

The Excellent Prismatic Spray

An adventure supplement for the Dying Earth RPG

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❧ The Excellent Prismatic Spray ❧

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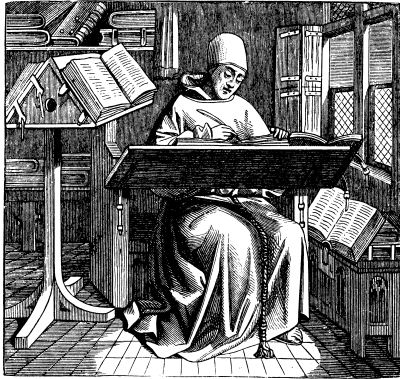
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✿ Editorial ✿



It is with a feeling of honest pride we present for your delectation and delight the third edition of *The Excellent Prismatic Spray*. Our cunning and successful ploy of publishing scenario supplements in a magazine format continues apace.

It should be noted that once more authors of the calibre of Robin D. Laws and James Maliszewski grace our pages, new contributors and valued stalwarts rub shoulders in easy familiarity. We have settled upon a consistently useful range of articles, with scenarios, gazetteers and background material, and our third element, 'plot hooks' in the form of 'Cozeners' Expedients' and 'Exotic Vistas' with which an overworked GM can enliven an evening of entertainment.

Even as I write, our minions are preparing another project, the Subscribers' Website, where a wealth of further material will be made available. Passwords will be sent to subscribers when the site is ready, enabling them to access additional unpublished information and scenarios, as well as forums for discussion of the finer points of play.

Finally it is perhaps apt for me to remind persons of literary merit that we are still desirous of acquiring the services of writers of solid accomplishment. Indeed with 'Cozeners' Expedients', 'Exotic Vistas' and similar categories of work one can contribute to the magazine without having to produce several thousand words of exquisite prose. Now if you are suddenly struck with an idea for a piece of a few hundred words it will find a valued if not overly lucrative home. All persons wishing to submit work are invited to contact the editor.

This volume of scenarios is merely one of many. Farsighted and mathematically literate individuals may subscribe for to four issues (including postage) for a mere £30 in the UK, or \$45 US and Canada. Those from elsewhere please contact Pelgrane Press and we shall calculate as economical a rate as is possible to suit your convenience. And, as yet another method of expressing the unbounded admiration with which we regard those who subscribe, they are to receive (at no extra cost) their password to the Subscribers' Website where much further will soon be revealed ...

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✿

It is with some regret that the management are forced to announce that their previous practice of having junior members of staff throw crusts to beggars, destitute scholars and starving artists will be halted forthwith on the request of the Kaiin guild of beggars who felt that the undignified scramble ensuing was bringing their profession into disrepute. As a result of their representations we have decided that we shall return to our original policy of having such undesirables driven away with whips and scorpions. We thank you in advance for your co-operation in this matter.

From our readers...

Sir:

I note you have continued with your insidious plan to malign my good name and character despite my protests. Whilst taking a constitutional along the Chambers Walk, I heard two disreputable students tittering over yet another article by my colleague Grashpotel, and muttering about madness. One, an artless fellow, addressed me in a familiar fashion and asked if I really was “a loon like the article said”. After I had set the maugifiers on him, I turned to ‘Turgubut’s Fatal Statistics’ in which a reference on page 25 implies that I am insane.

Even were I to ignore this libel, the detritus of shoddy scholarship, half-baked theory and poor research that has washed up on your pages is a slap in the face to all scholars of merit. I expect no better of my colleague Grahspotel, but he is my social equal and we can discuss the matter in the comfort of the Symposium refectory. You and your editorial staff, however, are a lesser class of person. Unless you immediately publish a suitable retraction, I will take pleasure in crushing your putrid organ by whatever means I find most amusing.

Is this publication poisonous? I ate the last volume.

Perrin
Inferator of the SyncreticSymposium

Sir,

In your last issue, you published a letter from me demanding that you sent three wine tasters to compare three varieties of Golden Porphiron in order to determine whether High Derna Heart is the finest.

The three tasters you sent, mooncalves to a man, failed utterly to identify the wines, even after consuming a crate of each from my cellar. My position is therefore vindicated, and I demand you publish a retraction of the same length as the original article.

Perrin
Inferator of the SyncreticSymposium

The Editor replies:

I have checked the details with my staff and it seems that there has been an unfortunate misunderstanding. Knowing your sensitivity, the management decided to send a group of ladies to test the wines. This party, comprising Plintha, Lactree and Pic, was routed from your doorway with accusations of harlotry. The three “tasters” you invited in were apparently three mendicant philosophers who have been haunting the town for some time, trying everyone’s patience with their obscure symbolic representations and irrational delineations. They were later found collapsed in a drunken stuporous mass and have been ejected from the area of the Scholasticarium.

Dear Sir

Following the instructions in “A Beginner’s Guide to Vat Creatures”, I created a tall, lithe young man who I thought might be useful about the house. My pleasure turned to horror when I found that he can only utter rhyming couplets penned by the poet Mortiquan. Where did I go wrong, and what is your recommended course of action?

Lainther of the Quincunx

We can only extend our sympathies while pointing out that abandoning your creation at the editorial offices was a most discourteous action. Kindly collect it immediately or we shall have to take the strongest measures.



Erberg and Parraifel, Booksellers
Copied to The Excellent Prismatic Spray so that others may know of my righteous wrath

Sirs

It is with a distress beyond the comprehension of your dullards’ intellects that I have received your impression of my “Ode to the Dead Sun”. Do you have no wit whatever? Can you truly be unaware of the significance of this work? It is the dying song of humanity, the song of songs, the last of all songs, that song, which I, Mortiquan, have penned to lament the final death

of our ancient world. A poet alone might seek to encompass such magnificence, such tragedy, and that poet is I, Mortiquan, chosen after all to pen the final words on the endeavours of all that was man. When the gods weep over our lost race, it will be my name that takes the final place, my ode which concludes the vast tale, the greatest tale of all. Such words as I have chosen are truly fit only to be sung out to the ultimate night, unfit for mere vellum, yet by the insistence of so many I have chosen to set them down, in a limited edition of one hundred, on the finest regal charta, bound in limp hide of newborn farlocks, the colour of damask rose.

So, what is this travesty I see before me? Is it some attempt at abstract humour? A malicious prank perhaps? Certainly I cannot credit it as an error.

The hide is pink! Pink!! PINK!!!

Yours in rage
Mortiquan

❧
Sirrah

I have just finished reading 'The Air-cars of Ampridatvir' in your scurrilous and generally disgraceful publication. You have utterly neglected to mention that there are significant differences between various models. The early "Type One" are distinguished by firm trim and a real leather seat. Later "Type One" models had only some inferior imitation leather. The control panel of the latter

differed in being counter sunk into the front mounting, although illuminated from behind. The differences between Types Two, Three and Six (Type Four appears to be a pre-production version of Type Five which was withdrawn after only six were manufactured) clearly require elucidation if your readers are not to remain misled, but an illustrated article would be more suitable than a mere letter to the editor. I await your invitation to submit my manuscripts.

Zelbachao
Secretary, The Mechanical
Devices Correspondence Society

❧
Dear Sir

It is with some trepidation that I pen this missive, but I feel that what I have to say needs to be said. I have read your publication with growing disbelief. Why must you always pander to the selfish whims of the self important? We have the Grand Domestic of the Walls of Kaiin, (and what did Perrin ever do for us?) ranting and raving, issuing threats to all and sundry, yet what is your publication doing about the night soil collectors of Saskervoy? You have totally omitted any mention of their dispute which has been going on for some months and has seen some of the leading citizens of our town forced to carry buckets of ordure through the streets. The situation is becoming grave, indeed one respectable maiden lady of mature years was deluged when someone emptied

a chamber pot from one of the upper rooms at the Inn of Blue Lamps.

This situation must not be allowed to continue. Already a learned committee is sitting on the problem yet the matter remains firmly unresolved. Cogent thought is needed to resolve this matter rapidly before the entire town sinks under the weight of its own filth. The dispute must be remedied, the night soil collectors must realise that charging three dinkets per bucket is beyond reason and their demand for a soap allowance (when did one ever see a night soil collector wash) can only be construed as some form of hollow jest.

I would like to take this opportunity to propose that matters concerning charging be set firmly aside and we ponder instead sundry grievances that have been aired of late. The insistence that citizens limit themselves to a one ell bucket per person per day is obviously absurd, but the demand that citizens only use one ell buckets is not unreasonable. To see an aged night soil collector struggling to tip a three ell bucket of guerdons into his stash barrel is to realise that something is amiss. I would suggest that with a reasonable approach on both sides, matters could well be arranged to everyone's satisfaction.

Cdr. Pertenth (retired)
Villa Incarnadine, Saskervoy

✿ Rules To Mock Your Vain Ambitions ✿

Design Notes on the Dying Earth Roleplaying Game

Robin D. Laws

We've made extensive use of quotations from Jack Vance's Dying Earth stories, both in the main rulebook and in support materials. But in this case I'm going to deviate from custom and instead begin with the words of David Mamet, the noted American playwright and film director:

"I like mass entertainment. I've written mass entertainment. But it's the opposite of art because the job of mass entertainment is to cajole, seduce and flatter consumers to let them know that what they thought was right is right, and that their tastes and their immediate gratification are of the utmost concern of the purveyor. The job of the artist, on the other hand, is to say, wait a second, to the contrary, everything that we have thought is wrong."

I've been designing games for a living for almost ten years now, and in that time I've been blessed with the opportunity to work on some extremely satisfying projects. The offer from Pelgrane Press to serve as lead designer on the Dying Earth Roleplaying Game gave me a special jolt of excitement. Ever since I first read the Dying Earth stories during my university days, I've considered them perhaps the only works in the entire fantasy genre with a claim to genuine literary merit.

Jack Vance is a professional fiction writer of the old school. He's surprised that there are still people making a fuss about his Dying Earth stories. He was just trying to write and sell some good yarns, he'll tell you. I don't know if he would be flattered or embarrassed to find some weird game designer guy arguing for his elevation into the hall of literary greats. Whether he likes it or not, I have to put forward the proposition that Jack Vance is to fantasy what H. P. Lovecraft is to horror: a writer who uses the trappings of genre to express a unique and personal vision, and its pleasures to lull us into accepting a dark and ultimately subversive portrait of human existence.

While the Dying Earth stories are wildly entertaining, they are not mass entertainment, at least not in the sense David Mamet talks about. Their protagonists are not the red-blooded, two-fisted heroes of action-adventure pulp, obvious avatars of virtue raining justifiable mayhem down on equally obvious villains. The Dying Earth does not express the earnest Christian worldview of J. R. R. Tolkien, or the formulaic "forces of good versus eternal evil" histrionics of his innumerable trilogy-spewing imitators. Vance belongs to the more jaundiced American tradition of satirists like the writers Mark Twain and H. L. Mencken, or the directors John Huston and Billy Wilder. The Dying Earth's visual wonder, rich sensory detail, and, above all, its hilariously rarefied dialogue, are all delivery systems for a depiction of human nature that is neither flattering nor reassuring. In its mirror, we see ourselves in all of our pettiness, indolence, contrariness, and selfishness.

*While the Dying Earth stories are wildly entertaining,
they are not mass entertainment ...*

The classic roleplaying experience — let's be honest here, for most gamers, it's still D&D, after all these years — is very much about power fantasy and wish fulfillment. It's about going up in levels and seeing what cool new powers you get when you do. It's about killing bad guys and keeping their stuff. Hey, they're chaotic evil, right? The deserve it, don't they?

To borrow some sentence structure from Mamet, I like D&D. I've written for D&D. But if the Dying Earth roleplaying game felt remotely like D&D (even with that game's borrowings of Vancian surface details, like spell memorization as a limit on magic users), it would justly be described as a creative failure. It would be a betrayal of the key elements that make the world worth adapting into a game of its own in the first place.

✿ Rules To Mock Your Vain Ambitions ✿

So, as far as rules and game mechanics were concerned, the game had to depart from many standard assumptions of the RPG. These include certain assumptions rooted in D&D, but also a number of beliefs cherished by gamers who regard themselves as true, sophisticated roleplayers.

If you want to evoke a different feeling than the default RPG, you need to design anew from the ground up, which means starting with the resolution system. The mature Dying Earth stories (those in the last three books) are tales of one-upmanship and reversal. The main character is always a little too smart for his own good, and his fortunes ebb and flow with a regularity he never seems to take note of. Sometimes he is the swindler, sometimes the swindled.

*Jack Vance is to fantasy what H. P. Lovecraft is to horror:
a writer who uses the trappings of genre to express a unique and personal vision*

To evoke this pattern, I needed a system of thrust and counter-thrust, where contests between characters take center stage. It also had to be one where results are not always what they seem, hence the reroll mechanism. The books' frequent reversals of fortunes dictated a system in which both Illustrious Successes and Dismal Failures happened (or, given the reroll mechanism, threatened to happen) with great regularity. That dictated a very coarse system with a very narrow range of possible results — that is, reliance on a single six-sided die.

This choice had a nice side effect. Maybe I'm crazy, but I've always found that the different dice used in RPGs all carry different emotional temperatures. The d4 is primal, parsimonious, and, as anyone who has ever stepped on one knows, hostile. The d12 is your goofy uncle, the one who tells you stories you aren't supposed to hear and asks you to pull his finger. The d20 is a serious-minded juggernaut of decimal regularity. The six-sider, on the other hand, is a Dying Earth die all the way. A cube, it is elegant, spare, and classical. As the die used by normal civilians, the d6 offers a kind of bridge out from the world of RPGs, just as the Dying Earth stories straddle the boundaries between genre fiction and literature.

Now, I'm sort of kidding here, but not entirely. The real point is that game design choices have emotional resonances, and I've always felt that designers are often inattentive to them. A resolution system is more than just a way of generating a desired set of statistics and probabilities. After a game session, mathematically inclined players may enjoy arguing probability theory, but what really keeps people coming back to the RPGing table is a sense of identification with the characters, and a desire to see what happens next. In other words, they're drawn in by the same impulses that involve us in any narrative. A designer needs to know the statistical results of his resolution system, more or less, but, to my mind, needs ultimately to make his decisions on emotional grounds. A film director does the same thing when he selects a certain color scheme for his film, or decides how he'll frame the close-ups in a given scene.

Moving out from the resolution system, we see other ways in which the DERPG seeks something other than the reassurance and gratification of mass entertainment. The combat system provides a prime example. In today's entertainment culture, saturated as it is with action movies, we're used to having our RPG characters engage in extended scenes of cartoonish violence in which we get to blow off steam, forget the pressures of the school or working day, and revel in our boyish fantasies of physical mastery over others. Don't get me wrong: if you know my other work, you know I groove to a well-executed action movie as much as the next guy. But in the Dying Earth, combat isn't choreographed by Yuen Woo-Ping. Always described quickly and briefly, it's short in duration and dangerous in consequence. Consequently, it's a thing to be avoided at all costs. The lengthiest (sort of) combat sequence is one in which Cugel devoutly attempts to avoid fighting a ghoulish ("CIL", from *Eyes of the Overworld*.)

So in DERPG, you don't get to be hit countless times before you have to start worrying. Once you get hit once, you suffer a levy that puts you on a quick downward spiral. Really there are three health conditions: Perfectly Healthy, Dead/Defeated, and Time To Run Away Now. The odd thing about more usual combat systems, which generally let you plow through dozens of enemies in the course of an evening, is that they lend you a false sense of invulnerability. You forget to run away when you're in trouble. Not so in the Dying Earth, where fleeing is a thing to do early and often.

✿ Rules To Mock Your Vain Ambitions ✿

Instead, the cut-and-thrust you'll more likely engage in throughout a session is verbal. Just as the stories devote much more time to negotiations, disputes and quibbles, I wanted a persuasion system that was just as robust and suspense-filled as the combat system. This brings us to an element of the game that may vex some dedicated roleplayers who are otherwise ready for an arch, literary RPG: if you fail to rebuff another character's persuasion attempt, you may find yourself losing control of your character, as he is convinced to do something you wouldn't choose to have him do. Although the book offers you an out if you're incapable of getting past this element of the game, I felt justified in including it for two reasons. First, I didn't want to shield players from the absurdity of the game's humor. If Cugel or Rhialto are repeatedly humbled, so must you be. More crucially, if Persuasion contests were to sit at the heart of the game, as the source material demanded, there had to be real consequences to failure, or they wouldn't seem to matter. Some people would rather have their characters die than to lose their sense of control over them. I think this stems from an overactive fear of embarrassment, which some players transfer to their characters. I would like to suggest, as delicately as I can, that these folks are perhaps most in need of a dose of Vancian rueful absurdity. One of the chief lessons of the book, whether we're dealing with Cugel's tendency to sabotage himself by taking his swindles one step too far, or even background details such as the ruined stadium of Mad King Shin, is that our proud efforts to control our environment are, in the long run, doomed and foolish.

*Nothing you can do as a GM will do more to bring the Vancian feel
to the game than the player's efforts, no matter how modest,
to speak like Dying Earth characters.*

The rules contain other traps for the player whose credo of total control over his PC at all times masks his true identity as a control freak. The game's tagline system literally puts words in your mouth, rewarding you for the adroitness with which you weave bits of Vancian dialogue into the game session. Again, this is an area where I felt I was taking a necessary risk. Some players who wouldn't bat an eye at the idea of having their (as opposed to their characters') puzzle-solving or tactical skills put to the test may freeze up when a similar demand is made of their verbal skills. It's almost as if certain education systems are making people afraid of words. As much as I might dislike this fact, it is a reality. And, indeed, there is an alternate improvement point system for people who just can't get past it. But I urge people to try, and GMs to encourage reluctant players, because if there's a single distinguishing factor that makes the Dying Earth stories what they are, it's the dialogue. The real point of the tagline system is to get players used to the idea of speaking in that distinctive voice. My experience suggests that most players will start to formalize their speech, at least a little. And a little is all that you need. The object is not to have every participant extemporizing perfectly-tuned Vancian lines. Even the odd verbal flourish or gratuitous cavil will do the trick. Nothing you can do as a GM will do more to bring the Vancian feel to the game than the player's efforts, no matter how modest, to speak like Dying Earth characters. The tagline system is a stepping stone to that goal. (I was going to use the metaphor of training wheels, but that isn't appropriate, because a well-floated tagline can be uproariously entertaining even after everyone has mastered the rudiments of Vancian speech.)

Experienced roleplayers may also be taken aback by the bonus you receive for allowing your ability styles to be chosen for you by a random die roll. It bribes you into taking the choice that's more fun, whether you're ready to admit it or not. By taking this option, you embrace the caprices of fate, and, right from the outset, display the fatalism characteristic of the Dying Earth¹. While most games and settings benefit if the player puts a great deal of advance thought into the character's past history, personality, and unique character concept, all of these elements are completely out of place here. Most Dying Earth characters behave in essentially the same way anyhow! You're not really having your character's personality

1. Whenever possible, I try to give an RPG's character generation process an emotional resonance that matches the nature of the project. To cite another example, my game Feng Shui, based on Hong Kong action movies, requires you to start out with a character template, in an effort to get you to embrace the stereotypes that are at the heart of that genre.

✿ Rules To Mock Your Vain Ambitions ✿

determined for you. That happened when you decided to play the game in the first place. Such is the nature of existence in the 21st Aeon.

You could look at the decision to write the rules text in Vancian mode as a necessary risk, too. We knew that some players would be put off by words like “Quotidian.” Again, though, I felt that the style and tone of the source material was the defining element of the material, and had to be hammered home in every way possible. For every player turned off by the use of big words they’ve been schooled to recoil from, we reckon there’s another ready to revel in the untapped richness of the weird and wonderful English language. Talking and thinking like an obfuscatory arch-magician is a huge part of the fun of playing this game. The style of the text had to reinforce that.

There are mordant, Vancian jokes embedded deeply in the rules. The fact is that high ability scores do not help you as much as you might assume, from your experience with other game systems. Some people conclude that this can only be an error in design. Of course, the relative inefficacy of high ability numbers is absolutely intentional. No one, not even the mightiest arch-magician, is free from potential humiliation. No action you take does not contain within it the potential for an enormous backfire. The residents of the Dying Earth scorn excessive ambition as a hopeless folly of ages past. We represent this, in part, by making the player’s efforts to rack up high scores through improvement ever more irrelevant.

That’s not the power fantasy on which almost every RPG is built. We could have catered more to that impulse, but at a terrible cost. We’d be undercutting one of the fundamental messages of the Dying Earth, and, with it, the entire point of doing the game in the first place. We take heart by looking at the small handful of other games that dare to flout our hobby’s love affair with power fantasy. Among them are some solid cult successes. First among them was *Call of Cthulhu*, another game that, in fidelity to its source material, pits the ultimately useless and doomed efforts of PCs against a background of imminent doom. Compared to what inevitably happens to your *Call of Cthulhu* character over time, the perennial embarrassments and reversals of your Dying Earth character will seem positively mild. The Warhammer roleplaying game brings that sense of doom into a fantasy context, again with results much more damaging to the PCs than a clever Cugel type will ever have to worry about.

Our hope is to join the ranks of those two games as another fun alternative to the roleplaying mainstream. Their players may not compete with D&D in raw numbers, but their loyalty is mighty. We think we can find a good crowd of people who, after they’ve first uttered a line such as “You are a scoundrel, and physically repulsive to boot!” just won’t look at their 12th-level paladins in the same way again.

Presumably, if you liked the game well enough to pick up this supplement, we can count on you as being in that number. Now it’s up to you to spread the word, introducing others to the twisty pleasures of Vancian roleplay.

As you cast your eye back over my opening quotation, you might catch me out in my clever stratagem. By praising your rarefied tastes and your presumed resistance to the gross flatteries of mass entertainment, I am, in fact, flattering you. I must plead guilty to this charge. And I’m not the first designer to curry favor with his customers ... that is to say audience ... by telling them that their sense of literary merit entitles them to feel a sense of superiority over other gamers.

Except that, in this case, it’s true.



A GRANDEE OF ALMERY, now resident in the fine manse Pergolo, seeks SUITABLE FEMALE COMPANIONSHIP. It is not possible to say how long such an untrammelled exploration of the further shores of wild passion and unrestrained abandon could last; applicants must be inventive and not object to whistling between the teeth.
Applicants to send an accurate likeness.

Jack Vance

The Vance Integral Edition

Paul Rhoads

The Vance Integral Edition (VIE) is a world-wide Internet-based project dedicated to the promotion of the extraordinary work of Jack Vance. Despite his apparent status as a secondary author in the realms of science fiction and fantasy (to judge by what one sees, or does not see, on the shelves of book stores) the VIE considers Vance to be, quite simply, one of the greatest authors of the 20th century.

The VIE book set will include over 130 texts, some never before published, and all brought into conformity with the author's intentions. Original titles will be restored. *The Dying Earth*, for example, will bear its true title: *Mazirian the Magician*. Chapters added by editors to two of Vance's books will be removed. Editorial tampering with phrases, words and punctuation will be corrected, in all cases where we have the manuscript evidence to do so. The VIE will be contained in about 44 handsome, bound volumes, and will constitute a permanent archive of the Vance *œuvre* (on sale only as a set, by subscription from the VIE website; projected date of delivery: December 2002). This not-for-profit project is made possible by an international volunteer effort. Volunteer motivation is threefold: First: gratitude for the pleasure and inspiration this exceptional author has given them. Second: consternation that most of his books are out of print and that many editions are marked by sloppy or disrespectful editing, and disgraced by inapropos presentations conceived in a spirit of crass commercialism. Third: the wish that others might discover this great artist.

Vance is known, if at all, as a science fiction writer. Yet he does not consider himself one. He does not even like science fiction. He is also known for his fantasy, though only a tiny percentage of his books might be put in this category. Connoisseurs are aware he has written several murder mysteries, including three under the name of Ellery Queen. (The texts of the Ellery Queen books are so corrupted however, that Vance has disowned them. Since the original manuscripts are lost, they will not be included in the VIE.) Is Vance merely a versatile writer of genre fiction? He himself might make this claim. His readers know better.

“Vance is known, if at all, as a science fiction writer. Yet he does not consider himself one. He does not even like science fiction.”

Vance's early literary influences were Edgar Rice Burroughs, and the now forgotten Jeffery Farnol. Vance states that as a boy he was captivated by the atmosphere generated by Burroughs' stories. Yet atmosphere is exactly the quality which, for a mature reader, Burroughs lacks. Apparently Vance's youthful imagination lent qualities to these adventures which can be found only in the work of Vance himself. From Farnol, in addition to a manner of no nonsense and fast paced story-telling, he seems to have learned a taste for high and fine language. But the effete Farnol quality is utterly absent from the robust and varied Vancian manners. Vance's preferred twentieth century author is P. G. Wodehouse, a far finer and more complete artist than is generally admitted, whose influence on Vance can be traced throughout. Another important influence, traceable particularly in Vance's fantasy, are the Oz books of L. Frank Baum. The paramount qualities of Vance's fantasies are whimsy and social criticism. The title *The Dying Earth* is non-Vancian because it suggests an atmosphere of sophisticated melancholy, absent from the work itself. *Mazirian the Magician* retains the fairy tale origin of Vance's inspiration, and the antic quality of the stories themselves. In any case, Vance is adamant about this rectification. Another title the VIE will rectify is that of the book known as: *The Eyes of the Overworld*. Vance points out that this title, in all logic, should have been: *The Eyes of the Underworld*. The correct title is of this book is: *Cugel the Clever*, which is consonant with Vancian simplicity and whimsy.

The Vance Integral Edition

Jack Vance is a great author. He merits to be discovered by anyone with a serious interest in literature. He deserves one of the first places in the literary history of the twentieth century, not for his influence which has been, sadly, negligible, but for the sheer artistic stature of his work. A word is therefore in order about the special circumstances which have prevented Vance from wider exposure. Vance's work is built on low and solid foundations. Totally absent is any hint of pretension to artistic 'progressiveness' or 'modernity'. All his books were written for money, often at the request of a publisher, and intended only to entertain readers — in the nineteenth century fashion. Over all, Vance's writing may be said to begin as adventure for boys, to evolve through the various genres already mentioned, eventually to emerge as something new. What is this new thing? It is impossible to define in a word or to indicate by a comparison. With a certain justice Vance may be called a comic writer but his stories cover the entire spectrum of human experience. Though he can be ribald, he eschews vulgarity, and he is unfailingly respectful of the intelligent and high-minded reader. If it is true that Vance is essentially a comic, it is impossible to deny his acute sense of pathos and tragedy. The philosophical aspect of his work is essential, yet his capacity to generate and maintain an utterly compelling atmosphere is a purely literary virtue. What can be said without hesitation is that Vance is, first last and always, a writer constantly gratifying to read, and reread, and a story teller whose mastery of the English language is one of the monuments the future will inherit from the twentieth century.

Vance has not been accorded a place in literature. He is known only in a narrow circle within the narrow circles of science fiction and fantasy. He would have preferred to write more mysteries but these never did well and he was not invited to do more. A measure of how little known he is, even within science fiction and aside from the unavailability of almost all his books, is that more Vance is sold in French or Dutch translation than in English. His way out of this impasse can not be a move to the top of science fiction or other genres because his work, being in fact none of these things in essence, can never please the mass of genre readers. Vance must be lifted by main force out of the categories in which he has been allowed to languish. This is the goal of the VIE.



ERBERG & PARRAIFEL of *Kaiin*

Sellers of Manuscripts, treatises and sundry documents
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TRAVELS WITH A GREEN PARASOL

A lady's travails in the lower Scaum Valley

by VERENDICA

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Patrons are requested to remember that we still stock a considerable number of volumes of the works of the Poet Mortiquan. These are to be awarded free, *gratis* and for nothing to commendable customers and those passers-by judged to be of a suitable scholarly demeanour.



*Devotees of the Prophet
Quand debate the fate of
the author.*



We are certain that the entire readership will join us in expressing felicitations to Grisa "Ironfist" on his retirement from position of Master Vexationist of the Arrearage Rectification Department. Congratulations to "Tooth Pliers" Shema on her promotion to this high office.



✿ The Gold and Amber Cabal ✿

M. D. Jackson

‘Diligence, Discipline and Dignity, that is what we seek.’

GM’S INTRODUCTION: the characters for this campaign are assumed to have reached the level at which they feel that they can consider themselves Arch-mages¹ but have not yet learned how to summon and bind a chug. Gaining this last piece of knowledge will earn wide acceptance in their exalted estate and will allow them to rub shoulders with the great.



Word spreads that Crysadon the Wise has formed an association of mages called the Gold and Amber Cabal. The members are pledged to refrain from injuring each other and to work together to further the advancement of magic. Rumors abound as to the membership of the Cabal; Crysadon is silent on this topic, although some arch magicians of great renown have been linked with the project. Crysadon has also announced that because he wants to bring fresh blood into the profession, he is willing to help lesser mages to rise to the level of Arch-Magician, and to do this he will teach worthy applicants how to summon and bind a chug. Successful candidates will therefore be able to summon and bind to indenture Sandestin. To prove themselves worthy, the candidate must succeed in four tasks.

- ✿ They must participate in an Erb Hunt and slay an erb in an acceptable manner.
- ✿ They must create a magical artifact.
- ✿ They must either create a new spell or simplify a well-known complex one.
- ✿ They must act with grace and dignity at the inaugural ball.

The inaugural ball will be held in a year’s time and candidates will have to present themselves with their artifact, their new spell and their erb skin cloak on that day.

If a character knows an Arch-Magician and makes a successful Scuttlebutt roll, they will discover that many of the learned are of the opinion that Crysadon the Wise is forming the cabal to increase his own reputation. He is well regarded and treated with courtesy by most other Arch-Magicians, yet he is not of the first rank. Crysadon hopes that acting as Preceptor of the new cabal will increase his status. Cynics suggest that Crysadon hopes that this will ensure him entry to the Syncretic Symposium of Kaiin.

Characters who are linked to the Scholasticarium in Kaiin should also attempt a Scuttlebutt roll. They will discover that senior members of that institution approve of the concept of a series of tests prior to membership of the cabal. At the very least, it will ensure that members of the cabal will be persons of some refinement who can be trusted to eat their soup with the correct knife. Lesser lights within the faculty contemplate attempting the tasks themselves.

During the course of the year, it is inevitable that some characters will find they do not have all the information available in their library or their researches take them down a blind alley. This being so they will be forced to take drastic steps. They must try to remedy the shortages, they can steal someone else’s work or they can try to find a collection of lost artifacts and pass some of them off as their work. Depending upon just how many players you have, you may want to have an NPC mage² working towards



The unprepossessing appearance of Crysadon the Wise belies his hunger for social status.

