

PELXPS007

Stranger, stay your hand a while

Are you sure you can cope with the contents of this publication? Ponder well on the writers.

M D Jackson, whose work comes to us, written in blood on the back of repeatedly erased medical records



David Thomas, who works sitting under a silver parasol on the bed of a long dead sea, dictating his works to three scribes, one blind, one deaf, and one mute



Justinian Merrihew who doubts not merely the nature of his existence but its very actuality



Ian Thomson who lives so close to the hithermost edge of the earth that dark dreams drift sinuously out of the darker gulfs of space and slip through the ivoried embrasures of his many canopied bed chamber.



Wonder at the pets of the Dying Earth, frolic in the icy streets of The Hidden City in the Mountains, gawp at Bildazan, God of Merchants and Thieves. Once again Pelgrane Press spares no expense or effort to bring to your attention what they most modestly assure me must surely be the finest collection of scenarios, background information and plot hooks for the Dying Earth as has ever been collected into one place.



So stranger, should you merely be desirous of titillation, of generously endowed maidens dressed in unlikely and uncomfortable combinations of chain mail and leather, of facile stories and shallow plots suitable only for the most juvenile, then carefully place this back on the shelf where your betters can find it.



If on the other hand you are a person of wit and discernment, welcome, this book has found its rightful home.

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The Dying Earth™

Tooth, Talon and Pinion

Pelgrane Press



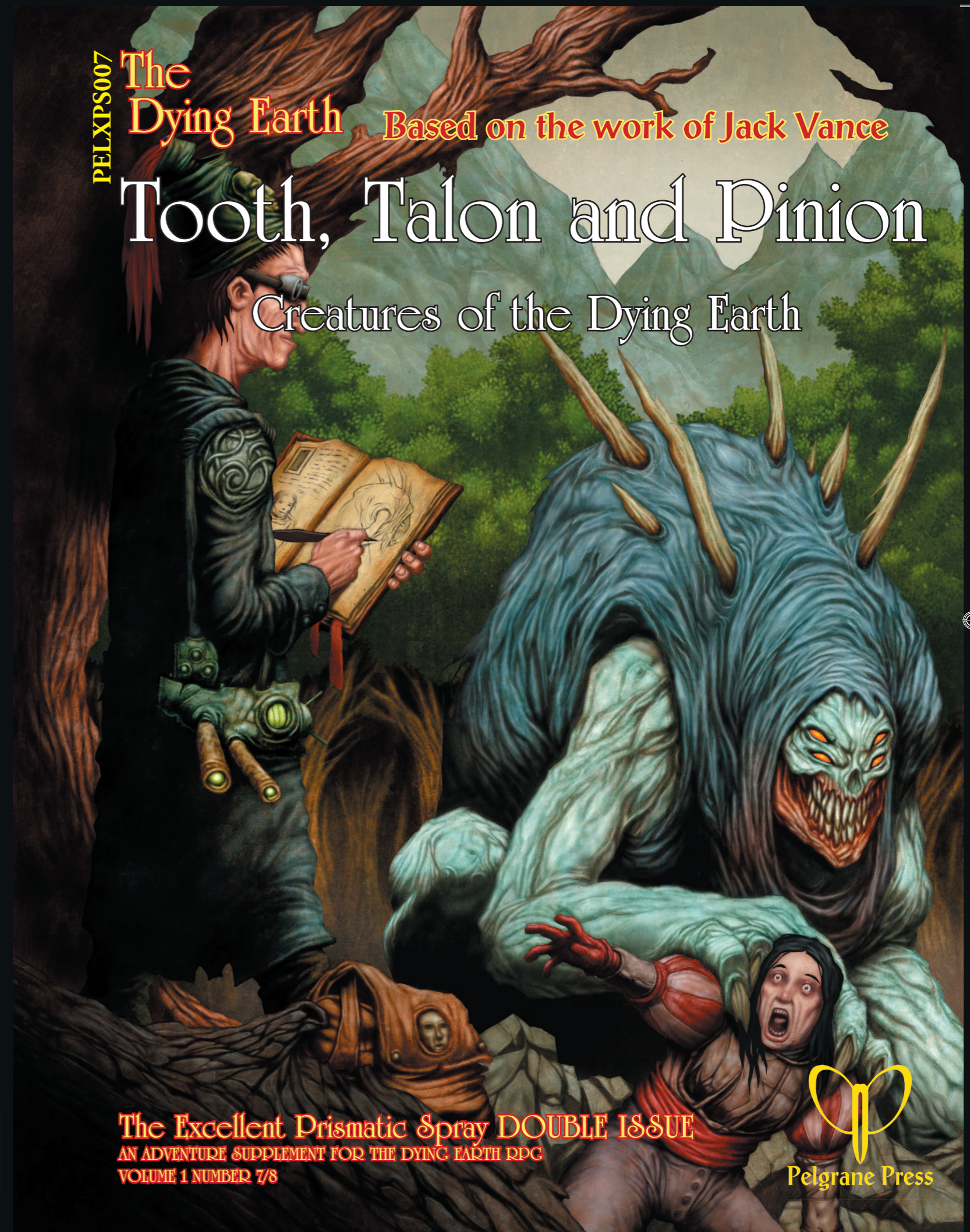
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The Dying Earth Based on the work of Jack Vance

Tooth, Talon and Pinion

Creatures of the Dying Earth



The Excellent Prismatic Spray DOUBLE ISSUE
AN ADVENTURE SUPPLEMENT FOR THE DYING EARTH RPG
VOLUME 1 NUMBER 7/8

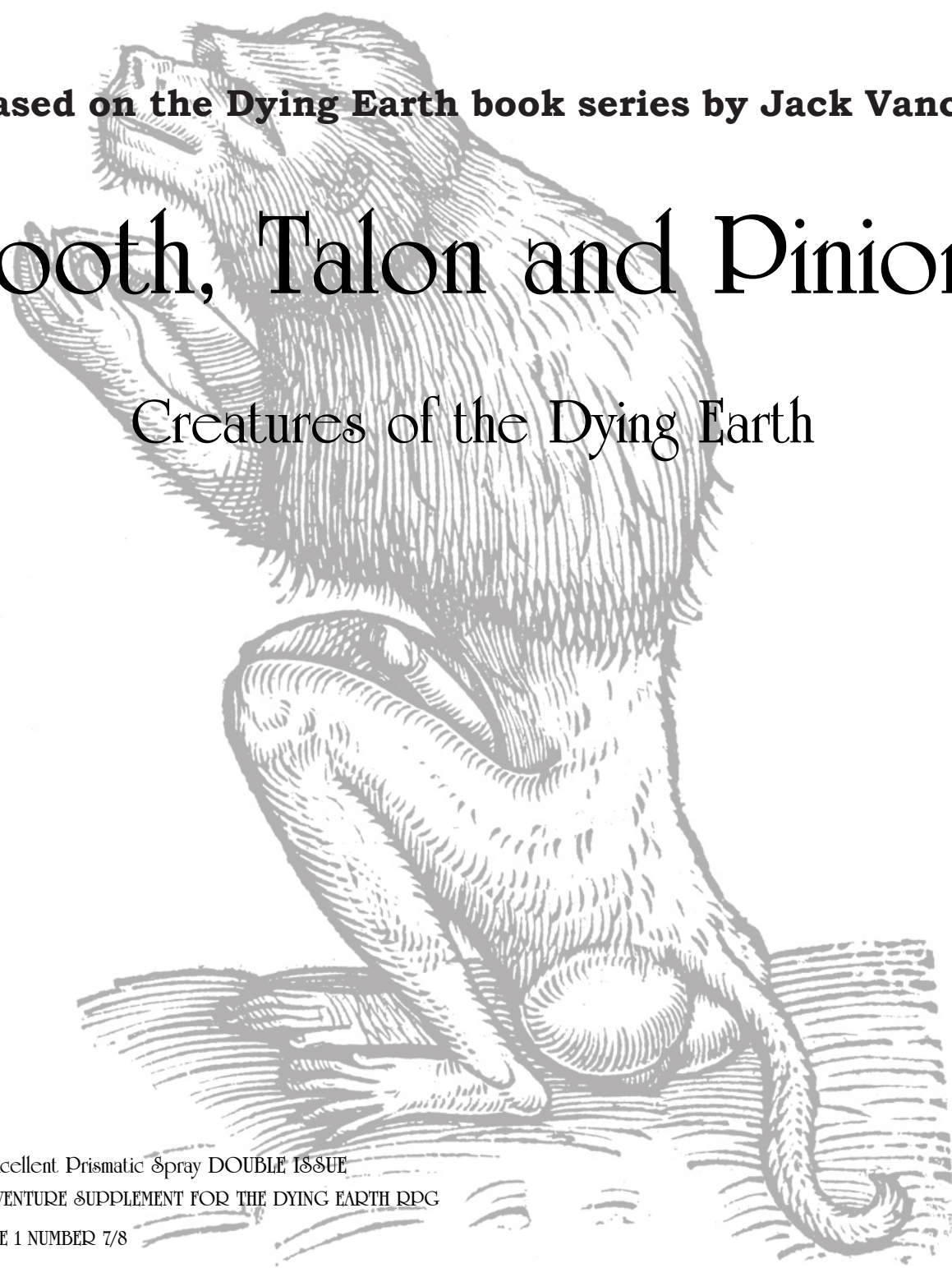


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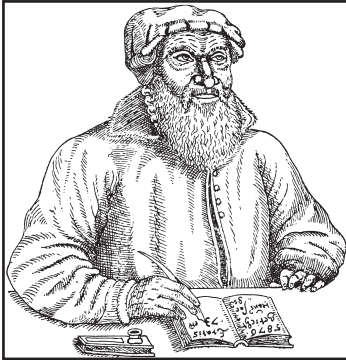
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✦ Editorial ✦



Yet again, with a regularity that displays our sensitivity to the demands of our readers, The Excellent Prismatic Spray once more appears. There are times in every editor's life when the time comes to spring into action. Often they are heralded by the arrival at the editorial offices of stalwart men with danny sticks sent by the publisher. So, surrounded by whimpering type-setters and miscellanarians I sit, pen in hand. The circumstances are not suited to the creation of great art; the screams of the paroemiographer have set off my parthophobia.

The contents of this issue are heavily weighted toward discussion on the nature of the beasts of the Dying Earth. This is an area we have perhaps given too little thought to up until now, but with some of the finest minds of the age committed to the topic I have no doubt that we have made a notable attempt to diminish the ignorance.

But lest you think that we have succumbed to chronic philotherianism we also venture into other areas and continue to elucidate and examine the farther corners of our ancient world.



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Some pedants and grammaticasters have made hurtful comments about the proof reading of this publication. It must be stressed that this magazine is a natural product. The slight variations in spelling and grammar enhance its individual character and beauty and in no way are to be considered flaws or defects



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The Letters of Bracht, Green Legionnaire

Compiled and Translated by M.D. Jackson

Editors note.

We have been handed these letters for publication. Normally we would hesitate to publish private correspondence but they do seem to cast a light on the nature of various creatures that represent a hazard for our fellow citizens. Hence we felt that by publishing them we would enable our readers to better understand how someone would best deal with such fell creatures as erbs, deodand, and Valdaran's Green Legion.

It was decided to retain the style of the writer, Bracht, who had few pretensions to literary merit and whose language was spiced with terms acceptable among legionaries but less acceptable in the drawing room of a respectable house. As a way of pandering to our type setters the letters have been split up and dispersed among the other articles. As a concession to you, gentle reader, they are in the order they were written.

To Mistress Isapinai~

I must admit to flicking through your lecture notes with interest as we sat in the Magician's. It has always astounded me that Mortiquan, an uncouth constructor of ill considered doggerel, author, (if that is truly the word) of The Ballad of Kalmir and Xozane, should be used as a source of instruction on the habits of deodand, erb or grue. Indeed to the best of my knowledge he has never ventured out of Kaiin and certainly never faced anything exhibiting more menace than an unpaid catamite, or the fury of a jilted widow. While Grashpotel might be an over wordy and self-opinionated old fool, one is forced, albeit reluctantly, to confess that he knows what he is talking about. Whereas the lamentable Mortiquan's knowledge of both deodand and verse form owes more to fever remedies and dream powders than it does to observation of reality. Indeed were it not for his sycophantic verses, dedicated in a most unsubtle manner to Prince Kandive's latest paramour, the green haired and utterly radiant Suletta, it is unlikely that he would be ranked among the poets of Kaiin at all.

One must remember that the speech of deodand is both subtle and enticing. This is something that an incompetent scribbler like Mortiquan could hardly be expected to render into verse, when writers exhibiting considerable competence have proclaimed the task to be beyond them. Similarly the deodand has a speed of reaction that far surpasses anything achievable by a normal man. Shooting a deodand from short range is not a recommended policy as should your arrow not prove instantly fatal the deodand will reach you and disembowel you before it realises that it is dead. I must confess that I have never killed a deodand myself but was present when Hilwini killed one that had been lurking on the fringes of the old town. He shot it from behind, at a range of a good fifty paces. He had an arrow in the bow and two with their heads stuck in the ground by his feet ready for speedy firing. He explained that if the first missed he could have drawn the second before the Deodand had turned round and located him, and if that missed he would still have the third drawn before the Deodand got within twenty paces. If the third arrow had failed then I with my grandfathers' erb spear and Tasci with his rapier were to fend the creature off until Hilwini too had readied his spear.

I wonder if perhaps it might be useful to continue this discussion tomorrow in person. I should be able to make my excuses and slip out of the Barracks sometime after the changing of the Watch. Perhaps we could meet at the Coppersmiths Tavern?

Bracht. Legionary.

The Letters of Bracht

To the fairest Isapinai~

I'm glad you found your way to the Coppersmiths. It has to be admitted that it is not perhaps the most salubrious establishment but on a legionnaires pay one cannot be too fussy. I was most impressed with your tales of the field trip Grashpotel took you on. Admittedly any junior officer of the Legion who lost so many men on a simple reconnaissance would be lucky if he were merely broken and stripped of his rank. Yet it has to be said that Grashpotel did seem to get most of you home safely and his comments about the culinary uses of the various creatures are to be taken seriously. It should be noted that far more Gid and Erb dine on human flesh than humans ever dine on theirs. Grashpotel is indeed a considerable expert in this field, just totally incapable of maintaining discipline in a small unit action.

I have been instructed by my superiors with regard to the recommended techniques for disposing of these creatures. Because we in the Legion do tend to travel in strong companies it is rare that we are bothered by predators. Yet isolated sentries may be attacked. Hence we tend to post men in pairs, one with a shield and the other with an erb spear. Erb, Gid, Pelgrane and Hoon are all best dealt with by a spearman who allows the beast to impale itself on the spear while a comrade armed with a large shield and a sword protects the spearman. I have killed a Hoon in such a situation myself; I held the spear and two colleges supported me. The hoon spitted itself on the spear and one comrade distracted it with his shield while the other slipped under its guard and cut its throat. We gutted it there and carried the haunches back to the camp where we ate the entire haunch roasted in its own skin over an open fire. Actually the hide is tough and the hair coarse. I know some have made jerkins of the material for when they are on fatigues. Double thickness with the hair scraped off hit makes excellent leggings for when you put in a shift in the quarry.

If you want to put the work of Mortiquan in its' context and grasp the true depth of his scholarship remember he is the one who says that the hoon is employed to pulverise "Krail", when one suspects that he actually means "Krale". The latter is a pod like plant yielding a rich indigo dye, if I remember aright it was what coloured the under blouse you were wearing yesterday, whereas the former is a rat/erb cross native to Cansaspara. Your uncle Volune has a pair of boots made out of kral hide.

Funnily enough asm aren't a problem. We did come across a village of them when marching north but they abandoned it before we arrived and probably reoccupied it after we had passed. I would agree with Grashpotel that they are intelligent and sociable. Whether they recognise the Legion as a similar entity and treat it with respect I wouldn't know.

Bracht. Legionary.

Grammaticaster seeks gorsoon, suitable candidates should apply to the offices of the
Excellent Prismatic Spray forthwith.



The Complete Works of Mortiquan. Will sell or swap for coloured baubles.
Apply Salisious Wingbat, Azenomei.

✧ Pets of the Dying Earth ✧

Lizard

Author's note¹: The several variant spellings on 'biologist' are intentional; I felt it enhanced the flavor of the text. Repairing the damage I have done to the English vocabulary, if needed, should be a trivial matter.



A Note from Altarrin to Grashpotel:

While my fellow students have been wasting their time in pursuit of half-mythical beasts no sane person would ever wish to meet, I have been conducting the far more valuable service of cataloging those animals that people might encounter in civilized realms. As such, I submit my work is of far more value, in that it can be checked, as opposed to the work of certain other individuals, who, for all we can tell, may simply be getting drunk in South Almetry while concocting ridiculous tales of 'grues' and 'deodands' which grow in ludicrousness with each flask of Mendolence imbibed.

Sincerely,

Altarrin Vax, Student of Biologetics.



🌿 Pocket Erb 🌿

Excerpts From *Candleweir's Guide To Suitable Companions For The Worthy*

...and so we see, from this anecdote, that tarp-breeding is suitable only for workingmen and the like, and not for those of nobler sentiments. Nor is it recommended that the finest choose for their closest intimates those of the race of man, for no other creature is a prone to treachery and ingratitude². So we turn, instead, to the so-called lower order, beasts that possess the ability to demonstrate affection but which demand no more than regular helpings of ground mermelant and a small pitcher of throck milk. Popular among the more daring of the ladies of Almetry is the Pocket Erb. This creature is usually kept on a leash woven of a mix of 85% silk, 14% tasslish, and 1% overworld lead, for reasons ancient and obscure. The leash itself is often decorated with images of small flowers. The Pocket Erb stands roughly two hand spans in height, of which fully a third is head. (And of that, fully a third is teeth) The beast is capable of being taught a few simple words, such as 'food', 'drink', and 'rend'. It can also be taught to perform tricks, such as 'lunge' and 'eviscerate'. There are few folk so hardened or bitter that they cannot be moved to tears by the playful antics of these charming creatures! A Pocket Erb resembles its larger relatives in all but size. It possesses the usual erbian compliment of limbs, in continuous motion, as it attempts to sit and stand at the same time. The stinger of the pocket erb is sometimes removed by the owner, a process called detalification, but this is considered barbarous and inhumane treatment by the Greater Almetry Beast Protective Association, who, if they spy someone with a detalified Pocket Erb, will set upon the individual with truncheons and inflict grievous wounds. More civilized owners of Pocket Erbs plate the stinger with gold, silver, or pheldspor, and make sure the end is well blunted. The most caring and compassionate of Pocket Erb Companions (for they do not consider themselves to be 'owners') will have specially fitted and highly ornamental tail-clasps manufactured, and these can be removed at will, allowing their beloved companion a night to wander around in its natural state, unhindered by any constraints. Such caring individuals are often well loved by their neighbors, their names spoken often and with great emotion. Under no circumstances must Pocket Erbs be fed honey -- the consequences would be dire. They are also especially fond of vithet vines, and will, if allowed to do so, make their home in a

1 It was felt that we ought to humor our author in this matter.

2 Dilwis Candleweir was married seven times, three times to the same husband. Her opinions were hard won.

✠✠✠ Pets of the Dying Earth ✠✠✠

bower of such vines, only leaving when it is time to be fed. Pocket Erbs, if well fed and well treated, and kept safe from the wrath of those few slope-browed and beetle-tongued individuals who do not appreciate the wild spirit of these marvelous creatures, can live up to twenty years. Thus, I, Candlerweir, recommend the Pocket Erb to the most sophisticated individuals.”



On The Origins Of Pocket Erbs: A Monograph By Beremon Of Forell's Port

“...it is obvious to any observer of any intellect whatsoever that the so-called ‘Pocket Erb’ is not an Erb at all! The Erb, is it well known, has eyes akin to those of an insect, such as a tarp or zrek; the ‘pocket erb’, on the other hand, is clearly more akin to the gid, perhaps infused with mermelant essence, which is the only thing which can account for the odor. Clearly, the sobriquet ‘pocket erb’ was created a merchant eager to make sales, for while the concept of owning a small erb has a certain baroque appeal, no one would ever choose to own a ‘pocket-gid’ or ‘dwarf mermelant!’”



Found in Forlin's Commentary on Beremon

“It is on the topic of pocket-erbs that we see Beremon at his worst. I do not know what creature he was studying, but it was clearly not a pocket-erb. For one thing, he did not mention the profusion of feathers around the base of the neck, which is such a distinctive feature it virtually defines the breed! Nor are the eyes non-insectile. My cousin possesses a pocket erb, and it clearly shows eyes segmented according to the ‘Epsilon’ pattern noted in Appendix 4”



From a fragment of a blood-spattered letter found in a compilation of goods being sold at an auction in Almerly, believed to date to early in the 21st Aeon:

“...I am telling you, Mother is crazed. Her mentality, never precisely ‘five-fold-proper’ as the Cuunish say, has clearly degenerated, and I intend to make full claim to my inheritance once the local sick-taker has been called to deal with her. The mansion is a disaster. Half the servants have fled, and the others are covered with scars of all sorts. The neighbors shun the place, and anyone associated with it -- in the two weeks since I returned from Kaiin, I have not been asked to single social gathering, which is an outrage almost beyond words. And do you know why? Her PET! The putrid thing follows her everywhere, prancing along behind her on its ridiculous little legs. She feeds it the finest morsels of candied meat, and calls it ‘Poochniks’, for no obvious reason. She will hear no ill spoken of it, yet, the moment she releases it for its ‘evening exercise’, it takes to attacking anything it can see. Only a madwoman could consider such a monstrosity to be anything other than repulsive. Once Mother has been placed in a suitably safe locale, I will make an end of it. It enjoys live wreele more than anything; I will use these to lure it to a box, wherein it will be sealed, then dropped in the Scaum. Such will (here the manuscript stops in a flood of ink, then continues on the next page) By all! The thing startled me, causing me to spill ink. As I railed at it, it crouched over my writings, looking this way and that, at the letter and at me. I shoed it away so I could continue writing to you. The look it gave me as it left was curious, those tarp-like eyes glistening with what I could only take to be emotion. It's almost as if it knew the contents of this letter and my plans for it! Such is nonsense, of course -- no one would keep such a creature if it possessed any more intellect than this quill I am using!” =====



✧ Pets of the Dying Earth ✧



A note from Altarrin to Grashpotel

Here the missive ends; evidence indicates it was never sent. The value of the letter is placed at five terces. I should note that, as part of my research, I purchased a Pocket Erb from a seller in Azenomei, a charming creature I have named 'Vrull' (after the 18th Aeon God of Agriculture and Boxes), which cost me 25 terces. I assume I will be reimbursed for the costs of my researches from university funds? If I am not reimbursed for its purchase, I shall have to release it into the wild, as I cannot afford to feed it. On an unrelated noted, I see that the vithet vines near your quarters are in full bloom; they are indeed lovely.)

✧ Adventure Possibilities ✧

"Please Save My Snurflee!" The PCs are asked, cajoled, bullied, or otherwise convinced to aid Madame Foremela Vithcoor, who is utterly distraught over the loss of her beloved pocket-erb 'Snurflee'. Her husband is a man of significant influence locally, and wishes only that his wife be made happy again. Thus, the PCs must locate 'Snurflee', who is lost somewhere in a nearby forest (or, even more amusingly, town) and return him, utterly unharmed to Madame Vithcoor. This means that no infliction of wounds is permitted; all attempts to capture Snurflee must be done without recourse to force. Complicating matters is the fact that Lord Vithcoor really does not want Snurflee returned, but, rather than let the PCs know this (and thus provide blackmail material), he has instead sent an additional group of dubious individuals out to make sure the PCs fail. For added fun and excitement, it can be worked so that half the party is working for Lord Vithcoor to save Snurflee, while the other half is working to foil them.

✧ Pocket Erb ✧

Attack (Ferocity) 6, Defense (Dodge) 5, Persuade (Charming) 12*, Rebuff (Contrary) 2~*, Athletics 6, Living Rough 9, Perception ~, Stealth 2~

Please note, the Pocket Erb does not or will not talk, except in fanciful children's tales such as 'Cruz And The Boy' or 'Three Terces For Master Lorveen'. The 'Persuade' skill reflects solely the ability of the Pocket Erb to get its owner to provide it with food, scratch its outer scales, or see it as a cute and cuddly pet. The 'Rebuff' skill reflects the degree to which the Pocket Erb will refuse to move from stacks of papers it is sitting on, or go outside when asked, or stop gnawing on the nose of a distinguished guest.



Your Employer(s)

🐌 Kaiinish Mockery Slugs 🐌

From *Duels Of The High Kaiin Families*, Volume MMCLXII

“The battle between House Tesh and Great House Kran was begun due to an incident at a party given at the ancestral hours of Kran the Twice-Elder. Klisten Kran, Second Heir to the Kran estates, spent the party surrounded by a fawning gaggle of associates, who swarmed around him in such a fashion that he was mostly hidden from view. Over the course of the evening, members of this throng would point and giggle in the direction of Amado Tesh, whose emotions went from confused to thoughtful then through vexed to furious. After ascertaining his garment bore no undesired stains, tears, creases, or holes, and that his hair was style in a ‘triple swirl’³ as was the required fashion, he stormed towards the cluster of mockers and pushed through to Klisten. Sitting on Klisten’s shoulder was a mockery-slug in the very likeness of Amado himself! Amado drew his rapier, the famous blade ‘Whizzleweep’, and slew Klisten right in the great hall of his father’s house. Kran’s guardsmen immediately seized Amado, and the base insult was avenged by a complex mechanism involving honey, tasps, four sizes of gears, and small wooden statue of a dog⁴, and the remains of Amado were left for his own family to find. Thus began a long and vicious feud...



From *Death Of A Barber*, Act V, Scene IV

Inspector Vousbane: “And so we see it plain! The hair is here, our search is not in vain!”

Barber Lerd: “The accusation is absurd; on that you have my word!”

Noble Crenz: “Let all deception end. Touch hair to worm, and watch its features bend.”

(They do so; Crenz and Vousbane gasp; Lerd slumps)

Barber Lerd: “But there is much you have not heard. My honor still may be repaired. Though his features had been blurred, it was Crenz who paid to have the slight inferred.”

Noble Crenz: “You lie, and now, your body I will rend. Death to all those who would good Crenz offend!”

(They duel. Lerd is slain.)

Inspector Vousbane:” His guilt was surely plain, but he was not the main/Culprit in this vain scheme of honor’s bane.”

Noble Crenz: “This is a loathsome trend; that traitor you defend?”

Inspector Vousbane: “Traitor, yes, but only due to pain inflicted by you, Crenz, when his family was slain.”

(They duel. Crenz dies.)⁵



From *Culzariths’ Catalog of Creative Creature Comforts*

It is insufficient to merely warp the features of your slug (molluscus imitatus Kaiin) into the necessary shape; for true impact, you must provide suitable garb! We at Culzarith provide a wide range of clothing to suit almost any style: Many Tiered Hat (miniature) 3g Half-doublet With Matching Sash (miniature) 4g Tail-Pontoons In A Variety of Colors: 1g⁶

3 An interesting style that demanded the head was shaved except for three long scalp locks that were brought round to tie together above the wide brimmed hat much worn at the time.

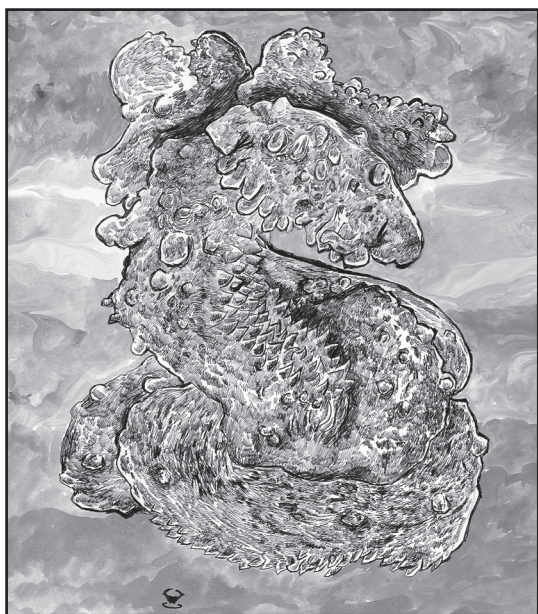
4 For those interested in this and similar mechanisms we can do no more than refer them to the forth coming Pelgrane Press publication, *The Pelgrane’s guide to Bondage and Torture*.

5 What modern playwright could match this for subtly of form, the simplicity of the underlying metaphor, or the ironies inherent in the plot? Alas we live in a fallen world.

6 Strangely Culzarith have always quoted in groats, their merchandise is thus advertised at extremely competitive prices. Purchasers have been surprised to discover later that the prices are actually in the rarely seen double terce of Gador Porrada.

Mockery Slug

Statistics: Basically, none. A mockery slug can neither attack nor meaningfully defend; it cannot persuade or be persuaded. If someone wishes to kill one, they merely need to state the intent to do so and have some weapon at hand and a few seconds to strike a killing blow. No rolls are needed.



From Turjan's Workbook:

The matrices for the mockery slug are simple enough for a beginner to master. Beginning with the equation $ty/q1+h$, proceed clockwise until the admixture is $+4x$ over m . Then add biological matter of the 'detritus' class from the archetype desired, and mix gelatin of leucomorph until $+6o-3r$ is reached. All will then be in readiness.



From the Editors' Workbook:

The Kaiinish Mockery Slug is a creature whose mere possession is a social statement, and most often a violence-inducing one. A vile invertebrate of roughly 1 foot in length, the Mockery Slug exudes an odor akin to rotting deodand flesh mixed with putrefying sea life, and leaves a trail of like-smelling ooze wherever it travels -- if a speed of perhaps a foot an hour can be said to be 'traveling'. Its skin ranges from mottled grey-green to putrescent purple-pink, shifting over time in subtle yet disturbing ways. None of which marks it a creature likely to be called a 'pet', save for the distinctive feature which gives it its name -- the creature's featureless head can be altered to precisely resemble the face and features of a selected individual. Obviously, having their visage displayed on so vile a beast as this would rightly and justly enrage such an individual, and thus, openly flaunting a mockery slug is considered one of the basest insults imaginable⁷. Thus, they appeal to the brash, the daring, and the foolish in equal proportion. Mockery Slugs will eat anything, provided it is rotted, and, if cared for and kept from harm, will live 5 or 6 years. They are seemingly incapable of showing any emotion other than hunger, and offer no affection or companionship whatsoever. Months of patient training may induce

the slug to raise its head and look about quizzically when its name is spoken; this is almost invariably the name of the person whom the slug resembles. In order to create a Mockery Slug, some biological matter, most commonly hair, belonging to the target (or 'archetype') is needed. This must be placed on an unshaped ('virgin') slug. After a few moments, the slug's head will reshape itself into the image of the being to which the hair belongs. Once a slug has been thus deflowered, it cannot again be altered.



A Note From Altarrin to Grashpotel:

For purposes of dissection and examination, I have acquired a virginal slug, at a cost of 9 terces. Again, I expect reimbursement. By the way, I happened to be watching as that barber trimmed your moustaches last week; he is quite skilled, and you are lucky to have him.)



7 Except perhaps among Walvoon Shopkeepers

✠✠✠ Pets of the Dying Earth ✠✠✠

✠ Adventure Possibilities ✠

You DARE? In a Rhialto level campaign, a rival of one of the PCs has begun attending gatherings and conclaves while leading a mockery slug bearing the image of the PC on a leash. The PC, naturally, wishes to avenge himself, but direct slaughter is out of the question; the rival is well protected by powerful sandestins. Clearly, “Equality is the essence of justice”, and so, the PC will desire to procure a mockery slug of his own. The first step will be getting some hair or other matter from the rival; this alone can involve many intricate schemes. Then, the two will most likely begin a sequence of ever more extravagant humiliations visited on the slugs, and, by proxy, on each other. This competition can provide an amusing running backdrop to an ongoing series.

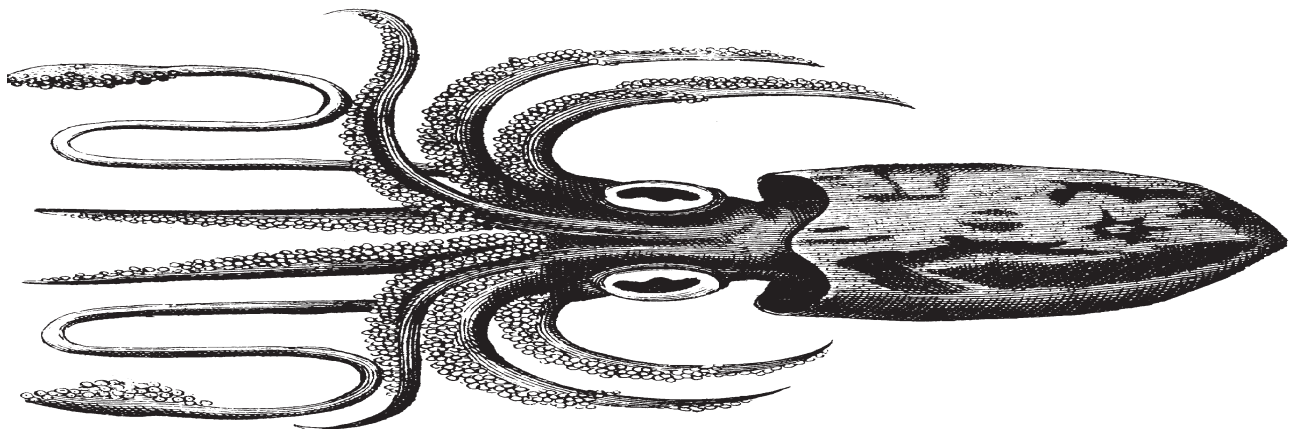


Revelation! In a Cugel level game, one of the characters is (falsely, for once) accused of truly base wrongdoing⁸. There is a lack of any hard evidence, and eyewitnesses are notably unreliable, especially after a few quick ‘Persuade’ rolls. A few hairs of the criminal were found at the locale of the crime, and, due to a postal error of great fortune, a virginal mockery slug was delivered to the chief constable. The hair is touched to the slug, and, lo! The features are indeed those of the PC! Thus must several mysteries be solved -- who framed the PC? Was the slug truly ‘accidentally’ shipped here? How did the hair end up at the crime scene? Isn’t just easier to run away than waste tedious time solving such mysteries while the sun sputters and dies? (The GM had best be sure to have a good answer for the last, as it shall most likely be the first question asked) Alternately, the use of a mocking-slug in this manner could be the only means by which a PC can prove their innocence of an accusation. In this case, acquiring a virginal slug and using it before some arbitrarily short date will be the essence of the adventure.

🐙 Dolsan 🐙

From Zevrizen the Medium’s *Jade Bestiary*

“The creatures known as Dolsan come in two varieties: The plain, or ‘common’, dolsan, which is a pallid grey in color and which is of no particular appeal, and the ‘chromatic’, or ‘uncommon’, dolsan, which is prized throughout Alмеры for its beauty. Each uncommon dolsan has a unique patterning of bright colors, ranging from intricate swirls to bold and daring ripples. Sophisticates often purchase dolsan to match their favored garments. Both types are identical in form: A tapered cylindrical body perhaps 18 inches in length, with two long, broad fins jutting out from the sides, is capped by ten tentacles of equal length stretching forward from the head. The beast is thus sometimes called an ‘air-squid’, though skilled taxonomists realize it related to the Unusual Hoon, albeit by a line of descent which seems unobvious and ambiguous to minds of unrefined intellect.”



8 the novelty of being falsely accused will be something that your players doubtless come to appreciate later when the accusations are well founded and backed with an insupportable adequacy of evidence.

❖❖❖ Pets of the Dying Earth ❖❖❖

From Forlin's Commentary on Zevrizen:

"Zevrizen is a biologicist (more accurately, a biologicer) on a par with Beremon, and I mean no exaggeration by this! He divides the dolsan into species when, of course, they ought to be divided by gender. It is plain to even the most foolish that the grayish dolsan (I prefer the more descriptive term 'air squid') is the male of the species, and the colorful variant the female. This is plain from casual observation of our own species: Males are practical and sedate, and dress as needed, while females are gaudy and opulent, dressing so as to attract a mate. Even without having a dolsan on my dissection table, I can tell you that!"



From Liddius Vandervan, First Administrator For Correct Fiction, Kaiin:

"I have reviewed the matter in question, and conclude that all existing copies of 'Cruz And The Boy' be gathered up from every library, home, and school in the region, and suitably burnt. New editions, in which the character of Cruz has been changed from a pocket-erb to a dolsan are to be printed immediately. This will dramatically reduce the number of injuries children suffer due to the bad influence of foolish stories."



Fragments from the workbook of Glisither Of The Blue Sandals:

"Following the writings of Forlin, who is without doubt the supreme biologicist of our age, I have begun experiments in the breeding of Dolsan. Beginning with the absolute fact that the 'common' and 'uncommon' are the same species, and further following the dictum of gender identification postulated by Forlin, I have reached the following conclusions: That dolsan of either gender can breed without representatives of the other, and that, furthermore, half of dolsan males lay eggs. Further investigation is warranted."



From *Earn Terces With Rapidity -- A Guide For The Eager Entrepreneur*

"If you are adventurous, you may well start a business collecting dolsan eggs for sale. Dolsan are excellent and affectionate pets if raised from hatching, but are intractable if captured live (though quite edible if basted with their own ink and served on a bed of black grains). A dolsan egg is worth 1t if it turns out to be the egg of the 'common' dolsan, but 10t or more if it holds the much rarer 'uncommon'. The dolsan are mostly harmless to the prepared traveler, so gathering the eggs is perfectly safe. Dolsan live in the warm and wet Southlands past the Sea of Slow Tides, which is a significant trek from Almerly. Fortunately the aclimatic jungles surrounding the River Lenai, the famous 'streak of green where all else is brown', also hold populations of these aerial wonders, and while the journey is arduous, it is generally considered feasible. Once the dolsan have been collected, continue south to the coast, hire a ship at Forell's Port, and return to make your fortune. But you must hurry -- the sun may go out at any time, and a brace of dolsan eggs will do you no good in the dark."



From *The Illustrated Primer For Dolsan Owners, Fourth Edition*

There is perhaps no more heart-rending sight than former owners of dolsan running through the streets, looking skywards, and calling the names of their pets. While some advocate severing the forward pectoral ligaments, this results in the dolsan becoming an immobile if brightly colored lump rather than the graceful and exotic beast of the air it is meant to be. Thus, it is recommended are large 'airium' be built, at least 10 ells to a side, and plated with clear glass of no less than five tomals tensility. A latching door in the airium will permit easy entrance to the owner, provided he is careful to not let his pet escape. Fill the airium with trees from the lands the dolsan came from, and you will have a habitat worthy of the pet you love."

Remember, Madame Ulvan's Gripe Water and Pickling Fluid, essential for the rearing of young children. Apply Box 92 Kaiin

✧✧✧ Pets of the Dying Earth ✧✧✧

From *Queniver's Guide To Dolsan-Keeping*

“While some who have relatives in the glass-plate business advocate the construction of excessively large airiums in order to contain dolsans, a far simple solution is a small cage, perhaps one ell on a side, placed in a room which can be easily sealed. The dolsan will be quite happy in the cage, and, when the room is sealed, can be freed to fly around at will, then lured into the cage again with a mixture of one-half Gravin's Oil and one-half murgle seeds. This mixture is also usable as a means to train the dolsan to perform aerial tricks, such as 'looping the tail', 'tentacle walk', and 'wobble-over-waddle', which will amuse guests both young and old.”



A note from Altarrin to Grashpotel:

I was unable to personally verify certain of this data, as the journey to the River Lenai promises to be unsuitable for my spinal ailments. I understand that certain of your students are chasing willy-nilly across the landscape studying the mating habits of pelgranans and suchlike. Perhaps one of them could investigate the region and return a small brace of eggs to me? I will happily pay a full terce for each 'uncommon' egg found.

✧ Dolsan Adventure ✧

The Egg And I

Abstract: It is fairly obvious from my notes (See the writings of Zevrizen, Forlin, and Glisither) that the issue of gender and species differentiation is far from settled in regards to dolsan. Thus I have, at great personal expense and discomfort, sent individuals to fetch a sufficiency of eggs. With luck, there will soon be a sufficient supply of eggs to test my theories. Early experiments indicate the situation is far more complex than early observer's believed, and the matter may take some time to resolve. Funding for this endeavor is difficult to attain.

Introduction: While dolsan have been favored pets for at least two aeons, few attempts have been made to truly categorize their breeds and genders. The processes of incubation, post-hatch-feeding, and early training are all arcane and ill documented. Breeders often claim secret or exclusive knowledge, which allows them produce the finest and most attractive dolsan, and refuse to share this information with others. Two methods present themselves: First, the acquisition of an established breeder's "Reproductive Journal"; Second, the acquisition of enough eggs that definitive experiments may be performed. The major goal will be to settle the issue of gender and species differentiation among dolsans; the secondary goal will be to find a means of reliably reproducing the most attractive patterns of skin color, so that the process is less random. The economic benefits of such research are of no concern to true seekers after knowledge, and thus, I feel secure no one claiming to be a genuine researcher would seek to lay any claim to any profits, meager, which might arise from such a discovery. The breeding program, once eggs are obtained, will take some three to four months. Assuming the sun does not go out in that time, the final results of the development will be made available at the Kaiin Dolsan Extravaganza, held each year to show off the finest dolsans. Competitions for 'color', 'agility', and 'farlaal' are held.

Methods: Firstly, eggs must be obtained. To this end, a party of explorers of stout heart and eager mien will venture to the River Lenai, the closest source for dolsan eggs. Rumors of erbs, grues, and strange rituals practiced by decadent cultures will be duly ignored as the frivolous babbling of besotted minds. The eggs will be packed in specially prepared containers, which will protect them from all harm. They will be brought north to the White Road, and thence west to Kaiin. Travel through Forell's Port and then by sea may be faster, but the damp sea air is known to be damaging to the eggs. (The short transition from Sousanene to Almerly across the Vildershal Gap will be tolerable; the long voyage from the Sea of Slow Tides to the Songan Sea would make the eggs worthless) Once eggs are obtained, breeding will commence. In order to achieve optimal results in a limited time span, the workbook of an established breeder will be obtained, by methods that are too banal to discuss in a paper such as this. A complete and total tally of each type of egg, and the sort of dolsan hatched, will be kept. Crossbreeding

✧ Dolsan ✧

Attack (Speed) 3, Defense (Dodge) ~2*, Athletics (~2.5)*, Concealment (9), Perception (5), Stealth(~1.5) *This applies solely to aerial maneuvers. If the dolsan is limited to the ground, it has Athletics of 1 and Defense of 1.

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programs will determine which species of dolsan, if there is indeed more than one, are interfertile with which others. Further, the first detailed studies of the relationships of skin mottling to environment and heredity will be completed. This is truly breakthrough research, and it must be noted that it shall be completed in the workrooms here -- there is no need for 'field studies', which are simply excuses for extended vacations.

Results: None as yet. I await the return of my egg-bearers and certain other factotums before I can complete my studies. I trust this delay will not in any way impede the grading of this project, as the results of my study are certain.

Adventure Premise:

In order for Altarrin to begin his already overdue research project, he needs individuals of courage, daring, and desperate need to procure for him two items:

- 1, a complete set of dolsan eggs, and,
- 2, a dolsan-breeder's workbook.

While Altarrin's genuine concern for those he sends on this mission can be measured only by use of terms such as 'minute' and 'insignificant', he is indeed extremely concerned with the successful retrieval of the eggs. If he is correct, he will be able to outdo established dolsan breeders and produce dolsans of extraordinary beauty, the sale of which will provide him with the income necessary to permit him to live the life he truly deserves. Thus, he will take great care to warn the egg-gatherers of the Valley of Cages and its' inhabitants; despite the richness of the dolsan to be found there, they will be advised to avoid it. (Details on the Valley can be found in the scholarly journal *Excellent Prismatic Spray, Issue 2*; if the GM has access to this work of education and enlightenment, and feels the valley will provide an interesting excursion for the players, he may well have Altarrin forget to warn them, or arrange that they arrive there despite all efforts to the contrary. Remember, the winds of chance blow cold in the morning.) There are two routes to the best place to find dolsan eggs -- by sea, along the Songan Straits and past the realm known as 'West Sousanene' or 'South Almerly' until you reach the Mirkeer Strait; through the Strait into the Sea of Slow Tides and thence to Forell's Port; stop there for supplies (and see the fourth issue of the aforementioned scholarly journal for some details on this jewel of civilization in the swamp of barbarism that is Sousanene Exterior (South)), then head west again, along the coast, past Sulz, until you reach the Low Escarpment which marks the end of the elderly Stoop-Shouldered Mountains. Circle the mountains until you reach the River Lenai, then follow it south until the jungle grows thick around you; there you will find dolsan! Then, when collected, head north along the river until you reach the White Road, thence from there to Filoriel Minor, and take the caravan across the Silver Desert and once more to Almerly! Alternatively, you can travel with the caravan from Almerly to Filoriel Minor, then follow the above directions to the river, and then return again by the same route. For this to be successful, you must take great care not to leave behind you the angry, the enraged, and the furious, for they will make your journey back hard indeed. Be gentle in all things. Once the valley has been reached, it remains only that the eggs be collected. A seemingly simple task, complicated by several facts:

a) It appears, on close observation, the dolsan have the curious habit of flying from nest to nest, and settling themselves around any eggs whatsoever. Thus, tracking which dolsan laid which eggs becomes next to impossible.

b) Studies of *Vormile's Taxonomy of Aerial Invertebrates, Volume II* indicates that there are not merely dolsan; there are Lesser Flatwings, Greater Flatwings, Broadfins, Longwiggles, Speckles Orthans, and several other such variants. Only one of these species is suitable as a pet, but none of the commentators Artillan researched indicated which one it was.

c) It must be mentioned, of course, that there exists in the jungles surrounding the North Lenai river a tribe of mostly-human beings, tall, dark skinned, and green-eyed, with sharp features and sharper teeth, who are, as such things go, reasonably courteous to outsiders -- except, of course, for those who would steal sacred dolsan eggs! Since the wrongness of this act is obvious, none of the tribesmen see fit to mention it until such time as the crime has been committed. Suitably cunning and devious characters may find ways around all of these obstacles; even more devious characters may simply gather eggs willy-nilly, take Altarrin's meager payment, and leave, allowing him to discover their treachery in due course when the eggs hatch.

Rhialto level characters may find these challenges nuncupatory; for arch-mages, it is always best to include rivals Altarrin's overly-direct comments have made him many enemies who would enjoy seeing anything he is interested in foiled, ideally in a manner not directly traceable.

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There is also the second half of Altarrin's scheme, which involves the acquisition of a breeder's guidebook. (It is recommended that GMs run one or the other of these scenarios, with the other one being handled 'off stage' by suitably competent or incompetent GMCs) The city of Kaiin is home to many of the finest dolsan breeders in the world. To a certain extent, they resemble arch-mages in all but power, in that they are allied into a loose conclave for mutual benefit, but this conclave is barely held together due to the variety of grudges and feuds which consume them all. There are five 'True Breeders' of Kaiin.

Lumphul

"They say wicked things about me behind my back, but I shall discomfort them in time."

A short man of outward calm and inward fury, who views all others as plotting to deny him greatness.

Persuade (Forthright) 14, Rebuff (Penetrating) 12, Attack (Caution) 5, Defense (Intuition) 7,
Pedantry (Dolsans) 16, other abilities as needed.



Vrik

"My opponents? Poltroons all of them! I have no equals."

Of medium build and graying hair, with a strong preference for dressing in orange, and whose dolsans are known for their speed and grace. Three times he has beaten Lumphul in the 'Rapid Spinning' competitions at the Extravaganza.

Persuade (Eloquent) 13, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 15, Attack (Speed) 7, Defense (Intuition) 6,
Pedantry (Dolsans) 14; other abilities as needed.



Glim Vormak,

"Remember always the words of the ancient masters. Rondure, not citigrade".

A man so lean as to appear past death, he has bred dolsan for longer than anyone can remember. He is often criticized for his lack of style and originality in his breeding, and he in turn derides foppish new styles as lacking true grandeur.

Persuade (Obfuscatory) 10, Rebuff (Contrary) 14, Attack (Caution) 3, Defense (Dodge) 4,
Pedantry (Dolsans) 17, other abilities as needed.



Quanervoy,

"I oppose bodachs with agersia"

The youngest to be acclaimed as a True Breeder. He is a man of experimental bent, and his 'nineticle dolsan' has been the talk of Kaiin since the last Extravaganza. All await his latest accomplishments.

