

The Excellent Prismatic Spray

A magazine for the Dying Earth RPG

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 1 • DECEMBER 2000 £4.50/\$7.00

FREE WITH THE DYING EARTH RPG



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

Zaramanth: Turjan-level adventures for duplicitous and artful magicians

The Arachnomancer: a discussion of his magic and creations by Ian Harac

By Hook and By Crook: magic, gambling and the dangers of the gaming table
A salutary tale by Lynne Hardy

The Arcana of Grashpotel: viniculture for the civilised reader

The Delicate Art of Economic Survival by Phil Masters

❧ The Excellent Prismatic Spray ❧

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

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✿ Editorial ✿



When the idea of a Role Playing Game set in the Dying Earth was considered we realised that it would be a game with its own distinctive feel. Hence we decided to produce a magazine to give you that support. Our aim is to provide those little extras that players and their GMs need. To help you lift your game, improve your life, enhance your performance. Literary viagra for flagging role-playing evenings without that strange, bitter after-taste.

It is apparent even now that you, dear reader, are a person of more than usual sagacity. It is obvious that you are not one of those for whom the loss of an index finger would spell illiteracy. We seek persons of no little literary merit, stalwart individuals not given to flinching in the presence of an overly immoderate metaphor, who can stare unflinching into eyes of a split infinitive and for whom aphorism

holds no fears. Are you of the calibre that we seek, persons with a thirst for adventure, who realise that true wealth does not reside in the chink of terces? If so contact the editor at the address below.

And now we throw open the door to an old world, to 'Mincing murder, extravagant debauchery, while Earth passes its last hour. The vapid mannerisms of pale people, using up their lives.'



This issue of our august publication is supplied free of charge for those wise enough to purchase a copy of the Dying Earth rules. It is also supplied free and gratis to those farsighted and mathematically literate individuals who subscribe for issues two to five inclusive for a mere £16. Also, as a way of expressing the unbounded admiration in which we hold those who subscribe, they will receive, at no extra cost, the scenario and game, 'The Mermelant Trail'. An irreplaceable resource, ownership of which is sure to be regarded in years to come as the mark of the discerning connoisseur of genre.

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Those individuals of low character intent upon selling patent medicines, charms of undoubted efficacy, gentlemen's requisites and erotic appurtenances are warned that the management maintain a policy of obstinate refusal to believe all such claims, references from minor foreign royalty notwithstanding. Any individuals who persist in attempts to sell such items through the pages of our eminent publication shall be consigned forthwith to the deodand pit, along with card sharps, hobble-de-hoys, and those who are late paying for their advertisements.

The management regrets that there can be no exceptions to this policy.

Calls himself an editor, might as well give him a wet t-shirt and call him an erotic dancer.

The Illustrious Viznatip
master of the medicinal arts, announces that his
soothing laxative cream is now available from
TRUMPIT AND DILLIWAIT, apothecaries, barbers and
purveyors of gentlemen's requisites whose establishment
overlooks the river at Taun Tassel.

✿ The Dying Earth: Colourful¹ Play ✿

‘Mincing murder, extravagant debauchery, while Earth passes its last hour’

Lynne Hardy, one of the original play testers, discusses how the game actually plays.

There is one thing to keep in mind whenever you play Dying Earth and that is colour. The sky may be a deep, dark blue, the sun an unhealthy, bloated red but everything else (absolutely everything else) is in glorious Technicolor. That includes the people, the places, the clothes, the language, the hats – everything. Never forget it. This article isn’t about game mechanics, although they are simple, elegant and have a great deal to do with the flavour of the game. It’s about atmosphere, tone and above all, how to have a lot of fun in the Dying Earth. And it is a huge amount of fun.

Jack Vance’s books rely on colourful, descriptive prose and whimsical, contrary characters dealing with odd and often dangerous situations. A major part of creating the right atmosphere, therefore, is in the detail. Let your descriptive powers run riot. The system can help you here – the different styles of *Persuasion*, *Rebuff*, *Attack* and *Defence* all help when describing situations in which they’re used. If you can, try to make the dice rolling secondary almost to the description of what’s happening: for example ‘The extravagantly dressed dandy snorts in derision at your pathetically convoluted attempts to dissuade him from his course of action. With a deft twirl of his wrist, he draws his rapier and waggles it menacingly in your direction’. This sounds much better than ‘Your Obfuscatory Persuade roll failed against his penetrating rebuff, so he’s going to attack you with his finesse skill’. Be extravagant and imaginative in your descriptions of dismal failures and illustrious successes, because you’re going to see a lot of them and they’ll become very important to the game’s progress. Try not to chortle too evilly during the dismal failure descriptions though, as you don’t want to dishearten the players too much! However, don’t get too bogged down in describing everything in minute and exacting detail as Dying Earth works best when it’s flowing smoothly and freely. This may sound like a contradiction in terms, but it is something you’ll get a feel for as you play. You’ll soon recognise which bits need that extra level of description to add to the story and which bits will only slow things down. Vance himself uses immense levels of descriptive prose, but only when it’s necessary to pique your interest!

Language is very important in the Dying Earth. It may seem verbose and flowery at first, but it really does enhance the game if people get into the spirit of that language. Taglines are tremendously helpful in giving everyone a feel for the sort of speech patterns to aim for, so don’t be afraid to use them. They added a huge element of fun to our games and they can lead to some truly groan-worthy but memorable moments. Watching my players’ beady eyes light up with delight when they saw an opportunity to slip (or shoehorn) in a tagline definitely added to my enjoyment in running the game. Try to encourage your players to speak in character by speaking in character to them. It might seem like a minor or even obvious point, but it really will help everyone. When we first started play-testing, we didn’t know the books or the language and we were very unsure about what to expect or what was expected of us. The taglines gave us a big clue, but it wasn’t until we started to speak in character that we began to feel more confident and most importantly,



A typical mages’ workroom. Sadly, the vat creation from which the bystanders are fleeing destroyed the workroom shortly after this sketch was executed.

Language is very important in the Dying Earth. It may seem verbose and flowery at first, but it really does enhance the game if people get into the spirit of that language. Taglines are tremendously helpful in giving everyone a feel for the sort of speech patterns to aim for, so don’t be afraid to use them. They added a huge element of fun to our games and they can lead to some truly groan-worthy but memorable moments. Watching my players’ beady eyes light up with delight when they saw an opportunity to slip (or shoehorn) in a tagline definitely added to my enjoyment in running the game. Try to encourage your players to speak in character by speaking in character to them. It might seem like a minor or even obvious point, but it really will help everyone. When we first started play-testing, we didn’t know the books or the language and we were very unsure about what to expect or what was expected of us. The taglines gave us a big clue, but it wasn’t until we started to speak in character that we began to feel more confident and most importantly,

1. As Lynn is not from the US, we have indulged her incongruous British spelling.

✿ The Dying Earth: Colourful Play ✿



MAGIC IS IMPORTANT in the *Dying Earth*, so encourage your players to put it to good use. Our most memorable moments all involve the use of magic – well, the misuse of it, anyway. It all helps to set the atmosphere. Your players are very important in setting the tone of this game. Every game I ran was a joint, co-operative effort on all our parts, with the players suggesting ways for the game to go just as much as I did. I hate to admit it, but often their ideas were better than mine so I used them instead. Again, this may seem like I'm stating the obvious, but *Dying Earth* does work best as a free flowing exchange of ideas between everyone involved. The term story-telling has almost become clichéd in role-playing circles these days, but that is what you're aiming for here: to tell a damn fine story.

started to enjoy ourselves.

Perhaps it might benefit your group to have an in-character chat before you get down to the first game, to give the players time to describe their characters to each other, find their feet in conversation, and relax.

Another thing to keep in mind is that everyone is out for themselves because, after all, it is nearly the end of the world y'know. Unlike in many traditional role-playing games where the party is more or less expected to work together towards a common goal, in *Dying Earth* that constraint is much less important. Some of the funniest moments in our games resulted from the characters attempting to surreptitiously get one over on their associates without getting caught. My group also never really saw the need to plan anything together, which generally led to all-out chaos as their plans always interfered with each other. Dissolving a hole in the side of a giant fish tank while your compatriots are stood in front of it isn't going to make your character particularly popular (especially when you nearly drown one of them) but it does lead to a lot of laughs out of character.

Your players' characters aren't the most important or the most powerful people in the world, either. That alone can lead to interesting situations and they just can't expect to just walk in anywhere and get their own way. Whilst this may come as a nasty surprise to some people, using lateral thinking and sheer cunning to get what you want is far more fun than wading in there with all spells blazing. Things have a bad habit of coming back to haunt you in the *Dying Earth*, so caution and guile are strongly recommended, especially if you don't wish to end up as the new exhibit in an irate arch-mage's curio collection. The *Dying Earth* gives you a great opportunity to keep your players on their toes, so make full use of it.

Don't expect things to go to plan. This may sound like a bad thing, but trust me, the game comes into its own when disaster strikes. Because of the nature of the mechanics there is a very strong chance that things won't go the way either you or your players were expecting, especially with beginning characters or when using magic. This should only add to the fun, not ruin everything. I'll swear that the dice know when you're trying to cast spells because that was when my group had a tendency to louse up big time. A word of advice: unless your group is planning to make their living as a demolitions team, be very wary of the *Excellent Prismatic Spray*. I'll say no more, but just you wait and see the first time your group uses it. Or should that be fails to use it?

If initially, like us, you don't know much about *Dying Earth* it can seem a bit intimidating at first. Please don't let that put you off because there really isn't anything to be afraid of. *Dying Earth* is grandiose, magnificent and challenging. Like all new settings, you just have to get used to it and find your own comfortable place within that setting. In the face of all that detail it can be nerve wracking to wing the details, but do it. After all, this is now your game and you're doing this for your enjoyment. From knowing little about the world, we went on to have some of the best, most creative and most enjoyable games our group has ever had.

So, remember, try to keep it fun, flowing but above all colourful!

WANTED: erb skins
Must be clean and ideally no longer attached to the erb.
Announce yourself at the Scholasticarium and ask for an appointment with the student Thaumaturgist Panakina.

❧ The Pirates of the Jhardine Coast ❧

M D Jackson

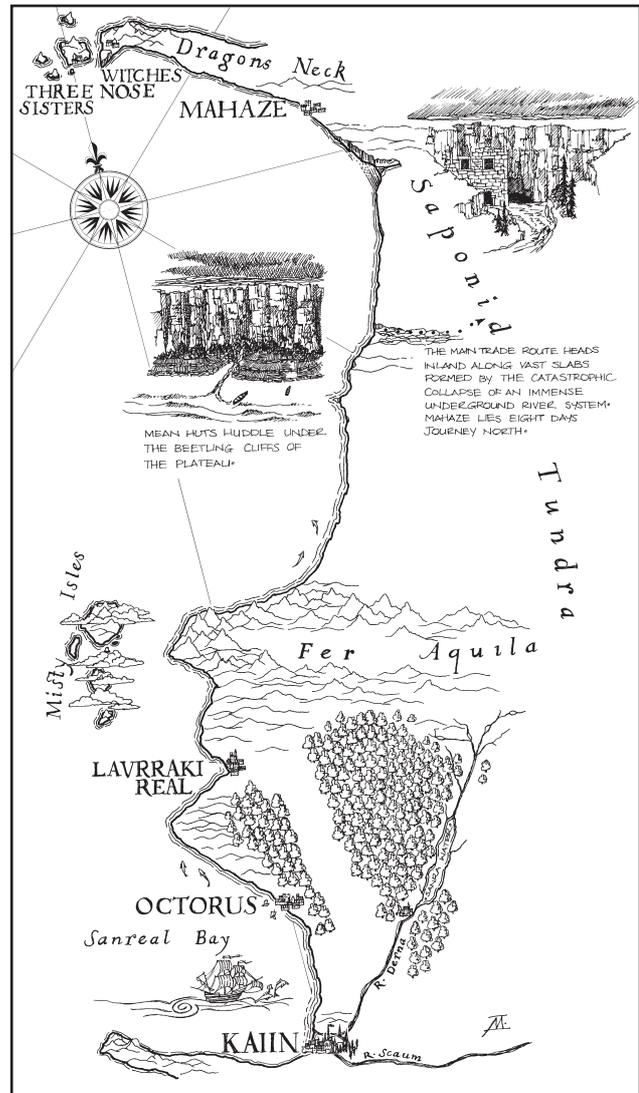
We bring you travel, adventure, treasure hunting and magic items of doubtful efficacy ...

To Geographers the Jhardine Coast is the strip of land where the Saponid Tundra meets the waters of the Melantine Gulf. The Tundra itself is a plateau which runs north from the Fer Aquila and eventually fades into the Pale Rugates while to the East it drops gently into the valley of the River Isk.

The inhabited area of the Jhardine Coast is a narrow strip of land, occasionally fertile but cramped. Indeed it is never more than a mile from the high tide line to the foot of the plateau, and it is on this strip that the dwellers of the Jhardine Coast live. The land affords them a poor living and most take to the sea in their little fishing boats to eke out a meagre living. Where the small streams that drain the tundra flow out of caves and down steep gullies to the beach it is common to see a tangled mass of tiny cultivation terraces clinging to the side of the gully with women and children hard at work weeding or carrying water to their plots.

There is little opportunity for trade. Sometimes they will carry fresh fish or vegetables inland to trade with the Saponids, at other times a courageous fisherman will sell his catch in the Islands of Cloud or Lavrraki Real. Indeed if ever a people had an excuse for turning to piracy, if only out of boredom, the dwellers on the Jhardine Coast must be that people.

A becalmed merchantman is vulnerable to the attentive inhabitants of the Jhardine Coast.



The Jhardine Coast south to Kaiin



✿ The Pirates of the Jhardine Coast ✿



An intrepid, if foolhardy explorer enters a sea cave.

Initially they operated in much the same way as any other piratical race, they would lure passing boats onto the rocks and pillage the wreck, they would put to sea in a multitude of small boats and swarm over the sides of becalmed merchantmen, killing and looting, they would even lurk around the Misty Isles to prey on the trade that crossed the Melantine Gulf into Kaiin.

Such was their reputation as a lawless and uncontrollable people that many fled there to escape from the attention of the proper authorities. Runaway slaves, escaped prisoners or felons who felt the hand of the law reaching for their collar, even mages who had inadvertently offended the powerful, all knew that they had a hope of survival should they manage to arrive at the Jhardine Coast.

Unfortunately in these last days under a dying sun even piracy has fallen into decline. There are fewer merchants sailing the seas than there used to be. Trade is often rendered unprofitable by the arbitrary tariffs of petty officials who hope to line their pockets at the expense of honest traders who may not have time to return before the sun blinks out. Not only that, but a high proportion of ships in the Melantine Gulf are owned and crewed by Dilks

from Dilclusa. Dilks are notorious for the way in which their merchant-ships often pursue, board and plunder innocent pirates. All in all these difficulties demanded another source of income.

Fortunately the Saponid plateau is formed of a sedimentary rock riddled with cave systems. The small rivers and streams that issue out of these caves often bring with them strange objects from forgotten civilisations. The remnants of there were often buried when the rock that forms the plateau was first laid down aeons ago. In those days it was the floor of the Meel Ocean. In more than one case intrepid explorers have worked their way back up the cave system to discover fossilised cities which they have slowly plundered. Very little survives intact, however the inhabitants count among their number a considerable number of minor enchanters and petty magicians. These have discovered that fossilised inscriptions and carvings can be a source of considerable knowledge from the past and they use this knowledge to recreate the tools and technologies long forgotten.

... it was Maurfagmal who did the experimental work which enabled his widow to eventually produce and sell fire-lances.

Hence it was that rather inept student of the Thaumaturgical arts, Maurfagmal who first found the first carvings of a fire-lance. It was he who connected the pictures with the strangely fused lumps of metal and ceramic which were occasionally found. Indeed it was he who did the experimental work which enabled his widow to eventually produce and sell fire-lances. Original finds are rare but the market that the Pirates discovered when they came to sell their products encouraged them to reproduce other items. They make a living from stealing spells and cantrips or magical items. The spells are copied and resold, while the items are carefully studied and duplicated. The main problem with Jhardine magical items is their inherent unreliability. A Jhardine fire-lance will often work well but they are erratic and occasionally fail in a spectacular fashion. Similarly a Jhardine spell may well have been copied by someone who did not completely understand the full significance of what they were copying and may include interesting or even fatal pervulsions.

✿ The Pirates of the Jhardine Coast ✿

Jhardine magical items and spells are sold secretly by quiet men in the back rooms of seedy bars in all the cities that front the Melantine gulf, and as far inland as Azenomei or as far south as Val Ombrio. Their customers include the rogue who wants an edge over the opposition, the failing mage desperate for something to boost his sense of self importance, and the foolish who think they can become Arch-mages without the necessity of arduous study.

The Pirates of the Jhardine Coast are disliked intensely by most established magicians. However, when the sun may blink out at any moment why waste what little time there is left trying to stamp out a trivial annoyance? On occasion, a magician is inconvenienced by the pirates, or comes across a strange artefact for sale which excites his interest. This happened to the Arch-mage ZILIFANT. He purchased a bowl which is certainly no younger than the 6th Aeon and which he purchased from one of the pirates. He has studied it intensely and believes that it is one of a set. He wishes to get at least one more of the set because if his theory is correct there will be a synergistic effect which should enable him to use these two bowls for their original purpose, which was to view episodes from the past which would be displayed on the surface of any liquid poured into the bowl.

Zilifant summons to his presence members of the party who are either in his employ or under an obligation to him and asks them to find another of the bowls for him. He purchased his bowl from a traveller who he met in the Viliyat Inn three weeks ago. The traveller was a Pirate by the name of VILITZ. All that Zilifant knows about him is that he comes from the village of Angholde which is about two hundred miles north of Lavrraki Real. He will defray reasonable expenses when the bowl is presented to him and will give each member of the party 100 terces as travelling costs. He will also stress the need for haste, mentioning pointedly that he is not in the habit of paying good terces to shiftless individuals who merely intend to pass their days in drunkenness and vice.

If the party approach him openly and mention the bowl he sold Zilifant he will try to be helpful (no one but a fool annoys both a customer and an Arch-mage.) He does not have another bowl but knows where he found the one he sold. If the players wait while he sells his goods he will take them to Angholde where they can help him look for another.



The Arch-mage Zilifant contemplates the bowl and the past.

It is now up to the party to find another bowl for Zilifant. Here I do not want to railroad them into choosing any particular method. So rather than trying to force them down any one road I would prefer to map out options which they might well follow. During these travails they will inevitably run across GM controlled or GMCs. Rather than go into reams of statistics for these individuals, each, when the character makes their first appearance will get the same sort of variable number formula as used in the Bestiary. This will allow you to adjust the power of characters relative to that of your PCs. The symbol 'R' represents the party's average rating in the abilities they will use to counter the GMC ability. So to spot a forgery it would be a case of comparing the GMCs craftsmanship with the PC's Perception or Appraisal.

❖ The Pirates of the Jhardine Coast ❖



Vilitz

If they do not wish to kick their heels for a month or more at their own expense then they can always help him sell his merchandise. This they find surprisingly easy if they neglect to mention the Jhardine connection and fall back on the 'budding mage down on his luck routine.' However, if they do this then next time they travel in the Scaum valley they have a fair chance (depending entirely on the whims of the GM) of being hounded by the disappointed users, or even worse, the heirs of disappointed users, of the artefacts they sold. There are several fire-lances, a score of enchanted rings, most for breathing underwater the rest for flying. Vilitz expects an average of 500 terces each for these items. The players by ignoring the Jhardine taint should easily get this and might even get 1000 terces.

If the party feel that time is pressing then Vilitz will tell them to go to Angholde and will give them a letter of introduction to a cousin and business partner of his, one Orkea Vraz.

Orkea, the bearers of this missive are agents of the Arch Mage Zilifant, a valuable customer of mine. He bought that bowl we found deep in The old Vraz cut. It was about twenty ells in from where the spring bubbles up. See if there is anything else round there and if they want it, charge them 1000 terces, but no rubbish because it is for Zilifant.

With or without meeting Vilitz, the party could try and get to the village of Angholde. The only feasible way of doing this, other than by use of magic, is initially by sea to Lavrraki Real. Once there the party can try and get passage up the coast with a Jhardine fisherman. If the party think about this problem while in the presence of Zilifant he will send them there by Thasdrubal's Langanetic Transfer, but obviously can hardly bring them back again using the same method. If they go to the manse of Zilifant to ask him to transport them by magic they will discover he is a busy man with many commitments. There is an 4 in 6 chance of his being out and not expected back for some weeks.

Whatever the method of travel, the journey should be without major dangers other than those of the players' own creation. The trip down the Scaum is though well-travelled waters. The sea route to Lavrraki Real does hold its risks; storms, giant keak and forgotten shoals await the unwary. Despite these dangers, Angholde should not seem an impossible destination.

Angholde itself is a small but sprawling place, trees grow from the cliff face behind the village while what little good soil there is has been fenced in and terraced so that every inch is utilised. The houses themselves are on stilts and the ground under them grows food for the table, including Golden Rhubarb and Sweet Flowering Persimmony. The village itself has only twelve families living there, most of whom are related. At least half are members of the sprawling Vraz clan while most of the rest are Muter. The headman, who lives in the largest house with the thickest and most numerous stilts, is the grandly named BRASSRUVWILBET VRAZ (*Obfuscatory 0.5R Penetrating 1.5R Caution 0.5R Dodge 1R*). All visitors to the village are expected to make a courtesy call to see him as soon as they arrive.

It should be noted at this point that while the Jhardines have in their time murdered and looted their way round the coasts of the Melantine Gulf, this was all a long time ago and the vast majority of them are peaceful people. This isn't to say that they will not happily flay thieves and vagabonds or nail them upside

❖ The Pirates of the Jhardine Coast ❖



Angholde

down to the door of the headman's house. In recent times they no longer indulge in it purely for the sport, or to lay bets on how long the victim takes to die.

Brassruvwilbet Vraz will assume that the party have come to Angholde to trade. It is the only reason why anyone should want to visit the village. People claiming that they are travelling for pleasure or merely happened to drop by to see an old acquaintance will be met with knowing nods and complimented on their discretion. If the party have the letter for Orkea Vraz, then they will be told how to find his house and after lingering a few minutes longer with Brassruvwilbet, exchanging gossip over a saucer of Possifross Tea they will be led to the house of ORKEA (*Glib 1.5R; Contrary 1R; Speed 1.5R; Intuition 1R; Craftsmanship 2R*).

