

The  
Dying Earth

Based on the work of Jack Vance

# Beyond the Mountains of Magnatz

By  
Ian Thomson



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Based on the Dying Earth Book Series by JACK VANCE

# Beyond the Mountains of Magnatz

Advanced Cugel-Level Adventures for the Dying Earth Roleplaying Game  
Written and Designed by Ian Thomson

"In the Footsteps of Fools" – Episode 1.5/1.6

## Credits

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***We need hardly remind players that reading beyond this point radically spoils enjoyment of the adventure series.***

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## GM's Commencement Notes

### Keeping the PCs on Track

PCs may occasionally be able to choose **modes of transport** in this campaign, but there will only ever be one route that they can travel back towards Alмеры. This is simple geographic fact. Plus PCs should 'know' that if they 'wander off the trail' in the wilderness the only uncertainty as to their demise is the number of hours before it occurs. Even in civilized lands they should know with absolute certainty that if they deviate from the main way they will only be entering regions with minimal backwoods settlements and nowhere to go beyond them. Cugel himself faced this dilemma often, so we consider this state of affairs 'canon'. Magical transport is rare and/or dangerously unreliable, and this is also common knowledge in this version of the DE. You may need to alert any Players very familiar with DERPG to this. Magical travel devices that cover great distance at speed remove the **magnificent sense of distance & danger** that simple geography provides, changing the tone of a campaign significantly and permanently (with a possible exception if such devices are rare and minimally charged – or otherwise of very limited duration).

### 'Adventurous Cugelesque' or 'Turjanic' Gaming?

This document is labeled as 'Advanced Cugel-Level' (not simply 'Cugel-Level'). How you stress this difference may vary. As GM it is your responsibility to alert Players at the start of this adventure series of the **general overview of how their characters may develop**. If you are favoring pure Turjanic play, let Players know they are evolving bold adventurers in the dark classic style – even though play will remain flavoured with **Cugelesque elements**. If this is your intent, you will be best-served to edit out the more ridiculous options of play in this series as you go (including sobering the personalities of some GMCs), and frequently take pains to present adventure elements in their darkest possible expression. (See the Appendix for extended information on these different styles of running campaigns.)

If you are content with simply enhancing typically Cugelesque escapades into this more adventurous style, let players know at the start of this series that in this game-world **spells are rare and very hard to learn**, accomplished magicians of any note are few, and that persons survive on their skills, luck and determination. Both Turjan-Level and Adventurous Cugel-Level share one perspective that is not much used in regular Cugel-Level play: "PCs have goals." (IT, p28.) This series Goal is to return to Alмеры and take revenge on Iucounu. (See Appendix 2 for more!)

Either way, run *Beyond the Mountains of Magnatz* as physically/psychologically the most challenging of this entire series. PCs need to experience this publication as a **stark struggle for survival** between one semi-civilized land & the next.

### What You Will Need to Run This Adventure Series

This *In the Footsteps of Fools* series has five publications (though some are effectively 'double publications'). They are: "All's Fair At Azenomei", "Strangers in Saskervoy", "Lords of Cil", & "Beyond the Mountains of Magnatz" (this publication). Plus they conclude with the forthcoming "And Thence to Alмеры". You will no doubt wish to **purchase this entire erudite series**, which amounts to a role-playing epic of **sadly all-too rare magnificence**.

You will also need the DE rulebook or (less ideally) the DE Quickstart Rules. *Turjan's Tome* allows significant and easy expansion of BMM in the adventurous Cugel style. And is **essential** if you are evolving PCs towards full Turjanic capacity, as you need to refer to specific rules, spells, items etc and add them into your running of BMM.

Also note that owning *Demons of the Dying Earth* will save you time devising rulings and creating new challenges and hazards with **ease and aplomb**. And that this supplement in the series is the last that includes a big chunk of the classic DERPG demonical elements covered in that publication. Likewise *The Dying Earth Compendium* will be of use, especially in offering expanded information on creatures encountered in this northern wilderness.

Plus the beginning of *And Thence to Alмеры* (ATTA) finds the PCs stranded in the regions north of Erze Damath. Later in ATTA we provide **succinct and flawless adaptation notes** for running *Fields of Silver* as an optional grand finale to the PCs' time in the lands other than those they hail from. So if you are yet to run the *Fields of Silver* adventure series, then purchase of it will be an "undeniably magnificent idea" as it can be added powerfully & potently into this campaign. (We mention this as opportune forewarning. *Fields of Silver* is NOT required for BMM.)

Various free resources are also at the Violet Cusps page: ([www.dyingearth.com/violetcusps.htm](http://www.dyingearth.com/violetcusps.htm)). Most recommended to assist this publication are: Using Magic at Cugel-Level, The Enhanced Action Ruling, The Magic of the Wild, Weapons of the DE, Deities of the DE (*especially to enhance the City of Mar section*), & Gilgad's Wilderness Survival Guide. Plus, the Character Sheets include shorter GMC outline pages, which we advise you use to enhance a sense of GMC substance with easy-access personal & rating details (particularly for GMCs accompanying the PCs).

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## Conventions of Presentation (updated from previous publications)

The **potential usefulness of an ability** is often indicated so: (Ψ WHEREWITHAL) (Ψ PERSUASION, SEDUCTION).

[An indication '1' means a skill is not entirely appropriate, and a penalty or levy of 1 is applied at the GM's discretion.]

Abbreviations are used for results. (HBS - Hair's-Breadth Success, DF - Dismal Failure, etc). Sometimes successes are listed in ascending order: a PS expands on information for an HBS etc. If so read the whole entry from at **the lowest useful success** up to and including the best success rolled to the PC who made it. (Other PCs that also succeeded, but less well are presumed to know less precise detail.)

At some points within the text you will see **the symbol '⊕'**. This indicates a section of linkage text for the GM to read out. Some of this is speech from GMCs, and other parts are scene-setting remarks. 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 verbal expression at the appropriate moment - in order to explain or elaborate a situation, or link one scene to another.

At many places we cover merely the most likely example of a potential plot direction, sometimes also suggesting other possibilities. Each GM will need to **adjust, improvise & expand**. Also we only occasionally mention opportunities for petty squabbles and minor treacheries. More opportunities should be watched for and invented. In short, use your finely-honed abilities as a GM to make sure your Players get to **experience their PCs acting in the ways they most enjoy**.

In many instances the text descriptions presume that the PCs take a particular course of action. Since we cannot account for every eventuality, when PCs vary the stated plot, the GM should **adapt the text to suit their actions**, using our suggestions as guidelines. This may even include suggested endings to adventures, so read each part before running it.

Taglines are offered as an appendix, covering each section of the scenario. They include many outraged statements against Iucounu. Depending on speed of play and your (or your players) additional diversions, these may not be enough. In that case use the presented tag-lines as inspiration for more, if possible having some stock taglines handy before play begins. Always include a few that disparage Iucounu, especially if you can link these to outrage at specific occurrences.

Another convention adopted first within *All's Fair At Azenomei* is 'empty ratings'. We slightly alter that here. GMC description boxes typically have suggested ability ratings and also an empty box next to many ratings. This is for the GM to enter her assessment **if a more game-useful rating is required**, dependent on his/her gaming group (after reading the description of the GMC and the role they play). Such a choice may vary according to previous PC successes and failures, or just on the immediate needs of the situation. Alternatively, the GM may choose to fill all such blanks prior to commencing play. The GM may also **alter the other ratings at will**, according to their conception of the GMC as best matches the campaign. Note also that GMCs have been granted only those Abilities most likely required when role-playing them in the encounter. It may occasionally be useful for the drama of the game (or for fun) for them to have other abilities. Providing that neglecting to use this ability on a previous occasion known (or obvious) to the PCs is not a ridiculous twist of reality, invent away. For fairness, write it down next the ratings in pencil, so it becomes 'fact'.

We do not provide convoluted flowery speeches for every GMC encountered, and in many cases merely summarize their attitudes. Each GM will need to **give proper voice to sundry flunkies and townsfolk** rather than a hurried summary.

Few individuals are named throughout this work. Any GM who can't instantly and congruently name and remember an individual whenever it is useful to do so, is advised to create a list of 20F and 20M names and keep them at hand (since referring to said list can be disguised as referring to the actual scenario notes). Having a name available if ever the PCs enquire of it, keeps the players on their toes in the sense of not necessarily being sure who might be a significant GMC and who is merely an incidental background person. **Having Vancian names readily available** also heightens the feel of a world going on behind the scenes, which supports the game-world realness that adds to the quality of the adventures.

### You are a Co-Creator of this Series!

The way this series plays out will **vary enormously** for different Players/PCs. It's your duty throughout to spontaneously: 'decide when an ability roll or contest is required', 'vary the suggested number/type of foes', 'add magical resistances', 'vary challenge difficulty ratings', 'improvise side events', 'adjust GMC ratings', 'give GMCs spells or magical abilities', and 'alter the nature of magical items' - as best fits the style of play. We make some suggestions as notes in the text. In a similar vein, all scenarios in this publication, whether detailed or outline, are open to expansion and re-interpretation. The GM needs to **read them carefully in advance** of play and make personal notes on possible variations, and on any and all inspirations you have for how it might play according to your experience with your own Players in previous adventures.

To include as much game opportunities material as possible into this epic journey, some adventure sections are **detailed summaries**. The details are laid out in one possible order of play. Many GMs will be able to run/extrapolate these off the cuff, improvising as they go. Other GMs will need to review each section beforehand and make **expansion notes**.





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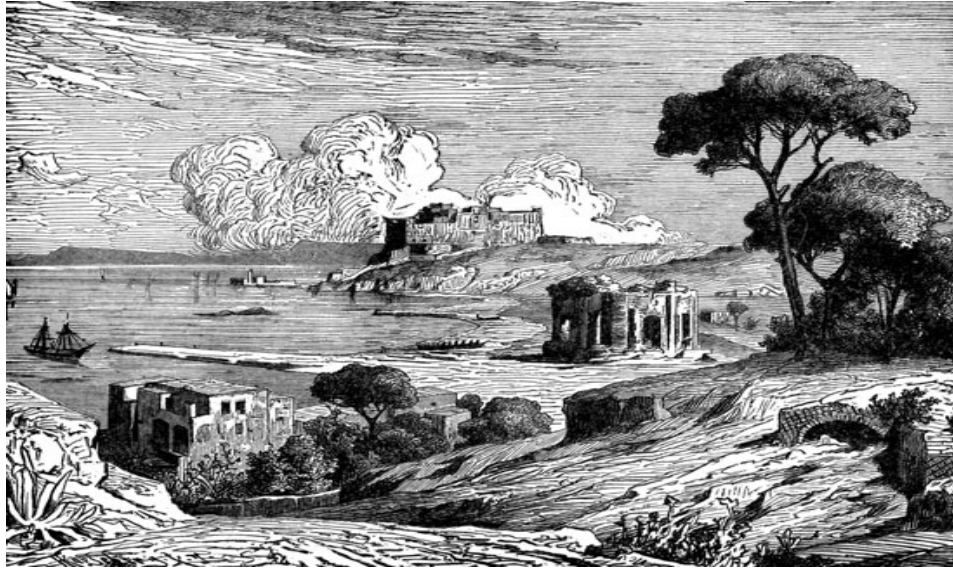
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#### Abbreviations Used in this publication:

**BMM** – Beyond the Mountains of Magnatz (This Publication!),  
**DERPG** – Dying Earth Rulebook (Pelgrane Press 2001),  
**DDE** – Demons of the Dying Earth (Pelgrane Press, 2003)  
**LoC** – Lords of Cil (the third publication in this series)  
**SS** – Strangers in Saskervoy (the second publication in this series),  
**TT** – Turjan's Tome (Pelgrane Press, 2003)  
**TDE** – Tales of the Dying Earth (Jack Vance's collected *Dying Earth* stories. Pub: Millennium. 2000)



## Chapter 1: Leaving the Lands of Cil



### 1.1) Back on the Path of Revenge

Dordge: the **sleepy village** of farmers and fisherfolk has been an idyllic rest stop after the crazed events of the previous weeks in Cil and prior to those escapades. It is useful if a PC brought from Cil an ancient tome. A playtest PC had 3 likely books. In Chapter 2 of BMM, PCs can discover such a book containing a spell to undo a demonic binding. It is more literarily pleasing (linking the scenarios) if they brought a book with them that contains this. Likewise it is useful if they also bring an ancient amulet, as this is one option as the magical tool to open a door in the Vull Temple. (It may just be a **valuable trinket** to the eyes of the PC owner, or a symbol of magical power.) If you haven't yet run *LoC*, note these ideas in pencil somewhere in *LoC* prior to where the PCs are driven away by the new lord.

If it was some time back that you ran *Lords of Cil*, profess to having lost your notes about what exactly the PCs managed to abscond with, and make new lists (based largely on the old if you have truly retained them). Incorporate into them several new items including such a book, perhaps entitled: "**The Cutz Wars: Myths and Realities**" by Garphajan Hax. (A book in tedious divergent prose using many old words and tortuous grammatical structures, which nonetheless says much about the wizards who conducted the wars, their followers, and the demonic entities which were summoned and utilised in this horrific and lengthy engagement.) If a player challenges you about this addition, merely gaze blankly at them with a casual shrug. Do NOT engage!

Remember that the PCs are motivated by a group oath **to wreak revenge on Iucounu** the Laughing Magician, and that this is the driving force for this campaign. Yes, Players may realize that their PCs are likely to be squashed like bugs by Iucounu when they storm Pergolo (or encysted beneath the surface of the earth at a depth of forty-five miles), but PCs themselves lack such fine discernment. So the control that the Players have is in how well they skill their PCs during the journey, and how cleverly they amass magical items and (later) allies to assist with this final inevitable confrontation. You may wish to start play with the following words, either adapting it to suit what really happened, or else simply retrospectively making this true. Perhaps phrasing it as a dream that the character who has **actively reviled Iucounu** the most in previous gaming experiences:

*"You emerge from a dream where you stood upon the sand at Shanglestone Strand, cursing the name of Iucounu the Laughing Magician. He with his arrogance cast you adrift here in the far north. Your bedraggled band swore a deadly pact that one way or another you would return to Alмеры. Stronger, wiser, more powerful. And wreak terrible revenge upon this pompous popinjay, this maggot of a man who treated your innately noble persons as if your worth was beneath his notice. With a curse you sit upright, hand clutching for your rapier, blood frenzy in your veins. ...*

*But Iucounu is nowhere near. You are still in the distant north,. Far from Azenomei and your adversary. One day Iucounu will face a heavy reckoning that will wipe the smile from his countenance once and for all. Until that glorious moment your path requires skills and determination, courage and cunning, simply to survive the journey back to those lands. But survive you will. That is your oath. One day That much you vow!"*



## 1.2) Departing Dordge

Dordge being a relatively humanitarian settlement, the locals have probably offered (as GM sees fit) to house most of any mass of GMC refugees that arrived from Cil. Notables, including PCs, have been asked to depart at **dawn tomorrow**. Rumour is that the new Lord of Cil plans to visit Dordge to see if the townsfolk are harbouring any of his enemies.

If a PC, now nervous about having to depart, asks a local for information about the Mountains, responses are that **they are haunted, and populated by vast numbers of erb, grue, and deodand**. PCs may (Ψ PERCEPTION -1, SCUTTLEBUTT, LIVING ROUGH -1) become aware that the locals have no evidence for believing the Mountains are any worse than anywhere else in the wilds, and are simply speaking what they have been told by each other for generations past - not what has been proved. And this belief (combined with a steep ascent into the rising foothills that begins only two days east) has kept anyone from Dordge from ever travelling more than two days out of town. (*It is risky to spend even a single night away from civilisation except in the kind of large armed group Dordge cannot muster.*)

If the PCs are departing on foot it makes more sense (for realistic survival) that they travel within a larger group than just themselves. You could begin play with the PCs and Cil ex-patriats all in **the Dordge Inn** the evening before the morning they must leave. Some PCs might selfishly wish to convince as many ex-Cil folk as possible to come with them (for "their own good"), when of course in reality, the PCs simply want as many layers of humanity between them and the local half-men as possible throughout the trip.

PCs should arrive in Vull accompanied by at least 15 GMCs, however many set off from Dordge. These are likely to be useful in that first scenario, being a small **persecuted crowd** some of whom will suffer and be imprisoned in Vull whilst the PCs attempt to solve the mystery, and who provide cover from within which the PCs won't stand out for special notice. It is also very useful if one GMC is someone sympathetic and interesting (who becomes an honorary PC) perhaps with some magical competency. This person may be sacrificed (by the GM) to assist the escape (*see Location 13 in the Vull Gazetteer*). However, the vast majority of these people will be the crowd of dupes whom the PCs will avoid in order to attempt to solve the mystery of what is happening here. Whilst the attention of Vull Clerics is distracted by this mass of GMCs.

However it occurs, if the PCs depart Dordge on foot, they may be leading a large group of 12-20, or even

more individuals who had strong political alliance with someone other than **the new Lord of Cil**. Name them all, give basic personal details (perhaps from the appendices in *Lords of Cil*), and describe some of their horrific deaths on the trek. You'll also need to adjust the wording in this first box. If you haven't run *Lords of Cil* (LoC) prior to this, you may want to reduce the GMCs to a bare minimum either because PCs weren't accompanied in the first place, or due to the 'natural attrition' already suggested.

⊕ *"Dordge was kind to you, allowing you time to rest. However, the inhabitants are simple folk, crafters and river fishers who like to keep themselves to themselves and avoid any hint of politics or ambition. They fear the wrath of the new Lord of Cil and now insist you be on your way. Notable enemies of the new lord, or any persons that might be known by him as strong enough to rival his claim cannot be permitted to stay. For then the Lord might have reason to visit his wrath upon this peaceful and defenceless town.*

*The locals have provided you with preserved foods and portable skins of water and wine. Not their best, but adequate. An old man also helpfully informs you that according to local rumour another town may well remain in existence a few days to the west. A traveller passed through Dordge on his way there only two decades ago. He was a minor-magician who confidently expected to find something interesting in that town and mentioned that according to his map it was only a week or so's walk away, following the course of the old road.*

*The old man tried to inspire your hope. There is no reason, he said, to believe that this town no longer exists. And since it is in the foothills of the Mountains its inhabitants might even know ways to cross that great range, which you have mentioned is your objective. The old road itself exists still, though faded to a trace in some sections. Seasoned travellers such as yourselves, he continues, should be able to follow it with ease."*







### 1.3) The Road to Vull

You may improvise or describe the trek (3 days if letting the Walking Boat plod along the road overnight as well as daytime, 8 days if leading a posse of dependents and camping overnight, 6 days if striding purposefully and boldly on foot with nobody slowing them) into the forested foothills. Remember that the last two thirds of the trip are a rising into the **foothills and pine forests**.

We provide no definitive encounters because PCs may be laden with magical items or barely possess rapiers, accompanied by many refugees or by few, on the walking boat or struggling on foot with torn shoes...

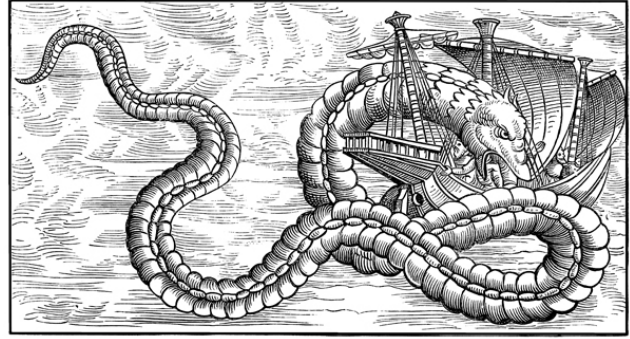
However, here are a few possible difficulties you could write-up into full-blown encounters. Or in some cases you might simply ask Players to describe how the PCs manage to survive, and see what they come up with:

- Having to create some kind of highly fortified nightly campsite set-up, or taking to the trees,
- Protecting a camp when it is attacked by hoonos,
- Role-playing (especially on third and later nights) attacks where some named GMCs are slain in combat with the half-men. [Likely just role-playing the PCs' actions directly and describing the horrendous things going on around them. The PCs have been adventuring together for long enough now that they may even – and you could encourage this – have developed **emergency survival tactics**, such as fighting back to back in a circle. A bold GMC or two may even join them. Less plucky GMCs will likely run about – or fight chaotically – in panic til slaughtered.]
- Setting watches and traps,
- Finding a ruined keep/large cave and organising the GMCs to block the doorway/s & evict inhabitants,

⊕ "After (X) days, the rough remains of the old road you have been painstakingly following become more visible as it enters the foothills. You occasionally pass the stunted ruins of some old buildings that may have been waystations of some kind, but nothing else of civilisation – old or new – is in evidence. At one point you pass over a high ridge, and for a while after that whenever you turn behind you can see the sun glinting on the vast ocean. Once sturdy craft plied its shining surface, but in recent times huge sea-monsters have been devouring shipping. Memory of this bloodthirsty menace puts a dampener on the otherwise magnificent view, and eventually its vast grandeur is lost to view behind the trees. Nonetheless, it is with some slight and surprising poignancy that you watch the last glimpse of this northern shore."

[X = a little less than half the time taken to reach Vull.]

This box largely applies if you are not role-playing the trip in any great detail. If you are, adapt this boxed text accordingly.



Note that the terrain they are covering is a mostly light or dense pine forest, with occasional large clearings or grassy vales to be traversed.

Before reading the following, if the characters are in the walking boat describe their deportment as casual, relaxed, enjoyable and leisurely. If they are afoot, describe their fatigue, dishevelled appearance, physical discomfort, and sullen & argumentative attitudes.

Whichever is the case will likely **colour the tonality** with which you read out these words:

⊕ "Though you don't always agree with your travelling companions, especially around choice of hat, or manner of personal expression, one thing on which you all concur is that the lands behind you were rather less than satisfactory. An impressive number of failed ventures still echo with disappointment, and the angry cries of persons of magic, power and deranged mentality still call for your blood, at least in your more nervous imaginings.

You continue east. All in all, it's a fine thing to be moving on again, and now at last after (XX) days, you begin to notice subtle changes around you. The road itself is slightly more apparent, crumbling sections of stonework occasionally peer out from the trees, and up ahead ... can that be the smoke of late afternoon hearth-fires above the trees?"

[XX equals the total days you decide the trip will take.]

### 1.4) The Boundary of Freedom

The campaign proper starts at this point. The PCs are nearing Vull, either in style within the Walking Boat, or staggering along on their uppers. If there has been a running battle with half-men each night after darkness falls (which you may have done in narrative style rather than by role-playing more than the first such attack), why not have a pack of them attack now, and cause the PCs and surviving GMCs to flee towards Vull? We provide two alternate boxed texts immediately below, for two extreme variants. The first caters for the PCs arriving here in majesty in the Walking Boat. The second has them fleeing slavering half-men. **Other variations may be the case** in your campaign, such as a Walking Boat crowded with refugees.



### Option 1: The Walking Boat

⊕ "The trail has been somewhat tedious, though the comfort of your magnificent magical craft has allowed travel in the style you so richly deserve. It is the least you could have expected after your exemplary service as Lords and Masters of Cil. But alas, those days of glory are behind. Cruel fate tore away the opportunities for elevated station, and now you dine on the last morsels of erb-liver pate and drink the last drop of Tugersbir Reserve from silvered goblets.

The smoke comes from a settlement. As you cross a ridge in the road, you see a small valley nestled beneath the first of the massive snow-capped Magnatz peaks. Visible through the trees 2 or 3 miles ahead are a collection of stone dwellings set in wide streets. Likely you're nearly at your destination: the true last settlement this side of the Mountains.

As you begin to ruminate with your fellows about strategies of personal presentation, the Walking Boat falters. This is somewhat worrying as its gait has never previously been anything other than utterly self-assured or even jaunty. After a few moments it falters again, speeds up, slows down, stumbles, then abruptly stops."

*[Since the Walking Boat is a demonic device, how is it that it falls foul of Magnatz's influence? The answer is to do with the conflicting magics of differing subworlds and nothing to do with the author's need to support the loss of the machine as part of the unfolding plot. Note also that if you have brought numerous GMCs from Dordge, one or more may perish at this point.]*

The GM may ask PCs for their actions, waiting only a moment or two for clear responses before continuing with 'the action'. Carefully and extremely swiftly disembarking is wisest, though few may choose this. Any who don't immediately state something akin to this will need to test Athletics against whatever difficulty you decide upon, as the Walking Boat slowly topples to one side, turns legs over top and crashes & rolls fifty feet through some small bushes into a stand of trees. (Where it ends up completely invisible from the road and partly buried in fallen foliage and gathered underbrush.) Do not make too much of this result, it is merely a plot device to have the Walking Boat out of sight from locals. **Those who are tipped out may be stunned**, have valuable possessions broken, end up with ripped clothes or battered hats, or even (gasp!) be injured. GM decides for maximum effect, dependent on the manner of failure rolled.

*They are now inside Magnatz's influence, and so won't be attacked as below, unless you decide that the edge of the demon's influence varies when judging his hold over half-men compared to his influence on magical devices.*

### Option 2 (Part 1): The Terrified Refugees 1

⊕ "Oh so cruel. Those are indeed hearth-fires ahead – signifying two things. Firstly that your destination is near. Secondly that dusk is falling. As you near a ridge in the trail, the lingering shapes amidst the trees that have dogged your trail the past hour have become more clearly obvious as half-men, at least 2 different species: deodands and something more akin to an asm.

Not working together, but tolerating each other's presence, which is extremely unusual and somewhat sinister. Someone in your group loses their nerve and runs, then someone else. Mass panic stricken flight quickly puts a mockery to plans for a rearguard defence or the possibility of standing en masse to repel all-comers in a fighting retreat into town."

*Whether GMCs accompany PCs in great number or only a dozen or so, it makes part of an interesting story to give all of them names, and a bunch of them basic personality traits and spartan skills - perhaps on the official DERPG 'Retainer' forms. In some games Players may even be happy to run two or three retainers.*

*The GM sacrifices them (and non-retainer GMCs) for the sake of drama whenever he so wishes, and the Players may then choose new retainers as necessary from surviving GMCs. If a crowd of GMCs exists, many will perish on the road to Vull, and departing that town, and more in the Vale of Dharad.*

*But it serves a superbly dramatic purpose if through sheer good luck two or three GMCs survive to the River Scamander and leave PCs at the first settlement. (A satisfying variant to the trail of death & destruction that PCs are likely familiar with.) Keep a list of GMCs and cross them out as they expire, and/or tear up the Retainer sheets.*

The GM may wish to make this an exciting last ditch running battle, rolling for the luck of GMCs and graphically describing their narrow escapes or horrific demises. Bold PCs may leap in to make a difference.

**Cowardly PCs may lead the retreat** (and be rewarded for doing so by remaining unscathed). Possibly a PC may have to battle for his life, saved either intentionally or by accident when a GMC crashes into his attacker. (Or when another manbeast wants to challenge the attacker for dining rights.)

One way or another, just when things seem dire, and survivors are only yards ahead of the half-men, the chase ends. The half-men abruptly cease, and stand still, watching the PCs. (Or, more horribly, dining on travellers that were too slow or weak to finish the escape.) GMs of a more macabre leaning may even have half-men taunt PCs as they slaughter and **devour a refugee or two**. Bear in mind that PCs cannot now move back towards them (see below).



### Option 2 (Part 2): The Terrified Refugees 2

⊕ "A few more half-men emerge, obviously laggards or latecomers to the original chase. Fully two dozen are there. A frightening spectacle, made only less so by their inexplicable immobility. Several of them evidence outright frustration, as if they can no longer see or sense you, and yet their eyes gaze hungrily in your direction, so this is all very perplexing – if most welcome.

Then a deodand backs into one of the other creatures, which reacts by driving a spine through the deodand's arm. A ferocious battle ends with both creatures maimed. The other half-men express no interest in this and are slowly beginning to depart, drifting away into the growing gloom. A few are carrying or dragging mortally injured or dying refugees with them.

From your position near the ridge-top just crossed as the light begins to fail you can see, two or three miles ahead, stone dwellings set into the forested floor of a small valley. The roadway points directly at them."

### What is this Fiendish Restriction?

The edge of a magical field generated by Magnatz ebbs and flows around the ridge-tops. It is not a physical barrier: his **demonic force** simply does not let creatures of full manbeast plasm pass into his vicinity without his permission until full dark has fallen. He also does not normally let any human pass outwards. Any PCs that test the area where the half-men stopped do not find a solid wall of air but a vague area where movement becomes challenging. Those with relatively higher Magic

ratings may be able to move a little further than their fellows, and it is even possible that one PC may possess a powerful magical item that allows them to pass through. This could only be something that is personally attuned and specific to allowing freedom of movement.

A multi-user device is insufficient and the barrier halts such things. In short, **the PCs are trapped**, and will ideally realise that at this point. It is possible that parties may consider themselves trapped anyway, simply by their geographic location in the centre of the wilds. Ordinary thrown objects pass out through this region. Most (see above) magical items seem to strike an invisible yielding wall and bounce back or thud to the ground depending on the force used in the throw.

In Option 1 above, the Walking Boat was disabled by this field, and began to falter after it had passed through. If the PCs investigate the road behind them around the ridge-top area they will also find this barrier. It extends in a wide circle approximately three miles from the Lake. However, since most of this area is **thickly forested** it is almost impossible to work this out. It is not even possible to tell that the boundary is gently curved (rather than a line) without following it for several hundred yards at least. (It is utterly invisible.)

*"The Curse of Vull" (following) is an epic investigational scenario and has 3 accompanying appendices. This level of detail is not possible elsewhere in BMM due to the massive word count that would entail. The GM should read all & make notes (for instance page numbers of important locations and events) before running The Curse of Vull as we can only provide one likely order of events (Chapter 2 before you) and PCs may make mock of this!*

### Who Is Cugel?

As astute readers of this series will be aware, PCs follow in the Footsteps not just of Fools, but of **Cugel himself**, venturing where our literary anti-hero once trod. In essence replacing him. Cugel makes a cameo appearance as a bleached set of bones in a sealed cage on Shanglestone Strand in the publication 'Strangers in Saskervoy' in this series, in order to subtly suggest this primary distinction. During this series, PCs visit places both familiar and unfamiliar, with situations Cugel encountered being altered for two main reasons:

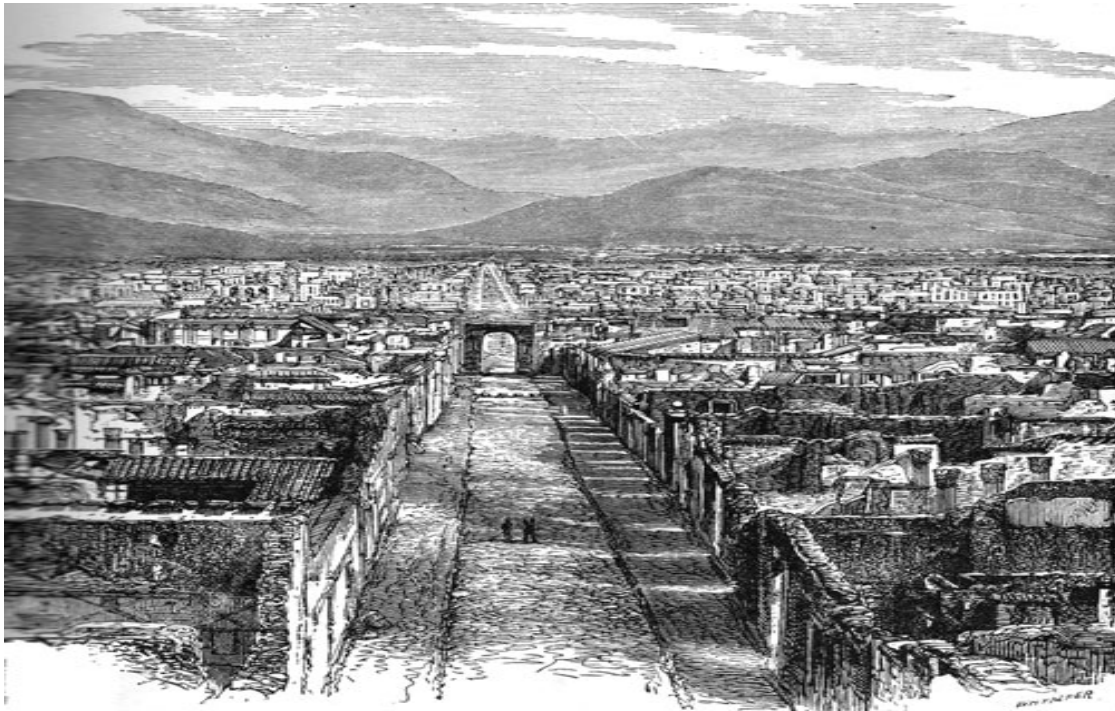
- 1) People who have read the books (many players) won't find it much fun if they already know what is going on and how to solve it, but may well find it extra fun if their experiences are broadly or specifically similar to Cugel's – and yet also surprisingly different.
- 2) Cugel was alone. DERPG at Cugel-Level is a different experience from Cugel's adventures in most instances. Challenges in this series better reflect interesting experiences for a '**gang of Cugels**'.

Consequently the Vull about to be encountered is different in many ways from the Vull that Cugel visited, and yet at core the same challenge remains: how to avoid becoming a disempowered victim of Magnatz. Before play is complete, resist at any cost the temptation to reveal or discuss any similarities or differences with the scenario and Vance's writings. Rather let Players explore it through role-playing. Gaming is more fun that way.

*Note that Vull is mapped & described, and its inhabitants detailed, in a large Appendix within this publication. You will need that mini-gazetteer at your side when you run the following scenario section, as its contents are intrinsic to the course of play. You will also need to read that gazetteer before running this scenario.*



## Chapter 2: The Curse of Vull



### 2.1) Introducing Magnatz

In this Vull, Magnatz is not held dormant simply by the presence of a watchman in the tower, but by ancient magics operated by the Clerics of Vull with whom he is in an uneasy alliance. The Magnatz in this scenario is not merely a **dormant aggressive giant**, but an unspeakable demonic horror that still controls and enslaves local humans and half-men alike in vastly differing ways – despite his imprisonment in the lake. This Vull is not on the lake of Magnatz but is near it. The lake itself is hidden away – a dark and mysterious **pool of horror** that no townspeople will ever mention (and is not visible from the ridgetop or any height due to a magical effect generated by Magnatz).

The PCs will need to realise they are in mortal peril, investigate the town for clues, discover some information and ancient magics, and confront Magnatz and his minions in one of several suggested ways. In true Cugelesque style their plans may very well only half-function at the end of the day, likely releasing an **enraged Magnatz** upon the town.

*At least speed read the main Vull Appendices before running this, & keep them on hand as you play things out. This section & its Appendices intertwine into a large multi-faceted scenario.*

### 2.2) Entering Town

⊕ *"It is dusk. A loud gong sounds from somewhere at the heart of town, echoing in strange ripples across the surroundings."*

PCs may (Ψ PERCEPTION-1, MAGIC) notice that this noise has magical resonance.

PCs will be seeking lodgings, and observing the town to better know the local folk. They may skulk from ruin to ruin, shadow to shadow, or **boldly walk the main street**. Their manner may set the tone. Adjust the boxed wording overleaf if they vary this course. They may seek a ruin to hide in, deciding to wait until morning before disturbing an unknown populous.

Part of your duties as GM is to improvise. Usually within this text we will describe a most-likely option and weave the adventurers around that. Know these passages well. Doing so will assist you when your Players inevitably have their PCs wander widely off track. Your **skills at improvising** should match their ingenuity. Action and exploration may well take place that isn't covered within the text.

After each encounter or landmark is reached, ask what the PCs will do, then **wait expectantly**. Let their exploration of town and their predicament be self-directed. This is an investigative scenario.





⊕ "You pass faint ruins amidst trees then long rows of empty building shells before the edge of the occupied town. Nobody is in sight, despite normal evidence of habitation. Soon you pass vegetable gardens and basic orchards. None show much civic pride, though are healthy & abundant. Likely most local nutritional needs are met within the wider town precincts. At last you pass an inhabited dwelling. Dim light shows behind plain heavy drapes."

#### As they enter the town proper:

⊕ "Clearly in older days Vull was a large town of note. Not with the magnificent manses of as Kaiin and Azenomei, but nonetheless with sturdy structures of size & merit. Nowadays it appears to occupy about a quarter of its previous expanse, with the regions around the town fading into a semi-forested zone and thence into the thick surrounding pine forest. Civic pride seems to be somewhat lax. Certainly public refuse is not scattered about the streets and the drains seem to be in order, but nonetheless, gutters are not weeded, old allotments have been allowed to become overgrown, and many garden gates hang on crooked hinges. Nobody is around on the streets."

### 2.3) Using Cil GMCs in Vull

If you elected to bring large numbers of refugees from Vull, have them split up into 2 or 3 factions (each led by a distinct personality) plus disparate individuals. These provide cover from which PCs (undistinguishable to the Clerics and townsfolk from the other refugees) can operate. You can give **vague or detailed reports** of their fates & antics via observations and rumour during the ongoing activities. PCs (possibly plus a small number of GMC companions) will likely be the only ones prepared to actively challenge the Clerics and traditions. Plus perhaps a few they convince of the danger. (Or perhaps another small group operate secretly – see suggestions in the following text.) In short use Cil refugees for maximum interest/amusement and decide and **note** your decisions about what else goes on.

#### Game Timeline in Vull:

*Run this scenario languidly. Allow PCs to engage in a series of explorations/considerations that evolves deliberately & in detail. Prevent Players from rushing things by making it clear PCs are in grave peril! Though let them gradually realise the oddness of the situation & inhabitants, rather than creating instant clarity.*

*Keep track of what has played out and announce local events (through incidental storytelling) at the appropriate time. Use this in combination with the Vull appendices.*

*The GM is recommended to elaborate all the suggestions, adding flowery description, conversational diversity and incidental interest.*

### 2.4) Day '0'

#### EVENING: Refugees arrive in Vull

Gong sounds a little before dusk. (Moan sounds when darkness is full.) Locals lock themselves inside, and presume all entreaties made from without are the games of half-men. Many GMCs seek a place to barricade themselves into one of the sturdier ruins. A large number may occupy the town's abandoned inn.

#### NIGHT:

**HALF-MEN MAY BE SEEN SKULKING THROUGH TOWN**, individually or in groups of two or three only after full dark. They will avoid PCs. PCs tired from a long trip, should understand that they may well be facing terrible death if they act before learning what is going on.

Play **the first encounter** with a half-man as fearful. PCs may seek shelter rather than fight an unknown number of anthropophages. The encounter may end where PCs make a fighting retreat into some building, perhaps seeking help from townsfolk who have barricaded the doors & windows and do not respond helpfully. "Go away. Your taunts and lies are unconvincing and ineffectual!"

**STRANGE ROBED & MASKED INDIVIDUALS (A BAND OF CLERICS)** on patrol. More fun if only observed tonight. These patrols are to make sure the deodands do not violate the agreement conditions. Also, a source of masks and robes (perhaps utilised tomorrow night).

**OTHER PURSUITS:** Searching the town & other acts of boldness. But it has been a long journey and the GM may slow activity as time passes by requiring Resistance rolls against Indolence or even Arrogance. (Anyone failing sensibly decides a good night's sleep is essential to their appearing refreshed before locals on the morrow.) If PCs begin investigating, review the Vull Gazetteer's Location 13 and the Tower of Vull Faris. Both could well be best explored early in the piece.

#### SEEKING SAFETY WILL EVENTUALLY BE A PRIORITY.

Towns-folk will at first assume PCs' entreaties are made by half-men and ignore them. If PCs find a way to enter one of the sturdily barricaded dwellings, townsfolk will say they thought their cries for aid were 'nightmares'. (It is major heresy to claim half-men walk the town.) PCs may break into a house, climb onto a roof, climb the tower... Other Cil GMCs may also seal their refuges and deny access to the PCs! Deodands are prohibited from attacking (or at least from injuring) true humans, but may enjoy a spot of terrorisation. Mock-besieging their hideout, cajoling and whining just for fun. Most oddly (to PCs eyes), if one loses control, others will restrain it – perhaps dragging it away.



## 2.5) Day 1 (Daylight Hours)

**THE MOAN/THE GONG.** These noises echo around dawn, though may only marginally disturb exhausted PCs: barely impinging on the edges of consciousness.

**IF THE PCs DO NOT ARISE AT DAWN, A DELEGATION OF VULL CLERICS MAY BE WAITING,** professing eagerness for tales of the outside world, welcoming visitors, and warning them to behave with decorum. They show understanding that foreigners may be unaware of exact customs, but nonetheless expect general respect to be observed. If PCs set watch and one fell asleep (thus breaking the chain) then the Clerics stand around them when they wake. (Looking in disdain upon their primitive attire.)

Not arising at dawn is already an offence, and may trigger their first 'warning'. Claims to have seen deodands at night will instigate *suspensions of public drunkenness* on a non-ceremonial day (a major crime). Magnatz protects the town, they say, and would never allow such a thing; therefore persistence that this is so is heresy! (Clerics will slyly ask if perhaps they were recalling fevered dreams. Or smarter PCs may think to do this.) Suasions may be needed to prevent one or more of the PC party being dragged away. Some PCs may be keen to commence defensive violence, but in an unknown town such would be most unwise.

**OTHER GMCs EMERGE FROM HIDING.** Cil GMCs desiring peace may also pretend to disbelieve PCs.

**PCs WILL LIKELY EXPLORE TOWN.** Encountering some of the oddities in the Gazetteer, and any others the GM invents. A common strangeness is that locals claim to have no knowledge of odd locales, have no interest if they are pointed out, and react in fear if it is suggested that they visit any. Or feigned disinterest if forced (or tricked, since forcing might upset Clerics) to visit one. Location 13, if not already discovered during the night, should be encountered during the middle of the day.

**TOWNSFOLK APPEAR INSIPID, & LIKELY INBRED.** None consider it possible that deodands have been in town. ("Beneficent Magnatz protects us!") It is heresy to say otherwise. One thing to be revealed (casually as part of the answers to questions, not offered PCs) is that no townsfolk are older than 40 or so (though they do not celebrate birthdays so age in that sense is meaningless) because around that time they are called to the Portal of Ascension and go to join Magnatz in idyllic Magnatzia (Invent varying and vaguely contradictory details about this paradise if PCs ask more than one person.)

- **Seeking Information about the Mountains of Magnatz.** Unaware that they are in a trap which the local folk hope will end in their sacrifice to appease Magnatz,

the PCs and the pluckiest of GMCs who do not wish to spend the rest of their days in this bizarre and restrictive settlement, will no doubt seek information about how to travel on. Townsfolk claim to have no idea, and say that nobody except the hunters ever leaves town. The GM needn't exaggerate the sinister nature of this bland revelation, but it marks these people as more than usually insular. If any hunters are asked, they will also claim to have never wandered more than a few miles from town. Persistent questions will have PCs directed to the libraries of the Senior Clerics. (See overleaf.)

**PCs MAY WISH TO FOLLOW SOME HUNTERS** as they leave town. These people will consider being followed to be a misdemeanour worthy of report to the Clerics and threaten such, unless convinced or tricked by PCs into camaraderie. Hunters pass the barrier, but PCs cannot. The Hunters will pretend amazement that the PCs cannot leave the town, and need strong convincing that the PCs are not just larking about if this restriction is demonstrated. It is all a façade, and the hunters know of Magnatz's influence. It is however a young hunter who is most likely person to be sympathetic to the PCs.

**SMALL GROUPS OF TOWNSFOLK (LED BY A CLERIC) FOLLOWS NEWCOMERS** around. Fortunately they are so inept that it is relatively easy ( $\Psi$  STEALTH, CONCEALMENT) for the PCs (the most experienced adventurers) to slip away unobserved.

**PCs EXPLORE AND LEARN THAT THE ENERGY BARRIER HEMS THEM IN.** whichever way they try. (If they do not yet know they are trapped.) Locals say that this is their divine protection & they are happy with it.

**IT MAY BE THAT SOME PCs (& DEFINITELY A FEW GMCs) FALL FOUL OF HERESY.** (Demeaning Magnatz in any way, or causing a great *(according to the Clerics)* public disorder, drunkenness on a non-ceremonial day etc. A minor first offence will result in being locked away (merely as a salutary disciplinary measure) for a few hours and released later in the day. A second (or more severe) offence might be dealt with through being placed in the stocks and pelted with vegetative refuse, ordure, and small stones for an hour, and/or locked up for a longer time. *(Such a victim of local laws might be the GMC who is partially possessed: see Location 13 in the Gazetteer. This fact, and GM's subtle hints that this person is possibly a key to their salvation, might be the very thing that motivates the raid on the Temple in the night.)*

**A VISIT TO THE TOWN HEADMAN, SEEKING CLARITY.** Due to his vague concepts, eagerness to please, and poor Imposture, PCs may suspect the position is a randomly assigned sinecure. (If he lets any information slip, then by any following visit he has been replaced.)



**PCS MAY VISIT SENIOR CLERICS** The GM plays their formality to the hilt, perhaps introducing a lesser Cleric to train PCs in correct & complex (and time-consuming) Etiquette in order to proceed to & through an audience. All Clerics, especially Seniors, are disinterested & aloof, claiming the religion says to tolerate inadvertent heretics merely passing through, providing they cause no harm and do not break religious precepts. Any Cleric will delineate the basic precepts. If a PC professes interest in joining the religion, 'coincidentally' a ceremony is planned tomorrow evening, at which the travellers are most welcome to "become deeply involved". (This invitation may be a sinister clue/motivation.)

**IF PCS QUESTION CLERICS ABOUT TRAVELLING THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS**, information will be minimal: an ancient road goes through Padagar Pass, the road has some hazards which are documented in the archives, it takes several days to reach the land of Merce or the Vale of Dharad depending on which branch of the road you take, it was an old military road from the Cutz Wars... The Clerics say that if the PCs learn the correct etiquette then they can access the religious archives. A PC or suitable GMC may stay behind to continue attempting this and may indeed learn some useful information. (And may at the end of the day report that they saw locked files and closed archive doors with demonic sigils upon them – see Gazetteer.)



**EARLY AFTERNOON WORD SPREADS: A SPONTANEOUS CEREMONY TO MAGNATZ** is taking place tomorrow evening. Townsfolk are both excited & apprehensive (to the Perceptive), but talking of the ceremony is heresy.

**ALSO EARLY AFTERNOON A CLOSED CEREMONY IS HELD** in the main temple room. Clerics wail and cavort, making the most bizarre noises for nearly an hour. Locals will be most confused if anyone suggests it odd.

**PCS MAY WISH TO EXPLORE THE SURROUNDING FOREST.** Locals will advise them that dangerous creatures dwell within the forest, and if the PCs venture there, then Magnatz will direct several of these creatures towards the PCs, who will then have to deal with them. For this purpose we point GMs at *Tooth, Talon & Pinion* (the Excellent Prismatic Spray magazine, Issue 7). Specifically it is possible that a sinister colony of Flantic (pp119/120) reside in the foothills on the edge of Magnatz's influence (also perhaps dependent on his energy for their continued survival as the last of their species). Likewise the Mank (IT&P: pp125/126 & Chapter 3.9 here.)

**OR PCS MAY CONVINCE HUNTERS TO GUIDE THEM THROUGH THE WOODS**, if the GM feels it appropriate. Magnatz will restrain all creatures when PCs are officially guided. They may visit the lake, after hunters initially balk at a certain path, though hunters will be wary, claim it is cursed and that nobody goes there. If PCs insist on sailing to the odd island they will NOT be able to identify it as a demon's head (but may suspect).

**IN THE LATE AFTERNOON CARPENTERS BEGIN TO BUILD A STRUCTURE IN THE MARKET PLACE.** The materials are mainly woven branches, plus large planks for the base. The artisans are not permitted to speak its purpose. By the time dusk approaches and the artisans retire for the night, it is clear that they have begun some manner of humanoid statue framework, which if proportionate will stand maybe as high as a three-storey house. Oddly it is on a sturdy wheeled-base. No doubt PCs will seek information. Locals are prohibited from talking about religious activities and refer questioners to the Clerics. Clerics say only that it will be an effigy appropriate to the glory of Magnatz. (The weavings are too narrow to permit egress, but wide enough to see the large empty space inside the effigy.)

**QUESTIONING LOCALS FURTHER ABOUT THE CELEBRATION** may ( $\Psi$  PERSUASION, PERCEPTION, SEDUCTION -1) give PCs the idea that they will be guests of honour, but won't net them other details (except the impression this honour may be the last honour they ever experience). Townsfolk Rebuff bonuses are high due to fear of Clerics. If PCs resort to extreme means to gain information about previous ceremonies they may gain a little more (see later info.). They could learn that the ceremony is to take place not the night immediately ahead of them, but the one following. (PCs need to learn that they have tonight and the following day only to work out what is going on.) The unwillingness of inhabitants to talk about Magnatz likely provides a clue that something is 'amiss'. Likewise the revelation that this will be a night affair may cause some puzzlement, as PCs will have experience of half-men in town.

