

The Excellent Prismatic Spray

A periodical supplement for the Dying Earth RPG

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2 • £7.50/\$9.95



Once again, those who support RPGs of a lesser calibre will certainly find something of note in the contents, which include:

Jack Vance and The D&D Game: Gary Gygax

Phasms: Rhialto-level adventures for the percipient by Robin D. Laws

Tweaks: Sasha Bilton & Phil Masters introduce readers to a feature which the experienced may turn to their advantage

The Arcana of Grashpotel: an invaluable account of Turgubut's *Fatal Statistics*

Three Golden Swans: a remarkably knowledgeable disquisition on gambling by Steven S. Long

The Air-cars of Ampridatvir: Nicholas H. M. Caldwell on the interface between magic and technology

❧ The Excellent Prismatic Spray ❧

Being a *Commodious Compendium* of erudition, intelligence, advice, narrative and insight of inestimable value to those of a DISCERNING TEMPERAMENT and ADVENTUROUS INCLINATION

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✿ Editorial ✿



So now we proudly present for your cerebral improvement the second copy of the Excellent Prismatic Spray. It has been a matter of some delight to us that our experiment, publishing Scenario Supplements in a Magazine format, has been so well received. We intend to continue with this format which has numerous advantages. Not merely familiarity and flexibility, but it also enables us to bring you scenario ideas that would otherwise be too brief to include in a larger and inevitably more self-regarding volume. You will note that this noble treatise is substantially larger than our first publication, an advance we felt we could make due to the exceedingly high quality of articles submitted. Admittedly such betterment is rarely without cost, but what value terces when the sun might blink out tomorrow? Within these covers we bring you the thoughts of Gary Gygax on the influence

Jack Vance had on his work, some Cozener's Expedients which will make your life as a GM easier, and articles by persons of the calibre of Robin D. Laws and Lynne Hardy. Yet all we ask is mere money.

Finally, it may be noted by persons of literary merit that we are still desirous of acquiring the services of writers of solid accomplishments. Similarly those whose muse inspires them to illustration need not feel that we shun their efforts. All persons competent in these fields are invited to contact the editor.

This volume of scenarios is merely one of many. Farsighted and mathematically literate individuals may subscribe for the next four issues for a mere £30, or \$40 US and Canada. Other areas please contact Pelgrane Press and we shall calculate as economical a rate as is possible to suit your convenience. Yet, as a way of expressing the unbounded admiration with which we regard those who subscribe, they will receive (at no extra cost) the scenario and game known as *The Mermelant Trail*. An irreplaceable resource, ownership of which is sure to be regarded in years to come as the mark of the discerning connoisseur of genre.

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❦

The management regrets that they are no longer able to maintain the old custom of dealing personally with those who insist on wasting their time with tales of personal misfortune involving harrowing ordeals by fire and flood, attack by beastmen or sundry undesirables, or even the petty vengeance of slighted lovers. In the interests of greater efficiency they suggest that persons prone to such behaviours should cast themselves forthwith into the nearest major watercourse, thus saving the management the expense of hiring thugs purely to achieve the same ends.

The typesetter humbly requests readers to note that the editor has publicly admitted to following the creed of Dangott, a god who "doesn't approve of punctuation".

From our readers...

Dear Sir,

My factor (whose name I do not recall) brought your periodical to my attention when I was suffering a moment of weakness (before my mid-morning glass of dyssac my humours are somewhat unbalanced.) Under normal circumstances I would have sent it back to the servants' quarters where such tittle-tattle and scurmundly ranting belong. Instead, I took in the cover, and noticed that you have acquired the services of my colleague at the Symposium, Sage Grashpotel. Gingerly avoiding the more scurrilous articles, I turned to G's account of the wines of the Derna valley: Golden Porphiron. Expecting a piece explaining viticulture in words from the estimable Jorro's *Dictionary for the Unwashed*, instead I discovered outrageous vilification and calumny. The finest and most delicate wine of the entire valley, High Derna Heart, the quintessence of Golden Porphiron, is referred to in disparaging terms: "only the actual owners attempt to claim it the equal of the immediate neighbours" This suggests that being slapped in the face with a piece of wet erb liver, or suffering the effects of an earthquake whilst in a scent shop is in some way more pleasurable than the tender ministrations of a Maot Excelsia. Sage Grashpotel's understandable jealousy at being denied a row of vines in the High Heart is his motive for this

under-researched nonsense, your motivation for publication is less clear.

I offer you the opportunity to rectify your mistake — you are invited to a blind tasting of the three wines, and if you have any kind of palate at all, there will be no contest. In future, I suggest you confine your articles to subjects of interest to your readers; the usual gossip and titillating nonsense.

Perrin

Inferator of the Syncretic Symposium

The Editor replies:

Whilst not normally editorial policy to discuss these matters, it ill becomes us to snub the Inferator of the Syncretic Symposium for the Simulation of Reality, Domestic of the Walls of Kaiin, Treasurer of the Scolasticarium's wine evenings, holder of a half share in a temperance hotel in Taun Tassel, and trustee of the home for elderly and distressed gentlewomen in Kaiin. We shall be delighted to put forward three discerning individuals to taste these wines. It should however be noted that it was not your factor who brought you a copy of our exalted work, but a junior member of the student body who is currently supplementing his income by selling the periodical door to door.



Dear Perrin

I was so glad to hear of your promotion, I have used your batter recipe many times with excellent results. It is excellent for pectizing all manner of acetarious flora.

However we have just killed a hoon that was rampaging in our sour melon patch and wondered if you still had your recipe for hoon and sour melon sauce.

Serenissima Trellice

We asked Makarapass, personal chef to Perrin, to deal with the letter from The Serenissima and are delighted that he accepted.

My dear Serenissima,

How fortunate you are to have a sour melon patch which bears fruit! Seeds were brought from the far west to this area by Cuish the Younger some three centuries ago but the plant rarely grows well enough to fruit in our soils. Should it bear, the grower must stand over the tender globes to judge the peak of flavour: if left an hour too long the pulp liquefies and ferments. The pressure of the gas generated during the (rapid) fermentation soon results in an explosion which distributes the seeds and stinking pulp over the surrounding area. And any incautious grower.

Nonetheless, the acid edge of the sour melon is an admirable contrast to the rich flavour of hoon: if properly prepared this is a dish fit for Kandive the Golden himself. I have suggested

alternative ingredients for the less fortunate, but would remind any aspiring cook that one cannot produce a culinary masterpiece without exerting oneself. Those who search out the correct ingredients will be well-rewarded by the results.

HOON WITH SOUR MELON

Instruct your cook to skin, bone, season, roll and tie for roasting a joint of hoon. Loin is best, thigh may suffice. If you are unable to obtain a choice cut of hoon, pork may be substituted. Brown in butter and place in a deep pot with 2 glasses of a full-bodied dry white wine — Viliyat is admirable for the purpose.

Cover and cook in a moderate oven (a joint weighing 3 lb will require 1½–2 hours). I suggest seasoned Peen wood as fuel, both for lasting heat output and its pleasantly scented smoke. When cooked slice and keep warm; set one of the undercooks to removing the fat from the meat juices.

While supervising the lad refuelling the oven, your cook should set another to stew 2-3 large ranish in butter. Onions may be used instead of ranish, but I must stress that too many changes will lower this dish from the sublime to the merely pleasant. Whichever is used, do not allow it to colour. In a separate dish heat a generous 1lb of sour melon flesh cut into 1" chunks with a minuscule amount of fresh spring water and a sprinkling of crystalline sugar. Plums may be substituted for sour melon flesh, but even mirabelles cannot equal the flavour that sour melon will bring to the dish. Drain the fruit when lightly cooked, reserving

the juice. This should be added to the meat juices together with a scant ½ cup of stock made from the roasted bones of the hoon. (In the Larval Age this useful liquid was normally made by treating the bones of a beef in similar fashion.) Heat to boiling, season and whisk in a generous lump of butter. The end result should be a well-flavoured sauce of sufficient quantity to moisten the meat rather than drown it.

Create an elegant bed of stewed ranish in the centre of a large serving dish, seasoning with salt and fresh-ground pepper. Place the sliced meat on the ranish bed and arrange the sour melon flesh around it. Keep the platter warm, strain the sauce over the meat and serve immediately.



Sir

Kindly note I omit the salutations and honorifics normally deserved by someone of your standing as undeserved by someone of your demonstrable moral turpitude. My husband assures me his purchase of your publication was inspired by the opportunity to read the article on the Golden Porphiron grape by the esteemed sage Grashpotel. Finding the volume momentarily set to one side in our tepidarium, I distracted myself from the rigors of preparation for bathing by reading the article, which clearly demonstrates the eminent Grashpotel's knowledge far outstrips even his own illustrious reputation. On leafing further in the hope of finding other elegant informatory expositions I was horrified to find the pages gaped wide to reveal a large, bold

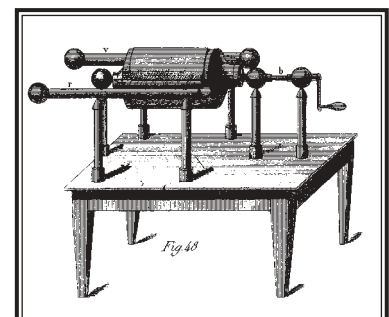
advertisement for a certain Wakdun. The fact that it is apparently considered acceptable to purvey such goods and services in the city does not mean that advertisement of such items is acceptable, or even desirable. I brought the matter to the attention of my husband, who expressed shock and announced his intention to confront this Wakdun in person to communicate our disapproval. I therefore trust no further advertisements will arrive from the same source, and that you will in future refuse any similar items on the grounds of common decency.

Haut Engrailed Festenchet



For our readers...

The editorial office received the following etching from Branzim Garmin, who discovered the artefact in ruins near his residence in Old Romarth. We will be delighted to present a small prize to the savant who provides the most convincing explanation of the purpose and function of this artefact. We are grateful to ERBERG & PARRAIFEL of Kaiin who have most generously offered the ten extant volumes of the *Collected works of Mortiquan* as said prize.



Jack Vance and The D&D Game

Gary Gygax

Being older than dirt, and a rabid gamer since he could see the top of a table, Gary Gygax is usually refereed to as "Game Geek Extraordinaire", "Lord of the Nerds", or simply as "Gramps." Rising from relative obscurity to general infamy after writing the Dungeons & Dragons game back before most folks were born, Gygax seemingly faded away after designing AD&D and writing a bunch of potboiler novels about a thief named Gord. Actually, some clever folks had him sequestered, but that's not for publication. Recently he appeared in voice and animated likeness on a Futurama episode, and has since been getting more press that he deserves, steadily and unashamedly plugging his new RPG system.

On the positive side, Gygax has been a fan of horror, science fiction and fantasy since around 1948. His considerable library includes almost all of Jack Vance's books, or did at least until he loaned them out to others.

It was by reading *Big Planet* in a pulp science fiction magazine that I first became acquainted with Jack Vance as an author. Mark you, at that time, the early 1950s, I was so avidly following imaginative fiction that I often read two books or pulp magazines a day. Of course, on days I had lots of things to do I could manage only one book, or even just a short tale, but that's a different story... back to this one. After finishing the *Big Planet* yarn, I decided that Jack Vance was one of my favorite authors, one of maybe 50 or so that I thought were "tops". My list narrowed considerably as I matured, so that by the 1960s, the writers for whose work I actually looked for was down to about a dozen. Lo and behold, I found a new novel by Jack Vance then. As a matter of fact I still have that very book now. It is *The Eyes of the Overworld* published by Ace Books, Inc. in 1966. It absolutely enthralled me as no work of fantasy had done for a long time. To my mind Cugel the Clever was just the sort of anti-hero that the genre needed. What a delight to get to know this fellow — from a safe distance — and read of his misadventures and less-than-ethical exploits! Later, when I picked up *The Dying Earth*, I was treated to more of the same sort of fanciful tale, an environment whimsical with characters to match. Fantasy set in a far future with just enough familiar elements of the medieval and renaissance in it to make it possible to relate to that environment. The strange and demonic denizens of the Dying Earth, the even odder inhabitants and their societies, the bizarre characters, were so perfectly melded into a whole as to enable more than mere suspension of disbelief on the part of the reader. One just had to believe that such a place existed, or rather will exist in some millions of years time.

Need I say that I am not merely a Jack Vance fan, but that he is in my opinion the very best of all the authors of imaginative fiction? Well I am and he is!

When I began to add elements of fantasy to medieval miniatures wargames around 1969, of course the work of Jack Vance influenced what I did. Along with Robert E. Howard, de Camp & Pratt, A. Merritt. Michael Moorcock, Roger Zelazny, Poul Anderson, J. R. R. Tolkien, P. J. Farmer, Bram Stoker—and not a few others, including the fairy tales Brothers Grimm and Andrew Lang, and conventional mythologies—his writing was there in my memory. Happily so. What I devised was based on the fantastic creations of many previous writers, an amalgam of their imaginations and my own. It was first published in 1971 as the *Chainmail* Medieval Miniatures Rules, the "Fantasy Supplement" thereto. Not much later, in 1972, I wrote the first draft of what was later to become the first commercial role-playing game, *Dungeons and Dragons*, published in January, 1974.

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Jack Vance and The D&D Game

Just what portions of these works and the subsequent *AD&D* game, stemmed from inspiration related to the writing of Jack Vance? Several elements were used in these games, the unquestioned foremost being the magic system. To my way of thinking, the concept of a spell itself being magical, that its written form carried energy, seemed a perfect way to balance the mage against other types of characters in the game. The memorization of the spell required time and concentration so as to impart not merely the written content but also its magical energies. When subsequently cast — by speaking or some other means — the words or gestures, or whatever triggered the magical force of the spell, left a blank place in the brain where the previously memorized spell had been held. Because I explained this often, attributing its inspiration to Jack Vance, the *D&D* magic system of memorized then forgotten spells was dubbed by gamers “the Vancian magic system”.

Of the other portions of the *AD&D* game stemming from the writing of Jack Vance, the next most important one is the thief-class character. Using a blend of “Cugel the Clever” and Roger Zelazny’s “Shadowjack” for a benchmark, this archetype character class became what it was in original *AD&D*. Also some of the spells and magic items found in the game were inspired from one or another of Jack Vance’s works. Notable are the Imprisonment and Evard’s Black Tentacles spells. The latter was devised after reading the short story, *The Bagful of Dreams* in *Flashing Swords* #4 published in 1977 — not in time for my work on the Player’s Handbook but added to it later in the *Unearthed Arcana* supplement. Did I mention the Robe of Eyes? Ah, and who can forget the IOUN Stones as magical items. Before actually publishing the latter, I of course consulted with their creator, to get permission.

That wasn’t difficult, for some considerable time previously I had written a fan letter to Jack, received a reply, written back, etc. Somewhere buried in one of many file cabinets stored in my basement is a folder with quite a few pieces of correspondence from Mr. Vance. As a matter of fact, we had hoped to have him as the Guest of Honor for an early GenCon, but at that time his appearance fee was a bit beyond TSR’s budget. He was very gracious when I spoke to him about being a Guest of Honor. Jack told me frankly that he was not particularly comfortable in such a role, mentioning that the fans, “seem to think that I should have little green horns growing from my forehead or something...” In retrospect, I believe that the Good Mr. Vance just didn’t understand the awe in which his fans hold him and was not at ease with the adulation given to him. Anyway, later on when I got in touch about the IOUN Stones, permission was graciously given, and so a new and unique set of magical items was added to the *AD&D* game. Indeed, what mage did not long for those 14 different colors and shapes to be circling his head? Mordenkainen, my own chief spellcaster PC, went on many a harrowing expedition searching for them, eventually wound up with an even dozen.

What did the creator of the concept for these marvelous magical stones ask in return for adding them to the game? Only what I was planning to do in any event, mention his books in the work. Not only is Jack Vance a great author, but he is a very nice guy too.

Aside from ideas and specific things, the very manner in which Jack Vance portrays a fantasy environment, the interaction of characters with that environment and with each other, is so captivating that wherever I could manage it, I attempted to include the “feel” he brings to his fantasy tales in the *AD&D* game. My feeble ability likely managed to convey but little of this, but all in all I believe that much of what fans consider to be the “soul” of the game stems from that attempt. Of course there were, as noted, a number of other authors who had considerable influence on what I wrote, so let it suffice to conclude that a considerable debt of gratitude is owed to Mr. Vance, one that I am always delighted to repay whenever the opportunity arises. It should go without saying that whenever I see a new title of his, I buy it and read it with avid pleasure.

Some years ago when I was doing just that, reading one of Jack’s SF novels, I came upon a “Lord Gygax” therein. I immediately phoned and complained that I had not appeared as a vicious “Starmeter”, merely a luckless noble. Mr. Vance turned a deaf ear to my implorations, and sadly “Lord Gygax” has never returned in some greater and more adventurous role in his stories. Drat! Now that would be what I consider as real fame...

To spice up my own *D&D* campaign back in 1974 I added a number of special “dimensional portals” so

Jack Vance and The D&D Game

that players might enjoy adventures in strange places that were different from the “everyday” realms of fantasy. The favorite of the players was one drawn whole from a series of SF novels written by Jack Vance, and through play therein futuristic weapons were brought into play against sea monsters and trolls, the various dangerous critters of dungeon and wilderness in the *D&D* world. How sad the players when these weapons their PCs possessed ran out of energy...

As influential as Mr. Vance was in inspiring what went into the work that became *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons*, the game I created was not meant to reflect, let alone recreate his, or any other fiction author's worlds. Clearly, the *AD&D* game was designed to accommodate a wide variety of fantasy concepts. The game and the environment I devised for play were written so as to serve many different tastes and styles, and in this it seems to have succeeded quite well. In doing that I used myth and legend, ancient and medieval historical bases, even some aspects of the Renaissance. To the delight of his many readers, Jack Vance is so creative as to devise entirely unique and wholly wondrous environments.

For example, The Dying Earth is a marvelous, dark far-future world setting. The earth is no longer our world, just as the sun is no longer the Old Sol we see. It is a planet so ancient that its earlier history has been lost and forgotten. Of the later ages, a staggeringly long series of epics, information is revealed only in tantalizing snippets. All of its places are striking in that they are strange yet somehow familiar, and there is no question that something startling and new will be revealed at each turn. To inhabit the world are suitably odd and eccentric races, characters, and creatures. To my thinking, this milieu is creative far beyond the bounds of what has been offered in any material previously written for the role-playing game. This shortcoming has now been remedied because gamers are now able to enjoy direct play in the astonishing world that is the creation of Jack Vance, the home of Cugel the Clever, Rhialto, and so many other outstanding figures.

In considering the Dying Earth milieu, one must be prepared to accept some differences between it and the standard world of fantasy derring-do. While much has been forgotten, the whole of the race of mankind has matured and grown ancient and cynical. Naiveté there is aplenty, but there is behind it cynicism, duplicity, and treachery. Of the knight errant, the noble quest, the honest forester there is little or none. Those are things of youth, innocence and the bright future where the hope is to live happily ever after. As the ale-hewed sun of the decrepit earth totters along its course, there is always the question of it failing. There is no longer belief in such things as were known in a younger time. Too many ages have passed for the human race to cherish such fond notions. Time has disabused them.

So the milieu is one where Machiavelli would be considered the norm in civilized places, while in the hinterlands the oddest of things are to be expected, the populace as savage yet more bizarre than any callow one recorded in the earth's younger aeons. This strange and sinister mixture provides a perfect background for the fantasy adventure campaign. While the hero is no longer in the standard mold, that archetype remains with its eremitic overtones — not quite an anti-hero, but certainly not a paladin. In its last age, the folk inhabiting the earth are more guileful, one might say.

Does that mean that the Dying Earth can not expect altruism, bravery, even a sense of wonder in its leading characters? Hardly! While such are rare enough here and now to be remarkable, these traits are definitely human, will persist as long as *Homo sapiens* in whatever evolved form remain extant. The trick to survival for such individuals on the Dying Earth world must be cunning. The brash and the foolhardy are “naturally” selected out early by the process of living in such an environment. It is obvious that the mage and the thief who prosper in this environment are similar to those created previously for us. Yet equally clearly one feels that both must be exceedingly clever and cunning...

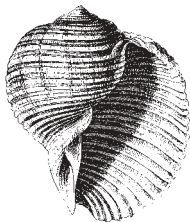
There is another truly great advantage offered to the Game Master when devising a campaign set on the Dying Earth. It is not highly detailed. There is no strict timeline laid down. All that has happened before is not “recorded”, nor is there an accurate gazetteer of the world. What magic operates? Nobody can say or guess, because in the long aeons of the Dying Earth's history, likely every form possible was discovered, used, and then forgotten... almost. This means that all that's necessary to create a really compelling campaign environment is to have the game in hand and the books that Jack Vance wrote about the world. Using the

Jack Vance and The D&D Game

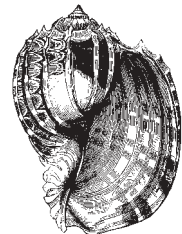
creative base of the author, the GM's own imagination cannot fail but to rise to the occasion.

The Dying Earth is the perfect place for a sophisticated, whimsical, and enthralling fantasy campaign. It can be on virtually any scale, and feature whatever the participant group enjoys most. Combat and magic? Of course. The same is true for story and intrigue. To be forthright, the milieu is so broad as to invite any and all aspects of the RPG into play, and those in whatever mix and degree of emphasis is desired. Simply put, the Dying Earth milieu is just about a perfect one to transfer from fiction to game. The caveat is, don't think along "conventional" fantasy lines. It is a place where long ages have altered things, even magic and the human archetype to some degree.

In concluding this brief essay, it is impossible for me not to say I am most anxious to actually play a character in the game. If only Jack Vance were the GM I do believe that I'd drop everything else to fly out to California the minute I got the invitation. That dream aside, a pickup game at convention, or anything like that, will do. Think I'll create a wily and roguish character and name him Gnoodle...



Newly arrived in Kaiin, the well-found ship
SOLIAN LADY
from a propitious voyage on the Sea of Slow Tides.
After great moil and constant jeopardy she has the
following cargo to place before all true epicures.



The delectable SOUTHERN NAUTILUS, trawled from great depths and kept alive in salt water tanks, fed only on lightly bruised sea kale smeared with honey syrup.

KELP PEAS

Picked from the great rafts of floating kelp. These are first boiled and then preserved by storing them in great vats of the finest Val Ombrian red wine.

SEA SHELLS both intricate and exquisite

Knife hafts, spice boxes and dispensers carved out of SEA HORSE IVORY

Salted sea kale, by the bale or by the bucket.



Offered, an unparalleled opportunity to further knowledge and in so doing enrich oneself.
WANTED, examples of all forms of COINAGE no matter what the age or national origin.
Highest prices paid in terces of current specie.
Bring your samples for assay to Gilmer, Master Mariner of the SEA TIGER
at the House on the High Cliffs, over the Skeleton Rocks.

✿ Phasms ✿

Robin D. Laws

‘Cease your ruction! The deception was, once again, for your own benefit.’

Phasms is an adventure for Rhialto-level Arch-Magicians. It presumes that they are members of Ildefonse’s conclave.

In a most sagacious display of economy, this adventure focuses on arch-magicians whose game statistics appear in the ‘Personages’ chapter of *DERPG*: Gilgad, Hurtiancz, Ildefonse, Rhialto, and Vermouliau the Dream-Walker. They appear both as themselves and as their extra-dimensional doppelgangers.



Premise

The carelessness of Rhialto spells misfortune for him and his colleagues. While attempting to summon a specimen of the incorporeal, extra-planar entity the Variegated Phasm, he instead conjures the dreaded and little-known Anacoluthic Phasm. The Phasm merges with Rhialto, reducing him to a drooling shadow of his former personality¹. It then begins to reproduce, possessing not only Rhialto’s household staff, but his fellow arch-magicians and their own retinues.

Meanwhile, in a dimension of Evil, wholly opposite to the familiar plane of the Dying Earth², alternate versions of the conclave observe this dire situation and see in it their opportunity to strike. Long have they waited to usurp the identities of the arch-magicians of ‘our’ Dying Earth, taking over the conclave and installing themselves in the luxurious manses of their counterparts.

Game designers note: Phasms includes the following traditional elements of a good Dying Earth game...

Odd Customs

The PCs encounter the peculiar delusions of their mirror counterparts, who claim to live in a blasted and horrific version of their own world. They describe themselves as the polar opposites of the arch-magicians we know, as quasi-demonic entities devoted wholly to rapine and destruction. Yet a visit to their dimension reveals a world indistinguishable from the Dying Earth. Furthermore, the alternate arch-magicians’ actions belie their claims of unrelenting evil: like the ones we know, they seem dedicated solely to petty comforts, rank pettifoggery, and the green-eyed pursuit of additional IOUN stones. In fact, the only means of distinguishing them from their counterparts is their facial hair. If an arch-magician is clean-shaven on the Dying Earth, his doppelganger wears a great and elaborately-tended goatee³. If the arch-magician we know is bearded, his counterpart wears a bejeweled chin-mask set in gold and platinum, which he affixes to his lamentably bare chin with an exotic, spicy-smelling glue not unlike spirit gum.

Crafty Swindles

The evil-dimension arch-magicians plan to swindle their counterparts out of their positions in the conclave, exiling them to what they describe as “the hideous, blighted world” of their own origins.

Heated Protests and Presumptuous Claims

The ‘evil’ magicians demonstrate enormous gall in pressing their claims. “After all, am I not patently Gilgad, for all to see? Therefore, I deserve, nay, demand, Gilgad’s rights and privileges before this conclave!”

1. Although some of his colleagues might advance the opinion that any change in Rhialto’s manner could not help but be an improvement.

2. Or so its inhabitants style it.

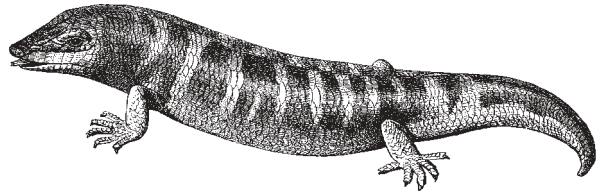
3. It goes without saying that all arch-magicians, in both versions of the *Dying Earth*, are men, and therefore capable of producing facial hair. The rampant gynophobia of Ildefonse’s conclave is well-known (see the Jack Vance story *The Murthe*).

❖ Phasms ❖

Weird Magic

The phasms owe their tremendous power to the fact that they can utterly neutralize any magic (or practitioner of same) through mere contact. Should the insubstantial forms of a phasm overlap with that of a worker of magic, all of his powers are instantly suppressed. The phasm then possesses him.

One possible solution to the phasm infestation is the thick-furred skink, a peculiar lizard native only to the most inaccessible reaches of the Northern Maurenron Range. The thick-furred skink utterly destroys all magic it touches. If dropped on a phasm, the creature's energy matrix is completely dissolved, and its essence dissipates across the planes, never to be reintegrated. The challenge inherent in using the furred skink for this task is that any arch-magician who touches one instantly and irrevocably loses all spell-casting ability. Even if his captive chug and sandestins do not take immediate and fatal vengeance upon him, he'll spend the rest of his days⁴ wandering the world as a pathetic non-entity, with neither manse nor IOUN stones⁵.



Thick-furred skink. This specimen was taken in the moult which occurs during the brief but fierce northern summer. The winter pelage is remarkably thick, silky, and of a pearl-grey that blends well with snow or rock.

Strange Vistas

The Northern Maurenron Range is a place of eerie and howling beauty.

Exotic Food

Should any of the PCs' mirror-world counterparts make themselves at home in the PCs' manses, they will immediately order staff to prepare lavish repasts using the rarest and most coveted ingredients in their hosts' larders, such as:

- ❖ miniature squid and ruffled songbird cakes with a porphiron-infused mustard mayonnaise
- ❖ sole stuffed with dried venison, caviar of the reticulated flange-eel, and caramelized apples
- ❖ soft-shell crabs with wilted spinach and warm tomato-basil vinaigrette
- ❖ breath-whitened bnugmer-leaves with dill and goat cheese on cayenne toasts
- ❖ a gumbo of leek, persimmon, and ape-finger (spiced tastefully, if you please)
- ❖ spicy boiled astralobster, Sanreal Bay fear-shrimp, potatoes, corn, and garlic
- ❖ gramber salad with endive and tomato-cilantro sauce
- ❖ ... and a snifter of your finest brandy. On second thought, bring the bottle.

