



Based on the Dying Earth Book Series by JACK VANCE

And Thence to Almery!

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

"In the Footsteps of Fools" - Episodes 1.7- 1.9

Credits

Content & Layout: Ian Thomson

Cover: Sarah Wroot & Beth Lewis (concept: Ian Thomson)

Interior Art: Pergolo Maps adapted by Ian Thomson from Profantasy's Castles & Tombs selections; Drakeling (p38) by Commode Minstrels Collective; Bazil (p21) & Asm (p34) by Beth Kovacs; Wefkin (p83) & Sylph (p89) by Carrie Walters; Map of Erze Damath (p116) from Lynne Hardy's 'Fields of Silver'; Demon carrying Cugel (p99) by Jerome Huguenin, incidental illustrations from Dover Books

Similarities between characters in this game and persons living or dead are coincidental.

The reproduction of material from this book for personal or corporate profit, by photographic, electronic, or other means of storage and retrieval, is prohibited.

Based on the Dying Earth book series by Jack Vance. Produced and distributed by agreement with Jack Vance c/o Ralph Vicinanza, Ltd.

E-mail questions and comments about this game to Pelgrane Press at: info@dyingearth.com, or write to: Pelgrane Press Ltd., 9 Bromells Road, London SW4 0BN, UNITED KINGDOM.

Visit us on the World Wide Web: <http://www.dyingearth.com>, <http://www.pelgranepress.com>

"And Thence to Almery" Copyright Pelgrane Press, 2011

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

Print Recommendations. Duplex: 1-66, 67-71, 72-77, 78-85, 86-105, 106/107 & 108-112. Single-sided: 113-121



GM's Commencement Notes

This publication contains much detail. However, since **only you know your PCs' individual interests & abilities** it is up to you to provide extra flourishing enhancements. You will need to **actively co-create** the adventures as they unfold. Adjust ratings of foes & magic (spells & items), twist plots, and alter/add ability challenges. If Players relish swindles & one-upmanship, make GMCs trickier & more pompous. If they love petty squabbles & minor treacheries, increase chances to grandstand each other, gain prestige and acquire rare items their colleagues covet. If they seek Seductions invent comely or haughty targets for their 'affections'. If they enjoy magical challenges, increase magicians & weird magic. If they love besting half-men (by spells, sword, agility or Persuasion), add more anthropophages. Also, because GMs tend to vary any rules to suit their tastes, this series contains minimal (DERPG1) rules/ratings etc. *See in particular p19 in this publication: 'Notes on Refreshing Pool Points'*. Therefore a GM can use: DERPG 1 (original), DERPG 2 (Revivification Folio), D20 (Primer of Practical Magic), or the author's simple free House Rules from the Violet Cusps page, and easily adapt this work to suit. [For more intro notes: *Beyond the Mountains of Magnatz*.]

What You Will Need to Run the "In the Footsteps of Fools" Adventure Series

The series: "All's Fair At Azenomei", "Strangers in Saskervoy", "Lords of Cil", "Beyond the Mountains of Magnatz" (BMM), concluding with the volume you are reading right now: "And Thence to Almerly" (ATTA). You will no doubt wish to **purchase this entire erudite series**: a role-playing epic of all-too rare magnificence. As well as needing a set of **DERPG Rules**, great benefit accrues from owning **the following Pelgrane Press publications**:

'Turjan's Tome': Spells, magical items, tweaks, adventure outlines & GM notes are **essential** if you wish to avoid considerable extra work designing & expanding ATTA. Whether PCs are more competent Cugelesque wanderers with a few spells and useful weird & wonderful items, or full upstart new Turjanites, TT is the key reference guide!

'Fields of Silver': This entire official adventure arc is added easily (via a conversion notes appendix) into ATTA.

'Dying Earth Compendium': Not as directly applicable as those above, but packed with game-enhancing trivia.

Various other free resources are also at the 'Footsteps of Fools' page: (www.pelgranepress.com/?p=4455). Essential to this publication are the "Old Romarth Guide", and the "Guide to Azenomei". Other recommended free articles are additionally linked there. Plus, the character sheets section at the base of the original Violet Cusps page (www.pelgranepress.com/?p=4096) contains shorter GMC forms, which can be used to enhance GMC substance - with easy-access personal & rating details (particularly suitable to have in hand for ongoing GMCs).

Keeping the PCs on Track

PCs may occasionally be able to choose **modes of transport**, but there will usually only be one route they can follow. This is simple geography. 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 away. Even in civilized lands they know with absolute certainty that if they **deviate from the main way** without a clear destination, they will only be entering regions with minimal backwoods settlements & nowhere to go beyond them. (Likewise time travel: even short-range spells are not known.) Cugel faced this dilemma often, so we consider this challenge 'canon'. Magical transport is rare and/or dangerously unreliable, and this is also commonly known in this version of the DE. You may need to alert any Players 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).

Conventions of Presentation

At some points within you will see **the symbol '⊕'**. This indicates linkage text for the GM to read out. Some of this is speech from GMCs. Other parts are scene-setting remarks. You will of course read out other parts of the text, or summarise information, in response to PC 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 must **adjust, improvise & expand**. 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**.

And Thence to Almerly occurs mostly in civilized lands, with civilized company. PCs have chance to engage again in old habits of trickery, one-upmanship & debauchery, though hopefully from at least slightly more 'Turjanic' perspectives.

2 *Not for distribution in any form without specific permission. One copy may be printed for personal use only.*



Contents

GM's Commencement Notes	(p2)
Contents	(pp3/4)

Chapter 1: The Scamander River (Northern Reaches)

1.1) The Pilgrims	(pp5-9)
Gilfigite Pilgrims [description/ratings]	(p7)
1.2) Vista of a Pleasant Cottage	(pp9-11)
1.3) Pelgrane Riders	(p12)
Ensorcelled Pelgrane [descriptn/ratings]	(p12)
1.4) The Thawn Herders	(p13-16)
The Thawn [description/ratings]	(p15)
Griffin [ratings]	(p15)
1.5) A Lively Debate	(p16)
1.6) The Dance Contest	(p17)
Map of the Scamander River Valleys	(p17)
1.7) Senadith	(p18)
1.8) The Wrestling Match	(p19)
Notes on Refreshing Activity pools	(p19)

Chapter 2: The Scamander River (Southern Extents)

2.1) Iuler	(pp20-22)
2.2) That's Entertainment	(pp22/23)
2.3) Murder!	(p23)
2.4) Shossledord	(pp23/24)
Creatures of the Forest [descrip/ratings]	(p24)
2.5) Steppe Bend	(pp25/26)
2.6) Angdithlaer	(pp26-28)
2.7) Varanook	(pp29/30)
2.8) Hoons of the Scamander	(p30)
Eastern Hoon [description/ratings]	(p30)
2.9) The Scamander Zealot	(pp31/32)
2.10) Ririmaud	(pp32-34)
The Felukhary [description/ratings]	(p33)
The Fanticule (Giant) [descrip/ratings]	(p34)
2.11) The Imperial Heir	(p35/36 & 38/39)
Bodyguard/Assassin [ratings]	(p36)
Duke Nethok Twiller [descrip/ratings]	(p36)
The Drakeling [description/ratings]	(p37)
Initial Conversations with Duke Nethok	(p38)
The Horse [description/ratings]	(p40)

Chapter 3: City of the Black Obelisk

3.1) New In Erze Damath	(pp41-43)
3.2) City Opportunities	(p43)
3.3) Creatures of the Marshland	(pp44/45)
Wysen Imp [description & ratings]	(pp44/45)
3.4) Dungeons & Deodands	(p45)
3.5) The Dark Collector	(pp45/46)
Orten Hodek the Collector [ratings]	(p46)
3.6) Terror of the Visps	(pp46/47)
The Visp [description/ratings]	(pp46/47)
3.7) Ritual Murder in Erze Damath	(p47)
3.8) High Society	(p48)



Chapter 4: And Thence to Almery

- 4.1) Tvost (p49)
- 4.2) New in Old Romarth (pp50/51)
- 4.3) The Lands Beyond the Prism (pp51/52)
- 4.4) Locating the Wizards' Manse (p53)
- 4.5) Journeying to the Manse (pp54/55)
- The History of the Four Wizards (p55)
- 4.6) At the Manse of Four Wizards (pp55-57)
- 4.7) The Plan of Vengeance is Set! (p57)
- The Four Wizards (basic details) (p57)

Chapter 5: An Audience with Iucounu

- 5.1) The Element of Surprise (p58)
- 5.2) Return to Azenomei (p59)
- Iucounu [description & ratings] (pp60/61)
- 5.3) A Selection of Notable Jests (pp62-64)
- Showdown with Iucounu! (pp65/66)

Appendices

Appendix 1: Erze Damath Gazetteer (pp67-71)

Appendix 2: 'Fields of Silver' Adaptation Notes (pp72-77)

Appendix 3: Caravan Ho! (pp78-85)

[p85: full page of details on the Labarg]

Appendix 4: Pergolo: the Manse of Iucounu (pp86-105)

[Intro: pp86-89; Ground Floor: pp90-95; First Floor: pp96-98; Turret Rooms: pp98/100; Basement: pp101/102]

[Useful magical items to find prior to reaching Pergolo: p103; Pergolo Floor Plans: pp104/105]

Appendix 5: How to use Turjan's Tome whilst running ATTA (pp106/107)

Appendix 6: The Ocean of Sighs (outline optional final chapter to this campaign) (pp108-112)

Appendix 7: Players' Maps (pp113-118)

[Pergolo Blank Outlines: pp113-115; Erze Damath: p116; The Eastern Lands: p117; Scamander River Valley: p118]

Appendix 8: Tag-Lines (pp119-121)

Alternative Rulings on the Use of Improvement Points (IP)

In this long campaign PCs have significant opportunity to amass IP. You may feel like far too many IP are accumulating, and your PCs are in danger of returning to Azenomei as mages and adventurers of legendary awesomeness unknown within the realms of the Dying Earth literature. If so, consider allowing up to 3 individual IP to be sacrificed per session to become bonuses to important rolls, and/or incrementally increasing the cost of raising abilities beyond a certain level.

Why Both 'Episodes' & 'Publications'?

You may have noticed that most previous volumes were two 'Episodes' of *Footsteps of Fools*. This was a throwback to the original idea of publishing the series in shorter episodic publications a little more like the original Cugel stories.

[*Lords of Cil* alone was not so easily divisible, being a super-size episode with different sub-episodes.]

For sheer completeness it is worth noting that Chapters 1& 2 of *And Thence to Almery* are **Episode 1.7** of the *FoF* series. Chapter 3 (including *Fields of Silver*) is **Episode 1.8**. And Chapters 4 & 5 are the concluding **Episode 1.9**.

[Each of the episodes includes relevant chapter appendices.]

It was once considered to publish Pergolo and the showdown with Iucounu as a final separate volume from *And Thence to Almery* (titled simply 'Pergolo'). However, it was recognised that being able to purchase it separately would have scandalously diminished the epic opportunity of reaching Pergolo (and one's vengeance on Iucounu) after being catapulted into the distant north and arduously returning. Hence this volume's unusually large page-count.



Chapter 1: Scamander River (Northern Reaches)



1.1) The Pilgrims

This publication continues directly from the final scene in Beyond the Mountains of Magnat̃z (BMM). As stated in BMM, there is no handy stopover point as at the end of other publications. BMM & ATTA are intrinsically interconnected via PCs being carried (divinely protected) on rampaging floodwaters. If for some reason you are utterly unable to run BMM you will need to reword the introduction so that PCs come upon the raft during the last hours of its construction before launching (and ignore all flood references).

1.1.1) Washed Ashore

⊕ *"The river rages in flood, carrying you at high speed for an extensive period of time before it even begins to slow. Miraculously your survival instinct sustains your fierce hold on whatever object is assisting your buoyancy. The water roils and you swallow pints, choking and coughing, but always find a breath as you need one. Trees and other objects tumble about you. The floodwaters ease. Day becomes night. Exhausted, you eventually slip into semi-slumber and barely notice when your support finally halts."*

Ask for Health checks in whatever way you see fit, to determine who regains full consciousness first and (if you want) whether anyone's Health suffers. If any Players **are unable to attend this session**, then it is ideal their PC be recovered later on down the river.

⊕ *"In the morning you wake aching in every muscle. Clothes are torn, skin bruised, and hair matted with unmentionable pollutive substances. Miraculously you live, relatively uninjured. You are lying high up on the pebble beach of what appears to be a large wooded island stretching away downriver away from you, though mostly obscured by trees. 200 yards of swiftly-moving muddy current hurries past and towering cliffs stand on either side. Whatever supported you lies broken around you. You and your companions are mingled in piles of debris and unpleasant objects."*

(Should there be **half-man GMCs** from the workings, add a final sentence to the previous paragraph. You could also add some odd little creature, such as wild simiodes, rifling the pockets of PCs, and instigate a chase & tussle or Persuasion contests to retrieve items.)

Player expressions of incredulity that PCs still live & are together can be met by acknowledging that each PC indeed finds this **incredulous**. Will you use *Fields of Silver* to expand this campaign via the seamless & magnificent adaptation notes Appendix provided? If so, all PCs on waking feel the 'power of fate' has somehow protected them, and that they have been caught up in bigger things than they can be aware of. (This may concern them! And fair enough! Mighty Gilfig awaits!)

1.1.2) The Island

The island has a wide surface area & cannot immediately be discerned what its extent is. It needs to be **explored, by wandering the woodlands & rocky shore**.

Possible things that might be encountered are:

- half-men or basilisk survivors from the Vale of Dharad
- signs of the flood having washed over the island
- items that could be used as weapons (if swept here by the flood they need to be light in weight
- an ancient tomb, or small catacomb exposed by the floodwaters, sarcophagus spilled to one side and relics strewn about in the mud (inc. an antique magical sword perhaps an enchanted blade of Motholam!) [see p. 104]

The river flows powerfully around them. It is the home of a **huge & hungry freshwater cephalopod**. This may be observed grabbing & devouring half-men or basilisks who try to swim to either shore, where a deep forest of tall baldamas, pines and spinth oaks grows.



If a PC has **befriended a hoon** or other half-man from Pharesm's land or the basilisk encampment, this creature (if it has survived) may still accompany them. From now on it would have to pose as a servant, captive, or magically transformed (cursed) human. Or otherwise it would cause hue & cry, and likely precipitate local attempts to slay it! This requires Persuasion and/or a great story, and also raises the possibility of a Player (temporarily or longer term) using a civilised half-man as a PC. Eventually at Erze Damath this would become problematic. Although what were **voluminous hooded cloaks** invented for if not to disguise the fact that the wearer is an unhuman menace?

1.1.3) Voynod the Wizard

GMs running **Turjanic campaigns** note that no other magicians are available to study with until Erze Damath. Such GMs can present Voynod as **a rare person of the PCs' ilk**. Magically he is more advanced. Nonetheless he is relieved to meet worthwhile company (rather than doltish pilgrims: though he won't say that incautiously).

He can be befriended by PC would-be magicians, tutor them in magic, perhaps **teach a spell or 2** in return for an agreement for a favour when he requests it at some future date (He will leave such to the Law of Equipoise.)

In **more Cugelesque campaigns** his friendship is due to their being similarly worldly-wise, compared to the pilgrims. In either case, play it so it is clear **his kindness** is partially due to the tedium of the river trip, and not something he would otherwise spend his time doing.

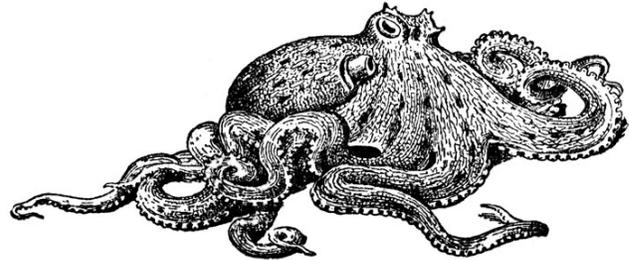
He is also the best mouthpiece to explain that E.D. is (a) the **only city of any real note** on this continent, (b) very far to the south (and thus **much closer** to their destination), and (c) 30 days from here through very dangerous terrain. Even parties on the river are subject to predations if not in sufficient number!! ("*A wise man travels with stalwart company across dire distances such as these!*")

As they investigate south through the forest on the island until near its tip, **the PCs encounter a strange character** (Voynod) sitting on a log in a clearing. Around his head float several librums, and he is consulting another. He has activated a cantrap that scans the area around for danger and manifests as a magic eyeball. It flies up to the PCs, squints in terror, then zips over to Voynod, who immediately turns.

Voynod: "Good day to you, fellow victims of this strange and malodorous flood. I am searching my compendiums for possible sources for this bizarre phenomenon whilst my fellows repair our raft. Can you shed any light on this sickening deluge of filth?"

Whether PCs own up or not, and irrespective of their physical appearance, Voynod will be sympathetic. If they are friendly to him, he will drop hints that Gilfigites

ride the raft for free and explain a few tenets about Gilfig in the "as of course you already know well..." style (offering information whilst pretending not to).



1.1.4) Meeting the Pilgrims

Voynod leads them a short distance. At the far end of the island are a number of **disparate individuals**, many of whom appear to be of a religious persuasion (due to a variety of cassocks, monkish robes, and ceremonial headgear) striving over the repair of a large and well-crafted raft that has partially split when wedging on some rocks. (Presumably driven there by the flood.)

The raft is large enough for two dozen in spaciousness. Its central area has a roof of **huge woven leaves supported by a sturdy bamboo frame**. Barrels and boxes presumably hold food and drink. Repairs look near complete. A thin and worried-looking man approaches. (Garstang.) PCs need to talk to him.

If they portray themselves as Gilfigites, he will ask basic questions of each, to ascertain genuineness. Each will (**Ψ PERSUASION, IMPOSTURE**) **have to convince him**. Others may gain points if they evidence (**Ψ IMPOSTURE**) realistic surprise if another is shown as a 'faking heretic'.

In any event, Garstang is too kindly to leave anyone stranded on this island, and will allow penniless heretics the opportunity to work their passage, cooking and cleaning for the others. He "Tsk Tsk" poor attempts to convince him of their worship of Gilfig, and expresses his hope that they **repent at Erze Damath** and seek forgiveness and divine wisdom before the shrine. He even reluctantly allows female PCs. This is unorthodox, and they are quietly advised to behave decorously.

Garstang: "*We, mainly devout Gilfigites, are bound for Erze Damath and the Lustral Rites at the Black Obelisk. We band together against the erbs and the gids. And are now taking advantage of the River Scamander to propel us in safety and speed. As you yourselves have experienced, an inexplicable and probably magical flood has temporarily halted our waterborne voyage on its first day. Gilfig is testing our resolve.*"

If you wish to join the group, to share both privileges and restrictions, you are welcome. The restrictions are merely to obey the commands of the leader, which is to say, myself, and contribute a share of the expenses and efforts as best you are able."



The Gilfigite Pilgrims

A Raft of 24 Pilgrims

The number is capped at 24 in order to provide a more comprehensible river raft. We offer ratings for personality pilgrims from the original story. Others merely named are Andle (the Funambulous Evangel), Arlo (with iron teeth), Bamish, Balch, Cray, Hant & Haxt (brothers), Lippelt, Magasthen, Mirch-Masen, Parso, Randol, Sayanave, Thilfox (brother of Vitz), & Tokharin. Six of the band are agnostics. (All bar Voynod admitted it and paid premium: funding the expedition.) Several pilgrims did NOT seek the fane and are likely to have mostly been skeptics.

Garstang the Leader

"Trust is essential in a company such as ours, comrades and devout Gilfigites. There can be no question of malice or deceit!"

A man spare and taut, with a waxen skin, a fragile skull, hooded eyes, and a meticulous nose so thin as to be translucent. Nonetheless of personable and unusually equanimous disposition: an ideal pilgrimage leader, as his father was before him.

Charming 8 [___], Pure-Hearted 11 [___], Caution 7, Parry 9, Health 8, Athletics 8, Gambling 4 [___], Pedantry (Gilfigism) 4, Perception 3, Living Rough 9, Physician 3, Stewardship 8, Wherewithal 5.

Bluner the Believer

"The sun is a cell in the corpus of a great deity, who created the cosmos in a process analogous to the growth of a lichen along a rock."

Obfuscatory 11 [___], Contrary 12 [___], Strength 6, Dodge 8, Health 7, Athletics 6, Gambling 3 [___], Pedantry (Gilfigism) 8, Perception 5, Wherewithal 3.

Casmyre the Theoretician

"I propose a succession of creators, each absolute in his own right."

Eloquent 7 [___], Lawyerly 9 [___], Health 10, Cunning 9, Vexation 10, Athletics 5, Pedantry (Gilfigism) 11, Gambling 4 [___], Perception 4, Physician 2, Wherewithal 5.

Lodermulch the Agnostic

"Notice this rent in my garment; I am at a loss to explain its presence! I am even more puzzled by the existence of the universe."

Arrogant and independent, Lodermulch cares nothing for Gilfig or any other religion and cares not who knows about it. He has paid many terces for his passage (unlike the canny Voynod) because his admitted agnosticism rules him out from proper membership in their number.

Intimidating 8 [___], Penetrating 12 [___], Ferocity 12 [___], Sure-Footedness 14 [___], Health 10, Athletics 12 [___], Concealment 4, Gambling 5 [___], Living Rough 6, Pedantry (Agnosticism) 7 [___], Perception 8, Quick Fingers 2, Scuttlebutt 4, Seduction 3, Stealth 5 [___], Wherewithal 9 [___].

Pralixus the Infinitist

"My doctrine is simplicity itself. A vast number of conditions are possible, and there are an even greater number of impossibilities. Our cosmos is a possible condition: it exists."

Obfuscatory 8 [___], Pure-Hearted 8 [___], Speed 9, Intuition 7, Health 9, Athletics 7, Gambling 4 [___], Pedantry (Gilfigism) 6, Perception 4, Wherewithal 4.

Roremaund the Skeptic

"Who created this hypothetical 'creator' of yours? Another 'creator'? Far simpler merely to presuppose the end product: in this case, a blinking sun and a dying earth!"

Like Lodermulch, Roremaund paid highly for his passage. He is a potential replacement PC if such is required.

Obfuscatory 7 [___], Wary 9 [___], Caution 8 [___], Misdirection 8 [___], Health 12, Athletics 8, Conceal't 5, Gambling 8 [___], Perception 7, Wherewithal 8.

Subucule the Devout

"I stand by the orthodox theosophy, in which Zo Zam, the eight-headed deity, after creating cosmos, struck off his toe, which then became Gilfig."

Forthright 10 [___], Lawyerly 9 [___], Speed 6, Intuition 7, Health 13, Athletics 9, Gambling 3 [___], Living Rough 12, Pedantry (Gilfigism) 10, Perception 8, Wherewithal 9.

Vitz the Locuter

"Our sun is not expiring, but merely tired. Its malady is analogous to blinking and could be cured by vigorous exercise."

Glib 8 [___], Obtuse 10 [___], Speed 6, Vexation 9, Health 7, Athletics 6, Gambling 6 [___], Pedantry (Gilfigism) 8, Perception 5, Scuttlebutt 7, Wherewithal 6.

Voynod the Wizard

"The known cosmos is the shadow of a region ruled by ghosts, themselves dependent for existence upon the psychic energies of men."

Voynod is posing as a pilgrim simply to gain safe passage to Erze Damath. He is an adventurer and a traveller, and feels sufficiently experienced now to leave the grim north. He knows enough of Gilfig to pose as a worshipper with no great effort. The GM can obtain a GMC sheet and note his tweaks, spells, cantraps and possessions as to best round out his personality & capacities to suit the flavour of their specific campaign and details of the PCs.

Eloquent 10 [___], Penetrating 11 [___], Finesse 10 [___], Dodge 9 [___], Magic (_____) 6 [___], Health 10 [___], Athletics 8, Concealment 7, Etiquette 6, Gambling 11 [___], Imposture 7, Living Rough 6, Perception 7 [___], Pedantry (Wizardry) 12 [___], Physician 4, Quick Fingers 5, Scuttlebutt 3 [___], Seduction 4 [___], Stealth 6 [___], Stewardship 3, Wherewithal 8 [___].



When PCs finish talking to him, Garstang introduces individual pilgrims, speaking in flowery terms about their personal histories. **PCs may well become bored** & make excuses before he is done. (A Persuasion or Etiquette challenge is needed to find some way to remove oneself without causing offence.)

PCs who don't convince Garstang they are Gilfigites will be assigned **ignoble labouring tasks** in the final repairs and refitting of the raft, and especially with the hard labour of its launching. They will be required to sweat away with poles, assisted by whatever pilgrims offer their voluntary aid. PCs sent to fetch wood on the island might be attacked, or have to avoid minor injuries or falls into mud or pits. (Ψ ATHLETICS, PERCEPTION)

Travelling The River

Working with canon and previously published DERPG information, travel is around 12 (sluggish) miles per day (as the pelgrane flies, though longer on the winding).

From here (SE of Barlig) it is about 130miles (say 10 days) to the junction with the Asc. Then a further 110miles (say 8 days) to the northern tip of the Blanwalt Forest. And finally a further 11 days (150miles or so) through and alongside the Blanwalt Forest itself.

GMs are encouraged to invent additional incidental riverine encounters and to expand the encounters.

Craftily coerce PCs to stay aboard until the Blanwalt Forest, providing clues and hints that maintaining the goodwill of the pilgrims assures by far the swiftest, safest, and most comfortable passage south possible. For example, Resistance to Indolence can be called for before actions highly likely to jeopardise this benefit can even be attempted. Likewise, threatening their transportation also goes against the overarching 'Goal' (to return to Azenomei and wreak revenge on Iucounu). The PCs will be evicted from the raft at the northern tip of the Blanwalt Forest. (In order to vary things in an interesting fashion from the original stories, and provide more direct exposure to the legendary Blanwalt Forest.)

Thus the PCs may still engage in actions that begin to annoy or offend pilgrims. Though these may be small (for instance winning many of the following contests and much of the pilgrims' money) inconveniences, these can be allowed (nay encouraged!) to build through the suggested raft activities, until the near-unanimous eviction of PCs occurs with game-realistic cause.

THE PILGRIMAGE: The major Gilfigite festival is the *Lustral Rites*. It takes place beneath the Black Obelisk of Erze Damath only every eight years. Many pilgrims save for decades to afford travel & expenses to go just once. Genuine believers will already know all about it.

Persons of Experience:

These regions are remote. Only once a generation is a trip to the Lustral Rites arranged. Garstang may have a map of the Scamander (see appendices), but has never travelled this way as an adult. His father led a previous pilgrimage, which he went on as a boy, and they spoke of it on many occasions since then. Garstang will not talk about specific details, he considers his memories sacred and shares them with no others. (None of the other pilgrims have travelled to Erze Damath before.)

1.1.5) The Journey Continues

No pilgrims except Voynod have heard of Almerly. And he knows only from books that it is far SW of Erze Damath. Anyone else asked for advice recommends consulting **geographers & sages** in Erze Damath.

☉ "Eventually, with much effort, the huge raft is launched. The pilgrims scramble hastily aboard. Evidence of the tidal wave of filth that roared so recently downstream is apparent on the banks.

The woodlands turn to featureless rolling grassy steppe. Mountains are in the distance to the north and north-west. Now & again the corpse of a basilisk is sighted, wedged in a bush or crushed between boulders. Due to superstition nobody wants to halt the craft to look. At the start of the afternoon a live but injured basilisk lying on a riverbank howls abuse in the direction of the raft, but its words are unintelligible. All aboard are puzzled as to why it seems so angry towards the noble complement of passengers.

Little else of interest is available in the way of entertainment during daytime, though most pilgrims engage in some manner of religious gesticulations and ritualistic movements at irregular intervals. The banks float by, sometimes forested, sometimes not, and gradually all evidence of the Dharad flooding is left behind.

To wile away time after dinner Garstang comperes entertainments. For the first few evenings he insists all pilgrims tell tales of their lives thus far, preferably the most exciting & entertaining episodes. Ten folk per night for the first 2 nights, leaving 3 pilgrims and the newcomers to tell their stories on the third evening as dusk begins."

Q: Players familiar with DE geography/books may ask pilgrims why the raft didn't use the closer river (Pholgus) to Barlig. **A:** Very simple: hazardous rapids & waterfalls.

Detail odious cooking and cleaning chores of PCs who work passage. (Inc. **Stewardship rolls** & descriptions of embarrassing & displeasing -to other pilgrims- results of failures.) Leave space for incidental Scuttlebutt & similar opportunities. (No pilgrims are women, unless one or two have sneaked in disguised behind false beards and **terse personalities**. Rakishness by a female PC could be part of the reason they are later thrown off the raft.)

Ask Players what they want their PCs to do on the way. (Opportunities for 2 or 3 casual rolls each day passing.)



1.1.6) Telling Stories

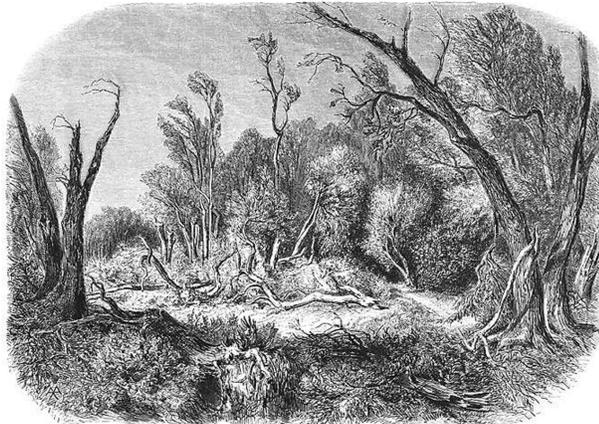
Garstang leaves the persons who joined the raft latest until the final evening of this particular entertainment. These are Roramaund, Voynod, Lodermulch and the PCs. As has been customary, there is a prize for the best tale of the evening. The two previous prizes were:

A crystal egg for Arlo who told the story of how he gained his iron teeth in the mountains north of Pholgus. At a strange shrine his party were each bestowed with a magical metal bodypart. He considered himself very fortunate compared to others amongst his companions.

A silver pendant of Gilfig (donated to the expedition by a well-wisher on their departure) to Pralixus for his description of a pilgrimage to the ruins of Tonk, where they failed to find a lost Gilfig temple but did discover a race of blind hoons living in a series of tubular caves formed inside the statue of an immense metal warrior.

Tonight's Prize: an enchanted coin that spins indefinitely when turned briskly on a flat surface. (Plus, tell Players, 2 free Improvement Points if a PC winner.)

☉ "Lodermulch is asked to speak first. He regales all who listen with his account of an amusing altercation between a hungry pelgrane and a high Lady of Erze Damath's pet simiode. The story is considered ill-favoured by some & wryly amusing by a few. Next Roramaund describes the day he & his father met a twelve-legged creature on the edge of the Ascril Forest. It scared them so much they climbed a tree and were there for nearly two days until a branch broke and the father plummeted straight down, landing squarely on the creature's head, killing it instantly, and also himself. This simple tale it is smartly delivered & well-liked.



Introducing Magical Items from now on:

Refer to the very last page of Appendix 4 (Pergolo). There you will find a list of magical items useful for assailing Iucounu once the PCs reach Pergolo. If possible from this point onwards have the PCs find/win/steal 2 or 3 of these before the reach Erze Damath, so as to begin 'tooling up'. With sense they will retain these to use against Iucounu, rather than earlier.

Voynod goes last of the original pilgrims. He tells of his sponsor and himself journeying in a crystal palace into the void, their trip hosted by a magician who summoned folk of distant aeons to entertain and provide personal company. His descriptions are favoured until Lodermulch continues the story, saying it is from a book about magicians' he once read in the great library of Tonk. Voynod and Lodermulch exchange pointed looks."

GM's Notes on the Storytelling

A potential point to show Lodermulch is an antagonist.

Players are encouraged to tell tales and allowed a **single roll per PC**. Consider Lodermulch's story a HBS and Roramaund's & Voynod's PS. Augment PC rolls +1 if:

- 1) Player delivers in the Vancian mode
- 2) The story entertains the other Players & GM.
- 3) The story describes their own previous adventures.

Rolls signify the outcome of the pilgrims' votes (Speakers on each individual evening are not permitted to vote.)

Describe the manner of the story-telling and the response of the audience, according to the result of the roll. For instance it may be that a Player speaks well and entertainingly, gaining +2 as above, but rolls a DF, (adjusted to an EF). In such a case the GM needs to explain what odd faux pas the storyteller made that offended the pilgrims, and describe various responses.

In the event of a tie, the person with the highest most actual **score calculation points** wins. (Total the number of the actual roll, plus the awards—see above—for appropriate story-telling.) If that is still a tie then the PC with the most positive (or least negative) sympathy points wins. If you do not use SPs, roll randomly.

1.2) Vista of a Pleasant Cottage

☉ "By the fourth day the mighty Scamander is far wider. No habitations can be seen, only grasslands & thin woodlands most suitable for half-men & wild beasts. You're blessed indeed to be riding this craft. Sceptics such as yourselves, Voynod and Roramaund, easily tolerate the tedious rites of pilgrims.

Now and again you subtly complement each other on the benefits of tolerance and an open mind. At other moments you cast hidden looks of disbelief between each other when a pilgrim does something like the seven energetic prostrations, which involve hurling himself violently and repeatedly to the floor of the raft, initially startling all nearby (including other pilgrims) and often causing bruising.

Today a double distraction occurs. First all observe a metal egg at high altitude moving swiftly, then descending miles ahead. Then two hours later the person on forward watch calls out for others to come and observe. A large sheet of silvered force hangs in the air. It does not block the river, but nonetheless hangs in their path. The long emergency poles are unshipped and with much effort the raft is slowed until it comes to a halt adjacent to this strange occurrence. Several pilgrims brace the raft, sweating with effort until Garstang casts a cantrap that makes their task far easier."