**FEAR AND DREAD WILL HOPEFULLY HAVE BUILT BY THIS POINT.** PCs may try to form alliances with other Cil refugee groups. Play these GMCs as diverse, forming their own factions. Through dint ( $\Psi$  PERSUASION) of effort some may come around and become co-conspirators (and some will perish in the assisting).

**THE GONG ANNOUNCES THE START OF DUSK.** Townsfolk pack up and head indoors. If hindered, they panic & may resort to violence. If held in place one may crack and say the night is full of 'demons' and 'ghosts', but otherwise only rage insanely with no more details. (**THE MOAN** again sounds when full dark has fallen.)



## 2.6) Day 1 (The Hours of Darkness)

**NO HUMANS ARE ON THE SHADOWY STREETS** of Vull after dark (with the exception of some of the Vull Clerics now and again) because half-men enter the town to come and worship Magnatz. Play early encounters as if the half-men are just wanderers from the wilds in search of prey, except they do not approach any houses, and also seem odd and preoccupied and may sometimes see and ignore(!) PCs. Puzzling!!

**AS NIGHT DEEPENS, HALF-MEN INCREASE IN NUMBERS** and converge on the market place and then march down the path to the Lake of Magnatz. Their behaviours are odd indeed. They are under strict instructions to avoid true-blood humans, since these are destined to be sacrifices. This does not include any vat-creature PCs however. If PCs attack first, the deodands are permitted to defend themselves, but also to flee. But deodands being deodands things might get out of hand for those engaged in combat, though any other half-men that see the combat will flee lest they are tempted to join in. Deodands will happily eat their fallen comrades etc. PCs may find it sinister that they are being ignored (as if they are perhaps being saved for something more important!).

**INVESTIGATING THE FOREST BRINGS HIGH CHALLENGES** as detailed for the previous night, and PCs still won't be able to get as far as the Lake of Magnatz. Dangers amass, the closer they get to it (see Vull Gazetteer), plus Magnatz is able to exert a confusing influence when it comes to geographic certainty. PCs may strike out in varying directions time and again and keep finding themselves emerging from the forest in more or less the same place as they went in. Magnatz begins to stir!

**INVESTIGATING THE TEMPLE BUILDING IS A SCENARIO OF ITS OWN THAT WILL HAPPEN AT SOME POINT DICTATED BY PCs' ACTIONS, WHICH IS WHY IT HAS ITS OWN APPENDIX.**

Within it PCs will discover aspects of what is going on, perhaps rescue a comrade, and hopefully gather magic and special items to assist them when they are taken to their involuntary audience with Magnatz. They will also observe the rite being formed to more fully awaken Magnatz. Amongst other things they'll discover relatively recent notes on the ancient Padagar Pass military road, which should be a goal of theirs by now.

- **THE MOAN** sounds as soon as dawn begins to show, and **THE GONG** when full light has arrived.

## 2.7) Day 2 (Daylight Hours)

**PCS NEED TO FIND SOMEWHERE HIDDEN TO SLEEP** if they spent much of the night investigating. Realistically, at least until mid-morning. Then (if questioned) they need to come up with some convincing explanation of what they were up to. When they do emerge they will find that search parties have been looking for them, though such persons will claim they were merely concerned for their (the PCs') safety. (NOT that some sacrifices were suddenly unaccounted for after sunrise.)

**TODAY IS THE TOWN HOLY DAY.** A true coincidence. It occurs regularly once a week. This might provide an alternative investigatory period. PCs might enter the temple mingling with, or disguised as, townsfolk and sneak away now (rather than last night) to explore whilst most folk worship. (See Appendix for ceremony details.)

**THE STRUCTURE CONTINUES TO BE BUILT**, more and more resembling a stocky demonic figure. The frame is still not filled, and there is stands, growing ever larger, a work of devotion for the artisans, something none will speak of in details, but may ( $\Psi$  PERCEPTION) be observed to view with simmering (sinister?) anticipation. It cannot be viewed up close, as it is guarded in a 10yard diameter circle by four groups of persons consisting each of two burly hunters and two slightly less-burly male townsfolk. Finishing touches are put to this simple humanoid 'skeletal' structure a half-hour before the gong. The only significant gap in the fairly tight weave is a 10ft diameter hole in the upper chest area. (*Use the Internet to find an overview of the movie 'The Wicker Man'.*)

**IF DOOM IS SUSPECTED PCS MAY WISH TO HIDE**, as may some GMCs. (PCs may want to conserve energy for whatever activities lie ahead this coming evening. All such folk will be rounded up over the hour before the gong. PCs and Cil GMCs not in hiding will be surreptitiously trailed, and at the sound of the gong will be turned upon, beaten, restrained, and brought to the market place. (*See next page for more details.*) Not all such visitors take kindly to this, and thus the villagers bring nets and poles with nooses. ( $\Psi$  ATHLETICS, ATTACK, CONCEALMENT)

**THE GM MAY HAVE TO IMPROVISE in response to all manner of plans that PCs (or unusually motivated GMCs) come up with.** A failed uprising against the Clerics may end with several Cil GMCs dead and many others injured (Clerics and townsfolk will try to take them alive). PCs may attempt to hide in the forests. Who knows? Assume this paragraph to be a catchall for *multiple possibilities*, and be prepared!





## 2.8) Day 2 (Evening)

*The GM will need to study all of the following (which is in effect the grand finale to this scenario, in order to familiarise themselves with the various details before actually running it.*

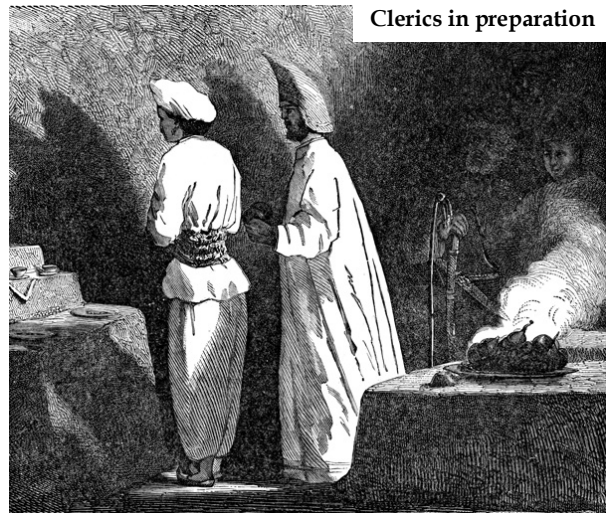
**THE GONG SOUNDS!** The armed gangs of townsfolk will be a high contrast to the subservient and insipid personas evidenced previously. PCs may slaughter several townspersons at this point, and nobody will care. Bloodlust is high. One or two GMCs may even be killed resisting arrest. In Turjanic campaigns this can be an 'Opportunity for Bloodshed', or several!

The Clerics may even use the Shren's superior tracking capabilities, backed by gangs of townsfolk with pitchforks. Clerics will be less ready to sacrifice their lives, and no townsperson will knowingly charge to death, but judgment is impaired, and their animal nature (demonic plasma in the vat matrix) revealed in their actions and savagery. As long as some PCs and most GMCs are captured a few (PCs) may evade (Ψ ATTACK, ATHLETICS, CONCEALMENT, STEALTH) capture.

**ALL VISITORS WHO WERE IN HIDING WILL ALREADY HAVE BEEN FOUND** (except perhaps the most cunning if this suits play) and **hauled to the market-place** in slave coffles, staggering one behind the other. Perhaps (if PCs have been away from the town centre or asleep) this has all happened offstage, and PCs brought here (or who observe from hiding) will be surprised to find most of their fellow refugees so restrained.

**THE TOWNSFOLK ARE NOW A MOB.** Scaffolding is hurriedly erected – taking only a quarter of an hour to reach the large hole in the upper abdomen of the humanoid structure. One by one the captured refugees are beaten with staves until semi-conscious, their arms and legs tied with vines, and carried up to this opening, via portable ladders, from whence they are **pushed into the structure** feet first, filling the legs first and then up into the abdomen, perforce standing upon each other's shoulders in a quite horrific manner. This is sinister and horrible. Describe it as such (not in a perfunctory way.)

**AS ALL OF THIS HAPPENS THE TOWNSFOLK CONTINUE TO GATHER** in an enormous milling mob here in the market place. Their normally placid countenances have turned to bestial glee and their simmeringly insane anticipation is now a hideous joy. The Clerics lead a demonic chant, an introduction to the repeated chant of the name: 'Magnatz, Magnatz, Magnatz...' The townsfolk are wide-eyed and drooling by this time. (Only Obfuscatory or Glib Suasions have any chance of success, and then only in stragglers, momentarily and requiring a PS or IS.)



Clerics in preparation

**WHEN THE CHANTING REACHES A CRESCENDO, A DOZEN OF THE TOWN'S MORE SOLID MENFOLK DRAG HEAVY ROPES FROM THE BASEMENT OF THE TAVERN,** and tie them to the edges of the planking platform. More men join them and take up the ropes, starting to heave. The 'statue' (likely by now many of its inhabitants wailing piteously) begins to move. Accompanied by the chanting townsfolk, and both led and followed by the Clerics, a diabolical procession commences and moves down a main thoroughfare, then along a forest track.

**IT TAKES SIGNIFICANT TIME TO PULL THIS HUGE STATUE ALL THE WAY TO THE LAKE OF MAGNATZ.** If you are already moving play towards Turjanic, some manner of rescue attempt may be launched, or attacks. (Gratuitous slaying of stragglers for instance, might be justified.) However, it is likely more fun if the finale is set at the Lakeside. (Too many townsfolk and half-men are on the alert, and only relax vigilance during the ceremony. Pedantry rolls by desperate PCs

It is most likely play will continue with some PCs inside the wicker Magnatz, and 1 or 2 (plus maybe a GMC or 2) still free, trailing stealthily through the underbrush.

**BY THE TIME THE FIENDISH PROCESSION IS HALFWAY TO THE LAKE, DEODANDS ARE EMERGING** from the growing gloom, and mingling happily with the townsfolk in a grotesque carnival. Neither seem to notice anything unusual (neither fearful not flavoursome) about the other, which may well be seen as highly remarkable. One significant point is that it likely requires some test of skill (Ψ STEALTH, ATTACK, CONCEALMENT, MAGIC, LIVING ROUGH -1) for those trailing/shadowing the procession to evade capture by these deodands, who are accustomed to tracking prey in the wild. Those captured will be thrust into the effigy. (The ladders were brought for just such a purpose.)



## 2.9) Day 2: Hours of Darkness

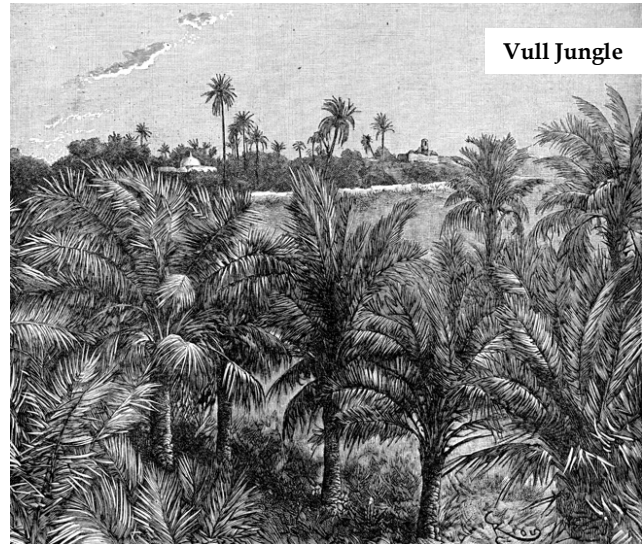
IT MAY TURN OUT IN SOME RUNNINGS OF THIS SCENARIO THAT PCs HAVE NOT YET EXPLORED THE TEMPLE, or failed to get in... This is really the last time when they can. If so, obviously allow the ceremony by the lake to continue *just long enough* for PCs to still arrive in the nick of time. It may be that the PCs are motivated to save a particular GMC (mentor, benefactor, love-interest) rather than to rescue their companion/s.

**IF THE PCs DO NOTHING, THE MACABRE PROCESSION WILL CONTINUE TO THE LAKE**, and haulers will drag the humanoid structure into the shallows, where it will float. The haulers then wade out and join the rest of the throng. The Clerics lead greater and greater frenzied howlings and chanting, until after ten minutes or so almost all participants tear off their clothes and begin a bestial orgy that sensitive GMs may wish to describe merely in passing hints of its utter abhorrent distastefulness. Other GMs may elaborate descriptions, as townsfolk, deodands and newly-revealed identical Senior Clerics cavort with casual disregard for remotest social nicety.

**NOT JOINING THE 'FESTIVITIES' ARE SEVERAL SENIOR CLERICS AND A DEODANDS** (numbers decided by GM). These perform a ceremony at the plinth. As the surrounding 'cavorting' builds to a frenzy (at a moment the GM chooses), they reach the peak of their ritual. Tiny barely-visible *filaments of energy* spring from every participant (blue from townsfolk, grey from deodands), join in a thick swirling weave above the altar, then shoot across the lake and plunge into its centre (directly before the island). The splash sends ripples back to the shore.

**AS THE ENERGY PLUNGES INTO THE LAKE, PARTICIPANTS IN THE ORGIASTIC RITE CRY OUT IN SICKENING SATISFACTION** and collapse, temporarily spent. Now is the ideal time for a redemptive strike. However, after only a few moments, the woven structure, with its wailing prisoners inside, begins to drift purposefully towards the island.

**THE HOPEFULLY REDUNDANT FINALE:**  
If the drifting platform were not halted and the prisoners rescued, as it drew near to the island, the island would be revealed as Magnatz's head as he partially rose from the depths, revealing shoulders, and then arms, as he slowly (his arms are held by huge chains) reached out and grappled the structure, pulling it in and crunching half in his mouth, before grasping the rest, and any swimming escapees, and devouring the lot, before letting out a horrific howl of despair that echoes for miles, and then sinking back into stillness.



## 2.10) Disrupting the Ceremony

*This section discusses the various details by which PCs might turn the tables and rescue at least some of their colleagues before fleeing Vull for Padagar Pass. GMs will ideally digest this before deciding what assistances and hints to provide/emphasise in the scenario itself. These choices largely depend on the skills, style, and usual tone of play of their particular players. However, read all of this section as aspects of each option may reveal useful details for following variant options.*

### **ONE POSSIBILITY IS HEROIC FRONTAL ASSAULT:**

Turjanesque PCs will have researched the ceremony, learned that at its crescendo most participants become exhausted, and may simultaneously launch an attack on the Clerics and their bodyguard, and a rescue attempt on the floating structure. The GM will need to match the capacities of the still-alert foes and the speed of the raft to make this a very challenging event.

Should the PCs partially succeed in saving the raft-sacrifices, and Magnatz still managed a good snack, then the terms of the ritual have been carried out and he will not be able to break free of his enchantment. PCs who have researched Magnatz will know that in order for the magical boundary around Vull to be broken (thus allowing their escape) Magnatz must be freed. They will know that the altar now needs to be defaced.

**OR IF ALL OR MOST PCs ARE PRISONERS IN THE EDIFICE, THEY MUST SOMEHOW ENGINEER AN ESCAPE.** The most game-realistic option is if a PC or two have remained free and now dash through the comatose crowd, swim to the raft and hack and slash a hole, so that people can begin to emerge. They are best served to do this at a point close to where their close companions are, as it is clear that the raft will reach the island before everyone can escape from the structure...



(This section needs to be role-played to the full.) If all PCs were captured, or were captured whilst on their way through the forest trailing the procession and then perhaps tied to the edifice with strong vines, some unusual means of escape must be arranged. IE something other than persons inside wriggling free of their bonds and forcing their way out. PCs, being forewarned, must have secreted ( $\Psi$  CONCEALMENT) daggers (or similar) that evaded the search when they were bound and thrown into the structure.

Or perhaps have some small and usual cantrap that can be used as soon as they manage to get their hands free. This **MUST** be a case of some highly imaginative or unusual PC ability or item saving the day, and only saving the day when applied through great difficulty and/or in the nick of time. Once again, if Magnatz snacks upon more than a handful of refugees the ritual is successful and he is not freed. If so, then the PCs will know that they must deface the altar (the centre of Magnatz's binding), and will likely have to fight their way through the Clerics and their bodyguard to reach it.

**IF A FIGHT IS NOT PREFERRED**, the GM will (as recommended in the Temple appendix) have delivered into the PCs' hands *Vull Faris's Ritual Grimoire*. From this they can now read the reversal section of the spell that binds Magnatz. Of course, they may be attempting to read the whole spell that banishes Magnatz back from when he came. However, as spectacularly heroic as that would be, it would not be so entertaining as the ending we have designed below. So the GM is invited to fudge the results of such a spellcast, in some version of one of the following. In this case read each one in isolation, not as a series leading to the best success:

**DF:** "Oh no. You totally stuffed that spellcast. Misplaced pervulsions explode all around you, as massive demonic energy is unleashed. You yourself are catapulted cartwheeling through the air..."

*The PC, or GMC, who cast the spell may be injured or may perish. You call for Swim or Athletics rolls as you see fit.*

**QF:** "That line was always going to be tricky. And you fluffed it. You sink to your knees, your skull throbbing..."

*The PC, or GMC, who rolled DF or QF may lose all points from their Magic pool or be drained of Health, or some other suitable demonic strain on their being. Imaginative GMs might have them spewing ectoplasm, having their heads spin around, or whatever else they think of. If you run fatalistic campaigns, this person may even die. If not, they will only be injured, though perhaps badly.*

**EF/HBS:** "You managed it. Just. Several pervulsions of the spell tore painfully at your sensorium, but you hauled yourself agonisingly through them." (PAUSE) "Oh, but wait a minute. It's just possible that you didn't quite manage to join the banishment clause to the liberating

stanza. You firmly cross your fingers behind your back whilst preparing to reassure your colleagues that such a turn of affairs would be most unlikely in the extreme. But before you can speak..."

**PS/IS:** "You did it. You cast the spell. You have banished Magnatz. Sadly though, you now realise that this banishment is not instantaneous. Your success with the spell has allowed you to feel the glacial slowness of its effect. It may be something about the embedded age of the enchantment at this place, or the power of the wizard who put it in place. Either way, Magnatz has been freed from his energetic restraints, but at the very least it will be some minutes, or possibly hours before his subworld reclaims him..."

**All results are followed by:**

*"...An ominous rumbling comes from deep in the lake; a bubbling roar rises from the depths. **The island is revealed as the head of a huge demon**, clustered with the moss and windblown debris of ages, bushes and small trees growing out of its deeply pockmarked skull. He slowly rears up from the centre of the lake with an ear-splitting screech, huge chains snapping and flailing around. One slashes the shore, scything more than a dozen people into halves. Another smashes through the centre of the humanoid structure, instantly killing several within and bursting it asunder. **Great waves strike the raft**, which begins to split apart, and the imprisoning structure also starts to disintegrate."*

(The waves of course carry any PCs out here and some others to the shore. You may simply say that this is what happens rather than making anyone roll. A wise decision in events that are incidental, but nonetheless present opportunities for PCs to be slain by the will of the dice. Vance treated Cugel this way more than once, having him emerge unscathed whilst others perished.)

#### **Abject Failure When Attempting the Dismissal:**

As you will see there is no way to 'fail' in terms of the plot when casting the spell from the ritual grimoire. The PCs may fail drastically in other ways however. This is always possible in any non-simple scenario.

If some PCs are apprehended and others succeed there's no problem. Players whose PCs have been apprehended can temporarily take over GMCs from Cil. Persons who emerge from the background 'suddenly' realising what drastic straits they are in and seeking to aid the few who have shown any motivation to escape: the PCs.

Or it may solve the problem if a personality GMC is either with the PCs or sympathetic to them, and can escape apprehension (the GM need only describe how they do this, and not even roll – they are a GMC after all) They can then be someone who acts behind the scenes (or is even a secret magician – though this can seem like a fudge-ending if not run sensitively) and saves the day sufficiently at least for the PCs to escape.



## 2.11) Fleeing Magnatz: A Plethora of Ideas

### MAGNATZ!

Somehow Magnatz will rise from his lake, trailing broken magical chains (see Appendix), which he will shrug off. They snap and flail around, **slicing through villagers & deodands alike**, miraculously all PCs are amongst 80% nearby who survive this first onslaught. The GM may call for Athletics rolls and describe near misses. Some PCs who roll badly may suffer slightly (lose a few Health pool points) usually as some smashed unfortunate is flung into them, or mashed against them, as that person takes the force of the impact.

Magnatz is enraged at having been imprisoned for so long, and goes berserk. He strides first to the chanting (or more likely fleeing since it takes him ten seconds or so to reach them) Senior Clerics and smashes them with a mailed fist, and stamps at them with his feet. Then he begins reaching out and grabbing handfuls of shrieking villagers, **lifting them high to his gaping maw** and stuffing them in. PCs will no doubt be fleeing in the general chaos. They may ( $\Psi$  PERCEPTION) nonetheless notice that Magnatz does not target any deodands directly. They die and are injured, but only accidentally.

### RAMPAGE!

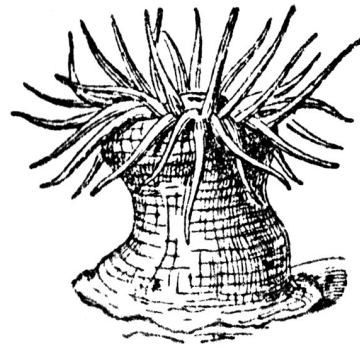
GMs now vividly describes scenes as deodands, Clerics, townsfolk, PCs, even one or two surviving Senior Clerics, flee in gangs around the forest paths. **Magnatz is clearly dedicated to crushing or capturing all non half-men.** Since 'capturing' inevitably ends in being stuffed into his hideous maw, and crunched into his gullet as if he were starving for sustenance there's little difference at the end of the day!

**Survivors flee down forest paths**, as the forest itself is too thick for speed. PCs may wish to hide out in the undergrowth, but then observe Magnatz's uncanny ability to sense those hiding, before scooping them up and devouring them.

- **A townspeople squashed in a footprint** of Magnatz
- **Deodands** about to attack the PCs when Magnatz steps past & kicks them unknowingly through the air.
- **Trees cross the path** (having been kicked down) and a fight ensues as panic-stricken survivors try to force their way past without concern for their fellows.
- **PCs confront a Senior Cleric** who attempts to use magic against them.
- **Ghosts of Magnatz's former victims** appear and swirl about, sometimes terrifying, sometimes assisting people escape: "Swiftly. Hide beneath this fallen tree!"

- **Peculiar semi-corporeal demonic imps** spring forth from Magnatz's mouth and run about causing mischief and attacking people. (They are easy to defeat alone but can be dangerous when they gang up on someone.)

- **Cracks open into a horrible demonic subworld**, letting out foetid odours and perhaps slimy and dangerously tentacled entities that stagger about & expire in the poisonous (to them) airs of the Earth.



- **Beast or beasts** (as mentioned earlier) are caught in the pandemonium and temporarily flee alongside PCs.

- **Hideous blobs of plasm emerge from the ground** and ooze around. Slow-moving, they occasionally entrap the unwary – rearing up and then collapsing down upon them, suffocating and then digesting their victims.

- **A Senior Cleric casts an attacking spell that actually wounds Magnatz.** The demon captures this individual and cuts open his abdomen with a fingernail, eating his entrails whilst he is still alive, then biting off his lower legs, then forearms before finishing him off.

*It is best advised for the GM, prior to play, to write a brief ordered outline of specific challenging incidents that the PCs (or differing groups of PCs if they have been separated) will encounter before they reconnect and either flee under their own steam or are rescued by the Walking Boat. The last of these needs to be a hair's breadth escape from being discovered and scooped up by Magnatz. In order for this whole section to be dramatically realistic, the GM must allow the PCs to use their skills and/or magical items/spells in various ways that show clearly that they have only narrowly survived being caught by Magnatz or killed by the deodands.*

[The fact that they are skilled/resourceful PCs must be useful **at least two or three times** as they flee through the pandemonium. At the end of all this if the GM has created a non-stop series of terrifyingly entertaining challenges, that have been role-played speedily, then her work is perfectly done. Along these lines it is again advisable to have some GMCs accompanying the PCs, who can conveniently be 'killed off' (in of course suitably graphic and tragic ways) whilst the PCs themselves miraculously survive – as do the heroes in TV shows and movies.]





## 2.12) Hair's Breadth Escape Options:

*Eventually the pandemonium abates significantly. However, Magnatz is not giving up until he has eaten everybody.*

*He even scrapes up those he has accidentally squashed. He is ranging about the forest in great strides, stopping now and then to listen. When he hears someone moving he growls in satisfaction, lunges or charges and then scoops. Carrying the wailing person to his mouth, sometimes pausing to gaze at their wriggling before crushing them to death in a hand, biting off their head, or simply tossing them into his mouth and crunching them down.*

**1) IF THE PCs ARE ABOUT TO BE RESCUED BY THE WALKING BOAT**, then one option is that Magnatz is ripping up great tracts of forest with his bare hands, sorting through the debris he holds for persons to devour, then ripping up more trees and repeating the process. This leads to a section of forest in which the PCs are hiding/evading being isolated, and diminishing as the demon ripping up swathes presents wide gaps that towering Magnatz can observe with ease.

The **Walking Boat** darts across one of these gaps, finds the PCs and then stands there patiently, waiting to be boarded. Any Vull folk or GMCs nearby will see this as a last chance for life and attack and/or attempt to board at all costs. Many will need to be repelled with injurious effectiveness. A small number of GMCs may side with the PCs and repel all-comers. These may have been sympathetic GMCs all along, or might be opportunists who realise that Domber's Motile Carriage is likely under the control of the PCs and so will 'nobly' leap to the defence of the PCs, risking life and limb to defend them and their device. (Never for a moment admitting that this is altruistic self-interest.)

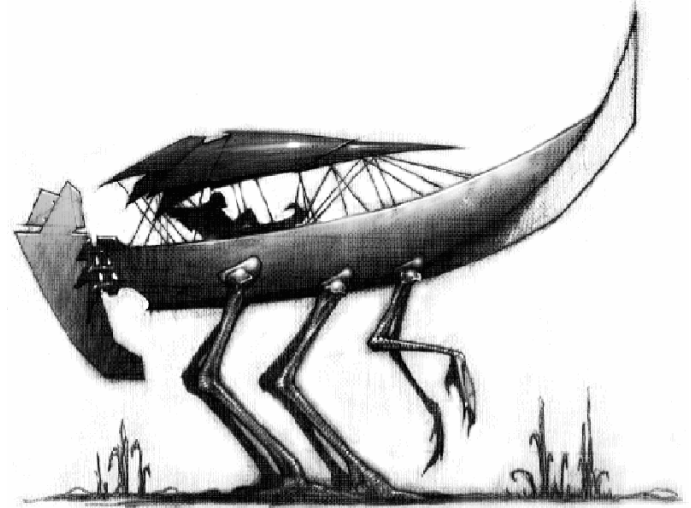
Once all PCs are aboard the **Walking Boat** flees across one of the gaps, entering the trees on the other side and evading with remarkable skill, changing course and taking full use of overhead foliage thickness as camouflage. Magnatz pursues for a while, and this chase should be described in horrific detail and if you like some secret rolls can be made and near misses described as a huge foot slams down just behind them, or a great hand smashes the trees right next to them (as Magnatz rages blindly).

**2) IF THE PCs ARE FLEEING AFOOT**, striving to reach Padagar Pass and escape from the devastation behind them, the direction of their flight takes them up the thickly forested slopes of Mount Temus. This is a highly sensible option as the pines there are tall and densely growing. Possibly a hunter may call out this information to all and sundry. (Likely a hunter who survives and is

one of those that accompanies them across the mountains.) In this case, adjust the information above, as the PCs find themselves and others trapped in this slowly diminishing tract of forest as Magnatz rips up swathes from its edge and moves closer and closer to them.

**One of the Senior Clerics will have a spellbook**, or will (ideally) approach the PCs and demand to use theirs. He will attempt to recast the binding and will temporarily succeed. Survivors swarm from the forest on all sides, taking advantage of the fact that Magnatz is vulnerable and frozen, twisting vines around his legs and bringing him crashing to the ground. The Senior Cleric continues to chant, however an astute PC will hopefully see ( $\Psi$  PERCEPTION) that the Senior Cleric is sweating and beginning to struggle.

**Now is the time to flee** (or sneak away amidst the exhilaration), and Magnatz shortly breaks free and savagely devours his would-be captors. (Whilst the PCs flee on 'feet with wings' towards Mount Temus perhaps alongside a fortunate few others.)



**3) IF YOU ARE RUNNING A MORE HEROIC STYLE GAME** (or if the PCs try this in desperation and the hopeful caster rolls an IS when trying to understand how to do this from Vull Faris's tome) the PCs might try again to **dispel Magnatz**, or use some other method from their personal repertoire. If so, make sure that much drama ensues as they attempt this task. Deodands and Clerics will try to stop them from doing this. These will attack unco-ordinated – running out of the trees in ones, twos or threes – whatever numbers make combat a challenge but allows the PCs to succeed at defending themselves and their spellcaster.

As noted earlier, **Magnatz is not deliberately killing deodands**, and the deodands are presumably hoping



their deity will settle down once he is finished snacking, and allow them to recommence their hideous worship ceremonies.) To dispel Magnatz **superior Magic rolls** are required. Describe each attempt as a desperate psychic battle (perhaps even complete with blood leaking from the would-be magician's eyeballs).

However (unless you are already running this campaign with competent PC magicians), the best that the PCs can achieve (though Players won't know it) is to **temporarily incapacitate** Magnatz, as described in Option 2 above. In this case, rather than have a PC stand sweating and struggling as the dispulsion attempt teeters, have it appear to partially succeed, and describe Magnatz collapsing to the ground, where townsfolk and Clerics use stout vines (again as described above) to bind him. This is not likely the result that the PCs were looking for, since Magnatz is still physically present. The caster will know that **the attempt was a failure** of some kind, and that Magnatz's discommodation could be VERY temporary.

Thus, 'now' is the time to back away - possibly whilst wielding the spellbook and saying things like "*If I can fell Magnatz, how difficult do you think it would be to shiver a dozen of you into splinters with a flick of my wrist?*" (Ψ IMPOSTURE) Of course, as soon as the PCs are at a safe distance describe the roars and screams as he breaks free and falls on his would-be captors with a terrible vengeance. However, you end things, a distant roar from the throat of a rampaging Magnatz is one fitting end to things.



*Daring rescuers flung high into the air!*

### The Revenge of the Senior Cleric/s

A final amusing option (to be slotted in just when the PCs think they have survived all), especially if they angered or annoyed any particular Senior Clerics, is to **have a Senior Cleric make an appearance right** at the end of things. One easy way is to have this senior cleric be one of the last survivors, and simply lunge from the small crowd, or a bush, attacking one or more PCs with a dagger, whilst shrieking out that they have destroyed centuries of work and released a terrible evil onto the world, and other such things like: "*All life is doomed due to your selfish actions!*" and "*The work of the greatest and bravest of all mages has been destroyed just to save your miserable skins! How dare you! How dare you!*"

Another more dramatic way (if they are fleeing in the Walking Boat) is to have the last surviving Senior Cleric **propel himself from the maelstrom** through means of magic - and come flashing through the air ahead of a cloud of demonic force that propels him, smashing down into the Motile Carriage, somehow landing unharmed as alert (Ψ PERCEPTION) passengers leap aside. He may kill a GMC on landing, and then spring up, attacking in a senseless rage as described above.

You may wish to attach a Senior Cleric of far more common sense to their survival party (even one stunned and contrite who says he has small magics that can assist their travel).

Whether their numbers include Clerics or not, it adds to game atmosphere if the PCs have **around a dozen GMCs** with them. So that 2 or 3 can be eaten by erbs or suchlike along the way, one stay with Pharesm, and 2 or 3 perish at the Vale of Dharad. Leaving 2 or 3 survivors of Cil to gratefully leave their company once they again reach civilisation at the upper reaches of the River Scamander (in *And Thence to Almerj*). Unless having GMCs along does nothing to weaken the sense of isolation and terror, at most 2 or 3 special retainer-types or major personality supporting GMCs could accompany them towards Erze Damath.



## Chapter Three: The Western Mountains



### 3.1) Overview

This chapter contains **a series of short scenarios and brief encounters** that mark passage across the Mountains of Magnatz. Refresh pools as you feel to.

Padagar Pass begins on the southern slopes of Mount Temus (a mountain obscured by the word "Vull" on the map on page 39 in this publication) then heads mostly east and slightly north, emerging as shown on the map. The great slide (see later) is where the road marking ends. Astute readers may wonder why the ancients didn't build a road south to Merce. They did. The PCs don't see it, and take the North road instead!

The PCs must travel the remains of the great highway as it heads further eastwards, travelling through the foothills of the Mountains of Magnatz in the direction of the city of Mar. As they begin, ruined manses are seen about them in the foothills, one of which is actually a large temple to Magnatz. Now is not the time to stop and investigate such things!

As always the GM is advised to expand and adapt all encounters using their own imagination. PCs may for instance have some magical campsite-protecting device that requires imagination for making nighttime dangerous for those afoot. Or you might have genius ideas for additional foes or challenges.

However they do so, GMs are advised to incorporate a sense of *survival terror* into play, and avoid simply rush-presenting one encounter/mini-scenario after another. This is the chunk wilderness section of this publication.

### 3.2a) Introduction (for those on foot)

☉ *"You rest on the lower slopes of Mount Temus above Vull, exhausted. Your chests heave with effort of having run so fast and so far. You can flee no more. Happily you are sheltered from casual observation beneath the thick trees. In the valley below you can hear the sounds of Magnatz crashing through the forest, and the occasional shriek of one of his victims, though ominously these noises now come far less often.*

*Unable to move for some time you are relieved to hear the auditory evidence of Magnatz fade gradually westwards. Perhaps Magnatz and the new Lord of Cil will soon have an opportunity to converse at length. You spare some pity for the folk of Dordge and hope that the Lord of Cil is visiting their town when Magnatz arrives.*

*Eventually you pick yourselves up and stagger on until you find a cave into which you all cram, barricading the entrance with thorn bushes. When dawn finally breaks you hear nothing of Magnatz, and head speedily through the woodlands to the Padagar Pass. Occasionally you can glimpse Vull through the trees, and note that it appears to be in ruins. Even the Tower has been cast down. At the Pass, as hoped, you find the remains of an ancient and impressively wide roadway heading east into the mountains. Resolutely you step out once more, heading for parts unknown that you may cross them and arrive eventually back in Azenomei, there to exact a complex revenge on the grinning Incounu."*

Whilst resting exhausted or sleeping in the cave, the PC group may have been joined by a few remaining refugees from Cil and perhaps a dozen or so confused Vull townsfolk.



If the PCs lack expertise in hunting, then three of the survivors are town hunters, who offer an alliance with the PCs until they reach the other side of the mountains. They claim only the wish for survival (more likely achieved in numbers), and all they want in return is to accompany those with knowledge of the outside world.

For the sake of drama a **final personality** survivor from Cil (someone they like – or perhaps dislike) emerges from the devastation, clothes torn and body bloodied. Create further introductory text for any of these options you choose.

### 3.2b) Introduction (Walking Boat)

☉ *"The Walking Boat flees at speed beneath the trees across the lower slopes of Mount Temus. You cling to its sides and furred upholstery to prevent yourselves from being bounced from its confines. Never before have you been able to cajole it to such speed. Some amongst you now begin to ponder if perhaps the device has a mind of its own, and is experiencing 'fear'.*

*In the valley behind you can hear the sounds of Magnatz crashing through the woodlands, and the occasional shriek of one of his victims, though ominously these noises come far less often. You are relieved to hear the auditory evidence of Magnatz fade. He is not pursuing you, and has perhaps turned his attentions to the West. Possibly Magnatz and the new Lord of Cil will soon have an opportunity to converse at length. You spare some pity for the folk of Dordge and hope that the Lord of Cil is visiting their town when Magnatz arrives.*

*When dawn finally breaks, you observe that the Walking Boat now lopes along the remains of an ancient and impressive wide roadway heading east into the mountains. Once more you head for parts unknown and hope that you may pass through them swiftly and arrive before long back in Azenomei, there to exact a complex revenge upon the grinning Lucounu."*

Options for additional companions to be met apart from those who climb aboard initially are absent, with the single exception that perhaps a **Vull hunter** managed to leap up at some point and grab the underside of the carriage (or cling to one of the legs), and strap himself to it with his hunting harness. If so, eventually he will call out for assistance, or be spotted when they stop for food and water, and offer the alliance conditions as in the first introduction above.

**The boat itself seems tired**, and sometime during the night (whilst its occupants were asleep) it has slowed to trotting pace.

Either way, they have run out of food, or shortly will, and thus will need to stop to hunt every now and then. (The Walking Boat is too noisy.) Rather than place a note in each wilderness encounter below as to how and why they PCs have had to temporarily disembark from

the Motile Carriage, the GM decides and may alter or extend the bridging text accordingly.

Commonest reasons are: **hunting for food**, stopping to collect water from a mountain stream, examining an ancient ruin, negotiating an obstacle such as a landfall (where the carriage is forced to scramble in a perpendicular fashion that makes it impossible for passengers to remain aboard), creating a campfire to cook food, and answering the call of nature (for those too embarrassed to excrete over the side of the vehicle).

PCs may hope **the Motile Carriage** will be with them all the way back to Azenomei. Do not disillusion them with casual remarks such as 'enjoy it whilst you can'. If available it is a fine crossover reminder of their glory days as Lords of Cil, but will be gone soon enough.

### 3.3) General Travel Details

The road is **more than 60ft wide**. It is largely clear of debris. Remarkable in the face of its obvious antiquity.

The assigning of sentries and other duties such as chief cook may well be a **Cugelesque Persuasion Contest** that lasts for some time. All of the PCs were recently Lords of Cil. If GMCs are with them, the PCs may continue with their lordly pretensions and assign lackeys to do all of the dangerous and arduous work. Your Players will make such things apparent as the campaign flows, and you the GM must respond accordingly.

Or call for **Resistance rolls** at appropriate moments to remind all concerned that this is DERPG not some other common RPG where characters routinely pull together to share tiresome duties. This is still a sufficiently Cugel-level environment that PCs greatly resent having to pull their weight undertaking 'lesser duties', and may roundly curse Lucounu as they do so.

**Routine assigning of GMCs** to dangerous missions such as standing watch and walking at point (along the road or when hunting) WILL result in GMC fatalities.

Whichever introduction you begin with, allow PCs to **control what they do** next. Stop, have breakfast... Have a planning meeting about what to do with the hunter and whether he will be useful... Whatever they choose...

Around this time clarify for the Players that their PCs face an **arduous mountain trek** of many days even with the road, and even with the Carriage if they have it.

Obviously **with the carriage** it will be far less physically exerting, however they will still need to forage for food (unless they have some magical device to feed them) and collect water in order to maintain their health.

Happily the magical forceshield of the carriage itself can protect them from the elements (except for the strongest storms – see later). Nonetheless some degree



of planning might be appropriate. But don't pressure them about this. Such things can happen later.

**Travel takes much longer on foot** than it does in the Walking Boat. Even in mountainous terrain Domber's Motile Carriage can easily average 6 miles per hour, and even accounting for 4 hrs a day pauses for hunting etc, therefore covers an impressive 120 miles per day. Energetic travel afoot is likely to average 2 miles per hour in the mountains, so even walking for 10 hours a day means only 20 miles or so daily.

Let us say that if the PCs are afoot, then the road is straight and true, carried on viaducts and through tunnels 100 miles to the edge of the mountains (5 days), then 100 miles through the foothills to Mar (4 days). If they are in the Walking Boat, then the road moves in great curves, effectively more than doubling the distance (240 miles: 2 days) until it reaches the foothills, where it continues to wind along river valleys for a further 200 miles (2 days). These distances are generally reflected in the different introductions to each section.

### Hunting:

If hunters are with them, make it clear that their aid is what prevents everyone from starving. PCs can (either assisted by hunter or alone if no such person/s exists) use Tracking to seek small game, Attack (at a penalty) and Living Rough to set traps, and Living Rough to forage for edible greens and fruits across the landscape. The GM may wish to rule that **they need to do this at least once every day**, or else begin (at least after the first day) to lose Health pool points which do not refresh until properly fed.

After two days hunger may also affect physical skills, applying at first a Levy then a Penalty. (As incentives for them to attempt to feed themselves, which emphasises the remoteness of their situation.) Actual role-playing of these efforts needn't take a lot of real-time if fully described, but adds to the vastness of the campaign, especially when the GM talks of the enormity of the skies and mountains around them whilst they attempt these tasks.

The role-playing part mainly consists of **deciding who will take on which tasks** (seeking game or seeking edible greens), plus dividing the party into two. (Wandering about alone or in very small groups is not sensible due to dangers of the wilderness.) Maybe this can be rolled for the first day, or the first two days, and then reintroduced sporadically, perhaps at the start of each role-played section below.

From now on this chapter contains snippets of text designed to be read as indicators of distance travelled and time taken doing so. If the PCs are in the walking boat read out the option 'Walking Boat'. If the PCs are on foot, read out option 'On Foot'. Where available then continue with the following general text appropriate for both.

### Survival in the Mountains of Magnatz

(Living Rough, or Pedantry at -1 unless specialism is Wilderness Survival, or Tracking at -1)

*The result is split into two sections because it will likely be amusing to have two PCs with totally divergent levels of competency. Harsh GMs with an eye for maximum game amusement may insist that the results made at this point encapsulate each PC's wilderness competency for the entire journey.*

**Failure:** Read this 2-part result for the first person to gain a QF, or only the first part if the only rolled failure is a DF.

DF: "May the fates have pity on us in this vast expanse of wilderness, since there is clearly nothing to eat for many leagues in any direction. Alas we will all surely expire of famishment before three days have passed!..."

QF: "...Surely there must be some small game or edible plants, but I for one am entirely without clue as to how such would be identified and obtained."

**Success:** Read out this part of the result as normal, as if it is the knowledge of the PC with the highest success level.

EF: "I recall once having read about the edible lichens and nutritious green weeds of the northern mountains..."

HBS: "...In fact if I recall correctly the serrated-edged leaves of the common jurpabush are high in protein and minerals..."

PS: "Not only that but the entire jurpa genus has edible tubers that taste as if lightly spiced, and accompanied by easily-netted small birds, one can survive quite adequately on this diet for weeks at a time..."

IS: "...Plus surely some large game must exist even in these far and distant lands. And of course nothing beats topping a meal with haunch of erb roasted over an open-fire for full culinary magnificence!"

*The Walking Boat can't be used to assist them hunting because the trees are too thick. The roadway travels consistently through thick pine forests over uneven ground. The roadway itself is relatively flat and unimpeded. This is not case for the forest around them.*





### 3.4) Attack of the Gids (or 'Never Get Out of the Boat!')

**⌘ (WALKING BOAT):** *"Without your being aboard Domber's Motile Carriage your travel would be incalculably more arduous. The road swings in wide curves, ascends and descends slopes, occasionally passes along massive viaducts that have somehow withstood the passage of time. Crossing gorges, cutting through short tunnels, sometimes buttressed against landslides by massive stone blocks on either side.*

*Often as the tireless Walking Boat lopes on, you thank the fates that it is available to you. Now and again it hops lightly over minor ravines or wide rushing streams that any persons on foot would need to leap or ford. Occasionally you glimpse threatening movement in the darkness under the thick trees beside the roadway. ...*

*... But the Carriage doesn't slacken, and these worrying stirrings are soon left behind. Sometimes the Carriage pauses for you whilst you fill its water storage bladders from a fresh mountain pool, but otherwise you urge it ever onwards, as far from Vull and Magnatz as possible in as short a time as can be managed. Nonetheless, eventually you grow hungry. As the afternoon begins of your first day of travel you are forced to admit that supplies in the carriage have run out barring a handful of exceptionally tasteless nutritional wafers. It has become necessary to cease travel for a short time and forage for food in the woodlands beside the road."*

(Some PCs may wish to stay aboard until the last moment that starvation allows. **Resistance to Gourmandism** can be requested, the Hunter GMC used, or Living Rough successes indicate that hunting may get more scarce the higher they travel, and that now in daytime is by far the safest point in the day at which to hunt.)

**⌘ (ON FOOT):** *"The impressive roadway strikes out bluntly, like an arrow, heading directly north-east. Its makers somehow sliced through mountainsides creating huge ledges and tunnels in order for their road to project truly, sometimes buttressing it against landslides with massive stone blocks on either side. You walk with best feet forward, determined to make the most of every hour of daylight. As the afternoon passes its midpoint you begin to grow hungry. Now, whilst the light is still good is clearly the time to hunt. You look dubiously at the thick pine woodlands beside the road, and yet in all honesty you have no choice in the matter, except to starve."*

This encounter is a simple opportunity to invent and role-play through a **forage, track & hunt situation**. This will play out according to the skills and successes of the PCs, and the whims of the GM. Are there GMCs present? If so, will the PCs delegate? Will they split up into groups? What food do they find? (**Ψ LIVING ROUGH, PERCEPTION -1**)

What animals are around? (**Ψ TRACKING**) Do they trap an animal or get attacked by half-men, or all of the above? An excellent attempt at Wilderness Survival or a horrific series of mishaps that include at least one fatality? The danger is heralded by **the distant distinctive call of a shamb**. But may be ended when a small troop of gids come to investigate the unfamiliar smells (unwashed adventurer) wafting through their woodlands.

Should PCs be ill-equipped, tone down the ratings of these creatures, and reduce the number of gids. The shamb may come late on the scene and be fled from rather than fought. Or not. This whole encounter is designed to be generally very challenging and **to set a dangerous tone** for the following journey, so if possible make it something that the PCs barely escape from with their lives.

#### The Gid

The long insectoid limbs of these intelligent half-men are covered in hard sections of chitinous carapace and end in stony claws. A gid's face is elongated and gargoyle-like. Ferocity (claws) 11 [\_\_\_], Intuition 8 [\_\_\_], Health 11 [\_\_\_], Athletics 14 [\_\_\_], Concealment 5 [\_\_\_], Perception 6 [\_\_\_], Stealth 6 [\_\_\_], Tracking 10 [\_\_\_], Wherewithal 8 [\_\_\_], Magic (Resistance only) [\_\_\_].

**Leaping Attack:** *The gid contests its Athletics (rolled at a bonus of 1, or of 2 if it has not yet been spotted) against the Athletics of the target: a single roll each. Any target capable of "Walloping" (DERPG, p33) the gid's Athletics automatically does – and not only evades its leap, but their next Attack roll is at a bonus of 1.*



#### The Shamb:

This predator is not a half-man, but a genuine wild beast covered in bristling black hairs, which runs on six legs as it chases down its prey. Its forelimbs are flexible and can be used for grappling victims, before such unfortunates are hauled up to its ferocious elongated jaws.

Strength (claws/jaws) 14 [\_\_\_], Sure-Footedness 10 [\_\_\_], Health 14 [\_\_\_], Athletics 12 [\_\_\_], Concealment 5 [\_\_\_], Perception 8 [\_\_\_], Stealth 7 [\_\_\_], Tracking 5 [\_\_\_], Wherewithal 12 [\_\_\_], Magic (Resistance only) [\_\_\_].

**Shamb Toxin (Resist with Health rolls):**

**IS/PS:** *Victim feels sick, and takes a levy of 1 on physical actions for the next five rounds.*

**HBS:** *Same, but lasts for several minutes.*

**EF:** *Same, but penalty of 1 for around an hour.*

**QF:** *Victim is almost totally paralyzed for 2 hours, then as EF.*

**DF:** *Victim expires.*





### 3.5) The War Machine

**⊕ (WALKING BOAT):** *"Domber's Motile Carriage trots on into the afternoon. Easily covering the difficult terrain where the road has been badly weathered by time and the elements. Less than an hour after you encountered the gids you see that the road ahead is blocked by some large structure. Your transportation begins to slow as it draws nearer to the obstacle..."*

**⊕ (ON FOOT):** *"As evening begins to fall at the end of your first day of marching through the mountains, you find yourselves surprisingly still alive. As is only sensible you have been examining the surrounding terrain for the past hour for some manner of shelter you can secure in order to survive the night, but not a single likely prospect has presented. And yet now perhaps your wish has been miraculously granted..."*

**⊕ (Continue...)** *"...Blocking the road ahead is a huge rusted building or something of the like. One end is buried in the cliff face, and its back end protruding over a dangerous precipice on the other, effectively blocking the road. But can it be a building? Since when has a building possessed wheels and large metal pipes protruding from its rear? A huge enclosed metal wagon?"*

This object once was a **war machine** that flew (via magic) and drove (cross country) with equal ease, which is how it manages to appear to be too large for the road. It was disabled by magic, and crashed here, caving in much of the control room. The enchantments of the road & its distant location have somewhat preserved it. The sketch map here is a mere indication, and is not definitive. The front end is buried in boulders, scree, soil and foliage stretching back halfway between the cliff and the ravine. Much other rubble is strewn around on either side of the craft, which could not be fully included in this sketch. And it **totally obscures the door on this side**, and most of the door (except the top lintel) on the other side. The lined objects outside each rear door indicate the collapsed wheels whose rubber-like material is now as hard as stone. Only the tops of them are visible and accessible. It also used to have forward wheels, but these are now completely buried beneath debris, and thus not indicated. The dashed circle above Corridor 1 indicates the open hatch-cover. Combined with the pile of rocks, this machine now utterly blocks the road and must be climbed over. The cliff is too high on one side, and too steep on the other. **Descent into the ravine** would be possible as a by-pass measure, but looks much more dangerous as an option. Whilst they are climbing over, someone will notice a large hatchway that is open (see 3.5.1). Sensible folk would hurry on, but the PCs (and possibly some of their companions) are adventurers, **eager for ancient curios** of great worth, and forgotten magical relics.

