

# Codex

The Gauntlet's monthly RPG zine



## BONE

MELODIES & TREASURES  
FROM THE REALMS OF DECAY





# *Paranormal Minstrels*

A game about calming spirits and entities with music.

Written by Mary Georgescu & Ray Olsen

Illustrations by Minerva Fox



*The  
horrid  
shrill sound  
of a flute pierces  
the cold room,  
revealing a spectre  
hiding amongst the  
furniture. The  
moaning dissonant  
echo of a cello  
ensnares a ghoul  
whilst compatriots  
complete the  
banishment ritual.*

## *Introduction*

You are new members of a Victorian era society of musicians called The Resonant. You investigate and mitigate paranormal activity for wealthy clients through the use of your instruments and their horrid, cantankerous melodies. You have trained many years for this moment. Will you succeed in restoring balance to the land, or will your troupe slowly become host to restless and confused spirits?

Being a member of The Resonant is your profession, your family, and your sense of control over death.

The risk is high. You could be possessed, put into a coma, or killed, but the reward of returning a lived-in space to peace feels immeasurable. Most within this group have given up a normal life in pursuit of assisting the living with the restless dead and the spirits of other, inhuman creatures. But some within the group see their role as protecting the spirits from the living; to protect them from those that seek to simply destroy whatever they do not understand or consider unnatural.

## *The Rules*

Players will be presented with a client that is looking for assistance with a spirit. It is up to them to investigate the nature of the spirit and how they want to deal with it. Play is freeform until a spirit is encountered.

When a player wishes to do something that has a risk of failure or wishes to interact with the supernatural, they will be asked to roll a d12. A success is determined if the rolled number is within the timbre of their instrument. If the number is outside the timbre, it is considered a failure, the degree of which is determined by the GM. This may be as simple as playing out of key or angering the spirit they are interacting with.

When facing a spirit, the game enters a series of rounds where the players will take a turn and then the spirit(s) will take theirs. Players will use their instruments and abilities to learn about, temper, and move the spirits. Spirits will utilize their tactics to avoid being removed.

*Harmony:* When two or more players are successful in playing their instruments they can be considered in Harmony. In the next round, players in Harmony get to roll twice and choose one roll to keep on all actions. Continued success keeps players in Harmony, and additional players who succeed join in the Harmony.

*Setup:* This game requires a Game Master (GM) and can have up to 4 players. You do not have to understand music theory in order to play, but it doesn't hurt.

You will need a d12 to play since the chromatic scale has 12 notes!



# Player Guide

## Character Creation

### Roles

You have individually trained within The Resonant to take on certain roles within the group, as it is a ridiculous notion for one person to claim they alone can cleanse a space.

#### *The Psychic* (Detection)

As the Psychic, when you search for an entity, you are more accurately able to locate the entity to within the area of the room where they are located.

#### *The Exorcist* (Removal)

As the Exorcist, you are responsible for handling and banishing of spirits. When attempting to disrupt an enemy spirit, you can roll twice and choose one roll to keep. If you play in Harmony with your fellow musicians, the effect of their song will be more potent towards removal or containment of an entity (removes one more energy than normal).

#### *The Medium* (Communication)

You have undergone more training in channelling spirits through empathy, and making contact is easier for you. When communicating, you get a deeper understanding of an entity's desires than the others.

#### *The Occultist* (Knowledge)

As the Occultist, you have the most book knowledge on the various types of hauntings. When trying to determine something about a haunting, you get more than the average information on a successful roll.

### Your Instrument

The bizarre nature of your instruments and their materials require a craftsman of extraordinary ability to create and maintain. This is partially why you need to remain within the protection and the network of The Resonant.

ROLL A D12 TO DETERMINE YOUR INSTRUMENT on the chart to the right.

The timbre listed is what you need on a d12 to play successfully.

#### *Instrument*      *Timbre*

1. Accordion..... 1-3
2. Drum..... 1-3
3. Ocarina..... 1-3
4. Mandolin..... 4-6
5. Violin..... 4-6
6. Cello..... 4-6
7. Trumpet..... 7-9
8. French Horn..... 7-9
9. Trombone..... 7-9
10. Flute..... 10-12
11. Clarinet..... 10-12
12. Saxophone..... 10-12





# The Origin of Your Bones

Roll to discover the instrument's make using a d12.

Origin of the Bone	What Price was Paid?	Appearance
(1-3) Family/friend	(1-3) Your position in society	(1-3) Completely hidden within
(4-6) Noteworthy person	(4-6) Your relationships	(4-6) Ornamental/inlaid elements
(7-9) Aquatic animal	(7-9) Your faith	(7-9) Functional elements
(10-12) Land animal	(10-12) Your desires	(10-12) Completely revealed

**Origin.** Upon entering The Resonant, you understand deeply the nature of physical matter—the nature of the body to decompose, rot, and return to the earth. Bones are tethered to the spirit and assist musicians with interacting with other entities. Without bones, your connection to limbo would be impotent.

**What price was paid upon your entry into The Resonant?** Did you lose all connection to the people you love for being away so often? Did you give up a marriage with your true love? Did you find your new knowledge of the afterlife shakes the foundations of your previous beliefs? Did you want to pursue other things that life has to offer, and now all of those opportunities have slipped away?

**What does your instrument look like?** Do you have delicate inlaid elements, or is your instrument made entirely of bone.



**IF YOUR BONE COMES FROM A FAMILY MEMBER OR A FRIEND:** Your instrument has the ability to stun an entity. When you use this ability and roll a success, one spirit is stunned for a round.

**Harmony effect:** This ability can stun one additional spirit when used successfully.

**IF YOUR BONE COMES FROM A NOTEWORTHY PERSON:** Your instrument has the ability to disrupt an entity's energy by 1 each time you play successfully.

**Harmony effect:** Increases to 2.

**IF YOUR BONE COMES FROM A LAND ANIMAL:** Your instrument has the ability to oust an entity from where it is hiding on a successful roll.

**Harmony effect:** You prevent it from hiding in any of the objects in the room you are currently playing in.

**IF YOUR BONE COMES FROM AN AQUATIC ANIMAL:** Your instrument has the ability to suppress one effect of a spirit (e.g. possession) for a round when played successfully.

