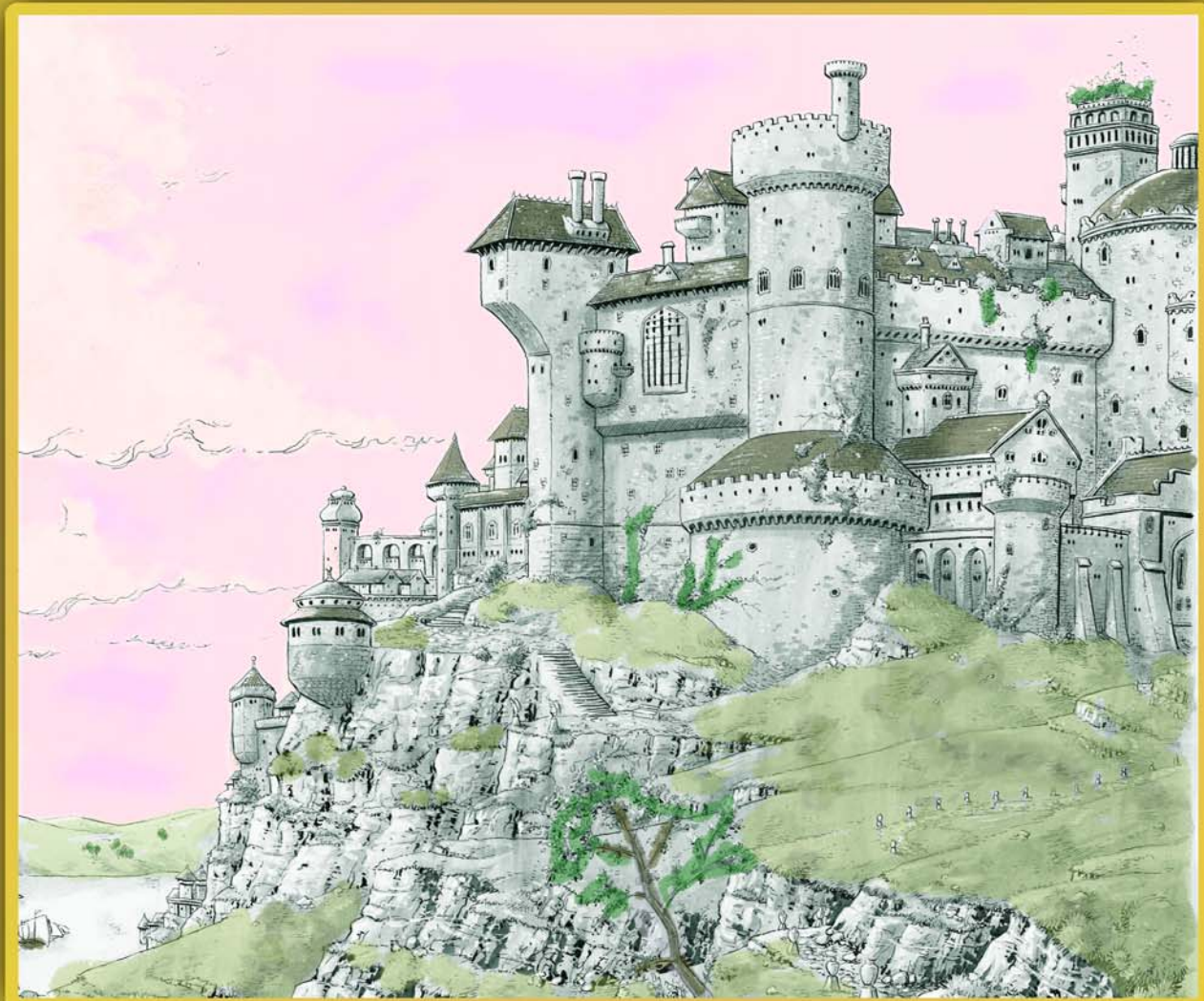


The
Dying Earth

Based on the work of Jack Vance

All's Fair at Azenomei

In the Footsteps of Fools: Part 1



By
Ian Thomson


Pelgrane Press

All's Fair at Azenomei" by Ian Thomson



Based on the Dying Earth Book Series by JACK VANCE

All's Fair at Azenomei

**A Cugel-Level Adventure for the Dying Earth Roleplaying Game
Written and Laid Out by Ian Thomson**

Credits

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Acknowledgements: "The Scaum Valley Gazetteer", Webster & Thomas (Pelgrane Press, 2002)

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Introduction

What You Will Need to Run This Scenario

This scenario is an adjunct to the author's *Guide to Azenomei* – which is available along with other free DERP G scenarios and resources at the 'Through Violet Cusps' page. (www.dyingearth.com/violetcusps.htm) Whilst the *Guide* is not technically 'essential' to run this scenario, it includes a wealth of background information on the town and its inhabitants. All of this will greatly enhance the depth and detail you can convey when running the scenario before you, plus can increase the gaming possibilities available - by providing the PCs with an extended fantasy milieu to explore. You will need the DERP G rulebook. Access to the *Scaum Valley Gazetteer* is helpful rather than critical.

The Start of an Adventure Series

This scenario introduces a series carrying your flawed heroes around various parts of the Dying Earth. If you are interested in operating such a Cugel-Level adventure series, consider running other available local adventures prior to this one. Here is the order of the house campaign 'Footsteps of Fools' so far (Vol. 0):

- 0.1 - *The Cooks of Cuirnif* (DERP G Rulebook – Pelgrane Press, 2001)
- 0.2 - *Lumarth/Caravan to Aktabras* (XPS Vol. 1, Dbl. Iss. 4/5 – Pelgrane Press, 2003¹)
- 0.3 - *The High Road to Kaiin* (free download at the Violet Cusps page)
- 0.4 - *A Walk in the Woods* (free download at the Violet Cusps page)
- 0.5 - *The Exasperating Cadaver* (free download at the Violet Cusps page)
- 0.6 - *The Day of the Quelo* (Convention module – may by now [Jan 06] or soon, be available at Violet Cusps)
- 0.7 - *The Quergib Frogs* (XPS Vol. 1, No. 3 – Pelgrane Press, 2001)
- 0.8 - *Axomber's Crypt* (free download at the Violet Cusps page)
- 0.9 - *The Kaiinese Drakeling* (free download at the Violet Cusps page)

The series takes the view that Cugel himself does not exist – ie the PCs themselves in many ways are 'Cugel'. This is not to say that situations that Cugel faced will be replicated, but there certainly will be some crossover encounters/situations. The series will begin as moderate Cugel-level and continue into advanced Cugel-level - in later stages offering the PCs the opportunity to graduate into Turjan-level gaming.

The evolution of a continuing series is dependent on the scenario before you achieving sales of at least minimal significance. Therefore, inform your friends and associates of the astounding quality of this resource, and stringently resist any thoughts of illegal and immoral gratis distributions. There are some amongst you that might wonder why you should pay for this scenario when others of almost equal quality and complexity are free at the author's Violet Cusps page. Consider those earlier works as tests, or free samples, if you will. Despite his love of the genre, paid projects are being offered and must take preference - so that the author can continue to enjoy a life of opulence and debauchery². Thus he sadly can no longer commit the considerable time required to write long role-playing adventures without any remuneration whatsoever.

We need hardly remind players that reading beyond this point will radically spoil enjoyment of this scenario.
[PRINTING pp 1-40: Double-sided (duplex). Cover & pp 42 onwards: Single-sided]

¹ By the time you are reading this, if XPS 4/5 is out of print, look for this article also on the Violet Cusps page.

² For 'opulence and debauchery' read 'sufficient for one square meal a day and a simple life'.



Conventions of Presentation

Within the following text on many occasions we will simply indicate the suitability of a given ability in a particular circumstance by inserting it within brackets with this symbol, thus: (Ψ WHEREWITHAL) or thus: (Ψ PERSUASION, SEDUCTION). [NB: an indication '-1' after such a skill means that it is not entirely appropriate and a penalty or levy of 1 need be applied at the GM's discretion.] Likewise we use abbreviations in place of the full title of success and failure results. (HBS - Hair's-Breadth Success, DF - Dismal Failure, etc). In some cases, success achievements are listed in ascending order, as a Prosaic Success (PS) expands on the information given in a Hair's-Breadth Success (HBS) etc. In such cases read out the entry for the character/s with the best roll, and tell any others that succeeded less well that their character knows similar but less precise detail. When reading such information out, simply begin at the lowest useful success and stop when the entry for the rolled success level is described. At some points within the text you will see the symbol '⊕'. This indicates a section of linkage text that the GM should read out. Some of this information is speech from GMCs, and other parts are the GM's scene-setting remarks to the players. You will of course read out other parts of the text, or summarise the information, in response to character actions or queries, but text marked '⊕' requires expressing at the appropriate moment - in order to explain or elaborate a situation, or link one scene to another.

DERPG is nothing if not flexible, especially at Cugel-Level. Therefore at many places in the following text we cover merely one likely example of activities the PCs may undertake, sometimes suggesting other possibilities. Each GM will need to adjust and improvise according to the whims and actions of their own PCs, especially when it comes to cheating during the challenges.

In many instances the text descriptions that follow presume that the PCs take a particular course of action. As is the nature of DERPG, they may do something utterly unexpected. Since we cannot account for every eventuality, in such cases the GM must adapt the text to suit the specific actions of the PCs, using our suggestions merely as guidelines.





Scenario Overview

The Great Fair

“Once every year, at the start of summer, Azenomei holds its annual ‘Great Fair’, and this event attracts not only traders of great renown, but also royalty and other notables from as far as Kaiin. This is the only time that the entire fairground is filled, and the town council makes considerable funds through renting out the prime positions and levying a tax on all goods bought and sold beyond a certain price limit. Naturally, this vast market attracts professional thieves and confidence tricksters in equal proportion to the genuine merchants.” (From: “The Guide to Azenomei”)

Azenomei is normally a quiet town, and some that are used to the cut and thrust of Kaiin have even described its citizens as ‘listless’ or ‘overly-restrained’. However, those who make such remarks tend to be vagabonds and scallywags, whose over-eager ways are frowned upon by the sensible folk of Azenomei. All manner of folk can be found here; for it is the most cosmopolitan place in the Scaum Valley – even allowing a subculture of ‘squatters’ to exist in the abandoned manses of the Backs. During the monthly fair (especially at the annual Great Fair) the town is heaving with travellers and joyful locals alike.

New in Town

Should you be in possession of the free (www.dyingearth.com/violetpusps.htm) *Guide to Azenomei*, this section will be simplicity itself to run. The PCs must obtain accommodation in this overcrowded town, and also gain the chance to explore its precincts. Should you already have run *Axomber's Tomb*, that scenario set up the idea that the PCs have already dwelt in Azenomei for some time – at least for a while. In such a case, merely agree that the PCs have a small knowledge of persons and places in town. However, explain that on their previous stay they did little other than lounge around in whatever level of decadence or penury presented itself. Therefore the intricacies and minutiae of the town passed them by.

The Set-Up – We here avail ourselves of a tried and tested introductory technique, in which the PCs take on roles originally intended for far more experienced and crafty adventurers than themselves. They do this for reasons of pure and simple personal gain – and the way in which this occurs (without appearing to be overly obvious GM machination) is clearly detailed.

The Great Fair – Next the PCs have the chance to explore the fair itself, sample its colour, take part in amusements, and face various opportunities to be robbed or swindled. Additionally, the PCs will all take part in the challenges to become the ‘Monarch of the Fair’. (Which carries with it a substantial and highly attractive reward.) This section makes up the bulk of the following adventure.

Introduction for Players

⊕ “Somewhat more than a week’s march from Kaiin, the large town of Azenomei lies at the junction of the Xzan and Scaum rivers. Here the ancient houses stand on wide terraces on the north bank of the Scaum, so while residents further from the river lack in proximity to the town’s concourse they gain in superb views. After Val Ombrio, the town is widely regarded as the second greatest settlement of Almeri. Azenomei is most well known for its monthly fair. This is basically an expansion on the weekly market for local and regional produce, but has over the centuries also attracted various entertainments that turn it into an event that draws people from the surrounding settlements. Most attractive of all, to locals and travellers alike, is the Great Fair held close to Midsummer every year. Merchants travel to every fair from as far as Kaiin, but the most prestigious come only to the Great Fair. At this time of year the town is packed to bursting, and opportunities for the wily entrepreneur are almost innumerable. Perhaps not totally by coincidence, you approach Azenomei one day before the Great Fair is officially due to commence.”

(This text immediately above can be copied and handed out before the game, or merely read out loud at the start.)



Scene 1: Nearly There

⊕ “As you pass alongside woodlands and fields, you notice many overgrown ruins long before you reach signs of habitation. A few of these have been rebuilt as stores or cottages for farm labourers, but most would provide little if any shelter from the elements. Azenomei itself is soon visible, standing on all sides of the confluence of the rivers Xzan and Scaum. Even from this distance, the picturesque gables and gently-smoking chimney stacks give a friendly feel to the place – something sadly lacking in Kaiin.”

It is at this point that the first significant event of the scenario occurs, although it should be played straight (rather than filled with obvious emphasis). Players may suspect its significance, but run it as if it is merely occurring for additional colour:

⊕ “Various folk have passed you on the road, mostly locals going about their normal business. But now from behind comes the sound of persons riding upon steeds of quality.”

The GM needs to ad-lib the descriptions here, dependent on the appearance and gender of the PC group. This is because the riders are similar to the PC party. The main differences are that these newcomers are better dressed and better equipped (including each of them being mounted on an actual ‘horse’), and that the PCs are outnumbered by 1. Do not labour the similarities, merely design your description to reflect the PCs in a general fashion, as this is an not a plot-critical distinction. The leader of the new group will throw up his hand, and that entire group will stop. The leader will then address the PCs in a slightly arrogant tone. *“Though ragamuffins you do appear, I sense that you are persons of the road perhaps with a wide knowledge of these parts. Pray, tell me the directions to the manse of Iucounu the so-called ‘Laughing Magician’.”* If a PC is able to furnish the newcomers with directions, their leader flips a shiny new terce into the air from atop thumb and forefinger. (Expecting the PC who answered to catch it - Ψ ATHLETICS.) If the PCs are unable to help, the leader will mutter *“Peasants!”* in a

marginally annoyed tone, and lead the others onwards.

Pedantry – Iucounu

DF – No doubt an arrogant local dabbler.

QF – Perhaps a jovial and popular local prankster of some minor magical capacity.

EF – Although I do seem to recall that his jokes are of the darker variety.

HBS – And that his very name evokes fear in those whom risk evoking his disfavour.

PS – In fact he has no friends at all, and few enemies – few living that is.

IS – He lives in his manse Pergolo on a hill to the east of Azenomei.

During this encounter the PCs may wish to engage the other travellers in conversation. The travellers may reveal their names (GM invents), expecting the PCs to know of them (Ψ PEDANTRY) as successful adventurers and treasure seekers. They may also, if engaged in an appropriate fashion, mention that their business involves applying appropriate revenges for wrongs done upon an associate of theirs. (Most of this is beyond the scope of this adventure. Suffice it to say that these superior adventurers have been duped into thinking that they are capable of putting Iucounu in his place, and will shortly meet a sticky end.)

If asked whether they are planning to enter the contests to become ‘Monarch of the Fair’, they all burst out laughing – and the laughter appears to have a sinister quality. *“Some believe so,”* says the leader. They will not stay to say more, as they have important business to attend to.

When this encounter is over, the PCs can continue into Azenomei:



⊕ “No city walls exist, and you soon pass into the roomy outer streets. Most houses are detached from one another, and many have fenced vegetable plots growing in the spaces between. Some places are doing so well that residents are even selling their excess produce from trestle tables at the edge of their property.”

Pause – to allow any Player comments or PC incidental actions

⊕ “Even this far from the marketplace, the town is quite busy, and the closer you get to the fair, the more people there are. Fortunately, it never becomes necessary to rudely force one’s way through a packed throng. Nonetheless one’s progress is often diverted by groups of locals or travellers standing chatting or admiring merchandise on display outside one of the shops. Clearly the festivities have already begun.”

Scene 2: New in Town

The Teeming Town

Azenomei is bustling about the concourse and the fairground. Other parts remain relatively quiet, especially as one moves away from the town centre. Describe the hustle and bustle as PCs wander the thronging sections, but remember that Azenomei is spacious, so packed crowds are not the norm, and only occur around the stalls, sideshows and most popular shops. Gangs of men are erecting barricades made of bales of straw up and down several streets (see the ‘Running of the Bauk’ later). At the fairground itself (if the PCs go there) teams of labourers are erecting the various stalls, and the poorer merchants are merely arranging with town guildsmen as to which of the marked plots they can rent for their tables.

2.1 – Finding Accommodation

Local Hostelries – Almost everywhere in town is full, and PCs will be rudely turned away. As suggested in the *Guide to Azenomei*, the Lorn Meropidan is one possibility for accommodation, and the Rampant Erb a slightly better option. However, do not feed these possibilities to the PCs. They will need to find and investigate them through their own efforts - and wandering about town should be part of the scenario.

Sleeping Rough - The weather is clement, and the countryside relatively safe. However, what are Resistances (particularly Arrogance, Gourmandism, & Indolence) for if not to motivate your PCs to try to their utmost to find a comfortable room for the night with a good meal and a fine breakfast? Only if

all reasonable attempts fail (or through sheer luck a PC makes at least two of the three Resistance rolls mentioned above) will they settle for some meagre accommodation in the camp (see below) or some ruin on the edge of town.

The Camp - A number of people traditionally make an encampment on the south bank of the Xzan just north of the fair. This place has the manner of a gypsy camp, with lean-to’s, tents, and tarpaulins providing shelter from the weather. (Though fortunately at the time of the Great Fair, the worst weather is usually no more than a quick shower, or a chill before dawn.) This is not reputable accommodation for persons of refinement, and a roll to Resist Arrogance is required before one might settle for a space here. (One is also expected to gather firewood, assist with cooking and the digging of latrines, and other ignoble pursuits, thus failure to Resist Indolence might result in one’s expulsion from the community.) The encampment surrounds a large ruined keep, and the elders of the temporary community pick the best spots within its walls.

