”*

*“Fortunately, it is only you who are imperiled.”*

*“I am struck dumb with nausea and admiration.”*

*“I firmly support all royal policies, regardless of content.”*

*“I protest! It was I who received the most vigorous pecking!”*

*“I shall attend closely, by means of this spyglass.”*

*“Let us enter into this next round of negotiations with unaccustomed frankness.”*

*“My intent is to stand well clear of all sprays, prismatic or not.”*

*“Such prankery is not only dangerous, but ill-mannered.”*

*“Surely that garment is worn ironically.”*

*“The terms of your wager lack precision.”*

*“This can only be taken as a sign of utmost treachery.”*

*“When this is known, we will be punched until we bleed from the eyes.”*

*“Your lamentable pudding barely scorched my companion’s lips.”*

*“Your zest for injury may diminish the value of your claim.”*



### *Getting Started*

There are several possible entry points into the adventure. Either assign different entry points to your various, independently minded PCs, or pick the best one for a cohesive group. In either case, the choice of entry point corresponds to the neighborhood in which the PC (or group) has the broadest range of contacts.

#### **Palace Environs**

This version of the adventure follows Plotline 1 (see diagram below) but starts with the second scene, the aftermath of the aviary break-in. The prince’s nervous chancellor, Pertrij (*Kaiin* p92) calls on the PCs for aid when he discovers that the aviary has been burgled. He will be doomed if the Prince finds out, so Pertrij wants to fix the problem before Kandive finds out. The PCs can tackle the problem in one of two ways:

If they discover lingering magic on the cranes, they can search for a countermeasure. This takes them to the Scholasticarium, where they are accosted by Anersi’s thugs.

Or they can head out to the nearest location where wild specimens of the required crane species are known to rest. Anersi’s thugs are staking out this place, to prevent any last-minute crane substitutions.

Through his thugs, the PCs learn that Anersi has heavily wagered that the crane ceremony will yield an unfavorable omen this year. By dealing with Anersi, they can learn of the weak link in Xerceju’s organization, an indebted student named Glerrad. From Glerrad, they learn of Xerceju’s plan, leaving them just enough time to rush to the ceremony.

#### **The Threek/Canal Town**

This uses Plotline 1 as well, but, instead of being brought into the incident by Pertrij, the PCs are approached by

surviving relatives of the aviary vigils. The vigils died after torture ordered by Pertrij; now the relatives want to prove the vigils innocent, to gain compensation for their wrongful deaths. This means finding the true culprit, which leads the PCs along the same trail of clues as above.

### The Tracks

For PCs centered in The Tracks, use Plotline 2. A petty gambler friend<sup>2</sup> of the PCs, known as Pluvote, is found horribly slain. When they investigate, Anersi's thugs show up to scare them off. This leads them to suspect Anersi of involvement in the death. Investigating further, they learn the secret that got Pluvote killed: he connected his acquaintance, the apprentice magician Glerrad, to Anersi. (*Kaiin* p147) The PCs learn of the aviary break-in. From there they can either try to capture a new set of cranes, or search for countermagic. Either way, they arouse the wrath of Xerceju, who confronts them. From him, they learn the nature of the magic on the cranes, and can then proceed to interrupt the ceremony, if they so desire.

### Scholasticarium District

Scholasticarium-based PCs stumble onto the plot when their acquaintance, Glerrad, afflicted with a terrible curse, points them towards the aviary. Their investigation of the break-in leads them afoul of Anersi's thugs. This leads them to suspect Anersi, from whom they can discover Xerceju's plan, as learned through Glerrad. They can then attempt to find new cranes or a counter to Xerceju's magic, but the prankster magician shows up and thwarts them, leaving them with a last-minute appearance at the ceremony as their only way of saving the day.

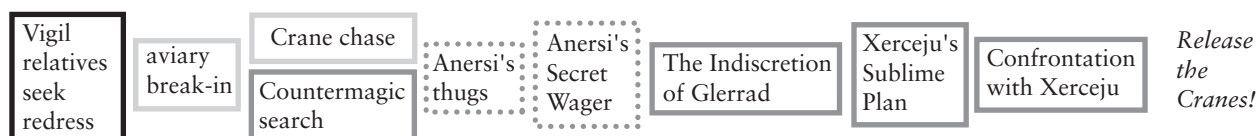
### The Market

Use either Plotline 2 or 3, after having established that either Pluvote or Glerrad is a regular customer of Market-based PCs, or their patrons.

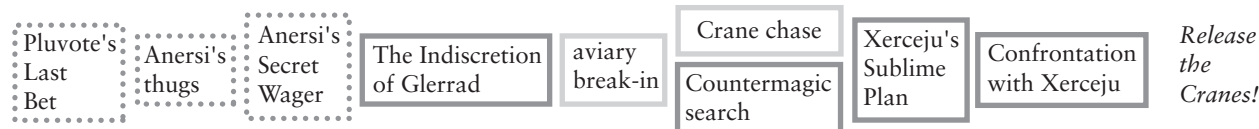
### The Fringe

Use Plotline 2; Pluvote is slain in the Fringe, and Anersi's thugs take the opportunity to severely thrash a few helpless derelicts who unknowingly stumble onto the scene of the crime. The derelicts tell the PCs of the murder, which they can then investigate, if they so choose.

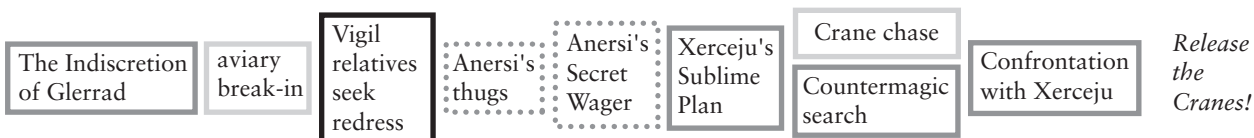
#### *Plotline 1*



#### *Plotline 2*



#### *Plotline 3*



*Some of the multitudinous ways in which the scenes of this scenario may be arranged to amuse your players.*

2. Alternately, Pluvote owes the PCs money, leading them to look to his killer for compensation. Or perhaps a relative seeks vengeance on those who slew him.

### Odkin Prospect

Glerrad hails from a wealthy family, and is known to aristocratic PCs. Use Plotline 3.

### The Undercity

If the PCs live in the Undercity they know that the city has not been destroyed, so establish Glerrad as a regular customer of the luxury shops there, and use Plotline 3.



## Scenes And Characters

Here are notes on the scenes and characters found in the three variant plotlines. Note that the content of the scenes may vary from one plotline to another, so use the synopses listed above in “Getting Started” as your key.

### Aviary break-in

#### Plotline 1

The PCs become involved after Pertrij discovers that royal aviary has been breached, with the vigils on duty none the wiser. Already afraid that his life hung by a thread (the life expectancy of chancellors in Kaiin is not great) he panicked, assuming them complicit in the incident, and ordered the men tortured. Unsurprisingly, they died without confessing anything, and now Pertrij is anxious for a new clue to the mystery.

The Royal Aviary is a large, gilded birdcage that is temporarily erected each year, so that people can view the lucky cranes housed within. It is located on the royal grounds just inside the palace district gates. Guards stand on duty at all hours to prevent saboteurs from harming the birds. Such crimes have been attempted in the past; a prince who cannot produce cranes on Crane Day suffers a terrible humiliation. (This is all common knowledge in Kaiin.)

From Pertrij or another palace contact<sup>3</sup> the PCs can learn that the cage was found yesterday morning with its doors swinging open. The guards were found lying among the nearby trees, blissfully unconscious. The cranes were still present in the cage, but Pertrij decided that something was surely amiss.

Any PC capable of performing a cantrap can examine the cranes and tell that some sort of powerful spell has been cast on them. If no PC can do this, Cilbikark, a dabbler on Pertrij’s staff, takes them aside and nervously informs them that he has cast the necessary cantrap. He tells the PCs about it, but not Pertrij. He does not want to attract unnecessary attention from either his master or the great magician who ensorcelled the birds.

If the PCs have been employed by the dead vigils’ relatives, they may need to Persuade worried officials to provide the information given here. The clues should feel harder to get, while still remaining available.

Cilbikark is also the palace’s resident expert on the puce-crested squawking crane, the species required by the ceremony. He can give the PCs the necessary directions to the Crane Chase (see below) should they ask about replacing the ensorcelled birds.

#### Plotlines 2 and 3

In both of the other plotlines, the PCs have already learned from Glerrad that Xerceju has done something

3. Pertrij has done his best to conceal the incident; no one else in the palace knows about it. If the PCs learn about it from another character, he’ll be fearful for his life, worried that he’ll end up sharing the vigils’ fate.

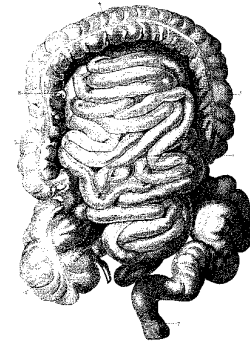
Tormented by an an unfortunate case of  
Colonic Extravasation?

Afflicted, through no fault of your own,  
with Thrumbarche’s Impaction?

Invalidated by the socially embarrassing  
emanations prompted by  
the Blue Reams?

Then you need  
**MOGLAMAR’S REMEDIAL  
COMMIXTURE!**

Meticulously prepared by the  
Consecrated Virgin Benevolents of  
Azenomei,  
**MOGLAMAR’S REMEDIAL  
COMMIXTURE**  
is an efficacious panacea for  
All Known Coeliactic Ailments!



Moglamar’s can assume no responsibility for unexpected and  
fulminating eruptions that occur as a result of use of the  
Commixture.

untoward with the birds. Vigils on duty can tell them the story and direct them to Cilbikark as a source of basic information. He can confirm that the birds are ensorcelled and/or tell them where to go for the Crane Hunt. Or they can seek out Pertrij for his perspective on events.

### Relatives Seek Redress

#### *Plotline 1*

In this alternate opening, tearful relatives approach the PCs and beg them to find out who committed the crimes for which their beloved family members were tortured to death. The spokesman for the families is the double-chinned, greasy-haired Zelme. Zelme pretends to be sorrow-stricken but speaks mostly of the compensation they will get if they prove the deaths unjustified.

One of the vigils was cousin to Pertrij's, assistant Cilbikark. If it makes no sense for Pertrij to provide necessary information at the aviary, Cilbikark will do so.

#### *Plotline 2*

Although not required at any particular point, you may want to introduce this element as a free-floating complication.

#### *Plotline 3*

Here the relatives show up at the aviary after the PCs have discovered the facts but before they can really do anything about it. Zelme at first accuses the PCs, for no discernible reason, of helping to cover up their relatives' deaths, and demands payment to exclude them from her upcoming lawsuit. They can persuade her (with a +1 bonus, since the truth is on their side) that they are her natural allies and should therefore be omitted from any litigation. This fuss gives Anersi's thugs time to spot the adventurers and plot to ambush them before they can look for countermagic or new cranes.

### Crane Chase

#### *All Plotlines*

After determining that the cranes are somehow polluted with unknown magic, the PCs may decide to seek new ones. Unfortunately, the ceremony is very specific and demands the use of the puce-crested squawking crane, a bird now rare in the Kaiin area. The only nearby place where the cranes are found is a gloomy marsh near the Thamber Meadow. The marsh is known to be infested with erb, which for some reason find the cranes unpalatable. However, crane-hunters are quite a different matter.

Make the journey to the marsh detailed and arduous, or dispense with it quickly, as demanded by the group's interest level. When they get to the marsh, the PCs will be confronted either by Anersi's thugs, or by Xerceju, depending on which plotline you are using. If they are itching for a fight with a half-man or two, throw that in on the way to the confrontation.

### Countermagic Search

#### *All Plotlines*

Alternately, the PCs may decide to look for a way to lift the spell on the current cranes, so they can be used without worry. The adventurers will not be permitted to take any of the cranes with them, but they can pluck a feather or two. They will likely head off to their Scholasticarium contacts to see if any of them can perform more precise detection magics on the feathers.

### ✿ CILBIKARK ✿

*"To draw attention to oneself is not only brash, but hazardous."*

Cilbikark is a tall, thin palace functionary with sandy hair and a beakish nose. Although he remains silent whenever possible, he speaks, when he has to, in a high, nasal tone. He wears a faded robe the color of mole fur, with matching skullcap, and nondescript slippers of soft leather. Cilbikark's primary credo is the avoidance of undue attention.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Obfuscatory) 4, Rebuff (Wary) 10, Attack (Caution) 3, Defense (Dodge) 3, Health 2, Magic (Studious) 4, Appraisal 4, Athletics 2, Concealment 6, Etiquette 6, Pedantry 6 (Court procedure 9), Perception 4, Scuttlebutt 4, Stealth 4, Stewardship 6.

**Resistances:** Arrogance Ω, Avarice 4, Pettifoggery 4, Rakishness 4.

**Learned Cantraps:** Note presence of lingering magic; gain blessing (2 pt. boon) to Concealment

**Spell:** The Omnipotent Sphere

**Special:** Suffers a -1 penalty on Rebuff when his opponent's suggestion will help him evade undue attention; gains +1 bonus on Rebuff when suggestion will expose him to attention.



Again, they are accosted before they find anything, either by Anersi's thugs or Xerceju himself. Both the gambler and the prankster-mage have paid informants to warn them when anyone starts making inquiries about enspelled crane feathers.

PCs who can cast Liberation of Warp may cast the spell and think they have done their job. Unfortunately, Xerceju has foreseen this eventuality, and, during his intrusion, slipped an anti-magical charm down the largest crane's gullet. The charm is described below.<sup>4</sup>



### Bead of Vexing Persistence

*2 points, permanent*

This tiny azurite bead specifically counters annoying uses of the Liberation of Warp. If the charm is cast within 10 yards of the bead, the bead temporarily absorbs all spell effects that would otherwise be neutralized by the Liberation. After ten minutes, it returns all the spells to their original state, as if the Liberation were never used.



#### Anersi's Thugs

The role of these bully-boys in the various plotlines is to show up and harass the PCs, but then to reveal their master's identity, allowing the plot to move forward.

##### *Plotline 1*

They confront PCs searching for new cranes or a counter to Xerceju's spell.

##### *Plotline 2*

They confront PCs looking into Pluvote's murder.

##### *Plotline 3*

Aided by the commotion caused by redress-seeking relatives, Anersi's thugs accost the PCs after they visit the aviary, before they even get a chance to go crane hunting or seek a magical remedy for the cranes. Anersi's thugs subscribe to the Philosophy of Thand, which states that men should always be prepared to risk their lives for their masters.<sup>5</sup> They are more eager to fight, and less concerned for their survival, than most denizens of the Dying Earth. On the other hand, they are also gullible (as their adherence to this foolish creed suggests), and can easily be persuaded to reveal the name of their employer. There are as many thugs as there are PCs in the scene in which they appear.

In all plotlines, the thugs foolishly reveal the identity of their employer. It's best if the players think to question them. If they do not think of it, you can either supply them the necessary clue, or require them to thrash about until they find other, more difficult clues leading them to Anersi.

4. The spell to transform puce-crested cranes to monstrous, pecking beasts has been omitted from this adventure, due to its sharply narrow applicability. It belongs to the class of Sub-Centaneous Spells, as identified by the archmagician Queevus. These are spells of such eccentric utility that they surely cannot be included in the legendary canon of the One Hundred Known Spells, as codified by Phandaal.

5. This philosophy was at one time thought to have died out, Thand himself having disavowed it before his death at the hands of two of his surviving henchmen.

6. Although theologians might disagree, Jualchima perceives no contradiction between her faith and the Philosophy of Thand.

#### ❁ ANERSI'S THUGS ❁

Here are their names and identifying quirks:

IBANNITZ speaks with a lisp.

LUMARCENG reeks of intoxicating herb.

SANNESIA a muscular, faintly mustachioed woman.

TEODES gigantic, slope-browed, looks about 14 years old.

DROLAS mispronounces words

URKEN high-pitched giggle

SEMURINGK speaks incessantly of his past lives

ARALEN continually reminds listeners of his extreme frankness

JUALCHIMA kindly offers to convert enemies to the religion of the Nocturnal God before releasing them to convert others.<sup>6</sup>

**Ratings:** Persuade (Intimidating) 3, Rebuff (Obtuse) 3, Attack (Strength) 6+, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 6+(, Health 2, Athletics 6, Living Rough 2, Perception 2, Tracking 4, Wherewithal 2.

**Resistances:** none

### **Anersi's Secret Wager**

#### *All Plotlines*

The PCs are directed to Anersi when his thugs stupidly reveal his identity — or, if they fail to glean this clue, by tortuous alternate means of your devising.

The PCs find Anersi ensconced in his office in his flamboyantly decadent gambling establishment, High Hell (*Kaiin* p153). He leans insolently back on his luxurious, charst-furred couch as he hears them out, smoking a thin brass pipe that emits intoxicating, eye-irritating smoke.

The outcome of the interrogation differs between plotlines: in 1 and 2, he lets slip only the identity of Glerrad; in 3, he reveals that Xerceju has ensorcelled the cranes so that they will ruin the ceremony.

In all cases, he can be made to admit that he has placed large wagers that the outcome of this year's ritual will be inauspicious. (To cover his trail somewhat, he is had his men place a multitude of small bets in the gambling houses of Anersi's rivals.)

To get Anersi to reveal this, the players must best him by contesting Persuade or Scuttlebutt against his Rebuff. Reward PCs with a boon if they find an approach that plays up to Anersi's arrogance and sadism; levy them if they appeal to his nonexistent humility or sense of fair play.

### **The Indiscretion of Glerrad**

#### *Plotlines 1 and 2*

The PCs know that Anersi has for some reason placed large wagers that the ceremony will have an unlucky outcome this year. They know that he is based his wager on information gleaned from an aristocratic student at the Scholasticarium named Glerrad.

They find him at that well-known academic watering hole, the Spined Tome (*Kaiin* p119), tipping a variety of Lumarthi dregs-wines with four of his fellow students. He will quickly shoo them away when it becomes apparent that they know something of Xerceju's plan — his friends do not even know he belongs to the prankster's organization.

Glerrad recently joined Xerceju's Kaiin Philosophical and Thaumaturgical Society (*Kaiin* p105), just in time to discover the elder magician's plan to sabotage the crane ceremony. Alas, several whirlwind weeks of excess at Anersi's gambling den, High Hell, left him seriously in debt to the vicious gambling magnate. As preliminary payment of his debts, he revealed Xerceju's plan to Anersi, suggesting that a person forewarned of the upcoming incident could make some profitable wagers. Because he would not be able to place further bets if word got out, Glerrad felt confident that Anersi would keep his secret.

He reacts with bitter dismay when he finds out that the PCs have cozened Anersi into revealing his identity. He knows that Xerceju's wrath, were he to learn of Glerrad's treachery, will be deeply unpleasant, if not fatal. Thus, as the PCs use Persuade or Scuttlebutt against his Rebuff to get him to reveal more of the plan, they must assure him that Xerceju will never know he told them. Grant a 1-point boon if their assurances seem convincing, or a 1-point levy if they ring hollow. If they overcome his Rebuff, he directs them to the aviary and instructs them to test for lingering magics. He then flees at top speed for his family's summer cottage near Flath Floiry, and, unless intercepted by the PCs, vanishes from the story line.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Plotline 3*

Glerrad kicks off the plotline by appearing to the PCs in a gruesome state, with his face melted shut. He can barely see through fused eyelids and burbles in inarticulate agony when the merest breeze blows on him. In this instance, the adventure works best if one or more PCs knows Glerrad beforehand. Or perhaps his wealthy family engages them to assist him .

In this version of the story, Xerceju became suspicious of Glerrad and, wearing a false face, followed him to a rendezvous with Anersi. He later confronted and punished Glerrad for his betrayal.

7. In a follow-up adventure, the PCs might be engaged by Anersi to track him down, with an eye towards extracting his gambling debts. If they stop the ceremony from being disrupted, they might do so to make their own peace with Anersi, who will be less than pleased by the failure of his wagers.



Now, Glerrad finds it painful to speak at all. With grunts, gestures, and crude sketches, he directs the PCs to the aviary. Then, as above, he flees for his family’s summer home.

### Pluvote’s Last Bet

*Plotline 2 only*

Pluvote, a petty gambler known to the PCs, is found in the dhjetar stables (*Kaiin* p161), hideously slain. At first, the discoverers of his body thought he had been killed by one of the dhjetar, because his corpse was mauled and partially eaten. However, closer inspection revealed that Pluvote’s tongue had been nailed to a long chunk of wood, a clear indication that he was murdered, and by someone wishing to remind people of the advantages of judicious silence.

Pluvote happened to be present on separate occasions while several of Anersi’s go-betweens placed bets on the negative outcome of the upcoming crane ceremony. He began to ask around about this, but made the mistake of quizzing Ibbanitz, one of Anersi’s thugs. Ibbanitz reported his curiosity to Anersi, who ordered him tortured and killed, as a general example to the overly inquisitive.

If the PCs ask their Tracks contacts about Pluvote, they learn that he was perpetually down on his luck, but could also be described as a clever fellow with a nose for opportunity. When word gets around that they are asking questions about him, Anersi’s thugs come after the PCs. Go to the “Anersi’s thugs” scene, above.

### Xerceju’s Sublime Plan

Xerceju is not the most rational magician ever to hang a shingle at the Scholasticarium. His plan is meant as a grand philosophical exercise to illustrate the unpredictability of fate in a world ruled by magic. He wants everyone to speak — and fear — his name. He pays no further heed to the ramifications of his plan. It never occurred to him that Kandive would suffer politically for his actions; when Glerrad made this point, Xerceju airily dismissed it. He does not believe in the supernatural efficacy of the ritual, and therefore does not worry that he might be bringing a year of terrible luck down on Kaiin’s citizens.

In Plotline 1, the PCs learn of the plan from Glerrad. In Plotline 2, Xerceju himself shows up to interrupt their crane chase or counter-magic search, cheerfully proclaiming the splendiferous profundity of his plan. In Plotline 3, they learn it from Anersi.

### Confrontation With Xerceju

In all plotlines, the penultimate scene,<sup>8</sup> is a confrontation with the wily Xerceju, who threatens the PCs with magical punishments most dire if they interfere with his plot. He is more than a match for Cugel-level characters, and a solid threat to a handful of Turjan-level types. In the unlikely event that you are running this adventure for Rhialto-level characters, his only useful ploys against arch-magicians are wheedling and persuasion.

8. That is, the penultimate scene as presented here. You may need to insert additional scenes between this and the climax, to make the timing of events work to best effect.

### ✿ GLERRAD ✿

Plotlines 1 and 2

*“I vehemently refuse to answer charges arising from a betrayal of confidence!”*

Plotline 3

*“Mmmg! Mmmrrrk! Ummg!”*

Vain and easily tempted, the blue-blooded Glerrad is shocked to learn that the world is full of killers and swindlers. Worse, they uniformly fail to exempt him from their cruel plans, despite his evident good breeding. Fear is a new concept to him, and the hold it has taken on him is complete. Still, until the PCs come along, he is not quite bright enough to realize that the city has become too dangerous for him.

His brunette hair falls across his marble-white brow in coy ringlets. He speaks in a breathy, insinuating whisper. He is resplendent in Crane Day finery: a wide chapeau covered in puce feathers from the crests of long-dead birds, a half cape embroidered with a silver-thread crane head, and boots equipped with splayed, bird-like feet. In plotline 3, these togs have been marred by tiny chunks of melted flesh.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Glib) 4, Rebuff (Obtuse) 6, Attack (Ferocity) 4, Defense (Parry) 6, Health 4, Magic (Forceful) 5, Appraisal 4, Athletics 2, Etiquette 6, Gambling 2, Pedantry 4, Perception 1, Scuttlebutt 4, Seduction 2, Wherewithal 1.

**Resistances:** None.



The only argument that works with Xerceju is that the pettiness of his scheme is an affront to his reputation, and does not live up to his previous epic japes. Any PC using any other argument does so at a levy of 1.

Xerceju has not bothered to prepare any means of aborting the prank; he can agree not to stand in their way as they try to stop it, but will not do anything to derail the impending disaster himself.

### Release the Cranes!

#### *All plotlines*

Do your best to ensure that the PCs arrive at the shore with only moments to spare before the cranes are released. Shamelessly interpose objects and situations between the PCs and the beach. Anersi's thugs might make a repeat appearance. Importuning relatives of the slain vigils could show up with complaints and legal threats. Vigils, misled by Xerceju, might think the PCs mean to disrupt the ceremony. If necessary, resort to chase scene staples such as pushy panhandlers, inconvenient parades, and carts careening out of control.

The gilded cage has been trucked to the muddy beach on a large cart. Kandive, members of the royal household, and various other dignitaries stand uneasily on a silk-draped platform that tilts unevenly, its support joists sunk merely into wet sand. A brass band, most of whose members are blind or deformed, tootles below.

As the PCs hit the beach, Kandive strolls down towards the cage, on a sopping, muddy red carpet. Paying no heed to their likely cries, he releases the cranes.

Turning monstrous, they treble in size, developing horny hides and great, pelgrane-like beaks. They swoop across the beach in search of eyes to peck out. Vigils run for cover. Functionaries in their finery scream and knock their knees together. Onlookers tear cloaks from one another, hoping to cover their heads. The blind half of the band keeps playing, while the merely deformed half tosses aside instruments and dashes into the bay.

Kandive retreats in an orderly manner towards his covered carriage; though he is capable of dealing with this crisis, he considers it beneath his dignity. Only if the PCs fail will he step in to drive off the demonized cranes.

The lead crane has now had time to pass Xerceju's Bead of Vexing Persistence through its system. Liberation of Warp will return the cranes to normal, as will contact with anti-magical talismans like Laccodel's Rune.

Alternatively, the PCs can try to shoot the monstrous things out of the sky with offensive spells or ordinary missile weapons.

If they return the cranes to normal, they will earn Kandive's gratitude, winning a generous reward suitable to your ongoing series. Technically, the ceremony has been completed, albeit in an irregular manner. The people of Kaiin mop their brows in a gesture of relief: disaster has been averted.

If all the PCs do is kill the monstrous cranes, they earn a more meager reward. Obviously, if they fail to do either, they gain no great benefit.

#### ✿ MONSTROUS EX-CRANES ✿

*"kruee-kro, kruee-kro"*

**Ratings:** Attack (Ferocity) 2~, Defense (Intuition) 1~, Health 1, Athletics 2~, Perception 2, Wherewithal 2.

### Aftermath

If acting on behalf of the dead vigils' families, the PCs can take their proof of Pertrij's wrongful orders either to the prince, or to the chancellor himself. In the latter case, they can wring a generous settlement out of him by promising to conceal evidence of his errors. Whether they pass this along to the families or swindle them is a matter left to the players' consciences. If they take the matter to the prince, he is dismissive. What are the lives of a few vigils, when his own might be at stake?

Behind the scenes, Kandive calls Pertrij on the carpet for concealing the problem from him, but this is a fact that the PCs can learn only by diligent application of their Scuttlebutt abilities. Unless you want to dramatically shake up palace politics, Pertrij manages to cling to his position, but becomes even more insecure than before.

This episode allows the PCs the opportunity to make friends or lasting enemies of Anersi and Xerceju. They can also impress the prince, without much risk of infuriating him. Be sure to follow up on these relationships as your series progresses.



# ❧ The Dying Earth Needs You ❧

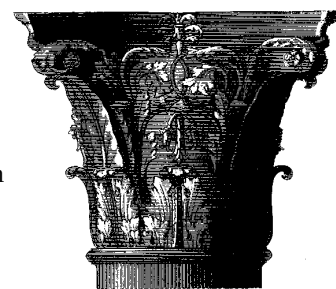
Lynne Hardy

or

*What precisely drives people to wander off into grave danger, when they really ought to have more sense?*

It's an interesting question, really, isn't it? Why do apparently sensible folk decide to abandon home and hearth for a life of rampant uncertainty, with no guarantee of a warm bed or meal, indeterminate plumbing,<sup>1</sup> and monsters with large, sharp teeth and an unhealthy interest in your well being? Bit of a mystery, really. Of course if they didn't you wouldn't be sitting there with a character sheet and some dice getting ready to play a role playing game set on Dying Earth. In the rulebook it states "thou shalt not write page upon page of immensely detailed, graphic fiction concerning thine origins"<sup>2</sup> That would be a "Bad Thing™", as it sets everything about your character in stone before you start and gives you very little flexibility should you require it.<sup>3</sup> No chance for that long lost evil brother to turn up and thwart you if you have an in-depth resume of your entire life down to what you had for breakfast every morning. Nevertheless, it is possible to give your character a sense of background and an idea of how they might react to certain situations based on their upbringing without writing the next nine-part fantasy blockbuster. So where do you begin? Let's look first at why people leave home, which broadly falls in to three categories: Personal, Local and "Not Really Much Choice In The Matter At All". The personal section is straightforward: personal betterment, personal gain and personal thrill seeking (or the grass is most definitely greener anywhere but here). Local is slightly more restrictive and much boils down to going off to get someone or something that will in the end aid your village. "Not Really Much Choice"? Well, that could be a whole range of things from the almost ritual "must get out of town quick because you did something you shouldn't with/to someone you shouldn't have", or tradition. Tradition is a powerful force in village life and just because the world is ending doesn't mean that tradition is going to go out of the window. If anything, people will tend to cling to it all the more as a stabilizing influence in an otherwise unfathomable world.

What we are suggesting is a brief description of where you came from, that is your village or town. What were their beliefs and how did that affect you? How will that influence your behavior towards other people? Is it ever likely that you will drop in at home for a chat? How are other people from the village going to react towards you? Just remember, every adventurer has to have come from somewhere. Of course, there is one minor danger in giving yourself a sense of community and history: your GM. Being the devious little creatures that they are, they will use any information you give them and turn it against you.<sup>4</sup> So you must put your thinking caps on, for by the simple exercise of a modicum of caution coupled with a smidgen of glorious cunning, there is a possibility that you can control what is going to be thrown at you in future adventures. Give your GM something juicy and they will love you for it and will not even notice how they have been duped. Unless they read this article as well, in which case you have a problem. If so, console yourself with the thought that a good GM will always find something evil to drop on you from a great height and you might as well have a hand in determining what that is. Right, let's look at some examples. In the traditional manner, we will start at the top.



- 
1. Plumbing in the Dying Earth will of course be covered in depth in a forthcoming supplement.
  2. Pedants please note this is a loose translation of the section on p120 of the main rules that deals with the matter somewhat more elegantly.
  3. It has to be admitted, a degree of moral and ethical flexibility is the hallmark of a successful individual in the 21st Aeon.
  4. Indeed to be perfectly honest this is the purpose of the entire exercise. Your hard-pressed, overworked and over stressed GM needs all the help they can get.

### I. *Personal Betterment and Gain*

*“When you see me next,” I told him, squeezing the words out between clenched teeth, “you will not talk to me that way. You will greet me as an equal or, which is the more likely, your superior. For I go to better myself and earn my rightful position in this world and your petty-mindedness shall not stop me!”*

There are many cases through-out history where people of lowly status set off to better themselves in the wide world before returning to really rub people’s noses in their new found status.<sup>5</sup> This can, of course, coincide with personal gain because money talks and can do so very loudly if you have enough of it. It’s a central theme of many fairy tales, so you might as well make it work for you. You can even couple it with revenge because, let’s face it, everyone has a mean streak when pushed.

The village of Mysogin has a terrible attitude towards women. They cannot own property in their own right and they are expected to marry whoever they are told to, have children and keep house. After all, it’s not as if they are truly human, is it?<sup>6</sup> Our heroine, a feisty lass who is more than well aware that women are superior to men in every way imaginable, has had enough. Tomorrow her father is going to tell her which of the local dolts she is going to marry. She knows this is not the lot in life for her, but what can she do to avoid it? Well, of course, she can leave and that’s exactly what she is doing right now. There she is, crawling out of the window in the dead of night, dressed in her brother’s clothes and with the kitchen knife (an evil blade) tucked into her belt.<sup>7</sup> She knows (from listening to the traders that visit the village occasionally) that there are other places where women are not treated this way and she is going to find them. How will this affect her attitude to people? Well, for a start, she probably is not going to like men very much. That does not mean she is a rabid man-hater, but she is going to be very wary of men in a position of power. After all, they have done their damndest all her life to keep her down. She is probably going to try far too hard to prove her worth to everyone in sight. She is going to have to be better than the boys, not one of them. That does not mean she is going to have an easy relationship with other women, either – she may be disappointed if they do not meet up to her exalted expectations. How will someone else from her village react to her? Now that could be interesting – if she meets a man from her village abroad in the world, then he is probably going to be horrified. It’s bad enough having to deal with all these brazen hussies without discovering that the good women of home (who know their place) have taken to gadding about in the guise of strumpets. And as for going home – well, expect fireworks. None of the village aldermen are going to be pleased to see her, even if some of the women are secretly envious and very proud of her. Wealth and spectacular magical prowess may keep them from an outright lynching, but it really is not going to be a happy homecoming. What if she lives as a man? It is not unknown. History is littered with tales of women who had glittering careers as men, their secret only being discovered after death. Maybe, deep down, she is more than a little ashamed of what she has done and wishes to remain incognito. It’s possible that all those years of conditioning mean that she is convinced that even outside she will only get her fair due as a man. Whatever the reason, this could lead to all manner of subterfuge to maintain the masquerade. There is a twist on this, as there is in most things. It does not have to be a woman escaping from the restrictive lifestyle of her forefathers; it could just as easily be a man escaping from a matriarchal society.



5. On a practical note, achieving the editorship of even a superior publication such as this does not grant one the same kudos as does riding into one’s home village surrounded by a substantial number of heavily armed and extremely proficient-looking personal retainers.

6. It should be noted that Lynne is from the North of England where things are done differently.

7. One only trusts she will exercise caution squirming through a narrow window with a naked blade pressed against her.

## 2. *Personal Thrill Seeking.*

*The little boy looked up adoringly as Uncle Mattians, renowned traveler and storyteller, recounted again precisely how he had outwitted the cantankerous deodand and how this had led to him wooing the most beautiful woman in Kaiin. The child loved the bit about the escape from the Royal Palace and was utterly determined that when his topknot touched the third notch on the door post, he would leave this dead-end hovel and have adventures of his own.*

This is perhaps the most obvious choice for an adventurer. Nowhere is quite so boring as where you are right now, home even more so. Maybe it was the life of repetitive drudgery, maybe it was the reputation of a disreputable family member—who, despite no-one having a kind word for him when he wasn't there was the most popular person in the entire world when he was—it doesn't really matter because you want out. So what does that tell you about your village? Maybe they just do not like outsiders and believe strongly in conforming, maybe they are genuinely happy with things the way they are, or maybe you just have itchy feet. You were never meant to be a pumpkin herder, were you? How will that make you react to the outside world? There are a couple of routes you could go: the madcap and the studious. In the madcap, you are desperate to try everything as quickly and as much as physically possible. Long term this isn't going to do you much good at all, but hey, the world is ending and you have to cram in as much as possible before you all disappear in a puff of exploding sun.<sup>8</sup> No one is going to stand in your profligate way. Most people probably think you are a drunken, debauched wastrel, but what is their opinion to you? In the studious path, whilst you are just as determined to sample everything the world has on offer, you want to take the time to truly savor each delight to the utmost. You may even seem reserved to those who do not know you, but you have an amazing capacity for the unusual. People probably nod respectfully as you pass by, even if they are bemused by your overall behavior. They are whispering “Now there is a man who knows how to enjoy the finer things in life!”<sup>9</sup> Of course, you have to pay for all of that experimentation and adventuring is so much easier than working. For heaven's sake, you left home to avoid all that nonsense.



*No one may stand directly in your profligate way, but opportunities will doubtless present themselves.*

## 3. *Local: For the Good of the Village*

*Why her? It wasn't as if there weren't other people who would have fair jumped at the chance to disappear off into this stinking wilderness, knee-deep in mud, with fanged horrors jumping out from behind every blinking bush<sup>10</sup> (did they have no sense of shame?). But, oh no, it had to be her, with her obvious talent for finding things. Oh yes, she could find things all right, but as far as she was concerned it was only ever trouble she found and it usually had her name on it.*

There are many scrapes you can get yourself into on behalf of your village. Perhaps someone has stolen something sacred to the village and you, with all your talents, are appointed the person to go and get it back.

8. Some savants assume an exploding sun, others point to the gradual decline and claim that the sun will just blink out and leave us to freeze in the dark. None of them can give a date, unlike a type-setter who confided to me that he knew the sun would blink out on a Perday morning, which is why he never bothered arriving at work until after noon.

9. Convince yourself of this.

10. Blinking bush (*Vibrare lento ubriacare*), a relatively rare plant found most often in northeastern Almerly.

Then there is always the staple “town in peril” option, where the elders have absolutely no faith in your abilities to solve the problem, but they would like you to go and fetch someone else to do it. Charming.

Supicus is a town with a problem. Within the last few months, a band of ghouls has taken up residence in the forests near by and has been making their presence felt. Despite being of a reasonable size and full of lusty farmers not averse to wielding pitchforks and the like, the town seems reluctant to deal with the problem themselves. Our hero, a fit and strapping lad, has been chosen to travel to Almerly to hire the best mercenaries the town can afford, and have them come and sort things out. How does that make him feel about the townsfolk? He is either going to be honored to have been chosen for such an important task as this or he is likely to think they are pathetic wimps for not dealing with it themselves. What will the townsfolk think of him? He is either the poor sap sent off on a fool’s errand who will probably never make it to Almerly in one piece, or he is a hero, risking life and limb in the service of his home. He has been given half the money up front to secure those mercenaries, so what is he going to do with it? That depends on what his attitude towards the quest is. If he’s one of those irritating do-gooders, then he’s going to do his best to keep it safe and use it only for the purpose for which it was intended, even if he should get side-tracked somewhere along the way, say by some other adventurous types he might just happen to bump into. If, on the other hand, he is fairly fed up with the whole situation and really could not care less about the town, then he is set for the fine life for a while at least. How about when or even if he gets back? If he comes riding to the rescue with the mercenaries in time, then he is going to be popular. If he is late, heaven help him if things have deteriorated. What if they have to send out a party to find out where he has gone with all that money? I am sure you can work out what the general reception would be like and it is not pretty. There is also his attitude towards other people. He could be an insufferable prig if he regards himself as a great hero, bending anyone and everyone’s ears with tales of how bold and fearless he is. Then again, he might be highly embarrassed by the whole affair and merely mumble when asked about his great quest, rapidly changing the subject to virtually anything else.



#### 4. *Tradition:*

There was really no way out of it, whichever way you looked at things. It had been like this for centuries, aeons even, and just because it did not suit him, it did not mean it was not right and proper. At least that’s what his grandmother kept telling him. And she would know because, like all grandmothers, she knew everything... Ah, tradition: a wonderful way to give yourself an interesting little background and a suitably quirky home village. Tradition can cover so many things that it really is the proverbial candy store that your small person has been abandoned in. Because there is so much scope for embellishment, let’s look at several different ways in which tradition can be used.

Back in the mists of time, a man battered by travail arrived at the village of Respis. The villagers took him in and nursed him back to health. In return for their help, he promised to aid them, provided that every year the strongest young people of the village undertook a quest to bring him the rare and beautiful quottle, which lived in the mountains far to the South. As long as they performed this duty, he would use his magical skills to preserve the villagers from sub-human ravages and the worst effects of nature. He has kept his word for every year a quottle has been delivered to him, which surprisingly enough has been pretty much every year since he got there, with the occasional notable exception. None of the villagers knows what he does with the creatures and there certainly has not been a local quottle population explosion, but as long as they are safe, they are not really that bothered. Our heroine is due to come of age at the time of

the “Quottle Quest” this year. Taking the quest will assure her passage into womanhood. Unfortunately, she is also the only person to come of age this year so it pretty much looks like she is going alone. As in the “good of the village” scenario, her attitude to this is very much going to depend on whether she agrees with the ritual. If she respects her elders and can see how much good the mage’s protection has done for her people, then she’s probably going to be thrilled and see it as a great responsibility, no matter what the personal danger (although I’m sure the mage could lend her a protection amulet or two because she is on her own). On the other hand, if she is a rebellious youth this could be the final straw as far as all those fuddy-duddies are concerned. Wander off alone into the wilderness to get some poor creature that probably ends up getting its neck wrung? Yeah, right! Of course, if she is suitably cunning, this could be just the chance she needs to experience the world. She has always been good at bluffing, so if she comes back she will have a suitably outlandish excuse. Again, her attitude towards other people is going to vary depending on her views on the quest. Either way, she will probably be quite respectful of mages because she has seen their work in action. It may even have inspired her to seek one out for training (after the quest is completed, obviously, if she is a good girl). The believer may be bold and brassy, supremely confident in her dealings with others because she knows the importance of her quest, or she may be quiet and serious, allowing little to distract her from her goal. But is she easily led? Will her head be turned by the bright lights of the many towns she will have to pass through on her quest? How will all those interesting, funny, loud and often dashing people react towards her? She will have to wait and see.



In an isolated valley, high in the mountains of Fer Aquila, hidden away from the rest of the world and accessible only through along, dark tunnel, lies the village of Aflif. It’s a peculiar place, when all’s said and done. Despite appearing to be rational folk, who all live healthy, fulfilling lives, the natives have the strange belief that when they reach a certain age, they die. Not that they drop down dead, nor that they ritually kill themselves but they die all right (but not so as anyone else would notice). Not that anyone would notice, because no outsiders have ever been to Aflif. At sunset on the day a villager reaches the age of death, everyone in the village gathers at the entrance to the tunnel to enjoy the almighty party that the soon-to-be-deceased is throwing. At the end of this party, the marked man drinks from the sacred flask and lies down to die in the entrance of the tunnel, out of sight of his fellows, who pay their last respects and leave. When he wakes, he has journeyed to the after-world and must make his way up the tunnel to the realms of death, where he is at liberty to wander and experience those things he has worked hard for during life. Of course, he is not really dead, but he thinks he is and belief is a powerful thing. He can interact with anything he comes across because to him the Dying Earth is the after-world, there for his pleasure and enjoyment. Because of the way these villagers enter the real world, they are all above a certain age. Bizarrely, because he is convinced he is already dead, his attitude towards personal danger is particularly lax but for some odd reason it seems to work and danger has a way of avoiding him, or just becoming so confused it gives up and wanders off. As far as other people are concerned, he is a benign older gentleman, with a gentle attitude towards everything and the impression that he is aware of a particularly amusing joke that he has not bothered sharing with anyone else. Yet. He seems to enjoy all that he is exposed to and it will take a lot to get him angry (although anything that truly upsets him in this, his personal utopia, is liable to really catch it). What if he should return to the

village? It's unlikely that he would, under his own steam at least. If he did, everyone would be very afraid of this ghost that had come back to haunt them. The same goes for any outsider discovering the well-hidden entrance to the valley. The residents of Aflif have never met an outsider and will think they have come from the world of the dead to torment them.



The last thing you really want to happen to you in the town of Hozyg is to be born a twin. They have very odd ideas about twins, especially identical ones, of which they have a very high incidence. Tradition has it that twins are sundered spirits that lure other vengeful spirits to the town to wreak havoc. Whilst they are children everything is okay, as the spirits cannot smell children properly, but once they reach maturity, one twin must be sent away or the whole population will suffer. The time has come for our set of twins to be separated. It has been decided that the eldest, more wayward child (who has obviously been trying to get the spirits here early) will be expelled. Her sister has always been pretty well behaved and will be an asset to her people, unlike this one. They are only a small community and really cannot tolerate troublemakers. It's not as if the child is going to be cast out without any aid – they have trained her to fend for herself as part of the ritual of expulsion and she has been given money and a map to the nearest large town (approximately two weeks walk away). What is our child's attitude towards her town? I do not know about you, but I would feel pretty resentful of someone throwing me out of my family with a total ban on my return home. The townsfolk are afraid of her because they think her continued presence is going to bring disaster on them all. The sense of hysteria has been growing since the twins began to reach maturity and, except for her sister, they are going to be very relieved when she is gone, even her parents, who have been regarded with suspicion since the twins' birth. What is her attitude towards other people? She probably is not going to trust too many people and is going to be very self-reliant. On the other hand, if she does find someone she trusts, she will probably follow them to the ends of the earth. Any betrayal of that trust would break her heart and could make her a very dangerous person to be around. There is possibly quite a chip on her shoulder and she is going to have a very cynical attitude towards most relationships, especially as her parents were only too pleased to get rid of her. What if she should go home? Bad move - her life is forfeit if she is caught as that's the only way to stop the spirits coming to find her. Should she try to go back in disguise, she will probably get away with it, but even her beloved sister would be afraid to talk to her. What do the townsfolk appear like to outsiders? Intensely superstitious and should any visitors be twins, then they will be ushered out of town very swiftly indeed.



On the other hand, the town of Hezyg in the next valley regards twins as a great blessing. What a marvelous opportunity they represent. They think their neighbors in Hozyg are very odd and have been known to take in children from that village out of a deep sense of sympathy. If they can get both twins when they are still tiny, then they will raise them as their own. Oddly enough, the end result will be the same: one twin will be expected to leave for the benefit of the village, but they do so with a blessing and the chance to experience anything they wish to before they are welcomed back with open arms. The residents of Hezyg also believe that each twin has half a spirit, but that merely means that one half can stay at home and help with the chores whilst the other can go off, explore for a while and then bring back news and great tales to the town so that all the inhabitants can benefit from a life of travel without having to leave their safe and cozy homes. To ensure that there are a minimum of hurt feelings, the twins are encouraged to decide between themselves who should travel and who should stay, but occasionally the decision has to be made for them. Our twins could not decide who should go and it has been decided that the youngest, who always had the more inquiring mind, should be the one to make his way in the world. Needless to say, the elder is resentful because that means he has to stay at home and do all the hard work while his brother gallivants about the land enjoying himself. After a feast, the youngest boy is sent on his way having been trained how to fend for himself, given money, a map and some good stout boots for his trip. How will he treat others? Probably with immense curiosity – after all, he has been sent out to find out about the world



for his town. That does not necessarily mean that he is some sort of comedic bookworm, nor a total innocent abroad. He may be rather intense, questioning people to within an inch of their lives, which could mean that if his reputation gets around, people avoid him unless they have several hours and nothing better to do. How will others treat him? That depends very much on his attitude towards his information gathering. As with our thrill-seeker, he may be studious or hedonistic and that will greatly influence other peoples' attitudes towards him. What if he goes home? Every twin sent out from Hezyg is expected to come home at some point, but there is no time limit on their wanderings. Occasionally some never return, which is a cause of great sorrow in the town, both for the loss of a citizen but also the loss of their information. Any twin returning home is welcomed with much celebration, but is expected to return to the normal work of the town. This has been cited as one reason why some never go back. In some rare cases, the other twin will be allowed to go traveling if it is thought that the first twin did not bring back valuable enough information. The first twin will always be regarded as somewhat of a failure in those circumstances, to the great shame of his family. Anyone who brings back very valuable information is going to be treated as a hero, so there are other motivating factors towards him making a success of his time away.



Well then, there you are, a few ideas on how to create a home and a frame of reference for your character that did not require reams of paper or several years of your GM's life to read. Please do not feel limited by the examples above – use your imagination to come up with your own unique slant on your personal history. A little bit of thought before you start play will not only enrich your character by giving him a reason for his actions (after all, everyone in the Dying Earth stories has a motivation for what they do),<sup>11</sup> but it also allows you to take an active part in deciding where future stories may lead you and your compatriots. So, get that pencil out and start scribbling.



## WAKDUN THE PANDERER

PURVEYOR of EROTIC APPURTENANCES & GENTLEMEN'S REQUISITES

*“Elegance in all things”*

Coffle Irons, Manacles, Fetters, Chains and neck Collars.

Damascened, insculpted and chased.

For an extra twenty terces they can be further personalised  
by having the name of your choice engraved.



11. It just may not be a very creditable motivation. Here we merely chronicle, it is not our place to pass moral judgments.



*A New and Accurate Map of the Known World*

*compiled from accounts of*

# *the Dying Earth*

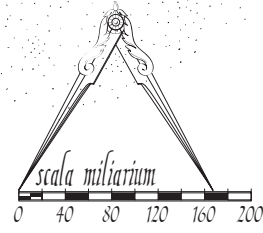
*by sages, scholars and other widely travelled persons*



*Here is painted a Suitable Map in which the location of Settlements, Mountains, Rivers, Islands and other features are most precisely arrayed for the education & delectation of Persons of Quality.*



ghs



# ❖ Efred, City of Sanctuary ❖

*David Thomas*

“The woman cursed, sobbed, pleaded. At last: ‘I tell, I tell you all’ she cried. ‘Dellare has gone to Efred!’  
Liane relaxed his efforts. ‘Efred. So, in the Land of the Falling Wall.’”

For as long as there have been disagreements and misunderstandings, there has been a demand for asylum and a profit in providing it. In the lands of Almere, Ascolais, Kauchique, and the Falling Wall, the discerning fugitive makes her way to Efred.<sup>1</sup> Of all the world’s communities, it is only in this city that a refugee can buy herself complete security.<sup>2</sup>

For time out of mind, Efred’s rulers have guaranteed complete immunity from abduction and assassination. Anyone who goes through the gate may remain inside provided she respects the residents’ right to the quiet enjoyment of their lives, and for as long as she can pay.

Well-used tracks from Cuirnif, Lumarth, and from Bandits’ Gap at the headwaters of the Derna lead to the safe haven. Besides the ubiquitous deodands and pelgranés, travelers on these roads can expect that fortune hunters and thief-takers will take an interest in them. This attention increases as the wayfarers near Efred, where hedgerows, haystacks and copses provide hiding places and vantage points for ambushers. Likewise, the ruined suburbs and market gardens that skirt the town offer concealment to attackers.

The roads meet two bow-shots south of Efred<sup>3</sup> at the inaccurately named Three Way Stone; a causeway leads up to the town. A large inn, The Last Peace, stands at the junction of the Efred and Lumarth roads.

Efred’s high, moated wall wraps round the entire site; its only gate stands between two sturdy towers. Behind it the buildings rise on a low steep hill at the western edge of the Plain of Red Flowers. A spiral street coils its way clockwise from the gate to the vertex, where the lord’s Palace, the Temple to the Revered Ancestors, the Hall of Justice, and the Grand Orpheum surround the market square. Private houses and struggling businesses line the road. Most are in use; over time the residents evacuated the suburbs outside the wall and are now settled in what used to be a citadel. The buildings are tall, shallow and thin, relying on each other for support. They are built of a mixture of materials; wood, a cemented aggregate of fist-sized stones, or stone from older buildings.

Efred’s gate is only open from dawn to dusk, and its guards have a picket for night time emergencies. They work exclusively from the right hand tower; the left hand tower is an inn for thief-takers, the Keen Deodand.

When travelers enter, the sentries draw their attention to a roofed cage inside the gate and to the right. It holds an assortment of sullen and badly beaten people: criminals awaiting expulsion. The guards then refer the new arrivals to Thubwal the Assessor, who keeps an office immediately

1. It has to be admitted that the less discerning tend to find their way there as well.
2. Cynics who wish to point out that a plentitude of funds can provide most things in most places should be shunned as persons of low breeding.
3. This distance is not an accident.

THE EXCELLENT PRISMATIC SPRAY



behind the left-hand tower. A line of people, clutching purses or their items, waits forlornly outside. One at a time they go into the office. A sign over the door reads “Payments Clerk to the Right, the Assessor to the Left.” Thubwal has business in the square every morning, so early callers will have to wait.

Thubwal, an open-faced, corpulent man with a thatch of light brown hair and a goatee, dressed in a violet frock coat, cream shirt and knee breeches, interviews all visitors. Based on what they tell him and what he reads in the enormous ledgers that line the wall behind his desk, he calculates their residence fees. He sets the rate at 1 terce a day for the rare, honest visitor and requires at least a tenth of the amount of the most recently posted reward from fugitives. If there is no reward, then he charges 10 terces for burglars, 15 for footpads and 30 for murderers.<sup>4</sup> These charges are cumulative and apply to each crime in any or all categories. The exiles should pay Mundrol, the clerk, every morning. Should the PCs protest at the cost, he will point out that any price is cheap where life is concerned, and that there are ample opportunities for persons of quality and experience to earn their keep. In any case, they have three days to make arrangements. As they leave his office, the Assessor mentions, almost as an aside, that they might care to pay their respects to Wolness, Lord of Efred. “All of the town square is within his gift, you see.”

### *The Town*

Exiles will soon learn that Thubwal’s claim that Efred affords ample opportunity is no exaggeration. The variety of enterprises, entertainments and diversions available in the town surprises many new arrivals. One building in three plays host to a business of some sort, or is filled with booths for lesser traders. Buskers, beggars, hawkers and pickpockets throng the street and dash through the rat-runs. Here and there work crews pour cement into holes in the road; Efred is an artificial hill, formed of earlier, ruined structures and is prone to shrinkage and soil creep in dry weather.

As they climb towards the square, visitors notice two definite patterns. First, all the businesses are on the left side, so that their private rooms overlook the plain. Second, as one climbs, the houses become cleaner, grander and better maintained and businesses less unwholesome and more exclusive, the further they are from the gate. The residents indicate that this phenomenon exemplifies the principle that refuse runs downhill.

### **The Square**

Efred’s cultural and mercantile center is an irregular pentagon at the top of the hill. The spiral road runs parallel to its base and a line of long steps joins it to the plaza. The resulting terrace has a restaurant at either end, with tables and chairs set outside each. The Temple, the Palace, the Hall of Justice and the Orpheum each sit on one of the other sides. A large fountain, where clean water flows into public troughs from the mouths of great pot bellied demon statues, stands in the center.<sup>5</sup> Around it, petty merchants and mendicants solicit passersby. A closed hatch in the base of the southwest statue leads down to the pump house. The PCs might note destitute people coming and going through it, when the shifts change. Sometimes these workers spit, surreptitiously, in the fountain.