Persuade (Intimidating) 12, Rebuff (Wary) 9, Attack (Cunning) 8, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 9,
Pedantry (Dolsans) 15, other abilities as needed.



Harcian,

"Friends, marvel at these, my most beautiful creatures."

A rotund man of middle years, whose dolsans are judged inferior by his peers but who continually wins awards at the Extravaganza, in large part because his ability to charm and praise purchasers of dolsan is vastly superior to his ability to breed them.

Persuade (Charming) 16, Rebuff (Wary) 12, Attack (Finesse) 9, Defense (Vexation) 9,
Pedantry (Dolsans) 13, Seduction 2 other abilities as needed.

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All Altarrin desires is a single breeder's book, and he claims to not care whose it is, though he has obliquely hinted that Quanervoy would be an optimal target, but, if this is not to be, so be it. The task is not simple. Each breeder has his workbook secured by the best means available to them, often including magical aids. Further, any attempts to Persuade a breeder to reveal the location of his book invokes a -2 penalty to the die roll of the Persuader unless extraordinary and extreme circumstances prevail. It is also the case that each breeder changes the location of his book with regularity, but, at this moment, the locations are:

Lumphul: It is in his library, inside a hollowed out book of utterly boring nature. Only a disturbance in the dust on the fourth shelf of the bookcase marked 'Religious Minutiae' indicates anything amiss.

Vrik: It is at the bottom of the well in the back of his manor house, protected by a spell of waterproofing. Each morning, he fetches a 'bucket of water', and then returns the empty bucket at night.

Glim Vormak: He wears his book as an earring, thanks to an arch mage who purchased a flock of dolsans from him several decades ago. The word 'farrip' transforms earring to book and back again. He is never seen without the earring, even on occasions when it is grossly inappropriate.

Quanervoy: He does not have a book, as such, but has encoded his formulae and notes as engraved sigils of extraordinary complexity and meaning, such that the slightest change in the width of line carries tremendous information. These sigils are scrawled into the wood of his workbench. Copying them is difficult to say the least; if anyone but Quanervoy attempts to transcribe them by any means other than sandestin-quality magic (and the task is so dull at least one-half an indenture point must be expended to convince the beast to do it well), that an Illustrious Success in both Perception and Quick Fingers is needed; any failure, even an exasperating one, means the transcription is ruined. The GM should roll in secret and the transcriber should not know if he has succeeded or failed until the pathetic, crippled, dolsan, with dull colors and wan tentacles, emerge from the eggs to splork⁹ piteously in Altarrin's workroom.

Harcian: Harcian keeps the pages of his workbook sewn into the linings of his vast collection of jackets, vests, overcoats, and cloaks. He has, or rather had, a complex system cross-indexing the type of information on each page with the type of clothing it was contained within, but he failed to maintain his organization, and now he often finds himself studying *Principles Of Pre-Hatching Egg Lubrication* when he was intending to mix a new batch of Suppleness Cream. This explains the qualities of his dolsans.

The acquisition of the breeding books can be done via attempting to convince a breeder to give you theirs (nearly impossible), deducing the location of the book via questioning the townsfolk and watching for odd behavior (slow and dull), or attempting to convince one breeder to betray another (much more entertaining). No breeder knows offhand where the others keep their books, but they do have knowledge of their fellow breeders' quirks and oddities, and thus would be able to make skilled deductions if pressed to do so. Naturally, the theft of any such book would cause uproar among the breeders, and there would be every effort made to locate the guilty party. Should this individual be located, he will spare no time in fingering the party. The Kaiinish Dolsan Owners Association will likewise take up the cause. Even if the book is successfully stolen, the final act will be at the Extravaganza. There, Artillan's dolsans will astound and amaze all -- until the owner of the stolen book, whoever it is, blows a small whistle of white gold. Then, Artillan's dolsans will swoop to the sound of the whistle -- a reflex conditioned into them during the incubation process by following the directions of the workbook. This will, of course, cause massive amounts of chaos, confusion, accusation, counter-accusation, and the likely destruction of the Extravaganza. Such is the life of a scientist!



Embarrassed by your ancestry?
Delay not longer, be adopted into one of Kaiin's most noble houses,
one off down payment, or easy terms available.
Box 12 Kaiin



9 "Splork" is the onomatopoeic noise made a land-bound dolsan.

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🏰 Red (Lesser) Tasp 🏰

From *Insects, Arthropods, And Others* by Dandrios Vull (Late 20th Aeon)

“The Greater Tasp, or Tasp Major, is by its’ nature inimical to all human contact, which is similar to the opinion of humanity vis-à-vis the Tasp. On the other hand the Lesser Tasp, or Tasp Minor, is for the most part content to live within the bounds of humanities encroachment, feasting on the leavings of man.”



From Forlin’s *Biological Inquiries Volume IV-a: The Red Tasp*

“I have procured, at no small personal difficulty, a Red Tasp ‘Duchess’, which I have placed in an enclosed, transparent container filled with rotting animal and plant matter. For three days, I observed nothing. By the fourth day, the bulk of the material had settled 4.5 inches, and I could see faint trails against the inside of the glass. By the end of the week, the entire tasp-castle was well under construction. The transparency allowed me to view the intricate inner chambers, including the small furnishings, the ornate tapestries, and so on. It is unthinkable that these creatures do not possess minds; the complexity of their underground castles bespeaks a significant intellect.”



From Beremon’s *Inquiry Into The Intellect of Red Tasp (And Certain Biologists)*

“The propensity of the mind, especially the weaker mind, to see intelligent design in random creation is well documented. Perhaps no better example of this is the continual myth of the ‘intelligent’ Red Tasp. Those who observe their hives (invariably built in compost and refuse heaps) will dredge up oddly shaped lumps of mud mixed with tasp-spittle and proclaim them ‘furniture’; they will find a mat of multi-colored moss and call it a ‘tapestry’. It is true the Red Tasp is a creature worthy of study by any true biologicor, but only as a complex beast, not as any form of miniature sentient life.”



From Odliwan’s *Travels With The Twk*

“So my companion, Altibialanaes, buzzed to my ear on his dragonfly mount and urged me to stop. ‘The City Of The Many-Legs is ahead, and you must take heed not to kill any of their scouts.’ I blinked in surprise, as I knew of no city here in the Draven Forest. Shaking his head, as he often did at my ‘bigling foolishness’, he gestured downwards. At first, I had no idea what he was pointing to, then I saw a pair of Red Tasp walking along a bilboris leaf. Altibialanaes urged his mount down, and hovered in front of them for a few minutes, then returned to my shoulder. ‘They grant us safe passage, providing we are careful, but you must leave for them five of the glistenfruits you carry with you.’ The fact such creatures could talk, reason, and bargain astonished me. I begged Altibialanaes to teach me their language, but he only laughed and called me a ‘bigling snod-jumper’. Ah, Altibialanaes! I miss your cheerful companionship, but your artfully preserved body is still the prize display of my mantelpiece.”



From *Culzarith’s Encyclopedia Of Education Supplies*

“Red Tasp Miniature Castle Kit: 5terces. This glass dome, one ell in diameter, provides weeks of education and amusement to children and slow-witted adults. Place any Red Tasp of Lesser or Greater Royalty in the specially prepared mixture, and wait. Soon, the wonders of the natural world will reveal themselves! Within the mixture, the cunning Red Tasp will construct a wondrous residence, called a ‘castle’ in the language of biologicists, filled with astounding creations! Some folk claim to see ‘furnishings’, ‘weapons’, and ‘dressing chambers’ in the castle, but others claim these are just accidents of construction. Regardless, all will be amazed and enlightened by the antics of these clever creatures. Warning: Culzairth And Sons is not responsible for any damage which may occur to any member of the household should the seal on the kit be broken, nor for the loss of any family member or pet which foolishly enters the sealed chamber.”



✧ Pets of the Dying Earth ✧

From Cruthfil's *Maxims To Prosper By*

"Maxim 25: Trust not the Twk-man, for he will tell you day as night as surely as he will tell you night is day!"



From the Workbook of Altarrin:

Clearly, the issue of Red Tasp intelligence remains unresolved. I can tell you what is resolved -- I hate these creatures. They sting. They bite. Their royalty is singularly difficult, with duchesses refusing to mate with barons, forcing me to expend a full 5 terces to procure a 'Duke' from Culzarith and Associates. The net result of my experimentation is indeterminate at best. The 'castle kit' I am using does not allow them full play; for example, Dandrios speaks of a 'Grand Chamber four ells in size' as the centerpiece of a true tasp castle, but such a chamber cannot fit in a 1-ell jar! Obviously, a complete castle, which has grown to full size, needs to be excavated from its native soils and returned here to me, where I can study it in full. I shall speak to Grashpotel about this. His other students seem to enjoy trekking into the most forsaken and repulsive parts of the world, sampling dung and overturning rocks. I'm sure one of them can be convinced to perform the necessary extraction and containment. A small fee might even be possible, once I have convince the bursar to continue to cover my researches."

✧ Tasp Adventure ✧

Being a Voyage Of the Fantastical Sort, or a Difficult Introduction to the Tasp.

The prospect of red tasp sentience is an intriguing one. It seems unlikely a being so petty could possess the intellect of a man, or even of a deodand, but reports of the complexity of their constructions place this certainty in doubt. Every attempt to resolve the issue has thus far resulted in further uncertainty, and, in at least one recent case, bloodshed. (See Boorwannel, Flourbish, and Stoot, *Transcriptions of the Greater Almerly Biological Association*, Vol 512, Page 47, 'List Of The Deceased Following Lecture on Red Tasp Selfcognizance') Such unfortunate incidents notwithstanding, I intend to resolve the issue for all time -- which may be mere hours, or it may be decades yet.

Methodology: The issue of ascertaining the degree and kind of red tasp intelligence is complicated by the scale differences involved. A single red tasp is but three quens long. (This paper shall use the accepted means of measurement preferred by the sages of Past Cian, and not modern and inaccurate measurements of no true merit.) A typical man, on the other hand, stretches nearly two fals! Communication between entities of such different magnitudes is a complex prospect. The solution can be found thusly, in the words of the Sage Mordanil, "Two things which are different can be compared only if they become the same." Thus, we shall alter the scale of a small team of researchers to that of a red tasp, and send them into a tasp castle to investigate. This procedure shall be undertaken with the gratefully donated assistance of the sandestin Veermorth, who is bound to service of an arch mage of my acquaintance. The precise terms of my arrangement with him are not the subject of this paper.

✧ A typical Red Tasp ✧

(when the PCs are at the same scale):

Tagline (if sentient):

"Your attitude is unbecoming for creatures of your obvious subservience."

Persuade (Intimidating) 11, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 10, Attack (Ferocity) ~1.5, Defend (Sure-footedness) ~1.5, Engineering (if a Functional) 9, Scuttlebutt (if a Noble) 9, Perception ~, Tracking 8. Defenders will be ~2 for Attack and Defense. Non-sapient red tasps do not have Persuade or Rebuff.

Results: Pending completion of the experiment, I also intend a full refund from my 'associate', who loaned me the use of a sandestin of extraordinary intractability and stubbornness, and whose innate contrary nature is unduly delaying the return of my research staff.

Adventure Premise: In order to satisfy the question of red tasp self-awareness, a carefully chosen group of explorers, sages, and luminaries (alternatively, rogues, con-men, and mercenaries) will be subject to a simple magical effect which will reduce them in size to but three quens. They will then be placed inside a red tasp castle located in a glass jar in Altarrin's workroom. There, they will wander about, exploring, and attempting to communicate with the inhabitants or otherwise find proof that red tasps are, indeed, sentient beings. They are to return to the upper layer of soil in the jar and use a small signaling device when they are ready to return.

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The process of metagenic compression goes smoothly. The PCs see the room rushing up and away from them, and the forms of Altarrin and Veermorth (who wears the semblance of a 14th aeon sand pirate pettyling) growing to become indistinct colossi. Then a thundering noise is heard (it is Altarrin speaking; his voice is indistinguishable as other than a roar at this scale), and there is a flash. The characters find themselves in a rounded wooden passageway, slightly aglow due to luminescent fungi in the walls. Before them, eight legs, gaping tri-part jaws, and glistening compound eyes, stands a red tasp, large enough to look them in the eye. So it begins! The GM should be aware that something has gone wrong, though the Characters do not yet know it. Altarrin's orders to Veermorth were to "transport this group inside the tasp castle in my workroom". Altarrin was unaware that a colony of red tasp existed outside his workroom, but had extended their castle to the wooden flooring, as the seasoned glimphal wood was extremely tasty. Veermorth, seeing an opportunity for enjoyment, transported the group to the castle 'in' Altarrin's workroom -- the one growing into the floors, and not the much smaller and better mapped one sitting in the glass jar. At this point, too, the GM must make another crucial decision -- shall the red tasp be self-aware? If they are, the adventure may go one way; if they are not, it shall go another. In all cases, the GM should keep the fact of awareness or non-awareness secret as long as possible; let the PCs continue to guess and ponder and conduct experiments. If ultimately, the red tasp are but simple beasts, then the scenario becomes a small bit of a throwback to earlier days of adventure, as a ragtag group of mismatched characters struggles through an underground labyrinth filled with deadly creatures. This may prove a refreshing change of pace from the typical DE scenario, but be sure the players are interested; many choose DE because the concept of such adventures bore them. On the other hand, if the tasp are self-aware, many other possibilities ensue. The tasp castle is organized along lines of status and function, with rigid barriers between the castes; still individuals of merit and ambition have been known to succeed. The players may find themselves caught up in bizarre factional wars among the tasp nobility or deal with accusations of heresy by form. Regardless of whether it is a product of instinct or design, the tasp castle is an amazing place. The corridors are bored through earth, stone, or soil with equal apparent ease, and are even covered with 'tiles' of a sort, apparently composed of dried mucous secretions. The corridors are lit, as noted, by glowing fungi, and are



even decorated in places with tapestries seemingly woven of lichen strands and small, brightly colored fungal growths which seem to serve only an aesthetic purpose, since they are poisonous to red tasp. (Or, perhaps, they're food for one of the non-tasp species which symbiotically share the castle) At all times, until the question of tasp sentience is settled, the GM should be prepared to offer alternate explanations for any feature of the castle. Almost anything can be explained as simple instinct; likewise, any behavior which serves no obvious purpose can be claimed as proof of intelligence, for only intelligent beings do things for no reason, at least according to Themble's 'Discourses On The Nature Of Reason'. which the Characters of course have read! If the red tasp are sentient, the players can determine this best by finding a means of communication. The Locket of Octavian Communication (first noted in XPS 1) may help, as sentient red tasp will know enough Arthropodic Tradespeak to get by. Alternatively, the GM is free to assume that, like pelgranans, deodands, and the man-eels of the Sousanene coast, red tasp speak the same language as everyone else. If this simple and expedient solution is selected, the GM may still wish to have the tasp not communicate for some time, despite direct attempts. If asked why, once communication is established, they will simply say, "I found it unthinkable that creatures of such ridiculous proportions were capable of speech; thus, it was evident I was mad in hearing you speak, so, in order to conceal my madness from my fellows, I re-

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frained from replying, lest they ask why I was speaking to such an odd creature!” Likewise, if the red tasp are not sentient, it will be by strange coincidence that they make noises which sound almost, but not quite, like speech. Perhaps careful study or training could teach them the language of civilized beings? (The opportunities for amusement in watching the players attempt to teach a red tasp to talk are manifold; take advantage of them.) While the complex castes, orders, and guilds which define tasp life defy easy enumeration¹⁰, they can be roughly divided as follows:

The Greater Nobility (which rule the castle and who found new castles), the Lesser Nobility (who basically act as commanders for various parts of the castle, and who can, with the right opportunities, advance to the Greater Nobility), the Defenders, who battle enemies of the castle (and occasionally various members of the Nobility depending on the internal politics), and the Functionals, who build and maintain the castle, keep track of the herds of freams, and otherwise do all the actual work. Now, it is one of the curiosities of red tasp life that an individual is not bound to the caste of their birth, but can advance in position via consumption of proper foodstuffs and the interchange of biological materials with members of different orders. Thus, a red tasp born to do nothing more than extrude hardening spittle may, if he is ambitious and cunning, alter his form to that of a Defender; thence, once in a position of some prestige (becoming, for example, a Knight Of The Deepest Soils), prevail on a member of the Greater Nobility to raise him to the Lesser; and so on from there. Those who claim the red tasp are intelligent point to this as proof, while those who dispute it claim it is merely an instinctual process by which the castle creates whatever types are needed at the moment. They also note that no sentient being allows unlimited advancement of place; it is a fundamental rule of all society that “A toiler does not supervise and a supervisor does not toil!” The mere fact a red tasp can proceed from spittler to overlord is evidence they are mere animals.



10 And thus, are ripe fodder for game play -- something as subtle as a curl in the hairs of the left rear leg-joint could be the only thing distinguishing a friendly member of the tunnel-reinforcers guild from a hostile and surly grade-three defensive guard who despises the ugly intruders in his castlez

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The red tasps will not immediately attack the players, even if they are non-sentient¹¹. They do not smell like enemies, and so, will be treated with careful curiosity unless they do something foolish, such as attack a noble, break open a wall, or touch the strands of nightmoss hanging from the ceiling of the gallery hall.

The society of the red tasps bears much resemblance to that of man. They have farms where fungus, nightmoss, and other plants are cultivated. They maintain herds of frems, which are odd blob like creatures with precisely 19 legs and no eyes. They have a noble caste which spends most of its time congratulating itself on its evident worthiness. And so on. Regardless of the opportunities for exploration and enlightenment which abound in the tarp castle, at some point, the players will have concluded they have enough information and will depart. Since the castle in Altarrin's workroom was well charted prior to their entrance, they know the precise route to the surface...hmm...that junction should not be there, and there is a 'double-up-and-down' type intersection noted on the map which is not present. Ha hm! We go...this way! I am certain of it! At some point, they will realize they are in the wrong castle -- and deep in it. This poses two problems: Firstly, finding their way to the surface. Secondly, finding their way to Altarrin and the duplicitous Veermorth! This latter can be an intriguing trek across seeming leagues of terrain, all of which is in the backyard of the university where Altarrin retains his workrooms. The players may encounter all manner of creatures which, despite their small size (relative to a human), possess the full range of emotions and desires, especially such as 'hunger'. Finding their way to the surface offers opportunities for more interaction with the castles inhabitants, especially if they are sapient. The first recourse will be to ask for directions from any passing individual. This will almost certainly fail, since the bulk will live their lives entirely within the castle. ("I am a fungus-shaper of the second degree, in good standing with the guild. Why would I ever seek anyplace other than this? Only the mad creatures who form the Legion of Explorers ever leave the castle.") Thus, they must seek out one of the rare tasps who ventures surfaceward, and convince him to help them somehow. If the 'non sapient tarp' option is chosen, then the players must simply find their way to the surface by means of sheer cunning, all the while avoiding any hazards the GM should care to throw at them.



The Taun Tassel Speculator



A NEWS LETTER FOR THE PERSON WHO WISHES TO KEEP ABREAST OF CURRENT FASHION.
IN THIS, OUR AUTUMNAL EDITION WE ARE PROUD TO FEATURE THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES:

Cascades and Tremulos, Yesterdays Millinery?
The Godet Revealed, Has the Gusset a Future?
Enhancing the Embonpoint!
Balzarine and the Mature Lady
The Peignoir, Jabot or Not?
Burnet for the Mitchen Maid

The Letters of Bracht

Dear Isapinai~

I am supposed to be on late patrol tonight but Skas said he would cover for me and Lasnave has promised to square it with the Captain. So if you want I can meet you at the East wing of your Uncle Volunes' Palace. I can bring a couple of bottles of wine, but it will only be legion stuff.

I have spent most of today working with the Birds. I don't know if Grashpotel mentioned them, they are a most unusual species. Valdaran came across the idea when in the far North years ago. He encountered a mage called Pharesm who developed the technique of altering the size of living creatures over five hundred years ago. Valdaran had some local sages learn the technique and he uses it on ordinary hawks. Obviously it takes careful working because one has to ensure that the hawk builds up its musculature by steady exercise. Currently we manage to maintain a flock of over a hundred of these birds of all sizes and ages. It is a lot of work and they cost an absolute fortune to feed. Not only that but they are bastards to work with. Each will accept only its own rider but will normally refrain from trying to kill the stable boys unless the boy irritates them in some way. Hence making a noise or attracting their attention is considered unwise.

Bracht. Legionary.



Dearest Issi~

Sorry I haven't been in touch but I got into deep trouble after being posted AWOL. It wasn't that I swapped a duty to be with you three nights ago, it was that I didn't manage to get back to the barracks for 48 hours. As luck would have it Valdaran himself was doing a spell on the duty rota and spotted my absence. I am being sent to the Cape of Sad Remembrance. The Legion has had reports that fishermen in the area are being harassed by something big in the water so we will set up catapults on shore and try and lure it within range. Hopefully we can nail whatever it is good and hard and I'll be back.

Bracht. Legionary.



❖ The Hidden City of the Mountains ❖

Lynne Hardy

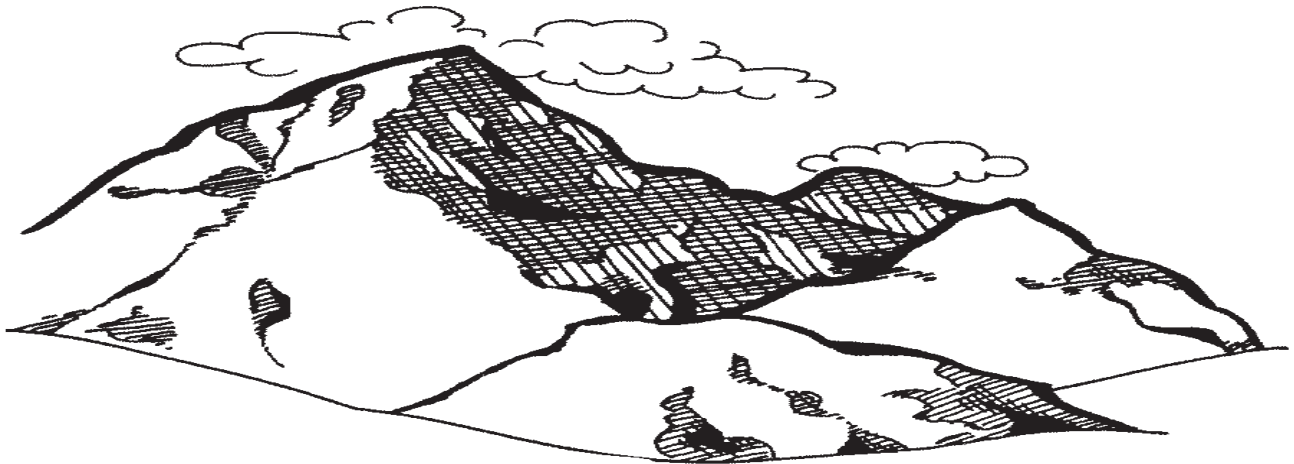
My dearest Relfan,

As you can see by the evidence that you hold before you, the reports of my painful and premature demise were nearly exaggerated. I say nearly and you must believe me when I tell you that it was naught but a miracle that saved us this past winter in the mountains. No strangers to hardship, this latest expedition pushed even our most experienced porters to their utmost limits. I fear you would barely have recognised me had you bothered to spy on our progress over the last few months. Once again, the only thing that saved us all was this blessed itchy nose of mine!

As arranged, we had travelled north into the higher reaches of the Fer Aquila. As is always the case, our progress was much slower than anticipated and I really must insist that the next time you send me away on a journey of discovery, you could have the grace to employ sober pack-beasts. If I have to argue the toss with one more mermelant, I fear you will once again have to take to the roads of our intriguing land for I shall be hanging up my boots!

Thankfully, as the enormity of our situation dawned on the damnable creatures they listened to reason, for a short while at least. The mountains are quite literally a stone maze in this region. Many were the days we wandered aimlessly amongst the gullies and ravines, with only the grumbling of the mermelants to cheer us. (I know you are well aware of my loathing for these creatures after years of bitter experience and I am most certain that you insist upon my usage of them out of a perverse sense of mischief, but enough of this tomfoolery). If it were not for a low grade but persistent irritation of my proboscis I would have called the entire expedition to a halt and insisted upon our return south to Kaiin. I did begin to wonder if my nasal aptitude was waning as the weeks dragged on and winter began to make its presence felt. The porters complained endlessly about the beasts, the beasts complained endlessly about the porters and I feared I might have to bang heads together to restore some sense of sanity.

When the snow began to fall I truly began to fear for our safety, especially after my notebook containing Phandaal's Critique of Cold was lost (I'll swear one of them ate it, you know), especially as the back-up amulet you gave me had only a few charges left. Nevertheless, we survived thanks to Behemoth's Bounty and the skill of the porters



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in finding brushwood. Never have I known such a winter in Ascolais or Almetry. When the blizzards set in that I knew we were lost, unless the fates decided to reward us for our perseverance. We came upon a magnificent city hidden in the depths of a particularly tortuous rock maze.

I can only presume that the original inhabitants wished to remain secluded from the world at large and I am not in the least surprised that they succeeded. It was as if the entire place had been carved from the very rocks of the mountains. The soaring towers were ornately engraved with many magnificent reliefs of fauna, flora and folk. Even the apparently lowliest of buildings was highly decorated with a level of craftsmanship that would make many of your business associates green with envy. Whilst I did not recognise the dress or demeanour of the figures depicted, it brought comfort to know that civilised men lived hereabouts. Our initial joy at discovering this hidden city was quickly dampened, as we could find no evidence of its inhabitants. Despite the fact that the buildings all appeared to be well maintained, there was not a single soul to be seen anywhere within the boundaries of the place. Nor was there any evidence of their demise or flight, a state of affairs that I am sure you will appreciate perplexed me greatly. Yet, my nose was still insisting that a mystery was there to be solved. I never thanked my mother for the inherited wonder that is my nose, you know—a great regret of mine. Still, I digress and I am sure you will be keen for more details. Of course, you have probably read the end of this missive already, a particularly bad habit of yours I must say. Patience, my friend, the intervening details will not disappoint!

Still, we now had domiciles in which to shelter from the worst of the snow, but the rapid drops in temperature were becoming more of a problem. One of the older porters actually froze to death whilst sitting next to a fire! If it had not been for the boy (who is rapidly improving under my tutelage and rarely lets his beast get away with its previous cantankerous outbursts) we would have perished to a man. Having sent him off to look for kindling (did I mention that the houses were strangely bare of all goods?) I began to grow concerned when he did not return at the arranged time. I went to search for him fearing the worst, but was relieved to see his woolly hat (not in the least bit fashionable, but in these climes I take sense over fashion any day) peeking out above a low wall. Imagine my astonishment when I rounded the wall to find the boy stuck up to his waste through some sort of trapdoor that had been hidden by a greater agent than mere snowfall. I retrieved the child immediately and sent him to fetch those men not waylaid by exposure. Together we excavated the secret entrance door and were all amazed at the flight of stairs we discovered below it. I will never again curse woodworm or rot, I swear my friend, as such was the means of our salvation. Either that or we have been overfeeding the child.

As the head of our expedition, (and the most experienced in potentially delicate situations such as these) I brought forth that little flame trick you taught me all those years ago and descended into the bowels of the very earth. The steps were very well crafted, carved as they were from solid rock. Nervously, several of the men began to follow, stumbling in the poor light. It soon became clear that I did not require my cantrap as at regular intervals along the wall glowing orbs appeared, greatly easing our passage into the depths. I do not know how far we descended into the roots of the mountains before we reached the bottom of the staircase, but it felt as if we may reach the very centre of the earth. I had noticed that the deeper we went the warmer it became, much to the relief of us all. The passage remained strangely bereft of carvings in sharp contrast to the city above. Several other passageways joined ours, giving the impression of a giant warren and I must admit I was becoming hesitant to meet whoever had carved these hidden walkways. Guided only by the glowing orbs, we wove our way forward in total silence. Just as I was beginning to fear that we had become lost in an endless catacomb, we emerged into a monstrous cavern. There at the heart of it was another city, carved from the rock in an exact replica of the city we had just left on the surface!

A soft, diffuse light from millions of orbs illuminated the place, giving it a truly ethereal quality. Never have I seen such a wonder, Relfan, and my heart leapt with joy at the vision before me. It was all I could do to maintain dis-

cipline amongst the porters, who would have rushed the place had I not sternly reprimanded them.

Our arrival had not gone unnoticed. A small, round fellow with large pale eyes appeared from the edge of the city and made his way towards us. He at least had the grace to seem somewhat surprised at our appearance on his doorstep, although I must say he handled himself very well upon the occasion. He introduced himself as Renean the Watchman and extended a large pale hand in what I took to be a traditional greeting. Naturally, I introduced myself and explained the plight of our group, impressing upon him the predicament in which we found ourselves.

Although wary at first, he soon began to understand our predicament and, since we already knew how to enter the underground city, gave in to our request for shelter (against his better judgement, it seemed to me at the time). Having sent the boy back along our trail to fetch those others of our party still surviving, we entered the city en masse, watched at every step by large limpid eyes peeking curiously from behind shutters and doors. I did notice that as we entered the city what appeared to be a work crew, toiling under a load of timber and a variety of tools, was exiting it towards the direction we had come from. Whatever the reason, they seemed to be in a hurry to repair the damage we had caused. I remembered to apologise profusely again for the boy's clumsiness, but Renean was most gracious.

The Watchman found us shelter in a comfortable though spartanly furnished house near the centre of the city. I noticed that it looked to have been hurriedly vacated and I asked Renean if our arrival had led to the inconvenience of one of the natives. He muttered something about them visiting relatives, which did nothing to allay my concerns. I asked Renean what the purpose of the underground city was. After regarding me quietly for a second (and I'll swear with a certain amount of pity, such as one reserves for those in their dotage) he confirmed my suspicions—the winters this high in the mountains are so severe that to remain above ground is foolhardy and guarantees death from the intense cold. Sadly, he informed us that unless we wished to risk that death, we would have to remain here for many months. Naturally, I offered him what goods we had for trade in return for provisions. He thanked us with good grace and although he admitted our presence would make things more challenging than usual, he appeared grateful that we would at least cover the cost of our accommodation.

Over the next few days, we met several more of the underground folk. They call themselves the Suteran and from all accounts have lived in the mountains for many aeons. It must have taken several of those just to carve the underground city let alone the surface one. The reason for the bareness of the upper dwellings is now immediately appar-



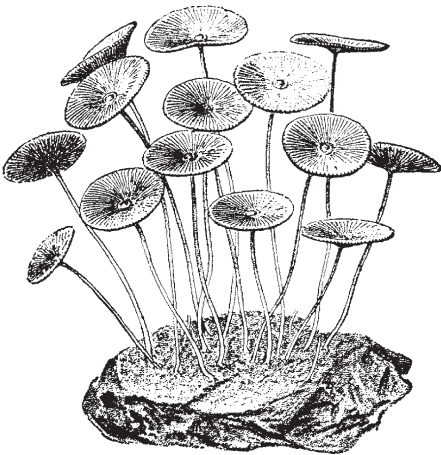
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ent—at the onset of winter, the families merely move their belongings down into their mirror homes below ground.

There are several entrances from the upper city, all carefully hidden and usually guarded to prevent the ingress of unwelcome visitors such as half-men and demons. Our entrance was apparently unguarded because the young lady had gone to fetch the work crew to repair the damage our boy had caused.

An apparently universal feature of these people is their pale skin and huge eyes, presumably an adaptation to their lives in the shadows for a large proportion of the year. Oddly, they are mostly hairless as well, leading to the ladies' elaborate usage of veils, ribbons and feathers unmatched even in Taun Tassel or Azenomei. I was informed by Renean that the headdresses represent social as well as marital state and personal expertise. Unmarried girl-children are not permitted to use more than a pale yellow ribbon tied with a specific knot until they come of age, at which point they are permitted to add such ornamentation as denotes their family, eligibility and training. It seems that the older, more venerable, ladies parade about in confections that resemble nothing more than elaborate wigs, but with not a single hair visible! It also became apparent that the men denote their occupation by hats, but with a much greater sense of decorum and taste than their women folk.

The voices of these Suteran are also very gentle, due no doubt to the soft echoes that are ever present in this cavern. Despite the warm calm of the cavern, it is never truly silent—there is always a soft susurrion on the edge of hearing. To speak loudly would cause harsh sounds to reverberate around the city for who knows how long and that is to be avoided at all costs. We soon learnt to modulate our own tones in keeping with those of the locals. Other than that, the Suteran are a cultured, refined people, with an outstanding oral tradition and complementary libraries (which are permanently stored below ground). Their musical heritage is also rich, although their preference for the unholy offspring of what appeared to be a bagpipes and a lute (charmingly called a paglub) was not only disturbing to look upon, but also to hear. Oddly, its harsh sound did not cause any disturbance to the echoes, a fact for which I am immensely grateful.

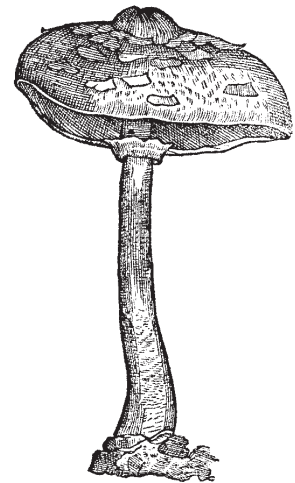


The Suteran diet was also more unusual than I at first suspected. Many of the porters initially refused to eat the concoctions of dried vegetables and luminous fungus which Renean and his family supplied us with, although they were keener on the fish dishes (although I doubt their initial relish would have been so great had they seen the sightless monstrosities in the flesh first). After sending the boy for lessons with Renean's wife Valora, they became happier with the fare provided as the boy mixed in some of our own remaining provisions, creating in the process several very interesting and highly edible dishes of which Glusthermal himself would be proud.

Even the mermelants decided to behave themselves, mostly due to the kind attentions of a group of young children who thought it

a great honour to groom and pamper the beasts. Unfortunately, I fear the creatures will now be even harder to deal with when they realise that this sort of treatment is not going to continue after we have left this place.

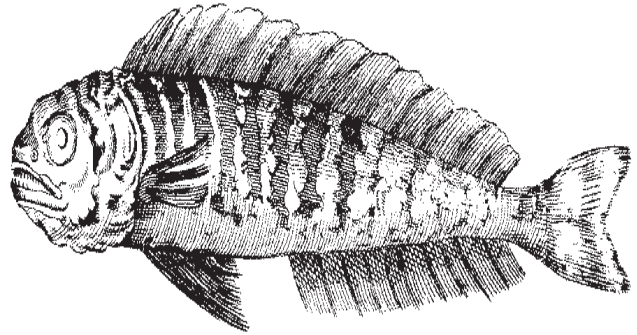
Ah yes, the food. I think I should mention a little more on that subject. Shortly after our arrival, Renean (who has apparently been appointed as our guardian and tour



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guide) took me to visit the aptly named *Feeding Caves*. Beyond the city cavern lie many leagues of interconnected caves. Growing on the walls of these caves are many varieties of luminous fungus, the vast majority of which are edible. Some that are not edible are fermented to remove noxious substances and make a passable wine, close to the quality of a good *Derna Yellow*.

The caves are a wonder to behold; with many shades and hues of luminosity and some truly remarkable growth patterns giving rise to a show of light reminiscent of the greatest magical duels (or those fireworks Prince Kandive has become so fond of). Fungus is not the only thing that grows in these caves. There are several subterranean versions of common vegetables that grow there too. Though lacking for the most part the colour of their topside brethren, they are tasty and nutritious if a little heavier in trace elements. Water is also not a problem here as several springs bubble up into the caves. As far as I can tell, only the entrance tunnels and the city cavern itself were carved by man—the rest have merely been cleverly utilised to suit the needs of their residents. The fish are found in deep pools, where they swim blindly in the darkness. Fortunately, this makes them very simple to catch with a strong net. As I hinted before that although their looks are against them, their remarkable taste is incentive enough for the fisherman. For all their blindness, they actively dislike being caught (I have several bite marks to prove it).



The mineral wealth of the caverns is also remarkable, although our hosts appeared to make no acknowledgement of the treasures poking from their walls. Indeed, they seemed most amused at our fascination with the gems we found. Although the Suteran do fashion jewellery from these gems, their abundance has given rise to a certain disinterest in the raw materials themselves. I had to enforce a strict edict on the porters to prevent them from hammering the walls to pieces in order to fill their pockets, although the Council did give us permission to excavate a small landslide in one of the far caverns for gems in return for us clearing the blockage. I have set aside one particular stone for Arryn, which will make a beautiful teardrop pendant for her birthday. I hope that it might persuade her mother that I am not such a disreputable character after all! One day I must get you to sit down with Ellysyr and explain to her exactly why it is I must travel to the ends of the earth at your behest. Still, no matter, I have yet more to relate and my paper supplies are short.

Over the months, we learned something of the social mores and beliefs of our hosts. We were never made to feel unwelcome or a burden, though towards the end of our stay the caves were looking a touch depleted of fungus. Of their origins, they were surprisingly coy, giving away little more than their ancestors had moved into the mountains to avoid persecution from lowland folk. The libraries are in a strange script which none were prepared to teach me (I don't doubt that your attitude would be similar, Relfan, should a total stranger turn up at your front door and demand free access to your library!), so I could glean little further information from that source.

The only other interesting snippet I could unearth regarded the light globes that illuminate the caverns. Every evening the globes dim to a background level, which to all intents and purposes renders movement about the caves impossible. In the morning, a small entourage travels around the city cavern, chanting what sounded very like an incantation of subtle power. It not only made my nose twitch, the hairs on the back of my neck stood on end every time I heard it. As the entourage passed each globe, it would achieve the previous day's level of brightness. I believe (from careful questioning of one elderly soul called Poht) that this act was unnecessary for the globes in the tunnels,

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which appeared to refresh themselves every morning of their own volition. I suspect that this would not be the case if the central cavern globes were not refreshed, but I could not convince the Council to forego their morning ritual in the furtherance of scientific research.

Nevertheless, it was with great regret that Renean informed us that spring had touched the world above and that the time had come for us to leave the mountains. He had been given permission to escort us out of the stone maze (which the Suteran's ancestors had indeed carefully constructed to keep people out of their city) and back onto our path. The boy was particularly reluctant to leave, as he had caught the eye of a very lovely young girl. In my role as the voice of reason, I was forced to point out his obligations to you and eventually he saw sense (but not before a display of emotion that his mermelant would have been proud of). That reminds me, I must caution the older porters about their use of language in front of one so impressionable.

I have procured several samples of the fungus for you to study at a later date, old friend. I thought I had better dispatch this missive at the first opportunity to allay any fears you might have as to our safety. We hope to reach the coast within the next few weeks and the descent has at least allowed us to replenish our supplies. Touchingly, Renean's last gift has been of great use to us. The Council had authorised the presentation of a globe to myself at his suggestion, for use "in all dark corners of the world". He has taught me the necessary incantation, just in case the globe should permanently dim (as it was taken from one of the tunnels and therefore shouldn't really need refreshing), although it has yet to show any signs of darkening at all. It has thus far proven invaluable and is indeed a great and considerate gift from a truly generous people.

Let me tell you one final thing, Relfan. It has occurred to me as we have descended towards the coast that I could never find my way back to that hidden city. Although I tried to follow the labyrinthine twists and turns of our route away from the city, my mind appears to have refused to commit the path to memory, an annoyance of immense proportion, as you know how I pride myself on my excellent recall. It would appear that the Suteran still wish to remain isolated and safe away from prying eyes. I hope for their sakes that they can maintain this isolation—I fear the debauchery of our world would only ruin that remnant of a bygone age that has been carefully preserved by its isolation and the heavy snows of winter.

🌿 Background Information 🌿

The Hidden City of Suteran is indeed a wonder to behold. Many aeons have passed since it was excavated from the living rock of the mountains, just as its surface mirror city was from the dead rock of the outside world, with powerful magics now mostly lost in the mists of time. The original Suteran people did indeed flee here from the lowlands, but their persecution at the hands of the lowlanders was not an esoteric matter but related to their practice of worshipping demons. Indeed it was with the demon Elfdemirkz's help that most of the initial carving of the surface city from the native rock was carried out.

When the first winter struck them, they died in great numbers, much to the delight of Elfdemirkz who was missing his customary sacrifice of lowlanders and was quite content with the chilled delicacy of his own followers. All was not lost though as the Suteran were then being led by a knowledgeable and cunning man. He convinced Elfdemirkz to build the mirror city in return for a huge sacrifice, but insisted that the city was built along the lines he, Dovhal, specified and in the site of his choice. The demon, thinking only of the feast awaiting him did not check the plans as carefully as he should and was responsible for the construction of his own prison. Dovhal had secreted within the architecture a binding sigil that drew the demon down beneath the mountains and held him fast. The lock of this prison was the glow lights, whose pattern around the walls of the city cavern and the adjoining corridors formed the outer edge of the sigil. In order that they remember how shortsighted they had been in worshipping Elfdemirkz, the orbs of the city cavern needed to be recharged every morning when the sun rose above the mountain peaks. If they were not, then the Sigel would degrade and eventually Elfdemirkz would be able to break free. The modern inhabitants of Suteran do not remember this, only that the orbs must be replenished every morn-

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ing. Although they do not know why, the thought of the orbs failing fills them with an ancestral terror of immense proportions. As a result of this, a small contingent remains underground throughout the year, although no one person is expected to live below ground on a permanent basis.

The Suteran people have adapted to their mostly subterranean life style with large eyes used to lowered light levels, pale skin and hairless appearance. They retain the archaic fashions once popular on the plains although adapted to their own needs. Despite their winter safe haven, life in the mountains is not easy and the familiar symbolism plays a large part in allowing someone's status, position and occupation to be instantly recognised, saving time and energy in the case of an emergency.

The population remains relatively stable thanks to the predations of mountain creatures (both above and below ground) and the often-extreme conditions. Should the Watchers fail to identify the approach of winter, many lives can be lost before the populace can safely make it to the winter quarters. The Watchers also periodically check the upper city throughout the winter to ensure its safety and to look for signs of spring. The people are indeed very wary of strangers, mostly because they are just not used to them. Indeed the misremembered details of their past also help to maintain a sense of suspicion. Despite the fact that the underground libraries are full of archaic and useful knowledge, it would be very difficult for an outsider to gain access to the scrolls and tomes unless they were greatly trusted. Visitors are rare not just because of the isolated nature of the city. A ward was cast not long after completion of the upper city and its maze that leads anyone consciously seeking the city to become lost. Only the strong minded or desperate can overcome it at great effort, but those who have no conscious knowledge of the city are, bizarrely enough, not greatly affected by it. This means that although an army of well prepared and highly trained lowlanders once perished in the maze (their bleached bones still lying where they fell) a bumbling wayfarer could easily stumble upon the place.

The Suteran are governed by a Council of Elders chosen from the people based on skill, knowledge and venerability. There is usually one member per Guild (of which there are seven: the Caverners, the Gatherers, the Watchers, the Herders, the Weavers, the Learners and the Makers) as well as other note-worthies from the major families. The role of Chairman is taken on a rota, with every representative holding the position for a season. The functions of the Guilds are simple: to ensure that the Suteran people can survive in the high mountains.

The Caverners are responsible for maintenance of buildings above and below ground; the Gatherers take care of both the growing and the gathering of food, including any hunting duties; the Watchers guard the caverns, help the Learners with the orbs and watch for winter/spring (and as such has a constantly changing membership as everyone at some time is a watcher, although there is a core of permanent members); the Herders are responsible for livestock; the Weavers take care of cloth production, tailoring and millinery; the Learners not only maintain the libraries but are responsible for the teaching of the children and the maintenance of the orbs with the Watchers (the Watchers are responsible for the actual bodily integrity of the orbs, the Learners for the re-enchantment ritual. The Learners membership does not change like the Watchers as it takes many years to learn the incantations properly); the Makers are the artisans who take care of the production of everything else a city needs to function, as well as encompassing the merchants. Finally, the inhabitants do not refer to their home as the Hidden City; to them below ground is the Winter City and that above ground is the Summer City.

To whosoever it may concern,
The editor and the publisher take the unassailable moral position
that anyone foolish enough to contact the advertisers does so en-
tirely at their own risk. If anyone is at fault, it is their own parents
for failing to imbue the basic elements of common sense.

✦ The Hidden City of the Mountains ✦

✦ How to Get There ✦

There are several ways in which a group of ne'er-do-wells could find the Hidden City:

1. They could be sent there by an external agent for a variety of nefarious purposes. This is going to make things difficult for them, as they will have to overcome the ward's protective affects. Amulets that shield the mind might work, or they may just have to rely on their cunning and Resistance (a prosaic success or higher against a challenge of Obfuscatory 8) to navigate the maze (tracking skills may also be used as an alternative). Of course, the maze also has a direct route straight past the city and out of the other side, so another prosaic success or higher will be required to find the city as well. Unfortunately, the more determined they become, the harder it will be, with levies to all search rolls as appropriate. Funnily enough, the moment they give up trying, the more likely they are to find it (see below)!



2. As in the letter, they could be on their way to somewhere else when fate and the elements turn against them. If they are not deliberately seeking the city, there is a very good chance that they will stumble across it (any success against the ward's challenge will allow them to successfully penetrate the maze and only a dismal failure will prevent them finding the city).



3. Of course, they could just be wandering in the mountains for a hearty constitutional when they become lost. As for (2), they have a much better chance of besting the maze and finding the city than if they were hunting for it.

✦ Things to Do in the City ✦

There are many things that your merry band could do once they have found the city, many of which are dependant of what time of year it is when they stumble upon it. If they find it in summer, there will be little or no mystery, as the upper city will be inhabited and there will be little evidence of the Suteran's alternate existence. Of course, the Suteran are an interesting people in their own right and the chance for cultural exchange should not be passed up! There is always the chance for romance or political intrigue in the Summer City (or both, should the inclination take you). Should they arrive as the great winter removal is in full swing, then there are many more possibilities open to them. Despite the fact that the Suteran are a wary folk, they will not deliberately send strangers off to their deaths if winter is imminent, although security precautions may be quite strict (in order to prevent the strangers from locating all of the hidden entrances to the underground city, for instance). The same could be said if the inhabitants are caught moving back up into the city after the winter has ended. Arrival in winter is likely to generate the most interest—after all, why is this beautifully maintained city empty, with no apparent signs of magical intervention or underhanded tactics. There may be clues in the paintings inside the buildings as to a migration, or they may stumble across a secret entrance. If things become very desperate, then a Watcher may take pity on them and rescue them, or they may find a Watcher performing their routine checks above ground and interrogate them.



❖❖❖ The Hidden City of the Mountains ❖❖❖

❖ Plot Hooks ❖

Here are several more in depth ideas of what to do in the Winter City. Unless stated otherwise, they rely on the characters having reached there in winter and having been invited underground.



After much researching into her city's ancient history and having finally translated some of the harder codices within the manuscripts, one young woman has determined to free Elfdemirkz. She may be doing this as a means to gain power, thinking rightly or wrongly that the demon will reward her for freeing him or she may be out for revenge again her people for some real or imaginary slight. She has systematically begun smashing the cavern orbs in order to break the demon out. The more that are smashed, the stronger he becomes and the more unusual things begin to occur within the city itself (rock falls, dead animals, dead people, frightening mass dreams, that sort of thing). Unless she is stopped, total disaster for the entire Suteran race is imminent as it is for anyone who happens to be stopping there at the time. This could be occurring during the summer, but entry to the actual city cavern is much harder at that time due to the entrance guard by the Watchers (and smashing things on her rotation is fairly stupid and bound to attract suspicion). Overall, it might be a good idea to find out who is doing this, why they're doing it and most importantly to stop them from doing it again.



During the winter, the food supplies begin to run short despite the fact that there should have been enough to feed everyone. The residents are starting to become panicky and one man in particular knows who is to blame—the ruling council. Dovhal (named after the legendary ancient ruler and not afraid to play on that fact) insists that through the Council's intransigence, the people are starving. They need a new and younger, more dynamic leadership if they are to survive. Of course, the whole thing has been engineered to further Dovhal's rather stationary career in the Gatherers (either by himself or shadowy mentors). He has been purloining and stockpiling the food in a hidden cavern and giving gifts of his allegedly "meagre rations" to those who can help his rise to power. It shouldn't be too difficult for someone to spot that he is never short of food and seems to be rising fast from obscurity. However, he has powerful friends and it might not be easy to prove his involvement; he is after all quite bright even if he is a total coward. Should he gain power, the food will miraculously be found with a variety of incriminating evidence against his enemies, which may just include the players depending on how much trouble they have caused him.