A Ruined Manse - More likely as a last resort, the PCs will find a ruin on the edge of town and make the best of its limited hospitality. So early in the piece they will not be troubled by half-men (which are rarely seen this close to town). Likewise, the town’s constables are too busy with other duties during the fair itself to have time to bother new squatters. (Though after the fair they move around swiftly – seeking backdated ‘donations’ from those too slack-witted to have quickly left town.)



Assorted Roguery - Should your PCs be destitute, they may move into their well-rehearsed practices of gambling, confidence scams, and petty-theft. Run these as best fits your game. Remember that Azenomei is currently packed with travellers, including many rogues and rascals just like themselves. GMs may wish to impose levies on gambling successes due to the preponderance of cardsharps and deputy constables in town at the moment.

2.2 – Learning About the Contests

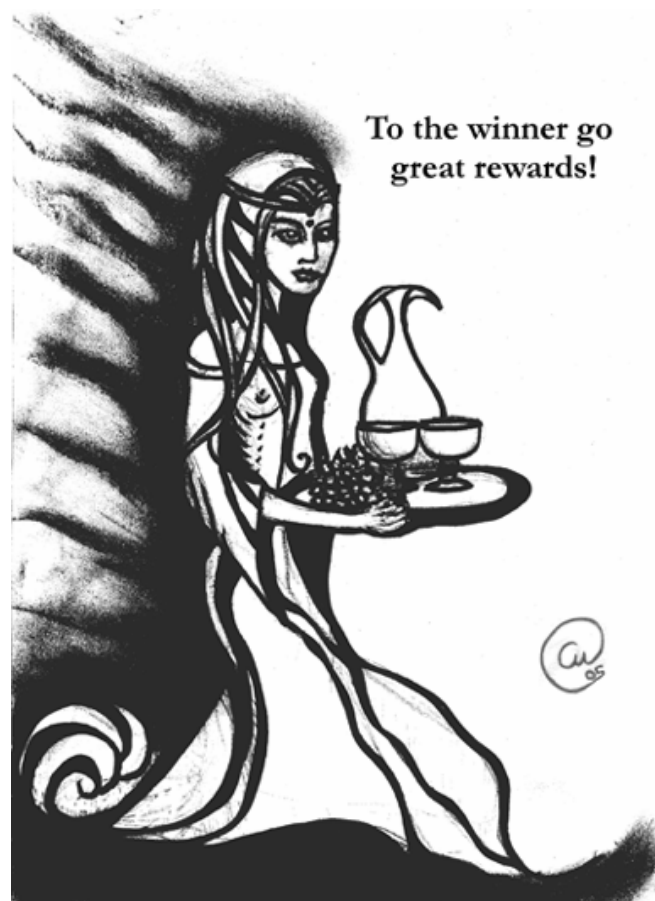
The Lure – From now on, the GM needs to be subtly (and perhaps not so subtly) sowing in the minds of each Player/PC the benefits of entering and winning the contests. If any one of them were to become Monarch of the Fair, this person would gain the freedom on Azenomei, and a life of luxury for a whole year is guaranteed. Also, by association their other PC associates would gain fine accommodation and access to the wealth.

GMs must not underestimate the power of this driving force for our penniless rogues. Initial Resistance rolls (Avarice/Arrogance) can be called for - if any PC wishes not to dedicate themselves to pursuing this possibility by any means. Anyone who fails, or who chooses not to roll, becomes devoted to this task. This state of affairs need not be overstressed in play – merely begin casually encouraging the players of such PCs at suitable moments. (Emphasising the benefits that the winner will accrue – compared to the less than adequate life currently being ‘enjoyed’.)

Those who roll and do Resist are not so inspired, but of course remain interested in the possibility. Other Resistances can be called for later when applicable. Note that until they come across the information that only a few days ago Iucounu was looking for several persons as entrants to the Challenges they will probably: (a) presume that only one of them is likely to enter, and (b) that the others will be supporting this person behind the scenes. It is also possible that the PCs may feel – after initial investigation – that there is no chance of success. Let this despondency last until they overhear or uncover rumours of Iucounu.

Everyone in town will be talking about the forthcoming challenges, wondering what manner of champions will be fielded this year and what challenges they will face. Bookmakers are taking bets on the number of fatalities and woundings that will take place in the ‘Running of the Bauk’ tomorrow. (They will prepare books on the contestants immediately after the registration that follows the Bauk run.) The following information must be gathered through appropriate conversation, not fed to Players by the GM.

Timing – The fair starts tomorrow, with the Running of the Bauk commencing at noon. Registration for those suitable candidates who wish to enter the Contest follows in the early evening. The six challenges then take place on the immediately subsequent three days, with one in the morning and one in the afternoon.





Scuttlebutt/Pedantry – Monarch of the Fair

DF – Err?

QF – A contest of sorts, reputedly held in Azenomei, or was it Cuirnif?

EF – Yes, definitely Azenomei. An annual series of challenges where competitors strive to win points.

HBS – Each challenge measures physical or mental capacity, and judges declare the results.

PS – The challenges vary each year, though occasionally some are repeated; and the winner of each challenge receives a prize – either a minor magical item or some other valuable. The overall winner is crowned Monarch of the Fair and given freedom of the town for a year.

IS – The winner's reward amounts to a large cash gratuity (5,000t), a monthly stipend of a further 1,000t, a free suite of apartments with servants. Plus their sponsor gains a seat on the town council. The two runners-up also gain a not negligible cash reward.

Scuttlebutt – The Origins of the Challenges

From HBS onwards, read out connected entries, ending at the best rolled result.

DF – The person you asked was a visitor posing as a local. Whilst he pretended to compose his thoughts and began glibly manufacturing confusing obfuscations, his associate stole terces from your purse before spilling beer over you and loudly accusing you of making improper suggestions. In the following confusion both thieves slipped away.

QF – Locals have taken a dislike to you, and each story you hear is less likely than the first. Not only that but you narrowly escape a beating at the hands of bullies.

EF – All of those that you ask are too drunk or stupid to furnish you with useful information, though the general consensus is that the challenges predate historical records.

HBS – The Duchess's grandfather, Chimlak the Historian, devised the challenges after uncovering ancient references to a similar festival held when Azenomei was a thriving new city in the previous aeon.

PS – That previous event celebrated the menfolk of the town as solid labourers and protectors of the womenfolk, and was used as the means to elect the leader of the town council for the year. Duke Chimlak restructured the tradition to make the winning position an honorary one, and the council membership a junior position for the wealthy sponsor rather than the winner.

IS – It is also widely believed that although the prizes were significant, the entry fees and increased business (and consequent taxation) left Chimlak with a healthy profit.

The Rules of the Challenges

The challenges are open only to non-magicians. Spells and magical items are not permitted as part of the proceedings. Young men in prime health are the typical entrants, though the Duchess changed the rules about fifty years ago so that a woman could also enter. On several occasions since then a female has managed to become a contestant. Nine years ago one such woman actually won the challenges, much to the delight of the Duchess.

It does not matter where the champion comes from, as long as he (or she) has a local sponsor who is fiscally solvent and a citizen of Azenomei. Only one entrant is possible per sponsor. Entrants must be human. (GM Note: a vat-bred PC will qualify unless totally and undeniably an inhuman construct.) Entrants must prove bravery and suitability in the eyes of the Fates, by surviving the *Running of the Bauk*, before being able to register.

The Other Contestants

Though the sponsors are known (see **Appendix 4.2**), the identities of their champions are closely guarded secrets. Only upon registration will they be revealed. The kind of people that enter are more typically bluff well-dressed fellows than scruffy and resilient adventurer types, as those local sponsors who enter a 'rogue of the road' as their champion suffer enormous social disapproval from then on. (GM Note: This is all in the manner of 'tradition', and this year will actually see tradition flouted significantly, for personal gain.) If the PCs try to find out the skill levels of previous contestants, they will hear fine stories of strength and skill. However, Resistances against Avarice and Arrogance must be rolled if any Player wishes their PC to realistically assess themselves as less-than-deserving of equally fine praise. Although sponsors may field only one champion, each sponsor often pays half a dozen or more a substantial stipend to brave the *Running of the Bauk*. (Then the sponsor chooses which champion they will register from any that survive intact.)



General Knowledge: The Rewards

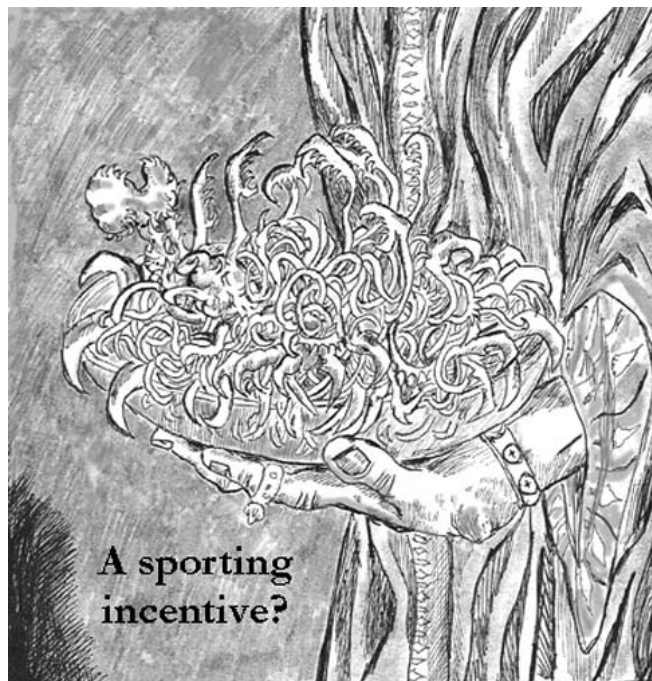
The winner of each individual challenge receives a special prize, usually a valuable magical item. These prizes for each individual challenge vary each year, but are always significant items. Previous rewards have included: a large gem that glowed constantly; a golden bow that fired on its own; a small magical tome; a miniature brass sheep that turned into a full-sized steed on command; a set of clothes that were always clean; a magical dining set that produced a sumptuous meal on command; stones that stored spells; a set of cusps that allowed views of an idyllic world; an amulet that warned of the approach of half-men; a tame pelgrane – and many more according to the GM's inventiveness.

The overall reward remains constant. The winner is crowned Monarch of the Fair and given freedom of the town for a year - which amounts to a large cash gratuity (5,000t), a monthly stipend of a further 1,000t, and a free suite of apartments with servants. Their sponsor gains a minor seat on the town council. In the past the 'Monarch' has sometimes been a stately figure, blending into society seamlessly and after his tenure remaining as a respectable member of the new nobility. Other times he has been more industrious, using his temporary status to build up mercantile interests in order to forge a sustainable future in Azenomei.

Other 'monarchs' have been less commendable: taking advantage of their status to house roguish acquaintances in their apartments, squandering their stipend on gourmandism and debauchery, and at the end of their tenure being abruptly expelled from the town precincts – sometimes quietly in the middle of the night with strict instructions never to return. The rights and restrictions of becoming Monarch of the Fair are few – merely opening the monthly fairs and attending a variety of prestigious social functions. (All things likely to appeal to ambitious PCs.)

It is at this stage that the GM should slyly (and without over-emphasis) reveal that not only does the winner receive 10,000 terces and the title and benefits of becoming Monarch of the Fair – but the third place contestant receives 2500t and the second place contestant 5000t. All this should

be enough to set cunning plans in motion – since even if a PC does not expect to win, much is available to be gained through prizes and awards for competing well & being among the runners up.



Finding out About the Challenges Themselves

Specific challenges for any year are also kept secret until the last moment. The town council finally decides on the exact events only a week or so before the contest, although they have a list of options developing over several weeks. Secrecy is paramount, and magic is used to seal those involved to oaths of silence. Since this adventure is Cugel-Level and the PCs are new to town, they have no access to those in authority that might accidentally reveal any details. Should PCs pursue such an option, explain that had they even a few days to try and inveigle themselves into local confidences this might be possible. However, since the challenges start tomorrow, there is simply no time. However, the structure of the challenges is common knowledge, and asking around with persistence and a modicum of politeness will reveal much general information – see **Appendix 2**.



Scene 3: Finding a Sponsor

Although registration follows the Running of the Bauk, it is almost immediately afterwards. Thus PCs have only tonight and tomorrow morning until noon to ingratiate themselves into the goodwill of a local notable. This may be a good time to recall that the GM needs to be regularly extolling the attractions of entering the contests and becoming Monarch of the Fair. Although initially the PCs may think that they have little chance of being sponsored, nonetheless subtly encourage their determination to make their best attempt.

After all, they are highly deserving folk of the world, surely it is their very right to take advantage of this golden opportunity for social greatness? They might even enter into a pact to support each other – or a specific one of their number – in the contests, to the detriment of the other contestants. If necessary, encourage the Players to discuss this in character – with each PC fully aware that they totally deserve such an honour as recompense for the cruel hand fate has dealt them up until this point. Encourage the players to believe that all PCs are at least interested (it would be utterly out of character if they were not), and any that actually failed their resistance rolls (see earlier) are determinedly devoted to the idea – certain that their dedication alone will cause opportunities to manifest.



Questioning locals will uncover several folk known to have shown an interest in fielding candidates (see **Appendix 4.1**). However, all of these have been successful in doing so some time ago. Only one person is known to still have been recently seeking a candidate, and has been unable (as far as is known) to find one – Iucounu the Laughing Magician. He was still looking for several candidates, even posting a reward, but such is his reputation as a powerful figure that nobody was interested.

That is not entirely true, some local folk were interested, but felt that they were perhaps risking disappointing the Laughing Magician if they gave a poor performance in the challenges. (NB: If PCs ponder that they also might give a poor performance, call for Resistance rolls against Arrogance. If this roll is not successful, they dismiss such a possibility out of hand. After all, are they not persons of breeding and natural character, and a competence born of wide experience!) Anyone who speaks of Iucounu looks around before doing so, and talks in guardedly respectful tones. None will have a conversation of any length about Iucounu, fearing his wrath if they are overheard. Typical comments are:

"There is but one I have heard who may still seek a champion, but he is someone that few dare to approach uninvited."

"To the east of the town, the fine manse of Pergolo stands upon the side of a hill. Its owner was seeking his champion as late as last week. I know of no other, but this is not an option I for one would be willing to explore."

"Iucounu is a pillar of the community, a magician of great renown. I know of no-one who would speak ill of him."

"His sense of humour is memorable, yet I would not wish to trade jests with a mage of his formidable wit and resource."

"It seems that he was seeking several candidates. Presumably he wished to have them all run against the bauk so that he could then select the best. Or perhaps he was acting on behalf of others who all wished to field a champion."



The idea is that the PCs should be tempted to seek Lucounu out themselves - understanding that he is an unpleasant fellow, but learning that when he employs people to do a job, providing his employees do their best to fulfil it he does not turn into some murderous monster if they fail. Certainly he has a mean temper and is thoroughly unpleasant to those who cross him, but the PCs won't know what a real nasty character he is until after they meet him. The PCs might be led to believe that the reason he has found no candidates is simply that no persons of sufficient calibre were forthcoming. Players themselves might realise that there is more to this than meets the eye, and may need to be reminded of the difference between 'cynical and knowledgeable Players' and 'avaricious and arrogant PCs'.

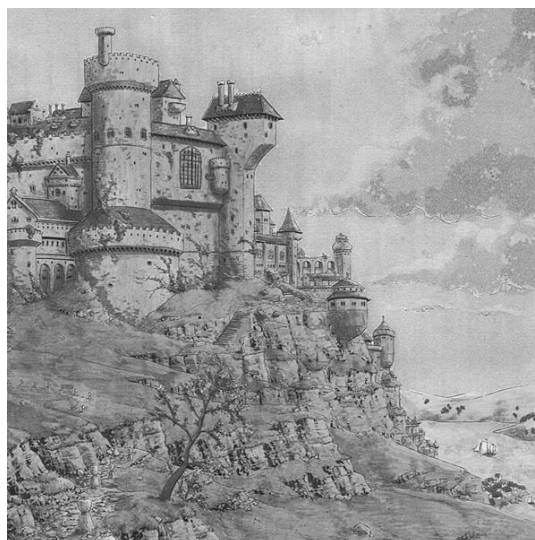
Pergolo

The PCs will ideally have no alternative but to visit Lucounu's manse 'Pergolo'. In the preliminary ('0' series) *Footsteps of Fools* campaign the majority of the players were unfamiliar with the DE stories (though nonetheless oddly expert at role-playing Cugelesque rogues). If your players are familiar with Lucounu, they may not wish their PCs to go anywhere near Pergolo. Respectfully remind such players that the PCs themselves know only as much about Lucounu as they have learned in town. Even PCs who have come to understand that a certain fearful respect of Lucounu exists in town are, like Cugel, more probably going to continue to act with misplaced optimism. (Rather than cowering being a flagon of ale concocting stories they will tell of the time they failed to grasp a golden opportunity for wealth and recognition.)

Pergolo, the magnificently-gabled manse of Lucounu the Laughing Magician, is situated to the north east of Azenomei and is reached by following a trail out of town or another up from the river near the village of riverfolk (see the *Guide to Azenomei*). Each journey takes about an hour going up and about 45 minutes coming down. The path from the river community is a winding way paved with dark brown tiles, and the path from the edge of Azenomei itself is merely a rough trail until it joins the paved path at around its mid-point. The

manse itself boasts twisted turrets of green glass and many fanciful parapets built into its gothic structure. (NB: If the PCs proceed up or down the path to Pergolo during the hours of darkness, it would not be inappropriate for them to encounter a deodand – or another type of anthropophage detailed in the Bestiary. This being has wandered into the area and been drawn to Azenomei by the sound and scent of so much prey.)