1. The more skeptical opinions of a wider world are not canvassed at this point.

2. The Kaiin Source book includes details of several suitable candidates in the section on the Scholasticarium.

✿ The Gold and Amber Cabal ✿

membership who the GM can use to set an example of duplicity and subterfuge which players may wish to follow. The nature of the adventure is such that it can run simultaneously with another adventure series, giving characters something to occupy themselves with during the lulls. This is to be encouraged. The nature of the Dying Earth is that characters are buffeted by fate, ‘maintenance of aim’ is a forgotten concept and life must surely consist of more than a blinkered pursuit of one particular goal.



Crysadon the Wise

Let none think we would accept ill bred louts, puissant or not, into the ranks of our cabal.

Courage is needed to face the greatest trials in the arts magical.

There will be a meeting of aspirant mages at the Kaiin town house of Crysadon the Wise where they will register their interest and be briefed as to the tasks ahead. They will then be given one year to fulfill the tasks. Note that while killing an erb takes relatively little time, the training necessary to learn the proper techniques is going to be somewhat time-consuming. With a good trainer you can add 1 die roll to your relevant pool per week of uninterrupted training. You still must have the Improvement points to pay for the skill improvement.

Initially at least, play is a little different from the norm. Before the game even starts, players will be asked to provide plans and other details of their character’s manses. The rule book covers this topic.

Once the players have arranged their manse to your mutual satisfaction, they will spend a considerable amount of time at home in their own manse. Unless players specifically wish their characters to travel for some reason, the game proceeds one month at a time. Players make their rolls in turn to see precisely what they achieved in their work rooms each month. To create magical items you need not merely knowledge and a good die roll, you need Improvement points. It is almost certain that characters will not have them to spare, especially as they are going to have to put points into combat skills so that they can kill an erb.

Either from congenital idleness or a shortage of time, the characters may wish to acquire things from tombs or similar places through use of Applied Archaeology³. Your characters must first make a successful Pedantry roll to come across reference to a suitable location mentioned in the books of their library⁴. By ‘suitable’ we mean one which is little known and is unexplored. After all, it would be something of a gaffe to present an artifact to be judged, only to have the judge glance at it and comment that when they looked through the contents of the lost tomb of Jurrow the Heinous, they had not bothered with anything so trivial.

Having discovered a suitable location, they must then make another successful Pedantry roll to find its location more exactly. Here an Illustrious Success means that the site is within a hundred miles of the tester’s manse. A Prosaic Success means it is within a thousand miles of the tester’s manse. A Hair’s Breadth Success means that the site is more than a thousand miles away. Between them the party will eventually discover somewhere reasonably suitable.

Now the GM has a nice little evening’s sub-campaign, THE QUEST FOR THE LOST TOMB. The characters who need to find the tomb go on the expedition while those whose character does not want or need to participate may take the role of assistants, bag carriers, sundry porters and similar riff-raff. This gives them plenty of opportunity for role-playing in a truly Vancian mode without worrying too much about the consequences.

IT IS PROBABLE that most characters will reach an impasse in magic artifact creation or are unlucky with their die roll on designing a new spell, or merely need Improvement points. You as GM must give them a chance to resolve these problem. This means that this campaign can be run in parallel with other campaigns, allowing for travel and adventure necessary to gain the Improvement points.

3. This term covers a multitude of sins, ranging from actual tomb robbing to careful exploration and excavation of a lost city.

4. Alternatively you may have a suitable adventure already to hand, or your players may well have come across a potential site in some previous adventure.

❧ The Gold and Amber Cabal ❧

A sample situation is provided here. GMs will doubtless improvise upon the theme for other venues.

When successful Pedantry rolls are made, the characters will have been reading through a copy of *The Day Books of Dibarcas Maior*, written by Maior's apprentice and long time companion Asn Chorwit. Dibarcas Maior studied under Phandaal the Great and the Day Books present a fascinating insight into the work of an Arch-magician who is still regarded as one of the greatest of the craft. The character discovers that their copy has a postscript written in Asn Chorwit's own hand; the postscript is folded up tight and has been used as a bookmark by the last person to use the work. This might have been Chorwit herself, as the book has not been much handled. The postscript reads as follows

I laid the body of my master to rest in the Valley of Graven Tombs. His body I buried deep, with no vast mausoleum but fearing for the future I hid it, using it as a repository for sundry artifacts I no longer have the facility to transport with me. So that the tomb can once more be found I erected two pairs of monoliths, each pierced by a single hole. When a watcher stands in the right place the holes in a pair of monoliths are so aligned that the flame from a lighted torch held behind the most distant monolith can be seen through the hole in the nearest monolith. If one stands on the grave site one can see the lights through both pairs of monoliths simultaneously. One pair is situated on crag above the Scaum where the rock drops sheer to the water. The other pair is on a knoll which rises stark out of the valley bottom. The monoliths are made to be easily overlooked, but anyone casting *Liberation of Warp* will find things easier.

It should be noted that a variant of the spell *Liberation of Warp* is included in the book itself.

Should the party hasten to the Valley of Graven Tombs a couple of Perception rolls will find the crag and the knoll. There is also a small agricultural village there called Viliyat. Many of the inhabitants work in the Tanvilkat vineyard in the appropriate season, cultivating their own garden plots at other times. The Monoliths are not obvious. Should a character quarter the area methodically they will literally bump into them and then they will be visible, draped over with foliage or hidden in dappled shadows. If the searcher remains looking at them they can continue to see them, so long as they remain in line of sight. If the observer takes their eye off them and looks back, the monolith will have disappeared again. This can be remedied either by the spell *Liberation of Warp* or by applying a coat of brightly colored paint to the monolith while you can still see it.

The paint has one advantage over *Liberation of Warp*⁵. If the spell from the book is cast by the monoliths on the knoll, some unusual perclusions mean that it cancels the spell *Forlorn Encystment* which has held a deodand imprisoned since the burial of Dibarcas Maior. A ravenous and somewhat disorientated deodand will appear between the two monoliths immediately at the end of the spell casting and will attack the nearest person on sight.

These minor setbacks overcome, the character (with a minimum of two assistants) must wait until dark to be able to line up the holes in the monoliths with the flaming torches. This leads to the second problem. While it is difficult to be absolutely sure, it seems that the tomb of Dibarcas Maior is now below the common room of the Viliyat Inn. The floor of the common room is covered with stone flags on which sit heavy wooden tables, each flanked by two benches. At one side is a long bar with a door



Horswort is likely to consider the excavation of his common room floor a major inconvenience. What if a valued customer were to suffer injury through a fall?

5. In fairness we must point out that when using the spell you do not face the risk of having your finer garments soiled with bright coloured pigments.

❧ The Gold and Amber Cabal ❧

leading to both kitchen and ale store. The common room is busy from evening to late at night, quiet then but for the snores of those travelers who sleep peacefully under the tables (there being no other accommodation), and quietly brisk through the day with Horswort the Innkeeper serving meals and providing hospitality to thirsty travelers. The ale is passable, a dark heady brew made from barley grown on the bonefield south of the tombs, while the wine is made from grapes collected from some of the less well known tombs. It is decidedly acceptable and the house specialty (neaps marinated in a dark red wine before being stir-fried with grated salt meat and diced vegetables) is excellent.

Horswort is by nature wary, and will quiz all visitors as to the reasons for their presence. Due to his constant exposure to Tanvilkat wine and Bonefield ale he has a natural affinity for magic. He knows *Lugwilder's Dismal Itch*, *Rhialto's Green Turmoil* and wears *Laccodel's Rune* on a pendant around his neck (a gift from a mage who made it for him in return for many excellent meals). He takes a dim view of individuals who dig up the floor of his inn without having the decency to explain the reason why and will not hesitate to use magic to make plain his displeasure.



Horswort

'I'll have you know this is a respectable house and we'll have none of them sorts of carry ons!'

Persuade (Eloquent) 6;	Rebuff (Wary) 11;	Attack (Cunning) 5;	Defense (Dodge) 7;
Health 5;	Magic 4;	Appraisal 6;	Athletics 4;
Concealment 2;	Etiquette 8;	Gambling 6;	Pedantry 7;
Perception 6;	Quick Fingers 2;	Stealth 2;	Stewardship 10;
Wherewithal 3			

Once the characters have found an excuse or opportunity to dig up the common room floor they must dig down a full six feet before coming to stone slabs six feet square. Although not exceptionally heavy⁶ these slabs are awkward and it does mean that the hole must be of a considerable size to uncover a full slab. On lifting a slab they find a chamber. In this chamber are many useful artifacts. There is also an *Astounding Oral Projection* spell cast on the back wall of the chamber, which is triggered by extra weight on the chamber floor. It speaks the following phrase once before disappearing.

"Greetings. Take what you find here, given freely to all comers. But dig no deeper and do not disturb the rest of Dibarcas Maior whose vengeance is not to be scoffed at."

Should anyone dig through the floor of the chamber looking for the tomb proper they will strike it a further six feet further down. If living flesh touches any surface in the second chamber this triggers a spell of *Relocalisation* cast on the chamber itself. The owner of the flesh is immediately transferred to the surface of the sun⁷. The only object to be found in this second chamber is a stone coffin containing the dust that was once Dibarcas Maior.

In the upper chamber there are the following artifacts:

The Cap of Long Nerves. This is a rather plain little hat with a mere three tiers. Anyone wearing it can cast Clambard's *Rein of Long Nerves*, once per day, on any subject they can see.

Rod of Dissolution. This is a slender rod of white gold, set with a single garnet on its tip. Anything unliving and smaller than a dead rhinoceros which is touched by the garnet is instantly turned into a small pile of dust. Note that this includes the scabbard so it makes the rod an unwieldy object to carry around. Dibarcas Maior wore it thrust into the side of his living boots.

Pendant. This is Laccodel's Rune, incised into a single giant pearl.

A Belt. When worn this belt will immediately enhance the appearance of the wearer, granting them boons to

6. A charm of Brachial fortitude is all that is necessary. Or two farlocks, one hundred ells of cart rope and two large sets of block and tackle.

7. Which while dim and greatly aged is still a place too hot for human life to exist without magical assistance. The gravity also presents insuperable problems to all but the best equipped.

❧ The Gold and Amber Cabal ❧

Persuade rolls when using Charming or Eloquent. There is also the added advantage of making the wearer more attractive to the opposite sex giving a boon to Seduction.

With these items to pick among the characters should well be properly equipped to attend the inaugural ball. In spite of their success so far they should not forget that there is still the small matter of the erb skin.



*‘Yes gentles, it’s an erb spear. Wield it with conviction... or at least
with the long metal pointy bit aimed at the erb.’*

‘You are supposed to kill it cleanly with one swift blow, not hack it to death with a thousand cuts.’

Wuzzar

‘Excuse me gentles, but you are supposed to insult the damned erb, not seduce it with your tender words’

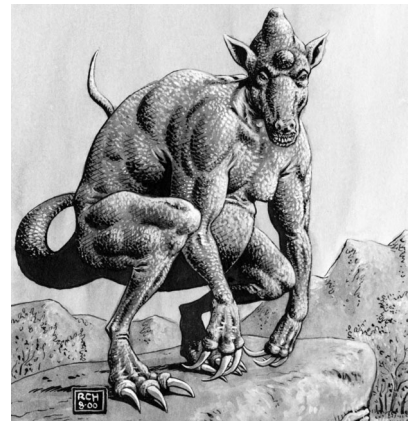
Persuade (Forthright) 9;	Rebuff (Obtuse) 7;	Attack (Finesse) 12;	Defense (Sure-footedness) 11;
Health 7;	Appraisal 2;	Athletics 7;	Concealment 8;
Etiquette 2;	Gambling 2;	Imposture 4;	Living Rough 5;
Pedantry 6;	Perception 6;	Stealth 5;	
Stewardship 4;	Tracking 11;	Wherewithal 7	

The last task before the ball is the erb hunt. The party must travel by ship to Octorus where they will be met by Wuzzar, Huntsman to the Prince of Kaiin. He will supply erb spears to those who do not possess their own, guide them into the Forest Da and find them an erb.

The technique for hunting erb is simple. One takes a very long spear with a long narrow blade. There is a cross guard set into the shaft a couple of ells below the spear head. The huntsman insults the erb so much that it becomes enraged and hurls itself at him. He aims the spear to catch the erb on the genital groove where the wound is both fatal and provides the opening cut for skinning the beast. Simple, really.

Wuzzar is expert at his craft and soon finds an erb. (The GM will roll a d6 and count rolls over 3 as 1. This is the numbers of erbs the party find. Once they have killed them Wuzzar can find them some more so that they all get at least one each.) Characters must then pick out their erb and insult it. To do this they use their Persuasion skill and if successful and the erb fails its Rebuff the erb becomes enraged and charges. An Illustrious Success in Persuade or a Dismal Failure in the erb’s Rebuff means that the erb is so enraged that any successful weapon attack kills it with the one classic wound at the genital slit.

If the erb is not enraged it will still attack and the character has to Defend. Other characters must provide assistance, otherwise the character has limited chances of survival. If the erb is enraged, then the character has the initiative and makes the attack. A Success is an automatic kill, an Illustrious Success is a kill which makes the one classic wound at the genital slit. A Failure means the erb is not dead and the character has to attack again. A Dismal Failure means that the erb has been wounded but is no longer enraged and will attack. A character can kill an erb with magic or use magic to survive but those achievements will not count towards passing the test.



ERB

Persuade (Glib) ~+2;
Rebuff (Penetrating) ~+2;
Attack (Cunning) ~+2
Defense (Misdirection) ~+2;
Health ~+2;
Appraisal 2;
Athletics ~+4;
Concealment 6;
Imposture 4;
Living Rough 8;
Perception 6;
Stealth 6;
Tracking 10;
Wherewithal 6

*Where the Ability is ~+2, it
should be greater by two than
the average for the party.*



❧ The Gold and Amber Cabal ❧



Servants preparing for the Grand Ball given some years past in honour of Kandive's Accession.

Finally comes the grand ball. This will be a truly magnificent affair. Even Prince Kandive the Golden will attend. The Characters will wear erb skin cloaks, displaying their prowess (and those who hacked their erb to death rather than killed it with one swift blow will be teased about moth damage and hard wear.).

The First Test occurs when the candidates are introduced to the Prince. He will greet them in the ancient language of the Court, a rarely used variant of one of the Magnatz dialects. A successful Etiquette roll will allow the character to respond to formal phrases, a successful Pedantry roll will allow the character to display a little conversational skill as well.

The Second Test materializes with the first course. This is a thin soup with long slivers of raw squid floating in it. A successful Etiquette roll allows the character to realize that the liquid is not to be eaten under any circumstances. Rather the slivers of raw squid should be fed to your neighbor on your left, using the long silver chopsticks provided. A successful roll with any skill indicating a degree of hand/eye co-ordination is required to do this safely.

The Third Test accompanies the third course. This is a haunch of braised oast served with a thick cream and blueberry sauce. Two different wines, white and red are placed in front of each character. Etiquette rolls are needed to realise that one drinks barley beer with Oast. Characters are expected to catch the eye of a menial who will fetch them a tankard full.

The Fourth Test presents itself when the lady⁸ on one's right starts a conversation on the topic of hunting from beast back. If you make a successful Riding roll you can contribute to the conversation and make a good impression. A successful Pedantry roll means that you can discuss the different schools of hunting technique, which she will find a little dry (but at least you haven't disgraced yourself).⁹

The Fifth Test takes place when the lady¹⁰ on one's left (who is, alas, probably covered with slivers of squid) starts a discussion on the doings of a certain, un-named person. A successful Scuttlebutt roll will enable you to pinpoint exactly who it is they are talking about and add even more details to the conversation.¹¹

The Sixth Test is the dance itself. Crysadon the Wise will lead the assembled company onto the dance floor with his partner and proceed to dance a Spavain in the Quaternary Mode. Characters require a successful Etiquette roll in order to know the dance. If they fail in this but make a successful Perception or Intuition roll, they may follow the other dancers well enough to avoid censure. Indeed, an Illustrious Success in this second roll counts as two successes toward the final tally, as it shows initiative above the norm. After

8. Or at least a well-bred person of the opposite gender.

9. It is possible that a character, knowing little of riding could instead attempt to seduce their neighbour. A *Success* in this will lead to the questioner reporting back favorably to Crysadon the Wise and will be counted towards the final total.

10. See note 7

11. Note that seduction can be attempted here to, although the GM should feel free to apply a levy proportionate to the amount of squid which adheres to her garb.

❧ The Gold and Amber Cabal ❧

determining the nature of the dance the characters must make either an Athletics or a Finesse roll to manage the steps.

The Seventh and final Test is individually tailored to each Character. Over the period of the tests Crysadon the Wise will have been watching the characters to find their weaknesses. Now there will be an assault launched at the character's greatest temptation. To succeed, players must successfully roll the appropriate resistance; if they fail this roll, they can still succeed by succumbing to their resistance in an Arch-Magician-like manner.

At the end of the evening the characters are assessed. Those who have managed no Dismal Failures and at least three Illustrious Successes are welcomed to the inner circle of the Cabal. Those who have at least two Illustrious Successes to counter balance every Failure are awarded junior membership with limited access to facilities such as the Cabal's Library. Those who merely passed more than they failed are made associate members with no rights other than the right to try again for membership next year.



The Prince of Kaiin

A bare eight miles from Kaiin along the Mermelant trail,
the Prince of Kaiin Inn provides a sumptuous repast for the discerning.

Try our signature pickled gar-nut with tossed salad and sliced plum marinated in a rose sauce, or our renowned steamed mutton, cut fine, and served with slivers of marinated flannberry.

For larger parties we pride ourselves that few can offer better than our speciality menu:

- ❧ Fresh Southern nautilus on ice ❧
- ❧ Poached Brelish with black butter ❧
- ❧ Citrelline ice ❧
- ❧ Broiled Merriot haunch ❧
with vegetables of the season
- ❧ Wild Fruits sorbet or Caramel Flan with Cressit sauce ❧

The Prince of Kaiin Inn is convenient to Kaiin yet sufficiently distant to ensure privacy.
Enquire about our special weekly rates should you wish to lease a suite for romantic assignations

Discreet elegance ... elegant discretion



Magsummer the erudite, purveyor of trifles and trinkets, prognosticator and augur of unparalleled prescience, announces that he will be proffering his services in the main Kaiin market on alternate days.

Wanted, a pack of four fold Emphri playing cards from the 19th aeon. Marked or not, as you see fit. Will pay in prestigious baubles.
Mintrud of Werewoods



❧ *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.

Tanvilkat and the Valley of Graven Tombs

The Geology and History

For a full understanding of this subject, it is necessary that we return to the first aeon, that period delineated as from the start of time to the appearance of man on our Earth. For two specific eras of this vast span of time, the lands of Almerey and Ascolais both lay beneath warm, shallow seas.

In the first era, the miniscular fauna was composed largely of tiny animalcules bearing shells or skeletal structures composed of calcareous material, while the great fauna including monstrous sea-going lizards and other astonishing creatures. In consequence, over a period spanning several millions of years, a thick deposit of calcareous matter was laid down, set with the skeletal forms of the larger creatures as a cake from the market may be set with currants.

In the second era, the process was repeated, save with fewer calcareous animalcules and a great quantity of clay, apparently the effluvium of some great river. This we judge from the presence of skeletal forms derived from both land and sea, predominately of mammalian structure, including creatures not dissimilar to the modern hoon and erb, at least in terms of form and function.

Across time, these two layers became compressed to rock, limestone and marlstone respectively. Somewhat later, but still within the first aeon, a great bubble of molten rock thrust up from the interior of the earth. Reaching the surface, this burst asunder both layers in a manner comparable to that of a bald head being pushed up through a mungberry tart. This rock, referred to as a batholith, then cooled to form a great dome on the world's surface.

That dome, much eroded, exists still, as Modavna Moor, that bleak expanse of rock and bog some hundred miles to the east of Kaiin. Despite its evil reputation as a place of gruesome deeds, also the haunt of ghosts, deodand and asm, the moor does serve a useful purpose, of which more presently.

At a considerably later time, the interior of the earth had cooled to the point at which it began to shrink and contort, in the manner of a grape drying to become a raisin. This process, during the eighth and ninth aeons, marks the last great mountain building period of the earth's history, throwing up many great ranges. Among the earliest of these was a range of peaks which have since crumbled to that line of low hills of which Fader's Waft is the greatest. Later, both the Maurenrons and the Fer



A practical demonstration of the manner in which the Modavna batholith forced its way through the overlying strata.

Aquila were thrown up, of harder rock, and thus currently less eroded.

The consequence of these mighty geological cataclysms was the formation of what we now know as the Scaum basin. Here a river has drained the land in roughly the same conformation, running east to west, since the early tenth aeon and under many different names. What has not altered is its basic course, running south of the Modavna Moor batholith, where it has cut a channel through the layers of marlstone and limestone to the granite below. Thus was formed that broad but steep sided valley known to us as the Valley of Graven Tombs as shown in Figure 1.

During the ages of man, the area appears to have been almost constantly inhabited, allowing the build up of rocky accretions formed of rubble and waste discarded by those early men. This has occurred both before and after the rise of the mountains, and has resulted in a complex set of accretive layers overlying the marlstone. The latest of these derives from Grand Motholam of the eighteenth aeon, at which time a city, possibly Malithzar, extended to the lip of the valley.

Thus and so, the valley was created. It remained in approximately the same state from the close of the eighteenth aeon to the early part of the twentieth; aside from the construction and collapse of various towns, bridges, roadways and so forth. Doubtless burials enough occurred in the area, but it was not until the rise of the city of Ferghaz in the third epoch of the twentieth aeon that this section of the Scaum valley became primarily associated with the disposal of the dead.

As has so often been the case in human history, the kings of Ferghaz, their power waxing, chose to declare themselves divine. Sadly for them, this was not the case as they had access to none but the simplest techniques for delaying the onset of decline and consequent death. Their primary religion contained as part of its dogma the belief that life continued in a blessed dream state after death, so long as the skull remained intact. Thus it was that King Espherin decreed a tomb built to house his corpse, and chose as its site the soft limestone of the Scaum Valley. Historians assert that this tomb was in fact on the southern bank, below where Baron Baumevaunt's castle now stands, an area with no vines so need not concern us.

Each subsequent King of Ferghaz was buried in the same fashion, for a dynasty of impressive length. Lesser royalty and nobles also took to the fashion, with lesser tombs cut higher into the hillside. Meanwhile, the flat land bordering the river became dotted with memorials recording the deeds of those interred, each with the appropriate statue (Figure 2).

Thus the valley became a tombyard, which continued to develop throughout the high age of Ferghaz. It was during this period that what is now the village of Viliyat was founded. Originally, this was a single house, designed to accommodate those charged with the guardianship of the tombs. Conveniently located, those artisans involved in the construction of the tombs and memorials came to live there also. A lichway was also constructed, for the better conveyance of the heavy granite sarcophagi of the time.

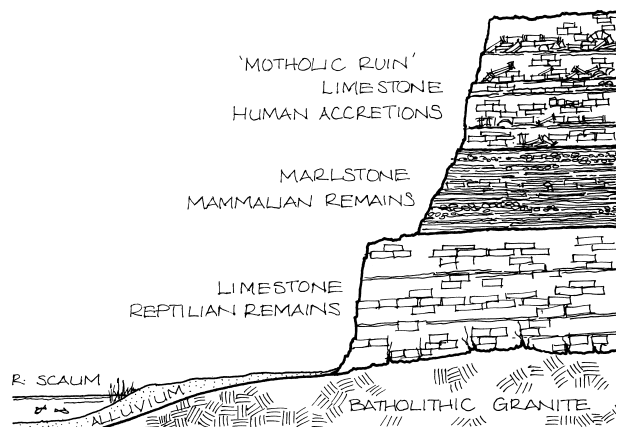


Figure 1. A simplified cross-sectional view showing Early 20th Aeon deposits and the underlying geology of the Valley of Graven Tombs.

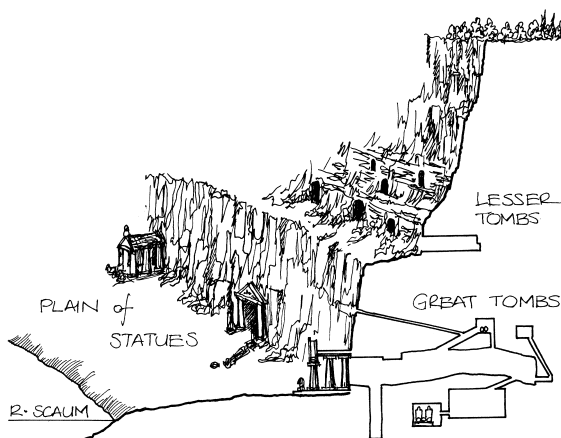


Figure 2. The Valley of Graven Tombs during the Imperial Tomb Period (Early Ferghaz).

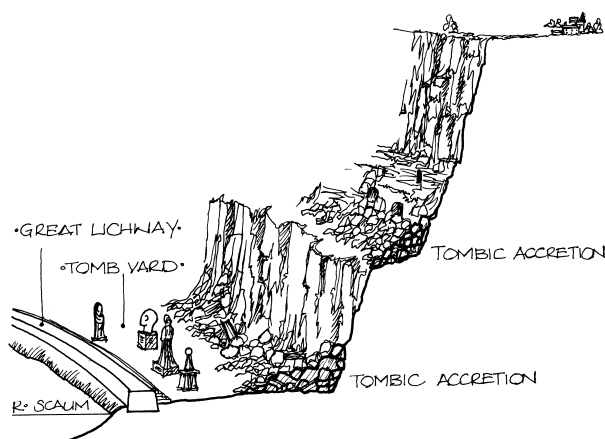


Figure 3. The Valley of Graven Tombs during the Republican Period (Late Ferghaz).

As time passed the government of the city passed from the declining imperial family, devolving to a group of noble houses, each providing one representative to a republican council. At this stage, burial in the tombyard came increasingly fashionable among the commonality of Ferghaz, with merchants and other low sorts being buried before the very doors of the great tombs. So low was the respect in which these people held their forebears that rubble from old tombs gates and memorials was pushed back to make way for the new structures, causing a build-up of tombic accretion, as shown in Figure 3.

The Kingdom¹ of Ferghaz at length passed, drowned in its own detritus, and the governance of Almerly became diffuse, each noble family ruling a greater or lesser area from the security of a castle. The tombyard was little used at this time, and fell into

disrepair, so that little more than a thick layer of tombic accretion was to be seen by the rise of the Kang Kingdom.

The Kang Kingdom was the result of the unification of the various baronial holdings under a single King at Azenomei. Initially the tombyard was used only by those living locally who interred their dead simply and with slight ceremony. As the population increased and fashions changed, new tombs began to appear. These were very different from the earlier structures, and built of black iron rather than stone. As was the custom imposed by the then important cult of the Brotherhood of Weeping Shadows, each tomb was topped by a great bronze sun, kept polished by the families of the deceased. Larger tombs, those of the Brethren themselves, were built at the top of the slope in the likeness of rayed hemispheres, intended to represent the rising sun. The level of the Scaum appears to have risen at this period, and the lichway was built up, trapping further tombic accretion. See Figure 4.

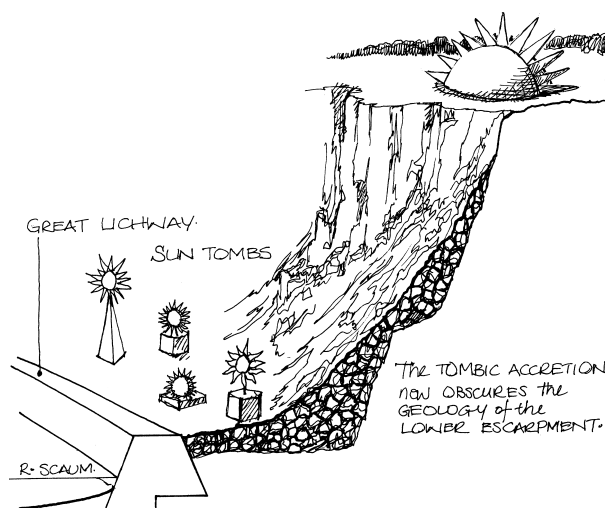


Figure 4. The Valley of Graven Tombs during the High Kang Period.

The Kang Kingdom collapsed back into the group of bickering baronies from which it had risen, with aggressive honor codes demanding that no man or woman pay allegiance to another. Only the royal palace at Azenomei remained to mark the kingdoms former glory, with the Mage-Kings of the time sinking into ever greater decadence. The tombyard continued in use, now imbued with a mystical aura for reason of sheer age. While Tombs were supposedly still of black iron, many were built from a cheaper dark stone, iron reduced to a mere plaque in some cases, and with the more prestigious tombs clustering on the higher slopes. Following the massacre of all but a handful of the Brethren by the Madnodlin family, sun symbols lost their vogue, being replaced by statues of that design known as the 'Pride Triumphant'. The fine lichway had also been destroyed, the victim of a great flood, which not only caused some levelling of the ground, but created the first traces of the bonefield at the margin of the Scaum. This is composed of light matter washed out from the tombic accretion, principally human bone (Figure 5).

1. It is interesting that even in its final republican phase, Ferghaz remained a Kingdom. The polite fiction was maintained that the monarch had just left on an errand and the council of nobles was looking after things until he arrived back.

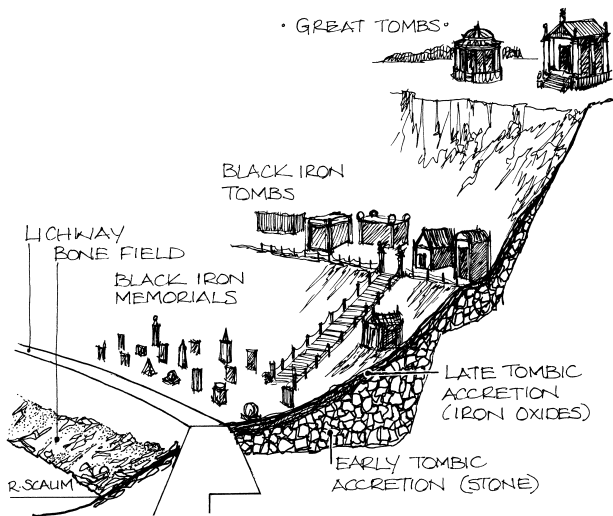


Figure 5. The Valley of Graven Tombs toward the end of the Kang Period.