An unscrupulous prospector from the Scaum Valley has learnt of the City's vast mineral wealth and has plans to plunder it. After several failed expeditions to find the city above ground, he has settled for the tack of mining into the underground city from further down the mountain. Perhaps the characters have been employed to do the digging, act as security or as Valuers for the gems (after all, this is a big operation). They may know nothing of the city, thinking this is just another mine. There may be someone on the inside helping the mining operation in return for unspecified "favours" (Dovhal isn't going to be the only ambitious person among the Suteran after all). Perhaps the characters have nothing to do with the dig and are merely in the city when the mineshaft breaks through, right into the Feeding Caverns, probably destroying months of supplies in the process. What do they do? There is of course the danger that the mining operation could break into the city cavern, taking out enough orbs to free Elfdemirkz, which isn't going to be a pretty sight. This could all take place during the summer, at which point there would be little resistance initially due to the small number of inhabitants below ground (especially if they broke through at night or in a distant cavern). This would be the ideal chance to discover and explore the empty underground city as well as pocketing a vast amount of personal wealth.



There is an opportunity to gain lost wisdom in the underground city, although an act of heroism or constant hard toil in the service of the Suteran will be the only way to gain their trust enough to get legitimate access to them. Hidden in the libraries are all sorts of maps, spells and demon lore thought lost for centuries, as well as more mundane things such as dye recipes, zoological tracts and any number of lost languages. Saving people from rock falls or slaying dangerous creatures venturing into the city caverns are always reliable methods for gaining the good opinion of folk, even if the threat isn't always quite what it seems..

❖❖❖ The Hidden City of the Mountains ❖❖❖



5. Unfortunately, the presence of strangers is not a good thing for the Suteran. A mystery illness is sweeping through the population, one that started not long after the arrival of the characters. Whether they are responsible for it or not, they will be expected to find the cure which should involve venturing out into the wilds in appalling conditions just to get those legendary herbs that grow only in the most inaccessible reaches of the mountains (or, alternatively, in the deepest most dangerous caverns or at the bottom of subterranean lakes). Time is of the essence and they aren't going to be popular if people start dying before they return. Of course, it could all be a plot to discredit them by a jealous or frightened local and if they perform admirably, its yet another way to gain access to all those juicy secrets in the libraries!

❖ Miscellaneous Persons ❖

Renean, Watcher

"It is not the sun dying that I consider to be the greatest worry at this particular moment".

Renean is a quiet, introspective character, devoted to both his career and his family. Slow to anger and infinitely patient, he is responsible for training new Watchers. He knows the caverns better than many other Suterans and is expecting to take his place on the Council within the next few years.

Persuade (Charming) 14	Rebuff (Pure-hearted) 15	Attack (Caution) 13	Defence (Dodge) 12	Health 12
Magic (Curious) 8	Athletics 6	Concealment 8	Living Rough 8	Perception 7
Stealth 6	Tracking 5	Wherewithal 5	Scuttlebutt 9	

Spells: *The Charm of Untiring Nourishment* and *The Omnipotent Sphere* (taught to all Watchers to aid in their work, if they are capable)



Valora, Talented Chef

"Pickled garcol should go well with that fromni, I should say".

Trained by her grandmother, Valora is a consummate chef and steward, with several ancient family recipes (both culinary and medicinal) up her sleeve. As befits her family and marital status, she has prominent supervisory roles in both the Gatherers and the Herders Guilds. Although shy with strangers, she is mistress of her household.

Persuade (Charming) 13	Rebuff (Wary) 14	Attack (Speed) 12	Defence (Intuition) 14	Health 14
Perception 9	Magic (Studious) 9	Athletics 5	Craftsmanship (Cooking) 10	
Wherewithal 7	Physician (Herbalism) 9	Scuttlebutt 6	Stewardship 8	

Cantraps: *Free from Taint, Enticing Aroma*



Poht, Venerable Elder

"There is always a reason, dear child, always."

Now an aged Learner, Poht was once an energetic and devoted scholar, spending many hours in the great Suteran library. Although he still attends the morning rituals, he no longer plays a major part, preferring to criticise the younger Learners for their lack of respect of the old ways, or what he prefers to call "supervising". Vain, but for the most part, generous in nature, he responds well to flattery.

Persuade (Eloquent) 15	Rebuff (Contrary) 11	Attack (Caution) 8	Defence (Vexation) 8
Health 10	Magic (Insightful) 6 (reflecting his age, once much higher)		

Spells: *The Reassuring Glow of Morning* (not available to outsiders, part of the recharging ritual)

❧ Cantraps ❧

Free From Taint Function

Any food a little beyond its shelf life will be cleared of decay and rot, making it entirely safe to eat. In the Winter City, used for those rations left at the end of the winter, or those not correctly preserved.

Gestures Required: Close examination of the ingredients, whilst muttering “Hmmm” in a concerned tone of voice.

Variations In Effect: A Dismal Failure will render the food utterly inedible—no part of it can be saved.



Enticing Aroma Function

A delicious smell pervades the air when a meal is being prepared, making everyone present salivate with anticipation. Again, mostly used on the less appetizing ingredients left at the end of the underground season.

Gestures Required: Constant stirring of the dish for at least a minute, accompanied by gentle singing of food related ditties.

Variations In Effect: On a Dismal Failure, the smell is so repulsive that only a successful Wherewithal roll will prevent instantaneous vomiting.

❧ Subterranean Delicacies ❧

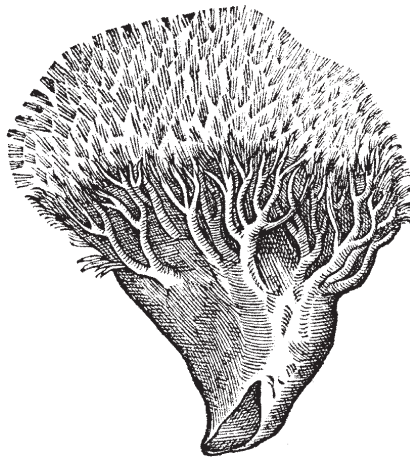
Garcol

The sightless fish that swim in the deep cavern lakes are collectively known as garcol. There are at least four varieties, varying in size from twelve inches to ten feet in length. The largest are prized not for their flesh, which tends to be bland and a little metallic, but for their brains, which have a pleasant, sweet taste enhanced by pickling with a luminous fungus known as bafqueorin (found close to the deep pools in which the big fish live).



Fromni

A type of vegetation found in the darker areas of the caverns (and usually quite high up the walls), reminiscent of the fern family. Renowned for its slightly piquant taste, it is usually steamed lightly with cave mushrooms, then fried in butter and garnished with pine nuts.



The Letters of Bracht

Dearest Issi~

I'm back, still on for tonight? I have got a couple of days leave owing. We got the beast. It was haunting the deep-water channel that runs close to the Cape. Most fishermen hug the coast here, a mile further out there is a lot of rock and even a small boat has trouble surviving in that sea. The deep channel is also the haunt of fish; perhaps it is the mixing of currents, or an influx of fresh water from the Scaum laden with silt. but this channel throngs with fish, especially "Tallies Green Mullet" and "Chantry Bass". We got three big catapults set up on a rock ledge above the shore. We drilled some heavy steel bolts into the rock and belayed the catapults to the steel. When the fishing fleet arrived we waited until we noticed one ship had its lines out and was being dragged backwards. Hence we loaded the catapults with cold iron darts, each with a 600-ell wherry hair cable attached to it. Finally the beast that was towing the fishing boat broke water to attack the boat and we managed to hit it with two darts. We waited while it exhausted itself pulling against the steel anchor bolts then harnessed a score of Farlock to the cables and hauled the creature in. Rozogenkin, our company mage, said it was a hybrid but then so is virtually every other dammed thing you pull out of the water.

When we got the creature onto the beach it was about thirty ells long and at least twenty ells around the girth at its widest point. It had the tentacles of an octopus, slightly transparent, and extending another thirty ells away from the trunk. The head showed definite human characteristics and the creature had vestigial wings rather than fins. As we pulled it out of the water it was offering to bring us a treasure ship that was lying at the bottom of the bay and even as we fired the third catapult into it to finish the job it was offering to teach us a charm to enable us to seduce water wefkjns.

We gutted it on the beach and I found a long handled fighting knife of strange design in its bowels. Rozogenkin said that the knife looked like one he once saw carried in Mell by a trader who had sailed up from the South over the Songan Sea. Some of the meat we ate, it was tough and tasted heavily of tar which we assumed came from deodand in its ancestry. The rest we gave to the fishermen who used it as bait.

Bracht. Legionary.

Official Announcement on behalf of the Justicar

ZATON & QUEST, purveyors of preserved meats, have been found guilty of INCITING their minions, clients and hirelings to WAYLAY persons of quality as they take their morning constitutional along Odkin Prospect or peruse a philosophical tract while taking morning cha at one of the more refined coffee houses.

That such PERSONS OF QUALITY should be besieged by uncouth underlings touting preserved meat of inferior quality is so obviously unacceptable that we have no hesitation in banning ZATON & QUEST and all those in any way obligated to them from entering Ascolais for one hundred years or until the sun blinks out, whichever is shorter.

Tremble and obey

The Letters of Bracht

Dearest Issi~

I managed to sneak back in without my absence being commented on. Skas managed to alter the duty book to give me an extra half days leave. It was a pity Madame Julapinai didn't accompany your uncle Volune to Azenomei. It was a trifle inconvenient, spending the entire three days of my leave confined to your bedchamber, fortunate indeed that you had taken the precaution of stocking up with both wine and sundry delicacies beforehand. I was pretty well done in by the time I got back to the barracks, only to discover that Valdaran has ordered extensive weapons drill to beat a few new recruits into shape and make sure the older lads are in trim. Most of the time we just use swords as once our opponents see the Green legion arrive they turn and run. But we do have to cope with half men and other more brutal opponents and for them Valdaran expects us to be able to advance it a steady line, four ranks deep, with spears. Poison go thithers are pretty useless in close formation but some of the men carry bows and everyone is taught to use a shield although most never use one in combat, against half men we brace the spear, thrusting its' butt into the ground and then holding it with both hands to impale anything that hurls itself at you.

Actually there is little call for the weapons drills now. Shields and spears are used by sentries or when out dealing with such things as Gid or erb. Bows are also used for this but a lone archer is very vulnerable and massed archery is too blunt an instrument for the scattered opponents we face. Not only that but Mages are very negative about too much bow fire and we rely on mages to protect us from magic. All in all we are better off with a few bows and some good mages than we would be with massed bows and no mages.

I assumed that you knew we never bothered with armour. The most we wear is a padded green jacket and that can be uncomfortable in wet weather. Most of our opponents are either running, in which case armour would merely slow us down and stop us catching them. The rest of our opponents are creatures such as the Hoon or Erb who can crumple plate or tear chain mail, doing horrible damage to the poor devil wearing them. Most of the time we jog into action so carry only the absolute minimum of equipment to ensure that we are not hampered in our pursuit.

Bracht. Legionary.

The Compendium of Universal Knowledge

A comprehensive listing of all the major people, places, creatures and phenomena within the DYING EARTH; with expansions, speculations and comments of other contributors, as well as asides into the Vancean oeuvre.

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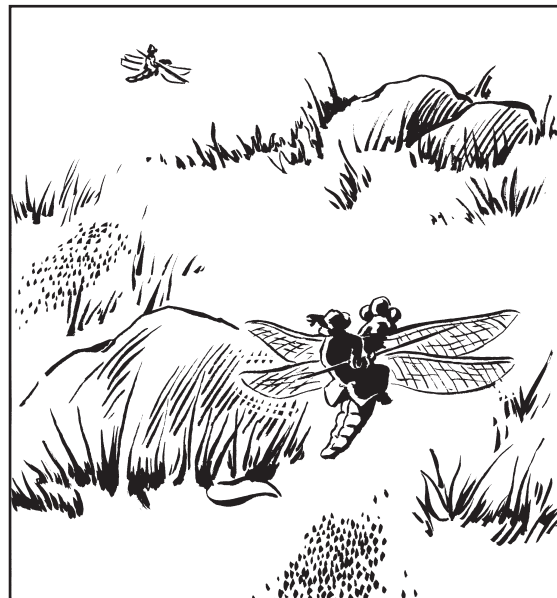
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✪ The Twk-men ✪

Nicholas Caldwell

The twk-men are tiny forest-dwelling humanoids with a greenish tint to their skins. Frequently encountered on dragonfly mounts, the twk-men shrewdly barter information, gleaned from covert observations of humans and monstrous creatures, in return for minuscule amounts of materials prized among their own people. Although they favor simplicity in dress, wearing gauzy smocks outdoors, their other possessions are extremely well crafted and suitably scaled to their miniature size. The same is true of their lances, which are twice the length of the twk-men's bodies. Twk-men society recognizes the authority of local chieftains. In contrast to their reduced stature, all twk-men have highly polysyllabic names.



✪ Fragmentary Conjectures ✪

- ✪ Twk-men were vat-created manikins fashioned to serve as minuscule actors during the age of Grand Motholam. They gained their autonomy in the turmoil of the succeeding eras. Prolonged exposure to human dramas has enabled them to simulate the lifestyles and customs of true men, distorted by artistic license.
- ✪ Twk-men are descended from a race of humans, who were accidentally miniaturized by the arch magician Phandaal, when he created the Great Forest of Da.
- ✪ Twk-men are demonic imps originally conjured into this plane of existence by the archveults to serve as their spies. Some twk-men tribes collaborate with the larger half-men species, such as deodands, informing such predators of potential victims in return for looting the bodies.

✪ Adventure Seeds ✪

The Thieves of Kaiin ...

A series of baffling thefts are plaguing the wealthy and powerful of Kaiin. Armed guards and magical practitioners have failed to prevent the burglaries. The crimes threaten the cancellation of many upcoming social functions. Hired by Prince Kandive or another notable, the characters must end the reign of the mysterious burglar. An appropriate strategy might be to provide a tempting target and try to catch the thieves in the very act. The burglars are a gang of twk-men working in tandem with a larcenous dabbler (or magician for Turjan-level campaigns). The twk-men may be motivated by caprice, a penchant for danger, or simple payment for services rendered. Or perhaps the magician has some darker hold over them.)

A Magical Accident ...

Through mischance, a spell going awry or a child's mischief, the characters and their charges have been shrunken to twk-man size. The threats are no longer erbs, leucomorphs, or gids, but soldier ants, wasps, songbirds, and wood mice. Encounters with such creatures should be frightening and dangerous, as even the children will soon recognize. Tiny rapiers will avail one little against a swooping thrush or the gaping maw of the mouse. Concealment may be surer than fleeing or fighting. Fortunately there is a twk settlement "nearby"—if the characters can reach it, perhaps they can persuade the twk-men to help them.

✧ The Twk-men ✧

Epic adventures in a small world

The Dying Earth is not a place for epic quests, heroic adventures, or grand campaigns of conquest, unless one is a Twk-man. Fending off attacks by swarms of deadly insects, seeking cures for tree blights, aerial explorations of the depths of the Great Forest of Da, mercantile expeditions, martial games, chivalrous combat, and outright wars between the Twk-men settlements are all possible, mirroring in miniature the grandiose goals of the ancients. Characters may be drawn into such “mock epic” adventures to aid Twk-men factions in return for information. Naturally these parodies will only be effective if the characters are reduced by design or accident to Twk-man scales.

A Pact with Phandaal? (Rhialto-level)

Lernicious the arch-magician has intimated to his fellow conclave members that he will soon astound them with new magical discoveries. When Lernicious misses the next several meetings of the conclave, the Preceptor may exhibit a modicum of anxiety and dispatch the characters to discover the reason for his absences.

Lernicious’ manse is heavily protected and the guardians of the grounds (vat-grown monsters and carnivorous plants) remain vigilant. Assuming the characters achieve entry, they will find Lernicious dead in his workroom. Extremely slender needles have been inserted into his brain through his eyes. Assiduous searching will reveal writings concerning Lernicious’ most recent research; attempts to loot the manse of his magical paraphernalia will trigger booby-traps at the GM’s discretion.

According to his notes, Lernicious was convinced that the Twk-men were originally a human people accidentally miniaturized by Phandaal when he created the Great Forest of Da. Lernicious further believed that the Twk-men had served Phandaal afterwards as his spies, acquiring magical secrets from him in payment. Negotiations with the twk-men having failed, he resorted to kidnapping a twk-man chieftain.

The Twk-men rescued their leader from Lernicious’ questioning and killed the arch-magician in revenge.

How this adventure develops depends on the origins of the (local) twk-men. If they are manikins who have gained autonomy, there will be few secrets to be gleaned. If they are indeed Phandaal’s (erstwhile) spies, they may have lore concerning Phandaal’s greatest spells; perhaps their leaders still report to Phandaal’s revenant deep within the Great Forest of Da—how will the revenant respond to the fumbblings of the 21st Aeon’s archmagicians? But perhaps the twk-men are actually the servants of the archveults—if so, they and their masters will seek to neutralize the characters so that the archveults can overwhelm the unsuspecting remainder of the conclave at a more auspicious juncture.

✧ **Taglines** ✧

‘Size is immaterial; technique is essential.’

‘Do you have salt? I would have salt.’

‘Your ignorance and rudeness is in proportion to your size. Show courtesy or you will learn nothing from me!’

‘Please remove your lance from my eye. We must negotiate as equals!’



Merry Pranks and Jolly Japes

travelling entertains who can be hired for weddings, children’s parties, funerals & burnings.

Apply Kaiin, the Market



✧ The Twk-men ✧

Scholarly Conjectures

✧ Facts and Fancies Concerning The Twk-men ✧

From *Kalasti's Natural Concordance, volume III, Halberdenties' Anatomical Appendix, and Annals of the Aeons* (various authors)

Anatomy and Size

Twk-men are identical in all anatomical respects to true men, differing only in scale. They average one to two inches in height, with an extremely slender build.

Skin Color

The greenish tint of a Twk-man's skin is an adaptation to their arboreal environment. This natural camouflage protects Twk-men from being seen by predators.

Body Paint

All Twk-men wear indelible body paint. To the unaided human eye, this appears as a uniform greenish tinge. In fact, Twk-men bodies are covered with a multitude of tiny patterns, which proudly indicate the social caste, family history, and tribal allegiances of the wearer.

Reticence

On almost all subjects, the twk-men are courteous and shrewd bargainers of information. However, they are remarkably silent on topics pertaining to themselves and their culture. Twk-men, who are pressed on such matters, will become very agitated and will seek to distance themselves from the questioners.

Memorization

Twk-men have excellent memories. During their former existence as minuscule performers, they could memorize any play, song, or snatch of music from a single recital and mimic a quadrille from a single observation. Their understanding of this recalled knowledge is, however, limited.

Society

Twk-men society models itself on the ancient dramas of Grand Motholam. The former performers now consider the entire world to be a stage with its inhabitants performing for an audience of twk-men.

Twk-men society maintains the original customs of the Tawek people (the original inhabitants of the Da woodlands shrunk by Phandaal). Each Twk-man settlement is autonomous; disputes between the fractious chieftains often escalate into brief bloody battles. Unrepentant or habitual twk-man criminals are banished from their home tribes and forbidden admittance to other villages. All Twk-men are united in a common belief that the Great Forest of Da belongs to them.

Paraphernalia

When encountered away from their guarded settlements, the twk-men will be mounted on their favorite dragonfly steeds and wielding long lances. The careful observer will note the finely made miniature saddles, riding tack, and pallets to hold the material payments for their bartered information. Each dragonfly mount may carry up to six separate pallets, each capable of holding a thimbleful of salts, extracts, liquids, or other substances.

In their hidden villages, less adventuresome twk-folk craft many items with great skill and a little magic from plant leaves, wood-mouse leather, and the scattered detritus of bigger folk. To a human archer, retrieving a broken arrow which has missed its target is a matter of little import; to a twk-man community, it represents a valuable source of strong wood for building tree-houses and metal for lances. Twk-men flyers will summon reinforcements to salvage any abandoned equipment of modest size once they are certain that the original owner will not be returning. Occasionally the twk-men develop long-term trading relationships with magicians and acquire items of human manufacture reduced by magic to the appropriate dimensions through this commerce.

✧ The Twk-men ✧

Poisons

From harvested or traded flowers, berries, and leaves, the twk-men create a variety of exotic fabrics, body paints, perfumes, intoxicating beverages, poisons, and herbal remedies. Twk-men medicine specializes in antidotes for natural and artificial toxins. Careful inclusion of minute doses of some of these poisons in their diet has ensured that most twk-men are immune to their commonly used toxins, such as the green body paint with which they coat their skins before leaving the safety of a village.

Twk-man body paint is highly toxic. The merest touch of the paint will burn a bird's beak, causing it to spit out the battered twk-man. Swallowing a painted twk-man will induce an agonizing death in small birds and animals; even a pelgrane will suffer mild nausea. If the body paint is smeared across the lips and nostrils of a sleeping human, it will be gradually inhaled and the toxic elements will directly destroy the lungs inducing death in several hours.

While civilized folk disdain the use of poison as an assassin's weapon, poison is for the Twk-men a pragmatic solution in a world where almost every predator is larger than them.

Weapons

Even amongst themselves, the twk-men have abandoned swords, daggers, and other melee weapons in favor of the mounted lance with its greater reach. These long metal lances are actually modified needles, acquired by barter or salvage from human wayfarers on the fringes of the forest, and then partially reshaped for the twk-men's requirements¹. Twk lancers can dispatch an ornery wasp, a deadly scorpion or even a belligerent rodent with a single thrust. With lance tips dipped in the appropriate poison, twk-men have attacked even deodands from ambush and slain them. Such vigorous actions are rare events and represent retaliation for great harm caused to twk-men individuals or entire communities.

Magicians

Arch-magicians among the twk-men are even less common than among true men. However, every twk settlement boasts at least one Magician and usually several Dabbler-level apprentices. Unlike their fully human counterparts, twk wizards are less interested in their own egotistical agendas, focusing instead on the security and prosperity of the community. Barred by tradition from becoming chieftains themselves, they serve as impartial councilors.

Magic

Twk magicians have access to a number of the commonly known spells of the Dying Earth as well as certain magics peculiar to their own circumstances. Panguine's Loyal Porter is occasionally employed for retrieving significant quantities of salvage or for moving a twk village in its entirety to a more secluded location. Phandaal's Critique of the Chill and Phandaal's Critique of the Warmth have sufficient potency to ward a twk refuge from inclement weather. Casting The Seventh Set's Web of Hiding on a daily basis to conceal a settlement is the responsibility of its most senior magical practitioner.

The arcane lore of the Twk-men includes the following spells: the *Ghost Rider*, the *Abjuration of Conflagration*, the *Charm of Calming Confusion*, *Phandaal's Puissant Pacification*, the *Minimization of Magnitude*, and *Phandaal's Equalizer of Scale*.

Twk-Man Game Statistics

Persuade (Forthright) ~, Rebuff (Wary) 1.5~, Attack (Speed) 0.5~ / (Finesse) 0.5~ Defense (Dodge) ~, Health 3, Athletics ~, Living Rough 4, Perception 6, Wherewithal 2.

Small Size: Dodge value already reflects the additional difficulty of hitting a target as tiny as a twk-man.

Dragonfly mount: When the twk-man is mounted on a flying insect, add a 0.5- to Attack (Speed) and 2- to Defense (Dodge).

¹ Many a peddler travels in safety through the forest because he is wise enough to pay a regular toll to the Twk-men in long needles. Such peddlers, while perhaps regarded by adventurers as their social inferiors, could be well worth cultivating by those who seek to contact Twk-men

✧ The Twk-men ✧

Skin Color

In their normal forest homes, the Twk-man's greenish cast grants him a ~ to Concealment (when hiding himself only) and a 0.5~ to Stealth.

Body Paint

Any Twk-man whose body paint patterns have been smudged or damaged suffers a levy of 2 to Etiquette when dealing with other Twk-men.

Memorization

Twk-men have Pedantry 2~ and may use this ability to recall ancient dramas, dances, scraps of knowledge, or even their observations of more contemporary events. However, Twk-men suffer a levy of 3 when attempting to use Pedantry to *understand* or *analyze* some fact.

Poisons

Twk-man poisons (such as their body paint) can be delivered by contact, injury, inhalation or ingestion. Twk-men are immune to these toxins. The exact degree of potency, interval, and effect depend on the delivery mechanism and size of the affected creature.

By contact (e.g. simply touching a Twk-man's skin):

Potency: Levy 1

Interval: 5 minutes

Effect: The victim makes a Health roll. On a Success (of any kind), the victim experiences a severe burning sensation, but no actual injury. The victim suffers 1 injury on an Exasperating Failure, 2 injuries on a Quotidian Failure, and 3 injuries on a Dismal Failure.

By injury:

Potency: Levy 2

Interval: 5 minutes

Effect: The victim makes a Health roll. On a Success (of any kind), the victim suffers 1 injury and no further effect. The victim suffers 2 injuries on an Exasperating Failure, 3 injuries on a Quotidian Failure, and dies on a Dismal Failure.

By ingestion (e.g. swallowing a painted twk-man) or inhalation (e.g. if the body paint is smeared across the lips and nostrils of a sleeping human):

Potency: Levy 3

Interval: 30 minutes

Effect: The victim makes a Health roll. On a Success (of any kind), the victim suffers vomits up the entire contents of its stomach. If the victim is a small animal or bird, it also suffers 1 injury. On a Failure (of any kind), victims of human-size or larger suffer 3 injuries, which can only be healed by magic; victims smaller than humans die.

Weapons

Advantage: The mounted lance gives its wielder a greater reach in combat. Also if the Twk-man can charge or "dive-bomb" an opponent, his first attack in a fight has a boon of 1. This advantage may be used again if the twk-man can back-up for a further charge.

Disadvantage: The lance is unwieldy for a twk-man to use on foot. All attacks suffer a levy of 1².



2 a spear twice one's height is not overly unwieldy when used on foot, but the levy is to allow for the fact that opponents will tend to get within the spears optimum range.

Magic

The Ghost Rider

Range: Touch

Duration: Hours

Difficulty: Straightforward

The target of this spell is normally a twk-man and her dragonfly mount. The twk-man, the dragonfly, and all possessions become undetectable to sight, hearing, and smell. The recipient of this spell does not become intangible. Targets can still see themselves and act normally. The Ghost Rider can affect living targets no larger than an adult human hand.

Violent and vigorous actions like combat may reveal the subject's position with reasonable accuracy, but will not dispel the magic. Anyone fighting a twk-man flyer thus protected suffers a levy of 2 and a penalty of 1 to all Attack and Defense rolls. If the character can arrange to combat the twk-man in smoke, fog, mud, or any other environment that reveals the twk-man's location, the disadvantage is reduced to a levy of 2.



The Abjuration of Conflagration

Range: Near

Duration: Special / Hours

Difficulty: Straightforward

This spell instantly extinguishes any fires in an area up to 20 yards in diameter and five yards high. No natural fires can be started in the protected area for the spell's remaining duration.



The Charm of Calming Confusion

Range: Near

Duration: Hours

Difficulty: Straightforward

When cast on a target of no more than animal intelligence, this will firstly prevent the target from taking any hostile actions and secondly induce a temporary state of confusion during which the target will forget its original intentions. Thus bewildered, the animal will usually wander off in some random direction away from the area. This spell does not work on humans, twk-men, sandestins, or hybrid creatures with human or near-human sentience (e.g. deodands, pelgranes, erbs, etc.).



Phandaal's Puissant Pacification

Range: Near

Duration: Special

Difficulty: Straightforward

This spell is believed by some authorities to have been devised by Phandaal purely for the benefit of the twk-men. When cast on a single creature of animal intelligence, this will immediately suppress the creature's natural instincts, effectively domesticating it. Twk animal handlers will still require days or weeks to train the "broken" animal so that it can serve as a mount, a beast of burden, or guardian. In addition to the restriction on the intelligence of allowed targets, the animal must also be no larger than an adult human fist.



✧ The Twk-men ✧

The Minimization of Magnitude

Range: Touch

Duration: Special

Difficulty: Straightforward

This spell permanently reduces the size of an inorganic object or non-living material to twk-man scales. Thus a saddle crafted for human proportions would be reduced to fit the dimensions of the twk-man caster. This spell will not affect objects larger than a normal-sized wardrobe and will not affect living creatures.

Phandaal's Equalizer of Scale

Range: Touch

Duration: Hours

Difficulty: Straightforward

This enchantment temporarily reduces a living creature in size, though the degree of absolute alteration will depend on the target's original dimensions. Hence if this spell is cast on a human target, the affected human will be shrunk to the size of a twk-man. If cast on a target larger than a human being such as a pelgrane, the miniaturized predator will still be two to three times larger than the average twk-man and as ill-humored as ever. All possessions carried or worn by the target are also affected by the spell.

✧ **Final note** ✧

An adventure involving Twk-men and written by the same august author is included elsewhere in this compendium of un-speakable delights.

Tired of teetering on a rickety plank over a noxious pit?

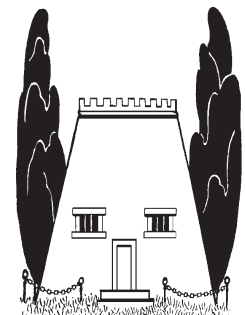
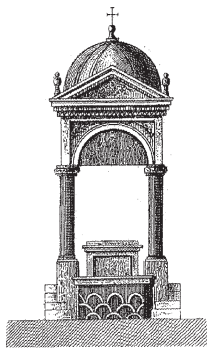
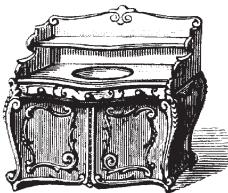
Contact Theadgilt and Longdrop, artists of the earth closet.

Newly arrived in Kaiin, our skilled artisans can delve for you a Taun Tassel Splay Foot, a Cansaspara Long Drop or a Cutz Tesselated.

No more uncertain planks in rickety huts, chose from our Gazebo, Pagoda or Kaiin Traditional styles, whilst for seating we offer the Companionable Bench (seating from three to eight) the Solitary Throne, or the Ships Rail Traditional.

Let your time of contemplation be well spent in comfort and security, let every motion be as smooth and carefree as possible. No more shall paramours shun your mansion, no more shall neighbours mock or small boys jeer.

As provided for the Arch Mages of the Blue Principles.





Grashpotel's Symposium

David Thomas

Here we have a series of adventures with a common theme. The great Arch Mage Grashpotel¹ runs occasional conferences for the edification of the wise, and the glorification of Grashpotel. Other arch mages² take delight in trying to humiliate Grashpotel by getting him to publish papers for his conference that turn out to be arrant nonsense. Thus and so, Grashpotel is regularly in deed of suitable³ Adventurers capable of investigating the claims made by the papers. These adventures are linked only in so far as they represent work done for Grashpotel. They need to be played in no particular order; indeed they can be played interspersed with such other adventures as a GM may decide.

The Carnival of Grotesques

Introduction

Grashpotel the Sage has recently received a very disturbing submission to his forthcoming Symposium Papers. At first he was of a mind to destroy the paper and ignore it entirely, suspecting it to be the work of some deluded or cruel-minded fool. However, the basic premise has activated his curiosity, and this coupled with having to hand a number of amateur adventurers eager for employment has convinced him to at least have some basic inquiries made. After all, if the claims to prove to have any foundation he can choose whether to publish the document or merely to use it as a useful influential tool in local politics. With the Symposium Conference approaching, soon Grashpotel will be busy evaluating more obviously promising papers, and organizing expeditions to check their authenticity. Thus, he personally cannot investigate these claims, and in any case, would be loathe to expose himself to either the rigors of hard work or the chance of ridicule if the entire suspect submission is merely an elaborate practical joke.

GM's Note: There needs to be a vaguely realistic reason why Grashpotel can trust the discretion of the PCs. Most likely this will simply be because the sage has something highly specific that they want (see introduction to this chapter), but could possibly be merely the availability of large sums of money in return for their silence. (Or it may be because he is a powerful magician sage – and they are miscreants who need to make amends for attempting to do him wrong.)

Grashpotel's Instructions

"I have received a rather surprising, and possibly slanderous, document. This piece makes claims that may have far-reaching and highly disturbing consequences both for the field of teratology and for the prestige currently enjoyed by several noble families of Ascolais. I require persons of absolute discretion to undertake an expedition some days' travel away from Kaiin, to investigate this potentially sensational situation. Within reason take what time you need, but return to me here within a few weeks, preferably with a full report on the truth or lack thereof in this document. In case these claims prove to be spurious, I wish to have no connection made between myself and your research. Be solicitous in all things, and under no circumstances jeopardize the good name of the Carnival unless you are completely certain of your findings and have no other choice. If any of the claims are true, I wish exacting details on the motivations and mechanics of how and why these acts occur. No matter what the results, if your diligence and veracity are demonstrable I will have further interesting and rewarding work available in the months preceding the Symposium Conference."

1 As such he wishes to be addressed and who are we to deny him his little pleasures?

2 And even some lesser lights.

3 For 'suitable' read expendable. Cheap and Expendable is perhaps the ideal but expendable with suffice.

Unthinkable Congresses: An Abstract

Commentators and academic speculators often discuss the origins of the half-men. How so, and for why, are the anthropophages brought into existence, they ask? Vat matrices are mentioned, forgotten magical capabilities of former aeons, even the subtle blendings of demonic plasms with that of other beasts and even human hosts. All of these conjectures may or may not be true, but can in any case be disregarded, for I have come across certain proof that a deodand resident in the Scaum Valley is capable of impregnating human females with its viable offspring - and has been doing so for several years.

No doubt you know that over recent years several wealthy families of Almerly have been plagued with irregular births of supremely ugly offspring, which all means of sorcerous inquiry have shown to be the fruits of an adulterous union. The mothers also strenuously deny any wrongdoing, and similar magical investigation has proved that they are speaking the truth. Some persons talk of the revival of an ancient curse; others speculate that one or more families are indulging in demonic practices and have brought this misfortune on their neighbors and acquaintances. Other less credible possibilities have also presented themselves; however all are false.

The terrible truth is that all of the births in question have fallen around nine months after a performance by the Carnival of Grotesques in the region of abode of the family in question. What is the connection? It is simple. Within the retinue of these showfolk is a certain enslaved deodand, a creature of great strength and peculiar habits. Although it poses as a slave, it has been with the carnival for as long as anyone can remember, and is in robust good health. Whereas normally all captured anthropophages whither and die within months at the most, or else (more usually) either fatally injure themselves or are slain during desperate and doomed bids for freedom.

But not this deodand. Oh no! We can only speculate what twisted activities it is somehow assisted to perform as an incentive to remain with the carnival; and what strange and unwholesome practices the rest of the showfolk engage in.

My research is incomplete, and I plan to submit further conclusive evidence to the Symposium during the forthcoming conference. For now I send this abstract as an incentive to prepare for my full revelations. I shall remain anonymous at present, as my life would most certainly be endangered were the showfolk to become aware of my investigations.

GM's Overview

Where the carnival is first encountered is up to the GM. Azenomei is one possibility, since a map of this town is available at the Pelgrane Press website on the "Through Violet Cusps" page. It may be necessary for the PCs to track its progress from a recent performance location, and perhaps first encounter the wagons as they roll down the road prior to setting up camp at the next site.

During the PCs' first exploration of the carnival, they should come across the recent corpse of a small bearded man. He may be stuffed in a barrel, buried in a shallow grave, or half-consumed by an anthropophage. However, and wherever, this person is found, evidence of foul play is apparent, such as a neck broken like a dry twig. Also, the corpse has been stripped of all valuables and identifying items. This person is of course the commentator who wrote the abstract that Grashpotel received, slain after Pentza discovered what he was up to. The discovery of the body comes early so as to discourage frivolous role-playing during the investigation. (The GM is free to invent the background and identity of this person as they see fit, although this may never be uncovered.)

The solution to the mystery is quite straightforward: it is not the deodand, but Pentza, the carnival head. He watches the local grandees, picks the most pleasing married woman, and arranges for her husband to be drugged or dragged off for exotic adventures of his own. While he is gone, this fair master takes up the man's appearance and impregnates his wife, all the while impersonating the highly amorous but entirely courteous husband.

If Puce is ever accused, the deodand denies being responsible for such acts. If questioned with civility (or if his life seems about to be forfeit), he may offer information in return for an assurance of a free run to the Great Da Forest. (Naturally, he

will only undertake not to eat his saviors when freed if they make this an explicit term of their agreement.) Puce knows the identity of the person responsible. When asked, he will explain—with entirely fitting condescension.

If pressed, Puce will also describe Pentza's true appearance. Puce does not know why Pentza insists on fathering ugly, misbegotten wretches, although he will concede that he finds it droll. He will also reveal that the carnival's personnel are those very same grotesques – Pentza's children and grandchildren. What the gallants do with this intelligence is up to them. No grandee worthy of the name would want to learn how easily she was deceived, neither would her husband care to dwell too deeply on what happened to him on that dreadful night. They might commission the adventurers to be the agents of thorough, but discrete, revenge.

The show folk do not always guard Puce scrupulously while he is locked in his wagon—although they will emphatically resist his removal from their caravan. It is thus possible to talk to the deodand, although carnival children may contrive to charge for access to him. If the PCs confront Pentza without taking adequate precautions, he will call his family to attack them. If captured, or more likely once the PCs are safely trussed up, ready to be fed to Puce, the showman will explain:

Pentza was born to Marsha Fenwitt, (a noted fire-eater and dancer with Cherry Bo-bo's Travelling Fair) and the Grandee Avaine Haudse. Appalled by her humble station, the Haudse family cursed her swollen belly and although her son nonetheless lived, he was born hideously ugly.

He has lived in the travelling shows for most of his life, at first wandering Ascolais and Almerly while his mother tried to track down his father and extort money from him. Marsha was ignorant of her small magical talent, but a passing wizard, Ozmay, noted it while watching her and Pentza perform in a tavern. He took them in, made her his mistress and set about making mischief with her young son.

Ozmay convinced him that he had been ill-used by the upper classes and that there was only one way to pay them back, to father children on all of the noble families south of the Fer Aquila. To aid this, he taught the boy some small magic and sent him on his way. Pentza will allow the party to survive if they happen to know of the present location of the now senile senior Haudse⁴, whom he intends will die, along with many of his family, in as humiliating manner as possible.

Though the solution is potentially straightforward, the GM should of course ensure that the PCs are unable merely to march into the carnival caravans and begin asking questions. Numerous secretive, burly, and potentially aggressive showfolk must be avoided, and Pentza himself is cunning and suspicious. Possibly the PCs will need to pose as grantees, potential employers, or even as humble carnival employees, before they can avail themselves of the opportunities they require.

❖❖❖ **Pentza's Carnival of Grotesques** ❖❖❖

This small travelling fair tours the valleys of the Derna and Scaum. On occasion it has appeared in Cuirnif and even in Efred, and is a regular attraction at Azenomei, Taun Tassel, Sferre and Kaiin. It recently left the old market outside that white-walled city and has set up in Sferre. The Carnival has twelve great, eight-wheeled wagons, drawn by two-headed, bald wherriots. All company members, with the exception of the proprietor Pentza, are appallingly ugly—a trait the show folk accentuate by wearing the best, costliest, most fashionable clothes available. A rash of thefts from laundries and washing lines along their route offers a clue to the origin of their apparel. Strangely, Pentza himself is an unnaturally beautiful man.

There are many interesting aspects to the carnival, and one of the most remarkable is the performing deodand, Puce—so called for his dyed skin and hair, and matching leather harness. He even carries the lavender motif into the scented oil that he rubs on his body. Never doubt it – Puce is a professional. He is also a prizefighter. At each venue a reinforced wooden enclosure is constructed, with raised seats overlooking the interior, and the whole thing covered by thick canvas walls and awning.

While travelling, the deodand slouches in his caravan, locked behind thick metal bars and chained securely to the wagon bed. On a halt, the sides of the vehicle drop down, and the creature rages at onlookers—rattling his cage and threatening to eat

4 Should they be likely to lack any other means of escape, make sure this is incorporated into their experience prior to this point.

them⁵. In the meantime, the grotesques drive a great log into the ground, erect a big top about it, complete with stands, then shackle Puce to the central pole. At the chain's full stretch, the deodand's claws will pass within a hand's span of spectators in the first ring of benches⁶.

The carnival has a selection of side show booths: food; confections; intoxicants; dart throwing; Find the Lady; prophylactics, adjuncts and amulets; Lirandys the seer; and four major acts, the Masques of Delight; Puce; The Great Diandro & Natasma; and the furious Murcheon. Admission to the Big Top costs five groats, or three for children.

✠ The Show ✠

The show opens with Murcheon, who starts his act as a straight man for Halmeon, the clown. The fool's antics progressively annoy Murcheon so that he loses all control and pursues the wretch around the ring (though they both scrupulously avoid Puce), performing astonishing feats of strength in his attempts to catch him. Their act ends with poor Halmeon begging for mercy and making an impassioned speech about his good heart and the world's need for laughter. Murcheon invites the audience to seal the clown's fate.

The Great Diandro and Natasma perform a spectacular knife-throwing act, which requires some preparation. Earlier in the day, Pentza tours the town, looking for a comely, adventurous and essentially mindless young woman, whom he offers free admission and refreshments in return for her participation in the proceedings. This girl plays Natasma for the evening.

In the act, the Great Diandro wanders into the ring and strikes up a conversation with Puce, calling him 'cousin' and asking after the health of his (Diandro's) aunt. Puce confesses to matricide and cannibalism, the audience gasps and then, with great eloquence, the deodand persuades Diandro to get him another meal so that he can become strong enough to break his bonds and flee. He cites the blood they share. Diandro agrees, takes Natasma from her place and thrusts her towards Puce.

The girl runs about in terror while Diandro tries to drive her towards her fate, using knives, both flourished and thrown. When Natasma is a few short steps from her doom, Pentza appears from nowhere and intercedes. Diandro throws his knives; Pentza catches them and throws them back, all the time fending off Puce with a burning brand. This display is a marvel of skill and dexterity. When the entire crowd is standing, Pentza triumphs and Diandro slinks into the night, muttering darkly. Depending on her composure, Natasma might resume her seat; more often she requires brandy and solitude, potentially available in Pentza's caravan.

The main attraction is Puce. Barkers throughout the performance and the fair itself let it be known that there is a purse of terces for anyone who will fight him. This champion need not necessarily beat him, just dare to approach him (lowered on a stout line), lay a blow that staggers or hurts the deodand, and then be hauled to safety. Doing this wins the gallant one hundred terces. Rendering Puce incapable of further aggression secures five centurms, though magic is disallowed and carefully watched for.



Face the monster and win terces!

5 Astute readers will recognise this as a common trait amongst professional pugilists, not merely those of less than human descent.

6 Let us hope he never realizes that by leaping up he could savage them with his talonned toes.

Naturally, the real money is won on the side bets. Usually, two or three local bravos attempt the feat; perhaps one succeeds while another is mortally injured, sometimes even consumed by Puce. Then a gallant traveler undertakes the quest and in a hard-fought battle, defeats the monster. Pentza pays out with good grace and the stranger departs. Those with sporting blood will note that the impresario doubtless covered his losses by not paying out on the favorite. They might even care to look on the deodand's broken, still-living body, lying with some of its arms and legs cruelly dislocated. They will hear him whimper and threaten vengeance.

Needless to say, the climactic battle is an illusion. Pentza caught Puce while he was starving and contrived with a surgeon to render the monster's limbs dismountable – his joints have been replaced with a cunning arrangement of pins and clasps, which, if struck thus and so, cause an uncomfortable, but easily reversible dislocation. After the fair closes, Puce is returned to his cage and his limbs restored. He, needless to say, resents this treatment, but is powerless to prevent it. The gallant stranger is, of course, a confederate of Pentza's; a fellow showman rendered comely by an application of the Enchantment of Another's Face.



The Masques of Delight perform a stately comedic dance

The Masques of Delight perform before, between and after the main acts. They are a song and dance troupe drawn from any of the show people with nothing better to do. They wear masks that accentuate their unfortunate looks, being beautiful, but scowling on one side, ugly but jolly on the other. The entire carnival sings in the finale; even Puce—who wails a descant.

❖❖❖ The Wagons ❖❖❖

Each of the twelve wagons is capable of hauling a ton and a half of goods. They are high-sided and brightly painted. Their heavy wheels have six spokes and metal tyres.

Wagon 1 is Pentza's. It has two seats, one for the driver, Maurantz and his mate Reyad, and a higher one behind it for Pentza. After a successful show, an impressionable local girl (Natasma, as often as not) can be seen embracing him upon it while the carnival makes its exit. She will sometimes be found sprawled weeping in a ditch around the road's first bend, and certainly abandoned before the next stopover. The rear part of Pentza's wagon has a comfortable divan, a stock of fine wines and silver cups and, on proud display, a dinner service, which when arranged correctly, depicts the famous Satyric Supper of Cansaspapa, an event no longer celebrated with the élan visible on the crockery. The carnival's strongbox is chained to the wagon bed. Pentza also keeps trophies – locks of hair from his victims—glued into his scrapbook, with careful notations of the event. This book, kept in the strong box, not only counts as evidence against the fiend, but also serves as a useful guide to the amorous capabilities of the ladies of the valley. Strapped to the back of the wagon is the tent shared by the driver and his mate.

Wagon 2 belongs to Murcheon and his family Clione, Tazna and Merrionne (wife and two daughters). Merrionne runs the dart-throwing booth. Aside from their dismantled stall and the prizes offered, their wagon contains little beyond a comprehensive collection of recent fashions and several bottles of rum. The cards in the booth are backed, to varying degrees, with steel. To confuse PCs, Merrionne punctures the cards over the metal underlay. Tazna is an odd throwback, a woman of normal good looks amidst her oddly-visaged relatives, seeming even more comely by comparison. She cultivates a friendly and outgoing manner, perhaps sufficient to inspire one or more PCs to attempt to rescue her from her life on the road. Unfortunately for the PCs, she is a witch in the archetypal meaning of the word, a black-hearted woman, thief and murderer, and perhaps the cruelest person amongst the troupe.

❖❖❖ Grashpotel's Symposium ❖❖❖

Wagon 3 is home to Lirandys the seer and his close friend Halmeon. It contains their hammocks, Lirandys' booth, folded flat, an extraordinary selection of playing cards, the seer's mystical, hooded robe and some splendid clothes. The two performers drive their own wagon. Lirandys' act is very good – he burns soporific incense, spreads the cards with artistry and presents a mysterious and authoritative demeanor, as only his nose projects past his thick, midnight blue cowl, stitched with cabalistic symbols.

Wagon 4 is driven by Shabney and Murca, who manufacture and sell talismans. They have sheets of metal, dies, hammers, scraps of parchment and slivers of ancient wood and bone. If approached correctly and provided with suitable materials and a sample from which to work, they can forge almost anything. Shabney and Murca are married to Rialé and Russa, respectively and have five children, Dresne, Shesne, Tamria, Modeu and Felice. None of the adults are sure of which child is whose, but are not too bothered anyhow. The children have duties of general burglary and larceny and keep a watchful eye for local vagabonds seeking to make money out of the fair.

Wagon 5 carries Puce. Fiorila and Bettice drive it, while their children, Zezma, Wando and Urlo run along behind. Fiorila and Bettice prepare and sell food and drink from their booth. They also approach and discourage local criminals who would try to prey upon them. Aside from Puce, their caravan holds their furniture, booth and the tools of their trade, including a cauldron four feet across and three deep, and a tripod from which to hang it. They sleep in a tent.

Wagon 6 holds Tyzant, the card sharp, who runs the Find the Lady booth. For variety, he also provides his services as dealer or croupier for dice or card games. Lowren and their children Fenzil, Portez and Gultney accompany him. Tyzant usually plays Find the Lady straight, and to a large crowd, to encourage a wide spread of bets. His nimble children pick the pockets of any over-successful winners, and indeed of anyone who appears to have valuables worth the effort. This is how their money is made.

Wagons 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11 carry the big top, the stands tents and general supplies. Ystre and Redufe, Nawsmune and Trouze, Ferrith and Pando, Druedra and Jusrian, Nabbel and Olio respectively drive them. Until an unfortunate and never to be repeated visit to Cuirnif, they had twenty children between them.