The Bold Adventurers

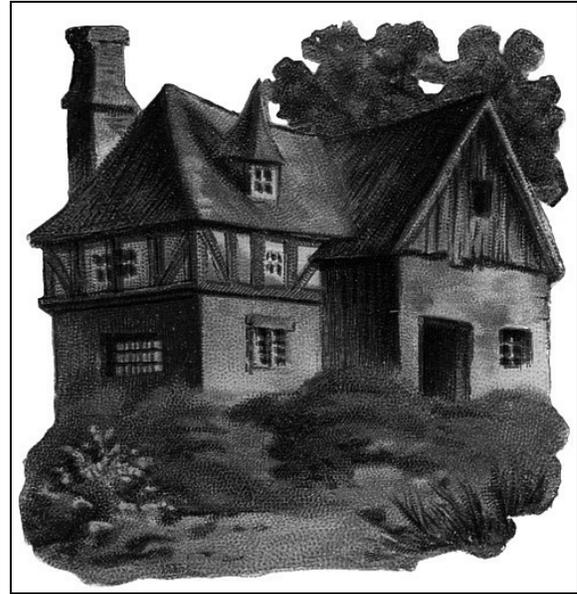
Within the surface of this 40ft x 40ft shimmering pane, one who strains to do so (Ψ PERCEPTION) can observe a small and quaint cottage situated in its own vegetable gardens and **surrounded by pleasant trees**. If anyone tests the pane, perhaps with a pole, they will find that any object pushes easily through the surface into the realm beyond, and does not emerge behind the pane.

The pilgrims look to Garstang as the one to decide what they do in the case of unpredicted happenings. His family after all operates these generational trips. He suggests it is some **vision sent by Gilfig**, or perhaps a test of piety, and deems that a total of 'X' pilgrims be sent through the pane to investigate this oddity. (X being the number of PCs who have Players present +2.)

As usual Garstang says that they will draw lots, and puts the names of all pilgrims into a hat. First of all he draws out a single name to decide who will draw the names from the hat. It is Lodermulch. Some comments of surprise pass around the pilgrims, and perceptive PCs may hear discussions on the oddity that each of the few times that have had cause to draw lots before that **Lodermulch's name is always there** as the one to be the drawer. Lodermulch himself evidences amazement, but turns down the offer of a redraw and consents to be the one to pull the names from the hat. (*He has a cantrap that influences whose names are pulled in any activity like this.*)

The names that are pulled are all of the PCs with Players present, plus Voynod & Roramaund. Coincidentally, these are **the people whom Lodermulch likes the least**. No manner of protestations will be given credence, as Garstang is too naive to accept them, and the rest of the pilgrims simply don't want to take the risks. It is near-universally decided that those who shirk their duties are not fit company for pure Gilfigites. (IE would be removed from the raft.) Voynod will set an example by not complaining in any overt way, though may snidely 'compliment' the "noble Lodermulch" on 'again' performing his duties so well.

Initially Garstang will simply ask the persons chosen to step lively through and come back with a full report. The PCs may wish to vary this simplicity. For instance they may recommend **some manner of safety testing** the wall of force, perhaps involving a live being. (This option will be considered fair enough and therefore permitted). A fish from one of the storage barrels on the raft would do the job nicely. It does indeed return unharmed. Explorers may request to be supplied with simple weapons, and though this will be discouraged, any persistent and reasonable Persuasion attempts are likely to succeed in such requests being met.



Dangers & Details

Once inside, the portal is seen only as a faint shimmer, and is lost from view a few feet away. It needs to be carefully marked, and travellers to remember its location

The area inside is indeed pleasant, and is somewhat larger than it appeared from outside viewing. For instance, they are in an expanse of formal cottage gardens with hedges, vegetable patches, ornamental & **fruit-bearing trees and flowerbeds**. The house itself is ten minutes brisk walk away.

The only immediately obvious strangenesses are:
(i) anything sampled tastes exceptionally good, and
(ii) {though it may take them a while to notice this}, a mile or so away from the house the more distant surroundings seem to lose a visual sense of realness, instead appearing like **well-drawn theatre canvasses**. (*If anyone walks towards them for long enough they become disorientated and find themselves wandering back to the house.*)

Attack Tree

Attack [___], Defence [___], Health [___], Magic [___]

As they approach the house they will encounter several trees surrounding the path that attack them with their branches and fast-growing roots, an emaciated half-man that attacks them with no sense of self-preservation and is utterly insane. If they examine its corpse they will find signs that its cranium has been operated on and sutured back together, and near the house a large **ornamental pool** that shows reflected the scene of a horrible murder that appears to have taken place one night on its edge (though the perpetrators are shadows).

The cottage itself is also larger on the inside than it appears. Huge kitchen, wide hall, large well-apportioned



drawing room, and a magnificent dining room make up the downstairs. All are decorated with whatever Players invent/recommend that the GM also agrees to.

Remember to advise Players that the more they speak in suitable flowery description the more likely it is that an object is there. For instance: "Above the fireplace Lesorix sees a glinting pair of crossed rapiers shining with the joy of diligent polishing and bearing jewel-encrusted hilts." Rather than: "An old rapier is lying on the couch. Lesorix picks it up." Of course the GM decrees as soon as they are examined (or attempted to be sold) that the jewels are imitation paste, though that doesn't detract from the visual appeal.

Other standard goods are also widely available, though nothing of high value that they can easily carry is here. On closer inspection it is not clear that the house is even lived in. Perhaps all is a façade? For what purpose?

Upstairs is a main bedchamber that is clearly the residence of a wizard. **Hats and robes** are in the cupboards, simple spell-primers on the bookshelves, and incomprehensible larger tomes are chained inside a glass-fronted cabinet. At least that is what they appear to be. If examined all are in reverse text. It may become obvious that this place is a mirror image of something.

Also up here are a luxurious bathroom, staffed by over-friendly voiceless sylphs, & two sumptuous guestrooms.

The basement may be hard to discover **until the screams start**. PCs searching for their source first of all come across an 8ft tall being made of scales and nodes, all connected by webs of force. This creature addresses them in barely discernible grating metallic speech thus:

"I am gratified that the contract continues to be met. Iucounu proves to be a reliable provider."

It then attempts to stun the PCs one by one with a long metal rod that exerts a blast of numbing electric charge.

Unfeeling Overworld Guardian Being (Krepth)

"Resistance is inefficacious! You will be utilised!"

Attack [___], Defence [___], Health [___], Magic [___]
GM adds any special characteristics/magic as suit the campaign.

This creature needs to prove to be hard to stop/injure, and should put them through their paces. Should they have any peculiar magic items, it will be handy if these are effective against it, but such are unlikely this early in this part of the campaign. This land is a different dimension, and so spells work unusually here, or not at all. This may prove advantageous or amusing (or both).

Another way to kill it is to lure/trip it into the pond, where the water nullifies its matrix and it collapses into a pile of scales. Wrapping it in curtains torn from the windows, throwing ornaments at it... all are acceptable ways to slow it down sufficiently to gain the upper hand.

Once the creature is disposed of, the screams continue from behind a door hidden within some panelling in the drawing room. Down stairs beyond, smaller Overworld beings are conducting fiendish anatomical experiments on several captured half-men and several human nomads of the steppes (with apparent indiscrimination).

Unfeeling Regular Overworld Being (Steppth)

"Who trespasses here? Where is Krepth?"

Attack [___], Defence [___], Health [___], Magic [___]
Much less tough than the guardian being, but still dangerous.

The PCs may creep down the stairs, observe this and then flee in fear, attack and put an end to things (in a more Turjanic campaign), or creep away. Attempts to converse with or convince the beings are futile, as they do not think like humans.

One challenge is finding the door again, though perhaps pilgrims are waving branches or sticks through it at a crucial moment (testing before they depart). If so, PCs may end up in the river as the raft moves on (Lodermulch having persuaded everyone that the characters are clearly not returning from their doom.)

If Things Go Badly Wrong:

Or the beings will eventually become aware of the intrusion, and give chase across the lawns, moving in gliding strides that are slightly slower than the PCs, but tireless and **wielding long silver rods** that release a stunning charge when contacting living flesh.

Roramaund may be lost here if things turn into a rout. Voynod may reveal some hitherto unknown magical skill or device that allows the rest of them to escape by the skin of their teeth. In a Turjanic campaign, PCs may obtain one of more of the silver rods, which are charged magical items that release a stunning blast of electrical energy whenever applied forcefully to living flesh.

However the scene is managed, it ends in a running battle to escape, perhaps with spells cast and items (likely mostly Voynod's) discharged. If all goes badly, pilgrims, marshalled by Garstang emerge to the rescue.

No return into this realm is sensible, due to the ferocity of the beings and the narrowness of the escape. The beings may even reach out through the wall and stun pilgrims with the rods, before the raft drifts far enough.

The Connection to Iucounu?

Has Iucounu been setting magical traps for them? Read the "Thawn Herders" encounter before deciding. An option is to place belongings of his in the master bedroom. There is no great relevance about a potential connection, except that it provides the motivation for the PCs to believe and respond to the Thawn Herders.



1.3) Pelgrane Riders

⊕ "A night and a day pass. Dry rolling grassland with occasional thin, dark woodlands stretch as far as the eye can see. The pilgrims are subdued after recent events. Normal evening pass-times are forgone. Another night goes by. The river continues to flow. In the morning of the following day you find that the daily breakfast gruel is beginning to lose the bare appeal that it once had. The journey is starting to become an indeterminable ordeal."

Somebody (a PC?) spots flying creatures. Around a dozen of them. From a distance **astute observers** may partially-correctly identify them as large (greater) pelgrane. Keener observers might also spot that around half seem to be supporting something on their backs.

These 11 creatures (exact number noticed as they draw closer) are indeed greater pelgranes, and 5 have riders – Clevenger! (Note that despite the brief presentation, rolls are required to identify beings, spot objects at a distance etc). This strange **airborne anomaly** assumes what looks uncomfortably like an attack formation and descends at speed in the direction of the raft.

The point of this encounter is to have the PCs mount an energetic defence. The pilgrims are **hysterically incompetent** or frozen in fear. Even Voynod has no direct attack spells (or the pelgranes are enchanted with Resistance if this is a burgeoning Turjanic campaign).

Pilgrims shriek in terror, hide beneath reed coverings and in barrels. Pelgrane may drop rocks first before they swoop (PCs roll Athletics), and smash through the reed coverings of the boat/shelter. Each riderless pelgrane will **attempt to grasp a pilgrim**, raise him to a great height and drop him (not over the river). We may lose some of the non-personality pilgrims at this point. A PC might even be grabbed, and have to break free and fall into the river to avoid being dropped to his death.

Allow PCs who have succeeded at Wherewithal rolls, to improvise effectively. No-one else (except perhaps Voynod & Lodermulch) is capable of useful action, though all will be running around making a hullabaloo and screaming advice. The navigation poles (quickly sharpened), might be a great boon here, impaling flying menaces. Hopefully the PCs will have some magic.

The foe try several passes. If this encounter is a struggle for the PCs the attack ends when three of the avian steeds are **slain or severely injured**, or when one of the riders is killed. If the PCs are proving efficient pelgrane killers, then this band is more suicidally determined.

After this they will fly away towards the north and not be seen again. [Or possibly one rider keeps all pelgranes obedient through continually playing a three-part pipe, and needs to do so within a certain distance radius: within target range of inventive/magician PCs.]

12 Not for distribution in any form without specific permission. One copy may be printed for personal use only.

No doubt **avid watch will be kept** for the next few days, but the pelgranes and their riders will not be encountered again (unless the GM has different ideas of course). If the PCs examine a fallen corpse, feel free to find a magician's markings on creature or goods, or even a pouch of coded messages. Iucounu's servants?



A Winged Steed

Certain witches and warlocks know the secret of breeding large specimens of the Common Pelgrane, from eggs stolen from the nests of the parent creatures. The process of breeding, feeding, and training also requires knowledge of certain enchantments and is so convoluted that success is far from guaranteed. Nonetheless, individual pelgranes exist that reluctantly allow riders to use them as winged steeds - for swifter passage across the countryside. (Though only the largest of the trained pelgranes are able to support full-sized humans for any distance, and the most feared pelgrane riders are of smaller stature.)

Ensorcelled Pelgrane

Strength 18 [___], Intuition 10 [___] (+1 if airborne and not attacking), Health 15 [___], Athletics 15 [___], Wherewithal 10 [___], Magic (Resistance only) 3 [___]. [-1 to all rolls for physical abilities when carrying a rider.]

Game Notes: Being intelligent and well-trained, the pelgranes that actually complete this partial-domestication rarely turn on their masters (only if severely wounded and exposed repeatedly to dangerous or painful circumstance). They are steeds not combatants, and will not automatically attack foes of their rider if the rider is absent. Of course they will do so without compunction if they are hungry and recognize the prospect of a hearty meal. If well-fed they may simply observe intruders in an uninterested fashion, merely checking if any personal threat is posed. In order for one of the characters in your campaign to ride such a pelgrane they would need to use Imposture and Persuasion to convince it that they were authorized to do so. Or possess some manner of magic to influence or control half-men.



1.4) The Thawn Herders

⊕ "Two more days pass. The mountains have vanished into the north. On the west bank woodlands are more frequent, growing into a small forest. Otherwise rolling plain seems endless in all directions. In the evenings Garstang organises chanting, and singing of Gilfigite hymns. This is entertaining enough for the masses, though for bold adventurers the excitement of endlessly repeated stanzas quickly wears thin. Around noon the raft is hailed. Human voices call. Men emerge from the trees. They ask politely for the pilgrims to pull the raft to the side of the waters, so that they may converse. Their manner is easy-going but worried."

All turn to the PCs (who may also **embrace Voynod** as a colleague) as most experienced in unexpected hazards.

The consensus amongst the pilgrims is of not wishing to stop. Several attempt to explain this to the woodsmen.

Iucounu's Curse

If the PCs and others decide not to stop, the Thawn Herders will communicate by shouting:

"Ho, travellers. Be warned that you are cursed. We detect a mage has placed a resonance to make your whereabouts known to him. Have you been plagued with dangerous fates just recently? For we also detect that only in recent days have you entered the effective range of this enchanted predicament.

Yet, we are all fortuitous in this meeting. You are blessed because the magic of our spirit speaker can remove this curse. We are blessed because we need the assistance of folk more experienced in the unusual hazards of the wild than we. And since you travel these feared waters by means only of a raft, we judge you such."

If the PCs decide to stop the above will be part of a bargaining discussion. Basically the 'Spirit Speaker' (minor magician) of the society has detected that the PCs have had a magical tracking enchantment placed on them, presumably so that Iucounu knows when they have passed a point sufficiently southward to indicate that they have found a way to return towards Almerj.

The Thawn Herder Spirit Speaker (clearly influenced by nomad customs if his ragged erbskin attire and the feathers in his hair are any judge) will ask and offer:

- "Have you angered a mage of any note in recent times?"

- "Amongst you is the taint of an enchantment to pinpoint your location, once beyond a certain latitude moving southwards. I am curious as to why that would be so."

- "This will surely make your journey unreasonably hazardous. We have need of your services, and will gladly remove this curse in exchange for your assistance."

It may be up to the PCs to persuade pilgrims to stop, even though recent events lend credence to the claims.

Once the raft stops, Garstang picks Lodermulch, Voynod, and 1 or 2 PCs to come with him off the raft. They converse with a small group of the odd rustic folk.

The Spirit Speaker will draw one of the original PCs aside, under some ridiculous pretence such as "I sense you are a person of botanical interests. Perhaps you may like to step yonder momentarily to view this unusual specimen of *Heracleum*?"

Once apart the Speaker explains that he knows only a few rafters are tainted, and that it would be perhaps incautious to reveal that? He therefore expects the PCs to enlist the other pilgrims and gives a quick overview of the problems facing the Thawn Herders. (He guarantees that he will begin the preparations to remove the curse, something that will take him two full days.)

It then becomes the challenge of the PCs to convince the rest of the pilgrims that it is in their best interests to do this. PCs may (rightly) presume that the pilgrims would leave the PCs here to work out their own fate if it became known that the majority were unaffected by the curse. Therefore it is in their best interests to enter into a small 'accommodation' with the Spirit Speaker, allowing all pilgrims to believe that they have all been cursed, and are therefore positively inclined to the task.

The pilgrims may talk energetically about what they could have done to anger a magician so he would curse them thus, and send the portal and the pelgrane to test them. If they do not know that the PCs are questing in revenge against a magician, they will be easily taken in.

If the pilgrims do know that the PCs are on this revenge quest, they may wonder if the curse is only on the PCs.

In which case the PCs must convince the pilgrims that nonetheless all now share the curse (which the Spirit Speaker will falsely support on their behalf since he wants the local problem solved). This may anger them, but wise PCs will divert the blame towards Iucounu.

Make it clear to Players that having this curse removed is a decisive point in the campaign. It needs to be obvious that PCs face constant attack from now on if they do not remove it. If they ask why Iucounu cannot just recast it once it is dismissed, the Spirit Speaker explains that it requires the targets to be standing at the place to which it is connected (presumably Pergolo).

This is also a powerful learning point in the campaign, where the PCs learn from the Spirit Speaker that Iucounu is not the incredibly potent mage they believed:

- "My sense is that this curse was placed to warn someone when you travelled too close, so he could watch for your approach. To me this indicates that he fears you. Yet he has some potency to be able to cast such spells. One possibility is that he possesses some magic and nonetheless lacks the guaranteed power to defend himself against well-executed attack from enemies of resource, such as you appear to be. Is he a man of much bluster and ceremony? Perhaps hiding his inadequacy through reputation? If this information is a comfort to you, perhaps it will increase your zeal to assist me?"



Discussing Iucounu's Power & Tracking Curse

Players may feel that the information at the end of the previous boxed section is just one interpretation. And that another interpretation might be that Iucounu loves a jest so much that he wants to torment the PCs the closer they get to him, and then annihilate them in one fell swoop! Fortunately DERPG is fictional in tone, not savagely realist, and plot hints can be taken as gospel.

However, if discussion ensues, both Voynod and the Spirit Speaker can attest that mages that are powerful beyond all reasonable fears do not stoop to engage in petty squabbles and revenges on lesser folk. Only those who are insecure with their position resort to torments. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that although Iucounu undeniably possesses much magic, most likely he is simply another arrogant magician who preys on lesser folk for his own unbalanced amusement. And thus is a magician who is also susceptible to magic and to surprise and determination.

This discussion may have happened earlier in this publication with Voynod or previously (BMM) with Pharesm, but now is an ideal place to have it occur or be revisited. The outcome needs to be that the PCs come to the awareness or confirmation that Iucounu can most likely be beaten if they (the PCs) can:

Cugelesque Option: ...collect sufficient items of magical potency/protection and increase their abilities,

Turjanic Option: ...learn more spells, gain more magical items, and increase their martial prowess.

This section is to some extent an introduction to the later encounter with the ghost of Pergolo's former owner (who will advise the PCs to seek powerful allies). And it is also a precursor to begin building game tension towards the eventual showdown with Iucounu.

General knowledge about magicians may or may not have been discussed earlier between PCs. Either way, now may be a good time to raise such things again. In this world Arch-Magicians as defined in Vance's original stories do not exist. Folk such as Pandelume & Pharesm are at the apex of their professions. Other magicians vary in potency, and numerous substantiated tales exist about magicians killed by other magicians, or even by angry mobs.

As Antone of Marke (a well-known magician-slayer of a previous aeon) himself declared: "A dozen raging clevenger can bring down a leucomorph!"

In short we encourage you to place into the course of play at some point round now, an in-game conversation about the PCs' (Players) practical expectations of being able to tackle Iucounu.

If PCs need further inducement to stop, a little way on are some rocks jutting into the river. Nearly two-dozen sling-men await with sharpened pebbles. As the raft approaches **they begin to limber up**. A sharp-eyed PC may spot this early, and make landfall without revealing they've noticed. Woodsmen are on one side of the river, but slingers are on the other. (These folk use small coracles propelled by simple cantraps whose effect lasts only sufficiently to cross from one bank to the other.)

The Thawn Herders

The thawn herders of the Scamander Basin are rough & ready folk, able to handle these obstreperous and independent beasts, **sheer them for wool**, milk them, even take some for meat. They thrive in the grasslands of the middle Scamander in the region around where it joins with the Asc, a day or two north and south.

Nomads of the steppe rarely range here, and are largely content to share the land peaceably with thawn herders when they do: **bartering nomad goods** for milk and meat. Normally no difficulty is too great for the thawn herders. Unfortunately something has been slaughtering the flock: every few days one or more of the beasts disappear, and the herders have found only partial tracks of the predator – and even these defy identification.

They have partially adopted nomad ways, the Spirit Speaker cast runes yesterday. The runes said to **look to the river for a solution**. The fates are smiling on them.

The Plot

Whether the pilgrims blame the PCs or not, the majority will honestly assert their incompetence in such matters. PCs and agnostics are unanimously (except perhaps for themselves) voted to represent all in the endeavour. The slingers stay with the raft, guaranteeing that it will not be allowed to depart without its representatives. Said representatives are taken an hour's walk **to the camp of the herders**, which is in a wide section of ancient ruins that are now also protected by a towering and mightily thick wall of prickly bushes the herders have created and added too over time. The entrance is a large gate of iron bars, set between old weather-worn stone pillars.

The PCs will be introduced to the respected elder and temporarily inducted into the clan. Apologies will be made for the informal nature of their employment, but these people are desperate and **very isolated from any other help**. These people are used to dealing with predators, but have no idea what is going on here. Their livelihood and therefore social structure is under threat. They seem to be good people, and also offer a reward.

Anyone assisting effectively will be taught the cantrap that propels a wooden craft across a river at speed.



Thawn range within 2 or 3 miles of the encampment at night, an area too wide to watch effectively. Historically they are rarely predated or even stolen by nomads, so herders have no knowledge or skill in operating during darkness. They are largely a peaceable people, maintaining skill in the sling only to deter the occasional wild predator such as a shamb. However, **the loss of thawn has increased** incredibly in recent times. Try as they might, herders found only a few scuffled tracks. Whatever hunts thawn is silent, skilled, & cunning.

The Thawn

The larger 'common thawn' whilst being of greater than animal intelligence unlike the prettier bearded thawn is incapable of speech, less observant and less stealthy.

Caution 10 [___], Sure-Footed 12 [___], Health 9 [___], Athletics 12 [___], Conceal't 5 [___], Perception 7 [___], Stealth 8 [___], Tracking 6 [___], Wherewithal 4 [___]

Nimble in Rough Terrain

The thawn can leap across and onto rocks, and dash across uneven ground, with supreme ease.

Game Notes: GM's grant a boon or bonus of 1 to the creature's Athletics rolls in such situations. However, it is not strong, and attracts a levy of 1 for feats requiring sheer muscle.

Collectors

Some wild thawn accumulate shiny and unusual goods that they find, possibly even collecting them from behind the backs of their distracted owners. Such things then find themselves secreted in similar heaps or earth or clay to those that mark a thawn's stored food supply.

A Tracking Animal

Bearded thawns captured whilst young can be trained as tracking animals, and used to trail a quarry across the wastes. This procedure was once reasonably popular, but now most rare. (Fortunately for criminals the world over.) *For any normal tracking tasks in its own environment (using its keen sense of smell to follow prey) the thawn rolls at a bonus of 2. It even has a bonus of 1 if the task is only marginally difficult.*

Variant Sub-Species

The smaller bearded-thawn (so called because its mane thickens noticeably beneath the neck) is intelligent, though extremely limited in the subjects on which it can knowledgeably converse.

Game Notes: Add 'Persuade (Obfuscatory) 0.5~' and 'Rebuff (Pure-Hearted: 'disingenuous') 1~'.

Adventure Ideas for Other Campaigns:

Our rogues raid a small town of dull-witted inhabitants, and escape with some valuable and/or prized local religious item. This time no ordinary 'corrective committee' follows them, but seasoned trackers with the use of two semi-domesticated thawns. Even if outdistanced, this group proves so tenacious as to follow the adventurers into their next two scenarios (or until confronted with sufficient decisiveness).

The herders are prepared to provide several young and **skilled slingsmen** (who have volunteered) but otherwise will not emerge from their camp at night (unless of course to assist someone struggling right at their walls). What they recommend is that the adventurers hide themselves in some ruins on the plain that the thawn habitually sleep around, and wait until whatever predator it is arrives. The herders hope for all concerned that the problem will soon be dealt with.

Information

PCs may ask for more information about the happenings and the surrounding area (or may explore during daylight).

The thawn herd numbers several hundred.

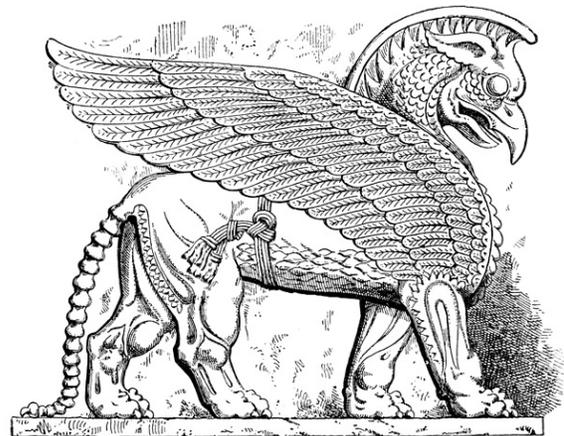
A range of low, partly forested hills is a few miles away.

On the plain are small areas of woodland in hidden valleys. Nomads rarely travel this far north.

Occasionally entrails or other body parts have been found at some place around the ruins, but these provide no clues. The herders know the size of their herd through estimation and through the individual natures of some of the beasts. That is how they know of the disappearances, because they are masters of their art.

The herders have no enemies, and have heard of nomad legends that ghosts haunt this part of the plains, which is why the nomads are rare in these northern lands.

However, the ghosts have never been seen within the settlement, nor has the predator. With the predator this likely means it is afraid of humans. A temporary solution would be to place all of the thawn inside the town's barns, but the wisdom of inviting a savage predator to investigate the town is questionable at best.



Griffin

Ferocity 17 [___], Dodge 14 [___], Health 17 [___], Magic (innate) [___], Athletics 13 [___], Concealment 6, Perception 9 [___], Stealth 5 [___], Tracking 7 [___], Wherewithal 14.



The GM will need to improvise, dependent on the PCs' actions. We provide a sample overview of play.

On the first night in the ruins, something disturbs the beasts. PCs track and use Stealth to try and approach it. Traps will be hard to set because of the number of thawn all around. After **much suspense** and seeing of shadows moving, eventually someone catches sight of a wild griffin. These creatures are powerful and savage.

Now the game turns, and the hopelessly outclassed PCs are forced to flee and fight for their lives, finding (or sensibly having already prepared) some protected ancient cellar with a narrow opening that they can barricade themselves into. The beast is **ferocious and determined**, but eventually departs. Lodermulch (having been successfully set up as an antagonist) might be slain horribly whilst saving the life of a PC during this encounter, thus setting up a satisfying dissonance between casual DERPG lack of empathy, and the sense that people can surprise when it comes to the crunch!

PCs tell their discovery at camp, and profess to fearing for their lives. Griffins are ancient mythic foes of nomads, so also of herders (who consider themselves part nomad). They become **resolute to have this beast destroyed** and offer what help they can (apart from engaging it, except for a few bold volunteers). They also increase the reward, offering several charged magical items that the GM invents. (None of which are directly useful in fighting the griffin.) The herders know that this type of griffin is not intelligent and suggest that cunning traps might be used to ensnare it and inconvenience it prior to it being set upon and slain.

PCs may recall (Ψ PEDANTRY) (a) wild griffins that have just eaten tend to sleep heavily the day after and are sluggish if woken, eventually emerging only at nightfall, (b) they rest in **cave lairs**, most likely in dry hillsides. (An expedition to the nearby hills is not out of order.)

Aided by the volunteers, PCs could set traps (nets & rope), perhaps with most thawn secreted in village barns and others tethered in the ruins. (Where **slingsmen and armed PCs** with nets can easily gain the advantage.)

If this is all too easy then there may be two griffins, one of whom is killed, then the other attacks in a vengeful fury. PCs may slay them in their lair in the hills.

If PCs need extra help, two timid bearded thawn (a breeding pair) **emerge from the wilds**, and offer to organise the domestic thawn to charge the beasts en masse and provide a cover for PCs activities.

If Turjanic PCs are *redolent with spells* make the griffin intelligent, with magic resistance & spell-like abilities. Or instead of griffins make the foes a pack of ferocious **half-spider/half-demonic entities** that live in a semi-

submerged mud-built hive. Either way PCs must persuade and plan, and act with decisiveness/cunning. The Spirit Speaker will eventually remove the curse. Run imaginatively as a peculiar ritual, with the location spirits finally cast out as screaming demonic imps, whipping off hats & causing moments of chaos before departing.

1.5) A Lively Debate

⊕' *"Two more days pass. Forest is now thick on the west bank, and growing more so on the east. But the pilgrims say this is not the famous Blanwalt, just another nameless northern woodland.*

Last night even the most devout began to clearly tire of the chanting and song. The evening was lacklustre. Not long after morning, while the raft floated placidly along, the sun gave an alarming pulse. A purple film formed upon the surface like tarnish, then dissolved. Certain pilgrims ran back and forth in alarm, crying, 'The sun goes dark! Prepare for the chill!'

Garstang, however, held up his hands in reassurance. "Calm, all! The quaver has departed, the sun is as before!" Subucule likewise reassured the travellers: 'Think!' he urged with great earnestness: 'Would Gilfig allow this cataclysm, even while we travel to worship at the Black Obelisk?' Calm was eventually restored and the day proceeded with more ease.

That evening Garstang tried harder to create cheer, and suggested a formal debate be held on the nature of Gilfigism or other heretical standpoints, purely as a theoretical exercise. The pilgrims, by & large otherwise listless & waning agreed without exception."

Apart from anyone on watch, pilgrims sit at the centre of the raft, with **Garstang acting as chairperson**. One by one everyone voices an opinion and is debated.

*The GM can offer 3IP to the winner, 2IP to a PC should they come second and 1IP for third place. The GM can also encourage ridiculous claims and convoluted justifications, requesting that for any PC who speaks, their Player actually propose some manner of **farcical creation concept**, or a bizarre reason as to why humans experience life the way that they do. This could be an expansion on the Law of Equipoise, or completely different.*

GMC debates should be created in outline only, based on the character quotes from the Pilgrims' ratings page earlier.

Once the **basic tenets** have been offered, the pilgrims vote as to whom they feel has a point worthy of discussing and who does not. This narrows down the field into more manageable numbers of contestants.

A contest can then be run using the free-for-all rules (DERPG: pp35/36). All compete for the approval of other individual audience member pilgrims. PCs stand an equal chance as any, despite **being non-Gilfigites**, because (a) many pilgrims respect a superior debater even if they do not agree with their concepts, and (b) doctrines of Gilfig are incredibly diverse (possibly PCs pose as worshippers with their own obscure beliefs).



1.6) The Dance Contest

⊕ "The day after the debating contest in the heart of the forest the mighty Scamander joins the equally mighty River Asc, descending from Merce and the north-west mountains. Still known as the Scamander, the river on which the raft floats is now a vast expanse. The tree-lined banks are a considerable distance away.

Throughout the day the raft moves on the broad flow, sometimes almost out of sight of the banks, sometimes gliding close beside the reeds of the shore. With nothing better to do, the pilgrims continue informal debate, sometimes lengthy disputations. The diversity of opinion is remarkable. As often as not the talk explores meta-physical arcana, or returns to the subtleties of Gilfigite principle."

Before the evening of dancing, ask if PCs are engaging in any particular activities today. This is appropriate for Turjanic PCs who might study **Magic with Voynod** or swapping tuition in other specialties with other pilgrims.

In the evening Garstang proposes a contest wherein all pilgrims demonstrate particular ritual dances of **various branches of Gilfigism**, for mutual entertainment. Not all of the pilgrims agree to take part, which cuts down the GM's need to invent different descriptions.

GM may offer IP incentives for PCs to get involved, or may call for Resistances against **Arrogance**, as original pilgrims cast verbal doubt that newcomers can perform.

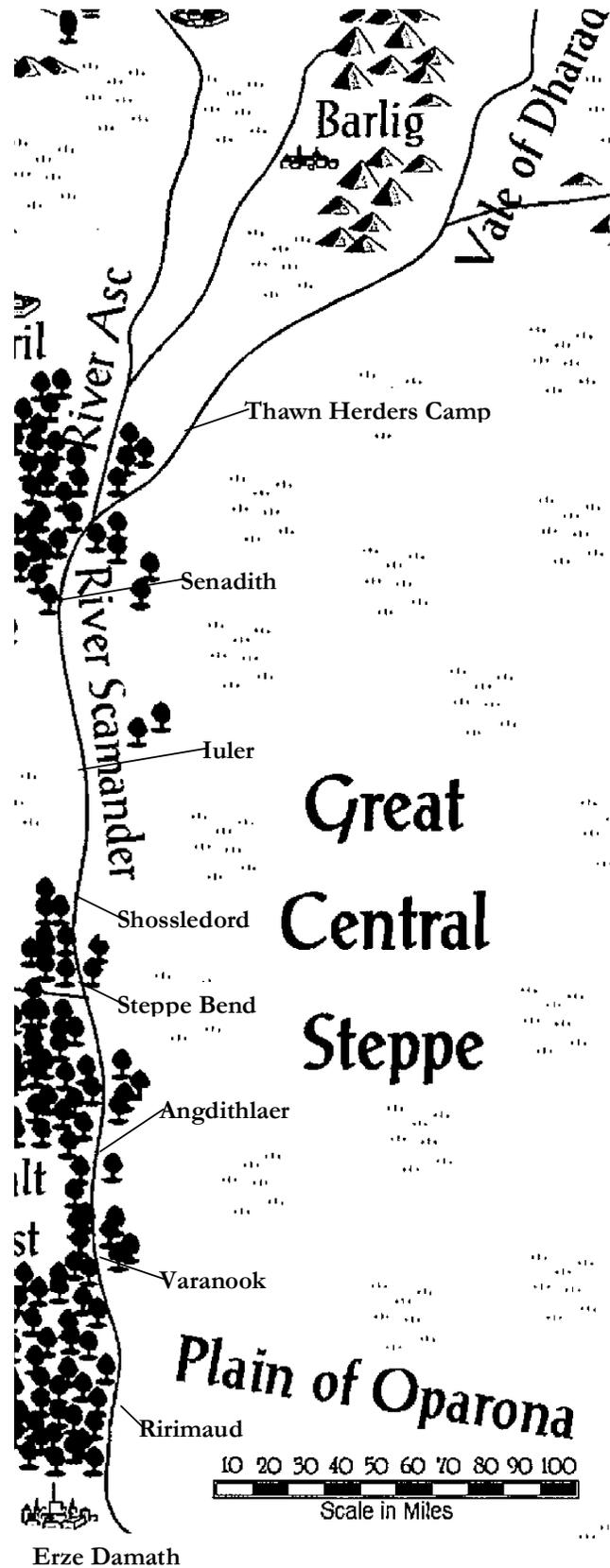
Either way, she explains that dice rolls are at +1 should the Player describe a particular series of dance moves in a vividly entertaining way, or possibly even +2 if the Player **actually demonstrates them** in any way more detailed than a brief overview. Explain also that a further +1 is offered for a PC who voices a convincing or detailed mini-myth as to what action of Gilfig's is being represented by this particular series of dance.