**Harmony effect:** You completely nullify an effect when playing successfully.



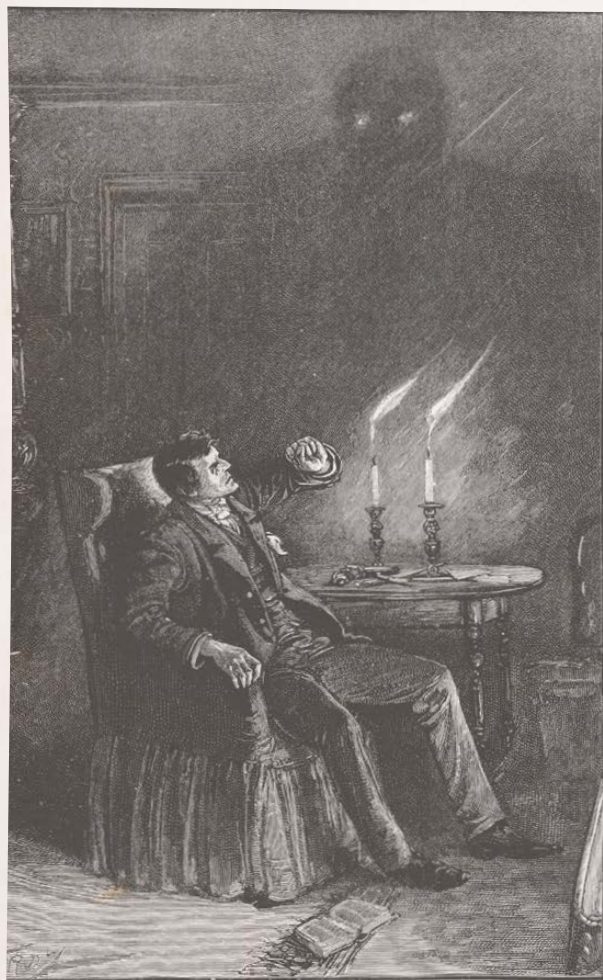
# GM Guide

## Creating a Mission

Describe the location, describe the people who are seeking help. They should have some descriptions to get the players thinking about the entity in the area. Make the area larger to give the players more things to search and explore. A location can have as many or as few spirits as you see fit.

## Gameplay

- Arriving/entering the home
- Determining the cause of the haunting
- Releasing/interacting with the spirit
- Resolution



## Creating Entities

Does the entity come from an object taken from its home? Is this building on an ancient burial ground? These thoughts will give you ideas on what spirits reside in this location.

The entities should be strong, otherworldly and not care for the living. Entities do not require rolls to act, though they can only do one thing in a round.

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## Entities/Spirits

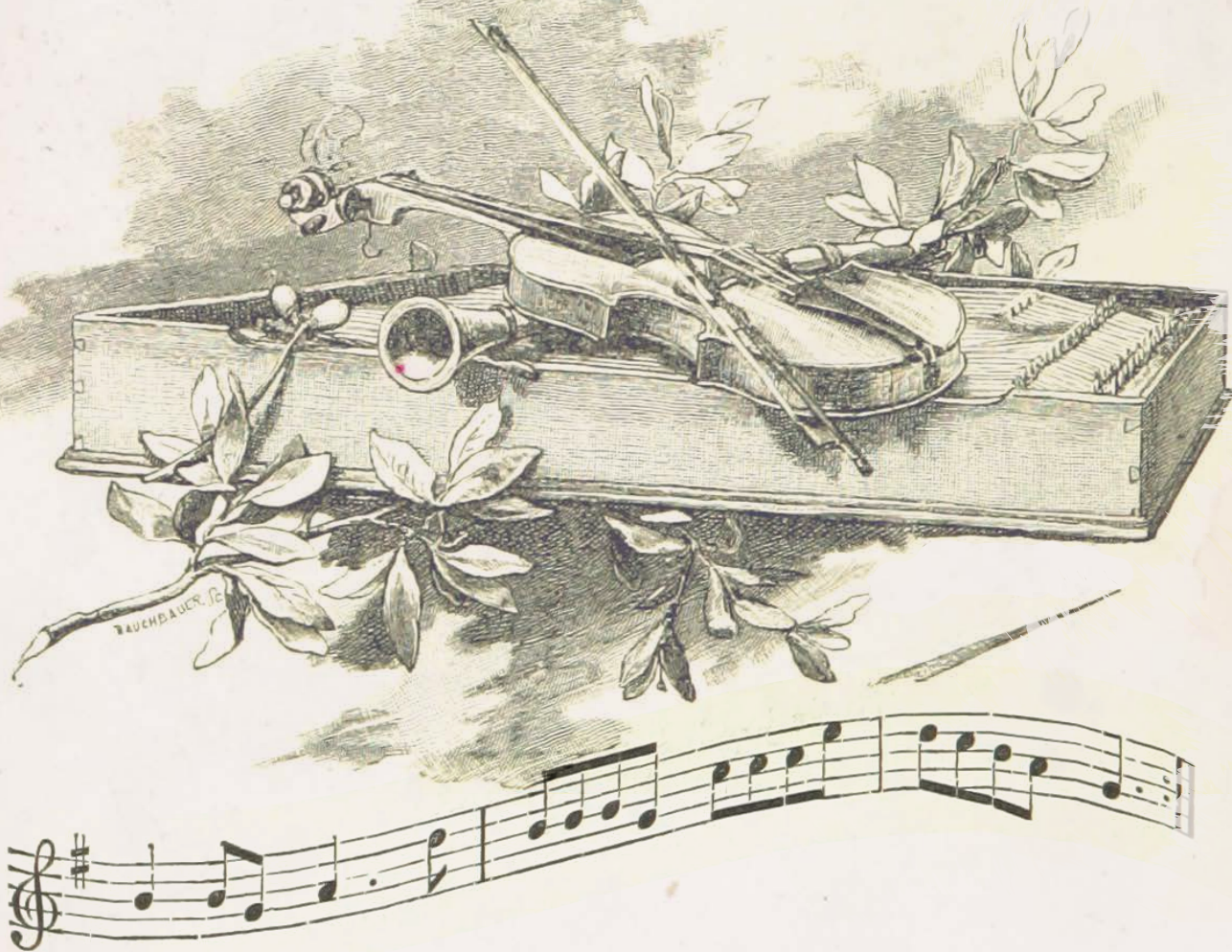
### Ghosts

These beings were human and can be intelligent or remnant.

Intelligent ghosts are actively seeking rest but the state they were in at death was turbulent enough that the spirit held on to the area in which it died long after its body was removed.

Remnant ghosts have given up the hope of finding peace. They are usually in endless procession, repeating the activities they were once doing while they were intelligent and still seeking rest.





### *Inhuman creatures*

These beings are old, inhuman, and have been resting dormant within the earth undisturbed until humankind encroached upon their territory. They can be hungry, curious, or relentless.

### *All entities have these traits:*

- **AURA:** Constant effects of spirits, such as temperature changes and frightening presence.
- **TACTICS:** The actions or moves the entity will take. Possession, moving objects, and general ghost stuff.
- **ENERGY:** The force keeping the spirit in this realm. Generally considered hit points by the living. One successful banishment action will reduce this number by 1, and at 0 the spirit dissipates.
- **BREATH:** If the players fail X amount of rolls the entity should do something harmful to the players. This should increase in severity as more failures occur.



# Sample Mission

## The Hilbert Estate

*A groundskeeper greets you as your carriage pulls up to a vine-encrusted mansion. In front of the mansion is a sprawling fountain with a central feminine figure pouring water from a jar. A heavy iron fence encompasses the estate. You can see around the side of the house is a large oak tree with a damaged swing dangling on the side.*

### Notes:

Proper yet unkempt, the groundskeeper is steadfast in protecting the property. The groundskeeper states the hauntings only occur at night.

