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PEOPLE
OF
PEMBROOKTONSHIRE

AUTHOR'S NOTES

While working on *No Dignity in Death: The Three Brides* and placing three adventures that were unconnected in my campaigns into a single location that came to be called Pembrooktonshire, my mind started to be filled with the possibilities for fleshing the place out. Early on I decided that it was probably best to leave the adventure itself alone and make the “fleshed out” material into its own book. It had to be released separately from (for those that just wanted the adventure) and simultaneously with (I hate when game companies rip off their customers by publishing additions or changes to their games or settings after the fact) the original adventure.

But how to best flesh out the setting in a way that was modular, entertaining, and personally interesting?

- The players in my home group seem to enjoy NPC interactions as much as actual adventuring. So when I run games, I often think of weird and sometimes disturbing personalities on the spot for NPCs.
- I am a big fan of *The League of Gentlemen*, the British TV series which takes place in the fictional town of Royston Vasey. One of the things I enjoy about the series is how every person in town seems to have a different sort of defective personality.
- While responding to a post on the Grogardian blog back in March, I made a quip that people will determine there are 137 of us in the Old School Renaissance. It was just a throwaway comment but people picked up on it as an in-joke.

Suddenly, I had my focus. I'd do what I normally do – come up with strange characters – to make Pembrooktonshire truly an adventure in itself rather than just a backdrop to adventure. All I had to do was come up with 137 weird and distinct NPC ideas. Easy, right? Hah! Towards the middle of the process I was considering a third book called *Nuke Pembrooktonshire* because I was beginning to despise the place. But doesn't that happen in all projects somewhere between “REALLY COOL IDEA!” and “Finished saleable product”? Luckily I caught a second wind that the last half was easier to complete than the first.

The inspiration for the individual characters came from many sources. Some were standard thriller-fare. Some were straight out of pop culture. Some were from my imagination. Some were designed to be horrific. Some were designed to be frightening in a more sophisticated kind of way. Some were meant to be comedic, and some were meant to be downright goofy. Some were intended to be a moment's diversion in a game, some were meant to be able to anchor an entire scenario.

There were some moments of doubt when writing this. Is this a valid and smart thing to work on and release? Will anybody care? Is it “old school” enough? In the end I just had to trust my own instincts. Whether this book gets bought or used or not, I would have felt the whole Pembrooktonshire creation to be incomplete without it. So here it is, and I can now close this creative chapter without regrets.

I hope it enriches your game, I hope it provides some entertaining reading, and I hope it inspires more original creations of your own!

James Edward Raggi IV
Helsinki, Finland
August 6, 2009

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HOW TO USE PEOPLE OF PEMBROOKTONSHIRE

Many traditional role-playing campaigns don't bother with "the town" or social interaction or political intrigue. That's perfectly fine. But some do, and in general these games have been underserved by gaming supplements. *No Dignity in Death* is largely an in-town adventure, and while details are given for the principal characters for the situations detailed therein, it gives almost nothing for interactions that are not related to those situations. Pembrooktonshire is obviously not your run-of-the-mill village, and obviously the possibilities for intrigue and adventure don't have to stop with *No Dignity in Death*.

People of Pembrooktonshire provides a toolkit for fleshing out the town and making it interesting while other adventures are experiencing downtime as well as a repository for triggers and hooks for entirely new adventures, all disguised in the form of character bios.

Nothing in this book is "official." The only version of Pembrooktonshire that is "official" is the one found in *No Dignity in Death*, and even in that adventure it is just a convenient background/excuse for the matters at hand. There isn't even much requiring the use of Pembrooktonshire in that adventure in the first place, especially if the given adventures are placed by the referee in different locations.

Nothing in this book supercedes the information found in the original adventure unless the referee so chooses. There, Constable Stark is gone on holiday, and that is not so unusual for a resident to do. Here, since foreign holidays are unconscionable to the average citizen, it is instead revealed that he was murdered. In the original campaign that spawned the adventure, he was at some sort of policeman's convention elsewhere in the kingdom, however it was worded at the time. None is more correct than the others except what the individual referee decides.

It is not expected that the entirety of this book will be used by any one referee. The characters in this book introduce a great variety of tones and elements into the town. By deciding which characters and/or elements to use, the referee can decide whether this town is to be played for laughs, as a political dystopia, as a horror setting, as a surrealistic farce, or something else, or even all of these at the same time.

By the same token, many of the characters' oddities have little connection to the character itself. Elements of a character can be mixed and matched with other characters found here, or in other supplements (Hommlet or The Keep could have just gotten much more interesting), or NPCs of the referee's own design.

Be aware of the effect that any change will have in other areas. For example, if a referee dislikes the idea about dwarfs being the secret overlords and protectors of the area, then The Great Games portion of *No Dignity in Death* will require a major revision, if it is to be used at all, and there will also need to be effective fighting men in the town. Small Town Murder would require no adjustment at all in this situation, and A Lonely House on a Lonely Hill would change only in backstory that players will very likely never discover to begin with.

Even if not one word of this book is used as-written, it is hoped that simply reading this text colors one's impression of *No Dignity in Death* and inspires ideas about fleshing out the town.

ABOUT PEMBROOKTONSHIRE

The less said about Pembrooktonshire in general, the better, in order to allow the individual referee to tailor the setting. However, there are certain assumptions made in the character writeups that must be addressed.

THE ENVIRONS

Pembrooktonshire is nestled in a mountain valley, several days' journey from the nearest settlement. The town itself is surrounded by a network of hills, between which are a series of fields and pastures. A river runs from the mountains into the hills forming a series of ponds, and there is a large pond near the town itself.

The hills form a barrier from the outside world, and the area is difficult to travel through unless knowing the proper routes. There are even forks in the road that lead only to dead ends in the hills. Many travelers seeking Pembrooktonshire never find it, spending days lost in the network of hills before giving up.

The townsfolk believe that the mountains are haunted with the spirits that guard the town, and people never go there. Sure, some foolhardy teenagers and curious adults will tempt the mountains, but as often as not they do not return.

The secret of the mountains is that a large nation of dwarfs claims the mountains as their own, and do not want humans encroaching on their territory. They have a network of tunnels throughout the hills surrounding the town, and are always on the lookout for trouble. They protect the town in order to keep up the spirit ruse, and nobody in town knows that the dwarfs are there.

GENERAL CULTURE

Pembrooktonshire has turned tradition and correct living into a way of life.

There is a complicated mass of customs and courtesies that govern what people should do in many situations, from offering (and accepting) tea and how to pay for goods in a shop to courtship and how to behave differently on different days depending on phase of the moon and day of the week. It's not so much a set of learned behaviors so much as a built-in means for everyone to feel superior over everyone else, as not one single person can keep it all straight and still function in daily life. Of course the niceties are less important for those doing work and socializing amongst friends, but they are essential when dealing with the important people (who often have advisors whose sole job it is to prompt them on proper etiquette).

The end result is something resembling a giant movie version of a high school clique. You're either in or you're out. And nobody wants to be out.

THE LAW

While there is a mayor and town council, these are effectively figurehead positions elected in what amounts to popularity polls. They basically rubber-stamp activities initiated by important private citizens and perform Master of Ceremonies duties at festivals and such.

The only official laws really have to do with property rights, physical violence, and theft. While even these are subject to the whim of the mob, convincing the general public that a murder or blatant fraud is acceptable will be nigh impossible.

THE GREAT FAMILIES

The Great Families are the de facto rulers of Pembrooktonshire. Not because they have power in a traditional sense, but because they are the rich trend-setters that everyone wants to be. Most gossip and dinner-table conversation in town revolves around the various members of these families and what they are up to.

The great families behave like they are eternal institutions, and it certainly seems so at any point in time, but in fact the families that are considered “great” constantly change over the generations. It’s prestige, not power.

MARRIAGE

Marriage is a very powerful political and social tool in Pembrooktonshire. Only the lower classes will marry simply for love, and that usually assumes that neither party believes they have a chance to advance socially.

There is also an intense social pressure to marry and produce children. Those who are not interested in marriage are considered in many ways unfit for general society. Those who seek to marry but are unable to find a partner are pitied. Couples who do not produce children are shunned, and an infertile person will find themselves divorced in short order. In this situation, both spouses generally blame the other, but the truth of the situation will normally come out as each finds another mate.

Once married, couples are expected to behave as if they are hopelessly in love. Adultery is considered a very serious (social) offense in Pembrooktonshire, and anyone caught committing it can expect many, if not most, of their close friends, acquaintances, business partners, and/or customers abandoning them.

NAMES

When a couple gets married, there is no assumption that the wife will take the husband’s surname. What happens is that the people involved, and their families, negotiate as to which last name will be taken. Gifts, bribes, and subterfuge is almost always a part of this process. Lower-born people will want the couple to take the name of the higher-born partner, in order to attach themselves to a greater family. Higher-born people will want the couple to take the name of the lower-born partner, if they approve of the wedding at all, in order to not dilute the importance of their family name.

Sometimes families can not come to an agreement (usually because the families are so close in status), and the married couple each retains their original name. But then come children, and the issue of which name they will carry flares up, far more intense than deciding what the married name will be. Pembrooktonshiretonians do not use hyphenated names.

RELIGION

Pembrooktonshire follows the religion of All, which is a monotheistic religion which recognizes one creator which set the universe in motion and monitors it to keep it in good working order. Worship and prayer to All ensures that the well-being of the worshippers is included in the definition of a universe in “good working order.”

Magic of any sort is generally considered to be an offense against the working order of the universe, and is generally feared and shunned, as are any practitioners.

The Church of All does recognize a number of saints. The saints are generally martyrs to All, or sometimes just great achievers who were also very pious, that are ascribed a certain profession or trait which they had in life, and those who admire or possess those traits or professions will generally also pray to the particular saint.

Organized worship is held every Sunday. There are six churches in Pembrooktonshire, one on the market square which can hold over 500 people, and five others scattered about that hold between 100 and 250 people each. The main church is decadently decorated, while the others are simple affairs.

From the point of view of what the believers do and how they express their faith, the Church of All is indeed very close to Roman Catholicism. However, what they actually believe is quite different. There is no mortal manifestation, or savior, or judgment day or great adversary in the religion of All. Hell is considered a real and awful place, but the danger is that wicked living will attract a demon to take one to hell, not that a wicked soul will go there after death.

There are no other religions openly practiced in Pembrooktonshire. To practice another religion, or even to acknowledge the validity of such, would mean becoming an instant and permanent social outcast. Outsiders' religion is tolerated much as the strange imaginations of a small child are tolerated by adults. Any attempt to proselytize or engage in theological debate or even openly practice will not be taken kindly. People displaying holy symbols of other faiths will be told to cover it up.

COMMERCE

Pembrooktonshire is a very rich town. It is stinking, filthy rich. Most of that wealth is concentrated in the hands of the upper classes of course, but even the lowest dirt farmers live better, freer, and surely far more securely, than those in similar circumstances elsewhere.

The wealth is generated by the reputation of Pembrooktonshire's artists, craftsmen, and fruit wines. Nobility, royalty, and wealthy people in general pay premium prices for Pembrooktonshire goods, and for all that is wrong with the town, the people that create these high-priced items earn every penny. Pembrooktonshire-made or -crafted items can be placed as treasure in random hoards throughout the land, because people will buy it.

PEMBROOKSHIRETONIANS

Elroy Aldersey, Stationery

Pembrooktonshire is an amazingly literate community, with even the poor children expected to learn how to read and write. While books and access to the printing press are available only to a few, letter-writing is alive and well throughout all the social classes. Indeed, it is quite fashionable to write letters to keep people updated on family business, even if the recipient lives next door.

Quills and paper and ink are readily homemade, but custom demands that important news be written on expensive paper using proper ink. Aldersey produces both items (even he has given up on trying to get people to buy quills instead of plucking poor passing geese) and does a steady trade.

Aldersey now concentrates on making the ink since hiring on two apprentices that seem to make paper even better than he. The problem is he spends so much time on his work, and is becoming more and more absentminded, that he goes out in public stained with ink and sweating like a pig, and always winds up smearing the stuff on everyone and everything.

He's not very popular lately.

Anthony Alford, Furrier

Pembrooktonshire may be situated in the most tame and settled area of existence. This creates a problem because come winter, the rich people want furs, and they want them in the latest styles. But where to get these furs in this area?

Despite being nestled in a mountain valley with no other civilization for miles around, there are no appreciable furry animals. No bears. No wolves. Not even any deer. No lynx or ermine or anything that might have fur in any quantity, let alone of any value.

It would be humiliating to buy fur from abroad. So what's a fur-man to do?

Rats and squirrels and chipmunks, that's what. And neighbor's kittens and the stray hunting dog that wanders onto his property.

Alford is an absolute wonder at taking these tiny, mundane creatures and making items of luxury out of them. But if a truly valuable pelt were to land in his lap... he'd have no clue what to do with it.

Frederick Amcotts, Corn Farmer

Frederick makes a good enough living from his cornfields to support himself and his extended family, but this is not enough for him. He needs more.

He longs for the days of communal entertainment gone by, when the crowds would gather, vendors would serve snacks, and together the people would all cheer as they were spectators to entertainment of the most thrilling and noble sort.

So Amcotts has cut down a large patch of his cornfield and built a gallows, hoping that if he builds it, they will hang.

Marcus Arbuthnot, Sculptor

There is a vibrant artist community in Pembrooktonshire. A quality artist can make a fortune selling his work abroad, and an artist that becomes successful abroad also becomes the hot fashion in town as well. And then there's the case of Marcus Arbuthnot.

Arbuthnot specializes in statues, architectural sculpture, and busts. He is very good, and his local patrons are always well satisfied.

Pembrooktonshiretonians celebrate Arbuthnot for his ability to capture the natural shape of things, and portraying the tiniest details of people, making his statues and busts frighteningly lifelike.

Foreigners are also amazed by his statue/bust work, but only the first time they see it. For some reason, and this is not at all noticed by the locals, all of his work detailing human features winds up looking exactly like Marcus Arbuthnot.

Owen Auden, Child

Auden is the youngest child of six, and is painfully shy. He never speaks louder than a whimper and tends to be ignored and forgotten.

Then one day Auden discovered that people actually couldn't see him. He had faded into the background so completely that he actually became invisible. Now, although still very shy and unwilling to speak to anyone and feeling uncomfortable at times he must be seen, he wanders into different places to observe people doing things. He finds it interesting how people act differently in private than they do in public.

Auden is also delusional. He's not actually invisible, it's just that people think so little of him that they simply don't care if he is around.