A heavy wooden door is situated at the middle of the entry-keep, in easy access at the end of the path. Just before the keep a 30ft wide and deep ditch opens onto jagged rocks. A sturdy stone bridge crosses it before the keep itself. For the agile it is possible also to gain access to the manse by clambering through one of several windows that can be reached with relative ease at the front of the keep. One can also pass around the manse (except that parts that overhang the cliff) and come across a number of windows through which one can peer (but not reach due to the dangerous ditch). Nobody and nothing will respond to any knocking on the door. The PCs may scramble across parapets and climb in at a window near to the door, clamber up to a higher balcony and enter there, or merely open the door. Whatever they do, they will wander through a few intriguing rooms (see below for the actual things Cugel encountered, and expand as required) and then arrive at the Great Hall of treasures. (If they are too nervous to actually enter, then they can see much of this from outside when they reach the appropriate window.)





Wonders and curiosities of Pergolo

A small pot with antlers, which emits clouds of remarkable gasses when the prongs are tweaked; an ivory horn through which sound voices from the past; a small stage where costumed imps stand ready to perform comic antics; an object like a cluster of crystal grapes, each affording a blurred view into one of the demon-worlds; a baton sprouting sweetmeats of assorted flavour; an ancient ring engraved with runes; a black stone surrounded by nine zones of impalpable colour; hundreds of jars of powders and liquids; vessels containing preserved heads. Shelves stacked with volumes, folios and librams - some bound in purple velvet (Phandaal's characteristic colour). Folios of drawings and ancient maps, and a score of small metal chests, sealed with corroded bands of great age; several massive engines whose purpose is not immediately apparent. (TDE: pp136/7)]

Getting the PCs involved: Option A

As you can see by the list above, Pergolo is full of valuables. It is possible, especially if players are unfamiliar with Vance's *Dying Earth* stories, that PCs may abandon their wish for employment and instead begin to fill their sacks with treasures. It may be possible for some GMs to utilise the same trap that Cugel fell foul of:

“Here was an alcove Cugel had not previously noted. A soft light welled like water against the crystal pane, which separated alcove from hall. A niche to the rear displayed a complicated object of great charm. As best Cugel could distinguish, it seemed a miniature carousel on which rode a dozen beautiful dolls of seeming vitality. The object was clearly of great value, and Cugel was pleased to find an aperture in the crystal pane. He stepped through, but two feet before him a second pane blocked his way, establishing an avenue which evidently led to the magic whirligig. Cugel proceeded confidently, only to be stopped by another pane which he had not seen until he bumped into it. Cugel retraced his steps and to his gratification found the doubtlessly correct entrance a few feet back. But this new avenue led him by several right angles to another blank pane. Cugel decided to forego acquisition of the carousel and depart the castle. He turned, but discovered himself to be a trifle confused. He had come from his left—or was it his right?” (TDE: p137)

Any PC that has already begun thieving will have to Resist Avarice not to enter this room off the Great Hall in an attempt to gain the complicated object. Or perhaps Magic resistance is required – since it is a magical trap? It is also possible that the panes in fact move, and so even a trail of rope or sand would be useless after a few rounds.

Should all, or some, of the PCs be trapped here, Iucounu will return. The front door will bang open, and PCs may (Ψ PERCEPTION) hear somebody (Iucounu) muttering. The voice is a mixture of grumbling and cackling laughter, almost as if the person to whom it belongs can't decide if they are amused or angry. The PCs may try to hide (Ψ CONCEALMENT) or sneak away (Ψ STEALTH), but whatever they do Iucounu will find at least some of them. He currently has encompassed only 'Felojun's Second Hypnotic' (DERPG: p107) and the 'Omnipotent Sphere' (DERPG: p108). He also knows the cantraps³: 'Artman's Mundane Concealment', 'Quort's Leaping Rapier', 'Spontaneous Mirth', 'Todman's Temporary Replicant', 'Voodle's Bogus Physiognomy' and 'Voodle's Distant Voice'. Between them, these things should be enough to defend him and secure the restraint of the PCs. If not, simply invent a few magical items: such as rope that automatically ties people up, sylphs that fly after fleeing intruders and subdue them with narcotic breath, gargoyles with stony unbreakable grips, even his pet Ettis may be given an uncanny tracking ability.

The reason why Iucounu is evidencing ambivalence is that only a few minutes before he arrived he went to meet his chosen 'champions' and almost fell foul of a trap designed to bring about his death. Through astute and swift use of: The Charm of Brachial Fortitude, The Excellent Prismatic Spray, The Liberation of Warp, the Interminable Interim and Edan's Thaumaturgic Poultrice (in that order) he avoided this fate. But in doing so slew all (bar one) of the champions he was relying on to enter and win the contests for him.

³ The article containing these cantraps is available for free from the author's 'Through Violet Cusps' page.



With all that in mind, play the chuckling Iucounu as extremely sinister as he considers the fate of thieves. *“What shall I do with you? A number of contrasting fates present themselves for consideration. Burial beneath the surface of the Earth at a depth of 45 miles, instant incineration, or perhaps transportation to the dismal reaches of Shanglestone Strand?”* Ideally the PCs will beg for a chance to redeem themselves, and Iucounu will hit upon the idea of using them as his champions. (They may even suggest it themselves.) In order to be sure that they will stand by any agreement they reach (see Option B), Iucounu will collect a number of squirming, pronged semi-corporeal Achernarians from his laboratory and merge one into the viscera of each PC⁴. As incentive, he will still allow them to keep any prizes they win during the challenges, but brooks no further persuasions.

Getting the PCs involved: Option B

This option is far less amusing, but we must give the PCs a chance to ‘do the right thing’. If they restrain their nefarious impulses for an hour and ten minutes, Iucounu will arrive back – as described above. Once again, he has narrowly escaped assassination and is in a ‘mixed’ mood. He will initially suspect them as being assassins, which could cause some moments of tension. Whilst he will not actually apologise as such for any slander or attacks, he will remark that whilst genuine unexpected visitors are extremely rare, thieves often attempt to plunder his manse (chuckle), and sometimes drastic measures (snicker) are required. Thus he admits that perhaps he reacted a trifle hastily.

He will listen to their proposal that they become his champions, and will ask them why they consider themselves worthy of the task. In reality, so close to the deadline, he has no other choice, and will grant them the position. He already paid handsomely for the group of champions that was sent from Kaiin, and they betrayed him. Now he relishes the slim chance to claw back victory for his

plan to get a seat on the city council⁵. As reward he will pay the entry fee for each PC, allow them to retain any prizes that they win, and furthermore give them 200t cash, plus 100 terces for every point they win in the challenges. Somewhere around now, a PC will likely think to ask how it is that Iucounu can field more than one candidate. This will cause him to laugh long and loud, but not to answer the question. After his laughing has subsided he will merely ask them to present themselves to the starting line for the *Running of the Bank* tomorrow, and things will continue from there.

They may also ask what advantages Iucounu can grant them to give them an edge towards possibly winning out in the contests. The Laughing Magician will guffaw, and say that indeed he has a few tricks up his sleeve; however, these will be revealed only on a need-to-know basis as they are required. He does admit that he cannot enhance them with regular magic, because the Duchess and her Magician detect for these (as does Huzanter), and will be extra vigilant during the challenges.

Getting the PCs involved: Option C

Being as pesky and unpredictable as they are, the PCs may utterly neglect to visit Pergolo in order to seek the employ of Iucounu on their own motivation. If so do not press the matter overmuch. Instead a shifty-looking fellow – an agent of the Laughing Magician, will approach them later in the evening. This man has been approaching other groups of folk on Iucounu’s behalf, but not revealing the identity of his employer. Instead, he says only that he seeks a group of resourceful and experienced adventurers for a job that is totally legal according to the letter of the law, yet sufficiently grey as to require persons of discretion and flexibility. The others he has approached have all been insufficiently flexible (drunkards, even less skilled rogues, overly-

⁴ For details on the full and intricate effects of this, see ‘The Eyes of the Overworld’.

⁵ It isn’t important, likely, or even necessary, that the PCs ever know the full machinations of Iucounu’s plans or motivations. Although he may mutter vaguely of the opportunities for high quality jokes that this will afford him, and chances for fitting revenge upon certain persons.



demanding for reward etc etc.) He offers payments as suggested above and lets them know that the basic job will take only a few days, and when they have agreed to general terms he tells them to go and see Iucounu up at Pergolo.

Going Back to Town

Iucounu says that he will accompany them part way back to town, though he does not say why. Shortly



Townsfolk carouse whilst villains expire!

before the junction of the path to town and the path to the river are signs of a battle. Specifically, two dead humans lie crushed beneath a large boulder next to the path, the remains of a third can be made out since his (or her?) ankles and feet remain in their boots – the rest being spattered in a wide fan behind them. A fourth person (the leader) stands motionless in a lunging stance with a rapier outstretched. If there was another assassin, Iucounu does not know so. The PCs may choose to tell him, or not.

Iucounu pauses here, and laughs deep and loud again. “Ah yes,” he says. “Assassins. Well, I know how to deal with assassins.” Then he turns to the PCs and wishes them “Good Day”, clearly expecting them to depart back to town. Once they are out of sight, they hear him laughing again, then a human shriek. In the gloom they see the man (no longer in stasis) rise into the air, spinning slowly around. The spinning gradually increases, and he begs for mercy. This begging turns into one long wail of agony as the spinning increases until he becomes just a blur. Then, his body bursts asunder and parts fly everywhere. In the sudden silence, the PCs can hear Iucounu laughing hysterically. (Warning: squishy organs may descend from the skies, as might segments of human entrails.)

Scene 4: Day One

Even though the Bauk event doesn’t begin until noon, all general shops are closed until this evening (after the barricades have been dismantled). A local ordinance ensures that no shopkeepers adjacent to the track gain or lose profit unfairly compared to those further away. The atmosphere in town is nonetheless one of high festivity.

4.1 The Running of the Bauk

Upon joining the gathering crowds as the morning progresses, the PCs can quickly learn where the would-be runners need to congregate. This is at the junction of Xzanside Road and Duchess Street. Here is a podium, and officials will pass three large garlands of flowers to anyone who wishes to make the grand run. Each garland is distinctively and

individually (and fortunately sturdily) constructed of flowers and coloured ribbons. The PCs will see Iucounu here in the crowd, partially disguised beneath a broad-brimmed hat, and he will nod and smile at them in a conspiratorial fashion. If a PC approaches him, Iucounu will be very annoyed if they do so too obviously. Nonetheless, at some point he will condescend to speak briefly with them. (If none approach him he will signal one to come over.) “My plans are progressing in a satisfactory manner. Begin the run with the others, and all of you behave in all ways as you normally would. My enchantments will assist each of your efforts.” Moments later they will notice him slipping away down the side of Duchess Street (outside the barricades of course) after which he will be lost in the crowds.



The Contestants

Billig Minlop

He is not particularly athletic, and is a little older than the rest of the contestants. He wears a thick grey woollen vest and heavy blue serge trousers, and is often seen mopping his brow with a kerchief.

Groglan Hodger

He wears dark brown trousers, and a red vest. His bald head is protected from the sun by an orange kerchief. He seems cheery and confident.

Killip Erwintranz

Long black hair and striped black and white trousers, with a neat brown leather jerkin. His manner is aloof.

Lyandros of Sferre [*]

Shiny black boots enhance his scarlet trousers, and his crimson cape adorns the back of a brown jerkin decorated with patterns of silver threads. (As per notes in **Appendix 4.2**, replace him with Liane the Wayfarer if desired.)

Mertok of Cuirnif

A solid man with a bowl-shaped haircut of thick black locks. He wears tightly fitting hose about his legs and a long green tunic. He seems nervous.

Quatto Lupworg [*]

A hulking brute - a full head and shoulders taller than any other contestant listed here, and equally as wide. He wears leather trousers and huge boots, and his finely worked leather waistcoat hangs open to reveal his magnificently muscled torso.

Rantagor of Old Romarth

A tall and gangling fellow, who works his nails with a small knife. He has on a blue and red underjerkin and black trousers, and oddly enough goes barefoot. A single scar decorates his right cheek.

Satmon Teele [*]

An unassuming and slight individual with a thin moustache and a nervous manner. He is certainly agile and swift, but seems to lack the social graces. He wears a dark suit with a grey shirt, and pointed black shoes.

Terrestrand Dinx

He has a mop of curly ginger hair, wears a pink shirt and orange trousers. His manner seems unnaturally jovial.

Urdril Reenk [*]

A tall, muscular man who has clearly seen much hardship – much of it probably dealt out by himself. His face bears various scars, and his muscles are clearly taut and rippling beneath his fashionable silk and leather garb.

Vampalor Planel

A young and energetic man, who keeps shifting from one foot to another. He has short brown hair and a mass of freckles, and wears simple brown and grey farmer's clothes.

Weshnir the Wary of Doolitz Water [*]

A short and stocky man. His clothes are heavy and of dull cloth in brown, black or grey. The single exception is a blue feather tucked into his black leather skullcap.

Other Contestants

Apart from the PCs, these twelve other eager contestants wait by the entrance. The five noted [*] are 'sponsored' and will also complete the course. (These folk are detailed fully in **Appendix 4.2**.) The fates of the others are revealed in the following description of the race, although may possibly be influenced by PC actions. Fote (see immediately below) will briefly introduce each contestant by name just before the gates open, pausing whilst the eager crowd cheer each time - and the GM mentions their appearance and any obvious mannerisms as an aside. The GM need include the PCs (plus unflattering descriptions) when Fote does his introductions.



Waiting to Begin

The contestants regard each other with suspicion and refrain from any small talk. GMs may wish to make meaningless dice rolls during the following events - as if for the GMCs in this list. (Thus convincing players of the truly random nature of events.) But then simply narrate their fates at the appropriate moments (listed in the following text) - acting as if the luck of the dice decided the results. When registration and introductions are complete, all contestants are handed their garlands and (see below) have the rules explained to them by Zelif Fote (see **Appendix 4.1** for Fote's details):

⊕ *"The blowing of loud horns from the grounds of the Duchess' manse will shortly signify the release of the bank. At this time we shall open this gate and you may commence to run. The barricade is then secured. You must run along Duchess Street yonder, then Fairview Lane and back here to the entry point. Somewhere on the course you must garland three bank, something that we verify by magic since each garland has a cantrap attached. Once your run is finished, ordinary folk may also enter through this gate and run the streets. If any of you leave the streets before garlanding three bank, or by any other means than this gate, you are disqualified. Other rules are simple - no fouling other contestants, no weapons, and no magic to be used. Should you be incapacitated, stewards will take you immediately to the healers. Again you are disqualified. Should you require more garlands simply call to the stewards and they will throw them to you - up to a maximum of nine. In the event that insufficient of you complete the course, other contests will be devised to choose more contestants for the challenges."*

Iucounu's Schemes

Iucounu has managed to use obscure magic to contact odd insubstantial overworld beings that can assist the PCs. These creatures are not elementals and do not register as spells. The Laughing Magician is confident that the scattered judges and magically competent observers along the course will not detect them. To be sure, he also has various magical spies that float around in near-invisibility and alert him to any possibility of his magical interference being spotted. He also has taken the precaution of wearing a sun hat of common style today, so as to mingle with the crowds and avoid casual observation. Not only this,

but he has an enchantment attached to this hat that diverts attention from him. (Thus not only can he pass through the crowd without everyone moving away from him in fear, but also avoids much standard magical surveillance.)

Guiding the Garlands

Whenever a PC throws a garland he/she notices a wispy spirit creature attach itself to the garland. In mechanical terms the pool points⁶ from this being may be used to assist either Athletics or Q-Fingers.

Avoiding Injury

When about to be trampled, gored, or tossed, a PC will attempt an Athletics roll to avoid this. In such circumstances they may notice a wispy spirit present about their feet and ankles. Its force will aid them in moving with enhanced swiftness/agility. Since observers merely note the person in a feat of heroic agility, Iucounu prefers to assist 'avoidance' rather than perform miraculous healings.

Healing

If a PC ever suffers an injury, or even more than one, within moments a magical wispy creature will materialise next to him/her. (Only the PC can see this being.) It reaches out with its ectoplasmic limb and touches the PC. Vitality begins to flow into the PC, and the creature itself begins to shrivel and fade, clearly in some considerable discomfort. Each of these delicate and wispy beings is sacrificing its life for the PC, though the PCs cannot actually be 'certain' of this. (Not knowing the ways of magic, perhaps the being merely appears to expire?)

Clearly this compromises the subterfuge, since persons being trampled by several bank, or thrown high into the air, and repeatedly emerging unscathed will draw suspicion. Nonetheless, Iucounu will use this means if he has to, since he is determined to increase his chances. Since sponsors are as yet unknown, chances of suspicion are correspondingly less acute, and the Laughing Magician has far greater freedom than he will have during the Challenges themselves.

⁶ GM decides on the appropriate rating pool total that the entity has, dependent on the average rating levels of the PCs. This also applies to any other assistances Iucounu's entities supply. Or the GM may prefer to apply a +1 or +2 bonus or boon.



Mechanics and Details of the Bauk Run

The Running Start

The other contestants all run down Duchess Street as fast as they can, the general idea being to cover as much of the course as possible before being threatened by the bauk. (This is a calculated risk, as the bauk may run towards them from the Duchess' manse as easily as be approaching from behind.)

The track itself is not uniform, but winds somewhat due to uneven erection of the barricade, therefore it is possible to find places to duck aside from the bauk, although a bauk might simply decide to stop and gouge you anyhow. In some parts bales of straw protrude from the rudimentary wall and could be used as springboards to leap through the air, or as points to try and duck behind if a bauk was about to crash into you. Improvise according to the wishes of Players for their PCs.

Bauk Encounter 1

The contestants run for a few minutes and are about a third of the way up Fairview Lane when they hear the crowd roaring up ahead, and spot about eight bauk running their way. These poor beasts are clearly terrified by the screams and clashing of metal objects from amongst the crowd. No wonder they are stampeding in such a frenzy! In a few moments the contestants will have their first opportunity to garland a bauk, and also their first opportunity to be tossed high into the air by a vicious set of horns or trampled to death – or both.