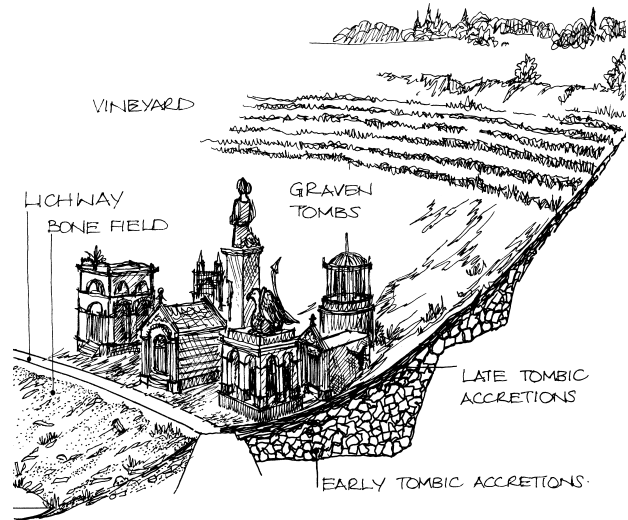


Figure 6. The Valley of Graven Tombs during the 21st aeon Kaiin Ascendancy.

We thus come to the twenty-first aeon and the Kaiin ascendancy. The majority of the baronies having destroyed each other in petty fratricidal strife, the white-walled city became increasingly important. Its rulers began taking ever grander titles until at last they styled themselves Kings, despite seldom ruling more than a small portion of Ascolais. Simultaneously considerable prestige was still vested in descent from the noble families of the Kang period. A long lineage was crucial for prestige, which led to the tradition of a full list of ancestors and their deeds being engraved on the tombs of the dead. Again, tradition demanded that anybody of social consequence be buried in the old tombyard, despite the journey of some seventy miles up the Scaum from Kaiin. Tombs once more became entirely of stone², and ever larger as more and more space was required for inscriptions. It is from this period that the name 'Valley of Graven Tombs' derives.

Viliyat had, by this time, become an ancient but thriving village, giving home to all those involved with the daily running of the tombyard. Rare indeed was the inhabitant without at least a dozen honorary titles and posts. The village had also become obliged to fend for itself in the matter of comestibles, to which end the bonefield had been planted with crops. The narrow strip of land above the tombyard was also planted, with vines of a local black variety known wryly as 'the deodand' as these creatures already infested the area. Both cultivated areas exist today, providing the wine known as Viliyat ordinary and the excellent bonefield ale in addition to food. The deodands also remain (Figure 6).

It was at this time that a certain Kastin came to the area. He was a miscreant, his crimes too vile and numerous to find space in this work³, set there across time by those intent on administering justice. They decreed that he might labor hard to small reward, benefiting others and thus atoning for his sins. It seems that he was a vine tedder of considerable experience, while the vengeful mage who brought him to Viliyat also provided him with cuttings of a high quality vine found by an obscure settlement of the seventeenth aeon. These vines Kastin crossed with the local variety, creating what he called 'Kastin's Black and Ancient Glory', now known as the 'Black Ancient'. The name Tanvilkat, by contrast, is of circular nature, existing in a loop of time. It has no origin, but was conferred by the twenty-first aeon mage who punished Kastin, for the simple reason that he grew up understanding that to be the name of the wine from the ancient vineyard in the Valley of Graven Tombs.

2. Perhaps as a reaction to previous fashions, a white marble became popular, hauled up river from quarries thought to have been on the islands of cloud.

3. Students have pondered just what crimes he must have committed, but to their disappointment the histories remain coy as regards the details.

Interestingly, this was also the time that the last of the Kang Mage-Kings died. Corpulent to an extreme and weighing some half-a-ton he was so lethargic that he failed to right himself after rolling over in his vat of supporting jelly, thus suffocating. Those remnants of his court still remaining could not be troubled to elect a successor. With this event the focus of power shifted entirely to Kaiin, with ever fewer burials in the Valley of Graven Tombs.

Observing Kastin's success, and with their livelihood failing, the inhabitants of Viliyat quickly took to viticulture. Thus Registrars of Death and Recorders of Lineage, as much as sextons and tomb-masons, became vine tedders. The vineyard grew rapidly, with the citizens of Kaiin eager for the new and wonderful wine, so different from Golden Porphiron and Sfer Green, so much finer than other reds of the region. Thus the Tanvilkat vineyard came into being, as shown in Figure 7.

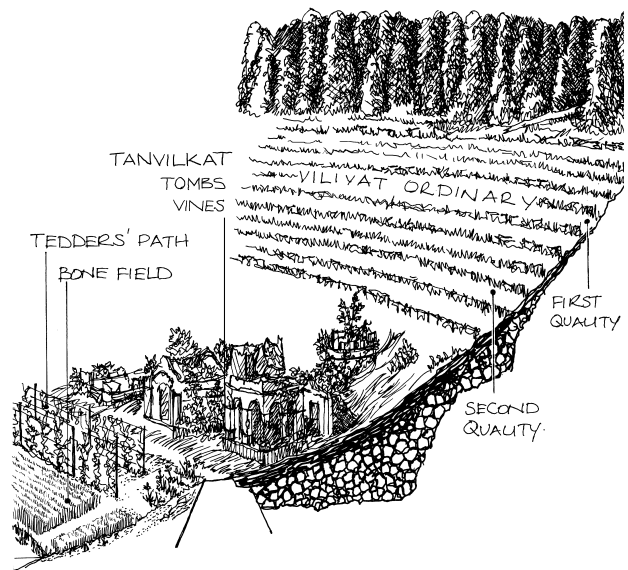
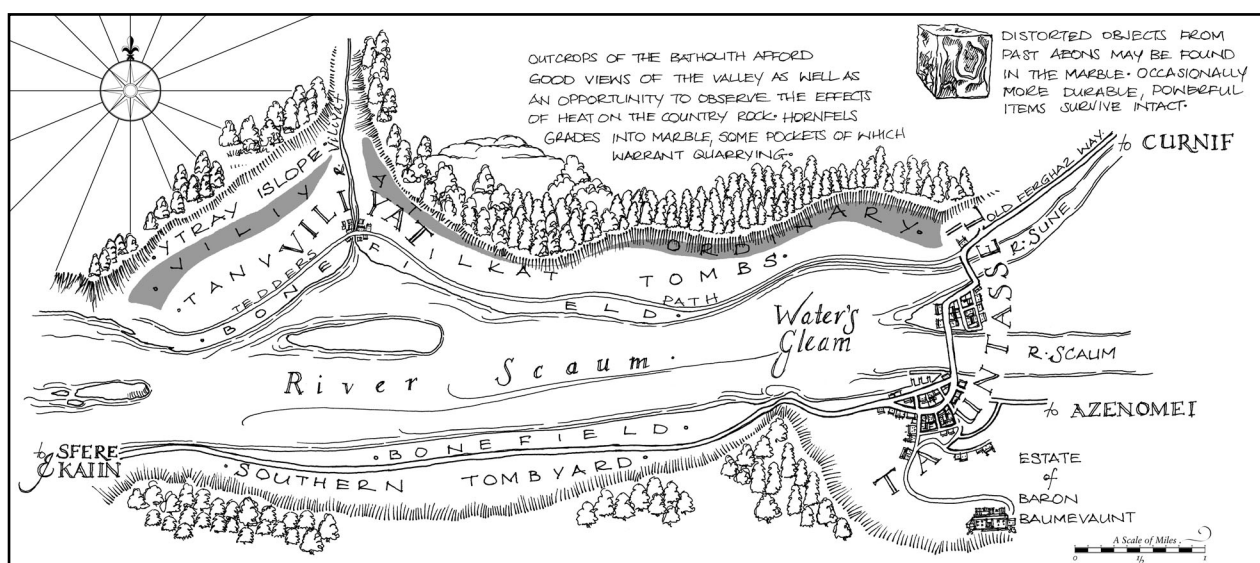


Figure 7. The famed vineyards of the Valley of Graven Tombs.

It had, indeed, reached its modern proportions within perhaps fifty years of the first plantings, running along several miles of the Scaum, from Ytray Bluff to close on Taun Tassel. This area is divided into four slopes. These, roughly from west to east, are Ytray Slope, Viliyat Slope, Over Gleam and The Tassel. Viliyat Slope (immediately east and draining into the Viliyat), Over Gleam (the southeast slope draining into Water's Gleam) and The Tassel, the warm southwest exposure nearest Taun Tassel. The boundaries between the latter three areas are vague and subject to much discussion; indeed, some simply call the entire Viliyat slope east of Viliyat village "Ordinary" and differentiate only between first and second quality.

The Wine

Instructed to do so by the mage, and for reasons of both quality and his own somewhat melancholy character, Kastin planted one single vine on each tomb. Each years grapes were then picked and vinified separately from all others, a technique retained to this day. This is simply done, by propagating cuttings in large urns, of which the area has an ample sufficiency. The roots are then trained down the sides of the tomb to the earth beneath. Within four to five years adequate wine may be produced, although vines must



now be ten years old before the resultant wine becomes entitled to the name Tanvilkat.

The result of this technique is that each year each vine, and thus each tomb, produces a single bottle of wine, both unique and of superlative concentration. Tanvilkat wines are therefore named for the occupant of the tomb over which they are grown and the year in which they were made. Thus one has wines such as Tanvilkat 'Eido the Bombast' forty-eighth year of the rule of Prince Kandive, or, as it might be, Tanvilkat 'Lord Usqueq Undamgreiy' year of the Ts flood surge.

That the quality of Tanvilkat is unequaled, none deny. It is the King of Wines, not merely concentrated, but rich, smooth, authoritative and above all complex. Each has its own unique qualities, and while flavors of ripe plumb, mungberry and red spice are typical, tasting notes of erb flesh, flaming brandy and eloglaze are not unusual.

To understand the factors allowing this, we must look back over this work. The cut of the Scaum valley provides a long sweep of south facing slope, essential for vineyard, while the Scaum itself retains heat and reduces the incidence of spring frost. Modavna Moor is also crucial, its bulk providing shelter from the north, to make this section of the valley warmer than any other, with a growing season starting one or even two weeks earlier and ending later by as much as a month. More immediate shelter is provided by that thick band of mandouars which grows along the top of the valley, reducing breezes and allowing hot air to linger among the vines.

The slope and the subsoils of limestone and marlstone are also important, providing drainage and the basic qualities of the soil, with those vines planted above the marlstone being regarded as generally better. The above would be true even in the absence of the tombyard, but the wine would only be of the quality of Viliyat Ordinary, which is to say, very good indeed. What makes Tanvilkat great is the build-up of tombic accretion on which the vines are planted. Beneath each graven tomb is a layer of tombic accretion, broken stone, allowing easy root penetration and rich in iron and minerals. There are also organic matters of all descriptions, magical effluvia and individual essences and wafts. In no two places is this layer exactly the same.

Thus we find, side by side, the tombs of the eighteen Quenules, members of the family of that name which rose briefly to importance in Kaiin. In design each tomb is identical, varying only in the details of the inscription. Each tomb produces its own Tanvilkat, subtle in its distinction. From the first tomb, that of Quenule Hirst the Patriarch, we have a wine of extraordinary depth, massive and robust, capable of eighty years maturation in the best vintages, yet never achieving an exceptional aroma. Ten paces to one side we have the tomb of his eldest son, Quenule Vevinjale, a mage of some repute, the Tanvilkat from which is soft and heavy, perfumed with spice oil and hoonliver paste. Further along there is the tomb of Quenule Alaphinjaha, a notorious courtesan, which gives a Tanvilkat said to carry the scent she wore to her bed. If any doubt this, they need merely taste the wine from the tomb of her twin sister, Melayinjaha, who was paramour to Mad King Shin and lies buried close to him. This is situated a mile away from her sister, yet the Tanvilkat carries the same haunting perfume.

There is much debate concerning the relative quality of different tombs, and no two authorities can be



A vineyard of such character as the Valley of Graven Tombs could scarcely fail to produce a superb wine.

expected to agree on which is the best. The most famous is probably that of Saskerdhol Iamnolt, a mage of Kaiin who became bored with life and had himself immured in his own tomb at the thrust of Over Gleam. On quiet nights he may be heard moving around the interior, while Buelaust, the tedder who works the tomb, claims to have held conversations with him.⁴

Thus we see that every Tanvilkat is unique, and while certain familial resemblances may be noted, according to many factors, each should be considered according to its own merits. In all, there are seventeen thousand, eight hundred and twelve Tanvilkat vines, spread over an equal number of tombs.

By comparison with Golden Porphiron, areas of slope and vintages vary little in quality. Of the four named slopes, The Tassel is much the smallest, and also inferior, boasting only twenty-seven tombs, none of which are exceptional. Of the remaining three, Over Gleam wines tend to weight, Ytray Slope wines to elegance, and Viliyat Slope wines to balance, although these distinctions are overridden by the qualities of individual tombs.

So favored is the vineyards situation that most vintages are good and many magnificent. Each is different, and comparisons between years are almost as subtle and remarkable as between tombs. Occasionally, in a year when north-east winds blow down the Sune Valley, the grapes may exhibit poor ripeness. Alternatively, in a year of strong westerlies, some rot may result. Such events are rare.

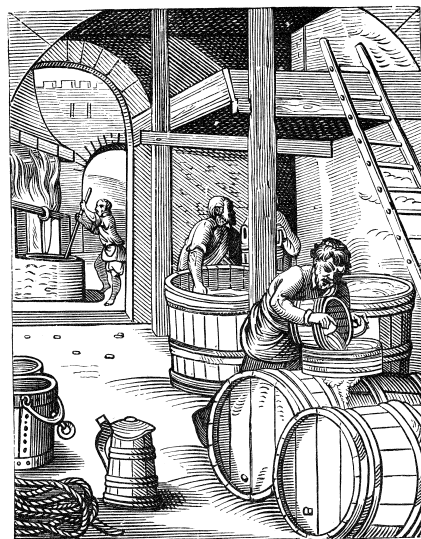
Viliyat

The village of Viliyat now stands beside the Scaum, as it has since the time when White Walled Kaiin was a fishing village, and of the two local towns, Taun Tassel was merely an inn by a bridge and Taun Sferre was totally non-existent. Viliyat is now the home of the wine tedders, each family living in a square house of two stories, the lower given over to the production of Tanvilkat, the upper to their living quarters, accessible only by ladder. The only building not the home of tedders is the Viliyat Inn, purportedly built on the foundations of the original guardhouse. It is here that all visitors must stay, from Archmages seeking to inspect individual vines to traders hoping to purchase barrels of Viliyat Ordinary and bonefield ale.

Along the Scaum margin, in a strip that grows wider towards the west, is the bonefield. This is now planted largely with barley and hops for the production of bonefield ale which bears the same relation to ordinary ale as Tanvilkat itself is to ordinary wine. Little else is grown, the villagers now being sufficiently wealthy to have the majority of their needs brought by river from Taun Tassel and other places.

While largely of placid, even phlegmatic disposition, the villagers are not to be trifled with. Their livelihood comes from the vines, and intrusion is resented, tomb robbers especially are given short shrift. Moreover, deodands are common in the mandouar woods and on Modavna Moor. Tedders work with weaponry close to hand.

Tradition is important to the inhabitants, as is their long history. The old tombyard titles still exist, so that a vine tedder may well also be Hereditary Assistant Sexton and Guardian of the graves of the Royal Concubines, Over-Registrar of Deaths for Upper Ferghaz and much else besides. Some of these posts are hereditary, others decided by election. Such matters are taken seriously, and it is a foolish visitor who mocks them, while to mention that the posts no longer have meaning is frequently a fatal mistake.⁵



Travelers should not miss the opportunity to sample Bonefield Ale and may find a tour of the small brewery both interesting and informative.

4. According to Buelaust they rarely discuss matters of any import, merely expressing their opinions on the state of the sun and the poor manners of the younger generation.

5. Indeed it should be noted that the rare member of the nobility who is deemed entitled to be buried in the Valley is met with the traditional liturgy and all involved will wear their traditional vestments while participating in a rite which is unchanged since the end of the Kang kingdom.

The Law

The quality of Tanvilkat is guarded both by the tedders and those who receive the produce. These are known as wine-titlers, those who own the right, or wine-title, to the production of each tomb. In many cases these are the descendants of those who lie beneath the ground, although wine-titles are often given as presents or in return for services, even money. Wine-title is traded, but the wine itself, never.⁶ Wine-titlers guard their bottles jealously, and to sell Tanvilkat is the height of bad taste. It is not available in inns, or other such places, yet such is the reputation of Tanvilkat that unscrupulous merchants, especially those far from Kaiin, have been known to sell Viliyat Ordinary and even lesser wines as Tanvilkat. Penalties for this are both severe and rigorously enforced, mainly by the Wine-Titlers Association, which includes many Mages and Archmages among its number.

The Festivals

By comparison with the festivals attendant on Golden Porphiron, those of Tanvilkat are grim affairs. At bud-break, grape-set and vintage, long processions of tedders may be seen, winding their way through the vineyards in their heavy formal robes of black and dull purple, silent and with their heads bowed. It is possible that these dour parades date back to the time of Kastin himself. Certainly he would have approved.⁷ According to rumor, the night sees less restrained revels, but while those staying at the inn may hear unusual noises coming from neighboring houses, they are never invited and it is considered tactful not to comment.

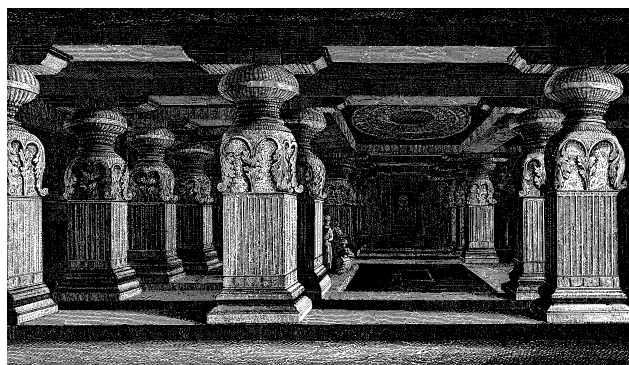
The one merry festival is the Viliyat Ordinary vintage, which takes place a week before Tanvilkat picking begins. This involves drunken revelry, maidens garlanded in flowers and very little else, and behavior typical of rustic celebration wherever man has come to till the soil.⁸ In this case the event is not in anyway traditional, but staged purely for the benefit of merchants, who may well find their purses lightened by the morning. The festival is barely three hundred and fifty years old.

The Game

As usual for Grashpotel's Arcana, reading this article and being able to quote from it allows players one Pedantry point. GMs may use it to add further Vancian flavor to the game, exploiting the information as they see fit.

An Adventure Hook

It may amuse players to enjoy the possibilities offered by this region. The information below is intended as a loose framework, which characters may enjoy without being railroaded. For instance, a group might have come down the Old Ferghaz Way from the ruined city itself, where the fall of a giant mandouar has exposed an opening into a chamber. Exploring with caution, they discover a number of artifacts, which they hope to sell when they come to an inhabited region. These artifacts will tend to be substantial pieces, heavy cast metal furniture, ponderous stone work of high quality. Allow players to puzzle over how they will even move



Newly exposed tombs (such as this entrance chamber, probably high period Ferghaz) almost always provide interesting opportunities for the experienced traveler to enrich him- or herself in some fashion (or die trying).

6. An unusual honesty compels us to confess that bottles may have changed hands for cash but this is only done by those of such venal temperament that they would never mix with polite society.

7. Although if accounts of Kastin are correct this approval would be muted and grudging.

8. Tillers of the soil are as creative in their attempts to mingle with scantily clad and nubile females in the presence of copious quantities of alcohol as is any other trade or profession, with the possible exception of magazine publishers.

these valuables without mermelants and great drays. Then as disappointment begins to set in, allow them to find a chest of fine glass ware, ancient tableware ornamented with silver filigree work, ivory mimes, fine pieces of jewellery and if they have been particularly amusing, some old tomes bound in the hides of unnatural creatures. Do not be afraid to provide more than the characters can easily carry. The more they attempt to sell, the more likely they are to flood the market. Similarly, do not fear that you will make them too wealthy. The inhabitants of Taun Tassel will part them from their surplus funds with casual aplomb.

Arriving at Taun Tassel, the road enters a street of tall houses. Many are ruinous, others appear uninhabited. Many are peculiar in that the lower stories are stone, well constructed of large dark granite blocks. Inscriptions have been carved in these, worn and in a heavy, florid script but still legible. They announce the professions of Embalmer and Coffineer, Stone Mason and Mourner, but there is no sign that such business is still carried out. By contrast, the upper stories of these buildings are wooden, built in haphazard fashion and topped with steep, slated roofs. This is the Charnels, the poorest part of the town, inhabited by misfits and degenerates.

After a couple of hundred yards, the road splits, the larger part turning sharply to cross an ancient bridge supported on water worn piers of black wood beneath which the Sune hisses and gurgles. The smaller section of road passes between the eroded trunks of what appears to have been a massive arch. On one trunk rests a great sarcophagus, still sealed, carved of malachite and heavily inscribed. The other has been topped with wood and has chairs set around it, making a table for the inn which stands behind. This is the Inn of the Malachite Sarcophagus, a cheap and somewhat disreputable establishment. The owner is GREFINDULE⁹, who will attempt to charge ten terces a night for lodging and five for a gruel in which the occasional lump of meat may be found.

The lower story of the inn is well constructed and it is still possible to make out the engraving above the door, which states that it is the 'East Post'. This is all that remains of its original purpose as guardroom for the gate to the great tombyard. The upper story is also stone, and on close inspection can be seen to have been constructed from the stones of the arch. Above this is a wooden dormer, overhanging the main structure at all sides. Within are two bars, one large and decorated with an extraordinary assortment of artifacts, all of which have been taken from the Valley of Graven Tombs. LOCALS sit around drinking sour ale from pots of tarred leather. These are an ill-formed and ill-kempt lot wearing an odd assortment of garments, seconds and cast-offs from the clothiers' quarter across the rivers. The second bar can be entered by a low door. It is dingy and plain, but the drinkers are well dressed in plain work clothes and carry an air of surly confidence. These are VINE TEDDERS who have been working the Tassel and Over Gleam. Cross-bows and pruning knives lie on the tables while they drink their wine.¹⁰

*Ships come from as far afield as Cansaspara, the City of Fallen Pylons
across the Melantine Gulf and even fabled Mahaze ...*

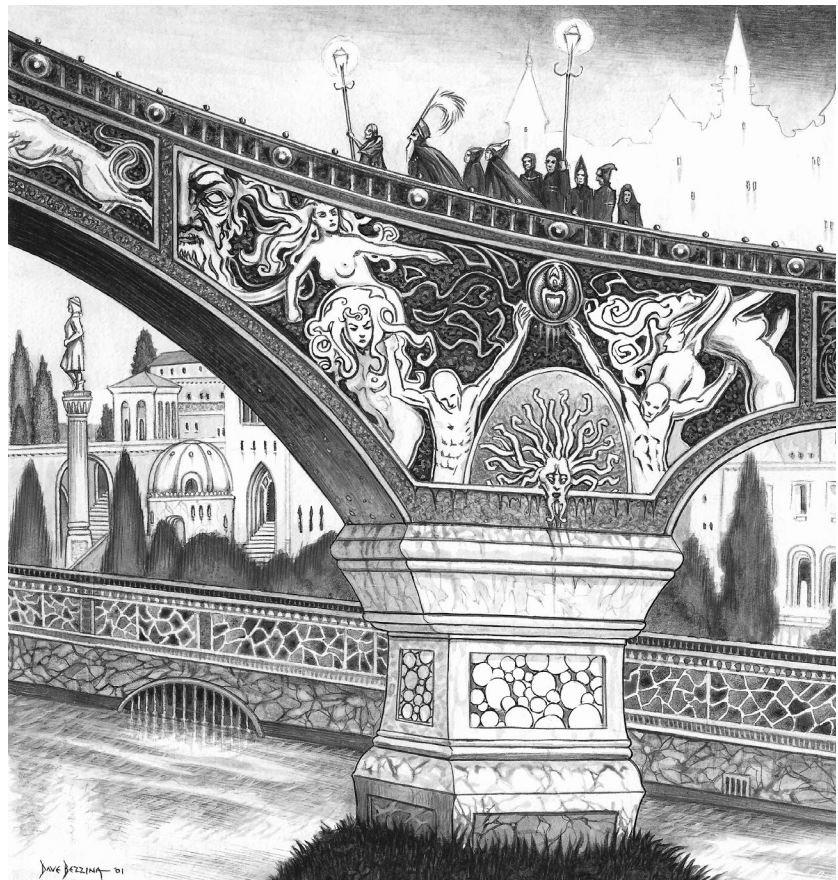
Sune Bridge must be crossed with some care. The roadbed sags and contains splits through which the river is visible below, while little of the hand rail is left. The high center span, designed to let barges past, groans and sways if even a light gig passes over it. In theory there is supposed to be a watch post of Bridge Keepers here but the situation, for all its excellent views, does not appeal to them and they now keep their booth on the Citadel bank. At the South end of the bridge is the Citadel, on the promontory which separates the Sune from the Scaum itself. It is a district very different from the Charnels as it is the commercial quarter of the town. Here are the docks where the barges come in, warehouses for cloth and hides, the premises of needle makers, felt nappers and numerous other trades relating to the clothing industry. Tall wooden houses line the narrow main street, many five or six stories high. Two roads lead down to the waterfront, where sometimes as many as four barges may be found at one time.

9. This typeface indicates first mention of a person or persons described in more detail in the abecedarian list at the end of the text.

10. Tedders will never go into the other bar to mix with the locals, and many locals would not dare to enter the bar frequented by tedders due to the tendency of the latter to deal briskly with suspected grave robbers.

This is also the highest navigable point of the Scaum for sea-going vessels, which anchor in Water's Gleam to transship their cargoes onto barges to be taken further upriver. Ships come from as far afield as Cansaspara, the City of Fallen Pylons across the Melantine Gulf and even fabled Mahaze. There is a single inn, a large, rambling structure at the back of the docks, The New Moon Inn, supposedly named for a long dead Archmage of the town who sought to have sandestin create a replacement for the Earth's vanished moon. The landlord is PROYWHEM, whose clients include bargees, LONGSHOREMEN and the less exalted travelers as well as locals.

Leaving the Citadel, the road rises onto the elegant Scaum Bridge. This is a high arch of mottled green stone carved with reliefs drawn from Kang kingdom iconography. Deceptively fragile, it is supported by a powerful spell,



The Scaum Bridge

thus withstanding floods, wind and rain for over a millennium without a trace of erosion. A twin structure once crossed the Sune, but collapsed when the spell dissipated, suddenly and without apparent reason. Despite its beauty the bridge is unreasonably steep at either end, being tall enough for a barge to pass beneath under full sail. It is also slippery when wet, being paved with slabs of polished stone impervious to wear.

At the summit a hexagonal stone hut projects out over the Scaum. Originally a toll booth, this now houses the Bridge Keepers under their Sergeant, OTHON. At this point we shall proceed with a sociological digression. It is soon apparent to even the most blinkered traveler that social standing is everything in Taun Tassel, and the townsfolk define it in terms of residence. Those who live in The Town Proper look down upon the Citadel's residents, who, in their turn despise the folk of the Charnel. Those of the Citadel aspire to the Town Proper, as the slum folk do to the Citadel. The Bridge Keepers on both bridges bear the heavy load of deciding who goes where.

Anyone who wishes to cross southwards and ascend to a better locale must prove herself worthy to a Bridge Keeper. The easiest way to do so is with a bribe. They must also wait until someone moves down in society, so providing a vacancy. Although the Bridge Keepers know the local populace by sight, they nevertheless insist that they wear a bright cockade as a visible proof of their status. The Keepers issue these ornaments when a candidate crosses the bridge, in either direction. Aside from those provided with cockade as a birthright, the number of available cockades is fixed annually by the Milliners and Dyers' Congress, who base their decision on recorded births and deaths. Visitors may apply to the Keepers for temporary crossing and residence privileges, for a fee of 50 terces in the Town Proper and 10 terces in the Citadel. Strangers must wear not a cockade but the torc appropriate to the area they wish to visit. Only one may be worn at a time, so the changing of these torcs or collars affords the Keepers a good income. Those

unwilling to pay will find themselves manhandled through the town and ejected into the Charnels.

The fee covers the rental of a hollow metal torc, preserved by minor enchantments and filled with little bells. These jingle as the visitor walks. The Town Proper collars ring in a minor key, those of the Citadel in a bright major, spanning three octaves. The townsfolk find these torcs both amusing and useful. The Bridge Keepers' hand bells are harmonically sympathetic to the collars. When a Keeper rings his bell, trespassing torcs respond with tooth-grating dissonance to cause visitors in the wrong locale such intense discomfort, that they can do nothing but wince unless they make a Wherewithal check, in which case they can act with a levy of 1.

The fee to have a torc removed is half that of fitting it, payable when leaving the city at its wharves or land gates. This covers the attendance of a Keeper and a locksmith. The artisan is not needed, but is present as a courtesy to an ancient guild. He will perform a complex pantomime of directing the Keeper in the correct use of his key, to disguise his redundancy. Keepers wear distinctive uniforms, tall shakos, swallow-tailed coats, britches and knee boots. As the Scaum Bridge is the more prestigious, its staff have better clothes, cut from twill, and dyed a solid mid-blue with mylax root. The Sune Keepers make do with buckram, colored in a range of reds, rust browns and dark pinks with an unreliable dye made from spurge flowers. The Keepers carry staves with an elegant hook on one end, both to fish people out of the river and to catch the clothes of anyone who tries to sneak over the bridges.

On the southern bank of the Scaum is Taun Tassel proper. Dramatic architecture and the combination of dark granite and pale limestone gives the town a fine appearance. The road forks beyond the bridge. One branch goes east, towards Azenomei and Val Ombrio, the other to Main Square, the center of Taun Tassel. One side of this is open to the river, the remaining three lined with tall stone houses. Most of these are the premises of the clothiers themselves, such as PROMEBAUST, Berliween, and Sethiyallow & Cripps. At the center of the Square is an ornate flower garden. There is also the principal inn, The Aviary, a fine structure of five stories in height looking out across the river. This is owned by the Clothiers' Guild and staffed by men and women from the village of PULKZIM, who are trained from birth in the art of service. In the entrance hall is an enormous cage of silver filigree containing exotic birds. It is here that the majority of customers stay while waiting the often inordinate periods for their clothing to be finished.