The party will find that Vilitz is not present in the village. Brassruvwilbet will ask them guarded questions as to just why they want to find Vilitz. (Many small minded and petty people, often missing digits or even limbs have been known to expend considerable effort in tracking down individual Jhardine salesmen) They must try to persuade the head man to put them in touch with someone who knows where Vilitz found the bowl. If they are honest then they should get a bonus to their *Persuade* roll. The best Brassruvwilbet can do for them is put them in touch with Orkea. The worst he is likely to do is have them leave the village next day on a south-bound boat. Only in extreme circumstances will he have them branded and sold as slaves to the nomads who infest the plateau on the opposite shore of the Melantine Gulf.

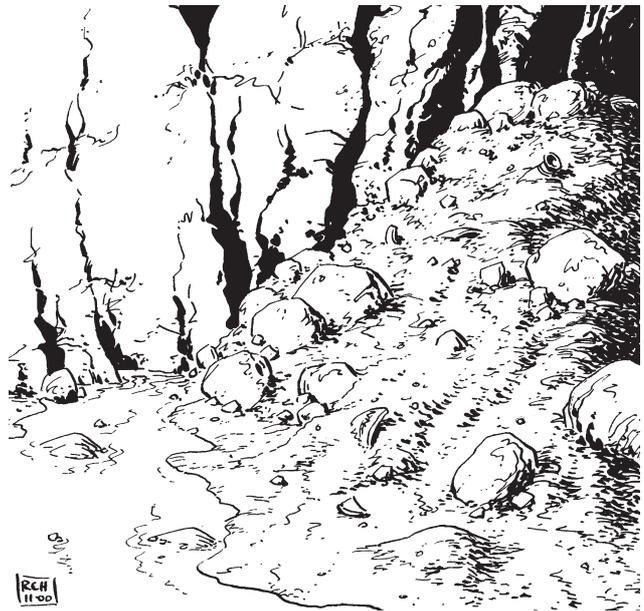
Dealing with Orkea is rather more tricky. Orkea is a person for whom the term mendacity might well have been coined. Once he knows of their quest he is determined that they will get a bowl so ensuring that he will get at least 1000 terces, even if he has to make the bowl himself. The first thing he does, for a 100 terce down payment – 'purely to cover working expenses you understand' – is to lead them to the Old Vraz cut. Getting there is a considerable task. One walks out of the village and north towards the cliff where it meets the sea. After an hour's walking you enter a sea cave which leads deep into the cliff. This is where the sea has broken into a previous water worn chamber, there is a small freshwater stream running at the bottom of the cave. From the mouth of the stream, near to where it disappears into a narrow fissure, there are a set of rock cut steps which lead up and further in, climbing for up to a hundred feet until you reach a small ledge and beyond the ledge a dry stream channel so low that further advance demands that you wriggle up on your

✿ The Pirates of the Jhardine Coast ✿

belly. After 300 ells the channel opens out to reveal a series of chambers. They are all utterly pitch dark, Orkea will have fetched lights if the party were too foolish to bring their own. These candles, of Pelgrue tallow, will be invoiced to the party at 10 terces each (you try to buy them cheaper off anyone else you chance to meet in the cave). In the sixth and last chamber the party once more meet up with the stream which flows across the chamber from East to West. The stream issues out of a narrow but tall crevice, this is the old Vraz cut.

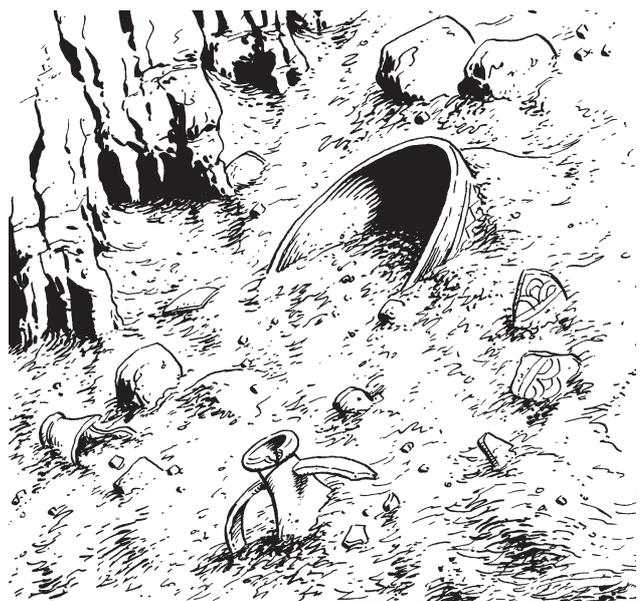
The crevice is full of mixed sand, silt, pottery shards and small stones. To excavate this carefully will be the work of weeks. Each week members of the party who spend their days working in the cut each make either an *appraisal* or a *pedantry* roll. They can only roll once and cannot spend points to reroll. On an Illustrious Success they find a bowl of the sort they are looking for. On a Dismal Failure they have hit bedrock without finding anything. If the party manage to accumulate three Dismal Failures without finding a bowl then there isn't one there. Ordinary successes indicate interesting and potentially valuable items have been found. Coins, rings, votive offerings and cunning fired pieces of ceramic are all possible. These would be worth somewhere in the region of 50 terces apiece in Kaiin. Orkea will attempt to charge them 100 terces a piece while Vilitz, if he has returned, by this time would charge them 10 terces apiece or bring them into a partnership, going 50:50 on any profits made.

One of the players will have to lead the crawl along the passage. For every 400 ells he crawls he rolls a d6. On a Dismal Failure the passage is blocked and cannot be further explored. Any other failure merely indicates that the week was wasted due to having to spend much of it cutting through solid rock to widen the passage enough to make progress. An Ordinary Success indicates a bed of silt which can be excavated just like the old Vraz cut. Because these beds are smaller only one Dismal Failure is enough to get down to bedrock. An Illustrious Success indicates that a source of the bowls has been found. This is a soft mudstone in which piles of crockery were trapped. The mudstone can be scraped away with a knife to prise out the bowls. There will be three identical to the one Zilifant is looking for. Wise players will suspect that while Zilifant only asked for one, if they were to bring all three he



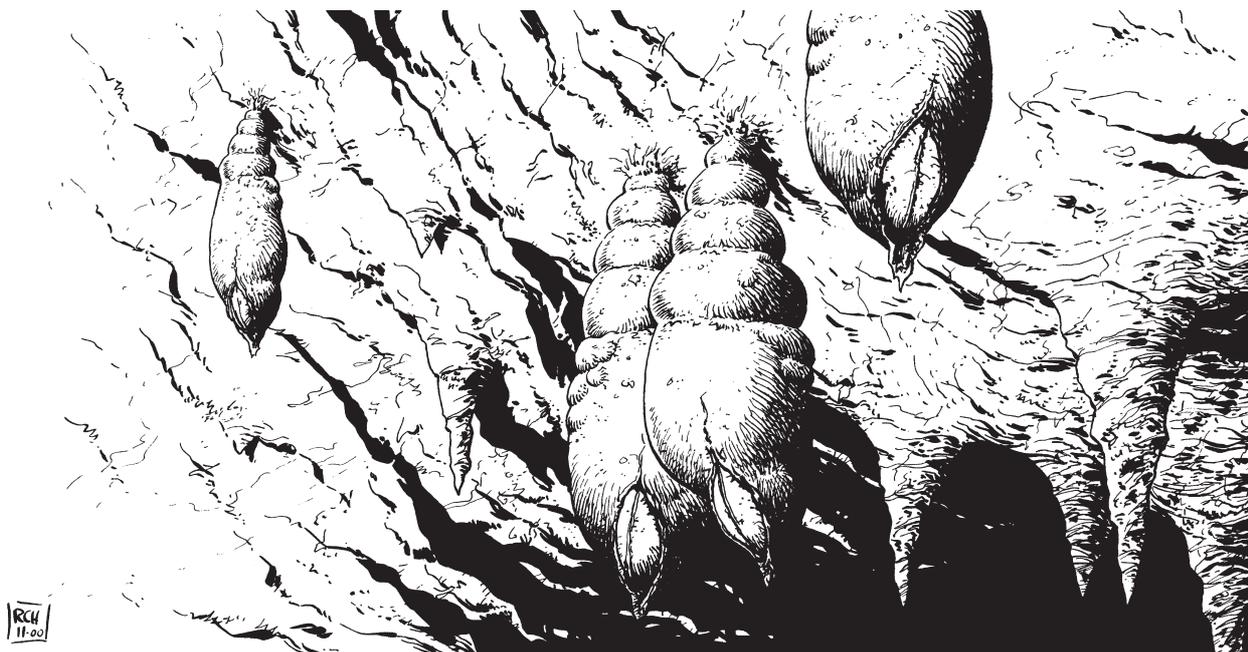
The mass of material in the crevice appears to be of little interest and less value.

There are other possible places where the bowl could be. The cut was filled from the small stream which has long since dried up. The stream may well have moved the bowl along with it and deposited it in the cut. If players were to crawl back along the stream bed they might well find where the bowl came from. The only problem is that they will have to widen the water cut passage in places to do this.



The bowls trapped in mudstone

❖ The Pirates of the Jhardine Coast ❖



would be suitably grateful and perhaps even impressed by their efficiency.

It may well be that the players do not find the bowls, at the very least the luck of the dice could make it impossible to locate any. Orkea is not going to turn down the chance of 1000 terces and as a Jhardine born and bred he is taking precautions of his own. While the party are excavating he will be working with potsherds and petty enchantments to create the sort of bowl they are looking for. If the party get to a dead end he will 'plant' his bowl in the silt that has built up in a side passage and encourage them to dig there. Spotting that this bowl is a fake is a simple contest between their *Perception*, *Appraisal* or *Pedantry* skill and his *Craftsmanship*. It should be noted that Zilifant will soon spot the fake as it is totally unmagical. He will not be impressed with the party that brings it to him.

The party could well need somewhere to live while searching for the bowl. Angholde does not boast an inn: the population is far too small and there is no passing trade. None of the families have room for guests, however Brassruvwilbet Vraz will point out that there are two old long houses at the end of the village that the party could use. These date back to the bad old days where piracy was a matter of hordes of swarthy men armed with cutlasses rather than a handful of men with second rate magical items and dodgy grimoires. The men who manned the pirate skiffs would live in great long-houses, barracks on stilts which could sleep over a hundred in double or even triple bunks. These

The Pelgrue

One problem the party could come across in the caves is the Pelgrue. This is a Pelgrane/Grue hybrid which has become a species in its own right. The Pelgrue hatches in the outer caves and crawls deep underground, feeding on strange and best forgotten creatures that live in the streams. At this stage it is a black slug like creature with an assortment of ill defined limbs. However as it grows it develops a more grue like appearance until finally, once it reaches about the size of a small dog it migrates back to the outer caves where it pupates. In this state it hangs for up to a year, finally emerging from the chrysalis looking like a small Pelgrane. It has a toothed snout rather than a beak and its wings are shorter and less elegant than the Pelgranes. It lives by diving for fish which it drags ashore and eats while perched on the rocks. It is not a strong flier, it cannot take off when on the water, it needs a running start, but it is a true flier, not a glider. These creatures rarely attack in the adult form, it appears they develop a rudimentary intelligence at this stage and avoid mankind. However in the pre-chrysalis stage they are nasty little beasts with no obvious intelligence who will certainly try to bit someone who cannot bit back. Individually they are too small to threaten a man, however several of them can cause problems for a man trapped in a narrow tunnel. (Ferocity 0.5R, Intuitive 0.25R)

✿ The Pirates of the Jhardine Coast ✿

long-houses still stand (after a fashion) and one of them could be made weatherproof enough to house a small party. When the party search the long-houses they will make some discoveries. Each long-house had one room on the ground floor, a kitchen, above which was the captain's quarters, four small but private rooms heated by the kitchen. Between the captain's room and the main dormitory was the captain's day cabin which served as office and officers' mess. All these rooms have been stripped of their furniture and anything else of value. However, to one side of the captain's day cabin was the armoury, where many of the pirates' weapons were stored when not needed. In one long house the armoury has long since been stripped and even the timber from the floor has gone. In the other, the armoury is still intact, the door still locked although the door itself is rotten. PCs with a love of rusty and decaying weaponry can spend many happy hours sorting through piles of man hooks, battle scythes, boarding pikes and boarding axes. Amongst the rusting debris there are still gems for those with the persistence to search properly. Half buried under one mound of rusting and rotting weapons there is a chest. If it is dragged out and opened (the hinges have rotted off, so this is easy) the contents have been spared the ravages of time. There is a rather attractive sword with scabbard and enough leather belting to enable it to be slung over the shoulder. There are also three long and beautifully finished daggers and a small boot knife with scabbard which you sew into the inside leg of your boot. These weapons, while not magical, are of excellent quality and are probably 20th Aeon work.

When it comes to buying food, there is fish for sale in the village and plenty of vegetables available to purchase. They could feed themselves well for 5 terces a day each. They could get a woman to come in and cook for them for another 10 terces a day. Yajja is a decent cook, nothing fancy, but appetising.

Once the bowl or bowls have been found and the party have either paid for them or otherwise acquired ownership all that remains is to get them back to Zilifant. He will pay 1000 terces per bowl which he feels should cover all reasonable costs. Players could try to persuade him otherwise (*Intimidating 1.5R*, *Penetrating 1R*). If they give him the fake bowl he will pay them nothing, indeed if they try to persuade him otherwise and fail he will ask for his 100 terces per head expenses money back as well.



MD Jackson is one of our happier discoveries. We can only reiterate our thanks to his therapist, who suggested that MD (as he is known to all fellow inmates) attend the creative writing classes.

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❧ 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.

The Wine

If Tanvilkat is to be hailed as the King of wine, then Golden Porphiron must be given the title of Queen. Sweet, dark and strong, redolent of honey, sun-apple and peaches, this golden wine is a true joy to drink. Each sip is ecstasy, yet an ecstasy that may be enhanced by a full knowledge of the elixir that fills your glass.

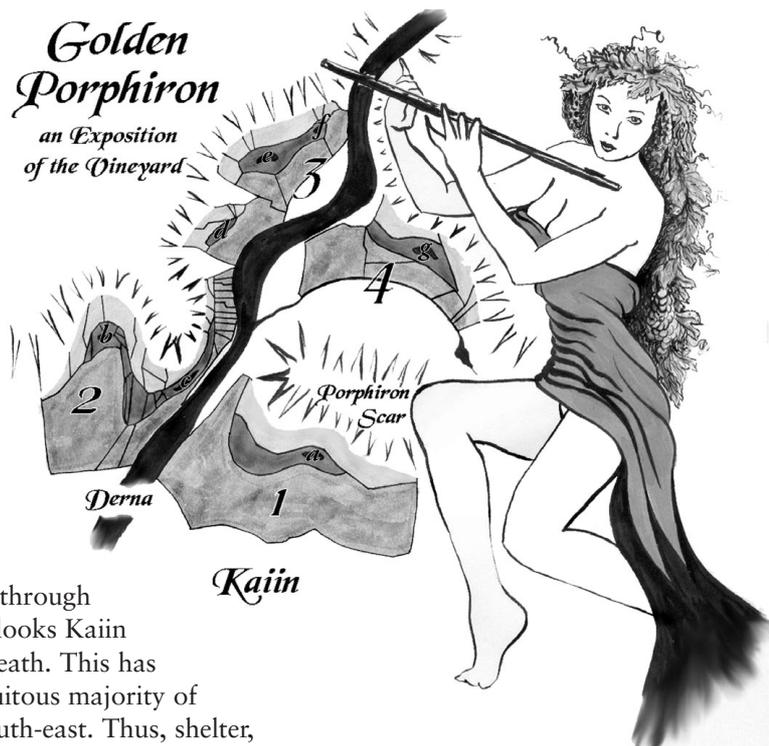
Legend has it that the Derna once approached the sea through a steep canyon of tumbled rocks, where Great Phandaal had demons cut the vineyards to his order. Be that as it may, it cannot be doubted that the site is extraordinarily well suited to the cultivation of the vine.

In simple terms, the Derna has cut a gorge through the hard limestone of the Plateau that overlooks Kaiin and down into the softer rocks that lie beneath. This has left a systems of steep, rocky slopes, a fortuitous majority of which face to the south, south-west and south-east. Thus, shelter, quality soil, excellent drainage and the finest insolation are all provided together, making the vineyard what it is.

As a final, exquisite touch, the fogs that rise from the Derna at night moisten the valley sides, encouraging that most beneficial of fungi, Imperial Yellow Botris, which both concentrates the wines and adds an extra element of flavour.

The sole permitted variety of grape for Golden Porphiron is the Yellow Glepsicule or *Dewbead*, which alone allows the full expression of the soil while of high susceptibility to botris. Thus is this great wine achieved, while stringent regulations as to boundaries, yields, pruning techniques, vine density and more ensure the maintenance of quality.

Technically, the vintage commences on the feast of Eupasian, although tedders never start picking until the mandouars that stand on the ridges above the vineyard have begun to shed their leaves. They then make repeated forays to the vineyard, each time collecting only those grapes that have ripened to perfection and show the effect of botris. These are made into Golden Porphiron, the remainder become Derna Gold, a wine which while undoubtedly of a lesser standard is by no means to be deprecated. In poor years, when the grapes lack sweetness, the dry Derna Yellow is made. Occasionally grapes are allowed to hang on the vines of the better slopes until the arrival of the first frosts, in which case the rare ice wine is produced, of superlative concentration if somewhat less finesse.



The Vineyards

Within those vineyards entitled to the production of Golden Porphiron, four principal areas, or slopes, may be identified, each producing wines of broadly similar character. These areas are:

1. **SCAR SLOPE:** that part of the vineyard owned wholly by the Royal House of Kaiin, and currently sequestered to the personal use of Prince Kandive the Golden and his immediate court. To the less knowing, Scar Slope wine alone represents Golden Porphiron, while those of the other areas are considered mere imitations. This is a foolish posture, as of the four slopes, Scar Slope is the largest but ultimately the least in quality. The wines are heavy, fat, the most glyceric, but frequently lack balance. The soil is typical of the vineyards; mixed marls and limestone, but with clays and sands on the lower, inferior slopes.
2. **SANREALE SLOPE:** continues Scar Slope to the north and west across the Derna. The soil is the same, and its wines are broadly similar in character, indeed often indistinguishable. Two exceptions exist, the narrow face above the Derna itself and Yolpit Gully, both more sheltered locations where the richest and most concentrated wines of all are produced. Ownership is varied, and includes many of the noble families not just of Kaiin, but of Ascolais and even Almerly.
3. **DERNA GORGE:** is the smallest of the vineyards, the hardest to work and the least known, yet provides an altogether more elevated quality of wine. The turn of the valley provides shelter and traps the river mists at night and the sun during the day. The slopes are steep, the soil dark, trapping the heat late into the night. The exact demarcation of the multiplicity of plots is known only to the vine tadders, the majority of whom are in the employ of the mages and scholars who make up the main part of the ownership. Here the soil is mixed of marls, limestones and a band of black slate, the result of some ancient volcanic metamorphosis. There is no more than a trace of sand, and that on the lowest slopes.
4. **IMPILO VALLEY:** forms a mirror to Scar Slope, with the same soil and exposure if greater height and thus less warmth. The shelter is improved, Porphiron Scar blocking the sea breezes that can so often mar grape development on the two main slopes. Broadly, the finest vintages in Impilo Valley will be those of moderate quality on Scar Slope and Sanreale Slope. Ownership of the slope is moderately wide, and most Kaiin families of consequence own one or more plots. The soil also mimics that of the Scar and Sanreale slopes, but with no sand and only a touch of clay in the valley bottom.

Within each area walls divide the vineyards, both according to ancient ownership and to those demarcations of quality laid down by King Retirigin the Even. These demarcations are:

1. *Ordinary*, (■): land producing wines that are simple, sweet and luscious, but may be light, or coarse in lesser vintages. This represents some half of the total vineyard and some three-quarters of production. The Ordinary wine of the Sanreale Slope is the Golden Porphiron most commonly encountered in the market.
2. *High Slope*, (▲): that land on the steepest gradients, towards the escarpment cliffs. No upper walls demarcate the High Slope vineyards, and vines are planted as high as the tadders dare, often on land that is little more than cliff face. High Slope wines are delicate, subtle and fail only in the poorest vintages.
3. *Mid-Slope*, (■): is demarcated as that land which combines the delicacy of the High Slope with the power of the low. However, to qualify for this high status the land must also have an ideal exposure, and each area of Mid-Slope vineyard is surrounded by a wall to define it exactly.
4. *Heart*, (♥): covers those areas of the mid-slope where all factors are at an optimum. Each area is surrounded by a wall, and both vines and wines are jealously guarded.



Seven vineyard hearts exist, each representing a perfect expression of the character of the slope in question. These are:

- a. **SCAR HEART:** produces a wine of weight and power, deep and rich, heavy and lush, with flavours of fruit so ripe as to approach decay. A mere sip of Scar Heart from a good vintage leaves the head swimming and the mouth curved into a smile, however dour the drinker before taking that sip. Currently, Scar Heart is reserved to the private use of Prince Kandive the Golden.



High Slope and Mid-Slope areas of the Derna Gorge, seen from the river.

b. **YOLPIT HEART:** the quintessence of the slopes above Kaiin. Yolpit heart has the same soil and exposure as Scar Heart, yet enjoys better shelter, allowing an extra degree of ripening of the grapes. If Scar Heart is redolent of a peach on the edge of rot, then Yolpit Heart is that same peach after an hour in the warmth of the sun. Four families share ownership of Yolpit Heart, each serving only among themselves and the closest of friends.

c. **FORUMORS DEATH:** the steepest of the great vineyards, so steep indeed as to endanger workers, who may tumble into the foaming Derna above which the vines seem to hang. Forumor wine is fresher, tarter and headier than the others of the Kaiin slopes, yet more concentrated and with a finish of greater length and finesse. Technically, the vineyard belongs to the House Skasserldol, a once royal family of Kaiin vanished some five hundred years ago. In practice, it is reserved to the use of senior fellows of the Scholasticarium.

d. **THE CAGE OF THE SUN:** in this vineyard, all those factors that go to give Golden Porphiron greatness are condensed. The exposure is ideal, the soil rich in the broken black slate characteristic of the slope. The small curve of the escarpment above the site provides a trap not only for the sun, but for warm air and river mist during the night. This is perfection, the wine a true symphony of flavour, balance and length, challenging description. In addition to the typical honey, peaches and sun-apples, notes of many flowers, musks and fruits have been recorded, along with such extravagant hints as paste of erb liver and burnt butter. Three owners share the Cage of the Sun, Ildefonse the Preceptor, the mage Dulce-Lolo and a certain Grashpotel.