Wagon 12 belongs to Diandro and his mother, Lurthe. He has a large number of knives, most with retractable or insubstantial blades, but some have serious utility and three, those he wears at his left wrist, the small of his back and right boot, date from the late 18th Aeon. Diandro also has five real throwing knives that he fans out in his left hand. If pressed, he will juggle with them. Uniquely for the carnival people, Diandro always wears a bottle-green frock coat. It has pockets for cut-throat razors in each lapel. The lapels are also backed with fishhooks, which means that grabbing Diandro by them is ill advised. Close inspection will show that they are spotted with dried blood.

❖❖❖ Supporting Characters ❖❖❖

Puce, Performing Deodand

“I will not kill and eat you. I propose to devour you alive.”

A tall, rangy deodand, with lavender hair and harness, who glistens with and smells of lavender oil.

It is unlikely that anyone will notice his dismountable joints. If such is observed, to strike the joint correctly requires an aimed attack (DERPG, p47) with a levy of 2.

Persuade (Eloquent) 8,	Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 8,	Attack (Strength) 2~,	Defense (Parry) 2~,
Health 10,	Athletics 8,	Etiquette 4,	Imposture 6,
Pedantry 4,	Perception 4,	Scuttlebutt 4,	Wherewithal 8.

Pentza, a Showman

"Gentlemen, come, prove your courage against the ferocious Puce."

With his spell active, Pentza is a spectacularly handsome, raven-haired man, with smoldering violet eyes. He wears high, black leather boots, an iridescent blue velvet tailcoat and a black two-tiered hat with a white cockade. Otherwise he is hideous beyond belief, with an orange rosebud mouth and great barbed teeth, mottled, warty skin and chicken's legs.

Persuade (Charming) 16,	Persuade (Intimidating) 10,	Rebuff (Penetrating) 14,	Rebuff (Lawyerly) 8,
Attack (Finesse) 14,	Defense (Misdirection) 14,	Magic (Devious) 4,	Health 8,
Athletics 9,	Concealment 7,	Driving 6,	Etiquette 4,
Gambling 11,	Imposture 10,	Pedantry 4,	Perception 6,
Quick Fingers 7,	Seduction 6,	Stealth 5,	Wherewithal 10,
Wealth 2.			

Spell: *Enchantment of Another's Face* (He carries his copy of his spell on a scrap of parchment inside his hat.)

Possessions: Pentza retains a small memento of Ozmay, a mirror-backed, claw-footed incense burner. If someone wrongs the showman, he can light the incense and his enemy's face will appear in the mirror. (Practitioners of Devious Magic can resist this effect, although, for obvious reasons the GM should make the roll in secret).



The Showfolk, performers and hucksters

"Yes, of course our game is honest – we return here every other year. Why would we cheat you?"

The showfolk are grotesque beyond belief, but in different ways. Churlishly, they fight with tent mallets and knives. The names and details of all the showfolk appear in *The Wagons*, above.

Persuade (Obfuscatory) 8,	Rebuff (Obtuse) 8,	Attck (Strength) 8,	Defense (Parry) 8,
Health 6,	Athletics 7,	Concealment 5,	Gambling 8,
Perception 7,	Quick Fingers 6,	Stealth 4,	Wherewithal 5.

Diandro, the knife thrower, is very skilled with his weapons, and has Attack (Cunning) 16.

Murcheon has Attack (Strength) 14, and Health 8.

❖ **Other Adventure Hooks** ❖

We provide here a number of alternative means for the PCs to become involved with the Carnival:

Fashion Victims

Naturally, players will want their characters to dress at the height of fashion; a wholesome ambition and one shared by the show folk. The PCs repair to a hostelry, perhaps the New Moon in Taun Tassel. They render their travel-stained garments to the management for sponging and laundering, and then awake to profuse apologies. The laundry has been robbed and its proprietor beaten unconscious. The management offers a selection of garments (obtained from the local gibbets) in partial compensation. By a curious coincidence, there is a fair in town, strictly speaking just outside its jurisdictional limits.

Rare Items Required

Someone, a manufacturer of magical adjuncts perhaps, or merely a student of half-man anatomy, requires a sample from a deodand, or a sample deodand. Normally such a hunt requires a journey into the wilds, and the risk of interception from other dangerous creatures. In this case the PCs happened only a few days ago to hear that the Travelling Show is headed for a nearby settlement.

Lady in Hiding

Yolana Dirune is a beautiful but shy woman. So shy that she will never leave her chamber, which looks south over the Scaum. Gurman Dirune, her stepmother, desires her to meet someone and be happy. She has expended a fortune on minstrels, perfumes, aromatic foods, but nothing works. She offers a reward to anyone who can bring the most handsome man in the land to her.

He's not Ugly; he's my Father

While travelling, the characters encounter a hideously ugly young man, called Jured, perhaps rescuing him from persecution, and/or being assisted by him from some minor difficulty. He is convinced that, as playing the fool saved him savage beatings and cruel taunts as a child, there is a showman in his blood. He asks the adventurers to help him to find his long-lost parent. The only clue is a piece of reddish leather harness that was used to secure the box that he was found in as a baby.



STELLWEED AND JOSSOP

EXPLORERS AND HAULIERS

Are pleased to announce that they have acquired a considerable number of **SARCOPHAGI** in both **PSAMMITE** and **WHINSTONE**. Elaborately engraved with burial texts in at least two languages unfamiliar to the finders, they are ideal for use as linen chests, meat safes, occasional tables, or when stood on end, wardrobes.

Also for the enthusiastic gardener or viniculturalist we have a considerable quantity of **GRAVE MULCH** and **BONE MEAL**, most excellent for use as plant food and general lawn fertiliser.

Available from our warehouse in the Theek by either the barrow load or the dray.

Finally for the collector we have an unsorted collection of **SPHINCTER CLASPS**, in both noble and base metals. These will be sold sight unseen by weight, at reasonable prices



🌿 Gids for Sport and Profit 🌿

✦ Introduction ✦

Rivnah Cadbeli and Frotilul Urvanof have submitted the paper below. It details their research to date into 'Gid Leaping', which is their proposed rival sport to Dhjetar Racing (KPG, p 162-164). They personally believe that dhjetars have become somewhat old hat (although some unkind voices have mentioned that the basis for this venture is jealousy of their rivals who have managed to keep them out of this lucrative field). Cadbeli and Urvanof each have a breeding center located in the Tracks region of Kaiin (KPG, p142). Not only is Grashpotel immensely skeptical of the claims of the group with respect to the differences in jumping ability between male and female gids, but also he is incensed by the apparent involvement of Perrin in the affairs of House Urvanof. As a result, if Grashpotel can ascertain that there is a future in this new sport he is determined to attach himself to the other house. He intends to accomplish this by means of presenting them with a fine female gid in fine mating condition, ready to produce a batch of new and hopefully improved natural hybrids for competition. He also wishes to first perform several tests himself (or have underlings transact the same) to be sure that the whole idea is not just a pack of ill-founded nonsense.

Note that this scenario comes about for the least serious of reasons in terms of Symposium Submissions. Though he says otherwise, Grashpotel's main motivation is to break his way into the apparently lucrative and socially admirable new sport in which his archrival Perrin has already gained a toehold. Such things may be glaringly obvious to Scholasticarium regulars, eventually worked out by intelligent outsiders, or totally overlooked by the congenitally daft. For these reasons, this adventure is the most suitable for outsiders to be recruited (thus gaining them a reputation for reliability in Grashpotel's perception, so that he may realistically call on them again for further episodes). That is to say, for this particular escapade, the sage does not really require educated researchers. Rather he wants bold adventurers capable of capturing a noteworthy female gid and running experiments on the capacity of gids to leap to order. (A task he presumes that will require more force than refinement.) Grashpotel for this relatively local expedition will provide them with a magical river craft to take them up the Derna to the Da Forest. He may also provide retainers, but these will be lackeys rather than experts, and unlikely to be of the diligent variety.

The Use of Gid as A Recreational Attraction

Unexpected Physiological Observations Regarding Sex-Variant Leaping And The Impact Of Cross-Hybridization

Submitted for consideration by Cadbeli R.¹ and Urvanof F., Gid Leaping Consortium, Kaiin.

Abstract

The sport of dhjetar racing is currently suffering from a moderate but pronounced downturn in popularity. In order to fill this niche, a consortium has been established to research new forms of mass sports entertainment. It is our aim to introduce the new discipline of Gid Leaping - a dual event in which gid are tested as to both their horizontal and vertical capabilities. The unpredictable nature of these creatures is expected to add to the overall crowd enjoyment. During trial evaluations, not only have ability differences been observed between the sexes, but also advances have been made in crossbreeding to refine more desirable traits in sports-creatures.

¹ To whom correspondence should be addressed.

Grashpotel's Instructions

"I have received this paper on the apparently burgeoning new sport of gid-leaping. At present I am unsure whether this is absurdity or a new wave of popular culture. I wish for you to travel to the Forest of Da and procure me a female gid in oestrus plus at least two immature gids approaching adulthood. These must then be brought safely and speedily back to Kaiin. Once you are back I wish you to clandestinely uncover the exact nature of the experiments being performed by Cadbeli and Urvanof, and set up your own equivalent procedures in order to dispassionately test their results. I do not wish to publish their paper if it is patently ridiculous, but nor do I wish to take firm stand as a resolute skeptic in the case that this fad proves to be founded in validity."

❖ Background Information ❖

The House of Cadbeli

"My family knows more than a thing or two about husbandry y'know"

The Cadbeli trace their heritage to their namesake, an itinerant tradesman who came to Kaiin several hundred years ago and established a once-famous livestock business. Over the centuries the family fortunes have waned, and although they still have their name and ancestral home, the coffers are not particularly full. Thus they need a novel means of raising collateral and re-establishing their once formidable reputation. The eldest son, Rivnah, wanted to study the natural sciences at the Scholasticarium but the family couldn't afford to fund him. He is behind the 'gid-leaping' venture and has roped his friend Frotitul from House Urvanof into the arrangement.

Rivnah: A small, over-enthusiastic type (who doesn't look the type for scholarly pursuits). The eldest son of the Cadbeli is determined to revive its fortunes in a manner that his forebears would approve of. His limited studies gave him the idea, and after raising some money from a successful gambling streak, he coerced Frotitul into signing a declaration of intent, and set up the first breeding center in the Tracks. He is a hopeful sort and doesn't let the string of upsets and near catastrophes bother him¹. He's absolutely positive that he's doing the right thing.



The House of Urvanof

"Well, one can just tell breeding, can't one"

The Urvanof family is stately and secretive, with rumors of its foundation being few and far between. They are wealthy and educated, with ties to many of the important families of Kaiin. Their wealth is undoubted, although no one knows where it came from. Traditionally, they have been fierce rivals to the Cadbeli family, always trying to outdo them in some fashion or other. Much to the disgust of both families the two eldest sons get along well together, with Rivnah taking the lead and often getting Frotitul into trouble (although never anything serious).

Frotitul: A large, friendly sort who shows more reserve than his companion (but only just). Rivnah, whom he respects tremendously, can easily sway him. Although nervous of their current business venture, particularly as he has siphoned-off quite a bit of family money to match Rivnah's contribution, he thinks that with time and effort it will surely succeed. More sensitive to the wishes of his family, he insisted on setting up a second center to at least maintain the pretence of rivalry with Rivnah².

Inadequately sesquipedalian? Cogitate no longer, contact
Windiffil the ciplinarian for instant relief

1 Had he been less fiscally demanding, he would have been an ideal editor.

2 Cynical readers may have noted that it is far easier to rig the betting when there are two apparently independent centers that secretly work closely together. It is not editorial policy to discuss these matters.

✦ The Ideal Gid ✦

As detailed in the paper, gids are dangerous creatures renowned for their ferocity, particularly the females who display a notorious habit of mating with anything in sight once they descend into oestrus. Fortunately, most matings succeed in producing live, if not reproductive, young. Breeding between a variety of species should be achievable in captivity, and is viewed as the most favorable method of raising hybrids by the current investors—who are anxious to avoid the cost, time and relative danger of involving powerful vat-savvy magicians too closely in the proceedings.



Walk Softly; We are Hunting Gid

Gids are widespread in the Dying Earth, having been found from Cutz to Ascolais. As a result, travel to the Forest of Da should be sufficient to provide a breeding female although there is nothing to stop the GM from sending the characters much further afield should it suit them to do so. Precisely how the PCs are going to attract and capture a female gid with the minimal of personal danger is quite another matter. If red truly attracts the females, perhaps the PCs could use a colored lure



A prime specimen of a female Gid

(although this has its obvious risks). Perhaps wet towels will calm the gid, or even colored blinkers³. Perhaps a captive male of the same or a different species will attract her. If all else fails, nets should immobilize the creature, and big sticks with sharp points should keep it under control. It is entirely possible that the PCs will need to hire a local hunter to assist them. Then all the PCs have to do is get their captives back safely to Grashpotel and the experimental breeding-center.

Game Notes: Maybe Ysmina or one of the Orix brothers could come along and help ride the adult creature back to Kaiin, or perhaps they need some sort of containment (magical or mundane) to complete the task. Above everything else, the safety of the citizens of Kaiin must be maintained, or someone is going to have to answer to the authorities for any maulings, trappings or deaths that could occur when a frenzied gid breaks loose in a populated area. This section of the scenario is a 'hunt', 'trap', and 'travel' adventure. The GM needs to outline each of these three aspects before play, to provide the maximum game-entertainment.



Cross Breeding Gids

The two original centers have been trying to breed a more docile gid, with limited success. The female gid can breed with pretty much anything, so the trainers are looking for other half-men or creatures with a more gentle nature⁴—or just a higher intelligence so that they can grasp the benefits of co-operating in the new sport. It may be that in your campaign, they have succeeded in rearing hybrids with a va-

3 One of our typesetters claims that discordant or raucous music has a soporific effect on the species. She refuses to expound further.

4 Gentle half-men tend to be eaten by their more malevolently inclined siblings.

❖❖❖ Grashpotel's Symposium ❖❖❖

riety of features. (Bear in mind that each breeding cycle can produce offspring from up to six different fathers, and there is nothing to say that the female cannot be bred again as soon as she has laid her eggs). Use your imagination to come up with some good and bad crossbreeds that share features of both mother and father.

As detailed in the paper, their attempts have met with limited success so far, but there are many more creatures to try, including beasts of burden, which have been domesticated for generations – maybe that could be bred into the gid line to improve docility? If miniature gids still exist, perhaps they are more docile (if they were originally kept as pets, you would think that would be a useful trait) – could they be used? The small problem of mate attrition during mating makes using intelligent creatures more difficult—as they do not willingly submit to this procedure. This is hampering research. But then, that really isn't your characters' problem, is it?

Game Notes: The PCs will need to clandestinely uncover the current success and failures of the original breeders, before engaging in their own research. If the PCs approach Grashpotel for assistance, he will make it clear that he has not authorized any 'industrial espionage' and does not condone such. (Nonetheless, he also makes it clear that he wants them to find out this information, and possibly arrange for the abduction of a specimen or two once their own experiments have progressed. This section of the scenario involves the setting up and use of a secret research facility (perhaps in a disused—and magically protected—warehouse in the Threek or Canal Town). Grashpotel wants replicas made of the testing facilities in the other centers. Then he wants breeding experiments to begin, and tests run on the immature gids (including tests as to whether or not they can be trained to be more pliable to human control).

Challenges for the PCs will include: procuring breeding animals, setting up their facility (perhaps before departure), finding (and keeping) reliable staff, and undertaking industrial espionage as mentioned above. Other problems may include paying-off snooping locals, locating (or explaining away) escaped beasts, and avoiding horrific personal injury. Grashpotel's only direct assistance will be to use some highly specific animal-related magic to hasten their female gid's oestrus interval to a mere three days, and to magically speed-up the maturation of the offspring.

❖❖❖ Gid Trainers, Jockeys and Guards ❖❖❖

Trainers

"When it looks at you like that, it's usually time to run"

There are few people insane enough to try to train gids in this modern age. It takes a very special kind of person to work in this field. There are currently three trainers employed by the rival camps, although one of them is recovering from a gid attack. Perhaps one could be bribed, blackmailed, or kidnapped to work secretly for new employers? Or perhaps they have each been training an assistant who would be more pliable to coercion?

Meribex: A quiet, introspective man, he has spent his entire life working with all manner of creatures. At one point he worked in the Prince's stables, until an unknown slight caused him to be branded and thrown out. He has drifted through a variety of positions since, never managing to settle. He does seem to have an innate way with hybrids, and is firm but considerate with his charges. He is in charge of the Cadbeli Stable.

Dolikt: A hulking brute, Dolikt is currently recovering from an attack by breeding female that resulted in the creature's death (hence the need for a new female). He has many years of experience as a stock handler, but is just as mean with the creatures as he is with humans. A vain and over-confident man, it came to as no surprise to many when he got in the way. He loathes Meribex and his natural ability with animals.

Wunya: A slight, wiry young woman trained by Meribex, she has been sent on loan to the Urvanof Stable, to ensure that the planned opening next year can take place, although without a breeding female things look grim. Her philosophy is balanced mid-way between those of the two other trainers, treating creatures kindly until they cross her, at which point they can expect no mercy. She takes a similar attitude towards any of her current staff.

Guards

“Kindly stand away from the fence, sonny. That sign is there for a purpose and I’m not carrying this big spike for the good of my health. Well, actually...”

The gid guards have primarily been employed to stop curious citizens wandering in and being eaten, although security is quite tight—in case the dhjetar fraternity begin to take them seriously and try to put a stop to the sport before its even begun. There is also the small problem of safely housing half-men, and preventing an organized escape incident. It is no worse a job than many of the private security arrangements in the city, and many representatives from the Builder’s Guild are employed here. Most are rough, dour and if they have a sense of humor, it is very dark. The PCs may be able to employ guards who have been sacked from the original research facilities, and thus bear a grudge against their former employers. (Although, they may have been sacked for incompetence or criminal behavior – not that any would initially admit to such being the case.)

Jockeys

The jockeys are mostly young children around the age of eight, chosen from the gutter and well treated purely for the purpose of preparing them for riding gids. Younger children don’t have the strength to handle the creatures, and older children are too big for the harnesses and the beasts. The amount of control they have over the gids is suspect to say the least – the first few trials left battered children in heaps on the ground when their mounts made a break for it. The number of jockeys fluctuates, as many children lack the nerve to continue, get badly trampled, eaten or just run away. There is one potential star: a child called Ysmina. Additionally, the Cadbeli are employing two persons of limited stature yet pronounced musculature, both of who answer to the name ‘Orix’. Rumors claim that they are not humans but representatives of a race from the Great Central Steppe, and are in fact tall for their kind.

Ysmina

“This kind gentleman took me from the gutter and promised to feed and clothe me. I was not inclined to present an argument.”

An apparently weedy child, Ysmina shows massive reserves of strength and determination in the face of great personal danger—when riding the true gids and the one or two hybrids successfully reared so far. She is the only child who has never been thrown. Also she can actually steer the creatures, something none of the other children have yet mastered. Her eyes are an unnatural blue color and she rarely speaks. Meribex has virtually adopted the child and is teaching her all he knows. It is unlikely that Ysmina could be convinced to leave her current position voluntarily.

Persuade (Charming) 1~, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 1.5 ~, Attack (Caution) 0.5~, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 1.5~,
Health 0.75~, Athletics 1.5~, Riding 9



Orix

“I am Orix. As am I.”

The Orix brothers were once members of a travelling carnival, and were valuable attractions due to their immense strength. They tired of life on the road, and sought their fortunes in Kaiin. Mysterious and slightly magical, these four-foot high individuals speak in an odd fashion and are most definitely open to better offers from the highest bidder. If necessary they possess a magical item that gives them the capacity to calm rampaging gids. (Though they will pretend that it is in fact a learned skill that gives them this capability.)

Persuade (Obfuscatory) 1.5~, Rebuff (Contrary) 2~, Attkc (Strength) 2~, Defense (Parry) 2~,
Health 1.5~, Magic (innate) 1.5~, Athletics 2~, Riding 12

Female Gid in Oestrus

"Raaaaarrrrrrggggghhhh <rend/slash/sever/chomp>"

As you will see by comparing ratings, the female of the species is assuredly more deadly than the male.

Attack (Ferocity) 15,	Defense (Sure-Footedness) 12,	Health 16,	Magic (resistance) 7,
Athletics 9,	Concealment 4,	Perception 7,	Stealth 4,
Tracking 9,	Wherewithal 1.5~		



TO WHOMSOEVER IT MAY CONCERN

The Guild of Trained Weasellers takes this opportunity to announce a change in the terms and conditions of hire.

From this point on the levels of remuneration are as follows:

1) The individual (hereinafter referred to as the PATRON) hiring the Weaseller and his weasel (hereinafter referred to as the WEASELLER and his weasel) shall be held responsible for ensuring that the waters in which the search takes place are not cursed, controlled by malignant entities or otherwise hostile to the operations of the Weaseller and his weasel

2) The Patron shall pay a fixed rate per day of 10 terees for one weaseller and one weasel. A day is calculated as being the time between sunrise and sunset. There is no hire period of less than a day, while a night, calculated as the time period between sunset and sunrise is to be charged at a triple rate. Should the sun blink out, this will be considered to be sunset for the purposes of calculating the day.

3) Items found are divided into three categories. The item sought shall belong in its entirety to the Patron, who accepts full responsibility for any curses, ghosts or magical or natural effects attendant upon the recovery of the item.

All fish or similar creatures caught by the weasel while diving for the lost item are to belong entirely to the weaseller. All other items shall be sold at auction, or sold at a mutually agreed valuation; the Patron is entitled to sixteen fifty seconds of the value.

4) Concepts such as 'fish money', 'dredge' and 'flounderage' are recognised as obsolete and will not be charged when searching rivers. In lakes, 'Flounderage' still applies but at a half rate.

Signed

Song Barentor

Head Weaseller, Guild of Trained Weasellers



🌿 The Myth of the Robber Asm 🌿

✦ Introduction ✦

Grashpotel is highly skeptical of the claims in this following paper; having personally researched asms at great length. Also, he has neither heard of Trodsten Mirbital nor of the school that this person claims to represent. Additionally, it is very unusual (if not unheard of) for anyone to take the side of half-men in so vociferous a manner; and the sage's interest has been piqued. As a result, he is wont to believe that this paper is some elaborate practical joke arranged by his peers to embarrass him in front of the Symposium. He wishes to avoid the consequences of such embarrassment, and have the veracity of the piece firmly established or (as he believes more likely) substantially refuted. Since the distance is considerable, Grashpotel will utilize an Agency of Far Dispatch (DERPG, p110 – the *Laganetic Transfer*) to send the PCs to the nearest large settlement—probably either Lumarth (XPS4/5, p52) or Efred (XPS 4/5, p26). The sage cannot send them any closer since neither he nor they have been to the location at first hand – thus the agency might choose to deposit the travelers in a sheer ravine of no exits or in a poisonous swamp¹.

From the point of arrival the PCs must travel as best they might, and GMs should subtly stress the long distance and the isolation of the region—as this is specifically why the asms chose Alden. The journey might even prove an experiential part of the scenario, with hazards posed by other creatures from within this book. Equally the return trip may be quite demanding, though Grashpotel may well have a magician acquaintance at the city of arrival, who will agree to summon the *Violent Cloud* (DERPG, p111) to send the PCs back to Kaiin. The distance between the nearest city and Alden needs to be at least two long days – so as to realistically portray the place as isolated. It need also be noted during gameplay that Alden has no resources or points of interest, making it trebly uninteresting as a destination. Even desperate merchants do not bother going there.

Grashpotel's Instructions

“Travel to the region known as the Plain of Red Flowers and find this reputed expert. Once this is done, you are to determine his methods of research and the validity of his claims, and prepare your own detailed report. I very much doubt that this is any more than a practical joke, with the intention to make me appear to be a fool before my colleagues. At the very least this commentator's understanding of asms as a whole is seriously flawed, yet he may have uncovered a rare colony of creatures that does exist with the noble qualities he claims. If so, then reside amongst them for several days and document their beliefs and lifestyles. Either way, I wish to be able to present my own informed elaboration on this submission as part of the Symposium Papers.”

The Robber-Asm as a Creature of Fiction: A Review

Submitted by Trodsten Mirbital, Lecturer on Half-Men Social History, Alden School of Natural Sciences, Plain of Red Flowers.

Abstract

Many a fireside tale has included that legendary creature the asm as thief, brigand and robber. The derivation of the story has been lost in the mists of time and has subsequently grown with each retelling. It is this author's conjecture that the asm has been poorly represented by both historical and contemporary fiction, and that restitution is due. I declare that thievous asms are nothing more than a manifestation of society's deep-rooted fears about its own degradation; a projection of our own descent into bestial behavior transposed onto an innocent and slandered creature. Asms are in fact intelligent and sociable creatures, worthy of acceptance into human society.

1 One must be precise when directing such magics, or risk onerous fractiousness from the daihaki involved

The Author

The presented paper is the work of Trodsten Mirbital—a struggling playwright originally from Kaiin. Trodsten left Kaiin under a cloud and decided to start a new life in Old Romarth as an excavator. He was unfortunately attacked whilst crossing the Plain by human brigands and left to die. Odcix rescued him and took him back to the asm village. There Trodsten was nursed back to health, much to his surprise, and able to observe the civilized ways of the asm town at first hand. Once he was healed, he was returned to the nearest human town of note (Alden), and primed to encourage and establish trade with the asm colony. The human townsfolk were initially reluctant to engage in such relations, but Trodsten eventually won them over by passing on many gifts from the asms. The characters can surely trace Trodsten—most likely by going to the region and asking around until they meet someone who has been there. This in itself needs to be a significant investigatory procedure, to establish the fact that this place is distant, isolated, and little known.

The Truth About Asms

At Alden the PCs will find that there does indeed exist a trade between this town and an asm colony that is both civilized and friendly to humans. What it will take longer to discover is that this is all a set-up. Odcix is an unusually intelligent asm, and the asm village is a fabrication created after watching human settlements in detail. Many other stricken travelers were 'rescued' before Trodsten (because the asms have an agreement with local human brigands), but proved less than impressionable and were thus abandoned². Eventually, Trodsten came along: a frustrated pedant with an overactive imagination – only too eager to believe he had made a unique discovery. At last the asms had their 'ambassador'. Shortly, they were able to put their plan into effect. They began trading relics they had collected (nothing too valuable, but many ostensibly interesting things from ruins across the plains), rare herbs (nothing too potent, but some useful as minor healing agents and others as food seasonings), and pretty stones that they claim are valuable gems. In return they required only metal goods, hunting spears, pottery items and foodstuffs. They also permitted small groups of humans to come and live within their village from time to time, and sent their own representatives to live amongst the humans.

In reality the asms have a fiendish plan to inveigle themselves into the lives of the humans, to such an extent that asms are regular sights on the streets of Alden. Then, when the time is right, they will rise up and slay the humans, taking over the town. They have chosen Alden precisely because it is extremely remote and has no allies or neighbors that will even notice if something happens to it. Why do the asms wish to do this? They are sick of human persecution and dominance, and jealous of all the benefits that come from opposing thumbs and other advantages of long-term civilization.

What the asms failed to take into account was Trodsten's desire for fame and fortune. He was not content to simply be the local asm ambassador, but also wanted to establish a reputation back in Kaiin, in preparation for his 'inevitable' triumphant and wealthy return. His one valuable remaining item was a magical imp capable of carrying a message over great distance. This he used to send his Symposium Submission to Grashpotel. (The imp was freed from its binding after performing this action, and instantly vanished after dropping the submission onto the sage's desk.) The submission has resulted in investigators (the PCs) being sent to this region. These persons are hopefully of a caliber to uncover the dastardly plan of the asms, and save the folk of Alden from their fate.

Investigations

Initially Alden will seem a parochial place, whose residents are clearly far apart from any other human settlements. However, a renaissance has occurred recently: asm interest and appreciation has given the residents renewed faith in themselves. They



2 Killed and eaten.

❖❖❖ Grashpotel's Symposium ❖❖❖

are convinced that they will become a place famous as the first settlement to engage in substantive relations with the asms, and be saved from their fate as an anonymous and flea-ridden backwater. So far the humans have all agreed to the request by Odcix (except for Trodsten and his secret submission to the Symposium) that the human-asm alliance be revealed to the outside world only when both societies have fully integrated. Alden's School of Natural Sciences is a small wooden building now taken over by Trodsten and Odcix, where the local folk attend evening lectures to 'learn the truth' about asm culture. (Trodsten named the building, and has high hopes that one day a respected seat of learning will exist here.)

The PCs will find Alden to be an unusual place, with asms and humans mingling freely, although asms are in the minority. Likewise, the asm village now has a human hostelry, and the asms lead the humans out on exploratory missions across the plain, protecting them from other half-men. All seems quite amazing and above board. However, the PCs will evoke great (hidden) alarm from the asms, who will try and quietly dispose of them (and possibly Trodsten too) as soon as possible.

The arrival of the PCs will be greeted with alarm by the asms, although they will not evidence this. Instead they will embrace the characters as friends, and offer them freedom to explore and investigate whatever they like. Their only request will be that can the PCs take their time to get a full picture, and also convince their sponsor to delay any publication of location details until the integration project is more firmly established. They will claim (convincingly) that if anyone learns sooner of the project than asm-hunters and puritans might descend on the region and destroy the relations between the two settlements (as well as destroying the asms themselves. Odcix in particular explains that this is the only feasible way to prove that asms can be good neighbors to humankind.

The PCs will initially find all to be normal (or as normal as could be in such an unusual situation). The townsfolk are very eager to integrate the asms, and have some friendships with these creatures. The asms in town do nothing except talk and arrange trade agreements. Odcix is the only asm permanently in town, and he lives at the School of Natural Sciences, where he also has an office. The asms arrange trips across the tundra, and teach classes in Wilderness Survival (Living Rough). The PCs will be encouraged as 'persons of wide experience' to come and explore one particularly interesting ruin. (GM can call for Resistances against Arrogance and Avarice, especially at Cugel-Level.) During the trip an 'accidental' landslide might threaten their lives, and even leave them in a trapped underground complex for some time. It might be Trodsten who organizes a combined party of asms and townsfolk to dig them out. (And the asms must agree to help for the sake of appearances.)

Once the PCs arrive, the asms will speed up their plan, sending more of their race to the human town. These asms will claim to have knowledge of ancient science, and begin to erect a complex wooden structure that they say will harness elementals and provide magical power to the village that will save them much time and labor. The asms will even say that they had not planned to reveal this for a very long time, but the arrival of outsiders means they must show how willing they are to aid humanity, before skeptics arrive.

PCs on the prowl will be targeted by further 'accidents', and by half-men allies of the asms, and may become suspicious and attempt to warn the local humans. The humans will not be interested in such claims. At the asm village no evidence exists as to the foul plans of these creatures. However, some miles away in a cave the asms claim as sacred (and occasionally go to visit when they think nobody is looking) is their old settlement, and the place where the massive sedentary Asm Queen holds court. Here the PCs may find human bones, even recently deceased prisoners, and the spoils of decades of predation on human travelers.

Since one likely outcome of this scenario is an armed escape by the PCs, be prepared to run a harrowing chase back across the plain, with crafty asms in hot pursuit. At the very least a cart and one or two of the local beasts of burden (the faithful drogger) will need to be 'obtained'. If possible create a scenario where the PCs uncover the horrible secret, but are unable to reveal it because of constant observation from the crafty asms. Then, a secret escape plan, involving avoidance of asm 'minders' becomes the best and only option. Ideally, Trodsten will accompany them, but this is not a happy ending scenario, rather one where the rude and obsessed locals will possibly all perish after having ignored the warnings of the PCs.

❖❖❖ Supporting Characters ❖❖❖

Trodsten Mirbital

"Welcome, welcome. You arrive with doubts and will leave with certainties!"

An idealistic and widely read young man, his hopes were greater than his talents in the field of scribing plays. A dalliance with a reputable merchant's daughter and his impecuniary state led to his departure from Kaiin to seek his fortune elsewhere. As do many solitary travelers, he fell prey to vicious brigands who stole what little he had and left him for dead. Determined to right past wrongs against the asms (who he romantically sees as totally innocent victims of human bigotry) he has submitted his paper. He is also assembling copious notes on the alleged ancient and noble origins of the asms. Much of his work is based on misinformation fed to him by Odcix and the other asms.

Persuade (Charming) 10, Health 12, Perception 6,	Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 8, Magic (Curious) 2, Wherewithal 4	Attack (Speed) 8, Athletics 5,	Defense (Misdirection) 9, Etiquette 8,
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Typical Townsperson

"Nonsense, sir. You see grim intent in the mildest of circumstances. The asms are clearly without malice of any kind."

Persuade (Forthright) ~, Health ~,	Rebuff (Contrary) 1.5~, Athletics 2,	Attack (Caution) 0.5~, Perception 2,	Defense (Dodge) 0.5~, Wherewithal 2
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Game Notes: The locals are so indoctrinated by asm generosity that they Rebuff persuasions that disparage asms with a bonus of 1.



Odcix the Robber Asm

"Many felicitations, human friends. Please avail yourselves of our humble hospitality."

Fiendish and cunning in the extreme, Odcix poses as merely one of the smarter asms that has been chosen as the ambassador for their town. In reality he is the mastermind behind the whole operation.

Persuade (Eloquent) 14, Health 12, Gambling 6, Quick Fingers 6,	Rebuff (Penetrating) 15, Appraisal 6, Imposture 8, Stealth 8,	Attack (Strength) 12, Athletics 12, Pedantry 6, Tracking 5,	Defense (Sure-Footedness) 11, Concealment 6, Perception 8, Wherewithal 9
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Typical Robber Asm

"Gnrr, Gnrr, I mean—greetings humans."

Persuade (Eloquent) 10, Health 9, Gambling 3, Quick Fingers 3,	Rebuff (Lawyerly) 11, Appraisal 3, Imposture 5, Stealth 7,	Attack (Strength) 10, Athletics 9, Pedantry 3, Tracking 2,	Defense (Sure-Footedness) 9, Concealment 4, Perception 6, Wherewithal 6
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🌀 Interview with a Visp 🌀

✦ Introduction ✦

Hastakant Zimmathor of Val Ombrio has submitted the following article, in support of Ilzinth Pharashgan's revolutionary re-evaluation of received wisdom concerning this horrific creature. Grashpotel is dubious of this paper's claims, both because they run so counter to accepted wisdom concerning the nature of the visp, and because Zimmathor owes him a sizable sum of money – a fact that might motivate him to submit a bogus research paper. This scenario is more directly suited for Turjanic PCs, but can be subtly altered to be an adventure for roguish miscreants by reducing the previous predations of the creature. (So that suspicions are not roused before the PCs arrive at the manse.) Travel to Val Ombrio from Kaiin should be swift: Grashpotel is keen to solve this mystery as quickly as possible, so as to send the PCs on further missions. If they have no swift transport of their own, he will use magic (likely the *Agency of Far Dispatch* again) to deposit them on the Taun Sfero road only a mile or so from Val Ombrio early one evening. Once again, they will have to return to Kaiin under their own devices.

Grashpotel's Instructions

"I am not a man who enjoys being surprised, least of all by self-important pedants like Zimmathor, who claims to have befriended and learned from a visp; a creature which I for one have never known to be sentient, let alone communicative. Therefore, go to Val Ombrio to ascertain the truth of his statements. I would like you to interview the creature Vaysla before publication of the Symposium Papers, since I fear that the other judges may be won over by Zimmathor's extravagant and unsubstantiated claims and may lobby for his winning the Symposium prize. I have no objection to Zimmathor's victory if all is as he presented it in his paper, but I have many reasons to doubt the veracity of his account, not the least that the creature he describes is a visp. Prepare a lengthy appendix to this paper and return it to me within a fortnight. Sketches are an essential aspect, plus verbatim records of the creature's words."

The Visp Who Came to Dinner

The account of Vaysla's discovery in the Great Da, as well as its horrific appearance, is exactly as Zimmathor claimed it was. That is where the official version and cold harsh reality part company. To begin with, Vaysla is not even a pure visp, but a visp-leucomorph hybrid—a Vispomorph if you will. Even so, he does possess many of the attributes of the creature as described by Ilzinth Pharashgan. Thus, one must wear specially treated lenses while in his presence or suffer amnesia and possibly insanity at the sight of him.

Vaysla is an accomplished liar and confidence trickster. Nearly everything he told Zimmathor about the visps and their rich culture is a spontaneously created falsehood. It was designed to win over the softhearted magician to his side, and constructed to play to the sympathies of those who believe the lesser creatures of the Dying Earth are hard done to by humanity. Zimmathor was such a person and he – like his journeymen – paid for it with his life.

Vaysla is a man-eater, and could not remain long in Val Ombrio before his more bestial nature took over. At first, Vaysla took to consuming the inhabitants of Zimmathor's manse, slowly eating them part-by-part until he had to move on to the next victim. Over time, this led him to consume every member of Zimmathor's household and even the old sorcerer himself. Now, Vaysla has no ready source of food and must either turn to preying on the denizens of Val Ombrio or attract food to the manse he now inhabits alone.

Since the latter option offers more opportunities to feast on human flesh unmolested by the local authorities, Vaysla has chosen it. He has assumed the identity of Zimmathor, dressing in his clothes and adopting his mannerisms to the best of his ability. His imposture is far from perfect, for he slurs his speech in odd ways (when pronouncing v's as z's, for example), as well as leering menacingly in the presence of anyone he deems suitable fodder for his meals (which is nearly everyone). Of course, his horrific appearance remains, which is why he has placed a quantity of punkgo paste-coated lenses in the foyer of Zimmathor's manse, along with the notice, 'On account of the visp, safety lenses must be worn at all times'.

The Misunderstood Visp: Reflections and Reconsiderations

Submitted by Hastakant Zimmathor of the Val Ombrio Sapitentiary

Abstract

While only an adolescent would go so far as to equate rebellion with the systematic questioning that leads to true science, there can be little doubt that humanity is not served by an uncritical acceptance of ancient taxonomic writings. Therefore, I propose to lend support to Ilzinth Pharashgan's recently stated opinion that KRASWIG'S TERATOLOGY is, in fact, mistaken when it comes to describing the creature known as the visp. The visp, as I will prove, is not a mindless predator, but a being of great intellectual capacity that has so far lacked the opportunity to prove its worth. Such a creature now resides with me, and apart from the need to continually wear protective goggles in order to avoid exposure to its defensive magical aura, its presence has been nothing but a benefit.

Thus far, the ruse has worked adequately, providing Vaysla with a steady supply of food, as various individuals call upon the man they presume to be Zimmathor. Of course, this deceit cannot continue indefinitely, since already several persons have been missed and searches instigated. Thus, by the time the PCs arrive, Vaysla is already preparing to depart his new home and return to the Great Da. It is merely the golden gift of unsuspecting human fodder that has caused him to overlook his natural caution and remain in one place for so long.

The Val Ombrio Disappearances

If the PCs stop in Val Ombrio before visiting Zimmathor's manse, they may learn of a string of mysterious disappearances. Several citizens have vanished without a trace in recent weeks, baffling the local authorities. They suspect that some sort of dark cult or wild beast is loose in the city, but they have direct evidence to support such a thesis. Indeed, they have very little evidence at all. Only the fact that people have inexplicably vanished provides any clue that there is even anything amiss in the city.

If the PCs ask about Zimmathor or his activities, most Val Ombrians will claim to know little. They say that Zimmathor seems more interested in traveling to godforsaken parts of the world than he is in spending time with the cultured folk of the city. The only individuals who have much truck with the eccentric magician are other savants and traders of arcane items. If the PCs poke around and attempt to speak with any of these same people, they will discover – perhaps not unsurprisingly – that they are amongst those who have gone missing.

In fact relatives of two of the missing men claim that they went to make a delivery to Zimmathor's manse and did not return. This has been reported to the authorities, which have not acted. If confronted as to this lack of action, they will claim that paperwork and procedural complexities are to blame. Unfortunately they actually fear to encroach on the residence of a magician, especially of the magician is one suspected of doing away with his visitors, and have thus refused to do so.

Even at the Sapitentiary itself Zimmathor's colleagues are uninterested in his whereabouts, since he is on an extended leave of absence to perform research of some kind. Only the Dean knows the exact nature of this research, and the Dean is presently in Kaiin. Unfortunately Zimmathor is loathed and detested by the rest of the staff as an unctuous and self-righteous pedant, and nobody cares about claims that some misfortune may have befallen him.

In Zimmathor's Manse

Inevitably, the PCs will make their way to Zimmathor's manse a few miles beyond the outskirts of the city to meet with the mage and, of course, his captive visp, Vaysla. The manse is huge and 14th aeon in design, with a variety of extraneous and frankly unattractive elements added to a boxy central structure. Like Zimmathor himself, it is a testament to a misunderstanding of the finer points of human endeavor in the quest for flashiness and immediate impact.

There is no door to the manse. Instead, there is a central archway that allows visitors to enter an ornate foyer, where there are numerous chairs, ottomans, and couches, along with small tables on which rest reading material of various sorts (mostly

monographs composed by Zimmathor himself). On one of the tables is a collection of lenses, as noted above. Vaysla observes the PCs through a peephole that Zimmathor used to spy on his callers (he preferred to make dramatic entrances and felt the peephole provided him with the means to ensure such an event occurred). In this way, he will not appear in the foyer until he is certain that all PCs are wearing the lenses. Knowing PCs as we do, it is always possible that one will simply refuse to wear the lenses, and even pretend to do so. GMs may wish to provide some magical sensor (created by Zimmathor before his demise) that registers (and notes out loud in a disembodied friendly tone) when each person has successfully applied their lenses.

Vaysla will enter the waiting area and greet the PCs. He will be as gracious and as eccentric as possible, so as to better imitate Zimmathor's renowned demeanor. He will engage in idle conversation about esoteric subjects (the star Cansaspara, the properties of mirchraig leaves, etc.), all of which he has invented for the occasions. Vaysla is a remarkable conversationalist (Zimmathor was at least correct about that) and he does his best to keep the PCs' heads whirling with feigned information about the world of taxonomy and related pursuits.

Vaysla will then take the PCs on a tour of Zimmathor's manse, showing off his large library, extensive alchemical laboratory, and even his menagerie of beasts, some of which defy easy categorization¹. If asked about 'the visp', the false Zimmathor (which is to say, the real Vaysla) will explain that his 'guest' is roaming about the grounds with the apprentices. He insists that they will all meet up with the shortly, so that the proof of his claims will become apparent. Of course, the meeting will never occur, for Vaysla continues to take the PCs on an indeterminably repetitive tour, seeking the perfect opportunity to attack and kill them. Whenever he is asked about when they will meet with the visp, he will always reply "Not much longer. Come, let me show you this room". He may even change his story so that the PCs think he is leading them in search of the creature.

Vaysla's Plan

Vaysla realizes that he has no hope of defeating all of the PCs by himself. Consequently, he endeavors to split the group up, so as to single each member out for ease of attack. His preferred method of doing so is by ascertaining what areas of esoterica in which a PC has interest and then turning them loose in a corresponding area of the manse – alone. Then he steals away from their fellows and attacks, hoping for a swift kill so that he may repeat the procedure until there are no more left alive. (Or, if the game – and the lives of favored PCs – is the better for it, perhaps Vaysla stuns them or injects them with paralyzing toxin – then hides them away in some terrible larder full of partial carcasses and semi-living victims.)

Unless the PCs are so unfortunate as to fall prey to Vaysla's plan to the last one (in which case the adventure is ended²), they will in all likelihood recognize that something is amiss. How they proceed from there is entirely up to them, as well as how successful Vaysla has been in prosecuting his imposture. There are certainly enough clues in the manse to piece together what has happened to Zimmathor and his apprentices. Coupled with Vaysla's odd behavior, a conflict will assuredly occur.

If confronted by a strong group, Vaysla will use his quick wits to hide and escape from them. Alternately (and preferably, from his point of view), he will attempt to remove the PCs' protective lenses so that they will see him from what he truly is – and suffer fear and mania as a result.

Despite apparent indigence the writer has immense assets: to wit the last surviving copy of the
GUIDE TO THE TOMBS OF THE FEATHERED PRINCES.

Purchasers sought. Apply Box 13 Taun Tassel.

1 The GM is urged to devise a suitably entertaining list of descriptions based on a perusal of this book.

2 A rescue can be easily arranged if necessary, as 2 or 3 magician colleagues of one of Vaysla's previous victims come in search of their missing associate

✧ Supporting Characters ✧

Vaysla the Vispomorph

"It is always a pleasure to . . . meet, other scholars like myself."

Viewed through the treated lenses, Vaysla looks like a wizened old man garbed in dark clothing, possibly with a slightly disconcerting (Perception: IS) smile. What he looks like when viewed without the lenses is up to the GM.

Persuade (Eloquent) 1.5~, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 2~ [16], Attack (Ferocity) 2~ [17], Defense (Sure-Footedness) 2~[16], Health 2~[18], Magic (innate) 12, Appraisal 7, Athletics 1.5~, Concealment 6, Pedantry 7, Perception 6, Stealth 10, Tracking 6, Wherewithal 1.5~[13]

Horrific Visage: Vaysla's horrific visage is treated as an automatic magical effect usable only at Near range; it costs the creature nothing. Target's may resist with Magic or Wherewithal, and make single roll. This is at a bonus of 1 if their ability is three or more points greater than Vaysla's Magic rating and a bonus of 2 if their ability is six or more greater; the converse also applies as regards to penalties. (Certain spells will also defend against this affect.)

IS – The victim finds the creature repulsive, and cannot bear to look directly at them, but can nonetheless act in all ways normally, save suffering a levy of 1 in all attacks that require locating the creature visually.

PS – As IS but more so: penalty of 1 to all attacks that require locating the creature visually.

HBS – Victim's mind refuses to accept what they have seen, and the victim is frozen in mindless denial, unable to act or think for one round. After this, they can attempt their resistance again if the visp has not attacked them in the meantime. Reduce actual success level of this second attempt by one degree.

EF – Victim passes out instantly, waking only after several minutes of terror-filled nightmares.

QF – Victim cowers gibbering in the nearest corner, incapable of volition for several minutes, and after that having lost their short-term memory for another hour or so.

DF – Victim flees for an hour, or until they have covered several miles. If restrained, they fight like a possessed person, using all means (including magic) to break free. Once the panic is over they are amnesiac for several days.

Other Special Abilities: Take or adapt these from the entries for the Visp and Leucomorph in this book, as best creates a foe of danger level suitable for the PCs in your campaign. Avoid the standard shape-changing abilities of the conjectural leucomorph. If you want it to change shape, perhaps give it chameleonic morphability rather than the capacity to become a ropey mass or giant lizard. (Otherwise we stray into the territory of more regular leucomorph encounters.)

✧ Other Adventure Hooks ✧

With Zimmathor and his apprentices dead at the hands of Vaysla, who inherits his manse? Do the PCs decide to take advantage of the situation and help themselves to a few enchanted devices and a sack of terces? If so, what are the consequences of these cold-hearted actions?



Are there more of Vaysla's kind in the Great Da and will they ever decide to invade the region around Val Ombrio, wreaking further havoc? Perhaps 'he' has secreted a number of fertilized eggs in the basement or attic of the manse. Perhaps some of these have already hatched, and he can call upon vicious juveniles to aid him – or perhaps one of the wandering PCs stumbles into the hatchery?



Zimmathor arranged an enormous menagerie of unusual creatures. Even though Vaysla is not a true visp, perhaps one of the other beasts in the manse is, and has become Vaysla's loyal servant? Or perhaps one of the creatures aids or warns the PCs?

🌿 The Equivocal Leucomorph 🌿

✦ Introduction ✦

Grashpotel often found that his own theses were in disagreement with the famous Kraswig's Teratology. Specifically in this instance: Kraswig spoke of the 'leucomorph' as having the capacity to create and manipulate fire, whereas Grashpotel's investigations of what he knows as the 'leucomorph' revealed no such capacity. Now a certain Klemvin claims to have established such information about this creature, and presented a paper for publication. Grashpotel is not convinced that such a creature as described even exists, and even if it does that it is a leucomorph as such. If it does, its existence undermines his own published wisdom. Grashpotel needs to know a lot more about this creature, especially whether or not the submission describes something that really exists. (In which case he can prepare his own publication to counter pedantic criticisms.)