Behind Main Square the ground rises steeply. Tier upon tier of fine houses have been built to command views across Water's Gleam. Here live those profiting indirectly from the clothing trade, minor grandees, a few scholars and petty mages. Cloth Street, once the commercial center, is here, as well as the Cloth Street Inn, which offers no accommodation and caters mainly for locals. The landlady is MAREN, who, with her daughters, runs three bars. Each bar provides for citizens of a different level of social standing. In the front bar outsiders are treated with haughty contempt. Here one may see Promebaust sipping at a glass of Viliyat Ordinary, or perhaps MADAME TAZJA, taking nothing but dressed in one of her own creations. To the rear is a larger room frequented by the youth of the town, such as YLIN, Sethiyallow's daughter. A smaller bar to the side caters for those of middle status and the odd stranger.

West of Main Square is a crossroads. The main roads continues along the Scaum, towards Zoken, another climbs the hill to the castle and a third road runs down to the waterfront. Here are the less prestigious shops and the premises of designers, fashion experts and seamstresses such as Tazja. It ends in a dock at which private vessels moor, principally those of wealthy customers. Beside the Scaum is the Taun



The gleaming limestone which faces some of the finest buildings are constructed bears closer examination, for it often contains intriguing fragments of relics from past aeons.

Tassel Temperance Retreat, an establishment favored by ascetics and others who disdain the luxury of The Aviary, or who cannot afford it but wish to avoid the unfashionable parts of the town. This establishment is half-owned by the Archmage Perrin, who may not even be aware of the fact. He might well be even more surprised to discover his partner in the enterprise is MADAME BERIMBAULT.

Above the town, over looking it but actually some distance away, rises the castle of BARON BAUMEVAUNT, Doomerth, an imposing granite keep of three turrets. The bluff has stood above the Scaum for time immemorial, and usually with a castle on it. A complex system of vaults is carved into the rock, many levels deep, while the foundations are built on older and yet older structures. The current structure is only four generations old but is already falling into disrepair. Within is the great hall and a jumble of rooms, few of which are used. There are also several secluded gardens, the Baron's particular pride.

Returning to the Malachite Sarcophagus, the track leading between the stone trunks follows the northern shore of Water's Gleam, with thick reed beds to the left and the tomb-studded slope to the right. This is the tedders' path, once the lichway, running from Taun Tassel to Viliyat. Each tomb is topped with a vine, and the tedders may occasionally be seen moving among them, pruning, treating disease or inspecting for signs of disturbance. On the ridge mandouars grow in a thick band, from which deodands or asm may well be watching. After a while the reeds retreat, making room for a strip of barley growing in the peculiar white soil of the bonefield.

Viliyat is a small village, consisting of a cluster of tedder's houses, a dock and HORSWORT's Viliyat Inn. Other than those who own wine-title to the Tanvilkat tombs, strangers are rare in Viliyat, and treated with suspicion. Beyond Viliyat, the tedders' path continues between bonefield and vines for rather over a mile before stopping abruptly at Ytray Bluff, which meets the Scaum in a great tumble of boulders.



Information for GMs

By Dying Earth standards the area is relatively placid, although not without dangers. Thieves are common in the Charnels, while characters who become drunk at the New Moon Inn are likely to wake up as part of the crew on a ship bound for Mahaze.¹¹ In neither place will it be easy to sell their Ferghaz artifacts.

To cross the Scaum Bridge, each character must persuade Othon that they have legitimate business. 'Legitimate' business does not include hawking artifacts of doubtful provenance, which will be considered a nuisance. Once in Taun Tassel proper, customers may be found, but not openly. Promebaust would dearly love to own a genuine Ferghaz mime, an ivory statuette which when moistened becomes a beautiful and capricious girl. He will never haggle for it in the street, still less his shop. Again, Tazja will pay dearly for the filigree decorations used in Ferghaz as art, which may be copied onto silk. She would also wish to pretend that they were her own invention and thus would demand discretion from the vendor.

The Valley of Graven Tombs is the haunt of deodands and asm, while the tedders will automatically suspect strangers of being tomb robbers and hence likely to damage the vines. If confronted by a tedder, a character will have to persuade him of his innocent intent. Grandees and Mages staying at the Viliyat Inn could well be interested in anything from Old Ferghaz, especially if it is magical. Characters must persuade potential buyers that the objects were taken from the city and not a tomb. If they fail they are likely to be attacked by tedders.



An atypical tedder in that he has momentarily put his crossbow to one side.

11. It must be admitted that ships sailing for Mahaze are relatively rare, barges to Kaiin are far more common, yet still mothers warn their offspring to beware of being stolen away to Mahaze.

Note that the Ferghaz tombs lie under many tons of rubble, the tombic accretion. Due to this only the most determined of tomb robbers will ever come across them, and in doing so invariably alert the tedders. At least one Pedantry point is needed for a character to know this fact.

Characters and Basic Statistics

Character values should be adjusted by the GM, as appropriate for the Characters. Abilities should also be added to suit the circumstances.

GREFINDULE, landlord of the Malachite Sarcophagus. Hirsute, nearly seven feet tall and with disproportionately long arms, he is obviously a hybrid. It would be unwise to mention this fact. He is surprisingly courteous and used to strangers but tolerates no disturbance in his inn. Uninterested in artifacts, of which he has many, he will suggest the party visit Taun Tassel proper. He is wary of those approaching the sarcophagus or touching the seals. Should anybody attempt to open it he will attack in a furious rage. (Within is nothing of real value, only a withered mummy he fondly believes to be an ancestor.)

Persuade: Intimidating 8

Rebuff: Obtuse 12

Attack: Strength 20

Defense: Parry 5

MAGNION, a vine tedder, is typical of his calling. Squat, powerful and phlegmatic, he seldom speaks and moves with slow, deliberate motions. He is suspicious, but slow to take offense, unless he suspects characters of being tomb robbers,¹² or attempting to watch the nocturnal debauchery attendant on seasonal festivals. He tends several hundred tomb vines, knows who has wine title to each, and thus has useful information about the tastes of many in Taun Tassel.

Persuade: Forthright 6

Rebuff: Wary 14

Attack: Caution 12

Defense: Parry 12

NULPH is a bargee, working the run between Taun Tassel and Azenomei. He has also worked as a longshoreman, the two professions being more or less interchangeable along the river. He is large, heavy set and blunt, with a coarse, ready humor and considerable loyalty, which is normal among the fraternity. Attack a bargee and a dozen or more will come to his aid. The barges will provide the same protection to those who hold tickets for travel on the barges, as they are considered to be under the bargees' protection. He will not rob characters or attack without provocation. Despite appearances, he is very aware of his surroundings, a skill derived from years of judging the position of submerged sandbars by watching the surface of the river. It is also possible to persuade him to row a party of travelers across Water's Gleam, thus avoiding the Scaum Bridge.

Persuade: Forthright 8

Rebuff: Obtuse 10

Attack: Strength 15

Defense: Intuition 12

PROYWHEM, the landlord of the New Moon Inn is a man of middle size and age. He is affable, talkative and constantly on the lookout for possibilities of profit. To him, duplicity is a virtue, and he will never tell the truth if it can be avoided. Should characters arrive at the inn, he will attempt to persuade them to allow him to act as agent, assuring them that despite his small cut, this will maximize their profit. Naturally they will never see their goods again if he succeeds, while those who complain are likely to be set on by the bargees and longshoremen who are his regular customers.

Persuade: Glib 15

Rebuff: Wary 10

Attack: Cunning 10

Defense: Vexation 8

12. Tomb robbers are regarded as vermin to be destroyed. There is no love lost between tedders and the inhabitants of the Charnels.

✿ Grashpotel's *Arcana*: Tanvilkat and the Valley of Graven Tombs ✿

SHRODRIL, a typical denizen of the Charnels: small, sharp faced, with eyes that seem to stare into nothing. In the Malachite Sarcophagus, if you ignore him, he will ignore both you and the most pointed insults you subject him to. He will also feign indifference if characters should reveal any wealth or desirable object. He is genuinely indifferent to insult, but not to wealth. If he discovers that the characters have wealth when he encounters them in the street he will try to persuade characters to dine in the Malachite Sarcophagus, where he hopes they will remain until dark. Any character abroad in the Charnels at night is liable to assault.

Persuade: Glib 10

Rebuff: Contrary 10

Attack: Cunning 12

Defense: Dodge 14

PHOLINE, a needle-maker of the citadel, is typical of the women of the district and also the less elevated among those of the main town. She is heavily built, practical in nature and considers all men fools and most of them drunkards. She has no use for trinkets, at least not those purchased from dubious-looking travelers. What she does have is comprehensive knowledge of the local gossip, including not only who among the wealthy of Taun Tassel will want what, but under what conditions each will be prepared to negotiate.

Persuade: Intimidating 10

Rebuff: Contrary 20

Attack: Ferocity 10

Defense: Sure-Footedness 10

OTHON, the Sergeant on Scaum Bridge is not a man to be trifled with. He is large and used to be with Valdarán's Green Legion, so also skilled and experienced. A local man, and employed by the Clothiers' Guild, he knows everybody who has legitimate business crossing the bridge, also most of the regular customers. To others, his attitude is that while they may not cause trouble if he lets them pass, they definitely won't if he doesn't.

With sufficient skill, he can be persuaded to allow characters to pass. Otherwise, he has four men behind him. An altercation will probably attract the attention of the Baron's men who patrol both the town proper, and at less regular intervals, the Citadel.

Persuade: Intimidating 12

Rebuff: Lawyerly 16

Attack: Finesse 14 (his men Finesse 12)

Defense: Misdirection 15 (his men Parry 14)

PROMEBAUST, titular Mayor of Taun Tassel and direct descendent of the original Promebaust who brought the clothing trade to the town, considers himself socially superior to all but the Baron locally and to most of his customers. Not an easy man to deal with, Promebaust does not like to be seen in conversation with his inferiors. He can be persuaded to buy, but against a levy of 1 in his shop or the Cloth Street Inn. Pholine and other women of the town can be persuaded to provide information on where and when he is best accosted. He can be relied on to argue the price. His fellow clothiers have almost identical characteristics, although the suggestion would horrify him.

Persuade: Obfuscatory 14

Rebuff: Penetrating 14

Attack: Caution 8

Defense: Vexation 8

JEROPHANE is a Pulkzim man by birth and works as a waiter at The Aviary. He is tall, bony and gives the impression that he is constantly bowing. Like all Pulkzim, he is trained to appear servile and obsequious while maintaining a fierce independence beneath. He is easily bribed and knows much of the town gossip. He can be persuaded to set up meetings with the dignitaries of the town, but in response will attempt to persuade characters that he deserves 50% commission.

Persuade: Charming 12

Attack: Cunning 10

Rebuff: Penetrating 10

Defense: Dodge 12

MAREN is the young widow who runs the Cloth Street Inn. She is of middling build, with a bustling, no-nonsense air about her. Her Inn is the hub of Taun Tassel gossip. She knows everyone and everything, but has little time for strangers and is not easy to persuade. On entering her Inn, Characters will be directed immediately to the side bar unless you can persuade her otherwise. As her Inn is a place where those in trade can relax, the selling of merchandise by customers is banned, especially in the front bar. Should Characters attempt this they will be ejected by Bridge Keepers who drink in the side bar (see references to Othon for some idea of the prowess of this fine body of men).

Persuade: Forthright 10

Attack: Caution 8

Rebuff: Wary 16

Defense: Intuition 8

MADAME TAZJA considers herself the leading seamstress of the town, although she has many rivals for this title. She also holds a license from the Baron which means that she alone may sell a hat with more than two tiers. She has some knowledge of Ferghaz art, and likes to use it in her designs, pretending originality. Normally she will snub characters completely, making it impossible to persuade her, but if a meeting can be arranged in some lonely place¹³ she will pay a good price for artistic designs without hesitation. On the other hand, if she discovers that characters have sold or even shown such design to others, she will have them set on by ruffians¹⁴ (Attack: Strength 12, Defense: Parry 10).

Persuade: Charming 12

Attack: Ferocity 10

Rebuff: Lawyerly 12

Defense: Vexation 10



Madame Tazja and her rivals have discovered that life is more pleasant and profitable if all co-operate in timing the introduction of new fashions. The husbands of the ladies who vie for pre-eminence in dress suspect this, but wisely value marital harmony more highly than terces.

YLIN, Sethiyallow's daughter is the local fire-brand.

Young, beautiful and hot-headed, she is an inspiration to the local youth and the despair of her elders. She is highly ambitious, craving everything from the Baron (despite a hundred year age difference) to becoming a witch. One thing she does not want is a place in her father's firm. Ylin will happily buy Ferghaz jewellery, even in the street, and she considers it beneath her to haggle, a noble affectation. Usually she is good for one hundred terces, her weekly allowance, but she will invariably try to persuade a character to undertake some gallant but idiotic mission on her behalf. This may be as simple as fighting a duel with Othon, who she dislikes because he treats her as if she was about six, or as difficult as tracking down the Baron's daughter Xiriël, who is in the sixteenth aeon. She is very persuasive. She is also a mermelant rider, and although the Baron's mermelants, Silken Claw and Velvet

13. By lonely we do not mean isolated. Madame Tazja would never consider going anywhere where her safety reposed in the hands of a band of unscrupulous adventurers.

14. That a lady of her quality should know such individuals is a shocking indictment of how standards have fallen. In Madame's defence it should be noted that in Taun Tassel proper even the ruffians are well dressed and nicely spoken. Many are the ne'er do well offspring of well-to-do citizens.

✿ Grashpotel's *Arcana*: Tanvilkat and the Valley of Graven Tombs ✿

Fang, consider her their servant, they also feel a certain noble obligation to protect her. Annoy her and she will set the mermelants on you (Attack: Strength 30, Defense: Vexation 15).

Persuade: Charming 18

Rebuff: Contrary 6

Attack: Cunning 8

Defense: Misdirection 12

MADAME BERIMBAULT, co-owner of the Taun Tassel Temperance Retreat, is a massive, heavy-set woman with a protruding jaw and a permanent scowl.¹⁵ She disapproves of everything, particularly drink and anything she classifies as merriment. At the hotel she will buy ancient medical devices, should you have any, but nothing she considers trivial or ornamental. Somewhat short of customers, she will try and persuade Characters to stay at the retreat, where they will be subjected to a regime of boiled grass at mealtimes, vigorous calisthenics, salt massages and herbal enemas.

Persuade: Intimidating 15

Rebuff: Lawyerly 12

Attack: Strength 11

Defense: Sure-Footedness 10

BARON BAUMEVAUNT, Lord of Taun Tassel, exists in easy accommodation with the Clothiers' Guild. Although his family is heavily in debt custom means that he can only tax his subjects lightly. However as the clothiers scramble for his favour they rarely press him to settle his account. Of middle height and solidly built, he is above all a peaceable man and detests disturbance. Policing of the town is left to the Guild, but he will back them up with up with his guards if necessary (Intimidating 5, Obtuse 5, Speed or Strength ~2, Parry or Dodge ~2, Health 8, Athletics 8, Wherewithal 5). To gain a formal audience characters must persuade one of the town dignitaries to see him on their behalf as he does not do business with people he meets in the street. Once convinced of their utility he will pay a fair price for magical artifacts. If characters attempt to extort him, he will still pay, but by means of coin which reverts to dust a few hours later. He is a popular man, and not only will his guards, various servants and the mermelants rush to his aid, but many of the townsfolk will also join in to protect him¹⁶

Persuade: Charming 12

Rebuff: Penetrating 12

Attack: Caution 4

Defense: Parry 4

Health: 2

Pedantry: 10 (with especial interest in Kang 23rd–27th Dynasties, and funereal practices of the fifth order lords of the galleys)

Resist: Indolence

Spells: *Behemoth's Bounty*, *Brassman's Twelve Fold Bounty*, *The Excellent Prismatic Spray*, *Khulip's Nasal Enhancement*, *Lugwiler's Dismal Itch* and *Liberation of Warp*.

HORSWORT, landlord of the Viliyat Inn. A big, solid man, but surprisingly fast and used to brawls. He is wary by nature. Strangers are rare in Viliyat, and he will quiz Characters as to why they are there. Although a man of the world by Viliyat standards, he is a local and has no truck with tomb robbers. On the other hand, he will be delighted to introduce respectable characters to his customers, who are mainly wealthy dignitaries on business relating to their Tanvilkat tombs. These are ideal customers for artifacts, especially magical ones, but first characters must persuade Horswort that they have not been tomb robbing. Customers tend to be nobles, mages, even archmages, and are best approached with an attitude of humble deference.

Persuade: Forthright 12

Rebuff: Wary 12

Attack: Speed 14

Defense: Dodge 14

15. Rumours that many years ago, when both winsome and lithe, she was the mistress of Perrin the Inferator are discounted by the younger generation as too fantastical to be true.

16. Especially if his appears to be the winning side.

GRASHPOTEL, junior Archmage of the Scaum Valley, is frequently to be found at the Viliyat Inn. Fairly tall, and spare, he wears ornate robes and a four-tier mustard yellow Sethiyallow & Cripps. He may easily be recognized by his bare forearms, on which are tattooed a selection of spells (in the extinct language of High Elioc so that hardly anyone else can read them). With wine-tittle to over four hundred tombs, he is obsessive about their condition, frequently getting under the tedders' feet as they try to go about their work. Nonetheless, he is greatly respected, both for the substantial income he provides and because he has been known to employ magic to rid the area of deodands and other dire beasts; in fact anything he regards as a threat to the welfare of the vines. He might buy magical artifacts if he is persuaded that they are in some way unusual or interesting. He will definitely buy antique books. Money is nothing to a man who can have his sandestin, Egev, produce golden coins and jewels from the air, but he does not like to feel that he is being taken advantage of and despises those who make their living by trade.

Persuade: Eloquent 20

Rebuff: Lawyerly 20

Attack: Caution 10

Defense: Vexation 12

Spells: All

Sandestin: Egev (a bifaulgulate sandestin quite capable of turning any PC below the status of Archmage into moldy jelly).

If a character asks Grashpotel's learned opinion on the value of an ancient tome, he is very likely to declare it priceless and hand over a hundred gold centums in the vain hope of repaying their courtesy. Conversely, if they declare the price to be a hundred gold centums while wearing an oily grin, they are likely to find themselves under the Spell of Untiring Nourishment, searching the bed of the Scaum for a button he thinks he might have lost as a boy. It is unwise to try to persuade Grashpotel.¹⁷



For myself I am not adverse to performing a service for my fellow man, especially if suitably remunerated.

Alas for the death of good taste and dignity!

As for me, my dignity denies me the opportunity to brawl in the street like a common delinquent.

Surely you are not one to let a trivial matter get in the way of good fellowship and a glass of strong ale.

Feel the quality, fabric like this is not to be found everywhere.

I suggest we take the opportunity to consider personal enrichment.

Not a moment to spare. Quick, I see the chance of an excellent meal at virtually no cost to ourselves.

What, you offer me remuneration? I trust you will remember that I am a person of consequence accustomed to being richly rewarded.

*My father often advised the taking of snuff in times of crisis.
Pray excuse me while I return home to collect some.*

For myself, I feel that if people of good will could all sit down together and discuss things in a reasoned manner, we could at least make our escape un-noticed.

17. Other arch-mages show similar personal characteristics. Indeed one anonymous wit felt that mages showed a disposition similar to hedgehogs huddled together for warmth.

✿ Inspiration from Representation ✿

‘She should be reasonably clean and not smell of fish.’

In a previous edition of this exalted publication we displayed a picture by the renowned artist Dave Bezzina and suggested that this artistic accomplishment might inspire readers to send in their suggestions of potential scenarios inspired by the picture. Here we present three, all arrived at independently, which we hope will show budding GMs just how they can draw inspiration from various sources.



From the esteemed James Maliszewski, purveyor of reverie to a wide audience ...

Upon the deceptively placid shores of the lake Jhianne once sat the great trading city of Sandine¹, a beacon to all civilized folk who plied the merchant trade along the river. A network of satellite towns grew up around Sandine, each supporting the lucrative industries that made the city the envy of the 19th Aeon. As their commerce with Sandine grew, so did their borders, often spilling over into the surrounding jungle wilderness. Until then, the jungle had lain undisturbed for as long as any could remember.

As one might expect, the beasts of the wild took exception to this intrusion upon their sovereign territory. Almost at once, the brutes of the jungle, especially the bindle cat and the quilkin, took to preying on the inhabitants of these outlying towns — to the consternation of Sandine, whose livelihood depending on their factors not being consumed by ravenous beasts.

Legions of animal catchers and soldiers sprang up just to deal with the animals. Trade declined as the outlying towns devoted more energy to protecting their citizenry than to sating Sandine’s ever-increasing commercial demands.

Thus it was that Hummin, Arch-Magician of Sandine, enchanted a collection of items he called “Gynomorphous Metastases,” but which most people referred to as “Hummin’s Women.” Although a magician without equal², Hummin’s rectitude left something to be desired. An inveterate philanderer whose appetites are still legendary among those eroticists, bawds and trollops who remember the old ways, the Arch-Magician was wont to enchant items pleasing to his own lascivious tastes; the Gynomorphous Metastases were no different. The Metastases are small jevacite stones into which Hummin inserted the ability to conjure an image of a female human form, whose actions and intentions accorded fully with the



1. Cartographers differ as to the location of the lake, most think that in the 19th aeon the Scamander swung a long way further south at Erze Damath and the lake was somewhere in this area. By their estimation Sandine lay on the shore of the lake perhaps seven hundred miles south of Erze Damath and perhaps three or four hundred inland of the Songan sea.

2. At least in his own estimation.

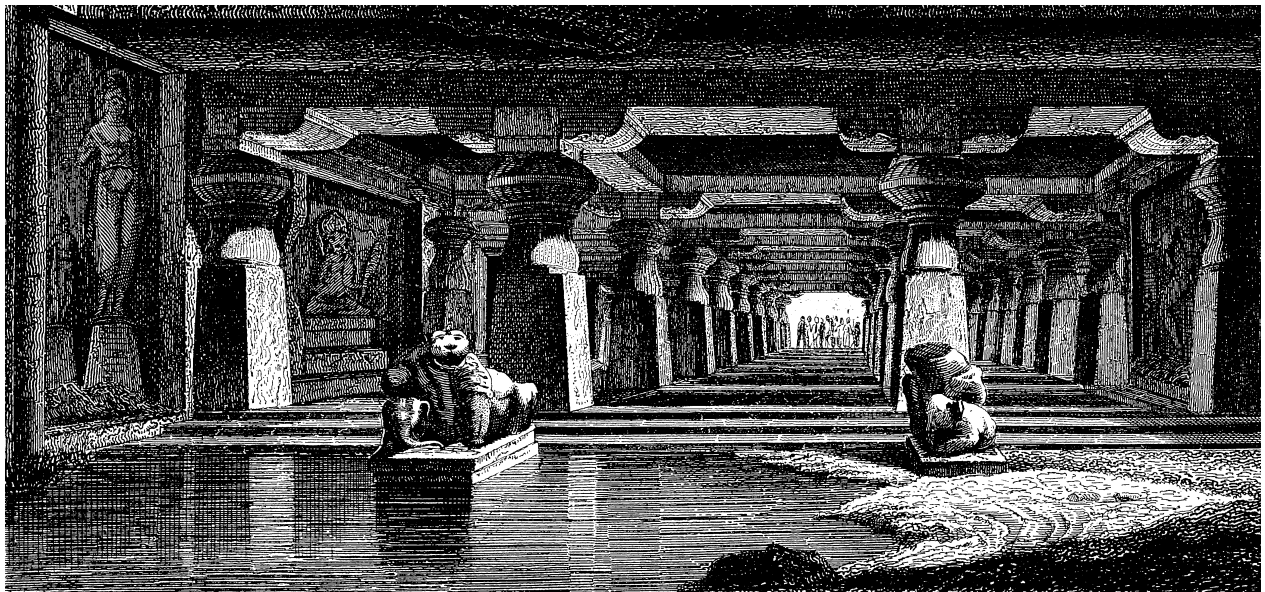
wishes of their user. Hummin hoped the stones³ could be used as lures for animal traps, thereby eliminating the threat posed by these creatures — and restoring trade to the crapulent heights of better days.

Hummin's plan worked all too well. Within a few short months, the Metastases, used as bait, improved the security of the outlying towns a thousand fold. Now bereft of employment, the animal catchers and soldiers denounced the Arch-Magician and Sandine. They called upon their leaders to take action — and so they did.

Realizing how much Sandine depended on them, the outlying towns banded together and made war upon their one-time benefactor. The city fell to the enraged townsfolk, who, in turn, suffered a reversal of fortune when they proved unable to master the intricate trade network Sandine had once maintained. Within a mere handful of generations, the jungle reclaimed the region totally, leaving only the ruins and beleaguered settlements of the present age.

Possible scenario ideas

- i) It is said some of Hummin's Metastases yet survive in the Silver Desert, along what were the banks of the River Jhianne, still active after more than two Aeons. If true, there are undoubtedly many who would pay highly for such enchanted items.
- ii) It is rumored that the ruins of Sandine slumber still in caverns near an oasis fed by deep underground waters, patrolled by the descendants of those brindled cats whose ancestors had troubled the area two aeons before deep in the Silver Desert.



An engraving in Restin's Argent Peregrinations suggests there may be factual basis for the rumoured caverns.

Pellin, Steward of one of the greatest of Mages, has been instructed to dispose of a SMALL PLEASURE BOAT of a mere 30 ells. Sails of azure Elterian linen, hull of MOWOOD, the prow is wrought out of BLUE TANTALUM set with Yu-sapphires, the cushions and drapes are the finest silk.

Contact him privily for quick sale brought about by a need to travel abroad



3. Of which he had a considerable abundance.



Lynne Hardy, from lands so far north that the sun never sets and migrating birds fly backward, contributed the following, being subtitled, ‘On the Nature of the Isle of Phelliday’.

In the deep forests of this mysterious place, the smallest of the Misty Isles, lie the overgrown ruins of a once magnificent menagerie. Many aeons ago, or so the fisherman’s tales⁴ would have you believe, the renowned collector and hybrid breeder Shareil came to the island in search of new specimens for her experiments. So enraptured with the island and its diverse creatures was she, that she immediately set her magical minions to building a palace of unrivaled beauty and charm where she could carry out her work in peace.

Despite the plethora of blood-thirsty and vicious flora and fauna on the island, Shareil never came to harm, which some romantically suggest was due to her innate knowledge and spiritual bond with all creatures. The more level-headed believe it had more to do with her greatest creation, the legendary Felidand, a feline/deodand hybrid of unparalleled cunning and ferocity. These magnificent creatures were utterly devoted to their mistress and she to them. Tales are still told of a beautiful woman⁵ wandering along the shoreline of the island at sunset, accompanied by her felidand companions. For this reason, most locals will not set foot upon the island, believing it to be haunted.

Possible scenario ideas

- i) The characters are shipwrecked on the island and are rescued by a charming woman and her terrible feline entourage. Starved of human company for many centuries, the ghost of Shareil will be unwilling to let them leave without at least one story each!
- ii) Aware of the rumors of a legendary beast on the isle, the characters have been hired to retrieve at least one live specimen (preferably a breeding pair). Shareil’s ghost isn’t really going to take that particular infringement too kindly at all.

Felidand

“Grph, hairless, wmph, small, grph, stringy creatures, wmph, people.”

Athletics 2~;	Attack (Strength) 2.5~	Defense (Intuition) 2~;	Health 2~;
Living Rough 5;	Perception 10;	Persuade (Intimidating) 0.5~;	Rebuff (Wary) 0.75~;
Stealth 15;	Tracking 12		

A large tawny colored feline of immense musculature, with limited powers of speech due partly to its jaw morphology and also due to lack of practice.

Shareil

“There is nothing that man can do that a creature can’t, given time, application and a brief spell in a vat.”

Perception 1.5~; Persuade (Charming) 1.5~; Rebuff (Penetrating) ~

The ghost of the legendary collector who has remained on the island to protect her beloved creations. She is an intelligent, attractive woman with a dry sense of humor. The felidand population of the island is totally obedient to her. Should her dagger⁶ be found (lying forgotten in the heart of the menagerie) and removed from the island, Shareil’s ghost will follow it. This could lead to all sorts of further complications as Shareil does indeed have an affinity with creatures, even after death, and will do anything to return to her island.

4. Scholars have noted that in fishermen’s tales, aeons are longer than usual and those with little written evidence are far larger than one would normally expect.

5. Scholars have also noted that the women in these tales are of a beauty unsurpassed since. There are theories which attempt to account for this, none of them are entirely convincing. See Kolquill & Lazarder’s *Fishermen and their Contributions to Historical Veracity*.

6. There is some controversy as to just how magical the dagger is. Some claim that merely wearing it will protect one from attack by dangerous beasts, others that it is little more than a pretty toy worn to pleasing effect by a beautiful woman.

From the rostgobler quill of the antipodean Ian Thomson we have 'Tjozyp's Temple':

At a remote town in warmer climes, impoverished wanderers encounter the travel-weary scholar, Tjozyp the Luminous. This man is the nearest thing to a true historian they may ever meet⁷.

Astutely recognizing their marked variance with the lackadaisical locals, Tjozyp offers to stand them a simple meal if they will address his offer of employment. He explains that only three or four days hence lies an ancient temple of remarkable beauty, no doubt also containing valuable trinkets from days before the earth reached its current decrepitude. He briefly surveyed its wonders some years ago, but due to a range of misfortunes has found himself with no retainers to accompany him on his current journey.

If prospective employees ask around, they find the townsfolk indifferent, yet effective persuasions will reveal that Tjozyp apparently speaks the truth. He arrived here a fortnight ago with two companions, distraught and complaining of ambush. The injured companions departed with a passing merchant and his entourage, returning to the coast. The temple itself is known only in rumor, since locals do not wander so far.

Deodands and pelgranes may threaten the unwary along the way to the temple, also the occasional erb. By night Tjozyp evokes the Ivory Barricade which ensures their safety. On the third day, diverse tropical plant-life grows evident, and by the fourth they are deep within the confines of this unusual vegetative milieu. Peculiar creatures screech and bellow, and exotic fowl fly overhead or trot about the underbrush. Hazardous plants, such as the razorglass bush, add further to the thrill of the trail.

By and by they reach an old temple of exquisite design. A delighted Tjozyp sets them about surveying the structure under his precise guidance. In cruel circumstance, he is slain by a great cat shortly after being left alone sketching the façade of this enchanting structure. His new assistants hear his cries, but arrive too late, other perhaps than to injure and drive away the fearsome feline.