... a true symphony of flavour, balance and length, challenging description. In addition to the typical honey, peaches and sun-apples, notes of many flowers, musks and fruits have been recorded, along with such extravagant hints as paste of erb liver and burnt butter.

e. **GREAT DERNA HEART:** a vineyard of extraordinary quality, failing to match the Cage only by the most narrow of margins, the most fugitive of subtleties. Even among those who are privileged to make the comparison, few indeed can tell the difference. The elusive hint of canyflake blossom is perhaps less rich, the meaty undertone perchance more of paste of hoon liver than erb, the butter possibly a shade less intense. The Great Derna Heart is of fractionally greater size than the Scar Heart, but shared among as many as eighteen owners, including the Scholasticarium and Ildefonse the Preceptor.

f. **HIGH DERNA HEART:** the neighbour to the Great Derna Heart, but strikingly different. Here the soil is almost pure black slate, with only a scattering of limestone pebbles and no marl at all. The result is the purest, most ethereal wine of all, with the longest finish and flowers in place of the spices and meats of most Golden Porphiron, so that in ways it is almost a different wine. While magnificent, only the actual

owners attempt to claim it the equal of its immediate neighbours. Perrin the Inferator owns a third, the rest being divided among other senior mages and savants.

g. IMPILO HEART: the largest and perhaps the least among the heart vineyards, also the only one ever seen on the commercial market. In those years in which Scar Heart shines, Impilo Heart produces only a worthy reflection. However, when the autumn wind is strong and the mists fail to gather above Kaiin, Impilo Heart comes into its own, and the subtle, citrus bite that always characterises it becomes an element of a superb balance. Some one year in twenty, Impilo produces a wine finer than anything from the Scar Heart, if perhaps not the equal of the best Yolpit Heart. Owners include the Dukes of Quanorq, sundry nobles and even wealthy merchants.

The Vintages

Such is the complexity of the Golden Porphiron vineyard and the variability of the Ascolain weather, that each year bring its own character. Broadly speaking, a minimum of wind and light rain are ideal, with warm, sultry days and cool nights allowing the river mists to rise and hold on the slopes until burnt off by the morning sun.

In a poor year, when the wind drives hard from all angles and frosts linger late in the spring and fail to come in the autumn, it may be impossible to make true Golden Porphiron at all, and a lesser wine, Derna Yellow, is produced in its stead. In most years good wine can be made, but only two years in ten is truly great Golden Porphiron produced.

The Law

The law as regards producing Golden Porphiron is exact, and all is overseen with great care by officials appointed by the Prince, the Institute and some of the great families. Tedders take pride in their work, and vigilance is regarded more as a tradition than a necessity. The penalty for falsifying Golden Porphiron is simple: malefactors are cast into the deodand tank to atone their sins. An exception to this exists: if the false wine is sold under the label of a vineyard owned by the Scholasticarium, *Forlorn Encystment* may be applied.

The Tedders

Golden Porphiron is produced to the most exacting standards. The tedders, who both work among the vines and oversee the vinification, are men of considerable skill and lore. To become a tedder requires an apprenticeship of twenty years, and requires mastery of not only the complex skills of viticulture and wine making, but of various cantrips to fend against pests and diseases of the vine.

Furthermore, the ripe Dewbeads tempt not only birds, but sometimes pelgrane and even deodands, which consider them a delicacy. Tedders are therefore required to master archery and invariably carry an arbalest slung across their backs. The principal tool of their trade is also useful in this regard, being an object not unlike a shorecombers patti-turner, a stout six ell pole with a flat spade at one end and a bill hook at the other. Tedders also carry a selection of pruning knives and a grafting splice, while those who work on the high slope also have grappling irons and ropes.

The tedders inhabit that part of Kaiin immediately below Scar and Sanreale slopes, each house a section of decaying palace containing spartan living quarters, a wine house and a cellar. Many of the cellars interconnect, creating a maze of passages, many disused, some flooded whenever the Derna rises.



A tedder

The Festivals

Three principal festivals exist in relation to Golden Porphiron. The first, **VERALION**, occurs in the spring when the sun rises over the Scaum as viewed from the top of Porphiron Scar. This is supposed to be the time from which spring frosts are no longer a danger and is marked by the sacrifice of fowl among the vines. Their blood is said to have enriched the ground across the centuries.

The second festival is **GLEPSICALION**, which occurs at the end of the harvest and lasts the full fifteen days until fermentation is complete. To be sober during this period is considered an insult to the wine Gods, a tradition in which many of the townsfolk join.

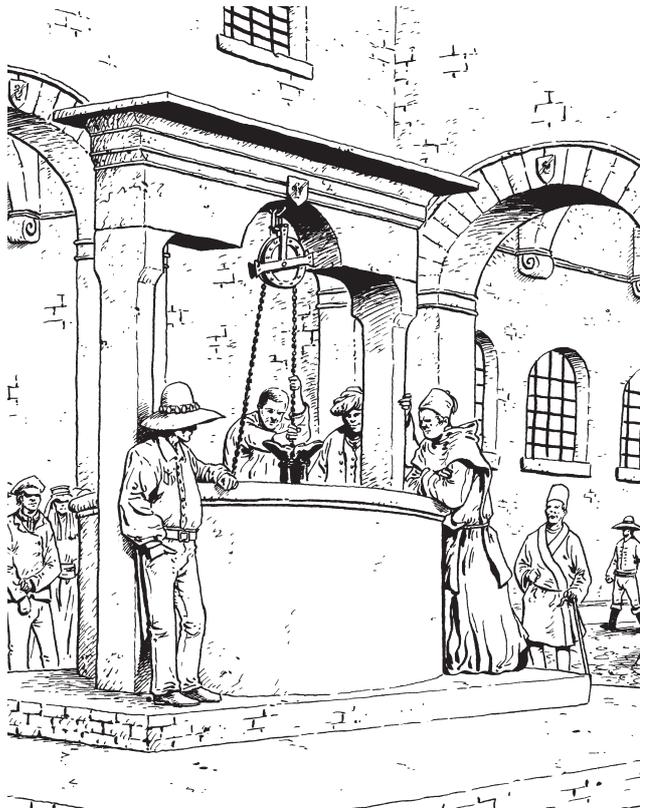
The third is **MAGISTRALION**, held a week or so later, when the owners come to taste the new wine. This is a formal and reserved affair, with stern faced scholars and nobles sipping at glasses of bright golden fluid and passing cautious and reserved judgements among themselves. A feast follows, of a quality in proportion to the success of the vintage, affairs which vary from the dour to the debauched.

Work available

The social parvenu and speculator **GINGASH JOLIFORM** is intent on raising his social status among the citizens of Kaiin. After an immense amount of wheedling he has managed to get Prince Kandive the Golden to accept an invitation to dine at his manse. He is determined to impress and the only possible wine he can serve with the series of desserts he is planning is Golden Porphiron. However, he owns no vineyard and can only secure inferior, low-slope wines on the open market. In the cellars of Kaiin countless bottles of Heart wine are mouldering in the dark, awaiting the day their owners judge them perfect. Gingash Joliform is aware of this, and also that nobody will part with any, least of all to him. Recently he offered extravagant returns on investments, not unreasonably expecting the sun to go out before he was required to pay up. The sun failed to die, and despite his largesse towards the courtesans, butchers and wine merchants of the city, Gingash is not a popular man. His only option is theft, but he lacks both the courage and the physique to put this into operation of his own accord. Also, the owners are mainly nobles, mages and venerable institutions, all of who may be relied upon to resent the theft and exact summary vengeance. On the other hand,



Gingash Joliform



The deodand tank in the court of Kandive the Golden

✿ Grashpotel's Arcana: GOLDEN PORPHIRON ✿

Kandive has been known to have those who serve him inferior wine thrown into the deodand tank.

The players are the group that Gingash Joliform has hired to steal four dozen bottles of Heart wine. There are thirty days until the dinner. They are to be paid handsomely, and as they sit in a disreputable Inn and discuss the project, various options occur to them.

- a. They can attempt the theft, seeking to gain access to the cellars of the Scholasticarium, Perrin the Inferator, the Sage Grashpotel or perhaps the courtesan/witch Yana van der Nefte. All of these wield powerful magics and defend their stocks with vigour. Grashpotel, for instance stores his wine in the lower cellars, which can only be accessed through a room infested with larval leucomorphs.
- b. They can forge the wine, buying bottles of ordinary Golden Porphiron or even a lesser wine, applying fake labels and making them look older than they are. This relies on Gingash Joliform not being able to recognise the real thing, and also on a hasty exit from Kaiin the moment they have their money. If they are caught by the authorities they will be thrown into the deodand tank for the amusement of Kandive's court.
- c. They can offer some service in return for the wine. Given its value and the power of the owners, this will be no ordinary service and they are likely to find themselves on an adventure that a mage would consider unreasonably dangerous. Nor is it likely to be possible to complete such a task before the date of the dinner.
- d. They can attempt to buy bottles from the two merchants who own small sections of Impilo Heart. These are Pholuriduc, who specialises in fine wines, and Alliradin, who trades in gemstones and salt. Pholuriduc lives in a manse near Viliyat, Alliradin in Val Ombrio, and both charge prices so high that Joliform's money will hardly cover the expense. Theft is an option, but means a journey, and if neither merchant commands magic, then nor are they likely to leave their property unguarded.
- e. It is rumoured, no more, that the tedder Umbeil holds back a proportion of his produce each year for his private consumption. He works the Derna Gorge, include plots in High Derna Heart and the Cage of the Sun. Umbeil is a large man, strong from years of hard physical work, who is known to have once killed a deodand with his land iron, yet is might be possible to discover the whereabouts of his cache.

Armed with knowledge of Kaiin and in particular of Golden Porphiron, the party may set out ...

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

Also known as Peter Freeman, he is acclaimed for his knowledge of and fondness for wine.



WAKDUN THE PANDERER

PURVEYOR of EROTIC APPURTENANCES & GENTLEMEN'S REQUISITES

Announces that *The Scarlet Apprentice* has once more returned to Kaiin fresh from another SUCCESSFUL trading trip up the SCAUM.

He is pleased to announce a GRAND SALE of assorted slave girls including three virgins of a hair colour rarely seen in Kaiin as well as **rustic cultural artefacts** transported at great personal risk for the delectation of the populace.



❧ Zaramanth ❧

'The way is long and the Forest Da is dark, but I hope to evade notoriety, and all my old friends as well.'

David Thomas has devised a Turjan level scenario for mages wishing to better themselves at the expense of their betters ...

A new manse has appeared, overnight, in the Derna Valley, standing on the Crag of Sabulle, upstream of Miir. A great wall of amber glass covers the cliff face and strange creatures peer through it. Two towers, fifty yards high, stretch through the Great Da's leafy canopy. Observers noted that a pelgrane flying over them succumbed to the Gyrator. Clearly, a new wizard has taken up residence. This could be a portentous event: the magicians Turjan and Mazirian have been quiet of late and the Twkmen complain of the salt shortage. There has been a culling of the ranks of bravos and bandits.

However it might be advantageous: reports suggest that the newly resident sorcerer has not yet completed his estate and will be travelling, one last time, from Kaiin with a rich convoy. This could well mean the doom of mundane highwaymen, but surely he cannot be too formidable for a group of wizards, strong with magic.

Unlike their brothers in Almery, the Ascolais Forest Wizards do not hold with providential associations.

Rather, they feel that every magician's hand is turned against them, so prefer to work alone, combining only in the most compelling circumstances, such as an obvious threat, an orgiastic religious celebration, or the chance of immense personal gain.

Such a chance has just presented itself. An arch-mage of Almery, ZARAMANTH, has decided to move to Ascolais, the better to avoid his colleagues in the southern hills. He has found a suitable site for his manse, called SABULLE: a long, overhanging cliff face with a south aspect, and has erected a great wall of thick amber glass in front of it. He filled this void with exotic fish and weeds from his holidays in the far south. He likes to wander among his pets when his work lies heavy upon him. He also feeds uninvited guests to them, casting *Untiring Nourishment* on them, so that they are eaten rather than merely drowned. At either end of the structure, elegant towers, crowned with cupolas and joined by a bridge of light, stretch to the sky, in competition with the trees. In one of these towers he lives, the other is for guests.

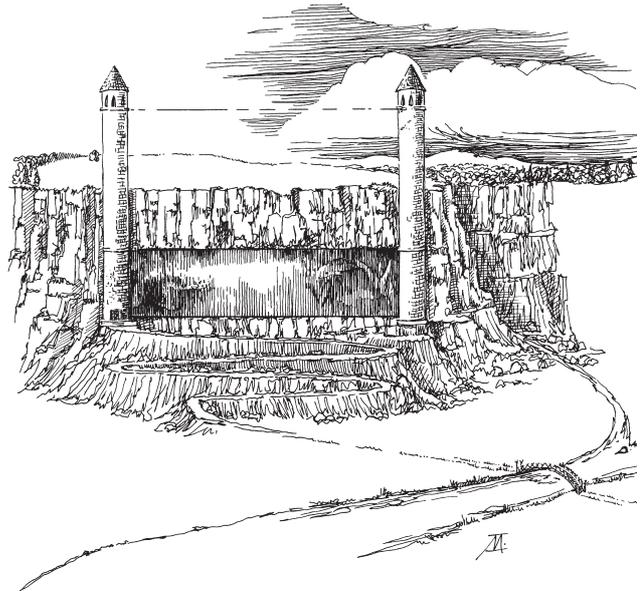
Unfortunately, his time among the glades and vineyards has ill-prepared him for his new home. He does not expect magicians to use spells directly against him, although this is the custom of Ascolais. Although inviolate in Sabulle, Zaramanth must make one last trip to Almery to collect his furniture, some mundane, some puissant, all of sentimental value. This undertaking is almost over. All that remains is to move his property from Kaiin to Sabulle. On his way back, some Forest Wizards might contrive his capture, then extract secrets from him, perhaps even loot his manse. For the slow of thought, the PCs are just such wizards.

You may well ask "Why should they want to do so?"

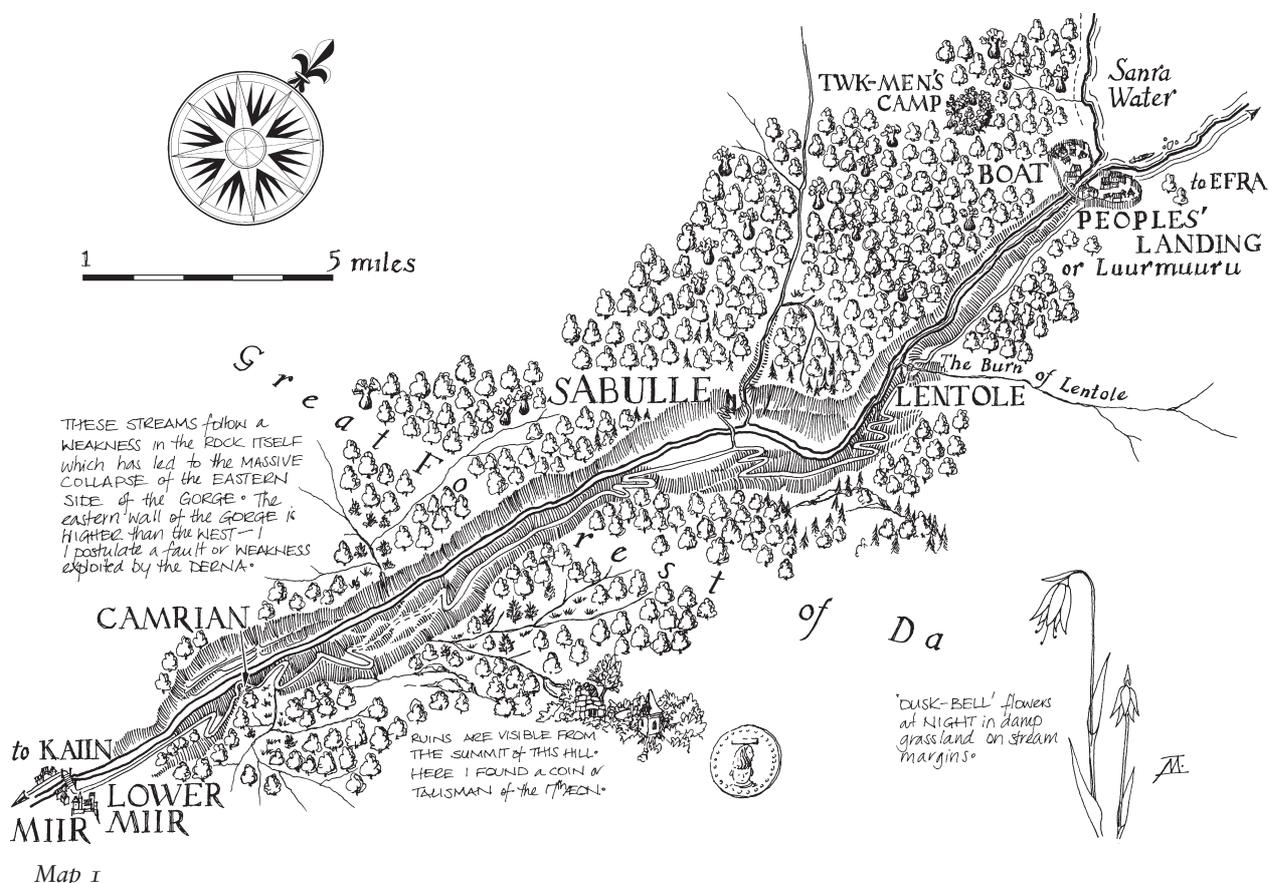
They should be alarmed at the presence of a superior practitioner in their midst.

This kind of opportunity might not arise again.

Any wizard who does not join in will subsequently face his rivals at a disadvantage.



The manse Sabulle



Map 1

Setting up prior to the game

All the players should design Turjan-level characters. Reasonable combat skills and health scores are recommended.¹

Resources

TWK-MEN: The foremost reliable source of intelligence is, of course, the Twk-men, who are suffering from a shortage of salt. The PCs might want, indeed should, attempt to negotiate a contract with the local tribe and its chief DANDANFLORES. They should however note that Dandanflores has massive *Persuade and Rebuff* scores: 20 in each of *Glib* and *Lawyerly*, and 15 in the others. If one player has been foresighted enough to list a Twk-man as her retainer, then that character enjoys a head start in this regard. A supplementary test of her grasp of the realities of the Dying Earth will be how adroitly she exploits this advantage to her own benefit. Obviously, the Twk-men will be the PCs' major source of information about Zaramanth's movements. For the GMs' convenience, the plotters' actions are limited by the range of the dragonflies, so they must act within the boundaries of Map 1. The Twk-men will sell the PCs maps of the various locations, these are cut into the underside of holly leaves. They will only be readable if at least one PC has paid a point for a magnifying glass.

The players may want extra muscle.

DEODANDS might be persuaded to forgo an immediate snack for the prospect of a hearty banquet. They are neither suicidal nor stupid, however, so will not perform a sacrificial gambit unless they are famished and are attacking the nearest source of food.

1. As the Turjan-level stories are somewhat bleaker than the Cugel or Rhalto material, so the players should be aware that treacherous, back stabbing behaviour is appropriate, if not actually compulsory.

✿ ZARAMANTH ✿

THUGS may be available in the villages indicated on Map 1, but they will need a more compelling reason to attack an arch-mage than mere terces. They are, in any case the more cautious and less energetic of their ilk, the others having not returned from similar work.²

Once locals (but not deodand) realise that they are fighting magic, they will suffer a levy of 1 to all actions due to immoderate dread.

SPELLS AND ITEMS: The PCs can have any reasonable item, such as *Live Boots*, handfuls of irritant or intoxicating powders, tubes of *Blue Concentrate* or *Scintillant Daggers*.

By all means allow the PCs to own facsimiles of *Laccodel's Rune*. Zaramanth has tasked his sandestin, MAZURKE to '*strip attackers of such adjuncts, whatever their precise nomenclature or taxonomy, and disregarding fine semantic and etymological distinctions. In every case, assess, immediately and without prevarication, delay or musing or irrelevant reflection, "Will this item hamper my master Zaramanth's spells in influencing this individual or changing his physical or mental state and condition of being alive to dead, or healthy to injured?" If the answer is "Yes", remove said item or items. "His", in this context stands by linguistic convention for the first person singular, of either, or no sex and also as a shorthand for persons plural, likewise of any or no sex whatsoever*'.

The PCs should not be able to use *Temporal Stasis* effectively. If, for any reason, they want to choose it, allow them to do so. Zaramanth has a device that inverts the charm's effect, so have the PCs find themselves stripped of possessions and the arch-mage long gone. Zaramanth will, out of puckish humour, secrete some of the PCs' personal articles on the caster of the spell.

The Story

Candidly, the PCs are being railroaded into intercepting Zaramanth while he travels the road from Miir, having prepared the best plan they can manage between them. Each PC intends to benefit asymmetrically from the venture.

The first part – negotiating their rules of association and gathering intelligence and helpers – will actually comprise the bulk of the game.

The second part – the attack upon and confounding of Zaramanth – should present no problems. As is so often the case, life can teach a lesson, in this case two: that greed can bring trouble and if something looks like a good idea, others will think so too.

This brings us to the third part: Retribution.

Naturally, the PCs are not in possession of the full facts, neither will recourse to local rumour be much help. The Twk-men will describe attacking bandits slipping into torpor at Zaramanth's word, only to have their throats cut by his guards. Enemies fall, stuck through with arrows, pierced by stabbing clouds of light, or spun until they disintegrate. However, what these insect-riding spies do not know is that some arch-mages from the south very much want to re-acquaint themselves with Zaramanth, principally to divest him of a quantity of IOUN stones and other artefacts, which they feel he has acquired through questionable methods. This done, they intend to burn his magical talent from him and send him to Valdaran the Just, to take service as his valet.

One item of Zaramanth's that the arch-mages will seek to destroy is a pewter hip-bath, carved with runes of the late 18th Aeon. This item effects the transformation of the bather into an archveult, which is what his pursuers believe Zaramanth intends for himself. Whether this is correct or not is beside the point. The arch-mage knows what the bath does, and refuses to destroy or surrender it to his associates.