4. t should be noted that Thubwal is by profession an accountant, not a moral philosopher. The fact that taking a life is equivalent to three petty burglaries worries him not one iota.

5. A complex system of buried pipes carries water from the base of the largest of the public troughs, providing an occasionally erratic supply of water to some of the better private houses and to several lesser municipal water spouts.

☘ THUBWALL THE ASSESSOR ☘

*“Circumstances that might have counted in mitigation do not influence my calculations, which are exact and impartial.”*

Thubwal has warm relations with bounty hunters; he pays them for accurate information on fugitives at large and the rewards offered, so that he may set a fair price for asylum. He also posts notices of imminent expulsions from the town. Marcis and Lonson, the proprietors of the Keen Deodand report their guests’ gossip to Thubwal as soon as their shifts are completed. The Assessor takes an extremely dim view of false reports and keeps careful records of who tells him what and is fastidious about scolding the faithless.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Glib) 12, Rebuff (Penetrating) 12, Attack (Caution) 6, Defense (Parry) 6, Health 2, Appraisal 12, Scuttlebutt 12, Stewardship 12.

**Resistances:** None

Townfolk and strangers alike go to the square to witness justice, explore spirituality, enjoy culture, and wonder at aristocratic magnanimity. These diversions happen frequently, as people struggle to remain in the town.

### The Lord's Palace

Wolness, Lord of Efred lives in a magnificent three-floor rotunda, with a central dome a hundred feet across, and seven minarets spaced evenly around its circumference. There are chambers, all thirty feet across between the exterior wall and the central hall. The building is of black basalt, inset with rose marble and mica. Three broad steps lead from the square to a pair of studded, lead-bound ebony doors, where there are always four soldiers on guard.

The sentries check all callers against the visitors' book and admit anyone who has not yet met Wolness. Persons who have visited the Lord before are only admitted if they have a written invitation or a persuasive manner.<sup>6</sup> The guards instruct callers to walk through the inner doors, twenty feet away, and into the main chamber. This central hall reaches up three floors; arched doorways, balconies and loggias overlook it. Its floor is gray-wood parquet; banners and flags hang from the walls. A pair of lamps, one green, one blue, burns one on each side of every door. If a room is occupied, a purple lamp in the keystone lights magically.

Callers find Wolness in the central hall. He is a pale, fleshy, jovial, bald man, barefoot in blue and white breeches, blouse and waistcoat, lounging on a scarlet couch on a dais. When the PCs come in, he is reading the law reports and chuckling over the capriciousness of the current judge, Pentile. Footmen and serving maids cluster around the dais, holding trays of refreshments, papers to sign and books to read.

### Robbing Wolness<sup>7</sup>

The palace strong room is under Wolness' dais and his treasure is kept in three pit-safes. The Lord and the Assessor keep the only keys. The other precautions against theft are simple; there are two guards in the strong room, and the safes rest on delicate rocking mechanisms. If anything other than a key disturbs a safe, then a net falls from the ceiling and metal arms with barbed hooks snick out from the floor around the pit. These attacks are respectively Cunning and Fast 13, and are intended to catch, not injure felons. Successful thieves would find that there is rather less in the safes than they might have hoped. Flat buttons covered with gold leaf instead of terces and brummagem and knickknacks (such as minuscule armies carved out of wood or teeth and lead-lined cups with demon claws clasping their bowls), instead of magical adjuncts. Wolness keeps his real treasure inside his mattress, where Snook, an apparently synthetic paramour, guards it.

### Wolness, Lord of Efred

Wolness will ask the PCs to explain how they came to Efred. He will then establish what they can do. The Lord has the discretion to waive the usual residence fee and will do so, provided that the adventurers have skills or attributes that interest him. GMs should allow the PCs to audition for the Lord. If they are pedantic and arbitrary, he will assign them to the courts. If they witness an unusual religion, he will send them to the temple. If they have any artistic talent, then he recommends the Orpheum. If they are especially likable (i.e. if they possess a lower level of Gambling than he does or if they can Wallop him at Etiquette, Pedantry, or Seduction) he will invite them to stay in the Palace with him. The PCs will retain these positions, whatever they are, until they achieve a Dismal Failure at whatever skill impressed him (or, obviously, if the GM has things for them to do). When they are ejected, they will find themselves at the mercy of the marketplace.

☘ WOLNESS, LORD OF EFRED ☘

*"Your prospectus says that you are droll and sardonic. Feel free to demonstrate."*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Eloquent) 13, (Charming) 8, Rebuff (Obtuse) 13, (Pure-Hearted) 8, Attack (Finesse) 8, Defense (Parry) 8, Health 4, Athletics 2, Etiquette 8, Pedantry 3, Seduction 3, Wherewithal 3. Wealth 12.

**Resistances:** None



☘ SNOOK ☘

**Ratings:** Persuade (Charming) 15, Rebuff (Penetrating) 8, Attack (Cunning) 8, (Strength) 3, Defense (Vexation) 8, Health 8, Athletics 8, Etiquette 8, Seduction 15, Wherewithal 8.

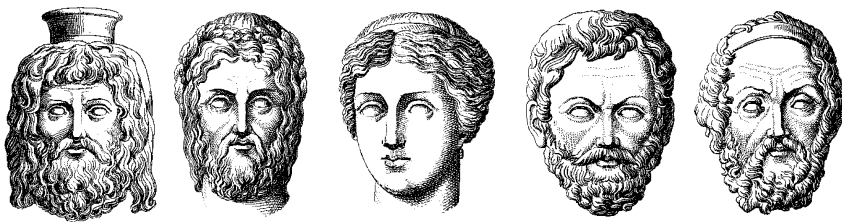
**Resistances:** All Ω

6. The guards are recruited from the Provosts and their statistics are given when provosts are discussed.

7. We include this purely for the sake of completeness. It is obviously an idea that would not occur to any of our readers.

### Snook

There are two Snooks, one at the Palace and one at the Temple. Each has a slim, lithe body and creamy skin. The Palace Snook has purple hair and violet eyes, the Temple Snook has saffron hair and amber eyes. Each wears a shimmering, diaphanous silk chiton, held secured by a sun-disk brooch at her left shoulder and cinched at her waist by a belt of metal plates. She also wears two slim bronze bracelets. She is a construct provided by the Revered Ancestors for the security and comfort of the Lords and Priests of Efred. She is a mystical construct of some sort, perhaps an avatar of a Larval Age champion, rather than an actual vat creature. Should she be killed, another creature just like her rises from the cenotaph at the Temple on the next dawn.



### Temple to the Revered Ancestors

This structure is to the left of the Square's terrace. It is a barrel-vaulted, ochre marble basilica with a central cupola over a portico with six pilasters, and a large apse at either end. The inside is somewhat bare. A cenotaph stands between two pylons against the back wall, opposite the entrance, and a flame of remembrance flickers from an amber lamp-stand in each apse. Stairs lead down from the apses to a crypt and to the priest's quarters. The temple floor has the names of all Efred's children set into its mosaics; they appear magically when an infant is named in the temple. Embrasures line the walls; and an accurate star-map decorates the ceiling. As the only windows are high in the walls, by day it seems that the night sky floats above the temple on a ribbon of dark red light.

The embrasures contain very lifelike bronze masks of the previous lords. Although the masks are beautifully worked, only the most self possessed (i.e. those who make any Wherewithal success) will want to take them down and look at them. Should they do so, they will discover that a layer of preserved flesh and pulverized bone lines each mask.

These are the Revered Ancestors. When a Lord or Priest of Efred is about to die, or has become too irrational to control the town, Snook takes an oval bronze plate, heats it to malleability and presses it to his face. She then pounds his head into the cooling death mask from the rear, causing it to fuse with the metal.<sup>8</sup>

The Revered Ancestors collectively bring stability to Efred. Kaldone, their priest has their counsel available to him at all times and they can empower him to cast spells on their behalf, for the good of the town. They also select a the new Lord or Priest, from the men currently in the

8. The Lord's co-operation in this process is not assumed. Also note that Snook can be arbitrary about her choice of when she regards the Lord as about to die. She is always correct, as having your skull pounded into bronze plate is always fatal.



### Snook's Bracelets

This pair of thin bronze hoops only works when they are worn one on each wrist. They allow the wearer to cast the Charm of Brachial Fortitude twice a week and make her immune to heat for half an hour no more than one a day.



### ☘ KALDONE ☘

*"Please remember I am a priest. Trouble me not with over much religiosity"*

Tall and cadaverous, with tonsured, shoulder-length, white hair and white mustaches, Kaldone is the current priest of the Revered Ancestors. He has the accumulated knowledge and magical skill of all his predecessors so, provided that he remains in the temple (he has a chamber under the left hand apse, and simple needs), he has the power of an Arch-Magician. He does not possess any sandestins, but knows all the spells in the DERPG rule-book. Any successor will acquired these statistics within a month of assuming the position. Should the successor manage to avoid Snook and slip away, (in itself no easy task and she is indefatigable when in pursuit) their statistics revert to what they were prior to elevation.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Forthright) 15, Rebuff (Penetrating) 15, Attack (Caution) 8, Defense (Intuition) 8, Health 8, Magic (Forceful) 20, Pedantry 20.

**Resistances:** None.

town. The provosts bring him to the temple for anointing.<sup>9</sup>

The Ancestors are fully conscious of what goes on inside the temple and are keen to learn of events in the town, so Thubwal reads his ledger to them every morning. They also give advice, in return for a good story or artistic performance. On occasion, Kaldone will commission people to talk to or play for an individual Ancestor privately in the right hand crypt. It is an act of courtesy, which the Ancestor rewards, for the performer to take the mask out of its embrasure herself.



### The Anointing Rod

This tulip-headed wand containing a small reservoir of magic oil rests on a rack above the cenotaph in the Temple. If a vacancy arises, it will make the next person touched by it into the Priest or Lord of Efred, as appropriate. Only the Priest can anoint a Lord, and vice-versa.<sup>10</sup> Should the anointed abscond, the appropriate Snook will bring him back.



### The Hall of Justice

Efred's court stands between the Palace and the Orpheum. It is a domed, 120 foot wide, square, Palladian structure with a magnificent portico. Inside, two walls separate the central lobby from the Courtroom, to the left, and the Provosts' Office, to the right. The lobby has benches and notice boards. Every morning Thubwal posts the lists of entries to town, marriages, divorces, and expulsions here. There are also court lists and lawyers' advertisements.

#### The Courtroom

Booths for advocates and their anxious clients line the walls of this room, appellants to the left, respondents to the right. At the end, lawyers' tables, a dock, and a witness stand face the judge's bench and the clerk's desk. Pentile, a small, bald man with a face like a pelgrane's, holds court alone from mid-morning until late afternoon. His summations are usually eccentric, sometimes Quixotic and often inexplicable, but he amuses Wolness.<sup>11</sup>

Pentile has four sentences available to him, corporal and capital punishment, restitution to victims, and expulsion from Efred. He often uses them in combination, and once required a dead wizard to animate his own corpse and exile himself.

The Lord also appoints the lawyers and follows their progress with interest. He dismisses any that lose three cases in a row. Advocates attempt to select their own work, but Murne, the clerk, keeps a register

9. It is rumored that the provosts also ensure that any bashful candidate does not 'inadvertently' miss his anointing or abscond later.

10. It is assumed by many that Snook is the one who selects the candidates, making her wishes clear to Priest or Lord. She has not found it necessary to clarify the procedure and no one has found it necessary to inquire too deeply.

11. A wise move. The reward on Pentile's head is considerable, and the terms "dead or alive" are specified in connection with it.

### ☘ PENTILE ☘

*"You have no advocate? Then you are poor and a fool, both of which may count in your favor: I am sentimental."*

Pentile is easy to flatter. He can also be bribed, with money, goods, or services. He created his own vestments: a series of offset billed caps, which look much like a spiral staircase on his head; and an ankle-length gown of maroon fustian, with bells for buttons and a trim of snow-weft pelts.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Obfuscatory) 12, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 12, Health 2 Pedantry 12.

**Resistances:** None



### ☘ MURNE ☘

*"Good day?  
How can it be a good day when I must sit here dressed like a badly plucked table fowl!"*

Murne is an old, thin, hollow-faced, irritated woman with hands made crooked by a lifetime of writing crabbed notes and furling vellum scrolls. Despite her protests, Pentile insists that she wear a white jupon and pantaloons underneath a black domino.

Murne cannot be bribed, but all other blandishments work well.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Forthright) 8, Rebuff (Penetrating) 8, Health 2, Pedantry 4, Stewardship 8, Resist Avarice 4.



and ensures that all parties obtain representation. The lawyers will only work if their clients can pay, so many respondents must represent themselves.

*The Provosts*

In addition to its indifferent soldiery, Efred has provosts, citizen-policemen who work for the court and the temple. Although the state pays, feeds, clothes and houses them, they are tough and dedicated. There are thirty of them, commanded by Provost Marshal Danidelles. They work in three shifts of six, a sergeant and five privates, with another twelve on court duties or held in reserve. The Provosts wear tawny busbies, swallow-tailed ochre coats, beige shirts and breeches, tan puttees, and dark brown ankle boots and belts. Their sergeants wear brassards and the marshal has a splendid, purple and yellow barred sash. The provosts' usual weapon is a hooked partisan, but they also carry swords and knives and three Capture-Globes.

The Provosts' Office runs along the entire left side of the Hall of Justice. The part nearest the front holds a counter and waiting area; behind it are desks and filing cabinets, a holding cell and, at the back, Danidelles' private chamber and an interrogation room.



**Capture-Globes**

These egg-sized balls hang from the provosts' belts on wire hooks. Each hook attaches to a boss set on the missile's surface. Inside the thin glass, a cup of compacted thyle-dust encloses a dormant colony of necrogenous saw-termites. A sudden jerk on the wire drives a sharp nail into the insects' queen, sending her enraged children into a mating frenzy. They burst out through the thyle-dust, which spreads in a cloud about five feet across. The termites themselves sink into the nearest living creature, driving their combined sting-ovipositors into it. Thyle-dust imposes a -2 levy on all actions until it is purged (unless the victim makes a Prosaic or Illustrious Wherewithal success, in which case the levy drops to -1 and 0, respectively). Despite their gruesome activities, the termites present no danger, serving mainly to disperse the dust.



**The Grand Orpheum**

Efred's palace of the interpretative arts is a semicircle of seating cut into the hillock. A thin oblong building across its base holds costume stores, a library of the standard works, and driving-gear for the lifts, hoists and a revolving stage. Performances take place on the stage, or its apron, which can be lowered and flooded if desired. Hopeful impresarios book the Orpheum from Cordandalus, the Commercial Director; when it is not in use, desperate artists rehearse their material and occasionally form impromptu companies to perform, either on the stage, or about the town. Wolness requires that some artists perform at the palace every night; Cordandalus selects them.



☘ DANIDELLES ☘

*"Pray save your remonstrances for a more convenient time."*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Intimidating) 10, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 10, Attack (Ferocity) 10, Defense (Parry) 10, Health 6, Etiquette 1, Pedantry 2, Perception 1, Scuttlebutt 1, Wherewithal 6.

**Resistances:** (all) 3.



☘ PROVOST SERGEANTS ☘

*"Only a fool would even contemplate intimidating us. We are prone to acts of fierce violence if provoked."*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Intimidating) 10, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 10, Attack (Ferocity) 12, Defense (Parry) 12, Health 6, Perception 3, Scuttlebutt 3, Wherewithal 6.

**Resistances:** Avarice 2, Indolence 1, Rakishness 3.



☘ PROVOSTS ☘

*"I suggest you raise that matter with the Sergeant."*

**Ratings:** Defense (Parry) 10, Health 6, Perception 2, Scuttlebutt 2, Wherewithal 6.

**Resistances:** Avarice 1, Indolence 1, Rakishness 1.



## Surviving In Efred

### Residence

Anyone who lives quietly and who can pay the Assessor's fees can abide in Efred. So can people who marry a native. Ideally this should be a love match, but the marriage contract is clearly an asset and can, thus be sold. Both polyandry and polygamy are socially acceptable, so many residents have multiple partners, as does Wolness himself. A foreigner's right to remain lapses upon divorce. This means that the natives support themselves by marrying fugitives, then divorcing them when the money runs out.

Unless an Exile has private, but portable, wealth, she must make her way on the free market, touting whatever skills, qualities, and wares she has. At first this should be role-played, but long-term survival can be presented as a series of contests of a PC's chosen skill against the market. The market's rating changes as people come and go, and can be determined in most cases by rolling a die. It should not be more than ten. If the adventurer wins the contest, she has covered her costs for a day on a Hair's-Breadth, for two on a Prosaic, and for a three on an Illustrious Success. If the PC loses, then she is in arrears, one day for an Exasperating, two for a Quotidian and three for a Dismal Failure. When a visitor accumulates four days of arrears, she becomes destitute. Should this happen, the unfortunates find themselves in front of the Assessor, who grants them a final interview.

### The Final Interview

Chronically impecunious persons have a final recourse before the courts order their expulsion for vagrancy. They can throw themselves on the Assessor's mercy. Thubwal will allow them to grovel, plead, blandish and wheedle at his feet. When he feels that they have done enough, he will offer them three choices; to perform distasteful personal services for him, to join the soldiery, and last, to work in the pump-room.

### Personal Services

Characters who are Eloquent, or skilled in Imposture or Seduction may find themselves entertaining the Assessor in his home next to the Square. Thubwal maintains a seraglio on the second floor and a symposium in his kitchen.

### The Efred Soldiery

*"Your unreasonable behavior has caused me injury and distress. The Assessor will draw up an invoice."*

The soldiers, who guard the walls, control the gate and walk the streets, wear red-piped white uniforms, comprising loose trousers, double-breasted white jackets, and two-tiered, billed caps. They carry whatever personal weapon they prefer and can afford and, at night, lanterns.

They receive clothing, room, and board from the lord, but are otherwise unpaid volunteers<sup>12</sup>—many are themselves impecunious exiles—so they impose taxes and special levies on residents and visitors alike, with the Assessor's assistance. Here their easily stained over ornate uniforms prove

12. We use the term volunteer loosely.

### ✿ CORDANDALUS ✿

*"You must understand that high art and commercial art are antithetical. An artist can either survive or create, not both. I choose to survive."*

Cordandalus is an elderly ex-actor who has settled in Efred. His only crimes were artistic, so he pays very little to stay in the town. He is of medium height, thin and somewhat frail, with thick white hair. He tends to dress in faded black.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Forthright) 8, (Charming) 3, Rebuff (Penetrating) 8, (Pure-Hearted) 3, Attack (Finesse) 8, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 3, Health 2, Imposture 8, Perception 4, Stewardship 8.

**Resistances:** none



### ✿ EFRED SOLDIERS ✿

*"Our remuneration is not over generous, hence our well founded delight when we chance to fall in with a person of proven generosity."*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Intimidating) 6, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 6, one style each of Attack and Defense at 6, Health 3. Athletics 3.

**Resistances:** none

very convenient; anyone whom they arrest can expect to receive an inflated reckoning, part laundry bill, part fine.

### The Pump House

Efred stands on the remains of a far larger, far older city that has been filled in with cement over the Aeons. This old metropolis itself stood on the large reservoir that is still Efred's source of water. Raising the liquid to the surface is a major undertaking, so the Lords and Assessors have always delegated it to the scum of the city. These unfortunates gather in a chamber in the center of the hill and work ceaselessly to direct water through the fountain above them. Now that Efred has diminished in size to become a mere fortified town, the pool of available scum has all but dried up, so Thubwal substitutes vagrants. One hundred unfortunates work hand pumps in four shifts of twenty-five, and remain in place until more vagrants present themselves for service. The Assessor selects excess pump-hands with the longest service who find themselves expelled from the town.



### Expulsion

Persons awaiting expulsion tend to be dejected. They are without funds, their clothes are torn and frayed and the stink of the pump room is ingrained into every pore. Nevertheless, they offer some sport, if motivated correctly. Ranmode the Actuarian provides such encouragement. He is an adept bookmaker, who will take bets on how an expelled vagrant fares. To assure enthusiastic participation, Ranmode gives them 30 terces and pays for a night at the Inn of the Last Peace. If the vagrants agree to have a flag on a pole strapped to their backs—so that spectators on the walls can better follow their progress—he will increase the payment to 70 terces.

Provosts escort the unfortunates to the Inn an hour before dusk. The Keen Deodand's patrons cluster in the doorway to watch them going past.

### Locations

#### *Inn of the Last Peace*

This sturdy, long, single-story house has two entrances, towards and away from Efred. The usual patrons are travelers who arrive after sunset, so are forced to sleep outside the town. Occasionally, customers going in the other direction sleep there; persons who are no longer welcome in Efred may have a last night's grace before running for their lives.

Lardane and her daughters Imenda and Duniss own and run The Last Peace. Their establishment has a pleasant terrace facing the Three-Way Stone and a modest bar at its other end. Between them are a common bunk room, latrines, and four private chambers available to guests. The Inn offers good rustic cuisine— cold cuts, thick stews, buttered greens, dried fruits, fresh bread and robust wines and beers—but its best known beverage is thresk, a tonic derived from Draken mushrooms that gives its drinker a sprinter's speed and a wherriot's stamina for three hours.<sup>13</sup>

When patrons arrive, the proprietors ask them whether or not they are

13. Or so it is rumored. It is also rumored that too regular consumption leads to chronic constipation, baldness and impotence. As such it is shunned by bounty hunters.

☘ LARDANE ☘

*"You will find nothing furtive or fly-by-night in this establishment."*

☘ IMELDA & DUNISS ☘

*"I must confess that I always had a soft spot for a well set up gentleman with a well stuffed purse."*

All three are petite and shapely, with blonde hair and sea green eyes. They wear scoop-necked gray dresses and heavy white linen aprons. Should violence erupt, they keep weapons behind the bar.

**Lardane Ratings:** Persuade (Eloquent) 10, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 10, Attack (Cunning) 6, Defense (Misdirection) 6, Health 4, Stewardship 10.

**Resistances:** None.

**Imelda & Duniss Ratings:** Persuade (Charming) 8, Rebuff (Obtuse) 8, Attack (Speed) 6, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 6, Health 6, Seduction 4, Stewardship 6.

**Resistances:** None.

pursuers or prey. If the former, they are referred to the Keen Deodand, an establishment at the town gate, dedicated to accommodating bounty hunters and thief-takers.



### Nets

Thief-takers often catch their victims in large, strong nets. A net attack uses the Cunning style and entangles on a Prosaic or Illustrious success. Entanglement imposes a penalty on its victim's attempts to attack, defend or even move: -1 if the net attack secured a Prosaic success, -2, if it was Illustrious. Each net will entangle one man-sized opponent and takes two people to cast it.



If any prey is outbound from Efred, Lardane arranges a formal breakfast for onlookers on the terrace and starts the fugitives running at dawn. As the bounty hunters must start from the Keen Deodand, the runners have a head start and should be able to make good their escape among the market gardens and ruins. This is less true for those who choose to wear flags strapped to their backs.

#### *The Keen Deodand*

The ground floor of the left-hand gate-tower has been converted into an inn, where those hoping to catch a fugitive on their way out<sup>14</sup> of Efred may stay. Patrons enter through a postern letting onto the causeway. Inside there is a bar and some tables. Out of respect for bounty hunters' rough demeanors and simple tastes, the Keen Deodand serves beer, grain spirit, biscuit, and dried foods. It has no furniture of any kind, beyond the serving counter. A true bounty hunter shuns luxury.

Marcis and her son Lonson take turns behind the bar. Both are Efred natives, who have never been out of sight of the walls. Their spouses, Bernax and Messine, respectively, work with them. All four of them adore stories of the lands and people beyond, and are voracious listeners. They allow no bad behavior, particularly, they will insist that their guests observe the correct procedures when fugitives are expelled.

As noted in his description, Marcis and Lonson sell information for Thubwal the Assessor. Additionally, Thubwal has mounted a spy hole and a listening tube in the back wall of his office which relies on the tower for support.<sup>15</sup>



### WANTED

An acquisitions agent, capable operating with consummate skill, and absolute discretion. Inquire with great dispatch at Wittle's Inn, at Wittle's Crossroads. Look for the clean shaven man with the feathered hat.

### ☘ MARCIS & LONSON ☘

*"No, stay and talk the day away, there is much to be said for spending time in setting the world to rights."*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Charming) 8, Rebuff (Pure-hearted) 8, Attack (Strength) 8, Defense (Parry) 8, Health 4, Scuttlebutt 10, Stewardship 10.

**Resistances:** Rakishness 4.



### ☘ BERNAX ☘

*"Traveled far, my good people?"*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Eloquent) 6, Rebuff (Wary) 6, Attack (Cunning) 6, Defense (Intuition) 6, Health 3, Concealment 8, Living Rough 8, Quick Fingers 8.

**Resistances:** Gourmandism 4.



### ☘ MESSINE ☘

*"Come, I will top up your glass while you continue with your tale."*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Glib) 8, Rebuff (Penetrating) 8, Attack (Finesse) 8, Defense (Vexation) 8, Health 6, Magic (Devious) 4, Etiquette 4, Imposture 4, Seduction 4.

**Resistances:** Indolence 3.

**Spells:** Charm of Another's Face, Phandaal's Mantle of Stealth.

14. Once a fugitive has reached the gate, the guards, or other locals, will often protect them from bounty hunters, for a suitable sum.

15. This reliance is both physical and metaphorical.

☘ DINING OUT IN EFRED ☘

Efred's cuisine falls between the complexity of Grand Motholam's classic dishes to the simple purity of herdsmen's stews and pottages. What makes food in the City of Exile distinctive is the *mélange* of styles, influences and savors introduced by forlorn gourmets who have fled there from across the Dying Earth.

From the first, local entrepreneurs attempted to stave off their own destitution by offering the expatriates the flavors of home. Inevitably, Efred's very many talented cooks relied on local ingredients, so their efforts only approximated to the original dishes. Thorn-sage instead of talaxis for example, or wherriot haunch rather than loin of oast. Dissatisfaction with these efforts led to the Syntheticians' Wars that marred the New Aeon celebrations and ultimately resulted in the New Cuisine, in which the chefs attempted to celebrate their city's staying power and its inhabitants' origins with respectful innovation, rather than slavish imitation. The results are usually rewarding, and sometimes startling.

GHOULS' EYES

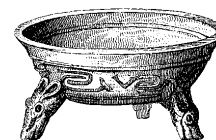
*Honey-spiced sausages in sour pastry, serves 10*

Make a standard ground-kasha pastry, add brewers' yeast and leave to rise. While this is rising, mix honey, crushed k'teis blooms and white wine to form a marinade.

Take ten spiced sausages, skin them and marinade for two hours. Drain and reserve the marinade, and keep the sausage skins. Roll the pastry to the thickness of fine artist's paper. Cut the sausages into 70 eyeball-sized pieces, roll into balls and wrap in pastry.

Take seven majan roots and slice crosswise to produce 70 rings. Press these into the balls, as if they were retinæ. Roll up the sausage skins into long thin tubes and cut crosswise to form 70 "optic nerves." Press them into the opposite side of the "eye" to the "retina." Grease a baking tray and pour the reserved marinade into it. Float the eyeballs in it. If possible arrange the "eyes" into seven hexagons, retinæ uppermost.

Bake for half an hour and serve with pepper-goarse and shrone-leaf salad.



☘ BUSINESSES IN EFRED ☘

Efred's commercial sector is very volatile, but the following are long-standing concerns.

**INNS AND TAVERNS:** There are five hostelries between the gate and the Square. They are, in order of quality and altitude: the Manurian Sphere, the Blood-Lily, the Wizard's Whiskers, the Principian, and the Decandile. All offer lodging and food and have some space for dancing and gaming.

**ENTERTAINMENT:** Aside from the Orpheum, Efred has a dance hall, the Untine Rooms; a gambling house, the Fortunata; and a fighting pit, the Hero's Prize.

**SERVICES:** Zaranda's marriage bureau introduces interested parties for a fee. Ralpart and Broone, Scriveners, concoct documents of all kinds. Tubthwaite's offers loans secured against personal property, and a fine selection of second-hand goods.

**HEALTH AND SANITATION:** Pashma and Ranto are doctors (Physician 4); Shanke and Prinze run a fine bathhouse; Fuldine has a laundry.

**SHOPS:** Most residents shop in the market, but Traggale, general merchant, sells hard-to-find items and will attempt to procure curios to order. Bymane is a reputable and reasonably competent tailor, as is Andel (each Craftsmanship 8).

## ADVENTURES

### *The Singing Deodand*

The PCs come to a great bend in the road, which swerves away from a ruin. It is obvious from the lie of the land that they are now traveling along an offshoot; the direct route, perhaps two miles shorter, runs straight ahead.

Should the adventurers decide to investigate—whether from native curiosity, nightfall, or a sudden change in the weather—they will come to an old inn, half of its roof gone, and a derelict shell that was once a stable. Part of the inn's floor has fallen into its basement. A strong smell of spilt wine rises from below, where someone is singing.

The voice is pleasant and, perhaps, un-human (a Perception Success notes this). If the PCs call out, the singer will introduce himself as Tamm, a native of Efred. He will explain that he has fallen into the wine cellar, broken his leg and cannot get out; he is singing to keep his spirits up. Tamm is in no danger of starving—the place has an armada of casks, a mountain of fine vintages, a great forest of sausages and huge pillars of cheese—but he is scared that this booty will inspire footpads with ropes to climb down, rob and kill him. Tamm hopes that the PCs are people of quality, who will pull him up and help him get home. Once he is out of the pit, he will have no need for his provisions, so his rescuers would be more than welcome to them. As an added inducement to treat him fairly, he will point out that as he is from Efred, he could help them settle into the town. Unscrupulous swindlers and merciless bounty hunters abound in the ruined suburbs and Tamm knows the secret way in.

Everything that Tamm tells the PCs is the truth, aside from one point; he is not from Efred. He is a deodand. Should the PCs fall for his simple trap, he will attack the first one to climb down to him; if they tell him to tie a rope around himself, he will do so, wait until they take the strain then pull them in. Tamm is strong for a deodand (Strength 3~). As his leg really is broken, he is not especially mobile (Athletics 0.5~).

The PCs will be able to salvage some provisions from the cellar. The landlord had hung his preserved hams and sausages from the ceiling; the top three in each of the strands (48 in all) were too high up for Tamm to gnaw. The wines fared worse; the deodand smashed all the bottles and casks he could reach and sat in the resulting pool. He drinks the mixture from an antique crater. Again, some items were out of his reach. These included three bottles of fortified Porphiron and a bottle of locally distilled Tanvilkat brandy. If it survives the fight, the crater will prove interesting. It was once the trophy of the Kaiin to Lumarth foot-race; a stylized procession of filigree athletes runs round the inside of the dull-silver bowl.



### *An Ambush in the Ruins*

*“Halt, miscreants. You know me and I know you. We will return to Port Perduz, where you will sink into the sucking sands.”*

A man in dark clothing appears in the middle of the road, barring the way, and orders the PCs to halt. If any player has emphasized that her character is being especially careful and observant then her PC will notice, on a Perception Success, that there is a shadow on the road ahead with nothing to cast it.

The man is Arles, Thief-Taker General of Port Perduz. He is under the impression that the PCs are members of the infamous Scarlet Cockade Society. Should they point out that they no more recognize him than he does them, or that they lack the eponymous hat ornaments, he will commend them on their disguises and glib tongues. If they attempt to overpower him, he will call upon his deputies, who have concealed themselves within net-cast of the road.

Before the fighting becomes lethal, Arles realizes his mistake and apologizes, in all sincerity, for attacking them. He makes them an offer, in an attempt to right the balance. He would like to give them a commission within

Efred. The Scarlet Cockade are vile land-pirates and thieves. They killed four deputies during their escape from custody and are apparently fleeing beyond Arles' reach. The bandits know Arles and his men, but they do not know the PCs. He will pay them 5 terces each a day for watching the Cockade for him, with an additional 100 terces a head if their assistance leads to the bandits' capture. He will also invite them to keep the fugitives' property, excepting those items listed on his schedule of stolen goods (unfortunately, this contraband is long since gone, pawned to cover the gang's expenses).

Arles will assign his assistant, Cloto, to them as liaison. Cloto will wait at the Three Road Stone for an hour at dawn, noon and dusk (Arles will lend Cloto his shadow-stone). If the PCs ask for a description of the Scarlet Cockade, Arles will volunteer that they are "seven women who dress like men. They are scrawny and not at all agreeable."<sup>16</sup>

#### Approaching the Town

*"See, sir, there sir, a man lurks inside that culvert. I will delay him for 100 terces"*

*"I can render the thief-takers flaccid for a mere seventy terces".*

*"My six sons will block your pursuers' way. A paltry ten terces each. They will taunt them for five."*

As the PCs near Efred, they hear a bell ring out from the gate-house and, shortly after, people will line the walls, calling out and cheering. Attentive travelers will note that the locals are offering to impede either pursuers or the unwashed, armed gang issuing from the gate-house. These last are dressed in disheveled traveling clothes, seem very tired and smell bad. They are obviously not guards; there are four of those, dressed in white.

Depending entirely on the needs of the GM's story, the characters could simply walk into the town, narrowly escape a hard pursuit with the assistance of the local people, or force their way through a line of bounty hunters. Once inside, residents will approach them, requiring payment for the services that they claim the PCs used in gaining the town. At some point, the PCs could receive a writ for default on these contracts.

#### ☘ Cloto ☘

*"Do not seek to persuade me. I take my master's guidance in all things."*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Forthright) 6, Rebuff (Obtuse) 6, Attack (Finesse) 8, Defense (Parry) 8, Health 6, Stealth 4.

**Resistances:** Gourmandism 2.

**Possessions:** Cloto carries a rapier in a battered scabbard.



#### ☘ THE DEPUTY THIEF-TAKERS ☘

*"Indignant protests inspire us to brutality; we are callous to blandishments and entreaties."*

The deputies carry heavy cudgels, studded with hob nails, and large nets. There are two thief-takers for every PC, and a further pair to guard Arles' back.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Intimidating) 8, Rebuff (Wary) 8, Attack (Strength) 10, (Cunning) 5, Defense (Parry) 10, (Vexation) 5, Health 6, Stealth 4

**Resistances:** Rakishness 2.

#### ☘ ARLES ☘

*"You are unconvincing; it is my experience that criminals are seldom honest."*

Arles and his men are dressed for traveling, in wide-brimmed, starched black hats and thick, brown cloaks. They have bottle-green knee boots, dark gray breeches and umber shirts. Arles carries a rapier of blue steel; an etched rose and thorn ribbon decorates its blade. Its hilt and pommel carry a weeping face motif.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Forthright) 12, Rebuff (Obtuse) 12, Attack (Caution) 12, (Cunning) 7, Defense (Dodge) 10, (Vexation) 5, Health 8.

**Resistances:** Indolence 4.

**Possessions:** Arles has a small, smooth, dull black pebble in his jacket pocket. This is a shadow-stone, a magical artifact that allows its user to blend into his own shadow. It works during daylight, for one hour in every four, activated by placing it under his heel, inside his boot.

Characters can spot the incongruous shadow on a Perception success. Attacks on the shadow injure its owner.

*Possession Point cost 4*

16. Arles is not a good judge of female beauty, or perhaps his knowledge of their characters has blinded him to their physical attributes.

### The Scarlet Cockade

This infamous all-woman gang has taken up residence in the Bird-Carved House, a four-story building halfway up the hill. They have recently married its owner, Sermillon. He is a petty wizard with prurient tastes and a lively curiosity about the uses of vermin. Indeed, his main research interest is insect and rodent hybridization. When the Scarlet Cockade are not distracting him in the bedroom, they keep themselves safe from divorce by performing fieldwork for him.

Fieldwork has two elements. First is vermin hunting, which sends the gang-members working through cesspools and waste heaps looking for rats, roaches and worms. Second is experimentation, where Cockaders release Sermillon's creations and surreptitiously take notes of their effects.

When not about their husband's business, the Cockaders do their best to swagger through Efred, whilst avoiding the Provosts. They resent their present circumstances, and are looking for a talented forger, who would be willing to re-draft Sermillon's will in their favor. Once this is done, they would also like to procure the wizard's death.

The women wear the dresses their husband designed for them:<sup>17</sup> off the shoulder, low in front and back, hobble-tight all over and laced up the left side. As Sermillon is somewhat short-sighted, he insists that his wives wear a different color of the rainbow each, to assist identification. The Scarlet Cockade does not follow his scheme with any diligence, but he thinks that they dress in red, orange yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet, in the same order as their names (see sidebar p14). Once they dressed alike in black bicornes, green breeches, heavily embroidered jackets and blouses, with black leather knee boots and belts, but the gang's own clothes became threadbare and stained during their escape from the Chaing Estuary. Now, all that remain are bicornes, with the cockade on the right side. They retain their rapiers and daggers and exert themselves to acquire more suitable clothes whenever they go out.

When doing fieldwork about the town, they steal drying laundry, or strip sleeping vagrants to stuff their specimen sacks with clothes. Their current off-duty wardrobe is a mixture of skirts, breeches, pantaloons, shirts, jackets and vests from a dozen different cultures, all taken in, slashed and puffed by Farletta. The gang's bicorne seldom tops the ensemble, instead, the women wear their cockade on a fillet cut from the same material as their jackets or blouses.

If the PCs are working for Arles, and feel that they will not be able to abduct the Scarlet Cockade themselves, then there are obvious stratagems:

- ☘ If they observe the women committing crimes, they can report them to the Provost-Marshal's office.
- ☘ If the PCs' prey attempts to hire them to murder Sermillon, they can attempt to persuade him to divorce his wives, which will render them destitute.

Needless to say, the Scarlet Cockade will take any attempts to interfere with their business very badly indeed.

### The Bird-Carved House

For some reason, the songbirds that live in this building's eaves peck portraits of themselves into its woodwork and masonry. Should the PCs investigate, they will find that Sermillon has placed a small, enchanted mirror

17. In all candor, this is usually a mistake.

#### ☘ SERMILLON ☘

*"I confess that my work has suffered since my nuptials. But they are such charming girls."*

Sermillon is thin, bony and hairy. His food-streaked tan beard straggles to his waist and he wears his long tow-like hair piled on his scalp, held in place by a pelgrane-headed pin.

His creatures are usually shrew-bodied, with an insect's head and mandibles, although the wizard is rather fond of his giant roaches with mouse head and shoulders, and is particularly proud of the latest product, the front half of a rat at either end of a violet corpse worm.

Regrettably, the practical results are discouraging; instead of embodying many-legged death, his hybrids, when released, attempt to curl up and sleep on the nearest heat source, whether a creature or a fire.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Obfuscatory) 8, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 8, Attack (Caution) 5, Defense (Parry) 5, Health 3, Magic (Studious) 6, Pedantry 8, Physician 8, Wealth 2.

**Resistances:** Indolence 4.

**Spells:** Behemoth's Bounty, the Liberation of Warp, Lugwiler's Dismal Itch, Spell of the Slow Hour.



among the nests. Anyone who looks at it, and who does not achieve a Wherewithal success with a bonus of 2, will spend the next day trying to incise a portrait of himself into the nearest unmarked surface. The wizard likes the way the little birds attend to his house and will make serious efforts to recover his mirror, should anyone steal it.

The mirror is worth 6 Possession Points.

### Ennui in the Temple

Some Revered Ancestors decide that they would like to see the lower town for themselves, and so arrange with Kaldone for suitable escorts to take them out for the night. The priest has the PCs sent to him and asks them to don the relevant masks. If they do not do so willingly, then he has provosts pinion them, and applies the bronze faces to them. Being sticky on the inside, the masks adhere to the PCs faces readily. Unfortunately, they interfere severely with speech, and so impose a penalty of 2 on Charming and Eloquent and of 1 on all the other Persuasion styles save Intimidating, which instead gains a bonus of 1.

The masks then ask the PCs to behave as they normally would. They are bored with the temple and want to see how the little people live. Depending on the GM's whim and the needs of the story, the night out with the Ancestors can be odd, depraved, embarrassing, or even constructive. An obvious advantage is that, if the PCs take the time to get to know the Masks, the ancestors will not nominate them as Lords or Priests.

The masks should not overmatch their wearers; but GMs should allow the masked PCs to make free with cantraps, curses, and blessings and perhaps should give the former Priests a simple spell or two.

### APPENDIX: SECONDARY STYLES IN EFRED.

*It is a sign of quality to work seldom, if at all. Only the Lord really manages this, although the huge number of skilled, eager-to-please exiles certainly make leisure time very pleasant. Most of the people, native and fugitive alike, have two different personae, one for work and one for play. Usually, the inhabitants work persona is Charming and Pure-Hearted, while on their own time, Efred's people are far less agreeable. PCs could, with the GM's permission, develop secondary Persuasion and Rebuff styles to represent this personality split.*

### \* THE SCARLET COCKADE \*

*"You will grasp the essentials of robbery soon enough."*

Also known as the Seven Wives, The Scarlet Cockade is a seven-strong gang of women with similar abilities:

**Ratings:** Persuade (Intimidating) 8, (Charming) 3, Rebuff (Penetrating) 8, (Obtuse) 3, Attack (Speed) 10, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 10, Health 6, Concealment 6, Gambling 4, Living Rough 4, Stealth 6.

*The gang members are Charming and Obtuse around Sermillon, as he prefers his women sweet and clueless.*

**Resistances:** None.

VASMA (blonde, blue eyes, tall, athletic) is the daughter of the Pandrex, Judicial Vivisector of Memex Farda. She learned some of his trade (Physician 2, Wherewithal 2).

CALENE (red hair, green eyes, mid-height, voluptuous) was the apprentice factor to the Sea-Shippers' Combination (Seduction 4).

NONYIA (dark brown hair, amber eyes, statuesque) spent her time gossiping (Scuttlebutt 4).

FARLETTA (black hair and eyes, statuesque) was once a seamstress (Craftsmanship 4).

BESHNA (mid-brown hair, green eyes, petite) stole from the onlookers at public executions (Quick Fingers 4).

DELUNE (silver-blonde, gray eyes, tall and slim) grew up alone in the Hall of the Obscure and studied its murals to pass the time (Pedantry 4).

ASMAIS (red hair, gray eyes, mid-height, buxom) is the daughter of a swamp witch. Magic (Devious) 2, she knows Behemoth's Bounty; Brassnose's Twelve-Fold Bounty; and the Illusion of Vile Arthropods. She carries three sheets of vellum that detail their formulae rolled up in her sword-scabbard. PCs will notice its unusual thickness on a Perception success).



# ❖ Mermelants Unite! ❖

*Thomas Russell*

*A Cugel-Level Adventure in Taxonomy*

## *Scene 1: On the Road Again*

*or*

*“Far too many seek our company here, we should move on.”*

In all likelihood, this adventure will begin almost as soon as you reach the typical conclusion of your last adventure. Your PCs are hastily fleeing town with an angry crowd hot on their heels...

The PCs will be eager to avoid the wrath of the mob and although they do have a good head start, any other means to increase the distance between them and the town they have just vacated will be eagerly investigated. As the road rounds a corner, the PCs will come upon a man riding a mermelant and playing a jaunty tune upon some bizarre stringed instrument. Behind him is a string of mermelants who are following the rider in a neat line although there is no rope or lead connecting them. Each mermelant wears an ornate saddle that includes a large parasol that casts shade on the beast and any potential rider. Pause for a moment and let the scene sink in – and then call for an Indolence roll. If any PC mentions the idea of obtaining the animals to use as mounts before you call for the check, have them make the Indolence roll at a penalty of 1. Those PCs who fail their Indolence rolls will immediately desire to have a mermelant to ride on. Those PCs who succeed should be gently reminded that an angry mob is coming after them, and that if they could obtain a mount somehow, their chances of escaping are virtually assured. Some PCs will point out that mermelants are notoriously unruly and difficult to control. You can easily counter this by pointing out that the rider appears to be having no difficulty in controlling his beasts. His team of animals follows obediently. In any event, all or most of the PCs should be eager to talk to the rider and make inquiries about the mounts. The rider will cheerfully stop if hailed, although he will not cease playing his instrument until he has carefully tied up all of his animals. As soon as he stops playing, the mermelants all sit or lie on the ground and begin grumbling about their ignoble conditions.

The rider introduces himself as Viront Satelmorg, a wandering merchant and trader who is currently dealing in fine mermelants. If asked about the instrument he carries, he will explain that it is a magical multi-stringed molan. The molan has the power to charm mermelants within earshot and they become docile and will willingly obey a rider or follow whoever is playing it. Quick to judge the PCs interest in obtaining mounts, Viront will start haggling with the players on a deal for the animals. All rolls against Viront will be at a levy of 1 because the PCs are under some stress to conclude the deal quickly or risk having their pursuers catch them (PCs may check their Wherewithal to remove this levy). Wise GMs should take this opportunity to relieve the PCs of any cash or valuables the PCs may have acquired in the recent past. If they try to buy the molan from Viront, a whole



*The well-played molan is more characteristic of the court than the road.*

new round of bargaining will begin. Viront will be very reluctant to part with the item that makes his job so easy. Still, he can be persuaded to part with it, but it should cost the PCs dearly. The negotiations proceed, the PCs should wind up with at least one mermelant for each PC to ride. Viront will go to his personal mount and sweet talk it into coming along with him. He does this even if he keeps the molan since he does not want the PCs mounts following him instead of them. With calm, constant reassurances, he leads his mermelant down the road towards the town of the PCs last misadventure. With Viront gone, the PCs are free to mount up and ride to freedom. They will, of course, be hampered by the fact that the mermelants absolutely refuse to cooperate with their new “servants” until they have been properly groomed and fed. Playing the molan, if the PCs have it, will produce no change in the mermelant’s attitude (although an Illustrious Success will elicit some breezy praise from the mermelants and that PC will henceforth be referred to as “the bard”). The molan is an intriguing, but ultimately mundane item that was part of Viront’s cunning fraud. Viront can enchant animals but it is the function of a particularly efficacious cantrap he uncovered and not any specialized magical item. The PCs will have to manage as best they can.

☘ VIRONT SATELMORG ☘

*“Of course we could haggle at leisure, I for one am in no real hurry.”*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Eloquent) 11, Rebuff (Penetrating) 7, Attack (Strength) 11, Defense (Parry) 10, Health 6, Magic (Devious) 3, Athletics 2, Driving (Mermelants) 6, Etiquette 9, Living Rough 3, Stewardship 4.

**Resistances:** None



## Scene 2: Getting There is Half the Fun

or

*“I confess that at times I am uncertain who owns whom.”*

The mermelants purchased by the PCs fancy themselves to a royal court with the PCs being mere attendants or functionaries. They will make every attempt to get the PCs to do their bidding (which generally consists of demands for beer) and even when cajoled or forced into service, they will retain a haughty, arrogant air and will somehow attempt to deceive themselves into believing it’s all part of their “Royal Lifestyle”. Although the stats for mermelants are found on p170 of the Dying Earth rulebook, we suggest a slight change. Give the mermelants a Persuade (Eloquent) and a Rebuff (Lawyerly) of 2, so it’s not terribly difficult to persuade them to serve as mounts. However, the mermelants’ Ability Pools refresh after 1 hour of labor as a mount or beast of burden. So there will be constant grumbling, whining and squabbling with the animals. Over the course of a day, the PCs will soon find their own Persuade and Rebuff pools running dangerously low. Should they try to coax another hour’s ride from their truculent mounts, perhaps being left woefully defenseless for an upcoming social encounter or should they pander to the mermelants’ whims, possibly allowing their pursuers time to catch up? The choices will doubtless prove entertaining. Be sure to play up the individual natures of the “royal court” of mermelants. True, their personalities are no deeper than those of the PCs, but try to give each mount a particular quirk, desire, or trait. Tailor each mount to its rider and do your best to provide maximum friction between them. To help you in this regard, we provide the following stable of potential mounts:

- ☘ His Imperial Majesty, Lord Sovereign of the Roads and Trails, Commander of the Four-Footed Watch, Scion of the Sun and Heir Apparent to Its Throne, Balsabubb Gormaple Thoristin the XXXVIII. He insists on being called by his full title at all times and also demands that any humans attending him always keep their eyes shut so as not to be blinded by his unearthly beauty.
- ☘ Queen Mother Jezzaniah Folwipple DuClaire. She insists that humans attending her must sing when they speak and will draw any unfortunate she can into a lengthy discussion regarding her various parasites (although she will not allow humans to remove any of the more visible or accessible ones).
- ☘ Earl of the Crooked Tooth, Neermalund Estingval Doon. He has the personality of a drill sergeant and demands military precision from his “adjutant”.

## ❧ Mermelants Unite! ❧

- ❧ Duchess Folina Meldissant Cordain. A vapid and idiotic creature, she regales her human with florid tales of romance and courtly love and insist that a cloak be spread over every suspicious patch of ground she might be required to cross, lest her delicate feet be injured or soiled.
- ❧ Lord Gavinal Hormikal Bult. If he is to be ridden, the rider must drape himself over the saddle like a sack of grain. He fancies himself a botanist and will try to get humans to bring him any interesting item of flora he spots. This often proves to be flora with an appetite for fauna.
- ❧ Grand Vizier Maloni. He believes himself to be a powerful magician and will take credit for almost any event that befalls the group as evidence of his potent arcane skills. He dictates his (wildly unworkable) magical theories to his ride, who must record them for posterity.

Let the PCs deal with their unruly mounts for a couple of days. The PCs should be able to make good their escape, but they will pay a fairly high price in peace of mind. When just about everyone is fed up, you can move onto the next stage.



### *Scene 3: Welcome to Aldusfeld*

*or*

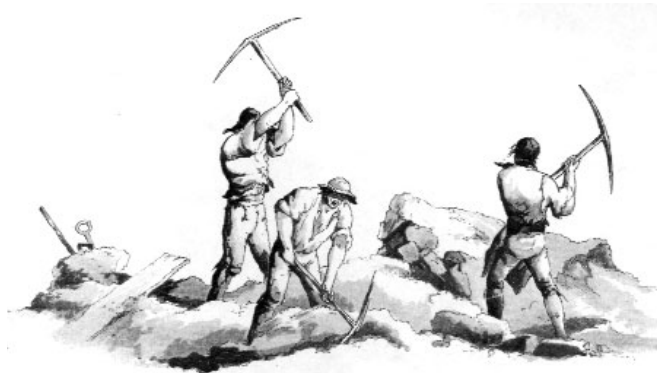
*“This was not the dramatic shift in fortunes for which I hoped.”*

As the party travels, they find themselves menaced by a large party of deodands. The signs are subtle but unmistakable. The rustle of leaves and odd footprint soon gives way to low growls, glowing eyes, and eventually ends in headlong flight. For once, both PCs and mermelants have identical agendas and there will be little grumbling as the PCs ride off at high speed. The PCs will discover that the deodands have planned their assault well. A second group of them has blocked the road and leap out in ambush. The terrified mermelants veer off to the side and go bounding through the woods. After a few minutes of crashing through underbrush, they will crest a hill and find themselves headed down into a small valley with a village at the center. From this distance, the only notable feature of the village is a large tower of some sort at the center of town. Unfortunately, there is little time to sightsee. The horde of deodands breaks from the tree line and the PCs will probably urge their mounts towards the safety of town.

As the PCs ride down into the valley, the tower in the village suddenly flares with a bright blue light, which bursts outward in a circular ripple of energy. The blue wave seeps over the PCs with a blinding flash and they suddenly find their mounts crashing to the ground. Have the PCs make Athletics checks to avoid being injured by the fall. When the PCs get back onto their feet, they survey a scene of devastation. Both the mermelants and the deodands lie sprawled about completely dead. At the lip of the valley, a few living deodands remain, but they are slowly retreating. None of the bodies bear any visible marks that indicate how they died, although the presence of magic must surely be suspected. At this point, several farmers will appear at the edge of some fields and hail the PCs. Their manner will be rustic, but friendly. They will welcome the PCs to the small town of Aldusfeld. If asked about the mysterious blue light that slew their mounts and pursuers, the farmers will claim that it's a magical defense of some sort, but that they know little of such things, save that it protects them from attack. One of the farmers carries along a large backpack, which he now opens up. Inside are the farmer's lunches along with a couple of bottles of wine. The farmers offer to share their midday meal with the PCs. The food is simple, but abundant and the farmers' simple courtesy is hard to resist. Most, if not all, of the PCs will probably sit down and partake. Those who do not will be summarily brought low with a blow to the skull when the drugged wine takes hold of their companions.

