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The **Dying Earth** Based on the work of Jack Vance

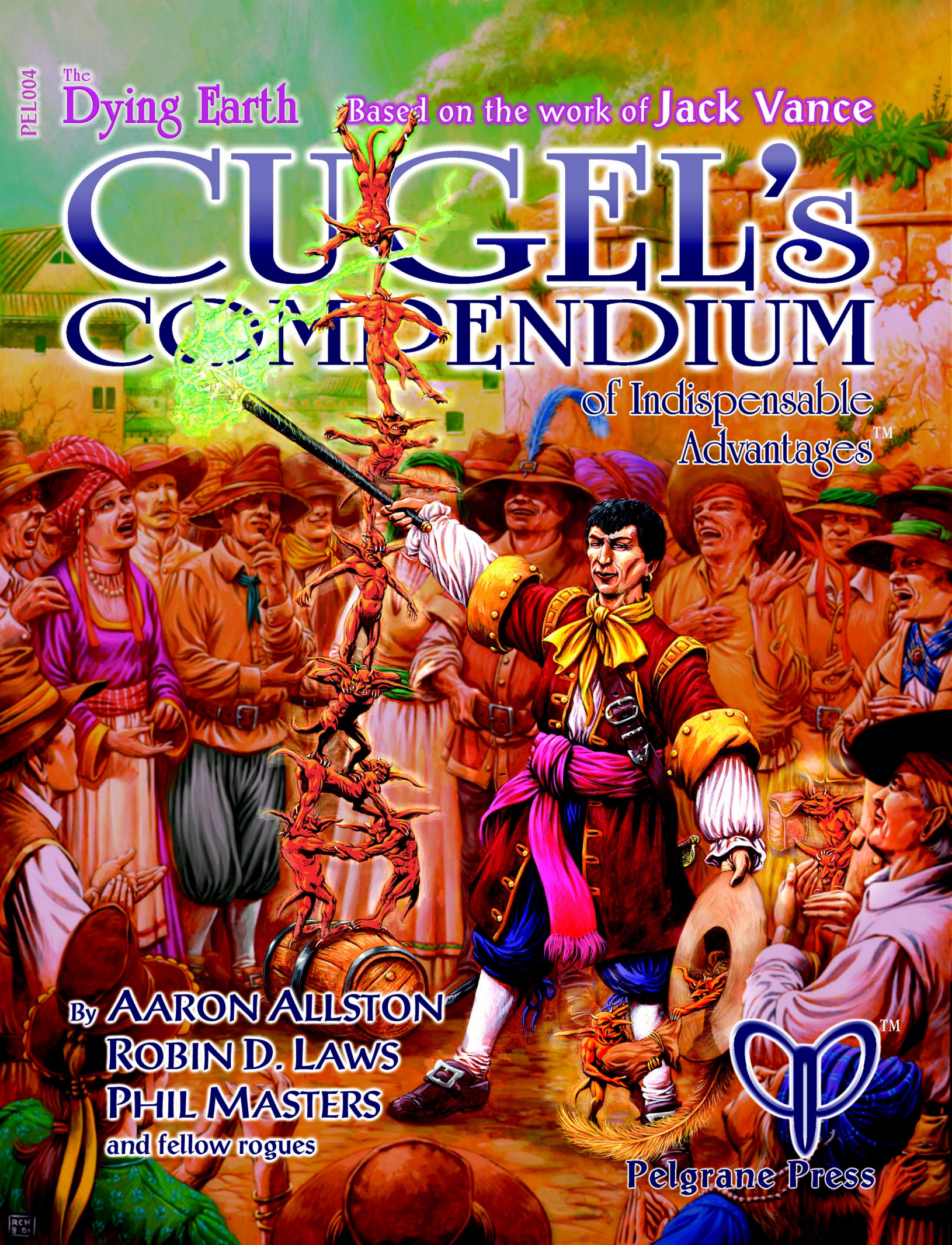
CUGEL'S COMPENDIUM

of Indispensable
Advantages™

By **AARON ALLSTON**
ROBIN D. LAWS
PHIL MASTERS
and fellow rogues



Pelgrane Press



Cugel's Compendium

of Indispensable Advantages™

A Dying Earth™
Players Book

by Aaron Allston,
Robin D. Laws,
Phil Masters, and cohorts

The play proceeded. Cugel lost eleven terces, and drank two mugs of the local beer: a pungent liquid brewed from acorns, bittermoss, and black sausage. Presently Cugel was able to introduce his own cards into the game, whereupon his luck changed and he quickly won thirty-eight terces [...]

Koyman rose to his feet. "I am destitute. Cugel, at least tender me a beer from your winnings."

"With pleasure!" Cugel called the serving boy. "Beer for Koyman and also for Bunderwal!"

"Thank you." Koyman signaled Bunderwal to his place. "You may try your luck against Cugel, who plays with uncanny skill."

"I will try him for a terce or two. Ho boy! Bring fresh cards, and throw away these limp old rags! Some are short, some are long; some are stained; others show strange designs."

"New cards by all means!" cried Cugel heartily. "Still I will take these old cards and use them for practice. Bunderwal, where is your bet?"

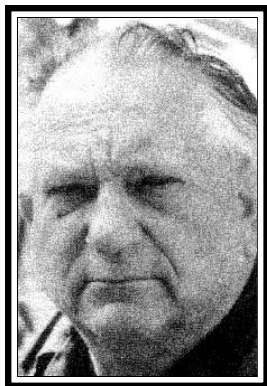
Bunderwal placed out a terce and distributed the new cards with a fluttering agility of the fingers which caused Cugel to blink...

— Jack Vance, *Cugel's Saga*

Based on the Dying Earth book
series by JACK VANCE

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The shackles of pecuniary practicality limit this Compendium to 72 pages. Additional material of great merit appears in the Compendium Addendum on the Pelgrane Press Web site: <http://www.dyingearth.com/compendium>

The quotations in the upper right corners of this Compendium's pages come from Jack Vance's books The Eyes of the Overworld and Cugel's Saga. Many can inspire taglines suitable for adventurers.

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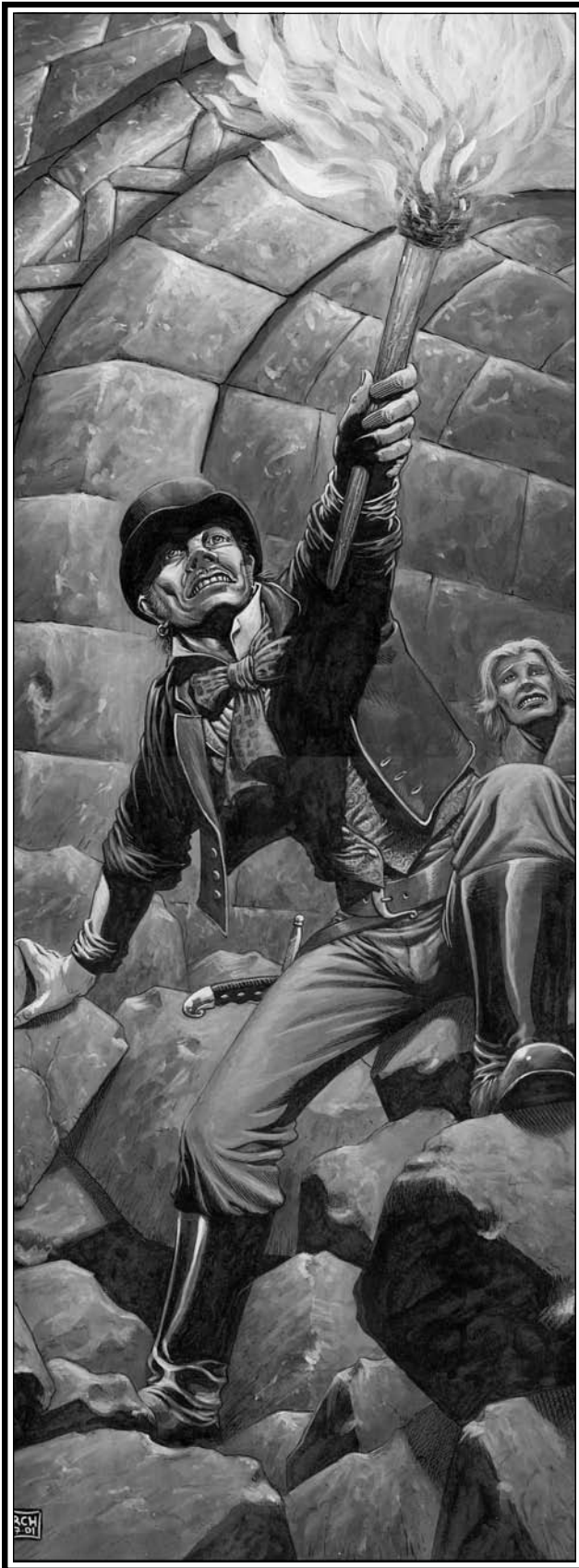
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Published by Pelgrane Press Ltd. Stock number PEL004.
 Printed in Bangkok, Thailand by Sirivatana Interprint PLC.
 Published October 2001. First printing October 2001.

Introduction



In all candor, this is a toy book. We want players to buy it, and so we provide many new magical items (in Chapter 1), new equipment (Chapter 2), new cantraps suitable for Dabblers (Chapter 3), and new character advantages called tweaks (Chapter 4) to enhance their PCs. We want GMs to buy it, not only for the many Cugel-level adventure ideas that this array inspires, but also to keep up with what the players can now add to their characters. ✿ By subtly playing off rival interests against one another for our own profit, we demonstrate a principle from the sections presented serially throughout this book: “Confidence Games.” These sections culminate in the essays of Chapter 5, which also provides illuminating discussions of negotiation in the style of Dying Earth characters; life and death, or at least status and opprobrium, may hinge on skillful negotiation. And unusually adroit players will appreciate the lengthy advice on running a confidence game against their very own Game Moderator. To the alarmed GM, though, we offer calming words: Be at peace! We assert unequivocally that you need not fear your players. Try to enjoy it—after all, what could possibly go wrong? ✿ You need only the *Dying Earth* rulebook to use this supplement. However, if you also own at least one copy of each of our other fine supplements, it is possible to collate certain seemingly disparate and innocuous sentences from each one to produce new character enhancements not available in this single product. Furthermore, by presenting to Pelgrane Press evidence that you have detected these enhancements, along with sales receipts for all available supplements, you will win a certificate of admission to the aristocracy of Kaspara Vitatus, Kaiin, or another city of your choice! To gain this valuable certificate, first buy at least one copy of each *Dying Earth* supplement, then decode the instructions cleverly concealed in the “Confidence Games” sections. (This offer subject to abrupt, unexpected cancellation.)

Chapter 1:



He left the room for a balcony circling a central chamber, light streaming through the oriels high in the walls. Below were cases, chests, shelves, and racks containing all manner of objects: Lucounu's marvelous collection.

The Eyes of the Overworld,
Chapter 1

Arcane Adjuncts of Obvious Utility

Magical materials and devices
of varying suitability for the
impecunious or impulsive

This chapter presents a choice selection of enchanted items of various scarcity. Find them in ruins; purchase them from traveling charlatans; or, if sufficiently tempted, consider purloining them from the display cases of collectors! Really, what could go wrong? ❁ The Game Moderator may, at her whim, introduce any of these items in a story, giving you the opportunity to have your way with them. Assuming she still wants your character to have an item at the beginning of the next adventure, you must then spend 3 improvement points for each Possession point you invest in the item. The character is then subject to losing the item only under the usual Possessions rules, as seen in Chapter 4 of *The Dying Earth* rulebook. (The same rules apply to the magical items listed in the rulebook's Chapter 6.) Without the Possession points, the GM is practically obligated to scheme to separate your character from the new item permanently, at the earliest believable opportunity.

To ransack the clutter of generations in search of a pot of boot-dressing was not a task to be undertaken lightly.

You can begin the game with these exotic Possessions by spending creation points on them. Each entry lists the minimum number of Possession points you must spend to begin the game with the relevant item. You may spend more than the listed number to gain a more secure hold on the item.

Amrakkik Paste

(2 points, Charged)

This is a naturally-occurring magical grease, seemingly of mineral origin; it is believed that all seams, beds, or pits from which it was once derived are now mined out, and hence the current supply is finite. It is usually carried in one-ounce quantities in small, stoppered bottles or pots, which are carefully designed to be watertight, for reasons that will become clear. For game purposes, each such standard container costs 1 point.

Amrakkik paste absorbs and stores electrical energies. However, its capacity is finite. For practical purposes, each container completely cancels and negates a single dangerous electrical blast that strikes or passes within five feet of its location, whether a natural lightning bolt, Gilgad's Instantaneous Galvanic Thrust, or some grotesque archaic weapon. The cause of this negation is not obvious to observers. The paste then changes color from pale green to dull brown, indicating that it is *charged*.

Magicians and Arch-Magicians can purify charged paste in their work-rooms, discharging it and restoring its protective ability. This routine task requires no ability roll, nor even passing attention, but the process takes a week. A sandestin can purify the paste instantly.

If charged amrakkik paste comes into contact with water, or any watery liquid such as wine or tea, it releases its absorbed electrical energy in an explosive flash. Treat all persons or objects within three feet as if they had just been struck by the attack or phenomenon that the paste negated. Other doses of the paste cannot negate this release. The exploding paste invariably destroys its container and scatters, but if carefully gathered (a task requiring patience, meticulous care, and several hours) and purified, it can once again protect against electrical forces.

Larger quantities of the paste absorb electrical forces an ounce at a time, and separate out, the charged explosive rising to the top of the container. If multiple unused pots or bottles are in the vicinity of an electrical blast, one of them (determined at random) absorbs its energy. Quantities smaller than an ounce are ineffectual.

this release: The alchemist Shantric the Self-Directed theorizes that thaumaturgical resonances between uncharged and discharging amrakkik paste create in each an unstable intrastructural electromotivatory fluctuation.

plunger-and-nozzle attachments: Gardeners have adapted some of these bottles for use among foliage. Sensible buyers considering a purchase may demand a trial demonstration to ensure they are not buying insect repellent.

Amulets of Noustrovian Etiquette

(1 point apiece, Permanent)

These simple-seeming bronze amulets have precisely one function (or arguably two, depending on one's definitions). Any person *openly* wearing one may, by a simple effort of will (taking one round of concentration), inflict cardiac palpitations and convulsions of the lungs on one other person who also openly wears one. These effects are treated like a blow from a weapon, requiring a successful Health roll by the victim to avoid injury. Each amulet works against a given victim no more than once per day.

These amulets date from the Noustrovian Commonwealth of the late 20th Aeon. Not to wear an amulet of this type was considered a gross and contemptible solecism. Since the fall of that Commonwealth, most amulets have been discarded or melted down for their bronze, but a few still survive in curio collections or, of course, beneath ancient ruins.

Chromatic Analysis Spray

(2 points, Charged)

This magical liquid, first formulated by an alchemist of the late 20th Aeon named Raeduss of North Ghasel, is projected as fine spray. Hence it tends to be found in intricate brass bottles, identifiable by their ornate plunger-and-nozzle attachments. A normal bottle can hold enough liquid for 12 applications.

One application of the mist tends to coat anything solid within two feet of the nozzle. If the substance in question is mundane, the mist leaves only an oily residue and faintly sour scent. However, if it touches anything magical, or enters an enchanted volume of space, the liquid instantly produces a dim polychromatic glow that endures for three to five minutes, depending on the intensity of the magic.

The light is pretty, if garish, but not bright enough even to read by. Its advantage is that it varies, subtly but consistently, with the nature of the target item's magic. An observer who has perused any of the half-dozen or so magical texts on the subject can determine much about an enchantment or item from the colors produced. The character makes a Magic ability roll; the GM should provide information in proportion to the result (and, ideally, with some reference to the character's style of magic). Anything but a Dismal Failure provides at least some information—although, if the result was Quotidian or Exasperating Failure, the GM may slip in some misinformation as well.

Charkid's Charm

(1 point, Permanent)

This contrivance was apparently created to simplify the life of a professional falconer of a past age, whose duties involved the handling of pelgranes (or some closely

related species, now extinct). A character in contact with the charm is completely immune to pelgrane attacks in every form. The creatures resolutely refuse to initiate hostile action against the character, though they typically deny the charm's magical influence and assert that this reluctance is by their own choice.

Unfortunately, it would appear that this ancient falconer was of superhuman strength; the charm, covered in intricate magical inscriptions, has the size and mass of a large wooden trunk. The charm protects only one individual at a time. If more than one person is in contact with it, the charm lacks effect.

Several rival scholars seek to establish the nature, history, and species of the being whose name is attached to this charm. The naïve assume that Charkid was the giant falconer; others imagine more complex historical narratives and associations.

Chronomantic Keep-safe

(2 points, Permanent)

A handsomely carved wooden box approximately two feet long by one foot wide by nine inches deep, the Chronomantic Keep-safe displays on its lid an hourglass surrounded by victuals, fresh flowers, and spritely nymphs. The interior of the box is simply lined with a rich purple velvet. The box does not appear enchanted.

External damage to the box will not damage objects inside unless the box is totally destroyed.

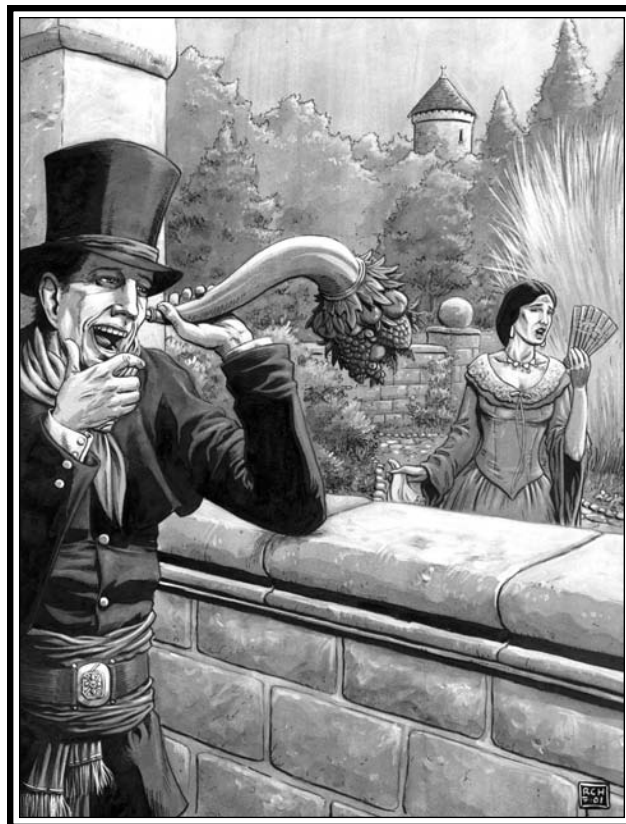
Any item placed in the box is protected from the passage of time. When the correct phrase is spoken (the opening line from Mortiquan's *Ode to the Weeping Wayfarer*) and the lid is opened, whatever was placed inside will be as it was when it went into the box. If this phrase is not spoken, the box's contents instantly suffer the aging effects of all time that passed since the box was last closed.

The prevalence of Keep-safes dating from the latter 19th Aeon testifies to a vogue at that time to send forth various legacies to future ages. To the modern adventurer, items such as blueprints for lethal death-rays will certainly lack relevance, but pedants may pay high prices for closed Keep-safes in hopes of finding (for instance) treatises on extinct cultures, or a manuscript with the lost ending to Ghobran the Estiquary's *Whither the Spirit of Elevated Inquiry, O Whither?*

Cloak of Flame Retardation

(2 points, Permanent)

This rough woolen cloak, available in a range of colors extending from mud brown to nauseating ochre, drenches you in several gallons of mossy-smelling water whenever you come within two feet of any open flame larger than an oil lamp. If exposed to fire damage (*Dying Earth* rulebook, Chapter 4), you may reduce the attendant Health roll levy by 7. Levies cannot be reduced below 0 or turned into boons. The cloak's action, embarrassing in social situations, is temporarily deactivated by removing and neatly folding the cloak.



Cornucopia of Discreditable Secrets

(3 points, Permanent)

Carved in the form of a syndic horn overflowing with fruit and grain, the small wooden Cornucopia houses a minor madling (119-09 Red in Thrump's *Almanac*) with clairvoyant powers and a taste for disreputable gossip.

The owner inserts the pointed end into one ear, then points its wider end toward a victim. The owner hears a piece of gossip that the victim would not wish made public. The information tends to be suitable for blackmail, but little else: "She wears green undergarments after midnight," for instance, rather than "She keeps stolen terces in her commode." The madling does not accept requests for specific information, and it has only a rudimentary grasp of the information's immediate utility (or lack of it).

In adjudging the efficacy of the madling's magic, assume it has Scuttlebutt 12.

The user must feed the Cornucopia every day with a bowl of fruit and grain, or the offended madling will speak the user's secrets aloud to the world at every inopportune moment.

The Diamonds That Were Kathak Thark

(2 points apiece, Permanent)

Kathak Thark was a minor demigod of the 17th Aeon who met an unfortunate fate through his dealings with a band of ingenious and atheistic heroes. Faced with direct assault by his foes, the god manifested in the form of a giant diamond, reasoning that the strongest substance generally known should withstand mere steel swords.

Pharesm [...] brought forth a wad of tangled gray tissue. "In order to facilitate your search, I endow you with this instrument which relates all possible vocables to every conceivable system of meaning." He thrust the net into Cugel's ear, where it swiftly engaged itself with the nerve of consonant expression. "Now," said Pharesm, "you need listen to a strange language for but three minutes when you become proficient with its use."

Unfortunately, his understanding of crystallography proved flawed, as did the diamond, and a clever blow shattered it, ending Kathak Thark's godhood.

However, divine energy is resilient, and after some millennia Kathak Thark's consciousness returned to his last body. Yet it remained fragmented and, by that date, scattered across Earth. Ergo, the god could not regain divine power, or indeed any powers beyond the capacity for speech, a rudimentary sensorium, and, perforce, a limited ability to be in many places at once. He also grew dimly aware of the approximate relative location of each fragment. This, then, has been the situation from that era to this ultimate age.

Kathak Thark is convinced, rightly or wrongly, that he would regain divinity if he could reunite his sundered fragments. Unfortunately, as he is perfectly aware, many of them are still buried in the silt at the bottom of various oceans, lost in the hordes of countless sub-intelligent monsters, or gathering dust in collections. Some have even been scattered to other stars or dimensions. Thus, as the sun lurches towards its last day, the former deity swings between near-hysterical panic, moody resignation, and denial. However, he persists in attempts to regain his full form.

Little of this is immediately relevant to characters who come into possession of any of the large, fine Diamonds That Were Kathak Thark. Their main concern should be that the former god is manifest in each of these stones, able to see and hear his surroundings, taste anything with which he comes into contact, and speak, usually in a testy and self-righteous manner, to anyone within earshot. There are many things that might be accomplished with these stones, not least in the way of eavesdropping, or location of further magical diamonds, but Kathak Thark must first be convinced to cooperate. This is difficult, particularly if he is depressive or fatalistic. Still, promises to locate other stones and work towards reassembling his body are usually effective (so long as they retain some credibility), and he is quite susceptible to flattery, provided that it is flowery enough to resemble worship. Kathak Thark has the skills Persuasion (Obfuscatory) 9, Rebuff (Contrary) 12, and Pedantry 6, which indicate this ancient being's poor willingness to learn.

The listed cost secures a single Diamond That Was Kathak Thark. (For consistency, it may be advisable to also ensure that the characters have wealth sufficient to make possession of a large diamond plausible, either to the plot or to local law-enforcement agents.) Note that many potential advantages only manifest when characters possess two or more stones.

GMs should note that players will soon wish to locate many more of these diamonds, especially those near the PCs, and also to judge what may be seen or heard in their vicinity. Though vetoing such demands is reasonable, the Diamonds That Were Kathak Thark can potentially inspire a full-scale series.

Frashjamir's Determinant Lash

(4 points, Charged)

Early in the 21st Aeon, the Magician Frashjamir experimentally pursued vulgar temporal power in the most jejune way, enslaving many and commanding their manual labor. The epitome of his philosophy was the enchantment he wove into these whips, issued to his most trusted lieutenants. The Determinant Lashes reduced the capacity of a slave for backchat or deviousness while ensuring vigorous performance.

Frashjamir's kingdom fell after 13 years to a slave revolt of minimal organization but remarkable vigor, and most of the enchanted whips were ceremonially burned during the celebrations that marked the founding of its successor-state, the Puissant Oligarchy of Thom. However, a few Lashes have survived to Earth's last days. Well made, they continue to function perfectly as mundane whips, and a particular, easily learned motion of the wrist invokes their magic.

Each Determinant Lash has up to 24 charges; each invocation spends one charge. A single selected victim within 15 feet is struck automatically. The Lash inflicts no actual damage (no loss of Health), but a certain amount of short-lived pain, a magical dulling of the higher intellect, and a corresponding increase in brute strength and vigor. The victim suffers a levy of 2 to any roll based on intelligence, sharp wits, cunning, or originality (including all uses of Persuade except the Intimidating style, all uses of Rebuff except the Obtuse style, and virtually all Resistance rolls), and gains a corresponding boon of 2 to any roll based on vigorous, forceful, unthinking physical action (including attacks based on Strength, Speed, or Ferocity, but no defenses). These effects last for one minute, continue at half effect (boons and levies of 1 each) for another minute, then fade away.

Grashpotel's Obdurate Curmudgeon

(2 points, Permanent)

When quiescent, the Obdurate Curmudgeon appears as a miniature grotesque, some two inches high. Speaking the command word on its base transforms the Curmudgeon



into its resident entity: a squat homunculus, six inches high, with short, powerful arms.

Like an animate doorstop, this grotesque holds entryways against intruders, allowing its summoner to (for instance) make a clean getaway. It has tremendous strength (Athletics 12, only for feats of muscle power), Concealment 12 (only for concealing itself), a gruff voice of a surprising baritone pitch, and a stubborn, humorless nature. It knows nothing of use to humans, except highly particular expertise on the subject of blocking doors.

Would-be intruders may try to Persuade the homunculus to grant admission; it has the abilities Persuade (Obfuscatory) 12 and Rebuff (Penetrating) 12.

The Obdurate Curmudgeon will not fight. As an elemental it cannot be killed, but it can be banished. It reverts to quiescence after its summoner leaves the vicinity, or in any case after one hour.

Imillin's Vermiform

(6 points, Permanent)

This magical water-craft, built in the form of a large eel or, to be more honest, a giant worm, appears to be made of wood painted with gray enamel. An open compartment on its back holds a single comfortable seat and modest luggage space. A minor enchantment protects both passenger and luggage from sea-spray and associated chills.

To move the vermiform, the passenger grasps an iron bar mounted within the compartment and issues verbal instructions. Though mindless, the craft can skim the water's surface at the speed of a pelgrane. Unfortunately, few passengers dare drive it to top speed; the protective enchantment is prone to fail at the limits of performance, leaving the passenger completely drenched with cold and stinging spume.

Inestimable Cγrational Locators

(3-5 points, Permanent)

Contradictory tales claim the originator of these items to be one of several famed Arch-Magicians of days long gone. Rebartoline the Resplendent of the 16th Aeon reportedly had both the skill and the abstruseness of character necessary for their conception.

Though they differ in precise arrangement, the same general principles of design encompass every Locator. Each is a hand-held device with an obvious grip and a

whimsical rotational adjunct set above, though some may be easily portable and others of more unwieldy proportion. The purpose of each is the location of one particular substance, being, or energy form.

When a trigger on the grip is pressed, the Locator commences its revolutions, accompanied by buzzing or hissing perturbations. Provided the device is in consummate working order, it will point unflinchingly at the nearest significant instance of its target, providing this source lies within the machine's range. Range varies drastically among Locators, from a radius typical of a small city to an entire continent. Unfortunately, a given machine's range, apparently set by its builder according to the relative rarity of its particular target, is in no way evident or deducible.

At least five of these minor engines have been reported within living memory. The first located gold; the second, persons with imposing magical erudition; the third, inanimate articles under enchantment; the fourth divulged the direction of any living being not immediately beside its own position; while the fifth seemed to choose, as best could be determined, only gentlemen of noble birth sporting green or blue epaulets. The Game Moderator sets the point cost of the Locator according to the perceived utility of its particular target.

Lactescent Discs of Uncompromising Hardness

(6 points, Charged)

Most Lactescent Discs are found within the ruins of Ampridatvir, last Olek'hnit city on a North Melantine island. These small white disks vary in size but rarely exceed two inches in diameter. Extremely thin, they are usually found in sets of up to ten, stored in a blackened wood box finely carved with lurid human nudes.

A Disc has no inherent erotic properties. Rather, it glues together smooth surfaces for a definite duration. After ten seconds out of its box it exudes a milky film, and thereafter the Disc sticks on contact, with unbreakable firmness. The adhesion lasts for exactly one full day, whereupon the Disc dissolves into aromatic vapor.

Aside from the Liberation of Warp and the like, the only practical way to detach a Disc prematurely is to consume or remove all oxygen around it. Flame will do this, as will certain magical items known to antiquaries.

Laksak's Helm of Curative Virtue

(24 points, Permanent)

This intricately decorated, gilded, and bejeweled helmet speeds the healing rate; reduce the time taken to refresh your Health when Down or Hurt, or to recover from a contusion, to one-third its normal value (see "Recovery and Refreshing," Chapter 4 of *The Dying Earth* rulebook). Furthermore, while worn, the helm protects completely from the effects of aging. Imbued with a mind of its own, the helm possesses a vast store of basic knowledge concerning healthy exercise, correct diet, the wisdom of avoiding hallucinogenic drugs or narcotics and of restraint in the intake of alcohol, and so on. It can see and hear using the wearer's senses—unfortunately, it

lolo stamped his foot. "I will not be domineered!" He sought to wrest the blue egg from Cugel's grasp. Cugel lost his grip and the object was thrown against the hillside, where it broke in a bright blue explosion to create a hole in the hillside. Instantly a golden-gray tentacle thrust forth and seized Cugel's leg.

cannot keep watch while its wearer is sleeping or blindfolded—and it communicates telepathically with the wearer. Only the wearer can hear this communication.

The helm's only true drawback is, arguably, its personality. In brief, it is fussy. Prone to lecture, the well-meaning helm forever attempts to derive from ongoing events a series of little lessons in health and hygiene. It rarely refuses its services, but it may try to coerce its wearer into a less threatening style of life by implicitly threatening to limit its function. Note that it has no loyalty to past wearers; if captured by a foe, it instantly transfers its services and voluble good advice to its new owner.

Momp Stone

(2 points, Charged)

Momp is a dull greenish-tinted stone, sometimes flecked with gray. It strongly resists polish or elegant cutting, making it of no use to jewelers. However, momp stone fragments from seams lying near major cities, battlefields, or palaces are much in demand among academic historians. The stone literally absorbs history, and releases it when burned.

Momp stone burns as easily as coal, if with more smoke. Anyone breathing the pleasant-smelling smoke gains a subtle awareness of anything that happened within 50 miles of the seam from which the momp stone was mined.

The effect lasts 12 hours. During this time, the character gains one free reroll on any Pedantry attempt regarding past events or conversations that took place within an area specified by the GM. (The roll is needed because the character must sort through voluminous and disordered knowledge of the past.) Recent or momentous events are more easily recollected. For especially dramatic events, the GM may grant a bonus of 1; unusually ancient events—say, earlier than the 14th Aeon—may inflict a penalty of 1 or may simply be beyond recall.

The cost is for a bag or box holding enough momp stone, from a certified source, for 12 uses.

Mutable Deck

(2 points, Permanent)

Magicians are no more immune to the temptations of the gambling table than are men from mundane walks of life. Unfortunately for the honesty of games throughout the Dying Earth—but luckily for you, should you acquire one of their hand-me-downs—magicians are as ready to apply their secrets of enchantment to the card table as they are to any other area in which they wish to excel. In other words, magicians are notorious cheats, and no object better proves it than the Mutable Deck.

It appears to be an ordinary deck of cards. (Perhaps the designs of the cards and backs are a little more ornate than most. Magicians have a tendency to overdo things.) By concentrating, the owner can cause one card face to change to another. He must know the current face of the card he wishes to alter, so the trick is generally only useful on cards he holds in his own hand but has yet to reveal to fellow players.

When playing a game of cards, you can spend 1 Magic point to reduce another player's Gambling pool by 3. You may do this once per contest. If you then proceed to roll a Dismal Failure, you find yourself in the uncomfortable position of seeing your opponent reveal a card identical to your altered one. That Dismal Failure costs an extra 2 Magic points to nullify (yes, that's right—Magic, not Gambling). In nullifying it, you are quickly concentrating on the card revealed by your opponent, altering its face as well. Other Dismal Failures you roll during the same contest also cost 2 extra Magic points: they mean that a new card has been revealed which is identical to the *last card* you had to change!

If you are ever unwilling or unable to nullify a Dismal Failure, you are unmasked as a cheat using an enchanted deck. Although most people are normally reluctant to attack known magicians, the universal hatred of card cheats may well tempt them to forgo this general policy as they attempt to rush you, kick you senseless, and strip you of all valuables.

Panpenler's Ewer of Efficacious Medicament

(2 points, Permanent)

Panpenler was a celebrated mage of the late 20th Aeon who is remembered for the excellence and reliability of his artifacts. His silver vessel has four pouring spouts. In the script of the Gorang Medicants, the spouts are marked "Vitals," "Wind," "Amatory disinclination," and "Wounds." The ewer still bears a grotesque engraving of an adult mermelant of the Twelve-Toed Superior Canterdale breed.

The spouts produce herbal medicine for the appropriate dysfunction: complaints of the lower intestine, chest pains, impotence, and injury, respectively. Each spout pours up to one dose of medicine daily.

Unfortunately, it is often forgotten that Panpenler created the ewer for a friend and confidant, Skivstang, an unsurpassed breeder of mermelants. Hence the ewer dispenses dosages appropriate to cure various mermelant afflictions—about seven to ten times the dose for humans. In appropriate quantities, the remedies are effective; the correct human "Wounds" dose halves the healing interval (not cumulative with other healing

bonuses). But in the quantities dispensed by the ewer, the remedies inflict grotesquely exaggerated effects on human patients. A mermelant-sized “Wounds” dosage does not cure human injury but rather doubles all healing intervals for a week, in company with nausea and occasional hallucinations. Effects of overdose with the other medicines are left to the GM’s vivid imagination.

In the dispensed dosages, the remedies are excellent for treating mermelants, should this unlikely situation ever arise.