From the GMs point of view, the arch-mages will arrive either as the PCs explore and loot Sabulle, or as they stand gloating over Zaramanth on the road. They will insist that the PCs both hand back all their loot and also pay a levy for interfering with the enforcement of the Blue Principles. If resisted, they will enforce

2. If the PCs do hire some footpads, the only available talent have *Intimidating 6, Obtuse 6, Strength 6, Parry 6, Health 4*. The same goes for any corrective committees or local militias the PCs annoy.

their opinion without any recourse either to subtlety or to compassion.

Astute PCs will reason that the arch-mages are unaware of exactly what Zaramanth took with him, so might contrive to palm some trifling objects. Perceptive characters will notice that the arch-mages are co-operating under sufferance, so should be amenable to private arrangements.

Zaramanth's Journey

Zaramanth has taken a barge to Kaiin and bribed Kandive the Golden to allow him to store his property in a secure warehouse until he can transport it to his new home.

Apart from the Lake of Dreams, the Derna is un-navigable for its entire length, so the arch-mage has hired porters and guards to lead his convoy of pack-mermelants along the road which follows the left bank of the Derna.³ He has twenty guards (all armed with bows and axes); eight pioneers, who proceed ahead of the caravan to clear obstructions; and ten drovers, who carry cudgels and knives. These people have made three journeys with him so far, so know the route well. This is their last trip.

The caravan will move directly along the road, taking a day to get from Miir to Zaramanth's manse. Once the Arch-mage has passed inside his walls, it will prove very difficult to winkle him out. If he unpacks and installs his adjuncts before the PCs act, they will soon discover that Zaramanth is no bumbling southerner, but a potent wizard with an antipathy towards acquisitive and magically-skilled neighbours. If they delay longer even more trouble accumulates. Some days after the arch-mage settles in, a party of his brethren from Almerly will turn up and insist that the PCs do their duty to magic and the sacred memory of Phandaal, by assisting in the siege, investiture and destruction of Sabulle and of 'that archveult and abomination, Zaramanth'.

The Almerly contingent's first thought will be to impose a 100% levy on the PCs assets for allowing this unholy transformation to take place, but this is bluster. The visitors can, by dint of careful negotiation, be persuaded to reduce the levy to a token 10%, then waive it entirely. If the PCs employ suitable blandishments, the arch-mages might even to agree to offer a modest reward of some kind, like the knowledge of a new spell, or even a limited service contract with a sandestin. However any PCs with IOUN stones will find them summarily confiscated. There is no exception to this last measure, under any circumstances.

Lines of attack

HOSTAGE TAKING: Zaramanth is attached to his possessions. He will negotiate an agreement which allows him to live in his manse with some of his power rather than lose all of it. He will seem particularly attached to a revolting pewter hip-bath.

AMBUSH: The guards and drovers will fight hard, concentrating their arrows on the nearest targets, and ganging up on opponents in close combat.

OBSTRUCTION: The PCs might care to set a rock-slide across the road, or make a barrier out of fallen trees. Although this will hinder the caravan, the guards will make a sweep of the area, looking for ambushes, before they remove the obstacle.



Zaramanth.

3. The PCs will only be aware of Zaramanth's order of march if they specifically ask the Twk-men to describe it to them, or if they scout it out in person.

Locations

The Twk-men's Camp

Your little scout leads you through the forest in a hopelessly misleading way, taking care to have you stub your toes, bang your heads, dislodge your hats and tear your clothes. When you are fully exhausted and irritated, he gestures ahead with his lance 'See, the city of Dandanflores and of my tribe. Have a care, only stand, lie or sit where indicated and make no sudden movements.' Ahead of you is a line of immense daobados, plashed together as an impenetrable boundary. Some of the branches twitch and stretch out towards you, rising and falling with your breathing. In front of you the plashing twitches apart to allow your passing and a guard motions you forward with his lance. From the entrance, you can see that the trees encircle a huge ziggurat of pumpkins, somehow both fresh and hollowed-out. One is carved in the likeness of a demon's face. From it a voice, high pitched to your ears, clearly deep and penetrating to the Twk-men, who cower among the plants.

'Good day [GM: insert PC names here], and well met.

What would you have of Dandanflores, chieftain of the Twk-men?'

Dandanflores' followers live in a grove edged with daobado (big, bulbous trees with a crown of trunks and branches growing from a central mass). The grove itself features a huge patch of hollowed-out pumpkins, amid a sea of vampire-grass.

Twk-men fly into holes cut in the pumpkins, precisely to fool observers into thinking that these are their homes. This is not the case: they live in the middle branches of the daobado, where they have rooted parasitic sky-lilies. These stretch to catch rain water, and thus provide the dragonflies with somewhere to lay their eggs. The Twk-men themselves occupy little floating huts, hollowed out of nutshells, which float on the lily pools. Old, hollowed-out roots lead from the pumpkins to the trees. Anyone climbing into the daobado or attempting to pass between them without first obtaining Twk-man permission will discover that whip-vines have also been grafted onto the branches.

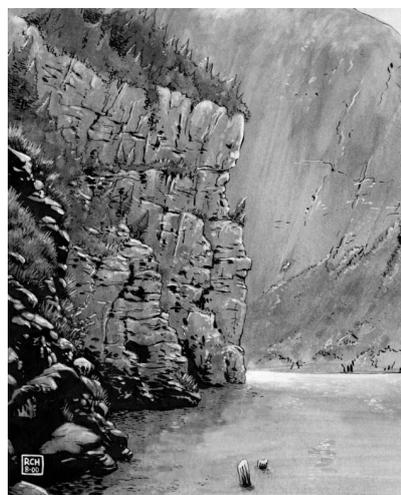
Anyone vindictive enough to stamp on the pumpkins will be covered in a cloud of *thyle-dust*. This is astringent, entering the tear ducts, pores, mouth, ears and nose (imposing a levy of -2 on all actions until removed). An hour weeping, or a thorough sweat bath are recommended methods.

Negotiating with the Twk-men

The Twk men know everything that happens within their section of the forest (*i.e.* Map One), excepting inside buildings or underwater. They trade this information for salt, rare oils and fine textiles. The usual rate is one drop of oil, one finger-width of fabric, or one gram of salt for every question answered, although they will, of course attempt to drive a harder bargain when their customer's need is evidently pressing. This is one of those occasions, a point which Dandanflores will drive home with his first two titbits of information: that the wizard travels on the road, and that he will complete his journey the day after tomorrow. Item number three is that he rests overnight at Miiir. The answers are usually terse and to the point. The Twk-men interpret the questions literally. As readers of *Mazirian the Magician* will know, Twk-men do not necessarily tell the truth and can be bribed to lie to subsequent questioners.

The Road

The Road follows the Derna closely, at times following its banks, at others climbing the gorge, even ascending to skirt the forest edge. Here and there, flash-floods, land slips, deliberate sabotage and accidental falls have blocked it, but the caravaneers have obviously opened the way again, or strung impromptu rope bridges across the gaps. Everywhere raiders could attack in numbers lie the bodies of the fallen, some rotting, most stripped to the bone, their mortal parts cracked, gnawed and sucked dry of marrow. The road is very narrow, only ten feet across,



A view of the Derna Gorge.

often with a precipice at one side. The GM should bear the adage about trapped rats in mind when describing the quality of the resistance. The PCs should discover the inconvenience of collecting loot in useable condition from a pack mermelant which has fallen down a cliff or been buffeted by a swift river at first hand.

Boat Peoples' Landing

You follow the path north east from Lower Miir, then come to a clearing in the forest. Here the Derna tumbles over a cataract, flanked by two ever-turning waterwheels. A rope bridge runs between them. Beyond is the shimmer of Sanra Water, the Lake of Dreams. The road follows the lake's south side; there is a track skirting it to the north, clearly little-used.

On the bridge two men wrestle, securely tied round the waist to the supports. Each wears a silk scarf round his waist. Each is watched by an anxious looking girl, also in silk. One athlete forces the other to his face on the swaying bridge and slips the scarf from his foe's waist. He shouts in triumph and grins wolfishly. The girl in front of him turns and runs up the river. He struggles with the knot on his safety line, unties it, then runs after her.

Boat people

Upstream of the mills, some sampans cast off from wharves and pole upstream, their passengers beating little drums and playing fifes.

Boat Peoples' Landing is the Twk-men's name for the place, the boat people themselves call it 'Luurmuuru'. It comprises two waterwheels, one on each bank, with a rope bridge suspended between them. Each mill has a wharf running upstream.

The boat people divide themselves into two clans, the Sunset and Sunrise. They live, with the Lake Lord's permission, on the west and east shores of Sanra Water respectively, and only meet at the Landing, where young men from each tribe will wrestle on the bridge to determine who will win the opportunity to pursue the loser's sister up the river to the lake, there to make her his wife and return to his people in triumph.

The mill house on the right bank has a tap room and barn for the convenience of travellers, the left bank has a more commodious inn. The mills themselves spin silk, for sale both to their respective clan and to travellers. It is considered an insult to carry the other mill's product across the bridge and past its rival's door, an inconvenience which PCs can resolve as the mood takes them.

There are bravos for hire here, people who want a less dangerous occupation than harvesting pupae from the forest and boat people who were unlucky in love.⁴

Lower Miir

To the east, on a severe crag, stands the ancient castle of Miir, seat of TURJAN. Ahead is a small settlement, next to a bridge spanning the Derna's gorge.

The Castle of Miir glows with strange lights and flickers oddly in the ruby gloom ... it is, clearly, proofed

If the PCs attempt to enlist the Boat People's aid, they will have to enter the forest in search of missing women, kidnapped by Thrang the ghoul-bear. This will involve a journey around the lake to the north east, a round trip of three days. They will find the three women trapped in a cage in a cliff face, confronted by a pack of hoons and deodands who are killing each other in their attempts to get at the meat before it gets too thin and stringy.

If the PCs attempt to hire mercenaries here, locals will tell Turjan secretly and he will forewarn Zaramanth. Some youths will enlist, only to turn on the PCs at a critical moment.



A sampan on the Upper Derna.

4. Wizards who have been stripped of their magic can gain employment collecting the cocoons of pupating ghoul-moths from the forest. It is unsavoury work, and not well paid.

against intrusion with strong magic. The village, Lower Miir, is a settlement of intricately carved stave-buildings, clustered behind a dark hedge of thorns. Lower Miir controls the bridge, but is itself subservient to Turjan (who does not care to exercise any influence beyond rewarding those who tell him of strange occurrences in the area). It has fifty buildings, but, at present, a shortage of fit young men. There are rather more well-fed deodands in the region than was previously the case.

Camrian

The road swerves into a cut in the cliff wall – to the North is Camrian, a village carved vertically out of a spire of the natural rock. A staircase, connecting the levels, winds around the outside, and pelgrane nets radiate from the top. A path leads to the valley below, trailing back and forth across the cliff face, between trenches, linked with Archimedes screws. These raise water to the village. Stern faced, very tired residents work them. A line of stepping stones crosses the Derna, on the other side. The village's cultivation terraces rise up along the north bank. Peasants are visible working among these.

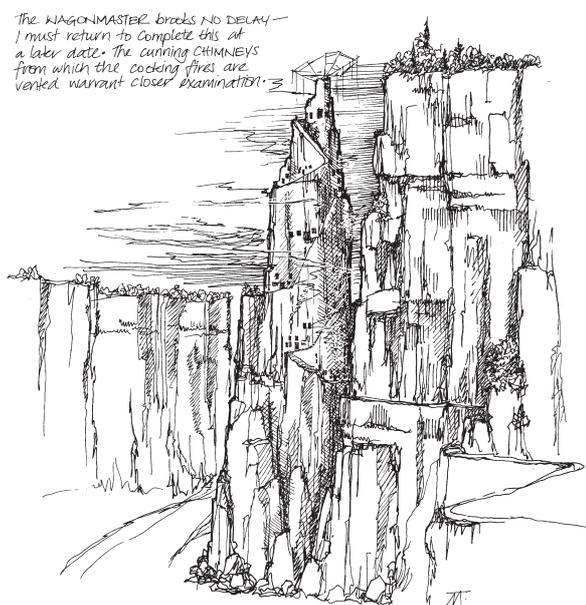
All Camrian's people live in the spire. The higher orders live in the top, those beneath are arrayed in descending order of merit. In the base of the column is a common room for travellers, who are a passing inconvenience. Camrian's residents rise and fall in status through their performance of 'notable acts'. Those who do better at their work, day by day move higher up the pillar, those who do less well quit their homes and climb down. The only way to retain the position on the apex is to defeat a passing pelgrane.

Naturally, travellers count as residents for the duration of their stay, so they will find themselves mounting the stair as soon as they perform any action at all with any competence. Wayfarers are, of course, welcome to tender coin or trade goods to settle their accounts, but will be offered the chance to perform a modest service for the village, inevitably taking the first step towards self improvement.⁵

Lentole

The manse at Sabulle rises to the west and a small, walled village clings to either side of a narrow valley, joined by a sturdy, hump-backed bridge. Interestingly, the people, who wear tight britches and smocks cinched with pom-pom ended sashes, try not to look to the south at all. All except the guard who, as you draw nearer, seems to be clamped upright in his sentry-box. Above him is a bell. Its rope hangs close to his right hand.

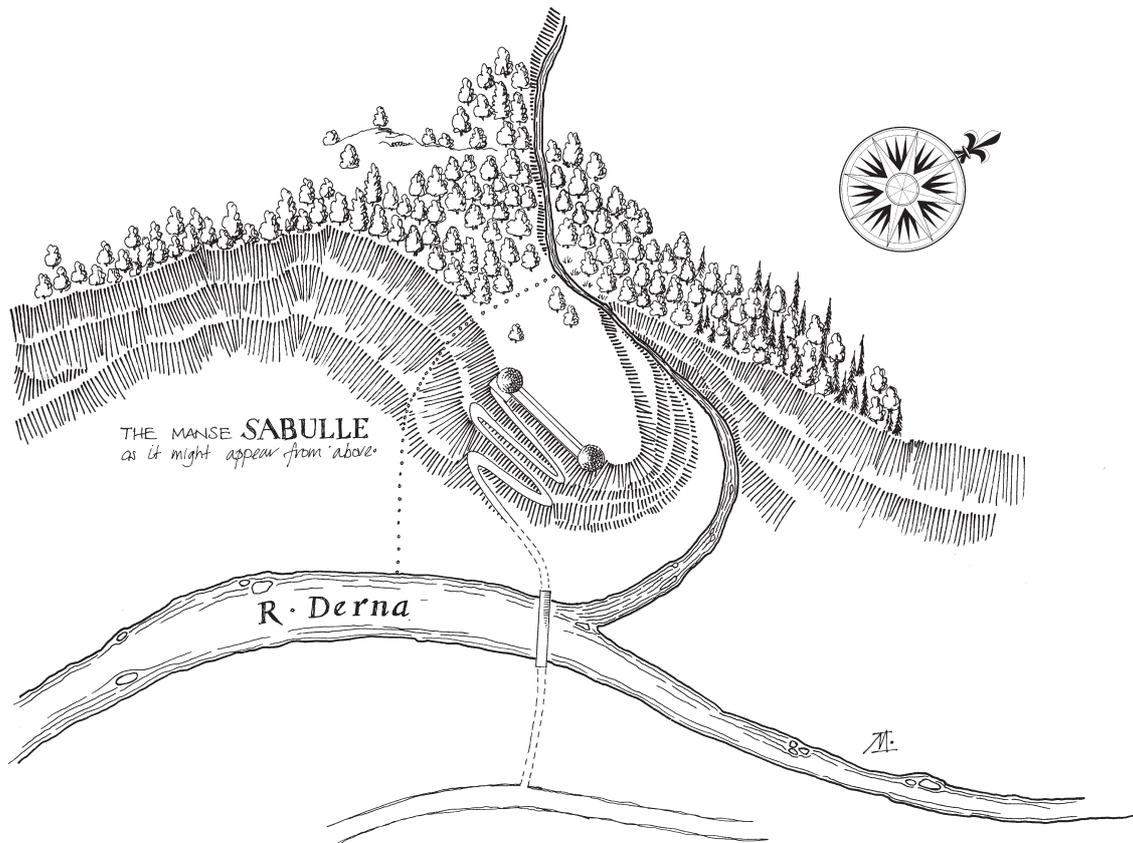
Lentole controls the only crossing point of its eponymous burn, but its people, visited in the dim past by hostile forces led by the Lords of Kaiin, feel a superstitious dread of the south, preferring not to look at it at all. This is not the complete disadvantage that it seems: they are perfectly happy provided that their walls are in the way. Neither do they have a problem with the direction in general, merely to the territory downstream of Lentole. They are aware of the appearance of Zaramanth's manse, of course, courtesy of their guard, who is a criminal serving a sentence.⁶



A sketch of the spire of Camrian.

5. The PCs may find some bravos – between seven and twelve – available for hire here.

6. Naturally, Lentole has bravos for hire, but their reluctance to look down the road to Kaiin might limit their usefulness.



Map 2. Sabulle and its environs. The PCs may elect to attack the caravan here, or as it crosses the valley floor.

Sabulle

The road drops gradually from the crag to the river bank and through a water meadow. Here a small wooden bridge, impossibly dainty and intricate, crosses the Derna. Another path runs up the far side, where it leads to an immense wall of amber glass, with strange, bulbous creatures behind it. Two great towers, some forty feet wide flank the glass panel. There is a door in the base of the west one.

Looking upwards, the towers stretch up past the wall and the crag overhanging it, and into the sky. From your vantage point they reach two hundred feet from the crag and into the sky. A glowing line, perhaps a bridge, runs between them. Should the PCs approach the bridge, they will note that it has a carved, forked upright, with a silver horn hanging from it. They are meant to sound the horn before crossing the river.

The Manse is a mage's home and workroom, but Zaramanth has not yet made it comfortable; it is simply warded against invasion: no one can enter who has not first sounded the horn. This instruction is nowhere evident and yes, this means that every visitor must blow at least one note (as a failed saxophonist, I can assure you that it takes a while to get the knack).

Aside from his fish, his bed, desk and warding devices, Zaramanth has not yet unpacked. The major defences currently emplaced are the projectors which inflict *Phandaal's Gyrotor* on anything flying overhead, and the door guard, a rune set in the keystone. It intones 'you are not announced, you may not pass' to anyone who attempts to cross the threshold without blowing the horn. If they do cross, it simply transports them to the aquarium.

The aquarium fills the entire void between the cliff-face and the glass wall. Fish, ordinary, flesh-eating fish live in it. Victims who are good at swimming may attempt to make it to the surface, where there is air, but no exit, alternatively, they may enter either tower through a door at its base. This door is an airlock arrangement which will allow two people to pass though at a time. The towers are 40 feet across, with five

✿ ZARAMANTH ✿

foot thick walls, giving a useable internal diameter of 30 feet. Each floor has one round room, lit by narrow windows closed with thick glass and by eternal lamps. With practice, a room's occupant can alter the light's intensity. A helical staircase, hidden in the thickness of the wall, joins the floors. There is also a helical chimney, which is magically soot and draft free and a fireplace in every room. Zaramanth has yet to resolve the issue of plumbing. All the rooms, as indicated, are bare, except Zaramanth's study and bedroom, and the entrance, which is packed, from floor to ceiling with trunks and cases. It is only possible to enter the east tower by walking through the aquarium, or across the bridge, which is a solid sheet of light, without handrails.

The garden: this is by no means mature (Zaramanth has had pegs put along its boundaries) out from the cliff side to claim his entire bend of river, and across the spur of Sabulle itself.

Casual Dangers

The forest is filled with horrors, including hoons, erbs and deodands, other wizards, vampire grass, whip-trees, the occasional bear/demon half breed and, nearer habitation, lynch mobs aping Valdaran's policy of punishing the wizardly community for bringing this gloom on the world. This they do by hanging every suspected magician they capture. Then, of course, there are the six legged forest dragons, which stalk the glades. None of these are much of a threat to a determined party, strong with magic, but see *Mazirian the Magician* for the consequences of attrition and overconfidence.

Special Considerations

This adventure actually has very few incidents: the PCs decide either to attack Zaramanth or let him be, in which case they will be co-opted by the arch-mages to assist in their subsequent action. The entire driving force is the characters' own lusts and most of the events will follow their interactions, both with each other and with the assorted GPCs.

Players should be in no doubt that a 'victory' is an individual triumph over the rest of the group, while a defeat is to be among the losers.

Flying or Walking on Air

Pelgranes fly low over the Great Da, so any character who leaves the security of the forest canopy will attract the attention of at least one of these horrors. Characters who have some – any – *Scuttlebutt* will know this automatically. It would be a kindness, and therefore an opportunity to gain personal advantage, to forewarn more insular colleagues of the danger.

Wandering off the Map

Should the magicians decide to wander farther afield, inform them (via the *Scuttlebutt* skill or the Twk-men, if they think to ask) that they may encounter:

The GREEN LEGION OF VALDARAN THE JUST, which is currently on a sorcerer-slaughtering campaign both south and east of the Derna.

The Witch LITH, who is beautiful and wholly entrancing, in Tamber Meadow to the south west.⁸

TURJAN of Miir, likewise to the south west, is not receiving visitors and has, of late, taken intrusions across his territory ill. He is most puissant and has developed a stern demeanour.⁹

The LAKE LORD, who is aggrieved that an air-breather demolished a picturesque ruin within his domain, will

8. Lith appears in the Dying Earth story, Liane the Wayfarer. In this she persuades Liane to steal a tapestry from Chun the Unavoidable, who lives north of Kaiin.

Chun is so terrifying that looking upon him induces paralysis or flight. If the PC has dodge or speed as a combat skill, he may run away from him, otherwise, he just stands, petrified. Luckily, Chun's only interest is to tear the eyes from the dead faces of those who steal from him, then thread them to his cloak. An encounter with Chun is inevitably fatal and upsetting for those who discover the body. Chun really is unavoidable. No matter where or how the PCs escape, he will find them ...

Going by the number of eyes Chun has harvested, Lith's ability to persuade is phenomenal.