#### 3.5.1) The Exterior

Remember that **the roadway is more than 60ft wide**. This means that the ancient vehicle itself is nearly 50ft wide, and if you include the rubble piled on either side (not indicated on the map) it is 100ft or more of difficult terrain to cross. Large rocks that might be unsteady, and a potential slide to the death across the loose shale surface into the ravine await. Emphasise that this climb is not something they should approach casually. Rolls will be required (boons/bonuses applied again for sensible practical assistance measures).

The Walking Boat crosses (when commanded) in a **series of leaps and bounds** that would fling out any occupants. (Though it won't move until it is unoccupied.) To clamber over the top of this relic a person has to climb the first side using Athletics (a no re-rolls situation). PCs using rope, or otherwise assisting each other gain bonus of 1 to their roll, or exceptionally of 2 for careful planning and good role-playing

*Penalty of -1 for any heavy burden.*

**ASCENDING (and reverse for descending):**

**DF:** You manage to clamber nearly halfway up, before stepping on a rock that slides away beneath you. You thud and scrape all the way to the bottom, taking an injury.

**QF:** You fall and hurt yourself, losing a point from your Health pool, and need to roll again.

**EF/HBS:** You fall and hurt yourself, losing a point from your Health pool, but make it to the top.

**PS:** With great care and effort you safely reach the top.

**IS:** You bound up the slope like a mountain goat.

**CROSSING:**

**DF:** You trip and fall as some loose shale gives away. Sliding with increasing speed you are completely without control as you hurtle towards the ravine.

**All Other Results:** Improvise from above.

The journey across the top is made more interesting by the fact that someone has dug down through the shale somehow, and created a **protective wall of heavy logs** around their digging efforts. This descent is nearly 10ft through stones and soil and ends at the metal top of this strange craft, where there is a circular hatch cover large enough to admit a human being. This hatch is almost closed, but clearly propped open by a wide piece of slate. In short, access to this machine of the ancients is possible. Around the hatch are ripped ridges of metal that perhaps indicate that some ancillary device was once attached here: a gun turret. (*Resistance rolls for Arrogance and Avarice could easily be manufactured. Persuasion contests to see who goes first are mandatory.*)

This device is jointly **technological, magical and biological**. Describe the interior to do justice to this fact. It is not a Space Age shuttlecraft.

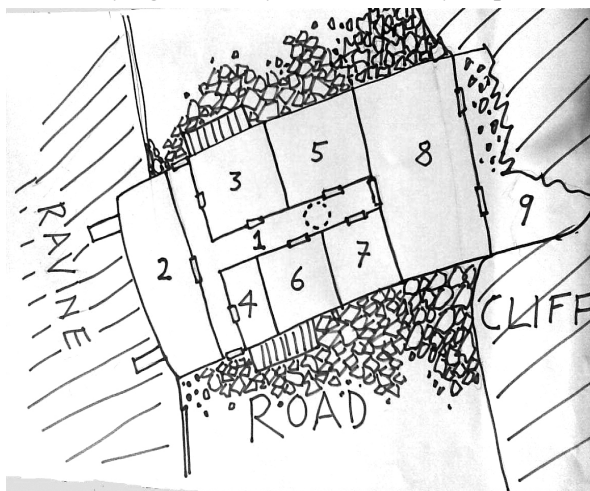


### 3.5.2) The Interior:

[It is dark inside and PCs will need some manner of light sources. GMs can expand inner detail & contents.]

**The 'Captain'** is a half-man mutant, a throwback to days when half-men were created with high intelligence, discernment and multiple utilities (rather than just as savage shock troops for the multiplicitious wars). He is psychologically unstable, and appears suddenly from the gloom as soon as some PCs have entered. Though his attitude is friendly, his voice is a **barely discernible buzz**, and his appearance worrying. He is a 9ft high human/insect hybrid with a long alien face and serrated barbs protruding from all major limb joints. Or, if such creatures feature in your campaign, consider making him an archvult - though a deranged cannibalistic one).

**The Automatons** are whatever you want them to be. Small half-biological half-mechanical humanoids, square robots that hover around in the air, or glass spheres with visible mechanical innards that roll about and protrude tools as and when required. The Captain has gained a measure of control over them and **they operate at his command**. If the GM decides, they may be open to commands from folk using Imposture or Persuasion to convince the mechanoids that they (PCs) are authority figures. They cannot verbally respond.



#### Action Aboard Ship:

The Captain will first welcome them, & give a deluded description of the glories of his craft. He speaks mainly of **entirely mythic repairs**, clearly impossible test drives & flights, and a crew that are taking a short absence of leave before the next mission begins.

The dining room will be the last place he shows them to, and is where he will seal them behind a bulkhead door (perhaps after a brutal fight in which they are subdued), giving them one hour to decide which of their number they are going to give him to devour.

He can also seal the whole craft if some GMCs are left outside. He (or one of his fellows if such exist) **slams down the hatch-cover and spins it closed**, which resets the combination tumbler. In the end they will have to negotiate with him (requiring exceptional role-playing to net them bonuses) or use the materials they can find to set a trap in order to counter or impede his formidable (& obvious) strength/combat capacity.

**1) Corridor.** '⊕' *"The metal walls are lined with indentations along which thick pulsing capillaries run. These oddly seem to be part of the décor, even though they ooze with slow-moving fluid. It may be that this craft is partly alive. The doors that lead off it are smooth and without handles. Each has a panel of translucent amber about midway up the wall next to it."* (Pressing the panel opens the door, which slides to one side – into the wall – with a hissing sound.) '⊕' *"Each of the doors also has a smaller plaque next to it, on which indecipherable hieroglyphics are printed. Below the hatch is a ladder set into the wall."* (Between rooms 6&7). If the hatch is closed it can be opened by turning the tumbler (also decorated with the same hieroglyphics) and listening for the correct series of clicks that will indicate the lock has been undone. (Ψ PERCEPTION -1, QUICKFINGERS -1)

**2) Maintenance & Fuel Chamber.** '⊕' *"A morass of pipes, panels, wires, wider pulsing organic tubes, biological organs inside fluid filled containers connected to rubber tubes, and odd mechanical devices all linked together with pipes, tubes and conduits in a masterpiece of technical wizardry. Some parts are corroded, others fused, and a few bits and pieces (mostly ceramic components) are still in excellent repair."* When undisturbed the automatons labour in here, trying to make repairs from an inadequate supply of replacement parts, welding, re-welding, screwing, unscrewing. Anyone who crawls around in here will be rewarded with some glowing rod, whirring mechanical component or other ancient wonder that could be sold or bartered with Pharesm later in this chapter (but is unlikely to be retained much longer than that). They may find the ship's brain in a central large transparent fluid-filled vat.

**3) Storage.** Battle helmets, fire-retardant suits, foil-packed meals, engineering tools. The GM expands the contents here depending on how much science fiction flavour is wished to be brought into the campaign and what items the GM wants the PCs to have access to.

**4) Facilities.** The door of this room is sealed with a growth of mould that is oozing around the doorframe. Somehow forcing the door open releases toxic spores into the interior of the craft. Once upon a time this was the latrine and washroom facility, and then some bodies were piled in here. That was long ago. The room has cracks to the outside and nature has taken over.



**5) Bunks.** '⊕' *"A room crowded by three triple-tier metal bunks. Beneath each lower bunk are three locked metal chests."* The GM decides how easy each one is to open and what it holds. The beds are meticulously made and the bedclothes are of a strange metallic fibre that is an incredible insulation material. If the PCs are afoot this will make their nights significantly more comfortable.

**6) Captain's Cabin.** '⊕' *"Whatever it once was, this room is now a giant insect's nest. It is filled with webbing and within the webbing are hung strange and shiny pieces of technology."* If anyone is able to break through the webbing (only the Captain can pass amongst it without sticking) they might discover such things as deodand bones, glow boxes (ancient flashlights), magical writing implements, goggles that allow vision in the dark, and whatever else can be imagined.

**7) Magical Chart Room.** '⊕' *"A single glass table is in the centre of the room. Up its legs run organic tubes that emerge from the floor."* Touching the tabletop initiates a holographic face to emerge and ask questions in an unknown tongue. After communication proves impossible it will become annoyed, curse them and depart. This is a magical knowledge spirit, bound to the table. The GM may improvise more detailed contact.

#### **The 'Captain'**

*"Welcome aboard my craft. It has seen better days, but soon it will be functioning at full fettle once more. Repairs proceed apace. You may address me as 'Captain'."*

Eloquent 16 [\_\_\_], Wary 18 [\_\_\_], Strength (Claws) 19 [\_\_\_], Parry 18 [\_\_\_], Health 20 [\_\_\_], Athletics 16 [\_\_\_], Concealment 6 [\_\_\_], Craftsmanship (Ancient magical technology) 3 [\_\_\_], Perception 4 [\_\_\_], Stealth 3 [\_\_\_], Wherewithal 10 [\_\_\_], Magic (Resistance only) [\_\_\_].

#### **The Automatons**

*"Bzzzz Whirrr. Klik. Klik."*

Strength [tools] 4 [\_\_\_], Dodge 2 [\_\_\_], Obtuse 6 [\_\_\_], Health [\_\_\_], Athletics [\_\_\_], Magic (Resistance) [\_\_\_]

Add a health roll bonus or boon according to your desired level of their resilience.

**8) Dining Hall.** '⊕' *"Something macabre has happened here. Evidence includes, encrusted blood on the walls and furniture, claw marks on the inside of the doors and wall, and fragments of tooth, claw and fur scattered about. The furnishings themselves are a long fixed metal table, and a number of loose chairs. Several cabinets were once here but have long since been smashed. Fragments of metallic paper embossed with indecipherable glyphs can also be noticed in the mud-encrusted carpet."* Once a meeting room and now a macabre dining hall. The Captain has imprisoned half-men in here then slain and devoured them.

**9) Destroyed Cabin.** Crushed remains of control cabin. '⊕' *"The north door is buckled outwards into Room 8. The south door is like the others. A transparent dome once adorned it, but this has been caved in. It has only been through sheer luck that this single section was protected by a fallen slab and has remained intact."* From here can be salvaged thick and thin rubber hoses, wires, metal panels and flanges, serrated blades (edges of torn panels), long slivers of metal & quantities of foul-smelling & highly slippery blood-like oil. Hopefully sufficient to set an ingenious trap for the Captain.

### **THE FIRST ROAD TUNNEL**

An option mainly for those on foot, but could also easily be adapted for those in Domber's Motile Carriage.

'⊕' *"Although you have mainly been travelling at high altitudes the roadway has been sloping down for a while. Up ahead it enters a tunnel through the side of a mountain. Presumably this then exits on the other side, although you have no way of knowing for sure because the mountain itself blocks your sight & progress with admirable efficacy. What is most irksome about this situation however, is that a surging river pours off the mountainside only a hundred yards before the tunnel mouth, and rushes through it into the darkness."*

#### **Problem 1: Seeing the Way**

Making torches, protecting them whilst negotiating obstacles. Much as we are loath to say, certain classic RPGs contain wisdom around positioning group members so that magicians and torch-bearers (usually the weakest fighters) are protected by the strong and more agile.

#### **Problem 2: Staying Out of the Torrent**

The PC party must pick its way painstakingly along the edges of the river (which has been flowing here for so long that it has worn a deep groove to which it mostly keeps). Nonetheless there are at least three sections that need to be crossed using ropes and other ingenious means in order to not be swept away. Do the PCs have magical light? Do they even have ropes, or must they make human chains?

#### **Problem 3: Gargoyle Nest**

Eventually the PCs see light ahead. Soon they reach a natural cave so large it would take a few minutes to walk across. Illuminated through holes in the roof high above that are utterly inaccessible to anyone without wings.

As eyes become used to the light travellers can make out that the river runs through the middle of the cave, expanding into a small lake, but with plenty of room to walk around it. The cave floor however is covered in **nodular protrusions** ranging in size from an inflated sheep's bladder to that of a small child.

On examination these protrusions can be seen to be rocky eggs, somehow cemented to the cave floor with an unidentifiable secretion. Further examination of the cave reveals **dozens of ugly rocky winged beings** the size of small children clinging to the walls high overhead, each fast asleep (or at least comatose and inert).



The PCs and associates will need to sneak through the cavern avoiding the eggs. If anyone rolls a QF or DF they make a noise and wake a gargoyle that is nearest to them. Or **possibly an egg will hatch**, evoking a PC's avarice to possess such a unique hatchling, perhaps to rear it as a pet. But the youngling screeches in alarm. Depending on the way of things, panic-stricken flight may be the best option. Fortunately the exit is near. (Being hidden because a **bend in the road** occurs here underground – to point the tunnel at the best exit place.) These gargoyles hate direct sunlight and will chase off intruders with savage buffetings of their wings as long as no hatchlings are prisoner.

#### Gargoyle

Glib 6 [\_\_\_], Obtuse 9 [\_\_\_], Caution (claws) 5 [\_\_\_], Vexation 8 [\_\_\_], Health 8 [\_\_\_], Magic (innate) 7 [\_\_\_], Athletics 3 [\_\_\_], Concealment 5 [\_\_\_], Perception 4 [\_\_\_], Stealth 6 [\_\_\_], Wherewithal 5 [\_\_\_].

**Game Notes:** Due to their stony substance, when injured by non-magical weapons, these gargoyles roll Health at a boon of 1.

#### Problem 4: Getting Back on the Road

Whichever side of the river the PCs are on is the wrong side. Shortly after it leaves the tunnel it pours over the side of the road, using a break in the protective side-wall that was split long ago by an earth tremor, and having worn it away further. So PCs find themselves between a raging waterfall and a 400ft drop onto rocks. There is no answer but to return (advisably after a suitable hiatus) back closer to the gargoyle cave and cross where the current is notably less. (Though still a feat requiring skill and fortitude.)

### 3.6) Basil!

⊕ (WALKING BOAT): *"As the afternoon begins to wane, and you dine upon gently braized fillet of gid..."*

⊕ (ON FOOT): *"After the night spent inside the ancient machine you march for a full morning. Your feet are becoming sore and your legs weary. Now, to top everything off..."*

⊕ (Continue...) *"...an unfortunate sight greets your eyes upon the road ahead. In the distant past an entire mountainside has collapsed over the roadway, burying it entirely for an unknown distance that must be at least a mile. The landslide was composed not just of earth, but also of huge jagged boulders. There appears to be no choice but to pick your painstaking way on foot through the rubble and up and over vertical boulderfaces. An entirely unlooked for inconvenience. You roundly curse the name of Iucounu and begin to examine the tree-covered terrain for the best way forwards."*

If present the Walking Boat will have to climb, leap and scramble, and it is impossible for passengers to remain safely aboard whilst it does so. It can be set on its way, but cannot be communicated with well enough to stay with them, and will quickly outpace them, disappearing. Perhaps PCs will explore the controls (Ψ PERCEPTION –

1, ENGINEERING –1, QUICK FINGERS –1) and manage to set it to go a mile ahead and then wait? Perhaps they will roll QF and it will **continue for 10 miles** or even a 100 (DF), reducing them to walking. If so adapt the ⊕ (ON FOOT) introductions: as timing will be variant.

#### Basil

The basil resembles a humanoid wasp. It has black furred legs and arms, with a black thorax and abdomen – both of which also sport irregular yellow markings. Short spines run across the tops of their heads in the form of a primitive crest, and have large compound eyes. It speaks with a **laboured buzzing drone** – when it bothers to speak at all. It does not engage in pedantic discussion, as do some other half-men, rather it restricts its speech to phrases of anthropophagic depravity and vile threats.

Intimidating (alien) 8 [\_\_\_], Obtuse (insectoid) 10 [\_\_\_], Speed [claws/sting] 10 [\_\_\_], Dodge 12 [\_\_\_], Health 11 [\_\_\_], Athletics 6 [\_\_\_], Concealment 2 [\_\_\_], Perception 9 [\_\_\_], Stealth 3 [\_\_\_], Tracking 6 [\_\_\_], Wherewithal 5 [\_\_\_], Magic (Innate) 3 [\_\_\_].

**Flight:** Bazils are not strong enough to carry large prey, but gain an Attack bonus of 1 when attacking from the air.

**Venom:** when making a Health roll for the final effect, if the victim's Health rating is 12 or higher, consider having the roll made at a bonus of 1. Likewise if their Health rating is 5 or less, consider applying a penalty of 1.

**Potency:** Levy 1 Interval: 1 minute. While the poison attacks their system the victim typically rolls or hops around, howling in pain. They can attempt (one roll only) truly essential actions at a penalty of 1. This includes continuing to fight the basil, but only Attack & Defence rolls.

**Effect:** The victim makes a Health roll. IS: recovers instantly, merely feeling unwell for an hour or so. PS: must rest for an hour and are at a levy of 1 for all physical actions, after which they feel unwell for a few hours. HBS: incapacitated for 3 hours. EF: incapacitated for a full day. QF: will die within a number of minutes equal to their Health (unless treated). DF: expires almost immediately.

**Regeneration:** A basil regains 1 Health per round. If deprived of its head or all of its limbs, this magical effect ceases.

As well as describing various difficulties they manage to overcome without needing to roll, create several obstacles that require use of rope and climbing etc. Explain to Players that with **adequate preparation** the PCs will not need to roll (or will need to roll two DFs in a row in order to fail). They will need to utilise fallen (or cut) branches, collected creepers and piles of rocks.

Most likely these will include climbing up a **massive boulder or two**, crossing a large chasm with a roaring stream at the bottom, and descending a precipitous ravine. Much of this will be through thick trees, and at the point of your choice a PC might (Ψ PERCEPTION)



smell something unusual just before as many Basil as the GM decides attack them.

One possibility is that **a single tall thin creature appears atop a rocky outcrop** and begins to harangue them in a strange droning tone. Only the most aurally dextrous PCs might ( $\Psi$  PERCEPTION -1) comprehend that this creature is barraging them with abusive phrases about their poorly presented dress-sense, their unkempt hair, and their obvious ineptitude when it comes to the finer arts of adventuring. In short it appears to regard them as prey not worthy of attacking.

**Soon a slightly smaller creature joins it**, clearly a follower of some kind and inquires what to do. The larger creature becomes enraged and strikes it about the head several times, turning its abusive attitude on its fellow. This goes on for a few rounds until **a third creature arrives - a female** (specialists in half-man anthropology may notice). This creature takes charge in a series of screeching commands, and all three Bazils then spring from the rock, and flap down to attack the adventurers. (If 3 is an easy number to deal with, have more also attack from hiding nearby.)

Are your PCs **short on supplies?** If so this is an ideal time to find and prepare ( $\Psi$  LIVING ROUGH, PERCEPTION -1) accompaniments to some manner of Basil dish. Food is rare in the mountains, and all opportunities must be taken advantage of. Losing an hour of travel whilst some search for herbs and tubers and others skin and roast the Basil can be role-played to quiet amusement. Cruel GMs may call for Wherewithal rolls for those attempting to eat this strange beast, unless the cooking ( $\Psi$  STEWARDSHIP) was exceptional.

### 3.7) The Ruined Town

**‘Θ’ (WALKING BOAT):** *"After the exertions of earlier in the day you are relieved to be aboard your conveyance, cursing once more the Laughing Magician who reduced you to ignoble exertions and exotic perils. Evening falls and your magical machine marches on, entering a rare deep valley within the mountains. Soon after darkness whoever is on watch notices..."*

**‘Θ’ (ON FOOT):** *"You walk until your feet shriek with pain, the hours turn into a full day. Your only moments of excitement were when you spotted a cave mouth & went to investigate, disturbing some manner of small wildcat and her kittens. Alas they were too fast to be turned into dinner, and Basil remained first and foremost on the menu. You spent a night crowded into the upper branches of an enormously ancient tree, forced to defend several times against some peculiar species of arboreal erb. Tired and disconsolate about your chances of long-term survival you nonetheless set out the next morning and marched a further full day until evening began to draw close and*

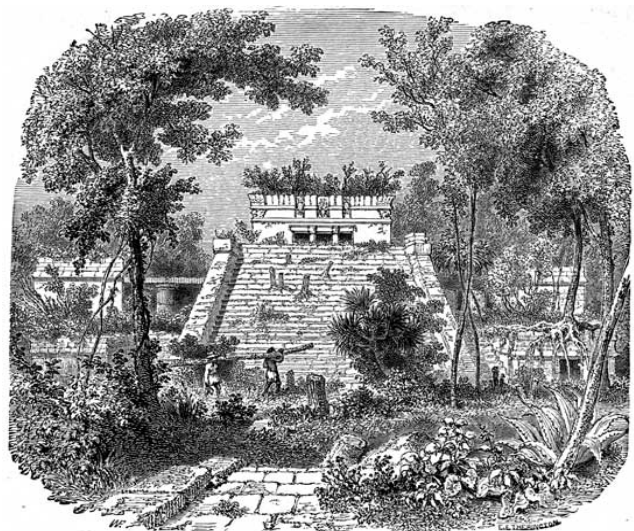
*the road descended into a rare mountain valley. Once again you have sensibly been searching the trees and rocks along the edge of the road for a spot where you can make your secure rest. And once again nothing has presented itself. Plodding along as disconsolately as you are it takes a few minutes for your brain to register..."*

**‘Θ’ (Continue...)** *"...that the surface of the roadway has changed, becoming more uneven. Looking about you, you observe that fragments of ruin are now protruding through the trees. In moments it dawns on you that you have begun passing through the remains of an ancient settlement. The difference underfoot illustrates that the roadway you have been travelling on was a magical one, and thus had survived the centuries relatively intact and clear of vegetation. Such is not the case now, as you find your way impeded by bushes and even trees, and the ground scoured by centuries of rainfall."*

The road through what turns out soon to be quite an extensive ruin has been worn by time. It is not enchanted. By daylight (and anything less than full dark) this town is **indescribably old**. The buildings are hung with creepers, and overgrown with grasses and trees. Progressing down the mainstreet requires chopping one's way through thick foliage. Even the Walking Boat will eventually be greatly slowed as the lush foliage of this valley becomes thick & rampant.

Depending on the resources and health of the PCs, here is a suggested order and selection of challenges:

**a) The vegetation-clogged mainstreet** is the only remotely easy way through town. PCs afoot must go single file often, with one person at point, clearing the way with a sword, hacking and slashing at the vegetation. This task is immensely tiring, and occasionally the person on point disturbs beetles, snakes or other hazards. Only whilst they are mid-way through this hazard and there is no point in turning back does someone disturb a tasp.





**b) Tasps then begin to attack the party** in slowly increasing numbers. (Inspirations may be taken from scenes in the movies 'Jurassic Park' and 'King Kong' (the more modern version). Obviously the GM balances the attacks to ensure PC survival, but several GMCs could perish. Run this as a terrifying encounter with real risk of death, with continuous dice rolling and gradually reducing Health pools. PCs should be encouraged to think of ways to move faster (two men on point hacking and slashing with gusto) and to shield themselves (protective formation)...

Even if they are in the Walking Boat, this device is picking its way slowly through the thick foliage and **tasps will easily get aboard**. If the PCs force the boat to run it will at some point (perhaps just short of the plaza) stumble and fall. Either way the PCs eventually make it into a wide relatively clear ruined plaza on the edge of a fast flowing, wide river, and if all else fails can dunk themselves in the shallows. Staying immersed (except for occasional breaths) for long enough (an hour) will result in the tasps departing.

### The Tropical Tasp

Typical tasps are "leaping green weasel-sized scorpion things". They are the southern tasp. This is the tropical tasp, although PCs may not know the difference.

**"What is it?"** (Ψ PEDANTRY -1, LIVING ROUGH)

DF: "Aaaaaaaah! Poison creatures! We're all going to die!"

QF: "Look, it's a green weasel-sized scorpion thing..."

EF: "... Aren't they called tasps?..."

HBS: "... and significantly venomous?..."

PS: "...In fact feared by many as utterly deadly?..."

IS: "...Though these look like a slightly different breed to the common temperate tasp. The green colouring is somewhat variegated and most definitely a deeper hue!"

**"What do I know of tasps?"** (Ψ PED'NTRY/L ROUGH -1)

EF/HBS: "Where there is one there are many!..."

PS: "...Thought to be magically created they hate humans and attempt to slay and eat them. ..."

IS: "...Ways to avoid demise under their stings and mandibles include coating oneself in basilisk droppings (or was it honey?), immersion in running water, or providing them with a less active victim than yourself to feast upon."

1: Singles tasps pop up and annoy people, trying to sting. These are easy to fight off presuming that the creature is spotted (Ψ PERCEPTION) before it springs at them.

2: A pod of tasps attacks a single person who is a little apart from the group, attempting to overwhelm them before assistance can be offered. This will occur ongoingly if the travellers don't bunch up.

3: A swarm of tasps rushes out and pours over the party. Everyone must make Defence rolls whilst fleeing for the river, presuming they know that immersion will help

### Surviving Tasp Attack (Rumour 1)

Unless a person has some effective magic, or is able to leap into a body of water (and hold their breath for a minute or so) death is inevitable.

### Surviving Tasp Attack (Rumour 2)

Tasps have an intense aversion to honey. Should tasps invade the area of your current domicile, avail yourselves of as much honey as you can, and smother yourself in the substance. The rampaging tasps will flow around you with a wide berth of several feet.

### Surviving Tasp Attack (Rumour 3)

Tasps will swarm to a source of food. Thus if an injured person falls into their path whilst others dexterously slash and swat at all tasps that try to nibble upon them, the tasps will quickly desist and move en masse to the fallen unfortunate. (Thus allowing survivors the chance to flee the area in the few minutes it takes to reduce the injured being to a gleaming skeleton.)

### Individual Tasp

Ferocity 3 [\_\_\_], Misdirection 9 [\_\_\_], Health 1 [\_\_\_], Athletics 4 [\_\_\_].

### Pod of Tasps:

Ferocity 9 [\_\_\_], Misdirection 9 [\_\_\_], Health 8 [\_\_\_], Athletics 6 [\_\_\_].

### Small Swarm of Tasps

Ferocity 15 [\_\_\_], Misdirection 9 [\_\_\_], Health 16 [\_\_\_], Athletics 8 [\_\_\_].

These ratings are rules structures to emulate the ease of hitting tasps if more of them are attacking you. Each reduction in tasp Health equates with the death of a tasp. You may wish to use whatever Poisoning rules you are familiar with, however we suggest an alternative. Each degree of failure equals one bite from an individual, two from a pod and three from a swarm. Every five bites removes 1 point from the Health pool, and every third of a Health pool reduced equals an Injury.

**c) On the other side of the plaza is a wide and fast river.** It will have to be forded (logs, vines, a raft, a precarious ancient bridge...) Maybe vines are needed to be sent across, by one person crossing upstream at a precarious series of rocks, because even for the Walking Boat not to be swept away a secure line will be needed. This is one of those situations where PC magic might make the task extremely easy. The tasps may return at inopportune moments! Not necessarily in vast numbers. Surrounding the plaza the riverside district is composed of peculiarly melted buildings that appear to have been exposed to momentary intense heat long ago.





On the far left-hand edge of the plaza are several buildings still remotely intact. One is **an old inn**, that perhaps may have been re-occupied, restored and used only centuries ago. It might provide a temporary haven, plus have a cellar stocked full of sealed flagons of wine!

**d) Surviving the night is an issue!** Ghosts attempt to drain Health via fear attacks. Tropical tasps fortunately are not nocturnal. A scout may find that hundreds of them have massed in the nearby foliage however, which might cause a hurry-on to be precipitated in order to be "gone from here by daybreak"! A half-man of your choice (or more than one) will also appear. Perhaps others will be seen watching from the other side of the river (or encountered by the bold person who has somehow managed to cross to the other side).

### THE SECOND ROAD TUNNEL

An option equally available for those on foot or for those (see adaptation notes below) in Domber's Motile Carriage.

⊕ *"During this trip you have traversed several short tunnels with no specific problem. However, up ahead of you is observed a long tunnel cutting through a shoulder of mountain – a tunnel that disappears into darkness with no way of knowing what is on the other side. And once again the only options to avoid this are ascent up a perilously precipitous mountain face or descent into an indescribably deep and treacherous gorge – in short no choice at all!"*

#### Problem 1: Seeing the Way

Much the same issues as the previous road tunnel, although without having to negotiate a furious torrent.

#### Problem 2: The Collapse

In the distant past an earth tremor brought down the tunnel, almost completely clogging it. This might prove to be a long section, as PCs first return outside to explore the possibility of another way (none exist that do not require regular rolls to avoid plummeting to one's certain death). The only possible variation is that the Walking Boat on its own can creep and leap and bound over the mountain, and may of course simply do this of its own accord. Leaving them to work out (or simply hope) that it has realised it cannot go through the tunnel and is off to wait for them. PCs and any companions will need to use Athletics and possibly even Engineering to negotiate through a difficult crawlway, avoiding both a crevasse and being squashed by a loose boulder, and at least one time, must dig out someone from under a collapse of loose rocks and stone. Once again, we advise that you run this part with **sufficient tension** to make it plain that death is a possibility for PCs, though hopefully only experienced by expendable GMCs. Playtest Note: In another classic RPG I used to run, I would put in at least one 'extreme danger of death' encounter/hazard/challenge into EVERY scenario, and very very rarely did the Players not manage to pull things together enough to avoid PC fatalities!

#### Problem 3: The Asm Nest

After all that, the PCs pick their way through the piles of huge boulders on the far side of the main collapse only to find that they are approaching the rear side of an asm nest. Presumably the creatures must be used to the sound of falling blocks as they are still dozing. Although it is dark in here they are nocturnal.

**1) The PCs enter an area of fallen boulders** and carefully arranged piles of rocks where the asms store their eggs. These many eggs lie around pulsating. Piling up boulders to form a floor-ceiling wall with only one entrance/exit has protected this area. Admittedly it is large, but sitting smack in the middle of it is a single napping asm of great size. One safe default option here is to peer past it, observe that all the other asms are asleep, slay it silently, and sneak on through. Beyond it the area in which 20 or so asms lie comatose is inspiring lit by a faint glow of daylight coming from not too far ahead.

**2) Sneaking Past!** The GM is advised to present this encounter as if there is every chance of **waking the asms**. Describe their recumbent forms, their noises of slumber, their occasional stirrings, one sitting upright in a nightmare then collapsing back into deep sleep. Depending on how many persons are sneaking through (and thus the likelihood of a DF, you decide how many Stealth rolls are required. (Roll 'randomly' if any PCs rolls a DF to see if any asms awake. Or if this DF occurs when they are nearly out of the area, have the asms' waking be a slow process.

**3) The Asm Net.** Perhaps unnoticed in the gloom with daylight so close ahead, the PCs failed to observe that some 10 yards back from the actual entrance the whole tunnel is blocked with a **biologically produced web of netting** filling the entire way, though only less than half a foot thick. This material is very much like a spider-web, though less ornate. Long ropey foundational webs have been woven and secured in less than artistic ways, but nonetheless do the job well. If the PCs are running for their lives one or more may be insufficiently Alert/Agile and become trapped in the thin, strong filaments.

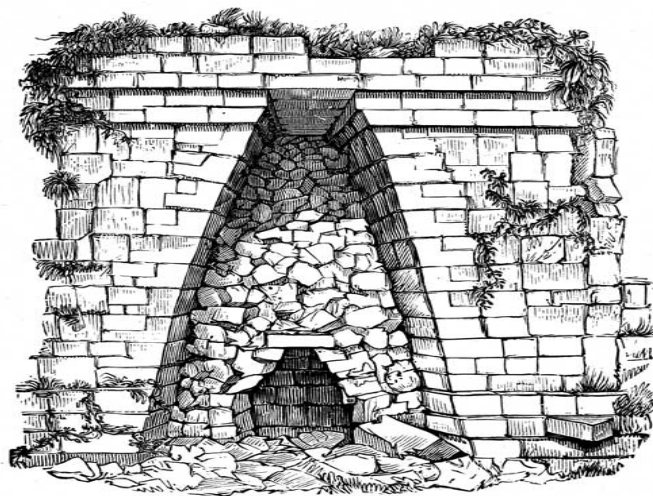
They will be in poor company. A **deodand** is trapped up against the cave wall (clearly sneaking in, hungry for asm eggs or somesuch). GM improvises the challenge here based on whether the asms are right behind them. If they have been unobserved then asm webs are invulnerable to normal means of severing, and even removing someone from them is a tricky and arduous business, especially avoiding ringing the numerous bells (mostly made out of adapted half-men skulls rather than metal, which in this instance is good because such things make less volume.

**4) The Deodand.** Here is a chance to converse with a deodand and learn a bit more about their nature. He has nothing better to do than talk, and can even tell them **it knows how to pass through the net**. (It will use this information to bargain for its life, which presents an



interesting challenge – will the PCs honour the bargain immediately afterwards? And if so will they honour it when the creature shadows them with intent to ambush them or pick off a straggler at first available opportunity?) In conversation the deodand will explain that in the absence of its preferred food (“that is to say yourselves”) it must still eat, and came sneaking in here in search of asm eggs. It knew of the nets but was **blinded by hunger**. It is still starving and so may instantly renege on any bargain once it is freed (possibly waking up the asms and resulting in its own demise at their hands or at the hands of the PCs). The information it knows is that human urine dissolves asm webs, and it will in no fashion reveal this until solemn oaths are sworn for its own safety. (Though PCs of course may sneakily word these to provide loopholes, and its up to the GM if the deodand is smart enough to spot these, or perhaps Imposture rolls are required (to impersonate someone who is telling the truth).

5) Flight into the Daylight. However it occurs, the PCs should flee this tunnel with **a small horde of angry and hungry asms on their trail**. A final hazard is that at some point in the past persons unknown (not likely the asms, but one should never underestimate an asm) partially blocked the entrance with enormous boulders, meaning PCs have to skirt a narrow gap around a heap of blocks. If the Walking Boat is in this scenario, it may be the only thing that saves them – kicking asms over the edge of the road hundreds of feet into the ravine to their deaths, so that the others retreat. The boat may even kill the deodand (especially if the PCs carefully negotiated an agreement with it and felt a sense of pride and honour in doing so). The deodand will berate them piteously with its last breath if this happens. (In the short moment before the Walking Boat increases the pressure and collapses its ribcage.)



### The Asm

Primarily black, humanoid with compound eyes and other insectoid features such as grinding mandibles and bristling antennae. Several large fangs protrude from the mouth. When full grown, asms are confident of victory in single combat against an armed opponent. They can talk, but typically only evidence interest in culinary preparation and appetising nature of their prey.

Forthright 12 [\_\_\_], Wary 10 [\_\_\_], Ferocity 14 [\_\_\_], Dodge 10 [\_\_\_], Health 10 [\_\_\_], Athletics 7 [\_\_\_], Concealment 3 [\_\_\_], Perception 4 [\_\_\_], Stealth 6 [\_\_\_], Tracking 3 [\_\_\_], Wherewithal 8 [\_\_\_], Magic (Innate) 4 [\_\_\_].

**Special Rules:** Victims have levy of 1 to Persuasion unless they evidence interest in the anticipated culinary process.

### 3.8) Meeting The Twastic

‘⊕’ (ON FOOT): *“Your previous exertions are behind you some hours now, and the morning gradually soaks you with a light and refreshing rain. This clears by noon and the sun comes out once more, warming your hearts and bodies with its struggling heat. Suddenly you are startled...”*

‘⊕’ (WALKING BOAT 1): *“The challenges of the last day are behind you and your conveyance once more puts best feet forward as it trots along the ancient roadway. Night has passed and your faithful walking machine once more carried you through it without incident. Morning is underway. Birds sing, the scents of the trees favour your nostrils, and even the sickly sun seems a mote more sprightly today. Life, comparatively speaking, is good, and the day rolls on into morning.”* PAUSE

*“From nowhere that you can see, though you suspect a particularly thick stand of trees up ahead, a peculiar glimmering green web of energy launches itself into the air. In moments it has wrapped itself around the Domber’s Motile Carriage, which staggers for a moment and then pitches to the ground, hurling all passengers headlong. It lies there inert, merely twitching now and again...”*

The alert might land safely (Ψ ATHLETICS).

‘⊕’ (Continue for either option...) *“... From a stand of trees up ahead emerges a most peculiar creature. The grey vaguely serpentine body is around eight feet long, and held four-feet from the ground by no less than ten pairs of legs. Its large round head is so festooned with stalks, knobs and tufts that it is impossible to discern if it has a face as such. Its tail is long, spiralled and segmented. All this you catch at a glance, as within its prehensile front feet it holds a peculiar elongated metallic device, which it points at you and your band of companions with some menace as it cries out in a threatening series of clicks and boots. Suddenly another swirling web of energy flings itself at you, after emerging from the tip of the metal object. It passes right through you, causing a strange stinging sensation, but otherwise having no apparent effect.”*



**⊕ (WALKING BOAT 2):** *"However, the edge of the web catches the Walking Boat, which instantly recovers, struggling swiftly to its feet. The bizarre creature is backing away now and its cries have become higher in pitch. It utilises its device once more, and for a third time an energy web projects out from the device, again striking you all for minimal effect, and again affecting the Walking Boat by far the most adversely. Once more your fabulous carriage thuds to the ground and lies barely moving."*

This encounter may play out in different ways. The GM may elaborate. If PCs try to sort out a misunderstanding (more motivated by fear than diplomacy) they may be able to communicate ( $\Psi$  IMPOSTURE -1, PERSUADE -2) via the use of sounds and pantomime. In which case they may believe they have befriended it. (Rather than it has assumed them to be particularly helpful specimens.)

### Applying Forceful Measures

The creature is **well-able to defend itself**, but will flee when it has injured enough of them to stop the assault, (rather than administering any coup-de-grace), or as soon as it receives more than a scratch or two. This may cause violent PCs to rethink their approach (or not).

#### Keerk the Twastic

Obfuscatory (Alien Mind) 16 [\_\_\_],  
Obtuse (Alien Mind) 18 [\_\_\_], Health 17 [\_\_\_],  
Strength [Hard Feet/Butting Head] 17 [\_\_\_],  
Sure-Footedness 13 [\_\_\_], Athletics 15 [\_\_\_],  
Concealment 3 [\_\_\_], Perception 7 [\_\_\_], Physician 14,  
Stealth 4 [\_\_\_], Wherewithal 9 [\_\_\_],  
Magic (\_\_\_\_\_) 10 [\_\_\_].

*(Persuasion skills come into play only if/when a PC has communicated sufficiently well using pantomime!)*

Despite its technological superiority, this Twastic is ancient, fearful, and slightly insane, as well as being alien. Likely only its fear will be noticed and understood.



### Pursuing the Device

The motivation for PCs in the Carriage to move into the next encounter is to seek out the miscreant and get them to undo the effect by firing their weapon again at the Boat. They may attempt to get this device in a fight, and may even succeed. If so its control-panel requires **a series of rapidly-tapped codes** that they do not know. (If they instead recover it much later and need to reactive the Boat, then its mechanism is simple.)

If they manage to befriend it, the device has of course run out of charge, and they need to accompany it, since communication/trust will NEVER be so high that they believe/feel/understand that the Twastic will return to assist them. IE if it departs they need to consider **a likely chance they will never see it again**, and indeed it may not return and thus need to be tracked. (Of course the Walking Boat recovers on its own just as soon as the GM decides that such is a fun thing to have happen, but the PCs/Players have no inkling of this.)

*PCs may carry/hide valuables rather than leave them within the crippled device. This can be a major role-playing undertaking! Anything left will be vandalised by half-men in the PCs' absence.*

**The Terrain:** The creature flees through trees up the side of the hill, using a speed no PC can match under normal circumstances. The road continues around the side of a mountain and so PCs cannot see what is more than a mile ahead. If they Track it (with great effort and discomfort) up and across the mountainside, or follow the road, all moves towards the same conclusion. Around the mountain a fantastic sight greets them.

### 3.9) The Giant's Plaza & Ruins

Around the side of the mountain is an **enormous stone plain**, covered in dirt now and occasional bushes and trees, but somehow having repelled vegetation sufficiently (the Twastic maintains it) to be revealed as an artificial construct made out of what appears to be enormous stone slabs (or possibly the tops of enormous stone blocks). The road blends into it and vanishes.

Over at one side were **several huge buildings & towers**, not fallen into desperate ruin. At three places (all distant) are the collapsed remains of large metal structures or machines. (If these are ever examined allow the Players to hypothesise that these were once spaceships, but the wreckage – plus unfamiliarity of the PCs with such things precludes further discussion.)

#### 3.9.1) The Collapsed Buildings & Crater

They follow (seeing him in the distance) or accompany the Twastic towards the collapsed buildings. It is a considerable walk. On the way they notice the ground has been **burned or scorched** (long ago) in several



large patches. It is hard to make out any details because of the dirt that has now covered this whole area (about 60% of it in varying patches of depth and extent).

At one point they find themselves **crossing or going around a shattered crater**, several hundred yards across. It is only 100ft or so deep, and definitely looks like a massively potent spell went off at this point. If they make a search they can find peculiarly blasted pieces of metal of all different sizes, any of which would be worth a fortune to sorcerers in Kaiin. Some are nearly 20ft long and oddly don't weigh nearly as much as one might expect. This is an unknown substance!

### 3.9.2) The Chasm

Near the ruins is a 15ft wide chasm. If they are with the Twastic it will embarrassedly **stretch itself across** and allow them to negotiate their way over its body. If they are not, then they will have to cross it using their ingenuity, perhaps some of the metal fragments gained by a 20minute walk back to the crater. The chasm itself is only 40ft deep, and ends where the walls come together, in a V, although it also appears in some places gaps exist where one could fall further.

If the Twastic is pursued, it is this chasm that allows itself to believe itself safe. The **chasm stretches for miles** each side, never narrower than this by more than a foot or so. At one edge eventually one would reach a drop of a half-mile, and at the other side a cliff face of a similar height. In short, crossing here is the only way.

#### The Mountain Mank

The mountain mank is thickly furred. Its fur grows close to the body giving it the appearance of an overly hirsute human, which at first glance (when a mank is drinking or eating fruit) may look rather ridiculous. The skulking sinister aspect of this beast, and its cruel nature, would soon dispel such illusion.

Manks also have 2-foot long hairless tails like those of a rat, which continually flick from side to side. The mank is normally active during the day, and usually lives in forests, where direct sunlight is diluted through the treetops. It is a ground-dweller. Conversations with a mank are typical of the more crafty type of half-man.

The PCs may perhaps even be delighted to see this quirky animal, then notice its hungry stare before it flees to fetch its fellows, shrieking in delight at the arrival of 'freshlings'!

Intimidating 6 [\_\_\_], Wary 7 [\_\_\_], Cunning 12 [\_\_\_], Sure-Footed 11 [\_\_\_], Health 11 [\_\_\_], Athletics 10 [\_\_\_], Concealment 7 [\_\_\_], Perception 5 [\_\_\_], Stealth 8 [\_\_\_], Tracking 6 [\_\_\_], Wherw'l 9 [\_\_\_], Magic (Resist) 10 [\_\_\_]

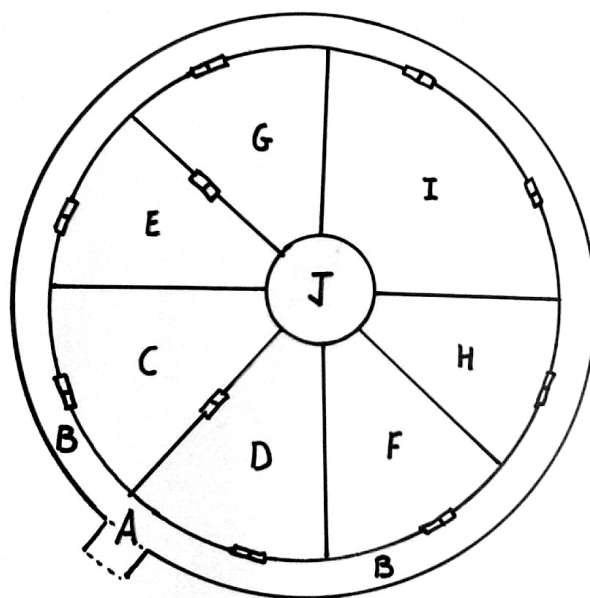
At length (GM decides on time based on their perception of the size of the plain) they draw up to the ruined buildings, which were even more massive than

they first appeared, and overgrown with vegetation. Another blasted crater is immediately before them. This one is filled with brackish water (which may contain demonic eels or just some **disturbing tentacled aquatic entity**).

Passing through the ruins appears easy with care, though once again requires negotiating through thick vegetation (even if one finds the way that the athletic and many-limbed Twastic uses). Nothing of the décor or facilities is left intact, but pieces of metal equipment (and possibly even the shells of vehicles) can be found. Should you so desire it, a small tribe of mank live here.

### 3.10) The Twastic Lair

⊕ "Beyond the ruins is another, much smaller expanse of this giant plaza, and only ten minutes walk away..." (or 2-3 minutes hard sprint from a clan of blood-crazed mank)



⊕ "...is a strange white disc-shaped building, something like two saucers turned to face each other so that it bulges in the middle and narrows slightly at top and bottom. In the nearest side is a ramp (not solid but a thin metal sheet) that rises from the ground to a hexagonal doorway in the side of this odd structure. Wind-blown dirt and vegetation make it obvious that this large structure has not moved for some time, and yet the thick metal legs that raise it 10feet from the ground indicate that in some manner it must once have been mobile. Nonetheless it evidences no wheels or wings, so perhaps was propelled by enchantments in the manner of a magician's manse in the old stories."

The GM may wisely wish to enhance the description so that the PCs are immersed inside a huge, cavernous and alien edifice.

The exterior of the structure is a cold, white metal, somewhat tarnished, but otherwise with no blemishes. It has no windows or openings other than the hexagonal



door at the top of the ramp. Remember that **this vessel is HUGE!** The simple plan might suggest otherwise. The outside circular corridor is close on 100ft wide! All of the rooms have ample areas to hide, and objects to climb etc etc. Even the corridors are lined with piping, grates, and bulging display cases. This is a 'busy' place, and Players should perceive it as a forest of possibility.

If the party are with a '**friendly**' **Twastic**, the creature will take them straight to the room of comforts (H) for them to become suitably refreshed, leaving them for a short while. Then he will return with a selection of ancient impressive clothing (ask each player to invent for their PC/s) that fits them perfectly. Then lead them back to the dining hall (F), where they will be feasted on the finest historic delicacies. (Again have Players assist in the designing of flamboyant soups and meat dishes – perhaps awarding an IP for the best description for each one of the three courses.) Then he will lead them to room of exhibits (I), and attempt to subdue them with the restraining device prior to placing them in with the other living curios. (At some point early on some of the strangely skull-capped mank will emerge from behind a row of display objects and communicate with the Twastic using hand gestures. This is a simple encounter to illustrate how much cover and opportunity for hiding and sneaking exists inside this odd building.)

If the party are trailing a **Twastic foe**, they will be free to examine the ship at their leisure. The Twastic will be either recovering in the room of comforts (H) or tinkering with the machinery in the engine room (G)

## A: The Ship's Ramp

The ramp is cold and metallic. Somehow this huge (over 100ft wide) expanse of metal is unruined despite obvious incredible age. The doorway is a straightforward hexagon, more than 10ft across each edge, with no sign of a door. Whether they are pursuing the creature or accompanying it, panels slide out of the wall, sealing the doorway when all (or most if a stubborn fellow remains outside) PCs are inside.

If the 'friendly' Twastic is addressed about this, **communication problems** make it impossible to explain what their issue is. If trust is in place, have the weather turn gradually bad as the Player of anyone outside compares the experience of that PC with the experiences of pleasure and fine-dining of those inside. They may then enter and join their fellows. Or they may (suspiciously) decide to secretly investigate the vessel. (Possibly requiring a Resistance against Indolence to sneak off rather than come and join in.)

## B: The Circular Corridor

This is lined with display cases set into the wall. The casual traveller can observe (but in no way access unless they have appropriate magic) **numerous artefacts and devices** from the history of this planet and from other worlds. When sketching the craft include many shapes and lines to indicate the presence of such objects.

These include obvious physical weapons, crystalline technology items, elaborate semi-mechanical costumes, unknown devices with intricate moving parts, mechanical creatures that move occasionally (or if the glass is tapped), amorphous globs of plasm that ooze inexplicably, and numerous large screens displaying views of historical and alien events/landscapes. An event that might be recognised is a royal pageant in Old Kaiin (when the Old Town was the thriving city) if anyone is familiar enough with Kaiin to spot this.