Peltaron’s Rapier of Plangent Glaciation

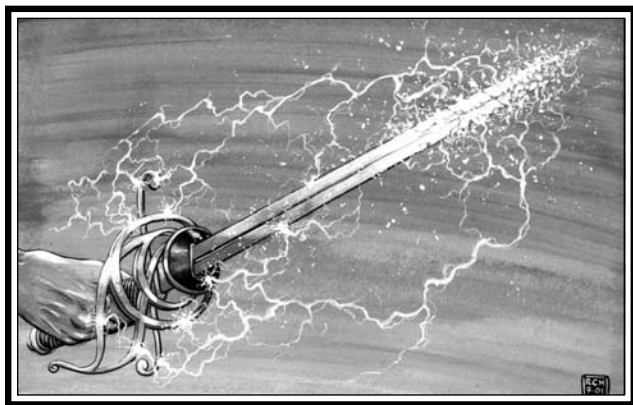
(2 points, Charged)

In circumstances where the display of weapons would attract irritating complaints or tiresome legal processes, the Rapier of Plangent Glaciation is convenient. Supposedly created by a witch of some forgotten era for her lover-bodyguard, it looks like a harmless sword-hilt, with intricate finger-guards finely worked in polished silver, its grip neatly covered in fine leather. On a verbal command, the hilt draws moisture from the surrounding air and freezes it into a full-sized ice blade of glassy sharpness and steely hardness.

This blade can be used as a normal rapier. In addition, should the wielder hit an opponent with an Illustrious Success, the blade exerts a painful and disruptive freezing effect, imposing a levy of 1 to the victim’s ensuing Health roll. This advantage is ineffective on inorganic opponents, such as metal automatons, and on non-living objects, unless the GM determines that their substance is fortuitously vulnerable to freezing. If the Illustrious Success is nullified, so is this effect.

The rapier can hold up to 12 charges. Each activation drains one charge and is fully effective for one round of combat. After that, the blade begins to melt and weaken; it can still be used, but with a levy of 1 to all Attack rolls for each full round it has been in use. If, at this point, it strikes a hard surface, or if its attack is successfully countered with a Parry defense, the ice shatters and the item becomes useless. Also, after three rounds, it loses its tissue-freezing advantage. Spending a charge at any time restores its full effectiveness for another round.

The Rapier has three other minor shortcomings. First, it must draw moisture from the surrounding atmosphere to produce its blade. In conditions of absolute aridity, such as a parched desert, it may work less effectively or not at all. Second, under exceptional heat (near a raging



bonfire, or in battle with a magical fire creature), it may weaken in its first round of use, suffering levies determined by the GM. And third, if its power is invoked underwater, or if the blade is plunged into water during its first round of use, it freezes the surrounding liquid, making it useless as a weapon and leaving the wielder attempting to heft 20 to 30 pounds of ice. Rarely, this last effect may prove useful for an ingenious bearer.

Peregrinating Gem

(2 points, Permanent)

A small, dull blue-green gem of no great value, this trifle will perhaps pay for a few nights’ board at lodging at a respectable inn. However, once the owner of the gem has handed it over in full and proper payment of the debt, if at any time that person should hold out his right hand with the palm open, the gem reappears there. (If the owner has no right hand, the effect fails.)

Note that this proclivity makes the gem difficult to steal, and the owner even has trouble giving it away. If the owner gives it to someone and the new recipient uses its magical property before he attempts to recover it, the gem transfers loyalty to its new owner and will return only to her. Other than that, the gem only reliably becomes the property of the new owner on the death of her predecessor.

Quadrion’s Stature-Enhancing Carpet

(5 points, Permanent)

This rug, about three feet by four, is woven with an intricate pattern. When it lies flat on the floor, any living thing that stands entirely upon it grows by 25 percent in all dimensions and exactly doubles in weight and physical strength. The moment that the beneficiary steps off the carpet, this benefit is lost; in fact, a person leaping vertically from the carpet and coming back down on it will contract and expand rapidly in disconcerting fashion. Clothes and even armor also increase (the inventor finding the alternative too foolish and uncivilized), but items held in the hands do not, and other objects worn or carried in pouches generally do not. (GMs may adjudicate this to taste.)

This increase in size has several benefits. Sheer extra mass and strength grants a boon of 2 to attacks based on Strength or Ferocity, or 1 to other modes. It also grants a boon of 1 to Health rolls to resist injury or poison (but not to resist disease, as infectious organisms typically multiply to take advantage of the larger body), and 2 to tests for any actions involving raw force. Furthermore, it grants a boon of at least 1 to uses of Persuade in the Intimidating style—more if the character can loom effectively over nervous victims.

However, large size and restrictions on movement impose problems. Even if an opponent obligingly remains within reach, the carpet imposes a levy of 3 to defenses based on Dodge, 2 to those based on Misdirection, or 1 to others. For that matter, a melee opponent may well step onto the carpet himself, and suddenly gain similar boons and levies. Many applications of Craftsman-ship, Physician, or Quick Fingers skills may also suffer a

The crowd surged around the first pavilion and Zараflam brought forth his "Nimble Squadrons": a parade of cockroaches smartly turned out in red, white, and black uniforms. The sergeants brandished cutlasses; the foot soldiers carried muskets; the squadrons marched and countermarched in intricate evolutions.

levy, at the GM's option, as the character must attempt the task with unaccustomed larger fingers.

Ring of Inviolable Sanctuary

(4 points, Permanent)

Tillidle was a late 19th-Aeon Magician congenitally unable to live in harmony with other magicians, to an extent that he spent inordinate time surviving attacks on his person. Dissatisfied with Laccodel's Rune and similar contrivances, he produced a ring to provide total safety when he uttered a single syllable. Tillidle made several of these rings, and they are still found in these last days.

If the wearer utters the command syllable, usually engraved within the ring band, the ring immediately casts the Charm of Forlorn Encystment on its wearer. The wearer disappears instantly from sight, to be immured unharmed in a pore of earth 40 miles underground.

The wearer, though immune to hunger, thirst, and age while encysted, is left with the problem of cancelling the spell. This Tillidle achieved by having the ring automatically reverse the charm after a short period, depositing the wearer safely on the surface. The advantages are obvious: The ring protects not only from attack but from falling. However, it is obviously unwise to use this ring while on a moving boat.

Some aver that the mechanism of the reversed charm is less reliable than might be desired. Skeptics and cynics point out that Tillidle's final disappearance was unexplained.

A GM who wishes to see players suffer may, whenever a character uses this ring, roll one die. This is the number of hours the character will be encysted, before reappearing in the same place. If the player rolls a 1, Dismal Failure, the character is encysted not for hours but for a number of days equal to another roll of the die. Should this second roll again produce Dismal Failure, the character is encysted for a number of years equal to a third roll of the die. If this third roll again results in Dismal Failure, the character will still be encysted when the sun finally blinks out.

Ruby of Lucent Absorption

(1 point, Permanent)

This red gem's magical property may be natural rather than a deliberate enchantment; reference books contradict each other. When exposed to the air, it absorbs all light from its surroundings save the deepest shades of red, to a radius of approximately five feet. Within that radius, all lighting is reduced to a dull ruddy glow.

This effect is usually regarded as a curiosity rather than a substantial advantage, but ingenious adventurers

may find uses for it. Because the ruby reduces the glint of polished metal or the brightness of pale garb, it may grant a boon of 1 to, say, a character using Stealth to avoid attention in low light.

Spectacles of Wisdom and Respectability

(1 point, Permanent)

This pair of spectacles with magnifying lenses was created just a few centuries ago for the cartographer Milersum the Hapless. Encountering a limit to the number of times he could sell counterfeit treasure maps to the same customer, he had these glasses made.

Perching the Spectacles on the end of his nose, the wearer engage a potential customer. Their power is strictly limited to attempts to sell documents, and the vendor must make an effort to appear scholarly. In these circumstances the customer suffers a levy of 1 to Rebuff. On a Dismal Failure, the victim regards the document as above suspicion, no matter what evidence indicates this trust may be misplaced.

Staff of Dedicated Continuation

(6 points, Permanent)

This plain staff for travellers evidently incorporates a minor variant of the Charm of Untiring Nourishment (*Dying Earth* rulebook, Chapter 6). To activate the staff's charm, the bearer announces his destination in a firm voice. So long as the bearer has it in hand, and continues to walk toward the destination, touching the staff to the ground at every pace, he has no need for food, drink, rest, or sleep. When he arrives at the announced destination, the charm ceases, leaving the bearer unaffected. The charm cannot then be renewed for 24 hours.

However, if the rhythm is broken before the bearer reaches the destination, or if the bearer spends more than a day moving away from the destination, the charm lapses. All the bearer's needs return in full measure. He will not drop unconscious or starve to death in an instant, but, depending on the degree of need neutralized by the staff, he may be ravenously hungry and thirsty, devour a gigantic meal, and then fall asleep for days.

Putting down or losing the staff when insufficient food is available, and the bearer has missed more than one meal, is dangerous. The character will lose 1 Health point every ten minutes, starting ten minutes after the staff is lost, until his needs for food and drink are met; once all such points are lost, the character falls unconscious, and dies after a further hour. In addition, a character needing more than one meal to make up a lack must make Wherewithal rolls every five minutes to refrain from eating anything vaguely edible set in front of him,

however poorly prepared or suspicious in its provenance.

If an ability relies on food, drink, or rest for refreshment, it cannot be refreshed while the staff's charm is activated.

Sultresser's Interrogatory Pendant

(3 points, Permanent)

This attractive pendant earring, which fastens to the lobe of one ear, holds a bound madling (119-06 Red in Thrump's *Almanac*) closely related to the denizen of the Cornucopia of Discreditable Secrets (*q.v.*). The wearer rouses the madling by pinching the pendant pearl between thumb and forefinger. Should the wearer of the pendant be asked a question within one minute after the madling is roused, the entity telepathically informs the wearer of the answer the questioner wants to hear.

Unfortunately, the wearer doesn't learn reasons why the questioner wants that answer. The interrogator might want desperately to have the wearer say something incriminating or foolish.

The Interrogatory Pendant is also no real help when asked a factual question to which the questioner does not know the answer. Hence if a passing traveller asks the distance to the nearest town, the madling would inform the wearer that the traveller hopes to be told, "Not far." The entity could not tell the wearer how far it actually was.

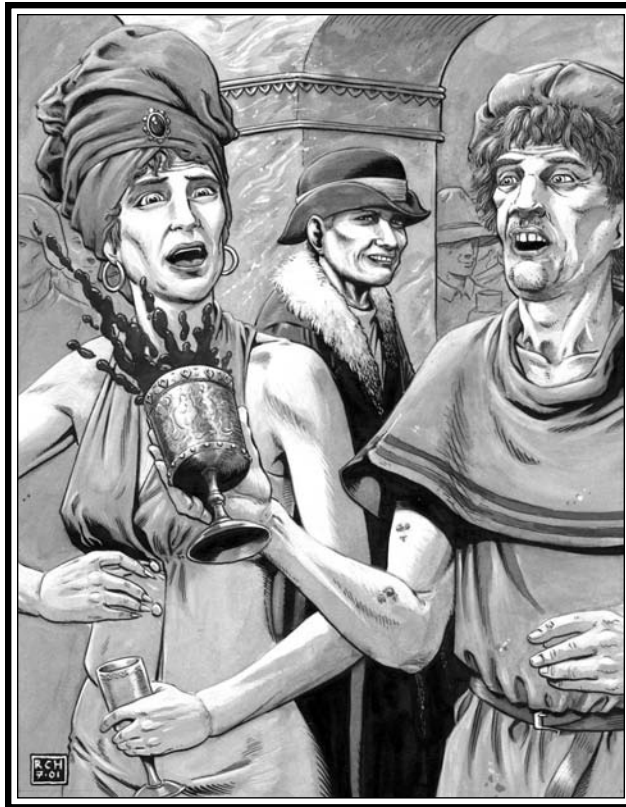
The madling is by nature exceedingly torpid. If roused often, it may begin to screech.

Unbalanced Goblet

(1 point, Permanent)

Crafted of multiple layers of dark crimson ceramic and rimmed with gold, an Unbalanced Goblet is an exquisite work, well worth any reasonable asking price. When he has business with a newly met partner, or romance with an attractive guest, a gracious host may fill an Unbalanced Goblet with the Scaum vineyards' finest violet wine. Upon a whispered phrase of command, however, the goblet lurches oddly in the holder's hand. One word spills the contents on the holder; a different word causes the holder to seemingly fling the contents at the nearest person.

The cunning mind swiftly perceives many uses. For example, you have served your guest, a refined lady from the middle-upper rungs of Almerly society, a fine after-dinner drink. She sips, then politely informs you that she must be leaving, lest her pet crawling-snake go hungry. You speak the word and her hand twitches, disgorging the contents of the goblet upon (oh, tragedy) her finest new visiting-dress! Ever gracious and forgiving, you command your manservant to remove the stain. This will perforce take hours, while you continue to express your love and desire for the lady. (The absence of her outer layer of garb is, of course, an added benefit.) In such cases the victim must Resist Indolence. Failure provokes humiliated lassitude, and inflicts a levy of 1 against Seduction attempts made by the Goblet's owner during the next hour.



Sometimes a suitable pretext is needed to grow enraged or demanding. A single word, and a business partner or petty official who thought he had the upper hand in the bargaining commits a hideous social blunder. The GM determines game effects of this stratagem.

Volpsiok Pollen

(2 points, Charged)

The extraordinarily rare (and possibly now extinct) volpsiok flower blooms only once every five years, three months, and five days, and produces a scent that most mortals find musty but unremarkable. Sandestins, by contrast, find it heady to the point of addiction. Casting a speck of the pollen into the air in the immediate vicinity of a sandestin will cause it to stop, breathe deeply, and be rendered torpid and totally incapable of useful work for one hour. (Though they do not need to breathe, they will, if necessary, manifest a nose for the purpose.)

It is believed that the matter of the very fine pollen resonates on some arcane magical plane, influencing the supernatural structure of the sandestin's true self. Chugs are immune to the pollen's appeal.

Offering a sandestin a speck of volpsiok pollen gains a boon of 2 to Persuade attempts directed at the creature. However, in practice this benefit lacks moment, as the sandestin will insist on breathing the gift straight away and thereby grow useless; once it returns to consciousness, the fitful creature may have entirely forgotten its

a speck: A standard measure for this purpose only, equal to one one-hundred-fiftieth of an ounce.

Cugel drew back from the mound. To move the rocks might yield magical treasures or, more likely, some unimaginable woe.

bargain. A sandestin threatened directly with a chug will temporarily refrain from indulging its desire, but will be sullen and recalcitrant for the next week.

If multiple sandestins are present, each will inhale a proportionate volume of the stuff, and be rendered incapable for a proportionate period. (For example, three sandestins are disabled for 20 minutes each. On regaining activity, they will be resentful and quarrelsome, blaming each other for "stealing" their rightful pleasure.) If only one sandestin is present, casting multiple specks into the air gains no further benefit, save to leave the sandestin irate at the wondrous stuff it was unable to enjoy before it dissipated on the breeze.

Sandestins themselves cannot locate volpsiok pollen; though infinitely aware when it is close by, they seem incapable of detecting it at range—perhaps because if matters were otherwise, sandestins would do nothing but pursue it through space and time. Likewise, sandestins cannot gather scattered pollen or extract it if it has mingled with other dust, as they become distracted, threats notwithstanding. A sandestin that has indulged in volpsiok pollen more than once in a month is likely to become obsessive, shrill, and vague; additional doses increase the addiction, and there are tales of sandestins rendered permanently useless by the discovery of large hoards of pollen.

The point cost is for a single speck of volpsiok pollen, usually carried in a tiny crystal phial. Rarely, it may be found in hoards of as much as five or six specks. Arch-Magicians may trade the pollen, and set a high price if they sense strong desire in the bargainer, but most frankly regard it as limited in value. Sandestins are hard enough to administer when they are sober.

Wa's Convenient Parrot

(16 points, Permanent)

This automaton is a gaudy bird about a foot long, perched on an ornate roost that is easily transported. Though there is evidence that its inventor intended it as a research tool, the Convenient Parrot is used today as a defensive device.

While sitting on its roost, the bird may be given verbal instruction, along with a specific command word. It then takes to the air (flying at a maximum speed of 60 miles per hour) and patrols a specified area up to 50 yards in radius, centered on its roost. Thereafter, the Convenient Parrot will intercept the first inanimate missile (spear, arrow, bolt, dart, or bullet) to pass through the area on each round. It catches the projectile in its claws with supernatural precision, flies back to its roost, drops the projectile, and resumes its patrol. If the intended catch resists diversion, the Parrot releases it, but will almost certainly have exerted enough force to divert it from its intended target. If the target tries to evade capture, the parrot ignores it (not being intended to capture living things).

If the roost is moved, the Parrot will fly after it, taking as long as necessary to catch up. If the roost moves completely out of sight, vanishes magically, or is disintegrated, the bird will drop its catches as close as possible to the roost's last known position and become inert.

The bird returns to its roost when a different command word is spoken in the roost's vicinity. If the bird operates continually for one full day without cease, the magic empowering it fades; it will land neatly on its roost (or at the roost's last known position) and become permanently inert. A Magician or Arch-Magician may repair the bird's powers and reconstruct its roost with a week of work in his work-room.

This automaton does not have a true mind and cannot follow complex conditional commands, but it will obey fairly complex instructions as to the area to be patrolled, and appears to comprehend a large number of languages and colloquialisms. It can talk only to the extent of conveying immediate maintenance needs—for example, "Polly wants a thirtyweight of erb-oil lubricant."

Yart Cog's Ring of No Consequence

(15 points, Permanent)

Yart Cog, a shrewd but unassuming Magician of the 18th Aeon, observed that magical invisibility invariably seemed to lead to more complications than benefits. Mere clouds of dust, pools of mud, and guard animals with keen noses confounded physical invisibility, and "mental" invisibility (forcing others' minds to disregard the magician) was all too often defeated by strong wills or magically-trained perception. Cog determined to find a truly effective functional invisibility.

A wearer of the Ring of No Consequence is perceived to belong to the most trivial, negligible social class or order known to the observer: unskilled laborer, slave, warrior, bureaucrat, or whatever. How the wearer is then treated—with casual disdain, ostentatious contempt, active sadism, nervous lasciviousness, fellow-feeling, or affable condescension—of course depends on the nature of the observer.

An observer will tend to neglect the ring-wearer's appearance unless anything about it is specifically pointed out; if he is richly dressed, the viewer might then laugh at him as a pretentious buffoon or, in societies with strong laws concerning proper social costume, order rapid punishment. Observers will, however, preferentially react to the ring-wearer's behavior rather than appearance. Behavior inappropriate to the apparent class may provoke laughter, beatings, or torture, according to the society and the observer. If the wearer lacks the ability to Resist Arrogance, the disguise is unlikely to endure long.

social class or order: In the unlikely event that the bearer encounters a truly and completely egalitarian society, the ring has no effect whatever. On the Dying Earth no such society has yet been documented.

Observers with the Magic ability may roll to perceive the ring-wearer's true nature with a penalty of 1 or 2, according to the wearer's behavior; Arch-Magicians suffer no penalty. The roll has a limit of one, unless the ring-wearer gives fresh cause for suspicion. If they succeed, the ring-wearer may oppose their Magic in a contest,

using Imposture skill. The Periap of All-Seeing defeats the enchantment automatically. The Talisman to Reveal the Hidden signals its presence, although the Talisman's wielder may still be taken in and assume there is some truly invisible entity in the vicinity, along with yon worthless peasant of no consequence.



Confidence Games: An Introduction

An ancient truism says you cannot obtain something for nothing. No statement could be farther from the truth. Nothing, in fact, is the best thing with which to obtain something, because it is infinitely renewable. You need merely play games—confidence games.

In the Cugel stories Jack Vance assigns a central role to stratagems, swindles, hoodwinks, thimble-rigs, and every kind of device for separating victims from their terces. Recognizing their importance, this *Compendium* discusses the requisites of these confidence games, and offers many illustrative examples, as sidebars throughout this book. You, the earnest student, may glean from them inspiration for your own ingenious roleplaying. The discussion culminates with techniques to hoodwink your own Game Moderator, though of course this dangerous information is presented for educational use only.

To work your confidence games, you need tools, stratagems, and an understanding of the first principle:

The Impedimentary Conscience

The principle to employ when separating the undeserving or overly-abundant from their wealth is not yours, but theirs: the principle of the *impedimentary conscience*—the understanding that almost everyone has, in his mind, a line that he will not cross. Your job is to find that line and be prepared to step to the other side of it, where he may not follow, should your situation grow bad.

You must observe in your mark one or more impedimentary consciences. Every conscience can be expressed as an unwillingness such as these:

- To let their spouse become aware of extrafamilial activities
- To let the city officials discover the true numbers describing their business profits
- To let anyone but their dearest friends or similarly-constrained rivals learn about their unsavory habits
- To let their children go through life unwed (thus, impending weddings of ugly children to superior mates become a magnificent tool)

In short, discover some vulnerable truth about your mark and hold that in reserve. Late in the unfolding of your plans, position that truth as a mighty shield between you and your mark. A truly skillful player works in such a way that the mark never realizes the shield has been deliberately raised.

Suppose a merchant too wealthy to remain unplucked has a daughter whose appearance or nature deters all suitors. Transform one of your confederates into a wealthy aristocrat from a distant land and send him in pursuit of this most unwelcome flower. Then, while those events develop, embark on your scheme against the merchant. Do not fail to fabricate evidence suggesting that you are also swindling the “wealthy suitor.”

If the scheme goes well, you can depart with your winnings and, soon after, the suitor can join you, perhaps enriched by an undeserved dowry. If the scheme goes badly, you engineer the revelation of evidence that, in the eyes of inconsiderate local officials, incriminates the suitor as a criminal mastermind funding your entire operation.

This puts the merchant in the position of taking vengeance against you at the expense of his daughter's happiness (or his own domestic tranquility in getting his daughter off his hands). Generally he will not do this, and you can escape. Once again, your confederate rejoins you later.

Never pick as your mark someone who rules through fear, and therefore may lack an impedimentary conscience! If so, there is no line you can hide behind, and he will ruthlessly hunt and kill you.

Further Illuminating Instruction

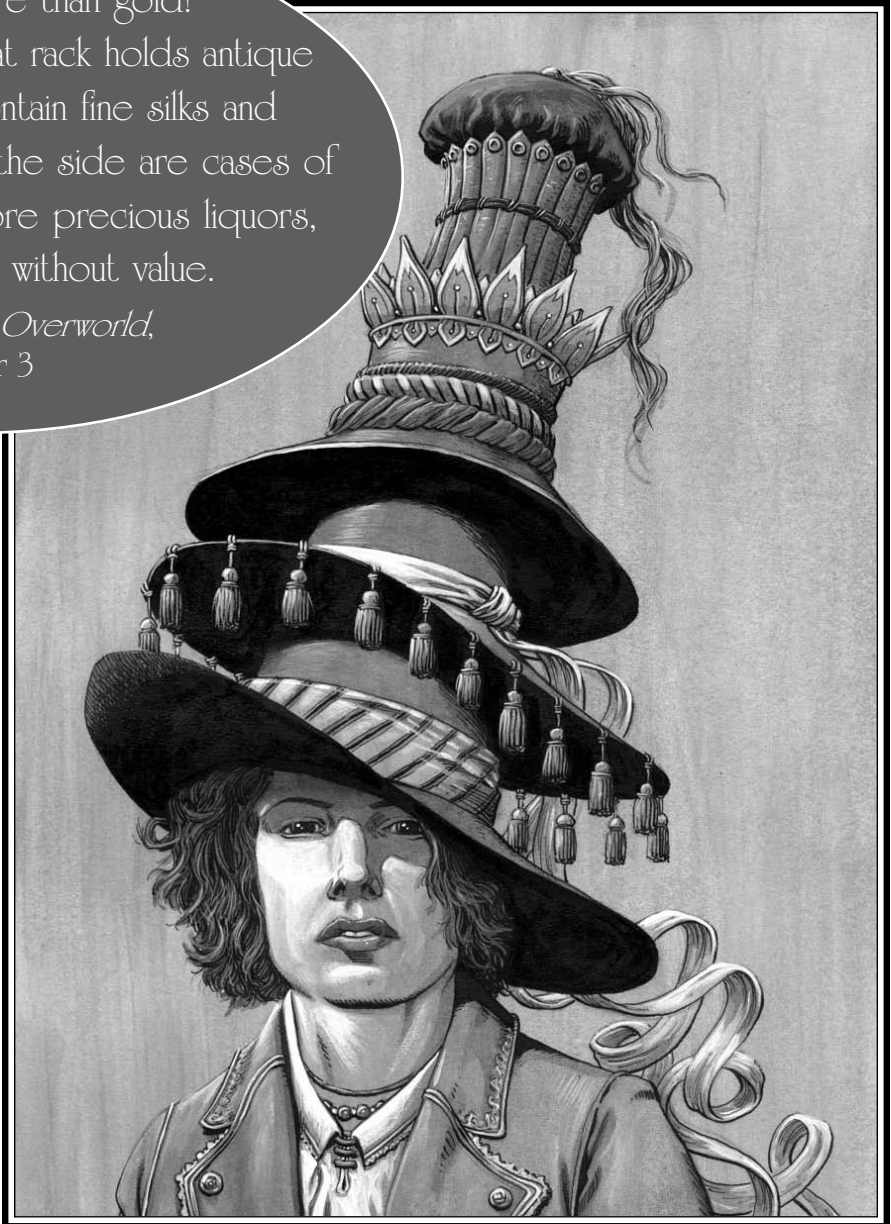
Your education awaits! Sidebars in later chapters introduce useful tools of the confidence schemer, then present a gallery of exemplary schemes. Proceed!

Here is much more than gold!
In this bin are jewels; that rack holds antique
coins. Those bales contain fine silks and
embroidered damask; to the side are cases of
precious spice, even more precious liquors,
and subtle pastes without value.

The Eyes of the Overworld,
Chapter 3

Chapter 2: Fashions, Fripperies, and Fops

Though generally
mundane in
essential aspect,
these items offer
intriguing
possibilities



Item	City	Town	Village	Isolated
Analytical Paraphernalia	1000	2500	N/A	N/A
Colinquace's Tonguesheath	12	15	20	35
Distracting Bauble	30	45	75	150
Fearsome Weapon	x4	x4	x10	x10
Imperial Kang Jelly Bath	400	900	N/A	N/A
Jealous Guardian	50	80	N/A	N/A
Majestic Assurance of Sanction	30	40	50	60
Manifold-Functional Hand Tool	50	75	150	N/A
Many-Tiered Hats	75	150	250	400
Nightman's Accomplice	300	450	600	N/A
Nornvale's Index of Customs	30	50	N/A	N/A
Spring-Heel Boots	300	450	600	N/A
Phollion Leaves (1 pound)	50	50	60	70
Telanxis Oil	100	150	250	350
Text of Gruke's Philosophy	30	50	N/A	N/A
Truly Unremarkable Garb	150	300	200	500
Wequill's Manual of Jestis	100	200	700	N/A

This chapter details new equipment, such as the tasteful many-tiered hat above. Some of it exhibits magical nature, but none requires Magic ability nor even rudimentary magical understanding to use. For general rules on Equipment, see Chapter 7 of the *Dying Earth* rulebook. Prices in the list at left are in terces.

Analytical Paraphernalia

Given the tragic dearth of honesty in parts of the Dying Earth, hard-working folk need to examine the true quality of metals, gems, and purported treasure they may be offered in the course of commercial negotiations, seduction attempts, or minor acts of extortion. Fortunately, experts in alchemy and practical appraisal are ready to meet this need. In some cases, the equipment they sell is indeed effective.

A typical example of this useful product takes the form of a wooden box weighing a good 20 pounds or more, full of vials and sachets, magnetic stones, and cloths impregnated with malodorous (but, of course, entirely harmless!) chemicals. A sheaf of notes accompanies the kit, explaining its use—sometimes even clearly. A good set of Analytical Paraphernalia grants a boon of 1 to Appraisal when testing the quality of precious metals, gemstones, and such, and may let the expert determine specific details not otherwise discernible, such as precise chemical compositions, at the GM's option. Inferior boxes grant benefits only for narrower categories of work, or even levies if the purchaser was especially incautious.

Colinquace's Tonguesheath

The revered company of Colinquace & Daughter has been plying its trade in a back street of Kaiin for more years than anyone cares to count. Purveyors of tonguesheaths and other gentlemanly items of dentalwear, they are a name to be trusted.

The Colinquace tonguesheath—accept no substitutes!—is prepared from the finest wheriot integument. It is lovingly cured and tanned using only the sleekest deodand pelt. Affixed by means of a stud inserted through the underside of the tongue, it ensures that the wearer may partake of local cuisine without danger of offending the host or vomiting.

The tonguesheath can be cleaned and waxed between meals with Colinquace's Sheathwax (2t per 50 applications) in time for the next disgusting repast. It is guaranteed for at least 20 meals, a span easily prolonged with proper care.

Distracting Bauble

A distracting bauble is a piece of costume jewelry so well-crafted that it seems a genuine and phenomenally large precious gem set in real gold or silver. When using your Persuasion (Eloquent, Glib, or Charming) ability to convince someone to undertake a scheme that you claim will make him money, your negotiating partner suffers a levy of 1. He is entranced by the jewel, which he takes to be real, and either imagines it on his own finger, or pictures himself giving it to an alluring woman whose favors he desires. The levy represents his distraction from the details of your scheme.

If your negotiating partner is another PC, he may ask to make an Appraisal roll. GMCs with Appraisal abilities above 3 always attempt the roll. In either case, you may either let him roll uncontested, or contest the roll with your Rebuff, as you seek to verbally counter his stated doubts of its authenticity.

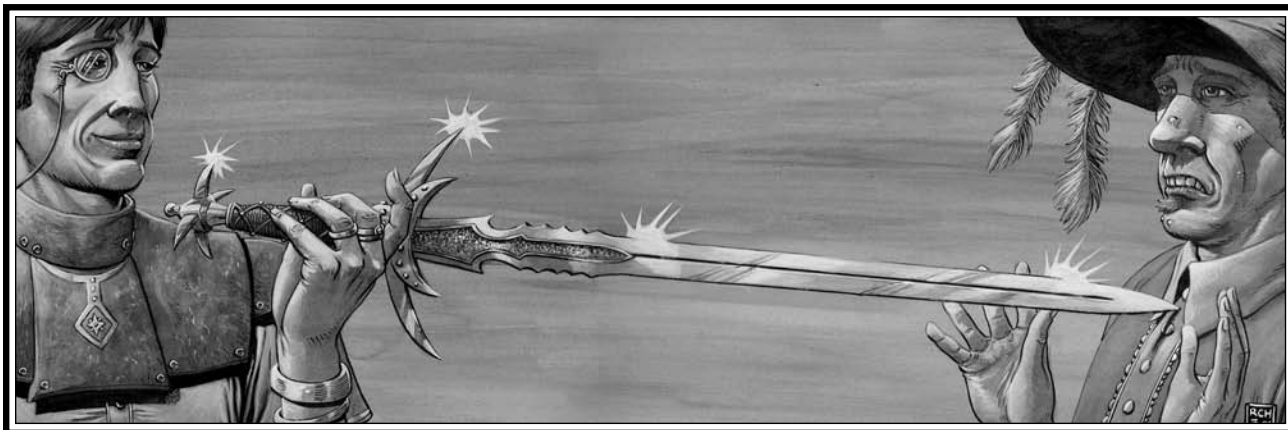
If your negotiating partner wins the roll or contest, he realizes that your jewel is paste. This prejudices him against your scheme; you suffer a levy of 1 instead. Once a character has identified your bauble as fake, subsequent Persuasion attempts work normally; neither you nor he suffer a levy because of the bauble.

Characters whose primary style of Rebuff is Pure-Hearted are immune to the distractions your bauble presents. Pure-Hearted GMCs never undertake the Appraisal roll, because they don't care about the jewel's value in any case.

Fearsome Weapon

The Fearsome Weapon is based on any regular blade; however, this particular instance of the weapon-type is made to emphasize the possibility of intimidation. Details vary from case to case, but most examples are jagged and barbed, with additional spikes, saw-like edges, and gratuitous flaring. Flat surfaces are etched with what appear to be arcane symbols, or darkened with smoke, while grips tend to be over-sized, with ornate pommels and hilts of eye-watering intricacy. Shafts are likely to be twisted and gnarled, and perhaps painted in unusual colors.

The purpose of all this gratuitous filigree is intimidation. In circumstances adjudged appropriate by the GM, a



That salver, for instance, was taken from the eleventh phase of the city Chelopsik, and is fashioned from corfume inlaid with petrified fire-flies. The characters are beyond my skill to read, but would seem to recite a children's song.

character exhibiting such a weapon with conviction (which usually requires either familiarity with the weapon's general type, or a successful Imposture roll, which may be opposed by use of Perception by close observers) gains a boon of 1 to the use of Persuade in the Intimidating style. The display may also (GM's option) gain a similar benefit in other circumstances, such as use of Etiquette to pass among vainglorious bravos, or Imposture to impersonate a brutal thug. However, should the effort suffer a Dismal or Quotidian Failure, the character is marked down by all observers as a buffoon who postures with ludicrously over-decorated blades, and may suffer significant levies to later actions, again at the GM's option.

The other drawback is that the Fearsome Weapon is markedly less effective in inflicting harm. It imposes a levy of 2 when used for attack with the Finesse style, 1 with Speed or Caution; it also imposes a levy of 1 to defense based on Parry or Intuition. Other modes suffer no automatic levies, but if the wielder suffers a Dismal Failure in any attack, the weapon has snagged some spike or ornament and been torn away, leaving the wielder disarmed. (Efforts to disarm the wielder by clever fencing may receive boons, too.) Furthermore, the GM may impose further minor levies as circumstances dictate; for example, the Fearsome Weapon may break easily if subjected to heavy blows. It also takes at least a full round to sheath, draw, or otherwise prepare for use, and GMs may amuse themselves by having its hooks and barbs snag inconvenient draperies, clothing, headgear, or hairpieces.

The price for a Fearsome Weapon is based on that of a standard weapon of the same type, multiplied by 4 in a city or town, or by 10 in a village or isolated village.

Imperial Kang Jelly Bath

An indispensable adjunct for persons of wealth and taste, the Kang jelly bath is a tastefully decorated tub some six feet deep, six feet wide and eight feet long. Originals may be excavated from the old Kang Kingdom Palace near Azenomei, or artisans hired to create reproductions. The bath should then be filled with a specially formulated jelly based on seaweed extract, ideally from the Val Ombrio sun-tide flats. Once ready, one or more persons may suspend themselves in luxury, exciting envy among their friends!

The jelly bath grants a boon of 1 (not cumulative with other Health boons) to Health rolls to recover from injury.

Jealous Guardian

A simple effectuant that may be purchased from any minor Magician, the Jealous Guardian comprises a ball of

explosive diambroid held by a water elemental. This is moderately stable and may be carried in a pouch without undue fear. The price includes ten minims of diambroid, which suffices to destroy the goods and most of the room they occupy.

