

The  
Dying Earth

Based on the work of Jack Vance

# The Creep of Inaccuracy

A Rhialto-Level adventure for DERPG



By  
Ian Thomson

Pelgrane Press





Based on the Dying Earth Book Series by JACK VANCE

# The Creep of Inaccuracy

A Rhialto-Level Adventure for the Dying Earth Roleplaying Game

Written and Designed by Ian Thomson

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## GM's Introductory Notes

This scenario is specifically designed as an introduction to Rhialto-Level play. You will need *Rhialto's Book of Marvels* (RBoM) to properly utilise it (particularly the chapter: 'The Arch-Magical Series', which is an essential adjunct to running this adventure to the full). Experienced DERPG GMs might be able to extrapolate a workable system from their previous knowledge of the original (Cugel-Level) and advanced (Turjan-Level) rules, and therefore use this scenario as an amusing one-off experience. But those who attempt such a thing will miss out on enormous range of expansion material within *Rhialto's Book of Marvels*. Thus, purchasing the latest of the rulebooks is highly recommended. This adventure is partially set in Kaiin. However, you do not need to refer to the *Kaiin Players' Guide* (KPG) in order to run it. Although if you do, you can then easily extend this episode using the plethora of detailed information within.

In Vance's 'Rhialto' stories, by and large Arch-Magicians live outside large settlements and keep to themselves. Weeks, even months, pass without even those on relatively cordial terms setting eyes on one another. Several arch-magicians joining forces for a single concerted action or series of actions is presented as a rare thing. Indeed the third Rhialto story *Morreion* is noted in several references as being an entire aeon later than the first two tales. You may wish to run your adventure-series in a like fashion, with years, or possibly decades, passing between episodes. Or you may choose the alternate path, creating petty newcomer arch-magicians, for whom life at this level of potency is novel indeed. In this case play may proceed along a more or less chartable timeline – with only weeks (or sometimes months) passing between each episode. We choose this latter path, and the PCs hereon are deemed as being newly risen to the ranks of arch-magicians. As suggested in *Rhialto's Book of Marvels* this allows you, the GM, to introduce "the elements of Rhialto-level play in an orderly and gradual fashion". It also provides a suitable arena for the examples of petty challenges given in RBoM, which don't fit the character of the arch-magicians in Vance's tales. (But do make for amusing role-playing.)

Please note that what follows is one GM's interpretation the rules in *Rhialto's Book of Marvels*. Your DERPG style may differ. Particularly, consider new spontaneous ways to introduce/allow Challenges, and opportunities to win the various Share Awards, ways that suit your Players and the game that evolves around them. The material here is suited to my gaming group and our style of play, not yours. Expansion and alteration is expected. You may even choose to extrapolate enormously on the storyline within, and in fact we encourage that – add, diversify, and enhance at will.

The PCs in this adventure are resident or visiting in and around Kaiin at the time this adventure starts. Using the original rules for creating arch-magician characters (DERPG, pp15-24), or the rules for advancing from Turjan-Level (RBoM, pp8/9), create your flamboyant new characters and their manses. Tell players that each PC bound their chug somewhere in the last decade. (Since the arch-magicians in the stories are centuries old, this makes the PCs mere striplings.) As part of PC background creation, ask players to define the relationship of each to Kaiin. A simple option is that they all use the Scholasticarium Library and have a nodding acquaintance with each other there. This works well in this adventure because all of them are present in said library at its commencement. Since arch-magicians are rare, ask each player creating a new PC to state how their character has risen to this lofty level. Reasons may vary from having accidentally inherited a chug on their master's death, through having just obtained a chug after decades of dedicated study at the Scholasticarium, to having done a deal with some middling daihak (the exact nature of which is best left forgotten). They may even have discovered one lying injured in some alternate reality, and merely picked it up.

Since Ildefonse is the initiator of this adventure, and seeks their help, this adventure is suggested as the very task that the new arch-magicians undertake in order to impress him enough to be granted auxiliary membership. Therefore, ideally the PCs will be known frequenters of the Scholasticarium Library and some may even (like Grashpotel and Perrin) be lecturers or other staff members who within the last decade somehow stumbled upon chug ownership.

Apart from this, providing the PCs are all newcomers to the rank of arch-magician, and therefore (again as described in RBoM p10) unusually active and ambitious examples of this magician class, little else matters. This scenario does not directly cater for the newly-invented rank of arch-warrior, but owners of *Rhialto's Book of Marvels* could easily incorporate such a thing should they so desire. Again, bear in mind that arch-magicians are rare individuals. Therefore, the PCs may be the only 'junior' arch-magicians in the Almerly & Ascolais region. This makes sense in game terms, in that they are upstarts with no choice other than to form at least a very loose supportive comradeship – merely as a means to aid their own survival. This would also explain why they have formed a loose friendship association centred around the Scholasticarium Library. Where better to safely pursue their studies than its hallowed and protected halls.



## Conventions of Presentation

At places in this scenario we cover merely **one likely example** of activities the PCs may undertake, sometimes suggesting other possibilities. Some parts are written in precise detail, usually linkage sections, and other parts are more fluid with various options presented that the GM will need to choose from and evolve. Each GM will need to adjust and improvise the action according to the whims and behaviours of their own PCs.

Another convention is the GMCs' **empty ratings**. That is to say some GMC description boxes with spaces for the GM to write their rating totals. It is impossible for us to cater for every gaming group, and appropriate GMC ability levels will vary enormously. Therefore for some useful skills we leave space for the GM to note whatever ratings she decides as appropriate (after reading the description of the character and the role they play in the scenario). In many cases it may be as simple as asking the PCs what their ratings are and then inventing the GMC's rating at that very moment. [To be fair it should then be written into the blank space and retained as 'gospel' from that moment on.] Such a choice may vary according to their previous successes and failures, or just on the immediate needs of the situation. Alternatively the GM may choose to fill all such blanks in **prior to commencing play**. This varies from the original '~+3' etc idea so as to give the GM total flexibility as to whether they want the encounter to be easy, relatively easy, hard, extremely hard etc. The GM may alter the other ratings at will and even add extra abilities, according to their conception of the character as best matches their gaming group. Incidental GMCs are detailed within the text at the time of their primary encounter.

For **reasons of space** we cannot provide convoluted flowery speeches by every GMC encountered, but in most cases we can merely summarise their attitudes. Since this is DERPG and not some game of lesser verve, each GM will need to give proper voice to these sundry flunkies and townsfolk rather than passing over their words in hurried summary. Likewise we cannot elaborate all of the opportunities for role-play in this finite document. Sometimes what we mention in brief asides the GM will need to expand into a minor scene – so be on the alert for these opportunities.

## The Ensqualmation Option for the advancement of Turjan-Level female PCs

After reading the section in RBoM on the difficulties of inserting female arch-magicians into Vance's all-male milieu, and recalling the ensqualmation incident in Vance's story 'The Murthe', an idea struck me. Should you have one or two female players who wish to play female arch-magicians here is an element of backstory that these arch-magicians might use. In my estimation it works perfectly well for an individual, and OK for two characters with a little stretch of credibility, but might not hold water for multiple uses. Basically it is this. On somehow managing to find and master a chug this/these female(s) then spent a few decades in the mastery of sandestin use before deciding that it was time to associate with peers once again. And that is when they realised that such a task would be problematic in the Alмеры & Ascolais district, due to the rampant mistrust of female magic-wielders. Sensibly they used magic to pose as a male and became associated with, and known by the Conclave, in that form. But after further years this began to pall, their denial of their true natures going against the grain. And this is where the second part of the plan was put into action. The female arch-magician(s) fabricated an ensqualmation curse or attack, enacted their own victimhood, and even played out months of captivity/suffering.

The Conclave not being noted for their bold efforts at rescuing their own, could be relied on not to intervene, and the perpetrator(s) of the subterfuge needed only to plant rumours as to what was (supposedly) occurring. Then, at the end of all this, the perpetrator(s) reappeared, claiming to have escaped, but still suffering (The Horror!) from ensqualmation. As we all know, Calactus prescribed a simple way to reverse ensqualmation (TDE, p608), but the arch-magician(s) in question 'decided' that they actually didn't mind being female some of the time. (In much the same way that Haze of Wheary Water permanently poses as a wefkin.) Of course this is a bizarre decision indeed, but no more bizarre than Haze's, which is something that members of the Conclave don't even blink at. So, that's the backstory that you could use some variation of; merely noting that the Conclave members regard the PCs in question as unstable and peculiar (exactly like every other member of the Conclave). There may be an extra element of mistrust because of the inherent fear of witches that the Conclave members have, but since Conclave members don't remotely trust each other anyhow – what of it?



Another, even simpler answer to this problem, which ties in with the feel of the role-playing game so far, is that the history of the Conclave remains the same, but that it's future is different. Specifically I mean that Ildefonse and the other arch-magicians are reluctantly responding to changes in trends. Ever since women started attending (and occasionally graduating from) the Scholasticarium (KPG, p103) it has only been a matter of time before one managed to bind a chug. Such a female arch-magician might never be fully accepted into the conclave, but the Conclave members know that she isn't a witch because they know her history. With reluctance they could just as easily allow her auxiliary membership as they would any of the other upstart PC arch-magicians. Due to lingering mistrust she may never be allowed to advance, but then neither might the other PCs in any series of adventures.

## Introducing this Adventure

Prior to commencement of play, explain to the Players that each of their PCs is a relatively newly advanced arch-magician, who lives in (or somewhere near) the city of Kaiin. It is up to each player whether their PC is a lecturer or department head at the Scholasticarium, a city grandee, a member of the Royal house, or a country gentleman who only visits town for study purposes. (The Scholasticarium Library has its own sandestins that prevent the tomes therein from being casually swept away by other daihaki. Thus, even the most powerful arch-mages must actually attend if they wish to peruse the tomes. Or at least send a retainer or simulacrum in their stead.) Explain also that whilst not necessarily being friends, each PC is acquainted with the others, in a loose and pale reflection of Ildefonse's conclave. Each PC has applied for membership in that conclave at least once, and usually three or more times (dependent on how long they have been an arch-mage) and has been rejected hands down, as an inexperienced newcomer.

Thus the PCs have formed their own loose alliance, and (as RBoM states so well) have been using their new powers: 'to attempt to outdo their colleagues', 'in the seduction of fair maidens', to expand the 'finery of their garb', and occasionally even in jaunts across the multiverse. (Though these latter have been mere toe-dipping exercises to date.) In short, the PCs are inexperienced and comparatively nervous arch-magicians, whose unfamiliarity with their new state of power (and the diversionary fractiousness of sandestins) has prevented them from really doing more than dabble with the potential possibilities at their command – until now! Every adventure is allowed to start with one unlikely coincidence and ours is this: it is unusual that several arch-magicians come into their power within a roughly similar time period. Thus, the PCs combining as an alliance (even such a casual one as this) is something that Ildefonse's conclave has never had to deal with before. This coincidence can be used to fuel the possibility of a new level of 'auxiliary' membership (RBoM, p10). (The conclave members are worried about a rival conclave being formed, and are prepared to make an exception for this small group that they would not make for individual new arch-mages - until said individuals had proved themselves over many decades. If the GM sees fit, this loose alliance can also be a hook for some of your future adventures. IE 'auxiliary' membership requires that the juniors hold themselves ready for occasional testing tasks that the conclave may see fit to set them with. (Until such time as they are judged sufficiently elevated to be admitted to full membership.)