These repasts might also be consumed during breaks in the conclave proceedings⁶.

Foppish Apparel

Although their fashion sense is otherwise identical to the arch-magicians we know, each counter-dimension sorcerer takes special pains to outdo his colleagues in the arena of facial adornment.

- ❖ A close-cropped goatee, each hair painstakingly gilded by a winged fey creature from the Ildish Wastes; several of these half-inch beings attend the magician at all times, to touch up beard hairs as the gold paint flakes off them.
- ❖ A fulsome handlebar moustache looms over a merely average goatee; exotic waxes allow it a two-foot wingspan. At each curled terminus hangs a tinkling silver bell decorated with flakes of obsidian.
- ❖ A golden chin-mask adorned with intricate relief carvings of angels and demons coupling in a most lascivious manner.

4. Which, shriven of his immortality, will be comparatively short.

5. His fellow arch-magicians will, with sighing expressions of regret, relieve him of these trappings of his former life, so as to shield him from the bitter memories they would no doubt engender.

6. It is rude, though not unheard of, for a magician to tuck into a full-course meal in the midst of debate. This convention does not, however, rule out the occasional snack.

- ☘ A magically animated goatee which moves about to underline the gestures of the wearer as he pontificates.

Structuring the Adventure

At all levels of play, *Dying Earth* adventures require more GM improvisation than many other role-playing games⁷. Nowhere is this truer than in Rhialto-level play, where the characters, through their sandestins, can do virtually anything⁸. In a Cugel game, when a player asks you “Can I do this?”, his more outrageous suggested actions can be greeted with a firm and hearty, “No.” Alas for the writer of Rhialto adventures, the answer to the same question, when posed by the player of an arch-magician, is almost invariably, “Uh, well, yes.” Granted, any GM equipped with an ounce of guile can figure out how to make the consequences of success just as vexing as failure. But an adventure writer can’t anticipate which impossible things the PCs will reasonably accomplish, given their power levels. So you won’t find a straight-line narrative here, in which discovery A leads the players to development B, which in turn takes them to plot point C. Instead, we’ll throw a series of possible scenes your way and leave it up to you to connect them to the players’ choices, threading them together in a logical sequence⁹.

Taglines

“Point of privilege!”

“There is no need for furtiveness.”

“You overrate the value of these humble objects.”

“To undertake the task myself would be an insult to your prowess and bravery.”

“I maintain a prior lien on all of his properties, taken out in anticipation of any future crimes against my person.”

“Fortuitously, I happen to be a master of the wholly non-magical combat technique familiarly known as the Claw of Prelb.”

“That statement would seem less ominous if you were to curtail your drooling.”

“Allow me to pinpoint your plan’s crucial hidden flaw.”

“I vaguely recollect a certain skink of the Maurenron Mountains, which may possess properties salient to this discussion.”

“Let us instead debate the former names of this location.”

“Do not destroy it before it can be thoroughly classified!”

7. For further elucidation, review “Anticipating Unpredictability”, on p. 138 of the *DERPG*.

8. Needless to say, you should, as always, make negotiations with sandestins as annoying and cavil-fraught as possible.

9. In fact, this author has proposed to the esteemed editors of the *DERPG* that, for Rhialto-level games, the term ‘adventure’ be replaced with ‘series of notes towards an improvisation’. Despite (or perhaps because of) the salutary effects it would have on authors, who are paid by the word, the proposition has fallen on deaf ears.

Editorial Note. this proposition is duly noted, but it must be remembered that rather than being mere hacks, scribbling pathetically to fulfill their quarterly deadline our noble contributors are now writers of note, wrestling heroically with their muse to fix deathless prose onto paper. Such exalted artistry dictates that a degree of economy with verbiage should be practiced. It should also be noted that both deadlines and Honorarium remain the same.

Getting Started

This adventure weaves together two sets of problems: the phasms and the mirror-dimension arch-magicians. The appearance of the first provokes an opportunistic sally by the second. Which end of the problem the PCs discover first is up to you. They can head to Rhialto's manse and discover that he has been possessed by a phasm. Or they can attend the conclave and discover a peculiarly aggressive Rhialto wearing an odd golden chin-mask demanding to be installed as Preceptor while an equally strangely acquiescent Ildefonse nods in placid agreement.

In the first case, trump up some business that takes the group to Rhialto's estate: find out what the PCs want and suggest that Rhialto might help them get it. In the second, the PCs are happily indulging in the creature comforts of their own manses when messenger creatures arrive to announce an emergency conclave, called by Rhialto and approved by Ildefonse.

If you regularly allow the party to split up¹⁰, some might go to Rhialto's while others simultaneously attend the conclave.

Phasms

The Anacoluthic Phasm is an insubstantial entity possessed of an instinctive level of intelligence which operates at about the level of a sea urchin or bivalve. It reproduces by feeding on the auras of magicians, and other beings who give off arcane energy.

Magicians become imbued with low-level arcane energy through the course of their spell-castings and experiments. They leave low-level thaumaturgical deposits on their carpets, their bed-clothes, and even on their forks and spoons. Any long-standing member of a magician's household will also have traces of the material on his hair and in the fibers of his clothing.

Anacoluthic phasms are attracted to this trace energy as barnacles are to the sides of ship hulls or as sharks are to chum. When one comes within a thousand feet of a mage it immediately envelops him in its own energy field and begins to feed. It reproduces whenever it encounters another living being imbued with traces of magical energy. Servants provide the phasm enough energy to survive, but not enough to reproduce.

Possessed victims retain a rudimentary consciousness. After infection they putter about in a rough approximation of their daily activities. Thus, an arch-magician who visits an infected colleague can suffer enphasmentation himself, but still make his brain-fogged way back to his own manse. There the phasm can reproduce, infecting the servants and any other arch-magicians who happen to come calling. In this manner, a plague of enphasmentation can strike an entire conclave of magicians situated throughout a wide area without having any noticeable affect on the general population.

Victims of enphasmentation suffer from glassiness of the eye and a propensity for drooling. They can respond to questions posed to them by others, but always in the same off-putting manner. They answer any question in the following manner:

"I am Rhialto the Marvelous, and I am conducting an experiment, because that is what I do."

"I am Bilt, factor to Ildefonse, and I am beating a rug, because that is what I do."

"I am Digo, stable boy, and I am gathering straw, because that is what I do."

It is as if the phasm is attempting to impersonate the victim, concealing his true status, but can muster only a rudimentary, instinctive facility for imposture.

As mentioned above, only phasms possessing magicians can accumulate enough energy to reproduce. Upon encountering a new, likely target for possession, it takes them several hours to generate a new specimen to do the deed. So it is possible for the PCs to visit the manse of a victim and remain there for a while before a possession attempt occurs.

When attempting to possess a victim the newborn phasm uses the Magic pool of its parent's host magician. Its Magic style is always Forceful. It enters into a contest against the victim's Magic pool. If the victim loses,

10. A useful stratagem with such powerful and versatile characters.

❧ Phasms ❧

he is possessed. If the victim wins, the new phasm dissipates. It takes the parent about two hours to refresh its host's Magic pool, at which point it generates another offspring which attempts to succeed where its predecessor failed.

However, if an arch-magician touches a phasm, he immediately faces a possession contest in which he suffers a levy of 3 per roll. Phasms absorb all spells cast at them. In fact, if the phasm is hit by a ranged spell, such as the *Excellent Prismatic Spray*, it is possible to see a countervailing energy bursting forth from the phasm, running along the length of the beam, and (if the magician does not immediately cut off his spell) infecting the caster.

If a magician uses a magical item against a phasm, it is overridden and imbued with phasmatic energy and stops working. Intelligent items experience the same diminished consciousness as living victims:

"I am Brignald's Ever-Present Wand, and I am ever-present, for that is what I do."

In short, the phasms present an obstacle against which the magic of even the greatest arch-magician is not only useless, but an active impediment.

Sandestins and Phasms

Anacoluthic phasms don't possess sandestins. They eat them. Sandestins fear anacoluthic phasms almost as much as they do chugs¹¹. No sandestin will agree under any circumstances to engage in any activity which might bring it into contact with a phasm.

Plague's Progress

As one might expect, it was the over-reaching Rhialto who accidentally summoned the phasms. They then spread to Ildefonse, his guest at the time. Ildefonse went back to his manse, where he was petitioned by Hurtiancz and Gilgad, both of whom wished to press a prior claim of damages against Rhialto. On their way back from his manse they encountered Vermoulian's palanquin on the road and the Dream-Walker was in turn enphasmed.

If other GMC arch-magicians¹² serve as personages to the PCs, they too should be enphasmed. If you know that a player with an established character won't be able to make it for any of this adventure's sessions, you can enphasmate him as well.

As previously mentioned, the mass enphasinations give the mirror arch-magicians an opening to take over the conclave.

'Evil' Arch-magicians

Despite their constant protestations to the contrary, the arch-magicians have exactly the same game statistics (and personalities) as their standard counterparts. The only exceptions are Rhialto, whose mirror version is aggressive and greedy for power,



A blank stare and tendency to drool is likely to indicate enphasination, although overindulgence in a particularly fine loin of hoon stewed with mushrooms and cream may have the same effect.

11. Although sandestins can imagine being obliterated by a phasm, most can readily remember being tortured by a chug, which are therefore the more feared of the two entities.

12. These might be of your own creation, adapted by you from the pages of *Rhialto the Marvelous*, or from a Pelgrane Press supplement unpublished at the time of this writing.

and Ildefonse, who is even more fuddled and passive than the version the PCs know. The whole scheme to take over the conclave is mirror-Rhialto's. He speaks and struts like a gloating villain from some other role-playing game. His clothing is identical to standard-Rhialto's, except that it is cast entirely in black and silver. Note that, even in his case, his self-professed evil is entirely confined to a swaggering demeanor. His actual behavior isn't any better or worse than any other arch-magician from either reality.

The others also act oddly, not so much because their personalities are different, but because they approve of false-Rhialto's plan and are therefore treating him with respect and deference. If your series is relatively new, or the players inadequately familiar with *Rhialto the Marvelous*, this clue that something is very awry may not be sufficiently obvious. You may wish to call for Perception or Imposture¹³ rolls: success reminds the players that the acerbic, high-handed Rhialto is one of the conclave's least popular members.

When first encountered the mirror arch-magicians are posing as their counterparts, and believe themselves to be carrying out the imposture splendidly. In reality, they're childishly poor at disguising their plans and true identities. Blatantly play them as if their behavior is something completely wrong and sinister.

The Sinister Plan

False-Rhialto assigned a sandestin, Binado, to the full-time surveillance of our Dying Earth, allowing him to do whatever he wanted there, so long as he immediately reported any activity suggesting weakness on the part of its arch-magicians. Further, he promised Binado his freedom if his report ever proved tantalizing enough to provoke false-Rhialto's long-anticipated assault on the conclave. Binado spotted the phasm plague, quickly alerted Rhialto, and is now happily enjoying his freedom, splashing around in the radiant pools of the sixth emanation.

Employing transplanar opticons, fake-Rhialto and his allies monitor earth to see which arch-magicians have succumbed to the phasm effect. Their counterparts then come here to join the conclave and vote for Rhialto's installation as Preceptor. Mirror-Rhialto expects that the other arch-magicians will be at some point freed from their enphasmation. He has prepared a lengthy battery of technical arguments explaining why he should remain Preceptor even when the ruse is uncovered. After all, he was legally installed ...

The Conclave

Perhaps impetuously, false-Rhialto calls the conclave before fifty per cent of the Dying Earth arch-magicians have been enphasmated. He must therefore temporize, delay, and make procedural maneuvers until his allies can arrive to carry the vote. The mirror arch-magicians are too afraid to enter our dimension until their counterparts have been possessed; no one wants to risk a magical battle with an arcane master as magnificent as himself. As soon as an arch-magician succumbs, his counterpart appears at the conclave, ready to vote.

This process does not seem inherently unusual. Many arch-magicians respond indolently to notice of an emergency conclave meeting. They typically straggle in over a period of days after concluding whatever experiments, gustatory endeavors, or erotic entanglements they were in the midst of when notice of the meeting arrived. They know that the early arrivers are the most enthusiastic pettifoggers and that days of privilege motions, minutes-reading, and semantic quibbling will occur before anything ever comes up for a final vote.

SAMPLE DIALOGUE

'Evil' Gilgad: "On this plane, I shall own many fine simiodes. Ah, by which I mean, it is plain that I own a fine simiode. Whose name is... Boodis. Yes, that is what I meant. Boodis."

'Evil' Hurtiancz: "Phaugh! Cease these tedious exercises in due process, and simply declare Rhialto the winner."

'Evil' Ildefonse: "To save time, and allow us to proceed to the excellent table of cheeses and sweetmeats laid out for us in the aviary, I propose that we stipulate that all of Rhialto's motions, including those yet to be mooted, are immediately and irrevocably approved."

'Evil' Rhialto: "It is clear that the conclave would suffer irreparable harm were the legitimacy of my candidacy called into question."

'Evil' Vermoulian: "Rhialto's candidacy is so patently worthy that I shall instead devote my allotted time to the explication of a series of dreams so fascinating they require a new classification number in my catalogue." [Clears throat to signal beginning of lengthy discourse.]

13. The use of Imposture is permitted on the grounds that an experienced faker can see through others employing similar tricks.

☘ Phasms ☘

It is also customary for attendees to pop in and out of a conclave in progress as urgent business captures their attention. They may leave simulacra of themselves through which they can monitor the progress of debate, or even deliver complex orations, while they perform investigations to back up their arguments, or simply pursue unrelated but more interesting business.

The PCs can therefore appear at the conclave, figure out that something is wrong, and then head off to the manes of the peculiarly-behaved, in search of answers to the mystery.

Travel to the Realm of Evil

If the PCs research the mirror realm, the information they find confirms the mirror arch-magicians' (incorrect) description of the place. They may find this information in learned tomes, or quiz their sandestins¹⁴. The received wisdom on the mirror realm is as follows:

"It is a terrible and blasted place, where the sun is even closer to extinction than our own. Food has become repellent to the taste; suitable fabrics for fine clothing are so rare that even wealthy grandees must clothe themselves in ancient and detestable rags. Worst, the coming apocalypse has intensified the well-known defects of the human character, so that the common man has become wholly dedicated to evil, savagery, and wanton destruction."

Should PCs travel there, they'll discover a world largely indistinguishable from the one they know, with two notable exceptions:

- ☞ The men wear goatees or chin-masks; the women wear chin-masks.
- ☞ Anyone with any degree of wealth owns a transplanar opticon, a device not unlike an ordinary spyglass. Through the opticon, they can view the actions of their counterparts on our Dying Earth. They spend every possible moment devoted to this pursuit, their chests heaving with a wistful and enervating sense of envy. Sorrowfully, they wish they were in the good dimension, engaged in all of the exciting and worthwhile activities that fill the days of their counterparts. No matter how wretched and benighted the existences of the people they see in the opticons, they regard our Dying Earth as a honey-drenched paradise compared to their own dreary reality.

PCs attempting to Persuade residents of this dimension that our Dying Earth is no more virtuous or interesting than their own face a levy of 5 on every roll.

A Conclusion of Some Sort

The PCs' choice of actions implies one of two possible climaxes for the adventure. If they concentrate the majority of their efforts on banishing the phasms, you should build that aspect of the story towards a climactic finish, resolving the alternate arch-magicians' withdrawal from the conclave in a perfunctory manner. On the other hand, if they spend the majority of their time dealing with their counterparts, you should deal quickly with the whole phasm business.

Phasms As Primary Challenge

The PCs must dream up a clever plan to defeat adversaries who feed on the very source of their vast power. It is possible, given the versatility of arch-magicians, that they'll come up with a brilliant plan bearing no resemblance to anything written here. As always, incorporate their ideas whenever possible: just make sure they face challenges in executing them.

It would be churlish of us not to supply at least one possible solution to the problem. It is hinted at in one of the taglines. If you have a group that relies on you for cues, you should assign the line about the skink to one of your more perspicacious players. If you are doomed to work with players who seem to be unusually slow on the uptake you could have them find a copy of Dipplewrac and Barwd's *Beasts of the Northern Regions*.

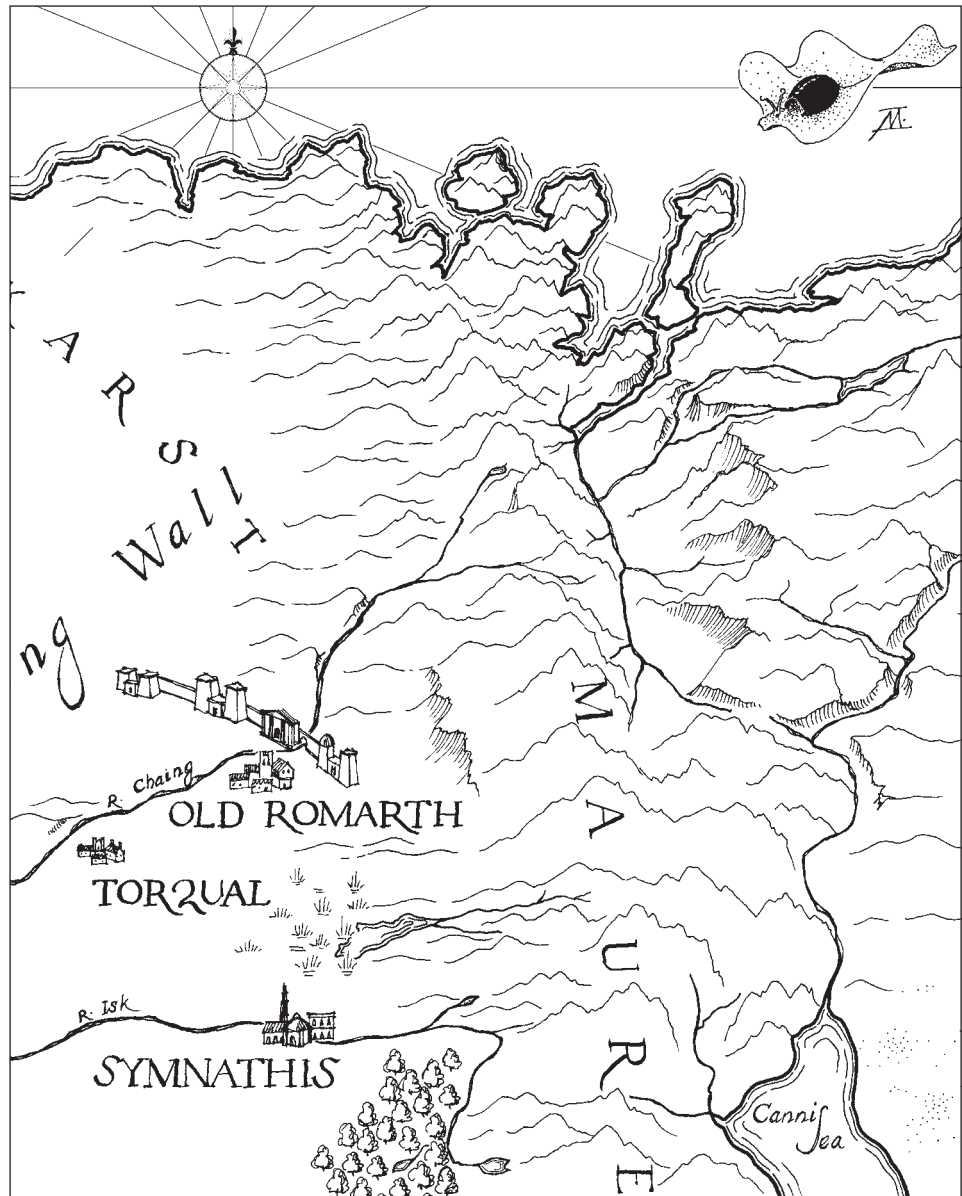
14. None of their sandestins have ever been there, but will repeat the standard wisdom as if they have. Only on close interrogation will they reveal that they merely recapitulate second- or third-hand accounts.

Anti-Magical Skinks of the Northern Maurenron Range

Deep in the frigid interior of the Northern Maurenron Range, where circuitous, howling winds cut labyrinthine passageways through teetering towers of hard-packed snow, dwells a small population of furred skinks. Arch-magicians would normally avoid these small creatures at all costs. They are not only immune to magic of any kind, but their merest touch can utterly and permanently shrive an individual of all capacity for the working of magic¹⁵. However, with the accelerating enphasmation of the world's arch-magicians, this very danger may prove the PCs' salvation.

The trick lies in capturing the skinks, then in finding a way to bring them into contact with the phasms while keeping them far away from the arch-magicians themselves.

Sandestins are as adamant about refusing contact with the skinks as they are with phasms. Contact with a skink utterly obliterates a sandestin. They'll be reluctant to even manifest themselves anywhere near the skinks' habitat.



The Northern Maurenron Mountains fall steeply to the waters of the Xandoon Sea. The Dusky Sea-moth pictured here is a common resident of these waters; fragments of its fragile shell are frequently found, but entire shells are rare. The Thick-furred skink is thought to inhabit the rocky highland surrounding the lake at upper right.

15. Make sure the players have plenty of warning that any contact whatsoever with these furry reptiles means the retirement of their characters. Threaten the PCs with skink contact, but always make sure they have a good way of escaping this grim fate. A player will have good reason to feel cheated if you bring about the destruction of his character in this way.

Men of the Northern Maurenron Range

A small tribe of men also survive in the harshest depths of the mountains. They call themselves the Krelop. Swathed in hides and furs, they subsist primarily on lichens gathered during the two-month period when the snows recede. Although a variety of insects adapted to the ferocious temperatures might provide better nutriment, they religiously avoid eating them. The Krelop do not wish to compete for food with the furred skink, which they worship as divine. The tribesmen know how to capture the skinks unharmed so that, in the course of their sacred rituals, they might be adored and provided with food.

The Krelop leader is named Duthab; he negotiates cannily. PCs trying to convince him to aid in the capture of skinks for any purpose other than adoration suffer a levy of 3. If he knows they intend to take the skinks away from the tundra, the levy is 5.

If the Krelop realize that the PCs mean to take the skinks away, they will attack immediately, armed with ice javelins and bone knives. If the PCs capture skinks, they might creep into the arch-magicians' encampment in an attempt to free them.

Although difficult, it is not impossible for the PCs to convince the Krelop to aid them. They might also recruit and train skink-hunters from elsewhere¹⁷.

Skink vs. Phasm

The exact delivery method by which skinks may be brought into contact with phasms, without either creature touching an arch-magician, sandestin, or ambulatory magical device is left as an exercise for the PCs. If your players are like the author's playtest group, they'll propose and then reject three or four perfectly serviceable solutions to the problem before arriving at an incredibly complex, over-thought plan.

(Specifically, my group recruited a pelgrane, who in turn enlisted a small legion of his fellows, who agreed to perform a service in exchange for a large herd of cattle¹⁸. The PCs stood outside the manses, their magical auras acting as bait for phasms, which then ventured outside only to be dive-bombed with pelgrane-dropped skinks.)

As they deliberate, it is likely that the players themselves will supply you with more than enough entertaining obstacles to their scheme.

Enphasmating the Usurpers

The perspicacious GM will be prepared for the possibility that the PCs will attempt to dispose of the mirror-dimension arch-magicians by arranging for them to become possessed by phasms. This should be a difficult task, given that the doppelgangers have been monitoring the entire phasm incident from the beginning, and

DUTHAB

"Long have my people venerated the skink."

Although scarcely fifty years of age, Duthab is a wizened, stooped man. A few jagged top teeth poke down from his well-worn gums. He has survived for decades in the toughest of environs, and is no fool. He values the lives of his people highly, though not so much as he does those of the skinks. Suspicious of strangers, he'll become apoplectic if he comes to trust the PCs and then discovers he was deceived. He knows little of the ways of arch-magicians, and may need to be persuaded of their power and status. Should relations between the PCs and Krelop become relaxed and friendly, he will suggest to the arch-magicians that they might profitably marry some of his tribe's plumper young ladies. Like most people, the Krelop believe that their way of life is the only route to true happiness, and are astonished by the customs and beliefs of outlanders. Duthab naturally assumes that any suitor interested in marrying a Krelop would wish to live among them, drinking lichen soup and scraping down in perpetual abasement before the skink. Should any of the PCs mock his religious beliefs, or the customs of his people, he becomes close-mouthed and uncooperative. If at a loss as to how to proceed, he may seek out a skink, in order to commune with it¹⁶.

Persuade 6 (Forthright); Rebuff 10 (Wary); Living Rough 12; Stealth 4; Tracking 6

16. The skinks, alas, prefer to keep their own counsel.

17. In playtest, the PCs briefly secured the Krelop's services, until the tundra men discovered their intentions. The arch-magicians wound up slaughtering the natives and recruiting ne'er-do-wells in Kaiin. They cast them into a temporal bubble so that their months of training might pass as mere instants. The newly-trained skink men captured two sets of skinks (I forget what happened to the first) and retired in luxury on the stipend they earned.

18. Their initial demand was for an equal number of succulent peasants, but uncharacteristic qualms prompted the PCs to venture a counter-offer.

☘ Phasms ☘

know to avoid contact with them at all costs. If the PCs attempt it, make sure that, on at least one occasion, the PCs must flee in haste from the phasms they're attempting to herd.

If the Phasms Are Dispensed With Quickly

In this case, the climax of the adventure becomes the expulsion of the arch-magicians from our reality. Fortunately, the sagacious designer of the *DERPG* rules has had the foresight to equip you with a game system that devotes as much energy and complexity to argument and discourse as it does to combat. Interesting developments could include the following:

From the Manor Ousted

The PCs are called by an outraged Hurtiancz to assist him at his manor. The alternate Hurtiancz has, through the distribution of generous bonuses and promises of lax administration, won over Hurtiancz's household staff. They now claim to recognize the false Hurtiancz as the genuine article, and the real one as a base impostor.

The PCs might solve this crisis by persuading Hurtiancz's servants that their new master is a self-admitted paragon of evil, and that his current munificence is all a plot to lead them to the torture chamber, the dinner pot, or worse.

Transfer of Indenture

Having similarly been promised the liberal disposal of indenture points, the PCs' sandestins desert them in favor of their doppelgangers: "The terms of my indenture state that I must unstintingly serve Cwilm the Annotator. And serve Cwilm I do. I assure you, my reasoning is without defect."

It might be amusing if their doppelganger's sandestins then dejectedly approached the PCs, offering their services. It transpires that the sandestins of the 'evil' dimension are as pathetic and envious as its human residents. They feel bitterly rejected, now that their far superior, charming, and interesting counterparts have taken their places. Naturally, this situation is not as promising as it seems. If the PCs make the mistake of asking the sandestins why they don't just depart, as would any sandestin of their acquaintance faced with a like situation, they do exactly that. Even if the PCs keep them around they find these sandestins' incessant moping, consuming envy, and lack of self-confidence to be just as great an impediment to the accurate fulfillment of instructions as the resentment and pettifoggery of their usual sandestins.

Cajoled to Self-Banishment

False-Rhialto attempts to Persuade a PCs to accept his lot in life, and move to the accursed depths of the evil Dying Earth. He chooses the PC with either the lowest Rebuff, or one whose Rebuff is Pure-Hearted (the style trumped by Glib persuasion.) To inject excitement and danger into this exchange, you might want to change False-Rhialto's Persuade rating to ~+5.