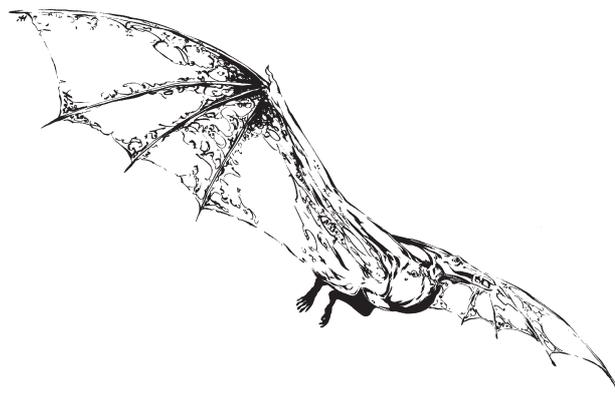
If a player insists that his PC is going to see Lith, immediately send him out to a shop to get refreshments both for yourself and for the other players. You are under no obligation to fund this expedition. When he returns, attempt a sympathetic facial expression and tell him to make up another character. If the group was satisfied with the provisions he bought, give him an extra tranche of bonus points as a personal "thank you".

9. Turjan has also granted Zaramanth safe conduct over his bridge, in return for certain magical lore.

refuse aid to any who go to the north east. If the PCs persist, he will, through his spy-network of water beetles and weftkins, inform all local deodands that a large quantity of flesh is abroad in the forest.

The west and north are the preserve of a large pelgrane, her huge brood of fledglings and several deodands.

The north east takes the players close to Mazirian's manse. Attempts to confront Mazirian are ill-advised.¹⁰



Pelgrane in flight

ZARAMANTH

| | Pool | Boon | Spells in Brain: | |
|----------------------|------|------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Glib [16] | | | <i>Excellent Prismatic Spray</i> | |
| Obfuscatory [11] | | | <i>Arnhoult's Sequestrous Digitalia</i> | |
| | | | <i>Phandaal's Gyrator</i> | |
| Penetrating [16] | | | <i>Phandaal's Mantle of Stealth</i> | |
| Lawyerly [11] | | | <i>Liberation of Warp</i> | |
| | | | <i>Charm of Untiring Nourishment</i> | |
| Cunning [15] | | | <i>Lentair's Enspelled Obedience</i> | |
| Caution [10] | | | <i>Lugwilder's Dismal Itch</i> | |
| | | | <i>Spell of the Omnipotent Sphere</i> | |
| Misdirection [15] | | | <i>Charm of Forlorn Encystment [c]</i> | |
| Vexation [10] | | | <i>Spell of the Long Hour</i> | |
| | | | <i>Instantaneous Galvanic Thrust [c]</i> | |
| Etiquette | | | | |
| Perception | | | Notable Adjuncts: | |
| Pedantry | | | <i>Magnificent Chronal Disharmoniser</i> | |
| Magic (studious, 30) | | | Tube of Blue Concentrate | |
| | | | <i>Zamoun's Surprising Fassail</i> | |
| Health [8] | | | 10 Empty IOUN stones | |
| Wounds | 1 | 2 | 3 | <i>Amulet of Puissant Reflection</i> |

Magnificent Chronal Disharmoniser This item is a pocket watch that runs backwards. It automatically inverts the temporal stasis spell, so that, regardless of who cast it, the Disharmoniser's wearer (defined as the person who last wound it) gets the benefit.

Zamoun's Surprising Fassail An ugly, vicious looking weapon that, despite its unbalanced appearance, gives its wielder the option of parrying blows in hand to hand combat, with a skill of 12.

MAZURKE, Zaramanth's Sandestin

Obfuscatory 9, Lawyerly 9. Having built Sabulle, Mazurke only has one indenture point left, so is quite zesty.

10. Players might know that this magician died in his eponymous story, but this is far from general knowledge, and certainly not known to their characters. Naturally, the Twk-men know, but will not disclose, the intelligence that a magician's home is available for pillage until they have tested the market.

❁ ZARAMANTH ❁

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| The GUARDS (20) | The DROVERS (10) and PIONEERS (8) |
| Ferocity 12 Strength 7 | Strength 10 Ferocity 5 |
| Parry 8 Health 8 | Parry 6 Health 6 |
| Intimidate 6 Obtuse 4 | Forthright 4 Wary 6 |

The CARAVAN has forty pack mermelants, each carrying about 250 lb. of freight. Most is unremarkable, but expensive: fabrics, small furniture, broken-down arts of larger pieces. Some is extremely important. There are alembics, valves, pumps, crucibles, mortars, pestles, pipes, scales, stands and racks, instruments of surgery and music, a telescope, seventeen bells, tuned across two octaves but inserting the missing Cutzean note.

Then there are books: the Three Books of Phandaal; Calanctus: His Dogma and Dicta; Calanctus: His Means and Modes; Calanctus' Decretals; The Doctrines of Calanctus; Poggiore's Absolutes; the Proceedings of the Green and Purple College (abridged); many commentaries on mundane subjects, especially fish; an extensive, illustrated discussion of both the Fourteen Silken Movements and the Eighteen Motions of Allurement, and parallel accounts of the War of the Witches and the Wizards, presenting both viewpoints on facing pages.

There are also some curios:

A PEWTER HIP BATH, carved, inside and out with obscure runes of great antiquity. The entire surface bears bas reliefs of both pastoral and exotic subjects, seemingly describing the life-journey of a man and a woman, paying special attention to their joys and woes.

A gigantic ormolu CLOCK, showing the time on Earth, on Sadal Suud and Jangk, on rotating ebony drums.

A TAPESTRY, the composition of which alters with the passing hours, showing life in a seemingly idyllic valley.

A china DINNER SERVICE of the 19th Aeon, decorated with intertwined sigils of fire and ice, which renders hot food cold and cold food hot.

A large semicircle of CLOTH, ten feet across, decorated on one side with pictures of a harvest celebration and on the other with a village at night. If fashioned into a cone, with the people on the inside, they leave the canvas to act out a wild party. If erected with them on the outside, the pictures perform any agricultural or gardening tasks needed within 100 yards of the cloth.

A pair of fireside CHAIRS, apparently made of soft, interwoven hands. They either massage or dismember the chair's occupant, at the whim of the owner.

A set of MODELS of all the species of half-men, carved from red lacquer and accented with green jade.¹¹



You underestimate my attachment, both to this venture and to my comrades.

There is scope for a less antagonistic relationship.

The valley and the road are beautiful, but there is an elegiac element lacking, I feel.

Sir, we are both persons of quality. Surely there is some prospect of a private arrangement?

I see that my dream of a bone-pipe organ moves nearer to actuality.

By no means, I sought only to lessen the tedium of the occasion.

I assure you that I act for the common good, unalloyed, and in all its symmetrical charm.

The Law of Equivalencies is no bagatelle to be disregarded on a whim.

I must confess that I am surprised and hurt by this turn of events.

I trust that your nicety of phrasing is merely an affectation, rather than a device to undermine the generous spirit of our discussions.

11. They have no merit, beyond the artistic, so feel free to encourage the PCs to scrutinise them for the code words which will transform the figurines into compliant life-sized versions of the real thing.

The Arch-mages

| MANDEBORE | HELEBUTHE | QUALESTO | SUZIONE |
|--|--|--|--|
| Skill: Charming 12 Penetrating 12 Finesse 12 Misdirection 12 Health 10 Pedantry 15 Devious Magic, 20 | Skill: Obfuscatory 16 Wary 12 Cautious 10 Vexation 10 Health 8 Pedantry 16 Insightful Magic 20 | Skill: Glib 16 Obtuse 12 Ferocity 12 Parry 12 Health 10 Etiquette 20 Forceful Magic 22 | Skill: Forthright 16 Lawyerly 12 Speed 10 Dodge 10 Health 8 Pedantry 16 Daring Magic 26 |
| Spells in Brain: <i>Instantaneous</i> <i>Galvanic Thrust</i> <i>Prismatic Spray</i> <i>Slow Hour</i> <i>Sphere of Omnipotent Force</i> <i>Forlorn Encystment</i> <i>Untiring Nourishment</i> <i>Liberation of Warp</i> | Spells in Brain: <i>Mantle of Stealth</i> <i>Untiring Legs</i> <i>Charm of Untiring</i> <i>Nourishment</i> <i>Liberation of Warp</i> <i>Temporal Stasis</i> <i>Phandaal's Gyrator</i> <i>Troll Strength</i> <i>Spell of the Slow Hour</i> | Spells in Brain: <i>Lentair's Enspelled Obedience</i> <i>Rein of the Long Nerves</i> <i>Phantasmal Threat</i> <i>Phandaal's Inside Out and Over</i> <i>Instantaneous Galvanic Thrust</i> <i>Spell of the Slow Hour</i> | Spells in Brain: <i>Excellent Prismatic Spray</i> <i>Rhialto's Green Turmoil</i> <i>Lugwiler's Dismal Itch</i> <i>Spell of the Slow Hour</i> <i>Phandaal's Mantle Of Stealth</i> <i>Twelve Fold Bounty</i> |
| Adjuncts: <i>Chronobell</i> 6 Empty IOUN stones <i>Expansible Egg</i> | Adjuncts: (Empty) Life Gong 4 Empty IOUN stones 6 IOUN stones, storing <i>The Spray</i> | Adjuncts: 7 Empty IOUN stones 5 IOUN stones, storing <i>Phandaal's Gyrator,</i> <i>Amulet of Virtuous Shielding</i> | Adjuncts: 9 empty IOUN stones <i>Tube of Blue</i> <i>Concentrate</i> <i>Soul glass</i> (a lens showing peoples' auras) |
| Pool | Pool | Pool | Pool |
| Sandestin MUNTLE Obfuscatory 16 Obtuse 16 (Torpid) | Sandestin ASHORNE Glib 8 Penetrating 8 (Zesty) | Sandestin FALIRNEAU Charming 10 Pure hearted 10 (Unremarkable) | Sandestin QUALISE Eloquent 10 Lawyerly 10 (Unremarkable) |

It is a rank injustice that the moribund sun persists in shining upon David Thomas. He is a low person, of no discernable quality or talent, beyond presenting so loathsome an appearance that we publish his work out of pity, and in the earnest hope that he will buy some decent clothes with the proceeds.



LAMAUD, supplier of fine wines to the gentry, announces that he has just arrived in Kaiin with a boat of the finest VAL OMBRIAN wines. Delivered to your manse by the butt or by the bottle.



✿ A Delicate Con ✿

To help the unscrupulous enhance their income

This plot hook can be used in any small town. It requires only players who are willing to get into the spirit of things and try to con both each other, the NPCs and even the GM.

Lug Hafoule

The players party arrive in a small community. They will be approached by another stranger in town who has already been there a week or more. The stranger, let us call him Lug Hafoule, is a genial soul who is apparently glad to have cosmopolitan company. However he will gently question the party to see just how flexible they are. This will be done carefully, he will treat the party to drinks or even a meal and should players comment on his generosity he will brush their thanks aside with the comment that in his line of business money comes and goes. If questioned as to what his line of business is he will look around to see if anyone is listening and will say that he is a 'Facilitator'. He makes things happen for people ... grants their dreams, adds colour to their lives and incidentally makes them poorer.

Because travel is difficult and potentially dangerous (and for many people utterly pointless), communities tend to be inward looking and generally prone to regarding themselves as the epitome of normality. Hence each small community will have some tradition or belief that the more cosmopolitan traveller will regard as bizarre. In this village it is necessary for the Mayor to be a person of intelligence, wisdom and wide knowledge. The current Mayor, one Mailerbach, is relatively new to his high office and many of the populace regard him with some suspicion, casting doubts on his abilities. Mailerbach (unfortunately for himself) has attracted the attention of Lug Hafoule, who has offered to teach him the magical arts. For tutoring in these Mailerbach offered to pay 1000 terces (which would come from the village treasury, which is the repository of villagers savings). Unfortunately, Lug Hafoule knows little of magic and no spells, but has had Mailerbach on a strict diet and meditation regime for three weeks. He hopes that the players will know enough spells which they will cast while Mailerbach makes meaningless gestures.

... her heaving bosom and tore frantically at the material with his teeth ...

The players can go along with this, dividing the monies earned equally between them all, or they can double cross Lug Hafoule by explaining to Mailerbach that Lug Hafoule knows no magic and offer to teach him themselves. Should they do that they will discover that Mailerbach, while not unintelligent, has no facility at all for magic and will not be able to master more than a couple of trivial cantraps. If he is told this then he will be most displeased and will refuse to pay them, denouncing them as confidence tricksters of the same sort as Lug Hafoule.

THE SCHOLASTICARIUM

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

Perrin: The Nature of Thaumaturgical Viniculture and the cure of Orange Wilt

Mistress Flook: The nature of the lost Fifteenth Silken Movement

Volume: The place of the Eroticist in the 21st Aeon

Grashpotel: The Origin of the Species

❧ The House of a Zoken Tanner ❧

Jim Webster

‘I am listening with two ears’

The houses in Zoken are built of wattle and daub on a wooden frame. The outside is then plastered with a mixture of clay and the juice extracted by boiling Gareen bark. This both waterproofs the outside surface and gives it a distinctive but not unpleasant pale yellow colour. The houses stand in their own plot separated from their neighbours by gardens and vegetable plots. The house of Vastus is a typical example.

Vastus works in the tannery for part of the week, and also tends his garden plot as well as doing occasional leather work which he sells to passing traders. His wife Lobubet tends their fibre-warls, shearing them every month and spinning and weaving fibre for the family’s own clothes. The fibre-warls this far north tend to have a coarser fleece than those further south and east.

When approaching the house from the road one steps first under an awning which stretches out to cover the doorway. In pleasant weather Lobubet will sit under the awning, spinning and chatting to her neighbours, while when Vastus is at home he can also be found there, sitting on a bench, trimming a piece of leather and watching the world.



Tanners at work

The main door of the house is normally propped open, allowing easy access from the awning to the ground floor which consists of two rooms. There is a large kitchen which takes up most of the space, with stairs in one corner leading up to the parlour while behind the kitchen is the store-room. There is a back door out of the storeroom which leads to the hand pump, the garden plot and the outside privy.

As befits the most used room in the house the KITCHEN is a room with few frills. A large but well made table takes up the centre of the room, it was made by Vastus’ father and has six hand-turned legs ending in clawed feet. Around the walls are an assortment of cupboards and shelves. Lobubet has displayed her crockery on the shelves. Vastus indulged in a little treasure hunting in his youth and most of the plates are 20th Aeon. Lobubet is immoderately proud of the matched set of six tankards that Vastus found that are almost certainly 18th Aeon. Next to the door and the main window is the loom on which Lobubet makes most of the cloth the household uses.

There is a stone bread oven against one wall and an iron range which takes up much of another wall. The floor is tiled with the stone flags Vastus found in a ruined manse a mile or two downstream, while the small bottle-glass panes in the two windows were shipped down from Azenomei. There is a hand carved chair at the head of the table for Vastus, and two wooden benches to which Vastus has fitted a padded leather cushion. Lobubet tends to keep her chair outside under the awning, having it brought in at meal times.

The STORE ROOM is the most cluttered room in the house. Barrels and boxes pack half of it, filled with flour, butter, beer and sun dried vegetables. From the walls and the ceiling hang off cuts of leather and bundles of herbs, hand tools and buckets. Going through this room to the privy in the middle of the night can be dangerous if you don’t remember just where to duck.

The stairs are narrow but have no turns or bends. They lead directly into the PARLOUR. This is the ‘best’ room in the house, where important guests or formal family occasions take place. There are two leather couches, both the work of Vastus, which are carefully made and ornamented with poker work. There is a low table and several thick rugs which also serve for seating younger or more agile visitors. The table bears

✿ THE HOUSE OF A ZOKEN TANNER ✿

the family collection of knick-knacks and ornaments. There is a 19th Aeon condiment set carved out of bone, a wine jug of translucent paste and several small metal objects of polished brass which might possibly have been parts of some mechanical contrivance. The wine jug is magical: any liquid poured out of it tastes fresher. On the wall there is the re-curved ankh of Sholid-Diin which is supposed to bring luck upon the house, as well as three bronze oil lamps. When lit they fill the room with a warm light and no matter what sort of oil is used they always burn clean and sweet smelling.

There is one large window made up of scores of small bottle glass panes. Light streams in but you cannot really see out. There is also one door. This leads to the foot of another steep staircase and another room. In this, the CHILDREN'S ROOM, the four children sleep in two bunk beds. Their clothes and other possessions are kept in chests around the walls. This room also has a large window which can be opened to allow the room to air while from a bracket in the wall is hung a spray of sweet flowering Honeybalm, known to be a sovereign remedy for many childish complaints. Up the second staircase is the MASTER BEDROOM and the third floor. Basically it is set in the roof space of the pitched roof with two windows, one at each end. Like the window in the children's room these windows can actually open. The room contains two clothes chests and a large double bed which is built into the room, the bedposts being structural members supporting the roof. Under the bed, concealed by the coverings, there are two chests containing the family's small store of terces, a few small family heirlooms such as Grandmother's jewellery, and a bolt of fine silk which will one day make a dress should a daughter need to snare herself a rich husband.

On the wall above the window hangs a hunting bow and a quiver with a score of arrows in it, while an erb spear is propped up in the corner of the room. In front of the window there is an arrangement of deep red sun flowers in a vase that one of the sons made from local clay.



Despite the fact that Jim Webster's character is largely moulded by events in Samarkand, he remains a simple, uncomplicated and essentially inchoate individual. This much at least is evidenced in his prose style.

Return once more to the dawn of time, to

renowned GLORANTHA

the fabled realm known and loved by us all.

Return to an era so ancient the Sun was a fierce golden orb. Experience for yourselves the problems and pleasures of life in a heroic age where empires and kingdoms grow, flourish, and are torn down by their successors. Build your kingdom and crush your enemies beneath the hooves of your cavalry.

“Truly a rare chance to experience the fierce passions of those early days”

Haxtpoish, editor of *Desuetude*

Bronze Age warfare



and a herd of cows.

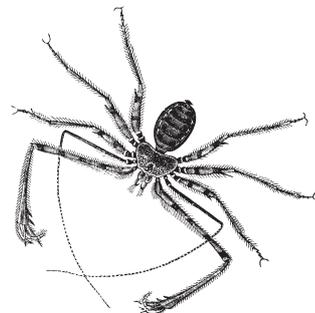


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THE PRIMER OF PRACTICAL MAGIC

❖ The Arachnomancer ❖

Ian Harac

A close look at the spells, artefacts and strange creatures created by The Arachnomancer

Sometime late in the 20th Aeon, near to the dawn of the 21st, there arose in the lands of Sousanene a most complex individual, who styled himself 'Dandrios Vuul, Octavian Philosopher', but who has become better known since then by the title 'Arachnomancer', which adds in accuracy what it lacks in gentility. An arch-magician of considerable skill, he followed the so-called 'Octave Doctrine', adding to it certain original perturbations and intricacies, which he describes thusly, in one of the few surviving fragments of his work:

'... and so, since all learned men agree that the universe exists across eight dimensions, four higher and four lower, so we see that 'eight' is the fundamental basis of creation itself. Since the octave must manifest itself in all forms, we must then consider how it manifests in the 'living' form. The creature which best manifests the octave is the spider, for it has both eight legs, showing mobility in the physical, and eight eyes, showing perception and wisdom. Its superiority as an Octavian avatar thus unquestionably established according to the PRIMARY METHOD OF ARGUMENTATION, the only sure path to philosophical truth, as expounded by the ...' *Here the fragment goes off into a discourse of fascinating intricacy but minimal relevance*

The Arachnomancer

The so-called 'Arachnomancer of Sousanene' eventually passed from record, and apparently from this realm of existence, when certain commands given to one of his Sandestins were interpreted in a particularly unfortunate manner. The Sandestin Thassuul thus garnered a significant number of indenture points as punishment, but, lacking a master to apply them, waits eternally and in poor humour for further orders. He has retreated to small hideaway in the quarter-realm of Thun, and no longer concerns us overmuch.

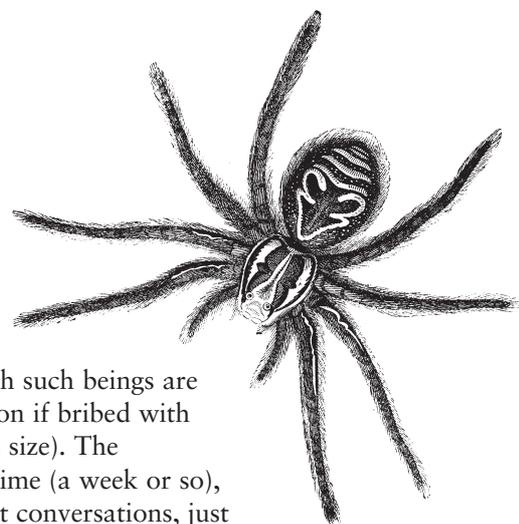
What does concern us, however, is the legacy of the Arachnomancer. As an arch-mage of significant power and an experimental bent, he left behind several puissant spells, some intricate and occasionally useful artefacts, and a small number of creatures which crawled out of his vats. The descendants of the latter continue to irk the lands

surrounding his manse; the former are often the subject of difficult inquiries. I shall attempt to document what is known about all of his leavings, but be cautioned! This information is incomplete, and may well be inaccurate in whole or in part. Those who wish to find the truth need only visit the area in which he once lived; be certain to avoid the druul hybrids and the scampering swarms of mound spiders, and be sure that, if you should rest in the village of Kreer on the White Road, that you do not wear orange (unless you are under 5 feet high, or bald) or clean the nails of your left hand during daylight.



Ruins which garner heat from the fading rays of the sun are favoured haunts for assorted arachnids of varying size and belligerence.

❖ The Arachnomancer ❖



Mire-scorpions or Yellow Xids (though such creatures are sullen and dull, and usually have little of interest to discuss). This enchantment grants no special loyalty or control, and any deals which are forged with such beings are often of dubious value. Still, they can be a valuable source of information if bribed with appropriate insects (or the occasional enemy shrunk to suitably small size). The fundamental drawback to this device is that, after wearing it for some time (a week or so), the magic tends to leak into the wearer, so that he will always hear faint conversations, just below the level of comprehension, coming from the myriad things which crawl upon the Earth even as the sun flickers out. A person so afflicted will often dismay his companions by shouting demands for quiet at the empty air, or casually noting that, yes, this weeks' wheatflies are not nearly so tasty as those born the week before. The voices will be silent only if the Locket remains unworn for a month or more.

Vuul's Cloak Of Disentangling Liberation

Immunity To Bonds (Ropes, Chains, and so on) +2, *Indestructible*: +2, *Unremarkable Appearance*: +2
Total Cost: 6

It was when Vuul noticed that a spider is never prisoner in its own web that this garment was inspired. Woven of the legs of countless millions of spiders (all of whom died naturally; it took years for Vuul to harvest the raw material for this cloak), the wearer becomes totally immune to all forms of bondage, restraint, or entanglement. As soon as he wills it, all such devices simply fail, slipping off, unlocking, or uncoiling as their nature warrants. The cloak is designed to look tattered and unremarkable, so as to minimise the chance it is removed prior to the wearer being bound. The device also adds a Boon of +1 to the wearer's *Defence Pool* when someone attempts to use *Restraint* against him in combat.