If it has any significance (IE any PCs have played the adventure of the Exasperating Cadaver) they may recognise Pioni, as a woman of nobility rather than a mysterious beggar. Players are encouraged to add in a few ideas, and the GM can award an IP for the most imaginative or amusing. Likewise with the rest of the rooms here. **Interior doors** (off the corridor or between rooms) open if approached, no matter who it is.

## C: The Workshop

A vast hangar of a room, containing massive banks of strange bio-technological equipment (all silent and dust-covered). Hard blocks of metal decorated with coloured lights stand shoulder to shoulder with bizarrely smelling metal frameworks and **transparent vats** that contain what look like enormous living brains.

Towards the centre of the craft is a huge open area with flat metal tables and wide spaces where dozens of **unfathomable experimental projects** have been started and left unfinished. Typically they are half-finished bio machines. To one side is a selection of familiar vats, several of which are active, growing those same brains and pieces of **bio-mechanical technology**.

In another area is a whirling machine of amber and green metal that sends out sparks and has faintly wriggling biological 'cables' protruding from it. Here is where the Twastic's energy weapon could be plugged in to be recharged. Likewise some manner of **translation device** (possibly where both wishing to communicate plug their heads into special slimy bio-hats).

Even communicating this way with a Twastic is hard. Simulate this by having the Twastic respond with emotions and peculiar semi-describable feelings, rather than words. (IE The Twastic says something that feels





to you like: *'the excitement you experienced as a child when someone in your community received a miniature erb for their birthday and you saw it running down the street for the first time with its owners in hot pursuit'*.)

GM's may wish to list all this in far less technical terms when describing what the PCs see. Hazards in this room can include some domesticated manks who have odd metallic caps (with many nodules and fine needles protruding from them) **secured to their heads**. These are controlled servitors and can behave however the GM wishes. Unless the PCs are potent and redolent with spells, these beings are likely slow and weak.

### **D: The Living Room**

Tables and long divan-like chairs, dozens of shelves of metallic-leaved books, a whole curtained area where several dozen **nest-like structures** may have been beds for this creature and his kind. Large metal vats are all empty, except for one that is filled almost to the brim with noxious sludge (highly rejuvenating for a Twastic).

### **E: Twastic Chamber.**

Great pulsating crystals, more large organic brains. Pipes, fluid-filled channels, feverishly-working manks. Along the wall with no door: a row of large transparent chambers that resemble a hive formation. The fronts are translucent, but anyone going close and straining to peer within can see a rolled-up Twastic. The glass fronts are very cold. Likely there are still 50 or more Twastics in these containers, even though two thirds are empty.

### **F: Dining Hall.**

Not just a dining hall. Many machines whirr and buzz here. Several gurgle! Many of them produce food. The food they produce is as peculiar or as familiar as the GM wants. 'Foreign' food may produce strange effects such as striking a diner blind, sending them into spasms, or turning all hair on their body blue. Beverages may assist a person to hallucinate or engage in prolonged verse. Whatever happens servitor Mank continue to fetch and carry according to the Twastic's commands.

### **G: The Technology (Or Engine) Room**

Vast banks of bio-machinery. Forests of slimy cables, hanging, coiling, laying in lines across the floor, clouds of metallic-smelling mist drifting about. Hisses, clunks, wails and wheezes. This place is as strange as a jungle, and made no less so by the presence of servitor mank strolling around carrying large metal tools. (The servitor mank have their nests around this room, which may be spotted from time to time – constructed of old bio-material mixed with **mank saliva**. They are situated at points where overhead beams can be reached through climbing cables from the top of the tallest machines.)

### **H: Room of Comforts.**

This is a bizarre room of many sections. Each is differentiated only by a haze of light, which is somehow restricted only to that specific area. Wide paths exist between and around these large areas. At first glance the room appears to be empty except for these large **floor-to-ceiling patches of faint light**. However, whenever any patch is approached those who look closely (Ψ PERCEPTION) can make out vague outlines of what is going on (or available) within. (GM describes.)

Passing through any wall of light requires only a minimal effort against a faint pressure. As one passes inside, the items/beings within come more fully into existence, and those things outside the area become indistinct and semi-hidden within a wall of dull non-light. If the Twastic is here it cannot explain this place, but **may frolic in and out of a few options** in order to demonstrate that it is safe. (The GM can elaborate on or add to these options and indeed may need to if the PCs are determined and able to sample this area at length.) Play out each experience with rolls and descriptions, rather than rushing them through as simple brief descriptions of the delights within.

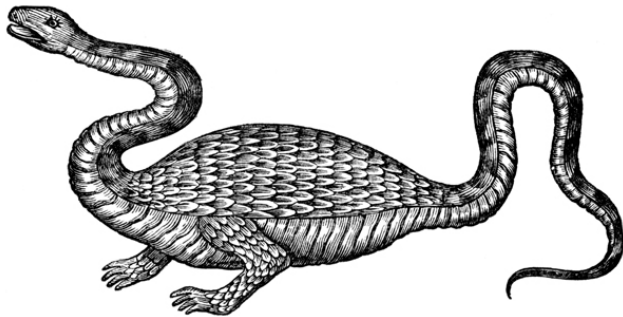
- A weightless area. Participants drift/swim amidst small **semi-intelligent clouds of plasm** (in attitude a little like lazy playful dolphins). Whenever contact is made all participants experience a thrill of ecstatic delight.

- A classic bath-house where **nymphs cater to your every need** amidst potted palms, tinkling fountains and steaming warm scented pools. The nymphs are used to servicing the Twastic and may be especially delighted to be interacting with humans again. However, they cannot communicate intelligently to any extent, resorting to coy smiles and charming laughs whenever confused.

- A pool of **disgusting slime** that reeks abominably and is filled with semi-intelligent eels that seem intent on wrapping themselves around participants and rhythmically squeezing them. (A PC or 2 may need to roll well to survive and escape this strange experience.)

- An area where irregular metal shapes ranging in size from that of large fruit to about that of human heads move around the space slowly in the air. If a PC makes a move towards any object a **strange metal baton** with a padded end appears in his hand and the objects move faster. A hole also appears in the air and moves around at irregular speeds. The GM may wish to elaborate this into a game with several PC participants playing against the Twastic. To keep it entertaining the GM can describe: the difficulty in skill required, the apparent **devious intelligence** of the moving objects, and the heroic or abysmal physical efforts of the participants.





- An utterly odd landscape of twisting rock formations with narrow loops and holes through them, dips and raises in the ground, hidden ditches and odd blue trees without any foliage but with **large coiling branches** that sway wildly from side to side. Amidst all this some peculiar feathered half-snake/half-mammal creatures slither & scamper at a frantic pace, dodging here and there at high speed. None of this makes any sense, unless the Twastic comes in and chases down and eats some of them. **Blue crystal nodes** can be found here in the ground now and again and if broken under a human's nose are extremely revitalising (1 Health pool point restored except from direct physical injury).

- A huge bubble of warm pale-orange liquid in which much smaller water-melon sized bubbles of air float. One simply attaches one of the bubbles of air around one's own head (so as to be able to breathe) and floats **in delicious bliss**. The bubbles of air are designed for Twastics and so will – after a few minutes – slowly **begin to asphyxiate** a human, perhaps requiring a rescue party when that person doesn't emerge. (And then several minutes of first aid breathing assistance, followed by some unpleasant involuntary regurgitation.)

## I: Room of Exhibits.

The GM (assisted by Players) exercises maximum imagination. Describe and note down a **massive variety of creatures** in stasis on various pedestals throughout this menagerie. It is a vast motionless zoo, although close examination indicates that very slow breathing and alive eyes characterise all of the exhibits. Creatures are often in pairs, and many times in 3's, 4's and 5's, though rarely more. Some larger creatures are alone.

At the centre of this room is a huge column of pulsing brain material inside a metal framework that reaches to the roof. Sufficient damage (magic or from a technological weapon) to this control-mind will irregularly set loose many of the beings held in stasis. (Make a game of having Players describe at least three weird creatures each, since they can only cover visual appearance, not attributes.)

The Twastic collects from behind a wall panel near the door another 'ray gun' that he carries with him. (If behaving in a friendly fashion he may go off and do this whilst the PCs are strolling around the exhibits.) Then he will indicate them to follow him, and take them to an exhibit where two humans (a male and a female) **dressed in ancient finery** (one some manner of guardsman, the other a lady) stand gazing at each other. The Twastic will then one by one fire his device at the PCs, causing them to freeze in time, then set them up as part of this tableau. Or at least he will try to. As fast as he is, the device is malfunctioning due to age, & takes moments to re-prepare itself between firings, making long whining sounds until it achieves a satisfying buzz. Likely the PCs will scatter, some escaping and some not.

If they get their hands on the device (most likely by injuring the Twastic so much that it runs off the heal) it is possible to reverse the effect and **set free any frozen specimens**. This is trial and error and any initial firing has a 50/50 chance of vaporising the exhibit rather than freeing it. Once the correct setting has been found, providing they don't then tamper with it any more, it can free exhibits with each blast, until it runs out of charge. Freed creatures are typically **confused, sickly and angry**, and are likely to run amuck. If either human is freed, they have never met and are from different aeons. The GM can decide their characters and if short on GMCs may have them join the party as extras.

## J: Control Room.

Normally accessed using a **tonal device** the Twastic carries, and operates prior to stepping through the wall, though PCs may or may never see this depending on how the GM runs this mini-scenario. Another possibility is that it can be accessed via maintenance ducts and cable crawlways below the floors, in the walls and in the ceiling. (Valid escape/avoidance options for PCs, since the Twastic is too large to enter most of them, though docile and timid minks might be sent.)

The room itself is in two parts. A central hub of **throbbing & oozing bio computer** that can be climbed (there are not stairs or ladder) to an upper low domed section that is atop the ship and is actually transparent (from within). Here are many screens from which the Twastic can observe the surrounding countryside, even many miles away, although the viewpoints are fixed (via technological-based enchanted items at this sites). This is how he knew the PCs were heading towards the plaza.

Up here are strange bio-mechanical bulb-control systems and **oozing slimy banks of brain material**. A dozen metal couches indicate where the 'crew' lounge



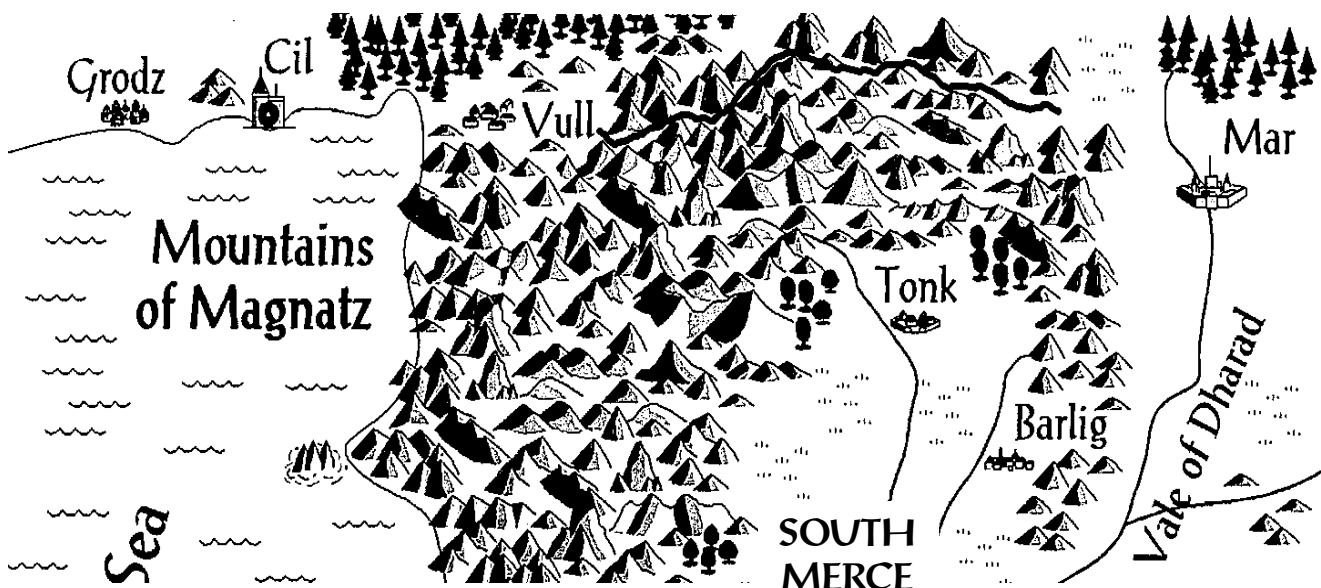
whilst the craft is active. A human might sit and apply one of the organic motivational helmets to his own cranium, thus merging with the bio-mind of the craft (which is now very nearly senile), perhaps with amusing effects. According to game needs there may be special

**maintenance creatures** up here, snakes with miniature human hands and feet who crawl around eating dirt and any decaying parts of the brain material, and who hiss at intruders with great fear and anger, but are too weak to attack effectively (unless they band together?).

### Resolving the Twastic Encounter

Even if the visit starts well, it will turn bad when they uncover the **selection of horrifying curios**, and the fact that he has them already earmarked to join them. PCs will flee about the room and the perhaps the ship, and here are several ways they can turn the tables:

- Other **weapons and useful curios** can be found on the walls. Ask Players what their PCs are looking for as they flee. Roll randomly to see how useful the device is, with a 1 meaning it is close to desired, a 2 meaning it is different but almost as useful, and a 3 meaning it has some other use not imagined but helpful. (A 4 means some other use of no assistance in this situation, such as creating a bowl of food.) These things are not abundant, and sheer luck may be required.
  - **Letting loose many of the stasis creatures** creates satisfying pandemonium in which to escape. Since the fearful Twastic will open the outer door to let the scary creatures out!
  - **Attacking the Twastic** effectively is hard as he is speedy and resilient and can be resistance to Magic, but concerted efforts may finish him off. Of course another Twastic is then woken to take his place.
  - Entering the control room and **engaging with the ship's mind** could cause it to do all kinds of strange things. It is possible this could be a significant part of the scenario, with the last two remaining free PCs (or a PC & GMC) battling their way here, and one of them fighting off the eels, whilst the other 'plugs in' and engages in a psychic battle with the ship's mind to set free the trapped beings (including their friends). This kind of interference may freak the ship out so much that when the PCs and GMCs (though some GMCs could still be inside) are off the GM decides this is the exact moment that the terrified ship re-activates and flies back from whence it came, with as much spectacle as the GM wishes to describe. Any Twastics still outside may chase it futilely, vanishing into the distance.
- In a scenario where the **Walking Boat** features, the Twastic will have sent manks to retrieve it, and it will appear at some point, either lying outside (and slowly recovering or being zapped into recovery by the PCs), or being prepared to also become an exhibit. It can be used once again as an intelligent assistance if required.
- The PCs' own Magic and special abilities should also be factored into this mini-scenario. Both so that they cannot instantly gazump the Twastic, and perhaps if they have some unusual benefits that can assist turning the tables on him at the end (perhaps by affecting the ship and its magic at certain vulnerable points?).





## Chapter Four: The Northern Mountains

### 4.1) The Assessor

☉ (WALKING BOAT): *"It is noon, more or less. The Carriage jogs easefully along, your most recent dangers fortunately a dwindling memory. A while back two desperate boons braved the sunlight, screeching in pain as it seared their eyes, and keeping to the shadows under the roadside trees. They attempted to tackle the legs of the Walking Boat using thick vines. One was left planted in a footprint. The other was kicked into a deep gully..."*

☉ (ON FOOT): *"Your endless trek goes on and on. You have travelled now for four days straight, not including the time taken for diversions, both chosen and inadvertent..."*

☉ (Continue...): *"...Along the way have been several large viaducts on which the road has stretched. You are on another one now, exceptional in length, stretching a full five miles already across a deep valley that alternates huge areas of bog with mosquito-infested sickly forest stretching for league upon league in either direction. Once in a while down there, you observe some bloated creature surface from the slime, sniffing the air.*

*Up ahead the viaduct cuts against a high steep-sided rocky hill. You are finally approaching this single landmark, and you see now that what you thought was a rock protrusion is in fact a bizarre stone & metal structure built across the whole roadway. Almost a fortress, though also resembling an ornate temple, it has a single large metal door in the side facing you, and no windows. You approach and draw up outside, noticing a single bell-pull made of copper protruding from the wall by the door."*

If anyone asks, this edifice looks different architecturally to the road, and is in fact a much **more recent addition** (though still old by human standards). No details have been provided for climbing because magic will occur in a few moments and prevent that from happening.

If they are in the Walking Boat as soon as all PCs have disembarked it **suddenly rises into the air**, and float up and over the temple, beginning to descend on the other side before being lost from sight. The GM will be forgiven for arranging things so that all (or most) PCs disembark whilst all (or most) GMCs remain on board, as such makes following encounters more manageable.

If the PCs attempt to climb the structure, simply advise them of the extreme dangers of this, and the extreme likelihood of **plummeting into the festering swamp** a considerable distance below. There are no handy ledges or easy climbable protrusions. If they delay entering or simply refuse, have them just appear in the first room.

It does not matter how this obstacle came to be. What does matter is that the PCs are about to encounter a self-important assessor of their quality.

#### 4.1.1) The Salon of Artistry

**Decorated in ancient style.** (Ψ PEDANTRY: Old Kang Kingdom). Potted ferns, sumptuous divans and several tables decorated with fine mechanical items of glass and silvered moving parts. These include dancing figurines, gently moving creatures, carousels of minuscules, small landscapes with moving clouds & swaying trees. All is of the **finest artistry** worth a small fortune (Ψ APPRAISAL). On one table however stand several objects (GM invents details) unmoving, with fine craftsman's tools in smart cloth pouches, scrolls of intricate diagrams, and neat piles of tiny spare parts.

They may find a door behind a curtain. If opened (at this time) it leads only to a **wall of immovable huge blocks**. Note that this place is highly enchanted and also otherworldly, so resistant to standard spells and to brute force. Once they are inside, the main entrance closes and cannot be re-opened or smashed down.

#### THE ASSESSOR

After they look around a little, in a flash of light a man appears dressed in **ancient finery** (Ψ PEDANTRY: Old Kang Kingdom) that is oddly coated in dust and cobwebs. He looks at them scathingly and says:

*"I am Assessor, placed here long ago to reduce the egress of miscreants and neer-do-wells into Merce. You have a series of four tasks to accomplish. Those who do well are entitled to enter Merce as honorary grantees of the realm. Those who do less will may accompany them as servants. Those who come close to success will be ejected back the way they came and entitled to try again no less than five years hence. Those who fail abjectly will be expelled into the barren valley beneath us naked and without possessions."*

The Assessor is not open to casual conversation except about the tasks. He does not reveal his history or make smalltalk. If someone attacks him he cannot be harmed. Instead he will ask if that was an attempt to **demonstrate a particular kind of weapon style**. If they say Yes he will shake his head in dismay and make a mark against them in his scorebook. If they say No (or otherwise show that they are trying to harm him) he will snap his fingers and that person will be afflicted by Lugwiler's Dismal Itch whilst they remain in this room (with attendant levies on skill success). Once all is settled he will explain their first task:

*"Since travelers come from diverse cultures the authorities have chosen the ancient Kang Kingdom as a default. Well known as it was for being the leader in its aeon in terms of style, etiquette, decorum and civilized behavior across the board."*



Hence we present to you these four tasks. Success is measured in your degree of demonstrated skill, which I shall measure as points in my book. Excellent levels of success indicate that you are a high grandee. Passable levels of success indicate that you are a lesser grandee. Bare success levels indicate that you are a person of barely passable standing, fit only to be a servant.

Your first task is to demonstrate your abilities in the fine arts of Kang genteel artistry. Choose one of the non-functional devices upon the table, and repair it. You may not change from that object nor assist another person in any way, or else be disqualified. Since this is not necessarily your normal style of craftsmanship you will be given a reasonable amount of time."

**He will not discuss details**, give hints or further say what a reasonable amount of time is. Skills useful in this encounter are such as: Craftsmanship (-1 unless ancient mechanical items are a specialty), Quick Fingers -1, Pedantry -1 (perusing the documents in detail), Perception -1 (copying a similar device). The GM is also free to apply a further -1 to any PC that can fairly be described as 'hulking', 'club-fingered' etc. Certain cantraps, tweaks or spells may reduce this levy/penalty.

**Do not advise Players** of these, or of options in the following rooms. It is a big part of the fun for Players to decide the best options for themselves. They may well come up with options you haven't thought of. It is entirely appropriate to enter into player-led dialogue about how to maximize their PC's chances of success.

Describe the results of their efforts in full, and have Players describe the **PCs' attention to detail** (perhaps offering reduced levies for those who describe the efforts in astounding flourishes of Vancian language). The following are suggestions to be varied as you wish.



*The Assessor Demonstrates Disappointment*

**IS:** With tremendous skill and reasonable flair you replace missing parts, bend thin rods of metal to the correct angles, and oil the appropriate tiny hinges. Soon the device is done. You locate a hidden switch, and it begins to move, sweet music accompanying its gyrations.

**PS:** With fair skill and painstaking attention to detail you adjust misplaced joints, replace warped coils, polish tiny dull mirrors and sweat over minute maladjusted springs. Eventually you operate the starting lever and the item commences motion, whistling in a thin but pleasant pitch.

**HBS:** Bumbling, sweating, recommencing tasks time and again, and using every ounce of your concentration and patience eventually you manage to bring this device into some semblance of coherence. Pressing the operational button causes it to creak painfully into motion, and operate sluggishly accompanied by an unfortunate grating sound.

**EF:** As HBS, but add: After a few moments you hear a painful screech as one of the crucial parts is bent in half. The device comes to a painful halt and the stench of overheated materials is acrid on the air.

**QF:** Try as you might this task is beyond you. Time and again you broke important components, or lost crucial tiny parts in your sleeves or in cracks in the floor...

...Finally, whilst trying to insert a new thin glass rod, you press it too hard and destroy one whole side of the device. Sheepishly you stand back to survey the irredeemable disarray that you have to admit is your 'handiwork'.

**DF:** *First two sentences as QF, then:* Glass rods snapped in your fumbling fingers. Tiny metal joints ended up embedded beneath your fingernails. Small springs flew into your face. Finally you are surprised to notice yourself crush the device in a bear-like grip, then hurl the crushed remains onto the floor with a great clatter, as you growl expletives.

In the event of disastrous failures, the Assessor will demonstrate near-hysterical disapproval, crying out at the lack of civilised conduct so prevalent in the Earth's final days. Even going so far as to **kick over some minor item** of furniture. Then he will recompose himself, mildly berate himself for stooping so low, and announce the results: Success (IS: 4 points; PS: 3points), Bare Success (HBS: 2 points), Bare Failure (EF: 1 point), Complete Failure (QF/DF). The Assessor will note the points tally at the completion of each room, and indicate the hidden door. This door will no longer have a solid wall behind. The PCs may pass beyond.

#### 4.1.2) The Formal Dance

Prior to opening this door, PCs can hear the sounds of skilled and creative chamber music playing out. On the other side of the door is a large ballroom, once again decorated in **the style of the Old Kang Kingdom**.



This includes impressive works of art and statuary liberally decorating the edges of the room.

Here in the room are about **40 Lords and Ladies**, plus more than a dozen servants. Buffet tables are piled with fruit and sweetmeats, but folk are dining only sparsely. (And in any case the food is tasteless and semi-intangible to PCs.)

As soon as they are assembled inside the Assessor will say to them: *"Your task here is to engage in courtly dance and polite conversation. Merely comport yourself with respectable aplomb over the space of three quadrilles and all will be well."*

Instantly the PCs will be wearing appropriate garments, dance partners will flit over, and the musicians on their stand will strike up the first quadrille.

The GM can describe any and all conversations. Other folk here can **converse appropriately** but will become baffled if the PCs address things outside of the setting. (Like the Assessor, whom they cannot see.) Three separate dances will take place, with short pauses in between. Significant successes should be rewarded in continuing aplomb. IE if a Player rolls an IS to attempt the first dance, they are clearly adept at these styles and can be awarded with a bonus of +1 to attempt the second dance.

In between the dances opportunities exist to make small talk, blend in, recommend (and correctly name) side dishes and fashions of the participants. And to comment on the fine pieces of art (or **mistakenly praise a piece of minimal skill** that was obviously here by mistake – and then recover by claiming you were merely pretending to test someone's quality of taste and perception).

Again leave room for improvisation. For instance a PC who is a musician (or who suddenly claims to be and states their high Quick Fingers ability as evidence) can be allowed to **join the musicians** and make their mark through appropriate creative mastery in that fashion. Or someone with high Pedantry (and rolled success) could claim that the buffet table is misarranged in a shameful lack of taste, and spend much of their time rearranging it and apologising to grateful guests about the near-miss etiquette disaster.

Even extreme improvisation could work, such as courting a couch-partner and engaging with them in a discreet alcove, whilst displaying the seven exotic movements and reciting all seventeen stanzas of famous **Kang love poems**.

The GM accrues points. Here are some examples.  
Each degree of success in a dance: 1 point.  
Each degree discussing fashion/décor: 1 point

To calculate the overall points awarded by the Assessor (at the end of the three dances and two conversation opportunities) divide these results by two.

Useful abilities in this setting include: Appraisal (discussing quality of goods/furnishings – slightly inappropriate, but if done with aplomb), Athletics (copying the phantasms), Etiquette, Imposture -1 (posing as a high personage of the era), Pedantry -1 (appropriate standards/quality of the era), Perception -1 (observing & copying), Seduction [or Persuasion 'Eloquent/Charming'] (convincing someone to cover/support your inadequacies in the dance, or impress in conversation), Stealth -1 (moving in a way that doesn't discommode other dancers).

### 4.1.3) Fine Dining

Many phantasms accompany the PCs and the Assessor into the next room, which is a **magnificent dining hall**. Servants (who can pass in and out of the room without ever being seen to do so) deliver three courses.

- 1) **Platters**. Dilclusal Seasonal Fruits and Various Cheeses of the Kang Valley, accompanied by Almerian Wines.
- 2) **Braised haunch of hoon**, with side-dishes of Romarthian salads with superb Saskervoy dressings.
- 3) **A selection of grand three-tiered cakes** formed in the shapes of battle creatures of Cutz Wars.

#### Challenges and some potential abilities to apply:

- Address each course with the right implements. (Etiquette, Pedantry, Perception, Stewardship -1)
- Engage with other diners only as socially appropriate (Etiquette, Perception -1, Persuasion {not Intimidating})
- Talk about the merits of the courses. (Etiquette, Pedantry, Persuasion {not Intimidating}, Stewardship -1)

*The GM keeps track of how many IS, PS and HBS each PC makes, allowing around five significant attempts to do well by each PC. **Have the Assessor award points** after watching. (PCs may find it disconcerting when he hovers behind them making notes.)*

### 4.1.4) Polite Society

Before they leave the dining hall, as people get up from the meal, the Assessor gets them together. He explains that they are about to engage in their final test. A simple after-dinner soiree run by the **Duchess of Kang, Lady Milshwa**. Since, he explains, this is the final test, no restrictions have been left in place, and they will literally be transported back in time to one of these events. They cannot leave the main rooms, but will nonetheless be attendant at one of these actual historical occasions. For reasons of magical necessity he too will be physically present and they are requested not to engage him in conversation.



Once so informed the PCs pass through into an area of three main rooms (connected by wide arches). These are sumptuously and royally decorated. One is a grand hall, one is a long area of quiet alcoves, and one is an upper room where **musicians play softly and a wide veranda projects above the edge of huge gardens** on a fragrant warm night. PCs are unable to leave these areas (prevented by magical force) but can see beyond.

#### Many ways exist to divert the proceedings:

- Pedantry: Lady Milshwa of Kang for several years held bi-monthly soirees that often degenerated into drunken brawls or semi-orgies. Attendees would initially behave as if nothing was unusual, but in truth were awaiting the fun.
- By mistake another group of rascals is also being tested.
- Rather than applying Etiquette and Pedantry, the PCs introduce Seduction & Gambling, and Persuade people to become drunk or involved in lewd stories.
- A GMC at the salon notices the dour attentions of the Assessor. A PC has the Assessor become a person of suspicion, perhaps arrested or cautioned by Palace Guards.
- A local wizard is friendly or suspicious and they engage him as an amused accomplice (who is annoyed at the interference of higher powers in the fates or mortals) or a foe who believes them to be inter-dimensional interlopers.
- Persuading the Assessor to sample the wines, and getting him dead drunk. So that when the time for formal assessment comes he has forgotten what is going on and is their 'most excellent' friend.
- PCs find magical persons/tomes and engage in mischief.
- The Assessor is cunningly trapped and bound by the friendly magician and crafty PCs and Persuaded to return the PCs to the right side (for them) of the structure on the viaduct. On penalty of being bound into a magic item for all eternity. (He is a magic spirit, so such could be done.)

Much of the motivation for above activities might be that the Assessor has indicated that several of the PCs are totally failing and are unlikely to be judged well. If the event ends up in a debauched sing-along including the Assessor, the PCs have done their job well. Along the way have PCs engage with GMCs on many levels. The Duchess herself may be young and comely, or matronly and amused. Nobody here has any idea who the mysterious strangers are who so often appear at these events, but suspect strongly that they are all local wizards adopting different disguises for amusement.

#### 4.1.5) Assessment

GM creates a formal setting (perhaps a courtroom, perhaps an office) in the final room of the structure. Normally here the Assessor makes formal judgment or washes his hands of them in frustration or anger.

## 4.2) Leucomorph Peril

**‘Θ’ (WALKING BOAT):** *"The day draws on. The cushioned Walking Boat carries you in endless comfort across the dismal landscape decorated with steep-sided bare mountains, slopes of loose shale, great waterfalls, and pine-forested foothills. If you were afoot this would be an epic journey, and one fraught with danger. Just this morning an elderly deodand braved the dawn's first light, attempting to swing from a tree branch into the carriage.*

*Unfortunately, for the beast, it missed and swung into a rock instead. You left it injured and bleating in a ditch, no doubt to become food for its fellows who emerged bleating into the early light to ominously approach their fallen associate.*

*The water bladders of the Walking Boat are empty once more, and after careful perusal of the area, you choose a wide glade in which a babbling brook gushes to order the boat to lower itself to the ground and climb out in order to stretch your legs. Rapiers are drawn merely as a precaution, but all seems peaceful. Time to unpack the tin buckets and pail water into the storage bladders."*

**‘Θ’ (ON FOOT):** *"Another day along this indeterminable trek. The fifth, or perhaps the sixth. You have become confused by the perilous monotony. Only this morning your band fought off an attack by half a dozen deodands who braved the early-morning light. No doubt they were emboldened to such an insanity by the unique opportunity to engage in a feast of human flesh such as likely they had not encountered ever before. Happily you slew the entire group, but it was a fight of sheer desperation in which the presence of sunlight weakened your opponents' efficiency. It is time to fill your waterskins as streams have been scarce the last few hours. By happy circumstance a wide glade in which a babbling brook gushes abuts the road before you, sandwiched between two steep cliff buttresses it is an oasis of beauty and tranquillity."*

PCs can **role-play any precautions**, but don't prompt them. Simply pause at the end of the description above. Some Players may insist that their PCs wouldn't allow the Walking Boat to enter the glade. If so, say that they must have been dozing. They are free now to suggest that it stands back up and retreats, or that they scout from its deck as it walks around. Only if the PCs have previously developed a stratagem for disembarking should you alter the descriptions from as written above. Once they have started to collect water, call for Perception rolls. A peculiar obelisk can be viewed some distance away along a path through the trees.

### The Three Witches

In a hut close to this obelisk live **three leucomorphs** whose human impostures are that of comely witches whose magic is that of natural sources (not demonic). Their ferocious bat-like guard creature lives inside the obelisk and emerges in gaseous form before solidifying. It may attack the PCs as intruders, and then be slain.





In recompense, the witches merely ask that the PCs come and join them for a meal and discussions. It is long since they have engaged with people from distant lands. They may admit to being exiled here long ago (or choosing such due to discrimination).



What they are the GM decides. Long-lived spies of one faction of the Cutz Wars, magically created creatures, witches who enchanted themselves to become leucomorphs. They will try to convince PCs to stay overnight and can **enchant the woodlands** so that the path back to the glade is obscured.

This is an opportunity for bloodshed, heroics, and magic, as the PCs **battle these shapeshifters** and attempt to regain the road. If PCs are not in the Walking Boat likely all these creatures will need to be slain to prevent their pursuit and/or revenge for any of their own that are slain.

In their cottage can be several **relics of the Cutz Wars**, in particular a device that they took from the corpse of a leucomorph hunter two centuries ago. It is an amulet that protects its wearer from the hypnotic influence of creatures with demonic or half-man plasm.

## Leucomorph (options)

The leucomorph is a white, human-like creature of unknown origins. Little is understood about this species. They are primarily nocturnal but not exclusively so, and possess a strange intelligence.

### Damage Resistant

The leucomorph is preternaturally robust & hard to injure.

*Game Notes: It makes its Health rolls at a bonus of 1 when struck by non-magical weapons. If magic is used to directly enhance weapons this resistance does not protect it, nor does any innate spell-resistance.*

### Human Form

Some few leucomorphs resemble humans so closely that with sufficient practice they could blend in to any rough and ready gathering with little difficulty. Or even mingle amongst a tavern crowd as long as they were not forced to enter into convoluted discourse requiring first-hand knowledge of human desires and foibles. (Their claws and fangs retract magically, leaving no trace when not in use.) These are the beings known as 'vampires'.

*Game Notes: Add - Appraisal 4, Etiquette 6, Gambling 6, Imposture 6, and the Pedantry rating is at least 6.*

### Bestial Humanoids

Some leucomorphs have a form that is a tall (around 8ft) humanoid of clearly alien and terrifying appearance. In this form they are far more hardy and strong, and so will try to change before combat or whilst beginning combat.

*Game Notes: Engaging presents a Wherewithal challenge.*

### Shapeshifting

The leucomorph requires three rounds to change form, and can be prevented from doing so by physical attack. Once it has changed form it is highly resistant to non-magical damage and fire.

*Game Notes: The expenditure of a point from its Athletics pool is required in order to change form. Each time it changes form it regains two points in its Health pool. When opposing damage from fire and non-magical damage in its plasmic form it makes Health rolls at a bonus of 1.*

### Spell Resistant

In either form the leucomorph evidences its otherworldly nature through defying the effects of spells.

### Vulnerable to Fire

The leucomorph fears flame, because it takes damage in the same way that a human does. Many half-men resist minor damage such as singeing or small burns without even blinking; not so the leucomorph. Perhaps due to its magical construction, exposure to flames pains any form of a leucomorph, and the human form might give away its nature if it is not able to hide its fear of fire.

*Game Notes: No extra damage accrues, but leucomorphs must check Wherewithal to attack strong foes wielding fire. (Although, even if*



unwilling to attack directly, a leucomorph may follow at a distance - waiting for one's guard to drop, or may attack from ambush later.)

#### Leucomorph (human form)

Charming 17 [ ], Penetrating 14 [ ], Caution 12 [ ],  
Sure-Footed 13 [ ], Health 13 [ ],  
Athletics 10 [ ], Perception 10 [ ], Tracking 2 [ ],  
Wherewithal 13 [ ], Magic ( ) 9 [ ].

#### Leucomorph (bestial white horrific 'alien' humanoid)

Ferocity 16 [ ], Misdirection 13 [ ], Health 11 [ ],  
Athletics 15 [ ], Concealment 6 [ ],  
Perception 6 [ ], Stealth 9 [ ], Tracking 8 [ ],  
Wherewithal 16 [ ], Magic ( ) 9 [ ].

They may or may not have spells, depending on the competencies of the PCs. (Their talk of being witches might be simply an unnatural magical essence and affinity with the horrors of the wilds.)



One of the famed legions of firestick mercenaries that marched off to the Cutz Wars never to return.

### 4.3) The Mighty Viaduct

**‘Θ’ (WALKING BOAT):** *"The Walking Boat springs and steps energetically along the old highway as it winds through the mountain passes. Though the way is often cracked or even split with great gaps that would slow the foot traveller, your carriage takes all in its stride. You sit back & watch the scenery pass. So far the weather has been clement, but up ahead are stormclouds.*

*In less than an hour you are feeling spots of rain. An hour later when you are several miles along the longest viaduct you have encountered so far the heavens open. After a few minutes it becomes clear that the Walking Boat's environmental protection enchantments are insufficient. You are reduced to forming bucket brigades to bale out your craft, and its speed is slowed as it has to mind its purchase on the slick roadway. Fortunately, as with all viaducts, the sides are edged with four-foot high parapets, so the chances of falling to your deaths in the rocky ravines and river valley far below are slim – even if the craft's strange bird legs lost their grip and took a tumble.*

*Happily no such event occurs, and you travel on. It is not quite dusk, but stormclouds overhead are blocking out almost all of the light. Suddenly the Walking Boat halts. It continues to shift about on its legs and doesn't seem in any way injured. Nor does it respond to your demands for it to continue. What can have caused it to stop?"*

**‘Θ’ (ON FOOT):** *"On and on and on you walk. Currently you are marching across the longest viaduct you have encountered in this mountainous journey, already having covered well over six miles in your best reckoning and with no end in sight. You are thankful for this structure, for the others like it, and for the cuttings and even tunnels that have made it possible for the road to strike fair and true. If it had not, you doubtless would have taken a minimum of five times longer to cross this expanse, and faced likely ten times as many hazards. Survival in the Mountains of Magnatz in short, would not likely have been possible without this major relic of ancient days."*

PAUSE for comments from the players.

*"You become slightly less grateful as dark stormclouds mass ahead of you and the wind picks up. You hurry further, sometimes even loping along, hoping against hope to find some manner of shelter or, more likely, the end of this viaduct so that you will at least be partially shielded by trees. Alas such is not to be. After only another mile, with the end of viaduct still apparently miles ahead you are being struck by heavy rain. Soon water is swilling about your feet, pouring past you in a constant stream, held in place by the four-foot parapets that line the mighty viaduct. And then you abruptly halt in alarm..."*

Note that some parties may have magical devices to protect them from the elements. In this instance the magical nature of **the storm can disrupt their enchantments** even at a distance. If necessary, describe the flickering attempts of such items to function, and the clear presence of some greater disruptive force.

**‘Θ’ (Continue...):** *"...At your feet is a yawning gulf. Down into the darkness you gaze, because the viaduct has come to an abrupt end. Well, not completely to an end. To the best that you can see in the occasional flashes of lightning the road before you tips sharply downwards, becoming a slide along which water pours. Staring into the gloom you wait for further lightning flashes and are gradually able to make out that the road appears to have been melted by some massive, probably magical, force. Due to its own enchanted nature it did not simply fall apart, but sagged and stretched. If you had magical boots that adhered to any surface and it was not raining so heavily as to make it a virtual waterfall, you could continue for several hundred yards more down into the agitated stormswept surface of dark lake."*

With closer examination, it appears as if the whole road has been **subjected to high temperature and melted like metal**, slumping downwards and creating an enormous ramp that swings to left and then to right creating a smooth steep slideway for several hundred feet that ends when it intersects with the wind-swept surface of a wide lake. The lake stretches out before you, but in the afterglow of the **increasingly-frequent lightning flashes** a tree-lined promontory is visible. (This is distant if the PCs are in the Walking Boat or



have some handy means of water travel, and only a half-mile away if they are afoot with no particular aid. If the PCs have no buoyancy and are afraid of swimming even that distance than simply place several uprooted trees down in the lake, slowly drifting by.)

If the PCs refuse to go down the slide and insist on returning the way they came, bring the stronger storm effects forward from the next section, and have something **destroy a massive section of the roadway**, thus giving them no choice but to return to the slide. Roleplay in detail how they set-up the Walking Boat and themselves, for what will clearly be a hazardous and unstable trip. Engineering is likely to be the only remotely useful ability for calculating the feasibility (reasonable) and hazard level (reasonable) of the **precipitous trip**, though this is made difficult by hampered visibility more than 100 yards down below them. In the deprivations and challenges that follow, one way to symbolise the physical difficulties without drowning characters is a slow removal of Health pool points, leading eventually to the equivalent of Injuries – as a result of exposure & general deprivation.

#### 4.4a) A Great Slide (Walking Boat)

PCs are invited to take what precautions they choose. Tying things down, wedging storage cupboards...

⊕ *"After having rightfully recognised that the only way to survive this tremendous drop is aboard the Walking Boat, you take whatever precautions you have decided upon and then command it to move carefully out over the drop. It squats down low, edges forwards, tips slowly as it folds its legs high, and then is away – sliding with ever increasing speed as it jolts and swoops along the wet glassy surface of the slide as the rain pelts down upon you.*

*Several times it crunches with jarring impact against the side of this insane amusement ride as the end of the road draws ever closer. Someone is shrieking with terror, more than one person in fact. After what seems an eternity, it strikes the surface of the lake with a tremendous impact, fountaining water high into the air, and plunging beneath. You are dragged down into the shockingly cold water."*

During the slide you might like to call for Wherewithal rolls to decide who is '**screaming like a Kaiin grandee**' or otherwise inconveniences themselves. When the Motile Carriage (never more motile than right now) hits the water ask what each PC wishes to do. Those who wish to let go and swim to the surface need to make an Athletics Success or EF. Describe their experience according to the level of success, with an EF meaning they find it a tremendous effort and emerge exhausted.

#### Losing Possessions from Self or the Boat

For the sake of the game, a small number of heavy objects can be ignored (principally wet clothes and rapier or other small weapon).

For any person who is attempting to swim to the surface, before they roll, ask them to describe all of the items they are carrying. Ascribe a levy or even penalty to their roll **according to the weight** of these, and (again before the person rolls) tell them of this extra difficulty if such has been calculated by describing how the weight of what they are carrying is dragging them down. (Then they may choose what they wish to let go of, or take the risk.

You might also like to hint that it will be difficult for you as a GM to **creatively assist** a character who rolls badly to survive if they are also subject to weight penalties. (This loss of goods is then in effect a story-enhancing replacement for loss of life.)

#### Clinging to the Motile Carriage

For those who wish to hang on tight, an Athletics success of IS/PS is required with a **no-rerolls situation** presents. If that fails then they have no option but to roll for swimming to the surface as above. If they succeed, the craft itself after a few moments ceases sinking and rises to the surface, carrying them with it. Those who make a QF in their Athletics roll to reach the surface arise anyway, but are **half-drowned** and need to be rescued. In more fatally realistic games a DF means drowning. In other games treat it as a QF. The Walking Boat is now on the surface of the water. Right way up though listing heavily.

Survivors will no doubt climb aboard, though attempts are hindered due to the **poor visibility** and massive sheets of rain. Run these attempts with as much drama as you can muster.

⊕ *"Your fantastic craft that has carried you so far is now in a terrible state. Fine upholstery savagely torn and saturated, minor accoutrements smashed or missing, canopy torn in half and hanging sodden. And the rain continues to pour down. The craft itself seems disorientated and perhaps injured. It has begun swimming in circles, its actions startlingly reminiscent of an injured duck. Fortunately after a few moments it seems to gather itself in a huge effort and set off into the gloom, with the rain continuing to hammer down."*

Play the effects of this impact realistically. Any valuables not secreted in secured storage compartments that have stayed secured, or attached to a persons body and not significantly increasing their weight when it comes to swimming, will likely be lost in the depths of the lake. Even one or more of its legs might be gone into the



depths, and/or hanging broken and useless. The **final magnificent act** of Domber's Motile Carriage is that it will carry its passengers through the storm across the rolling surface of the lake to a treed island that its keen senses located on the way down. The PCs themselves (unless they have magical vision aids) cannot see this island, but will begin to see the strange effects of the storm in the distance (see below).

### Farewell to a Mythic Travel Device!

Role-play the fact that the Walking Boat is soon discovered to have **sprung a leak** – several in fact. Desperate bailing attempts will be required, plus rudimentary repair work on the few accessible tears in its structural integrity. Lack of Success in this should be woven into the storyline as if these failures are what then result in the Walking Boat **disappearing forever** in a short while beneath the surface of the waters. Successes in these attempts need likewise be woven into your descriptions as the heroic efforts that keep the Walking Boat afloat until they are near enough to the island to gain it without tremendous difficulty.

This is the **sad moment** when this magnificent device is written out of the storyline. The presence of this magical travel device unfortunately restricts gaming challenges to a massive extent. Both in this campaign and in suggestions for adapting *Fields of Silver* as part of their time in Erze Damath in *And Thence to Almetry*.

And in the here and now, whilst the storm rages around them and **rain hammers down**, they desperately attempt to bail out their struggling craft, as it flounders on towards a shore that from down here is utterly invisible – even in the flashes of the largest lightning bursts. Thunder roars all around them and the surface of the lake begins to heave more frantically. PCs may become alarmed that perhaps **some creature like Magnatz lurks beneath the lake**, but this is not the case.

*Now is a good time to describe the building storm.*

### Salvation!

Eventually the lightning does reveal the tree-lined shore, either a wide promontory or a large island. It is steep and rocky, but not across its entirety. Several expanses of beach can be seen cutting back up into the cliff face, and the Walking Boat turns towards the widest of these. As the Boat draws within a few hundred yards of this beach make it clear that **the PCs are losing the bailing battle**, despite whatever their best attempts of use of special magics might be. (If necessary have the boat split down the middle.)

It may be that PCs have had the foresight to prepare some manner of buoyancy devices, perhaps from the ships water bladders being blow up with air. Or perhaps not. More items may be lost, though less likely lives, as they are **forced to abandon their sinking craft** and swim for the beach. Adapt earlier swimming details.

⊕ "Behind you only the edges and prow of Domber's Motile Carriage are visible as it fills with water. You watch with a touch of sadness and a sense of trepidation as your sturdy steed sinks from sight. The waters close above it and it is gone. Somehow you know at this moment, that despite your best pretensions you are no longer dispossessed Lords of Cil, but merely woebegotten travellers struggling for a beach in the middle of a storm."

### 4.4b) A Great Slide (if Afoot)

PCs need to be invited to take whatever precautions they choose, **strapping objects to themselves**, roping each other together (not a particularly sensible idea), padding their joints, limbs and hands with rolled up excess clothing... If anyone wants to guess on the hazards of this undertaking you can inform them that without the presence of the storm major abrasions from friction would be likely.

The following text is if everyone goes together. PCs may decide to argue about who goes first, or even suddenly push over a hated GMC. If individuals go one by one, or someone is sent ahead in order to have the safety tested, **describe visually what those left behind see**. Wherewithal rolls would not be inappropriate here!

### Hold On Tight!

⊕ "You are ready. You move forward. You let go. You slide. The speed of your travel is so fast that you can do nothing but fall with your heart in your throat. Occasionally you thump against the containing wall of the roadway, and though this is painful it is not injurious. After an amount of time you cannot calculate since your perception of time was somehow suspended the moment this began, you strike the water and plunge deep beneath the surface. Down here it is dark, cold and wet, and you don't even know which way is up."

Use the same rulings as in the section above that describes the difficulties experienced by those flung from the Walking Boat as it plunges beneath the surface. You may call for Athletics rolls as they all attempt to gain **one of the larger trees floating by**, and those who fail may end up with a branch only. Just as an IS may result in accessing a huge tree where one can ride above the water partially shielded from the rain by branches still with leaves on. (A comparative luxury only as the storm is now severe.)



The **storm builds to a crescendo** as they are approaching the cliffs. The trees may need to be propelled by some magic the PCs possess, may float close to the island and then need to be swum away from, or may drift directly into the shallows. You may run this as a harrowing journey where some GMCs are lost, or where injured PCs (or even GMCs) are supported by the heroics of others.

### The Storm

The GM is free to use their imagination to create a mythic storm either in sheer proportion or in actually containing mythic elements. These might be mighty armies struggling across the skies, gods and demons fighting each other. Hideous beings peering down... All such things would be glimpsed only in lightning flashes, not a continual drama played out before their eyes.

☉ "... You stand dripping on a sandy beach some hundred yards across at its widest, rain and wind ravaging your body. The beach disappears into the cliff-face another hundred yards behind you, where small pine trees cling to the base of the rock face. As you visually examine this environment as best you are able, eyes narrowed against the driving rain, and hoping to spy shelter you are disappointed. Surely in all of this stony geography there must be a cave or at least a substantial overhang."

### The Demon of Domber

Should your PCs have been travelling in the Walking Boat, here is the final encounter related to that magical artefact, which will occur as they are salvaging whatever the GM kindly allows to be washed up with them, which may be amongst the possessions of GMC corpses:

☉ "A disturbance occurs in the waves offshore, near to where the Motile Carriage disappeared. You squint through the pelting rain, hoping for a miracle. Is your magnificent vehicle arising reborn from the waters? Sadly not. What arises is a strange being, with scales, horns and a horse's face surrounded by tendrils and filaments waving as if independently alive."

This is the demon that was bound into the enchantment to form Domber's Motile Carriage. Finally freed. It reaches the shore and wades out of the water, now standing before them. PCs may of course attempt to flee. If so it appears before them further up the hill after flying by, fluttering the feathers on its body.

☉ "This creature is over ten feet high from hoof to top of head, looks somewhat like a scaled horse, with a lion's face and sodden red feathers protruding from lower legs, knees, tail and neck. It stares at you with unreadable gaze. Smoke eases from its nostrils. Though you have never seen it before, somehow it feels familiar."