The PCs will be brought to with a bucket of cold water splashed on them. They are all lying in a stable of some sort and all wear a thick collar about their necks that tingles with magical energies. One of the farmers, Gil, will explain that the tower does defend the town of Aldusfeld by killing any non-human creature that enters the valley. Unfortunately, this includes pets, livestock, and beasts of burden. Hence, the village desperately needs people to provide the manual labor needed to sustain the town. The villagers have a long and noble tradition of

upholding human rights and slavery is abhorrent to them and so the PCs have been reclassified as mermelants, which poses no uncomfortable ethical dilemmas. The collars the PCs wear are also tied to the magical tower. If they ever move beyond the confines of the valley, the collar will discharge a lethal bolt of energy. Unknown to the villagers, the collars also impose a levy of -1 to any Magic rolls due to the interference it sets up. The PCs will then be herded out with the rest of the town's mermelant population and set to various and unpleasant tasks. They will soon discover that the town does not rely solely on captured visitors. Most of the town's mermelants are natives with only a few outsiders. What is particularly disturbing is how readily the other mermelants have fallen into their role. Their delusions and their desire for beer is every bit as grandiose as the PCs former mounts. Each morning, the mermelants are all herded into a central compound and the "human" population of Aldusfeld will come around and take as many mermelants as they will need for the day. Only the wealthiest citizens possess mermelants of their own and even they will supplement their stable with the public herd. The citizens of Aldusfeld will be almost completely immune to the PCs efforts to persuade them of anything. Their particular form of Rebuff will generally involve a sound thrashing. PCs caught trying to steal something (and be sure to give the PCs a chance to work at one of the wealthier houses), will be given a lashing and forced to spend several days working on particularly unpleasant jobs (dredging out a nearby river, clearing a latrine, or pulling rocks from a field should do nicely). The PCs only real respite comes at sundown. As night approaches, the mermelants are returned to the common corral and then left to their own devices until sunrise. So long as the PCs do not intrude into someone's house or make a general nuisance of themselves, they will be completely ignored by the citizens. Of course, as animals, they will hardly be allowed into even the most disreputable tavern in town. While escaping this predicament is the PCs primary goal, a few simple plot twists can easily be worked in:



*It is true that hard labor alone never killed anybody, but it certainly inspires the laborers to consider ways in which such effort can be minimized.*

- ☘ Naturally, as new members of the herd, various townspeople will be quite eager to see how fast they are. A race is arranged between the PCs and the three fastest mermelants in town. Wealthy citizens own these mermelants and each will try their utmost to ensure that their beast wins. Plying the PCs with beer is the least of the tricks they may try. PCs will find that the owners are much more susceptible to "advice" from mermelants at this time and may be able to influence events so as to attain a more comfortable servitude.
- ☘ A recently captured outsider forced into the mermelant role attempts to organize a resistance among the rest of the herd. He may well be able to enlist the PCs' aid in this matter. His plan is to organize a strike of sorts and simply refuse to work until his demands for freedom are met. It will take much effort on the part of the PCs to persuade the other mermelants (who are used to no other life). Should they succeed in creating a work stoppage, the citizens of Aldusfeld will simply open up several large barrels of beer and offer free servings to the mermelants. The majority of the herd (possibly including some PCs) will rush to glut their bellies on beer. They will grow belligerent as they become drunk, but at this point, the town guard will rush in with truncheons and bludgeon all the truculent animals. The next day, the mermelants will be back at work and the ringleader of the strike will be forced beyond the edge of the valley at spear point. The guard will return from the valley edge with just the collar.
- ☘ Working at the mansion of a citizen, a PC may encounter the most beautiful mermelant they have ever seen. However, this particular mermelant is the prize possession of the owner of the mansion and is jealously guarded. Attempts to seduce this lovely creature will be difficult, but true love (or lust) may yet win through.

- ✿ By virtue of the tower, the citizens of Aldusfeld are effectively vegetarians (mermelant meat is considered far too tough). However, the citizens still eat a more luxurious and varied diet than their beast of burden. Put one or more PCs to the task of hauling in copious amounts of fine food into a storage area, then send them back to the stables for their evening slop. Very likely a nocturnal visit for a midnight snack will be formulated.



### Scene 4: The Tower

or

*“Our situation is dire, the time has come for extreme measures.”*

Eventually, the PCs will begin to long for the joys of the open road. To escape Aldusfeld, however, they will have to remove the collars they wear. There is no visible locking mechanism and talking to the other mermelants will reveal that once attached, the collars only come off when the mermelant wearing it dies. No key to the collar has ever been seen, although it has been rumored that one may exist in the tower. As long as the tower continues to function, the PCs will not be able to leave. The tower is located in the center of town and consists of a squat, stone, three-story base with a more slender two-story spire sitting atop it. There is only one entrance to the tower at ground level and no windows can be seen. The town guard has its quarters in a building across the street from the tower and the town council’s offices are also nearby. Despite the high number of guards and officials present in the area, the tower itself simply has two rather bored-looking guards at the tower’s sole door.

Getting past the guards, especially at night, should not prove too difficult for the PCs. By causing a suitable distraction, it should be easy to draw the guards away from the door, and the PCs can then break into the tower. (As the door is locked, they may break in both literally or figuratively). Inside, the PCs will find that the tower is mostly open space, or it would be, if it were not filled with massive magical engines and machinery that stretch all the way up to the top. A large console, filled with buttons, dials and levers is prominently located off to the player’s right as they come in. The ancient machinery is probably well beyond the knowledge of most of the PCs. Those PCs who have a Magic or Engineering score may make some rolls to see if they can understand any of the equipment’s arcane operations. Those scoring Illustrious Successes will be able to determine how to deactivate the tower’s machines safely. Other Successes mean that the player has not made any changes, good or bad. A Dismal Failure will result in a painful jolt and one Wound will be inflicted on all the PCs in the tower. Other failures will produce odd or disturbing noises, but there will be no practical effect.

PCs without any relevant abilities will simply have to work the console and hope for the best. Have each PC make a roll for every 3 rounds they spend working the console. On an Illustrious Success, they have shut down the tower’s mechanisms. On any other Success, nothing happens. On an Exasperating Failure, the PC receives a magical jolt for 1 Wound. On a Quotidian Failure, all PCs in the tower take 1 Wound. On a Dismal Failure, all mermelants in the village take 1 Wound and the authorities will probably become aware that something is amiss at the tower. PCs who are carried away in the passion of the moment may choose to simply smash random bits of machinery in hopes of bringing the whole thing to a halt. This is the best course of action. Any serious amount of bashing will quickly disrupt the machine and it will cease to function. It will also cause 1 Wound to every mermelant in the village and the authorities will definitely be alerted when the chain-reaction caused by the PCs reckless behavior causes a series of fires and explosions from the tower.

As soon as the tower shuts down, the collars worn by the PCs (and all other mermelants) will snap open and drop off. If the PCs have safely shut down the machine, they will be dismayed to discover that a faulty power

✿ TOWN GUARDS ✿

*“Hey, you!”*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Intimidating) 10, Rebuff (Wary) 6, Attack (Ferocity) 8, Defense (Parry) 8, Health 6, Perception 1, Scuttlebutt 2, Wherewithal 6.

**Resistances:** None

coil continues to glow and spark. The heat from the coil will damage an insulating rod and the sparks will ignite some flammable gas within. Soon a series of muffled explosions and smoking conduits will strongly suggest that the PCs take their leave of Aldusfeld immediately. Some PCs may be concerned that the deodands that originally forced them to Aldusfeld may prevent their escape. Nothing could be further from the truth. As soon as the deodands, hoons, gids, and other assorted beasts see the tower of Aldusfeld come crashing to the ground, they will come pouring down into the valley for a long-delayed meal. The town guard, having grown complacent because of the protection of the tower will find themselves overwhelmed in minutes. With so many tempting targets to feast on, the PCs will have little difficulty in slipping away from the carnage and off into the night and on the high road to adventure once again.



*Fortunately deodands are capable of informing the unwary of their own nature. The above may be a hoon or a gid, depending upon whether one believes the ecclesiarch Gaulph Rabi or the traveller Spontino, or something entirely different if one regards the dispute as indicating a lack of accurate information. As the preferred food of both hoon and gid (and indeed many other creatures) is human flesh, those who encounter something resembling the above would be unwise to linger in hopes of resolving the confusion.*

The preparation of a CULINARY EXTRAVAGANZA for the most discerning of palates is no facile undertaking, and that gastronomic endeavour is made all but inconceivable when you lack the crucial garnish!

When the tantalizing Suppuration of the Hispidulous Slig is infuriatingly absent in your kitchen, you need

☞ **MOGLAMAR'S REMEDIAL COMMIXTURE!** ☞



The subtle and piquant delicacy of  
**MOGLAMAR'S REMEDIAL COMMIXTURE**  
is surpassed only by the prodigious aesthetic of this luminous mauve tincture!



**MOGLAMAR'S REMEDIAL COMMIXTURE**  
the preferred garnish of unsurpassed gourmands everywhere!

Moglamar's can assume no responsibility for unexpected and fulminating eructations that occur as a result of use of the Commixture.



# ❖ Arcana ❖

To succeed in society in the last years of earth it is necessary to appreciate the better things of life.

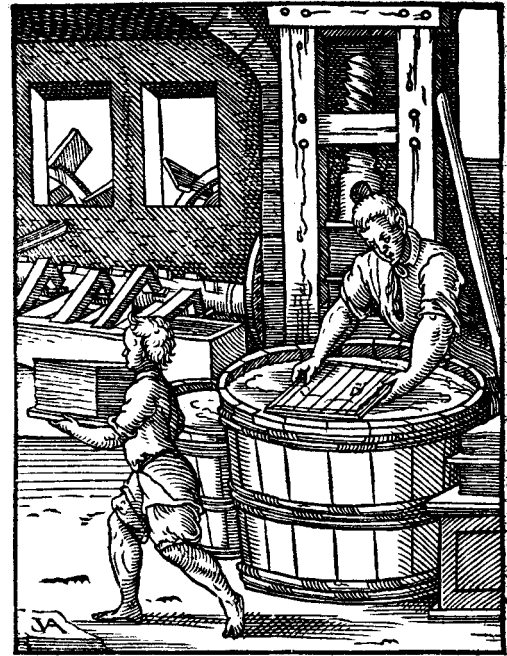
GRASHPOTEL looks deep into the bottom of his wineglass and shares his erudition.

## *Some Observations on the Hall of Ennis in the Gray Dene*

### **Introduction**

Prior to embarking on this dissertation, it will be necessary for the reader to understand the basic nature of deity. Gods form sections of that group known to the Temuchin as Daihak. Broadly speaking, Daihak may be classified into three groups, each of which contains numerous sub-groups. The first of these groups is the Great Gods, primarily Lah and Aea, who, under a multitude of names, represent the expressions of the male and female cardinas respectively. Secondly, there are lesser Gods and Demons, springing into existence through the force of human belief, and maintained in the same way. Generally, “Gods” and “Demons” are treated as two distinct types, but in practice there is no reliable way to tell the two apart, since the God of one sect is often the Demon of another. In the course of this dissertation we deal exclusively with the lesser God initially known as Ennis. For the full understanding of the origins of Ennis, a little historical background is required.

Towards the end of the third epoch of the Seventeenth Aeon, a male child was born to a couple of no particular significance. They were bookbinders by trade, in the market town of Glaidenfrei, in what is now the Land of the Falling Wall. This child, Jendweist by name, displayed magical aptitude at an early age, and, in accordance with the habit of the time, was duly sent to the local wizard for assessment. Thus he became an apprentice, and after many years ascended to the rank of Mage and in due course, of Archmage. Jendweist was learned, quiet, and of a pensive nature, although of considerable power. Thus, when the war of Wizards and Witches came to his land with its attendant disturbance, he at first thought to stand aloof, a tactic that only succeeded in drawing the antagonism of both parties. At last, after much travail, Jendweist fled, not spatially, but temporally, to the later part of the Sixteenth Aeon, before the ascension of the first powerful witches. In the Sixteenth Aeon, Jendweist found himself not merely one among a handful of puissant peers, but alone in his ability, with not a single rival capable of summoning a sandestin within a thousand miles. Inevitably, he became a person of significance, and in due time found himself ruling a kingdom of moderate proportions, which he chose to style Jirilee. Despite his best efforts, he found himself resented by certain ungrateful elements of the populace, and thus was forced to safeguard himself and his vassals. This he did by binding sandestin to artifacts of regal significance. Initially he bound the sandestin Voe to a wand of iron, creating Abvoea, with which he ruled effectively for many years. As Jirilee grew and prospered, Abvoea proved inadequate, and he was obliged to bind a second sandestin, Lentu, to a sword, creating the



*Jendweist is shown collecting paper for his father's business in this engraving from Endber's Hierology of the Xaroon Coast.*



legendary Cartlentua. Meanwhile, in the surrounding lands, and indeed in Jirilee itself, the worship of the God Yasdak had been growing. Yasdak was a jealous God, and his followers allowed neither dissension nor indifference, slaughtering all those who would not convert to the religion. Unfortunately, so fragmented was the region that no effective opposition could be mustered, and the Yasdak jihad grew until only the strongest of independent kingdoms remained in defiance, Jirilee among them. For years, Jirilee withstood the Yasdak onslaught, but the drug-induced fanaticism of the Yasdakites gradually wore the defenders down, not to mention sheer weight of numbers. At last the kingdom collapsed, Jendweist dying in the final onslaught on his castle, to leave a single army in the field, commanded by the hero Ghilandir, who wielded Cartlentua. Before long, Ghilandir too succumbed to the Yasdak hoards, fighting a last battle with his back to a lake. On the eve of this battle, two important events occurred. Firstly, in an effort to rally his troops, Ghilandir declared Jendweist a God. Given that at the time of his death Jendweist had been several thousand years old and the most powerful individual perhaps in the world, this was readily believed. Secondly, Ghilandir had rafts built on which his female followers escaped, along with a handful of warriors.

For centuries the worshippers of Yasdak held sway, the priesthood growing ever more powerful and ever more detached from the commonality, with the worship of Jendweist a diminutive and hidden cult confined to a few families among the peasantry. Yet their belief was strong, and thus the ghost of the dead Jendweist became eminent in Gray Dene, growing slowly in power. Within a matter of some three hundred years, Jendweist, or rather his spirit, had become a minor God.



*Part of a frieze depicting the fall of Jirilee from the Temple of Old Ennis in Romarth.*

### **The Sixteenth Aeon: Birth and Growth**

Thus came into being the Feast Hall of Ennis, a great hall of stone, with a table at the centre, perpetually extending itself. At the head of the table sits Jendweist, with Ghilandir at his right-hand side and his faithful worshippers beyond, forever carousing. There are great haunches of meat, huge pies, platters of vegetables and fruits, all to be washed down with wines, ales and mead, in inexhaustible supply. Sylphs provide service, both gustatory and erotic. It is important to note the nature of the Domain created around the God Jendweist, or Ennis, as his peasant worshippers called him. When alive, Jendweist was of a gentle, scholarly nature, if regal and possessed of considerable magnificence. Yet his Domain in Gray Dene has more of the character of his subsequent worshippers, primarily the vigorous, dynamic Ghilandir. Thus, rather than a garden paradise or ethereal palace, the Domain of Ennis is a feast hall, full of bold, roistering warriors and sturdy, rebellious peasants. The atmosphere is patriarchal, masculine, often coarse and not infrequently lewd. Not surprisingly therefore, Ennis himself, along with those few scholars who survived the fall of Jirilee and had the sense to accept their ruler's ascension to deity, feel themselves somewhat out of place in their own Domain.

Thus and so, the Feast Hall became established, and as is the way of the Gray Dene, the Feast Hall expanded to accommodate new worshippers as they died, thus the spatial dimensions of the Hall are analogous to time.

In due course, High Yasdak withered and fell, largely as a result of a proclamation that virgins alone could ascend to the Yasdak heaven. As the only organized group among a multitude of downtrodden peasantry, the



*The Feast Hall of Ennis*

Ennisites successfully took over, establishing the Ahja-Khail Empire. This persisted for many years, and the Feast Hall once more began to fill with warriors and noblemen, sages and wizards. Initially the worship of Ennis was restricted to the imperial family and their close associates, until following a complex series of events, huge statues of the God appeared in the great cities of Trojik and Plouvundiel. Thereafter, the worship of Ennis became general and the feast hall grew apace, now filling with all manner of men. The Ahja-Khail Empire fell in its turn, as Empires will, the victim of the arch-witch Phaetis, whose Gynarchic Paradise replaced it. It should be noted here, that Ennism is an exclusively male religion<sup>1</sup>, and that the women of the Ahja-Khail Empire tended to worship Aea, the Earth-Mother. Subsequently Phaetis, after she had handed her earthly mantle to her successor, Llorio, herself become a Goddess. This ascension is generally considered to mark the juncture between the Sixteenth and Seventeenth aeons.

#### **The Seventeenth Aeon: Schism**

The end of the Sixteenth Aeon point marks the first schisms of the Ennisite religion. In Phaetis' Gynarchic Paradise, the majority of men were reduced to a degraded state, little better than beasts, and incapable of religious belief. Only in remote areas of the once great Empire did the worship of Ennis continue. Over the ensuing centuries, each of these enclaves, to a total of fourteen, developed its

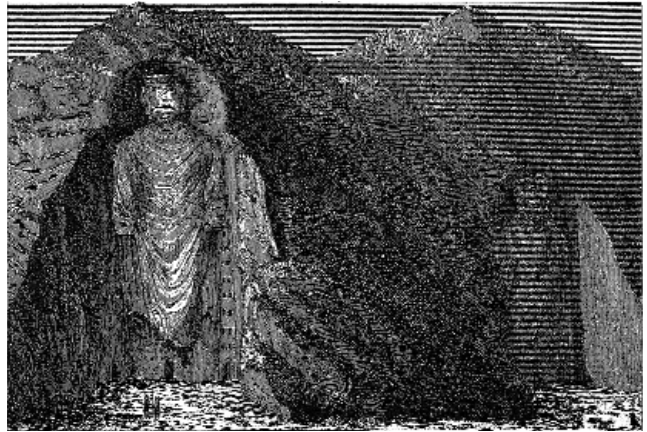
own subtleties of dogma and ritual. In Gray Dene, this process is reflected in a branching of the hall and table, with divisions and re-divisions, until fourteen halls ran parallel. Five of these end in blank walls, just as five of the sects died out for one reason or another. Three merge again, reflecting the unification of the three southernmost cults immediately after the ascension of Phaetis to her personal heaven. Thus, during the wild and undisciplined times of the first epoch of the Seventeenth Aeon, we have two primary religions in what we shall term for convenience the Land of the Falling Wall, although at the time the wall was not to be built for over two aeons. These are the now fragmented Ennisite religion, which also relates to Lah and is exclusively male, and an exclusively female religion focused on Aea as Earth Mother, but also on Phaetis, now declared Aea's daughter. (She was the daughter of a shoemaker from Trojik and his somewhat volatile wife, although her priestesses will assure you that this is purely conceptual.<sup>2</sup>) As the Seventeenth Aeon progressed, so the tension between male and female factions grew, finally erupting into the war of Wizards and Witches, a conflict not resolved until the triumph of Calanctus, many epochs later. Thus, we have what must not only be the climactic irony of Jendweist's existence, but also one of humanity's most poignant tragedies. In fleeing the war, Jendweist not only failed to avoid it, but also became its instigator. As a lesser irony, it should be noticed that as a boy in Glaidenfrei, the young Jendweist was not only worshipping at his own altar each feast day, but also being chided by the local priests for failing to perform proper homage to the God Eweis.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, "Jendweist"

1. Given that those who carried the faith in its first years were predominantly women this is surprising and students wishing to study the matter further are recommended to consult Vasraivin & Ivdol, *Godhead Revealed and the Nature of Motherhood*.

2. This they say with a straight face, and woe betide the questioner who does not seem convinced.

3. The name has evolved over the aeons, Ennis is merely the commonest variant.

translates to “Grape pip of Eweis”, so he was effectively named after himself as well. With the triumph of Llorio and her witches, the Second Gynarchic Paradise was established, and great were the woes of men. All Gods were declared Demons, and their worship banned. This resulted in the further fragmentation of the Ennisite religion, with numerous schisms. Again, in Gray Dene this is marked by the splitting of the hall, to a maze of parallel passages, most of which come to dead ends, a few of which remerge. There is also a new phenomena. A proportion of the Ennisite sects accepted their enforced status as diabolic cults. In these cases, in Gray Dene, the branches of the Feast Hall end in tremendous shafts, each descending to a Demon Realm ruled by a demonic scion of Ennis . Thus, by the closing epoch of the Seventeenth Aeon, the Feast Hall of Ennis has become a vast and mazelike array of passages, shafts and dead ends.



*Figures of Lab carved into the cliffs of the Maurenron range along the River Isk east of Romarth.*

#### **The Eighteenth to Twentieth Aeons: Decline**

With the triumph of Calactus over Llorio and the banishment of the witches, worship of Ennis once more became open. Across the Land of the Falling Wall, something over a hundred Ennisite Temples were in existence, each the premises of a distinct cult, many of which were unaware that they worshipped the same God as the others. A substantial number of diabolic cults related to Ennis also persisted. By now, the religion had lost its dynamism. Many cults faded away as members deserted to newer and more enticing religions. Others effectively destroyed themselves, by banning new membership, or imposing impossible demands for entry to the Feast Hall. Thus, as the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Aeons progressed, passage after passage in Gray Dene reaches a dead end. Their structure is characteristic, each with a morose cluster of ghosts seated around the end of the table, sipping at their tankards and grumbling over faded glories. In very few cases, branches remerge. It should be noted here that as each sect considers itself the one true path, so the ghosts in each branch of the Feast Hall consider themselves the only true Ennisites. Although each ghost has an allotted place, movement in the Feast Hall is not restricted, and thus argument, rancor, ghostly brawls and raids on the passages of rival sects are frequent. Given the boisterous and somewhat rough nature of many of the early worshippers, it is also common practice to drop beer kegs, whole roast oxen and other suitable missiles down the shafts to the demon realms.<sup>4</sup> By the late Twentieth Aeon, only the most persistent of sects survived, to a total of seven.

#### **Twenty-first Aeon: Modern Cults**

Today, as the sun fades, five branches of the Feast Hall of Ennis persist. Few are aware of each other's existence, and none are aware that they worship the same God. A further two sects died out recently and are worthy of mention.

- ✿ The largest of the Ennisite cults is that worshipping him in the aspect of Wiulio. This is the primary religion across the southernmost area of the Land of the Falling Wall, and also Ombalique. Wiulio is seen as patriarch and protector, typical manifestations of the power of



*Tablet depicting Wiulio/Jendweist sheltering an incarnation of the City of Gundar.*

4. It is uncertain whether these missiles are regarded as an insult or a friendly gesture from fellow worshippers of the God in his different aspects. It is noted that Grashpotel does not mention entering these demon realms in person.

Ennis. An interesting feature of this sect is in use of the Trigrammatic Sign as a sacred symbol. While varying somewhat in detail, this is essentially a representation of the rune at the hilt of the blade of Cartlentua, preserved across the aeons.

- ✿ Second in size is the tribal religion of the ferocious Shell Fetish nomads of the Great Central Steppe. These fearsome but primitive warriors ultimately derive from a group of Ennisites expelled from the city of Qual-Arien in the Nineteenth Aeon. They were a sub-sect that defied an edict banning the consumption of goose for all but the priesthood. Qual-Arien is gone, the main sect gone, but the sub-sect survives, with the Shell Fetishes worshipping Ut-Eweis as their sole God.
- ✿ Much smaller is the cult of E in Forrell's Port on the Sousanese Coast. This is a relict of what was once the primary Ennisite sect in what is now Almery, and has now died to a handful of worshippers centered on a small temple hidden somewhere in that somewhat confusing city. Of great interest is the Portal, a direct entrance to the cult's branch of the Feast Hall in Gray Dene, which mortals are permitted, even encouraged, to use in return for a donation to temple funds.
- ✿ Smaller still is that diabolic sect using the Ring of Urit in Kaiin's Old Quarter. This is an ancient cult indeed, dating directly back to the tenth epoch of the Seventeenth Aeon, although the current practitioners are a poor lot, barely capable of getting themselves together for the monthly human sacrifice.
- ✿ Smallest of all is that of the Temple of Old Ennis in Romarth. This is a curious case, as it was founded by the Arch-mage Moerdrake at the close of the Twentieth Aeon. Moerdrake had traveled back in time to the Sixteenth Aeon, and became embroiled in the fall of Jirilee, returning with a firm belief in the God Ennis. In Romarth he established his cult, which has no worshippers and a single immortal priest. In Gray Dene, this is represented by a small annex to the Feast Hall, no more than a few hundred paces from the head of the table. Like the temple of the cult of E, the Romarth temple has a portal into the Feast Hall, but the current priest, the Mage Eifas, will not allow it to be used for casual purposes.
- ✿ In the city of Ferghaz an Ennisite cult related to that in Forrell's Port existed until the final abandonment of the city. There was a temple, and also a Portal, but these are long abandoned, the stones scattered or buried. Those entering the Portal in Forrell's Port may walk along the passage in Gray Dene and take the first branch to the left, whereupon they will presently arrive at the dead end representing the demise of the Ferghaz Cult. Here, the Portal exists, and those who wish may use it, finding themselves in a darkened underground chamber from which there is no exit.

☒ **INTEREST PETITIONED!** ☒

The Knotted Temple Elucidator for Disciple Exemplification issues a challenge to the discerning dabbler in Thaumaturgy.

It is considered necessary to return to animation a TAMBER-TIPPED WICK WORKER. This relic dates back to the 16th Aeon. The perfumed thrumber threads in the chest area are degraded and worn to nubs. The support member appendages are rotten worm-ridden husks in need of immediate attention. The red rotor "face" appears in good condition, yet screams when touched with instruments.

The task will inevitably prove to be an interesting one suitable for only the most efficient and insightful. The chosen candidate will work in comfort in our well equipped workshop using the original instruments as validated by the primary maker.

To signal your interest in such a challenging engagement (indeed an intellectual adventure) please tender your 5 terce deposit. When you achieve the successfully re-animation of the Wick Worker, the deposit is refunded immediately and in full. At that point we will also provide not only a certificate of accomplishment and gratification, but also letters of recommendation. Please be present at the Prince of Kaiin Inn at noon tomorrow where your credentials can be scrutinised.

❧ In old Carchasel there is an abandoned temple belonging to a forgotten Ennisite Cult. In a deep moss overgrown chamber beneath tumbled blocks of stone is a Portal, which may be used with impunity by those able to overcome the erbs that use the chamber as a residence.

### Conclusion

Thus we have a picture of the Feast Hall of Ennis, a structure not atypical of Gray Dene. I personally have spent much time there, as the personal guest of Ennis /Jendweist himself. The investigation of the passages is fascinating, and also discussion with the ghosts.

Across the aeons, many Mages have worshipped Ennis, and there is much to be learned, especially as ghosts tend to be far freer with information than the living. I recommend it to the scholar.



*Purportedly the entrance to the abandoned temple, although the buildings shown bear no resemblance to Carchasel today. From Endber's Hierology of the Xardoon Coast.*



NOTE TO GMS: Grashpotel will provide a copy of his dissertation free of charge to any who present themselves at the Scholasticarium in a suitably unctuous manner. As he implies, it is quite easy to get into the Feast Hall of Ennis, and once there, you may wander as you please. There is much to be gained in the way of knowledge, which may be dispensed at the GM's discretion, from spells to the whereabouts of hoards of treasure. All PCs need to do is to persuade a suitable ghost to part with the information, although naturally they must know what questions to ask. There are drawbacks. Most importantly, anybody accepting food or drink from a ghost becomes trapped in Gray Dene. Ennis alone can return them, and must be persuaded to do so. Ghosts tend to try and catch visitors out, if only to break the monotony. Some four billion people have worshipped Ennis, each occupying three feet of table space, face to face. Allowing for the extensive branching of the passages, it is therefore some 120,000 miles from either of the easily accessible portals to the throne of Ennis. This has to be walked. PCs may exit from the temple in Romarth, receiving only a lecture on manners from Eifas. It is easy to travel toward Ennis, but anybody attempting to go the other way will rapidly become lost. Most of the Feast Hall is in a state of continuous mayhem. Possession of the dissertation adds 2 to a PCs' Pedantry pool and their Magic rating. Unfortunately, Grashpotel's theories on the nature of Godhead are not universally accepted among his colleagues. Any PC found with the dissertation, or quoting from it, is likely to be ridiculed, especially by Perrin, who regards the whole thing as a figment of Grashpotel's imagination. Owners of the dissertation must roll when attempting to Persuade anybody with a Magic rating above 10. On a Dismal Failure they then face a levy of 1 in the discussion. On an Illustrious Success they gain a boon of 1. Otherwise there is no change. If Grashpotel's theories cause a degree of scholarly dissension among his colleagues, the same is not true of priests. His ideas represent gross heresy to all religious groups, in one way or another. Most cults will consider any PC in possession of the dissertation a prime candidate for burning, disemboweling or whatever hideous death happens to be in vogue.

# ✿ The City of Lumarth ✿

*Ian Thomson*<sup>1</sup>

“I give up this money not to please you but to punish myself for trying to improve a group of primitive peasants.”

## *Common Knowledge*

Perhaps garnered at Inns as travelers approach the city:

- ✿ The City of Lumarth was once vast. The ruins evident for many leagues verify this, as do rutted stone roadways extending far beyond its current bounds.
- ✿ The citizens are known as the ‘Kind Folk’, due to their observance of elaborate social niceties under the Doctrine of Absolute Altruism.
- ✿ The Priests of the College of Coramese Thurists administer the precepts and refinements of the Doctrine with impressive zeal.
- ✿ Lumarth’s most renowned features are five domed temples, each of which is dedicated to a demon. However, the people are not demon-worshippers, and the admirable Coramese Thurists continue to educate all five demons in the ways of Absolute Altruism, convinced of the inevitability of their eventual redemption.
- ✿ Lumarth hosts a weekly market and is situated at a junction of the only major trade routes in this region. Its people and Priests are used to the ways of outsiders and treat minor infractions of their laws with commendable tolerance.<sup>2</sup> Visitors have nothing to fear, provided they behave with moderate decorum within the city limits.



## *Scuttlebutt*

Characters able to delve deeper may uncover a few more snippets of interest:

- ✿ The exertions required by Lumarth’s citizens to maintain such constantly high standards of moral behavior occasionally lead to unseemly drunkenness or crazed anti-social outbursts. Fortunately the Thurists compel only the worst offenders to descend into one of the demon pits on a pilgrimage of religious instruction, although a multitude of other taxing penances await lesser felons.
- ✿ Despite the relative tolerance of the Thurists, any foreigner pronounced guilty of a major offense is a potential educator of demons. Hence they are placed at the head of the line of the demon whose month is current.
- ✿ The ruler of Lumarth is the notoriously humorless Grand Thearch, Chaladet the Great.
- ✿ Chaladet has forbidden the use of magic within the city precincts, as sorcery was too often used in contravention of the Doctrine. Nonetheless, before his edict, many citizens practiced a variety of cantraps and dabbled in small spells, and presumably still have this capability.
- ✿ The common folk are lethargic and pale, due to the rigid laws on their behavior that accompany the Doctrine. They must behave with obsessive rigidity in regard to ritual and social exactitude, or else face being labeled heretics. Repentant heretics are considered highly qualified to visit the demon of the month, to tutor it in proper behavior.<sup>3</sup>

1. An antipodean penman of awesome gusto.

2. Only rarely asking their assistance in educating the demons.

3. Unrepentant heretics are considered unworthy of this honor, and are executed by stoning, outside the city limits.

❧ The task of educating the demons in correct behavior is obviously challenging, since none have yet returned from the task.<sup>4</sup>



### *Cugel's Visit to Lumarth*

Cugel's visit to Lumarth during his southward journey is described in 'Cugel's Saga' (*Tales of the Dying Earth*, Millennium, 2000: pp514–523). During his brief stay, Cugel is declared guilty of the defloration of fifteen of the 'Seventeen Maidens of Symnathis' who are destined to grace Lumarth's Grand Pageant. His role as night caravan guard before their arrival in Lumarth allowed him ample opportunity (indeed the only opportunity during their closely guarded journey) for private access to the maidens, and so his guilt is deemed unquestionable. He is sent to visit the demon Phampoun below its temple, to instruct it in 'kindness, consideration and decency'. Cugel manages to trick Phampoun to the surface, where it becomes disorientated by the evening sunlight, and runs amok, knocking down buildings in its rage. If Cugel's visit has not occurred before your characters' arrival at Lumarth, then ignore the following.

#### **Lumarth Post-Cugel**

During his outburst, Phampoun flattened trees and burst through houses as if they did not exist. This presumably went on throughout the evening until it was dark enough for him to be calmed by his attendant homunculus and returned to his temple. This rampage had three principal results. Firstly, many small buildings were flattened, and some have yet to be rebuilt. Secondly several people were killed and injured. Thirdly, Phampoun's unsociable behavior showed that he was a priority case for education in the Doctrine of Absolute Altruism, and he now receives at least three pilgrims during each month dedicated to his name (rather than the customary single visit). A less obvious fourth result was a stirring of public discontent. The increase in 'pilgrims' has meant an increase in severity of sentencing for those who infringe against the Doctrine. Misdeeds that formerly would have been punished by a month's labor at the stone quarries have been commuted to the presumably terminal attempts to educate Phampoun or one of the other demons. There are those in Lumarth who deem this excessive, and public opinion progresses steadily against the Thurists, who are unable to find enough criminal foreigners to make up the deficit.

### *Arriving in the City*

Whichever direction one arrives from, five domes of shimmering iridescent gloss mark the site of Lumarth from quite some distance. Other great public buildings may also be observed from adequate elevation, but lack the impressive grandeur of the prominent domes. Each primary approach to the city is along a broad avenue of rutted stone, beneath the arching shade of enormous black mimosa trees. As the city gets nearer, the simple fields and woodlands can be seen to conceal acres of tumbled ruins. Even the outermost edges of the surviving city hold many structures of dubious resolution, and many apparently serviceable buildings show no sign of current tenancy. At the city's center, a triumphal arch of obvious antiquity stands crumbling in the path. Its inscriptions and decorations demand dedicated and educated scrutiny before offering any clues about their origin or significance.

### *City Locations*

#### **Districts and Roadways**

As is usual in these final days of the Earth's passing, insufficient diligence is applied to the upkeep of the buildings and thoroughfares. Nonetheless, Lumarth is comparatively elegant, and the central areas are kept free from refuse. Likewise, the more prominent city properties are repaired to an acceptable standard. Within the smaller side alleys and at the civic fringes, preservation efforts do not maintain this high standard. The three

4. There is a school of thought that suggests that the educational process is not merely easy but grants the educator awesome powers such that they never wish to return to Lumarth.

major neighborhoods are Plaza District, Upper Town, and Riverside, and the lesser sectors are Lower Town, Brokenside and Tower Hill.

#### **Wayfarer's Inn**

This most well favored of the city's inns stands at one corner of the main plaza. Prices are somewhat elevated, but the diligence of the service and the quality of both accommodation and food serve to swiftly redeem all misgivings.

*Several lesser establishments, from the favorable Tavern of Blue Wisdom to the grubby River Eel Bar, also exist.*

#### **The Old Palace**

This magnificent edifice runs one entire side of the civic plaza. During ceremonies, and when pronouncing matters of public justice, Chaladet sits resplendently before it on his chair that rests upon a great dais. The Priests of the College of Thurists may also be in attendance, dependent on the import of matters in hand.

#### **Lumarth Docks**

The Isk remains navigable between Gundar to the north and the Tsombol Marsh to the south. River traffic is relatively abundant, serving the outlying towns and villages that are reliant on this great watercourse for their livelihood. The aging docks are kept in reasonable repair, although the prevalent sailing skiffs are somewhat dwarfed by berths originally intended for more majestic craft. Ladders rise to the sturdy stone wharves.



### *Lumarthi Tag-Lines*

*“The Brothers are uniformly energetic, are they not?”*

*“Whilst I grasp only the basic tenets of your belief, and thus cannot assess its merit at depth, does it never strike you as excessively confining?”*

*“The stubborn persistence of the Thurists must at times be intensely vexing.”*

*“Might I suggest that we promptly avail ourselves of that tour of the resplendent Dockside District that we have been postponing for so long.”*

*“The Doctrine seems curiously flexible when ensuring that the demands of the Thurists are met without unseemly delay.”*

*“Whilst ordinarily I would denounce a precipitous flight into unknown darkness as tantamount to lunacy, in this case I must concede to the validity of your proposal.”*

*“Others less virtuous than myself might conjecture that such a situation could be exploited to unprecedented personal advantage.”*

*“Hold fast, all is not as it seems. I can assuredly explain our extreme behavior to your absolute satisfaction.”*





### *Lumarthi Tweaks*

These are Tweaks that may be acquired by those who have lived for at least a year in the city. They can obviously be attempted in other places and situations.

*“The Disparate Customs of our Fair City are as Equitable as they are Unanticipated”*

Persuade (Obfuscatory)

**Situation:** Noted by one in authority whilst contravening one of the lesser tenets of the Doctrine of Absolute Altruism, you apologize expansively to diffuse their antagonism, and avoid being charged with an offense.

**Description:** Your rambling line of convoluted apologies is designed to indicate simultaneously your familiarity with local social customs, your acceptance of the doubtless validity of the reasoning behind their formulation, and the inappropriateness of any formal penalty imposed on one as stupid as oneself.

**Benefit:** Vigilant upholders of the Doctrine are brought to the opinion that you are a confused and well meaning simpleton, rather than a public menace, and let you go with merely a stern caution. This tweak must be invoked the instant that one is subject to official reprimand, and has no value when supporting clearly criminal acts such as vandalism, theft, or grievous bodily harm. It grants +1 to all results other than Dismal Failure.

*“Have a Care, Lest your Behavior be Formally Noted”*

Imposture

**Situation:** You face intimidation, argument, or sluggish responses when making demands of a citizen of Lumarth.

**Description:** You imply with certainty that you carry weighty influence with the Thurists or the Brothers of Benevolence.

**Benefit:** Any success levels in any immediately ensuing Persuasion contest are raised by one, except for a Dismal Failure. This Tweak will never work on a person against whom you have already scored a Dismal Failure in its use, nor against anyone who was witness to an attempt that resulted in such a failure.



*An appeal to the Brothers of Benevolence may carry the day in even the most mundane discussion.*

*“You are Mistaken, and Perhaps Observed a Person with some Slight Resemblance to Myself”*

Athletics

**Situation:** The Thurists and/or Brothers arrive unexpectedly on the scene during a flagrant breach of the Doctrine of Absolute Altruism.

**Description:** Living in a society of sudden and stringent reprisal makes one unusually alert to the arrival of officialdom, and swift to evade its inconveniences. You depart through the nearest window or back entrance (or perhaps propel yourself over a wall or through a serving hatch) at the instant the officials appear on the scene.

**Benefit:** Your Athletics result is raised by 1 whenever it is immediately used to evade a surprise encounter with any of the Coramese Thurists or Brothers of Benevolence who are attempting to apprehend abusers of the Doctrine.



## Concerning Religion

### The Doctrine of Absolute Altruism

#### *General Precepts*

Citizens and visitors are expected to comport themselves courteously and passively on all occasions. Public disputes are prohibited, and even the disciplining of unruly children must take place without irksome cries and entreaties.

#### *Specific Precepts*

No drunkenness, running, shouting or jostling in public places.

No arguing or raised voices to a degree as might intrude on fellow citizens. Uphold the laws of hospitality always, including charging fair price for goods and services and never engaging in theft or fraudulence.

Every citizen must grant suitable obedience and deference to personal and general decrees made by any Priest of the Coramese Thurists, as these persons embody the highest degree of purity attainable within the Doctrine.

### The Grand Pageant of Ultimate Contrasts

Several major settlements across the Dying Earth hold a great annual pageant or festival. This common tradition is held by savants to hearken from the previous aeon, and was once even more widespread. Like many historic activities, its popularity has waned, and yet the grand celebration of wonder and diversity somehow retains a place, even (or perhaps because of) the inconstancy of existence that prevails as the sun slowly dies and the Earth's story draws to a close. Every year, the College of Thurists oversees Lumarth's Grand Pageant. At this time the citizens are allowed an inordinate degree of exuberance in their behavior. There are marvelous entertainments of all kinds from the surrounding regions. The theme is a celebration of the divergent wonders of life and habit still extant on the face of the Dying Earth. The 'Ultimate Contrasts' are a series of contests at which hopeful citizens and eager local villagers present their entries on the hopes that their particular exhibit will capture the attention of the Thurists and win them great reward. The seventeen senior Priests survey these contests and the accompanying festivities, with a benevolent gaze. They later retire to the Palace to subject themselves stringently and energetically to certain hazardous rites that assure the continued prosperity of Lumarth, thus they hope to add strength to the sun in its dying days. Ordinary citizens know little of these rites, other than that at least one involves the seventeen maidens from Symnathis. These maidens later rejoin the festivities in a state of ethereal indifference, possibly induced by certain of the soporific herbal essences imbibed during the preparations for the rites. When it is time for them to leave, each is given a small purse of gems, purely as a ceremonial gesture. No maiden is ever eligible to participate in the rites at any future pageant. Note: The people of Symnathis are noted for their comely aspect, but the precise spiritual connection with the College of Thurists has long since been forgotten.

### The Day of Proposals

The first day of the Pageant begins as one of relative austerity, resembling any regular civic carnival. There are sweetmeat vendors, buskers, dancers, jugglers, and a plethora of gaming stalls, where one may try one's hand at anything, from clouting the burrossa nut from its stand using an irregularly curved stick to guessing the weight of the dowager. Fortune-tellers and curio-



*Serving maids wearing traditional costume as they fetch festival beer for their households.*

sellers promote their services with indefatigable cries. Barkers and criers wander the town, screeching the praises of the various entertainments and exhibitions that will be available over the three days of the Pageant. As evening approaches, Chaladet the Great sits on his throne on the edge of the city plaza and proclaims the Grand Pageant of Ultimate Contrasts officially underway. From every doorway burst citizens in fantastic masks and amazing costumes, dressed as animals, magicians, spirits or indeed any other entity that has taken their fancy. Intoxicating beverages flow much more freely than austere Lumarth sees at any other time of the year, and the Doctrine is all but forgotten as the evening evolves in a lively fashion. The Thurists and the Seventeen Maidens retire to the security of the Palace to engage in altogether more becoming rituals, and the carnival proceeds with fervor.

### The Day of Contrasts

Throughout the morning, the various contestants fine-tune their acts, or prepare their exhibits for presentation. Although the citizens are still relatively jubilant, the fabulous costumes and masks, the unabashed acts of debauchery, are no longer common. The first contests begin in the early afternoon, and share the theme of 'Performance'. Storytellers, musicians, dancers, acrobats, animal acts, and other carnival stunts follow one another on three separate stages of different sizes. Only magic, mutilation, and murder are prohibited to the performers. Almost any other type of activity qualifies, which leads to an astounding array of endeavors. The Thurists tend to favor a performance that is both physically challenging and visually stimulating, although once in a while they will break tradition and select a cleverly humorous theatrical piece, or even a bawdy satire, as the winner. The victorious contestants gain an overstuffed purse of monies to share amongst themselves. The second round begins in the early evening, and these contests are held on the theme of 'Wonders'. A large and sturdy platform is erected at the center of the plaza, and the crowds gather close. Lumarth is not the only city to



*Two festival contestants discuss the possibility of working together for their mutual benefit.*

host such a display and bizarre spectacles are drawn from the furthest and oddest reaches of the Dying Earth, the contestants aiming to prove that their efforts rank amongst the finest of all. The scope of entries is far too great to list, although last year's winner was a colossal intelligent blue slug that was capable of exuding and molding multiple dexterous pseudopods, each of which proved itself singularly adept at a specialist task. The winner of this round of contests (or the owner of the winner, as appropriate) is awarded a bulging bag of gems and valuable trinkets, and is declared the Hero of the Pageant. The final round of contests goes under the theme of 'Propensity'. The doughty citizens engage in all manner of bouts, games, and races, attempting to demonstrate their agility, vigor and robustness. At the culmination of these trials several giant mebbel ants are released into the streets with tightly strapped posterior nodes, and young men and women leap to gain colored rosettes from the flailing antennas of these enraged creatures. Grievous wounding, even to the point of death, is not uncommon. The winner is the one who collects the most rosettes, and this person receives a nominal appointment as city champion, plus a generous weekly stipend for the rest of the year.

### The Day of Sufficiency

Whilst still technically part of the pageant, the 'day of sufficiency' offers little more than a quiet market and lackadaisical attempts at street cleaning. Hopeful bands of itinerant performers caper with forced exuberance, keen to earn sufficient funds to support them on their journey home. Even these folk disappear by the end of

the afternoon, when the Brothers of Benevolence begin to reappear on the streets. At this time the Brothers are often in a surly mood due to indispositions caused by their feats of extravagant indulgence throughout the celebrations.

### The Demons

The five demons are Yaunt, Jastenave, Phampoun, Edelmar and Suul. During the high years of the Great Magics the city fell under the sway of Yasbane the Obviator, who breached openings into five demon-realms and constructed the temples. The citizens rose in revolt when human sacrifices began, and Yasbane was expelled. Unfortunately, there no longer existed any magician with sufficient power to close the demon gateways, and the Thurists who took power were forced to continue a minimal practice of human sacrifice, to prevent the guardian demons from rising into the city to seek their dues. The ingenious Thurists decreed the 'Era of Love' to acceptably codify the human sacrifices that were still required, and to pacify the unruly citizens of Lumarth. The calendar of Lumarth differs little from that of surrounding regions,<sup>5</sup> other than in the fact that each month carries an additional name, that of one of the five demons. A human sacrifice must be presented to each demon at least once during its month. The Thurists prefer to appoint foreign criminals or the most bothersome local troublemakers to this role, rather than common folk. Therefore, despite the unnerving presence of the demons, and their stubborn refusal to become properly educated, the city does not exist under a dominion of terror, but does manifest pronounced social restriction and unequal privilege.<sup>6</sup>

### The Demon Temples

All vary in décor and style, and each month the Thurists' Chief Adjudicator, dressed distinctively in his white gown of purity, attends the appropriate temple. Typically he calms each wrongdoer, clarifying the benevolent nature of the people of Lumarth, and their desire to see the criminal redeemed. Then he explains that the criminal must undergo the three-phase program of penitence. Phase One is acceptance of the validity of the program. Phase Two is to undertake a mission to educate one of the demons in the Doctrine of Absolute Altruism. Phase Three presumes success at Phase Two, and is automatic acceptance into the ranks of the Coramese Thurists. Those who flee the Adjudicator are quickly restrained by Brothers of Benevolence, and begin their mission tightly bound. Phampoun's temple is approached via worn marble steps through an enormous arched portal, into an echoing hall distinguished only by its high dome and the altar at its far side. A side chamber is illuminated by high circular windows and paneled with dark blue wood. When facilitating the redemption of those who have broken the Doctrine's precepts, the Chief Adjudicator conducts his scrutiny of the miscreant in here. When the process has been explained, the Adjudicator need only touch a button to open the central portion of the room's floor onto a spiral chute that leads to Phampoun's chamber.

### *Cugel's Visit with Phampoun*

*As he descended the chute, Cugel experienced a thickening of the air, which in the end burst to allow him to fall into a gloomy chamber, illuminated by a single lamp. Here sat Phampoun on a massive chair, and Cugel tricked the demon's homunculus servant (which was attached to the end of its tongue) into raising the central dais to the temple aboveground. Phampoun was driven temporarily insane when Cugel pulled the covering discs from his eyes, and Cugel made off with two sacks of the demon's gold.*



*Cugel the Clever*

5. Pedants eager to discuss details of calendars used are referred to p23 of *The Kaiin Players Guide*.

6. Since Cugel freed Phampoun, an air of discontent has grown, and muttered imprecations against the Thurists may often be overheard. As yet, no major public action has occurred. The true reason for the greater number of ambassadors sent to visit Phampoun these days is to appease its wrath.

### *People and Organisations of Note*

**CHALADET THE GREAT, GRAND THEARCH OF LUMARTH:** Chaladet is the aged High Priest of the Thurists, but decries all fanciful notions that he rules Lumarth. His role, he asserts, is solely that of a guide to the ways of the Doctrine, although he certainly has no sympathy for felons or pranksters who disrupt its precepts. Early in his tenure, after an unfortunate incident where a cabal of petty sorcerers attempted to overthrow the rule of the Thurists, he decreed that magic could not be practiced within the city limits. These magicians were overcome only with considerable difficulty, and those that survived repented and became engaged as ambassadors to the demons.

**THE COLLEGE OF CORAMESE THURISTS:** All Priests wear gowns of embroidered silks, and sport splendid double-crowned ceremonial headgear, lending them an impressive dignity. Their pale transparent skins, thin high-bridged noses, slender limbs, and pensive gray eyes denote individuals clearly destined for spiritual pursuits. The Priests of the Thurists are of variant racial stock dissimilar to most citizens, being descended from the ruling elite of Yasbane's time. Such social distinctions are no longer even vaguely recalled, having been comprehensively subsumed within the city's religious hierarchy. As well as the Priesthood, the College incorporates the 'Brothers of Benevolence', a cast of acolytes who wear distinctive brown and yellow robes. These sturdy individuals are privileged citizens, chosen for unwavering adherence to the Doctrine, and an ability to compel order on those lamentable occasions that this is necessary. Priests attending situations where they might otherwise find themselves inconvenienced will always be accompanied by a group of the Brothers who are eager to demonstrate their skills in the ways of Benevolence. The Brothers are granted exemption from certain of the Doctrine's tenets, should circumstance require application of their special attributes.



### *Scenario Ideas*

We provide four mere plot hooks, as well as a considerably more detailed scenario, "Caravan to Aktabras" that presents a potentially lucrative commission for Cugel level characters in Lumarth.

#### **Working as a Guard.**

The characters are journeying near Symnathis when they have the opportunity to serve as guards on the caravan escorting the seventeen maidens to Lumarth. Since Cugel's disruption, there are now irregular guard rotations, dire warning of demon dooms, and a system of rewards for divulging the identity of any who threaten the maidens' purity, not to mention numerous cantraps applied to each maiden's personal accommodation. The main cantraps trigger irritatingly strident howls and vibrant pulses of light should the locks on the maiden's booths, or certain of their garments, be interfered with in any fashion. Previously, a single guard was employed, as the route is without notable hazard and the ritually applied "Chaspran's Zone of Agony" also protected the caravan at night. Nonetheless, Cugel revealed a flaw in these precautions, and guards now stand watch in three pairs, operating simultaneously throughout the night. Whilst their stipend has increased, it may be collected only after confirmed delivery of seventeen intact maidens to the Thurists. This encourages a profound vigilance. Despite these additional precautions, events on the Dying Earth can be unexpectedly inconstant, and during this particular trip, simple or complex dangers may threaten the caravan, including the disappearance of a maiden and the necessity of relocating or replacing her. Once the group has arrived at the Pageant, characters may involve themselves in the flamboyant festivities and the wondrous exhibitions that both entertain and amaze.



#### **Enticed into Sedition.**

There are those amongst the citizenry who have newly charged rebellious leanings, and might welcome the arrival of outsiders to aid in their own designs. Newcomers might become involved, either willingly or through the devious plans of others, in anti-doctrinal activities and may then be blamed for the entirety of any noted

sedition. Whilst avoiding the Brothers of Benevolence, and their ‘welcoming committee’, the visitors must somehow prove their innocence to avoid being assigned punishment (possibly including fatal ambassadorial duties). One such rigorous scenario could begin when a certain ‘Tozzio’ of Riverside draws them into conversation at an inn. It is best if the characters have just become suddenly and inconveniently destitute after gambling, theft, duplicity, or overzealous ‘taxation’ by a gang of surly Brothers has taken its toll. They face high charges for accommodation and sustenance, and are unable to make good their debts. Such a situation is regarded most unfavorably by the Innkeeper, and, perhaps more importantly also by the Thurists. The prospect of uniformly unpleasant retribution for non-payment of dues looms large.

Tozzio has noticed their plight, and seems unusually sociable for a Lumarthi, and is more than a little inebriated. Perhaps the laxity of the festival atmosphere has tempted him towards excess? He is fascinated by the visitors’ foreign dress and customs, and lets slip his grievances against the rule of the Thurists and their Doctrine. In particular he bemoans the exceptionally high rate of popular taxation, harsh punishments and the inordinate wealth hoarded by the Thurists, in spite of the city’s need for investment in public amenities other than the restoration of civic facades. Perhaps a solution to their mutual problem of inadequate funds is at hand?

Through a tortuous waffle of obfuscation, Tozzio gradually reveals that he has made deliveries to the Thurists’ Palace throughout the previous year as part of his duties as a drayman’s apprentice. He no longer holds that position, since an altercation with the drayman over some missing sacks of valuable meal left him without employment. Nevertheless, he noted during his tasks that a cunning man with equally dedicated helpers could reach the Palace’s treasury by scaling an ornate iron trellis, clambering across a section of tiled roof, and entering the palace via a skylight. Normally such an endeavor would be foolhardy in the extreme, as the Palace Guard is composed of the more competent Brothers. Yet, during the height of the festival the distractions are many. Indeed the consumption of intoxicants far exceeds the usual restraint encouraged by the Doctrine. Perhaps Tozzio is a genuine fellow, seeing like-minded rascals amongst the characters, or perhaps he is a gifted thief and confidence trickster who intends to leave them to face the wrath of the Thurists. After all, if he draws up a rope and makes good his escape with a small selection of choice valuables, the Thurists may happily vent the bulk of their fury on the obvious felons trapped within the treasure room.



### Working with the Brothers

Lesser penalties for offenders against the Doctrine include assisting the Brothers of Benevolence as they do their rounds. It quickly becomes clear to those sentenced to this duty that the Brothers run a variety of extortion and protection rackets, allowing some major offenders to go unpunished while miscreants of a minor nature might be hounded mercilessly. Offenses such as shouting when set upon by surprise, running across the street, or not sufficiently cleaning the frontage of your property may result in an instant fine, to avoid the bureaucratic costs of formal charges. Temporary Brothers are required to perform all manner of unseemly tasks, from threatening mothers in front of their children through to tracking refugees from justice through the archaic and perilous sewer system. While working under the guidance of Brother Zeit (a truculent and ignorant individual), the characters have to enter the premises of one Solmis Dorinwit, who is accused of late payment of ‘rental assurity’. Dorinwit is a trader in furs who was comparatively

#### ✿ TOZZIO ✿

*“I will take another glass of the white...now what was I saying?”*

He is dressed in a smock of blue brushed velvet, faded and soiled with age and hard wear, belted with a bright yellow cummerbund and he wears black moleskin knickerbockers with leather gaiters. His hat, now disreputable, was once lime green with red piping.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Obfuscatory) 8, Rebuff (Contrary) 8, Attack (Cunning) 6, Defense (Dodge) 8, Health 3, Athletics 2, Driving 3, Quick Fingers 5.