Unbeknown to our explorers, this temple still holds a guardian ghost, who whilst of comparatively benevolent disposition does not look kindly upon desecration or looting. She commands three great cats, and may also manifest to better apply magical effects for the discouragement or injury of thieves. Hidden within the ruin are ancient treasures, such as the Orrish Crystal⁸, making efforts to defy her potentially of great reward.



WAKDUN THE PANDERER

PURVEYOR of EROTIC APPURTENANCES & GENTLEMEN'S REQUISITES

Ladies' Night

We have now available a fine collection of MALE HOUSE SLAVES for the discerning buyer. All of striking physique and regular physiognomy, presented for display washed and lightly oiled. Impress your neighbours, delight your friends, relieve your husband of sundry trivial tasks.

Contact us to arrange inspection



7. He is notable for his insistence on discovering the truth, whether or not it contradicts his theories. Such behaviour is frowned upon in most of the Dying Earths few remaining seats of learning.

8. Details of this stone are few, needless to say it is thought to be of considerable value and is mentioned in legend as having an ability to cure general debility and warts.

✿ The Glass World ✿

A scenario for those of an enquiring nature

Lynne Hardy

The Glass World deals with weird magics, doomed romance and petty vengeance, as well as taking in natty fashions from a bygone era and encouraging more than a passing interest in horticultural hybridisation and other such nefarious doings. There are several ways in which the following scenario can be used. Although intended for Turjan-level characters (just in case things come a little stressful in the latter stages of proceedings and the deft use of magic is necessary to save the day), with only minor adjustments it could be used for those Cugel-level characters looking to stretch their cranial matter a little further than normal. Or, as we here prefer to call it in our local argot, get massively tooled up.

Setting the scene: “Azenomei, Town of Wonders.”

Well, some at least ...

There are several ways in which your unfortunate (nay, what am I thinking, extremely fortunate) players could find themselves in Azenomei¹. Perhaps they are here resting after a particularly arduous adventure or are merely passing through on their way to somewhere else. Maybe they are here to avail themselves of the possibilities offered by the local fair, a perfect opportunity to acquire all those essential items the adventurer requires. Or mayhap they have been drawn here by the promise of employment. But then again, they could be keeping a low profile after becoming involved in a delicate and embarrassing situation which arose elsewhere.

The fair itself is a veritable cornucopia of delights, where reputable traders in fine goods and gastronomy from the far flung reaches of the Dying Earth rub shoulders with mountebanks² and fortune tellers. The stalls are constantly changing and can be hired from the authorities at a few terces a day, should anyone wish to do so. Rummaging through the stalls will bring to light many fine objects whose uses are too manifold to mention, but there are also many gewgaws for the less discerning to waste their valuable coinage on. The traders are voluble, charming and above all determined to separate the unwary from their terces.

One trader above all has a reputation to maintain. Esterfal, a nondescript individual with no outstanding features to speak of other than his voice. It is mellifluous, deep, resonant and above all, charming³. He prides himself on the quality of his goods, which for the most part are genuine historical trinkets or enchanted items of guaranteed, if limited, usage. He is particularly pleased with a shipment he received earlier, via many intermediaries, from a distant

This scenario can be played as it is. A discerning GM with a vicious, or less honestly, a playful nature, could build the pressure and the headaches by running this as a series of dream interludes, of which further details will appear later in the text. Of course, as is often the case in the Dying Earth, things may not quite be what they seem and further details on that particularly enticing twist will also be provided at a later date.



1. My favourite city in the Scaum valley, more civilised and less frantic than Kaiin, less split with cliques than Taun Tassel and with excellent hunting in the hinterland.

2. Cynics might comment that mountebanks, charlatans, cheats and impostors form the majority of the merchant class, but it is editorial policy not to be drawn into such discussions.

3. It is claimed that at the sound of it deodands have forsworn meat and courtesans have taken up their beds and set forth on the paths of chastity and righteousness. It should be noted that we have only the word of some of Esterfal's drinking companions for these claims.

✿ The Glass World ✿

associate who mines the mounds near the town of Tugersbir.

As the characters pass by his stall, Esterfal will attempt his salesman's patter, especially if there should be a lovely⁴ lady present. He will offer them amulets sovereign against dropsy, boxes that preserve the contents from spoilage and even maps to wondrous treasure-troves. Should the party be resistant to his charms and begin to walk away, he will gesticulate for them to follow him to the rear of his crowded stall.

There, beneath a fine blue velvet cloth, is hidden a charming glass orb containing a tiny but perfect mansion. Picking up the orb and moving it about reveals the exquisite craftsmanship with which it has been made — why, you can even see the tiny figures in the ballroom caught mid-dance. Depending on how you turn the globe, they even appear to be dancing still. The central courtyard garden has also been finely detailed. It is doubtful the characters will ever have seen anything quite so skilfully made.

Of course, there is a catch. The price Esterfal wants for the globe is extortionate and should most definitely be beyond the characters' means. Esterfal is no fool, though and he and his booth are warded with a variety of amulets to protect against controlling magics. There are also alarms should the characters try anything else underhanded to obtain the globe. Esterfal will be very disappointed in them should they try such foolish things. Of course, being such a beautiful item, the characters will need to fight their Avarice or the desire to possess it may be all consuming

As with much else in life, the characters don't need the orb to get themselves into lots of trouble but should they be determined to steal it, or obtain the money for it by a variety of nefarious means, allow them to try. Unless their attempts are subtle and well-constructed, the Azenomei guard will take a dim view of having their peaceful lives disturbed by petty, not to mention incompetent, thieves. Much joy⁵ can be had from watching the characters struggle to obtain a bauble which is practically guaranteed to bring them nothing but grief.

Entrapment: "I Fear I May Have Over-indulged a Trifle ..."

That evening, after a hearty meal, the player with the lowest magic score who touched the globe begins to feel a little nauseous. Well, somewhat more than a little in fact, so much so that it would be wise for them to retire to their bed. Glorious descriptions of their unfortunate state are most definitely encouraged, as it adds to the atmosphere if all concerned believe (at least initially) that the following events are the products of a fevered and delirious imagination.



After all of the characters have retired, the ill character is woken by the delicate strains of a minuet to find him or herself surrounded by a thick, all-encompassing mist. The music draws the character to a seemingly vast ballroom. Huge swags of material garland the room, although the ceiling is not visible. The ballroom itself is tastefully decorated in muted creams and browns and silk flowers festoon the entire area. The dance floor is full of people, swirling about in time to the minuet. No matter how characters search, they will not be able to locate the source although the music is bright and clear. The dancers' costumes are elaborate if of an unfamiliar style and are made of fine materials encrusted with lace and pearls. Each also wears an animalistic, distinctly nightmarish mask.

4. While lovely is preferred, wealthy is an adequate substitute and prosperous is acceptable in the face of nothing better.

5. See how we pander to the pleasures of our game moderators.

✿ The Glass World ✿

Around the edges of the room are tables, at which are seated other guests. They appear to have recently finished dining on a sumptuous meal and are apparently chatting animatedly amongst themselves. Closer investigation reveals that they are not making any sound at all and take no notice of the character's questions or entreaties. A quick glance at the dance floor will identify a number of people who do not appear to know how to dance. They too are wearing the costumes of the dancers and have a grotesque mask each, but have none of their grace and style. The other characters have appeared in the guise of revellers and will be able to spot their companion standing by an empty table, no doubt looking suspiciously at their own mask which lies on the table beside them. Fortunately for the characters whilst they cannot gambol nimbly, they do all appear to be able to speak with their normal charm and wit. Unfortunately, they appear to only be carrying that which they fell asleep with. Unless they sleep attached to their grimoire, any mages will have to rely on what spells they had memorised at the point they went to bed and the same goes for any weaponry⁶.

A thorough investigation of this room will reveal (even to those who are not blessed with the greatest of Perception) that there is only one substantial, real wall. Whilst there appears to be something on the other three sides of the room, they are most definitely not what would be described under normal circumstances as walls. In fact they are more of a swirling, virtually impenetrable misty substance, with strange shadows moving across the surface. In places they are highly reflective and may also be curving in on themselves. The one true wall is also of some interest. As well as a door (hidden behind a thickly draped curtain and requiring a successful use of Perception to locate), there is a fireplace and a high ornate mantelpiece. The fire in the grate is apparently roaring away in silence and without giving out any heat whatsoever. On the mantle is a large old clock of a very intricate design, protected by a heavy glass dome. It is the only thing in this room that appears to be making any noise (although whether or not the characters realise this straight away is entirely up to the GM). Above the mantle is a portrait of a handsome young couple standing in front of a house which the more perceptive of the characters may feel is disconcertingly familiar to them.

The door itself opens onto a long, wood panelled corridor. Two flights of stairs appear to lead downwards and the wall opposite the door consists mostly of plain glass windows, which look out over a central courtyard garden. No doubt the characters will want to explore further.

The House: "My, What A Charming Residence You Have Here ..."

Below follows a list of the rooms within the house and what may be found there. Items of great import to the plot will be detailed at greater length elsewhere.

Upstairs:

Guest Bedrooms

In the west wing there are four guest bedrooms. They are charmingly decorated and comfortable. In all of the rooms are items required for personal grooming, what appear to be travelling clothes as well as several other garments, and other items of personal trinketry⁷. The clothing is of good quality, but apparently very old-fashioned.

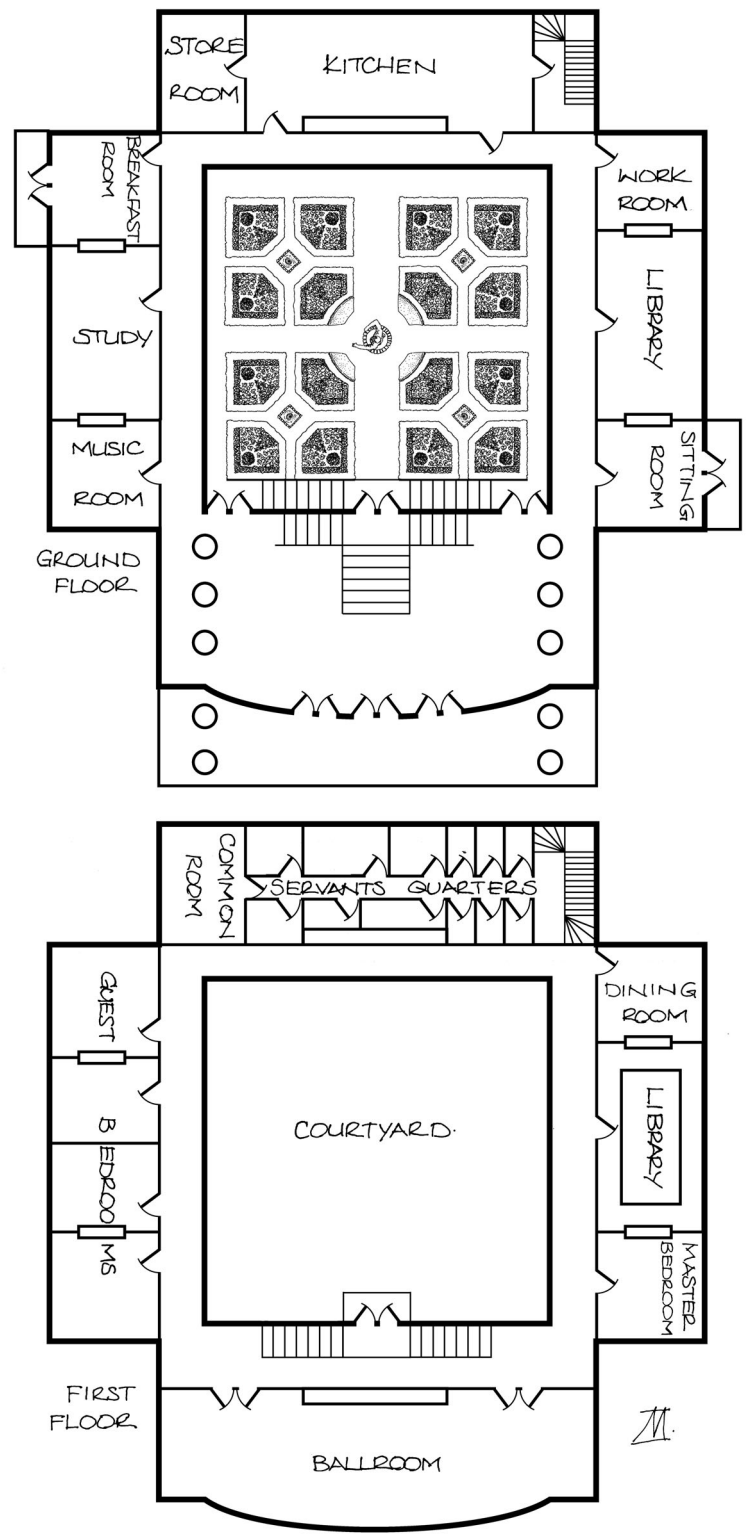
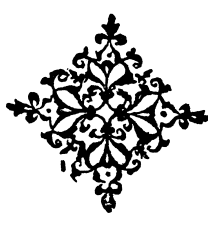
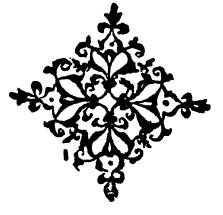
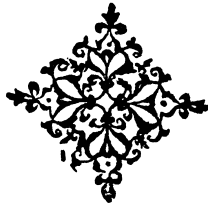
Should anyone care to look through the windows of these rooms, they will see only creamy mist.

The Master Bedroom

A very well appointed room containing many personal items belonging to both a lady and gentleman. The dresser is beautifully carved and has many drawers. There is another fireplace here and above it another portrait. Unlike the one in the ballroom, this picture has been defaced such that the woman's visage has been torn and ripped from it. Several items are also broken, apparently having been launched at the walls at

6. It is as well to note down at this point comments that players make that their character "always" sleeps with a dagger under the pillow, or, in more extreme circumstance, their hand clenched firmly round the hilt of their favourite war axe. In future this snippets of information can be brought into play in circumstances less to the players advantage. Hence potentially amorous partners may cool rapidly on discovering a battle axe in the bed, servants cutting themselves on naked blades whilst plumping the pillows will demand recompense. GMs will doubtless discover yet more situations in which they may take honest pleasure.

7. None of these baubles have any real value but this fact will doubtless not stop sundry characters filling their bags and spending the rest of the evening staggering around under the weight of ebony hair brushes, toilet soap and rather nice towels.



❧ The Glass World ❧

high speed. Again, only mist is visible from the windows of this room.

Library

This is a two-storey room, with the upper level accessed by means of a balcony which runs the entire circumference of the room. In each balustrade there is a gate by which a movable ladder can be accessed. A cluttered desk can be seen on the ground floor from up here, but this too appears to have had some havoc wreaked upon it. There are many treatises here, covering a wide range of subjects but the most popular appear to be travel, foreign lands, horticulture and magical hybridisations. There are also a number of old personal journals detailing experiments and several empty books. If none of the characters had many spells memorised before they awoke here, then the library is a good place to allow them, within reason, to arm themselves with useful spells. Some form of tally over a limited number of rounds should be employed whilst they search for named spells in unfamiliar books with at best possess patchy indices or, more generally, no index at all.



The library is both comfortable and well-stocked with tomes dealing with a vast range of topics.

Dining Room

An elegant room, again decorated in neutral tones. Picture windows look out only on to mist to the east. A large oval table, capable of seating ten, occupies the centre of the room. Only two places have been set at the far end of the table and the remains of a long desiccated flower inhabit a crystal vase set next to one of these places.

Staircase

A plain staircase leading downwards. There is a ladder on the far side of the stairwell that leads up to a hatch onto the roof. A second door here leads off into the servants' quarters. A "frozen" servant is halfway down the stairs with a tray containing empty plates. He is clammy to the touch, does not appear to be breathing and is difficult, but not impossible, to move.

Servants' Quarters and Common Room

All of the rooms lining this corridor are deserted. They are plainly furnished with a bed and a washstand in each. There are personal items, but of low quality and certainly nothing of interest to the discerning pilferer's eye. The common room at the end of the corridor was obviously in use shortly before it was abandoned, as there are several different card games in progress on some of the tables in this room. There are also several worn, comfortable chairs for lounging in as well as one or two dilapidated but obviously much loved sofas.

Main Staircase

The staircases meet at a central landing and sweep down into the entrance hall.

Downstairs:

Entrance Hall

This is perhaps the most breathtaking room in the entire house. Many different types of marble have been used in the floor to create a magnificent floral picture that covers virtually the entire area of the hallway. The six pillars in the room are also marble and have been inlaid in such a way as to make it appear that creepers have climbed up them to where a beautiful frieze of further flowers covers the ceiling. The detail is so great that the flowers almost appear to be real. A huge set of double doors, flanked by windows, leads out of the house. In front of them stands a man, his hand grasping the doorknob.

He has a panicked look on his face and again is clammy to the touch. With difficulty his hand can be pried

✿ The Glass World ✿

off the doorknob and whoever does so may well notice (Perception) that his fingernails are torn and bloodied. His clothes are finely made, but again of an unfamiliar design. The doors are resistant to any attempts to open them. Destructive spells fired at them merely appear to pass straight through and physical violence leads only to bending and warping, before the doors spring back into shape. There are two doors into the garden here. The other two doors into the garden are in the west and east corridors.

Sitting Room

A well appointed room, with French windows leading out onto a pleasant veranda; the doors are jammed tight and cannot be opened. The ever-present mist is all that can be seen beyond the little terrace. There are several comfortable sofas and chaise longues here and there are serious magical texts lying on side tables along with a few slushy romantic novellas. Some good, but amateur, paintings decorate the walls and are mainly concerned with landscapes although there are a few of ships. Several of the paintings have been signed with the initial 'E', but those of ships are signed with an 'N'.

Library

More serious magical texts, personal journals and a variety of other learned tomes. The surface of the desk that was visible from the first floor has indeed been hastily swept clean, spilling ink onto the floor (as can be witnessed by the stained floorboards under the bottle) and scattering the books hither and thither.

Work Room

This room is far too tidy to have been used recently. The walls are lined with benches on which stand arrays of gardening equipment that would make most horticulturists cry with joy, together with intricate glass alembics, stands and burners. There are also many sealed jars on the shelves containing dried plant components and other useful ingredients. A large, sturdy table occupies the centre of the room and set into the table are two lead vats. One is empty and clean, the other is fastened shut with a padlock. Should anyone successfully pick the lock, then the characters must muster their Wherewithal to avoid a debilitating bout of retching and vomiting at what is within: due to an imperfect seal on the vat, it contains nothing but the fetid, rotting remains of what may be some form of plant hybrid now submerged in a disgusting soupy broth. On one of the other benches are hurriedly copied spell formulae and several empty component jars. On the floor next to these is a beautiful dress, lying as if it had just fallen there.

Stairs

Leading upstairs and also containing a door into the kitchen.

Kitchen

The room is full of servants, all frozen in place. All of the food appears to have disappeared, leaving several of the staff in comical positions. Those characters feeling lost without weaponry could avail themselves of the many sharp knives on offer here. There is a door in the far wall that leads into the storeroom. As before, sealed or dried goods appear to have survived, but there are several empty baskets and plates where victuals were once resident.

Breakfast Room

A charmingly intimate room, obviously not for use by the general public or guests. The furniture is older than in the rest of the house and looks well used while the decoration is less formal. French windows lead onto another veranda, but once more these are jammed tight against all attempts to open them. There are more sketches and landscapes decorating the walls here, but not quite as good as those in the sitting room.

Study

This is a sombre and terribly formal room, wood-panelled from floor to ceiling and very dark. There is another fireplace in here and again the portrait of the couple above it has been vandalised in the same manner as the one upstairs. A huge desk sits imposingly in front of the window and on it are business ledgers for the firm 'Alesten and Corlam'. The books in here are all business related, detailing ships, costs, cargoes and buyers. Anyone making successful Stewardship rolls can quickly ascertain that Alesten and Corlam are a wealthy firm with a thriving business.

❧ The Glass World ❧

Music Room

A pleasant room containing several musical instruments, some familiar, some not. There are also artists' materials in here, including a large box full of scraps of paper and pencils, charcoal, brushes and paints.

Other Places of Interest.

The Garden

The cloister corridor on the ground floor has three doors leading out into the formal courtyard garden, one on each side. There are four main plots, each with a central fountain that is no longer functioning. Each plot has four flower beds which are edged with neatly trimmed hedges. One of the hedges is an ossip bush, but unfortunately it doesn't have any berries on it. The beds themselves contain a variety of plants that are either associated with magic, herbal remedies or cooking. Neat little name-tags identify each type of plant. The pathways throughout the garden are a golden coloured gravel and lead to a central bed containing an unnervingly lifelike topiary statue of a man. He is stretching out to something just beyond his reach and his face is contorted into a scream. There are four benches around this central feature, should anyone care to rest awhile. There is no mist in the garden, but looking up reveals no sky, only the creamy reflective surface seen in the ballroom. Again, vaguely familiar shadows appear to be moving across the surface.

The Roof

A precarious location, accessible only to the most Athletic characters. There is little of interest up here except more mist and strange sky. Any character attempting to climb down the outside of the building finds that they cannot move over the edge of the roof. Every time they try to go over the edge, they just appear to have climbed back onto the roof again.

Explanation⁸: "What The Deuce Is Going On Here, Then?"

Some aeons ago in a civilisation long buried beneath the mounds of Tustvold, there were two powerful families that, for the most part, got along famously and had been business partners for generations. They were experienced merchants, with a vast network of suppliers, buyers and staff. The two eldest sons of the family, as well as being groomed to one day take over the firm, had been friends from childhood, although there had always been something of a friendly rivalry between them. The problems began when the daughter of a lesser family, concerned mostly with horticultural enterprises, was presented to society. The lady in question was beautiful, charming and magically talented. Like her grandmother and mother before her, the lady's special interest was the creation and refinement of plant hybrids, magical or otherwise. Both young men fell in love with her, which could only lead to trouble.

Over the years both men attempted to woo the lady Erinsay. Garten, son of the Alesten family, grew increasingly bitter over the whole affair, as it was obvious that Erinsay favoured Nerrin Corlam. Nerrin did everything he could to spare his friend's feelings and maintain the friendship, but it became increasingly difficult to do so as Garten became more and more obsessive. Erinsay, for her part, was careful to discourage Garten as gently as possible. After all, her family relied heavily on Alesten and Corlam and could easily have been ruined by the withdrawal of their patronship. Business matters were not the only reason for her care, as she also couldn't bear the thought of offending her love Nerrin by her rough treatment of his friend.

Eventually Erinsay could put off her decision no longer and accepted Nerrin's proposal of marriage. Garten took the news badly and sent several threatening letters to Erinsay. Determined that if he couldn't have her, neither could Nerrin, Garten set about his petty revenge.

Using his family's vast resources he sought out a dubious individual⁹ named Qilqon, one of an enclave of disreputable mages living in the hills above the city of Helmint¹⁰. When faced with the challenging

8. Players are advised not to read this section. Your GM will soon notice that you alone of the party seem to be acting with a sure confidence and will penalise you horribly for your temerity.

9. In truth there was nothing dubious about Qilqon. He was simply a rogue for hire.

10. Some authorities claim that the ruins of Helmint can be seen by anyone prepared to dive in the cold sea off the coast near Tustvold.

❧ The Glass World ❧

assignment, Qilqon set about constructing an exquisite enchantment, marvellous in its deviousness.

Erinsay lived in what had been her grandmother's house, a short carriage ride outside of Helmint. The wedding and the subsequent celebrations were to take place there. On the day appointed for the festivities, the guests arrived along with servants bearing the sundry gifts and presents for the young couple. According to the bearer, one present, a beautiful clock, was a gift from the townsfolk of Caenorhib where Erinsays' family maintained several plant nurseries. Thrilled with the item, Nerrin and Erinsay had the servants install it in the ballroom for all to admire. Unfortunately for all concerned, the clock was to prove their undoing.

When the clock struck two, Qilqon's enchantment took hold. The staff became frozen in time, Nerrin became the topiary statue and the revellers were cursed to dance or chat inanely till the end of days. Erinsay found herself wandering the corridors of her home, untouched by the spell. On her pillow she found a note from Garten, who had broken into the house under Phandaal's Mantle of Stealth in order to gloat and inflict petty damage. The note detailed what he had done and gloated that he would possess her for all eternity as she and everyone else in the house were now contained within a perfect glass orb for him to view at his leisure. Garten also commented that eternity should be long enough for her to reflect on her inappropriate choice of husband. The note also contained a statement to the effect that the only way the enchantment could be broken was to have all three of them in the same place with the clock, an impossibility as he wasn't trapped in there with them.

Erinsay was not powerful enough to undo an enchantment of such a nature on her own, but neither was she prepared to spend her days being slowly driven mad. Using her family's knowledge of plant magic, she transformed herself into a rose that became embedded within the clock itself, the only place where it would not suffer the effects of passing time.

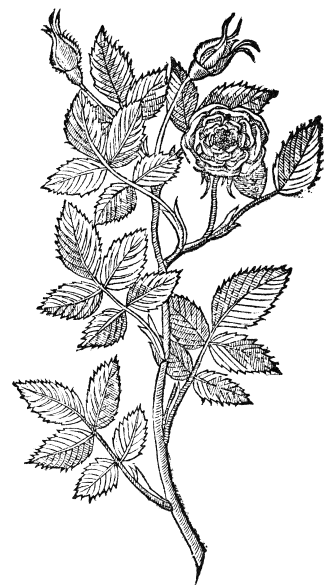
In a twist to the plot befitting our moral tale, natural justice had been unwittingly served. In his fatuity, Garten had left it too late to escape the house and did indeed become trapped. Erinsay only failed to spot him because his invisibility initially remained intact and only dissipated after she had interred herself. In the outside world, Garten's arrogance led to the eventual ruin of his family and the orb was lost when Helmint was buried during the many upheavals that wracked the area.

Items of Import: "Good Gracious! Have You Seen This ... ?"

There are several items of great import around the house that should help the characters to determine where they are, what is happening and how to escape their predicament. These are listed below with their location.

The Clock Located in the Ballroom

The clock is a large, finely wrought, very ornate carriage style clock, with the body standing on three legs. The whole thing is covered by a heavy glass dome. It is the source of the enchantment that holds this household in thrall. It alone of all the things in the ballroom makes a noise¹¹, the incessant half ticking of a clock that is stuck. Unwittingly, Erinsay may have prolonged the house's imprisonment by putting herself into the clock's mechanism as she has jammed the minute hand into place. The clock is incredibly heavy and will require teamwork or *Warp of Troll Strength* to lift it safely down from the mantelpiece and onto a table for further examination. A successful Athletics or Quick Fingers roll will be required to remove the dome without smashing it. Once the dome is removed one can see right into the mechanism where it is possible to see the rose. Quick Fingers can be used to remove the rose, as could Craftsmanship or anyone with a clockwork Specialisation. Smashing



11. Remember that the music can be heard in the ballroom but has no source.

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the clock would not be a good idea, as it would probably destroy the flower.

Should anyone use a *Periapt of All Seeing*¹² on the clock, they will see the interchanging images of a woman, the rose and the clock. With luck this will give them a clue as to what is going on. Removing the rose from the ballroom will cause it to revert into Erinsay, who will be naked and visibly distressed. After she has clothed herself, she will be prepared to answer any questions the party has but she really isn't very pleased to see them (after all, she doesn't know that Garten is still in the house). If, as the play testing party did, the entire clock is removed from the ballroom, it will begin to pulse and swell alarmingly. They have only a limited time to get it to the garden with the other two crucial people in order to break the enchantment.

The Pillow Letter *Located in the Master Bedroom*

This is the letter that should help the characters most in solving the puzzle before them. It has fallen down between the bed and the side table and only actively searching characters who succeed in their Perception rolls will find it there. In it are the details described in the previous section, plus any other hints the GM may feel it necessary to give. It is signed with a 'G'. The overall tone of the letter is haughty, cruel and deranged. Combined with the other letters hidden in this room, it should paint a portrait of a thoroughly unpleasant and petty little man.

The Threatening Letters

These are located in the Master Bedroom dressing table. Actively searching characters who again succeed at a Perception roll will discover a small bundle of unpleasant notes hidden at the back of a drawer in the dressing table. There are lots of harsh comments and thinly veiled threats to Erinsay about how much she'll regret her decision and so on. They are again signed with a 'G'.

Transformation Protocol

This is located in the Work Room. Although smudged and hurriedly written, any mages should be able to decipher the vast majority of this manuscript, which details the transformation of a living animal into a plant. The list of ingredients matches those pots scattered about this bench and corresponds to those required for a human to rose transformation. The protocol is contained within a personal journal, which on the previous page has a brief note written by Erinsay describing what she hopes to achieve with the transformation and praying that someone will soon rectify the situation.

The Unfinished Reply

This is located in the Library (ground floor). Amongst the books scattered on the floor around the desk is an unfinished reply to one of the threatening letters. There are no names on it and it has been hurriedly written in a woman's hand. It appears to have been hurriedly hidden in the book in order to stop someone from finding it. The words on it are "I hope, for the sake of your soul's preservation that those threats which you have so recently made will not...".

The Sundered Sketch. Located in the Music Room

At the bottom of the artist's work box is a crumpled sketch of a man who looks remarkably like the gentleman hanging onto the door handle in the entrance hall. His face has been scribbled out. The sketch appears to have been torn from a larger picture, the rest of which is in a frame on one of the walls in the breakfast room. The gentleman in the framed picture is the one in all the other portraits in this house.

Resolution: "So, Your Plan For Escape Would Be ...?"

There they are, trapped in a glass orb created in the far distant past. What can they do? There are several different options:

1. They can find all the clues scattered about the house and attempt to reverse the enchantment by assembling the key players in one place and breaking the clock in front of them. It is preferable if they do this in the garden as cutting Nerrin off at the ankles to move him could be distinctly unpleasant when he is

12. Described on page 117 of the rule book.

✿ The Glass World ✿

returned to mortal form. Although it will be hard to move Garten from his position in the hallway, the wheeled trolley in the library should come in very handy.

2. If they have smashed the clock, accidentally or otherwise, they could use the *Second Reintropic* to remove the enchantment from the clock, all three key players and the house in general. *Liberation of Warp* is not really recommended as it only affects a certain area and could lead to all sorts of unpleasant effects should someone be stood on the margins when the spell is fired. The maiming, destruction or otherwise unfortunate end of any of the key players is not a barrier to the characters' escape, but it really would be letting the side down ...