Below are a selection of phrases the demon might use. If PCs are well-armed and/or seething with spells it can be hellbent on revenge. If so, take up your well-thumbed copy of **Demons of the Dying Earth** and create its

statistics and abilities. In most cases we imagine it will outclass the PCs, and so present no ratings here. PCs may also have demon binding devices, so just play this as it occurs best to you, using the phrases as a guide. Its voice is high-pitched and menacing.

"I am both grateful and highly vexed."

"I have been imprisoned as that device for century upon century, cursed originally by Simbilis to serve humankind."

"How I loathed being forced to serve your needs as best I could."

"I was elated when I first came into your possession, knowing that being the property of such inept owners might finally cause so much damage to the craft that I would at last be freed."

"Were I of benevolent disposition I would reward you with a further term of service, but I am not. I merely exercise great restraint in not taking your lives, and leave you on this dismal shore."

After speaking its final words the demon laughs in a sinister and ongoing fashion as it also begins to flicker in and out of this reality. The flickering slowly picks up speed. If anyone presumes this heralds some kind of disaster, and flees, then let that be so. A minor anti-magic implosion could be suitable, sucking PCs back until they nearly are pulled into a subworld, but manage (Ψ ATHLETICS) to save themselves (and/or others). Loose items may all be lost into this vortex, or it may only exert a pull on living human tissue. Or perhaps the demon was laughing because the explosion creates stinking slime that takes 3 days before they can stand the smell of each other.



## 4.5) The Tree-Tower Folk

After whatever salvage is possible, PCs have no choice but to march upwards in a desperate hope to get out of the horrendous effects of the **howling wind and rain**, which is tearing at their skin & clothes. After only a few minutes of tortuous climbing which may (Ψ ATHLETICS) involve mud slides & knees knocked on pointy rocks...



‘⊕’ “...What you hoped was a ravine into the interior, merely cut over the centre of a crescent-shaped island. You see a large wind-swept lagoon before you, with steep-sloping sides stretching back from the water. The slopes are liberally scattered with stands of pine trees, amongst each stand of trees - and even in some cases attached to them by walkways and ropes made out of vine - are several dozen crude but sturdily-constructed huts adjacent to polished slides cut through the earth down to the water. The nearest is two minutes walk across the uneven windswept ground through the solid sheets of rain that now threaten to pulverise your very innards. No other shelter is visible.”

If they dawdle, start removing further Health pool points and perhaps having the worst affected collapse and have to be carried. The huts are squat (5ft high) with peculiar slitted windows too small for egress and currently blocked with wood. They are built from vines, driftwood and pine branches, woven tightly together then plastered with mud to seal most gaps. They use surrounding trees to assist structural strength, being built amidst & hard against them.

#### 4.5.1) Inside a Hut

No other hut nearby looks any better or worse, but some PCs might think to locate a hut that is further from any others, or looks sturdier (and thus more easily defensible), or is disconnected from any others by walkways etc. Indeed such is eminently sensible, and if they don't then a hut chosen has more doors and is less easily defensible – perhaps requiring all-night watches and defensive actions.

The doors are a little under four-feet high, and also made of rough planks of pine, though securely fitting. One will need to be broken down. Whilst such is going on at one end of the house, the inhabitants will **hurl ordure from a narrow window** above the door, and squeal and shriek unintelligible invective. If the PCs persist they will likely flee from the door at the other end of the house, leaping onto a slide down to the water then emerging and racing into the nearest hut to them. Should the PCs trap tree-tower folk in the house they will become crazed with fear and pack themselves into a huddle, attacking berserkly as soon as a door is opened and people begin to enter. A typical residential hut is composed of a kitchen/day-room with a stone bench for preparing fish, small long wooden table with simple stools, and **bins of dried fish and other vegetative foodstuffs** such as nutritious lichens. A doorway leads to a sleeping area, with rough mats of woven vegetable fibres. This area has a peculiar odour of animal origin (the creatures).

#### Tree Tower Person

These beings reach a height of around four feet. They resemble a hybridization of frog, stalking bang-nose beetle and miniature gid. They have pelts of gray-green fur that grows patchily over reptilian skin, long, thin bodies and limbs, and the mollusk-like countenance reminiscent of the gid. They wear basic clothing, typically crude loincloths, and some kind of headgear. The defenders of their lairs even construct rudimentary armor, such as belly and chest protectors made of tough fibrous material, and headgear formed from whatever skulls of appropriate size that they can recover. (Human or half-man tends to fit them well.)  
Cunning 4 [\_\_\_], Sure-Footed 9 [\_\_\_], Health 4 [\_\_\_], Athletics 9 [\_\_\_], Concealment 3 [\_\_\_], Craft'ship 4 [\_\_\_], Perception 8 [\_\_\_], Quick Fingers 5 [\_\_\_], Stealth 3 [\_\_\_], Wherewithal 2 [\_\_\_], Magic (Resistance only) 4 [\_\_\_].  
*They are described more fully in the DE Compendium, pp 235/6.*

#### 4.5.2) A Good Night's Rest

After a few hours the storm will die down a little and a few dozen creatures will proceed to the house and demand that the PCs leave it. However, **they do not speak a human language** and their protestations may well be perceived as threats. The weather is still terrible (just not calamitous any more) and so the weary PCs will likely mount a watch all night.

If PCs leave any windows open the creatures will once again throw ordure and **jars of ill-smelling fluids** into the hut. The few windows and two doors of the hut can be barricaded using furniture, but this will need to be role-played as the PCs smash the furnishings. (Note that emerging into the night is not an option, since Health pool points are already teetering in the balance after what the PCs and any companions have been through.)

It is up to the PCs if they set watches etc, but bear in mind **their exhaustion** and a watchman is likely to fall asleep. Though extremely good role-playing may result in the creatures being observed setting the traps below.

#### 4.5.3) Pits & Traps

When morning comes the storm has died down to a steady **light rain and minimal wind**. Of the local creatures there is no sign. Gazing through cracks around the doors or windows, or edges of the building, the PCs can see that from distant huts small plumes of smoke rise from hearth fires. But nearby **no signs of life are evident**. However, during the night the creatures have (under cover of the weather) created several traps in front of each door.

**Before one door is:**

- i) A pit of spikes concealed by a reed mat covered by soil,





ii) A branch of a tree pulled back, and tied tight, attached to a trip-wire embedded in the ground in front of the door. (*The force being strong enough to knock someone out*).

**Before the other door is:**

- i) A net concealed beneath dirt and tied to weights in the trees, so that anyone trapped within is hauled high and secure into the branches
- ii) A thin sack of ordure hung high above and camouflaged, which is attached to a chord hidden in leaves and earth.

The GM decides how well these are hidden and how dangerous. If any Player has read the books then they may think to look for these, and that is fine, since it is a reasonable precaution, but allow only one Perception opportunity with no re-rolls (unless PCs commonly triple check for traps when leaving an overnight location or observed particular activity during the night).

Perception may (IS only) reveal a sense of excitement and expectation before any traps are activated, which may even warn PCs of imminent danger.

#### 4.5.4) Dealing with the Creatures

Whether fighting them to free trapped colleagues, or merely descending to the shore (see below) the PCs will have to battle these creatures. Their main attack is thrown dung and pointed sticks, and they are timid and craven. The running battle should be described in farcical terms, with creatures running, throwing, shrieking and retreating. If one of their own is wounded they will **wail in anger** and threaten, but not more fiercely attack.

Should the PCs manage these creatures easily or the GM want more nail-biting action here, she can invent a shaman amidst them, a single creature (dressed in skins and feathers) who they draw back in awe from. This individual could have access to several spells, including:

**Felojun's Second Hypnotic** (DERPG p107).

*PCs' only avoidance is if at least one of them escapes its effect, otherwise they will be stripped, tied up and carried to a hut whilst the creatures prepare a cooking pot.*

**The Omnipotent Sphere** (DERPG p108)

*Shaman uses it to repel an attack (very effectively).*

**Spell of the Slow Hour** (DERPG p110)

*Most amusing result is if 1 or 2 PCs resist and can then protect their slow-moving fellows.*

**Archemond's Unlikely Self-Restraint** (IT p84)

*Shaman uses it to repel an attack (very effectively).*

Taking hostages would be difficult, since the creatures attack fiercely when held, but is one way to keep their fellows at bay (by threatening the hostages).

#### 4.5.5) Getting Off the Island

Down at the shore is the only obvious means of getting off this island. Since the storm has abated, PCs can see that **the mainland is less than a mile away** and that the creatures have several strange raft-canoes pulled up amongst the trees at the water's edge. Gaining access to these requires the running battle to take place.

The creatures are too slow-witted to realise where the PCs are headed until they are nearly there. Then several groups of creatures will attempt to paddle away in all of the rafts and the PCs will need to run in order to reach the last one in time, perhaps finding a **pathetic single creature** obviously unsupported by its fellows, trying to save its pride and joy from the marauding big creatures! Make this a contest. If they fail they'll have to build a raft, use hostages or sneak up on another raft elsewhere.

If the PCs are rich with spells have some manner of lake creature menace them

#### 4.6) The Sunken Nymph

‘⊕’ *“Your journey to shore proved only that you are not skilled rafters, but eventually you arrive, leaving the island and its strange inhabitants behind. The water level of the lake is clearly much higher than normal, and you strike shore amidst a stand of mostly submerged trees. The hillside above you is lightly forested.”*

Pause here to allow for Perception rolls if Players call for them. With a success you could invent the top of a small circular shrine building to be spotted. Diving down into that might allow PCs to discover a bored Overworld being **sitting in an air-bubble**. (Not just bored because her shrine is flooded, but because this location is so distant that no-one ever visits any more.)

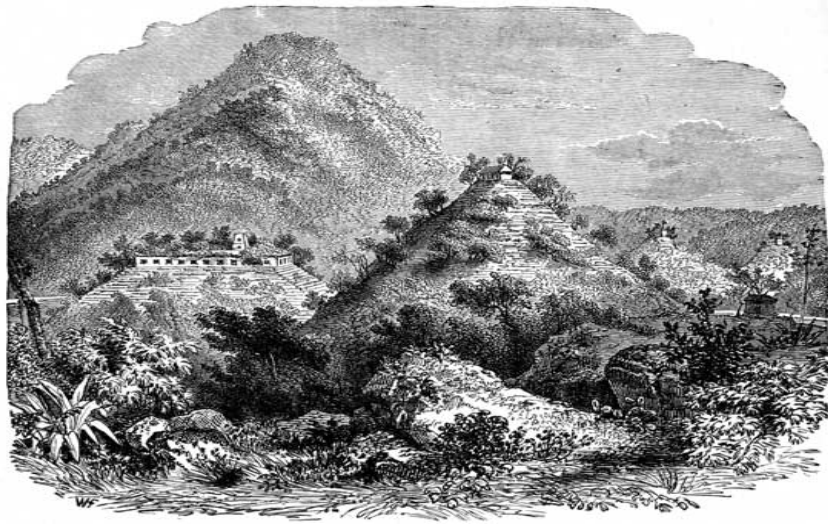
#### The Nymph of the Shrine

In exchange for amusing tales she might offer to bestow a gift of a blessing, but will demand that anyone who wants to contest for this must come down and visit her and proffer **their best attempt** at entertainment. If the campaign includes Couching, then that is one of the options, and since the PCs have been on the road for some considerable time now...!

The blessing is whatever you want it to be, and how you decide the winner is perhaps best measured as the best role-played IS. **One option for a blessing** is: *“May you stand unscathed whilst all around you are fighting for their lives.”* This is easy to adjudicate as a GM: in the next big fight this PC is simply invisible to any foes. Another option for a blessing is: *“May your body resist any and all discommodation by deleterious substances.”* (Anti-venom: useful in the section that follows.)



## Chapter Five: Beyond the Mountains of Magnatz



### 5.1) Pharesm's Valley

☉ "You climb the rise to a high point. Once there you can see that you have at last exited the Mountains of Magnatz. Yes a few mountains still stretch on all sides, but the landscape in front is mostly a series of forested foothills unfolding for many leagues north towards a far-distant marshy lowland.

A mile or so east you see a huge pile of stones plus several half-buried ruins that may once have formed a way-station of some kind at the end of the ancient viaduct. You walk over and indeed find the ancient road, though it now sinks into the landscape.

Clearly the lack of windblown soil in the mountains contributed to its longevity. Still, you can travel its path as it turns east, because it continues to cut a broad swathe through the forest, and marks the easiest and swiftest passage in the direction you wish to go.

You walk for the better part of a day. Late afternoon finds you overlooking a long valley filled with peculiar stone structures. Some miles distant a large ornate single-story manse stands atop a hill, sporting a conservatory with many sparkling panes of glass."

#### 5.1.1) Introduction

i) The PCs walk into the valley and observe a few of the **odd rocks at closer range**. They have been carved into peculiar and intricate geometric shapes and engraved with precise runic (magic not demonic) inscriptions.

ii) After a while they find waiting for them a **fancy coach drawn by six erbs** in harness, who are trained not to talk or act belligerent, but one may momentarily look hungrily at a PC then chastise itself under its breath. "I do not eat of living flesh. I do not eat of living flesh. I do not eat of living flesh!"

The driver may surprise. **An asm wearing coachman's clothes** and conversing politely. (He betrays no hint of inhuman nature and can speak a little about Pharesm.)

He says his master, Pharesm, has invited them to dine.

iii) They drive by increasing numbers of these **peculiar rock formations**, which vary tremendously in size, style and complexity. The coachman will refer all enquiries about the nature of the stones to his master Pharesm.

iv) PCs will observe **small work parties** sitting eating their evening meals (consisting of standard human working-man's fare: pies, tankards of ale etc). These folk are dressed in breeches and jerkins and carry satchels of their provisions and tools. However, the members of these parties are all half-men, apparently mingling in easy camaraderie. (Understate this description to counterpoint the extreme oddness of the situation.)

v) All is not idyllic. A **desperate deodand** runs by, leaps at the carriage and is fended off by frantic PCs. It still wears torn trousers. PCs cannot be sure they are worker's attire since deodands often wear rudimentary clothes. A group of erbs in workers' clothes carrying clubs rush up and chase it away, catching it just out of sight and (by the sound of it) belabouring it to death. If pressed, the coach-asm will say that occasionally half-men from the wilds encroach onto the property.

vi) PCs will be brought eventually to a road that curls across a steep lightly-wooded hillside **to a large hilltop manse**. It is a single-level marble and slate structure, a huge glass conservatory and several large workbarns nearby. The asm also serves as a butler and invites them inside. The erbs pull the carriage away, breaking into casual conversation and informality. (GM improvises.)



### Pharesm's Manse & Immediate Surrounds

*Pharesm and his daughter Latija are the only human residents. All non-staff half-men live in the dormitory barn on an adjacent hilltop. Within the house are many rooms for entertaining (none showing signs of recent use) plus the following. We provide a map overleaf in case you expand this scenario, but you will need to provide the specific details, and information for the extra rooms.*

- 1) Huge Marbled Inner Court:** Potted ferns, a magical singing fountain, marble benches, aromatic flowers...
- 3) Pharesm's Study/Workrooms:** Locked (contains his notes and more unpleasant volumes on interfering with and breeding variant species of anthropophage)
- 4/4a) Garden Room:** Here the sindics labour without ever speaking. They alone amongst the 'employees' seem obviously disconsolate, but work without complaint.
- 5) Main Bedroom:** Latija's room
- 6 & 8) Guest Bedrooms:** Luxurious
- 7) Master Bedroom:** Pharesm
- 9) Smoking Room** (gentlemen only)
- 10) Library:** Open (contains much including magic tomes and many general studies of anthropophages)
- 11) Latrines/Washroom Area** (humans only)
- 12) Extensive Kitchens/Bakehouse:** 4 madlock cooks supervise 3 erb kitchenhands.
- 17) Priority Bunkroom:** Supervisors & specialists (not the kitchenhands) bunk together in here and seem happy with their lot. The others resent them, though never overtly.
- 18) Billiard Room & Card Room**
- Arboretum/Conservatory:** Magnificent and exotic plants (a few dangerous also) growing in this huge glass-ceilinged room attached to the front of the manse.
- Extensive Vegetable Gardens:** Flourishing with huge vegetables and legumes. Sindics weed, spread blood & bone (collected from drums in the garden room) and harvest the produce for the kitchens.
- Laboratory:** Beneath the main house, entered through a secret door in Pharesm's study and a semi-secret door in the wooded lower hillside. Here are vats where creatures are both undergoing creation & adaptation. Sarcophagus-like programming chambers, plus cages containing gibbering and drooling failed experiments. Also the mulching machine that disposes of utterly irredeemable specimens and sends their remains by tube up to the blood & bone drums in the garden room. The truth is Pharesm is a failed master of the vats, who is forced to brainwash and adapt half-men rather than creating his own workforce.

### Pharesm

Forthright 18 [\_\_\_], Lawyerly 20 [\_\_\_], Caution 12 [\_\_\_], Parry 16 [\_\_\_], Magic (Studious) 17 [\_\_\_], Health 13 [\_\_\_], Appraisal 15 [\_\_\_], Athletics 9 [\_\_\_], Etiquette 10 [\_\_\_], Pedantry (Anthropophages) 14 [\_\_\_], Perception 11 [\_\_\_], Physician 6 [\_\_\_], Stewardship 8 [\_\_\_], Wherew'l 13 [\_\_\_]

### 5.1.2) Early Events

**i) Pharesm welcomes them as rare guests.** He is happy to talk about his work., though responds to polite questions rather than just reeling off details. He is preparing this area **according to ancient instructions** in order to invite a creature he calls only 'Totality' into being. He uses half-men as his staff because he has found a way to extract the charge from the demonic plasm in their make-up, thus rendering them suitable employees. The exact process he prefers to keep secret. He has a daughter (whose mother he will not talk of). His work is painstaking and is taking centuries, during which he has not left this place and rarely received visitors (hence his joy to see them).

**ii) He will supply the local information he knows.**

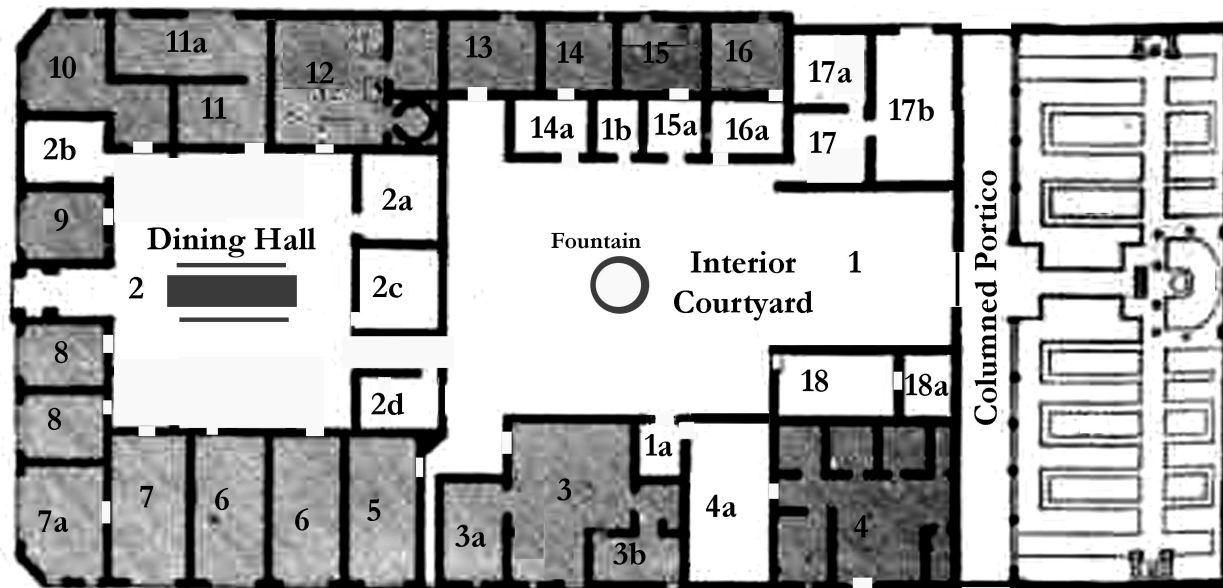
(Not much. He transported himself from Saskervoy centuries ago and has not explored much nearby.) The ancient road fades to nothing as it heads east into the Northern reaches of the Vale of Dharad, which was once famous. Last Aeon it was occupied by a basilisk army besieging the ancient and magnificent city of Mar and has been avoided ever since. Likely now all is ruins. In any case **the river is in massive flood** after the recent storms, and it will be some days at least before anyone can travel that way. (This is true.) If asked about the storms he suspects that some very powerful energy **held over from the Cutz Wars** was unleashed, but he doesn't have time to concern himself with such things.

From the Vale of Dharad one can head south on the River Scamander, and he has heard that far downriver is **a large southern city called Erze Damath** which may still exist and could well be the ideal point to enquire how to proceed west to the Land of the Falling Wall. If asked directly about transporting them to Azenomei by magic he will say that that type of magic he once knew but has long ago forgotten, but that he will consult his books and get back to them as soon as convenient.

**iii) If any creatures are questioned about their origins** they either pretend ignorance, or claim such things are distasteful. In extreme cases they may become agitated and (only at a point where it adds majorly to the story) go berserk & flee into the wilds or collapse in fits.

**iv) PCs may wish to explore the house when Pharesm is asleep.** He will be **upset with intruders** and may threaten them with destruction in a fit of anger then apologise and offer instead to clear their transgression if they perform a task for him. Or they may offer this.

**v) PCs investigating the dormitory barn may overhear muffled discussions of mutiny,** quickly hushed. Play this scenario with a tone as if rebellion may be only one hunger pang away (though Pharesm is in denial!)



## The Work Crews

**10 asms** (8 labourers, 1 coachman, 1 supervisor)

**12 deodands** (all labourers)

**13 erbs** (10 labourers, 3 kitchenhands)

**2 gargoyles** (butlers in the house)

**5 gid** (labourers), **4 grue** (3 labourers, 1 supervisor)

**10 hoon** (labourers), **7 sindics** (gardeners)

**18 madlocks** (12 labourers, 4 cooks, 2 supervisors)

**1 sime** (labourer), **1 simiode** (pet/dog-ape companion)

Pharesm's work crews operate from dawn to early evening. He wanders amongst them often – usually first thing and then retires to his study until mid-afternoon when he goes out again. He travels in the erb-drawn coach.

When amongst them he coaches them in precision detail. He also holds training sessions for different groups one day every week. (Although these are just refreshers, since the necessary mathematical precision is programmed into them in his workroom.)

The reason he spends so little time in his workroom is that the programming of new servants is done only irregularly. Once every couple of years he sends his followers into the wilds to capture half-men for programming. PCs may of course ponder how it is that half-men have such a skill at fine gometric masonry.

If they ask Pharesm he will claim that it is in their nature and just needs to be coaxed out of them. He doesn't want to admit to his workroom activities (out of a sense of professional secrecy not shame) and so says that he is proud to have reformed these beings, but offers no details. He claims half-men are much maligned, and in appropriate circumstances can be redeemed, as his projects clearly show. He may demonstrate the civilised skills of one or

two, and the GM will be forgiven for allowing alert PCs to notice simmering resentment and submerged ambivalence. For their reward half-men are fed, clothed and housed. Plus they have been taught civilised games and sometimes play on the lawns around the house, kicking an inflated sheep's bladder in teams of two. This often results in incidental minor injury, but none of them seem to mind.

## 5.1.3) Cast of Characters

**Pharesm** is the closest thing to an arch-magician in this publication. **Not the equal of Pandelum**, but could converse intelligently with that famous mage. Neutral, aloof and opinionated, but not evil. PCs will soon notice that he seems fair, though clearly considers himself by far their superior. The only way they could find disfavour with him is to treat him with clear disrespect. He is totally dedicated to his task (summoning Totality) and the PCs are a tiny diversion to his centuries-long fanaticism. 2 or 3 times a century he transports himself back to Saskervoy, as he has colleagues there, but does this with a specific magical item attuned to Saskervoy.

All servant **creatures have standard ratings** (whatever is standard for your campaign). Use whatever you have around for anthropophages from other adventures. Alter only their Persuasion & Rebuff skills, giving them secondary skills that they use here. For Persuasion these are **Eloquent or Charming** (low ratings indicate the strain many suffer acting this way) and for Rebuff give them **Wary or Obtuse** (to illustrate their confusion). More perfected specimens (such as the coachman) instead have **Lawyerly or Pure-Hearted Rebuff**. Of course under stress all may revert to their old ways.



**Latija** is a peculiar waif-like woman, remarkably attractive & curious, though (initially) extremely shy & sensitive, and **not of sparkling intelligence**. Amenable to Seduction, she favours (penalty to her Rebuff) bulky masculine individuals. In couching, her half-man plasm is revealed as she turns (energetically not physically) into a ravenous she-beast who wails and has the strength of two. Play this for maximum amusement, terror and injury – for her amorous companion. (Astute pedants might deduce that her parents were human and madlock, or more charitably that she is a vat creature.)

#### Don't Panic: It's Turjanic!

If you are running a campaign moving PCs onwards towards the Turjanic expand this adventure so that Pharesm becomes a mentor. He is delighted to see them here and since the flooding will take 2-3 weeks (not days) to subside he is eager to have them assist him with many tasks that his followers are unable to do. In return he spends long evenings tutoring them in the ways of magic and loans them several of his choicest librams, though these are not to be taken out of the manse.

#### 5.1.4) Suggested Hazards

i) PCs cannot leave the area until the floods have subsided. If they need proof they can travel for a day through the eastern boulder fields until outside of Pharesm's influence, then another half-day until they reach the massive spread of waters that is an overflowed river. Investigation indicates that it is retreating, but slowly. **Unreformed half-men** and other creatures roam this area (repelled from Pharesm's domain by his magic protections). It is not possible to circumnavigate this region because it merges into impassable marshland in the north and impassable mountains in the south.

ii) A mixed posse of **erb and hoon patrol** the grounds at night, watching for intruders. Pharesm may forget to tell PCs about this, which may result in their being beaten black and blue in a 'misunderstanding' that at last gives these creatures a legitimate opportunity to express their buried displeasure at having been civilised.

The PCs have a chance to work for Pharesm to earn money (or to earn goodwill in the hopes that he will find a way to transport them back to Almer). He will NOT appear to be trying to keep them here, since they are clearly **an enjoyable distraction**, but a distraction nonetheless, and unskilled labour to boot. The work they can do is carting rough stones into position from a nearby quarry in the wooded hills. This task is dangerous because unrefined half-men lurk there. The PCs will be asked to lead a group of erbs to do the heavy work and take a cart or two.

iii) A deodand has been **preaching dissent** (basically posing awkward questions such as "Why can't we have some meat for dinner?") and is to be publicly stoned. Everyone is required to attend, and Pharesm runs this as a religious ceremony stating phrases from a doctrine that the PCs had no knowledge of until now:

- civilized beings do not eat flesh
- civilised beings work without distraction
- civilised beings assist their fellows
- civilised beings to not hunt

It may be this event that finally brings to the PCs' realisation that Pharesm is insane.

iv) Local simes **want their leader back**. Significant foes, they sneak about at night, occasionally ambushing, but usually just trying to find him. (All buildings - including their current contents - have been enchanted to be invisible to the senses of unrefined half-men.) The Sime may threaten the party on their several trips to collect huge rough stones. At first sensed, then seen in the distance, and on the last trip mounting **a vicious attack** that slays several erbs and threatens PCs' lives.

#### The Sime

*This is an expansion on information in the Compendium p212/3. If you wish to make the simes even more dangerous refer to the Taint (poison) rulings for this creature in the Compendium.*

Intimidating 10[\_\_\_], Obtuse 13 [\_\_\_], Strength 16 [\_\_\_], Parry 12 [\_\_\_], Health 15 [\_\_\_], Magic (innate) 5 [\_\_\_], Athletics 3 [\_\_\_], Concealment 5 [\_\_\_], Perception 4 [\_\_\_] Stealth 8 [\_\_\_], Tracking 5 [\_\_\_], Wherewithal 9 [\_\_\_]

#### Chameleonic

Variegated simes are capable of changing the green tints of their skin from a deep verdant green to a pale yellowish-green. Whether this is a conscious or unconscious ability is unknown, but probably the latter. Use this ability as primary to the sinister nature of their surprise attacks.

GMs are forgiven for referring (at least atmospherically) to the alien antagonists in a popular series of predatory-based science fiction films. (Though much less combat effective.)

*Under standard rules for contests, this sime gains a +1 to its Concealment rolls. If the GM is making a secret roll for an incautious character, only an IS reveals the presence of this hidden being. The chameleonic sime is a deadly creature, capable of launching a close range attack in the wilds, with little chance of early detection.*

#### Communicating with Simes

Though they can converse, their thoughts are dark and aggressive, focused around the need to feed, and a deep hatred of humanity. It seems as if a profound loathing of human beings was part of their original matrix.

*No degree of human feeling exists in a sime. Any conversations will be peculiar and unnerving. Simes are capable of rational speech but have no empathy for human values or ambitions. This makes them incredibly resistant (+2) to distraction and Persuasion.*



v) The Sime attacks (and deaths of the loyal erbs) may be the incentive for Pharesm to ask the PCs to train the most apt of his followers (erbs and madlocks) as guards. This should be role-played to the full, using skill rolls to evidence and coach these somewhat unwilling and **largely inept specimens**. It is also an opportunity (as may occur in other aspects) for PCs to strike up something resembling friendship, or at least favouritism with one of Pharesm's half-men employees. Madlocks are the most realistic, but another creature could be more amusing, as its buried human plasm struggles to recognise the strange emotion of 'friendship'. This could result in some heart-felt and moralistic role-played conversations when this creature seeks out his new 'friend' late at night to ask if Pharesm is good or evil.

vi) Pharesm reveals that the true reason he wanted the guards trained are that these sime attacks are not the first. **Sime have been sneaking into his territory** and slaying his workers now and again, which is creating fear and instilling imprecision in the creations. The creatures are enchanted to be undetectable by magic and he lacks the skills to track them, but the PCs do not. He wants them to lead his trained creatures out to track, find, and slay the evil Sime. The combat encounter at the end of this can be epic, with some guards turning on their employers and other surprises as the Sime use intelligent tactics. Pharesm may arrive with spells to save the day, though will have initially refused any such requests on account of extreme busyness with his projects.

vii) Somehow PCs will **offend Pharesm** Most likely by trying to discover the source of noises (when Pharesm conducts experiments around midnight for an hour or two in the underground laboratory). Or by debauching his 'daughter', or refusing to train his guards. This will result in his temporary anger, and in his saying he was getting close to working out a spell to send them **back to Almerly**. Ideally PCs will then beg and plead for some way to recompense him (see last part of this section).

### 5.1.5) Resolution

If you don't play out the following option (Iucounu!), or want to sabotage it, any surviving Simes will recruit some other half-men and **storm the manse** just when Pharesm is completing the summoning of the agent to send them back to Almerly.

The PCs will need to take part in a **spirited defence**, or may choose to flee. Some half-men servants will remain loyal. Others will turn on the humans. Individual things the PCs may observe or be part of:

- Massive vandalism by the workers
- Negotiating the manse in flames from the inside.
- Latija's head being torn off by a hoon.

- Pharesm being beaten to death by a mob of creatures.
- Latija eating Pharesm's entrails.
- Rampaging Simes howling in glee as they plunder and ravage, occasionally grappling prey and applying the taint.
- Simes sadly leading away their rescued former leader who is now utterly insane.
- The manse in flames from a distance, surrounded by howling, dancing half-men.

It is possible to include all this and still lead into the boxed section: The Simes attacked just as the spell was being completed, and **distracted Pharesm**, but he was basically done except for inessential words of closing.

The PCs are surrounded by gloating half-men, allied GMCs and/or friendly half-men torn apart near them, the **Agency of Far Despatch** swoops down, gathers them in its claws, snatches them aloft and heads south.

### Iucounu! (an optional addition)

Pharesm's research has come up with an obscure spell. Its limitation is that he can only reverse the magical command that brought them to Shanglestone Strand initially. The spell is inexact, but he believes has a 95% chance of success if they follow the details to the letter. The details include that each person to be transported needs to be coated in owl bile and holding a live raven.

Describe and role-play this fully. Act as if it is their way home and the scenario booklet is near the end. Even if the Players presume it isn't, play this to the hilt. Keep a tight rein on things. The PCs will be transported (via a resummoning of the Agency of Far Despatch and another long arduous flight) back to the roof of Pergolo.

If you have *And Thence to Almerly* play out the next bit fully, possibly each PC might flee individually into the castle. If so play out non-Turjanic futile attempts to escape Iucounu. Iucounu and his alerted minions (golems, madlocks etc) will hunt PCs, and corner them one by one.

Otherwise Iucounu is up there star-gazing and, as PCs try to regain befuddled senses after the trip, he whips out a small belabouring tool he always carries and renders them unconscious one by one. PCs may try and act at a penalty or levy of -2 as the GM decides these attempts will run.

One way or another all PCs will be stunned, tied once again and then dragged outside to a spot where Iucounu has clearly executed his enemies before (bloodstained stones and bits of bone). Have PCs make Wherewithal rolls not to beg for their lives and wail in terror. But Iucounu is having a laugh. He grumbles at having to use up his valuable energy yet again, as casting such powerful spells is tiring, but nonetheless anything is worth a good joke at someone else's expense!

With a flourish he recites a complex spell, and blasts the PCs right back to where they came from, likely into Pharesm's workroom. (Or the sad ruins thereof.)





## 5.2) The Vale of Dharad

⊕ "You trek along the ruins of the ancient road, becoming ever more submerged in the earth and eroded into fragments. Clearly the magic that protected it was connected to the Mountains of Magnatz. As evening falls you notice scattered around you are low-lying ruins almost entirely hidden in banks of furze. With a little exploration you find the remains of a brick room half-buried in a hillside and entered via wide holes between the roots of a large tree. Here is as safe a place to spend the night as you are likely to find, despite the unpleasant reek of some previous inhabitant."

### 5.2.1) Introduction

In the morning PCs emerge from their secure hiding place. They travel over **lightly forested countryside** between foothills and a vast expanse of marshland that stretches into the distant north as far as they can see. The only way to go is forwards, and they march for hours. Summarise another 3 days travel if you wish to, and then they arrive over the top of a low hill at...

### 5.2.2) Plot

The Vale of Dharad is an enormous area of smoking ruins scattered about a low sickly-forested grassland that is gradually reclaiming the enormous battlefield. In the distance is a city **beneath a dome of force**. No other settlements or signs of life are visible, except for three pelgrane overhead. It makes sense to enter the nearest stand of trees rather than waiting for them to attack.

A vast battle went on here once. Clearly it was more recent than the Cutz Wars, although still ancient.

Sickening black lakes, melted fortresses, and frozen **statues of men and half-man warriors** forever locked in petrified (turned to stone) horror litter the landscape. (GM invents whatever other weirdness she can think of, including encounters. For instance a severed giant stone head that **speaks painfully** in an alien language.)

The PCs will need to traverse this **horrendous landscape**, and may wish to travel towards the high-walled city at the centre of the valley – a city that is encased in a glowing dome of light (which makes it hard to see what is going on within). Or they may skirt it at a huge distance (especially after moving closer and seeing the lizard beings patrolling its edges). However, it is hard to avoid it at a safe distance since pelgrane have spotted them and the trees do not extend into the foothills or the mountains that rise quickly behind them.

### 5.2.3) Characters

Some ancient feud with the residents of city of Mar caused a huge war that wiped out almost all on both sides.

## The Basilisk

Basilisks are stocky reptilian humanoids, with dark-green or yellowy-green hide, thick tails and clawed hands.

Intimidating 11 [\_\_\_], Wary 13 [\_\_\_] Ferocity 14 [\_\_\_], Sure-Footedness 12 [\_\_\_], Health 14 [\_\_\_], Athletics 15 [\_\_\_], Concealment 5 [\_\_\_], Perception 10 [\_\_\_], Stealth 3 [\_\_\_], Wherewithal 16 [\_\_\_] Magic (Resistance only/Demonic) 5 [\_\_\_]

### SCHOLARLY CONJECTURES:

#### Creatures of Another World

Basilisks came as conquerors to our world, during a time when the population was as small as it is today. This was a period when the inhabitants of the Earth found travelling to the stars relatively easy, and had also realized that the star around which our planet circles was entering its senility. Thus the vast majority of people had departed.

Fortunately the humours of our airs and waters proved incompatible, and most of the Basilisks died before their army of conquest had done more than gain a toehold here. Most of the survivors were hunted down over time, but in a few rare places they managed to maintain tiny colonies.

#### Demonic Entities

Remnants of the Cutz Wars: demons and half-men with reptilian plasm were bred by magicians and this created the race of basilisks – a dependable breed of shock troops. These particular ones are the last of their kind who emerged from magical stasis a few hundred years ago, long after the Cutz Wars were finished, and attempted to restart them by continuing with their ancient mission against Mar.

#### Magical Beings

If the PCs have any notable magical capabilities, you may wish to enhance the basilisks by spreading a few spell-casters (standard or demonic) of comparable skill amongst their ranks. Natural facilities such as toxic skin secretions (see the DE Compendium) can also be considered.

#### Prodigious Archers

The strongest basilisks are able to operate enormous self-bows that propel flint tipped arrows for up to two-thirds of a mile. These are easy to avoid if you see them fired and heading your way or are under cover, such as in woodland, but otherwise do massive damage, typically a single arrow killing or maiming a regular humanoid (including human).

The city is populated by an inbred mini-society with no access to the mighty magics of old, and besieged by the few hundred remaining descendents of the lizard people, who now do what they do out of sheer habit.

The basilisks no longer have access to magical weapons, or even decent armour. Instead they are dressed in skins and grass skirts, and carry **sharpened poles & stone clubs**. However, they are still a military force and live in



a circle of simple hut villages a mile or so from the city. From these they patrol ceaselessly in squads of about a dozen. It may be that these beings are the descendents of **mindless soldier clones**, rather than the officer class. (One would hope that officers would have given up long ago simply in order to return to the clubhouse!)

#### 5.2.4) Suggested Plot

i) **However, the GM manages it, basilisks capture the PCs.** Perhaps a hunting party pursues them through the dry, sickly forests with plenty of opportunities for Stealth and Concealment. The PCs may even defeat the first party or two that latch onto their trail. But eventually the basilisks will realize that a fine quarry are in the vicinity and send out larger numbers or multiple groups. It may be that the PCs stage a desperate last-ditch defense inside a peculiar ancient rusted structure that they gradually notice is the half-buried shell of **an invasion craft from the stars** or a **demonic temple**. If you ran the Lucounu option in the last section, then the PCs may be very lacking in equipment, which suits this particular section of this adventure arc very well.

ii) **Once captured, PCs are pinned and have enchanted unbreakable slave-anklets** attached to their lower legs. And their hands tied in vines before being formed into a slave coffle, then dragged behind lizard-folk guards. The magical anklets not only inhibit spell-casting, but also inhibit overly violent tendencies in different degrees. For instance a thrown punch gives a severe pain behind the eyes, whereas a hefty kick or head-butt raises that pain to somewhat incapacitating.

A physical attack that is made with intent to wound sends searing pain through the entire nervous system, and leaves most persons on the floor **in agonizing spasms for several moments**. By this means the basilisks keep their slaves from attacking their masters and each other. The same happens if release is attempted without speaking the (Demonic?) cantrap. This all leaves the GM free (nay commanded!) to invent ridiculous fights with, and bullying from, hulking anthropophagous half-men that consists mostly of jostling, rough bumping, and hard stares.

iii) **Eventually the PCs and captors arrive at a large camp** inside a strong wooden stockade. This is the main base of the basilisks, though they have many smaller bases. Inside here is **an entire town**, including the bunkhouses for the different castes, and a bizarre stone statue (a religious icon) at the center of the settlement. In town they will be taken to the slave pens where many half-men of all kinds are held inside corrals like cattle, sleeping only under rough lean-tos. The slaves are left **untended for hours** and PCs will need to assert their

right not to be intimidated by 1-3 posturing half-men who are at the top of the slave hierarchy.

iv) **Amongst the slaves are two runaway hoons** that once served Pharesm, and still retain sufficient programming to be civil to the PCs. The benefit of Pharesm's programming is that they are also capable of ongoing rational thought and are constantly planning an escape. There were more of them, but all have died during their attempts – one of which was a mass breakout in which these two only survived by sheer chance. These two will contact the PCs and propose an alliance in order to escape. They are able to command the **loyalty and secrecy** of a handful of other half-men (who would not trust the PCs otherwise). Options to be considered include tunneling, escaping from a work party, or fleeing into the city, which slave legend says has happened before. Escape is not immediately possible anyway. The next morning the **slaves are split into gangs** and sent about their tasks. Tasks include:

iv) **Digging at the face of an immense tunnel** that is gradually pushing its way towards the subcellars of the city. Slave legend says that the basilisks try this every few decades, and the attempt always ends with magic from the city blasting down the tunnel and collapsing it. The basilisks wait a while then start a new tunnel somewhere else. The legend seems to be supported by the presence of comparatively few basilisk guards in the tunnel itself, though a large number wait at the tunnel mouth. Tasks in here involve **hacking away at the earth** with stone axes and wooden rods, or carrying the resultant debris back to the surface in woven bags. Opportunities exist by the score for marginally injurious intimidation attempts by some of the half-men.

iv) **A mile or so from the city the basilisks have erected ramparts.** These are just outside the range of the city's magical defenses. At least once a week the basilisks send a runner **towards the city** with basilisk archers trained upon them to shoot if they deviate from their task of charging the city with a homemade bomb, with a long-hissing fuse, under their arms. (Basilisks have a rudimentary grasp of chemistry including blackpowder, and create round housings out of kiln-fired clay.) One of three things usually happens. Either the runner drops the bomb near the city and tries to gain access (this is rare and results in that person then being stranded in range of arrows), **the bomb explodes too early**, or a beam of magical light emerges from the city and vaporizes bomb & carrier. Very rarely the runner reaches the city, plants the bomb against it, and flees safely back to the basilisk lines. The bomb never makes even a dent in the magically-defended city walls. Not even wet weather stops this: fuses are waterproof!



v) **Slave-Fights.** In the evenings the basilisks amuse themselves by taking the anklets off pairs of slaves and having them battle it out in a crude arena with makeshift weapons. The first challenge for a human is to run to the weapons rack and get the single sword. Many half-men are of course already armed (claws & teeth).

vi) The basilisks **delight in the foul refuse** that the city humans expel through their sewerage overflow (300ft above ground level and impassable to enter due to a wall of magic force) and have built a dam across the river. They treat the huge stinking lake as a pleasure resort. Crude bungalows dot its shores, and many basilisks pole across it on rafts (or are rowed by sweating slaves), crooning love songs to each other.

PCs are given a hideous duty cleaning the detritus of the lakewards side of the dam walls, otherwise mosses that the basilisk find offensive grow their in profusion. The fact that a **species of mutated keak** also lives in the lake could be considered. (Basilisks might fish for them like marlin!) An even more hideous duty is having to lower recaptured escapees strapped onto frames down onto the front of the dam, 300ft above the river below, to hang until hungry Pelgrane devour them bit by bit.

If you are running demonic Basilisks, their Queen might be a massive demonic lamia living in the lake, emerging at night to lay eggs, which are then taken to a hatchery building. Slaying her would end (eventually) the siege.

The hoons may tell PCs that the only reasonable escape plan anyone ever came up with is to blow-up the dam with bombs **dropped into the central sluice well** (then to cling to larger pleasure rafts and be carried away down the Scamander). A risky undertaking, but most of the half-men declare themselves willing. The only problem is how to gain access to the bombs, stored in a fortified shelter a half-mile away on the lake shore.

vii) PCs are eventually noticed as the same (according to ancient scrolls) species as the city inhabitants! A hue and cry ensues, much pandemonium, and discussions at the highest levels. In the end the basilisk overlords can think of only one thing to do with spies. The PCs are taken to the ramparts, each tied to a cart that also contains bombs with fuses lit, and pulled swiftly (each by two half-men) to just outside the city walls.

PCs might attempt to convince a half-man to loosen their bonds, but these creatures fear for their lives. In the end **the bombs will explode** (describe the rending sensations and extreme heat). Yet each PC materializes inexplicably alive and whole just inside the city, **without anklets**, able to look out through the dome on the smoking ruins of the carts below (where, fortunately no sign exists of their own bodies). This is a divine event that occurs for reasons that become clear later (if you insert the *Fields of Silver* campaign into *And Thence to Almerly* using the adaptation notes in that publication).



*Eastern end of the City of Mar – Long before the Basilisk Siege began*



**The City of Mar (Note that further specific information & a map are also included as an Appendix: pp89/90)**

A strange place. Outside all is chaos. Inside, a not atypical society lives amongst the ruins of the settlement's former grandeur. They have created the ruins by 'mining' older buildings for repairs on newer ones, which hasn't mattered as the size of the population dwindled. Way back when, 80,000 souls inhabited this large city, but now a mere 7,000 remain.

In many ways Mar is like Kaiin or Erze Damath, but more akin to Kaiin's undercity than its normal precincts. People here wear strange antique fashions with huge curved collars, thigh-high boots with immense turnovers, immense sleeves and peculiar tight caps with ridiculous front-pointing peaks. However, all are in dull shades of brown and gray. Only the priest class wear more vibrant colors – always shades of green.

The people live on fruit and vegetables grown in the city precincts and former parks. They also cook and devour their own dead (at least those that die young and tender enough). The elderly they throw into the sewerage overflow.

PCs who gain access to the city may at first wonder if it is deserted, and wander ancient overgrown streets, spying snakes and parrots living amidst the vibrant vegetation. Eventually they will arrive at the inhabited areas, whose main avenues are lined with magnificent salacia trees and still swept clean on a daily basis.

Unless they have assumed a local disguise PCs will instantly be recognized as outsiders, apprehended and taken to the city magistrate. If they are accompanied by allied half-men, the citizens will attempt to slay these beings out of hand, and will do so unless the PCs convince them otherwise or physically stop them.

The Magistrate (Traqheptz) is their leader and questions the PCs thoroughly. The city folk have held the assumption that the whole world (apart from them) had been taken over by basilisks. That only their city magic held out. Else why has no rescue mission been sent after all this time? The citizens will be most angered to hear that 'apathy' is the reason!

PCs will be set free to go about the city, pending the council decision on them. At the heart of the city is a temple to Miamatta, a massive establishment complete with enormous statue of Miamatta and smaller ones of his prophets and martyrs. From the top of this temple a thick beam of light rises straight up for a mile where it joins with the dome of blue force that covers the city. Here in the temple, the priests wear green robes and offer alms to all who come to worship.

They do this by holding out a small box, which they expect you to open and take 2 or 3 coins from according to your need. (The tradition is now pointless as the city works as a commune: everyone taking turns working to grow the food and otherwise perform the necessary tasks.) Should a PC put money in the box, they will be taken for someone impersonating a priest and taken to the magistrate who will sentence them to hard labor in the orchards or on a building project.

Apart from in the temples it is an offence to address any priest without first performing the 11 genuflections. Anyone so neglecting will be sentenced to 24 hrs straight shoveling ordure in the sewerage channels. The priest class is a matriarchy, ruled by older women who carry a ceremonial whip or a chastising tube. It is an offence to look them directly in the eyes, and those who do so quickly find out that these matrons are impressively trained in the use of their accoutrements.

Being sentenced to shovel the channels for this or lesser periods of time is common, as it is the only civic task universally abhorred. These channels have been made since the siege began, to replace with river-powered sewerage system. The new system relies on rainfall (the dome allows elements & clean air to pass through to the inside), which can be insufficient after it has filled the drinking-water cisterns. Thus stealing, thinking about stealing, and sometimes even tempting someone to steal are all crimes that can get one sentenced to several hours at the marginally less stinky end of a shovel.

Anyone entering a large and deserted building or wandering far from the main avenues, yet noticed by any of the populous might be set upon with the intent to kill them in such a way as to make their demise appear to be an accident. After an accident the body becomes a legitimate foodstuff, traditionally 'owned' by the person that 'finds' it. Though this person is expected to share the bounty with friends and colleagues.

The city's great library is likely the prime point of interest for the PCs (providing they don't make too much noise, sit incorrectly, or walk the wrong way between the stacks – and get sentenced to the shovel). It might even be a place where PCs exploring a burgeoning Turjanic campaign have the chance of lengthy studies whilst stuck here in Mar.

GMs can of course create other adventures amongst the ruins and abandoned districts. Forgotten basements and other places of interest are common, since the current populous are too narrow-minded to travel outside of the central city area.

Eventually the magistrates rule that the PCs (and any surviving companions) must balance the Law of Equipoise. Since the outside world is unaware of their plight, the PCs must return to the outside world and return with assistance to free them from the basilisks. (Which could be a Turjanic adventure run after the end of this campaign series.) There is only one known way to exit the city, through the sewerage outflow that Miamatta allows to remain open for egress (but not entry).