The PCs have the opportunity to race boldly ahead or to hang back and see what tactics the other contestants use. If they hang back they will find themselves in the company of Billing Minlop, Lyandros (or Liane) and Weshnir. The others charge on, howling for glory. However, when the group comes closer to the bauk, Killip, Satmon and Rantagor suddenly dash and/or leap for cover at the sides of the course. Thus, Grogan, Mertok, Quatto, Terrestrand, Urdril and Vampalor meet the rushing beasts head on. (Much to the roaring crowd's approval.) All of these men attempt to leap and dart between or around the beasts, casting their garlands as they do so. PCs will see from their safe distance two bodies thrown high

into the air - and the beasts charge on. They ignore the GMCs that took cover, all of whom attempt to garland a beast as it passes. As the creatures pass, the PCs will see that three have been garlanded.

Garlanding the Bauk

PCs have three clear options when attempting to garland a bauk: (1) Lurk beside the path in some piece of cover then spring out and throw the garland; (2) Wait in the path of the bauk, throw the garland and then leap into cover; (3) bravely dodge between the bauk, throw the garland at close range.

Option 1 – If the PC makes a PS/IS with Concealment this gives a +1 bonus to their throw. On a QF no throw may be attempted, as the hiding place proves inadequate in some way, or the PC has to duck back as a bauk runs too close. On a DF a bauk singles the PC out for a goring charge.

Option 2 - The PC gets an automatic +1 bonus to their throw, then must use Athletics to gain cover. On an IS/PS they do so easily. On an HBS they do so in an ignominious scrambling, shrieking lunge of terror, ending up lying upside down or wedged between bails. On an EF a horn gouges them and they must make a Health roll, but nonetheless they leap clear. On a QF a bauk butts them aside for an injury, but fortunately they are not trampled. On a DF the PC is butted to the ground and then trampled underhoof, taking two injuries.

Option 3 – The PC gets an automatic +1 bonus on two throws - or a +2 bonus on one throw – PC's choice. Then must use Athletics twice (as Option 2) to avoid injury.

NB: For simplicity the bauk have been described as always running in small groups. This can be considered a species trait. Individual GMs are of course free to improvise ratings and details of interactions with individual bauk that are separated from, or stragglers from, a pack.

Riding the Bauk

Certain heroic PCs may attempt this, but must make a Wherewithal success to do so. Without Lucounu's magic it would be tantamount to suicide, but with this special aid, they may survive the inevitable violent dismounting – and may even garland a couple of bauk in the meantime.



Aftermath of the First Bauk Encounter

The crumpled bloodied bodies of Grogan, Terrestrand and Vampalor lie in the middle of the course. Stewards are lowered over the barrier and run with stretchers to collect their remains. By some freak chance Terrestrand has survived and the stewards that confirm this race away with him towards the nearest healing station. Mertok was gored but claims to be sufficiently well to continue.

Dead – Grogan (tossed), Vampalor (trampled);

Injured/removed – Terrestrand; **Injured/struggling** – Mertok; **Garlands** – Quatto (1), Satmon (1), Urdril (1).

Bauk Encounter 2

The group of runners reaches the end of Fairview Lane, and can hear the crowd roaring from behind. A pack of around 20 bauk are charging towards them. Mertok is too injured to run fast and immediately takes cover. Billing and Rantagor do likewise a little further on. The others keep running, looking for better cover. As the pack passes them, these three will leap up and attempt to garland a bauk or two. Mertok horribly misjudges and is trampled into a pulp, Billing garlands one, but then is targeted by a particularly furious male straggler and – despite a desperate attempt at flight – is tossed into the air and then gored. Rantagor manages to garland a beast and escape unscathed.

The crowd roar in excitement at these equally entertaining antics. As the beasts approach the other runners, it is clear that attempting to dance through the middle of them is suicidal (unless one has magical aid). All other GMCs attempt to take cover or dance along the edges near shielding protrusions of bales. Lyandros (Liane), Satmon, and Weshnir each garland a bauk. Urdril is tossed through the air, but avoids serious injury.

Dead – Mertok (trampled); **Injured/removed** – Billing; **Garlands Total** – Quatto (1), Lyandros (1), Rantagor (1) Satmon (2), Urdril (1), Weshnir (1).

Bauk Encounter 3

Halfway towards the Duchess' manse, fourteen or so bauk are charging towards the contestants - again spurred on by the howling crowd. Plenty of time is available to take cover, and everyone remaining attempts to do so. However, just before

the beasts arrive, Rantagor leaps out and hurls a garland, barely making it back to safety. He is successful. The others wait until the beasts are passing, and Rantagor also attempts another throw. This time he is gored and thrown to the ground. He is so badly injured that stewards have to remove him as he curses quietly. Quatto and Weshnir have made so many misses they call the stewards for replacement garlands. Despite his injury Urdril bravely lands another garland.

Injured/removed – Rantagor; **Garlands** – Killip (1) Quatto (1), Lyandros (2), Satmon (2), Urdril (2), Weshnir (1).

Bauk Encounter 4

Passing the Duchess' manse, the large group of bauk are returning, perhaps having even been joined by a few friends! Again the contestants must scramble for the best hiding places. The usual flurry of desperate attempts occurs, during which Killip is caught by a horn and dragged into the pack. There is little for the stewards to scrape up afterwards. Lyandros (Liane?) leaps onto the back of a straggler and pulls his last garland over its horns before sprinting safely off.

Dead – Killip; **Garlands Total** – Quatto (2), Lyandros (3), Satmon (2), Urdril (3), Weshnir (2).

Bauk Encounter 5

As PCs near the end of the course, the crowd roars from behind as the huge pack seems to have turned around. Additionally a smaller pack appear ahead. Concealment is suddenly at a premium. The beasts meet in a raging, clashing mass near to where the contestants are, and this pandemonium needs to be described accordingly. Urdril is gored again but manages to somehow reach the exit and is hauled out, Lyandros manages heroically to vault across several beasts to do the same. Quatto punches a beast in the head before placing the garland on its stunned face and then leaving. Weshnir is butted through the air, and by sheer chance one of his flying garlands lands over the horns of a beast a moment before he crashes into the top of the exit gate and is pulled inside by stewards.

Garlands Total – Quatto (3), Lyandros (3), Satmon (3), Urdril (3), Weshnir (3).



4.2 Registration

Once the *Running of the Bank* is over, those who completed their run (and garlanding) over the set course are awarded with an orange rosette, meant to signify bravery. (Remember that some of the GMCs are injured and will be being attended to by healers. Since standard treatment is by Thaumaturgic Poultice, all will be quickly back on their feet.) As he awards each rosette, Fote calls out: “Who sponsors this fine champion?”

From the crowd step the various sponsors to acknowledge their champions, and escort them to the registration table. (See **Appendix 4.2**.) None will yet step forth for the PCs. Nearby is a long table at which sit various town dignitaries, including Marcoster. These folk take the details of each champion, confirm that their sponsor is of local pedigree sufficient to be allowed to field a candidate, and collect and count the money.

The money is taken away at the end of the registration, under heavy guard by a number of constables (and Marcoster himself). Iucounu will be visible in the fringes of the crowd, and will communicate with the PCs via shaking or nodding his head. In this fashion he will ask the PCs to wait until the others have registered. Each other contestant will walk up to the table accompanied by his sponsor, both will answer a few questions, and both sign forms. The other prospective contestants, sponsors and general public are held back from the table a little way by the constables, so unless magic is used the questions cannot be overheard.

Questions for Contestant:

- Name? - Occupation?
- Do you agree to abide by the rules of the challenges particularly as regarding no use of magic?
- Do you promise to remain in Azenomei town until at least dawn of the day following the last day of the challenges?
- Should you become Monarch of the Fair, do you agree to perform those customary rites and requirements as befit this noble position?
- Sign here...

Questions for Sponsor:

- Name? - Are you a full citizen of Azenomei?

- Do you ratify this contestant as your representative in the challenges?
- Do you agree to abide by the rules of the challenges particularly as regarding no use of magic?
- Should your challenger become Monarch of the Fair, do you agree to perform your duties on the Town Council in a civil and judicious manner as befitting the laws and nobility of character of this fair town?
- Sign here...



Iucounu Reveals His Plan

The PCs will no doubt have been wondering how Iucounu is going to register them all. His means is relatively simple, and utterly breaks the spirit of the contest qualifications. Out of the crowd step several ‘Iucounus’, all identical in body and manner, but dressed differently. They nod to one another and form an orderly queue, each one carrying a bulging sack (of 10,000t). Each one selects a PC qualifier and undergoes the registration.

Some amongst the registration panel attempt to convince the ‘Iucounus’ that their conduct is irregular. The leading Iucounu asks to be shown the appropriate passage that declares this to be something that cannot be permitted. After some falsely-polite arguing under their breath and several instances of Iucounu starting to become vexed and then being mollified, the leading Iucounu wins the discussion and the PCs begin to be signed up.

It is made firmly clear to Iucounu that should any of the registration fees mysteriously



vanish, since he and his 'associates' all apparently share the same identity, all of them will be disqualified. Iucounu sniggers at this, and agrees that this would only be fair. (PCs may gain the impression that that it is this large sum of money that finally sways the judging panel into agreeing.)

Iucounu in his turn adds that should any of the registration fees be stolen and then said to have disappeared, he would most decidedly not be amused. An 'understanding' is reached. The PC at the front may see one of the panel furiously modifying the rulebook with quill and ink. The crowd mutters in displeasure, but this turns to neutral chatter whenever one of the 'Iucounus' turns to look at the source of a particular comment.

4.3 The Duchess' Speech

In the evening, once registration is complete, the Duchess mounts a podium here in the marketplace, and makes this speech. Some PCs may (Ψ PERCEPTION) notice that the Duchess is a little distracted, as if Iucounu's actions took her by surprise:

⊕ *"Fellow citizens, visitors from neighbouring settlements, and foreigners to our locale, welcome one and all. Every year we hold our Great Fair, and as you know every year we test a group of challengers to see who is worthy to become Monarch of the Fair. This great honour goes to he who proves himself (or herself) overall best in the contests that follow. Points are awarded by a panel of judges – three points for first place, two points for second place and one point for third place. As additional incentive, each contest itself has a prize for the best competitor. No magic is allowed, and cheats will be disqualified and run out of town. I now declare the challenges to be commenced!"*

The crowd roars its approval and settles down to an evening of ribald festivities.

4.4 Incidental Opportunities for Excitement

Across the evening, the challengers may enjoy the many entertainments at the Fairground, although the larger market stalls are not open yet. Local law says that only smaller stalls may operate today, and the larger undertakings cannot start until dawn tomorrow. Iucounu will meet with at least one of the PCs earlyish in the evening. He first evokes

some kind of bubble of force from a magical crystal in his hand (which enfolds both himself and the one he is speaking to).

Then Iucounu says that they may be under magical observation from now on, so they must not refer to him or to any magical assistances unless they are certain they are not overheard. To this effect, he hands over a small medallion - which is a gold eye on a gold chain. He explains that it identifies and blocks them from the senses of magical spies. Although stringent magical observation will no doubt be focussed on them, Iucounu says that he should still be able to use his unusual advantages to assist them as the challenges progress:

⊕ *"Since the specific contests are secret I will not know the most apposite way to assist you until they actually begin. It is therefore your duty to perform at your maximum competency, and at all times to act with utmost confidence. I will then be ideally placed to clandestinely enhance your performance or the results of your actions as best I may. Unless I initiate it, we are not to have contact throughout the challenges. There are those who will stop at nothing to have me and my representatives disqualified from the proceedings."*

If they stray from well-frequented areas, one or more PCs may be attacked and beaten by representatives of other sponsors. (Although these will have been hired through disguised third parties.) Anyone asked will suggest that the PCs need to get a good night's rest. Iucounu (his doubles having all vanished back into the crowd) will suggest that they accompany him back to Pergolo for safety. However, since his repulsive character has now been revealed, the PCs may prefer to stay in town. Note that if the PCs do stay in town, kidnapping attempts may occur - burly rivermen sent to apprehend or debilitate the PCs.

At some other time during the evening, Marcoster will approach the group of PCs (or whomever he can find if they have split up). He will buy them each a drink and explain that whilst what Iucounu has done is not against the wording of the rules, it is certainly against their spirit, and his actions have already caused some major revisions of the rules for next year. Marcoster further says: *"I suspect that Iucounu is using you as pawns*



for his plans and you are not personally to blame. Thus, if there is anything you wish to tell me, I will be most happy to hear it?” (At this point the surroundings suddenly go quiet, as Marcoster also places them in a bubble of stealth.)

Marcoster pauses and then says: “*Having Iucounu as a council member will be an unfortunate circumstance, as the Laughing Magician will surely use his position to wreak mischief for his own amusement. He has been trying to get onto the council for years, and has always been blocked by the crafty politicking of the incumbent members. Although the position gained via sponsoring the winning champion is a minor one, it still represents an unfortunate victory that will certainly be for the detriment of the town.*”

Marcoster will not talk detailed politics with them, but will certainly say that he would be immensely grateful if none of the PCs win. Marcoster also hands them a silver disc amulet onto which a stylised eye has been engraved: “*This will allow you to hear if any of Iucounu’s spies are nearby. Thus you can safely discuss any plans to sabotage him without fear of being overheard.*”

Marcoster can promise many rewards, such as cash, magical items, and even the temporary restraint/distraction of Iucounu whilst they safely flee the region. This whole state of affairs is designed to put the PCs in a great bind, out of which they will not initially know how to wriggle. It is entirely possible that they will realise that there is no other option but for all of them to lose to one of the other contestants, whilst actually pretending to be doing their best to win. Or they might invent a series of tricks against the other competitors in order to support their own representative. Who knows what DERPG PCs will do!!

The Medallion of the Gold Eye

Around every half an hour, and especially immediately before any contest, Marcoster sends spy spirits. The wearer of the gold eye can see these wispy smoke-like beings, but they are held back and seem frustrated and confused – obviously unable to focus on the PCs. Marcoster will believe Iucounu (rather than the PCs) is blocking them and soon gives up such efforts. [This medallion cannot detect Iucounu’s spy spirits.]

The Medallion of the Silver Eye

Just before contests, and around every 20-30 minutes, Iucounu sends spirits to observe the conversations of the PCs. The wearer of the silver eye sees different entities – like energy eels with bulbous eyes, swimming in the air. [This medallion does not assist the detection or influence Marcoster’s spy spirits.]

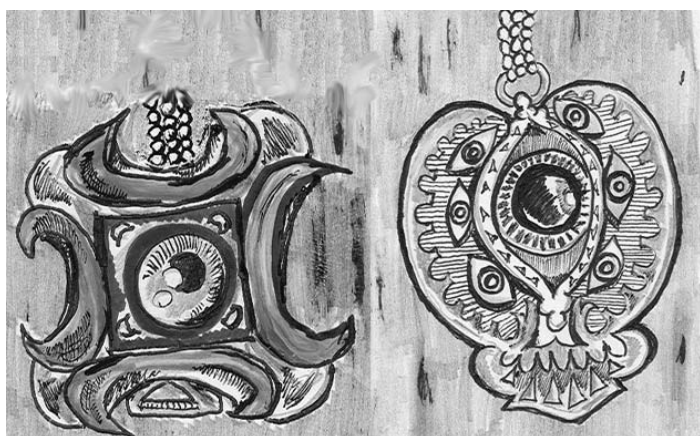
Playing the Odds

Various private and community-based bookmakers will be running odds on the contestants. However, all are such unknown quantities, and the challenges themselves largely secret until they are actually held, that little technique (and much guesswork) is involved and the spread of odds not enormous. The general order of prestige in which the contestants are held depends on two things – their performance in the *Running of the Bank*, and how well they are perceived to have a broad spread of abilities suitable for the varying contests. The GM makes these up if/when PCs wish to place bets.

The Mechanics

Note that when running some of the challenges where GMCs are pitted against each other - or against non-PC obstacles – you do not always have to make long series of rolls. Alternatively you can use this chart here for the general result (adjusted by any bonuses/penalties noted at the challenge entry itself). Then describe the contest in a few flourishing sentences. It may be fairer to award points clearly according to your own assessment as you go, rather than leaving them vague. (This avoids any crisis of conscience if PC scores are very close at the end of a match.) However, award the actual points out loud only at the end of the contest when all the results are in. IE the judges make a comparative award of points after seeing all of the contestants in action. Take care to see that these general results roughly match the achievements of the PCs.

- 1 – Exceptionally badly
- 2 – Very badly
- 3 – Poor Performance
- 4 – Barely adequate Performance
- 5 – Good Performance
- 6 – Excellent Performance



A pair of magical eyes

Refreshment of Pools

If it becomes necessary to pay attention to such things, consider creating opportunities for PCs to refresh significant skills during the long evenings/nights in between the days of the challenges. The main cause for consideration is that both the Athlete's Challenge (Day 3) and the Defender's Challenge (Day 4) may require Attack/Defense.

The Judges & the Judging

The identities of the judges are not important, but the GM might like to make up names/descriptions of town notables. (See also **Appendix 4.1**.) They award points as a single unit, according to a discussion held immediately after the final contestant has made their attempt.

For ease of tracking the results, the GM might like to replicate their decision-making on scrap paper. Actual points awarded are always the same – 3 points for first place, 2 points for second place, and 1 point for third place. How these are calculated may vary. For a simple knockout challenge, it is self-explanatory. However, for comparative performances, the judges award scores out of 10 and then compare them when all contestants have performed. On a tiebreak situation, the judges will also take into account personal style as well as results.

Rank Amusement

It is worth mentioning that PCs will soon become aware that one of the objectives of the challenges is to provide much amusement for the spectators. That is to say that neither those running the challenges nor those watching actually expect the contestants to be expert, fluent, nor even competent, at their allotted tasks. Rather, the contestants are expected to be amusingly inept. The crowd will roar with laughter at disappointments and mistakes, and even injuries – and jeer and catcall in a most unsympathetic fashion. Make sure that the PCs (and other contestants) at least slowly become aware that what they thought was an august series of contests are actually opportunities for civic hilarity. Of course, when contestants do well, and/or perform flamboyantly, the crowd may evidence a certain admiration. The GM will need to balance any such flamboyancy from the PCs with corresponding actions from the GMC contestants.