Sebastian Auvunet, Ironmonger

With access to the mountains cut off, Pembrooktonshire has to import all of their metal. Pembrooktonshire's artistic and craftworks are in such demand that gaining this material is not difficult, but someone's got to organize it.

Because it would be bad form for the artisans or craftsmen to organize their own export arrangements, and because it would also be improper for one broker to be an all-in-one organizer, different traders for different goods, even if stemming from the same overall deal, have sprung up to fill both the demand for materials and the need to be proper.

For many years the ironmongers of Pembrooktonshire have been importing inferior ore. The brokers are buying it from the source, then selling that ore to third parties at inflated prices ("It's Pembrooktonshire ore, superior as all our exports are!"), and then buying substandard iron for import. And of course, pocketing the difference.

Auvunet continues this fine tradition.

Matilda Bainbridge, Slovenly Trull

Matilda has always been a scandal, deciding to live the life of pleasure and sin instead of being a proper young lady. Ostracized in public and rarely alone in private, life has caught up to Bainbridge: She is now in her forties with five children from five different fathers with the sagging body to show for it, and the "gentlemen" are no longer calling.

Now it is even worse: She feels she is going insane. Two of the more cruel members of the great families of Pembrooktonshire have made a bet on whether they can make Bainbridge go insane, and so they have hired ventriloquists to follow her and talk to her while they stay out of sight.

The voices are telling Matilda to do horrible and humiliating things. And her will to resist is running out.

Horton Baker, Butcher

Horton is a family man. He'd better be, since he has twenty-eight children. And he's only thirty!

Horton and his wife enjoy engaging in marital relations more than most, and as is usual with the common folk in these situations, his wife Hellenne often finds herself with child. Only it's never one child. Or even two or three. Every time she gets pregnant, she delivers *at least* four strong and healthy children.

The neighbors are getting upset as the younger litters cry all night and the oldest children run rampant unsupervised throughout the neighborhood. It's getting harder and harder to support the family as pressure continues to mount to use his access to livestock to feed the family instead of practicing his trade and selling to others.

Baker is getting desperate, and with every chop of his cleaver he comes closer to making an irreversible decision.

Alec Balfour, Town Crier

It's not all that often that there are public pronouncements to be made, so Alec works most of the time as a dishwasher at a local pub. When something needs to be communicated to the people, Balfour dons his official uniform, goes to the general public gathering areas, and does his civic duty.

The problem is he experiences terrible stage fright, and the normally well-spoken man develops a terrible and severe stutter while making pronouncements. Every time.

Gordon Balladeer, Lamplighter

Gordon is a middle-aged man who has the unenviable task of lighting Pembrooktonshire's oil street lamps every night and keeping them clean. It's a filthy job with horrible hours, and after fifteen years of this labor, he has become jaded and old before his time.

Gordon always was a good-natured kidder and practical joker, but as time has worn on his good humor turns ever more often to sarcasm. However, in recent months, Gordon has become very upset as people are taking *everything* he says seriously and act as if it's the truth. His forty years of habit has made it difficult for him to not throw in a snide or pithy comment in every conversation, but now he is horrified that people are putting full stock on his every word (but not when he tries to explain that he's kidding...) and is gaining the reputation around town as something as a folk sage.

Dennis Bergelin, Blubberer

Oil is a valuable commodity, and it seemed to Bergelin that importing hideously expensive whale oil was a losing proposition for Pembrooktonshire. But the town has no access to the sea. What to do?

The answer came as Dennis was out hunting one day perilously close to the mountains. He found a grievously wounded troll down an embankment. In a mix of greed and foolhardiness (for whatever wounded the troll must still be very close and very powerful, else the troll would no longer be wounded nor indeed wounded at all!) he crept close and lopped a finger off of it before burning the rest (who hadn't heard the stories?).

In the days that followed he found to his horror that the finger was growing. A few days later when there was almost an entire arm, he did some experiments... and found that troll blubber oil works as well as whale oil.

Now Bergelin sells his super-secret oil (which he advertises as extremely perishable – use within days!) and is getting rich off of it.

There are only two possible problems: If Bergelin is away from home for more than a week or so, or unable to work, that hand (currently hung on an iron hook) is going to grow into enough of a troll to free itself. That won't be good.

Two, some people are stockpiling oil by buying through intermediaries. If enough of this oil is stored in one place, it will have enough “troll essence” and soon some rich people are going to have real live angry trolls in their storage spaces.

Nigel Bingsley, Taxidermist

Like most working men in Pembrooktonshire, Nigel is very skilled at his work, has a loving family, and works hard to fit in to the social scene and come across as a moral and proper gentleman. He’s even overcome the unpleasant stigma of engaging in a profession that involves playing with dead things!

But Nigel’s workshop is constantly being burgled. He can’t figure out what’s going on. The watch is similarly clueless. Every so often, one of his pieces disappears, with no signs of forced entry (and he’s had his locks changed a dozen times), no clues, and the pieces (some of them quite large) are never seen again.

It’s like the damn things just got up and walked away...

Theodosa Birkbeck, Maid

Birkbeck is an aging spinster who just isn’t up to dealing with livestock anymore, so has moved into the more upscale work of cleaning the homes of rich people. It’s really not so bad as work goes, as the well-to-do tend to be tidy people, and the worse she has to deal with from her employers is being completely ignored. It’s better than getting kicked in the face by a horse.

Her only problem is that since she doesn’t much communicate with her employers, and they tend to live in such large houses, she doesn’t know exactly who is in the family and who is not. She is also coming into direct contact with the ghosts of many of the families’ deceased members, and neither she nor they realize they are dead. And so she carries on conversations, fetches things, goes on errands, and for all intents and purposes acts irrationally as far as any witnesses (her employers, mostly) are concerned.

Lloyd Borcellino, Farmer

One of Pembrooktonshire’s numerous and seemingly interchangeable farmers, Lloyd does his best to work his fields and raise his livestock.

He is pitied by those that know him because he has been married for many years and he and his wife have not managed to have any children.

Or so everyone thinks. The truth is that the couple has been having children, many of them, over the years. But they’re not human. They’re animals. Piglets. Lambs. Calfs. When they are born, Lloyd just takes them out and puts them with the other animals and pretends one of his livestock just gave birth.

The couple have no idea why this is happening, or even how – Mrs. Borcellino’s body was quite ruined after the first birth and is no longer able to have marital relations at all. And she’s not into bestiality.

But whatever the cause, the couple agrees on two things. It’s their secret, and boy oh boy is the meat from *those* animals the tastiest they’ve ever had!

Clive Brodhurst, Pigeon Breeder

Clive is a man of mystery. He’s undoubtedly of the town, but nobody can remember growing up with him. He also has a knack for being able to hang around public places without being seen.

He bought an old man’s outlying homing pigeon farm some time back, and bought a large building near the center of town to house the business. He “didn’t want to be so far away from where the action is,” he said.

Brodhurst is a spy, but he has no idea who he is spying for. He thinks there is some monastery within several days’ ride that has taken vows to never be in direct contact with the outside world, but wishes to receive news of it. So Brodhurst makes daily reports about events both mundane and noteworthy and sends it along

via carrier pigeon. The townsfolk, used to the birds flying around with messages tied to their legs, think nothing of it.

And not even Clive knows who is receiving his messages.

Shane Bunting, Consumption Victim

Bunting is an unfortunate man, the greatest poet of the age (his favorite topic was criticizing the lower classes) slowly wasting away in bed. Well-loved and always the life of the party when healthy, he is now shunned by all but his caregivers for fear that his illness will spread (although some believe he has become a vampire).

The truth is Bunting is not ill, but haunted. An evil witch appears some nights (not every night, and never while Bunting is attended) to steal his spirit and ride it to the witches' Sabbath. During this time Bunting is awake but unable to move or even breathe, and feels the pain and terror of suffocation even though death cannot occur because the spirit is bound. By morning, the witch returns the spirit and flies off cackling, promising to see him again.

The townsfolk think he is hallucinating, as this often happens with people in the next room (and standing guard outside, as he was believed when it first started happening) and nobody has seen anyone coming and going.

Bunting's time is running out.

Thurston Butcher, Candle Maker

Baker is a conscientious man of about thirty years of age, and after an early period of unsteadiness, has turned himself into an excellent candle maker. He even creates expensive candles, intricately carved and adorned with precious metals and gems, to sell to far-off royalty. The honor received from such works makes all of Pembrooktonshire proud.

In public, Baker is seen as an exceedingly polite man, always overdressed for the occasion with his expensive scarves and silk gloves and ever-present overcoat.

Thurston has been dead for twelve years.

Jaime Böhmer, Milkmaid

Jaime is a young woman who makes ends meet by milking cows for several farmers. Being an unmarried young woman, she of course still lives with her parents, but they fear they will never be able to marry her off.

Böhmer is a very sensitive woman. So sensitive that she *deeply feels* any emotions happening around her. If someone else is a bit sad, Jaime breaks down crying. If someone else has received good news, Jaime is jumping up and down for joy. If a man smiles at her, she falls in love with them. If someone stumbles over something she left in a corner and they are momentarily annoyed, she feels the same guilt and shame as if she'd dropped their baby.

People really don't like being around her.

Lucas Chappelle, Goatherder

Happy with his and his family's lot in life, Lucas only wanted a quiet existence out in the hills and pastures. But even this simple pleasure has been torn from him.

Some time back, a few of his goats uncovered a previously unknown cave in a low hill. Chappelle found them inside, drinking from a strangely colored pool. Ever since, they have become ravenous carnivores, gobbling up every rabbit, squirrel, hedgehog, cow, and horse they have come across.

Chappelle spends his time in mortal fear, desperately herding the goats away from all people and away from the town.

Abraham Charrington, Banker

Charrington is the man responsible for receiving payments for many of the goods sold from Pembrooktonshire. He also runs a strikingly modern banking system, storing the gold of various families while issuing credit and allowing them to pay various businesses using vouchers, or cheques, that allow the recipient to redeem them for hard currency later.

As the foremost member of one of the great families of Pembrooktonshire, most consider him honest to a fault, and the perfect man to perform this job.

They shouldn't. He aggressively uses his foreign contacts to channel the real gold out of Pembrooktonshire and replace it with an almost identical-looking crystal (not iron pyrite!). Over the years he has basically robbed the entire town of all of its wealth.

All of the money in circulation in Pembrooktonshire (not money stored in private vaults for quite some time) is not made of precious material, and the same can be said about most of the jewelry in town. It is worthless to the outside world.

But this doesn't matter the way Charrington believes. Pembrooktonshire exports, not imports, and if someone were to find out that all of the gold in town was fake, the town is collectively delusional enough to declare that their "gold" is what is truly valuable and that the foreign stuff is the forgery. And good luck exporting anything after that!

Abraham Christiannse, Canemaker

An important status symbol for men in Pembrooktonshire is the cane. Everyone who is anyone has a walking stick complete with custom-made heads made out of precious materials.

Christiannse's customers, simply attempting to obtain a fashion piece, swear that walking becomes much easier when using these canes. What is happening is that Abraham's work on the cane heads is preternatural, and the canes actually do make walking easier. The problem is that men who use the canes frequently over a period of time start losing the full ability of their legs when not using the cane.

Abraham is aware of this, and wish it wasn't happening, but he's not about to stop selling his canes.

Peregrine Cleverdon, Locksmith

Peregrine is a rising young star in both the social and artisan scenes of Pembrooktonshire, and has the according attention of many young ladies hoping that he'll want to marry them.

He's garnered this reputation for his ostentatious custom-made locks which he seems to be able to crank out with ease. Everybody who is anybody wants one of his locks on their front door so that every passerby knows that the owner of the building is in tune with the latest style.

There's just one problem. Cleverdon is very good at making unique, attractive and prestigious-looking lock casings and keys, but not so good at making actual locks. Every single lock he has ever made can be opened with the same key. But he hasn't realized that just because they look different, they don't function differently. Nobody else has realized it yet either.

Edwin Clover, Cockfighter

Even in a town as image-conscious as Pembrooktonshire, there are smoky backroom entertainments. While it doesn't get as vulgar as some other locales, there is a healthy (?) interest in cockfighting.

Clover is a champion cockfighter, training his fowl in all manner of foul tactics. His birds have won the championships four years running.

Under Clover's influence, the fights have gotten bizarre. Weapons and armor are added to the dumb cluckers in order to make the fight more spectacular to onlookers, thereby increasing attendance and hopefully the betting pools.

First it was razor claws. Then a beak-blade. Then eye protection. And so more and more was added... now chicken fights resemble clockwork mecha duels more than anything else, including oil-based one-shot flamethrowers and automatically triggered darts. The fights end up with the roosters having to tear through their opponent's armor and ripping off various devices before any fight can be concluded. Spectator injuries are frequent but usually minor as the rooster-sized armaments are not so large.

But someday somebody is going to figure out you can put all this stuff on a man... and that man will die quickly as of course none of this is motorized and the sheer weight will render the wanna-be cyborg soldier near immobile in actual combat.

Gerald Constant, Farmer

Gerald Constant is a loving husband and father of twelve rather well-behaved children. During summer months he is up at the crack of dawn and goes to bed at sunset. He sleeps a lot in the winter.

But he's not always out in the fields, or caring for the farm animals. Sometimes he's in the secret basement of one of his tool sheds, mocking and humiliating and torturing an elderly dwarf he was able to corner alone while taking a walk into the forbidden mountains some years back. Constant is perhaps the most depraved person in the entire area, and the dwarf's mind shattered under the cruelty long ago.

Cows #125, 163 and 265

The farms and pastures around Pembrooktonshire are peaceful, rolling, and beautiful. The livestock is healthy, the land is fertile. The usual drudgery and uncertainty that farmers elsewhere face is instead rewarding and profitable here.

Long ago, longer than any of the current citizens can remember, Pembrooktonshire welcomed visitors, had their own men worthy of note, and on occasion had problems common to outlying communities: monsters. All of these qualities are now distant memories, but there are reminders to be found if one knows where to look for them.

Some time back there was an infestation of doppelgangers in the area. Four of them set themselves up in Pembrooktonshire. Their activities were stealthy enough to be undetected by the powers that be, but in their own subtle way, they caused much mayhem, not to mention the number of villagers they murdered, ate, and replaced. They were eventually defeated by a traveling group of powerful adventurers, but instead of killing them, the adventuring wizard decided to have some fun. He polymorphed the four into cows and made sure they did not remember their lives previous to grazing and saying, "mooooo!" Collecting their treasure, the adventurers went on their merry way, never again returning to Pembrooktonshire. The cows became known as good quality stock, giving plenty of milk and somehow never growing old, so they have been sold and thieved and traded by the townsfolk over the years.