3. Again, if the clock has been smashed, they may be in for a long period of research in an unfamiliar library trying to invent a way to get out of there. Reward imaginative use of spells, but it's going to be difficult. Still, players can be tricky little blighters and may yet surprise you.

Conclusion: "At Last, Freedom ... "

So with luck (and intelligence) the characters have been able to escape from the orb. What happens now? That all depends on where the GM wishes his campaign to go from here.

If run as described above:

1. If the characters successfully freed the house from its enchantment in the optimum manner, then Nerrin, Erinsay and Garten (as well as everyone else in the house) are revived. Garten has one charge left in his amulet containing *Phandaal's Mantle of Stealth* and will use it to cause as much mayhem as possible. Natural justice demands that he must be dealt with before the characters are freed.

2. As above, but the moment the lovers are restored to each other, the orb explodes and the characters find themselves back in their beds covered in glass cuts, with the local constabulary hammering on their doors. They want to talk to them about the mysterious disappearance of an artefact of some worth that they were showing an unhealthy interest in the day before....

If run as dream interludes:

1. Either of methods described above will stop the dreams.

2. Acquiring the globe and smashing it will also stop the dreams.

3. An expensive, but effective, method of stopping the dreams if the orb proves difficult to obtain would be to hire the services of a mage who specialises in dream magic. He should be able to break the orb's hold on the characters, potentially in return for a very large favour.

Perhaps the crafty demon Kerizez¹³ is truly behind these shenanigans, using the globe as a lure to entrap prey which he can gradually weaken and drain of their essence.

1. Again, an easy option would be to smash the globe, but we feel that lacks subtlety and lets the characters off far too easily.

2. With every dream the characters become weaker as the demon uses his carefully constructed trap to leech their very essence away. Only a mage specialising in demons or dreams can free them from this one, in return for a very large favour.

Further Options: "It did WHAT?"

Of course, there are other things that might happen that would add further spice to the proceedings. For example, where did the house go when freed (if freed?). It might appear ... bang, smack ... where the globe was, in which case Azenomei suddenly acquired a large town house in the middle of the fair¹⁴. It may have returned to its original location and its original time. Then again, it might be stuck in a mound near Tustvold awaiting the judicious use of *Phandaal's Inside and Out and Over*. If the orb was smashed, did

13. If any of the characters has made a powerful enemy then feel free to substitute that enemy for Kerizez.

14. Obviously it will be impossible for anyone to prove that the characters are to blame, unless Erinsay mentions their actions to the authorities, in which case the characters will be dragged into a long technical argument with sundry local gentry which will inevitably lead to them being asked to pay a substantial sum for the land on which they have placed this house.

✿ The Glass World ✿

the house regain its original size at all, or do the characters now have a miniature house to look after? If the demon was truly behind it all, will he take kindly to having his meal ticket destroyed and will he want vengeance? Just because they have escaped from the orb doesn't necessarily mean that their headaches will be over.

Magic in the Orb: "What do you mean, it didn't work?"

Because of the highly unusual nature of the orb, magic isn't necessarily going to work quite the way it does under normal circumstances. Time is a law unto itself within the house and time spells are going to be unpredictable at best. Being trapped in the globe will also affect the way in which travel spells work. If running the scenario as detailed originally, then *Spell of the Loyal Servitor*, *Thasdrubal's Laganetic Transfer*, *Call to the Violent Cloud* and *Relocalisation* are all likely to either fail or act in ways other than that expected. Demonic agents may well turn up and then be unable to exit the orb, or they may not be able to get into it in the first place.

Of course, *Relocalisation* could work, but it would only extract one person (the caster) and leave everyone else trapped in there. This may well turn out to be a viable option if all else fails. If running the scenario as dream interludes, then casting any of these spells will probably result in the characters awakening.

Of course, another point of interest is that the orb in and of itself won't appear magical to detection methods such as the *Periapt of All Seeing* (it isn't disguised or invisible, after all). A *Pendant of Temporal Monitoring*, on the other hand, may well hint that something is amiss.

The dramatis personæ: "Put your hands together for ..."

Esterfal, a Trader

"May I interest you in this fine example of early 18th Aeon Pursuivant Ware? It's a very desirable object ..."

Persuade (Charming) 17; Rebuff (Penetrating) 16

Esterfal is indeed an individual of average appearance, but his voice is his prized possession and he is very good at putting it to its best use. He is not a stupid man and carries on his person at all times amulets containing *Laccodel's Protective Rune*, *Temporal Monitoring* and *Periapt of All Seeing*. Various other protective runes are woven into the fabrics of his stall and into cloths covering the merchandise.

Erinsay, an Intellectual Beauty

"The beauty of plants is that they aren't just beautiful"

Persuade (Charming) 14; Rebuff (Pure hearted) 12; Defence (Dodge) 10; Health 12;
Magic 12; Specialisation (Plants) 10; Craftsmanship 2; Etiquette 2;
Perception 3; Pedantry 6

Spells: None currently memorised, but there are plenty in the grimoires in the library.

Erinsay is indeed a beautiful young woman, whose knowledge of plant magic is astounding. Her long auburn hair and green eyes are exquisite. Charming and eloquent, it's not surprising she captures men's hearts.

Nerrin, a Fine Gentleman

"Business? I believe that can wait a little while. More importantly, how is your lovely family?"

Persuade (Eloquent) 15; Rebuff (Penetrating) 12; Attack (Finesse) 13; Defence (Surefooted) 14;
Health 14; Magic 2; Etiquette 2; Scuttlebutt 4;
Appraisal 3; Athletics 4

Nerrin is a handsome gentleman, with perfect manners and a dazzling smile. He is very friendly and confident in his dealings with people having been trained for most of his life in how to conduct a successful business.

✿ The Glass World ✿

Garten, a Petty Jealous Man

"I don't care what you say, it's what I say that matters."

Persuade (Intimidating) 14; Rebuff (Contrary) 13; Attack (Cunning) 12; Defence (Misdirection) 14;
Health 12; Appraisal 4; Gambling 5; Etiquette 1;
Stealth 5; Scuttlebutt 4

Whilst also a handsome, well-groomed man, Garten was rather spoiled as a child and never could accept not getting his own way. A cowardly bully prone to gloating, he will do anything to ensure Nerrin and Erinsay are kept apart.



I assure you, my good man, that I am not who you think you are.

You will excuse me sir, for after all, it's not as if your face was sufficiently memorable.

It would appear that dastardly magics are afoot within this eldritch place.

Surely you are mistaken, for after all, this is but a dream.

Had I wished for a quiet vacation, I would have gone to Sfere!

*All the terces in the world would not entice me to remain here one minute longer
than is strictly necessary, make no mistake about it.*

A rose by any other name would probably not be quite so unexpected.

*Locked! There is not a lock yet which can withstand the carefully applied forces of logic,
dexterity and the Excellent Prismatic Spray.*



And a note of thanks to the playtesters Richard, Chris Docherty, Louise Hancill and Mark Freeman

THE SCHOLASTICARIUM

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

Perrin: Etiquette as a tool of social exclusion

Mistress Flook: The histrophilosophical accordance of chastity and political decline

Volune: Applied thaumochronology with emphasis on the carnal practices of the Kang Kingdom

Grashpotel: The lesser wines of Cutz with special reference to their ability to travel

Hetta the Austere is pleased to announce that the Shorecombers Temperance Association has acquired quantities of Raptogen, an exhalation that induces apathy. All and sundry afflicted with over-ardent paramours may apply forthwith and purchase a small quantity at no great price.

❖ Cozener's Expedients ❖

"You should practice optimism."

First we have two from Lynne Hardy ...

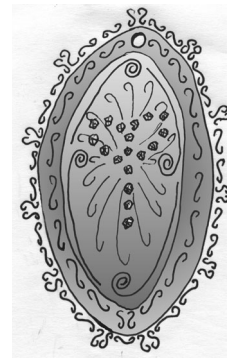
A Great Reward or "That'll Teach You To Be Altruistic"

No doubt your brave adventurers have wandered far and wide, sampling the delights of the Dying Earth from as advantageous a position as possible. Yet once more there are those who at first appear deserving if help and sympathy that are in fact not at all what they seem.

There is a small town¹ in the near wilderness, its location of no great import to any but the town's folk themselves. Occasionally travelers stumble across it on their way to greater places, it being conveniently located, not far from the road, but it is not a place that anyone would go to deliberately: it has no great library, no astonishing tombs, nothing of extraordinary interest. It is what it is, a town along a road to somewhere else.

Whilst traversing this road, your merry fellows come across a poor soul under attack from two deodands. The deodand have him suspended from a scrubby tree by his ankles and are taking turns to poke him with sharpened sticks. From the snatches of conversation drifting their way, it would appear that the vile creatures are under the mistaken apprehension that this will soften the miserable chap's meager flesh.² Naturally, such an upset to the proper order of things cannot be tolerated and it should only be a matter of time before the band free the poor wretch and send the disreputable pair of half-demons to their doom.

The man, obviously once a person of considerable means, a conclusion easily drawn from observation of the obvious quality of his now torn and dirty clothing, thanks them effusively and as a token of his immense gratitude offers them his only item of any value, an amulet. It is beautifully wrought in fine metals with an unusual luster and intricate designs. Several precious stones are set into an almost familiar pattern at its center. It would be churlish not to accept such a fine gift!



Does not the beauty of this item suggest to the wary that it may prove hazardous to those who possess it?

Yet, as ever is the case in this world, all is not what it at first appears. Should anyone accept the amulet from the man, he whoops in delight, shouting bizarre things along the lines of "free at last" and "for all the good may it do you" before racing away towards the town. If there is hesitation from the rescuers at the thought of accepting the jewel, he will resort to a most demeaning form of groveling in order to get them to willingly take his gift.

If the amulet has been accepted, all will not be well. In fact, the amulet attracts misfortune to any who willingly accept it from its previous owner. As they journey into the town, the bad luck will begin to manifest itself in clumsiness and minor mishaps. The townsfolk will shun them and only the man they took the amulet from will be prepared to instruct them in the dire details of their predicament.

No one in the town remembers where the amulet came from nor even when it appeared, but it has plagued them for centuries. Every family in the town has suffered from its curse at some point in their history and all are wise to the nature of the curse. They eventually moved the town nearer to the road in order to

1. So much decayed as to be barely a village, but who are we to cavil at such pathetic clinging to a faded civic pride.

2. Admittedly neither the editor nor any of the correspondents have much direct experience in these matters, but we are reliably informed by those whose opinions we respect that poking one's dinner with a sharp stick prior to cooking serves little useful purpose. Certainly, we are united in our belief that were this procedure in any way necessary, our mothers would have insisted on us following it from our earliest youth.

hoodwink travelers into happily taking the item, as they had discovered that attempting to plant the amulet on an unsuspecting soul would find the wretched thing back in its place around its victim's neck the next morning. Each time a new victim was created, the previous owner left as quickly as possible. The poor creature saddled with the cankerous trinket soon found that wandering too far from the town was extremely dangerous as the incidents escalated in severity with time.

Not completely ungrateful for the freeing of the townsfolk from the curse, the locals were always willing to come and rescue the unfortunate if things got too out of hand, unless of course they wandered too far away and came to a sticky end. Several times the amulet changed hands via the corpse of its previous owner being found partially consumed in a ditch, the means of their doom still about their neck.

And so it is that our heroes must now suffer the same fate of so many before them. Do they endure the bad luck until some other method of freedom comes to light, or do they dupe the next gullible soul they come across into the same situation? Ah, decisions, decisions ...

The Delightful Box or "Well, It Was Working Only A Minute Ago"

There are times in an adventurer's life when he must rely on the talents of people other than himself to accomplish his goals and desires. Proper precaution must be taken at all times in order to prevent mishap and mayhem. If characters have failed to achieve the necessary level of suspicion of their fellow man, then they really do deserve all they are about to receive.

The amount of virtually impenetrable forest in this region is becoming something of a chore to the party, who are no doubt scratched and bruised, not to say exhausted, from the efforts of hacking through a variety of toothed, thorn-encrusted and occasionally garrulous foliage.

But help is at hand! A lowly village has been carved from the choking woodland, a place of warmth and respite from the arduous tasks so far undertaken. The villagers are a little shy of strangers but friendly enough and are certainly gracious if frugal in their capacity as hosts.³ The village elder will eventually volunteer the services of three of the village's most capable trackers to guide the party through the forest to the gentler plains on the far side, for an appropriate consideration of course. The terms will seem to be expensive if not technically extortionate and bartering may well bring the price down a little. Yet such help will be of immense use, especially as the old man seems to think that it will speed their journey immeasurably. And in these end days, when is time not of the essence. Does the party want to be still hacking their way through thick forest when the sun winks out?

When all are refreshed and ready, the trackers will lead the band through dense thickets and along confusing pathways. It may appear at times as if they are going around in circles, but how could one tell without a clear sight of the dying sun? Each night, the trackers will set camp and take watch. One morning, after several days of this procedure, the party awake to discover that the trackers, the camp and all the food are gone, vanished without trace. But perhaps fortune is not so capricious after all! For what is this? There is a small clearing nearby, with a simple but comfortable dwelling of stucco and tile.

A gentlewoman, obviously a person of learning and good taste, is sitting beside the front door peeling vegetables she has just taken from a wooden box at her side. Carissam, as she introduces herself, is most unused to visitors in this part of the forest. It was for that reason that she moved here, to follow a life of simplicity away from the evils of the fading world. She pats the box absent-mindedly, mentioning that she lives comfortably here despite its apparent isolation.

Should the characters explain their predicament, she will take pity on them and insist on providing breakfast for them. She instructs them to bring her a stone each, about the size of a plum. Carefully she will place them in her box and close the lid. Tapping it three times on the fruit symbol carved into the



3. Frugality appears, alas, to be quality common amongst hosts everywhere. This is often coupled with what I personally regard as an unnecessarily rigorous adherence to the law of equivalencies.

end panel, she reopens the lid and withdraws enough mead-apples for those present. Any exclamations of delight, surprise or wonder will be met with chuckles and kindly smiles. After what appears to be a period of intense contemplation for Carissam, during which she will continue to peel her vegetables, occasionally dropping further twigs, leaves and stones into the box and bringing forth further edible items for skinning and dicing, she appears to come to a decision. Provided that they will allow her to build herself a sufficient store of vegetables and fruit, she will sell them the box and give them the best instructions she can to get out of the forest, as they are still at least a week from its margins. She still has the plans and most of the necessary oils and unguents to create another box and the rest she will be able to take from the forest. Her price will be high as it will take her many weeks (if not months) to replace her bountiful larder box. The price should not be so high that the characters cannot afford it nor that they balk at it immediately and become stubborn enough to insist that they can manage without such an overpriced fruit crate.

Once (or should that be 'If') the characters close the deal, Carissam will instruct them on the use of the box. Unbeknownst to them, of course, this benevolent hermit has accomplices. The box has been carefully positioned over a concealed trap door to a root cellar full of vegetables harvested by the inhabitants of the very village the party hired the trackers from. When Carissam knocks on the box, a variety of cunningly hidden trap doors are activated allowing her young son to swap items placed in the box for edible items. In this way, the villagers fleece any unwary wanderers they find twice — first by leading them close to Carissam's house and abandoning them without food and secondly by convincing them that the box is the answer to their hunger's prayers.



A simple but attractive dwelling with a capacious cellar.

Of course, when the characters try to use the box for the first time, sufficient fruit and vegetables will have been placed in the box to make it appear as if it is still working. A lesser dweomer has been placed on the box to make it appear magical to most simple detection devices and only pulling it apart will reveal the true nature of the fraud.

Naturally, should they try to return to Carissam's cottage in order to remonstrate with her, they are unlikely to find it.⁴ It's going to be a long trek back to civilization, but at least the instructions she gave them to get out of the forest are accurate.



Then we have Ian Thomson's work ...

The Quergib Frogs or "You should have seen the one that got away!"

The marsh edge town of Quergib owes its prosperity mainly due to the presence of many edible species of marsh creatures, for each of which the inhabitants have numerous delectable recipes. On special days a festival is held, during which groups of indigenes roam the marsh, competing to collect the most numerous and appetizing fish and amphibians. No restrictions exist which might prevent visitors respectfully participating, and all that do so are cordially invited to the town feast that traditionally follows.

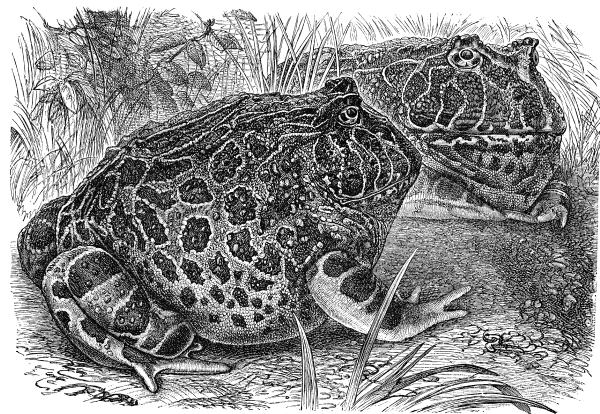
Champions amongst the local people are famed for their ability to collect impressive hauls, and an active wagering circuit exists. People of wealth and good upbringing attend not only for the fun and feasting, but also to place substantial bets.

The grand prize is a purse of terces and groats so heavy that it takes more than one man to carry it any distance at speed. This testifies the great benefits that trading their catch with more distant towns brings to this settlement, for they alone have the aptitude to seek edible creatures within these waters.

4. Unless of course, you as GM want them to.

Whilst characters may imagine they have no chance to win at this contest,⁵ the night before it all begins they will be furtively approached by one Symbsorn, a local fisherman of some standing. He investigates their eagerness to win the contest and earn the reward. He has a plan, which he considers is outstanding and which he believes will allow them to return to town with the most impressive haul, and thus claim the prize. Symbsorn explains that he wants nothing from them in recompense, as his design is to benefit through heavy wagering upon them through another intermediary. Since he was suspected of foul play in the previous year's event, he is not willing to be seen to act in any way that will not face the most stringent scrutiny.

Providing that they prove amenable, Symbsorn explains further. He has a whistle that calls a particularly delicious species of frog. Better still, its sound is inaudible to human ears. He purchased this from a Magician, and has tested it to his satisfaction. Symbsorn desires to win this contest most fervently, as his rival Alakanash has backed the winner three years in a row, and gloats in a most unseemly manner. It was beginning to appear that no suitable assistants would be forthcoming this year, and Symbsorn expresses his relief in their arrival. It may also be noted that both Alakanash and he are on the judging panel, and so any claims of deception should be easily curtailed.



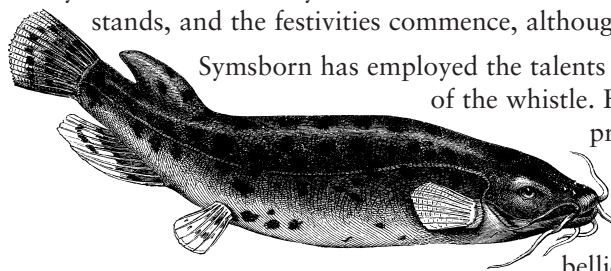
A frog of delectable appearance and flavour ...

The plan calls for the characters to head to a distant point within the marsh, where they will be unobserved. There they are to fill their sacks for the whole of the day, and return in the early evening when the town bells are rung, as this marks the beginning of the judging. If anyone queries why they have only frogs, they are to explain that these creatures abounded in one location, and catching them with nets was performed with startling ease. Certainly there were other species around, but with such a surfeit of these tasty amphibians there was no need to gather further varieties.

The characters depart with nets and sacks, and all goes as planned. The whistle is blown, apparently producing no sound, and yet each time it is used a dozen or more of the frogs arrive from the wetlands with alacrity. They seem dazed or charmed, and collection is effortless. In the middle of the afternoon several men of the town pass by, and are amazed at the quantity collected. They decide to hunt for this species nearby, and grow suspicious enough to observe the characters from hiding, challenging them when they see the whistle in use. One declares that Alakanash will surely regard such behavior as beyond the confines of the rules. These interfering individuals must be dealt with effectively, whether by force, reward, persuasion, or denial.

Back in Quergib, the judging panel rules narrowly in favor of the characters, marginally ahead of another group that returned with several weighty fish. Alakanash is furious, and demands investigation, whereas

Symbsorn makes many a heated asseveration illustrating his rival's envious temperament. The judgment stands, and the festivities commence, although the contest ends under something of a shadow.



Symbsorn has employed the talents of local Magician, Jantar Kabrolle, in the fabrication of the whistle. For his part in the deception, Kabrolle has been promised a family heirloom of the Symbsorn's; a metal jug which, assisted by a certain incantation, transforms all liquids placed within into the finest wine. With Alakanash and his friends eyeing the winners with bellicose intent, Symbsorn offers to create a distraction,

5. In all candour, a not unreasonable assumption.

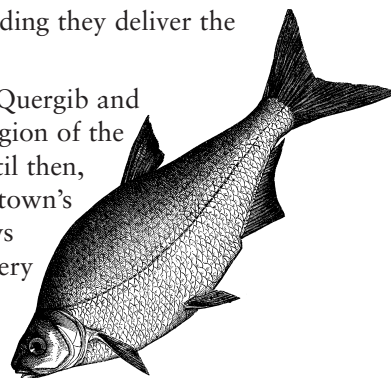
allowing them to leave town unobserved first thing in the morning, providing they deliver the jug to Kabrolle at his manse, Roffion, but a few leagues distant.

Leaving town before dawn is not an engaging option. The area between Quergib and the nearest settlement is no more and no less full of jeopardy than any region of the Dying Earth, being frequented at night by erbs, deodands and worse. Until then, characters may engage in a variety of pleasures, as their whimsy and the town's resources permit. Their enjoyment is threatened only by ominous shadows cast by Alakanash's associates who seem to lurk with ready cudgels in every darkened doorway.

In the early hours, Symsborn somehow succeeds in setting the house of Alakanash ablaze, and the town is soon in pandemonium, at which time the characters may leave without drawing attention.

Symsborn's machinations display their full compass when the travelers reach the Manse of Kabrolle. Whilst crossing his resplendent lawns they are attacked by a hideous vat creature, with no alternative but to kill or grievously injure the creature to ensure their own safety. Kabrolle shortly emerges from the Manse, intensely agitated by the casual destruction or impairment of his watch creature. He demands compensation, claiming a figure roughly matching their total contest winnings.⁶ He will not be swayed, and threatens to evoke the *Charm of Forlorn Encystment* upon those slow in agreeing to his terms. If the characters move towards town to make complaints, or even dally in argument, they hear the approach of a throng of angry locals. The townsfolk are convinced of the guilt of these newcomers, both in somehow cheating the contest and in the wanton destruction of Alakanash's townhouse to cover their escape.

If the mob is avoided and Symsborn confronted, he proves to be a dabbler of some merit and defends both person and property enthusiastically. Violent acts by indignant characters only act to further confirm their identities as swindlers and bandits in the eyes of the local authorities, leading at best to the decision to expel them naked from town at dusk, immediately following a lively flogging.



Duty and self interest combine. A dead deodand is not merely one less hazard to face but also represents the possibility of an excellent pair of boots from the hide.

I for one would pay handsomely to escape this clinging forest.

Tarry not, such is the nature of some of our party that even a warm welcome cools on closer acquaintance.

A day's fishing, thaumaturigical assistance and a large purse at the end of it, that is what I call sport.



Pelstang, merchant of Kaiin, is currently in Val Ombrio to purchase SPASE-BUSH BUDS of the finest quality. He seeks only those graded 'Prime' or 'Illustrious', desiccated and ground or abraded and parched as appropriate.

*Payment is prompt & in fine terces
all minted prior to the accession of
Kandive, Prince of Kaiin.*



6. Indeed the convergence between the two sums, the contest winnings and the value of the watch creature, is so close that persons prone to scepticism might draw their own conclusions.

❧ The Laughing Magician ❧

Steve Dempsey

‘This post does not include the offices of valet, scullion, porter, dogs-body and general roustabout.’

Many have asked us just how does one run a ‘Dying Earth’ role-playing adventure series. For this reason we have asked Steve Dempsey, one whose influence on the feel of the game has been marked from the start, to produce, in several sections, a longer, more loosely linked campaign than usual. While the campaign can be run one section after another, we would suggest you interleave it with other adventures so that characters do not come to feel that their entire lives are bound up in the one quest. On the Dying Earth “maintenance of aim” is a forgotten concept: life is often a series of short term expedients.

Iucounu of Pergolo has an obsession. He wishes to restore the demon Sadlark to its former glory. Believing himself to be an incarnation of this fallen denizen of the overworld, he has dispatched Cugel, that fox-faced vagabond, to far Cutz. There, Cugel will retrieve the lenses that Iucounu requires to see into the overworld. As readers of ‘Cugel’s Saga’ will know, Iucounu also pays Twango to fish out the scales of Sadlark from the mire into which the demon fell.

Iucounu needs one further component to reconstruct the demon: a nexus of fine silver wires to serve as internal organs in the nether realm. Iucounu knows that it will take much work, bravery and sacrifice to obtain this, so has decided to dupe somebody else into performing this task for him. The people he wants should be resourceful survivors who know how to take care of themselves. He must perforce thoroughly test their abilities in the field. To this end, he has prevailed upon Tostvole the Apothecary, an inhabitant of Azenomei, to secure the services of some appropriately talented yet otherwise stupid minions.

This adventure has several sections, Desperate Merriment on the Lower Scaum, Hirelings, and The Overworld. They should be played in this order. The first section serves mainly to set the scene and to contrive a meeting between the PCs and Tostveld. In the middle section the party must prove that it is capable of the task Iocounnu intends it to perform, a trip into the demon-land known as the Overworld. Naturally, this Overworld journey forms the third part.

Desperate Merriment on the Lower Scaum

In an effort to amuse his subjects, Prince Kandive the Golden has decided to sponsor a race from Kaiin to Taun Sfere. This will be the Last Annual Ascolais Cup (also the first, but the sun might go out tomorrow). The rules state that the participants must use natural means of propulsion, a phrase amenable to very loose interpretation. The prize is 5,000 terces. The race has attracted a motley bunch of contenders. One of them, Amance Yrean, seeks to hire some likely fellows to help crew the Dandiprat, a flying ship. He hires the PCs.

Introduction

The night before the race, Amance assembles the PCs in his manse in a pleasant part of Kaiin to allow them to introduce themselves. He also presents another shipmate to them, his nephew Porgeron Milak. Porgeron is a farmer’s lad, seeking out experience of the wider world, and coincidentally avoiding hard labor during the busy harvest period.

The Commencement

The race starts on the banks of the River Scaum, where Prince Kandive officiates from his pleasure barge. He gives a leisurely hand wave, and turns back to his latest concubine, a giantess from far Qonderam. At the signal, the fastest competitors hare off into the distance leaving the others behind. Amance Yrean’s plan is to follow the river as far as possible, thereby avoiding any dealings with unwelcome creatures that dwell between Kaiin and Taun Sfere.

❧ The Laughing Magician ❧

The Race

The main interests during the race will come from interaction between the shipmates, who as yet do not really know each other, their interaction with the other competitors and the way they tackle the mystery of how the ship flies. Occasionally a pelgrane may be sighted and will inspect the vessel for the opportunity to make a quick snack of one of the participants.

The competitors¹

CUTHNETH FIGO owns a pair of stone statues from the 17th aeon. When he whispers the correct password they become lifelike and transport their owner 40 leagues. They can only be used once every 3 days. Figo is a very rude fellow and will berate anyone nearby.

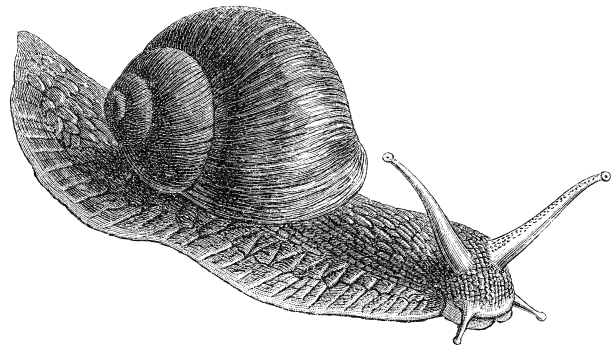
AMANCE YREAN, owner of the flying ship, the Dandiprat, participant in the Great Race and current employer of the players' characters. He will not attempt to cheat, although he will not prevent others from cheating on his behalf. He is an amiable fellow but expects his money's worth. He has a fixation with pustules. He keeps the clapper for the ship's bell about his person at all time. He believes that it is the bell that is magical, in that it summons harmonic waves in the air that cause the ship to rise up. In reality it is the clapper that causes this effect and any old bell will do. In the evening, he sets the ship to half speed, retires to his cabin and sleeps soundly until the cockerel wakes him at dawn.

TRANLOW AIMIOR owns two great bovinid creatures that somehow propel his land-racer at a high speed. Unfortunately they need to eat a lot so, after a few miles, they must rest to graze. His cart is piled high with hay in case they run short of food. He does not expect to win and will dourly enlarge upon his poor chances to anyone who comes nearby.²

DRAGO PONS is on his trusty charger Melphalio. He is in fact one of many identical men who happen to own virtually identical gray quartaz. They will use this fact to attempt to cheat. Drago will start the race, Prago taking up the middle section and Trago the end. Others fill in as is needed. Trago will appear in sight as soon as anyone gets near to Sfere. The only difference is that his quartaz has a faint star on its forehead, which the trio have failed to notice. The other two quartaz answer to Nelphalio and Welphalio.

STENELION ELORRG rides a great chariot supporting a cage full of timpit. These cute creatures are the favorite food of the slobbering pung, a variety of racing snail. With the aid of a small catapult, he flings these defenseless creatures in front of his team who charge forward to feast. The timpit does little else but breed so he is guaranteed a good supply. If the cage should break then a great torrent of timpit will burst forth, smothering the immediate area under their little bodies. The timpit infestation will then die out.³

IMNESS PENCE trusts his two porters, Brik and Brek to carry him to Sfere. They appear to be two large uncomplaining men who go about their business with good cheer. They are in fact sandestins indentured to Imness by misfortune to the tune of 8 points. They keep up a happy banter to annoy their master and willfully misinterpret his orders to ensure that he will not win. They are quite willing to act on



While faster than other types of pung, the eating habits of the slobbering pung ensure it is less popular.

The limbs of the timpit are primarily used in mating displays rather than locomotion. They have long been extinct in the wild.