DF's cannot be re-rolled. Invent catastrophe as PCs make an absolute ass of themselves: **falling into water barrels**, stepping off the raft, accidentally kicking Garstang in the chin with a particularly flourishing high-step...

Spend time on this encounter for the most amusement.

Fishing for Coin

This might be when PCs introduce Gambling onto the raft, dependent on **how confident they are** at their moves, (or how confident the Players are at their descriptive or acting capacities). Either now or in the forthcoming Wrestling contest, Gambling should be heartily encouraged, and PCs commence to fleece the pilgrims of all that they're worth using all their skills at dice & cards etc. This should provoke simmering resentment, but be fuelled by the PCs' very real speculated need for funds when they arrive at Erze Damath. It could also be the **very** thinly veiled motivation behind the righteous zeal of the pilgrims to eject the PCs from the raft (see later).





1.7) Senadith

☉ "After breakfast there is some excitement. Garstang says that from his observations of forest that is dwindling on both banks, that the raft is approaching the northernmost settlement at the far distant edge of the lands surrounding Erze Damath.

Paddles are broken out of the stores, and the pilgrims strike for the distant eastern shore with eagerness. By the middle of the afternoon it is drawing closer, and by late afternoon is very much near at hand. Now the more heavily wooded of either bank.

The ground is muddy and thick with tall reed beds, but soon enough, on a slightly raised hillock of ground you can observe a stockaded settlement. Despite themselves the pilgrims give off an almost unanimous cheer.

After what seems only moments Garstang guides the paddlers to bring the raft close against a large boulder that emerges from the river. The raft is tied to an ancient brass hook. A series of footholds presumably lead to a path that in turn leads to town."

Senadith

The stockade reinforces ancient crumbling defensive walls into which many of the town's dwellings are built. Clearly this was once an extensive and well-structured keep rather than a town as such. The area around is mostly mudflats and reedbeds. Even inside the town is extremely damp, with wide duckboard walkways serving as the 'streets'.

Many of the 700 or so inhabitants wear tall boots secured over their shoulders by braces. The town came into being as a centre of the freshwater mollusc industry and fortnightly the mollusc barge heads downriver to Erze Damath and back. (It last departed only this morning.)

The inhabitants carry all manner of weaponry, but are not displeased to see visitors. The Senadith Inn, despite its mud-strewn floor, is lively and welcoming. This is the first place that PCs will meet people from Erze Damath. For basic information on that city, refer to the appendices. Divert extensive questions about the river route south, by making inhabitants charge exorbitantly for information.

Most pilgrims, and presumably all of the PCs, go into town just in order to stretch their legs and get a taste of civilisation. The GM is encouraged to run this town somewhat like a **'Wild West' outpost**. Trappers and hunters rub shoulders with oyster divers, and relic miners who comb the scattered ruins of the surrounding plains for undiscovered caches of ancient treasures. Also here are a number of nomad guides, trackers and trappers, dressed in unusual skins, feathers and paint.

Possible Events in Town

A PC offends a drunken treasure-hunter who attacks him with fists on the main street, resulting in both persons ending up **coated in mud** and spending the night in the town gaol for disturbing the peace.

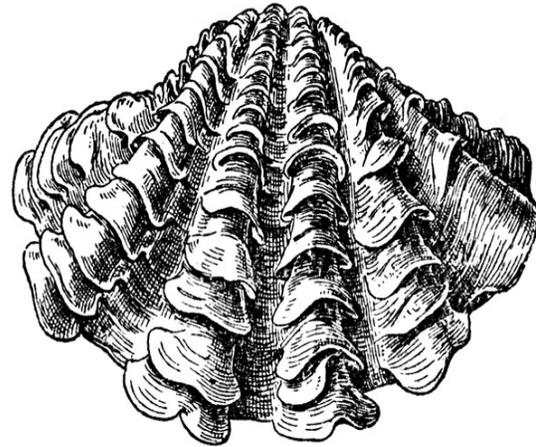
Visits to Sallan's Salon, where Mistress Sallan hosts informal tea-parties at all hours of the day or night, after which individual guests may be **entertained by the staff** in private chambers, each equipped with couches of different quality (reflecting the hourly room cost).

PCs may engage in card and dice games with hardened gamblers in the saloon, in a town where **civil manners are few and far between** when it comes to dealing with proven cheats. (The usual treatment is stripping, a sound hiding and being thrown into a nearby mudpit.)

PCs may be robbed by (or repel with spells & violence) **a gang of treasure hunters** down on their luck.

A PC may become enamoured of a bar-girl (or pot-boy) in the Senadith Inn, only to find that a huge mollusc packer (who is so vast that the unkind might accuse him of having some erb-plasm or **being an escaped vat creature**) considers them their personal sweetheart!

As the evening draws on the Senadith Inn becomes even more 'lively'. An incautious PC might be punched unconscious for 'looking at someone in a peculiar fashion', or may become **inadvertently embroiled** in a mass crude fist-fight after accidentally jiggling the elbow of a drinker who was enjoying a particularly fine ale.



As is far from unknown, the Senadith Inn might burst forth into a huge brawl, presenting numerous options for theft, violence, the settling of old scores, and perhaps a new friendship with one or two of the pilgrims who have remained in town, and who now prove themselves to be adept **wielding improvised truncheons** made of table legs in the PCs' defence.

Falling asleep **dead drunk and badly bruised** (possibly with an unknown woman draped across you) in a small locked bunkroom with a few trusted fellows is not the worst way possible to end a long evening in Senadith.

GM Note: The story continues after Senadith with the PCs aboard the raft a few more days yet. Ensure that this remains so.



1.8) The Wrestling Match

⊕ "Senadith was a refreshing change. The raft floats on. The stench of mud & shellfish gradually fades behind you. The forests dwindle in the north, & once again rolling barren grasslands take precedence. The day, like the river, drifts towards evening."

Create a disagreement between one or more PCs and pilgrims. Possibly caused, by tension, jealousy, gambling debts, principles of Gilfigism, or **some manner of imagined slight** at Senadith. Blows and abuse may occur, or a severe complaint (and call for the PCs to be ejected from the raft) registered with Garstang.

Garstang, ever ready with diplomacy calls for the dispute to be resolved in the standard way that watermen on the Scamander settle disputes – a **wrestling match**. The other pilgrims at once become enthusiastic, offering themselves as seconds, coaches and immediately starting to make bets.

The rules are simple – the first to three throws or pins (or a combination of three, composed from either option). Combat will take place an hour after dinner, in order for sensible digestion to be allowed beforehand. The pilgrim accuser will begin to practice his muscular stretches immediately and be soundly supported by **several colleagues**. He is clearly a man who knows the wrestling art. Perhaps he was hoping for this outcome!

Run the wrestling as a contest, giving +1 when a Player creates a particularly beautifully crafted description of the physical abuse he metes out to his opponent. The opponent of course should be named and **described in arrogant detail**, and his own actions, especially successes or grunting failures also solidly detailed.

It is possible that persons will be tossed into the crowd, thumped soundly about the head (though Garstang will offer a warning and call for a brief pause). The PC accidentally **throwing their opponent off the raft** in such a fashion that the opponent sinks and is never seen again is a sobering potential end to a taut interaction.

⊕ "After the excitement and callousness of the wrestling contest is over, the atmosphere on the raft languishes once more. The following night Garstang asks for spontaneous entertainments and picks nine of the pilgrims to stand up in turn and offer their best story or trick for the amusement or edification of the others.

With a couple of notable exceptions, such as Vitz's impressive vocal exercises, nothing remarkable is expressed. Nonetheless these activities do pass the time and a degree of camaraderie is restored. The following night another 9 are chosen. This evening the efforts are somewhat more entertaining. Good cheer begins to be restored.

You & your companions are scheduled to perform after one night's hiatus, since the raft will shortly pause at the settlement of Iuler."

A Matter of Refreshment (Ratings Pools of an Active Nature)

The style of writing in FoF focuses more on story than rules. It has long been the intent of the author to never let rules interfere with a rich story. Alongside this he presumes most GMs adapt story challenges according to their own rules interpretations anyway. If you are keen to stick to the original rules, then you may have to manufacture story opportunities for PCs to slink away, rest-up and try again later (since presumably your game antagonists will have to do the same thing). Refer then to the speedier refreshment rules variations (DERPG: p27, TT: p29)

Alternative house rules on the Violet Cusps page are another way to deal pools becoming drained by the need to act frequently. Plus, though items that refresh pools are in some places discouraged from being created, we beg to differ in this regard. With things such as Athletics and Combat it can be presumed that the pools to some degree represent fatigue, whether physical or emotional, whether gross muscular or individual energy, and that over time magicians would have addressed these shortcomings. Therefore we offer here a few suggested means by which PCs can be better equipped than average. Specifically, items that pull energy from the surroundings to revitalise basic physicality (refresh Attack, Defence, Athletics and perhaps even 1-3 points in the Health pool, but no more:

A Magic Weapon: Highly durable, with a gem clasped in the hilt, also perhaps able to speak threats to your foes.

Personal Enchantment: Granted in thanks or reward for services, by some magical being or powerful mage.

This may manifest as a small (or large) tattoo, and is likely only once per day (or requires a Magic pool point)

Magic Item (brooch, amulet, armband): Found in the tomb of an ancient warrior perhaps?

One-Use Potions: Resonant with other gaming genres, but could be reinterpreted as gems you crush beneath your heel, gaseous philtres that you inhale from tiny stoppered flasks, or strange items that speak magical words.

RESTRICTIONS: Three times per day seems reasonable, and this restriction adds to play as it means Players have to choose when to use it and when not. Another option (for more powerful items): each use costs a Magic pool point per 3 other pool points regained. Charged items would be most useful only in campaigns where repeated activity such as that we are talking about came but rarely. All of the means by which these refreshment options are granted should be noted as rare in the game. (Otherwise PCs would realistically be often coming up against others with the same facilities. And that should be a rare occurrence, only with arch-foes of some type.)



Chapter 2: Scamander River (Southern Extents)



2.1) Iuler

⊕ *“Four days after departing from Senadith the raft arrives at the town of Iuler, and Garstang orders it paddled over to the western riverbank. The town is situated between a large woodland and the water, and is constructed alongside old buildings which may once have been a riverside customs station or somesuch. It is now late afternoon. Fishing boats are also returning from the river. Local folk aboard them and waiting ashore smile and wave.”*

A total contrast from Senadith. The most offensive thing that normally ever happens here is when fashion-conscious youths laugh cruelly at the patterns of uniformity amongst several pilgrims' headgear.

Iuler

(Summarised from 'Fields of Silver')

Iuler is little more than a curious cluster of houses adjacent to the beach. The inhabitants are very industrious and farm the land with great diligence and as a result have one of the best diets of all the river inhabitants, being an even mix of vegetables, cereals, herd beast and fish.

A more secure form of income for the villagers is the sale of their alcoholic beverages (produced from their cereal crops). The villagers also do a roaring trade in carved bone Gilfigite emblems & charms, which they sell to pilgrims who stop here on their way to Erze Damath.

The most notable feature of Iuler, though, is the peculiar dress sense of its inhabitants. The cut of every suit of clothes is totally unique to every individual.

PCs may still be able to gamble, steal, couch, and otherwise get up to misadventure, but Iuler stands out as a **very very ordinary riverside settlement**.

It can be a counterpoint to the endless adventures that have beset PCs for so long a period prior to this point. If the GM truly wishes to encourage some manner of lively role-playing here, she may have the PCs find a most excellent and highly inexpensive tailor who would be only too pleased to assist the PCs to **dress themselves more appropriately** for their arrival Erze Damath. If only they had sufficient funds!...

Exploring the Undercombs

A more adventurous option: The massive old customs house contains a series of deep open shafts in its recessed shadows. (From which odd noises emerge at night.) Locals never go down there, for the simple reason that such an activity seems to be **an incredibly dangerous notion**. Rumour says tombs of wizards of the Cutz Wars are down there in the dark. Every few years treasure hunters arrive, & descend into the gloom. Most do not come back, but those who do seem elated and carry laden satchels downriver to Erze Damath. Satchels that they make certain no locals can see inside of. (Questions about the nature of these reveal that it was well over a decade ago that the last group of people emerged happy with full bags, and three other parties have been in and not emerged since then.)



If PCs descend (desire for ancient riches: Resist Avarice) we recommend **a series of interweaving catacombs** in which they discover much, perhaps in this order:

a) Old **exploration tools** (rope/dagger...) seemingly simply dropped & left behind on the rough floor. This is where you allow them to find a number of torches, flasks of oil and flintbox – have they been remiss enough to not bring sufficient with them.

b) **Sarcofaghal niches**, all plundered long ago. (Unless you add more, the only items of value remaining are funereal statuary and wall carvings that are very non-portable.)

c) Several half-formed **blind dwarfish humanoids** that wander aimlessly around, but attack when startled (GM chooses if this is potentially deadly or merely amusing.) These are escapees from a close subworld & have tubular innards packed beneath their skin, rather than proper organs.

d) A scattering of peculiar gems, just lying around (though actually in a trail leading to the next section). Sadly these are valueless because they corrode in a matter of hours when exposed to the air above, but Appraisal notes them to be worth between 50-250t each. (Resistance to Avarice can be called for. Award an IP for the most convincing – and verbose – rationalisation why they should continue investigating far underground.)

e) A magical tunnel flexure, possibly an old magical trap to impede tomb-robbers. This grindingly occurs after they have passed, perhaps inspiring foolish and doomed attempts to run back through (if a GMC is with them). They are now trapped and must continue or starve.

f) An underground collapse that occurred long ago. It opens into the roof of a cathedral-sized grotto. (From where many intriguing glints – possibly of numerous gems – twinkle enticingly.) Descent is relatively easy over a large pile of collapsed earth and stone.

g) On the grotto floor: hundreds of foot-long chubby larvae browsing on fungal matter growing on ground and lower walls. Defended by a type of **subterranean bazil** [full details BMM: p29](in sufficient numbers, but only semi-intelligent) to give PCs a challenge. [The many glints are strangely glowing points inside each individual larva. These indeed are the source of the gems.]

h) An encounter with a party of demon adventurers. Perhaps the PCs hear them coming (from a side tunnel). They too are harvesting the larvae, slicing them open and removing the ‘gems’ without a second’s thought. A survivor can be used to guide the PCs to an exit to the upper world. (If the PCs don’t leave a survivor, the demons carry a map that indicates [perhaps using Pedantry] what is clearly a sun at the top of a passage only four caverns – and connecting tunnels – away. A number of other large and small side tunnels lead off.

The demons have travelled for many days from a subworld, on a very risky venture following an ancient map, to gather what to them are secret riches from a series of nests near the surface world. So they should be real personalities, not just blade-fodder. Add some magic capabilities if the PCs also possess some.)

The PCs may take a prisoner or two. These demons continue to live even if dismembered and halved, as long as their heads and some portion of torso remain intact. The wounds bind over with an internal sap that sets like resin, and if left in contact with the earth they regenerate within a couple of weeks.



i) A cavern with a forest of living fungal creatures with whip-like arms. Individually not dangerous, but if PCs fail to sneak through without disturbing them... (They might do this is coated in demon blood, as the fungal creatures view demons as their masters.) ... these beings move slowly but can mob the PCs with injurious intent.

j) A river of slime that bubbles up in one cavern to their right and travels into a ravine several huge caverns (out of their way) to their left. The way ahead is clearly visible, but the river of foetid goo needs to be crossed. PCs may together severed ropy arms of fungal creatures and whoever draws the short straw gets to swim across (tied for safety) and secure several thrown ‘ropes’. Or they might rope themselves together and try jumping across a series of rocks. Whichever seems more fun...



k) In this vast cavern is a pastoral scene, though a demonic one. A small peculiar gothic manse stands at the heart of a series of irrigated fields in which oddities grow. In the manse lives a half-demon, half-human mage who claims he is the famous Phandaal, now in retirement. His servants are the inept blind stumpy humanoids PCs may have encountered earlier. His crops are demonic half-human plants, writhing in perpetual agony. He and his creatures wander through them, hacking off pulpy protuberances and throwing them into a cart to be taken to the nearby drying racks. Every few days a cart pulled by insect creatures with a demonic mahout arrives from a subworld, and gives over more of the unusual gems. 'Phandaal' uses these gems as magical engines in his workroom experiments. 'Phandaal' insists that they stay as his guests and sends his bloat-creatures to prevent them from leaving. He is as magically powerful as the GM decides. To defeat him may require either Persuading him that they have pressing business, or something dramatic like setting his manse on fire.

l) The oily water that irrigates the crops enters the previous cavern through a tunnel that (according to their guide or the demonic map) must be waded along. At the other end is a cavern in which a bloated gelatinous 'thing' floats in a pool of slime of its own making. (*This being which may exert a hypnotic effect, or attack them with jets of slime so hideous as to threaten to render the target unconscious – depending on whether this is a Turjanic or Cugeleseque campaign*). It uses its hypnotic singing to lure demons here and then devours them, slowly through its skin. (Several are stuck there, half-dissolved at present.)

m) Climbing a series of ledges in a very uneven tunnel eventually gives way to a long cavern, the floor of which is polished so no possibility of purchase is available. The way to cross is by running, aiming at the shadow that is presumably a distant door and jumping. Those who fail end up bashing against walls, ricocheting around most ignobly and possibly falling into small hidden crevasses off to the side. Once again ropes would be a fine idea.

n) A small cavern blocked by a **huge bloated demonic creature** that is sentient, so heavy it can roll around and crush anyone. It can't otherwise clear the way, and does not want to. There is no way to get beyond it, except to ask it to breathe in whilst you squeeze past. However it won't let just anyone past. The PCs must convince it of their worthiness to travel on, but what it considers worthy are terrible acts of savagery to be meted out on the hated upper world. It is hard to convince (Ψ PERSUASION, IMPOSTURE), but fortunately has a poor memory and forgets who they are within an hour, so they can try again. (They may be stuck here for some time if the GM makes its ratings exceptionally high.)

Advise players that particularly graphic descriptions and profound swearings to the veracity of their claims will enhance rolls. In a Turjanic game an unusual spell may cause it mortal injury.

o) The Exit Tunnel is extremely steep, and has previously collapsed near its entrance. PCs will need to dig themselves out, and will emerge in a terrible state of disarray. Athletics and Health rolls will not be out of place, and neither might digging one's fellows from under a heavy earth-fall. But eventually out they come.

All the above may have taken some hours. PCs emerge on an outcrop much further downriver just as the raft drifts into view (the pilgrims having given them up for dead.) You may wish to allow enough time to sell some of their gems. So that the problems & disappointments that play out when these turn to foul exudations less than a day later can lead to claims for recompense. (And the inevitable effrontery that greets such claims.)

2.2) That's Entertainment

⊕ "Another day of drifting on the massive river between endless rolling miles of grassland. A minor excitement occurs when somebody spots poorly dressed riders mounted on strange beasts, taking water at the river's edge. But they are so distant that their angry taunts are mere whispers on the air. Soon they are gone."

The evening after their departure from Iuler is finally the turn of the PCs and remaining sceptics (and whomever else the GM sees fit to include after working out who has already expressed themselves) **to entertain the other pilgrims**. We provide only Voynod's efforts as an example. The GM can summarise 2 or 3 others.

From his pack Voynod pulls several trinkets. (Incidentally his pack is **magically protected** if theft is attempted earlier, plus he sleeps with it under his head, and his magic eyeball keeping watch.) His efforts are likely to inspire feelings of inadequacy in others:

Firstly he turns a fish to a bird, then coin to worm, then **a piece of wood to an apple**, before turning all back. These are simple illusions, but feel real when touched.

Second he passes a small **silver ring** to Haxt and says to touch it to his tongue, then press it to his forehead before looking through. On looking through it Haxt claims to see an endless procession of people that Voynod says are his ancestors stretching back to the primal soup.

Third he produces a **small jewel**, flings it into the Scamander, snaps his fingers and it comes flying back. Finally he displays a **small mannequin** that sings a raffish song, dances and engages in clever repartee with anyone who cares to engage. It is clear that he possesses more fascinations, but decides that he has performed his fair share and yields the 'stage' to the next contestant.



The next contestant needs to be an expendable pilgrim: Lodermulch if he is still alive; someone else if he is not. Whoever it is has a pot of salve that he uses to anoint his sword, and then uses his sword to cut through any object presented to him. He explains that this is a magic unguent that he discovered in a ruin in Northern Merce. PCs may have impressive artefacts, or may wish to tell stories or dance again, or even put on a wrestling show. The GM can invoke resistances to Arrogance or dangle IP rewards as incentives to perform for the crowd. Use previous rulings as guidelines, dependent on what is occurring. Also offer the Players the chance to invent minor skills for the PCs that have not yet been revealed in play and offer the awarding of an appropriate Tweak related to that ability should they perform exceptionally. In the morning Lodermulch (or whomever displayed the salve) **has vanished**. A search ensues and the salve is found amongst the possessions of one of the PCs.

2.3) Murder!

The pilgrims unanimously call for **ejecting all** PCs (and perhaps Voynod too, though not to loudly since he is a wizard) immediately into the river. Garstang looks at the PCs as if betrayed, and will improve his demeanour only when the PCs put up a vigorous denial in their defence.

Pick one of the pilgrims to **stand as their accuser** and one of the PCs (possibly the one in whose possessions the salve was found) to argue in their defence. Garstang will insist on a trial by debate if nobody else simply starts such a contest.

Play the debate as a Contest. The accuser will invent details of having seen the PC **looking covetously** at Lodermulch (or whomever it was) and arguing with him. The GM decides with a dice roll (50/50) if any of these are true. *"Actually you did do that and Casmyre saw you also. Tell us then what was really going on."* The Player must then present a convincing reason for why the PC was behaving in that way. (That had nothing to do with the salve – inventing perhaps even a series of interactions.)

On an eventual **IS** or **PS** for the PC, Garstang is convinced they are innocent and refuses to have anything said or done against them. On a **HBS** he says that the evidence and justifications are unclear. In either case because of tensions on the raft he apologetically says that they must disembark at the next settlement.

On an **EF** he says that it does indeed appear that the PC may have murdered Lodermulch, but that this has still not been fully proven, and thus they should be turned over to the authorities in Erze Damath for further investigation. On a **QF** the PC's guilt seems indeed reasonably likely and again the authorities mentioned. In

either case the pilgrims growl in agreement and take up coils of rope, preparing to bind the captives.

On a **DF** by the player, all PCs are rushed by screaming pilgrims and tossed off the raft. From here they have to swim to shore, then make their arduous way for two days across dangerous country to Shossledord. Make their ejection from the raft a horrendous experience with beatings, and shrieking vicious pilgrims. Not all attack necessarily. Any who have had particularly friendly relations/connections with the PCs will stand back, clearly upset at what has transpired.

Voynod is too powerful for pilgrims to attack. In any failure except DF he will say he **does not accept** that any guilt has been shown, and says that he will say so to the authorities in Erze Damath in the strongest terms. This dampens the fire of the pilgrims, who reluctantly concede that they could be mistaken and agree to simply ejecting the PCs from the raft at the next town.

Who Did It?

PCs may try to find out who has framed them, and Players may even suspect the PC, but the GM can be clear that someone has set them up. This is a nod towards the murderer of Lodermulch in Jack Vance's stories, someone who was never identified and was likely one of the few nameless pilgrims that never left Erze Damath in search of the fane. In short, that person got away free.

Such a person might even be found in Erze Damath if PCs question all buyers/sellers of 'second-hand magical curios' (IE criminal fences) until they find the salve for sale.

Bribery or threats may gain a description that leads back to the perpetrator.

And it is possible that PCs may attempt to discover the identity of this person whilst still aboard the raft, but since that would divert their ejection at Shossledord then it is not ideal if the mystery is solved at this point.

2.4) Shossledord

☉ *"It is a tense two-day trip now that trust is broken. The land around is still mostly rolling tundra but becomes slightly more wooded throughout the first day, and trees grow even thicker as the second day rolls on, becoming full forest by late afternoon. At last a handful of buildings on stilts at the river's edge are seen and the raft is paddled towards them."*

Shossledord consists only of three large houses on stilts that are separated from the bank by a drawbridge. From this point onward **full forest encroaches the river** on the western bank, stretching away for miles. The raft merely bumps against the jetty, and the PCs can step off with ease. (It is up to the GM whether Voynod and any other allies join them or simply gaze with sympathy and regret, unable to speak without alienating themselves.)



The inhabitants are Funambulous Evangels: religious zealots who refuse to place their feet upon the ground, believing the earth is composed of the grave dust of every being that has gone before. Due to **ceremonially prepared tall-soled shoes** this belief does not prevent them from entering the nearby forest to collect exotic woods, to trade with passing merchants & pilgrims.

All Evangels departed yesterday for the Lustral rites. Apart from 2 adults & 3 children **in the forest collecting woods**, and an elder asleep on a store bench. The one asleep will soon wake and attack them if they are inside a building, presuming them to be bandits. If PCs are Turjanic he has spells and a Magic rating. PCs may explain their arrival however they wish.

The Evangels claim that, for religious reasons, that outsiders cannot stay inside a building without being initiated (*a Cugeleseque option*), so must camp on the riverbank & **brave the hazards**. Even the children fiercely screech this, and are prepared to defend their homes with force. Nor can outsiders stay in or near the settlement more than one night, even if they sleep on a boat. Such is the way of Gilfig in these matters!

Staying outdoors feels to be suicidal. If the PCs complain about this, the Evangels say **Steppe Bend is only eight hours brisk march** from here, so that if they walk swiftly through the night surely they will arrive there hale and hearty. A Living Rough success shows this as preposterous. Marching in the morning will be considerably safer. PCs will need to use Persuasion or threats if they want to stay. The Evangels will Rebuff at +1 due to fierce religious pride. The main activity at Shossledord will be the need to convince or coerce a powerless but **fanatically adamant** family!

Shossledord only has a punt: enchanted to move only across the river without drifting. The Evangels explain that whilst odd creatures live in the forest, they mostly sleep during the day. Whereas, **plains nomads** often kill civilised folk on the other side. The Evangels also explain that no boats are likely to pass til the Lustral Rites' end. The PCs could build a raft, **but discourage** this at this point, focussing on long periods of time, lack of skills or having it fall apart when launched

Turn their necessity to leave the settlement into a Persuasion contest if you wish, giving the lead Evangel **+1 or +2 bonus** as he wails about the impurities of associating with outsiders, and the agonies his family is suffering just having the PCs nearby. The family will wail accordingly, and generally behave so obnoxiously that hopefully the PCs will get the hint. If the worst comes to the worst, the elder will **set fire** to their buildings if the PCs do not depart in the morning. Or he

will try to do so at night, and need to be Persuaded that the intruders will leave at first light or shortly after.

Travelling South through the Forest

Steppe Bend is indeed only 8 hours march through the forest. Make it clear somehow that walking on the Plains is **NOT an option**. Evangels will be extremely fearful of the nomad tribes in this region, who hate civilised folk and hunt them savagely. Make this **true in every respect** if the PCs attempt to walk on the plains side. Parties of nomad braves will hunt and attack mercilessly, causing PCs to abandon all and swim across the river. This is important to establish, as a large episode **takes place in the forest** later.

In the forest the GM can introduce as many creatures as she sees fit as the PCs march southwards. A sample few are listed here, and others are described in *Fields of Silver*.

Soonux

An extremely long-necked vegetation browser with a body somewhat resembling a streamlined mermelant, this being has huge tufts or hair protruding from its ears and ankles. When frightened it charges its imagined foes, kicking, stomping and wailing. They usually travel in breeding pairs, possibly accompanied by one or two young.

Strength 17 [___], Sure-footed 15 [___], Health 15 [___], Magic (innate) [___], Athletics [___], Wherewithal 3 [___]

Bislooth

A large blue cat the bulk of a man, with enormous ears, huge paws and an elongated snout. This predator's tail is so long & muscular that it can (and does) use it as a whip. Ferocity 14 [___], Dodge 12 [___], Health 16 [___], Magic (innate) [___], Athletics [___], Wherewithal 8 [___]

Moosan

A lizard with six legs rather like a simian's (with semi-opposable thumbs) and the head of a horse, this creature is not even as large in bulk as a mermelant, and has a peculiar manner. It coos and whines sympathetically, rolling on the ground fetchingly whilst all the while assessing the strength of its prey, then leaps up and attacks, scratching and biting, attempting to stun the weakest party member before scooping them up in its forearms and fleeing to its lair.

Speed 16 [___], Misdirection 16 [___], Health 10 [___], Magic (innate) [___], Athletics 14 [___], Wherew'l 9 [___]

Croobekker

Black and white striped low-slung half-beetle, half-lizard with the grinning head of a malformed, imbecilic child, this creature has 6 insectoid legs and is popularly raised, trained and ridden by the nomad clans of this particular region. It may be encountered wild, or may be met as the steeds of a party of six or seven wooping nomad braves keen to prove their manhood by attacking travellers and taking their left feet as trophies back to the lodges of their families. These nomads respect good fighters and withdraw if outmatched.

Caution 12 [___], Intuition 13 [___], Health 8 [___], Magic (innate) [___], Athletics 11 [___], Wherew'l 7 [___] (Crooben roll Health at +1 due to their hard carapace.)



The Blanwalt Forest

Summarized extract from 'Fields of Silver'.

This ancient forest is the haunt of many strange and improbable creatures, though few half-men. Legend has it that Mad King Kutt instructed his mage Follinense to create a vast menagerie for Kutt's private entertainment. Purportedly, the King soon bored of his exhibits and ordered them released. Most unusually for such magical hybridisations, the creatures were & still are particularly fecund. They still roam both the Blanwalt Forest and the Plains of Oparona. The temperament and feeding habits of the remaining creatures is hard to gauge purely on appearance so caution must be exercised.



2.5) Steppe Bend

Overview (summarised from 'Fields of Silver')

The residents of Shossledord may have neglected to say that Steppe Bend is also a town of Fumambulous Evangels. It rises above the eastern bank of the river on tall pillars connected by many interweaving ropes & wires. These pillars are an extension of the jetties that stick out into the river. Not only are all walkways in Steppe Bend aerial, but the gardens and vegetable plots are too. Platforms and irrigation systems feed the local population without their ever needing to set foot on the ground.

The locals prefer to eat only fish and shellfish caught from the river. There is no inn, although there is ample mooring for riverboats. The inhabitants provide catering if required. Although gracious hosts, the piety of the inhabitants is not to all tastes, and many orthodox Gilfigites avoid the town.

Steppe Bend Townsfolk

Supercilious and prone to long tedious conversations directed entirely towards attempts to convert all visitors to their specific beliefs, these folk are nonetheless not without heart (being more secure in themselves than the extended family that live at Shossledord).

They welcome the travellers and offer to put them up until a riverboat passes, providing that the visitors undertake hunting expeditions into the forest on their behalf (as they cannot, due to their shoes). They want one creature for meat, and another (resembling a large blubbery winged beetle) for fat for lamps and candles.

Information they Know

Erze Damath is ten days south by riverboat or on foot walking briskly. However, the woods and plains are **thick with creatures** from this point onwards, and so the PCs are stuck at Steppe Bend for the time being.

The raft of pilgrims passed by and stopped for supplies. Nothing was said about **any former passengers**, but the pilgrims seemed not in high spirits, considering that the Lustral Rites will start in a little under two weeks.