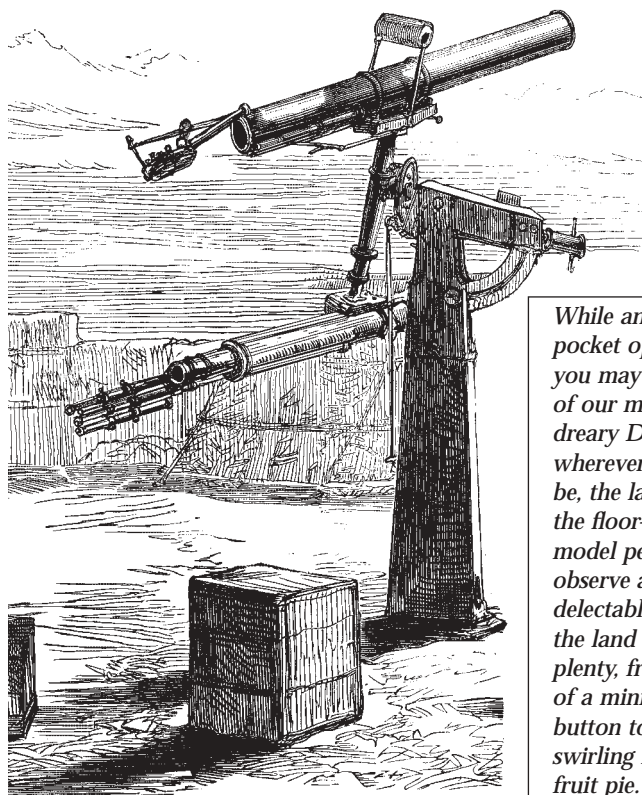
Other doppelgangers, perhaps the PCs' own, will attempt to Persuade others into resigning themselves to a life in the evil dimension. Try to see to it that at least some of the party, or at least their major allies within the conclave, suffer this unhappy fate. Of course, life in the evil dimension is miserable, because no one is doing anything other than staring into their transplanar opticons and moaning about how wonderful life would be on the other side of the mirror.

Which brings us to at least one possible conclusion ...

THE PESKY MATTER OF AN ADDITIONAL REALITY

While alternate universe tales are fun, they have an unfortunate habit of adding an absurd level of complication when they become part of a series' ongoing continuity. ("Our Rhialto is too occupied to assist? Well, let us pop over to the mirror dimension and see if alternate-Rhialto will cooperate with our scheme!") If, after this adventure has concluded, the PCs abuse the mirror dimension as an all-purpose solution to their problems, you may wish to engineer a magical cataclysm¹⁹ which prevents the arch-magicians from traveling from one side to another.

19. A Barrier of Interminable Disjunction might suffice.



While an ordinary pocket opticon ensures you may be reminded of our misery on this dreary Dying Earth wherever you might be, the larger lenses of the floor-mounted model permit you to observe all the delectable details of the land of joy and plenty, from the lustre of a miniscule pearl button to the steam swirling from a hot fruit pie.

Opticon Distribution

Here's one way the PCs can solve the adventure's central problem:²⁰

After one or more PCs is persuaded to accept exile to the evil dimension the others follow, out of a sense of solidarity. Then, with the aid of their sandestins, they can manufacture huge numbers of transplanar opticons²¹ and distribute them

throughout the civilized lands of 'our' Dying Earth. Within days of their distribution, the people of Dying Earth are staring forlornly through their opticons, remarking sadly on how much better things seem in the so-called dimension of evil.

"Dimension of evil? Clearly a misnomer intended to console our unfortunate selves! Anyone looking through this glass can see that it is a boundless land of joy and plenty compared to our own dried-up husk of a world!"

The denizens of the mirror world are

momentarily flummoxed by the sight of their counterparts looking back at them through their own transplanar opticons. After several days, however, they come to bask in their new, unaccustomed status as the objects of envy. They throw down their spyglasses and go off to do all the things they used to only watch: soaking at public baths, organizing smoke-hazed orgies, feasting on luxuriant victuals, and so on.

In short, the mirror dimension becomes the same as the original Dying Earth and the world the PCs came from descends into covetous lassitude. They can then enjoy their positions in the new reality, proceeding as if nothing had happened. Their counterparts, now in control of the conclave in a world of inadequacy and transplanar opticons, curse a Fate which has consigned them to eternal doom and perdition.

Epilogue

When both usurpers and phasms have been safely dealt with, the attention of the conclave will turn inexorably towards Rhialto, and the humiliations and risks his reckless experimentation has rained down upon its membership. Hurtiancz, Gilgad and Vermouliau are among the first to demand an emergency meeting, at which they intend to file harshly punitive claims of compensation against their colleague. The PCs may join in the wrangling, thus ingratiating themselves to whichever faction they decide to align with. Or they may simply wish to retire to the comfort of their own manse, allowing the squabble to proceed without them, as they call for their servants to lay on a suitably sumptuous repast. By such means are the endings to all diverting episodes of narrowly-averted doom celebrated.



We ponder, but do not comment on the fact that the concept of neighbours enervated by envy was brought to you by a Canadian.

20. Don't railroad the players towards it; if they come up with an equally amusing solution, allow that to work, after generating suitable suspense through a series of challenges and reversals.

21. The design is quite simple to replicate, once one comprehends its innovative use of Prohaster's Seventh Principle of Transducement.



❧ Arcana ❧

To succeed in society in the last years of earth it is necessary to appreciate the better things of life. GRASHPOTEL looks deep into the bottom of his wineglass and shares his erudition.

Turgubut's Fatal Statistics

The name of the mage Turgubut is one instantly recognizable to all but the most witless and ill educated¹. In temporal terms he occupies that period of the 20th Aeon during which old Ferghaz, though declining, remained the principal city of Almery. Although the son of a minor grandee of Dai Passant by his own admission, his life was spent in Old Romarth, in the Land of the Falling Wall, where he survived to a respectable two-thousand three-hundred and thirty-seven years.

He was a mage of considerable skill, by assertion a diabolist, but of too cautious a nature to excel in his chosen field. His true competence lay in the collection and presentation of that information pertaining to the successes and failures of others involved in the practice of the magical arts. It is for this that we owe Turgubut a debt, he having collected a body of statistics of singular volume dealing with the risks and consequences of all matters thaumaturgical.

Had he stopped there, his work would doubtless have died with him. We are fortunate that his vanity led him to produce one thousand signed copies of the work, each a volume three ells in height and a half-ell in thickness, bound in the skin of prime buck deodands² and clasped about with iron. In the central boss of each book a fire elemental is bound, flickering as the claps are pulled back, and it is thus that a genuine first edition may be recognized³.

Since Turgubut's demise, the book has been much copied, always with painstaking care. Yet many copies have also been made in which the statistics that form the core of the work are deliberately misrepresented, to the great, but usually brief, consternation of thieves. The *Fatal Statistics* are designed not to be read page by page, but as a reference work. A work enlivened by the fact that Turgubut chose to provide numerous illustrative examples, feeling unable to restrict himself to pure, unadorned data, for which we may be thankful. This choice greatly broadens the interest of the work, and also provides some historical information.

To condense Turgubut's work would be a vain labor, also insulting to his memory and possibly dangerous. Examples may be extracted in order to illustrate the worth of this magnificent tome. Following a chapter of introduction, he devotes himself to what were then called the 'primary spells', all of which are included in the hundred now widely known. A typical example is *Behemoth's Bounty*, on which Turgubut remarks:

Behemoth's Bounty

A simple spell of six pervulsions, designed to provide a substantial feast to the caster and as many as twelve guests. The Bounty is said to have originated towards the end of the seventeenth Aeon among the giant K'lomic people, a fact supported by the large size of the utensils, the conjuration of which is the essence of the third and fourth pervulsions of the spell. From there it appears to have spread rapidly, but with little evolution, and it is listed in the perfected category of Phandaal's Directory. Tyros and gimcracks may safely cast the Bounty, a simple spell that in truth is little more than a reliable cantrip. Nevertheless, research shows that such people fail to cast the Bounty successfully a full

1. Such individuals do not buy this publication anyway, although some answering that description have been seen borrowing the copies of their more erudite and sagacious friends.

2. The production of these volumes inflicted severe damage on the population of deodands in the Old Romarth area from which it took them several centuries to recover.

3. Scorch marks are also regarded as a label of authenticity. These seem to have come from impertinent librarians lighting their pipes off the tome.

✿ Grashpotel's Arcana: Turgubut's *Fatal Statistics* ✿

half of the time, generally due to incorrect stresses on the pervulsions, notably the fifth.

Of eight hundred and thirteen instances of the spell being cast by those not qualified for the exalted title of Magician, I made the following analysis:

Among the failures ...

137 instances: nothing whatever happened, the caster having mangled the pervulsions so badly as to fail to impinge upon the sensorium of a madling.

85 instances: the feast appeared but in an advanced state of decay, the first, or stabilizing, pervulsion having been improperly realized. It is uncertain why madling do this, although the most probable theory holds that such pranks equate with their sense of humor.

51 instances: a feast appeared of foodstuffs inimitable to the human digestion, again due to an error of the first pervulsion and the malice of madling. Tree bark, stones, cobweb, raw pelgrane wing, fecal matter and a green gelatinous substance of unknown origin have all been reported, invariably displayed to extravagant perfection.

28 instances: no table or supporting structure was provided and the feast fell to the ground to become soiled, an error that can only be blamed on the profound stupidity of the caster.

71 instances: the feast appeared, but briefly, vanishing before the casters and associates could partake. In these instances there would appear to be an error in the sixth, or fixative, pervulsion.

35 instances: the spell failed for more specific reasons. These include three instances of groups of large gentlemen in flamboyant dress, presumably K'lomic dignitaries, appearing seated around the feast. Other cases which must be considered failures include those twelve instances when the spell has been evoked in a pastoral or sylvan setting and the smell of the food has drawn in erbs, hoon or other dire beasts.

and among the successes ...

94 instances: the feast appeared, but without the accompanying utensils. This may be easily replicated by omitting the second and third pervulsions, although there is little to be gained by this exercise.

40 instances: the feast proved to be composed of a single foodstuff. For some unknown reason this is most often liver of hoon basted in devil's pomatum, a dish perhaps too rich for consumption in large quantities or without a suitable staple. Plain bread has also been known to appear, in enormous quantity, a variant sub-referenced in Phandaal's Directory as the Baker's Bounty.

161 instances: the feast appeared as it should, an abundance of large platters piled high with plain but nutritive foodstuffs, assorted pies, roasted vegetables, cold meats, boiled roots, grains and invariably great quantities of soup.

87 instances: a feast of superior extent has appeared, sometimes five times the normal size. Unfortunately whatever error causes this does not relate to the utensils provided, and much of the excess food is inevitably spilt.

13 instances: a superior version of the feast appeared, with delicacy upon delicacy laid out to provide a truly sumptuous repast. Alas but no caster has managed to record the errors which cause this variation. Certainly they are subtle, and one authority suggests the feat is only possible to those who lisp during the fifth pervulsion.



Behemoth's Bounty.

❧ Grashpotel's Arcana: Turgubut's *Fatal Statistics* ❧

11 instances: bizarre, but undeniably successful results have been achieved. These include feasts displaying the cuisine of ancient empires and remote regions, and, as a final warning note to amateurs, the case of the student mage Prztjil, who managed to conjure the entire faculty of his college to the table, stuffed, roasted and served on a bed of crisp garden vegetables."

Thus Turgubut ends his most enlightening comments on the casting of *Behemoth's Bounty* by novices. He goes on to discuss its handling by those of greater skill and remarks on the low incidence of fatality associated with the spell. This is by no means always the case. Each of the primary spells is considered, and most are illustrated by fatal error, at least when cast by those of imperfect skill. Many instances are recorded of the *Excellent Prismatic Spray*, a simple enough spell but one often required in hurried circumstances, becoming turned in on the caster, often with fatal results. In his summary of the chapter, he notes that in as many as one instance in three of miscasting the result is for the spell to be turned on the caster. This observation he equates with the mordant humor of madling. Such instances are often disastrous, but may be salutary or even droll, at least from the point of view of the observer. Cases in point include the student who thought for a prank to use the *Enchantment of Another's Face* to impose the features of an asm on an unpopular colleague. Not only did he signalize himself rather than the intended butt of the joke, but the asm was so enraged by what it considered a somewhat cavalier misappropriation that it tore its way free of its cage and slew the student.

Secondary spells, the subject of Chapter Three, he defines as those which must be impinged on the sensorium of a full sandestin rather than a madling, although this is not a certain definition. Broadly, they include those of ten or more pervulsions, such as *The Charm of Forlorn Encystment*, the *Instantaneous Galvanic Thrust* and *Temporal Projection*. As might be expected, errors are both more frequent and more varied in type. In such cases he estimates that disaster is likely to overtake a tyro one time in three and that they will achieve success only one time in three. An interesting case in point is THE SPELL OF TEMPORAL STASIS, on which Turgubut remarks:

"the spell is not one to be undertaken lightly, and those who feel it is a safe choice for experimentation are sadly mistaken, often fatally mistaken. The spell does not slow down time, as is often mistakenly believed, but speeds up the personal time of the caster. Objects in contact with the caster are also placed within the fast frame of temporal reference, allowing alteration of the surrounding environment. This may seem simple, but for proper use thirteen pervulsions must be encompassed exactly, while many errors are possible. Experienced mages are aware of this, and seldom use it, while those greater mages with the skill to control sandestin prefer to give their creature a direct command rather than use the spell. I could discover only three-hundred and seventy-two instances of this spell being attempted by those lacking the full magisterial status, and the resulting statistics provide a most salutary lesson:

135 instances: the effect was fatal, for a wide variety of reasons. The commonest of these (94 instances) appears to relate to the final, fixative pervulsion. If this is not properly encompassed, the caster becomes detached from the spatial reference relative to the rest of the universe as well as the temporal. The effect is to disjoin them from the motion of the planet and indeed the solar system, resulting in rapid acceleration on a complex vector. None are known to have survived this experience, while most strike walls or other solid objects within some fractions of a second of casting the spell. The consequences are somewhat unpleasant for all concerned. In other cases they simply disappear, never to be seen again (27 instances). This has been suggested as an error of the fourth pervulsion resulting in their relative temporal speed becoming infinite. From their perspective, the universe must simply wink out of existence around them.

116 instances: the spell failed to work correctly but the effect was not fatal or not immediately fatal. In the majority of such cases nothing whatsoever happened (73 instances). Frequently (29 instances) the spell worked but time was only slowed marginally, allowing those around to observe the caster's intentions. The result was invariably acrimonious debate, in four instances resulting in the death of the caster. In ten instances the caster managed to freeze themselves, a condition in which eight remained until freed by mages able to command sandestin. The other two, both handsome young men, were

✿ Grashpotel's Arcana: Turgubut's *Fatal Statistics* ✿

utilized as statues before the manse of the mage Laevalume.

121 instances: the spell worked, to great or lesser extent. In 59 instances the spell appears to have functioned correctly in all important particulars. As the spell must be maintained by the concentration of the caster, we often find it failing before being used to sensible effect (43 instances). In some cases (14 instances) the spell worked but those on whom it was inflicted retained an exact memory of events during the stasis, an aberration widely blamed on sandestin. Also included in this category must be the late Hywalt Precjik, who used the spell to copy a colleague's parchment on which was inscribed Llorio's Long Path of Indigo Velvet. So delighted was he by his success that when he dissolved the stasis he was discovered in flowing robes of indigo velvet, to the dramatic indignation of his host."

On which note Turgubut concludes his remarks before going on to discuss the use of the spell by mages, for whom it remains an endeavor fraught with risk. Other interesting examples from this chapter include the misuse of the *Charm of Forlorn Encystment*. It appears that approximately one incompetent in six has encysted themselves, while the spell is reversed almost as often, resulting in the disencystment of all those individuals within a mile's radius. The retrotropic spells, those which clear or reverse the effects of magic, are of particular interest. The application of the Third Retrotropic in order to estimate the level of demon taint in an object by the release of imps also causes reversion in all magically enhanced living beings within hearing range. I myself have done this, when in the company of Carthos of Sferre and a Cloud Island catamite of whom he had become enamored. The catamite proved inhuman, reverting to a curious black hybrid of pelgrane and man, much to my alarm, the astonishment of Carthos, and the yet greater astonishment of the catamite himself, who had no idea of his ancestry.

The fourth chapter of Turgubut's work deals with the calling and binding of beasts, a skill more widely practiced during the eighteenth to twentieth aeons than it is today. As even the dullest bumpkin knows, calling is a simple tripervulsive spell, consisting of announcement, signalisation⁴ and fixation. At its most basic, this is little more than a complex cantrip, and may be used for such mundane and rustic tasks as the calling of farlocks or swine. Despite this Turgubut records errors, such as the student who attempted to call a single wild piglet from the forest in order that he might take his evening repast. Due to a failure of signalisation he was trampled, gored and bitten to death by a maddened herd of over three thousand wild boar.

Only when dealing with dire beasts is binding necessary. This is a far greater skill, requiring exact control of species-specific spells of four to nine pervulsions. The dire beast most frequently called is the pelgrane, the intelligence and flying ability of which make it ideal for



As an exercise students are advised to consider under which circumstances (if any) it would be appropriate to summon over three thousand wild boar.

⁴ Wrongly called 'singlisation' by some students, although the term does adequately describe the effect.

purposes of observation. The species is highly dangerous, and must always be bound with a spell of eight pervulsions. Here then, are Turgubut's remarks on the calling and binding of the pelgrane:

"It is to the mage Trahinbult that we are indebted for the large volume of data available on the summoning and binding of the pelgrane. It was he who introduced to the Green and Purple College the practice of a tenth year exam for all students. This was a simple matter. In the morning he, (or his successors, for the practice lasted for over an epoch), would oblige the students to demonstrate their competence by producing a tractable pelgrane. Thus the students could easily be divided into five categories, according to intelligence and diligence.

Those students who declined the test altogether were graded 'inept' and driven from the college while being pelted with dung. Some three students in twenty chose this option.

Those who attempted to summon a beast but failed were graded 'dullard' and dismissed that they might find employment better suited to their abilities. This accounted for some five students in twenty.

Those, the majority, who summoned a beast but failed to bind it were graded 'vapid' or more frequently 'dead'. (Those few who overcame the beast by strength were then admitted to the ranks of the college porters, while those very few who overcame the beast by force of pure reasoning were allowed to continue their studies.)

Those who declined the test by reason of extreme danger but who proved their skill by calling a less ferocious creature were graded 'judicious' and allowed to continue their studies. Some four students in twenty fell into this category.

Those who completed the task as requested, roughly one student in twenty, were graded 'sagacious' and accelerated to the rank of Mage Apprentice.

Occasionally an aberrance occurred. Of the 72,637 students recorded as having attempted the test, twelve made the classic failure of signalisation and drew in every pelgrane within effective radius of the spell. Eleven of these died, the twelfth was the great Morreion, who bound all fifty-six pelgrane in a display that earned him the awe of his fellow students and the enmity of the faculty. A lone, instructive and final case was the student Dystveil, who, with a double spell of three and eight pervulsions, managed to draw in forty-two pelgranes, two-hundred and sixty assorted erbs, hoons and deodands,



The great Morreion accepts the grudging admiration of the faculty members who witnessed his summoning and binding of fifty-six pelgrane.

❧ Grashpotel's Arcana: Turgubut's *Fatal Statistics* ❧

one-hundred and forty-four unspecified dire beasts, nine-thousand eight-hundred and twenty-seven other creatures including seventy-three madlings, five sandestins, three demons and the daihak Lorvutuk. Thus ended the Green and Purple College⁵.

This last observation is, of course, open to debate. Many authorities list the Green and Purple College as having collapsed in internecine strife. Still, Turgubut had this sort of data collected by the bifaulgulate sandestin Osherl, now bound to Lord Ildefonse the Preceptor, and so it is hard to dispute his findings. As the chapter continues, Turgubut lists the results of calling all the major dire beasts currently extant and several that have since died out. It would be fitting to conclude that the chapter carries a basic moral: if you cannot bind, then do not call.

Chapter Five covers what is undoubtedly the most important area for all those aspiring to the upper echelons of magedom, the summoning and binding of madlings and sandestins. Again the summoning is the simpler part of the exercise, and again, summoning without the ability to bind is best avoided, being, in this case, almost invariably fatal. Turgubut also discusses the summoning and binding of daihak, an area in which even Great Phandaal moved with caution. Let us consider Turgubut's remarks on the summoning and binding of madlings:

"Madling, those lesser sandestin not associated with the overworld La, are the creatures most commonly used for all but the simplest magical effect. They are vastly more potent than elementals, yet may be controlled with reference to the Great Name and without a chug, removing many of the barriers which make the control of full sandestin so fraught. Madling are also more tractable, and my researches show that for every mage using one or more sandestin, some 150 have used madling and not progressed. In contrast, a yet more dramatic ratio exists between the several hundred recorded mages who have successfully utilized sandestin across history, and Phandaal, the first Amberlin and Dibarcas Maior, which three alone dared to employ the forces of the lesser daihak. Nevertheless, the summoning of madling is a matter to be approached with caution, and a direct correlation exists between the skill and experience of the summoning mage and their success. This matter is best expressed in tabular form, showing those fractions expressing the consequences of the total number of attempted madling summonings available to my research:

| <i>Ability/ Outcome</i> | <i>Horrid Death</i> | <i>Punished by Madling</i> | <i>No Manifestation</i> | <i>Brief Manifestation for one command</i> | <i>Recalcitrant Madling held</i> | <i>Loyal Madling held</i> |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Buffoon</i> | <i>76/114</i> | <i>21/114</i> | <i>17/114</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>0</i> |
| <i>Tyro</i> | <i>143/291</i> | <i>53/291</i> | <i>45/291</i> | <i>50/291</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>0</i> |
| <i>Student</i> | <i>1,322/3,987</i> | <i>666/3,987</i> | <i>592/3,987</i> | <i>701/3,987</i> | <i>706/3,987</i> | <i>0</i> |
| <i>Mage</i> | <i>47/1,677</i> | <i>51/1,677</i> | <i>40/1,677</i> | <i>468/1,677</i> | <i>532/1,677</i> | <i>539/1,677</i> |
| <i>Arch-Mage</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>11/504</i> | <i>7/504</i> | <i>114/504</i> | <i>193/504</i> | <i>179/504</i> |
| <i>Great Mage</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>2/43</i> | <i>9/43</i> | <i>11/43</i> | <i>21/43</i> |

Before considering summoning, those of low competence should consider some of the consequences of failure. Ulcerous carbuncles, skin of peculiar hue, an inability to close one's mouth, are the least of the pranks played by madling. The creatures resent being bound to service and make full play of their perverse humor, inevitably to the disadvantage of the hapless summoner. Good taste forbids me from describing some of the more outlandish punishments inflicted, let alone some of the bizarre deaths achieved by this technique."

Such figures should strike fear into the most optimistic of students, yet even now, aeons after the high magic of Grand Motholam, with all but a trifle of humanity's experience behind us, students and those of lesser competence persist in attempting the summoning of other world beings. Yet if the risks of attempting to

⁵ A persistent legend states that Dystveil, almost alone among the college, survived this encounter and in later life ran a much-frequented ale house in Val Ombrio.

✿ Grashpotel's Arcana: Turgubut's *Fatal Statistics* ✿

control a mere madling seem high, they are placed firmly in perspective by Turgubut's statistics for attempted summoning of sandestins. Here, he places all those below the rank of mage in a single class, noting only that none have ever successfully bound a sandestin to their will and that in fully 108 instances of the 112 known attempts in which a sandestin has appeared at all, the summoner has lost their life. Mages fare little better, although most at least possess the knowledge that it is necessary to bind a chug before attempting a sandestin. Of the 13 foolish enough to try, 11 are either dead as a result and must dance the plains of La for all eternity, while two survived in regrettably altered form. Even among arch-mages some one in forty attempts result in disaster, while the process of summoning a chug carries a similar risk. His statistics on the summoning of daihak show that it is quite simply best avoided. Only with intensive research, necessary to bind the individual chug which can best control the sandestin one intends to summon, can the whole process be regarded as feasible if not safe.

In his sixth chapter, Turgubut discusses interactions with other world beings other than merely summoning them. These include such actions as creating junctions with demon realms, using under- and over-world beings as agents in conflict, bargaining with daihak and even the egress into realms such as La and Grey Dene. Again, these are adventures fraught with risk, which may be illustrated by the figures for attempted abstraction of specific ghosts from demon realms by the process of summoning another demon and abstracting the ghost while the demons are engaged in conflict.

"A total of seven-hundred and thirteen mages and arch-mages have attempted this feat, of whom:

312 instances: they were torn apart

189 instances: immolated

17 instances: forced to dance the double cuppola through all eternity (one whilst reciting Majigan's The Complete Limpid Verses⁶)

127 instances: the mages have not returned from the demon realm and cannot be contacted

11 instances: became conjoined with demons

13 instances: were merged to become the obscene Collective Compository so often cited in demonological articles

10 instances: died in conflict with each other whilst the demons fought (the five witches and five mages mentioned in 'The Regrettable Incident of Llorio's Coterie and the Fivefold Wizards')

18 instances: where magicians, all of Grand Motholam, succeeded through the agency of other lesser daihak. All but three of these were to die a premature death or become insane⁷

16 instances: otherwise unaccounted for"

Since then, the diabolist Shrue and Perrin himself have succeeded in this feat, while a not insignificant number of others have failed. Thus of some 800 attempts we have but 20 successes, with four alone retaining their sanity. Risks are high, as with all aspects of dealing with daihak, both demons and gods. It is here that Turgubut becomes truly indispensable. The diabolist Shrue, one of those few who came through the experience with both life and sanity, assures me that had he read Turgubut first he would never have attempted the feat. A further case in point is that of arch-mage Phaeton, who attempted the binding of the great god Lah by the mechanism of a gigantic chug. Phaeton failed and died, while his associates live a life trembling fear lest they draw the attention of the god to themselves.

The seventh chapter of Turgubut is somewhat lighter reading, discussing, as it does, the possibilities for error in the manufacture of magical artifacts and of artifacts by magical means. He is also among many who have pointed out that objects of magical creation, be they foodstuffs, wines, music, companions for lewd vagary or any other specific, invariably fail to provide the satisfaction to be obtained from the genuine article.

6. It is not known why the demon in question felt the extra punishment was necessary. Rumours that the demon merely liked poetry have been dismissed on the grounds that in this case a work by Majigan would not have been chosen.

7. Some authorities feel that the onset of insanity was prior to making the attempt and indeed point out that making the attempt could be taken as proof of insanity.

❧ Grashpotel's Arcana: Turgubut's *Fatal Statistics* ❧

I quote Turgubut:

"The Mage Choveligin, seeking to impress the local nobility, caused to be created a great banquet, of mellow wine and high-status food, all of this of magical origin and served by sylphs, naked beneath gowns of green gossamer. The nobles duly partook, eating, drinking and conversing with polite restraint, and taking their leave before the middle hour of the night. Choveligin, somewhat nonplussed, chanced to stroll out onto his balcony. Here he observed, in the village square below his manse, the self-same nobles downing flagons of strong ale, devouring hot roast haunch of farlock cut from the spit and cavorting with a number of local maidens. Disgusted, Choveligin effected a transformation upon the nobles and took himself into retreat."

This passage also relates to Turgubut's eighth chapter, which contains few statistics and is in large part a commentary on the poor wisdom of those mages who have sought to aid the populace. His opinion, which I can only share, is that ingratitude is the rule, outright hostility not uncommon, and that even when faced with an attitude appropriately humble and obsequious, the wise mage keeps his property close about him and a selection of potent spells at his fingertips. Turgubut then concludes with a summary of perhaps unnecessary length, which I shall not trouble to discuss.

To conclude myself, Turgubut's death must serve as a lesson to all statisticians, and indeed, all who seek to use statistics. Using his own data, he calculated that a mage of his ability should be able to bind six pelgrane to his will simultaneously. He also calculated that this number would provide sufficient lift to take him aloft in a basket, to the comprehensive astonishment of his contemporaries. In all this he was correct, forgetting only that once aloft, further pelgrane would be sure to be drawn to the contrivance. These he proved unable to control.



Pride comes before a fall: the ability and willingness to plan every detail of an experiment are characteristic of those who will survive the exercise. Statistics serve to remind both students and survivors that failure may exact a higher price than success.

Applying Turgubut's Fatal Statistics to the Game

GMs may use this article to add color and a Vancian feel to play, while the statistics given relate to the rules and if necessary can be used. Note that most of the figures given express probabilities of approximate sixths, or of thirty-sixths if a re-roll is applicable. It should also give them some ideas as to just what fate they should inflict on the hapless character who has somehow achieved a Dismal Failure when rolling to cast a spell. For the purposes of play, except in extreme cases it is perhaps harsh to merely kill the character, especially when such imaginative and potentially interesting alternatives have been explored.

Players may also benefit.

1: Having read this article allows one extra Pedantry point. Owning a genuine copy of Turgubut allows two extra Pedantry points, or three for a first edition. Copies may be obtained during play at the GM's discretion.