- An occultist, on a successful roll, would know that spirits are strongest at the time of the haunting.

Lord Hilbert has returned from a recent trip to West Africa. The groundskeeper will not easily disclose what objects were obtained from the trip.

Lord Hilbert was in the midst of writing of his adventures. If asked, the groundskeeper will show the manuscript.

- The manuscript's latest entry talks about a deal with a shaman in a remote village. Lord Hilbert traded for a large sum of resources that could help the village for a mask that was worn by the shaman.
  - When asked about the mask, the groundskeeper will hold firm to his belief that Lord Hilbert "saved the village" from famine.

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## Sample Spirit

The spirit is in a constant state of sadness. During the haunting, its sobs echo from room to room without a source or pattern.

A dark, worn wood mask contains the spirit.

- Destroying the mask unleashes the spirit, who lashes out at the players in a rage.
- If the mask is taken from the home, the players will find their sanity questioned as they attempt to return to the guild.

**ENERGY** of 4

Its **TACTICS** include:

- Using its otherworldly sobs to distract the players (**AURA**).
- Fleeing and hiding in objects at any chance possible.
- Thrashing about causing collateral damage, surely to come out of the player characters' pay.

If the players make 4 failed rolls consecutively, the Spirit lashes out and injures a player character, causing them to roll with disadvantage. Rolling with disadvantage means rolling twice and taking the least favorable result.

If the same player character is injured twice during this encounter, they die.

If the players manage to pacify the entity and return to the Halls of The Resonants with the mask, The Resonants will make sure the mask is returned to its true home. The players are gifted with a dream of warm sunlight upon a vast savannah. A humanoid figure emerges from the grass, smiles, and slowly fades away as it approaches. Players are individually granted knowledge of other potential locations of stolen items from this region.







# THE RUINS

IN CRACKED  
EARTH



By Matt Hayles  
Illustrations by J.L. Householder



# The Ruins in Cracked Earth

A collaborative archeological setting-builder for Dungeon World.

*For use in a first session to establish the lore of the world, or when an appropriate monument is unearthed.*

When you **discover and explore the buried remnants of a long-dead civilization, half-remembered in myths and legends**, read and answer the lead question, then roll as instructed below.

- On a 10+ – pick one and answer.
- On a 7-9 – pick one for the GM to answer, or ask the GM to pick one for you to answer.
- On a 6- – pick one and answer it, but the GM will tell you how the truth is much, much worse.

*Take turns answering, building on previous answers. Don't forget to draw maps and name everything.*





# BARBARIAN

## *LEAD QUESTION:*

You have heard the secret songs passed down by your people. Tell us, what excesses did they pursue? Where in the known world are these excesses still indulged in? Then, roll **+CON**.

- What sacrifices did they make to their gods, and what boon did they receive in return?
- What curse still plagues their descendants? How can one ward against it?
- Where was their most glorious conquest, and where did the refugees flee to?
- What pillage did they take that was never found, and where did they take it from?
- What people still wander their lands, and what strange products do they offer for trade?

# BARD

## *LEAD QUESTION:*

You have learned the old stories and the new. Tell us, was their demise ultimately good or bad for civilized peoples? Why? Then, roll **+CHA**. Your questions may be chosen from any class list, and you choose and answer an additional question.

# CLERIC

## *LEAD QUESTION:*

You have read the ancient scrolls kept in the cloister. Tell us, what is the name of the cult that keeps their religious traditions alive? Why are they loathed or honoured? Then, roll **+WIS**.

- What relic or rite of theirs has your church hidden? Who must you keep it secret from?
- What heterodoxy of theirs is catching on? Who is preaching it again in the world?
- What prophecy did their greatest seer foretell for the world? Who still believes?
- What god of theirs was cast out, and where are they said to be imprisoned?

# DRUID

## *LEAD QUESTION:*

The beasts speak of them. Tell us, how was the landscape changed when they fell? Why does the wilderness flourish or perish in their former lands? Then, roll **+WIS**.

- What grows or thrives in the heart of their former land? From what, where, or whom does it draw its unnatural power?
- What beasts know the secret, safe passages through their lands? How are they strange?

*(continued on next page)*



# DRUID

(CONTINUED)

- By what mark or feature can a descendant of their bloodline be recognized?
- What form do the spirit or spirits that guard their lands take? What would they take from or give to those who seek to pass through?

# FIGHTER

**LEAD QUESTION:**

Their deeds are known. Tell us, when the empire's capital finally fell, what did the victors do with the remnants of the vanquished? Where did they do it? Then, roll **+STR**.

- What people stood foolishly against them in battle? Where can their ruins be found today?
- What mythic weapon did they forge? Who was the last to wield it before it was lost?
- What wall or fortification of theirs still stands to this day? Where is it?
- When they took their last stand, which nations stood united against them? What still haunts that battlefield?

# PALADIN

**LEAD QUESTION:**

People say many things about their rule. Tell us, were they good or evil people? Then, roll **+CHA**.

- What hero stood against them and was victorious? Who still venerates the hero, and how?
- In whose name did they launch their crusades? In what faraway land did they wage them?
- Who do you know who has quested for a fabled shrine in their lands? What makes it holy or unholy?
- What test of justice did they practice? Where is this system still in use?

# RANGER

**LEAD QUESTION:**

You have seen their ruins scattered across the land. Tell us, what do their ruins look like and why do the common people avoid them? Then, roll **+WIS**.

- What peoples did they enslave for generations? How did the slaves come to be free again?
- What wondrous animal marked their heraldry, and why was it chosen? It's said to be extinct, but you've seen one, perhaps the last one—where?

(continued on next page)



# RANGER

(CONTINUED)

- What mystical guide will take travelers safely through their lands? How can the guide be summoned?
- What place of sanctuary have you found in their lands? What marks the spot?

# THIEF

**LEAD QUESTION:**

It's whispered in the guilds. What fabled treasure of theirs has yet to be discovered? Who or what is said to guard it? Then, roll **+DEX**.

- When they took their last stand, who of their own betrayed them? What price did the traitor demand to change sides?
- What form of art did they perfect, and who do you know who would pay well for a relic?
- What ancient order of assassins claims to have slain the heir to their throne? What dark art or technique have they mastered?
- What venom did they make, and what was its grisly effect? What chemical reagent is needed to make it, and why can it no longer be found in civilized lands?
- Pick something another player has added to the world map. Who do you know who has a map to it?

# WIZARD

**LEAD QUESTION:**

It's written. What magic was used in their dying days? Why is it now forbidden? Then, roll **+INT**.

- What was the source of their arcane power? How was it corrupted, and who scattered it?
- In what dead language were their texts written? Where is the largest repository of their surviving texts?
- Who do you know who travelled to a place of power in their lands? When they returned, how were they different?
- What fabled artifact survived their fall? What happened the last time it was used, when it disappeared?
- You know the secret reason, the true reason, the empire fell. What was it?