Today, cows 125, 163, and 265 are coincidentally part of the same herd again. The three still graze and give milk, but if the magic that keeps them bound to these forms is ever dispelled...

Thornton Cumberbund, Town Planner

The people of Pembrooktonshire are a fertile lot, having been encouraged to have many children and all. With such population growth, new buildings and indeed new neighborhoods spring up fairly regularly. Someone has to oversee all of this construction and make sure it doesn't get out of hand.

That someone is Mr. Cumberbund, a progressive man that believes an ever-evolving community is the key to a live and vibrant society!

This translates to tearing down old buildings to make way for new ones. The more respectable families in town don't need to worry about their property, but the lower-born often find themselves forced to move further from the center of town as their property is marked for destruction and rebuilding.

Cumberbund hates walking around town and seeing commoners about, so he is attempting to drive them all away.

Alfred Cunningham, Barrister

Alfred has always been fascinated with the idea of debate and is intensely interested in justice, so it was natural to become a lawyer. Unfortunately, given that the legal system in Pembrooktonshire is largely fixed, and certainly no one of consequence would ever hire low-born legal counsel, Alfred is very poor.

Instead of giving up on his dream (not to mention at this point he enjoys annoying the establishment with his attempts to argue against them), Alfred has figured out a way to make his profession feed his family, even if his clients don't have much money and he never wins his cases.

He requires all consultations to happen at the client's house, over dinner which the client must provide. And Cunningham brings his entire family (and he's got a lot of kids) over to eat as well.

Veronica da Vinci, Expensive Doxy

Of the dozen or so prostitutes operating in town, only one has a degree of respectability. Of course, this has been gained by being so expensive that only a very few can afford her, but her parlor in the middle of town never fails to gain attention as its façade and décor are changed seasonally. It's always a sensation.

Da Vinci's (public) bedchamber is the most impressive display of splendor and decadence in town. Among its delights is the heavy use of an exotic incense... which renders men utterly impotent while in its vapors. Once before her, da Vinci ridicules them and threatens to expose their shortcomings to the world (not being able to perform in the chambers of Ms. da Vinci would be a fatal social blow) unless they return, paying full price, at least twice more, and spread the word about how ecstatic their experience with her was.

Lancelot Dashwood, Eunuch

Young and unmarried ladies must be allowed out of the house every so often in order to experience the vulgarity of town society, but it is imperative that they be protected and chaperoned at all times by a member of the stronger sex. Family members often have duties to attend to, and having these young women be left to the company of other men would be scandalous!

Castration is not a punishment in Pembrooktonshire (they consider it as utterly barbaric) so eunuchs are very rare. A eunuch has not much to lose socially (no chance to marry, let alone marry well) by admitting his condition, but much to gain professionally as concerned rich parents are always looking for non-threatening minders for their daughters.

Enter Mr. Dashwood. The problem is, Mr. is actually a Ms. Lucretia Dashwood has always been a tomboy farmer's daughter, with a stocky build and not many curves or feminine facial features. Dressing up as a man and fooling the townsfolk isn't difficult.

And being alone with so many innocent young women gives Dashwood an opportunity to commit many scandals-in-the-making of her own.

Martina de Almeida, Housewife

The typical woman in Pembrooktonshire is subject to a lot of stress and work, but not so much pressure. Keeping the home and raising the children while the husband performs some sort of trade is tough work, for

sure, but the family's name won't come under scrutiny if one has a bad day housekeeping. Unless important guests drop by, but how often does that happen to someone who can't afford cleaning staff?

At least that's how it is in the town proper, if not in the outlying farm areas. Out on the farm the wife is right there with the husband, doing all of the heavy lifting... *and* taking care of the kids and keeping house.

Many wives, when out of earshot of the men and the cultural elite, decry this as unfair and demeaning. De Almeida, on the other hand, would love to be able to have the option of devoting her life to her man and keeping a lovely and splendid home. But she can't.

She doesn't know who her husband is. She thinks she remembers the man she married, but every day a new man walks in the door. He looks different, has a different name, and is indeed a different man, but he calls her Dearest, and is called Daddy by their three children.

Polly de Kook, Cheap Trollop

Being known as the town's cheapest whore hasn't done much to make Polly's life enjoyable, but it manages to pay the bills.

Polly is also a horrible gossip, and combined with having a genuinely friendly and curious personality, learns more about her clients than they wish to tell, and spreads that information around. This attracts the attention of "clients" more interested in her information than her services, but de Kook seems blissfully unaware of the intrigue that surrounds her.

She is also completely unaware that much of what she knows is wrong. Polly suffers from intensely lucid dreams to the point where she can not tell what has happened and what was dreamt. She is not an imaginative girl and her dreams are basically alternate versions based on her real life, reinforced by her opinions of the people involved. So, for example, as she believes her married clients are for the most part bad men, she dreams of them doing or saying bad things. People that she likes do good and kind things in her dreams.

And she gossips about it as if it were all real.

Helio DeCameron, Cobbler

A middle-aged bachelor, DeCameron has been very lucky in business and not so lucky in love. Unbeknownst to him, a number of shoe fairies have long inhabited his property, and wish to remain hidden. When DeCameron begins work on his shoes, the fairies put him to sleep and do his work for him, all the while frolicking in their shoe fairy manner. They are quick to hide when visitors come, and DeCameron, after all these years, credits his blackouts to some sort of transcendental state of crafting.

But he can't find a wife. The last woman he brought around must have run off when he went into one of his trances... but were his customers ever so pleased with the quality of the leather shoes he made that day!

Hector Degauchy, Postman

The oldest and most respected of the small Pembrooktonshire postal service, Degauchy manages to deliver more mail in less time than anyone ever has. His six-hour route takes him merely four hours.

That's very unusual, considering that half of his mail are letters written by people that don't exist, is delivered to addresses that don't exist, and were sent (with proper postage!) from addresses that don't exist.

Giles Denton, Beekeeper

Giles is a man in his early thirties that prefers the finer things in life, from clothing to furniture to women. The premium he charges for his honey supports all this and more.

Giles has delusions of grandeur and has taken to learning how to control his bees using pheromones, and is convinced his bee army could be used to make him ruler of Pembrooktonshire. He has successfully engineered the death of several local animals this way, but has been hesitant to try it on a human. If only there were some strangers that could be used for the test...

Warren Diadoro, Jeweler

Diadoro is one of the more trusted men in Pembrooktonshire. He is the man who creates, repairs, polishes, and modifies jewelry for the richest people in town.

The thing that annoys Warren about his job is when people want him to repair or polish items that he didn't create. When doing these duties, he heats these items up over a flame. And damned if half the jewelry worn by the nobles doesn't have some sort of weird foreign squiggly writing that appears only when heated.

Louis Diggle, Wagon Maker

Many of the rich hate that they must walk on the streets like commoners, so the demand for wagons and coaches is far above what it should be for a town of this size. Many of the wealthy use coaches to travel across their own estates or even courtyards!

Louis is the main man responsible for creating these coaches. Because this is a matter of upper class pride, the coaches are becoming exceedingly extravagant and decadent, with ridiculous amenities that make them resemble mobile homes more than conveyances. Many commoners don't live in accommodations as luxurious, or sometimes even as spacious, as a nobleman's coach.

As time goes on and Diggle's designs become even more outrageous, and then become standardized so even more middle-class clients can afford certain upgrades, previous wealthy clients feel their coaches need to be improved, so Diggle and his team always have plenty to do.

Not all of the added luxury is unnecessary, as the ingenuity of Diggle and his team have resulted in wagons and coaches that feature superior handling, comfort (no matter how rocky the road, the passengers enjoy a smooth ride), cleanliness (the pulling horses' refuse never touches the ground), and safety.

Diggle also hires people to perform random acts of vandalism on coaches and wagons, just because enough business is never enough.

Edward Dilhorne, Clockmaker

It takes a detail-oriented and fastidious man to successfully build a working, dependable clock from scratch. Unfortunately, Dilhorne is not a detail-oriented or fastidious man.

His clocks are things of absolute beauty, have no doubt. And they work. Dilhorne's problem is consistency. He has great difficulty creating clocks that tell time at the same rate as other clocks.

Luckily, his clocks are sympathetic to his plight and do what they can to protect his reputation. Clocks that are near each other, say within a city block, synchronize themselves to each other. However, they may be hours off from clocks across town and significant minutes off from clocks several blocks away.

But when someone checks their neighbor's clock, it matches theirs. So most people in Pembrooktonshire can not agree on how long a particular trip or errand takes, or believe they are very fast, or experience great periods of lost time.

Herbert Dooley, Tobacconist

One of the few importers operating in Pembrooktonshire, Dooley is under constant scrutiny to be sure he is not falling under foreign influence. But a certain percentage of the population loves their tobacco (the upper class smokes it, everyone else generally eats it) and it doesn't grow anywhere near the town.

The thing is, Dooley's supplier realized very quickly that neither Dooley nor anyone in Pembrooktonshire actually knows what tobacco really is. Dooley's first attempts to import it brought the real thing, but the coughing and wheezing associated with first-time smokers made it unfashionable. After complaining to the tobacco growers who supply him, they began to send a "better" batch of tobacco which was easier to smoke and better tasting. It immediately sold better and became fashionable to smoke during social events.

But it isn't tobacco.

Joseph Dornford, Soldier

Very rarely, a Pembrooktonshiretonian leaves the town to spend a good amount of time abroad, and is accepted back into society when he returns. Dornford is one such man. He left town as a young man to follow his dreams of excitement and glory as a soldier, and was gone for fifteen years.

Because he wrote letters home *every day*, and because his family is generally well-regarded, and because he was very dismissive and downright insulting of outsider culture after returning, he was received as a returning hero, and acknowledged as the fiercest fighter Pembrooktonshire has ever seen.

The problem is Dornford has never seen actual combat. When he served, he looked good in his dress uniform, followed orders well, peeled a lot of potatoes, and guarded his general's tent well. But never once did he cross swords with or even so much as fired an arrow in the general direction of an enemy.

Not knowing the difference, the townsfolk will always believe Dornford's stories and advice on combat, battle, and strategy over anyone else... even if they are veterans of actual wars.

Edmund Dusserre, Diplomat

There are dungslingers and manual laborers and plumbers and gravediggers and all sorts of undesirable jobs in Pembrooktonshire. Then, worse, are jobs which almost require exposure to foreigners, and worse than that, travel to foreign lands. Brokers and export merchants are considered to have a tough job for that reason, but at least they bring in all the wealth that fuels Pembrooktonshire.

But a diplomat? That's a grubby, thankless, miserable job if there ever was one.

Pembrooktonshire is rich and non-militarized. It takes hard work, leverage, and keen negotiating skills in order to keep Pembrooktonshire free from outside interference.

Sure, Pembrooktonshire is technically part of some far-off noble's territory or within the borders of some empire or another. When history is written, if Pembrooktonshire is mentioned at all, it will be considered as just another town in some greater power's holdings.

But the reality is Pembrooktonshire is self-governing and unsupervised, thanks to the efforts of Mr. Dusserre and those diplomats that came before him. He is responsible for going "abroad" and maintaining this state of affairs.

In the past, this has been done through bribery. The outside ruling power gets a cut of the trade leaving Pembrooktonshire, plus tributes custom-made by the finest craftsmen in town. Today, this doesn't happen. Dusserre doesn't visit anyone. He keeps the tribute and levies for himself, and lives the high life when not in Pembrooktonshire.

What he has done is convinced the powers-that-be that another village, a rather poor one, is Pembrooktonshire, which has resulted in heavy persecution of that village for its refusal to pay its "fair share" and for hiding its assets from the auditors that come to assess what that fair share should be. And for trying to deceive the crown as to the very name of the place.

And after one of the frequent purges, Desserre will then prostrate himself in front of the ruler asking for mercy, spinning such a web of lies as to keep the real Pembrooktonshire safe and hidden.

Whenever dealing with a different ruler, or when a ruler (or advisor) changes, Edmund chooses another place to be “Pembrooktonshire.” At present there are five different villages which he has so named, all five are being heavily persecuted by the regional rulers, and there is even a war being waged between royal noble houses over who has dominion over one of these “Pembrooktonshires.”

Charles Englefield, Barber

Charles is one of the town’s barbers, cutting hair, shaving customers, and performing dentistry all day long.

Englefield has a list of “approved” hair, moustache, and beard styles, which he himself determines according to what he believes to be proper for a Pembrookshiretonian. Customers are not shown this list, but anyone who chooses a style that is not approved is also diagnosed with a dental problem. Painful surgery follows.

Bernard Eyre, Leech

Eyre is head of one of the great families of Pembrooktonshire, and is the foremost man of medicine in town.

His methods are barbaric. He does use leeches, he bleeds his patients nearly dry when they are ill, prescribes near-lethal poisonous “remedies,” and generally is sadistic to those that dare need his services. He also prescribes courses of laxatives and even more disgusting “fitness regimens” for healthy patients seeking ways to remain so.

He is so highly thought-of socially that it is considered a deliberate insult and a scandal if someone that can afford his services chooses not to. And how ungrateful and lacking in social graces it would be to dare to not improve if under Dr. Eyre’s care! On occasion when one of his patients dies, the deceased’s family is so mortified that their relative would have the audacity to die while under the care of someone so well-respected that they pay the doctor a generous sum of money as an apology for the impertinence.

Titricia Finn, Midwife

A spinster in her early 60s, Ms. Finn handles the deliveries for the majority of Pembrooktonshire’s births. She’s very good; she’s never lost a mother or a child in her care.

While she goes to church every Sunday and keeps up appearances, Titricia is not what she seems. She worships the Outer Powers, and they have given her a task. After delivering a baby, she takes it into a private room to “be cleaned.” She insists on privacy, and because of her flawless reputation, no one argues. Here the child is traded to an agent of the Outer Powers for a changeling; a facsimile of the child so perfect that neither the parents nor the child will ever realize it isn’t a natural human. Changelings are more impulsive and stubborn than the norm, and tend to be more physical than intellectual (-1 intelligence and wisdom, +1 strength and constitution), but otherwise are human. The only clues that they are something else are that protection spells affect them as if they were summoned beings, and because they have no true souls they can never be raised from the dead.

Because she does not handle every birth in town, and because sometimes she just doesn’t have the opportunity to do the switch in time, there is a 1 in 4 chance that any Pembrooktonshire native under the age of 30 is a natural, normal human.