The Vatspawn Of The Arachnomancer

While Dandrios Vuul was an incessant experimenter in weaving the matrices of life, the majority of his efforts were notable for possessing both of the unfortunate traits of 'singularity' and 'brevity'. There were some few exceptions to this general rule, and what knowledge exists of these is detailed below. (It must be noted that incautious travellers might well encounter creatures of the Arachnomancer which, while existing in 'singularity', nonetheless know little or nothing of 'brevity' as applied to their own lives, but rather too much of it when applying the concept to the lives of others.) The two most successful creations of the Arachnomancer are Mound Spiders and Druul Hybrids.

Mound Spiders

Known Facts: Individually, each Mound Spider is a distressingly large arachnid, though not one seemingly supernatural in nature. A bloated, furry, body of a single handspan is supported by eight thickish legs. Any one can be killed with a single successful attack by blade or flame, though a fist would do the trick in a pinch. Properly stewed with a savour of drelwort and mintoekel leaves, Mound Spiders can make an interesting dish for those not overly squeamish. But it is rare that a single Mound Spider is found. As the sagacious might derive from the name, the Mound Spider lives in colonies of several thousand, forming huge earthen mounds that jut over the landscape in the eastern reaches of Sousanene Ulterior. (Far to the south of Almery). When hunting prey, they hunt as a pack, and the statistics given are for just such a mob. (The appropriate term for such a grouping, according to the Sapitentiary in Val Ombrio, is a 'Felk', for reasons both obscure and irrelevant.)

Scholarly Conjecture: Scholars, as is alas all too common, have put forward the following suggestions, normally without benefit of substantial evidence to support their arguments.

- a) Each Mound Spider is as a leaf on a tree, or a scale on a fish - a part of a greater whole, not a being in itself. In such a case, the being is the Mound: the sum of all the spiders which compose it. If one could somehow contact the implicit 'mound-mind', communication to mutual benefit might be attained. In such a circumstance, the Mound would have Persuasion and Rebuttal skills.
- b) Vuul created the Mound Spiders by infusing the plasm of a Forest Tarantula with the animistic matrices of several species of ant. This hybridisation of '8' and '6' was so alien to his philosophy that it ultimately drove him mad.

☘ The Arachnomancer ☘

A Felk Of Mound Spiders: *Attack* (Speed) ~1, *Defence* (Dodge) ~2, *Health* 5, *Athletics* 6, *Concealment* 4, *Perception* 8, *Tracking* 10.

The Mound-Mind, if such truly exists and is not the idle conjecture of layabout philosophers: *Persuade* (Intimidating) ~3, *Rebuff* (Penetrating) ~2.

The Druul Hybrids

Known Facts: They reside in small villages scattered around Valley Than, a dry and relatively desolate valley in the far south west of Sousanene.

Scholarly Speculation: Here again scholars argue among themselves, although in the case of the Druul hybrids it is obvious that many must have formulated theories which, if based on observation, included observations made after heavy lunches or the ingestion of recreational narcotics. In the interests of completeness I put forward the theories below without comment.

Druul Hybrids are insular and threatening to outsiders, but do not actively seek to commit evil unless transgressed against.

Alternatively, Druul Hybrids are blood-drinkers of the worst sort; their appetites would make a deodand blush, if such a thing could be imagined.

Druul Hybrids resemble horrid human-spider hybrids, having the foreparts of a man and the body of a massive spider. They consider four-limbed beings to be 'half-men'.

There again it is considered by some that Druul Hybrids are actually human in form, but, when in public, they sit astride giant spiders, fooling the credulous into believing they are some sort of half-man.

Some believe that Druul Hybrids can change their form, becoming either fully men or fully spider.

Finally some scholars hold that the hybrids are not vatspawn at all: they are the descendants of the staff of the manse of Dandrios Vuul, and have turned his fetishes into the basis of their society. They are consumed by the belief that Dandrios Vuul can be restored to life.

Statistics: These make the assumption that the Hybrids are, in fact, 'spider-centaurs' or 'spidaurs'. Should this turn out to be wild rumour, the GM will have to adjust these numbers to better reflect truth.

Persuade (Eloquent) 10, *Rebuff* (Contrary) 9, *Attack* (Strength) ~2, *Defence* (Intuition) ~1, *Health* ~2, *Athletics* (10), *Living Rough* (12), *Etiquette* (3), *Perception* (6), *Craftsmanship* (2)

Druul can walk up walls or cling to ceilings with successful *Athletics* roll. An additional roll must be made to stay stable each time that an *Attack* or *Defence* roll is made.

Plots And Story Ideas

Several possible plots can be built around the remnants of Danrios Vuul.

Adventures In The Lands Of Sousanene

Firstly, his spells are of interest to any Dabbler or Magician seeking to expand his knowledge. While they might well be a focus of a PCs quest, they can be more of use as a motive for a cluster of Cugel-level characters sent on an errand ...

'So you see, the fact is that somewhere in the ruins of the Arachnomancer's manse, there is a small workbook, octagonal in form, which contains this enchantment. Would that I were as young and spry as you! I would fetch in less time than it take a drelk to devour a yellow grubling! But youth has fled from me. While the book itself is of small volume, it is buried amidst mounds of useless frippery ... statues of blue jade, chests bulging with archaic coins, gaudy weapons and armour of no meaning to a seeker after knowledge such as myself. If only ... if only someone of youth and vigour, a member of a band such as yourselves, were able to sort through all that clutter and bring me the tome!'

Secondly, even an age after his death, his influence is felt by those who live in the area surrounding Valley Than in the lands of Sousanene. The inhabitants of Kreer on the White Road are mostly inoffensive folk, if their strictures, which are not excessively onerous, are observed with exactitude. Yet they currently face great troubles, in the form of an excess of mound spider colonies being established at the edge of their fields.

✿ The Arachnomancer ✿

Simply eliminating any given mound is no solution – why have the colonies moved? Finding the *Locket of Octavian Communication* will enable the players to divine the answer: the colonies are being driven from their normal home on the Janith Plains due to an incursion of erbs, who find mound spider queens an exceptional delicacy. The erbs, in turn, are on the move due to the re-occupation of the manse of a long-dead arch-mage by the upstart Zan of The Five Directions. Zan might be convinced to mitigate his demands on the Erbs if he received some compensation, such as the formula for *The Assumption of The Perfect Form*. (This plot follows the Law Of Narrative Circumference to an exacting degree).

As another possibility, the players may stumble into a village of Druul Hybrids. They might then find that the Hybrids have a use for them, as a part of their quest to restore their creator to life:

‘All matter is permanent; nothing is ever truly gone. Thus, what remains of Dandrios remains in the Earth. So we sift the dust, the water, and the air, passing it through a weftwork of filters and zellims, extracting and sorting each particle which contains the ‘krel’, or, to use a crude term, the ‘essence’, of Dandrios Vuul. When all has been collected, we shall restore him via a process which is of no concern to halfmen. Portions of his ‘krel’ could be anywhere, in anything, even somehow in the flesh of such halfmen as yourselves. You say you ate of the bluefruit trees to the north? *Ha hm*. Please wait here for but a moment ...’

Adventures Elsewhere:

In a Turjan-level game, one of the PCs is hosting a party which will surely grant him the favour and acclaim which is his obvious due. During a formal presentation in which the character is about to be presented with the title of ‘Lord Magician Of The Azure, And Dominiar of Veldar Kale’, LORD THANAK DEMIRE is suddenly set upon by a swarm of thousands of spiders, and, in front of dozens of guests, messily devoured in mere seconds. Naturally, such an unpleasantness greatly hinders the social climbing of the PC who gave the party. In order to achieve full justice, the PC must track down who has discovered the *Abhorrent Arachnid Attack* ... and what this person has against the former Lord Demire. In the course of this, they might well learn of the other adjuncts of the Arachnomancer ...

In a Cugel-level game, both the *Enchantment of the Vertical Stride* and the *Cloak of Disentangling Liberation* can be of use in certain endeavours rich in moral necessity but lacking in petty legality. The acquisition of these things – or defeating rivals making use of them – can be fodder for plots.



Some Taglines Of Possible Use In Adventures Involving The Adjuncts & Artefacts Of The Arachnomancer

On the road is one thing; in my bed is quite another!

We shall assume the pattern holds, and that eight is the number.

I begin to find sympathy with flies, although not so much as to cause me to act unwisely.

The virtue of tenacity, especially when possessed by ones enemies, is overstated."

The posture is undignified, but the advantage is clear.

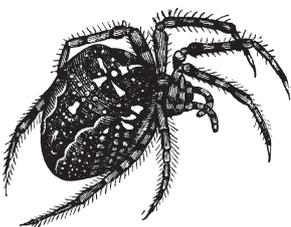
I would do so gladly, but my brain is full at the moment.

The stricture is inexplicable, but not onerous. I shall abide by it.

A half dozen spells writhe and gambol about my cortex.

The function is evident, but the purpose clouded.

Two things my father always said! First: To always eat with one nostril open. Second: To always bring a torch to the privy. I now understand the latter part of his wisdom. The former part continues to elude me.



Ian Harac ... perhaps one of America's leading writers in his field, and probably the only one whose children we hold hostage.

✿ By Hook and By Crook ✿

Lynne Hardy

A detailed examination of the creation and use of an interesting and very different magic item.

Haldebis gazed mournfully from the knothole that was his view of the world. He had long ago ceased to be amazed at the lengths that Shaphim had gone to in order to exact his revenge for what was, after all, such a mere slight. Who would have thought that a hat (and a rather moth-eaten, tatty thing at that!) would have led to such an adventurous, yet monotonous life.

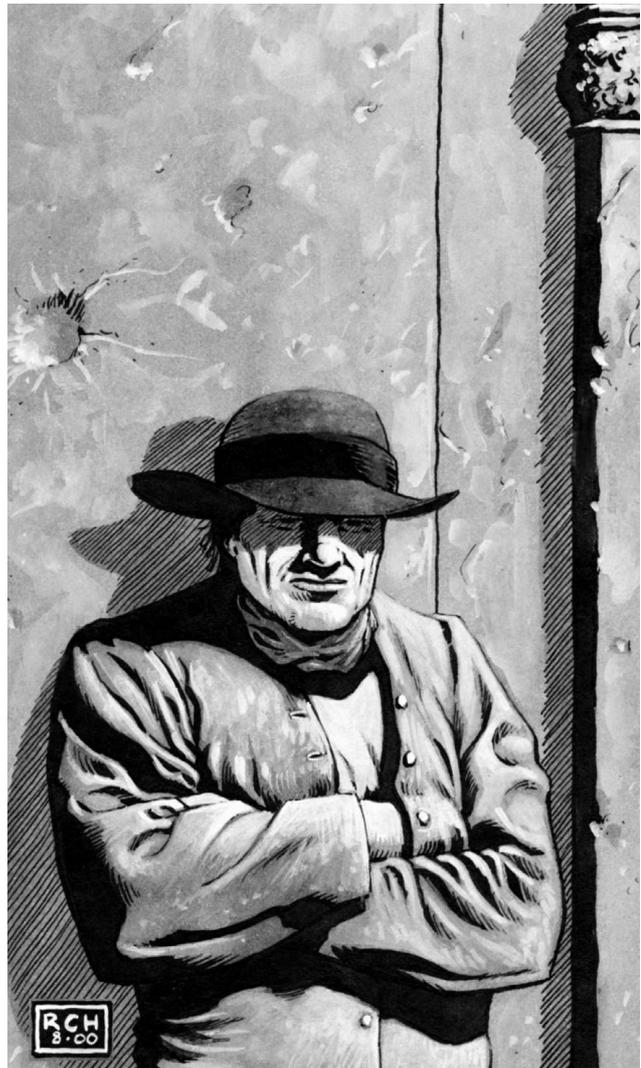
There was another new pocket beyond that knothole and another new hand that wielded his home with a charming flourish. Probably one as rapaciously debonair as he once had been, before that ill-fated card game with a petty mageling and his disgraceful apparel. What were Shaphim's words? 'As you are such an aficionado of the milliner's art, may your future prospects lead to your further edification'.

Still the judicious, nay inspired combination of the *Charm of Untiring Nourishment* and *Embracil's Diminution* had brought him here, destined to pass from one rogue to another, until Shaphim relented or the sun burned away. By hook to crook, as it were.

He smiled to himself. In many ways he could not complain – how many could claim to have been at the forefront of a revolution? Granted, it was only to start the fire that engulfed the palace (you could still see the charring on one of the upper tines), but he had been there. And then there had been that dashing mountebank, so like him in his wilder days, who had escaped that rather irate lynch mob across a flooded river by means of his cleverly contrived raft. Although it had taken him weeks to dry the rugs thoroughly afterwards. Apart from one potentially disastrous woodworm infestation, that was the worst he had suffered for many a long day.

The new hand, as smooth as that of any other gentleman of respectable (or dubious) status, reached into the pocket and withdrew Haldebis' tiny wooden domicile. Despite the signs of hardship it maintained an air of glamour, a need to be possessed, a delicacy of craftsmanship inherent with age. With a word, the trinket swelled to the graceful proportions of a excellent hat stand, very handy for the dapper man about town. After all, even the lowliest of hats must be hung properly at night to maintain its essential character.

Haldebis watched from the safety of his gaol. And once again the sombre, burning light of another dying day was obscured by the shadow of his fate and hidden beneath the brim of yet another ostentatious hat!



Shaphim sporting a sad example of the milliner's art ...

As the result of an exchange of (un)pleasantries following a card game HALDEBIS, itinerant wanderer and card-sharp, found himself miniaturised and stored in a glass bottle until the loser of the game, Shaphim, could construct a suitably appropriate magical prison. This prison turned out to be the magician's hat stand, a fine piece of Sabrewood¹, expertly carved with a dash of ostentatious frippery about the cunning carved tines which resembled seductively beckoning fingers.

Having ensured that there would be comfortably secure living quarters within the upper portion of the stand for his detractor, the mage Shaphim set about further enchanting the item. It would be virtually indestructible, so that the rogue would long remember not to bandy harsh words with wizards, especially concerning their hats. The hat stand was also intended be irresistible to thieves. Hence it would constantly change hands, giving the thief a taste of his own medicine. And the reason for the thieves desire to possess the artefact ? Luck: the owner of the hat stand would find his luck at cards miraculously improved, if only to further to rub Haldebis' nose in his misfortune.

Of course, when designing a magical hat stand one must remember that no self-respecting thief will tote a full sized hat stand with him, so the thing would have to be miniaturised for transport. A brief word – 'minimus' to shrink it and 'maximus' to enlarge it – would be all that was needed for its control. After all, it would be such a shame to deny the hat stand its true purpose of creation by leaving it permanently miniaturised! Of course, the fact that the hat stand constantly shrinking and growing would add to its prisoner's discomfort was almost beside the point ...

Haldebis had had to endure this many times now, more than he could honestly remember even if he'd cared to. It wasn't as if his armchair could be moved away from the knothole window and every time (absolutely every time) some intellectual make-weight drew a pack of cards, he was drawn to that seat and compelled to watch them benefit from his misery.

Fortunately *Mynn* was one of his favourite games. His current owner, one THROMBAN, had drawn his trinket from the pocket of his magenta velvet pantaloons and with a reckless disregard for propriety had declaimed the word visible only in the miniature state: 'Maximus'. He had proceeded to genteelly place his chapeau (a massive confection of orange organdie and Kaiin lace, purchased from Sethiyallow and Crips, tailors and milliners of Taun Tassel,) upon one tine, careful not to obscure the knot-hole that marred the otherwise perfect grain. Haldebis was forced to concede that Thromban had been quick to notice that his unnaturally good luck was lost if the hole was covered. The stand was carefully positioned eighteen inches behind Thromban's right shoulder (couldn't have anything 'sinister' about it as Shaphim had joked) knot hole forward, a position Thromban had derived empirically over many hands.

And so it began. The circular cards, shaped after Mynn's moon-like visage if the legend was correct, were dealt to the six players. Thromban, cocky with foreknowledge, bet high, much to the surprise of his fellows. As the evening passed they learnt that it had been no false modesty – he was a true adept. At least for the moment.

Haldebis groaned. The fool wasn't paying enough attention, as soon he would have scored a waxing crescent and his most cunning opponent Pusnitt a waning one. This would force the players to exchange positions and the unfortunate situation of the circular table close to the back wall of the tavern would render the assistance of the hat stand void when Thromban must assume the crown seat, which was tight against said wall.

1. Sabre tree: A large, willowy tree whose pendulous seed pods resemble sabres, hence the name. The wood of the tree is hard and resilient, but contrarily easy to carve into intricate items. The dried pods were used in the 14th Aeon by the Glucnac Empire as training weapons for their militia due to their abundance and ease of replacement.

It wasn't a pleasant sight, that of a full-grown man sobbing pathetically over his lost terces. Yet as his new owner, the same Pusnitt who had benefited so much from a change of horizon, mumbled the word only now revealed in the grain, that sight became Haldebis' final glimpse of Thromban, now just one more beleaguered citizen down on his luck.

Over the years Shaphim's melodramatic sense of vengeance had been defeated. There had been that time in Azenomei when a lady of immense personal charm and not inconsiderable beauty, one Zrathia, had used not only her ample endowments to distract her fellow players, but also a deck of Mynn cards with unusual properties.² To Haldebis it sometimes felt as if Mynn herself was joining in on his punishment as many of his most vivid memories (and interesting encounters) involved that blasted game. Still, he'd never thought to be that close to a woman's breasts again even if he had been unable to do much about it. Still, that came much later in the day. He'd never honestly believed women actually did conceal things in their bosoms until then and he still wasn't convinced it could be comfortable.

Old Haldebis sighed heavily. Those cards certainly were unusual: they looked perfectly mundane, but he'd felt the hairs on the nape of his neck tingle in a way that reminded him of the first effects of his own enchantment. Somehow they had negated the effects of the hat stand and Zrathia's quick fingers had shuffled the cards to her own advantage. By skill and a stunning knowledge of the moon's phases, the young woman had not only won the game but also the hat stand.

It was what came later that was the most remarkable thing. The overheard conversation had been somewhat muffled by his storage location, but Zrathia had met with a gentleman and discussed how well her charitable efforts had gone that evening. To Haldebis' surprise, she appeared to be handing over a large portion of her winnings to the gentleman, who had mentioned something about the 'Munificent Society' being very grateful. Zrathia had petulantly complained about her compulsion being highly unfair when she worked for them anyway, but the gentleman had merely laughed and commented that it wasn't as if they could turn it on and off selectively and if she didn't like it, she should let other people win more often! He missed that young lady. Life certainly hadn't been dull while he'd been in her presence (and that of her cards). He'd felt free for the first time in too long. If only it could have lasted for longer, but then, when had he ever been lucky, particularly in love?



The charming and beautiful Zrathia with one of her many profitable admirers.

2. Strataboehr's Perfectly Mundane Mynn Deck

Created by an unknown arch-mage for the 'adventurer' Strataboehr the Salubrious in payment for services rendered, there are several decks of these unusual cards in existence. After many years of fast living and fantastical adventures, Strataboehr noticed that many of his compatriots had fallen on hard times. Moved to pity by their condition he founded the Munificent Society of Travellers, an organisation dedicated to helping those of the quick-fingered professions now too old or too down on their luck to help themselves. The cards themselves are the Society's major source of funding. It is virtually unheard of for these cards to be owned by anyone not associated with the Society. If lost, the Society will spare no expense in finding them.

Game Information:

The cards negate all enchantments that might be used at the gaming table to effect the game's outcome. Other than that, they have no effect on the gambling skills of their owner. The cards are apparently mundane even to magical examination.

Disadvantage: Whoever wins a game in which these cards are used feels compelled to give 25% of their winnings to the cards' owner for the Munificent Society.

Items

The Marvellous Miniaturising Millinery Mainstay

Game Information: the hat stand gives the owner one free reroll per roll at *Gambling* whilst playing cards.

It can also be used as a *Found Object* when full-sized by people with that familiarity.

Advantage: The victim is so surprised by the choice of weapon that he suffers a levy of 1 to his first Defence roll.

Disadvantage: On a *Dismal Failure*, the wielder becomes entangled in the hat stand and suffers a levy of 1 to all Defence and Attack rolls.

Disadvantage: Anyone with light-fingered tendencies will want to steal this item, by whatever means. The sight of the hat stand being miniaturised/maximised triggers this impulse and the character must *Resist Avarice* to combat it.

People

Zrathia, Daughter of Munificence

Persuasion: Charming 12

Attack: Finesse 10

Health: 14

Rebuff: Penetrating 11

Defence: Intuition 10

Magic: 4

Skills:

Athletics: 2

Etiquette: 3

Perception: 5

Seduction: 4

Concealment: 2

Gambling: 10

Quick Fingers: 10

Zrathia is a beautiful and talented young woman who spends much of her time gathering funds for the Munificent Society. Her father gave her into the care of the society in Kaiin after her mother's death and the residents of the home there trained the girl in the arts of gambling and deception. Once she was old enough to fend for herself, the Society sent her out to Azenomei to continue the work Strataboehr had started over two centuries before. She is one of the Society's best charitable workers and enjoys her job, but she would dearly love to pursue her studies of magic.

Haldebis, Hat Stand Inhabitant and Repentant Gambler

Persuasion: Obfuscatory 15, Glib 10

Rebuff: Wary 11, Lawyerly 6

Attack: Cunning 12, Speed 7

Defence: Misdirection 10, Vexation 5

Health: 10

Magic: Devious 4

Spells: Currently none, but Shaphim still has Haldebis' grimoire that contains: *Arnhoult's Sequestrous Digitalia* and *Brassman's Twelve-fold Bounty*



Haldebis once enjoyed wearing a hat.

✿ By Hook and By Crook ✿

Skills:

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| Appraisal: 6 | Athletics: 5 |
| Concealment: 5 | Gambling: 10 |
| Imposture: 3 | Living Rough: 3 |
| Quick Fingers: 10 | |

Possessions: Deck of marked cards (3), a very fine crimson velvet hat (2), a set of lock-picks (2), rapier (1)

Before his imprisonment Haldebis was a wandering opportunist, a firm favourite with the ladies and an accomplished gambler and confidence trickster. Always keenly aware of current fashion, he cut quite a dash in his heyday. However his sarcastic nature got him into many scrapes, the most recent having placed him in his current position.