The functions are many, but its principal use is to guard goods coveted by those of greater magical ability than yourself. In such cases you pose the Guardian in a ring of exact diameter, some way above a rigid floor, and use a minor cantrap to protect your goods. You are thus doubly protected. An incompetent cannot remove the goods, and should a magician approach and arrogantly cast the Liberation of Warp, the elemental is banished, the diambroid drops, and you will be left with your pride, if not your goods.

Majestic Assurance of Sanction

Residents of the Dying Earth occasionally stumble on magically preserved documents of apparent legal veracity, written in illegible but imposing characters, and often struck with a complex waxen seal denoting antiquity. Some such objects are favorably scented, speak their message aloud in the language of the day, or mutter incomprehensible imprecations. Their provenance varies. Forgotten treasure chambers included an inventory; imposing ancient personages dispatched strongly worded missives that went astray in transit; critical proclamations were laid down on durable parchment.

Whatever the actual origin of such a document, innovative characters might vehemently assert it as the work of a local worthy or feared oppressor, claiming certain privileges and relying on the item's splendid fabrication to support their assertion. An adroit stratagem of this type improves Eloquent, Forthright, or Intimidating Persuasion successes, turning Hair's-Breadth Success to Prosaic, or Prosaic to Illustrious, as well as changing Exasperating Failure into Hair's-Breadth Success.

Such results, never guaranteed, are most effective in impressing illiterate and subservient peasants, or lowly citizens wary of the wrath of an unpredictable overlord. Dismal Failures while attempting this subterfuge reveal the claimant as a blatant fraudster, who waves what is clearly an antique catalog of fashionable furniture while babbling about some agreement with a neighboring ruler's idiot nephew.

Manifold-Functional Hand Tool

Why carry an entire burdensome tool-chest when a single implement, light enough to tuck through one's belt, serves every need a sensible craftsman could reasonably expect? This is the question the makers of the Manifold-Functional Hand Tool persistently ask their customers (and anyone else within shouting range), all the while

gesticulating with their wares. It is the work of the smith-toolmakers of the otherwise disregarded small town of Down Kailmoss, where it has become the emblem.

The Tool consists of a short wooden shaft, at one end of which is a head consisting of, on one side, a broad axe-blade, and on the other, a heavy, flat-faced hammer. Projecting forward, continuing the line of the shaft, is a sharp, flattened spike, fit to serve as an awl or pick; this has a pair of toothed edges, one designed as a wood-saw, the other hardened to cut metal. The butt of the device is sheathed in another metal fitting, flattened and sharpened to serve as a chisel, and roughened to various textures on each face so as to function as a rasp or file. The whole is rigid enough to serve as a pry or lever.

The price quoted is that of a well-made Manifold-Functional Hand Tool; the wise reader will guess that a cheaper version, sold by an inadequate, slapdash, or dishonest smith (including virtually any example made outside Down Kailmoss), will rapidly become blunt, bent, or fragile. Buyers must test purchases from unknown vendors as best they can. In Down Kailmoss itself, the price is a mere 20 terces—but few self-respecting characters would travel to such a dull place merely to purchase a hand-tool. Conversely, the Manifold-Functional Hand Tool may not be regularly available for sale in other locations; the GM determines this.

Sadly, even the best-made instance of this implement suffers from its own comprehensive design, as it is rather difficult for an ordinary mortal to use, or even handle, without suffering an accident with one of the spikes or edges. To represent this, any task performed with this tool either takes twice as long as usual, or suffers a levy of 1. On a Dismal Failure, something is broken or damaged—often the subject of the work, but possibly the tool itself, or even its user (rendering him Hurt) at the GM's whim.

Similar problems arise if the Manifold-Functional Hand Tool is used as a weapon in combat; it is only marginally suitable, as its balance is abysmal and bizarre. For such purposes, it may be treated as an axe, a found object, or a knife, at the player's option, but in all cases it imposes a levy of 1 to attacks. Its imbalance also imposes a levy of 2 to any attempt to throw it.

Many-Tiered Hats

Along the Scaum and its tributaries, the many-tiered hat is an indispensable claim to style, male or female. In general, the number of tiers denotes status, but this is not a simple matter. A shorecomber or such lumpkin wearing a six-tier hat gains no more respect than might a tramp attired as a full colonel. To wear the wrong hat is to risk being judged a buffoon.

Two-tiers are the norm for the commonality. Cugel wears a three-tiered hat, typical of a freebooter wishing to



Tools of the Trade (1 of 5): Confidants

When one person tells you that you are besotted with drink and standing at a precarious angle, you do not believe him. When a dozen do, your belief in your own sobriety is shaken. The principle is clear: It is very helpful to have confederates.

These are the attributes most useful in confidants:

- ✿ They can assume a bewildering variety of mannerisms, disguises, and accents. (Be aware: Should they lose their love of you, these confederates can turn these tools against you.)
- ✿ Their faces are not widely distributed on notices posted throughout the land.
- ✿ They are predictable in the ways they lie to you and cheat you.
- ✿ They have affection for you, and consider the possibility that continued years in your company will afford them more pleasure than legitimate employment. (Note that it sometimes becomes necessary to "string them along" with promises of marriage or other eventual legitimacy, resulting in an eventual turnover of confederates as time passes. Note also that a spurned confederate knows you well enough to offer you serious problems.)
- ✿ They are skillful. Among the skills you should seek: Appraisal, Concealment, Craftsmanship (especially concerning documents), Imposture (the value of this skill cannot be over-emphasized), Perception, Quick Fingers, and Scuttlebutt.

It requires ministerial skill to keep confidants and pliable. Many of the confidence-game techniques you employ against marks must, to a lesser degree, be used against those who assist you. But you should only use these skills to remind your allies of the proper course of their lives, not to deprive them of rewards they have rightfully earned. You should profit most of all, of course, but your associates should profit as well.

Confidants with grand names: One sort of confidant deserves separate description. Most notable persons eventually have children. The children of notable persons are often not, in and of themselves, notable. Indeed, some actually resent their parents for excesses of wealth, bravery, talent, or scholarship. These children can be very useful to you, because of the names they bear. The son or daughter of a minister will carry some of the parent's cachet. When this offspring is your agent, your plans will ooze legitimacy.

The benefits provided by famous heirs last mere months or perhaps a year at best—eventually their criminal natures will become public. Have more famous children waiting in the wings.



Tools of the Trade (2 of 5): Reticence

Regardless of what plan you employ, never provide information to a mark unasked. Instead, conceal crucial information, to the extent that your marks must beg, bribe, or threaten you before you yield it.

When you approach a wealthy patron and say, “I have a scheme that will earn us a great fortune; all I need is a small fortune to bring it to fruition,” you are greeted with suspicion and scorn. But if your mark finds clues suggesting you have such a scheme, but that you are concealing it so that all the profits may descend upon you alone, his desire to learn more will grow great. He will bear no suspicion that your scheme is wholly imaginary, and he will be first to offer you the necessary capital.

cut a dash, and of minor landholders and others of middling status. A four-tier would be appropriate for a wealthy farmer or merchant, a minor magician or scholar, perhaps a senior civic official. Only those of considerable rank would dare a five-tier—the nobility of the region, senior Magicians, even Arch-Magicians. Rhialto the Marvellous wears a six-tier; few others could aspire to so magnificent an article.

For PCs, a Cugel-level character would ordinarily have hats of two or three tiers, Turjan-level four or five tiers, and Rhialto-level five or six. An appropriate, well-maintained tiered hat grants a boon of 1 to Persuade or Rebuff contests of social standing against anyone with less impressive headwear. But if you wear a hat of inappropriately high station, you must succeed in an Imposture roll to carry off the claim.

Nightman's Accomplice

This long, stout staff of wood, shaped to metallic hardness by means now lost, conceals an ingenious mechanical contrivance. Few Accomplices remain extant, much to the relief of adjudicators familiar with their purpose.

With a few twists and jerks, the experienced owner can swiftly disassemble the Accomplice into component rods and dowels, and may adroitly reorganize these sections into a pole twice the height of a normal man, complete with pegs for toe-grips and a retentive claw at its upper extremity (advantageous for secure lodgment). The extended pole maintains sufficient strength to support a heavy individual walking on it between secure resting points.

When used to surmount a height no greater than 20 feet, such as a building wall or rock face, the Accomplice raises Hair's-Breadth successes to Prosaic, or Prosaic successes to Illustrious. It also changes Exasperating Failures to Hair's-Breadth Successes.

The disadvantage of owning an Accomplice arises from unfortunate revelations of its nature before attentive authorities.

Nornvale's Index Of Customs Fascinating and Unique

This weighty tome, bound in gid hide with strappings of iron inlaid with curlicues of watersilver, is well and truly prized by any traveller. Nornvale, who (according to the

frontispiece) “has walked, flown, or thruuned the length and breadth of the Earth, recorded every cultural quirk and idiosyncrasy, and compiled them into this index of perfect efficiency.”

Anyone wishing to impress the natives, or avoid a dunking in the mire-scorpion pits, may consult this book. Each consultation requires ten minutes of meticulous study, for Nornvale's index is not so perfectly efficient as asserted. On an Illustrious Success, the user has said precisely the right thing, or cocked his cap at just the jaunty angle, or has presented a rock of exactly the right shade of azure, and earns a boon of 1 to his Persuade pool against the inhabitants. On a Dismal Failure, the reader has insulted, offended, or otherwise angered the locals, and suffers a levy of 1 to Persuade. Any other success or failure results in pleasant smiles or disdainful sneers, neither so extreme as to bear on future relations.

A single roll may be made per culture—Nornvale's work is extremely broad, but not deep.

Phollion Leaves

The pungent phollion plant is said to be native to a land beyond the Plains of Oparona. The point is moot, for the merchants of Erze Damath keep the source of these fragrant leaves to themselves. A mild sprinkling of phollion leaves augments the flavor of any aliment to which it is added.

Decadent gourmands in the larger cities find a dash of phollion increases the pleasure—and pain—derived from the consumption of escharotic fruits and vegetables such as klembs and synines. Successful ingestion of such caustic foods indicates a refined audacity, required for admission to the famed Sodality of Venturesome Epicures of Old Romarth.

The overuse of phollion leaves is dangerous. When combined with notably spicy foods, they overpower the senses to the point of pain. Consequently, many locales restrict the import and use of phollion leaves, thereby only increasing demand among sybarites.

A character who eats a meal spiced with phollion suffers a levy of 1 to Wherewithal rolls to resist the ill effects of calefactive foods (burned mouth, watery eyes, gasping shrieks, etc.). If the Wherewithal roll succeeds despite the levy, the dauntless character receives a boon

thruuned: descriptive of an obscure mode of demonic locomotion.

of 1 to all Etiquette or Persuade rolls against discriminating gourmands. Digestive aftereffects of unwise phollion consumption are left to the GM's active imagination.

Spring-Heel Boots

From vague yet widespread stories, it may be surmised that upwards of a dozen pairs still exist of these outlandish examples of mechanically assisted footwear.

Remnants of a bygone age, sometimes recovered from the basements of forgotten purveyors of clothing and accoutrements, Spring-Heel Boots reach almost to the knee and have long, durable laces. The unusually thick soles contain squat and sturdy rods and links of metal, all closely packed, plus segments of an unknown rubbery material that shifts slightly under pressure. Past attempts to dismantle and replicate the boots have failed utterly, as the workings are beyond the bounds of current learning.

When activated by toggles at the rear of each calf, the boots enhance the wearer's stride by

propelling a mechanical force through the heels. Once the wearer masters this peculiar propulsion (a task requiring time, determination, and an Athletics ability rating of at least 2), he may run at twice normal velocity, leap double his normal distance (with a running start), or drop from a tall building or low cliff with security and dextrous aplomb. However, the boots require firm footing; soft or muddy terrain is anathema.

The GM may require a successful Athletics roll to use the boots, assigning specific boons or levies to the roll according to circumstance. On an Illustrious Success, the wearer's speed and jumping height are redoubled to four times normal. On a Dismal Failure the character suffers one (agonizing) injury, and one or both boots have become unlaced; retying them takes a minute or so.

The boots themselves are robust, and unlikely to suffer damage from anything short of blacksmith's tools or furnace flames. Otherwise how could they have endured through the aeons to grace adventurous feet in these last days?



Tools of the Trade (3 of 5): Spells

Each of these Straightforward spells can procure income:

Arnhoult's Sequestrous Digitalia. In addition to expediting common theft, this spell is of great use in acquiring keys, letters, seal-rings, and other items crucial to identification. It is best employed to merely borrow those items for duplication rather than stealing them; to return such an item unnoticed is to prevent immediate suspicion.

Brassnose's Twelve-Fold Bounty. Find employment where a new treasury is being constructed and create containers of cement with this spell; you can build yourself an uncemented ingress (though it requires careful concealment of your sabotage). When selling an expensive item, use the Bounty to create paper or parchment on which both the bill of sale and all due receipts are written; once a day has passed, the purchaser can prove neither that the item is his or that the money was. When dealing with officials intent upon arresting you, provide a distraction while a confederate steals their shackles, duplicates them, and replaces them with the duplicates; by this means you can escape within a day. Contract to embarrass a city nobleman by having his clothes fall off, and then replace that nobleman's ties and stays with Brassnose duplicates. Fabricate an escape ladder or light bridge whose central portions are made up of iron bars created by this spell; it will then collapse at a prearranged time, thwarting your pursuers. (Be sure that your timing is up to the task, lest you cut off your escape route.) Present a wealthy warrior with a set of armor made of genuine materials—but whose shape and proper dimensions are maintained by stays created by the spell. When the stays disappear, the armor collapses into a binding metal jacket the warrior cannot escape, putting him at your mercy.

Enchantment of Another's Face. Some useful applications of this spell are obvious. If you rob a traveller while wearing the face of a notorious bandit, that bandit receives the blame. But more subtlety brings greater rewards. Take on the face of the city's most beauteous courtesan and walk past the station of guards, that they be momentarily mesmerized and your confederates can more easily sneak past them. Take the face of one lover and whisper details of a rendezvous with the other, so that one will be at a predictable place at a predictable time, giving you access to his quarters or setting him up to take the blame for your activities. To escape a sealed city, take on the form (and smell) of someone who has recently died of plague, and have your confederates conduct you to the city walls in a coffin, for the guards there will be anxious to see you deposited outside the city environs.

Never use this spell when verification of identity is an important consideration; it is far more efficient to use it where a belief in the false identity is already secure. For instance, do not assume the face of Laruth the Moneychanger, walk into his establishment, and decide to withdraw some petty change; your behavior and lack of knowledge of his operation will give you away, assuming that magical defenses at his establishment do not.

The Illusion of Vile Arthropods. If you establish an escape route that leads to either a door or a pit full of scorpions, your pursuers are certain to choose the door. It therefore behooves you to lie in an empty pit and cover yourself with illusory scorpions. Take care to remain at the edge of the pit, in case some pursuer, disgusted by the imaginary vermin, decides to pour fiery embers on them.

Now I must run home to cut leather. I have a hide taken from the back of an old bull bauk, and I will make you boots to last your life's span or until the sun goes out, whichever is the sooner. In either case, you will lack all further need for boots.

Telanxis Oil

Manufactured by a lengthy and extremely expensive procedure from the large red petals of the parasitic telanxis bloom, this oil has been a boon to diplomats, ambassadors, and plenipotentiaries since at least the 20th Aeon, when its remarkable capabilities were first recorded by the alchemist Raradoz the Squeamish.

As his epithet suggests, Raradoz was possessed of an unusually weak stomach. Even the most mild of foods, such as spraling and giannet compote, did not sit well with the unfortunate Raradoz, whose gastric deficiencies had plagued him since birth and accounted for his skeletal frame and valetudinary ways.

The telanxis bloom admits no rivals within its bowers. Any plant whose seed is unfortunate enough to fall within its domain eventually undergoes an amazing tranformation, as the bloom's leafy tendrils wrap themselves around the interloper and slather it with an aromatic sap. In short order, this sap effects a wholesale change in the offending plant, transforming it into a telanxis bloom!

Observing this bizarre display of vegetable aggression, Raradoz surmised he might be able to extract sap from the telanxis as a means of rendering piquant foods more suitable to his limited palate. With time and much effort, the alchemist achieved the proper formula, one that, when added to any foodstuff, eliminates both its taste and texture to the point of blandness. Not only did it aid Raradoz in the daily routine of eating the spicy dishes his master, Prince Munishood of Phort, foisted upon him, but it gained the favor of those whose duties often required the consumption of unsavory foods of less civilized lands, such as envoys and legates.

The use of a few drops of telanxis oil grants a boon of 1 to your Etiquette pool for the purpose of avoiding a social faux pas while consuming food of a taste or texture not to your liking. At the GM's discretion, the oil may also grant a boon of 1 to other ability pools for actions that involve eating unpleasant, ill-prepared, or otherwise noxious viands. A vial of oil (good for ten uses) costs 100 terces in a city and much more in smaller settlements—if it can be found at all.

Historical postscript: Raradoz's efforts proved too efficacious, for he succumbed to wanawhet poison that a rival for Prince Munishood's patronage placed in his victuals—its telltale scent masked by the telanxis oil by which the alchemist swore until his demise.

Textbook of Gruke's Philosophy

Throughout the aeons, one recurrent subject of popular literature has been the intellectual means by which individuals may tolerate the wearing afflictions of

everyday life. As such books invariably consist of a small number of pithy epigrams and a great deal of blank paper, rather than dense, closely-argued pages of information, they may be easily and profitably reproduced, even by the decayed and unreliable publication arrangements of the age.

No one knows who Gruke was—probably an amateur aristocrat-poet whose writings represent inept attempts at blank verse. But one scholar who has traced the history of this text back into the fog of earlier aeons has declared that Gruke was not, in fact, human; rather, he was of an alien race, and his statements are barbed ironies and flippant satires of the humanity his own kind sought to subjugate.

Once in any day during which the possessor of a copy of Gruke's Textbook suffers mental distress, tedium, or emotional privation sufficient to cause impairment, he may consult the Textbook in search of a solution. Each such consultation takes at least ten minutes, and requires successful Perception; each reroll adds five minutes to the time taken. Success restores 2 points to any one reduced ability pool of the player's choice, selected from among Persuade (Obfuscatory), Persuade (Forthright), Rebuff (Penetrating), Rebuff (Contrary), Pedantry, Seduction, or Wherewithal.

However, on a Dismal Failure, the character, confronted with the failure of even past ages to resolve the depressing realities of the present, sinks into depression and ennui, and suffers a levy of 2 to all abilities. This continues until the character can make a successful Wherewithal roll (with the levy). One roll, with a limit of one and a penalty of 1, is permitted if the character lacks a Wherewithal rating. Attempts may be made every eight hours, starting eight hours after the disastrous consultation.

Truly Unremarkable Garb

It is easy enough to acquire cheap and dowdy clothing, but persons seeking to pass as members of the lowest social classes, and thus escape the attentions of the wealthy, are well-advised to shop with care. Mere drab cheapness itself commands attention by its difference from the age's normal wild variety of styles.

Thus, some experts in the subtleties of sartorial psychology offer roguish or merely discreet customers Truly Unremarkable Garb. The Garb grants a boon of 1 to Imposture rolls in any attempt to pass as gutter-scum or a lowly worker. While membership in these classes has many drawbacks, it can grant safe passage in circumstances where more substantial folk would be challenged. The assemblage includes a tunic, trousers, and cheap hat, but not a cloak or coat.

Procurement of such a costume may itself be a problem for an untrained purchaser. To determine whether the offered clothing is the work of a true expert in deception, or merely an assemblage of cheap clothes thrown together by a confidence-trickster, requires a successful Perception or Imposture roll. Even if the roll indicates shoddy goods, the vendor may try to Persuade the buyer that the assessment is mistaken.

Wequill's Manual of Jest

Persons seeking to produce the appearance of a wit in which they are tragically lacking may, with usually only moderate difficulty, acquire some slim folio or light-weight scroll of proven flippancies and witticisms. The book widely thought most worth purchase was written by one Wequill, official clerk-historian to the Jester's Guild of a long-forgotten 20th-Aeon city-state. A few hand-

copied versions, and survivors from eras that believed in making parchment durable, are adequate to meet the demand.

To use Wequill's Manual, spend at least ten minutes searching through it, then make a roll based on Perception (or Scuttlebutt, if searching for means to satirize some local personage). Re-rolls add five minutes each to the search time. Success grants a boon of 1 to Persuasion in the Glib, Obfuscatory, or Intimidating style, to Rebuff in the Contrary style, to Etiquette when seeking to pass among frivolous and flippant persons, or to Seduction of those rare persons moved to passion by humor. However, no benefit is gained if the character's rating in the ability exceeds 10, as there is clearly nothing he can learn from a mere book.

If the search ends in Dismal Failure, the subsequent attempt suffers a levy of 2, as the character desperately employs a grossly inappropriate jest. For that matter, any unsuccessful attempts to use jests from the Manual may incur grave social penalties.



Tools of the Trade (4 of 5): Letters of Introduction

"The bearer of this instrument is Wakkam, the eldest son of Ekkam, Minister of Antiquities of Kaspara Vitatus, and may be identified by his noble bearing, the distinctive chevron-shaped chip in his upper right incisor, and a birthmark, in the approximate shape of a rampant gid, placed by fate on the inner portion of his left elbow.

"Wakkam, my confidant, precedes me to your fair metropolis, and is charged with securing quarters for my visit, which shall commence a month after his arrival. Please show him every hospitality and consideration, knowing that I shall visit blessings of greater measure upon those who befriend him in his role as my agent.

"(signed) Ka'al Ovaldan

"Minister of Trade, Kaspara Vitatus"

One of the most versatile and profitable tools one can possess is a Letter of Introduction from an unimpeachable source. The precise language and details of such a letter varies with the situation, but the following guidelines are paramount:

- ☛ The putative author of the instrument must be well known to those intended to read it, but only by his reputation for lavish wealth and expensive tastes.
- ☛ The author and the party introduced live far away, and ideally have never been visited by residents of the city where the instrument will be employed.
- ☛ The instrument must be verifiable as authentic. Arrangement for verification varies with circumstances, of course, but the supposed veracity of the instrument generally needs to survive only one attempt at authentication, for reasons discussed below)

With such an instrument, you can live a life of wealth and ease. Those who wish to befriend the patron who has "introduced" you will lavish gifts upon you and entertain you. Money-lenders will extend you lines of credit commensurate with the reputation of your supposed patron.

But you must never, never reveal to your benefactors that you need their generosity. Be appreciative, of course, but never be suspected of begging. Only with a wealthy aristocrat's disdain of wealth can you acquire it.

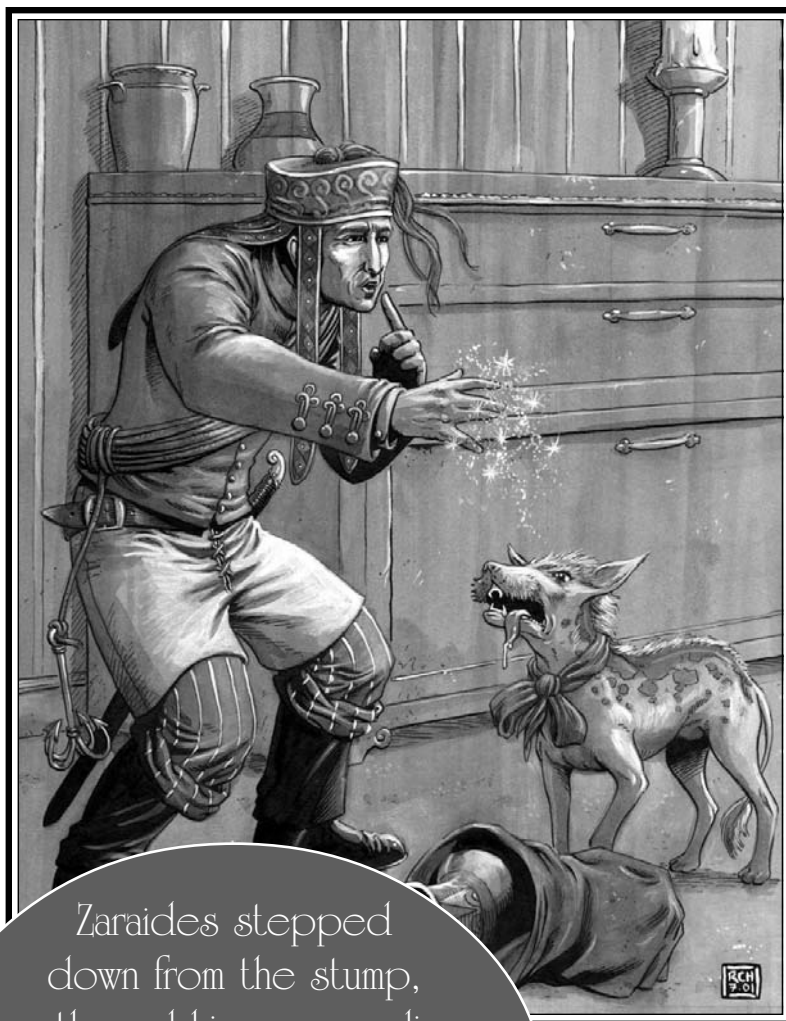
Understand that the Letter of Introduction has its own life cycle. When used for the first time, it is in its glorious youth, dazzling to the eye, fresh in its newness. But it ages rapidly. As those around you note inconsistencies surrounding your identity, the Letter enters an unlovely middle age, surviving solely on the affection you have earned for yourself through your brief association with your acquaintances. Eventually truth erupts and the Letter perishes, with all the benefits it has brought you.

You must act, while the Letter's youth is still in full bloom, to secure enduring benefit. If your goal is the seduction of some comely aristocrat, accomplish it with haste. If you mean to swindle some rich acquaintance, spirit away the valuables early on. If your aim is to eat a patron out of house and home, demonstrate ferocious appetite from your first meeting.

Chapter 3:

Clever Cantraps for the Resourceful Rogue

Minor magical effects to
delight Dabblers and the
marginally competent



Zaraides stepped
down from the stump,
gathered his compendia,
and flung them into the air; all
lofted high to float swiftly over
the treetops and out of sight.

The Eyes of the Overworld,
Chapter 7

The following register of advantageous cantraps offers generous utility in a variety of circumstances. A few of these cantraps are more likely to be used *against* characters than by them; we describe these to forestall disaster and encourage alertness. ✿ Of those cantraps still known, only a minority are of use to the adventurer.

Cantraps ordinarily have singularly specific application, such as lighting a feeble lantern to illuminate needlework, or calming a marsh-hen unnerved by the sound of the chef's halberd being honed. Though the term "cantrap" also applies to blessings and curses of advanced potency, in this study we explore only the simplest class, the kind an unassuming landloper or rakish rascal might use. ✿ Jack Vance hints in passing at a variety of cantraps, from simplistic competence in quieting barking dogs or resisting stinging insects, to the capacity to weave magical skeins of starlight in which to capture floating dreams. From this latter example, we may deduce that magicians either still retain access to abstruse cantraps that no ordinary mortal can even envisage, or that they vie for prestige by describing near-miraculous competences as mere cantraps. ✿ Certainly Magicians and Arch-Magicians enact lesser magics in modes more vital and prolonged than do mere Dabblers. These listings assume a caster of low competence, and assign efficacy accordingly.

Finding and Learning Cantraps

Each worthy cantrap results from aeons of magical research, refined into simple incantations and ritual gestures. Despite the waning of wisdom in this final age, a wide tradition of folk magic still prevails, but is by no means centralized. Rather, isolated cantraps are passed down through families, or within small communities, or even as trade secrets within professional guilds. A given cantrap may be well known in one region, yet utterly unheard of further afield. That there are still so many of these simple magics in the world may show the prevalence they once attained.

No college of cantraps waits with open doors for the eager rogue. (Some bastions of wizardry, such as the celebrated Scholasticarium of ancient Kaiin, may pass on a few didactic fragments to legitimate pupils.) In forays across the Dying Earth, the unaligned individual will sometimes heed (or endure) the effect of a particular cantrap, and may then devise his own access to its casting methods.

How widely cantraps are found, and how easily they may be learned, are of course subject to the GM's whim.

Cantraps in Play

Unless otherwise stated, the effect of each cantrap is a boon of 1 on the first roll (only) of a related contest or ability attempt. The standard duration of cantraps that are not instantaneous is about an hour. This duration may be influenced by the caster's ability to retain concentration on an active cantrap, and a person under dire duress may be deemed to have let the cantrap lapse. Illustrious Successes extend the effective duration of a cantrap to the full hour unless the description states an alternative. Under such prolonged circumstances the boon is still only applied to the first roll of any contest attempted within the duration.

Most cantraps are activated by ritual gestures that must be accompanied by brief arcane mutterings, although only the substantive gestures are detailed below. Some suggested peripheral benefits rely on a person being impressionable in certain ways. If he is not—for instance, a monk of absolute austerity surely cares little how jauntily your cap is tilted—the GM is at liberty to decry this part of the benefit.

Cantraps are automatically refreshed after a good night's sleep. However, they become unusable for an hour after a Quotidian Failure, and until the next dawn (or three hours minimum) after a Dismal Failure. Dabblers cannot reroll these failures.

To alleviate tedium, to say nothing of injurious retribution upon our own persons, we have omitted minor practical cantraps such as "Polish Mirrors" or "Make Cooking Fire Burn Hotter." The GM may assign such humdrum tools freely to Dabblers, with the clear understanding that she will instantly revoke them on evidence of abuse.

Note that cantraps rarely have import sufficient to be granted formal appellation, and thus are distinguished with brief captions suggesting their function.

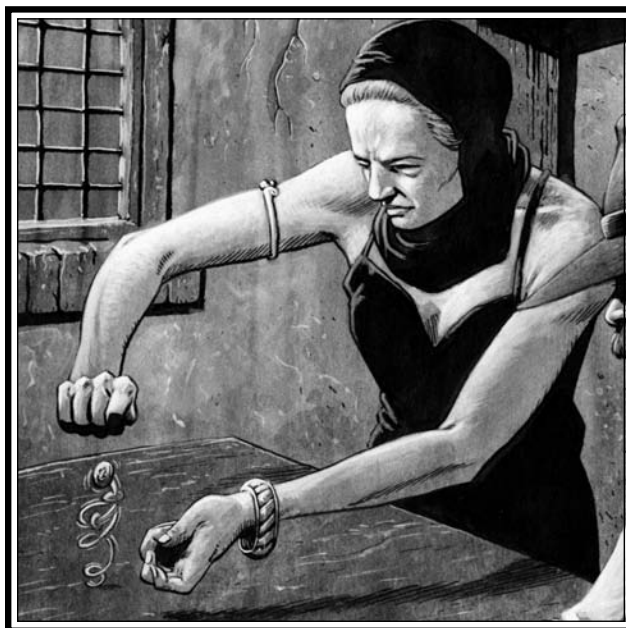
In Society

Dancing Coins

Function: Coins that hover and sweep through the air above a tabletop amuse weary travellers. A coin made to float past a dozing guard and drop noisily to the floor might have other benefits.

Gestures required: The coins must be stacked and pressed lightly with the palm of the hand. Then a single coin may be guided while the rest float aimlessly, or all coins may be moved in synchronous languid motion.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure the coins spray wildly to all sides, possibly injuring bystanders. On an Illustrious Success the coins require minimal attention, and improvise their own acrobatic antics for the cantrap's duration.



Disclose Toxins

Function: Through enhanced nasal efficiency, the caster discerns poisonous or narcotic substances disguised within food or beverages.

Gestures required: Repeated tapping of the index finger against the side of the nose.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure a result is divined that is contrary to reality. On an Illustrious Success (if toxins were used) the caster additionally becomes aware of any residual taint on the hands or clothing of any person nearby.

Fashionable Attire

Function: Corrects the angle of the hat, the stiffness of a mustache, the angling on the cut of a jacket, and even the subtle tones of garments—all in the twinkling of an eye.

Vasker chuckled. "What a thought! Cugel will not care to be visited with a spell customarily reserved for our wherlots! Such a spell does not accord with his dignity."

"I give dignity second place to expedience," said Cugel.

Gestures required: One merely clicks one's heels briskly several times in rapid succession, while clasping the hands as in prayer.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure the effect works in reverse, making one's appearance dour and grim. This incurs a levy of 1 to all Persuasion attempts against anyone for whom disagreeable appearance is a distraction. On an Illustrious Success the beneficiary's attire gleams resplendently, granting a boon of 1 to Seduction and to Persuasion in Eloquent or Charming style.

Melodic Tones

Function: The voice takes on a soft musical purr, most alluring to members of the opposite sex. In peaceful environs this enhances Seduction attempts, or Persuasion in Eloquent or Charming style.

Gestures required: Drumming fingers on the sides of the throat while humming gently.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure the caster is unfortunately struck dumb for several minutes.

Repel Dirt

Function: Produces a brief static charge that repulses mud, mire, grit, aging vegetable matter, and the accumulated filth of the road.

Gestures required: Repeated flicking of the fingers a hand's width from the body while raising the left and right hands alternately to the side.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure the target not only remains soiled, but the impacted grime also emits an unpleasant odor. On an Illustrious Success one's garments positively gleam with cleanliness, and a boon of 1 is gained to Persuasion attempts (Eloquent, Fortright, or Charming) that immediately follow.

In the Library or Work-room

Bring Book to Hand

Function: A book or scroll leaps across a gap of several arm lengths. Useful for impressing the gullible during any attempted imposture of a powerful Magician. (Persuasion attempts in Eloquent, Fortright, or Charming style that immediately follow gain a boon of 1.)

Gestures required: One merely reaches out one's arm and casually wiggles the fingers in the book's general direction.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure either nothing occurs, the desired tome falls sullenly to the

floor from a shelf, or else it rockets across the room, striking the caster in an embarrassingly painful fashion. On an Illustrious Success the book wafts with unusual elegance and may be caused to perform graceful spirals throughout its trajectory.

Enhance Vision

Function: Enhances normal vision under the dimmest light, negating penalties or levies for visual perception in gloom.

Gestures required: Push the head forward three times in quick succession, in the manner of ducks on a pond.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure vision is notably impaired for the duration of the cantrap, imposing a levy of 1 on all abilities where vision is a significant component, and making it impossible to see details under poor light. On an Illustrious Success, the caster can see in dim light as if it were a bright day, and in pitch dark as if it were twilight.

Seal Book

Function: Holds any book tightly shut. The effect can easily be bypassed by any competent Magician, although the cantrap's caster will know of any interference, even if the magic has been reset.

Gestures required: Tapping the book authoritatively.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure the book remains sealed for a full day. On an Illustrious Success, likewise, although the caster can open and close it at will during this time.

Turn Pages

Function: Turns a book's pages as reading progresses. This may impress the gullible in the same manner as "Bring Book to Hand."