## FINISHING THE SETTING

**REVIEW THE MAP TOGETHER**, filling in details and names as needed. Ask each other questions. Leave blanks.

**LASTLY**, everyone silently marks one place on the map they want to investigate further. Resume play.



# A SHROUD FOR THE SENESCHAL



BY SHARANG BISWAS  
ILLUSTRATION BY CECILIA FERRI





# LOOK UPON MY WORKS, YE MIGHTY, AND DESPAIR

– Percy B. Shelley, *Ozymandias*

## Preparations

*You will need:*

- Between 3-8 players. *More can play, but might slow the game down.*
- Craft materials. *At their simplest: scrap paper, scissors, tape, markers. Feel free to have more elaborate materials available.*
- Pen and paper *for each player.*
- Cards or beads *of two colours.*
- Space *for one player to lie down [optional].*
- 20-60 minutes, *depending on how long you want to spend doing craftwork [see Phase I].*

THIS IS A GAME ABOUT CULTURAL APPROPRIATION, COLONIALISM, FUNERALS, AND INSULTING PEOPLE THROUGH ART. It is meant to be short and light-hearted. While there may be a “winner” of sorts, this is not a game about winning or losing.

*NOTE: Please be mindful of your insults, especially when it comes to physical features and the people you’re playing. Do not include insults that target real-world marginalized identities.*

ONE OF YOU IS THE SENESCHAL. You were installed as a ruler a decade ago by the Khan, when he crashed onto these shores on a wave of sharpened iron, hardened leather, and ash-blackened eyes.

As your 70th birthday approaches, you are made keenly aware of your mortality. You have commanded indigenous artisans famous in their crafts (in their own, quaint way, of course) to fashion for you fine funerary apparel, so that your glory may live on, even in death. You will select only the best pieces to take to your grave.

THE REST OF YOU ARE THE ARTISTS. While some of you are indifferent to the Seneschal, the rest hate him and the Khan he represents. You will use the only medium available to you to express your frustration: art. You will code hidden insults into your art, knowing that the Seneschal never bothered to learn your people’s language and cultural conventions, confident that your mockery will outlive the bones of the Seneschal.



# PART I

## THE TRADITION

**START BY PICKING EACH ARTIST'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SENESCHAL.** Consider your coloured cards or beads and designate one colour as Hate and one as Indifferent. The ratio should be as follows:

- For two to three artists, one of them should hate the Seneschal, while the rest are indifferent.
- For four or five artists, two hate the Seneschal and rest are indifferent.
- For six or more artists, three hate the Seneschal and the rest are indifferent.

### IN SECRET

**Secretly and randomly assign each artist an Attitude.** Drawing a random card or picking a bead out of an opaque bag are good methods. The Attitude should remain secret to every other player until the end of the game.

**Each artist now takes a minute to privately decide on and write down the Reason for their Attitude.**

- **Hate:** Those who hate the Seneschal write down how the Seneschal wronged them, or their family. E.g. "The Seneschal seized my family bakery."
- **Indifferent:** Those who are indifferent note down one way in which the Seneschal could be worse. E.g. "At least the Seneschal hasn't killed any babies."

### PUBLICLY

**One artist decides on a stylistic motif that's important to the culture** and describes to everyone else why it's significant. Motifs should be visual elements, and easy for players to make and draw using the craft supplies. (E.g. "*We use a lot of stripes because our ancestors used two kinds of reeds to make striped basketwork*" and "*We layer fabrics on top of each other in holy clothes to symbolise the layered nature of the cosmos*" are examples of good motifs.)

**The Seneschal takes that motif and appropriates or disparages it in some way.** (E.g. "*OMG, really? Your elegant stripes came from such a primitive origin? How quaint!*" or "*I really like that layered look; I'll use it for my babies' diapers!*")

**Repeat the two public steps until every artist has gone once.**



# PART II

## THE MAKING

**THE ARTISTS AND THE SENESCHAL HAVE DIFFERENT THINGS TO DO DURING THIS PHASE.** The artists will be crafting funerary objects, while the Seneschal will be writing a speech and perhaps making pompous comments about the artists' work.

The duration of this phase depends on how much players enjoy doing crafts. Agree on how long you want the phase to last before diving into it (anywhere from 10 minutes to 30 minutes) and set a timer.

### ARTISTS

**The artists now have time to use the craft materials and make art!**

They should use the following rules:

- They are making physical objects with which to adorn the Seneschal body as it lies in its tomb.
- Objects should be wearable or placeable on the Seneschal's body.
- Incorporating the stylistic motifs created in Part I is encouraged.
- Artists should let their creativity run wild and make whatever item they want that follows the rules. They may imagine the objects to be made of materials that are not present.  
*E.g. a tiara made of paper is a silver tiara, a thimble adorned with flecks of paint is a jeweled fingertip-cuff, a rope of knotted string that hooks around an ear and is tied at the ankle is a fine chain made from bones from the inner ears of pregnant hippos.*
- Artists are trying to get their art immortalized by being chosen by the Seneschal. They should try and come up with a good way to describe their work.

**Additionally, Artists who hate the Seneschal** should add one design element to their piece that somehow mocks or insults the Seneschal. They should not announce what these elements are, and mockery can be as silly or political as they wish.

*Eg: an Artist may decide to draw fish on the silver tiara, to symbolize how the Seneschal is completely out of their element. Another artist might imagine that hooking a chain from the ear to the foot represents how the Seneschal is a slave to their smelly feet.*



# PART II

(continued)

## SENESCHAL

While the Artists are creating their masterpieces, the Seneschal writes a **short (1-2 minute) speech** to be delivered during the Offering ceremony (Part III, below). The speech can be about anything at all, but it's good to keep in mind that the Seneschal is a pompous, old fool who has no real interest in learning about the Artists' culture, considers themselves superior, and is concerned about their image and how they will be viewed after their death.

If they finish writing their speech early, the Seneschal may walk around inspecting the Artists' work and making snobby, misguided comments.

# THE OFFERING

## PART III

**One by one, each Artist now offers their art object to the Seneschal**, describing it and why it's worthy of being buried with the Seneschal's holy corpse. They may describe the object in any way they see fit but should be careful not to betray their Attitude, and not to reveal the hidden insult.

**Once the Seneschal listens to all the descriptions, they choose a few of the art objects as worthy of burial.** The Artists who made those objects become immortalized in history. The rest are forgotten for the supposedly minor role they played (in the Khan's history books, at least).

- For two to three artists, the Seneschal chooses one art object.
- For four or five artists, the Seneschal chooses two art objects.
- For six or more artists, the Seneschal chooses three art objects.

**The Seneschal lies down** (unless they would rather not) and the Artists adorn them with the chosen art object(s). One of the Artists then reads out the Seneschal's speech.

After the speech, all players observe a one-minute moment of silence to represent the passage of time.



# PART IV

## THE DISINTERMENT

**The Artists are now Archaeologists**, descended from the original Artists. Hundreds of years have gone by, and they are excavating the Seneschal's tomb.

**Players can now reveal their motivations**, and the secret insults on their artwork, starting with the objects the Seneschal chose.

