

The Balance Restored

an adventure for the **Dying Earth RPG**, suitable for Turjan-level characters

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Turjan's Tome would be helpful, but is not necessary to run this adventure.

Background

The mage **Vanduk** has promised to deliver a talk at a conclave. His reputation rides on the success of his demonstration. His talk is about how spell pervulsions or combined to make worthwhile effects, but his understanding is that of a hedge magician. So he called on **Pandelume** and negotiated an exchange. Pandelume was to teach him the pervulsions of *Vorredol's Removable Eye* for use at the Symposium. In exchange, Vanduk was to deliver certain rare spices to Pandelume. Vanduk cheated, some of the spices were fakes. Pandelume realised that Vanduk would try to cheat him and put in the faulty syllable to at least gain some advantage. The mistake summons a demon who it just so happens Pandelume wants to capture. Had Vanduk been honest, Pandelume would have sent him a message explaining that there had been an accidental inversion and giving him the correct version of the spell.

The PCs are the unfortunates who are left to sort out this sorry mess.

The Seminar

The PCs are attending the Symposium of Erudition at the Scholasticarium in Kaiin. This is a sombre occasion for academic discourse on the theory of magic. Sessions range from the simplistic *Primer of Practical Magic* up to the erudite *Extensions of Intra-Dimensional Entropics to Temporal Manifolds*.

Many of the more popular sessions, such as *More Turgubut's Fatal Statistics* have been booked solid so our heroes find themselves signed up to a seminar by Vanduk on the *Commoving Pervulsions in the Fourth Syllable of Vorredol's Removable Eye*, whilst waiting for Kandive's Vat Creature dueling to start in the deodand pits.

To avoid any unpleasantness at the Symposium, **Grashpotel**, a master at the Symposium, has instructed a Sandestin to prevent any unauthorised spells being cast by students on the Symposium's premises or environs. Spells under demonstration are excluded from the Sandestin's remit. Grashpotel has not informed the students, as he is concerned with more weighty matters.

To allow the full range for the spell's effect, and to avoid any of the pervulsions destroying yet more of the Scholasticarium, the demonstration takes place outside in a small, half ruined, stone amphitheatre. Students test their combat magic here against the Dying Earth's more ferocious fauna. As a result, much of the arena and the front four rows of seats are stained with the black blood of monsters and mages alike.

This is not a popular seminar and only three others are in attendance; a glum student, **Callok**, who has been charged with overseeing the demonstration and two rather bitter-looking mages who sit on opposite sides of the arena. These are **Arelthen** and **Sabcenthe**. They were once partners in the tomb-raiding business, but fell out over the sharing of spoils. They are both looking for a means to get one up on the other and are suspicious to the point of paranoia.

The demonstration starts well enough. **Vanduk's** pervulsions prove to be not entirely without merit but seem mostly to offer a change in the mode of propulsion of the wandering eye, from flying on butterfly wings to swimming with cilia. However, as a finale, **Vanduk** promises something more interesting and difficult. The eye will not only be rendered invisible, but he will cast spells through it.

In the course of this difficult pervulsion, Pandelume's misplaced syllable manifests. Instantly, the Sun darkens (whether as a result or by chance it is not possible to establish) and two great eyelids close as the whole sky appears to blink, the sun being the pupil. Crimson vein-like lines of forces flash across the sky and fade away.

When the sky returns to normal, the unfortunate Vanduk has been reduced to a pile of ashes that are immediately used as a dust bath by some passing twitter-jays. (Players must make Wherewithal rolls. Anyone who fails faints clean away.)

Although it was clear to everyone that the sun dimmed (which is a frequent occurrence in the Dying Earth), only those who attended the seminar saw the eye effect. None of those present know what causes this effect although Arelthen and Sabcenthe are as likely to blame each other. They both grab for their protective amulets, and mumbling under their breath, flee the scene. Minutes later, the sky blinks again and Callok is similarly reduced to ashes. The eye being clearly visible in the sky again. The PCs have only a short time to sort out the mess or suffer the same fate.

(Have the players make Wherewithal rolls again. Anyone who failed the first time suffers a levy of 1. If they fail again they are overcome by a mixture of fatalist melancholy and insensate bravado. They suffer a levy of 2 on rebuffing all attempts to persuade them to do something dangerous.)

What Really Happened

The eye is that of a demon, **Phanlick**, who has been summoned by the perverted spell. He isn't in the sky, he is actually in the eyeballs of those who witnessed the summoning. Phanlick is unable to manifest properly because he has been summoned into all the people present at the seminar. If he can kill off all but one of those present, he will be able to take over the unfortunate who is left.