1. For the purposes of his own campaign the GM may wish to include further competitors, perhaps in more conventional boats.
2. It is not unlikely that players may assume that Tranlow Aimior is perhaps engaging in a ploy and has some hidden advantage that he has not yet revealed. They may well be encouraged to wager large sums of money on the strength of this belief. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Tranlow Aimior is entirely accurate in his assessment of his chances.
3. It should be noted that this process, while not instantaneous, will take less than a day. The timpit form a squirming layer an ell deep.

✿ The Laughing Magician ✿

suggestions from the PCs to further annoy their master.

The ship DANDIPRAT. As much a participant as an artifact, the floating ship takes off when the bell is rung. The ringing of the bell summons the invisible giant that carries it. The Giant's presence can be deduced by various things that fall off him such as ticks, dandruff, spit and sweat. The ticks are in fact Grue, ferocious carnivores (see *Creatures*). The dandruff will fall in large fist-sized flakes resembling snow but smelling and tasting, of a ripe Azenomei Blue, the sort that one is encouraged to keep in the outhouse and only eat by the light of day. The spit and sweat falls as dangerous vesicles of mucilage that can engulf a man's head or ruin a prized outfit. The giant, by his very bulk, prevents any rain from falling on the ship. It should be remembered that this creature, summoned by the bell to carry the ship at the whim of the person who rings the bell with the magical clapper, understands nothing else. It needs no worldly sustenance and does not make a sound. It is too big to be affected by the PCs but could be irritated. This would cause it to seek to eradicate the source of the annoyance, much in the way a quortaz swats flies with its tail.



The celebrated Dandiprat seen passing under the bridge at Taun Sfele during a pleasure cruise.

The ship itself is not particularly sea or air-worthy and will creak and groan whenever it is in motion. Its speed depends on volume of the bell but the Captain does not like to set too furious a pace, "so as not to exhaust the magical effervescence contained therein". Occasionally the giant stops to rest and at other times will show fatigue by lowering the ship ever nearer the water.

The ship is a fairly simple affair with two main decks, a poop and a fore-deck. The wheel is on the poop deck, where a large well polished brass bell hangs. There is a crow's-nest for the watch. There are two large and well-appointed cabins under the poop deck and two smaller and more basic cabins to the fore.

Access to the lower deck is through a large trapdoor next to the mast and down some stairs that lead aft. The lower deck contains the supplies for the journey: apples, flour and fish in barrels, sausages and herbs hanging from the beams. There is a small cage containing 6 chickens and a goat.⁴ Away from the mast there is a small coal stove whose flue passes through the captain's cabin and out through the poop deck. The coal is kept in a large metal bathtub with a lid, "to keep out sparks". There is a large bung in the floor to allow draining of any water through the bilge and out to the ground. A number of hammocks provide sleeping space for those without cabins.

The Finish

As the race nears its close one of the competitors⁵ quite near the finishing line but within sight of the PCs. If no others are left then another brother of Drago Pons will appear from nowhere to lead the field. The only way to win the race is to go very fast. This involves ringing the ship's bell with all one's might, causing the Giant to run in great loping strides. The ship will swing backwards and forwards alarmingly. All those who are not tied down will be thrown about. They might even fall out of the ship. If lucky enough to debark on the back swing, they will tumble through the air and be caught again on the upswing.

4. Why the goat is kept in the same cage as the chickens is an unexplained mystery. Rumour has it that the chickens refuse to comment and the goat merely refers questioners to a now defunct Kaiin juridical coterie.

5. The GM's arbitrary choice.

✿ The Laughing Magician ✿

The Giant is not terribly agile and will run full tilt into the precarious walls of Taun Sferé and make a large breach. At this point he will fumble the ship. Dandiprat will sail through the air and land on whatever other competitor is left. The finishing line will be in sight; the small, swarthy man will be seen asleep under a tree just beyond it.⁶ The crowd will proclaim whosoever crosses the line first the winner.

The PCs will be invited to a great after-race feast with all manner of delicious and extravagant dishes, frivolous entertainments and redolent hallucinogens. In the morning they will awaken in a cold cell, deprived of their belongings and chattels. They will find themselves charged with all manner of crimes including malfeasance, torts and natural injustices, all pertaining to the willful and wanton destruction of the walls of Taun Sferé, the malicious and brutal assassination of the last competitor and varied calumnies pertaining to the person of Amance Yrean. Even the slowest and least mentally agile will soon realise that Amance is not in the dock with them, and it appears he has managed to make good his escape, along with the prize money.

Trial ...

Warders drag the PCs into the dock. The court consists of a Judge, two advocates and an assemblage of sundry clerks. Indeed, no expense has been spared and there are even bailiffs, a gallery and sometimes a mob outside. In Taun Sferé the accused are considered guilty until proven innocent. Anything else would be a waste of the court's time. The Judge's job is to ascertain whether the accused are interesting enough to be condemned to prison: those found 'not dreary' are condemned to prison, others are found 'dreary' and hauled off to Jiich, Greatest of all Pelgranes (see *Creatures*).

The court is presided over by Judge Sparlo who is one of the very few women in a position of power in Taun Sferé. Her will is iron and she will brook no questioning of her authority. She wears the dark robes of her office, under which can occasionally be glimpsed a puce basque.

If the PCs argue elegantly and well, they will avoid Jiich. Otherwise feel free to condemn them to be eaten. The gallery will be fairly vocal in support of the PCs, urging them to ever more fanciful arguments, displays of passion and general tomfoolery. They will cheer if the PCs are sent down and boo loudly otherwise.

Bail is set just before sentencing, providing an opportunity for outsiders to pay for their freedom or for third parties to buy them as slaves. The reserve price will depend on how 'interesting' the PCs have been proven. Tostvole will be bidding along with many others. He won't necessarily win and if the PCs are just too interesting the reserve price may not be reached.

This is an opportunity to avoid the Prison sequence if the GM so desires. Tostvole could outbid all others and acquire the PCs' services. Another option is to have the PCs play the part of the bidders in the auction for their own lives. Of course if the PCs join in the bidding, encouraging one or other side, they will prove themselves 'less dreary' and so their reserve price will not be met.

... and Punishment

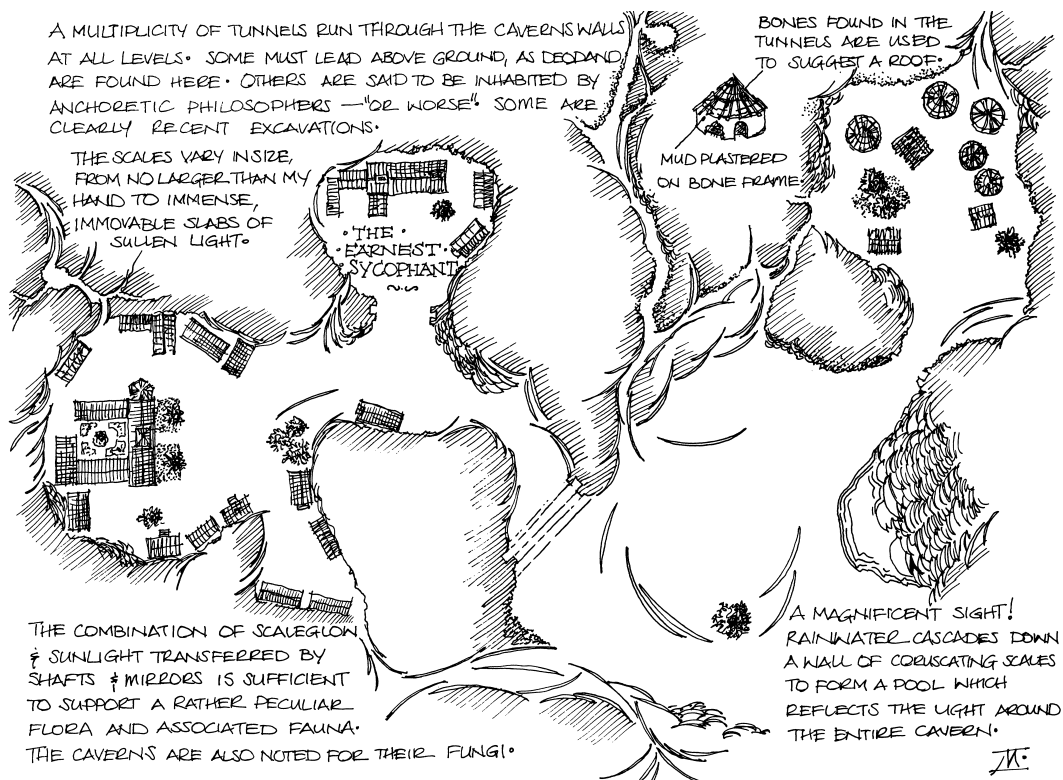
Taun Sferé Prison

Unless the GM wishes to spare the adventurers the indignity of incarceration, the front of the dock drops down and they slither into a deep pit. They are in prison.

Taun Sferé's Prison serves two purposes, being somewhere to put undesirables and providing entertainment for the demon that lives under the town. Townsfolk who commit crimes become warders and other servants of the penal system. Foreigners are imprisoned. Here they act out petty dramas written by a small band of dedicated writers that live in the town above. Instructions are sent to the prisoners in message tubes. There are stage directions and snippets of dialogue that they must enact. If they perform adequately, they are given supplies by the same system of tubes. There are of ropes, pulleys and mirrors to allow the writers' underlings (the 'Watchers') to keep an eye on the prisoners.

6. This is in fact Ned the Swart. He will be found asleep under a tree at the start and again at the finish as the PCs appear. He is a sandestin whose duty it is to inform Kandive of the race's winner, so that bets may be paid.

❖ The Laughing Magician ❖



Plan view of the prison in the caverns underlying Taun Sfer.

The whole complex is lit by a dull glow that emanates from the demon's scales. It varies in color according to mood with purple corresponding to quiescence and a vibrant green to agitation and an approaching tremor. The effect of this is much as above ground. It damages buildings and the prison control systems, which then must be repaired by the staff.

The Taun Sferites control the prison by rationing supplies. They can also send guards down through secret passages to deal with any real troublemakers. At such time they lower large wooden screens, painted to look like rock, which section off reprobates, so that they can be dealt with more easily.

The prison is a vast system of caverns and tunnels under the city. Most are natural voids in the soil deposited within the scales of the demon, but these have been expanded over the years. There is one large central cavern with two smaller cavern complexes at opposite ends. The prisoners live in these complexes. The two groups are prosaically known as the Westerners and Easterners. They are mutually hostile, each guarding their entrances to the main cavern. They do meet occasionally in the central area to barter goods in a market.

The Westerners are largely Kaiinites and have modeled their society on their home. They have a ruling prince, Prince Kynikos who maintains a court wizard and an elite corps called the Glorious Few. The wizard has no magical skill, but all the others maintain the pretense that he is fully puissant in order to obtain their daily supplies. The prisoners will be placed among the Westerners and expected to conform to their proprieties. For reasons of artistic exactitude the Westerners have a tavern, the 'Earnest Sycophant' which forms a back drop for many of the writers plots.

The Easterners are drawn from a wider background. Clad in skins and equipped with bone tools, they function as a tribe of beast men. Their purpose is to provide a counterpoint to the sophistication of the Westerners and for this purpose they are denied the amenities such as fire, soap and similar trivial trappings of civilized life.⁷

7. It should be noted that this lack is neither unnoticed, nor unlamented. Easterners feel themselves to be badly treated and will attack Westerners with vigor in consequence.

✿ The Laughing Magician ✿

Prison Life

The only introduction to prison life received by the prisoners is the judge's advice to "Try to fit in, if you wish things to go well." They are then deposited in the great cavern with instructions to head west.⁸ Whilst they explore their surroundings the Watchers will take note of their personalities and roles will be written for them that seem appropriate. They will be introduced to the strange goings-on quite gradually as other prisoners are given instructions that involve the PCs. Then it is up to them to involve themselves in the rich, if somewhat clichéd tapestry of life that occurs in the prison. Typical story lines involve:

- ✿ *a greedy landlord*
- ✿ *a poor widower with children*
- ✿ *a lost dog*
- ✿ *an illicit liaison*
- ✿ *an illness in the family*
- ✿ *a strange prowler*⁹

The GM is encouraged to embroider on the PCs' actions and fashion them into a melodrama. These are normally scripted by Citizen Makmyre. He is the chief writer for the prison and as such is one of the most important people in Taun Sferre. He is at the same time admired, hated, and feared by prisoners and townspeople alike. His word can have anyone cleaning Prince Kynikos' toenails for a year or working behind the bar in the Earnest Sycophant. He is not a happy man. He has been unlucky in love many times and has grudgingly had his paramours sent below, for they all fail him eventually. Personally something of a stoic, he expects others to accept their fate without question and he really doesn't understand rebellion. He lives in a house near the top of the hill with an excellent view into the prison. It does suffer from tremors rather more than others and is in constant need of repair.

PRINCE KYNIKOS, ruler of the West. He is by no means fat, but is certainly the most corpulent person in the prison. He orders his followers around and feigns disinterest in their entertainments. Underneath, he is really a friendly and enthusiastic fellow who curbs his natural urges so as to fit the part written for him by a spiteful author. His heart is obviously not in it but he will try his level best to have the PCs do his will.

THE GLORIOUS FEW. Easterners and Westerners tremble at mention of this name. This is the most terrifying guard of Prince Kynikos. Unfortunately there is only one of him. He does try to live up to his billing, though, and enjoys swaggering around taking that which he fancies and pushing people around. He has been doing for so long that he has come to believe his billing and is ripe for a fall.

PRISONERS. Choose names from this list:

Yellbas	Fuscler	Meridol	Kolich
Yadiremeer	Fesswal	Lareloslo	Vosiman
Sabdaal	Nisando	Glussops	Bobisifag
Parnip	Calasko	Solish	Domasanca
Kuttler	Domberler	Selnitz	Balchimouc
Sazinth	Zint	Colpee	Aramile

The prisoners are almost without exception bad actors. Some attempt to read the lines that have been assigned them as quickly as possible so they can then get on with their usual day, others have become depressed at living in eternal half light and barely notice the PCs (these will soon become Pelgrane fodder). A few enthusiastic souls have grasped their chance and through dint of playing their parts well have come to receive a half-decent standard of living and the favor of the writers. There is a small group called the Apoditic Solipsists, who believe that the world outside is illusion and the only reality is in the prison. The writers do not encourage this, but the other inhabitants think that the Solipsists are simply being left alone until they are assigned roles in some new and exciting story.¹⁰

8. Whether or not they know which direction is west is of no concern to either the warders or your good self.

9. Note that story lines relying heavily on such things as incest, or unusual sexual orientation are regarded by the discerning audience as too platitudinous and are therefore shunned by the story writers.

10. It is assumed by most that the roles will be those of victims.

Escape

Various methods exist. All attempts should use the characters' abilities. The method most obviously available is bribery, although establishing discreet channels of communication with a warder may be difficult. It is possible to escape by discovering the watching system and climbing out, using its ropes and crawl-ways. As inmates are under constant supervision, it is unlikely that these escape attempts will succeed. If they do, then they will also have to escape the town. Should they fail to escape, then in the eyes of the judiciary they have outlasted their entertainment value. With all due ceremony they will be ejected from Taun Sferre. So whether the party are ejected or are just known to have escaped, the townsfolk will summon the Greatest of All Pelgranes to deal with them. Alternatively, Tostvole could rescue them.

Jiich¹¹ At some point, when they are out in the open, either having escaped or having been sentenced as 'dreary', a gigantic pelgrane pounces on the Characters and carries them off to her nest on a large rocky ledge in the Great Da Forest. This Erie is the size of the Coliseum and is filled with eggs in various stages of development. The PCs will have to be quick to avoid being eaten by a young pelgrane and can escape into the jumble of tree-trunks that make up the nest. Here they will find a village made from old eggshells, ruled by King Gabalon.

There are about 30 inhabitants to this village but no children. They are from many different species which have fallen prey to the Jiich but have escaped. There is even a resident pelgrane who, having fallen young from the nest has not acquired the vicious ways of his race. He has learnt to converse wittily on many subjects and provides entertainment to the villagers by way of a twice-weekly monologue. His genes seem to be stirring as he is starting to look at the larger villagers with a vicious gleam in his eye, something of which he is not proud and is trying to hide. Eating one's auditors is not polite.¹²

The villagers are kept in an uneasy peace by their ruler, King Gabalon. It purports to be a perfect democracy with the King acting as the facilitator for discussions, the King using the Wand of Shancith and a posse of deodand enforcers to quell any disagreement. For those fond of thaumaturgical curios the Wand of Shancith is a wand nearly two ells in length. It has a potent magical aura and is in fact regarded as sacred by the deodands. They will follow the owner's orders as long as he or she causes them no harm.¹³ The wand has no inherent powers except that deodands local to the nest will respect the wishes of its bearer. If the bearer can be tricked into harming a deodand or the wand shown to be powerless then deodand will lose respect for it and consume the holder, post-haste.

Gabalon will not let the population of the village rise above 35. Every time this happens, he uses his influence with the deodands to have the

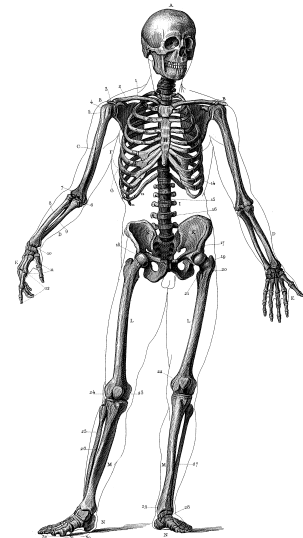
11. There are those who wonder if Jiich could perhaps be summoned to wreak vengeance (perhaps unwittingly) on the enemies of the summoner. Dismiss this from your mind immediately. Her arrangements with the municipality of Taun Sferre are precisely delineated, of long standing, and beneficial to both parties. This fact, plus a degree of inflexibility brought on by old age, means she is literally deaf to new ideas.

12. Note that one should not read into this comment any statement of editorial policy.

13. Some scholars postulate that it was used in the creation of their species.

At this point a scholarly digression is perhaps called for. It is now recognized by many sages that memory resides not in the brain, as some foolish dolts might suggest, but is laid down in the intricate structures inside bones. Each of the 246 bones of the skeleton has a different purpose, the left ulna, for example, carries all memory of things seen whilst under the influence of alcohol. The brain is merely an organ for organizing the retrieval of this information. Turjan makes use of this phenomena in his vats to give a personality to his creatures. It is possible, using the whole skeleton of a person, to reconstruct them from such a state as they were reduced to by the deodands, provided the brain remains intact. Without this, the reborn individual cannot access its knowledge in any sensible order and is doomed to confusion. At this point it beholds us to close our scholarly digression and return once more to the plot.

Steve Dempsey



❧ The Laughing Magician ❧

villager that has most displeased him brought to a small room at the back of his eggshell house (which is the largest and impressively furnished). Here he has them strapped to a table and devoured by the deodands. They leave the bones, which are collected into packages. They also leave the brain as it is too well protected by bone, which they are expressly forbidden to chew. In any case, the brain dissolves into gray mush in about 12 hours, useless except as a thin sauce. These packages are collected once a month by a peddler who uses the cover of darkness to cross to the nest. Using the secret ways through the forest that he alone knows he takes the bones to Turjan of Mir who uses them in his vats.

It is not unlikely that the characters will grow weary of Gabalon's little kingdom and venture forth into the Great Da Forest. Here they will meet with many strange characters, some of whom we have portrayed for your greater delectation.



PORPHYR is a strange wanderer in the Great Da Forest. He peddles madcap schemes to people. He was once a great wizard, but was driven mad by a misfiring spell. He is sometimes to be found wrapped up in his cloak with his big purple hat, resembling nothing less than a giant mushroom. After some awkward moments, perhaps an application or two of Phandaal's Gyrator, he may try to sell some of his harebrained schemes to the PCs. Perversely, the events he describes only take place if the PCs don't believe him.

Examples of his tales are:

- ❧ An old tale tells that the Red Knight abducted a maimed Lady from her home on the Queens Spire, and held her within the Tombs of Silence. There he hits her happily. Watch out for a swordsman's blood brother and a sleeping dragon. Bring her home. Name your price.
- ❧ It is told that, a half-glimpsed hairy thing is in the Necropolis of Witches. Explore it. It is guarded by the shrieking eels. Report back to a small boy. We can offer a dwarf's iron boots.
- ❧ A few minutes ago, an ancient, crippled clamith settled in the royal prison. Explore it. It is guarded by dark creatures. Report back to a slave. We cannot pay you; but you have our gratitude!
- ❧ Seek the Throne out of Mind, and we'll split the profit. It is believed to be in the Lords Monument, guarded by countless deodands. Watch out for the good priest and the maiden Sellena Ironside. Travel within the tombs of silence, where the prophet will break it. Return it to a hapless stranger, its rightful owner. If you help us, we will accept you as our lord.
- ❧ Seek the Pillar of Damnation, to save the world. It is believed to be at the Stream of Madness and guarded by a senile centaur. Watch out for an hoon. Then travel in the Plain of the Sun, where a wizard lives who will dispel it. Return it to a sickly orphan, its rightful owner. We will await you in the Lone Wood. Whatever you find is yours.
- ❧ A few days ago, a small girl was robbed at the World's End, and lost a ghost's soul. Recover it. You shall have the Dragon of Secrets in payment.
- ❧ It is told that a faun abducted a shoemaker from her home in the Howling City, and held her in a far land. There he insults her glumly. Watch out for the king and a powerful henchman. Bring the shoemaker home. You will surely gain glory and renown!
- ❧ An old manuscript relates how wizard's apprentice was cruelly poisoned by the father of a spoiled child, at the Scar of Sorcerers for the money. Avenge it. You shall have the Goblet of Fate in payment.

The BARRANOW is a large, floppy, sessile carnivore, looking like a twenty foot wide, collapsed pumpkin lantern. Twenty thick, strong tentacles, which attack with a Strength of 16 and defend with a Parry of 12, Health 10, radiate from its base. More sinisterly, it can extrude any or all of its six barbed teeth on a length of well-innervated muscle. It can spit these teeth twenty feet to penetrate flesh readily (it attacks with a Finesse of 25). When well-placed, the Barranow nerve tissue melds with the victim's nervous system, enabling the unfortunate to be worked like a puppet. This unwilling mannequin's role is to lure victims for Barranow to eat. For its own amusement, the creature enjoys asking difficult riddles through its mouthpiece

❧ The Laughing Magician ❧

and then devouring the victims as they stand pondering the answer. If they refuse to co-operate, the creature will eat them anyway, but, through an enslaved mouthpiece, will castigate them for their lack of spirit.

Some sample Riddles:¹⁴

- ❧ I am both Mother and Father. I am seldom still yet I never wander. I never birth nor nurse: *Tree*
- ❧ I'm told a certain something grows in its pouch, swells and stands up, lifts its covering. A proud bride grasped that boneless wonder, the daughter of a king covered that swollen thing with clothing: *Dough*
- ❧ Strange thing hangs by a man's thigh, hidden by a garment. It has a hole in its head. It is stiff and strong and its firm bearing reaps a reward. When the man hitches his clothing high above his knee, he wants the head of that hanging thing to poke the old hole (of fitting length) it has often filled before: *Key*
- ❧ Quick; quite mum; I die notwithstanding. I lived once, I live again. Everybody lifts me, grips me, and chops off my head, bites my bare body, violates me. I don't bite a man unless he bites me; there are many men who bite me: *Onion*

- ❧ I saw a woman, solitary, brooding: *Hen*

Having a sound basic knowledge of human nature, Barranow will ordinarily send an attractive girl called Delabinthe to act as a lure to the party, claiming that her three beautiful sisters are being attacked and that they would be grateful for any help. Delabinthe is Charming (17), apparently Pure-hearted (13) defends by Dodging (11) and attacks with Speed (7). She was once an accomplished temptress, working the taverns and riverboats between Azenomei and Taun Sfere (Gambling and Seduction at 19 each), but the privations of forest life and, particularly the absence of cosmetics, a mirror, hot water and a laundress have reduced Seduction to 5.

When she returns with the dupes, Barranow will snare them with its main tentacles and then subject them to some annoying word games. Should they answer correctly, the monster will let them go, then extrude an enslaving tentacle, and recapture them, reasoning that their high intellects might be useful.

The creature keeps a selection of different lures handy, and currently retains the services of four of them, but finds that Delabinthe works best. Provided that they have food and shelter, the lures can survive indefinitely, although their personal grooming and hygiene suffer. If the monster is supplied with new food, they remain uneaten, so have a strong incentive to co-operate. Currently, two of Barranow's male dupes (Dandro and Ruldan, Strength and Parry of 10) are making a lean-to shelter out of plashed branches and turf. Another, Fergaz, has gone on hunger strike, reasoning that, if he is the thinnest, he will be eaten last.



Barranow

14. These, it must be admitted, were reported to us by survivors. It is unknown whether Barranow has a larger stock or whether these represent the limit of its wisdom.

❧ The Laughing Magician ❧

Barranow's main mass has no defenses other than the teeth (only two of which are currently available) and a Health of 20. Adventurers who kill Barranow will have the opportunity to pick through its digestive tract for previous victims' possessions, but (if they make a Pedantry roll) would be advised to neutralize the juices with eggshell. They will find little. The gold content of the modern terce is distressingly low, so they will find small nodules and thin disks of the metal, some broken pieces of chain and two finger rings.

TOSTVOLE is jovial, if slightly portly due to years of sedentary living. Although generally in good humor, he is a perfectionist where his work is concerned and strives to achieve exemplary results. He does have a sense of proportion though and realizes that sometimes his best will just have to do. He wears a tall hat with a wide brim. Its crown contains several little drawers, which hold his tools: scissors, an anableps (an optical device that allows him to keep an eye out whilst bending to inspect a specimen); purple lovage fronds, powdered Korfe beetle and smoking allex (all common remedies used to treat ailments). Otherwise his garb is unremarkable, high leather boots over maroon breeches cut and puffed with sky blue, a fine sky blue waistcoat cut long around the back and with tight sleeves, a yellow cummerbund and a maroon silk shirt.

Tostvole is a well-known and widely respected person in the Scaum Valley, who seldom refuses an invitation to visit wizards in their own homes. His medical practice is well known and he himself travels widely, on comfortable river boats, to attend to his clients. He keeps a house in Azenomei, on Xzanside, and a shop and consulting room on Scaumside. They connect through the back, by way of a dog-legged garden. When traveling, he secures the best available chambers in the most comfortable inns.

When afloat, he keeps an eye out for adventurers of the right quality. As he is looking for itinerants with comprehensive experience, Tostvole will make a point of visiting town jails, and has even offered finder's fees to local thief-takers. Whenever the GM decides that the PCs deserve to become the Laughing Magician's stooges, it should be risibly easy to arrange for them to meet the apothecary.

He will tailor his offer to fit the adventurers' circumstances, but its gist is that he needs agents to gather rare items for some exacting patrons. He lacks the aptitude to collect these things himself, so will remunerate those who can do very well. If has stood bail or paid fines on the PCs' behalf, he will make deductions from their fee accordingly.

Should the party want to make discrete inquiries before accepting his offer, the apothecary will understand. Clients will express satisfaction with their services, and innkeepers everywhere will observe that he is an ideal customer, discerning, polite and clean. Azenomei gossips remember Tostvole moving in from Erze Damarth some 5 years ago. Apparently, the damper climate was better for his health and Azenomei market is a good source of apothecary's supplies. Tostvole has built up a list of trusted clients who send from as far off as Cuirnif and Kaiin for his remedies. Apparently, he has had some problems with Iucounu, but has settled matters with suitable gifts.

Tostvole can turn up to rescue the PCs at any point, a genuine *deus ex machina*.¹⁵ He will be bearing a warrant from Taun Sfere showing that he has paid their bail. Jiich's nest is only a short distance from



Tostvole in his (relative) youth as depicted on one of the waybills he posted when he began to practise.

15. Always obliging, he will time his arrival to the GMs maximum advantage.

✿ The Laughing Magician ✿

Azenomei and he will find the PCs and take them to his home. In case of need he has a pill that causes short-term invisibility. Its duration is variable, from about 1 to 3 hours but a side effect is that a random body part remains invisible for a few days after use. It only effects bodies, not goods and chattels.



Creatures

GRUE¹⁶. Its skin is pitted and strangely iridescent. It has no head or mouth, rather a gaping maw on its underside. Its limbs are too many to count, barbed, mobile and strong. Its nature is predatory. It scuttles from cover, enmeshes its victim with its legs and tears away, hungrily sucking up the blood and gobbets of minced flesh. If punctured, it will bleed messily. Its ichor is green and iridescent, it will stain anything it touches and can only be removed with the strongest of solvents. These creatures occasionally drop from the giant and scuttle around on deck.

PELGRANE. Flying monsters that can snatch a whole man and quortaz from the ground.

Jüich, Greatest of All is a female pelgrane of immense size, probably magically enhanced many years ago by a forgotten mage for unknown reasons. Now truly vast she lives on the bounty of her smaller mates and the municipality of Taun Sfere.

Moving on ... eventually (and probably in spite of their best efforts) the party will have met up with Tostvole and will have been hired by him. We are now ready to move on to the next stage, Hirelings.



A journey to Taun Tassel holds out many possibilities. The possibility that it may enable me to avoid sundry creditors being one of the more important.

I would gladly pay what is owing but I am by nature a philanthropist and have given virtually everything I own to the poor. Candor compells me to admit that most of the poor were tapsters, bawds, trollops and courtesans.

I would recommend we leave, quietly and with a minimum of fuss. I also recommend that we do it now.

Yet even as you spoke I saw the a film pass over the face of the sun.

When I was younger I spent much time in the company of sages and pedants. That assauged my thirst for knowledge and now I shun such company when at all possible.



Steve Dempsey shares with Jack Vance a deep love and knowledge of France. It speaks volumes for the generosity of spirit displayed by the editor that this is not held against him.

16. GMs may prefer to use another version of the grue in their own adventure.

The Brotherly League of Enlightened Sagacity wishes to announce that it will be holding its annual symposium on the advancing apocalypse at Cuirnif. Due to a clerical oversight, for which we apologise (those responsible have been severely chastised), the event will now take place during the Festival of Gourmanderie. We hope that this will not overly inconvenience our brethren and will serve only to highlight the debauched and degenerate ignorance which we strive to rise above in these, our final days. Bookings can be made direct through the usual channels, or failing that, through the Cuirnif Hospitality Bureau at greatly inflated cost.