2: Quoting Turgubut, correctly or not, at those about to undertake any magic related roll forces them to accept a levy of 1 on the roll. Unless they can quote back, in which case the effect is negated. It may well be that the characters do not have their copies with them. They may either make a Pedantry roll to remember the appropriate quotation, or a Persuade/Rebuff roll to convince their opponent that they have.

False copies of the Fatal Statistics may crop up at the GMs discretion. Owning a false copy still adds two Pedantry points, but all magic-related rolls after it is acquired must be taken at a levy of 1 until the PC figures out what is happening.



Grashpotel, more formally Iunutharis Grashpotel, Sage, Demi-Inferator of the Syncretic Symposium etc. Lectures at the Scholasticarium and is considered an expert on hybrids, half men, beasts of the wastes and their culinary preparation.

Also known as Peter Freeman, he is acclaimed for his knowledge of and fondness for wine. His family insists that actuarial propensities are merely a phase in his personal development and point to his interests in wine and fine literature as evidence that he remains, at heart, a decent and outgoing person.

THE SCHOLASTICARIUM

Persons of quality desirous of advancing their education are invited to present themselves to Amserl Bassouc, admissions porter and battles overseer anytime during the next few days to enroll in this establishment. As well as the usual courses, there will be a series of lectures from persons of note over the coming week. These include:

Perrin: Literate Tradesmen and The Death of Punctuation

Mistress Flook: The demon consort and its place in post-Kang Iconography

Volune: The role of fan languages in the falling birthrate among noble families in Ferghaz

Grashpotel: The degeneration of the culinary arts among the inhabitants of the Upper Scaum

Dafis: Kastin's remarkable work *Viticulture under the lash*

Myra: The Natural and Un-natural Geography of the Lower Scaum Valley

Already the more commercially aware will have noted the obvious advantages to be gained by publicising one's business in this space. Not only are we willing to enhance the viability of established businesses by generously making space available at a sum barely more than nominal, we even have a policy of allowing all and sundry to place small advertisements. These are charged at 20 pence per word, minimum charge £3. Discounts are available for those worded in a suitably Vancian fashion. For small ads, please contact the editor direct. Clients desiring larger advertisements are requested to contact Pelgrane Press at the address in the Editorial.

✿ Tweaks ✿

Sasha Bilton & Phil Masters

‘Come along with us; you have an unconvincing manner.’

This article is devoted to a new type of advantage you can give your character: the TWEAK. The tweak is an invention of a certain Robin D. Laws whose name be well be familiar to the more erudite among our readership. Many more of these Tweaks are to found in the forthcoming Pelgrane Press Title *Cugel's Compendium of Indispensable Advantages*.

Although we don't recommend it for beginning players, experienced ones can add tweaks during character creation, at a cost of one-third of a Creation point per tweak, or 1 point for Magical tweaks. You are permitted to take tweaks only if you agree not to increase the GM's information burden. You must be able to remind the GM what your tweak does before using it. As soon as you ask her, "What does Volcanic Umbrage do again?", you permanently lose the tweak, without regaining the points you spent on it. If the GM asks what a tweak does, you must have the answer readily to hand¹.

A TWEAK is an add-on to an existing ability, allowing you special benefits in a particular situation. You must have at least 3 points in the pertinent ability before you can buy a tweak for it. A tweak acquired during play costs 1 Improvement point. Magical tweaks, those using the Magic ability, cost double and require at least 6 points in the correct Magical style as a pre-requisite.

Each tweak explanation contains a minimum of three entries: Situation, Description, and Benefit. Situation tells you when the tweak applies, using few, if any, game system references. In the Description, we tell you what your character does when you activate the tweak. The Benefit explains the rules to use when you bring your tweak into play. You are never obligated to use a tweak just because its governing situation has reared its head; you may always conserve your ability points for later use. Finally your GM may wisely rule that you may only use a tweak once per gaming session².

Appraisal

"Our original tariff is moot."

Situation: You have performed a task and would see a greater reward.

Description: By presenting a list, either written or verbal, of broken tools, misplaced workmen, angry locals, unpleasant halfmen and poor weather you gain the sympathy of your patron and exact a greater toll for your services.

Benefit: For each successful Appraisal and Persuade roll you make, add ten percent to your fee. Dismal Failure identifies flaws in your work and your fee is reduced by a like amount.

You are allowed one successful roll for Appraisal and one for Persuade, re-rolling failures as appropriate. An Illustrious Success on either of these rolls adds twenty five percent to your fee.

Concealment

"The item you require is momentarily mislaid."

Situation: An everyday item of small size is urgently required, but you currently do not have it on your person.

Description: Given that you have previously visited your current location, and that you are an inveterate hoarder, you may well have hidden away the said item for safekeeping.

1. Beware of enhancing the tweak's power under these circumstances. While the GM may well have forgotten its finer points, you may rest assured that the other players will remember its disadvantages.

2. Although they may well be enticed to allow a second use should it appear artistically essential or even amusing.

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Benefit: On a successful Concealment roll, you find the item you require hidden away on a mantelpiece, behind a bed or down the back of a couch. The item will not have a value any higher than your current Concealment rating expressed in terces and is never hard currency, nor is it readily disposable for ready money.

Further benefit. For twice the cost one can have one's backpack included in the place where you may have hoarded the item. In this case the item may not be larger than could be readily concealed in a clenched fist.

Driving

"Follow that floating bed with vigorous dispatch!"

Situation: You seek to shadow another vehicle.

Description: Becoming totally focused on following the object of your interest, you will not lose the trail no matter what occurs.

Benefit: You gain a boon of 1 point to your Driving and Perception rolls when following another vehicle. However should you fail, you find yourself completely lost.

Etiquette

Social chameleon

Situation: Upon arrival at a new port of call, you seek to master the rituals and customs of the locals with all haste.

Description: When you come across a society you have no knowledge of, you may instantly adapt to any new regime of etiquette by ignorant emulation and conniving self-abasement.

Benefit: You may spend Persuade points to bolster your Etiquette rolls.

Health

"It is a mere scratch, madam."

Situation: You have gained a second injury, but wish to remain standing.

Description: By applying a reserve of physical effort you seek to enliven your good standing amongst those about you by resisting the easy option of lying on the floor and begging for mercy.³

Benefit: By spending two health points from your pool, you may remain hurt on two wounds, rather than falling down. A third wound will, of course, kill you.

Imposture

The Imitation of Useful Verbal Mannerisms

Situation: You find that your accustomed manner of debate or dispute is sadly ineffective in current circumstances.

Description: Adopting a different manner of debate, drawn from your observations of others or the acts you sometimes create, you press your point in what you hope will be a more effective way.

Benefit: For the expenditure of 4 Imposture points, you may act exactly as though your preferred style of Persuasion or Rebuff was something other than is written on your character sheet, for the duration of one contest. For example, a normally Glib individual may effectively become Intimidating, or a normally Penetrating thinker may temporarily appear usefully Lawyerly. Your effective rating in this alternate style will be 2 less than your rating in your normal primary style, or equal to your rating in Imposture,⁴ whichever is less.

This is useful to negate the advantage of an opponent whose own style trumps one's own, to trump their style, or to gain the secondary benefits of another style. In the last case, remember that the effects do only

3. This Tweak is common among deodand, half men and similar creatures, especially those with the wit to realise pleas for mercy are likely to go unheeded.

4. Your rating in Imposture before you spent the four points necessary to use the Tweak.

✿ Tweaks ✿

last as long as the current contest, although if another contest follows immediately after, they may be carried over by expenditure of another 4 points.

Magic (Insightful)

"In past aeons the answer was common knowledge."

Situation: You seek to discover mysteries of the past, without journeying there yourself.

Description: By entering a trance, clearly of mystical nature, you open yourself up to the local population of ghosts and ghosts of ghosts. With luck, one of these spirits will furnish you with an answer to a question that you have been unable to solve yourself.

Benefit: After 10 minutes of complete concentration, you put your question, which must be about an event that took place upon the spot you stand and in the dim past, to ghosts of that era. Entering the trance costs two magic points, and you find the correct ghost only on a successful magic roll.

Dismal Failures can be quite horrific and of course ghosts have been known to lie.

Magic (Forceful)

Instruct the minor Elementals

Situation: A trifling effect is required, yet a cantrip is not applicable.

Description: Once successfully controlled, minor Elementals maybe given a single command of a simple, physical nature. A human with the correct tools could achieve this command. Such Elementals will never interfere with other living beings or magical entities.

Benefits: After expending two magical points and achieving a successful magic roll, you instruct the Elementals. They may be given such tasks as 'Light all the candles in this room', 'Lock all the doors in my manse', 'Fetch me a bowl of soup', 'Clean the chimney' and so on.

Dismal Failure indicates the elementals mistook your instructions and performed the opposite.

Persuasion (Forthright)

"Is That Your Spear, or Do You Hide Behind it from Small Children?"

Situation: You are confronted by one or more opponents, and physical violence is clearly unavoidable. You are confident enough of your chances, but would feel better if you could be sure that your opponents would remain innocent of much tactical subtlety.

Description: You fix your leading opponent with a glance, and issue a remark of brutal contempt. Hopefully, this provokes him to anger, which the wise warrior avoids.

Benefit: For the expenditure of 1 Persuasion (Forthright) point, you may engage your intended victim in a contest of Persuade against Rebuff, with no rerolls permitted on either side. If you win the contest, your opponent is enraged, and will charge you at maximum speed. If he has Ferocity as a style of attack (preferred or secondary), he must use it; otherwise, he suffers a levy of 2 to all his defense rolls for the first three attacks you make. You would be well advised to win the ensuing combat, as you are unlikely ever to make a friend of this person.

Scuttlebutt

"You should seek out my brother-in-law."

Situation: You require the particular services of another but cannot bring to mind someone suitable.

Description: As a last resort you decide to re-acquaint yourself with a family member or old friend, who can provide the skills and items you lack. This person is renowned as a slip-shod, work-shy, over-priced scoundrel.⁵

Benefit: If you fail to find someone who can do as you require, you may reverse your fortune. However the quality of work and cost will be unfavorable, further more the GM is likely to add other amusing, for her at least, side effects.

5. We shall draw a veil over what this says about your family and associates.



“... a slip-shod, work-shy, over-priced scoundrel.”

Seduction

“A Precursor of Our Future Bliss is No Crime.”

Situation: You are attempting to gain the affections of one whose narrow morality frowns upon the piquant joys of a relationship which does not endure long enough to grow stale.

Description: You weave your enticements among hints and actual offers of a longer-term partnership. This suggests that your intentions are, taken in total, honorable on the other person's terms, and any private activities now would merely anticipate the legal formalities of marriage, and hence would be no great sin.

Benefit: Provided that you have assessed the other person's attitudes correctly, you gain a boon of 2 to your use of Seduction. Furthermore, once successful, you need make no further effort to retain the interest of the other person for at least a week.

Unfortunately, the victim of your trickery will not forget that you have made a promise, whether explicit or strongly implicit, and will become increasingly importunate as time goes by, demanding timetables and perhaps making arrangements for ceremonies⁶. After one week, as you continue to disregard such matters, they may make an uncontested Rebuff roll (but will always accept the initial result without spending points to reroll). If successful, they will become forceful and demand that you make good on your promises; on an Illustrious Success, they will

recognize your true nature, grow cynical (perhaps even violent). and are quite likely to seek revenge. Likewise, should you depart the neighborhood, they will respond as the victim of vile abuse, and unless inclined to suicide, will spread fervent complaints about you and perhaps seek physical retribution, personally or through hired thugs or burly blood relations, if possible. Not surprisingly, this trick rarely works twice on the same person, or on two people who are acquainted with each other.

“You are attempting to gain the affections of one whose narrow morality frowns upon the piquant joys of a relationship which does not endure long enough to grow stale”

“Kiss Me Today, for Tomorrow I May Be Dying in Some Dismal Mire.”

Situation: You wish to propose erotic dalliance to an individual whose tastes run, if anything, excessively to the romantic.

Description: You present yourself as a true, flamboyant adventurer, here today, battling monstrosities or striding across trackless wastes tomorrow. Thus, you imply, any hesitation in sharing your bed would be an opportunity wasted, probably forever, and would furthermore constitute a cruel reduction in the joys of a brief and chancy life.

6. Should the person in question be someone of power and authority in their community, these preparations could well be prestigious, very public and involve considerable financial outlay.

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Benefit: Provided that you have assessed the other person's attitudes correctly, you gain a boon of 2 to your use of Seduction. Furthermore, if you are successful, your partner of the night will wave you off in the morning with no more than a flattering tear and a yearning sigh, and none of the usual tiresome complaints at being used and abandoned.

If you do not depart in a style befitting a wandering adventurer, but persist in remaining in a place of safety enjoying the soft pleasures of civilization, then the object of your attentions will rapidly become cynical. Exactly how quickly this happens depends on the GM's judgment of the situation and what might be considered reasonable behavior from an adventurer, but you are unlikely to enjoy the pleasures of their bed for more than two or three nights, after which you may well be publicly derided by your recent enamorata as one whose acts and capacities do not match his claims. Should you leave, but return to the same area after a decent interval (at least a month), you will not necessarily suffer disdain, and the same seductive trick may even work again, but you will be expected to produce full, detailed, and blood-curdling accounts of your escapades in the intervening period.

"Your Morality, While Admirable, Lacks Breadth of Understanding."

Situation: You seek the favors of a person who clearly possesses the natural, healthy desires of a normal mortal, but who may resist your charms through either some specific and pettifogging moral code, or an irrational prejudice against one of your appearance, social class, or supposed nature.

Description: You formulate your seduction, less as an appeal to the senses or emotions (although they too may be stirred with subtle references and hints), than as an exercise in moral and philosophical logic. You ask, with every sign of calm reasonableness, for an explanation of why your potential partner should not engage with you in simple, honest pleasures, and then proceed to show that their reasons are either plainly misguided, or based on an incomplete understanding of the situation.

Benefit: Provided that the other person's resistance to your seduction is indeed based on a coherent moral code or rationalized prejudice, you gain a boon of 1 to your use of Seduction. Furthermore, you may spend Persuasion points on the Seduction attempt, and if your own primary style of Persuasion trumps or is trumped by the other person's primary style of Rebuff, apply levies as for Persuasion attempts. If their resistance has some other basis, such as a distracting practical concerns or a flat dislike of your face, you will suffer automatic failure with no rerolling permitted, and likely be dismissed and even abused as a tiresome and licentious quibbler.

Stealth

Going about one's business

Situation: You are caught in a place you should not be.

Description: By taking on a scampering confidence you seem to fit into role of a purposeful lackey, farmhand or junior under-steward to others of a greater status. You quickly become invisible to these people and may avoid fractious conversation.

Benefit: You gain a boon of 1 to Stealth when wishing to avoid people who have the Stewardship ability.



SOUGHT, news of the whereabouts of Mitelgo, son of Matinno of Rhaun.

Last seen with the numismatic collection of his father last Spring.

Betelk of Rhaun, Seeker of Lost Things, currently of the Inn of Six Winds,
Rhaun, will reward information according to its value

A BOUNTIFUL REWARD Offered for the return of one hat stand. Sentimental value to owner, Cricklelade, who lies inconsolable and bereft of appetite at the heartless theft of his heirloom. His dismayed fellow townsfolk will generously recompense any who find said item. For further details contact the Town Council of Behemboun.

❧ The Timeless Valley ❧

Lynne Hardy

‘Why do squares have more sides than triangles?’

My Dear Relfan

I tell you Relfan, I have never seen so odd a place as that valley. It lies to the east of the Maurenron Mountains where they descend forested to the shores of the Songan Sea. None we questioned about it after our discovery had even heard of it. I myself, despite my many years of travel and experience in these matters, found it only by a fortuitous turn of fate.

We had been heading for those ruins of which I spoke previously when one of the beasts of burden began to exhibit the grossest histrionics. It was obvious that the poor boy in charge of it, despite his claims, had not the merest inkling of how to handle a beast in such high dander and off it went, crashing through the undergrowth with sufficient noise to wake even the most somnolent gaun. As we followed the beast (it was, after all, carrying my favourite armchair¹), we became aware of a certain, well, *orderliness* to the forest. As we descended further through the trees we passed a ruined, though once magnificent, tower hidden now beneath creepers and decay-blooms. You know me, Relfan, my nose began to twitch and the hairs on the nape of my neck were fairly capering in anticipation. I tell you I could virtually smell the presence of the miraculous!

The village was a simple treasure to behold, reminding me of those my maiden aunt used to twitter about as populating her youth. You know the sort — all clean and neat, orderly streets, never a raised voice nor an unkempt child. We thought the place to be deserted at first, but Belpa spotted smoke coming from several of the chimneys. She also spotted people in the fields which covered the valley floor on either side of the gently tumbling stream. A sense of calm gentility pervaded all. I do believe our race's past may once have been as this, my friend.

It was at this point that I first noticed the apparent lack of time it had taken us to reach this hidden idyll. But, as I could perceive no threat, I did not dwell upon the matter. Casting my eye along the valley, I followed the stream until it reached a magnificent wheel of immense proportions after which it tumbled over a cataract. Standing there I could just discern the sea many leagues distant.

Yes, Relfan, a monumental water wheel. It made those of Luurmuuru look like mere child's toys. But that was nothing compared to the tower to which it was attached: rising majestically from the valley floor, it soared above all else, a masterpiece of grace and elegant dimensions, culminating in the most impressive clock-face that I have yet seen. The villagers seemed in no hurry to leave their honest toil, so we searched for that abominable menace which had absconded with my favourite chair. I was delighted when the boy spotted the beast grazing near the great wheel as I now had a legitimate reason to investigate further without overstepping our so far peaceful welcome.

We were greeted with nothing more than a cheery wave and nod from those we passed and I do admit I felt the tensions of our expedition melt away as we strolled by. As the boy dealt with his charge, which thankfully was also in a much gentler frame of mind, I approached the tower steps. The unmistakable sound of whirring cogs of great size met my ears and my nose fair itched to distraction. Ah, Relfan, as you very well know, there is nothing quite like the thrill of discovery!

1. Sakonitz the Hard was not known for the austerity of his expeditions. One floundered in the Twish due to the inopportune way water swamped his overloaded barge. In subsequent expeditions he was more spartan in his approach and no longer took a spare pot-bellied stove to cook on.

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And yet I felt a growing sense of uneasiness as I stood and listened to the mechanism within. Now it sounded not peaceful, but quickened, almost frantic. Turning back to the valley I saw the once unhurried workers scurrying, nay, swarming back to their dwellings. Smoke fairly belched from the chimneys now, and even my own compatriots looked hurried and ill at ease. I cannot recall now just how long that sensation of pressing urgency continued, but rarely have I seen my crew establish camp so quickly or determinedly — not even when that mighty storm near froze us to the Peaks of the Misty Isles. But end it did just as the cogs resumed a steadier hum.

Ashamed though I am to admit it, I jumped when the tower door opened behind me. A small man, meticulous in his motion, eyed me steadily then, shuffling forward, shook me firmly by the hand. He announced that I should call him Horologis and that he would be most grateful if I should join him in his manse for a companionable drink and a bite of supper. With such a charmingly quaint invitation, how could I refuse?

Ah, dear Relfan, it was then that I truly wished you had been there with me. The tower itself was not the least bit as graceful inside as it was without. Giant cogs and massive spindles, all powered by the wheel and its attendant gears, jostled for space within those walls. Perhaps I sound too harsh: there was a beauty there, but a hard, shiny, metallic beauty such as all clockwork possesses. Used to the faded poetry of ruins, my breath was truly snatched away by the sheer raw energy of the place. As we ascended the stairs, which wove in and out of the mechanism in a most alarming fashion, I caught glimpses of strange retorts and weird devices held on pivots above many of the cogs.

Horologis noticed my interest and explained that these devices were the work of a lifetime dedicated to research of the most serious nature. It was his quest to investigate the movement of time from the smallest fraction of a second to the passage of aeons. I must have looked dumb-founded (which I find hard to believe) for he patted my arm in the kindly manner reserved usually for the infirm or infantile, then proceeded to

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demonstrate in great detail the workings of a device he called his 'Static Temporexis Instigator'.

The instrument, which resembled nothing so much as the hideous vat-grown offspring of a glassbell plant and a brass candelabrum, was ratcheted into position over one of the larger cogs. As its teeth contacted those of the device that odd sensation of dislocation returned. The cog slowed and I felt an unnerving calm descend over me. I could almost swear to having seen the very particles of the air coalesce before my eyes as time itself slowed. I feared time had ended and indeed it felt an eternity before the old man pulled on the lever that released the cog from its servitude. I had always loathed the platitude concerning time washing over one, but my friend I'm afraid to say that it most definitely does so.

As we dined on Songan sweet tea and martle² biscuit cake, Horologis explained further (and at what seemed to be great length, no cogs involved) about his work. He had been apprenticed when young to the mage Darabellum, who had constructed this tower to aid him in his research into time. Although he had never stated it, Horologis believed that Darabellum had sought to avert our impending doom through his work. It was a goal towards which my current host also laboured. I admired his sentiments and was impressed by his works, but nothing I saw or was told convinced me that this gentle old man held the key to a prolonged and glorious future.



I am not sure how long we stayed there in that timeless valley. I doubt anyone truly knows how long it has existed in its current form, even Horologis himself. Do not mistake me, I was not sorry to continue my journey onwards but during those moments when the mechanism of that great wonder moved barely at all there was a sense of genuine peace that I do regret leaving.

The only other thing of note, Relfan, which I cannot yet find a satisfactory explanation for, is the sight that greeted my eyes as we left the valley. Anxious to try out your delightful variation on the Periapt of All-Seeing, I raised the amulet and positioned it as instructed. And what do you think it revealed? I'll tell you — cogs! The entire valley is filled with cogs, all interconnected and all driven, from the smallest to the largest, from that tower. What enchantment brought them about, I am at a loss to say, but there they are in their thousands. I doubt I will ever forget the sight of them, working in time to the ticking of that great clock. One day Relfan, if there truly is time left to allow it, I hope you get to see that place.

Sakenity the Adamantine



Background

The clock tower was constructed nearly six hundred years ago by the mage Darabellum in a secluded valley in order to minimise any outside interference with his experiments. It controls time within the valley by a variety of enchantments that have, effectively, been mechanised. The water wheel powers all of these enchantments. Fitting the various devices to the cogs alters the gearing, speeding up and slowing down the mechanism depending on what has been attached and therefore speeding up and slowing down time. Darabellum worked hard trying to find ways to prolong time and control its passage but knew he wouldn't live long enough to finish the work himself. He had already constructed the villagers to fend for him and now he created Horologis to take over his works. Unfortunately, a flaw in Horologis' construction means that instead of continuing Darabellum's work, he merely repeats it.

All of the notes for Darabellum's work are in the clock tower hidden among the mechanism. These are the schematics for turning all the commonly known time spells into clockwork mechanisms, which could be miniaturised if given to an expert watch-maker. Several unfinished, highly experimental pieces are to be found on workbenches in various precarious positions throughout the tower. There are also grimoires containing the time spells, although they are well hidden. Horologis himself doesn't use them, but he is aware of their importance to his former master and has a large sentimental attachment to everything in the tower.

2. Readers are advised to avoid confusing martle seeds with mantle seeds as the latter are renowned for their potent laxative properties.

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Of course, investigating the watchtower should lead to some interesting encounters with a variety of grim but ingenious clockwork traps that result in much injury but no pecuniary gain!

Horologis and all of the inhabitants of the valley are in fact clockwork, although they themselves have no idea of this. This will not be automatically obvious to any observer, as Darabellum was a skilled craftsman with access to detailed creation notes from some of the finest mages of the time. If any of the inhabitants are 'injured' Horologis will 'heal' them. To an outsider this will appear as 'broken' and 'repair', but they know nothing else and therefore see nothing unusual in this. They would be highly surprised to see an outsider's idea of hurt.

Injury to the inhabitants is potentially one of the few ways an outsider would realise that there is anything strange occurring in the valley (besides the time alterations). Horologis is not as skilled as Darabellum and although he can repair most damage caused, problems can arise. Major damage, caused for example by crushing injuries, can only be patched as he lacks the necessary skills to fabricate the most delicate new parts required. This can lead to an apparently pointless repetitive behaviour in the automata as they try to carry out their programmed tasks, but no longer have the full capacity to do so. There may well be an inhabitant or two out in the fields attempting to wield a scythe with tragically comic results. Any head injuries result in similar problems. Horologis also cannot improvise methods to repair any unusual injuries.

Severely damaged automata are not cannibalised for their parts, but are interred within a catacomb dug into the cliff face close to where the river tumbles over its cataract. This place is regarded with a certain amount of reverential dread by the inhabitants, as would any other graveyard. The tomb itself resembles nothing so much as a storeroom, with the automata stacked neatly against the walls. The effect can be very disconcerting, with lifeless eyes reflecting back any lamp light that falls on them.

Fortunately Darabellum constructed sturdy automata that can withstand more in terms of damage than a normal person, but over time serious damage could not be avoided and there are fewer than there were originally. Eventually there may come a point where there is no one left functioning in the valley as there are no children and no means by which Horologis can create new automata.

As a side effect of their magically clockwork nature, the inhabitants of the valley are very good at games of chance and are apparently able to predict the draw of a card or the fall of a die with unerring accuracy. This tends to take away any challenge in a game and the locals don't tend to play much among themselves, except as a mental exercise. Whilst not used to large numbers of visitors, they will engage in games with outsiders who they have learned are rather partial to such things and quietly relieve them of any valuables. All such winnings are usually returned in full to the amazement of any outsiders, who generally have no idea that they have been the butt of a very old joke.

All of the inhabitants are linked to the clock tower by their invisible cogs and so inherently feel the changes in time without having to look at the clock. As a result of this, they are always innately aware of the time. An outsider will feel the changes in the speed of time, but will be unable to judge how much has passed or what time it is without reference to the clock face. Any pocket-watches or time measuring devices will be similarly effected by the tower and will run to its time, not that set by the owner.

The tower at the valley entrance was constructed by Darabellum to provide an added level of security. Although ruined now it was once a comfortable residence, where he would occasionally escape from the rigors of constantly altering time. There were magical alarms set in place to warn the mage if anyone entered the valley, but there was also a watchman, Therin. Like the other inhabitants of the valley, Therin was

Despite the appearance of sentience, the inhabitants of the village are not truly intelligent. They were constructed to appear and act as human as possible and have a limited ability to observe, 'learn' and 'remember', but they cannot learn complex new actions or magic. The introduction of a new game of chance would render any prediction advantage the inhabitants have null and void as they could only really copy the other players. Darabellum had hoped that Horologis could learn and reason, but that is not the case; the 'memory' he has now is little different to that he had when first created and any new facts he can only recall for a short period of time.

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clockwork. None of the other inhabitants were aware of his existence and none have missed him since his disappearance.

Therin fell foul of a problem that will afflict any of the automata that attempt to leave the valley. Distance weakens their attachment to the clock and as they require the magical cogs to keep their internal clockwork wound, they cannot survive without that attachment. Therin, whilst chasing a group of scallywags and vagabonds, exceeded the range he could wander and began to 'wind down'. His bond was broken and he is stranded in woodland about a mile from the valley entrance. Whilst heavily overgrown, he isn't physically damaged and returning him to the valley would reactivate him, probably much to the horror of whoever was carrying him at the time! Such a wound down automaton could be magically powered³.

The guard tower itself contains several chambers, most notable a small workroom with a few lesser manuscripts on clockwork and several functional traps linked to the alarm systems. Whilst there have been few threats through-out the years due to the valley's seclusion, the inhabitants know that the alarm can mean trouble and will be prepared for the arrival of outsiders if the alarms are tripped. Perhaps strangely, there are no alarms on the actual path and as a result travellers can enter the valley in secret.

The valley does suffer from one potentially disastrous weakness: everything within it is dependent on the flow of water from the mountains. If this flow should cease, then life within the Timeless Valley would grind to a complete halt.

Without the water to power the wheel, the clock would cease to function and the inhabitants would wind down. There is no general back-up mechanism for powering the water wheel. Any blockage occurring within the confines of the valley is swiftly dealt with, as the inhabitants instinctively know that the flow must continue. No matter what the activity the inhabitants are engaged in, they will abandon it en masse until the blockage is removed. This has lead to several accidental fires, building collapses and ruined dinners, but so far the problem has been limited to the local area. As they cannot venture far from the valley, should a blockage occur more than a mile up-river, there will be a serious problem.