Opportunities for Adventure

i) Hunting trips may discover many odd things within the forest. The Evangels, despite stating that the forest is **relatively safe during waking hours** in truth have virtually no knowledge about it, having never ventured in far. Plus they have heard rumours that one of Mad King Kutt's hunting lodges is only a few hours into the forest along an old road that is still barely discernible. What amazing treasures of information, or trophies from a by-gone age might be uncovered there!

ii) The Evangels have never hosted such a worldly-wise bunch of travellers before. **Gambling, wenching, and excessive use of strong drink** may be introduced to the Evangels as the PCs wait for the next boat south. The Evangels are unused to such ways, and may succumb easily at first, only later to rise in righteous anger and evict the PCs early one morning, advising them to strike south with all speed. (Advising them it is merely three days and two nights to reach Angdithlaer.)

iii) If the PCs fought nomad braves on their way here, surviving braves, or their clansfolk may come to the opposite side of the river, issuing challenges for the PCs to engage them in **contests of skill & daring**, tempting them with offers of gift exchanges (ancient treasures discovered in ruins on the planes) for the winners. The braves might also besiege the village in more Turjanic campaigns, requiring PCs to engage them in armed and/or magical combat. If you feel comfortable to vary the **types of magic available in your campaign**, it is

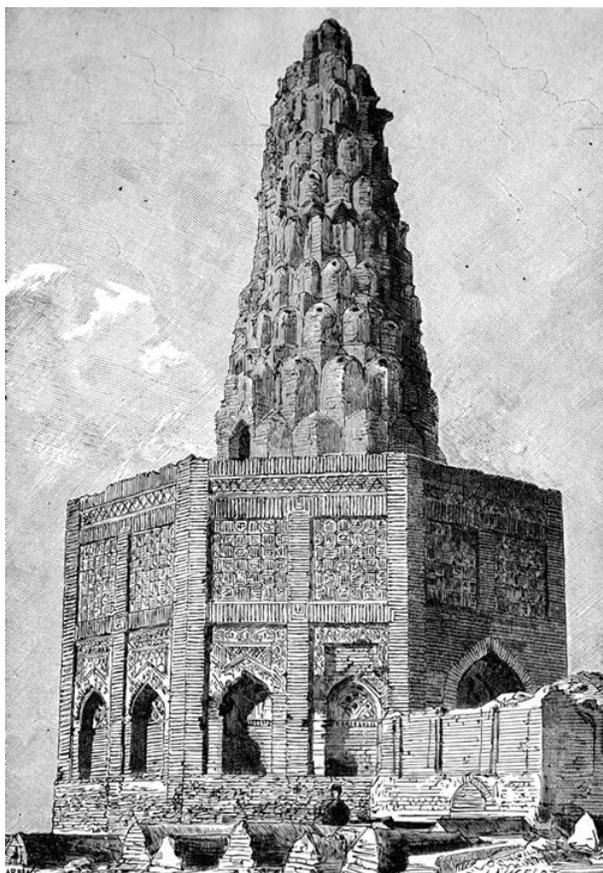


possible that the nomad magician/s (shaman/s) might have the ability to raise and command the ghosts of their ancestors and send them against the village.

Even if PCs haven't had problems with nomads before, maybe the settlement has been under threat for some time, forced to give unrealistic tribute to a nomad war party, that is due to return in a few days. **The townsfolk are proud** and would now rather die than give the nomads any more of their resources. You might want to take inspiration from such movies as the Seven Samurai or the Magnificent Seven, and have Turjanic PCs and any remaining GMCs erect barricades, have inhabitants digging defensive ditches. (If not out of altruism, then in order to save their own skins. And because the townsfolk promise to help them build a raft and donate provisions sufficient to reach Erze Damath without having to brave the Blanvalt Forest).

Whether PCs raft or walk to Angdithlaer, you need to improvise any encounters you wish them to experience along the way. The following paragraph is for those who have somehow obtained a basic raft and provisions, and for GMs who've had enough of wilderness adventures.

2.6) Angdithlaer



Overview (summarised from 'Fields of Silver')

Uenmund, a disciple of Gilfig, allegedly established **Angdithlaer**. It is notable only for the Temple of the Order of the Acersecomic, staffed by a cult of Gilfigites who wear their hair long and unadorned. These monks maintain a library of sacred texts (the Manuscriptorium). There is a small fee for such research and the monks provide spartan catering facilities & board on request to those undertaking lengthy research. A brother (monk) accompanies even regular visitors at all times.

☉ *"For three tedious days you float downstream. Thick forest on the west bank and varying woodlands or grasslands on the east. Your amusement consists of mosquitoes, march flies and whatever contemplations or personal disciplines manage to retain your attention. Despite your long familiarity on the trail by now, tempers are frayed by the time you sight your destination.*

The only mutual satisfaction along the way was a vitriolic three-hour discussion covering in detail how the arrogant Iucounu will pay for his japes in pain, injury and horrendous deprivations.

Towards the end of the third day a large village or small town appears, nestled against the Blanvalt Forest within an oblong of high stone walls and with a strange tower at its centre. It is the first major settlement you've seen since Vull. Several townsfolk are mending nets on the stony beach and gaze at you with curiosity."

The Nature of the Settlement

Angdithlaer has been built on the ruins of a far older settlement. In this case little remains from that earlier time. (Both because the new town itself is now so old, and because it was built using the stones of the old river settlement.) The whole structure is not so much a town, as PCs will realise when they get inside, but **a temple compound**. Angdithlaer's another religious community.

The streets are wide and well kept, with deep gutters and cobblestones. All **significant buildings shinningly whitewashed**. The few remaining ancient structures include the Manuscriptorium Tower. Rumour says this was the very spot where Uenmund spent 13 days and 13 night existing only on beetles and puddles of rainwater as he contemplated the magnificence of Gilfig. On his emergence from his semi-torpor he announced that the building would become a new centre of learning.

Entrance to Angdithlaer is easy during daylight for those who are not obviously violent or deranged. As soon as dusk threatens, **the large wooden gates** are firmly closed and are not opened again until full daylight shines upon them. (In an emergency, monks guarding the walls might lower a rope for obvious humans in need of aid.)

Guards will advise visitors that general decorum is required in the settlement, as a respect for Gilfig. No running, shouting, or accosting the residents. Weapons must be handed in, to be returned on departure.



Why Stop Here?

PCs may be keen to get to Erze Damath. The PCs may need freshwater, they may need food, their raft might be gradually disintegrating, or Oric might surface curiously beneath them, and destroy their raft.

Oric is a large and friendly creature that lives in the river here and delights in the company of the local fisherfolk. It is used to the locals and knows them well, but occasionally becomes overexcited when new travellers pass by, and surfaces too close to them in order to take a look. Normally this is no problem, and merely scares people and spills drinks, but when the transport is – how shall we say – less than professionally designed, and takes a glancing blow, it might easily come to grief. Or if he misjudges and surfaces directly beneath them...

Oric is semi-intelligent and looks like a cross between a hippopotamus and an orang-utan. He cannot speak a language, but will be desperate to help anyone whose craft he has destroyed, and carry them back to shore. (Initially PCs may imagine that they've met their doom.)

The Populous

The folk here are either the **ruling religious zealots** (and their monk servants), or simple laypersons who tend fields, bake bread and live in simple dwellings within the walls. The lesser folk, like many on the river, are fishers & crafters, and grow food in vegetable plots & in orchards outside the town walls on the forest edge.

They live to serve. In exchange they gain an ordered society, safety, and structured daily habits. **To relax they attend scripture readings and enjoy formal dances** in the town hall (the only fully extant ancient building outside the temple complex, though it has been heavily repaired and adapted from its original structure).

Angdithlaer is not the town at which the PCs are likely to gain a more magnificent craft with ease. The few fishing boats of any size that they have here are far too valuably prized. Plus both townsfolk and religious types alike value labour in exchange for goods. They live to work, though **definitions of work vary enormously** according to their social station. Money is of so little use to them that only enormous quantities of it attracts their interest. (Then it becomes worth someone travelling to E. Damath to buy documents for the Manuscriptorium.)

The Order of the Acersercomic

Three ranks of worshippers: laypersons (townsfolk), monks & predicants. The latter two ranks are technically mendicants in that they **depend on the support of the townsfolk** to live, but in reality they simply do not need money for their lifestyle, and unambitiously are happy to continue with things exactly as they are.

This patriarchal cult believes **simplicity and austerity are the correct philosophies**, and that all else is distraction, so broke from common worship of Gilfig.

Practicing brethren are required to abstain from cutting their hair (seen as an act of simplicity). Laypersons (townsfolk) cut their hair as it reaches their shoulders.

Nobody is ever idle. **Work is reverence to Uenmund**, who never ceased his wandering or speaking the word of Gilfig. That doesn't mean that everyone here charges around non-stop all day, but nobody loiters on street corners, and everyone at least appears to be doing something useful. (Many laypersons are so experienced at this imposture that it might be seen as an art form!)

The Temple

The temple buildings themselves operate like a monastery in many ways. There are cloisters, reading rooms, a main worship chamber, scriptoriums, walled vegetable gardens, and the predicants have their own large building and walled area. Within this walled area is the only substantial bit of the original town. Uenmund and his followers partly rebuilt it. By the time they reached this place they'd become weary of the hard life, and set up this private area as **their own little palace**.

They then publicised the place as a site worthy of pilgrimage, awaited the arrival of converts, and in only three years had organised a functioning society to **cater for their every need**. Gradually as they grew older they had to let some slightly younger priests in on the secret, and ever since Uenmund passed on the town has functioned as an upwardly mobile society moving towards this life of privilege. Although only the predicants know this, and few monks even suspect. And of course only a small elite actually get to enjoy it.

In this secret area a large bathing pool & smaller pools, (heated by natural springs) all beneath magnificent stone rooves supported by high columns, glass conservatories where grapes and other exotic fruit grow, a series of three pits where predicants bathe in **rejuvenating natural warm mud**, a room where sylphs endlessly massage anyone lying on the magically heated slabs...

Tasks to Justify The Town's Hospitality:

Exhausted PCs may arrive without provisions (even if due to the raft disintegrating.) PCs may attempt to Persuade locals that recompense is only fair, but locals do not believe the creature is their responsibility so have Rebuff bonuses. Basically the PCs will be inadvertently enmeshed in the local hierarchy. They will be expected to labour nine hours a day in one of the tasks overleaf. [Only if one of them has some way to pay the exorbitant fees (or uses cunning Imposture) to enrol as a Scholar will they be elevated to that status.]



- i) Breaking rocks in the compound corner where old blocks from ruins are turned into gravel for the streets
- ii) Going into the forest to hunt for a meat animal. (This could be a mini-scenario of its own. At least one monk will be sent with the PCs.)
- iii) Anyone with engineering skills or similar might be sworn to secrecy and requested to fix some luxury equipment in the priests' special area (and be entitled to enjoy some of the privileges) leading to an imbalance of experience that Players know about but PCs do not.
- iv) Whitewashing the civic and temple buildings.
- v) Maintaining the civic vegetable plots and orchards.
- vi) Gathering firewood in the forest (another opportunity for fear and adventure)
- vii) Copying documents in the scriptorium
- viii) Cataloguing endless volumes in the manuscriptorium
- ix) Only the ill (Ψ PERSUASION, IMPOSTURE) are allowed to shirk duties, and would be expected to lie in the hospice showing evidence. Those playing as bereft of wit (Ψ IMPOSTURE) might be permitted to wander town.

Opportunities for Mischief & Adventure:

Restricting Magic: *In Turjanic play Uenmund found magic under the temple that gives his disciples Magic Resistance bonuses.*

1) Constructing a New Raft

PCs will be allowed to work on building a new raft only in their spare time. And finding decent wood out in the forest (that is not instantly commandeered by the monks for their own projects such as shoring up the aged cellars of the temple) is not easy. The GM may also create arduous taskmasters, idle co-workers, and/or assign PCs only to the most dangerous and horrible tasks that normal inhabitants simply never do (such as hunting for meat). In the end chances are high that the PCs will give up on it all, steal a fishing boat, plus provisions, and perhaps even steal some useful tomes from the manuscriptorium. Make this difficult, requiring sneaking around town at night avoiding patrols of monks (who conceal billyclubs in their robes) and angered posses of townsfolk. If all goes horribly wrong PCs may be captured, stripped naked, coated in molasses and strapped to a makeshift raft and put afloat on the river. (The common fate for heretics.)

2) The Under Manse

Accessed via the cellars beneath the temple area of the settlement, and unknown to all but the priests and most trusted monks, are the remains of the previous settlement, which was actually a manse of one of the last aeon's major magicians. Constructed largely below ground (for protective, reclusive or aesthetic reasons is unknown) a fascinating series of peculiar rooms, traps, passages, and inexplicable magical treasures awaits.

These rooms have proved fatal often for those sent down, and the locals (and even normal travellers) simply do not have the pluck or experience to investigate effectively. Maybe the priests will hire the PCs for these particular duties, offering in return new river transport and supplies, or simply cast them beneath - because it is 'the will of Gilfig' and clearly ordained that this must be so. (If they make this offer, then they had control of Oric all along, and this is a huge con, where they sink the rafts of anyone who looks competent to explore.)

3) Savage Secrets of the Priesthood

An imaginative GM might find some way for the PCs to discover that the priests are luxuriating within their compound whilst others toil. This could be combined with the last adventure, with priests simply assuming that adventurer-types will 'naturally not disclose the necessary trappings of relaxational enhancement' as otherwise the business arrangement may be jeopardised. (Business arrangement being the PCs get to retain a share of any spoils.)

The PCs may choose to promote dissent within the townsfolk, leading to a revolt in which a few junior monks & some more uppity artisans take over town with the hope of establishing wider access to the secret amenities and turning them into a public resource. Of course such idealism is doomed to failure, and a new set of leaders will simply replace the last. But in the excitement the PCs (with their adventurous abilities) might temporarily find high favour and be paid with free access to a larger fishing boat and several days' provisions. (Which would likely be their goal all along.)

4) Alien Parasites

Rather than only simple luxury, the priests may be also living in a strange alien environment with lots of odd magical experiments (at the human-brains-in-jars level of sick weirdness). Alert PCs might spot clawed appendages emerging from the throats of talkative priests now and again, and their language might be overly-logically phrased.

Consider that alien or magical mind-parasites possess the highest tier of priests, or indeed all of the priests. (If so, Uenmund accidentally released them, and paid the ultimate price.) In such a version of Angdithlaer, the 'priests' are here to mine the manse beneath, which was based around a complex sorcerous laboratory. (Which unfortunately was enchanted to repel Archernarians, so they must instead send representatives down there.)

Also, the religious system invites favoured citizens now and again to join the priesthood, which mostly means becoming invested with an Archernarian. Anyone discovering any of this can't be allowed to depart alive, but then the priests intended to 'use' the PCs all along!



2.7) Varanook

⊕ "You are beginning to wonder if you will ever reach Erze Damath. Other river traffic is non-existent, presumably because anyone who possesses a functional river craft has headed to the big city for the famous Lustral Rites. For the whole of this last day forest has been thick on both sides of the river, and you travel under the shadows of great and ancient trees.

Early in the evening of this second day since you left Angdithlaer, you spy fires on a beach on the eastern shore, and though wary you soon notice that the folk tending them are not bandits, nor religious fanatics, but rustic folk dressed in flowing gowns with plenty of airflow options, and simple robes & tunics of leaves.

Several stand up and wave in a friendly fashion, inviting you to share their grilled fish. Some of these are enticingly attractive folk. Mixed amongst them are several nomad types, who seem at ease with these villagers and accepted by them. Most curious...

Tired of the tedium of the river and eager for fresh food and new company you pole your raft towards the shore. As you arrive on the beach several locals stroll over and greet you cordially, asking if you are travellers from afar on your way to the Lustral Rites."

[Adjust above if PCs arrive covered in molasses and strapped to a raft. Locals will row out to assist.]



Why Stop Here?

We have simply written the stopping of the raft into the introductory text. If any Players complain, feel free to call for Resistances to Indolence and/or Rakishness

The locals are truly as friendly as they appear, and will offer the travellers a share of their fire-grilled fish, and some of the fruit from their baskets. They will be eager and curious for news from the north, and impressed by **tales of danger, travel and revenge**. Suitable persons will be happy to engage in flirtatious activities, but draw the line when it comes to more. Their religious tenets preclude erotic congress with outsiders except during specific rites to Gilfig that few outsiders take part in.

Wary PCs might check if they are engaging in any **cultural obligations** by accepting gifts, or fraternising with members of the community. Locals will assure visitors that only direct theft or violence, vandalism of the nature temple, or engaging in coitus outside of the ritual space, bring the populous to assertive retribution.

Overview (summarised/extended from 'F. of S.')

No inns exist. The locals dwell in elaborate tree houses. These are accessed by rope ladders & mobile walkways secured by vines. Overnight accommodation and basic meals in one of the communal sleeping lodges is there for anyone able to pay 3 terces per night, or to collect and chop firewood in the morning with the adolescents. Odd and dangerous beasts wander this area at night.

Varanook is one of the few places left that still practices Upaithric Ecdysiasm, a rustic cult given to naturalistic worship in sacred glades. As a result except at times such as during the Lustral Rites (now) a dozen or so young men of means from Erze Damath will be here, worshipping as lay members alongside the locals.

The adults of this society do not practice any form of relational ownership. Only pregnant mothers, young and the infirm have accommodation lodges of their own. Travel-weary PCs might find their first night here to be a surprising one (or an eventful one: see Cloppin's Fungus below), again locals stopping short of congress with those not at least lay members of their religion.

Due to being on the eastern shore, nomads sometimes travel through the forest & engage with the people here. However there is a traditional friendship between the two groups, since the nomads respect this form of worship as being something akin to some of their own practices (though of course more forest-based).

Villagers supply nomads with fish when they visit, and occasionally nomads live with them for a while. These are usually second sons of tribal chiefs or warlords, sent to learn something of the ways of the outlander.

An ancient temple stands in the forest nearby. It is formed of standing stones and large stone 'tables' exposed to the sun and stars. Those examining the site will find that the undersides of the stone tables are covered with carvings of orgiastic rites between humans & mythical and magical beings in woodland glades.

Local Society

Only in rare times of emergency or when dealing with thieves or violent intruders do the locals **form a council**. For lesser crimes a guilty person is banished (irrespective of whether they have means to survive the forest). For greater crimes the person is taken to a sacred glade and tied to a tree in the early evening.



The locals worship nature & live off forest berries & nuts, plus fish, make their own wine, and collect and eat various fungus from the forest (which significantly supports their easy-going nature). They delight in their own **physical beauty**, which they reveal coyly from time to time out of sheer joy. Each morning they arise early to perform naked exercise regimes on the beach.

Potential Escapades

- **Cloppin's Fungus** (as it is known in Erze Damath) is a hallucinogenic and mood-enhancing mushroom that heightens awareness and lowers inhibitions. Many locals routinely take some before retiring (early) for the night.

- **Once a month locals hold an ancient rite** (the next time is whenever the GM decides, ie this night or the next), in & around the temple, as elaborate/orgiastic as the GM wants to devise. It is the only rite accessible to visitors who haven't gone through weeks or months of initiations. In a Turjanic campaign this might include half-men, **demonic visitations**, or just (far more wholesomely) energy-draining Overworld beings that take random sacrifices back to their realm at the end of the rites. (*Something so accepted the locals forgot to mention it.*) Sacrifices, locals say, are always returned at the next ceremony, but PCs **might not want to wait** for weeks of uncertainty. Locals may point PCs to a standing stone at another location on which is written a spell to open a doorway to the realm into which the PC has been taken. In that realm the PC might be being subjected to endless torments, or **indescribable ecstasies**, as the GM sees fit, and may or may not be grateful for rescue. Locals there may include fearsome, ravenous & almost totally **ineffective ectoplasmic beasts**, abominably decadent bloated beings of great power but little sense or mobility (except extruded appendages), & odd squads of imbecilic mole-like drones. Or the whole journey might be some strange version of a Celtic/ Greek myth in the Klesbu's Realm (see Deities at Violet Cusps page).

- **Mushroom Smugglers:** It may rightly be presumed that Cloppin's Fungus fetches a fine price in E. Damath. Unfortunately taking it from here is considered a crime, and also it dries out and loses its properties in 2-3 days (unless properly prepared, which only an IS Pedantry success with relevant specialisation can reveal).

- **'Obtaining' Several Reed Fishing Craft** could be necessary if 2 or 3 nomad guests take the PCs' raft and sail towards Erze Damath, or possibly one city person has been trapped here, pretending to be happy to be staying on, but suddenly seizing their chance to be away in time to attend the Rites. (Leaving a written apology.)

Whether the reed craft are intricate and fragile and take incredible skill to avoid capsizing, or regular skiffs that 'any idiot' could propel for hours depends on the GM's choice. Whatever decision, the locals own only a few, & guard them well. Retribution for their attempted theft is always to be tied naked to a tree deep in the forest.

Perhaps have them be difficult-to-manage craft that keep depositing our heroes into the river, thus requiring them to be secured very strongly by vines (requiring a role-played excursion to the bank) which makes the encounter with the Zealot at the weir more challenging.

2.8) Hoons of the Scamander

⊕ [Create this wording as a travelogue of tedium, recounting that the interactions with the hoons was a welcome diversion from riverine tedium, then play out the action as if in flashback.]

Hoons might be so stupid as to argue aloud as they plan, or end up fighting each other if thwarted. Or instead use these creatures as ongoing foes: shadowing PCs on the river-bank or **floating very poorly hidden** behind drifting logs, launching random and amusing attacks until finally slain.

The Eastern Hoon

Eastern Hoons sometimes work in concert, but also sometimes act aggressively towards one another – especially when their plans are thwarted or they suffer from unsatisfied hunger. In range, the hoon or "rosgobbler" is well known in the Scamander valley.

Large & fierce, thickly furred (light gray that whitens with age), humanoids. Large eyes, long, powerful arms. Skull is pointed/ peaked above the brow, jaw receding, & mouth contains two or more large fangs. Adults are taller than a man & considerably stronger. Hoons attack with fearsome claws and brute strength, attempting to incapacitate and then rend victims into edible chunks.

Intimidating 6 [___], Obtuse 13 [___], Strength 18 [___], Sure-Footed 14 [___], Health 16 [___], Stealth 3 [___], Athletics 11 [___], Conceal't 2 [___], Perception 4 [___], Tracking 5 [___], Wherewithal 12 [___].





2.9) The Scamander Zealot

⊕ "After Varnook the distant forest on the east bank dwindles and the rolling plains once more descend to the water's edge. On the other side of the river the Blamwalt Forest continues to grow thicker and darker. Now and again you can make out strange beasts drinking at the water's edge. But always at too far a distance to discern much detail. Suddenly, at last, with positive relief you see evidence of human presence once again up ahead.

The traveller with the keenest eyes has been watching the strange row of dots on the water's surface for a while now, and at last has identified them. They are the tops of posts marking a grand weir stretching fully across the river. Only a wide central section is possible for large craft to travel through, but this is blocked by a chain stretched tight from post to post. You draw near that chain."

The PCs may be in coracles. If so the coracles should by now be securely (nay tortuously) tied together by vines that have been both soaked & dried repeatedly for days, thus making them **impossible to separate** by normal means in less than an hour or so, or else by hacking them apart. Hence the PCs either need to go and try to remove the chain, go to the bank and heave their craft through the trees and around the weir, or try to lift it's hefty soaking weight over the weir. (If they instead beach their craft, to investigate their surroundings, the zealot appears and insists on the toll merely for passing through, & the scenario continues in an adapted form.)

Some might presume that a toll is required, and head for the chain. Some Players may know books and expect a crazed zealot. Let us not disappoint them! However, in this role-playing version **the zealot is far more potent** than in the book. Likewise the chain can be enchanted to prevent easy removal (except by him)



The Zealot: Gaunt-limbed with long hair, in tattered black robes & flourishing an iron staff, a man emerges from a small woodland on the east bank and strides along the weir (an easy task for the normally agile).

He dwells in a simple hut that is difficult to see within the trees. He moves towards them, gazing threateningly, and cries out: "Go back, go back! The passage of the river is under my control. I permit none to go by!"

Conversation may ensue, which will soon result in a further declaration:

"I demand the life of the most evil of those amongst you. Declare that person and send them to me." If given the chance, he will also add: "I remit this requirement only if one amongst you can demonstrate their deeply virtuous nature to my satisfaction!"

In basic Cugelesque campaigns PCs might enter into a Persuasion/Imposture contest to prove their worth, or declare someone else as evil due to some past deed. In more adventurous Cugel fashion someone may **leap onto the weir and attempt battle** with him.

Bulas the Mad Hermit

As noted in *Fields of Silver*, the position of weir toll-taker used to be official, but was abandoned due to constant larceny of weir-keepers. Bulas believes himself to be descended from a line of hereditary semi-noble weir keepers who were tricked out of their position by the corrupt governmental hierarchy in Erze Damath.

Ririmaud folk tolerate Bulas because he has magical powers. For Adventurous Cugel campaigns we suggest an enchantment to resist damage & another that allows him to shrug off (or reflect) spells. In more Turjanic campaigns he is a lunatic magician with spells and other items, including an enchantment of rapid regeneration.

Normally Bulas merely toys with passers-by and lets them go on every time someone jumps onto the weir and threatens him. As soon as this happens he says that this is a sign of virtue, and is content that the other travellers have embarrassed themselves.

Today he is pretending to be in a foul mood because the villagers are desperate for adventurers to help them with a problem (see 2.10: Ririmaud). So a "set-up" has been arranged, wherein the enchanted Bulos pretends to become so enraged and dangerous that the PCs will be forced to kill him. Fortunately for him he will regenerate from a magical egg buried beneath a tree a mile away even if his body is burned or lost in the river.

Intimidating 11 [___], Contrary 12 [___], Magic (Devious) 5 [___], Strength 12 [___], Dodge 14 [___], Health 9 [___], Athletics 9 [___], Perception 11 [___], Living Rough 9 [___], Wherewithal 8 [___].

As hinted at above, his Rebuff against removing the chain is high (bonus of +1) unless someone first convinces him they are genuinely and powerfully sympathetic to the terrible and unjust removal of his family's right to officially manage the weir.

If they befriend him he takes them to town. If not, he somehow destroys their transport during the confrontation, so that a visit to town is inevitable.



The Legacy of Bulas

The hermit's bloody demise under the flashing steel of the PCs is the ideal option to end the last encounter. Should this be the case the PCs might examine his hut. It is a poorly furnished but adequate dwelling on the east bank. Much of the furniture has been salvaged from the river or taken as payment from the less virtuous.

It is worth noting that the folk of Ririmaud can be as happy or unhappy about the demise of Bulas as the GM wishes. If they enter town, crowing over their victory over the mad hermit, have Bulas regarded as a lucky charm for the area. Perhaps he even used his magical powers to help with the harvest. The PCs may then be stripped of every last remaining valuable (apart from basic equipment) in order to make some slight recompense for his immeasurable loss. Or they might be made to join a hunting party (see next page).

A simple search reveals that the hut is built atop the basement of an older structure, entered through a hidden trapdoor. Down here is a very basic, but functioning laboratory. Bulas has been working on creating salves, ointments and potions from various rare berries and bits of exotic animal. He also has a collection of magical journals that are as suitable to the campaign as the GM decides. They might be indecipherable ravings, or they might be just the thing to assist an up and coming student of magic. Such a student might be able to identify and take sufficient instruments and ingredients to create a small testing kit for the magical items, though to gain a successful identification would take hours of work, especially whilst adrift on the river. Nonetheless, this could be a very game-appropriate pass-time in a Turjanic setting.

He labels his products in his own language. Several dozen appear finished and ready: salves in small pots, potions in thin clay jars with waxen seals, and ointments in cardboard tubes, single-use clay amulets that crumble to dust when their charge is activated.

We advise GMs to create a table of effects something like the following. Since the properties are unknown we rely on the GM's assessment of the moment to decide what they are, but also suggest that she roll secretly as a matter of course, so that she can use the roll as a guide, and 'fudge' it whenever this powerfully suits play.

- 1: A terrible result that brings injury to the user and anyone right next to him/her.
- 2: An annoying result that significantly inconveniences, or slightly harms, the user.
- 3: An annoying result that in some small way inconveniences the user.
- 4: A magical sparkle and no obvious effect, though it might intimidate any foes that see it happen.

5: A marginally useful result, which would have been far more useful in some other setting.

6: A useful result, though not necessarily the one that was hoped for.

Many PCs will have the good sense not to experiment with these things, but others may be applying salves to swords, wounds, locks, and drinking potions whenever there is an emergency. We offer a few suggestions merely as illustrations of the vast array of possibilities:

- Makes a sword indestructible and sharp.
- Heals a single injury when most is drunk at once
- Contains several applications of healing salve to be applied directly to flesh
- Causes any inorganic material to burst into flame
- Makes metal objects glow very brightly for an hour
- Dissolves anything made of wood up to the volume of a heavy dining table
- Releases a gaseous cloud that causes all who fail to halt their breath (or resist) to fall unconscious for several minutes
- Neutralises a magic effect (permanent if it's low-level)
- Enhance the item or person with +5 to their capacity to resist spells or magical effects
- Make a person or object intangible for a few minutes.

2.10) Ririmaud



Overview (summarised/extended from 'F. of S.')

The village of Ririmaud is within the edge of the Blanwalt Forest on the west bank. PCs may observe the smoke of cooking fires. The locals are normally quite friendly to travellers, and the single inn ("The Weir Keeper") is good clean, and reasonably priced. It prides itself on its unique menu – serving variations of dishes all based on the bizarre creatures of the forest.



The locals call themselves Gilfigites, but worship Gilfig only in word and barely attended tradition. They revere the Scamander as a providing spirit that is far more meaningful than any civilised god. They fish from nets across the weir and take advantage of rock pools a little way downstream. Fish & crustaceans are a solid staple.

The village stands in a clearing just inside the edge of the Blanwalt Forest. It stands within a tall stockade of cut and sharpened tree trunks, and has a strong wooden gate. Inside this are a little over a dozen sturdily constructed rustic dwellings, the inn, and several storage and work barns of various sizes. Paths lead away to other large clearings nearby, where they also grow cereal crops. Overall they do very well for themselves.

Ten families, and around 20 other permanent residents live here, totalling around 70 adults and 30 children.

Plot

If (as is ideal for this plot) the PCs offended the town by **slaying their hermit mascot**, then this task is a punishment, and a court will be arranged (producing witnesses and evidence).

After which they will be sentenced to death, but have this remitted if they **swear on a stone sacred to Gilfig** that they will complete the task allotted and see the town's representatives safely to Erze Damath and safely aboard a rivercraft back again (until it vanishes from their sight upriver).

The locals are recently aware of a small group of true-bred **unusual riding beasts** in the area and have been trying to catch them for days. However, they have no skills in this field of endeavour.

Some weeks ago representatives of Saffer the Stockman from Erze Damath boated upriver and left an illustrated manual of the most valued beasts. (Yes, there are breeds **thriving in the Blanwalt**, not only unique animals.)

The villagers are poor & would dearly love the money, so as to send their elders to Erze Damath for the rites.

The beasts prove hard to capture, but the villagers have a magic item that tames the creatures for twenty-four hours, during which time they can be ridden to Erze Damath (only one long day's ride away). This is a **tube of orange concentrate**. Saffer's representatives left it.

The PCs are tasked to capture sufficient beasts for all PCs to ride, plus two more. So PCs & 2 local guides can travel by forest trails to Erze Damath in daylight when **dangers are minimal**. This village marks the southern most region of the forest that the fabulous beasts are reliably found in, and they are rare even locally.

All of the forest south of here is the official hunting preserve of the Erze Damath nobility, and the creatures

have largely learned to stay away from it. Obviously they don't all stay away, but those that are there have learned to give the trails a wide berth, so safety of a reasonably-sized and well-armed party is pretty much guaranteed.

Villagers will say **the Lustral Rites began yesterday**. The first week is mainly introductory rituals, so arriving any time in the next week will still leave visitors a full representation of the grand experience in Erze Damath.

The locals get the exotic meats for their inn in trade from the nomads, who (as with Varanook) have a peaceable alliance with Ririmaud, which is a gateway for them to gain civilised products & wares. Thus the locals **have no hunting experience**, capacities or tools (beyond simple spears & ropes) and don't know how to track/trap these creatures. They had hoped to do a deal with some nomads, but none of these folk have visited them for weeks, & sometimes don't appear for months.

The deal is that the locals guide the PCs to Erze Damath safely through the forest, and then all of the creatures will be **sold to Saffer the Stockman** for the profit of the town. IE the PCs gain no monetary reward. (If the locals are upset about the death of the hermit, then under normal circumstances *of course* the PCs would have been entitled to a share of the payment!)

The Felukhary

A large stolid creature with the horse's best & worst features. It eats native grasses, so is cheap to feed, but is extremely wilful. It is semi-sentient and can speak.

In appearance they resemble large ponies with faces like point-nosed hounds, and have long tufted tails that they frequently flick around their hindquarters to discourage insects. They are native to the regions convergent with Erze Damath and the Silver Desert.

In recent years they have become rarer and rarer, and now fetch a fine price. Even Saffer the Stockman is paying handsomely for specimens in good health.

Game Notes: As a riding animal, the felukhary has great advantage and some annoying habits. It is intelligent and not overly-argumentative, but sometimes finds it hard to grasp over-complex proposals. No felukhary is able or willing to fight, being smart enough to see that such an action can only possibly cause it harm. (If cornered, a loyal and well-treated felukhary may assist its owner in a fighting retreat, but will normally seek only to protect itself.)

Felukhary

Obfuscatory 4 [___], Obtuse 8 [___], Caution 12 [___], Vexation 12 [___], Health 14 [___], Athletics 13 [___], Wherewithal 7 [___]



Trapping their Prey

Much of the activities and adventures involved in **capturing several Felukhary** depend on the skill-level and resources of the PCs. The locals know little. It may be that your PCs are adventurous types, with Tracking and Living Rough skills, well-versed in the use of lassoes, nets, camouflage and agility. Or they may be **pedants of animal behavior**, knowing exactly what foods felukhary are attracted to, and more importantly exactly what herbs to lace them with so that the creatures become tired and sluggish, or drunk.

Or the PCs may have excellent Persuasion skills and come up with a convincingly plausible manufactured set of reasons to convince the felukhary to visit town, or why life for them in the big city will be so much more awesome than life **here in the dangerous forest**, where they are in fact prey for the larger carnivores. (It's up to the Players whether PCs believe they are offering the felukhary a better life, or are callously enslaving them.)

If the Players and PCs are at a loss, then they need to ask around town, and find someone who can give them advice. This might be an aged woman who is **half-nomad** and thus looked down upon by the other locals, who knows a few facts about all the common beasts.

If you wish to expand this mini-scenario further, a witch may be dwelling a few hours away in the woods, who comes into town only every few weeks, and who knows **the ways of the forest** extremely well. The PCs will need to travel to her residence, possibly encountering half-men along the way or some other magical menace.

a
robber
asm



Once there they must do a deal with the witch (who may be an aged crone or a **handsome robust woman** of early middle-age depending on the GM's whim). Her bargain might be easy, or something as hazardous as tracking a small pack of **robber asms** who ride giant fanticules - in order to recover a stolen magical crystal.