Horace Fitzherbert, Philosopher

A stunningly calculating merchant and leading producer of sweet candies in his prime, Horace has stepped down from active work, and his position as head of one of Pembrooktonshire’s great families, in order to write books and reveal the nature of the universe to the people.

His writings of course are very traditional, recalling golden days that never were and ideals that are impossible for people to live up to.

His most famous work is called *Suspicion as Proof*. It supposes that people have excellent intuition, and that while an individual may be mistaken, the collective opinions of a group of people would not be. Therefore, if there is mass suspicion, it should usually be taken as proof that the suspected thing is true.

The book made him famous and well-liked about town, and he is considered one of the foremost intellectuals in Pembrooktonshire history. He is often consulted on matters he knows absolutely nothing about, but that's OK, since it's his intuition that is important more than his knowledge.

And to those that disagree with his theories, the question must be asked: What are you hiding?

Selina Foxlowe, Expensive Doxy

Selina is one of the more accepted mistresses in town. Some say she is even fashionable, as she has made a career of comforting wealthy and influential widowers in their grief.

Foxlowe creates more discussion amongst the common folk because of her hair. Rumor has it that she has never cut it, and it is kept in perfect condition. Her hairstyles, especially at large social gatherings (and especially when she is on the hunt for a new man) are legendary.

The truth is she hates her hair and is unable to cut it. It is indestructible, immune to pulling, cutting, tearing, burning, or anything else that has ever been tried to control it.

Richard Frost, Poet

Frost is a teenager studying philosophy under the wise men of the town. However, Frost sees himself first and foremost as a poet of the people, being able to give voice to the young and underclass who normally have no say in the running of the town. He actually fancies himself as something of an anarchist and revolutionary.

The reality is he is a grubby little guttersnipe, quick to assert dominance when he believes he is in control but cowering and shifting blame when anyone is in the least way forceful with him. While fronting as an anarchist, he will be quick to summon the authorities if he witnesses any illegal behavior.

And he can be quick to notify the authorities about anyone he doesn't like, on charges he gleefully invents.

Theodore Geurts, Thief

Geurts is one of the few ne'er-do-wells of Pembrooktonshire, never having done an honest day's work in his life yet somehow always managing to keep his head above water.

His rationale for living like this is it just isn't fair that the Geurts name has been maligned through the years, and should be higher up on the social ladder. He can name ancestors that did "great" things and how the town should have celebrated them.

His only problem is that there are no fences in town so it doesn't do him any good to steal items of value (not that it stops him). It has to be coins only if he is to receive any immediate benefit from it. He knows that someday he'll have the opportunity to leave town on a trip to sell his various stolen goods, so in the meantime he has started feeding his jewels and small valuables to ducks that live around the local pond. Most days he can be found there, feeding and being very defensive of these ducks...

Thomas Grayson, Shipbuilder

Pembrooktonshire is near a river and has a rather large pond (it is a bit generous to call it a proper lake), but it is essentially landlocked. The river is non-navigable by anything more than a kayak, and the pond isn't worth much more than a romantic canoe trip.

But Grayson is building a boat. A very large boat.

Up until a couple years ago, Thomas was an accomplished and popular woodworker, being favored for all sorts of jobs. After earning enough money to realize his dream, he quit and began his shipyard.

Behind a hillock, out of sight of the town. Near neither the river nor the pond. The people laugh at him, forcing him to pay premium wages for hired help on the project.

He claims that there will be a great flood and the only way to survive will be aboard his vessel. He claims to have been contacted from above and given the holy duty to save two of every family in Pembrooktonshire, one man and one woman, so that after the world is washed away, the townsfolk will finally claim their rightful inheritance – the entire world.

To this end, his boat (about 20% finished at this point) is being constructed as the finest luxury boat ever conceived, at least for the areas reserved for those of sufficient status. His deck plans are a thing of architectural beauty and madness.

Grayson is right. There will be a flood. Someday. In this lifetime, in a hundred generations, who knows? And when it happens, the laughing will stop. Two by two the chosen survivors of Pembrooktonshire will file onto the craft.

And it will not float.

Boyd Grütz Müller, Carpenter

Grütz Müller is a hardworking family man who is serious about his craft, never assuming he knows best and constantly seeks to learn new tricks. He is obsessed with being better than he is, forever fearing to become complacent.

This obsession has caused Boyd to tap into a state of superconsciousness while working, and the result is very unusual. Even the simple work that he does looks very artistic. The demand for his work is increasing as people become aware of the unique appearance of a Boyd-crafted piece..

Boyd's work is physically impossible, and operates on laws of physics alien to this dimension. Still, everything holds together. If for some reason magic were to be dispelled in the area of anything he has worked on, it would fall completely apart.

Royston Haddingfield, Builder

Haddingfield is a smart and still-strong middle-aged widower, who along with his sons Tony, Reggie, and Vasey, performs most of the major construction and renovation work around town. There are few residences, and fewer public buildings, that have not been improved by the work of the Haddingfields' skillful hands.

In his spare time he socializes and plays darts down at The Last Stop, and is an accomplished whittler. Every Saturday morning he dutifully takes a beautiful bouquet of flowers to the grave of his wife. He has never so much as thought about another woman in the six years since she passed.

Haddingfield and his sons scam the town in one particular way: They always screw up their jobs in minor, but noteworthy ways. They then offer to fix it for free, and are willing to construct a secret cellar in return for the client not speaking about the mistake and thus ruining the Haddingfield's perfect reputation. They've been running this scheme for two generations now, and so most of the people of Pembrooktonshire have a secret place of their own that no one knows about, and they also think nobody else has such a place.

Randolph Harnsworth, Dog Breeder

Harnsworth is one of Pembrooktonshire's great families. While Rudolph is not the leader of the clan, not yet anyway, he is the most highly thought of as he is in the prime of his life (which is considered the 40s in Pembrooktonshire) and socially active.

It is he who breeds and trains all of the dogs for one of the favorite pastimes of the Pembrooktonshire elite: Foxhunting.

Because dogs are not native to the Pembrooktonshire area, the Harnsworth family, several generations back, imported chihuahuas to be used as foxhunting dogs. They're perfect, as there is a high turnover rate (foxes can easily deal with one chihuahua, while a pack can take down a fox) and few people can stand the yapping of dozens of chihuahua puppies. Luckily, Randolph is deaf.

Esther Hart, Haughty Courtesan

Esther has worked hard all her life attempting to rise above her farming roots and make something spectacular of herself. As the years went on, she was getting desperate... she was almost 20! It was almost too late! She was almost *old*!

She set out to intensely study the manner and custom of the upper class, and soon was seen on the arms of gentlemen of the upper class.

These days, she is always in the company of an influential and well thought-of member of society, and is so scared of returning to her lower class standing that she actively scorns those of lesser station.

Oh, and she has a functional extra eye on the bottom of her left foot.

Maurice Heathcote, Pontificator

The oldest member of this great family of Pembrooktonshire was in his prime the highest ranking priest in town. He was also one of the first people to publish his philosophies and thoughts, and thus his influence and importance rose to even greater heights.

His book *Personal Holiness* established the tone of Pembrooktonshire religion forevermore. It describes the "correct" ways to hold ceremonies, how often people need to go to church (every Sunday barring extraordinary circumstances!), and most importantly how to detect unbelievers through everyday behavior.

More relevant to visiting adventuring parties, according to *Personal Holiness*, traveling far from home is considered a warning sign for devil worship, as is not being close with one's family. Heathcote's view has always been that magic use, *including and perhaps especially clerical magic*, is sinful. No priest native to Pembrooktonshire will use clerical magic.

Phoebe Herculanu, Brazen Strumpet

One of the dozen or so "working girls" in town, Phoebe takes her share of grief from the more upstanding citizens. Then she takes her share of money from their husbands.

Those that "spend time" with Herculanu experience hallucinations and don't remember the time they are physically with her. What they do experience is some sort of spiritual awakening, and begin volunteering at the church, or helping out the less fortunate. One thing they don't really do afterwards is patronize prostitutes.

The truth is Herculanu is very religious, and performs her profession as a means to spread the word. She considers it especially important to share her beliefs with foreigners, since they are more at risk for unholy behavior. She's willing to be a social martyr for the cause.

William Hoffmann, Interpreter

Most Pembrooktonshiretonians do not like to speak to foreigners. Hoffmann has turned this fact into a very popular living.

On the rare occasion that an unexpected outsider wanders into town, most folks will pretend to not understand what they are saying, claiming they do not speak the outsider's language (and plainly saying so). Everything the foreigner says will be treated as complete gibberish, and the local folk will openly speak about the poor manners and habits of the people in front of them.

Enter Mr. Hoffmann. Luckily, he knows both languages, and he will offer to act as the foreigners' interpreter at a very special price! The townsfolk know his schtick, and they will speak to him, who will then repeat the words to the foreigner, and repeat the process back, even though everyone is speaking the same language.

And he doesn't understand any other language.

Tobias Holmes, Playwright

Tobias is one of the few people who are celebrated locally while remaining totally unknown outside of town. As Pembrooktonshire's foremost playwright and producer of popular entertainment, Holmes is sure to cater to the hometown crowd.

He does this by completely ripping off plays written abroad, down to the last stage direction, changing only the names and nationalities of the characters so that all the good guys are from Pembrooktonshire and all the bad guys are from anywhere else. And the bad guys always wear masks on stage, as it is considered taboo for Pembrooktonshire actors to portray foreigners. The masks don't hide their identities but it is understood they are following tradition so nothing untoward is considered to be happening.

Many a murder mystery has been given away in the first minute by the fact that only one character is not local.

The punters don't seem to mind, as they enjoy seeing Pembrooktonshire portrayed positively on the stage, and since foreign entertainers never travel here on their own, not even the most well-educated have ever so much as heard of the most famous plays, songs, or dances.

Holmes exploits this ruthlessly, and has the most self-important attitude imaginable to boot.

Myron Hunsley, Shoe Salesman

Because the upper class of Pembrooktonshire dislike dealing directly with those who get their hands dirty (craftsmen!), and because footwear is perhaps the hardest piece of clothing of all to fit properly, a very small group of people now make their living selling shoes.

Hunsley is something of a podologist, able to read people's personalities just by feeling the contours of their feet. This has given him much stress. Intellectually he knows every one of his customers is an upstanding leader of the community... but the feet never lie.

Perhaps he should read his own feet, and then he would think twice before attempting to concoct a variety of poisons in order to "save" the town.

Rupert Irving, Chemist

While Irving is indeed a professional chemist and concocts many remedies to cure what ails the townsfolk, in his off-hours he is a full-blown, all-out mystical alchemist, searching for the formula to turn base metals into gold.

Like all alchemists before him, he has been unsuccessful. However, lately he has been able to create an odd green rocklike material from iron and copper. He isn't quite sure what it is, but he is sure it has some arcane properties. If only he could discover what they are...

Barnabas James, Chimney Sweep

There are few jobs less glamorous than that of a chimney sweep. Up on roofs all day, continuously covered in soot...

You can find the most amazing things stuck in chimneys. Especially when half the population thinks it's clever to make a secret compartment behind a brick in the chimney. James makes it a point to take all of the items he finds in chimneys, and switch them all around, so everyone has someone else's secret stuff in their own secret place.

Frances Kingsford, Farmer

Kingsford had long enjoyed the rather peaceful life of a farmer, thankful that he had a large landholding and the freedom to do as he wills.

This changed several years ago when a meteorite crashed in the middle of his cornfield. Kingsford was at first pleased because the soil seemed super-fertilized by this occurrence, and the crop grew healthy and fast.

But also violent. The corn, while still rooted in place, became animate and seemed unwilling to be harvested. Frances had to become an agricultural warrior, cutting down the stalks one duel at a time.

But the resulting corn was so sweet and large and profitable, and he feared people wouldn't buy it anymore if they found out it was alive. So Frances kept his secret, and became a "bad neighbor," erecting fences and yelling at kids to stay off his property and not inviting folks over for supper, ever.

This has put a great strain on his family, but after his young son was almost killed by a cornstalk, they know it is for the best.

But of course there are always a few people every year that disappear without a trace because Kingsford's field is such a tempting shortcut between town and a nearby stream... and many of the prospectors who supposedly never return from the mountains never actually reach the mountains.

Abigail Laffey, Housewife

Abigail was orphaned at birth. Her father was killed when he attempted to throw his wife down a flight of stairs only to have the tables turned on him, but Abigail's mother died in childbirth. Growing up, she was teased and abused by other children for being so crass as to not have a real family, but eventually found her inner strength, found a husband (for the Laffey name was still strong), and has over the years produced a large family.

The couple's sixth child has just been born, and Abigail awaits the seventh, for she knows it will grow to be a person of great power and influence in the world.

Yet still she fears the gallop of approaching horses...

Addison Lakely, Retiree

Addison Lakely is a centenarian who still enjoys surprisingly good health. Long ago he was known as a master gardener and herbalist, but for the past thirty years he has been living off of his savings and the goodwill of the townsfolk. He is a well-known personality about town, being its oldest resident and taking frequent long walks around town, conversing with the people and playing with the children.

However, his mental state has been deteriorating for some time, and his short-term memory is almost non-existent. When he greets neighbors, he often forgets that he has met them before, even if he has greeted them

every day for the previous month. This, combined with his frequent mumbling to himself, has caused many people to avoid him. He has perfect memory of things several decades old, however, and does tell such tales that entertain the people... the first time or three he tells them.

Addison is very concerned about the happiness and well-being of his neighbors, and so takes care to maintain the cheery, folksy appeal of Pembrooktonshire life. To accomplish this, he uses a talent he cultivated long ago: Lakely is a magic-user of some small ability. Eighty years ago he apprenticed under a great magician, and although he had great aptitude for the magical arts, social pressures convinced him to give it up. He did manage to attain fifth level, but these days has but three spells in his book: Read Magic, Detect Magic, and Dispel Magical Aura. Due to age and other factors, aside from his spell usage he is for all statistical purposes a normal man.

Addison's long walks are often just an excuse for him to detect magic around town, so that he may then follow it up with Dispel Magic Aura. This third level spell removes the magical signature from an item/area/person, but not the magic; it functions as normal but no longer detects as magical. The spell is permanent (until dispelled by magic!), but anyone detecting magic while using a scrying spell can see the obscured enchantment.

However, in his senile state, Addison thinks he's dispelling the magic altogether. So for over twenty years now, every magical thing in Pembrooktonshire has existed in secret, and nobody knows...