# PART V

## THE LEGACY

**Players now narrate the epilogue.** If more than half the objects the Seneschal is wearing are insulting, the Archaeologists narrate how the objects confirm the history books' stories of the Khan's forces being thrown off their land. Otherwise, the Seneschal narrates how their dynasty lived on and ruled the land.

## QUICK REFERENCE TABLE

Number of Artists	How Many Artists Hate The Seneschal	How Many Objects The Seneschal Picks	How Many Insults Are Needed For The Artists to Determine Their History
2-3	1	1	1
4-5	2	2	2
6+	3	3	2

## Special Thanks To:

Max Seidman, Mary Georgescu, Ray Olsen, Lucian Kahn, Sara Williamson, Leo Jenicek,  
All my playtesters.



# Thirty-Six Reasons You Know Where to Go

Starting points just as strange and dangerous as the destination.

## To Make My Bread

An incursion to the ruins of an ancient mill.



# TROPHY

JESSE ROSS



# Thirty-Six Reasons You Know Where to Go

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Every journey begins somewhere. Roll a dark and light die to determine how the treasure-hunter leading the party knows about this particular location.

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• • A squat man with spider's legs speaks the route to you while you sleep.

• • A witch screamed of a hidden passage as she burned on the pyre.

• • You received a freshly drawn map as your only inheritance.

• • You paid attention to the details in an amputee's drunken brags.

• • You stalked a treasure-hunter, killing them once you knew their secrets.

• • You were hired by a masked noble to investigate a rumor.

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• • Many years ago you were led here as a sacrifice but you escaped.

• • A miscast ritual revealed the location to you as a vision in a flickering flame.

• • You bribed a desperate ranger in the kingsguard.

• • This location was mentioned in ancient records you've studied.

• • You deciphered a code hidden in a children's song.

• • You noticed part of a crude map scrawled on the ground near a goblin hovel.

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• • A wandering fortune-teller traced it on your palm.

• • It was a residual memory after being temporarily possessed by a forest spirit.

• • Your sister was the lone survivor of a previous expedition.

• • You've observed where the local wildlife refuse to go.

• • A dying man shared it with you in exchange for the care you gave him.

• • You sold your farm to a retiring treasure-hunter for her guidance.

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## 36 REASONS YOU KNOW WHERE TO GO



You hired a scout to survey the forest's depths, who returned speaking in riddles.



It was mentioned in a book held in your temple's forbidden library.



You bound a forest spirit to a glowing orb which leads the way.



The constant buzzing in your head only quiets as you get closer.



You woke up after a rough evening with a map tattooed on your forearm.



You pieced together stories overheard while serving as valet to an antiquarian.



The path was woven into a tapestry your family has had for generations.



Orfilios, the patron saint of prosperity, blessed you with a vision for your devotion.



You were illegally hunting in the forest and tracked your quarry here.



Your uncle's mad ramblings alluded to landmarks, and you recognized the first two.



You read private letters you were meant to deliver to the governor.



You won directions from a reckless and luckless gambler in a high-stakes dice game.



The stars write their demands on the canvas of a heaven only you can see.



You were the torchbearer for a previous expedition which passed over this site.



A strange pattern on your goat's fleece bears a striking resemblance to local terrain.



The steel-gray fox which you found and have taken as a pet pulls in one direction.



You were meant to accompany your love here, but he took your gear and left in the night.



You are the reincarnation of Queen Sehtet ils Noh and you know the way home.



## INCURSION

# To Make My Bread

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Just inside the edge of the forest, a half day's journey from the safety of Fort Duhrin and nestled into the banks of the Naveh River, is the ruins of a massive old mill known as Kormoran's Wheel. Given the strategic location of the mill ruins, a tent city has sprung up around it, an unlicensed gathering point for treasure-hunters and those seeking to profit from their journey. The Fort's Governor has sent in the kingsguard four times to toss out the squatters and tear the tents down, and four times the city has been rebuilt bigger than before.

The residents of Kormoran's Wheel have little fear of the kingsguard or any other so-called authority figure with fancy proclamations and fancier horses. What they do fear—and are right to fear—is the fine, white mist that is sometimes seen drifting from the mill ruins, and whatever is drawing the young men away from home, never to be seen again.

### THEME

Bone

### MOMENTS

- ◇ A chalky, white mist drifts from deep in the mill ruins
- ◇ Your mouth moistens as you inhale the warm aroma of freshly baked bread
- ◇ The millstone begins turning, the deep grumble of stone on stone
- ◇ A delicate and playful melody pricks the air: a deftly-played bone flute
- ◇ Slippery and noxious plants grow around the mill, they buzz with slow and stupid flies
- ◇ The air is burnt and heavy with black ash
- ◇ An anxious bird flops around on the ground, its wings no match for its grossly heavy body
- ◇ A man screams, though maybe it was only the cry of a bird
- ◇ A twisted goose-man stumbles from the shadows, falls and breaks its neck
- ◇ Everything is caked in a powdery residue, a mix of white, black, red and gold

# INCURSION: TO MAKE MY BREAD

## CONDITIONS

- ◇ Every joint in your body aches with the heat of an oven
- ◇ Your teeth crowd and merge, growing into a hard beak
- ◇ Everything is cold and you have goosebumps that refuse to go away
- ◇ Small nubs burst through your skin, sprouting into downy feathers
- ◇ You feel compelled to follow the lullaby of a flute only you can hear
- ◇ Your skin loosens and begins to slough off, revealing the muscle and bone—and flecks of gold—underneath
- ◇ Your arms feel empty and look extremely large and distended to you
- ◇ You see the wheels within wheels that are the sacred geometry underlying everything
- ◇ You want to seek high ground, but everything feels heavy
- ◇ Your boots keep falling off as your feet and legs feel awkward to walk on
- ◇ Things become difficult to swallow and your neck feels long
- ◇ The sweat trickling down your forehead is flecked with gold
- ◇ Your own voice sounds like honking, though others understand you normally
- ◇ Your fingers stretch into featherless wings, making your hands unusable
- ◇ Your belly swells and bursts as an orb of pure gold spills out

## RING 1

**TERRORS:** The treasure-hunters are starting an expedition into the Kalduhr but have stopped in the tent city of Kormoran's Wheel to get provisions for the journey. The party buys fresh bread from a kindly old woman named Risti and as they step away a fight breaks out. Joban, an old treasure-hunter turned forest guide, accuses Risti of murdering his adult son, Jakob, who has not been home for two days. Joban has found a golden tooth in a roll he bought from her, and Jakob had just such a tooth. Risti swears she is no murderer and begs the party to help her. When pressed, she admits that the roll came from the mill ruins. Her hands have become too arthritic to knead the dough required for her breads, but thankfully the forest spirits have been blessing her with a daily delivery of baked goods to sell. Risti will guide the treasure-hunters there, to defend her good name and help learn the truth behind Jakob's disappearance.

**TEMPTATIONS:** Risti offers the treasure-hunters her eternal gratitude. If that's not enough, she says that deep in the mill ruins is a pile of treasure: offerings to the forest, which she herself would take but for her bad joints and fragile bones.



