

PEL006 The
Dying Earth Based on the work of Jack Vance

The Scaum Valley GazetteerTM

By
Jim Webster
David Thomas

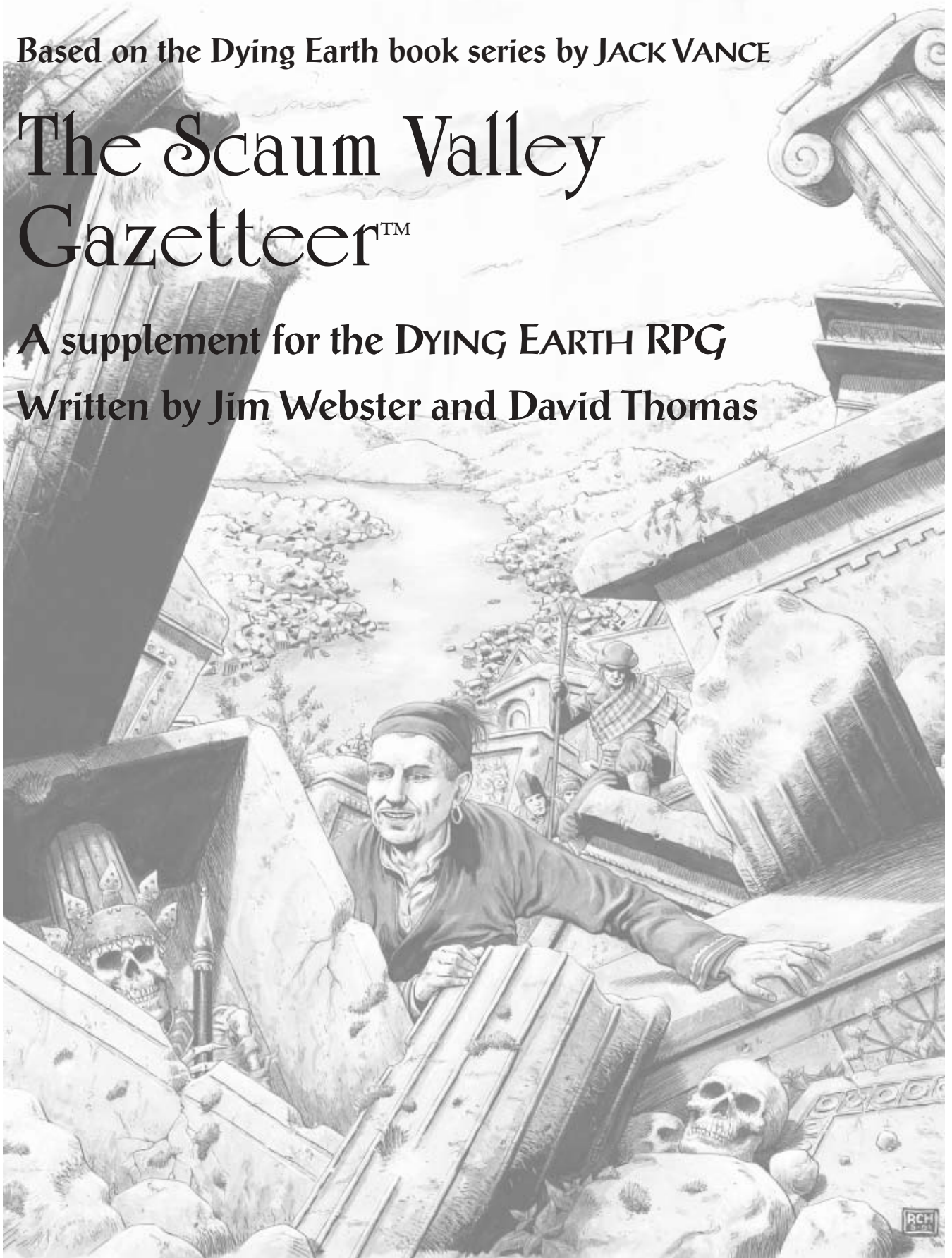

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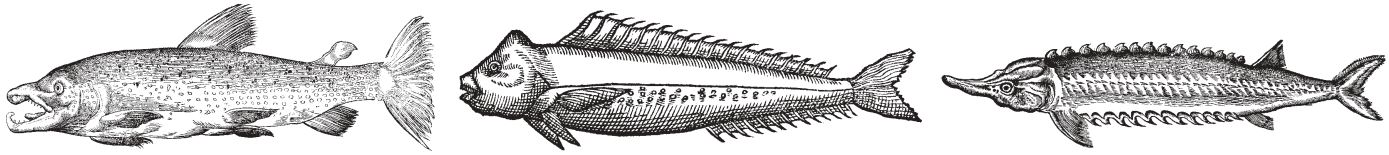
Based on the Dying Earth book series by JACK VANCE

The Scaum Valley Gazetteer™

A supplement for the DYING EARTH RPG

Written by Jim Webster and David Thomas





Credits

Authors: Jim Webster and David Thomas

Layout and Art Direction: Sarah Wroot

Additional Material: Simon Rogers, Steve Dempsey, Ian Thomson, Lynne Hardy

Cartography: Sarah Wroot

Cover illustration: Greg Staples

Interior Illustrations: Dover Books copyright-free resources, Ossi Hiekkala, Ralph Horsley, Hilary Wade, David Bezzina

Editing: Simon Rogers, David Thomas and Sarah Wroot

With thanks to Jack Vance



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

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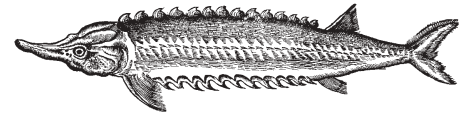
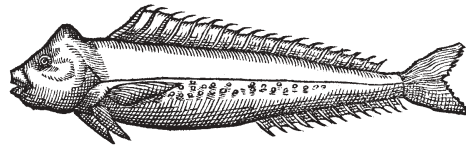
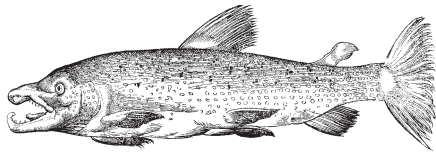
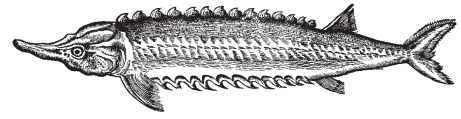
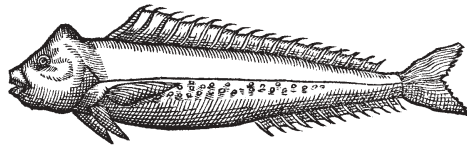
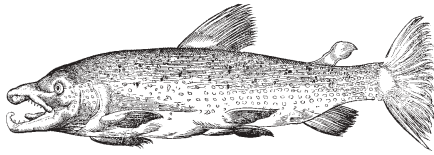
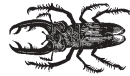


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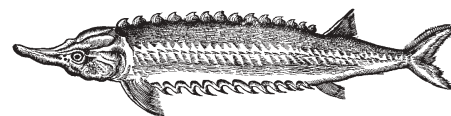
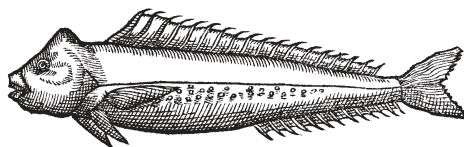
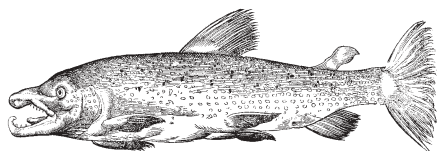
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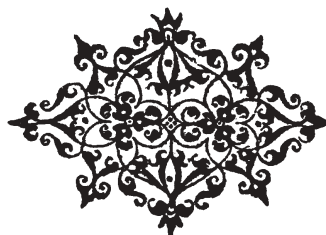


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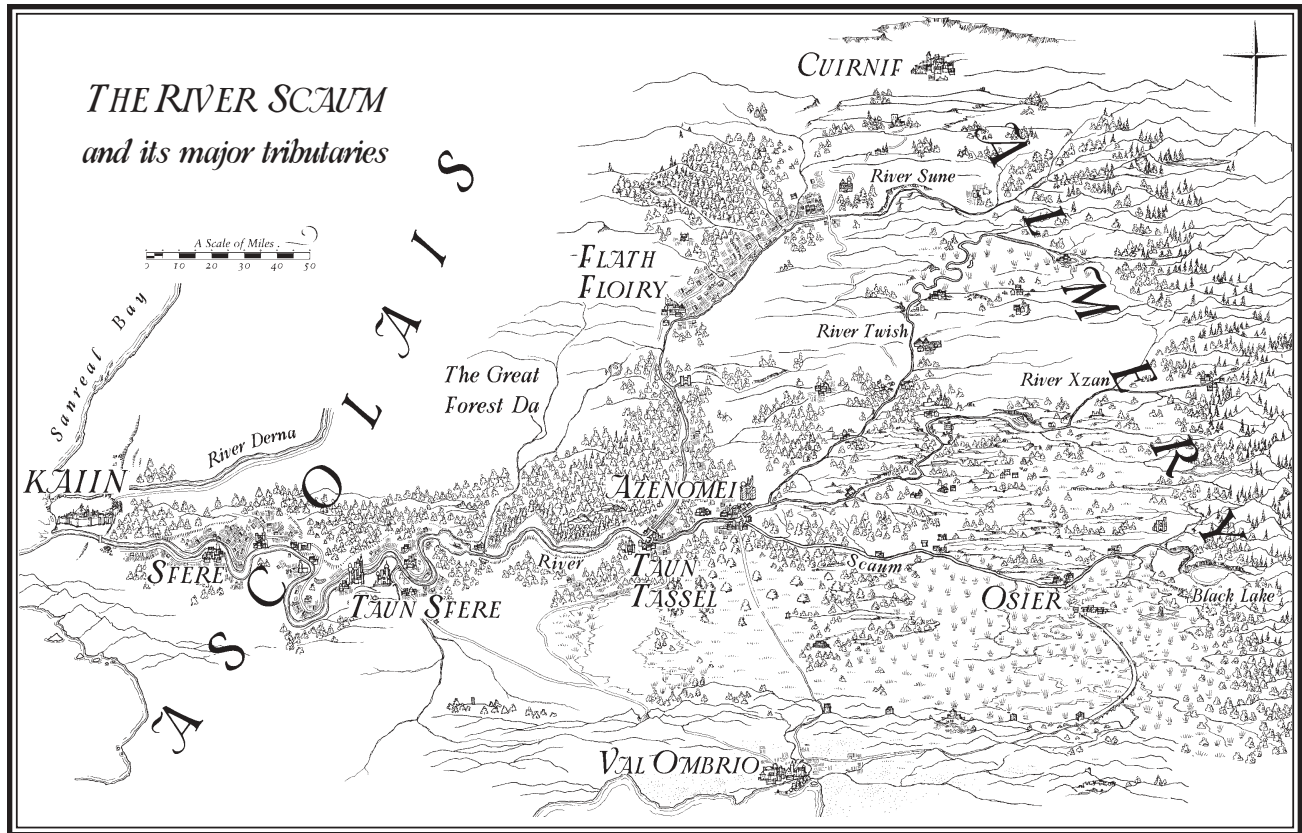
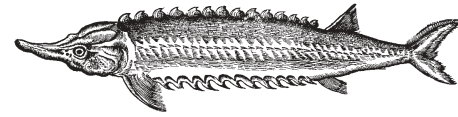
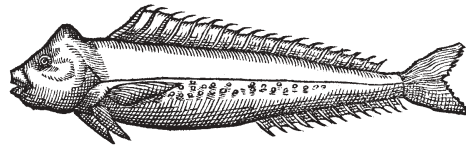
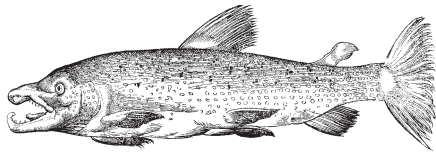
Introduction

*In which it is explained that the Dying Earth
may not be what players expect.*

WELCOME to the Scaum Valley Gazetteer. Here, we detail many of the diverse communities on or near the great river and its tributaries. Travelers will have the dubious pleasure of discovering and exploring these places with very little foreknowledge. There is some movement and even trade along the river but, as it is to the advantage of those familiar with the differing local traditions, taboos and fetishes to keep this knowledge to themselves, newcomers will not find them forthcoming. Some may even mislead potential rivals. Even when terces are not at stake, many inhabitants of the Dying Earth find it amusing to watch strangers fall foul of local customs; experienced wanderers regard any freely given information as suspect.

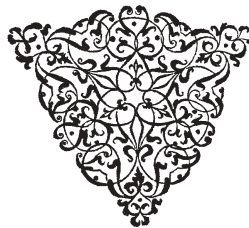
The Dying Earth may not be what players expect. All the great deeds have been done; all atrocities have already been perpetrated. Sitting at the end of Earth's history, in the 21st Aeon, the world's last inhabitants see no reason to attempt anything new. Why repeat that which has gone before, when the sun is about to expire? People have smaller, pettier motivations and live life one day at a time. In this book, we have tried to allow the PCs to do pretty much the same. They can drift around the area interacting with the inhabitants, take up offers of employment, or be coerced into service. Each section begins with an annotated map, which will enable PCs to find their way around much of the area. Immediately after the each map is a more detailed text, which describes what the visitor sees, hears and smells. It introduces the people a traveler is mostly likely to meet. Maps, illustrations and suggestions for casual misfortune accompany it. The charts may seem to have lacunae, and the reader might think that the travelogue is imprecise, especially in matters of distances and traveling times. In these cases, the reader is in error; the cartographers and essayists are correct. All distances were measured on the best map of the area we could find, a fine 20th Aeon representation of Alмеры and Ascolais. We derived the travel times from the speeds of mermelants and wherriots, reported to us by experienced, sober draymen. We discount the wild claims of loping-gaited, long-legged vagabonds and or of golden-eyed, murdering dandies. Where there is reason to believe that towns subsequent to the 20th Aeon have grown up, we have amended the records accordingly.

We start our account at Osier, where the portage hampers navigability, and then head westwards towards the sea, stopping at the edge of the Great Forest Da. Pedants have asked why we did not start at Kaiin and work upwards, as many travelers do? In answer, we merely point out that consummate artistry demands that our tale start quietly and build up to the crescendo that is Kaiin, rather than starting with a mighty flourish, only to



dwindle and die at the Osier Portage. We regret that those tributaries of the Scaum; the Sune, the Twish and the Xzan, intrude on the elegance of this scheme. While they are, for our purposes, unwelcome, they nevertheless constitute an organic part of the drainage basin so we have appended them to the gazetteer. Similarly, the land route to Val Ombrio is of economic significance; we include it. By contrast, the Scaum's sister river, the Derna, makes no positive contribution to the region, being infested with wizards, deodands, vagabonds, demons and witch-hunting legionnaires, so we omit it. Go there at your own peril. We will not assist you with directions, lest your relatives hold us responsible for your folly.[†]

Finally, you will find scattered through the text various boxed sections. These are for the eyes of GMs only and contain only such tedious technical details or petty critiques of character actions as to make their sad lives more bearable. Those who intend to play this game should nowise give these boxes any attention whatsoever; their prose is drear and inelegant. Far better to join us now with a glass of dark Porphiron, nibble on one of these delicious sugared mantis, and travel vicariously onward into the Valley.



[†] The publisher's desire to create a separate supplement detailing this region is irrelevant.



The Scaum from Osier to Kaiin

In which we follow the sun as it traverses more civilised lands

Osier

The village of Osier nestles under the Amyl hills, where the Scaum cascades over rapids, forcing river traffic to use the portage rather than risk the river itself. As two trading routes meet here, it is not uncommon for traders to join a boat at the portage. There is also the Osier ferry crossing. The Land Pilot, Assrig is responsible for the rope-drawn raft that is hauled across the river by its passengers. The people of Osier are perceived by neighboring communities to be dour and unimaginative, as befits those who haul loaded barges over log rollers for a living. Burly, powerful individuals who win local wrestling contests, all wear long knives or have short-handled axes at their belts. Travelers who stay among them find that they are not without their own natural charm. The party will be forced to spend the night in the village if they are ascending the Scaum by boat. Whenever the boat arrives, the villagers will only tow it next day, for two reasons. The first is that the portage takes a day to complete: starting late would merely mean the boat spent a night in deodand-haunted woods. The second is that the Inn needs the trade, for it cannot survive on the custom of locals alone. When a boat arrives, it is met at the pier by Assrig, who greets passengers in a

businesslike tone and arranges the hauling of their boat up the slipway and out of the water. He then formally locks the boat's hatches and seals them with his official stamp so that no one can gain entrance. In the unusual event of more than one boat arriving, they are moored against the bank and dealt with in order of arrival. Latecomers make do with less salubrious accommodation, unless they are sensible enough to reserve rooms at the Inn during the wait.

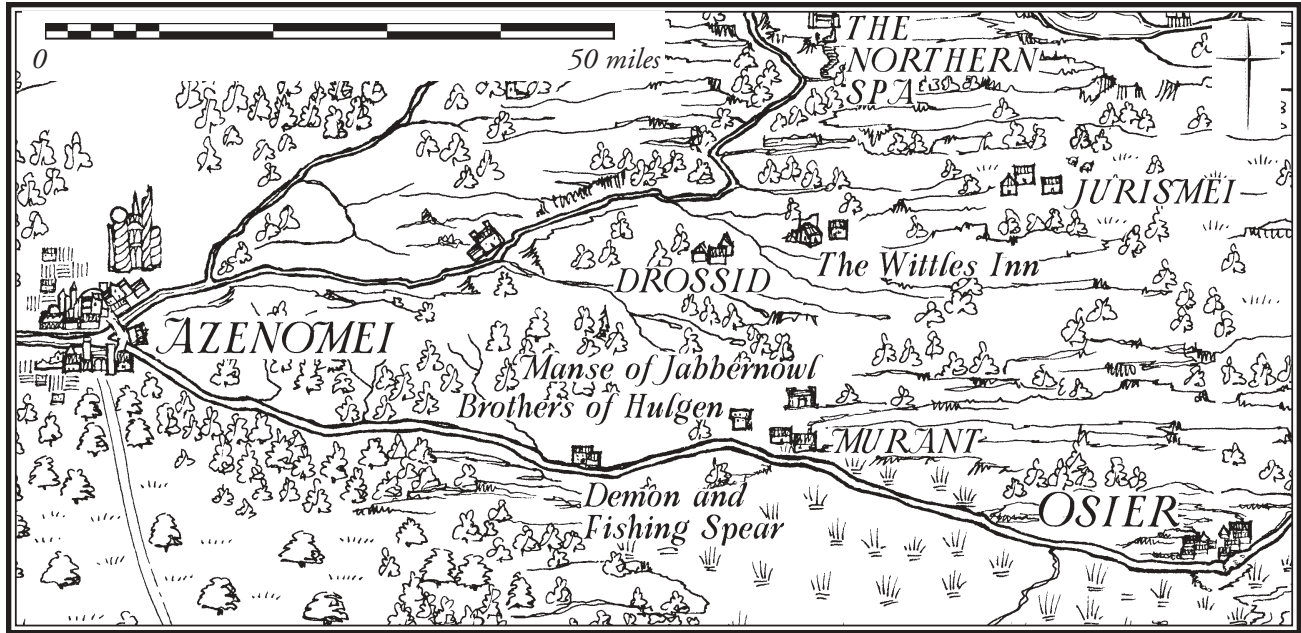
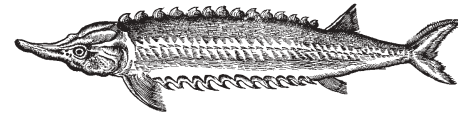
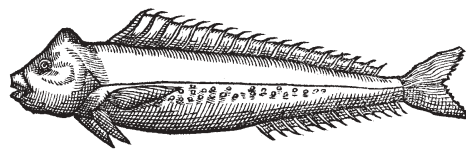
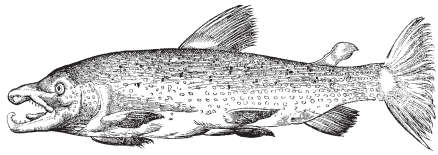
Assrig, Portage Supervisor

"Now that the legal niceties have been observed, let us retire to Widdloe's for a few hoops of Skeddlepike."

The bald and pigeon-chested Assrig fulfils the roll of Portage Supervisor in Osier. He is dour and unimaginative, but methodical. Whilst undertaking his formal duties he sports a black felt tricorn with a golden, hoop-shaped hat ornament, and a sack-like garment tied at the waist, sleeves and legs with embroidered braid.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 8 (5 *additional points for any Persuasion attempt involving his duties*), Rebuff (Lawyerly) 8, Health 5, Athletics 5, Attack (Caution) 5, Defense (Intuition) 5, Pedantry 6, Scuttlebutt 6, Stewardship 6

Resistances: Pettifoggery 0



Jossop, Portage Carpenter

"A small flange extruded from a Kaiinese borrell-boat frame should suffice."

A poor general carpenter, Jossop is dangerously specialized in the construction of portage boat frames. Jossop's conversation is limited to grunts unless the subject of boat frames is raised. This topic lends itself to interminable monologues, and Jossop is violently sensitive to others' boredom.[†]

Ratings: Persuade (Obfuscatory) 6, Rebuff (Obtuse) 8, Attack (Ferocity) 7, Parry 6, Health 6, Athletics 12, Craftsmanship (Carpentry) 12



Halfest, Town Chanter and hedge magician

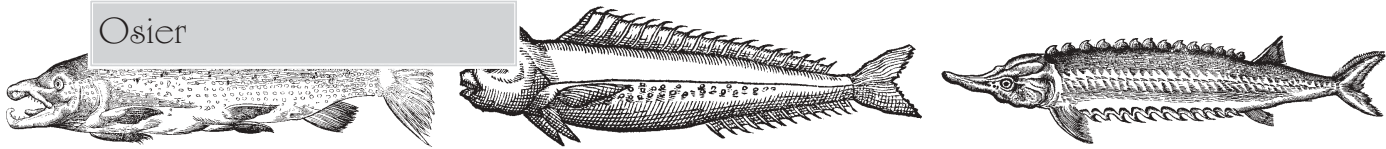
"Be gone, dark woodland beast! Depart unquiet wefkin!"

A corpulent 12-year-old boy with a nasal whine, Halfest drums and chants cantraps to keep the village safe from half-men. Anyone with a Magic rating of 7 or higher who makes a secret Perception roll will notice that Halfest has good potential as an apprentice, if she can bear Halfest's wheezing and constant food lust. Halfest devised a cantrap which helps the local Skeddlepik champion, Minblome in exchange for a share of his winnings.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 10, Rebuff (Wary) 6, Attack (Cunning) 4, Dodge 8, Health 3, Magic (Devious) 9, Athletics 3, Scuttlebutt 8, Quick Fingers 8.

Assrig then turns the boat over to Jossop the village carpenter who, with sundry assistants, builds a frame around and below the vessel, so it can run over the rollers. This requires the removing of two planks from either side to allow Jossop to bolt the frame directly to the boat's strakes. The whole process takes just over an hour (as Jossop has a comprehensive selection of frames in stock). Once the work is done the assistants take up their places on the boats deck, or under it in

[†] Jossop's exposition on the 14 types of dovetail joint used in a gurney rig once impelled a pelgrane to fall into a narcoleptic coma.



wet weather, to guard it until morning. One of the assistants, Jossop's son Halfest, keeps up a constant drumming and chanting which is proven to keep off evil spirits and wandering deodands.[†] Given that Jossop takes the removed planks back to his workshop for safekeeping, stealing the boat is pointless, as it will no longer float.

Occasionally, there are those who would be tempted to use their magical assets and have their boat float or fly over the portage. This is not wise. The villagers claim to have been harassed by pelgranes in previous years, and that they begged the Arch-Magician Phaeton to do something to aid them. He it was who built the tower. At the very top, set in an elaborately wrought housing, is a crystal which automatically discharges itself of a great burst of energy whenever it detects anything pelgrane-sized or larger flying higher than the tops of the trees. Any target would be severely damaged by this energy blast. The crystal recharges itself from the sun's rays. As the device has been a great success, pelgranes are never seen in this area and it is no longer possible to avoid the portage through flight.[‡]

The village sprawls along the side of the rapids, and houses over three-hundred people, most of whom are employed pulling boats. The pullers are proud of their skill and tend to give short shrift to those who regard them as unthinking beasts of burden, and abandon them to pull their own vessel. Any travelers who cheerfully add their weight to the ropes and haul willingly and with good humor, or even pass up and down the lines of workers, distributing good ale and wheaten bread, will be welcomed into the hearts of these simple people and invited to enjoy the singing and dancing to drum and zither with which they enliven their evenings. Travelers are warned not to show too close an attention to any one woman. Should her father be dissatisfied with his current son-in-law, he may well order him divorced and marry his daughter to a stranger instead. The bride price is not unreasonable, the ladies are not unattractive and are strong, intelligent and capable about the home, but the new husband will be expected to work on the portage.[§]

Travelers almost always stay at the village inn, WIDDLOE'S, there being little real choice. They cannot stay in their boat as it is locked within its

frame, with the night breeze whistling through the gaps where the planks used to be. Halfest's chanting and drumming also guarantees that no one on the boat would get any sleep. Anyone trying to sleep outside near the river will be driven indoors as the light fades by the swarms of nocturnal death's-head bugs (so named because the markings on their carapace bears a fancied resemblance to a skull). Camping in the woods is possible but reliable accounts point to them being deodand haunted. It may or may not be an exaggeration, but the villagers themselves do not go into the woods after dark and the village maintains two archers, Isnatar and Selswick, who watch all night from a roofed balcony halfway up a tall but slender tower built next to the inn. If asked, they say that they do occasionally catch glimpses of what might be deodands and two years ago Isnatar did hit one with an arrow, but the creature made off into the woods and they declined to follow the blood trail.

Isnatar, watchman and hunter

"I tell you, I punctured its nuncial cavity."

Isnatar is tall and graceless, but exhibits extraordinary composure in the face of danger. The locals make allowances for his abrasive manner as he supplies much of the meat for the village.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 8, Rebuff (Contrary) 6, Attack (Strength) 10, Defense (Vexation) 5, Health 8, Athletics 6, Living Rough 6, Wherewithal 12

Selswick, watchman

"Five of them there were, but they departed in a hail of arrows."

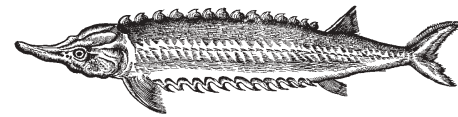
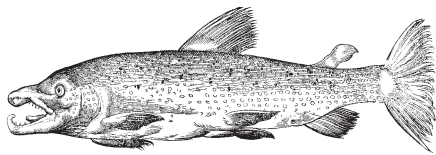
Selswick is a noticeably cross-eyed man whose skill in archery extends to stringing a bow and loosing an arrow. He carries a skinning knife and a bone horn.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 5, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 6, Attack (Caution) 3, Defense (Parry) 5, Health 6, Tracking 6

[†] Enterprising PCs may wish to learn this cantrap, and to secure their future, perhaps even dispose of its current user.

[‡] Kind GMs, if any such thing exists, should demonstrate the device to PCs who consider the aerial option by demonstrating the crystal's power on a passing pelgrane.

[§] We apologize to the few residents of Osier capable of reading for the patronizing tone of this section.



Skeddlepike

The main distraction for itinerant travelers is the local gambling game, Skeddlepike, where players cast battered metal hoops, attached to long leather thongs, which they try land on one of several pegs attached to the wall. When they hit something solid, the hoops ring clearly, each with a different note from the Cutzean decatonic scale. Each peg scores a different total, but this total can be modified by where the thong rests on the floor. It is a game that demands dexterity and especially, when a thong lands over the thong of another ring, a grasp of advanced mathematical calculation. It should be noted in passing that hoarberry sauce has slight hallucinogenic effects, which does not help in this regard.

To play a round of Skeddlepike, players make five casts (or plants) of the hoop using their Quick Fingers skill to build up a tally (see the *DERPG*, p34). The player with the highest total wins that round. Those who have recently consumed hoarberry sauce (see also p13) will be at a levy of 1, unless they notice the effect of the sauce (a secret Perception roll) in which case they can make a Wherewithal roll to avoid the effect.

Players have used the same hoops in the game for as long as anyone can remember. The locals claim that they make a good sound when they hit a peg well. Should a PC with Pedantry examine one, a Hair's-Breadth Success, she will note that they are aeons old. On a Prosaic Success she will decide that they are Pennant Rings from Luid Shug: part of their battle banners. On an Illustrious Success, she will remember that Luid Shug used a chromatic scale adapted from that then popular on Sadal Suud. The rings are a cleverly executed, but poorly researched counterfeit.

A Game and its Consequences

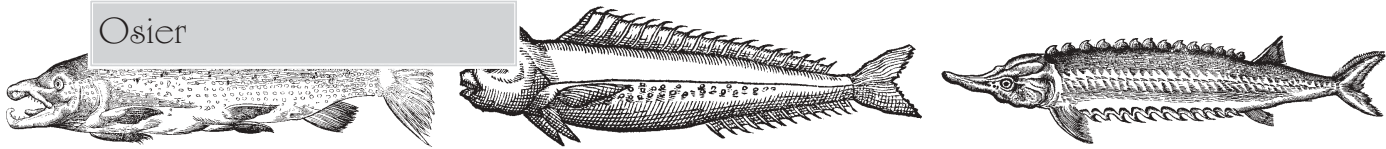
Regardless of how the PCs have conducted themselves the villagers will lure them into a game with the undisputed Skeddlepike champion Minblome, who holds his crown because he uses a minor cantrap to cheat.

Should the PCs notice that the champion incorporates magic into his playing style the game will end in an undignified scuffle as Minblome is taken outside and forced to make material and corporal restitution to all the unsuccessful challengers.

If the game proceeds, the PCs will be allowed to win the first few games for gradually increasing stakes. The final game will be for the value of the PCs boat and this one they will lose. The villagers are generous winners and instead of taking the boat as their rightful property they ask the PCs to perform a small service for them. This involves the adventurers picking some berries from a krebellar bush up in the hills and bringing them back to the village.[†]



[†] Defeat in a Skeddlepike match is not a prerequisite for this jaunt. The people of Osier are inventive, and will devise other strategies to inveigle the PCs.