Describe this exit from Mar in as much repulsive detail and role-played intricacy as you can possibly devise. The only possible saving-grace of this fate is that at least the citizens supply the PCs with weaponry and supplies for the journey.



### 5.1.5) Resolution

PCs emerge from the outlet, are washed unnoticed into the lake reedbeds, and hide **until nightfall**. (Basilisks sleep later in the night, apart from basic patrols.) If the PCs get caught they will be immediately hung out for the pelgrane. Fortunately the breakout happens 2 hours later (see below), since pelgrane hunt by day.

Fortunately for them this is the night that the hoons decide to lead the break. Perhaps driven to despair by the loss of their allies, as they may later reveal if given the chance. **A mass breakout & flight from the slave pens** is orchestrated and half-men run amok. Only a couple of dozen are in on the grand plan. These charge the doors of the bomb store and subdue the basilisks in cloth sacks (then sit on them) thus minimising the pain of the anklets. (Or use some other technique that PCs assisted in planning earlier.) This is where the PCs will become involved if still in hiding. They will have heard the break out, and see the basilisk **guards flee from this area** towards the disturbance. The PCs may indeed be the ones who then raid the bomb warehouse, and/or their lack of pain anklets **MUST** be a crucial factor in the desperate plan actually succeeding.

Bombs are quickly hastened to the sluice well, lit (using tapers and flint-boxes from inside the store) whilst other conspirators madly paddle sturdy rafts to the edge of the lake next to the dam. The bombers then race to these rafts and scramble aboard before **BOOM!**

However the PCs start this section they will end it amidst a **maelstrom of sewerage**. The lake is large (fed of course also by a river – not just the city effluent), the dam is high, the bomb quantities were poorly calculated and far too powerful for what was required. How might the PCs possibly survive with any sense of realism? By the will of Miamatta of course. Who knows the mind of a deity? Perhaps by simple comparison the PCs are the most just force in this whole region? Or perhaps Miamatta wants to aid them to escape so that they can return and **free the city from the basilisks**? (If you decide that this latter instance is the case, then create some token or clue that this is so, and have it lead later to a scenario where PCs return & drive off the basilisks.)

Tossed and battered amidst water and detritus the PCs are cast high into the air, by a miracle ending up clinging to pieces of buoyant debris or the edges of rafts or other basilisk pleasure craft. Play this for maximum drama and amusement, as basilisks too are caught in the deluge.

The PCs move on as if they were flushed out of **one of Kaiin's finest automatic porcelain commodes!** This expulsion is a watershed in every sense, sealing off the distant north from casual return visits overland.



*Echoes of the Cutz Wars finally fade into the distance*

### Reborn!

Excuse our rude and messy metaphoric transition. Yet we must note that in a sense the PCs are indeed about to be reborn here at the end of these episodes. Not least because of leaving the legacy of the ancient Cutz Wars behind.

They will also shortly in the forthcoming *And Thence to Almery* enter lands more familiar to those known and explored in their former lives. There their old habits, attitudes and pastimes may well begin to re-emerge. Not quite Turjanic, but now with personalities leaning much more in that direction, their capacities and capabilities are now likely much evolved.

In *And Thence to Almery*, just for the fun of it, we encourage partial PC reversion-to-type by cunning use of example – various GMCs will attempt to extort and waylay the PCs in a fashion that should remind them of the good old days in the lands of the South. (Starting with some of the pilgrims and continuing with townsfolk along the Scamander River valley.) Whether the PCs then respond as resourceful rogues or as bold adventurers is up to them. Though we cannot but imagine that our more adventurously capable heroes are now more likely to approach life (and all its challenges) somewhat more often with the sword of a stalwart than the muffled tread of a craven.

If the PCs retain any objects that could be broken in this transition by water, then these things perish. The divine protection extends only to their lives. In most cases any possessions not easily and tightly secured beneath clothes will be lost, but allow for glorious exceptions if some item has somehow survived all the way from the first adventure for instance. (Though such is highly unlikely.)

It is useful for PCs to arrive in Erze Damath later in *And Thence to Almery* with few valuables to sell – in order to provide a clear game motivation for them to take up the adventures thinly disguised as offers of employment. (In order to finance a crackpot expedition across the Plain of Obelisks in the direction of Old Romarth.)



## Appendix 1: Index of Persons, Beings & Locations

### Persons

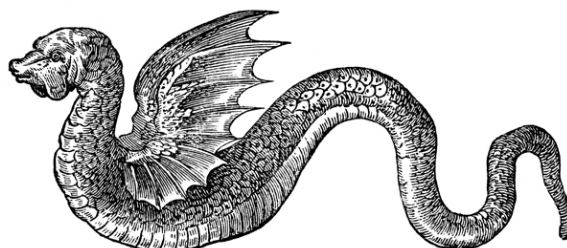
Pharesm [ratings]	(p52)
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## Appendix 2: Updated GM's Notes for the 'Footsteps of Fools' Campaign

### Cugelesque or Turjanic Play?

Whilst this series maintains many typically Vancian flavors of Cugel's world, the PCs also face **unusual perils and horrors** as Turjan and others did. You may use the Footsteps of Fools series to transition a more typical frivolous Cugel-Level campaign towards full Turjan-Level, or into what may be called 'Adventurous Cugel-Level'.

The main differences between more adventurous Cugel games and Turjan-Level:

- i) Are Improvement Points granted **as if there is no tomorrow**? Does this linked series of publications represent exactly the kind of personality-building (Turjanic style) experiences that the PCs have previously managed to avoid? Or do you retain and monitor the release of IP to carefully-managed guidelines, so that the PCs only gradually increase their capacities, in effect carrying on their lives (as Cugel did) with only slow evolution in response to external circumstance?
- ii) As noted in *Turjan's Tome* (pp21/22), atmosphere is significant. Do you retain Tag-Lines (especially the most frivolous), offer capricious turns of fate, and maintain the PCs in their identities of **wandering treasure-seekers** of no social-standing? Or do you sideline fripperies in favor of the dark despairs featured in Vance's early stories, and evolve the PCs towards becoming potent magicians and adventurers of regional repute?
- iii) Are adventures liberally sprinkled with spell-casting confrontations, with the heads (and enchanted storage items) of several PCs becoming **well-packed with encompassed magics**? Or are spells (especially the offensive variety) rare, with would-be PC magicians required to spend large numbers of IP on learning spells (especially the offensive variety) and for Players also to at least role-play in outline the time PCs spend studying - rather than engaging in couching, games of chance, and other Cugelesque pursuits in their free hours?
- iv) Is PC death a significant risk, a rare possibility, or **something almost unheard of** and usually only allowed by the GM if the manner of demise is too hysterically amusing to miss out on?

- In some Cugel-Level games the GM may normally intervene with some god-like twist of fate to save PCs from death, **UNLESS** they bring their demise upon themselves through unusually (even for Cugel-Level) over-the-top acts of stupidity or greed, or ridiculous levels of bad luck that fall far beyond the standard cruel fates that Cugelesque PCs normally experience.

- In some Turjanic games PC death may occur (or be a significant risk) every few episodes.

- Middling Turjanic and Adventurous Cugel-Level games can vary between PC death being extremely rare (and a risk only in certain extreme pre-determined scenario chapters), or almost unknown (saved for grand finales etc).

### In this Series We Adopt the Style of Adventurous Cugel-Level Play

Beyond the Mountains of Magnatz (BMM) is largely written from the perspective of being an Adventurous Cugel-Level series, and includes side-notes as to how to alter the material for more Turjanic PCs. If you are aiming to end this whole campaign with the PCs **emerging at fully-fledged low-level Turjanic capacity** (after – hopefully – defeating Iucounu) and moving thence into a proper Turjanic campaign, the next publication in this series (*And Thence to Almerj*) contains more definitive adaptation notes. Whilst running the characters through this publication (BMM) a GM who is guiding the PCs towards Turjanic heights simply allows them to keep increasing abilities and slowly gaining access to more and more magic. (Plus enhancing foes and challenges to make them more 'Turjanic'.)

'Adventurous Cugel-Level' PCs are still **profoundly self-motivated**, somewhat effete and (to a degree) indolent, yet are subtly different from their more regular Cugel-Level counterparts. Instead of always avoiding danger and seeking betterment only through larceny and duplicity, this next generation also enjoys gaining **significant experience and competency**. Despite themselves, they are beginning to evolve from blundering effete nincompoops into arrogant rascals of some skill and spine. As Cugel did, they are becoming confident (albeit not always realistically) of their abilities to overcome the difficulties of any situation. Of course, they may still wish to do so with the minimum effort, and arrange for unsuspecting hirelings to take the most obvious risks...

Of Vance's characters, **Liane the Wayfarer** best represents this attitude. Quite the self-opinionated dandy, yet also capable of bold adventure. Apart from his somewhat sociopathic nature, he is a good representation of the type of person your PCs may be evolving into. His behavior is context-appropriate: closer to Cugelesque in social and non-threatening settings, more flavored by the Turjanic when adventuring. Thus a PC of this type may occasionally hew through a batch of thuggish hirelings of a demonic priest, **leaving blood & limbs strewn about** an ancient



temple precinct, and offer the coup de grace to a violent mugger who attacked them in a darkened alley. But the same PC would normally unquestioningly accept the capitulation of lesser misguided nincompoops - as described in the original Rulebook's notes on Killing (DERPG, p11) - in any civilized setting. (Even if said nincompoops had been insulting in the extreme.) Also as noted in that DERPG entry, the accepted way to defeat an enemy in civilized circumstances is still through **humiliation and impoverishment**. So - rather than administering a rapier through the thorax - taking a purse or other valuable, or propelling the vanquished adversary into a mermelant trough via forceful application of boot-heel, would be a more appropriate triumphal gesture.

## Learning & Using Magic at Adventurous Cugel-Level

Spell-casting can be treated almost as a special ability, something to be used by 1 or 2 of the PCs, often at some risk to themselves in extreme situations. Merely 'helpful' spells are far easier to learn and much less risky to cast than offensive spells. (An example 'Spell Failure' table is available at [www.dyingearth.com/violethusps.htm](http://www.dyingearth.com/violethusps.htm) within the 'Using Magic at Cugel-Level' free article). The one or two PCs that have encompassed a small handful of spells have done so only after a large investment of IP (perhaps an exponentially rising cost for increasing one's Magic rating) at the expense of other abilities' advancement. PCs may gain magic to shield them from spells, but these will usually be charged items rather than encompassed spells.

When combating magicians, rather than **pitting themselves in a spell-casting match**, PCs rely on stealth, subterfuge, speed and pre-planning. If they are taken by surprise by a majorly powerful magician, this will be a well-crafted plot device, or at least an option that is catered for in the plot. In this style the PCs encounter truly potent magicians only as major foes or powerful employers.

Centers of education such as the **Kaiin Scholasticarium** may initially seem to be oddities in such a world, since they are presented as places where any person with sufficient money and dedication can learn a bevy of spells. However, we can presume that in this version of the Dying Earth, the more potent a spell is the more effort and time is required to master it. Thus the Scholasticarium may churn out scores of graduates over the decades who can encompass half a dozen useful magics, but few who can master an array of truly awesome spells such as the **Excellent Prismatic Spray**. (Likely many of those over-ambitious students who attempt to learn this particular example simply eviscerate themselves in an impressive pyrotechnic display, thus encouraging others to turn their attentions to such magics as the Charm of Untiring Legs, Edan's Thaumaturgic Poultice, Calantus' Instant Dispulsion, or Incontestable Pedantry.) Not that the recruiters and advertisers of the Scholasticarium would necessarily be forthcoming on this subtle capability distinction.

## Adjusted Rules Concepts for 'Adventurous Cugel-Level'

We adopt various **ideas from *Turjan's Tome*** into this series. Firstly the levels of danger continue to slowly increase, and the 'Opportunity for Bloodshed' (TT, p24) is a recurrent occasional theme. We recommend using the options for 'Speeding Up Combat' (TT, p25). Pedantic arguments are less prevalent (see 'Heated Protests' - TT, p27), and Resistances to all save Arrogance & Avarice are less frequently required. Plus, Resistances are never called for when a clear and immediate longer-term goal (or sheer survival) would be notably threatened by such a deviation, but only when PCs are relatively relaxed & safe - reflecting natural human psychology. Furthermore, the new Turjanic elements of 'Horror' and 'Lost Knowledge' get much more of a look-in.

**Refreshment of pools** is speeded up, as optionally described DERPG p27 & TT, p29 (or even half that time). And when a PC finds new items, previously owned items may be sold, swapped, or even given away as long as the owner gains some benefit in doing so (as per TT, p33). This releases old **Possession Points** to attach to new items.

**Improvement Points (IP)** are covered by new rules in *Turjan's Tome* (p29), designed to maximize opportunities for gain - so that PCs can afford spells, manses etc etc. Such grand considerations are not required in this series. Instead, the newness here is that IP will be awarded for suitable role-playing in this new style. Players will need to be fully informed of how you decide that this works. Here are some appropriate possibilities:

1) The opportunity to gain IP from **three Tag-Lines per session** still exists. However, to illustrate that this is of lesser importance, a single IP is gained for a decent showing of one of these, and 2IP for exceptional application. Plus you may wish to retain the 1IP granted for a Player **simply showing up**. In addition, also award IP for **appropriate role-playing** at the rate of 1 or 2 per incident (1 for a useful action, 2 for exceptional merit), up to three times per session. (Bold acts of brash adventure to further the group's goals [see later], managing a roguish

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Cugelesque plan with particular cunning and advantageous peer consultation, dealing the final act of defeat to a remarkable foe ...). This encourages players to directly address the changes in tone. One important change is that IP are no longer awarded for actions that threaten group goals or safety, no matter how stylish or amusing. They may still be awarded for sensibly applied duplicity, well-planned thefts, solving a very difficult problem etc. (Each session: 0-6 for Taglines, + 0-6 for good role-playing, + [optional] 1 for showing up).

2) Should you wish to **more greatly increase** the number of IP available, plus further encourage PC dedication to the group goal ['dealing with all difficulties so as to the most speedily and effectively continue onwards towards a successful vengeful confrontation with Iucounu'] then as well as the options mentioned above (in '1') also award 1-5 at the end of the session according to how well each PC furthered the group's overall goal. (This too encourages the new style of play.) (0-6 for Taglines, + 0-6 for role-playing, + 1-5 for goal advancement, + [optional] 1 for turning up) In this optional level you might also consider the following **amusing addition**. Any PC who states a highly amusing or cleverly obscene vehement verbal attack on Iucounu (specifically related to blaming Iucounu as directly responsible for some unpleasant turn of fate that has befallen the PCs) may call for this to be treated as a tag-line once per gaming session (or an impressed GM may simply state it to be so). This then has the potential to gain them 1 or more IP points, if the others agree that the statement has sufficient merit.

3) If Players need additional assistance to transition their PCs from more roguish chaotics into more considered adventurers, let Players know that you are tracking **Sympathy Points (SP)**:

- Acts of idiocy or dangerous selfishness that put the mission (revenge on Iucounu) at risk by jeopardizing the lives or safety of other group members attract 1 or more negative SP.
- The amount of IP a PC is actually granted at the end of play is reduced by their total of negative SP (or by the negative SP accrued during the session, or 1 IP per 3 -SP depending on the rate they are routinely awarded).

4) Finally, consider incrementally increasing the number of IPs needed to raise the Magic rating. One example might be that it takes as many IP to increase to the next rating as the number of the new rating itself. (EG, to increase Magic rating from 12 to 13 costs 13 IP.) Likely you would choose to cap this at some point; dependent on the amount of IPs your PCs routinely accumulate. 15 or even 10 suggests itself as a cap, or possibly as low as 8 if you are strongly restricting the flow of IP so as to keep your PCs slow in their advancement onwards from being Cugelesque rogues. This technique illustrates (and should be reflected in play by the attitude & dedication of the PC) that **learning magic is tortuous**, challenging and requires tremendous dedication that few are capable of.

Another suggested option for rules mechanics that illustrate the effort and energy required to master spells is to apply an IP cost the first time a spell is successfully encompassed. A few examples:

- Simple Useful Spells (Sequestrious Digitalia, Astounding Oral Projection, Brachial Fortitude, Nasal Enhancement, Loyal Porter, Loyal Servitor) 1 IP.
- More Advanced Utilitarian Spells (Behemoth's Bounty, Untiring Legs, Untiring Nourishment, Thaumaturgic Poultice, Another's Face, Dissolution, Twelve-Fold Bounty, Illusion of Vile Arthropods) 2 IP.
- Major Utilitarian Spells & Minor Defensive Spells (Second Hypnotic, Interminable Interim, Omnipotent Sphere, Critique of the Chill, Mantle of Stealth) 3 IP
- Awesome Utilitarian Spells, Minor Offensive Spells & Greater Defensive Spells (Dismal Itch, Enervation of Will, Inside Out & Over, Green Turmoil, Slow Hour, Second Retrotropic) 4 IP
- More Impressive Offensive Spells, Demonic or Otherworldly Utilitarian Spells, & Potent Defensive Spells (Liberation of Warp, Gyrator, Web of Hiding, Laganetic Transfer, Violent Cloud, Instant Galvanic Thrust, Relocalization, Temporal Stasis) 5 IP
- Major Offensive Spells, Awesome Defensive Spells and Phenomenal Magics of Other Kinds (Excellent Prismatic Spray, Forlorn Encystment, Rein of Long Nerves, Enchantment of Youth Renewed, Temporal Projection, Stolen Life) 6 IP

Another significant style variant we explore here is around **anticipating unpredictability** (DERPG, p138). That original ruling states that PCs can do anything, and that no plot should depend on a single outcome. This concept has been adjusted. We still promote flexibility, offer red-herrings and set-ups, and imbue the scenes with much



chance for individual action. However, some goals are apparent and desirable to aim for, not least the over-arching urge to return to Azenomei and **forcefully deliver Iucounu's comeuppance**. Other specific goals that are essential to the plot of this publication will be augmented within this work by the crafty 'all roads lead to Rome' ploy, and/or presented subtly in a style of cunning inevitability.

## Establishing PC Motivations

*Summarized from the more detailed boxed section in 'Strangers in Saskervoy'. Ideas originally adapted from Turjan's Tome.*

**Iucounu the Arch-Adversary** – because we are so generous, each PC that was sent to the north by Iucounu automatically has this relationship, & 1 free IP. Likewise after a month of being amidst them any PC who joins the party has heard so much vile talk of the Laughing Magician that they also gain this relationship & 1IP.

### Goal 1 – “Return to Almerly, redress the balance of fortunes with Iucounu and take his treasure.”

The GM should point out that if they do away with, or drive off, Iucounu they can access his wonderful belongings and wealth, not to mention take up residence in his magnificent and elaborately apportioned dwelling.

Some players may have read the stories and know that Iucounu used magical means to detect Cugel's return. If anyone brings this up, remind the Players that (a) the PCs do not know the full details of Iucounu, and (b) this is a different version of the Dying Earth from the original stories - so Iucounu may not have such specific powers. Alongside this goal might be a personal sub-goal for each PC to continue accumulating experience and assistance on their trek south. Thus they will be able to challenge Iucounu with more efficacy. At this stage, so far from their enemy and so full of impotent rage, such fears are in any case far from paramount. The fact that all PCs have this goal also allows the GM to call for Resistances to Arrogance or Avarice at junctures where PCs appear to be about to stray from the obvious path that will support them in realizing this goal.

### Goal 2 – “Support my comrades on our mission.”

Let the players know that each of these must be written on their Character Sheet as a *Goal*. Oaths/promises can be broken, but Equipoise **threatens the dishonorable**. (As described in Turjan's Tome once the goals have been adopted, Rebuff rolls against Persuasions that further the goals are at a levy or even penalty – a device that notably assists the transition from regular to adventurous Cugel-Level gaming.)

All of this does not mean that 'Adversaries' need to feature elsewhere in this campaign or any of your campaigns. You could reserve the whole concept of 'Adversaries' only for epic adventure sagas like this one. Having Iucounu as an arch-adversary is an unashamed plot device to drive the PCs towards a return and to fuel this ongoing campaign.

**Arrogance and anger now drive the PCs** to return, though not to take suicidal risks on the way. This lust for revenge also does not mean they may not stop to enjoy the places they visit or to take advantage of opportunities. After all, the better prepared they are when they return, the easier it will be to exact their revenge. Likewise, the longer they take the less likely Iucounu is to be expecting them.

Down the track it may be possible that PCs will expire. Replacement PCs from local regions could be motivated by the ever-more exaggerated tales the original characters tell of the great rewards that will become available when the little gang defeats the doltish Iucounu and **snatches his horde of valuable and fascinating belongings**. That is to say that anyone who joins and supports their enterprise will be entitled to a significant share. In this way it is even possible that a group of entirely new PCs might be the ones to finally return to Azenomei and exact the horrible revenges (or at least attempt to).

Write new Goals upon their character sheets in shortform: such as “Take revenge on the monster Iucounu.” And grant the IP accordingly. All PCs need to have **some kind of goal** like this (or as detailed above), as the backbone to this campaign. With such a goal the GM need not worry about keeping the PCs on geographic track. And as mentioned can use Resistances and other games mechanics against them, since this goal is an established primary part of the PC's personality. IE such a goal is an embedded story element, which supplies the backbone to this 'campaign'.



## Appendix 3: The Vull Gazetteer



### Overview

Vull Town has no wall, no barricade, no ditch. The streets are hygienic but unkempt, littered with leaves and windblown dirt. It was once a much larger town, but nearly three-quarters of it has been left to the encroaching pine forests and scrub. **The central area remains inhabited.** Here is a square, with several large civic buildings. Straggling orchards and rough vegetable gardens amidst the immediate ruins are the only strong signs of humanity. Wandering around town (not noticed immediately as the creatures are initially shy of strangers) are Shren: **unintelligent devolved descendants** of a food creature used by demon hordes during the Cutz Wars. They die if taken beyond Magnatz's influence, and when they expire (wherever they are) they melt into pools of goo. They resemble a cross between a bloated dog and a lizard, live on anything (like goats), and breed (noisily and without embarrassment) freely. They provide meat and milk.

### Typical Shren

Claw 4, Dodge 7, Health 3, Athletics 6, Concealment 10, Perception 7, Stealth 9, Wherew'l 5, Magic (Resist) 3 [\_\_\_].

### Using Magic in Town

As noted in DDE pp54-57 not all spells or magical devices function in areas of the Dying Earth that are affected by 'demonic fields'. Vull is one such place. An extensive list of DERPGE spells that function in any way in a subworld is at DDE pp56/7, and the efficacy of magic items is discussed on DDE p55.

**Many spells and items do not function**, are warped in effect, or work once only. (For instance the Violet Cusps from Lords of Cil struggle to work in this area, and require the expenditure of 1 point from the wearer's Magic pool for every minute worn. The point being lost the moment a cusp is donned.) If you do not have access to DDE, you will need to **decide case by case** what magics the PCs have may function and what may be dormant here. Whether you have access to DDE or not, you will need to have a broad knowledge of the magics that your PCs possess, so as to assist your decision-making and general GM'ing as regards magic in significant situations here. (Especially where the lives of PCs may hang in the balance if specific magic is as yet untried.)

### The Town Centre

A main plaza is dusty and earthblown. Several establishments that were once shops now stand open to the elements, with front windows fractured or missing and doors hanging ajar. On one side of the square is a single building that shows signs of use. It is a two-story temple of some kind, square and squat with **carvings around the door** and the large effigy of some manner of demonic pelgrane, rearing with serrated wing-edges, atop the portico twenty feet above the door. Even more distressing is the Vull Tavern. Even it stands abandoned with a forlorn inn-sign dangling askew at the end of a single chain. (It is used only on special occasions.) PCs, or if not them a gang of other Cil refugees, may take up residence here.



## The General Populous

The average person in Vull does nothing more than plod through their duties, **keeping their heads down**, working industriously, celebrating the rare holy days as permitted, and doing their best to not be noticed by the Clerics. Their clothing is basic, in faded browns and greys, with floppy formless hats. Smocks and leggings are austere.

**The GM invents names and necessary characteristics as & when PCs interact.** No townsfolk will interact first with the PCs, in case they are seen by the Clerics to be **too forward**. Rather they will move by, heads lowered, glancing up only if startled.

**Townsfolk will also be somewhat awed by the PCs' clothing** (unless the PCs have changed attire, perhaps after **observing the town** before entering and stealing some clothes). It may be that the locals even comment with amazement and delight, though only in low voices as they pass by (at a distance).

Once contact is established the GM might like to play them as simple & timid but friendly folk who are easily impressed by tales and attitudes of the outside world.

**Approximately 400 people live in Vull, aged between eighteen years old and forty years old.** Even with their overly languid ways, sufficient exist to swarm and slay a group of armed vagabonds if said vagabonds begin to bully and murder folk indiscriminately (or more accurately are remiss in hiding the evidence of such). The townsfolk live in groups of 6-8 in separate dwellings or in different sections of the same larger dwelling. They cohabit in strange **polyamorous combinations** that the GM can briefly pass over or focus on as part of the essence of Vull, depending on the tone of their campaign and personal game style.

**As play commences and they explore the town trying to find out what is going on, PCs may notice certain things.** (The GM only reveals any of the following if someone investigates appropriately, asks an appropriate observational question, or exceptionally when it most potently suits the drama of the situation.):

- **The townsfolk seem slightly more than usually docile**, somewhat resembling cattle in their manner and lacklustre obedience to the Clerics. (In most DE societies there will be at least a few persons expressing some manner of dissatisfaction.)

- **Most of the townsfolk look alike**, as if perhaps (Ψ PEDANTRY) inbreeding in this locale has been more pronounced than usual even in these moral-less times. (The truth is that all of the townsfolk are vat creations. And all are created from the same five remaining matrices. This does not mean that any are identical. Far from it. The matrices are old and were designed to create multiplicitous varied copies, but nonetheless a resemblance exists. In

particular with the women who are mostly slightly tall for a woman and fair-haired or else slightly rounded and dark-haired.) Note that all games play out differently. It may be that one of your PCs is a Magic specialist, and another is a Vat Creature. Between them they may quickly work out that the townsfolk are also vat creatures, though none will understand the term or be able to talk about their origins coherently. "We come from Magnatz. We return to Magnatz."

You as GM then need to vary details of play accordingly. (If a PC is a vat creature, creative GMs might invent their origins in this place, and thus have many of the townsfolk resemble them. Their biography will be available in the office [Room 2 of the temple]. Perhaps they went rogue and escaped, or perhaps were sent off on a secret mission to find out information about the outside world, and have utterly forgotten this – due to a fault in their retentive memory core section. Perhaps they begin to get *deja vu* as they approach town...)

- **Nobody younger than 18 or so appears to live here**, nor many over 40 (the inhabitants step out of the vat aged about 18 in physicality if not mentality, and typically begin to degrade aged about 35-38, becoming more and more eccentric over a few years until they are clearly a liability – at which point they are recycled). If asked, about such things, the locals will appear confused – they will NOT speak of their origins, and likewise don't know what children are. Possibly they will react as if questions about children are inappropriately personal. This fact (lack of persons under 18) should definitely not be simply stated by the GM, unless at a very potent moment it is a suitably sinister realisation – changing the tone of everything. The youngest people here (if questioned) are extremely naïve and unknowledgeable, and will always refer (sometimes very anxiously) difficult lines of questioning to someone older than themselves, or (more likely) to a Cleric.

- **It could be possible for the PCs to convince someone aged around 40 to join them** as a loyal assistant, once PCs discover (and communicate to this person) that they are going to be recycled. But this might also be fraught with difficulty if the person is beginning to mentally and/or physically destabilise. (*The GM can play such deterioration as they wish, however the 2009 film 'Moon' is an excellent resource for ideas.*)

**The folk of Vull have only one specific behavioural mannerism** that is peculiar and common. In their speech they commonly use phrases such as 'All praise to Magnatz', 'Most high esteem to Magnatz', and 'Under the watchful and merciful eye of Magnatz'. Common does not mean every few sentences. It does mean that if they ever do something they feel might be a bit out of place (such as talking to a foreigner or cursing after striking their thumb with a mallet) they may say something like this, and even genuflect whilst doing so.





If asked why, they may explain that a great being known as **Magnatz provides safety** for their town from the anthropophages and other natural disasters. If asked to provide details, however, everyone will say they are unworthy to discuss the mighty Magnatz and refer the questioner instead to approach a Cleric for greater enlightenment. (Everyone lives in fear of saying something that might be construed as inappropriate and thus placing themselves in the Clerics low esteem, and perhaps suffering a punishment.)

They may be convinced (Ψ PERSUASION, ETIQUETTE -1) to speak of the **basic ceremonial requirements** that the Clerics ask of them. This amounts only to attending a weekly service in the temple (by coincidence the morning of the second full day after the PCs arrive, and attendance at the irregular ceremonies that the Clerics call approximately twice a year. Further persuasion will be needed to reveal more about the nature of this ritual (see elsewhere) and they will not mention the sacrificial aspect. The other ritual that they may talk about with more pride and even eagerness is **the Ascension**. They enter the temple, are reminded of the glorious benevolence of Magnatz, and launched into Magnatzia through a magic portal in a beautiful garden. (By launched they may explain that four Clerics, hold them, one on each limb, swing them back and forth, then let them go – in doing so propelling the fortunate person on their way to Magnatzia through the magic portal.)

The townsfolk may (Ψ PERCEPTION) seem **quietly pleased** to see newcomers, but will deny it if confronted. The truth is that their presence offsets the chance of any townsfolk being required to be sacrificed.

### Standard Townsperson (Basic Vat Creature)

*"My duties call and your words are befuddling. I recommend seeking out one of the Clerics for greater elucidation on the matter."*

Obfuscatory 3, Obtuse 11, Cunning [Random Object] 4, Parry 6, Health 6, Athletics 5, Concealment 4, Craftsmanship [varies: mostly none], Perception 3, Stealth 6, Stewardship 7, Magic [Resistance only: as needed] [\_\_\_]

### Town Notables

**The dozen or so hunters have very slightly more forceful attitudes than average.** They still toe the line as regards good civic behaviour. If any replacement PCs are required, such could be a young hunter whose vat matrix had corrupted (or by sheer fluke manifested a flawless creation – perhaps even being an effective reincarnation of Vull Faris, though with fractured memories and minimal magical skills since the matrix is now so old and so often used) and allowed them to evolve a real personality. The hunters are the people that the Clerics call on in those rare occurrences when they need muscle to reinforce their

edicts. Incidents of local unrest are so rare as to not need an ongoing constabulary.

**A couple of dozen crafters and their apprentices** also exist in Vull. Being a tradesperson is highly valued due to the reduced likelihood of being required to be sent off to 'worship' Magnatz. Such folk are carpenters, bakers, millers, seamstresses and the like. Armourers and weaponsmiths are unknown. There is not even a proper blacksmith here though a basic forge functions in the workers' barn.

### Normal Daily Events

i) Townsfolk breakfast in their homes on porridge, biscuits, fruit and the milk of the odd Shren beasts

ii) Once dawn is fully broken and sunlight (such as it is) covers the town a loud going echoes from the temple building, carrying all the way across town. The human inhabitants breakfast hurriedly and resume their daily tasks which mostly include building maintenance, local farming, and general work such as baking, woodturning, pottery making etc in the workers' barn.

iii) Townsfolk lunch on hunks of bread and Shren cheese (which tastes appalling) with fruit.

iv) Clerics perform simply closed rites to Magnatz in the temple during the afternoon, screeching and wailing appallingly for nearly an hour.

v) Townsfolk dine on Shren meat and cooked vegetables. *(Diet here is so austere that is enough to have PCs frantically seeking a way to depart town. You may consider calling for Resistances against Gourmandism for any character that is insufficiently active in seeking a way of escape from this place.)*

vi) The moment dusk begins, whatever the season, a loud gong echoes from the temple building. It may be magically enhanced, because it can be heard all throughout town, wherever anyone is. The moment it sounds people stop what they are doing, quickly pack away only perishables and valuables, then return to their homes. If stopped or impeded this is one of the few times they might become aggressive. (Such an encounter early in the piece, where a townsperson suddenly turns psychotic, could be played as a tragic incident.)

vii) The moment night is fully fallen an eerie deep moan calls out from somewhere in the forests surrounding the town (the lake). It too echoes widely across town and beyond, carried perhaps magically on the air. This is the cue for the half-men to enter town.

viii) The moment that true dawn begins to show, another eerie moan carries across the air from outside of town. All half-men still present in town immediately stop what they are doing and rush back into the woods.



## Incidental Incidents

During the day PCs may observe the following (as best fits the mood of the scenario as it unfolds):

- A townspeople who is malfunctioning and ripe for recycling flees the Clerics only to be recaptured after running into a wall. If observed, the Clerics act as if they are assisting this person because the person has a mental instability.
- A Shren expires (due to natural causes, or when a large piece of lumber falls on it...) and melts into a pool of goo.
- Footprints of deodands are seen about town.
- An expired deodand (the victim of a squabble amongst associates) is found in an abandoned building.
- An old townspeople (40+) stands bemused and is quickly led away by a fearful fellow townspeople (and taken to sit in a house and given broth until they regain their senses).
- Someone they have spoken to is injured in an accident and loses part of a limb. They are hurried away to the Clerics (and later discovered by the PCs inside the temple building - in a vat re-growing the limb)
- The Clerics question or take away someone who has spoken at length to the PCs or even been somewhat friendly or sympathetic to them. (This person may be rediscovered in the prison room on level 2 of the temple.)
- The Clerics beat someone with staves, but stop immediately when they sense they are observed, assist the person up, gently admonish them, and let them go. The person seems confused, but departs.

### Typical Hunter (Slightly Superior Vat Creature)

*"It is not for me to question the ways of Magnatz. I hunt so that my neighbours and I may eat. What else is there?"*

Forthright 7 [\_\_\_], Wary 10 [\_\_\_], Caution [Rapier/Bow] 10 [\_\_\_], Dodge 12 [\_\_\_], Health 9, Athletics 9, Concealment 11, Craftsmanship (Bowyer) 5, Living Rough 4, Perception 8, Physician (First Aid) 3, Quick Fingers (Setting Traps) 4, Stealth 9, Tracking 11, Wherewithal 8, Magic [Resistance only: as/if GM requires] [\_\_\_].

## The Vull Clerics

**Numbers:** Regular clerics are composed of around 5% of the population (around 40 of them) aged in their thirties and forties. These best of the standard vat creatures are chosen for their intelligence and aptitude. Senior Clerics vary in number according to the GM's requirements, likely ranging from 3-16.

**Attire:** Regular Clerics dress in impressive black robes with high stiff collars, and tight black skullcaps. The skullcaps are edged with silver thread woven into small arcane designs. (Anyone with Demon Lore, or some similar

specific pedantry specialisation, may be able to identify them as such, but only a true specialist could even begin to read them in the time available. They are an enchantment that marks them as servants of a demonic force. No PC will be sufficiently knowledgeable to read more meaning.) Senior Clerics wear robes edged with the silver fur of erbs, and topped with high starched curving collars that peak and sweep back in the rough approximation of the leathern wings of a diving pelgrane.

**Mannerisms:** Their manner is haughty and puritanical. They mostly confine their disdain to minor punishments such as sentencing people to the stocks, public whipping, or long assignments propelling the mill-wheel. Capital punishment is only ever of one kind – being sent to Magnatz.

**Magic:** Whether some of the Senior Clerics possess magical items or spells, or strange demonic protections (either as items or as 'blessings' from Magnatz), or a Magical resistance rating depends on how much magic your PCs have access to. The GM can invent at whim to best suit the specific campaign if required.

**Knowledge:** If any regular Cleric is questioned courteously about **Magnatz**, they may say that this ancient being protected Vull during the Cutz Wars and has been revered ever since, but will say that they are not pious enough to speak more, and refer the questioner to a Senior Cleric. (And also perhaps reporting the questioner to the next Cleric they see.) If a Senior Cleric is questioned about **Magnatz** they will recommend that the questioner come to regular worship services and work their way up to a layperson, after which they can attend educational sessions. (None of which can happen within the timescale of this scenario.) If any Clerics are questioned about the **peculiarities of Vull**, they will say that the ways of Magnatz are not able to be understood by outsiders and that even for locals it takes years of study even to begin to understand the motivations and powers of this magical being. If PCs accuse the Clerics of worshipping a demon, give the PCs a chance to realise that this is a powerfully bad idea. The Cleric/s in question will become most alarmed and scarcely believe their ears. Is this person voicing 'heresy'? Surely not? *"Kindly rephrase the words you just uttered. I need to be absolutely clear that you have just voiced a heretical belief before I call for the guards and have you stoned to death."* Ideally this will result in a Persuasion contest with a penalty for the Cleric (due to his disbelief), and the PC will win. Of course the ideal is not always what occurs!

**Murder!** Since all of the townsfolk are vat-creatures and demon-worshippers, Vull is actually a unique environment where anyone can be killed (as long as there is a good reason for doing so and the PCs have worked out that they are within a societal entrapment) without accruing any negative Sympathy Points. In practical terms, if this was necessary the PCs would be wise to do so secretly and hide



the bodies. In the event of failing to convince a Cleric that you are not a heretic, for instance, it would be perfectly reasonable to lure said Cleric into an alley on false pretences, deal to him and hide the corpse in a rainbarrel. Rather than the PC risking having him/her-self, and possibly also their companions, stoned to death.

**Accessibility:** Regular Clerics sometimes wander around town alone. Senior Clerics always with a retinue.

**Senior Clerics:** More closely perfected vat creatures, the few who emerge long-lived and with full capabilities and intelligence closer to what the Vull Faris matrices were originally designed to produce. These are only seen occasionally **outside the temple during daytime**. However, when they do travel outside the temple they wear ceremonial facework masks resembling an ornate daihaki (otherworld being) of indiscriminate origins, thus utterly disguising the fact that they are identical (save in apparent age) human males with the same slightly saturnine features (thin moustache, black goatee, slicked hair: Vull Faris).

None of these affectations are the result of personal grooming. The aspect of the perfected matrix setting includes genes that do this. Several regular Clerics and several hunters also always accompany them as a **bodyguard retinue**. It is possible that particularly resourceful PCs might contrive (though it would not be easy) a way to get the mask off a Senior Cleric. If so they may be surprised to find that nothing untoward exists about the being beneath, though of course if they knock the helmet of a second Senior Cleric... (Unless some confusion exists that perhaps they coincidentally chose the same Senior Cleric again!)

### Regular Cleric

#### (Slightly Superior & Educated Vat Creature)

*"Careful, lest your questions stray into confirmed heresy and I am forced to sentence you to the stocks to discourage others."*

Eloquent 7, Lawyerly 11, Strength [staff] 7, Parry 9, Health 6, Athletics 5, Concealment 2, Perception 5, Pedantry (Lore of Magnatz) 3, Stealth 3, Stewardship 3, Physician (Vat-Based First Aid) 3, Wherewithal 4 [\_\_\_], Magic (Resistance only) [\_\_\_].

### Senior Cleric

#### (Fully Superior Vat Creature, Educated & tougher than a normal human)

*"Hunters! Apprehend that person. Beat them soundly and consign them to the whipping post!"*

Intimidating 9 [\_\_\_], Penetrating 13 [\_\_\_], Parry 12 [\_\_\_], Strength [staff] 11 [\_\_\_], Health 11 [\_\_\_], Appraisal 3, Athletics 8 [\_\_\_], Concealment 3, Craftsmanship (Vat Maintenance) 4, Pedantry (Lore of Magnatz) 5, Perception 6, Physician (Vat-Based First Aid) 6, Stealth 4, Stewardship 5, Tracking 2, Wherewithal 7 [\_\_\_], Magic (Resistance only) [\_\_\_].

## The Curse (As the Folk of Vull experience it)

Magnatz to the townsfolk is an entity of legend whose influence clearly still protects the town, or so they have been indoctrinated to believe as part of their creation process. Nobody in Vull will refer to **Magnatz's influence** as a curse. However, several times a year a person who has been disrespectful to Magnatz is taken away to a secret ceremony and never seen again.

No townsfolk will talk of these things, since to do so might lead to an inadvertently irreverent comment. (Plus the ceremony is not actually secret. All locals attend and **watch the sacrifices being devoured** by Magnatz, and engage in minor orgiastic rites. Deeper questioning about this could reveal an extremely unstable nature to these apparently placid folk. Perhaps a suppressed deep and denied shame and guilt.) If asked directly about the influence of Magnatz, once again a townsfolk would refer the questioner to a Cleric.

The only thing they might talk about, if a PC convinces them ( $\Psi$  PERSUASION, IMPOSTURE-1) is their belief in the afterlife. Everyone knows that (except for those few whose skills are so in demand that their time on this plane is extended) sometime **around one's fortieth year**, maybe a little later, one is invited to one's reward, taken via a special procession into the Temple and passes through a portal in the Garden of Ascension into the Idyllic Overworld domain of Magnatzia. Here in this place are groves of fruit trees, streams of wine and nectar, pavilions of eiderdown couches, and all else to make one's eternal rest the most beauteous experience possible.

## The Curse (as visitors experience it)

### 1) General Transgressions

Anyone who takes Magnatz's name in vain or otherwise speaks in disrepute will be subject to punishments. The Clerics may be lenient in duration of punishment for first time offenders who effectively ( $\Psi$  PERSUASION, ETIQUETTE -1) claim ignorance, but not likely in remitting punishment altogether. Things that may offend the Clerics (or a local who seeks favour by reporting an offence to the Clerics) are:

- Wearing inappropriately violent attire; - Impugning the wisdom or benevolence of Magnatz;
- Attacking a townsfolk; - Suggesting that the Clerics are not totally wise and benevolent

(It is the GM's job to phrase all declared transgressions in appropriate Vancian language.)

Many other things exist as well, but the idea is not to have the PCs spend all of their time being punished, but to have them acting on particularly 'good' behaviour for the sake of challenging game play. Punishments include:



- 1-24 hrs in the town stocks (where anyone is authorised to pelt them with small stones and putrid vegetable matter)
- A public flogging (extreme cases only, more likely as a threat than an actuality)
- Collecting rocks from the old part of town to be piled in a large yard near the centre of town, using only a rickety handbarrow, and supervised by several huntsmen.
- Clearing out gutters and drains that are thick with filth.

## 2) Being Sacrificed to a Hungry Demon

The day after the evening that the PCs arrive the Clerics will have decided that the stars have converged into an appropriate alignment for one of the irregular major ceremonies to Magnatz. The word will quietly spread later in the day, and the time of the ceremony will be set for the evening of the next day. The townsfolk may (Ψ PERSUASION, ETIQUETTE -1) seem somewhat pleased at this news. Some PCs may (rightly) become suspicious of the coincidental timing, or they may as Cugel-did, assume that they are merely blundering through coincidences. But do not enlighten them – in fact you might be forgiven for muddying the waters of comprehension in this regard.

## 3) Honoured Guests (comparatively speaking)

It is not unusual for settlements across the Dying Earth to be accepting of others who do not know or share their beliefs and customs. But it is (or may seem so to Players/PCs) unusual for a place with so many peculiarities to be so permissive. This may never be explained to the PCs, however, the reason is that souls that have been only recently plucked from their freedom taste so much more delicious to Magnatz, and he enjoys psychically observing their last futile hours of their petty lives. These conditions are deeply established and Magnatz in any case wants to be freed, so will not alert clerics if the PCs begin to amass knowledge that may assist in his freeing.

## The Curse of Vull In Truth

During the ancient Cutz Wars arch-magician Vull Faris bound Magnatz here, and set up a religiously-focussed society to keep him bound. This society supported Vat Creature replicants of Vull Faris and seven of his companions. This was **a magician's trick**, since part of the binding agreement was that he would maintain eternal watch. Over time (only after society and the Dying Earth in general became significantly more decadent) three of the matrices have corrupted and are unusable.

The remaining five have also corrupted, but still produce serviceable copies amongst many inferior specimens. Inside the temple, hardworking staff continually tend the vats, producing between them **a serviceable vat creature** to replenish the population at a rate that has the population slowly dwindling. The most important one is that of Vull Faris, even to the extent that they have assured

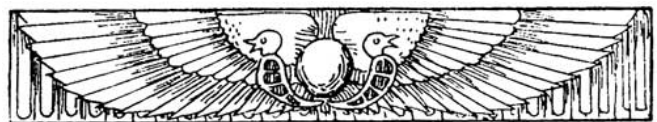
that Vull Faris will always be here, by creating an entire class of person (the Senior Clerics) who are all (to the senses of Magnatz) Vull Faris – though their numbers are **now dwindling**. These matrices are so old that the copies that emerge from them vary widely enough now in appearance that outsiders such as the PCs may at best suspect inbreeding (rather than replication), and are unlikely to suspect that these folk are from the same matrices (at least not straight away).

The human population began to decline, and more and more vat creatures were required to maintain a semblance of regular society (sufficient to perform the annual binding ceremonies required to keep Magnatz 'chained' beneath the lake). When it was extrapolated that possibly within as soon as a century the population would be too small, the **vat creatures conspired** to secretly produce more of their own and slowly introduce them to society as hooded Clerics (disguising their sameness behind masks).

To cut a long story short, the human population was eventually entirely replaced. The ceremonies to Magnatz continue, though the bond is weakening, and some centuries past Magnatz regained sufficient power to be able to manifest magic in town. In order to appease him a deal was struck. **Magnatz rules the night** and the Clerics rule the day here in Vull. (The information in this paragraph and some in the one below could be revealed to the PCs if they obtain and peruse old logs in the records room, or simply spend a half-hour there pouring over the information.)

The requirements of the curse mean that (a) the Clerics need to perform small rites daily, (b) a single community rite weekly, and (c) large sacrifice three times per year. If they ever ceased to do any of this, the enchantment that Vull Faris set would falter, with **unknown consequences**. The consequence they most fear is that Magnatz would be freed or dispelled in some way. There is of course nothing to stop them all fleeing at daybreak with a whole day's head start or perhaps even a week or two before Magnatz could even begin to break free, but this is the Dying Earth and old habits die hard.

So, three times a year the Clerics lead ceremonies in which they sacrifice a number of vat-creatures to Magnatz at the horrible lake. These are usually the **elderly vat-creatures** that were due for 'recycling' anyway. They also sacrifice all travellers that arrive, since Magnatz particularly likes human flesh, and this offsets the need to sacrifice as many townsfolk.





### Vull During the Daytime

The townsfolk are **listless and uncommunicative**, evidencing only casual interest in the PCs' presence, and not stopping to address them, and only reluctantly halting and conversing if directly addressed. PCs may ( $\Psi$  PERCEPTION -1) occasionally notice somebody watching them when that person thinks the PCs cannot see them, but unless the PC moves with extreme care ( $\Psi$  STEALTH -1) by the time they have turned the person will be behaving normally.

The idea here is to set-up a sense of subtle unease about the place. Ostensibly, this place is not worse than any other Dying Earth backwater town the PCs may have visited elsewhere. Once again, judging by its former **ancient grandeur**, the people here are a sad cry from the former citizens. Shren may be seen from time to time, sometimes fornicating furiously, sometimes eating scraps from the ground or from outside kitchen doors.

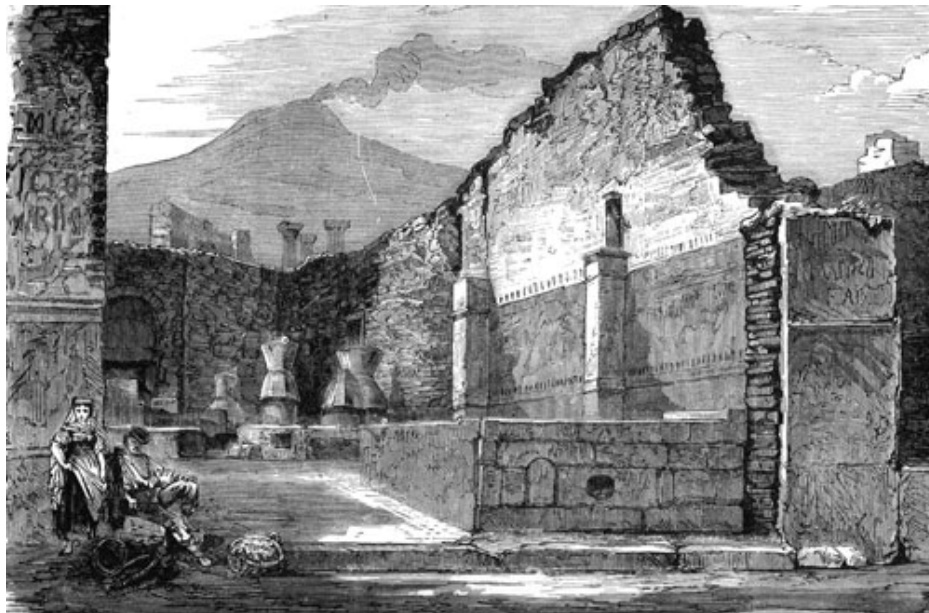
### The Night Populous

By night, upwards of two-dozen deodands come quietly into town, make sport with any human possessions left lying around, and wander about the streets looking for food for a while (occasionally pouncing on and eating Shren), before heading down the forbidden trail and engaging in obscene orgiastic rites on the shores of the Lake of Magnatz.