## Preparations

Before commencing play proper, make sure each Player has indicated on their PC sheet which possessions are carried as standard, which spells are routinely encompassed each morning, and the like. Later in the series you may allow instant transport, but such did not routinely occur in the Rhialto stories, so why not instil some necessity for pre-planning right at the beginning. Arch-magicians are not infallible or invulnerable, especially at the beginner level, which each PC is at. Absolutely do not let players assume that their PC has with them whatever they need at any given moment. When they leave their manse, they need to be clear what they are taking with them, and this reverts to the default unless otherwise specified. In the playtest one player thought to have various contingency packs on standby at his PC's manse. So that he could send his sandestin for one or more of them in event of an emergency: IE "Go and fetch Packs A, C & F from the secure store, and bring them here instantly, whole, intact, without alteration or interference of any kind." We all agreed that this was a sensible use of an Indenture Point.



## Chapter 1: The Mystery Begins

### 1.1) Optional Introductory Events

If you have access to the marvellous Kaiin book, then now is the time to introduce a short series of less significant events during which your PCs will have the opportunity to explore minor challenges and their own capabilities before the adventure itself commences. As stated earlier, by virtue of all PCs being new arch-magicians not yet accepted into Ildefonse's conclave, they are part of a loose comradely alliance which includes only the PCs, though for the sake of this story might be looked kindly upon by Perrin (KPG, p112).

The PCs might be friendly rivals, like Ildefonse and Rhialto, or they might be niggardly pedantic colleagues, or a mixture. Your players may have taken the opportunity to fill in the 'Character Overview' box on the back of the Rhialto-Level character sheet with details of their PC's manner and presentation in the world. This in itself may be enough for likes and dislikes to have already become apparent. Two arch-magicians vying to be the best 'poppinjay' for instance, or two 'experts in historical curios'.



Arch-magicians, whether part of the conclave or not, are valued by the upper echelons of society, and will be invited to the best events. (Not each and every one, but on a regular basis by anyone who wants to cultivate powerful friends.) Personalities still matter, and

although no-one will want to annoy an arch-magician seriously, it is widely known that other arch-magicians look poorly on savage behaviour against the lower orders and would retaliate. Thus a certain degree of snobbery and exclusivity is still present. Nonetheless, if your players have gamed in the Dying Earth before, they will find that at last that their PCs are at the level of high privilege. Invite the PCs to balls, have lowly magicians petition them for magical assistance or apprenticeship, suggest social contests for public superiority, have one PC invite all of the others to an evening of Gambling at the Tracks...

### 1.2) Perrin and Ildefonse

As stated earlier, the PCs are all present in the private reading room of the Scholasticarium Library this morning. It might be amusing to ask each Player to describe what it is that their PC is researching. Allow the invention of ever-more grandiose objectives. In time-honoured DERPG style, possibly even offer to award an Improvement Point or two for the most ambitious and amusing offering. In such a case give the Players a minute or two to write down the objective as a sentence, which they will then read out to the group. (In terms of the award, something like the 'Seventeen Erotic Combinations as listed by the legendary concubine Zaffula', or 'Malopil's Perfected Brewing of Yeastly Beverages' should be automatically viewed as superior to anything that is actually scholarly or remotely related to the serious magical arts.

The research of course is immaterial to the events to follow. The first that the PCs know of any impending mystery is when Perrin comes into the reading room and wanders over to each PC, cordially asking if they would do him the honour of attending a small gathering in his office at noon. He says that he wishes to ask their advice on a sensitive matter, and will provide something he refers to as a 'modest luncheon', which knowing Perrin will be an excellent buffet selection of choice viands and fine wines. PCs may vie for the most impressively graceful or craftily condescending response to his invitation, depending on their wont. (Again the GM may wish to allocate an Improvement Point to he who comes out with the most game-amusing response.)



Any adventure in a DERPG series must be seen to be presented as an overview. For instance, in this specific case we do not mention possible attempts by individual PCs to be first to Perrin's office with gifts and flattery in order to impress this Scholarly arch-magician. Likewise we do not list possibilities for character-assassination by spreading slanderous rumours about their colleagues - on the offchance that this will lead to the PC speaking these rumours to gain comparative prestige in Perrin's eyes. It is up to the GM to subtly suggest, encourage or guide such efforts. Opportunities such as this will no doubt be present throughout this adventure without always being specifically mentioned. The GM needs to keep an eye out for them and also to allow space for PCs to notice and use such opportunities - even when the GM (and indeed the author of the piece) did not.

Perrin is indeed waiting in his office with a fine buffet lunch at his beck and call. His sandestin Conlyp stands lethargically around in the guise of a robust young sylph, occasionally producing and offering a new selection of sweetmeats on a magically manifested tray. The centrepiece of the display is a magnificently braised haunch of erb, delicately flavoured with a dozen discreet spices. A tureen of kank-blossom and peppered-leek soup is also a marvel both to the smell and the taste. Perrin refuses to talk business until all have dined, which is no chore whatsoever. He himself joins in heartily, and encourages talk about personalities and events related to the Scholasticarium.

**Improvisation:** This too could be expanded into a challenge (RBoM, p12) in which some PCs attempt to outdo one another with tales of their own explorations and experiments (using Persuasion and Rebuff, or possibly other abilities including Pedantry or Etiquette, depending on what stories they make up about their opponent). Specifically in the playtest we found that it was very easy to generate tales of the failures of other PC arch-magicians, things that were not established in the backstory (since there was no backstory), but sounded believable. IE:

PC1: "I was most saddened to hear of the unfortunate demise of your aviary of zooney birds. If it is not too bold of me to suggest, then perhaps on any future similar occasion you might wish to target your experiments in pyrotechnics in some other direction than towards the front door of your own manse."

PC2: "Your sources are incorrect. A force of archveults assailed me at the precise moment of casting, and it was their foul influence that diverted the thrust of my spell."

PC1: "An interesting assertion. I was present at the edge of your property during the event, and saw no archveults, nor indeed anything more threatening than an owl. However, I did observe certain deranged caperings that some optimistic dabblers might be convinced to label as spell-casting."

Encourage players to come up with at least some basic verbiage rather than just rolling the dice. One way to do this is to offer boons on rolls for any half-decent verbal presentation, or a levy for those who do not make any effort to come up with appropriate language.

As luncheon draws to a close, perhaps with any embarrassed PCs fuming quietly in the corner whilst nibbling on dry crackers coated with lark pate, a knock comes on the door. Perrin answers it, and none other than the renowned Ildefonse, Preceptor of the Ascolais & Almeri conclave enters the room.

Undoubtedly the PCs have all met him before, since each has at least once petitioned for membership of the conclave. (And inevitably been refused.) A conversation will take place, and the thrust of Ildefonse's news is this (and may be interrupted by questions):





⊕ “Recently an unfortunate re-occurrence of the dreaded ‘Creep of Inaccuracy’ has beset the region. Both Rhialto and myself managed to purge it from our own collections, but only by great effort. Its latest manifestation is here at the Scholasticarium. Master Perrin wisely alerted the conclave to its presence, and after due consideration we have decided on a course of action. This curse threatens us all, and needs to be eradicated. Firm and decisive action has been agreed upon as the only possible solution. A task force of dedicated arch-magicians must single-mindedly investigate the origin of the curse and eradicate it with extreme prejudice, so that the sanctity of our libraries will never again be threatened. This task force is to be composed of those arch-magicians here in this room, with Perrin and myself serving in an advisory capacity, and the others as the primary active force. As a reward for success the conclave has agreed to create a new level of membership for certain valuable ‘auxiliaries’, to which you will automatically graduate on successful completion of this mission.”

How the GM handles Perrin’s reward is up to them. He may be involved merely in order to protect the Scholasticarium Library, or he too may be granted auxiliary membership of the conclave as part of his rivalry with Grashpotel.

Fear not that we have forgotten about status (RBoM pp11-32). Ildefonse offers an extra reward to the most competent of the arch-magicians, a primary representation, if you will, of the value of accumulating a greater degree of Status Points than your fellows:

⊕ “In emulation of the conclave itself, the auxiliary branch will have its own Preceptor, and the person deemed fit to be offered this role will be one amongst you who proves their suitability for this high status by dint of courageous and decisive actions during the task ahead of you. Presuming that you bring this event to a successful conclusion a proper conclave will be called and you will all be granted auxiliary membership. At that conclave we will evaluate the mission based on your own accounts and our knowledge, and decide then who is the most suited for the Preceptor’s role. Perrin here may also be asked to recount his observations of your performance.”

NB: *The GM if necessary can plainly tell the players that this decision will exactly depend on the highest Status Points total.*

The PCs may already have heard the rumour that sage Grashpotel has been acting somewhat unpredictably, even for him (see KPG, p111 & 125), and may realise that despite the rivalry between them, Perrin is concerned for his colleague, and has contacted Ildefonse because of this. The fact that Ildefonse and some others of the conclave have also been subject to the Creep is presumably what has stirred the famously sluggish conclave into an active response. (Irrespective that this response was a clear decision to lump the responsibility for this potentially hazardous mission onto someone else.) The following information may be gained by talking to Ildefonse, or by PCs examining their own recollections.

### **Pedantry – The Creep of Inaccuracy**

DF – Perhaps some manner of the Palsy?

QF – No, wait! Isn’t it some type of magical instability of the mind? I seem to recall....?

EF – Not of the mind, it affects the written word in some way. Doesn’t it?

HBS – It affects magical literature, twisting its contents to support erroneous and therefore dangerous misinformation.

PS – And it affects the mind of the reader, which makes it triply dangerous, since in time the reader cannot tell fact from fiction.

IS – To the best of my knowledge a malevolent magician, whose name I cannot recollect, created it aeons ago.

## **1.3) Research**

The next step is to perform research into the origins, effects, and (hopefully) cure, for the *Creep of Inaccuracy*. Here, and in other parts of this adventure we cannot possibly predict what order the PCs will attempt to pursue their options, and have thus listed them in an arbitrary fashion. Likewise, bear in mind that your PCs may think of other avenues of exploration not mentioned here. They may also assume that the arch-magicians of the conclave have at least perused their own Compendiums in search of an easy solution (and failed to find it).

**Perrin:** He knows a little of Grashpotel’s recent blunders and is alarmed at his associate’s descent into irregularity and misinformation. The fact that this is adversely affecting the students is not something that overly alarms him. They are, after all, only students. The GM can use Perrin as an unofficial stimulator for the quest for Status Points. At this stage of the





adventure he will be genuinely interested in their progress in a supervisorial capacity, wanting to know what each PC has accomplished.

**Ildefonse:** The preceptor is loathe to offer any examples of his (or Rhialto's) difficulties and embarrassments that came about as a result of their being affected by the Creep. He is also unsure of whom else amongst the conclave was affected. Possibly Byzant, Shrue and Perdustin. He has done some cursory research on the Creep, and has identified it as originating in the Eighteenth Aeon – a product of the diseased mind of Klymp the Knave. Klymp (it was found some years after his death) had been the originator of a number of curses and significant problems that plagued the arch-magicians of the day.