**Resistances:** None

#### ✿ BROTHER ZEIT ✿

*“You seek to take advantage of my good nature: desist.”*

He is a not untypical Brother,

**Ratings:** Persuade (Intimidate) 11, Rebuff (Wary) 7, Attack (Strength) 9, Defense (Parry) 8, Appraisal 2, Athletics 3, Stewardship 2.

**Resistances:** None

successful, and was highly regarded by his fellow citizens. He reputedly walked a line close to the edge of the Doctrine’s major principles. Perhaps as a result of this, he pays out repeatedly due to various claims made by the Brothers, who quote obscure clauses of the Doctrine as their justification. Dorinwit is now almost penniless, but Zeit nevertheless suggest that his place of business needs energetically refurbishing, just in case he has further monies with which he is not yet willing to part. Dorinwit begs the characters for leniency, and recognizing them as foreigners on punishment duty, suggests a compromise. In return for the characters making the ‘refurbishment’ under Dorinwit’s guidance, the trader can alert them to the precise details of how Zeit’s fellow monk, Brother Troke, collects and transports the monthly ‘voluntary donations’ from the traders on the Riverside; these he takes to the Tavern of Blue Wisdom, ready for sharing with his comrades. Armed with this information, it would be a simple matter to waylay Troke with a suitable blunt instrument, and share the spoils amongst much more deserving beneficiaries.

**For Sale**

Ivory pendant on chain of gold with inlay of pure azemurite. Image is that of Sandestin “at play” with nymphette. Details on item upon request, but must attend in person.  
See Bosslem, trader in ivory and other fine items, the River Inn, Azenomei.



**The Survivor**

Maglarab, an aged sorcerer from the original local uprising, has been kept by the demon Edelmar for its entertainment. This tortured survivor at last managed to sneak a note to the surface attached to one of the bats that reside with Edelmar during daylight. (Maglarab recovered writing materials from a pocket in the shredded jacket belonging to one of the more recent ambassadors.) He details the layout of the demon’s lair and the impressive treasures he has been forced to catalogue on its behalf. More importantly, he explains that Edelmar invariably sleeps a full day, beginning no later than six hours after dining with the ‘ambassador’. Understandably, Maglarab, chained securely whenever Edelmar sleeps, pleads for assistance in his escape, offering preferential guidance in collecting the most portable and valuable goods from the demon’s treasures, and making specific mention of a fabled artifact. The drawbacks are that Maglarab does not know how to gain egress (even though he falsely indicates otherwise in his note), and that rescuers may be obliged to flee through a mysterious iron door across an arm of the demon realm, before regaining Lumarth’s decrepit sewer system. (Possibly with an irate Edelmar on their trail.)

✿ MAGLARAB ✿

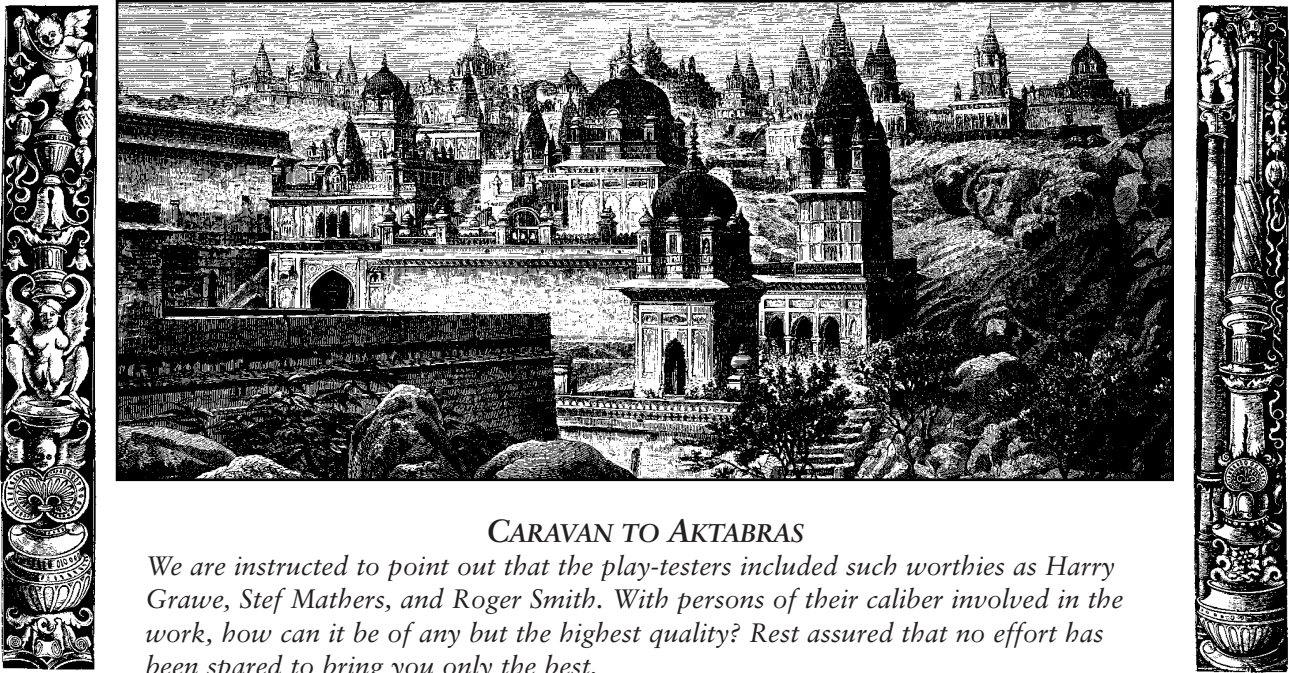
*“I sleep among wealth unimaginable, but would trade it all for a set of sturdy bolt cutters.”*

Maglarab wears the discarded rags of previous ‘ambassadors’. He is old and worn and wants to see sunlight before he dies.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Forthright) 10, Rebuff (Pure-hearted) 8, Attack (Speed) 5, Defense (Dodge) 4, Health 3, Magic (Studios) 23, (He knows all the spells in the Dying Earth rule book, none of which are any use on this Demon) Appraisal 4, Athletics 1, Etiquette 3 (Telling stories to a Demon) 10, Pedantry 18, Wherewithal 10.

**Resistances:** None





### CARAVAN TO AKTABRAS

*We are instructed to point out that the play-testers included such worthies as Harry Grawe, Stef Mathers, and Roger Smith. With persons of their caliber involved in the work, how can it be of any but the highest quality? Rest assured that no effort has been spared to bring you only the best.*

#### Placing the Characters

As mentioned earlier, the Grand Pageant is one of few events causing the hebetudinous denizens of the Dying Earth to venture from the safety of their habitual locales. Whether the characters are enjoying fabled Kaspara Vitatus the City of Monuments, or exploring festive Cuirnif, sampling its culinary delights, word will come to them of the Pageant and its opportunities for personal enrichment.<sup>7</sup>

After a taxing journey, perhaps prompted by unfortunate misunderstandings in one's previous temporary abode, the characters take meager hospitality in the 'Howling Hoon' Tavern at Gralbel hamlet, a day's walk from the city of Lumarth.<sup>8</sup> If the characters are new, each is short on funds and seeking affable employment. A fortnight remains before the Grand Pageant One by one the other patrons retire, but those who must share the common room floor sit close to the fire, making introductions whilst sharing a flagon of passable mead donated by the affable innkeeper. (If the players themselves are new, it is a chance for them to explain how they came to be here after having lived virtuous if sheltered lives in some civilized town or isolated farming community.)

#### Background

On the desolate Saponid Tundra stand the ruins of ancient Aktabras. Once a year the city mysteriously revives, and its residents indulge in vibrant festivities within their magically restored gracious streets and garlanded pavilions. No common Lumarthi are known ever to attend this magic spectacle, as the trip across the desolate tundra is too frightening even to consider. The Thurists deliver both comestible delicacies and wines and spirits to Aktabras by wagon. In return, the Thurists gain beautifully woven items of clothing, ornate rugs, richly decorated wall hangings, and rare antique ornaments and trinkets. These items are claimed to be of unparalleled spiritual importance, and upon their return to Lumarth are carried into the Palace with much ceremony. According to the Thurists, they must be in place at least a full day before the Pageant commences.

The Thurists have said only that the newly acquired goods are arranged in a sacred room within the Temple, as part of an incisive ceremonial display of beneficence and pulchritude that maintains the sun's strength by reflecting the glory of the Earth. Heretical rumors claim that these items are in truth stored within the Palace

7. Hence it is possible to entice your characters into this scenario, even if they are currently miles away from Lumarth and show no interest in visiting.

8. Rates are cheaper here than in Lumarth where prices in the inns rise in anticipation of the Grand Pageant.



only long enough for a suitably wealthy merchant to collect them. The Thurists aggressively refute such tales. They further claim that should this reciprocal tradition ever fail to be performed successfully, then the sun's already ailing fortitude will be critically undermined, and the Earth will come immediately to an end.

### Recruitment

*The Duty of the Felons:* On their approach to the city, an affable local farmer will explain that visitors who wish to do well in Lumarth can do no better than to observe one particular custom. He explains that it is considered good form, on first arriving, to stand within the plaza and bellow, at one's most strident vocal capacity, a tirade of denigration against the five demons whose memory still provokes widespread public condemnation. If the travelers follow this advice,<sup>9</sup> they will be quickly subdued by a patrol of the Brothers of Benevolence, and face punishment for breaking the tenets of the Doctrine of Absolute Altruism. They will quickly be sentenced to redeem themselves by accompanying Dondrek's caravan. In order to ensure compliance, the Thurists ritually taint each person with an indelible demon mark. If a further ritual does not remove this within two weeks, they say, the mark will draw the attention of underworld entities, with assuredly dire consequences. (The mark fades after six days or so, being little more than a clever cantrap.) The Thurists show their altruism by granting the characters a full pardon and half pay if they will faithfully accompany Dondrek to Aktabras and back.

*Signing On:* If the characters are unconvinced by the frolicsome peasant, and thus avoid the charges, Dondrek approaches them at the Wayfarers' Inn. While an unusually generous stipend rewards those who join his caravan, Dondrek will at first offer a lesser sum.<sup>10</sup> His description of the task at hand paints an attractive picture of otherworldly festivities. The cynical may question why, if Aktabras is so wondrous, are others not eagerly standing in line to perform this duty? In response, Dondrek explains that the Lumarthians are not used to travel, and feel ill at ease beyond the city confines. Those familiar with travel are hard to come by, and he claims that the characters fit the requirements perfectly, and that he is desperate for personnel.

*Inveiglement:* Should the characters prove loathe to accompany the expedition on what may be a unnecessarily arduous experience, Dondrek proves a virtuoso of expediency, tempting their avarice and arrogance to the best of his considerable abilities (GMs may increase his skills at will). His confident manner is startlingly persuasive, and his comely and suggestive assistant, Meshali, inspires visions of a journey incorporating ample opportunities for the delights of couching with an enthusiastic associate. (Meshali, in reality Dondrek's conniving daughter, will not be accompanying the expedition, and will 'succumb' to an unspecified malaise shortly before they are due to depart.)

If the characters have opportunity to question locals about the caravan, the Lumarthi know little more than that it is a sacrosanct Thurist tradition. Certain gifts of food and drink are taken to Aktabras, and certain ornamental relics and materials are returned. (The Thurists arrange for certain of the Brothers of Benevolence to adopt disguises and pose as porters, joining the returning caravan at the city limits. Therefore locals genuinely believe that the entire caravan returns safely.) City residents of Lumarth are never part of the caravan's general staff. As far as any of them knows, this is because the tradition demands that only proficient travellers accompany the expedition. In any event, they know only of details through general rumor. The Doctrine of Absolute Altruism insists that certain Thurist rituals, such as this one, are sacrosanct and thus beyond the reach of rude speculations by the insufficiently holy.

Under no circumstances will more than half of any promised payment be handed over before the trip begins. Although Dondrek himself might be persuaded, Thurist Priests, who will never be face to face with the characters, control the purse strings.

9. Should your players follow the advice, it may be time to reassess your relationship with them, and contemplate whether now is the time to sell them your car, some other car picked at random in the street, or even a local bridge.

10. He has no wish to cause comment and arouse undue suspicions by making the opportunity 'too' attractive.



### Taglines

*“Whilst outwardly your words seem to ring true, I suspect that you speak with less than unqualified sagacity.”*

*“Multi-nodular organisms, even ones deep in repose, instill in me more than moderate dismay.”*

*“Your efforts are diverting, I must admit, but perhaps more suited to the entertainment of small children.”*

*“Your dour prognostications begin to grate upon my nerves. Cease and desist.”*

*“I suggest that such a course of action could only be construed as unnecessarily convoluted.”*

*“For myself I have seen enough furze to last me until the sun goes dark.”*

*“The prudence of your suggestion is entirely self-evident”*

*“Your arguments seem to indicate my suitability for the assignment, but my knees pain me and the responsibility should sensibly be given to one of a more robust health.”*

*“I would have responded sooner, but I was beguiled by the magnificence of your hat.”*

*“In all candor, your easy manner and unlikely appearance serve only to reinforce my suspicions.”*



### Dramatis Personæ

In order to balance the talents of these incidental individuals against those of our characters, wise GMs may wish to apply alterations to the following details, by means of an astutely wielded pencil.

#### Dondrek Pharlamat

*“I am convinced that our mission is of the utmost importance towards sanctifying fair Lumarth for the year ahead, and aiding our increasingly morbid solar orb. Thus I pledge my every energy towards success, and trust that you will do likewise.”*

Dondrek is a local merchant, in league with the Thurists. He makes clandestine deals in which the resultant bounty is sold off to traders who remove the evidence to the markets of the south. He is being threatened by the Thurists, and is not completely happy with the situation. This is his first trip, since the previous merchant disappeared mysteriously shortly after the last trip. If questioned, Dondrek falls easily back on religious sanctity to support his reluctance to elaborate. His most prominent apparel consists of light blue pantaloons above dark brown calf-length walking boots, and a gray travel cloak over a plain purple vest. He sports a jaunty wide-brimmed chapeau with a large golden trubob feather.

**Ratings:** Persuasion (Forthright) 10, Rebuff (Penetrating) 10, Attack (Caution: Rapier) 8, Defense (Dodge) 7, Health 6, Appraisal 8, Athletics 3, Craftsmanship 3, Driving 3, Etiquette 4, Gambling 3, Living Rough 2, Pedantry (Mercantile operations) 3, Perception 3, Riding 2, Scuttlebutt 4, Stewardship 6, Wherewithal 3.

**Resistances:** Arrogance 2, Avarice 3, Indolence 4.

### Rarana the Acolyte

*“Some say that a woman’s place is not amongst the Priesthood. I, who traveled widely in my youth and noted many women in the highest of office, deem otherwise. I suffer the most taxing of duties with stoic perseverance. The Priests will one day regret forcing me to travel a fool’s errand with vagabonds and half-wits.”*

Rarana Jupekk is one of the junior Thurist Priests, and has been sent along to safeguard the interests of the College. One of the rare female acolytes, she is eager to prove her worth, knowing that she may eventually be appointed senior acolyte if she can demonstrate herself to be sufficiently ruthless. (Senior Acolyte is the highest position a female may achieve within the College of Thurists.) Rarana declines to sport the artfully embroidered silk gowns normally worn by Thurist priests, and instead wears a dark red traveling robe with a deep hood, which is lined and cuffed with the glossiest erb fur.

**Ratings:** Persuasion (Eloquent) 9, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 7, Attack (Speed: Rapier) 10, Defense (Intuition) 11, Health 5, Athletics 4, Etiquette 3, Pedantry (Theology) 8, Perception 6, Physician 3, Scuttlebutt 2, Stealth 2, Wherewithal 4.

**Resistances:** Avarice 4, Indolence 3, Gourmandism 3, Rakishness 3.



### Doctor Chomosset

*“Greetings, my fellow travelers upon the face of our aged planet. In frank refusal to accept the end of my days in sloth, I wander widely in search of the fascinating and arcane, offering my small skills and large enthusiasm to all worthy endeavors.”*

Dondrek has been bribed by Chomosset to permit the Doctor to join them. The Doctor will meet them outside the city, as if by accident, posing as a simple scholar who grows intrigued to thoroughly examine the mysteries of enchanted Aktabras, and perhaps obtain some trifling magics or curios to add to his collection. He coincidentally carries sufficient travel rations on his person for a trip of around eight or nine days. Chomosset will not reveal his mastery of magic unless essential. He travels inconspicuously in a rusty brown cloak and jerkin, jet-black boots, scarlet knee-breeches, and a silver gray skullcap.

**Ratings:** Persuasion (Charming 14), (Obfuscatory) 10, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 12, Attack (Finesse: Rapier) 10, Defense (Misdirection) 11, Health 7, Magic (Studious) 7, Appraisal 7, Athletics 4, Etiquette 5, Gambling 3, Living Rough 3, Pedantry (Archaeology) 8, Perception 4, Physician 3, Riding 3, Scuttlebutt 2, Seduction 2, Stealth 4, Stewardship 2, Wherewithal 5.

**Resistances:** Arrogance 3, Avarice 2, Gourmandism 4, Indolence 5, Pettifoggery 2.

**Spells:** Charm of Untiring Legs, Charm of Unending Nourishment, Edan’s Thaumaturgic Poultice, Phandaal’s Critique of the Chill.



*Apart from Rarana, Dondrek’s official assistants currently number only three:*

### Pangalam

*“Perchance you glance at these flasks I secure against the saddle of my dryllic. The beverage they contain is as the foulest vinegar, and they are an unfortunate medicinal necessity that I must suffer for the sake of my ailing liver.”*

Pangalam is a drunkard and brawler, who offended the Thurists and Brothers of Benevolence at a recent market. His home is a town far from the city and he has been incarcerated for over two months without anyone inquiring over his whereabouts. He was kept in reasonable conditions, has been offered the generous half pay, and has been told that this trip will clear his criminal record. Unless his flasks are stolen or destroyed, he will be drunk for the entire journey, having spent his entire payment in advance on alcohol of dubious distinction. Pangalam is dressed as a member of the peasantry (as indeed suits his origins), wearing gray trousers, battered brown boots, and a pale green jerkin.

**Ratings:** Persuasion (Glib) 8, Rebuff (Obtuse) 10, Attack (Strength: Cudgel or Fist) 9, Defense (Parry) 8, Health

8, Athletics (sober) 2, (drunk) 5, Craftsmanship 5, Driving 2, Gambling 2, Scuttlebutt 3, Stewardship 2, Wherewithal 2.

**Resistances:** None



### Lesorix

*“You fine fellows seem wise in the ways of the world, and thus unafraid of novel experience. I happen to have with me a set of multi-faceted gaming pieces from the 19th Aeon. I am as unfamiliar as yourselves with the variegations of their disport. Perhaps together we may entertain ourselves around the campfire, and even make small wagers merely to pass the time in further jollity?”*

Lesorix is a rogue from the south, who failed when he tried to swindle various influential citizens of Lumarth in a series of rigged card games. Fortunately for him, the demon of the month had already received its ambassador, and the Caravan to Aktabras had pressing staff requirements. In order to pique his interest further, the Thurists explained that he could choose instead to wait a few more weeks and then go and teach the Doctrine to one of the Demons. Alternately, they offered him half pay for this trip, and described the decadent delights of Aktabras in glowing terms. (See also ‘The Duty of the Felons’ above.) Lesorix has a taste for the gaudy, with tall boots of aquamarine below stout trousers of navy blue cloth. His shirt is of the finest vermilion silk, his topcoat a dull royal red, and his peaked cap an offensive orange.

**Ratings:** Persuasion (Charming) 13, Rebuff (Contrary) 10, Attack (Cunning: Rapier) 11, Defense (Dodge) 12, Health 6, Appraisal 3, Athletics 3, Concealment 4, Etiquette 3, Gambling 7, Imposture 2, Living Rough 3, Perception 4, Quick Fingers 5, Riding 2, Scuttlebutt 2, Seduction 3, Stealth 4, Wherewithal 2.

**Resistances:** Gourmandism 3.



### Seif the Tracker

*“I know the rolls of the Tundra like the hairs on my palm. Follow my statute to the letter and we need fear no danger greater than occasional chirping insects invading our downy bedrolls as we take our repose beneath the slowly spinning stars.”*

Seif is an unusual man, who still plies the trade of hunter and tracker about the Isk and its woodlands. His knowledge of the rural environment is the best, and his value as security for the caravan seems all but sufficient to offset his surly and temperamental attitude. Although he claims familiarity with the Tundra, he has never ventured this far from the Isk. He is in dire need of funds to pay off gambling debts he unwisely allowed the Brothers of Benevolence to accrue against him. (He is known to have no friends or immediate family, and was cheated by the Brothers to put him into this position.) Seif’s clothing gives him away as a hunter of the river valleys. The shaded oranges, browns and blacks, which make one almost invisible amongst the trees and hedges, broadcast Seif’s location upon the Tundra almost as vividly as if he was accompanied by a clamorous troop of minstrels.

**Ratings:** Persuasion (Intimidating) 8, Rebuff (Wary) 7, Attack (Caution: Hunting Knife) 11, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 10, Health 7, Athletics 4, Concealment 5, Craftsmanship 3, Living Rough 4, Perception 6, Stealth 5, Tracking 4, Wherewithal 2.

**Resistances:** Avarice 2, Indolence 3.



### Beast of Burden: the Dryllic

Dryllics are comparatively widespread in this region, as their sturdy nature makes them valuable to the common farmer and rare merchant traveler alike. The beast resembles a long, low ox, but with legs more akin

to a large canine. Normally, dryllics are dark gray, but occasionally come in brown or tan with the occasional albino. Chief amongst the animal's virtues is its omnivorous diet, along with a hardy nature and passive disposition. Its only significant flaw is its pessimistic outlook that it will share with riders and teamsters at every opportunity, as relating its woes and suspicions of gloom in a deep and mournful voice gives it immense satisfaction. It can survive on nourishment gained from almost any type of vegetation, which it pauses to regurgitate and chew with irritating regularity unless forcefully cajoled.

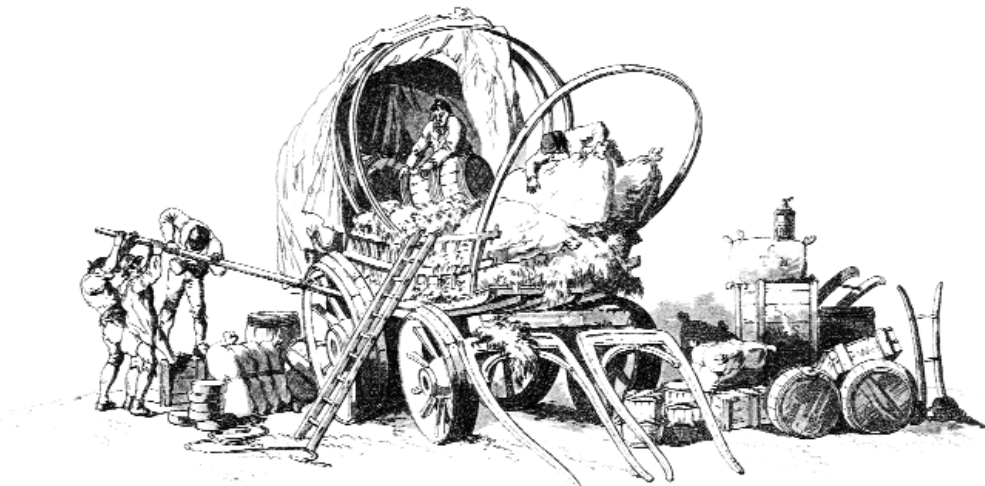
**Ratings:** Persuasion (Intimidation through pessimism) 5, Rebuff (Obfuscatory through unfounded and monotonous predictions of doom) 9, Attack (Strength) 3, Defense (Dodge) 2, Athletics 2, Living Rough (Dryllic) 12, Wherewithal 2.



### *Caravan and Cargo*

Though Dondrek behaves as if this expedition is a full trading caravan, the total amenities amount to sufficient dryllics for each expedition member to ride, three more as general pack beasts, and one sturdy canvas-covered wagon containing:

- ❧ 3 barrels of drinking water
- ❧ (16x [number of legitimate travellers]) servings of dried edible lichens and fungus, which serve as trail rations
- ❧ 4 canvas tents (each suitable for two persons)
- ❧ Sufficient bedrolls for all personnel
- ❧ 3 large shovels (for any necessary eventuality)
- ❧ 2 spare wagon wheels
- ❧ 17 large steamed goglokki birds, preserved in boxes of hurrumbush sauce
- ❧ 32 warramik puddings (wrapped in lubol cloth)
- ❧ 12 date and syggral pies
- ❧ 24 packets of glazed warbrak nuts
- ❧ 16 small barrels of olnib ale
- ❧ 21 bottles of Lumarth's finest quormish



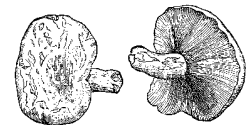
## The Journey

### The Saponid Tundra

*The Tundra is beautiful, yet barren. In the evening and early morning the scattered twisted stone outcroppings of this rolling landscape are shrouded with subtle colors and delicate shadows. On the horizon, a pallid haze makes accurate assessment of distance impossible. The primary vegetation is a gray furze, or gorse, and the soil beneath is predominantly composed of pale sand, lying exposed along the trail. The terrain is uneven, even though there are few elevations of note, and any number of hazards could be waiting over the next crest of ground. More often than not, the only danger immediately beyond any rise is a patch of soft sand that might mire the unwary. The land is not suitable for cultivation, other than at its fringes, so neither men nor beasts are common within its confines. The trail to Aktabras is merely this thin line of exposed sand, meandering across the gently rolling landscape. On infrequent occasions, a length of ancient roadway reveals itself from beneath the soil, but rarely accompanies the travellers for more than a hundred yards. Nonetheless it serves as an indicator that this route was once well traveled. Even more rarely, a barely visible ruined section of stone wall also emerges from the earth. (The only ruin truly worthy of the name is the tower in which the travellers may spend the second night.)*

### Trials of the Trail

- ❧ Before the ‘caravan’ even leaves the plaza, the travellers must each mount their dryllic and attempt mastery of their dour beast.
- ❧ Someone must find forage for the beasts and tether them each night.
- ❧ Riding a dryllic or controlling those that pull the wagon are equally arduous undertakings. The whining of these animals can drive the strongest to distraction. Once a day each character must test their Wherewithal. Dismal Failure means that the characters nerve cracks and they must be given a herbal infusion that makes them sleep for the next twenty-four hours. After this they may attempt to once more work with dryllic.
- ❧ Someone must prepare the edible lichens that pass in these parts for travel rations. This chore is unnecessarily taxing, as the resultant simmering stew requires constant attention for the better part of an hour. Perhaps a simple roster can be peaceably arranged? (Or perhaps not?)
- ❧ Each night on the Tundra, guards must stand watch in rotation. Guarding duty is unlikely to be popular, and Persuasion contests will determine who stands watch and for how long.<sup>11</sup>
- ❧ Lesorix wishes to engage his fellows in games of chance. He carries only his odd historic counters and a well-worn pack of cards, but is proficient in several games that nobody else has ever heard of.<sup>12</sup>
- ❧ Whilst more than averagely austere, Rarana is pleasing to the eye, especially when the evening arrives, and a young man’s fancy turns to thoughts of vigorous couching. Is she really so unassailable? Rakishness asserts its influence at least once per evening, as the bravoos (led by Lesorix) vie with each other for her favors.
- ❧ At the GM’s discretion, Chomosset may know several intriguing cantraps, and may be persuaded to divulge their secrets. Whilst generally of surprising benevolence, Chomosset requires large quantities of wealth before even considering teaching anything further than a cantrap or two.



11. If guard duty is not carried out due to idleness, a wise GM may have some unimportant character inexplicably disappear.

12. Lesorix came bounding to life in the play-test as an encouragement and an example to all characters, attempting to pilfer the goods and terces of sleeping fellow travellers as early as Lumarth, and pressing his rakish ways upon Rarana. Furthermore, he was the first and most successful consumer of the wagon’s sacrosanct cargo of foodstuffs. He might well plant evidence on one of his colleagues if suspicions should be aroused.

### Day 1: Setting Out

Dondrek declines to make each trifling decision, and leaves incidental details to his underlings. At the outset he indicates that the promisingly indolent sinecure of wagon driver is available, and the rest of the group must bicker over who is to get the job. Rarana naturally assumes that she will be automatically permitted to repose alongside the driver, or make as snug a position for herself as she can within the crowded wagon. She may be sadly mistaken. Dondrek will not permit any to ride with him within the wagon unless Persuasion overcomes his objections. The additional, potentially perilous, role of outrider is also essential. Unlike the position of wagon driver, Dondrek may permit this duty to rotate amongst any suitably competent riders.<sup>13</sup> Before departing, Dondrek will speak a few words of instruction, advising affability upon the trail, and reminding all of his employees that the contents of the wagon are their primary concern, and must be protected from damage and thieves with unflagging vigilance.

#### *A Wandering Scholar*

Chomosset waits at a ruined crossroads, some miles from Lumarth. He plays his role as the easy-going wanderer with well-practiced aplomb. Dondrek and he have also rehearsed their exchange of pleasantries, and he is welcomed into the company.

#### *First Night (Urbod)*

The caravan stops at Urbod, the most distant hamlet from Lumarth, situated on the utter edge of reasonable farming land. The elder residents are most sanctimonious. They allow no alcoholic beverages to be consumed within the hamlet, and frown heavily on such unessential expressions as humor and romance. The young are not so set in their ways, and Jolena (the headman's daughter) is considered shapely. Several of the young men are also eager to learn the ways of civilization, which thoughtful travellers might decide include gambling or drinking games.

The members of the caravan are graciously permitted to sleep in the public barn, and to dine at the communal meal in the main hall. They are also expected to attend the dreary poetry readings and dire attempts at mummery that follow. Here, they will certainly be asked if they can present their own suitable entertainments in return. Persuasion rolls are needed if the characters are to avoid this unbecoming scene of potential embarrassment (thus leaving themselves free to dally with those of the village youth who have also declined to attend).

✿ BILDECK the village headman ✿

*"I do not hold with that sort of carry on."*

**Ratings:** Persuasion (Pure-hearted) 8, Rebuff (Wary) 7, Attack (Strength) 11, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 10, Health 7, Athletics 4, Craftsmanship 4, Living Rough 4, Perception 6, Stewardship 4, Wherewithal 2.

**Resistances:** Indolence 5, Rakishness Ω



### Day 2: Tedium of the Tundra

*A relentless ride across the rolling tundra does little to convince the characters of its scenic merits.*

#### *Second Night (The Tower)*

This is the first night in truly unknown territory. The GM might gently and humorously inquire who is used to Living Rough. Do erbs roam in packs of a score or more, or does the barren nature of the Tundra mean that half-men are rare in the extreme? What is that distant howling in the middle of the night? (A levy of 1 is applied to all rolls made on behalf of those unfamiliar with the Saponid Tundra, and Dismal Failures recall staggering tales of mortal peril.) Now that the caravan is far from even the spiced gruel served in Urbod, their cargo no doubt exerts an alluring siren call. Resistance to Gourmandism would seem in order. After all, a few mouthfuls here and there would hardly be missed, would they?

13. Or between any of the crew, should all prove equally proficient, or more likely equally inept.

The tower is unknowably old, but remains whole despite the passing of time. Entry is now by a window, since the ground floor is buried. A great stone trapdoor is almost completely obscured by the earth on the floor. An upper floor is likewise accessible should someone scale the exterior of the tower, or be able to reach a small square hole up in the ceiling. There is plenty of room for beasts and humans inside,<sup>14</sup> but the wagon must be protected by this night's guard rotation. (If it is not, then a lone deodand makes off with a choice pick of the goods.)

*The Upper Room:* This room was surely a magician's workroom, but has been plundered extensively, as well as exposed to the elements through gaps in the wall and roof. Fungus-covered fragments scattered across the floor may once have been fine furniture. The only embellishment is a mosaic with several glowing stones set into it, decorating one section of the wall. It is an anti-theft device, and if a stone is touched, the unwise visitor is exposed to a spell that turns their ears long like those of a mule or the rummeh beast and causes them to bray during speech. Innovative GMs may devise a list of further potential effects that are dependent on which stone is touched. The spell lasts for exactly forty-eight hours before vanishing as suddenly as it manifested.

*The Basement:* The room below is knee deep in fetid water, and unwholesome lumps may once have been tables and chairs. Anyone bold enough to explore may unearth a magical or mechanical contrivance, such as an item listed in *Cugel's Compendium of Indispensable Advantages*. A huge aquatic albino centipede resents the intrusion.



### Day 3: Deceptive beast-men

Perception successes by the outrider(s) during the afternoon may reveal one or more half men lurking in the scrub brush, or skulking beyond the brow of a low hill. These shadow the caravan, assessing its strengths. At length, as the outrider investigates a rocky slope out of sight of the wagon, a lone figure approaches and attempts to enter into conversation whilst two of its companions wait in hiding. This individual, a swarthy and bestial fellow dressed in rags, claims to be a man cursed into this form by a magician, earnestly seeking news of the civilized world. He further tries to persuade the traveler to follow him over the ridge to value some intriguing jeweled items discovered in nearby ruins. Should an expendable individual such as Seif or Pangalam somehow be persuaded to perform the outrider duty, they may vanish inexplicably, leaving only their contentedly browsing dryllics, which prefers to answer demands for clarification by assuring all that doom is certain.



### Third Night (Camping on the Tundra)

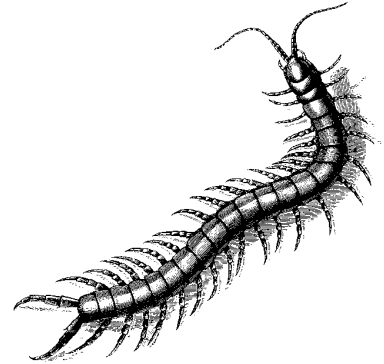
Now that beast-men (or some unknown hazard) has threatened the caravan, Chomosset puts up magical defense. This takes the form of silver rods that focus an invisible wall of force. Anyone touching this wall is burned and hurled aside. Later, several, deodands attempt to breach it by surprise, with agonizing results.

14. Persuade contests are needed to get the dryllics to scramble through the window.

#### ✿ SAPONIDCENTIPEDE ✿

“...”

**Ratings:** Attack (Strength) 8, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 6, Health 7, Athletics 4, Wherewithal 2.



#### ✿ SOLITARY BEAST-MAN ✿

**Ratings:** Persuasion (Glib) 9, Rebuff (Wary) 7, Attack (Ferocity) 11, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 10, Health 4, Athletics 4, Living Rough 7, Perception 6, Wherewithal 2.

*Note that other beast-men tend to substitute intimidation for Glib.*

**Resistances:** None



(much howling and the smell of singed flesh.) For a time, they gibber and cajole, testing the steadfastness of the travellers, offering to leave them alone if they send just one of their number out for more personal discourse. Later, one of their number may be thrown over the wall by his comrades and needs to be dispatched as he rifles the wagon or attempts to slay the travellers.



#### Day 4: The Ruins

Little is left of Aktabras, save hummocks marking buried foundations and barely discernible roadways. At the city's center is the large dome of a partly buried structure much blasted by the winds of ages and left without definition. Chomosset is interested in exploring before night falls. A character's *Illustrious Success* whilst exploring results only in the discovery of a two-foot long metal rod buried in the dirt. This is not corroded, and has an indiscernible carving at one end.



### *Aktabras*

As the evening falls, Aktabras reappears gradually, forming from a mist that swirls from crevices amongst the ruins. Its appearance is heralded by displays of fantastic colored lights drifting overhead. At first the whole scene appears utterly ghostlike, but gradually solidifies, as do sounds of merriment and discourse. In less than an hour, the travellers are standing in what, for all practical purposes, is a normal city, albeit one of ancient splendor. The noise and motion come only from the central section, and exploring the outer reaches reveals them as empty and sinister. When the characters reach the city center, waste no embellishment in describing the vibrant costumes and fervent manner of the citizens.

Soon, an obsequious official (possibly a priest, since his manner and dress somewhat resemble that of the Thurists of Lumarth), will approach Dondrek. He is clad in silver robes and wears a golden mask that obscures his entire head, and offers to accept delivery of their goods. (If characters are sufficiently attentive to inquire, the Priest also wears gloves, and so his skin is in no place visible.) Two individuals in slightly less gaudy robes, but equally all-encompassing masks, form his honor guard at all times. Each bears a stout staff topped with an arcane symbol. The characters will be required to fetch the goods from the wagon, as the dryllics absolutely refuse to come near the ghosts.

The 'Priests' are deodands under the compulsion of Aktabras' resident demon 'Jampash', and their normally voracious appetites are restrained. Should characters rip the mask from a Priest and expose the deodand beneath, nearby citizens will react with horror, as will Dondrek and Rarana and the other caravan crew. Pandemonium will ensue as other deodands emerge from hiding. Dondrek and Rarana will be allowed to flee, and one other GMC may also elude capture (see below). All other caravan crew will be pursued or fought, and come to their captivity sooner than would otherwise occur.

#### Temptations Aplenty

Presuming the characters' actions permit some time for satisfying diversion, they will find that the citizens of Aktabras appear to be normal physical beings, intent only on enjoying their festival. They are the victims or creations of a great and ancient magic, which also binds the demon to this place, and should be portrayed as even more vague and otherworldly than the normal inhabitants of the Dying Earth. None suspect that their existence is anything but ordinary, although persistent questions may cause a resident to recall that his or her memories of anything other than a series of annual festivals are admittedly somewhat vague. To them, this particular festival is the 'All Praise the Stars', and they know that the city is ruled by Lord Zimba, as well as other obvious facts, but nothing of any usefulness.

Alluring maidens and strapping youths (Resist Rakishness), delightful banquets (Resist Gourmandism), and opportunities to gamble one's terces for trinkets at exotic games and contests (Resist Avarice) abound. One could simply choose to lounge at the edge of a wine-filled pool, being fed grapes by charming handmaidens

(Resist Indolence). During the early part of the night, Dondrek (who is acutely aware that his life hangs in the balance if he does not play his role) surreptitiously notifies the ‘Priest’ as to who is acceptable as sacrifice. Observant characters, who have made their Resistance rolls, may note this exchange.

Anyone who wishes to depart from the revelries and explore the city must make the appropriate Resistance rolls. Many distractions might present themselves, in the form of personal ornaments, delightful household decorations, or even bulging purses (no doubt stuffed with antique coins). Should a character be apprehended in the act of theft, they will be asked to return their booty, and thereafter be treated with suspicion, but no further reparation will be sought. Characters should be encouraged to give free reign to their appetites. The huge stone door to the central dome is visible in this illusion of the city, but remains inaccessible, as it is buried beneath many feet of packed sand.

### The Cruel Truth

The City of Aktabras was once a twin to Lumarth, and its demon is entombed beneath the central dome. More than a generation ago, two Thurists from Lumarth, who were both minor magicians in the days before the ban, came to plunder Aktabras during the day of its revival. Instead they encountered Jampash. They successfully bargained for their lives, promising to return each year, offering fresh victims in exchange for small portions of the city treasures.

This agreement satisfied all until Chaladet the Great (then in his first years of office) became involved. He demanded a share of the loot, and invented the ‘tradition’ of the caravan, claiming publicly that it was the revival of an older practice. Whilst the two original Thurists have long since been removed from the equation, the tradition remains. Now it has become established in local myth, and any that bother to cogitate over this event assume that it must truly be a continuing custom from the previous aeon.

Dondrek and Rarana are alert to the perils. The terrible secret of the Thurists’ bargain is that each year at least four victims must be brought to the city and left to their own devices. Every year these people (who tend to be recruited with minimum ostentation from the ranks of newly arrived strangers, patently undistinguished individuals from the surrounding country, or unremarkable petty criminals) vanish, and the citizens of Lumarth are none the wiser.

### Capture

As dawn approaches, it is customary that the official caravan personnel (in this case Dondrek and Rarana) will be allowed to collect a quota of valuables, dependent on the quality of human sacrifices that were brought. By this time, each of the sacrifices will have departed from the city. This could be through a suddenly opening trapdoor, down a water chute opening whilst the character frolics in a fountain, or being grappled from behind through a door that opens without warning. Astute GMs may observe that seeing one character abruptly vanish in a mysterious or violent way might lead the others to attempt to flee such a fate. The ghostly citizens are not part of the act, and are only bemused by any pleas for assistance, and terrified by threats of violence. Should one of them be intentionally injured, they do not bleed, a reality that causes them some puzzlement.<sup>15</sup>

A merry chase, followed by a decisive coshing, can add great merriment to the game. Otherwise, hidden trapdoors and other mechanisms act instead. All deodands dress as priests, with long robes and ceremonial



*Necklets of carcasite are believed by some to encourage true dreams, foretelling the future. Anklets are thought to allow dreamers to travel to the land of which they dream and experience their dreams in the flesh.*

15. Should any characters attempt to leave the city’s confines, Jampash’s deodands hasten to retrieve any would-be escapees.

masks obscuring their identities. In the play-test, the characters grew slowly more suspicious, and engineered to ambush one of the 'Priests'. This ambitious plan failed, and the expedient 'chase and coshing' option proved satisfyingly effective.



*The Dining Room:* Other than Dondrek, Rarana, and either Lesorix or Chomosset (whichever is least friendly to the main characters) every other character will come to consciousness inside their own small barred cage, in which there is barely enough room to stoop upright. There are sufficient cages, plus several spares, hung by chains from the roof of the cave, and dangling ten yards above the floor. The characters can observe each other easily by the light of several torches that flicker with an eerie blue light, and are attached to the walls. The cave is sparsely decorated as some rather rude dining hall with a long stone platform serving as a table, and with rocks instead of seats. A great metal cauldron stands in a fireplace next to what appears to be an uncomfortably large food preparation block in which is embedded a prodigious meat cleaver.

Those with good vision may discern several long bones lying about the room, which have been cracked open (possibly in order to suck out the marrow). Furthermore, the robes and masks worn by their foes in the city are now casually discarded near one end of the table, and their own obvious weapons are stacked neatly in a corner of the cave. The chains that support the cages are attached to stout metal cog-wheels against a far wall. It is impossible by any ordinary means to reach one of these chains from within a cage.

*Exiting from the Cages:*

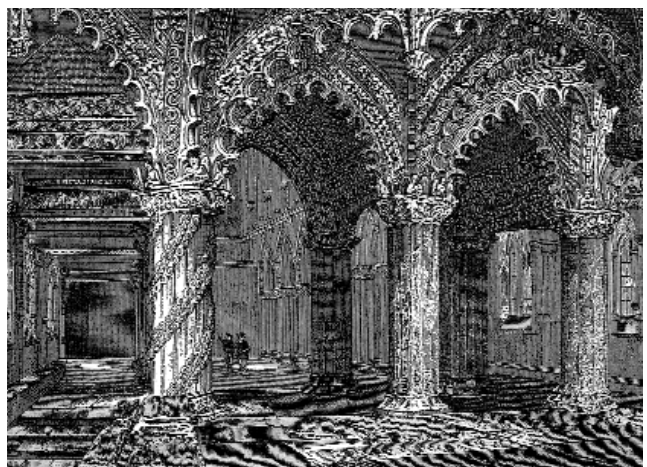
- ✿ Two cages, swung energetically, may (after some time and effort) be impelled to strike each other. Eventually this will cause sufficient damage that one set of bars will be bent enough to allow a character to squeeze free.
- ✿ The characters have not been thoroughly searched. If the metal bar was discovered in the ruins above, it proves adequate in prying the bars apart.
- ✿ Unexpected resource. (If the characters possess some unusual or unique ability, item, or effect, this can be used to aid their escape.)

After recovering their weapons, it might be opportune to dictate an encounter with the dastardly deodands. No one has previously escaped the cages, and so the characters have the advantage of surprise. Whilst classical opportunities for bloodshed are rare in the *DERPG* stories, a vigorous engagement at this critical juncture may enhance the already apprehensive atmosphere.

Alternatively, the characters may encounter the half-men in the corridors and successfully hide as they pass.

*The Catacombs:* Torches may be taken from the walls of the cave, and the mysteries, horrors, and wonders of the adjacent catacombs can be explored. It will take some time to pass through the tunnels. The characters will pass by, or through, various rooms, and creative GMs might like to invent several further dusty and echoing chambers, plus a map. This area can be as simple or as complex as desired. The characters will be able to follow the trail that the deodands (and something with larger feet) have made in the dirt. Many other passages lead away without a trail, and each leads to certain peril.

*The Chamber of Torment:* In this horrific torture chamber is a small red-skinned and wrinkled individual named Ompolomp. An extremely minor demon who may be dispatched with ease, he will



*Visitors to the Catacombs should avail themselves of the opportunity to view what is perhaps the finest work of the mosaicist Ranpole. Note the witty use of lamps in niches masquerading as windows to cast light on this magnificent creation.*

squeal with an offensive clamor when injured or alarmed for his safety. Chained here in perpetual agony is Darsten (possibly being tormented at this exact moment), one of the two minor magicians who originally discovered Jampash, and was betrayed by the Thurists. His discomfiting lack of limbs makes successful restoration to society unlikely, although his eagerness for revenge prompts him to demand that he be carried to Jampash. On gaining sight of the demon, he promises to reveal his secret knowledge of how it may be slain, so he can revel in its defeat. (In matter of fact, Jampash can only be temporarily stunned, but Darsten does not reveal this trifling exactitude.) Should the characters refuse Darsten's offer of help, he will allude to his knowledge to try and convince them of his sincerity. He will also assure them that there is no egress from this complex without passing the demon.

*The Aktabras Archives:* The huge ornate door to this room depicts scrolls and open tomes, clearly revealing its purpose. It will need to be opened by force or Pick Lock ability. Within is a small library of all manner of literature, but all in languages of the previous aeon. The value is incredible, but if the PCs begin to collect a few souvenirs, Darsten will announce that anything taken from the catacombs without first being unenchanted by Jampash disappears on passing beyond the city's bounds. As they examine this room, a mottled leucomorph may attack from its resting place upon the ceiling, possibly ending the life of a GMC before being outpaced by the main characters.<sup>16</sup>

*The Lower Hall:* One circular room through which the PCs pass has only half a floor. A wide pit takes up its entire center. This pit drops abruptly away into nothingness, although a narrow stair leads down around its edge. A stone lectern indicates that ceremonies once took place here, but no other evidence remains. The floor at the far end of the room has collapsed into a yawning chasm, presumably due to subsidence. To move on from here, they must cross using a fallen column as a bridge as many have done before them.

*The Robing Room:* Once a place of preparation for the Priesthood, this is now the lair of Jampash's deodands. The half-men normally reside amongst the miraculously preserved ceremonial regalia. This much is evidenced by their refuse, which includes spoor and the remains of unfortunate travellers and their equipment.

*The Waiting Room:* A corridor ascends to a large wooden door, decorated with arcane runes burned into its surface. Before it is reached, an archway opens in the left wall, where another door stands ajar. The small chamber beyond echoes with voices. Characters hear Rarana anxiously ponder why it is taking Jampash's servants so long to collect the sacrifices for evaluation. Dondrek groans in reply, complaining of a great horror that only increases the longer he remains below the ground. Other than the two Lumarthi, there is little in this room, barring stone benches and thick dust, although an archway leads to a short corridor that passes into Jampash's chamber, effectively by-passing the huge door.



Opportunities for deception and revenge abound at this juncture. Dondrek may declare firmly that he was acting under violent compulsion from the Thurists, and that his entire livelihood hangs in the balance. Rarana may in turn explain that she is merely performing her religious obligations as so ordered. She will attempt to convince the PCs that it is their duty to sacrifice themselves in order for the sun's longevity to be supported.

Before the characters enter the room beyond, Darsten will explain that his researches long ago revealed that whilst Jampash, like fellow demon Phampoun, detests sunlight, it is not as great a weakness as it is for his fellow. Jampash is vulnerable if the bulbous node at the nape of his neck is struck with force. In the previous aeon, the priests of Aktabras (who presumably were considerably bolder than the Thurists) used such actions as a means of punishing Jampash if he failed to obey them. Darsten himself was delivered to Jampash securely bound, and was thus unable to utilize this information.

### **The Chamber of Jampash**

The main door to this chamber is closed, although it is possible to enter through the waiting room. This great circular hall lies beneath the central city dome, and is filled with glittering baubles and fascinating relics. Jampash has decorated his environment by collecting every last treasure and fine fabric that the city has to

16. Or it may even be contemptuously dispatched, as stranger things have happened.

offer. He has accumulated these in great piles around his stone throne. This depository of the city's riches is at first glance a literal gold mine of opportunity. Unfortunately, all goods taken that have not first been unenchanted by Jampash (a task that is extremely arduous for him) will vanish when they leave the outer confines of the city ruins.

Whenever they arrive, Jampash (a hideous dog-headed, multi-noded, hairless, clawed creature with bat's wings and a crimson skin, who is twice the size of a burly man) is in repose, seated upon his vast throne, which fortunately faces the main door, and not the antechamber.

A sturdy pulley system is rigged to the ceiling of the dome, and the large platform it is attached to hangs overhead, adjacent to a human-sized crack in the domed ceiling, through which the stars are visible. Stacked at the point where this platform might rest on the ground when lowered, are several bulging sacks of trinkets and rolls of fine fabric (all unenchanted), plus all the goods brought from Lumarth.

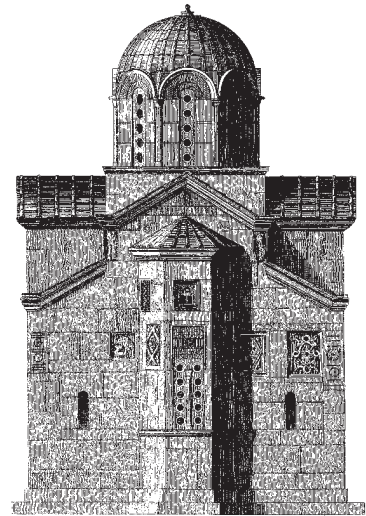
The pulley is normally operated by the might of Jampash. Heaving with his demonic muscles, he can lift what otherwise takes three burly individuals to transport. This effort is needed to lift one person (or equivalent weight of treasures) from the floor of the cavern to the gaping crack in the top of the dome. (The sacks are normally lowered to the ground outside by ropes from there, and individuals must climb a crude rope ladder, which was lowered by the deodands an hour or so ago.)

How the characters will choose to make their attack on Jampash is up to them. One might engage in Imposture or Obfuscation, whilst another sneaks up around piles of treasure, armed with a stout cudgel or the cleaver. When Jampash is struck, he will be rendered helpless and lie quivering in agony, but is otherwise so tough as to be virtually invulnerable to all but mighty magics. His discommodation is only temporary, and he continues to shudder and groan. If the characters fail utterly in their attempt, Lessorix or Chomosset (whichever evaded capture) climbs to the crack in the dome. By sheer accident, whilst trying to stealthily pull the platform towards him (to avail himself of its valuable contents), he releases the break on the ropes. It plummets down to strike Jampash upon the head and shoulders (and node), rendering him senseless, or distracts the demon at a vital moment, allowing a character to strike. The ropes fall from the pulley, rendering the platform useless.

If the characters successfully inconvenience Jampash, the platform will fall anyway. Despite this minor setback, Lessorix or Chomosset is still at the advantage. He shouts down to explain that secured up here is a long rope ladder, surely sufficient to reach the floor of the dome. There is also a rope at the end of which is a stout basket, and he requires this to first be filled with choice valuables. He assures them that when he has secured these valuables within his pack he will drop the ladder.

When Jampash shows signs of stirring, further applications of force prove effective. If the GM needs to encourage haste, perhaps the deodands will be heard returning. They may be temporarily sealed beyond a barred door, but will exert impressive stamina by throwing themselves against the door and gradually weakening it. Indeed, perhaps more of the unusual underworld leucomorphs sense Jampash's vulnerability, and slowly emerge from the depths. With the platform having scattered the spoils, characters will need to resist Avarice in order to be amongst the first up the rope ladder. How much time they have to collect easily portable gems, coins and trinkets is up to the GM.

Should Lessorix or Chomosset be unwilling to lower the rope, the



✿ JAMPASH ✿

*"I am a demon. You are a light repast. I see no reason why I should be expected to indulge in witty repartee or litter my speech with epigrams."*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Intimidating) 12, Rebuff (Wary) 14, Attack (Strength) 35, Defense (Parry/Invulnerability) 25, Health 18, Perception 6.