**Magnatz itself usually rises** at least momentarily to observe this horror, at which point the deodands howl with repulsive delight. These are not the same deodands every night. The GM creates any amount of deodands, especially for the finale.

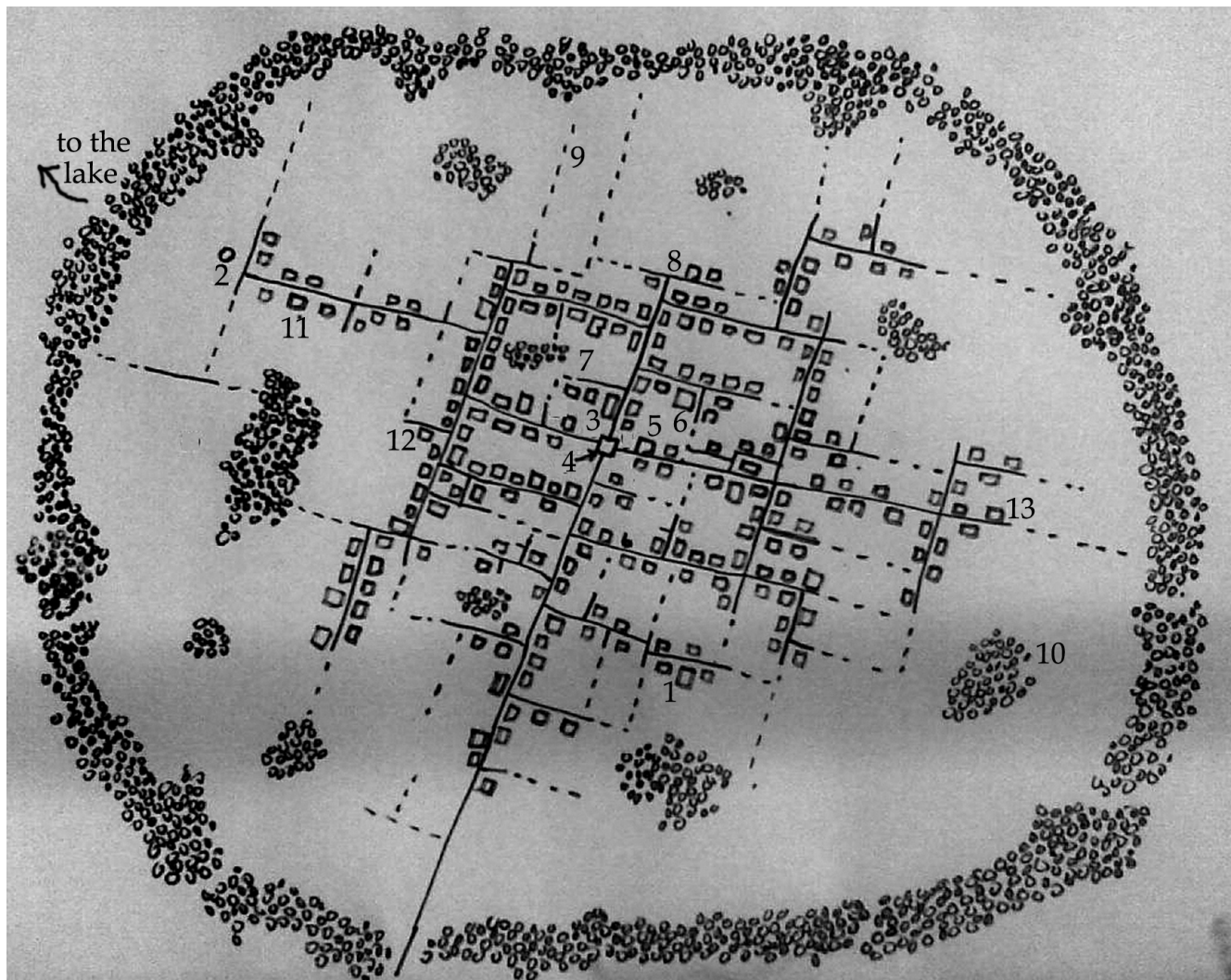
As morning begins its approach the deodands begin to tire and the rites gradually cease. When the hideous moan sounds any remaining deodands **reluctantly trail away** from the site, back down the path across town and into the wilds once more, usually leaving a few dead behind them.

The deodands are prohibited from attacking any townsperson indoors, though occasionally they will claw pathetically at portals and try to convince someone to step outside. "The night air is cool, and the starshine most pleasant. Why don't you open your doors and come enjoy our delicious company?" The deodands are weak in the early morning as they return to the wilds and statistics should be reduced accordingly. We do not include deodand statistics as it is ubiquitous in any DERPG campaign.





## Appendix 4: Vull Location Guide



**1) Headman's House** (a titular position only, the position is yearly and only maintained because the enchantment that binds Magnatz requires the civic headman to speak a few words at each sacrifice).

**2) Tower of Vull Faris** (A strange edifice that it nearly impossible to climb without magic. If the PCs do have magic (or are exceptionally ingenious then up in the abandoned and musty cupola is a rusted telescope, trained upon the Lake of Magnatz. At night the telescope reveals that it is enchanted, and allows greyscale – nightvision – observation of the island. Any deodand activities can only be picked out very dimly through the trees, as the trees obscure vision of the shore almost totally. The island seems to be just an island, and the whirlpools may be intriguing. The telescope might be freed with an appropriate skill or tools, but this would be hard work, and may then become a possession.) In daytime nothing is visible, though use of Violet Cusps or something similar might vaguely detect a magical aura.

In full dark a faint magical glow can be seen about the top. Up here held in stasis and magically obscured from easy regular sight until up close might be a prime vat copy of Vull Faris, bound in chains and obscured by magic, quite insane, strapped to a rigid metal frame with his head clamped so that he faces the Lake of Magnatz, and with eyelids surgically removed. (Eyes lubricated by a minor additional enchantment.)

Aged and haggard, yet still feebly struggling, the PCs could be forgiven for imagining this is the original Vull Faris, and not merely one of a succession of Vat Creature copies that have suffered here for countless generations in order to fulfil an aspect of the binding enchantment. If he is removed and not replaced in three days, or similarly if the tower is destroyed, Magnatz will begin to be able to break his binding, but that is too long-term to affect this scenario. The GM is also free to imaginatively elaborate what else the PCs find up here.

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**3) Tavern** (disused – the PCs or other Cil refugees may set up residence here. Those that do will be easily accessed by the Clerics and perhaps recruited into work parties on the market gardens as an act of civic cohesion.)

**4) Marketplace** (people exchange produce here at a variety of stalls, but it is functional and without life or entertainment)

**5) Temple of Magnatz** (a large square building with a massive columned portico around the entirety). Thronging with activity during daylight hours, but silent and the main door closed up with metal shutters from dusk to dawn. (See later in this gazetteer for map and text for the temple building.) PCs may ( $\Psi$  PERCEPTION) notice that the only points of egress apparent after it is locked up are small windows high up on the temple portico. (The walls of the of the building are as tall as two large houses and utterly without purchase. The roof is invisible from the ground, but from another tall building can be seen to be the typical ridged gable, only these particular ridges are sided with dull black slate of a suspicious sheen.) The Clerics all reside within this structure.

**6) Workers' Barn:** Tool repair, food sorting/storage. Attached to this is the millwheel, which is powered by five or six locals (or PC/GMC minor heretics) walking inside it like a treadmill.

**7) Seven statues:** Vull Faris and his associates (see later details). Four proud men and three powerful women, all appearing as mages. No names or other clues are given, but the astute may ( $\Psi$  PERCEPTION -1) notice a vague resemblance between five of these and the local populous.

**8) A triumphal arch** decorated with carvings of the Cutz Wars (tall demons and noble human warriors fighting, with no clear victors. Images of spellbursts, gross decimation, huge lumbering demons bigger than manses...)

**9) A series of five small craters** inside which the earth is fused to glass and nothing grows within them. Water has collected in them, but has an odd silvery sheen. (No local ever takes this water for any purpose, but at night deodands often gather here to drink their fill.)

**10) An enormous rusted metal arm**, as long as a cart, designed in the shape of a twisted and scaled demonic forearm. Almost completely lost from sight now amidst the undergrowth. Who would construct such a thing and why? (Could be the only visible portion of an entire buried demonic metal creature that reanimates if fully exposed to starlight, but fortunately is completely bereft of wit.)

**11) The ghost of a magician** slain in the Cutz Wars is in this house. He has gone completely insane, but his ramblings may contain some clues. (PCs may be drawn to the house during their nighttime investigations when they hear him babbling incoherently. Use the ghost statistics in DDE.) If one of the PCs is possessed by the warrior (see

14 below) a conversation may ensue, with the GM providing any details.

**12) A fountain** tucked away in a back lane. It is cursed. Human blood flows from it continually, filling the basin and draining away. It smells and is covered in flies. The locals never use this street.

**13) An ancient section of wall**, somehow still standing whilst the large civic building it once merged with (which stood some distance from the town square) has almost utterly vanished into ruin. On this particular remaining section of wall is a faded (but still barely discernible mural) depicting magnificent ornately armoured warriors marching into battle. When viewed any night under the moon this mural begins to slightly twist and turn, but only when viewed from a slightly oblique angle. If anyone attempts to discern more of its visual secrets, the GM decides which skills work ( $\Psi$  PERCEPTION -1, MAGIC). A success also requires the expenditure of a Magic pool point. Role-play this as great feats of concentration and persistence. Tuning oneself into the mural is extremely difficult. Rewards are great, though risky. Raise difficulty levels as high as you like if you use a GMC for this task (as recommended early in the scenario book), therefore any interested PCs will fail, and you can simply announce that the GMC has succeeded through great effort.

The person so succeeding falls into a trance and enters the scene as if in a lucid dream. They find themselves in the army. The GM should describe this in fluid detail, as the PC in question marches (or rides) with the brave soldiers of Guepah the Great. Describe in sentences the vastness of the army, the glory of their weaponry, the apparent confidence of the legionary wizards, the mighty warbeasts. Note also that any person undergoing this vision will be in a trance for around an hour, and their companions may well snap them out of it, or try to. It is up to you as GM whether they stay in the trance and continue the vision, perhaps despite being carted off, or are able to be pulled out. (At which point they may describe what they were viewing and wish to return to finish the viewing, which may require them to remain here at the scene and need to be protected from deodands by their companions.)

If allowed to continue, the vision will continue as the army begins to engage first with another army (far less magnificent, though one that is supported by demonic mercenaries), then (after successfully defeating these upstarts) with various larger demons. (Which are also overcome, though with heavy losses in both demons and magicians.) It is also revealed at this time that the chief magician of this force is one Vull Faris, who is addressed by name. Eventually, due to high casualties, the PC (who held something like the rank of captain) is raised by battlefield promotion and enters the field tent of Guepah the Great, a golden-armoured titan with a beard large enough to hide an erb in. Here too are other officers, both



long-standing and newly promoted, and the seven surviving senior wizards including Vull Faris himself.

Much is discussed about the mighty power that Lord Slaye of Cil has marshalled from one of the subworlds, some nameless vast horror. Vull Faris is sent away to research this creature, vanishing with much reluctance into his private dimension, whilst swearing to return with the solution to binding this entity. Before he can return the creature is upon them. A massive squat reptilian monstrosity with an enormous inhuman pale face. Each webbed hand is as large as a working man's hovel. Impervious to all but the mightiest magics, it stomps and flails warriors and magicians, wreaking havoc through the armed forces. A bold warrior-mage pierces one of its eyes with a flame lance, but in the next instant is swallowed whole. You (the PC) are part of the last charge and personally managed to pierce its shin with a magical spear you swept up from amongst the fallen. You are sprayed with a gout of thick black demonic blood which forces its way magically into your air passages. You expire.

The PC will awake at this point, shrieking (and perhaps coughing ectoplasmic goo). The GM is at liberty to use this event as a plot-device of mighty proportions. If the PCs are poorly ill-equipped to deal with Magnatz and their predicament, then the spirit of this forgotten warrior will partially possess the PC. In game terms the PC now has double Health (reflecting their skill in combat rather than a sudden increased robustness) which is available to them at all times, and receives a boon of 10 points to Attack, Defence and Athletics whenever these skills are used in combat with anything demonic (including half-men). Resistance to demonic spells is now 20.

Psychologically the GM treats the person as having a new personality that emerges only when the GM finds it amusing/useful to do so. If the Player is competent to run this, the GM can coach them. If not, or in addition, the GM describes the PC's actions and words in appropriate circumstances. Usually this person is puzzled, and can offer little to the others in terms of hints about what is going on. And is unreliable. He may charge to an attack, explode in a flurry of blows, or break down in maudlin regret. All as the GM sees best. If the character is expendable (possibly a GMC in the first place) a final self-sacrifice may save PCs from slaughter during the pandemonium in the final section of this chapter.

## The Area Surrounding Vull

*The GM can place these locations as they wish.*

**Lake of Magnatz** A black evil-smelling semi-fluid quag, with a mysterious "an oddly proportioned rock emerges from the centre of the lake, tall and domed, yet pitted with protrusions and covered with straggling and sickly vegetation" island at the centre. This is the top of Magnatz's head, obscured with mud and bushes, and with

bumps and bunions that look like rocks. One option has PCs visiting here under –reluctant– guidance. The island resists casual explorations to discover its true nature if they are bold enough to sail there, since when dormant Magnatz is very rock-like, and his substance is too hard to remove more than a splinter. (If they manage to do this, a thin oil may ooze from the slight crevice created.)

**14) A black altar** stands half in and half out of the lake, carved from volcanic rock, shaped like a repulsive demonic head, though now worn by time. It radiates an aura of fear and is deeply carved with numerous markings. If examined well it might be seen that the area around it has been trodden down, and old bloodstains mar its surface, suggesting use no more than weeks or months ago at most.

**15) A row of seven demons** ranging in height from 4ft to 10ft tall. All are made of stone and seem to be flinching in pain. All are extremely realistically carved. Birds have nested in two places between the horns of the two tallest. Moss grows on their shoulders. Their spirits are also trapped in these forms, and their eyes seem to follow anyone who passes by.

**16) Next to the path a little way before the lake comes in sight is a broken and rusted machine**, mostly lost in the undergrowth. This is an air-car from the Cutz Wars and half of it was melted into slag by a demonic fireball. If the GM so desires, some of the crystals within its engine cavity may have magical properties (at the very least the capacity to store Magic pool points).

**17) A 20ft tall half-melted metallic figure** frozen in a marching position though partially slumped. It can be made out that once this was a noble heraldic warrior, presumably an automaton although it seems to be solid.

**18) A decorated plaza** about ten yards across, overhung by ancient trees, and adjacent to the minimal fractured ruins of a large house. This is an option that can be used or ignored as the GM sees fit. It's best use would likely be as an insertion when the PCs are fleeing Magnatz as his binding is broken. The first person to experience it might be the first person to roll as DF as the PCs flee along an ancient roadway, beneath a thick canopy of branches, that makes running through the forest easier - tripping through thick foliage and falling onto the plaza.

Despite the years, the plaza itself remains clean and uncracked, though slightly tilted by earth subsidence. It is decorated with numerous swirling coloured geometric patterns laid out in mosaics. Stepping onto the plaza instantly extracts 3points from a person's Magic pool (or from items on their person if insufficient pool points are present, possibly destroying an item in the process) and grants the person a magical effect of the GM's choosing as best suits the moment. This is a relic from the Cutz Wars, a place where anti-demonic heroes were blessed.



As it activates, the person is locked for several moments in excruciating pain whilst surrounded by lines of lively blue electric force, then vanishes for a moment or a few minutes. Presumably they are howling and futilely twisting to get free prior to this. Other PCs may try to assist them, but will be struck by the same effect if they contact them. Should you wish to expand this further, anyone so engaged might be transported from this place to a small arena in one of the Overworlds, where they find themselves standing before three huge blue motionless statues made of curious mixtures of scales held together with webs of force.

Cunning GMs might describe the first PC's experience as they "hurtle through a spinning void of many coloured lights, passing numerous opaque portals which you somehow know lead to other worlds, momentarily glimpsing a startled magician standing in the prow of a magnificent black magic flying vessel", until they arrive via a heavy and disorientating landing in a "strange realm with a bizarre multihued sky in which float massive distant fiery orbs", and the arena into which they come tumbling not only unharmed but also "unusually invigorated in fresh vital air". Only then the GM 'stops themselves' and says something akin to: "Oops. I shouldn't talk about what's on the other side before I ask what everyone else is doing." (Thus secretly encouraging more PCs to make the journey.)

On the other side, these Sadlark-like beings eventually activate. (Only after PCs have had the time to examine this ancient Overworld arena and its bizarre underground rooms that the inventive GM will create and details, perhaps with the assistance of the most imaginative players who have been instructed to 'think weird'! A few interesting items may be gained here.) The beings are expecting to be greeted by ancient heroes come to perform feats of martial prowess to prove their worthiness to be granted major magical boons with which to return to the Dying Earth and use against the demonic hordes.

And they will make this plain in their confused displeasure. Perhaps after first hunting down the intruders in a terrifying game of cat and mouse through the underground corridors, in which the GM should carefully cultivate an atmosphere in which she subtly suggests that these sniffing grumbling beings are most definitely dedicated to the PCs' demise. You might even end this section as they find a room with a magical portal in, and are attempting to activate it when the Overworld beings finally catch up with them, and stun them with nets of energy.

PCs with sufficient skill and verve might reveal (Ψ PERSUASION, IMPOSTURE) that they are 'heroes' in the middle of confronting, or about to confront, Magnatz,

whom the Overworld beings will describe as one of the most heartless and savage foes ever to escape from a Subworld. They will then be asked to demonstrate their aptitudes, so that the Overworld beings can best adjudge what enchanted enhancements to bestow upon them. These beings are naïve in the ways of the surface world, and so might be taken in by cantraps, sleight of hand (Ψ QUICK FINGERS), acrobatics (Ψ ATHLETICS), explicit and convincing tales of awesome deeds (Ψ PERSUASION, IMPOSTURE), or other approaches as inventive Players wrack their brains.

The beings will not hesitate to magically dismiss the unconvincing, who will disappear in a flash of light. (Which will be the case for all or most GMCs if any such folk also make this trip with or after the PCs.) Rewards will reflect the tale told. Successful PCs who speak of martial prowess may be gifted with something like a suit of energy armour that is activated by a Magic point pool, or a blade of Overworld force that glows with coloured light and hums as it cuts through air and demonic hide alike. One who convinced the Overworld beings that he/she is a Magician might be granted an amulet projecting an aura that resists demonic magic, or a wand that sears demonic flesh.

Basically the GM invents such things on the spur of the moment in response to PCs' actions, claims and success levels. It is also up to the GM if any of these benefits continue to last beyond the confines of Magnatz's valley. If the PCs are not benefiting from the Walking Boat, then magical weaponry and defences might be the game-realism way in which they survive the crossing of the Mountains.

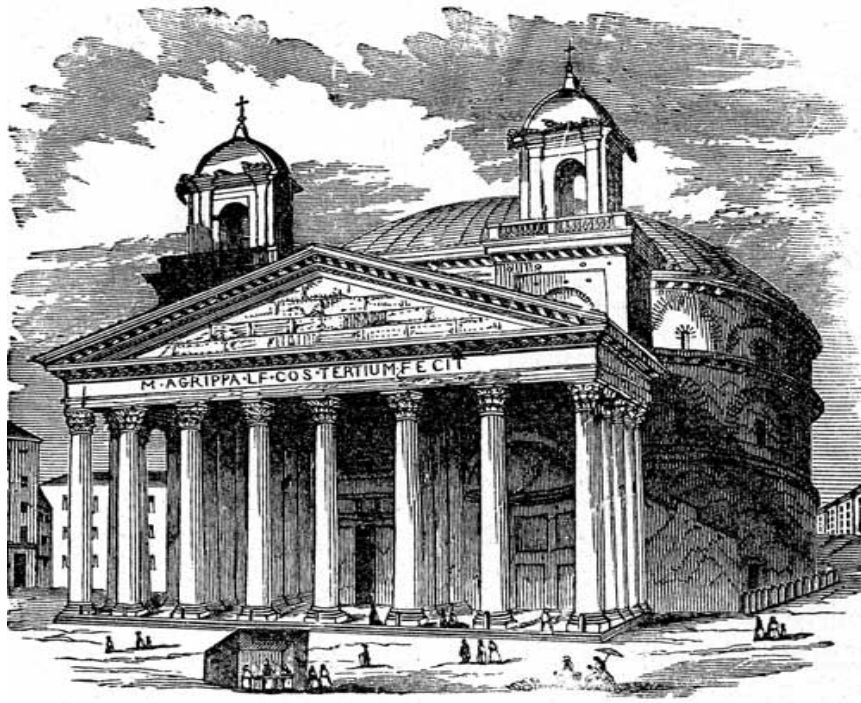
**19) A faintly humming whirling ball of blue energy** on a metal stand shaped like a lance protruding from the earth. No demon can come within 100yards of this structure. An additional benefit is that anyone who is not demonic and has no demonic taint who enters this space has their Magic pool points fully recharged though only once per day. (Again this must be off the beaten track somewhere.)

**20) Guepah's Mound of Warriors** (This enormous mound of earth hides the long dead remains of the army of Guepah the Great that was sent to destroy Magnatz. Magnatz destroyed them but was later commanded by Vull Faris to inter their remains beneath this huge mound of earth. Anyone visiting here at night will be disturbed by several ghosts of some of the war leaders, who encourage revenge and may even, amidst their ravings, reveal some useful information.) The semi-possessed character might have an episode of emotional distress at this place.

**21) Mount Temus** looms over Vull and Padagar Pass cuts across its southern flank.



## Appendix 5: Vull Temple



### Introduction

As stated elsewhere, this is a major part of this adventure. The PCs need to realise they are going to be sacrificed to something big and nasty, and pursue the hope that somewhere within the huge temple building are sufficient clues for them to avoid that fate. Exactly how and when the PCs explore this building (in several visits or all at one time, which seems more likely) depends on play, and various options are given in the scenario text. The GM is at liberty to motivate Players to have their PCs engage in unusually adventurous activities simply by reminding them that this is not simple Cugel-Level anymore. Therefore, PCs that 'fail to act in their own best interests' will surely perish. (We are presuming here that your Players are the kind of folk who role-play in order to advance their characters and enjoy the thrills of a good story, so hopefully no such inducement will ever even be necessary.)

The temple is in two sections. The lower temple (ground floor) is set up as a place of serious religion with rooms dedicated to worship of Magnatz, including the Garden of Ascension. This area is comparatively dull. The junior Clerics only know this area and never ascend (until their 'personal rite'). They falsely believe that on their ascension they will be 'reborn' as Senior Clerics, but this is not logical due to their numbers, and anyone explaining well enough ( $\Psi$  PERSUASION) might profoundly disturb them.

### Getting In

*PCs should be left to choose how they will do this, and might combine more than one option. Or may find new options.*

i) **Disguised as simple worshippers** ( $\Psi$  IMPOSTURE) the PCs may don local clothing, mingle with the townsfolk during the ceremony, then slip away into the interior (which they can only do unobserved when the ceremony becomes raucous, and they won't know for certain that such an opportunity will present unless they query a local as to what goes on in ceremonies, using Persuasion methods that either create an aura of respect or are particularly intimidating. (Simple general enquiries will not suffice.)

ii) **Attending Worship** after convincing ( $\Psi$  PERSUASION) a large number of Cil GMCs to join the ceremony in a huge gang of 'penitents/ supplicants', then ( $\Psi$  STEALTH, CONCEALMENT -1) slipping away (perhaps when some co-conspirators from Cil create an effective diversion)

If the PCs sneak in as part of a service, disguised as townsfolk, they will not be remarked upon. You might make it easy for them to realise that they can disguise themselves. Or the PCs Townsfolk will presume that the PCs are 'doing the right thing'. However, some manner of diversion may be needed in order for them to slip away deeper into the temple without being noticed. Or players might be here at night having broken in.



iii) **Upper windows.** At night, one agile ( $\Psi$  ATHLETICS -1) PC negotiating the front wall of the temple, lowering a rope, and all of them squeezing through ( $\Psi$  ATHLETICS) one of the small upper windows one by one. A sensible option is for others to stand below with a thick blanket held between them in case the person falls. Especially in a campaign with Turjanic pretensions anyone falling from a great height onto hard ground may stand a chance of expiring or being cruelly injured.

iv) **Over The Roof.** The only other ( $\Psi$  PERCEPTION) way in is by rope and climbing ( $\Psi$  ATHLETICS). The suspiciously-sheened huge slate tiles are magically enhanced to make purchase and magical adherence impossible – a task current inhabitants are incapable of performing, but was an enchantment cast long ago when security was more of a priority. This is more dangerous, but some PC groups by now will be doing sensible things such as obtaining and using metal spikes to attach ropes to, and suchlike

Descriptions in the text are simple, often consisting only of introductory flowery phrases, or even less for non game-significant rooms. The GM needs to be primed to create additional small descriptive details as required for both atmosphere and play. More specifically the GM is encouraged to create their own strange encounters prior to running this scenario and place them within the building. As with the Palace in the publication 'Lords of Cil', you may recruit your players to assist you – asking them to co-create the environment as they search different rooms. Note also that this temple is huge. The simplicity of the map may lead folk to assume that the areas are of easily manageable and explorable magnitude. Indeed not. Even 3A (the smallest room) is a large gymnasium capable of housing 100 or more active recreationists at any one time. The whole place should give the impression that it once housed a far more residents.

## The Public Ceremony

This lasts for somewhere between two and three hours. Townsfolk are summoned by a special use of the gong, and leave their tasks to wander obediently inside, where they arrange themselves in a loosely packed throng. It seems that being at the front is considered prestigious, and people are constantly rearranging themselves to be nearer to the dais, as ousted people are pushed back. This is done quietly and with respect, but creates various currents of movement within the crowd. (Great cover if PCs want to move about, especially before the Clerics assemble, when the rearranging is less subtle, and occasionally evidences as minor scuffling.)

The structure of the ceremony itself is straightforward.

i) About ten minutes after everyone is inside four heaving huntsmen close the main doors. (This is totally innocent, but if PCs suspect that some special reason exists for having everyone off the streets, then why not have small gangs of deodands bundled beneath animal skins rush past carrying bizarre ritualistic items – and heading towards the lake hurriedly as they attempt to get out of the sunlight, though only those outside will see them unless some special magic is available to spy.)

ii) From the door at the rear of the dais, 20 Clerics emerge and line the back of the platform. Three of them step forward, two supporting the most elderly and standing slightly behind this revered figure, which raises his hands high into the air, causing absolute silence to fall into this large space. The Cleric then cries out 'Magnatz!' in a frail but enthusiastic tone, and the word is echoed three times in a vast roar from the crowd and Clerics combined.

iii) The townsfolk are led in bizarre chanting and shaking for about 20 minutes, repeating phrases that the Cleric announces and then everyone else follows flawlessly. This is a peculiar unknown language (demonic) and contains only one occasionally repeated recognisable word (Magnatz). The movements are not ritualistic, but a minor frenzied bobbing about that around 10% of the crowd are engaged in at any one time.

iv) The end of this section is signified when the eyes of the statue on the dais suddenly glow with a sickly green. The crowd gasps and ceases its chanting. They then begin to sway and mutter incoherently and out of synch with each other. The energy in the room is almost tangible. 'Something' is happening. PCs (if any PCs remain by this point) with a Magic rating above 5 may sense that an unpleasant force has manifested in the vicinity. This might be the time when they consider to move on from this room, passing easily now amidst the now slightly insensible crowd. Men and women shuffle and lightly stamp, waves of movement pass through the crowd as one person sways against another and this builds. This continues for a few minutes more.

v) Countless filaments of green light begin to ooze from the statue's eyes, one connecting with each of the Clerics first of all, and then others (the number growing) snaking down into the crowd. Nothing appears to happen to persons so connected, although if this is experienced there is a sense of slight euphoria. Effectively this filament drains a single point from a Health pool and Magic pool (if available) – a process taking a full half-hour, during which all folk are only semi-sensible at best. PCs may wish to avoid it, and need only resist Magic 12 or use Athletics/Concealment/Stealth amidst the crowd. But do not describe this in simple mechanics. This is a powerful encounter with a demonic force, even though not a life and death struggle.



vi) If the PCs remain for the rest of the ceremony, the GM is advised to create further peculiar acts, bearing in mind that folk will be slightly tired after the filaments retreat. At the end of the ceremony the townsfolk will stagger exhausted to their homes, rest for no more than an hour, and then return to their labours. All in all this could be a good cover for investigating the temple if the PCs haven't done so during the night.

## Temple Ambience

The temple is huge. Don't let the simple map fool you. As an example, Room 1 (the public temple) is a vast chamber, capable of holding 400 standing individuals with ease and room to spare. Inside, many items line the walls of the corridors (in groups or rows) of both the upper and lower floors.

These objects can be detailed if examined, but are basically to provide cover for Concealment. (Some on the upper floor might still be active.) If anyone questions as to why the temple is lined with junk, a Pedantry roll may bring forth the apparency that at some point in history all remnants of the Cutz Wars were collected from the city & surrounds and brought for storage into this building. If the pieces are examined, it is also apparent (upstairs only) that more than one item of sorcerous machinery has been worked on, in an attempt to repair it.

GMs might consider inventing items and making these things an active part of the scenario. Persistent PCs might be rewarded with something like a semi-functional mechanical battle glove (GM invents benefits and drawbacks of using), or even a dart gun and ammunition – in separate locations. (This item expires due to mechanical failure exactly when the GM wishes, or simply runs out of ammunition that is too finely-tooled to be replaced.)

Apart from the public ceremonial room, the temple will always be sombre when the PCs are inside. Never is this place a hive of activity: *"You have entered a gloomy and still environment. Dust lies thick on the floor, though disturbed by many feet. This building is ancient, made of massive blocks of stone, perhaps by magic. Hallways and rooms are of a grand scale. Once upon a time many notable people likely walked these polished flag floors. Sputtering torches stand in sconces carved like the grinning heads of imps every twenty feet or so. Small long windows high in the walls are rare and likely inadequate even on the brightest days. Numerous statues, large ornamental urns, and inexplicable non-functioning pieces of ancient machinery line the walls, presenting worrying shapes and shadows."*



## Lower Temple

**1) The Public Temple Chamber:** The grand stairwells indicated on the map are enclosed inside walls, and their doorways have been long-ago walled up with immense blocks. Whatever is upstairs is clearly inaccessible by these means. (See also details at '14' below.) Both junior Clerics and regular townsfolk know that it is the sacred domain of the Senior Clerics, and thus heresy to discuss in any detail the possibilities of what might be up there. (All regular traffic to the upper floor uses the stairs at the end of the corridor near Room 5.)

*"A large echoing chamber, fully the height of five men, and large enough to hold 400 or more with ease. Supported by ornate pillars carved with strange twisting designs, and most notable at the opposite side from the main doors for the large platform and peculiar dais, presumably from where the Clerics address the crowd. At the rear of this dais is a large sculpture of a tall and powerful being, and to either side of that are ornate closed metal doors leading out of the room. Two further large doors exit to the left and right of the room, plus it appears that once upon a time two stairwells ascended to an upper floor, though access to these has long since been sealed off with immense blocks."*

If the PCs are able to get close enough to see the sculpture: *"More than the height of two men standing one atop the other, this being is humanoid and yet unnaturally curved. Its hands and feet are clawed, and it's head more of an animalistic snout. Nonetheless, it's physical attitude of open-handed generosity (rather than poised menace) seems calming, although the more cynical amongst you might suspect that its poise could also be interpreted as the patient stance of a being awaiting to receive what is rightfully its own. The statue emerges partially from the wall, indicating hopefully that it is a symbolic partial piece, and not some manner of golem that can be animated to accost intruders."*

**2A) The Infirmary:** Rows of beds and a calm atmosphere indicate that some consideration is given to the physical health of the junior Clerics. Various small vats and glass containers house odd-smelling fluids (magical vat liquids that are restoratives for the Clerics). Here might be a Cleric or two, recuperating from one of the illnesses that begin to afflict them as they approach their expiry date. Transparent hoses slowly deliver these fluids from bedside jars into their veins via thin metal tubes.

They might raise an alarm and need to be 'subdued'. This is not a surgery, so Player creation of scalpels etc is not appropriate, but other useful magical or first aid equipment can be here. One hunter is here, who broke his leg when an erb threw him across a clearing. He is partially sedated because of the pain. Another townsperson (a skilled artisan) is also here, resting in the only occupied metal bath of three. This bath is full of a strange goo that enters via thin pipes from the ceiling. His crushed leg has been removed, and another one is growing from the neat stump, nerve endings and bone tissue first.





**2B) Room of Vestments:** Robes, headdresses, ceremonial clawed gloves, ceremonial scarves. In storage alcoves or hanging on hooks. Superb for disguises.

**2) The Office:** Logbooks are kept of all the transgressions of townsfolk, stored in multiple shelves across most of the walls. Each person living has a book in the active section, and as well as a name also has a code number such as "Experimental Batch 3897B(i): Individual 242". (Their actual 'name' meriting only a mention in the brief bio on the second page.) All previous 'residents' are also detailed, plus analysis notes as to the success, or lack of, of their matrix-efficiency index.

Also here, if PCs search, are accounts kept as to how many souls Magnatz has received so far each year (plus the records of previous years). None of this is easy to understand, and would require some time to be spent perusing these thick volumes to understand that somewhere there is an entity known as Magnatz that for some reason requires to be fed with a dozen or more living entities three times a year.

Further careful perusing might uncover the book that details foreigners sacrificed (rare in these days of lack of travel). Notes in the margins indicate that relief of the writers that Magnatz will be satisfied for far longer due to the higher quality of these specimens over the feeble energies of the locals. (Clerics consider themselves elite.)

**3A) The Gymnasium:** Various weights and climbing equipment are scattered throughout this large area. It is where the Clerics keep themselves fit in the hopes of sustaining their vat-lives beyond the standard duration.

**3) The Room of Contrition:** A tall statue of Magnatz stands on a plinth overlooking a room that is bare other than with several small wooden trunks. One or two lesser Clerics may be in here, flagellating themselves with barbed flails for thinking impure thoughts. Others may be rolling on the ground in fits of guilt. None will observe the casual onlooker, unless that person intervenes.

**4) Vault of Memories:** *"A dark, high-ceilinged, square room, with no discernible furnishings other than a single silver globe in the middle of the floor, half-buried in the ground."* Anyone touching this globe is subject to Magical attack (GM decides ratings/difficulty). Into their heads might be forced a number of patently ridiculous 'memories' of a beneficent Magnatz performing friendly tasks. Such as: building a school for happy, smiling children; stamping on marauding half-men; damming a river with a big rock to form a swimming hole; throwing the contents of a metal water silo onto a burning building to save the inhabitants...

This was all a sham, used years ago to brainwash people when such a thing was needed. Now it is used only for those vat-creatures about to be recycled (sorry, about to ascend to Magnatzia), to place them into a state of soporific euphoria. It also might derange the mind of a PC

or GMC, causing them to become (temporary) devotees of Magnatz (and thus require stunning and restraining, or disenchanting, before they can take an active role in the adventure again). If they are a GMC the effect might be long-term.

Astute PCs ( $\Psi$  PERCEPTION, MAGIC) might notice that the image of Magnatz sometimes doesn't match the actions – suggesting that the scenes are fabricated, or even notice the odd moment where Magnatz seems to be eating some he saved, though a moment later it is again clear that he isn't.

**5) Room of the Penitents:** Both doors capable of being locked. Here is where minor heretics are kept awaiting punishment, recycling or sacrifice. Inside are also several large statues of Magnatz in alcoves. Anyone spending the night here has nightmares of a demonic being. The GM decides who and how many folk are in here, if any.

**The Grand Doorway.** This magnificent arch stands at the base of the stairway next to Room 5. It is decorated with strange sigils and emblems (demonic). The door itself is not actually a door in the usual sense, but a single flawless and smooth panel of translucent red amber-like material. (Immune to all normal means of opening.)

If necessary, PCs might be able to enter here by waiting (perhaps hiding in the Honouring Room) for a Senior Cleric to pass through. That Cleric utters a magic (demonic) word, expends a Magic pool point, and passes through as the strange material simply fades to a mist and then resolidifies (a few seconds later – maybe just long enough for PCs to sneak after this person).

**6A) Clerics Food Preparation Area:** plus storage for dried foods. Food for Senior Clerics also prepared here.

**6) Junior Clerics' Communal Dining Hall**

**7) Junior Clerics' Sleeping Quarters:** Rows of bunks, spartan dining rooms, foodstore, simple kitchens, washrooms... Make it up if PCs go here. Most of the junior Clerics will be here at night.

**8) Clerics' Private Chapel.** The junior Clerics worship here. *"A dim and dusty vault filled with rows of hard wooden benches. At one end a 10ft tall statue of a vaguely reptilian humanoid stands with arms raised and hands (claws) held open. Before it a wooden lectern decorated with strange burned runes faces the area where the audience would sit."* The statue of Magnatz once again accentuates a relative friendliness (IE it is not attacking, nor has human limbs in its hands or mouth.)

**9) Library:** *"A large room containing many scrolls and books rising high in tiered shelving stacks. Also here are copy benches and sheaves of paper upon which careful copies of large texts are being made."* Herein rest many books written in ancient (demonic and/or Cutzian) scripts that defy easy translation. Scattered amongst them may be some in recognisable languages if the GM so desires. All those being copied are unreadable. The copying is a pointless task given to the



lesser Clerics to keep them busy (or may be part of some grander plan that the PCs will never have time to uncover).

**10A) Senior Clerics' Communal Room:** couches, a water fountain, desks and writing equipment, dining table, whatever else you wish to invent.

**10) Senior Clerics' Bunkroom (Individual Stalls)**

Personal possessions in open fronted storage lockers include simple things like books on demonic magic, numerous copies of the memoirs and biographies of Vull Faris (list differing titles for amusement if the PCs explore in here), beakers of pure alcohol. Some PC groups, aware of their impending fate, may feel justified in sneaking in and murdering all Senior Clerics silently, one by one. If so discourage gently, or invent protective energy fields, though timing makes a difference here. Several Senior Clerics should survive, even if the campaign is evolving into Turjanic and prone to violence, and then PCs mount a carefully crafted assassination program.

**11) Room of Restoration:** Here are various Magnatzian relics (statuettes and minor magical devices that transport one into bliss when handled/contemplated on/sat in—though a demonic version of bliss). Sitting in demonic decorated coffins enhances the vitality of vat creatures but does nothing for humans. Invent at will.

**12) Garden of Ascension:** Possibly a point at which the PCs might enter the temple from the roof. *"This room is open to the sky at its centre, and thus more of a courtyard than a room, though around half of it is rooved. At its centre grow palm trees and bushes of coloured and scented flowers. Around them is a colonnaded walkway."* (Around which Clerics wander during daytime whilst reading (or pretending to) treatises on the magnificence of Magnatz.) If the PCs investigate this room further, in the middle of the vegetated area is a large oblong shallow pool in which tiny coloured fish dart about beneath and around beds of drifting water lilies. Plus (not immediately visible through the stand of trees and bushes, until that obstacle is by-passed) the Edifice of Ascension sits under the upper storey at the rear of this area.

**13) Edifice of Ascension:** *"At the far end of the garden area is a large and peculiar mechanical, or possibly magical, apparatus. It has many parts, some of which tower over the PCs. Just looking at this bizarre contraption may cause confusion. Much of this is a mass of vats and pipes, with noxious liquids brewing and bubbling and their resultant gasses being expanded through pipes."* Once they examine this area the PCs will see also that a central part of this structure contains a chair device, attached to pistons and chains, and adorned with decorative restraining straps (because the journey to Magnatzia can be a bumpy ride). Alongside this is a lever topped with a silver demonic head control-knob. When the lever is pulled several valves release and a jet of gas wafts across the chair area, causing all in that area to become temporarily euphoric.

The chair then rises up to the ceiling and passes through a concealed valve into Room 18, where the occupant

(typically restrained) is belaboured into semi-consciousness by the vat constructs here and thrown into a processing hopper. PCs may enter the inner temple through this point: one needs only to sit in the chair & pull the handle.

The noise of the machinery is not great as the workings are kept well-oiled. Those who fail to resist the magical euphoric will still be conscious of their purpose and able to defend themselves, but will also be extremely happy for the next ten minutes. One option for entry is one-by-one for this purpose, or perhaps the chair can safely transport two persons (though this would need to be tested by one person first to be sure there was room for two to pass through the aperture without being crushed).

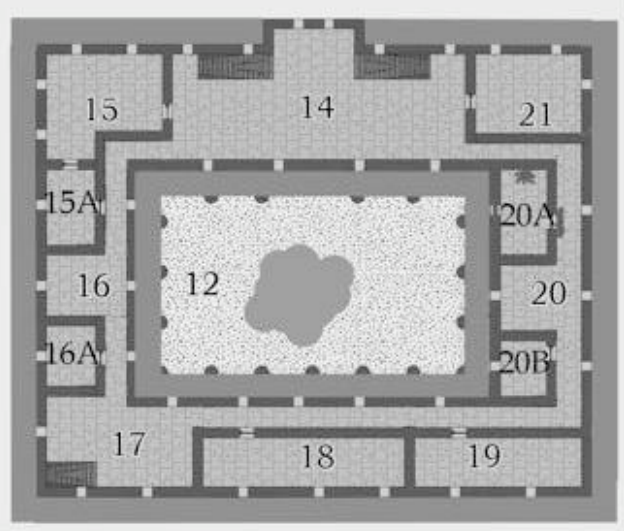
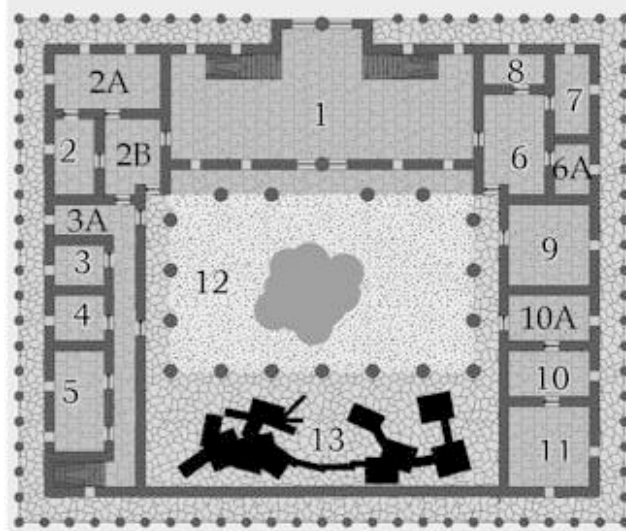
One amusing episode would be PCs and their allies passing one by one or two by two into the room above, each pair attracting more vat creatures attempting to subdue them and shove them into the hopper. In the early waves PCs will be hard-pressed to defend themselves and a GMC may be lost into the hopper. Once sufficient PCs arrive they should be able to fend off the last of the vat creatures and perhaps will decide to dispose of the evidence in the hopper.

**Beneath the Edifice:** The observant examining the structure may ( $\Psi$  PERCEPTION) notice a semi-concealed panel in the base of one of the structures at its rear. Opening the panel reveals a ladder leading down. Why has it not been opened? Perhaps the panel is invisible to the eyes of vat creatures? (A precaution evoked by the creators to prevent any aberrant or wilful creation from finding it.) Beneath the machine is an area that can be as simple or as complex as the GM requires.

It could even be extended into a mini-scenario of subterranean passages if so appeals, containing worm-like demonoids and hulking vat aberrations placed there as wandering guards. The principle purpose of this area is to house a beautiful huge radiating Overworld crystal, which is the power source for this whole area and might even be a foundational energy device for maintaining Magnatz's binding enchantment.

It is housed in a delicate frame of metal stanchions and arches. It cannot be destroyed but may be sabotaged in a way that causes its power to begin to fail. IE smashing the stanchions. Unfortunately this loss does not immediately end the binding, though it does weaken it. If this is all that is sabotaged the binding will not fail for months. A primary guardian might be the first ever Vull Faris clone, now indescribably ancient and partly senile, who can answer some of their questions.

*(This section is an example of the kind of improvising GMs are encouraged to do throughout this entire publication. Most GMs will likely find it easier to make such adjustments as notes when originally reading this work, though sometimes ideas also spring forth during play. If so, make sure they do not disrupt the game-play solutions and pathways of investigation already in place.)*



## Upper Temple

The upper temple has a much smaller population. Only Senior Clerics nowadays access this area, though there is also a residential population of vat-creature workers. Rooms are only briefly described, since there is no way of telling which ones the PCs will enter and which they will not. GM needs to describe any entered in flowing detail, and perhaps request the assistance of the PCs in fleshing out these places (as suggested earlier). The windows indicated on the map are not true windows that could be passed through, but merely air-vents set into the stonework. It is impossible to use normal means to view through them.

Note that vat creatures are sometimes noted as carrying things as they walk by, and yet no storage or repair workshops are indicated in the index to this floor. Remember the storage functions of these massive corridors? As well as many items stacked and spread along the walls, several areas have been dedicated to workshop spaces, not only storing sections of piping and pieces of wood, but also with workbenches and appropriate tool storage units. Some of these are mentioned in the incidental encounters section later to be placed wherever the GM chooses. One can assume that the vat room and its supporting mechanisms are subject to extreme wear, and need continual maintenance.

## Workers in the Temple

Some vat creatures emerge resembling visually to a high extent the original matrices. Since it would look odd if all townsfolk looked the same (and then perhaps violate one of the original binding enchantments – that a vibrant town of dedicated followers of Vull Faris would stand upon this site until the sun died) all those who are carbon copies do not get their intelligence fully activated and instead remain here, hidden from the rest of town, working away.

Semi-intelligent drones. They wander about and do not bother PCs if the PCs do not bother them. Somewhat like the Borg from TV's "Star Trek: The Next Generation", if one is attacked, others from nearby within easy sight will slowly converge (like zombies). Those from further away will be drawn if a fight escalates (either by sight or sound).

These creatures also do not feel pain, or only very dimly. This brings to light possible amusing scenarios such as PCs apologising for stab wounds, brushing a vat-creature down and shaking hands, whilst a converging horde slowly loses interest and walks away. These beings cannot be Persuaded or Seduced. The only way to influence them is with Imposture, posing as a Cleric bringing new instructions. But successes need to be good, as such a thing is highly unusual. Failures result in bland statements that the vat creature in person has reasoned "I suspect you may be an intruder. Excuse me whilst I go to raise the alarm." (Perhaps requiring they be tailed as they slowly wander away, done away with when out of sight of other vat creatures, and the body hidden.)

## Sample Worker

*"Kindly ...desist ...from your ...distractions. I am ...at ...task."* (Said in a slow and dulled fashion.)

Forthright 2, Obtuse 18, Strength [fists] 7, Dodge 9, Health 14 [\_\_\_], Athletics 7 [\_\_\_], Craftsmanship 6, Perception 4, Quick Fingers 3, Wherewithal 3 [\_\_\_]. (Health indicates low levels of pain awareness, not enhanced sturdiness.)

There are five different visual appearances of workers, representing the five functioning vats. PCs may become aware of this weird fact quite soon, as they observe passing groups of workers, two or three of which are identical. Although they vary of course in age.



**Vull Faris:** Saturnine appearance, average build, a thin near goatee and long dark hair (greying in the older models)

**Scandrik Hale:** Muscular and bald, strong features and thick lips.

**Mercher Gronz:** Short and stocky. Thin brown hair. Balding in older models.

**Hallena Peere:** Attractive (or would be if not bereft of wit and having the effects of this in carriage and muscle tone). Tall (for a woman) and blonde. Averagely built.

**Norada Clenderal:** Dark haired, average height (for a woman). More roundly constructed.

*On being in the temple for some time it may become obvious to the PCs that these people could all reflect the appearances of the founders of this town, in that all inhabitants resemble them to one degree or another.*

The most important object for the PCs to obtain whilst exploring this area is **Vull Faris's Ritual Grimoire**. It is held in a display case as described immediately below, and is best located in whichever of Rooms 15, 15A, 18 or 20A that the PCs last discover/investigate.

## The Ritual Grimoire Case

*Adapt this if the grimoire is located in Room 18 on the lectern. Perhaps it is protected by a 'box' of magical force?*

☉ "A square glass case stands on a solid featureless glass plinth that is three-feet high. There are not apparent seams in the case. The book itself is open on a small metal support, so that the two open pages can be read."

The text is archaic, but can be read by anyone whose Pedantry is 5 or more, though it takes some time to do so. These pages discuss the creation of vat creatures, specifically what to do when a matrix becomes old and corrupt and yet cannot be replaced or redesigned.

Opening the glass case is as complex as you want it to be, depending on the resources of the PCs. It might be a hidden catch (Ψ QUICK-FINGERS, ATHLETICS-1, CRAFTSMANSHIP-1), or a magical seal (if the PCs have, or can find in their immediate surrounds, some manner of impeding magic), or merely require a codeword to be spoken for the lock to open and otherwise be incredibly tough and require intense effort and ingenuity to smash apart.