Running the Contests

Take special care to describe the actions of the GMCs in suitable entertaining fashion, and have the Players describe the actions of the PCs likewise. Do not let any contests degenerate into mere repetitive rolling of dice to 'see who wins'. If necessary, bribe your players into compliance by offering to award a bonus pool point (or more than one – in the same way that tag-line rewards are decided: see DERPG p123) for any inventive/amusing action that is imaginatively and suitably described. Such pool points might be made available only for the contest at hand, or allowed to remain in the pool afterwards – as the GM wishes.

Also, make sure to describe the atmosphere of the crowd, and the tension in the air as the judges decide points for each individual challenge. All of these little things will add incidental feel and detail that will make this scenario a memorable one. GMs should also aim to expand upon opportunities available outside of the contests themselves, using **Appendix 3** as inspiration. Other possibilities are romantic interest, betting scams, drinking and eating binges, and futile arguments – all things that will likely be second nature to experienced GMs of DERPG.



Scene 5: Day Two

In the early hours, the proper merchants bring in their wares and set up their stalls. The Duchess herself opens the Great Fair this morning at a more reasonable hour for those who like a civilised breakfast. Several hundreds of people come out to see her opening declaration and watch her cut the coloured ribbon across the gates⁷ to the fair:

“Citizens, visitors, friends and neighbours, I declare this year’s Great Fair open. May this tradition continue to bring peace and prosperity to our town.” The fair itself is detailed in **Appendix 2**. This information should be retained close at hand to assist in fabricating a range of activities to be role-played whenever the PCs are not involved in the competitions – particularly in the evenings.

Preparations for the Day’s Challenges

GM: Bear in mind that the PCs will need to get up early to witness these preparations, or to ask around once they have awoken. Some evidence of course they will see as soon as they arrive at the Fairground.

In the early hours sufficient large metal cages are erected in the wide bare area in the middle of the fairground, sufficient one for each contestant. These are then covered in sturdy canvas so as their insides are obscured from view. A little later, a single large and extremely strong box wagon is driven in, backed up to each covered cage one at a time, and something secretly manoeuvred inside. Additionally the same number of long tables is erected nearby, plus beside each larger table are several smaller tables and huge wicker hampers. (Anyone listening near these cages may hear the occasional squawk or grumble.)

5.1 The Hunter’s Challenge: Securing Your Pelgrane

⊕ The Duchess Speaks: *“Welcome one and all to our fine town’s annual tournament. We see arrayed before us our brave challengers ready to prove themselves capable of excelling in the first of the traditional virtues most prized by*

this town. Let us first recap the rules. No fouling of other contestants, no ganging up on other contestants, and no use of magic. Anyone proven beyond reasonable doubt to have acted in such a fashion will be disqualified. Now, for the first challenge we test each person’s skills as a hunter and provider. To this end, each competitor must subdue and secure an adult pelgrane, using nothing more than a net, a stout staff, and a length of sturdy rope. The winner of this individual contest gains an enchanted anti-pelgranic helmet.” Stewards pull the canvas coverings from the first cage, revealing a glum-looking pelgrane (DERPG: p170) seated in the middle– now blinking in the unaccustomed daylight. It gives out a plaintive squawk.

Each contestant is given their stout net and sturdy stick, and stewards lead the first person (names drawn from a bag) to the door of the cage. Stewards use their own sticks to make sure the creature is not near the door – then open the door and push the contestant inside, closing and securing it behind them. Once this particular bout is over, the canvas is pulled from the next cage and the next contestant has their turn. Challengers may try simple subdual, or may try to convince (Ψ PERSUADE) the pelgrane that they will help it to escape if it co-operates. The GM devises pelgrane ratings to be challenging but not immediately fatal. If such a thing appeals, you might roll for the demeanour and intelligence of each pelgrane.

A person who strongly and forcefully and (relatively) quickly secures their pelgrane will score 10 out of 10. If this is slightly marred by something (being wounded, appearing scared, inept net-use) then the score will drop. If a contestant is ever downed by the pelgrane, stewards will rush in to the rescue, and the contestant is likely to score 3 points at best. The anti-pelgranic helm is a magical metal hat (with a number of charges decided by the GM) that – providing the helm is worn on a human head - casts the *Galvanic Thrust* (DERPG: p112) at any aerial pelgrane (or being with at least 40% pelgranic plasm) that comes within 20ft. (Bear in mind that the verbal description given to any winner will not be so specific.)

⁷ The gates are ornamental, since one can enter the field by merely clambering over the picket fence almost anywhere.



Remember that although points out of 10 are used for calculating placing, the actual final results are first (3pts), second (2pts) or third (1pt) places.

Lyandros (Liane) – Bounds and weaves in a confusing attack [+1 to result roll]

Quatto – Attacks immediately and ruthlessly with immense strength (beats and wrestles pelgrane) [+3 to result roll]

Satmon – Attempts a whispering Persuasion to gain pelgrane's confidence, then attacks it by surprise [+2 to result roll]

Urdril – A berating Persuasion against its base nature, then a subdual attack [+2 on result roll]

Weshnir – Attacks ruthlessly at once [+2 on result roll]

5.2 The Steward's Challenge: Preparing for the Banquet

As the Duchess readies herself to speak, stewards prepare all the large tables by placing flowing tablecloths upon them. They also arrange on the smaller side-tables a number of dishes, bowls, platters, and trays of cutlery. On a final table they set up a workspace a number of raw vegetables, a variety of kitchen tools, and several jars of sauces.

⊕ The Duchess Speaks: *'For the second challenge, we present the opportunity for our contestants to excel in the preparation of a banqueting table for eight diners. To this end they must arrange all dishes and cutlery just so upon the table, and then for the finishing touch of their exhibition create a vibrantly appetising salad. A strict time limit is set for each task. After five minutes at each section, a gong will be rung to indicate that all contestants must stop. The*

winner of this individual contest gains a small magical soup tureen that serves delicious broth once every day.'

The objective is clearly to arrange settings for eight, and position the tureens and other receptacles around the table in a suitable fashion. PCs must first roll Etiquette to calculate their degree of skill at setting the table as required. Next, each contestant must use Stewardship to whip up a classic salad that the judges will find gastronomically appealing. (Since this is a race, in both cases use the rules on Tallies – DERPG, p37. One roll is allowed for each minute, and the person with the highest tally at the end has performed the best, and so on.) Describe failures (for both GMCs and PCs) in the most amusing ways possible – disastrous faux pas with cutlery presentation, use of the foulest sauce imaginable etc... (If the latter remain not re-rolled, judges may be spitting out great mouthfuls in amazed disgust!) It will probably be worth mentioning to the PCs their absolute lack of qualification - most likely - for such things. During the process, make each Player describe their PC's manner and actions, as if they know what they are doing – then roll the result.

The magical tureen serves a meal for four (or five at a pinch) every day. The broth is always different (rotates around 177 recipes), and delicious and nutritious. But, unless served with hunks of crusty bread it always leaves one feeling hungry.

Lyandros (Liane): Etiquette [____] Stw'dship [____]

Quatto: Etiquette [____] Stewardship [____]

Satmon: Etiquette [____] Stewardship [____]

Urdril: Etiquette [____] Stewardship [____]

Weshnir: Etiquette [____] Stewardship [____]





Scene 6: Day Three

Preparations for the Day's Challenges

In the early hours of the morning, surveyors mark out a large thin rectangle of ground at the center of the marketplace. Once this is done, labourers with shovels and barrows go to work excavating a pit about 10ft wide, 5ft deep, and 40ft long – with stairs cut into one end. Once they are finished (after a little more than an hour) it is vigorously lined with puddled clay. Then finally a long bucket chain is formed from the river's edge, and the pit is filled to the top with water. Nearby a large table has also been positioned with [no. of contestants] chairs, and covered with several large sheets. Under the sheets are [2x no. of contestants] intriguing large and irregular objects. As normal, several constables stand watch - fingers eagerly clasping rapiers.

6.1 The Athlete's Challenge

The contestants are asked to gather near the rectangular pool and the crowds draw around them. The Duchess is nearby but appears to be waiting for something. From out of the crowd, seven burly men appear, hefting a long sturdy tree-trunk. It has already been pruned of any protruding branches, and with some difficulty they lay it across the narrowest width of the pool, in the middle. The Duchess observes this, and steps forward to speak:

⊕ The Duchess Speaks: *"Welcome again to our fine athletes. Today's first challenge is one of agility and energy. The contestants will be split into pairs, and each pair will compete one against the other to knock their opponent from the unsteady log into the muddy water. Each winner will then go into the second round, where the survivors will be paired again and go through the same process until final scores are awarded to the strongest three. Let the drawing for pairs commence. Know also that the final victor will receive a wonderful pair of spring-heeled boots."*⁸

The GM puts the names of all contestants into a hat, and draws competing pairs. (Although at least in the first round, you will be forgiven for simply matching each PC with a GMC.) Each contestant is given a padded flat-bladed club and one of each pair is guided to each opposite end of a log. The idea is that they carefully step onto the unstable log, approach each other, and belabour at their opponent with the club until they are knocked into the muddy water. A choice of abilities are

applicable to match against your foe (which is handy since several rounds are on offer): Athletics, Quick Fingers (levy of 1), Attack (all at a levy of 1 – except Caution), Defense (Dodge, Parry & Misdirection are at a levy of 1). Mechanically, DF's cannot be re-rolled – on any DF the person rolling it falls off the log. Also, if one attacker rolls an IS whilst the other rolls any kind of failure (and cannot re-roll), the loser is knocked into the muddy water. Otherwise, the contestants whittle away at each other until one runs out of pool points and then rolls a failure.

If uneven numbers of contestants occur at any stage of this challenge, the last person to have their name pulled fights last and must fight whomever the judges say is the best of the losers of that round. It is worth noting that it is possible that a person who was defeated in the first round but then recalled to face off against someone (due to there being an odd number of contestants) may then reach the final three. If so they are immediately awarded third place and are unable to compete for first and second place. Likewise, if a loser is recalled to fight in the final round, and beats the challenger they are placed against, they automatically gain third place. Eventually two opponents are left and must fight for first and second position.

Lyandros (Liane): Cunning -1[___], Intuition [___], Athletics [___], Quick Fingers -1 [___]
Quatto : Strength -1[___], Parry -1[___], Athl'cs [___]
Satmon : Finesse -1[___], Sure-Footedness [___], Athletics [___]
Urdril : Speed -1[___], Intuition [___], Athletics [___]
Weshnir : Caution [___], Dodge -1[___], Athl'cs [___]

⁸ Spring-Heel boots are fully detailed on p20 of *Cugel's Compendium of Indispensable Advantages* (Pelgrane Press, 2001), or GM invents to suit.



6.2 Pedant's Challenge: Iconic History

⊕ The Duchess Speaks: *"Now comes the time when our bold challengers must evidence their breadth of knowledge when it comes to antiquities. The items under consideration for this contest are divine effigies of incalculable age, each one with a specific set of meanings. Each contestant has two such objects that they must describe and evaluate in three succinct summaries. The individual prize for the winner of this contest is a magical pen and inkwell set that writes as you dictate. Gentlemen (and lady/ladies) - to your chairs."*

Stewards pull the cloths from the large table, and each contestant is taken to a chair. In front of each chair are two odd statuettes of peculiar beings. Some are half-fish, others half-bird or half-lizard, some bestial and some are humans of extreme beauty or repulsiveness. The GM generally describes each one that each PC has before them.

What is not known to the contestants is that the judges have little concrete knowledge about these objects, and are open to confident persuasion that what they believe to be correct might in fact be wrong. Thus, this is not actually a test of knowledge (Ψ PEDANTRY) but of bravado (Ψ PERSUASION/IMPOSTURE). Each PC of course gains the opportunity to use their Pedantry (which will be at a penalty of 1 unless they have a relevant specialism) initially upon the item in question. If this fails, they may also attempt their Appraisal (though this is at a penalty of 2). Should any of these rolls succeed, the PC may in fact have some general knowledge about the ancient divinity in question, and the GM will need to make this up on

the spot. Otherwise, a strong case of talking fluent and convincing nonsense is called for.

It is up to the GM exactly how the mechanics of such a thing are organised. One option again is to use the Tally system (DERPG: p37) with each contestant having three chances (per object) to make statements that impress the judges with their detail and conviction. In this case, the GM notes the reactions of the judging panel, and the conviction with which the PC manages to imbue his/her comments.

The magical pen and inkwell set is indeed a fine prize, and works as described. You say the activation cantrap and begin dictating. The pen responds to simple commands like 'stop' and 'new paragraph' but is otherwise quite pedantic, so it is best to only use the device when one is guaranteed to remain focussed and undisturbed. On any DF with the activation cantrap the device writes in an ancient foreign tongue, and continues to do so for the next several (2xD6) days whenever used. (This fact is unknown to the current owners – though well known by the person who sold it to them.)

Lyandros (Liane) – He actually knows antiquities, and is a good talker [+2 to result roll]

Quatto – Utterly fails to understand the contest: "Duh, itsa godda wings un duh legs unn err..." [-3 to result roll]

Satmon – Again has some knowledge of the ancient gods and is a good waffler [+1 to result roll]

Urdril – No actual knowledge and not a great convincer [-2 to result roll]

Weshnir – No knowledge but a good impostor (due to his trade) [-1 to result roll]





Scene 7: Day Four

Preparations for the Day's Challenges

A broad track around the marketplace is marked out with a wall of hay bales on every corner, and on each corner approach, and other general fencing of wooden cases and other oddments is put in place elsewhere along this length. Whilst all this is going on, in the centre of the field carpenters construct a sturdy platform two feet from the ground and about 20ft square. When they are finished, posts are erected at each corner and three lines of rope circled around and secured to the posts.

7.1 Drayman's Challenge: The Cart Race

⊕ The Duchess Speaks: *"In order to test their abilities as draymen, and to provide entertaining spectacle for our honoured visitors at this time, we have elected to hold a cart race. When the signal is given, each contestant must run for a cart and drive it around the course for two complete rotations. The winner will be the first one to complete this feat, and wins a magical device known to our wizards as Hoptile's Bridle⁹."*

Sufficient lightweight carts and juvenile bauck to pull them are now brought up to the start of the course. The contestants are some distance away, though a wide gap through the crowds has been cleared. A judge holds a firecracker and lights it. Its report is the signal to run. An initial Athletics roll is required. This is at a bonus of 1 if the PC's rating is 8 or more, and at a penalty of 1 if it is 3 or less.

Whatever result is rolled determines positioning amongst the runners. (Note that it is possible to be neck and neck.) The person/s at the front get a bonus of 2 on the first following Driving (or Riding – see below) roll, the second rank get a bonus of 1, and the third rank get no bonus or penalty. If a fourth rank of runners exists, they suffer a penalty of 1 on the first roll.

⁹ **Hoptile's Bridle** is a leatherwork bridle that can be fitted over any creature to turn it into a pliant magical steed – even semi-sentient ones. It is fully detailed on p43 of *Turjan's Tome of Beauty and Horror* (Pelgrane Press, 2003), or GM can invent..

It is possible to use Riding instead of Driving – by leaping upon the beast instead of the wagon seat – but don't tell the Players this. Weshnir the Wary is better at Riding than Driving, and will think of this himself, so one or more PCs might emulate him, especially if he is ahead in the footrace section. Use the Tally option (DERPG: p37). The person with the highest Tally is in the lead, and so on. Each roll indicates that a third of the track has been covered, so six rolls in all are required to cover the two laps. On an un-rerolled DF the wagon crashes, or the beast bucks the rider off. If everyone has poor Driving/Riding, the GM might like to consider an isolated ruling where DF's can be re-rolled at a cost of only 1 point. If you need to supply an explanation of why this is so, then perhaps the beasts are highly trained and carts especially sturdy?

GM: Remember also to leave room/present opportunity for all manner of sabotaging actions. Any contestant driving a cart that makes an IS/PS may attempt to crash into another for instance. The scope for savagery is immense!

Driving/Riding: Lyandros (Liane) – [],
Quatto – [], Satmon – [], Urdril – [],
Weshnir – []

7.2 The Defender's Challenge: The Duel

⊕ The Duchess Speaks: *"And now we come to the final challenge, where our valiant contenders must combat one another so as to demonstrate their prowess with weaponry. Traditionally this is the rapier, but any conventional weaponry is allowed. Each contest finishes when one participant surrenders, or falls down and does not arise for the count of five. The head, neck and throat are not viable targets, and anyone who strikes an opponent in such an area is disqualified. Healers are on hand, but if anyone wishes to pass on this contest they may do so simply by refusing to get into the ring, or by jumping out of it before a winner has been decided. The prize for this challenge is a magical Rapier of Plangent Glaciation."*¹⁰

¹⁰ The Rapier of Plangent Glaciation is fully detailed on p10 of *Cugel's Compendium of Indispensable Advantages* (Pelgrane Press, 2001).



As with the Athlete's Challenge, contestants are paired by pulling names from a hat. Also as with that other challenge, the GM is forgiven for simply pairing each PC with a GMC for the first round and claiming this as a coincidence. (Or even for arbitrarily pairing contestants for the maximum possible in-game amusement.) Grudges may come out during this round, if the PCs and GMCs have been fouling each other during the challenges. Run these according to their standard rules for combat.

Optionally, the GM can incorporate Athletics for those who wish to dance around the ring looking for an advantage. [Note that this is only possible if your Athletics *Wallops* (DERPG: p33) that of your opponent. If such is not the case, then using Athletics to assist you is not an option.]

One simple way to adjudicate such an incorporation is to allow anyone who concentrates on ducking and jumping rather than combat to act thus: for each Athletics pool point expended they gain a bonus of 1 on a single Attack or Defense roll. However, a roll of 1 is still considered a DF (showing the dangers of taking such risks).