Justin Laroux, Glassblower

Laroux is a master of his craft. Few people on the planet can make works of glass art as skillful as Justin can, nor can they make everyday jars and wine glasses appear so exotic.

Justin is also a painter, and one of his favorite pastimes is to scope out a local store selling some durable good, make a very fragile glass replica and paint it to where it is indistinguishable from the original item barring close inspection. Then he replaces the item. Hilarity ensues! His favorite is when he replaces food items at a market stall with glass and sees some poor bastard get a mouthful of glass shards.

Sophie-Rosemary Laverick, Housewife

All Rosemary ever wanted was to marry a wonderful man and raise a lovely family. She thought she was blessed to live in a community as close-knit and strong as Pembrooktonshire, and indeed married well and thought her life was going to be absolutely perfect as soon after she found herself with child.

But her life has turned into a nightmare. She has discovered that her husband has made a pact with the devil to impregnate Sophie-Rosemary with the guarantee that the child will grow up first to elevate the Laverick family to the level of the great families of Pembrooktonshire, and then to rule over them all. Sophie was horrified, but could live with this. Her child would be successful and influential!

And then she was visited by an angel who informed Laverick that her unborn son will indeed grow to rule Pembrooktonshire as promised, but during his rule will cause the downfall and finally the total destruction of the town. The only way this can be stopped is if Sophie-Rosemary sacrifices her son when he is exactly one year old.

The angel thought it was bringing joyous news to one of the oppressed souls of the town, and reassuring her that nothing can stop it if she does nothing. The angel did not for a moment consider that the citizens here do not realize how wicked the place is and want to see this way of life continue forever.

Sophie of course considers this *horrible* news! On one hand... influence and power! On the other... infamy and failure! She can't possibly harm her child... but she also won't let any harm come to the community. What will she do?

Algernon Le Strange, Youth

A boy of just fourteen, Algernon is being groomed for greatness as the heir of the Le Strange legacy. One of Pembrooktonshire's great families, the Le Stranges are embroiled in a bitter generations-long feud with the equally powerful Quedgely family.

Tensions between the families are bound to rise, as Algernon has fallen in love with Elmira Quedgely, a girl just one year his senior. More than a few members of both families would kill to prevent their youth from becoming "corrupted" by a member of the other family.

So Algernon and Elmira find ways to escape into each others' arms, unseen by all... for now.

What nobody realizes is that due to a string of coincidences facilitated by Juliette Wilcox's masks, Algernon Le Strange and Elmira Quedgely are brother and sister.

Wendy Lillywhite, Wanton Wench

As a barmaid at the Squicky Wicket, Lillywhite has earned quite the reputation. She is drop-dead gorgeous, and very friendly to all who pass through the door. When someone with a bit more money than sense comes in, she really goes to work.

She does everything she can, including heavy flirting and even promising downright obscene things, to get the person drunk and up to her private room above the bar. There she drugs them and robs them. If they live nearby (and she will find out where they live while flirting with them), she will take their key, visit their home, and take valuables from there.

The victim is then taken back downstairs into a back room, where the owner (who gets a cut of the action) will attest to the victim simply having too much to drink.

Raymond Lolley, Village Idiot

Raymond Lolley's parents died when he was a baby, and he was soon adopted by the Lolley family who herded sheep to the south of town. A troubled child who kept to himself, Lolley found himself more comfortable around the sheep and the sheepdog than with other humans. His adoptive family died in a house fire when Raymond was 13, and there was no one else to take him in.

Doing odd jobs around town, Raymond made enough money to keep himself (in the same apartment he still lives in over Church Street off the Market Square) but withdrew even more as the people of this crowded, crowded town continually mocked him and pretended that they remember him doing things and having conversations that he never did. Now Raymond Lolley is acutely paranoid and neurotic, never coming out of his room unless he absolutely must, for fear of the townsfolk taunting him with their imaginary acquaintance.

Raymond Lolley, Street Sweeper

Orphaned as a baby, the boy who would be named Raymond was adopted by the Lolley family, who were professional dyers whose pungent profession ensured that they would not be very popular in social circles. When that family died after their dyes caught fire, Lolley went to live with Lolley family relatives in another town.

When he returned in his teens, for the family he lived with never considered him one of their own, he found that nobody seemed to believe that he'd ever been gone. They treated him as if he was an addled soul of childlike mind, and found that he was laughed at when he tried to become an apprentice to various craftsmen around town.

Living now in a small apartment over a shop on High Street (near the Market Square), Raymond almost fears going out in the day. He fears he is going mad, as the townsfolk often greet him and have a laugh about things he doesn't remember. The people of Pembrooktonshire are not cruel or mad in Raymond's eyes, so

the problem must be him. He knows he is losing his mind, and lives in fear that one day he will blank out and never come back. So now he performs his duties at night, tries to avoid being seen, and waits for oblivion...

Homer Longacre, Serf

Pembrooktonshire is obviously not a shining example of a progressive community, but in truth the oppressive nature of the town is overwhelmingly due to social, not legal, pressures. Even the lowest-born is still a free man, able to seek and earn his fortune in just about any way he sees fit. In fact, doing so is the best way to ensure that one's children aren't the lowest-born of their time. It's a long, cruel road but there is opportunity, both economic and social, for anyone willing to be soulless enough to chase it.

But not the Longacres. An artifact of the old days when Pembrooktonshire was more of a proper feudal holding, the Longacre families are serfs in the literal sense. They are tied to the land, forbidden from seeking other professions, and are basically owned by the owners of the land they live and work on.

This is not an oversight. The wealthy of Pembrooktonshire think this is hilarious, and in fact trade and sell this spot of land amongst themselves for a pittance, just to allow everyone an opportunity to own their very own peasants. Some treat the situation as a learning exercise and to experiment, others use it simply as an exercise in cruelty.

What costs something more than a pittance is bribing parents and other family members to pressure children to marry Longacres, because nobody would do so willingly, and if they didn't then future generations of the idly privileged wouldn't have people to torment.

Quentin Lorenzetti, Plumber

Indoor plumbing is a very rare thing in Pembrooktonshire, and only the most extravagant homes have it. It's very primitive in any case, and requires a great deal of maintenance. Few are qualified to do that work. The owners certainly aren't the sort to do anything that might risk coming into contact with refuse, and the lower classes tend to view an indoor lavatory with only slightly less trepidation than they would an altar for human sacrifice.

But Lorenzetti is up to the task, and barely a day goes by when he doesn't have his sleeves rolled up and his arms elbow-deep in crap.

What he didn't count on is that the nascent sewer system of Pembrooktonshire has connected to an underworld kingdom ruled by a dragon turtle that commands a vast army of mutant servants. He has heard rumors of a captive myconid princess, but he has not been able to determine exactly where she is being held.

Gilbert Lumley, Tailor

Creating and mending clothing is considered woman's work in Pembrooktonshire, but Mommy always encouraged Gilbert to do what he was best at. And he was best at the terribly unmanly job of fitting clothing.

When Gilbert's mother developed arthritis, their shop began to engage in deceit. Before, Gilbert had been the face of the store and took the measurements, but his mother did the actual work. Afterwards, Gilbert did everything, with his mother playing her part and acting like she was still doing the work.

Now Gilbert's mother has died, and keeping up the ruse is more difficult than ever. He has not reported her death, and indeed has found himself rushing to the upstairs workroom and imitating her voice for the reassurance of customers downstairs. People believe the story that Mommy Lumley can no longer walk, and for now they do not seem suspicious.

But how long can this go on?

Eugene Madget, Farmer

Eugene is a lonely man in his thirties that spends much of his time growing very tasty rutabagas on his modest tract of land.

Eugene verbalizes his inner dialogue. There is not a thought that crosses his mind that he doesn't express. At market he's often heard to be having conversations with himself: "This apple seems rotten, very rotten. That one looks nice. Ooh, rather soft. I need to find a good selection of apples soon, I need to pee." Nevermind when he sees an attractive woman. "Oh, I'd certainly like to raise quite a large family with that lassie. Oh wait, she's got a man already. It would be wonderful if he got run over by a coach."

Madget isn't in any other way mentally deficient. He is a reasonably intelligent man who quickly comes to proper conclusions, but with everybody being privy to all his private and quickly-discarded 'what-if?' thoughts, they think he is quite the simpleton at best, and a complete maniac at worst.

Cain Magellan, Perfumer

While Pembrooktonshiretonians bathe far more frequently than is normal in their world, there is still a healthy trade in cosmetics and colognes. Magellan is the most prominent creator and merchant of such things.

Cain Magellan is completely anosmic, and is unaware of how any of his concoctions actually smell. He creates his fragrances through specific formulas, and then tests the results out in public. He is very aware, through these tests, what elements in what combinations tend to be pleasing and which are not, but because he has no first-hand knowledge, grievous combinations do occur.

This is complicated by the fact that one of his most well-respected clients is also herself anosmic. One time when circumstances demanded Magellan to present a completely untested fragrance, there was an odd moment of uneasiness as two people unable to smell were looking to the other to confirm whether or not a perfume was pleasant smelling. They came to the mutual conclusion that it was.

But it wasn't. It actually smelled like a combination of burning beetles and a trampled skunk. But who was going to tell this lady that she smelled like a carrion crawler's farts? And wasn't it natural then that her fragrance, which she was quick to praise, would become a fashion as people wanted to be more like her?

For awhile half the town reeked like a troglodyte swimming in formaldehyde, but luckily the fad soon passed. Some still cling to the fragrance though...

Oliver Manley, Ropemaker

Poor Manley. He sees craftsman after craftsman become wealthy and gain fame and social status by selling their wares to people outside Pembrooktonshire. But rope is rope, and Manley ropes aren't any more special than ropes anywhere else.

But he still does a good job and makes a fair living, so people get annoyed at his bitterness. This in turn makes him more irritable and paranoid, and he has begun to take shortcuts with his work.

He's using bonding agents that deteriorate under intense heat for most of his rope these days. He won't sell that to blacksmiths or the like, but for general rope use, sure, why not?

But for some reason his rope, when hanging slack, seems to find its way around people's necks...

Toliver Maxwell, Exporter

Toliver handles most of the work of contacting and arranging the sale of Pembrooktonshire's goods to the outside world. Given that most of Pembrooktonshire looks down on the outside world, not many people are eager to get in on this action, even if it does make Maxwell very wealthy. And the townsfolk are worried that Maxwell is being corrupted by foreign ways.

Maxwell keeps his distance from the outsiders well enough though, keeping in touch and playing the wheeling dealing businessman just well enough to bring in the big money. He does have one little quirk: Whenever he deals with a new client from a new place, he always sends one of his “inventory assessors” to that place to murder a member of the local merchant’s family and bring back a trophy.

Minerva Meijer, Fashion Model

Not many people get to be the physical representation of the feminine ideal, but the fashion community of Pembrooktonshire needs people to model their creations, and Meijer is the best of the bunch.

She is a wretched, disfigured caricature of a human being. The makeup she has used over the years has permanently dyed her face. Her lower ribs have been broken and re-healed in a manner that constricts her innards and she can no longer eat solid food. The circulation in her feet had been restricted so many times that they had to be amputated, and now she manages to walk in her fashionable boots only because of long practice with the primitive prostheses her employers have financed for her. Her hair has been styled with dangerous chemicals so often that it has fallen out, but the designers say that just putting wigs on her is far simpler anyhow. Her teeth have been removed to give her jaw a smaller bite and to help her lips achieve the perfect expression (models should never open their mouths anyway).

All in all, corpses that have been in the grave for months look more alive than Minerva does, and this is immediately obvious to any outsider that looks at her (or smells her – she reeks of rot). But due to the consensual perception of reality that Pembrooktonshire has chosen to accept, the locals look at her and see only perfect beauty.

Oscar Mohl, Laborer

Oscar was a man down on his luck who rubbed his rabbit’s foot and wished he could live his life all over again and get it right this time.

His wish was granted. He’s lived his life thousands of times now, memorizing every detail, trying to figure out what the perfect path to happiness is. He’s even gone on to be a great conqueror in some of his attempts at life, he’s tried his hand at being a vicious murder, and had a go at being the age’s most prolific lover, but in the end he’s decided that being a manual laborer and doing physical jobs around his hometown give him the perfect blend of security and freedom from real responsibility.

That he knows, from trial and error, exactly how to get what he wants from pretty much everyone he ever meets, only helps his enthusiasm for this simpler life.

Mohl will involve himself with the PCs only if it benefits him. He can’t be cheated, he can’t be harmed... because this has all happened to him before, and he knows what will happen and how to twist it to his advantage. He will always make a saving throw, always win initiative, never miss a roll, and never be harmed by others’ actions.

Luckily, he wants to help... for a price. If the PCs have a problem, he’s already researched the answer before they ever meet him. Do they need help in any way? He’s there just in time to give them the aid they need. And they’ll pay up, too. If they didn’t, he’d know from previous experience, and wouldn’t have helped them this time.

Alexandra Morgan, Schoolmarm

Ms. Morgan is the local schoolteacher and the foremost authority on manners and custom in Pembrooktonshire. Courted for her expertise when festivals and important events occur, she is normally not engaged socially as most of the townsfolk believe she takes the rules of social behavior a bit too far. Her interpretations of everything from proper dress to courtship are subjects of discussion all over town amongst adults of parenting age. Older folks are set in their ways, and of course the younger folk don’t care.

Or at least they think they don't care. Pembrooktonshire youngsters are incredibly better behaved than most children after about age nine or so, directly due to the influence of Ms. Morgan. That family-aged adults seriously debate her opinions is no accident either.

Some decades ago, when Alexandra was a pre-teen, a local man set off to seek his fortune. This angered Ms. Morgan as she took this to mean that the perfect town of Pembrooktonshire was not good enough for this malcontent. What an insult! When he returned years later with an *alien* bride, Alexandra was furious and mounted a campaign of social condemnation that drove the couple away into the nearby mountains (another blasphemy – *nobody* goes into the mountains!).

She swore such social contamination would never happen again. For decades now she has been the school teacher in Pembrooktonshire, and the prosperity of the town ensures that most children receive at least a basic education. At exam time, Ms. Morgan knows that she has her students' complete attention and that others would not disturb such intense study time, so she uses her talents at mesmerism to not only impress the real lessons into the children, but make them more susceptible to and place far more importance on tradition and social pressures. Her hypnotism skills are quite weak, and without such a captive audience and an overall environment that supports her intentions, it would never work. But she has both, and so Pembrooktonshire grows more uniform and insular as the years pass by...

Jasper Moulds, Physician

Social influence and pressure is enough to maintain the status quo in Pembrooktonshire, but some are not satisfied with that. One of these is Jasper Moulds, patriarch of one of Pembrooktonshire's great families.