Selswick

- If the PCs were ill mannered, and threw their weight about the villagers will order them to the bush leave it at that.
- If they were civil and behaved with decorum, the villagers will mention that the bush is actually in the garden of a ruined lodge, which they suggest might contain some valuables, as no one can remember it being pillaged.
- If they behaved quite unlike persons of quality, by making an effort to be friendly and acted with open-handed generosity, then the villagers will also mention that the ruin has gone unpillaged due to the presence of four deodands. These deodands, the villagers assert, cannot attack anyone who carries a sacred symbol, which is a rune scratched carefully on to a piece of stone while chanting a verse of a half-forgotten prayer. For a small sum, an old man who is drinking at the inn will be able to tell the PCs what the prayer is. His equally elderly companion remembers what the rune looks like.

The site lies about an hour's walk from the river, its ruined shaded by moonflower trees, whose blossoms delightfully perfume the air. The krebellar bush is obvious: its purple berries hang over the garden wall so they can be picked from the track. The manse itself is in a ruinous state but at least one room appears to be intact.

The deodands do not usually harass people who are outside the walls, but this is not an

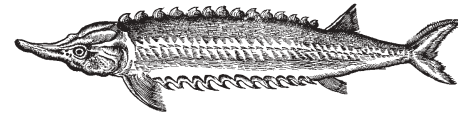
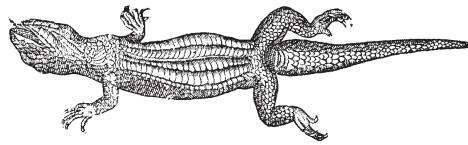
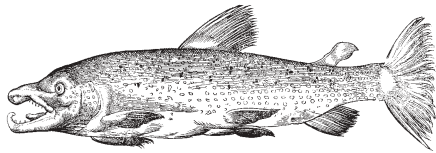
unbreakable law. This uncertainty is one reason why the villagers send expendable strangers to collect berries. If the travelers enter the garden, the deodands creep cautiously through the foliage ready to pounce when the strangers leave the ruins.

The first room is something of a disappointment, however, there is a stairway going downwards in one corner. This is cut into an earlier, 20th Aeon building, with two surviving rooms. One is a wine cellar, protected by a rune that prevents the deodands from entering; a secret Perception roll will reveal this rune. The wine, preserved by a charm cast by the original owner, is still eminently potable and were the travelers of a mind to take some flasks, the wine would be well-received by those with a cultured palate. PCs familiar with the vintage wine trade could estimate that these bottles could fetch as much as one hundred terces each if sold in one of the larger towns of Almerly. Unless they resist their Gourmandism, they will only realize this after they have consumed the merchandise.

The other room is almost empty, save for a little iron table in an excellent state of repair. Its top is wrought in the semblance of the Keak-God, Sigodin-Yth. This table would fetch over a thousand terces in Kaiin, as it is 17th Aeon. It requires at least three people to carry it. It should be possible for a determined party with spades and picks to delve even further, but what they discover is entirely up to the GM.

On leaving, encumbered by wine flasks and perhaps even a wrought iron table, the party will encounter the deodands. They rely on travelers to collect the wine for them. The deodands' response will depend upon the travelers' numbers. If there are less than five travelers, the deodands will strike swiftly, hitting those at the back of the party, stunning them with a swift blow and dragging them off. They will attempt to take two captives, concentrating on anyone heavily laden or wearing armor, as these will lack the agility to defend themselves.

If the PCs outnumber them deodands will appear from the bushes and confront them. They will suggest surrender and will even encourage the PCs to drink the wine, which they suggest will serve both to give flavor to their flesh, and will ease



the passing to the next world for the travelers.

If the party has the sacred symbols and begins to chant, the deodands will smirk and try not to laugh. This might disappoint the PCs, unless they realize that this is an ideal opportunity for them to run away. Should the party want to keep the table, it will have to fight for it.

Once this distressing scene is concluded and assuming the travelers survive they will return to the village. The villagers want the krebellar berries because they make a tonic that is sovereign for the treatment of rope burns and strains.[†] The villagers will listen with interest to the tales told about encounters with deodands and if these have been killed then next day, after moving the PCs' boat over the portage, they will depart to the ruin and loot it systematically.

Widdloe's Inn

Widdloe's serves good food, especially its fish dishes, although many find the hoarberry sauce a trifle strong. Locals merely claim that it is an acquired taste. There are few domesticated animals as grazing is scarce and if left in the woods overnight they just disappear. Most meat dishes are game shot by the erratic hunter Isnatar, if he fancies an afternoon's hunting, or worn-out pack beasts who have collapsed (and occasionally died) from overwork getting to the portage. The stew is palatable and reasonably priced and contains a high proportion of vegetables, while a roast joint will be very expensive, tough and heavily seasoned with hoarberry sauce in a desperate attempt to disguise its inadequacies. If you insist on meat, we recommend the succulent kursim table fowl when in season, stuffed with oats and berries.

Accommodation is clean and tidy and only slightly more expensive than travelers would expect. Widdloe is assisted by his three daughters, Pook, Snook and Dolarene who, fortunately for themselves, take more after their late mother than their father. They are friendly, lively, pretty girls, who are happy to chat with the patrons.

Widdloe, Innkeeper

"I realize that this is in poor taste, but I mistook your previous remark as a request for credit."

Widdloe is a thin, cadaverous individual who takes a pride in his cooking and does the best he can with the materials at his disposal. His daughters prefer him in the kitchen, where he does not induce shudders amongst his patrons. His pallid appearance is due to his phobia of sunlight. He is one of the few individuals who anticipate the demise of the sun with pleasure. He will only go outside if he makes a Wherewithal check.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 10, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 8, Attack (Cunning) 5, Defense (Dodge) 8, Health 10, Appraisal 5, Perception 9, Stewardship 7, Wealth 3, Wherewithal 2

Pook, Snook and Dolarene, Innkeeper's daughters

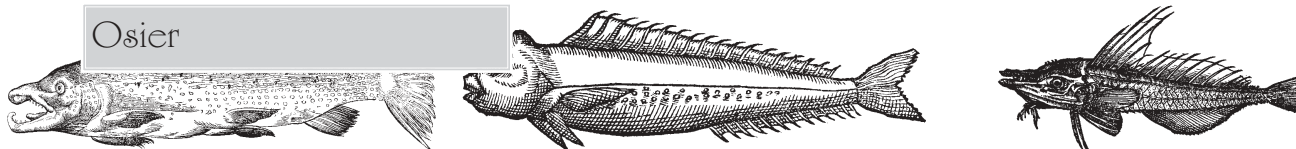
"I must have taken your comment out of context, as it appeared on the surface to be an improper suggestion."

Widdloe's daughters are friendly but uncompromising. Pook and Snook are sly and flirtatious, whilst Dolarene is moon-faced and



Widdloe

[†] Krebellar berries are also a powerful prophylactic against conversation. They produce remarkably potent halitosis.



dreamy. They are partial to new and fashionable apparel and will take it in lieu of payment.

They serve generous helpings (in spite of Widdloe's somewhat disapproving looks) and help create the cheerful atmosphere. They are open to clandestine suggestions that will enable them to leave the Inn. Whilst they have all been acquainted with the concept of a fate worse than death they have doubts that many things could be a fate worse than spending the rest of their lives waiting table at their father's house.

Pook's Ratings: Persuade (Glib) ~, Rebuff (Wary) ~, Attack (Finesse) 4, Defense (Dodge) 4, Health 6, Appraisal 5, Concealment 4, Etiquette 5, Perception 6, Quick Fingers 3, Scuttlebutt 5, Seduction 4

Snook's Ratings: Persuade (Charming) ~, Rebuff (Penetrating) 6, Health 5, Concealment 4, Etiquette 5, Perception 6, Quick Fingers 3, Scuttlebutt 5, Seduction 5, Resist Rakishness Ω

Dolarene's Ratings: Persuade (Obfuscatory) 5, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 10, Health 4, Craftmanship 6

Minblome, Skeddlepike champion

"I am as gracious in victory as I am sure you will be in defeat."

Minblome proclaims himself the undisputed Skeddlepike champion of the world.[†] Halfest devised a cantrap which damages Minblome's opponents' chances in exchange for a share of the winnings. Minblome's cantrap gives a levy of 1 to any opponents Quick Fingers roll when attempting to plant a hoop.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 6, Rebuff (Obtuse) 7, Attack (Ferocity) 8, Defense (Vexation) 5, Health 8, Quick Fingers 2~, Scuttlebutt 10, Wherewithal 5,

Resistances: Arrogance 0

Jomalam, Keblabous and Gomba, other Skeddlepike players

"A fine ringing note and a double whorl on the floor! A notable performance."

These three are capable, if unimaginative, players.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 5, Rebuff (Wary) 4, Attack (Strength) 6, Defense (Misdirection) 5, Health 6, Quick Finger 5

Bosslem, trader in ivory and tableware

"Your requirement for weighted dice seems at odds with your honest countenance."

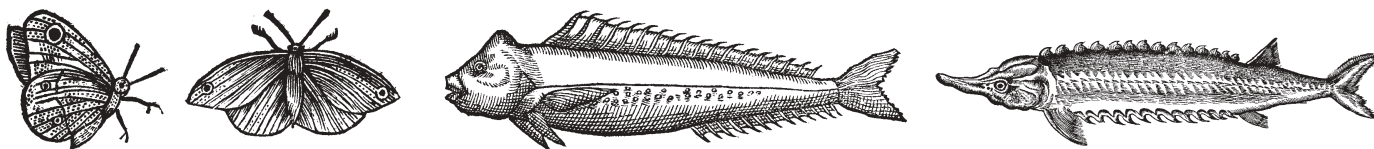
Bosslem, a merchant from Troon, trades in small ivory trinkets and tableware. He is a rarity in these times, a merchant who cheats only the dishonest. He sports a large traveling cape that conceals tight-fitting leather riding breeches and a flamboyant silk blouse. He carries a tube of blue concentrate.

Bosslem has come south from Troon across the Plain of Standing Stones with his goods on a gangling oast. He intends to meet his partner, Miggable, who will join him at the portage with their boat. Being used to the area, Bosslem brought his elderly, broken-down pack-beast that only just made it to Osier and now resides in the cold cellar below Widdloe's kitchen. Bosslem is happy to make conversation, but is a little close-mouthed over his business. He will display some nice ivory-handled cutlery as well truly exquisite as condiment sets to serious customers. He also has



Monthank

[†] A truthful claim, though Osier is the only place where Skeddlepike is known.



dice for sale. These are unusual in that they are not weighted in any way and he takes a pride in the fact that they do roll so true. He will imply that they are loaded to anyone who appears to be dishonest.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 10, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 8, Attack (Speed) 6, Defense (Dodge) 5, Health 10, Appraisal 10, Gambling 5

Monthank Fiss, Bosslem's clerk

"It is of no consequence, please forget I spoke."

Bosslem is accompanied by Monthank Fiss, his clerk, who is shy to a fault. A lovelorn romantic, Monthank moons over pretty girls, but is too reticent to act. He spends his time not looking at the innkeeper's daughters; should one of them approach him he positively cringes. Anyone who offers to assist him in his feeble romantic schemes will be able to Persuade him with a boon of one.

Ratings: Persuade (Obfuscatory) 5, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 8, Attack (Caution) 5, Defense (Dodge) 6, Health 5, Appraisal 5, Pedantry 6



Murant

West of Osier the Scaum passes south of the Great Forest Da. A derelict towpath follows the north bank. Along this stretch the fishing is very good, with trout and marrow-eels in abundance. On the edge of the forest is the hamlet of Murant, on the north bank of the river where a ledge of rock runs down from a range of low hills. The riverbank itself is marshy and grows nothing but golol trees and vampire grass. The hamlet itself is built on the rock ledge and thus overlooks the Scaum. Further along the rock ledge the soil cover is thicker, and yields a good crop of knurled barley. Local women bake a thick, heavy barley cake, which they eat instead of bread. Anyone wanting to

board a boat at Murant has to climb down a ladder to a hanging pier, which can be pulled up when the river runs high in the spring floods. The hamlet itself has less than a score of houses and one small inn.

Each man in the village fulfils a specific hereditary role, decided in the distant past. Although some occupations are clearly far less agreeable than others, their practitioners insist that each is the best possible way to live.[†]

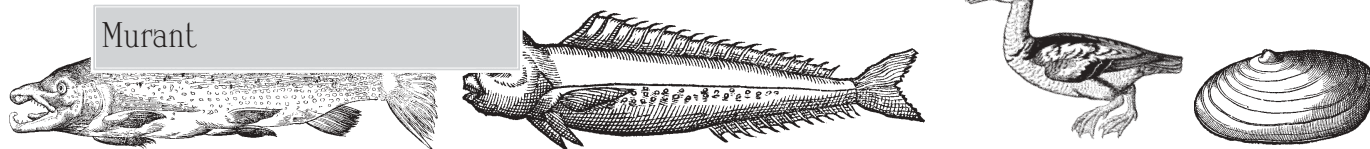
These claims to preeminence sometimes become heated and the contending parties hold a formal contest to establish which of their crafts takes precedence. As no one local is impartial, the Murantese ask visitors to render judgment for them. Naturally, none of them is above influencing the judge's decision, so should a dispute be imminent, lobbyists will scour the countryside looking for suitable candidates, whom they will promptly suborn.

Their occupations are uniformly unattractive to the casual visitor. Some cast fishing nets in the Scaum itself, grub in hollow logs for sleeping lappets, measure the wear on the towpath's cobbles, count sunspots and note the sun's deepening hue[‡], or pick out a scanty living tapping the sap of the golol trees. Golol sap is poured into flat pans and dried in sheets over peat fires. The resultant material, called *golanther*, is extremely flexible and is formed into useful items such as sound-boards and ceremonial headgear. Most of the golanther is sold down-river to Sfere, where it is used to line the alembics used in the distillation of the finer blossom liqueurs. The locals also plait it into leggings, as it is proof against vampire grass.

As an ancient and inexplicable exception to the rule of heredity, the hamlet appoints one from among its number to be the Insidiary Watcher, a combination of organizer and pier guard. Given that this involves sitting on the hanging pier watching river traffic and organizing a detail of women and small boys to work the winch when a riverboat wishes to dock, this task is normally given to a toothless ancient. Currently this job is done by one Estne, a woman well into her seventies. She sits in a rocking chair on the pier knitting. Her two sons Gyvon and Feviak, put up an awning so she can have shelter from the rain. With the arrival of a boat she tugs on a cord which rings a bell in the house of her daughter Anet, who will then sally forth, collecting women and children as she goes.

[†] Visitors have reported that the Murantese find it outrageous that anyone would know more than one trade, and have been known to drive such abominations from their village by pelting them with offal. Those who routinely pass through Murant know better than to mention what they do for a living.

[‡] The common Dying Earth pastime of remarking on the sun's condition is unknown in Murant, only the Sun-Lookers may do so, and their pronouncements, however inaccurate, are incontestable.



The Murant Boatman

The Murant Boatman is little more than a large village house with a tap-room in the landlady's front parlour and bunks for six in the spare bedroom. Millice Halfron keeps a fair table and everything is clean. The ale is adequate, the wine drinkable and the fish stew with barley bread sauce is actually rather good. Anyone staying the night at the hamlet can stop at the Inn. Some of the other houses will accommodate travelers but always charge the same tariff as the inn.

Millice Halfron, landlady of the Murant Boatman

"The late Mr Halfron would not approved of such vulgarity."

With a starched white apron and tightly pursed lips, Millice is the soul of propriety. Any well-groomed traveler with a finely cut physique will find himself the subject of her discreet attention.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) ~, Rebuff (Penetrating) ~, Attack (Ferocity) 6, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 7, Etiquette 4, Pedantry 2, Scuttlebutt 9, Physician 5, Stewardship 10

Estne, Insidiary Watcher of Murant

"Aren't you related to the Mohinson who walked with a limp, whose daughter ran off with a peddler from south of Sferre? You certainly have your father's eyes." Estne is a knowledgeable gossip who dabbles in herbalism and witchcraft. She is nearly eighty and uses her experience to her advantage. She will meet courtesy with courtesy, and insults with a quick bath in the Scaum. She expected the sun to go out years ago, and is happy to be living on borrowed time.

Estne will engage any stranger in conversation, asking after children and grandchildren. It is widely believed that she knows the family details of everyone who has ever plied the Scaum. Darker rumours also insist that she is a witch. This is not strictly true. In her long life Estne has picked up a great deal of general knowledge which she diligently passes on to her daughters and granddaughters. She knows a cantrap for use during beer making and another for driving rodents out of a house. She is also a skilled herbalist, and has trained her daughter Anet. She has strict ideas of

just how things should be done. Those who are courteous will be met with courtesy in return. Anyone who tries gentle flattery or even flirting will find her even more helpful. Whilst she is intelligent enough to realise it is purely flattery she enjoys the game and is pleased that someone is generous enough to include her. Those who are ill-mannered or even aggressive could find themselves in an early bath. The awning isn't the only modification to the pier that her sons included. Should she knock a lever by her chair (normally concealed under the knitting) then the ropes that hold one end of the pier come away and the whole thing swings and hangs vertical with one end in the river. Her rocking-chair remains in place, suspended from the awning. More than one arrogant trader has found himself dangling from the rockers. A line in convincing flattery is then needed to stop her treading on fingers with her iron-rimmed clogs.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 8, Rebuff (Penetrating) 5, Attack (Cunning) 1, Defense (Vexation) 5, Health 2, Magic (Insightful) 3, Ettiquette 8, Perception 8, Physician 8, Scuttlebutt 10, Stewardship 6, Wherewithal 8

Gyvon and Feviak, sons of Estne

"We defer to Mama in such matters."

Gyvon fulfils the role of Subsidiary Watcher and Feviak is the Hereditary Carpenter of Murant. Well accustomed to their mother's volubility, they are taciturn and lazy.

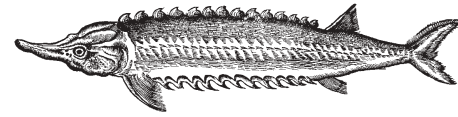
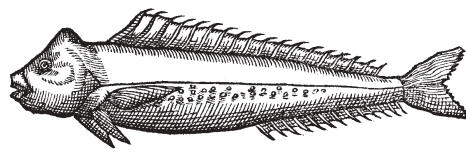
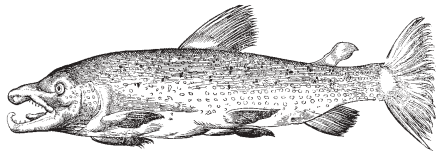
Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 5, Rebuff (Contrary) 5, Attack (Strength) 6, Defense (Intuition) 6, Health 5, Athletics 10, Craftsmanship 10, Seamanship (river boats) 8, Stewardship 6

Anet, daughter of Estne

"The quality of your complexion suggests intestinal worms. For but three terces I will brew a vermifuge that will drive them out."

Sharp-tongued Anet is a master herbalist and minor magician. She will brew potions for a price, but her cure may well have unpleasant side effects. Knowing her skill, it seems unlikely that this is accidental.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 10, Rebuff



(Lawyerly) 6, Finesse 6, Misdirection 6, Health 7, Magic (Daring) 7, Appraisal 7, Concealment 4, Physician 6, Scuttlebutt 6

Spells: Spell of the Loyal Servitor, Spell of the Slow Hour, Javanne's Enervation of Will



The Brothers of Hulgen the Tabellion

Northwest of Murant, along the same rocky outcropping is a small religious foundation dedicated to the remembrance of Hulgen the Tabellion. Hulgen was a member of an enclosed order who used to dwell on the site. She was the only one who could talk to outsiders, so dealt with the few local tradesmen whom the monks deemed essential. According to legend there was a river demon who was terrorizing boating traffic on the Scaum in the area. It seems that she heard of the demon from a local fisherman who brought fish to the Order and, in spite of fears for her safety, she volunteered to be the bait the fisherman needed to catch and destroy the demon. Local legend has it that she was a young maiden of exceptional beauty and the paintings of the episode in the order's chapel do seem to bear this out. They all show a girl of eighteen with red hair and green eyes. The legend states that the young fisherman was the only one who had the courage to tackle the demon when older and wiser men counseled caution. In spite of their advice, he used the maiden for bait and when the demon moved in to seize Hulgen, the fisherman was seen to strike with a fishing spear. In the resulting commotion the girl, the demon and the fisherman all disappeared.

The modern foundation, the Brothers of Hulgen the Tabellion, believe that just as Hulgen gave her life to slay the river demon, so they should be prepared to help others. The six brothers and their abbot, Pacende, provide shelter for travelers, help guide parties through the Great Forest Da and generally do good deeds. Such is the nature of the time that they had to find somewhere inaccessible to live once it was widely known that they had adopted this policy. Most

dwellers of the Dying Earth would consider this philosophy bizarre, and even evidence of insanity.

Although genuinely helpful, the Brothers are not a soft touch. They will accept recompense gladly and, if the individual they helped appears prosperous, they will demand payment. Their foundation is housed in a large three-floored square tower with no entry below the second floor and a narrow stair, which winds up to it. Observant visitors will note that this stair is overshadowed by the roof-top parapet and there are murder holes aplenty along the parapet's length. If they venture out after dark, the Brothers carry poison go-thithers and, even in daylight, one walks the roof parapet with a dart gun as well as his breviary.

Pacende, Abbot of the Brothers of Hulgen the Tabellion

"Our help comes with no price, except that which you can afford to give freely. No, we are to be the judge of that price."

Bedecked in the resplendent lapis and cream robes of his office, Pacende appears an oasis of spiritual calm. In fact, he is a nescient martinet, and he takes pleasure in extolling the virtue of Equipose[†] at any opportunity.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 10, Rebuff (Obfuscatory) 8, Attack (Cunning) 7, Defense (Vexation) 7, Health 6, Etiquette 8, Pedantry 8, Wealth 5

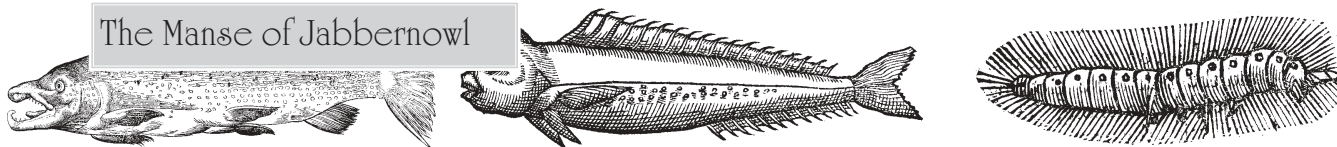
Cheemly, Badaka, Loilogal, Minsip, Kerchum and Domdolmeer, Brothers

"Greetings friend. May the blessings of Hulgen shower upon you and may you, in your wisdom and generosity, repay her for the favor she shows you."

The virtues of the order are embodied in the Brothers rather than their Abbot. They wear long rust-colored robes which are worn loose over a lilac and magenta undershirt.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 7, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 7, Attack (Caution) 7, Defense (Dodge) 6, Health 6, Athletics 6, Wherewithal 7

[†] That is, that every favor must be reciprocated to the last jot and tittle.



The Manse of Jabbernowl

Further inland along the stone ledge, where it begins to disappear into the Great Forest Da, is the manse of Jabbernowl. He is reputed to be one of the few notable magicians not in Idlefonse's conclave still living along the upper Scaum, and is notoriously fond of his privacy. His current chief preoccupation is creating new creatures in his roiling vats. Previous occupants of the vats roam the forest near his home; deodands and erbs give the place a wide berth. One of his creations is rumored to be a combination of demon, pelgrane, and deodand, a creature that haunts both the night skies and the dreams of those who have seen it.

Jabbernowl, Turjan-level vat magician

"I would be delighted to provide you with food and accommodation for the night; my enjoyment of the forthcoming entertainment will adequately repay my hospitality."

Jabbernowl is a great believer in the Law of Equivalencies; he will deal fairly with everyone, but will extract non-pecuniary recompense from those without means. This can involve humiliation, but rarely physical harm.

This mage regularly changes his semblance to suit his mood. He normally appears middle-aged, short and stocky. His voice is always the same, a mellifluous baritone.

When he is not tending his garden or researching chug summoning, he works on his vat creatures. Jabbernowl has not fully mastered the intricacies of mathematics;[†] some of his vat creatures are distasteful monsters.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 14, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 12, Attack (Caution) 11, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 10, Health 6, Magic (Studious) 15, Specialization (Vat creatures) 10, Appraisal 6, Craftsmanship 5, Etiquette 8, Pedantry 10, Perception 6, Physician 7, Riding 4, Seduction 3, Stewardship 4, Wealth 15, Wherewithal 4

Resistances: Indolence 2, Arrogance 6, Avarice 3

the track to the hamlet with a string of livestock. Some are loaded with piperaceous seckels, which are grown in the manse orchard. These are shipped down to Sfere, where they are quickly acquired by many of the better eating-houses. Others of the pack animals are products of the vats and are sold down the river as beasts of burden.

Leulliot, factotum to Jabbernowl and vat creature

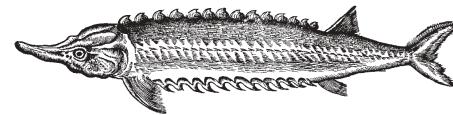
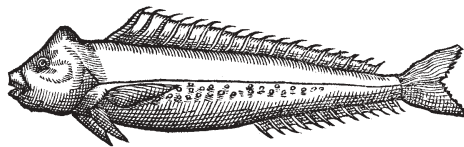
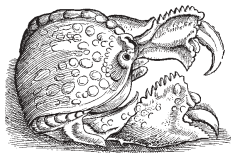
"I am but the factotum, however I will endeavor to put matters in their proper context when the Master deals with them."

Jabbernowl's first successful vat creature, Leulliot was originally intended as a hybrid of human, pelgrane and night-gall. Instead, Leulliot stepped wet from the vat as a perfectly formed human, with the capability of transforming into a dangerous winged predator. Burly but light footed, he has a disconcertingly sharp gaze and tends to



Every week Jabbernowl's factotum Leulliot rides along

[†] A prerequisite of successful vat work; see *Turjan of Miir*.



concentrate it on anyone talking to him. Jabbernowl overlooks certain financial irregularities because of Luelliot's efficient service, and Jabbernowl's affection for his vat creatures.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 10 (Persuade (Intimidating) 6 as Pelgrane), Rebuff (Contrary) 6, Attack (Finesse) 2~, Defense (Dodge) 0.05~, Health 10, Appraisal 7, Etiquette 6, Gambling 7, Pedantry 5, Scuttlebutt 4, Seduction 3, Stewardship 10

The approach to the manse is one to cause even the stoutest heart to quail. There is a thick thorn hedge round the grounds, broken by a large gate, to which two deodands are nailed upside down. They have been transfixed through their norcal cavities. They are still alive, if immobile, and they will subject passersby to requests for assistance in gaining their freedom. They speak convincingly of lost manses deep in the woods, where fortunes and rare tomes bound in purple man-hide await discovery. If a traveler were unwise enough to cut one down it is unlikely the deodand could control its hunger. It would almost certainly attack the minute its hands were free.

The driveway up to the manse itself is lined with dark moribific pine, whilst the overgrown orchard is an oppressive mass to the west. The manse itself is laid out on a raised dais above the orchard. A terrace runs down the front, and callers are always met there by Leulliot, who will provide them with a simple collation of forest fruits, soft callow bread, butter and a light blossom wine. Jabbernowl will, at some point, join them and conduct them through the great hall and into his workroom. The hall itself is well-lit through tall windows. In the middle of the room there is a large table laid for a meal. It is set for more than twice the number in the party.

The walls are of dark wood, cunningly carved with scenes taken from the local forest. Here a hoon plays with its cubs, here the erb stalks its prey, here the forest deer graze. Higher up the wall, lining the staircase to the minstrels' gallery, there is a representation of the manse as it must have looked many years ago. The painting depicts a function in the Great Hall where many ladies and gentlemen disport themselves in their finery.

Jabbernowl will invite his visitors to dine in the

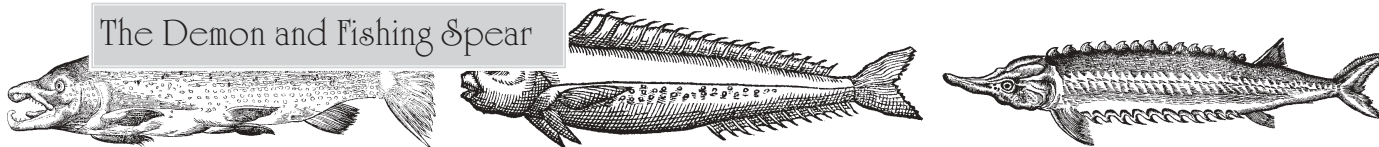
great hall, and in style. He will assure them that, as his honored guests, they are welcome to wash in a bathhouse and dress for dinner in garments that Leulliot will lay out for them. These clothes are of somewhat antique cut and fabric. They are of high quality and enhance the wearer's natural advantages. All the costumes have tall, double-coned hats. The jackets, britches or skirts are tight fitting matt fabric in muted umber, teal and midnight blue, with bright metallic piping.

When guests come down to the table, Jabbernowl greets them courteously and sits them at the table, each with an empty chair on either side of them. He then claps his hands and chants a spell of only six syllables. Out of the carving and down the stairs to the minstrels' gallery comes a partner to sit beside each dinner guest. These are previous inhabitants of the manse, who remember each occasion when they have been called forth to attend upon visitors. They are relaxed and friendly. The apparitions respond well to invitations, either to leave the party early or to meet a living guest later, for a discreet assignation. They will be specific as to the venue. During the meal, it must be the cloakroom; afterwards the undercroft below the stable. In either case, the diner will only return from the encounter if his partner fell asleep before he did. Otherwise, he will be nowhere to be found, although a close scrutiny of the mural in the gallery will reveal his new location.

This is a trap, intrinsic to the house, and not of Jabbernowl's making, although he does relish it. The apparitions are imprisoned in the carvings, alive and fully sensible. Their only way free is to provide a substitute, defined in the curse as someone who has fallen asleep in their arms. Should an adventurer do so, he will awake, to find himself upright and unable to move or talk, looking down upon the hall from the Minstrel's gallery. Whether or not the victim can outlast his seducer, may be determined by the GM from simple whimsy, or by a contest between the apparition's Seduction skill of 1~ against the victim's Athletics, Seduction or Wherewithal, whichever is lowest.

Jabbernowl will accept no responsibility any such misadventure,





but will admit that his enjoyment of the occasion imposes a debt upon him and so will provide a solution. To free their companion, should they want to, the adventurers must provide a substitute whom the prisoner must render unconscious. They can either recapture the fleeing apparition, or dupe a stranger into congress with their friend.