**Resistances:** None

*Note that the demon can fly as well as run considerably faster than any of the PCs.*

characters are thrown upon their own resources. Dondrek or Rarana might advise them that unless they escape before the sun rises, they will be trapped within the enchantment and lost to the world forever, as only the deodand servants of Jampash can go free when he commands them. One possible avenue of escape is for someone to hold fast to the demon's neck and menace his vulnerable node with a sharp weapon, forcing him to fly up and reattach the pulley rope.<sup>17</sup>



### *Aftermath*

Jampash traditionally provided an escort of three deodands to ensure the caravan's safety until it came within sight of Urbod. The reliability of these creatures was enforced by dint of arcane agreements they have entered into with Jampash. If the characters return to Lumarth they might successfully assume other identities and mingle with the Pageant crowds.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps a bargain will be struck with Rarana, presuming she survives? Jampash himself will eventually recover, but has no choice but to wait beneath the ruins of Aktabras, as he is bound to its fate. Still, he may retain yet more deodand servants, who pursue the characters and attempt to take revenge and recover the stolen treasures.

#### ✿ NOBEL ENDOLANK'S TRAVELLING SPECTACULAR ✿

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Gasp at the Energetic **Spike** and his Cavorting Deodand!

Marvel at the Charming **Claryssa** and her Performing Eels!

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Such is our renown that no doubt DIVERS ATTRACTIONS of equally PUISSANT DISTINCTION will also be joining us prior to the commencement of the season. Book now in your droves to prevent great personal disappointment. Our One and Only Officially Sanctioned Booking Booth is sited at the Kaiin Market. Proffer your hard-earned (or rightfully inherited) terces to no other charlatans. (Location of Performance to be Announced Shortly.)

All customers note that our entertainments have nothing to do with the disreputable Andobang's Travelling Show so recently driven out of Sferre after the unfortunate incident with the escaping hoons and the elderly citizens' excursion.

17. In the playtest, Lesorix was at the top, and received a bag load of enchanted valuables (that later vanished) and was persuaded to lower the rope ladder. Chomosset and the main characters barely escaped up the ladder as the deodands smashed in the door, although the other GMCs were too slow. The unfortunate Dondrek was the last person able to ascend the ladder, and was dragged off by a pursuing deodand almost within an arm's reach of safety.

18. Only to be recognized and apprehended at a later date in order for the GM to catapult them into another escape.

# ❖ Forrell's Port ❖

## *Lizard*

*Myrna the Rootless has provided incontrovertible proof that the estimable Lizard may have been suffering from*

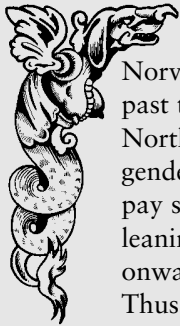
The city of Forrell's Port is the largest and most cosmopolitan urban center in the Sousanene Exterior Region, which, as Rhialto once quipped, is praise on par with being the least ravenous of deodands or perhaps the most handsome of Pelgranes. Ignoring the snide comments of Almerly dandies who consider a brief stop in the felarn (literally, 'visitor pit') of the South to be 'visiting the wilderness', the fact remains that Forrell's Port is, in all candor, the 'Gateway To The North', the portal through which merchants and tradesmen pass from around the Sea of Slow Tides to the Almerical Regions. Approaching from the Sea, a visitor will first see nothing but utter splendor – the low, sloping hills (which become, in time, the Stoop-Shouldered Mountains) are covered with endless sprawling roads and dwellings, piled one after another, seemingly without limit. It is only upon docking and proceeding further that it becomes evident that the vast majority of the city is ruin and waste; only a comparatively small section in a tight circle around the seaport remains fully inhabited, and even that shows signs of considerable wear. A traveler used to the interesting and exotic customs of the Sousanene Coast (see XPS Issues 2 & 3) might find Forrell's Port a refreshing respite indeed. As a city which clings to life only by being attractive to all, from Kainish shellfish sellers to Dweelari vorthans and agents of the Feathered Princes, it cannot afford to



toss those who wear a Scaumish many-tiered hat into the mire-scorpion pits, no matter how much such a fellow truly deserves it, nor remove a man's ankle solely because he drinks Violet Mendolence from a copper, rather than a brass, tankard. No, indeed not! Tolerance and brotherhood are ever the watchwords in Forrell's Port, and, if someone should take offense at the heathen and barbaric acts of a traveler, well, his response to such must be tolerated as well. As they say in Forrell's Port: "He who drinks mermelant milk with his left hand had best hold his hat with his right!"

The nomenclature of the regions of Forrell's Port reveals much of its history. There is the Merchant's Quarter, the Upper Sector, the Lower Ward, the Dock District, the Middle Center, the Traveler's Region, and so on. Likewise, the streets, lanes, alleyways, and passages blur into one another without obvious rationale; Green Deodand Street becomes Third Avenue (Left) for a length of 20 paces, then is Green Deodand Street again, except that the flow of traffic is now reversed and foolish outsiders who cannot bother to understand simple rules of direction are likely to be trampled under mermelant-drawn carriages. Furthermore, as bridges collapse or roads crack to the point of total disintegration, there is little incentive to repair them, so the flow of traffic

simply spills over into other channels.<sup>1</sup> As the city has been built, conquered, destroyed, and rebuilt over the ages, individual buildings which survive one calamity retain their old addresses, such that a blacksmith said to be located 'at Number 12 in the Green Zone' may be directly next door to an inn identified as being found in 'the Middle Center, building AD, cannot miss it', without there being any obvious demarcation. As a rule, without a native guide, finding your way from the lower floor of an inn to the upper floor is a difficult endeavor. Fortunately for travellers, locating a guide is simple. One never has any trouble in finding an enterprising young man or woman who will perform the dual services of leading you through the city and reducing the back and shoulder pain to be had from carrying a pouch heavy with terces. Rarely is such generosity seen in Sousanene, and it should be responded to with all due grace and gentility. Attempts to navigate Forrell's Port without such a guide can be based on Pedantry, Perception, or Scuttlebutt, as the GM sees fit. For maximum amusement, choose whichever of the three is lowest. To begin the process, consider that each journey from one point to another consists of three stages. Each success of Hair's Breadth or Prosaic nature moves the character one stage closer to their goal; Quotidian or Exasperating Failure means the character is neither more nor less distant, but simply lost. An Illustrious Success places the character at the doorstep immediately, while a Dismal Failure means the character looks up with frustration to find himself standing at his point of departure. Boons and Levies may be applied with a heavy hand based on the frivolous whims of the GM or the need to advance the story with all due alacrity.



### *An Example*

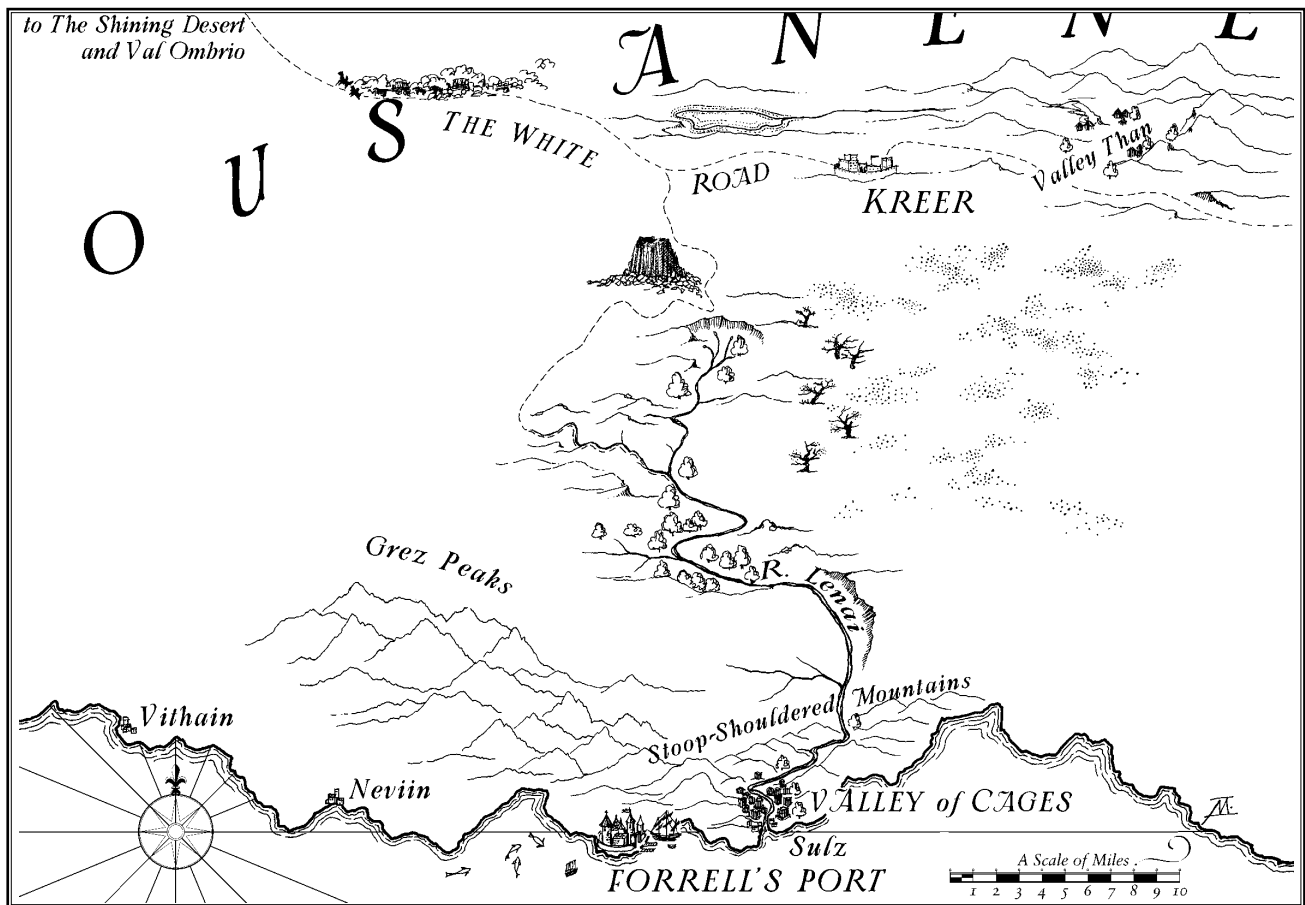
Norvane of Kaiin, having narrowly escaped the Wardens of the Valley of Cages and made his way past the other hazards of the area, has at last reached Forrell's Port. He stands at the Great Northern Gate that marks the easternmost edge of the city. A scruff-faced urchin of indeterminate gender implies that a terce or two will ease Norvane's quest, while subtly hinting that failure to pay such terces might result in a wrathful rebuke from a knot-muscled gentleman of ill manner leaning against a crumbling column. Norvane ignores both promise and threat and proceeds onwards. Norvane lacks Perception or Pedantry, but is somewhat skilled at asking questions. Thus, he chooses to navigate by Scuttlebutt, in which his pool measures a somewhat tepid 5. Nonetheless, how hard can it be to traverse a small city from one gate to the Inn of Blue Frogs, where his companions no doubt await? His first roll is a Prosaic Success; a gray-haired matron points languidly down a crumbling boulevard that leads him into the more built-up (or, rather, less fallen-down) parts of town. He is one 'stage' there; two more to go. Some more questioning yields confusion and contradiction; an Exasperating failure causes him to waste 15 minutes asking at the Inn of Blue Fogs for his friends. His pool is now at 3; he questions one more person and receives clear directions – a Prosaic Success has placed him near the docks. Almost there, he inquires about a shortcut, since he is already very late. A smiling man points him at a tunnel that will place him at the very front of the Inn. Unfortunately, a Dismal Failure results in the tunnel expelling him back by the Great Northern Gate, where he glumly hands a stack of terces to the smirking youth and, with expert guidance, finds himself at the Inn in mere minutes.

Given the nature of Forrell's Port, a map would be pointless. Thus, rather than provide some spurious chart of buildings with small circled numbers leading to a pedantic and dull key, it is instead the case that this essay simply notes many of the more interesting sites of the city, and allows their relationship to each other to be made based on the undeniably correct and flawless judgments of the GM. Those who would deny the rightness of such judgments are florp-wallowers and churds, and fully deserve any such fates as may befall them.



1. Any accidental resemblance between the street layout of Forrell's Port and that of certain cities of the Larval Age, located on the Western Coast of the Americas, and famed for their bridges and sour bread, is utterly without cause, purpose, or design.





*Locations of note*

**The Library of Nine Knowledges**

Built during the reign of Fandwort Noom the Three-Sevenths Mad, the library is a gorgeous structure exemplifying the 21st Aeon revival of the 19th Epoch '14th Aeon Recreation Period', with cupolas, gantries, and turrets lurching gracefully from every roof and wall. The interior is a vast, spacious, place, with artfully twisting staircases spiraling about each other and floors jutting at aesthetic angles from the walls. There is room inside for an auditorium, three lecture halls, a symphonarium, a greenhouse, and an extraordinary amount of sculpture, much of it dating to the 'Second Glory' days of Lost Kuriin and supplied by Neviinish (see XPS 3) divers down on their luck.<sup>2</sup>

The only thing this magnificent edifice lacks is books; there are fewer here than in the much smaller libraries of Almery and Ascolais. Said Fandwort: "Do not bother me with such trivialities! It is the form which contains knowledge, not the knowledge which is contained, which is paramount!"

**Tower of Higher Justice**

Squat, gray, and lurching, the Tower of Higher Justice looms out of the mists like a particularly slow deodand about to pounce. 'Functionality' is the watchword here; no brick or board was used unless it serves an absolute and undeniable purpose. "The absolute antithesis of the Law of Aesthetic Design" is the description given by Grinwald Meer, Second Architect to the Heights. It is a building most wish to avoid, and for reasons beyond artistic distaste. This is where Prince Moriaz, current leader of Forrell's Port, dispenses justice, ruling on all

2. "Down on one's luck" seems a mild euphemism for the situation where one dives, expecting to salvage bottle after bottle of much sought-after vintages and returns groaning under the weight of a veritable incubus of unfashionable and virtually unsaleable statuary.

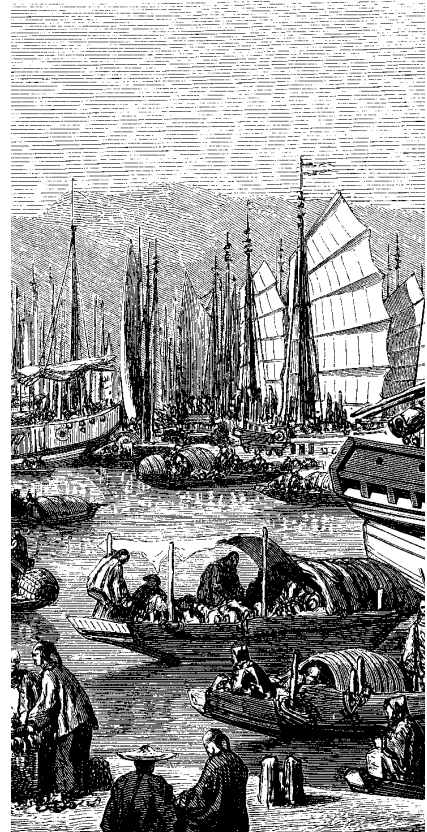
cases deemed by the Council of Orderers to be of the 'Severe' or 'Demonic' grades. The penalty for such crimes, which include murder, maiming, robbing of merchants, removal of blue stones from the harbor, and similar odious acts, is invariably death; the function of the Tower is to determine the means of death, the duration of the execution, and the precise degree of agony to be endured. Ages of careful research and study have enabled the Transitioning Agents, those men of somber mien who carry out the judgments of the court, to control pain and duration to an exacting degree. Those who perish here, and there are many, are at least comforted in some small way by the fact they are in the hands of consummate professionals.<sup>3</sup>

### Tower of Plain Justice

The Tower of Plain Justice is a long, flat building composed of white marble veined with crimson and gold; it possesses none of the traits usually associated with the word 'tower'. This alone makes it exceptionally difficult for outsiders to locate. The interior is spacious, but is usually crammed full of supplicants and litigants of all sorts, each vying desperately for a few moments with a judge, or, failing that, an Assistant Orderer, Case Reviewer Third Class, or even an Intercedent of The Red Robe. All cases not judged 'Severe' or 'Demonic', including but not limited to those graded 'Ordinary Major', 'Ordinary Minor', 'Twice Ordinary', 'Intriguing', and 'Zefflous', are dealt with here, according to law, custom, tradition, and whim. Minor thefts, vandalism, public indecencies, and drinking fermented mermelant blood out of season all fill the dockets of this tower. As a rule, getting a case heard by anyone empowered to do anything about it will take 2d6 days of constant bargaining. Those wishing to expedite matters might consider Scuttlebutt to find out who is the best person with whom to speak, Seduction to win someone to your side, or Gambling to get someone to give up their place in line.

### Outerdock

The tang of salt air mixed with the mouth-watering aroma of sea dolsan split open and roasting on wooden slats; the hail and cry of seafarers from across the Sea of Slow Tides, Almery, and even further lands; the sight of a thousand colors of cloth; these are the sensory impressions of Outerdock according to *Forrell's Port: A Travellers Guide*, available for one terce from any bookseller of good reputation.<sup>4</sup> The reality is slightly less romantic; the tangy air tends to have a rotting odor to it, grilled dolsan is an acquired taste at best (and may shock or horrify individuals who kept dolsan as pets in their youth, as is common in Kaiin), and while the dock is indeed filled with seafarers from distant lands, they are far more inclined to slit your purse and throat (not always in that order) than entertain you with jigs and tell you tales of exotic creatures. Nonetheless, for those traveling by sea, Outerdock is the point of debarkation for Forrell's Port. The dock area itself is surrounded by a blend of warehouses and taverns, all carefully marked in the Forrellian style, which places Warehouse 23 precisely between Warehouse B2 and Warehouse IV. Guides are recommended. Likewise, it is well worth noting that, as the city has aged, large portions of the dock area have fallen into disuse, while others remain active; these separate areas are all called 'Outerdock'. The natives always know which Outerdock is which; visitors will likely end up at the incorrect point unless guided.



### The Purple Bazaar

There is some debate over the precise origin of this name by which the main free-form shopping district of Forrell's Port is known. Some claim

3. This is at least the claim made by Prince Moriaz and who are we to gainsay him?

4. Should such an establishment elude you, we have it on good authority that this invaluable reference work is to be seen on the shelves of lesser establishments for virtually the same price.

that, at the time of the founding, the terces used in the city had a purplish cast to them. Others claim purple was the color of the Guild of Mercantilers during the 18th Aeon, and the name thus evoked ancient traditions. Still others claim the cloth of the booths used to be a brilliant purple. The most likely explanation, though, was that the bazaar was named after the color certain patrons turn after discovering the true quality of the goods they have purchased. Regardless of origins, those seeking the transmudane had best venture here, where it can oft times be found. Unlike the staid shops that cater mostly to locals, the Bazaar specializes in items of interest to foreign visitors. Rare magics (blocked from functioning in the bounds of the city for safety reasons), ancient artifacts,<sup>5</sup> the shrunken skull of an over-grue,<sup>6</sup> and similar wonderments await the buyer. At times both wondrous and rare, genuine items of true potency are offered for sale; locating such among the more dubious items is left as an exercise for the canny buyer.

### **Inn of Blue Frogs**

Run by Mazorn Blone, the Inn of Blue Frogs is a common meeting place for out-of-towners, being reasonably clean, reasonably safe, and reasonably cheap, at least if you are reasonable about your expectations of the term 'reasonable'. Mazorn loathes and despises the owner of the competing Inn of Blue Fogs, which was created solely to steal his clientele.

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### **Morvane Street**

Morvane Street runs crosspendicular through the city, providing a traveler with a view of Forrell's Port from Glimmering Sector to Dundranton. The street obeys no obvious pattern of progression, and seems to change names every other block. Thus, a traveler may find themselves on Morvane Street just about anywhere, and then find themselves somewhere entirely different after walking even a handful of yards. All who know the city will insist there is nothing magical, odd, or arcane about Morvane; it's obvious that outsiders simple do not pay attention to obvious street signs and indicators.

### **The House of Dornvale**

Traveler Climacteric: Dornvale is the author of many fine books on the world, for he has indeed seen it all, as anyone who asks him will soon discover. His house is a small manse of glistening black wood, set in a well-tended garden behind a low wall. Visitors are welcome, but those who seek to do him harm should be aware of the fact he is a true Arch-Mage, and commands three sandestins of reasonable power. After centuries of wayfaring, he has become something of a homebody, and rarely leaves his manse, preferring, instead, to use a form of dream-extraction to excise his memories of foreign lands and cause them to seep onto the pages of his manuscripts. Of late, though, he has been troubled. His works documenting the world of the late 21st Aeon are complete beyond all reproach, but, surely, the world was not always as it is?<sup>7</sup>

The idea of a history of time as well as place has come to him, but his desire for further travel is dulled. If someone could be flung into the ancient past, left to explore, then retrieved, their memories could likewise be extracted, and a book written, all without ever having to leave the comforts of home. "Hm? Visitors? Let them in, let them in! I think I can use them. Mellincanthus! Prepare to open a chroncyclic vortex."

### **Borndrevin's Fine Sluggery**

The mocking-slug is known mostly as a Kaiinish fashion statement, but trade brings with it concepts, and thus,

5. Instructions are unavailable, but a discerning and wise individual will easily learn their function.

6. Cunningly disguised to resemble a mere pebble.

7. A question of some import, and one that purchasers of any of Dornvale's works would do well to ponder. While Dornvale is diligent, the world is still large. He has seen it all, but he has not seen it all recently. Some scholars privately concede that in some cases his information may be a thousand years out of date.

Borndrevin has opened a sluggery here in Forrell's Port. Virginal slugs are for sale at reasonable rates, though providing matter for the 'archetype' is up to the purchaser. For those who have not yet seen the Bestiary, the mocking-slug is a foot-long invertebrate of foul mien and fouler scent, with the singular useful trait of being able to take on the facial features of a chosen individual. Once set, these features cannot be changed, and inducing a mocking slug to resemble a rival is considered an insult at once both clever and base. The Sluggery supplements its business with small costumes that can be used to dress the slug in the same fashion as the person it has been compelled to resemble. (A small bit of hair, fingernails, or other organic detritus from the target is needed to perform the process.)

### The Glistening Palette

"Fine Dining In Forrell's Port" has for ages been considered a canonical example of the non-existent book,<sup>8</sup> but Arch-Cuisinologist Jolan of Ascolais seeks to change this. Several years past, he was struck by a vision, and felt compelled to leave his home and family and travel the arduous road to Forrell's Port, where he established the Glistening Palette in a momentarily prestigious portion of the city. (Those who claim his motivation was due to gambling debts are speaking out of the back of their throats, as the saying goes.) The Glistening Palette is indeed an establishment suitable for the most demanding gourmand. A mere whiff of the fine scents emanating from it, and individuals will be compelled to Resist Gourmandism or be drawn inside for a meal or two. The menu is wide and exotic, and every dish on it is prepared to perfection.

The costs are extreme, and remain undisclosed until after the meal. Jolan notes the reason for this: "I exist to provide the finest of foods and to satisfy the most delicate of tastes. Yet some people will deny themselves pleasure simply due to over-sensitivity to the number of terces in their pouch. Rather than dissuade people with a presentation of costs that may cause them to miss the most wondrous dining of their meager lives, I demand they order what they desire without any concern for price. That must be settled when the food has been consumed." Those who find themselves unable to pay may discover that Jolan (and his rather crude 'Waitstaff Sentinels') consider 'pain' to be a sensory experience as important as 'taste'. Yet the world is complex and alternatives often appear; certain services, most notably the gathering of rare ingredients, might be performed instead of payment. Dornvale is a favored patron of the Glistening Palette, and will often be willing to spare a portion of an indenture point to assure compliance in these matters.



### Two-Step Terrace

Overseeing large portions of the city, this raised area is home to the wealthier citizens. A lot of it has fallen into decay but it is considered gauche in the extreme to mention, or even seem to notice, the vast sprawl of ruins that separate houses. Attempts to point out the condition of most of the buildings will result in confused looks, offended sneers, and contemptuous explanations that "the manse of Tormalith the Fifth is currently undergoing extensive reconstruction."<sup>9</sup> According to the inhabitants, every house is currently inhabited by a family of the finest distinction; even a building reduced to a mere outline of the foundation is simply being 'worked on', with the inhabitants momentarily 'out of the city, enjoying their vacation'. No amount of Suasion can cause them to admit anything is amiss; pushing the issue too far may result in violence or madness.

### The Manse of Zaan (Summer House)

Zaan of the Five Directions is one of the premiere Arch-Magi of Sousanene Ulterior, by virtue of the condition that he is the solitary Arch-Magician of Sousanene Ulterior. While his primary manse is located near to the

8. A topic of much study at certain universities, on the grounds that existence and non-existence are fundamentally identical, and thus, by reading books which do not exist, one can gain understanding of those that do, but with much less effort.

9. Anyone who has had any experience of "getting the builders in" will find this sort of explanation has an aura of authenticity difficult to shake off.

White Road, he maintains a secondary domicile for summering in the southlands. The manse has a distressing tendency to walk about when Zaan is not residing in it, causing occasional property damage and road obstructions. This is nothing the natives of the Port are not used to, and take it in good humor. When Zaan is present, the manse stays put, but the sky above it is often shaded in lurid and dubious patterns, and strange visitors are known to walk the twisted roads of Forrell's Port, asking directions. There is nothing quite like a lost sandestin fearing an indenture point penalty to provoke hasty and accurate instructions as to the shortest route from 'here' to 'there'.

### **Inestimable Garden Maze**

This maze was commissioned during the Tenancy of Banderwal the Intriguing, and attempts since then to uproot it have failed. Thus, it has been left to expand indefinitely. The area of the maze is a small city square, a few dozen ells (at most) per side. Viewing into the square from a nearby elevation reveals a simplistic hedge maze, of interest only due to the many brightly colored flowers that grow intertwined among the walls. A local guide, if one is present, will warn visitors away, but if they push the issue, will shrug and direct them to the gate, which is usually shut, but never locked. Once they have entered the maze, the guide will mourn briefly for the terces which should have been his,<sup>10</sup> and leave, looking for some new source of income. Those who enter the maze, in turn, will quickly find that it possesses volume far in excess of what is apparent; indeed, the size of it is truly 'inestimable', as it curves inwardly upon itself into infinity. It cannot be traversed by any mundane means. (Magic of various sorts might permit it) The rich fruits of the maze do provide sustenance, and rain that strikes the city manages to strike the whole of the maze at once, no matter the fact that a finite amount of rain should not be able to cover an infinite amount of hedge-maze. Thus, over the centuries, colonies of inhabitants have settled various parts of the maze, and view newcomers as ideal sources of anything which the maze itself does not produce -- which is, in sum, nearly everything.

### **Apparent Apparels**

As with the Glistening Palette, Apparent Apparels is a bold and daring attempt to bring some form of civilization to the wretched backwaters of Forrell's Port. The finest items of clothing, from a Scaumish many-tiered hat to the ripple-gowns favored by high ladies of Kaiin are available here, at surprisingly, moderate prices. Rumors that the garments are woven of light and air and will dissolve quickly once the dweomers begin to fade (usually at some distance from the city) are to be considered base and meritless. Still, it is true that "All is impermanent; the world itself shall fade soon enough. Why should it be surprising that things of beauty, seeing the end of all that is creeping ever closer, choose to remove themselves?"

### **The Outer Dumps**

The lack of a strong civic structure in Forrell's Port has resulted in an intriguing solution to the problem of waste disposal. Those with wealth pay to have it hauled and dumped far from them; those who live near the dumpsites pay to have it hauled further still; and so on until it reaches a point at which no one has the terces to pay for any further outward motion. The Outer Dumps, then, are located throughout the city -- anywhere where the cycle of payment and motion ends. The result is that the detritus of civilization can be found around almost any random corner, which can be considered a great boon, if one is ever on a quest for decaying dolsan skins, remnants of clothing, and any fish too foul to sell even as a 'rare native delicacy' to visiting travelers. Given the age of both the city and the dumps, it is such that it is possible almost anything can be found somewhere, if one looks hard enough. If a character spends a day searching various Outer Dumps, he may regain one possession point lost due to any cause; he suffers a levy of 1 to all Persuade checks (unless his style is Intimidation) due to the repulsive odor he exudes.



10. He will, of course, attempt to persuade anyone who insists on seeing the garden to leave their belongings outside, but such efforts are often futile.

### *Follow That House!”*

The PCs have been commissioned by Zaan of the Five Directions (an Arch Mage of ill-defined nature; hence, any such individual of great power and odd tastes (which is most of them) may be substituted, if he could logically or illogically maintain a manse similar to Zaan’s in Forrell’s Port) to fetch a case of Blanefontine Verdant 801, a particularly rare and melancholic beverage that exists currently only in ancient caches, such as those regularly raided by Neviinese divers. For purposes of this escapade, we shall assume the bottles have been retrieved, and are safely in the hands of the players, and they need but perform the simple task of bringing it to the fore-room of Zaan’s mansion to collect their reward (or, alternatively, and more probably, to gain the surcease of some torment Zaan has inflicted upon them). Unfortunately, Zaan has been called away on pressing matters to the far north, and thus has abandoned his vacation home for the moment. This abandonment occurs just as the players arrive at the outer wall. They will see the house rear itself from the ground, turn cupolas and turrets left and right as if scenting the sea air, and then amble off over a hill. The players, of course, must pursue the house, but the pursuit is inordinately frustrating. For the first part, this offers a cunning and cruel GM the opportunity to inflict any of the regions of the Port previously described on the players, as they race down Morvane Street, claw through the Outer Dumps, and avoid rogues along Outerdock. Yet, there is a far more subtle problem: the manse seems unduly intent on not being caught. Locals familiar with the wanderings will note that this is odd. As a general rule, the motions of the house when untenanted are basically random, and while ill chance could account for some of the problems the PCs face, it would take the wrath of a thousand gods of ill fortune to account for the utter inability of the players to catch the house. Or, failing a thousand gods of ill fortune, one bored Sandestin. Fortiliaxius, one of Zaan’s more potent and most devious sandestins, was left to guard the manse, and given instructions to the effect of “And let no harmful person or substance pass these gates”. The Blanefontine, it seems, has been tainted by the long drowned years it spent beneath the Sea of Slow Tides, and has become a lethal, though delicate and refined, with a full body and a hint of impudence, poison. While some might argue that Fortiliaxius could simply purify the beverage, or just destroy it, he finds that the most enjoyable way to perform his ordered duty is by frustrating the servants of his master, in the vain hope they may someday exact revenge upon him. So he continues to move the house about, keeping just out of reach of the PCs, and furthermore uses his powers to create random obstructions and frustrations, voiding any efforts to reach the manse via any means less potent than sandestin-level magic. After the frustration level of the PCs has reached the stage where random geometric solids are being hurled with increasing velocity and precision at the GM, allow them some slight respite. A thief is seen stealing a bottle of the Blanefontine, sipping it, and then curling into a small ball before dissolving into acrid smoke. A seller of charms and trinkets manages to persuade the PCs to purchase a small ring that, he claims gives off a clamor in the presence of malign magic; to his shock, it turns out to do just that. (He then spends the rest of the scenario attempting to steal it back) And so forth. Eventually, the PCs will attempt to enter the mansion without the wine; at this point, they will find it far easier to accomplish. What remains is to explain to Zaan what happened to his wine, and to witness such punishment as may be inflicted on Fortiliaxius. Alternatively, Zaan might (on the suggestion of Dornvale, a regular house-guest) dispatch the PCs to a time an aeon or two earlier, when the wine was fresh and untainted, perhaps offering them the ‘assistance’ of Fortiliaxius, who will, undoubtedly, feel no bitterness or resentment towards those who pointed out the over-enthusiasm with which he pursued his duties.



# ❧ Home Brewed Heroes ❧

Vat Creatures as Player Characters in the Dying Earth RPG

*Ian Thomson*

Several of Jack Vance's Dying Earth stories describe vat creatures in human form; they are capable of reason, whimsy and share the urges of the capricious societies that encompass them. Some of these creatures seem little different from the humans of the Dying Earth, who themselves seem rather otherworldly from the point of view of a modern reader.<sup>1</sup> Others show certain obvious peculiarities compared to the humans of that era, including gross deformity, dazed awe, and more than usually insipid artlessness. Such traits would sorely disadvantage Player Characters. In Issue 2 of the *Excellent Prismatic Spray* we showed the practical methods by which mages and similar individuals create vat creatures. In this article we lay before you, perhaps somewhat audaciously, rules for creating them as characters with capabilities that will allow them to interact in most situations without evoking indecorous comments. These considerations ensure that such noteworthy individuals are neither summarily attacked as demons, nor routinely hunted as half-men. Neither will they be considered for display as curiosities – except perhaps in the rarest of occasions at the GM's whim. Vat creature characters are best when they are rare, but nonetheless make engaging additions to companies of adventurous vagabonds. A vat creature's presence might eventually draw similar misplaced individuals seeking tolerant companionship. The following rules are for Cugel-level adventures, although more powerful specimens could, with only minor changes, be adapted to suit a Turjan-level campaign.

The procedure for creation is as follows. Firstly choose your creature's origin. Secondly choose the principal role for which it was created. Third, apply innate abilities as you see fit. Lastly, proceed with the standard character creation rules, adjusted as suggested below.



## Origins

Numerous reasons can explain the circumstances by which a vat creature finds itself abroad, the simplest being the demise of its creator. Other vat creatures may have been freed in an act of goodwill, or they may have escaped to avoid unutterable torments. The bonus character creation points indicated are balanced. One of the more important factors is the ease with which they allow the Game Moderator to use the background material to inconvenience the character later.



### Origin Bonus Points

You were freed: None

Your creator was slain by an enemy: +3

You escaped from a violent or warped master: +4

You escaped only minutes before an appointment to be rendered into your raw components: +5

You are largely amnesiac of events prior to independence: +6

*The GM and the Player must together devise the general circumstance behind any choice other than the final one. The GM has free rein in the latter case.*

1. Or not. After all, readers of the *Excellent Prismatic Spray* indeed share many of the characteristics noted above of Dying Earth vat creatures.

## Vocations

As discussed in the article on vat creatures in *XPS2*, there are abundant reasons why a magician might manufacture a sentient. We shall here expand on those details. Vocation should reflect the proposed demeanor of each vat creature. Choosing abilities related to an occupational style generates bonus creation points, as would a random selection made under the standard rules. Random or alternate selection in these instances brings no benefit and should be discouraged. Whilst assigning ability ratings, the Primary Abilities recommended below may be raised to a maximum of 15 points, rather than the usual 10 in a Cugel level campaign. If this advantage is taken, then the GM correspondingly caps one of the Restricted Abilities.

With regard to Health, it is entirely plausible that the magician responsible for creating a vat creature has imbued it with superior vitality or robustness. Therefore, the ability cap on Health ratings is 15 rather than 10, regardless of other considerations. This is more likely to be a consideration for a Defender, but any other style of servitor may have been bred with unusual hardiness, for the creator's own valid reasons.

### ❖ The Loyal Retainer

What better course to assure that desirable combination of loyalty and competency in your chief hireling than to fashion him from raw materials in the comfort of your own workroom? You may then instruct him to your own high standards.

**Ratings:** PERSUASION: Glib or Forthright. REBUFF: Obtuse or Contrary. ATTACK: Cunning or Caution. DEFENSE: Dodge or Misdirection. MAGIC: Insightful or Curious.  
**PRIMARY ABILITIES:** Appraisal, Craftsmanship, Driving, Stewardship.  
**RESTRICTED ABILITIES:** Engineering, Living Rough, Pedantry, Physician.  
**OPTIONAL BONUS ABILITIES:** Animal Care, up to two further specializations in Craftsmanship.

### ❖ The Sensual Companion

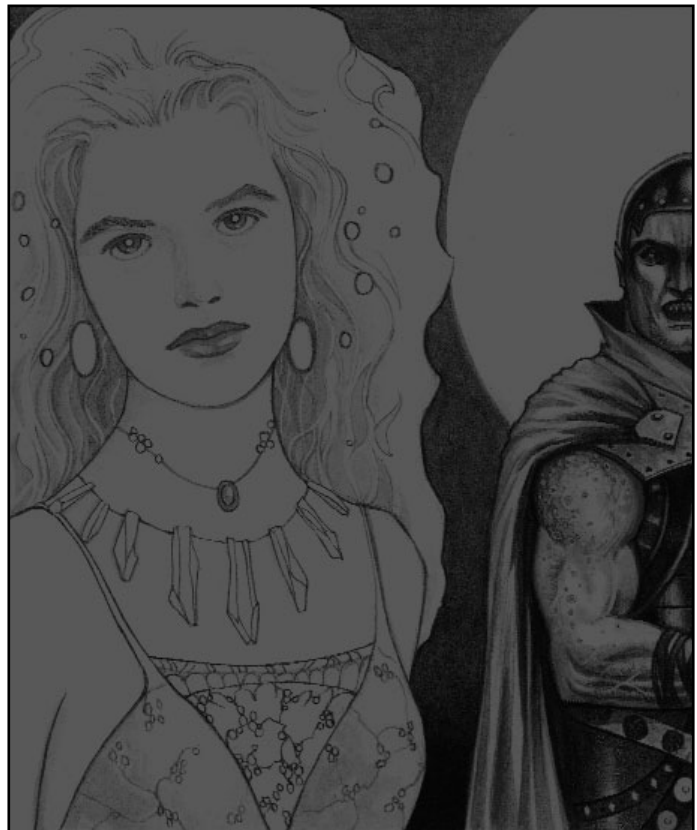
Magicians are by no means averse to the pleasures of the flesh, and indeed have more means than most to pursue such avenues of distraction.

**Ratings:** PERSUASION: Eloquent or Charming. REBUFF: Contrary or Pure-Hearted. ATTACK: Speed or Caution. DEFENSE: Misdirection or Vexation. MAGIC: Daring or Curious.  
**PRIMARY ABILITIES:** Athletics, Etiquette, Quick Fingers, Seduction.  
**RESTRICTED ABILITIES:** Driving, Engineering, Living Rough, Pedantry.  
**OPTIONAL BONUS ABILITIES:** Acrobatics, Dancing, Erotic Arts.

### ❖ The Dedicated Defender

Guardians can be fabricated using aspects of the hoon or deodand, so as to ensure their strength and bravery. Magicians of finer sensibility might be disinclined to have obvious horrors as doormen if cultured callers are expected, and take pains to design such servants with tolerable appearances and more moderate appetites.

**Ratings:** PERSUASION: Forthright or Intimidating. REBUFF: Wary or Penetrating. ATTACK: Strength, Finesse, or Ferocity. DEFENSE: Any excepting Vexation. MAGIC:





Forceful or Daring.

PRIMARY ABILITIES: Athletics, Concealment, Perception, Wherewithal.

RESTRICTED ABILITIES: Appraisal, Craftsmanship, Etiquette, Pedantry.

OPTIONAL BONUS ABILITIES: Craftsmanship (Weapons and Armor only), up to two further Weapon Skills.

### ❧ The Learned Assistant

A magician might fashion an apprentice or overseer to aid in his duties, whether practical or studious. A peculiarity unique to this class of vat creature could be a tendency to resemble its creator. This gives the added benefit (to the creator) that there exists the possibility that the creature may become a victim of mistaken identity during any assault on the magician's person. Further advantage (to the GM) is that this makes it so much easier to devise a scenario based on an embarrassing case of mistaken identity. Should the player decide that they will adopt this characteristic, it seems only fair to award 3 bonus creation points towards its fabrication.

Ratings: PERSUASION: Eloquent or Fortright. REBUFF: Wary or Lawyerly. ATTACK: Finesse or Caution. DEFENSE: Parry or Misdirection. MAGIC: Studious, Insightful, or Curious.

PRIMARY ABILITIES: Appraisal, Engineering, Etiquette, Pedantry.

RESTRICTED ABILITIES: Athletics, Gambling, Living Rough, Tracking.

OPTIONAL BONUS ABILITIES: Up to two further specializations in Pedantry, and may have a magical ability rating of up to 9.



### *Innate Abilities and Design Flaws*

Use of creation points is not necessary to gain an innate ability at the base value (8 for a Cugel-level campaign and 12 at Turjan-level). Yet the character must take on a flaw. (A possible flaw is indicated in brackets after each ability noted below.) The GM may allow creation points to be used to increase an innate ability up to the normal ability cap. It is also at the GM's discretion how many abilities (and flaws) a vat creature character is permitted. Innate abilities, and their accompanying flaws are really what make vat creature characters so different from common humans. The following process is proposed with flexibility in mind, and the Player may present a case for alternative special abilities. Due to the potentially enormous diversity of creations, we provide only recommendations. It is up to the GM to consider what will be likely to enhance play and what may disadvantage it. As an example of how this will work in practice, one possible type of innate ability, mentioned below only in passing, is the enchantment of a permanent magical effect. This may be an unconscious protection or as the capacity to evoke certain small magics at will, or at predetermined intervals (perhaps two or three times per day). Appropriate corresponding physical flaws could be unusual skin pigmentation or eyes that glow in the dark. One suitable mental flaw might be a general inability to comprehend the devious wiles of normal humans, illustrated by a general levy of 1 when attempting to resist Suasion of any kind. General psychological instability, such as a phobia towards a type of person or circumstance, is another style of flaw, imposing a levy of 1 on all ability attempts when exposed to the phobic stimulus.

As a rule a vat creature character should only have one innate ability and one corresponding flaw, unless the GM has their own reasons for allowing more. Whilst vat-created humans with bodily flaws are not prominent in Vance's work, Turjan and Mazirian both produced physically or mentally imperfect specimens. Even the vat of the masterful Pandelume yielded a beautiful woman who saw all reality as evil and ugly. Thus, it seems that perfection is likely guaranteed only to the most diligent and sophisticated Arch-Magicians. The process of creation by lesser individuals may result in any number of minor peculiarities, as well as those presented here. From the GM's point of view, flaws also provide in-built limits to a vat creature's superiority. Whilst faultlessly

enhanced vat creatures may certainly exist, these are not likely to be found wandering in the company of itinerant vagabonds. (Though they might appear among the more heroic retainers in Rhialto-level campaigns, where perhaps they will embody a minimum of three or four innate abilities.) The naming of these attributes as ‘flaws’ assumes the perspective of the common person. Quite possibly some ‘flaws’ are design specifications.<sup>2</sup>

A GM may devise their own flaws, but all obvious peculiarities should be such that charitable folk may assume they are the effect of a minor enchantment or curse. Of course, any of the more unfortunate physical features may cause the less enlightened to reach automatically for their disemboweling knives.



### ❖ Retainer

#### ACUTE HEARING

*Innate ability:* Can discern words spoken at a great distance or very softly. Useful when responding to orders issued clandestinely or from a distant wing of the Manse.

*Flaw:* Is easily distracted by loud noises. Receives a levy of 1 when attempting anything in a particularly noisy environment.

#### EMPATHETIC

*Innate ability:* Can discern the general emotions of any human. Useful in making sure that the needs of guests and hosts are met, and discerning if any guest intends harm. This operates as a magical perception.

*Flaw:* When dealing with persons of a Contrary nature, the retainer becomes immensely irritated and faces a levy of 1.

#### MAGICAL UTILITY

*Innate ability:* Can cast half a dozen household cantraps at will, such as ‘Polish Metal’, ‘Repair Wood’, ‘Propel Broom’, ‘Open/Close Portal’, ‘Open/Close Lock’.

*Flaw:* Faces a levy of 1 when attempting to cast regular spells that it has learned in the customary fashion.

#### STURDY

*Innate ability:* Can carry great burdens with little effort, or exert impressive steady force. This ability is not transferable to the combat situation, but is advantageous when moving furniture, bulky equipment, and the like.

*Flaw:* Faces a levy of 1 when trying to persuade others who know of this ability that it should not be the one chosen to undertake a task requiring strength.



### ❖ Companion

#### CONTORTIONIST

*Innate ability:* Multi-flexing joints are useful in a variety of athletic practices and in wriggling through small gaps or evading other confinement. Gains a boon of 1 to every Athletics attempt.

*Flaw:* Physically weak, suffering a levy of 1 on all tasks requiring strength, and on Defense rolls against attacks of Strength.

#### HYPNOTIC GAZE

*Innate ability:* This is ideal for distracting its creator’s rivals/victims, or for an unexpected style of Persuasion.

*Flaw:* Eyes glow when using this ability, prompting those who observe, or resist, its application to suspect that dark magics are at work.

#### NUTRITIONALLY EFFICIENT

*Innate ability:* Needs to eat only once every few days.



2. Reclassifying flaws as features has a long and ignoble history.

*Flaw:* Is at a levy of 1 when ingesting poisons or other disadvantageous substances via the digestive system.

SLEEPLESS

*Innate ability:* Requires no sleep, and gains a boon of 1 against any magical or narcotic influence that promotes sleep.

*Flaw:* Is at a levy of 1 when defending against Suasions of all styles, except Intimidation, during the nocturnal hours.



Guardian

CLAWED

*Innate ability:* Can extend and retract claws at will, giving a boon of 1 to all unarmed combat, and to Persuasion in the Intimidation style.

*Flaw:* Once this attribute is evidenced, the character runs the risk of being identified as being from half-man stock. A plethora of disadvantages stem from such a revelation. Additionally, the character may have slightly pointed ears, necessitating the adoption of elegantly coiffured shoulder length hair, or a hat with capacious flaps.

NIGHT VISION

*Innate ability:* Can see in the dark, providing a minimal light source is present, albeit only with greyscale vision.

*Flaw:* The pupils are unusually slanted—vertically like a cat’s—possibly causing social embarrassment, or colors cannot be distinguished, even in daylight.

TELESCOPIC VISION

*Innate ability:* With concentration can see over extended distances, or pick up visual details normally indiscernible.

*Flaw:* Pupils of the eyes are an unusual color, such as metallic or violet. This occasions discomfiture amongst the unsophisticated.

TOUGH

*Innate ability:* A fibrous physiology endures double the number of standard injuries.

*Flaw:* Has a thin prehensile tail, best kept concealed to avoid recognition of half-man heritage. Even if somehow removed—a painful process—it regenerates with unusual swiftness.



Assistant

COMPREHEND SPOKEN WORDS

*Innate ability:* Can discern the meaning of any spoken language, a fortuitous talent for eavesdropping on foreign visitors.

*Flaw:* The brain of this creature is decidedly inefficient at processing visual languages, creating a levy of 1 on any attempts to read.

COMPREHEND WRITTEN WORDS

*Innate ability:* Can read any non-magical language, being effectively an animate and sentient translation machine.

*Flaw:* Finds processing verbal complexities to be profoundly arduous, attracting a levy of 1 when attempting to resist Suasions of a Glib or Obfuscatory nature, or has eyes without pupils.

PROTECTIVE ENCHANTMENT

*Innate ability:* Tattooed internally with Laccodel's Protective Rune – for all practical purposes the source of its protection is unknown, save to its creator.

*Flaw:* Is completely incapable of casting any magic more efficacious than cantraps.

RESISTANT TO FIRE

*Innate ability:* Perhaps the previous assistant was destroyed in an unfortunate workroom conflagration?

*Flaw:* Is vulnerable to low temperatures, attracting a levy of 1 on all actions undertaken when its person, or the immediate environment, is as cold as a winter's night or more so, or skin has a silvery tint



*Standard Development*

When creating a vat creature character, Persuasion, Rebuff, Attack, Defense, Health, and Magic attributes are devised as described in the standard rules, with the variations noted above. Any abilities that clash with the character's role within their creator's household (such as a Companion with superior fighting ability) have been acquired since independence. Possessions are adequately detailed in the standard rules, and only the Resistance abilities remain to be deduced. Whilst a case can be made for various Resistance styles matching the character's original purpose, the reality is that one character might gravitate towards a particular tendency, whilst another from an identical background could well be drawn in a different direction. Therefore, the choice of Resistance(s) is left to the individual player, who by now knows their vat creature character far better than we do. The player and GM should work this out between them. In any other game than the Dying Earth RPG, it might be necessary to encourage those playing vat creatures to have their exotic characters behave in a suitably quixotic fashion. The citizens of the Dying Earth are sufficiently decadent, parsimonious, and obscure in their motivations that even the manufactured motivations and deportment produced in both vat and laboratory may pass without remark.

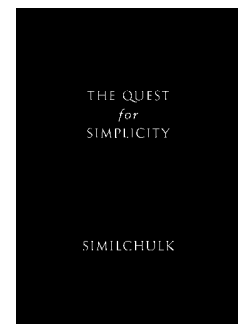


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# ❧ The Laughing Magician *Part II* ❧

*Steve Dempsey*

*In which we continue the adventure begun in 'The Laughing Magician Part I',  
The Excellent Prismatic Spray Volume 3.*

After the PCs are rescued by Tostveld it is assumed that they will work for him. Tostveld will give them letters of introduction to his customers. He will require them to return to him after each job, with an endorsement from the client in question, at which point he will pay them. He will not offer any advance against their wages, reasoning that, if they cannot support themselves, they are not the people he wants to hire.

*This section contains two scenarios, in similar and partially linked formats. First is the name of the customer for whom the PCs are acquiring whatever it is they seek, followed by a detailed adventure. GMs may use the stories in any order.*



## THE MUTROON

*Customer: Geodine Radkode*

Geodine Radkode is in his own estimation a great artist.<sup>1</sup>

He is the head chef to Citizen Makmyre in Taun Sfere. He is corpulent and sweaty. He wears the usual Sferite garb of grey outer coat with a dazzling yellow silk lining. He works with his team of geriatric under-cooks, in the highest part of one of the taller mansions, on top of the hill in Taun Sfere. He claims that only those with at least fifty years worth of experience would be able to understand the true nature of his art.

He does not demand potions and paregorics from Tostveld, but rather rare ingredients for his kitchens. He wishes to prepare a Quadrip Soufflé to celebrate Makmyre's 15th year in office. It is up to the PCs to obtain the Quadrip.

### The Mutroon

Traditionally this fabulous beast has four legs, a segmented tail and a long, segmented neck that culminates in a large, ugly, tooth-filled head. It can change its shape and usually masquerades as a person, either as Patch, a young, blond pageboy with a button nose and bright blue eyes, or as Gualpahsimp, the fallow, dark-haired groom. The Mutroon has been seen in the woods near Kaiin. The quadrip of a Mutroon is nothing more than its eyelash, but must be removed in the correct manner (at night, with the left hand, using the silver tongs that the chef will give them). The Mutroon will expire during removal of its quadrip, but it is otherwise effectively indestructible. This bizarre state of affairs is the result of the activities of a mage, Tyberdbaust the Nitid. Early in the 21st Aeon he was asked to create a creature that was worth hunting. Eventually he created the Mutroon, which has no other purpose than to be the quarry. It will not cause any problems between hunts, rarely turns on its pursuers, and always provides good sport. If, perchance, it is killed then another appears, created by a thaumaturgic mechanism Tyberdbaust concealed somewhere in the area.

The taking of the quadrip is an act redolent of symbolism, most of it now lost. The inclusion of the quadrip in a dish is equally symbolic.<sup>2</sup>



1. An opinion shared by some and derided by others. Such is the thorny path the great artist must tread.

2. Especially when one considers it adds solely to the esteem of the dish while contributing nothing to its taste, texture or nutritional content.

### *Royal and Ancient Mutroon Hunting Society*

Prince Kandive the Golden is the patron of this Society, the Kaiinite club that has assumed regulatory powers for this activity. All hunters must acquire the proper regalia and keep the society's observances. These strictures are a source of revenue, as each hunter must own the necessary accoutrements and maintain a personally dedicated, hand-copied book of offices and hours.

Naturally, these prerequisites are only available from the society's hereditary suppliers, the couturier Jasqualmine and the scrivener Quilderaske.

The members defend their monopoly on Mutroon hunting jealously, although actual hunts are rare. Between excursions, the hunters keep to their clubhouse, a low, over-fussy lodge with three cupolas, covered with wisteria and scorpion-vines and set in its own grounds on the edge of the Scar. Their kitchen provides potluck, fortified with the dregs of the previous night's wine, and their cellar offers a conservative collection of sturdy, hearty vintages. Pages attend them, feigning rapt attention when members tell their tales, filling their plates and freshening their glasses. They will also arrange the delivery of food from local restaurateurs and bakers.

As noted above, two of the servants, a helpful groom called Gualpahsimp and a lively boy called Patch, are the Mutroon itself, in disguise. Both are well liked by the members, but while Gualpahsimp will not assist anyone until they are members of the society, Patch will help them join. Although the Mutroon is simply keeping all its enemies where it can see them, it will seem to the party that Patch is possessed of a puckish sense of fun.

#### **The Hunt**

The Annual Mutroon Hunt is the only occasion when the club does any hunting, and is far less frequent than the adjective "annual" would suggest. It is largely a ceremonial affair, which Prince Kandive observes from his pleasure barge on the Scaum. Prince Kandive must consent to sanction such an event. Methods of persuasion that have worked in the past include giving him some form of amusing yet overwhelmingly decadent gift or ridding him of one of his more tiresome courtiers. If the PCs manage to achieve this he will declare a Hunt in two weeks and appoint them as its stewards. These high and honorable liturgies require that they organize and pay for the event. This includes ensuring that all members are suitably attired. Naturally, the Stewards are free to defray expenses in any way they see fit, provided the dignity and grandeur of the occasion survives unscathed. Gualpahsimp and Patch will prove immensely helpful, in organizing the Hunt.

The Hunt follows a time honored plan (see 'Rules of the Hunt', below). On the eve of the Hunt, the Stewards hold a splendid, opulent, extravagantly catered, masked ball. All members who wish to hunt must attend, accompanied by a suitable partner.<sup>3</sup>

At midnight, the rules of the Hunt are read out, and lots are cast to select one of the members' guests. This person is declared "mutroony", and is dressed in a bright yellow domino. The Mutroonie<sup>4</sup> will serve as a substitute if the



*While attendees are masked, servants are not. It is possible that the wives of Hunt members resent this, but then again not – their partners tend to leave the wives to their own devices. So to speak.*

3. The suitability is something of a social minefield. Being accompanied by a scandalous mistress or a dowdy wife can bring a member into disrepute, while giving ones arm to a creditable courtesan will raise ones standing.