Shaphim the Sage, Seeker of Enlightenment

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>Persuasion</i> : Intimidating 16, Forthright 11 | <i>Rebuff</i> : Lawyerly 15, Penetrating 10 |
| <i>Attack</i> : Finesse 10, Cunning 5 | Defence: Vexation 15, Parry 10 |
| Health: 15 | Magic: Studios 25 |

Favoured Spells: *Embracil's Diminution*, *Charm of Untiring Nourishment*, *Felofun's 2nd Hypnotic Spell*, *Lentair's Enspelled Obedience*, *The Omnipotent Sphere*, *Instantaneous Galvanic Thrust (C)*, *Thasdrubal's Laganetic Transfer*, *Behemoth's Bounty*

Skills:

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Etiquette: 10 | Perception: 10 |
| Pedantry: 15 | Wealth: 8 |
| Wherewithal: 7 | Gambling: 2 |

Possessions: *Blue concentrate projector* (easier than fighting oneself); tatty, stained, weather-beaten, but much loved, hat (4)

Shaphim is a self-absorbed humourless man with a penchant for cards but who hates to be beaten. He has a pathological hatred of thieves and cheats and is therefore highly unlikely to use any spell that would be popular with that type. Despite the fact that he is an arch-mage he doesn't currently have a Sandestin as the Brotherly League frown on the practice. After an almost lifetime of research and incidental persecution of cardsharps and similar, Shaphim was contacted by the Brotherly League of Truly Enlightened Sagacity and after several meetings with the hierarchy released his Sandestin Charis, donated his worldly goods to the League and set off to right the greatest of his past wrongs. It genuinely hasn't occurred to him that Haldebis would bear any grudge for his punishment. All that matters to Shaphim is that he finds and releases his prisoner so that Shaphim can assume his true place at the end of time.



The results of a successful use of Behemoth's Bounty.

Miscellany

Embracil's Diminution

Duration: Day
Range: Touch
Difficulty: Straightforward

Originally created in the 11th Aeon, this spell has undergone some refinement and several variations along the theme are currently extant. The most common allows the caster to shrink the touched object down to approximately half an inch in height, retaining all proportions. Occasionally used by enterprising thieves, historically its most common use has been for exploration of hidden ruins and experiencing life from a totally different aspect, as well as a handy way to imprison and store specimens.

The spell used by Shaphim was a modified version based on the work of Embracil's former apprentice Kerder, which has permanency elements, added to it. There is only one known copy of this version in existence.

Brotherly League of Truly Enlightened Sagacity

The League was formed many years ago by a small band of mages determined not only to improve their collective knowledge and live comfortably in their dotage, but also to ensure that when the sun finally flickered and died that they would assume a place of immortality in the emerging new universe.

The League's central belief is based upon an ancient grimoire the founders of the group discovered while excavating some ruins in the Draven Forest. It contained details of a ritual that would ensure immortality should the end of the world come. The group has been working steadily towards their goal of performing this ritual, occasionally recruiting new members with the resources and skills to ensure its success. Over the years the organisation has become increasingly akin to a religious order and now has a strict charter that members must adhere to. The charter disallows the binding of Sandestin and in order to show true sagacity, members must have a clean and unblemished soul. This technically results in members making reparation for any past misdeeds, perceived or otherwise.

The main Seminary for the handful of full members is located in the ruins where the grimoire was found. There are rather more associate members who are still working towards enlightenment but they tend to reside in their own manses despite having theoretically handed over ownership of both property and goods to the League.

Unbeknownst to the League, the ritual they seek to perform will not grant them quite the immortality they have in mind. It will actuate their transformation into archvults. This fact has become known to one or two arch-mages elsewhere in Dying Earth and they are currently trying to identify and destroy the grimoire and possibly the League.

In his current reflective state of mind, possibly brought on by a surfeit of quasi-religious zeal, Shaphim has realised that it had been churlish of him to punish Haldebis for the multiplicity of slights that Shaphim had suffered over the years at the hands of the disreputable. It wasn't Haldaburgh's fault that many another societal leech had relieved Shaphim of money, possessions, and in the case of one notorious rogue, his first magical creation, his fondly remembered Expansible Egg. Haldaburgh, Hasselbis – he wasn't even sure of the fellow's name after all these years, but it wasn't as if he'd been a memorable chap.

There is no time to ponder further on these perplexing matters however. It is imperative that he finds that hat stand or his entry into the Brotherly League of Truly Enlightened Sagacity might be delayed beyond reasonable limits (if one considers the imminent dying of the sun as a reasonable limit). If his spirit is to join the exalted ranks of the true magi after the impending celestial consummation, then he must put right his most heinous wrong and free the tiny tearaway and return him to the earth in time to fully enjoy its final moments.

For the Games Master there are endless opportunities laid open by our cautionary tale ...

The characters may come across the hat stand in a casual game of chance. Can they resist the urge to own it?

The characters could bump into Shaphim, who is hot in pursuit of 'the item' and in need of assistance in his search.

Zrathia might engage the characters in a game of cards. Perhaps she is recruiting new collectors for the Society?

An eminent arch-mage of past acquaintance approaches the characters with worrying information: he has heard of the Brotherly League and wants the characters to help him track it down. Or perhaps he is trying to recruit them into the League?

While Shaphim pursues his quest there is an empty manse with a veritable array of protection measures currently empty of occupants in the rolling foothills of the Fer Aquila Mountains. Will the characters take it as a test of their skills, or will someone hire them to empty it?



Sufficiently sagacious to be based in the North of England, Lynne was one of those we asked to play test Dying Earth.

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❧ Lesser Magicians of the Northern Saskevoy Reach ❧

as elucidated by Xenophage, Sinecurist

‘Hoy, you skew-faced vagabond! Be off with you! We need no salves
nor talismans nor prayers nor erotic adjuncts!’

North of the town of Saskervoy, in the land of Cutz, lie the manses of three lesser Magicians. These individuals, collectively referred to as the Five-fold Three, are in order of decreasing opacity, Klasti the Confusing, Valmouny the Insipid, and Perfluus the Profound.

Klasti the Confusing

Klasti the Confusing defies all reasonable attempts at classification. In order to fully comprehend the scope of this assertion, it is necessary to bear the following point in mind at all times: Klasti (or at least, the rumour of Klasti) demonstrates a style of argument that adds new shades of meaning to the words ‘evasive’ and ‘contrary’. Klasti’s intractable polemic against even the most basically verifiable assertions has ensured that no living person can ascertain whether s/he is male, female, alive, dead, or even extant.

A typical conversation between Perfluus and Klasti serves to illustrate the point:

P: ‘Klasti, I deem it necessary to summon a council of the Five-fold Three post-haste.’

K: ‘To whom do you direct this statement?’

P (irate): ‘To Klasti the Confusing, of course. There is none other present.’

K: ‘Until my presence has been adequately demonstrated, I cannot assume that I am here to respond to your summons.’

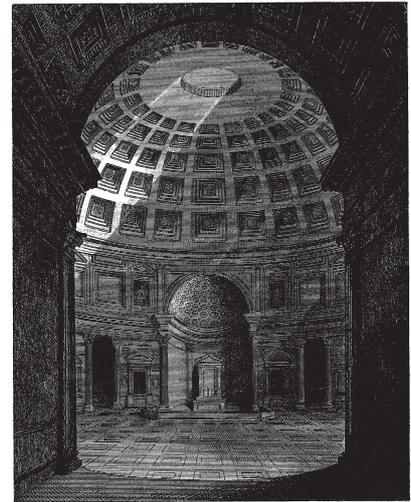
P: ‘By the evidence of my own eyes, I perceive the presence of Klasti! Note also that the Thaumic Locator displays an erratic reading! A Magician of power is undoubtedly present!’

K: ‘The needle wavers in deference to your own somewhat dubious ability. Your eyes, meanwhile, inform your own sensorium, and not that of Klasti. Subjective evidence of this type must be considered circumstantial, and can be safely dismissed. Further, I now recall that I am currently elsewhere. The entity you perceive must therefore be figmental, or worse, an impostor. I suggest that you alert Klasti immediately! The situation is grave!’

P (dubious): ‘Where might I find Klasti to convey this news?’

K: ‘It is possible that you will shortly find Klasti at the council of the Five-fold Three, which you have recently convened.’

The uncertainty generated by this style of verbiage is magnified by the singularly bizarre wardrobe that accompanies the presumed presence of Klasti. Klasti’s day wear might well consist of any number of boots (usually between 1 and 10) of assorted styles, sizes and colours. These boots disappear into a dress of finest cream samite, reinforced with iron bands. A purple shirt in the style of Scaum river ferry pilots, beneath a tasteful girdle or brassiere of yellow and pink beads. Gloves similar in nature to the boots issue from all parts of the sleeves, and some parts of the dress. Some even appear to contain hands. Surmounting the whole, a hat which covers the whole of the putative head in the form of a green velvet barrel. Occasionally it sags during conversation to resemble a large beret.



The interior of the famed Basilica of Cutz, in which Perfluus the Profound occasionally passes learned and precise judgement on particularly convoluted legalities.

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The ensemble is roomy; gauged to the frame of a person of astounding corpulence it affords plenty of scope for movement within for an average-sized person. There does in fact appear to be a considerable amount of surreptitious movement within the garments at all times.

The manse Felpick, with its fine gardens of diaphanous blooms and garish fungi, is assumed to be owned by Klasti. Felpick is inhabited by an elderly couple, Blotho and his wife Mizzerspeen, who claim the manse as their own. A time-worn ritual of argument with the pair greets all who attend the manse expecting to find Klasti. After much remonstrance, Blotho will grudgingly accept messages for Klasti 'In case your illusory acquaintance should someday chance by. In any event, I am urgently advised by Mizzerspeen to humour madmen'. Blotho and Mizzerspeen will never let visitors past the front door, so the contents of the manse remain a matter of some speculation.

Klasti (or Klasti's wardrobe) loudly denies he is a Magician of any sort, despite evidence to the contrary. Klasti attributes any magical effects that might occur in the presence of so many boots as the caprices of passing sandestins, freaks of nature, involuntary magical eructations by other Magicians present, or to the possible existence of a divine urge.

The Magician's behaviour is generally bizarre (intense and wondering inspection of everyday objects for instance), and may culminate in one of Klasti's famed episodes. Examples of these episodes include loudly arguing with an unseen, unheard presence, followed in short order by tussles and violent fisticuffs with the absent adversary. Occasionally, Klasti wins this shadow boxing. At other times, the Magician sags to the floor momentarily, then leaps up high in the air, and runs whooping around the locale, upsetting carts, kicking over barrels, and stealing boots and gloves. After such an episode Klasti disappears, only to return later in an excellent mood. The significance of these episodes is unknown, and the high incidence of mayhem is discretely ignored by those who measure the perils of accosting a ranting Magician. Klasti claims ignorance of the episodes in any case, and few are prepared to argue. Those that do find themselves permanently side-tracked in typical Klasti style.

The reasons for Klasti's cognomen are self-evident.

Suggested Statistics: *Obfuscatory* 15, *Contrary* 15, *Cautious* 5, *Intuition* 10, *Magic*: Insightful 10

Valmouny the Insipid

Valmouny, in direct contrast to Klasti, prefers orderly conduct at all times. As an instance, missives from Valmouny will invariably be in triplicate: one copy for the receiver, one copy to be countersigned and returned to Valmouny, and one copy for the messenger to burn in case he is waylaid. The somewhat spindly Valmouny sports a ragged white beard streaked with tan and ochre. His tufted hair, round head and long, sharp nose give the unmistakable impression of an undernourished sparrow.

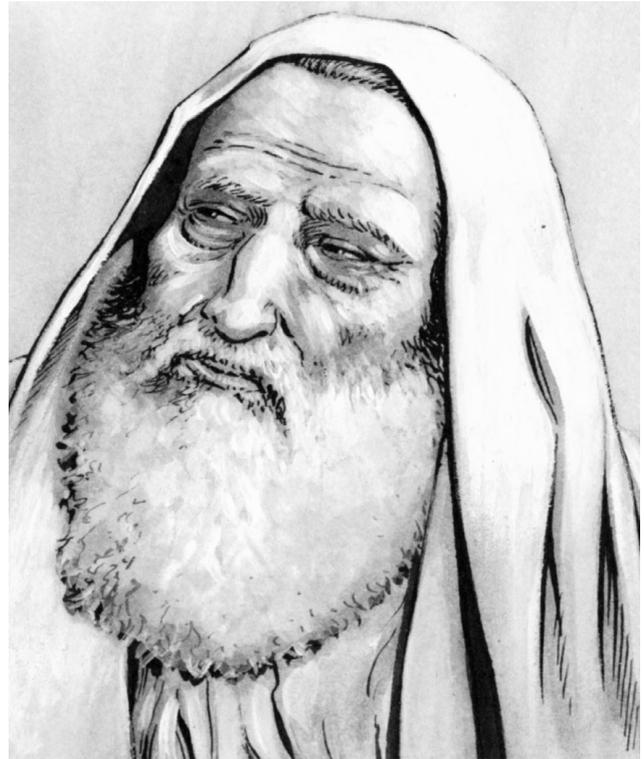
At Valmouny's manse, Mocravee, affairs are geared to a 25 hour day, to ease calculation of Valmouny's employees' stipends. The manse is sealed against daylight and artificially lit to prevent the potentially cataclysmic effect of the vagaries of seasonal and daily light on the ordered affairs of the household. This also provides Valmouny with the potential advantage that when the sun goes out, Valmouny can continue his research uninterrupted (should he even notice). Although Valmouny is as close-mouthed as any other Magician concerning his research, he is always as ready to crow over his latest triumph as any other. In this way, the direction of Valmouny's interests can be deduced. Valmouny endeavours to create vat-creatures that can be utilised to contain non-physical ideals in the manner of IOUN stones. Needless to say, taking Valmouny's status amongst the company of Magicians as a guide, it is apparent that he has not yet succeeded. An interesting aside to this research, though, is Thurl, the vat-creature that serves as Valmouny's major-domo. Valmouny claims that Thurl embodies that moment of time when the sun will go out, and ensures the security of his manse by means of a large pad of explosive diambroid affixed to Thurl's head. Valmouny has loudly commented to any that care to listen that should his manse be violated, the diambroid will be detonated, thus bringing about the extinguishment of the sun. To date, none have dared test the veracity of his claim.

Valmouny's other areas of interest include the construction of various engines. The principles of these engines

have benefited nearby slaughterhouses in augmenting their efficiency, and one particular demonstration was sufficient to cause Weft, Prince Kandive's infamous torturer to abandon his post and adopt the discipline of vegetarianism.

All of the manse's staff are subject to an employment review every 25, 100 and 1,000 hours, with a full staff review every 10,000 hours. Staff failing to reach the required standard are generally discharged. 'Discharged' appears to be a euphemism for 'recycled', which in itself is a euphemism for a somewhat unclear procedure.

Valmouny's attire is as austere as his manner, shunning the garish excesses of the majority. He can be observed on many occasions, parading the streets of Saskervoy clad only in a simple shift of colourless fabric. Valmouny's comprehension of everyday matters is limited which is reflected in what he considers proper conduct. He has been known to loudly berate the clientele of a wayside inn for being drunk in public, and lectures merchants on the evils of charging good terces for fruits that are available free of charge in the nearby deodand-haunted forests. The fact that Valmouny resembles nothing more than a bewildered old man in a night-dress appears to have escaped him. Unwise strangers have mocked him on many occasions, to their ultimate dismay.



Valmouny

'Valmouny resembles nothing more than a bewildered old man in a night-dress'

Valmouny also fulfils the role of magistrate for the villages surrounding Saskervoy. His interpretation of proper conduct frequently conflicts with the laws of the region, but this is of little consequence to Valmouny. His perceptive legal mind and ability to twist the law into hoops and loops that would daunt a contortionist enable him to pronounce a guilty verdict in any case. It is rumoured that a conversation between Valmouny and Klasti on a fine point of legal precedent ended only after several weeks when Perfluos the Profound invoked a Temporal Hiatus to enable him to separate the two. Necessarily, as magistrate, Valmouny officiates as judge at public contests. Valmouny's favoured team consistently wins, as the majority of opposing contestants are invariably arrested for various misdemeanours by the mid-point of the contest.

Valmouny is styled 'The Insipid' in recognition of his sartorial retardation.

Suggested Statistics: *Obfuscatory* 14, *Lawyerly* 12, *Cunning* 8, *Vexation* 9, *Magic*: *Studious* 12

Perfluos the Profound

Perfluos is the assumed 'First among Equals' within the Five-fold Three. This is generally because he is willing to attend to the details of the association, such as the organisation of annual field trips to the Scholasticarium in Kaiin.

Perfluos's pre-occupation with the exact mass of brain matter require to hold either a Straightforward or a Complex spell have lead to a lifetime of bizarre experiments on his own sensorium. The results of these experiments account for Perfluos's unworldly appearance, his cognomen, and his somewhat changeable personality. Perfluos sports a cluster of metal clips about the crown of his bald head. On occasion, these

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clips hold small jars or tubes, within which float lumps of organic matter: segments of the brains of others. By means of wires and piping, these adjuncts are connected to Perfluos's own brain, allowing him access to the knowledge contained within them. Conversely, Perfluos seems to take on aspects of the personalities of these long-dead anonymities, though not to the extent that he loses his sense of self. Other than this, Perfluos appears as a neatly-dressed, fashionable member of Cutz society, with a carefully trimmed black beard, green and black crushed silk shirt, trows of a dark blue, and curl-toed boots terminating in red pom-poms. He eschews hats, which would perch awkwardly upon his clips.

Perfluos's manner is generally dreamy and pre-occupied. His absent-mindedness is immensely more pronounced than that of the usual magician, but once his attention has been engaged, his views and opinions on even the simplest of matters are never less than insightful. Conversations with Perfluos at these times can be fascinating and thought-provoking, as he seems capable of grasping many sides of an argument simultaneously. This is accentuated when any of his clips are in use.

Perfluos's manse Astrades is an immense frosted-crystal sphere that initially rested on six rock pedestals. On particularly stormy nights, the manse was known to dislodge itself, and roll about the surrounding countryside, to the sound of Perfluos's dismayed outcries. After these events an extra pedestal was added to the manse's foundations, in the hope of improving stability. Because of the manse's history of unintended movement the gardens of rare and exotic plants are within the manse itself, on the upper level. Access to the manse is either by way of an iron framework that winds about the manse, terminating at the summit of the sphere, or by air. Meetings of the Five-fold Three are invariably held at Astrades, and Perfluos is extremely open with his research: practically unknown amongst Magicians. So far, however, neither Valmouny, Klasti, nor any other Magician has succumbed to the urge to hammer metal clips deep into their own sensoriums.

*'no other Magician has succumbed to the urge to
hammer metal clips deep into his own sensorium'*

The practical effect of Perfluos's experiments allow him to plug in a morsel of brain matter containing a Straightforward or Complex spell: Perfluos is able to memorise this spell immediately, at the cost of forgetting another spell of the same type. In this way, Perfluos can carry with him a number of useful spells, instantly switching one for another at will. The spell so memorised is forgotten as soon as the adjunct is removed.

As Primate of the Five-fold Three, Perfluos endeavours to maintain equilibrium within the group, but given the untoward personalities of both Klasti and Valmouny, and Perfluos's own disinclination to concentrate on matters at hand, this is seldom the case. On occasion he has discovered that he is in conflict with one or both of these worthies, without recalling the principles of the dispute.

Perfluos is recognised as 'The Profound' by virtue of the sobriquet's aptness.

Suggested Statistics: *Eloquent* 10, *Penetrating* 10, *Finesse* 7, *Intuition* 7, *Magic*: Curious 15

*The Five-fold Three*¹

As is the case with any number of other collective groups of Magicians, Klasti, Valmouny and Perfluos are in association by sheer proximity. In order to avoid the wasteful process of direct competition for resources (including the local population), the Three maintain an uneasy peace. This peace is routinely subverted by all of the members for any number of reasons normally rooted in gaining advantage at the expense of another. Perfluos considers Klasti's actions highly unorthodox, and possibly criminal, but is acutely aware of the difficulties inherent in curbing the behaviour of such a nebulous quantity. Accordingly, he will often direct his attention to thwarting or inconveniencing Klasti. The case of the theft of Klasti's Omnihedron by one of Valmouny's vat-creatures, for instance, was summarily dismissed – by Valmouny. Klasti routinely aggravates Valmouny, often by the simple uncertainties inflicted by Klasti's presence. Both find time to put aside their differences and press an assault against Perfluos, should they consider that his attention is suitably absent.

1. The origin of the name of this group is obscure. Many claim that, given the uncertainty of Klasti, the correct title of the band is perhaps closer to 'The Five-fold Two (Pending Clarification)'.

✿ Lesser Magicians of the Northern Saskevoy Reach ✿

Perfluos, however, bears no malice to either, and is easily capable of dealing with the truculence of either through judicious use of spell-swapping. On the whole, an uneasy balance is maintained.

Suggested adventure hooks

1. Valmouny requires help in his production of vat creatures. In order to do this, he offers to compensate the players for a quantity of their blood. The resulting creature (which periodically randomly changes form to that of one of the characters) escapes, and begins to enjoy its new life in the surrounding villages.

Unfortunately, it has no knowledge of local customs or mores, and rapidly develops a bad reputation on behalf of all those it imitates. Valmouny, by dint of a complex legal argument, holds the player characters responsible for the actions of a creature created from their own blood, and threatens to bear down with the full force of the law unless the creature is re-captured.

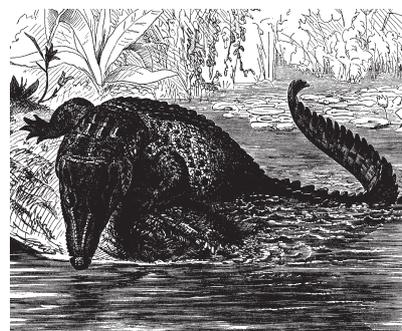
2. Perfluos engages the characters to perform research at the local library. A team employed by Klasti have been given the task of researching the same subject, but they appear to have privileged access to the necessary tomes. The players are consistently denied access to research materials, while Perfluos grow ever more impatient ... Somehow the research materials must be suborned from the gloating rivals.