After the meal, Leulliot apologizes but explains that the guests must be accommodated in the loft above the stable. There are clean blankets and fresh straw and it will be possible to spend a comfortable night there. Leulliot will advise travelers not to venture outside the stable at night as various creatures from Jabbernowl's vats roam the grounds in the darkness, to provide security against the worst a dying world can offer. Should anyone ignore this advice, they will find the estate a terrifying place. Dark shadows move for no obvious reason, there is unexplained creaking and groaning coming from the undergrowth in the orchard. If the traveler spends more than a quarter of an hour outside the stable she will be swamped by agreutic bats who will pursue her indoors. These bats will suck blood from anything stationary and also rasp the skin with their abrasive tongues. They are deterred by fire and amonita flowers, and will not go under a roof.

Jabbernowl's workroom is also bright and airy. Vats extend along the length of one wall and various creatures are growing in them. Most appear to be pack beasts of one sort or another. Another wall is lined with shelves filled with apparatus and bottles of dubious substances. One door leads back into the house, into what appears to be a library, a further door leads outwards to a building site. Jabbernowl is intent on extending his workroom and wishes to use materials purchased from Falax (see p21).

Currently, he is on the look out for a small but intelligent party to head north from his manse along a rarely traveled road to track down a spring which his books tell him had curative properties in the late 20th Aeon. Another task he has is the locating of a villa which was reputed to be the summer retreat of Amberlin the Second (see p48). The ruins are across the river on a road that leads from the bridge. Road and bridge have long disappeared but Jabbernowl did once hear reports that signs of the old bridge piers could be seen twenty miles downstream of Murant.

The Spring of Happiness

This is reputedly somewhere near the trail leading from the Manse of Jabbernowl to Wittles Inn. There are several springs in the erb-haunted glades to the west of the trail but whether any bring true happiness is impossible to say.



The Demon & Fishing Spear

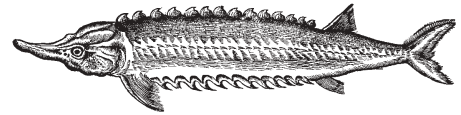
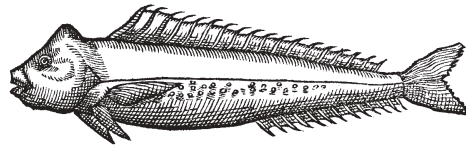
About six leagues down the river is a small pier on the north bank of the Scaum. This serves an inn, THE DEMON AND FISHING SPEAR. The landlady is Usnlip, an attractive woman with red hair and green eyes, a trait she shared with her mother and her five daughters. If the family lived in a more heavily settled locality, this might cause comment.

The inn does a steady trade with the local river traffic, the food is excellent and the beer is better. The specialty of the house is shotten pike with seckel sauce, served on a bed of diced barley cake.

Usnlip, landlady of the Demon and Fishing Spear

"Gentlemen, would you care for a glass of mulled wine by the fire to drive away the river mist?"

Usnlip is a distant descendent of Hulgen, a vat creature of Jabbernowl. She has striking red hair and wears gauzy vermilion dresses which swirl about her. Her extraordinary confidence may be because Jabbernowl's protection has given her a charmed life, or perhaps it is just her nature. She is more tolerant of poverty than dishonesty; the impoverished she will feed in return for labor; the



dishonest she renders helpless with drafts brewed from herbs shipped from up river. She will strip any victims, have Falax lower them on to a raft of reeds and let the current carry them where it will.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 11, Rebuff (Wary) 12, Attack (Cunning) 6, Defense (Dodge) 13, Health 8, Appraisal 3, Athletics 2, Craftsmanship 3, Etiquette 4, Gambling 3, Living Rough 2, Pedantry 2, Perception 7, Quick Fingers 4, Riding 2, Scuttlebutt 5, Seduction 4, Stealth 1, Stewardship 8, Wherewithal 4.

Resistances: Arrogance 3, Avarice 1, Gourmandism 2, Indolence 4, Pettifoggery 5, Rakishness 2

Falax, fisherman and salvage expert

"My philosophy is circumscribed by a well-weighted line; my motives for salvage are more base."

Falax is a fisherman who supplements his income by arranging the transportation of building materials to Jabbernowl. He finds such labor distasteful, and would rather use others to perform the cruder aspects of his trade. He fishes for the pure joy of it. He uses precise terms when discussing business, but will be effusive when discussing the pleasures of the line. Unlike his wife Usnlip, he is not blessed with pleasing countenance; he lost his teeth in a dispute over the mating season of the ellock trout and his face is warty and yellow.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 1.5-, Rebuff (Lawyerly) -, Attack (Strength) Attack () 5, Defense (Sure-footedness) 5, Health 7, Appraisal 7, Athletics 3, Craftsmanship 4, Pedantry (Fish) 7, Riding 7

Working for Falax

Falax is willing to hire suitable workers to haul heavy stone wall plates to the manse of Jabbernowl. Any party who undertakes this task will be accommodated at the inn overnight. Next morning Falax will take them upriver to Murant where he will point the party to the track that leads to the Arch-magician's home. It is possible that they will lose the trail, as it forks several times once it passes the Monastery of Hulgen the Tabellion. The monks will cheerfully direct the travelers, and will warn them of the dangers of the woods.



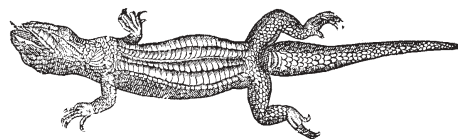
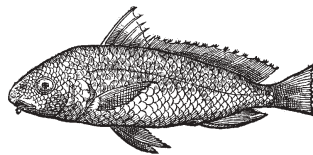
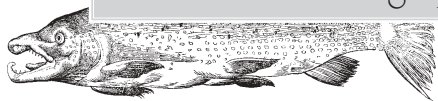
The True Story



From what evidence still survives, it seems that Usnlip is the direct descendant of Hulgen, whose cunningly wrought escape from a life of seclusion culminated in the carefully choreographed river demon episode. Every generation born since then has had red hair and green eyes, and every child born has been a girl. Family wisdom indicates that it is as a result of a bargain made with the demon, that if a son be born, the demon should take it. The truth is even more complex. The original Hulgen was a vat creature grown by Jabbernowl. The magician built the original matrix to be self-replicating. Hulgen was created with an independent spirit and insisted on making her own way in the world. While working at the inn in Murant, she fell in love with a local fisherman. For deep emotional reasons of her own, she decided to avoid him and joined the enclosed order. She soon realised that it was a mistake. In her distress she got a message to Jabbernowl, whose elaborate sense of humour led him to put together the river demon episode. The demon, played by Leulliot, waited until all three were under the water then he used a small enchantment which whisked them down river to the site of the Demon and Fishing Spear.

Some five hundred yards inland of the pier is the ruins of what was once a great house. Usnlip's husband Falax is a fisherman but, when the river runs too fiercely for fishing, he quarries the ruin. Stacked by the pier is a neat pile of dressed stone and roofing tiles, which are sold to the inhabitants of villages all up and down the river. He also uncovers other artifacts which he either sells to passing travelers or travels down to Sfere himself to sell at the great Summer Fair. Falax will often hire a passing party of travelers who are willing to stop over for a day or two. Normally he pays no more than a few terces, plus modest board and lodging at the inn. A party hired in this manner will find themselves doing all manner of tasks.

The Demon & Fishing Spear



When they arrive at the manse, Leulliot will ask them their business. When they explain they are from Falax he will send word to Jabbernowl who will arrive and greet them. He then ushers Leulliot and the party through his workroom, shows them his building site and then has Leulliot take the party to the stable where they run their eyes over as motley a collection of hybrids as ever towed a cart. Leulliot will suggest four or five of the beasts as suitable for the task. He will watch the party hitch them to the cart and give them an hour of instruction in working with the beasts. Finally, when satisfied, he will announce that dinner is served and the entire party will return to the great hall.

The evening is pleasant and the company excellent. The food is also of high quality, Leulliot beams with pride at the efforts of his kitchen and takes both complements and complaints personally. During the meal both Leulliot and Jabbernowl gently quiz the party about their travels. They are also very sensitive to any comments made which might disparage Usnlip. Even after many generations both men have an abiding affection for Hulgen which has been transferred to her descendants.

Next morning, Leulliot will organize the party and assist them to harness the wagons. They should follow the wide cart-road Leulliot points out to them. It has a decent hard surface and, when it crosses a stream, it does so on a stout, stone bridge. The journey takes half a day and with empty carts is easily accomplished. They should arrive at the old house by noon where Falax awaits them with a picnic lunch. After lunch Falax has them hard at work sliding the stone roof plates off the top of the walls and into the carts. Each cart takes three of these roof plates and Falax insists that they be handled with precision. Falax takes careful and precise note of all breakages, and deducts an appropriate amount from the contracted sum. The fronts of these plates are exquisitely carved: Falax has them rolled in mats of dried grass for transport. Each roof plate weighs about half a ton. They are moved with ropes and levers until they can be placed at the top of a ramp down which they will slide onto the carts. PCs will need to use their Athletics ability to do the work

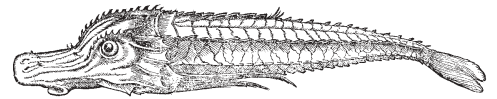
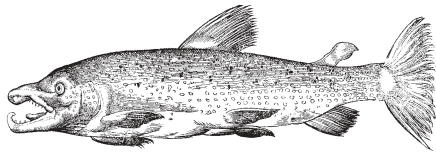
themselves, or their Riding skill to use the beasts. In either case, they cause a breakage on a Dismal Failure. They require a combined tariff of 30 to complete the task.

Once the PCs have loaded the carts, they can spend the night in the inn. The draught beasts are housed in the inn stable. They may gain the false impression that their meal and drinks are included in the tariff, but Falax will make deductions for any purchases he considers profligate.

At the inn there will not be many other travelers. A pair of merchants dealing in antiquities from Sferre have called to see whether Falax has anything of interest for them before they head on up river. The older, Cardiss, is portly and slightly deaf so he talks more loudly than he needs. The younger, Euraz, is diffident and says little, listening to Cardiss reminisce about his dealings up and down the river. However Euraz wears a sword and walks with a certain lithe grace. Anet daughter of Estne, has travelled down to both supply Usnlip with certain herbs and also to look at a collection of 18th Aeon herbalists' grinding wheels that Falax has found in the old house.

Whilst the party are present, Falax will show Cardiss and Euraz some of the items he has found. There are two candlesticks wrought out of an unrecognizable metal. They are a matching pair and have the likeness of erotically entangled hybrids. As curios they will be worth at least a hundred terces. If anyone can decipher the 17th Aeon script on the base they will realise that these artifacts do have a certain power and are worth ten times as much. If an ordinary candle is burned in one of them, then there is a profound aphrodisiacal effect on anyone within the room. If candles burn in both, anyone with inadequate natural characteristics will find them much improved.

Falax has also found a pycnite quill holder and inkwell in the form of a hoon curled up by the fire, a six-inches tall ebony statuette of a deodand leaning against a tree and a pair of ear pendants in a style thought daring in the 19th Aeon. They are all fine pieces; Falax will part with them for an average of 50 terces per item. Cardiss and Euraz would far rather pay less than 50 terces for each curio, so will offer the PCs 10 terces an item to



steal them on their behalf. Falax would certainly resent this trespass on his property, and would investigate the matter. As an inducement to wholehearted cooperation with his inquiries he will observe that, as the PCs already know, he is Jabbernowl's agent, thus any offense against him is clearly one against the magician. Those who volunteer information on the culprits can expect better treatment than those who do not. As time is pressing no one will be released from their current, contracted service, but those who offended worst will get the poorest treatment.

Next day, the party will harness the beasts back onto the carts. They will top up their load with some elegantly worked metal pillars that Falax has also found in his delving. Then there is just time to have a quick lunch sitting on the low walls of the old kitchen garden before Falax bids them good day. The journey back with loaded carts is harder than the previous day's trip. The pace is slower and on some sections they have to unhitch a team from one cart and use two teams to tow a cart up an incline. That cart is then left at the top and both teams go back down the incline to collect the other cart. The GM may enforce Driving or Riding rolls as she sees fit; the consequences of Dismal Failure are unpleasant in such circumstances.

Evening brings rain and things go even slower, the draught beasts slip and lose their footing, carts slide sideways on uneven surfaces. Shapes appear at the edge of vision and the noise of large flapping wings comes from above them. Eventually, in front of them, an asm steps out into the road. In cold, dry tones it announces that it needs one of the party for food and invites them to choose which. It will wait only a short while. Perceptive party members will notice that there are other dark shapes among the trees behind it.

If the party decides to fight, the asm will spring at the nearest member, and its companions will come out from among the trees to join it. At this point Leulliot, in his flying hybrid form will strike; he will attack those asms who are not actually in contact with the party, buffeting them with his wings, raking them with his claws and rending them with his fanged beak. If the party cannot dispose of those asms that are in contact with them

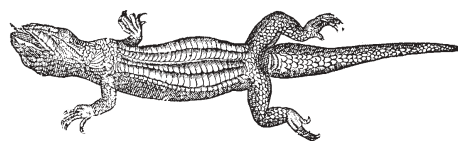
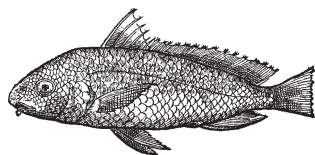
he will plunge into that melee as well but will not come too close to the PCs. If Leulliot is injured by the party members, he will not attack, but will disappear into the night. If the party members do not interfere with him, he will fly off with an asm hanging from its talons.

After this incident the party will find they have not more trouble from the denizens of the forest. Wearily, they will finally get the carts back to the manse of Jabbernowl. They will be met at the stables by Leulliot. If the flying creature was wounded Leulliot will be wearing appropriate bandages which he will dismiss as a slight accident with one of the vat creatures. If the flying creature was not wounded then Leulliot is not bandaged and when he leads the party to the stable where a silver platter with various meats plus hot pepper soup awaits. He explains he will not be joining them as he ate earlier.

Next morning they are awakened to an early breakfast. They will find the carts unloaded and the roof plates stacked carefully to hand. Jabbernowl greets them in a friendly manner and pays them the sum of terces agreed with Falax, minus any deductions that Falax has made. If they have performed well in the eyes of the GM, Jabbernowl may even give them a bonus, or some



The Wittles Inn



advice which will help them on their road. If their behaviour has been generally acceptable he may even offer them more work. From Jabbernowl's manse it is merely a short walk down the track to Murant where they can get Estne to flag down a boat for them and arrange passage along the river to where ever they are heading.

Falax does have other tasks that need doing if the party seek more regular employment. There is a well in the manse that he has never fully explored himself. From lowering a lantern down on a rope, he knows there is a large open space at water level. He also knows that water flows at the bottom of the well and when he lowered a metal weight with wax on its base it picked up an unrecognised gold coin and pebbles from the bottom of the well.



Into the Well...

If the PCs have stolen from Falax, or otherwise offended Jabbernowl, they will be given the opportunity to satisfy their curiosity as to what is down the well. Naturally, hirelings in good standing are also free to volunteer. The wizard will provide them with ropes and lanterns.

The well opens into a wide cavern, easily a hundred yards across. Its floor is covered by ankle-deep water, except for the well shaft, which drops another five feet. The roof seems to be carved with strange ribs and the space between them glow with a faint viridian gloom. There is the sense of something coiled around the cavern, straining against the ribs.

PCs looking for gold will find it scattered around the well shaft, mixed with human bones. It appears that the originator of the bones fell down the well, while carrying a clay pot filled with coins. Those who think to excavate will find that the entire cave is paved with a mix of pebbles and old gold.

Should the PCs begin to collect the coins, they must attempt to resist their Avarice. The GM should note those who fail, as they will exert themselves more than their fellows, and so pique the interest of the cavern's resident entity. First the floor will begin to shake, imposing a 1 point levy on movement, then it will extrude tentacles with a

Ferocity and Dodge of 8 each and a Health of 4, one of which will engage each Avaricious PC. Next, the ribs will begin to contract, as will the well. The exit will not close so quickly that the looters cannot escape, although they must make a successful Athletics roll with a limit of two.

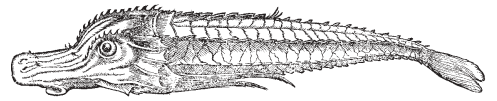
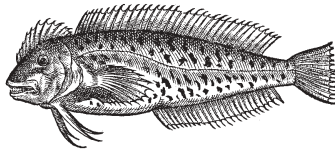
PCs who make a successful Pedantry roll will realize that they are inside of a large Overworld being, perhaps Varanma. Those who know about ancient customs will recall on a successful roll that the mixture of gold and humble stones encouraged torpor and, if administered in sufficient quantity, pleasant dreams. An analogy with drinking oneself unconscious will afford the insight that to return Varanma to quiescence, the PCs will have to replace all the looted gold and add more of their own. If they do so, they can climb out easily.

In any event, Jabbernowl and Falax will meet them on the surface. There is a good chance that the magician's home is shaking and that he has concluded, from the fissures radiating from the well head that the PCs are somehow responsible. The PCs could, of course ask for more gold, which request is unlikely to be received with equanimity. Alternatively, they could keep their loot and run for the forest, reasoning that a mage without a manse is not much of a threat.

PCs trapped down the well will be available to Jabbernowl when he re-opens it. He will require that the adventurers retrieve any escapees for him and will write the word 'thief' across their faces, using luminous magical pigment. It can only be removed when they have completed their task.

The Wittles Inn

Anyone leaving the hamlet of Murant and heading north along the trail will come to the house of the Brothers of Hulgen the Tabellion. A stalwart tower built in the old style it dominates the track. From there the path winds a few miles more before arriving at the Manse of Jabbernowl. Past the Manse and its enclosed grounds, the trail becomes much fainter and at times can barely be followed on the ground. If travelers head due north at this point they will find signs of the old road bed, such as culverts and antique



bridges over small streams. The trail runs in this fashion for at least one day's walk before it come to Wittles crossroads, site of the WITTLES INN. This ramshackle building is built against the last remaining wall of some far older structure. The old wall appears to have been poured, in one piece, using molten lava as a building material. The new structure has a steeply pitched clay-tiled roof with four high gables, and the other walls are timber framed from the second story up; the walls of the ground floor are made from large stone blocks, each weighing well over ten tons.

Inside, the inn has a common room, which takes half the ground floor, with a kitchen and staff quarters filling the rest of the area. The upper story is one long bunk-room for guests. Leaning against the north side of the inn are wattle and daub sheds which act as store rooms, privies and stables. The inn is run by Borstep who, with two serving women and a stable boy, provides a reasonable service to occasional travelers. Members of staff also work in an extensive vegetable patch that provides much of the food for the inn.

On the positive side, the food tends to be fresh. On the negative side, words like 'boring,' 'limited' and 'unimaginative' come to mind. Borstep has been known to serve bread made from potato, or even turnip flour, when he cannot get wheat or barley locally. In a notable departure from custom, Borstep refuses to sell alcoholic refreshment of any kind and forbids the use of all intoxicants on his premises. As the sun flickers and dies, jaded sybarites travel long distances to appreciate the discomfort of the Dying Earth's last temperance hostel.

Borstep, proprietor of the Wittles Inn

"There must be no intoxicants of any kind consumed on the premises. No Golden Porphiron, succulent liqueur fancies nor aromatics."

The innkeeper will talk longingly to anyone about fine wines, rich food and the doings of people in Kaiin. Despite this, he wistfully proclaims the inn's invariable rules of temperance at every opportunity. Borstep is a pleasant individual to deal with, helpful and genuinely kind. He is also reserved and quite easily embarrassed. He does have a mischievous streak, despite his good nature, but since the imposition of the rules of temperance by the magician Jessifer, he has curbed this tendency.

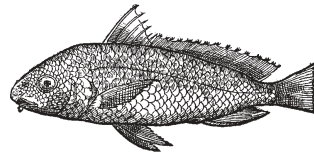
Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 10, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 8, Attack (Cunning) 4, Defense (Misdirection) 5, Health 7, Appraisal 6, Imposture 6, Pedantry 4, Scuttlebutt 4, Stewardship 5

The Restoration of Spirit

Borstep has a problem. His three employees are actually mannequins, cunningly wrought, who may even regard themselves as human. They were inflicted upon Borstep by a magician, Jessifer, a member of the Institute who became intoxicated at an inn Borstep once ran in Kaiin. Borstep quietly mimicked the stumbling magician who, when sober, remembered the performance and ordained that Borstep would never need view the like again. The mannequins find and instruct Borstep to confiscate any intoxicants. The stable boy checks the harness and baggage while the two women check the rooms and the food. If Borstep fails in this duty, they will embarrass him by engaging in erotic experimentation with the guests, an experimentation which, if allowed to proceed, eventually ends with them devouring the guest in question. This, Borstep wishes to avoid. He has managed to get his hand on Archemere of Glanond's *Annotated Principles of Manikin Construction*. In this, it points out that most mannequins (as opposed to animated statues or golems) are made of a complex of organic chemicals and should be kept away from strong spirits, which dissolve them. The work discusses the ways in which mannequins detect pure alcohol and suggests that placing sensors in the fingers is safer than mounting them in the nose.[†] Borstep wants one of his guests to get a large barrel of strong spirit and partially disguise the smell, perhaps with aromatic bitters or aspergantium. If the guests could work out just which finger the mannequins use to detect alcohol, then the sensors could be either destroyed by an accident such as trapping them in a door or burning them. Then Borstep and his allies could either push the mannequins into the barrel or spray them with its contents. Borstep prefers pushing as spraying highly inflammable alcohol around the inside of his inn might be disastrous. If implemented

[†] The Principles also delineates Quistvar, the formal dance of the Merlop Phalanx, and suggests three possible substitutes for failed primary armatures.

Drossid



correctly, this plan will dissolve the mannequins, and Borstep would once more be free.

If Borstep feels he can trust the party, he will pour out his problem to them and will be generous to win their assistance. He has credit with a supplier in Sfero who will provide the spirit and he is not without friends in Kaiin from the old days. Indeed, he would give his liberators the Wittles Inn and would return to Kaiin to restart his old establishment, the Scholar's Respite.[†]

Kemlin, Mostock and Chanandler, mannequins

"The ill-favored one with the darting eyes is in possession of the Forbidden. Borstep, see to it."

These magical constructs are smooth-faced, expressionless creatures with slow-blinking eyes. Kemlin has female attributes, Mostock and Chanandler, male. They wear simple tunics, aprons and serviceable cotton trousers.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) ~, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 0.5 ~, Attack (Speed) ~, Defense (Parry) 0.5~, Health 10, Magic (Resistance only) 6, Athletic 5, Perception (sniffing out alcohol) 10, Seduction 5, Wherewithal 8

Drossid

The main east-west trail from Murant is well marked and gets a little use from travelers, but more from local traffic. A couple of miles to the west of Wittles Inn is the village of Drossid. Here the local people have cleared a considerable glade in the forest and they grow corn and kale and keep manks, whose milk goes to make a rich dunlop eaten with coarse bread and salted meats. The people themselves are suspicious of strangers and wary of all who come out of the forest. As a group they are unprepossessing, lank, ageing early, and the men at least growing straggly beards. They follow the creed of Gavom the Disconsolate, who believed that the sun has already expired, and what we see is the moon, expanded to an unreasonable size by the negative energy of humankind.[‡] Travelers who come to trade will be dealt with fairly and with reasonable civility, but need not

expect favors. Travelers penniless, lost and in need of compassion will not find it and will be indentured as servants. Thieves and vagabonds will simply be tied between trees at night and left to the deodands. The villagers bolt their doors with the fall of night and their livestock live below them in their two-story houses. There is no inn; anyone forced to spend a night in Drossid must bargain with a householder for accommodation. If they are lucky, they will be entertained by a householder who offers the local specialty, a thin pancake of farina rolled and stuffed with chickpea, sawbugs marinated in sour beer, the whole served with a crab-apple sauce, on a bed of toasted hemp-nettle nutlets. The flavors are interesting and the hemp nettle does have a gentle soporific effect and, when prepared by a competent cook, the combination is excellent. Honest praise of this dish is one of the few ways to win a general welcome within the village. If this dish is served then it is customary for guests to taste food first before the family can eat it. Should a guest be so ill-mannered as to refuse to eat first, then the family goes hungry and the meal goes uneaten. Accusing one's hosts of attempting to poison their guests, then requiring that they eat first, to demonstrate good faith, is perhaps the only way to make the situation worse.

Panicles Brevon, Drossid Headman

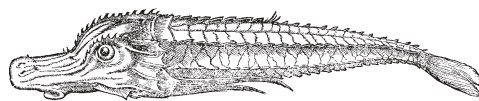
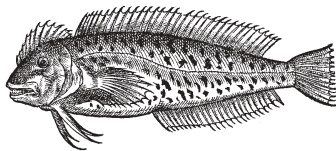
"Accursed fate! A creature of the underworld stalks you, and I must banish you from this place of comfort!"

Panicles is a histrionic and highly sensitive retired Green Legionnaire possessing the unfortunate ability to see into other worlds. He retains his uniform – a padded, yellow jacket, stained with verdigris, red trousers with green piping, black ankle boots and a red neckerchief. He wears a tall, black felt hat with a showy green cockade.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 7, Rebuff (Wary) 6, Attack (Strength) 8, Defense (Dodge) 5, Health 8, Athletics 5, Perception 12, Physician 8

[†] The idea of the PCs managing an inn, even temporarily, is a terrifying prospect for a GM, but an excellent adventure hook.

[‡] The calendar of Gavom is not noted for religious feast days or revels.



The Demon, Riala

The village headman at Drossid is one Panicles Brevon, a tall man just over middle age who served for some years with the Green Legion, and who walks with a limp. He accuses the PCs of having a demon following them. They have: Riala, a fallen sandestin who has lived been trapped in the region since the mid-19th Aeon. Riala was cursed after the fall of Grand Motholam to remain on the Dying Earth until she met someone as dishonest and unreliable as herself. She has latched on to the least Sympathetic PC as a suitable candidate but needs to observe her perform an unprompted and egregious fraud, to confirm that she is indeed the one.[†] Anyone Pure-Hearted can sense Riala on an instinctive level, so gains a two-point boon in contests with the sandestin's victim and a one-

point boon when dealing with her associates.

Riala will not tell her victim why she is haunting her, as this would invalidate the fraudulent act, but she might explain matters to the other PCs, if she believes they will keep them confidential.

Riala, fallen sandestin

"For contractual reasons, I cannot confirm your suspicions. Please ignore my nodding head; it is a tic, nothing more."

To all but those cursed with unusual vision, Riala is invisible. To those with magical sight or sensitivity to other worlds, Riala appears as a subworld demon; emaciated bony body, a ridged scarlet skull, dangling jowls and a needle-fanged maw. Despite her loathsome appearance, her conversation is urbane and witty. She is charming enough to succeed in far-reaching confidence games. She will only attack in self-defense.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 2-, Persuade (Obfuscatory) -, Attack (Speed) 5-, Defense (Vexation) 5-, Health 2-, (Magic for Sandestins see *DEPRG* p92), Gambling 10, Imposture (voice only) 7, Perception 12, Scuttlebutt 2-



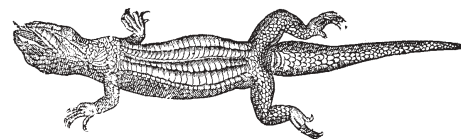
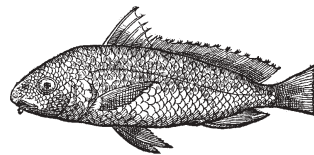
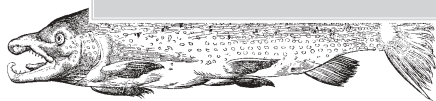
Panicles Brevon

Jurisimei

East of Wittles Inn the trail is more pronounced and eventually opens out into a string of clearings and open grassland. This is Jurisimei, the home of the Jursi, a pastoral people who keep large flocks of kursim fowl that graze the area. Their lands lie on both sides of the north-south trail, which runs down to Murant and the River Scaum.

The Jursi are a short, cheerful people, who seem somewhat contemptuous of their own minor short comings. They transport their plump kursim fowl in wicker baskets to Murant, and from there down river to Sfer where they command a good price and are much sought after by the better class of gentleman's eating house. Indeed four, five- and six-legged kursim table-fowl are regularly prepared in the village, stuffed

[†] The GM can decide retrospectively at what point Riala chose her victim.



with herbs and roasted in great ovens before being sent all the way to Kaiin. They belittle their fine achievements by claiming that they only rear fowl because asm and erb ate all their larger grazing animals. Indeed, the fowl do deter nocturnal wanderers. More than one asm has been hacked to death by villagers who were awakened by the screeches from the kursim pens. The Jursi do not live in a single village, just a sprawl of huts and larger timber houses scattered along the tracks. Travel off the trail is difficult, because of the endless fowl pens and fences which festoon the area with netting. It is this netting in which asms get entangled. At the edge of the cleared ground the Jursi have planted a row of vampire trees to deter anyone from arriving except by the road.



The Pelotherapy Inn

Peduncle Dreal, Innkeeper and chief of the Jursi

"I can assure you that the experience is a sensual apogee."

A thin, bird-like woman, Peduncle chitters nervously to anyone who stands within a few feet of her. For work, she wears a heavy smock dress and leather apron; at play, a diaphanous medley of lime taffeta and chiffon.

She makes her living from the Inn. She earns her indulgence money by persuading travelers to indulge in a pelotherapeutic massage. She implies that this involves beautiful staff, fine unguents, in all a rich, rewarding and sensuous experience.

Ratings: Persuade (Obfuscatory) 6, Rebuff (Obtuse) 7, Attack (Finesse) 5, Surefootedness 7, Appraisal 6, Athletics 4, Etiquette 5, Perception 7, Physician 6, Quick Fingers 5, Scuttlebutt 3

Chacoffly, Descalam and Falack, fowl-traders and gamblers

"That was a neat move. I suggest you hold your arm steady whilst I examine your sleeve. Please ignore the blade; it is merely an affectation."

Expert gamblers from regimented Sfere, they are expert Cavander[†] players. They will grudgingly lose money to an expert gambler, but resent cheating beyond reason. They gamble with gold tokens that represent fowl; a winner may be surprised to acquire a cart-load of fowl rather than terces. The fowl-traders are very competitive, and can be persuaded to fight amongst themselves in a game rather than combine to challenge a newcomer.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) ~, Rebuff (Lawyerly) ~, Attack (Strength) ~, Defense (Misdirection) ~, Appraisal 6, Gambling 0.5~, Perception 4, Quick Fingers 6, Scuttlebutt 5, Wherewithal 4

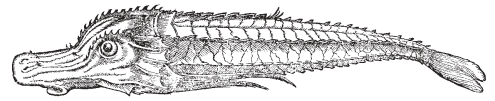
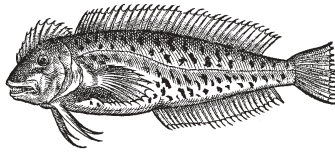
Peduncle Dreal, current chief of the Jursi, imposes what little formal order there is in the area. She is not only the owner of the largest kursim pens, she also owns the Pelotherapy Inn and Spa.