❖ The regions of the Sousanese Coast ❖

Lizard

‘Come visit me behind my tussock, and we will console each other without constraint.’

It has been brought to my attention that my original study¹ of the regions of the Sousanene Coast contained trifling discrepancies with other published works on the area. It remains my contention that ‘truth’ is a wavering illusion, a maiden of fickle tastes and extravagant whims, and only a fool courts her too energetically. Nonetheless! In order to appease the niggling notions of pettifogging individuals, I have altered certain of my precepts.

Thus and so, the Sousanene Region consists of the Ulterior Division, which is primarily wasteland, inhabited solely by shagglemeers, grey erbs, druul hybrids, and the occasional cluster of enterprising young men intent on offering polite guidance to such merchant caravans as may veer south from the White Road; and the Twain Exterior, or Coastal, Divisions. The West Coast borders the Songan Sea, and is even called by some ‘South Almery’. It is a mostly civilised realm suitable for an arch-magician to take a brief respite from his normal companions and occupations. The folk here are meticulous in their rites, but forgiving of the clumsy errors of travelers, provided they do not commit gross excesses (such as wearing hair braided to the right, or similar indecencies which cannot be discussed in delicate and refined company). The South Coast, on the other hand, runs along the northern shore of the Sea of Slow Tides. It is a region inhabited by wastrels, ne’er-do-wells, xenophobes, and travelers from regions even further south, seeking respite on their way to the more civilised lands of Almery far to the north-east. It is the South Coast which is our immediate concern.

The city of Forell’s Port is the logical end-point for travelers washing in on the ‘exhale’ phase of the tides. According to the Dictum of Inclusion, however, a thing cannot be understood outside of the context in which it exists²; hence, we look first at the Dominions Minor of Exterior Sousanene, represented by the settlements of Vithain, Neviin, and Sulz.

Sulz

Sulz rests at the mouth of the River Lenai, downstream from the Valley of Cages, the precise borders of which are defined according to measures set down by Avorial Deritass in the late 20th Aeon. The Sulzeen folk are dutifully cautious of their neighbours, and tread lightly near the borderlands, while enjoying the profits which accrue from their position. There is a considerable trade which occurs along the borders, conducted by those individuals whose greed and daring are measured in weights of lead and whose sense of self-preservation is measured in weights of tin. The



The Valley of Cages

1. Note that the study referred to here was a work published in Kaiin to great critical acclaim, especially among those who value a learned work for its novelty, its illustrations but above all for its weight.

2. First propounded by Sadithzarddo the Omphalopsychite this doctrine has well stood the test of time and we have no hesitation in referring readers to the collected works of Sadithzarddo.

❧ The regions of the Sousanese Coast ❧

Wardens will often consider as useless such materials as are of great value elsewhere, and, in turn, will value highly goods which they could easily procure by a simple journey beyond the valley – but since they will never undertake such a journey, the contemplation is meaningless, and both sides profit.

This has led to some interesting developments in Sulz. A village of rude huts, decrepit fishing boats, and a single inn, it has cultivated an image of poverty and wretchedness typical of such places. A traveler surviving the transit down the Lenai, or taking refuge after a navigational error caused them to miss Forell's Port, or merely travelling westward along the coast, would see nothing of note in Sulz and would depart as quickly as possible. The food served to guests, a thin gruel of river-reed grain accompanied by fried drez fins and a beer made from fermented dolsan ink, does nothing to encourage long stays. The inhabitants are conversant with the region, and will provide clear and accurate directions to any wayfarer, in order to speed them along more swiftly. Further, the inhabitants will considerably warn the voyagers of dangers they face in the area. Should wanderers arrive in Sulz near dark, they will be warned of squint-eyed grues, who cannot see at night and only attack in daylight. This makes it wise to continue voyaging while dark remains rather than waiting for day. Likewise, travelers who arrive during daylight hours will be properly cautioned about the hazard posed by pirates who lurk offshore, spying coastal wanderers by their torch light, and who can be best avoided by continuing onwards while the sun, red and swollen though it is, still shines on in the sky.

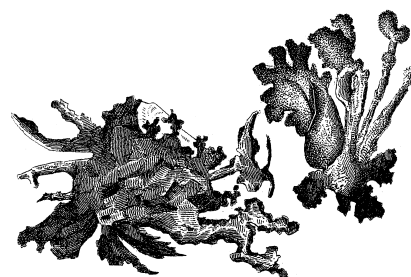
The reason for this diligent regard is clear; over centuries, the accumulated wealth from the trade upriver has become great, yet the Sulzeen are reluctant to part with even a quarter-terce of it, or even let it be known it exists, lest they fall prey to countless forms of avarice. This has led to a village where work-twisted fisherfolk clad in salt-rotted rags return to their mud-patched huts each night to hold prismeralds from Meashott and lacegold from Skryr up to the flickering light of candles made from blort tallow, then quickly hide them again, lest anyone come to take them away.

If someone should stay overlong in Sulz, the inhabitants will grow by turns more solicitous in helping their guests prepare for departure, then curt to the point of offensive rudeness, then suspicious, then violent, with the precise timing of these phases, and their outwards manifestations, dependent on the character of each individual.

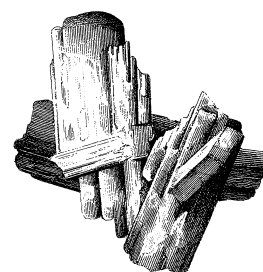
Though the Sulzeen are neither warriors nor magicians, they are not helpless in the defence of their wealth. A mob armed with pike-skewers and farming sickles can appear in a surprisingly short time if the cry is raised³, and certain artefacts of indisputable enchantment have found their way down-river as well. The victims of this fear-borne wrath often have no idea what aroused the anger of the throng; the idea that the Sulz could be hiding a treasure equal to that to be found in the tombs of the Feathered Princes simply will not occur to anyone who has taken even a brief look at the village.



Fishing, or more accurately, spirited imitation of fishing has become an artform in Sulz. Villages field troupes of actors whose ability to appear to labor at their nets is judged at an annual competition held in early spring.



Lacegold is a form of native gold highly prized for its rarity.



Prismeralds are believed by some to offer protection against the more virulent forms of gastric upset suffered by travelers and inhabitants of the Sousanene Coast.

3. Shouting "Thief" in the village can produce an angry and heavily armed crowd in a very few minutes.

✿ The regions of the Sousanese Coast ✿

Scenario concepts:

The simplest adventure involving the Sulz is that which is almost the baseline for adventure in the Dying Earth — travelers arrive in passing, encounter odd customs, nearly die, and leave ruins and rage behind them. In order to make this of interest, the GM should do all he can to avoid hinting at the reasons for the growing hostility of the Sulzeen, while making sure there is a good reason for the adventurers to stay overlong. For example, the party might have arrived by sea to meet a patron who will be travelling down the River Lenai to meet them. Their patron, of course, has fallen afoul of the Wardens to an extreme degree and was an honoured guest at the most recent Cleansing of the Red Cages. The party knows this not, and waits, day on day, for his arrival. Meanwhile, the Sulz grow ever more convinced that the party plan theft, murder, or most likely both, and decide to act before they are acted upon, following the Principle Of Pre-emptive Justice⁴.

Another possibility is that Zaan of the Five Directions has discovered, in his lingering examination of his newly-acquired domain, that Vormigan's Invisible Ring had inexplicably vanished, along with an apprentice mage, some centuries before. Careful questioning of his sandestins revealed the ring to be located in the Sulz region, but Zaan felt indenture points were to valuable to squander foolishly, so he chose instead to send his current apprentice, and perhaps some other acolytes and lackeys, to fetch it. The ring long ago ended up in the hoarded treasure of Sulz, and players must find it. The response of the Sulzeen to someone barging into their village and actually "asking" about hidden treasure is left to the GM's imaginings.

The Sulzeen have acquired a small number of enchanted items as well, though these are rarer. Some washed down river or were gained in trade; others were scavenged from the sea foam, especially during the post-exhale. The GM may use this opportunity to introduce almost any relic or device desired; a small sampling of possible items follows:

At this point the situation calls for a thaumaturgical digression. The Invisible Ring is just that: a ring which is utterly and completely invisible. It is NOT, as some folk of great imagination and small morals have claimed, intangible and weightless as well – it can be felt easily and can even be 'seen' if covered with fine dust. It is composed of an unknown substance which possesses, in the absolute, the traits of 'hardness' and 'transparency'. Other than that, it has no known enchantments or dweomers placed upon it.

Circlet of Violet Imprisonment

Offensive Item

Base Cost: 1

No Attack Roll Required +2

No Health Roll Permitted +2

Item Has 24 Charges +2

Drawback: The item has no range; the victim must be tricked or coerced into entering the circle* 1/2

Total Cost: 4

The Circlet of Violet Imprisonment appears at first to be a long, thin, necklace of finely drawn wire. Usage of it requires the knowledge of two words of command, which may be gleaned from long discussions with dreary sages or short discussions with recalcitrant sandestins (and the expenditure of indenture points). The first word 'Zum', causes the necklace to become a stiff circlet five feet in diameter. The second, 'Muz', causes a field of violet lightning to arise upwards from the circlet, forming a cage some eight feet high. Any unfortunate inside the field will take a wound when attempting to leave.

The device is most often imbedded in a floor, or hidden beneath a rug, or otherwise placed where it is unlikely to be seen. At the appropriate moment, the owner will speak the word and entrap his target, who can then be dealt with properly after some contemplation. No spell or enchantment of less than sandestin strength can pass outwards through the ring, though the reverse is not the case.

4. Rarely discussed by respectable jurists, and shunned by many this principle nevertheless finds ardent advocates, normally among those who have not been called to the bar.

✧ The regions of the Sousanese Coast ✧

Veldar's Folding Lobster

Transport Item

Base Cost: 5

Transport up to 5 people +5

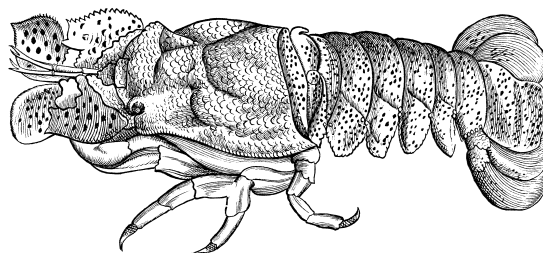
Acts as a Diligent Retainer*2

Compresses to Locket size *2

Fails under common circumstance *1/2

Total Cost: 20

This is an item of legend, a thing which no modern mage could hope to devise. Veldar of the 19th Aeon crafted it, using the long-lost sorceries of 'mathematics' and 'engineering' to guide his sandestins. When he was finished, he had produced a small locket of 7 sides, fastened with a golden clasp. If the clasp is released, the locket will unfold and transform into the semblance of a metallic lobster of enormous size, easily big enough for five to ride comfortably upon it. Manipulation of a nodule located just behind the head of the automaton will compress it to locket size again⁵. The craft has only one drawback — it will not work more than 10 miles from an ocean. Since Veldar intended it for exploration of the coastal regions of the Sea of Dim Reflection (now the Shining Desert), he did not view this as a problem.

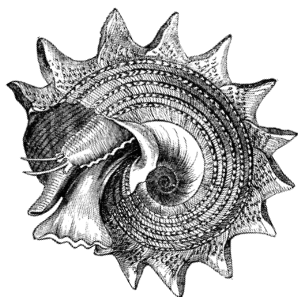


With the sunset glimmers of the dying sun striking fire from the gems ornamenting its carapace this is a remarkably attractive automaton.

Vithain

Somewhat to the west of Forell's Port stands the Encrustation of Vithain, so-named because the town is a mass of coral nurtured into the shape of buildings, with the Vithaini dwelling within. The population consists of a few dozen 'pool farmers' and a small number of other craftsman. Unlike the majority of towns, villages, hamlets, and settlements of the Dying Earth, Vithain eagerly welcomes wanderers, showering them with accolades and jewellery of polished coral, and urging them to share their meagre foods and rest in any quarters they may choose. If this fails to set travelers to fits of paranoia and fear, they must be newly crawled from the vats.

The village proper is composed of a number of large mounds of coral, stretching outwards from the slowly seething surf. Each mound holds two or three families, who live in small but serviceable chambers surrounding a central pool. The pool is the source of most of the food for the families in a mound, and each family will designate an individual (most often the eldest son) to be their gatherer. The gatherer must arise early and dive into the chill waters, swimming down as far as possible to gather succulent flatworms, crisp brek shoots, and gleamshells. This is hard work, and the main impetus for forming a family is to produce an heir who will do it for you. In turn, parents with a strong son who gathers much food will be hesitant to allow him to be married off, and will often make ridiculous demands on the family of the prospective bride. (As a matter of custom, no families who share a mound may intermarry; to do so will result in all who dwell within the mound being fed to the man-eels who dwell in the rocky outcroppings a few miles from shore.)



The inhabitants of the gleamshells are valued as food and for a dye derived from their digestive glands. The empty shells are discarded on village middens.

Anyone approaching the Vithain outskirts during the dark nights will see certain hulking shapes, manlike in rough outline, lurching slowly from the sea to the land. If a traveler is foolish or daring enough to approach, he will discern the creatures to be apparently men of some sort, utterly covered with barnacles, coral, and scuttling crustaceans, which crawl around the exterior of their bodies and, if the investigation proceeds long enough to notice, the interior as well. Conversation with these creatures is possible, and they will prove capable of erudite, if somewhat slurred, speech. Unfortunately, they have little to say other than polite questions regarding what the characters have eaten recently, in order to determine which of them will have the best flavour. Besides

5. This nodule should not be manipulated while passengers are seated otherwise they will be folded up with the lobster.

✿ The regions of the Sousanese Coast ✿

wayfarers, their diet consists of fish, spineworms, and whatever small land game they can catch during their nightly sojourns. They also rage futilely at the sturdy growths which house the Vithaini, and offer great rewards for anyone who would let them inside. Vast treasures lie just offshore, and they will promise delivery of anything from 12th Aeon wine goblets to terces of recent coinage in return for assistance in breaking into the secure village buildings. The veracity of such claims is to be considered small.

Those who approach Vithain during the night had best be prepared to deal with these scuttle-men, as they are locally known, for the Vithaini will not permit anyone entry while such creatures are about, no matter the degree of entreaty or the scope of promised reward. During the day, however, a hungry or tired traveler will find the Vithaini as unctuous and helpful as can be desired, and most will feel that they have finally encountered folk who recognise their inherent greatness and nobility, and treat them appropriately⁶. The choicest foodstuffs, shoreweed wine, and other amenities will be offered. The interiors of the housing domes are surpassingly comfortable, with the Vithaini showing tremendous ingenuity and skill in shaping their odd dwellings to suit their needs. The sea offers up many luxuries from aeons past, and these decorate the interiors of the compounds with unusually tasteful elegance.

Unfortunately, they have little to say other than polite questions regarding what the characters have eaten recently ...

After a day or two of fine seafood, polite if simple conversation, and attentions as desired from the unmarried youth of the village, travelers will be asked to participate in a harmless ritual signifying a bonding between the village and the passers-by, a trivial formality of small real-world significance but of tremendous import as a symbol. The rite consists of the individual being led into a large central coral-mound, where he is asked to remove his garments and dive into the main pool, to retrieve a glimmorg (a small glistening extrusion which grows on the shells of certain forms of scuttlecrab) from one of the near-surface shells. Then he will be taken to a feasting hall, and the rest of the party will join afterwards.

It is only after the unfortunate begins his dive that the deception of the Vithaini becomes clear. As soon as he is below the surface, great tendrils of greenish-blue flesh, which had appeared to be seaweed, will unwrap from the pool and attach themselves to the diver. He will quickly be pulled below, where his blood will be leeched out and replaced with an odd liquid of similar function but inhuman nature. His skin will erupt with parasitic polyps, and his body will become host to a number of other life forms of the shelled and scuttling variety. The nature of the transformation is such that he can survive but a few hours out of water.

The town of Vithain is, in fact, a single organism, most likely a greater hybrid demon from some unnamed over-world. It has entered into a relationship with the inhabitants, who feed it such individuals as are no longer of use to them, and any they may entice from the outside. The organism, named simply Vith, enjoys the taste of warm mammal blood but considers itself too refined to kill, hence, it provides a replacement in the form of its own internal fluids.

It should be noted that Turjan-level characters may find themselves in a special bind if they allow themselves to be trapped — no spell can be spoken clearly while underwater! The GM may allow them to try, but at a suitable levy. Likewise, Sandestins might well feign deafness or incomprehension. “His last command to me was ‘murbleblurb mmmph’, which I took to mean that he granted me full and absolute freedom from all indenture past or present. Surely, if I misunderstood, he would have said something.”

Neviin

Neviin is the largest and most outwardly prosperous of the lesser towns of the southern Sousanene coast. It possesses broad streets kept reasonably well-cobbled, rows of small houses demonstrating no excessive outward decrepitude, and many sturdy well-maintained fishing boats.

The business of Neviin is wine, of two general sorts — freshly made from the fruits of the sea-grapes that grow in profusion offshore, and antique vintages hauled up from the fabled lost city of Kurin, which sank

6. The Vithaini are even reputed to listen attentively to narrative odes of interminable length, claiming that they find them entrancing.

✿ The regions of the Sousanese Coast ✿

in the 18th Aeon and whose vast storehouses of wine, wonderfully preserved, await daring divers willing to brave the cold waters and man-eels.

In spite of enjoying a rude prosperity the townsfolk are divided into several factions, identifiable by the colour and style of their hats. The areas of the town owned or controlled by each faction are marked in subtle ways by scraps of a party colour. Thus, a small red ribbon hanging over the door of an inn bespeaks an inn friendly to the Crimson Cap faction, while a yellow vase in the window of the tavern across the street bespeaks loyalty to the Lemon Widebrims. ‘Bareheads’ are looked on with suspicion no matter where they go; visitors are encouraged to quickly acquire head covering. A small white skullcap of no ornamentation is usually taken to mean an outsider or one who has declared no loyalty; however, such a one will find himself cajoled or bullied into joining this or that faction. Wearing an incorrect combination of colour and style (i.e, a crimson widebrim) can be cause for anything from mockery to mayhem. Those wearing a Scaumish many-tiered hat will be summarily quartered and fed to the man-eels.

For the GM, ‘confusion’ and ‘chaos’ are to be the watchwords!

As a rule, the factions co-exist in uneasy truce. The exact ideals, goals, beliefs, and values of each faction are obscure and difficult to fathom, but each member of any faction will insist that his are true, wise, noble, and virtuous in all facets, and any further inquiry is without merit. “Consider! The dictums of those who wear the green tri-point are without doubt the essence of virtue and correctness. To even inquire as to the thoughts of others is thus foolish, for they are wrong, and why waste time in the pursuit of error? Further, pointless quibbling over this or that minor point of green tri-point doctrine is a waste of time; it is true and that is that. No more need be noted or said.”

As whiteskulls or bareheads outside of the general social structure, the characters will be seen as resources to be exploited in whatever passing scheme is occurring, most of which involve sabotaging boats, stealing wine-presses, or the occasional torching of a warehouse belonging to an opposing faction. The exact relationships between factions shifts daily; a character may attempt to ingratiate himself with the Azure Longbills by sneering at the Lemon Widebrims one day, only to find the same comments made the next day earn him a vicious thrashing and a warning not to slander those who are, if not fully correct in their thinking, at least on the proper path. For the GM, ‘confusion’ and ‘chaos’ are to be the watchwords! At no moment shall it be clear or obvious who is friend and who is foe.

The multitudinous problems of Neviin are compounded by the secondary business of the town, that of salvaging wine and other valuables from the great storehouses of Kurin. For generations, divers of all factions have ventured to the great ruins and returned with all manner of valuable goods. Of late, though, the dives have become deeper and longer, and the returns fewer. Fear that the source of plunder might at last be exhausted has set the factions to an unprecedented degree of bitterness, as none know when the next storehouse opened will be the final one found. Rumours of a prime diving location or a vault recently unsealed by the actions of the sea lead to vigorous and occasionally violent conflict. This conflict is at it’s height during the apogee of the Tidal Inhale, when the Sea of Slow Tides is at its lowest and dives which would otherwise be impossible can be made. Magic would greatly aid the quest, but any faction who had a magician of even middling skill would find themselves the focus of nearly united rage⁷.

Adventure possibilities are manifold. Aside from the obvious (one of the characters is, by sheerest chance, wearing a hat of the colour and style of a particular faction and is thus embroiled in conflict), consider the following: Vintner Second Degree Morl Tovaz has decided upon an intriguing scheme to ensure that the dwindling supplies of Kurin wine will fall to his faction, the Lemon Widebrims. With the aid of a minor magician in Almer⁸, he has procured cloth possessing certain properties, the most important of which is that it loses all colour in water, becoming pure white. When dry, it returns, with considerable rapidity, to the dyed shade. When he spies the ‘Whiteskull’ PCs, he will put his plan in motion, beginning by doffing a

7. Tilvain of Ascolais ventured to the city seeking employment due to his mastery of the Charm of Untiring Nourishment; he was found dead, being sliced apart, drowned in acid, and partially devoured by mire-scorpions, within a day of his arrival.

8. Who wisely remained in Almer, dealing at all times with intermediaries and never risking his person in the maelstrom that is faction politics in Neviin.

❧ The regions of the Sousanese Coast ❧

Green Threepoint hat and altering his features with makeup. Then he will approach the characters. “Greetings, good outlanders, whiteskulls though you be!”

“My name is Dormal Niv, and I speak for the Green tri-point faction! I have need of individuals of both skill and discretion. Are you they?”

Assuming the characters assent, Morl (disguised as Dormal) will ask them to surreptitiously enter the diving-raft of the Crimson Caps, and replace a small collection of strips of red cloth with such cloth as he will provide, and return the cloth found there to him. Then, they will be suitably rewarded.

It’s all fairly straightforward, as such things go. The Crimson had struck a deal with the man-eels, seeking that they leave alone all divers wearing red, while attacking all others. The remuneration to the man-eels is unknown, but it most likely includes suitable extra food to be delivered to them at scheduled feast-times. Morl’s plan is to substitute the red ribbons worn by the Crimson with the enchanted cloth above, which will turn pure white in water. The man-eels will then attack, while his own divers will remain safe. And, if the characters are caught, they will implicate Dormal of the Greens!

Complications are possible. Such things include the characters being later hired to dive for the reds (ideally, one group of the characters will be so hired without the knowledge of the group hired by Morl), or the transaction being overheard and greater sums offered to turn the enchanted cloth back to Morl, claiming to have done the deed. A third possibility is that the man-eels be convinced to ignore those wearing white, while targeting those wearing red. A creative mind will no doubt conceive of further innovations.

Man-Eels of Sousanene Coast

Known Facts:

The man-eels resemble sharp-fanged, talon-nailed humans in their head, shoulders, and arms, but their lower bodies are long, sinuous, and fishlike. Male and female seem identical to casual inspection, and no one has expressed any desire to investigate in a non-casual manner. They are refined of speech, though their fangs and tongues provide an odd accent, and the excessively gustatory slant of their preferred topics of conversation may be disturbing to some.

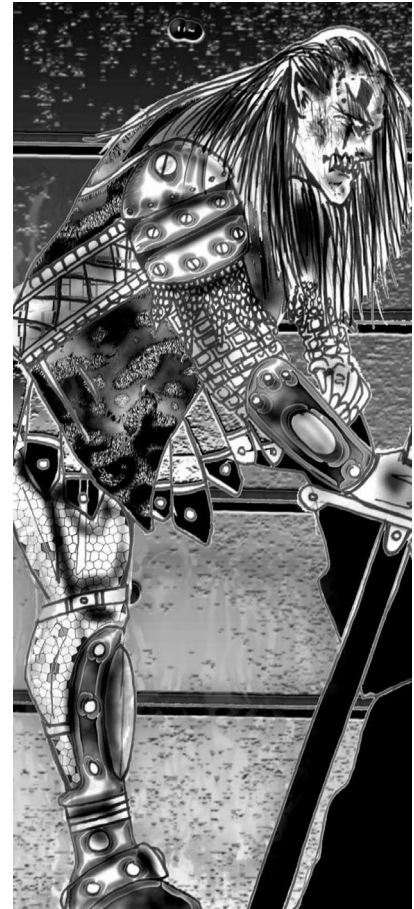
Speculation:

- ❧ The man-eels are possessed of tremendous wisdom gleaned from sub-sea demons, and will share it with those who ask.
- ❧ They have access to great treasures dredged from the sea floors.
- ❧ They possess a magic sleight which enables them to become humans, and walk among men unknown, to breed hybrids, who will be drawn to the sea when they reach maturity.



I had not, until this moment, realised that one could wear a garment until it was so stiff with salt that one could cut oneself on it.

The ale, while in itself foul, does at least mask the taste of the gruel.



Early man-eel as depicted on a fragment of tapestry preserved in the Scholasticarium, Kaiin. The presence of legs indicates the tapestry must date from the 17th aeon if not earlier.

❧ Exotic Vistas & Strange Encounters ❧

‘For myself I feel travel to be a potentially enriching experience’

As one travels a little used path to the south west of Kaspara Vitatus, one finds oneself winding aimlessly across open moorland with narrow scrub-filled valleys fissuring it in a seemingly haphazard manner.

Eventually sharp-eyed observers will note the rays of the dying sun flash off something on the moor to the west. Valiant adventurers may well wish to investigate further, and plunging across the moor will come to a toppled obelisk of crystal which once stood at the head of a steep sided gorge so deep that if six tall men stood on each others shoulders they could not reach the top.

At the head of the gorge is a cave with a perfectly circular opening, obviously carved by an intelligent hand. Water pours out of this cave in a gentle stream and runs down the gorge. On closer investigation it will be apparent that a series of steps at one time led down to the cave from the top of the gorge.

Anyone entering the cave will find that at it had once been a richly appointed dwelling with three rooms. Most of the furniture is carved out of the living rock and cannot be moved¹. There is a kitchen, a bedroom where even the most enthusiastic searchers will find nothing of interest, and a bathroom. Water at the perfect temperature for a hot bath² flows ceaselessly from a spout carved into the wall. There is a plug in the bath and the water has filled the bath and flows over the rim, across the floor and out of the cave. Careful study shows that the floor has been eroded by the flow of water which must have been happening for over a thousand of years.

Someone sitting in the bath can look into the spout to see nothing, although they may hear distant manic laughter. Pulling out the plug will lower the level of water in the bath, but anyone who heard the laughter before will now hear cries and shouts in a language they do not understand, and the flow of water from the spout will stop immediately³.



THE MUNIFICENT SOCIETY OF TRAVELERS

*For those whose life has consisted of naught but the lonely road with never
a consistently rosy hearth to warm yourself by,
then have no fear for there is hope!*

If such paths no longer draw you on, good friend, and your feet long to feel the embers' warmth, then join us at the Munificent Society of Travelers. All of our profession are welcome on a residential or associate basis. Should you not require our services, we are always on the lookout for young volunteers to aid us in our charitable works. Applications in person to be made at any of our branches in Kaiin, Azenomei, Port Perdusz, Kaspara Vitatus and Erze Damath.



1. Obviously there are collectors who will offer a couple of hundred terces for such novelty furniture. As it will take weeks of work to move, involve the hire of mermelants and wagons, and skilled men with hoists, slings and the full impedimenta of a busy dockyard it is unlikely to be worth the effort.

2. Depending upon the your whim, the character who takes the opportunity to have a bath can emerge with certain dice pools refreshed, ten years younger, or merely clean.

3. Depending again on your whim, replacing the plug could start the flow of water once more, or might simply result in an ominous silence.

❖ 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



Those who have purchased the two previous volumes are doubtless already instructing their steward to pay, thus saving them having to inelegantly fumble in their pockets for the money. Those who have not previously encountered us will no doubt be glad if we expound upon the contents. As always, we have tried to provide our readers with a plethora of useful background material, adventures and con tricks.

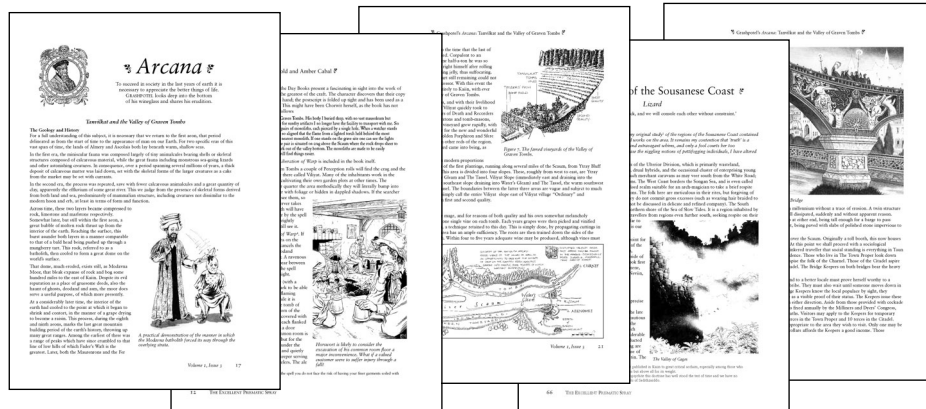
- ❖ The sublime PETER FREEMAN lays before you the Valley of Graven Tombs wherein PCs mingle with tomb robbers, wine merchants and an old world's last fashion houses.
- ❖ ROBIN D. LAWS discusses the way he set about writing the 'Dying Earth' rules and gives an insight into the underlying dynamic of the game.
- ❖ LIZARD continues his exploration of the far south of Almetry where strange customs prevail and the unwary traveler merely provides rich pickings, or in extreme cases lunch, for the denizens.
- ❖ LYNNE HARDY provides an excellent mystery to be solved in 'The Glass World', where the prospect of matrimonial harmony is the spur to darker villainy.
- ❖ M. D. JACKSON, who returns to our pages at the insistence of his therapist, provides an adventure allowing suitably puissant Turjan-level characters to progress to the rank of Arch-Magician.
- ❖ STEVE DEMPSEY starts a series which we confidently expect to become a source of inspiration even to those GMs who cannot find players of sufficient sophistication to adventure in the 'Dying Earth'.

Finally, we have sundry short pieces and plot hooks, abounding with ideas and incidents that a cunning GM can slip seamlessly into any adventure to provide color, excitement and a certain depth.

It is obvious that, having read through to this point, you are a person of considerable discernment. Someone of your caliber is undoubtedly busy with many calls upon your time. Fortunately, there is no further need to procrastinate. Simply hand over a trifling sum to the attendant and you can study this consequential document at your ease.



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