Once they have satisfied her she may provide them with a horn or harp that can be attuned to enchant felukhary and then magically returns to her a full day after its use. **Another significant challenge** may be how they can catch sufficient felukhary to cater for their needs. Lets say there are four PCs plus two GMCs plus two villagers. That is eight felukhary!

A way to partially solve this is for the GM to intersperse the information that **sturdy felukhary can carry two riders** for hours at a time, providing they are not forced to travel at speed. Another option is to have it much more easily possible to capture a few specimens of the short-lived, highly common (& therefore of minimal worth), and stupid, scoonux or croobekker (see p24).

The fisherfolk have nets and ropes in abundance. All else will need to be invented/improvised by the GM as required. If we don't find a desperate PC **ineptly trying to lasso felukhary** before realising he is totally ill-equipped for the job (perhaps as he is dragged through the forest at speed) a fine opportunity has been missed!

Giant Fanticule

These creatures are shaped something like a cross between a scorpion & a scarab beetle, with barb-tipped whip-like tail that can inject fatal poison into its prey.

Ferocity 17 [___], Dodge 12 [___], Health 14 [___], Athletics 5 [___], Concealment 8 [___], Perception 6, Tracking 5 [___], Wherewithal 10 [___].

Armor

The carapace of the larger fanticules aid in protecting the creatures from physical damage.

Game Notes: The Giant Fanticule has such a tough carapace that it rolls such Health checks at a bonus of 1.

Magic Resistance

The giant gray fanticules are redolent with natural magic, and can resist spells.

Game Notes: They have Magic (resistance) 4'.

Poison Sting

See also poisoning (DERPG, p58). If a victim is stung a second time increase the potency levy by a point. If they are stung a third time the potency becomes instead a penalty of 1. When making the single 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.

Potency: Levy 1

Interval: 5 minutes. During this effect the victim is incapacitated with fever and delirium.

Effect: - The victim makes a Health roll. On a DF or QF they expire at once. On an EF or HBS they take the equivalent of three injuries from the toxic shock. On a PS they take 2 injuries, and on an IS - only 1 injury.



2.11) The Imperial Heir

Introduction

PCs will set out from Ririmaud an hour or so after dawn the morning after they have **secured the riding beasts**. The GM can devise any encounters, or simply describe the journey as they continue for four hours or so beneath the tall trees of the Blanwalt.

The trail is along an ancient road that is clearly used still to some degree. Their guide will inform them that **hunting parties from Erze Damath** occasionally still venture this far, which is why the road is cleared of fallen trees now and then. The huge worn blocks now covered in soil nonetheless also prevent larger plants and trees from finding sturdy purchase in the roadway.

A guide also says that in times gone by the **fabulous creatures of the forest** were widely hunted in this area and have since become far scarcer. They are common north of Ririmaud, but some instinct keeps them out of this area even these days. (Not entirely, but by & large.)

Hunting is a pastime only of the incredibly wealthy and has more or less died away. The guide says as recently as in his grandfather's time **an Imperial Hunt** often quartered at Ririmaud, but those days (like the Empire itself) are long gone. (The guide will mention that the Empire ended centuries ago, but a faction of Imperials still lives in Erze Damath and has influence there. It was only a few decades ago that they stopped organising large and impressive rituals such as the Imperial Hunt.)

Whoever is their guide will have everyone stop in a clearing for lunch (simple and small in amount: bread & cheese from Ririmaud). Apart from tying up the beasts, unless confronted by a PC, the guide/s will be **lackadaisical about security**. You may wish to ask the Players if they want to set up any lookouts or other security measures. Do this casually. It can merely be a nod towards reminding Players that the Blanwalt Forest is not a safe or happy place, and that casual attitudes here are perhaps not the best idea. Also, the stale old food is of disappointing quality, not worthy of fine folk.

The Imperial Hunt

As they are finishing lunch **a hunting horn** will sound not too distantly. Soon the sound of charging beasts will be heard. Several people are riding fast and furious.

Though the **Grand Imperial Hunt** does not take place any more, the Imperials themselves remain wealthy and hunt regularly in the Forest, though it is rare to find them out this far. (Occasionally other wealthy persons of Erze Damath also organise hunts into the forest, so probably a dozen or more every year are held. But none except the Imperials go away for weeks at a time.)

This particular hunt is special. The Imperial Heir has several times this year been on the trail of that most rarest of creatures: a dragon. Not the fearsome magical creature of old, but probably **a Drakeling** (see later) made larger by magic, then escaped or released into the wild. If you want to, make up its history and the history of its discovery and previous attempts to catch it.

This hunt is also more complicated because the Imperials are not a single solid faction, but a group of competing houses: principally the Langwists, the Crollans, and the Twillers. The leading member of the latter, **Nethok Twiller** is also a playboy (in a small way). Like many powerful men, he has powerful appetites. He is leading this hunt, unaware that several members of his bodyguard (including all the officers) are assassins tasked with his failure to return alive from this hunt.

A further complication is that the dragon (widely believed by all, including the assassins & those that sent them, to be mythical) **is very real**. And is close by!

Meeting The Imperial Heir

Riders enter the clearing on horseback. This is remarkable. The horse is a rare beast indeed, and mark the riders as powerful adventurers or extremely wealthy (or both). Seven riders are **unremarkable bodyguard types** in leather hauberks, with short hefty-bladed pole-arms held at the ready. Two are more regal types wielding impressive scimitars and dressed in jerkins of scale-mail over leather, and leather breeches.

The guides jump to their feet then drop to their knees. The horsemen all are startled to see others in the forest.

"*Are we so close to the road? I didn't realise!*" calls out a wild-haired man in his early-40s. He seems amused more than alarmed. "*Get up,*" he calls out to the kneeling guides. "*There's no call for obsequiousity all the way out here.*"

Nethok says to the others to take a break. He introduces himself (by first name only) and his friend 'Parisides'. Then asks who the travellers are and what they are doing out here in the wilds. He will listen with interest and will respond to questions, but not get involved **in politics**. He immediately buys the Felukhary, instructing his companion to pay over a half-centrum for each.

Overjoyed at being paid, & keen to be home afore dark **the Ririmaud folk go** (maybe 2 per beast). One admits/apologises for the Hermit subterfuge as they leave. If PCs have concern to get to Erze Damath, Nethok asks them to overnight with him so they can talk at the campfire, then discuss travel plans in the morning.

The Felukhary are delighted to be owned by the Imperial Heir and say so. Nethok **temporarily loans** one each to the PCs and any accompanying GMCs.



The guardsmen do not talk, although astute PC might notice a couple muttering and looking sullen. If the PCs comment on this, Nethok will agree that his bodyguards are a **surlly lot**, but efficient enforcers of the noble Erze Damath Constabulary. (Again, an especially alert PC might detect a measure of bitterness in his tone.)

Nethok uses an amulet (charged by means known only to his family) to create a feast using **Behemoth's Bounty** (DERPG, p105). Everyone is invited to dine.

During the conversation have Nethok be genuine and companionable. Like Voynod he finds the PCs unusual and fascinating companions. He may mention that the regular folk of the city are either **insipid, greedy and narrow-minded, religious zealots**, or all of these at once! He will also reveal that he has been hearing rumours of a dragon from hunters for the last eight months and is determined to find and kill the beast. It is said to have eaten more than a dozen hunters, though being so far from the city nobody cares. He clearly seeks excitement & unusualness that the city can't provide.

Ambush!

Reluctantly Nethok gives up the hunt for the day and heads off back to camp. He says that his other scouts may have had better luck **finding a trail of the magical beast**. If asked, he says that he will spend a maximum of four more days out in the forest, and then must get back to the city to continue his civic duties.

The trip back is uneventful, marked only (if PCs are alert) by watchfulness and whispered asides between guards, who also watch the PCs suspiciously. (PCs may suspect the guards are just looking out for the Duke.) Nethok **asks continual questions** of them, proving fascinated by whatever they tell him, though clearly no fool to fall for simple obfuscations and made-up stories.

After half-an hour's hard-riding Nethok abruptly draws his horse to a halt, crying out sharply: "*Wait!*" He is staring into the trees ahead. Parisides immediately draws up alongside, but then **attacks Nethok with a short-blade** from his sleeve. Both men fall from their horses. The guards attack the PCs. Further guards emerge from the trees. Make this a tough fight for the PCs. Run this so PCs feel there is NO chance of negotiation, knowing that they are witnesses who must be eradicated.

Bodyguard/Assassin

Intimidating 8 [___], Wary 8 [___], Ferocity 10 [___], Parry 10 [___], Health 9 [___], Magic (_____) [___], Athletics 8 [___], Riding 7 [___], Wherewithal 9 [___].

They have +2 to all Rebuffs against not doing their job, knowing that if they fail they will themselves be killed. If necessary they are all enchanted to resist spells (Bonuses to Magic resistance perhaps.)

Duke Nethok Twiller: The Imperial Heir

Nethok also sits on the city council. He is 40 years old. He is proud & commanding, but also has the sense to listen to (and oft times act on) the wisdom of others.

He believes the Imperials should be reinstated as the leading elite of ED, alongside a People's Senate. Not because he believes that the common folk are equal (far from it) but because he believes in fairness (as he sees it from his lofty position) & opportunity, as rights for all.

He is a good councilman, somewhat of an idealist, and wants to make a difference. This has led to his being appointed head of ED Constabulary. His only weakness is his enjoyment of a good time, though this is excessive only in the eyes of the prudish Gilfigite minority.

Fields of Silver claims the Constabulary ("Thief Takers") reports to the Precursor of Gilfig, rather than to the Council. We alter that reality, rather than repealing it.

The new reality is that yes the Precursor is traditional head of the Constabulary, but this was as the result of emergency powers granted long ago. In recent decades Imperials and certain other council members have been campaigning to regain control on behalf of the people.

The Imperials threatened to withdraw vast donations to certain coffers. The Gilfigites reluctantly conceded some ground. The Constabulary's active leadership now includes some Council-appointed representatives, & the nominal head of the Constabulary is now Twiller. This was all the result of some fierce negotiations.

He is well-aware all officers immediately under him are more loyal to the Precursor than to him, & corruption is rife in the Constabulary. Bribes/concessions, favourable treatment, bullying, turning a blind-eye, favouring the wealthy... all of these things are commonplace.

Twiller has complete control over a section of the Thief Takers: the Constabulary Imperial Division (C.I.D.). These are a newly created specialist squad of discreet investigators who handle all unusual crimes: magical-based, serial murders, metaphysical threats to the city.

All tasks in this area so far he has handled with skill and effectiveness, and has gained some public popularity, even amongst the wealthy. What the Gilfigites thought of as a minor concession has now become a thorn in their side, which is why Twiller was marked for death.

Forthright 14 [___], Penetrating 15 [___], Cunning 15 [___], Sure-Footedness 16 [___], Health 12 [___], Magic (_____) 7 [___], Athletics 11 [___], Concealment 8 [___], Etiquette 10 [___], Stealth 8 [___], Gambling 11 [___], Pedantry (Imperial History) 9 [___], Perception 13 [___], Riding 14 [___], Seduction 13 [___], Tracking 11 [___], Wherewithal 15 [___]



The Drakeling

"The predator was a small dragon with furious red eyes and a monstrous fanged mouth."

Known Facts

Often called a Hedge Dragon, but more properly entitled a 'drakeling', this aggressive & unintelligent beast is clearly the product of some magician's vat. That creation was long ago. These rare creatures can only occasionally be sighted - usually in out of the way places - as they pounce from hiding to devour some small mammal. The Hedge Dragon resembles the mythic beast, often with leathery wings, and almost always with a snout full of ferocious teeth. Most specimens have the requisite 4 legs, but some have 6, and occasionally one has even been seen with 8. Skin colour is most often reddy-brown, but occasional green specimens have been recorded. They are of no great concern unless some unusual occurrence has occurred, such as the unfortunate circumstance of being significantly shrunk.

Scholarly Conjectures:

Curative Properties

It is well known that the blood of a drakeling is effective against magical poisons, when properly prepared.

The Fire Lizard

In some decadent cities, drakelings are caged & prodded with sticks in order to encourage this flame - which is then used for lighting tapers for candles, or even cigars.

Game Notes: For the cost of 1 point from its Magic pool, the drakeling can emit a burst of flame from its mouth. This is capable of causing an injury to a fully-grown human - if directed into the face at close range.

Giant Drakelings

Fortunately no such creature as the giant drakeling is known to exist. Occasionally magicians shrink their enemies and drop them into mazes with regular hedge dragons. Should this ever happen, the beast will appear to be huge - larger than a fully-grown bull mermelant.

Magical Repulsion

If a drakeling is within a few inches of you, it assists you in resisting magical effects. Mind you, this also blocks beneficial magic, so in such cases the drakeling must be temporarily taken a short distance away.

Game Notes: The drakeling must be sufficiently comfortable with their companion before this effect takes place. If so, the beneficiary can use the drakeling's Magic pool as if it were an extension of their own. (The drakeling's Magic pool refreshes automatically three hours after it has been drained to 0.)

Miniature Monster

The drakeling, or miniature dragon, is merely a large creature shrunk by magic as a lesson in humility. Dyareken the Third accomplished this feat sometime during the Seventeenth Aeon. It is horribly conceivable that larger specimens may still exist somewhere on the Dying Earth.

Value to Magicians

As well as being useful for terrorizing shrunken enemies, the wings, claws, skin and blood of the drakeling are useful in preparing enchantments of different sorts.

Game Statistics

Hedge Dragon

Ferocity 3, Sure-Footedness 5, Magic (Resist) [___], Health 3, Concealment 12, Perception 3, Stealth 10, Wherew'l 3.

Giant Drakeling

Cunning 17 [___], Dodge 14 [___], Health 20 [___], Magic (_____) [___], Athletics 9 [___], Perception 7 [___], Tracking 7 [___], Wherewithal 18 [___]. (In a more Turjanic setting the creature may have other magical properties such as super-hard scales, resistance to non-magical damage, even regeneration capacity.)

Other Drakeling Adventure Hooks

PCs may be dispatched to capture one of these creatures so that it can be used to make a potion to save the life of a benefactor or even one of their own. Since the small versions of these creatures are both beautiful and delightful, such a task may be hard upon the conscience. (And costly in Sympathy Points.)

[Turjan-Level] Magicians value drakelings highly. The PCs may be engaged to collect several of these creatures on behalf of a sponsor, may need one for their own work, or may have a pet drakeling stolen by an unscrupulous rival.



Whatever happens, make it clear that the presence of the PCs **prevent Nethok from being assassinated**. A wild card in the combat is Nethok. He can have extra magical items secreted about him if required to turn the tables, including powerful healing salves (in strictly limited amounts). Another wildcard is the magical material gained from the hermit's hut. These can be given the most advantageous effects if combat rolls are poor. If you are gradually and cruelly whittling away any GMCs that have accompanied the PCs all the way from Cil, then **one of them may perish** in an initial knife-thrust. Also call for Ride (or Persuasion if there is time) rolls for anyone that wants to fight on felukhary-back, as these creatures will otherwise flee.

In the aftermath of the ambush, Nethok will be injured, but not too badly, and if nobody else is badly injured he will have no salves. He will however walk around and **stab each surviving wounded assassin to death**. Only direct pleas from PCs can possibly save one, though Nethok will explain that these men will stop at nothing to do the job, & he doesn't particularly want to have to keep watching his back. No former bodyguard will beg, but any less injured may make heroic suicidal attempts to gain a weapon/hostage and/or escape.



Initial Conversations with Duke Nethok

Nethok is extremely grateful. Not wimpy grateful, but **powerfully and nobly grateful**, scowling excitedly from the thrill of the fight. He will congratulate any particularly effective PC fighters and the PCs in general for their plucky behaviour. He will interpret their actions in the most favourable light, and ask what he can do for them now that they have saved his life.

They may speak of Iucounu and their return to Alмеры. He is well-read and knows exactly where Alмеры is.

He adds (enhancing the game realism of this fact) that it is a shame that regular magicians no longer routinely have access to the magics of old. If they did he could command one to transport the PCs back to Alмеры.

He himself has never met a magician with such powers. However, he believes he can help them. He tells them that despite the fact that the **religious factions mostly have control of Erze Damath**, he does have significant influence, which is growing, and believes within a few months he will have enough supporters to push through civic decrees for public works and other major undertakings. Also from his studies he knows that it was only a couple of centuries ago that caravans stopped travelling between Erze Damath and Old Romarth (a place that he knows is contiguous with the Land of the Falling Wall north of Alмеры). "*Perhaps,*" he says, with a grin, "*it is time to send a very large and very well-protected mercantile expedition to re-open that profitable trading avenue?*" "*And I think I now know just the people to assign to lead it!*"

He will also explain at this point that the Plain of Obelisks and the mountains to its north are all **filled with half-men** and (at their edges) human bandits. That coupled with the geographic challenges (thirst, poisoned water, wild animals, sunstroke) this means that nobody has survived the trip in small groups. Every few years a group goes out there. (Either an adventurer band, misguided archaeological explorers, tomb-robbers or sometimes merchants striking out to Old Romarth.) But **none ever return** who have gone any distance. It is even rare simply to get a few fractured survivors making it back to Erze Damath, but that does sometimes occur.

He briefly explains he has taken it upon himself to try to wrestle the **E. D. Constabulary** from the hands of the religious zealots, and turn it back into a public amenity. (Again, observant PCs may notice that Nethok is a man who relishes a mission: the more challenging the better.) He says he can rely on the *Constabulary Imperial Division*, who are efficient and well-trained, but they are also understaffed, and are constrained by various tenets and budgetary requirements of the general Constabulary.

He also tells them that some months ago he pondered the possibility of **funding a private investigation team**, to whom he could give Imperial Validation and a public licence from the Constabulary, and have them investigate independently but unofficially allied to the C.I.D. It was an idea he gave up, on realising that nobody he could trust was sufficiently skilled to do the job of dealing with the city's many true mysteries and unusual major crimes.

If they haven't already talked about similar things in their past, he asks what experience they have in this area. But he already believes they are **right for the job**.



Mutually Beneficial Gainful Employment

Nethok offers them a deal. For his part he will make sure within eight months at the latest to gain a decree for the city to fund an expedition to Old Romarth, to re-establish the **lucrative trade route**. They (the PCs and any companions) will be a part of the leadership of this caravan, and will be free to depart from it when it reaches Old Romarth, their duty complete.

On their part are two clauses:

1) They must operate as an independent Investigation business, funded by him and official & legal with an Imperial Licence. They must take cases he sends their way but can take independent cases too, and indeed must take some to remain credible. He is open to talk details, and is reasonable in expectations, not instructing them to act as if they are indestructible heroes of old!

He is as open as possible to be about what he requires, but says he doesn't want to say too much about Erze Damath society until they have finished the hunt. He says he will give them 10 days in Erze Damath to come to a decision. They can use this time, he suggests, to confirm that what he says is true: there is no safe way back to Almyer overland, no route at all south or west, and no magicians with access to magical transportation. Specifically he lets them know that the penniless fare poorly in Erze Damath.

Plus in a city of religious zealots and an embedded set of laws even skilled adventurers find themselves labelled simply as bandits and neer-do-wells, and so he is also offering to set them up with an occupation and automatic social status, though he'd like his link with them to publicly remain very informal. Whatever questions he does ask can be answered from the Erze Damath appendix, the ED chapter, or from your copy of 'Fields of Silver'. He ends by telling them it is wise to trust no-one in Erze Damath that you do not know well. And if they didn't try to bargain him down to six months' service (which he would have accepted) uses this as an example of them not behaving as ruthlessly as anyone with influence and power in Erze Damath will.

2) They must assist him to finish his hunt, which he agrees to abandon if they don't succeed in four days.

He can tell them whatever the GM wishes him to know about the beast (taken from the info in this publication or elsewhere).

Hunting the Draconic Prey

Next stop is the camp where Nethok was quartered last night. This is only another ten minutes ride. Here are still **half-a-dozen men**. Nethok will ride into the camp (tarpaulins roped between trees and a fire) loudly announce that he was just thwarted an assassination attempt and that he knows they are all assassins. He will add that if he ever sees any of them again he will have them killed on the spot, and so they are well-advised to return to the city, pack their goods and depart.

If you want to add in more combat he will have everyone dismount some distance from the camp and sneak up from a different direction to that expected. Then he will **walk into camp alone** to make this announcement, be attacked and require the PCs to save him again. If criticised afterwards he will apologise and say he was still upset about being betrayed by his friend Parisides, and that anger affected his judgment.

It is too late to go hunting now so he erects a **magical force wall** so they can sleep well. In the night a strange many-legged reptile will try to get at them, but will fail.

In the morning he cooks a small cauldron of gruel, and unpacks small sacks of nuts and dried fruits, plus some skins of watered wine. Then he talks of the general plan for **tracking and finding the dragon**. He relies on a device that he had a wizard make for him. A hand-held rotating device that will tell the general location of the beast, but not its distance away. Until it is within a half hour's ride, and then it makes a high-pitched buzzing.

Other things to look out for he says (perhaps in response to questions) are **huge clawed footprints**, goutts of flame rushing towards you, or a huge fierce reptile with wings. He says that it apparently cannot fly very far due to its bulk, so is mainly a ground dweller.

⊕ "You pack sufficient of the campsite as you will need, leaving the rest to the forest. Spare horses are assigned in a tied-line to the person with the least combat experience. You ride the entire day without hearing the tell-tale buzz of the strange detector. That night you camp as before, breakfast, then spend another day of fruitless searching. This day is more lively. You have to fight off, and slay, a huge blue flightless bird that rushed out of nowhere and killed one of the riderless horses. On your second full day with the Duke, a little before lunchtime the device begins to buzz."

The Duke quickly sets up his magical wall of force, around the spare horses and any non-combatants, and with the others rides on out to meet his prey. This time he finds it, in a **low rocky range of hillocks**. It takes refuge in a small series of large caves. How intelligent, how vicious, and how magical it is depends on the GM.

It is a man-eater and the Duke wants it killed. He has minor enchantments to resist flame that he can cast on all to greatly reduce the damage. The Duke **takes the teeth for his prize**. PCs can have whatever they want. He rides with them back to the edge of the forest, being able to tell the direction by the sun easily, and makes an arrangement to meet them at the Inn of the Green Lamp in ten days, or a few days sooner if they wish. He asks they wait 2 hours before following into the city, and to enter by the N gate (not the NE which he will use). He wants their connection to him to remain secret until they are established as a legal agency in the city.



The Horse

"Guyal urged his horse forward and pounded fast under the trees."

Introduction

This piece is the last known of my writings from the mass of material prepared during my stint as writer and editor of the abandoned Dying Earth Bestiary (some of which was edited into the Compendium and/or Tooth, Talon & Pinion). Most of the excess material survived and I have edited it into articles and adventures like this. The Felukhary text (p33) was originally also part of this 'Horse' entry. The PCs may wish to purchase these notable steeds as a sign of status. In ED they are available (at high cost) only from the Imperial Stables.



Known Facts

The horse is an ancient animal, described in the oldest tales and rumoured to have been the most common of riding animals as far back as the Age of Glow. In its pure form it has no odd characteristics, is not sentient and if well trained is exceptionally loyal. The pure form is now extremely rare – being known in some regions (though available only to the wealthy) and a thing of legend in most others. More common are divergent subspecies with varying peculiarities: one of which was left out of the Gazetteer and is therefore detailed here.

The Horse

Strength 14 [___], Sure-Footedness 12 [___], Health 16 [___], Athletics 15 [___], Perception 8 [___], Wherewithal 6 [___]

Game Notes: Horses are expensive and highly sought. Someone known to ride/own a horse gains +1 on Etiquette rolls in polite society. And a similar benefit when engaged in Persuasion rolls around Persuasions related to status. Beasts with a strong measure of horse plasm in their structure are the Ristato and the Tarmi (see Players' Guide to Kaiin, p72), Felukhary & Tonquill.

The Tonquill

A creature of the tundras north of the Great Erm, the tonquill is a creature the size and rough appearance of a small horse. It seems that somewhere along the line, a proportion of reptilian plasm was introduced into its make-up, and tonquills have lightly-scaled green skin and no ears. Sometimes young specimens are caught by natives of the lands around Benbadge Stull, and trained for use as racing animals. They are fit for no other domestic use, as they remain nervous and agitated when in captivity.

Game Notes: Tonquills require supplementary fodder consisting of insects or crustaceans, and normally pursue and devour large flightless beetles of their home tundra.

Tonquill

Speed 12 [___], Dodge 15 [___], Health 13 [___], Magic (Resist) 7 [___], Athletics 14 [___], Wherewithal 5 [___]

Game Notes: A person of small or average stature may possibly be able to use a tonquill, which was captured and trained when immature, as a riding animal. Their main advantage is speed. Anyone without a Riding rating of at least 9 suffers a levy of 1 when making a Riding roll anytime the creature is running fast or leaping over obstacles.

Horse Adventure Hooks

Erosto, a Kaiin Gaming Magnate (KPG, p148), has ordered a horse from the renowned stables in Sfero. Since this settlement is only forty miles distant, and good help is hard to find, (or perhaps due to a cunningly manufactured case of mistaken identity) our rogues are hired for the task. If they steal and sell the beast, an incensed Erosto stops at nothing to track them down and bring them to justice – the deodand pits. If they attempt to deliver it, circumstances conspire to make it appear they have stolen and sold the beast.

The annual Tugersbir Tonquill Races attract a great purse for the winner. Should a PC be a proficient rider (or some subtle magical item helps them pose as one), they fancy their chances at winning this. Unfortunately they quickly realize that cheating, bullying and even disablement, are inherent in the culture of this race.

PCs have no choice but **to accept several Felukhary** as their mounts for a particular escapade. These animals make their journey far more difficult, but towards the end may be instrumental in saving the lives of the PCs due to their stubborn refusal to bow to enemy threats - and their ability to bound agilely through rocky terrain.



Chapter Three: City of the Black Obelisk



3.1) New in Erze Damath

Regard the magnificent Erze Damath Gazetteer appendix to this publication for the essential overview of this city. Furthermore, regard your shining new copy of *Fields of Silver* for further rich information. We do not incorporate many city details within the following notes, but you should use the Gazetteer appendix to **make it come alive** for the PCs! Here is an opportunity for a long stay. An imaginative GM can incorporate many things around these adventures, making daily life in Erze Damath a campaign in itself.

Much information on city religions is in *Fields of Silver*. In these initial suggested adventures the PCs need have **no interest in religion** beyond familiarising themselves sufficiently not to inadvertently commit a crime. They should be discouraged from pursuing involvement, due to extreme tedium and utter lack of relevance (which will not be the case when undergoing the adaptation of the *Fields of Silver* campaign – wherein research of religions will become part of their necessary role-playing activities).

It is recommended PCs roleplay all **significant domestic events** when first arriving. Where do they stay initially? Squat in an old manse? Take rooms in a prestigious inn? Purchase or rent a modest domicile? Swindle someone into giving them free board? Consider printing a large copy of the map and filling in streets and other details.

Back in civilisation at last, the PCs are nonetheless trapped. Erze Damath appears to be the end of the road for their journey: so near and yet so far! Bordered on the north by the **dangerous Blanwalt Forest**, to the south by the deadly Silver Desert, and to the west by the impassable Plain of Obelisks. Only to the north and south-east do semi-settled lands extend, and neither are directions that the adventurers wish to travel in.

Making the Best of Things

Fortunately Erze Damath is a **city of opportunity**, and in many ways not dissimilar to somewhere like Kaiin. Somewhat more decorative folk live here, but basic human nature and level of culture is more or less the same. In all of their travels since that devil Iucounu banished them to the far north the PCs have never arrived at somewhere so 'familiar' and filled with opportunity and privilege as Erze Damath.

PCs settle, perhaps hoping that they needn't rely on the Duke's largesse and that in some weeks, or months at worst, they will discover means or magic to travel west. After all this is a **city of gods**, and lesser things than gods exist that can assist persons to magically travel vast distances. Yet, gradually disillusion them through local lore and opinion. All sides will support the fact that an alliance with the Duke is the only possible way they will move on in the foreseeable future. In short, they will soon become clear that Erze Damath will be their home a while.



Theft is Discouraged!

Random theft to enhance one's funds is not looked upon lightly. Robbers and muggers are keenly pursued by the city's yellow-uniformed Thief Takers. Once caught and tried in the courthouse such persons are sentenced to community service of a greater or lesser arduousness, and truly incorrigible criminals are staked out in the Eastern ruins as fodder for half-men.

Seeking to Travel On

During the course of playing this chapter PCs may continue inquiring about means to travel westward towards **Almerly & Ascolais**. Or to the Land of the Falling Wall, which they may (correctly) believe is closer.

You may merely recite that in between gaming sessions their efforts to discover such information continually meet with failure. Or you may perhaps parcel out their attempts around adventures, using Scuttlebutt etc. If you have access to *Fields of Silver*, **Eurias the Geographer** can eventually be found, and possibly **Trofomuire the Magician** (see later in this chapter).

Ordinary folk and even most of the educated have no knowledge of such places. Cugel took the services of a **'professional geographer'**. Since he told Cugel to return exactly the way he came, we can presume that this person merely 'repackaged' what Cugel told him.

The only new information he offered was confirmation that directionally Ascolais lay beyond the Songan Sea. No **casual enquiries in Erze Damath** will produce reliable information without some good rolls or a sensibly role-played line of enquiries as to whose advice can be trusted. And such information is not cheap.

Introducing key Magical Items from now on!

Refer again to the very last page of Appendix 4 (Pergolo). There you will find a list of magical items useful for assailing Iucounu once the PCs reach Pergolo. Erze Damath is the first likely source for such things, as are the ruins of Dastra. Don't introduce too many too early, and don't give away too obviously that they have future uses!

The GM can make it clear to Players that although they may have looked at the superb DE map, PCs have not. Only VERY well-educated PCs have even a vague idea of where Almerly is geographically. So PCs discovering more should be fully role-played as they waste time (and perhaps money) with charlatans, before eventually finding a **genuine part-time sage** or private library, and confirming that in the previous aeon a caravan route ran from Erze Damath to a town called Tvost in the Maurenron Mountains, then Old Romarth.

This is not a casual confirmation and needs to be introduced into the game with suitable flourish. Old

Romarth may be a place some of the PCs have visited, or at least when they lived in Ascolais & Almerly they will have met people who have **visited Old Romarth**. The PCs are still far from home, but they now have confirmation that the next leg of the journey will take them to the edge of known territory at last!

Despite any sense of ease given in *Fields of Silver* as to travel across continents, we repudiate that misconception and name it as a **profound difference** between basic Cugelesque perspectives and advanced play. The PCs are not yet lofty adventurers. They are simple travellers. Yes caravans sometimes travel into the regions around Erze Damath, but they stick to **the fringes of the known world**. They do not strike out into the void, heading for such potentially mythic or by now ruinous & abandoned locales as 'Old Romarth'.

Such insanity risks inevitable death by desiccation and felinodore predations. Yes once in a while within **recorded history** someone has headed out into the Plain of Obelisks seeking ancient tombs and the like, but no records exist of any such person having returned.

PCs seeking a route deep into the Plain and beyond will be met by **blank looks and pitying expressions**. Only exhaustive research will uncover scholars who have at least read references to such foreign lands in old texts. Enough to say that there are no means of travelling safely through the Silver Desert or the Plain of Obelisks.

Tovin the Sage

If you plan to use the adaptation notes for *Fields of Silver* (and of course that campaign book itself) Tovin will be the name of their main initial contact as they come to know ED. He is the middle-man between them and the Duke. He will be with the Duke whenever they initially meet at the Inn of the Green Lamp. Tovin's office is given as the place to leave messages, have meetings etc.

Tovin is a sage who adventured in his youth. In later middle-age he is settling down somewhat, though still gets out exploring now and again, and has led three expeditions to Dastra for the Duke. He is the man who gives them any funds the Duke approves, evaluates their expense claims, and pays bills deemed appropriate. He can also guide them into a basic knowledge of the city.

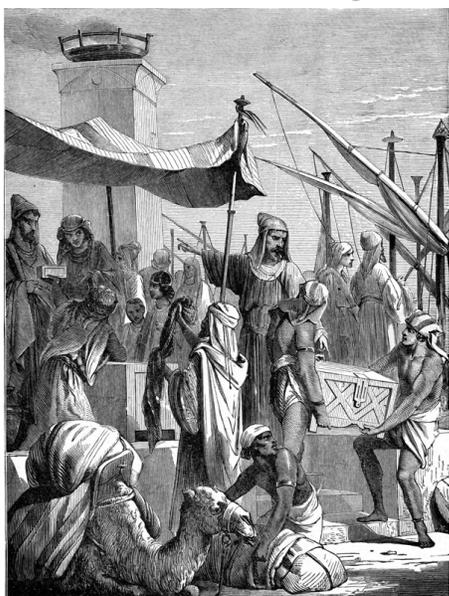
You may like to have Players role-play the PCs' selection of business premises, a name for their business, creation of calling cards, and visits to notables of Erze Damath to extol their virtues (perhaps with a letter of recommendation from the Duke himself).

The Duke can soon enough find them free basic premises in a building that some distant family member owns. Tovin will show them around the options however – not the Duke. Roleplay the PCs checking for security value, location, ease of exit & defensiveness etc.



Striking Out on their Own?

Ambitious PCs might suggest heading NW around the Blanwalt Forest and then westward around the edges of the mountains, claiming this to be a simple alternative to heading across the plain. Once again suggestions of this nature are met by **folk looking askance**. Most will ask if you so seriously want to sacrifice yourself to the mercies of the ‘wind-stick devils’ and ‘rock goblins’ of the mountains can they have your money, fancy hat, boots and in fact trousers? Since **a corpse has no need of comforts**. (Crossing the region to the west of the Blanwalt Forest is dangerous enough, though sometimes done by well-prepared caravans, but nobody heads further west into the mountains or alongside them.)