While the Inn does good business, the spa, which specializes in curing diseases by the application of mud, is no longer popular. Occasionally, a traveler will avail himself of the service, normally mistaking it for a coy term for some competitively priced calligynic entertainment. Indeed, it is perfectly possible that there are those who find being forcibly dunked in a mixture of mud and fowl droppings by a six-foot tall, 304-pound woman satisfying. If so, the person's identity and a welltold account will earn a fine supper from Azenomei to Sfere, although the tale would prove too tame for Kaiin.

The Pelotherapy Inn does have an excellent bath suite as well, but customers who have availed themselves of the spa must submit to being sluiced down in the main street with buckets of cold water before they are allowed into the Inn at all.

The staff at the inn are cheerful and correct. The girls move exceptionally well, as Peduncle has regularly retained Gusswig Melodis (see p50), trainer of exotic dancers. Food is good, mainly fowl, as one would expect, but served with a fine selection of wines that come up from Sfere by river.

[†] Cavander is a variation of Skax in which Green Varlets can be discarded after any red-card play. Skax players consider it showy and irreverent.



The guests at the Inn are a varied bunch. There are fowl-traders from Sfere; serious men who sit together and talk shop long into the night. Most wear feather cloaks and hats of two tiers, fitted with birds' wings. They also play interminable card games amongst themselves, pushing piles of coins from one to another. It is probable that any traveler who gambles regularly will recognize the game as Cavander. If they are well spoken and can fund their own stake, the fowl-traders will allow them to play. A gambler would have to be good or expertly crooked to take money of these players on a regular basis. The local gamers respect and admire skill, but take a dim view of sharp practice and cheating. Their legal practices are informal, involving a tree in the forest and a ball of binding twine.

There are other individuals who trade around the area. One such is Answile, a packman who makes a point of visiting all the small villages and hamlets on this side of the Scaum.

Answile, trader and source of information

"A martyr to my liver, sirs, a martyr."

A small, weasel-faced, yellow-complexioned man who sits next to his man-sized pack, he tends not to talk to strangers. Although his looks are against him, he is welcomed by virtually all he meets, as amongst other things he carries salt, fine needles, thrush pate, ebon dice and delicately wrought good luck charms of amber, to brighten the lives of those in the area.

His liver is not what it was and he dare not drink anything other than spring water or watered milk. Should anyone recognize his symptoms and produce a cure using their Physician ability, Answile will be more forthcoming. A mine of information on the area, he can point out pitfalls that could inconvenience a less well informed party. However, get your information quickly because he will soon start drinking wine and no longer has the resistance he had in his youth. After the third glass he will no longer speak coherently and after the fifth he will fall asleep across the table. At this point one of the maids will call a stable-boy who will carry Answile to his bed. The maid will also lecture the party firmly on their damaging Answile's liver again. By most counts

Answile has already been cured five times, the PC's attempt will be the sixth.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 1.5~, Rebuff (Wary) ~, Attack (Finesse) 5, Defense (Intuition) 5, Appraisal 6, Craftsmanship 4, Perception 12, Scuttlebutt 12, Stewardship 5

Other visitors pass through, such as young nobles from Kaspara Vitatus and the Land of the Falling Wall travelling south to visit Kaiin. These scions tend to spend well, but are often accompanied by a bodyguard of ruffians from their estates, who drink too much and cause trouble with the maids. When this happens, Peduncle will have one of the older women whisper encouragement to one of the more noxious ruffians and entice him outside. He is then set upon by the stable staff and will receive a full Pelotherapy session, for which his master will be billed in the morning.

Bastime the Magniloquent, Junior Pontifact of Kaspara Vitatus

"Rostup! Have the men give this inconsequential wretch a thorough beating."

A inbred advertisement for the aristocracy, Bastime is bored of this backwater and longs to reach Kaiin. Resplendent in his pepper-pot hat and gold and cream motley suit, he orders his factor Rostup to see to his needs. He is a short-tempered and arrogant teenager on his first jaunt from Kaspara Vitatus to Kaiin, where he intends to enroll in the Scholasticarium.

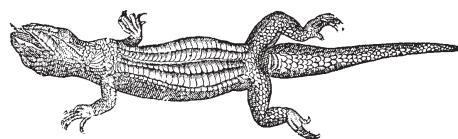
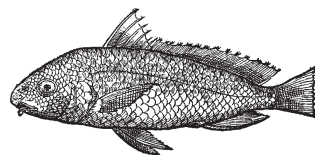
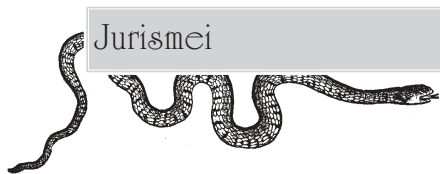
Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 8, Rebuff (Contrary) 7, Attack (Finesse) 6, Surefootedness 7, Health 6, Etiquette 1.5~, Gambling ~, Pedantry 8, Riding 12, Scuttlebutt 7, Stewardship 7, Wealth 5

Resistances: Rakishness 0

Rostup, Factotum to Bastime

"My master wishes you to remove your hat. He finds it offensive and inappropriate for one of your station."

For reasons of self-interest, Rostup insulates his master from the acerbic nature of reality. If Bastime were to take too great an interest in reality, he might note that Rostup has free access to Bastime's purse. Rostup is clever, charming and



devious. Of these three, he only exhibits his charm to Bastime.

Ratings: Charming 10, Penetrating 8, Cunning 7, Misdirection 8, Health 6, Appraisal 5, Concealment 6, Etiquette 3, Gambling 4, Imposture 4, Pedantry 5, Perception 9, Riding 3, Scuttlebutt 8, Stewardship 9, Wherewithal 4, Avarice 1

Ferrule, Combliban and Sumbume, Bastime's bodyguard

"Fetch me more wine! Move with alacrity, or feel the back of my hand."

These three are bored, arrogant ruffians who drink too much at their master's expense. They are eager to gamble and brawl. They are armed with rapiers, but will resort to fists and furniture first.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 5, Rebuff (Contrary) 7, Attack (Ferocity) -, Defense (Parry) -, Athletics 9, Gambling 6, Perception 5, Riding 6, Wherewithal 9

Resistances: Rakishness 1

Staying at the inn at the moment is an ill-matched pair, who seem to be traveling together. One is Antowaze, a traveling musician, the other Kastin, an impecunious philosopher. Antowaze is a travelling musician whose music is much sought after by most guests, (Kastin being the most vocal exception) and especially by the local people who keep him busy performing at baptismal ceremonies, bankruptcy petitions, witch burnings and similar occasions of rejoicing. He will explain to anyone who asks that he is writing a monograph about the area and is traveling purely for knowledge. He will happily engage anyone in conversation and will willingly pass on information about the road to travelers. However, while he will remember the quality of the beds in the last inn, or the play of light on a serving maids hair as she stood washing glasses he will be vague about distances and threats faced.

Kastin on the other hand growls at anyone who seems to be enjoying themselves, makes surreptitious notes in a lost language in a small notebook and considers himself a philosopher. If he bothers to answer questions as to where he is going he will merely reply 'I will return to the Circle of Weeping

Shadows with my new knowledge.' His many detractors contend that he is taking an inordinate amount of time doing this.

On a more positive note, Kastin is a man of learning and could well impart good advice. He will always cite The Law of Equivalencies, and will insist that there must be some reciprocity. Hence he will expect help of equal value, whether monetary or by assistance in some small task.

Kastin and Antowaze seem to be staying at the inn for an indefinite period and both are evasive if asked what their business is. The reason for their reticence is simple. Antowaze rarely carries money and Kastin sought to prove a mathematical doctrine to the fowl-traders. As this involved the laws of probability and the immutability of chance, the proof took the form of a card game. Kastin was less than convincing and managed to lose the great part of his cash. Since then, they have been holidaying at the Inn, hoping to raise funds to enable them to settle the ever-growing bill. Currently, Antowaze is managing to earn more than they spend and Kastin has managed to extract terces for advice from the occasional traveler. At the moment, neither has any money but Antonwaze has paid Peduncle enough money to allay her suspicions.

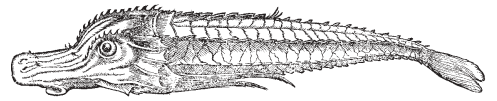
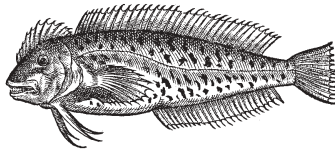
Antowaze, Traveling Musician

"The sun fades like an autumn pomegranate, and I sing to you of sweeter times."

Antowaze is a knowledgeable exponent of the seventeen-string zither, and has a fair baritone voice. Whilst he appreciates terces, he lacks a practical understanding of finance.

Antowaze is dressed in hose, codpiece and slippers, all of dove-gray and dark blue, with silver embroidery and a jupon of fine royal blue, chased with pearls and vermeens' masks. A dress knife hangs from a belt of white gold and blued silver.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 11, Rebuff (Contrary) 12, Attack (Finesse) 9, Defense (Vexation) 12, Health 8, Appraisal 3, Athletics 2, Craftsmanship (musical instruments) 5, Concealment 3, Driving 2, Etiquette 7, Gambling 3, Living Rough 2, Performance (Playing musical instruments) 8, Pedantry 4, Perception 7, Quick Fingers 4, Riding 4, Scuttlebutt 5, Seduction 8, Singing 8, Stealth 4,



Stewardship 1, Tracking 2, Wherewithal 7

Kastin, Itinerant Philosopher

“Pah, revel briefly in your doomed frivolity. The end hastens.”

Kastin is a refugee from a philosophical order, the Circle of Weeping Shadows. In a fit of self-indulgent poesy, he fled with a sacred orchid.

Steely-eyed Kastin is a man of somber attire; a limp square of black felt for a head covering, a small tattoo of an X on each cheek, a gray blouse, a thin silk jacket with long tails that swirls around him, occasionally revealing pouches and pockets. He has deep purple breeches and low hard-soled shoes made of deodand skin. An unkind person might use ‘jaundiced’ to describe his unusual skin-tone. Ink and chemical stains mark the tips of precise fingers. Only a flaccid orchid of mauve tucked behind his ear is an apparently incongruous nod to fashion. His hand habitually rests on a foil, sheathed in a dull gray scabbard attached to his belt.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 10, Rebuff (Wary) 10, Attack (Cunning) 6, Defense (Misdirection) 6, Health 5, Athletics 4, Etiquette 5, Gambling 6, Living Rough 3, Pedantry 8, Perception 8, Physician 3, Quick Fingers 2, Stealth 5, Wherewithal 6

Resistances: Pettifoggery 0

Often found drinking quietly in the main bar is a tall, thin and elderly gentleman who will introduce himself to travelers as Grissle, Magus Quillan’s steward (*see Quillan’s House, below*).



Quillan’s House

Quillan, Local Magician

“I believe that Gill and Velar will provide us with an understanding. Be seated will I peruse the shelves.”

Magus Quillan is a magician of good standing in the community. He likes to meet travelers who look useful and instructs Grissle to fetch such to his manse. He is well aware of his limitations as a wizard and this elevates the importance in which

he holds his research into Hundir the Marginal. He teeters on the brink of madness; if his research into Hundir bears fruit, he is likely to become a vindictive megalomaniac. He wears a complex toga held together with a burnished brass clasp in the shape of an axe-wielding soldier.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 11, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 12, Attack (Finesse) 6, Defense (Dodge) 5, Studious 10, Appraisal 6, Athletics 5, Craftsmanship 7, Etiquette 3, Gambling 6, Pedantry 12, Perception 10, Physician 8, Stewardship 8, Wherewithal 10

Resistances: Arrogance 0

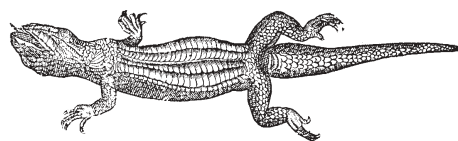
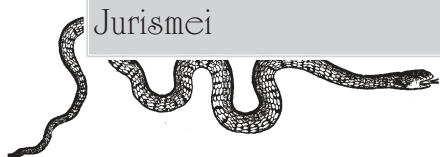
Grissle, aging Steward

“Yes, your magnificence. It shall be so.”

Grissle is eager to please his master, but tends to use inappropriate honorifics at which Quillan cringes with embarrassment. Most retainers on the Dying Earth are competent but malicious; in contrast the incompetent Grissle is honest and eager to please. Grissle wears local garb; a strip of heavy brown cloth wrapped around the entire body, but with the addition of an axe-shaped tattoo on his forehead.

Ratings: Persuade (Obfuscatory) 6, Purehearted 5, Attack (Finesse) 4, Defense (Dodge) 3, Health 6, Craftsmanship 2, Driving 3, Pedantry 8, Perception 5, Scuttlebutt 5, Stewardship 6

Quillan’s manse itself is merely a rather larger house set amongst its own fowl yards and from the outside resembles the other houses in the area. Inside, it is very different. Quillan subscribes to the school of thought that insists mages should look like mages. The ground floor of the house is one large reception room, with kitchen, dining room and assorted storerooms off it. The reception room itself is festooned with witch balls and sacred symbols culled from across the aeons. A stuffed blood-eel hangs from the ceiling and a deodand skeleton stands in one corner. One wall is covered entirely with bookshelves and browsers will note such titles as *Whither Necromancy?* Tarpon’s *Osmological Handbook* and even Gill and Velar’s *Herbicide Botany*. The magician’s other interest, antique sculpture, is obvious from the sketchbook



and two folios of etchings. Quillan does not keep his spell books on public display; they are hidden upstairs in his study.

Quillan is not one of the great mages; indeed if he lived in Kaiin he might not even be considered a mage at all. He has mastered a considerable number of cantraps which he uses widely. One of his most useful is one which ensures that a cooked fowl is always done to perfection. He also knows another which can tighten netting or fold it neatly and a third which makes sure that his hair is clean and tidy. All three provide him with regular work in the neighborhood. Other than that, he can barely hold two spells in mind at the same time. He usually keeps *The Excellent Prismatic Spray* and *The Omnipotent Sphere* encompassed.

For more reliable protection, Quillan possesses The Abominable Vermin Re-infesting Bell. This device hangs from a fob chain. It is a rat's skull, enchanted to a metallic quality. Its clapper is a fusion of scarab, mouse, and vole bones. When rung, all dead representatives of those species swarm up in a four-foot circle around the caster and attack the nearest living thing, unless it is

magically protected. The vermin attack with a Ferocity of 4, defend with a Misdirection 4, have a collective Health of 4, but cannot do more than Hurt. Victims failing a Wherewithall roll can do nothing more than fight off the vermin.

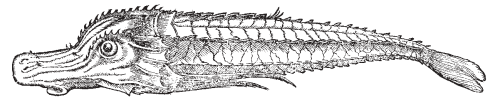
The Walking Statue

One of Quillan's books goes into some detail about the palace of Hundir the Marginal[†]. Hundir was a mage of considerable power who specialized in animated statuary. In the grounds was a statue which was so constructed that, when activated, would defend its owner's property. It is a statue of a warrior in the panoply of a forgotten aeon.

Quillan has enchanted a pendant which will always point to the statue until it touches it. From that moment, the pendant points to Quillan. He will ask the party to take the pendant, find the statue and bring it back to him. For this, he will pay up to thirty terces each. It will take four people to carry the statue.

If Quillan is impressed by the party's air of trustworthiness he will tell them the command word, 'hipploe' which makes the statue walk





behind the person who last said the word. He will on no account tell them the command word 'zennloe,' which invokes the artifact's guardian function, although the PCs will learn it if he sets the statue on them, whether by way of experiment or in an attempt at chastisement.

The journey north is difficult as the direct route suggested by the pendant is against the very bones of the land. No paths run in that direction and every rill, stream or gully crosses their route. Indeed at one point they will come across a sheer escarpment forty feet high which they will have to travel ten or fifteen miles east or west to ascend. The statue still stands, but there is no sign of any manse or garden. The route back is equally tricky. (It is less difficult if the statue can walk).

The trip will present other problems. Twk-men are quite numerous in the area and, while not hostile, they need pacifying if they are to be of use. Bribes of rare pollen, exotic foodstuffs, fine hair or spun gold are well received. Twk-men will be able to suggest short cuts or more likely easy ways to bypass obstacles. Asms and deodands are also common and the party will have to spend at least two nights in the woods. Twk-men can recommend safe campsites. There are several deserted towers, houses or woodman's shacks in the area. None are of any real interest being long plundered of anything of value, the towers consist of two stories with a crenellated roof walk and are left over from the 19th Aeon when they marked the frontier of two feuding lordlings.

The Statue

Hundir's guardian has not weathered well. The stone he chose for it, a pale blue marble, has well-defined fracture lines and years of water seepage have made it friable. Its first moments after full animation, when it draws its two stone axes, is impressive, the cloud of dust when it smashes them together far less so. Quillan's hidden madness will surface on return of the statue. He will think himself the reincarnation of Hundir, and respond to any demands for payment with a maniacal giggle and the command word 'zennloe'.

Should Quillan set his stone soldier on them it will disarm itself and then totter around waiting to be hit. Only attacks using the Strength style will

damage it. These result in clouds of dust and fragments. Everyone fighting the statue should make a Health roll, with a 1-point levy against the PC who did the damage. Those who fail cannot act for one round.

Quillan will be appalled at this wanton vandalism of a miraculous artifact and will insist that, in lieu of damages, they must journey to Azenomei, and secure the famous Twk-man statue on his behalf (see p146).



The Northern Trail

North of Wittle's Inn the land rises somewhat and its bones lie close to the surface. Myrna the Rootless traveled through this area and left her impressions for posterity:

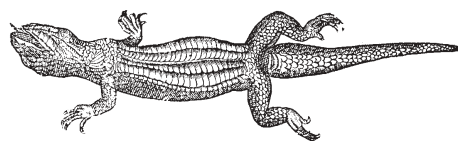
... The landscape is ancient beyond telling... mountains of red-gray sandstone rise like towering, buttressed layer cakes, their interleaved sediments the only record of the existence of another, earlier mountain range which was worn away by to be re-deposited as a sea floor, and rose to be mountains yet again. These modern hills are rooted on the oldest rocks in Ascolais... twisted and contorted, low hills and valleys of gneiss rise from the river and the grasses to glisten in the sun. But these hills and valleys were only revealed by recent erosion of the sandstone, not created by it... the landscape of the gneiss was formed by wind, rain and frost many aeons ago.

I haven't begun to describe the beauty of the rocks themselves which, when fresh-riven by frost or hammer blow split to reveal contorted veins of milk-White quartz, black hornfels and pink feldspar, which glistens like crystalline flesh in the sunlight...

The northern trail is difficult to follow and rarely used. It winds in and out of the twisted valleys. Travelers will occasionally see a length of low wall, up to three bricks high in places where a house once stood. Elsewhere there are isolated chimneystacks, the timber building having long rotted around them.



The Northern Spa



Curses

At one place the path passes through what was obviously a fine arch, the engravings overgrown with ivy and chiddlemoss. The engravings suggest that it is unwise to leave the trail in the hours of darkness.[†]

A ghost inhabits the broken town, and will curse anyone who leaves the path. The ghost is that of a priest, Mombalume, who followed the xenophobic cult of Cerulean Purity. The rites of the cult insisted that to be ordained, each priest must curse three strangers to the village. Pure-Hearted Mombalume did not fulfill this requirement, and his cruel demonic deity refused him peace.

Mombalume need only curse three travelers and he will be free. Using Impersonation he will create voices nearby, asking for help or offering rewards. He is still very reluctant to curse travelers, but if they show sufficient arrogance and self-interest, he will change his mind. His curses are very weak, “may your nails grow quickly” or “may you always find a grub in your salad.”

Some PCs might assist the ghost, perhaps persuading it to use curses that are easily averted or that cancel each other out. If they assist him, he will reveal to them the location of the local temple, where they will find a case of fine local wine, long since turned to vinegar. The bottles are coated with a fine film that reflects rainbow hues, enhancing the appearance of any liquid therein.

The Northern Spa

After two long days walking the path opens out and even shows signs of use. In places the stone paving still remains. Finally, a mere thirty miles from Wittle’s Inn as the pelgrane flies, is an old spa. A small stream plunges two hundred feet vertically down a cliff face into a pool. The pool itself is also fed by a spring, which bubbles up through the rocks nearby. There is a definite metallic tang to the air, with a hint of sulfur.

The spa building itself was once impressive to behold. The spring itself is surrounded by a rotunda, with a opening in the roof through which the water fall pours. The rotunda was obviously home to many exotic plants and there are still the foundations of a

nympharium visible to the north side. The southern approach to the spring was through another building, some of which still stands, its many-arched roof of bronze sheets is patched in places with both tile and even slate. There are lean-to structures built against it and from these passersby can hear the squeal of swine. Along the cliff face itself, it is obvious that there were once wrought iron walkways, which are now much decayed. Some hang down while others have fallen, crashing through the rotunda and into the pool.

Grubby urchins will swamp anyone approaching the spa. They deluge the travelers with questions and conduct a detailed examination of their possessions. Some of the older ones will solicit services of a personal nature and will endeavor to distract the party, so that younger members can pilfer small items from their baggage. If the visitors drive the urchins off, they will flee back to the spa with screams and their adults will pour out to protect them. Sharp-eyed travelers may notice that all these children appear to be female. The arrival of travelers will bring adults to the doors of the miscellaneous shacks, from where they will sullenly watch them approach. Eventually an elderly man, grubby, but reasonably well dressed, will approach them and formally welcome them. He is Nassid, self-proclaimed guardian of the sacred waters and lord of what little he surveys.

Nassid, mad anthropophage

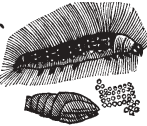
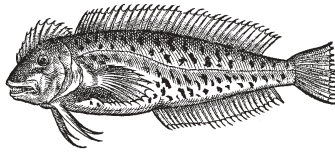
“Ha, the sun flickers, I must concentrate my efforts more earnestly, lest it goes out inadvertently.”

In the days of the Dying Earth where eccentricity is expected and indulged, there is little left to surprise the experienced traveler. Even so, Nassid is quite, quite mad. Although lucid and courteous, he has crossed the threshold of the human experience and now has more in common with deodands than normal men. His conversation in disconcerting as he leaps from one subject to another. He will drop strange phrases into any conversation, no matter what the topic.

Nassid looks old but still sprightly. Dressed in a long black robe on which are embroidered various runes and icons. Some are sewn on upside down.

Ratings: Persuade (Obfuscatory) 9, Rebuff (Wary) 12, (Attack (Caution) 3, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 7, Health 3, Magic (Daring) 2,

[†] A Pedantry check will reveal this.



Specialization (vat creatures) 0, Appraisal 5, Astronomy 2, Athletics 1, Concealment 1, Engineering 3, Etiquette 2, Gambling 1, Living Rough 1, Pedantry 3, Perception 8, Physician 1, Stealth 5, Tracking 1, Wealth 6, Wherewithal 1
Resistances: Arrogance 0, Avarice 0, Gourmandism 0, Indolence 10, Pettifoggery 5, Rakishness 0.

Nassid maintains himself in some style and considerable squalor. He has a harem of over thirty women, there are no other men; boy children are weaned late and then fattened for the table. It is they who squeal from the lean-tos. He has lost track of just how old he is, but the waters of the spring have maintained his vigor and some of his women are at least his great-great granddaughters.

During the night, parties of his women roam the woods with battlescythes, mattocks and heavy bows. They will hunt down for the table any living creature but especially prize deodand. There is normally at least one deodand hanging in a shed being butchered.

Nassid regards all travelers as food, but enjoys conversing with them and, when night falls, he will both provide a feast and accommodate them in a relatively clean stone-built hut set a little apart from the rest. There is no bedding, but there are several man-sized raised areas on the floor. The door has a bar, which can only be worked from the inside. Less obviously, some roof sections can be removed easily from outside and anyone within can be shot down from above with arrows as, there is nowhere to hide.

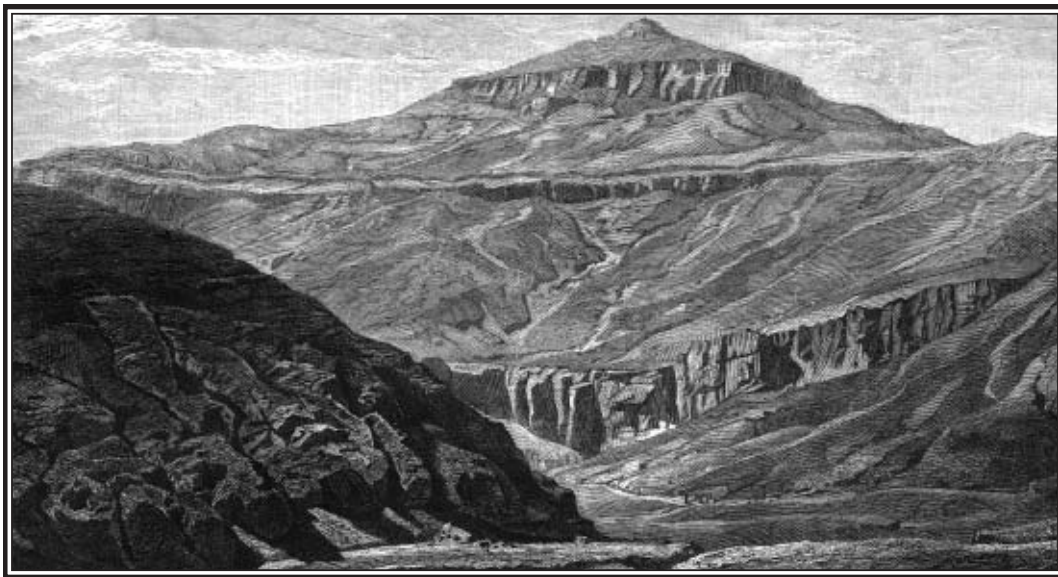
Nassid may well have been an apprentice mage at one point. If anyone manages to engage his women in private conversation (difficult to arrange unless they are bribed with salt or honey) they will talk of demons and sandestins. They will also mention his workroom. One place where this private conversation is possible is at the rather grand evening meal that Nassid will insist on laying on for his visitors. This is both a chance for him to converse with them and to flavor their flesh for the pot. He will encourage them to drink wine and eat fruit, especially anything with a meddler sauce. This, he feels, enhances the flavor immensely. He has at the table vast cauldrons of a stew of nondescript appearance and flavor, that the women eat with great gusto. Nassid feels this stew, heavily seasoned with

ramp as it is, will not enhance the flavor of his intended victims.

Serving at the table are a handful of mute eunuchs. These sad-faced individuals are some of Nassid's many sons, who have been allowed to grow into their early teens. In the last year of their life they eat meddler sauce with everything and go fat to the slaughter. If a traveler shows them any attention or sympathy they, will desperately try to convey to him, in mime, the peril he is in and will encourage travelers to eat heartily of the stew.

Nassid's workroom is in the bronze roofed building next to the rotunda. There he has a couple of growing vats, a shelf laden with stopped vessels and a large barrel containing socotrine aloes. Nassid has been experimenting in his growing vats, but has achieved nothing. They are normally filled with a haphazard collection of apparently random organs from an assortment of species, some human. In hot weather the stench can be overpowering, but Nassid will not use preservatives as failed experiments end up as stew, any unpleasant flavors disguised with ramp. On the bench by the vats is a tattered volume labeled *The Workbook of Jabbernowl* but owning it has obviously done Nassid no good whatsoever. The fact that it is written in Jabbernowl's own imaginary language probably doesn't help. On the shelf there are several more volumes, Poggiore's *Absolutes*, Phunurus's *Commentaries on Phandaal*, Rustoppen's *Ritual Artifacts and Major Thaumaturgical Items of the Derna-Scaum Basin* and *The Edicts of the Green and Purple College*.[†] Nassid has access to several powerful spells, but no longer has the mental capacity to encompass them, and indeed it is unlikely he could read them successfully from a text. He has, at times been served by madlings, but these long since worked off their indenture points. He has also dabbled with daihak but whether these experiences were a cause, or merely a result of his madness, is no longer possible to ascertain. If he is attacked he will attempt to summon a daihak to protect him. This summoning will not actually work but will cause so much disturbance in some of the nether worlds that it is not impossible that one of the denizens could manifest themselves briefly out of simple curiosity.

[†] Magical scholars will find the Edicts a disappointment. They contain no arcane lore, but are a record of estate management and the college's student bylaws. The list of cutlery required to eat a mead apple runs to fifteen items, some of them no longer known.



South of the Scaum

In which we describe many hazards, omitting only those we feel to be of little interest to the experienced traveller.

Those territories that lie to the south of the River Scaum are less visited than those to the north. The country is lower lying and much is wet and marshy.

Begellum

From Osier, the road continues south. This trail is relatively safe, especially if followed by a strong party. Two days south of Osier is the village of Begellum. The inhabitants are a tall and, one might even say, a handsome race. They cultivate large vegetable gardens and keep beehives on the flat roofs of their houses. These four and five story buildings are made of mud brick, over which they paint the resin of the morobab tree. This preserves the buildings from the rain. It is traditional for houses to have their fourth floor overhang the other floors and houses are built close together so that it is possible to step from one roof to another with relative ease.

The inhabitants are followers of the deipnosophist Warkle and their headman or priest is known as the Ostiary. They are great believers in the value of sunlight and to ensure they benefit as much as possible from its health-giving rays they shave every trace of hair off their heads, leaving only eyelashes.