Gestures required: Hold the tome aloft and rotate it clockwise.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure the book's pages adhere and cannot be turned at all for an hour. On an Illustrious Success the book also props itself in mid-air at the most convenient position for perusal.

On the Hunt

Advance Softly

Function: Muffles one target's footfalls and incidental noises.

Gestures required: Cover the ears with the hands and shake rapidly from side to side.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure the target of this cantrap becomes more clamorous than usual, suffering a levy instead of a boon.

Auditory Embellishment

Function: Detects noises made by creatures the hunter is following, or that follow him, as if the caster had the hearing of the most sensitive beast.

Gestures required: Somewhat painful tweaking of one's own ears.

Variations in effect: Dismal Failure incurs a levy of 1 to all auditory challenges for the following hour. Illustrious Success grants a boon of 1 to the same challenges.

Efficacious Spring

Function: Negates a GM levy of 1 or 2 when leaping a particularly wide breach.

Gestures required: Rapid knee bends.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure the leaper falls hopelessly short. On an Illustrious Success he lands with notable grace and agility, ready for immediate action.

Seek the Trail

Function: Grants a boon of 1 (or more likely annuls the GM's levy) when tracing a difficult trail.

Gestures required: Grasping the nose in the right hand and covering an eye with the left, the caster spins twice on the spot.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure the caster loses the trail utterly, even using his normal senses. On an Illustrious Success the trail may be followed across an extended span.

In Transit

Inner Fortitude

Function: Withstand without discomfort the effects of unseemly chill or withering high temperatures. The effect lasts one hour.

Gestures required: Inhale sharply, then huff and bellow for long moments.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure, the caster becomes unusually vulnerable to the very inconvenience he tried to counter, and suffers a levy of 1 on all physical actions for several uncomfortable minutes. On an Illustrious Success, the caster is protected until the next dusk or dawn, or for at least a further three hours.

Resist Dampness

Function: Provides a rainproof magical barrier of sufficient duration to reach nearby shelter, or else dries sodden clothes in the blink of an eye.

Gestures required: Throw one's hands high and wide, and call a multi-syllabled designation.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure one becomes utterly soaked. On an Illustrious Success the caster's skin and clothing gain a water-repellent aura for one hour. This does not interfere with normal imbibing.

Sprightly Stride

Function: Aids Athletics rolls in any contest using locomotive speed.

Gestures required: One must first adopt a stationary lunging stride, then windmill the arms in preposterous exaggeration.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure all Athletics rolls suffer a levy of 1. On an Illustrious Success, the beneficiary may stride tirelessly at jogging speed for up to a full hour.

Withstand Insects

Function: The caster becomes utterly repellent to small biting insects, and hazardous creatures of insectile type, such as asms, face a levy of 1 on their first direct attack against the caster.

Gestures required: The caster must clap his hands and leap from foot to foot.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure the caster attracts all insects nearby. (Such failure fortunately does not make it easier for an insectile monster to strike, but might otherwise enrage it.) On an Illustrious Success an entire group of travellers may benefit from this effect, or an insectile attacker becomes so inconvenienced as to suffer a levy of 2 rather than 1.

Sundry Magical Fripperies

Assuage Afflictions

Function: Soothes aches, abrasions, or minor sprains suffered by the caster or any compliant target. Alternately it grants a boon of 1 to the healing activities of a Physician.

Gestures required: Pass one's hands over the site of all impairments, muttering rote-learned phrases of depuration.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure, all targeted afflictions become notably worse; the victim's next Health roll suffers a penalty of 1. On an Illustrious Success, the cantrap will heal an injury or counteract a venom or canker.

Calm Hound

Function: Acrimonious watch-beasts are rendered passive and of good will.

Gestures required: The caster drops to his haunches and makes revolving passes with his arms in the animal's direction.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure the dog becomes enraged and attempts violence on the caster. On an Illustrious Success the cantrap either affects several animals instantly or puts a single animal into profound slumber.

As time passed Cugel grew restless, and on three occasions approached the arched entrance. On each occasion a Presentment came to deter him, first in the shape of a leaping ghoul, next as a zig-zag blaze of energy, and finally as a score of glittering purple wasps.

Discommoding Dazzle

Function: A momentarily blinding flash bursts from the fingertips. This grants a boon of 1 to an immediate action that opposes the distressed victim.

Gestures required: Merely fling one's hands toward the face of the target.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure, the caster inconveniences his own vision, while the target is substantially unaffected. On an Illustrious Success, the target is utterly blinded for a round and suffers a levy of 1 to all actions requiring clear sight for an additional round.

Displace Weight

Function: A momentary muscular embellishment, useful only for shifting large items of furniture or pushing against a stubborn obstacle, such as a locked door.

Gestures required: Assume a classical stance and flex the biceps immodestly.

Variation in effect: On a Dismal Failure, the caster becomes weakened for the next several minutes, taking a levy of 1 on all abilities requiring physical strength.

Douse Flame

Function: Quickly expunge any minor conflagration, such as a torch flame or a pile of burning papers.

Gestures required: Arcane finger gesticulations.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure, the effects of the blaze are fortified threefold. On an Illustrious

Success, other flames of equal size in the target's vicinity are also extinguished.

String of Sparks

Function: From the fingertips emanates a trail of twinkling motes, which proceed in loose file at the caster's mental direction.

Gestures required: Clap the hands smartly three times in succession, then lunge forward briskly.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure, the sparks fly wild and may set fire to nearby combustibles. On an Illustrious Success, an amazing array of multicolored sparkles may be commanded.

Vile Keening

Function: Cry a repugnant and clearly inhuman wail, albeit only at standard human vocal strength. All who hear this are likely to be affronted, but otherwise suffer no obligatory penalty.

Gestures required: Pull the skin into flaps at either side of the neck, then make choking noises at the back of the throat.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure, the caster's voice becomes notably repulsive for the following hour, and suffers a levy of 1 to all vocal communication attempts. On an Illustrious Success, the keening is transformed into a horrendous demonic bellow, imposing a levy of 1 to all Wherewithal rolls of enemies taken by surprise.



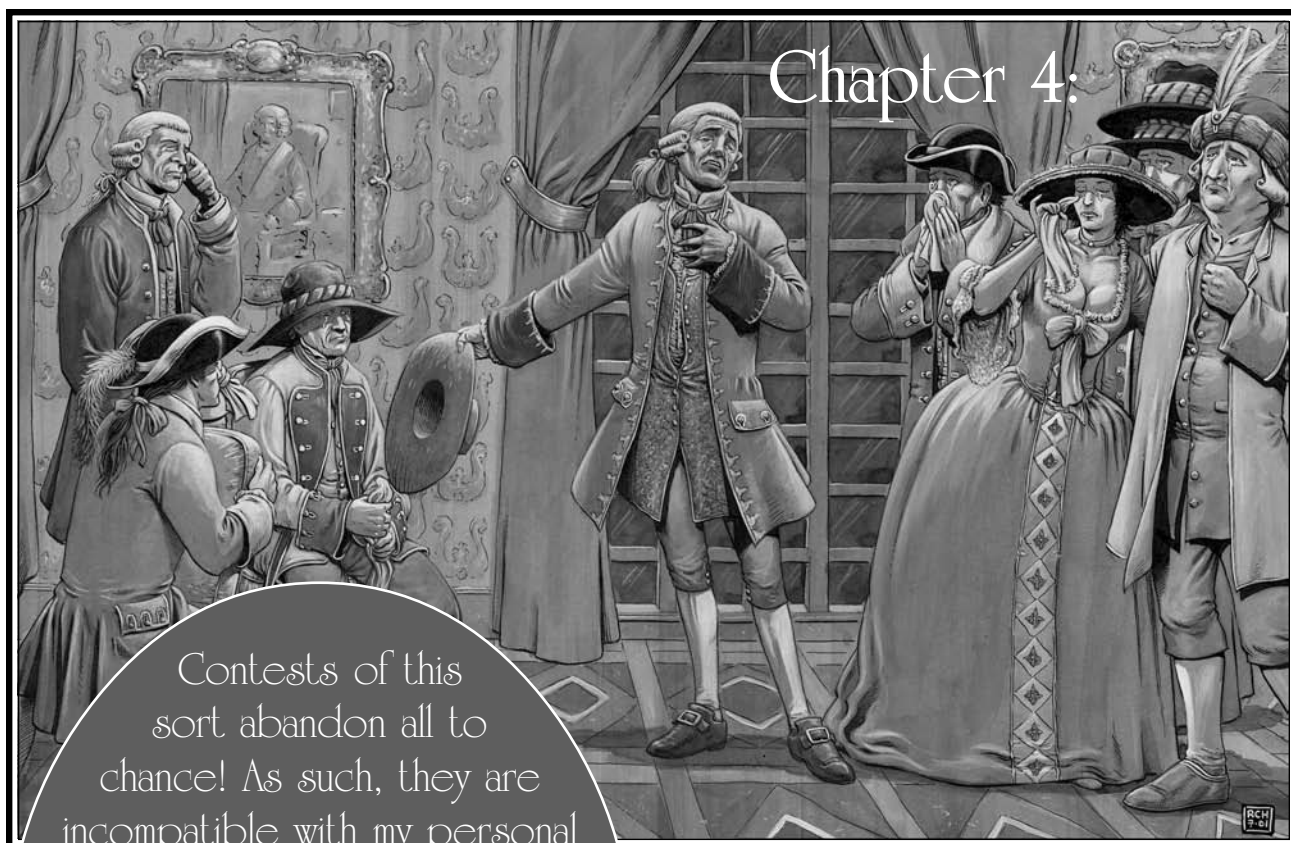
Tools of the Trade (5 of 5): Supporting Beliefs

Extracting wealth from those who deserve it less than you is simpler if you can build the edifice of your deception on the bedrock of someone else's belief.

Suppose the champion of a city has fallen in combat. Listen to what admirers say about him. "He's not truly dead. He rests beneath the earth while his wounds heal, and when we truly need him again, he will rise again." Stifle your cheers and get to work—many of these hapless dupes will pour money into the champion's injury relief fund.

"It was not the chug that killed him; he was slain by Temalia, his jealous rival." Here, too, are opportunities for gain. You can build up false evidence that will gratify proponents of the murder theory so well that they greatly reward you—or perhaps Temalia will pay you to destroy it.

But be careful. Sometimes preposterous notions turn out to be true. If the champion is indeed only sleeping, he might arise at a time inconvenient for you. If indeed Temalia the rival did kill him, she may see investigation as a threat.



Contests of this sort abandon all to chance! As such, they are incompatible with my personal temperament. I am not one to crouch passively with my hind-quarters raised, awaiting either the kick or the caress of Destiny! I am Cugel! Fearless and indomitable, I confront every adversity!

Cugel's Saga,
Chapter 1

Farragoes, Feints, and Flailings

Introducing tweaks, individual accomplishments that distinguish the adventurer of true talent

Previous chapters presented new entries in categories already created in the *Dying Earth* game. This chapter introduces a new type of advantage experienced players can give their characters: the **tweak**. ☼ A tweak enhances an existing ability, bestowing special benefits in a particular situation. For instance, the tweak Extravagant Show improves the appearance of objects you make using your Craftsmanship ability; Arcane Arches and Architraves lets Magicians with Engineering ability spend more on their manses. Often a tweak lets you spend points from one ability pool in certain contests of an entirely different ability. ☼ You are never obliged to use a tweak just because its governing situation has reared its head. You may always conserve your ability points for later use.

Cugel, while plausible, is nonetheless a bit of a scoundrel.

Buying tweaks: You purchase tweaks with character points or improvement points, just like abilities. Each tweak is associated with the ability it enhances, and sometimes with a particular style of that ability. You must already have the related ability or style before you can buy the tweak. The tweak listings below are organized by the ability and style tweaked.

You must have a rating of at least 3 in the associated ability before you can tweak it (that is, buy a tweak for it). The tweak itself has neither rating nor pool. Note the tweak on the back of your character sheet—presuming, of course, you are using a copy of the revised Character Sheet included at the end of this Compendium.

During character creation you may buy three tweaks for 1 character point. A tweak acquired during play costs 1 improvement point. The GM may restrict you to a certain number of tweaks, and will certainly set a time limit on dilatory players paging laboriously through this book in search of some optimally efficient tweak. (We don't recommend tweaks for beginning players, precisely to avoid such undue wasting of time.)

You are permitted to take tweaks only if you agree not to increase the GM's information burden. You must be able to remind the GM what your tweak does before using it. As soon as you ask her, "What does Volcanic Umbrage do again?" you *permanently* lose the tweak, without regaining the point you spent on it. If the GM asks what a tweak does, you must have the answer readily to hand. Although it is only right and just that every player should purchase a copy of this book, or even two, it is forgivable in a pinch for you to look up a tweak in another player's copy.

Each tweak is explained in terms of its situation, description, and benefit. **Situation** tells you when the tweak applies. **Description** indicates what your character does when you activate the tweak. **Benefit** explains the rules to use when you bring your tweak into play.

Persuade

Glib

Offer of Promotional Fervor

Situation: You are negotiating the price of a product offered by a merchant or tradesman. The item in question must be one that the merchant has stocked in depth, and you must credibly suggest you will spend the next few months in the area from which the merchant draws his customers. You cannot use the Offer of Promotional Fervor if the product is already so popular he has trouble satisfying demand, or if you've told him you're merely passing through.

Merchants whose primary style of Rebuff is Obtuse are immune to the Offer of Promotional Fervor.

Description: You promise to increase demand for the item in question by using it in public, praising its merits

among your wide circle of friends and associates, and perhaps even by writing a broadsheet asserting its fine quality and bargain price.

Benefit: Spend any number of Persuasion (Glib) points, then make an uncontested Persuasion (Glib) roll. On a Hair's-Breadth Success, subtract 5 terces or 5% (whichever is greater) from the item's price for each Persuasion (Glib) point you spent before rolling. On a Prosaic Success, subtract 5 terces or 10% (whichever is greater) per point spent. On an Illustrious Success, the merchant gives you the item at no charge (in the case of items with an asking price less than 100 terces) or at 50% off (for asking prices equal to or greater than 100 terces). On no account will the merchant ever pay you!

Charming

Perpetual Good Nature

Situation: Establishing yourself in a neighborhood or society, you judge that it would be wise to have more friends than foes.

Description: As you go about your routine affairs, you apply your habitual charm to everyone you meet.

Benefit: At the beginning of each day which you intend to spend more or less entirely dealing with mundane matters in public places, spend 1 from your Persuade pool. So long as you are not dragged off into unusual or private business, you establish a pleasant relationship with one ordinary person of the GM's choosing. The new acquaintance will not fight for you, lend you more than a couple of groats without good cause, or trust you with wealth or private secrets, but will speak well of you if asked, share a drink with you if invited, and prefer you to unknown outsiders in the event of a dispute.

Eloquent

Display of Tear-Jerking Oratory

Situation: You are giving a speech in front of 20 or more people, some of whom are wealthy, cultivated, or sensitive to life's finer sentiments.

Description: You speak in such refined yet moving terms on your chosen subject that even bystanders unable to give you whatever you're angling for are nonetheless forced to pull out their fragrance-dipped handkerchiefs to dab at tearing eyes.

Benefit: At the end of a successful contest in which you used Persuasion (Eloquent), spend any number of Persuasion (Eloquent) points. When you have finished your speech, an influential local offers you an employment opportunity unrelated to the Persuasion attempt you were making. For instance, you may be asked to deliver a eulogy, take part in a stage performance, or recite a sentimental poem for the benefactor's aging grandmother. For Cugel-level characters, the fee offered

for this task is 10 terces for each extra Persuasion (Eloquent) point you spent at the end of the contest. (For Turjan-level characters, the fee is 100 terces per point; for Rhialto-level, it is 1000 terces.)

The GM may, naturally, weave this offer of employment into her plot by placing interesting obstacles before you as you attempt to fulfill it.

Forthright

“Is That Your Spear, or Do You Hide Behind it from Small Children?”

Situation: You are confronted by one or more opponents, and physical violence is clearly unavoidable. You are confident enough of your chances, but would feel better if you knew your opponents would eschew tactical subtlety.

Description: You fix your leading opponent with a stony glance and issue a remark of brutal contempt. You hope this provokes him to anger, which the wise warrior avoids.

Benefit: For the expenditure of 1 Persuasion (Forthright) point, you may engage your intended victim in a contest of Persuade against Rebuff, with a limit of one on each side. If you win the contest, your opponent is enraged, and will charge you at maximum speed. If he has Ferocity as a style of Attack (preferred or secondary), he must use it; otherwise, he suffers a levy of 2 to all his Defense rolls for the first three attacks you make. You would be well advised to win the ensuing combat, as you are unlikely ever to befriend this person.

“Why, in My Day...”

Situation: In this decrepit age, when discourteousness knows no bounds among cavorting bratlings, you face a person at least 20 years your junior.

Description: You describe the “good old days” in a fashion that convinces the youth of your superior knowledge and perspicacity.

Benefit: You gain 2 points to your Persuade (Forthright) pool when dealing with anyone significantly younger than yourself. However, on any failure, the youth regards you as a hopeless old duffer, and further Persuasion attempts against him suffer a levy of 2.

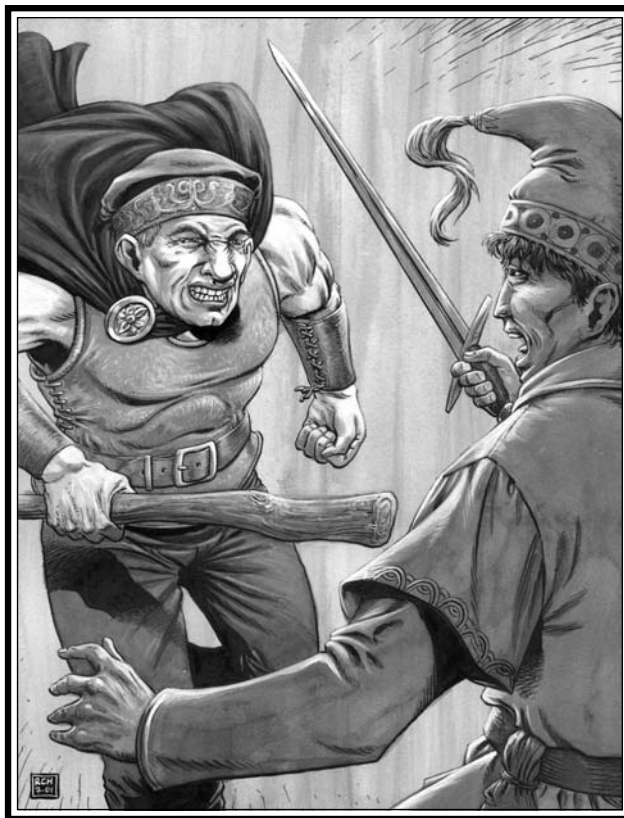
Intimidating

The Very Serious Threat of a Painful Conclusion

Situation: During combat, you wish to drive off an opponent over whom you already have an edge, or perhaps simply to strike at her departing back.

Description: Driving forward with a snarl, you make your willingness to do harm completely obvious.

Benefit: You must have already scored one hit on this opponent that caused actual injury, or two that did not. Now engage this foe in a contest of your Persuade (Intimidating) against the better of her Attack (Ferocity) or Wherewithal. (If she has neither ability, she may roll with a penalty of 1; see “Caught Without the Right Ability” in Chapter 3 of the rulebook.) If you win, she



must run away (see the rulebook’s Chapter 4) at the first opportunity.

Obfuscatory

Backsplash of Persistent Confusion

Situation: You are using your Persuade (Obfuscatory) ability to convince a GMC to make a decision based on facts you have wholly fabricated.

Description: Your words are not only confusing, but downright deceptive. You may vividly describe events which never took place, invent a historical anecdote, or promulgate a spurious theory about the operations of magic.

Benefit: If you succeed in a contest, you may spend 1 or more additional Persuasion (Obfuscatory) points. Your negotiating partner not only agrees to do what you suggest, but then, on his own initiative, undertakes further actions based on your specious facts. He (or others he in turn convinces of your falsehoods) performs one useful favor per day for you, for a period of days equal to the extra points you spent.

Each morning, the GMC is permitted an uncontested Rebuff roll; he will always accept the initial result without spending points to reroll. If successful, he notes a logical error in your story and stops helping you. If he roped others into doing favors for you, he spreads the word, and they too stop. Only on an Illustrious Success does he realize that you set out to deceive him; otherwise, he assumes that you were honest but mistaken.

Faucelme stood back and held up his hands in the manner of one who dissembles nothing. "Is this the conduct of a 'sly and unpredictable villain'?"

"Decidedly so, if the villain, for the purposes of his joke, thinks to simulate the altruist."

"Then how will you know villain from altruist?"
Cugel shrugged. "It is not an important distinction."

You are Vitbilea the Veiled, a lusty enchantress. You are staying at an Inn run by a woman named Egregia, whose six agreeably muscular young sons are disagreeably modest, even when working in the warm sun. Knowing her to be a devout practitioner of the Asavite sub-sect, you convince her that the Asavite hierarch in Kaiin has just declared that men should abandon their modesty in the days approaching the summer solstice, and should labor in the nude, despite any discomfiture this should cause them. At the end of your successful contest, you spend an additional 4 Persuasion (Obfuscatory) points. Egregia's marble-bodied boys will work naked for your viewing pleasure for the next four days. On the first day, one of the boys does you an additional favor by climbing up a fruit tree and delivering the ripe, glistening plums to your work table.

The next morning, Egregia gets a Rebuff roll. She scores a Prosaic Success. She realizes that you must have been mistaken, for the hierarch may not promulgate doctrine without calling a conclave of hermits to debate his pronouncements. She orders her boys to reclaim their clothing, and to stay away from the ill-informed female guest. However, she takes no further action against you, not realizing you meant to deceive her.

"You Lack Wide Education"

Situation: It is a dark time for savants such as yourself. The common level of erudition has fallen precipitously since the last aeon. Fortunately, erudition is still respected in some quarters, even if not fully understood.

Description: When facing an ill-educated dolt, you may sway him more easily by quoting ancient texts and *bons mots* from sages of note.

ancient texts: For convenience, here are some titles you may wish to reference in your Persuasion attempts: *Merliszal's Consummate Effectuary*, *Vagrant Recollections of Zinqzin the Encyclopaedist*, *Refutation of Nonsense!* by Simonias the Preceptor, the fragmentary *Longueurs of Aegis Prolosteron*, Trofil's *Incomparable Compendium of Ancient Achievements* (colloquially known among scholars as "the Twelve Scrolls"; only tantalizing fragments of one scroll remain), and *Barandbarad the Most Elevated Quaesitor of Latier Motbolam: An Aggregation of His Multifarious Reflections on the Abstruse Vagaries of Life as Dictated from Vile and Insufferable Captivity to Bodd the Guard*.

Benefit: When using Persuasion (Obfuscatory) against one who has neither this tweak nor the Pedantry ability, you may spend 1 from your Persuade pool to gain a boon of 2.

Rebuff

Lawyerly

Counter-Proposal

Situation: Someone is trying to Persuade you on a topic concerning which you have your own clear ideas.

Description: Dismantling the other party's arguments with precision, you advance smoothly to your own ideas.

Benefit: If you have just won a contest using Rebuff in the Lawyerly style, you gain a boon of 1 if you immediately use Persuade on the same or a closely related topic.

Obtuse

"I Swear That You Are Being Deliberately Ludicrous!"

Situation: You are dealing with someone whose fine judgment might inconvenience you, and whose friendship is of little value to you.

Description: In the course of a verbal exchange, your persistent inability to follow even the simplest line of thought irritates the other party to distraction.

Benefit: During a conversation or negotiation, you may match your Rebuff (Obtuse) ability against the best of your victim's Persuade (Forthright), Rebuff (Obtuse, Contrary, or Pure-Hearted), or Wherewithal. (If he has none of these abilities, he may roll with a penalty of 1; see "Caught Without the Right Ability" in Chapter 3 of the rulebook.) If you win, he becomes inflamed with emotion, suffering a levy of 1 during any use of Persuade (unless his style is Intimidation), Attack (Finesse or

Caution), or Etiquette, for the next ten minutes. However, if his Attack style is Ferocity, he gains a boon of 1 to attack you in the same period. Other parties observing your apparent doltishness are less strongly affected, although if they share your opponent's nature and sympathies, they probably think you deeply annoying.

If your intended victim wins the first contest, there is no immediate penalty in game terms. However, he, and any observers, will mark you down as either a fool or someone impersonating a fool, and will probably mock you in private conversations thereafter.

Pure-Hearted

Piteous Plea

Situation: You are helpless, and a human enemy is about to kill or violate you. This stratagem is exceedingly unlikely to work against half-men or intelligent creatures.

Description: With widened eyes, you look deep into your enemy's eyes or approximate equivalents and, with honest, simple pleading, awaken the tiny spark of mercy and decency that lies hidden deep within his heart.

Benefit: By spending 5 from your Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) pool, you convince your enemy to stay his hand. He won't necessarily free you, but he won't kill, maim or violate you until at least the next morning, or for 18 hours, whichever is greater. In the meantime, you've bought yourself enough time to attempt escape, or for your companions to stage a rescue.

Wary

Volcanic Umbrage

Situation: You have just discovered that you have been cheated or conned. The individual responsible for doing this still stands within throttling range.

Description: You fly into a titanic, blustering rage, waving your arms and spitting out barely coherent threats. Even if you are a mild-looking person not known for violence, your aspect temporarily becomes so alarming that even a hardened warrior will flee from you in instinctive fear.

Benefit: Make an uncontested Rebuff (Wary) roll. If you succeed the person who cheated you must run away from you at best possible speed, in a direction calculated to achieve maximum distance from your raging, lunatic self. After one minute, he can stop his flight by making a successful Wherewithal or Persuasion (Intimidating) roll. If he wants to make that a Wallop instead of a roll, he compares his Wherewithal or Persuasion (Intimidating) rating to your Rebuff (Wary) rating.

Attack

Caution

The Epitome of Prudence

Situation: Engaged in combat, you see that departure would be wiser than continuing with this match.

Description: Your opponent having become accustomed to your cautious style of fighting, he is unprepared when a moment's retreat transforms to outright flight.

Benefit: You must have been in combat using this style of Attack for at least two rounds. You now follow the usual rules for Running Away (see the rulebook, Chapter 4), but instead of pitting your Defense against your opponent's Attack, you spend 2 from your Attack pool, and succeed automatically in escaping. However, your opponent may still pursue in the usual way.

Ferocity

Cruel Blow

Situation: In combat.

Description: As a shark senses blood in water, you instinctively take note of the physical weaknesses an opponent unconsciously covers during a fight. If you sense that he protects his knee, you make an extra effort to smash it, guessing that it was probably injured in an old fight. If he blinks when he gets close to you, he is probably especially afraid of being hit in or around the eyes, so that is where you strike him.

Benefit: At the outset of an Attack exchange, you may spend 3 Attack (Ferocity) points. If you hit your opponent in that exchange, he suffers a penalty of 1 on his Health roll.

Finesse

Exhibition of Disconcerting Accuracy

Situation: You are in a tavern, encampment, or similar place frequented by ruffians who might accost an unsuspecting traveller. You have equipped yourself with a throwing knife, and see a likely target, such as the cap or sleeve of a tough-talking bully positioned conveniently near a wooden wall or support post.

Description: With a nonchalant jerk of your arm, you throw the knife, hitting your target with hair-splitting accuracy. You may not use this tweak to hit someone in combat; it is for display only.

Benefit: No patron witnessing your exhibition will attack you unless you provoke him in some way. (Take care that your Exhibition of Disconcerting Accuracy doesn't itself justify an attack.) If your provocation is non-violent, an antagonist may only attack you by scoring an Illustrious Success on an uncontested Wherewithal or Persuasion (Intimidating) roll.

Target Shooting

Situation: You have experience in the sport of target shooting and a working knowledge of the standard rules. While using a missile weapon in a shooting contest, you seek to apply technical skill and fine judgment.

Description: Pausing to take careful aim at the target, you place your shot with absolute precision.

Benefit: If you can adopt a comfortable shooting position, you may spend one round taking careful aim at a specific target, then claim a boon of 1 for all subsequent shots at that target, so long as it remains to your front.

"So then, what of us?" demanded Cugel. "We wish pack-animals, docile and frugal of habit, rather than freaks and curiosities, no matter how edifying."

"Certain of my ample stock are capable of this function," said the keeper with dignity. "These command the highest prices. On the other hand, for a single terce you may own a long-necked big-bellied creature of astounding voracity."

You also receive a boon of 1 to Gambling when betting on your own shooting contests.

Strength

Bypassing the Locksmith

Situation: You wish to open a locked door.

Description: With a prodigious kick or mighty heave of your shoulders, you smash the door open.

Benefit: By paying Attack (Strength) points, you may automatically declare a door open, smashing it off its hinges without having to make a bothersome roll. Contrary to popular belief, the difficulty of bashing a door open is not based on the strength of the door itself, but of the frame surrounding it. A typical wood frame costs you 2 from your Strength pool. A frame reinforced with metal at its deadbolt costs 4; a door barred with a plank costs 8; and a metal-barred door costs 12.

Defense

Dodge

Transfer of Ill Fortune

Situation: While with one or more companions, you are targeted by a ranged attack, whether a genuine danger, a magical spell or sandestin effect, or a mere indignity such as a chamber-pot dropped from a high window. The attack targets you specifically, not your group in general.

Description: You quickly maneuver so that the incoming attack instead targets your nearest companion.

Benefit: The GM determines which companion is nearest you. Spend 3 Defense (Dodge) points to make this companion the new target. The target may attempt to evade the attack, but suffers a levy of 1 against whatever roll the GM would have allowed you.

You may use the Transfer of Ill Fortune only to evade ranged attacks normally avoidable through a Defense (Dodge) roll.

Misdirection

The Balance of Fortune and Mischance

Situation: You and one or more companions are in combat. Your companions are nearby but need not be actively participating.

Description: Employing your customary evasions, you cunningly ensure that blows intended for you are diverted to strike others.

Benefit: When you Defend with Illustrious Success, spend 2 from your Defense pool. Select a character (other than your attacker) immediately adjacent to you or close to the relevant line of fire. Engage the intended new victim in a contest matching your Defense against his. If you succeed, he is struck in your place; however, Dismal Failure imposes a levy of 2 on your next Defense attempt during this fight.

This trick is often so cunning as to look accidental. However, the victim (if not rendered insensible by the blow), and any observers with grounds for suspicion, may attempt an unopposed Perception check. On a Prosaic Success they take note of your luck, and may



assume the worst if it is repeated. On an Illustrious Success they guess the truth, with certainty sufficient to accuse you later if not actually justify immediate action.

Sure-Footedness

The Art of the Salubrious Landing

Situation: You are falling from a height sufficient to cause you harm. (See the rules for falling in Chapter 4 of *The Dying Earth* rulebook.)

Description: Like a cat, you instinctively position yourself for the best landing possible under the circumstances.

Benefit: When falling more than 20 feet, spend up to 8 Defense (Sure-Footedness) points. Subtract this number from the 10-point Athletics levy you usually suffer when making rolls to reduce injury.

Balancing

Situation: You are trying to maintain your balance while walking a plank or tightrope, facing a mighty wind, slipping and sliding on a greased surface, and so on.

Description: Your sense of balance is superb.

Benefit: When struggling to remain on your feet, you may spend an additional Athletics or Defense (Sure-Footedness) point on any single roll or reroll; if you suffer an Exasperating Failure, you may instead treat it as a Hair's-Breadth Success.

Note: Balancing is also available as a tweak to Athletics.

Vexation

Interrogatory Banter

Situation: You are in combat with a foe whose knowledge of other matters you wish to probe.

Description: While employing your customary vexatious manner of Defense, you judge your words especially carefully, provoking your opponent into careless speeches in reply.

Benefit: On each round when your Defense is successful, you may also engage your opponent in a contest of your Persuade against his Rebuff, with a limit of one on both sides. (Combats are, by and large, brisk affairs.) If you win, you provoke him into verbal response to your taunts. This reply will be truthful, or at least revealing; a vexed combatant is rarely capable of deception. It is up to you to determine what taunts will provoke the most useful responses, and up to the GM (or the opposing player, if this fight is between PCs) to decide on a likely reply. If at any time your Persuade results in a Dismal Failure, you can make no further attempts in this fight.

Appraisal

"There is a Tale to Go With That"

Situation: An item you are evaluating has historical significance as well as monetary value.



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Heroism Is Not Its Own Reward

This simple technique is merely a method of introduction for some; it's a be-all and end-all for less ambitious schemers.

Determine that a wealthy but physically unprepossessing person will be alone at a predictable time. This may require nothing more than observation of the mark's habits (some wealthy folk like to wander abroad at night in disguise, the better to visit illicit dens) or careful contrivance.

In a dim and desolate spot, have a disguised confederate assault the wealthy individual. When things look worst for the mark, step in and effect a rescue, sending the supposed robber into quick retreat.

In its most primitive form, this is enough for a schemer to earn a few coins; the wealthy mark, rescued from danger, may give him a reward. However, the more elaborate schemer can use this ploy to work his way into the mark's confidence, the better to set up more elaborate schemes later.

To fool shrewder marks, it is advisable to accomplish these tasks during and after the rescue:

- ☛ Announce your name in an unmistakable and unforgettable way, such as when berating the supposed robber, so that the wealthy mark will have no trouble finding you should he wish to.
- ☛ Demonstrate a skill, turn of phrase, or personal detail calculated—from researches you have already performed—to attract the mark's interest. If the mark is seeking a nephew abandoned at birth at the fork of the rivers Asc and Scamander, and you are of an appropriate age, say something like, "I was adopted by rough, cruel rivermen of Asc and Scamander, but it gave me no love of them, or fools like them—and I shall now tattoo my disdain on your flesh."
- ☛ If appropriate, garner the mark's sympathy. Giving yourself a trivial knife-wound before the fight begins, you strip the bandage free as the supposed assailant flees. Now, not only have you saved your mark, but you have been wounded in his defense; only the stoniest hearts will fail to be melted by your self-sacrifice.

"Here you see the pattern from which my great work is derived. It expresses the symbolic significance of NULLITY, to which TOTALITY must necessarily attach itself, by Kratinjae's Second Law of Cryptorrhoid Affinities, with which you are possibly familiar."

"Not in every aspect," said Cugel.

Description: Your training in Appraisal encompasses the background of its subject as well as plain monetary values. When you assess an object, you may be able to say something of its likely history.

Benefit: Whenever you succeed in Appraisal, you may ask the GM if the object in question has a well-known history or any non-monetary peculiarities related to its past. Such information is limited to a sentence or so of casual knowledge, not the detailed lore of historical scholarship, but it may nonetheless be useful. By spending 1 from your Appraisal pool, you may wrack your brains for another sentence or so on the subject; if nothing is likely to occur to you, the GM should say so and the point returns to you unspent. If you also have Pedantry skill, facts you recall using this tweak may serve as the starting point for more detailed researches and contemplations.