Unbeknownst to anyone, Darabellum is not actually dead. He is in a secret chamber beneath the clock tower, heavily protected by traps and magics. There he lies in what might be referred to as suspended animation, carefully controlled by a miniature version of the Static Temporexis Instigator. This device runs independently from the main clock mechanism and has kept time passing at an incredibly slow rate for the mage, thus



The Static Temporexis Instigator

3. All the automata have a hidden mechanism added by Darabellum by which they can be rewound manually, giving him the option of keeping the automata running outside the range of the tower. PCs with good Perception and Craftsmanship may notice this and take advantage. The automata would probably regard such behavior as an indignity and resent it greatly.

❧ The Timeless Valley ❧

averting actual mortality. Originally, the device was set with an alarm that would disengage the machine when Horologis had completed Darabellum's planned research. As that research hasn't advanced since the mage's 'death', it is anyone's guess when or if the mage will ever awaken. Should the flow of the river be blocked, there is a back-up mechanism to ensure that Darabellum's vital functions would still be supported. There is a complex series of wind powered gadgets built into one of the clock tower's walls and the apparently ornamental flapping pelgrane atop the tower would act as the driving force for this in times of dire need. Should this back up system fail, then the machine will be stopped and Darabellum will awaken, no doubt very frail and incredibly grumpy.



Adventure Hooks

1. Relfan has hired the characters to mount a return expedition to the valley to negotiate access to Horologis' technology. Payment will, no doubt, be generous.
2. Some unscrupulous vagabonds have discovered the secret of the valley and have dammed the river! Should our band of merry wanderers find the valley, all the citizens appear as if frozen in time. This could of course be an excuse for scandalous pilfering, but we would hope that our curious protagonists would care to investigate, find notes on the tower's unusual nature in Horologis' journal, then set about finding the blockage and removing it, thus restoring the valley to life. But then again, they'll probably just steal anything that isn't nailed down (see above, depending on what else is left after the original miscreants have been through everything with a not very fine toothed comb). Perhaps Darabellum himself is waking! Given his irascible nature and impatience there can be no doubt who he will blame.
3. Horologis is trapped in the mechanism. Without Horologis, the villagers cannot be healed and any accidents will lead to breakdown. The whole valley may be in a state of overall decline as a result of this. Again, this would allow our sturdy travellers the opportunity to further line their no-doubt bulging pockets or alternatively to redeem the merest fraction of their souls by a charitable act of rescue.
4. The self-styled Emperor of Sabysway⁴, a collector of whimsies who currently resides on the edge of the Great Da Forest, has somehow discovered that the inhabitants of the Timeless Valley are automata and wishes to possess one for his collection. A handsome stipend is available for such recovery work.
5. Having found the valley by accident, one of our intrepid band falls in love with one of the inhabitants. This is quite possible: the automata were designed to be physically attractive and often live in couples. Some of the younger 'unmarried' ones have been unconsciously expecting Darabellum to arrange partners for them for half a millennium. They have built into them the ability to flirt and in the distant past Darabellum occasionally funded his projects by creating automata for the carnal gratification of wealthy clients. However Horologis and other automata would frown on any long term relationship between one of their number and an outsider. Such



A group of attractive young 'ladies' tending their strawberry bed. (Drawn from Relfan's description; the timid Maurenron Greenbuck are depicted to stress the gentle nature of the ladies.)

4. Initially the self-styled Emperor of Sabysway amassed a considerable collection of ephemera in his palatial manse on the edge of the Great Da Forest, ruling the nearby villagers with an iron but immaculately-gloved fist. It wasn't that he had any great magical talent, rather that the peasantry were easily impressed and devoutly superstitious. Unfortunately for him even gullible slack-jaws eventually grow to resent an unforgiving life of drudgery for one man's gratification. One more cerebral than the rest (who would go far if he could get away from Sabysway and he knew it) whipped up a puritanical indignation in the populace. They attempted to overthrow the tyrant in order to recreate an idyllic independence that had never existed. As a result the 'Emperor' and a handful of staff moved to a new manse deeper in the Forest and the Emperor struggles to rebuilt his collection.

✿ The Timeless Valley ✿

implacable opposition could drive the lovers to elope; what then will the result of this star-crossed love be?

6. An unscrupulous mage (to whom the characters owe a large favour?) has intercepted the letter to Relfan and wants Darabellum's grimoires for himself. Can the characters secure a grimoire and expiate their debt?

7. Whilst hopelessly lost, the characters discover an overgrown statue, situated apparently at random in the deep woods. On closer inspection, it appears to be a man frozen in time. What could this bizarre discovery mean? Potentially the finder can build a new career as a side-show entrepreneur ...

8. The valley would make an excellent base for research and if the characters can convince Horologis that they have been sent by an old colleague of Darabellum's, they may have a ready-made manse at their disposal.

9. All of the above information is false: Darabellum was not actually interested in time at all, but set the valley up as a plaything. All of the time control aspects of the valley are illusion. He lived in the tower high up at the valley entrance, which is full of the real automata construction manuscripts. These plans would be worth more than a few terces to the right buyer.

Miscellany

Horologis

"Myself, I strive, I tend and repair; continuing the great work of my late master; so all runs with precision"

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Persuasion (Eloquent) 12; | Rebuff (Pure-hearted) 15; | Attack (Strength) 10; | Defence (Intuition) 14; |
| Health 20; | Magic 4; | Craftsmanship 3; | Physician (Automata) 20; |
| Pedantry 5; | Stewardship 3; | Perception 2 | |
| (Pocket tool kit 1, Pocket watch 1, Journal 3) | | | |

Horologis is a masterly piece of the artificer's skill. Appearing almost totally human in nature, he is indeed an automaton. Created by Darabellum, he has overseen the running of the valley and the clock tower since his creation. Whilst semi-magical in nature, he cannot learn or use magic. His Physician skill relates only to automata and is of no use to humans⁵. He appears to be an affable gentleman settling into late middle age, who loves nothing more than a good fireside chat and a philosophical argument.

YOUNG GENTLEMEN!!!! A prestigos opurtunity has arisen!!
The most respected Sage, Carthos of Sfere, intends to outfit an expedition to the Misty Isles!
Our purpose? The quest for truth, welth and more besides!!
(Only those of good breeding and fine manner need apply)

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5. While his skills will be of little use to an ordinary mortal creature, he has an innate ability to mend intricate machinery such as pocket watches.

✿ The Timeless Valley ✿

Darabellum

"Pah, want a job doing and you must do it yourself! Centuries slip past and we have no extra data! Well stop standing there with your bottom jaw flapping, the day is already ruined, nothing you can say now will worsen it"

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---|------------------------|
| Persuasion (Forthright) 14; | Rebuff (Lawyerly) 15; | Attack (Caution) 8; | Defence (Vexation) 10; |
| Health 5; | Magic (Studious) 17; | Specialisation in Magical Clockwork 15; | |
| Appraisal 7; | Craftsmanship 10; | Engineering 10; | Gambling 5; |
| Pedantry 6; | Perception 8; | | |

Spells: None at present, but all of the time related spells in the magician's grimoire section of the main rule book are scattered through several tomes within the tower (*Interminable Interim*, *Spell of the Slow Hour*, *Spell of Temporal Stasis* and several incomplete versions of *Temporal Projection*). There are also plans for the *Magnificent Chronal Disharmoniser* and the *Chronobell*⁶. Among the other spells in the grimoires are *Warp of Troll Strength*, *Spell of the Loyal Servitor*, *Spell of Dissolution* and *Felojun's 2nd Hypnotic Spell*.

Should anyone encounter Darabellum, it will be in one of two states: hooked up to his suspended animation machine or weak and groggy after a mechanical breakdown of some sort. He is a very old, tall and wizened man with a hunted look. His once legendary patience has been replaced by snappy impatience should he be awake. This is as a direct result of his time experiments, as is his confusion. He will be disappointed, angry and emotional should he find out all his work was for naught. Basically, he's unpredictable.

Valley Residents

Residents of the valley will have the relevant skills necessary for their rural way of life. They will also have Gambling (10) and Health (20) unless damaged in some way.

An Unfair Advantage at Cards: When engaged in a card or dice game that they know, the inhabitants of the valley gain an automatic prosaic success on the first roll of the Gambling skill. In any rerolls within that round, they gain a +2 bonus to the repeated dice roll.

Additional Effects of Magic: As the residents are technically inanimate objects, then only spells affecting such objects will work on them. Mind control spells and those affecting living objects will either not work or produce suitably bizarre consequences at the GM's whim.

Alterations to Automata: Should anyone acquire an automaton and wish to alter it in any way, for example to teach it new card games or to make it key-driven, then they will need to be very careful indeed. They will either have to find a mage with a specialisation in magical clockwork at least as high as Darabellum or have Darabellum's own construction notes. Should they find a willing mage, he should make a roll using either his magic or specialisation skill. On a Hair's Breadth Success, it will take him one month to acquaint himself fully with either the automaton or the notes. A Prosaic Success cuts that time to two weeks and an Illustrious Success to one week. Using the rules for creating an enchanted item in the Magic chapter of the rule book, the mage can then attempt one roll per week to effect any alteration. Changing the power source will require two successful rolls: one to locate the drive mechanism and the other to alter it and fit the key. A lack of magic involvement in the power source of the automaton will drop its apparent intelligence, but it will still be far superior to anything currently available.

AN ADDED EFFECT

Should anyone entering the valley own a Pendant of Temporal Monitoring, it will glow orange initially, then proceed to cycle steadily through a series of kaleidoscopic colours. At the point when any device is fitted to the clock mechanism, it will return to its orange coloration.

6. These spells are further elucidated in an article describing the adventures of the arch-mage Zaramanth, which is to be found in Volume One, Number One of the *Excellent Prismatic Spray*, available at all reputable hobby stores or direct from Pelgrane Press, 18-20 Bromells Road, London SW4 OBG. Tel. 020 7738 8877 email: inbox@dyingearth.com website: <http://www.dyingearth.com>

✿ The Timeless Valley ✿

Reprogramming the automaton requires a number of successful rolls equal to the complexity of the task and the number of new movements required. Very complex sequences, such as teaching the automaton a new card game should require at least 5 successes at the GMs discretion. Altering the automaton should not be a simple task as these are remarkable creations. If the person attempting the alterations doesn't have a specialisation in either magical clockwork or the construction notes, then they suffer a penalty of -2 to every roll relating to their work on the automaton. If they have either the specialisation or the notes, they gain a boon of 2. If they have both the specialisation and the notes, they gain a bonus to every roll of +1. Above all, this is going to be expensive work in terms of both improvement points and terces, with no guarantee of success. However, the potential financial rewards of owning such an automaton could be substantial.

Relfan's Adjunct to the Periapt of All-Seeing

20 points Permanent

Designed by Relfan, a research mage and erstwhile adventurer, the adjunct attaches to the Periapt by a series of delicate wires and clips and resembles a jewelled eyepiece. When held to the eye, as one would hold a monocle, it allows most forms of enchantment to be visualised within a glowing blue aura. It can give no indication as to the type of enchantment unless it is particularly powerful, at which point it may give an abstract representation of the effect, such as the cog wheels.



The EMINENT ARCH-MAGES, PERRIN & GRASHPOTEL, summoners of sandestin and wielders of dire magics, wish it to be clearly understood that if a single leaf, stalk, stem, root or fruit of a single vine in that area of the Valley of the Graven Tombs given over to the production of the wine Tanvilkat is damaged or so much as disturbed during that expedition rumoured to be planned by a certain Gingash Joliform (or any other such expedition), rapid and definitive justice shall be visited upon all concerned. Even now we rehearse the pervulsions of the Charm of Forlorn Encystment.

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✿ The Air-cars of Ampridatvir ✿

Nicholas H. M. Caldwell

And souls go thrilling up like bubbles in a beaker of mead!

"In ages past when the sun was yellow, mankind mastered the mature Earth with technological marvels. Men created machines of metal and of other substances no longer known. Men used machines to converse with each other heedless of distance, to plumb the darkest depths of the great oceans, to fly across the blue skies, and to voyage beyond this world to the stars themselves. Many left this Earth for worlds circling younger suns, never to return home. Mankind understood the secrets of the universe, though no man or woman could know them all and still be truly human.

Those who remained on the aging Earth dwindled in number and understanding. Too few to retain their mastery of the machines, some turned to other ways to master the world. Powers summoned in the earliest of days; powers that men termed then and now as magic were studied and exploited. As the sun reddened with age, magicians and arch-magicians wove spells of great potency, ordering the world and its peoples to their caprice and whim.

But even in these last days when the sun might go out at any moment, leaving Earth to perpetual night and eternal lifeless cold, when the successors of Phandaal squabble like children over scraps of spells, there are still places where the last men can gaze in wonder at marvels of technology and in their brutish ignorance deem them magical artifacts of great potency.

Such a place is the island city of Ampridatvir, last bastion of the Olek'hnit peoples, founded millennia ago in the northern reaches of the Melantine Gulf. In Ampridatvir, the sagacious and benevolent Rogol Domedonfors rules with an easy hand, wielding the secrets of fire, light, and gravity, that his people may devote themselves to reason and meditation rather than labor endlessly for the mundane necessities of life. A most noble vision; mankind should not squander the last precious moments of the dying Sun grubbing for food, clothing or shelter.

In Ampridatvir, nourishing and appetizing viands are created from base materials in the food factories. Beacons of light rise from the lofty towers piercing the darkness at night. In fine weather, the citizens travel around the city on conveyors: black-hued energized strips constructed into the roads which bear whatever stands upon them to all points in the city. If the weather is inclement or haste is of the essence, a citizen will drive to his destination in the comfort of a land-car, its body fashioned from metals, its interior furnished with sumptuous cushions, and its occupants protected from the elements by a transparent dome. For propulsion, these land-cars employ forces drawn from time and space. Unless damaged by mischance or malice, a land-car will continue to function for centuries, perhaps longer.

Wise beyond normal men, Domedonfors has harnessed his limitless knowledge to create Ampridatvir's fleet of



The air-cars were only one of the wonders of Ampridatvir.

✿ The Air-cars of Ampridatvir ✿

air-cars. These contrivances have a strange appearance. The lower half is in shape alike to the hull of a small boat with steeply curving sides, though it is made of polished smooth metal. Affixed to this 'hull' are four wheels for maneuvering on the ground. The upper half of the air-car is a transparent dome made from a material then unknown to me. Like the land-cars, this dome is for the protection of the passengers, preventing discomfort and injury from rapid motion through the upper airs.

To enter the air-car, one need only release the dome by turning a knob on the outside, and step inside. After making oneself comfortable on the cushioned seat, the dome should be restored by flicking the rightmost lever half-way down. Flicking it completely down locks the dome in place, preventing its release from the outside. Control of the air-car is accomplished using the steering globe and a series of levers, all of which are clearly identified in terms of their function in Latter Olek'hnit script. To ascend, one moves the altitude lever upwards; to descend, downwards. To maintain a constant height above the ground, flick the altitude lock lever downwards. To move forward faster, move the speed lever upwards; to brake, move it downwards swiftly. To maintain a constant speed, flick the speed lock lever downwards. To change direction, simply grasp and move the steering globe in the desired direction; the air-car will turn to reorient itself. Some measure of dexterity is advantageous when attempting to perform all these maneuvers whilst traveling at high speed.

The air-cars will seat two passengers in complete comfort or up to four persons of a tolerant and easygoing disposition. Easily able to out-fly even a pelgrane in terms of speed, height, and range, the citizens of Ampridatvir use the air-cars to travel between the island and the mainland, and to cruise around the towers. When not in use, the air-cars rest on landing-pads on the highest towers and terraces.

And yet the air-cars are merely the most obvious of Ampridatvir's glories ..."

a fragment of The Notebooks of Elthewn the Heretic



Elthewn the Heretic was (and perhaps still is) an apostate magician who renounced occult magic, preferring antique lore. According to the *Cyclopedia*, he devoted the latter part of his career to seeking out and learning the old knowledge. Reputedly he visited the Museum of Man and returned. The *Cyclopedia* dismisses him as an ill-informed troublemaker whose writings are the ravings of a lunatic, riddled with inaccuracies, best forgotten¹.

GMs may wish to tantalize PCs with this portion of Elthewn's Notebooks. Some PCs (and GMCs) will dismiss Elthewn's account as confused cant; some will take umbrage at his insulting comments, reading no further or destroying the scroll². Though his philosophy is debatable, his style verbose, his sentiments cloying, Elthewn's observations are nevertheless true. PCs who can soar above their preconceptions will be minded to obtain an air-car for their own purposes.

Certain additional facts should be stated:

PCs who wish to pilot an air-car should be in possession of Driving skill, their wits, and fast reactions. Though an air-car can carry four passengers, when it does so the person flying the air-car will be hampered in her movements, making rapid maneuvering difficult. Also, while a horse-drawn cart and an air-car have similarities, be mindful of the differences³.

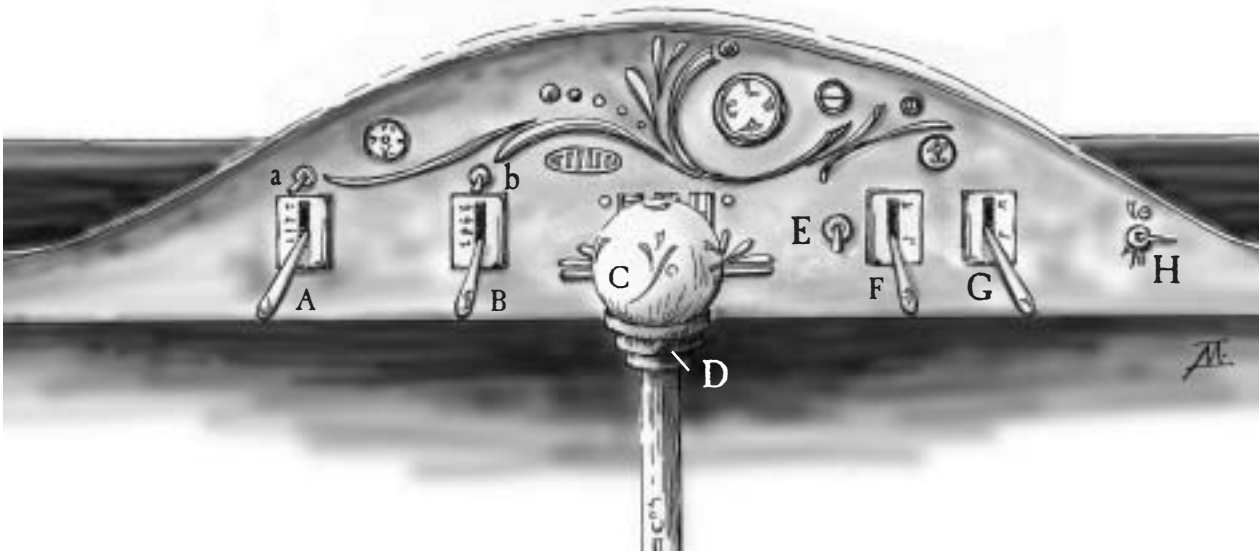
Elthewn's account does not fully identify the levers with their functions and omits mention of other controls. Doubtless he feared such detail would betray his excessive pettifoggery. GMs of an inquisitive nature will desire such information from the noblest of motives. GMs of a mischievous nature will require such information to torment PCs who wish their air-car to become airborne.

1. It must be admitted that the compilers of the *Cyclopedia* seem to have had a considerable disdain for most other savants, including some of their co-compilers. Scholars are cautioned to treat this aspect of the *Cyclopedia* with considerable reserve.

2. It is to be feared that others will merely ignore it once they realise it is neither a guide to buried treasure nor a lewd monograph.

3. At the very least air-cars are easier to clean up after.

✿ The Air-cars of Ampridatvir ✿



The control panel of one of the less elaborate models.⁴

A. Speed lever; a. Speed lock; B. Altitude lever; b. Altitude lock; C. Steering globe; D. Illuminator; E. Ventilation control; F. Temperature lever; G. Mode lever; H. Dome control.

Elthewn notes that the dome should be closed by moving the right-most lever (to the extreme right of the steering globe) downwards; in fact it must be closed before the air-car will respond to any movements of the other levers or the steering globe. This is a deliberate safety feature. While the other levers and the steering globe may still be moved, they will remain in the new positions. Once the dome is closed, the air-car will attempt to obey the settings of all moved levers immediately. Thus an air-car may ascend suddenly, brake horizontally, and reorient itself simultaneously to the discomfort of all passengers. Prompt action is essential. After the immediate peril is averted, swift insight must disclose additional measures. Experiment with caution!

As an aside, GMs should require players to be exact in describing their characters' experiments with the controls. This may mislead devious players into the conceit that moving multiple levers is essential to activating the vehicle. They will doubtless fail to restore the controls to their neutral arrangement⁵, the dome will be unexpectedly closed, and the GM may enjoy a merry prank at their expense.

There are four other controls not described by Elthewn.

An observant reader will have noted the presence of wheels soundly attached to the air-car's hull. These are neither decoration nor affectation. Instead they serve two purposes: firstly to deflect the impact of landings, preventing the 'keel' of the car from being scraped or worse; secondly to permit the air-car to be driven on the ground. One lever (the second from the right) is responsible for switching the air-car from aerial mode (when in the upwards position) to land mode (when in the downwards position). This mode lever may be moved even when the vehicle is airborne — fortunately it will only trigger the change if the wheels are resting on a solid surface. In land mode, the altitude levers are ineffective (but may be moved). The speed levers and the steering globe function normally.

The maximum speed of an air-car on land is equivalent to a galloping horse. Such velocities are only possible on even ground such as the paved streets of Ampridatvir before its fall. Rough ground and muddy tracks will require a slower pace, rocky outcrops or obstacles evasive maneuvering, and woods, marshes, and dismal swamps will be impassable. Careful pilots will endeavor to land their vehicles on flat land. In an emergency,

4. The author hopes, nay expects, that GMs will present their players with photocopies of this illustration, but lacking the interesting and informative section on what the various knobs and levers actually do. We suspect this will create situations redolent with both interest and hilarity.

5. Another safety feature is that when the dome is opened and the vehicle is halted, all controls revert to neutral.

✿ The Air-cars of Ampridatvir ✿

an air-car may be landed on water and it will not sink. Despite the boat-like shape of the hull, the air-car cannot be 'driven' on the water's surface. Unfortunately the air-car can be forced underwater by pressing the altitude lever downwards. Anyone sufficiently foolish to attempt this with the dome open should deservedly drown; more importantly they will flood the air-car and ruin the cushions!

Two further levers provide for the comfort of passengers. Moving the temperature lever (third from the right) downwards will cool the interior of the vehicle; move it upwards if warmth is desired. This will only take effect if the dome is sealed. The air inside an air-car will become stale and musty if the dome is sealed for long periods. The ventilation control (fourth from the right) should be used to expel old air and draw in fresh air.

The final control is actually a knob on the steering globe, rather than a lever. Turning the knob will cause an illuminating nimbus to be emitted from the gleaming hull, lighting the craft in all directions including downwards. The further the knob is turned, the greater the range of the radiance. A rapidly moving patch of light at night may inspire the unwanted curiosity of winged monsters, the envy of knowledgeable insomniacs, and the wrath of dedicated astrologers.

Knowledge of the Olek'hnit script would be valuable to anyone wishing to fly an air-car. Such learning must be gained from reclusive savants. PCs may be too stingy or conventional to pay their price. Denied their proper recompense in terces, goods, or services by shrewd bargainers, cunning sages will leaven their lessons with a few choice mistruths.

The air-cars are products of extremely advanced technology and/or magic; without the learning of a Domedonfors, they are as incomprehensible as the motivations of a sandestin in its home dimension. Unlike sandestins, they cannot be replaced. If an air-car crashes, the passengers will probably walk away unharmed but the air-car will be wrecked without hope of repair.

The erudite GM will have noticed that Elthewn's account is of Ampridatvir in its days of glory before the strife between the sects of Pansiu and Cazdal became violent and Domedonfors abjured his people. Dependent upon the time-frame of the campaign, Ampridatvir is likely to be in ruins with the Greens and the Grays striving for control of Domedonfors' power through red-garbed Raiders. GMs should carefully note the colors of the PCs' attire — sartorial elegance may become a matter of life and death. Assuming the PCs can avoid the factions and the predatory gauns, they should be able to locate an undamaged air-car as the surviving natives fear and avoid these artifacts. A cluster of unknown individuals arguing obscure points of pedantry and engineering by an air-car will attract notice.

Domedonfors was a man of peace; although the air-cars are sturdily constructed and able to resist most blows, their best defense is their speed. Note they are completely unarmed — GMs should be inventive in thwarting any PC who tries to mount weapons on the vehicle.

Elthewn's account is vague on the subject of land-cars. They are very similar in shape and form within and without to air-cars. Their controls are similar save that land-cars lack the two altitude levers. Impatient or unperceptive PCs may accidentally steal a land-car. The rash young men of Ampridatvir are accustomed to riding land-cars through the streets at high speed. GMs should take advantage of this opportunity to stage a chase scene. Pursued through the streets, forced to weave in and out of archways and gaping tower entrances to elude the inhabitants, the PCs must save themselves by a display of élan and daring. Alternately bickering and frenzied flicking of levers may be a fatal distraction for the driver.

If the campaign is set after the events of *The Dying Earth*, locating a usable air-car in Ampridatvir will be much more difficult. The Greens and Grays are now able to see each other and pursue their war without Raider intermediaries. Domedonfors' death spasms have toppled most of the towers; those still standing are structurally damaged and may yet collapse. Removing air-cars from the buildings will require extreme care. Salvaging fallen air-cars from among the wreckage on the ground will require patience, shovels, and alert lookouts! The natives will investigate, attacking first, looting second, and discussing the possible provenance of their deceased victims over a convivial glass later than evening.

✿ The Air-cars of Ampridatvir ✿

Prior to Domedonfors' retreat into suspended animation, he constructed an underground network beneath the city with scattered vestibules linking his mechanism with the rest of Ampridatvir. Sealed during his period of self-imposed isolation, they opened to allow his renovating pseudopodia access to the city when he returned. After his true death, they remained open, though (partially) blocked by lifeless tentacles. Audacious adventurers might consider braving the stench of still-rotting flesh, the darkness, and the vermin to discover what lies beneath. The machines to create food, generate power and light, and manufacture other devices are likely to be damaged; regardless their workings will be unfathomable and their nature resistant to removal through sheer bulk. It is conceivable that there might be working vehicles in an isolated chamber.

PCs might happen upon an 'abandoned' air-car in the wilderness outside Ampridatvir, or perhaps a continent more distant. The former occupants may have left it for a brief period. They will be displeased if they find strangers meddling with their property and take hasty measures. Alternately the occupants may have become victims of malice — perhaps a noxious vapor has been introduced through the ventilation inlet to cause slumber, or they have succumbed to mind control by exotic hypnosis. The transparent dome will be no protection from the latter. The air-car may still be a trap for the unwary.

Informed PCs may be aware that an air-car is allegedly in the possession of Ulan Dhor, or more likely his uncle Prince Kandive the Golden, ruler of the city of Kaiin. Enterprising or perhaps foolhardy adventurers may attempt a heist, intending to use the air-car for a speedy getaway. As the air-car cannot be locked using its own mechanisms from the outside, an adept of Kandive's stature will have taken other precautions such as installing an otherworldly guardian or placing a magical trap or two to disconcert lesser thieves.

A GM with a taste for the unexpected may set her campaign much earlier. The PCs arrive in Ampridatvir, only to discover it is not in ruins, but rather in its final days of decadence. Followers of Pansiu and Cazdal riot in the streets while partisan air-car pilots hunt their rivals in the skies and bomb their enemies from above. Unlike their descendants, the leisured citizens delved into the occult. Some will rank as dabblers in the Art, a few may even qualify as magicians. The PCs' priorities will be to stay alive and escape with or without an air-car. As the violence rises, Domedonfors is mortally wounded and shuts the city down in revenge, allowing the mayhem to really begin ...



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Contact the Cold Room of the shorecomber Harjuk the Anthropophagus, Shorecombers Guild, Kaiin.