**Grashpotel:** Busy and confused, the powerful Inferator does not believe he has been cursed. He is just busy. He is too busy even to spend time discussing this with Perrin. Only direct intervention by Ildefonse is likely to convince him that something truly is amiss. (One of the reasons he is so busy is that he has recently noticed several significant problems with his primary theories and researches, and is seeking to redress them as quickly as possible.)

**Rhialto:** Questioning Rhialto (as one of the most accessible and personable of the region's other arch-magicians) or any other arch-magician that a PC has a cordial relationship with, can reveal whatever information the GM decides is suitable. None have any obvious enemies newly appeared. Any that admit to having been affected by the Creep inform PCs that it took an unseemly number of Indenture Points to eradicate the problem, which is not something they are willing to experience again. Yet as of this moment they have no knowledge of who set the curse upon them or why. They all want to know this, or at the very least want to know an effective counter-curse that they can embed over their valuable collections to ward against future tampering.

#### **The Scholasticarium Library:**

This incredible resource (KPG, p122) is here to be examined at length, and may well be the primary source of the following information, or not, at the GM's whim and according to the dictates of entertaining role-play.

**The Creep of Inaccuracy:** This curse distorts and erases knowledge, spreading from book to book and affecting even the library owner's mind. The first

known instance of the Creep of Inaccuracy was at the main library at the court of King Zenweld, who ruled a substantial part of the world, including the regions know known as Ascolais and Almerly during a latter phase of the Eighteenth Aeon. After some years of confusion, Klymp, a little-known magician, managed to create a solution and was awarded the lifetime position of Royal Wizard, and attendant privileges. No solution is extant to this curse, which was thought to have been forgotten in the mists of time. The only occasions when it has been used as a curse in historical times were very much directed by a malevolent individual against one of his enemies. For instance, Geegphan the Vengeful used it against a trio of enemies five centuries ago, causing the downfall of each of them. The only person one can assume to have had the counter-curse was Klymp, although Geegphan is a more recent figure that released it upon the world and he may have had his own protections.



**Klymp:** An arch-magician who apparently started as an ill-favoured rogue and through peculiar circumstance managed to find and bind a chug after only being a regular magician for a little more than two decades. He was appointed Royal Wizard to the court of King Zartowl in the city of Iskwen sometime in the later years of the Eighteenth Aeon, became an arch-magician during that time and outlived the kingdom. His last known home was the manse "Kruplar" in the land of Cutz, shortly before the Cutz Wars began.

**Geegphan:** Sometimes known as the 'vengeful', this arch-demonist was an unpleasant fellow in the extreme, and released a number of powerful curses during his time, including the dreaded *Creep of Inaccuracy*. (NB: This is a clue – the fact that Geegphan was a demonist – so the GM should not advertise or hint at this reference. Unless a PC thinks to follow this up.)



## The Sandestin Solution

In the Rhialto stories sandestins were not the automatic recourse. Even arch-magicians prefer to use spells or magical devices. Sandestins are fractious and unpredictable, and follow the dictates of the letter of your instruction. It is crucial in the development of a successful arch-magician that he learn precise languaging when commanding sandestins. Many a budding arch-magician has been left in some soon-to-be fatal, or distant (in time or space), situation due to imprecise instruction. As RBoM states (p98) a sandestin's greatest desire is to be proven so unreliable as to be discharged from service, and if this comes about by the unfortunate and entirely coincidental death of the arch-magician, then so be it.

Indenture Points are hard to come by, particularly if you are an inexperienced new arch-magician. Although only hinted at in the Rhialto stories, it is clear arch-magicians cannot simply assign Points will-nilly for poor service. The sandestin must do something especially villainous or wilfully in contradiction to its instructions or terms of service in order for their Point total to be increased. Sandestins, who utterly resent being forced to service will normally try to avoid this. Indenture Points are normally held back for emergencies or events that cannot possibly be accomplished in another way. The only time Rhialto used sandestins with frequency was when he was stranded in the past after being deprived of most of his other magical resources. During that time he was able to ask his sandestin incidental questions and receive fair answers, because he'd spent an Indenture Point for 6 months of 'mundane light service' (Appendix 2), which a PC will have to do at the start of play if they want the same level of co-operation from their primary sandestin.

The point, therefore, of this boxed information, is to indicate that it is far more likely (far, far, more likely) that PC arch-magicians will seek a mundane or magical solution, even at great effort, before resorting to sandestins. The GM needs to make sure that their players are aware of this distinction. Of course this doesn't preclude a PC from using sandestin magic, but the Player needs to be clear that Indenture Points do not just automatically refresh at the end of each game. During the game they are purchased at 1 Improvement Point apiece. However, since these additions represent penalties for infractions, their acquisition must be role-played (using a Persuade/Rebuff contest against the sandestin: IS: 3 pts, PS: 2pts, HBS: 1pt) - unless their addition occurs during a break in the action of at least a day.

And let us imagine a situation where a group of arch-magicians are sorely threatened. Is one of them likely to volunteer one of his valuable sandestin Indenture Points to save the day? Or are they more likely to enter a lively discussion as to whose turn it is to make this offering on the group's behalf? If there is time for a debate, there will inevitably be one, possibly an indeterminably long one, which may indeed prove to be a PC Challenge (RBoM, p12).

NB: In situations of imminent life or death, when sandestin action is required to save them, PCs may still attempt a quick argument unless they have developed a clear priority system that all have accepted and understood. As GM, exploit such situations to the full, reminding overly sensible and agreeable players that their arch-magician PC is unlikely to be so compliant. It is entirely appropriate to ask for a Resistance against Arrogance before a PC ever voluntarily sacrifices something valuable for the greater good (except in immediate life or death situations).

Speaking of which, when a life or death situation occurs, a fine GM trick is to ask players to write secretly on a piece of paper whether they order their sandestin to rescue everyone, and what exact words they use. (This writing represents the babble of voices as each arch-magician panics.) Some arch-magicians may obfuscate, hoping that someone else uses up an Indenture Point first. It is not inconceivable that all PCs may perish in such a situation. Sensible groups of PCs will arrange their own very minor version of the Monstrament detailing the fact that anyone who clearly saves the life of a fellow by astute and swift use of sandestin is entitled to at least one IOUN stone. Such a thing is in keeping with the tone of the Rhialto stories when translated to the RPG setting.

Sandestins need specifics. You can't ask them to 'go find the originator of this problem', or 'bring me the best magical item to solve this dilemma'. If you do so they will begin an interminable debate outlining the multiple ways that such a command could be interpreted, and explaining why to attempt to do so would take many years of research.

**Progressing Through the Scenario:** Because this is a sample adventure, pains have been taken to combine linear plot with opportunity for PC improvisation and derailment. As a GM, when you prepare and run your own adventures you may chop and change the plot with casual abandon, and that is perfectly fine. Here, however, in an effort to provide a solid framework for exploring this kind of play (as GM and as Player), we have attempted to set up the various chapters in a fashion that will need to be explored in a specific order.



## Chapter 2: History Today

### 2.1) What Next?

The PCs will have found some clues as noted above. Time travel is a tricky thing, best left to GMs who have plenty of experience running Rhialto-Level games. Hence, ideally your PCs have no automatic means of flitting about time. We can assume that even members of the conclave are wary of doing such things without taking proper precautions. From the clues that the PCs have uncovered, the only viable lead is Klymp's tenure at the court of King Zartowl during the latter part of the Eighteenth Aeon.

Geegphan's historical details are too tenuous to guide a sandestin's correct placing of persons in time or place. However, since Klymp was court wizard for decades, it is entirely possible for an arch-magician to instruct his sandestin to transport the PCs to a safe place outside the palace sometime during those years. Avoiding errors in timing needs to be brought into the wording, by saying for instance that Klymp must be hale and hearty and with full faculties at the moment they arrive. Should the PCs also specify that they wish to arrive sometime between the first manifestation of the Creep and the time Klymp became an arch-magician, the sandestin will do his best but fail. The PCs (see below) will arrive during the festivities that mark Klymp's ascendancy to arch-magicianhood.

The first difficulty is deciding who is to spend the Indenture Point on behalf of the group to transport them all back through time (a similar problem will also occur when they wish to return). Although the arch-magicians in the Rhialto stories never had such arguments, one gets the feeling that in their earlier years if they had been forced into such group actions, such disagreements would have been entirely within their character. This may be the point when some version of the PCs' own rules and regulations is brought into effect, setting up a strict rotation of who spends Indenture Points on the group's behalf. In other RPGs the GM might encourage gravity, brevity, and clarity in such a discussion. In Rhialto-Level DERPG however, she should not only encourage vigorous debate for the privilege of going last, but also offer actual Status Points (for instance half of a Directed Share: RBoM, p31), or even Improvement Points for in-character role-playing.

### Status Point Options

As an expansion on the Victory Conditions (RBoM, p11), should you find that your players are not pursuing Status Points with the vibrancy that you would hope for, consider adding an Improvement Point incentive at the end of a session for the PC with this highest Status. This reward would be either for the winner alone or granted in descending increments with the winner getting a significantly larger share. These extra IP would be awarded at the end of the session. Adoption of this rules expansion in playtest was a significant incentive, though I granted the newly gained points immediately since this adventure was not run as part of an ongoing campaign.

PCs may of course try all sorts of other avenues before transporting themselves back in time. The GM may need to adopt the 'all roads lead to Rome' approach, gently diverting them back towards the inevitable without appearing to be doing so.

### 2.2) Iskwen

The arch-magician PCs arrive on a hillside overlooking a large city (Iskwen) one summer evening. The city appears to be in pageant, vibrant and alive with happy crowds. The city is not as large as Kaiin, but impressive nonetheless. It is walled and is but three miles away. The PCs will need to travel this distance somehow, across the fields and small woodlands outside the city walls. Perhaps one of them has a motile carriage?

Should the PCs be utterly uncaring for their own safety, have them attacked by some semi-intelligent monster (not just a run of the mill half-man, but some odd carnivorous beast or bizarre flying demonic humanoid unique to this era of the distant past). The idea is not to actually kill a PC but to remind them of their own mortality – and to evoke exciting role-playing as the PCs employ spells or ingenuity to save themselves or their comrade. If possible, evoke states of dishevelment, have PCs thrown into quaggy ditches, encourage PCs to flee ignominiously rather than stand their ground and risk being gored before they can cast a spell – all that sort of thing. Sandestin sarcasm or admiration at the sight of surprisingly deft action would not be out of place.





If a PC uses spells or Indenture Points to save another, then now might be the time that they add to their list of rules and regulations about reciprocal assistance. Should such a course of action appeal, the GM might even make note out loud that this beast is something previously unknown to any of the general classification indexes. Therefore it could be an opportunity to issue a Challenge (RBoM, p12) to another player in the form of a wager that they cannot correctly identify the beast. This would effectively be a Pedantry Challenge. Or the GM might declare - since this is an opportunity to “belittle, humiliate, and otherwise show up your fellow PCs” (RBoM, p31) - that the PC to best, and most convincingly, classify its taxonomy might gain half a Directed Share (RBoM, p31). Envisage, for instance, PCs standing over the creature’s shredded corpse, pointing out faint striations upon the tail, or the distinctive musculature around the lower jaw.