3.2) City Opportunities

Resigning themselves to a stay of reasonable duration in Erze Damath, various Players might ask for (or can be offered) their PCs to have the opportunity to continue with Rating enhancements that take **serious game time** (depending on how you run your campaigns).

Specifically this could include educational research to support increases in Pedantry specialisms and **study of magical lore** so as to be able to justify increasing ratings in Magic. (I require study time in my campaigns).

GMs can factor such things into how they run the following adventures, giving PCs periods of ‘free time’ and asking Players to give a 2 or 3 sentence description of how each PC uses that time. After which the GM responds (perhaps after calling for 1-3 dice rolls) as to **how successfully** that time was spent. In particular this opportunity is useful if the PCs will be entering into the adapted unfolding of the *Fields of Silver* campaign, but have not yet mastered much magic.

Prestige

In a game with more Cugelesque elements, invent and detail much around fashion and furnishings, and require rolls against Arrogance not to spend much of one’s earnings on well-presented accoutrements.

Increasing Magical Capacity

In ED PCs may gradually come across and learn 2 or 3 spells that later prove useful for surviving Gilfig, yet of **limited utility** in other settings. (If you are trying to keep spell-fluency limited.) Or you might write in that some of their payments for (or items discovered within) the following scenarios are **anti-magic or anti-demonic** devices that do the same job as certain spells. No magicians of particular note are mentioned in *Fields of Silver*. PCs may **seek out magicians** or sages who might be able to transport them back to Almerly.

Be ready to basically detail several minor mages, who have studied for many years merely to grasp the basic arts. (They are of no help in this regard, but can possibly help with access to their collections – for a fee of course). Also invent three persons of **reasonable magical competency**, the most noted of which is named **Trofomuire**. He also serves as a Stimator in the Triteuchal Court, though this is largely a sinecure.

Trofomuire is introduced if you have *Fields of Silver* and will run it as the **extensive endpiece** to this chapter. In that case he will later transport them to Tvost. If such is to be so, play him as reluctant to see them at this time. When their persistence pays off they observe that he is clearly a **troubled person** (though they cannot take advantage of this as a clue when events in *Fields of Silver* commence, as he will later vanish). It might be amusing to have him become a mentor to one of the PCs.

Any PC with Magic will realise (by the books and items in Trofomuire’s study) that he is **a magician of merit**. Nonetheless, as explained earlier, magical transportation is incredibly rare (both devices and spells), being magic that tears the fabric of reality then puts it back together again. Trofomuire may say that alas his grandfather was the **last real magician** in the family. All his ancestor’s major tomes were destroyed in the fire that consumed his library and life during an ill-attempted summoning. Another alternative is to use Trofomuire as a loose contact for any PC/s interested in magic, so as to establish him as a regular **inoffensive GMC**, rather than setting him up in suspicion as someone clearly with a greater role to play than currently apparent. He is ideal as **a sponsor for the first adventure** (3.3). A magic-seeking PC might negotiate secretly with him (reducing the fee he will pay them, in exchange for magical coaching in lieu of money to go to the common purse).



Enemies & Spies

Thugs hired by the Precursor's staff may set on PCs to deliver well orchestrated noir-esque warnings to get out of town. Some thugs are members of the Constabulary.

Iucounu may have spies. PCs may spot semi-substantial hybrid creatures now & then spying on them: a weasel-fish, a frog-bat, a spider-monkey. If captured/tortured they admit that they have been briefed to watch for the PCs and report back to Iucounu when he summons them back to his manse weekly. They are conjured elemental beings, but they suffer like living beings do.

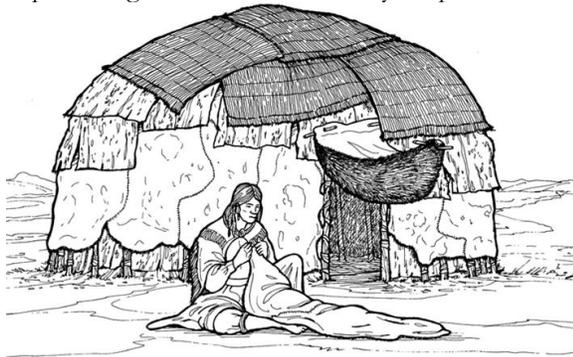
In a more Turjanic game, a PC magician may turn one of these creatures into a double agent, having it spy on Iucounu. Keep its information to a minimum, but it could pass on that Iucounu is not as strong as he poses. Should this become hard to manage Iucounu slays it.

3.3) Creatures of the Marshland

A wealthy sponsor with an interest in magical research (perhaps Trofomuire, **one of the Duke's old tutors**) contacts the PCs and says that he requires a minimum of three wysen-imps to be brought to him alive, for reason of their magical attributes. He will pay 500 terces for each pelt (and can be bargained up to 750 terces per pelt), up to a maximum of five pelts, plus expenses of 100t (can be bargained up to 120t) per person (to a max of 6 persons). He has a map to an **extensive marsh** on the Great Central Steppe, from where reports of a colony of Wysen Imps come. The Duke recommends this as a fantastic idea, as it sets them up as legitimate.

At various sources around town the PCs can learn **various rumours of the nature of wysen-imps** and the hazards of the Central Steppe (including the wandering and remarkably uncivilised nomad tribes).

The PCs would be wise to hire a guide, perhaps from one of the friendlier nomad clans, and perhaps even don nomadic disguises. Since the nomads hunt and trap the **strange hybrid beasts**, it might be sound to purchase some unusual (and swift) riding beasts and take some time practicing to become sufficiently adept riders.



A Typical Nomad Dwelling

Suggested Hazards

Finding their way (there and back)

A friendly nomadic trading party.

A hostile group of three braves who will not stop at anything short of ritual single combat.

Traversing the steppe and the marshland.

Marsh wights (see *Lords of Cil*)

A shamb, The wysen-imps!

Their own consciences (see end of wysen-imp entry)

The Wysen Imp

Wysen-imps are amphibious and live in deep tunnels entered from round holes usually near the edge of a river or marsh. In the day they sleep in burrows and at night hunt for fish, crustaceans and small mammals.

Finesse 11 [___], Sure-Footed 12 [___], Health 13 [___],

Magic (innate) 11 [___], Athletics 12 [___],

Concealment 14 [___], Perception 6 [___],

Stealth 10 [___], Tracking 6 [___], Wherewithal 10 [___]

Marshlanders

These sprightly creatures know instinctively where to tread on damp terrain, and have slightly webbed feet to allow them maximum purchase. Their instincts are finely-honed for survival in marshes.

Game Notes: Wysen-Imps gain a bonus or boon of 1 to Athletics rolls related to traveling over such topography. However, they are not particularly brawny, and so do not gain such advantages for acts of strength or endurance. They also gain a boon of 1 to Defense, Stealth, and Tracking rolls in such terrain.

Group Defences

Wysen-Imps live in colonies, although the openings to their dens might be some distance apart. One or more always peer through small observation holes at the end of a blocked side-tunnel. The colony is soon alerted to intruders – or at least the outer guards if the rest asleep. Though they cannot speak with humans, they are semi-intelligent, and carry/use basic weapons, inc..missiles. Invaders may also be pelted with stones, which are held in the mouth and spat out with great power & accuracy.

Juvenile Specimens

Immature wysen-imp can be captured at a tender age and domesticated. Though such is unusual, nonetheless experienced travellers may come across such a situation. Unfortunately, they are more likely to be the trained pets of thieves rather than devoted home-helpers or watch animals. On reaching maturity – typically after two or three years of age – they become fractious and unruly and are then sold or released into the wild.

Game Notes: Simply reduce the ratings of the typical example generated, by a quarter or a third.



Magical Natures

The only reason that wysen-imps remain alive at all, with such a high demand for their pelts, is that they have a few magical attributes. Firstly, they can vanish and reappear up to 20 yards distant; secondly sometimes they are actually a foot or two to one side of where they appear to be, and finally their rolling croak has a hypnotic effect on humans.

Game Notes: For the cost of 1 point from their Magic pool a wysen-imp can do one of the following at will: transport itself in the blink of an eye, anywhere between 10 and 20 yards from its current position; obscure its position for several minutes by presenting an illusion that it is slightly to one side of where it actually is; or create a hypnotic effect with its cries. This latter effect can only be resisted as follows: anyone that hears these cries must make a single Wberewithal roll. This is at a bonus of 1 of their Wberewithal is 3+ points higher than the creature's own Wberewithal, and at a bonus of 2 if six or more points higher. Conversely it is at a penalty of 1 if it is three or more points lower, and a penalty of 2 if it is six or more points lower.

IS: the cries leave you unmoved;

PS – you are distracted and take a levy of 1 on all mental processes whilst in the vicinity of the wysen-imp;

HBS – you are highly distracted, and take a penalty of 1 to mental processes and a levy of 1 to physical actions;

EF – you become confused, taking a penalty of 1 to all activities;

QF – you are convinced that you are offending the wysen-imps, and do your best to persuade your fellows to vacate the area, departing yourself even if they will not;

DF – as QF but use force to back-up your argument if necessary.

Inoffensive Riverine Mammals

The wysen-imp is a quadrupedal aquatic mammal of clearly magical origin. Its thick waterproof fur is blue & shiny, and its face is something like a cross between man and simiode. Its short limbs are sturdy, and possess webbed digits for better propelling itself through the marshes. In manner they are nervous, and so not often seen. They are widely hunted for their fur, and so are rare in populated areas.

Because they are so magical, many magicians seek wysen-imp body parts or pelts. Persons inveigled into a hunt for wysen-imps and their pelts will be confronted with comparatively intelligent and good-natured beings, which are being slaughtered for the fiscal benefit of a greedy few.

How will they respond to being a part of something very akin to organized murder? This scenario can be set up so as the PCs will decide to give up and let the wysen-imps alone, or even end up aiding them against predatory shams. If so, any PC having been prepaid by Trofomuire has some explaining (& blaming) to do!

3.4) Dungeons & Deodands

Have PCs explore more of **life in Erze Damath**. We have an expanded list of new locations in the ED Appendix that you can add to those listed in *Fields of Silver*. Exploring the city is an adventure in itself.

Things will be quiet for a while. They may well look around for things to do. **Exploring the Eastern Ruins** is an obvious option, though the Duke will have to expedite their getting a permit, since strangely the city bureaucracy is otherwise slow to process their needs.

Now is your opportunity to unearth & adapt 2 or 3 of your old adventures from less decadent role-playing games and adapt them to this milieu. Perhaps heavy **rains preceptate some landslips** in the ruins that reveal new tombs? Maybe someone finds an old treasure map and sells it to the PCs? They might be hired for a rescue mission after a part of adventurers goes astray?

A second party of adventurers (some of whom were amidst the bully boys that attacked them at the end of 3.2) appear and can **rival the PCs** and perhaps gain the upper hand in recovering relics now and then.

Annoyingly getting there early, having better equipment, and being sponsored (semi-secretly) by the Precursor's Office. A Grand Finale to this little bit might be when both parties band together to tackle a deep and dangerous ruin, and release a powerful golem (inhabited by **the spirit of a former magician**) that they all (who survive) have to flee. And that takes three whole squadrons of the Constables to destroy (with some injuries amongst their own personnel).

The **Ruins of Dastra** are untapped potential for such things. It might be their experience in the Eastern Ruins that brings them to Hodek's (see 3.5 next) attention.

3.5) The Dark Collector

A mysterious man is hiring guards. He claims his name is Orten Hodek and that he has led several expeditions to the ruins of Dastra and returned with many relics. (He is a vampiric leucomorph, and has already slain & devoured 20+ travellers over the last two years.) He offers them **150t retainer each** (& can be bargained to 200), plus payment of 40t (can be bargained to 60t) per day for a planned trip of three weeks. (A week each way and a week on site that may be extended to two weeks.)

He explains that the hazards will be only the usual: half-men on the way, and half-men, bandits & ghosts on site. (The ghosts mostly just use fear-based attacks.) If necessary as part of the intro, the Duke **finds this man suspicious** and wonders if he is smuggling illegal mind-altering funghal concoctions that are relatively new to Erze Damath, so insists the PCs apply.



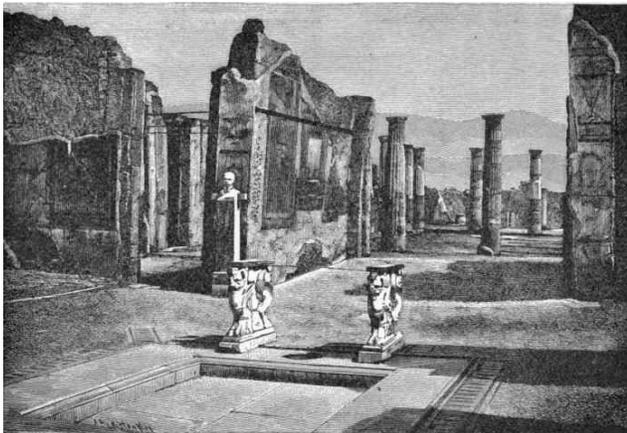
Research

Otren has indeed run several expeditions, though in every case he has lost at least three members of his retinue (betraying them horribly, then **hunting them for sport**), & once lost them all. (Because of a magnificent treasure he wanted for himself.)

Nonetheless, the survivors came back very wealthy. If confronted about the **high body count** he will admit to obfuscating about fatality rates, saying that he otherwise has had problems acquiring personnel.

Dastra is a dangerous expanse of ruins and lives are lost there all the time. But well-equipped expeditions often return with **plenty of spoils** & no loss of personnel.

Orten appeared in Erze Damath from an unknown origin less than three years ago. He has no friends, & lives in a **fortified basement** in the Eastern Ruins.



Suggested Hazards

Using the information on Dastra in *Fields of Silver* create a suitable ruin/basement complex for PCs to explore.

During their sojourn in the ruins Orten will manifest as a **vampiric leucomorph**, and do away with 1 or 2 GMC retainers mysteriously – placing their souls in his peculiar skull amulet – before the PCs cotton on and do away with him (a hard task as he is a magical being).

Or they will **investigate his lair**, discover he is a magical vampiric being (prisoners/gory relics) set a trap and slay him (but fail to find his hidden treasure).

Either way, he is a **dangerous foe** who loves the challenge of hunting skilled prey. Or perhaps his entire motivation for this scenario is to dispose of them because they came close to finding his lair during their expeditions into the ruins.

A dangerous game of cat and mouse in the ruins is not out of the question. Play him not as some stock bad guy easy to destroy, but as a **profoundly strong and evil antagonist**, who they can only even hope to destroy with extreme luck and cunning.

Orten Hodek

Forthright 12 [___], Lawyerly 13 [___], Finesse 14 [___], Dodge 15 [___], Health 9 [___], Magic (_____) [___], Athletics 8 [___], Riding 7 [___], Wherewithal 19 [___].

At your discretion he can roll his Health and Athletics at +1, illustrating his powerful non-human nature.

3.6) Terror of the Visps

Introduction

Travellers on the south road downriver have been disappearing. Entire small groups. Odd noises have been heard in the woods at night. A group of merchants offer a substantial reward to those solving this frightening series of events. The merchants are **influential in politics** and neutral to the Duke’s attempts to bring more justice to the city, and so the Duke is VERY keen to curry their favour!

Research

GM creates details of disappearances of previous 3 wks.

The Visp

A hideous nine-foot monster of unknown origin. It is nocturnal and hunts by following the scent of meat, which it senses by means of two flexible probosci - one growing on either side of a scalp crest. Their eyes are large, pink & luminous, adapted to see in dim light.

Abominable Visage

Some reports talk of a rare creature whose countenance is so hideous it drives humans insane to look upon it.

Game Notes: Anyone who sees the visp must make a single Wherewithal roll the moment they lay eyes upon it. This is at a bonus of 1 of their Wherewithal is 3 or more points higher than the creature’s Magic rating, and at a bonus of 2 if their Wherewithal is 6 or more points higher. Conversely it is at a penalty of 1 if their Wherewithal is 3 or more points lower, and a penalty of 2 if their rating is 6 or more points lower.

IS/PS – effect is dealt with, the viewer remains highly agitated;

HBS/EF – the viewer is paralyzed with horror for 2 rounds;

QF – the viewer becomes bereft of wit for an hour or more;

DF – the viewer goes completely doo-lally, and remains that way for 1-3 days (if the visp doesn’t simply pursue & devour them).

Aura of Obscurity

A lone survivor from a party of five that was attacked near Haldock Hill claims he saw some kind of wavering shape stepping out of the gloom before one of his companions was hefted into the air & disembowelled.

Game Notes: Such visps are virtually undetectable in poor light (penalty of 2), and even in full daylight impose a penalty of 1 on Perception rolls to spot them. (Their distinctive aroma nonetheless may aid in their detection.) They become slightly more visible when engaged in energetic activities – such as rending and devouring.



Horrible Impostures

A single traveller has been telling the story that as he passed along the road from Erze Damath to Creman Stuk, he heard the cry of a woman in distress and went to investigate. As he approached the source of the voice, he happened to glance down and saw a gnawed human thighbone of recent origins. Rather than idling in conjecture, he took to his heels at once, and was pursued for almost a mile - by a visp crying out in a woman's voice. He claims if he hadn't chanced upon a caravan transporting wine upriver & taken refuge amongst them, the beast would surely have slain him.

Lone Wanderers

Visps usually travel alone, and never in more than three. *(The default option if PCs are not befty with magic.)*

Associating in Packs

Visps travel in small groups, made up of the alpha female, her mate, and her hatchery siblings. Whilst these do not necessarily always stay together, if they split into small bands, other groups will never be more than a few minutes distant, should one group cry out for aid, for assistance with a hunt, or in triumph on making a kill.



3.7) Ritual Murder in Erze Damath

Someone/something is abroad in Erze Damath, **killing criminals & unofficial courtesans**. The murders started just before the PCs arrived. The PCs are amongst those suspected. Part of the motivation to solve this mystery is to clear their names.

Mostly though, the Duke wants them to solve it, because he is considering making it publicly known that the PCs work for him, so as to show **clear & incontrovertible evidence** of the good he is doing for the city. (To bolster his political influence.) But he wants his identity as their sponsor kept secret at first, certainly until they are no longer suspected murderers!

Research

Seven known murders occurred recently, with the first discovered the very night they arrived, though the constables estimated the person was dead at least a day before being discovered. (Spread the rest out over the time the PCs have been in the city.)

Each person has been **eviscerated** and their entrails and eyeballs plucked out. And their entrails were then arranged in a terrible occult pattern around the bodies.

None were known to have any connection. However, PCs' research will begin to uncover that these low-lives lived in **the same ruined tenement** two months earlier.

By questioning other persons in that building (requiring skill and bribery), the PCs discover the dead were part of a gang of thieves who **illegally plundered a crypt** in the Eastern Ruins two weeks before the murders began.

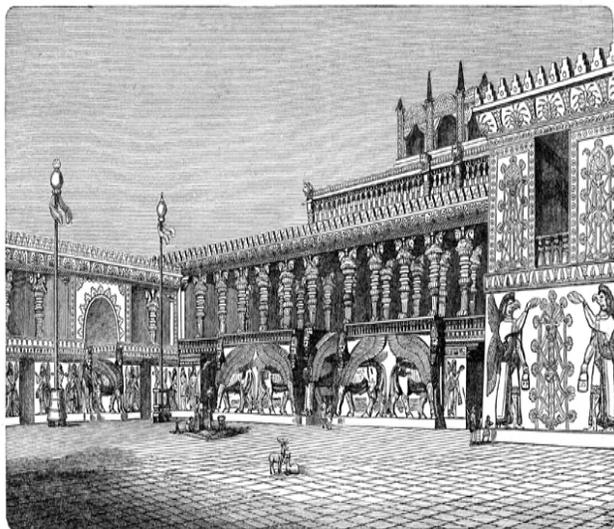
The Duke is anxious the mystery be solved, but won't say why. If truth be known he suspects that one of his younger cousins was involved. This **head-strong woman** (Katarinka) has looted the ruins before, using lowlife assistants, and recently been acting strangely fearful. The Constabulary as usual is unlikely to help.

Katarinka is as of yet still alive, but the Demon has nearly gotten her twice now, and once even when 'safe' inside **her own family compound**. During this attack three guards were slain in the person's defence, but this has been hushed up with money to the guards' families.

Suggested Hazards

PCs locate Katarinka (in hiding) via criminal contacts. She didn't enter the crypt, but stood guard (sponsor's privilege). She can reveal all who entered are dead, and that they all came out of the crypt **screaming in terror**. (Sadly Katarinka will be slain the same way shortly after the PCs question her unless they decide to protect her.)

The crypt is an ancient & deep. Protected by traps that have been activated (though several have reset) - and occasionally still have their victims in them. Here was a **Warrior Knight of the Cutz Wars**, buried in an amber sarcophagus. (Now empty.) By the demonic markings this Knight was not one of the 'good guys' in the Wars. The tomb robbers activated a curse, that they all be slain as trespassers. This Demon Knight drifts in shadow form about Erze Damath by night (why it takes so long to find its victims) **becoming corporeal only when it attacks**, and rests in its highly hazardous and magically protected tomb by day. It may well become a major public threat, growing ever less discerning about who it kills, and the PCs may actually be hailed by some as **saviours of the city**. The Duke will want knowledge of his cousin's involvement suppressed.



3.8) High Society

A Series of Nefarious Escapades

The reward for stopping the creature is socio-political benefit for the Duke & elevation into polite society for the PCs. (If they try to resist this remember Arrogance!) PCs are invited to a party where great wealth is strewn about, **flaunted in their faces**. They realise they have to measure up in actual wealth to match such arrogance, as well as needing the money for their own ends.

PCs are fed up of poor treatment and horrific dangers. Also the Duke seems to be abruptly losing interest in them, having become disillusioned. Tovin can support the PCs. He knows how to disguise one's identity from the rare anti-theft magics that only a few can afford anyway. However it comes about, they decide to embark in a **well-orchestrated series of thefts**, passing on the goods to Tovin who still has underworld connections to sell the goods. He wants to run the trading expedition even if the Duke abandons it. The motivation for all this is simply to assure the expedition will happen.

Research

Attending parties, and scouting the location of wealthy goods via visual observation Scuttlebutt and Seduction. (GM devises 2 or 3 parties, their hosts and guests.)

Suggested Hazards

Stealing the goods, avoiding guards, fleeing fanatical thief-taker posses, strange guard animals (captive erbs).
 Unmentioned magical traps, insomniac ageing family members carrying double-chambered siege crossbows
 Avoiding suspicion of their new wealth by claiming to have discovered treasure in the Eastern Ruins.
 Avoiding Seduction by undesirable persons.

Moving On to Almerly

OPTION 1: If you **ARE** using *Fields of Silver* and its extensive adaptation notes (**Appendix 2**), then 'High Society' (3.8) is just a series of amusing escapades before those adventures begin. The Duke has begun secretly preparing for the expedition as promised. And the PCs engage in these escapades merely due to having been **horribly snubbed and belittled** by the wealthy, as a means to plunder the city for valuables before departing. These mini-scenarios will occur shortly before the Duke becomes ill (see below). The Witch (who is ensorcelling him) is then a terrible foe that is threatening their future. Though they may fail to save the Duke, it doesn't matter (thought they won't know this), because *Fields of Silver* provides an alternate way to cross the Plain of Obelisks.

OPTION 2: If you are **NOT** incorporating *Fields of Silver*, expand 'High Society' as the PCs' **ONLY** means to gain sufficient to fund a **magnificently defended caravan** (**Appendix 3**) across the Plain of Obelisks. In this case the Duke's illness and death may be the trigger that leads them into this plundering spree, perhaps assisted by magics from the witch (see below).

The Duke's Demise

Nathok initially comes to them after they haven't seen him for a week or two, staggering up with trusted retainers, looking haggard and losing his mind.

He employs them as personal bodyguards, knowing he is being somehow ensorcelled, but remembers nothing of his **nightly visitations**. (A succubus has been set on him.) The PCs must devise a plan. Perhaps one night they camp outside his room, hear noises, but can't enter. (Magic holds the door shut.) Next night they stay inside to face but not slay the fearsome succubus. They must discover who can create/summon such an entity.

The summoner (a witch) has been paid by the Gilfigites. They have **done a deal** with another relative of the Duke's, who is more than happy to toe the Gilfigite line, and who wants the Duke's position on the Council.

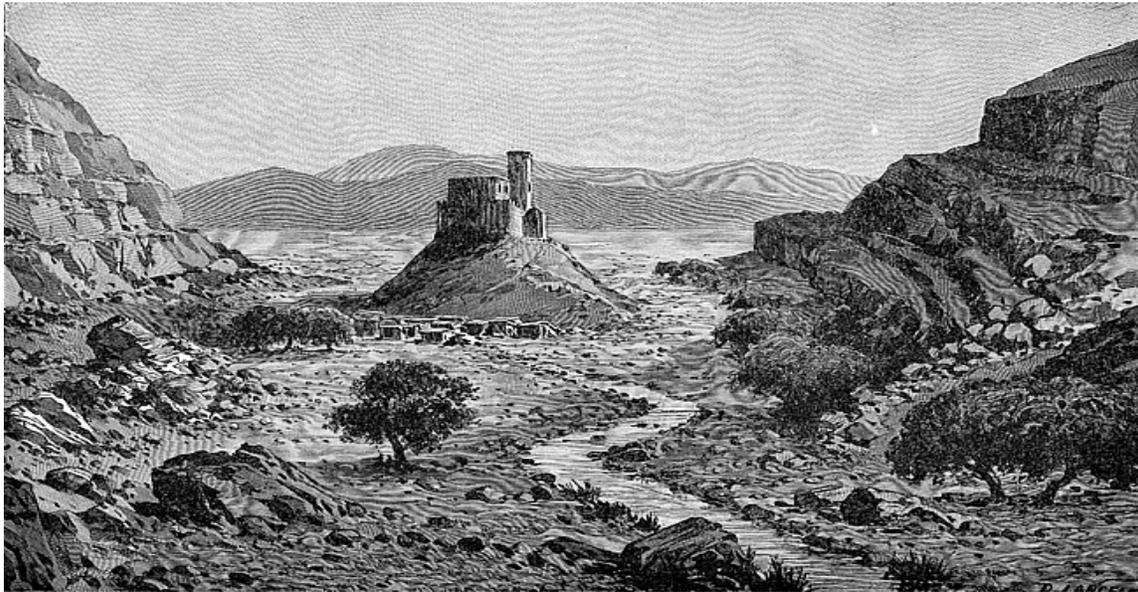
On finally tracking her down (after Nathok dies or loses his mind) she is the last survivor of female magic-users the witch finders slew centuries ago. She defeats & traps them. (After an epic battle in her protected/trapped lair.)

The most wryly amusing resolution is if she is an enemy of Iucounu and learns (as she's about to kill the PCs) that they are too. She does a total about-face - offering them anything she can if they promise to **'slay that smirking yellow abomination'**. 'Anything' amounts mainly to protections for their expedition, as she doesn't want to attract Iucounu's attention if they fail.

In a Turjanic series she bestows gifts of magic on them.



Chapter Four: And Thence to Almery



4.1) Tvost

The detailed *Caravan Ho! Appendix* will be played out before or after Tvost. Tvost is either the caravan's end or start point, depending how the GM transported the PCs from Erze Damath. The hills in the background of the picture above are the edge of the range that stretches all the way from **Tvost to Old Romarth**.

Thus they are the first geographic feature that any PC may have previously seen at the edge of their original lands: more likely glimpsed in the distant north as they gazed towards fabled Old Romarth. Nonetheless, **this is a historic scene**. Home (nearly) at last! (The Caravan scenario is **Appendix 3**.)

Option A: Arriving By Caravan from E.D.

The picture above is the welcome sight of the fortress of Tvost as the PCs emerge from the rolling barrens.

The trail in the forefront of the picture is well-worn for two reasons. First because the folk of Tvost have over the centuries worn it down when they travel out to the Plain of Obelisks to collect medicinal plants. Second, because expeditions of the foolish do travel this way now and again, and the dry weather here means that disturbed ground is slow to be covered up again.

If the PCs arrive here in a caravan from Erze Damath, then they will learn from locals that the way to Old Romarth is along the ancient road that is exceptionally easy to follow, and is relatively safe with hamlets and occasional villages along the way. The GM will need to invent a detailed summary of that journey.

Option B: Joining a Caravan at Tvost

If PCs arrive at Tvost magically, the picture is the view as they wipe themselves free of repulsive demonic slime.

In Tvost they will learn that the way to Old Romarth is **hazardous & barren**. Once upon a time a major tradeway spanned that expanse, but the days of frequent small caravans are now long gone. Even the larger trade caravans are dwindling. But the PCs are in luck! The monthly trade caravan from Dai Passant to Old Romarth (see & use **Appendix 3: Caravan Ho!**) will be passing this way in only four days. It travels up from the land around Lake Lelt, following the River Cannis (three miles beyond the fort and not visible in the picture due to rolling foothills) and always puts in to **make use of the fortifications** for a day's rest midway in their trip. (No other buildings exist in these parts, and they are too well-armed for the bandits to trouble them)

Tvost

The ruined fortress was once a **mercantile way-station** where goods between Dai Passant, Erze Damath and Old Romarth were checked and tariffs levied. The last place to provision on the way onto the Plain, or before traversing the barren hills to Old Romarth. And the first place to recover when travelling in the reverse direction.

The sturdy storage barns at the hills' base are empty and in disrepair, exposed to the elements for so long now. The fortress itself is huge. It is inhabited by a large **family of bandits** who levy tariffs even yet (with menaces) and may be slaughtered to the last by a party of Turjanic PCs. (Ideally not before one is questioned.)



4.2) New in Old Romarth

Use the free **Old Romarth Guide** available at the Pelgrane Press 'Footsteps of Fools' page. Make this location rich, dangerous and an enjoyable role-playing environment.

We will shortly catapult PCs from Old Romarth to Azenomei.

We do this (a) because they may already have extensively traveled the known Dying Earth between these two points and therefore anything we write could contradict your previous campaign storyline. Or their criminal records at previous locations could make suggestions written here impossible to play out.

Also (b) since Zaraides magically transported Cugel the last part of his journey after Firx was removed, this reflects an aspect of the books. Plus since magical transportation is rare this becomes a special event within the campaign.

Introducing Magical Items in Old Romarth:

Refer again to the very last page of Appendix 4 (Pergolo). There you will find a list of magical items useful for assailing Iucounu once the PCs reach Pergolo. Now begins the last chunk of the adventure wherein they can find a few of these items. In the hands or pockets, or dwellings, of antagonists, in the desk drawers of bureaucrats, for sale in curio shops in the more dodgy mercantile parts of town... Scatter them as best fits, without it seeming as if you are simply 'giving them away'! As a last resort the Four Wizards (see later) have amassed a few items over the years and will indeed simply hand them over but these gifts are the exception.

Introduction

Wandering Old Romarth seeking the Four Wizards is a scenario in itself. Describe the city as they travel, and invent rich incidental encounters and challenges after reading the **Old Romarth Guide**. Adapt voluminously according to circumstance. If the PCs do away with (Turjanic play) or embarrass (Cugelesque) overly optimistic muggers, perhaps they are members of one of the Romarthi district street gangs. (The Bashers, The Cutters, The Howlers etc.) And this gang is made up of **insanely proud** violence-prone lunatics with a megalomaniacal leader? Several more attacks could occur, perhaps leading to the PCs arrest as murders and being thrown into the magical prism (see later). This may all be a plot devised by Iucounu (also see later).

Seeking the Four Wizards

Initially nobody has heard of the Four Wizards of Old Romarth. "Four Wizards? Can't help you there! There's far more than four wizards in Old Romarth. Some of them will give you the time of day if you are polite. Others will send you leaping on your way on six foot strides of flame. Try the Collegium. They keep records on things."

This gives the PCs the opportunity to **wander the taverns and inns** of Old Romarth asking questions. Or, more imaginatively to seek out other magic users and ask them. The GM will need to invent these people.

As well as wandering asking questions and seeing the sights, PCs have the opportunity to experience unique local atmosphere: Muggers, Watchmen, Savage Street-gangs (in the **bad parts of town**), The Aloof Cruelty of the Upper Classes, The Compassionless Activities of Bailiffs seizing property, Down & Outs dead in alleys...

Now they are back in lands they know, at least one PC can meet an old **adventuring companion**. (In Cugel-Level play this person might be running a scam that the PCs become involved in, or merely a footpad seeking assistants.) Or, they might be an old enemy. (Taken imaginatively from a previous scenario or invented.)

This person could vary from being an employer who stiffed the PC out of their payment, an employee who was stiffed out of payment by a PC, somebody the PC stole a treasure from, the magician who created the **vat creature PC** and wants them to come back to work...

A whole mini-scenario could be played out around this latter opportunity. The PCs are stronger now, but still would find it challenging to go up against a wizard who has given the vat creature PC 24 hours to wind up their affairs before being collected and taken back to the manse to resume their duties, or possibly **recycled for valuable parts**. This gives PCs time to engage a plan or seek aid. Or possibly the wizard has since employed a much more potent vat creature, and tells the PC that they have a choice to terminate their own existence or have it terminated. (The magician returns to home, and sends this improved version out. Its instructions to dismantle the PC with extreme prejudice.)

PCs need to **find accommodation**. Seeking the Four Wizards will take days, though they don't know this yet.

The Spy

Iucounu has **informants and allies** in several major settlements, including Old Romarth, constantly on the alert for his foes and keeping watch on those he particularly despises. Particularly these spies will be looking for the PCs, since the PCs hopefully had their tracking enchantments removed in the Upper Scamander by the Thawn Herders Spirit Speaker.