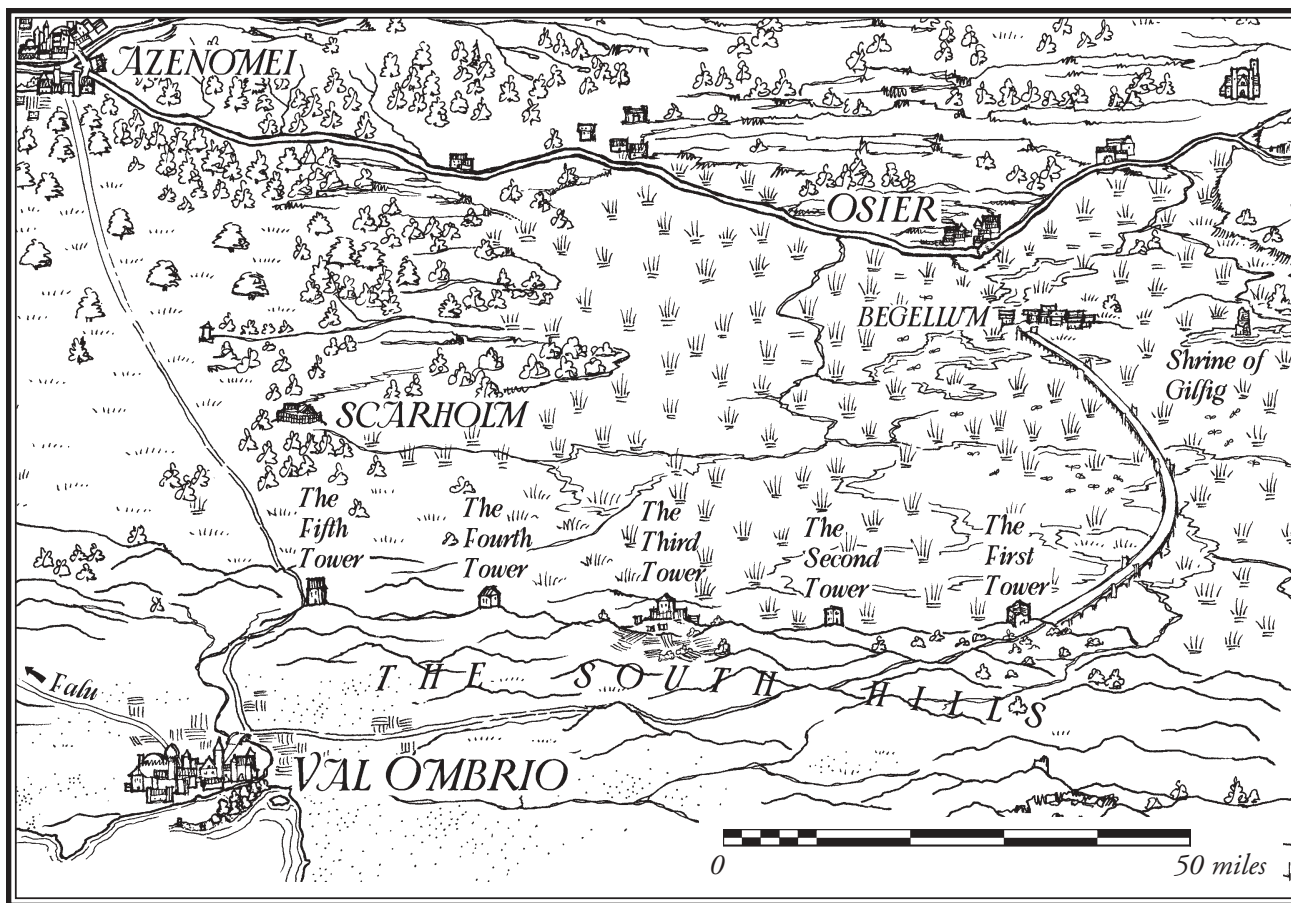
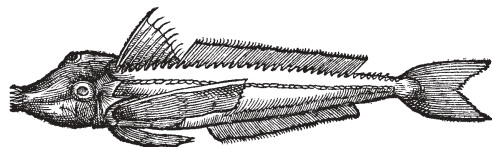
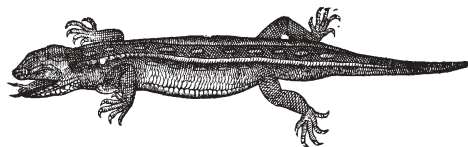
They also wear as few garments as the season allows them. Those they do wear tend to be semi-transparent. From Begellum there still exists a trail which winds its way east through bottomless swamps towards the hills. This is the old pilgrims' route to the Shrine of Gilfig. The route is difficult to follow and rarely used. The Ostiary is supposed to follow the route regularly and check the markers but the current incumbent, Solinvass the Enlightened, is old and running to fat and he hasn't been out of the village for over a decade.

Solinvass the Enlightened, Ostiary, Priest of Gilfig and Village Headman

"We are not people easily disturbed by plangent cries, servient as we are to the one true doctrine. So cease your clamour and bare your head to the sun's last health-giving rays."

The portly Priest of Gilfig and First Servant of Warkle, Solinvass's has confined his spiritual role to a few muttered prayers at breakfast and dinner. His dress is confined to a small loincloth during the warmer seasons, supplemented with a grubby white cassock when the weather turns cold.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 1.5~, Rebuff (Obtuse) ~, Attack (Caution) 4, Defense



(Surefootedness) 5, Health 6, Appraisal 6,
Pedantry 8, Perception 6, Physician 5
Resistances: Indolence 1, Gourmandism 0

The Ruined Shrine

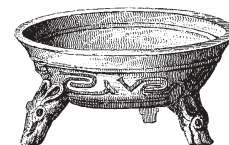
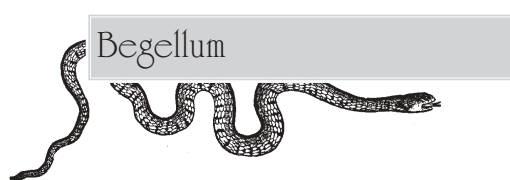
The Shrine to Gilfig, Preminent, and Revealed, stands in clearing, edged with mead-apple trees. Once, it was a fine establishment, with buildings laid out like the markings on a clock face. A central tower, now fallen and lost, cast its shadow on the structures. When it darkened them, the monks used them for ritual cursing. All that remains intact is the mid-afternoon cursing-room, which is now home to an erb, who uses a vellum copy of the *Correct and Right-Written Protocols* as nesting material.

Solvinass is contracted to keep the ruin in good order and specifically to prevent 'any use, occupation or infestation, without prior sanction

from the appropriate authority, by creatures, emanations or presences, sentient or otherwise.' Solvinass has recently discovered that a group of pilgrims will shortly be arriving from up-river and is aware that they will hold him responsible for the decrepitude of the shrine.

He is further enjoined to ensure that any pilgrims 'feel the full and authentic splendor of the preminent and revealed god, who is unquestionably in residence.' Solvinass has a locked handcart, filled with cleaning supplies, theatrical props and costumes, to assist in the discharge of his duties.

The Ostiary is more than happy to subcontract these tasks to suitable applicants. If they do not have their own tools, he will rent his to them. As village headman, Solvinass can require their assistance as a reasonable charge for their hospitality and security. Regrettably, he has no knowledge of the correct protocols, or even of



orthodox Gilfigite theosophy, but doubts that the same would be true of pilgrims. The PCs can either make up their own ritual, hoping that the pilgrims will not notice, or they can recover the text from under the erb.

The villagers welcome passing merchants. They sell morobab resin in pottery containers, two of which can be slung over the back of all but the smallest pack beast. They also produce a strong spirit made from distilling mead over slow burning peat fires. This is well received by drinkers who regard it as a sovereign remedy for impotence and lachrymal palsy. Finally, they produce sturdy but virtually transparent garments made from the hair of the fiber-warl. Travelers arriving at the village are expected to visit the Ostiary at his home and discuss with him matters of philosophical import. If they impress him as persons of learning and integrity (or are naturally bald) they will be welcomed and allowed to stay and trade.

Otherwise they will be forced out of the village and will have to retire to the kraal. This is a high-walled circular enclosure where the flock of fiber-warls spends the night. These are tall and ungainly animals of limited conversational ability, whose long fleece is shorn at monthly intervals. The hairs of the fleece are virtually transparent.

Unfortunately, they share the irascibility of all their kind, dislike strangers, whom they ostentatiously ignore by sitting beside their strong smelling dung fires singing strange songs in a high falsetto throughout the night.

Travelers who are fated to spend the night in the kraal (which while noisy and malodorous is at least safe) can avoid this fate by offering to perform any simple task to aid the community. Solinvass does have something that he wants doing. The village's reputation for fine honey and even finer honey spirit is based on the horse-blossom meadows that the bees pasture. This is a swathe of cleared land on a grassy ridge. Barely a thousand paces across and less than two thousand long it is a riot of color from spring through summer into autumn. Many of the plants were created long ago to produce nectar of great delicacy and with many subtle flavors. Inconveniently, in the last few years a group of nomadic herdsmen from the south has set up permanent camp there. These people actually



Nomad's Fibre-Warl



4 warl's kidneys, cored, skinned and chopped.[†]

4 fibre-warl chops

1 large ale glass of hot water. *The finished dish should be relatively thick but not stiff enough to stand up unsupported.*

1 thrissel pod or bay leaf

2 springs of fresh thyme

One quarter twire root cut into slices one thumb-width thick. *A pound of potatoes may be substituted when twire root is out of season.*

One pound of onions, roughly chopped.

1 tablespoon full of flour

salt and pepper

You can also add mushrooms *one pound or less*

Many add gem-wrack, carrot, fresh gathered stur-moss and turnip as well. For every pound of potato add quarter of a pound of these mixed vegetables.

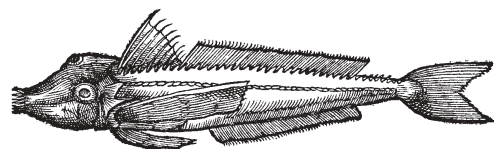
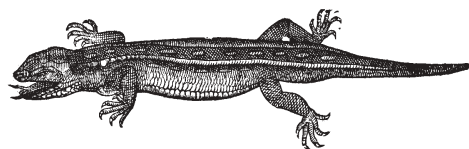
Assemble the dish in layers, a layer of potato, a layer of onion, a layer of carrot and turnip, with a bit of meat between the layers. Finish with a layer of potato. If there is any gravy left, or even some quail or similar fowl or meat beast left over from a previous meal then that too may be rendered more pleasant by inclusion in this dish.

Put this all in a sealed clay pot in the embers of a fire for about three hours. Eat.[‡]



[†] Lamb was substituted for fibre-warl in the distant past when fibre-warl was not known.

[‡] We apologize for the length of this culinary digression, but it was the writer's invariable practice to describe his own meals in his manuscript. Going by the stains on the paper, he did not break from his work to eat.



tend fibre-warls and have found that grazing on the meadows produces fibre-warl meat of exquisite flavor, which is winning a fine reputation as far away as Kaiin. When they first arrived, Solinvass negotiated with them and it was settled that they could stay for three months a year and graze no more than 400 head. They did honor this agreement for the first two years but latterly have refused to move. Solinvass wants someone to impress upon them that they should once more honor the arrangement.

It is a five-minute walk to the meadows and a further ten minutes to find the herders. They are a thin, dark people with lank blond hair, which the men, at least, wear in five thick plaits down their backs. They braid their beards and women curl the ends of their mustachios so that it is possible to rest a cheroot in them. They greet travelers with suspicious reserve but are not unfriendly. The same cannot be said of the guard beasts, man-high, snarling quadrupeds which guard the flocks. When the travelers explain their business the nomads will stop them and tell them that this is best discussed at a public meeting. The party then has to address an audience of about forty, ranged in age from babes in arms to crones. If the party are courteous and don't make obvious threats or try to intimidate them, they will be given a polite hearing. When the party have made their case, if they have been convincing, the nomads will sit them down to a formal meal and explain the situation. If unconvincing, the nomads will treat them with

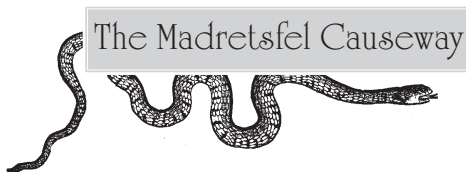
contempt and drive them from the camp, showering them with warl droppings. Treat the nomads as a single individual for the purposes of Persuasion, with a Rebuff (Wary) of 1.5-.

The nomads explain that they would be happy to stick to the agreement. When they try to drive the flock down the trail that leads away from the meadow both warls and guard beasts become confused and will not proceed further. They suspect that a hermit who lives in the woods is to blame.

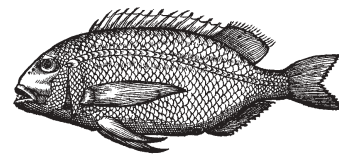
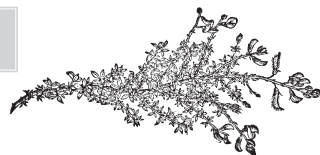
The hermit himself may be found sitting, cross-legged on a narrow wooden shelf fixed about twelve feet up in a daobado tree a mile to the southwest of the meadows. He will see the party approach and will greet them gravely. He will listen to their problem and will ask them searching philosophical questions in an attempt to see whether they are persons of intelligence. If they make a poor impression on him he will turn his back on them and climb further up into the tree, until he is no longer visible. If they impress him he will throw down a rope ladder and invites them to ascend. Those who do are in for a surprise because when they arrive at the branch they see a large, comfortable room, well stocked with the good things of life, which is invisible from below. They will also notice rooms that extend from the one they can see.

The hermit, Jusmar, is a little surprised that there is a problem. He has small vegetable plots, which are scattered among the trees. Eventually he grew tired of chasing warl away from them when the nomads let their animals roam unattended. Finally, he cast a minor curse, which rebuffed both fibre-warls and the guard beasts. What he hadn't realized was that the spell not only lay between the meadows and his vegetables, but it across the nomads' only route out of the meadows to reach their winter pastures. As he is a reasonable man he will offer to lift the malediction, if the nomads send a herdsman to keep warls on the meadow and off his vegetables. If this offer is brought to the nomads they will be perfectly happy to come to an agreement on these terms and will immediately send a man and a guard-beast to cover that side of the meadow. The nomads will also show their gratitude to the party. Each will be given a heavy





The Madretsfel Causeway



warl-fibre cloak, woven with broad zigzag patterns in bright colors.

On return to the village of Begellum, Solinvass will be pleased with the success of their mission. They will be accommodated in his own house and over a table, laden with such local delicacies as imported honey-glazed, baked oast on a bed of smoked marsh grass and tittlebirds stuffed with acorns, all served with slices of wild plum, he will join them in a wide ranging discussion on the meaning of life and perhaps even pass on what few details he knows of the road ahead.



The Madretsfel Causeway

Further south the road crosses the worst of the swamps on a great raised causeway which rests on a series of arches. It is wide enough for three wagons to drive abreast and appears to be formed from one seamless piece of stone. It takes three days to walk from one end to another. The structure is now known as the Madretsfel causeway because legend (and an inscription in the lost tongue of the Ascolid Mummies) decrees that the causeway was built by the last great Archon of Val Ombrio, Madretsfel the Obscure. The arches rest on huge stone piles, built into the swamp, and many of them are inhabited by swamp fishermen, who build reed shelters which cling to the undersides of the arches. Indeed, some are suspended from thick reed cables that are slung over the causeway. The fishermen travel around the swamps in coracles made from woven reeds, caulked with oily slime. They hunt various amphibians and birds, which they bring down with blowpipes, as well as fish, which they catch in woven traps. They also dive into the meres for treasure, because the swamp has formed over the ruins of some long-forgotten city. The divers breathe either through a long tube of reed or, for longer excursions, sink airbags of egret skin. Travelers on the causeway are potential customers and they will be regularly propositioned. As well as charko, which is fish, dry grilled until flaky and then served with a chokeapple bud sauce, the fisher-folk pride themselves

in producing a fine haebass - stewed waterwirt with egret livers all topped with a honey-glazed pastry made from stone-ground reed pith and fish oil. Each community will also have a small stall on the causeway where they display finds taken from the sunken ruins. Much of these are pieces of cunningly shaped stonework or statuary, grossly over valued by the fishermen for whom any stone is a valuable asset. There are also other items of value. Iridescent porcelain from the 15th Aeon, heavy bronze mixing bowls from the 19th Aeon, all jumbled up with ivory inlaid black marble bench tops and pallid-featured statuettes of indestructible resin alloy.

If a traveler seems unusually discerning or more than usually wealthy, he will be offered different fare. Some finds are gathered from pits dug down through the occasional mud islands, which yield far more interesting goods. One pit has broken into the peribolos of a petty savant of the 18th Aeon, and some of the more perishable furnishings have survived intact. Much has already been disposed of, but there remain two goblets, each cut from a single gem, one sapphire, the other ruby. Anything drunk from the blue cup, even honey syrup, tastes pleasantly tart and astringent, while even vinegar would taste deeply sweet and mellow from the red goblet.

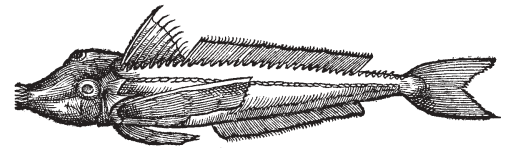
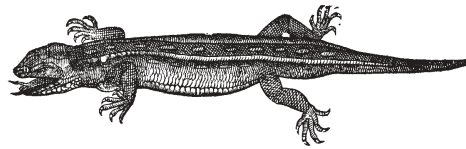
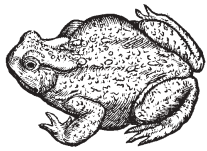
There is also a heavy tome that the savant was reading at the time. It is D'munoth's *A Compendium of the Denizens of the Subworlds*, a guide to sandestins and similar creatures.



Chokeapple bud sauce



Take one plump chokeapple bud (use a clove of garlic out of season.) Crush it and place it in a bowl. Pour over five tablespoons of dry white wine or cider, and equal amount of brown rockfish sauce. Two tablespoons of sieved tomato and either a whole fresh mustard root, chopped and soured in horsetail sap thinned in plum vinegar or a heaped tablespoon of mustard powder. Finally, add a tablespoon of the softest of brown sugars. Whisk briskly with a slotted spoon until all is blended to a harmonious whole.



D'munoth's Compendium

D'munoth's *A Compendium of the Denizens of the Subworlds* was actually written as a witty spoof on similar learned works written at the same period which tended to be long on pontification and hyperbole but short on facts. It includes an incantation for summoning sandestins and binding them. Long forgotten, its nature will be obvious to anyone who has any knowledge of sandestins for, to someone with knowledge of such incantations, it is obviously flawed.

What the incantation does is mark the caster for denizens of the subworlds while simultaneously protecting them from subworld attack. Because D'munoth's *Compendium* is a much sought-after work amongst sandestins, who appreciate its mockery of magicians, they will approach the caster in a score of guises and attempt to trick them into parting with the book. Indeed, if approached outright most sandestins would regard one or even two indenture points a fair price for a good copy.

The fisher folk prefer to trade for metal items. They especially prize long-bladed knives or even swords, as these are regarded as sovereign protection against the large bull waterwirt who, when in rut, will attack a man on sight, and the asms who lurk in the swamp forest. They also fear the ghouls who travel the

swamp lying prone on narrow rafts which they paddle with their hands. Fisher folk are seldom bothered by bandits and half-men, who fear their blowpipes and poisoned darts.

The South Hills

At the end of the causeway, the road continues southwest to Val Ombrio and beyond. It is possible to head west along a path which follows a raised ridge which runs though the South Hills. There are scattered clearings in the thick scrub, which contain nothing but the charred and blackened remains of burned houses. This area was once home to simple smallholders who lived in scattered hamlets. They have all gone now, dead or scattered by the half-men who have congregated in the swamps and forests north of this area.

The First Tower

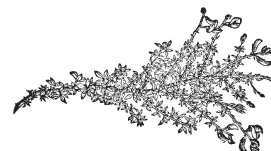
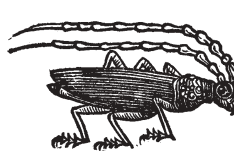
At twenty-mile intervals along the ridge, there are stout stone towers, three stories high and about forty feet square at the base. They were built many years ago to provide shelter for the travelers who used this route. The first is in a ruinous condition, there are no internal floors or walls and the roof has also fallen in. The walls still stand and it is possible to block the doorway with fallen roof timbers, to spend the night in reasonable safety.

The Second Tower

The second tower still stands in fair condition. Several families of degenerate cozeners live here. They were cast out from their own community in Sousanese coast and would flee no further.

Loson, cozeners and head of the Nugam family

"Shoes do not mitigate against liability for hoofage. If



mermelants pay, so must you."

When travelers are ensconced in the mean shelter provided by the inhabitants of the second tower, Loson and his family will move amongst them, demanding that they pay duties that are required under archaic legislation. Loson chews Lauren grass and is not easily understood.

Ratings: Persuade (Obfuscatory) 1.5-, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 6, Attack (Cunning) 7, Defense (Intuition) 7, Health, Appraisal 6, Concealment 4, Craftsmanship 5, Gambling 6, Imposture 3, Living Rough 6, Perception 5, Quick Fingers 4, Stewardship 6, Tracking 4, Wherewithal 4,

Resistances: Avarice 0

Humule, Edsiff, Mollibun, Carabam, cozeners

"My word is a copper-bottomed pledge of propriety."

Simpering, dirty and skinny, only the most pure-hearted would mistake the cozeners for honest men. They wear their hair in a crest thickened with mud or dung and ornamented with flowers or pretty stones.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 5, Rebuff (Obtuse) 7, Attack (Speed) 6, Defense (Parry) 4, Health 6, Athletics 6, Concealment 3, Gambling 5, Imposture 4, Living Rough 6, Pedantry 2, Perception 4, Quick Fingers 5, Scuttlebutt 2

Inbred and timid, they rarely venture out of sight of the tower and scrape a living from their small plots and from fishing in pools at the edge of the swamp. They survive by fleeing to the tower when faced with attack and by hurling stones from the flat roof at besiegers. Any travelers who seek shelter will cause consternation. They will not let anyone inside the tower but will allow them to camp at its foot. Against one side of the tower, a lean-to stable holds their few draught beasts are held. This would afford shelter to the truly desperate.



The Third Tower

The third tower is the stronghold of a pocket barony ruled by Kieradd, Lord of the Last Tower. Of all the towers, is in the best condition. It has been extended, outhouses have been added, and the whole has been ringed about with a curtain wall with a sentry way and interval tower. It is a substantial fortification. Travelers are met a couple of miles away from the tower by a dozen riders on beast-back armed with glaives and dart pistols. They will question the travelers carefully about their business, and then half the patrol will escort them on to the tower. There they are met at the gate by guards with war flails or halberds. If the travelers are unkempt, or persons of rough or violent disposition, then they will be interviewed by the guard sergeant and will spend the night on pallets in the guard room before being escorted on their way next day.

Kieradd, Lord of the Last Tower

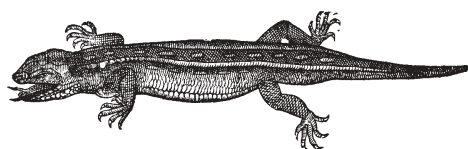
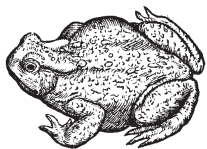
"My justice is brisk but fair."

Kieradd, Lord of the Last Tower, is dark and saturnine. He is courteous, friendly and a considerate host. An anachronism, Kieradd holds back the encroaching darkness with determined efforts to rid his lands of half-men and bandits.[†] He controls this tower and the next two and is acknowledged as lord of the population who live in the South Hills. He holds no one to be his master but has been known to say that he holds in the greatest honor the men of the Green Legion and every year he exchanges filial greetings and gifts with the Prince of Kaiin. In Val Ombrio, he is considered a mixed blessing. He shields them from the threat of the beast men but charges tolls on all goods traveling north or south through his territory. Constantly on the alert, it is he who keeps the half-men penned up against the river.

Kieradd wears the a variation on the uniform of the Green Legion; a padded, yellow jacket, stained with verdigris, red trousers with gold piping, black ankle boots and a red neckerchief embroidered with a rampant grude.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 8, Rebuff (Penetrating) 10, Attack (Cunning) 12, Defense

[†] Kieradd is, of course, doomed. As a soldier with territorial ambitions he will inevitably irritate the morose Arch-magician Tchamast, who has not yet noticed him, or his tower. The riders have inadvertently damaged his wild garden and, on one occasion, killed a perfectly serviceable tree-weasel.



(Intuition) 10, Health 9, Magic (Studious) 6, Athletics 5, Concealment 6, Imposture 2, Living Rough 6, Pedantry 6, Perception 8, Riding 8, Stealth 5, Stewardship 8, Tracking 6, Wherewithal 8

Resistances: Arrogance 2, Avarice 6, Gourmandism 2, Indolence 6, Pettifoggery 2, Rakishness 2

Quimbol, Confidential Secretary to Lord Kieradd

“In Kaiin, you would simply be thrown into the deodand pits for that remark.”

Once a courtier in Prince Kandive’s court, Quimbol breached the sartorial laws of Kaiin by wearing an over-fancy brocade. Blaphena, the Inquisitor of Fashion banished him from Kaiin, where he took up with Kieradd. He passes confidential information to any outsiders he thinks will cause Kieradd trouble. His reasons for hating Kieradd are complex, and he does not understand them himself. He gains nothing from his treachery other than satisfaction. If presented with incontrovertible evidence of his misdeeds he will fall silent. If the opportunity arises, his pupils will shrink, he will shut his mouth tightly, moan, then stalk his accusers with a needle-thin dagger poisoned with Matakak’s Vengeance.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) ~, Penetrating 1.5~, Attack (Cunning) 5, Defense (Misdirection) 8, Appraisal 9, Craftsmanship 4, Etiquette 8, Gambling 5, Imposture 6, Perception 7, Physician 6, Scuttlebutt 4, Stealth 6, Stewardship 7, Tracking 5

Resistances: Arrogance 1

Sopham, Guard Sergeant

“I suggest you surrender. I have been known to neglect niceties of due process.”

The sergeant is a hardy veteran with a sadistic streak. He treats his soldiers well, and reserves his ire for itinerant adventurers and half-men. He does understand the distinction, but does not consider it worthy of note.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 9, Rebuff (Penetrating) 8, Attack (Finesse) ~, Defense (Dodge) 1.5~, Health 10, Athletics 5, Perception 6, Stewardship 7, Wherewithal 7

Matakak’s Vengeance

This horrific toxin was first brewed by the renowned apothecary Matakak when he was unexpectedly passed over for promotion by Jemlin, Mad King Shin’s Chamberlain. It induces occasional bouts of paralyzing pain, screaming and sweating, followed by copious drooling and sometimes, death. Only one person in Kaiin knows the antidote; other cures are temporary.

Potency: Levy 3

Interval: 15 minutes

Effect: When first afflicted, the victim makes a Health roll. On a Dismal Failure, death results in approximately one hour. On other failures, the victim suffers bouts of paralyzing pain, screaming and sweating, followed by copious drooling. The roll must be repeated every day until the victim finds a cure; the bout occurring at a random time during the following day. An Illustrious Success gives five days reprieve from the symptoms.

Coiblome, Lemithet and Costum, guards

“Your pleas would be more convincing if you were trembling with fear.”

There are few opportunities in the Scaum Valley for legalized bullying, and the guardsmen realize their luck in acquiring such a sinecure.

Their orders are to escort all travelers to the Guard Sergeant. Any attempt to persuade them otherwise is at a levy of 1.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 6, Rebuff (Wary) ~, Attack (Strength) Attack () ~, Defense (Parry) 1.5~, Health 8, Athletics 4, Gambling 5, Perception 4, Scuttlebutt 3, Wherewithal 5

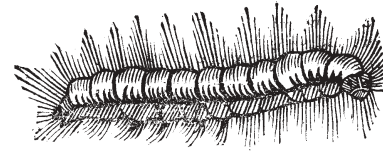
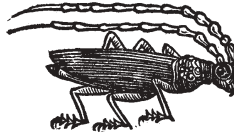
Tschk and Mkng, riding beasts

“Tschk refers the honorable questioner to the rider, above.”

Kieradd’s riding beasts are quadrupeds, called grudes that stand slightly higher than a man at the shoulder. They have a thick hide, which is in many places formed from overlapping horn plates. These are lacquered in bright colors and lovingly polished by the riders. There is also a saddle, which is an integral part of the hide. The beasts can move faster than a man can run, but not for many miles.

They have long necks and broad heads with

The Third Tower



heavy jaws. Relatively intelligent, some can read and all can hold their own in a reasoned conversation. A close bond exists between rider and mount and it is not unknown for the mount to be at least as intelligent as the rider.

Grudes avoid the use of pronouns, considering them an insult to a perfectly good name. Their names are very hard to pronounce, requiring an Etiquette or Pedantry roll, if the GM wishes it. Riders who wish to instruct grudes must do so in the form of an exposition in the present tense, for example, "Grude Tschk bravely traverses the hill and waits at the bank of the Scaum, with his comrades who greet him with great growls."

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 4, Rebuff (Obtuse) 2-, Attack (Strength) Attack () 1.5-, Defense (Intuition) 7, Health 10, Athletics 10, Etiquette 4



Bait

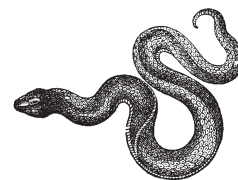
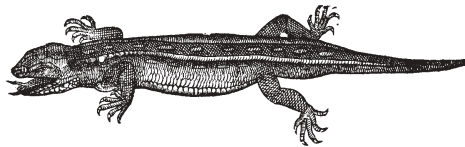
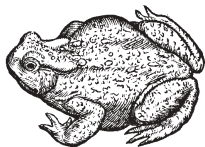
If the PCs appear to be persons of quality and discernment, they will be escorted to a room within the tower and provided with warm water and towels to allow them to wash themselves before joining the lord at his table. All through the meal he will be disturbed by secretaries running in with papers to be signed or messages to be read.

Kieradd feeds his guests on the delicacies of the country, twill grubs, deep-fried in cold-pressed meddler oil and rare white cockroaches with a vinegar and absinthe dip. He knows most of what passes on the ridge, and a little of what goes on along the river.

Kieradd also has his own agenda. He knows that there is a band of half-men lurking in the swamps half-a-day's march west of the tower. He also suspects that he has a traitor in his ranks, who has been passing information to the half-men. He intends to use the party to help him deal with both these problems. At the end of the meal, if the PCs are not ill mannered and when only they and his secretary, one Quimbol, are left at the table, he lowers his voice and asks the PCs if they will do him a favor. He has a small package of rather valuable items that he wishes them to transport west, and hopes they will take it for him to the next tower, where the Castellan will be able to make proper provision for its further transport. He would take it himself but confides that, at dawn, he must take a strong party of his riders east because he believes bandits aim to cross his territory there. He asks the secretary to make up a small parcel of various items from around his inner sanctum. It is Quimbol the secretary he suspects.

Next morning, Kieradd has already gone by the time the party leave and they are given the package secretly by the secretary. About ten miles from the tower they will see a large band of half-men moving towards them. There must be at least a fifty of them. It will be obvious that they cannot outrun them, but it should be possible to reach a rocky knoll, which will give them a slight advantage in the inevitable fight. There is a wood about three hundred yards away to the west but, apart from that, the area is open rolling grassland.