### Mortality and Fallibility

In the Rhialto stories, Morreion very nearly died when the archveults left him at the end of the universe, Hache-Moncour was stripped of his magic and immortality, Rhialto is fearful of a grue when he thinks he’s trapped outside his own boundary magics, and at one point nearly the entire conclave is ensqualmed and about to be taken away as slaves to Sadal Suud. Thus we can see that Arch-magicians are not invulnerable to negative circumstance or even death. Certainly the likelihood of such is much reduced, and by and large they tend to live for centuries (even aeons according to the final story in which the Conclave itself is nothing more than a memory). Petty gods and demons can be used, alongside temporary loss of magic and sandestin access to evoke real fear of personal annihilation or utter failure in adventures if you wish.

Closer to the city the PCs will observe several well-fashioned coaches waiting to pass through the gates. A force of polite guards in splendid livery are gently examining the coaches’ occupants and contents before allowing entrance. A few folk wait to enter on foot, and are regarded with near-disdain by the guards, being forced to wait their turn. Even those on foot who are quite well-dressed are so treated.

**City Guard:** Fortright [\_\_\_], Lawyerly [\_\_\_], Finesse [\_\_\_], Parry [\_\_\_], Health [\_\_\_], Athletics [\_\_\_], Perception [\_\_\_], Pedantry [\_\_\_], Wherewithal ~[\_\_\_].

The PCs will need to enter the city. They may choose to do so as lowly foot-sloggers (**Ψ RESIST ARROGANCE**), or manufacture some manner of magical carriage. It is possible this may become a ‘Free for All’ Challenge (RBoM, p23), especially if the GM offers a half or full Directed Share (RBoM, p31) for the most gloriously presented arch-magician. (Once again consider having the Players write down in three sentences or less the exact nature of their mode of transport.) If PCs decide to co-operate at this juncture in order to save Indenture Points or Magic, do not deride this. It is not crucial that they challenge each other at every turn, especially not when they are facing an unknown and possibly hazardous situation.



Note that the city cannot be entered by use of regular magic. Anyone trying to do so will find themselves rudely returned to the point at which they started, possibly falling in an ungainly heap due to the reverse force of the repulsed spell. PCs may evoke this as a Challenge if they like, wagering with each other as to who can be the first to break through this defense. However, a victory here is not possible without spending the minimum 3 Indenture Points required to nullify these defences temporarily. A powerful daihak watches over the city’s integrity. Note also that a sandestin will not elaborate on the nature of this being for anything less than a single Indenture Point (and will



argue for 2 points, claiming its potency is such that the sandestin risks harm in merely investigating it too closely). If anyone spends the point(s) required, the sandestin returns after a few moments and says that the protective entity is a demonic daihak possibly from the dimension known as Thrupp 103, unless its nostrils fail to identify the characteristic reek with any certainty. Of course all of this is unnecessary if the PCs merely create some kind of posh carriage and declare themselves to be foreign grandees. (Wealth talks on its own behalf.)

Other difficulties include translation. (Hopefully one of them brought along some sort of translator like Rhialto's glossolory [TDE, p650].) If not then more Indenture Points might be required. (1 point will grant the entire group the ability to speak and be understood for a whole day and night.) And though the PCs will not know it, their arrival in the city (or more precisely the arrival of their sandestins) will be noted soon enough by the protective entities stationed within.

At some point the PCs will inquire of someone what the celebration is about. They will be told that the festivities acknowledge the investiture of the new city wizard, whose predecessor died or departed (dependent on who they ask) some weeks ago.

Apparently the ceremony took place this very afternoon, and the new court wizard (one Klymp by name) was invested with the rights and privileges according to his new rank. Tonight there is feasting and drinking aplenty, and tomorrow has been declared a public holiday.

The above information (if guessed at indicating that Klymp is already an arch-magician) might lead to a chastisement of a certain sandestin if the PC's instructions were specific. The sandestin will defend itself roundly if so, declaring that such accuracy over such a long distance is dazzling indeed, and in fact they should be congratulating it. PCs may gain the impression that the sandestin itself is amazed to have brought them to the correct spot even within the lifetime of the person whom they wish to address. This impression will be reinforced if they attempt to use another sandestin to reposition them in time a few months or years back. The problem (so they will be told) is now that they are all here their very presence disturbs the timeline for decades around.

Chrono-navigation is an imprecise science at the best of times, and with this added interference the chance

of finding their way to an earlier period of Klymp's life is virtually non-existent. Nonetheless, for a mere five Indenture Points any of the other sandestins will be willing to try. (And if so they will fail, taking the PCs on a merry chase through history only to reappear back at this time and place just in time to see themselves leave on the merry goose chase - and to observe the resultant sick flicker in the fabric of reality.)

The city is civilised, the people relatively well-off, and the refreshments delightful (if a trifle expensive - illusory coins anyone?). Overall this is a more genteel settlement than the dour and decadent Kaiin, but otherwise things are much the same as the wealthier quarters of that city. For instance no districts like Canal Town are present here, and the area that is like the Threek is a much smaller proportion of the city. Remember, of course, that fashions vary, and the PCs may evoke mirth and ridicule until they subtly adjust their garb - replacing their hats and sashes with more becoming attire. (1 Indenture Point will cover the whole group, though as to who spends this - that could be quite an argument.)

### 2.3) The Court of Zartowl

The PCs will eventually, or immediately, travel to the Palace. Here they will face a similar and more stringent procedure. Nobody without an invitation is allowed inside, and the invitations are magical devices with imprints of the bearer's likeness. Nonetheless it will cost only a single Indenture Point to have passes manufactured for all PCs. If they try to enter without one, this will invoke suspicion. PCs may guess (or have a sandestin confirm) that the Palace and its grounds are also protected by a powerful daihak.

Inside the palace a grand ball is taking place, and the GM will be forgiven for evoking Resistances left, right and centre. Food, wine, women, gambling, dancing and other entertainments from the simplest to the most debauched are on offer depending on your tastes. Women from the upper echelons of society (some single, some dallying away from their relationships) might well be attracted to this dazzling bunch of strangers. (Presuming that they have adjusted their attire according to local fashions, but then again had they not then they probably would have been denied entry even with a proper invitation.) During this time the PCs may learn a little more of the previous city wizard, who was in fact a sorceress named Yaska. (The



rulers of Iskwen are notoriously egalitarian in their quest for excellence no matter how it clothes itself.) Nobody knows what happened to her; she simply disappeared after an explosion in her laboratory. After a couple of months people have had to presume she was destroyed or transported to some distant place from which she has been unable to return.

Using magic within the Palace (anything more than personal cantraps) draws the attention of madlings. Madlings cannot be seen by the human eye, but arch-magicians can sense them ( $\Psi$  PERCEPTION) if they are alert as unseen forces. A sandestin can also pass on general details if asked, but only one who has been granted an erased Indenture Point for the standard '6 months light duties', as this includes access to its own general knowledge.

**Madlings:** Magic[ ]



The madlings are not in themselves troublesome, and can be easily dispelled. But if they vanish or are interfered with, or detect major magics, then they will alert the Commander of the Guard who will come to question the PCs, along with his primary bodyguard, all of whom (including himself) are protected from magic by potent amulets (created by Klymp's daihak).

Eventually, through asking the right people, or being convinced to accompany the guards, the PCs will be brought into the presence of Klymp the newly-appointed city wizard. Normally a cunning man, tonight he is surrendering himself to drink. It would not be remiss of the GM to engineer a situation wherein the PCs have no option but to match him

drink for drink (perhaps in a free-for-all) in order to be considered worthy company to which he will impart his secrets. Once he is alerted to the fact that they are arch-magicians he will assume (and indicate so in a knowing fashion) that they have been sent by a foreign power to assess if he is any threat to them. He will reassure them that his small country has no ambitions other than its independence, and he himself prefers to have all of his time free for study and relaxation. "War," he says with utter conviction "is so time-consuming and wasteful of resources. You need never fear that we shall ever come barking at your borders."

Once in his cups he may still need to be flattered and cajoled ( $\Psi$  PERSUASION) into revealing that he created the Creep of Inaccuracy in order to impress the King and Court when he removed its blemish from the city libraries. Or this may be one of those 'Not If, But Who' instances (RBoM, p18) where success is pre-ordained and it only matters who amongst the PCs gets there first. Remember though, that this is Klymp's 'home turf', and the Players/PCs need to be given the solid impression that the man they are dealing with could possibly be capable of wiping them out with a twitch of his daihak/sandestin for all they know. (IE a modicum of tact is clearly essential).

In any case he will admit his guilt so directly, only through hyperbole and hinting asides. He may also allude to the fact that it was only a few months ago that he managed to bind a daihak that grants him incredible powers, and tell the obviously exaggerated tale of this heroic feat. He believes it was actually an utter fluke, and in reality was a binding of him by a demonic daihak with a penchant for mischief (which the PCs probably won't know for certain but may suspect). Then, he says, it was only a matter of time before he used these powers to arrange for the demise of his predecessor.

They may flatter and befriend Klymp (which may in itself be a Challenge pitting the boasting prowess of one PC against the others, according to how well they represent themselves as mighty magicians of the future, or from a distant land or star). If they also offer him some kind of very substantial reward he will be open to helping them. He will of course couch all his responses in terms that indicate he didn't actually cause the Creep to infest this city's libraries, but that he nonetheless uncovered and invented a cure, and will be delighted to show them his notes. These notes, he says,





are arranged in such an order as that it may appear to the ‘untrained eye’ as if curse and cure were developed concurrently. This will be a mere illusion – he will tell them – brought about by an inexcusable lapse when compiling his old series of notebooks into this current volume. For he would, obviously, never stoop so low as to resort to such chicanery.

**Klymp:** Eloquent [\_\_\_], Wary [\_\_\_], Speed [\_\_\_], Intuition [\_\_\_], Health [\_\_\_], Devious [\_\_\_], Appraisal [\_\_\_], Athletics [\_\_\_], Concealment [\_\_\_], Gambling [\_\_\_], Imposture [\_\_\_], Pedantry [\_\_\_], Perception [\_\_\_], Scuttlebutt [\_\_\_], Stealth [\_\_\_], Stewardship [\_\_\_], Wherewithal [\_\_\_]

*Klymp can be portrayed as the arch-trickster if the GM so desires, or possibly at this point in his history he has yet to reveal himself to be the originator of such works – or else the majority of such works have not yet been engineered.*



Klymp’s source of sandestin-like powers is not actually a sandestin, but one of the other daihak, a being of a demonic affiliation. The PCs will need to question a sandestin in order to gain fuller information, and pay an Indenture Point for the privilege. If they do, they will learn whatever the GM decrees, including the fact that Klymp appears to be unaware that his soul is part of the bargain he has entered into.

Klymp’s new quarters are Yaska’s old quarters, and he is in the process of redecorating. The old silvers and purples are making way for the more manly new golds

and reds. He takes the PCs to his personal library, and they cannot help but see that the annex of this area that serves as a workroom has recently been destroyed in conflagration. If questioned, Klymp will say that this was where Yaska destroyed herself, or did whatever it was that caused her to vanish. He may look slightly guilty as he says this, for Yaska was a surprisingly good teacher, and he betrayed her. She put up a good fight, but the daihaki magic eventually overcame her and catapulted her away into the chronoplex.