In his weakened state, Phanlick is kept in check by the influence of the sun. He can only act when the sun dims. He has enough power to kill one of the weaker vessels that hold him. He kills in order of increasing Magic Pool. In the dark he has slightly more power and will influence those he possess. This manifest as a boon or levy of 2 to any skill use that Phanlick deems is in his interest. In areas with artificial but non-magical illumination, Phanlick's boon or levy is 1.

Arelthen and Sabcenthe both have high magic ratings but will have spent several points in casting spells at each other, whom they blame for this to do. In effect, their magic pools are now 7 each. Each time a PC's Magic pool drops he will see the eye-blink effect as before and feel a burning sensation which increases in vigour as the pool drops to 7. Should a PC's pool drop below 7, they will be consumed in fire the next time the Sun dims. Have the sun dim at least once before the PCs visit Embelyon and once more when they are in the Valley of Graven Tombs. Each time the sun dims, everyone will feel a little warmer, the more so the lower their magic pool is. They might even feel a scratching sensation in their eyes, or some other appropriate discomfort.

A Pedantry roll reveals:

6: To Embelyon, and spare not the Violent Cloud. Pandelume will surely help, for a price.

5: The sage Pandelume surely knows the answer. He is wise in spell-lore. I wonder where he lives.

4: I recall a gloomy tome that mentioned a Master of Spells who possessed knowledge of Pervulsions. Boredom prevented me from furthering my knowledge.

3: Let us essay some perversions of some vat creatures, surely this will help. (Fun in the short term but not really an answer)

2: Such is the way of the world. All is but ashes and the twittering of birds. (No it isn't)

1: Recasting the spell correctly is sure to remove the effect (All the eyes affected leave their owners and **Phanlick** materialises where they meet. The only way to stop this is to destroy all the eyeballs before the join to form **Phanlick**.)

If the PCs don't know what to do, nor have the *Call to the Violent Cloud* spell, asking around at the Symposium will reveal that Vanduk had dealings with Grashpotel in the recent past. The PCs attention should be drawn to one of his seminars entitled. *Kobori and the Lallephar: Travels in the Violent Cloud*.

Grashpotel will offer one use of an enchanted kettle that summons the cloud in exchange for some minor bauble or a service at a future date. If asked politely, he might say that he let Vanduk have a use of this item not very long ago.

Embelyon

Embelyon is as described in the short story Turjan of Miir (and indeed, Turjan's Tome of Beauty and Horror). It is intimately linked to Pandelume and he may never leave it for it would cease to exist. The sky is lit with strange swirling colours, the flora and fauna was mostly created in Pandelume's vats but some of it has generated spontaneously fashioned on his secret desires.

It is but a short journey through Embelyon to Pandelume's manse. On the way, the PCs may encounter **Tozog**, part vat creature, part phantasm. Tozog may become a threat but he will not enter Pandelume's long low manse of red stone.

Pandelume knows of anything that happens in Embelyon. He knows the PCs' names and he knows the purpose of their visit. He is willing to reverse the effects of the misplaced syllable (a silent aspirate) in return for a small service. He will make no secret of his involvement in the affair, although will not proffer explanations unduly, but will maintain that equipoise has been respected. Pandelume if treated with respect, will also warn the PCs about the side-effects of their possession, namely should they cast much magic, they might turn to ashes.

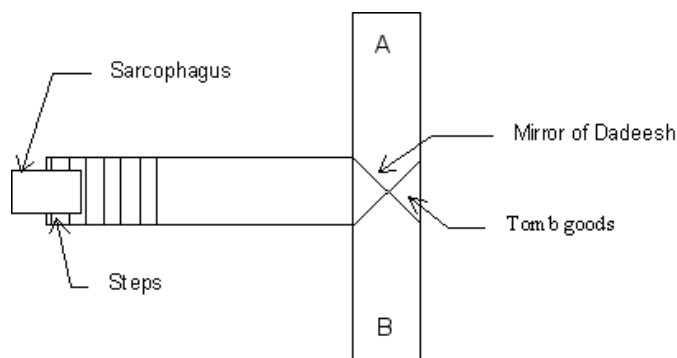
Any carping will bring the following rebuff, "Having seen prestidigitation of dubious instructional value, you have learnt that the road to understanding is fraught with danger and mishap. For this lesson, there is no charge."

Pandelume requires the PCs to fetch him the Mirror of Dadeesh from its resting place in the Valley of Graven Tombs. Pandelume will give the PCs a gem to break that will return them to his parlour once they have retrieved the mirror.

Valley of the Graven Tombs

The PCs fetch up in front of a simple stone sarcophagus, engraved with all manner of mathematical

symbols and closed with an impressive lead seal bearing the inscription $\sum_{i=1}^k \frac{R_i^2}{n_i}$.