# INCURSION: TO MAKE MY BREAD

## RING 2

**TERRORS:** The mill ruins are treacherous, due to the collapse of the foundation by the migration of the river over centuries. Slips and falls are likely. Call for frequent Risk Rolls just to navigate, with any increases in Ruin leading to broken bones. Eventually, a cave-in happens, forcing the party to press forward in search of an alternate exit.

**TEMPTATIONS:** Risti leads the party to the well and its treasure. Just as she claimed, the well is deep and would surely be impossible to get to the bottom of if not for the fact a couple of geese can be seen rooting around in the collection of visible coins and trinkets. The cave-in has opened a possible new route which should provide access, though getting there will be slow-going, especially since Risti demands to be brought along.

## RING 3

**TERRORS:** A rumble from above threatens a second cave-in, but it's quickly followed by a rhythmic grinding. A millstone is turning. Risti laughs, but whether it's nervous or knowing laughter is difficult to determine. She deflects any accusations made toward her. She will aim to ally herself with whoever has the highest Ruin (assuming they're showing her sympathy) and will very, very subtly push her ally to identify the other treasure-hunters' flaws and weaknesses, especially the ways in which they could be dangerous to the ally. Additionally, a mess of blood and organs—but importantly, no bones—are discovered. Investigating them closely reveals them to be the remains of one or more birds, since feathers are discovered. Embedded in the viscera are a few pebbles of pure gold.

**TEMPTATIONS:** Risti injures herself and needs to sit and rest. She offers everyone sweet rolls (which she claims are not gifts from the forest and she really did make them herself) and plays familiar tunes on her bone flute. Ask the players what loved one the songs remind their treasure-hunters of and how their planned expedition into the forest was intended to help them.

## INCURSION: TO MAKE MY BREAD

### RING 4

**TERRORS:** The treasure-hunters make their way deeper into the mill and the treasure, where they are overwhelmed by the smell of baking bread and the heat of an oversized oven. Geese wander aimlessly. There is strained honking as a monstrous hand plucks one of the geese from the gaggle and carries it away. Call for Ruin Rolls here, with any resulting increases in Ruin pushing the treasure-hunters to develop bird-like qualities.

**TEMPTATIONS:** One by one the geese are slaughtered by the giant monstrosity and their bones are removed and cracked in half. The bones contain liquid gold that is poured out into a huge vat. The hollow bones are then ground under the mill wheel. Around the vat, nuggets of solidified gold are visible and recoverable, but would require the treasure-hunters to put themselves dangerously close to the giant.

### RING 5

**TERRORS:** Risti will play her flute loud enough for the monstrosity to hear, attempting to draw it away. It will smash anything it can to get to her, including destroying the vat of gold and opening up an exit for anything that can fly out. This leaves the treasure-hunters and any remaining geese to try to get out. Any increases in Ruin will lead to a treasure-hunter noticing gold dripping from their wounds, which all their companions will also notice.

**TEMPTATIONS:** A treasure-hunter who sees gold spilling from one of their companions must succeed on a Ruin Roll or attempt to get all the gold out of the victim by any means necessary. Clear blue sky is visible overhead through the opening the monstrosity tore in the roof of the mill. It seems impossibly out of reach.

**Fi, Fai, Foh, Fum.**  
**I smell the blood of a little one.**  
**Be you alive or be you dead,**  
**I'll grind your bones to make my bread.**





# THREE DOZEN THINGS

THAT ARE  
TERRIBLY  
WRONG  
WITH  
THESE  
BONES



1



One of the tibia had been snapped in half, seemingly post-mortem. The word Ascension was threaded through the marrow like a stick of rock. On examination, every part of the skeleton bears displayed a separate word. Tomorrow, we will try and piece together the message...



It was highly believed that the Skeletons of Anatiagua were decorated in death, the intricate carvings across their bones seemingly made with ceremonial tools. But we now know, with the discovery of the Xibal'n Tablets, they were magically carved while they were still alive...



These bones aren't bones at all. They seem to be the shells of tiny microorganisms that have gathered into a colony that uncannily mimics the appearance of a reasonably intact human skeleton. We don't know why... yet.



"Oh, those? C'mon, don't be stupid, everyone knows those are replicas. The real Cursed Bones of Breccan started growing tissue around 'em when they were excavated. Probably in an acid bath in some spook D.C. agency now."



"As best I can tell, these Denisovan fossils appear unremarkable, if not so well preserved... that is, except the left femur... the medullary cavity contains what appears to be a length of rolled vellum, sealed in wax... and addressed to you, Doctor."



The people of the dry desert are one with it. They depend on its kindness for water, and for life. And sometimes, when a child is born with bones like the dried saguaro cactus, they know kindness has a price.

2



The dice that clatter on the tables of the otherwise low-rent gambling den, Satan's Purse, have each been lovingly harvested and carved from the hands of cheats. Rolling your own bones is considered good luck.



A wild hunt begins after it becomes known that famous street artist Zok went undercover as a fake surgeon to put their art on people's bones. Collectors would pay incredible amounts for this art.



"I find the ossuary welcoming. The interred bones whisper to me, wanting me to join them. My flesh feels itchy and ill-fitting."



You recognise the bones in front of you. These are your bones.



This body was found in a park yesterday in a pool of his own blood. However, his skeleton appears to be at least 700 years old. Fossilization has begun, and there are ritualistic carvings at various points.



Today, athletic debates center around skeletal replacement. Carbon fiber and other super materials are not only lighter and stronger, but can be customized for longer strides, enhanced mobility, and even extra joints.





We thought it was another asteroid belt. We thought the readings were being affected by a nearby pulsar. It was only after we sent the landing party that we realized it was the vertebrae of a great, dead space whale. And the pulsar? The mourning song of its mate.



To create the perfect homunculus, you must always start out with a rib. A dog's rib will give you a loyal companion, a lion's rib a brave one, but a creature created from a human rib will be nothing but trouble. Unless you use your own, of course. That's quite different.



"...and this band of knights rode the land, and pillaged and terrorised it. Their armour turned blade and shot, though it was not metal, but terrible bone grown from their own flesh. These soldiers were not of earth. I do not confess to know Hell, but surely this is where they are from?"



Each Chairman of the Federal Reserve, on death, contributes a bone to the Official Augury. As the number of bones grow, the predictions grow more dire.



"Begin recording. Specimen seems to be a normal juvenile human skull. Aberration indicated by the growth of multiple spikes in a circular pattern, spaced one inch apart."



After the first earthquake, a superstitious few noted the timing between scientific discovery and tectonic disaster, but were heartily dismissed. The massive osseous plate was declared a skull fragment of a prehistoric titan, enshrined in the Royal Museum. Gentlemen-scientists descended en masse across the land to mine for their own legacies. Now, if one cuts the bones out from any vertebrate creature, what can one expect? Now extrapolate: what if one did the same to a planet?



It seemed a refuse pile at first, what with the different sizes and seeming species of bones within. But it was only when the human femur fit a little too well with the bull hip that we began to suspect something more.