Since this is the finale of the action, take special care to evoke the excitement and tension as the deciding points are wrung out of the challenges through blood, sweat and tears. Since it would be unfortunate if a PC was killed this early in the ongoing campaign (although such may unfortunately happen in later episodes) the GM is entirely at liberty to fudge their woundings so that they collapse, are ruled the loser, and are healed moments before expiring. Possibly stewards (or other PCs) may have to leap into the ring to stop an angered GMC from finishing someone off. Others may not be so lucky, and if it adds to the excitement and sense of danger have one GMC slain by another before the final rounds.

Lyandros (Liane): Cunning [___], Intuition [___], Athletics [___]

Quatto: Strength [___], Parry [___], Athletics [___]

Satmon: Finesse [___], Sure-Footedness [___], Athletics [___]

Urdril: Speed [___], Intuition [___], Athletics [___]

Weshnir: Caution [___], Dodge [___], Athletics [___]



*The
Duchess
is
not
amused!*

7.3 The Final Rulings and the Award Ceremony

After the final contest, those requiring healing are dealt with by the Ethodeans in their tent, and if anyone is killed they too are treated to the ritual wailing from the followers of this goddess. (Before being ceremonially burned on the edge of the marketplace later on as dusk falls.) Whilst this is going on, the judges deliberate their final tally of points. This tally will ideally depend on the final challenge, although the PCs may have managed things nicely so that their desired result is assured. (Though equally likely the GM may have worked against this so that their grand plans have been difficult to stick to.)

The Duchess, notables, sponsors, and the judges gather on the small stage that was quickly converted from the duelling platform whilst this was going on. The Duchess is the one to speak, her voice amplified by magic. She announces the winners in reverse order. *"Congratulations and our thanks to our brave challengers this year. As always, despite some irregularities, the contests have been entertaining and exciting to observe. Unfortunately, not all that participate can win. In third place is [insert name] with [insert no.] points. For their efforts they are awarded this bag of 2500 terces, and free food and accommodation in Azenomei for the next three days. In second place is [insert name] with [insert no.] points. For their efforts they receive this bag of*



5000 terces and free food and accommodation in Azenomei for the next week. However, in first place, and this year's Monarch of the Fair is [insert name] with [insert no.] points and sponsored by [insert name]."

The crowd cheers after each winner, but lets out an enormous roar after the announcement of the ultimate victor. This person is garlanded with flowers, and carried around the Fairground on a chair held up high by muscular farmhands. The second and third place contestants accompany them - on foot immediately behind. The GM invents and describes sufficient pomp and ceremony until late into the evening - to round of this prestigious series of events with suitable panache. Much drink will flow, various merchants will offer to bank the new wealth of the winners, persons of a seductive nature will be drawn to the champion and his/her fellows, and to the runners-up (although less so). The fair itself goes on in the evening and much fun and games may still be had, especially if these options weren't fully explored during the evenings after the contest days.

The New Rules

Between now and next year the rules of the challenges are changed in several ways, the most important being (a) that magicians are no longer even allowed to sponsor contestants, and (b) clarifying that multiple representatives of a single individual are no longer permitted as a means by which to exploit the rule restricting one contestant per sponsor.

7.4 If a GMC Becomes Monarch

Iucounu is angered at being crossed. Even if the PCs have hidden their plans behind a cunning façade of trying to win, he suspects duplicity - nay, is certain of it. If they have hidden their intentions well throughout the contests, he will feign moderate unhappiness (rather than the rage he really feels) and invite them to a commiseration dinner (and if applicable for the return of his Achernarians - since he truly wants them back) at his manse. There, he says, he will also outline a new and lucrative mission he hopes they will agree to perform on his behalf. He indicates that this is even more important to him than the council position, and that he hopes they will find it within their

capabilities and desire to redeem themselves within his eyes. "Oh, it will be interesting; involving uncommon opportunities to travel, and affording great reward."

Moving On: Option 1

The PCs may refuse to go to the manse under any pretence. In which case, Iucounu will ambush them at their first campsite or inn after they leave town - or just on the road - using specially trained madlocks to assist him. In this situation adapt Option 2. They will be hauled back to his manse in terror, perhaps piled deep in the back of a cart.

Moving On: Option 2

Iucounu has a sumptuous dinner laid out and invites them to dine.



When they actually sit down, the hall is swarmed by madlocks who bind them in magical rope. Iucounu is now free to rage:

"Do you think I am a fool, not to understand what you were doing - cheating me through inaction. You were hired for a task and yet deceived me at every step of the way!"

[Snicker] *"My plans and wishes are now thwarted. Never again will I be allowed the opportunity to enter a contestant in the challenges nor therefore gain the seat on the council that was so essential to my planned series of jests!"*

[Cackle] *"By rights I should inter you all deep within the Earth using the Charm of Forlorn Encystment. A few decades of isolation would teach you the meaning of contrition!"* [Chuckle] *"But instead I choose exile in the barbarian north, a place I recently visited and found to be the most vile and uncivilised I have ever had the misfortune to encounter!"*

He has the madlocks drag the PCs upstairs onto the top of a turret and they are bundled into a large cage of sturdy brass bars, which he locks.



The Cruel Fate

(Coincidentally also sending the PCs to the start of the next scenario in this series.)

Once the PCs are firmly incarcerated, Iucounu recites the invocation of the *Laganetic Transfer* (DERPG, p110). This causes an enormous winged demon to arrive, grasp the cage and haul it high into the cold night air, before carrying them north at great speed for many hours, over Modavna Moor, high over the Saponid Tundra, then the Wild Waste. Finally they fly for hours more across the Ocean of Sighs - before the demon drops the cage on a desolate beach from a height of fifteen feet. Describe the flight, and allow attempts to communicate with a passing imp or the demon, in suitably grim and chilling detail.



7.5 If A PC Becomes Monarch of the Fair

Iucounu is understandably pleased, and congratulates them effusively. He unconditionally forgives all problems, promising that no bad-feelings remain. If Achernarians were applied, Iucounu invites the PCs to his manse at their earliest convenience to have these parasites removed and enjoy a celebratory dinner.

Townsfolk of quality do not associate with the Monarch or his friends, because of the deception involved in their entering the challenges. But in order not to offend Iucounu, they will be

politely cold, rather than vicious or slanderous. Still, at least one romance will occur for a PC.

If PCs did not suffer the alien infestation then a few days of ‘celebration’ may occur before their date with Iucounu. Strongly pre-emptively illustrate what they are about to lose – the fine apartments, excellent food, cash rewards, and ‘energetic’ romances for at least two characters. However, Iucounu will very soon politely invite them to dinner at his manse, to “discuss several concerns” he has about the behaviour of the Monarch and his friends and how this might reflect on his own position on the council. At dinner he explains that persons of influence are hinting that a passage in the rules suggests that if the Monarch is guilty of extreme behaviour his sponsor can be evicted prematurely from the council. Nonetheless, he says he is sure a compromise is possible with some modification of their behaviour.

If the PCs refuse to go to this meeting, refer to Option 1 above. If they do go, refer to Option 2, but change Iucounu’s mood from rage to coldly considered, and substitute his words with the following: *“It pains me to reveal that after due consideration I feel my plans cannot risk being compromised by the antics of such unpredictable characters as yourselves. Since you have served me well, I hold that the Law of Equipoise prevents me from terminating your existence. Nonetheless, you must be removed.”* [Snicker] *“Burial beneath the Earth at a depth of 45 miles is appealing, but is perhaps tantamount to death. Therefore I choose to send you far from this region to a distant and barren place I had the misfortune to visit recently. Persons of your resources may even find a way to thrive there.”* [Chuckle.]

As the PCs are dragged painfully to the cage (see above) they cannot fail to notice a bemused and still slime-dripping vat-grown construct that exactly resembles the new Monarch (the PC winner). Elaborate this meeting as far as is

Abbreviations Used in this Work:

DERPG – ‘Dying Earth RPG Rules’ (Pelgrane Press, 2001)

TDE – ‘Tales of the Dying Earth’ by Jack Vance (Millennium, 2000)

SVG – ‘Scaum Valley Gazetteer’ Webster (Pelgrane Press, 2002)

XPS – ‘Excellent Prismatic Spray’ (Pelgrane Press – various)



Appendix 1 – The Great Fair

⊕ The lively fair is situated on a huge field that stands on the arm of land where the Scaum and Xzan join. Nearby are stands of fruiting trees and copses of fluttering yellow bilibobs. A decrepit wicker palisade encompasses the whole of this wide area. If it is meant to prevent people from passing easily in or out of the fair it is clearly ineffectual. Amidst this bustling throng are stalls, booths, entertainers, and a great mass of folk determined to enjoy a fine day.

Merchants

The more prosperous local merchants have permanent booths, and arrive with their goods on a wagon early every morning that a market is held – usually accompanied by one or more muscular hirelings. These traders mostly live either nearby in a riverbank manse, or else in Scaumside, south of the river. The successful merchants who travel from more distant places for the larger markets (and the Great Fair) have arrangements for sturdy semi-permanent booths to be erected on their behalf. These folk stay in one of the better inns. The booths, whether temporary or permanent, are sturdy wooden constructions, usually with a lockable back-room, that is likely to be protected by cantraps or other measures. Regardless of its level of security, it is not usual for any merchants to leave valuable goods unattended overnight, unless they are able to afford reliable guards, or are sufficiently dedicated to stay on the premises overnight. (This is a fairly common occurrence during the larger fairs, where middling prosperous merchants sleep with their goods, usually with at least one other person assisting the thief-watch.)

The second tier of traders are peddlers, folk of good standing who have a more modest stall – sometimes a hut, and sometimes nothing more than an old door laid across trestles. Some of these sleep with their goods, others have a handbarrow and/or associates, and take their goods back to a tavern room each evening. Those who stay behind in the evenings eat around communal fire-pits near the river. The difference between these folk and the lowest tier of traders, is that these folk are commercially reasonably successful. This might be either because their goods are fine local crafts (perhaps produced by themselves or their relatives) or because they are excellent traders with a fine eye for value and a talent for trader's patter. The greatest number of traders are a poorer lot, who display their wares on the grass or a blanket. These have no greater status amongst the other merchants than the general public who browse the stalls.

Incidental Entertainments

Vegetable Contests

Local farmers are eligible to bring along their best and biggest vegetables, and town councillors judge the best in several categories (including 'most amusing shape'). The judging takes place under large open tents, and each entrant normally jealously guards their offering until judging is complete.

The Punch and Judy Show

Available both in shows for children, and in the evenings in more risqué versions.

Tug of War

Local bravoos have arranged themselves into teams on either side of a specially created muddy quag near the riverbank. This is always highly amusing for the spectators, and a small sideline in betting takes place. If the PCs wish to they may field a team. Teams are coincidentally all the same size as the group of PCs (3-5), or perhaps PCs need an extra recruit. Mechanically each GMC team is ranked either with a boon of 1, levy of 1 or no adjustment. The GM uses their best assessment to decide on the relative strength (Athletics/Attack – Strength) of the PCs compared to their opponents. For each stage of the tug, the lowest rolling team is pulled



half as many steps forward as the difference between the rolls – round fractions of less than 1 up, and fractions of higher than 1 down. There are ten steps between each group and the mud. Once the lead character is adjacent to the mud, they must make an Athletics roll each round to keep their footing. If this fails, all is lost as they slide into the mud – and their fellows after them (except for someone making an IS with Athletics, who can throw themselves aside). Incidentally, the prize for the winning team is a massive cake from Dame Mygens famous Cake Shop. (Thus resistance to Gourmandism might tempt the PCs into this amusing activity.) Mechanically, the leading character uses points from a pool composed of his own Athletics pool points enhanced by half the points from the Athletics pools of his fellows, then halved. After the match is over, the lost points are divided equally and as equal an amount as possible taken from each participant's Athletics pool.

Guess Whose Feet?

Various well-known locals line-up behind a screen with trousers or skirts held up slightly, so that their feet and ankles are visible beneath the screen. Others must guess whose feet belong to who, and can win a reward – usually a sack of prize-winning vegetables.

Pie-Eating Contest

No more or less complicated than it sounds. A group of large men sits at a long table, each with 20 pies in front of them. The first to down all of them wins 100 silver terces. (Those producing significant wastage – crumbs, rinds, and sections of pie strewn around which are not actually eaten – may be disqualified by the judges.) [It is unlikely that any PC possesses the prodigious Gourmandism required to triumph at this competition in the face of the prodigious local contenders, but it might be amusing for them to try.]

Wrestling Matches

Huge, sweating, leering, and obscenely muscled individuals challenge all comers for a purse of 250 terces. (Won if you can throw them from the ring or knock them out by slamming them against the canvas.) The rules are simple – no punching, no eye-gouging, no scratching, no squirrel grips. [This is the event here that most readily suggests itself for role-playing fun if one of the PCs has Strength 8+ as an Attack – since this acts as a boon of 1 to their Athletics for the purposes of wrestling. GM's will need to invent amusing protagonists, and a tough PC might net himself a purse of winnings before local favourite Mandrel 'Haystacks' Vrambon flattens him.]

Juggling

Various performers, some on stilts, some using clubs, some firesticks, some balls, do their best to entertain the crowds with their antics. They do this as a means of earning money, and are all part of the single licensed carnival that the town council permits to come to the Great Fair. GMs should go to some effort to describe individual acts as part of the fair's general ambience. Perhaps even roll a dice to indicate how impressive any performance is (though it will only be very poor if a DF is rolled). GMs can even simply tell the Players that PCs are impressed with various specifically named parts of any performance if an IS (or possibly PS) is rolled. Some acts rely on lithe female performers, so Resistances against Rakishness may need to be made in order to decline to part with a terce or two in appreciation.

Corn Doll Competition

Like the vegetable contests, local children compete to make the most beautiful doll out of stalks of corn and ribbons. The prize is usually a cake or some more robust doll from one of the shops in town.

Contest of Grotesques

Anyone may bring along the most repulsive living creature they can find – whether sentient or entirely animal. These are displayed all afternoon for the amusement of the fair-goers. The cost to enter a grotesque into the judging is 100 terces. (This prevents the presenting of frivolous candidates, which was a problem in the past.)



In the evening independent judges award a purse of 500 terces to the person whose grotesque proved the most popularly repulsive. This year, there are seven entries:

- i) **Juvenile Deodand** – chained and slaving, this creature alternates between lunges and cringing. It is clearly a young deodand, although very nearly full adult height. Three uncouth opportunists (adventurers) have brought this specimen.
- ii) **The Abominable Vat Creature** – Though otherwise apparently fully human, this man has skin that he can turn transparent through mere concentration. He had entered himself in the competition. (A former anatomy model from the Scholasticarium.)
- iii) **The Book of Obscenities** – Xallops the Archaeologist (TT: p134) has uncovered another fascinating book from an ancient ruin (or perhaps it is the same one). It contains motile pictures of hideous historical events. Xallops is showing the depiction of the mountainous mound of dying enemies (that Golickan Kodek created on Modavna Moor) to anyone who cares to look.
- iv) **A Barbarian Lizard Man** – This humanoid creature was captured somewhere across the Songan Sea and is secured with chains and manacles. Perhaps once it might have been savage, though that is debatable, but it is now a pitiful sight, and obviously ill-treated by the ruffians that have entered it into the competition.
- v) **The Walking Corpse** – A magician named Tzant is accompanied by what is clearly a person dead and desiccated for many years. He names this only as 'the walking corpse'. It will win the contest unless PCs somehow intercede. The corpse is sentient and may often be seen conversing with Tzant. It is also very flammable – if utilised this fact angers both corpse and magician.
- vi) **A Minor Gargoyle** – this horrid little stony creature is around 3ft high. It scampers, leers, and scratches itself. The person presenting this exhibit is a woman adventurer (actually a minor mage), and this is her servant – though she does not specify this fact. When the judging occurs, the gargoyle goes through a routine of obscene gestures and actions that it has obviously rehearsed well, and finds amusing to perform – especially when people react with shock and disgust. The woman herself seems pleased with its routine, and feeds it a live rat afterwards (which she pulls from a wriggling sack).
- vii) **The Repulsive Clown** – this man is dressed as a jester, but his garments are ragged and smelly, and he does not seem to be a particularly jolly soul. When it is time for him to be judged, he performs a comedy routine of jokes designed to turn the stomach and offend the sensibilities, and incorporates a lively selection of disturbingly noxious flatulence. He is so disgusting that the judges have to deliberate for some time between him and the walking corpse as most grotesque entry.

Standard Hustles

PCs should be too wily to enter such things, but here are two examples of the kind of thing that is common:

Find the Lady – Bet your terce, find the card from the rotating three on the table, and win 3t back. What can be simpler? Well, the cardsharp in question is adept at hiding the real lady in a groove in the edge of the table most of the time. Only someone deliberately looking for trickery who has either Gambling or Perception 8+ and rolls an IS will see him do this, though such a person rolling a PS will notice his hands moving oddly as they speedily manipulate the cards. (Once they have observed this action, both an IS or PS will notice it again on future rounds.) The sharp changes the cards around in several separate flurries, usually making the change in the third or fourth flurry. So after the first, or during the second, flurry, a swift participant might identify the card (IS or PS success) and slam their hand down on it. (The sharp will be less able to argue that he hadn't finished his adjustments if the PC acts during the second flurry.) Note again that the GM rolls the dice, and so the PCs/Players will never be sure if they know where the correct card is. On a DF or QF they will think they do, on an EF or HBS they won't have a clue.

The Pea Under the Nutshell – Same sort of thing. The hustler is adept at gripping the pea between thumb and forefinger, slipping it under and from out of any shell she wants to. Thus it is 'never' under the first shell chosen and rarely under the second. Same observation chances exist as above, but this one is less easy to



sabotage with a pre-emptive strike (since the pea is actually usually in the hustler's hand). One way to do it is to push the hustler back or suddenly restrain them – prior to lifting the shells to show that no pea is under any of them. However, such things have been tried before, and the hustler has trained herself to kick over her wooden table and drop the pea if attacked by surprise. It is also possible that this huckster is a former adventurer and long ago managed to memorise one spell, and now uses it to help them – the *Spell of the Slow Hour* (DERPG: p110) – in an emergency. IE she will activate this when attacked and place the pea in a superfast flurry disguised as continuing her normal dextrous actions.