A man of science and reason, as he is known, Moulds made his name first as a doctor, but now explores unknown knowledge. His specialty is genetics, genealogy, and philosophy.

He became interested in the subject after he passed by a commoner that dared look him in the eyes and even wiped his brow in his presence. That it was in the middle of summer and the man was carrying a rather large load of produce on his back is irrelevant; Moulds was deeply offended.

He has been working hard for a quarter of a century now to prove that the high-born are biologically and spiritually superior to the low-born. His research began, as he feels all meaningful research does, with a question: Why are the great families better than the rest of the population?

In his studies, he finds the disturbing trend that the lower-born families spread their genetic stuff far wider than the great families do. That this is true because the great families consider far fewer families worthy of consort does not factor into his thinking. "The lower classes must be brought into line!"

To protect the bloodlines of the upper class, Moulds has proposed a great many solutions. Restricting the breeding of the great families only to other great families was well-received, if not exactly universally practiced (and was an edited version of what Jasper really proposed: enforced incest). His attempt to have all of the lower classes sterilized was a hotly contested issue, defeated only by the lesser members of the lower class asking the question, "Then who would actually do work?" The only reason this was brought up by these people is because they knew the answer would be "Us!"

Other suggestions he's come up with (that are always debated but never seriously considered) are unbreachable walls around the great families' estates (which would make them prisoners while the commoners roamed free), reproduction by the lower classes only by license, and euthanizing any child with any sort of birth defect (such as cleft palate, nearsightedness, red hair, left-handedness, body hair, weighing less than or more than the statistical average, etc).

Yeah, he's nuts, but is still considered a serious and influential thinker because of his last name.

Drusilla Myklebust, Aged Madame

Drusilla is a maker of baby clothes, and as such makes a tolerable living from the lower classes of Pembrooktonshire. She herself is very image- and fashion-conscious, and always takes great pains to look immaculate. She frets over every wrinkle, in both her clothing, and in recent years, her face. What makes aging even more horrible is that she has the means to fix it.

Whenever Drusilla sleeps with a man, he ages one year and she becomes one year younger. It is an ability she can not control and does not want. But it's true, and she is very distressed about it. She doesn't want to get older but doesn't want to hurt anyone. And she doesn't want to be alone.

She has ended up with a horrible reputation. She has the occasional fling, each time with a different man so as to minimize the harm, but what she really ruins her socially is her willingness to throw herself at the rare foreigner who passes through town. She feels no guilt about this. As far as she is concerned, if you're not from Pembrooktonshire, you're not a real person.

Walter Narquin, Farmer

The Narquin family's world was turned upside down when their family was visited by an alien life form. It was short, with stubby legs and a big nose and pointy ears, but spoke in the human language. The Narquin's youngest son decided to call it "Elf."

The creature has a ravenous appetite, and especially enjoys cats. The Narquins have such a time keeping it away from their little Fluffykins... and after the children developed a shine for the weird creature, the family has had a worse time keeping it hidden from the neighbors and the Pembrooktonshiretonian authorities.

Meanwhile, Elf is wondering who these idiots are that don't recognize a gnome when they see one.

Roger Nelthorpe, Tinker

Roger is the eldest of one of the great families in Pembrooktonshire, but he was never considered an important member of that family. He married poorly ("selfishly thinking only of love," as his relatives would say) and pursued his invention of small and useless gadgets.

Nelthorpe had hoped to create items which would make life easier for everyone, but instead he was treated as an eccentric fool, although he did make a comfortable living making mechanical trinkets for children.

After his wife died, Roger began experiencing health problems. He began to use his mechanical skills to replace his failing body parts. With the help of several old friends he trusted to keep his secret, he first replaced an eye. Then a knee. Then his liver, one lung, and finally his beating heart. After that, he really got busy improving himself.

Today Roger Nelthorpe is more machine than man.

Nicholas O'Shaunnessy, Dungslinger

Nicholas is a bitter old man, having been ostracized for decades because his uncle dared to marry a foreigner, bringing great shame to the O'Shaunnessy name and ensuring it will die out. He has always been forced to do the most demeaning jobs usually reserved for young boys looking for a few extra coppers. These days, he gathers manure and spreads it over crop fields.

Nicholas is actually a member of a sacred order, just as his uncle was. Luckily his profession coincides with his quest: To find the hiding place of the Black One before the Obsidian Tower reappears. Why he's performing his search by digging through dungpiles in Pembrooktonshire is anyone's guess. His frustration with life increases but he never realizes that notable entities tend not to hang out in such places.

Gavin Old, Gluemaker

When an animal dies and can not be eaten, it gets sent to the Old family. Gavin is an expert gluemaker, and guarantees his adhesives for years.

Of course, his best glue isn't made from animals at all. He believes that the best glue is made of people – the more noteworthy, the better. So whenever somebody important dies, he spends many nights staking out the burial site, waiting to find a time when nobody's looking so he can steal the body.

Many of Pembrooktonshire's graves and mausoleums are filled instead with animal remains. Old would consider it disrespectful to empty a grave without leaving something in return. In the quite rare occasion that a body is exhumed, this has been used as evidence that the deceased was a witch... sometimes resulting in the burning of some of their still-living relatives.

Julius Oliphant, Armorer

Julius is a middle-aged man, massively built from his many years at the forge. As the years wore on, he found his true talent was making armor and weapons. These days, his work is sought after by wealthy collectors and warriors as the Oliphant name on a sword has been enough to end fights all by itself.

He is also a radical pacifist. He doesn't care if the outside world kills itself off so he is happy to supply real arms and armor for foreign sale, but he refuses to sell real tools of war locally. He just doesn't tell anybody.

So all of the items for sale in his Pembrooktonshire showroom are exquisitely crafted and beautiful to behold, but they do not stand up to the rigors of battle. Armor loses one point of effectiveness after every attack (not hit) made on the wearer, and his weapons have a -1 damage modifier, cumulative with every hit made.

Benedict Onions, Junior Priest

Onions is the youngest priest at the church in Pembrooktonshire, yet his artistic talent and impeccable calligraphic skills have caused Father Rhydderch to put him in charge of archiving and copying of old texts (presses being considered too vulgar to duplicate holy works). Onions enjoys his duties immensely.

Benedict is also quite the forger, and is a former employee of the Reuter bookbindery, where he learned the ins and outs of book manufacturing. Onions has been rewriting the chief texts that Rhydderch uses for his sermons one page at a time, and then replacing those pages late at night. The rewritten passages carry the same general meanings as before, but when taken as a whole are beginning to resemble something else altogether...

Sybil Orhan, Old Crone

Scorned by the citizenry and abandoned by her children and grandchildren, Sybil lives off of her meager savings in a small cottage on the outskirts of town.

She is a bitter, bitter old woman, always talking about the way things used to be, and making the point that things were better back in the day.

Although no one knows it, she is the one that highlights the real tragedy of Pembrooktonshire. While the town has always been socially rigid and bound by tradition, during Sybil's lifetime she has seen this true conservatism usurped by self-interested demagogues and the trend-following masses. The traditions that Pembrooktonshire now follows are not the actual traditions that Pembrooktonshire thinks it follows, and nobody knows the difference, or would believe the difference if it was pointed out to them. As Sybil has learned to her ruin.

Imogen Oxnard, Shepherd

Imogen is a middle-aged widow who tends to one of the large herds of roving sheep in the foothills under the great forbidden mountains. Her sons have all moved out on their own, and for some reason she declines

all offers from those interested in buying her property. She even forcefully rebukes those that suggest she could profit more (and work less) by simply selling some of the herd for slaughter rather than keeping the entire herd and just selling the wool.

Oxnard refuses because some time back, a traveling wizard transformed her husband into a sheep. The wizard was quickly apprehended and executed after some other shenanigans, but Imogen never spoke of her husband's fate to anyone, and of course immediately lost track of which sheep in the herd is indeed her husband...

Kenneth Patterson, Undertaker

Patterson is the man responsible for preparing the deceased for funerals and then burying the remains. He is a handsome, well-tanned man that has none of the stereotypical gauntness or deathlike peculiarity about him.

He does have one rather disturbing habit. When the body of a young and attractive female passes through his door, as part of the preparation process he will dress it up and take it out to the lake and dance with it on the shore. So good is his skill at makeup and, well, puppetry, that he has been witnessed doing this and nobody has suspected that he was with a corpse.

Bartholomew Peacock, Messenger

While not the largest city, delivering a message across town can considerably disrupt one's day. Most wealthy families and businesses have servants they can dispatch to deliver notes. Others don't.

And Peacock is there. For a fee, he will take messages to anyone, and prides himself on hand-delivering messages to people even if they do not want to speak to visitors. But he also expects a tip from the people who hire him.

Those who do not pay the tip will have their messages go undelivered. However, they will not know that, as Peacock is an expert forger, and as part of his service always returns signed delivery forms. He will simply throw the message away, forge the signature and time of day in the hand of the intended recipient, and forget all about it.

Miranda Peaver, Housewife

Mrs. Peaver is an aging woman who is obsessed with the success of her eight children. All boys, they have been groomed since birth to be proper citizens and honor and promote the family name. However, they aren't the brightest group of lads in the world, and for the talents they do have, they are only human. They're not perfect.

Miranda realizes this while at the same time finding it completely unacceptable. She has made it her life to be in all her sons' business, whether it be professional or personal. If there is a superior rival to one of her boys, she goes out of her way to ruin that person. No deed is too dirty for her to perform if it means her sons will meet with greater success.

And if it comes to the worst, her father was a chemist, and she knows how to make all sorts of undetectable poisons. Funny how half her sons' first wives all died suddenly. Just like some of their more accomplished classmates back in school...

Jefferson Pembroke, Cooper

As a descendent of Pembroke-tonshire's founder, Jefferson finds himself often asked for advice from all corners, on all subjects. And he's not even yet a middle-aged man! He tries hard to give good advice, and is as helpful around town as he can be.

The one thing that Pembroke can't deal with very well is numbers. He's not stupid, but keeping his attention span focused on mathematics and counting is painfully difficult for him. He's hired a young man to deal with his business affairs so as to keep himself out of the poorhouse.

He never lets anyone watch him work, and seems anxious whenever someone makes a large order. For some reason every thousandth barrel he makes is a gate to some infernal netherworld, and gremlins pour out of the newly completed barrel until he can manage to smash the thing and close the gate.

Samuel Pfaff, Buttonmaker

Pfaff (the p is not silent) is a hypochondriac of the first order. But he thinks he is mentally ill. Which he is, but not in the manner he believes.

His trouble started when a highborn gentleman was so pleased with the buttons made for his new suit that he invited Pfaff over for tea. While conversing, business came up, and Pfaff was left alone in the sitting room, and started paging through some of the books on the shelf. There he came across a copy of *A Catalog of Maladies of Perverts, Lunatics, and Maniacs*.

Not understanding how things work, Pfaff believes one catches a mental illness the same way one would a cold (foul vapors, of course!), and that they pass in the same way a rash might. So every couple of weeks he believes he has a new mental disorder, and acts out in order to be treated for his condition.

A major problem is that there is no one in Pembroke-tonshire who even recognizes the concept of "mental illness." Pfaff's host only had that book to look up dirty words in the "Pervert" sections. So when Samuel decides to have a split personality, or go catatonic, or become psychotic, the response is the same. Somebody cracks him over the head but good, and he gets thrown in the stocks until somebody gets tired of his wailing.

Reuben Pontier, Plague Inspector

There is much the social machine of Pembroke-tonshire can do, but one thing it cannot is shame disease into avoiding town. As many are aware of this (even though they think something must be done!), the current thinking is having someone whose sole job it is to be a lookout for disease.

Pontier is the current Plague Inspector, and as such he has full authority to inspect any person or animal at any time. Usually he is positioned in the market square and when someone snuffles or coughs, he is there demanding to see their tonsils and checking for buboes. He is also authorized to enter any building at any time without permission, as long as the owner is present.

In all, he does provide a valuable service and has detected health problems early, even if he has never detected plague.

But power corrupts, and Pontier frequently uses his power to demand humiliating strip searches and home searches of a very disruptive nature if someone displeases (as in, refuses to stroke his ego) him.

Maximilian Pratt, Scarecrow

Pratt makes his living as an exterminator, killing rats and insects in town and dealing with rodents and crows out on the farms.

In recent years he has taken to dressing up like a scarecrow while advertising and performing his work.

Most people assume it's a publicity gimmick, but the truth is Pratt is growing straw instead of body hair (he keeps his head and face shaved) and this is his way of keeping that covered up.

Roger Peter, Carpenter

Peter is a well-liked, average sort of family man, but he's got a complete inability to care for plants and jokes that they die in his presence. He thinks that's a joke, but plants can not survive in his presence for more than a couple of days. His parents' farm, on a good tract of land, immediately failed when Roger became old enough to run and play in the fields. His wife keeps no garden, so this has not been an issue for some years.

Felix Quaif, Farmer

Pembrooktonshire is in the ideal location. It is nestled in a mountain valley but there is enough space in that valley to support many farms. Quaif's corn farm is one of the more productive agricultural enterprises in the area.

Several months ago, after a meteor shower, Quaif found an odd plant growing in his fields. It refused to be pulled out of the ground, and Quaif was trying to figure out how to get it out of his field when he saw it capture and devour two passing rabbits. Quaif decided there might be money in this thing and decided to see how big it would grow. It is now ten feet tall when standing fully erect, and Felix is feeding it whole lambs.

And now it has started talking to him...

Basil Quedgely, Scribe

Quedgely, part of one of the great families of Pembrooktonshire, has for fifty years been the official scribe of the town. It is his job to record the arguments and results of criminal proceedings, record and file arrests, marriages, divorces, property acquisitions, and town council meetings and legislation.

About forty years ago he became utterly bored with his work. He always wanted to be a great writer, not a simple recorder of events. So he stopped worrying about accuracy and began writing creatively. Every criminal incident, from juvenile vandalism to improperly marked stalls in the market square, becomes part of a greater criminal conspiracy. Every simple trial becomes a courtroom drama. Every marriage begins (and ends) with a torrid affair. Every business transaction recorded here is a result of backroom wheeling and dealing. Every town council matter, from the lamplighter's pay to the fee to use a public garden, becomes a struggle for absolute supremacy between rival factions.

A Quedgely or not, if anybody ever bothered to read the town records, Basil would be quickly and forever silenced. Because even though he thinks he's making all of this up... he's accurately recording the truth of all these matters.