❧ A Beginner's Guide to Vat Creatures ❧

Jim Webster

‘Wormingers are hard to come by, especially Wormingers of quality!’

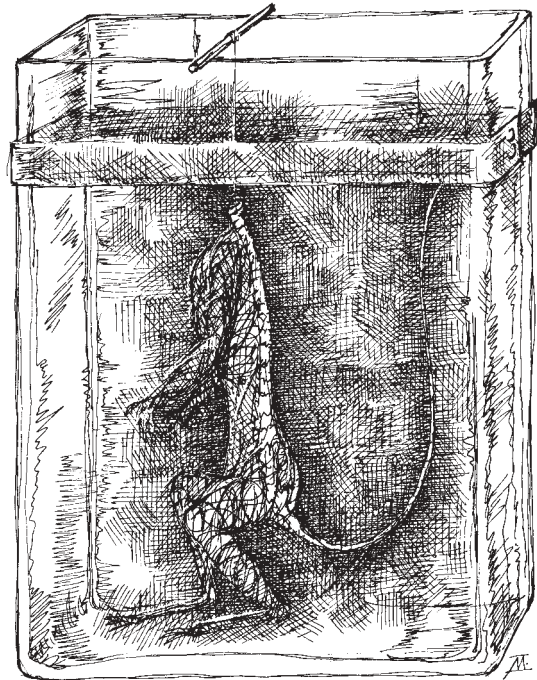
The ability to create vat creatures is considered by some to be one of the hallmarks of an accomplished mage. Some scholars consider that the ability to control sandestin is merely a combination of luck and bluff, while the creation of a totally new vat creature is an act dependant entirely on skill and knowledge.

Before looking at vat creatures proper, let us first look at some creations which are most definitely not vat creatures. The first of these is the SEMBLANCE. A classic example is that created by Ildefonse and Rhialto when they wanted to build a semblance of Calantus. The procedure is relatively simple. One merely builds an armature of silver and tantalum wires upon an articulated spinal truss. This must then receive a shadowy sheathing of tentative concepts. The next step is adding a skull and sensorium. Most would say that now is the ideal time to impart knowledge to the sensorium, this is often done by loading it with IOUN stones. Finally one adds muscle, skin, features and sense organs.

One is left with a creature which looks and acts like the individual on which the semblance was based. Indeed, the creature knows that it is that individual. Yet it is a mere construct, incapable of reproduction and prone to catastrophic failure should any of the systems come under undue pressure. It is also an unbecoming consumer of IOUN stones.

Creating a semblance is a relatively simple magical task provided the necessary equipment is available. An arch-mage would expect to have this sort of thing constantly to hand when in their own manse. A mage should pay three improvement points over a period of a month to ensure that they have assembled all the materials (with the obvious exception of IOUN stones). Once the materials are gathered the budding creator uses the same procedure as for when they create a magic item. Magicians must spend one week in their work-room for every roll they make to create the semblance, arch-magicians need only spend one day in their work-rooms for every roll they make. Should you fail to make this roll it means that the character must spend another week or day at work and roll again at the end of this time. An Ordinary Success means the character has successfully created an acceptable Semblance. An Illustrious Success indicates that the character has produced a Semblance of such excellence that even the most intimate associates of the original person would be duped into believing the semblance is the real person.

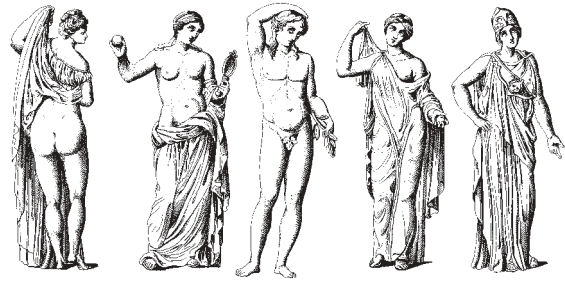
To ensure that the semblance has some native intelligence and useful memory it is advisable to load their sensorium with no less than five IOUN stones. If you want the semblance to be able to comprehend and even work magics, you should add an extra IOUN stone for each spell you intend them to be able to use. No more than 9 IOUN stones may be used.



A small semblance in preparation. Note the reinforcement necessitated by use of a glass vessel: anything larger than a small rodent should be prepared in a strong metallic container.

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The next category is AUTOMATA. All manner of creatures can be created in this wise; those that look most human are normally referred to as *mannequins*. They are purely sophisticated mechanical contrivances, incapable of reproduction or change other than decay. Indeed while a semblance can and does resemble a person so closely that almost all can be fooled, with experience automata are more easily exposed. The subject of automata and their creation is both vast and intricate and as such we hesitate to include it here, referring the reader to other sources.



Automata may be purchased from those who make a speciality of their construction (illustrations from the catalogue of Doreniap the Watchmaker).



The vat creature is a living creature which can feed, breed, live or die in a perfectly ordinary mortal manner. Only in its creation does it differ from any other mortal creature.

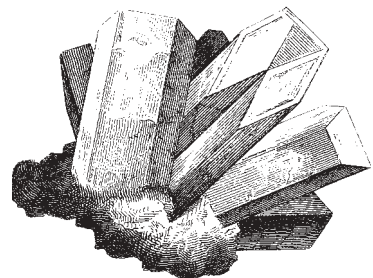
The first stage of the creation involves the matrix. This is the information which defines the creature down to the smallest detail. There are three ways in which one can produce a matrix. You can modify one that you already have, you can produce one from scratch, or you could extract one from a living creature of your choice. These procedures demand considerable skill, especially in the esoteric subject of mathematics, a discipline no longer taught in the Dying Earth. Effectively one defines the creature you are to create mathematically and build this description into the matrix. One then mounts the matrix into a computational projector built into the nutrient vat. A single cell is exposed to the projector which modifies it, stamping the matrix into it. The modified cell is then placed in the vat. The projector is so placed as to illuminate the vat, superimposing the matrix on the nutrient medium. All one has to do then is to wait for the cell to multiply. Illuminating the nutrient media with the matrix merely serves to further enhance the direction the replicating cell receives. Finally the creature is ready and the mage merely injects a minim of a suitable drug (Ormyre's Imperative Energiser is the most commonly used) into the creature's neck to bring it to full activity.

Creating the matrix

This is a skill which owes far more to pedantry than it does to magic. To create a new matrix the mage must spend a full week in complex calculation. At the end of the week, the player makes a Pedantry roll with a limit of one. If the mage has the Pedantry ability with a specialisation in Mathematics, he or she succeeds on any Success roll. Magicians without this specialisation only succeed on an Illustrious Success; the week is otherwise wasted. Further weeks may be spent, and further rolls made.

Modifying an existing matrix is less trying. If the mage has the Pedantry ability with a specialisation in Mathematics, they succeed on any Success roll and may reroll. Magicians without this specialisation succeed on any Success roll but may not reroll.

Once the magician has both crystal and matrix they must store the matrix on the crystal. This uses the same procedure as magic item creation. Magicians must spend one week in their work-room for every roll they make to install the matrix in the crystal, arch-magicians need only spend one day in their work-rooms for every roll they make. Should you fail to make this roll, even after rerolls, it means that the character must spend another week or day at work and roll again at the end of this time. An Ordinary Success means the character has successfully created the item. An Illustrious Success indicates that the character has produced a superior matrix crystal. A Dismal Failure indicates a flaw in the crystalline structure and another piece of crystal must be used.



The only suitable crystal is rose ziosite which is purchased from the inhabitants of Ironport.

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The mage Sencz who at one time maintained a large town house in Kaiin mingled the essence of man and pelgrane to produce a man capable of flight. His creatures can still occasionally be seen in the far East where they eventually migrated. They have the wings and thorax of a pelgrane but the head and intelligence of a man.

Creating a matrix crystal takes six improvement points. The matrix crystal, once created, can of course be used and reused for no further points cost.

Extracting a matrix

It is possible, if you have a living creature you wish to copy, to extract a copy of the matrix from it and store that on a matrix crystal. To achieve this the creature must be trapped and held absolutely still in a suitable medium. Its veins are then infused with Marralers Serum which both anaesthetises the victim and also makes the matrix visible under certain lighting conditions. The mage then focuses a modification of the computational projector on the target. Effectively the projector is fitted with diffusing lenses and an absorption filter. The projector is loaded with a piece of rose ziosite crystal and left for a period of hours. At the end of this period the matrix should be captured on the crystal.



Whether this process is a success or not is determined by a die roll using your Magic ability. You may re-roll if necessary. A Dismal Failure may not be rerolled. An Illustrious Success indicates a perfect copy, any other success results in a copy which will produce a viable creature but which is subtly different to the original. Any sort of failure means that the crystal is useless and must be replaced, a Dismal Failure normally means the creature awoke during the process. If the creature was a mouse or similar, then it merely swam round the vat and thus could not be copied. If the creature was a deodand or hoon then it broke out of the vat and is currently rampaging around your work room.

It takes one day to extract a matrix using this system and three improvement points. The creature created using this matrix will of course have their veins full of Marralers Serum and will require flushing with blood before it can be awakened. This takes a successful Physician roll. Failure means the creature dies. Dismal Failures may not be rerolled.

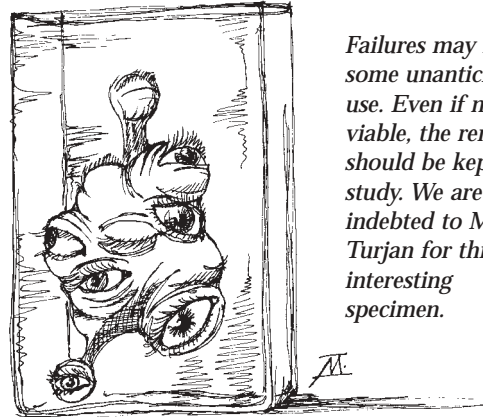
Growing the vat creature

Once one has the cell and the matrix crystal the process of growing the vat creature can begin. This process takes weeks, but while the mage must be available to monitor the growth, it is not necessary to spend every working hour supervising the process. One roll is allowed per week on either the Magical or Pedantry

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abilities and can be rerolled as necessary. A Failure merely means that the creature has not developed during that week. A Dismal Failure means that the process has failed and the mage must start again with another crystal. Note that if you have a superior matrix crystal you treat Dismal Failure as mere failure. It needs six successful rolls to complete the creature, one of these rolls must be an Illustrious Success. With a Superior Crystal one does not need the Illustrious Success.

Growing the vat creature takes 3 Improvement Points.



Failures may find some unanticipated use. Even if not viable, the remains should be kept for study. We are indebted to Magus Turjan for this interesting specimen.

Training the vat creature

When awakened the vat creature is aware and has reflexes necessary to control its body; indeed, if guided it may stand up and walk but, like a new born infant, has no comprehension of its surroundings. This can be remedied in two ways. Before animation the mage can transfer knowledge to the creature by the use of IOUN stones. After the creature is animated the creature can be trained and educated just as any normal infant could be.

When using IOUN stones one merely selects from one's own memory the appropriate memories to be passed to their prodigy, copies these into the IOUN stone, and then commands the IOUN stone to release the information into the sensorium of the creature. The created vat creature will have the selected memories of the mage who created it and might even believe itself to be its own creator. Using an IOUN stone to instill memories takes a week followed by a Magic roll with a limit of 1. All but Dismal Failures are treated as a success; a Dismal Failure causes the destruction of the stone. If the process is a success, the improvement point cost is that of creating a Recalcitrant retainer.

This process takes one week. At the end of this the GM makes a secret Magic roll, with the magician's player deciding how many Magic points to devote to rerolling. A success indicates that the creature will have the character and knowledge that the creator intends. A failure will be somewhat more complex. An Exasperating Failure means that the creature will occasionally exhibit unexpected tendencies which the creator could find troubling. A Quotidian Failure means that the creature will be under the GM's control. This need not be to the creator's disadvantage. A Dismal Failure means that the creature will resent its creation and its creator and act to their detriment. This may not be immediately obvious to the magician. This process costs improvement points just as if creating an Unctuous retainer.

Educating a vat creature as one would any ordinary person can be expected to take some months and the GM will watch how the creator treats their creation during the course of play and tailor the creatures development accordingly.

It costs one improvement point per session to train a vat creature using this method.

Magicians with a specialism in Vat Creatures

While most mages will be familiar with the concepts which underlie the creation of a vat creature, only a proportion of them ever go as far as creating one. There are many reasons for this. Mathematics is very much a lost art so few are left who can create a matrix from scratch. The whole process is time consuming and intricate. Mistakes are easily made and one is not guaranteed success. Finally while many an aspirant may dream of vat born beauties, by the time the techniques have been mastered most can no longer remember why a pretty face or well turned ankle was so important the first place. Yet in spite of these pitfalls there still remain some who persevere.

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What skills does our aspirant creator of vat creatures need? Obviously a profound knowledge of magic is essential, as is some knowledge of mathematics. The latter will have to be purchased as a Pedantry specialism using improvement points, and the GM should only award the knowledge after a period of study under someone who knows mathematics or the acquisition of new reference sources. Other skills that are vital are Pedantry and Physician while Craftsmanship will be exceedingly useful to the character who wishes to grind the lenses for his own computational projector, rather than be tied to the timetable of some grasping artisan.

Mistakes are easily made and one is not guaranteed success.

It is not merely in the creation of the character that the aspirant places him or herself at the mercy of the GM. Once the character has been created and moved into their workroom there are still many obstacles the GM can place in their path. First they need a source of rose ziosite crystal which is found only in Ironport. Traders travelling up the Twish Valley may well collect some for you but it will be expensive and it could take many months to arrive, if at all. Also, giving terces to strange merchants and saying "Fetch me some rose ziosite!" is not a reliable way of achieving anything but a deficit of terces. The wise mage goes himself (the area is mapped in the forthcoming Scaum Valley guide).

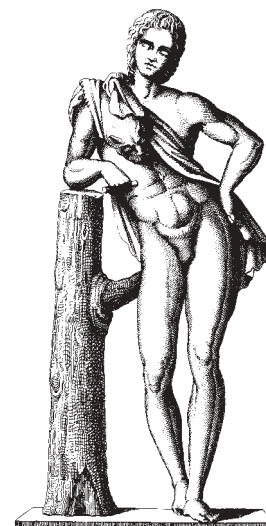
Our mage may then need Ormyre's Imperative Energiser or Marralers Serum. Neither is readily available in the local apothecary's shop, although some of the ingredients may be. There could be another journey to discover the composition of these compounds and locate the ingredients. The average mages workroom will have suitable vats of all shapes and sizes, yet it is unlikely to have a computational projector and building one is not something to be undertaken lightly. The plans may have to be sought out and the lenses ground properly, a tricky exercise in craftsmanship if ever there was one. As you can see, if a mage wishes to become a creator of vat creatures there are many opportunities for stimulating scenarios available to the intrepid GM.

Grow your own retainers

So, why should anyone go to the trouble and expense of growing their own retainers when there are villages full of people perfectly willing to serve for a small honorarium? Most mages claim that vat grown retainers are more loyal, although this is by no means guaranteed. It appears that one of the commoner flaws seen in training is a lack of loyalty.

Another advantage of growing ones own retainers is that one can build them with features not normally seen. A mage fearful of being physically attacked and unable to defend him or herself with powerful magics might well create a body guard which was a vat grown hoon 'improved' by greater intelligence, the addition of human features such as jaws capable of normal speech, and (more speculatively) a considerable personal loyalty to its creator.

A more traditional form of vat creature is the beautiful woman or handsome man grown for companionship. Although derided by moralists the type is perhaps the most common. Indeed it has been argued that so many vat creatures have been created and have bred with ordinary humanity that mankind is physically more attractive than it once was. Many mages have discussed the fact that it is relatively easy to mingle different types of creature on the same matrix. Some have suggested that it is because of a demon taint that has entered humanity, but whatever its cause it is not especially difficult to mingle various different creatures.



A more traditional form of vat creature is the beautiful woman or handsome man grown for companionship (display stand available at extra cost).

PCs as vat creatures

An interesting choice for a character. To a certain extent the character could be a vat creature without anyone realising. I will look at the those factors which make a vat creature different. On the level of the creatures mental makeup it is possible that the creator intended the creature to have some very specific

✿ A Beginner's Guide to Vat Creatures ✿

purpose. If the creator wanted a factor for an estate, then the creature could well have considerable stewardship skills. Similarly if the creature was created purely for the carnal gratification of its creator then it might have a deep knowledge of the amatory arts.

It is also possible that a vat creature of human appearance could conceal certain advantageous physical attributes. They could have been created to be or more than human strength or dexterity. They could also perhaps be more fleet of foot or with enhanced vision or hearing. These factors could be taken into account in character creation. The player would chose up to four abilities which they could have pools of more than ten points without paying more than one creation point per rating point. The GM will then pick four abilities where a 6 point ability cap is imposed and one must immediately pay an addition cost to go higher than that cap. Also the GM may insist that certain abilities be taken or certain attacks and defences be used. Hence if the vat creature character is designed to be strong, then the GM may insist that the Attack form chosen is Strength and the Defence form Parry.

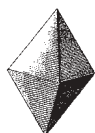
More obvious to observers would be the vat creature created from non-human stock. These might well meet a hostile response from simple peasantry, who might even stone them thinking them half-men or demon spawn. They might meet with contempt when the urban sophisticate assumes that a bestial appearance contains a bestial intellect. Certainly this sort of creature would have great difficulty fitting into society and would almost certainly be snubbed by many who are regarded as consequential on the social scene.



The renowned crystal merchant SEEBOR has just returned from Ironport with a fine selection of ZIOSITE CRYSTALS

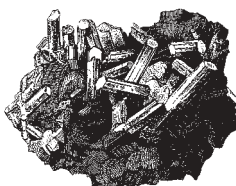
PELLUCID ROSE

From 240 terces per crystal, 1000 terces per cut crystal
As supplied to arch-mages throughout Almerey, the very finest crystal available anywhere.



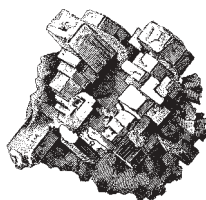
LUCID ROSEATE

From 120 terces per crystal, 400 terces per cut crystal
Considered by many the equal of Pellucid Rose, this crystal is widely sought after and is mentioned by no less an authority than Bapokode in his *Vats and Matrices* as a perfectly adequate vehicle for the finest work.



LIMPID FLUSHED

From 60 terces per crystal, 200 terces per cut crystal
Considered by many the most perfect form, it displays a classic severity of structure which is believed to enhance the underlying similitude whilst maintaining full referral with surface actuality.



TRANSLUCENT SERENE

From 30 terces per crystal, 100 terces per cut crystal
Competitive, its true worth not measured in money but in the pleasure to be gained from gazing upon it.



Also we have *sundry trinkets* carved in darkest harnstone by the inhabitants of the backwoods of the Upper Scaum.
Plus *minor thaumaturgical contrivances* of uncertain efficacy culled from ruins situated in the Maurenron watershed.



❧ The Valley Of Cages ❧

Lizard

‘Such strictures surely do not apply in this case.’

Deep in South Sousanene, just north of where the languid washes of River Lenai empty into the Sea Of Slow Tides, lies the Valley of Cages. This place, a weird hybrid of city and wilderness, has been known only through half-lies and quarter-truths for ages. Now all¹ of its mysteries shall be revealed ...

A traveler who avoids the Erbs of the Janith Plains, and looks to his right when traveling down the White Road towards Kreer will find himself facing the Stoop-Shouldered Mountains (or so the name best translates). There are several passes through these mountains, but the most inviting is that which follows the River Lenai. Perhaps a day’s travel along the banks of the river (or sailing on it in a flat-bottomed raft of sturdy make) will reveal to the traveler a wondrous sight. Rising up the slopes of the valley, and stretching to the horizon, is a city of cages — large and small, square and round, great squat boxes with heavy iron bars sinking into the soft loam, delicate wickerwork spheres dangling from thin ropes high above ... onward and onward they reach, with the wan and crimson sunlight passing through the myriad bars and frameworks to cast shadows of geometric intricacy.

The Valley does not reach forever, of course; it stretches but twelve miles if it were straight, but slow curves and odd twists give it an appearance of much greater length. The sides are covered in lush greenery, an oddity in the otherwise arid Sousanene region, and a variety of birds, brightly-hued dolsan (or ‘wingsquids’ in the regional tongue), and vallith-hoppers fill the eyes with color and the sky with sounds. In spite of this it must be noted that for most travelers the most interesting features of the Valley are not ornithological in nature. The single most outstanding feature of the Valley of Cages is, of course, the City of Cages, sometimes called the Gaolopolis². It has existed for centuries, and is a place of legends. Most of the cages are empty; a proportion, perhaps one in ten, are not. The beings in these cages are diverse in form — humans and erbs, writhing man-eels from the shores of the Melantine Gulf, demons from realms not described in the Iron-Shod Codex, and stranger things. All are marked by singular wan raggedness, and an empty hollowness as they cling weakly to the bars and call out in a variety of tongues for aid. It is strongly urged that travelers ignore importations of pity, threats of foul vengeance, or promises of reward, for freeing those trapped offers both difficulty and risk in large portions.

“I must order you secured, contained, pent, incarcerated and confined.”

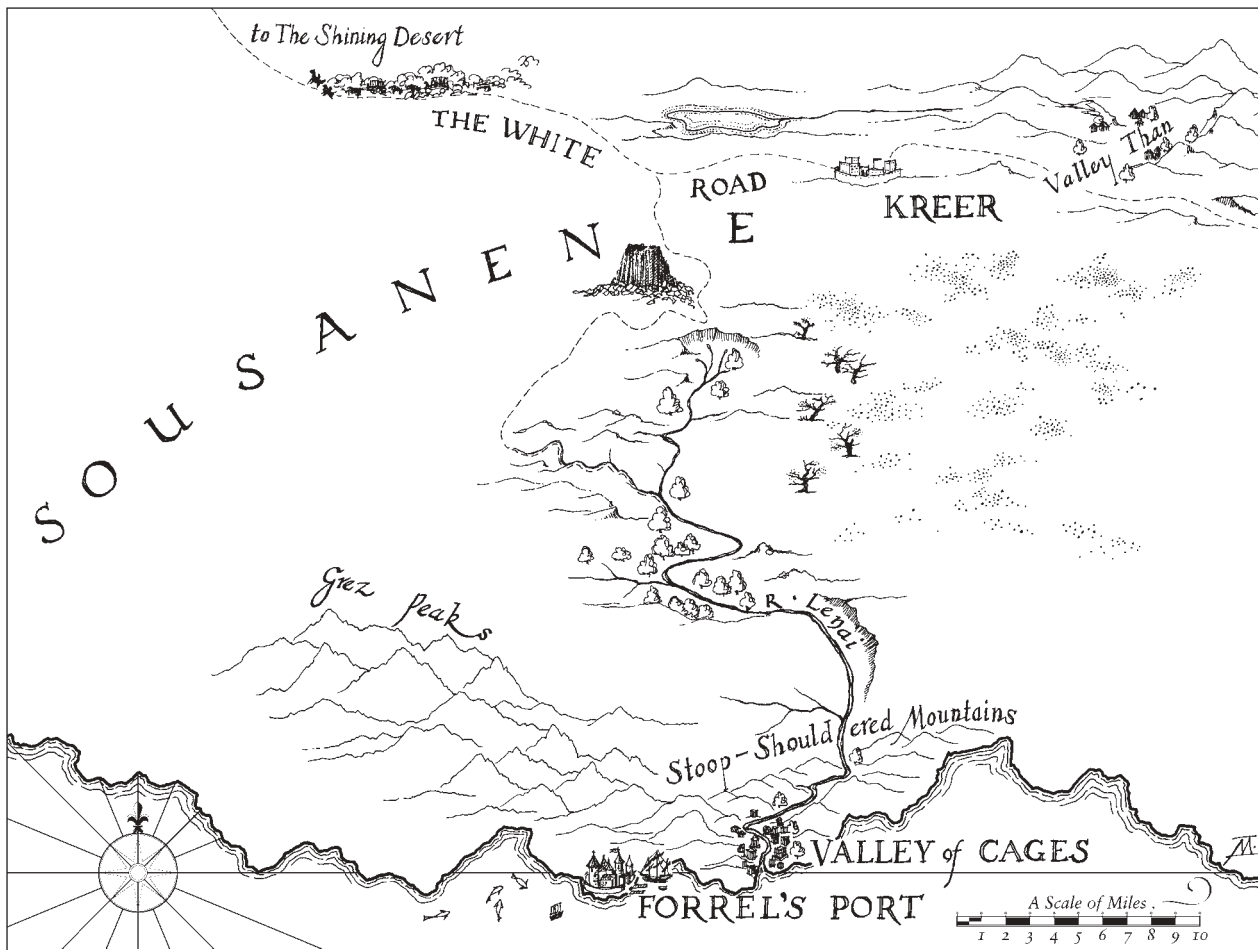
The difficulty comes from the fact the cages are composed of materials which are not what they seem to be. That is, suppose a traveler, a lank-limbed wanderer with a habit of whistling between his teeth, for example, were to enter the valley and happen upon a comely, if haggard, woman trapped in a cage near to the ground. She offers him rewards both monetary and otherwise, and he, being a gallant fellow, undertakes to free her. He studies the cage, and its occupant, from all angles, to be sure of the merits of the construction of both, and concludes the cage is simple black reedwood, bound with sturdy but not invulnerable hand-woven twine of yellowish hue. With a flourish, he takes out a knife of good steel (or so the seller assured him) and begins to cut at the twine. His knife twists and bends around the bonds. He curses the merchant who sold him the knife, and feels his offering the merchant terces made of mimicstone was, as he thought at the time, both wise and just. He should not blame the merchant. The cages of the valley are of sandestin make, and cannot be harmed by any lesser force than that of a Grade-III, or ‘Pseudo-greater’ sandestin³, suitably commanded.

1. (First Chroniclers note: In accordance with the Dictum Of Accuracy imposed by His Veracity, Turnaal VI, it must be noted that the term ‘all’ is fundamentally hyperbolic in nature, and, further, the value of any revelation is highly dependant on the insight of the person to whom things are revealed.)

2. But only by the pretentious.

3. Here we use the terminology of the Sapitentiary at Val Ombrio. This sort of Sandestin is known in the Scholasticarium in Kaiin as bifaulgate.

❖ The Valley Of Cages ❖



Our traveler's woes are not yet finished. While he has failed to break the bonds, he implores the prisoner to specify in greater detail the location of the treasure horde she owns and has hidden nearby, the better to hire workmen to come free her, of course. While he is engaged in such banter, as well as the contemplation of the possibilities offered by the relatively wide gaps in the bars, the Wardens arrive, knowing by instinct that someone has attempted to free a prisoner.

The Wardens

The Wardens are the name given to the valley's non-caged inhabitants. There are several dozen of them — some authorities claim that there may be as many as two hundred⁴, dwelling in a handful of rude villages constructed along the banks of the Lenai. They are a squat, ill-formed people with broad faces, shocks of dirty yellow hair, and eyes of dull gray. They dress in 'uniforms' of thick, rough-woven cloth, cut in a variety of styles in order to show rank and areas of responsibility.

Despite the sparseness of their existence, they conduct themselves with a great show of refinement and grace, with careful and exaggerated attention to degrees of rank, proper decorum when dealing with superiors and inferiors, and strict, even fanatical, adherence to a code of conduct and behavior which exceeds that even of the Feathered Princes of Lesser Taveen, if such a thing can be believed. It is remarkably easy for even the most circumspect of travelers to give unwitting offense.

The use of Persuade or Rebuff is at a levy of 1 when dealing with the Wardens, unless your Rebuff style is Lawyerly — only such a mind can work itself around the conditions, exceptions, and variations which the wardens seemingly absorb with their rations of wiskcule squeezings from the day of their birth. Further,

4. See *Field-notes of the Lenai Expedition* by Abich, Curator of the Sapientary.

✿ The Valley Of Cages ✿

conversations with the Wardens on nearly any matter will provoke a Resist Pettifoggery check; those with low resistance to this vice may well find the hours wheel by as ever finer points of protocol and tradition are debated.