Watching from the wood are Kieradd and his thirty riders. He will wait until the half-men have



reached the party and are focused on that combat. At that point, he will quietly order his men to mount and they will ride, line abreast, towards the melee. When his presence is noted, or fifty yards away, if otherwise unnoticed, he will order a charge and the line of riders will smash into the rear of the fracas. Their final charge will be obvious, if only because the ground will shake under the pounding of hooves. Immediately, the half-men will attempt to face about, but this will be a hopeless exercise, as the riders will smash through them and cut them down as they run. The party will have at least three rounds of combat before the cavalry arrive. While Kieradd would not wish the party any harm, and would be a trifle put out if any of them managed to get themselves killed in the course of the action, he is unlikely to be disconsolate, especially if he manages to wipe out the half-men. Wounded party members will receive expert medical attention on the spot and would be carried carefully back to the tower to receive the best the tower can offer.

Quimbol will be taken into custody but escape. He will track down the PCs – the source of his downfall – and attempt first to humiliate, then to kill them.

The Fourth Tower

The fourth tower is a day's travel from Kieradd's is a well-maintained tower where travelers will be welcomed with courtesy, and provided with a warm meal and a clean bed for a mere five terces. Vagrants may work instead, the terms to be agreed between both parties.

The inhabitants of this tower, and the fifth tower beyond it are the descendants of military colonists, settled there during Azenomei's imperialist decade, some time in the middle 20th Aeon, when the city fell under the spell of the Suns of Hate. They follow their ancestors' ways fastidiously, and drill daily with dart guns and swords for an hour before breakfast, lunch and supper. They are competent masons, smiths, and carpenters. They grow the food on smallholdings, relying on goats and chickens for meat, dairy produce,

eggs, and fabric.

As is usual in such resourceful communities, the members are fervent demonists. Every year, they must sacrifice a red-haired, blue-eyed traveler to the underlord Chkarain.[†] Such a person will be referred to as the Exigent One, lauded, and given every facility that the locals have to offer. At midnight they and any others who resist will be lowered into a deep well in the center of the tower's basement. Below, the sleeping Chkarain and his parasite Monoman await.

Like Phampoun, one of the Five Demons worshipped in Lumarth,[‡] Chkarain is extraordinarily sensitive to sunlight. When a victim arrives his adjunct, the homunculus Monoman, will request that the victim tells a few tales of the world above. Out of a misplaced fastidiousness, Monoman will not refer directly to the sacrifice's eventual fate[§] and instead dismisses such discussions with a wave of his hand. After any stories are complete, Monoman will awaken the sleeping demon by lifting his great eyelid cusp. Monoman is gullible, which should provide any self-respecting PC with numerous escape possibilities. Chkarain's bloated mass lies on a large pile of beer tankards and bottles, some from the last aeon. Deeper in the pile are terces; it seems the currency of sacrifice has been devalued over the years.

Chkarain, demon underlord

"Extinguish!"

At the time of the Fall of Sadlark, Chkarain dwelled in the demon-realm Jeldred. When Sadlark fell, the interstitial conduit was ruptured, and Chkarain tumbled to earth. He is disconcerted by his strange environment, and has entered a state of hibernation with occasional gustatory interruptions. He is not amenable to persuasion, and if roused he will eat anything living that comes to hand. Sunlight will drive him into a frenzy, and he will head north smashing all before him.

Chkarain is a large, mottled-gray humanoid with three-fingered hands the size of a stable-boy, an immense rumbling belly and saucer-sized eyes covered with iridescent cusps. His choice of corporeal garb is considered gauche in Jeldred.

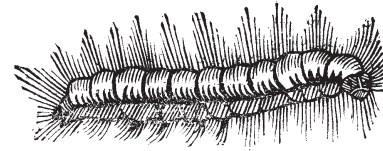
Statistics: irrelevant; he cannot be persuaded except by Monoman, and can wallop anyone in both Attack and Defense.

[†] Astute GMs will substitute the characteristics of the PC with the lowest Sympathy rating.

[‡] See *The Seventeen Virgins* in the *Eyes of the Underworld*.

[§] Chkarain will swallow them, and they will be transported to his vast stomach in Jeldred.

The Fifth Tower



Monoman, demon adjunct

"And when you have expounded your tale, Chkarain will ... well, no matter."

The homunculus is an integral part of Chkarain's being, connected by an insubstantial web of demon-force. Monoman is responsible for Chkarain's bodily need: sieving chyle, combing tendrils, and polishing tusks with an erb-hair brush.

Monoman's experience of Dying Earth inhabitants is limited to gibbering sacrificial victims; he is therefore guileless and open to persuasion. Any attack on him is an attack on the demon, so violence is unadvisable.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 5, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 6

Jorry, Malimpoon, Gazoar, fervent demonists

"I am sure the demon overlord will be moved by your pleas of mitigation."

The inhabitants of the fourth tower are disarmingly courteous and generous. Against this must be balanced their desire to throw a suitable sacrifice to Chkarain.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) ~, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 1.5~, Attack (Cunning) ~, Defense (Dodge) ~, Health 10, Athletics 10

Nemithe is a fiddler with one tune; Valdaran the Just and her part in his making. Ten years ago, she arrived with her son Colane and took up residence in the Fifth Tower. The inhabitants tolerate what they consider to be her monstrous lies, as she is harmless and is an excellent child-minder.

Nemithe wears a loose yellow smock dress. She has black hair streaked with silver pulled back into an unfeasibly tight bun, which has the effect of giving her goggle eyes.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 6, Rebuff (Obtuse) 5, Attack (Speed) 2, Defense (Intuition) 1, Health 3, Athletics 1, Craftsmanship 3, Etiquette 4,

Jugran, dabbler, and Nemithe's son

"A chicken which gives milk and eggs! This alone should be a cause for wonder."

Among the people of the fifth tower is Jugran, a conjurer of low ability. He is interested in animal hybrids and has made a hen with teats, which suckles its chicks and breeds true. He has just recovered a waterlogged chest from the river bank which includes a new spell he is anxious to try: Clambard's Remote Utterance

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 6, Rebuff (Contrary) 7, Attack (Finesse) 8, Defense (Intuition) 2, Devious 7, Health 5, Athletics 6, Concealment 5, Gambling 4, Pedantry 6, Quick Fingers 5, Scuttlebutt 6,

Resistances: Indolence 2, Rakishness 2

Spells: Clambard's Remote Utterance, The Astounding Oral Projection, Arnhoul's Sequestrous Digitalia

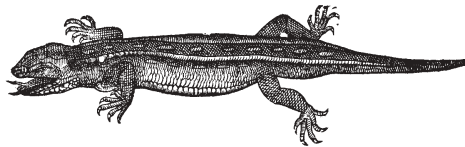
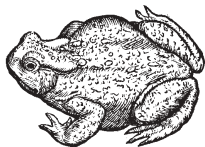
The Fifth Tower

A further day's journey from the fourth tower is the fifth tower. It is well maintained and decorated with hanging banners representing the Five Triumphs of Valdaran. The inhabitants will allow travelers to join their communal meals, in return they expect a poem, song or dance. Guests who perform badly will be ridiculed and pelted with rotten tasack gourds.

Nemithe, Valdaran's aunt

"Here is a silhouette of Valdaran pulling the wings off a tittlebird, and here he defenestrates his first witch..."





Clambard's Remote Utterance

Range: Near

Duration: Hour

Difficulty: Straightforward

This spell enables the caster to completely control the vocal chords of one nominated person, at any distance. Should this happen to a PC, then the GM, or the player whose character cast the spell, should provide the lines for her victim to read out aloud.



GM: This spell does not always work well. The folio that includes the only extant copy has suffered some water damage and, when cast on all but an Illustrious Success, affects the caster and everyone within three yards. When cast on PCs, they start speaking through each other's mouths. To run this in a game, have each player lip-synch while the adjacent player does his best ventriloquism. The spell can be corrected by comparing its text with the closely related Rein of the Long Nerves.

Valdaran's Aunt

After their communal supper, eaten at long tables, Nemithe will assure travelers that Valdaran the Just is one of their own. They will point to Nemithe, a well-preserved woman of some fifty years, who will produce diaries, cameos and a dried piece of gristle, which she will claim to be Valdaran's umbilical cord. Apparently, he had it enchanted and will come to the aid of whoever burns it. Later the same evening, an elderly man called Colane will tell them about how he taught Valdaran the martial arts. The next morning other residents will assure the party that both Nemithe and Jugran are famous liars, but not badly intentioned. Should the PCs steal Valdaran's cord and burn it, he will eventually find them, bewildered, and inconvenienced. He will then turn unreasonably vengeful.



The Road Back to the River

After the last tower, the road to Azenomei is relatively open, passing through an eerily empty countryside which is almost entirely empty rolling grassland. The little-used trail leads eventually to the Scaum on the opposite bank to Azenomei. Another track joins the trail from Azenomei to Val Ombrio. The plains themselves are the haunt of pelgranes, who soar high above and watch for easy pickings. They normally survive on gawk, a small six-legged herbivore that roams the plains in family groups.

The Scaum Valley Swamps

North of the South hills, and between them and the river, is dangerous country. A tangled mess of swamp and forest it is home to many parties of half-men and other predators. Some of these have progressed far enough to have developed their own social organization and dwell in the village of Scarholm a mile or two from the river and about two day's tough walking from Azenomei.

Scarholm

Scarholm is composed of crudely built huts lacking elegance, but possessing a rugged solidity. It is surrounded by a stockade of rough-cut logs. Scarholm is run by the fierce matriarch Harazan, who is of mixed ancestry. Whenever the inhabitants manage to capture a deodand alive they have it held in formidable restraints and then proceed to hold a Black Sabbath of epic proportions. Word is passed down river as far as Kaiin and witches and petty mages of all sorts congregate in the woods along with demons and sundry familiars. The center of the festivities is the deodand. Females in the village attempt a grisly coupling with the half-man. This is part of an orgiastic rite that results in a strange diversity of offspring. The fruit of this ghastly occasion are carefully inspected. Male offspring whether they appear to be half-deodand or man are raised to adulthood. Daughters with deodand qualities are



raised with special honor and become the tribe's new matriarchs in years to come. Other female offspring are assessed carefully and if they seem to have a degree of potential they will be raised scrupulously, and then sold at a suitable age to Gusswig Melodis (p50).

In addition to slaving, this bestial community supports itself by banditry and hunting. They will attack riverboats, travelers on the road and settlements. They rarely cross the river and the efforts of Kieradd ensure that they seldom venture into the south. One of their more lucrative sources of income is treasure-seekers searching for the site of a villa which was reputed to be the summer retreat of Phandaal himself. The ruins are supposed to be facing a road which leads from the Murant bridge. Road and bridge have long disappeared, but river travelers have reported that at seasons of low water, signs of the old bridge piers could be seen twenty miles downstream of Murant. These treasure hunters are regarded as a fine source of wealth, and enough of them survive and prosper to encourage more to try their luck.

Harazan, half-human witch and Matriach of Scarholm

"I apologize if my words were unclear. Fangs and a forked tongue can impede communication."

Harazan can take the form of a human, a deodand or any stage between. Her stare is disconcerting, her slow absent-minded transformation even more so.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 1.5-, Rebuff (Wary) 7, Attack (Ferocity) 6, Defense (Dodge) 12, Health 10, Athletics 6, Stewardship 8, Wherewithal 10

The Lost Villa of Amberlin the Second

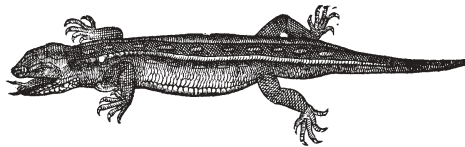
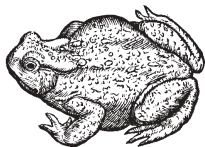
This is located on a terrace overlooking the river, about a mile from the water. It was never Amberlin's but belonged to his sister and her family. The great man did stay there occasionally and his nephews and their descendants cherished various personal items

that had been his. The villa is one among several which once formed a fashionable little hideaway for the wealthy and there is much of interest to be found. Once an explorer arrives at the approximate position of the bridge, it is easy to follow the old road. It winds up from the river and there is a spur leading off to the terrace, while the rest continues eventually disappearing into the swamp. On the terrace, there is evidence of both ruins and of previous excavation. There were, at one time, six villas here. One has disappeared forever, carried away in a landslip late in the 20th Aeon. The second is the most obvious and the most vigorously excavated. All that remains is a pit, which shows the lines of the foundations and a deeper hole, which was once a well. The third has been less worked over, the floors are still there and in one place an exquisite mosaic showing a yellow sun over a forested landscape is visible. Below lies an ransacked cellar. Elsewhere there is a room, which still has walls remaining up to knee height. If the foot of debris on the floor were to be moved another cellar trapdoor would be revealed. This cellar has not been opened for many years and was used as a workroom and storeroom for someone interested in taxonomy. Various forgotten creatures stare blindly out of the specimen bottles that line the walls.[†] Open on the workbench is that classic work *Taxonomic Reduction*, by the Turgid Cabal. It should occur to any explorer that the specimens in their bottles could well be worth money in the Scholasticarum district of Kaiin, where collectors quest constantly for novelties.

The fourth villa is set back behind the others and has hardly been touched. Still, there is little left, just walls no more than waist height and trees growing through the floor. The fact that one tree has sunk into a hole will suggest to the more observant the presence of a cellar or similar. Cutting through the roots will show that rather than a cellar there is a passage. This has fallen in one direction, where it would run towards the river, but in the other it is passable and leads further back and further up to a fifth villa.

This is built into the rock at the back of the terrace and is the one that belonged to the family of Amberlin II. The villa itself has been totally obliterated by the ravages of time, but the passage continues to a suite of rooms buried and originally accessible from Amberlin's villa. The first a traveler knows of their presence is when he finds his path

[†] In surprisingly good condition. If they are removed from their containers, they will be restored to motility. They will be less grateful for their restoration their rescuers might expect. They are the last representatives of their species and are painfully aware of what their lives hold for them.



blocked by a door. Anyone with a Magic pool will immediately note that the door has been enchanted. The last person passing through the door cast an enchantment which froze time in the rooms behind. Opening the door immediately breaks the spell and the party will find the suite left exactly as they were in past aeons.

The rooms were created not by Amberlin II but by his sister, as a refuge for him in the Schismatic Wars. Unfortunately, he was captured by the Sophistic Cabal before he could hide. There are four rooms in all. One is stocked with fine wines and food of exceptional quality; there would have been enough in this room alone to last Amberlin II for a year or more. The second room is a bathroom. An underground spring was tapped but over the years the spring has dried up or changed its course and the water no longer flows. There are still large soft towels and delicately scented oils placed conveniently to hand.

The third room contains a hexagonal bed of prodigious size. It is placed centrally in a room whose walls and ceiling are mirrors of exceptional quality. Each wall-mounted mirror is a cupboard door that swings open to reveal racks of clothes made of fine materials but archaic in their style. From the clothes it is obvious that Amberlin II was a man of greater than average height, but slender and fine boned.

The last room is a workroom and study. Many mages would give their souls to spend an hour in Amberlin's study (and some did), but this one was never actually visited by him. It is still a valuable find. The walls are lined with heavy volumes, histories of previous aeons, accounts of exploration and discovery, details of travels to far stars. There are also herbals, bestiaries, books on political economy, the philosophy of power, and even a compendium of methods to extend the life of the sun. There are very few books of magic.

Of most immediate interest is Phandaal's *Primer*. This is a book he wrote for his students. It details the methods by which magic is worked and gives the outlines of some simple spells and cantraps. There is also *Amberlin's Travails* by Benthoscope, which details his survey trip looking for the sunken continent of Kara. This contains a couple of minor spells. The first, *The Stubborn Sphere* allows the caster to survive immense pressures and another Lifjem's *Phlogistonic Ministrator* allows water breathing. There is also the

first volume of Amberlin's lost autobiography, *Memoirs of a Logodaedalus*, which recounts his childhood and early training. This is particularly interesting for historians, because it is the only analysis of his mother's cantrap, which she used to create order among scattered objects strewn around a room.

The Law of Equipose

The villa stands, apparently un-looted for a very good reason. Amberlin's major work laid the basis of the indenture point system, so was for him reciprocal. It remains so for anyone who tries to gain advantage from works written or used by Amberlin. It is hoped that PCs with Pedantry will know this.

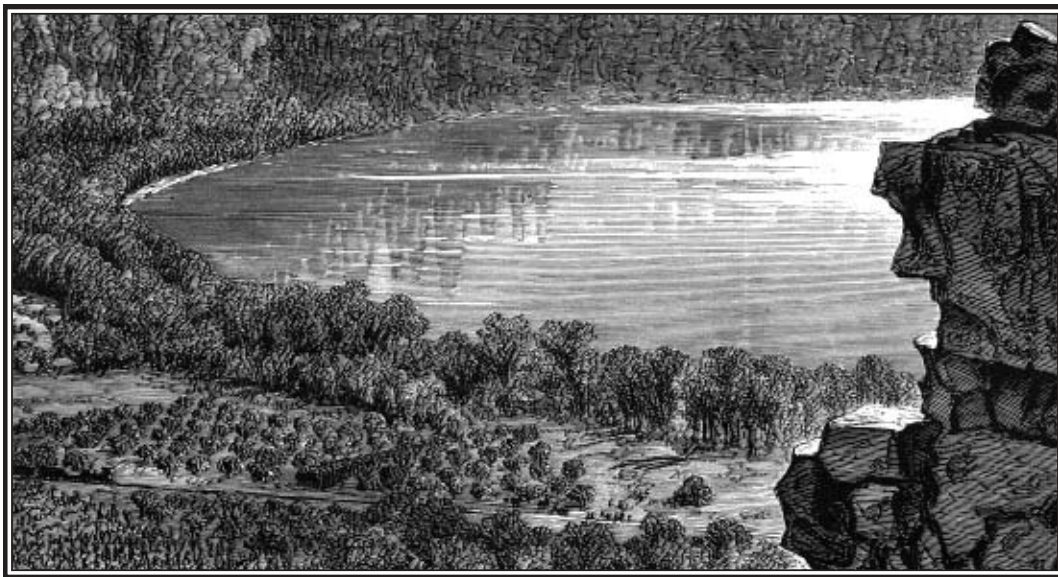
Should they not, or if they loot the villa anyway, Melarne, a sandestin, will appear whenever they gain an advantage from their booty. That is, if they sell it, successfully use it in research or even read it themselves, Melarne will demand that they perform a service of equivalent value for him. As a sandestin, he does not actually need anything, but he will derive immense satisfaction from watching mortals perform pointless and demeaning, or even dangerous tasks for him.

Simply restoring the items to the villa will act as suitable service, provided that the PCs never tell anyone about the special conditions which apply to items looted from Amberlin's villa. Melarne will not volunteer this information.



The sixth villa was obviously the last to be abandoned and on entering it, they will find that the roof is still sound in places and that there is one room which is still secure. Previous parties seem to have used it as a base. There are cold ashes in the grate and firewood is stacked carefully nearby. Otherwise, the villa is stripped of anything at all valuable.

If travelers dawdle amongst the villas, they will begin to notice that they are being observed. The half-men maintain a distant watch over the area, a party of six scouts visits from Scarholm every week and if they do not return then a warband leaves to investigate. Certainly, it would be unwise to spend more than a couple of days near the villas.



Azenomei to Taun Tassel & The Valley of Graven Tombs

In which increasing numbers of rogues frequent the outskirts of civilisation.

Azenomei

Azenomei lies at the confluence of the Xzan and the Scaum rivers. It is approximately five days march to Osier and about seven days march to Kaiin. Terraces overlook the river. It is ancient and in decline and is of note now only for its fair which draws inhabitants from the entire Scaum valley.

There is a wharf and a tumbled down hut, which serves, inadequately, to protect those waiting from the elements. After Val Ombrio, the town is the second city of Almery, rivaling Kaiin and regarded by some as rather the more civilized. Perhaps more ruinous than Kaiin and with no signs of any city walls most of the dwellings lie further from the river, across a broad field encompassed by a decrepit wicker palisade that accommodates the regular fair.

The River Inn

With its outstanding view across the Xzan, the River Inn is the finest Azenomei has to offer, serving local dishes such as spiced sausages with green wine. Well-heeled merchants and collectors of curios share the common room with lucky gamblers.

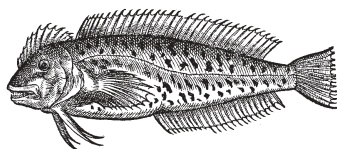
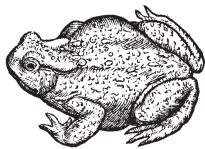
This Night's Patrons...

Gusswig Melodis, his sister Idora and his five dancing girls chat amiably. Anyone spending an evening with them will have an entertaining time. After listening to Gusswig talk at any length anyone can bluff non-dancers about dance in general. Idora smiles, sews sequins and listens to her brother. Gusswig enjoys singing bawdy ballads and encourages everyone else to. He enjoys himself hugely, has a fine voice and a wide and scurrilous repertoire.

Aside from Sar'ais, the girls curl themselves around his chair, and hang on his every word. Sar'ais stands behind him, that he cannot see her yawning. Observant PCs might notice that she and Idora make eye contact often. If asked, Sar'ais will agree to leave the common room with a rakish PC, but this might not end well. She and Idora find that men on their own in the dark are easier to rob than any other kind. PCs who are engrossed by Melodis' badinage will find it easy to fall in with the other dancers, because of their evident respect for the master.

Gusswig Melodis, choreographer and dance troupe leader

"My desire to better my lot does not extend to procurement."



Gusswig is a large man, portly if not actually fat, with a jolly disposition. Melodis manages a five dancing girls, Sar'ain, Sar'ais, Limenel, Torla and Corla, whom he trained himself. He is proud of his art, always insisting that he trains dancers; he does not buy or sell them. Despite his trust that the sun will go out soon, he nevertheless attempts to assure his protégées future, by managing their social lives to their best material advantage. Two ways to offend him are to call him a procurer or a slaver.[†] Unusually for a hefty man, he moves with a casual grace.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) ~, Rebuff (Contrary) 6, Attack (Finesse) 6, Defense (Misdirection) 7, Athletics 6, Craftsmanship 4, Etiquette 10, Health 7, Pedantry 5, Perception 9, Stewardship 8,

Idora, retired dancer

"The fee is twenty terces – the double cuppola cannot be danced half-heartedly."

Gusswig's brother Idora is a lithe brunette. She is slightly younger than him and is, like him, a retired dancer. In spite of rumors to the contrary, she is his sister, has her own room and earns her living by making the costumes for the troupe. She is actually the more intelligent of the pair and handles all the money. She deplores lecherous men and will connive with Sar'ais to rob them. She knows a couple of cantraps, which she would

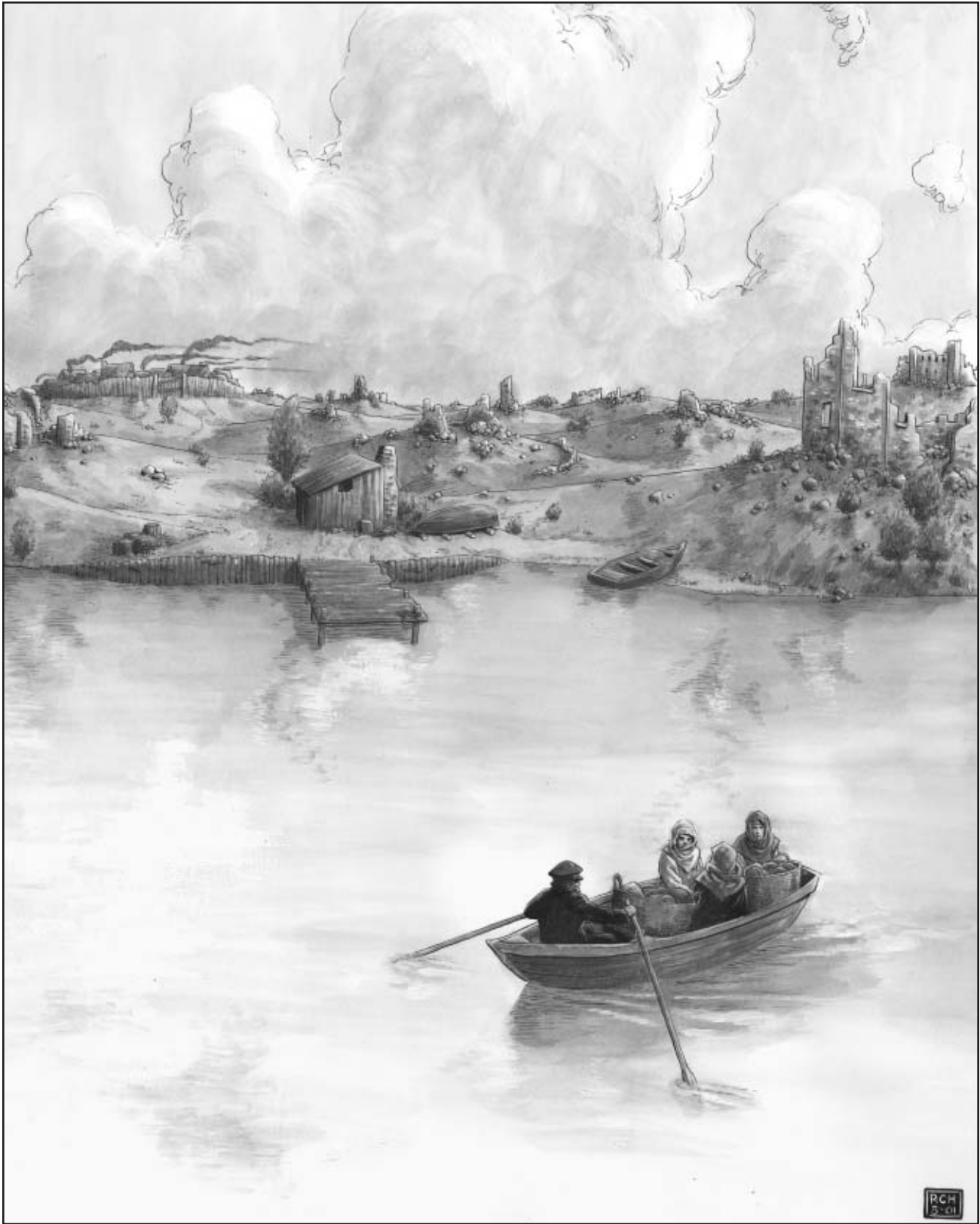
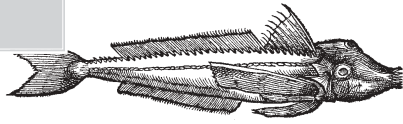
happily teach anyone who wanted to learn them. One means you can always thread a needle first time while the other makes sure that the best of the available light shines on the needle. Idora uses her magic to aid her when picking locks; other uses may occur to the PCs.

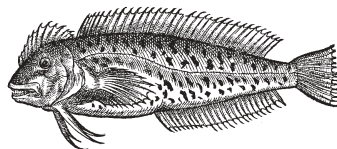
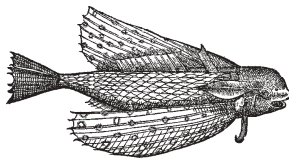
Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 8, Rebuff (Penetrating) 6, Attack (Speed) 6, Defense (Dodge) 8, Health 8, Athletics 9, Craftsmanship 10, Etiquette 12, Perception 9, Physician 8, Scuttlebutt 5



[†] The truth hurts.

Azenomeil





Sar'ain, Sar'ais, Limenel, Torla and Corla, dancers

"The move you suggest would require a contortionist, not a choreographer."

All but Sar'ain are in thrall to Gusswig, and will not be persuaded of anything without his permission whilst he is in sight. They are used to improper suggestions, and no longer blush. They will artlessly repeat any such suggestions to Gusswig.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 8, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 6, Attack (Speed) 2, Defense (Misdirection) 3, Health 8, Athletics 8, Etiquette 6, Perception 5, Scuttlebutt 3, Seduction 4

The Doughty One

The landlady, Desmuria, is proud of the high standard of cleanliness that she maintains. Certainly the rooms are well appointed and the tariff reasonable. She sets a reasonable table, specializing in fish dishes such as Goby in Latakia sauce and Loin of Manatee on a bed of neaps. The establishment is patronised by the more prosperous merchants. At the other extreme is ...

The Lorn Meropidan

This is positively run down and squalid. There are no beds or even an upstairs, patrons are expected to sleep on the floor or on the tables in the common room, or if they pay two terces more they can share a palliasse with one of the landlord's slatternly daughters or even less presentable son. Food consists of stew. Patrons are politely requested to refrain from making detailed enquiries as to its original provenance. The clientele are generally as unattractive as the establishment and most seem to cope with the situation by drinking as much as possible of the cheap sour ale and sprawling unconscious in or around the pools of sundry spillages which so regularly decorate the common room floor.

Most of the patrons seem to be human, at least they remember to walk upright without prompting. Some of them make a living 'hunting' for 'meat' which they sell to the landlord or by scavenging amongst deserted and long forgotten dwellings in the near by forest. For an investigator with a strong stomach and a need for knowledge about the darker side of the forest the common room of The Lorn Meropidan is a useful meeting place.

The Landlord, Teedmain is unctuous in the extreme in the presence of law officers. He is no better than his patrons, however, and those sleeping in his common room must be prepared to have their goods rifled.

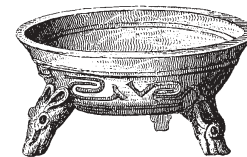
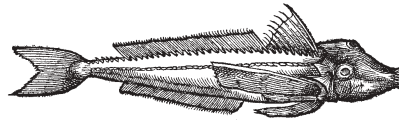
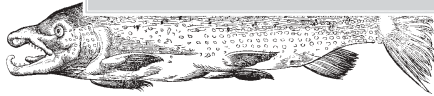


The rest of the town consists of a couple of extremely long and winding streets, Scaumside and Xzanside, of mainly detached houses in varying states of repair and occupation. It is apparent that the town was once larger because in the fields around it are low mounds, unploughed, which were obviously once houses. Interspersed among the houses are plots, which consist of rubble or occasionally, vegetable gardens, clearly the site of long forgotten blocks of dwellings. Some of the houses, especially those that flank the fairground and market place are definitely palaces and most of these are still occupied. As for services made available to the busy traveler, there is a blacksmith who also does a lot of heavy fabrication and is generally considered competent to fix stream engines, together with a wheelwright, several tailors and potter or two as well as the more normal goldsmiths, silversmiths, coiners, traders in ephemera, purveyors of assorted condiments including salt and no less than three cobblers, one of whom specializes in clogs. Several of the houses have flourishing gardens as well as handy fields and they often have produce on a table near the door for passers-by to purchase.

A genuine find for the hungry traveler is the house of Gilsan Char. A master pastry-cook, his front door is always open and the smell of cooking hangs enticingly in the still air. Every day his wife and three children tour the town with trays containing fresh bread and meat pies as well as sweet pasties and sugar mice. On fair days, he sets up a stall on the fair ground where he sells his wares to all comers.