Fire-Twirling

More popular when the light starts to fade in the evening, but still happening on and off during the day, small groups of exotically (and scantily) clad young women and men twirl chains with flaming ornaments on the ends. They do so in amazing patterns and with great agility. See 'Juggling' above for further details. Even on a DF a fire-twirler will not suffer more than a dropped chain and a minor singe – since they are all well-practised professionals.

The Coconut Shy

This regular carnival event as usual seems easy, but is very hard. The coconuts are each wedged into their stand, each of which is made of a flexible wood that grips them tight. The huckster in charge knows how to twist the coconuts so that it seems as if they are loose when he removes, tests, or adjusts them – which he does before each demonstration he performs. If any PC wishes to have a go, the cost is 1t per three throws and the prizes are in coconuts – if you knock one off you get two. Note also that the stall is protected by a cantrap that detects if magic assists any throw. Mechanically, a single roll of the dice calculates each throw. No adjustments are made, because the task is so hard, and note that the GM rolls the dice for a secret result. If a character has Attack (Strength) of at least 8, and/or Athletics of 10 or more, they succeed on an IS roll only. Others will never succeed. The huckster will always call out his disappointment when someone fails to knock off a coconut.

The Dagger Throwing Range

This operates in a similar way to the coconut shy. Along the back wall of the booth are many playing cards. A single terce will buy you the opportunity to make three throws with the daggers supplied by the stall-keeper. It is not permissible to use your own daggers, because the storekeeper requires everyone to be on an "even-footing". If you can stick each dagger cleanly into three cards you win a choice of one of several decorative wooden carvings. If all three cards are nobles then you win a small shiny metal ornament such as a decorative fish, a mirror, a brooch, a pair of spiral earrings etc. (All very suitable for impressing one's date). Mechanically, also a single roll is required per dagger throw, with the following adjustments. (Again the GM makes all rolls secretly.)

Base Chance – None (Without adjustments below it is impossible to hit a card, since the daggers are weighted badly. Exception – perhaps on a DF you accidentally hit one – but not a noble.)

Bonuses – For every one of the following bracketed options that apply to a PC, they gain a bonus of 1, to a maximum bonus of +2 (Quick Fingers of 8+; Attack style of 'Cunning' or 'Finesse', Defense style of 'Sure-Footedness'.) Note however, that on the first throw no bonus is applied – as the thrower initially becomes aware of the odd balance and trajectory of the knife. Similarly, even if the PC has the maximum bonus of +2, on the second throw they can only gain a +1 bonus, and do not get the maximum until their third throw. Since the Players themselves are not aware of these specific mechanics, they act as a realistic representation for this game of 'chance'.



Gwatibble's Dancing Hoons

Gwatibble is a huge, bald man, immensely strong, and actually a vat-grown construct with a fair degree of hoon in his own make-up. He carries an immense whip, and sports massive black boots, grey trousers and a dark blue heavily-ruffed shirt. He sets up his little roped area somewhere in the fairground, drives a great metal stake into the ground and attaches two chains to it. Then he fetches his two hoons one by one from their nearby caravan-cage. These are then attached to the stake by means of large chains. Using a whistle and the whip, the hoons are thereby 'encouraged' to engage in amusing movements and pantomimes. Both creatures seem undernourished and terrified of Gwatibble. If the chance arises, a member of a rival entertainment troupe uses a cantrap to snap the chains at a crucial moment, and the PCs are coincidentally nearby when the hoons make their desperate bid for freedom. Whether they savage small children and reveal themselves as monsters, or whether they are pathetic prisoners soon hacked down by alarmed and overzealous constables is up to the GM.

Pickpockets

Pickpockets operate throughout the crowd – locals targeting foreigners, foreigners targeting the rich, and those with no discrimination at all. For any significant period that a PC or group of PCs spends wandering the fair roll a single dice. On a 1, a pickpocket targets a random PC at some point during that time. Do not specifically alert the PCs to the presence of pickpockets unless they seek pertinent advice from a knowledgeable GMC. It may not be until one PC has been robbed that they adopt any sensible safety measures. Some pickpockets are career criminals, others mere roguish opportunists, others youngish children with a carefully-cultivated air of heart-wrenching poverty and malnutrition. Note that many also operate with back-up, carefully passing their stolen goods to a third party moments after the theft. Such a switcheroo might be noticed (IS or PS) but also might not. They are not so well organised that further persons line up for this subterfuge – if the first switcheroo is noticed then he/she is in trouble.

Mechanically, first of all roll for the Pickpocket with an automatic bonus of 1 due to choosing his/her moment carefully in the crowd and bustle of the fair. The PC counters with a single Perception roll, and has two possibilities to gain a bonus of 1. First, if the Player has recently, or often, stressed that their PC is tautly alert for pickpockets; secondly if the PC has a Perception of 8+. Thus it is possible that the PC might counter with a +2 bonus. Note also that various methods of securing one's valuables might automatically defend against pickpockets, for instance an elaborate codpiece is unlikely to be rifled without you noticing. Other less stringent measures, such as securing one's cash inside one's jerkin might also serve as well, as a pickpocket would have to somehow undo your jerkin to reach them.

Pocket Picking Results:

Pickpocket (PP) rolls 1 degree higher than victim: *PP only locates your valuables, but cannot reach them safely. On their next attempt they roll at a further bonus of 1.*

PP rolls 2 degrees higher - *they obtain some small item or a few coins.*

PP rolls 3 degrees higher - *they obtain some significant object including possibly your money pouch.*

PP rolls 4 degrees higher - *they obtain your most expensive item.*

PP rolls 5 degrees higher - *they obtain your most expensive item plus some other minor object or some coins.*

PP rolls same as victim - *victim is alerted and theft is thwarted, but PP escapes into the crowd.*

PP rolls 1 degree less than target - *PP obtains some small item or few coins, but is noticed whilst doing so. Victim may pursue hard on their heels as PP attempts to flee through the crowd.*

PP rolls 2 degrees worse than target - *target is instantly alerted and may attempt an attack on the PP.*

PP rolls 3 or more degrees worse than target - *target automatically apprehends the offending invasive hand/wrist.*



Taking a Chance

Some PCs may wish to enhance their own funds through a variety of nefarious means. Since all have been inveigled into taking part in the challenges, Iucounu (or even their own sense of self-preservation) may alert them to the fact that being caught in criminal acts is likely to get them disqualified. However, such considerations apply more to obvious crimes such as picking pockets or mugging wealthy citizens down dark alleys. Many other activities are less likely to result in criminal proceedings, even if discovered. If the PCs set up their own bunco operation within the Fairground, they will shortly be visited by constables and asked for their permit. As mentioned elsewhere, a particular troupe of entertainers has exclusive license to run 'entertainments', and gives a hefty fifth of its takings to the town council. The list and description of licensed 'entertainers' is thus available to all senior constables for regular checking. If the PCs keep watch for the constables, they may nonetheless manage to bilk a few fair-goers of their terces and then 'do a runner'. If the constables catch them in the act, and the PCs act innocent, there is a chance (Ψ PERSUASION) to be let off Scot-free. If this fails, fines may be levied. There is a levy on Persuasion chances to resist minor penalties if the PCs are apprehended trying to flee the scene. Being known as challengers has a mixed blessing – it allows them some small leeway, but allows them to be easily recognised later by their victims.

Appendix 2 – General Knowledge about the Contests

Day 1

1) The Running of the Bauk

Before each Great Fair, the circle of main streets nearest the Duchess' manse are lined with barricades of thorny bushes and bales of hay, and around three-dozen forest bauk are released at noon - and run frantically up and down, seeking egress back to the wilds. Anyone who wishes to register for the challenges to become 'Monarch of the Fair' must first prove their bravery by dashing around the course, and not only surviving - but also somehow managing to 'garland' three bauk. Once these hopefuls complete their run, many other local bravoos and dozens of out-of-towners also try the course, optimistically relying on safety in numbers to protect them. This tradition began with the Duchess' father, a century or so ago. A rather bloodthirsty fellow, he used to run himself (in disguise) during the first few years, and after that used to watch from a balcony – cheering when unfortunates were tossed over barricades or trampled underfoot. Whilst most view the scene from their balconies or behind barricades, much prestige is later had by evidencing scars and bruises and telling exciting tales of your experiences. During this event about a tenth of the participants are significantly injured, and each year usually accounts for at least half a dozen deaths¹¹. (More deaths would surely occur but for the healers of Ethodea who remain on hand. Mind you, as efficient as they are, the healers have no miraculous powers beyond standard spells, only ways of accelerating natural healing processes.) The exact streets are: the Xzanside Road from Duchess Street (the main turning south of the Duchess' Manse) to the end of Fairview Lane (junction north of Huzanter's), Duchess Street as far as Fairview Lane, and all Fairview Lane. This provides a circular track of a little over three miles, which is lined with screaming spectators behind their barricades.

2) Registration – Early Evening

All contestants must have a local sponsor to provide them with a character reference and pay the substantial fee. This sponsor must be of financial means, and a citizen of Azenomei, since if their champion wins, the

¹¹ Curious PCs may discover that most deaths are from amongst those aiming to be contestants in the challenges.



sponsor gains a seat on the city council. The cost to register a contestant is 10,000t¹². Each sponsor may register only one contestant. (This latter information may appear to derail any grand plans the PCs have of each of them somehow entering.)

Day 2

3) Contest 1: The Hunter's Challenge – Morning

Each contestant must show themselves appropriately skilled in the arts of hunting. (Previous challenges: a simple archery contest, wrestling with juvenile erbs, spearing a single charging hoon after it was released from a cage, throwing a series of spears at a moving target, lassooing a wild bauk, and identifying a series of pelts.)

4) Contest 2: The Steward's Challenge – Afternoon

Each contestant must display capabilities of a domestic nature. (Previous challenges: preparing a sumptuous meal, making a four-tiered hat, tasting and identifying several wines, balancing a complicated account ledger, sewing a set of large curtains suitable for the drawing room of the duchess' manse¹³, and re-upholstering an antique couch.)

Day 3

5) Contest 3: The Athlete's Challenge – Morning

Each contestant must perform some feat of athleticism, or a series of feats. (Previous challenges: an obstacle course, the long-jump, swimming the river, a riding race, a foot race, arm-wrestling contests, carrying blocks of stone from one side of the field to another, and leaping through rolling hoops.)

6) Contest 4: The Pedant's Challenge – Afternoon

All contestants are presented with a series of valuable and/or rare items and must describe their secrets to the judges as best they can. (Previous items: coins from the previous aeon, a selection of the various wines of the region, a variety of rare editions of the poems of Mortiquaan, Soussanese pottery, the season's fashions, and jade statuettes from the Kang Dynasty.)

Day 4

7) Contest 5: The Drayman's Challenge – Morning

Each contestant must show their expertise in handling a cart drawn by a draft animal – usually a bauk gelding. (Previous challenges: an obstacle course, an unusually recalcitrant species of animal, a straightforward cart race, a race to put all four wheels on a wagon and then cross the field to a finish line, and loading a cart and driving it over uneven ground – with the winner being the one whose load survives the best.)

8) Contest 6: The Defender's Challenge – Afternoon

Contestants are paired into duels with rapiers or their other common weapons. Judges measure skill and assign points as they watch. Occasionally this is changed to a variant form – such as staff-fighting, but such things have proved unpopular with the crowds, and so this final challenge is likely to be a match of standard weapons as normal. It is always last because although people rarely die (no more than one person every three fairs or so), they often enough become so wounded as to require a few days to fully recover – even when under treatment from the healers.

¹² GM: A purposefully massive figure, as this plot device alone explains why so few contestants are entered. Local rumors claim (accurately) that the council seat inspires the wealthiest, and the fee bolsters the coffers of both the Duchess and the ranking council members.

¹³ It was not entirely coincidental that the Duchess was renovating her personal apartments that year.



Appendix 3 – Sundry Tricks and Diversions

Running of the Bauk

During this challenge, one or more of the extremely alert PCs may observe (Ψ PERCEPTION -1) the following: **Lyandros** (Liane) – seems occasionally to exert feats of unusual agility. (His boots are potent magical artefacts that enhance his dexterity. They are also enchanted to not be easily revealed as magical.) **Satmon** is capable of strange contortions to avoid the horns of the bauk. (Being an archveult, his joints are elastic.) **Weshnir** seems occasionally to blur oddly when he is in physical danger. (A cantrap to obscure his exact location in space: he will not be able to use such advantages in following challenges.) *Should a PC consider pointing out cheats to the judges, make sure that at least one of the above is seen to notice one of Iucounu's assistances. It is probable that the observer would be Satmon, who's archveult senses can perceive a wider spectrum than human eyes.*

Spy Spirits

Marcoster's spies are blocked by Iucounu's device. However, Iucounu's spies are only 'revealed' by Marcoster's device. Therefore the PCs will need to create some kind of subterfuge. The simplest idea is to invent a code so that whenever Iucounu's spies appear the PCs can break into discussions of how they "plan to win the contests for the greater glory of Iucounu". The arrogant magician will thus be appeased, and his spies will soon depart. Marcoster may at some point confront the PCs grumpily, giving them the impression that he is frustrated that his spies have been blocked, but since he presumes they (the PCs) have nothing to do with this, his implications will not be overly vindictive or accusatory.

The Hunter's Challenge

For the actual challenges, everyone knows that the scrutiny for illegal magic is much stronger and so cantraps cannot safely be applied. If the GM so desires, **Satmon** may be set up as most likely overall winner. If so, not only is he double-jointed (though will only use this when sure of being free from observation), but also has a strange hypnotic power over half-men. He may initially have problems with his pelgrane, but then softly talk it into submission – so that it meekly allows itself to be tied. If challenged, he will explain this as a trick he learned in the distant east. **Iucounu's** overworld magic can little help the PCs here, and in any case, Iucounu is clever enough not to risk potential discovery early in the challenges. He knows his representatives will be under especial scrutiny and is taking a calculated risk in order to divert suspicions. **Lyandros** (Liane) also has the help of his magic boots, which might give him a boon/bonus on agility. Observers will notice only that he is very sprightly. One benefit **Urdril** has as a vat-grown construct might be that he resists normal physical damage. IE a boon or bonus on his Health rolls. GM adjudicates as applicable, and again a PC that is close by might observe (Ψ PERCEPTION -1) something of this.

The Steward's Challenge

Iucounu cannot influence Etiquette, but can send spirits to enhance the flavour/quality of the prepared foodstuffs. (Only the PC whose food is being enhanced will be able to see this as it does its work during the closing moves of the preparation – after the PC has made their roll.) The GM may thus choose to improve any PC Stewardship roll by two levels. (IE QF to HBS etc.) If so, have the judges evidence extreme surprise that such an odd-looking combination/preparation somehow works so well. Of the GMCs only **Satmon** may influence this contest, and in a similar way. He has magical dust concealed beneath his fingernails (in the hopes that one of the Stewardship tasks would be food preparation). When added to any food, it enhances the taste significantly. (GM improves Satmon's result as appropriate.) Unfortunately, within the next hour, these bizarre overworld spices cause extreme nausea and vomiting in the human system. (The temporary debilitation of the



judges will cause alarm, but the cause will never be traced.) Again, an observant PC might (Ψ PERCEPTION -1) see Satmon surreptitiously flicking out dust from beneath his fingernails, or may simply observe him acting oddly. Bear in mind that the judges and crowd are also watching, so there would have to be some rationale as to why nobody else observed this. (Perhaps close range only?)

The Athlete's Challenge

Satmon and **Lyandros** (Liane) both have an agility advantage here. **Iucounu** can assist PCs by using spirits that assist their balance. Such a spirit will only be able to act three times for any PC, and the PC perceives the assistance as unseen hands.

The Pedant's Challenge

Iucounu cannot help the PCs here. **Satmon** is at an advantage because he actually knows something of Earth's ancient deities.

The Drayman's Challenge

Iucounu will assist the two PCs who have the most points to run faster in the first part. They will feel themselves slightly lifted and propelled, and gain a bonus of 1 to their Athletics roll. Otherwise, Iucounu can only help PCs with their balance. (See the 'Athlete's Challenge'.) Basically, the first three times that a PC faces disaster a spirit assists them to regain control. In some instances such help may be impossible, so the GM has to assess each incidence individually. Note also that by now Iucounu will be aware that some of the PCs have little or no chance of winning, and may not bother to send any spirits to assist them. (Though if a PC falls off their cart and is about to be run over and crushed, Iucounu might – if only to assist the morale of the other PCs he hopes might yet win – have spirits assist them in rolling to safety.) Note that if any GMCs are horribly injured after a DF sends them crashing onto the track beneath the wheels of other contestants, the healers can revive them through simple use of Edan's Thaumaturgic Poultice. **Satmon** and **Lyandros** both have a sleight advantage due to their enhanced agility. GM adjudicates as appropriate. **Urdril's** advantage only becomes applicable if he takes damage as part of this challenge.

The Defender's Challenge

Again **Satmon** and **Lyandros** both have a sleight advantage due to their enhanced agility. **Urdril** has a major advantage, since his enhanced physical form resists injury. If he is repeatedly stabbed this will cause some suspicion to be levied against him, and he might even be revealed (via a ceremonial detection conducted by Marcoster – or Iucounu) as having significant half-man plasm – and therefore be disqualified. (See also the final boxed Diversion below – as such a revelation might have other implications as regards an ongoing investigation.)

Iucounu can use spirits to have the first three successful attacks on a PC diverted or slowed. IE a bonus or boon applied to the PC's Defense. However, in order to minimise suspicions against him, Iucounu will only send these spirits to assist PCs that have a chance of winning.