The cover of the book reads: 'Ritual Grimoire'. The name of the author is inside the front cover: 'Grand Triarch of Dharad: Vull Faris – Demon Scourge'.

The contents of the book (revealed if perused at length, or perhaps 'in extremis' if events are progressing apace) include, often lodged deep within other sections of the work:

- Details of the standard conditions of Magnatz's binding (human sacrifices in intricate ceremony every year, Vull Faris himself to stand constant watch, the town to remain constantly vigilant)

- The ritual enchantment that bound Magnatz (which could theoretically simply be read in reverse to release him, a task that would take a skilled magician merely a minute or so),

- The focus of the enchantment being described as a dark altar on the edge of the lake that is where the demon shall be bound: "held by mighty enchanted chains, beneath the water so that only his eyes can gaze upon the world he once swore to dominate".

- Details of the sacrificial ceremony, giving hints to the intuitive (Ψ PEDANTRY) that if this ceremony was disrupted and the altar defaced or befouled (PCs at liberty to improvise) this might violate a condition of the binding and thus set Magnatz free

- Very important: Amongst the chapter of warnings about Magnatz, the reader finds notes that he/it is a powerful demonic entity whose energy has an effect on the area around where he is held:

*"It is most important that revitalisation rituals are carried out monthly, or preferably weekly, or else Magnatz may begin to exert a force that brings the region surrounding his lake under the sway of physical laws more applicable to his subworld of origin than to those of our ailing planetoid. Specifically, regular magics may fail or be altered, demonic beings might begin to appear, and Magnatz may be able to seal himself off from the outside world – or seal all visitors inside his little kingdom." ...*

*"Should such a state of affairs ever eventuate, it would be very hard to regain control, other than ending the binding enchantment and starting all over again, which would of course be most undesirable and arduous an undertaking. Nonetheless, a complete wiping of the binding would disrupt the vortices of power on which he built his 'alterations' as they would require to be woven through the original binding in order to be effective from his position of energetic incarceration."*

(Basically PCs need to gain the impression that in order to break the barrier surrounding Vull they need to disrupt the binding that holds Magnatz beneath the black lake.)

- The book may hold many other items of interest depending on what benefits the GM wishes to introduce to her PCs.

- Note that if a PC or GMC has brought a magical tome from Cil, then the binding-release spell will be found in that Cil tome, not in this book (which is entirely devoted to holding Magnatz in place).

- If a GMC magician has accompanied the PCs from Cil, then this person is the only one capable of casting the de-binding. This GMC may not be a close confidante of the PCs and may need to be located (freed?) and convinced to



undertake this task, and will likely expire horribly for maximum dramatic effect upon its completion.

**14) True Magnatz Worship Area (for Senior Clerics and vat creatures).** A large true representation of the hideous Magnatz and his gaping maw. Even at night two or three vat creatures may be here prostrate before the statue, quivering in adoration and terror. A large section of the back wall of this area is a softly glowing swirling mass of energy, and is made more active through concentration. It is here that the Senior Clerics come to communicate with Magnatz. It is also here that the binding of the creature is focussed. Were the PCs mighty magicians, they could disrupt the magic.

As it is the hideous demonic pentagram on the floor is impervious to all but the strongest spells backed by a concert of mighty minds. Should PCs linger here, a half-seen hideous visage (Magnatz) will appear and will demand to know where its human sacrifices are, and why it has to wait until (the ceremony). It further complains that it is heartily sick of a diet of vat-grown human constructs, which taste so bland and have hardly any souls to speak of. It ends by saying: *"I curse you Vull Faris' for your bargain. One day I shall be free and shall deliver a terrible revenge upon you and your accursed human world."* Before or after this encounter ghostly excretions of Magnatz's evil intents manifest and float moaning about the area. Note that the stairwells are accessible from up here, but have been significantly infilled by people throwing broken machinery and tools into them for more than a century. The pointless task of excavating them would take many hours by normal means.

**15A) Magical Workroom:** Both doors to this room are magical glass that shift aside only when a Senior Cleric or Vull Faris clone presses his warm hand against it. (One method to enter is by obtaining such a hand after seeing this manner of entrance or, more likely, egress. If the hand cools whilst they are inside, then they have to wait for another clone to come along so as to obtain a second hand for making their escape.)

*"Clearly a magician's laboratory. Various experiments are ongoing atop more than a dozen large stone benches, though currently nobody is tending them. Many glass-fronted storage cabinets also rise nearly to the ceiling, and a wheeled ladder on rails is available to access the majority of the shelves."*

Fill this with devices and amazements of your own devising. PCs could easily find some useful items such as vials of acid, cutting tools, magical fluids. Of course many of the more useful items will be unidentifiable to dabblers and therefore useless. Here is a specific place to **insist** your Players assist with the active design.

**15) Library:** The entrance to this room might be held closed with a peculiar puzzle lock that defies both nimbleness (Ψ QUICK FINGERS, ATHLETICS -1, STEALTH -1) and mental acuity (Ψ PERCEPTION -1,

CRAFTSMANSHIP -1, PEDANTRY -1) to be operated successfully. All Senior Clerics know this combination and are the only ones to use this room. The real book depository of this temple. Herein is a treasure trove of ancient tomes. Once again Players are invited to assist the GM in devising the contents.

Many will be legible only to those with a Magic rating of 6 or more, others are in ancient scripts, but many are readable (since the current language of the ancient earth is itself an age-old tongue). Many magical references are also here, though most are to do with the creation of vat creatures. (Vull Faris dedicated the library to this purpose.) A vat creature PC (even one not from here) might find a tome with his picture on the front, only to discover that it is his 'operating manual' and that he is a standard model. Although ongoing study of it might reveal ways to activate hitherto secret/magical abilities.

**16A) Latrines.** A series of enclosed cubicles surround the edges of this room, raised several feet above the ground to accommodate a large raised platform that also circles the room. (Within this platform are pipes that pump the voidings of the vat creatures into the mulching pool in the Funghal Chamber.) Irregularly a vat-creature hoses this area down. It might be on duty when the PCs pass by, and if attacked has the option to spray them with water.

**16) Portal Room:** At the centre of this alcove a 15ft tall and wide decorated portal framework bounds an oval aperture that is completely empty, though the border is one decorated with huge and potent magical runes. Viewed from the front this is indeed empty, and objects can be thrown (or persons step/jump) through with impunity and will only (1 time in 20) vanish when such is done. However, when viewed from the back, the portal is filled with coruscating blue light.

If passed through, persons so doing fall 50feet onto a mass of fungus growing in a peculiar spongy landscape. Up above them balanced on a frictionless 50ft pole is a portal identical to the one they passed through in Room 16. GMs can use or not use this option as their experience of this scenario suggests. Various options present as possibilities:

- (i) PCs pass through out of curiosity and have to deal with –fight/avoid/converse with– strange semi-intelligent creatures whilst seeking for sufficient solid materials or other means [perhaps creatures like fish that are filled with helium and float routinely at heights of 50-100ft] to regain the portal and pass back,
- (ii) PCs with one or more violet cusps may need to bargain these for assistance, thus losing that item/s,
- (iii) PCs may be pursued or trying to avoid a suspicious patrol of Senior Clerics and have no choice but to leap through the portal or be captured,
- (iv) PCs may be captured by vat creatures and thrown through the portal [Senior Clerics would not waste





sacrifices]. This is a peculiar Overworld domain and not a subworld.

**17) Vat Support Room:** A forest of bubbling pipes, simmering brewing huge containers of coloured sludges, and dull-witted vat creatures stirring, mixing and testing solutions (with scientific instruments and their senses: sniffing/tasting).

**18): Vat Chamber:** Entrance is either from the Garden of Ascension or through a doorway suspiciously lined with demonic and magical symbols, the door of which is featureless jet black like pure oil that is somehow upright. It also feels like this to the touch. Those wishing to pass through must overcome Magic rating [ ] or else be a Vull native vat creature, who are simply allowed through. Once one is inside one can simply exit at will, or reach through and touch another, who can then enter with ease.

*"This room is long and high. It is dimly lit, but not so dim that you cannot make out a dozen or more human forms moving slowly as they perform their tasks. Some mix powders at benches, some stand adjacent to five large metal tanks (though three other tanks stand ignored), slowly stirring or gently prodding the unseen contents with poles, some focus on delicate metalwork at low benches, one stands at a lectern – immersed in consideration of a huge tome. At the centre of the floor is a strange metal sphincter that presumably allows access to the floor below. Next to it is a large metal hopper with a wide-brimmed aperture on top."*

As well as the vats, machinery here processes both fungal material and recycled vat creatures into pulpy soups (via crushing and boiling) that are then channelled into pipes that pass through the wall and end as spigots in the Feedroom. The hopper is where the 'ascended' usually end up after arising from the garden below, grabbed, beaten and thrown – often still struggling – into its gnashing teeth. One or more PCs may need to violently resist this fate, though hopefully will be advantaged by not being strapped to the chair.

In the vats are growing townsfolk in various stages of completion. Describe in minute detail the bundles of nerve-endings, visible brain stems, fluttering eye-stalks etc. For dramatic effect one new creation may emerge whilst the PCs are here, unsoiled and unconditioned, and thus a brand new blank PC. Bursting forth with a howl from the fluids. If not prevented, the workers will congregate on this newborn and carry its struggling form straight to the conditioning room.

Various options present: the newborn might be psychopathically deranged and attack all and sundry with great strength, or be timid and bereft of wit. PCs may wander the tanks, peering in, and view an incredible beauty, whose eyes then open as she sits up and falls deeply in love with the male PC with the highest Seduction rating. Another possible object here is a dissection table, where a townsfolk is strapped, undergoing examination (gagged and without sedation) to investigate the problem

or enhancement that evidenced itself through their vat matrix expression.

This may be the point that PCs observe that all vat creatures have an inner matrix replicant about which their form is created. (Perhaps when it is pulled bloodily from the still-wriggling townsfolk, though they cease wriggling and that point.)

**Vat Workers:** all are drones of the Vull Faris variety. They are programmed to become violent only in three circumstances: (i) An outsider or vat-creature attempts to damage the vat-creation process, (ii) An outsider damages a vat-creature, (iii) Someone arises through the ascension chair. In this latter case of course that person is usually restrained. An alert PC might notice these creatures approaching as he steps off the chair and attempt to convince them that he is on an inspection visit. If he is wearing Clerics robes then this attempt will be at a bonus of +1.

**19) The Feedroom.** There is no door to this room. Inside here vat creatures when dining operate spigots in pipes that pour coloured thick soups into wooden bowls and then eat with wooden spoons and long stone tables. At one end of the room is a long sink and a wide set of shelves on which cleaned bowls and spoons are neatly stacked. A shift may be eating as the PCs arrive.

**20A) Vull Faris' Chambers:** The doorway is blocked by a ward of purple force. It has not been entered for some years. The **most ideal way to enter** (literally speaking) is if one or more of the PCs are wearing amulets that they obtained as Lords of Cil (as suggested in the introductory paragraph to this booklet). This readily explains why no-one else has been able to open this room for centuries. If this is the case, the amulet in question has a distinctive design that is echoed on an embossed silver plate at the centre of the door.

Merely extending the amulet, saying 'Open' forcefully (and expanding a point from your Magic pool) causes the wall of force to drop and the door to swing inwards. Another, equally valid way to open the door would be if any of the PCs have a spell book and are able to take the time to sit and read out a spell of unlocking, or perhaps have a cantrap that does this job.

If it is merely a cantrap that works (or some device of similar weakness) for the sake of realism, have the user of this method feel the massive resistance of the force that resists this attempt, know that the attempt is hopeless, and then feel that massive ancient enchantment simply crumble away due to the massive passing of time undermining its foundation. (The cantrap being the feather that brought down the empire.)

Note that if the PCs have no such thing, you will need to improvise some other possession to be effective, or allow acts of gross inventiveness such as throwing workers at the





doorway (who are incinerated in a blast of magical fire) continually until the warding is exhausted. (Such a ploy might be triggered by the GM reminding the character with the widest knowledge of magic that wardings usually can only operate a certain number of times before they need to be reset.) An alternate entry option if applicable (IE they have at least one vat creature companion) is that the wall of force simply prevents vat creatures from entering.

**Inside the room** PCs will find that it is part bedchamber, part private workroom, part private library. Have the Players assist you in the design of this magnificent chamber. Allow them free reign in suggesting what might be here with the proviso that for every valuable or magical curio they suggest they must also create a verbal description of some piece of incidental décor. Bear in mind that an object's properties cannot often be guessed by its appearance. PCs may emerge from this room with multiple magical items, all (or most) of which will be charged, of very minor efficacy.

*IE hairbrushes that protect you from the rain, boots that allow you to step over puddles and streams, mirrors that have a spirit inside that will point unerringly to the north, a tiny silver homunculus riding a tiny silver horse (useful only for entertainment), a lyre that plays by itself and conjures insubstantial naked sprites that dance with exquisite beauty as long as the music continues, a mirror that gives fashion advice, a device that identifies demons according to Thrupp's Almanac's Classification Index, an imp in a box that cleans shoes and launders clothes at your bidding (once a day), a small bedside statuette of a nymph that when touched comes alive and is ready and available for erotic congress (and asks them where Lord Faris is)...*

**Additionally**, PCs can find various other things as the GM invents (or as the Players create). Vull Faris' personal Cutz Wars campaign notebooks (tedious, tortuous and yet priceless if sold somewhere like Kaiin), his store of gems for emergencies, a set of magical primers, enchanted crystals that store Magic pool points or one-use spells, a jade statuette of a horse that (upon expression of the activation word) becomes a full-sized green horse that is unswervingly brave and loyal and doesn't need food, and requires only the expenditure of 1 Magic pool point per hour that it is active.

Basically the GM needs to invent as suits the tone and direction of their campaign. Take some time here before play begins to at least jot down some ideas. Consider what useful spells might need to be available to the PCs in the mountain encounters to follow, and have these available (usually as one-use) one way or another. This is a location where the PCs may learn much, and even gain some powerful items, if your play is moving towards the Turjanic.

Bear in mind however, that they will lose all in the Vale of Dharad, so this means (a) you can be overly generous in some ways, (b) you needn't plan too hard that these items

are crucial to their future development. If the PCs have access to the Walking Boat, and if one or more are studying magic then tomes may be found here that they can peruse whilst travelling across the mountains, and benefit from 1-3 learned spells plus an increased Magic rating by the time they reach Dharad and lose most of their worldly goods.

**Hazards** may also exist in this room: a poisoned dart inside a lock that needs to be picked (of an intriguing small chest), a suit of armour that comes alive and attacks intruders who haven't said the correct safety word, a blast of force that paralyses someone who tries to pick the lock of a tome, a pentagram around a fascinating pair of silver wings on a stand, which sends out a cloud of soporific gas when its boundary is crossed by living flesh...

**The GM** is heartily encouraged to write an overview description of this room and its contents according to the character, aptitudes, possessions and ambitions of the specific campaign PCs. And this be expanded by group effort during play. One clue that it is hazardous might be two desiccated bodies of Vull Faris clones (the last two that tried to investigate this room) before the most hazardous trap (a hidden pentacle beneath a rug in front of the door that lacerates any vat creatures who cross it with radiant force that deactivates their matrix, but otherwise does not damage to anyone else).

**20B) Prisoners' Indoctrination Room.** A simple door of bars opened and locked by a lever nearby in a wall, which might conceivably be used by any incarcerated PC who makes a rope and noose out of torn clothing. Those held awaiting the decision whether they are destined for recycling or sacrifice (or dissection to examine their matrices) are restrained here. Furniture consists of simple rough bunks and blankets, and a single latrine.

Mischievous PCs might consider setting them free and sending them back to their fellows, in order to spread the word that Ascension isn't quite what it is said to be, only to see them executed in the main square as heretics. However, these vat-creatures are being subject to constant indoctrination, so most would be too befuddled to take that role. Playing at a subliminal level (though more obvious after spending an hour or so in here) are low tones that disrupt memories and replace them with new ones about being a loyal citizen and revering Magnatz and suchlike.

After two days in here any normal mind is quite loyal to Magnatz and the clerics. There is insufficient time for this to be a PC's fate, though someone incarcerated here overnight would emerge quite unbalanced and half-loyal to the ways of Vull (and need frequent Persuasion to do as the other PCs say). This room is dual purpose, and also holds 'newborn' vat creatures. This may indeed have been its original purpose. Those fresh beings have their sensoriums programmed by the subliminal indoctrination,



destroying their capacity for independent or critical thought (unless the GM writes exceptions into the piece).

**20) Bunk Area:** The vat creatures sleep in here when not on duty. Some may be here now, copulating like brutes, or sleeping deeply next to such activities. Personal possessions are few and pathetic (like coloured scraps of cloth). The bunks are narrow and stacked ten high, with thin ladders ascending to the tops. As many show signs of use as the GM requires there to be workers on this level. A number exceeding forty is suggested.

**21) The Fungal Chamber:** No door fills this doorway, and speckled lichens cover the doorframe. A large chamber in which beds of large foul-smelling fungus grow. This is tended (mulched, new seed rows planted etc etc) at all times by vat creatures. At one end of the room (next to Room 18) is a set of windows through which harvested mature fungus can be thrown into troughs in the Recycling Room. At another side of the room is a foul smelling pool into which several pipes of sludge drain after emerging from the wall. (The wall between here and Room 16A.) Note that despite how the map looks, the entrance from the stairs into this room is through a single large square balustraded egress in the exact corner of the room. (The indicated stairs are mostly out of sight below floor level.)

## Incidental Encounters on the Second Floor

*Use this as a checklist. We offer various amusing things here, to be thrown into the course of play whenever there is an opportunity for an amusing or dramatic moment. As with all significant aspects of the scenarios in this book, GMs are heartily encouraged to adapt these suggestions and invent their own as best suits the moment when the game is run (or in preparation beforehand).*

**Workers 1:** Three workers (two of whom are almost identical) walk by carrying a piece of metal sheeting.

**Workers 2:** A lone worker (whose inner matrix is faulty) and believes himself to be Mercher Gronz, confronts the PCs to demand to know their business and who they are. His moment of lucidity passes as soon as the entertainment value of the encounter begins to diminish. Or if the PCs are convinced they have fooled a true official (unlikely but possible) he may return later. If threatened he will warn them that he has a mind seething with spells, and strike a pose as if about to blast them with magic, demanding their surrender. If they surrender he will take them to the Indoctrination Room, lock them in, and then forget all about them. Even forgetting to remove their possessions from them.

If necessary he returns later with an obviously demented companion version of himself, to whom he will point out the PCs and congratulate himself, before degenerating into demented ramblings, then forgetting everything that has happened and demanding to know who they are and why they are locked in. Perhaps even unlocking them with apologies.

**Workers 3:** A hugely muscular bloated version of Mercher Gronz (an advantageous vat aberration) shambles by carrying an enormous piece of piping towards the vat room. As well as its physical deformity, this creature also has freewill, though is simple-minded. It will be curious about the PCs and may respond well to friendly overtures, though initially will pass them by, only to sneakily turn and trail them (due to inquisitiveness rather than malice, though PCs might not understand this). If befriended or treated well, this creature may become a GMC that accompanies them for a while.

**Workers 4:** Two identical clones (save one is 8ft tall and the other 4ft tall) pass by carrying a section of wooden support towards the vat room.

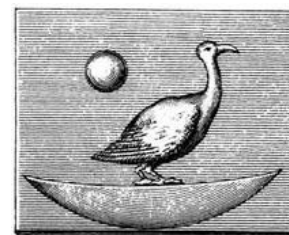
**Workers 5:** Along the wall at this place instead of the usual stacks of mysterious machinery, statuary and other bizarre objects are several workbenches. Three vat creatures labour over tasks related to finely crafting sections of wooden beam and their joints. (Repeat if necessary.)

**Workers 6:** As encounter 5 except recreational. The vat creatures also have seats and small tables, upon which they are crafting things like fine miniature replicas of beautiful oddities of such as manses, air-cars, Magnatz, Overworld beings...

**Workers 6:** Another along-the-wall workshop area, except this is for metalwork. Small tools could be useful to steal, as they include magically-powered soldering irons, sonic metal cutters and benders. Other things such as vices and rods and sheets of metal are too heavy to carry away. All magically-powered items are not charged, but rely on the magical power source of the temple to charge them, and so will expire at some point in the future whenever the GM arbitrarily decides.

**Weird Magic 1:** This is also a workers encounter. The GM needs to devise strange **bodypart adaptations** for some of the specialist workers and describe this when they are encountered. One hand is a flat-bladed stirrer, a tongue is a flexible long tasting-tube, one hand is a hammer or chisel, eyes radiate light (night-shift)...

**Weird Magic 2:** Ghostly **demonic plasm**, drifting around. May sting to the touch. May try to envelop and dissolve a character. Is unintelligent and can be avoided. May be a powerful encounter that requires fire or magic to save the day, or just a painful annoyance.





**Weird Magic 3: Peculiar floating lights** (around two dozen), that when examined close-up can be seen as tiny little demons riding miniature pelgranes. These are a simple entertainment enchantment that has become perpetually trapped in this location. However, they appear to be about specific errands, flying anxiously around the corridors on this floor appearing as a cloud of sparks.

**Weird Magic 4:** Stacked against the wall at a point of the GM's choosing is an **ornate metal door** in a frame. It may catch the eye of a PC because it is emblazoned with runes and humming slightly. If it is opened from within the frame (perhaps requiring the lock to be picked) it reveals a peculiar pink vortex. Anyone stepping into this vortex is transported to, and spat out of, another identical door. (Which locks itself behind them.)

This door can be placed in an adjacent corridor (or a room that has proved tricky to gain access to), or even at some place in the forest, such as embedded in a heavily overgrown ruin near the lake. (This then could provide their means of escape from Magnatz at a later date.) Passing either way through the portal requires a single Magic pool point to be expended for every trip after the first that is taken on the same day. (Unless that ruling needs to be changed in order to avert PC deaths.)

**Weird Magic 5:** Propped against a wall, behind a pile of broken tables is a **metal bicycle with a huge front wheel** and tiny back wheel. This might catch someone's eye simply because of the oddness of it. It is a magical device, which (like the Walking Boat) is a bound demon. It can be ridden at speed around the corridors and does not need a Riding roll to stay on, but does require the expenditure of a Magic pool point for every hour of its use. It can speed across rough roads with relative ease, reducing the painful bounces caused by potholes, but does not function across anything resembling wilderness beyond the flattest most manicured lawns.

**Weird Magic 6:** A **blue statuette** of a half-kneeling man, shielding his eyes. This is half life-size. Anyone touching this statuette once becomes permanently immune from one particular Resistance, at a commensurate cost. IE a full resistance to Gourmandism also bestows on the recipient the inability to resist loudly criticising any food containing an obviously yellow ingredient. (Treat this as a curse for means of removal.)

Touching the statuette again removes that effect and cost. Describe any benefit not in rules terms, but in peculiar body sensations that leave one feeling 'different but basically fine'. Needless to say this might be quite amusing. Keep track of who has touched it and how many times. Make brief notes only of the changes to a character until they have left this place and have no opportunity to touch the device again.

**Weird Magic 7:** On one of a series of shelves are various pieces of flesh-coloured stone that might make up a nearly life-sized statuette. Since the limbs and torso are warped and scaled, perhaps it is a blessing that the head is missing. Nonetheless there is a carved wooden object nearby, in the shape of an asm's head, but hollow. This will not affix to the limbs, even though the limbs and torso could be stuck together.

However, if interfered with for long enough the asm head activates and begins to converse in a curious buzzing tongue, becoming annoyed when it cannot be understood. Anyone placing this head over their own can see in the darkness, gains a bonus of +1 to all Tracking rolls due to an increased sense of smell, gains a bonus of +1 to their Wherewithal when dealing with half-men or demons, and begins to gain an appetite for human flesh. (After the tenth time worn, roll a dice every time it is used.

If a 1 is rolled, roll another dice. The second result indicates how many hours before the owner suddenly becomes anthropophagically ravenous. Explain this in an aside to the Player who must then role-play their character's horrible appetite. Fortunately they may be sufficiently horrified at their actions that they cannot actually strike a killing blow, but won't know that until in a position to do so.

**Other Weird Magic:** The GM is encouraged to invent a few more things of dubious & entertaining utility.



**Senior Cleric 1:** This happens if the PCs are disguised as Senior Clerics. A Senior Cleric will stumble across them, and (unless an alarm has been raised) simply assume that the PCs are Senior Clerics about their legitimate business. This Cleric will ask them a few simple questions (GM invents, according to where the PCs are), such as: "I was concerned about temperature irregularities and could not sleep. Are the vats maintaining constant temperature?" Or: "I also came to commune with the most gracious one. Is his manner agitated or benign this night?". The PCs have the chance ( $\Psi$  IMPOSTURE, PERSUASION -1) to end this encounter without combat or suspicion.

**Senior Cleric 2:** Somewhere near the end of their visit, when they have all the clues they need, either the first Cleric will return with suspicions ("Who are you exactly? I had presumed Stabbril, Hetx and Moker, but these three remain sound asleep.") or a more alert Senior Cleric will spot them and be highly curious as to why a group of Senior Clerics is up and about. ("Is there some manner of emergency?")



## Appendix 6: City of Mar (Mini Gazetteer)

### Introduction

Mar could contain a variety of adventures, and not just be an entertaining stop-over. If PCs stay here for any length of time, drop the hint that they are in what is probably the single example of a preserved city from a former aeon, and unimaginable treasures likely await in the forgotten buildings only a mile or two distant!

### The Map is Not the Territory

You are advised to print your own copy of the map, and either mark the numbered entries before play or as the PCs explore. Also advise Players that their copy of the map is a guide, not an absolute representation of Mar.

As they begin to explore, explain that Mar is MASSIVE! Even the smallest buildings marked on the drawing are either large manses or small tenement blocks. Many other buildings exist, but are *too small* to have been marked on the map. Plus the streets are now overgrown with jungle-like vegetation with one exception (see next para) and must be struggled through. So the PCs are not walking across large empty expanses from one large building to another. But are investigating a vast area of landmarks, mansions, tenements, streams & ponds.

A single large chunk of city is inhabited and relatively cleared of vegetation. (We suggest the SE corner as it has access to the temple complex via the 5,000 stairs and because it has the large building in the corner that can be the library, town hall and council chambers etc.)

**1) The Great Hall of Mar.** Despite the smallness of the society, officialdom is alive and well. Archives are kept, births & deaths recorded, & the city library maintained.

**2) Miamatta Temple Complex.** Unless you want to walk a large distance through the city and then climb the old closed and locked gates, the easiest way to reach this complex is via the vast wide stairway. Up here a priesthood flourishes, food and necessities provided by the general populace. The priest caste's roles have degenerated into nit-picking ritual and habitual behaviours, whilst the essence of their religion is utterly lost. However, as mentioned elsewhere, Miamatta has not forgotten his people, and as well as protecting the city hopes to engineer the end of the basilisk siege. Because of lack of active faith his influence is extremely limited in terms of basic everyday communication and manifestations. One duty that every person undertakes once a week is several hours turning the massive prayer columns. (Just as well because these magical devices generate the city's defensive magics, though this specific detail/reason has been long forgotten.)

**3) The Effluent Emporium.** We suggest the large nondescript building just north of the tower that is just north of the council building. Here the city nightsoil collectors deliver their noxious carts for processing from the wealthier houses, and the public channels flow into processing pits. (By processing they are merely mixed with rain water until reaching the correct consistency and then the sluice is opened, allowing the contents to vomit out over the cliffs down into the marshland below that feeds the basilisks pleasure lake.)

**4) The Hermits of the Tower.** A distant large wall tower that was once a guard barracks is now home to a band of peculiarly deranged hermits. (Exiled heretics.)

**5) The Magical Orchard.** An entire city street is filled not with the normal undergrowth and palm trees but with strange plants and trees that shimmer and tinkle. Man spout not fruit but strange crystalline extrusions. A forlorn archvult has been cursed to tend a small stand of trees and has expanded his purview in a slow attempt to take over the city with these plants of his homeworld.

**6) The Palace of Artistry.** One spectacularly fine manse still has gardens tended by insubstantial imps. The house itself is a huge gallery of sculptures, paintings, mosaics and water-features, plus much else to delight and entertain. The only problem is that once you are inside, the building's guardian has become so lonely that it twists reality and prevents visitors from leaving. (Fruit trees keep people alive indefinitely. The creature must be found in its hidden lair, and dealt with before the PCs can find their way out of this house & grounds.)

*Why not also some other deities as well as Miamatta. Bampath has a shrine in the Library, and Ethodea a small hospice. Plus hidden in the abandoned sections of the city:*

**7) The Temple of Klesbu.** Klesbu was once the patron of humour, dance, & food. His temple is surprisingly clean and gleaming. One of its guardian spirits is still active. This is the Jester, and PCs are forced to endure a farcical series of encounters and tests before they can leave this structure. (Though they also gain the chance to win some minor, but useful innate magical abilities.)

**8) The Nympharium.** A fully equipped, but long-forgotten annex of the serene Temple of Paphnis. The nymphs are overjoyed to embrace new patrons!

**9) The Solar Emosynaries.** Forgotten by anyone outside of Mar, and secret even to few within, on one central city is a fully-functional solar support station. Unfortunately outsiders who find it can never be allowed to leave the city and tell others.





## Appendix 7: Advanced Rules on Half-Men and DERPG Abilities

*Because this adventure publication often places our PCs in the wilds, we offer some optional rules clarifications around conducting encounters between the PCs and anthropophages.*

**Persuasion:** This ability is not uniformly useful against the creatures of the wilds. Even the most intelligent do not share similar goals or even culture to humans. Those on a slightly lower rung of sentience (such as deodands, leucomorphs, madlocks, gargoyles and the like) are even harder to relate to in a conversational setting. Persuasion attempts by humans against such creatures must be backed with claims to have access to (or knowledge of) things that these creatures value. If not, then either penalties/levies are applied, or else the GM simply decides that the attempt will fail, and all that can be accomplished is the distraction of the creature whilst the Persuasion attempt continues. It will be rare indeed (perhaps an IS) that some being such as a deodand can be convinced to cease an attack, even if more succulent foods are convincingly promised close at hand. In short, in order for a Persuasion contest to function without penalties/levies being applied, the human Persuader must have some way of evening the odds. This might be apparent potency in magic, convincing descriptions of tastier and more abundant prey nearby, tangible rewards in terms of commodities valued by the slightly more civilized anthropophages, or useful information. When dealing with the more ravenous man-beasts (such as deodands), if the being has not eaten human flesh for some time, its reasoning processes may not even be functioning – and therefore all Persuasion contests doomed to failure.

**Rebuff:** Especially at Cugel-level, some of the half-men within will have greater Persuasion skills than the characters have Rebuff scores. This does not mean that they can easily convince a player's favorite PC to accompany them back to their cave for a 'quick bite'. GM's are advised for the sake of realism to grant a bonus of at least 1 to a character's Rebuff when an obvious half-man invites them to dine (or similar dubious proposals). This equates with a reasonable cultural mistrust of these beings. Some GMs may simply rule that no character ever needs to Rebuff the requests of an anthropophage or other sentient eater of flesh. (This especially might be the case with those slaving with obvious hunger and/or pleading to be allowed to partake of the victim's vital organs.) A similar ruling may be made when characters have to resist a temptation put in their way by such creatures, though since hidden treasures do abound in the Dying Earth, it's always possible the deodand truly does know the location of some awesome ancient wonder.

**Athletics:** The Athletics rating is averaged across a being's raw physical capabilities. For instance, though a domestic beast may have a similar general Athletics capability to a human, or even lower, it may well be faster and/or able to jump larger distances. Giving the creature a boon or bonus, to such rolls when attempting tasks in which it would have a natural capability can solve this. Likewise, the GM need sometimes differentiate between Athletics rolls relating to feats of strength or stamina, feats of speed or agility, or other specialist function. For instance, the thawn is highly agile, taking a bonus of 1 when leaping and sprinting, but not strong – perhaps taking a levy when feats of strength are required.

**Living Rough:** Many creatures have no statistics for Living Rough; which is a human ability. Whilst creatures and half-men certainly have differing abilities to fend for themselves, this is not easily adaptable to the ability as presented, and so the ability is ignored. It is more straightforward to simply decide what behaviors the creatures are capable of in relation to their own basic survival needs. Note also that in their own terrain, the wild creatures of the Dying Earth are at an advantage when it comes to Athletics (certainly when attacking from ambush or evading pursuit), Concealment, Stealth and Tracking. GMs can consider granting a boon or even bonus of 1 to important actions such as these - to illustrate the superior adaptations of the wild creature. Some of the more bestial half-men will also gain these benefits.

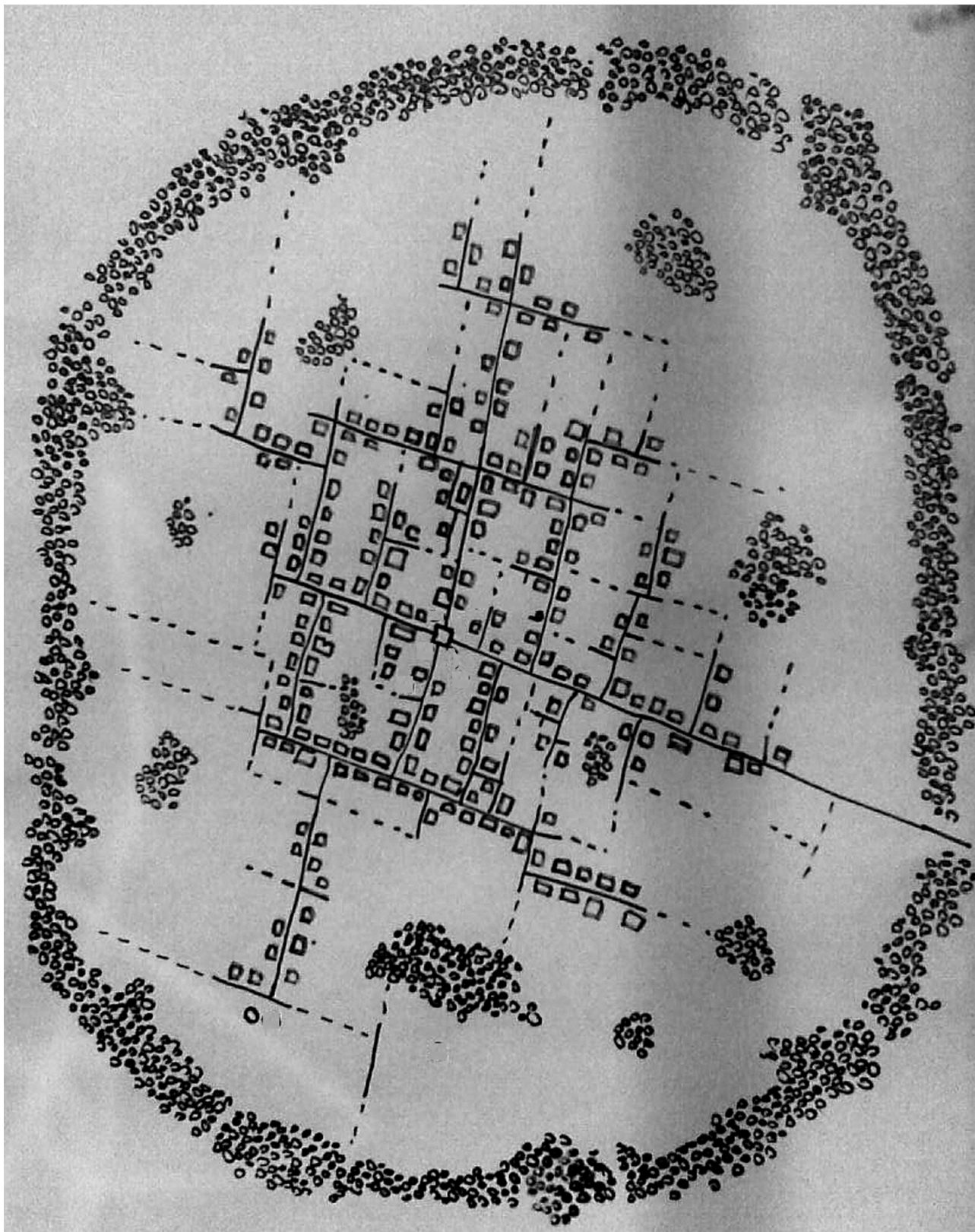
**Wherewithal:** Different GMs will have different ways they apply the Wherewithal rules. One possibility is for checking a creature's morale. Anthropophages generally gain a bonus of 1 on any physical threats from single human prey, but a penalty of 1 against Magical threats (that are highly convincing (Imposture) or otherwise appear to be substantiated). Other sentient beings respond in a normal fashion – that is they wish to preserve their lives, and unless they are attacking fanatically (due to blood rage or for revenge) will take penalties or levies on their Wherewithal rolls if outnumbered or otherwise clearly out-matched. Some non-sentient creatures do not have a Wherewithal rating, as the skill of Wherewithal generally infers the ability to cogitate – and thus to respond to fear. Of course even non-sentients may respond in a way that enhances self-preservation, but the GM should rule such circumstances according to the dictates of the game.

**Resistances:** Resistances are typically absent in the ratings of non-humans, since these game artifices are largely intended for PCs and GMCs operating to very human agendas. Though some non-humans might in some aspects have human-like desires, this still in no case equates across the board with the human Resistance abilities. If any are required, the GM will need to devise them as and when necessary, based on their assessment of the specific creature and the exact game circumstances. (And the fun of the moment!)





## Appendix 8: Players' Map of Vull





## Appendix 9: Taglines

### Important Introduction

We provide a wide sampling of tag-lines. These are not intended to cover all of your gaming needs, especially if you are a skilled GM who widely improvises aspects of play only suggested within this publication. Likely all GMs will need (in between sessions of play) to **create further tag-lines** to suit the occasion, possibly assisted by the Players. It is often wise to base them on likely encounters in the next session, with note to the remaining tag-lines in the Players' possession. Yet also there is merit in creating a 'bagfull' of general tag-lines suitable to a wide-range of situations.

When it comes to the tag-lines railing against Iucounu and his treatment of the PCs we offer the following:

- You need not create further ones against Iucounu than those that are here when you are inventing new Tag-lines, but merely keep these as examples. You can instead advise any Player at the beginning of play that if they do not currently hold a tag-line related to Iucounu they are free to devise one, show it to you for approval (and for your input/editing) and can then use it (during that gaming session). Should its use in play be appropriate and/or highly amusing, they gain either one or (exceptionally) two bonus IP, as you adjudicate in the moment.
- Consider awarding additional IP to those who spontaneously create highly amusing and effective 'Tag-Lines' spontaneously in play, especially pithy (rather than overly-wordy) **bursts of righteous anger** against Iucounu during situations of severe discomfort or hardship.

For the sake of amusing game-play we recommend here **a new ruling on Tag-Lines**. Advise your Players at the start of this campaign that Tag-Lines that are **used with extreme amusement or highly appropriate positioning** as a PC rolls an ability in a game-significant moment are special. In cases where the delivery is exceptionally appropriate to, or enhancing of, the moment, or exceptionally amusing, the GM automatically applies a bonus of +1 to the roll. This does not happen every time: the tag-line usage must be remarkable in some way, not just any old tag-line randomly selected.

We provide tag-lines for four PCs in this appendix. It may be that some groups play with more than this number. In such a case, **devise extra tag-lines** based on the ones here, or encourage Players to create one of their own - which you would secretly (unseen by the other Players) view and confirm (or ask for revision) before each gaming session starts.

### From Dordge to Vull & Early Experiences in Vull

"I add this sleight to my score against Iucounu. Oh how he will one day pay. Mark my words."

"Would haste not now serve us with admirable suitability to the moment?"

"Is it merely my own imaginings or do these folk seem more than usually insipid?"

"Though the way seems far and the mountains tall, I avow that I will come through all and stand once more at the gates of Pergolo with vengeance in my grasp!"

"What manner of magic is this? My keen sense for danger is stirring and I advise all to be on the highest alert!"

"Let us reconnoitre the environment as any traveller naturally would, yet keeping our senses powerfully honed."

"I sense that this is not just one town, but two co-existing in some unholy alliance!"

"When one wishes to laugh with Iucounu, he should embark upon the project with all caution."

"Such punishments are barbaric. Is there no just authority with which I can lodge a stringent complaint?"

"I detect a mystery, wrapped inside an enigma, held within a conundrum."

"Stare not in such fashion, foul creature. You shall not make a meal of me before I make a corpse of you!"

"Let us look to our own interests. I foresee that few others in this vicinity, if indeed any, have our welfare at heart."

### Vull Temple Investigation

"Here is a most disturbing set of circumstances. Exactly at the point where I foolishly imagined strangeness to have reached its zenith!"

"Our business here is perfunctory, but nonetheless requiring of great concentration. I advise that you immediately continue your own tasks lest you inadvertently trigger a miscalculation in my assessments."

"The fat-headed buffoon Iucounu stands behind every this and every other suffering and embarrassment we face during our travels!"



"Somewhere, sometime, and somehow all of this must have had a purpose, a reason, nay an outcome, that made at least some sense. In the now, it is an insanity of epic proportions."

"No ancient edifice exists that is sufficiently well-protected that I cannot find a way of plundering its secrets!"

"What is this pestilent miasma? From whence does it emanate?"

"Now that the true nature of things commences to be revealed I wonder what further horrors await us?"

"We shall not perish here so far from home. Gather your courage and let us proceed more zestily."

"Let us apply the rapier of lucidity to this situation!"

"I am impelled to admit that I found what just occurred to be significantly disturbing."

"Alas, that yet another dream of ever-lasting reward turns out to be such a cruel fabrication."

"I deny your very existence, you repulsive fiend. Be gone from my sight!"

### **The Ceremony & The Escape**

"Iucounu, Iucounu! If I could repay a tenth of your offences, the world would think me harsh!"

"I had thought myself immured to the extremes of horror, but such savage cruelty is unsurpassed."

"Why do we even contemplate delay? Our survival depends on extreme velocity."

"Is such madness universal? What has happened to humanity? To basic decency?"

"My sanity is threatened, my sensibilities ravaged. I confess a desire to find a hiding place, crawl inside and never emerge again."

"What is this monstrousness? How can it even exist? I have been catapulted into disequilibrium!"

"Wherefore lies hope? Where is potential and possibility? I see only doom, doom and more doom."

"Another score against Iucounu! The Laughing Magician will pay dearly for this painful inconvenience!"

"One option is to lunge shrieking into the melee and mete out harsh justice with our blades and fists."

"How is it that it falls on us to redress this horrendous situation? We are mortals, not divine avatars of justice."

"I cannot believe that we are destined to perish in this sickening chaos. I for one shall never give in."

"Slice it, stab it, smash it with blunt objects. I care not how, but only that its end is accomplished."

### **Perils of the Western Mountains (1)**

"Iucounu! I call a curse of pulsing carbuncles upon you!"

"I marvel that we stand here still living after the ferocity of what just occurred."

"Here is a fine predicament. One the one hand we are cursed. On the other we are damned. How can one decide?"

"I tremble at the thought of what we must subsist on if we are to survive this perilous journey."

"Beware. I sense a rustling and my keen sense for danger is aroused!"

"Nothing will deter me from my revenge against the repulsive Iucounu. Not even this. Collect your weapons: Now is the time for savage effectiveness!"

"With rapiers drawn and eyes at constant alert we may yet survive the hazards ahead and descend into civilised lands once more"

"Oh for the want of a pair of spring-heeled boots. With such an appurtenance this task would be child'splay."

"Are we speaking of that yellow, immoral and repulsive Iucounu, sometimes known as the Laughing Magician?"



"The way is ancient and yet sound. I call upon the Gods of Gnienne to guide us homewards along it at best speed."

"What manner of device is this? What was its purpose and motivation, and who was its master? The ways of the ancients are strange to me."

"Should we survive this predicament I resolve to abase myself at the next holy fane we come across for a full half-hour of vigorous prostrations."

## **Perils of the Western Mountains (2)**

"Here is a beast most abhorrent. What demented imagination dreamed up its existence?"

"Tucounu must have his joke, but one day I will have a jest of my own! And what a jest it will be!"

"In this instance I appoint myself as impassionate and final arbitrator. No other course of action is possible."

"Are these illusions or realities? Entertainments or educations? Once in ancient days such things might have been commonplace."

"Do not sneeze, do not stumble. Do not cough or yawn. If your feet must make a noise, let it be the stillness of a settling feather. Should we match all these requirements we may yet survive to see another morning."

"I would have leaped into the attack, but my brain refused to believe what my eyes just saw and I became too confused to move."

"I confess that I fear to enter into this gloomy expanse. Any number of horrors could await us within."

"Is that a travelling device or a domicile, a storage facility or a monument? My experience gives no clue."

"What are these creatures? Curious, and somehow delightful to the eye. And yet so savage!"

"Trust is a fragile thing. One moment here, the next moment gone. Who is to say wherein it may be placed and where it cannot?"

"Here lies an obstacle most vexing. I shall sit a while to consider our options. Presently a solution will become clear"

"I suspect our freedom may be gained by utilising the allies at hand. In large numbers lies our salvation."

## **The Assessor, Leucomorph Peril & The Great Slide**

"I shall have a glass of the finest Kanggian Astrolade, and a half-dozen of the purple Pralleq eggs. Your fetching them with haste is what is now required of you."

"Truly, truly, Iucounu you have much to answer for! One day you shall pay in blood and screams!"

"What harm can come of agreeing to a simple hospitality request? Though admittedly such comes unexpected out here so far from civilised conveniences."

"By what authority, mandate, or certifications do you judge me? Hah! I decry your claims as ridiculous."

"It is clearly demonic and means us harm. Why pause? Why falter? Strike it with force and determination that we may soon end its abhorrent existence."

"Here is a transformation both unlooked for and unexceptionally unfavourable. I recommend rapiers and cudgels."

"I identify myself with the cause of justice. Revenge is my name. I breathe it and have it thick in my veins. You cannot bar my progress!"

"Ah, the Third Empiric Quadrille, performed in its abbreviated form. I know it well. Allow me to demonstrate."

"If I emerge from this exertion alive and whole I swear I will boil that fiend Iucounu in a vat of his own slime."

"Your anger is misplaced. Look first to yourself a the author of your own predicament!"

"Surely it cannot be that taxing. Tools and diagrams are at hand. Let us set to without complaint."

"I fear I am unable to move one inch further. Pray do not touch me, else I may burst into shrill wails of terror."



## **Tree-Tower Folk & Pharesm's Valley**

"I am finding the weather of late to be more than a trifle perplexing, not to mention unseasonably arduous."

"Iucounu is nothing less than a buffoon For a fancied slight he threw me to the north of the world, where the sun wheels low and casts no more heat than a lamp!"

"As a person of obvious and significant magical competence I wonder if you might perhaps be able to transport us back to the land of our origins, from whence we were cast for a mere trifle."

"I require a quiet room away from this never-ending dampness, and I will fight any man or creature that stands in my way, including yourself."

"Never have I come across a coachman of such peculiar and unsuitable appearance, and yet his manner and style leave nothing to criticise. I am uncertain whether to tip him or slice off his head."

"Insane he may be, but he is our host and therefore deserving of the usual niceties of refined social interaction."

"I do not like the silence. It disturbs me with portents of unknown mischief and peril. Let us beware."

"These woods creep with untold menace and we could perish here so far from home, and our fates never be known. But let us not countenance such an ignoble demise for a single moment."

"Iucounu, hear me this. Your jests amuse only yourself, and your manner is offensive. The day will soon come when justice is served upon you!"

"This region is rife with peculiar obelisks. Once upon a time deranged sculptors must have been in high demand."

"The master of these labourers clearly has the strength of character to command great loyalty, and naturally therefore I suggest is someone to whom we should proffer polite respect."

"Iucounu, at last you have exceeded yourself! This time you will pay the price! I appoint myself your nemesis!"

## **Vale of Dharad & the City of Mar**

"This foul embarrassment is only the latest of our troubles that Iucounu will soon suffer for!"

"You are not only ugly and brutish, but lacking even the most basic rudiments of civilised conduct. I take it upon myself to provide you with a blunt reminder of the benefit of good manners."

"The citizens of this place seem to be unaware of the outer world. Perhaps it would be wise not to challenge their delusion."

"Do not leave me here to expire in such a fashion. Search your twisted soul for an ounce of compassion I implore you."

"Something about the local diet disturbs me, but I do not dare to mention it lest I give offence and end up being invited to dine."

"Of the many trials we have endured, this is by far the most repulsive. I fear my noble bearing may never recover."

"Were it not for Iucounu I might be dining on erb-liver pate in a well-apportioned conservatory, rather than staggering through yards of stench-laden filth!"

"Strike me again and I shall retaliate with the full force of my considerable magical repertoire."

"The facilities here are gratifyingly and unexpectedly munificent. I may be forced to spend considerable time here."

"What manner of beings are you? Unhand us! I am person well-known in Kaiin and you would be advised to treat me with greater dignity."

"I sense in this place an etheric emanation that I can only describe as holy. Perchance it has somehow survived intact from aeons past. How curious."

"Blast your festering eyes, Iucounu. If I survive there shall be a reckoning indeed!"