You can feel the music from the bone flute as it weaves its way into your body. Your own bones start to itch, then spines of bone erupt from beneath your flesh as the transformation begins.



"The crew remain distressed by the local flora, claiming to see human remains in every fallen branch. I confess, the resemblance grows harder to ignore. I myself found a perfectly formed jawbone, and can find no carving marks upon it."



While donating cadavers to medical science has become quite commonplace, Aloysius Stone is believed to be the first person to donate his to the field of performance art. His skeleton "dances" at the front of the carnival parade each year, and he has just completed a season playing Yorick.



After 17 years, he no longer worried about them finding the body. He even brought his kids to the park, though he avoided that particular hillside. But some volunteer had thought it would be fun to decorate the lobby with stuff they'd found in the woods. There, among the turtle shells, deer antlers, and possum skulls, were unmistakable human teeth, his buddy's many cavities right where they'd always been.



I viewed the X-rays with burgeoning horror. The patient had raved that someone had stolen his skeleton. My God. He was right.

5



The Davenheim Skull was a unique trophy in the killer's lair. Originally, it was thought to be a shattered skull poorly reassembled with resin. It was only after closer investigation that authorities realized fragments came from more than five different victims.



An office of the national labs burned down recently, taking out the entire population of specimen rats. When the rats' skeletons were taken to animal control for disposal, their bones showed signs of extensive tool use, and even handedness!



Somewhere in Arizona there is a taxi driver whose teeth are carved with tiny words. But these are old words, obsolete words, and as they recede from this world, they creep into his bones. Who knows what concepts, what ideas his skeleton might hold?



Created from the woven bones of highway roadkill, the sign outside Ronda's Highway Grill is in every state guide book as a "must see." Of course, tourists are often disappointed to discover its miniature scale, and the utterly disappointing offerings at Ronda's for "food." Only regulars ever notice that the bones in the sign never stay quite the same.



Most don't know that Merlin had his wand engraved into his own radius. Fewer still know how it's been passed down from Master to Apprentice ever since.



A simple pair of dice. Their surface is cool to the touch and the pips are almost impossible to read. But if you squint at them after casting them, you can feel a tapping deep inside your left femur for each count of the dice.

6



Renovating the old Jackson house was supposed to be a fun family weekend. But then the walls started bleeding after we tore off the plaster. "At least it's got good bones," I heard myself say as I looked into the wet ruin revealed. Then the kids started screaming from upstairs.



The unearthed skeleton bore all the signatures of a North Woods Butcher victim. We ran the DNA to see if it matched any of the missing persons associated with the case and got a hit—on the only victim to escape the killer, still alive and well.



The first emperor brought unity at a great cost: he burned all writings that conflicted with his vision. When he found that scholars were memorizing the forbidden texts, he burned them, too. Legends said that the scholars had memories so precise, their knowledge was in their bones. Centuries later, we found microscopic markings on the insides of the bones, and they match texts smuggled out before the purge.



This rib cage seems unusually organized, with ribs in two distinct sizes, but no logical pattern to them. Those with only the most obscure knowledge will recognize it for what it truly is: a xylo-bone.



After slaying the skeleton hordes of the necropolis, the knights made a horrifying discovery as they investigated what their enemy had been hiding and protecting: a nest full of bone eggs, each one-by-one hatching into small animated skeletons.



The fourth brother, rarely mentioned in the fairy tale, built his house from the bones of his enemies. He never had a wolf problem.



# CODEx KEEPERs

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Jesse Abelman, Keeper of the Moon's First Memory  
Rob Abrazado, Keeper of the Purple Falsehood  
Stras Acimovic, Keeper of the Man Who Dies Every Third Day  
Quentin Acord, Keeper of the Word that Binds and Blinds  
Benjamin Adelman, Keeper of the Brotherhood of the Black Dragon's Great Saga  
Joaquin Aguirrezabalaga, Keeper of the Blood of Lursiss  
Vendevogel Alain, Keeper of the Omegatherion of Fasar  
Alan, Keeper of the Wanting Widows of Thon the Promiscuous  
Jason Alejo, Keeper of the Titan's Heart  
John Alexander, Keeper of the Child Whose Face is a Mirror  
Zach Alexander, Keeper of the Weeping Cells  
Brendan Allison, Keeper of the Child Who Creeps and Crawls  
Kristin Allison, Keeper of the Bright One's Shroud of Mourning  
Brian Allred, Keeper of the Spear Eldfuglinn, Which Burns with the Terrifying Light of the Sun  
Bryen Alperin, Keeper of the Sibylline Grimoire  
Joe Amon, Keeper of the Astral Blades  
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Robert Angus, Keeper of the Keystone of the Many Worlds  
Apollo, Keeper of the Vein-Seeking Tongue  
Vincent Arebalo, Keeper of the Dolm Sarcophagus  
Mark Argent, Keeper of the Child Who Has No Shadow  
Gene Astadan, Keeper of the Temple of the Viridescent Wyrms  
Michael Atlin, Keeper of the Beetle's Teeth  
John Atwood, Keeper of the Diary of Sanguine is the Eye  
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Andrew Bailey, Keeper of the World Teeth  
Josie Baker, Keeper of the Mutinous Younglings  
Chad Bale, Keeper of the Chimes of Misery  
Noah Ban, Keeper of the Maze of Unending Pleasure  
Joe Banner, Keeper of the Testifier's Skull  
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Michael Barford, Keeper of the Eternal Chime  
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Michael Beck Esperum, Keeper of the Recorded Grievances of the Thousand Heretics  
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Boni, Keeper of the Thirteen Principles of Volmun  
Jason Boucher, Keeper of the Feathers of the Molting Godling  
Michael Bowman, Keeper of the Luck God's Last Hand  
Sophia Brandt, Keeper of the Dying Heart  
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Brass Monkey-lizard, Keeper of Samantha's Star, May It Stay Forever Dark  
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Darren Brockes, Keeper of the Agony Songs  
Bromeliad, Keeper of Our Mother's Cool Breath, Bottled  
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Chromatic Chameleon, Keeper of the Gossamer Crown  
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Bay Chang, Keeper of the Heart of Lursiss  
Len Chang, Keeper of Pagliacci, the Wicker Mannequin  
Who Does Not Sleep  
Matthew Chappory, Keeper of the Ever-barren Barley  
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Jeremy Christian, Keeper of the Spiral Nemesis  
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Aaron DeRosa, Keeper of the Silver Dragon's Second  
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Joseph DeSimone, Keeper of the Secret that Allows Us  
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Steven desJardins, Keeper of the Black Between the  
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Mark DesLauriers, Keeper of the Goblet of the Maudlin  
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Simone Di Rubbo, Keeper of the Goddess in the Letters  
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Kurt Ellison, Keeper of the Shining Sadness  
Norm Elvin, Keeper of the Refined Rose Dust of Daar  
Angúl  
Tor Erickson, Keeper of Brother Elijah's Last Breath  
Jennifer Erixon, Keeper of the Spider Tombs  
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The Fifth World, Keeper of the Wisdom of Emerald  
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Klint Finley, Keeper of the Book of Marvels, Wired Shut  
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Though We Frequently Try  
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Francisco, Keeper of the Blood-Soaked Corridor  
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Men  
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Gregory Gelder, Keeper of the Knight of Mums  
Michele Gelli, Keeper of the Woman Who is a Nest for  
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Walter German, Keeper of Galotta's Scarlet Dance