Charlotte Quessy, Harlot

Charlotte might be the most naïve woman alive. For twenty of her forty years she has been a prostitute, and is waiting for her dream man to find her and take her away from this miserable life.

Unfortunately, she has become so desperate that she believes every client just might be her dream man, and so falls in love with everyone that passes through her door. This is even more so for repeat customers. And yet more intense for foreigners (which doesn't improve her standing with the locals any...).

Penelope Rambottom, Housewife

Penelope is absolutely disgusted with how women are disrespected and disregarded in Pembrooktonshire, and she has decided to do something about it! She has formed the Honorable Organization for Maidenly Emancipation.

HOME seeks to educate the population about the role of women in society. Of course HOME is horrified that women walk the streets unchaperoned, of course HOME is horrified that women speak when they are not first spoken to, of course HOME is horrified when a woman seeks to do a man's work and earn money instead of keeping a proper household.

Of course HOME is in competition with all of the “proper women’s leagues” to be the most influential and respected in town. The feuds and rivalries are *vicious*.

And of course all of HOME’s pronouncements and public business is conducted by the members’ husbands, as it would not be a good example for the wives to be protesting or being seen as independent activists.

Cecil Ranahan, Nailer

A lot of construction happens in and around Pembrooktonshire, and the load of constantly making nails wore heavy on the established blacksmiths’ time, so one apprentice decided to open his own forge and specialize in making nails.

He makes a decent living and is raising a respectable family.

Except for their cat. Their cat is a bastard. Literally. Pet genealogy is kept track of as strictly as human family trees in Pembrooktonshire, and to own a cat of low, or unknown, breeding is considered very low-class.

But Cecil won’t get rid of it. He’s found that he has gained eight of the cat’s nine lives. And he’s used four of them up already. Or is it five? And what will happen to Cecil if the cat’s only life ends?

Clarence Ravensdale, Tax Assessor

As part of one of the great families of Pembrooktonshire, Clarence is the ultimate political appointee. He is the town’s tax assessor, and in some ways the most feared man in town. He also has a crippling case of dyscalculia.

Because of this, he does not care about financial records or taxation history or even monetary tax payments. He has decided that all taxes shall be paid in heads of livestock. He has set up three pens on the outskirts of town. People listed as “poor” must fill up the small pen with livestock. “Freemen” must fill up the medium pen. “Gentlemen” and “Ladies” must fill up the large pen. One’s status is determined by how impressive-looking Ravensdale deems one’s home.

All of the great families are somehow classified as “poor.” Clarence’s explanation? “Those houses are much too big for my liking. They would take forever to clean.”

Tobias Reuter, Author

Tobias is a greatly respected author and founder of the Reuter press and bookbindery. Now in his 80s, he lives just outside of town in a large villa. It was his dream to move the Reuter family up to the level of the great families of Pembrooktonshire, but it was not to be. And Tobias is livid.

The reason the family never ascended is because his son, Kurt, married downward, and when he took over the press he opened up commissions to foreigners, thus encouraging the Reuter family to be exposed to all sorts of alien thought (foreign-penned works are officially banned for sale within the town). Only Tobias’ reputation protected the family, but their chances of being important as a whole have passed.

Reuter’s own claim to fame is his book *On Paper As On Stone*, which was the first book printed on his press. It is completely self-serving, promoting the printed book as being authoritative just by virtue of being printed, and carrying far more weight than a spoken argument. This led to many wanting to have their thoughts published, which of course would have resulted in many divergent views being printed, which would have ruined the perceived authority of the written word and given voice to too many unimportant and unconnected people in town. Reuter revised his famous tome to include qualifications for print, which includes sponsorship by a member of the great families of the town. This was Reuter’s bid to greatness; the original printing had been a scandal precisely because Tobias was of the common folk and the great families’ stranglehold on influence was threatened.

But instead of being the revolutionary that would have transformed Pembrooktonshire, Tobias threw his lot in with tradition and the great families, and even today is more loyal to them than to his son and son's family who he considers to have destroyed the Reuter name.

Georgine Revesby, Wealthy Procuress

Revesby is a social crusader and a moral standard in Pembrooktonshire, often giving public speeches about the importance of clean living. Of particular importance to her is the purity of young women, and has been the loudest voice in a generation calling for chastity in social life.

Her efforts have made it extremely unfashionable, barring exceptional situations (or personalities) to engage in or discuss physical relations, even so much as a kiss on the cheek. Many families feel so guilty about their carnal urges that married couples go for years without touching each other "improperly." This has also created something of a sexual counter-culture as well as a general "what we do in private is far different than what we say in public" repression. Revesby loves this because it continues to give her crusade ammunition and relevance in public life.

She also loves it because she is the most ruthless pimp in Pembrooktonshire and does her best to corner the market for her girls.

Gemma Rouleau, Dancer

The fine arts are as appreciated by the upper class of Pembrooktonshire as they could possibly be in a culture which detests outside influence. In addition to the more usual plastic arts, the performing arts are well thought-of, and command enough of a fee at public and private functions that accomplished performers can spend weeks or months between performances simply preparing for the next one.

Gemma was a beautiful young woman, extremely graceful and unbelievably flexible. Her performances left audiences speechless. Then one day at rehearsal she had a bad spill and suffered a spinal injury. Unable to turn her head, or lift her arms over her head, or bend at the waist, she decided that her next performance must go on anyhow and then figured that would be it. She stayed in seclusion for months, depressed all the while and gaining weight.

It was a private function and the hostess had hyped the dance performance so much (she had insisted on seeing an early rehearsal) that the guests dared not do anything else than raucously applaud as this uncomfortably plump woman in a leotard simply wiggling slightly and dipping at the knees every so often. Unnerved at the positive response, Rouleau declared this was her "Interpretation of the Struggle of Honor," and became an instant sensation.

Her health isn't getting any better, her waistline isn't getting any smaller, but for all big occasions it is now almost mandatory to hire Gemma to perform her sensational new dance. And the style is catching on.

Randolph Sabouin, Puppeteer

Sabouin is an insane, insane man. He creates puppets and performs delightful shows for young and old alike, but when the curtain is drawn, Sabouin retreats to his rented room above a shopfront and goes to war.

He believes his puppets are alive and pressure him to commit crimes and be socially unacceptable. He is resisting their more hellish suggestions, but finds himself succumbing to the simpler mischief just to placate them.

He's tried to destroy some of the puppets, but this hurts his business as the most popular puppets to the crowd are the ones that are most fervently pressuring him. He's had to re-make them.

But Sabouin's puppets are not at all evil, and they do not encourage evil. However, the meaning of right and wrong in Pembrooktonshire is different than in most of the world, and puppets trying to convince someone to promote an egalitarian, free society will be seen as quite wicked indeed.

Neville Savage, Chastity Beltmaker

Propriety and decency is important in Pembrooktonshire, so much so that the chastity belt is an important device in society. Proper gentlemen expect to see such a device on their wedding night, and Savage is the man trusted to make these all-important items.

The Pembrooktonshire style of chastity belt is soft but tough leather which covers not only the groin but the torso area as well, as a corset. They are sophisticated enough to prevent interference with bodily functions but will not open without compromising the integrity of the belt itself.

They are fitted when a woman is 17. Savage keeps all specifications on file, and so if a belt is opened for legitimate reasons (medical procedure, baths) with duly respected witnesses, he will fashion a new one to the new specifications.

Under no circumstances will he construct a new belt for someone without witnessed and confirmed legitimate reasons for the breaking or removal of the old one (and he has been offered vast fortunes to do so, but always refused), nor will he make an individual's belt to any other specification than the original measured when the recipient was 17. He does not condone a gluttonous lifestyle!

Gabriel Silverdale, Standard Master

Every family wants their standard to be the most impressive in town. Only a few can afford the artists skilled enough to achieve this. Moreover, every standard must be approved by the town's Standard Master.

Originally intended to simply forbid the registration of continuous new standards by families (keeping up appearances is such a full-time job after all, and the Joneses just got themselves a new crest...!), bribery and utter lack of taste have reduced the office to simply collecting fees and rejecting scandalous crest applications.

Silverdale amuses himself by accepting fees and then rejecting applications for no good reason, but "suggesting" changes that would allow a resubmission to be approved. He doesn't attempt this with anyone truly influential, or families that truly can't afford it, but that middle class is ripe for fun.

Thus, many middle-families have quite odd crests featuring donkey rear-ends, tadpoles, three-legged dogs, pink posies, and psychedelic color schemes.

Morris Simons, Bard

Morris makes his living composing great musical works for great orchestras in larger cities, but around town he's known as the minstrel who performs down at the Good Shepherd. He's a young man for his abilities, merely in his mid-thirties, but he has an old haggard look about him. Sometimes it seems like he's staring at things that aren't there. His performances always draw a crowd because people never know how he's going to act.

You see, when Morris plays an instrument, and it doesn't matter if it's his lute, a violin, his mandolin, or even his prized dragonskin drum, he sometimes travels through time. There seems to be no pattern, no way to predict when or if it will happen. When he does time travel, he always appears in the midst of other performing musicians, sometimes in rehearsal, sometimes in performance, and a few times, on live television. Because he's never playing the same thing the others are, the performance breaks down immediately, and when Simons stops playing, he is instantly transported back to his own time at the same moment he left; onlookers don't even notice that he'd gone. And that's the moment his performances become eccentric and interesting.

Jonathan Smith, Cowboy

Every morning, Jonathan Smith straps on his chaps, dons his ten-gallon hat, picks up his lasso, and saddles up his horse for another day of cattle rustling out in the fields.

Jonathan Smith feels paranoid, alone, and cut off from the world. He believes himself to be an unlikable freak, unable to fully participate in society.

This is because Jonathan Smith is the only sane, honorable, honest, normal person in Pembrooktonshire.

Bianca Snoddy, Dollmaker

Bianca is a dollmaker without peer. Whether it's lifelike girly dolls, tough and durable wooden soldiers for the boys, or even a simple teddy for any small child, Snoddy can make it, and quickly.

Bianca is especially proud of her porcelain dolls, and these special pieces she spends many weeks perfecting. She gives strict instructions to the buyers that these are to be treated with respect and are not meant to be thrown around by a careless child.

To protect these creations, she places a live adder in the body cavity, drugged with a special poison that slows its metabolism to a crawl until again exposed to open air. If it is broken, out comes the adder to bite whoever is nearby.

Leonard Snow, Barrister

The law in Pembrooktonshire is not very well placed in precedent or even decree. It is for the most part determined by fashion and public opinion. And fashion and public opinion are largely determined by the important people in town. Whatever wouldn't cause a riot is allowable.

Thus legal counsels are not so much experts in law as much as experts in rhetoric and marketing.

Belonging to one of Pembrooktonshire's great families and being trained as a lawyer means Leonard creates law as much as he argues it. Merely hiring Snow as one's attorney is usually enough to settle a matter, as one so respectable would never represent a client who isn't correct, and arguing with the man would be so gauche.

Legal battles between proper litigants are often introduced, fought, and decided in secret, with the public revealing of the dispute, complete with the announcements of the legal counsel, being the end result after a settlement is reached.

Alisa Somerbaker, Child

Alisa is a farmer's daughter, not yet eight years of age. She is something of a rough and tumble tomboy, and has whupped quite a few of the male children while "playing."

She has told a number of other children that a necklace she found in the fields holds great power, and that if the other children don't obey her every command, a great demon will come forth and eat them. The children thus far believe her, and their odd behavior in serving Somerbaker has caused their parents to be worried. None have yet taken any action, wondering if it's just children being children.

But the amulet *does* contain a demon, and if Alisa were to summon it, it *would* eat the children. Her, too.

Christopher Sparrow, Child

Christopher Sparrow is the leader of a wild gang of six-year-old farmer youths. They roam the countryside (never straying too close to the mountains, of course) looking for trouble.

One time, Sparrow was wandering alone and came across a curious meeting of a small brown bear, a bunny, a pig, an owl, and a small tiger. Enraged by this obvious pagan sorcery, he gathered his friends and stoned the offending animals to death.

Since then he and his gang have similarly disposed of three pigs living in houses as men, a large white rabbit that nearly escaped down a hole, a pig that seemed to spin webs as if a spider, and a broadsword-wielding duck.

He and they are now constantly on the lookout for animals that do not seem as animals.

Lucius Sprockling, Casino Boss

Of course there's a casino in Pembrooktonshire. With so many idle rich, why wouldn't there be? And Sprockling is the man who needs to make sure everything runs correctly.

In addition to dealing with movers and shakers who believe the mere utterance of the words, "I want to win," should be enough to make it so, and commoners spending their literal last silver hoping to win big, Sprockling has to deal with the fact that the odds are preternaturally fluid in his casino.

Card decks which are witnessed as being legitimate full decks somehow become stacked during play. Roulette wheels, painstakingly tested for balance, become fixed. And there doesn't seem to be anything that anyone can do about it. Sprockling even arranged an after hours all-nude card game, just to prove there is no cheating going on, and the cards still went all wonky.

If the customers were getting rich, Sprockling would hardly be concerned. But the problem is all of the shenanigans happen in favor of the house. He can't *give* money away with his games, and he's tried. The gentlemen are getting angry. Sprockling is running out of time.

Percival St. John, Landlord

As a member of one of the foremost families of Pembrooktonshire, and wealthy due to being one of the largest landlords in town, St. John has the money to pursue his odd tastes and the status to not be publicly castigated for doing so.

In recent months St. John has taken to sleeping all day and only being seen at night. Never a well-tanned man, he has taken on a cadaverous complexion. He goes for long walks at night, but prefers only his own company and will duck down alleys and generally flee rather than pass by someone on the street.

His new schedule also means he never shows up at church, and this more than anything else has gotten people talking. He is unpopular with his tenants around town, and their talk of him being a "bloodsucker" is being taken literally by those just now becoming interested in the situation.

There is nothing supernatural about St. John; he's simply eccentric. But the rumors are spreading, and more and more people are convinced he is indeed a creature of the night. It's only a matter of time before someone takes action... or hires someone else to do so.

Nathaniel Stallone, Farmer

Slopping the pigs and plowing the fields isn't the most thrilling or easy-going work on Earth, but Nathaniel is glad to do it. He loves the fact that he can make things grow and that even if nobody was interested in his produce, he and his family would be completely self-sufficient.

Stallone just can't seem to keep money in his pocket. Every time he has a few coins, they disappear. There is not one copper to be found in his home. Whenever he goes into town, people around him seem to lose their wallets and coin purses as well. Many a time has Stallone been accused of theft.