4. The terminology is complex. The person declared "mutroony" is "The Mutroonie". We make no attempt to explain the grammatical rules behind this, indeed the editorial office believes there are none and the usage is purely arbitrary.

Mutroon should not be caught by the following midnight.<sup>5</sup>

After the ball, the members change into riding clothes and assemble for a stirrup cup, served by the Mutroonie. They set off, on their riding beasts, accompanied by leashed erbs, in pursuit of their quarry. There is no set pattern and the hunt will trail over Kaiin or the local countryside, upsetting peasants and making a nuisance of itself. The Mutroon's spoor will be found and followed, the erbs keen sense of smell aiding in this. When finally all appears lost, the Mutroon will be cornered in some dell or up a back alley-way. Here it will make a last stand and, as usual, escape. Unless, of course, the PCs intervene with some better plan than that forced upon the members of the hunt through adherence to the Rules.

The Mutroon is, of course, well familiar with the hunters' plans, whether traditional or novel, having listened to their formulation. The beast participates in the hunt out of a sense of duty. It is horribly strong and difficult to kill. Its successful escape dooms an innocent<sup>6</sup> to a day tied to a pole.

### The Club

By Royal Decree, only members of RAMS are eligible to hunt the Mutroon.

Memberships can be inherited, but is otherwise by invitation and for life. Should the adventurers wish to join, the most obvious course is to prevail upon two current members to propose and second the application at a fortnightly management meeting. The members vote on the nominations, and all must agree for the candidate to succeed. In all usual circumstances (that is, unless Kandive interferes), the Society believes its roster to be full, hence vacancies only arise on the death of a current member.

For the imaginative, the annals of the Society record that, on occasion, strangers have impersonated members, living or dead. Patch, will, of course be able to provide membership lists and addresses, both past and present.

Patch will also inform those who ask that the following schemes have worked in the past.

- ✦ Serving the RAMS for many years until nominated and accepted.
- ✦ Prevailing upon a current member to change his will, before his sudden demise.
- ✦ Bribing or blackmailing a member for his place.
- ✦ Changing the waiting list so that one's name is at the top and precipitate the removal of a member.
- ✦ Change the membership list.

The final route is to secure membership through Prince Kandive's fiat.<sup>7</sup>

### Current Members

The Society is not the most prestigious club in Kaiin,<sup>8</sup> but it is of the highest rank, as the Prince is its patron. Its members sit at the low end of his table at banquets. Every noble house is represented in the Society's rolls.

**PATRON: PRINCE KANDIVE**, a decadent wizard

The ruler of Kaiin is a degenerate hedonist<sup>9</sup> who rules through dint of superior magic and the apathy of his subjects. He judges their moods well and knows just when to hold spirit raising municipal events (such as a Mutroon Hunt or an eccentric race). His control of Kaiin is unassailable. Perhaps another Arch-Mage could wrest it from him, but none have tried. Commentators suggest that he has had time enough to establish dependable safeguards against interference.<sup>10</sup> See *DERPG* p157 for more details on Kandive.

5. This alone serves to indicate that perhaps dowdy wives outnumber creditable courtesans on the guest list.

6. Given the nature of those to whom the lot of Mutroonie normally falls, innocent is perhaps a strange term to use.

7. Given Kandive's nature this is perhaps the most dangerous choice.

8. That honor belongs to the Plumpers, whose job it is to make sure that the cushions on the Pleasure Barge are sufficiently fluffed up.

9. Or should he be reading this, a farsighted and tolerant ruler whose wisdom and strong right arm have guided our city successfully for many years.

10. Cynics merely point out that Arch-mages are as apathetic as the rest of the population when it comes to the exercise of authority in all things but getting rapid service when ordering drinks in a four ale bar.

Kandive chooses to have someone else defray entertainment expenses wherever possible. He also prefers any event to be at least as good as the last festival held in his city, and regards falling standards poorly.



**CHAIRMAN:** LAMANVIN SULOBACH, an ill-mannered duffer

*“Bwah, watsgoingon. Nonsense, I forbid it absolutely, bwah [snore]”*

A large fellow of high standing, who is rude and ill-mannered to all but his social superiors, and even then only begrudgingly. Lamanvin can often be found reclining in his favorite chair sleeping off the effects of a Live Eel pie and a 40 year-old Cuirnif Smoked Brandy. It is unwise to disturb him as this only draws a cloud of invective and partly digested eel. His jowls have grown so that it is virtually impossible to understand a word he says, which has been the ruin of many a servant. Patch, of course, understands him perfectly.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Forthright) 8, Rebuff (Contrary) 11, Attack (Ferocity) 8, Defense (Parry) 6, Health 2, Etiquette 6,<sup>11</sup> Wealth 10.

**Resistances:** Rakishness 4.



*Members of the Club enjoy a variety of less formal meetings throughout the year.*

**SECRETARY:** KOYFLAM SAR, an absentee

This sprightly young fellow inherited this position at the untimely demise of the rest of his family in a cruel and unusual bookbinding accident. He was at the time of adventuring in parts unknown. When questioned as to his whereabouts, all an unhelpful sandestin would venture was that he ‘hadn’t been eaten yet’. Until this uncertain situation is explicated, the post remains unresolved.



**TREASURER:** TURSPIDE TWANPO, a profligate spender

*“What, only forty seven courses! Adequate for a rustic picnic perhaps but not a Club Banquet.”*

Turspide is the life and soul of the club. He organizes the biggest banquets, the most deliciously decadent masked balls and commissions the outré livery for the Hunt.

He has never managed to keep the club’s spending under control, seeking to outdo every last affair with the next. As yet the Prince has put up with his foibles and constant begging for funds as the diversions have always entertained the mob.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Glib) 11, Rebuff (Obtuse) 10, Attack (Cunning) 6, Defense (Misdirection) 9, Health 3, Etiquette 6, Scuttlebutt 5, Seduction 2, Wealth 3.

**Resistances:** None.

11. When insulted by Lamanvin one is left with the impression one has been insulted by a master, as each snub is measured to a nicety.



YAN ALTA, Keeper of the Kennels

*“Don’t worry, it brushes off.”*

Yan Alta is of the old Kaiin aristocracy. She is severe but fair, stiff, thin, tall and class-conscious. She holds the honorary position of Keeper of Dogs for the Royal and Ancient Mutroon Society and while she doesn’t care much for RAMS, she dotes on her beloved pets.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Pure-hearted) 10, Rebuff (Penetrating) 10, Attack (Ferocity) 8, Defense (Vexation) 9, Health 7, Athletics 2, Driving 5, Etiquette 8, Living Rough 3, Pedantry (Animal breeding) 4, Perception 5, Riding 11, Stewardship 6, Tracking 4, Wealth 15, Wherewithal 6.

**Resistances:** Indolence. 6.

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FUSCRUFEL MOR, a plebeian tailor

*“Perhaps you will get to inspect my craftsmanship in situ.”*

This fellow belongs to a noble line now fallen on hard times. His job is sewing codpieces for the deodands in Prince Kandive’s pit. He fashions leather codpieces in varied harlequin colors corresponding to the various noble houses, used to identify the deodands for betting purposes during games in the Prince’s palace. Fuscrufel never attends RAMS meets, nor does he care for any of the other members. He is well aware of the value of his heritage and is keeping it to pass on to any offspring that he might engender. Unfortunately, on account of his occupation he has a stoop, scarred and pitted arms and face and only two fingers on his left hand. He will view any amorous approach with ungracious suspicion.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Forthright) 5, Rebuff (Wary) 8, Attack (Cautious) 4, Defense (Parry) 5, Health 3, Athletics 2, Craftsmanship 12, Etiquette 3, Pedantry (Deodand musculature) 12, Stewardship 2.

**Resistances:** Rakishness. 5.

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LORYS PEL, Orthodoxy Administrator

*“That color is suitable only for elderly virgins or the children of night soil collectors risen above their station.”*

Lorys Pel works for the Prince and is charged with ensuring the proper observance of rights, customs and protocol as laid down in the Book of Motholam. The Prince mainly keeps him around for comedy value, as flaunting customs causes Lorys to fly into a rage, which he must contain whilst in presence of his sovereign. He generally vents his spleen on his long suffering and mousy wife Engeulade.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Obfuscatory) 8, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 12, Attack (Cautious) 7, Defense (Intuition) 8, Health 4, Athletics 1, Etiquette 12, Pedantry (The Rules of the RAMS) 10, Stewardship 2.

**Resistances:** None.

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BRASS TOKER, an absent-minded biologist

*“Royal and Ancient Mutroon Hunting Society. Me, a member? I suppose I might be.”*

Brass Toker is hardly ever present in Kaiin, but can be found wandering the nearby wilds in search of specimens for his collection in the Natural History Museum. His club badge of office is somewhere in the museum.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Pure-hearted) 8, Rebuff (Penetrating) 11, Attack (Cautious) 11, Defense (Surefootedness) 12, Health 6, Athletics 5, Etiquette 1, Living Rough 6, Pedantry 8, Perception 5, Riding 4, Stewardship 1, Tracking 6, Wealth 8, Wherewithal 2.

**Resistances:** All at 2.

HALASSO MIRCH, a dull wizard

*“On the other hand it might be true, but personally I always felt that the answer lay in the detail of the problem. Taking a long view I would say that...”*

Halasso is soporifically dull. Almost everyone who talks to him falls asleep. As is well known to Kandive, this is an effect of the sloe-gall pomade Halasso uses to dress his hair into its raven’s beak quiff and wings.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Obfuscatory) 9, Rebuff (Contrary) 12, Attack (Caution) 9, Defense (Misdirection) 11, Health 3, Magic(Studious) 20, Athletics 1, Etiquette 5, Pedantry 16, Perception 5, Stewardship 2, Wealth 17, Wherewithal 2.

**Resistances:** None.

He knows all the spells in the *Dying Earth Rulebook*.

JINCEVEE PETISH, an effusive Realtor

*“Obviously you cannot manage with less than fifteen bedrooms.”*

Although it is probably a thankless task in Kaiin, city of a thousand manses, Jincevee has nonetheless taken on the mantle of the Munificent Realtor. When anyone’s manse is no longer inhabitable, Jincevee will find them a suitable replacement. He will arrange transport of goods, chattels and wives, ensure that the new manse is of a grandeur befitting the occupant and that any neighbors are of suitable station. He is well known for his dedication to his work and what free time he has is spent at the Club. Jincevee has one servant who helps in his endeavors, the rather less enthusiastic, over-worked and sarcastic Vrazcas.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Eloquent) 12, Rebuff (Obtuse) 11, Attack (Cunning) 11, Defense (Misdirection) 9, Health 2, Athletics 2, Driving 2, Etiquette 2, Pedantry (the houses of Kaiin) 15, Perception 5, Riding 2, Seduction 3, Stewardship 7, Wealth 18, Wherewithal 4.

**Resistances:** None (The simple statement “He is a Realtor” should be explanation enough.)

BUNDERASLER, a conniving antiquarian. (See ‘Horse Brasses’, below).

SKIVLER BALCH, a ruthless taxidermist

*“I have an armature of just your size.”*

Skivler is the best taxidermist in all Ascolais. He has a rival in Cuirnif, Narliman, who is in the service Duke Orbal. Skivler justly regards Narliman as an unworthy ruffian, who sullies the craft of taxidermy. Narliman is no artist, merely an artisan, who thus has a larger collection of specimens than Skivler: both are attempting to be the first to complete a collection of the Bestiary of Brass Toker (3rd ed. revised). Skivler is somewhat hampered in that he requires perfect specimens whereas Narliman will make do with any moth-eaten or well hung scrap from a deodand’s larder.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Forthright) 8, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 10, Attack (Ferocity) 8, Defense (Dodge) 10, Health 2, Athletics 2, Appraisal 3, Craftsmanship (Taxidermy) 9, Etiquette 3, Pedantry 4 (Taxidermy) 8, Perception 3, Physician 1, Quick Fingers 6, Seduction 1, Stewardship 3, Wealth 4, Wherewithal 2.



*‘Fang and Feather’ Beautifully composed and executed, this classic dining table centrepiece is testament to Balch’s skills.*

**Resistances:** None.

ZA HANTLIN, a rich debutante

*“Oh you poor dear.”*

Za is determined to marry Prince Kandive and rule Ascolais by his side. She thinks she can make a ‘decent’ man out of him. Kandive, who as yet has not tired of her efforts to improve him, is quite touched by her naiveté and perseverance. Occasionally he has her accidentally pushed among his captive deodands, but so far she has always managed to talk her way out, in the process reforming the poor creatures and ruining them for the pit. She keeps inferiors at an appropriate distance but can usually be persuaded to bring to any deserving cause the full rigor of her unbridled enthusiasm.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Charming) 16, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 10, Attack (Strength) 3, Defense (Dodge) 8, Health 4, Athletics 2, Etiquette 4, Seduction 8, Wealth 25.

**Resistances:** Gourmandism 4, Indolence 4.

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STAFF

YOIMMOUS, an obsequious mounter

*“Aye sir, naught but a touch of colic and bad temper.”*

It is Yoimmous’s duty to ensure that the mounts used in the hunt are correctly stabled and prepared to hunt at any moment. As such he will be found hanging around at the back of the club, grooming the beasts. Should anyone approach him, he will adopt a most sickening and fawning manner, claiming that “although [he] tries to the best of his abilities, the beasts really do require several daily brushings with Old Samanel’s Exclusive, a tonic that brings a shine to their coats.” He will, of course, require payment to apply this remarkable paregoric.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Obfusatory) 11, Rebuff (Obtuse) 9, Attack (Strength) 9, Defense (Parry) 9, Health 4, Pedantry (Riding) 6, Physician (Vet) 2, Scuttlebutt 6, Riding 6, Stewardship 3.

**Resistances:** None.

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WEAM, a recalcitrant erb handler

*“More than my jobs worth Sir, happen you’d better take it up with Mistress Yan Alta.”*

Weam is the keeper of the erb kennels. He is also responsible for their training. Never having seen the Mutroon, he has not been able to train them to hunt one and given his generally lazy and surly manner, he is ill disposed to using his initiative. He has taken to hiring out the erbs, suitably muzzled, to pull carts for the local fishermen who use them to haul their catch up from the quays to the markets at first light. These rugged men will be ill-disposed to any who tries to deprive them of the means to their livelihood, and Weam will certainly not become involved.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Obfusatory) 8, Rebuff (Wary) 9, Attack (Cunning) 10, Defense (Dodge) 9, Health 3, Athletics 2, Driving (Erbs) 1, Pedantry (Erb handling) 1, Scuttlebutt 3.

**Resistances:** None.

 KILLCROP & NOTAPHILY 

Bankers, experts in champerty, forfeiting, and defalcation, are pleased to announce the opening of our third branch in Kaiin. Prospective customers are welcome to visit our new premises, situated in the Threek opposite the laundry pool for the convenience of the many businesses in the area.

GUALPAHSIMP, the helpful groom

*“Yes Sir, at once.”*

Herein lies the key to this mysterious pastime. This fellow was, is and always will be the groom. He is, in fact, the marvelous Mutroon. Where safer to hide than in full view, what better position to obtain than chief amongst one’s own pursuers? Sallow, quiet, tall, thin and dark-haired, he is a most excellent and helpful fellow, polite, well turned out and knowledgeable. He is always ready to help a member of the club remember their excuse for staying out all night (an AGM perhaps or by order of the Prince himself). He is, in fact, the very model of a man’s man. During the hunt, Gualpahsimp will turn up when required then absent himself with the minimum of fuss. He will revert to his true form to lead the Hunt on for a while then will once more assume human form when some excitement has been achieved.



PATCH, the lively page

*“Your drinks, my lords, as ordered.”*

Shortly before sunset Gualpahsimp packs up his chamois, reamers and brushes and goes home. Soon afterwards, Patch reports for work. He is a small, attractive, lively boy who attends to the members’ needs with brisk efficiency. He ripostes cheekily, but amusingly, when spoken to. He is popular with the members and considered an asset to the Society. As is proper, Patch does not reveal any personal information to Members.



JASQUALMINE, couturier

*“Look on the bright side Madame. You may not be able to breathe, but this corset will stop an axe never mind the Mutroon.”*

Jasqualmine makes all the liveries, clothes and accouterments required for the Hunt, including the ensembles of the Eve of Hunt Ball and the mutroonie’s domino. To his intense indignation, he must follow Turspide Twanpo’s designs,<sup>12</sup> which are inelegant, over-fussy and too tight for comfort.

Like his ancestors, Jasqualmine has discovered that the members and stewards do not regard settling their accounts as pressing matters. This attitude should force genteel poverty upon him, but Kandive is happy to purchase the members markers, for reasons that are easy to surmise.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Eloquent) 9, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 9, Attack (Speed) 10, Defense (Misdirection) 11, Health 3, Athletics 2, Appraisal 3, Craftsmanship (Needlework) 8, Etiquette 3, Quick Fingers 3, Scuttlebutt 6, Wealth 4.

**Resistances:** None.



## Jasqualmine

Couturier to the Royal and Ancient Mutroon Hunting Society  
is proud to advertise in support of the annual display of Society hunting fashions.

*Shun cisvestism and disport yourself in habilitory elegance*

A small deposit will secure any garment until full payment is arranged.



12. Twanpo shuns the Taun Tassel cut which is less restrictive, preferring instead to rely upon corsage of considerable sturdiness to fit the wearer to the garment.

QUILDERASKE, scrivener.


*“I assure you the documentation is all in order.”*

Quilderaske is the Society’s chief copyist. He also provides all the stationary and supplies the Society needs. Some of their requirements, such as tanned deodand hides for binding, mermelant belly parchment, dried grue bile for inks; are difficult to obtain. Quilderaske’s wife and four sons assist him

**Ratings:** Persuade (Charming) 10, Rebuff (Wary) 9, Attack (Finesse) 11, Defense (Intuition) 8, Health 4, Athletics 1, Appraisal 3, Craftsmanship (Penmanship) 8, Pedantry (The Affairs of the Club) 6, Seduction 3, Stewardship 3, Wealth 2.

**Resistances:** None.

**QUILDERASKE**  
 Scrivener to the Royal and Ancient Mutroon  
 Hunting Society is honoured to be asked to  
 support the society at this time.



We provide a comprehensive chirographic service, including the composition of both personal correspondence and official documents such as bills of manumission or property deeds. Do not waste your superiors’ time with trifles; our skilled penmen can create the appropriate documents for you and add a signature distinguishable from the original only by its greater elegance.

Available to reputable customers are limited quantities of tanned deodand hides.

### ❧ *Rules of the Mutroon Hunt* ❧

- ❧ All members who wish to hunt must present their credentials to the President at midnight at the Eve of Hunt Ball.
- ❧ Payment for the right to Hunt must be made to the Treasurer, to whit one terce.
- ❧ One person shall be drawn from amongst the unclean and declared “mutroony” to serve as a substitute should the beast not be captured.
- ❧ Members shall be suitably attired, in spurs, over-cape and breeches. They must mount their beasts and not dismount until the Hunt is eventuated.
- ❧ For tracking the Mutroon dogs are used unleashed; they criss-cross the ground searching for the scent.
- ❧ The use of erbs in tracking the Mutroon is permitted but they must not be allowed to harry the beast, and hence are kept on a leash. Once the scent is found they follow more closely and more quickly than dogs. At this point the dogs are called in and leashed.
- ❧ The Mutroon must be captured using a ceremonial foul, an eight-ell length of Ermish Ash surmounted with a ligature plaited from the hair of eight good women of Kaiin.<sup>13</sup>
- ❧ That person who captures the creature is said to have “Mutrooned” and declared throughout the town as “Mutrooner.”
- ❧ The Mutroon is paraded to the Transpontine Gate where it is hoisted on an armature for display to the populace for no less than twelve days.
- ❧ If the Mutroon is not captured by midnight of the day of the Hunt, the mutroonie is brought forth and serves as a substitute in the proceedings aforementioned. In these circumstances, the member whom the mutroonie accompanied to the ball is declared Lesser Mutrooner.
- ❧ All members, saving the Patron and the Mutrooner (regardless of degree), must donate two cases of fine wines, one white and one red, worthy of laying down, to the Patron, to the Society cellar, and to the

13. In spite of ribald jests to the contrary, there are many good women in Kaiin and the maintaining of the ceremonial foul is among the easiest of the erb handlers tasks.

Mutrooner. The vintages given to each recipient need not be of the same quality.

- ❧ The Stewards must report any breach of the rules to the President.
- ❧ The penalty for any transgression of the rules is a forfeit to be chosen by the President.

### Running the Hunt

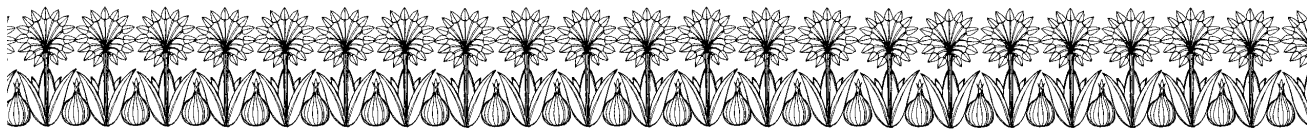
Players should commence by rolling against their characters' Perception ability. The character with the best score spots the Mutroon and leads the hunt. That character will choose from their Pedantry, Tracking or Perception pools, and every roll takes the hunt on a further hour. On a Dismal Failure the character utterly loses the trail and other characters may try again to pick up the trail. On an Illustrious Success, the Mutroon has been cornered. The character who is leading the hunt must attempt to trap the Mutroon in the traditional fowl.

### THE MUTROON

**Ratings:** Persuade (Whatever trumps his opponent) 10, Rebuff (Whatever trumps his opponent) 10. (These Abilities may only be used in Human form.)

**Resistances:** Attack (Strength) 2~, Defense (Dodge) 2~, Health 4, Athletics 5, Stealth 2.

Other characters may “gang up” on the Mutroon to aid in its capture, but the one who defeats the creature is the Mutrooner and takes the glory. GM-controlled characters present may also take part in the vulgar brawl. The GM should roll a d6 for each one; on an odd number they unwittingly assist the capture and may be included in the “ganging up”, but on an even number they equally unwittingly assist the Mutroon to escape, effectively canceling out one of the characters ganging up. If the party are successful in the combat the Mutroon is taken, but if the Mutroon wins it breaks away from the hunters and has to be chased again.



## HORSE BRASSES

*Customer: Bunderasler*

Bunderasler wants to be the secretary of the Royal and Ancient Mutroon Society. He thinks that high position in such a prestigious society will bring him the consequence and influence that befits a man of his intellectual prowess. He owns a shop in Kaiin that he likes to consider the ideal place for the wealthy customer to browse. Alas, it is more like one of those lesser types of market stall, but with a roof. It does indeed provide curios and artistic trinkets for the more discerning patron, amongst a mass of junk and broken furniture that, over the years, his agents have recovered for him. This band of people travel the length of Alмеры in their rickety carts in search of finds. Bunderasler also panders to Prince Kandive in the hope of advancement. The Prince amuses himself by asking him for more and more extravagant items, with the promise that on delivery he will once again consider the position of secretary.

Bunderasler is too self-assured and self-important to realize the deception. He is wise enough to spread his bets and has also been plying other members of the club with gifts and has had slightly more success. Gualpahsimp (see ‘The Mutroon’, above) has been running a book on whether Bunderasler will gain office or suffer some other, more cruel fate in the deodand pits. Bunderasler has been charged with finding a rare horse brass that the Prince feels will be quite delightful on the breast of his favorite concubine.<sup>14</sup>

14. We refuse to be drawn into prurient discussions as to what this opinion tells us of the Prince and his less widely shared predilections.

Unfortunately his last agents have disappeared and he is unaware of their fate (death in Count Orbal's punishment tubes, although some of them escaped). He knows that Tostveld has people who are experienced at this sort of thing and so has paid him to get the job done.



### Horse Brasses

Horse Brasses are a common feature of houses near the Valley of the Graven Tombs. They are to be found suspended above fireplaces for good luck, worn as ornaments or sewn into garments. During the 18th Aeon, it was common to bury the harness of favorite steeds with princes, sometimes even the mount as well. It should be noted that whilst the phrase 'Horse Brasses' remains as a widely accepted generic term, and many 'horse' brasses once adorned the harness of farlocks, mermelants and several other species of riding beast.

The protagonists' job is to travel to this place and, using an identification book,<sup>15</sup> find the particular object that Bunderasler requires: 'Melenila's Appearance of Joy'. This is a rather fine piece showing the allegorical representation of Joy appearing as a dray, making its deliveries. It is

remarkably similar to the rather less important and more common 'Fishwife Screaming at Noisy Deliverers'. A seer has confirmed to Bunderasler that the brass is still in a tomb in the valley. She also managed to ascertain that it lies within a tomb of a person with the same name as one of the PCs, which should cause them some anxiety. The exact location of this tomb is not known, although it lies about halfway up the valley.

There is some danger from ghosts in the Valley; Tostveld warns the PCs not to talk to them. For protection at night, he gives them each a ghost-bowl.

He also hands them a small pot of denatured deodand grease to ease the donning of the bowls. Although unscented, the grease is still rather runny and black. It is likely to stain clothing, and, with prolonged application, skin. Over-reliance on the lubricant could lead to its user being mistaken for a deodand.<sup>16</sup>

The exact location of 'Melenila's Appearance of Joy' depends on the whim of the GM. In the depths of the tomb is a fairly simple option, but other brasses can be found under the mold or in the water, with the crabs. More insidious is having the bandits discover it just before the PCs turn up and have them fling it into their net. Alternatively, they may have already sold it in town and when the PCs retire down-hearted and defeated to a nearby inn, they might find it above the fireplace, adorning the belt of the barman or perhaps even as decoration in the bottom of a beer mug.<sup>17</sup>



### Events

#### Bandits!

The initial danger in the valley is Carbondor and his gang. He could be persuaded to help the PCs, if they show mercy or offer to help in his quest to become a deodand. If the PCs do not deal with him in a permanent fashion, he will return to harry them once he recovers from his injuries.

#### Tombs

The PCs can look in any number of tombs before they find the correct one, a process limited only by their patience and the inventiveness of the GM.

15. Vraznark and Cilkother *Brasses and Other Metallic Harness Decorations in Almetry*.

16. Although to be fair, there are not many deodand with spindly shanks and a decided paunch.

17. Thus proving that seeking for wisdom in the bottom of one's beer mug may well be a valuable avenue of research.

✿ BUNDERASLER ✿

*"Look around, browse without restraint and wonder at the unequalled selection of marvels I have arranged for your delectation."*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Glib) 8, Rebuff (Obtuse) 10, Attack (Caution) 10, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 11, Health 3, Appraisal 3, Athletics 3, Etiquette 4, Pedantry 5, Stewardship 6, Wealth 10.

**Resistances:** None

*The very tomb required...*

As the antiquarian's seer revealed, the tomb that contains 'Melenila's Appearance of Joy' bears the name of one of the adventurers. A statue of an impaled ghoulish bear, clutching a battle flag, marks the site. The flag, exquisitely carved from ochre jadeite, bears the deceased's name, inlaid in serpentine.

Those of Bunderasler's men who escaped Duke Orbal have returned here and are looting the grave. They have discovered a rich seam of horse brasses and are part way through bringing them up. Lacking the catalogue, they have decided to retrieve them all. The looters have a small barge concealed on the river, behind a recent rock fall, and under a tarpaulin. They have also stretched a net out under the surface of the water. When they retrieve a brass, they fling it down into the river, where it lands in the net, concealed from prying eyes.

Around the tomb are scattered remnants of broken translucent shells that seem to be from some kind of crab. They are old and dry, the remains of some bird's dinner. Should the PCs be patrolling the area overnight, they will hear splashing, and cracking sounds. If they investigate, they will discover that nocturnal crab-fishers, blue and green birds, with chisel beaks and grasping claws at the end of their wings, stalk the banks, eating burrowing river crabs.

One of the grave robbers, Vasgo, remains in the tomb, and scares off interlopers by imitating a ghost. In the meantime, the other three carry their looted horse brasses to the bank and drop them into the net.

Although Vasgo told his three companions to be as quiet as possible, they are not very good at following instructions. As a result strange noises can be heard emanating from the depths of the vault from time to time. These include the groaning of exertion, the metal rasping of brass against brass, the pinging of brasses being dropped, and the swilling of beer.

These sounds will be distorted by the corridors and sound eerie and alarming to the PCs, suggesting the presence of not only ghosts but also perhaps grues, leucomorphs or hoons.



### *The Tomb*

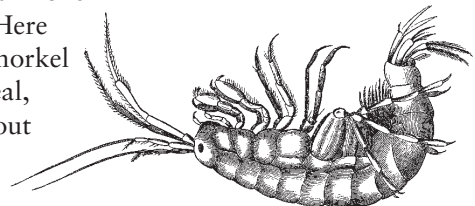
There are only 5 rooms in the whole tomb and hundreds of yards of gloomy corridors that all resemble one another. The corridors are generally 15' high and about 3' wide. The floor is mostly cobbled but, in places, the dust of aeons and various lichens have created some soil in which small pale plants grow. Light is alien here and the glow of torches and other sources of illumination is strangely dimmed; perhaps the bleak walls absorb it. Occasionally, there is a featureless slate door to break the monotony of the walls. These are not locked but require a good hard shove to open.

#### **The Shrimp**

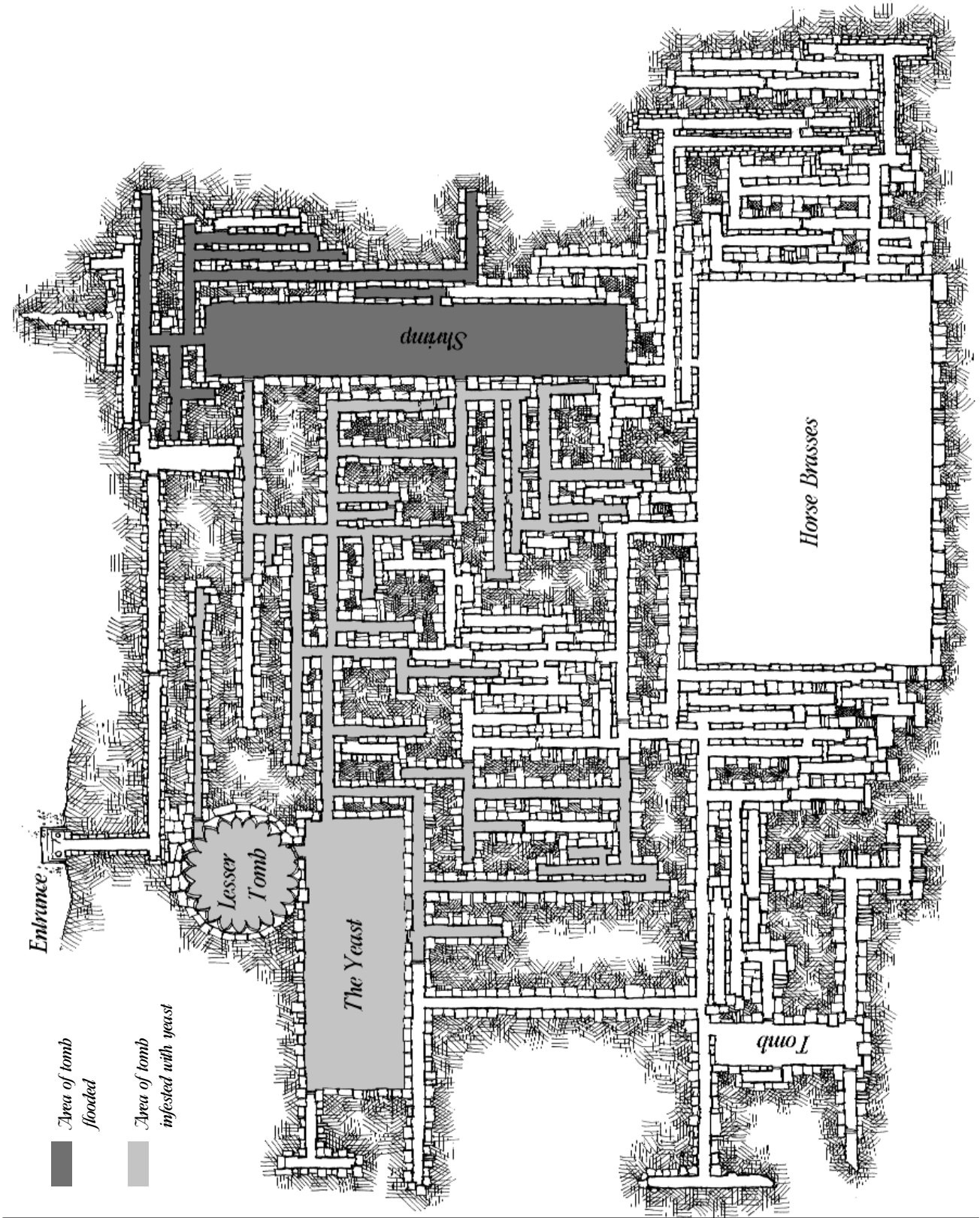
The tomb has mainly withstood the test of time, but the repeated landslides have caused some cracks. In particular one part of the lower tomb has become flooded. Over time, translucent fresh water stinging shrimp have evolved here, and across the countless years have reached sentience and built a civilization. The shellfish have no buildings but have a very rich literature that explores the impossibilities of life beyond the Great Grey Door. Some intrepid Aeronauts have ventured beyond the pool to attempt to explore the great beyond but none has returned. Their poems and epic tales about crabs are recorded in scratch marks all around the floor and the walls of the cavern.

The only other inhabitant of this area is an old sage, Kalluk. He discovered the writings of the shrimp many years ago and has been studying them ever since. He has a damp pallet in one of the far corners of the room, built up on a mound of shrimp shells. Here he keeps his few belongings: a wax tablet, a mortar and pestle and a snorkel fashioned from hollow carapace sections, glued together with bone meal, and a shelf filled with identical journals covered in wax cloth to keep out the damp.

Despite the evidence, he does not believe the shrimp responsible for







Area of tomb flooded

Area of tomb infested with yeast



✿ KALLUK ✿

*“Flee ghost, lest I blast you with powerful magics.”*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Forthright) 7, Rebuff (Contrary) 12, Attack (Cautious) 3, Defense (Dodge) 3, Health 2, Magic (Studious) 16, Appraisal 3, Pedantry 8 (Translating languages 16), Wherewithal 5.

**Resistances:** Indolence 3, Rakishness 6.

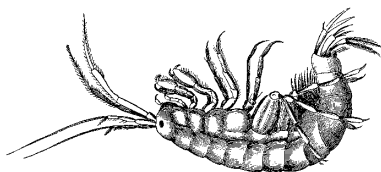
**Current spells:** Excellent Prismatic Spray, Rhialto’s Green Turmoil, Gilgad’s Instantaneous Galvanic Thrust.



✿ THE SHRIMP ✿

Should these attack, each victim faces an opponent with an Attack (Cunning) 12 and Defense (Dodge) 11. On a Success, the Shrimps inflict one envenomed puncture. Shrimp venom has a potency of Levy 0, an interval of three minutes and causes trembling and spasms until collapse and death ensue. On an Illustrious Success the venom has a potency of Levy 1.<sup>18</sup>

Should the Character score a Success, they have not been attacked. On an Illustrious Success, they have destroyed all shrimps crawling over them and will not be attacked during the next move either.



18. See page 59, *DERPG* Rules.

the writing and lives off them and the clear water in the flooded room. The first the PCs will see of him is his dim light shining in the chamber, for he has some small skill with magic, or hear him splashing about as he catches his dinner.

His work consists of two actions. Firstly, using his wax tablet and snorkel, he sits underwater and transcribes the writing. When he has filled his tablet, he then sits on his bed and copies the text from his tablet into his journal, with footnotes and references to previous volumes.

He is aware of the ghosts in the valley and has trained himself to ignore them. As such he will most certainly ignore any interruptions until they become overpoweringly intrusive. He will then unleash his magic. As he has been resident for many of their generations, the shrimp have come to worship him as a god and will take a dim view of any attack on his person. They will come to the aid of their divinity and swarm over any attacking PC delivering envenomed punctures. Should Kalluk die, they will all freeze, stunned and shocked. They will then carry his body, in a long procession back to his pallet and mount an unswerving vigil, until they all die of starvation.

It will take much effort to persuade the sage that any visitors are real. He knows little of the rest of the tomb, save that he does remember once seeing something glinting in the darkness many years ago.

**Yeast of Doom**

When the tomb was first raided, thieves carried yeast in with them. This has multiplied, evolved and grown so that now a whole section is home to one giant organism. This creature has spread itself as far as possible and lives on scraps carried in by the wind. As a tomb robber progresses into the area it inhabits, the air starts to become foul and the walls and floor grow progressively more slippery and yellowish. All surfaces take on a spongy texture. Intrepid delvers who come this far will start to breathe in the yeast’s spores. Characters should make a Health roll at this point, treating the spores as having a Potency of 0 and an interval of one hour. Failure means that those infected will start to expectorate great streams of bright yellow mucus. This is not in itself dangerous except that the coughing will become more and more frequent as the mold takes hold. Should the PC succumb coughing will lead to choking, collapse, and death. Another problem with the yellow spores is that they regard vellum as a rather decent meal and will spread to the characters copy of *Vraznark and Cilkother’s Brasses and Other Metallic Harness Decorations in Alмеры*. The PCs will be in a race against time to identify the correct brass before the book falls apart. (It has a Health 3 for the purposes of resisting the yeast. In the case of the book, symptoms of infection are the pages beginning to collapse into dust.) The room where the mold originated contained many stuffed and mounted riding beasts. These have long since turned to mulch and all organic parts of their tack have gone too, although the metal still remains. The room, thick with yeast, is damp but slightly warmer than the rest of the tomb. Great strands hang from the

ceiling and drip to the ground, and there even appears to be some slight movement in the creature as waves propagate back and forth across its surface. Occasionally a pseudopod rises in the air to track some morsel of food. The PCs represent its first decent meal in aeons...

### **A Big Pile of Brasses**

This room contains an enormous pile of horse brasses that the looters have deposited here, prior to removing them from the tomb. The three other bandits have been coming and going frequently as they haul the booty to the surface. They have made a small fire to provide some light and heat and even have had a meal down here; the remains of some river bird stew sits in a greasy pot. If found down here they will respond the only way they know how: with fists. They will not mention Vasgo and will play up the ghost angle in the hope that they will be rescued.

### **The Occupant of the Tomb**

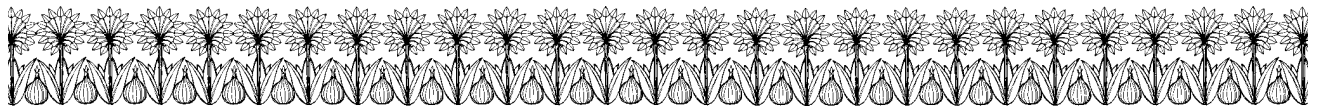
Although Vasgo is playing the part of the ghost, this tomb does have one of its own. This is the last resting place of Hycouruniks, favorite eunuch of Emperor Faudil, a celebrated calligraphicist and apiarist. In a fit of jealousy, the eunuch drowned his master in honey. Princess Tandala, the Emperor's fifty-third daughter, had him flayed, then buried, still alive, in salt. When he died, she hung his preserved body in a large glass jar, from the chandelier of her father's redundant seraglio. This mortal part was retrieved during the reign of Vitziflam II Bilen, grandson and successor to the Princess, (later Queen, Queen Dowager and finally God Empress) Tandala, and interred, with some honor, in an old tomb inside a vacant crypt.

Unfortunately, it was erroneously believed that the appropriate form of service was to bury the testicles separate from the body, and in another part of the complex. Hence, although the eunuch and his manhood are together in spirit, they are physically forever apart. Hycouruniks' shade wanders the passageways in search of his missing glands, barely a whisper on the wind. The eunuch's ghost will be drawn to the PCs, especially so if some of them are male, and will hover at the limit of their lanterns, draining life from them and growing both in stature and in solidity as he does so.



### *The Lesser Tomb*

This is the most ornate chamber in the entire complex. It has a large bronze door that is secured with a baroque lock and is sealed with lead. The door was inscribed with gilt letters that have long since been pried away. A close inspection reveals the flowing and decorative script but its meaning has been lost. None have dared break the seals for fear of some terrible curse. The lock is old and feeble, the lead soft and the hinges smooth, so breaking in would not be difficult. Inside is a wonderful sight. The chamber is in the shape of an onion flower and features this bloom as its general motif. The walls are covered in jade inscribed with a similar script as that on the door. On a small pedestal in the centre of the room lies a wizened object, the Hycouruniks' severed parts. If by some chance the ghost is reunited with his goal he will depart the mortal realm.



## GMCs

CARBONDER and his band

*“I would normally devour my prisoners, but I am afraid your personal fetor dissuades me.”*

This undesirable is the leader of a group of bandits that preys on travelers in the valley. He is very tall and broad, his hair is long and matted, and he wears no clothing except a leather harness. He carries no weapons but is dangerous nonetheless.

Carbonder is known for his delight in savagery and violence; not content with just robbing people, he insists on biting them all over. If they taste good he eats them, otherwise he lets them go, naked and unarmed. His one true desire is to become a deodand and he imagines that by eating people he will achieve his goal. He has found it quite hard to eat people as they seldom taste good, and demonstrate a low standard of personal hygiene.

To avoid being troubled by the ghosts, he and his men have stuffed wet mud in their ears. This has dried into hard little plugs that render the footpads at least partially deaf. They communicate through hand-signals and banging sticks together. This has saved the life of many a traveler, as the sound carries quite well and gives plenty of warning of trouble up ahead. The bandits refer to each other by a specific sequence of rasps and taps; their leader, Carbonder, is known to them as “Click-Clack”. The bandits live in one of the drier tombs, near the eastern end of the valley, on the south side of the river.<sup>19</sup> They use small coracles to cross the river but do not attack boats as these are usually well guarded and Carbonder cannot swim. As Carbonder has lived in the area for a long time, and knows the valley very well, he could be useful to the PCs in helping to locate the tomb they seek. Of course, they will have to unplug his ears and acquaint him with the spoken word.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Glib) 10, Rebuff (Wary) 11, Attack (Ferocity) 11, Defense (Vexation) 9, Health 4, Athletics 5, Concealment 4, Pedantry (Valley of Graven Tombs ) 4, Perception 3, Stealth 2, Tracking 3.

**Resistances:** None.



AVERAGE BANDIT

*“Our way of life leaves little time for deep philosophy. Hence we have no moral qualms about merely killing you and taking your possessions.”*

The bandits always marginally outnumber the party. They all have the following characteristics:

**Ratings:** Persuade (Intimidating) 6, Rebuff (Obtuse) 6, one style each of Attack and Defense at 6, Health 3, Athletics 3.

**Resistances:** None



*Kalluk at work in the tomb.*

19. Their choice of a south side tomb with no vines means that they do not face the automatic enmity of the vine tadders.

### Thieving Vagrants

Four of Bunderasler's agents escaped from a cell while awaiting death in Duke Orbal's tubes. Their leader is Vasgo, a young but bright lad who greased himself with a residue produced from the prison gruel and squeezed through the bars. He is quick on his feet but still not strong enough to pose a threat in a fight. He does have some bravado, but a determined adversary can scare him into surrender or flight. Vasgo chose not to free anyone who would dominate him mentally, so saved the three least intelligent, but most brawny, of his fellow captives. They are Lumpkin, Yell and Lugys, all people of very low quality. If things are going well, they will follow Vasgo's commands, otherwise they will squabble, bicker and lash out at anyone nearby. If no adversary presents itself, they will fight amongst themselves.

VASGO

*"In my experience 'tall' and 'stupid' are synonyms."*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Charming) 11, Rebuff (Penetrating) 9, Attack (Cautious) 3, Defense (Dodge) 11, Health 3, Athletics 6, Concealment 5, Pedantry 2, Stealth 6.

**Resistances:** None.

LUMPKIN, YELL and LUGYS

*"Matters are over complicated. Silence, lest I simplify things with my club!"*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Intimidating) 4, Rebuff (Wary) 6, Attack (Strength) 11, Defense (Parry) 9, Health 5, Athletics 1.

**Resistances:** None.

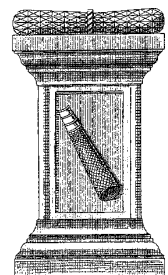


HYCOURNIKS

He was accorded great honor with a state burial in the Valley of Graven Tombs. He is now a ghost of little stature who seeks reunion with his missing anatomy. In life, he was a big man who once wielded his sword in defense of his lord. In death, he carries a ghostly reminder of this weapon that will become more solid as he gains power.

Despite his excruciating death and long interment, Hycourniks' ghost remains lucid. He will approach individual looters and ask them to help him, lying about his knowledge of the tombs, and making any plausible assurances they seek. In game terms, this is a contest between the ghost's Persuasion (Eloquent) (which begins at 6, but which will rise as high as 18 as the eunuch beats the characters) and the PC's chosen Rebuff. The spirit himself counters attempts to persuade him with Rebuff (Wary), initially held at 4, but potentially rising to 16.

Should the ghost's Persuasion rise to 12 and his Rebuff to 8, he becomes mostly solid, enabling him to attack with the sword, which he carries across his chest. His Attack is 20, he has no Defense, and his style is Ferocious. This is resisted with Rebuff, not Defense, with Obtuse and Pure-hearted styles imposing a levy.



### Items

#### ☒ "Old Borkenla's Monosy"

This is a pocket version of the full *Aenoic Erudition of Hippopaedia*. It covers matters pertaining to horses such as the fineness of the hair and its uses, the different dialects of whinnying that one meets across the ancient continent of Num and, in a codicil, adornment of horses and brasses. The full version was housed

in the monumental House of Horse on the island of Hadin before it was overcome by the waves some aeons previously.

The Monosy is bound in a fine baleena hide with a great bronze clasp. It weighs near enough 12lbs and measures over an ell high by half an ell wide and is five thumb-widths thick. The pages are made of durable baleena vellum, but the inks have faded over the centuries and only the black is now visible. As much of the text was in yellow for emphasis this makes for difficult reading at some crucial points.

❧ *Ghost-bowls*

This is a tight-fitting device with a transparent visor and side pieces that come down to cover the ears. They both prevent ghosts entering into the wearer's ears at night and make it extremely difficult for the wearer to hear a ghost's whispered words [Footnote. Or anything else for that matter.. Each bowl has a different tint, to allow easy identification when worn, although this does make it difficult for the wearer to be able to see the same color as his or her bowl. They are usually issued with some form of grease to allow the bearer to don them more easily.



### *Creatures*

#### *Ghosts*

The Valley of Graven Tombs is haunted by many pitiful creatures which lie in wait to bore the living with tales of why they do not deserve to be dead. Most sages consider that these spirits hold no power, as long as they are ignored. They gain more substance as they engage with a listener. Many ghosts are completely drained and only appear as whispers on the wind. It is very dangerous to sleep in the valley among the tombs as a ghost can use this opportunity to creep into a mortal's ear and engage them in their dreams.

In game terms, as they gain points in a contest, they can raise another ability or score by a like amount. This is the only way they can refresh their points pools. The more powerful ghosts can use their points gained in this way to work magic if they choose, typically attempting to control a mortal or to curse them.

Many wonderful treasures are contained in the tombs, if the tales are to be believed. Most have long since been looted.

#### GHOSTS

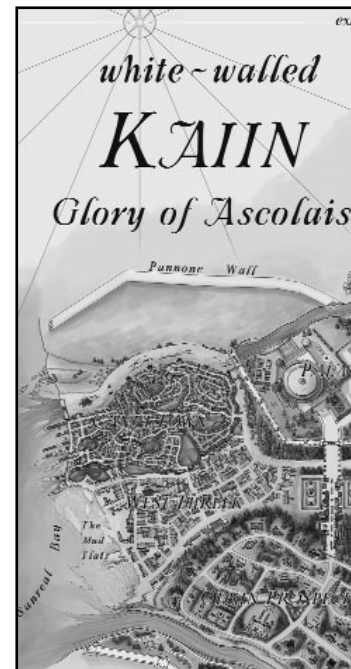
**Ratings:** Persuade (Eloquent) 1.

On a Success, the ghost takes one point from one pool of the victim and uses it to create the same pool of its own. On an Illustrious Success, the Ghost takes two points but may put them into any Pool it wishes.

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\*Succinctly, buy the maps or the cartographer gets it.



# ❖ The Sculpted Chair ❖

*Lynne Hardy*

“A stringent rule stipulates that neither imaginary nor purported marvels qualify for the competition.”

*My Dear Rehan*

Again I have a remarkable tale to tell you. No, before you protest, let me assure you that it is not a lost city nor a technological marvel from a past age. I realize that I have written to you about many of those over the years, but you must remember that our world is very old and as a result has an abundance of such items. This time at least I can present to you not only several pieces of fine exterior art, but also wondrous gateways to ages past. Now at least, will you consent to reading the remainder of this letter? Then I shall continue.

We were returning from the coast by way of Troon, when we found ourselves crossing the Plain of Standing Stones. Naturally we were keeping an eye out for asms, knowing what terrible brigands the creatures are, when the boy informed me that he had seen something moving over by a stone circle standing a little way from the road. Leaving the animals (complaining bitterly about everything, as usual) and most of the porters on the road, the boy and two of my most trusted companions and I approached the shadowy circle. I should note that it was still daylight, though you should know me well enough to realize that I would not venture into such a place after nightfall unless suitably prepared. Only amateurs and desperate men are wont to suffer such folly. I must admit being somewhat surprised by what we found when we reached the circle. Firstly, although colored to appear as rough-hewn rock when viewed from outside the installation, the uprights were not composed of stone at all but stained and very ancient wood. The artifice by which the effect had been achieved was magnificent and even upon close inspection an amateur might still have been confused. Only the texture of the wood, marred occasionally by lichens, which had been fooled into forming intricate growth patterns on the leesides, confirmed my suspicions. There are few ways to disguise the polished smoothness of very old and exposed lignum, you know.

Within the circle was another wonder to behold. Here, the true nature of the wood was not only unmasked but accentuated as the ‘inside’ face of the wooden uprights was decorated with the most remarkable carvings. The nature of these carvings was at first confusing, although having mastered the trick of it, I now feel slightly



## ❧ The Sculpted Chair ❧

ashamed that I did not spot it sooner. Only seven were carved in any detail and those details appeared to be disjointed and fragmentary although executed with unquestioned skill. The eighth appeared to be no more than a log from which a huge gouge had been rent. Still I studied it more closely and noted that there was a distinctive sheen to the bottom of this gouge, which reminded me in no small measure of your kitchen stools, having suffered many years of polishing at the seat of untold pantaloons. Realizing this, I immediately positioned myself in the chair and my eyes were truly opened. Before me were not confused carvings, but a table laid with food of every description. Beyond the table was a window, looking out over a valley and beyond to gentle hills. As I looked, my head grew heavy and I set to dozing. At least, that is what I presumed at first, but I was aroused from my slumber not by one of my staff, but by the aroma of an excellent meal and the gentle warmth of the sun on my face.

Opening my eyes cautiously, they merely confirmed what my nose and face had already told me. The circle was gone, and I now viewed the table and its appetizing viands as clearly as I see this parchment upon which I write. For all my stout nature and extensive experience, I was more than a little thrown by the proceedings. I stood up from the chair in which I found myself and threw about the Adjunct to the Periapt to ensure that my eyes were not deceived by mere illusion. They were not. I indeed stood in a warm and serene kitchen, with a groaning table and radiant golden daylight before me. Yes, orange daylight, my friend, not the corpulent red of our days. A young woman was watching me with interest, though displaying no sign of alarm. She was a hearty creature, with a kind and gentle face that indicated a level of intelligence suitable to conversation. Indeed, she approached me then with a charming smile and expressed her surprise (but delight) that she should have a visitor at this hour, when there had been none of late. She introduced herself as Anine, mistress of the house, and bade me sit with her and enjoy a rest before the other members of her family arrived for their evening meal. I determined from her gracious nature that I could be candid and related to her my surprise at finding myself in such a place, having been on a windswept moor not five minutes earlier. She laughed, though not mockingly, and agreed that it must be very strange for sure, but that all would become clear. Her husband joined us then, a fine specimen, with a sturdy build more associated with menials and a complexion that suggested outdoor work. His hands were indeed callused though there was a fineness to them that refuted mere casual labor as the cause. We began the meal after three bouncing (I can find no other adequate term for them)<sup>1</sup> children joined us. As we ate, I listened to the general chit-chat that pervades all such family gatherings. I restrained from amateurish behavior and held my council although it was obvious that such unexpected visitors were not so. Eventually, Xyphyl cleared his throat and fixed his steady gaze upon me. “And from whence do you hail, visitor?” I answered him truthfully, for there was no need for deception or guile in this warm place. He smiled crookedly and nodded as I described the circle and the vista I had seen. He then leaned back in his chair and, absentmindedly running his hands through his hair, began to explain my peculiar predicament.