Athletics

Balancing

See under "Defense (Sure-Footedness)," above.

Climbing

Situation: You are travelling up or down a vertical surface, like a wall, tree-trunk, or cliff, or shinnying up a rope.

Description: You are a natural climber.

Benefit: When climbing, you may spend an additional Athletics point on any single roll or reroll; if you suffer an Exasperating Failure, you may instead treat it as a Hair's-Breadth Success.

Finely-Honed Physique

Situation: Your athletic accomplishments and self-evident training are well suited to impress an audience.

Description: Flaunting your musculature, you impress those whose admiration might be convenient to you.

Benefit: So long as you have correctly assessed the nature of your audience's tastes, you may spend points from your Athletics pool to bolster your use of Etiquette or Seduction. Normally, you must spend 2 from the former pool to substitute for 1 from one of the latter, but if, in the GM's judgment, you are seeking to impress or charm shallow individuals who are susceptible to mindless but rugged handsomeness, a simple one-for-one substitution is permitted.

Jumping

Situation: You are using your leg muscles to propel yourself either forwards or upwards.

Description: You jump like a grasshopper.

Benefit: When jumping, you may spend an additional Athletics point on any single roll or reroll; if you suffer an Exasperating Failure, you may instead treat it as a Hair's-Breadth Success.

A Rush to Resolution

Situation: You are about to enter melee combat, and you wish to exploit your trained physique to best effect.

Description: You rush, swing, leap, or somersault into action.

Benefit: Spend 2 to 4 points from your Athletics pool, and *on the first round of combat only*, apply a boon to your Attack, or a levy to your opponent's Defense, of the same value minus 1. (For example, spending 3 from your Athletics pool permits you to claim a boon or levy of 2.)

Swimming

Situation: You are in the water, and wish to avoid drowning, or simply want to travel from one place to another.

Description: You are a strong swimmer.

Benefit: When swimming, you may spend an additional Athletics point on any single roll or reroll; if you suffer an Exasperating Failure, you may instead treat it as a Hair's-Breadth Success.

Concealment

Scampering Hither and Yon

Situation: You wish to proceed unnoticed from your current location to another. There is plenty of cover between here and there, but it unfortunately lacks contiguity.

Description: Observing the watchers in order to pick your moment, you leap or scurry from point to point when their backs are turned.

Benefit: Engage the watchers in a contest of your Concealment against their Perception. The GM determines how many gaps occur in the cover between you and your goal; each gap imposes a levy of 1 to your roll. You may spend points from both your Concealment and Perception pools on this contest. If you succeed, you dash to your goal unobserved. If you fail, you are spotted in transit at a point of the GM's choice.



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Trade In Secrets

When persuading someone of your authentic powers as a soothsayer, or perhaps your hitherto undiscovered relationship with your mark, nothing conveys legitimacy like knowing things that ordinary persons should not know.

To find out these crucial secrets, you must typically spend funds to bribe persons who are (or have been) close to your mark. Seek persons your mark has driven from his household or personal retinue. No one is better for your plan than an embittered former nurse or valet, one who was an observant servant of your mark for decades and whom the mark has now cast adrift. It often takes little money or persuasion to open that person's treasure-house of memories.

Having discovered secrets about your mark, identify those that the mark believes are known only to one or two, and those he believes known only to him—or to the dead.

By careful and sparing use of the last variety, you can persuade the mark that ghosts truly speak in your ear or that secret knowledge is invested in you. Once the mark believes this, you begin providing him information from beyond the grave: advice on the way he rules his domain, expands his financial empire, conducts his politics, and so on. Charge high fees, else he will think you are a lower-class prophet; improve your income beyond that by investing in his decisions. When you have convinced him to do something inexplicable, bet, through intermediaries, that he will do this thing; when you have convinced him to establish a caravan route to a hitherto ignored city, buy land in that city and sell it to him, for a much greater sum, when he needs to build his caravanserai.

For smaller secrets—the sort that might be bribed out of his current valet or groom—you can earn smaller sums. If you learn, for instance, what the embroidery on his undergarments depicts, meet him on the street and then bet him that you can divine this knowledge with your arcane powers. (Note that you can earn token funds without even having these secrets. First bet one man that you can persuade another to show his undergarments on the street, then bet the second that you can divine the design on his undergarments. You will be wrong about the design, and so must pay; you will be right about the man's willingness to demonstrate, and so can collect.)

Craftsmanship

Extravagant Show

Situation: You wish to apply your craft skills to ensure a quick profit.

Description: You produce fine-looking pieces, perhaps at some expense to their ruggedness or quality of fit.

Benefit: You gain a boon of 1 on any test related to the appearance of your work, including (at the GM's discretion) determination of its selling price. However, unless you achieved an Illustrious Success related to its overall quality of manufacture, the thing proves mediocre over long use. Characters using Appraisal or Craftsmanship to assess the item will spot this with an Illustrious Success. (You may use Persuade to convince them that they are mistaken, or at least to convince onlookers that your critics are dolts and pettifoggers.) Avoid lingering in this neighborhood overlong, as word of the fallibility of your products may spread.

they are mistaken: "Ah, I see you have a discerning eye! Only the most perspicacious customer notices the minuscule crevice at the base of that fine drinking mug. It is perhaps gratuitous to point out, to one so shrewd, that the Morovantine monks who cast these mugs are required to insert a seeming imperfection, so as to avoid offending their deity. But as I am sure you know, the defect is cosmetic only, and the mug is solid as diamond."

Driving

Post-Leap Steering

Situation: You have just made an impressive flying leap onto an uncontrolled vehicle.

Description: After the death-defying leap, getting the vehicle back under control is a matter of little difficulty.

Benefit: Provided that the leap was challenging enough to require an Athletics roll, you achieve an automatic success on what would otherwise be the subsequent Driving roll to control the vehicle and stampeding beasts, if any. If you immediately afterward enter into a Persuasion contest against an individual who witnessed this feat of derring-do, you gain a boon of 1—unless his Rebuff style is Contrary, in which case you suffer a levy of 1 for displaying such moronic disregard for your own safety.

The Role of the Coachman

Situation: You have found gainful employment as a driver, pilot, or chauffeur to some wealthy individual.

Description: Operating your assigned vehicle with quiet precision and fine judgment, you distinguish yourself in this job. Any minor lapses of savoir-faire are forgiven because it is such a pleasure to be driven by you.

Benefit: You may use Driving in place of Etiquette or Stewardship, and possibly other abilities, to prove your

[The foreman shook] his head with a frown of dissatisfaction. "Much too slow! The craftsmen toil as if in a drugged torpor, or else display a mulish stupidity. Only yesterday Dadio Fessadil, he of three ells with the green kerchief yonder, used a nineteen-gauge freezing bar to groove the bead of a small inverted quatrefoil."

Cugel shook his head in surprise, as if never had he heard of so egregious a blunder.

value as a servant. Characters with this tweak may well hold down these remunerative (if slightly servile) jobs for years. While this in itself may not appeal to scapegrace PC adventurers, the chance of acquiring employment in the houses of the wealthy may open up all manner of additional prospects for profit.

Engineering

Arcane Arches and Architraves

Situation: You are a magician and wish to design your own manse.

Description: You apply obscure knowledge and a detailed understanding of building practices in the drawing of your plans.

Benefit: Whereas most magician's manses may cost no more than three times their Wealth rating (see the main rulebook, Chapter 5), yours may cost up to your Engineering rating plus three times your Wealth rating. For example, if you have an Engineering rating of 6 and a Wealth rating of 7, your manse may cost up to $6 + (3 \times 7) = 27$ points.

Etiquette

Determination of Plausible Boundaries

Situation: You are plunged into an unprecedented social situation (a frequent mishap in the Dying Earth).

Description: Displaying a fine grasp, not merely of etiquette, but of its underlying principles, you improvise new rules appropriate to the circumstances, and propound them with clarity and grace.

Benefit: You may spend 2 from your Etiquette pool to create a plausible and coherent-seeming rule to cover some unprecedented situation, 4 to cover a whole category of minor problems, and so on up to 10 to define some whole new system of good manners. If these rules are carefully defined to benefit you or some other individual or group, double the cost. Thinking these ideas through requires five minutes per point expended.

Of course, if the new rules clearly go against the best interests of any persons present, you will probably have to use your Persuade ability to have them accepted.

You are a magician: Or, more appropriately for this supplement's purposes, you wish to impersonate one.

Yertigala the Sea-Captain finds that the passengers on her ship this week include both devotees of the Nine Principles of Transcendent Sense, a religion whose members are required to eat only food prepared by their own hands, and to dine with much invocation of specific prayer; and the Marchioness of Haux Harrass and her retinue, who insist on the highest possible standards of cuisine and table manners. Unfortunately, the ship's galley and dining facilities are not spacious, and within a day, squabbles over arrangements verge on violence. Spending 4 from her etiquette pool, Yertigala spends 20 minutes developing a set of viable protocols that permit the sharing of galley and tables with no more than the odd cold glance. Enjoining the two groups to this new code requires considerable effort, but at least the voyage ends without inconvenient homicides.

"Please Forgive My Companion, Who Was Dropped At Birth"

Situation: A member of your group has just committed a terrible social faux pas. He may have offended the attendees at an elevated social function, insulted a potential patron, or annoyed a hot-tempered person who is even now reaching for his rapier.

Description: You mollify the insulted party or parties by smoothly pointing out that your companion is either a halfwit or foreigner, and is therefore not fully responsible for errors of etiquette. Given their source (you explain), the offended persons need not consider his words a meaningful insult; they can safely ignore him without damage to their reputations or honor.

Benefit: Spend 1 from your Etiquette pool to eliminate the adverse consequences of another character's Etiquette failure. No roll is required, but you should roleplay your explanation for maximum entertainment.

Simple Good Manners

Situation: You are among folk whom you have no wish to annoy.

Description: You have learned a simple lesson that seems to have escaped too many others; that the first rule of politeness is to avoid irritating self-indulgence.

Benefit: So long as you are being watched and judged, you may spend points from your Etiquette pool

in place of those for any Resistance rating, provided that you have a rating of at least 1 in that Resistance.

Gambling

Comprehension of First Principles

Situation: You are playing a game of chance you have never encountered or even heard of until now.

Description: Your expertise in Gambling extends beyond rote mastery of the odds and quirks associated with particular games. Your mastery of the principles behind all interactions of random factors lets you quickly understand unfamiliar games. Your beginner's luck may surprise other players expecting to make an easy mark of you.

Benefit: You gain a boon of 1 when playing a game for the first time. The effect lasts the entire evening, no matter how many exchanges you happen to make in a single night's play.

Instinctive Estimation

Situation: You are caught in some complex and challenging situation with a number of difficult options.

Description: Your trained gambler's instincts let you size up the problem and decide where your best chances lie.

Benefit: Make an uncontested Gambling roll, whether or not actual betting is taking place. (You probably visualize yourself placing bets on the subject.) The better your success, if any, the more precise your idea of relative risks. This does not provide a magical solution to a problem; indeed, sometimes the result is a depressing realization that all available options carry high risks. However, it does help you think clearly, and kindly GMs may take the opportunity to drop hints as to the best course of action.

Gorbinesse, pursued by a trio of ghouls, is presently hiding nervously in a small copse as the creatures draw closer. Should he trust to his chosen hiding place, slip to the far side of the copse and flee at speed, or leap out, sword in hand, and endeavor to slay the ghouls one at a time before they can work together to bring him down? He asks himself how he would bet if observing this situation from afar. The player achieves a Prosaic Success on his Gambling roll, and the GM observes that ghouls are noted for their speed, perceptions, and aggressive fighting abilities—but the shrewd judge of odds would recall the magic boots that Gorbinesse recently acquired. Frankly, intelligent gamblers would favor the ghouls in all cases, but one who enjoyed risks might venture a few terces on those boots upsetting the bookmakers.

Seeing matters in this way, Gorbinesse begins moving carefully towards the far side of the copse....

Health

Endurance of Chill

Situation: You are wandering in the wilderness, and having a little difficulty with wet weather or cool temperatures.

Description: Good health and a hardened metabolism let you endure such experiences with, if not perfect equilibrium, then at least some tolerance.

Benefit: You may spend points from your Health pool in place of those from your Living Rough pool, but only to counter problems caused by wet weather or cold conditions.

Germ Resistance

Situation: You are suffering from a non-magical illness.

Description: Although you are as apt to catch a contagious disease as anyone else, your body is quick to cleanse itself of germs, viruses, and parasites.

Benefit: Halve all disease intervals (see Chapter 4 of the *Dying Earth* rulebook). You may spend an additional 2 Health points to reduce the interval by a final total of 75%.

Iron Constitution

Situation: You have been poisoned by an ordinary, non-magical toxin.

Description: Although you might feel slightly woozy or nauseated when poisoned, your extraordinary liver processes contaminants that would fell an ordinary man.

Benefit: Treat any Dismal Failures you suffer while rolling to resist applicable poisons as Quotidian Failures.

A disadvantage of having an Iron Constitution is that you must ingest double quantities of alcohol or other intoxicants in order to suffer the desired, pleasing effect. The diligent GM should ensure that you pay twice as much as your companions whenever you while away an evening at a tavern, and make other appropriate adjustments reflecting this heightened resistance.

Imposture

Appearance of Vulnerability

Situation: Another character is observing you, and may be tempted to do you harm.

Description: By feigning inferiority in the matter in hand, you persuade your foe that you are easy prey, thus inspiring her to waste valuable moments in a casual, failing first move.

Benefit: When someone is using Perception to determine if you are susceptible to a Wallop, you may counter them with your Imposture ability. If you win the contest, they think that you are thus vulnerable. If you are not, they will waste an action and those precious 5 points from their pool trying and failing.

(Note to GMs: If this tweak is used successfully against a PC, it is up to the player to decide honestly if the perception of vulnerability would lead to an attack, even though he knows he was just involved in a die-

You speak with neither logic nor comprehension!
How can you be so absolute!

rolling contest. If you have the slightest doubt on the subject, assume that he would have. After all, he must have declared an interest in the potential victim's level of vulnerability, which strongly implies malicious intent. Of course, if the tweak is used by a PC against a GMC, you must play absolutely fair yourself—but we know no GMs who would not.)

Imitation of Useful Verbal Mannerisms

Situation: You find that your accustomed manner of debate or dispute is sadly ineffective in current circumstances.

Description: Adopting a different manner of debate, drawn from your observations of others, you press your point in what you hope will be a more effective way.

Benefit: Spend 4 from your Imposture pool. You may use any one style of Persuasion or Rebuff for the duration of one contest. For example, a normally Glib individual may effectively become Intimidating, or a normally Penetrating thinker may temporarily appear usefully Lawyerly. Your effective rating in this alternate style will be 2 less than your rating in your normal primary style, or equal to your rating in Imposture, whichever is less.

This usefully negates the advantage of an opponent whose own style trumps your own, trumps his style, or gains the secondary benefits of another style. In the last case, remember that the effects last only as long as the current contest.

Living Rough

Adroit Foraging

Situation: You are in the wilderness, and have run out of provisions.

Description: By combing the forest for nuts, berries, honey, edible plants, tasty birds, and delicious rodents, you not only feed your party, but learn valuable facts about the surrounding area, which you can use to your later benefit as long as you remain in this particular patch of wildlands.

Benefit: You gain a boon of 1 whenever foraging for food.

"A Gutter is but a Wilderness, Without the Inconvenience of Travel"

Situation: You find yourself on the streets of a city or town, without evident means of survival.

Description: Applying the basic principles of living rough, combined with hard experience of the lowest levels of town life, you locate or improvise food and shelter.

Benefit: You may use your Living Rough ability in urban situations much as in the wastelands. Note that this relates purely to questions of finding food, drink, and shelter, and perhaps to dealings with small scavenging

creatures in back alleys and waste-heaps; Living Rough grants no advantage to social dealings in towns.

Pedantry

Oblivious Inquiry

Situation: An intelligent, non-human creature is lunging toward or pouncing on you with obvious hostile intent. Neither you nor anyone with you has yet attacked the creature.

Description: Too consumed by scholarly curiosity to show the terror appropriate to the situation, you puzzle the beast by remaining unperturbed by its advance. When he gets close to you, you pepper it with questions of interest to the natural historian. You ask it to identify its species (if it is not obvious) and then to answer queries regarding its range, diet, hunting methods, life expectancy, and mating habits.

Benefit: If you beat the creature in a contest of your Pedantry versus its Wherewithal, spend any number of Pedantry points. The creature is so baffled by your failure to flee, scream, or defend yourself that it screeches to a halt in confusion. It may or may not provide useful responses to your questions. The effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the extra points you spent at the end of the contest.



Oblivious Inquiry delays, but never stops, the creature's attack. During the delay, your companions can prepare weapons or enchanted items, seize a superior position, flee to the relative safety of a building or vehicle, or otherwise gain an advantage for themselves when the inevitable moment of conflict begins.

"A Scholar, Sir, is Intrinsically a Member of the Superior Classes"

Situation: You are dealing socially with people who, by class or inclination, greatly respect learning.

Description: Flaunting your erudition, you impress those whose admiration might be convenient to you.

Benefit: So long as you have correctly assessed the nature of your audience's tastes, you may spend points from your Pedantry pool for Etiquette rolls. Normally, you must spend 2 from your Pedantry pool to substitute for 1 from Etiquette. But if, in the GM's judgment, you are seeking to impress or charm bookish individuals who are susceptible to uncultured but impressive displays of book-learning, a simple one-for-one substitution is permitted. In rare circumstances, you may also use Pedantry to bolster Seduction attempts, at the GM's discretion.

A Textbook Case of This Malady

Situation: A friend or acquaintance is struck down with a serious disease (which does not slay too quickly).

Description: Academic knowledge encompasses medicine as well as other sciences. Using your learning and working from first principles, you diagnose the problem and prescribe treatment.

Benefit: If you also have the Physician ability, and if this problem is indeed described in archaic textbooks, you may use points from your Pedantry pool for Physician rolls. If the disease is a new, undocumented variant of something known, you may still apply this tweak, but once you have used up your Physician pool, all Physician rolls suffer a penalty of 1.

If you do not have Physician ability, but your textbook knowledge is applicable, you may use Pedantry in place of Physician, but with a penalty of 1 from the start, and the GM may interpret any failures as Dismal.

In general, you can recognize easily enough whether or not this tweak is applicable to a given case. If the GM determines whimsically that you have been misled by deceptive symptoms, she may permit you some kind of roll to recognize your error before the patient dies. Or she may not.



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Peddle Dreams

Do you find yourself at a seaport with a need to travel to a distant destination but no money for passage? There are bound to be some present with a similar but not identical problem: They have money for passage but cannot find accommodations.

Loiter near the stand or window selling passages. When customers are turned away and make loud, angry announcements of their names and ranks, note that information. Later in the day, visit them in the guise of an officer of the ship company and sell them the passages they request. Offer them additional staterooms or berths at a reduced rate as apology for your earlier unhelpfulness.

If all passages are sold from a place where you cannot loiter, simply set up your own stand in the marketplace near the docks.

In neither case should you sell passages for more than a single day; by the second day, word may have spread.

Authenticity is the key to trust. Listen to the way ship representatives speak, and how they sell their passages. If they issue documents, find one from an earlier sailing and use it as the basis for documents you issue. Find a uniform of the ship company. (You may have to follow a representative who is about your size and weight and remove it from him when he is in no position to object.)

A more elaborate, profitable, and potentially disastrous form of this game is to sell an entire ship's worth of passages. Become the representative of a ship in a city where that ship currently has no representatives. To eliminate busybodies who might object that the ship will not be tracing the route you describe, you might create a ship wholly from your imagination.

You will need operating capital, a beautiful uniform (you are a representative of a prestigious ship line, after all), an office, a staff, documents of passage, bribes for the local authorities, etc. In each case you can probably get what you want by running a game on those who normally provide such things, but the more confidence games you concurrently run, the more likely one will be exposed and ruin your plan.

Having acquired all your props, set up an office, publicize the impending arrival of the ship in question, and begin selling passages to its next exciting port of call. Have confederates speak eloquently of their previous trips, and show artistic portraits of the ship's beautiful, extravagant cabins.

Naturally, be well away from town on the date the ship is supposed to arrive.

"What have we here? A person suffering affliction?"
 "Yes; Cugel has committed a series of abominable crimes,
 of which he wishes to purge himself."

"A total misstatement!" cried Cugel. "No proof has been adduced,
 and in any event I was inveigled against my better judgment."

"What You Call Obsession, I Call a Sense of True Values"

Situation: While pursuing some academic matter, you encounter arguments or danger that would cause most folk some qualms.

Description: Focusing on your primary concerns, you simply refuse to be distracted.

Benefit: So long as you can indeed focus on some academic issue, you may add a boon of 1 to your resistance to attempts to distract or divert you. (This usually means Rebuff or Wherewithal rolls.) This costs nothing from your Pedantry pool in itself, but the GM may periodically require Pedantry rolls to focus on the subject of your academic obsession, and to identify what makes it so important to you not to be persuaded from your work. If she decides at any time that you have simply exhausted the subject for now, you lose this benefit.

Perception

Cautious Despite Distraction

Situation: You are engaging in routine necessities or pleasures of life, but you have grounds to suspect danger.

Description: In one particular distracting circumstance, you can keep one ear cocked and one eye open, thanks to bitter experience, a suspicious nature, or simple good sense.

Benefit: Despite the *Dying Earth* rulebook's Perception description (Chapter 4), this tweak lets you specify one class of situation—such as eating, getting drunk, making love, or making rolls for one specified skill—in which you can continue to reroll Perception checks, albeit with a levy of 1. You must define the situation when you acquire this tweak. You may purchase multiple Cautious Despite Distraction tweaks if your character is exceedingly suspicious.

Detect Rustling In Underbrush

Situation: You are on watch for a party camping in the wilderness.

Description: You are acutely aware of the tiniest noise or movement. Furthermore, you can tell the normal chirping of birds and swishing of wind-blown weeds from the approach of stealthy predators or forest-dwelling ambushers.

Benefit: Spend 3 from your Perception pool for a bonus of 1 on all Perception rolls for the next two hours.

Physician

A Cure for the Sickness Named Normality

Situation: You, or some ally, must achieve some feat of strength or speed.

Description: Preparing a finely-judged tonic, you enhance the imbiber's abilities.

Benefit: This tweak requires a substantial array of medical supplies (at least a specially prepared bag of expensive and perishable pharmaceuticals, and ideally a full work-room) and at least ten minutes of work in the company of the intended recipient, whose metabolism must be measured with care. For each point you spend from your Physician pool, your tonic grants the recipient a boon of 1 for one round to one combat ability or to Athletics.

Having decided how much benefit you wish to grant and having spent those points, assign the points for the desired effect, and a number more to be used in a Physician ability roll. The GM rolls secretly on your behalf, rerolling failures for as long as the extra points assigned last. On an Illustrious Success, the duration of the boon is tripled; on a Dismal Failure, the recipient suffers a levy of 2 instead of a boon, and may at the GM's option undergo other painful or long-lasting problems; otherwise, the tonic has its intended effect.

Treat Burns

Situation: You are called upon to heal a patient suffering from burns.

Description: You are expert in the formulation of salves and poultices which speed up the healing process in burn victims.

Benefit: On a successful result, increase by 1 the boon your patient would normally receive from you, as given in the Physician ability description (*Dying Earth* rulebook Chapter 4).

Treat Disease

As per "Treat Burns," above, but for patients suffering from diseases.

Treat Poison

As per "Treat Burns," above, but for patients suffering from poisoning.

Physician ability roll: The GM may optionally grant a "placebo bonus" of 1 to this roll if the Physician character successfully Persuades the target character of his tonic's unquestionable efficacy.



Confidence Games: A Gallery of Stratagems (4 of 12)

Trusted Names

You find yourself in a city where a distant manufacturer of goods—pots, spirits, textiles—is known. This manufacturer has no concerns in the city. With a little capital, you have a sign painted with the name of that trusted concern and rent a warehouse.

Announce yourself as the local representative, opening a branch of the business here. It will, sagely enough, start out small and grow to meet the needs of the community. In the meantime, you will make ends meet by renting out unneeded portions of the warehouse for reasonable fees.

As trusting dupes deliver their property or their excess stock into your hands for safekeeping, remove it from its boxes, bags, or other containers (which you leave in the public portions of your warehouses), evaluate its worth, and then secretly convey it elsewhere for quick resale.

This plan has the drawback that inevitably it will collapse. First, one or more of your clients will need to retrieve their property. Do not panic, but prepare to close down your operation. To stall those annoyingly inquisitive clients, consult your records and discover that, by mistake, their goods have been transferred to the main warehouse in the firm's city of origin. You will put in a request for the goods to be transferred back; it will take a few days, but—and this is important—because of your mistake, they will receive six months of warehousing for free, not just for the items that were mistakenly transferred, but for a volume of space three times what they took up.

Now, those clients will probably be mollified; even more gratifyingly, they will bring in more goods you can ship off to be sold. However, the hourglass sands are running out. More clients will need their goods, and they will be less and less satisfied with your proposed settlements. In addition, inevitably, a genuine representative of the business will discover your mysterious warehouse with their name, and will take steps to bring you to justice.

Thus, have escape routes and a sharp sense of timing.

Quick Fingers

Alternate Digits

Situation: Your fingers cannot reach some important task, or they are being too closely observed to perform controversial work.

Description: Fortunately, practice and preparation let you use your toes instead.

Benefit: If you have shed any shoes, stockings, or socks, you may use your toes as other folk use their fingers, to grip and manipulate. You suffer a levy of 2 to any task performed in this way, whether using Quick Fingers or any other skill, and of course the GM may question how you keep your balance. Nonetheless, a little ingenuity should let you accomplish surprising things.

Riding

Empathy with the Brutes

Situation: You are an experienced animal-handler, with special knowledge of one particular species of subhuman intellect.

Description: You have built a particular and advantageous empathic association with this species over the years.

Benefit: Choose one species of riding beast when you buy this tweak. (If you want to work well with more than

one, purchase this tweak multiple times.) You receive a boon of 1 when using Riding ability with that species.

However, empathy works two ways. You may never be casually cruel to, or inflict gratuitous pain on, a beast of that species. (Medical treatment is not gratuitous but genuinely necessary, and a slap may be justified to punish malevolence.) Furthermore, if you observe another being maltreating a member of the species, you must intervene to save or avenge the victim, much as you would for a close friend or human loved one. Characters who act in a limited or paltry fashion clearly lack empathy, and instantly lose this tweak and all points they spent on it.

“There’s Turnips In It For You”

Situation: You are leaving your mount (which is at least as intelligent as a horse) while you do something else.

Description: If your mount cannot understand speech, you have nonetheless trained it sufficiently to give it one set of simple instructions, which it will carry out in your absence. If it is intelligent, you have presented yourself to it in a manner it finds pleasing; it is motivated to carry out simple instructions.

Benefit: Spend 1 from your Riding pool and name a simple instruction you wish the beast to carry out. Instructions should be no more complex than these:

- ✿ “Neigh if that man who kicked you walks past.”
- ✿ “Keep staring at the man in the hat.”
- ✿ “When no one is looking, eat the flowers in that box.”
- ✿ “Try to lead the other beasts over the bridge.”

Cugel was given one of the beasts to lead, a twelve-legged creature twenty feet in length, with a small foolishly grinning child's head and tawny fur covering all. Cugel found the task irking, for the beast blew a reeking breath upon his neck, and several times pressed so close as to tread on his heels.

The creature performs its assigned task to the best of its ability, assuming the instructions do not go beyond its nature.

No animal will risk its life for you when you're not around. A herbivore will not eat a plate of meat; beer-loving mermelants find it impossible to remain abstemious if offered ale. Riding beasts cannot make many distinctions important to humans; they can't tell an attractive person from an ugly one, or an ordinary townsman from an Arch-Magician.

Scuttlebutt

"That is Surely Worth the Price of a Little Refreshment"

Situation: You find yourself in a familiar town and in need of a light meal or refreshment.

Description: Your Scuttlebutt skill tells you not only who is doing what in these parts, but who else would like to know some of these facts.

Benefit: By spending 2 from your Scuttlebutt pool, you identify some person who will pay for minor gossip in food and drink, stroll there within a few minutes, and receive that payment. Depending on the quality of local cuisine, you may obtain simple bread and potted meats, a tankard of tolerable ale, or a minor favor without significant risk.

If you prefer fine foods and elegant wines, or wish a slightly greater favor, you may make an uncontested Etiquette roll. On an Illustrious Success, you receive not only fine refreshment, but also the temporary friendship of a person of similar quality; on any failure, you are cast out as a vulgar gossip-monger with nothing interesting to tell (and, worse, no entertaining way of telling it); while on a Dismal Failure, word of your tale-telling reaches and annoys someone of power and influence.

Seamanship

Weather Sense

Situation: You wish to know what the weather may be like in the near future.

Description: You apply the practical climatic knowledge gained by seafarers, whose lives, after all, frequently depend on correct assessment.

Benefit: You assign a number of points from your Seamanship pool to predicting the weather, in the same manner that characters may assign points to issues of

Perception (see the description in Chapter 4 of the *Dying Earth* rulebook). The GM may assign a boon if conditions are stable and straightforward, or a levy if they are tricky and unpredictable. Depending on the result of her hidden roll, the GM may give you responses either subtly inaccurate or moderately helpful; lie to you freely if the result is Dismal Failure; or, on an Illustrious Success, provide accurate predictions for a day or so ahead.

Seduction

Annihilation of Confidence

Situation: You wish to diminish the emotional stability and reliability of another.

Description: You have mastered the art, not only of seduction, but of assessing another's emotional weaknesses and then striking hard at them. In brief, you can be emotionally brutal when it serves.

Benefit: Initiate a contest of your Seduction versus your intended victim's Rebuff (Wary, Penetrating, or Pure-Hearted) or Resistance to Rakishness. (If the victim has none of these abilities, she may roll with a penalty of 1; see "Caught Without the Right Ability" in Chapter 3 of the rulebook.) If you succeed, you have led the other party on, then cast her hopes down with a mocking jest. She becomes morose or aggrieved for the next full day (a full week if resistance ended in Dismal Failure), suffering a levy of 1 to use of Persuade or Wherewithal in that period. Also in that time, she cannot herself attempt Seduction on anyone except you, and that at a levy of 2, though if she succeeds her depression will be instantly lifted.

If you attempt to use this tweak, but your efforts end in Dismal Failure for you or Illustrious Success for the other party, the results are the reverse of that intended, as you find yourself drawn to this person who has spurned your most alluring advances; it is then you who suffers 24 hours of gloomy self-contempt.

"Kiss Me Today, for Tomorrow I Die in Some Dismal Mire"

Situation: You wish to propose erotic dalliance to an individual whose tastes run, if anything, excessively to the romantic.

Description: You present yourself as a flamboyant adventurer, here today, battling monstrosities or striding across trackless wastes tomorrow. Thus, you imply, any hesitation in sharing your couch would be an opportunity wasted, probably forever, and would furthermore

constitute a cruel reduction in the joys of a brief and chancy life.

Benefit: Provided that you have assessed the other person's attitudes correctly, you gain a boon of 2 to Seduction. Furthermore, if you are successful, your partner of the night will wave you off in the morning with no more than a flattering tear and a yearning sigh, and none of the usual tiresome complaints at being used and abandoned.

However, if you do not depart in a style befitting a wandering adventurer, but persist in remaining in a place of safety enjoying the soft pleasures of civilization, your partner rapidly grows cynical. Exactly how quickly this happens depends on the GM's judgment of the situation and what might be considered reasonable behaviour for an adventurer, but you are unlikely to enjoy the pleasures of the bed for more than two or three nights, after which you may well be publicly derided by your recent innamorata as one whose acts and capacities do not match published claims.

Should you leave, but return to the same area after a decent interval (at least a month), you will not necessarily suffer disdain, and the same seductive trick may even work again. But you will be expected to produce full,

detailed, and bloodcurdling accounts of your escapades in the intervening period.

"A Precursor of Our Future Bliss is No Crime"

Situation: You are attempting to gain the affections of one whose narrow morality frowns upon the piquant joys of a relationship that does not endure long enough to grow stale.

Description: You weave your enticements among hints and actual offers of a longer-term partnership. This suggests that your intentions are, taken in total, honorable on the other person's terms. Any private activities now would merely anticipate the legal formalities of marriage, and hence would be no great sin.

Benefit: Provided that you have assessed the other person's attitudes correctly, you gain a boon of 2 to Seduction. Furthermore, once successful, you need make no further effort to retain the interest of the other person for at least a week.

However, the victim of your trickery will not forget that you have made a promise, whether explicit or strongly implicit, and will become increasingly importunate as time goes by, demanding timetables and perhaps making arrangements for ceremonies. After one week, as you continue to disregard such matters, the partner may make an uncontested Rebuff roll (but will always accept the initial result without spending points to reroll). If successful, the partner forcefully demands that you make good on your promises; on an Illustrious Success, she will recognize your true nature, grow violently cynical, and quite likely seek revenge. Likewise, should you depart the neighbourhood, she will respond as the victim of vile abuse, and unless inclined to suicide, will spread fervent complaints about you and perhaps seek physical retribution, personally or (depending on her character) through hired thugs or burly blood relations.

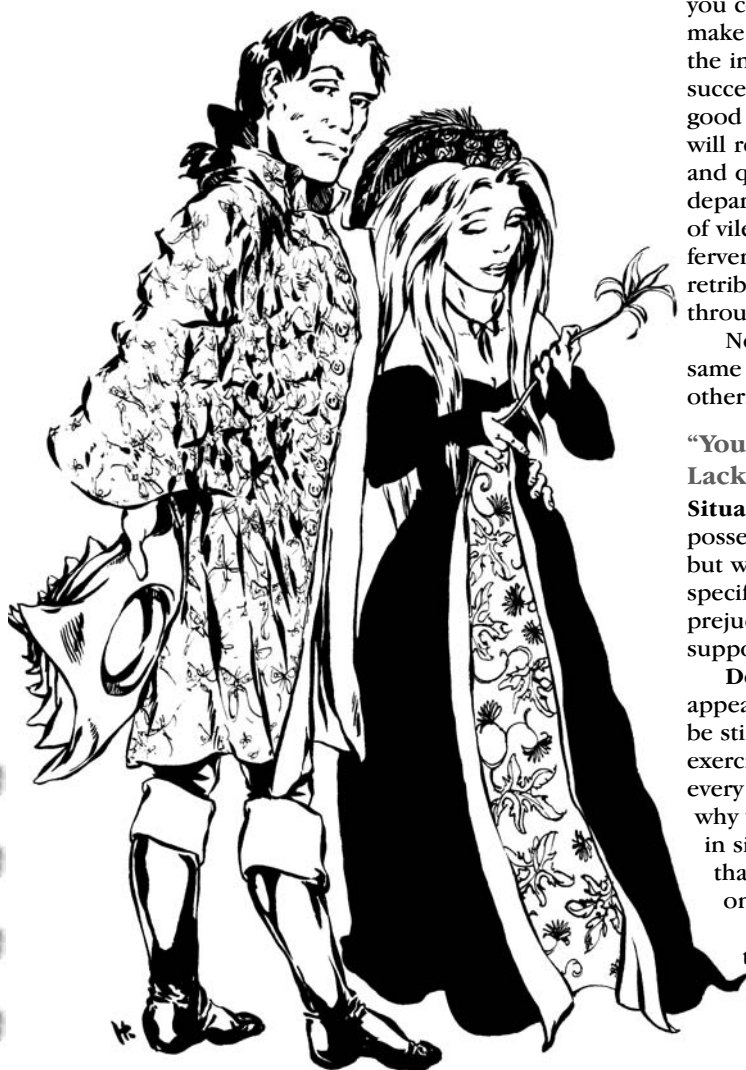
Not surprisingly, this trick rarely works twice on the same person, or on two people acquainted with each other.