Foul Murder

The GM will ideally develop various interesting subplots that take place throughout the evenings and in between challenges. These may vary from simple long-cons performed by the PCs (or upon them), through extended romantic intrigues, to rivalry with local bullies who have no time for grasping and effete outsiders. Here is an overview of a specific and fairly complex series of incidents to serve as an example. GMs who use it will need to extend and elaborate the events and implications suggested below. We gratefully acknowledge the inspiration of Michael O'Brien for this particular idea.

Day 1 - During the morning an hour or two before the Running of the Bauk, one or more PCs will observe a group of travellers much like themselves haranguing constables. The travellers claim that one of their associates went off with a man she met in a tavern last night and has not been seen since. The constables are disinterested, but take down a rudimentary report.

Day 2 - Some time during the Hunter's Challenge, local youths discover a partially dismembered body in the woods southeast of the Fairground. This is quickly brought to the attention of the constables. Once the excitement of the Challenge has died down, the rumour quickly spreads. Various exaggerations become 'fact', such as "the person was ripped clean in half", "all their blood was sucked out", and "the body was found wedged high in a tree". Normal folk are kept out of the woods by constables, but a few persons of note are allowed to visit the scene. If the PCs can make a reasonable claim (Ψ PERSUASION) to have experience in mysteries, they will be believed and allowed to view the evidence. A young man has been slain (broken neck) during the night and his entrails partially devoured. The GM should devise ways in which suspicion (in the eyes of the PCs alone) falls upon Satmon. Satmon is prone to night wakefulness – he does not need sleep, only meditates for an hour or so before dawn. Thus he roams the quiet town streets and countryside. Satmon may be observed and followed (Ψ CONCEALMENT, STEALTH) by PCs this evening. If the PCs also think to watch Urdil they may see that he also is a nocturnal wanderer. If a half-man was seen on the approach to Pergolo and not slain, it should be encountered and slain during this night, by PCs or others.

Day 3 - Shortly before the Athlete's Challenge a woman's body is found in the town Backs, in a similar condition to the man slain yesterday. She was slain last night. The town is in an uproar, and the Challenge postponed more than an hour. Marcoster and Huzanter use magic to scour the streets for hidden half-men. Announcements declare nobody is to travel in groups of less than three after dark. If the PCs followed Satmon through the whole of the night they may (correctly) consider him vindicated. Bootprints are found near the body, but the senior constables are still convinced that a dangerous half-man predator is haunting the town. From tonight onwards patrols of armed constables will be scouring the district, and PCs may encounter them if they are abroad. If so they'd better have a good excuse for skulking around at night. If they are as yet unaware of Urdil's wanderings, they may see a shadowy figure, and might be the ones to find the body detailed for tomorrow's discovery.

Day 4 - In the early hours of the morning a young woman's fresh body is found in a culvert directly off the main concourse. After further initial panic, the powers that be decide the contests must go on. General fear is spreading through the populace.

Satmon should be set-up as the logical suspect from the PCs' point of view. (Since they may have observed his odd contortions.) However, it is Urdil (with way too much deodand plasm in his make-up) who is responsible. Ideally one of the PCs will face him in combat during the Defender's Challenge, and note his suspiciously sharp teeth and bloodthirsty manner. He is a cannibal and must maintain his strength through devouring human innards 1/2days or 1/1day during times of activity. PCs may think to trace the group they overheard on Day 1 for a description, but shouldn't find them too soon. The authorities will not act against suspects without hard proof (fearing professional jealousy as motivation for accusations). If Urdil wins, with a PC second (due to their expert planning), it would be a grand dilemma for them alone to know he is the inhuman murderer.



Appendix 4 –Personalities of the Fair

4.1 The Notables

Amisaulde - Duchess of Azenomei

Amisaulde wanders the fair with her retinue of footmen and sycophants, a troop of half a dozen pikemen, and her wizard **Marcoster**. (Typically this group numbers 18 - 25.) [See also: Azenomei Guide]

Fianosther

This merchant is a wily fellow, capable of turning a profit from any intriguing old rubbish. However, he makes pains to keep his nose clean, and hires others to do any unseemly collecting required to replenish his stocks. Rumour has it that he keeps a captive erb in the back room of his booth. [See also: SVG p54]

Huzanter - Curio-Shop Owner and Rumoured Mage

Though he denies such things, Huzanter is widely suspected amongst the folk of Azenomei as being a mage of significant prowess. Everyone treats him politely and his opinions are respected. Typically at the fair he will be wandering by himself, watching the contests alone, or engaging in polite conversation with other local notables. [See also: Azenomei Guide]

Iucounu the Laughing Magician

This ugly, unpleasant and vindictive magician maintains the pretence that he is respected and well-liked in Azenomei. This pretence is assisted by the fact that anyone who crosses his path toadies up to him as best they can, and that those who think ill of him (almost everyone) is loathe to speak these thoughts in case his spies are listening. In reality there is little chance of this, unless you are someone who has recently crossed or irritated Iucounu, as his resources are finite. He rarely comes into town himself unless on specific important business, preferring to send his servants; however, he does so enjoy the annual fair. This year he is determined to field the winning candidate for the opportunities presented by gaining a legitimate place on the town council and is already planning to use this status as a platform from which to perform any number of high japes. When wandering the fair he is typically accompanied by Ettis, a “small round animal with long fur, short legs and black button eyes” that “bounds up and down with a series of shrill barks”. [See also: DERPG p157 & Azenomei Guide]

Kandive – Prince of Kaiin

Kandive, like the Duchess, wanders the fair, aloof from the attentions of fox-faced vagabonds. He too is accompanied by his retinue – family members, Kaiin City vigils in their dress uniforms, and various palace functionaries and their staff. (This group never numbers less than 20, and may consist of up to 40.) [See also: DERPG p157 & KPG pp86-99]

Lampet Dool

“I seem a little short of gambling change today – perhaps a rent increase across the board is worthy of consideration.”

Dool is a property owner, one of Azenomei’s ultra-wealthy. Both robust and rotund, he wears billowing black silk breeches, a shirt of canary yellow, and a maroon jacket of great capacity. He tops this with a strange conical blue hat of foreign origin.

Phendway Hackram – Chief Constable

The blustering power-hungry town’s chief justice. He wanders the fair with various functionaries and hangers-on, attempting to ingratiate himself with local personalities and anyone more important than himself. [See also: Azenomei Guide]



Selitan the Gorgeous

Travels to every Great Fair and around half of the monthly markets. He is a tailor with an estate to the north of Kaiin, and brings a fine selection of gowns, cloaks, hats, tunics and the like. [See also: SVG p54]

Tontrika Insidrikall

"Kindly remove that badly-dressed person from that place by the railing where I intend to stand."

A genuine noblewoman of Azenomei, distantly related to Prince Kandive – but not on particularly good terms with the Prince of Kaiin. Not one of the most noble of the nobility, she still looks down her nose at anyone not at least of her own station, and has little time or consideration for the masses. She wanders the fair with an effete retinue of personal assistants and 'friends'.

Varuna Albret - Acolyte of Ethodea

This active middle-aged woman is head of the small group of worshippers of Ethodea that staff the town's small hospice. She and her healers have a tent at the Fair, where they treat all injuries according to severity. Providing nobody will die or suffer permanent disablement if they delay, they will treat any injured contestant as a priority. [See also: Azenomei Guide, and 'Deities of the Dying Earth' article at Violet Cusps page]

Wyst, Purveyor of Curios

Wyst is renowned for delving into strange corners and forgotten ruins, and hawks his intriguing wares at fairs across the Scaum Valley. [See also: SVG p55]

Zelif Fote – Head of the Town Council

Successful merchant town council leader. He also oversees the constabulary. Consequently he is very busy during the Great Fair. Although he could delegate if he wanted to, and for other events usually does, he likes to be seen in his full power during the Great Fair. He is usually encountered striding around with several senior constables. [See also: Azenomei Guide]

4.2 The GMC Contestants

Lyandros of Sfere (sponsored by Lampet Dool)

"I am sure you would stand a good chance of winning were it not for several genetic defects - all too obvious to the trained eye."

An out and out dandy from a wealthy family of Sfere, he was disinherited years ago due to various indiscretions. Shiny black boots enhance his scarlet trousers, and his crimson cape adorns the back of a brown jerkin decorated with patterns of silver threads. His manner is condescending and brusque to fellow contestants. [If Liane the Wayfarer (DERPG: p158) is known to your players through Vance's stories, for added DE flavour, consider using his name/description instead of that of Lyandros.]

Lyandros' Ratings: Glib ~[___], Lawyerly ~+2[___], Cunning (Rapier) 1.5~[___], Intuition 1.5~[___], Health ~+2[___], Athletics 1.5~[___], Driving ~+3[___], Etiquette ~[___], Gambling 2~[___], Imposture ~+3[___], L. Rough ~[___], Perception ~[___], Pedantry ~[___] (Antiquities), Quick Fingers 1.5~[___], Riding ~+2[___], Stealth ~[___], Stewardship ~[___], Wherewithal ~[___].

Quatto Lupworg (sponsored by Zelif Fote)

"Are you directing your gaze in my direction?"

Quatto is a hulking brute of a man, a full head and shoulders taller than any other contestant listed here, and equally as wide. Of Gattanese descent, he wears leather trousers and huge boots, and his finely-worked leather waistcoat hangs open to reveal his magnificently-muscled torso. Unfortunately, what he benefits from in brawn he lacks in brain. Fote has not cheated in any way, except using the town's taxation money to pay for his agents to scour the countryside these last months, looking for the largest, meanest and toughest individual that could be reliably bribed to enter the contest on his behalf.



Quatto's Ratings: Intimidating ~[___], Obtuse ~-3[___], Strength (Club) 2~[___], Parry (Club) ~+2[___], Health 1.5~[___], Athletics ~[___], Driving ~[___], Etiquette 1, Gambling 3, Living Rough 1.5~[___], Pedantry 2 (Wrestling Rules), Perception ~-3[___], Riding 3, Stewardship 3, Wherewithal ~[___].

Satmon Teele (sponsored by Marcoster)

"Greetings and salutations, Teele's the name, traveller and entrepreneur. Excuse me a moment, as I have an urgent appointment some distance hence."

Satmon is an unassuming and sleight individual with a thin moustache and a nervous manner. He is certainly agile and swift, but seems to lack social graces. He wears a dark suit with a grey shirt, and pointed black shoes. On his head is a bowler hat of impeccable style. Satmon is a disguised archvult. Marcoster knows this – having captured him some months ago. With the Contests approaching, after the merry dance that Satmon led him prior to capture, Marcoster wondered how these abilities might be taken advantage of. Marcoster was able to penetrate the archvult's disguise, and has since assisted to perfect this defense. If Satmon wins and plays the role of successful champion for the year thereafter, Marcoster will give him the secret of permanently activating this improved magical disguise, and allow him to leave. If he loses he must just leave and never return.

Satmon's Ratings: Obfuscatory ~+3[___], Lawyerly 1.5~[___], Finesse (Rapier) ~+3[___], Sure-Footedness 1.5~[___], Health 1.5~[___], Magic (Overworld) 8, Athletics ~+3[___], Driving ~[___], Etiquette 4, Gambling 6, Imposture 8, Living Rough ~[___], Pedantry 5 (Overworld Physics), Perception ~+2[___], Riding ~[___], Stealth ~+2[___], Stewardship 6, Wherewithal ~[___].

Except when used defensively, Satmon's Magic is severely limited - due to his need to continually concentrate on his magical disguise. A few exceptions to this are noted within the text about running the contests.

Urdril Reenk (sponsored by Phendway Hackram)

"I don't recall inviting you to converse with me."

Urdril is a tall, muscular man who has clearly seen much hardship – much of it probably dealt out by himself. His face bears various scars, and his muscles are clearly taut and rippling beneath his fashionable silk and leather garb. He talks little, but speaks plainly when he does. GM: Note that he acts like the typical tough and ruthless adventurer that might be representative of PCs in some other role-playing games. It is worth noting that he is a vat-bred soldier, several decades older than he appears.

Urdril's Ratings: Intimidating ~+4[___], Penetrating ~+2[___], Speed (Rapier) 1.5~[___], Intuition 1.5~[___], Health 1.5~[___], Magic (Resistance only) 7, Athletics ~[___], Driving ~+2[___], Etiquette 3, Living Rough ~+3[___], Pedantry 4 (Military History), Perception 1.5~[___], Riding ~[___], Stewardship 4, Wherewithal 1.5~[___].

Weshnir the Wary (sponsored by Tontrika Insidrikall)

"I am still pondering the most suitable response to your question."

Weshnir is short and stocky, and slow in speech but with a wily gleam in his eye. His clothes are heavy and of dull cloth in brown, black or grey. The single exception is a blue feather tucked into his black leather skullcap. Weshnir is an assassin from Val Ombrio - hired by one of Tontrika's contacts, when she expressed her desire to field the winning champion this year. Tontrika does not know Weshnir is an assassin, but would probably not care overmuch if she did.

Weshnir's Ratings: Eloquent ~[___], Contrary ~+4[___], Caution (Rapier) 1.5~[___], Dodge 1.5~[___], Health ~[___], Athletics ~+4[___], Driving 6, Etiquette 5, Gambling 7, Imposture 1.5~[___], Living Rough ~[___], Pedantry 4 (Assassination), Perception ~+3[___], Riding 1.5~[___], Stealth 2~[___], Stewardship ~+1[___], Wherewithal 1.5~[___]



Taglines for "All's Fair in Azenomei"

GM Note: Should you have less than five PCs, simply divide up any remaining tag-lines as appropriate, creating more if necessary to maintain balanced distribution. It is possible that your gaming sessions may not exactly match the suggested tag-line dispersion below. In this case, re-order them as required.

SESSION ONE (New in Town & Finding a Sponsor)

Character One

"Gather your courage, for talk of death and horrific injury are merely tales to frighten under-ambitious yokels."

"The peculiar patterning upon the turrets suggests an architect both ambitious and imaginative. Such a person can surely possess only the finest sensibilities."

"I can speak with unshakeable certainty in saying that I believe the spirit of the regulations has remained substantially unchallenged."

Character Two

"I require merely a fine bed, a quiet room, and a meal of high excellence. Surely this is not too much to ask?"

"Certainly the enticing lure of wealth and prestige is not one I can easily choose to ignore."

"Normally my actions are considerably more refined. I feel that somehow a gross injustice has been rendered."

Character Three

"I am anticipating with much relish the inevitable day when I shall be admitted to the ranks of the local nobility."

"Let us sally forth with a will. Soon we shall achieve the station in life so cruelly denied us prior to this point."

"I am certain that many opportunities exist in this fine town for persons of wit, persistence and imagination."

Character Four

"Folk of our quality do not deserve such treatment. We are used to the finer things in life."

"Come now; boldness is called for. Though some few dangers may be involved, always remember that they who risk nothing gain the same."

"I am no whimpering milksop, but I must observe that such casual and vicious cruelty turns my blood cold."

Character Five

"Regard the moonlight sparkling upon the water, the candles flickering in the gable windows. Ah, Azenomei, how I cherish your lustrous embrace."

"None shall call me craven when I rest upon the Champion's seat."

"Perhaps my initial enthusiasm was founded in an over-hasty assessment of the situation at hand."

SESSION TWO (Running the Bauk & First Challenges)

Character One

"He may be all smiles and jollity, but the important question remains: how well do our goals match his own?"

"He was clearly a man of many qualities, if only one of them had been the ability to leap thirty-feet straight up I might not be standing here now regarding his sorry remains."

"Why is the course of my life continually filled with such hazard and complexity?"

Character Two

"Though under normal circumstances these creatures would seem patently ridiculous, I advise acting with the utmost consideration."

"I am impressed. This seems to me to be magic of a most fascinating and advantageous nature."

"It is my growing suspicion that this situation is designed more for callous amusement than for a serious assessment of genuine ability."



SESSION TWO (Continued)

Character Three

"I have not recently observed another such impressively diverse gathering of thoroughly offensive individuals."

"It seems only fitting that we should place a discrete yet substantial wager on the person that commands our attention as most likely winner."

"Is it by such ill-advised actions as these that you intend to assist us in championing our cause?"

Character Four

"Such precautions serve us only to counteract the overly savage nature of these cruel and destructive beasts."

"Note the long spatulate fingers, and the sloping brow. These are not the marks of a person lavish with integrity."

"I feel somewhat perturbed by the desperate nature of the responsibility that has been allotted us."

Character Five

"I will utilise such trickeries only to appease our sponsor. My own skills are more than adequate to the task at hand."

"The day is young, and the challenges spread wide before us. Who can say what fate may reveal when the final tally is counted."

"Stand back. Whether at dice or cards, I am prepared to call no man my 'master'."

SESSION THREE (Continuing Challenges, Fairground Fun, & the End of the Contests)

Character One

"I am a person of many talents, and my prowess in such matters is not to be underestimated."

"I urge you to ignore the sorry manner of my appearance, and remember only the stalwart nature of my initial challenge."

"Let us drown our sorrows in numerous mugs of the strongest ale available to mankind."

Character Two

"Kindly hold my jerkin until I return. I shall now inflict the appropriate level of curt remonstrance."

"Pity alone stayed my hand. By rights I should have trounced him soundly."

"This is not an outcome I had previously entertained, nor one with which I am particularly enamoured."

Character Three

"My intention is to administer a thorough thrashing to this dubious individual. You will be well advised to watch and learn."

"Here I observe a career path not completely alien to my own sensibilities and aptitudes."

"I am tempted to remark that our situation could be worse, yet such words ring hollow with false confidence."

Character Four

"Some subtle form of deception is involved, yet my senses fail to perceive the manner in which it can be so."

"A sharp light reflected from the window of yonder manse, catching my eye at a critical moment. Otherwise my victory would have been assured."

"I deplore your methods. Nothing will be served by pummelling me in such a rigorous fashion."

Character Five

"The time draws close when we must bluntly evaluate our strategies in the cold light of reality."

"I cannot understand my failure to perform in my usual spectacular fashion. Some manner of debilitating curse is the only conceivable explanation."

"Your assessment is flawed. Our actions never for a moment strayed from the purest of motivations."