But Stallone never has the money, and at this point, after many searches, everyone is aware that there is never any coin in his home. Merchants can attest to the fact that he never buys anything with coin, either.

Money just disappears from around the man.

Virginia Stark, Rich Panderer

As the matriarch of one of Pembrooktonshire's great families, Stark wields great power about town. But she is a bitter, bitter woman. Years ago, she caught her husband with another woman (not even doing anything... just conversing with another woman, completely innocently). The story she told is that he humiliated her and ran off with the woman to foreign lands (a sure way to get the townsfolk to consider them scum!). The truth is, they are buried in the town's largest park.

Ever since, Virginia has been resentful of happy relationships and downright hateful towards men. Stark expresses this by playing matchmaker with the town's married folk, carefully selecting combinations she believes will lead to affairs and then exposing those affairs once they happen.

This has given her a reputation as a moral defender of decency in the town and only increases her status.

Edwina Strokes, Great Dame

The eldest member of the great Strokes family, Edwina is famously unmarried and even more famously claims to be a virgin.

She is over 90 years old, and makes frequent pronouncements concerning the improper behavior of couples in Pembrooktonshire. In recent times, she has decided to give something back to the community: Its decency.

She has created the Honor Society, an organization committed to recruiting young (under-10) girls and having them commit to doing the right thing – promising to not soil their bodies or dignity. Girls in the honor society must pledge to remain a virgin not only after marriage, but they must wait until their husband has given them a child first.

Because Strokes has so much social clout, and because the truth about such things is not spoken of in polite company, nobody has spoken up to reveal the flaw with this scheme. The original Honor Society girls are now in their mid-20s, and while many do drop out of the program, many are so image-conscious and enjoy the prestige that goes along with being an adult member of this group that they keep their promise, and wait.

And wait.

And wait.

Octavia Teixeira, Princess

Her father deposed and her family put to the sword by the invading forces, Octavia fled her life of luxury, and ended up in Pembrooktonshire. She's confident that nobody will ever find her here and approves of the rather rigid social structure of the town.

She creates a problem for the populace. She is a foreigner, but she is of noble blood. Out of respect for someone that is truly not a commoner, she has been given her own modest household, with sponsors donating servants. It is expected that she invest in (not actually work at) a trade to provide a future income.

However, she spends all of her time simply making demands and ordering her servants around. No reason she should change her behavior because she's in a new area, right? The Pembrooktonshiretonians constantly seek audiences with her to get advice about various matters, which she gladly provides.

She thinks they are deferring to her noble blood. She doesn't realize that they are treating her like a curiosity, or a zoo exhibition, and show up to laugh at the advice given by an ignorant foreigner.

Portia Tissit, Milkmaid

Portia is a popular young lady who lives and works on one of Pembrooktonshire's many outlying farms. Otherwise a plain looking girl aside from her rather buxom figure, Portia has recently begun avoiding her suitors, and social life in general, to spend almost all of her time working. Even at the oddest hours.

The thing is, *it's not the cows that Portia is milking.*

Sylvester Tither, Potter

Sylvester is one of the unnoticed and unheralded craftsmen of Pembrooktonshire. He creates simple work intended to be used by normal working folks, and is not interested in reputations abroad or becoming a celebrity in town.

Tither is the most intelligent, albeit not formally educated, man in Pembrooktonshire. His advice is always good, his reflections thoughtful. Unfortunately he has a complete inability to speak clearly, and his vocal manners are identical to those of a retarded child. Even his wife thinks he's an idiot.

Herbert Umpleberry, Fruit Farmer

Umpleberry tends to the orchards on his property, harvesting great numbers of apples and pears every year. The majority of these are used to make cider which is famous across the realm.

Herbert has a special ingredient he uses to give his cider apples that little something extra. In his garden, he also farms an odd species of worms, and makes sure that all of his cider fruit have one of these worms living in it before it is scrapped. It gives the fruit a tangy flavor unique to Umpleberry Cider.

Being a worm wrangler is probably not the easiest job in the world. He has to keep it secret, else his customers become disgusted. And the little purple bastards keep escaping the worm corral he built into his home garden and burrowing away into the ground...

Vernon Vallancourt, Artist

Vernon is a young artisan more interested in making people happy than in creating great works. He spends most of his days doing sketches of people for small sums in the market square. He does do some more lucrative private commissions too.

Vernon's paints are personally made using an odd combination of berries and liquids found in the immediate area. Somehow, he has managed to unwittingly create a potent magical effect: Any living creature he depicts in a portrait has its soul sucked out of its body and trapped into the painting.

Vallancourt doesn't realize this, and this isn't the sort of thing Pembrookshiretonians would notice.

Roland Valmore, Child

Roland is a farmer's 8 year old child that believes with all his heart that on All Hallows Eve, a great spirit appears in the pumpkin patch and gives children a present.

Since believing this, Valmore has not been able to convince any of his friends to stay with him in the pumpkin patch and wait for the great spirit. They tease him mercilessly about it, and even adults have heard about the kid's obsession.

This year will be different. Roland has begun to read *Suspicion as Proof*, and has passed on some of its ideas to the other children. Now scared to believe Roland wrong, Charles, Lucille, Patricia, and Sallyann plan to accompany Roland to the pumpkin patch this year.

At that time they will learn that Valmore has been telling the truth. The spirit will appear, as it has every year, and grant a wish to Roland, as it has every year. And this year Roland will wish for the demise of the cruel people that have teased him for years when he was telling the truth.

Margaret van Mook, Typical Streetwalker

Margaret is an everywoman, having just typical enough features to be seen as neither ugly nor beautiful and being able to blend into a crowd. When on the make, Margaret dresses in typical streetwalker dress.

But when out of costume, nobody seems to recognize her. Oddly, people only seem to remember her by what she wears. When in a new outfit, she just seems vaguely familiar. "I've seen her someplace before... but where?"

She milks this for everything it is worth.

Henry Waxman, Baker

Every day, Henry Waxman opens his bakery and presents the morning's efforts. And every day the people in the Market Square of Pembrooktonshire remark just how amazing Waxman's bread and pastries are.

He also doubles as something of a marriage counselor for the local church. It seems that when he is around, people don't fight. Ever. He isn't allowed around the field for the Great Games because it was discovered that the contestants felt "too embarrassed" to compete in front of him.

Sylvia Wayne, Child

Sylvia is a six year old child that is terrified of the dark. Her father, a mid-level merchant, often takes her into caves that line the foothills around town and leaves her there in the dark. "To build character so you won't be scared of anything when you grow up."

She used to cry and scream as the bats flapped around her and tugged her hair and scratched at her face. Then one day the Constable heard her and came to help.

Sylvia's father came upon the scene as Constable Stark was carrying her out of the cave. Believing he was kidnapping her, Mr. Wayne beat Stark to death with a cane and buried the body in the cave.

He told Sylvia that if she ever cries again when placed in the cave, Constable Stark will rise from the dead and eat her. Sylvia now stays very, very quiet at all times.

Millicent Wellesley, Saucy Tart

Millicent is an apple-picker and a favorite of the rebellious young men of the town. She never shirks her duties, but she also makes sure her free time is always taken.

Whenever she sleeps with a different man, she attracts a fly which then follows her around. If the fly is killed or otherwise greatly removed, it is soon replaced by another.

She's got quite a swarm, but believes that the city itself is just becoming more infested.

Matthew Weyhofen, Gardener

A luxurious frontage is a must if one is to be well thought-of in Pembrooktonshire, and nobody provides better than Matthew Weyhofen.

He is a master of arrangements and plant care, and nobody else in town can make flowers bloom so vibrantly, or grass grow quite so green. And like most masters of his craft, he guards his secrets carefully, and often works only in the dead of night.

The truth is, while Weyhofen does have an excellent eye for garden arrangements, he doesn't know the first thing about actual plant care. The one thing he does know is that he is the best fertilizer he's ever heard of. Anything made of him, or cast off of him, makes plants grow like mad. Hair, flakes of skin or dandruff, snot, urine, feces, other bodily fluids, all make plants grow quite quickly.

He learned early on that people don't take kindly to him pissing (or worse... or much worse) on their plants, so he prepares his "secret formulas" in private, and so increases the mystique of his work when odd looking and smelling "chemicals" are poured and sprayed out of bottles on the plants.

He has made out a will stating he wishes to be buried with acorns in his grave, and he figures the biggest, fastest growing tree ever will sprout from his grave as a fitting monument to his life.

He is scared of what would happen if he is ever with a woman, so he has avoided this situation so far. But it's only a matter of time before someone of his talent and renown is going to be socially pressured into marriage...

Rachel Whispers, Landowner

Whispers is a comely young widow, just twenty-three years of age. She now runs the decently-sized apple tree orchard that's been owned by her husband's family for generations. She's an able administrator and a kind employer.

Rachel Whispers is scared to death. She became convinced that her husband's death from falling from a ladder was no accident, and she came to believe their three year old son was responsible. She came to believe he was possessed by a demon. On one stormy night, when she was struggling with the decision to turn him over to the priests, the child said something particularly blasphemous and in a fit of pure terror she killed her only child. Her panic only increased as she realized what she'd done as the boy's dead, innocent face stared up blankly at her.

Knowing this would mean she would go to the gallows, Whispers brought the body to her secret basement to give herself time to think about what to do next. To her horror, when she woke up the next morning, she found her son playing in the front yard, talking to the neighbors. Firmly convinced of his diabolic nature, she killed him again when he came inside and brought the body down to the basement, no longer troubled by guilt.

But every morning, there the child is, laughing, playing, being seen by the neighbors. And every late morning, she brains him with a cast iron frying pan, or a piece of furniture, or perhaps even stabs him with a large knife. The ways she kills her son seem to be different every day. But nothing stops him from being alive and happy the next day.

And Rachel's basement is getting full...

Katrina Wilberforce, Housewife

Have you ever regretted a decision that you made so much that you believe your entire life would be different if you had just made a different choice?

Katrina sure does. She married her high school sweetheart instead of the man who had a more respectable name. So for her entire adult life she's had love, caring, respect, but not a lot of influence. She hates it.

And she did something about it. Her husband is a farmer and works ridiculous hours all day to help the family get ahead. The man she thinks she should have married works long into the night in order to maintain his lavish lifestyle. Katrina has decided she's going to marry that other man as well. So she sneaks out while her husband is at work to spend time with the wealthier man, who believes her to be newly divorced.

She is exhausted and now flinches at shadows as she is scared her deceptions will be revealed, but is managing to keep up her double life.

Julianne Wilcox, Maskmaker

Pembrooktonshire has far more than its fair share of wealthy citizens, and one thing the upper class enjoys more than anything else is the quarterly masquerade ball.

Wilcox makes a fine living, as it is considered very low-class to wear the same mask twice, and everyone demands masks custom-made to express their individual tastes and to impress everyone else.

Wilcox's masks completely and totally conceal the true identity of whoever is wearing the mask, no matter how small or flimsy the mask is... provided that there are at least nine other Wilcox masks being worn in the immediate vicinity.

Henriette Woolcombe, Housewife Activist

Woolcombe is not just the stereotype of a nagging wife. No, she is so much more. She has been brought up to believe in the traditions of Pembrooktonshire and she is always vigilant against aberrant behavior. She has a large collection of books written in the past few decades and has compiled an extensive cross-reference of details about what the "proper" social customs are. And she has perfect recall and a willingness to verbally assault others who aren't measuring up to what her research says should be the standards.

You know the expression "More catholic than the Pope"? Woolcombe is the type of person that would claim the Pope isn't even catholic for a variety of unimportant reasons.

Benedict Wroxley, Sly Pimp

Wroxley is a revolutionary. He believes that Pembrooktonshire's overall moral stance is unhealthy for its people and wants the citizens to just relax and have more fun.

His solution to the problem is to charm some young women into entering the glamorous life of prostitution, where everyone likes them, they get paid for doing something they enjoy, and everyone lives happily ever after.

He's such a personable young man that he has actually got a few lasses believing this. He's just saving up for a storefront.

He has no clue.

Arthur Wyndham, Vintner

Wyndham Apple Wine is the most famous of the Pembrooktonshire wines, and Arthur Wyndham is the head of this great family.

In addition to overseeing the running of his business and administering to the great apple orchards his family owns, Wyndham is also a social activist who despises the more free and "irresponsible" lifestyle of the Pembrooktonshire youth. He declares this a "foreign influence" and seeks to eradicate it.

His method of doing so is to codify exactly what it means to be a Pembrooktonshiretonian, and actively campaign against behavior and circumstances not included in his definitions. He has published many books and pamphlets on the subject, and recently he has been hinting about a list of twenty-eight "secret foreigners" who have been seeking to undermine the moral fabric of Pembrooktonshire youth. This has created a keen interest in genealogy, as close family bonds and a dedicated interest to family history is indeed a cornerstone of Pembrooktonshire citizenry... at least it is now, according to Wyndham's declarations.

In truth, Wyndham's writing is very contradictory, and nobody, nobody, could possibly live up to the standards as described in the numerous long, rambling, poorly-written volumes that Arthur has produced. *Anybody* could be ruined based on these books, and the populace would go along with it for fear that their

shortcomings in the same area as the accused would be revealed. And challenging the books or Wyndham himself is considered a dread attack on the fabric of Pembrooktonshire society itself.

Beatrix Ødegård, Housewife

The Ødegård name means almost nothing in Pembrooktonshire. Well, that's not exactly true. It's treated with scorn, as worse than nothing.

Immigrants to the town face an unbelievable battle for acceptance, and it is normally not until three or four generations, *if* members of the family marry well and basically make their foreign name disappear. And the Ødegård name has letters that don't otherwise appear in Pembrooktonshire, making their situation that much worse, and after five generations they are still treated as complete outsiders.

The Ødegård family problem is that their heritage is important to them, and they are all so *beautiful*. Not in the affected Pembrooktonshire manner, but in a true natural sense. Social climbers can often resist it, but low-ranking folk have no reason not to respond to it, and the Ødegård women typically have so many suitors that they get to set conditions for marriage, and this includes keeping the name.

As the matriarch of perhaps the lowest family in Pembrooktonshire, Beatrix works very hard to keep the family name vibrant. That she is a witch of the traditions of her family's native land only helps this effort.

The magic of the North Country witches is subtle and takes much time and preparation. Beatrix's current enchantment involves beauty. Everyone living in the immediate area (say, three city blocks) becomes minutely and barely discernably uglier, but the total stolen beauty is then gathered within a growing child.

No one has yet discovered this is happening, or the Ødegårds would surely be burned.

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