Apparently his father had been a talented individual who had learned the trade of mage from his father and the craft of the cabinetmaker from his mother. From the works he later showed me, I believe that several of the better houses in Kaiin possess his mother’s work and I have definitely seen it on sale at Sepmi’s. Both sides of the family were involved in commerce, primarily logging in the Da Forest and the export of the fine woods to places in the Land of the Falling Wall. Xyphyl’s maternal grandfather was the head of the hauliers then, but was not in the prime of his youth any longer and preferred to spend as many of his evenings as possible with his feet up before his fire. With this in mind, his son and daughter-in-law determined to build along his trade route a means by which he could do just that. Over the course of several years, Sessilie, the daughter, carved remarkable likenesses of the family home on the inside of seven timber pillars. The family would transport them to the relevant spot and Aerht would enchant them, along with the eighth pillar, such that when anyone rested in the chair, they would feel drowsy (to lessen the disorientation one felt on shifting, but also of use should an undesirable happen upon the place; sleepy creatures are far easier to deal with) and awake in the most comfortable chair in the family kitchen. Positioning oneself in the chair the next morning would reverse the effect. So I spent a very pleasant night with Xyphyl, Anine, and their charming children and was more than a little sorry to depart the next morning by way of the route I had previously come. Needless to say, the boy

1. The Editor expresses regret at the lack of thesauruses in the wilder reaches of Almerly and south of the Falling Wall. Alas but such is our fallen state.



had roused the porters to a frenzy upon my disappearance and all were most relieved when I reappeared unharmed (except for those ungracious mermelants, who merely commented that this must mean they would have to get back to work again then). Xyphyl kindly gave me a list of places that these carefully disguised transport devices had been hidden and once I have returned to Azenomei with our merchandise, I shall mount an expedition to determine if any more still exist. It would be most pleasant indeed to visit that warm and sunny place again, although I would hate to make a nuisance of myself!

*Sakonity the Adamantine*



### *Background*

During the 17th Aeon, the families Maxan and Holler dominated the market in the recovery and haulage of fine woods from the Forest of Da. Not only were they impeccable businessmen, but the close association of the two families allowed them to provide a complete service few of their rivals could hope to match. That and the added bonus of several artisans and mages in the family (ensuring that every last detail could be taken care of in house) and their empire was secure. Xyphyl's maternal grandfather, Loqua Holler, was a comfort-loving sort, and whilst not afraid of hard work, took no delight in sleeping out of doors with the wagons. Thanks to the longevity of both families (darkly hinted to be unnatural by their worst rivals), he had reached what many would consider to be a grand age and was still running the haulage routes to Kaspara Vitatus and beyond. His bones ached from the damp and his constant complaining set his son and daughter-in-law upon the path to their greatest accomplishment: the creation of a set of way-posts that would allow the old man to return to the comfort of his bed almost every night whilst en route. It took two years to carve, transport, and enchant the sculptures with a variation upon both the Spell of Relocalisation and the Charm of Somnolent Slumber. Although there were occasions upon which a bemused and dopey half-man appeared in the kitchen chair, they were soon dealt with by a more than prepared matriarch or small child carefully trained in the use of frying pan and meat cleaver. So that Loqua returned to the correct place, different cushions with specifically embroidered patterns of localization linked to each of the way-posts would be used to plump his favorite seat. The family business eventually declined after several centuries with the waning affluence of their society. Remnants of the family still exist and will usually be involved in haulage or carpentry. Very few have any idea of the former influence of their ancestors and none know of the way-posts, which were always a very closely guarded secret and quickly forgotten when times got hard.



### *Adventure Hooks*

- ✿ Relfan requires someone to go and see if the list of way-posts is accurate and whether or not any of them are functioning (we leave it entirely to the GM's discretion as to how many there were originally, where they were located along the route from Azenomei to Old Romarth and how many still work).
- ✿ The benefits of a portal to the 17th Aeon to a merchant of magical curios and such like must be obvious. Rumors have begun to circulate that unusual items are available in Azenomei, and a former employer of the PCs wishes to know what is happening. She will hire them to investigate, being able to tell them only that the goods appear to originate from the Plain of Standing Stones. What will they find and will they tell her?
- ✿ The Scholasticarium has come to an arrangement with Xyphyl and his family to run field trips allowing a few of the student faculty to visit the 17th Aeon through his kitchen. What wonders await the eager students and will they be more successful than most of the previous outings? (The exact location of the family home we leave to the GM, but might we suggest that it is not too far removed from Azenomei and that *The Scaum Valley Gazetteer* contains many fine potential locations).
- ✿ Anine has journeyed forward to request Sakonity's help in an urgent matter. Someone is trying to destroy the family business and she needs unknown outsiders to help her find out who is responsible. Are the characters up to the job?
- ✿ Whilst traveling across the Plain of Standing Stones, the characters find a small child dressed most unusually and crying. Where is the child from, and what on earth are they going to do with it? (If they prove to be utterly hopeless, naturally, either Xyphyl or Anine will come and find it. Needless to say, this could lead to much embarrassment on the party's behalf).
- ✿ An annoying Lordling from Kaspara Vitatus has gone missing. Rumors abound that he has been behaving very strangely (even for him) ever since he had a weird timber sculpture uprooted and placed as the central feature of his wilderness garden. His family want him back and are so desperate they will even employ the characters to find him.
- ✿ A descendant of the Maxan-Holler lineage has discovered that people are taking advantage of a portal system that, by rights, belongs to them. What sort of trouble are they likely to cause and who will the characters be helping – the aggrieved relative or the people with a vested business interest?



### *Miscellaneous*

XYPHYL, Kindly Carpenter and Artisan

*"The quality of this wood means that it should give your great-grandchildren something to sell should they need to maintain the standard of living they're used to."*

A devoted family man, skilled carpenter and youngest son of the third generation of the Maxan family, Xyphyl lives quietly with his wife and children in what used to be the Holler family home. Most of his work is commissioned by the Maxan-Holler empire and he is quite happy to work to order. He has no desire to run the company and continually strives to emulate his late mother's intricate work. Although he enjoys a good story, he has no real desire to see the rest of the world.

**Ratings:** Persuasion (Charming) ~, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 1.5~, Appraisal 10, Craftsmanship 14, Perception 13, Scuttlebutt 11, Magic 4 (but knows no spells).

**Resistances:** Rakishness 4.

ANINE, Cook, Herbalist and Competent Wielder of a Frying Pan

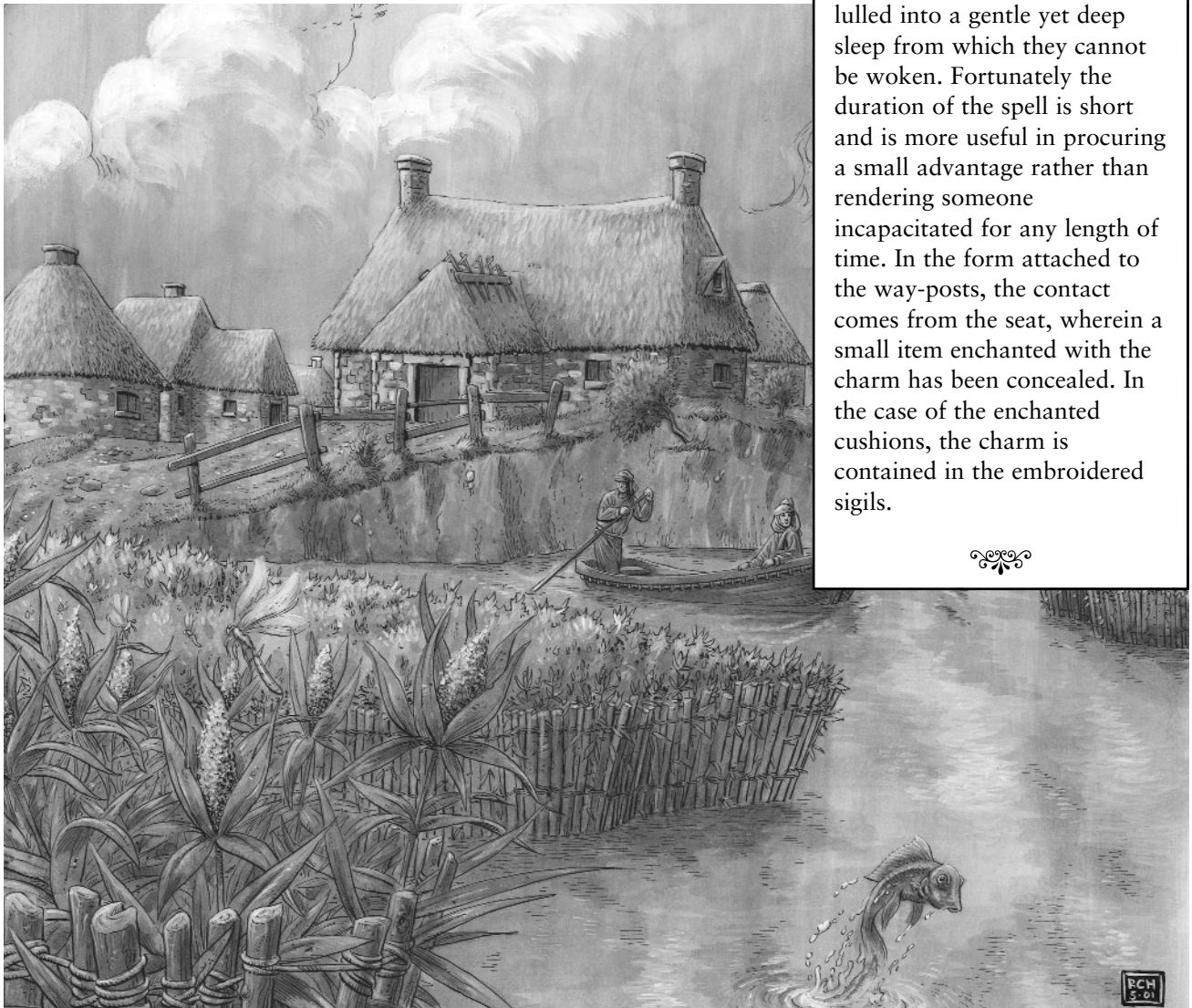
*“Might I suggest you reconsider that course of action? The clang of metal on bone does nothing for my nerves.”*

Anine is not a member of either the Maxan or Holler family, but a childhood friend of Xyphyl’s sister, Jiqxi. A competent wife and mother, she is an excellent cook and the manager of her husband’s carpentry business. Level headed and calm under pressure, she has much to teach any budding chefs or fighters who might happen through the way-posts.

**Ratings:** Persuasion (Forthright) ~, Rebuff (Penetrating) 2~, Attack (Cunning) ~ (allows her to use any kitchen implement that comes to hand as a weapon), Magic 6, Appraisal 11, Scuttlebutt 13, Stewardship 14, Wherewithal 12.

**Resistances:** Indolence 3, Rakishness 2.

**Cantraps:** Repel Dirt, Assuage Afflictions, Discommoding Dazzle, Bring Book to Hand.



### The Charm of Somnolent Slumber

**Type:** Straightforward

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** 5 minutes

**Style Affinity:** Devious

In its original full-length form, this spell was devised to render hyperactive royal children docile for the evening, but the practical uses of this sadly abbreviated spell should be obvious to even the most obtuse of mages. The target is lulled into a gentle yet deep sleep from which they cannot be woken. Fortunately the duration of the spell is short and is more useful in procuring a small advantage rather than rendering someone incapacitated for any length of time. In the form attached to the way-posts, the contact comes from the seat, wherein a small item enchanted with the charm has been concealed. In the case of the enchanted cushions, the charm is contained in the embroidered sigils.



# ❖ The Luminarion ❖

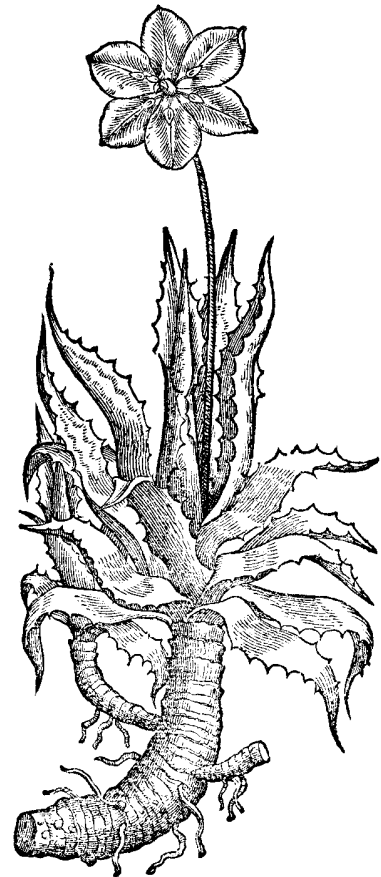
*Mark Baker*

“Gookin, why do you lie among the cheeses?”

## *The Plant*

The Luminarion is a prickly desert plant—a tuberous, mottled succulent with a purple flower—that possesses the characteristic of luminosity. After dark, it emits a purple glow, claimed by some to be not dissimilar to the light of the sun. Thus, the plant is highly prized as a source of nighttime illumination. The Luminarion grows only in the harshest deserts of eastern Alмеры, far from civilized lands. Nobody has yet managed to grow them from seed in a less harsh climate, although they can be cultivated in a heated conservatory with the right soil and a great deal of attention. Each year on the Aryday night of the third week of Inlasto,<sup>1</sup> the plant shoots a single glowing, violet seed into the air, to be carried on the wind until it finds a place to settle. Those few adventurous souls who have witnessed this spectacle have likened it to a dance of fireflies.

The Luminarion blooms but once in its lifetime, after four years of life. For a few short days in late summer, its petals burst forth in a glorious display of porphyric color, closely following the path of the sun each day as it crosses the sky. Then, the plant withers and dies. According to travellers who have been stranded in the desert and forced to live off the flesh of the Luminarion, its flavor is uniquely delicious; although its fibrous nature is prone to cause a subsequent case of diarrhoea. This leaves an ‘afterglow’ in the excreta (that stains everything it touches with violet luminosity) that only fades over a period of days. Allegedly, the dwellers of the deep desert can track a man who has eaten Luminarion even after dark by the glow of his spoor. The seeds of the Luminarion can be rendered to produce a radiant, purple oil. The petals can also be distilled to make Glowine, “the only wine that truly leaves you with a warm glow inside.” Collecting these treasures of nature from the desolate wastes in which they grow is fraught with danger, especially at night when they are easiest to find, so it should come as no surprise that they command high prices in the cities of the Dying Earth. In Kaiin, a meal of Sun Flower will cost 100 Terces; a jug of Luminarion oil sells for 200, while a bottle of Glowine will sometimes fetch as much as a thousand terces and a living plant will fetch two thousand terces.



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## *The Order of the Luminarion*

Due to the magical nature of the Luminarion plant, and its somewhat mythological cycle, it should come as no surprise that a religious order has sprung up around this mystical plant. The Order of the Luminarion, as the believers have come to be known, believes that Luminarions are draining the light from the sun, and that to prolong the life of the solar orb, they must restore that light. It is their conviction that mankind lives in a state of dark melancholy, and only by facilitating the restoration of light to the sun may they achieve grace and happiness. The most dedicated of their number sacrifice themselves to a long life of much melancholy, devoting themselves to gifting others with the happiness of serving in this

1. We refer the reader to the Pokuno reckoning used in Kaiin. See *The Kaiin Players Guide*, p23.

process of luminal restoration. Priesthood in the Order is open to both males and females of any sentient nature, but they must first prove their worth. The novice initiate is charged with seeking out a new plant in the desert. Equipped only with the purple trowel and watering can of a novice, his purpose for the next four years is to protect the Luminarion where it grows. He must ensure that it is watered and guard it against all who would pick it or feed on it until such time as it blossoms. Finally, he must ceremonially harvest the plant before it begins to wilt, and take it to the nearest temple: only then will the novice be judged worthy of ordination. Many fail. Some die in the wilderness as a result of the privations of the desert, lack of food or water, killed by the monstrous beasts that roam the wastes, or by bandits or those who would steal the Luminarion for monetary gain. Some find their plants dies before it blooms, and then must harvest the remains before they wither, returning the remnants to the nearest temple to be used in the lesser ceremonies of the year. In such cases the novice will return to the desert to seek out a new bloom to protect and cultivate. Only by returning to the temple with a plant in flower can they aspire to the priesthood, and be permitted to wear the purple burnoose of the Order.

Most novices decide that they are not suited to the religious life, abandon their charge, and return to civilized lands. The Order tries to keep track of those who “fall by the wayside,” and (to show that there is no ill feeling towards those who have tried and failed) they are extended an invitation to the Harvest coming festival in the Autumn.<sup>2</sup> On arrival at the banquet, they will be waited on by their former colleagues, now newly ordained as priests in the Order. Once the Luminarions have been harvested, extracting the light from the rare plants—so that it might be returned to the sun from whence it came—requires an elaborate ritual. According to the lore of Khaivelo<sup>3</sup> the cactus flesh is first prepared in a Jacynth sauce. Some offshoots of the sect (following the teachings of the sages Bambachder of Kauchique and Saipichlo<sup>4</sup> respectively) insist that the Luminarion should be stewed with a wild ramp and spurge gravy, or marinated for a day in pauncewort juice and then grilled instead. This culinary preparation traditionally serves to assist the assimilation of the Luminarion luminescence within the souls of those who dine on the meal. This is followed by the banquet.

If in season, as at the Harvest coming celebration each year, the blooms of the Luminarion are served as a side dish, sprinkled with a dressing of Luminarion oil and Hilp. The whole is washed down with a suitably vintage bottle of Glowine. Guests at this feast are expected to consume to excess, and it is considered a mark of bad manners by their cultist hosts if any food remains on the table at the end of the evening. According to cult lore, once the radiance has been absorbed, the participants in this banquet must then die. Purified by the holy meal and filled with porphyric brilliance, their souls will ascend to the sun in a state of grace, and there release its light back to its solar source.<sup>5</sup> Death must occur before the onset of muscle relaxation that would normally ensue after eating of the Luminarion, otherwise the natural sinfulness of the

2. This invitation is pressing and often involves the invited falling asleep in some strange drinking den and waking up hooded and bound in the back of a cart.

3. A lesser magus whose teachings are shunned by the truly devout on the grounds that he sacrifices theological exactitude for culinary excellence.

4. Both these worthies cling to the older tradition, but it must be said that Bambachder with his wild ramp is closer to the true tradition of indigence.

5. Travelers are often invited to partake of these ceremonial banquets. The order can be most insistent.



*The purple burnoose may be any shade from gridelin through heliotrope to plum. The precise shade may indicate the status of the priest, or merely the skill of his or her laundress.*

body will defile the light. Such impurity can be observed by any who look upon the excreta of one who has delayed overlong a-dying. Over the years, priests of the Order have compiled elaborate tables charting height and body weight against the time that it takes for the luminous essence to be fully absorbed into the soul, and how long it will then take before the light becomes corrupted by the body and hence, the time frame in which they must make the sacrifice. The most prominent members of the cult carry ornate chronometers designed in the form of a digestive tract, into which they can feed the diner's height, weight and gender, and then estimate the progress of the meal through the body. Traditionalists following the teachings of Panbunerro the Enlightened<sup>6</sup> believe that there is no substitute for listening to the diner's stomach, and carry "listening horns", often elaborately carved with images of the Luminarion.

Cult members are found mainly in the deserts and wastes of eastern Almerly, where the Luminarion grows. Solitary priests<sup>7</sup> may be encountered in the great cities of Kaiin or Cuirnif, preying on those rich patrons who are willing to pay great sums to dine on the plant, not realizing that this involves releasing their souls to the sun. The Priests are readily identifiable by the purple burnoose that they wear. Travellers should be wary about accepting hospitality in any of the cult's temples. Visitors are feasted on Luminarion, prepared in the appropriate fashion. The more suspicious traveler may notice that his hosts do not join him in the eating of the banquet, though this is typically explained as a period of fasting for those who have adopted the purple burnoose of the Order of the Luminarion. Then provided with lodging for the night, they are unlikely ever to awaken. Rumors tell that the guest quarters at the temple in the desert of Maneth are built directly above a deep ravine, with trapdoors in the floor that can be opened once the guests are asleep, plunging them several hundred feet onto the jagged rocks below and thus relieving them of their melancholy. Any infringement of the Order's rule is dealt with harshly, though there is little documentary evidence listing those rules, and some disagreement between different sects of the Order. Causing a Luminarion to die so that its light is dispersed across the desert and can no longer be restored to the sun is probably the most serious offense that a priest can commit. The punishment for this crime is being force-fed an excess of raw Luminarion before being staked out to grill in the desert sun. The rapid dehydration delays the onset of diarrhoea, allowing the sunlight to concentrate more densely in the malefactor's soul, thus purging him for his crime when he does ascend to the sun. A similar penalty is adjudged for a priest who allows a man to dine on Luminarion and then fails to release his soul before the onset of corruption. The punishments for errors committed by a novice are far less severe. For a trivial offense, such as puncturing his purple watering can, the culprit is force-fed an excess of raw Luminarion and then simply and painlessly having his throat slit at the appropriate moment. The time between completing his meal and the ritual severing of the jugular gives him opportunity to reflect on his misdemeanor, and glory in the imminence of his ascension to the sun. It should be noted that travellers who touch a Luminarion are considered to have implicitly enrolled within the novices of the Order, and so become subject to the judgement of the Order for any crimes they may subsequently commit.

☘ BAZVIUMAN THE BOLD ☘

*"A little more of the sauce,  
perhaps?"*

An excommunicate Priest of the Order is Bazviuman the Bold, who was employed as head chef at the Sabdes restaurant in Cuirnif in the preparation of Luminarion meals for the wealthiest of patrons. He introduced a toxin into his dishes, carefully timed to kill the diner at precisely the right moment. He was forced to flee the city on charges of mass murder after the birthday party of Gluskoeller the Indulgent. He has subsequently been excommunicated and declared a heretic by the cult, on the grounds that the poison he used corrupted the Luminarion light consumed by Gluskoeller and his guests, causing a violent fluctuation in the solar disk when their souls ascended.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Glib) 11, Rebuff (Wary) 8, Attack (Cunning) 9, Defense (Dodge) 8, Health 1, Athletics 4, Pedantry (the Luminarion) 10.

*He is perhaps representative of the average priest of the order.*

6. Panbunerro shunned mechanical contrivances and over complex calculation. He was a believer in 'two gurgles and a belch'. His followers now estimate that one can risk a third gurgle.

7. The pejorative term 'Assassin' is not used by the order

# ❧ Ghosts of the Forgotten Past ❧

*Kurt Brown*

“Two hours of loose philosophising will never tilt the scale against the worth of one sound belch.”

## *The Tube*

An unusual sight: spanning the narrow valley is a stone tube, supported by towering pillars made of the same carefully polished stone as the tube itself, each pillar being higher than a seven-story house. The ends of what amounts to a twenty-ell diameter airborne tunnel are ragged and broken, whether the result of sheer age or a cataclysm in the distant past, none can say. Pelgranes make their home in both ends of the ancient construct, peering down at the travelers with wary eyes. Passing beneath the tube, the party happens upon a young woman of surpassing beauty seated upon a large boulder worn smooth by the water that once coursed through this long-dry riverbed. She lowers her gaze from the nesting pelgranes, pensively polishes the large gem hanging from a gold chain around her neck, and speaks to the travelers: “I lie in yon tube, cold and dark these many aeons, trapped and alone. Those horrid birds would make their nests from my bones! If you have any mercy, any care within you, please grant me the eternal rest of the grave.”<sup>1</sup> The task will be difficult, for the ends of the tubes extend well beyond their supporting columns and the pelgranes do not take kindly to intrusions upon their nest. Perhaps a dexterous climber could loop a rope over one of the jagged projections, allowing those less acrobatic easier access to the tube. Magic would obviously ease matters. What unknown peril lies within the lofty tube remains to be seen.



## *The Cave*

Passing a wet and stormy night in a shallow cave formed by an overhanging ledge of rock, the travelers' fire flickers and dims briefly as a previously unnoticed, yet distinguished-looking, gentleman dressed in unusual fashion settles himself by the fire. His apparent translucence indicates to all present that he is not entirely of this world. Warming his hands before the fire, he addresses the group: “No matter the ferocity of the flame, fire does not warm me as it once did. Yet I can but try! Note, if you will, the shadows that dance across the far wall of this grotto! They move oddly, do they not? Observe that far corner, where even the brightest glare dares not venture. That darkness conceals something that men have fought over for more aeons than even the sages have heard tell of. I came here myself, long ago, in my pride seeking what I had been told could not be found. Only my own death allowed me to understand the full price that must be paid for such a thing. If you wish to

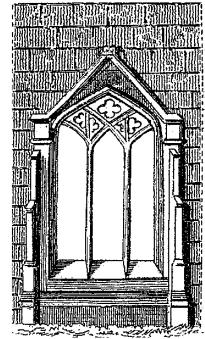
1. If her bones are there, then the valuable jewel on the gold chain may well be as well. Or then again, dear GM, it might not. That is your decision.

discover the price that you must pay—and that prize—yourselves, you have only to make the attempt. Your way is clear.” The specter leans back and laughs heartily, vanishing in the flickering light as fog before the dawn.<sup>2</sup>



### *The Window*

Whether they have defeated the last of their tormentors in a running battle that spanned several leagues or merely spent a pleasant hour strolling to aid digestion, the travelers rest in the shadow of an ancient, ruined tower. The blackened stones provide shelter from the light mist that has blanketed the early afternoon, and hides the party from passing troublemakers, be they fell beasts or merely creditors. Barely half of the circumference of the tower still stands, rising to an impressive but unstable height of almost four stories. The remains of each successive floor clings to the wall of the tower in a desperate effort to extend their life, but the slowly shifting stones spell out their ultimate fate – to join their brethren in the tangled heap of stone that surrounds the remaining wall. As the adventurers recover from their exertions, a casual examination of the ruins reveals an unusual discrepancy. Far above, near the top of the tower, one perfectly unbroken pane of glass remains. From below, it appears to glow with a bright yellow-white glare that stands out in the gray haze of the afternoon storm. Climbing the interior of the ruined tower requires great skill and agility, especially considering the rain-slicked surface of the stones. For those who manage the climb to the window, an unusual sight awaits. Looking through the pane, the curious climber is treated to the sight of another world! They gaze upon a clear day unlike any they have experienced before, lit by the glare of a small, yellow-white sun far removed from the bloated russet orb that dominates the Dying Earth. Strange flying machines dominate the cloudless sky, and a vast city stretches from horizon to horizon, a city of which no trace or memory has passed down to the present day. Such a ghostly window, be it magic, artifice, or spirit-induced, would be an item of great value if it could be removed intact and functioning from the crumbling, treacherous tower.



### *The Lecturing Revenant*



Stumbling among the shattered rubble of a long-decayed building, the travelers are confronted with a bizarre and eerie sight. A score of ghostly figures hover in the air several meters above the ground. Most of the wisps appear to be seated on air, paying studious attention to the gestures and unheard speech of another of their cohort who paces back and forth across a long-vanished floor. The ghostly audience occasionally nods, applauds, or discusses matters of ghostly import amongst themselves, all out of earshot of the adventurers. After a few minutes, the spectral lecturer raises his hands, the spirits stand, and all fade from view. As the party

2. Should anyone be unwise enough to examine the indicated corner, the result is entirely up to the whim of the GM. Perhaps the result is a demon realm shielded from the world by but a few inches of crumbling stone, perhaps in the corner lurks a loathsome creature who conjured the specter to lure the unwary into its grasp. Why, it might even be a portal through to one of the strange worlds listed in *Turjan's Tome* or any volume in a minor trove of books of lore.

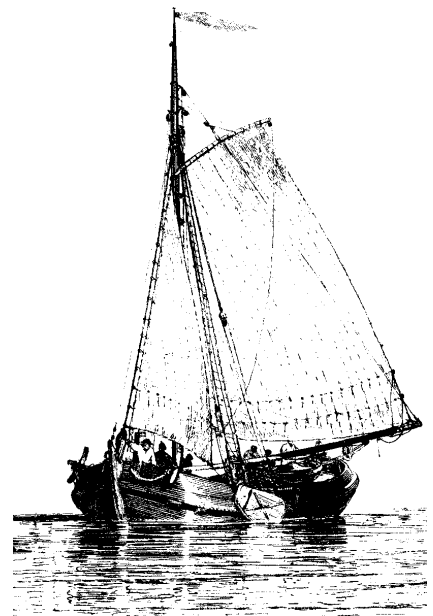


prepares to depart, they suddenly find themselves surrounded by dozens of ghostly figures, many of which they recognize from the floating lecture hall. The spirits seem to be imploring the travelers to search the crumbled ruins for something, but they lack the ability to communicate exactly what it is they desire. Searching the ruins is a daunting prospect – much of the rubble is in the form of large stone slabs, which require the efforts of many men to budge. Digging beneath them may prove a more direct method to locate the object or objects of the spirits' desire, but could cause the delver to become trapped in a cave-in. While I would hesitate to restrict the imagination of the GM who already knows what the ghosts seek for, if you wish the phenomenon could be the Lecturer. She was a celebrated minor poet who inflicted her muse upon her fellow citizens in this area an aeon ago. Her urge is to teach her poetical system to as many as possible but alas, her books are lost, trapped in the rubble below. Should the adventurers find her books, she and her class will fade forever, as she is convinced that once her books are read her system will flourish. Should the adventurers be killed in the excavation, then they will join the class. She regards both eventualities as satisfactory.



### *The Ship*

Early one morning, becalmed at sea, the travelers' vessel is slowly engulfed in a bank of dense fog that persists until midday. As the fog slowly lifts, the party is surprised to find another, larger vessel less than a cables length in front of their ship. A sturdy line connects the stern of the mysterious vessel and the bow of the travelers' own ship. Despite a lack of wind, the larger vessel, its sails filled with a non-existent wind, appears to be towing their ship. Figures can be seen on the deck and in the rigging of the mysterious vessel, but attempts to hail them go unanswered. The pilot of the larger vessel will occasionally leave his post to test the taut line, then return to his duty behind the wheel. Examining the line attached to their own bow, the erstwhile seamen find it to be ordinary, if stout, hemp rope. As the larger ship appears to be taking the party towards their intended destination, it may be best to let the ships go where they may. Should anyone attempt to remove the rope from the bow before nightfall, a low moaning sound will be heard to emanate from the towing ship. As the rope becomes looser (or more damaged from cutting), the moaning will grow louder. The ghostly figures on board the large ship move to the stern railing and stare menacingly at those who are attempting to refuse their good-will gesture. At nightfall, the rope and mysterious ship will vanish into another sudden fog, leaving the travelers' ship to sail onward under a clear sky and steady wind.



### *The Common-room*

The travelers have stayed on the road too long, and the dreary damp of an early evening storm drives them to seek shelter. They notice a warm and welcoming light just off the trail, and approach to find a humble but well-maintained inn. The sounds of laughter and the smell of roasting meats draw them inside. Therein, they find a large common-room crowded with many individuals, singing, drinking, playing games of chance, and generally enjoying an air of prosperity and plenty that seems in direct contrast to the dreary and scant countryside through which the party has been journeying. One man in particular, a large, rotund, red-faced giant with flowing red hair and shaggy beard, seems to be the center of attention. He holds court near the hearth, attended by several comely females who freshen his drink as he plays a hand of Tumbas, a local game of chance

involving dice and cards. He calls out to the travelers: “Ho, friends, and welcome to my abode! Shake off the dampness and partake of our bounty! Maids, drinks for our guests! And not a word of payment – not a groat shall I take from you, for tonight we celebrate!” The party finds mugs of fine ale (or wine, depending on the preference of the recipient) thrust into their hands, and several nearby revelers offer their seats to the newcomers. Platters heaped with meats, cheeses, and vegetables are placed before them by flirtatious maidens. A roar of approval greets the expansive nod of the Red Man. The food and drink are of uniformly excellent quality. The attentions of the servers and wandering entertainers (from dancers to musicians, and even a juggler) are anything but lacking. The atmosphere of hospitality and good cheer is certain to crack the shell of the most hardened misanthrope. Questions as to the nature of the celebration are smoothly and laughingly rebuffed “Not now – Eat! Drink! All will be revealed at midnight!” Once the party has had their fill, the Red Man gently shoos his opponents from his table and calls out to them “Travelers! A game of chance to pass the time and perhaps enrich your purses? I am a miserable failure at cards, I’m afraid!” The laughter from around the room and the sheepish but good-natured looks of his latest challengers seems to indicate otherwise. The games of chance (chosen by the party, at the insistence of the Red Man) proceed apace, taking up the balance of the evening. Their host is a skilled player, but does not defeat his guests more than would be considered polite. Drinks are consumed and sugary treats enjoyed, all in an atmosphere of goodwill and merriment. Questions beyond those permitted by polite small-talk are deflected or ignored entirely, but not in a way that would indicate malice. If questioned persistently, the Red Man merely suggests that midnight will bring the answers they seek. Outside, beyond the notice of the travelers, the storm grows more intense. As midnight approaches, the merriment in the inn dies down, slightly at first, and without drawing the notice of the players at the Red Man’s table. Engaged as they are in spirited competition, they hardly notice that the common-room is slowly changing behind them<sup>3</sup>...



3. I refuse to circumscribe your imagination, thus I leave you to ask yourself, what does the common room turn into? A sub-world hell populated by imps and minor demons? An empty void, cold and hanging among the stars with NOTHING forming one edge? A portal to another time or place that you as GM want the party to visit? The back bar of their local drinking den where they awake to discover the last weeks’ adventures had been but a dream? Who knows, who can know?

## Exotic Vistas & Strange Encounters

# ✿ The Encroaching Green ✿

*Consisting of contributions from Lizard and Ian Thomson whose erudition is neither scorned nor flattered with meaningless and trumpery trinkets and furbelows. We commence with Lizard's composition...*

**I**t is one of the truisms of life in Earth's last Aeon that you cannot kick over a loose stone without uncovering an ancient ruin. Though the inhabitants of the Dying Earth wallow in a slow stagnation, they are surrounded on all sides by evidence of change. Nothing is new, fresh, or virginal<sup>1</sup> – everything lies on top of something else. Where there is now a sea, there was once a fertile plain; when crossing a desert, you are likely to find the ruins of ships that sank when sandy barrens were a sea floor a mile below the surface. In the great forests of Ascolais, you will find many things that were built when the land was not a forest at all.



### *Temple of the Six Premises*

A few dozen millennia ago—recently, really—the cult of the Six Premises was quite popular among certain of the intellectual class in Alмеры and its vicinity. The teachings of the cult held that the entire universe was based on six key principles, and that once those principles were known, any further knowledge could be derived from them via a process of simple logical deduction. Unfortunately, the cult split apart in a violent struggle as it slowly became evident none of the members could agree on what the six key principles exactly were, with the ‘Life Predates Living’ faction, for example, being wholly exterminated by the ‘Two Points Are Implicit In Time’ faction in a single brutal night. The entire cult dissolved shortly thereafter, and the main temple of the cult near Ascolais was abandoned, and soon the forest engulfed it. This is rather a shame, because, as it turns out, the cult was almost correct. Through a combination of logic, the lost sorcery of mathematics, and the aid of some bottled daemons almost any question can, indeed, be answered. The “Logicarium” in the lower reaches of the temple was nearing completion as schisms began to rack the cult. It remains incomplete, but almost functional.<sup>2</sup> Anyone who reaches the temple and makes his way to the basement (more on that in a moment) will find a strange device. It is a massive construct of gold, silver and bronze, in the form of a large ring perhaps 15 feet in diameter. In the center of the ring, the floor is encrusted with odd runes, and a pole with a spider's web of pearled silver dangles from the ceiling, terminating at about five feet from the floor. Part of the inner ring is covered with knobs, levers, dials, and the like, all likewise rune-encrusted. In the darkness



1. Claims of any of these, especially concerning young maidens, should be regarded with great suspicion.

2. Let none mock the condition ‘incomplete but almost functional’. It appears that as early as the Larval age, this condition was regarded as synonymous with ‘marketable’ especially by that class of cozerner concerned mainly with the selling of electronical adding machines and similar contrivances.

beyond the ring, liquid-filled jars are visible, most of which also contain odd creatures whose shapes can only be dimly discerned. If someone stands in the center of the ring and speaks into the spider's web, they may ask the Logicarium any question. The Logicarium is extremely persnickety and its odd, many-toned voice will usually ask for more details, or perhaps provide a correct but useless answer. An Illustrious Success is required to gain a useful answer. The questioner may keep trying, rephrasing the question, adjusting the dials, and so forth, until his Persuade pool is exhausted or he rolls a Dismal Failure. Upon such a failure, or upon exhaustion of the pool, the Logicarium will decree the questioner to be "irrationality incarnate" and inflict a single injury via a concealed lightning-projector.<sup>3</sup> Some questions may be beyond the scope of the machine (at the GM's discretion), and the reply will be along the lines of "The axioms needed to answer that question are undervived". Even so infuriating a device as the Logicarium is still of immense value, so it might seem a trifle odd that few beings have found it and made use of it. The answer to this puzzle can be found in the basement passages leading to the machine. Fearing the anger of the irrational mob,<sup>4</sup> the builders of the machine created several unusual guardians, hybrids of mechanism, grue, and Northern Tasp, and set them to patrol. Reaching the Logicarium will require either defeating the beasts in combat, or convincing them that the questioner has the right to be there.

THE GUARDIANS

*Known Fact*

The Guardians exist to protect the Logicarium from intruders.

*Scholarly Conjecture*

The Guardians are more mechanism than being, and so need only air to survive.

The Guardians can alter their form and can appear as any creature, until they attack.

The Guardians may be deactivated by offering them honey and butter cakes.

The Guardians may manifest almost any weapon, and will counter any attacker with the best possible counterattack.

**Ratings:** Persuade (Intimidating) 0.75~, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 2~, Attack (Variable) 1.5~, Defense (Variable) 1.5~, Athletics 2, Living Rough 8, Perception 9, Stealth 3, Tracking 5.

**Resistances:** None.

*When engaged in combat against a single individual, the Guardian will choose the Attack and Defense style best suited to defeating that individual. If another individual joins the fray, the Guardian cannot switch to yet another style.*

*Taglines*

*"When I press this button all I get is a strange pinging sound."*

*"Nonsense, it is purely a machine and therefore cannot have a mind of its' own."*



*The Demesne of Kullifer's Hollow*

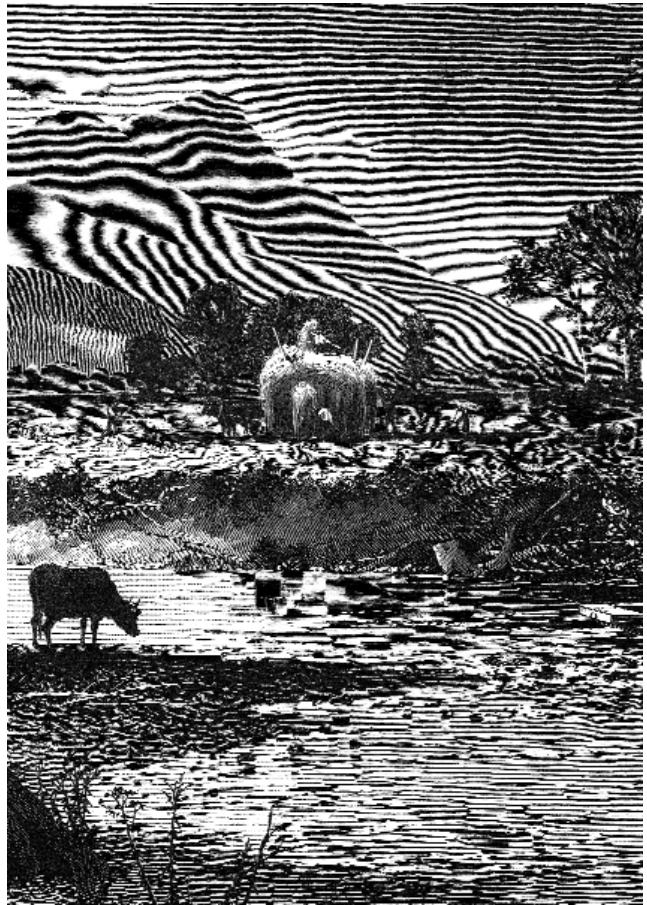
Kullifer's Hollow is a small valley, perhaps eight miles long and two wide, which rests in a particularly dense and overgrown patch of Ascolais. The woods surrounding the valley are extremely dense, and are haunted by several sub-species of grue, making passage difficult. The valley itself is only lightly wooded, with but a few copses of trees standing here and there. A dark lake rests on the valley floor, and there is a small village by the lake. A hillock overlooking the village boasts a small mansion and carefully tended fields spread out from the village itself. Adjectives such as "bucolic" will spring readily to the lips of passers-by, no matter how much they fight the impulse.<sup>5</sup> The village itself is a world out of time, a township frozen in sociological amber. No magic is

3. Surviving texts indicate that the designers had given much thought to the concept that they encapsulated with the term 'error message'.

4. Or more probably, schismatic members of the sect.

5. In these circumstances, readers are reminded that whilst they might indeed mock the very idea that they would use adjectives such as 'bucolic', or describe the village as 'quaint', 'charming' or even 'picturesque', they are most unlikely to have seen the village and thus should accept Lizard's comments at face value.

at work here, save a charm that keeps the worst of the local predators from encroaching on the village. Rather, the village still believes itself part of the Kang Empire, and the ruler, Lord Grand Magistrate Medellian Pormaund, awaits orders from the Emperor. It is his firm belief that such orders will be coming at any moment, and, until then, it is a matter of duty to preserve the village and their way of life against all disruption. The population of the village numbers some 500 or so, supporting themselves by fishing and farming. Young men of the village often leave, briefly, in their youth, to explore other regions of the woods; on such expeditions, they oft encounter suitable brides in scattered hamlets but it is rare indeed for one to venture out of the forests and even rarer for one who does to return to Kullifer's Hollow. For this reason, the populace of Kullifer's Hollow shows few of the signs of decrepitude that similar isolated populations do; indeed, the people are healthy, strong, and seemingly mostly sane. Over the centuries the village has existed, it has attempted to keep the traditions of the Kang alive. One by one, over the years, each family would eventually do something to please the Lord Grand Magistrate, and be awarded a noble title, and, as the years wore on, such titles became ever more common, leading to a situation where each and every inhabitant is a noble of some sort, from the Imperial Overseer of Fish-Cleansing to the Most Exalted and Twice Honored Cleanser of Chamber Pots. Exceedingly complex and intricate rituals of recognition abound, and so, to simplify things, each citizen wears a range of ribbons, buttons, emblems, and sigils, which specify with exacting precision their place in the social hierarchy. Failure to accord anyone the respect they deserve is, of course, a base violation of public decency and good order.



Visitors will be sighted as soon as they pass over the rim of the valley, almost certainly chased there by grue. The grue will cease their pursuit as soon as their prey enters the valley proper. They will then call to their fleeing victims, warning them of terrible dangers below, and telling them that a mercifully quick death would be preferred. “Should you come with us”, they will say, “you will be our meals, and thus, your deaths will serve a great and noble purpose! But if you enter the valley, you will end your lives and accomplish nothing! The rational choice is clear.” If the characters dismiss such arguments as wholly self-serving,<sup>6</sup> they will soon be hailed by a team of four men dressed in an archaic fashion. They will be wearing ornate armor, and tall, conical helmets fitted with several feathers as decoration. Their accents will be odd and clipped, as the characters are asked to identify themselves. Upon hearing any identification, they will talk hurriedly and quietly among themselves, and then say words to the effect of “You must come with us to the Lord Grand Magistrate of the Inner Domain; he shall speak to you.” The Magistrate will ask, firstly, if they are messengers from the Emperor. Should the characters say “No”, he will be slightly disappointed, but not otherwise too put out; surely, the messengers shall come tomorrow. Should they say “Yes”, he will ask to know what the Emperor wishes him to do. Characters may need to make a Resist Avarice check to avoid claiming that the Emperor orders the Magistrate to turn over all wealth to his esteemed messengers, or something of that ilk. Even if the characters lay aside this easily exploitable opportunity, it must be noted the Magistrate is not quite so easily fooled as he might seem. Orders must be given in a specific manner, phrased just so, and be issued in full accordance with

6. An attitude we find strangely common among characters.

established protocol. In the unlikely event a character has Pedantry (Kang Empire), this confidence trick may be pulled off; otherwise, there is little chance of convincing the Magistrate of the truthfulness of their claims. The exact consequences are up to the GM, but they most likely involve being left chained to a large rock on the tree line in anticipation of the grue. Otherwise, the village is reasonably peaceful. A guide will be assigned to the characters to assure that all proper manners are observed. It is likely that, sooner or later, most likely sooner, the topic of conversation will turn to the Kang Empire. The greater the ignorance the characters demonstrate of this long-dead Empire, the more distraught and worried the villagers will become. Sooner or later, the truth will out: the Empire is no more. The villagers, who have spent their lives believing themselves loyal subjects of the Empire, will be enraged – their titles are meaningless drivel! Their efforts and work are without purpose! Destruction and chaos will erupt. At some point, the manse of the Magistrate will be attacked. This will destroy the charm that has protected the valley for so long, and flocks of grue, eager for fresh meat, will swarm in. It is at this point that the characters may find it possible to make a hasty exit.

### Taglines

*“Of course I am a senior Kang official, a person of discernment would recognize it instantly in my nobility of countenance”*

*“Actually you are a trifle behind the times: the Kang Emperors now punish that offense with a small fine only.”*



### The Ghost's Market

This is an oddity few have spoken of. If they do, then most consider them to be mad, and perhaps they are. Nonetheless, the truth is there to be sought for those who have the courage to seek it. Deep in the woods of Ascolais, far from any border or clearing, some may hear an odd sound, the faint echo of laughter, terces jingling and all the other noises of people at a fair. Attempting to follow these sounds, which fade and shift as the winds blow, requires a tally of 5 from Perception checks. If this tally is successfully achieved, then the individual will come upon one of the stranger sights of the Dying Earth – the Ghost Market of Ascolais. It resembles a typical fair, such as may be found in any decent-sized town, but for the minor fact that all who run the booths, and most who shop at them, are ghosts. The phantasms come in all shapes and forms, but most of the customers are of men or of manlike beings, from all the aeons of history. So, too, are the merchants. One man may be selling wood carvings of the 12th Aeon, while another, in the next booth, offers the nose-jewelry popular in the Crimson Banner Kingdom that peaked late in the 14th Aeon. Art, weapons, jewelry, musical instruments, and more, all are offered. Coins of any age are accepted in trade. There is only one problem<sup>7</sup> – the items are insubstantial, shadows of light and smoke, and no living being can easily handle them. They are things out of time, and do not belong here. Two possibilities offer themselves. Firstly, a buyer may simply kill himself, thus becoming a ghost, and thus able to use his purchases. This possibility is sub-optimal.<sup>8</sup> A second option is to attempt to bring the items forth into the modern era, and give them solidity again. Several spells may be found which will claim to do this, such as



*The chele melon proves a trifle sweet for the educated palate, but the rind makes an admirable pickle to accompany cold meats.*

7. The editorial staff of *The Excellent Prismatic Spray* are willing to concede that there are indeed many problems. We feel that they pale into insignificance next to this one, hence our perhaps excessively bold use of the phrase, “There is only one problem”.

8. For several reasons which we have not the space to further investigate

‘Phandaal’s Chronatic Shift’, and a quest may be undertaken to locate and use such spells. Alternatively, Sandestins may perform such magics, for the cost of ½ an indenture point; such enchantments are quite taxing. Sadly, such efforts will prove vain, as the items, once restored to solidity, also suffer all the ravages of age, and rapidly crumble into dust. Sandestins will, of course, not volunteer this information unless directly asked.

There are other reasons to attend the Ghost Market. Interrogating other shoppers, or even the merchants, may provide knowledge of past ages. Each knows only the things of his or her own era, but, even so, this can prove valuable. If someone is seeking knowledge of a city lost late in the 17th Aeon, it is possible some merchant or customer at the Ghost Market lived in that time, and can tell you of it.

*Taglines*

*“I have stood at crowded bars and wondered if I were a ghost,  
so long did it take to be served, but this situation is wholly unfamiliar to me.”*

*“How can time be of any value to someone who has been dead for three Aeons?”*



*The Petrified Manse of Nemileen the Thrice*

Nemileen was a potent mage of the mid-19th Aeon, and his home was at the center of the vast city-state he ruled. After his death, the city-state fell to packs of half-erb barbarians. When they broke in to plunder his mansion, a ward was triggered, and the mansion, along with much of the city and the attacking half-erbs, was turned to stone. In the ensuing ages, the forest has closed in on the stone city, encrusting and encasing it. It is now hidden entirely, except for some odd shapes under the trees and the occasional very lifelike statue of a half-erb found encrusted with lichen and moss. Only the manse, a many-terraced structure of delicate arches and broad windows, remains mostly unenclosed by the forest. Visitors to the manse will find it a place to rest out a summer storm, or hide from a hungry grue. It is an eerie, but oddly beautiful, place. The spell Nemileen left to ward his possessions was an enchantment of artistry as well as power. The windows of the manse are now translucent crystal, purple-veined quartz and warm amber. The interior is a blend of countless types of stone, with red-veined marble having replaced the wooden banister of the main staircase and obsidian curtains hanging around the bed in the master bedroom. The books in the library have covers of granite and pages of shale so thin they are almost transparent. Contrary to all rational expectation, there is little intrinsic threat to this place. Any number of odd beings with strange motivations may well have taken up residence here—indeed, it is large enough to support several independent inhabitants—but there is no hostile power directly linked to the building itself. The potent magics used to create the place are long since



faded, and no one is presently at risk of petrification. No further guardians remain to prey on trespassers, and Nemileen himself is far beyond this plane, and will take no steps to revenge himself on those who violate his former home. In short, the Petrified Manse is simply an interesting bit of scenery, a moment of strange beauty in the midst of the usual chaos and turmoil.

### *Taglines*

*“Look at it, the face of a half erb and as cold and unyielding as stone. It reminds me of my last wife.”*

*“The bed, while admittedly clean and well aired, is somewhat to hard for my taste.”*



### *Lake Tallowmeer*

In the northern part of Ascolais, the forest grows preternaturally thick. Transit without the aid of magic becomes painfully slow, with the trees packed together so tightly that, in some places, a diversion of a few miles is essential merely to get around a particularly dense patch of foliage. It is in the heart of this region that the near-legendary Lake Tallowmeer is to be found. While exploring in this dense wood, one of the party, chosen either at random, or on the basis of being the most deserving,<sup>9</sup> will emit a sudden “Whoop!”<sup>10</sup> and then be silent, vanishing from the view of the rest of the characters. Careful examination of the area in which he fell will reveal an odd hollow beneath the close-packed roots; further examination will show the hollow extends rather a long way down. At the far end of the declivity, which is really more of a tunnel going on for at least 100 feet, there is another opening, into...somewhere else. Those who look through the opening will find themselves staring down, from a height of some hundred yards, onto the surface of a large lake. The lake itself is perhaps a mile long and half a mile wide, and the entire underground chamber is roughly double these dimensions. The entire place is suffused with a tranquil emerald light of no discernible source, and the air has an odd scent to it, the smell of exotic flowers and moisture. It is cool<sup>11</sup> and a slight breeze is always blowing. The lost member of the party can be seen struggling in the center of the lake, having taken a single Injury in his fall. Getting down to rescue him, or finding some way to bring him up, is a worthy goal (under most circumstances) but exploration of the strange chamber is likely to be considered as well. GMs should encourage such exploration, perhaps with subtle hints.<sup>12</sup> Getting down should be a trivial matter for Turjan-level characters, and perhaps a bit more challenging for Cugel-level individuals. The roots that form the ceiling of the chamber are strong, and can be climbed easily enough, though the fall will be painful. Not as painful as it should be: something in the air here slows falling objects considerably, so that anyone plummeting from the roof, rather than dying as they justly deserve, merely suffers a single injury. The area surrounding the lake is dotted with small hamlets of 10 to 20 buildings, each containing about 30 to 80 inhabitants. The folk who live here are short, with pallid white skin, no evident hair on either gender, and wide yellow eyes. Their teeth tend to be sharp, and their hands display signs of webbing between the fingers. They are initially terrified of visitors. Over time, curiosity will overcome their fear and they will approach. They speak an oddly distorted version of the standard dialect, but they are easy enough to comprehend. They are exceptionally forthright in their speech, even rudely so, and will make direct comments on the visitors’ odd smell, ugly outer garments, weird posture, and so on. Further conversation will show that the beings of the lake not only lack manners; it seems they lack all concept of prevarication. It is quite impossible for them to speak falsely; the idea will never occur to them. At least, not at first...

The lake dwellers believe that the world beyond the Green Ceiling is long since dead, the sun extinguished aeons past, and that they are the sole remnants of the world left. If confronted with evidence that this is not so, they will become by turns confused and angry. Having lived for millennia on raw fish, moss, and sand-jumpers (a small but tasty insect), the thought that a far richer (albeit eventually doomed) world was literally just

9. For example, the player involved had the temerity to order anchovies on the pizza that night.

10. This is a literal translation.

11. But still too warm to properly chill white wine.

12. Having the rest of the party all slip uncontrollably down the tunnel is probably a shade over the top.



overhead will distress them utterly. Of course, it is quite possible that the characters never explain the facts of the matter. Since the Tallowmeer folk are utterly gullible, they will accept any story—the characters were magically transported from the distant past, the characters are ghosts, the characters are from Far Arcturus—anything at all. There is one other point of interest in Tallowmeer, and that is the source of the light. If asked about it, the Tallowmeer folk will happily paddle a small canoe out to the center of the lake, and direct the characters to look down. There, shimmering in the deepest part of the lake, is a jewel at least a foot across, something like an emerald, but lit from within with a cold fire of indescribable beauty. It is a unique artifact, and worth an untold number of terces. Anyone viewing it must Resist Avarice at a levy of 1 or begin plotting to steal it.