Anyone going around Old Romarth asking about the 'Four Wizards' will eventually **attract the attention** of Chinrowdy. Chinrowdy is a huge man (actually a vat construct) of great strength, physical endurance and possibly also magical resistance. He may have a gang of middling competent brigands he can call on. Plus he has descriptions of all of the original PCs and instructions to



do away with them if he comes across them. (In return for a large cash reward.) He will arrange **an ambush** suitable to the strength of the party as he perceives it.

If caught alive he admits Iucounu paid him to watch for them, and had the keywords 'Four Wizards' on the list of rumours to track. His bullies know nothing of import. Chinrowdy communicates with Iucounu by talking through **a magical candle** and it. He has not met Iucounu but was terrified into obedience years ago when Iucounu was hiring new people locally.

He has had no previous significant tasks set for him by Iucounu, except for supervising the overland delivery of crates from Port Perdusz. Imaginative GMs could have PCs obtain the **Skybreak Spatterlight** from Chinrowdy if it is to be introduced to the game. (See page 63)

4.3) Lands Beyond the Prism

If PCs use force and threats they will eventually attract the attention of the City Watch, maybe become persons wanted for questioning. And perhaps have a run in (more than once) with watch squads. Chinrowdy may have reported them (if he lived, or one of his watchmen who escaped or observed from a distance if he did not).

Or Chinrowdy may frame them, at Iucounu's behest. In Turjanic play, city artefacts exist that stop a person casting spells (when that person is magically targeted by the object) thus making PCs 'apprehendable'. A further crime might be "causing one of the city artefacts to be discharged whilst avoiding pursuit/apprehension"!

This mini-scenario has PCs being cast into the famous 'Bolenkue's Magical Prism' in the basement of the City Hall (see Old Romarth Gazetteer). This artefact was created by a prestigious city magician (Bolenkue) last aeon as his last act before retiring. One rumour says that he retired by passing through the prism in his manse, which was plundered by a rival and the prism itself after many misadventures arrived somehow in the basement of the City Hall. Posing the question that it's use as a disposal avenue for undesirable elements may not be the function for which it was originally intended.

i) The sky remains constantly glowing a strange sombre mauve. It has no sun and no stars. The criminals live on a large hilled and wooded island surrounded by endless expanse of **still silver ocean**. They cultivate basic crops and eat strange native fruits (having worked out through trial and error which are edible and which are not). They also farm small savage beasts for their wool. Other dangerous beasts used to live here but were eventually slain. Amongst them is the odd rumour that long ago a party of thieves re-emerged from the prism in Old Romarth. None have the courage to pursue this hope.

The people operate in a **hierarchical society**, and the PCs are expected to conform immediately to this, and (in Cugeleseque play) are forcibly separated from whatever gear (including fancy clothes) they had retained. The prim on this side is set into a rock face at the edge of the large clearing in which the settlers have built mud, stick, and palm-frond huts. Newcomers appear inside a sharp-tipped stockade to the sound of a mystical chime that alerts locals to their arrival. This distraction may be useful later (someone else arriving).

The PCs may take control (later or at once), may remain strong independents, or may be beaten by sheer numbers (and have to plot their escape during evening rest from **toiling as slaves** in the fields). In the latter case bear in mind that it is forbidden from leaving the island. This ruling is one of preservation to support the self-created hierarchy here. The leading Island Council do not want their supply of free labour to diminish.

Every few months humanoid fish-demons (perhaps a variety of **first-stage keak**) burst from the waters and attempt to plunder for the few minutes they can breathe air, before having to descend once again beneath the strange waters. If this happens in a timely fashion, PCs may escape in the confusion, or perform so well in the defence of the community that they earn their freedom. (These attacks are what keep the number of humans on the island in manageable proportions, since miscreants are added to the settlement fairly regularly.)

ii) From the top of the tallest hill (rumour may allude or the PCs discover for themselves) a single other tall wooded island is visible distant in the flat silver ocean. The challenge now is to find a way to **cross the ocean** and reach that island. In the past various persons have constructed rafts and poled their way across, again so rumour says. However, all have been slain by attacks of keak that leapt from the waters.

Someone will warn the PCs of this if they attempt to depart without such knowledge. This person may be an invented personality GMC if required to lend sufficient weight to stop the PCs departing in **ill-prepared haste** and then perishing. Alternatively it may simply be that never before has a coherent and well-practiced band of adventurers been thrown through the prism. In this case, their spells, manufactured weaponry [eg carved spears from sturdy branches], and any other ingenious devices may be what allows them to pass across the ocean whilst repelling 2 or 3 keak attacks.

Default propulsion is by very long poles. A more imaginative option is by capturing **a brace of keak** and having them secured to the raft – required to pull it to the island in order to regain their freedom.



iii) The second island is wild and rugged. Specific potential hazards are: a crash-landing on its shores, as huge **violent breakers** smash upon jagged rocks; a challenging search of the island whilst being terrorized by the most horrendous species of visps imaginable (see pp46/47); a savage species of winged imps that guard a ruined temple complex where the PCs attempt to take shelter from a peculiar electrical storm; a bronze colossus that is initially standing like a great guardian state with its legs on either side of another prism on the far side of the island. (But animates when they approach and attempts to slaughter all full humans.) Note that this prism has two sides. One side may lead back to the prism in Old Romarth if that amuses you. (Not that this will likely be the side the PCs choose to go through.)

v) Going through the wrong side of the Prism on the second island takes the PCs to a bizarre void. They arrive through another prism that is attached to a large **asteroid** (barren dusty rock) floating in this 'Nothing'. Many other rocks of varying sizes, from equal to human fists to as large as multi-roomed manses. (Their own rock on which they have arrived is only as large as a wealthy merchant's Kaiin townhouse.) In a Turjanic campaign not only do some spells not function (or function oddly) here, but you can introduce a strong & violent winged species of demons that flap around the void hunting lesser unintelligent demons that live and breed in crevices on the rocks. All seems hopeless, as the prism on their asteroid is inactive now. Eventually someone will spot another prism on another asteroid some considerable distance away. Anyone with any knowledge of **motional geometry** will realise that since the asteroids are moving around each other, the asteroid with the other prism will eventually come relatively close. How the PCs then travel across to it depends on their (and the GM's) imagination. Possibilities include: **(a)** Discovering that one can make anti-gravity discs from a mixture of asteroid dust and one's own bodily fluids, and then attempt (with 'attempt' being the operative word) to leap out into the void and pilot oneself in the right direction. Hopefully with the able assisting the inept – by throwing ropes etc. **(b)** Capturing and 'persuading' some of the winged demons to assist. It takes two of these creatures to lift a human being. **(c)** Using knowledge of chemistry to amass, combine, & ignite certain compounds found on their own asteroid, and propel it like a ship through the void. Well, not quite like a ship, since it has no steering! In this way they may of course crash into the second prism and squash it against its asteroid, but despite the chagrin they may suffer, the new prism itself will remain sufficiently intact to still be serviceable.

v) **Manufacture** at least one more small self-contained environ to be inserted at this point. For inspiration refer principally to the 'Crystal World' (TTp148), 'Porphirel' (TTp150), and/or 'The Caverns of Tuelle' (TTp152). In Tuelle they may (Ψ PERSUASION, IMPOSTURE) recruit an army of blindly loyal underlings in whose company the PCs may emerge from the Old Romarth portal.

vi) Refer principally to 'Alivia Mallain' (TTp147). The PCs will emerge in an **architecturally resplendent** cloud city in a private dimension, where languid pedants, retired magicians, and beauteous townfolk mingle in an almost dream-like paradise. (If PCs arrive with creatures from the Caverns of Tuelle, these will be mostly lost at once amidst the hustle and bustle, but if you wish may re-appear with them in Old Romarth.

Once again use this environment as an opportunity for co-creation with your Players. What do they want to find, and how well can they describe it? Blended with your GM's veto or unchallengeable adjustments to whatever they describe. Make this a **place of marvels**, where the PCs can have whatever they want. Local types questioned just know this place as 'The City of Meard', and have lived here for always. Anyone the PCs consider might be an outsider (looks like a wizard or ex-adventurer) if questioned will be vague as to who they are, when they got here, how they got here, and how long they have been here. At some point they will meet a confused old magician (see ending) but underplay this. When this course of play starts to dull, alert the Players to the fact that their PCs have been pursuing such activities **for days** now, or possibly even weeks, and are starting to forget why they are here, even who they are. Call for suitable rolls (Ψ MAGIC, RESIST INDOLENCE) to see how steadfast the PCs are to their survival and to travelling on from here. Any that succeed may need to convince (Ψ PERSUASION) the others in a battle of wits that they are all being lost in this place and in danger of losing their identities if they don't leave soon.

Their escape can be **as simple or sinister** as you like. They may notice a distant tower, climb it, pass through a library which they discover is the mind of a retired magician, find a gong marked "Never Ring This Gong", fight past it's magical guardians, ring it, and be launched out of the prism in Old Romarth. Or make it more difficult with city guards appearing as they approach the tower, and magical traps and **weird magical creatures** (such as half-human magicians with tentacled faces). Plus the old magician, now filled with power and spells, and proving a formidable foe. If so this magician will magically appear with them (now old & senile), and later be recognised as Bolenkue who disappeared (retired?) last aeon. (The Prism will shatter when they all emerge.)



4.4) Locating the Wizards' Manse

The re-appearance of the PCs (and whomever comes along) is as exciting or as clandestine as you like. They may **emerge in a huge mob** and pour onto the streets in daylight, avoiding the Watch by sheer force of numbers. Or may appear at night, overcome City Hall guards by skill, stealth and daring then flee into the dark. They may take Bolenkue with them (perhaps hoping to learn magic from him), or may of course slay him as a foe. Try and avoid this latter if possible, perhaps by making him **amiable & harmless** at this stage. He will be useful as a segue shortly. If he is lost in the escape, city authorities question him over a few hours, have another wizard confirm his indefinite madness, and then simply let him go (or he escapes using the few cantraps he remembers and uses during moments of lucidity). He then happens to find the PCs in the city, or they come across him being robbed or beaten etc.

What happens next will hopefully be a much more low-key and **furtive search** for the 'Four Wizards', using cunning, bribery and perhaps even disguises. Much of their exploration of Old Romarth may be in this section.

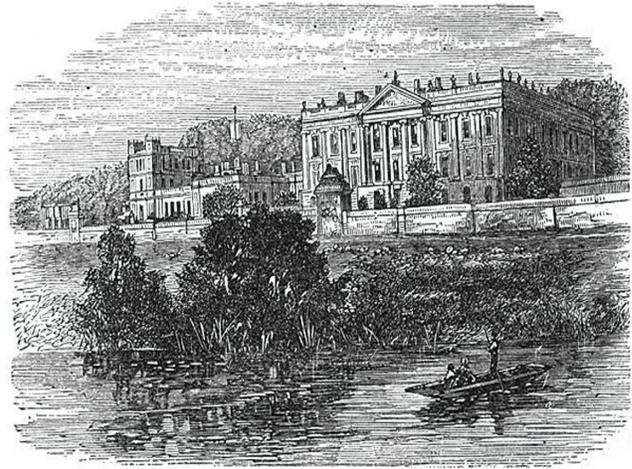
The Collegium

PCs may approach **Pedants of the Collegium** to ask about the 'Four Wizards', perhaps inspired by a rumour they hear in town. (If they came here earlier, this may be where a contact of Iucounu hears about them and sets Chinrowdy onto them.) Only well-dressed and well-bred PCs may wander the Collegium unchallenged. Even they need to create reasons for being there if they want appointments with any records keepers or personnel. Make this a **nightmare of bureaucracy**, requiring endless patience, packed lunches, bribery, Persuasions, Impostures, and perhaps even a bedroll! They may notice a few folk pretending not to know of the Four Wizards, as if some old horror lurks behind that story.

The Obtrank Rumour

Eventually from one source or another at the Collegium (likely old records or an old lecturer) the PCs will learn that three generations ago a **group of four wizards** lived in a manse two days north of the city on the banks of the Szonglei River, not far from the town of Obtrank where the vast and ancient Normalcy Training College refines the callow youths of the city in preparation for enrolment in the Collegium.

A well-travelled road goes most of the way, but the last three hours heads away from Obtrank down an abandoned road through thick forest rumoured to be haunted and particularly **thick with erb & grue**. (The GM decides how true these rumours are.)



Information at the Obtrank Normalcy

The Normalcy is an obvious **source of rare information**. It has been around for centuries and is in the same part of the world as the Wizards' manse. At the very least PCs will need to find the manse's precise location, to avoid wandering for days in the wilds.

The Four Wizards were not particularly friendly, but not known for being more selfish or cruel than any of their kind. They were **specialists in their fields** and occasionally lent their expertise for the city's benefit (at great financial cost to Old Romarth). However, one day all contact with them was lost. Eventually some folk grew bold enough to go to their manse 'Drupashla'.

It had disappeared along with the staff, except for a few that were found dead. Common belief at the time was that the wizards had fallen foul of a magician rival.

As is usual in such circumstances, though the circumstances themselves are rare, all (or most) records about the existence of these wizards were expunged, and sensible people **stopped talking about them**. (Somebody somewhere had taken such a violent dislike to them. or so it appeared, that they had eradicated them from the face of the earth. The wise chose to disassociate themselves utterly from the victims – since the magician who did this to them as well as being awesomely powerful was likely to be someone insanely vengeful!) Thus only the rough location and the rest of the information here can be discovered. The PCs at this point may start to become worried about Iucounu! Further exploration of the manse (or rather the site where it once stood) has not been known to have occurred, presumably because some who went to investigate vanished and others reported **savage magical creatures** in the forest nearby (perhaps entities that had escaped from captivity when the four wizards suffered whatever fate they did).



4.5) Journeying to the Manse

The GM may devise various **'natural' challenges** (both geographic and anthropophagic as suit the tone of the campaign) along the way. Once PCs get close they will begin to fall foul of more challenging defences, which the Four Wizards have slowly upgraded over time.

GMs are encouraged to expand and adapt these, or even replace them utterly if they so desire. As with much in this publication, this far into the campaign the author can have no idea of the strength, aptitudes, and abilities of any PC party. So we are restrained with the details offered. The GM must be **final arbitrator** of specifics of challenges placed before your PCs. And will need to read this section and create appropriate ratings etc.

They need to be stretched a bit at this point, so that it is feasible that others would have been challenged had they investigated this site. They will fail at the end (see a little below), which is the 'realism' explanation of why all others have failed. Nonetheless, Players need to feel that these protections were **effective deterrents**, and not just some haphazard little challenges.

i) The Deep Forest: Not a created hazard, but a hazard nonetheless. The GM creates whatever half-men problems are entertaining at the level of competency of the PCs. Could be just annoying and depleting of pools/spells, or some real threat. The old road they are following gradually peters out, but can still be followed in patches all the way up until the first real hazard (ii)...

ii) Magical Misdirection: The first and least savage of the defences. Anyone who comes within a league (3m or 5km) of the site of the manse finds must detect/notice and then resist a magical force that sends them off at an oblique angle without their realising it. This needs to happen at least once, so that the PCs find themselves in some location a league or so the side of the direction they were heading for.

iii) Otherworldly Terrors: When the PCs eventually break through whatever enchanted resistance you devised for 'ii' and head into the interior of the deep forest they will gradually find that the trees become more and more twisted and unusual, and the local creatures more and more demonic or mutated in appearance. This could even stretch to trees and other plants being mobile savage threats. The first sign of this might be a deodand being eaten by vines and still half alive! (The wizards performed a rite that linked this area to one of the subworlds.) Needless to say the GM might also add in some actual demons or demonic creatures. Return to 'Beyond the Mountains of Magnatz' and examine the options for the thick woodlands round Vul.

iv) The False Manse: At last the horrible zone of hazards is passed, and the woodland becomes normal again. Birds can be heard, squirrels look like squirrels, and pigeons look like pigeons (rather than as horrible hybrids of the two.) And there it is. A large ruined manse. Perhaps smaller than one might have expected, but nonetheless exactly what they were looking for.

Or is it? PCs with good memories might recall that the reports they heard was that the manse had disappeared. If so they may wish to proceed with caution. The manse appears to be a regular ruined structure, damaged by time, and perhaps long-ago by fire. However, it is a trap. Not magical (as that could be detected), but magically created. Rebuilt in this haphazard fashion each time a rare incursion of intruders happens. Basically it is structurally unsound and sections of wall will fall atop adventurers at the first available opportunity.

Note that if someone is slain here, the Four Wizards have vats and could potentially bring a recently deceased person back to life. However, such a person would be half-vat creature and have some unusual characteristics. (Refer if possible to the 'Home Brewed Heroes' article on Vat Creature PCs in 'Ascolais & The Land of the Falling Wall' (Excellent Prismatic Spray Iss. 4/5.)

v) The Coruscating Metallic Giant: Perhaps whilst the PCs are getting over the startlement of one or more of their number being crushed dead (or to severe injury) by a falling wall, out of the forest strides a 20ft tall metallic humanoid creature surrounded by vivid coruscating energies. Before PCs can begin to wonder what manner of daihak they are about to face, it attacks! This magical warrior is Bazzard the 'son' of the four wizards. In reality he is a vat creature of great strength, vitality, and whatever magical competencies you care to grant him. The magically enhanced suit he is wearing is an enchantment tied to the magical realm, so cannot assist the PCs in an assault on Pergolo later. The PCs are up for as epic a battle as they are capable of.

Design Bazzard at least mostly before the fight begins. Otherwise things may seem contrived. No doubt the suit is enchanted to deflect or absorb spells, but sufficiently powerful magicians may be able to damage to its frame, or to its wielder. The suit can absorb much before it begins to be damaged. Hopefully by now the PCs have means to deflect or absorb spells. If they don't he will disable them very quickly, or else they will need to be dodging and leaping around the ruined manse and through the trees whilst he fires of his small library of spells at them. (The suit is like a charged magical item.)

Bazzard is not open to discussion. Only if they cry that they are here on a mission of revenge against Iucounu



seeking help will he pause. In that pause they need to Persuade him that they aren't making this up, and he will request they drop all weapons and prostrate themselves before him. He may be Persuaded to do something different, e.g. negotiate with a spokesperson.

If things go really badly and Bazzard is about to destroy them, and they have Bolenkue with them, then Bolenkue might recognise the man in the suit and cry out to him at an appropriate juncture: "Bazzard, my boy! Is that you?" Bazzard responds: "Uncle Bolenkue?"

This may be the distraction they need. If the PCs destroy Bazzard, since he is a vat creature he can be rebuilt from his matrix, or replaced with a replicant. His original essence will be preserved somehow, since he features later in this story.

The History of the Four Wizards

They were well-known three generations ago, but got into a dispute with Iucounu and since then have had to share a single set of removable bodyparts between all four of them. To support them they have enhanced their vat creature Bazzard. He goes into town in a buggy and trap on the rare occasions that they need anything. Their manse they have hidden by powerful magics, knowing that they are vulnerable to other magicians in their position.

The dispute with Iucounu was over a trifle. They disapproved his membership application into a new cabal that they were the founding members of. Iucounu slowly and deliberately planted false clues that led all four wizards into a trap on another plane of existence, where a peculiar entity sundered them. Iucounu came along to 'pick up the pieces' so to speak, and made off with several parts of each of them, leaving them all to die. Luckily Bazzard (their trusty vat creature had been neglected as beneath Iucounu's notice) was capable of regeneration and was able to rescue what was left of them. In a prodigious feat after many months, he returned from the other world back to this one. Nonetheless they were now left more or less powerless.

They chose to spread the subterfuge that Iucounu had eradicated them, in order to avoid his retaliation whilst they built their defenses. Due to his possession of their bodyparts and the enchanted nature of the entity that sundered them, the wizards have been unable to regrow their missing parts.

Throughout these decades they have been carefully plotting their revenge, but unable to act it out, as no-one would be insane enough to pit themselves as a rain of righteous fury against Iucounu the infamous Laughing Magician. Or would they?



4.6) At The Manse of Four Wizards

Here are various ways the PCs may get to enter the manse of the Four Wizards:

- i) If Bazzard is convinced that they are enemies of Iucounu, he will call this out into the air, and seem to converse inside his own head. Then a doorway will appear in a tree, and they can pass through it into a clearing which is inaccessible any other way, and in fact only 'exists' by passing through the tree.
- ii) If Bazzard is convinced they are good friends of his Uncle Bolenkue he will give them an opportunity to talk and say why they are here. During which time he will hopefully be told that they are enemies of Iucounu. (If so, see 'i' above.)
- iii) If they defeat Bazzard and he is left alive (which is quite possible since he is a sturdy vat creature) they can also start a discussion with him, hopefully leading to the same effects as at 'i'.

If they defeat Bazzard and he is blasted to bits, this is where something different happens. The Four Wizards have done their best, and are concerned that they are about to be plundered and slain, but are hoping that their realm will not be discovered. So...

- iv) If PCs have magic to detect and open the entrance in the tree, the Four Wizards have set wardings, and as soon as the tree opens these will barrage the PCs, followed by a sad wave of weak vat creature servants wielding kitchen knives. Hopefully the PCs will manage to resist/deflect or avoid all this, and open negotiations.
- v) If the PCs don't have such magic, they may try communicating somehow, or perhaps Bazzard will regenerate sufficiently to be spoken with, or a new Bazzard with different magic (not the suit) will appear and attack them anew, starting things off all over again!



The Manse At Last!

Beyond the tree is a clearing with a very small and basic manse in it. The Four Wizards maintain an **illusory realm** here. It is little more than the clearing and a large walled vegetable garden & barn behind the main building. As they meet and converse with the Four Wizards and learn of their story, try and indicate that the fact that they survived, have managed to keep amassing magic, and have stayed hidden all this time in their own private dimension is actually pretty impressive!

Meeting the Four Wizards

A simple vat creature wheels a modified barrow out of the house. Something, or someone, is perched upon it.

⊕: The man perched on the barrow is peculiar in that he has no legs, a single arm (the right), and a single eye. Though obviously disadvantaged his voice when it emerges is spoken with authority: "Stop there. I am Archimbaust, owner of this manse, a pale shadow of the mighty Llaio that once stood on this sire or hereabouts. I may have been the subject of dire treachery that has left me in this feeble state, but I am not without magical resources, so be on your guard if you mean us ill!"

If Bazzard is still alive but injured, Archimbaust will call other vat creatures to take him for healing. Otherwise, or after, he converses with them, asking who they are, where they are from, and why they are here. Encourage the PCs (players) to recount sections of their travels. PCs will soon notice that Archimbaust is slightly **mentally unbalanced**: hardly surprising given his condition. See this boxed section of information on the Four Wizards if the PCs ask any personal questions.

Once Archimbaust is satisfied with their motivations and story, he invites them into the manse, commenting it has been a long time since they have had visitors.

⊕: The manse is simple but comfortable. A fire is going in the main room. Simple semi-intelligent vat creatures wander about their tasks. From comfortable (purpose-built) chairs in the main room come the voices of three people anxious to know what is going on. Each is identical to Archimbaust, save one has a leg, all of them have only one ear, and none of them has any eyes. As with Archimbaust the places at which the missing organs should be attached are obscured by a faint magical fog. Enchantments have been at work here!

Information:

During conversation the wizards will impart the following, often in response to questions rather than just barraging the PCs with information. Play this whole part out in leisurely fashion: a welcome rest for PCs who get to socialise with sympathetic (albeit rather strange) GMCs. PCs may wish to bathe, eat fruit, have wounds tended to, ask multiple questions, examine the manse, examine the strange misty edges of this magical domain, examine the vat workroom, examine the small library of magical tomes.

- 1) This area (the entire forest nearby) can resist magical spies. This makes it hard for them to send magical senses out, but means guaranteed privacy from Iucounu.
- 2) Their manse is called Llaio. Or rather Archimbaust's original manse was. Archimbaust was the owner of Bazzard, and the one who had a secret small private dimension to which they retreated all those years ago.
- 3) Iucounu tricked them into falling foul of a daihaki vampire named Srekner who removed most of their external bodyparts, leaving them vulnerable to Iucounu, all because they had denied him membership of their conclave. They had derided his lack of power, they admit, but underestimated his cunning, viciousness, creativity, macabre sense of humour, and capacity to plot, plan and execute complex revenges.
- 4) Over the last century or so they have slowly, slowly, re-established themselves in secret (with the great assistance of Bazzard), plotting a similar slow revenge on Iucounu, and have everything now save sufficient bodyparts to march on Pergolo.
- 5) Iucounu has put about the rumour that he constructed Pergolo, but all he did was make some structural alterations. Kerhazdrin originally created the manse centuries ago. When he passed on, his son Rahazrin, a much lesser magician, inherited it. After a few decades of struggling and failing to master the magics of Pergolo, Rahazrin unwisely chose to trust an unknown magician by the name of Iucounu, in the hopes that between the two of them they would master the magics and split the benefits.



Rahazrin was an acquaintance of the Four Wizards, so they noticed when he disappeared under suspicious circumstances. Since then Iucounu has proved time and again that he is a liar, double-crosser and cheat, but this was one of his first betrayals. The Four Wizards will warn: “Above all, accept no favors and make no agreements! At best you will find yourself in his obligation, which is a bottomless pit. More likely you will simply be horribly betrayed at the first possible moment!”

6) Iucounu is an upstart of no great merit, & triumphs through devious planning, sheer devilish luck, and long-term persistence. As many magicians do, he has magic that resists all spells so far cast at him, but has otherwise proved time and again to rely on devices and amulets. In short, he creates an aura of grand magical potency whilst in fact being quite mediocre. He is too lazy and incompetent to have spent his time struggling to master much magic and instead seeks out items and pastimes of comfort and ease, to suit his hugely inflated self-opinion. (Therein lies his weakness and his downfall!) They have learned this through collecting reports and using spies of their own over this last century.

The GM tempers the above information according to the strength of the PCs as they see themselves and as the Four Wizards will kit them out. Players must feel that the PCs face strong challenge in going against Iucounu, but also that victory is a possibility.

If your PCs are already well ‘tooled-up’ with spells and magical items, then great. If not the Four Wizards have a small selection of items they have collected over the decades. The GM designs them according to the suggestions in the Pergolo section that follows. (Yes, you will have to read that section and note the marked suggestions around the specific challenges the PCs will face. In this place most of all you will need to have a solid awareness of the capabilities of the PCs and make sure they are catered for.)

If the PCs don’t yet have it, the Four Wizards might have the Skybreak Spatterlight. See its details on p63.

The Four Wizards

Their names: Disserl, Vasker, Pelasias & Archimbaust.

Appearance: small and slight, with round serious faces and black hair cut short.

Physical peculiarities: Each of the wizards is a torso with a head attached. The head has no eyes and only one ear. Where the eyes, second ear and limbs should be are strange non-visual spaces. By that we mean that there is a barely noticeable vortex of magical energy there. No unsightly blood or visible inner body workings, but a field of magic that not only looks like nothing but also diverts ones eyes away from it. Between them the wizards possess an arm, a leg and a second ear. These they pass between them using levitational cantraps.

4.7) The Plan of Vengeance is Set!

The PCs (Players) must be heavily involved in creating this plan. We include a variety of ideas here for the GM to use to stimulate discussion. The wizards are angry, eccentric, slightly deluded, but exactly the raw resource that the PCs need to give them their final elements in preparation to **confronting Iucounu in his lair**.

If the PCs don’t have all of these, the Four Wizards have some they have been collecting over the years. Or possibly they know where the such things are stored in the Old Romarth Collegium, and have **a partial plan ready** to use in order to steal them. Note that the PCs might get suspicious that this all seems to convenient. Well, it is convenient. This is fiction, not a documentary.

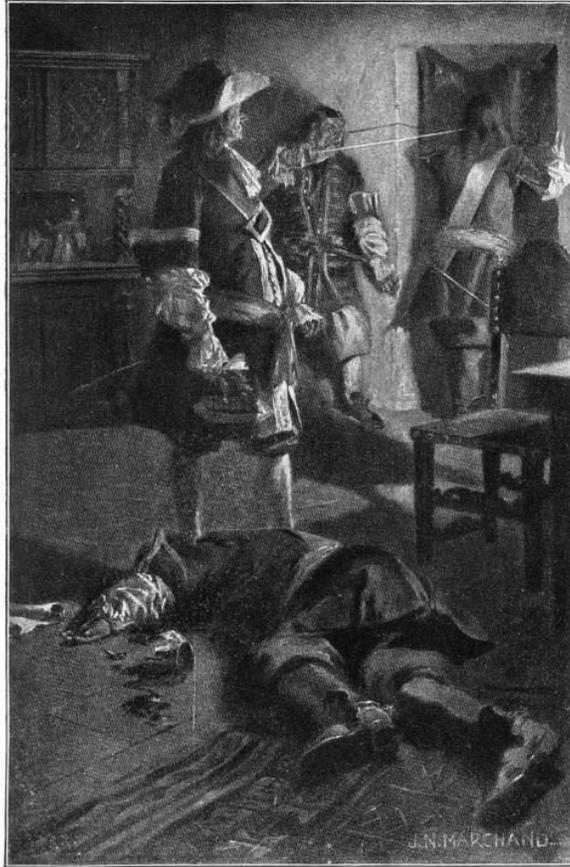
However, for the sake of inherent game-realism the Four Wizards have waited decades, and were prepared to wait decades more. Now just happens to be when the PCs arrived, and clearly **the fates have decided** that Iucounu is due for his come-uppance. Remember to play the Four Wizards as very grateful, and even gleeful, that the PCs have arrived. Oh, they have been waiting so long for vengeance, and to be whole again!!

Significant Elements are:

- i) Are PCs equipped enough? Several must have items that repel magical effects. They need healing magic too.
- ii) The Four Wizards know their limbs are stored at Pergolo. If the limbs are destroyed they can regrow them again at last, so will ask the PCs to destroy the bodyparts as soon as they are found, and perhaps provide disintegration powders for exactly that purpose.
- iii) The Four Wizards want to deal. They want Pergolo. At Liane-Level this could work. The Four Wizards become the PCs’ benefactors, running Pergolo, and purchasing/staffing an Azenomei townhouse for PCs to use whenever they want. And being open to Persuasion that instead of a manse, or as well as, a generous suite of rooms at Pergolo can be made available in perpetuity. In a more Turjanic-Level series, the PCs may want Pergolo for themselves, in which case they will need to work out an agreement. Perhaps sharing Pergolo?
- iv) Distribution of spoils? Who will evaluate Iucounu’s wealth, and how distribute it after they have it?
- v) Iucounu cannot perceive inside this domain. The Four Wizards can magically hide PCs from magical detections for 48hours, so transporting them directly from Llaio to Azenomei seems wise. They cannot transport them inside Pergolo, nor close to it, because any standard magical warnings in and around Pergolo would be activated. Nor have any of the Four Wizards been anywhere else close to Pergolo except Azenomei, and a prior visit is necessary for their spell to function.



Chapter Five: An Audience with Iucounu



5.1) The Element of Surprise

Once the plan is sorted out, and the PCs properly equipped (with some basic supplies, new/extra weapons 1-3 good night's sleep, and possibly learning a couple of extra spells/cantraps – or attempting to – in the Llaio library, they are **ready to depart**. Let PCs plan any extra things. Make this a plan in which the Players are very much involved.

The Four Wizards explain that their biggest gain is magic that utterly hides a handful of people from magical detection for 48 hours. If this makes good realism-sense in your game, this enchantment also makes it harder for magical effects and spells to strike those so enchanted. (In rules terms, providing a bonus to resist Magic.) The only risk is if the PCs materialized very close to Pergolo, as this might activate some enchanted **proximity alarms**. Since Azenomei is a good hour or more away from Pergolo there is no problem in depositing them in an alleyway in town. Make this enchantment as simple, complex or as ritualistic, or even comedic as you wish. Maximum game fun is the aim!

When all is prepared the Four Wizards get Bazzard to activate an **ancient device**. One of the Wizards (painstakingly using the single arm and eye) taps out co-ordinates into the device. Again make this process as simple, complex, scientific, ritualistic, as you wish.

Briefing On The Mission

Iucounu relies on magical items and reputation. He takes months or years in **planning his jests** and magical achievements. In short he is a charlatan. Yet he is a magically competent charlatan. (How much of one depends on the level of magical competency of PCs.)

The **element of surprise** is crucial. The PCs will be transported to Azenomei, and must then go straight to Pergolo and attack before he can possibly find out that they are here and prepare any special extra magics. At present even if he knows they are in the Old Romarth region he cannot know they can be transported to Azenomei in the blink of an eye. Long-distance magical transportation is rare, and instantaneous transportation even rarer. The Four Wizards having possession of such is a huge point in their favour.



The Boys Are Back in Town

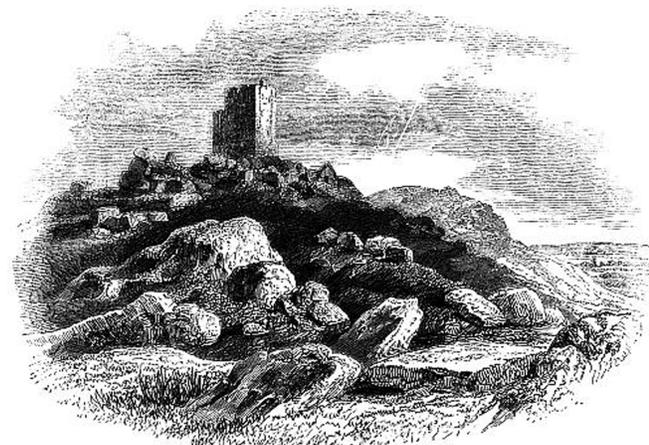
Apologies for the use of single gender. It was too much of an amusing cliché not to. Have their arrival be something special. Describe it in detail, whatever happens. It has been a long trip!

Their arrival back in Azenomei is a huge threshold in this adventure series. Don't just have the PCs appear unnoticed in some quiet alleyway. (Unless the PCs have gone to great trouble specifically to be unobtrusive, but even then things can go wrong.)

In a Cugel-Level adventure they might appear in an outhouse, in the Duchess' palace, in the constables headquarters or cells, in front of a stampede of baulk on the first day of the challenges...