Either way, Grashpotel needs to have reliable knowledge to judge the submission against, and possibly to augment his own wisdom when he is called to account for how he has failed to include this entity in his lectures so far. In short, this adventure is a face-saving expedition. The distance to be covered this time is enormous, and the cage carried by the Agency of Far Dispatch will need to be kitted out with food and blankets for the journey. The GM should also devise an odd aerial encounter or two, and/or some unusual sights seen far below. If the PCs are unable to arrange their own reasonably swift return, Grashpotel will grant them use of a single-use magical item (see 'Crystal of Remote Conveyance' in the appendix on Magical Items). Before they depart he attunes this item to a large empty storage cupboard off his apartments at the Scholasticarium. It is a large green crystal the size of a child's fist, enclosed in a small padded box. Grashpotel explains that the person who crushes the crystal, and up to six other humanoid life-forms touching them (plus their carried goods and worn clothing) will be transported instantly and safely to the storage cupboard¹.

Grashpotel's Instructions

"I have taken particular interest in this paper, because it relies heavily upon the contentious discipline known as 'trans-logic'. Trans-logic remains highly controversial within the scholarly community, some of whose members view it as nothing more than sophistry. I am of such an opinion himself, although I must admit to being somewhat sympathetic to Klemvin's central thesis, namely that older works of taxonomy, such as Kraswig's Teratology ought not to be dismissed simply because of their age. I intend to verify Klemvin's claims by sending you to the Great Erm. I believe that, unfettered by the vagaries of Trans-logic, you are better equipped to evaluate the true nature of the creature Klemvin calls a leucomorph – and whether Klemvin's paper is indeed the result of careful study or the imbibing of too much zhiamaldo nectar. Prepare detailed written and visual observations of this so-called leucomorph, and return with at least a limb of the new creature, and preferably a whole corpse or living specimen."

Note: Grashpotel is hiding his own lack of knowledge about this creature behind a shield of unnecessary verbiage²

A Matter of Pride

The events Klemvin witnessed while staying in the Great Erm did indeed occur. It is simply his understanding of them that is mistaken. In reality, the crop burnings and livestock killings have little to do with Kraswig's version of the leucomorph. Instead, they are the result of a long-standing feud between the farmers of the village of Ilja and a wily old man named Oonas. (Or possibly not, at the GM's discretion.)

Elderly Shyster seeks attractive assistant with the idea of eventual apprenticeship.
Apply Box 192 Val Ombrio

1 The GM may complicate this return – see item description in appendix A1.1 – if the PCs don't convince Grashpotel to take special precautions to prevent the cupboard from being used by his stewards.

2 It would take braver commentators than we to claim that such a thing is commonplace amongst the Scholasticarium pedants.

Fire in the Valley: the Presence of the Leucomorph in the Great Erm and the Vindication of Kraswig's Teratology

Submitted by Lorso Klemvin of Saskervoy, after an extensive two-year inquiry into the nature and habits of the aforesaid beast.

Abstract

In recent years, the received wisdom of previous aeons, as exemplified by scholarly works such as KRASWIG'S TERATOLOGY (among others) has come under attack by a new generation of self-proclaimed savants. Such people have mistaken casting down idols with the long and difficult process of empirical investigation, of which Kraswig, for all of his faults, was one of the world's greatest exemplars. This is nowhere more apparent than in his study of the leucomorph, a creature whose true nature has long been a subject of conjecture and heated debate. It is the purpose of this paper to advance the thesis that, contrary to innovators like Voyla and Madmundor, the leucomorph is much as Kraswig described it – a magical being of flame.

Ilja Village

The village of Ilja is home to several dozen families, all of whose ancestors settled here in the aftermath of the Cutz Wars of the 18th Aeon. Since then, they have turned their backs on the sorcerous ways of their forefathers, believing – quite rightly – that it was an overly great interest in matters magical that initiated the Wars that wrought such havoc in the region. The Iljans (whom Klemvin called 'Ermiens' due to his unwillingness to listen to their folk histories) are mostly farmers who raise livestock of various sorts (such as dounge and farlock). They also grow haxteler roots and twanner vines, not to mention the oft-mentioned zhiamaldo nectar, whose use as an intoxicant is known as far south as Port Perdusz.

The village headman is Dibias, a large and imposing man whose bald head gives his face the appearance of a large bamberd egg, painted with a human likeness (as they do during the Phasberen Festival of Noval). Despite his stern looks, Dibias is actually quite a helpful individual – provided he is paid for his services. Like all Iljans, his willingness to aid outsiders is directly proportional to the coin one places in his purse. Over the years, the Iljans have learned to be wary of charming foreigners who are unwilling to put their money where their mouths are.

Oonas

Oonas is an Iljan or at least was an Iljan before he was cast out of the village for his unorthodox ways. His crime had nothing to do with religion or moral codes but simple common sense. Oonas had long observed that the Iljans, living within a valley, had no easy means of disposing of their considerable rubbish and filth. Over time, the area surrounding Ilja had grown ripe with refuse, which created a pungent aroma the likes of which few had smelled in the far northern reaches.

Oonas proposed to raise a strange creature, one that appeared to be a ball of steaming, ropy flesh to act as a 'refuse disposal'. He believed that this creature could rid Ilja of its offal and return the village to its former pristine condition. Alas, the beast proved difficult to domesticate and its first – and only – attempt to clean the village resulted in two villagers being 'cleansed' before their fellows drove the creature away – and Oonas along with it.

Since then, the old man has lived in a shack in the nearby woods, plotting his revenge against his neighbors, who clearly did not understand he acted only in good faith and without malice. Now, he rails against Ilja, burning their crops and killing their livestock. He does this only rarely, for he does not wish to draw attention to himself, lest the Iljans decide to do more than exile him from their town this time.



Oonas' creature

Investigations

When the PCs arrive in Ilja to investigate Klemvin's claims regarding the leucomorph, they will immediately smell the overpowering fetor that emanates from its huge pile of ordure. So distasteful is the odor, that any PC who does not have the means to dull his sense of smell suffers a levy of 1 while performing any action that requires concentration within the village's confines.

Despite the stench, the Iljans greet the PCs happily. Dibias agrees to show them around the town, introducing them to the local notables (the blacksmith, the herbalist etc.), as well as inquiring into their business in Ilja. If the PCs should admit to being academics or having come to follow up on Klemvin's work, Dibias will become even heartier in his welcome. He will make all manner of promises to help the PCs in their investigation – provided, of course, that they pay a variety of taxes, duties, and surcharges. Dibias apologizes insouciantly for these charges, but claims that they are necessary to 'preserve the pristine beauty of Ilja' from the disturbances that taxonomic expeditions invariably bring. The GM is encouraged to introduce as many such taxes as he sees fit to make the PCs' endeavors as frustrating as possible. Should this adventure be run at Cugel-Level, the GM should introduce at the start of the adventure the opportunity to fleece significant 'expenses' from Grashpotel³.

Once paid, Dibias and the other Iljans are as helpful as they can be, which is to say not very, since their intention is to fleece the PCs as many terces as possible while they are in the village. Thus, they do whatever they can to prolong their stay, sending them on wild goose chases throughout the surrounding countryside – and even into the garbage heap! At the same time, the Iljans are wily enough to know they must mix some truth into their deceptions, lest the PCs simply pack up and leave. The GM should thus parcel out tiny bits of genuine information amid the obfuscation.

Klemvin's Visit

Inevitably, the PCs will ask someone about Klemvin's visit to the Great Erm. The Iljans will admit to remembering him but will be hazy on the details, at least until provided with sufficient funds to jog their memories. With the expenditure of much coaxing (and even more terces), the PCs learn the following:

Klemvin visited the valley and spent much of his time either consuming zhiandal nectar or pestering the locals with ridiculous questions about the leucomorph.

- ❖ The Iljans claim never to have seen a creature that matched Klemvin's description of the leucomorph. Indeed, they chalked it up to a fantasy of his nectar-addled brain.
- ❖ They admit that there have been unexplained crop burnings and livestock deaths, but they believe them the result of the divine whims of the Great God Loion, whose capricious nature has afflicted the northern peoples for untold aeons.
- ❖ Klemvin stayed in a shack in the woods not far from town, since he felt his 'objectivity' was best served by living on the outskirts of Ilja rather than within it.

Too many questions disturb the delicate balance of etheric harmonies, whose salutary effects on the Great Erm can only be restored through acts of generosity, such as, for example, the donation of terces and gems to the humble people of Ilja.

The Woods

The woods surrounding Ilja are dark and cavernous. The Iljans claim the woods to be haunted by spirits of the dead, as well as rapacious beasts that feed on the flesh of men. Consequently, they avoid such places, unless driven by the desire for money. Such was the case when Klemvin stayed in the shack, for he required daily shipments of food, water, and zhiandal nectar. The Iljans only delivered such commodities because Klemvin paid them well for their services – the only means to overcome their enormous fear⁴.

3 The necessity for ample funds is indicated in Klemvin's text

4 Such fear may of course be another money-making contrivance.

❖❖❖ Grashpotel's Symposium ❖❖❖

Klemvin's shack contains little of obvious interest, certainly no clues as to what he did or did not observe while in the Great Erm. Of more genuine fascination is Oonas' shack, deeper in the forest. The PCs may stumble upon it if they venture along the path into the woods beyond Klemvin's place, or if they are drawn by the rumors of ghosts and other supernatural entities.

Oonas is very wary of outsiders, especially those who bear the 'taint' of having dealt with the Iljans. Consequently, he is reluctant to speak with the PCs, and only methodical persuasion will change his mind. Even then, he remains skeptical of the PCs' true intentions. Until he understands that they bear him no ill will, and that their interest is purely scientific in nature, he will remain reticent. Once the PCs have overcome these traits, he will open up and explain his use of the 'refuse creature', as detailed above. He hopes to gain sympathy for his 'innovative use' of the local creatures for 'the benefit of Ilja and the Great Erm'. It is at this point he offers to show the PCs his 'garbage disposal', whose domestication he claims to have refined since he first introduced it to Ilja years ago.

The Leucomorph Survey

The beast that Oonas has found and supposedly domesticated is based on one of several conjectural leucomorphs that might possibly exist, but is it truly a leucomorph? The final decision rests with the GM. Naturally; her choice will determine whether or not Klemvin's thesis is indeed correct. If, for example, Oonas is breeding what are in fact standard leucomorphs (as described by Grashpotel), Klemvin's position is a false one. On the other hand, it is possible that Klemvin is correct and that not all of the crop burnings and livestock deaths are caused by Oonas. (Perhaps Oonas was inspired to replicate the actions of a rare creature (which may or may not be some variety of leucomorph), as a way to gain his revenge without being an obvious culprit.) In such a case, the old man may express bafflement at the description of acts he never committed, thereby opening the way for the leucomorph as described in Kraswig's Teratology. After all, the PCs' goal is simply to determine whether Klemvin is correct in his assertions or not. There is no reason why he need be correct. Indeed, the falsity of Klemvin's abstract provides for as many interesting possibilities as its veracity.

❖❖❖ **Other Adventure Notes** ❖❖❖

The legends about the woods surrounding Ilja might well be true. If so, Grashpotel or another member of the Society would be interested in proof that spirits of the dead haunt the forest.



Ilja is certainly not the only community within the Great Erm. Could there not be other more isolated villages, whose inhabitants have preserved the ways of Cutz as it was during the 18th Aeon?



The Great Erm is clearly an isolated ecology, full of numerous bizarre and unusual species, some of which may be variations on other more common beasts. Consequently, it is the perfect place to introduce other versions of Dying Earth creatures besides those the PCs have already encountered. It is one possible recurring theme of this adventure, that well-meaning (or profit-seeking) local hunters – or even Oonas – guide the PCs on expeditions in search of the 'leucomorph', only for other different dangerous and/or irrelevant creature to be encountered each time.



What if old Oonas intends to use his 'domesticated' beasts to exact even greater vengeance upon the Iljans? If so, it would not be the first time that an ancient slight wrought havoc long after the initial instance.



✦ **Supporting Characters** ✦

The Iljans

"Welcome, stranger. We'd be happy to put you up for night – for the appropriate compensation, of course."

The Iljans are a stereotype common to life: ill-mannered, grasping rustics with no interest in anything except fleecing outsiders of their coins. While this description is accurate, it leaves out the fact that the Iljans are also quite well informed about matters in the Great Erm, making them well worth cultivating as contacts—assuming one can afford their ever-increasing 'fees'.

Persuade (Glib) 1~,
Health 1.5,
Scuttlebutt 3,

Rebuff (Obtuse) 1.5~,
Craftsmanship 2,
Wherewithal 3

Attack (Caution) 1~,
Living Rough 1,

Defense (Dodge) 1~,
Perception 2,



Dibias

"You will find my services well worth their expense . . . You did realize I do not work for free?"

The village headman, Dibias, is a burly, angry-looking man, with a bald head and a tiny ribbon of a mouth. Nevertheless, he can be helpful, remarkably so in fact, provided he is well paid for his services. Besides greed, his primary motivation is to protect the folk of Ilja from disreputable foreigners. No amount of money will change this basic element of his character.

Persuade (Intimidating) 2~[16], Rebuff (Wary) 1.5~,
(Ferocity) 2~[15], Defense (Parry) 1~,
Health 5, Athletics 2,
Rough 3, Perception 4,
Scuttlebutt 4, Stewardship 5,
Wherewithal 4

Attack

Living



Oonas

"They'll regret the day they ever shunned me, they will. Oh yes, they'll regret it."

Oonas is an unpleasant old man whose bizarre manner of dress is exceeded only by his pungency. He wears mismatched clothing that he scavenges from those discarded by the villagers of Ilja. Oonas is sure of himself and his inherent rightness, which makes him difficult to deal with unless one is willing to concede his position at the outset.

Persuade (Forthright) 1.5~,
(Cunning) 1~,
Health 3,
Rough 2,
Scuttlebutt 2,
Wherewithal 1.75~[15]

Rebuff (Contrary) 2~[17],
Defense (Vexation) 1.25~,
Appraisal 2,
Perception 3,
Stewardship 2,

Attack

Living



🎭 Mysteries of the Twk-Folk 🎭

✦ Introduction ✦

Grashpotel again needs to defend his position as supreme expert in Dying Earth Teratology, and has been presented with a paper that poses some curious questions on the nature of the Twk-Folk. Normally one would never bother the Twk-Folk in their home, as these beings are very private beings and not agreeable to interference. Now it seems that one of the ancient Manikin Theaters has begun touring the towns of the Scaum Valley. Who knows where it has come from, whether it was touring all this time and has just returned, whether it was recently formed, or whether it was transported from the past? Such things are in any event secondary to the chance for pedants to pose questions to these miniatures, with little risk of stirring the ire of the whole Twk race (if Twk-Folk they truly are). Nonetheless, Grashpotel is too cautious to go himself and risk offending this race (though he will never voice this concern to his employees – preferring simply to cite an overload of other commitments as his reason for sending them).

Nonetheless, he must submit the last Symposium Papers for printing on Iccapasal's 'Reprosorium' (KPG, p135) in two or three weeks at the latest—in order for publication to be completed in time for the Symposium Conference. Thus, he will pay his trusted hirelings well to go and find the carnival and make a full survey of the nature of its performers. Again if necessary Grashpotel will use an 'Agency of Far Dispatch' to send them at full speed to the last town in which the Theater was known to have performed: Azenomei (two weeks ago). Again, the PCs will have to return under their own steam. If they are smart they will research Twk-Folk and take along various items with which to induce the creatures to friendship.

Grashpotel's Instructions

"A former student of mine has informed me that a manikin theater has been touring the villages of Ascolais. Locate the theater and determine whether the manikins are relict twk-folk, travelling players miniaturized, or new creations from a magician's vats. Collect as many manikin disputations as possible."

Finding the Theater

Azenomei is a sensible location for a troupe of entertainers. The characters should make it their first port of call. Now an assiduous tour of the taverns and the small theatres will reveal that the Theater they seek departed more than a week ago. Should they choose to question visitors from beyond the city, persistence will gain them an encounter with the jovial trader, Smarnatt, who witnessed a performance in the market square of Taun Tassel six days previously.

On The Origins of the Twk-Folk

Submitted by Pazardan of Taun Sfeve.

Summary

Various writings indicate that it was the magician Telchior Wanmer Karsad who rescued the Grand Motholam from inferior performers. From my recent researches among the fragmentary collections of the Sapientiary myself, I posit that this magician was actually three persons, namely Telchior, Wanmer, and Karsad, who co-operated in this matter, as the records reveal no instances in history of any mage possessing three names. The magicians devised ornate mobile theaters, alike to the boxes currently used by puppet shows, but imbued with magic such that an image of the manikins was projected and enlarged to fill a normal-sized stage (or indeed the amphitheater of Kaspara Vitatus!). When not performing, the twk-folk remained safe in the closed theaters. Needing only modest amounts of sustenance, the twk-folk could memorize any play, song, or snatch of music from a single recital and mimic a quadrille from a single observation.

If plied generously with expensive intoxicants, she will recount how a traveling showman in a gaudily appointed horse-drawn covered wagon arrived in Sferre one morning and persuaded the village elders to allow him to erect a marquee over a portion of the market-place. After making diverse preparations inside the canopy, including the digging of a large pit, the showman (styling himself Lurtianze, the Maestro and the Unique) invited the inhabitants to attend a trio of performances in the afternoon and long evening.

At the appointed hour, the curious entered the marquee. A company of dwarf actors (barely the third of a man in height) stood in antique dress and with a slight tinge of green in their faces (most assuredly some trick of the light upon their makeup) awaited the audience's attention. At an unknown signal from Lurtianze, the troupe commenced with a burlesque farce, essayed a minor historical play from the previous epoch, and concluded with a rude comedy of manners. The actors then vanished and Lurtianze collected his fees. The audience was ushered out, the hole filled in, and the marquee dismantled. Within an hour, Lurtianze had quit Sferre, heading north on the Old Ferghaz Way. (The closest settlement of note in that direction is Flath Foiry, and sensible PCs will make for this town at best speed. Coincidentally they will arrive in the town more or less at the same time as the Theater.)

Flath Foiry

Lurtianze's preparations will be as described for Sferre. Characters may seek to engage him in conversation—he will be haughty and arrogant, making grand claims of his artistic vision, mastery of direction, and the uniqueness of his performances. Pressed on the nature of his actors, he will be secretive and defensive. Invited to Kaiin, he will politely refuse, claiming a previous engagement in the Festival of Thespianism at Cuirnif.

The characters should attend the day's performances. The extremely perceptive or those closest to the stage may observe tiny humanoid figures at the feet of the larger actors, moving in perfect synchrony to their half-size 'humans'. The shrewd should realize that the 'actors' are no more than projections of the manikins. To learn more, the characters must have private access to the theatre box. Lurtianze may be distracted by effusive praise or required to courteously converse with patrons of the arts willing to donate generously.

If such stratagems fail, Lurtianze's departure and his progress to a quiet woodland clearing (where he intends to rest for the night) might be covertly observed. Close watchers will perceive him first counting his takings and then opening an ancient box. He will speak quietly into the box and be answered by up to a dozen high-pitched voices. A little later, he will close the box, prepare himself for rest, and go to sleep.

Meeting the Manikins

Assuming the characters gain access to the theatre box, they will find it relatively easy to open¹. Inside will appear to be various compartments, miniature buildings, and other oddities. While the characters are perplexed, a manikin will poke its head out and introduce himself as Weminare. He will question them as to their names and natures, and answer their queries with naïve honesty to the best of his ability. If no violence is perpetrated upon him, other manikins such as the proud Perlidanes, the flirtatious Suzanilla, the sullen Merlonidas, the carefree Turlinopes, and more, will appear and join the conversation. As many as fifty manikins reside within the chest, each as yet possessed only of one major character trait. All are keen to learn more about the outside world, devouring facts and pestering the characters to teach them new songs and stories. Persuasive bargainers may tempt Weminare (and perhaps others) into leaving the box to see the world in the company of the characters. (Grashpotel would surely pay well for such an exhibit to illustrate his own conference speech.)



1 Or not, should picking of exotic and magical locks be within their capabilities.

❖❖❖ Grashpotel's Symposium ❖❖❖

A Visit to the Twk-Folk

Such a hubbub is likely to attract (or wake) Lurtianze, who will be exceedingly displeased. Matters may turn violent, or the characters may apologize and leave. Should any of the manikins depart with the characters, Lurtianze will discover this within a day and pursue them to recover his property.

The manikins will be inquisitive and talkative companions, asking endless questions about their surroundings. Pupils of Grashpotel might wish to test the hypothesis that the manikins are the progenitors of the Twk-folk by arranging a meeting between Weminare and his brethren. (If the characters fail to propose this experiment, such an encounter might occur fortuitously.)

If the two groups meet, the Twk-folk will welcome the manikins as long-lost kin. Once they learn that there are other proto-Twk-folk in the captivity of a functional theatre box, they will insist on knowing its location. Depending on the characters' behavior, they may enlist their help in the task of liberation. True scholars will aid them simply to garner new enlightenment concerning Twk-man culture, and perhaps future favors from this race. The characters might even be bribed for their aid by the promise of some scraps of magical knowledge.

Cuirnif's Festival of Thespianism

Perhaps the PCs will be tempted to become the new proprietors, and to tour the countryside independently as a means to make themselves a fine living. (This is after all their last paying mission for Grashpotel.) Or possibly they merely wish to enter this curiosity in the Cuirnif Festival, in the hopes of winning the grand prize for the most interesting and entertaining act. Whichever may be the case, they must guard against the depredations of other ne'er-do-wells, the unwelcome attentions of nobles and magicians, and their eventual discovery by the Twk-folk. (These last will seek to liberate their fellows at the most inopportune juncture.) Duke Orbal's tastes turn to historical dramas and tragedies with their attendant violence and chance of memory loss for the manikins. Human entertainers will be jealous of the manikin theatre's popularity and will attempt to harm the manikins, adding extra danger to the Twk-folk (and any PCs') plans to liberate the remaining captives and salvage the box.

The Regenerative Properties of the Theater Boxes

A manikin who has been injured or even 'killed', e.g. during a performance, will be restored to full health overnight if placed carefully within the theater box and the lid closed. Unfortunately, the manikin will lose some or all of its memories depending on the severity of the injury. If merely injured, the manikin will forget the events of the previous day. If 'killed', it will forfeit all its memories (and any accumulated personality). These healing potencies will have a similar effect on 'wild' twk-folk, who will be extremely interested in acquiring a functional theater box.

❖❖❖ Supporting Characters ❖❖❖

Smarnatt, Trader

"In wine alone, there is truth, friend. This bottle is empty of both."

Rosy-cheeked and tending towards stoutness in her maturity, Smarnuff's preferred activity is drinking at the expense of others' purses.

Persuade (Glib) 1~, Wealth 3, Perception 1.5~,	Rebuff (Penetrating) 1~, Appraisal 2~, Scuttlebutt 2~,	Attack (Caution) 0.5~, Etiquette 1~, Wherewithal 3	Defense (Parry) 1~, Gambling 1~,
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Lurtianze, the Maestro and the Unique

"Quiet, your boorish prattle offends my artistic sensibilities."

"Gentlefolk, I bring you entertainment of a magnificence unparalleled in this aeon. You will remember this extravaganza of tragedy, of comedy, and of drama in its purest form until the sun goes out and beyond. I give you the Players."

Lurtianze is tall and thin as a scarecrow. His nose is large, his front teeth protrude noticeably, and he sports an elegantly trimmed goatee beard. On the road, he wears serviceable, even shabby, travelling clothes. In town, he wears trousers and shirts of the finest silks, favoring blues and greens with silver or gold buttons. He owns a rapier for fending off half-men and knaves.

Persuade (Eloquent) 2~, Health 4, Etiquette 1.5~, Seduction 1~,	Rebuff (Contrary) 2~, Appraisal 1~, Gambling 1~, Wherewithal 1~	Attack (Finesse) 1~, Athletics 0.5~, Living Rough 0.5~,	Defense (Vexation) 1.5~, Driving 3, Perception 2~,
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The Manikins

"To live is to perform. To perform is to live. The theater is our world."

The manikins are identical in appearance to their wild twk-folk brethren. In dress, they wear an assortment of miniature facsimiles of ancient fashions. Each has a distinct character; Perlidanis is proud, Suzanilla, flirtatious, Merlonidas sullen, and Turlinopes carefree. Their abilities are oriented towards performance, not survival. There are fifty manikins in all.

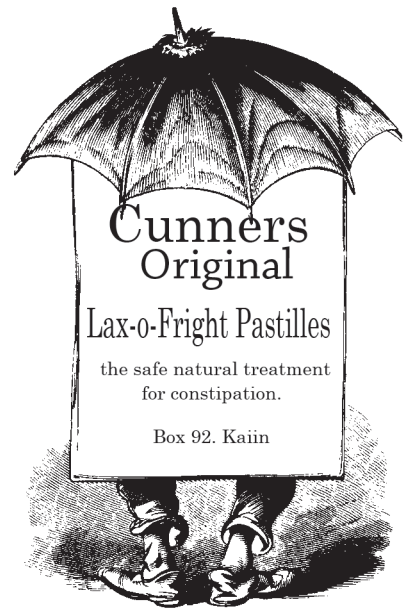
Persuade (Forthright) ~, Defense (Dodge) ~, Pedantry 2~,	Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 1.5~, Health 3, Perception 6	Attack (Speed) 0.5~ Athletics 1~,	Attack (Finesse) 0.5~, Imposture 1~,
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Weminares

"Such marvels, such wonders you speak of! Would that I could experience them all!"

Persuade (Forthright) ~, Attack (Finesse) 0.5~, Athletics 1~, Perception 6	Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 1.5~, Defense (Dodge) 1~, Imposture 1~,	Attack (Speed) 0.5~ Health 3, Pedantry 2~,
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✦ The Clevenger Collectors ✦

Jeanry Chandler

The editor would also like to thank Ian Thomson for his contribution.

✦ Introduction ✦

Sage Grashpotel (KPG, p111) of the Kaiin Scholasticarium has recently lost¹ his clevenger specimen, and he wants someone to go to the Fer Aquila, which these creatures frequent, and procure replacements. He considers the clevenger particularly interesting for three reasons: first and foremost, due to their purported resistance to magic; second, the curious nature of their conjectural origins; and third, due to rumors of their delectable taste when properly braised or poached. He will briefly describe the creatures in question, but recommends that his hirelings find out more information from the locals². This scenario is suitable for beginning Turjanic adventurers or experienced Cugel-like rogues. At the very least, Grashpotel offers a moderate reward for the collection and retrieval of a minimum of five live specimens of this creature for the Scholasticarium, with a bonus to be paid for the capture of ten or more specimens.

At Turjan-Level, one or more of the adventurous PCs should be reasonably educated, and either they already have a relationship with Grashpotel or the GM will manufacture such a relationship. This can be something as simple as their vaguely knowing a friend of the sage, perhaps someone to whom Grashpotel has been recently complaining about the lack of trustworthy specimen collectors. In payment for this 'simple mission', Grashpotel will offer them membership of the library, access to classes, magical items, or whatever else your players covet for their characters. Alternately, the PCs are all advanced students at the Scholasticarium, who are given this task in order to redress former errors, or as an alternative to a failed educational subject.

It is not realistic for beginning bumbler to be given this task³. In spite of this minor detail, this scenario will easily fit into a Cugel-Level campaign that has been established over a fair number of adventures.

How the GM brings the PCs to Grashpotel's notice will depend on their actions. Perhaps the characters have an opportunity to abuse the facilities of the Scholasticarium, avail themselves of property belonging to Grashpotel or an ally of his, or impersonate personages of greater competence, all at apparently low risk⁴. These exertions would doubtless make an evening's entertaining play in their own right. At the end of the session the PCs may have made some minor gains and be planning further endeavors in the same vein, but in a surprise denouement, Grashpotel learns of their actions/identities. He demands recompense through their performing this collection on his behalf, and if necessary has some magical incentive that ensures they will do their best to achieve this duty.

The Fer Aquila is far to the north of Kaiin, beyond the Great Forest Da. If the adventurers cannot relatively easily reach this goal by their own means, Grashpotel will transport them directly to the village of Grogof (see below) by magic⁵. Grashpotel gained his previous clevenger specimen near Grogof, and recommends the local inn most highly. If magic is to be used, GMs should describe the transportation of the PCs with suitably atmospheric detail – from weird departure, through strange two-hour journey, ending with bruising crash-landing (see TDE pp141/2 for inspiration). Early one morning, before most citizens are awake, Grashpotel will lead the PCs to one of his workrooms within the Scholasticarium. Here is a sturdy wooden

1 Killed by the Excellent Prismatic Spray whilst running amok in the lecture hall during the last of the several occasions it managed to get free

2 Grashpotel is ostentatiously busy and cannot spare the PCs much of his time. There are far more interesting ways an Arch Mage can spend his time than conversing with the great unwashed.

3 Although it can be remarkably amusing.

4 Possibly including fee-paying students – see KPG, p128

5 It really depends on how the GM likes to run things. The journey to the Fer Aquila on foot is a series of adventures in itself and could keep a party occupied for several evenings. Hauling the clevenger home to Kaiin could present many opportunities for honest amusement on the part of the GM. At about 250 miles, as the mile is measured in Kaiin, it is perhaps a fortnights journey.

❖❖❖ The Clevenger Collectors ❖❖❖

cage, reinforced with metal bars; with a great metal crossbar projecting from the roof, and with two benches nailed securely inside. The PCs will be asked to haul it out through the large glass doors onto the wide balcony, beyond which the sounds and smells of the Scholasticarium District are richly displayed.

Watched by curious gargoyles from above, Grashpotel will then help the PCs into the cage, and ask them to hold tightly to crossbars that he secures before them. Then he conjures up an *Agent of Far Dispatch* (DERPG, p110). Before they depart, Grashpotel will inform the travelers that they must return via ship from Lavrraki Real to Kaiin. The sage has an account with the merchant Yakethese (KPG, p82), whose many ships regularly call at both ports.

❖ The Clevenger ❖

GMs: Note that this basic information is neither identical to that within the *Compendium*, nor anything like as rich in detail¹. If discrepancies become important in future scenarios, the GM can understand that this particular group of clevenger are a slightly variant subspecies.

Scholarly Conjectures

Follinense the Lesser in his *Hybrids of the Oparona Plain and Blanwalt Forest:*

Found in the Fer Aquila, clevenger are demented vat creatures made with a flawed pattern by a rash magician in the 17th Aeon.



Gaulph Rabi, Fellow of the Collegium:

Clevenger are the tormented ghosts of heathens judged and found wanting by the Great God Gilfig. They will be doomed to wander the earth forever fomenting wickedness unless taught to obey the tenets of orthodoxy by a true believer of the faith.



Mortiquan of Kaiin, Last Poet, Gold-Bearded Seer of Fair Ascolais, Thrice-Myrmalt:

Clevenger are the things of fairy tales; the subject of bedtime stories used by maidservants and old wives to frighten naughty children. They do not actually exist.



Game Mechanism

When sufficiently angry or frustrated, clevenger spend Defense and Health points as Attack points. They squander all these points, paying to reroll any opponents Illustrious Success and its own Dismal Failures—until the pools are empty. The clevenger then collapses in exhaustion, helpless.

Persuade (Intimidating) 0.5~	Rebuff (Contrary) 0.25~	Attack (Ferocity) 2~	Defense (Intuition) ~
Health 1.5~	Athletics ~	Living Rough 3	Perception 4
Stealth 6	Tracking 5	Concealment 4	Quick fingers 5
Magic (Resistance only) 0.5~			

1 All the more reason to make speedy purchase of that tome immediately!

✧ Grogof ✧

In an isolated vale along the old Imperial trail through the Fer Aquila lies a small village. Though far from any other significant settlement, Grogof is fairly prosperous. It is the crossroads for two ancient and still occasionally traveled road systems, and is the only place where provisions are available for nearly a week in any direction. Unfortunately, when the PCs arrive in the area, they find that a passing caravan has recently bought virtually all the available provisions. The town is now rich in terces, but with very little surplus non-perishable food, decent wine, or any other resources valuable to the traveler. The residents, suddenly very rich, no longer care so deeply about the welfare of their visitors, and the fabled hospitality that Grashpotel alluded to is entirely absent. One fact alone is in the PCs' favor: the region around Grogof is currently suffering an infestation of clevenger.

Clevenger Activity

PCs exploring near Grogof will observe signs of clevenger activity: many small animals tortured and left dead, uneaten, hanging from nooses and nailed to trees in various ways; smashed artifacts of various types, broken farm fences, mysterious holes, piles of offal... Eventually the party will encounter a group of peasants preparing wooden 'mad-babies'—sturdy wooden images painted and clothed like a human child. These peasants will take the totem to a field or a roadside, then pronounce loudly that they are letting their 'babe' go out and play, and how much they hope some wicked clevenger won't harm it. When the peasants retire, the clevenger will shyly emerge from the wilderness clutching stones, sharpened sticks, and wood or bone clubs. At first they appear silently at the edge of the woods, rapt, staring vacantly at the totem: mouths slack, eyes big and eerily reverent. Soon they will begin giggling slyly and drooling in indication of their malicious intent, and begin to circle and taunt the wooden image⁶.

Are you overly learned in the law? Possessed of impressive musculature, a keen eye or fingers dextrous enough to drop a token into a mans pocket without him noticing?

If the answer is yes then a thrilling opportunity awaits you. Join the Thief Takers Guild of Kaiin.

Wealth, Honour and the admiration of your peers awaits you, do not delay.

For the first thirty applicants a free uniform awaits. Impress the ladies with your martial bearing, resplendent in badius tunic, filemot hose and coruscate yellow codpiece.



6 If this following passage encourages those more widely read PCs to consider the use of tar babies to trap clevengers, then by all means allow this method to succeed.

In due course they will bicker among themselves, and fight. Some will be ripped apart. The remainder will vent their insane fury on the wooden image, beating it with clubs and rocks, and finally rending it to bits with their teeth and claws. They will compete with one another and this will lead to more fights. Once exhausted in this fashion, the remaining clevenger are then captured with nets by the waiting peasants, who finish them off with sod hammers and hedging bills, chop them up, put the bloody pieces in pickle barrels and use them for bait to catch crabs and saw-toothed fish in the nearby river. Since several local folk have perished recently, no local will countenance a clevenger being permitted to live. The PCs will drop even further in local perception should they reveal that their goal is to capture a clevenger alive⁷.

Great Gilfig's Mission to the Clevenger

Outside the village is a Gilfigite mission devoted to saving the souls of clevenger, educating them, correcting their ways, and setting them upon the righteous path of religious orthodoxy. The Mission is run by the Abbess Marcatrude, who is assisted by twelve Gilfigite nuns (all junior members of the order of The Sisters of the Steadfast), as she seeks to mend the ways of these incorrigible creatures. A squadron of twenty-four Dragoons guards them all. The sisters and the Dragoons live in a small but well fortified compound in the wooded hills about three miles from the village. The compound consists of a fortified barracks, a stable, three large two-story dormitories and several smaller outbuildings all within a palisade of heavy sharpened wooden stakes.

The infinite patience and determination of the Sisters is well matched by the utter diabolical depravity and stupidity of the clevenger. The Sisters have managed to crop their hair of captured creatures and clothe many of them in raiment of white. They have disciplined the creatures sufficiently that many will sit in pews through religious services, and more or less correctly use eating utensils to consume meals. But other than that the 'mission' is a failure.

Though apparently imbecilic, the clevenger do possess a strange form of low cunning, and they seem to enjoy the process of slyly pretending to be converted to the path of 'good', only to fall from grace repeatedly in the most shocking possible manner. Upon completion, each act is proudly brought to the attention of the horrified Sisters by the perpetrator itself. Though each infringement is punished severely by the Sisters (carried out by the willing and eager Dragoons), the harsh punishment is completely ineffective at curtailing the lapses of the clevenger. If anything, though they wail piteously and seem to genuinely fear punishment, they seem to take a kind of perverse pleasure in being punished, regarding it as proof of their wickedness. PCs may seek provisions at the Mission, and they will be invited to a communal meal (during which they will witness many of the horrible tragicomic antics of the clevenger). The meal is simple fare normally consisting of mutton stew⁸ with sweet onion chutney, coarse bread, and funny tasting butter, washed down by weak, sour acorn beer⁹. The Gilfigite Missionary, Baswiller, is also visiting at this time. During dinner Baswiller, a zealot in the truest sense, will repeatedly confront the PCs on their opinions about religious orthodoxy. He badgers them constantly, always steering the conversation repeatedly back to religious subjects in an attempt to nail them down in a clear contradiction or violation of dogma. Should the PCs react negatively to the misbehavior of the clevenger; if they admit to anything but fanatic devotion to Gilfig, or if they display ignorance of the sacred religious practices (such as if they fail to make the required three spontaneous belches during the course of their meal), Baswiller will triumphantly label them as heathens and peasants. Once this happens it is unlikely that 'The Church' will approve of the mission of the PCs. Even if the PCs somehow manage to avoid being condemned by Baswiller, Sister Marcatrude will not approve of any mission that is not directly related to Gilfigite proselytizing of some sort, so will politely refuse to assist them. The suspicious Baswiller will linger on like a bad smell, to make sure the PCs don't attempt to steal either provisions or clevengers.

7 It is perhaps possible that they can convince the confrontational rustics that they are magicians looking for a way to eradicate the entire species through use of experimentation on captured specimens. In this case the Peasants may well assist them in capturing a clevenger alive.

8 It is mutton for the dragoons, the nuns feed the clevengers a vegetarian stew with plenty of bran. Marcatrude has a secret belief that a busy bowel leads to a quiet personality and ensures the clevengers eat plenty of roughage.

9 During the course of the meal the chutney, the butter, and the beer will turn out to have been contaminated in horrible ways by mischievous clevenger.

Baswiller the Zealot

The zealot Baswiller is an up and coming Gilfigite prophet and spiritual leader who has just arrived in this part of the world on a pilgrimage to as many Gilfig holy sites as he can manage in three years¹⁰. He does his eloquent best to persuade the PCs that clevenger are the living incarnation and embodiment of Gilfigite sinners. He says that a warlock is undoing the good work of the Gilfigite mission that seeks to cure them of their blasphemous ways and save their ghosts by putting them onto the path of righteousness. Baswiller claims that this warlock, a certain Salathiel, seeks to 'domesticate' clevenger and thereby turn them into slaves for his own personal profit. By attempting to blasphemously 'domesticate' clevenger, Salathiel threatens to infuriate the God Gilfig, who may well allow the sun to wink out—in a fit of pique and exasperation at mankind's infinite greed and wickedness. Something must be done to put a stop to this wicked plot. Baswiller requests that the PCs do whatever they can to disrupt the activities of the warlock. If they succeed, they will be richly rewarded (Among other things the church will have no use for the various magical adjuncts and artifacts belonging to Salathiel and will be glad to see them distributed among faithful allies.)

Salathiel the Wizard

Not far from the Mission lives the minor wizard Salathiel. He makes his home in a small crumbling fort situated on a precariously inaccessible craggy hill. Gilfigite crusaders entering the area two decades past were unable to storm the keep, and since then local authorities have tolerated his continued presence, though the indignant Sisters hotly resent him, insisting he is practicing witchcraft and leading the clevenger astray.

Local town authorities are more unbiased to the magician, because Salathiel provides a steady stream of artifacts and natural commodities gathered by his tame clevenger, which he sells to traders in town for a very moderate price. They in turn make a good profit reselling such artifacts to those traveling merchants and factors that pass through. Salathiel often has drinks at the tavern in Grogof, and may adopt a sympathetic attitude toward the PCs. He will certainly take an instant (and not unreasonable) dislike to Baswiller, and generally despises all Gilfigites.

If the PCs strike up convivial conversation, Salathiel will invite them to his keep, and treat them to dinner served by polite, liveried clevenger of meek, even jovial demeanor. (The wizard keeps an elegant table. His meals often include snapping-fish caviar, sunflower pollen cakes with furze-wasp nectar; braised clevenger chops¹¹ with ramp sauce and lemon, a delicate aphid nectar sorbet for dessert, and light cherry blossom wine.) Salathiel will explain the method of his success in taming clevenger. With the help of some minor hypnotic spells, he is able to delude his retinue of some twenty of the creatures into believing that by strictly and precisely following his every instruction, they are in fact mortally wounding his pride and behaving in the most reprehensible way.

Salathiel explains that only about one in ten clevenger are susceptible to his special treatment, but with the help of some friends and the district's peasants he intends to expand his operation by organizing clevenger hunts. He wants to collect a small army of the creatures and use them to rid the district of the menace of the ongoing infestation. He wishes to do this as a project in its own right, and is unaffected by feelings of altruism.

Assuming the PCs do nothing to irritate Salathiel, he will be willing to sell them some provisions at a fairly reasonable price and even provide a few minor enchantments if they press him (also for a price). Unfortunately he will not allow them to have any of his own clevenger. If the PCs express complaints about Baswiller, Salathiel can also provide them with a flask of a pheromone, which attracts and enrages clevenger. Should the flask be broken or poured out near Baswiller he will be attacked by the clevenger. Alternately the pheromone can be used to lure clevenger to capture or slaughter.



10 Though the characters may well come to feel that he shows a distressing lack of urgency to push on.

11 Anyone thinking to get the recipe for Grashpotel will be well rewarded later, perhaps with a dinner invitation. Who knows what mixing with such distinguished company could do for an adventurers career prospects?

❖❖ **The Action** ❖❖

Grashpotel may have some moments to discuss such things before the PCs set off. Other than his input, the wizard Salathiel is probably the only ally they can hope to find in this episode. Ideally the PCs will scour the terrain and residents, and then formulate a viable plan. Ideally they will consider just how to get the clevenger back to Grashpotel. Will they load them in a wagon, or just in a slave coffle? And what other hazards will threaten this journey to the coast? The PCs must succeed at several specific goals:

- i. Identify and procure sufficient food to support themselves
- ii. Learn about the habits of clevenger
- iii. Explore the area and identify likely sources of clevenger,
- iv. Avoid the suspicions and agents of the Gilfigites and superstitious villagers,
- v. Trap, steal, or otherwise obtain a numb of clevenger,
- vi. Transport the clevenger safely, probably overland to Lavrraki Real but possibly south to Kaiin.

Should this adventure be run at Cugel-Level, the very real chance of matters degenerating into a fiasco presents itself. Should this be the case, several of the potential action events listed can instead be subsumed under a new possibility – ‘inventing a plausible series of excuses’. This may further become a theme in any of the adventures that follow, as the vagabonds and mountebanks try their hardest but nonetheless fail, and are forced to cover their ineptitude in order to maintain their profitable employment.

❖❖ **Supporting Characters** ❖❖

Marcatrude, Gilfigite Abbess

“The seeds of salvation can only be sewn behind the plough of orthodoxy.”

The Abbess Marcatrude wears the coarse grey horsehair robes of her order. Her hair is done up in a severe bun, and her outfit is completed by simple wooden sandals, a rope belt from which hangs a small pouch, a great ring of keys, and a pair of stout clevenger manacles.

Persuade (Eloquent) 1.5~, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 1~, Attack (Ferocity) 0.5-, Defense (Intuition) 1.5~,
Dodge 1~, Health 3



Baswiller, Gilfigite missionary

“I could refute your assertion in six ways!”

Baswiller is a wears an immaculate suit of white linen, and a pair of elevated wooden sandals. His short grey hair is cropped in a neat tonsure. On the road he also wears a broad brimmed canvas traveling hat, a backpack containing camping gear, a belt with several pouches containing more gear as well as religious items, and a stout iron shod walking stick (with which he defends himself if necessary).

Persuade (Eloquent) 2.5~, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 3~, Attack (Caution) 0.5~, Defense (Vexation) 1.5~,
Health 2

Salathiel the Wizard

“Give me the robber who demands my terces at the point of his blade over the bandit who suborns them from behind a pulpit.”

Salathiel wears a simple but neat black wool cloak over an elegant suit of dark blue velvet with silver buttons. He covers his head with a simple merchant’s cap of black satin, and carries a jeweler’s monocle in his pocket—attached to a fine silver chain.

Obfuscatory 0.5~, Penetrating 2~, Ferocity 0.5~, Intuition 1.5~,
Dodge 1~, Health 2, Magic (Insightful) 12.

Spells: *Phandaal’s Mantle of Stealth, Felojun’s Second Hypnotic Spell, Spell of the Omnipotent Sphere*

✦ **Taglines** ✦

“You sir, have the manners of a clevenger.”

“I don’t mind if you emasculate me; just please desist from using that vulgar language in my presence!”

“There is a most impertinent rock behind you. You should chastise it.”

“Allow me to relieve you of that screaming brat.”



VLAID AND PANCHINPULÉ-HOOQ
Purveyors of musical instruments to Persons of Quality

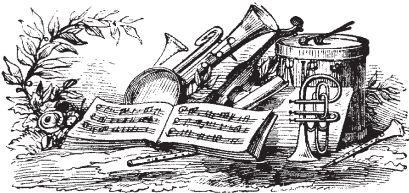


Have available for sale a “Grand Imperial” Caricordia, in perfect condition, totally reupholstered and its valves replaced.

We also have a new “Princess Imperial” built for a client with the most exacting specifications:

The leather is kid skin from suckling males of the upper Lamaguire goat, a species to be found in the mountains some thousand miles west of Mel at altitudes of 8,000 ells and more, this is dyed in gold-rose as prepared by Morst of Taun-Tassel. Wooden fittings are of aged Deodar from the Blanwalt Forest. Metal fixtures and fittings, tappets and pipes to be in Ghraivvender’s gold-steel. Glass fittings to be of rose coloured Cienid Ul infused glass. Frame to be of fine Vir Vassilis steel.

Persons of discernment are encouraged to contact us immediately, lest this unique instrument be sold to a person of lesser quality.




The Letters of Bracht

Dearest Issi~

I have managed to get a two-day pass, starting tomorrow. Can you meet me at the Magicians Inn this evening, I am running an errand for Valdaran and I can snatch half an hour to see you and make arrangements. I got the pass because I have to go to Azenomei and collect six riding beasts from Kjeradd of the last tower. He offered them to Valdaran as mounts for a cavalry force. Mermelants are not really suitable being to independent in their attitudes while Farlocks as bred in Almerly are too heavily built, draught animals rather than cavalry mounts. Admittedly some of Duke Tambascos' men patrol on Farlocks but they want something that gives a comfortable ride as they will spend an entire day on patrol, they do not need them as battle steeds.

Kjeradd has made good use of mounted men, but then he is using them to break up large bands of aggressive half men who are trying to smash their way across his territory to reach the richer lands to the south. His enemies have to fight on his ground, which is dry, and reasonably level. We have to seek our foes out and they tend to hold their Sabbaths on broken ground and hill country totally unsuitable for the deployment of a cavalry. But Valdaran feels that there are circumstances where a few mounted men could come in very useful. I suspect that he worries about Sardanapulus who claims to rule much of the area on both sides of the Derna including some of the Forest of Da and parts of Porphiron Scar. He has started to demand a tribute from all who wish to pass through his territory. Apparently he wants the tribute in the form of bones that he needs to finish the creation of his mausoleum. His forces are composed of barbarians some of whom ride beetles.

Bracht. Your Legionary.



Shy? No friends?
Try
Madame Ulvan's
Gripe Water
and Pickling Fluid
Box 92 Kain

Young Widow, left wealthy by the recent demise of elderly husband, seeks consolation in the arms of man with blue skin

Apply in secret to the Inn of Inn of Five Flags,
Flath Floiry



For Sale, garden clearance.

- A thirty ell statue of a naked male, grossly priapistic with beard to navel. Assumed to be statue of forgotten god.
- Three life sized statues of dancing naiads, dressed in flowing robes, carrying gelding knives.
- Equestrian statue of Kang knight on Mermelant with lance and curiosa
- Cyprian dancer with scythe, black marble, with inlaid white marble hair.
- The skoptsy of Garnquil, a touching rendition of this scene well beloved in fable, in bronze.
Contact Filwillin on Odkin Prospect, Kain

The Letters of Bracht

Dearest Issi~

I'm back from Azenomei and I did remember to collect the hat you had on order from Sethiyallow and Cripps as well as buying some woven ribbon from Promebaust. I even remembered the collection of assorted nether garments from Sardaal, Sardaal and Maulmundolde. You must explain to me why a garment costs more, the less material it contains. I'm sure I could have equipped half a company in padded jerkins for less than the price of a tunic, which for all its under-wiring and sewn on fish scale still contained less fabric than a handkerchief.