Inspection and Pedantry reveal this to be the resting place of a 19th Aeon calculist Kruskal-Wallis. The only ingress is by breaking the seal and suffering the curse of Kruskal-Wallis, which only affects the person who actually broke the seal. The curse is to "never rank first in any competition". The seal inscription also transfers itself to the accursed's chest.

In the sarcophagus are stone steps leading down into an unlit passage. The Mirror of Dadeesh is set up in the t-junction but is not actually visible or substantial. Looking down the corridor one can see just a plain straight corridor. Anyone passing through the Mirror is randomly redirected to A or B. At A they are subjected to Excellent Prismatic Spray¹, at B, they are teleported outside, next to the sarcophagus. A and B are identical but the PCs can leave items or marks to distinguish them.

The PCs will be able to find the Mirror's frame by means of magical detection or a very close inspection of the walls. Once freed from the wall, the frame comprises two seven-foot-high, light metal frames hinged in the middle to form an X. The PCs can easily fold them for transportation. Once folded, the mirror becomes opaque and cannot be entered: it is reflecting the frame. It resembles a square metal sheet.

The Mirror will also trap any manifested demons.

The tomb goods, hidden behind the mirror comprise a small hematite urn containing the ashes of Kruskal-Wallis; a Primer on the Analysis of Pervulsions; various golden surveying implements and an abacus that will instantaneously count any quantity specified. It can only count things that you could otherwise count but don't have the time to do so. So it could count sand on a beach but not Grashpotel's IOUN stones unless you have access to them in such a way that you could count them if you wanted to

Embelyon, again

On their return, the Pandelume will have a servant take the mirror from the PCs and have it set up on a dais. Standing behind a screen, Pandelume will cast two spells on the PCs, the first is *Phandaal's Extension of Endowment*, a complex spell that allows one to transfer the effect of a further spell to willing participants (at a cost of one from the Magic pool of each participant). The second is *Vorredol's Removable Eye*. All the eyes will converge on the dais and Phanlick will emerge triumphant. **Phanlick** has but a few short moments before he is sucked, screaming and kicking into the mirror. The PCs will regain control of their eyes but if they don't recall them immediately, Phanlick has the opportunity to take a few with him.

¹ Its efficacy will have waned over the Aeons and the darts will only inflict half the PC's Health in wounds.

Cast of characters

Vanduk, Failing Magician

Persuade (Charming) 12, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 9, Magic (Studious) 12 (3 in pool)

Vanduk has learnt 8 versions of the Removable Eye spell, all counting as different due to the pervulsions. He also has *The Call to the Violent Cloud* and the *Ominipotent Sphere*.

Callok, Bored student

Persuade (Glib) 6, Rebuff (Purehearted) 9, Magic (Studious) 7 (5 in pool)

He has learnt *the Spell of the Loyal Servitor* and a pervulsion of *Spell of the Slow Hour* that means time passes 3 times faster for him than anyone else. This means he can ignore boring lectures but it does make him appear to be slow and dim-witted.

Arelthen, a paranoid mage.

Persuade (Charming) 8 Rebuff (Penetrating) 8 Attack (Caution) 6 Defend (Parry) 8 Magic(Studious) 13 Appraisal 6 Etiquette 6 Pedantry 8 Perception 8 Quick Fingers 6 Scuttlebutt 6 Stewardship 6 Wealth 6 Wherewithal 8 Avarice 3 Gourmandism 3 Rakishness 3 Health 6

Spells: *The Second Retrotopic* (c)*, *Excellent Prismatic Spray**, *Rbialto's*, *Green Turmoil*, *Omnipotent Sphere*, *Interminable Interim*

Items: a yellow spindle IOUN stone (empty), a pendant of Temporal Monitoring, a Talisman to Reveal the Hidden.

Sabcenthe, another paranoid mage.

Persuade (Obfuscatory) 8 Rebuff (Contrary) 8 Attack (Strength) 6 Defend (Vexation) 8 Magic(Studious) 13 Appraisal 6 Etiquette 6 Pedantry 8 Perception 8 Quick Fingers 6 Scuttlebutt 6 Stewardship 6 Wealth 6 Wherewithal 8 Avarice 3 Gourmandism 3 Rakishness 3 Health 6

Spells: *Shabat's Admonitory Bolt* (c)*, *Unassailable Intellect**, *Malakan's Silver Skin*, *Imperceptible Intellectual Analyser*, *Calanctus' Substantive Guardian**

Items: the wand of Obdurate Affixation, *Zaladet's band*

Grashpotel, an Archmage (The Kaiin Player's Guide p111)

Grashpotel has recently become an archmage. He enjoys lecturing and his main vices are "going on at length" and food. As an archmage he has a sandestin, Masdrio, at his disposal and so should be virtually immune to any magical or physical assault from mages.