In another annex the PCs may observe an ancient brass cabinet worked with a sickening frieze of demonic metalwork and horrid runes. This is the receptacle to which the demonic entity Argrule is linked. Any PC with an interest in Daihaki may be asked to Resist Pettifoggery to prevent themselves from needing to take advantage of this unique opportunity to examine and classify this avatar at close range. This may even be a suitable point for a PC to issue the Challenge (perhaps in the form of a wager), that he will be the one to most quickly and accurately label and describe it according to Thrupp’s Index. If the cabinet is opened, Argrule’s repulsive visage leers out. He will immediately try to take over the minds of anyone looking at him, using his full magical potency. This can form an amusing backdrop as the PCs try both to identify, and perhaps communicate with, the being in feigned relaxation - whilst pretending that their minds are not being ravaged by an entity of the outer dark. (NB: If Klymp has left the area, perhaps to retrieve the key to the secure stacks of his library, then such might be an ideal moment.

Unfortunately, Klymp’s old workbooks are gone. He stands in bemusement when he discovers that only simulacra stand in their place, and as he comes to understand why Yaska had been treating him so oddly in the weeks before he disposed of her. He will name her as the only possible culprit, since this area has profound magical protection. He will also moan and talk about betrayal, and yet mutter about the inevitability of the Law of Equipoise, and how he should not have been so ill-prepared to realise its effects would come back to haunt him.

### Where did Yaska go?

The PCs may have pieced together that the ruthless Klymp used his daihaki magic to dispose of her. In order to learn where she went, and confirm that she



had the stolen workbooks upon her person, they will probably need to use sandestin magic. (We say ‘probably’, being as we are unaware of the exact level of resourcefulness of your campaign PCs.)

Now is the time to alert the Players to the fact that finding out where she went to is one of the occasions where a **Share Award** (RBoM, p29) will be granted to the one who does so first. Players won’t know that this is not an exceptionally difficult task, since it is definitely a crucial one, a turning point in the scenario. PCs may comb the city, seek out her old acquaintances, travel the country to visit her distant relatives, visit every second-hand bookdealer in the land, all in vain. The way to track her is to ask a sandestin. This recalcitrant creature will (for one Indenture Point) confirm that she took the workbooks and various other books with her. It will also explain that she was attempting to escape under her own power when Klymp set his daihak on her. The result was that she was transported a vast distance, and is thus untraceable without gargantuan efforts. The cost it requests for such an effort is 3 Indenture Points (may be bargained down to 2).

If sent to track her, the sandestin will actually vanish for several minutes, which usually either indicates that a task was indeed exceptionally arduous, or that the sandestin has been destroyed and is never coming back. But then it will return. It arrives facing the other direction, mutters in exasperation, then flickers out of existence, returning again a few seconds later. It looks over its shoulder sharply and then turns around.

“Ahah,” it says, “I have tracked the sorceress across the chronosphere. She left a faint but unmistakable trail of timelight during her transportation to your own aeon.”

Yes, Yaska was transported to the very aeon from which the PCs so recently arrived. But they cannot be transported to her point of arrival because they already exist in that time period. The closest they can be transported is to the moment just after they originally departed, and this is nearly a century after she arrived in that time. However, the PCs now know what they are after, and can try to track the books, and her.

Before they leave, the PCs might force Klymp to revise his work for them and recreate the countercurse. This will not be easy. He doesn’t want to, and his demon will protect him. Yet with sufficient Wherewithal and expenditure of Indenture Points they might temporarily overcome this entity and bend Klymp to their will. They would also need to use Indenture Points to obtain obscure tomes and spell components. Elaborate this section as required, though it is easier for the plot if his daihak is too powerful and he merely expels them from the city. Note that in any case they cannot take Klymp back with them unless they are prepared to pay the 5 Indenture Points required to break him temporarily free of his demonic bargain. And even if they do this, he will shortly be visited by (and kidnapped or killed by) his demon ally. (Mind you, this might be an amusing episode if one of the PCs is sheltering him as he works laboriously on the countercurse.)



**Argrule:** Intimidating [\_\_\_], Lawyerly [\_\_\_], Magic (Demonic) [\_\_\_], Health [\_\_\_], Appraisal [\_\_\_], Etiquette [\_\_\_], Gambling [\_\_\_], Pedantry [\_\_\_], Perception [\_\_\_], Wherewithal [\_\_\_]

**Argrule’s Demonic Minion:** Intimidating [\_\_\_], Obtuse [\_\_\_], Ferocity [\_\_\_], Dodge [\_\_\_], Magic (Demonic) [\_\_\_], Health [\_\_\_], Athletics [\_\_\_], Perception [\_\_\_], Wherewithal [\_\_\_]



## Chapter 3: Back to the Future

### 3.1a) The Final Solution?

If you decide to follow this route, and the PCs return with the countercurse, it works. Surprise, surprise. How easy was that? They are invited to cleanse Grashpotel's quarters themselves, whilst Perrin distracts his comrade at an evening's wine-tasting. The members of Ildefonse's Conclave demand a copy immediately (through Ildefonse) and those who need to test it out do so to their great advantage. Proceedings are then set in motion for a special meeting of the Conclave to create the new rank of auxiliary members and install the PCs as its first representatives. Then during inevitable delays before this conclave comes about - terrible, a new curse arises. First one, then two, then three, of the arch-magicians are struck by Manse Blight. This curse disrupts the magic inherent in their manses, imposing a penalty of 1 on all rolls involving Manse properties connected to its structural integrity. And every time a DF is rolled, bits keep dropping off. No surprises then when the conclave members declare that the job has not been done as far as they are concerned and petition the PCs in the strongest terms to finish their task. No surprises either when after a bit of historical research the likelihood of Klymp also being the originator of this new curse comes to light. The mission continues. Unfortunately they cannot return to the past again, because they are already there, as are their sandestins. They must pursue solutions in the here and now.

**Locating Yaska:** She cannot be simply located by use of sandestin magic. Her own daihaki function at that level and have blocked her whereabouts.

### 3.1b) On With the Mission

If the PCs do not return with the countercurse, then they are armed at least with the knowledge of Yaska and her possession of the workbooks. It is clearly she who has targeted the arch-magicians with whom she has found herself sharing her new aeon. All they have to do is find her and put an end to her activities, possibly along the way incidentally uncovering the nature of whatever grievance she holds. The GM now announces another opportunity to win a **Share Award** (RBoM, p29). The first person to find a concrete clue about her or her presence in this aeon wins this.

The PCs need to visit the manse of one of the afflicted arch-magicians. The GM should make this person the most entertaining of the arch-magicians to interact with. She should also declare that the person who impresses this personage wins a Directed Half-Sha 16 Thus, how they arrive, what they say about each other, what gifts they bring, how they promote their own involvement in the activities so far – all of these things might be taken into consideration.

The other afflicted arch-magicians in the region refuse outright to let the upstarts enter their homes; their arrogance forcing them to continue their own efforts to manufacture a solution. The one who allows them to visit is a more forward-thinking individual who knows that one day these junior arch-magicians might be his colleagues, and so is attempting to foster good relations with them. If you are familiar with the stories, then the sinisterly sycophantic Hache-Moncour (RBoM, p79) might work well. Regardless of who it is, this person will invite them to dinner at his manse. There he will naturally try and impress them with his own exploits and facilities (harder to do if he is suffering from Manse Blight). Arch-magicians being what they are, including Hache-Moncour, this meal may degenerate into base Gourmandism contests and other challenges promoting the bravado of all involved.

During all of this, the PCs must play detective, asking what activities or visitors have been unusual for this person in the days or weeks prior to the arrival of the curse. The GM needs to invent a list on which she includes a Masked Ball at the home of Lady Shaunica (SVG, p81). It is possible that the arch-magician they are with will also recall that the other afflicted arch-magicians were also at that ball. Or the PCs may take the list to one or more of the other arch-magicians who are suffering the curse, bulling past their paltry objections, and work out the coincidence that way. The actual coincidence may take some time and resources to work out (or may simply be divined by scrying through time if such is allowed under your interpretation of the rules). It is that each of the afflicted individuals spent time in discourse with a woman affecting the feathered jacket and mask of a white swan. And before she left them, she passed over a small book of poetry. Finding this out counts as a





concrete clue. (Hache-Moncour will not think to divulge this information without being pressed for it. After all, such things are relatively commonplace.) NB: All these books of poetry disintegrated after releasing their curse into the manse in question.

### 3.3) Lake Island and Lady Shaunica

The PCs need to find out who the woman that dressed as a swan is. To this end they will first need to visit Lady Shaunica. (In any scrying the woman does not reveal her true form or admit her true name to anyone. She is in fact also protected by Daihaki magic.) Whilst they could just get their sandestins or magical transports to deposit them upon the lawns of Holam House at Lake Island, Lady Shaunica is notoriously fond of her privacy. She is also a favoured acquaintance of Rhialto the Marvellous. It would be too easy here to gain an introduction through Rhialto. So if they attempt this, Rhialto is away hunting down an archveult who stole some of his IOUN stones.



This leaves only the normal way. One must contact Lady Shaunica and petition for an audience in the normal fashion – sending lavish gifts, a flattering letter, and hoping for the best. It is not inappropriate for some manner of Challenge to be evoked here, as to whom will be the first to be invited to visit Lady Shaunica, or who will receive the most promising reply. Mind you, such things will be complicated by the fact that she invites them all on the same day, via an identical letter, to attend a private soiree. (Some arch-magicians may argue that the Challenge is null and void if they are all invited together. Or perhaps the first to set foot on the lawns will proclaim himself to be the rightful winner, resulting in heated debate [Persuasion]?) The GM will in any case point out that the true challenge comes from gaining the identity and

description of the woman they are seeking. (A task that will net the victor an entire **Share Award**.)

Once on her premises, the arch-magicians will find her a woman of exquisite manner and appearance, and her home a repository of great artistic treasures. Not to mention a fine buffet table set on the patio immediately outside the main drawing room. Resisting Rakishness will be a challenge all of its own, possibly resulting in less than becoming behaviour. Fortunately for her, Lady Shaunica has several of Rhialto's sandestin-designed protections for dealing with unwelcome advances, even from arch-magicians. The least of these finds one deposited naked on the shingle on the far side of the river, trussed hand and foot like a hog and securely gagged. (Anxiously awaiting nightfall and the arrival of the local deodands, or perhaps the passing of some itinerant rascal.) Unaware of this risk, the PCs will no doubt posture and preen ridiculously in an attempt to gain the Share Award by being the first to inveigle the information they need. Lady Shaunica shifts the topic away from business when they are all together on the patio. She will such as: *"I wish to hear tales of daring, and poetic descriptions of my graces, not all of this talk of mystery and curses. Flatter and charm me, and then maybe later I will deign to respond to your dullard whimsies."*

Lady Shaunica does not wish to give away the identity of her mysterious friend, but the first arch-magician to thoroughly charm and entertain her and/or convince her that her friend is quite probably a witch from a previous age, will gain the information. (This is the winner of the free for all bragging contest, who is invited to stroll around the grounds with her, and another example of a pre-ordained success [RBoM, p18].) The woman they seek is none other than Lady Yasmaine, whom Shaunica met last year at a ball given by Prince Kandive. If questioned, Shaunica can recollect that Yasmaine asked many questions about the nature of Shaunica's connection with the arch-magicians of the region. However, Yasmaine evidenced no particular dislike of such people, only an eager curiosity. Shaunica does not know where Yasmaine lives exactly, only that she said she dwells in Odkin Prospect. But she can describe her (accurately compared to their description of Yaska if they have one). Shaunica also knows that Yasmaine is friends with Flolad son of Flolad (KPG, p78), and possibly more than friends.