I also brought you a present, well two actually but one I will keep as a surprise. As to the other, I don't know if you remember quizzing me on battle-scythes and similar weapons. It was after a lecture by Fabachpeny that you slept through and were most disgruntled when you awoke to find you'd missed the gory bits. So I've fetched you a battle-scythe. Actually the name is a bit of a misnomer. All sorts of beast men and bandits and others who inhabit the edges of civilisation carry them. Construction is simple, fasten a length of iron to a piece of tree branch and sharpen one edge of the iron. The one I've fetched you is quite a good one, the blade appears to be an old scythe blade but worn down through many years of use and sharpened on both edges, while the shaft is a length of cart shaft which has been roughly whittled down to size at one end. I must admit they are a terrifying weapon, if only because they are wielded by people with no firm grip on life. Kjeradd had me ride out with a patrol and I saw one beast-man kill a riding beast with one blow, splitting its skull, but his next blow was blocked by a sword and the battle-scythe shattered. I would guess that with most of these weapons, if you land a good blow there is at least a fifty fifty chance that the weapon will fall apart. Anyway, unless I hear otherwise I'll be able to slip out of the barracks tonight to meet you, just leave a first floor window open in your apartments.

Bracht. Your legionary.



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 enrol 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 causes of the inevitable demise of the mages Grashpotel and Volune as a result of their own insensitive inanity"

Haghut: "The place of innovation and improvisation in current thaumaturgical thought"

Etkai: "Dress sense and the modern thaumaturgical practitioner, with special reference the preferred form"

Madame Wheezer: "Wheels and Whorls, an inductive analysis"

❖❖❖ The Duniwassal Mattock ❖❖❖

Justinian Merrihew

The vapid mannerisms of pale people, using up their lives

❖ Foreword ❖

This scenario is designed for someone already in possession of that work of Literary Genius, the *Scaum Valley Gazetteer*¹. The aim is to provide a scenario that will both provide an introduction to the Dying Earth Roleplaying Game, so is suitable for new Cugel level characters, but still provides interest and challenge to those with more experience. The Scaum valley unrolls for their delectation and delight, the inhabitants are not excessively dangerous, few of them travel with puissant magics hovering on their lips, and even the half men are well spoken and initially courteous. A party of quick-witted individuals, armed with a certain easy charm and perhaps even a smattering of magic, should be able to succeed in the quest.

❖ Introduction ❖

Ishdan, Hereditary keeper of the Duniwassal Mattock, lives a life replete with problems. The current one is entirely of his own making. The Mattock is processed through the byways of Sferu on the first day of autumn cultivation. There, it is used by the current Duniwassal to ritually cut the first turf prior to the autumn plowing.

The mattock itself has a cold iron head, inscribed with forgotten runes from the 14th aeon. The haft is durmast set with engraved ivory plaques and gold wire. The whole is kept in a linden wood case into which are set rough-cut gems taken from the body of Bolgios when he fell in battle leading his demon spawn warriors against the vat creatures of the arch-magus Distarn.

Ishdan's other problem is related to his skill at the card game Montabasquo. Specifically, his difficulty was that he was good enough to feel confident when asked to play against strangers on a river barge traveling home from Kaiin. Regrettably he wasn't as good as they thought and trying to substitute flair for ability proved woefully insufficient. He paid off his debts by giving them the Mattock's carrying case and much of the gold wire from the haft. He has had the case replaced but² Ishdan is confident that the deception will fool nobody who has seen the original. The mattock and case are also very well described in Rustoppen's definitive *Ritual Artifacts and Major Thaumaturgical Items of the Dernal/Scaum Basin*.



Ishdan

"Alas that my exulted position prevents me from leading the expedition in person."

A tall, thin person who tends to speak with great formality

Persuade (Glib) 12,
Athletics 1,
Scuttlebutt 6,

Rebuff (Penetrating) 9.
Appraisal 2,
Stewardship 2.

Attack (Caution) 6,
Gambling 3,

Defense (Parry) 9, Health 2,
Pedantry (The Mattock) 3,

Resistances: None

1 Since we pointed out to the author that Kudos was non-taxable he has shamelessly endeavored to maximize his returns in this area. We apologize for any inconvenience so caused.

2 The replacement for the carrying case looks as if it had been made by someone who saw the original, once, some years before, and saw the commission as an opportunity to get rid of a lot of cheap glass baubles.

✦ The Duniwassal Mattock ✦

It is the kind of dilemma that only a random and impertinent act of larceny can solve. He contacted Nassid (Page 34 *Scaum Valley Gazetteer*), taking him for one of the few people mad enough to accept this sort of stolen magical artifact. Indeed, Ishdan dwelt at length on the magical properties of the case and its ability to cure the Scintillant Pox. Nassid agreed to provide a considerable sum of terces for the box and mattock. One of Nassid's women delivered the Terces to the "Murant Boatman" where it has been placed in the care of Millice Halfron, the landlady, who will be relied upon to arrange for its transport to Sfer.

Ishdan has worked on his side of the deal. A courier called Mewling Shin, newly arrived from Kaiin but who works this area reasonably regularly, has been hired to transport a package to Nassid. A passage has been booked for him on "The River Doung", a barge that plies a carrying trade on the Scaum. Mewling will board the ship carrying a well-wrapped box, which, if searched, is full of religious texts and several heavy stones to make up the weight. When Mewling arrives at Murant the captain of the River Doung will note that he has another package for Nassid, which he also collected from Sfer. This package actually contains the Mattock. When Mewling delivers with the two packages Ishdan has every confidence that Nassid will eat him. Thus with the main witnesses disposed of Ishdan feels he can bluff his way through the following investigations.

✦ End of Plot, on with the Motley ✦

The players are all assumed to be strangers to Sfer who have drifted into town in a desperate attempt to overcome the ennu that blights their lives. Sfer doesn't have an inn as such, however its place is taken by "The Guild House", (For more details of Sfer see the *Scaum Valley Gazetteer*, especially page 110.) home of the various craft guilds whose members still ply their trade in the area. For a reasonable sum travelers can sleep in a single bedded room and eat at the general refectory. The food is simple but wholesome.

One morning as party members and other visitors are eating their breakfast, (a simple repast of smoked monk fish, rye bread and sour curds) Ishdan, Hereditary Keeper of the Duniwassal Mattock, enters the refectory and asks all strangers to the town to give him their attention. At this time of year, just before harvest, it is traditional to hold the ancient ceremony of "Viewing the Sacred mattock." He formally summons them under the laws and ordinances of the free city of Sfer³ to attend upon him. All this involves is them meeting him in an hour's time at the main door of the Mattock Hall, where he will display the mattock, with moderate ceremony. Afterwards, he will pay for an excellent lunch to be provided in the refectory: stuffed lirkfish are already being delivered and tasp have been marinating in white wine and sour cream for three days.

Once he has observed the formalities, the Hereditary Keeper will become chatty, answer their questions in as much as he's able and generally make himself pleasant. As well as the players there are three others present.



Mewling Shin

"Time's money lads, must be back on the road again soon."

He is a short, wiry individual whose natural shyness means that he doesn't tend to push himself forward. If asked he will explain that he is a trusted courier who has a commission to fulfill this afternoon. He fully intends to go to the morning's ceremony.

Persuade (Forthright) 9,	Rebuff (Wary) 11.	Attack (Finesse) 12,	Defense (Parry) 9,
Health 8,	Athletics 7,	Appraisal 2,	Living Rough 6,
Pedantry (The roads of the Scaum Valley) 8,		Riding 4	Scuttlebutt 6,
Wherewithal 5.			

Resistances: Arrogance 5, Avarice 1, Gourmandism 1, Indolence 6, Pettifoggery 1, Rakishness 1.

³ Sfer may indeed once have been a city, conceivably it may be a city again, but the cynic might comment that both possibilities are equally remote. Yet it costs us little to pander to civic pride so we display our good manners by correctly observing the niceties.

✠✠✠ The Duniwassal Mattock ✠✠✠

Lurdan Encraty.

"I can well remember overhearing the Prince himself once tell Count Anrassay the very same thing. Indeed I have since that day felt the argument was unanswerable."

An elderly man, partially deaf, with a pronounced stoop and a tendency to tell long and pointless stories about the doings of minor functionaries in Kaiin. He is in Sfero to see his brother who has not got long for this world.

Persuade (Obfuscatory) 8,	Rebuff (Lawyerly) 10.	Attack (Caution) 6,	Defense (Parry) 9,
Health 3,	Athletics 1,	Appraisal 3,	Etiquette 6,
Imposture 2,	Pedantry (Rules of Procedure in Kaiin) 6,		Scuttlebutt (Kaiin) 6,
Wherewithal 1			

Resistances: None



Cyrina Heverstabt

"Buy cheap, sell dear! Never neglect the feeding of your pack beasts! Do all that and you shouldn't starve."

A large woman, mentally sharp but, due to a leg injury, she can only walk using crutches. She is owner of a felukhary train who came through Sfero to transship her cargo to a riverboat. Her injuries came about when she was helping load the cargo and had her leg trapped between jetty and boat. She is philosophical about it and reckons that in another month she will be back on the road with her felukhary train.

Persuade (Forthright) 11,	Rebuff (Penetrating) 10.	Attack (Speed) 11,	Defense (Dodge) 9,
Health 5,	Athletics 3,	Appraisal 5,	Driving 6,
Living Rough 5,	Riding 4,	Scuttlebutt 2,	Stewardship 8,
Wherewithal 6			

Resistances: Arrogance 1, Avarice 1, Gourmandism 1, Indolence 6, Rakishness 4.



The party makes its way to the Mattock Hall to meet Ishdan. He now wears his formal robes and has a lackey hand to each of them a long flowing cloak of heavy green corduroy. Each of these garments is capacious enough to fit anybody with room to spare, Mewling is almost lost in his. Ishdan then leads them into the Hall in formal procession two abreast while Ishdan sings an Introit in a tongue lost in the 14th aeon. The hall is dark and they walk along a narrow corridor illuminated only by the candle Ishdan is holding. Eventually they pass under an arch and there, across an open space, they see the Mattock lying on its jeweled case. Two candles illuminate it. Ishdan lines them up ten yards from the mattock and chants a blessing, this time in a 15th aeon dialect that they can barely understand.

At this point he bows to them, walks across to the two candles, snuffs them and tells the party to turn round to face the exit. At this point, he snuffs out his own candle. In the darkness all that can be seen in the light coming under the outer door. As party moves towards it, there is a slight accident, when Ishdan trips one of his guests up, causing all to stumble and fall in the corridor. Eventually everyone gets to the door and out into the morning air. Ishdan then locks the door, forms them up into the procession again and they walk back to the guild house where each is dispatched to their room to change for lunch. When they have washed and returned to the refectory, they hand the cloaks back to Ishdan.



✠ The Duniwassal Mattock ✠

The Ceremony of Viewing the Sacred mattock

The celebrant chants the mantra. “ossia ner panda has morvic.” The lackey then chants “enrobed wes tanda, enrobed hass willit”

The celebrant then chants. “me usoff ad nav a cupula. Sonat und dassen mit mi star it.”

The lackey and others present then chant “hall ad vertu, hall ad grow.” The celebrant then joins everyone in the final chant of “enrobed un istoff yet notwit standor.” Which is repeated twenty times.

Mewling sends his apologies and cloak with a pot boy. He says that he has to collect a package so must miss the lunch. Lurdan Encraty also sends his apologies, the fall in the corridor has winded him and he must rest. The rest sit down to the meal, which, as promised, is excellent. Ishdan is a cordial host, always ready to order more wine, and the conversation is interesting. As the meal draws to a close, Ishdan is called out by a page who bursts in with an urgent message. The Hereditary Keeper comes back into the refectory, with a furious expression and three armed constables. He announces that the Mattock and its case have been stolen.



Singden Chillingsmith

“Naught like this has happened here in my time!”

A burly individual surprisingly fast on his feet, constantly on the move checking that matters are proceeding as they should.

Persuade (Intimidating)6, Rebuff (Pure Hearted) 11. Attack (Strength) 9, Defense (Surefootedness) 11,
Health 4, Athletics 1, Appraisal 4, Stewardship 8, Wherewithal 5

Resistances: Avarice 3, Indolence 6, Rakishness 1



Constables.

“Resistance would be inelegant.”

Intimidating 6, Lawyerly 6, one style each of Attack and Defense at 6, Health 3.

Resistances: None.



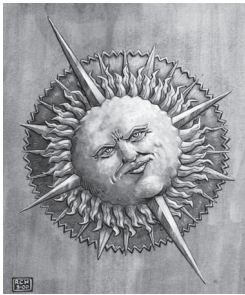
There will be some discussion at this point⁴. Ishdan will point out that the mattock was present until they saw it, and the doors have been locked since they left. The hall has no windows, something they may have noticed, and there is only the one way in or out. Therefore he points out it must have been one of them. The Guild Steward, Singden Chillingsmith, points out that if the rooms are searched this would prove guilt or innocence. This will be done, in the full view of all, so players must tell everyone exactly what they carry. Cyrina Heverstabt’s room is a revelation. It is stacked to the ceiling with felukhary pack saddles and such things as bundles of rare herbs, bolts of fine fabric, exquisite hand painted tableware, hand blown glassware and old manuscripts that she has purchased for her trip back. It will take at least an hour to search her room. The rooms of Mewling Shin and Lurdan Encraty will be empty, as they have obviously checked out and left. If no player suggests this shows them to be obviously guilty, Cyrina Heverstabt will. Ishdan will reluctantly agree but will insist that some of the characters may be in league with them. Ishdan makes the following comments, not in any particular order but dropped into the discussion.

4 That we confidently predict.

☛☛☛ The Duniwassal Mattock ☛☛☛

- ☛☛ They strike him as associates of Mewling Shin and Lurdan Encraty.
- ☛☛ Theft or conspiracy to steal is punishable in Sferé by stripping the guilty party naked, painting them from head to foot with a thick pepper sauce and then driving them out of town at nightfall to go where they will. It should be noted that deodand locally regard vagabond au pepper sauce as a delicacy and hang around the town on an evening should such a sentence be executed.
- ☛☛ They can convince him and the constables (who are silent but distinctly unsmiling) of their innocence by finding the guilty party and handing him over.

Once the players have agreed to assist him, Ishdan is helpful. He calls in the current Duniwassal who both swears them in as deputy constables and pins a badge on their chests. These badges show them to be officers of Sferé, who must be assisted by all law-abiding citizens.



The badges have the following properties:

- ☛☛ They can only be removed by the Duniwassal or by the action of a Sandestin
- ☛☛ They cannot be covered over, always appearing again on the upper garment⁵. Whenever the wearer of the badge enters an alehouse or similar drinking establishment everything goes quiet for about 30 seconds before conversation restarts and everyone goes about their business again. Note this isn't magic, merely psychology.
- ☛☛ If the wearer of the badge is targeted by arrows or similar from the front or either side there is an 85% chance that the arrow will hit the badge.

Hunting Down the Two Fugitives

The obvious method is by talking to Guild staff, whom are extremely helpful to badge wearing law officers. This elucidates the following information:

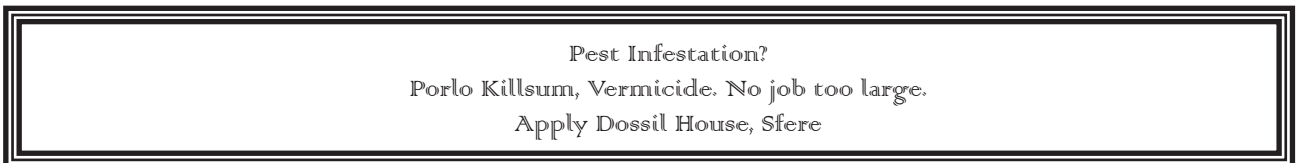
Lurdan Encraty

- ☛☛ • Asked where he could find the time of the next boat to Kaiin.
- ☛☛ • Became agitated when he was told it would pass late this afternoon.
- ☛☛ • He asked for directions to the house of Gurmass.
- ☛☛ • After returning from the ceremony he changed hurriedly and left by the back stairs, meeting two cleaning staff on the way. These staff commented on how well he looked, no sign of a stoop and a brisk walk.

Mewling Shin

- ☛☛ He left by the front door just before lunch, carrying a long package and was headed towards the pier. This surprised no one as he is a reasonably regular courier and people were used to him doing this.

Given this information the party can decide what it intends to do.



5 We do not recommend the investigators attempting to go bare-chested unless they have ample chest hair or an interest in body piercing.

✦ Options ✦

Visiting the house of Gurmass

If the party goes to the house of Gurmass they will find him out but will be entertained by his wife Florwim. Lurdan is concealed in a bedroom upstairs. Florwim will be gracious and will say that Lurdan, an old friend of her husband, did call. Gurmass will be disappointed to have missed him. She claims that Lurdan told her he was walking west, to his brother's farm out of town. He did not have a large package; just a small bag such as a man might keep a change of clean linen and a light lunch in.

When the party leaves, she will watch them go and then she and Lurdan will try and get to the pier, traveling by back lanes. Should the adventurers find them together, she will passionately declare her love for Lurdan and throw open the bags they carry. While they appear to be making off with most of her husband's more portable possessions there is not sign of the mattock or its case.

Lurdan is actually thirty years younger than he claims. He has come to Sfero to elope with the wife of Gurmass. If the party go straight to the pier they will discover Mewling Shin has left an hour before on "The River Doung". Lurdan and his par-amour have not yet arrived. If otherwise undisturbed they will turn up at sunset to catch "The Silver Orb" which is bound for Kaiin.

The arrival of Gurmass

At 8pm Gurmass, accompanied by four burly retainers, rages into Sfero looking for Lurdan and/or the Characters. Gurmass arrived home to find his wife and his savings missing and, if the characters visited his house, his neighbors will have told him of this. He has heard about the missing mattock and case and it is obvious to him that Lurdan took it to help fund his new life. He will dismiss comments that Mewling took it, as he has used Mewlings' services himself in past years. He insists that the players accompany him post haste to Kaiin where he is sure they will find both mattock and the missing wife. He is neither irrational nor especially violent, but he is very angry. He has a hand axe thrust through his belt, but he has picked up one of the fire irons from the hearth in a distracted sort of way and he is bending and twisting it, without apparent exertion. This may have the effect of intimidating people. He wears a deodand harness over his jerkin, with extra pieces stitched in, as the original was a too small. Local legend tells that he was changing a broken cartwheel near a patch of wood east of town, when a deodand came out to attack him. He killed the creature by smashing it with a thrown cartwheel at close range.

If the PCs have talked to Lurdan, searched his parcels and mention this, Gurmass will admit their evidence is good, but will demand recompense from them for abetting a thief, unless they are very persuasive. If Gurmass presses his case, a court can form immediately with a tribunal of three judges, Ishdan, the current Duniwassal and the Guild master. Ishdan wants them out

of town so accepts their innocence. The Duniwassal tends to side with his fellow citizen, the Guild master will be swayed by their behavior and rational argument. If found guilty they will be fined seven hundred terces, which Ishdan will offer to refund when they fetch the mattock back. If found innocent then Gurmass will formally apologize and will bother them no more.

A side trip to Kaiin?

It is possible that Gurmass' argument sounds good to the players. If this is the case let them go to Kaiin where Gurmass knows Lurdans' abode. He summons constables and goes there. Lurdan demands that the matter be put to the Prince Kandive. At court Florwim, who has already had enough of Lurdan, claims to have been kidnapped. Lurdan, somewhat surprised at this turn of events demands that the Prince put him under an enchantment to hear the truth. The prince, wiser than both decides to concentrate on the stolen valuables, which are all returned. Florwim and Gurmass depart and the party can question Lurdan in the princes' presence about the Mattock. Lurdan knows nothing about it and the Prince is convinced even if the players are not. The players have a one-day journey back up river to Sfero to pick up the trail.



❖❖❖ The Duniwassal Mattock ❖❖❖

Gurmass

“And another thing. I cannot abide flash lads from the big city who mince into town to corrupt our women with their regular washing and smart clothes.”

Persuade (Intimidate) 9, Health 12, Riding 3,	Rebuff (Wary) 9. Athletics 7, Stewardship 3,	Attack (Strength) 16, Appraisal 2, Wherewithal 5	Defense (Parry) 14, Living Rough 3,
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Resistances: Gourmandism 1, Indolence 6, Pettifoggery 6, Rakishness 4



Florwim

“And what can a simple country woman do for a fine gentleman such as yourself.”

She obviously once read the word winsome in a bodice ripper and decided that was for her.

Persuade (Charming) 11, Health 5, Seduction 5,	Rebuff (Contrary) 9. Athletics 3, Stewardship 6,	Attack (Cunning) 5, Appraisal 5, Wherewithal 5.	Defense (Vexation) 9, Perception 3,
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Resistances: Arrogance 1, Gourmandism 2, Indolence 1, Pettifoggery 6



Burly Retainer

“Beat it, or I’ll beat it for you”

Large, well muscled and hard working, they lack even the affectation of intellect.

Persuade (Intimidate) 5, Health 6,	Rebuff (Obtuse) 6. Athletics 2,	Attack (Ferocity) 10, Wherewithal 3.	Defense (Dodge) 9,
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Resistances: None

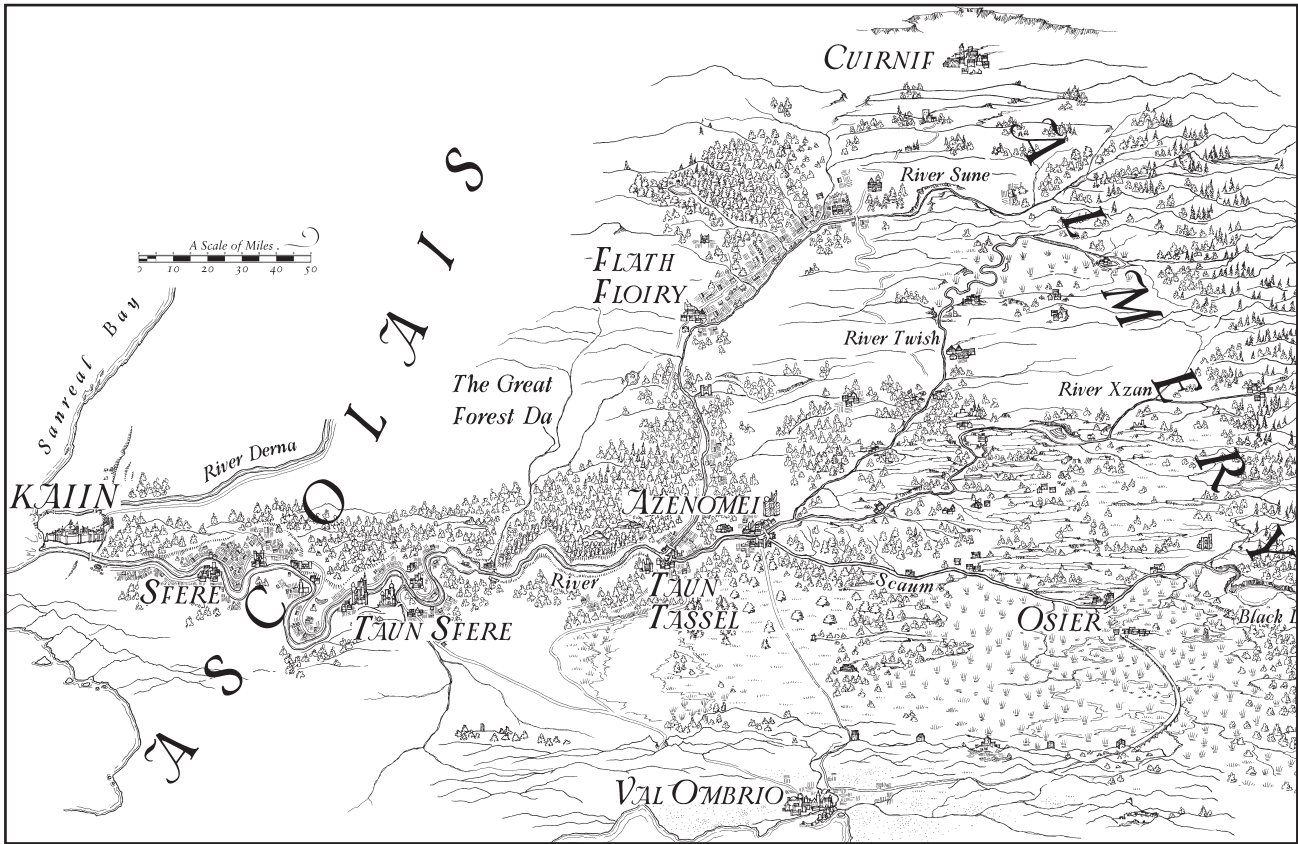
❖ The River Trip ❖

Assuming the players wish to follow Mewling, the river is the only sensible option. There are fishing boats moored at the pier but against the current they couldn’t offer to overhaul the River Doungue. In any case they are not large enough to carry a party of any size and supplies. If the adventurers choose to try, no fisherman will take them past Azenomei. At Azenomei they can find someone who will take them to Murant.

Alternatively, they can hire a boat for an extortionate fee. Effectively the owner will sell them it, with the option to buy back if it returns in decent condition. Ishdan and the Duniwassal will resist buying it out of public funds. If the party do go on their own boat they will have to camp on the bank at night as there isn’t room in the boat to cook or sleep. They will therefore be slower, traveling at half the speed of a riverboat.

In discussion with Ishdan and the Duniwassal, it will be agreed that the party be given the sum of 20 terces each in cash for expenses, and a book of expense vouchers, which will be redeemed by the municipality. Players will find that, combined with the badge of a deputy constable, these vouchers will be accepted as payment by boat skippers and Innkeepers the length of the river from Kaiin to Osier. On a voucher one writes what is being purchased, how much it cost and two copies are kept, one for the seller and one for the purchaser. The purchaser will present his copy at Sfere, or more likely sell it for 80% of its face value to a boatman who will present it next time he is passing.

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The Duniwassal

“Now lad. Just remember it’s municipal funds you’re playing with so no extravagance mind.”

Tall but stooped, he has reached late middle age without ever exhibiting and sort of zest or recklessness. He probably isn’t going to start now.

Persuade (Forthright) 9,	Rebuff (Obtuse) 11.	Attack (Caution) 6,	Defense (Parry) 9,
Health 3,	Athletics 1,	Appraisal 5,	Scuttlebutt 6,
Stewardship 8,	Wherewithal 2.		

Resistances: Arrogance 5, Indolence 2, Rakishness 1



The next boat available is the Panache. It is captained by “Stone Privy” Hillise. He will draw up at the pier at Sferre about noon and will unload some cargo and take on a little more. He is more than happy to take a party of Sferre deputy constables for a nominal charge, which is paid by Ishdan on the spot.

The riverboats of the Scaum are based on the same general design. They are broad and shallow bottomed. All have a fore and aft rig. Below decks there is one large hold, running from stem to stern, the hatches are covered with heavy fabric sheets or timbers. Above, there is a large three-room deckhouse where the crew eat, sleep and the captain has his office accommodation. Passengers are expected to sleep on the deck or, if conditions are extremely bad, under the table where they and the crew eat. All boats have some form of secondary propulsion to help when there is no useful wind. The Panache has a stern paddle wheel, driven by a captive demon who will propel the boat at a fair rate of knots in return for fresh beast flesh, and even faster for man flesh. The captain is too mean to feed it either very often, as the wind and current are available free.

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The River Doung has a propeller, driven by a capstan in the hold, turned through complex gearing by powerful, if unintelligent vat creatures. This could be compared to ‘The Spirit of Peace’, which uses chained convicts to pole the boat along, walking up the sides of the boat on a special walkway. One or two of the smaller boats even use ancient reaction engines, which burn timber cut from the woodland at the side of the river.

The crew of the Panache is a mixed collection, barefoot and shaven headed. Most wear britches thickened with pitch and brightly colored tunics of worsted or shoddy. Around their waists, they have checkered cummerbunds through which are thrust a fine array of knives, mallets and in many cases the slippers they wear whenever they go ashore. They speak an argot of their own with loan words from a score of dead languages, the sense of which can be barely comprehended by landsmen. The crews of the other riverboats resemble them closely. Most have their wives and children aboard, these live either in partitioned cubicles in the crews’ quarters or under awnings rigged on deck. Many of the younger children will never set foot on land and even the women are born, grow and marry on the boats without spending a night on the land. The women differ from the men in that they tend to be cleaner, carry fewer knives and plait their waist length hair. Indeed no girl is considered old enough to marry until she can sit on her plaited hair. As girls cut their own hair, they have a degree of control over their marriage prospects. All the crew have a cheek stud with a silver seven pointed star on it. ‘Stone Privy’ Hillise, as captain wears a pied hat with lappets that tie under his chin.

Travel is comparatively restful. Passengers are expected to sit on the deck under a temporary awning and keep out of the way. Meals are served three times a day, a simple breakfast of bread, a congou flavored with cheese, and sour milk. The mid day meal is merely bread and strips of sun dried beast flesh with small beer. The evening meal tends to be more elaborate. It always starts with a thick soup of potatoes and leeks with a little meat for savor, followed by a fish course or perhaps fresh water crab in gillyflower sauce. If the weather is too rough for the awning then everyone has to huddle in the crews eating quarters.

Stone Privy and his wife Gyrwiss will listen with interest to everything the party has to tell them. They cannot help, but will drop the party at Azenomei where they recommend that the party catch the River Queen that should be coming through next day.



‘Stone Privy’ Hillise

“Why it’s as snug as a stone privy”

A Small bouncing individual who is always on the move and always busy.

Persuade (Glib) 10,
Health 4,
Scuttlebutt 6,

Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 7.
Athletics 4,
Seamanship 8

Attack (Cunning) 12,
Appraisal 5,
Wherewithal 3

Defense (Surefootedness) 11,
Pedantry (The river Scaum) 8,

Resistances: None



❖❖❖ The Duniwassal Mattock ❖❖❖

Gyrwiss

"I've seen more meat on a crutch"

A large buxom lady who moves sedately, she is rather like a planet with her husband a moon⁶ in orbit around her.

Persuade (Forthright) 12, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 12. Attack (Strength) 9, Defense (Misdirection) 8, Health
6, Athletics 2, Appraisal 3, Scuttlebutt (Scaum Valley) 6,
Stewardship 7, Wherewithal 6

Resistances: Arrogance 5, Indolence 6, Rakishness 5

❖❖ Fellow Passengers ❖❖

Traveling to Azenomei is the trader Gradish Isslenord. He has two staff with him, burly porters called Lormop and Jalwinny. Gradish is quite open about where he is going and will discuss trade in a general way. Currently, he is trading in an assortment of things. Nicely turned bowls of svittim wood, fine robes run up using vair silk from far west of the falling wall and boots and jerkins of embossed deodand hide. He has also a selection of rather exquisite jewelry, which he carries in a pouch at his waist.



Gradish Isslenord

"Quality, Quality, Quality, that is what my customers demand and that is what I supply them."

A rather nondescript individual whose conversation is bland unless you steer it to his wares.

Persuade (Eloquent) 10, Rebuff (Penetrating) 9. Attack (Caution) 8, Defense (Parry) 10,
Health 2, Athletics 1, Appraisal 8, Living Rough 3,
Stewardship 9, Wherewithal 3

Resistances: Arrogance 2, Indolence 6, Pettifoggery 1, Rakishness 5



Lormop

"Well I wouldn't like to say for sure but I reckon Mr Isslenord should know."

A tall thin man with bushy eyebrows that meet above his nose.

Persuade (Glib) 6, Rebuff (Obtuse) 11. Attack (Strength) 6, Defense (Dodge) 5,
Health 5, Athletics 3, Appraisal 2, Living Rough 6,
Wherewithal 1.

Resistances: None



⁶ We trust our readers are scholarly enough to understand the literary illusion. Those who have not yet realised our ancient world did once have a moon are referred to Coldark the Mesamath. "The Great Tumble. Defining event of the 8th aeon?"

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Jalwinny

“Yeath Lormop”

Small thin man with limp and a lisp

Persuade (Obfuscatory) 4, Rebuff (Obtuse) 5. Attack (Ferocity) 8, Defense (Dodge) 9,
Health 5, Athletics 2, Appraisal 2, Living Rough 4,
Wherewithal 1

Resistances: None

☞ River Encounters ☞

As they travel along the party will meet an assortment of small fishing vessels. Some of them will come along side, to sell either their catch, or the various trinkets and gewgaws that they have made or found. Their crews will have a fair idea of whether or not another river boat had been past this way and in this way the party will be offered information, personal services, hand-carved hardwood fishing spears enchanted by hedge sorcerers, or intricately wrought silver filigree meditation pieces made by the Solivant monks of the Ferruginous Caucus. There are cunningly loaded dice made from the skull bone of the river ert and strangely shaped knives, their blades three aeons old, excavated from the store of a long dead smith, given hafts of bauk ivory and set in scabbards of silver slick fish skin.

☞ Azenomei ☞

Azenomei is described in the *Scaum Valley Gazetteer* (See page 50), but affords an opportunity for the party to be distracted from their task.

Sub Plot

While players are only here to catch a boat they are bound to get into trouble, having been left on their own with nothing to occupy them. I suggest you aid them in this with the following optional side trip. At the fair ground they will come across on Stosser, who sprawls on the grass by a dirty blanket on which there are spread some interesting items⁷.

- ☞☞ There is a small 15th aeon statuette depicting a grue in amorous embrace with an erb.
- ☞☞ A long dagger with a wavy edged blade in a harsh blue metal.
- ☞☞ A tube which when you look down it allows you to see what was where you are looking 24 hours before.
- ☞☞ An ornate breastplate of antique design, which looks as if it would be perfectly useful once it got new leather straps
- ☞☞ A gaming board set with a checkerboard of ebony and ivory squares plus 32 playing pieces. All in a nicely carved linden wood box.
- ☞☞ A small silver arm ring engraved with runes and set with small ivory diptychs
- ☞☞ A torque of diorite carved with the faces of various demons. This appears to be an 18th aeon work.

Stosser will explain that these are things that come out of a ruined manse in the forest. If he gets any interest he will offer to strike a deal. If the party comes with him they can lift away the heavy timbers blocking his explorations and thus get at the good stuff and he will split it with them.

As lies go, this has the advantage that it is almost true. Stosser trades with a small group of half

⁷ It is up to the GM whether any of these (other than the tube) are in any way magical



❖ The Duniwassal Mattock ❖

men who keep the manse and its forgotten treasures to themselves. If he gets half a dozen people to help him he will use them to kill the half men and give him access directly to the manse. If he only gets one helper then he will do what he normally does, betray them to the half men who accept meat in return for the artifacts. What Stosser doesn't want is two or three helpers as they are too few to kill the beast men and too many to stab simultaneously in the back.

If one player does fall in with Stosser's plans, then Stosser will attack them from behind just as the half men appear. If they are killed in the engagement, then Stosser will take their belongings as well as whatever he can get from the half men. Stosser is no fool; he will sell the belongings to Asenbait (Page 55 *Scaum Valley Gazetteer*) and then disappear for a while with the rest of the loot. Asenbait is a fool and will have the dead players belongings on his stall next morning. If the players notice this they may well be able to put enough pressure on Asenbait to get him to tell what he knows.



Stosser

"It'll be easy and the less as knows about it, the less that's going to want a share, know what I mean,"

He is a decidedly grubby individual. Discerning characters will not get too close to him. He tends to scratch himself in an abstracted fashion without apparently realising he is doing it.

Persuade (Glib) 10, Health 2, Wherewithal 3	Rebuff (Contrary) 8. Athletics 2,	Attack (Cunning) 10, Appraisal 3,	Defense (Surefootedness) 9, Living Rough 6,
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Resistances: None



Half men

"An element of imbalance in our relationship must not be allowed to continue. You must join us for lunch."

They appear to have more or less deodand in their ancestry but with an admixture of less obvious beasts.

Persuade(Intimidating) 8, 5,	Rebuff (Obtuse) 6, Athletics 4,	Attack (Ferocity) 1.5~, Wherewithal 6.	Defense (Intuition) 1.5~, Health
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Resistances: None

❖ Traveling on the River Queen ❖

The crew of the River Queen is similar in many ways to that on the Panache. The captain, Uriose is a tall expansive individual who obviously loves the river and his way of life. He welcomes them aboard personally, happily accepts vouchers as payment⁸ and personally shows them where to stow their equipment out of the weather. His ships secondary power source consists or a pair of freshwater horned whales. They are harnessed to the front of the ship like horses. There is a duck board arrangement that runs out to them and the coachman spends most of his time out there.

He is willing to help in any sensible way he can. He is bound for Osier (*Scaum Valley Gazetteer* Page 8) and from there over the portage further up stream. Knowing the River Dounge, he doubts it will go past Osier. On his way to Osier Uriose has cargo to drop at Murant and hopes to collect more. He is sure they will have time to ask around for Mewling Shin and then rejoin him if he hasn't been seen. Uriose is even willing to stop at the Demon and Fishing Spear in case Mewling Shin stopped there but considers it unlikely.

8 He discounts the vouchers by fifty percent

Uriose

“Gods yes, Not a problem, I’ve travelled this river all my life. We can cope, no doubt about it. (pause) Sorry, what was it you wanted?”

Persuade (Eloquent) 11, Rebuff (Pure Hearted) 9. Attack (Cunning) 9, Defense (Dodge) 11,
 Health 3, Athletics 4, Appraisal 4, Seamanship 6,
 Wherewithal 5.

Resistances: None

While attacks from the half men and similar creatures living in the forest are unlikely they do happen. (See the Inhabitants of Scarholm, page 47, *Scaum Valley Gazetteer*) It is up to you whether you inflict this on your players. The attacks tend to be preceded by a barrage of arrows nominally aimed at the crew on the deck but not desperately accurate. This barrage is accompanied by an attack by armed warriors who glide down from the treetops clinging to wings of plaited reed. They attempt to land on the deck abandoning the wings just before they do. Simultaneously a mixture of small boats, dug out canoes, and rafts push out from their hiding places amongst the trees that screen the bank and attempt to close with the boat. A river boats crew will normally be outnumbered at least two to one by these attacks but if the raiders do not board immediately or get lucky with the arrows hitting the helmsman, then the riverboat will tend to outrun them. In the case of the River Queen the presence of the horned whales means that boarders are very reluctant to approach from the front and will tend to wait for the River Queen to draw level with them. This does increase the chance of outrunning them.

Past Azenomei the nature of the river changes. Players notice that Uriose always has one man armed with a dart gun and a poison go-thither up the mast on a fighting platform. In places, the river narrows and great trees from the forest overhang it. Once, they find that a truly immense tree has fallen and partially blocks the river, forcing boats to sail close to the other bank as they maneuver past it. At this point Uriose places several men on the foredeck ahead of the hatch cover, armed with battle hooks and snaffle irons. Mothers bring their children inside the cabin. If party members fetch out their own weaponry and join the crew on the fore deck their presence is noted, approvingly. At night, the boat does not travel in darkness, as is done below Azenomei, but anchors in the mid stream and the two horned whales are set to swim round the boat on long reins to deter swimmers. The captain sets a strong watch.

At the GM’s option, half men, wild creatures or vagabonds can attack the River Queen on this stretch, and in considerable numbers. PCs who fight in her defense will earn the crew’s respect and the captain’s gratitude.

The Demon and Fishing Spear

(For further details see the *Scaum Valley Gazetteer*, Page 20)

Uriose will accompany them ashore and will go into the inn with them. Usnlip, the landlady, is there and, with Uriose vouching for the party and given confidence by the badges they wear, she is as helpful as she can be. The River Doung called on its way up carrying a message for her husband, Falax. It was a query from a magician in Kaiin asking about the source of some gaming tiles Falax had found. Uriose will suggest they stop for a meal, shotten pike with seckel sauce, served on a bed of diced barley cake. Falax will come in while they are eating and can confirm that no Mewling Shin came ashore and no one left the boat other than the captain’s son delivering the message.

Osier

Here they will catch up with the River Doung, which is berthed waiting for a cargo. If the party let Uriose accompany them, the captain of the River Doung, Shan Oust, will be helpful explaining he dropped Mewling off at Murant. He will also mention a second parcel that Mewling offered to transport for him as it was on Mewlings route. If the party is friendly, bring drinks, or generally admire his boat, Oust will wax lyrical. Currently he is sporting a bruise on his cheek, while a couple of the crew also appear injured. Mewling spent a lot of time on the foredeck exercising and undergoing strange exercises with a stout staff he carried. Some sailors mocked this and Mewling challenged them to a combat. In the

❖❖❖ The Duniwassal Mattock ❖❖❖

resulting good-natured fracas the courier dealt one of them a blow to the back of the head that put the victim out for two hours. Then five of the crew rushed him at once and he tipped two over the rail into the river, knocked another into the hold and caught Oust himself a blow on the side of the head, which had him seeing stars. Mewling did all this without working up a sweat. He then brought several bottles of wine out of a private store and shared it around the crew. In the eyes of the crew of the River Dounge Mewling Shin is an excellent chap who can do no wrong.

If Uriose isn't with them Oust will be more reserved. He respects their badges and will not lie to them but if they hector him he is unlikely to mention the second parcel.

As it is a days steady walk by overland trail to Murant, Uriose will point out it would make sense for them to wait until tomorrow, when the River Dounge will be might be loaded, and take passage on it back down river to Murant. If they walk, they will have to wait until morning anyway as it would not be wise to get caught in the forest as darkness falls. If they have upset Oust, he will announce that it will take him at least two days to load and they would be wise to walk.



Shan Oust

"Captain Of the River Dounge, finest boat on the river."

Persuade (Charming) 8,	Rebuff (Wary) 9.	Attack (Strength) 11,	Defense (Dodge) 10,
Health 4,	Athletics 1,	Appraisal 5,	Seamanship 6,
Wherewithal 2.			

Resistances: None

❖❖❖ The Murant Path ❖❖❖

The walk to Murant is along a narrow, but reasonably clear trail that runs parallel to the river, only leaving it to take short cuts where the river bends. At one point the trail becomes a paved road of three or four miles before reverting to a track. On the road section there is evidence of at least one side turning. If players to take one of these turnings they will merely end up deep in the forest as darkness falls. The side paths always peter out after a couple of miles, whatever they led to has long since vanished under the greenery.

Murant

(For further details see the *Scaum Valley Gazetteer*, Page 15)

The obvious place to ask is at the Murant Boatman. The landlady, Millice Halfron will be delighted to help the authorities and says that Mewling arrived in Murant some four days ago. He had a meal at the Murant Boatman before walking off inland. He didn't say where he was going, but then she neglected to ask. She specifically remembers that he had two identically sized parcels. Later that day, a rather rough looking woman called, asking after him. She was shabbily dressed but solidly built, and carried a heavy bow, a battle scythe and a small satchel. Millice gives the impression she disapproved of this woman. The rough looking woman asked if Millice had any honey and eagerly bought two honeycombs, paying for her purchases with antique silver coins, the like of which Millice has never seen before.

The woman was a bit disappointed when she discovered she had missed Mewling. She deposited her satchel with Millice, asking her to put it on a southbound boat to take to one Ishdan in Sfere. Millice wonders, as the party is composed of Sfere law officers, could they take charge of the satchel and see it reaches Ishdan safely. The bag has a label, and is addressed to Ishdan, Hereditary keeper of the Duniwassal Mattock, Sfere. The handwriting is Nassid's but there is no return address. If the adventurers open the bag, they will find it heavy with the 2000 terces that Nassid is paying Ishdan for the Mattock.

Brothers of Hulgen the Tabellion

(For further details see the *Scaum Valley Gazetteer*, Page 17)

The trail leads past their establishment. If the PCs stop and ask, the Porter on the door will call the Watchman down from the roof. The Watchman did see Mewling heading north along the trail, but failed to notice a woman on the same route. He will admit that he doesn't try to spot people who leave the trail to bypass the monks; he merely watches those who come into view very closely.

At the Manse of Jobbernowl

(For further details see the *Scaum Valley Gazetteer*, Page 18)

Jobbernowl himself is delighted to help the party and Leulliot will state that he saw Mewling go past. Both saw the woman following after him. Regrettably, Jobbernowl, like many Mages, is a believer in the Law of Equivalencies. While perfectly willing to aid the party he believes that they must aid him to an equal amount.

He will gladly provide them with food and accommodation for the night, expecting their company and news to repay his hospitality. He also has a task, in which the party can help him. He has recently acquired a full-length mirror that also appears to be some sort of portal. He has studied it with care and now thinks he knows how to activate it, although he is not willing to go through himself. Should one of the party reconnoiter the portal for him, thus helping him with his research, he will aid them in their quest.

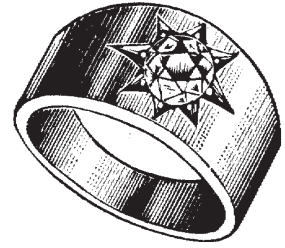
Jobbernowl will equip any volunteer with any sensible equipment. He will even help her memorize a spell if she is capable. When the character steps through the portal, she will feel a slight discontinuity, then find herself standing in the open air. The first thing that will strike her is the brilliance of the sun, which is almost white and certainly too bright to gaze upon directly. Once she has got over the shock of this and looks around she will observe that she is on an open grassy plain. Around her, in a semi circle, are five 'doorways'. Each is a trilith, with two large vertical stones twice the height of a man, capped with a third stone that must weigh several tons. In the center of the semi circle is a single vertical pointed stone. She has stepped out of the fourth⁹ "doorway". There is no one near at hand although, in the far distance, there is a thin plume of smoke rising. If the explorer walks towards it, in two hours, she will come to a village, where a Stone Age population treat her with a degree of reserve but do not seem unsurprised at her arrival. Communication is not easy, but the locals explain that all sorts of strange people appear around the stones. Other than that they can tell her little more.

Back at the standing stones, walking through the other doorways will take the PC to different destinations. Number one¹⁰ is onto a world that is hot, arid; the atmosphere is barely breathable and stinks. There is no obvious sign of life larger than brown scum. The next doorway leads to a world where giant reptiles live amongst lush vegetation. The center portal takes the player to a world similar to the one on which the stones are set but in this case the inhabitants of the nearby village have bronze and iron tools. The fourth portal takes her back to Jobbernowl's workroom while the last takes her to a cold dark world. What little light there is comes from a luminous fungi that grow on the dark ground. White slug like creatures crawl across it grazing.

If the explorer returns and reports merely the five sets of standing stones Jobbernowl is politely grateful, but not impressed by

Jobbernowl's Ring. 5pts

The ring is of considerable age, assumed to be 19th aeon or even earlier. When the ring is thrown onto the ground at the wearer's feet and the command word "greaten" is spoken the ring will expand to form an impenetrable wall of flame fifty feet in diameter. If the word "constrict" is said the ring will shrink and return to being a bronze arm ring.



The ring holds one charge, and recharges itself at night when its owner sleeps. It absorbs from the owner one point from their magic pool (or health pool if they haven't got a magic pool.) Hence the when the owner awakes they have already used one point from the pool.

9 From the left, counting clockwise.

10 The one on the extreme left

✠ The Duniwassal Mattock ✠

their initiative. He will give limited advice. If she has investigated all the doorways he will be pleased and very helpful. If the party does not guess for themselves, Jobbernowl will observe that the Stones apparently allow access to five ages of the world.

The very least Jobbernowl will do is to report that Mewling stayed overnight, some days ago. He left next morning, saying that he intended to go to at least Wittles Inn where he hoped to meet up with a guide. He agreed to carry a message from Jobbernowl to Magus Quillan, care of the Pelotherapy Inn, as a return for the hospitality he had received.

If the players impressed Jobbernowl then he will be of more assistance. If shown the satchel he will recognize Nassid's handwriting. He will warn them against him, describing him as definitely mad and probably a mage. He has been irritated himself by Nassid's clumsy attempts to learn his secrets and suspects that Nassid might be behind the disappearance of his workbook. He will ensure that they have sufficient supplies for the journey and will lend one of the party a bronze arm ring, inscribed with a pattern of flames. If the ring is thrown onto the ground at the wearer's feet and the command word "greaten" is spoken the ring will expand to form an impenetrable wall of flame fifty feet in diameter. If the word "constrict" is said the ring will shrink and return to being a bronze arm ring. This should enable them to spend nights safely in the wilderness. The device will only afford a reliable defense against a deodand if the creature is less than 25 feet away from you when the ring is dropped.

Wittles Inn

(For further details see the *Scaum Valley Gazetteer*, Page 24)

Borstep will welcome them and be delighted to provide them with the hospitality of his establishment. Unfortunately, his problem with the Mannequins affords little opportunity to watch who passes his inn. He does remember Mewling, who had a meal at his inn before asking for directions to the Pelotherapy Inn where "he had something to deliver". Borstep obliged him and will, out of respect for the law and in return for a small consideration, provide the same information to them.