3. Valmouny is taken ill, and the characters are deputised to the task of meting out justice in his absence. All must proceed according to the law! All must proceed according to Valmouny's strict instructions from his sick-bed! The two sets of strictures differ wildly. The first notable case is to try the recalcitrant vat-creature from Scenario #1. Confusion is compounded as the prosecutors rapidly become the accused.

4. Klasti intends to steal back the Omnihedron so recently purloined by Valmouny's major-domo. Considering the efficacy of Valmouny's security, the characters must find a novel approach to extricating the artefact (presumably by co-opting or subverting Valmouny's staff, or by use of a remote-control *Clockwork Insinuator*, provided by Klasti for the purpose).

5. Valmouny has placed a large wager on a beast race. It is evident that Valmouny's beast will win, as many of the other beasts are already languishing in the stable-cells, awaiting arraignment on a number of supposed four-legged crimes. The characters are employed by Klasti to nobble the favourite. This is not as simple as it seems - upon first attempting the feat, it transpires that the beast is possessed by a minor demon. Learning this, Klasti now wishes the beast to be stolen, rather than nobbled. This is evidently considerably harder than it sounds.

6. Perfluos, requires that the characters obtain the eggs of a Marsh Warbler (presumably a kind of bird) for him exclusively. Klasti and Valmouny shortly demand the same. The Marsh Warbler turns out to be a crocodylian of immense size, whose only weak spots are its Lumbar Nodes. Hilarity ensues ...



London-based Steve Durrant clearly brings his experiences of life in the capital to bear on his contributions.

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✿ The Quirvel Stand ✿

Colonel H Beaver has devised a confidence trick ...

The editor has observed that great literature and cartography are not bedfellows.

On the south side of the village of Muiry on the Scaum Valley¹ path is a makeshift trestle table, covered with fine cloth, attended nonchalantly by a short, grimacing local, Rassmugan. He wears the customary light cotton shawl embroidered with floral imagery over a simple harlequinade. His hat is conical and marked with a spiral that runs from base to top. He has a waxed, two-pointed sharp beard which he fingers nervously. A small card placard on the stand states ...

RASSMUGAN'S QUIRVELS By appointment to the *Guild of Etiquette*, RASSMUGAN is entitled to supply quirvels to all visitors. These will ensure the most expedient service, and the best prices in Muiry.

~~~~~

You are Not Beneath My Notice (very small) 5 *groats* • I Note your Existence with Interest (small) 1 *terce*  
I Will Deal with you Promptly (medium) 2 *terces* • You are Entitled to our Premier Service (large) 5 *terces*  
I exist only to serve you (Very Large) *Please Enquire*

An array of carved quirvels are laid out on the stand, ranging from a 4 inch long stick with a simple inscription (very small) to a spectacular 5 foot long specimen (very large) The inscriptions are in a very obscure local dialect and translate roughly as 'The holder of this object is gullible and deserves to be fleeced.' In fact, *Quir Vel*, in this dialect means 'I am a gullible halfwit'. Itinerant visitors are unlikely to know this.<sup>2</sup>

Rassmugan explains how the Quirvel is deployed 'With your quirvel held out before, approach the inn keeper, merchant or official. Hold out your quirvel in your left hand, thus, and state clearly 'Quirvel, Quirvel, Quirvel.' You will be offered service according to the stature of your quirvel.' Rassmugan is very persuasive.<sup>3</sup> He will appear extremely reluctant to part with the Very Large quirvel, and will not accept less than 10 terces for it. It entitles the holder to bestow titles on anyone in the village<sup>4</sup>. It is most likely that at least one PC will leave the stand with a quirvel. A hundred yards up the road Rassmugan's brother Hanagan awaits, carrying a large danny-stick and wearing a star metal helmet. He is posing as a village guardsman. He states 'No stranger may pass without paying the stipend! 1 terce and 1 goate in final settlement is the legal requirement!' He is full of bluster, but will not physically prevent anyone from passing. He will give the correct degree of deference to quirvel holders and allow them past without hindrance. This will perhaps cause a few more to turn and purchase quirvels. The Preceptor<sup>5</sup> has two choices at this stage.

### *Choice the First*

Quirvels are recognised by merchants throughout Muiry. Tradesmen will be helpful, even obsequious to quirvel holders who will be taken to a separate room, served hoeby-leaf tea, and then fleeced<sup>6</sup>. Non-quirvel holders will be treated curtly, but are more likely to get a better deal because of their obvious lack of gullibility.

### *Choice the Second*

The merchants have never heard of quirvels; this is a brand-new scam by Rassmugan. They will be in turn amused and outraged by the quirvel holders' behaviour.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the local carpenter will notice a similarity between the quirvels and certain carvings that were stolen from his work room. If they return to the outskirts of the village they will discover that Rassmugan and his brother have departed, weighed down with terces.

1. Or any other village of your choice.

2. Requires a *Pedantry* roll with a levy of 2, assuming a relevant *Pedantry* skill.

3. *Persuade* Glib ~2, *Charming* ~1, *Rebuff* Obtuse ~1.5

4. Or any other distinctive property that comes to Rassmugan's mind

5. Also know as 'the GM'

6. PC's have a levy of one on all *Rebuff* rolls under such circumstances.

7. If someone approached waving a stick and shouted 'I am stupid, I am stupid, I am stupid' how would you react?

# ✿ The Delicate Art of Economic Survival ✿

*Or Gainful Employment and Profitable Schemes*

## *Phil Masters*

Even as the sun grows dim, the inhabitants of the Dying Earth feel impelled to continue to live. This implies certain complications and requirements; food, shelter, clothing, and so forth. While some find such things relatively easy to acquire, others discover that, like most of their ancestors through the world's long history, they must find some form of remunerative employment.

In terms of the Dying Earth RPG, this is not, in general, a significant issue for Turjan-level characters. For the most part they are fully occupied in employment defined by their histories and natures. They may be princes, military leaders, aristocrats, petty magicians, noteworthy merchants – in short, they most likely spend their time doing something that pays the grocer's and the tailor's bills. As for Rhalto-level characters, these are, in general, wizards of vast power for whom material survival is the most trivial of questions.

All too often Cugel-level characters lack any steady means of support. In large part, of course, this is exactly how a GM wants things; hungry individuals with no shelter can be inveigled into all manner of adventures by the offer of some minimal sum of money, or the mere hint of wealth. Nonetheless, if the game is to become a fully-fledged series, it can be helpful to have some idea as to how the PCs acquire their livings between incidents.



*The archetypal Dying Earth protagonist's crime of choice is undoubtedly confidence trickery.*

## *Player Decisions*

It is entirely likely that the players will not only design their characters around the idea of specific careers, but will suggest new and unique ideas for employment. This is to the good, as their ideas can provide the GM with ideas for plots, and perhaps for major features of the series. However, characters can be equally well based on other concepts, and then may have to scratch around in search of odd jobs as they go along. Fortunately, most PCs are enterprising folk, rarely at a loss for profitable ideas. Or so at least players like to think.

GMs should pay attention to the type of careers that players choose for their characters, and try to discourage certain categories of choice. The easiest, from GMs' point of view, are naturally itinerant jobs of the sort associated with adventure; merchants, mercenary soldiers, criminals, and the like can easily be dragged into all manner of adventures, and often have to leave a given area in a hurry. The only snag with such ideas is that they are, to be frank, terribly clichéd, at least in the world of role-playing games. Other wanderers, such as sailors or itinerant preachers, are slightly more problematic; while they certainly have possibilities, they also suffer constraints. Sailors can be hard to involve in inland adventures, while priests tend to have narrowly-defined ethics and objectives, and should logically answer to higher authorities, whether human or supernatural. Nonetheless, they may fit in well with the GM's plans.

It is more sedentary (or at least static) career choices that are truly problematic. In fact this is a general

## ✿ The Delicate Art of Economic Survival ✿

problem in role-playing games. GMs must forever be on watch for players who produce elegantly-crafted, richly-conceived characters with no possible motive whatsoever for getting involved in adventures. Even on the Dying Earth, there are farmers, bureaucrats, and home-makers. Fortunately for this specific game there is also a sense of overwhelming, arbitrary, and often brutal fate, which the GM can embody. If players insist on being difficult in their character conceptions, then their characters deserve to suffer the loss of their farmlands to hordes of marauding voles, the loss of their bureaucratic posts to the organisational decisions of deranged supervisors, or the loss of their homes and families to divorce or religious conversion. Especially sadistic GMs can dangle the hint of possible restoration of the status quo at the end of long and tortuous adventures; ideally, by the time the players or PCs realise that this is a false hope, they will be irretrievably entangled in unending complications.

(Of course, the loss of the static occupation also implies loss of the income for which it was adopted. There is little help for this; think of it as yet further motivation for the character.)

### Crime (and Otherwise)

A passing acquaintance with the Dying Earth stories might suggest that the only natural career-choices for Cugel-level PCs would be illegal. Admittedly, the protagonists of the tales are rarely mere thugs (although most will resort to violence when the situation is pressing and the odds are in their favour), but the normal behaviour of many of them, confronted with the need for cash, food, or shelter, is to resort to some sort of shady dealings. Nonetheless, Dying Earth games can and really should deal with something a little more complex than the doings of bands of petty criminals.

The archetypal Dying Earth protagonist's crime of choice is probably confidence trickery. Apart from anything else, this provides endless opportunities for the sort of baroque linguistic pyrotechnics that typify the stories. This whole aspect of the source material is represented in the game by the emphasis placed on the mandatory *Persuasion* and *Rebuff* abilities, and a goodly rating in the former is a prerequisite for a career in swindling, especially if the tricks are to be improvised rather than carefully pre-planned. Any style can be used for such purposes, although few confidence-men favour *Forthright* or *Intimidating Persuasion*. (That said, one who did might be an amusing variation.) Depending on the character's preferred mode of operation, *Appraisal*, *Concealment*, *Etiquette*, *Gambling*, *Imposture*, *Pedantry*, *Perception*, *Quick Fingers*, *Scuttlebutt*, *Seduction*, or *Stewardship* can all also be directly relevant to this way of making a living.

*Appraisal*, *Athletics*, *Quick Fingers*, or *Stealth* can also be relevant to other non-violent criminal enterprises, such as purse-cutting or burglary, and characters based on this style of life certainly have their place. Those who insist on combining a high rating in *Attack*, something in *Defence*, and perhaps a little in *Living Rough* and *Riding*, are welcome to the life of a bandit, but it is a life forever dependent on the ability to pick only on those truly less formidable than oneself. With so many other careers so much less illegal, and in some cases even ethical, why act as though determined to receive the punishments allotted to crime by the Dying Earth's ingenious and petulant rulers?



*Why act as though determined to receive the punishments allotted to crime by the Dying Earth's ingenious and petulant rulers?*

### Skills and Motifs

The chief point to consider in relation to jobs and characters is, of course, the abilities required for the latter to fill the former. These should, for the most part, be self-evident, but players should pay some attention to the question of useful or interesting secondary abilities. For example, a character designed to make a living as a medical doctor

## ✿ The Delicate Art of Economic Survival ✿

should take a decent level of skill in *Physician*, but might also do well to possess a working knowledge of *Pedantry* (if he wishes to be thought an acceptably learned fellow) or *Etiquette* and *Scuttlebutt* (if he wishes to find work tending to the better class of person, who can of course pay more appropriately). In fact, some jobs are performed built around whole lists of abilities; a wandering merchant may choose better stock by application of *Appraisal* and sell more effectively with a little *Persuasion*, will probably need some knowledge of *Driving*, *Riding* or *Seamanship* to make the movement from one stage to the other more tolerable, and may well also be skilled in *Etiquette* or *Gambling*.

It should also be noted at this point that *Craftsmanship* is an ability especially associated with earning a living, and requires little in the way of subsidiary abilities: although a few points in *Persuasion* or *Rebuff* may help ensure a craftsman his due reward. It should also be noted that the crafts most likely to appeal to the footloose adventurer, such as armoury, may not be the most profitable in many communities, whereas the best-paid occupations, such as jeweller, rarely have direct applications for those adventuring in the wilderness.

It has often been observed that the greatest profits are associated with specialisation, and the idea of *Tweaks*, introduced in the forthcoming CUGEL'S COMPENDIUM OF INDISPENSABLE ADVANTAGES, can help in depicting characters who follow this theory. For example, a medicine salesman might have a *Tweak* to his *Persuasion* ability that makes his claims for the coloured liquids he sells strangely convincing, or an habitual burglar might have a *Tweak* to his *Athletics* that makes him an especially skilled climber. At the very least, even without tweaks, one who specialises in a particular activity will probably carry the correct tools to support it. Admittedly, over-use of a single strategy (as possibly represented by a *Tweak*) may have its drawbacks; opponents and competitors may too easily anticipate one's actions, and those who pursue a criminal career may be tracked by the forces of justice or vengeance, who need only listen out for multiple complaints of a similar nature from adjacent regions. Nonetheless, concentrating on a specific, profitable approach to the question of earning funds can lead to excellent results.

### Some Possibilities

The following are just a few of the areas of employment that might well be appropriate to PCs in many games:

#### *Hunting*

The wildlife of the Dying Earth is regrettably dangerous, but it does include some less ferocious animals, and both the meek and the violent species may have pelts, meat, or ivory that makes them profitable to hunt. (Of course, hunting the dangerous types requires special skills and courage, but the hunter can then charge higher prices for his trophies accordingly.) As honest employment goes, this is a rather good choice for adventurers, in fact, as it teaches useful skills, commands a degree of respect in many societies, and provides simple adventure plots for the tired GM. The mere possibility of horrible death at the claws, fangs, or stingers of one's intended prey or other beasts is surely a small drawback.

Hunters should study *Attack* (with any style, though *Strength* or *Ferocity* may make something of a mess of pelts), *Defence* (unless perhaps one only intends to hunt small prey), and *Living Rough*. *Athletics*, *Perception*, and *Stealth* are usually also wise, depending to some extent on one's chosen methods.

#### *Mercenary Soldiering*

Despite the sensible weariness of many of the Dying Earth's states with the follies of conquest, there is still a place for the professional soldier, whether putting down bandits or half-men, guarding houses against burglars or cities from assault by larger bands, or filling out a nobleman's retinue while wearing a stylish uniform. The drawback with this as a career is that, however carefully one chooses one's employer, sooner or later, one may actually be engaged in combat by something at least as formidable as oneself. Still, for those whose only obvious advantages are size and surliness, soldiering is a workable choice.

The wandering soldier may be forced into a period of wandering by the catastrophic collapse of a previous contract, involved in escapades at the behest of an employer, or induced to a little speculative adventure by a hint of profit. Sadly, many common folk regard soldiers with mistrust moderated only by fear, but this need not be justified.

## ✿ The Delicate Art of Economic Survival ✿

A mercenary should ideally have good ratings in *Attack* and *Defence*, although bluff can achieve a great deal instead of either; indeed, a realist might suggest that the most important ability is the *Intimidating* style of *Persuasion*. While cynics expect all soldiers to *Rebuff* in the *Obtuse* style, other styles actually serve just as well. No other abilities are universal even among skilled soldiers; while *Etiquette* is handy for a well-paid bodyguard, *Living Rough* may be learned during an interesting career, *Riding* or *Seamanship* mark the cavalryman or marine respectively, *Gambling* is often the only way to pass boring and pointless guard duty, and so on.

### *Trade*

The merchant classes range from prosperous businessmen who never leave their mansions but who manage extensive organisations of salaried minions, down to solitary peddlers with a few rough kitchen implements or cheap fabrics to sell. Needless to say, Cugel-level characters, lacking *Wealth*, will tend to the latter end of the range, but some may be able to hold on to a few useful possessions and a fair amount of stock.

Adventurer-merchants should ideally specialise in small, highly portable goods, such as jewels, magical artefacts or amulets, or rare fabrics or furs; being tied down to operations within reach of a warehouse is too constraining. Likewise, they should preferably be interested in engaging in highly speculative ventures, and be susceptible to the hint of excessive profits in unfamiliar territories, rather than being the sort to restrict themselves to a familiar circuit. Fortunately, PCs as a breed tend to be risk-takers.

*Persuasion*, preferably in a *Glib* or *Charming* style, is the primary skill of an adventurer-merchant, along with some degree of *Rebuff* (probably *Wary*, *Penetrating*, or *Lawyerly*) for the occasions when they are buying stock or dealing with prospective partners. *Appraisal* can mark out the adaptable trader, *Craftsmanship* one who can make his own stock, and *Etiquette* one who has the sense to deal with the better sort of customer, while *Driving* enables one to operate with a cart if one's stock does not fit in a small pack, and *Stewardship* is likely to be helpful if one is actually successful enough to expand one's activities into a true trading-house.

### *Treasure-Hunting*

In a world with millions of years of history, there is much of value to be found in lost vaults or ancient ruins. Sadly, there are also numerous guardians, traps, and bizarre remnants, all posing considerable potential dangers, yet life must have its spice, and these hazards serve to justify healthy profit-margins on the treasure-hunter's sales. This professional may be entirely freelance, hauling his finds to the nearest substantial market for sale to the highest bidder, or may accept commissions from wizards, scholars, or collectors seeking specific items. In the latter case, characters should try to remember that their employer may wise enough to take some sort of precautions against the well-funded employee selling rarer discoveries elsewhere.

The treasure-hunter should have at least a tolerable rating in *Athletics*, as his work will inevitably involve some climbing, *Swimming*, or jumping, sooner or later. *Appraisal* and some *Pedantry* are the mark of the well-prepared freelance. Training in *Attack*, *Defence*, *Concealment*, *Living Rough*, *Perception*, *Stealth*, and *Wherewithal* may also be time and points well spent.



*Even the hero Loraio was at one time reduced to advertising the Glimmister of Sharpness.*



Sage advice from an adept. A masterly exposition.

# ❖ Adventures in Strange Worlds ❖

*Jim Webster*

‘It is but the diseased effort of an elder artist’

The Scaum valley is not a safe or comfortable place for the aspirant mage. The arch mages who subscribe to the Blue Principles rarely openly attack each other, although they generally keep a close eye on developments around them. The arch-mages pose an especial threat to anyone who has placed themselves on the path to greatness and hence stands out from the common ruck, particularly if the individual in question doesn't have the power to defend themselves should they offend one of the great. If the powerful are not enough of a threat to the aspirant mage, there is the constant risk that one's contemporaries are plotting to overthrow one and acquire your powers for themselves. Hence it is not an area where someone knowing a few spells can set themselves up as a sorcerer-king. It is instead an area where the wise mage makes as few enemies as possible.

Indeed, wise players will make as many friends as possible and when creating their characters should ensure that they know several of the arch-mages. In the course of their travels they will inevitably wish to call upon these friends for aid in times of strife. The Law of Equipoise demands that these friends also find tasks for the players to do in return.

The Arch-mages indulge in their own tussles for superiority, but the presence of the Blue Principles restricts their direct actions and they will therefore act through proxies. These proxies need not know why they are acting as they are. Here is a suggested task that your players could find imposed upon them as they travel around.



*There are many entrances in the Valley of the Graven Tombs; although the original residents have no need of such niceties, those who now inhabit some tombs may resent disturbance.*

***Gentle humiliation:*** *Hand the following out to one of the members of the party*



The arch-mage PANDERLEOU is a keen collector of rare and wonderful artefacts from all accessible dimensions. He has heard that there is an occasional portal somewhere on the south bank of the Valley of Graven Tombs which leads to the lost realm of Chaesm. This is a land abandoned by its inhabitants centuries ago. However there are legends of a great library of Chaesm which contained many valuable tomes describing the magics of the area. The books are written on thin wooden boards bound together and each is kept in its own wooden slipcase.

Panderleou has decided that he hasn't time to go on what he regards as a tedious trawl, but he hopes that you will do so for him. So sure is he that you would accept this smallest of tasks that he has brought with him a ring which is keyed to the portal, where ever it is. Once you get within a league of the portal the ring will start to glow with a gentle light, a light that gets brighter as you approach the portal. When the portal is touched by the hand wearing the ring it will open and allow one or more people to pass, providing they are all touching each other.

Once though the portal Panderleou has provided you with a case which will hold virtually an entire library should you need to and yet can still be carried by one man. He expects you to pick among the

books and bring home any he might consider of interest. Obviously if you find any you particularly want, feel free to put them in the case as well. The disadvantage is that only Panderleou can open the case to take things out. No matter how much has been put into the case, whenever anyone but Panderleou opens it, it will appear empty.



*However the truth is somewhat different ...*

Nahourezzin, savant of Old Romarth, felt he had been snubbed by Panderleou whom he regards as something of a common little upstart. He wishes to humiliate Panderleou and has chosen the party as the tool of choice. He arranged that Fianosther, trader in rare artefacts and historical curios, should purchase from a indigent traveller a 19th Aeon ebon box, the size of a well bound book and beautifully engraved and inlaid with sea horse ivory. The box contains a ring which will open a portal in the Valley of Graven Tombs. The portal leads to the world of Archeglamgan. In this world the trees are self ambulatory and walk and talk amongst themselves. They are not immediately hostile to anyone but would, for example, take a very dim view of people who make books out of wood. A peculiarity of this world is that the soil is fluid, the trees half walk, half float. A person would have to wade laboriously though this thick muck. They could float on the back of one of the inhabitants if the inhabitant was either willing or dead.

*Needless to say Panderleou will not be pleased, should he discover how the demon was released, and by whom.*

There is only one building on this world and that is made with walls of rammed earth and is roofed using thin stone slabs supported by matrices of magical force. The walls, floor and roof are all bound together to be utterly impassable but for the door, which can be opened by touching the outside of the door with any metal object. (Metal is not found on this world.) The building is a prison for a minor demon who, if released, will disappear immediately to revenge itself on the one who caged it in the first place: Panderleou. Once the demon has left the building will collapse upon itself and sink into the muck, leaving no trace that it ever existed. Needless to say, Panderleou will not be pleased, should he discover how the demon was released, and by whom.

The key to entering and leaving the world of Archeglamgan is the ring. If held next to the correct tomb in the Valley of Graven Tombs the side slab pivots and allows the party to crawl though and arrive at Archeglamgan. In Archeglamgan they crawl out of an identical tomb with identical pivoting slab. Leaving the world involves the party placing the ring next to the tomb and having the slab pivot. The situation is complicated because the tomb on Archeglamgan is hidden under the waist deep fluid soil, but with simplified because there are no other tombs. Anyone standing on the tomb will find the soil reaches only to their ankles. They can also see the worlds sole building in the distance, perhaps ten miles off.

## ERBERG & PARRAIFEL of *Kaiin*

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