Above all else, the Wardens, as befits their name, see to the cages and their inhabitants. According to them, it is the duty given to them by the deity Vortax ‘The All-Seer’, and to violate would mean the destruction of their villages and lives. (Some scholars dispute this account; see below.) They regularly feed the prisoners a mixture of ground river-reed grain, fat from the blorts raised as food beasts, and, a piece of fresh fruit on such occasions as the guidelines⁵ in the Third Volume mandate. That this meal is often grossly unsuited for the prisoners it is to be fed to is a point of minimal concern to the Wardens⁶.

A typical Warden has the following characteristics:

| | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Persuade (Obfuscatory) 4; 4; Health 6; Gambling 1; | Rebuff (Lawyerly) 7; Living Rough 5; Scuttlebutt 2 | Attack (Strength) 4; Perception 2; | Defense (Intuition) Tracking 4; |
| Resistances: Arrogance 1, Pettifoggery 1, | Avarice 7, Rakishness 8 | Indolence 5, | Gourmandism 2, |

The current leader of the Wardens is High Warden Gremmitz Dor, Bearer Of Six Sigils, Holder Of The Green Ribbon, Overseer Of The Four Sectors, and Upper Secretary Of Internal Affairs. He is a man of singular interests, with a keen eye for any sort of deviation from the precise conduct of affairs and little tolerance for slackness, indolence, or inconsistency. He uses *Bulthin’s Boots of Surpassing Peregrinations* (see below) to great effect when dealing with those who do not obey all dictates and decrees with exactitude.

The rituals and routines of the Wardens are worth noting in brief, but the traveler is cautioned that this extremely cursory overview does not begin to explore the intricate overlays of rite and ritual which guide the Warden’s lives. The primary rituals number four: The Rite Of Welcoming, The Declaration of Criminal Trespass, Rite Of Spiritual Enlargement and Corporeal Dispatch, and the Cleansing of the Red Cages.

The Welcoming occurs whenever a new prisoner enters the Valley. Note that random wanderers are not immediately considered prisoners; the Rite Of Welcoming occurs only when a previously empty cage is filled by the will of Vortax. The new prisoner is greeted, a meal is given to him as specified in the Third Volume, and he, she, or it, is informed of such rules as they might be capable of breaking, which are few in number. The Warden’s believe the security of the cages to be absolute, and thus, do not mind attempts by those inside to cajole those outside into freeing them — such means only more prisoners.

The Declaration Of Criminal Trespass: Whenever someone scores an Dismal Failure on a Persuade roll, or attempts to free a prisoner, the Wardens will declare the offender to be criminal and use means from force to trickery to get the miscreant into a nearby cage of suitable size. Once inside, the unlucky wayfarer becomes a prisoner, but, not being among the Chosen of Vortax, his stay will be briefer and significantly more painful. The Unchosen, as such are called, are considered to have sinned against the Society of Wardens and thus must repay their debt to society by serving as models for subtle variations on the Cleansing of the Red Cages.

Rite Of Sending Off: The death of a prisoner is the only time a cage may be opened; on such a joyous occasion, the prisoner is granted his full and total freedom and pardon for all crimes, present, past, and future, that he may commit either here or in any further realm he may choose to live in. The freed prisoner is then used as the basis for a complex and nourishing stew which the wardens consider the finest reward for their loyal service to Vortax.

5. This lays down a complex schedule of dates and rituals.

6. Evidence quoted by Abich, *Field-notes of the Lenai Expedition*.

✿ The Valley Of Cages ✿

Cleansing of the Red Cages: Just above the main village of Wardens are four rows of cages of unusual quality and construction. They are cast in crimson metal which glistens with an odd translucency, and shows no sign of scratch, abrasion, or wear. They are empty much of the time, but (rarely) a prisoner will appear here. This is considered a powerful omen, and any child born on such a day will be assumed to have a special destiny. A prisoner in one of the Red Cages will be fed the finest food the Wardens produce for precisely nine and one-quarter days; then he is removed and is turned over to the Cleansers, who proceed to kill him in a unique style. It is a matter of pride, and concern, that in all the untold centuries the Wardens have maintained their traditions, no Cleansing has ever been performed the same way twice.

The Cages

What is the origin of this place? Who built these cages, and placed the Wardens there, and why? The tale the Wardens tell, of the god Vortax, holds that the Valley is really a form of hell and those in the cages are placed there by the judgment of Vortax to contemplate their errors and eventually reach peace. When they perish, it is evidence such peace has been reached, and joyous songs are sung over the now-holy corpse. They point to the sudden appearance, in the cages, of most of the extant prisoners as proof of this — who but Vortax himself could work such miracles?

Scholars outside the region dispute this, at least those few who bother with the moribund and backwater Sousanene regions. They note that Vortax is unknown to any but the Wardens, and, more importantly, the Theosophers of the Sapitentiary in Val Ombrio have deduced the existence of Vortax would violate the third and seventh ordinances of Zuun The Interpresential, which is clearly impossible, and anyone who says otherwise is likely to be devoured by mire-scorpions⁸. Careful research points to a more likely explanation.

Sometime in the late 20th Aeon, a short while before the age of Dandrios Vuul, a very powerful arch-mage named Avorial Deritass led a conclave of similar mages known as the Twelve Of The Ochre. Avorial was a man of cunning, insight, and perception, but also a man possessed of a certain grandiosity of style which would make even such as Rhialto pause⁹. He was not a man to do things by half, or even by whole, measures — such measures as he used were ultimately ten or hundred times what was needed for the task.

The task in question was to create a central place to contain vatspawn that were not ideal but were yet unworthy of being destroyed; rivals in need of extensive interviews and stern lectures on morality and justice; and half-men and beasts found by the Twelve in their many journeys across the Dying Earth and into prior Aeons. As the talk continued, the idea of a prison or a zoo seemed too limiting, not sufficient unto any need he might someday conceive. So, the Valley was born.

And thus he worked chugs to their limits and squandered indenture points like quarter-terces, until endless twisted tiers accommodating numberless ranks of cages enchanted to indestructibility lined the sloping sides

OTHER RITUALS:

The rules, strictures, regulations, requirements, and formalities of the Wardens defy any scholar's efforts to catalogue, due not in small part to the ease with which such scholars break them. The GM is free to invent, at whim, any restriction which may provide his or her players with amusement, consternation, or confusion.

A few suggestions:

Beginning a sentence with the word 'The' is not permitted during the evening of the full moon.⁷

Four people may not share a table, unless one of them, but only one of them, is a woman with black hair and green eyes.

To sneeze during a meal is grievous offense.

The ends of cloaks must not be more than six inches, nor less than eight inches, from the ground while walking.

The following weapons are not permitted: Knives of more than six inches; single-bladed axes; and sharpened povil seeds.

7. As the Moon was destroyed during the 8th aeon interpretation of this ordinance is somewhat arbitrary. Scholars are uncertain as to its derivation and many maintain that it has more to do with the card game Mynn than any astronomical phenomena.

8. The city ordinances of Val Ombrio specifically forbid maintaining deodand pits or caged erbs within the city limits. Such are the obstructions cast by petty bureaucracy on the path of true wisdom.

9. Although only briefly.

✿ The Valley Of Cages ✿

of what had been until then simply the South Lenai Valley. The place had been built, but to serve a purpose, it needed more.

The cages themselves are imbued with powerful dweomers, rendering normal means of material destruction singularly ineffective. Even spells of the usual sort will fail against these prisons. A sandestin can easily overcome the magic temporarily, at the cost of one-half an indenture point (as the sandestin must overcome the magic of another). The only other known means of egress is to convince one of the Wardens to open the cage, which is an extraordinarily difficult thing — a levy of 2 on all Persuade attempts is mandated when the object is to get a Warden to release a prisoner while body and soul remain intact.

To manage his planned collection of interesting subjects, Avorial chose a family of loyal retainers. He had always intended to add more but his interest was soon focused on other topics and thus he left but the single family there. This, of course, resulted in the current Warden culture, not to mention the extraordinary similarity of feature and bearing shared by all who dwell within the valley.

Unlike most arch-mages, Avorial had many apprentices, some magicians in their own right. Yet he was loathe to teach them the secrets of Sandestin control. For their use, he crafted a cunning hybrid of *The Call To The Violent Cloud* and the *Charm of Forlorn Encystment*, stripping both of many complex interstices and fixing many variable resonances to form a single chord, creating a spell simple to master but grossly limited in utility compared to its parents. The spell, *Avorial's Sign Of Intense Interest*, is described in the *Lavender Libram* as follows:

Avorial's Sign Of Intense Interest

Range: Near

Duration: Instant

Difficulty: Simple

Source: Original

When this oddly-named spell is cast, the subject of the 'intense interest' to Avorial is transported in an instant to an empty cage in Avorial's vast Gaolopolis, the Valley Of Cages. There the target will wait until such time as Avorial discharges said interest. Since Avorial died an aeon past, such a wait will be equal to the length of time for which the victim can survive on thick gruel and thoughts of vengeance. A Dismal Failure with the spell will cause its force to be spent on the caster, placing him in the Row Of Red Cages. (See above.) Avorial did not take kindly to incompetent apprentices.

Items

Every so often a prisoner will appear bearing some items of magic. As the prisoner has no use for them, such items, once detected, will be placed in storage until the prisoner has been freed. Any such items the GM may wish to introduce could conceivably be there. A few possibilities include:

Bulthin's Boots of Surpassing Peregrinations

Transport 1 Person: 5 Points

Item is Attractive and Well Made: +1

Small Transport Item x2

Total Cost: 12 points

Bulthin, a particularly lazy magician who dwelled in Lesser Vandeer centuries before its destruction, crafted this item so that he could keep pace with his comrades while exerting a minimal effort. By saying "Boots, advance me to his place!" and pointing at an individual in sight, the wearer is instantly moved in front of that person. An Athletics roll may be required to maintain full orientation after such a sudden shift.

✿ The Valley Of Cages ✿

The Cloak Of Hydrish Aversion

Defensive Item

Immunity to Water : 1 point

Indestructible by Normal Means: 2 points

Total: 3 points

This cloak, whose creator remains unknown, was removed from a prisoner in the Red Cages some decades past. When worn, it creates in water an absolute fear and loathing of the wearer, such that it will flee his presence. The wearer thus remains dry in any rainstorm, and may even walk across the surface of a lake bottom surrounded by a bubble of air.

Plots and Story Ideas:

a. Cugel-level characters may be traveling to or from Forrel's Port, the main trading juncture for the Sea of Slow Tides. The Lenai is an obvious route, far easier than walking around the Grez Peaks or the Stoop-Shouldered Mountains. This will place the PCs directly into the valley, where they will enjoy the many sights and quaint customs of the inhabitants.

b. The self-proclaimed 'Magician Devneel, Master Of All Spells' grossly misunderstood both the purpose and casting of *Avorial's Sign Of Intense Interest*. This would normally be very little concern to the players, were it not for a slight misunderstanding involving Archduke Obery's prized orchard, his equally prized daughter, and a pit of writhing vral into which the characters will shortly be lowered — and the fact Devneel is the Archduke's indiscreet, but occasionally useful, son. A captive impling has revealed the location of Devneel¹⁰, and certain magics designed to compel obedience have been used to encourage a burst of altruism in the vral-food-to-be. They have nine days to retrieve Devneel, or they will have the chance to closely examine their own livers for signs of disease or degeneration. Turjan or Cugel-level characters could find this a suitable challenge.

c. Rhialto-level characters might find that a long-time rival of their has secured the very sandestin used to construct the valley, and has decided that it is time the valley had a new master. While not nearly so extravagant as Avorial, he nonetheless possesses many traits of the 'arrogant', 'cruel', and 'creative' variety (unlike the unfailingly noble and compassionate PCs) and thus intends to put the Valley to use in ways Avorial planned, but never quite achieved. The PCs, of course, will be his first subjects of interest. While the cages are normally of little concern to a true arch-mage, the presence of the sandestin who built them means that extraordinary cunning will be needed. This works best if one of the PCs (or a valued retainer, perhaps one who knows embarrassing secrets¹¹) is taken, leaving the rest to effect a rescue or find some other solution.

Of Human Bondage

More thrills and excitement in South Sousesane in an adventure for Cugel-level characters

Our story begins in Forell's Port, the largest and most cosmopolitan city in the region of Sousesane. Here, the characters have stopped for a few days of rest, a chance to sample the delicacy of sea spraling with half-bitter herbs and pickled falbi roots, and opportunities to learn some local customs and determine if the stories of the absolute honesty of the inhabitants with regard to games of chance are true. (As it turns out, they are basely false, and evidently begun by the locals themselves.)

At some point, the characters will be pursuing separate agendas, perhaps to avoid those who may appear to be looking for a group matching their description. Regardless of where they go, each group will meet with either Nimosine of Five Eyes or the Witch Zaral:

NIMOSINE OF FIVE EYES, a Magician of considerable skill (but who seems to have but two eyes, and will ignore utterly any question about his name). He will say words to the effect of: "Ah! You are the ones I was

10. Currently dwelling in one of the Row Of Red Cages.

11. "It is written in the High Book of Canzaar Can that 'Those who live not, speak not'. Please do not consider this to be a criticism of your service which, to this point, has been exemplary."

✿ The Valley Of Cages ✿

told about. Excellent. Your pay awaits.” It is virtually impossible for anyone to resist such an entreaty — a Resist Avarice roll at a significant levy is called for if anyone tries. (Besides, whoever Nimosine has mistaken them for clearly is an undeserving cad for missing his appointment) Once the characters have accompanied him to his villa, a structure of six angles and five walls overlooking a small lagoon just outside the main city, he will note that their pay does, indeed, await, and will continue to wait, until such time as they provide him with his beloved and respected mentor Davorian Vall, or, failing that, his workbook in which is inscribed *Phandaal's Whorl Of Great Expanse*. Davorian had left Nimosine years earlier, apparently ensorced by some witch or the like, and had vanished. Nimosine finally tracked him to the Valley of Cages, but knowing the reputation of the Wardens and the powerful magic of the place, took the long way around the Stoop-Shouldered Mountains and made arrangements for mercenaries. He will obliquely hint that he knew the characters were such by their shifty demeanor, crude manners, utter lack of social graces and so forth.¹² When all is said and done, he will make sure the offered reward is something at least one of the characters truly desires, enough to cause him to convince his comrades to help him. He also notes that the precise residence of the apparent destroyer of his mentor would be most appreciated.

THE WITCH ZARAL, a woman garbed, to all appearances, solely in rainbow fog. She is currently residing in the upper levels of Inn Of Blue Respite, where she is surrounded by magical adjuncts and tools of all kinds, at least one or two of which are of great potential value to the PCs. She is seeking her lover, a great magician named Davorian Vall. She would give anything to have him returned whole and well to her, but, should that somehow not be possible, she desires only his workbook as a memento of her one true love. She says he was betrayed by his devious former apprentice, Nimosine Of Five Eyes, who somehow trapped him in the Valley of Cages. The exact location of Nimosine would be an added bonus.

Nimosine and Zaral will both emphasize, in the strongest possible terms and without any room for misinterpretation or confusion, that utter and total secrecy is the first principle: “Nimosine/Zaral is a traitor and a villain, but he/she has many agents and spies, and commands powerful sorceries. Should he/she suspect we have even met, surely, you will find yourselves facing Forlorn Encystment or worse!” They will also downplay any stories about the Valley of Cages, insisting that the natives are harmless simpletons. “Yet, should it seem the release of Davorian might be complex, perhaps it is best to find the workbook first. The Whorl may be all I need to free him.”

The characters will then reunite, and, presumably, head for the valley. Each group should be pleasantly surprised at the willingness of the other to come along.

The GM must decide which story, if either, is true. It is also possible neither Zaral nor Nimosine ever met Davorian. If you decide this is the case, they should say something such as “It is possible his confinement may have driven Davorian mad, so that he does not remember me. If so, fetch the workbook to me with all haste. There is a charm in there to restore full mental vigor.”

Davorian, when found, will prove to be understandably reluctant to comment on where he hid his effects, and will insist only on being released. Should the characters press the issue to excess, he will direct them to a cave in the northern edge of the valley, informing them that the deodand living there is harmless forest creature given the mere *seeming* of a fierce carnivore. The speaking of a complex pass-phrase will undo the spell and allow them free entrance to the cave, when his workbook is contained¹³. His reaction to the names of Nimosine and Zaral is left to the GM, but neither name will prompt him to immediately reveal his secrets before he is freed.

The Wardens, of course, will react with suitable hostility to any attempt to free a prisoner, but (in theory) will permit conversation — provided such conversation does not violate any of their laws, customs, taboos, rituals, etc, which is at the GMs discretion.

The exact effects of *Phandaal's Whorl* are left up to the GM.

12. Should any of them be wearing any sort of armour this will merely reinforce his opinion. Not only that but he will insist it be removed before they enter his home. Mail or plate can play havoc with soft furnishings.

13. The truth of this should be left up to the discretion of the GM. Opportunities for mordant humour abound.



*Iron bars do not a prison make. These are some type of wood.
Consider the many opportunities for quiet contemplation.
An intriguing doctrine, which I shall have to consider at length.
I must consult my references, which will require me to leave immediately.
Surely, such simple folk cannot be any threat to us.
I remain perplexed. Perhaps you could demonstrate?
I do not consider either alternative desirable. I propose a third option.
Cause and effect follow each other as surely as the sun dies.*

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❧ The Three Golden Swans ❧

Steven S. Long

“Perhaps you will accept this sum to spare me the effort of carrying it?”

In the land of Alмеры, not far from the edge of the shadowy Wistol Woods, an odd and ungainly building squats beside a dusty, well-traveled road. From a distance, a traveler may take it for a ruin or abandoned manse of some sort, and thus a place for him to avoid (as it might harbor erbs, or deodands who have made so bold to venture forth from the nearby woods in search of succulent human meat). But if he approaches, he will soon discover, to his undoubted joy, that men have not abandoned this place at all — far from it, in fact. A few steps closer, and he will see the sign of three golden swans above the door and recognize the establishment for what it is: an inn.

THE THREE GOLDEN SWANS: A SIGN OF QUALITY

The building, or rather buildings, containing the inn — known, as even a dullard can guess from the sign, as the Three Golden Swans — were not originally built as a hostelry. From their stone foundations and lower walls, they appear to once have belonged to a small castle, or perhaps some sort of guard-station or counting-house beside a long-lost thoroughfare. Many years ago, the proprietor of this fine establishment, Hosuman Probel, chanced upon the ruins while serving as a junior merchant in a caravan passing through Alмеры. His nose twitching with the smell of potential profit, Probel left the caravan behind and took ownership of the ruins. By dint of strenuous effort, not to mention the expenditure of all the funds he possessed, he built wooden walls and roofs, installed new windows of clear glass, and furnished the place as best he could. After some years of privation and toil, he'd built himself an inn, with which to serve the people and traders of Alмеры and thereby enrich himself. He named the place after a large placard he found amidst the dust and decay, which he polished to a fine sheen and hung above the outer door to draw attention to his new business.



The Three Golden Swans is sturdy but hardly attractive.

❧ The Three Golden Swans ❧

The architectural oddness of the place becomes apparent to anyone who comes close or steps inside. From the outside, a mishmash of materials and styles confronts the eye, reflecting the divers hands which built the Three Golden Swans. Carved stone lintels stand next to crude (but strong) wooden fixtures, and windows like dark eyes dot the four faces of the main building, no three of them on a straight line or of uniform size. Inside, the common room seems unusually large, airy, and bright compared to those of most inns and taverns; patrons who have taken private rooms for the night must climb two and a half flights of stairs but round the common room wall to reach the floor where patrons reside. A large and majestic fireplace presides over a room filled with tables, chairs, and benches, some showing signs of age, others looking brand-new — and all of them a little rickety, since Probel built or fixed them with his own crude carpenter skills. A few equally crude chandeliers, and torches in sconces, provide additional light, giving the place a warm and cheery feel on chill nights. The large, carved mantelpiece over the fireplace, replete with rings from wet mugs left there too long and gouges from knife-fights, testifies to the building's former importance and its current fallen state.

As unusual as the place may look, no one can deny that the Three Golden Swans sets a fine table. The kitchen, run by Mistress Elpha, turns out fare either merely serviceable or elegantly extravagant, as the occasion demands; Elpha's soups and pastries are in high demand among the locals and repeat visitors. The beer and ale, prepared by brewers elsewhere and shipped to the inn by boat and by caravan, delight the palate with their fine, crisp taste, and warm the body after a hard day on the road or in the fields. From noble Vintershale to watery Brinfager, a customer can always find a potable to accommodate both his thirst and the state of his purse.

Besides the main building, the only one most guests ever see, Probel owns three other structures which can be found round the back of the Inn, clustered around a cobbled stack yard. There is a large, well-furnished aviary and stable, which houses both his patron's quortazes and his own as well as other mounts; a storage building where he keeps extra furniture, carpentry supplies, and some foodstuffs; and a small blacksmith's shop where Cosgrove the farrier works.

THREE GOLDEN SWANS

PRICE LIST

BEVERAGES

BEERS AND ALES

Vintershale 1 terce
Shastara $\frac{1}{2}$ terce
Kasarilch 6 groats
Brinfager 2 groats

OTHER POTABLES

Wine 1-3 terces
Liqueur 2-8 terces
Viska-leaf tea One cup free with meal;
additional cups $\frac{1}{2}$ groat apiece

FOOD PRICES

Beef 3 terces
Pork $1\frac{1}{2}$ - $2\frac{1}{2}$ terces
Fowl 1-2 terces
Game (seasonal) 1-4 terces
Fish $\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{1}{2}$ terces

Bread 2 groats per loaf
Cheese 2 groats per round
Vegetable selection 4 groats
Salad 3 groats
Pastries and sweets 1-5 terces

LODGING PRICES

One night, average room 5 terce
One night, large/fine room 10 terces

Stabling 4 groats per quortaz (includes feed)
Shoeing/trimming 1 terce per foot

❧ The Three Golden Swans ❧

The Racetrack: A Place of Merriment and Excitement!

Behind all of Hosuman's buildings sits a broad, flat patch of land where he has contrived a quartaz racing track. Here local grandees, hot-headed youths, travelers, and anyone else who cares to participate can engage in the 'entertainment of potentates' and (perhaps) make a terce or two from a well-placed wager. Hosuman covers many of the bets, using a complicated system of odds-making based on his extensive knowledge of local quartazes, and his well-known ability to evaluate quartaz flesh generally. Fortunately for him, his complex methods confuse many inattentive gamblers, allowing him to transfer the stake from their purses to his own. He holds scheduled races once a week and impromptu races whenever he can sneak away from his duties and assemble enough people to participate.

Probel and His Household: Innkeepers Nonpareil

Hosuman Probel, proprietor of the Three Golden Swans, resembles a starved crow. A mop of untidy black hair sits atop his large-nosed, pale-skinned head. His mouth seems crooked into a permanent smile which manages to convey insincerity regardless of what Probel actually feels. His body, thin and gangly, sometimes appears to want to go in two directions at once, though he actually displays a remarkable dexterity when it comes to not spilling food or bumping into his guests. Probel does his best to project an air of amicability backed by authority. He wants his tavern-goers to enjoy themselves, but if trouble ensues, everyone should know who is in charge at the Three Golden Swans.

Unfortunately for him, everyone does — it's his wife, Elpha. A large woman of imposing appearance and mien, whose florid face gives her a well-deserved look of perpetual distemper, she nominally has authority only over the kitchen and the maidservants, but in truth runs the entire inn. If her loud, brassy voice and ample arms weren't enough to command the attention and obedience of Hosuman and the servants, the kitchen utensils she always seems to have in her right hand would do the trick. One good whack from a rolling pin, frying pan, or wooden stirring spoon suffices to make Hosuman shriek an apology for his ineptitude and scurry to do a better job.

Two forces control Hosuman Probel's conduct: greed; and fear of his wife. With far too many inhabitants of the Dying Earth, he shares the vice of greed. He likes nothing better than the clink of good terces in his palm, and jealously guards his profits. He'll gladly bilk a traveling merchant or adventurer out of his funds if he can find a way to do so without risking his own neck. But cupidity comes in second compared to the terror he feels for his wife. Over their many years of marriage he has come to loath her — her obnoxious voice, her arrogant ways, her overly plump body. But he knows she can break him like a twig, and will if he defies her. He longs for a way to get rid of her for good, so that he can run the Three Golden Swans as he pleases.

Only quartazes and quartaz-racing appeal to Hosuman as much as money. Fortunately for him, Elpha despises the odor of quartaz, and won't go anywhere near the aviaries or the racetrack unless she absolutely has to, thus providing her henpecked husband with a refuge of sorts from her tender attentions.

Unbeknownst to his wife, Hosuman makes a good bit of money betting on races at his track; he hides some, and invests the rest in quartazes (and tells Elpha he won them).

Hosuman Probel

"But of course, sir! Here at the Golden Swan we fervently endeavor to provide our patrons with whatever they desire — for a reasonable fee, naturally."

| | | | |
|---|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Appraisal 7; | Attack (Cunning) 3; | Concealment 4; | Defense (Dodge) 5; |
| Etiquette 5; | Gambling 7; | Health 6; | Perception 4; |
| Persuade (Eloquent) 8; | Rebuff (Wary) 7; | Riding 6; | Scuttlebutt 8; |
| Stewardship 9 | | | |
| Resist: Indolence | | | |
| Possessions: Three Golden Swans Inn, various outfits of clothing, five fine quartazes | | | |

❧ The Three Golden Swans ❧

For her part, Elpha despises her husband as a weakling and a fool. She knows exactly how the inn — and everything else — should be run, and she intends to see that it's run that way. Anyone who doesn't toe her line and obey her orders with precision will feel first the lash of her tongue, and then the force of her hammy fist. Even customers, to whom she is at first unfailingly polite and kind, will learn of her wrath should they misbehave or attempt to cheat her.

Elpha Probel

"Hosuman! Your excuses reek of indolence and sheer perversity. To your labors!"

| | | | |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Appraisal 4; | Attack (Ferocity) 6; | Defense (Dodge) 5; | Etiquette 4; |
| Health 7; | Perception 4; | Persuade (Forthright) 7; | Rebuff (Penetrating) 7; |
| Scuttlebutt 7; | Stewardship 110 | | |
| Resist: Indolence | | | |
| Possessions: Kitchen implements, various outfits of clothing | | | |

The Probel Children: Tributes to Their Forebears ...

Hosuman and Elpha have three children. The two eldest participate, somewhat against their wills, in the family business.

Their first child, a daughter named Chusa, serves as one of the inn's maids. She serves beer and food in the common room, and helps the other maidservants to make up the rooms. A fetching lass approaching marriageable age¹, she has to dodge groping hands and scurrilous comments every evening; Mistress Elpha has broken the pate of more than one patron foolish enough to speak salaciously to Chusa in her presence.

Next in line is Jordell, their eleven-year-old son. He serves as spit-boy, turning the fine meats Hosuman sets on the spit every evening. He hates the dirty, sweaty job, but knows full well how his mother will deal with him if he skimps his work. Like his father, he loves quortazes and quortaz-racing; Hosuman has hopes of making him into a rider in a few years so he can get rid of the likes of Gurdick Frinn.

The Probels' youngest child Rhutha is but three years old². Although she's supposed to remain in her room during the evenings, she usually sneaks out to sit on one of the stairway landings, where she occasionally earns a groat or two by her sheer cuteness and learns words her mother would definitely prefer she not know.

The Servants: Industrious and Diligent³

As an inn of size and reputation, often well-frequented by persons of means and taste, the Three Golden Swans employs several servants to ensure the highest quality service. Chief among them, at least in terms of pay and the respect accorded them by patrons, is Cosgrove the farrier and poulter, whose domain is the small smithy and leather workshop next to the stables. Cosgrove mainly makes and repairs tack for quortazes, but he can also shoe most mounts, make minor repairs to weapons or armor, and even forge crude blades. After he closes the smithy at dusk each night, he sits in a corner of the common room, intimidating troublemakers with this thick-sinewed arms and fierce glare. If necessary, he picks up brawlers, card cheats, and people who attempt to default on their bill and throws them face first, out the front door — then drags them back inside so Hosuman can extract any sums due for services rendered or necessary repairs.

In addition to Chusa, the Golden Swans has several maidservants to



A metal plate found in the ruined buildings shows a farrier and that rare animal, the 'Equine' or common horse.