## Chapter 4: Kaiin – Jewel of the South

### 4.1) To Kaiin

Yet another clue. PCs may now travel to Kaiin with all dispatch. It would not be utterly unseemly for a PC to call out a Challenge here as to whom travels fastest to Kaiin without recourse to sandestin assistance.

### 4.2) Flolad son of Flolad

As mentioned in the Kaiin book (KPG, p79), Flolad possesses ancient enchantments that allow sandestins to be released from their Indenture Points. No sandestin will ever point this out to a PC. However, it is only fair to assume that most PCs will have heard of this. (The GM makes a single roll on Pedantry for each PC, aiming to achieve a success of any kind. PCs who actually live in Kaiin are granted a bonus of 1. If nobody succeeds then the following encounter could be disappointing all round.) Since Flolad goes to social events, and arch-magicians go to social events, I am ruling that it is not Flolad's actual presence that dismisses the Indenture Points, but the actual use of a sandestin against him or his property in any way. Note that Flolad is the only person who knows Yasmaine's address, so the PCs may waste time looking for a less dangerous source of information.

Flolad is one of **the** most important people in Kaiin, therefore it is entirely appropriate that the PCs vie for his approval by presenting themselves in the most ostentatious fashion. They might go out of their way to find out what he likes and bring gifts, or they may send their sandestin on ahead to announce them (in suitably glowing terms – and possibly never see it again). Or, since they are hot on the case they may merely debate amongst themselves as to who is the most appropriate amongst them to act as spokesperson. (This would be a free-for-all Persuasion challenge, as described in RBoM, p23.) After all, he who presents the facts to Flolad at an urgent meeting is half-way towards forming a Relationship with this important personage. If it is useful to do so, the GM can declare that the PC that is the spokesperson in their dealings with Flolad gains half a directed share (RBoM, p31). After all, convincing the others that you are best suited for this task (for whatever reason) is a clear case of onepmanship.

This may again turn out to be one of those times when the outcome is pre-ordained. Or you might wish the PC in question to roll an ability contest against Flolad to convince this powerful individual that his associate (and possible intimate) Yasmaine is a dangerous character in need of apprehension. One way or another, Flolad will finally accept that a woman has duped him, and he reveals that although Yasmaine didn't tell him herself, his sources have discovered that she is the person who bought the old manse in Odkin Prospect that once belonged to Changa the Witch (DDE, p49).

One of the PCs may have heard ( $\Psi$  PEDANTRY) that only five years ago Valdaran the Just and his Green Legion raided this place and put an end to a cabal of demonic witches they found practising there. The house was burned to a ruin, but was purchased around three years ago, and rebuilt overnight by a mysterious foreign merchant, or so the rumours have said.

PCs technically could recruit Valdaran and his followers to assist them, but any PC even suggesting such a thing would be required to ( $\Psi$  RESIST ARROGANCE) just in order to voice it. Likewise, any PC who wanted to agree would need to do the same. Possibly a PC who did Resist could then Persuade all the others in a free-for-all, but such things are becoming complicated. GM's faced with such a thing need merely state something along the lines of: "The PC who most forcefully leads the assault on Changa's old manse gains a full directed share" to quickly change the direction of debate. Or perhaps one of the other PCs can be subtly prodded into challenging the suggester of this odd idea with accusations of cowardice?

### 4.3) The Manse of Changa the Witch

This property is typical of those scattered about Odkin Prospect. It stands in its own small parkland that is surrounded by a 10ft high stone wall. As with many properties in the Prospect, this wall merely serves to mark the boundary of an encompassing sphere of force that prevents mundane and magical assault. However, in this case the effect wasn't purchased from one of the Palace sorcerers, but created by a demonic force. Sandestins may be able to find this out, but will not volunteer such information freely.



The PCs will quickly find that there is no easy way through this barrier. Mundane spells do not work. If it suits the game and looks possible according to realistic PC capability, allow the PCs to figure out some way to pass through or wear down the defences with magical attrition. In such a case one of the PCs might win a challenge by being the magician who finally breaks through. But if it comes to the crunch, someone will probably need to pay the 2 Indenture Points required for a brief opening of these defences, or the 3 points required for putting them in hiatus for a longer period. (Although as you will see, in the latter case, this will be 1 point wasted.)

A complication exists. Due to the presence of a major overworld artefact in the house, the area inside the wall is considered a pocket dimension for all intents and purposes. Sandestins will not know this until they enter, unless specifically sent on a mission to gain facts first. Ideally (in plot terms) a sandestin will transport everyone inside before this fact is realised. Should you have access to a copy of *Demons of the Dying Earth*, then you might look at p45 for a list of spells that work differently in other dimensions (or examine the similar information in the *Gomoshan's Tomb* adventure. Otherwise, since this is a unique pocket dimension, make up your own rulings. (Ideally do this before the game begins for the sake of fairness.)

Simply put, the arch-magicians find themselves trapped within the walls of the grounds. The rules of magic are different here, and the first thing they might realise is that the sandestin's access is only one-way (or the sandestins may neglect to mention this until much later). On top of this, what appeared to be sparse deciduous woodland when viewed from outside turns out to be ancient weird forest now they stand at its edge. As the arch-magician PCs take this in, describe how any visibly manifest sandestins retreat to their walnut shells or other portable casings. Even those not visible will be felt curling themselves up as small as possible. The PCs may at this point rightly assume that anything that unnerves sandestins is something to be concerned about.

If a sandestin that is engaged in a six-month contract for basic service is asked, it will explain. "This is another dimension; the rules of magic are different here. Plus, there is an entity at the centre of this place whose powers are a threat to our existence." It will say no more unless paid lavishly in Indenture Points. All of

the sandestins now wish to lie dormant and avoid notice. Any tasks required of them will cost at least 1 extra Indenture Point, and they will refuse point blank to do anything that involves them travelling independently around this pocket dimension at any distance from the PCs of more than a few yards even outdoors. Now seems to be an appropriate time for the GM to announce a Share Goal: "A full share goes to the PC who first lays hands on the missing workbooks." Breaking back out is something that is possible for the sandestins to do, but very hard. Indenture Points will be charged in profusion, and the sandestins will need to travel across the multiverse seeking advice from various elementals and sage entities. (Which takes time even for them.) Crafty PCs may try and use the sandestin's fear against them to reduce the Indenture Point total, but will learn that the total has already been reduced as low as they are going to let it. (Because the sandestins want out as much as the PCs.)

In the meantime they may as well get on with the task at hand. A demon has been left to patrol the grounds. The GM needs to decide whether it is actually several demons, how strong it is, what it looks like, etc. All such things depend on the powers currently possessed by the PCs. Sandestins will still agree to do things to enhance or shift a PC slightly in space, but will not attack the creatures here. If asked to, they will claim that the powerful entity at the centre of this realm will surely devour them if provoked, and annihilation is something even more feared than the dreaded chug. Thus, the arch-magicians are reduced to dealing with threats by using whatever spells work in this realm. And this is indeed the point of this encounter, to give the PCs/Players a chance to wield spells of excessive violence against foes that actually have a chance of causing injury to arch-magicians (something that ups the scene tension notably).

**Demon Guardian(s):** Ferocity [\_\_\_], Sure-Footed [\_\_\_], Magic (Resistance only) [\_\_\_], Health [\_\_\_], Athletics [\_\_\_], Concealment [\_\_\_], Perception [\_\_\_], Stealth [\_\_\_], Tracking [\_\_\_], Wherewithal [\_\_\_]

If your Players are greatly enjoying countering this sudden threat to the survival of their PCs, then add other odd dangers into the woodland before they reach the house – carnivorous plants, slime creatures lurking beneath shallow ponds, floating bags of living acid... whatever bizarre otherworldly inventions you think of.



Many of these should be relatively easily dealt with despite the unusual circumstances. (IE some will serve as illustrations that despite the present dangers, well-prepared arch-magicians are potent individuals.)

### **Demons and Magical Damage**

At Rhialto-level since a sandestin can simply restrain a demon or render it unconscious it would be extremely easy for an arch-magician (or more likely their burly retainer) to cut off its head - or otherwise terminate it - whilst it was so inconvenienced. Thus at Rhialto-level we suggest that most demons can only be damaged by magic, and that regular weapons simply bounce from their hides. This situation presents a much higher entertainment value. In this particular case the GM may of course have sandestins refuse even to hold a demon, though they have no excuse (other than their own fear and reluctance) for not performing holding actions like dropping trees onto/before these entities.

The manse appears pleasant enough on eventually reaching it, although the journey was longer than they might have expected when looking at the apparent size of the grounds from outside. Clearly, someone has been using potent magic here, taking advantage of the prevalence of strange hermits that live in the Prospect to shield their own oddness from common knowledge.

Getting inside is another difficulty they will need to overcome. It too has a protective shield of other-dimensional magic. Probably some version of whatever worked against the outer wall will do, but sandestins gain a boon of 1 to their Rebuff rolls when evidencing their reluctance to move closer to the source of power in this place. Again, a proud arch-magician may boast (or wager) that he will easily overcome these paltry defences. (Or perhaps wager that another PC cannot.)

Within the manse the furnishings are decent but unusually inexpensive for the area – a fact that should be suspicious in and of itself. The majority of rooms are clearly unused, and have gathered dust.

Nonetheless, someone has been living here. Rooms of note include: a well-stocked library; a witch's workroom (complete with rabid guardian vat creature that leaps dripping from a cauldron with murderous intent); the witch's bedchamber; and a black sorcery room (predictably in the cellar). The workbooks that the PCs seek are in the library. It would be a fine thing if a PC spots their **'Must Have' item** in the library and is faced with the choice of being first to grab the

workbooks OR their item, but unable to be first to both. He who dithers loses out on both counts if eager rivals are present. Note that magical defences block all important items, and any PC who wishes to snatch something important up must match his rating against what is effectively the manse's Security rating. This gives another possibility of a free-for-all challenge. It might also be amusing to have a few shambling vat creatures appear and attempt to rend the arch-magicians limb from limb before they are casually blasted into shards (bearing in mind the spell-casting restrictions present due to being in another dimension.)

**Vat Creature(s):** Strength [\_\_\_], Parry [\_\_\_], Magic (Resistance only) [\_\_\_], Health [\_\_\_], Athletics [\_\_\_]

Since the location of a 'Must Have' item is essential once in a while in scenarios, the witch's workroom is another possible place for a PC to spot such a thing. Remember that obtaining a 'Must Have' item entitles one to a Directed Share, and that snatching another player's 'Must Have' item from under their nose entitles one to a Directed Share x 1.5.

It might be worth the GM's while to create lists of interesting magical items and tomes that she can read out as the arch-magicians ransack the shelves and drawers and benchtops in unseemly haste and greed. (Such lists will at the very least enhance the amusement of this moment. The kind of things that Cugel-level characters only dream of, and Turjan-Level characters covet, will be casually swept onto the floor as the arch-magicians hunt for items of real utility and interest.)