"Your Morality, Though Admirable, Lacks Breadth of Understanding"

Situation: You seek the favors of a person who clearly possesses the natural, healthy desires of a normal mortal, but who may resist your charms through either some specific and pettifogging moral code, or an irrational prejudice against one of your appearance, social class, or supposed nature.

Description: You formulate your seduction less as an appeal to the senses or emotions (although they too may be stirred with subtle references and hints) than as an exercise in moral and philosophical logic. You ask, with every sign of calm reasonableness, for an explanation of why your potential partner should not engage with you in simple, honest pleasures, and then proceed to show that her reasons are either plainly misguided, or based on an incomplete understanding of the situation.

Benefit: Provided that the other person's resistance to your seduction is indeed based on a coherent moral code or rationalized prejudice, you gain a boon of 1 to Seduction. Furthermore, you



Cugel, you cultivate your senses as if they were hot-house plants. Why not, once and for all, break the tyranny of your internal organs? I will give you a tract to study.

may spend Persuasion points on the Seduction attempt; if your own primary style of Persuasion trumps or is trumped by the other person's primary style of Rebuff, apply levies as for Persuasion attempts.

However, if the target's resistance has some other basis, such as distracting practical concerns or a flat dislike of your face, you will suffer automatic failure with no reroll permitted, and likely be dismissed and even abused as a tiresome and licentious quibbler.

Wealth

Remember, the Wealth ability is not available to Cugel-level characters. But by including Wealth tweaks, we enlarge our audience of potential customers yet further!

Instant Companionship

Situation: You are at large in a city or other large settlement, occupied by people who both know that you are wealthy and (like most citizens of the Dying Earth) have an appetite for luxurious living at another person's expense.

Description: Wherever you travel in public, bright-eyed sycophants follow, hoping they'll be in the right place when you offer a round of drinks or invite everyone in sight to a sumptuous banquet. You can at a moment's notice surround yourself with obsequious revelers.

The circumstances in which this might be useful are various. You might wish to impress someone just as shallow as your fair-weather friends. It might behoove you to establish an alibi for yourself while a doppelganger wearing your visage commits crimes against nature. You could be trailed by an assassin or spectral killer, and wish to present it with many potential targets.

Benefit: Spend any number of Wealth points while in a place frequented by layabouts and hangers-on. Within 15 minutes, a number of people equal to the points spent will be at your side, enjoying food, drink and song financed by your good self. (The cost of the banquet is included in your expenditure of Wealth points.) If you try to persuade them of anything during the evening's debauchery, each suffers a penalty of 1 to all Rebuff rolls. The people you attract, though they may travel in rarefied circles, are unlikely to offer useful abilities or reliable favors. They are not the rich, influential, and noteworthy, but their wastrel brothers, idiot cousins, and indolent retainers.

Widespread Investments

Situation: You are in a city or reasonably large town with which you are familiar or where you might have business contacts, and you have a fair chance of identifying

yourself. You find yourself temporarily separated from your usual adequate funds.

Description: Calling on business acquaintances, or the staff of some mercantile endeavor in which you have invested or a finance-house in which you place deposits, you raise monies adequate for the moment.

Benefit: Spend 1 from your Wealth pool to raise the cost of a plain change of clothes or an adequate meal, with no roll required. This involves calling on business associates and invoking your good name; if there are likely to be no such folk in this conurbation (in the GM's judgment), if your good name in business has been badly besmirched, or if your appearance has somehow suffered radical change (say, due to malicious magic), your effort fails.

Characters with higher Wealth probably have contacts over a wider area; if in doubt, assume their connections extend up to 100 miles from their manse for each point in Wealth above 5.

Wherewithal

Dour Determination

Situation: You face a far superior opponent whom you must at least delay, even if defeating her is beyond the bounds of plausible optimism.

Description: Gritting your teeth, you force your opponent to pay for every small step on the road to victory.

Benefit: By spending 3 from your Wherewithal pool, you can prevent an opponent from achieving a Wallop on you. Instead of spending the full 5 for the unsuccessful Wallop, she loses 1 from the relevant pool, and the contest proceeds normally. This is perhaps most applicable in hand-to-hand combats, but a refusal to surrender quickly can be just as effective when refusing to be persuaded, when resisting seduction, or when squabbling over points of academic theory.

The GM rules when this tweak can be used—that is, whether a given contest permits an exercise of stubborn recalcitrance.

Inspiring Others

Situation: You are a member of a group in a difficult situation.

Description: Your own fearlessness helps your companions take heart.

Benefit: When every member of a group is required to make a Wherewithal roll, you may roll first. If you achieve a Prosaic or Illustrious success, you may spend points from your own Wherewithal pool to let them reroll, if necessary.

“There Are Limits to Even *My* Suspension Of Disbelief”

Situation: You face a supernatural horror and wish to avoid the dread deriving therefrom.

Description: If you encounter a creature or circumstance whose otherworldly origin would normally elicit terror, you may avoid those effects by steadfastly denying their reality and hence their efficacy.

Benefit: By spending 2 from your Wherewithal pool, you can provide a plausibly rational explanation for an occasion of unearthly activity that would otherwise fill you with unalloyed dread, so as to avoid effects of the aforesaid dread on your person.

Willpower Over Mere Fact (Or Indeed Sense)

Situation: You suffer physical harm, but determine to continue about your business.

Description: You wilfully overcome the protests of your body.

Benefit: You may spend Wherewithal points when making Health rolls, at a rate of 3 for 1—that is, spending 3 from your Wherewithal pool counts as spending 1 from your Health pool. However, you may not start to do this until your Health pool is reduced to 1 or zero.

Magic

Curious

Routine Safeguards On Research

Situation: You are about to try out a new item, cast an obscure spell, or otherwise seek to learn more about magic by tugging its strings and tapping its keys.

Description: You have done this sort of thing before, and though you are prepared to take risks to extend your magical knowledge, you have learned also to take elementary metaphysical precautions.

Benefit: When taking a magical action that carries a risk of dangerous accident, you may first spend a round conjuring a weft of forces around yourself and the object of your interest. This barrier may possibly absorb some of an ensuing back-blast. If something does go dangerously wrong, you may make a Magic roll; on an Illustrious Success, you take no physical damage from the accident, and on any other success, you gain a boon of 1 on rolls to resist damage. You may also spend Magic points instead of Health points to avoid injury, if applicable.

If the accident is instantaneous, your Magic roll has a limit of one. If the misfortune takes effect in more than a second, the roll has no limit.



Confidence Games: A Gallery of Stratagems (5 of 12)

Well-Deserved Rank (For A Price)

This technique requires a bit of time, operating capital, and a setting where a wealthy middle class is kept from rising into the aristocracy only by ancient, unforgiving traditions of the ruling class.

Establish yourself as a wealthy and influential representative of a distant court—the methods for doing so have already been laid out before you. Choose a land of origin that the locals know to be great in tradition but, recently, increasingly poor of wealth. You need confederates as your servants and at least one expert in forging documents.

In your protracted dealings with wealthy but untitled citizens, drop hints that you seek the worthy—men and women whose birth rank was low but whose bravery, generosity, or other imaginary traits are unmatched. As the curiosity of your new friends grows, allow them to piece together the reason for your visit to this land: You represent many noble families of your homeland, families who must sell their royal titles so that they can maintain their estates. Naturally, this is a matter of some secrecy, and just as important, you must find only candidates worthy of these titles.

You will find many applicants; show them compelling documentary evidence of your legitimacy. First, of course, the greater titles command the greater prizes—how sad that no one hereabouts can afford the more magnificent ranks. Second, each title will be accompanied by a certificate of authenticity and a nobleman's costume in the traditional style of your homeland. Third, and most important, the ruler of your homeland will be paying a secret visit to this land, and on that occasion will personally bestow all the new titles. Have copies of the invitations—with the invitees' names left blank for now—on hand to show the now-quivering merchants of this community.

You can further elaborate by only informing persons you intend to destroy. Allow only them to buy into your plan, and, even though it will cost you more, arrange a beautiful formal ball for the ceremony. Then inform the local ruler that a secret conspiracy of traitors has assembled, seeking to overthrow the legitimate crown. The proof? Why, they all now wait in their hall of conspiracy, dressed in uniforms announcing their true allegiance!

A related technique: In lands where the royals do actually bestow titles on members of the middle class, an act of bribery can procure the list of those currently being considered. Find those named who are likely to be unaware of such consideration but desirous of title, and represent yourself as a friend who has the ear of the committee who makes the choices. For a lavish fee, you can all but guarantee the bestowal of a title this year...

Finding an appropriate spell, [Cugel] held the fire-ball close the better to encompass the activating syllables. There were four lines of words, thirty-one syllables in all. Cugel forced them into his brain, where they lay like stones.

The GM may determine that some forms of damage are simply too exotic, insidious, or overwhelming to be deflected by this minor enchantment. For example, if the accident releases an invisible and scentless poison gas that takes several hours to kill you, you cannot deflect it. A magical detonation that utterly devastates several square miles will most assuredly leave you a cinder, albeit a slightly larger cinder than if the protection had been absent.

Daring

Never Knowingly Unarmed

Situation: Combat is imminent. In these particular circumstances you would prefer a sword or axe over magic. However, you lack such a weapon.

Description: Invoking a familiar twist in reality, you rapidly resolve your problem.

Benefit: You may conjure one familiar, non-magical, personal weapon from your manse's armory to your hand. This requires a successful Magic roll; provided that no more than one reroll was required for this, the blade or staff appears so quickly that you may use it in combat on the same round. Opponents are probably surprised; the GM determines this according to the vagaries of the situation, but should disallow surprise only with good reason. Surprised opponents suffer a levy of 1 to their Defense rolls on the first round of the ensuing fight.

It should be self-evident that Dabblers, who possess no manse, cannot use this tweak.

Devious

Disdain for the Servant Classes

Situation: You are negotiating with a supernatural being in your service.

Description: Your devious dealings with such entities have left you with a fair grasp of their tricks, and possibly reduced your regard for them as intelligent entities. Whatever persuasions they try, you detect with ease and spurn with contempt.

Benefit: You gain a boon of 1 to your Rebuff when any sandestin or similar supernatural being which is now or has ever been formally bound to your service attempts to use Persuasion on you.

Forceful

Magic Derives from Personal Force

Situation: You wish to work some important magic, valuing its success above even your own well-being—to at least some extent.

Description: You draw on your own life-force to empower the working.

Benefit: You may spend Health points in place of Magic points. However, if the magical task in question ends in Dismal Failure, you lose 2 more Health points, in addition to those already spent.

Insightful

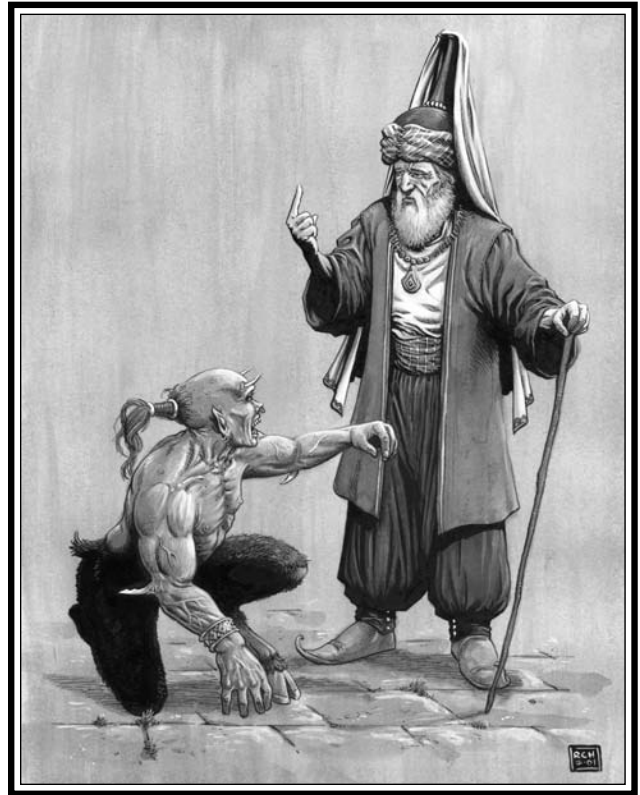
Knowledge of Immaterial Society

Situation: While conversing with a sandestin or other supernatural being which is not actually bound to anyone's service, you wish to persuade it of something.

Description: Your careful study of such beings' likely motivations and obligations makes you a more effective negotiator.

Benefit: You gain a boon of 1 to Persuasion when dealing with sandestins or similar beings which are not presently bound to any magician, Arch-Magician, or archveult. (Bound spirits have other pressing concerns, which you do not necessarily know how to manipulate.)

This tweak cannot be used to increase indenture points.



"Cease your preposterous maundering, creature! I know as well as you do that the Great Name attends closely to these situations!"



Confidence Games: A Gallery of Stratagems (6 of 12)

Manufactured Dread

This technique borders on legitimate business. Persons who cannot endure the thought of dirtying their fingers with honest money should avert their eyes.

In every land, in every city, there are crafted goods that are inexpensive to produce, hard-wearing, and in regular demand by the populace. The type varies from place to place—here pots, there fishing-nets, mud-bricks in some other locale.

Often there is little local competition for their sale. One maker suffices for the community, and demonstrates such hard-working honesty that competing with him, driving prices down, would ruin both competitors. This maker has achieved a monopoly in his craft... and then has frittered away this advantage by not taking excessive profits.

To replace this person with a manufacturer who displays a more sophisticated sense of the market, convince customers that this maker's goods are contaminated, at the very least, by bad luck—perhaps by supernatural ill-will.

Techniques are many and varied. For example, begin by having a confederate spend time as a street prophet, staging a few dramatic revelations that astound the crowds, and mixing with them prophecies that point to a dangerous failing in the quality of the competitor's goods.

Then, as rumors grow louder and questions begin, supply answers. A few trifling but well-timed instances of sabotage demonstrate the deadly inferiority of the competitors' goods. Artful use of Arnhoul't's Sequestrous Digitalia or Brassnose's Twelve-Fold Bounty can cause craft items to fail at critical moments.

The next stage is to impress the community with the superior reliability of your own goods. This, too, requires a staged demonstration. Is it a competitor's leather armor you seek to displace? Demonstrate the qualities of your own armor by some daring means, such as the interception of an arrow meant for the local ruler. (He need never know that the arrowhead was already in place in your cuirass, with the arrow that sped toward him a broken-headed wooden shaft.) Is it chains you manufacture and sell? (The audience does not need to realize that the ghoul that shattered your competitor's chains, but was restrained by yours, was carefully coached in the effort to put into its escape attempt.)

With public sentiment running your way, you must not relax. Instead, rob your competitor of the ammunition of truth. If you can, buy his business concern and add it to your own, announcing that you will be updating its manufacturing methods to match your own—and impress the populace by your generosity toward a competitor. If you cannot buy out your opponent, keep him reeling with further sabotage until you can take your profits and run.

If you do end up as the sole proprietor of goods in the community, do note that eventually they will fail you. Some oaf will misuse your pot or chain or loaf of bread and manage to kill himself, and his widow will blame you. At that point launch a furious battery of counter-accusations, then flee when darkness permits.

Studious

References to Hand

Situation: You wish to conduct research while away from home.

Description: A simple enchantment facilitates your studies.

Benefit: Define up to six books, stored in your manse, that have no other magic laid upon them or worked into their fabric. At any time, a successful Magic roll brings any one of them to your hand. You may change the list of six whenever you are in your manse; this process takes half an hour.

This enchantment summons only books. The GM will, of course, sternly forbid any flimsy ploy to summon useful non-literary items, such as terces, supposedly attached to the chosen book's cover or spine. If a chosen

book has been spirited away from the manse in your absence, the summoning fails.

It should be self-evident that Dabblers, who possess no manses (and who all too often do not even possess six whole books of any description) cannot use this tweak.

Speed of Study

Situation: You are searching a voluminous non-magical book for some important but well-hidden detail.

Description: As both a scholar and a student of magic, you are used to this situation, and have developed magical techniques to simplify the process.

Benefit: By spending 1 from your Magic pool, you may determine in which half of the book some specific information lies. This halves search times. Further expenditure of Magic points repeatedly halves the number of pages to search, reducing search times accordingly.



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How Pleasant To Share!

All persons are convinced they deserve bountiful wealth. In fact, most advance their exclusive rights to that fortune.

Convince a number of people that an opportunity will soon arise for an informed party to achieve wealth through minor investment. Be sure that the parties receiving this news will not communicate with one another. Though greed often keeps people from sharing news, sometimes desire for prestige causes them to hint at grandeur to come, which can cause your plans to go awry.

For example, you pretend to be a miner and strike gold. You accept investments so as to dig out the gold, and all involved will grow rich. The novice confidence artist seeks a hole in the ground and some gold nuggets, and considers that all is ready. No! In itself, this plan is fatally flawed. You may persuade investors to offer money, but there is no reason for them not to discuss matters with one another and compare terms. In fact, personages of influence may find legal means to transfer title of your supposed gold-bearing land to themselves and cut you entirely out of the deal.

So, find a reason that will convince your investors not to talk to one another. Perhaps whatever your plan entails is illegal, or the reward cannot easily be divided among several persons—it can go to two at most (you and your “sole investor”).

A revised example: You claim to have found a lost treasure that legally belongs to some important person. You cannot dig it up legitimately because that person will merely claim it. And the loot includes a coronet and a herald's staff that grant their bearers the titles of Prophesied Ruler and Wisdom-Drenched Advisor to the local kingdom. You, of course, have no ambitions to rule; you will be content with the role of Advisor, while your most generous patron will assume authority.

That's better—it gives your patron reason for silence. But he might capture and torture you for the location of the treasure—after all, your sole virtue now is that you know where it is. So you elaborate. For each of your patrons, you draw up a family tree establishing yourself as a distant cousin of the clan. You also work up a supposedly ancient document that presents the legend of the treasure. The legend asserts that only members of the patron's clan can possess it, and predicts that only one of them—who bears a birthmark matching the one you bear, or who arrived in town under circumstances that match your arrival—can actually free the treasure from the monsters and cunning devices that guard it. Place the treasure in a location patrons cannot easily or legitimately enter: an imaginary hidden chamber beneath the King's throne, or a cavern that only you can enter through use of an ancient incantation. (Note that you may need to set up an effective demonstration.)

There is still the matter of proving you've found the genuine treasure. Rob a patron's strongroom, steal some item of antiquity, duplicate it, insert the duplicate into the treasury, then present your patron with his own treasure, denouncing the one in his strongroom as a fake. (Note that this is harder than breaking into your patron's strongroom just once, so if you're better off merely absconding with the contents of the strongroom, do so.)

Now your patrons each have reason to advance you money and to keep you alive until you acquire the treasure. To gain even more money, convince the victims that their personal fortunes can be vastly increased through some preposterous process: “Every silver coin you shovel into the cave known as the Mermelant's Mouth will, an hour later, emerge as a coin of gold from the nearby cave known as the Mermelant's Sphinxter.” Again, you must credibly demonstrate this process so they will participate. Then find ways for different patrons to participate in your process and for you to spirit away their treasure, all without allowing them to encounter one another.

After you receive the investments, launch the money-making plan into a state of ruin. The simplest way is to flee with the investments. Better, have an unimpeachable disaster destroy the plan in such a way that no one will blame you, nor will anyone ever discuss the matter again. For instance, you might have each patron learn, from his own researches (and the artful employment of your confederates), that the Mermelant's Mouth-Sphinxter technique is a trap of the gods. The gods will cause all the silver to be swallowed, and the one who initiates the ritual (and any confederate he chooses to name) will be afflicted with an ailment in which his parts drop off one by one until his death is not only certain but devoutly wished. The patrons will, inevitably, look in on you to determine your status, at which time you demonstrate how your nose and fingers have suddenly chosen not to be associated with the rest of your body. “I die,” you tell them, “and so that my spirit be cleansed, I must admit in the Great Temple all details of my plan.” At this point, your patrons will individually bribe you to keep their name out of your prayers, and they will flee, grateful that you generously guarded them from godly vengeance.

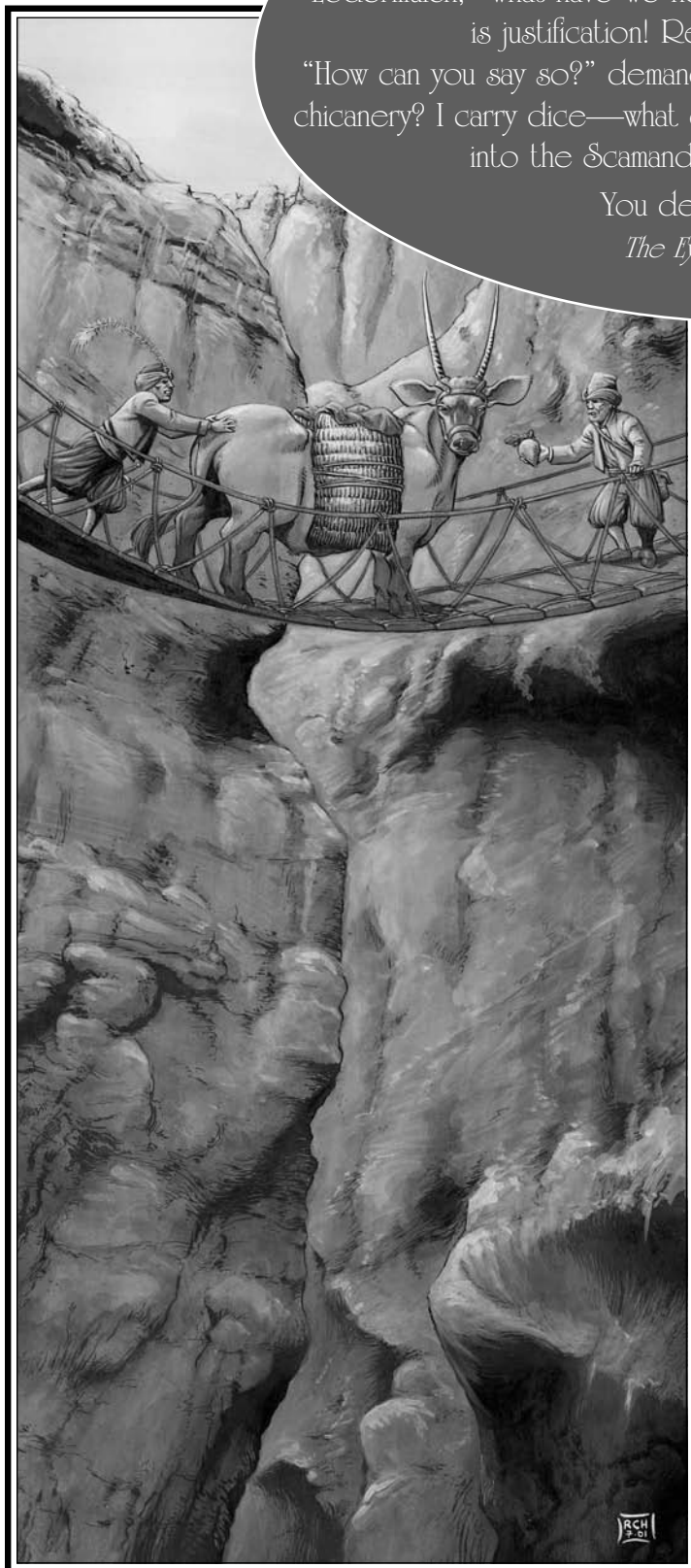
That is only one way to appeal to a wealthy person's desire; the method may be applied a thousand different ways in a thousand different locales.

Lodermulch presently flung down the dice and seizing Cugel's elbow shook it, to dislodge several additional dice from the cuff of his jacket. "Well then!" bawled Lodermulch, "what have we here? I thought to detect knavery, and here is justification! Return my money on the instant!"

"How can you say so?" demanded Cugel. "Where have you demonstrated chicanery? I carry dice—what of that? Am I required to throw my property into the Scamander, before engaging in a game?"

You demean my reputation!"

The Eyes of the Overworld,
Chapter 5



Chapter 5:

The Fine Art of Negotiation

Essays on the consummation of manifold desires

The Rudiments of Debate

Replicating the argumentative tactics of tales of the Dying Earth is not beyond the wit of a competent player or GM. Anyone, with a little practice, may argue with characteristic Vancian panache. Some hints:

- Encourage verbose formality. Simply saying "You should do such-and-such a thing or I will kill you" is too crass; it also closes off other options should the situation change in some way, and tends to alienate the sympathies of onlookers. Much better to observe, "Under the circumstances, I will be forced to exert myself against those who neglect this simple matter."
- Indeed, denizens of the Dying Earth rarely make direct reference to their current positions of advantage or disadvantage. In part this is simply a mannerism, but consider: The disadvantaged party, by admitting to weakness, suggests desperation, which the other person may well seek to exploit. As for the person at the advantage, bragging appears merely crude; it is far more amusing to smile slightly and watch one's opponent writhe.

Soldinck smiled a cold brief smile. "Unfortunately, a single post is open at the moment, that of supercargo aboard the *Galante*, for which I already have a qualified applicant, namely Bunderwal."

- ✿ Interrupting another speaker in mid-sentence is unusual (unless they are droning dolts without basic courtesy); debates are built as a structure of interpolated statements, not as shouting contests. (In game terms, interrupting and refusing to let a foe finish may incur a levy of 1 or more points from the character's Persuade pool.)
- ✿ Styles of Persuasion and Rebuff should determine behavior in debate. If this proves difficult at first, play characters with Fortright or Intimidating styles of Persuasion, and Obtuse, Wary, or Contrary styles of Rebuff.
- ✿ The person in the stronger position can open and control the debate. In conditions of equality, the bounds of the dispute are determined by the characters' success in Persuasion and Rebuff. Changing the terms of a dispute requires cleverness and verbal dexterity, else the speaker is left seeming inept, his interests too blatant. (Again, the GM may penalize the offender a point or two from his Persuade pool.)
- ✿ Dying Earth inhabitants routinely refer to many incidents and cultures in history. GMs shouldn't automatically contradict a player's historical claim, simply because it hasn't been previously entered into evidence. If a character proclaims, "This was clearly established by scholars in the court of the Autocrat Ferunine the Expeditious, in the 18th Aeon," he may be bluffing, but maybe not; for game purposes, it matters little. Even if the GM would prefer that the claim be untrue, the player should be allowed to make the claim in debate. And should the player try to act on his own claim—well, who knows? There may well have been shifts in the weave of actuality since the 18th Aeon, or the character may be operating under a distressingly inept or incomplete interpretation.
- ✿ It is perfectly acceptable for both sides in a debate to talk complete and blatant nonsense.

A Debating Example

Mostly debates should be built on accurate (if not always complete) statements of fact, and organized as interpretations of those statements, heavily influenced by personal prejudice. Of course, "facts" in *The Dying Earth*, as in any roleplaying campaign, can be created and augmented as circumstances dictate. One mark of an entertaining player is spirited improvisation of backstory, ancient history, and legal precedents—and, if necessary, plausible distortion of other players' similar improvisations.

The best way to approach the debate is to look to your character's styles of Persuasion and Rebuff.

Two adventurers, Achermor and Bresferring, confront a deep crevasse, spanned by a steep but possibly traversable rock wall, beyond which lies a mound of valuables.

Achermor opens in simple style, as befits his Fortright mode of Persuasion. "Ah, Bresferring, now is your chance to earn personal glory and my undying gratitude—and all you have to do is bear this rope across there and tie it off to yonder rock. That done, we can commence ferrying those enticing treasures back here and thence to town for sale."

Bresferring's player decides to Rebuff this point, as the GM has emphasized the instability of that rock face. "I observe a certain inequality in your proposal," he says in his Wary style, "in that all the danger involved falls to myself, and yet I suspect that half the ensuing profit will fall to you. Indeed, this inequality may not have entirely escaped your attention."

Achermor tries again. "Perhaps there is some small risk, notwithstanding the fact that I will be holding a rope attached to your person," he declares. "But what is such a risk to an athlete such as yourself, when compared to the profits in prospect? And have we not faced countless dangers together in the past...?"

Now, this is a relatively new game with few prior events for the player to invoke. But it was established during character creation that both these two had been serving as deckhands on a freighter out of Kaiin, recently foundered. So Achermor's player improvises: "Did I not cut down a sea-demon looking to leap upon your back, that night off the Cape of Pomegranates?"

Bresferring's player could simply deny the truth of the story that Achermor has just used—but he accepts that Achermor, being Fortright, is unlikely to resort to overt untruth. On the other hand, a Wary character questions motives: "Yes," he says, "I recall that incident. However, the demon would have turned on you next, and for that matter, I believe that I slew three of the creatures myself that night. None of which, however, is germane to the issue in hand: to wit, why I should take vast risk for an uncertain reward—a reward halved by your own demands..."

And so on. The trick is to build tenable arguments using the characters' styles of Persuasion or Rebuff.

Negotiation in Practice

Manifestly unfair yet stubbornly consistent is the simple truth that, though the world should recognize your worthiness and consequently provide you with all life's pleasures without effort on your part, it typically will not. For you to obtain those pleasures, you must receive more than you expend. To do that, you must negotiate.

Negotiating is the fine art of issuing forth words as though they were the finest paints and using them to coat, color, and brighten the truth so that it will be more pleasing to the eye of your counterpart in trade. Success is when that counterpart assigns far greater worth to your words than your goods, and, in turn, gives you in exchange items that are far more worthy as goods than as words. Failure is when the paintbrush of your tongue goes astray, spattering you and your surroundings with random hues that do nothing more than anger your counterpart and diminish your worth.

If we may switch metaphors, any contest of negotiation requires tools. Consider each tool to be a short-hafted hammer and the head of the individual you negotiate with to be a stubborn nail. Choose the hammer that seems best suited to the task, give the nail a few quick blows, and if it does not budge, bring out another hammer.

Lack concern. The most important hammer, to be used sparingly throughout any negotiation, is to appear to lack concern. If your counterpart can detect your desperation, even your perspiration, he gains an advantage on you. At all times, remain unconcerned—and do not forget, if you must have your allies with you, to keep the company only of allies who will follow your lead. (When one of your fellows blurts out, "That's the one we need, I'll pay any price," it's best for you to open your purse there and then so that you may bleed for a shorter amount of time.)



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Charity Begins At Home

In communities where wealth abounds, poverty abounds as well—plutocracies are built on the bent necks of the unfortunate. The wealthy sometimes feel guilty about their grandeur. By creating a charitable institution, you can show them how to alleviate their guilt and improve the lot of the poverty-stricken.

You need operating capital to rent a building and populate it with the very needy and enough staff to appear to be taking care of them. Then, for plutocrats daring enough to spend a few minutes among the poor, arrange tours through your facility—complete with tour guide and refreshments suited to the aristocracy. (Be sure to prevent your guests from handing out coins to the residents of your business—"They will only waste it on distilled spirits," you inform them.) Then, at the end of your tour or at some later time, you extend the opportunity for your visitors to make contributions in proportion to the generosity of their hearts.

"But wait," you say. "If their hearts were afflicted with generosity, they would not still be rich. Instead, I would already have their money." It's true. They will give you sums that, while useful, are sadly unsuited to bringing you into their economic fold.

So you embroider, by appealing to a common characteristic of the rich: their desire to remain so. Demonstrate to them how your charity can actually improve their wealth.

For example, you might hire a stoop-backed old farmer and his hardy young grandson, who bear the same facial features. Dress them identically. Have a box contraption made and conceal the young man in it. With your wealthy visitors at hand, demonstrate your invention, the Illustrious Rejuvenation Volume. Lead the old man into one end, activate flashy and confidence-inspiring apparatus on top, and lead the young man out the other end. "It is only in its testing stages," you tell your patron. "Each use requires the expenditure of many terces' worth of materials, and, so far, it can be of use only to the common soil—that is, the low-born. Sadly, its only purpose at this time is to take gnarled old serfs and transform them again into eager, hard-working serfs."

How your mark's eyes will shine. He knows that, once you have all the techniques smoothed into obedience, he will be able to enter the box and emerge as a vital young man... and for now, he still profits, because his work force will be revitalized. Thus you can collect contributions from him, both for the needy and for your own researches, until his ungrateful suspicions send you fleeing from his lands.

Note, too, that this technique can introduce a large number of healthy young fighters into a nobleman's land, should you ever wish the noble family to be overthrown.

Cugel gave Bunderwal a careful inspection. "He seems to be a modest, decent, and unassuming person, but definitely not a sound choice for supercargo."

"And why do you say that?"

"If you will notice," said Cugel, "Bunderwal shows the drooping nostrils which indicate an infallible tendency toward sea-sickness."

Flatter. Only the most gullible of persons will become more amenable to your terms simply because your silken words polish his ego. Still, discovering that someone is a gullible fool is an experience that will warm your heart, so it is a good idea to attempt flattery early in any negotiation.

Imbibe. Even negotiators who are immune to flattery can sometimes be persuaded to drink with you—particularly when it is your purse bringing in the beverages. If a night's worth of hard drinking constitutes only a fraction of the amount you will be exchanging (even under the best of terms), it is most appropriate for you to treat your counterpart to an evening of drink. For your part, arrange to be served dark liquids that merely resemble spirits, and starting when your counterpart begins to show signs of the liquor's effects, begin a slow, protracted negotiation.

Distract. If you know what appeals to your counterpart to the point of distraction—in particular, healthy young beauties of the gender of your counterpart's choice—arrange to have one in your company while negotiations take place. This works very well in combination with the Imbibe tactic.

Disparage meticulously. It requires a keen eye to examine every characteristic of the item, artwork, animal, or service you are negotiating to buy, and a keen mind to catalogue every imperfection in it—imaginary as well as real. Have a list on hand (uppermost in your memory, not written on a scrap) of all those imperfections, so that each time your counterpart raises a virtue (and the asking price), you can offer a contrary opinion (and a lower price).