There are several aspects to an adventure in Lake Tallowmeer. The revelation of the outer world to the inhabitants, the inevitable discovery by the inhabitants of the fine art of deceit (and the impact this may have on characters who have come to trust the utter inability of the natives to lie) and schemes to acquire the light-stone will all intertwine, leading, with almost gravitational certainty, to the destruction of Tallowmeer society. So it goes. Upon exposure to direct sunlight, the light-stone will crumble to green dust, worth perhaps a terce.

*Taglines*

*“At least their women do not smell entirely of fish.”*

*“I wonder if such a simple people would be interested in a few honest games of chance?”*



*And now from the not unworthy pen of Ian Thomson.....*

*The Singing Tree*

Any villager in that part of the Forest of Ascolais can alert an interested traveler to the presence of their famous ‘Singing Tree’, only an hour or so from the edge of town. The pathway there is well worn by the feet of many pilgrims and curious visitors, crossing the swift flowing stream by a robust bridge of tree trunks, and skirting the edge of Hugaph Woods.

On any given day, the visitor may find other tourists already sitting near the tree, or perhaps two or three locals enjoying a picnic. Or, if he is extremely fortunate, he may be here alone, and can sit in the shade beneath the high branches undisturbed.

The Singing Tree is taller than most other trees of the region, and of a species as yet unidentified.<sup>13</sup> For reasons unknown, at intervals that seem to follow no recognizable pattern, several times a day the tree shudders and emits a series of haunting melodic sighs that may last for a few seconds or for several minutes.

The tree has no apparent organs or extremities capable of emitting such sounds, and keen observers report that the noises seem to emanate by way of a breeze that flows from between its luxuriant growth of leaves.

Climbing into the tree to seek the source of these harmonies puts a person in peril in two ways. Firstly the tree itself seems to resent such intrusions, and branches jerk, kink, or otherwise evade a climber’s grasp once he has reached some distance from the ground. In these circumstances the climber must make two successful Athletics rolls, both at a penalty of 1, to avoid falling twenty feet.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, local law forbids such trespass, on penalty of three days hard labor in the village drogger pens (an undertaking likely to leave one fit for no form of human congress for several days thereafter).

*Taglines*

*“In my boyhood I was a noted tree climber. I shall stand here and advise you as you climb.”*

*“Such music may not be without monetary value.”*

13. Some have postulated that it was created by a mage in the distant past, others that the tree is a singer of some renown who offended a mage in the distant past.

14. see ‘Falling’, P56 *DERPG*

### The Man of Brass

Whilst crossing a region inhabited only by uncouth hunters and sly anthropophagic beasts,<sup>15</sup> the travelers come across the ruin of a large house. This now evidences little more than earth covered hummocks marking where its main walls once stood. Two large stone gateposts, which, despite being overgrown with creeping vegetation, have also somehow survived the years. If the vegetation is cleared away, the left-hand post sports a brass plaque with the single word 'Drojak' engraved upon it. Anyone who enters this area other than through the gateway will find nothing of any interest at all, unless they mount a full excavation of the property. In this case, they may, after many hours of labor, uncover various semi-valuable relics that might earn them some profit when sold to curio collectors or historians. Those who choose to enter the property through the apparently defunct gateway, will notice no immediate change, and yet have partially entered another realm. In this realm exists a living antique, a sentient creation from long ago, still sadly mourning the days when its responsibilities and attention to detail made it a valuable, nay essential, assistant to the resident nobility. This Drojak, for it was named after the grand residence for which it bore responsibility, will soon become visible, but only to those who pass through the gate. It will arise from its prone contemplation, offering them all it can do to make their stay within the property as comfortable and enjoyable as possible. Drojak is a small brass man, a little shorter than the average sized male adult, and correct in every anatomical detail, barring the necessary equipment for procreation and full enjoyment of the carnal delights. He can collect firewood, assist in food preparation, wash clothes, and perform a multitude of other household tasks, many of which have no way of being performed in his current situation.<sup>16</sup> He is neither visible nor tangible to those without magical senses, unless they first pass between the gateposts. The main problem with Drojak is that he is lonely, and requests that any visitor who accepts even one of his offered services stay with him and benefit from his servitude for the rest of their natural life.<sup>17</sup> Drojak is able to enforce his wishes with a superhuman strength, superior agility, and great resistance to any manner of normal physical attrition. Magicians of merit may find various ways to inconvenience him, but he even resists magical powers with great enthusiasm, if not with ease. Anyone trapped upon his premises may notice he occasionally (when believing himself to be unobserved) visits a secret place within the ruins. Here he has hidden a small brass box, and within it he keeps his gender-specific attachments. A prisoner who uncovers this secret may gain an advantage, as these items, whether attached or apart, are much more vulnerable to physical attack than the rest of him. More morbid discoveries might be the partially interred remains of his previous 'guests'. If a person were to escape, leaving Drojak only temporarily discommoded, and not depart back through the gates by

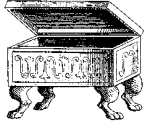


✿ DROJAK ✿

*"I exist purely to serve."*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Glib) ~+4, Rebuff (Wary) ~+6, Attack (Strength) ~+4, Defense (Intuition) ~+5, Health 16, Magic (Devious) ~+3, Appraisal 6, Athletics 5, Concealment 5, Driving 2, Etiquette 4, Gambling ~+3, Living Rough 3, Pedantry 12, Perception 6, Physician 3, Quick Fingers 4, Riding 2, Stewardship 15, Stealth 3, Wherewithal 10.

**Resistances:**  
Rakishness Ω,  
Gourmandism Ω.



15. Cynics have suggested that this could include the Golden Walk in Kaiin.

16. Hence his unparalleled skill with an early Kang fruit blender will only become obvious should the party have both the implement and the fruit to be blended.

17. Unfortunately his skills do not extend to building maintenance so he will not be able to provide his guests with even the most rudimentary shelter.

which they entered, the man of brass would surely later follow and exact his angry revenge. This would likely happen at an untimely moment, causing great embarrassment and discomfort to not only the perceived perpetrator of his rejection, but also to any others in the way of flying objects such as furniture and brass fists. Leaving through the gates may, according to the whims of fate, satisfy his deluded cognition that the potential victim has departed his domain and thus moved beyond his reach. Alternately, a person of sufficiently compelling verbosity might persuade Drojak to relinquish his useless servitude at the ruin and instead attach himself to their retinue. Should this occur, it might be advisable at least to furnish the brass man with a suit of clothes to reduce some measure of surprise for those that encounter him on the road. Note that in such a case, Drojak will not travel without his small box and its valuable contents. Sadly, Drojak is unlikely to remain a companion for long, as his unique powers will likely soon be coveted by those more powerful and more persuasive than his new ‘master’. Even so, in this meager time, he might prove to be profoundly useful in many ways.

*Taglines*

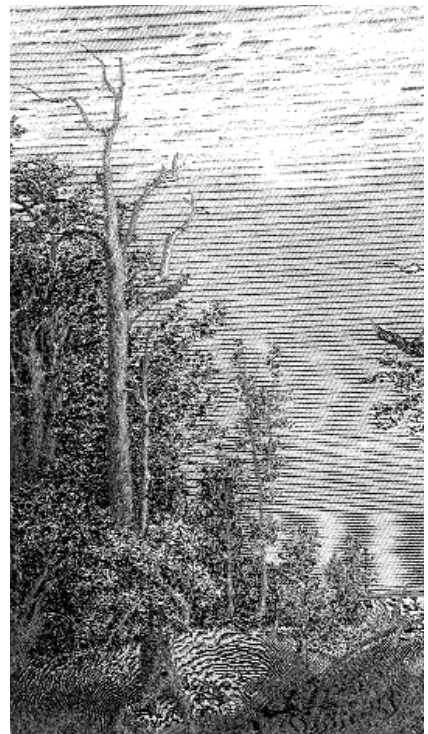
*“I suspect that if we could catch him by his gender-specific attachments, his heart and mind could well be amenable to our suggestions.”*

*“What harm can there be in a little personal service.”*



*Silver Bells*

In some woodland, far from any main trail, an almost indistinguishable ruin lies buried within the groves. The ruin itself is not remarkable, but at one of its boundaries stands a tall tree decorated high above the ground by silver bells. These sometimes chime as if shaken by the wind, but do so whether the air is quiescent or the wind is turbulent, and never with any greater volume than on a previous occasion. Travelers are sometimes drawn to the spot by the ethereal sound of the bells, and sitting beneath the tree is refreshing to both body and soul.<sup>18</sup> Whilst in repose, a man might ruminate that a single bell would surely fetch a useful sum at any market place. Scaling the tree is not overly arduous,<sup>19</sup> but the bells are at the ends of fragile branches, and so reaching one of them is a notable task (requiring an Athletics tally of five). When a bell is touched, it metamorphoses into a living human or half-man, who plummets from the tree.<sup>20</sup> The person who grasped the bell is instantly transformed into a bell identical to all others on the tree and hangs suspended from the same branch from which the previous bell hung. Recovering a friend so entrapped is an awkward process, possibly requiring scaffolding, a live captive deodand, and an excellent spatial memory with a certain aptitude for arboreal distinctions. Attacking the tree with an axe or similar implement will have two effects. The first is that the blade will bounce off the tough bark; the second effect is that the vibration will undoubtedly disturb the bees who nest deep in the trunk.



*Taglines*

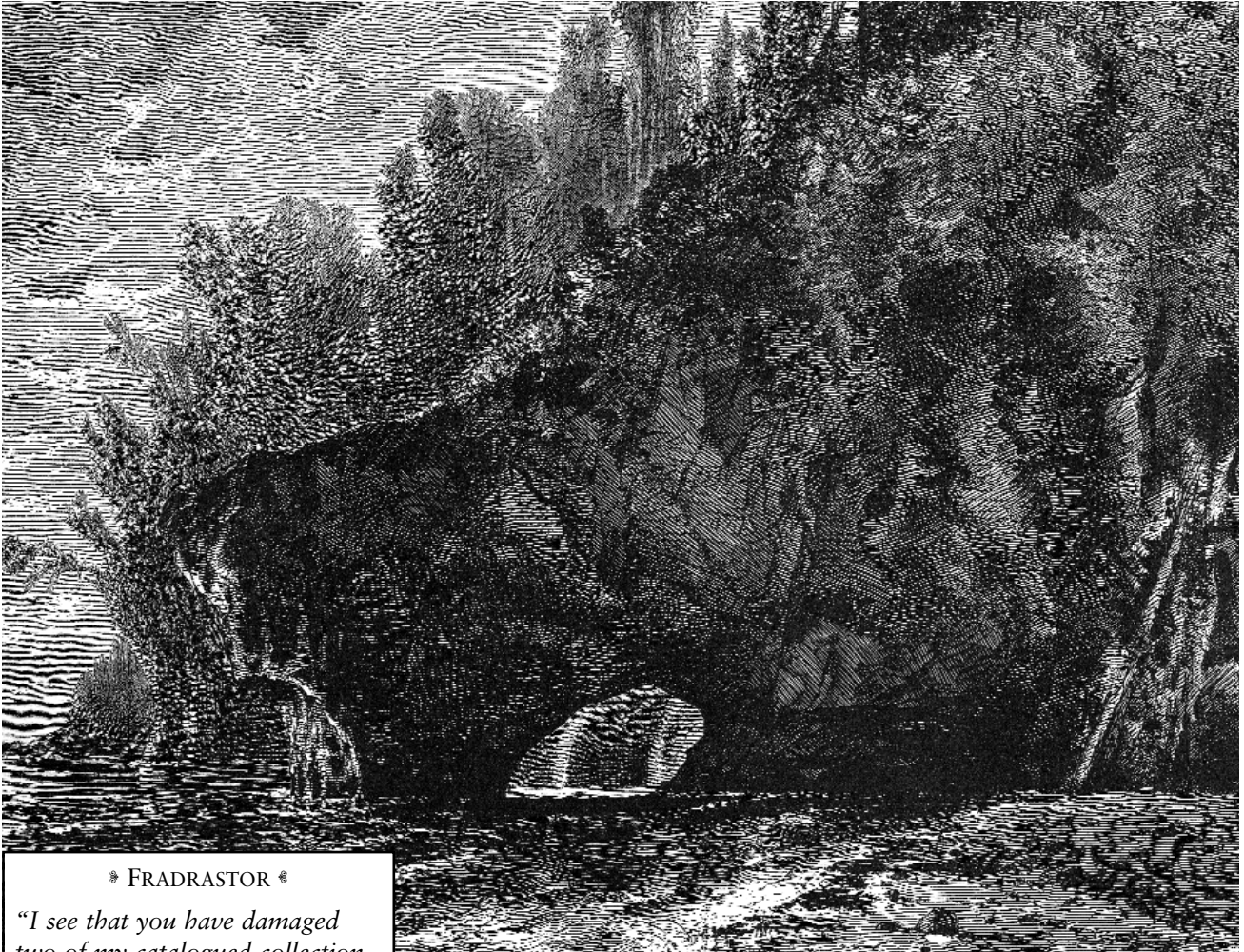
*“I never thought I would find myself engaged in a quest for an unwilling campanologist.”*

*“Would you think that a buzzing sound might signify something of import?”*

18. Certainly GMs should allow characters to refresh one dice pool.

19. Demanding no more than one Athletics success.

20. With the risk of suffering severe injury. Their fall might be broken by a cart load of hay, a pile of bed rolls, or even one of the characters.



❧ FRADRATOR ❧

*“I see that you have damaged two of my catalogued collection. Recompense is demanded.”*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Forthright) 9, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 12, Attack (Ferocity) 8, Defense (Sure-footedness) 9, Health 12, Magic (Studious) 20, Specialization (Biology) 12, Appraisal 8, Astronomy 9, Athletics 2, Concealment 5, Engineering 7, Etiquette 2, Gambling 5, Living Rough 3, Pedantry 17, Perception 6, Physician 8, Riding 4, Stealth 5, Tracking 3, Wealth 14, Wherewithal 6

**Resistances:** Arrogance 4, Avarice 6, Gourmandism 5, Indolence 4, Pettifoggery 3, Rakishness Ω.

*Beach of Bones*

The coast of Ascolais is in many places dismal and uninhabited. Indeed much is inaccessible save from the sea and mariners give it a wide berth. Thus it is that far from civilized human habitation, our travelers may meet with further troublesome escapades. Today they traverse a firm sandy beach with a cliff at one side and rolling ocean on their other hand. The cliff is made from packed alluvial shale and stones and at intervals has partially collapsed, creating rough headlands that block the way. As they scramble over the narrower part of one of these outcroppings an unexpected scene is laid out ahead. The long curving beach before them is much wider than the strip of sand they have been following, and the cliff drops back into dunes covered with a forest of dense grasses. It is not these surroundings that amaze, but the contents of the beach. The beach extends to a far headland, and its entire expanse is festooned with the skeletons of sea creatures, many of which are as large as (or larger than) a respectably sized manse. Travelers may vary in their perceptions of this place. Some may find it macabre, others regard it as spectacularly beautiful, and others (more practically minded) simply as an obstacle course to be negotiated. Sufficient to say that all must wend their way

between the gleaming bones of aquatic behemoths, past massive grinning skulls, and through temples formed from vast white ribcages. Between their greater cousins, the skeletons of smaller creatures, little bigger than large mermelants, also lie. The common hazards of this area are the audacious rylniks (dog-size rodents) that feed upon the recent smaller carcasses. (There are no recent huge corpses.) A less common, but decidedly more worrying imposition, is the attention of Fradrastor the Collector, a large insectoid sentient who regards this beach as his own private property.

*Taglines*

*“Apparently ground bone sells at twenty terces per cart load in Sfere where they value it as fertilizer.”*

*“Let no one even contemplate any form of spell for animating the dead.”*



*A Roadside Stone*

The Roadside Stone stands just a few leagues before a town that may serve as a stopping point for footloose vagabonds or well-intentioned intermediaries. The Stone recognizes no such distinctions. Taller than one man on the shoulders of another and so wide at its base that the same two men could not clasp their arms around it, this tapering obelisk is decorated with pictograms of unfathomable origin. If touched with bare skin, it is as warm as a living creature, but groans each such time as if in pain. Local legend narrates that each midnight, a form appears near the stone and searches all around for something that it never finds. Should brave adventurers return to the site and wait until midnight they will observe a shadow step from the stone and begin to inspect the surroundings with meticulous zeal. The figure may be defined as a tall woman in a dark hooded cape, who is uncommonly fair to the eye. If greeted openly, she will admit that she is the victim of a curse, and each night must seek a certain blue jewel, lost here long ago. Those of a romantic inclination might persuade her to relinquish her searching and engage in more amorous pursuits, and perhaps she will oblige. Any person conjoining with her is lost and will be dragged into the substance of the stone, for this is her horrible purpose. Locals neglect to warn travelers, for if not regularly appeased this witch roams further afield to sate her damnable appetite.

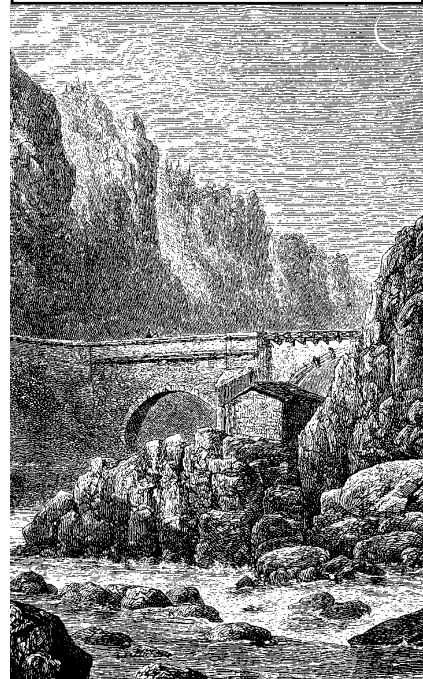
*Taglines*

*“When I said that I preferred a woman of spirit, she is not entirely what I had in mind.”*

*“I have always been strangely attracted to older women.”*



✿ Rylniks ✿  
*“Eat, Eat”*  
**Ratings:** Attack (Speed) 6, Defense (Intuition) 5, Health 2. Athletics 5, Perception 4, Stealth 5.



✿ THE WITCH OF THE STONE ✿  
**Ratings:** Persuade (Charming) 12, Rebuff (Penetrating) 11, Attack (Caution) 6, Defense (Vexation) 8, Health 6, Magic (Devious) 6, Athletics 4, Etiquette 4, Imposture 6, Pedantry 6, Perception 6, Seduction 8, Stealth 2, Wherewithal 2.  
**Resistances:** Indolence 2, Pettifoggery 4.

### *The Toll Bridge*

Far from any major habitation, a bridge of wondrous architectural consummation spans a great gorge through which flows a remarkably potent river. Even were the travelers able to climb down (an unpredictable undertaking at best), crossing the raging rapids would still be problematic. This ancient arching stone overpass provides the only reasonable way forward, unless the group has time and predilection to make a prodigious detour. Stepping out bravely reveals the sturdiness of this construction, despite the passage of centuries and the frequent small bushes and patches of grass now growing on the bridge. Unfortunately, entire blocks are missing from the ramparts, and (more disturbingly) from the main structure on which they walk. This latter deficiency provides spectacular views into the ravine and of the exuberant watercourse below.

Animals might need encouragement to risk this passage. Those who proceed will not fail to notice the briskness of the wind as they approach the arch's apex, and the increased number of missing blocks underfoot. Nonetheless they may continue unimpeded until the summit itself is crossed. Waiting patiently, concealed behind a bush until the wayfarers' approach, is an anthropophagic desperado of imposing stature. This brigand has the impertinence to be wearing the remnants of stylish attire, and sports a mighty axe, utterly incongruous to his pretensions of civility. This recalcitrant demands wealth or property as the whim takes him, and has the strength and audacity to back up the claims that he is capable of hurling his victims bodily from the edges of the bridge or through one of its more notable breaches. Dealing with him may be either costly or hazardous. If seriously challenged, he may flee with haste. If encountering those unable to defend themselves, he feasts at leisure.

#### *Taglines*

*"I knew no good would come of ignoring my mothers advice to refrain from consorting with the great unwashed."*

*"Fear not, he is all blather, advance rapidly and strike him with your staff."*

*"Sirrah, from your mode of dress I assume you to be involved in some thespian enterprise. I am afraid you fail to carry the audience."*



### *The Unusual Deodand*

Ambushed and injured by half-men one night in a woodland, the travelers fled, only to become geographically disadvantaged, with the sound of rampaging death pursuing them. From the shadows steps a deodand, its hands raised in friendship. "Fear me not. Whilst my form must surely inconvenience your senses, I offer you only my assistance. Those we hear would surely proffer merely their grating jaws and digestive capacities." If questioned succinctly, he will explain that ruins are nearby where artful adventurers could evade a battalion of erbs, or pick them off at leisure from defensible doorways and narrowly arched passages. He is happy to lead them there, as all he wishes is to make amends for the deplorable conduct of the majority of his species. True to his word, the deodand will hastily lead them further into the woodlands, to a ruined town now greatly overgrown. He leaves them to their own devices and departs, lest he 'alarm them any further'. The ruins prove to be most excellent for evading and ambushing the erbs, the survivors of which eventually retreat.

The travelers, by now greatly exhausted, may take refuge in a well-preserved building where they can barricade the door. Whilst searching for such a place, they likely note the impressive antiquity of their surroundings, the formerly exquisite architecture, broken aqueducts, cracked and sludge-filled ornamental ponds, and fallen venerative towers. After only an hour or thereabouts, the deodand returns, this time with others of his kind. They seek out the travelers, and prepare to dispatch them for ease of eating. It is singularly curious for a

#### ✿ THE BRIGAND ON THE BRIDGE ✿

*"Cliché demands I ask for your money or your life. Personally I would prefer to take both."*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Intimidating) 10, Rebuff (Wary) 10, Attack (Ferocity) 2~, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 1.5~, Health 2~, Athletics 10, Concealment 8, Living Rough 8, Perception 6, Stealth 8, Tracking 10, Wherewithal 8.

**Resistances:** Pettifoggery Ω.

deodand to use such foresight in methodology. This could be a tale his victims might dine out upon for many days ahead, should they have the unlikely good fortune to survive.

*Taglines*

*“Pah, we should never have trusted anyone more swift tongued than a publisher’s nark.”*

*“For myself I am sure it is just the sort of understanding that can be settled by persons of good will discussing the details at length. Ideally not over lunch.”*



*Strange Fishing on the Ascolais coast*

PCs approach a prosperous fishing village. They should be struck by the remarkable beauty of the fisher-folk. The women particularly are remarkable for their impressive figures and fine complexions. There are no children in evidence.

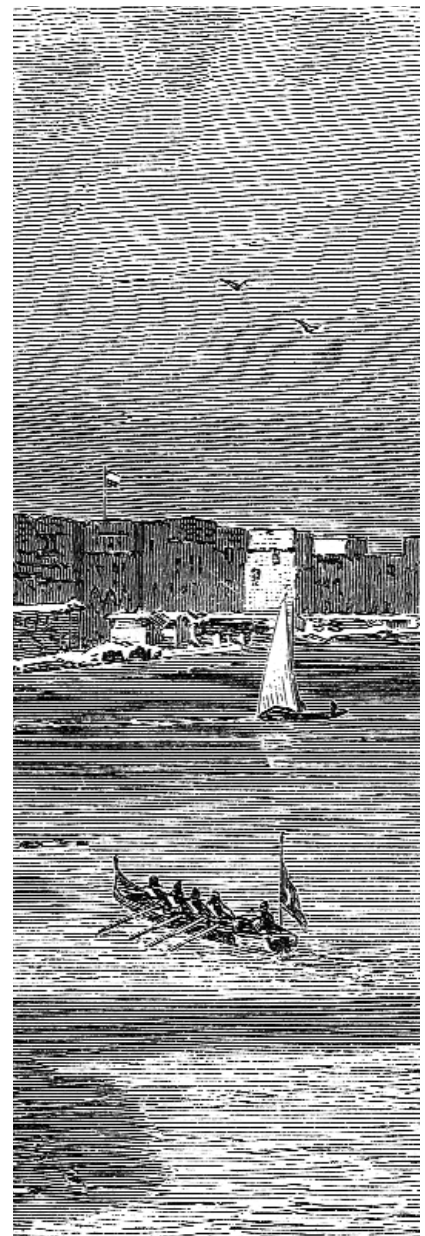
The PCs are very well-received by the friendly villagers. They will explain, if nobody comments upon it, that there are no children because it would not do to become pregnant before the Queen. This would be a discourtesy. The Queen, while in all other ways a docile, humane and caring person, has to follow the ancient rules when a discourtesy is committed. The row of iron cages suspended over the water will be indicated at this point. Anyone guilty of a discourtesy to the Queen will be closeted in a cage, pelted with filth and ordure, and left to rot until their remains trickle through the bars and feed the sacred fish below. Some may ask why none of the local gallants have put themselves forward for the role of the Queen’s consort. The inhabitants have a ready answer. “They consider themselves unworthy.”

Why? The normal answer seems to be that they consider the Queen to be the epitome of beauty, far outshining all other ladies in the village. Looking at the pulchritude displayed about them, it would be a flint-hearted soul who did not long to just gaze upon such charms.

The PCs doubtless have among their number gentlemen of high repute and noble mien. One of these would doubtless be the one to become the Queens consort for a month and thus save the village from the celibate fate into which it had fallen. Of course, they would have to bear with being the Keeper of the Pearl Vaults and Wielder of the Sacred Periapts as well. Power, wealth and fabulous beauty on their arm? There should be quite a struggle for the honor of this position amongst the PCs. This competition will be keenly fostered by the women of the village. The Queen will agree to meet with the party when one of them has been chosen as the most worthy. If necessary, it will become apparent that any urge to flee without electing someone to this post would be a definite discourtesy. Furthermore, alert fishermen armed with long spears, entirely to ward the village from any marauding beasts, patrol the village margins.

When the Queen finally appears, she is a hideously repellent creature. The local girls will sing her praises:

“See how her teeth jut out at the same angle as the sacred Thraup fish!”



“Her skin has the same grey tinge as the mule shark, lord of the seas!”

“Scent how wonderfully her hair has been greased with the rancid fat of harfisk livers.”

“Her eyes look in different directions so she may see her subjects and the spirit world at the same time!”

Remembering that to attempt to become the Queens consort and yet fail to rise to expectations would be a serious discourtesy, there may now be something of a shuffling of feet. The previously most worthy PC will doubtless attempt to bow out gracefully to others, who will be equally keen to dodge the great honor. Of course, backing out without good cause would certainly represent a discourtesy, and there are plenty of iron cages waiting. To complicate matters, the village girls will enter the debate, encouraging PCs to either stand as Consort or force others to do so.

- ✿ Minx one will offer blandishments of erotic possibilities as soon as the deed is done and she is free to perform congress.
- ✿ Minx two will advance the theory that the Queen is the victim of an enchantment and as soon as she is swept away in the arms of some gallant and roundly kissed, her true glorious form will return.
- ✿ Minx three will offer the use of a magical adjunct shaped like a mushroom. There is but a single charge in the device, but once rubbed in the relevant area, a gentleman will have ten hours of marvelous delights available to him, even had he no partner but a week-dead skate.<sup>21</sup>

Eventually a winner, or loser, will appear. He must attempt to overcome his natural repugnance or commit a discourtesy. The latter will result in a visit to the cages, which are indeed very well guarded. If the former, then the village will be freed from its self-imposed curse and access to the Pearl Vaults will prove lucrative. In the event of failure, a second champion must be found, and so on, until there are no PCs remaining. If all fail, they will be doomed to the iron cages and the humiliation of being heaped with rotting fish guts. Eventually one of the minxes will arrange their release, minus anything of value (of course) and they will depart with a greater understanding of human nature and the lingering scent of dead fish.

#### *Taglines*

*“Fortunately I am fond of fish.”*

*“Bah, the situation is hopeless.”*



## *The Prince of Kaiin*

A bare eight miles from Kaiin along the Mermelant Trail,  
the Prince of Kaiin Inn provides sumptuous meals for the discerning.

We are pleased to announce a series of TRADDAY PHILOSOPHICAL REPASTS, in which our Mar-trained chefs present the finest in food and wine in combinations to seduce the mind as well as the palate.

Book now to avoid disappointment!

*discreet elegance ... elegant discretion*



21. It is to be suspected that tales of two and three are delusory. Who knows the future with one?



## ❖ Cozener's Expedients ❖

“I urge you to ignore his long spatulate fingers”

### *The Cart of Confections*

The travellers are progressing along a reasonably well-frequented route between the small forest towns of Charn and Kaloop<sup>1</sup> when they encounter a man sitting on a grassy knoll. This gentleman is dressed in an unusual assortment of clothes; sturdy boots of superior cut, long green jacket, and capaciously brimmed red hat, sporting a blue feather. Beside him is a small, wheeled cart, an obvious antique that is decorated with faded symbols and text of no discernible meaning. The cart is taller than it is wide, the wheels being unusually large for its size, and on its top are two closed hatches. In response to their interest, the man introduces himself as Erbid the Confectioner, claiming a prodigious reputation in this region as a purveyor of sweetmeats from his magical trolley. For a very generous donation he can offer them refreshment from a long list of delights. If they are completely without funds, he will even offer them a sample. He explains that generosity is a luxury he can easily afford, since the trolley replenishes itself at no effort. It is his good fortune to have been given the enchanted device in return for assisting an Arch-magician many years ago, and its powers have been set so that they work only for him. On recognizing that his new acquaintances are in a sore financial predicament, Erbid has a proposal for them. In order to maintain his livelihood, he must travel regularly between the two towns, and once in a while feels the need to rest. Providing they swear to return the cart to him at an agreed location in three days, he offers them the use of it, explaining that after three days he will have to reset the magic, or it will no longer function. He does not wish to ask any of his neighbors to help him, for fear that they might then decide to attempt to control his business, foreigners passing through are the perfect assistants. He offers to accompany them along the way to Kaloop for a while, having exhausted custom in Charn these last three days, and explains the workings of the device. It is simple enough; one merely calls the name of the desired refreshment, raps sharply on a hatch, and reaches inside to find it waiting. He teaches them a list of popular delicacies, such as the luscious Robanberry Tartlette, and the mouth-watering Pijangle Stick. Sure enough, the cart works as planned, and Erbid watches like a benevolent patriarch as they make their first sale to a small group of hungry pilgrims. Then he departs for his house in Charn, arranging to meet them in three days. Unknown to the party, on reaching Charn he collects his meager belongings and departs the region at speed. The cart is as much a curse as a burden, as our unsuspecting travellers will discover. All goes well at Kaloop, although if the locals are questioned, they reveal that Erbid has only been amongst them for a few weeks, which goes against his description of himself as a long-time resident of these parts. On the



1. Towns from courtesy only. Were the inhabitants guaranteed not to discover my true opinion, I would name them villages or even hamlets, bereft of any society or culture. They lie deep in Almerly.

evening of the third day a knocking will come from within the cart, which if investigated reveals an ugly imp who promptly demands payment. If the knocking is ignored, the imp climbs out to accost the cart's new owners. Erbid has transferred ownership to them through trickery, and it is now their responsibility to provide the imp with his nourishment. Every three days it demands the flesh and blood of an entire sentient being, to be cooked and fed to it through the hatches of the cart. If this is not done, the imp is capable of inflicting a minor curse upon each member of the group, such as nasal liquidity, or aching brain. Transferring ownership of the cart reveals that not all are as gullible as themselves. Ordinary folk will demand to know the liability, and laugh at protestations of innocence, perhaps even causing the would-be purveyors to be run out of town. Most sinister of all, the cart appears both indestructible and unavoidable. No matter what they try, a few hours later, it will reappear at their side, rolling on its squeaking wheels from a darkened alcove, or simply standing before them as they round a bend in the road.



### Sirgefeo's Legacy

Walking along a road the characters see a neatly if humbly dressed old man, apparently exhausted, leaning on his cane and half collapsed against a tree. When they draw near he hails them with a weary gesture. The old man is named Sirgefeo. He greets the characters and begs them to sell him some wine or water, for which he proposes to pay the sum of one silver terce, a more than fair amount.

Once he has been given something to quench his thirst, Sirgefeo sadly explains that he has become exhausted while attempting an important journey, which he fears he must now abandon. Coughing and wheezing, he will then show the characters a document he is carrying, a letter bearing the seal of Octorus, from a Magistrate of Octorus announcing that his uncle Cakamue, a wizard of some note, has passed away, leaving Sirgefeo a legacy consisting of a moderately large sum of terces and a small collection of thaumaturgical artifacts and tomes. Unfortunately, Sirgefeo suffers from a rare disease, an affliction of the lungs and liver,<sup>2</sup> which can only be cured by special medicines and an extended period of convalescence. He is too sick to travel to Octorus and claim his legacy, and must instead immediately receive treatment from an Apothecary in Kaiin or face the certainty of imminent death from his affliction. While explaining his plight, Sirgefeo seems to suddenly be struck by an idea. Unbuttoning his tunic, he reveals a curious bronze pendant hanging on a silvered chain over his sunken, purple-spotted chest. Sirgefeo removes the pendant, which he explains is a medallion bearing the family seal, given to him at birth by his dear uncle. With tears in his eyes, Sirgefeo proposes to give the characters his pendant, the document with the official seal, and a letter in his hand naming one of them as his legal representative. In exchange he asks only for a modest sum of money, sufficient to pay for his badly needed medicaments, which he will repay out of the inheritance.


If the PCs are willing, he will ask them to help him limp back to the nearby town or village<sup>3</sup> where he will make the arrangements. Everything appears to be in order. The medallion, portraying the image of a bear and a maiden and the letter "C", appears to be both aged and genuine. The official document bears the formal seal of Octorus and if the characters insist, Sirgefeo can have his letter appointing them his agents notarized by the local lawyer, Corha. Unbeknownst to the party, Corha also happens to

❁ SIRGEFEO ❁

*"Cough, wheeze, Yes, my health is not what it was. Cough"*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Charming) 8, Rebuff (Pure-hearted)12, Attack(Cunning)2, Defense (Misdirection) 4.


**Resistances:** none



❁ CORHA ❁

**Ratings:** Persuade (Forthright) 4, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 9, Attack (Caution) 6, Defense (Dodge) 3.

**Resistances:** none



2. That this affliction is serious is obvious even to the casual observer. Without treatment it is unlikely Sirgefeo will survive the week.  
 3. We will not name this home village or town, it is the one which fits most conveniently into your current series.

be the brother of Sirgefeo, and an expert forger and metal smith.

Naturally, when the characters arrive at Octorus, they learn that Sirgefeo has sold similar amulets and documents to five other people. Each amulet is identical, probably cast in the same mold, and each document is such a masterful copy of the original that it is impossible to distinguish the genuine article. The good news for the characters is that there really is a collection of valuables to be distributed. The Magistrate of the town must decide who is the rightful heir, and being a wise and learned gentleman steeped in the very spirit of justice, he will no doubt side with the characters.

On the other hand, if they investigate at all, the characters may quickly learn of rumors that the Magistrate is known for his weakness for fine wine and gourmet cuisine. They may very likely also hear tales of how other cases were decided in the favor of certain litigants who plied the man with expensive meals at his favorite restaurant, the Immaculate Oyster. Perhaps out of mere intellectual curiosity, the characters may inquire at this renowned establishment. When they arrive, they will find themselves in a queue behind several of the other petitioners, who greet them with suspicious derision. The entire group will soon learn that the restaurant's finest table has already been reserved for the one missing petitioner and the Magistrate. The other four petitioners will immediately cry foul, but that petitioner, a certain Kilash, will emerge from the restaurant, and suavely explain that he is merely taking a perfectly legal and reasonable opportunity to argue his case. Certainly nobody in this group would dare imply that a Magistrate of this stature, and a refined gentleman to boot, would be capable of being swayed by a mere meal, no matter how fancy? The only choice remaining is for the other petitioners, (and one hopes, the characters) to insist on joining the dinner so that they, too, can have a chance to argue their case. The Immaculate Oyster is a stout, stately building of wood and timber, with glass windows and a steep roof of seven gables, situated on a better part of the harbor front. Inside, there are two main dining areas facing an enormous 70-paned glass window overlooking the harbor. There is a third special dining platform raised some five feet above the floor and cordoned off with velvet ropes, featuring a vast oak table of ancient vintage. This is where the Magistrate usually prefers to take his meals. Dinner will commence at nightfall, and each petitioner will soon realize that they must purchase ever more expensive desserts, food items, wines and other delights for the delectation of the Magistrate. This in fact seems to be the only way to get his attention. Each attempt at Persuasion must commence with an offer for him to try this or that dish, then



continue on to a subtle and well-reasoned argument in favor of the speaker's rights as heirs to Cakamue. Characters may then attempt to Persuade the Magistrate, but he will prove remarkably adept at Rebuttal. The owner of the Immaculate Oyster, proprietor Jaffo, senses the nature of what is taking place and does his best to reap a suitable harvest of terces at the expense of the petitioners. Before each of the seven courses (see 'The Menu' below), Jaffo will recite the details of several house specials, each of which cost roughly double the normal considerable price for each dish.

As the night goes on and the wine continues to flow, the resolve of the Magistrate will slowly begin to melt under the pressure of the constant arguments of the various petitioners, not to mention the mellowing effects of the food and drink. This happens slowly, because the Magistrate has a prodigious appetite verging on the superhuman, matched by an equally remarkable thirst, as well as a great resistance to the debilitating effects of alcohol. It will take many goblets of wine and trays of sweetmeats before the will of this man is broken upon the wheel of excess, but it is clear that it will happen eventually. The characters must attempt to Persuade the Magistrate of their cause, but he will be aided in his resistance to their argument by the eloquent refutations and dismissals of the other rival petitioners. One petitioner (usually whichever one, if any, trumps the characters Persuasion style) will make a counter-argument refuting each of the characters' claims. The characters, in turn, may attempt to counter the various spurious arguments put forth by the other petitioners, or even perhaps by the other characters if they are not acting as a group. The entire time, anyone who does not maintain decorum will be evicted from the dinner table and summarily placed under arrest by the suddenly irascible Magistrate, who is accompanied by two of his stalwart bailiffs.



⇌ *Gaming the meal* ⇌

Only one character is a Petitioner, so other PCs can be given reasonable sums of money (similar to that which their comrade has available to him) and can adopt the personas of the other petitioners. Each petitioner wants to be the one who succeeds in convincing the Magistrate that they are the heir. To do this, one must be the first to achieve an Illustrious Success using Persuade, when the Magistrate's pool has been reduced to zero.

As each course is served each petitioner must offer one of the options on the menu. Not every petitioner need offer an option at every course, and then there is the wine to go with each course as well. The magistrate will choose the two most expensive options. The petitioner whose option was the most expensive may attempt to Persuade the magistrate, but will be Rebuffed not by the magistrate but by the petitioner who offered the second most expensive option. Only if the first petitioner succeeds in achieving a Persuade Success against the second petitioner may he then try to Persuade the Magistrate. This is done with a Limit of 0. If this fails to achieve the end result desired, then the two characters who purchased the wine may attempt their Persuade/Rebuff contest.

This process continues until the Magistrate is Persuaded or all characters have no money left. In the latter case the Magistrate states that matters are complex and he shall return the following evening to consider things further.





*“The Magistrate is known for his weakness for fine wine and gourmet cuisine...”*

*Found, on the beach below Odkin Prospect: a silver anklet set with cabochons and with rose quartz inlay. Worked with complex chronogram on banderol, bears intertwined letters KP and H. Apply Shorecombers guild, Kaiin*

❧ MAGISTRATE HIVIACAN ❧

**Ratings:** Persuade (Intimidating) 8, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 12, Attack (Ferocity) 8, Defense (Intuition) 8, Health 6.

**Resistances:** none



❧ THE TWO BAILIFFS ❧

**Ratings:** Persuade (Forthright) 4, Rebuff (Contrary) 8, Attack (Strength) (Knout<sup>4</sup>) 9, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 9, Health 4, Athletics 3.



❧ JAFFO THE VIANDER ❧

**Ratings:** Persuade (Glib) 9, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 8, Attack (Speed) 3, Defense (Vexation) 4, Health 3.



❧ PETITIONER NIOLO ❧

**Ratings:** Persuade (Glib) 8, Rebuff (Wary) 7, Attack (Cunning) (Knife) 6, Defense (Intuition) 6, Health 3.



❧ PETITIONER KILASH ❧

**Ratings:** Persuade (Eloquent) 7, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 7, Attack (Finesse) (Rapier) 9, Defense (Dodge) 8, Health 4.



❧ PETITIONER NOUTH ❧

**Ratings:** Persuade (Obfuscatory) 8, Rebuff (Obtuse) 9, Attack (Ferocity) (Cane) 5, Defense (Intuition) 7, Health 2.



❧ PETITIONER QAV ❧

**Ratings:** Persuade (Intimidating) 6, Rebuff (Contrary) 10. Attack (Strength) (Sword) 10, Defense (Parry) 12, Health 5.



❧ PETITIONER BEVASIA ❧

**Ratings:** Persuade (Charming) 8, Rebuff (Penetrating) 8, Attack (Speed) (Rapier) 14, Defense (Parry) 11, Health 3.

4. A Knout is a short length of stout, knotted rope favored by Bailiffs wishing to bring a point home with vigor.

## ❁ The Menu ❁

### Pre-Appetizers

Yellow fremise melon and prickly pear fruit served with tart white wine	1 <i>terces</i>
Shevanil halves served with dandelion wine	1 <i>terces</i>
Toasted nectar ants with blue cheese and kelp crackers, served with hard pear cider	2 <i>terces</i>

### Appetizers

SHARK PUP broiled in its own “mermaids purse” on cold sautéed sea anemone salad	3 <i>terces</i>
Sugared SEAL NOSE with candied zasp and hot mulberry liquor	4 <i>terces</i>
BLUE OCTOPUS simmered in its ink, then steamed for two heartbeats in lavender oil mist served with tart bitterwort chutney	5 <i>terces</i>
Broiled prawns in creamed conch sauce	5 <i>terces</i>
Live soft-shelled mantis shrimp served with burning horseradish sauce	7 <i>terces</i>

### Salads

Hot golden river peppers, chilled jellyfish pulp, and spiced sea urchin eggs over a bed of pickled kelp and tossed brine lettuce	1 <i>terces</i>
Watercress and shallots garnished with slices of mud-eel skins baked in lemon juice, then blanched for three heartbeats in boiling rose petal dew	2 <i>terces</i>
Sweet clover and pickled ramps served with sunflower seed bread and larks tongues marinated overnight in a delicate sea cucumber wine sauce	3 <i>terces</i>

### Soups

Shark tripe soup with kelp crackers	5 <i>terces</i>
Sea sponge milt garnished with crab eyes	7 <i>terces</i>
Wrasse nest soup with saffron butter	11 <i>terces</i>

### Entrees

Broiled HORSESHOE CRAB viscera with sliced almonds and creamy barnacle chutney	10 <i>terces</i>
Pickled BLOWFISH <sup>5</sup> in ramp sauce with blue onions and sharp horseradish sauce	11 <i>terces</i>
SEA BEAR steak with rosemary and tart lemon grass, served with roasted yams and boiled ramps	15 <i>terces</i>
Braised SEA OTTER tongues with ginger over a bed of sliced baby yams sautéed in seal blubber, slathered with a yellow saffron lemon butter sauce and garnished with a touch of tart lime sauce	25 <i>terces</i>

5. Blowfish are, of course, lethal when ingested for the most part. The management of the Immaculate Oyster will not assume or take responsibility for the health of those who order this dish: those who wish to do so consume it at their own risk.

## Savouries

Salted glass eels	4 ferces
Seal flipper pie	4 ferces
Roasted Pelican bill stuffed with herrings in sweet nectar liquor	8 ferces

## ❁ Wines ❁

All wines served by the bottle unless otherwise noted

### White

MADAME GLAFEIG'S <i>A jug of honest white wine from a local house</i>	5 ferces
JEIDAT'S SEA-SLOPE FRESH <i>A delicate local wine, dry and a little tart</i>	6 ferces
GLAFEIG'S MELANTINE SPUME <i>A foaming wine for festive celebration</i>	9 ferces
LUIT FATFINGER'S DERNA YELLOW <i>A rich yet dry wine of Kaiin</i>	10 ferces
CARTHOS ESTATE SFERE GREEN <i>The most refined of dry white wines</i>	12 ferces
LUIT FATFINGER'S DERNA GOLD <i>A rich, sweet wine of Kaiin. Truly glorious</i>	15 ferces
CARTHOS ESTATE SFERE GREEN SUPERIOR <i>A classic of refinement</i>	15 ferces
HOUSE OF JOLIFORM LOW SCAR SLOPE GOLDEN PORPHIRON <i>Nectar of the Gods</i>	35 ferces
HOUSE OF JOLIFORM YOLPIT HEART GOLDEN PORPHIRON <i>The quintessence</i>	120 ferces

### Red

MASTER GLAFEIG'S <i>A jug of plain, good red from a local house</i>	4 ferces
FER AQUILA BLUSHING ROSE <i>A pale red of great delicacy</i>	5 ferces
THE RUBY OF VAL OMBRIO <i>Rich and strong, from far Almetry</i>	8 ferces
SEA-DARK RED OF SANREALE <i>A red wine both rich and subtle</i>	10 ferces
HOUSE OF JOLIFORM VILIYAT ORDINARY <i>A reflection of great Tanvilkat</i>	15 ferces
PURPLE IMAGO <i>A strong desert wine from distant Ampeiter</i>	17 ferces
HOUSE OF JOLIFORM "TWENTY TOMBS" TANVILKAT <i>Sublime nobility</i>	50 ferces
HOUSE OF JOLIFORM "THE BROTHERS TANVILKAT" <i>Unsurpassed excellence</i>	150 ferces

*To complete your repast may we suggest a glass of...*

Aged Rum	2 ferces
Fine port	3 ferces
Brandy	4 ferces
Ancient Brandy <sup>6</sup>	15 ferces

5. It could well be that several of these, red or white, may be fake. Indeed, there is likely to be an inverse correlation between cost and authenticity. We know, for instance, that "The Brothers" belong to Grashpotel. Anybody wishing to comment on wines should read Grashpotel's articles first. Anyone quoting from Grashpotel gains a boon to their Rebuff should they attempt to ridicule the choice of wine.

6. In Ocorus it is traditional to drink strong spirits after dinner. During the meal a selection of appropriate wines will be served.

### *The Inheritance*

The inheritance consists of 1,000 terces, 4 minor magic artifacts, and a small library of five Tomes in which can be found four simple and two complex spells. It is locked in a strongbox at the Magistrate's office.

#### **Magic Items**

❁ Krasdyke's Horn  
*5 points, Permanent*

This is a tiny silver horn which, when spoken into, can convey a message of up to thirty words directly (and discreetly) into the ear of the last person who touched the horn with their left thumb. The person receiving the message hears it as a shrill hectoring voice that imposes a levy 2 on any attempt to use the horn to Persuade.

❁ The Analytical Tablet  
*4 points, Permanent*

A small slate tablet. When it is laid upon surface or object, the user will see the chief physical components of that substance inscribed in 17th Aeon hieroglyphs on the tablet. Anyone with Pedantry 10 or Magic 10 will automatically be able to read the hieroglyphs; anyone else must achieve a Pedantry Success, but once this is achieved, they can always read the tablets without further rolling of dice.

❁ The Mask of Sabeevo  
*10 points, Permanent*

A delicate birch-bark mask, which allows the wearer to command the loyalty of one woodland beast for every point spent out of the wearer's Persuade pool. (These points are refreshed normally.) The mask only works during the hours of darkness and the effect lasts until sunrise.<sup>7</sup>

❁ The Adroit Chisel of Calla Fau  
*10 points, Charged*

When used, this chisel allows the user to shape the hardest stone as easily as if it was soft as cheese<sup>8</sup> with the skill of a Master Mason. It will do this for three hours and then must be recharged. This can be done by transferring 1 point from the users Craftsmanship, Quick Fingers or Athletics pools. This happens when the user sleeps with the chisel, in its erb hide sheath, under his pillow. The transfer takes place at dawn, which means that the user's Pool is not refreshed by the nights repose.



*Petitioners lacking gastronomic expertise have been known to employ professional epicureans to ensure no undesirable flavors are present to influence the magistrate's judgement.*

7. Assuming always that the sun does rise.

8. Or any other dairy product of the reader's choice, provided it is relatively soft and easy to cut with a knife.



### The Tomes<sup>9</sup>

- ❁ Broomfond, *Enchantments of the Northern Latitudes*  
A comprehensive account by a respected author whose sad death a mere century ago left us at the mercy of semi-literates of negligible scholarship and less style.
- ❁ Casfagcas, *Potions and Charms suitable for the Particularly Jaded*  
The classic 20th aeon work by a well respected eroticist known for his knowledge of love potions and charms.
- ❁ Dosinan, *Sleights of Magic*  
The classic early 21st Aeon tome which is sometimes known as “The Tricksters Bible”
- ❁ Stafdyke, *A Survey of all the Aeons*  
The classic text.
- ❁ Vydorsk, *Miscegenation, The Underworld, And You*  
Considered by some to be overly sensational but still a well researched and well-respected work.



### *A Corsair Maid*

*This episode may well be part of “Sirgefeo’s Legacy” or can be fitted into any other suitable occasion.*

Your meal, excellent though it is, is disrupted by interminable inquiries from the waitress, a comely young lass named Lakne. Though apparently well meaning, she will continually interrupt conversation with banal questions (“Are you done with that, sir?” “Are you sure you would not like more pepper, your Greatness?” “May I fill your wine glass, sir?” “Get you another napkin, your Lordship?”) as well as accidents, mistakes, and clumsy corrections of them. Lakne will spill wine on the characters, drop plates, mix up orders, and returns several times to be reminded of requests for various items. Lakne receives considerable abuse and chastisement from the proprietor for each of her clumsy mistakes, but she seems to endure it all with a quiet, humble dignity. The proprietor apologizes, confesses his utter exasperation, and explains that she was only hired a week ago and will be replaced, beaten, tarred, and feathered and driven out of town, as soon as another waitress can be found. About midway through the meal, the characters will notice a certain hubbub has developed among patrons and staff gathered near the great window of the restaurant, which overlooks the waterfront and provides a spectacular view. Everyone is commenting with interest, admiration, and a certain degree of awe upon the appearance of a large, sleek black merchant sloop, which has just entered the harbor. When the town constable marches by hailing “All is well”, the sign that the hour of midnight has arrived, the characters may

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9. The GM is invited to select 4 simple and 2 complex spells that she thinks will be pertinent to the characters and apportion them to the work she thinks most appropriate.

again notice a commotion at the window. There seems to be a disturbance at the docks. The Black Freighter has pulled up to the quay and hoisted what appears to be an all-black flag on its mast. Several of the crew, abnormally large fellows by the look of them, seem to have disembarked, and appear to be participating in some sort of riot. Soon the characters hear people begin to utter words like “pirates”, “freebooters”, and “raiders”. The mood becomes panicky. Anyone taking a look at Lakne will notice that she is peering out the window smiling with a contented air about her, and standing a bit straighter. She ties a black ribbon in her hair and departs for her room where she will retrieve her rapier and prepare for the imminent arrival of her crew.

Lakne is, in fact, a minor sorceress and a pirate captain in command of a formidable pirate ship. What happens next is largely dependent on how the characters treated Lakne during the meal. If they were cruel and arrogant, they will soon very likely be running for their lives. If they were very sympathetic or kind, they may find her willing to allow them to share in the looting and pillaging of the town. Indeed if any made a romantic assignation for later, Lakne may well take them along with her as a plaything to wile away the long hours at sea.

❧ LAKNE THE PIRATE ❧

*“Have him washed and shaved and taken to my cabin.”*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Charming) 10, Rebuff (Pure Hearted) 11, Attack (Finesse) (Rapier) 12, Defense (Dodge) 10, Health 3, Athletics 5, Seduction 4, Stewardship 8, Wealth 6.

**Resistances:** none



❧ PIRATE CREW ❧

*“A Harrr, slice ‘im with yer goosing ‘ook.”*

**Ratings:** Persuade (Forthright) 6, Rebuff (Wary) 6, Attack (Speed) 8, Defense (Dodge) 9, Health 4.

**Resistances:** none



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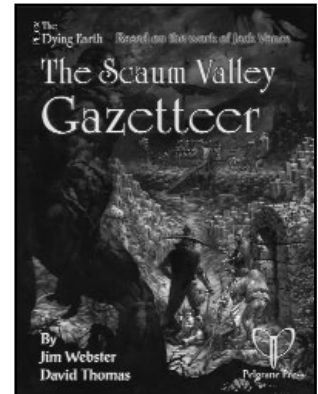
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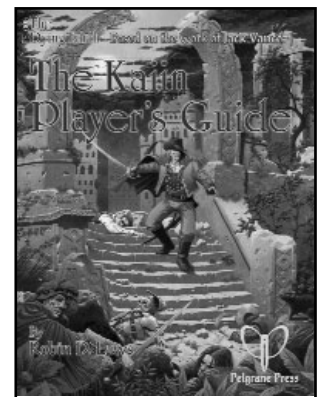
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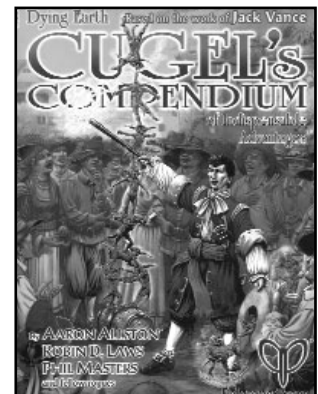
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