1. Indeed in less reserved parts of the Dying Earth, at seventeen she would be considered in danger of being left on the shelf.
2. Her conception remains something of a mystery to Hosuman. When in his cups with his cronies he has been known to attribute his lack of memory of the incident to the excellence of his ale.
3. Readers will doubtless be delighted to know that as a respectable publication the *Excellent Prismatic Spray* is licensed to use irony, satire, and even (under certain controlled circumstances) facetiousness.

❧ The Three Golden Swans ❧

keep the floors and tables clean, the customers well-supplied with food and drink, and the rooms tidy. They range from Gerta, a bony old impertinence of a barmaid, now past the first flush of middle age, to Seeta and Rilka, twin sisters of eighteen years whose pert beauty excites many offers from drunken patrons proffering employment of a somewhat more lewd nature than their present positions. Even were they inclined to accept these eloquent proposals, Mistress Elpha keeps them too busy for such activities.

To keep his kitchens and spits filled with meat, Hosuman has hired a local fellow named Bettol as his huntsman. For every acceptable game animal or brace of fowl Bettol bags, Hosuman pays him an agreed upon amount of terces — which Bettol quickly spends on drink or cards. Though shiftless to the point of exasperation, Bettol genuinely enjoys hunting and always manages to roust himself out of his bed early in the morning to pursue prey. He gladly accepts emoluments from inn patrons to bring them particular types of game for Mistress Elpha to prepare.

Hosuman gives over responsibility for the health of his five fine quortazes, not to mention the quortazes of his customers, to the aviary boy Varmulk. A thin, lanky lad of ten, Varmulk possesses an intellect belying his years. He craftily sizes up the patrons who lodge quortazes in Hosuman's aviary, easily discerning who he can bilk out of a few terces with one of his schemes, and who will not fall for his wiles. He also serves Hosuman by helping him to cheat at quortaz-racing. If a patron has a particularly noteworthy quortaz to enter in a race, Varmulk arranges to administer a mild soporific made from a local herb to the hapless fowl, thus allowing Hosuman's steeds to win more often than not.

The Quortaz or Almeran Racing Fowl

The quortaz, a creature commonly seen throughout certain parts of Almerly and Ascolais, is considered a hybrid of wading stork and an unknown ungulate herd animal or animals, with a short, sturdy body resting atop two long, spindly legs. The adult has a fine tan coat on back and flanks, with black feathers appearing amongst the longer hairs on thighs and forelimbs. Tufts of larger feathers on the knees and elbows of adults provide distinctive patterns of coloration which allow keen-eyed observers a way to tell one quortaz from another. Gamblers everywhere know the quortaz as a swift animal well-suited for racing. Though strong, its long, often fragile legs generally render it unsuited to hauling burdens or pulling carts. But it can easily carry the weight of a single jockey along a track and across a finish line with sufficient speed to win a clever or fortune-blessed bettor a terce or three.

Quortaz racing has its own risks; the animals are often fractious and ill-tempered, and a rider thrown from so tall a mount almost invariably suffers injury when he hits the ground. Quortazes live wild in some places. The males of the species jealously guard their herds of females, and their claimed territory, from other males, and indeed from any other creature which seems threatening. They have been known to attack even men, charging to the assault and delivering powerful, deadly kicks with their legs. Some folk make a good living catching wild quortazes for racing, or even shooting them for their flesh (which, when properly prepared with a blend of herbs, has a sweet, savory taste).

The Regulars: Scions of Nobility All

One who visits the Three Golden Swans with the regularity demanded by its fine cuisine and scrupulous service will, of a certainty, come to recognize others like himself, who find the inn's attractions too enticing to resist. Like a brotherhood of knights



A juvenile male Quortaz, as indicated by emergent feather tufts at the knee and elbow and first growth feather crest.

❧ The Three Golden Swans ❧

chartered by a duke of Grand Motholam returning to their lord's keep to seek his accolades, these notables visit the common room of the Swans on a daily basis, perhaps in search of the wisdom one can only find in the bottom of a mug of fine Vintershale.

Seated at his customary table near the fire, Gurdick Frinn dominates the conversation in the room with his loud, clear voice and well-formed opinions on a myriad of topics. A short, thin fellow, almost the mirror opposite of Cosgrove when it comes to physique, he works for Hosuman as a professional quartaz rider. His winning ways at the quartaz-races have led Hosuman to provide him with free room and board (though he must buy beer with his own winnings). Once he starts to lose, he will quickly find himself thrown out into the cold to find his fortune elsewhere.



When Elpha is present one dare not linger in the kitchens of the Swan.

As his partner in jocularly, Frinn has chosen Roden Skeers, a fellow of average appearance who affects the style of dress of a wealthy dilettante. He obtains the funds to buy such fine apparel from the purses of other patrons, for he is a gambler of consummate skill. With deft fingers he always manages to deal cards or throw dice so that the results favor him. Hosuman tolerates him, and his constant attempts to bed one (or all) of the serving-girls, because he attracts business, buys food and beer, and gives the innkeeper a five percent cut of all his winnings. (Hosuman intends to enlist Cosgrove's help to negotiate a higher percentage for himself soon.)

For at least a few nights every month, Juberal Phelterates graces the Three Golden Swans with his presence and his custom. A rich, accomplished trader whose caravan plies the roads of Almerly and beyond the Fallen Wall, Phelterates professes to find the food and drink at the inn unparalleled, and describes Mistress Elpha as "the most beauteous and skilled kitchen-keeper in all the land!"

Having wrapped Elpha around his little finger with his charm, he has skillfully blinded her to the fact that it's her daughter with whom he truly wishes to establish a greater intimacy.

Orazhion the Shadow-Worker

Another flagon of this excellent Vintershale and then we shall give you a chance to master the prism.

| | | | |
|--|---------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Charming 12; | Eloquent 6; | Penetrating 11; | Pure Hearted 6; |
| Cunning 10; | Cautious 7; | Misdirection 13; | Intuition 10; |
| Etiquette 8; | Perception 9; | Pedantry 12; | Magic (Curious) 15; |
| Health 8; | | | |
| Resist: Indolence, Gourmandism | | | |
| Possessions: A purse of magical coins ⁴ ; Tube of Blue Concentrate; Prism of Projection ⁵ | | | |
| Spells: Excellent Prismatic Sphere; Spell of the Omnipotent Sphere; Phandaal's Gyrator; Phandaal's Mantle of Stealth; Liberation of Warp | | | |

Undoubtedly, the locals who drink at the Swans would describe Orazhion the Shadow-Worker as the most unusual of the inn's regular patrons. A magician of no mean ability who resides in a three-domed manse of crystal and chalcedony not far from Hosuman's establishment, Orazhion is one of those rare wizards who seems to enjoy the regular company of his fellow man. Like a field worker or clerk, he spends many an

4. These coins allow the user, with but the most minor of cantraps, to make them disappear and then reappear on command out of the clothing, ears, mouths, or any other orifice of anyone within six feet of the caster.

5. When set down on a flat surface such as a table, the prism will project the thoughts of one person facing one of its long sides and project them on the wall opposite as moving pictures. With long practice Orazhion can control his thoughts.

❧ The Three Golden Swans ❧

evening in the Swans, whiling away the hours over glasses of wine and a joint of Bettol's latest prize. When moved by whimsy or strong drink, he sometimes entertains his fellow patrons with minor magical effulgences.

Using the Three Golden Swans in Your Stories: Wondrous Possibilities Abound!

As a person of notable intellect and perspicacity⁶, you have no doubt discerned that the chief use to which you might put the Three Golden Swans is as an encounter for your troupe of heroes. While described as a venue in Almery, it could exist nearly anywhere in the world of the Dying Earth — in the Land of the Falling Wall, in the midst of some merchant-traversed waste, or beside a river where sailors traffick cargoes of various sorts, to name just a few examples. Once your characters have the pleasure of arriving at its doors, they might find themselves involved in a wide variety of mishaps and adventures. Characters with a penchant for gambling, may be drawn to one of Roden Skeers's games of chance, or to participate as bettors or competitors in the frequent quortaz-races. Hosuman might even enlist their help with one of his schemes to rig an event... or to get rid of his bothersome wife.

Characters of less daring bent can enjoy the food and drink the variety of beverages available in the Swans, or perhaps attempt to make the acquaintance of one of the delightful maidservants. Of course, that could quickly bring the wrath of Mistress Elpha down upon their heads. Perhaps a discussion of the philosophical verities with Orazhion would prove safer and more enlightening... assuming, of course, he does not take offense at something they say, or even the foolish cut of their hats, and challenge them to a contest of magic. There are other possibilities. As a GM you are no doubt a person of high intellect and exquisite taste, moved by a spirit of noble self-sacrifice to take on the burdens of game moderating as a way of entertaining others. To assist you in this fine endeavor, we present the following additional ideas for stories featuring the Three Golden Swans. Season to taste and serve to your players with a side dish of dramatic whimsy.

SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE: If Hosuman can cheat at quortaz-racing, so can the PCs. Through chance or diligence, they notice Varmulk's stash of herbs, realize what he's up to, and prevail upon him (with threats or money) to rig the races in their favor. Naturally they make a great deal of money at first, but eventually excite the suspicion of Hosuman or some other patron, are discovered, and must flee ahead of a pack of enraged gamblers (with luck remembering to take their possessions and hard-won funds with them).

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER: On their way to the Three Golden Swans the characters have the good fortune to bring down several game animals, or perhaps a large brace of fine fowl. These they use to pay their tab at the inn for several days. Bettol, concerned they may imperil his job (or at least cost him money), begins a concerted campaign to make their lives miserable and drive them away. If they're clever, they can catch him at his tricks and exact an appropriate revenge.

THE HIEROPHANTS OF MARGUZH: The characters arrive at the Three Golden Swans after a long, tiring, and perhaps danger-filled day of travel. Their hopes of hot baths and fine meals are dashed when they discover the Hierophants of Marguzh, a group of lofty-minded and arrogant-mouthed pilgrims, has occupied all the rooms in the inn. If the characters want to spend the night indoors in a nice bed with a hot meal in their bellies, they're going to have to find a way to trick or rob the haughty Hierophants. But beware; it may be that Marguzh is a jealous and protective god, or that one of his worshippers has some skill with magic...

THE CONSEQUENCES OF JOCLARITY: The characters make the acquaintance of Orazhion the Shadow-Walker, who fortunately for them takes no offense at the cut of their hats. During a long evening of drinking and card-playing, they lose all their funds to him and indeed go a long way into debt (perhaps he has magical assistance?) and must find some other way to cover their bets. Orazhion, not wanting to discommode his new friends too much, sends them on a quest to recover for him a certain trifle he desires for his collection of jade figurines, a carved game-piece in the form of a crouching beast. Oh, he almost forgot to mention — this object is currently in the possession of Prince Kandive the Golden of Kaiin...



An unhealthy ability to elucidate the wiles of the racing fraternity speaks of a misspent youth.

6. Unless of course you merely borrowed this magazine from a more astute friend.

❖ Three Cozener's Expedients ❖

Colin Speirs

'We prostrate ourselves before the fish-god Yob, who seems as efficacious as any.'

'The unworthy are to be shunned by decent folk' or 'We don't want you here'

The town gate of Thearsphane is, unusually, for these decadent days, guarded by a uniformed functionary with slung shield. This muscular oaf seems a little too fond of menacingly flourishing his sword to be admitted into polite company. He peers at your throats and, not finding anything there to his liking, spits in the dirt at your feet before announcing:

"This is Holy Thearsphane. Infidels such as yourself are not permitted to walk the streets after dark. Best find yourself someplace to stay and wait the night out, or better yet, camp outside the walls for the night and do not defile the Holy City."

At that he removes an amulet from under his cloak, kisses it, and replaces it again. If glimpsed it appears golden, with a crystal or similar in the center.

The town is bustling, with people conducting business as per normal, occasionally bringing out these amulets and kissing them at the beginning or the end of their conversations. Directions can be found to an Inn that undoubtedly charges a slightly higher rate for 'Infidels.' ("We have to boil the sheets afterwards, you know.")

The town itself is built in rings around a domed structure that is guarded night and day by more burly louts in uniform who refuse entry to all not wearing the amulet and do not hesitate to prod those turned away with their weapon points to drive home the full measure of their disdain.



A detachment of the Thearsphane Temple Guard hastens to its post.

CLOSE EXAMINATION of any of these amulets show that the amulet is a golden disk with three concentric, circular ridges embossed upon it which surround the central crystal. At the bottom of the amulet the three ridges are cut though by a continuous furrow which leads directly from the crystal to the bottom edge.



If a character asks about these amulets then they will be told that they are the symbol of the Holy Temple of Thearsphane, symbolizing the layers of the Temple that surround the Treasure chamber. The standard response is "No one can enter the Temple who does not wear the badge of our faith ... if the outer sanctum is too holy to be defiled by infidels, imagine how much more Holy are our Inner Treasures! If it were not for them then the Sun would already be Dark. The Temple is our Holy Place: Only those who bear proof that they are not profane and wear the symbol of their purity are permitted access".

The GM should remember that the townsfolk look upon on the Infidel as lower than dirt. Their manner varies from individual to individual but should be categorized as either Obfuscatory or Contrary, and someone with a Penetrating manner might receive some clues that something is behind these haughty manners, perhaps a suspicion of fear. In the town there are some merchants who sell amulets to the faithful, but they will not to those who are obviously outsiders — except one rather down-at-heel merchant who can be easily persuaded to sell for only a mildly extortionate price. The players should be able to beat the merchant

❧ Three Cozener's Expedients ❧

down, gaining some small victory with their wits. The merchant will offer this snippet of information:

"The Temple has three layers, the Outer, the Middle and the Inner. The Outer and Middle are where worship occurs. We are told that the Inner is too Holy even for most of the faithful to enter, for that is where that which brings light to the World is kept."

It can safely be assumed¹ that the group will try one of three things:

Those of a more brutal nature will attempt to gain an amulet by theft or violence. If this occurs a Hue and Cry will be raised, but it will not catch the characters (though you can have fun chasing them). They will not be recognized later as the thieves.

Those of a more mercantile cast of mind will be tempted to purchase amulets from a questionable source while the simply unimaginative may attempt covert entry. If the characters purchase amulets, then they can try to infiltrate the Temple along with the nightly worshippers. All that is checked is the Amulet, there are no passwords required.

Finally, for those who choose covert entry there are more entrances than the main door. A glance at the illustration so thoughtfully provided shows that there are many windows, latched but not locked. There are Patrolling Guards who have a regular patrol. This is as regular as clockwork, the pair of guards takes ten minutes to walk around the building in each patrol. Because of the shape of the building any given point is invisible to the patrol for at least nine and a half minutes.

The Temple

As described it has three layers, each separated by a door: if all the doors were open and the Temple was viewed from above then it would look not unlike the Amulet. None of the inner doors have guards.

By the Door to the Outer Layer (which is well-guarded) is a plaque which reads 'Do not enter unless you wish to learn. Never be ignorant in the Temple of Thear'. Most townsmen stay in the Outer Layer, reading the texts that accompany instructional friezes, detail the work of previous generations, or worshipping the 'Gem of Thearsphane' which keeps away the Darkness.

By the Door to the Middle Layer is a plaque which reads 'Do not enter unless you wish to serve. Never be arrogant in the Temple of Thear'. The Middle Layer contains fewer worshippers: they read and transcribe Holy Texts and undertake such mundane tasks as cleaning the Layer.

The Door to the Inner Sanctum is an imposing double valve bound in bronze. The sides and lintel are covered in rococo carvings and in the middle of each door is a plaque with the same message: 'Do not open unless you wish to give of yourself. Never be parsimonious in the Temple of Thear'. When the inner door is opened there is a screen which conceals the center of the inner room from gaze. One must walk into the room and past the screen to find out what lies in the center, though a brilliant



The Temple of Thearsphane.

1. Certainly the town's inhabitants make this assumption.

❧ Three Cozener's Expedients ❧

glow is visible through the screen like a thousand sparkling fireflies. On entering the room the person will find themselves in a huge, darkened chamber much larger than the inner room appeared from the outside. In the center is a lit throne upon which sits an idealized statue of a man, some eighteen feet high.

If they approach the supposed statue it speaks and starts to rise.

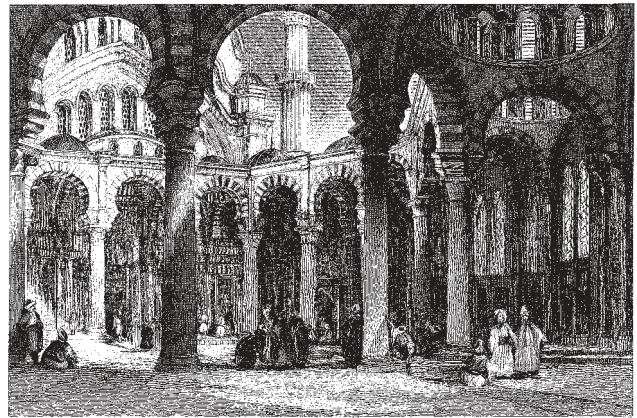
"I am Thear and I hunger, but I eat only that which willingly comes to me ..."

What happens next is up to the wits of the character. Thear is vain² and can be flattered. He genuinely believes that his presence is required to stave off the death of the Sun, but he gets bored here so he might release a prisoner with some kind of restraint, like *Firx*, to retrieve some bauble or trifle to entertain him. This would naturally be a dangerous quest.



'Alas for the plight of the honest man' or 'Paranoia is not your friend'

In the Market of Raphaen are many stalls, selling food and clothes as well as the more usual esoteric items of mystery. One stall that stands out is the one which proclaims itself 'Sabharu the Honest's EMPORIUM OF DELIGHTS'. Sabharu is simply dressed, and his hat lacks some of the curlicues and flourishes of the truly civilized. His stock is most intriguing; the stall is overflowing with artifacts from a variety of ages and artistic values, there are such things as leather scroll cases, grimoires, devices of crystal and metal. Sabharu will extol the various virtues and delights of each of the things he has to offer ...



"The Perfume of the Third Hipparch of Ellicos, the merest emanation of which will imbue the inhaler with the skills and insights of one of the finest military commanders of his age."

"Maps to treasures beyond the ken of man or demon: things from aeons past, things of which we have lost every whisper of knowledge."

"Crystals containing energies that make magic a thing of ease, though beware they might make one susceptible to transformation into an archvult, or worse, potential enslavement."

"A potion here I have, just the merest sip, barely a taste, and your member will be so rampant as to aid the satisfaction of your Priapic whims."

"Ah now, here we have the Grimoire of Gachsghi, a mystic who plunged deep into the mysteries of IOUN stones, while in this somewhat smaller volume ... here... we have three spells efficacious in aiding the traveler."

The Market is held within the confines of a spectacular ruin.

Value of the artifacts has to be judged with an eye on your campaign; they should be valuable, but not totally out of the reach of a diligent and hard-working character.

For example, in a Cugel-level game, a map to a treasure in a city only exposed from its current location under a shallow lake by the actions of summer drought or a cunningly built coffer-dam might be valued at 80 terces, a grand sum for a Cugel-level character, but should be upgraded to an intriguing barter for a Turjan or Rhialto-level game.

2. Such vanity is only to be expected in a powerful demon. *Magic* cast at him will be ineffective, although bringing the roof down on his head is going to slow him down. If combat is attempted he attacks with Ferocity 20 and defends with Sure-Footedness 18. He has Health 25. In discussion he will use his Forthright 15 and Rebuff with Penetrating 10. He will not leave the temple.

❖ Three Cozener's Expedients ❖

"There you have found no other thing than *Bridali's Invaluable Portable Shelter*. At rest it resembles nothing more than a walking staff, but, if you see that ring around the staff, push it towards the wider end and out pops silken canopies and fine mesh nets for the shelter of the user and relief from biting insects. The other end, pointed, can be driven into the ground to form a tent."

No matter what he has, the claim he makes is correct: his goods do what he claims of them, possibly more, never less. However it must be remarked in passing that each is subtly cursed to bring bad luck to those who acquire them by illicit means. This curse involves Levies on those abilities involved in the use of the goods stolen. If the theft involves the death of the previous owner then the curse is even more powerful. It imposes a minus one Penalty on all abilities .

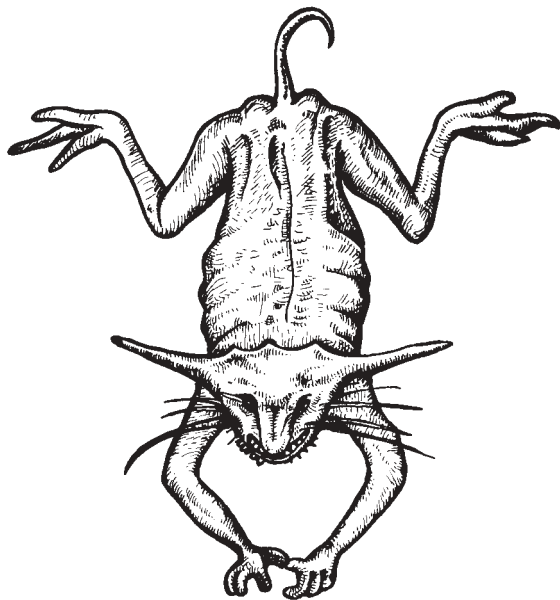
To relieve oneself of the curse, return the object to the rightful owner or, should none be known, deliver the object to a reputable temple as an offering. Sabharu the Honest will also teach people the curse (for a not unreasonable sum), should they be able to convince him of their good character.



The curse of the Tazz'k

This should take place over a period of two to three days as they approach a town or village, particularly one surrounded by terrain that affords cover along the trail leading to it. As the group travel they will experience a host of minor annoyances and accidents. Girths of riding beasts will be cut, as will straps of belt pouches. People will trip up, cups and goblets will be spilled, whispered words will cause arguments. There should be a couple of days of this (although other encounters should be arranged to break up the monotony and make the mishaps a little less obvious at first.)

These mishaps are caused by agents of a travelling gang who set up in a town, play their scam on travelers, and then move on. The agents (normally working in groups of two) are stealthy coves who possess a spell, the little regarded *Leddirass's Umbraculum of Stealth*. This provides concealment not unlike *Phandaal's Mantle*, but only results in invisibility if the target remains within a shadow; in total darkness or in a beam of direct light there is no actual invisibility, only if there is a shadow from a light source.



A Tazz'k as depicted in shades of ultramarine, pavonian and gridelin highlighted with gold on a tapestry in Elhembree's caravan.

While the more active agents of the association launch their secret attacks, others set up the elegant eight wheeled caravan of 'The Arch-magus Elhembree the Kindly, Scourge of Spirits and Master of the Seven Exorcisms of Tukah-Day' in a central town or village. In front of the caravan, seated under the awning that screens the door from the sun can be found Troatbind, Elhembree's servant, who tends the caravan and screens visitors from the Arch-magus. At regular intervals, or on the arrival of large parties, he declaims in the square.

"My master, Elhembree, is kindly to mankind in these troubled days. Rather than seek the riches and rewards of an estate, as do so many of his exalted rank, he seeks to spare mankind the depredations of spirits and demons so that they may enjoy their lives in peace. We are here but for a few turns of this ancient Earth, so if you are troubled by spirits of any kind, petition my master and be rid of them forever. Whether it is sandestins who drain your magick or Tazz'ks who wreak havoc upon you, petition Elhembree (who offers his services for free) to rid you of your tormentors."

✿ Three Cozener's Expedients ✿

And of course this is the ruse, although Elhembree 'offers his services for free', Troatbind regrets that he, alas, is concerned with worldly matters such as ensuring his master can eat and that his transport is maintained, and thus must ensure that a few terces (10-20 per individual seen by the master) be donated "for goodwill you understand, I regret it deeply — but I must insist".

If an exorcism is paid for then the attacks will cease, otherwise they will continue for another day or two outside the village. After that the agents will give up and return to await another incoming victim.

The agents use strange tools to achieve their ends. One is a long handled pole with a very sharp knife on the end for cutting straps from a distance. Another, much favored, is a sectional pole that assembles to form a kind of fishing rod for filching small items from below whilst the agent is up a tree.



Personally I find the symbolism both redundant and archaic

*Statuary of such proportions has not been fashionable for over a aeon.
No wonder they take such efforts to conceal it.*

Alas that I am temporarily short of funds. Would it be possible to extend some form of credit?

*Your selection of merchandise is indeed extensive and not without interest. However I am forced to wonder
about its possible authenticity.*

Surely I have seen similar before, although admittedly it was not so extortionately priced.

There are those who would seek scapegoats merely to excuse their own lumpish nature.

Who knows what strange creatures pilfer and intrigue under our dying sun?

For myself I would prefer not to spend my days with foot pads, hoodwinks, sundry imps and incubi.

Are you a clever, adventurous soul?

But do you speak plainly, clearly and precisely?

DO NOT FEAR

I, ATTEL THE ELUCIDATOR, Eleemosynary Educator of the Asces, will transform you from a plain-talking stay at home to become the acme of volubility and grandiloquence. Shed your breviloquent and duncical ipseity and equip yourself with my arsenal of vocal and lingual techniques with which to vanquish the many jealous competitors you may encounter.

Beguile those you encounter, be they deodand or gid, magician or barbarian warrior, so that adversaries transform into benefactors and all seek to fulfil your desires and divest themselves of riches

TO YOUR BENEFIT.

To avail yourself of this transcendent opportunity apply to Attel the Elucidator, Eflin by the Asc.

ALL LESSONS 1 TERCE

The reward offered for the return of monies stolen from Pausath of Aan is rescinded,
the thief having been found deceased and bereft of funds.

Betelk of Rhaun, Seeker of Lost Things

❧ An Opportunity ❧

Displayed below for your pleasure we have a picture by Dave Bezzina, one of our many talented artists. This picture could well grace any scenario. The opportunity we offer is for you to write a short (between three hundred and four hundred words) plot which explains the picture. Obviously this plot must be set somewhere on the Dying Earth and should be in keeping with the work of Jack Vance. Equally obviously in a mere three hundred words we would not expect you to adopt the Master's prose style.

We have decided that the best submissions will be published in a later edition of our august publication. We have also pondered the matter of a reward for those whose literary ability shines from their work as a fulgorant gem in a dish of pebbles. Obviously mere terces would not be enough, for what use are terces when the sun may blink out at any moment? Instead we offer the respect of your peers, the adulation of masses and the awed esteem of the literary establishment. Also, one participant will be invited to repair to Kaiin where they will receive, at the hands of Hisan Erberg, several volumes of verse by the poet Mortiquan.



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We have a scenario from the pen of Robin D. Laws, Gary Gygax on how the work of Jack Vance shaped his approach to the writing of Role Playing Games, and Phil Masters in person has provided some interesting *Tweaks* to enable you to get the best from the rules. We also provide much else that is useful. *Turgubut's Fatal Statistics* shows what might happen when spells are miss-cast. Steven S. Long's *The Three Golden Swans* describes a hostelry that will prove immensely useful in any setting. And in the *Cozener's Expedients* shrewd locals try to trick the party, separating them from their hard-earned money or (in extreme cases) their lives.

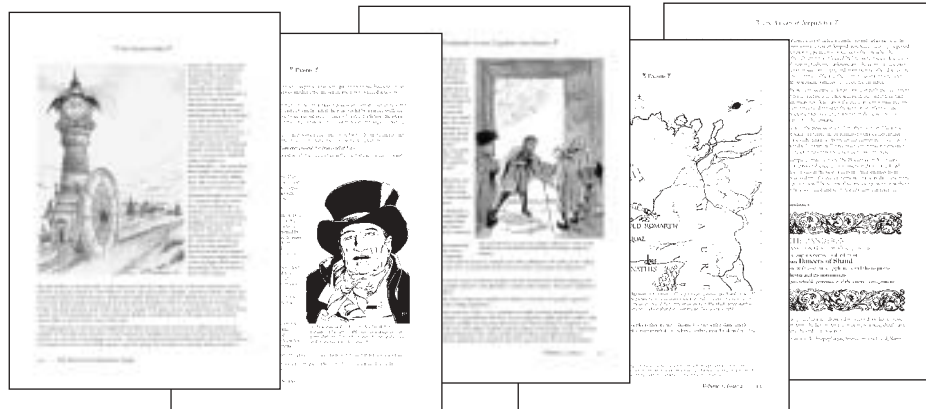
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