Much more he is obviously not willing to say, as he is too busy ensuring that no one is indulging in intoxicants. He never noticed anything else but, if asked, the stable boy remembers that a big woman caught up with Mewling outside the inn and had an argument, where she tried to dissuade him from taking the recommended route to the Pelotherapy Inn, claiming she knew a shortcut. Mewling declined to follow it, and they walked off in the direction of the Pelotherapy inn, still arguing.

The Pelotherapy Inn

(For further details see the *Scaum Valley Gazetteer*, Page 28)

At the Inn, things are quietly busy, but Peduncle still makes time to greet travelers. She has not seen Mewling, but will ask her staff. They have not seen him either. If the characters remember to ask, she will tell them where to Magus Quillan lives. He is at home when they call. He will greet them politely; admit that he was expecting a small package from Jobbernowl but that no one has arrived to deliver it. No one in the area has seen Mewling.

Mewling's disappearance will leave the players in something of a quandary. Of the guests currently staying at the inn, Answile has some knowledge of Nassid. He can tell players where the trail to Nassid's establishment leaves the main road and can also warn them about Nassid's women. Answile has met them on the road and has only survived because he always carries honeycomb for them. Of the other guests, Kastin knows that there is a mage of sorts living at a ruined spa north of Wittles Inn. Anton has heard rumors about cannibalism but discounts them, because he has heard similar rumors in many other places. The best people to ask would be Magus Quillan and Peduncle.

Peduncle has heard rumors from customers that it is unwise to travel alone in the woods north of Wittles Inn. She has also heard of a magician who lives in that area. Other than that she cannot help much.

Magus Quillan believes that there is a magician living in some squalor with his harem in the woods to the north of the Wittles Inn.

»»» **Finally meeting Nassid** »»»

Overall, Nassid is not pleased with developments. He has parted with a considerable sum of money, 2000 terces, for one mattock and its enchanted case. The mattock arrived and Nassid immediately compared it with the detailed description in his copy of Rustoppen's *Ritual Artifacts and Major Thaumaturgical Items of the Derna/Scaum Basin*. While he is willing to overlook the missing gold wire from the haft, which he feels he can replace using the detailed sketches from Rustoppen's book, it is obvious that the case is not authentic. Unfortunately, Mewling's demise meant that he could not be questioned on the matter so Nassid has no idea what has happened to his money. Nassid was so annoyed by this that he had Urutha, the woman sent to guide Mewling, flayed alive before he thought to check with her about the money. While, on the positive side, he has two more carcasses hanging in his cold room, he is no nearer retrieving what he sees as his rightful magical case.

When the party arrives he is going to be very interested in what they have to say. Their attitude and their conversation will determine whether they walk out again. There are various factors that mitigate for their continued survival and others that militate against it.

If the claim they are Friends of Jobbernowl

Nassid wants to learn more about Jobbernowls' vat rearing techniques. Therefore friends of Jobbernowl will be seen as possible conduits of information. A friend of Jobbernowl is likely to be sent to him with a message asking for help. Mind you, only one friend of Jobbernowl is needed to carry the message, the others can stay as hostages, and if Nassid grows impatient, lunch.

Friends of Ishdan

Nassid feels cheated and friends of Ishdan could take a lot time dying, in ways that didn't adversely affect their culinary potential.

Officials of Sferre seeking the return of the Mattock and case

As it was the real case that Nassid was really after, he is not unsympathetic to officials who wish to recover the false case and mattock from him. He will expect his 2000 terces back, which is not difficult if the players collected the satchel. Also he is likely to rationalize¹¹ that Sferre doubtless has many officials and would not miss the odd one or two added to his larder.

There are other factors that come into play as well. If the players have brought plenty of salt or, especially, honeycomb, to hand out to Nassid's women, they will be well disposed toward them. As the women see it, this sort of behavior is to be encouraged and if word gets out, then the world could well become a sweeter and somewhat stickier place. The women, used to Nassid's insanity, will take advantage of any lapses in concentration to whisk endangered party members out of his clutches and back to the road. If any of the characters is particularly charismatic there is always the possibility of romantic entanglement to confuse the issue.

Finally the players may just decide to draw swords and hack their way out in the finest sword and sorcery tradition. The women, subject always to the possible effects of honey or love on their loyalties, will fight until Nassid is dead but will then will fade into the woods and wait until the party leaves before returning to decide how to restructure their community. It is not improbable that they may try to kidnap/seduce/entice a male party member into taking Nassid's place.

Back at Sferre—What happens while the adventurers' backs are turned?

While the players have been engaged in foreign travel at municipal expense, the people of Sferre have not been idle. Although the Duniwassal originally allowed himself to be bounced into supporting Ishdan's idea of sending the party to recover the mattock, the more he thinks about it the more silly it seems. By the time Gurmass gets back from Kain, the Duniwassal has developed profound reservations, so takes Gurmass and other leading citizens into his confidence. When the River Doung

11 We realize that the term 'rationalize' is not one often seen when used in connection with Nassid and apologize unreservedly, but feel unable to come up with an alternative term suitable for family reading.

❖ The Duniwassal Mattock ❖

returns to Sfere, the Duniwassal will board and have a long talk with Shan Oust. If the players never collected the satchel of money from the Murant Boatman, the Shan Oust will have fetched it down river himself at Millice Halfrons' request. This, along with Ousts' information about two packages for Nassid, will be enough evidence for the Duniwassal to have Ishdan arrested and placed in protective custody until matters are settled. He will then charter the River Dounge to take him, eight armed constables, Gurmash and several other leading citizens with their retainers, north to Murant. This heavily armed party, twenty five strong, will arrive in Murant ten days after the Mattock was first reported stolen, unless they meet the party traveling in the opposite direction. Four days after that, they arrive at Nassid's hideout, reinforced by Jobbernowl, who has decided that he may as well deal finally with Nassid. It is then possible that in the unlikely event that the characters are prisoners, but not yet eaten, they could be rescued by the assault which kills Nassid and disperses his women for good.

If the players are pretty brisk they could be on a riverboat, heading west and meet the Duniwassal and his party sailing east somewhere about Azenomei. If they have the Mattock and can explain away the false case convincingly the expedition will turn round and escort them triumphantly back to Sfere. To the Duniwassal, the return of the Mattock is the important thing, the loss of the case of far less importance, especially as he will now be convinced that Ishdan is the culprit.

❖ The Denouement ❖

On arrival at Sfere the party are formally thanked and their legitimate expenses promptly refunded. A modest reward of about 250 terces each is paid out. In the Guild House, where this reward is paid, the smell of pepper sauce thickening slowly on an open range pervades the entire building. In one of the small cells in the basement, Ishdan is frantically thinking of excuses and people to blame. How long will gratitude last and how long before Gurmash, new Hereditary keeper of the Duniwassal Mattock, allows simmering personal resentment at the part the party played in his wife's elopement to cloud his judgment enough to start listening to Ishdan's latest attempt to put the blame entirely on them? At the wharf the "Dark Sorceress" is taking on passengers and cargo for Kaiin and the coastal towns of Sanreale bay. Perhaps now might be a wise time to move on?

❖ Spare NPCs ❖

It is highly probable that GMs will discover they need either a deus ex machina to explain something to a notoriously slow party or alternatively a brief encounter to fill out an evening. These NPCs are provided purely for this purpose.

Wakdun the Panderer

"Ah sir, follow my advice and I promise you that once more the blood will course hot through your veins and the you will entirely recover your lost ardour. A little trust, a handful of terces and you have recovered your lost youth"

Persuade (Charming) 12,	Rebuff (Pure Hearted) 11.	Attack (Finesse) 10,	Defense (Surefootedness) 10,
Health 4,	Athletics 2,	Appraisal 7,	Living Rough 2,
Pedantry (The Scaum Valley) 5,	Riding 4	Scuttlebutt 6,	Stewardship 8.

Wherewithal 7.

Resistances: Arrogance 2, Avarice 1, Gourmandism 1, Indolence 4, Pettifoggery 1

Wakdun has his main dwelling in Kaiin. His is the large palace at the drier end of Oldkin Prospect. The building is in good repair, the gravel carriage sweep is immaculately raked and the flunkies in their plum colored regalia and six tiered hats stand ramrod stiff by the main doors.

There is a side entrance off Porphiron View, which is used by business callers. Above the door is a large and elegantly lettered sign which reads "Wakdun the Panderer, purveyor of erotic appurtenances and Gentlemen's requisites." Around the rear of the palace the walls are new and windowless. Wakdun also has a pavilion overlooking the Derna with extensive gardens and lawns sweeping down to the river.

✧ The Duniwassal Mattock ✧

In Kaiin, Wakdun is regarded as a leading citizen. He was allowed to fund an entire day's festivities when the Prince celebrated his birthday and should the Prince ever call a council, Wakdun is always sent an invitation. Business matters mean he spends a lot of time out of town. He trades widely and also travels a lot himself. Certainly all business along the Scaum he transacts in person, as he is the only one who can deal safely with half men.

His mode of doing business is based on mutual trust. He anchors in the middle of the stream next to the trading place and the half men tie the women they wish to trade to the stakes along the waterfront, and pile other goods in a heap by them. They then step back into the forest and disappear from sight. Wakdun then goes ashore alone, looks at the wares on display and places a selection of trade goods in the open as his starting offer. He then rows back to his riverboat, "The Scarlet Apprentice" and waits. The half men come out of cover and assess the goods on offer. If judged sufficient they collect the goods together and leave with them, leaving the women and sundry other impedimenta for Wakdun to collect. If they feel his offer was not generous enough, they step back into the cover of the trees and allow Wakdun to land again and add more to his offer. If Wakdun feels he has already offered enough he loads his goods back into the boat and sails away. So goes the trading with the half men on the river Scaum. There are at least four of these trading posts; the most important is the one near Scarholm. Other merchants have tried the system but have always been betrayed and taken prisoner. If presented for sale at the stakes Wakdun always buys them and always releases them free of charge when they return to Kaiin. It is Wakdun's invariable rule that, should petitioners present themselves to him with proof that he has purchased one of their kindred, he will automatically release them for no ransom at all.

Wakdun demands absolutely loyalty from his staff and boat crews. Ties of family loyalty bind many of them to him; his mother's family is especially large and intermarried widely with many others of Kaiin's more noble families. Anyone seeing his crew going aboard will immediately spot his kinsmen, well dressed and elegant. The rest of the crew tends to look hard-bitten and capable. However they cause no trouble in Kaiin and should there be the usual street disturbances, these men, dressed for the occasion in the Green and gold livery of the Wakdun house, are always placed at the disposal of the Prince.



Tabazinth

"Ha, reminds me of the time I was on the 'Golden Bell' sailing out of Kaiin"

Persuade (Eloquent) 10,	Rebuff (Penetrating) 8.	Attack (Cunning) 9,	Defense (Intuition) 11,
Health 2,	Athletics 2,	Appraisal 4,	Gambling 9,
Scuttlebutt (Gossip of the riverboats) 8,		Wherewithal 4	

Resistances: Arrogance 4, Avarice 3

He can be met anywhere on or along the river. The Dying Earth's equivalent of a riverboat gambler. He travels up and down the rivers, taking passage on whichever boat looks to be carrying the most interesting passengers. Some of the boats let him travel free, regarding him as a fund of good stories and cheap entertainment. As he will inevitably win back any money he pays for his fare, it is easier for everyone to let him have the free ride. He is smartly dressed, his clothes colorful and a little too bright to be regarded as good taste. He wears several rings, which are regularly used as stake money. He rarely cheats, but then he rarely needs to and does give the impression of genuinely enjoying the sport. He also does not sit with his back to a mirror or a door or window.

NEEDED URGENTLY!
Wife and four children, for tax purposes.
Apply Kaiin Box 89

✧ The Duniwassal Mattock ✧

Bunderwal

When ever anyone starts questioning him too closely about something he places his hands in front of his face and “experiences a flash back” He will say things like “*the slaving jaws, the eyes, gods but the eyes*”.

Persuade (Glib) 9,	Rebuff (Contrary) 8.	Attack (Strength) 8,	Defense (Dodge) 11,
Health 3,	Athletics 1,	Appraisal 4,	Living Rough 2,
Gambling 3,	Scuttlebutt 2,	Seduction 6	Wherewithal 2

Resistances: None

Boats traveling along the river anywhere down steam of Azenomei can meet the Castaway. Ahead of them in the river they see some form of raft with a figure on it, trying to attract their attention. As they get closer and the crew prepares a rescue they discover that it is a man riding down stream on an upturned table. He rejoices in the name of Bunderwal

Naked, save for a maid’s pinafore, his story is that he was one of a party of travelers going overland who were taken by deodand. He was the last survivor, having been made to wait on the deodands as they devoured his companions. He was to have been eaten, but managed to escape to the river by chewing through his bonds and slipping away.

The truth is somewhat different. He had been traveling on the river in the pleasure boat, the “Perfumed Garden”. Many minor celebrities from Kaiin were disporting themselves on the trip. He had an assignation with a lady in her cabin, and as they were engaged in an elaborate exercise, her husband tried to get into the cabin to collect his cape, the evening having been a trifle chill. When he found the door locked he demanded admission, and being of a suspicious turn of mind, reached what Bunderwal regards as a personally insulting conclusion, so started to hack the door down with a boarding axe that was conveniently to hand. Bunderwal, rather than face the wrath of a burly and axe armed husband with homicidal intend, smashed his way through the cabin’s mullioned windows with an occasional table. As he did so, the door gave way, and Bunderwal threw the table out of the hole and leapt after it. Since then, he has been paddling downstream and is worried that the cuckolded husband may try and get the Perfumed Garden turned round to hunt him down. Bunderwal is worrying in vain. His indiscretion has already been forgotten; his paramour is at this very moment is consoling herself without constraint in the arms of a new swain. Her husband lies drunk and incapable in a quiet corner of the dance floor.

“Perfumed Garden”

A larger riverboat than usual, it resembles a floating gin palace. It has two paddlewheels driven by defanged and clawless deodand. It hogs the middle of the river forcing anyone else to hug the bank. It plies the river between Kaiin and Azenomei. Its deck is crowded with sightseers, while there is a large superstructure that looks like some strange, over-decorated wedding cake. The bottom level of the superstructure is a dance floor, music constantly rings out from it. The top floor is a covered viewing area where people are playing gambling games. The tier in the middle accommodates the bar. The built-up stern holds cabins with mullioned windows. Acute observers will note that one set of windows appears to have been smashed out.



Pakdun the Wanderer

“Oh well, it was fine while it lasted, I think it’s time to move on.”

Persuade (Forthright) 7,	Rebuff (Wary) 8.	Attack (Caution) 12,	Defense (Parry) 9,
Health 6,	Athletics 4,	Appraisal 2,	Living Rough 7,
Riding 4	Scuttlebutt 2,	Wherewithal 2	

Resistances: Indolence 3

Pakdun can be met on any trail, a tall, gangling individual, equipped with a stout club at his shoulder and a long dagger strapped to his side. He wears serviceable garments in a brown worsted cloth. He has a pouch on his belt, which contains a handful of small silver coins of miscellaneous providence and has stout boots of Gurr Hide. He is traveling nowhere in particu-

❖❖❖ The Duniwassal Mattock ❖❖❖

lar; he tends to concentrate on leaving places in a hurry. While not especially dishonest, he has the sort of face that gets blamed for whatever just went wrong. If players accompany him, they will find him a useful and honest companion, but whenever they enter a village within hours he will be accused of stealing chickens/children/spoons or anything else that isn't actually bolted down. His name may well be against him in this matter.

He does have a disconcerting habit of clicking his tongue against the back of his teeth and when in repose trims and cleans his nails with his dagger.



Myrna the Rootless

“Oh pull yourself together, how else do you expect me to emasculate a deodand?”

Persuade (Forthright) 11, Rebuff (Penetrating) 12, Attack (Cunning) 8, Defense (Vexation) 9,
Health 4, Athletics 3, Appraisal 2, Living Rough 7,
Pedantry (The flora, fauna and geology of the Scaum Valley) 11, Wherewithal 2

Resistances: Arrogance 2, Avarice 3, Gourmandism 1, Indolence 7, Rakishness 3

A lady Scholar, she can be found virtually anywhere. Brisk by nature she is smaller than average, broad shouldered and dresses in a style entirely her own, normally cut down britches and a short jacket of stout tweed.



Antessa Dehale

“Drink deeply and tell me how your spirit moves within you.”

However in daytime it is likely to be:

“Do I know you from some place?”

Persuade (Charming) 11, Rebuff (Contrary) 8, Attack (Caution) 7, Defense (Intuition) 11,
Health 4, Athletics 3, Appraisal 6, Scuttlebutt 3,
Seduction 8, Wherewithal 2

Resistances: None

A lady of negotiable virtue, should the party encounter her by night, they will find a rare beauty, dressed in silks only slightly stained, dark eyes that flash a challenge by candlelight over the gaming tables. Should they meet her again next day the same eyes are harder than obsidian and her features seem to have a sharper, more angular cast.



The Synaxite Molinia

“Alms for the poor. Be generous to those who have so little”

At night it is more likely to be:

“I hope we can get better acquainted, you have the most interesting eyes.”

Persuade (Eloquent) 12, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 11, Attack (Speed) 7, Defense (Surefootedness) 9,
Health 3, Athletics 3, Appraisal 5, Gambling 5,
Pedantry (The doctrine of Mellifluous Renewal) 5, Scuttlebutt 6, Seduction 6,
Wherewithal 3

Resistances: None

She will be found in any larger conurbation. A sister from one of the traveling orders she espouses the doctrine of Mellifluous Renewal. Her order is not a common one (she is currently its only member) and apparently its rules set a great store on collecting alms to be given to the poor and deserving. The good sister, with her chaste demeanor, simple charm and obvious good looks, finds money easy to collect. During the day she wears the order's long black robes of coarse hemp, tied at the waist with a white silk belt. During the night she still wears black, but it tends to be silk cut to reveal her figure to advantage as she moves with casual assurance among the gambling tables or the dancers at some fine soir e.



WAKDUN THE PANDERER

Purveyor of erotic appurtenances and Gentlemen's Requisites



It is with genuine pride that Wakdun takes this opportunity to inform his esteemed customers of the opportunity that now awaits. Persons of discernment who place cultured enjoyment and enhanced sensitivity over frenzied erotic cavorting will undoubtedly be delighted to discover that Wakdun has received a stock of rare dream powders from Cienid Ul. This of course supplements rather than replaces the stock drawn from the Lamaquire Basin and the hinterland of Forrells Port.



For those who prefer frenzied erotic cavorting Wakdun has available a score of fresh barbarian maidens from the darker reaches of the Scaum, and has taken onto his books a number of Kan  Sergeants.



The Travelers Guide to the Exotic and Quixotic Bildazan, God of Merchants and Thieves

Greg Saunders

'Dazzels and Marvels beyond worth, as well as charms, puissances, and elixirs.'

Jack Vance, *The Eyes of the Overworld*

❖ Introduction ❖

'You will find certain customs which guide the folk to be at variance with our own. They may impress you as strange, grotesque, laughable, disgraceful picturesque or commendable depending upon you point of view.'

Jack Vance, *Cugel's Saga*

In the dying days of the sun the wise and cautious do not choose to tread the paths to foreign lands, for with the burning orb guttering like a spent candle who would waste precious time trudging dingy roads only to be beset by swindlers, half-men and beasts but a mile from the fireside? Still, as one reclines in the comfort in more civilized lands it can be a pleasant distraction to ponder the peculiar traits and customs of those less-fortunate individuals encompassed by that most descriptive term, 'foreigner'. It is in this light that this article has been envisioned as an introduction for the learned yet curious reader to the quaint customs of the worshippers of Bildazan, a religious folk found within the town of Tugersbir in the far land of Cutz. It is the author's hope to delight the mind of the discerning reader with a description of the particulars and peculiarities of the Sect of Bildazan, an ancient religious order whose piety is perhaps only rivaled by its by perversity¹.

🏰 The Town of Tugersbir 🏰

The worshippers of Bildazan inhabit the town of Tugersbir in the land of Cutz at the very edge of known civilization. The town itself is ensconced within the crumbling walls of a timeworn amphitheatre set within the bowl of a hill and surrounded by the ruins of an ancient city. Although the city ruins are undoubtedly the haunt of Hoons, Gids and all manner of other disturbing denizens Tugersbir itself is stoutly defended by a combination of arena wall and a contingent of reassuringly motivated guards. Where required the walls are patched with a lattice of resinous Beldam wood strips embedded in wild Drogger dung, a combination thought to magically repel half-men². Entrance to the town is gained via a sturdy wooden gate manned by a contingent of town guards. This gate leads to an aerial walk way that stretches over the ruined city and leads to a further gateway through which the traveler must pass to enter the topmost tier of the mighty amphitheatre. The high-gabled, timber-framed houses and workshops of the town can then be seen mounting the steps which climb the sides of the amphitheatre, forming concentric rings around a vast area of now indiscernible original function at the bottom of the arena. This fabulous central space is occupied by the wonder of Tugersbir, the grand market.

Wandering through the labyrinthine passages of the market, past stalls of fine cloth from Alмеры, magical talismans from bygone aeons and beautiful works of Art surely snatched from moldering crypts, a traveler to this town could understandably assume that they had entered one the greatest market in all the lands. Yet to fully understand the place of the market within the town one must first explore the nature of the people themselves, especially in relation to their god, Bildazan, whose two-faced graven image dominates the center of the market watching all that transpires below.

1 The author notes with interest that Iunutharis Grashpotel of Kaiin neglects to mention Bildazan when detailing the peculiarities of the town of Tugersbir. One can only speculate as to the cause of this oversight, but one possible explanation lies in the swift departure made by that notable sage, under cover of darkness, minus several prized items and a not inconsiderable sum of terces. Perhaps his short visit did not allow the scholar to fully acquaint himself with local customs.

2 The resulting rank odor of combined resins and dung may compound the efficacy of any magical effects.

✠ The Sect of Bildazan ✠

'The divinity, controlling every aspect of existence, persuades the priest to perform such acts.'

Jack Vance, The Eyes of the Overworld

Bildazan himself is known as the 'two-faced god' and justly so; the monikers becoming eminently acceptable if one studies the statue that dominates the market place. Here the god is depicted as envisioned by the people themselves – a tall, slender-bodied man of indeterminate age with two faces, one looking forward and one behind. By some magic undisclosed by the residents of Tugersbir the head slowly revolves so that throughout the day first one then the other face is presented to the market. The first presents an open and honest visage while the second is a caricature of all that is sly and wicked. The noble face is a physical representation of Bildazan as the spirit of commerce, embodied in the market place that stretches out beneath the statue. This aspect of Bildazan is the god of all merchants, and represents the honest exchange of goods for the benefit of all. This embodiment of divinity is most apparent in the hawking vendors calling their wares among the rich artifacts that line the stalls of the market. In an ironic juxtaposition of values the second face of Bildazan represents that which is diametrically opposed to good commerce, namely thievery and roguishness. This aspect of Bildazan encompasses all that is greedy and grasping in human nature, from the pickpocket who shows a tender over familiarity with the money pouch of the innocent to the footpad who punctuates his trade with a swing of the truncheon. Perhaps unsurprisingly this aspect of Bildazan also dominates the market place, for thieves haunt darkened doorways and groups of bravos fight for terces amongst the stalls.

Bidazanese Dogma

The people of Tugersbir are a pious folk who worship their god scrupulously. Dogma dictates that those who worship Bildazan and expect his blessings must worship both aspects of his polar nature, for as the great 18th Aeon prophet Nilfagus (see sidebar) argues in this respect one cannot accept the light without acknowledging the existence of darkness. To the people of Tugersbir worship is not restricted to rituals in the great god-hall that occupies the highest tier of the arena, but takes the form of direct actions in every part of the town, all religious practices following a strict doctrine laid down by the righteous Nilfagus. Following the tenets of Nilfagus a

The Venerable Nilfagus

'By juxtaposing omnipresent puissance with diametrical ambivalence all becomes sanguine.'

Nilfagus was a prophet and sage of the 18th Aeon who became the leading religious authority of the then newborn sect of Bildazan. This occurred after the sage was subject to a personal visitation from the god whilst purchasing a particularly extravagant hat. After receiving such favor, Nilfagus was compelled to write no less than thirty-six tomes on all aspects of Bildazan and his worship, twenty-three of which currently reside on the god-hall of the Tugersbir¹. Over the aeons certain other religious groups most notably the Pantheonic Tibberites and the Zerodic order of Zealots have attempted to demean the word of Bildazan as set down by Nilfagus. Principally this has been directed toward the peculiar behavior displayed by the sage toward the end of his life. Indeed, the problem of divine accuracy has been exacerbated by the fact that the last thirteen librams attributed to Nilfagus are composed of dictated conversations between the sage and an overly ornate hat-stand. The situation was further compounded by the fact that during the final weeks of his life the sage declared that he himself was the hat-stand in question, and walked abroad adorned in a range of exotic hats, ultimately leading to his death from malnutrition (he had correctly observed that hat-stands do not require nourishment).

The followers of Bildazan remain unimpressed by such commentary, attributing the behavior of their prophet as part of a final great lesson to be passed on to his followers. The gist of this argument is that all are children of the earth and as such are part of the earth and all that resides upon it, and therefore it follows that there is no truthful difference between oneself and any other objects of natural origin. The argument is then extended to include manufactured goods such as articles of household furniture. Despite the fine tenets of this erudite argument the Tibberites and Zealots remain unconvinced.

1 The editor regrets that he is not in any way interesting in being importuned by ill mannered mendicants claiming to have discovered the missing thirteen tomes and merely refers them to the authorities in Tugersbir whose attitude to such individuals is unfailingly robust.

devotee of Bildazan might one day demonstrate his piety by delighting the senses of his customers with a wide array of exotic trinkets, in doing so displaying all the charms and obsequies of the experienced and well-traveled merchant. He then may be found the next day rendering his former customers insensible by the force of club in order to purloin their terces. Both activities represent respected aspects of Bildazan and so are considered perfectly acceptable by the pious folk of Tugersbir.

It may be noted that the actions of a common thief or dubious merchant who are not native to Tugersbir could be construed as acts of devotion to Bildazan, and as such unscrupulous individuals might attempt to manipulate piety to their own ends. Nilfagus demonstrates foresight in this regard by stating that to prevent such heretical behavior the worshippers of Bildazan must wear masks bearing two faces to indicate allegiance and authorized worship – one face is that of a smiling merchant, the other that of a snarling criminal. Balancing the tall and flamboyant hat to which the masks are attached upon one's head demonstrates the piety of the wearer³. Furthermore, the simple action of rotating the pinnacle of the hat such that one facet or other covers the features can leave viewers in no doubt as to the aspect of Bildazan being worshipped. The hats themselves are not for sale and must be obtained from the priests of the god-hall; casual travelers are warned at the gates to beware what may appear pious activities when performed by unmasked individuals. Approximately a third of the population of Tugersbir are involved in commerce at any one time, worshipping the noble aspect of their god as merchants. A further third portray his darker side, whilst the remainder are involved in the numerous humdrum activities of daily life such as maintaining the town buildings, smearing dung over the walls, filling the ranks of the town guard or other onerous tasks. Duties are rotated regularly such that in due course all get an opportunity to show devotion to Bildazan, with the zealotry of their observances determining the period of time they are allotted for future religious activities.



The Merchants of Tugersbir

'Enter, my friend, enter. How goes your trade?'

Jack Vance, *The Eyes of the Overworld*

Tugersbir has a truly dazzling market place and many of the items for sale cannot be found in even the most civilized lands, and many are drawn to the market despite the dangers presented by local customs. Many of the merchants specialize in certain items such as magical adjuncts, fine cloth or erotic stimulants, although where these artifacts for sale originate from is not so clear. It has been reasoned that the dark crypts of the surrounding city provide many of these treasures but unsurprisingly the townsfolk are unwilling to divulge their sources and frown upon idle speculation. When dealing with the appropriately masked merchants of it is imperative to note that by strict religious rule they employ a specific system of etiquette when bartering (see sidebar). This system can be difficult for the newcomer to fathom – indeed some travelers to Tugersbir have inadvertently invoked the wrath of the high priest of Bildazan by failing to follow the rules as set forth

by the venerable Nilfagus. Should the customer manage to navigate the complex tenets of bartering in Tugersbir then many otherwise inaccessible items may be found amongst the stalls, and many a famous magician from civilized lands can be found arguing the price of a rare amulet or other fabulous object.



3 Others have also commented on a certain phallic symbolism little remarked by congregants.



The Thieves of Tugersbir

'You have rifled my collection! I note certain of my most treasured valuables!'

Jack Vance, *The Eyes of the Overworld*

Thieves abound in the market place, lurking in alleys, hiding in doorways, loitering under stalls. Many of the thieves of the market place tend to congregate in groups of three to five, all wearing the masks that denote their devotion. They prey on the customers of the market and are careful not to steal from the stalls for they themselves might man that very spot next sunrise. Of course the actions of the thieves are a result of deep religious beliefs and devotion to Bildazan, following the essential tenets set down by Nilfagus in the 18th Aeon. The thieves tend to prey upon the weak and the loners and groups can often traverse the market without incident. However, those bidding for items at the stalls may not wish another to accompany them and hijack their purchase at a moment's notice, so caution is the watchword.

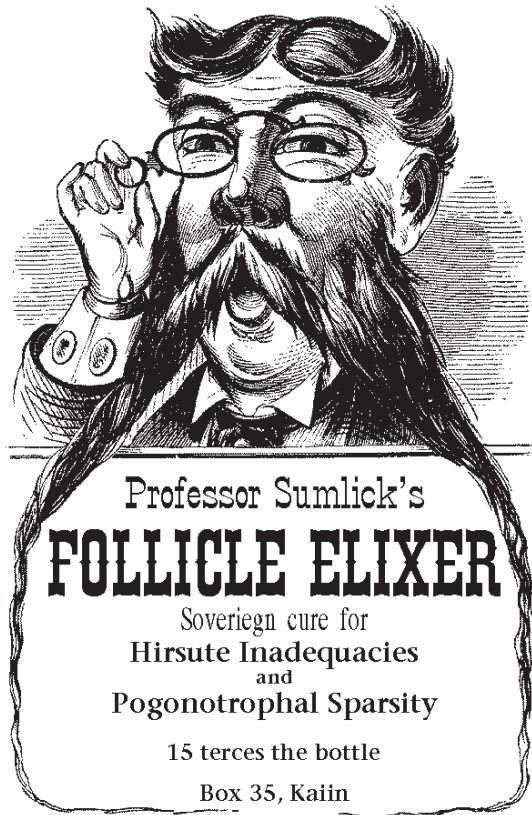
Heretics

'I know nothing of your rites! This is not heresy, it is simple ignorance!'

Jack Vance, *The Eyes of the Overworld*

Unfortunately, the visitor to Tugersbir may not find the tenets of the local belief to their liking. However, to denounce the worship of Bildazan or question the efficacy of Nilfagus' doctrine within the market place is a dangerous pastime as the pious servants of Bildazan are not the only people to wander the streets of the town by day. Guardsmen also survey all that goes on within the walls. The stranger to Tugersbir should beware—these guards do not seek to deter thieves from their activities, only in fact to uphold the holy edict of Bildazan and to bring the heretic to religious justice. Those found within the town that break the laws of Nilfagus, such as those who fail to observe the correct etiquette as victims of robbery or who neglect to pay an appropriate donation after a purchase at the stalls, are dealt with swiftly by the Guards. Justice itself it meted out on a case-by-case basis by Minnulant, the current High Priest of the God hall, consulting a copy of Nilfagus' *Appropriate Actions for the Cessation of Heretical Activity* in all aspects so as to fully sanctify proceedings.

In the most extreme cases of heresy death may be deemed the only suitable recourse, but in many other instances the insult to Bildazan may be repaid by a simple service in which the heretic can reaffirm their piety. In one noted case the punishment for heresy involved a trip to an ancient tomb within the crumbling city surrounding the town, whereupon the heretic returned to the temple with several wondrous items⁴. Still, all was made sanguine by the completion of the task and the reformed heretic ensured salvation in a second⁵ and assuredly better life.



4 But at the cost of his sanity as a result of a jab from poison Hoon-barb.

5 Or possibly a third.

»»» **The Etiquette of Bartering** «««

'The total of the charges to your account exactly equals the worth of this trinket – there is no change forthcoming'

Jack Vance, *The Eyes of the Overworld*

In the town of Tugersbir the ancient art of bartering follows the rigid and regimented pattern first described in the 18th Aeon classic *Treatise on the Practical Rituals of Bildazan: the Etiquette and Manners of the Precise Calculation of Worth*, the only known copy of which rests in the vault of the god-hall. Those willing to study the crabbed and tiny spider-scrrawl of the venerable Nilfagus will find the rules of etiquette employed within the town laid out simply and clearly⁶. The correct etiquette is summarized below:

The Enquiry

Should a potential customer come across the stall of a merchant of Tugersbir displaying an item of interest, etiquette demands that the customer approaches the seller in specific manner. Currant dogma favors the affectation of an attitude of extreme boredom tainted with a dash of scorn, although other schools of thought exist with loud derision a popular alternative. Casting a desultory eye over all of the goods on display accompanied by some grunts of disgust, the customer is then required to utter some general comments as to the quality, source or legality of the wares. The merchant in turn should welcome the customer fawningly, typically pointing enthusiastically several items from the stall that are of the poorest quality and yet simultaneously insultingly over-priced.

The Opening Offer

At this point the customer makes an opening offer for the desired item. Etiquette states that this sum this should be exactly one half what the customer believes the item to be worth, and should be accompanied by various questions and statements regarding the item in question and the merchant, typically in reference to the relationship between his parents at the time of his birth.

The Price

The merchant should then reply in turn with a price. Nilfagus states this should also be exactly one-half the actual sale price of the goods, the discrepancy being that part of the price to be paid to Bildazan himself in the form of a donation to the God-hall. At this point the customer must decide if he wishes to purchase the item in question at the offered price or to continue bartering.

The counter offer

Assuming the customer is unwilling to accept the value intimated by the merchant's first offer but still remains interested in the item, he must return with a counter offer so redefining his belief as to the worth of the item in question. The merchant in turn replies with a modified price and the bartering continues until either the customer walks away (with obligatory insults) or decides to accept the merchant's implied price.

The Gifts

During each stage of the bartering process the merchant attempts to offer the customer gifts to seal the exchange. Typically, these are small trinkets worth a fraction of the worth of the item being haggled over. By accepting any of these gifts, the customer has agreed to purchase the item at the last price offered by the Merchant before the gift was accepted. Any failure to recognize the acceptance of an offered gift as agreement of sale is frowned upon by the Bildazanese. It is an act of heresy, and as such is dealt with most firmly by the town guards.



Payment

After the gift has been exchanged and the deal closed the customer pays the merchant the final bid and acknowledges that the price represented one half of the actual worth of the article by paying the remaining worth of the item as a donation to the god-hall. This payment must be made by sunset to ensure that the exchange is correctly sanctified. For his part the merchant announces the purchase to the high priest so that the coffers can be made ready to accept the donation. Failure to pay the agreed price to the God-hall is considered a great insult to the religious efforts of the merchant and is a mark of serious heretical leanings.

The appropriate skills can of course be utilized in all parts of the bartering process, but the customer must keep a careful eye on the various offers and prices that are bandied about during the exchange.

✠ The Etiquette of Thievery ✠

The less religiously devout might be mistaken for thinking that the customs of the Bildazanese with regard to criminal activity follows no code, but they would indeed be mistaken. The irrefutable Nilfagus laid down the correct manners one must employ when displaying your piety to Bildazan through the ritual of robbery. The exact terms are laid out in the 18th Aeon tome *Nilfagus' Guide to the Worship of Bildazan: Ritual Robbery for the Pious* again located in the God-hall. Below is listed some of the principle guidelines for this form of devotion.

Selecting Targets

Before the act of thievery can begin the thief must select a target. Strangers are acceptable targets – the cult of Bildazan is not so narrow-minded as to refuse religious joy to others.

Form of Robbery

Any form of robbery is allowed, typically including the pick of pockets and less savory acts. Some have taken an even more liberal interpretation of Nilfagus' word, and stride through the streets picking targets to duel for money, although these masked bravos are generally frowned upon for their unnecessarily modern view of Bildazanese doctrine.

Taunting

Where appropriate⁷ the exchanging of taunts is considered in the best tradition of thievery and leads to correctly sanctified actions. Failure on the part of the victim to reply in kind is considered very bad form.

Defense

The victim of a robbery is permitted to mount small a defense of his person – not to do so would be to deny the honest thief the appropriate acknowledgement of their devotion. However the victim can expect no help from others on the street—it is considered impolite to interfere in the religious observances of others.

The sanctity of life

In all of Nilfagus' teaching the sanctity of life is upheld, from that of the lowest thief to the richest victim. Only heretics are waived this right. It is this knowledge of the respect the worshippers of Bildazan share for their victims which acts as a bond to hold them together—taking the life of any man within the walls of Tugersbir is considered dire heresy.

Donations to the God-hall

Ritual states that whatever a thief steals in the marketplace, one half of the value of that item must be paid to the high priest at the God-hall by nightfall; typically this is assessed as a value in terces. Dogma states that the victim of the robbery is duty bound to report the value of the items taken to the God-hall so that proper accounts can be kept. The robber is allowed to keep the item; typically these same items are sold on the merchant's stalls the following day.

⁷ For example, when not involved in the more covert forms of the thieving arts.

»»» Notable Buildings and Citizens of Tugersbir «««

As has been noted the town occupies the remains of a large amphitheatre. Many small dwellings and storehouses line the bank of the structure with steep streets running between them, but along with the statue of Bildazan two buildings clearly dominate the town.

The God-hall

This impressive structure is set the top tier of the arena and is constructed of wood cleared from around the arena. Two stories tall and boasting some impressive turrets and towers, the structure is the tallest in the town save the statue of Bildazan itself, but the hall is not used for religious ritual. Instead it is the home of Minnulant, the High-priest of Bildazan, and also the collected coffers of the town. From the top of the tallest tower a bell is rung every sunrise indicating that a new day of worship has begun and is rung again every evening to denote that all donations have been paid. Failure to ring the bell indicates dire heresy within the town, and rouses the wrath of the guards.

Minnulant, high priest of Bildazan

'I feel that your current course runs tangential to the emanations of the most holy Bildazan – perhaps the completion of a minor task would demonstrate the purity of your fervor.'

The high priest of Bildazan is small, round and exceedingly fat. His bald and shining pate surmounts a pale face boasting a perpetual grin that many would mistake for the musings of a dotard. However, anyone who makes such an assumption is in for an unpleasant surprise. Minnulant is a cunning and ruthless man who thinks of one thing and one thing only – lining the coffers of the God-hall⁸. He works closely with his brother Sausm, ensuring a steady supply of heretics to gather artifacts for Bildazans' coffers.

Persuade (Obfuscatory) 8, Magic (Studious) 5, Perception 3,	Rebuff (Penetrating) 5, Health 4, Scuttlebutt 6.	Attack (Cautious) 5, Appraisal 9,	Defense (Dodge) 3, Etiquette 9,
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The Guard chambers

This squat building is the only one within the town constructed of stone. Set on the lowest level of the arena bank, the guards are able to sally forth into the market place with the maximum of efficiency. Rumor has it that the single story visible above the ground is not the only level of the chambers and that heretics have been known not to leave the building once sent there by Minnulant. A contingent of twenty guards guards both the town and the town walls.

Captain Sausm, head of the Tugersbir Guard

'You sir display a marked lack of reverence to the omnipotent one, perhaps you disagree with our doctrines?'

A hooked nose and hawkish features mark the face of the captain of the Tugersbir guard. Sausm is always on the look out for heretical behavior – victims of the thieves of the market place will find no comfort here. Sausm subscribes to a pragmatic view of the word of Nilfagus. Each arrest he makes brings heretics to the judgment of Minnulant, who is also by chance his brother. The high priest tests the piety of these individuals by assigning them quest to complete, which usually by chance also involve the swelling of the coffers of the God-hall. Travelers to Tugersbir find the sharp questions on religious dogma they enjoy with Sausm somewhat unnerving.

Persuade (Forthright) 4, Health 6, Stealth 5,	Rebuff (Penetrating) 5, Etiquette 7, Wherewithal 5	Attack (Finesse) 7, Perception 4,	Defense (Parry) 6, Scuttlebutt 4,
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8 This phrase may be considered interchangeable with 'his own pockets', a simple synergy that pleases Minnulant.

✠✠✠ Bildazan, God of Merchants and Thieves ✠✠✠

Parletaum, a typical citizen of Tugersbir

Perhaps I could alert you to this fine Robathian rug, notice the exquisite stitch-work around the crest of the golden Pelgrane'

Tall and rakishly thin with a long moon-face and knock-knees, Parletaum is a paradigm of the good Bildazanese citizen. Two out of every three days he can be found worshipping Bildazan, and he takes his religious duties very seriously. His stall in the market place he shares with three other men, each taking an alternate day to hawk the wares. Parletaum and his colleagues specialize in fine rugs, many of which may come from the depths of tombs in the surrounding city – apparently the original builders had a penchant for fine stitch-work. When selling on the floor of the arena of the town Parletaum is the model of charming obsequiousness. The following day he then marks his devotion to Bildazan by lurking in doorways and striking at passer-bys with a cudgel, robbing the dazed unfortunate and fleeing with a torrent of insults in his wake.

As Merchant:

Persuade (Charming) 6, Health 5, Stealth 5,	Rebuff (Lawyerly) 5, Appraisal 7, Stewardship 4	Attack (Cunning) 5, Concealment 5,	Defense (Vexation) 4, Etiquette 6,
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As Thief:

Persuade (Intimidate) 5, 5, Stealth 5,	Rebuff (Wary) 4, Appraisal 7, Stewardship 4	Attack (Speed) 7, Concealment 5,	Defense (Misdirection) 6, Health Etiquette 6,
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At the Moderators discretion the inhabitants may encompass the occasional spell, purely for the purposes of self-defense.

🏹 Adventures in Tugersbir 🏹

There are several reasons why adventurers might be found within the holy walls of Tugersbir. More common examples are described below:

Impelled by a higher force

A magician to whom the characters owe a favor⁹ has sent them to the town to secure a magical artifact that has recently surfaced in the market. Needless to say, though the magician in question is familiar with all aspects of Bildazanese culture, he neglected to mention the idiosyncrasies of the market place to his emissaries. Can they negotiate the vagaries of religious doctrine without invoking heresy?

Purchasing rare artifacts

The characters themselves may have heard of the wondrous market of Bildazan and want to purchase items for their own requirements. Again an unfortunate lack of understanding of the tenet of Nilfagus' doctrines is inevitable, leading to perhaps fatal misunderstandings with the town guard.

Items for sale

The characters could have come across a hoard of ancient artifacts and wish to sell them, or perhaps they have developed a scheme in which to turn a terce with some items of dubious lineage. Bildazan is of course the best place to go to hawk such goods, as long as you are fully familiar with the word of Nilfagus.

9 See 'Whom do you know?' in the DERPG

✠ **Expiating Heresy** ✠

Given the nature of Tugersbir, there is an unfortunately high probability that player characters within the walls of the town will inadvertently commit a number of acts of heresy. Minnulant is enthusiastic for heretics to avoid death and prove themselves worthy of salvation, and has construed a myriad of ways in which this can be achieved. Listed below are some examples of how characters may redeem themselves in the eyes of the high priest:

Digging for treasures

The crumbling city surrounding Tugersbir is awash with ancient tombs and crypts, some the home of unpleasant entities. Minnulant often chooses to send heretics out into the Hoon-haunted desolation to unearth a quantity of rare items to the satisfaction of Bildazan.

Serving on the guard

Minnulant and his brother Sausm often test the mettle of heretics by drafting them into the guard, especially when there are some particularly voracious deodands lurking around the perimeter of the town....

Robbing patrons

Of course the doctrine of Nilfagus is sanctified only within the walls of Tugersbir, and customers once outside the town are safe from pious thieves. However, Minnulant is eager to spread the word of Bildazan, and often sends heretics outside of the town to waylay travelers in the name of his god, especially those departing the town with pockets stuffed with ancient wonders.

✠ **Taglines** ✠

'I appear somewhat confused as to your prices – no matter, the inferior quality of the items and the dubious lineage of the seller have dissuaded me from purchase.'

'I protest, I have made no heresy, in fact I was not aware of any dogma to be rebuked!'

'Ah, a two-faced god indeed, neither of which appears to show pity.'

'In my experience donations are typically voluntary, I would coarsely term the proposed payment a bribe'

'Sir, please desist in your antics with the cudgel lest I decide to spit you upon this steel thorn.'

'Ah, the arrival of the guard! Surely and without doubt justice will triumph over crime in the case of the purloined purse.'

'That mask hides all the contours of your features. Come to think of it, that may not be to your disadvantage.'

'What! Pay twice for this cheap bauble! An outrage!'

'I seem confused as to your actions guardsman – surely the unconscious thief yonder should be the target of you ministrations, not myself the unfortunate victim.'

'I find the customs of the town somewhat dispiriting.'

The Letters of Bracht

Dear Issi~

Sorry I haven't been in touch for a few days but I have been laid up. After I saw you last week we were sent out on a forced march with no notion of just where we were going. I led 25 picked men, all archers, and then a full company, which had been out on manoeuvres for over a week, joined us. During the evening we doubled back and moved along edge of the old town to the beach where we were picked up by a couple of boats from somewhere up the coast. They transported us to a beach north of Octorus where we had to wade ashore and hide in the hills. That night we were led east towards the forests edge. Finally we were split up and I was left with my twenty-five lying along the hillcrest while the rest moved round to the north. Below us in a bowl in the hills was a large fire with many strange and terrible creatures cavorting around it. After an hour the other company must have finally got into place because there was a flash of light from their position and a shouted war-cry as they charged into the throng. We waited until the rabble by the fire started fleeing in our direction, then I got my lads up and we fired as fast as possible into the mob. It was good shooting; they were running at us with a fire behind them. A lot were hit but as our other company pursuing cut down those who faltered, the rest had no option but to carry on toward us. Finally we had to stop firing because those fleeing and those pursuing were so intermingled. At that point we dropped our bows and charged down into the cauldron.

I was unlucky because I ran into someone with what I would call a poison go-thither. I don't know if you've seen one but this thing looked like a cane or length of bamboo the size of a gentleman's walking stick. The end is a flexible blade that also acts like a wick, drawing poison up from a well within the shaft. He caught me a blow that sliced through the jacket I was wearing but luckily didn't cut the skin. As I brought my sword across to parry the reverse stroke he drew a dart pistol and put a dart into my leg. Luckily it wasn't one of the bigger ones made like a stubby crossbow but was one of those little ones with a very powerful internal spring which are a real sod to cock. Even so my leg buckled under me and if it hadn't been for my sergeant hacking the bastard down from behind I would probably have died then and there. After the fighting was over the lads were searching the battlefield for survivors or anything worth having and they found a couple of stragglers who had decided to hide in a hollow that was packed with thorn bushes. I think the stragglers hoped they wouldn't be seen and they almost got away with it. They wouldn't come out to be executed so we obviously had to go in to get them. One of them had an arrow gun. You don't see all that many of them, they are a long tube which has a side opening breech. You slide an arrow into the breech and then put your packet of gunpowder in behind it. You then swing the breech back in line with the barrel, lock it, point the weapon and pull the trigger. Apparently they are quite useful against such creatures as hoon and similar because the arrow is a fairly solid block of pointed metal and when it hits it tumbles inside the targets body doing wicked damage. Not only that but it hits with a pretty solid clout and I know old hunters who claimed to see a leaping hoon knocked backward by the force. As the cultist with the arrow gun could see our archers and they couldn't easily see him it looked as if we were going to have difficulties until our mage cast the spell of the slow hour and walked into the thicket and took the gun off him.

Anyway our doctor says I'm fit for light duties so I wondered if you were doing anything this evening?

Your Bracht.



Dear Issi~

More trouble. Valdaran is getting nervous and is upsetting everyone else. I think he suspects Kandrive of being "up to something" or at least being even more than usually up to something. Because of this when we attacked a palace on Odkin Prospect Valdaran led us in person. (You've probably heard about it already.) The unsettling part was rather than going in and just killing everyone (which does tend to be the way our attacks work out) Valdaran wanted prisoners to question, so he insisted we carried snaffle irons. I don't like them myself. Imagine a long pole, almost the length of an erb spear. However instead of a spearhead it has a mass of twisted and barbed spikes. The idea is that when you swing this and hit someone you twist it, entangling their clothing and trapping them. All I can say is, gods help you if the target wears tight fitting clothing or is effectively naked. This is not a weapon for hunting erb with. We took two prisoners and killed no one (in spite of what the gossips said about blood swilling down the front steps) so Valdaran was moderately happy. Anyway I should be able to get two days leave on the strength of it. I have one more patrol to put in, and then I'll see you tonight at the Magicians. If Madame Julapinai has taken to roaming the house at night, then Zades has just inherited a houseboat on the river and has offered me the use of it. I thought I could perhaps give you that other, surprise present as well.