The sorcery room, when they get there, is an eerie place, which cannot be properly illuminated. Whatever it is that stands so bulkily at the cellar's centre seems to absorb most light like water into a sponge. Why would they even go here, when they have found the workbooks and when even sandestins are quivering in fear? Curiosity, avarice, as a result of a cowardice challenge? Perhaps one of the PCs has challenged another to see which of them can subdue and bind the entity to their will? Since they may never go here, the possible events if they do will be merely summarised.

However, if your PCs are capable enough it may also be an opportunity a crescendo moment, so consider the following: The PCs cannot leave the grounds because their powers are limited in this dimension, as are the powers of their sandestins (who are effectively operating on this entity's turf). In such a situation they





are left with no choice but to confront the entity with the objective of destroying or disabling it, so that they can then pass back out of the manse's grounds into Odkin Prospect (rather than being left traversing the distant planes without a map). This could be set up and played as a free-for-all version of a Tough Challenge (RBoM, p18). In this case victory would be almost assured, and the only variant would be which PC gains the status from being the one to actually express the final blast of mental force that defeats their foe.

If the PCs need some kind of concrete motivation to send them into Magical contest with this being, perhaps it begins to set off enchantments designed to pull the oxygen out of this pocket dimension, or otherwise make it uninhabitable for the intruders. Or perhaps it begins (ever so slowly) to manifest itself fully in the courtyard (into some huge blob that gradually becomes recognisable as a embryonic hundred foot physical demonic avatar. (Since this is impervious to their Magic, they will have no choice but to confront the energetic avatar downstairs before it can complete the process of creating their nemesis in the flesh.)

Or perhaps the arch-magicians scent or suspect IOUN stones, and find that Yaska (wisely) stores hers in a doorless compartment in the front of the altar (where they buzz and bounce most appealingly). For variety you might make these instead be IOUN alternates such as Unda-Hrada's Tears (*Demons of the Dying Earth*, p67). Imagine the fun of trying to collect these dodging and flying baubles once they have defeated the demonic entity and the manse collapses or burns around them!

### **Yaska/Yasmaine**

It is probably an apposite moment to discuss this woman, who is the focus of this scenario after all. Well, in truth she is a mere plot device, but in the tradition of most role-playing games, as a primary plot device we feel she deserves at this minimal explanation.

A woman who worked her way up in her own aeon, where prejudice against witches was almost as strong as in our own time. She found a position of power, was forced to take on a male apprentice, discovered he was plotting against her, and at the moment of her planned escape was attacked by him and catapulted into the far future. Although she succeeded in absconding with a number of potent magical tomes, she found herself in a land and society far more backward than her own, and was unable to practice her magic without prejudice.

Fortunately the Scholasticarium at least provided a place where women were allowed to associate with magic, so she naturally gravitated here. Nonetheless (or perhaps because of the condescension received at the hands of the almost exclusively male staff), her bitterness and hatred for male magicians continued to grow. Eventually she used Klymp's workbooks to summon a daihak of her own, and set about a number of petty revenges. (Including seducing magicians and arch-magicians, and the subsequent purloining of information and magic items. And the recent escalation to the release of curses. She is an angry woman!

The shrine at the centre of this darkened room is a blackened human skull (Changa's) on top of a burned and melted altar. The daihak manifests as a faceless shiny-skinned humanoid with bat-like wings. (Again, on the moment it appears one PC may challenge another as to who can best classify it according to Thrupp's Almanac.) It is impervious to many spells, or at best scorched by them, thus PCs need to match their sheer Magical will against its own to overcome it here on its home turf. During any such combat make sure to describe its hideous keenings (yes even though it has no mouth) its savage claws, and its relentless efforts to reach them in order to rend them limb from limb.

This combat needs to be played out with full drama and description, since if it takes place it will be a highlight of the adventure. If any sandestins are forced into participation, create a very real opportunity that they will be permanently dispelled or destroyed. Consider also describing arch-magicians bleeding from the nose and ears, skin charring, bones creaking, that sort of thing - as they have no choice but to pit their in combined wills against this fiendish entity. Once the entity is defeated you will be fully within your rights to have the manse explode, burst into flames, disintegrate, or whatever else best suits your sense of the dramatic. Since sandestins may now act with impunity, the safety of arch-magicians in such an event is almost assured.

*As you will probably have gathered by now, Yaska is not at home at this time. If it adds to the fun and games she might appear whilst they are so engaged, salvage some of her equipment and tomes, and flee beyond their ken. But only if they are powerless to stop her or too distracted. Of course, if the opportunity presents, one PC may confront her alone. Since she has potent talismans she is invulnerable to magic, and an undignified physical pursuit or combat may become necessary. Ideally she will escape so as to be encountered later.*

# Chapter 5: All Hail the Intrepid Heroes

## 5.1) Bringing News of Success

A Challenge may occur as to who alerts Ildefonse of their success. Speed and splendour of arrival all count in deciding such a distinction. It is possible that unscrupulous PCs (which is to say any of them) might even sabotage the transport plans of their fellows.

## 5.2) A Local Aside

This is a shameless opportunity for giving the PC in third place in the Status Points stakes (or the male character closest to this point if you allow female arch-magicians) a chance to catch up. (Or the PC with most Sympathy Points [DERPG, p143], if you track these.)

⊕ "You are walking in Kaiin's huge Market Place, some few weeks after the events that you have just survived, and still some few days before the scheduled conclave. Others of your companions are in the area, either still lunching at the Scholasticarium or browsing other stalls. You yourself are examining the offerings of those who claim to have pulled treasures out of the bay, but as of yet have found nothing of merit. On your mind is the witch woman Yaska, who has so far eluded detection. Although you did not admit such to your comrades, you began to find her somewhat familiar. Eventually managed to recollect that six months ago you met her at a soiree in Odkin Prospect, during which time she charmed you, and this led to an energetic physical encounter in one of the private apartments. And yet for some reason, she chose to leave no curse with you, nor any other impediment. You sigh at the fond memory, and fancy that perhaps you alone managed to satisfy her female needs and attain a special place in her fractured affections. Then you start from your reverie. Surely not. You look again at the end of the aisle. A woman in a wide-brimmed hat is carrying a large bag and moving with swift short movements along the stalls, examining this and that in hurried bursts of energy. You position yourself to greater advantage. Yes, it is her, there is no doubt: Yasmaine, or rather Yaska, the woman cast adrift from a far distant time. What will you do?"

Encourage interesting role-playing by offering the player half of a Directed Share if he captures her or otherwise alerts the authorities, but a share and a half if he manages to approach her as an admiring equal and gain at least a lingering embrace before parting.

**Yaska:** Charming [\_\_\_], Penetrating [\_\_\_], Cunning [\_\_\_], Misdirection [\_\_\_], Health [\_\_\_], Daring [\_\_\_], Appraisal [\_\_\_], Athletics [\_\_\_], Concealment [\_\_\_], Gambling [\_\_\_], Imposture [\_\_\_], Pedantry [\_\_\_], Perception [\_\_\_], Riding [\_\_\_], Scuttlebutt [\_\_\_], Seduction [\_\_\_], Stealth [\_\_\_], Wherewithal [\_\_\_]  
*Resistances:* As you see fit, with the proviso that rude temptation is not the way to win this encounter.

Flattery and admiring reassurance is the way to go here. She may admit that she is leaving Kaiin and departing overseas for a new life, leaving her checkered past behind her. Perhaps the PC in question did indeed charm her, or perhaps he is left with a book of poems or cursed brooch slid secretly into his pocket. (Should he fail to charm her.) Persuasion and Seduction are the abilities that leap to mind, and Yaska should be 1 point better in these ratings than the PC. A PC who fails the task will not notice that they have been cursed, but will be discovered at Conclave to be in the throes of ensqualmation, and therefore in need of a cleansing. This ignoble situation should be role-played for maximum amusement, and will result in a levy on the PC's rolls when he tries to convince anyone of his heroic involvement in the preceding events.

## 5.3) At the Special Conclave

PCs have the chance to describe the various difficulties they went through in the course of 'getting the job done'. Since whoever speaks first has the opportunity to lavish praise on themselves, it may be a free-for-all challenge to decide who this will be, with the accumulated challenge points going to the winner. This person will inevitably tell all in great theatrical style, magnifying their own role. If someone does so in character award them an Improvement Point or two.

However, all PCs will be allowed a say. If Ildefonse has to step in and decree that it must be so, he will, perhaps quoting an obscure by-law (RBoM, p36). Or he will agree that the PCs may tell their tale as a group, if that is what they decide to do. Again this would be a free-for-all, with eliminated PCs being sidelined by the overbearing expressions of bravado from their fellows. Once again, you might insist that each Player voice at least a sentence or two, to stay in the running (or to avoid suffering a levy).

The person with the most Status Points at the end will still be appointed as the Preceptor of the auxiliaries; this is merely an opportunity to change who that person will be. The Conclave will vote at the end of the PCs' description of the events that have just occurred, though of course the GM merely declares that the result of the vote is a clear preference for <insert name of PC with the most Status Points>. In the event of a tie (which the GM might also declare if the difference in Status Point totals is only 2 or 3) tying PCs will be told that they appear to be of more or less equal merit. And they must therefore stand and expound on the reasons why they should be chosen above the other candidates. This is another opportunity for a Challenge of course, which may result in the Status Points total becoming more clearly divergent. It is also an excuse for flamboyant role-playing. Note that the role of acting Preceptor stands until some viable reason emerges why things should change.

Now comes the time when the Conclave must decide on the exact rights and privileges of the auxiliary members. Ildefonse (seconded by Rhialto) will declare that for the purposes of this conclave alone, the PCs will be given full participatory rights. Thus the GM, and likely the players too (although since they are new then perhaps a sense of unfamiliarity is a good thing) will need to become familiar with the Conclave chapter. (RBoM, p33).

The GM will also, prior to running this adventure, use this chapter to decide on the exact rights and privileges that will be on offer. Individual PCs, or PCs acting in group or in support of each other can lay claims for various privileges, dependent on their own limited understanding of points of order etc. This is not meant to be an opportunity for them to make great gains, merely their first chance to experience the rampant unfairness and chaotic nature of the conclave, and to have their rights and duties fully delineated. PCs will need to stand up and argue against the full member that put forward a proposal, if they are to gain a concession. In the event of a tie, or to clarify the benefits of a win, Ildefonse will decide and announce the result.

### Points to Consider:

The entire auxiliary might be proposed to become equivalent to one vote; PCs may argue that their full might is worth at least two votes in any dispute.

Likewise in the event of a quorum being required, the auxiliaries might like to see two of their number equalling

one regular member, whereas someone within the conclave originally proposes that three of them should be the equivalent to one regular member.

No auxiliary member may call for a conclave to be convened except through a full member; PCs may wish to argue that if they act in unity, the auxiliaries should be able to convene a conclave.

The auxiliary is entitled to its own copy of the Monstrament (RBoM, p35), which will be held at the manse of their acting preceptor. Not only might other PCs argue for their own copy (a request not likely to be granted therefore at a penalty of 1), but also might argue amongst themselves for a rotating hosting of their copy.

No auxiliary member may propose a motion, except through a full member. (Again a penalty of 1 stands against the PCs even arguing that they be entitled to propose a motion if they act in unison, as none of the full members want this.)

As immediately above – as pertains to declaring an ad hoc conclave.

Again as above – as pertains to the auxiliaries as a body being subject to Executive Orders.