Misdirect. When your counterpart is in the midst of a slow day of sales, it may serve your purposes to pick out an object of the same approximate value as the one you truly want and begin negotiations for it. Mark as the highest amount you will pay some figure that is so ridiculously beneath the true worth of the item that, were the seller to agree, you could resell it immediately for a profit. Under most circumstances, negotiations for that item will eventually come to an unhappy halt. At that point, you can eye the object that you truly want and, as if tired and disinterested, begin negotiations for it. Your counterpart may give up in disgust, refusing to dicker further, assuming that you can never be pleased, or he may negotiate and accept a lower price than he would have before, just so that he might have something to show for his exchanges with you.

Corner and renegotiate. When you are paying for a service, particularly one that will take some time to complete, consider negotiating for more service than you

truly need. Then, when you have received what you originally wanted, arrange for your counterpart to be unable to deliver the rest. By this means you find yourself in a position of strength when it comes time to renegotiate the fees. For instance, if you need a place in a caravan to conduct you to distant Yar, arrange for it to take you instead to even more distant Kalalictur. (Be sure to pay no more than half the negotiated price, the remainder to be paid upon your arrival.) Once you have arrived at Yar and time presses for the caravan to depart, a trace of the right materials in the cook's pot will cause minor illness to abound... and major illness to descend upon you. You then negotiate from the position of one who has been deprived of half his services and has been poisoned nearly to death; many a caravan owner would return a great portion of what he has been paid merely to quiet the shrieks of the dying man whose accusations could spoil future business opportunities here.

Persist. A champion fighter does not fall to the dirt after sustaining a few blows, and neither does a champion negotiator. Should you find yourself against a counterpart whose skills match your own, pace your fight. Step in for a few exchanges, and then step back to catch your breath. Perhaps you will see or hear some clue that will give you an additional tool to bring into the fray.

The Principle of Artistic Redundancy

As an experienced warrior knows not to rely solely on his favorite weapon—for it may break or fly from his hand—you, as a negotiator, must (to switch metaphors again) keep several weapons at hand. If you contest with a skilled adversary, you might find your first rapier-like stratagem flung away by his brilliant contentiousness. When that happens, you must, in turn, have a new technique as your hideaway dagger and yet another as your clenched fist... lest you end up spitted on the blade of onerous compensation.

Thus, in each negotiation, have at least three weapons at hand. In place of a sword is your long ploy, a plan requiring at least some advance preparation. In place of a dagger, you carry the short ploy, one that requires little or no preparation. In place of a fist is your fallback ploy, which is ready with the speed of thought and which cannot be detected as a weapon until it is too late.

A few sample situations follow, together with their accompanying armaments.

Persuading Those Who Provide Service and Who Love You Not

The most persistently tedious of negotiating partners are those to whose lives you are but a temporary event. To them, their goods and services are the constant joys (or constant aches that are, in their familiarity, more endurable than novelty), while you are a blurry face retained in memory for but a few moments.

Because of this failing on their part to recognize your importance, they perceive themselves to be negotiating from a position of strength.

A Long Ploy: Make Him Love You

Your tendency to evaporate from a counterpart's life causes him to regard you without the affection that is your due. This poor soul, though he aches to take you into his affections, is afraid to do any such thing, because he knows that you will soon vanish from his life, taking with you the brightness and joy you represent.

To find the common ground that will cause someone who was a stranger a moment ago to embrace you as a lifelong friend requires a little listening. Situate yourself so that you may overhear this stranger's words as he works or rests. Hear his voice. Hear his troubles. Make them your own.

Is he from far Kishpa-due, stolen away as a child from what he calls "that glorious center of civilization" (doubtless a weatherbeaten hamlet with a single cow and not one intact set of dice)? If you can simulate any knowledge of the place, then so were you—and if you have heard enough of his words to describe his kin as your own, you have gained not only a friend but a brother. Does he have a daughter whose amorous nature causes him to tear forth his beard, tuft by graying tuft? Why, your daughter (whether or not she exists in the flesh) is exactly the same, and you taught her to respect your words and wisdom with an act of generosity that set all the townsfolk to talking. Miraculously, that act of generosity could easily be duplicated by your newfound friend.

To compound your sudden worth in your counterpart's heart, let him know that you will be moving to this land, this city, this neighborhood, so that you will frequent his threshold... and so that he will abandon any plan to cheat you based on the notion that you might never return.

These means sometimes cause a negotiating adversary to reduce his fees to a range you consider reasonable.

A (Fairly) Short Ploy: Appeal to His Greed

The adversary is too thick to love you; perhaps his heart is scarred or his brain heavily encased. Yet he still loves money. Turn that desire into a collar about his neck.

Keep on your person a money-pouch of broken pottery and base metal that clinks in a manner evocative of gold and jewelry. Adopt the manner of one whose wealth is boundless. (This is no deception, for the wealth of your company is indeed without measure—literally.) Show generosity at every opportunity. Have confederates reinforce the impression of wealth. Impersonating nobles from distant lands, they visit you and leave with your lavish gifts. Beggars prostrate themselves before you, and

you elevate them with boundless generosity. Old friends sigh because momentary troubles keep them from laying out small fortunes for bride-prices or the rental of an army, and you, without thought or concern, hand over staggering sums to set their lives aright.

Meanwhile, purchase your negotiating adversary's services, trinkets, meals, and fine goods—all on account.

Inevitably, your trading partner begins hinting that he would appreciate payment. As those hints become more frequent, pointed, and loud, poison your money in his mind so he won't accept it until circumstances change. For instance, point out someone whom your counterpart does not know, and suddenly remember where you have last seen that person: He is a tax collector, and it is obvious he has an eye on your counterpart. Should money change hands now, that collector will surely swoop.

When the times comes to settle accounts, instill in your trading partner an uproarious intoxication (see the "Imbibe" technique above). Employ a confederate to sit beside him while you stand before him. The confederate slices open the partner's money pouch and covertly transfers its terces to you. You palm the coins, appear to produce them from your pouch, and offer them as payment. This payment will fall far short, but your counterpart accepts the partial payment and drops the coins in his pouch—where they dribble into your confederate's hands.

Repeat the cycle until the bill is paid, and then still further: Hand over coins at least twice more as a gratuity for excellent service. Be sure to have your counterpart acknowledge—preferably before witnesses—that all debts are settled. Then, immediately contrive to take him into some heavily populated place where the damage to his coin pouch can be attributed to a thief's depredations. When he finds himself without money, he cannot ask you for his payment again. Continue your generosity by making some additional purchases for him with the money from his purse.

A technique that requires less endurance is the last-minute robbery. Take your intoxicated counterpart aside. Weigh your pouch as if to squeeze off the portion that you owe, then say, "No, you have done all I have asked of you and more. Let me match your generosity with my own." Then you present the entire pouch. Note that its thongs must be knotted tight, the better to prevent him from peering at the contents immediately. Once your partner begins to stammer expressions of thanks, a trustworthy confederate enters and robs both of you at swordpoint. This, of course, requires a confederate who will reunite with you later, and who will not later blackmail you by threatening to go to your counterpart with the truth.

A third technique to avoid payment involves staging your gruesome death. Note that this is most effective when you are traveling under a false name, preferably in disguise. Set up some dangerous situation where you will find yourself in your counterpart's company when it comes time to pay him. Contrive, through the use of your surroundings and confederates, to be slain in such a way that your body cannot readily be found. Some appropriate situations:

"Cugel is a man of discernment!" declared Bunderwal. "I would rate him an applicant of fair to good quality, and I urge you to ignore his long spatulate fingers, which I last noticed on Larkin the baby-stealer. There is a significant difference between the two: Larkin has been hanged and Cugel has not been hanged."

- ✿ A bridge on the verge of collapse.
- ✿ Any deep or murky body of water.
- ✿ A building on fire—though this situation should be left to providence, as you should not be igniting buildings to make a getaway.

For example, say you decide to pay your counterpart while walking on a bridge over a deep stream. Show him the metal cable that now attaches the pouch to your waist—a precaution, you explain, to deter thieves. On the bridge, you struggle to open the cable's clasp so that you may pay your counterpart. At that moment, a masked rider charges across the bridge, knocking you over the rail into the water. Your counterpart will hear you cry,

"Too heavy, my pouch is too heavy," and then you sink from sight, killed by the very wealth he hoped for. While he laments life's bitter irony, use the ballast of the pouch to walk to the inverted barrel you have situated not far away. Scatter the pouch's contents on the floor of the stream, then stay beneath the barrel and drift downstream.

A Fallback Ploy: Run Away

A simple last-ditch option to avoid payment is to vanish.

This does present drawbacks. The counterpart, rather than allowing you to fade from his memory, will remember you forever, and not fondly. He will instruct the local constabulary, who will also remember you. So consider this only as a last resort, unless you are in disguise, in which case it can have been your plan all along. For this purpose, consider travelling in the guise of an enemy.



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On Occasion, Be the Victim

To ruin a legitimate merchant—or to put him into your debt to the point that you can demand great quantities of money from him—follow these steps. (Note that they will only be effective in a land where courts of law reign supreme or where rulers choose to hear suits and dispense justice.)

On the street of merchants, find a vendor of valuable items such as jewels and gems. Purchase such an item. Negotiate well, but pay legitimate coin; resist any urge to cheat or deceive. Make sure the item is worth approximately what you spend.

Take your purchase to the shop of one of the first vendor's competitors, one who is renowned for honesty—or at least afraid of being caught in a deception. Offer him the item for a quarter or a third of its value. He will be suspicious. Invite him to take it back to its place of origin for an appraisal.

When he does so, the original merchant will be suspicious, too. He will assume that you paid him in false coin, or that you have substituted the true item for a magically-produced fake for which you hope to obtain genuine coin. Both merchants will come for you, and they will bring the authorities. You will be accused. Make every effort to look guilty, so that you will be hauled off to jail and the court of a judge. (But insist that the officials bring along the money and the item being purchased, and that they do so in a way that ensures these items cannot be lost or substituted.) In the hours after your arrest, have your confederates circulate word of your imprisonment and the charges made against you throughout the community, and insist that they poison your reputation to the extent they can.

When all is settled in the court, it will be proven that you made no attempt to defraud either merchant, and you will be able to prove that their actions against you have cost you tremendously in reputation. At this point you can begin a lengthy and probably profitable campaign to sue or blackmail your accusers.

You can make the situation worse for your marks through other means. For example, prior to embarking on this scheme, court some undistinguished child of a distinguished family, and leave the apparent object of your desire with these words: "If I come to you tomorrow, you will know I intend to seek your hand in marriage. If I do not, I have chosen to live the remainder of my life in lonely solitude." When you do not arrive to make a marriage proposal, the object of your alleged affection will be heartbroken and will communicate that fact to the rest of the family; make sure your confederates further communicate it, and the family head's sudden hatred of you, to the community. By this means, once you have been freed by the authorities, you can demonstrate that the false charges made against you cost you the regard of a noble family... and you may be able to demand far greater damages.



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Rely On Pettiness

You find yourself in possession of numerous identical objects of no worth—oil lamps with the overbright image of a smiling gaun glazed on one side, or wooden disks inexplicably engraved with the words “Do Not Choke.” (Do not ask how such a condition could befall you. In the profession of confidence games, these things happen all the time.)

Rather than abandoning these useless objects, turn them to profit. Take one to the marketplace and contrive to situate it on a vendor’s table. Then stage a fight with one of your confederates before that table. While the audience stands about laughing, your confederate can rise from the dust, notice the useless object on the table, react with great glee, pluck it forth, and hold it for you to see, saying, “Look what I have found.”

“No!” you cry. “Not that!”

“What is it?” the vendor asks.

“A cursed hurling-knack,” your confederate replies. “You have a cursed hurling-knack manufacturer in your fair city. When such a thing is hurled in anger, the first victim it touches is forever cursed with fear that twists the stomach. See?” And he hurls it at you. Whereupon you demonstrate stomach-twisting fear until you can get clear of the crowd’s sight and abandon your disguise.

In the hours that follow, other confederates take to the street, demonstrating the stomach-twisting fear of all cursed hurling-knack victims.

The next day, the one of you best suited to the role of a nasty old manufacturer of cursed items sets up a table in the market and begins selling cursed hurling-knacks. The very fear engendered by your earlier demonstrations will cause new victims of the frightful weapons to exhibit the symptoms you have already displayed, and thus the fear will spread—fear, and the need of petty personages to inflict that fear on their enemies and rivals.

Two days later, close down the cursed hurling-knack table and open up a stall selling cures for the fear brought on by cursed hurling-knacks.

Allies Who Should Practice Self-Sacrifice

Even those who love you sometimes pursue the ridiculous notion—doubtless taught them in their youth by some droning priest—that you should undertake dangerous physical activity with the rest of them. Assuming your feigned illness or injury has failed to elicit sympathy, turn to negotiation.

A Long Ploy: Anticipate and Evacuate

Hard experience will teach you the rhythms by which your fellows decide to force dangerous tasks on you. Calculate when these mandates are due to descend, and then be somewhere else: at a gambling game that will keep you until the crucial deadline has passed, or in the company of a mighty ruler so smitten with your charm that he cannot bear for you to leave.

The hardest part of this technique—other than charming the mighty ruler—is to learn the timing, which is knowledge no document can impart. Eavesdrop on your associates when possible, particularly when they think you are absent or sleeping. When you hear one say, “Tomorrow, we will force him to speak for us before the Thief-Lord,” you know that tomorrow is the one day of the year you will arise before dawn and perform useful errands in town for your associates (without first asking their leave).

A Long Ploy: Let Them Participate in Their Own Legends

Learn how your colleagues regard themselves. The bumbler with the long flat piece of steel, its edge serrated by wear practically into a saw, doubtless views himself as a master swordsman. The grabby lady whose gaze latches onto every coin within sight will inevitably imagine herself a cutpurse without peer. And the lonely, uncharismatic, unhygienic figure with his nose adhering to the book in his hands—adhering by means of a substance best not speculated about—cannot but fancy himself a supreme student of sorcery.

Encourage these notions, no matter how wrong they are. Let your fellows understand that in them are the roots of tomorrow’s legends. Mention the great heroes of ancient times they would like to emulate, and invoke those names when their spirits flag.

Then, when discussion arises of who should do what, pick out the most dreadful of the duties and utter statements, in an unsure tone, such as “I’m not sure that even a swordsman as great as Geldan the Never-Perforated could accomplish such a task,” or “That duty requires nimbleness indeed—the nimbleness of a master burglar. I misdoubt that any of us would suffice.” Such words stir the hearts of would-be heroes and motivate them to leap forward. You then can step forward to handle the tasks they have no time to address, such as keeping the campfire going.

Cugel said, "We are posing problems for poor Soldinck, who already has worries enough. Let us be considerate. I suggest that we trust our fortunes to Mandingo the three-eyed Goddess of Luck."

He brought a packet of playing cards from his pouch.

"The idea has merit," said Bunderwal. "But let us use my cards which are newer and easier for the eyes of Soldinck."

A Short Ploy: Twine Their Words Into Self-Swallowing Snakes

By understanding the task soon to be dropped unbidden into your lap, you can, perhaps, persuade your fellows to recognize the futility of offering it to you.

Say you are to acquire transportation for your fellows' escape from their next escapade. At the proper time, you are to be waiting with one mount for each of them.

Before discussing the matter with your fellows, make sure that your hands are tainted with some odd perfume or odor that riding beasts dislike, such as deodand blood.

"Exhausted mounts?" you ask.

"No, fresh," your friends say.

"So I must steal them a day or two before the event, so they have time to rest."

"Yes."

"So you want draggy, older mounts."

"No," they say. "Fresh, young mounts that will carry us to safety."

"Fresh, young mounts will be missed as soon as they are taken. I must have draggy, older beasts so that the alarm will not be raised, so the investigation will not be vigorously pressed."

At this point they will have to discuss the matter. They will then say, "Do the best you can," which still leaves you with the duty of acquiring mounts.

"And it must be [red-eyed palominos]," you add—substituting the exact description of your own mount for "red-eyed palominos."

"Why must it be [red-eyed palominos]? They are excessively rare."

"Because they are the only sorts who do not spook when I approach them," you say. And when they doubt your words, you approach the other mounts. As you lift your hands to them, they scent the odor and respond with panic.

The same sort of ploy may be used in every argument; erect not one barrier but dozens between you and your friends' perception of you as the ideal person to carry out a mission. You end up burdened with lesser tasks, and they with the tasks you wish to avoid—a true victory in negotiation, for the work is properly distributed, and you have done your share of it.

A Fallback Ploy: Let Madness Be Your Guide

A hand falls on your shoulder, and you recognize your good friend Dofray. You know he is about to tell you to climb to the upper reaches of the Dread Tower of Slatak the Squamous. You have no desire to find out how Slatak got that way.

Before he can speak, whirl on him and say, "I am anxious to begin my climb. Let me do it now, before the sun sets, so that all may witness my skill."

"No, no," Dofray says. "Darkness will conceal your approach, improving your chance of survival."

"I have no fear of death!" you proclaim. "Still, I could be persuaded to wait if I had a little more wine to sustain me. Then I will climb under cover of darkness."

"Good," Dofray says, and fetches more wine.

"And when I confront Slatak in his lair, I will stand over him and tell him, 'I have conquered your pathetic excuse of a stronghold—I, with the help of my friend Dofray, and my friend Kelzepur, and our wealthy patron Bellburg the Indolent,' and I will laugh down into his scaly features."

"No, no!" they all say. "You are only to seize his serpentine chalice and descend with it back to us. Do not mention our names."

"That is insufficient! He must recognize our greatness! And since I am the only one he will see, all I can give him of your greatness is your names. And the names of your cities and the streets where you live, so that he will not mistake you for others. Still, give me some wine so that I might think on your recommendations and adapt them to my own distinctive style."

And so it continues, until either they are convinced that they are doomed if you approach within ten thousand paces of that tower, or they discover that, because of the way they have been forcing wine down your throat all night, you are incapable of climbing.

Those Whose Lives Will Be Immeasurably Broadened By Your Affection

Some people, brought up in provincial territories, do not understand that they should accept a gift. Often, the people upon whom you would like to bestow the gift of lovemaking are the same way—reluctant, unaware of their obligations, oblivious to the delights your gift will bring them.

It is of course imperative that you never force a gift on an unwilling recipient, but it is only courteous to persuade someone to accept a gift and thereby be enriched. The next time you offer a gift, perhaps good manners will take over and your intended will not put up such a resistance.

never force: The GM tracks your character's sympathy points (*Dying Earth* rulebook Chapter 9). Assault causes your character to lose sympathy, and bad tidings will ensue.

A Long Ploy: Become A Lover From the Land of Dreams

Given time and access to acquaintances of your intended, you can gain a sure sense of what that individual wants in a lover. Find out all you can about that person's previous lovers, that you might discover common traits among them. It is also good to discover why each person is a former lover, that you might again find a common theme. (By this means you can either forestall your own exit from your intended's life or, should the need arise, hasten it.)

If your intended is an artist, your success is practically assured if you can look upon his or her art; in those pieces you have all the visual cues you need to fabricate a dream lover. But it is helpful to recognize the difference, in artistic representation, between a lover and an icon of obsessive hatred or fear; perhaps you should find an artist to evaluate the work and highlight that difference.

With a sense of what would be irresistible to your intended, try to fashion yourself into that individual. Then place yourself in the path of your intended.

Some cautions: Do not find a ploy for this introduction that can be only used once before it is discarded. If every encounter you have with your intended is the result of some odd coincidence, he or she is sure to become suspicious. (With some, this suspicion works in your favor, because your intended knows that he or she is being pursued. With others, it is an alert to possible danger.)

Instead, you should find some means to cross the path of your intended again and again. If this person is the guest of another, contrive to become a fellow guest. If this person is a devotee of (say) the rare art of gambling with living dice, become a student of that diversion.

Then decide whether you are to chase or be chased. The latter is better; it is less work. If you have done your job perfectly, you will be a prize your intended must pursue. If you have failed, you must do the pursuing, but repeated contact with your intended should indicate the events to arrange, meals to host, gifts to offer.

You may do your job too well. Your intended may succumb to your charms but not realize that this was the ultimate destination of your quest, not the penultimate;

he or she may imagine that a relationship of years' duration will result from what you have briefly shared.

In such cases, always maintain the high road of charm and civility, that bad gossip reflect solely on the other party. When your ex-lover offers you words and tears that tug at the strings of guilt, soothe yourself by settling on another intended and beginning another pursuit.

And remember that some ex-lovers are petty enough to hire powerful brutes to kill you for what they consider your insensitivity. In matters of love, always keep a rope tucked away under the balcony for an expeditious escape.

A Short Ploy: Sail in the Wake of Jealousy or Spite

Someone who would not in other circumstances inform you that you were standing up to your ankles in leucomorph bile might happily topple into bed with you if it causes distress to one whom he or she loathes—especially if they were, until recently, lovers themselves.

Here again, learn as much as possible about your intended before making any sort of approach. Should you learn that your intended has recently had a falling-out with another lover, you may then stage a brief and inconclusive (but nonetheless adversarial) encounter with that former lover in the presence of your intended, the better to establish your credentials as someone the ex-lover dislikes. At this point the standard pattern of introducing yourself to your intended and demonstrating healthy interest—in full view of the ex-lover—takes over.

A Fallback Ploy: Impersonate Another

If your skills of impersonation are sufficient, consider briefly taking the guise of another person. This is a valid and even necessary tactic when your intended is tiresomely faithful to some fool, inexplicably disinterested in you, or both.

This tactic is best employed when you have contrived to overhear the lovers' plans for rendezvous. When they part, find some means to incapacitate the one whose identity you wish to assume, take his outer garments, practice the resonance and inflections of his voice, and make sure the rendezvous site is poorly lit. Costume parties are especially appropriate for this tactic.

How to Talk to a Deodand: Negotiating with Dangerous Creatures

Chapter 12 of *The Dying Earth* rulebook describes several carnivorous intelligent creatures, colloquially called "half-men," that infest the forests and marshes of the world. Characters who encounter these creatures in untoward ways often try to talk their way out of being consumed. Furthermore, some brave folk deliberately undertake such meetings in hopes of talking the creatures into some act—such as, say, assaults on some third party. For encounters with sapient nonhumans of ravenous

appetite, here are general rules of, if not etiquette, then procedure.

Negotiating From Weakness

First, note that these carnivores are just as prone as any other natives of the Dying Earth to florid formality and even verbosity. Many are distorted descendants of

Cugel frowned. He gave his head a decisive shake and replaced the cards in his pouch. "As I analyze the situation, I see that despite your inclinations—I am truly sorry to say this, Bunderwal—it is not proper to deal with Soldinck's important affairs in so frivolous a fashion. I suggested it only as a test. A person of the proper qualities would have rejected the idea out of hand."

Soldinck was favorably impressed. "On the mark, Cugel!"



Confidence Games: A Gallery of Stratagems (11 of 12)

Minor Tricks of the Trade

A few things you can do for quick money or minor victories:

The Angry Husband Game. Have a comely female accomplice lure a rich but not physically prepossessing mark up to a second-story room. The room, which must have a window, is prepared so that it contains no place the man might hide. Once the mark has shed significant portions of his clothing—the portions holding his money and his weapons—you burst in through the door, to your female confederate's cries of "My husband! I thought he was away!" Your mark, unless he is the bravest or most stupid of men, will leave as quickly as possible, through the aforementioned window, giving you the opportunity to gather his belongings and flee before he can return with the authorities. Be sure not to perform this scheme on a magician, who might do you considerable harm even without weapons.

Another confederate can earn the mark's goodwill, and perhaps some extra money, by standing beneath the window when the mark descends; pretending to be a passer-by, your confederates lends the mark a cloak and accompanies him home.

The Goldmaking Box. Have a craftsman create a box that takes a coin into a slot at one end and stores it in one internal reservoir, then, after a knob has been turned a number of times, ejects a similar-sized coin (from a different internal reservoir) through a slot on the other end. Load one reservoir with gold coins of the region, the other with lead coins minted to be identical to the gold ones. Now, pretending to be an addled magician, you can demonstrate your party trick at any gathering of the credulous and wealthy—accept a gold coin from one of the guests and "transform" it into a lead coin, then, when he complains, "transform" it back into gold. The extremely stupid guests will be amused; the not-quite-so-stupid guests will realize that you have an apparatus that can be used to consistently transform lead into gold and will bedevil you for the secret.

By your actions and speech, make it clear to them that, as a master magician, you have no fear of their threats and no need of money, nor have you any conception that this device would be of great interest to the avaricious. Tell the parties interested in its acquisition that you do require diamonds, emeralds, rubies, or other precious stones to amuse your pretty young wife, and you will gift the transformative box to the one who can provide you with the largest stones. If you have only one box, give it to the bidder with the grandest bid; if you have several, accept sealed bids and tell each bidder privately that he has won, and collect the payment for each. Then depart town swiftly with your ill-gotten treasure, for it will not take greedy folk such as these long to discover that the boxes can only transform a limited number of lead blanks before their secrets are revealed.

The Breaker of Fingers With a Heart of Gold. When you learn that someone has gone deep into debt and that his creditor intends to collect on a certain date or do substantial physical harm to the debtor, use your own powers of negotiation to settle this matter in a happy way. Send a confederate to the debtor, pretending to be a representative of the creditor and demanding that the debtor meet him at a specific place and time with his payment—or whatever portion of it he has accumulated. Then the confederate can go to the creditor, pretending to be a representative of the debtor, claiming to have raised the entire debt amount and promising to pay it at a specific place and time (the time identical to the other appointment, the place as far away from it as possible) at a dinner intended to honor the creditor. You then ambush the debtor when he arrives and take the sums he has brought with him.

To add insult to injury, you might have the creditor arrive at his rendezvous just in time to take possession of a bill of fare for your inn and tavern stay. (When we spoke of this as a happy resolution to the situation, we meant happy for *you*, not for the creditor and debtor.)

humanity, demons, or bizarre non-terrestrial beings, so their conversation should display subtlety and complexity. PCs may seek to take advantage of this, engaging the predator in protracted discourse while awaiting rescue by their allies, but intelligent predators have heard such stratagems before and will rarely be fooled.

The human negotiator must consider what might tempt the half-man. Offers of treasure or magic have sometimes served, but predators generally lack interest in such things. If you win a contest of Persuade versus the predator's Rebuff, you can offer the creature a plausible alternative to consuming you—most simply by suggesting another potential victim more tender, riper, plumper, or otherwise superior in gastronomic terms. Offering guidance to substantial supplies of better food has some potential, but the creature may well suspect trickery, and prefer certain benefit now over more speculative advantage later.

Unfortunately, even in the lax and open-minded days of the sun's demise, offering another human being as food inspires horror and distaste in fellow humans. Dangling the mere possibility, with no intent to fulfill the bargain, is less immoral, for all its inherent duplicity, but the monster may mistrust the offer without a demonstration of genuine intent. Offering transport to more prosperous regions, say, or assistance in avoiding hunters, is morally not much better than the first option.

Optimistic persons negotiating with anthropophagous predators might hope to study the species in question, to discover what innocent leisure pleasures it pursues. Determining that ghouls appreciate strong drink, say, or that erbs like to make their beds of the foliage of a particular shrub, could be advantageous. Sadly, few predators are given to explaining their aesthetic judgment or domestic habits to human naturalists, and reference books lack credible details. It is possible that in the predatory mind the idea of recreation does not even arise.

In any case, whatever the nature of the negotiations, the attempt to secure one's own life may prove fruitless. The regrettable fact is that half-men lack conceptions of honor or good business practice. As they themselves might explain, if they devour a person, they need not worry over his later distrust.

Negotiating From Strength

The best way to negotiate with dangerous creatures is from a position of security. Swordpoint may suffice; stout rope (with no visible fraying) is better; powerful magic ensures swift compliance.

Many half-men use only tooth and fang, and most know little of magic save that it may reliably slaughter them at great distances. Hence, they regard it with potent dread. Aggressive predators, believing that magic requires a moment to invoke, handle obvious magicians by staging violent ambushes at very close quarters.

The coin of highest value in any negotiation, of course, is the creature's own life. To convince the creature that it will continue to live if it cooperates, you

must advance a feasible mechanism by which it may depart safely when the terms of the deal are completed. (Whether you honor such terms or butcher the creature forthwith is purely a matter of personal conscience—but one must give the impression of a legitimate bargain.) In truth, most such negotiations have been terse and frankly uncertain, like that offered by Mazirian the Magician to the deodand he caught with Phandaal's Gyrator (see Jack Vance's *The Dying Earth*), or that which took place between Cugel and the deodand he ambushed and maimed en route to the Mountains of Magnatz (in Vance's *The Eyes of the Overworld*). Both these associations ended with the death of the deodand.

Informing half-men that their lives are inevitably forfeit, but offering them the choice of either swift or prolonged and painful deaths, may sometimes prove effective. But the tactic has limits; some creatures are authentically fearless, or at least unable to comprehend the boon they are being offered; others are overcome with spite and merely spit defiance; others again combine cunning and vengefulness, and seemingly acquiesce to the bargain while actually misleading with lies or omissions. Keeping the creature alive until its claims have been tested may seem wise but, of course, this presents its own difficulties.

Vagaries of Specific Creatures

- ✱ The **deodand** is widespread, voluble, and self-assured that it can profit from conversation. It employs glib persuasion to discourage a victim from (to its mind) unnecessary and pointless resistance. Such persuasion is rarely effective, owing to the notoriety of the deodand's dietary habits and the visibility of its appetite.
- ✱ Conversational skills of **erbs** are questionable. They are known to have human and demonic ancestry, which would imply a tendency to negotiation, but there are few reports or even conjectures on this matter.
- ✱ The **gaun** is well known to lack shrewdness. Assuming it can speak, it may be susceptible to offers. But some tales suggest it possesses intoxicating breath, which would grant it disproportionate benefit in bargaining.
- ✱ **Ghouls** are not much inclined to discussion, and **gids** are infamous for their fearsome 20-foot leaps, launched from beyond negotiating distance.
- ✱ Not much is known about the linguistic inclinations of the **hoon**, though some conjecture that it may sometimes engage in debate or possibly gambling.
- ✱ **Leucomorphs**, of course, remain too obscure for glib generalizations.
- ✱ Finally, **pelgranes**, though capable of speech, display an unrelentingly predatory nature and tactics that inhibit negotiation: swooping down, they strike swiftly, before their surprised targets can attempt speech.

"Cugel's qualifications are impressive," Bunderwal admitted. "Against them I can counterpose only honesty, skill, dedication, and tireless industry. Further, I am a dignified citizen of the area, not a fox-faced vagabond in an over-fancy hat."



Confidence Games: The Culminating Stratagem! (12 of 12)

Fooling the Omniscient

At times you may suspect that your plans are being overheard, evaluated, and then thwarted by The Powers That Be—an invisible awareness that hears all and has ultimate power—in short, the Game Moderator.

When you suspect an arbitrary and unnecessary thwarting of your plans, you might need to run a confidence game on these powers.

Settle on the goal you feel The Powers That Be will, if they suspect your motives, arbitrarily thwart.

Decide, in an academic sense, on the scheme you would employ to achieve your goal—if only The Powers That Be would not interfere.

Discuss your plans in such a way that The Powers That Be cannot overhear, with only those confederates who need to understand your genuine motives. If one of your fellows does not need to understand, do not involve him in the dirty business of the truth.

Now it becomes trickier. Settle on a secondary goal, and a secondary confidence game to achieve it, that can incorporate the elements of the plan you've decided upon for your principal goal. This is your "cover story." As far as The Powers That Be and some of your fellows are concerned, it is your main goal.

Perform this scheme, never hinting to The Powers That Be that your stated goal is not your principal goal. Depending on the elements of your scheme, The Powers That Be may realize your true intentions late in its unfolding, at which time they may indeed thwart it out of spite, or may acknowledge your cleverness and allow it to take place as planned. In some cases, The Powers That Be may continue to be fooled until the full accomplishment of your plan.

Once all is said and done, you may decide for yourself whether to boast to The Powers That Be of the true nature of your accomplishment. To do so is to invite almost certain retaliation of some sort, but some egos demand this sort of validation, so to recommend against it is pointless.

An Example Scheme

As an example, let us say that you and your friends have the confidence of Persin, younger son of Kulthin, the Most Envious Ministocrat of Endismott, a pointlessly self-satisfied region that, if it were surrounded by competing nations rather than desert, might be justified in styling itself a petty kingdom.

Kulthin has another son, Guldebard, and it is clear to you that Kulthin plans for Guldebard to succeed him. You also suspect that Kulthin's wishes on this point have nothing to do with Guldebard's skills as a ruler, which are negligible, and everything to do with the appreciation the Powers That Be have for Guldebard's value as a foil for you and your friends. Guldebard is petty, vain, intrusive, manipulative, and self-righteous. In fact, he's rather similar to you, except that you know your actions are justified and his are not, which makes him the Villain.

So you'd like to prevent Guldebard from taking the throne, but know that the odds are stacked against you because the Powers That Be appreciate him so. The thing to do is run a confidence game that appears to be accomplishing one thing but actually make it harder, if not impossible, for Kulthin to announce Guldebard as his successor.

Because you have the ear and friendship of young Persin, and because you've been known to perform a few confidence games in the past, it is entirely credible that you might want to make use of your friendship to connive a large fortune from the lad. You begin setting up a confidence game that, on the surface, appears to be designed to do just that. But its details will also serve to discredit Guldebard in a significant way, and you do not have to reveal this true goal until the operation is well along in execution.

Obviously, you and your fellows must discuss these matters where the Powers That Be cannot overhear you. You must put together a set of plans that accomplish your goals while appearing to do something the Powers That Be will not counteract. And then, in the presence of the Powers That Be, you must recreate your planning session, pretending that your false goal is your true goal. For one experienced in confidence games, this should not be too taxing.