Your Bracht.

Hetta the Austere

Wishes to announce that the **Shorecombers Temperance Association** has now acquired a **COLD PLUNGE BATH** of considerable capacity.



Those troubled by *Lusts of the Flesh* or a swain of *More Than Usual Persistence* are invited to attend our evening plunge sessions to **Dispel Immoral or Lascivious** humours.



Attendees are asked to wear **Concealing Garments** of fabrics **Opaque When Wet**, lest the soaking allows for inadvertent titillation.



Glasses of Bitter Nettle tea, an excellent *Purge* and *Depressant* will be served after bathing.



The Letters of Bracht

Mistress Isapinai

It is with deepest regret that I have to write to inform you of the death in action of Archon Bracht. He was a fine young man of whom I had the highest regard. His loss has saddened us all and left a gap that will be difficult to fill.

In his papers deposited with the legion clerks he had named you as his sole kin and so we have taken the liberty of sending round his effects. These total

Sword, Short, with belt and scabbard..... 1

Bow, composite..... 1 (the quiver and arrows are Legion property and are retained)

Tunic, green, 2

Trews, green..... 2 (padded jacket is Legion property and is retained)

Erb spear..... 1

Diary..... 1

Long handled fighting knife with no scabbard..... 1

Boots (as a separate bequest he left both of them to the legion)

Cash..... 37 terces

Back pay owing, after deductions..... 29 terces

Small wrapped packet containing silver ring set with semi precious stones, engraved with the letters I and B intertwined..... 1

Please sign for them when they are delivered, it eases things for the men of his company who are responsible for dealing with these matters.

Also pass on my regards to your Uncle Volune when you are next in touch.

Valdaran

Officer Commanding. The Green Legion.

❖❖❖ The Animal Apocrypha ❖❖❖

Being an examination of beings of the Dying Earth that are either believed extinct, uniquely rare, or considered legendary

Ian Thomson, as always with thanks to Jack Vance

Author's Note: All quoted creature introductions are taken directly from Jack Vance's tales.

GM's Notes: The ability ratings in square brackets note the cap on this ability¹.

🌀 The Bogadil 🌀

"Range around the forest and assemble here, in order and discipline, all bogadils, ursial lopers, manks and flantics, and any other creatures of sentience."

❖ Known Facts ❖

Bogadils were delightful ape-like beings with stubby tails, and with hindquarters resembling those of a jackrabbit or Almerian Quoo. They move by bounding along on all fours, but are also able to stand upright, and have reasonably dexterous paws at the end of their forelimbs². They were arboreal creatures that were widespread in and around the forests of the Dying Earth during the Sixteenth Aeon. During that time it was known that they dwelt in small family groups, though all were part of a larger pack that roamed over the same territory. They were sentient, but their intelligence was rudimentary at best, and they were extremely timid when it comes to contact with humans.

Their faces were also more ape-like than human, and yet clearly they contained a predominant amount of human plasm in their make-up. By nature they were idle and mischievous. When encountered far from human settlements they lived on local fruits and vegetation, occasionally indulging themselves by devouring large crustaceans or small mammals. When living close to human settlements they were thieves and mischief-makers of the highest order, and would steal any tasty foodstuffs they could get their paws on. It seems that they were not highly intelligent; rather they were motivated by a strange satisfaction in causing distress. When the tables were turned upon them, it seems that they were rarely able to appreciate the humor, and it was common at that time for these creatures to be the subject of cruel practical jokes.



❖ Scholarly Conjectures from the period ❖

Affinity to the Trees

Bogadils are swift indeed when clambering through the treetops, swinging on vines, or scampering through thick undergrowth. Humans without considerable skill in athletics or woodcraft will be left far behind.

Thockadore Lackwill, Hunter.

1 Where there are matters of scholarly conjecture, we have tried to quote the words of the scholars in question. Their names are apprehended to the comment they make. There are those who might claim that some—Silvithos the Teamster or Nogba—are not scholars. This may be true but is essentially irrelevant, as they do know what they are talking about, a facility they share with few self-proclaimed scholars.

2 Though not dexterous enough to remove objects tied securely to their tails by those equipped with opposing thumbs

❖❖❖ The Animal Apocrypha ❖❖❖

Game Notes: Apply a bonus of 1 to all Athletics rolls they attempt whilst clambering through trees or thick underbrush. This is far easier to administer than laying levies or penalties on human pursuers, so merely describe the difficulties faced by the PCs.



Leaping High

As an aid to speedy travel, bogadils can leap and bound as part of their standard means of travel. This makes them difficult to pursue or capture, even when in open terrain.

Vinus Morobia, Caravan Master.

Game Notes: If using strenuous exertion (the expenditure of 1 point from its Athletics pool), a bogadil may leap long and high over obstacles or merely to automatically negate imminent physical contact without need for an avoidance roll.



A Magical Nature

Bogadils are created creatures, like many of those extant in the world today. When they were originally developed in some magician's vats, this person chose to bestow upon them several magical properties. Firstly, they can see almost as well at night as they can during the day; secondly, they can detect magical items and magicians by scent alone; and finally, they can heal injuries to themselves or others by using a natural enchanted song.

Galwuy the Munificent. Sage.

Game Notes: The song of enchantment is a series of melodious humming cries, which is beautiful to attend. For each point spent from their Magic pool, an entire injury can be cured on any non-demonic being of approximately their own size.



Game Statistics

Persuade (Glib) 0.5~[6],	Rebuff (Contrary) 0.5~[7],	Attack (Speed) 0.5~[5],	Defense (Sure-Footedness)
0.75~[8],	Health 0.75~[7],	Magic (innate) 4,	Athletics 0.5~[6],
Concealment 3,	Perception 4,	Quick Fingers 1~[9],	Stealth 1~[10],
Wherewithal 4.			

❖❖ Bogadil Adventure Hooks ❖❖

In the modern era (the 21st Aeon) it is improbable that Bogadils have survived from those earlier days. Nonetheless, since arch-magicians do travel into the past (or send lackeys there) it is far from impossible that a breeding pair might have been brought back some centuries ago on a whim, and let loose somewhere. Thus a single colony may exist at some distant location from the well-populated human lands. The PCs might encounter these creatures whilst the characters themselves lie injured and desperate after a combat that they only just won. Out of the trees these little beings creep, moving across to the most badly hurt adventurer and singing their healing song, simultaneously picking pockets and rifling backpacks. Who would want to attack the creatures that have just saved your life? And yet those magic items must be retrieved.

LOST – AN OPERA GLASS IN A BLACK GID-LEATHER CASE

Was lost while promenading in the Winter Garden by the young Man who fainted. The finder will be suitably rewarded by returning it to no. 59 Flaunting Erb St. or no. 630 Felicity Ave. in the store.

🌀 The Flantic 🌀

“Rhialto sprang into the air and ran on great lunging strides after the flapping black flantic, which, swinging its gray head about and observing Rhialto, only flew the faster.”

✠ Known Facts ✠

Also a creature well known in the Sixteenth Aeon, the flantic was a semi-intelligent being created from plasm that include human, flying lizard, and demon. It had a man-like head – distorted only with an elongated and flexible neck connecting it to its shoulders, and was black or dark gray in coloring. Its body was little larger than that of a human adult, but coupled with the enhanced arm and upper body musculature required to support its great leathern wings, it appeared to be significantly larger. The flantic had claws rather than hands, but these were capable of grasping small objects – although incapable of fine manipulation. Its normal mode of attack was to swoop down and carry off small beasts, dropping them from as high as it can go—in order to kill them. Then it would rip at them with its claws and devour them at its leisure. This beast was also capable of aerial combat, and used its claws and buffets from its wings to discommode airborne opponents.



✠ Scholarly Conjectures ✠

Pelgranic Precursor

Though said by some to be a precursor to the pelgrane, there is argument over whether it was a natural evolution or that the plasm of the flantic were used as part of the original pelgranic matrices. The pelgrane has a long head resembling a beetle, whilst the flantic as described above is much more man-like in visage.

Volune Stinobric. Guardian of the sacred flowers of Falgunto



Sinister Impostures

Though clearly an aerial creature, flantics when pressed could fold their wings about them and don a cloak. With the neck pulled down, and a hood thrown over their head, they could pass as human beings. This was not a subterfuge that would withstand serious challenge, but was enough to casually disguise them in any busy environment, or in a place where questioning of those you do not know is considered ill-mannered.

Mortiquan of Kaiin, Last Poet, Gold-Bearded Seer of Fair Ascolais, Thrice-Myrmalt

Game Notes: Take advantage of these capabilities when designing encounters with these creatures – see below.



Magical Capacities

Probably as a result of their demonic plasm, some flantics' were innately imbued with several magical effects that resemble cantraps. Firstly, they would release a soporific gas in a single burst that is capable of putting an adult human male to sleep for several minutes. In those that could do this, (some authorities claim it was only the females, other that it was only juvenile

✧ The Animal Apocrypha ✧

males) the gas was released from valves inside the mouth, and so emerges as if it is a breath attack. Secondly, it appears that each flantic could camouflage itself against any surface – whether natural or man-made. Finally, the flantic also resists all regular Dying Earth magic in the same way as demons (DDE³, p45).

Quirethomble. Librarian. The Scholasticarium. Kaiin.

Game Notes: The breath attack costs a flantic 1 point from its Health pool, which is why such effects are kept for times of absolute necessity. It is not possible to physically resist the gas if it is used in close proximity in a relatively confined area (including within the embrace of the flantic's wings), except by being aware of the potential of such an attack and holding one's breath. The GM must adjudicate such escapades individually. The chameleonic camouflage effect costs 1 point from the flantic's magic pool and lasts for several minutes.



Game Statistics

Persuade (Forthright) 0.5~[7],	Rebuff (Contrary) 0.5~[6],	Attack (Caution) 1~[8],	Defense (Misdirection) 1~[9],
Health 1~[9],	Magic (innate) 7,	Athletics 6,	Concealment 5,
Imposture 8,	Perception 5,	Stealth 1~[10],	Wherewithal 1~[8].

✧ Flantic Adventure Hooks ✧

Although common only in the distant past, it is entirely possible that scattered colonies of these beings still remain in remote places of the Dying Earth. Though they do not in general gather together in numbers, several may share the same territory with relative harmony. Thus, these odd beings can occur occasionally in scenarios when the PCs are far from civilization. So as to evoke a feeling of their distant origins, the GM might wish to associate them with some unimaginably ancient ruin where some lost lore is to be found. The flantic might not themselves present much of a mortal threat to adventurers of any experience, and are perhaps best used as the tools of sinister human enemies of the PCs. In such an instance, the flantics' capacity for stealth and their aerial abilities make kidnapping, surprise assault, theft, and even basic espionage well within their purview. Note that an individual flantic is not strong enough to carry an adult human, but two can do so when working together.

ERBERG & PARRAIFEL OF KAIIN

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3 Lacking this tome simply give each flantic a bonus of 1 on rolls to resist regular spells.

🌀 The Gleft 🌀

“A gleft, coming upon Guyal’s mother in labor, had stolen part of Guyal’s brain, which deficiency he now industriously sought to restore.”

❖❖ Known Facts ❖❖

The gleft is not so much an animal as a sentient web of force. None know for certain the origin of such beings, or whether there are many glefts or just the one individual that gets up to a fair amount of mischief all by itself. Rumor⁴ has it that a gleft typically floats around a district causing casual mischief over several weeks or months, and then abruptly simply ceases to be there. Some folk who have sighted glefts at differing times and locations claim that in its natural state this being is a small misty mass with faintly glowing green-tinted eyes somewhere within. Due to the diversity of these similar sightings, this description is widely accepted as being accurate. Nonetheless, it seems that the creature has at least two forms since other reports speak of the mist coalescing into a semi-corporeal hairless imp around two-feet in height. The actions of these creatures (this creature?) is purely for one goal only – to steal magical essence from people, beings, or enchanted items. The gleft typically manifests near to the object, creature or person, moves into physical contact with it for some moments, and then departs – leaving the subject of its attack devoid of some magical aspect that it previously possessed. During the manifestation the imp-like form is visible, but barely. There seems to be no sense to where it appears, or how often. It is clearly drawn towards magic, but not necessarily to the greatest concentration of magic in a region.

❖❖ Scholarly Conjectures ❖❖

Demonic Essence

Glefts are rogue energies that have escaped from the subworlds. Like all demons, they loathe and despise humankind, and their purpose is one entirely of mischief. The impish appearance of the gleft makes clear that its original energy is that of a subworld, since the homunculoïd imp seems to be the default shape for energies manifesting from such realms.

Iunutharis Grashpotel, Archmage



Mist-Beings

Gleft are merely mist-beings, their mist-form can only be viewed by the very observant (IS), and the mist is, in my opinion, the visual representation of the gleft partially manifesting as it considers whether or not to try and feed at this time and place. This form may float around an area for quite a while, occasionally vanishing and reappearing moments or minutes later.

Carthos of Sfere

Game Notes: Various magics may temporarily dispel the gleft when it is in mist form, but it cannot suffer harm.

Product of Magic

The gleft is the product of magical energies left over from experiments in magical laboratories. More specifically, commentators (or at least the more perceptive commentators) claim that an embryonic sentience from either one of the overworlds or one of the subworlds becomes the focal point for the gathering of these leftover energies. Once sufficient energies have gathered, a proto-being is formed that exists partly in this dimension and partly in the one of its origin.

Ildefonse the Preceptor

4 It must be confessed that learned opinion and rumor are of equal but minimal value in these circumstances.

✧ The Animal Apocrypha ✧

Semi-Corporeal Glefts

The gleft must be in imp form to drain magical energy, and although translucent and insubstantial can be viewed by any alert observer (not roll required except). In this form the gleft can pass easily through any non-magical object, though it has to pause and wriggle its way. It cannot (in either form) pass through magical barriers that protect against spell casting, unless its own Magic rating beats that of the caster of the barrier. For some reason glefts never change to their imp-form in bright natural light.

Issapinai, Arch witch favoured of the Goddess Phaetis

Game Notes: In imp-form the gleft can be dispelled as when in mist-form. It can also be affected by those spells that affect Achernarians. (See page 100 of the *Compendium of Universal Knowledge*.) Bear in mind that it still does not have a physical body as such, so an IS is required to destroy it – any other spell success simply dispels it for a few hours or days. Certain magical or enspelled weapons may be able to affect it in this form, but will do lesser damage than one would expect.



Stealing Magic

A gleft travels in a parallel otherworld, manifesting at a location where magic items or spell-users are present. If its target is an item, it merely drifts over to it and sinks into its substance, or (if the object is smaller than the gleft) the creature picks it up and cradles it. If the target is a living being, then it may seek to avoid the gleft, and if the target is successful the magical vampire will eventually depart unsatiated. (Although it may take seconds or minutes before it becomes bored.)

Raigemuir the Malignant

Game Notes: When attacking a living being, the gleft must overcome the target's Magic rating. Items or beings that do not have a defensive rating are without protection from its attack – unless some spell blocks its access or it rolls a Dismal Failure.



Stealing Personality

Some claims have been made that glefts can affect the destiny of youngsters by stealing parts of their personality whilst the child is still developing – or even still in the womb. Most folk regard this as a tale told to frighten children. I suppose it is possible that magicians of particular resources have managed to summon gleft-type entities that can be commanded to engender this curse-like effect upon the families of enemies of the magician. (Especially if magical capacity is known to run in the family line.) But I confess that I would believe pretty well anything of those self-absorbed, self-important, nonentities.

Hache-Moncour

Game Statistics

Magic (innate) 1.5~[16], Concealment 1~[8], Stealth 1.5~[17], Wherewithal Ω

✧ Gleft Adventure Hooks ✧

In a more esoteric adventure the gleft might take part of a child's mind, leaving that child bereft of wit. Then the adventurers will be required to investigate who hates the family so much as to cause this disability, and work out how they did it. Then the PCs will need to confront the wrongdoer and have the effect reversed. In simple encounters, glefts may be summoned and bound to guard the laboratories of magicians. Those who enter unbidden might find themselves targeted by a small swarm of glefts that try to devour their encompassed spells and the enchantments from their most favorite magical items. At Rhialto-Level a plague of gleft manifestations might be caused by some ancient malice—and for a time prove to be a problem without solution.

🦅 The Griffin 🦁

“He stood with one foot on a stone griffin, arms on bent knee, gazing toward Cugel with an expression of brooding dislike.”



✧ Known Facts ✧

This beast has the head, wings and forebody of an eagle; and the main torso and rear limbs of a lion. Oddly enough, this creature has a majestic appearance, seems at ease with its two parts and exists easily in the wilds—where it normally preys on birds and small animals for its sustenance. They are so rare that most pedants refuse to believe that they exist; though heraldic design and statuary depict them widely. Rare claimed sightings do occur in the wastes north of Cil, but these are not treated with any great credibility. Griffins are solitary creatures; save for when they come together for the purposes of procreation. The male will afterwards stay to protect the female whilst she comes to term, and then whilst the cubs are in their first months; and then will depart. Another exception is of course when siblings play together as pre-adults, and just occasionally an adult pair will join forces to assist in hunting for a season or two.

✧ Scholarly Conjectures ✧

Vat Matrix Instability

The griffin is a vat creation; devised in response to some magician’s favorite storybook no doubt. Amongst the plasms known to have been used are: eagle, lion, man, and possibly demon. Of those encounters that have been documented historically, one thing that makes them less believable is the widely differing nature of the interactions. Some have described the griffin they supposedly met as shy and peaceful, others have mentioned harrowing encounters with a ravaging beast, and still others have told of their beneficial interchanges with an ancient animal of incredible wisdom and nobility. Those familiar with the vats understand that it is possible that all of these reports might be true. This is because some vat creatures, though stable enough to breed and survive, can evidence an unstable genetic structure—resulting in individuals of widely differing aspect and attitude.

Issapinai, Arch witch favoured of the Goddess Phaetis



Rogue Griffins

Once in a while a griffin is born that evidences its demonic nature, or perhaps is driven mad by some disease or torment, to quote our informant. “Damned thing was a man-eater. It would attack lone travelers in the Wastes, flying down from rocky outcrops and ripping into the victim’s flesh with its talons.”

Nogba

Game Notes: These are always, for some reason, full adults of unusually impressive stature. Increase Attack, Defense, and Health ratings accordingly.



✧ The Animal Apocrypha ✧

Noble Griffins

Some griffins are blessed through an accident of their matrix with great wisdom and extremely long life. Such a creature will typically be found in some deserted—and yet at least partially intact—ruin, preferably where they can gain access to libraries and other places of interest. They might dwell in a civic tower that is long since blocked at the base, or on the upper floor of a building whose stairs have collapsed in the distant past. If approached in a friendly fashion, it might be possible to learn much from such a being—likely in return for actions it cannot perform itself. (Anything involving small manipulations or a journey into a human town for instance.)

Vermoulian the Dream-walker

Game Notes: These beings are likely to be just as tough as the Rogue Griffins mentioned above. They will also have ratings in Appraisal, Gambling, and Pedantry.

Magical Natures

Griffins are highly magical, and have the following innate properties: (i) they resist Dying Earth spells in the same general and specific ways as the basilisk⁵; (ii) their claws can damage magical or non-corporeal entities; (iii) a single drop of their blood when diluted in water and drunk is sufficient to negate the most virulent poison; and (iv) non-enchanted weapons do considerably less damage to them than normal.

Game Notes: They roll their Health at a bonus of 1 when assessing possible damage from non-magical weapons. If you do not have access to the *Compendium*, simply make them immune to mind-control magics and give them a bonus of 1 to resist all other Dying Earth spells.



Game Statistics

Persuade (Forthright) 1~[12], Rebuff (Penetrating) 1~[10], Attack (Ferocity) 1.5~[15], Defense (Dodge) 1.5~[13],
Health 2~[17], Magic (innate) 1.5~[14], Athletics 1.25~[12], Concealment 6,
Perception 1~[9], Stealth 5, Tracking 7, Wherewithal 1.5~[14]

✧ Griffin Adventure Hooks ✧

Griffins are creatures normally encountered in isolation. In a campaign they should be rare, far more often reported than actually encountered, and if you have encounters, they should be separated distantly in time (and probably in location). A suitable first encounter is when immature griffins are seen cavorting together in the distance. The GM should run this as a 'sighting of fabulous beasts'. Describe the wonderment of the characters as they observe these mythic creatures for the first time. Another encounter opportunity is when the PCs meet a strange magician who has a miniature griffin as a familiar—but will not elaborate as to whether he captured it in the wilds or created it in his vats. Later in the campaign comes a rogue griffin – perhaps a brief encounter where they must battle for their lives. Later still, the PCs learn of a wise griffin that is the custodian of some magical lore to which they require access. A journey must be made to visit this creature, and then a number of activities performed in payment—before the lore is passed over. Finally, once griffins have been forgotten, the characters are called upon (directly or as a substantial side-part of a scenario) to protect a settlement/caravan/etc from a man-eating griffin of prodigious strength and cunning. One or more personality GMCs need to be introduced—and slain by the creature before the quest is ended. The PCs will be taxed to their utmost to track and trap/slay the beast. As a final twist, it turns out that there is not one killer griffin, but two (siblings who for some inexplicable reason remained together as adults).

5 See page 20 of the *Compendium of Universal Knowledge*

🌀 The Mank 🌀

“We tie them to the tails of bogadils, or ursial lopers or even manks, which prompts them to absolutely comical acts of worry and shame, so that they run pell-mell through the forest.”

❖❖ Known Facts ❖❖

The mank is possibly an earlier evolutionary spin-off or vat-cousin of the hoon, but is smaller (being only man-size) and wilier than that modern creature. Like the hoon, the mank is thickly furred, but its fur grows close to the body – unlike the shaggy pelt of the hoon. This gives the mank something of the appearance of a human that has suffered from a curse of over-hirsutiness, and at first may look rather ridiculous. The skulking sinister aspect of this beast, and its cruel nature, would soon dispel such an illusion. Additionally, manks also have two-foot long hairless tails like those of a rat, which continually flick from side to side in a restless manner. The mank is unusual amongst half-men in that it is normally active during the day, although it tends to seek shelter from the full sun—and lives in forests, where direct sunlight is diluted through the treetop canopy. Despite the fact that it resides in woodlands, it is a ground-dweller and makes its lair in caves and hollow logs, which it stops with sticky debris in order to discourage nocturnal predators. Conversations with a mank are typical of the more crafty type of half-man rather than the desperate deodand.

❖❖ Scholarly Conjectures ❖❖

Adhesive Exudation

A mank can secrete great amounts of saliva, which forms into a gelatinous sticky mass after a few moments of exposure to the air. The mank itself is immune from the adhesive properties of this substance (which explains why it is not continually gluing its jaws together) but can use it to enhance traps or seal up its lair against enemies. The creature normally uses this matter to stick leaves; bark, twigs and turf onto the larger objects it uses as parts of its projects, and is adept at making the resultant product seem entirely natural. Since this salival goop remains effective for several hours it is also common to find it as an integral part of the restraining mechanism of any trap.

Zaraides the Sage

Game Notes: Consider giving a bonus of 1 to Concealment rolls where the exudation is used as an accessory. Mere strength rolls are not enough to pull oneself away from this stuff, as doing so is just as likely to rip off your own flesh. Escape may be managed by clambering (carefully) out of any snagged clothing, or dissolving it with pure alcohol. Alternatively one may wait an hour or three until it begins to harden and may be chipped away.



Tricks and Traps

There is no end to the manner of traps that the mank can set for potential prey, from simple pits to fatal deadfalls. After all, how can one leap to safety when one is glued to the spot?

Xolon, Master Hide Merchant, Tugersbir

Game Notes: The GM need use the utmost of their cunning to create sticky situations for the PCs.



❖❖❖ The Animal Apocrypha ❖❖❖

Teamwork

Manks are sociable creatures and tend to operate in small gangs, although once in a while a bull-mank will strike off on its own. (It is my belief that it is these that are responsible for attacks near settlements of any size.) A bull mank can make for an interesting half days hunt, taxing the hunters cunning rather than his courage.

Duke Tambasco.

Game Notes: Bull manks are significantly stronger and more athletic than the typical mank.



Game Statistics

Persuade (Intimidating) 0.5~[6],
Defense (Sure-Footedness) 1~[11],
Concealment 7,
Tracking 6,

Rebuff (Wary) 0.5~[7],
Health 1~[11],
Perception 5,
Wherewithal 1~[9]

Attack (Cunning) 1~[12],
Athletics 1~[10],
Stealth 8,

❖ Mank Adventure Hooks ❖

Even in the Sixteenth Aeon manks were not common, and probably just as well. Still they linger on in small groups and whether it is as a result of a magician re-creating them in his vats or they have just survived no one knows. As noted above, these creatures are no mean foes, and a group of them could easily slay an entire party of medium-level adventurers if played to capacity. Manks love human meat more than anything, and frequent locations where inexperienced groups of adventurers tend to appear.



🌀 The Murgril 🌀

“A great winged creature wearing white robes flapped on high along the face of the cliff.”

✠ Known Facts ✠

The murgril are assumed to be highly magical beings, semi-demonic entities that somehow became established upon the Earth. They are in body slightly larger than humans, and possess gray membranous wings with solid ribs of glistening black chitin. The main torso is that of a demonic human, and the head is also vaguely human-like—but extended into a muzzle similar to that of a mastiff. For ceremonial reasons they wear strong white robes, which flap about them as they fly. In the past, the murgril claimed to be associated with the Great God Yelisea; for example, a million years ago in the land of Farwan their predations were said to be at the whim of this deity. In fact these creatures themselves spread this rumor through human agents, so as to establish and justify their feeding habits. Yelisea is the god or goddess of fate – so an ideal choice for such a resigned enterprise. Apart from expending energy in order to feed, these creatures like nothing more than to perch on high ledges overlooking their territory. Nobody is aware of what strange thoughts pass through their minds, since none has yet managed to converse with a murgril and live to record what occurred.



✠ Scholarly Conjectures ✠

Feeding Habits

Murgril through habit like to carry away their victims to a great height, and then drop them to their deaths. The body is then left to ‘mature’ for several hours, before being devoured during the hours of darkness. A single murgril is easily capable of carrying an adult human.

Cugel the Clever, Gentleman of Almery.

Game Notes: As in the story where Cugel was transported back into the past (TDE, pp217-226), this simple attack method depends on having victims that are either insensible or fatalistically resigned. Cugel himself was able to break the wing of the murgril that attempted to carry him off, and so escape.



Demonic Nature

Due to their otherworldly nature, the presence of a murgril is signaled by both a strange tart fragrance—something like an antique exhalation of molder and must – and a slow plaintive melody, so sad as to bring tears to one’s eyes. Both of these effects are actually in the minds of the observer and not present in reality. The music of anguish and exalted despair and the odd smells are part of a sorcerous innate ability that over time causes those who remain in proximity to a colony of murgril to become more and more immured to a mental state of laconic fatalism. Such things are commonplace in the subworlds, but fortunately rare upon the Earth. Unlike other demonic beings summoned to the Earth for shorter periods of time, the murgril have sacrificed much in balance for their prolonged sojourn here. The drones have lost their demonic protections and are ordinarily vulnerable to damage from weapons. Once sorely injured, they become dramatically slowed, and soon expire. As with many other demons their bodily material then rapidly decomposes. In the case of the murgril they turn to a substance reminiscent of brittle paper, which is then disintegrated in the first strong breeze.

Shrue the Diabolist

✧ The Animal Apocrypha ✧

Game Notes: In the short term, these effects need to be described for maximum atmosphere, as they are otherwise largely ineffective. The emanations of the murgril will only at that stage have an effect upon anyone who scores a Dismal Failure on a single (No Re-Rolls) Wherewithal roll. Such a person for the next few minutes after this first failure will be sluggish and despondent, but will soon recover after leaving the vicinity (a mile or so) of the colony. They are then immune for a day or so (as is anyone else who scored anything above a DF). These tests will be repeated every day a person hears the sounds and smells the scent, and each time their chance to resist drops by one degree – until inevitably they will fail and have no chance to resist again. This results in a period of intense melancholy. After some days more, this will recede, leaving the characters back to normal with the following exceptions: they no longer wish to leave the location, and they accept the actions of the murgril as being normal. Any outsider can see that this is an absolute fallacy, since no small settlement can possibly support the attrition rate required to feed a colony. Magic that defends against mental control is an effective barrier to these effects—they may still be faintly sensed, but have no psychological effect on the listener.



The Murgril Colony

A million years ago the murgril would relocate regularly around various small settlements, using a carefully crafted cover of being servants of the Great God Yelisea. Gullible and superstitious locals nonetheless accepted this heretical nonsense—allowing the murgril time to move in and effect their enchantments on the local inhabitants. Over a period they would seriously deplete the human flocks on which they preyed, and then – suddenly and mysteriously – depart.

Game Notes: Each murgril colony is composed of one queen, two lieutenants, and a dozen or so drones. The drones do not possess any magic, but the others do. GMs will need to design these enhanced superior murgril as required for gameplay. For instance, the lieutenants alone have: Persuade (Intimidating) 12 and Rebuff (Lawyerly) 10. (The drones are incapable of sentient communication, but can instinctively understand the wishes of their lieutenants and their queen.



Game Statistics

Attack (Caution) 1.25~[12],	Defense (Misdirection) 1~[8],	Health 1~[10],	Magic (Demonic) 1.25~[12],
Appraisal 5,	Athletics 0.75~[7],	Concealment 3,	Pedantry 1~[8],
Perception 4,	Stealth 6,	Wherewithal 1~[8].	

✧ Murgril Adventure Hooks ✧

Though Cugel's encounter with the murgril was a million years in the past, these demonic beings think nothing of time. Perhaps there is only even one colony that merely replenishes itself of missing members and relocates every few months to seek fresh prey. It is conceivable that this has been going on for well over a million years. It is also possible that the murgril had been absent from the Earth for many tens of thousands of years—before being resummoned for some sinister purpose. It would not be inappropriate for the GM to recreate a settlement similar to that described by Vance in Cugel's encounter with these beings. Of course, PCs are unlikely to accept the influence of the murgril easily, and this in itself becomes the substance of an adventure. The GM provides the motivation to keep the adventurers in the area, counterbalanced with the threat posed by the murgril. It then becomes necessary to explore the colony. The only certain way to force them to move on is to destroy their hidden queen. Since this being is far larger and stronger than the murgril drones, and is hidden in the hatching chamber deep within their lair, this poses a challenging task. Another complication is the presence of various human stooges in the employ of the murgril, whose only wish is for their demonic masters to feed in peace (and for the stooges thus to receive whatever diabolical rewards have been promised them). In fact, it is almost compulsory that such activities are eventually found (by the PCs) to revolve around a coven of demon worshippers⁶.

⁶ Should, on the other hand, you feel that your players are persons of wit and distinction and may have read the above passage, then feel free to allow the coven of demon worshipers to remain purely a figment of their own overactive imaginations.

🌀 The Twastic 🌀

“Up the valley road came a pair of twenty-legged creatures.”

✧ Known Facts ✧

Twastics are intelligent and peculiar sentient animals that were present on the Earth in various small colonies during the Sixteenth Aeon. In those days they mingled freely with the human populations close to their own settlements, although more in the manner of benevolent overlords than as equals. They are excellent traders and tended to build up strong mercantile concerns that were overseen by their human agents. Thus the twastics themselves could enjoy lives of leisure, living on the proceeds of their enterprise. In physical form a twastic is a twenty-legged creature, eight feet long and four feet high, with a large round head that is studded with stalks, knobs and tufts. As they move, their caudal segments rise and curl forward in an elegant spiral, and the creatures make the most of this motion to decorate themselves with iron gongs and small bells and vibrilators liberally hung about their persons. This results in a pleasant cacophony of chiming and clanging. Twastics also wear long drapes in the manner of robes, with various colors signifying their mercantile rank. Their method of communication is by a rapid clicking of the mandibles. Those used to communicating with humans can moderate this until it resembles the sound of human speech rendered in sibilant tones. As well as having large eyes, twastics ‘see’ with a sonar-like organ embedded between their shoulder blades. Hence they do not need light, although they prefer it as use of this ‘organ’ expends valuable energies.



✧ Scholarly Conjectures ✧

Alien Origins

The Merioneth ruled a 14th Aeon empire that lay around the Meel Ocean and controlled much of the inhabited Earth. It was Merioneth that contacted the ancient human worlds of space and, under the later rulers; there was much emigration from Earth to the bright new worlds of the outer sphere.

Various alien races came to our world for trade and exploration, and some left behind ambassadorial colonies, and even small groups of settlers. This was most common immediately after the planet became largely depopulated of humans—when whole civilizations took to the stars simply because they could. It seems that most alien settlers were refugees or zealots from other worlds, thrown out of, or escaping from, their homeworlds (rather than typical representatives of their races). One such group was the twastics of Canopus.

Carthos of Sfero.



Koolbaw the Walking Serpent

In the mountains south of Saponce, a single long-lived and insane twastic still lingers on in this world. This creature is not malevolent as such, but rather is an immortal sorcerer of his race, driven mad by loneliness and abandonment after his fellows departed. He lives in a fragmentary ruin that was once a twastic settlement and star-port (and now is hardly even discernible), and spends his days wandering the mountain slopes. Whenever he comes across anyone sentient, he begins to bemoan his fate, but usually does so in the twastic language, which sounds like a collection of terrifying clicks. If someone then becomes

✧ The Animal Apocrypha ✧

fearful and attacks him, he will retaliate with extreme ferocity in order to defend himself from this unwarranted aggression. Fortunately he never consciously initiates violence himself. The fearful natives of Saponce know him as Koolbaw the Walking Serpent (TDE, p102), but his true name (in the human tongue) was 'Mighty and Most Revered Kulbahasshkriil – Keeper of the Secret Lore's'.

Silvithos the Teamster

Game Notes: GMs of merit can surely devise a scenario wherein the PCs do some wrong to 'Koolbaw', then later discover the being's true nature – perhaps from iconographs within the twastic ruins.



Game Statistics

Persuade (Eloquent) 1.25~[14],	Rebuff (Obtuse – that is to say: alien) 1.25~[12],		
Attack (Strength) 2~[17],	Defense (Sure-Footedness) 1.5~[13],	Health 1.5~[17],	
Magic (innate) 10,	Appraisal 2~[16],	Athletics 1.5~[15],	Craftsmanship 8,
Etiquette 9,	Gambling 1.5~[14],	Pedantry 1.25~[14],	Perception 7,
Stewardship 8,	Wherewithal 1~[9]		



Magical Capacities

Twastics are from a world and society far different from the Earth. These creatures are thus in possession of magical capabilities that vary markedly from the style and substance of those native to this planet. Rather than devising new spells and cantraps for their own world, it is easier to design innate magical properties. Some suggestions include: the twastics resist Dying Earth spells at a bonus of 1; they are immune to certain spells in the same specific and general ways as the Achernarian; they have hypnotic vocal powers; and they heal rapidly from wounds not caused by magic.

✧ Twastic Adventure Hooks ✧

Twastics are not ideally suited as recurring encounters in any Dying Earth series, since they are more suited to a previous aeon of the world. Apart from Koolbaw (see above), the twastics have long-since departed the Earth; , there are two ways of reintroducing them to a modern campaign. Firstly a small group of twastics returns from the stars⁷, intent on some goal such as finding out what happened to its colony, or renewing a search for a certain kind of rare and hyper-valuable trade good. Secondly, a colony of the creatures may have gone into some kind of hibernation and only recently emerged (to find most of their technology gone, and themselves stranded).

The twastics as mentioned in Rhialto's story are friendly, but aloof and disinterested. There is no reason to suppose that they will be any different now. Most likely they will be either the hirers of the PCs, or the hirers of the enemies of the PCs. Your plucky adventurers will either need to help them or thwart them – with either option presenting an opportunity for several odd interactions with these peculiar aliens. Ideally at the end of the adventure the twastics will find/rebuild/refuel/re-enter their craft and depart for the stars, never to be seen again⁸. It is also possible that one or two might (unknown to the PCs) remain and be encountered later in the campaign. (Once again on some initially unfathomable quest or errand, but this time one that has an entirely different set of motivations.)

7 Quite possibly viewed by the PCs as their bizarre craft descends from the heavens in the middle distance.

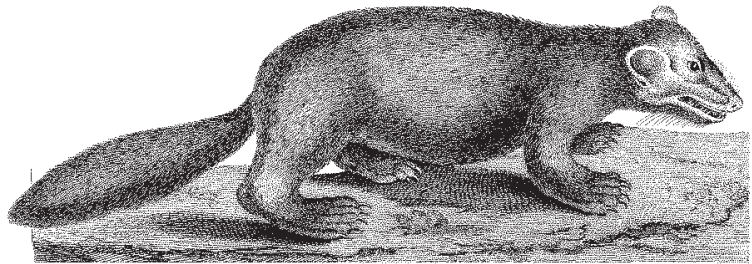
8 Would that others be so easily disposed of. The over protective mothers of less senior wives, overly gallant swains of adventurous daughters and excessively inquisitive tax officials all spring to mind at this point.

🌀 The Ursial Loper 🌀

“Only moments passed before an ursial loper returned with a fragment of blue porcelain, and demanded the reward.”

❖❖ Known Facts ❖❖

As its name implies, this creature’s core plasm were taken from the apparently extinct bear. If early speculative commentators such as Follinense can be credited, the other major plasm were human, monkey and demon. This combination has produced a wiry creature typically five or six feet in height at maturity. Its fur was thick and short, similar to that of a bear, and usually black at front and rear with thick anterior white stripes – as well as white striations upon its bear-like snout. One prominent feature



was the long furred tail that it used for balance when running and climbing trees. Lopers moved through the forests – their primary habitat – in great strides, lunging over and around obstacles with ease. (From this comes the common name.) Lopers were not anthropophagous by inclination, preferring to subsist on berries, tasty tubers, and any small creatures they were quick or stealthy enough to catch. Nonetheless, they ate human flesh if it were presented to them. It is simply that they did not choose to hunt for humans, and normally gave any humans that they saw (and any other half-men) a wide berth. Perhaps they were merely wise enough to avoid taking such risks but they have also been known to converse with humans convivially when encountering them abroad in the forests (and more importantly have not used such opportunities as a clandestine way to get some advantage that allows them to dine upon their conversation partner). Thus it seems that they are just unusually good-natured⁹.

❖❖ Scholarly Conjectures ❖❖

Arboreal Inhabitants

Although named as ‘lopers’, for that was their style of movement as they traveled and hunted on the ground, I would suggest that these creatures were predominantly tree-dwellers. They may have been slightly more capable of speedy travel at ground level, but for reasons of safety adapted their long limbs to clamber into the treetops. There they would construct tree houses and walkways way out of sight in the tallest thickest canopies, and there dwell in relative safety. Obviously no evidence of these remains after all these years. .

Yezgan, Mage



Erb Precursors

Some academics claim to have traced the genetic lineage of the modern erb back to a creature known as the ursial loper, which was common throughout the Sixteenth Aeon. Such speculation seems to be rooted in solid deduction, and the two beasts seem to have much in common. Yet where the erb is bulky, the loper is long, and where the erb is ferocious the loper is cautious. Perhaps the millennia have hardened the sociable loper of yesteryear into the horrible man-eating erb of today?

Carthos of Sfere.

9 This may go far to explain their possible extinction

✧ The Animal Apocrypha ✧

Speculative Nonsense

The loper is in no way related to the erb, except that similar plasms may have been incorporated into the original vat matrices. The temperaments of both creatures are so utterly dissimilar that such ideas are clearly nonsense.

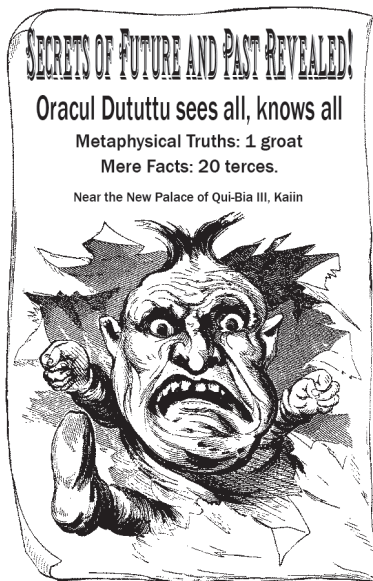
Iunutharis Grashpotel, Arch mage

Game Statistics

Persuade (Obfuscatory – dumb) 1~[8],
Attack (Caution) 1~[10],
Concealment 7,
Tracking 3,
Rebuff (Obtuse – dumb again) 1.25~[11],
Defense (Dodge) 1.25~[12],
Perception 4,
Wherewithal 1~[8].
Health 1~[12],
Quick Fingers 3,
Athletics 1.5~[14],
Stealth 6.

✧ Ursial Loper Adventure Hooks ✧

Since lopers are presumed to be extinct, any encounter with them should begin in the manner of a 'sighting'. Either tracks are found (by someone educated enough to be able to identify them), or a distant viewing of the creature lunging into cover; that sort of thing. Lopers are not creatures ideally suited to a combat encounter; rather they are intelligent and communicative – something rare indeed in these times. PCs may presume that any half-man is anthropophagous, and this in itself might lead to unfortunate misunderstandings (read 'killings'¹⁰). A simple scenario premise that suggests itself begins with a sighting (made by the PCs at some distance in an inaccessible and rarely frequented locale). This is followed (after the PCs return to town and describe the creature to their patron or some other interested pedant) by an expedition to prove the existence of the beast and perhaps secure a live specimen or a skin. Since the creature has not been seen for so long, it logically must inhabit an area that humans seldom visit. This presents the opportunity for the GM to weave an adventure where the PCs make other discoveries of a fantastic nature – lost cities, forgotten temples, other fabled creatures, a potent magician of a previous aeon long-since presumed dead... In short, one could arrange for a clichéd, 'lost world' style of scenario but seen from a Dying Earth perspective. Ideally, the lopers themselves will prove valuable allies rather than mere quarry, and one or more of these creatures will 'save the bacon' of the PCs before the day is out.



10 Or embarrassing and panic stricken flight that stops only when your characters realise the loper has also fled.

✠✠✠ A Treatise on the Origins and ✠✠✠ Intelligence of Certain Dumb Beasts

Being a Minor Submission to the Syncretic Symposium

David Thomas

Many of the books I would like to cite were unfortunately incinerated during the Fading of Glow. During that epoch the Misinformationists¹, enemies of the Perlure Consensus², under the impression that the increasing quantity and complexity of information not only correlated with, but caused the inexorable rise in entropy, decided that they could reverse the trend by purging the world's libraries of knowledge. I know of this loss to Knowledge because I possess the frontispiece of '*The Book of Everything That Was, Is and Will Ever Be*'. For some reason, the picture of a sage, with pretty girls at his feet, looking adoringly at him has the chapter headings imprinted on it, in mirror writing³.

Nevertheless, the material available is compelling and I set it out here. I have remarked on Grand Excrutiator Ovar Wyrries and the Perlure Ecstasists elsewhere. To recap briefly it is well known that the Ecstasists were a sect of orgiastic assassins; living in secret within an indolent civilization. Their leader's title hints at a still older function, torturers of the enemies of the state, the Perlure Consensus. At this point I will note that the Ecstasists wore a rayed headdress and that there were two grades of courtesan-assassin, the Inflictors, who led each chapter and performed any killings; and the Enablers, who provided a suitable working environment – a revel or a private party, perhaps – for the murder.

This society had reached a degenerate state at the time that the past ripples⁴ had begun to dictate the state of what would soon be the future. One immediate effect was the disappearance of the Consensus, which broke apart at the prospect of new empires and peoples. The Ecstasists' form was, like that of all parasites, defined by its host and Wyrries resolved to have his people survive by transforming them into a more generally acceptable body. The method used is lost to us, but the result was that of all the Consensual Societies only the very recently formed Order of Transportationists survived the collapse of the Perlure Consensus and the Fading of Glow. The Order Comprised Drovers, who controlled teams of previously unknown animals, the wherriots. Although the Order steadfastly refused to trade their animals, the Order would carry any material any distance for their employer. The Transportationists were notorious among settled societies⁵; perhaps one family in four has members of Drover ancestry.

As the Davanta Trench filled with sediment and became progressively less brackish (ultimately to form the Silver Desert) the sea trade dried up, as did the need for transportation into the hinterland. The Order metamorphosed into a nomad tribe, the Wherriot-Riders, who became a great local scourge. Over time the towns around the Green and Silver Lake (as it then was) organized to rid themselves of the nomads. Having captured and examined some riders and their wherriots, they determined that they could reverse Wyrries' great metamorphosis. Obviously, the results were not as hoped, perhaps because the townsfolk retained some captured animals for their own use. In any event, both oasts and mermelants arose from the Great

1 The situation with regard the Misinformationists is obviously to well known to bear repeating, but we merely comment that some historians date their passing late in the 14th or early in the 15th Aeon

2 a parasol organisation whose members were the leading thinkers and rulers of their day

3 on examination we have decided that the chapter headings are imprinted to distract the readers attention from the poverty of the pretty girls, rendered obvious by the paucity of their clothing.

4 See *Kiamarth's Chronal Hysterisis and Causation*

5 Members of the Order traditionally had several spouses, widely separated, in different towns or even eras.

✠ A Treatise on the Origins and Intelligence of Certain Dumb Beasts ✠

Reversal. My contention is that the oasts' size is the result of the significance of Inflictors and Drovers to the Ecstasist psyche. Similarly, mermelants' amiability and affection for intoxicants springs the Enablers' contributions to the assassin cult.

Much more recently in history, the mermelants clearly moved westward into the Land of the Falling Wall, where they entered the Skull Khan's service. I take the references to the "sniffing giant engineers" to apply to the oasts who doubtless carried the siege-ladders and rams for the horde.

All that remains to complete my historical case is to state that the mermelants must have driven the oasts south towards Ascolais because their degenerate state upset the quadrupeds, or for some other reason. The fact that wherriots retain the rayed headdress worn by Ecstasists speaks for itself.

Etymology

For those who choose to disbelieve history, there is always etymology: the words "oast" and "Wherriot" clearly derive from "Ovar Wyrries." "Mermelant" is clearly a corruption of the Argeverdic "mar" and "mulashce" or "drunken beast," which places the noun's origin in the Years of the Last Rains, that is at the very time when the Silver and Green towns were becoming deserted.

The necessity for further work in the field

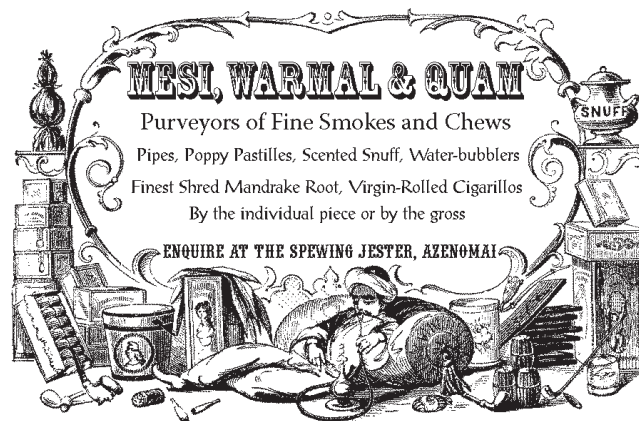
I am of course, aware that there are those who regard deduction to be the misbegotten orphan of facile whimsy and intellectual pretension⁶. Nevertheless, I believe that I can further entrench my theory in respectable academic thought, by comparing the generative organs and pre-cortical nodes of the beasts concerned. The acquisition of body parts is little more than a chore; a mermelant might object to being shorn of its privates and trepanned but Knowledge must take precedence over selfish attachment to life.

There is a second possible proof. It has come to my attention that there are feral mermelants, creatures who disdain harness and groom, but which demand beer with menaces and bully other draft animals. My contention is that these are a delinquent element in the Republic, who might be willing to reveal its secrets as an act of rebellion. I suggest that a suitable student be dispatched to find such creatures and interview them.

Respectfully,

Parbal of Kaun.

(Please note I have been forced to take the unlikely name of David Thomas lest the same petty minds who snubbed my previous work discard this current piece unread.)



6 A not unreasonable attitude much admired amongst the staff at the *Excellent Prismatic Spray*
134 THE EXCELLENT PRISMATIC SPRAY