Grievances: Initially it is proposed that the auxiliaries may only offer a grievance if they do so in unison. No penalty stands in the way of this being argued against in favour of an individual auxiliary doing such a thing.

NB1: The full members see no problem in auxiliary members having full rights to call Points of Order and Precedence etc. Such things are so embedded in their understanding of the basic structure of conclave that no-one even thinks to question the rights of the auxiliaries in this regard.

NB2: Should a PC shine particularly well during debate, and accumulate significant numbers of Status Points, check and see if they have overcome the previous holder of the highest total. If so, select the arch-magician most favourably inclined towards the new leader (or select at random if no person fits this description, but don't choose Ildefonse or Rhialto). This person stands up and says that they believe the conclave has chosen poorly in selecting the acting Preceptor for the auxiliaries. He instead puts forward the person with the new highest total, and calls for a vote on the matter. Someone else stands up and says that a vote cannot be held until both challengers have spoken again. Another contest (even a Quick Contest – RBoM, p33) will need be played out, and the acting Preceptor may change.

# Appendix 1: Role-Playing Hints for Rhialto-Level

## Rivalry

A read through of Vance's Rhialto stories brings various aspects into focus. Whilst the theme of oneupmanship and ruthless competition is primary, it is important to note that this goes on amidst a climate of ostensibly cordial interchange much of the time. Whilst Rhialto himself certainly has enemies, by and large the arch-magicians do not exist in a climate of unbridled hatred. Many of them have cordial or at least neutral relations, attend the same social functions in an attitude of good-natured rivalry, and socialise in a civilised fashion once circumstances have conspired to insist that they spend time together. At one point Rhialto enters a room and doffs his hat, and various other arch-magicians respond in kind, although others coldly ignore him. So, it is important to note that competition is considered normal. At a distribution of IOUN stones for instances, it does not surprise the arch-magicians when several of their number cheat using the Charm of Temporal Stasis, despite their having agreed verbally upon an equitable selection. Nor is this event a cause for unbridled anger or lasting enmity – the arch-magicians take such chicanery for granted and individuals who lost out are mostly annoyed with themselves for not having acted first or with greater efficiency. Of course within this framework it also seems that various veins of sympathy exist, and it is also likely that several members of the conclave will take a dislike to the others. How the Players and GM decide to run this within their own group is up to them. Possibly the PC arch-magicians maintain a roughly cordial social framework (whilst still of course attempting to hoodwink, outdo, and rob each other on a regular basis). Or perhaps the rivalry runs far deeper beneath a veneer of overpolite social nicety.

## Sandestins & Spells

Arch-magicians do not use sandestins habitually. For most eventualities they use their repertoires of spells and cantraps. Sandestins are useful when Rhialto travels back in time, since during the story of *Fader's Waf* he has been robbed of much of his magical power, which he would have likely used instead had it been available. In the story *Morreion*, sandestins are not mentioned at all, yet the magicians fly to the end of the universe and do other weird and wonderful things like activating living representations of women from previous aeons. Thus, whilst sandestins are certainly indispensable and immensely powerful, in the stories the arch-magicians use their spells and magical devices by default, rather than reaching for the chug and preparing orders. Similarly, arch-magicians tend to travel via magical machine rather than by sandestin-powered teleportation, which again clarifies that sandestins are for emergencies and unusual situations – for use in extremity rather than daily application.

With a few exceptions, such as Gilgad's Galvanic Thrust and Ildefonse's Signifier, spells are not mentioned to anything like the same degree as they are in the Turjan-Level stories. However, this appears to be because the arch-magicians take such things for granted rather than because they are uncommon. No doubt each arch-magician has a large battery of spells at their command, and a range of favourite spells from which they choose those that they routinely encompass. Likewise they will have several magical devices about their person, taken from the large collections at their manse, and any device they have they will know the activation cantrap as readily as you and I know the way to the local shop. Such things are obvious and apparent to experienced arch-magicians.

## The Limitations of Sandestins

They cannot create magical items, or journey to a time period if they are already there (TDE, p648); they cannot directly affect lesser gods, the more powerful demons, or someone who also commands sandestins (RBoM, p103). They need specifics and their magical effects can only be roughly equivalent to spells. For each Indenture Point they might: recover a magical item, build a reasonably sized and apportioned manse, slay a powerful archveult (usually by collapsing a cave on them etc rather than dealing death indiscriminately – sandestins have an aversion to being used as common assassins, which needs to be worked around through indirect means); transport you into the far past; repair a magical item (but not recharge one); identify the originator of a set of footprints and describe their present location and activity... Wise arch-magicians include smaller tasks into larger orders, since such things (e.g. stocking a fine wardrobe as part of the manse's furnishings) cost no extra indenture points – being framed as incidental.



## Appendix 2: Optional Sandestin Guidelines

**Murder!** Sandestins won't willingly murder someone. Such an act is against the rules of their own High Congress (RBoM, p102), perhaps a subclause of the Permeating Injunction. This includes such things as transporting somebody to a place that will inevitably result in their death in anything less than a few weeks. They will happily transport attackers roughly to a distant place. If commanded to murder someone they will argue at great length, and demand a high cost in Indenture Points, quoting the Law of Equipoise and the by-laws of Sandestin High Congress. As explained more fully below, an exception is made for those who are already (or about to) cause harm to others, but even so such an act evokes a higher indenture point cost, making the better option transportation or restraint.

**Injury.** Sandestins will not impose actual injury on a non-violent person, such as breaking a leg, rupturing a spleen etc. This might be because such a thing might lead to death, or perhaps this is a separate subclause, or most likely because it is in contradiction of the Law of Equipoise to do so. One exception to this rule is in regard to those sandestins somehow magically bound into weapons, who have no choice in the matter. Sandestins will happily impose all manner of inconveniences however – such as carbuncles, three-foot long noses, turning somebody bright blue. Whilst sandestins still won't murder a violent person, they might transport them away so violently that they suffer injury. If the person is themselves a murderer (previously or just about to be) the sandestin might accidentally allow a wall to fall on them whilst blocking the way, or otherwise get around this injunction. As mentioned in other DERPG publications, this seems all to be a balance with the Law of Equipoise – what you do unto others expect have done unto you. When dealing with aggressors, the sandestin sees itself as fulfilling the Law of Equipoise by allowing a degree of violence. But when dealing with passive subjects it is constrained from causing them harm.

### Sample Indenture Point Costs

**1 Point** (*“generally equivalent to a single difficult, but not overwhelming, magical effort”*)

Recovering a stolen magical item; Constructing a moderately sized elegant manse; Six months of mundane light service; A week of significant endeavour without risk of harm; A single relatively simple service for an hour or two that has some risk (such as repressing the magical pendants of a small group of arch-magicians); Casting up to 3 straightforward spells; Casting a complex spell; Restraining up to a dozen non-magical beings; Transporting up to a dozen persons back in time or returning them to their present; Reading someone's mind for specific information.

#### **2 Points**

Restraining a relatively weak archveult/witch/demon; Allowing vision through the defences of another arch-magician's manse; Briefly deactivating the defences of another arch-magician's manse; Constructing a moderate manse with full furnishings and accoutrements; Rendering one person temporarily undetectable to magic.

#### **3 Points**

Restraining a relatively powerful archveult/witch/demon; Removing/dispelling a weak archveult/witch/demon to where they are unlikely to return from; Allowing vision and sound observation through the defences of another arch-magician's manse; Longer term deactivation of the defences of another arch-magician's manse; Constructing a moderate manse with full furnishings and accoutrements and some minor magical capacity.

#### **4 points**

Restraining a very powerful archveult/witch/demon; Removing/dispelling a medium archveult/witch/demon to where they are unlikely to return from; Slaying a weak archveult/witch/demon; Transporting you inside the defences of another arch-magician's manse (without setting off the security measures).

#### **5 Points**

Removing/dispelling a very powerful archveult/witch/demon to where they are unlikely to return from; Slaying a relatively powerful archveult/witch/demon; Transporting you and a few companions inside the defences of another arch-magician's manse (without setting off the security measures).

#### **6 Points**

Slaying a very powerful archveult/witch/demon; Transporting your group from the clutches of an enraged godling.

## Appendix 3: Tag-Lines for the Creep of Inaccuracy

Play might go for three sessions, or even four, should your Players/PCs be particularly diversionary or verbose. In such cases you will need to adjust and expand the following, which are presently balanced across specific adventure sections.

### Character One

The allure of dusty tomes dwindles appreciably when measured against the unexpected offer of a refined luncheon. I have rarely seen such a spectacularly ineffectual effort. Perhaps if you would care to stand aside...?  
My highly-evolved nasal facility reveals the disagreeable scent of ancient evil drifting limply upon the wind.

### Character Two

I am pursuing the study of eighteenth aeon erotic art, purely as an enhancement to the nobility of my soul. Your inopportune and ill-founded comments are without a minim of merit. I reject such slander with my fullest vigour. My ability to down trenchers with the best of them is without question. Hand me a tankard and prepare for amazement.

### Character Three

Good day to you, sir. Might I take this moment to remind you of my current application to join your fine order? You will find I am the logical choice to head such a force, due to my wide experience of both conundra and uncertainty. I am unconvinced by such claims and suggest a wager to see which of us can truly best master this trifling adversity.

### Character Four

No manner of curse exists that I am unable to undo. I shall lead, and you shall follow. To the library!  
A jaunt in time is no significant peril. Command your sandestins and evoke your cantraps, for I am in full readiness. Fine clothes, feathered hats, high-stepping horses, such is my natural milieu. Follow me to the walls.

### Character Five

Might I compliment you on this excellent buffet. Clearly you command sandestins of a superior gustatory competence. My membership in your organisation is as good as guaranteed. Merely outline the problem and consider it solved. Your sluggish attitude does you no credit. Behave more zestily or I shall be forced to act with rude force.

### Character One

I shall personally find and restrain this witch or else eat my own hat, lightly boiled and garnished with kank-weed. Fell deeds once took place upon these premises; death and revenge still hang heavy on the air. Loathe as I am to admit it, we have no choice but to attack our cruel nemesis in concert and with our utmost force.

### Character Two

I say this only out of courtesy, but your overly-ostentatious hat is certain to offend her and your ridiculous trousers will surely unsettle her delicate nerves. I advise you to stand aside for your betters in this arena. I was merely taking cover behind that fallen log in order to better target the entity with my choicest magics. My own role has been reduced and maligned to the point of utter farce. I demand a retelling in the strongest terms.

### Character Three

Eyes with the lustre of gossamer stars, lips shining as rubies, hair like spun silk... Command me – I am yours. My mind seethes with spells, my fingers glow with power. Consider the workbooks as being already within my grasp. We cannot accept such a poor representation. Our recent actions have shown us to be men of mettle. Think again!

### Character Four

Enough faddle. To Kaiin at once. You may not care for such things but my personal prestige hangs in the balance. Penalties must be exact and proportionate. I declare it my own arduous duty to find and confiscate her IOUN stones. Such a reward is generous indeed, yet somehow lacking when compared against the magnificence of our recent exertions.

### Character Five

Although the shamefully bedraggled appearance of my colleagues belies it; we are on a mission of utmost importance. Whilst none posses greater innate boldness than myself, when sandestins cower I at least pause to consider my options. Though no stranger to adversity and exertion, I now admit to lethargy. If needed I shall be relaxing in my nympharium.