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Confidence Games: The Culminating Stratagem! (continued)

These are the steps of your false plan:

1. You will contrive to have your friend Persin elevated to the rank of Tax Collector of All Endismott, and you and some of your confederates will serve him as administrators and tax collectors. (It may be that you will have to embroil the current high tax collector in some sort of scandal to pave the way for Persin.)
2. You will use your nefarious skills for legitimate and honest purposes, much as this pains you, in order to build up Persin's reputation as an honorable and effective Tax Collector.
3. You will arrange to have written and delivered into your hands an authentic document signed by Guldebard authorizing that the bearer and his companions receive passage across Endismott's borders, and cooperation from all Endismott guards and officials they receive. (This, you explain, will be a necessary element of your plan to get you, your associates, and your ill-gotten gains out of the country.) Naturally, acquiring an authentic document this potent will require that you perform a number of different confidence games, but by now you are certainly capable of such deception.
4. Additionally, you will need to arrange for Guldebard to draw up a set of orders for one of his trusted officers. "After Persin's first triumphant tax collection day," you tell Guldebard, "I will feel that my work here is done, and can leave your glorious land of Endismott. But I fear for my life during travel and would beg that you lend me the strong arm of your most trusted officer, that I be sure I will reach the border safely." Give Guldebard a letter that you have written, one he can simply sign; the document must read something like, "You will convey (name) and his retinue to the border as per all prior arrangements." If Guldebard does not, and writes one of his own that does not suit your purposes, you will have to run a confidence game on him to get you what you want. The Game Moderator will believe—for you will express it so during one of your false planning meetings—that the orders will allow Guldebard's officer to conduct you or one of your allies to the border in advance of the treasure wagon, the better to be sure that the path is free of impediments, and Guldebard's name is the only one short of Kulthin's that will get the job done.
5. You arrange to get an authentic treasure chest liberated from Guldebard's possession, for the same expressed reason.
6. You have a considerable amount of false money minted out of lead, tin, or some other common metal. When making these arrangements, you or your confederate will wear a bulky, cumbersome robe and hood and speak in vocal tones that are not your own. To the extent that you can do so without tipping off the Powers That Be, you perform a vocal impersonation of Guldebard when dealing with the manufacturers of the false money.
7. You have an official Treasury wagon built for tax collection purposes. (Wherever appropriate, you use the same disguise and voice you used when arranging for the false money to be minted.) The wagon has a bin into which coin will be poured. All present will hear the coins clinking down the trough and clattering into the official Treasury lockbox visible under the driver's bench. But in reality the coins are sliding down greased troughs into the Guldebard treasure chest commissioned in step 6. The chest is concealed beneath the rear of the wagon, and the false coins are clinking down into the official Treasury chest.
8. You arrange for someone who loathes Persin and would be most happy to see him eliminated from the royal line of succession to pay you a considerable sum to arrange such an event. You tell him that if he is to witness the event of Persin's destruction, he must join you for the ride out of Endismott. Tell him what clothes to wear so that he will blend in with your party.

Now—as easily as that!—the trap is set. You are in a position, on Persin's first day as Tax Collector of All Endismott, to accompany him on his rounds, gather the money, feed it into the wrong trunk, detach the trunk and allow Persin to go back to the Treasury, and escape with documents that will get you to the nation's border unmoled. The Powers That Be are satisfied with the amount of effort you have put into this confidence game.

But when it comes time for you to perform the game, you alter the plan. You do accompany Persin on his rounds, pick up the money, spirit away the trunk full of real funds, and put it on a wagon of your own choosing. Then the majority of your confederates return to the Treasury to celebrate with Persin while you, and you alone, join Guldebard's officer for the ride to the border. He has his orders; you have your document of permission; the only change of plans as far as the Powers That Be are concerned is that you are not riding out in advance of the wagon, but with the wagon. Should the Powers That Be ask you why this is being done, have a glib explanation for the change (keeping your confederates' reputations intact) .

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Cugel turned to Soldinck: "At last—and we are lucky in this—Bunderwal's style, which consists of slander and vituperation, can be contrasted with my own dignity and restraint. I still must point out his oily skin and over-large buttocks; they indicate a bent for high-living and even a tendency toward speculation. If indeed we hire Bunderwal as under-clerk, I suggest that all locks be reinforced, for the better protection of your valuables."



Confidence Games: The Culminating Stratagem! (conclusion)

Your next stop is to pick up the enemy of Persin who has been kind enough to give you his money and accompany you on this expedition. His clothes match yours—you have already arranged this.

As you travel, claim to grow tired and hand over the reins to this enemy of Persin. Then you can crawl into the bed of the wagon, with your treasure, and get some sleep. But instead of sleeping, you climb out from under your blanket and out the back. It's best to do so at an inn or other place where you can arrange for transportation, particularly if this is only a few minutes into your expedition.

Get back to the Treasury. Put the note the Guldebard wrote, the one granting its bearer passage to the border, on the wagon that was used to collect the taxes. (Place it somewhere it can be easily found, but also somewhere that is credibly a spot where the document could have been misplaced by its owner.) It's best if this can be accomplished before the false money is found, but works either way. Now you can sit back and watch the fun.

Because the false money will be discovered. Blame will initially fall on Persin, of course. But someone—contrive for it to be anyone but you or your confederates—will discover the letter of passage. This will lead the authorities to race for the border in search of the thieves. Since they are racing and Guldebard's officer is merely trotting along in escort of a slow-moving wagon, the pursuers will catch up to the wagon. Guldebard's officer and Persin's enemy will be caught in possession of the treasure. Guldebard's officer will be in possession of a document that implicates Guldebard. He and Persin's enemy will accuse you, but your confederates will claim that you have been among them all the time, and may even have pulled a confidence game to convince others who were present during your absence. As the investigation widens, witnesses will describe the one who commissioned the wagon and the false money, and that person will sound much like Guldebard.

Naturally, the story will spread widely, despite any attempts to curtail it, because you and your confederates will be spreading it. And there is every chance that Guldebard's prospects for becoming the Crown Prince of Endismott will be ruined.

The Powers That Be may choose to punish you for tricking them, or may sit back in rueful admiration of your chicanery. Either way, you will know that you have done all that could be done.



The Random Costume Generator

Understanding that the sun is sputtering toward final darkness and the Earth is fated to end at some imminent date, many inhabitants of the Dying Earth reasonably respond by paying great attention to their appearance.

Previous texts have emphasized the importance of characters' style and form of clothing. However, on occasion even the most fecund imagination finds that inspiration has departed, and that a vision of some crucial actor, otherwise complete as regards manner, habits, morals, and story function, strangely lacks detail in tailoring. In these cases, a costume suggested by dice may inspire new and interesting thoughts. Furthermore, when other ideas are lacking, the chance discovery of an arbitrary costume—in some wardrobe in which adventurers are currently hiding, say, or in the luggage of the victims of bandit activity—can distract players while a more wilfully conceived plot germinates elsewhere.

For all such uses, the Random Costume Generator provides an invaluable (or at least valuable) service.

Using the Generator

Determine the costume's characteristics using the following sequence of tables. Each characteristic in a table is numbered. Choose one or more characteristics from each table in order or, if you wish, decide a characteristic randomly by rolling dice—a process known as “rolling on” that table. For most tables you'll roll one, two, or three dice and add the results to get the number of the corresponding characteristic. “18+” means “18 or more.” “2-” means “2 or less.”

Important: At all points the randomness of this tool is optional, rather than mandatory. You may always choose from any table, rather than rolling dice and trusting whimsical fate. For instance, if the costume to be generated belongs to a wealthy military officer, one need hardly roll dice to determine gender, quality, or style of clothing. Humanity must be served, not enslaved, by its tools!

(You can find a downloadable version of this Generator at <http://www.dyingearth.com/compendium>.)

Stages of Costume Generation

1. Gender
2. Quality
3. Style
4. Form
5. Layering and Thickness
6. Headgear
7. Footwear
8. Pattern and Color
9. Embellishments

1. Gender

To determine the (apparent) sex of the person for whom the costume was made, roll three dice and add the numbers together, then find the result on the table below.

Roll	Result
3-5	Sensibly Androgynous
6-10	Male
11-15	Female
16-17	Bizarre or Alien
18	Cross-Dressing

Explanations

“Sensibly Androgynous” garb is designed for persons who disdain the fripperies of sexual display, or simply for the widest possible market. It is usually cut loose, not following any particular shape of hip or chest, and does not emphasize any particular physical attractions. It is unlikely to represent the most attractive option for any wearer, unless fashion has moved this way in a given town this year, but it may nonetheless be well-made, colorful, or eye-catching, and it is probably comfortable.

Garb for males may incorporate codpieces and suchlike, and

if well-cut and designed for attractiveness, may emphasize trimness of buttock and manly broadness of chest. Costumes for females should fit comfortably over bust and hips, and may emphasize them, or incorporate skirts or other features designed to flaunt the sway of hips when walking. Either costume will follow the prevailing stylistic norms for the specified gender in their place and era of design.

“Bizarre or Alien” costumes are designed for beings who diverge substantially from the human physical archetype. They may be exceptionally large or small, thin or expansive; they may allow for wearers who possess additional limbs or heads; they may fit beings of totally non-humanoid type; they may simply follow fashions so wildly eccentric and outré that no observer, unfamiliar with the designer's intent, can comprehend their function. GMs should decide for themselves what is most appropriate in the context, and if necessary, roll on the table again to decide the basic plan of the costume beneath its oddities. (For example, if the costume is made for an impossibly obese homunculus—was it a male or a female homunculus?)

Lastly, “Cross-Dressing” costumes are apparently, to a first glance, made for one sex, but are actually cunningly designed to enable a person of the other sex to pass in disguise, incorporating padding, bindings, and so forth. It may have been designed

for theatrical use, espionage, crimes of deception, or to assist an unusual hobby. Roll one die; on a roll of 1-3, the garb seems female but is actually designed for a man, on 4-6, the converse is the case. From now on, treat the costume as its apparent type; it can be worn by a person of that sex, but will probably prove

uncomfortable for long, and perhaps even grotesque in its visual appearance.

In all cases, roll another two dice; Male costumes incorporate a corset on a roll of 2, Androgynous costumes do so on a 2 or 3, and Female costumes do so on a 6 or less.

2. Quality

Next, determine the Quality of the costume with a roll of two dice:

Roll	Result
2-3	Very Cheap: intolerably shoddy. Subtract 4 from the Style roll in step 3; roll one die, and on a roll of 6, give the garment one Embellishment.
4-5	Cheap: unappealing to discerning characters, but wearable in a pinch. Subtract 2 from step 3's Style roll; roll one die, and on a roll of 5 or 6, give the garment one Embellishment.
6-7	Workaday: visually unappealing, but robust and serviceable for practical purposes. Subtract 1 from the Style roll; roll one die, subtract 3, and give the garment that many Embellishments.
8-9	Stylish: appropriate to a person of quality, but unlikely to be considered overly extravagant. No modifier to the Style roll; roll one die, subtract 1, and give the garment that many Embellishments.
10	Pretentious: highly decorated and definitely impractical for anyone performing manual labor, but employing slightly inferior materials, none of them very expensive. Add 1 to the Style roll, roll one die, add 1, and give the garment that many Embellishments
11	Flamboyant: expensive garb genuinely appropriate to a wealthy gentleperson of leisure, or to the more successful type of courtesan or court parasite. Add 2 to the Style roll; roll a die, add 1, and give the garment that number of Embellishments.
12	Roll one die: on 1-4, treat the costume as Flamboyant; add 2 to the Style roll and give the garment a number of Embellishments equal to the roll of one die plus 2, but note that it incorporates some exotic or trend-setting features. On 5, treat it as Flamboyant, but made of especially expensive and unusual materials, add 4 to the Style roll and roll two dice to determine the number of Embellishments. On 6, it is Tasteful , embodying quiet good taste, and being well-made, graceful, and comfortable, but appearing unremarkable to untrained observers, with no modifier to the Style roll; roll a die, subtract 2, and give the garment that many Embellishments.

(For an explanation of the Embellishments roll, see "Embellishments," step 9.)

3. Style

To determine the Style of the costume, roll three dice on the table at right and apply the modifier for its Quality stated above.

Explanations

"Ruffianly" garb marks the wearer as an undisguised bandit or footpad; it shows signs of wear, or is clearly made to shrug off such, is dark (or otherwise designed to aid concealment), and probably includes scabbards and weapon-belts. It may bear features or badges that indicate membership of some gang or illegal clique.

"Laborer" garb is the plain and serviceable style of the lowliest manual worker. (However, in the Dying Earth, many such folk prefer to dress a little above their station, as life is harsh enough without flaunting one's lowly status; hence, many peasants and ditchdiggers affect better-looking garb, which need not necessarily be fragile, thus preserving their self-respect.)

"House-Servant" costumes are designed to be worn more indoors than out, to ensure that the wearer does not disgrace the household which issued them, but definitely not to surpass the more stylish costumes worn by the servant's employers. Hence, it may be tolerably plain, or resemble costumes worn by rank-and-file military characters.

"Mundane" styles are simply those worn by ordinary folk going about their ordinary business. (But remember that, in many communities on the Dying Earth, even costumes turned out by the thousand, by journeyman

tailors, may incorporate features that would startle folk from less sophisticated eras.)

"Military" garb is or resembles that worn by professional warriors. If Cheap or Workaday, it probably represents the uniforms of ordinary infantry and sailors; if of better quality, it

Roll	Androgynous	Male	Female
2-	Ruffianly	Ruffianly	Ruffianly
3	Laborer	Ruffianly	Laborer
4	Laborer	Laborer	Laborer
5	House-Servant	Laborer	House-Servant
6	Mundane	House-Servant	House-Servant
7	Mundane	House-Servant	House-Servant
8-11	Mundane	Mundane	Mundane
12	Military	Military	Military
13	Casual	Military	Casual
14	Casual	Casual	Casual
15	Casual	Aristocratic	Aristocratic
16-17	Casual	Aristocratic	Aristocratic
18+	Aristocratic	Grandiloquent	Grandiloquent

designates an officer, and hence draws notice and respect. (Sensible officers keep well back from the battle-lines, and hence do not worry about being noticed by the enemy; less sensible officers desire such attention, as they invariably dream of glory and honor in all quarters.) As the Dying Earth sees few large wars, military costume is frankly a matter of style more than practicality.

“Casual” garb represents those styles worn by ordinary folk of no great wealth when they are seeking amusement. Hence, it tends to be modestly colorful, modestly dramatic, and tolerably comfortable, if rather less robust than ordinary working clothes.

4. Form

Certain tables in this step are only appropriate if the user has no idea of the prevailing styles of the costume’s region or culture. Random rolls may well produce results that will be widely perceived as grotesque. Hence, many users will bypass this step entirely.

To determine the basic form of the entire costume, roll two dice:

Roll	Result
2-6	Single piece
7-9	Two pieces: bodice with integral sleeves, leg coverings
10	Two pieces: sleeveless bodice, leg coverings
11	Bodice, sleeves, and leg coverings all separate
12	Eccentric form, determined by the GM (radical asymmetry, “costumes” made of shimmering magical energies, etc.)

For each piece or element, further determination is required.

Single Piece

Roll two dice, and subtract 1 if the costume’s appearance is female, use the unmodified roll if it is androgynous, and add 2 if it is male.

A result of 1-6 indicates a **dress**. The dress is sleeveless on a roll of 1 on a single die; otherwise, it has sleeves (see below). It has a minimal or open-fronted bodice on a roll of 2 on two dice; otherwise, roll for the Bodice style as below. It always incorporates a Skirt.

A result of exactly 7 indicates a **body-suit**. It is Close-Fitting on a roll of 1 or 2 on one die; otherwise, it is Loose-Fitting. In the former case, it incorporates a high-necked torso covering and long sleeves and leggings; otherwise, roll for Bodice (the torso element), Sleeves, and Leggings as described below.

A result of 8 or more indicates **robes**. Roll one die; the robes are simple and easy to wear on a roll of 1 to 4, moderately complex on 5, and annoyingly cumbersome on 6.

Bodice

Roll one die:

Roll	Result
1	Very low neckline at back and front
2	Very low neckline at front only
3	Moderately low neckline
4	Moderately high neckline
5	Fastened so high at the throat as to threaten suffocation
6	Eccentric design at GM’s option (asymmetric, bare midriff, cutaway panels, etc.)

“Aristocratic” costume is, or resembles, that worn by the higher social classes; if of Workaday or poorer Quality, it represents a comically bad imitation of high-society fashion. It is rarely particularly practical, although that depends on prevailing modes.

“Grandiloquent” costume is designed purely for show, and its cost and workmanship are usually obvious to all discerning observers, for better or for worse. Wearing such garb anywhere except the most formal or important courtly occasions is usually the mark of a hopeless fop, although it may win applause for courage.

Sleeves

Roll one die: On 1, sleeves are short, minimal, or flimsy; on 2 to 4, they are long and close-fitting, on 5 they are long and loose, and on 6, they are very loose and possibly cumbersome.

Leg Coverings

Roll one die, and subtract 2 if the costume is a Male design, 1 if it is Androgynous. If the total is 1 or less, the Leg Coverings are Trousers; if it is exactly 2, they are Leggings; if it is 3 or more, they take the form of a Skirt.

Trousers

Roll two dice, subtracting 1 if the costume’s Style is Military:

Roll	Result
1-3	Very tight
4-5	Fairly close-fitting
6-7	Comfortable fit
8	Loose
9	Floppy and baggy
10	Knee-length
11+	Shorts

Leggings

Roll one die; on 4, these are almost painfully tight; on 5, they are relatively short (exposing some skin); on 6, they enclose the feet. Male costumes with leggings incorporate a codpiece. Roll one die; on 4 or 5 this is moderately emphatic; on 6 it is brash.

Skirt

Roll two dice:

Roll	Result
2	Minimal
3	Very short, puffed
4	Knee-length, tight-fitting
5	Knee-length, full
6	Calf-length, simple design
7	Calf-length, with heavy pleating or flaring
8	Ankle-length, slit for free movement
9	Ankle-length, with heavy pleating or flaring
10	Floor-sweeping
11	Floor-sweeping, with a train
12	Asymmetric or otherwise unusual

In addition, roll another two dice, adding 1 if the costume is Aristocratic or Grandiloquent in style. On 11, the skirt incorporates a substantial bustle, and on 12 or more, it incorporates a full crinoline.

5. Layering and Thickness

If circumstances don't obviously determine the general weight and warmth of the costume, roll three dice:

Roll	Result
3-6	Lightweight single-thickness (high summer garb)
7-9	One moderately thick layer
10	One heavy, warm layer
11-12	Heavy outer layer over lightweight lining/underlayer (outer layer is deliberately slashed on a roll of 5 or 6 on one die)
13-14	Lightweight, decorative outer layer over heavy, practical inner layer (outer layer is deliberately slashed on a roll of 6 on one die)
15-16	Multiple lightweight layers: roll one dice and add 1 to determine number of layers
17-18	Multiple ultra-lightweight layers; roll three dice for number of layers

6. Headgear

As has frequently been noted, hats are very important on the Dying Earth. Some costumes incorporate a matching hat, but many others will not; this means, not that the wearer should go bare-headed, but simply that he is expected to make this important choice personally. A few incorporate a hood.

Roll four dice; add 2 if the costume is Ruffianly, subtract 2 if it has a bodice but no sleeves, subtract 3 if it is a body-suit, add 1 if it consists of robes, and subtract 2 if it is lightweight and single-thickness. If the total is 19 or higher, the costume incorporates a hood. If it does not, roll one die, with no additions or subtractions; on a 5 or 6, the costume comes with a matching hat.



If a hat is indicated or required, roll three dice to determine the type:

Roll	Result
3	Beret
4	Small circular cap
5	Helmet (roll one die; on a result of 1, it is simple and non-metallic, on 2-3 it is plain metal, on 4-5 it has a simple plume, and on 6 it has an extravagant crest)
6	Peaked cap (roll one die; on 6, the peak is extravagantly large)
7	Small, narrow-brimmed design (includes a feather or similar embellishment on a roll of 5 or 6 on one die)
8-9	Large, floppy cap
10-12	Broad-brimmed, soft hat (roll one die; on 2-5, embellished with one feather or similar; on 6, embellished with a number of such equal to another one-die roll)
13	Tricorn hat (roll one die; on 3-5, embellished with one feather or similar; on 6, embellished with a number of such equal to another one die roll)
14	High-crowned, rigid, drum-like design
15	Soft, high-crowned, brimless, floppy design (folds to back or side)
16	Metal circlet
17	Metal crown
18	Truly weird headgear, at the GM's option (magical construct, cage with animals, fish-tank, etc.)

7. Footwear

On a roll of 5 or more on one die, a costume includes matching footwear. To determine the type, roll two dice, and subtract 2 if the costume is Very Cheap, 1 if it is Cheap; add 1 if it is Pretentious or Flamboyant:

Roll	Result
2-	Plain and minimal slippers or lightweight sandals
3	Simple (but possibly elegant) slippers or lightweight shoes
4	Open sandals (roll one die; have high heels on 5+)
5	Heavy-duty sandals (roll one die; have high heels on 5, raised soles on a 6)
6	Lightweight shoes (roll one die; have high heels on 5, raised soles on a 6)
7	Rugged shoes (roll one die; have raised soles on 5+)
8	Lightweight ankle-boots (roll one die; have high heels on 5+)
9	Calf-length boots (roll one die; have high heels on 5, raised soles on a 6)
10	Knee-length boots (roll one die; have high heels on 5, raised soles on a 6)
11	Heavy, functional boots (roll one die; have raised soles on 6)
12+	Unusual or highly ornate, with magical or complex mechanical features or other exceptional embellishments (spring-heel boots, hollow crystal platform soles containing colonies of luminous crustaceans, etc.) at the GM's option



8. Pattern and Color

If the costume consists of multiple parts, roll one die. On 3 or less they have fully matching patterns; on 4 or more they are contrasting, and each is rolled for separately.

For each pattern to be determined, roll three dice; subtract 3 if the costume's Style is Ruffianly, 2 if it is Laborer, or 1 if it is House-Servant; add 1 if it is Casual, 2 if it is Aristocratic, or 3 if it is Grandiloquent. Then consult the following table:

Roll	Result
4-	Dark: plain black, or some dull, somber shade of brown, blue, grey, or green (roll on the Color Table on the next page, rejecting or modifying bright or light shades)
5	Dull motley: the garment is made up of elements of several colors, but none of them are especially strongly contrasted or interesting. This is a matter of salvage, not sartorial flamboyance (roll several times on the Color Table, rejecting or modifying bright or light shades, if you insist on fully random determination)
6	Subtle check: roll twice on the Color Table, and note that the two colors are likely to blend when the garment is viewed at a distance
7	Plain: roll once on the Color Table
8	Fine pinstripe: roll twice on the Color Table, and note that the stripe color may not be noted except at fairly close quarters
9	Subtle herringbone: roll once on the Color Table, and note that the pattern is in two variant shades of this color
10	Contrasting trim: roll once on the Color Table for the main color of the item, then roll one die; on 1-2, the trim is fur, on 3 it is gilt braid or otherwise prone to glitter, on 4 it is a subtle variation of the main color, and on 5 or 6 it is a completely different color, for which roll on the Color Table
11	Ingenious shading: roll twice on the Color Table, and note that the item of costume flaunts the dyer's art, shading between the two colors to interesting effect
12	Stripes: roll one die; on 4 or less, these are in two colors, otherwise they are in a number of colors equal to the roll of one die (roll on the Color Table for each color). Then roll one die again: on 3 or less the stripes are vertical or along the limbs, on 4 or 5 they are horizontal or hoops, and on 6 they are diagonal, curved, or otherwise eccentric
13	Blatant check: roll twice on the Color Table, and note that the colors are visibly distinct even at quite long distances
14	Pelt: roll one die; on 1, the garment is soft leather, on 2 it is thick leather, on 3 it is rigid leather, on 4 or 5 it is plain fur, and on 6 it is patterned or otherwise unusual fur (if brash effects seem desirable, roll on the Color Table for the color of leather or fur)
15	Contrasting panels: large areas of the garment are made in each of two different colors, producing a forceful checkerboard or "harlequin" effect (roll twice on the Color Table)
16	Monochrome pictorial: the design of the garment's fabric depicts a scene or image, but in a single color on a plain background, making it relatively tasteful (roll once on the Color Table to determine the background color, and again to determine the image color)
17	Colorfully pictorial: the fabric of the garment actual depicts a scene or image, in full color (roll once on the Color Table to determine a dominant color that will probably catch the eye of casual observers at a distance)
18	Impossibly intricate: the pattern incorporates a multiplicity of designs, symbols, and possibly pictures (roll once on the Color Table to determine a dominant color that will probably catch the eye of casual observers at a distance)
19+	The cloth is enchanted, or incorporates some obscure material; its colors (and quite possibly their pattern) shift and transform as one watches; details are left to the GM

Color Table

To determine colors when required, roll two dice:

Roll	Result
2	Blurred Mixture; roll again twice (re-rolling duplicates) for the two colors blended or running together.
3	Gray: roll on Intensity Table
4-5	Black: roll one dice; on 1-2, the color is pure, perfect black, otherwise assume slight greyish tinge, stains, fading, subtle tinting, etc.
6	Brown: roll on Intensity Table
7	Green: roll on Intensity Table
8	Blue: roll on Intensity Table
9	Red: roll on Intensity Table
10	Yellow: roll on Intensity Table
11	Orange: roll on Intensity Table
12	White: roll one dice; on a 1 or 2 the color is pure, perfect white, otherwise roll again for the tint (re-rolling 11 or 12)

Note: In all cases when two rolls are required to determine two adjacent or overlaid colors, a duplicate result simply implies an especially subtle shaded effect. If this seems inappropriate—say, on a Grandiloquent garment patterned with Contrasting Panels—feel free to reroll, or simply choose a sensible result.

Intensity Table

To determine intensity of colors, roll one die:

Roll	Result
1	Pale, possibly faded
2	Light but distinct
3	Bright or otherwise very distinctive
4	Strong, tending to the dark
5	Dull or dark, possibly muddled
6	Very dark

9. Embellishments

Lastly, a costume may have arbitrary decorations or accoutrements. A base roll for numbers of Embellishments is given for each Quality of costume; add 2 to the roll for Military-style costumes (usually indicating badges of regiment and rank; GMs may assign these rather than rolling). Roll an extra die if the costume is of Aristocratic Style, or two more dice if it is Grandiloquent. If the final total is zero or less, the costume is tragically unadorned; otherwise, proceed to the table at right to determine the character of each Embellishment.

For each Embellishment, two rolls are required, each using three dice. The first roll determines an adjective, the second a noun. Put these together in the obvious fashion. (Note that the results describe appearance, not actuality; Faceted Gemstones on a Very Cheap costume are certainly mere glass shards.)

If a noun recurs on the same costume, either that feature takes different forms on different parts of the costume, or several adjectives apply to the same Embellishment. If an adjective and noun recur together, that particular feature is by far the most noticeable part of the costume. The GM's decision is final, as always.

Roll	Adjective	Noun
3	Ghastly	Periapts
4	Darkened	Pompoms
5	Outsize	Lacings
6	Delicate	Straps
7	Gilded	Scabbards
8	Miniature	Badges
9	Fashionable	Buckles
10	Plain	Buttons
11	Showy	Fastenings
12	Exaggerated	Embroidery
13	Glittering	Costume Jewelry
14	Milky	Beadwork
15	Striking	Metalwork
16	Tasteful	Crystals
17	Petal-Like	Gemstones
18	Enchanted	Anatomical Samples



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Character Name _____ Player _____ Series _____

Series level: Cugel Bonus size: 6

The Dying Earth

Character Sheet

Appearance

General

Facial features _____

Hair (color, cut) _____

Notable mannerisms _____

Costume

Upper (tunic, shirt, doublet...) _____

Lower (pantalons, leggings, skirt...) _____

Gloves, belt, sash _____

Shoes, boots, hose _____

Coat/cloak _____

Hat _____

Portrait

Abilities

Style Rating Pool

Persuade

Secondary _____

Rebuff

Secondary _____

Attack

Secondary _____

Defense

Secondary _____

Health

☐ Hurt ☐ Down/Unconc. ☐ Dying/Dead

Weapons

Melee weapon _____

Missile weapon _____

Weapon _____

Weapon _____

Weapon _____

Ability Rating Pool

Appraisal

Athletics

Concealment

Craftsmanship

Driving

Engineering

Etiquette

Gambling

Imposture

Living Rough

Pedantry

Perception

Physician

Quick Fingers

Riding

Scuttlebutt

Seamanship

Ability Rating Pool

Seduction

Stealth

Stewardship

Tracking

Wherewithal

Total pts, Abilities column 1 _____ Total, Abilities column 2 _____ Total, Abilities column 3 _____

Resist.

Rating Pool

Arrogance

Avarice

Indolence

Rating Pool

Gourmandism

Pettifoggery

Rakishness

Total Resistance pts _____

Taglines Used This Session

#1 ☐ #2 ☐ #3 ☐

Unspent Improvement Pts

Points spent (total):

Abilities col 1 _____ + col 2 _____ + col 3 _____ + Resist _____ + Other side _____ = + Improvement points spent _____ =

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The Dying Earth

Character Sheet

Character Name _____

Player _____

Series _____

2

Series level: Cugel Bonus size: 6

Tweaks	Ability and Style	Situation	Benefit	Points
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
Total Tweak pts				_____

Magic	Style	Rating	Pool	Points (= Rating x2)
	Spell	Range	Duration	Points
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____

Possessions	Item	Points
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
Total Possessions pts		_____

* Indicate "special" possessions with an asterisk (*).

Relationships

Personage 1	Name	Points
	Location, occupation	_____
	Style	Rating Pool
	Persuade	_____
	Rebuff	_____
	Significant abilities	_____
	_____	_____
	Relationship to you	_____

Personage 2	Name	Points
	Location, occupation	_____
	Style	Rating Pool
	Persuade	_____
	Rebuff	_____
	Significant abilities	_____
	_____	_____
	Relationship to you	_____

Points spent (this side):

Tweaks _____ + Magic rating _____ + Spells _____ + Possessions _____ + Personages _____ = (Enter total on other side)

Cugel's Corrigenda

Sad yet unavoidable circumstances forced the deletion of this worthy material from the *Dying Earth* supplement *Cugel's Compendium*. Life's tragic vicissitudes! Yet Pelgrane Press, through unstinting effort, now brings it to you freely and without immediate specific obligation! Of course, any gesture of gratitude you care to make, such as purchasing said supplement, would not be judged inappropriate by even the meanest dullard.



(Steve Dempsey, Jean-Baptiste Hebraud, lizard, and Ian Thomson)

Chapter 1: Magical Items

Caerwile's Capacious Commode

This is a bedpan of exquisite craftsmanship, with the outer rim decorated with figures from mythology and the underside decorated with polished jade insets. Though this artistry alone enhances even its mundane function, it has an additional ability. Upon the speaking of a single word, the contents vanish utterly, leaving the item utterly clean and without taint or odor—the perfect utility for a sophisticated gentleman or lady.

Sadly, there is a drawback. The mechanism by which the commode disposes of its contents is a simple teleportation spell, with the destination being the manse of a Magician loathed by the item's creator. Unfortunately, said Magician has mastered, at long last, the art of controlling sandestins. His first command will be the destruction of the foul relic and, not incidentally, its

possessor. Need we note that it is at roughly this time that the commode enters the hands of a hapless and unknowing player character?

Ever-Jam Teaspoons

Magician Tokish Pulkanish had three little girls. He had to them raise alone, as Madame Pulkanish unfortunately disappeared as a result of a laboratory "incident." To satisfy the children's gluttonous appetite for sweets, Tokish devised his Ever-Jam Teaspoons.

Simply dip one in a container of no more than a gallon of any liquid. The liquid instantly takes on all the properties of jam. The effect remains until the teaspoon is removed from the container. The jam flavor varies arbitrarily. The effect is illusory, so when a character tastes the jam, the GM makes a secret Magic roll. Success means the taster detects a bad taste, smell, or color. A taster unaware of the illusion feels completely sustained—at least until the effect ceases, whereupon his hunger returns unabated.

The Wheezing Gauntlet of Cigagna

This is a single white leather gauntlet woven with five gold threads. Its rumored first owner was Nomarch Nisrelin Cigagna, a famous Ascolais noble of the 18th Aeon. Cigagna was much appreciated for his dexterity and discretion; the mean-spirited would call him an assassin. He used his Gauntlet to purge oxygen from the throats of its unfortunate victims.

When the owner applies the Gauntlet to a living victim's mouth and crumples the glove in her fist, the victim instantly suffers suffocation, and must succeed in a Health roll or receive two injuries. The prominent wheeze accompanying the deadly attack sounds quite weird.

Cigagna disappeared suddenly, and the scanty records of the epoch leave no clue to his fate. The Gauntlet's subsequent owners might, perhaps, speculate, given the regrettable consequences of Dismal Failure while using the Gauntlet: It immediately grasps the face of its possessor. If the victim cannot succeed in a Magic roll, the Gauntlet sucks in her entire body except the clothes. If she tries to physically resist, only a Health roll with a penalty of 1 can save her from a hellish death.

Chapter 2: Mundane Items

Colinquace's Lazy Teeth (23 terces)

Are you too tired from your exertions on the Pleasure Barge to masticate your food, but wish nevertheless to avoid the dyspepsia commonly associated with underchewed morsels? Then look no futher than Colinquace's Lazy Teeth.

This device fits easily to the front of the face with adjustable hooks for the ears and nose. Its engine runs on nutilla nut oil, and the tall chimney ensures that all fumes are disgorged behind the diner.

The device is guaranteed to crush even the most stubborn dishes, reducing them to an paste without destroying flavor or nutritional value.

For the arrant sluggard, the paste can be directed via a small tube and a valve directly into the stomach. Why waste your mouth on chewing when it could be available for much more fulfilling pursuits?

Chapter 3: Cantraps

Effulgent Vitality

Function: Defying all physical inconveniences, this cantrap summons internal vitalities that grant a boon of 1 to the Health roll.

Gestures required: A tensing of the abdomen, accompanied by the recitation of a single arcane syllable.

Variations in effect: Dismal Failure inflicts a levy of 1 in place of the boon. On an Illustrious Success, all Health rolls over the next few minutes are so enlivened.

Inconvenience Lock

Function: There are numerous occasions when one might wish a secured portal to open promptly.

Gestures required: The caster presses his fingertips to the lock and twists them as if using a key.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure, the lock becomes jammed. On an Illustrious Success, the lock opens noiselessly.

See Cards

Function: The advantage of knowing which cards your fellow players hold needs no explanation, granting a boon of 1 to the first rolls of each contest over the following hour.

Gestures required: The entire deck must be held in clasped hands with arms outstretched, then swung in a wide circle.

Variations in effect: On a Dismal Failure, the cantrap gives false readings, resulting in a levy rather than a boon. On an Illustrious Success, the boon is increased to 2, as the normally difficult task of discerning the identity of all cards becomes much facilitated.

Chapter 4: Tweaks

Persuade, Glib

"My factotum will settle the bill"

Situation: You are presented with a bill of fare but do not have means to pay it.

Description: You blithely direct the bill-presenter's attention to one of your companions.

Benefit: The inquirer is persuaded that the poor target is responsible for all charges. The cost is 2 points from your Persuade pool. Of course, if the victim also has this tweak, he may use it at this point to deflect the bill to another victim. You may decide that this is a suitable time to leave the vicinity.

Etiquette

"Let me get that for you"

Situation: You are in combat and wish to make an expedient exit.

Description: When your enemy drops, breaks, or otherwise mislays an item during combat, you politely offer to retrieve it.

Benefit: You quickly pick up the item, then depart the scene, leaving the poor opponent waiting for the kind service. If you have caused the enemy to drop the item, there is no cost; otherwise, you spend 2 points from your Etiquette pool.