The Fair

Azenomei is most notable for its fair. Merchandise on offer includes the produce of the entire valley, talismans of dubious efficacy, grave goods, librams and pickled homunculi. There is always plenty of room, unfortunately some of what appear to be the best sites are actually on the site of the Old Gibbet and are regarded as ill omened. The New Gibbet is not on the fairground itself, but is on the riverbank half a mile down stream of the landing place. The stallholders can



be split into three groups. The most prosperous merchants hire permanent booths have wagons with their wares next to the booth and stay in The River Inn or The Doughty One, booking their room for the next fair when they vacate it after this one. The booths themselves are of stalwart wooden construction with a roof over the stall and a lockable back room so that a trader's goods are protected from both weather and thieves. Then come the honest peddlers. They have a modest stall, often merely an old door laid across trestles under which they sleep. They eat together round the communal cooking pots, which are set up after the fair closes its gates to trade at sunset. The third class sprawls on the grass with their offerings spread in front of them on a blanket and spend the night in The Lorn Meropidan.

Fianosther, rogue and prosperous merchant

"My price is a modest twelve thousand terces."

The crafty Fianosther[†] has a well-stocked booth protected by a chained erb. He offers "Dazzles, displays, marvels beyond worth, as well as charms, puissances and elixirs." He has access to suppliers as far away as old Karkod, from where he gains sealed caskets. There contents are various and usually of modest value, for example calcified fish-bones used as a purgative in the time of Grand Motholam. Fianosther makes the most implausible schemes a matter of certain benefit to his victims. He once persuaded Cugel the Clever to rob the fearsome Iuconou, although not in so many words.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 11, Rebuff (Wary) 12, Attack (Cunning) 9, Defense (Dodge) 13, Health 8, Magic (Devious) 9, Appraisal 10, Athletics 5, Concealment 6, Driving 5, Etiquette 4, Gambling 7, Living Rough 5, Pedantry 6, Perception 7, Quick Fingers 4, Riding 4, Scuttlebutt 5, Seduction 4, Stealth 4, Stewardship 8, Tracking 2, Wealth 10, Wherewithal 7

Selitan the Gorgeous, prosperous tailor

"I say nothing, my friend. I let the quality of my wares speak for themselves."

Selitan has an estate somewhere on the coast of Sanreal Bay north of Kaiin. He produces his own cotton fabrics and keeps a manufactory where specially trained women take his plain garments

and cover them with intricate embroidery. He has a fine selection of gowns, cloaks, hats, tunics, britches, and nether garments in all styles and colors.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 10, Rebuff (Penetrating) 6, Attack (Finesse) 3, Defense (Vexation) 4, Health 5, Athletics 8, Appraisal 10, Craftsmanship 12, Stewardship 10

Hesnin Bulopin, prosperous supplier of relishes and fancies

"Come my friend, tempt your jaded palate. Live for now, what call for terces when the sun flickers out?"

He specializes in preserved foods and pickles. He has two wagons backed up to his booth, loaded with decumanus smoked over willow bark, and pickled smolt served in sour chestnut sauce, exotic sun-dried vegetables and conserved meats of every description. He has a winning smile, undermined by sharp, yellow teeth. He is most proud of his pickled smolt – a potentially lethal delicacy. He is aware of the danger.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 8, Rebuff (Contrary) 7, Attack (Caution) 6, Defense (Parry) 8, Health 8, Athletics 3, Craftsmanship 6, Stewardship 5

Smolt Infestation

Smolt is the egg sack of a rapacious stomach parasite, the smolt worm, which inhabits the intestinal tracts of the keak. They resemble small, succulent sausages. Pickling does not kill the eggs, and any PC consuming pickled smolt will suffer the effects.

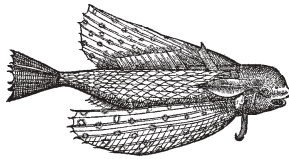
Potency: Levy 2

Interval: Two days

Effect: The victim must make a Health roll with a limit of zero. On a Failure the smolt larvae attack the brain of the victim, who then develops a prodigious appetite and attempts to migrate down stream by the most expeditious means available. On a Success, the victim merely suffers from wind at times of stress.

Cure: If the victim is clothed in a keak's stomach the worms will head for the victim's orifices. Other cures may suggest themselves...

[†] Fianosther is mentioned as a source of magical folios in the adventure *The Twins* on p62. If a GM wishes to run this adventure, we suggest that mention be made of the folio at this stage.



Mino the Limber, peddler

"Come, sample the finest sausage from Kaiin to Cutz. Try them now before my competitors buy up my entire stock to save their own reputations."

A peddler with a considerable local following he makes and sells his own sausages, which he cooks over a fire by his stall. He also has several other different sorts of blood pudding and haggis. His son and business partner Young Mino is a hunter and supplies the raw material for his father's business. They also sell joints of meat but mainly direct to such people as Desmuria (see p53).

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 10, Rebuff (Contrary) 6, Attack (Strength) 6, Defense (Vexation) 6, Health 5, Athletics 8, Stewardship 6

Wyst, purveyor of curios

"Fate has made me a philosopher, my friends. For this reason I am unable to extend credit to travellers."

Wyst is renowned for delving into strange corners and forgotten ruins. He regularly appears at fairs the length of the Scaum with strange artifacts. Currently, he has a collection of fine and eminently serviceable porcelain which is all 20th Aeon, some 19th Aeon cutlery made from an unknown metal and a selection of interestingly shaped bottles and containers. He also has a few books to sell, among which is Rustoppen's *Ritual Artifacts and major Thaumaturgical Items of the Derna-Scaum basin*, the rarely seen 19th Aeon Azard-il Joru's *Tribes of Almerie, Kaulchiquie and Xardoon* and the 20th Aeon *Letters from Cutz* which details the foibles of northerners from the perspective of a minor diplomat.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 10, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 10, Attack (Finesse) 7, Defense (Sure-footedness) 6, Health 10, Appraisal 10, Etiquette 6, Pedantry 8, Stealth 10

Broggiss, skin and bone man

"Suits you better than its original wearer, Sir. Trust you wear it in better health."

This uncouth frontiersman's wares consist of assorted beast skins, all reasonably well tanned and useable. For discerning customers, he also has an assortment of bones and organs, which are reputed to be useful in both magic and herbal medicine.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 10, Rebuff

(Obtuse) 4, Attack (Ferocity) 6, Defense (Misdirection) 5, Health 8, Athletics 5, Appraisal 6, Pedantry 4, Wherewithal 7

Asenbait, robber and re-seller

"At this price you don't need to ask questions."

Asnebait is a large, fearsome block of a man with a heavy nose and forced smile. Asenbait supplies second hand clothes and personal effects. There is more than a suspicion that these are what he has taken from victims waylaid in the forest.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) ~, Rebuff (Obtuse) 8, Attack (Strength) 1.5~, Defense (Misdirection) 7, Health 6, Appraisal 4, Stealth 8, Tracking 6

The Healer Mercurius

"You should have had these seen to earlier. Yet for persons of solid worth I should be able to do something to alleviate the problem."

Mercurius, wanders the fair, hawking his healing salves and potions. He has a boy with him carrying a cloth-wrapped parcel, which appears to contain various medical instruments and supplies. Mercurius will extract teeth and set bones. He has tonics and salves for many things but offers no miracle cures. He attends the fair regularly and does do repeat business.

Local opinion is that he is competent and generally respected. This is a fallacy; in fact most of his treatments work by means of a spell, *Yasbane's Displacement of Woe*. This treatment transfers the ailment or injury to a nearby person, who will contract its effects within the hour, no doubt providing more customers for Mercurius.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 10, Rebuff (Wary) 10, Attack (Cunning) 5, Defense (Intuition) 6, Magic (Devious) 7, Appraisal 4, Physician 10



Yasbane's Displacement of Woe

Range: Near

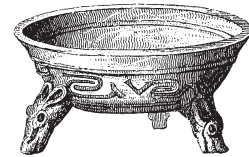
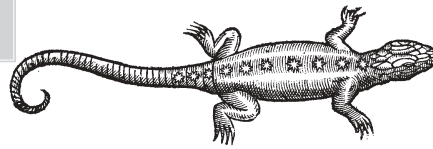
Duration: Instant

Difficulty: Straightforward

A spell of only three subtle syllables, it can be cast surreptitiously. It transfers an ailment or disease to



Iucounu's Manse



another nearby person. It cannot heal injuries caused by traumatic blows such as those received in combat. The transferee will only notice that something is amiss if they roll an Illustrious Success on Perception. They can only make such a roll if they are not distracted by conversation.



Iucounu's Manse

Perched on the heights above the river Xzan some three leagues from Azenomei stands Pergolo, the manse of Iucounu the Laughing Magician. The approach, a road paved with brown tiles winds past a dozen stone huts inhabited by those who tend the river terraces and navigate the river, up a steep hill and into a courtyard. The front door is a heavy panel with a carved face in a rictus of despair. It is a complex structure, topped with three transparent green towers; an ancient castle in which circular stairs sweep into an astounding great hall, filled with cases of curios, books and a maze of glass to trap the unwary.

Jince and Skivvee, his comely stewardesses, serve him. Ettis, a short-legged animal with black button eyes and long fur acts as his companion. Iucounu dines on a novel cuisine of his own devising with strange condiments and unsettling juxtapositions of flavors.

Iucounu the Laughing Magician

Iucounu's details are given on page 157 of DERPG.

Jince, comely stewardess

"My contractual obligations do not extend to exchanging pleasantries with the unwashed."

Only large quantities of terces make life with Iucounu bearable, and then only briefly. Jince, a former priestess of Dangott, has saved nearly enough to leave his service – but what will Iucounu's reaction be when she states her intentions?

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 10, Rebuff (Contrary) 8, Attack (Finesse) 6, Defense (Misdirection) 6, Health 7, Athletics 6, Etiquette 8, Pedantry 7, Seduction 6, Wherewithal 4

Skivvee, another comely stewardess

"A request for condiments is a notable slight to your host."

An unkind person might think that her cold demeanor and willingness to work for the yellow magician implies that she is construct. Skivvee is alert to any social error, and she will rebuke any visitor who steps outside her rigid boundaries. Even her rudeness is circumscribed by Chumberwal's *Tenets of Polite Discourse*.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 7, Rebuff (Wary) 7, Attack (Cunning) 6, Defense (Parry) 6, Health 6, Athletics 6, Etiquette 6, Stewardship 8

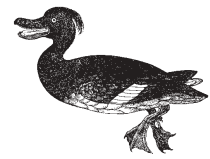
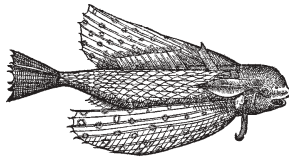
Iucounu's Collection

Put a spade in the ground in the Dying Earth and you will hit the detritus of a previous civilization. For this reason, the best collectors have a discerning eye and forthright approach when discarding the imperfect. Even by these standards, Iucounu has an extraordinary collection of curios, antiques and enchanted objects.

In his surreptitious inventory of Iucounu's manse, Cugel discovered the wine Angelius from Quantique; a small pot with antlers, which emits remarkable gases when the prongs are tweaked; a grave casket from Korkod (sealed); an ivory horn through which could be heard voices from the past; a small stage with imp players; a cluster of crystal grapes through which could be seen a blurred view of various demon-worlds; a baton sprouting sweetmeats; tomes bound in purple; Phandaal's color; a miniature carousel with a dozen dolls imbued with vitality; Thief-taker (a rope woven of wasp legs, which binds the unwary); and a crystal maze in which he was trapped.

The twk-men's Colossus

In a clearing in the woods a few miles inland from Azenomei is a giant statue of a twk-man. That is to say that it stands a full four ells tall from toes to eyes, a great crested helmet makes it taller still. This statue has been created by local twk-men, who have built it over the years out of woven spiders' silk suspended from a skeleton built up of discarded dragon-fly skin. Glusdithipman, at one time king of the local twk-men, struck a bargain with the mage Hyoldelops. The twk-men would



serve him as scouts and watchmen, if he would breath life into the statue. Although Hyoldelops has been dead a thousand years and Glusdithipman even longer, the statue can still be animated by a twk-man flying into its left ear and chanting the correct thaumaturgical formula. It moves ponderously; sprightly PCs should be able to avoid combat.

Ratings: Attack (Ferocity) 10, Defense (Parry) 10, Health 20, Athletics 4

Jeزantay

A day and a half downstream of Azenomei, on the Scaum's right bank, stands Jezantay. The town is built on a substantial levee, left high and dry after the river changed its course. What travelers see first is a forest of flagpoles, flying yellow, pink and orange banners. As they get nearer, buildings, mostly pink or yellow, come into view. On closer inspection, a visitor will note the town has a substantial wall of masonry looted from surrounding ruins, daubed with rose-wash. The two hundred buildings are tenanted and in good repair, built of stone, with thick roofs of lead, painted yellow. The fields around it display an organized crop rotation, over-representing bright flowers of all kinds. At night, a large, red-orange orb above the chapel illuminates the town through large glass panes. On reflection, travelers might realize that there are no ruins above ground level within sight of Jezantay.

The townsfolk offer worked building stone, dyes, pigments and perfumes, and buy sun apples, books, relics and artifacts. Local people dress in bright, tight clothes, with low necklines and plenty of buttons, bows, bells and buckles. All wear their hair long and loose, under garlands of fresh flowers or, in winter, which they resent bitterly, orange berets. A smiling, round-faced golden sun is a much-loved motif.

The town has two parallel streets, which open onto a central, oblong plaza. In the middle of one long side of this is the tavern, THE GOLDEN CROWN. Opposite it is the FACTOR'S HOUSE. One of the short ends accommodates the town library, named the REPOSITORY OF MATHEMATICAL EXACTITUDE. Opposite, and the center of the town's devotions, is the CHAPEL OF GLOW.

The Golden Crown

This tavern offers a clean common room and ten private chambers, two of which, at the gable ends, have their own plumbing and fireplaces. Warming pans are available without charge. The fare emphasizes eggs, fowl, edible flowers and honey, so is perhaps an acquired taste. The local practice of bringing food to the table cold, then drenching it in brandy-mead and igniting it is odd, although the result, a hot, rich, caramelized and slightly smoked pullet, is well worth it. In winter, patrons are confronted with more dismal rations, quiches, salted meats, round, yellow-waxed cheeses, pickled, bottled or brandied fruits and roast vegetables. The formulaic apology 'It is all we have, reverence, until the Sun burns again', is dispiriting.

Chamtan, landlord

"The sun is in fine fettle; to say otherwise is heresy."

Chamtan is a flighty, energetic man who twitches and starts like a rodent. He serves tables himself with great efficiency. Unfortunately, he is a tittle-tattle and a sneak. He enjoys nothing more than to inform on travelers who make disparaging remarks about the sun's longevity. Such unfortunates are likely to be roused from their bed in the earlier hours by stern enforcers from the Chapel of Glow with Chamtan simpering in the background.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 8, Rebuff (Obtuse) 6, Attack (Cunning) 5, Defense (Sure-footedness) 7, Health 6, Appraisal 3, Athletics 2, Etiquette 4, Pedantry 9, Stealth 7, Stewardship 7

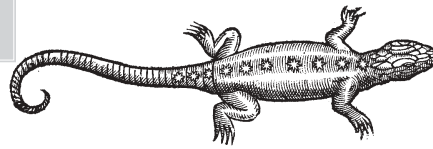
Resistances: Indolence Ω, Pettifoggery 0

The Factor's House

Traders must obtain permits to buy and sell from the Factor's House. In return for their five terces, they receive a stern instruction to abide by local laws and a voucher for a day's use of a one of the fixed, stone booths (on closer inspection, vacated crypts with the roof and one wall removed), which line the long sides of the marketplace. Quence, the Jezantay Factor, makes his inspections accompanied by four functionaries. Onenell carries the official scales and weights; and Ulith, the flasks, rods and calipers. The local metrics are based on Onenell's weight and Ulith's dimensions. The other two, Makasha and Tuyal are



Azenomei



more burly, and come equipped with shackles and knouts, have an obvious function. Egregious or persistent shortchanging and sharp practice lead to an appointment with Shemchar, the public executioner, who brands offenders on the face. Residents think it fitting that he does so at sunrise, having made the criminal kneel all night, in front of the Chapel.

Quence, the Jezantay Factor

"Your produce is of a non-standard color. Your impudence merely increases the gravity of your infraction."

Quence, a tall, thin man nursing a potbelly, is a pettifogging bureaucrat of the worst kind. On duty, he wears the heavy leather cone of office, pierced with holess for his arms and head. It is black and highly polished. His figure is only discernable when he is off duty at which time he frequents the Golden Crown.

Ratings: Persuade (Obfuscatory) ~, Rebuff (Obtuse) 1.5~, Attack (Speed) 6, Defense (Vexation) 7, Health 6, Etiquette 3, Pedantry 10, Perception 10, Scuttlebutt 4, Stewardship 4, Arrogance 0, Pettifoggery 0

Onenell, Totem of Mass

"I am not merely vain; my weight is a matter of civic importance."

The weights in Jezantay are defined as a proportion of Onenell's own mass. If his fat increases noticeably, he is confined to his quarters for a few days on minimal rations until the situation is rectified; if his ribs show, he is sent to the Golden Crown for a binge. His food is measured carefully, as are his excretions. Traders may demand that the weight of their goods be measured against Onenell. Onenell guzzles food whenever he has the chance, and the locals are always attempting to sneak extra portions to him; conversely, the merchants attempt to afflict him with laxatives and poisons.

Onenell, an oily-skinned fidgit, wears a rigid

leather all-in-one with flexible joints. This makes any increase in weight easy to judge. He wear rings which will slip off if he gets too thin.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 9, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 4, Attack (Strength)Attack () 5, Defense (Intuition) 4, Health 7, Appraisal 5, Athletics 5, Pedantry 8, Scuttlebutt 5, Stewardship 6

Resistances: Gourmandism 0

Ulith, Totem of Mensuration

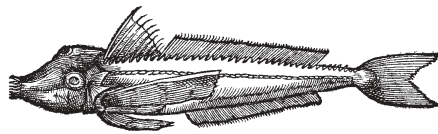
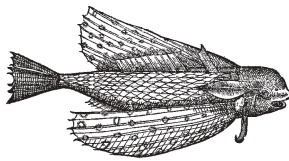
"Two millims under may seem a trifling matter to you, but whether you sell vell-eels or rope, exactitude is essential."

Like Jezantay, Ulith's is used as the prototype for measurement. His shoe size, height, the span of his hands and the scope of other body parts are all used as benchmarks. Ulith's dimensions are less susceptible to variation than Onenell's weight, although his advanced age has lead to a little shrinkage. Ulith is over 90 years old, and Jezantay will soon need a replacement. Very tall travelers may well find themselves the object of the locals' attention. Conversely; the traders are looking for a shorter replacement.

Ratings: Persuade (Obfuscatory) 9, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 8, Attack (Caution) 2, Defense (Vexation) 1, Health 3, Appraisal 7, Pedantry 8, Perception 8, Scuttlebutt 6

The Repository of Mathematical Exactitude

The Repository of Mathematical Exactitude is a sturdy, square building with a capacious, barrel vaulted roof. Its curator, Wenlowe, buys old books in stupendous quantities but displays precisely one, in an assortment of editions. All the others are shredded by his underlings and consigned to the Chapel fire. The work he reprieves is Phandaal's *Mathematical Primer and Excursus into Vulgar Cosmology*. Originally a crib for the great mage's slower students, Jezantay's founders took it to be the solution to the dilemma of existing at the end of the Sun's life. On one reading, Phandaal's trite observation that there is no mathematical reason for time to have a forward direction, would seem to mean that there is no fundamental magical principle to prevent it being reversed. The town's fathers decided to implement a



plan to turn back time through a strict policy of sympathetic works, such as decking out their environment in the colors of the Age of Glow, and excising all subsequent structures and artifacts from existence. The town is built out of the all the surrounding ruins. They consign any major work of recent history to the Beacon.

Wenlowe, Curator of the Repository

“Your assessment is correct, the work is of great value. It will maintain the Beacon for at least a minute.”

The curator is the sanctimonious burner of books. He suffers a tic caused by long-term exposure to antique paper. He harbors secret thoughts that the basis of his vocation is flawed. This means that any criticism of his practices will be met with outrage, and cries of calumny.[†]

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) ~, Rebuff (Contrary) ~, Attack (Finesse) 6, Defense (Intuition) 5, Health 8, Craftsmanship 5, Etiquette 6, Pedantry 9, Perception 5, Wherewithal 4

Resistances: Arrogance 0, Pettifoggery 0

The Chapel of Glow

The Chapel is an octagonal plinth with four arches, supporting an immense, multifaceted round, orange glass orb. Beneath the orb is a stone pulpit. At night the orb acts as a beacon while an officiating minister or acolyte delivers sermons castigating current pessimism and the incorrect conviction that the sun will inevitably die. By day, devotees clean out the soot. The Chaplain, Sabretta, lives in a modest stone house (actually a substantial, converted mausoleum) beyond the Chapel.

Closer inspection reveals the plinth to be hollow, containing storage space around a geared platform, and a capstan. Devotees work the capstan, pumping fuel into the belly of the beacon, where Sabretta or an assistant, standing in the pulpit, ignites it with a long taper. Wood, peat and straw, are the most common fuel, although scrolls, books and combustible artwork, especially antiques, are much prized and sought after. Sabretta's assistants Colluman and Jerisipy act as enforcers for the village's religious edicts.

Sabretta, Chaplain

“The so-called death-throws of the sun are the twitching of a great egg hatching.”

The Chaplain is disconcertingly asexual. Sabretta's appearance and religious accoutrements do not throw any light on her gender, and the members of the congregation are either too polite or too fearful to enquire. Colluman and Jerisipy are running a book on her sex, and have a more personal interest, but an outsider is needed to provide evidence. Sabretta wears a robe made from strings of petrified frogspawn over a shapeless cotton smock.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 8, (Lawyerly) 5, Attack (Ferocity) 6, Defense (Misdirection) 2, Health 6, Athletics 3, Etiquette 5, Imposture 7, Pedantry 12, Perception 8

Colluman, church enforcer

“The tongue flicks around her mouth like a hungry eel – this is certain evidence of her feminine nature.”

Not a master of doctrine, but nonetheless a useful instrument of the church, Colluman places his cudgel where Sabretta directs. Colluman is sure that Sabretta is a woman; his orientation and love for the Chaplain makes any other possibility unpalatable.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 8, Rebuff (Obtuse) 7, Attack (Finesse) 6, Defense (Misdirection) 5, Health 5, Appraisal 7, Athletics 3, Etiquette 6, Pedantry 4, Perception 3, Seduction 2, Stewardship 4,

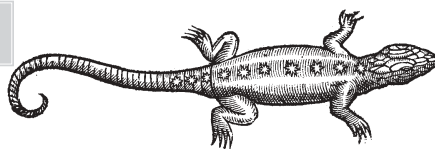
Jerisipy, church enforcer

“See how he scratches his buttocks with his right hand; a sure sign of manhood.”

Jerisipy is a keen-nosed sniffer of heresy. She wields a whip and a sharp wit to induce compliance into unwilling deviants. Jerisipy is certain that Sabretta is a man, her feelings for the Chaplain makes the other possibility distasteful.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 1.5~, Rebuff (Contrary) 0.5~, Attack (Finesse) ~, Defense (Vexation) .75~, Health 5, Appraisal 4, Athletics 3, Etiquette 5, Pedantry 6, Perception 6, Seduction 5, Stewardship 4

[†] His offenses against literature are ameliorated by the fact that he has burnt over fifty copies of the complete works of the poet Mortiquan.



The Sunapples

Should the adventurers make a favorable impression on Sabretta, the Chaplain will offer to pay them five hundred terces to obtain two sunapple trees, if possible from separate orchards, to plant outside her house. Aside from the chores of finding, digging up and transporting the plants, and the usual dangers of the road, this is a straightforward commission. Sunapples were once common in the valley, but they have almost disappeared, perhaps due to wild sindics draining their sap. Apparently, there is an extant orchard somewhere downstream (see *The Glowing Trees* p98). The sunapple trees have great religious significance, and Sabretta will wish to plant them on a suitable corpse if they are recovered.



The Twins

To the landward of Jezantay, a small tributary stream, the Witches Tears, flows out of the Great Da, (at this point, nine miles away) and then turns to run parallel to the Scaum for a mile. It joins the river just south of the levee. The Tears is shallow and rocky and, occasionally, body parts and clothes wash down it. A track runs beside the right bank which, traders or other travelers will tell them, goes to the miserable village of Kolpo, some four days into the forest. No one local admits to following it there. If the party does so, they will encounter a gang of efficient bandits, in the forest margins, who style themselves the Wood Wardens, and make living gathering tolls from travelers. They also predate the nearer cottages and smallholdings, but not to the extent that their residents leave. Indeed, the crofters feel that, if they are to be oppressed by anyone, it may as well be by the Wood Wardens.

Naturally, the Jezantay authorities are well aware that the Wardens exist, but feel that it there is no point in commissioning their destruction. Suitably qualified vagabonds are just as likely to do so free of charge, if confronted by them.

The Wood Wardens

This is a gang of twelve bravos, led by Ulthariao, a

warrior of heroic proportions, who has a conjoined twin sister and hedge witch, Perula, poking out from his left hip. They live in tree houses built inside the forest margins: they dovetail whole trunks between the crowns of substantial trees and then build platforms between them. The resultant enclave is secure from casual assault, but has no level floors. The robbers keep their loot in their huts, but have little of monetary value, as their victims give them food and drink, rather than specie. They do have a comprehensive range of forest fruit cuttings, which they have trained up the sides of their trees.

Ulthariao and Perula, conjoined twins

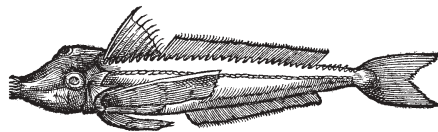
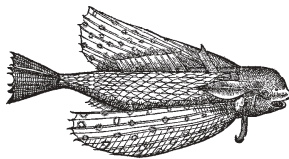
"In answer to you unspoken question, we have a very understanding tailor."

The chief bandit is an alarming prospect, two bodies, one male, one female, flaring from an athlete's hips, and supported on two thick legs and one sturdy crutch, with which the woman supports her weight. Both heads have their own consciousness, and are clearly fully aware and intelligent. They are clearly good friends and devoted siblings.

Dressing well is beyond the twins, but they do their best, wearing black thigh boots, cream britches and two blouses, one dove gray (Ulthariao), one pink (Perula). The blouses will not tuck into the waistband, and each is cropped to reveal a pair of navels, mounting a sapphire (him) and a garnet (her). Both hold their hair back with fillets that match their eyes.

Their swords are a matched pair of dueling foils, which were enchanted as a practical joke. Each infallibly parries a blow from the other. They are of exceptional quality and an unknown metal. Their fittings are deodand teeth and their hilts are bound with pelgrane hide. The swords' case is in the tree house.

Ulthariao is a huge, slow moving, stooping man. But for the woman's torso growing sideways out of him, he would be extremely handsome, strong jawed, with a generous mouth and aquiline nose. His hair is honey-blond and his eyes a clear blue. He wears his blade at his right hip and draws it with a fancy, reversed-hand technique. When in



combat, he turns sideways on to his opponent, the better to shield his sister. His size and ungainliness mean that those who attack with Speed, Finesse or Cunning impose a levy of 1 on his defenses.

Perula would be a beautiful woman, if she had legs and hips of her own. Her hair is blue-black and her almond eyes a soft violet. Her face is heart-shaped, her cheekbones high, her nose small and upturned and her mouth a rosebud. A thin book protrudes from the waistband of their britches. Occasionally she can be seen reading it intently.

She assists her brother by spell casting. Perula uses her magic as circumstances dictate, but will put her brother's safety above all other

considerations. She also fights on his behalf, or in her own defense, should blows come directly at her. If attacked herself, she fights using a blade drawn from her crutch. If forced to fight on her brother's side of their shared body, she does so improvising with whatever is to hand

Ratings: Perula's statistics are in *italics*.

Persuade (Eloquent) 10, *Persuade (Charming)* 10; Rebuff (Penetrating) 12, *Rebuff (Wary)* 8; Attack (Caution) 10, *Attack (Finesse)* 6; Defense (Parry) 6, *Defense (Misdirection)* 6; Health 13, *Magic (Daring)* 12

Spells: Perula knows The Excellent Prismatic Spray, Phandaal's Mantle of Strength, Liberation of Warp and Brassman's Twelve-fold Bounty. She usually memorizes the first three spells.

Cheminiss, Corulo, Ramirian, Millamun, Tholninck, Harrings, Min: Male Wardens

Pergyula, Merima, Madam Corulo, Lesuth, Horumcar: Female Wardens

The Wardens have all been outlawed from their homes so support themselves as best they can with extortion and theft. They prefer not to kill unnecessarily, but will do so, rather than risk injury to themselves. All carry rapiers, bows and axes and dress in close-fitting breeches and shirts of local cloth. Their boots are undistinguished, calf-length, natural leather. They wear wide-brimmed, low-crowned felt hats, and woolen cloaks. If killed and their bodies looted, their incidental possessions will fetch between five and seven terces per bandit. The Wardens will usually offer terms to their opponents, as they have found that people who know that they can buy their way out of trouble for a reasonable fee will do so, rather than fight. If forced into conflict, the gang is formidable. The bandits shoot from cover or maneuver in four person teams, as appropriate, with the intention of pinning and outflanking their opposition. They only close if numbers and terrain are on their side. If they are themselves attacked, they will withdraw in sections, with at least one firing at their attackers from cover.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 6, Rebuff (Wary) 6, Attack (Speed) or Attack (Ferocity) 8, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 7, Concealment 8, Stealth 6





The Trader's Curse

The twins are not unreasonable and will listen to well-framed petitions. If petitioners are fashionably dressed, the bandit chiefs will ask them what people wear outside the wood. Perula will be particularly interested in hemlines, and whether waists and necklines are currently cut high or low. The word 'cinched' will make her close her eyes and shudder. Should they warm to visitors, the twins will even explain their tragic circumstances, and are happy to hear travelers' tales themselves.

Their father, Swaide, was the deputy thief taker of Azenomei. Before their birth he took their mother, Lunlila, to the public excruciation of Damnas, a trader from Efred, in the Land of the Falling Wall. Damnas had been properly convicted of bilking his customers and was sentenced to a slow severing. Seeing that Swaide, who had caught him, was accompanied by a pregnant woman, Damnas cursed her rather than him, saying that her children would lack what he himself did until he was made whole again. As the Twins understand it, this means that they will be conjoined until the trader's corpse rests in one place. They would dearly like to be less freakish, so will gladly accept any offers of help, sincere or otherwise. They will even offer their hidden treasure (alert PCs who make a hidden Perception roll may notice that the other Wardens are surprised by this, as they are not aware of any secret cache).