Persuade (Eloquent) 10, Rebuff (Obtuse) 15, Attack (Cunning) 2, Defend (Vexation) 5, Health 10, Magic (Curious) 20, Appraisal 4, Etiquette 4, Gambling 4, Imposture 4, Pedantry 12, Perception 4, Scuttlebutt 8, Seduction 4, Stewardship 8, Wealth 12, Wherewithal 8

* Denotes a spell already cast. The reason the two mages have such low pools is that one tried to cast *Shabat's Admonitory Bolt* and the sandestin just absorbed the magic pool spent. The other failed to cast the *XPS* and tried to dispel the protection with the 2nd *Retrotopic* which was also gleefully foiled by Grashpotel's sandestin.

Tozog, an unfortunate.

Tozog is an unfinished vat-creature that stalks Embelyon. He is a manifestation Pandelume's suspicion. Tozog was accidentally poured from his matrix before he was complete and only exists as a pale mirage, a slight breeze, a vapid odour or an indistinct sound, something distant and insubstantial.

Although Tozog is close by, he always creates the impression of something far-away, even when he attacks. Tozog's desire is for shape. He latches onto and haunts anyone who says anything that could be the least bit construed as a threat to Pandelume. Tozog feeds off his victim's fears. As he does, the sensorial impressions he creates grow stronger and start to spread to other characters. If the fear is real, have the PCs make Wherewithal checks. Tozog captures the points that are spent and transfers them to abilities. For each point he gets +2 in Attack (Ferocious) and Persuade (Intimidate), and +1 in Health. Once Health reaches 5, he is corporeal enough to attack through an onslaught of sensory violence. He can capture further points spent to increase

Tozog cannot leave Embelyon and he will not enter the manse. Pandelume is incapable of perceiving Tozog.

Pandelume, an archmage (Turjan's Tome of Beauty and Horror, p131).

Pandelume is a student of the great master of magic Phandaal and aware of many pervulsions. He is also a great creator of vat creatures and has mastered the matrix for humans. Pandelume's form is too terrible to contemplate (A Wherewithal roll at a penalty of 3) but he will give his guests the chance to avoid seeing him.

Persuade (Forthright) 15, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 20, Health 15, Magic (Insightful) 25, Specialization (Mathematics) 19, Appraisal 17, Pedantry 25, Perception 8, Stewardship 10, Wherewithal 16, Resistances: all Ω

Phanlick, a demon.

Phanlick in his natural form is a spider-like creature. He has a small body with ten 20 feet legs that taper to dagger-like edges. He never raises them very far and they always dangle beneath his body. His whole form is incandescent. Anything that he touches soon starts to smoke and will catch fire in a few minutes.

Persuade (Intimidating) 12, Rebuff (Purehearted) 6, Attack (Ferocity) 20, Defend (Surefootedness) 14, Magic (Forceful resistance only) 20, Athletics 14, Pedantry 10, Perception 15, Wherewithal 12, Health 18

In combat, if he Wallops somebody, they are reduced to ashes. His only vices are setting fires and torture.

Taglines

Taglines are optional in a Turjan-level adventure, but at least these may provide some inspiration.

- Mathematics indicate three solutions to this problem, but this is the one that will cause you harm.
- I am seized by sweet melancholy.
- Stand hither, that I may blast you with my spells.
- Not since I dissected a deodand have I smelt anything so foul.
- Defend yourself, I am in need of a distraction.
- By the baleful eye of Jheldred, No!
- The incommidity will pass, look instead to our adversary.
- Nothing scares me, I am merely cautious.
- Blame not the tool, the fault is with the craftsman.
- By Skax, your insolence will cost you dear!
- If you say that once more, I will have lead run in your veins.
- Cruelty? No. It is mere expediency.
- Your offer is not without merit, but offends equipoise.
- I was lost in contemplation, please repeat your previous statement.
- The sun may pass, but I will endure!
- I will do no such thing; I have made a vow.

And here are some Vancean versions of other sayings*:

- I have become aware of a convolution in the ether.
- Let us fly over and reign down destruction from the skies.
- You must ask yourself, "Does chance smile upon me today?" Well, does it?

And the odd bit from the Bard:

- What man dare? I dare!
- I find that you have a gallows complexion.
- What conjuration, and what mighty magic!

* Editor's note: These taglines do not pass the "strictly no-pop-culture references rule", but I am willing be indulgent due to the otherwise flawless nature of this adventure.