Joshua Gilbreath, Keeper of the Elven King Who Never  
Was  
James Gibson, Keeper of Beltherion Brightlord's Shadow  
Daniel Gill, Keeper of the Vial of Dwarf Tears, Secret  
Shame of Their Race  
Christopher Gmelch, Keeper of Lianore's False Lament  
gnapo, Keeper of the Emerald Path  
Raymond Goerke, Keeper of the Willow Crown of Old  
King Celadon  
Edgar Gonzalez, Keeper of the Iridescent Forest  
Matthew Gravelyn, Keeper of the Twelve Graven Images  
Luke Green, Keeper of the Covert Tools of the Eight  
Immortals  
Christopher Grey, Keeper of the Lies of the Child  
Kingdom  
Greyhoof, Keeper of the Jale Putrescence  
Derek Grimm, Keeper of the Spirit Discs  
Tre Grisby, Keeper of the Broken God's Final Indignity  
Andrew Gross, Keeper of the Fell Emperor's Last Breath  
Ollie Gross, Keeper of the Ministry of Embers  
Paul Groudas, Keeper of the Rusted Crown of Old King  
Murr  
Derek Guder, Keeper of the Red Drums of Bellona  
Matthew Gushta, Keeper of the First Oak  
Lloyd Gyan, Keeper of the Seven False Smiles  
Gene Ha, Keeper of the Gaze, Adoring and Wanton  
Tony Hahn, Keeper of the Tongue of Gormakir the Cruel  
Haiduc, Keeper of the Meat Orchards  
Charles Hainsworth, Keeper of the Song that Sleeps in  
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Seth Halbeisan, Keeper of the Nectar Which Shall Never  
Touch Our Lips  
Justin Hamilton, Keeper of the Last Tears They Shed  
Noella, Keeper of the Tome of Forgotten Fae Remedies  
Hans, Keeper of the Wolf-King's Last Fear Sarah Walsh,  
Keeper of the Star Whale's Lament  
hansbuetow, Keeper of the Echo Plantations  
Michael Hansen, Keeper of the Shriven Monks Who Have  
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Ryan Macklin, Keeper of the God Sarcophagi  
Rory MacLeod, Srorrim Ni Nees Eb Ylno Nac Hcihw Taht Fo Repeek  
Kira Magrann, Keeper of the Singing Serpent's Nest  
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Manu, Keeper of the Little Box with a Tongue and Mirror Inside  
Michael Marciano, Keeper of Moonweaver's Celestial Cloth  
Todd Marion, Keeper of Twilight's Heartfelt Whispers  
Aaron Marks, Keeper of the Skull Which Catches the Blood  
Manu Marron, Keeper of the Automata Philosophica  
Eugene Marshall, Keeper of the Last Flame that Burned in the Firmament  
Kevin Marshall, Keeper of the Chains of the Nameless Kings  
Mike Martens, Keeper of the Thousand Verses of Voe'huul  
Keith Martin, Keeper of the Woman Who Screams the Prophecies  
Blaine Martin, Keeper of House Fenderan's Fallen Banner  
Robert Masella, Keeper of the Soothing Mists of St. Fenton the Merciful  
J. Brandon Massengill, Keeper of the Lich-Bone Die  
Michelle Matsutani, Keeper of the Golden God-Poppies  
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Mikel Matthews, Keeper of the Scarification Blades  
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Darius Meskauskas, Keeper of the Unseen Moons  
Corey Metcalfe, Keeper of the Most Delectable Wyrms Viscera  
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nurdertim, Keeper of the Mechanical Mastermind of Havena  
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okokok, Keeper of the Carnifax of Hyluren  
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John Rogers, Keeper of the Leveraged Library  
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RL Vieira, Keeper of the Iron Seals  
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Sabine Voelkel, Keeper of the Hell Armada  
Christian Vogt, Keeper of the Forest of the Moth Prince  
Shervyn von Hoerl, Keeper of the Titan's Womb  
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David Walker, Keeper of the Severed Hand of the Lonely Knight  
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Janie Walter, Keeper of the Stainless Vessel of St. Evelyn the White  
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Noel Warford, Keeper of the Tortoise Who Mends the Heavens  
watergoesred, Keeper of the Rose Maiden's Labyrinth  
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Mark Watson, Keeper of the Tales of the Forgetful Prince

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Joe Webb, Keeper of the Lost Archives of Lahaug  
Phillip Wessels, Keeper of the Dun Putrescence  
Matt Wetherbee, Keeper of Palowma's Candied Delights  
Devin White, Keeper of the Venom of Lursiss  
Whitt, Keeper of the Ninety-Nine Laws of the Sleeping Giant  
Mark Wiand, Keeper of the Enshrined Stone Bezoar  
Christopher Wiegand, Keeper of the Head of Nerva Atellus  
Will, Keeper of the Thousand Year Cocoon  
River Williamson, Keeper of the Blazing Sigil  
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Ryan Windeknecht, Keeper of the Pain Manifesto  
James Winterbottom, Keeper of the Mellifluous Flatteries  
Slawomir Wojcik, Keeper of the Sigils of the Six Black Heralds  
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Jacob Wood, Keeper of the Protoplasmic Pit of New Life  
J.D. Woodell, Keeper of the Hymnal of St. Aasu the Butcher  
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Yimbo, Keeper of the Last Wish of the Grackle Queen  
Jason Yoakam, Keeper of the Child Who Sings the Final Song  
Ömer Aybars Yurdun, Keeper of the Prisoner Beneath the Mountain  
Sam Zeitlin, Keeper of the Grief Engine  
Seth Zeren, Keeper of the Thousand-Blade-Pierced Corpse



# CODEx CONTRIBUTORS:

Cover illustration by Chris Spence

Illustration for *Three Dozen Things That Are Terribly Wrong With These Bones* by Devon Serket

Developmental editing by Jason Cordova & David LaFreniere

Content editing by Ryan McNeil

Line editing by Lauren McManamon

Layout by Jake Householder except for *Trophy*, which was laid out by Jesse Ross

Contributors for Miscellany – *Three Dozen Things That Are Terribly Wrong With These Bones*:

Rob Abrazado, Mr. Baerg, Hannah Banks, John Campbell, Barry Cook, Daniel Fowler, Greg Gelder, Bethany H, Joshua Kershaw, David LaFreniere, Ryan McNeil, Diana Moon, David Morrison, Chris Newton, Jen Overstreet, Gerrit Reininghaus, Ferrell Riley, Darold Ross, Blake Ryan, Matt Stuart, Andrew Tapp, Chris Thompson, Sabine V, River Williamson

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