In a Turjanic campaign they might appear on a nearby lightning-blasted hilltop during a thunderstorm, in Price Kandive's barge on the river...

You get the picture.



5.2) Return to Azenomei

Refer to the *Guide to Azenomei*: available **free** at the DERPG *Violet Cusps* and Pelgrane Press *Footsteps of Fools* pages.

Since the PCs are now **undiscernible to magical identification** they can pass into town, finalise plans, take advantage of an inn and purchase any last-minute adventurers' supplies (rope, spikes etc).

You can stimulate their interest in such if they have not thought of it previously by simply – after they have arrived in Azenomei – asking the Players if the PCs are interested in purchasing any **special equipment** to assist them in their assault on Pergolo. It could be amusing if the answer is yes, and yet the one thing they don't have is ready cash. Still, likely they would be able to sell something, and this would be some easy simple role-playing to enhance their sense of being back in civilisation as they know it.

Another thing they may enjoy is to revisit a favourite eating establishment for fine wine and foodstuffs. Should they do this, invent at least one person, even if it is just **the innkeeper**, who remembers them from before with some degree of good feeling (even if just because they used to be regular patrons):

“Good evening gentlemen. How can I... Well, bless my soul if it isn't <insert names of original PCs>. I had assumed that some manner of ill-fortune had taken you from this world after the contests, but no here you are hail & hearty. Well, well, well. And my haven't you changed. Have you been away on a journey of some portent? If so, welcome back to Azenomei. Sit yourselves down.”

Whether it is day or night when they arrive depends on the plan designed. If it suits your sense of style, have them arrive back exactly one (or two) years to the day as to when they set off. **The Great Fair** has just begun! (Or at least have them arrive on the day of the monthly market.) PCs may wish to ask a few questions about Iucounu (such as whether he is at home, or at the fair).

If they have arrived at night then it should be obvious to their memories that **Iucounu loves the fairs** and is always there, thus meaning they have the whole day tomorrow to investigate Pergolo if they wait until he is observed approaching the fair.

In short they can reprise the tactics that got Cugel into this mess in the first place, though for them the initial trigger for these adventures was a little different. Or they may wish to apprehend and question one of his servants. Or perhaps hire/dupe some local thieves or thugs to assist (unwittingly act as **canon-fodder**). Allow free rein to such interesting ideas and play them out.

It is possible that the PCs may plot and plan an assassination attempt at the Grand Fair itself. They might track Iucounu's movements, and launch a magical assault when he is inside a curio tent or **Fianoster's booth** for instance. Allow all such things to be planned and executed. As you will see in the following section there are several options as to the reality of Iucounu.

Most likely though any Iucounu slain at the fair will be a vat creature replicant of Iucounu. It will be obvious after the fact, due to the strange nature of the body's **inner workings**, and the presence of an ornate vat matrix that this is not the real Iucounu.

Such an assault will of course tip their hand. The 'real Iucounu cannot fail to notice if one of his replicants is suddenly blasted or hacked to bits. The PCs' likely only option from this point is to then **race to Pergolo** whilst they are still hidden from magical detections, and launch an assault without delay.

In the following pages are a great many options for how this may play out.



Iucounu the Laughing Magician

"I hereby invite you to visit me at Pergolo; surely you have not forgotten the amenities? Every night we will host a grand banquet, and I have discovered a new phase of magic, with which I recall remarkable persons from across the aeons. The entertainments are splendid at Pergolo!"

Descriptions: "A man wearing garments of black. He was small, yellow of skin, bald as a stone. His eyes resembled knots in a plank; his mouth was wide and curved in a grin of chronic mirth." "A tawny coat contained the pear-shaped torso; the thin legs were encased in tight pink - and black - striped trousers."

At Cugelesque level: Iucounu is a low to middling-level magician who hides his insecurities through posturing and cultivating a massive reputation for vindictive cruelty. He betrayed and defeated Rahazrin the previous tenant of Pergolo only after months of plotting and feigned friendship. Rahazrin was the son of the original owner, struggling to unravel the secrets that his father had left him. Iucounu's first and best joke so far was this subterfuge of friendship and assistance that allowed him to worm his way into Rahazrin's confidences. Iucounu is still trying to work out most of the magics of Pergolo, and his personal powers stem only from a small range of spells that he can encompass, and from a handful of magical items in Pergolo that he has managed to decipher. This version of Iucounu actually suits the sense in the original stories of Pergolo being far too poorly defended, considering his reputation and apparent magical potency.

At Turjanic level: Iucounu is still a braggart and bully hiding behind reputation, but is also a solidly middling level magician with a range of spells and a number of potent items. We provide many suggestions in the 'Showdown' section of this chapter. You will have to decide which exist and how potent they are. Likewise the suggestions for his traps and actions in the Pergolo Appendix may be altered, ignored or accepted fully, as you see fit. As in the previous option he took Pergolo over from its previous owner. But this still wasn't easy for him. It took plenty of time and plotting and was not just a case of Iucounu steaming in with fingertips dealing magic death. (Or else the PCs would have no chance of defeating him!) He is a magician of greater calibre than any PC magic-wielder, but not necessarily very much greater. His advantages are in cunning, experience, and a sociopathic cruelty that puts normal Dying Earth folk firmly in the shadows.

Comparative Potency: Whichever reality you are choosing from the above, design Iucounu to be slightly more potent than the PCs, but slightly less potent than the combined PCs if they plan and act with daring, skill and good planning. IE if they pull together with tremendous resolve, they should be able to just best him. This concerted co-operative action is the initiation they need to become full Turjanic juniors if that is the direction your are sending your campaign.

The ratings below are expanded from the original DERPG Rulebook, which are more suited for Cugelesque play. You will of course re-create Iucounu to be a suitable foe for your PCs after reading the remainder of this chapter.

Intimidating 8 [___], Penetrating 14 [___], Cunning 6 [___] Dodge 8 [___], Magic (Devious) 18 [___] {Specialisation: Demon Relics 10 [___]}, Health 12 [___], Appraisal 8, Athletics 1 [___], Concealment 4, Etiquette 2, Gambling 2 [___], Imposture 5 [___], Living Rough 6, Pedantry (The Cutz Wars) 14 [___], Perception 6 [___], Physician 4, Riding 2, Scuttlebutt 4 [___], Stealth 3 [___], Stewardship 3 [___], Wherewithal 5 [___], Wealth 15.

Cantraps:

Originally in this series Iucounu was said to have the following cantraps: '*Artman's Mundane Concealment*', '*Quort's Leaping Rapier*', '*Spontaneous Mirth*', '*Todman's Temporary Replicant*', '*Voodle's Bogus Physiognomy*' and '*Voodle's Distant Voice*'. These are all described in the free article on cantraps available on the Violet Cusps and Footsteps of Fools pages, so we will not further describe them here. Use these cantraps (and others if that suits your game) to round him out in a Cugelesque campaign. In a more Turjanic series of episodes it is up to the individual GM how much cantraps play a part and how powerful they are.

Iucounu's Magic at Advanced Cugel-Level (Liane-Level if you will)

You may wish to stick closely to the reality explained elsewhere in the author's work for DERPG: magic is hard to learn, and the hardest spells are those that emit mighty violence on their targets. Iucounu in such a Dying Earth has a repertoire of spells - most of which are useless in combat and defence and so needn't be even mentioned here. His strength is in painstaking behind-the-scenes preparation of enchantments - either that can be used as one-off effects for laboriously-defined pranks, or as charged items. This Iucounu also has access to several magical items that can exert mystic effect, but many of which are useless to defend his person or home. His spells are mostly those of trickery and surprise.

This Iucounu is a charlatan of the highest order. Yes a far superior magician to any of the PCs, but no match for the gang of vengeful adventurers they have no become (thanks to him). His only major strengths in this version of the DE are (a) that he has access to a sorcerous enchantment that protects him from the magic of others [the GM designs this as they see fit]. One option is a device taking days to charge & absorbs a finite number of Magic pool points before being exhausted.

Overleaf we describe his recommend spells, and how he might use them against PCs. How the PCs might avoid becoming victims to these magical attacks is explained in the standard rules and depends on their skills, experience and possessions.



Basic Encompassed Spells:

'Felojun's Second Hypnotic' (DERPG: p107) Causes paralysis (perhaps prior to a fatal sword thrust). Can be countered by the Liberation of Warp etc, or by being struck for damage.

'Omnipotent Sphere' (DERPG: p108) Pushes a globe of magical force outwards from oneself. Useful for breaking away from restraints or busting open doors, or for pushing someone over the battlements.

Either Encompassed Spells or Charged Items:

'The Charm of Brachial Fortitude' (DERPG: p105) A great boost to physical strength for a single feat or contest.

'The Liberation of Warp' (DERPG: p107) Blasts away magic, including active spells.

Edan's Thaumaturgic Poultice (DERPG: p106) A strong healing spell that also neutralises poisons, even reattaches limbs.

'Advantageous Aerostatic Association' (IT: p83) Can float safely to the ground from a great height. Good for escape.

'Archemad's Unlikely Self-Restraint' (IT: p84) Causes the target's own clothes and gear to tightly restrict them.

'The Curse of Unwitting Merriment' (IT: p87) Causes the target to laugh uncontrollably for hours or until they resist.

'The Inanimate Assailant' (IT: pp91/92) Activates inanimate objects (doors, chairs, hatstands) to attack the target.

'Phunurus' Phantasmal Net' (IT: p100) Creates and directs a magical net of restraint against a single target

Possible One-Off Enchantments or Charged Items (about His person either as reactive defences or as properties within charms/amulets etc that he can activate at will or with a simple cantrap):

'Calactus' Substantive Guardian' (IT: p86) Iucounu has a more advanced version of this. It is the magnificent magic that has allowed him to stay alive for so long. It can absorb as many points worth of spells as the GM decides. His weakness is that it eventually runs out of capacity and needs to be recharged in a days' long ceremony. He has been very careful to keep this fact away from anyone else's knowledge. It might be in a tattoo or in a precious stone he swallows.

'The Excellent Prismatic Spray' (DERPG: p106) Shrivening magical bolts of force that blast a person apart

'Enchantment of Another's Face' (DERPG: p106) Allows him to pose as one of the PCs, prior to stabbing them or pushing them over the battlements. (And/or a version that allows him to see through the illusions of others!)

'Felojun's Second Hypnotic' (DERPG: p107) Freezes the targets in space. Spell is broken if they are injured/bashed.

'Phandaal's Mantle of Stealth' (DERPG: p109) Be invisible but not inaudible. Can still be tracked and attacked (at penalty)

'Arnhoul't's Unimpeded Egress' (IT: p85) Allows caster to pass through 10ft (3m) of solid object such as a wall. (Again good for escape, or surprise attack.)

Calactus' Instant Dispulsion' (IT: p86) Cancels a single magical effect

'The Spell of Sudden Irritation' (IT: p103) Causes target to become aggressively annoyed at whomever is next to them.

'Yimbolo's Dancing Blade' (IT: p107) Conjures an enchanted blade to fight for you as if held by an invisible colleague.

'Lubyon's Concealing Mist' (IT: p113) Removes caster slightly from this dimension making them hard to see/affect.

Iucounu's Magic at more Turjanic Level

In this reality Iucounu is significantly more potent than any PC magic-wielder should be at this stage in the series. Prepare his most common spells from the lists above. Here below are some other IT spells that suit our conception of him at this level. Mostly they would be single-use (or minimally-charged) items that require days to be made active again once used:

'The Elegant Combatant' (IT: p89) Enhances one's combat capabilities significantly for a single fight.

'Obstructive Ether' (IT: p96) Creates a large definite area of air that cannot be passed through without a struggle

'Phandaal's Observational Confinement' (IT: p99) Traps target in a magically-created bell-jar large enough for a human.

'Lugwiler's Resilient Overskin' (IT: pp 113/114) Provides a damage-resisting armor of air around the caster.

Final Notes:

Print out an official DERPG character sheet, and create your Iucounu. Give him a picture if you can, and create a separate page for notes of the possibilities of who he is and how he might behave. We cannot do that for you here because (as mentioned elsewhere) at this late stage in this series there is no way of the author knowing any degree of detail about your PCs and their preferences and abilities. You need to design Iucounu as a formidable but beatable foe. You will be forgiven for altering reality a little bit as the confrontations with him play out. It is important to make this final battle an epic one. However, avoid randomly altering Iucounu as a matter of course. Players/PCs must experience the real Iucounu as a tangible and solid magician foe they can throw themselves against, and eventually defeat. Not a chameleonic superhuman.

All the above headings and suggestions are just that 'suggestions'. Mix and match as you see fit. You will also need to create and detail at least three lesser (but still impressive) vat creature Iucounu's, so that they can be fought against and slain. One option is to make them progressively more formidable, until the PCs finally confront the real Iucounu. Vat creature Iucounu's may be able to cast 1-3 spells from a reservoir of magic pool points &/or carry charged magical items.

We strongly recommend also that you examine the PCs' character sheets in between sessions and invent several aspects of Iucounu's spells and capabilities that can be countered by astute use of any unusual items and abilities the PCs possess.



Approaching Pergolo

PCs may wish to sneak about in the hills and approach Pergolo from the rear, or go in disguise (perhaps one of them as a farmer driving a hay wagon, with the others hidden inside). Because they can't be detected by magic, many options are available that involve obscuring the visual evidence of their presence. Let them plan this and work it out for themselves.

Be prepared to draw a sketch map of exactly where Pergolo is in relation to Azenomei, including any outlying farms or whatever else you want to add as incidental detail. Almost as much as their arrival back in Azenomei, their approach of Pergolo is a landmark event in this epic series of adventures.

Don't scrimp on making the experience feel as well-rounded and as atmospheric as possible. If there are any GMCs with them, have these be your dramatic mouthpieces for enhancing the epic sense of this moment.

When they finally draw near:

⊕: “At last, ahead of you is Pergolo, the target of all of your willpower these last long months. The twisted turrets of green glass rise against a dark blue sky. Scarlet sunlight engages itself in the volutes. Towers and gables stand proud and high. Skylarks wheel overhead warbling sweetly. Few would guess that this was a moment of such vengeance.”

5.3) A Selection of Notable Jests

Here we present a selection of options designed to be part of a suitably fitting **final confrontation** with Iucounu. Structure them into your plan of events at Pergolo in whatever way you feel is most suitable. Other less pivotal static challenges are detailed in the Room Glossary section of the Pergolo Appendix.

Some PCs will die at Pergolo in a Turjanic campaign, though ideally survivors will remain standing bloodied in the debris, **victors** here at the very end of things.

Off to Shanglestone Strand

It would be unutterably impolite of us if we did not offer a reasonable option to have the PCs **transported back to Shanglestone Strand** for a second time, as Cugel was. Please refer to the ‘Ocean of Sighs’ Appendix for a detailed outline.

The optional **Ocean of Sighs** Appendix is best run either before too much attrition is done against Iucounu (so that the vast majority of this grand finale section can be run at a later date – IE abruptly postponed) OR right at the end of their success (activated by his dying curse).

However initiated, a magical interstitial vortex snatches up all PCs and transports them across the Ocean of Sighs once more, depositing them abruptly in the same spot as they first arrived. Describe their uncomfortably rapid flight in some detail, including their rude deposit upon the **barren shoreline**. It would be most amusing if this took place at the end of an evening's gaming.

If you run this abrupt relocation as a consequence of Iucounu's dying curse, then perhaps by the time the PCs return once more the Four Wizards have taken over Pergolo (see the final chapter in this publication), and another **battle for sovereignty** of Pergolo has to occur? If this is not Dying Curse triggered, consider having it come about as a result of PC stupidity. For instance, opening a book that looks really dangerous, activating a magic mirror that is under a cover very clearly labelled: “Do Not Remove This Cover”...

A Plague of Iucounus

Iucounu proves initially hard to find, but after a brief savage battle surprisingly easy to kill as he springs from hiding casting spells. Perhaps they consider themselves triumphant and start cataloguing their new residence.

All the more surprising when another Iucounu attacks them a while later, followed by another, then another. In a Cugelesque game, a mob of Iucounus must attack them. Inferior weak vat replicants that nonetheless look real racing from all directions! These encounters should be spread out over much of their investigation of Pergolo, rather than rapidly one after the other.



These are all **vat creations**, whilst the real Iucounu is in hiding, or is skulking about to attack them. He may routinely have one of his stand-ins hiding nearby, to take the brunt of any attacks whilst he secretly flees.

The spare Iucounus are all stored in the basement, and there are a **finite number** of them. (Whatever the GM finds most amusing.) Even in a Cugel game though only vat bred they are all strong and carrying at least knives.

Sadlark & the Skybreak Spatterlight

In a more Cugelesque toned campaign it is possible that you will decide that Iucounu is a fairly accomplished magician and that the Four Wizards were downplaying his capacities. Therefore the PCs will be facing a much stronger Iucounu and struggling to defeat him. In such a campaign, PCs might need to work out how to activate Sadlark and operate within that creature as 'driver'.

In a more Turjanic campaign, Iucounu may have learned how to do the same. Note that this is different from the stories and Sadlark is little more than an intelligent vehicle in this game.

In 'Strangers in Saskervoy' the recovery of Sadlark was mentioned only in passing. Since the time that the PCs were at Flutic we can presume that Master Twango (or whomever replaced him) has renewed his operations with extra zeal. As mentioned in the Ocean of Sighs appendix, shortly after the PCs left Cil the oceans were opened once again, and shipping traffic from Saskervoy to Port Perdusz recommenced.

So in the time that the PCs were crossing the Mountains of Magnatz, descending the River Scamander, and residing in Erze Damath Iucounu has continued amassing the different segments of Sadlark and now has the creature constructed (see Pergolo appendix) all except for the Skybreak Spatterlight.

The PCs can obtain the Skybreak Spatterlight in one of two ways. Firstly, if you are not running the 'Ocean of Sighs' extension to this series the Four Wizards have sneakily obtained it and simply give it to them (see earlier). Secondly, if you are using the 'Ocean of Sighs' appendix to extend this campaign they can obtain it by theft from the hold of the Tugersbir Witch.

The properties of the Skybreak Spatterlight and of Sadlark when motile are yours to devise, depending on the needs of this series to assist the PCs against Iucounu. It may be possible, since Iucounu prefers trapping and disablement to slaying his foes, that at the end of a ferocious running battle a single desperate PC remains free. And has no choice but to climb into Sadlark, activate this Overworld being, and take on Iucounu from inside this bizarre creature.

The Luck Of Iucounu

If it suits the tone, Iucounu's **invulnerability** to magic may be due to his connection to –or use of– a device in the basement (Pergolo appendix: E14) or a turret (D3). Once it is destroyed he becomes vulnerable to magic. If they are struggling, Rahazrin's ghost may advise them where it is. When it is destroyed Iucounu may flee for his life through the sub-caverns (via basement: E8), and perhaps need to be hunted across the countryside.

Archernarian Possessed Assistants

Iucounu has done a deal with three Archernarians, and secured them human bodies. They wander Pergolo muttering, displaying clawed tentacles within their mouths, and wearing large hooded robes (to obscure them from the painful sunlight). These beings have innate magical resistance due to their **alien nature**, and whatever other magical capacities you care to imagine that match the needs of this finale in your game.

Vat Creatures

Invent them at will. Not just human things but odd creatures such as half-animal things. And including perhaps replicants of the PCs heralding back to when Iucounu was bucking to have one of them be **Monarch of the Fair**. Make it sinister to have PCs fighting exact copies of themselves, though without the exact spells or journey-hardened new skills. These will be Iucounu's shock troops: charging suicidally with fanatical loyalty against the foes of their master. Do not neglect this possibility if your PCs love a good fight (or love blasting foes with magic). Vat Creatures can be large and terrifying (half-bear half-lizard) for instance, or small & ferocious. EG slaving carnivorous versions of Ettis.

Groundhoon Day

PCs might be overmatched, or extremely unlucky, and be slaughtered or **encysted at a depth of 45miles**. If so consider that the Four Wizards, brought by Bazzard, reverse Forlorn Encystment after a few days. Or they may have magic to reverse time up to 24 hours, taking PCs back to where were about to enter Pergolo (or if they need some specialist equipment: about to leave Azenomei). Likely a single-use emergency option

Trapped in the Otherworld

Iucounu is insane. As soon as he realises intruders are on the premises he activates a defence that places all of Pergolo and immediate surrounds into a **demonic subworld**. Nothing threatens immediately, but only Iucounu knows the magic to send Pergolo back. If they kill him they are trapped here. It is an awesome backdrop though to seeking him in his manse. Views from the windows are not heartening and there is no chance to retreat or go get extra help/equipment!



The Four Wizards: Friends or Foes?

They may arrive at the climax, carried by Bazzard and other vat-servants in wheelbarrows and sacks. They may desperately reinforce the PCs' play, having kept their arrival a secret so as to arrive undetected. (Their hiding magic could have been broken were Iucounu alert.) Or they may want to capitalize on the confusion and wrest control of Pergolo from the victors.

A safety clause or *fait-a-complis* might be that the four wizards arrive in time to save the PCs' lives but then take over Iucounu's castle and evict the PCs (which was their plan all along, and another double cross). But these magicians at least will be fair, and reward the PCs and call things quits. If the PCs concede graciously they may gain powerful benefactors.

So the PCs end this series horribly double-crossed, but as relatively wealthy adventurers with powerful allies (the four magicians). The wizards may even quote the Law of Equipoise and remind the PCs of how much better off they are now than they were before Iucounu banished them. A wizard might even say: "Do you wish to make enemies of us, as you made enemies of Iucounu, or shall we forge a mutually beneficial bond of trust with each other?"

Or they might turn out to be just as ruthless as Iucounu, and it is in fact they who cast the PCs north to Shanglestone Strand once again, not Iucounu! In this case, they will say that they are sparing the PCs' lives simply in order to balance the Law of Equipoise. This might be a better introduction to their obtaining of the Skybreak Spatterlight, which will be necessary for them to defeat the Four Wizards when they return.

Although since the Wizards now have their limbs, when the PCs return only one of them might be in residence, with the others having departed to set up their own manse's elsewhere. (Now that they have been restored, their alliance has lost the cohesion and they have gone their separate ways, or perhaps Archimbaust returned to Llaio and the remaining victor killed the other two?)

Iucounu's Tactics

Sneaking about, setting traps (see Pergolo appendix), casting spells from hiding. Sending his servants against the PCs in cunning waves of attack. Taunting them by shouting from various rooms, his voice echoing around Pergolo. **Make a list** of what servants and creatures he has, and don't alter it unless you absolutely have to for dramatic tension. Allow the Players to have a sense that their PCs are ploughing through Iucounu's allies and getting nearer and nearer to victory. If he is injured and still escapes he will make his way to an emergency vat and have himself healed in an hour or two.

Secret Passages

These can exist wherever you want them to, within reason. Iucounu has mastered knowledge of them all. Plus they are also hard to find and open without the right activation cantrap. By this means he can **attack, taunt and escape**. At the very least the PCs will likely be delayed in following him, giving enough time for him to vanish again. Unless they have a spell to blast the oaken or stone door to the secret passage into bits.

A Dying Curse

If the PCs trap and slay Iucounu too easily for dramatic purposes, he utters a dying curse (or **his ghost** does if he is slain too swiftly). This curse propels the manse (and its immediate grounds if necessary to enclose all PCs) into another dimension, perhaps a subworld.

"Enjoy your victory whilst you may. I Iucounu shall have the final moment of mirth. Your grand new residence shall be enjoyed only from the confines of the subworld Yarranos. May you fare poorly!"

⊕ "Iucounu's spirit fades away, his face is a bitter mask of defeat, and yet somehow still smiling to the last. As the echo of his words fades, the lights from outside of Pergolo are shifted from those familiar to you, to dappled greens and unwholesome shifting blues.

In the distance something primitive and inhuman wails. The stench of sulphur reaches your nostrils. Is that ectoplasm beginning to ooze from the walls of Pergolo, or just your imagination playing tricks on you?"

Rahazrin the Foe

The PCs succeed, and free Rahazrin, perhaps over the dispute of the Four Wizards, although there may be no reason to have the Four Wizards arrive until days after the action is over if you don't want. Rahazrin was real, but is no longer. Now he is **another Iucounu** and will plot to have the PCs killed one by one as soon as possible, as part of his last elaborate joke. Or Rahazrin is another megalomaniac magician and demands to have Pergolo restored, whilst sending them on their way with just a few sackfuls of coins and curios for their troubles.

What Happens Next?

That's up to you, based on the many options discussed. PCs might be evicted by the Four Wizards and continue into a Liane-Level campaign. Or they may take over Pergolo as their base for a Turjanic campaign. Either option is suitable if you are ceasing at this point to run DERPG. It always feels good to have the final close of a big campaign be on a high-point, so that Players can forever remember that they 'triumphed in the end'. In that case the Four Wizards are noble, grateful and generous, and make-good all their promises to the PCs.



Showdown with Iucounu!

Here is one potential order of events as the PCs search for Iucounu. At what rate these occur alongside the explorations of this bizarre building depends on the drama and entertainment requirements of the moment. We recommend however, that this exploration of Pergolo is portrayed as a high-drama event, sinister, worrying and spooky, with PCs required to be alert and thorough. Rather than an off-handed humorous set of challenges. Vary the ratings potency and any magical capabilities of any creatures/foes mentioned so that (at least initially) they are reasonable challenges that usually whittle away at the party, rather than each being a life-and-death struggle.

1) On the Way. Some unusual guard creatures launch a surprise attack whilst the PCs are still on the road. (Nobody lives up here near Pergolo, and so no witnesses see the savagery, and yet PCs are likely not expecting problems until they actually reach Pergolo.) Make these peculiar and sinister and dangerous. Iucounu is trying to eradicate them with some demonic-essence vat creatures: the most powerful of his creations.

2) Iucounu Appears (a Personal Phantasm [IT: p114]). This magic comes from a charged item that may have a few more uses if the GM so wills it later. He at first greets them and congratulates them on having travelled so far and looking so well etc. Then he tries to convince them that they should give up any sense of retribution and instead be grateful to him for their magnificent transformation from scoundrels to persons of note. In fact he may ask if they have come to thank him and give him a present, saying that such is not necessary and he is only too proud to have been able to be of assistance. This encounter sets the tone that Iucounu is indeed concerned that they can best him, and he is trying to worm his way out of trouble. "We have no need to be enemies, persons of nobility like ourselves!" If continually denied he will turn bitter and attack them. The phantasm cannot use magic, but can use weapons, such as a gleaming sickle. Note that Iucounu has to have this phantasm in his vision to control it, and so must be watching them from a window or balcony at Pergolo, which a sharp-eyed PC may notice.

3) Guards. As the PCs come nearer to Pergolo, a bunch of men-at-arms (as many as challenge the party) move out to block the way. They are armed with dart-guns, nets, battlehooks and whatever else the GM decides. These locals, hired some weeks ago when Iucounu realised the PCs were returning, have been on rotational duty here. They have been paid and threatened extremely well, and will fight savagely to repel the PCs. Or perhaps (if the PCs have neglected to employ any GMC assistants) they have been hypnotised, and if so can be released or break free of that influence (after being stunned or injured), and can join the PCs party so as to revenge themselves. PCs may suspect trickery and it is up to the GM if these turn out to be double-agents.

4) Gaining Entry to Pergolo is as described in the Pergolo appendix. Iucounu has a warding on the front door, however. If the PCs are dumb enough to enter that way they will activate a version of Thasdrubal's Enfeebling Gaze (IT: p116), or possibly Shabat's Admonitory Bolt (IT: p115). If the PCs are extremely well-stocked with magic, Iucounu has wardings on other entrances as well. Or there may possibly be mundane methods of defence on some of the entrances, such as oil sprayed from nozzles, followed by a cantrap-activated burst of flame.

5) A Phantom Harpsichord. Before the explorations have gone far they will begin to hear loud harpsichord music: a somewhat mischievous and erratic sonata. They may track this music to Room B9 if they wish. See notes in Pergolo Appendix for exactly what happens when they get there. On the way to the harpsichord room they should be attacked at least once, and perhaps twice by a mass rush of Iucounu's human servants (well-armed & ensorcelled!)

6) The First False Iucounu: A vat replicant Iucounu leads a party of servants in an ambush attack on the PCs, charging out of a room or corridor. The real Iucounu is present but at a very safe distance. He watches through a disembodied eyeball that floats high up against the roof and might be spotted by a keen-eyed PC. This eyeball is not Iucounu's actual eye, but a cantrap projection. Nonetheless, striking it for damage dispels it and causes Iucounu some pain, which may give away his true location on some balcony or across a huge hall. The replicant can be seen to be false as it doesn't die quickly even when horribly injured, and has a matrix and some peculiar inner organ structures.

7) Suits of Armor. A distant clanking comes closer and closer. Iucounu has animated the manse's suits of armor and set them on the trail of the PCs. How tough they are and how magic resistant depends on the moment's requirements. This however is meant to be one of Iucounu's big efforts to wipe out the PCs so should give them some consternation and be a pitched battle, perhaps with the suits of armor literally requiring to be hacked into bits before the entities powering them finally have insufficient material to remain influential. Again the eyeball watches!



Note: Do not throw these encounters thick and fast at the PCs. Yes, initially Iucounu wants to wipe them out with a vengeance. But once he realises they are more than a match for what he can throw at them, then he resorts to more considered and far-reaching options

8) The Second False Iucounu: Once again leading whatever rag-tag force of servants he can rally, Iucounu organises them into a wave of ambushers, so that he can cast spells (see the character sheet you created for him) from behind them whilst ducking for cover. Again he makes good use of a vat-created simulacrum. This being is lurking out of sight, so that if Iucounu needs to make an escape this simulacrum can take the force of attention from the PCs. This may be the last concerted attack he makes, leaving PCs realising they are making progress.

9) The Cloud of Terror: A roiling dark grey cloud moves towards the PCs. It is part mist and part corporeal, with pseudopodic strands of substance reaching out towards its prey. It is a demonic entity, and thus the GM can make up its strengths, vulnerabilities, and any resistance to specific spells.

10) Lightning Bugs Swarm: Overworld entities like large crystal bees that spit small bolts of lightning. Summoned by Iucounu. Immune to most spells, the PCs nonetheless must have some unusual way to destroy or dispel them.

11) The Third False Iucounu: Acting as if it is the real Iucounu offering surrender, this vat-creature approaches them. It is however enchanted with whatever boob-traps you deem tasteful and appropriate. It might detonate, it might release a cloud of soporific gas, it might begin talking in such a convoluted and hypnotic way that all who fail to resist the (relatively close-range) effect are hypnotised. In this latter case the real Iucounu and some lackeys are standing by, ready to race in and slaughter their foes (the PCs).

12) Undead! Iucounu horribly reanimates some of his former victims. This stinking, rotting, yet inhumanly strong, wave of antagonists may suddenly pour against the PCs from all directions, described in suitably 'horror-film' style.

13) Sinister Chanting: Realising he is outclassed, Iucounu pulls out his 'big guns'. His voice is heard echoing in a repulsive chant. Likely he is standing atop one of the towers, and starts when they are as far away as they can be. Thus PCs may rush to reach him (rightly presuming that he is up to something that will not be good for them). He finishes just before they arrive, and may escape by leaping into the air using Advantageous Aerostatic Association (TT: p83). If so, he has another false Iucounu planted in whatever room he reaches, a simulacrum that can be the focus of any desperate chase (whilst he himself hides in a secret passage etc). The result of the chant is that Pergolo is plunged into another dimension. This can be whatever you want. One option (mentioned elsewhere) is that it is in the outer edge of a subworld, somewhere that demons don't usually go, so that it remains unnoticed for many days. In the end the PCs may need to travel through the subworld to escape, only to find that Pergolo returned to the 'real world' a few hours after they left it. Or they may need to seek out the artefact that powers this magic (somewhere within Pergolo) and destroy it, whilst repulsing a small force of demons, some of whom return to the Dying Earth with them when Pergolo transports back. If pool points are a concern, the dimensional shift can recharge everyone's.

14a) Sadlark 1: If Iucounu is being roundly trounced he will flee to the secret room containing Sadlark, and leap into its embrace, activating it and becoming part of it. In this option Sadlark has not been brought into the story much, and the PCs are not necessarily in possession of the Skybreak Spatterlight. Or if they are, perhaps Iucounu manages to get it from them somehow? If the PCs do not know much of Sadlark, then Iucounu will gloat as he attacks, saying that his associate Master Twango recently sent him the last part of this device, and that he had been unwilling to test it until now. So he thanks them (the PCs) for giving him the motivation to do so. This finale is a desperate battle of the PCs, or even a desperate flight. The way they defeat Iucounu Sadlark could occur in many ways. They may manage to damage it using their best efforts, or it may be invulnerable, and deal them terrible damage (leaving smashed PCs in its wake as it pursues the last survivors). At the end they may be saved because Sadlark subsumes Iucounu and becomes confused. Anyone who recalls the books may cause it to trip into a fountain and fall apart.

14b) Sadlark 2: If the PCs are sorely drained they find Sadlark's Room and are able to re-activate this being using the Skybreak Spatterlight that they have with them. The Four Wizards should have introduced this pivotal event earlier as a possibility. IE the PCs should know that whilst the person who climbs into Sadlark is at risk, nonetheless there is a reasonable chance of their mastering this Overworld being and directing it to fight Iucounu. Which is ideally what happens. In such a case Iucounu himself will also be somewhat reinforced. Basically he will have desperately done a deal with a demonic entity and become semi-possessed. What the 'Sادلarked' PC confronts is not the Iucounu they are familiar with, but a bloated, horned, scaled, smoke-breathing, poison-spitting enhancement. A suitable way to end this chapter is with the 'Sادلarked' PC and 'Demonic Iucounu' toughing it out whilst any other still active PCs snipe on from the sidelines. GM's will be forgiven for making this a slugfest, with both parties pummeling each other for all they are worth, after having realised that all of their fancy magical effects simply bounce off each other.