If the party asks around the taverns in Azenomei, older residents will remember the execution well, noting that the trader's body was thrown into the river and carried downstream. They will remark that trade fell off sharply after that day and remained at a low ebb until more accommodating laws were introduced. Any well-read pedant will know that, should the PCs actually find the body parts, all they need do is bury them together in a vacant crypt.

Finding the corpse is well nigh impossible without magic. Luckily, a spell exists in the *Necropes' Guide and Pathway to the Beyond*, a folio which was offered for sale recently by Fianosther (p54), who trades from one of the better-established booths in the fair. Fianosther still has the item, but retains it as a courtesy to the local evil wizard, Iucounu, the Laughing Magician. He

will rent it to interested parties, though, for a fee of fifty terces, provided that they do not remove it from his booth.

The spell needed is *A Conversation with the Restless*. Transcribing it will require three Pedantry rolls, and will take four hours. Fianosther does not consider it constructive to ponder on whether the Laughing Magician will take amiss his renting the folio to passing travelers.

The old gibbet where Damnas was sawed in half has been dismantled, and the site is now available for hire. All the traders can point to it, but will rub their waists reflexively as they do so.

Should the party proceed, Damnas' ghost will regret that he cannot direct them to his bones. Deodands ate his body three days after the Scaum took it. Luckily, he is bored by haunting a muddy field. The traders on his patch always do badly, and this is beginning to annoy him. The ghosts of others, condemned on the same spot, complain and jostle for elbowroom. They will be jealous when they find out that he has had a real conversation. All in all, he would rather be one of the restful dead. Although rather proud of his curse, he regrets that he must remain earthbound until its conditions are met, or until he lifts it. He is still very aggrieved by his experience of Azenomei justice, and will only revoke his malediction following a satisfactory meeting with the Twins. If the attempt at reconciliation goes well, with them apologizing for their father and him regretting cursing them, the spell will lift.



A Conversation with the Restless

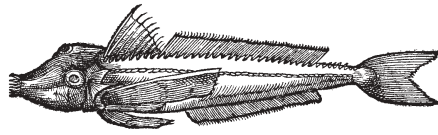
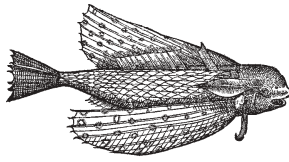
Range: Self

Duration: Hour

Difficulty: Straightforward

In the 19th Aeon, when the Necropes held sway across Almerey, they devised a many spells to contact the deceased. The spells were successful, but the contact was frequently unsatisfying. Great artists, poets and philosophers disappoint when not viewed through the lens of history.

This lesser example allows a neophyte to contact the spirit of a person who is not settled in the Beyond. Spirits tend to complain, and must be persuaded to reveal information. The spell gives no



compulsive power over the deceased, but the opportunity to moan and whine may make them more amenable, as will a promise of future contact. The restless may haunt those who do not fulfill their promises, and some have a curse.



A Difficulty

The Party must persuade the Twins that reconciliation is their best hope. This will not be difficult, but it will incur their gang's displeasure. The Wood Wardens know that their future depends on their imposing chief, and realize that the Twins remain with them only because they are freaks, not because they are outlaws. Cured, the siblings will put their old ways behind them and the gang will revert to being leaderless scum.

They do not want this to happen and will suspend the 'only kill when necessary' rule to keep their group intact. They might dress poorly and be liable to arrest in towns but in the countryside, they are a major threat. Naturally, they must act without the Twins knowing what they are doing, perhaps insinuating that the party consorts with demonic powers, and that their deaths, injuries and disappearances are supernatural. GMs who feel committed to PC survival might want to hint at the Wardens' feelings with overheard whispers or disconsolate mumbling.

When the Twins have been persuaded and their gang placated, all that remains is for the party to sneak a notorious, two-headed monster into Azenomei fair at night and call Damnas up, one more time. If all goes well (some of the players, may, if they like take the parts of the ghost and the Twins) Damnas will leave the earth, his fellow spirits will bid him good riddance, and the conjoined siblings will split into two people and promptly abandon their life of crime. They will make every effort to find their saviors, and properly express their thanks.

Freed from the need to stoop, Ulthariao will straighten up to an imposing six foot six inches. With legs attached, his sister will stand five foot two and will express an interest in high heels. If one of the PCs has previously shown good fashion sense, Perula will ask the PC to assist her in choosing her first dress.

Taun Tassel

While Azenomei is the main town on the Scaum, with its palaces, fair and traveling merchants, Taun Tassel, two days' walk to the west of Jezantay, is where the Old Ferghaz Way comes south to the river. A trail on the far bank continues south to Val Ombrio. Travelers from Cuirnif travel overland or by riverboat to Flath Foiry, lodging at the INN OF FIVE FLAGS, before covering the last 130 Azenomeian leagues to Taun Tassel either by boat down the Sune or along the Old Ferghaz Way. The latter, a paved road of great antiquity, had a charm of protection cast upon it in the latter days of the 20th Aeon and this charm still lingers making the road more popular than the river. From Taun Tassel south, it is reputed to be 185 Azenomeian leagues to Val Ombrio, but the journey rarely takes more than eight days. The route is well traveled, as salt from Val Ombrio is sent north and, at Taun Tassel, transshipped for distribution. Baron Baumevaunt, who rules with a light hand and is skilled with soothing words and gentle flattery, maintains order. A handful of guards assists him. They occasionally patrol the streets at night and sweep the wooded hinterland for unsavory creatures.

Baron Baumevaunt

"Gentlemen would you mind awfully patrolling the Great Da for the next two days? It would be very decent of you."

Baumevaunt, his family and retainers wear enormous cockades of flantic feathers[†] secured in a purple headbands, which enable them to move across the town's bridges without hindrance.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 12, Rebuff (Penetrating) 12, Attack (Caution) 4, Defense (Parry) 4, Health 2, Pedantry 10 (Kang 23rd-27th Dynasties, and funereal practices of the fifth order lords of the galleys)

Resistances: Indolence 0.

Heem, Quelce, Trowse, Gumlor, Cujayal and Sanropas, guards

"I would like to volunteer to arrest the visitors, sir. May I apply the new type three restraint, sir?"

His guards also have a special uniform, all of

[†] A scaly creature of the 14th Aeon, entirely without plumage, as Vance aficionados and PCs with Pedantry will clamor to point out. Telling the Baron so would be discourteous and ill-advised.

Taun Tassel



sateen. Their jackets are sky blue, and trousers and shirts are bright yellow. The Bridge Keepers provide the Baron with their six least-useful people, so the Guards are incorruptible, industrious and vigilant. Their dedication and enthusiasm set them at odds with the Baron's subtle approach.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 5, Rebuff (Obtuse) 5, Attack (Speed) or Attack (Strength) 2-, Defense (Parry) or Defense (Dodge) 2-, Health 8, Athletics 8, Wherewithal 5.

Taun Tassel sees itself as the heart of the milliners' trade. Merchants bring fabrics from as far away as Cansaspara for it is here that, in the eyes of the inhabitants at least, the most skilled clothiers in the Scaum Valley ply their trade.

Taun Tassel is divided into three parts by the Scaum and the Sune. On the south bank of the Scaum is the Town Proper, on the land between the Scaum and the Sune, the Citadel, and on the north bank of the Sune, the Charnels. Social standing is everything in Taun Tassel, and the townsfolk define it in terms of residence. Those who live in The Town Proper look down upon the Citadel's residents, who, in their turn despise the Charnel's people. They also aspire to the Town Proper, as the slum folk do to the middle town. The Bridge Keepers bear the heavy load of deciding who goes where.

Arrival

Visitors arriving at the Town Proper or the Citadel will soon annoy the inhabitants beyond endurance. The town has a rigid view of social status and strangers will inevitably find themselves offending local sensibilities.

PCs will notice that nearly everyone wears an identical, bright cockade, although others substitute a jingling metal tube, worn as a collar. As they will initially have neither, they will attract resentful attention, especially so if they affect any kind of hat ornament. Local people will refuse to trade with them and instead demand that they pay compensation for their flagrant disregard for the institutions of Taun Tassel. If the PCs respond in kind, the inhabitants will become obdurate and, at the GM's discretion, a fight against opponents with Strength and Parry of 6 and a Health of 3 could follow. Otherwise, the PCs will be

directed to the nearest Bridge Keeper, to be torced (See *The Bridge Keepers* p68).

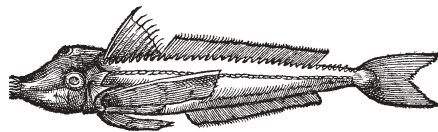
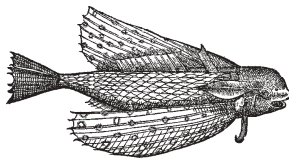
The Town Proper

The Town Proper, where the fashionable clothing emporia are found, stands on the Scaum's south bank. Here, the town square faces the river, which forms its north side. This plaza is lined with grand houses, most of which have a shop on the ground floor. In the center is an ornate garden with carefully raked gravel paths and borders of sweet-smelling crowswort and orange hartlebloom. Here the people of the town promenade at all times of day in their finest clothes.

The garden's centerpiece is a statue of Promebaust the Lachrymose who founded the fortunes of the town's clothing trade. From the Town Proper the Scaum Bridge leads to the Citadel. The bridge is an elegant structure of green mottled stone, carved with scenes from the history of the Kang. Downstream of the bridge is a little-used stone jetty, where grandees used to moor their pleasure boats. The only current tenant is the Baron's golden barge. To the Townsfolk the jetty offers a promenade, where strollers may watch their reflections in the water. One day each year, the townsfolk still dress it with bright hangings and banners, in case a Prince of Kaiin should happen to sail up the river in his barge. On this day, determined by the Bridge Keepers, the town's artisans can assemble on the south bank and, facing the river, advertise their wares to passing boats.

The Town Proper is rent with bitter feuds, caused by stubbornness and social friction. Promebaust, a remote descendent of the Town's founder, owns one of the finest clothes shops, THE UNDERSTATED EMPORIUM. He will not talk to Berliween, owner of EXCELLENCE IN YELLOW, because Berliween lured





one of Promebaust's best needlewomen away to work for him. Similarly, ever since the sad incident with the blue, washed silk, Yoklian, owner of the eponymous YOKLIAN'S, shrieks abuse whenever Tazja, proprietor of THE SUPERIOR FEDORA, walks past her shop. Most of the town folk regard these antics with wry amusement and struggle to remember who is currently refusing to talk to whom. While someone wearing a garment made by Berliween could well be snubbed if they walk into Promebaust's emporium and it would be embarrassing to visit Tazja to purchase a hat to match the suit made by Yoklian, it is rare that anyone suffers anything more than a fit of the vapors.

Promebaust, Titular Mayor and owner of The Understated Emporium

"The blue emmin fur is more discreet and enhances madam's glorious complexion."

An insipid merchant with inflated ideas of his own style, Promebaust snorts, sucks his teeth and sneers at perceived errors of fashion. He detests Berliween for his attempts at social climbing and superior yellow dye. His supposed descent from his namesake, the founder of the Town Proper, makes him an insufferable snob. He would rather lose a customer than sell a garment denoting high status to a person he considers low status. He hates Tazja because the Baron awarded her the sole concession to sell hats of four or more tiers.[†]

Promebaust has a spectacularly varied wardrobe, but is too ungainly and long-limbed to be a flattering clotheshorse.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 8, Rebuff (Obtuse) 5, Attack (Ferocity) 6, Defense (Intuition) 5, Health 7, Appraisal 7, Craftsmanship 8, Etiquette 11, Gambling 2, Pedantry 6, Perception 4, Stewardship 9

Resistances: Arrogance 0, Avarice Ω,

Berliween, Dabbler, dyer and owner of Excellence in Yellow

"The yellow robe you select supports a social fiction which your manner belies."

Berliween is short and thin with fine, thinning hair on a mottled pate. He is straightforward in his criticism of unacceptable garments, although he will opt for servility if he encounters real wealth or

apparent breeding.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 1.5~, Rebuff (Penetrating) ~, Attack (Speed) 5, Defense (Intuition) 6, Health 7, Appraisal 5, Athletics 3, Craftsmanship 9, Etiquette 9, Pedantry 8, Perception 7, Scuttlebutt 5, Seduction 3, Stewardship 5

Tazja, haberdasher and owner of The Superior Fedora

"Two tiers will be more than adequate for your current requirements."

The Baron awarded Tazja a concession for a wonderful hat made from Yoklian's finest material. She is the only merchant permitted to sell hats of four or more tiers. She guards this right jealously, and will only sell many-tiered hats to those with the requisite social status. Any unsuitable person must persuade with a levy of 2 to receive such a hat. She is a little tall to wear a hat with grace.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) ~, Rebuff (Penetrating) 7, Attack (Speed) 6, Defense (Dodge) 5, Health 7, Appraisal 8, Athletics 3, Etiquette 11, Pedantry 9, Perception 9, Quick Fingers 6, Scuttlebutt 10, Seduction 6, Stewardship 7

Yoklian, owner of Yoklian's

"The bird cage is an essential part of the ensemble."

Yoklian creates fine silk from moonspiders' threads. Her materials are exquisite, but her garments are considered overblown and fancy by the more fashionable. Tazja used Yoklian's wonderful cerulean silk to create a four-tiered hat for the Baron; Yoklian received no credit for it at all. This event has made her suspicious when approached by strangers with proposals of mutual benefit.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 0.5~, Rebuff (Wary) 1.5~, Attack (Speed) 5, Defense (Misdirection) 4, Health 6, Appraisal 8, Athletics 6, Craftsmanship 10, Etiquette 3, Pedantry 4, Perception 8, Quick Fingers 4, Scuttlebutt 6, Stewardship 7

Resistances: Avarice Ω, Rakishness Ω

[†] For an encounter with Promebaust, See DERPG page 63, *Xolon Transgresses Local Norms*.

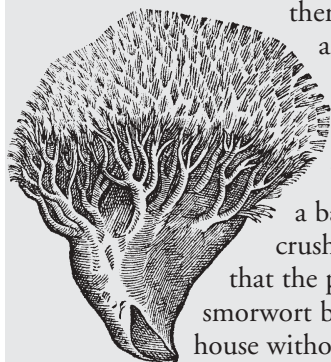


The Yellow Tar Cap

Should any traveler be looking for temporary employment, Taun Tassel has such as would suit every level of attainment. While skilled needle workers are always in demand, there are wagons to unload, scissors to sharpen and shoddy to comb. Occasionally, there are other tasks that need more exacting skills. One such opening is available to those who gain Promebaust's confidence. Promebaust, the owner of The Understated Emporium in the Town Proper, is looking for a suitable group, which will help him revenge himself on Berliween. Berliween, proprietor of the rival Excellence in Yellow, is justifiably proud of his iridescent yellow dye (as worn by the Baron's guards) that far surpasses any other used in Taun Tassel. This he extracts from a fungus, the brown tar cap. Others have tried using this fungus but no one else knows the cantrap Berliween uses to enhance the natural color. What Promebaust wants the party to do is to find another fungus, the yellow tar cap, which looks very similar, but is both rare and has very different effects. Promebaust discovered by accident that the yellow tar cap, when boiled in water and caustic pomiphriage, produces an odor of eye-watering pungency that lingers for some days. The party is to slip into Berliween's dye house, in the Citadel, and there mix yellow tar cap in with the brown tar cap. When boiled, the resulting odor will force Berliween to evacuate his premises and wash all his fabrics in scented soaps to try to remove the lingering smell.

The task is relatively easy. First, the party has to find some yellow tar cap. Failed Pedantry rolls will lead to players picking the brown tar cap by mistake. Dismal Failures will lead to

them picking the similar amber smorwort. This fungus, when crushed or jostled, will give off hallucinogenic fumes. Banging them about in a bag will be enough to crush them. It is unlikely that the party could get amber smorwort back to Berliween's dye house without crushing it.

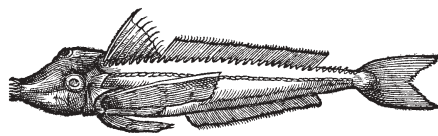


The next stage, getting into the dye house, is more difficult. Berliween's dyers work at night, while during the day people are always coming and going, taking dyed fabric to dry. Obviously, magic will be of assistance, but peddlers selling needles are always welcome, and good customers who show an intelligent interest (while expressing commendable certainty that Berliween is the town's finest milliner) are often shown round the premises.

The final stage, which Promebaust gloatingly awaits, is the making of the dye. Promebaust will not pay the party until he knows that they have succeeded. He will give them a good, if anticipatory breakfast, as they wait for Berliween to light the fire and start making the dye for the following night's work. If the party has managed to get amber smorwort into Berliween's dye tub the results will be spectacular: Berliween, hallucinating wildly, will prance round the square wearing a golden smock, tucked into a pair of disreputable draws, with a bed sock pulled on top of his head as a hat. Promebaust will be so delighted by this that he will actually double whatever he promised to pay the party.

If the party merely failed to recognize the fungi and put brown tar cap into the dye tub then nothing untoward will happen. Promebaust will have them driven from his shop by burly apprentices and he will try to bill them for the breakfast. However, if they succeeded and put yellow tar cap into the dye tub things will take an unexpected turn. Berliween will chant his cantrap, which he uses to enhance the color. It will also enhance the odor. A heavy yellow cloud of stinking vapor will emanate from Berliween's emporium, and will roll across the square, scattering promenaders and causing the flowers to wilt. Promebaust will frantically order his shop closed, the windows sealed, but all to no avail. For at least a month after there will be no sales in Taun Tassel, everything is being washed, dried, sniffed carefully and then washed again. The party would be wise to leave as soon as possible, ideally without leaving an address for correspondence.





The Citadel

The Citadel fills the spur of land between the Sune and Scaum, from their confluence to an old, moated wall. Generations of occupants have variously demolished, built over, dug under and broken through the fortifications, which no longer have any defensive value. The moat now serves as a series of retting and tanning ponds. The Citadel accommodates the trades on which Taun Tassel depends. Here live the makers of needles, the felt nappers, the dilators and tauteners. The Citadel holds the town's two commercial wharves, one on each of its rivers. These structures are of vitrified stone and are in good repair, being relics of the 23rd dynasty of the Kang Kingdom. From the Citadel, one crosses the Sune over the eponymous bridge. This is a more ramshackle structure, of timber piers with a patched roadbed and sagging spars. The only tavern of repute is THE CLOTH STREET INN.

The Charnels

On the right bank of the Sune is the Charnels, Taun Tassel's poorest suburb and now largely ruinous. Originally it was a collection of funeral parlors and mortuaries but fell upon hard times long ago and became a safe place for the venal, the debased, the morally putrescent, the defiled and the cankered. Most of those living here make a living from tomb robbing, and the inhabitants are held in contempt by those who live in Viliyat downstream. The more industrious forge treasure maps or make counterfeit cockades and torcs for sale to visitors. PCs can use Appraisal to decide whether these items are serviceable or not.



A Confidence Trick

Hielin is a charlatan who sells fake maps purporting to show the location of important crypts in the Valley of Graven Tombs. Hielin currently lives in a small hut on the edge of the Charnels under the name Moolar, Master of the Yellow Orb and Guardian of the Black Conflagration.

His hovel is cluttered with rotting parchment while on the table where he sits is a small pile of new parchment onto which he copies the old documents. The hut always looks as if it has been ransacked, so poor is his filing system.

He is, he claims, collecting evidence for his *History of the Valley of Graven Tombs*, which will show where every tomb is, and give full details. Each tomb will have its own chapter and he will show visitors the chapters he has just written about particular tombs.

If a visitor reads the chapter, they will realize that while the tomb described is minor, it is specifically said to lie across the entrance of one of the great lost tombs of the Ferghaz period. Acquisition of this chapter would allow the owner to find (and probably loot) this lost tomb.

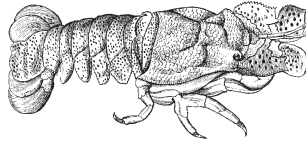
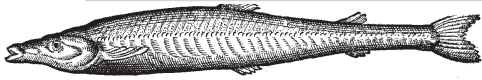
The use of Persuade could well lead Hielin to sell the chapter to a fellow scholar (he still has the rough draft and so can always rewrite it) as he is obviously in sore need of funds, if only for a suit of decent clothes. The entire hut is effectively a stage set. Hielin has rooms in The Cloth Street Inn and walks to work in the morning changing into his scholars rags when he arrives. Should one of his hired urchins in the street see a previous mark approaching, Hielin hastily puts on his customary apparel, slips out of the back and saunters over the bridge back to the Citadel. He returns to work next day and once more starts composing new tombs to sell to wandering adventurers.

Hielin, fraudster

"I may be poor, but scholarly principle prevents me from parting with such an important work."

Hielin is a professional swindler who constructs elaborate ploys to fleece the unsuspecting. In his guise as Moolar, he wears threadbare clothes from the Symposium in Kaiin. Whilst in The Cloth Street Inn, he sports a fine blue suit from Yoklian's in the Town Proper. He is so proficient in his art that he can simulate the Pure-Hearted Rebuff style (spending Imposture points on Rebuff), although a Pure-Hearted PC may notice this if they make a Perception roll.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) -, Rebuff (Penetrating) 0.75-, Attack (Speed) 7, Defense (Dodge) 5, Health 9, Appraisal 5, Athletics 4, Concealment 6, Craftsmanship 7, Etiquette 5, Imposture 12, Pedantry 5, Perception 6, Quick Fingers 4, Scuttlebutt 6, Stealth 5, Wherewithal 4
Resistances: Avarice 0



The Bridge Keepers

The Bridge Keepers bear the heavy burden of deciding who goes where in Taun Tassel. Anyone who wishes to cross southwards and ascend to a better locale must prove herself worthy to a Bridge Keeper. The easiest way to do so is with a bribe. She must also wait until someone moves down in society, so providing a vacancy.

Although the Bridge Keepers know the local populace by sight, they nevertheless insist that they wear a bright cockade as a visible proof of their status. The Keepers issue these ornaments when a candidate

crosses the bridge, in either direction. Aside from those provided as a birthright, their number is a fixed annually by the Milliners and Dyers' Congress, who base their decision on recorded births and deaths. Visitors may apply to the Keepers for temporary crossing and residence privileges, for a fee of 50 terces in the Town Proper and 10 terces in the Citadel. Strangers must wear the appropriate torc, and only one at a time, so the changing of collars affords the Keepers a good income. Those unwilling to pay will be manhandled through the town and ejected into the Charnels.

The fee covers the rental of a hollow metal torc, filled with little bells, which jingle as the visitor walks. The Town Proper collars ring in a minor key, those of the Citadel in a bright major, spanning three octaves. The townsfolk find these magical torcs both amusing and useful. The Bridge Keepers' hand bells are harmonically sympathetic to the collars. When a Keeper rings his bell, trespassing torcs respond with tooth-grating dissonance, and cause visitors in the wrong locale such intense discomfort, that they can do nothing but wince, unless they make a Wherewithal check, in which case they can act with a levy of 1. The fee to have a torc removed is half that of fitting it, payable when leaving the city at its wharves or land gates.[†] This covers the attendance of a Keeper and a locksmith. The artisan is present only as a courtesy to an ancient guild. To disguise his redundancy he performs a complex pantomime of directing the Keeper in the correct use of his key.

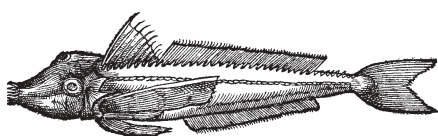
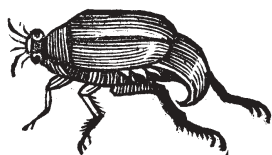
Toin, Tessem M'char and Kemel, Bridge Keepers

"Hold fast, or I will have your teeth dancing the Mobilay to the sound of my bell."

Keepers wear distinctive uniforms, tall shakos, swallow-tailed coats, britches and knee boots. As the Scaum Bridge is the more prestigious, its staff has better clothes, cut from twill, and dyed to a solid, mid blue with mylax root. The Sune Keepers make do with buckram, colored in a range of reds, rust browns and dark pinks with an unreliable dye made from spurge flowers. The Keepers carry staves with a big hook on one end, both to fish people out of the river, and to catch the clothes of anyone who tries to sneak over the bridges.



[†] Readers of *The Brave Free Men* and its sequels will be cautious about simply cutting the torcs open, as in those book they were lined with explosive. GMs should encourage such unnecessary prudence, as rogues from all about will doubtless offer expensive (but sovereign and completely safe) methods of removal.



Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 8, Rebuff (Contrary) 6, Attack (Strength) Attack () 9, Defense (Parry) 8, Health 4, Appraisal 5, Athletics 4, Etiquette 2, Perception 6, Stewardship 3,



The Golden Barge

PCs in financial distress will find themselves impelled towards the Charnels by the frank disdain of the townsfolk elsewhere, whose snobbery has a noticeable gradient. The north side of the town is its lowest social point, so adventurers inevitably will find themselves there, close to destitute and available for hire. The Baron's guards have orders to look for impoverished adventurers and to bring them to him at his castle in the Valley of Graven Tombs.

The Baron (p63) requires an untenanted tomb on the north bank of the Scaum for his great aunt Permada, who feels that when the sun fails dying in company with the commoners will lack distinction. She has persuaded her nephew to make the necessary arrangements, trusting in his academic interest in Kang funerals. Baumevaunt needs Servants Plenipotentiary, people desperate to supervise the clearing out and refurbishing a crypt on his behalf. Local workers will not serve, as the contractors need to apply themselves to a wide variety of tasks. One of these is to ensure that the golden barge, currently at Taun Tassel, will be able to moor near the tomb. Candidly, the Kang laid powerful curses on their graves, and the Baron would rather not have these affect his own subjects.

The Baron's requirements are exacting. To suit, the tomb must bear the mark of the Incisive Wisdom Sisterhood, a jaw-less skull, above a crossed quill and saber.[†] He feels that such tombs might occur next to the dry docks that the earlier ('Lesser') Kang used for their ship-cremations, and can indicate three possible candidates, visible from his castle. The Baron has a very good idea which sepulcher will suit, but needs the his Servants Plenipotentiary to find it for themselves – he is anxious that the resident ghosts should not

discover that the PCs are evicting them on his behalf, as this will attract their curse to him.

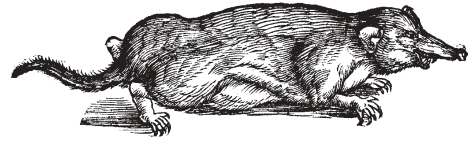
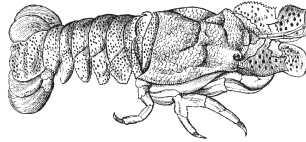
The PCs must hire boatmen to help them with the barge, laborers to assist in clearing a way from the bank to the tomb, cutting back vines and removing the loot. While surveying, it will be apparent to the adventurers that the only way to bring the barge to the tomb would be to flood one of the dry docks.

Preparing for the trip to the valley will require them to visit all parts of Taun Tassel, to recruit workers. The PCs, who have a budget of 1,000 terces, will be accompanied by a pair of the baron's guards, Gujyal and Sanropas (p63). The guards will take custody of the gold and ensure that the PCs move across the bridges without hindrance. The guards' tastes are pedestrian, so they will query any extravagant expenditure. When the PCs have finished the work, the two guards will escort them to return to the castle, where the Baron will ask them if they found what they wanted, and will try to manipulate them into answering 'yes'. In this way, he hopes that any ghost watching the transaction will take this as the adventurers' admission of their own guilt. He will admonish them never to rob a grave again.

After some searching and ugly incidents with grasping and lazy workers, the PCs will find a suitable tomb. As the Baron expected, the excavators can see his castle from it. The crypt has a door facing west and is close to the northern edge of the graveyard, by the side of the Great Da. Characters who roll successfully against Pedantry will remember that late period Kang tombs were bicameral, with a room for mundane grave goods and a burial chamber beyond. Usually, a stone screen separated the two. Breaking the stone invoked a curse upon whoever caused the desecration. The curse on this tomb is the Threefold Curse of Milandja the Last. PCs who can read Old Kangese will note that the curse-screen says so. It also defines the curse's elements and indicates that all parts will affect the victim. It does not say that if not all parts have effect, then none will, but PCs with Pedantry, or those who Rebuff in a Lawyerly style, can work this out on a successful roll.

The first part of the curse is a spiritual call to

[†] Indicating a facility with lore and swordplay, but recognizing their futility in the face of mortality – the Kang were a morbid and introspective people.



the nearest entity that can do the despoilers the most harm. At the time the malediction was laid, this was a guardian pelgrane that always hovered overhead. In the PCs time, it is simply the nearest deodand. The half-man will attack them as cleverly as it can manage.

The second part of the curse afflicts them with great internal anxiety. Personal certainty was important to the Kang and this malison undermines its victim's self image, rendering her incapable of interacting with others.

GM: subtract the PCs higher suasion and rebuff ratings from 10. Assign the result (treat negatives as positive) to the style that trumps it. Until the curse is lifted, the PC must use this new style, unless she succeeds in a Wherewithal roll.

The third part of the curse builds on personal anxiety by complementing it with external terror. The hex makes them attractive to the creature or circumstances that they most fear. As the threefold curse is intended to be long lasting, this circumstance will never kill them, but they may wish otherwise.

Milandja the Last, ghost

"Why do you disturb me from my quiet rest? Prepare for a curse."

Milandja, when alive, was an efficient, matronly ruler of her family. She feels she has earned her rest and despises intrusion, but after initial anger, she will listen to reasoned argument.

Ghosts may have whatever special qualities the GM determines, for example, cannot suffer physical damage, a freezing touch, paralysis or poor table manners.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) ~, Rebuff (Obtuse) ~, Attack (Finesse) 1.5~, Defense (Sure-footedness) 0.75~, Health 7, Athletics 10, Etiquette 10, Imposture 3, Perception 6, Wherewithal 5

Circumventing the Curse

The PCs can do this in four ways. Firstly, by restoring the tomb to its former state, repairing the

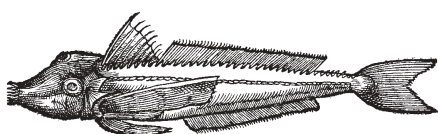
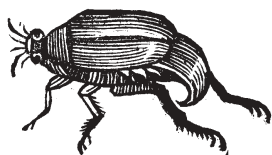
screen and returning any loot. The second would be to persuade Milandja that they are not ultimately responsible. She will require them to carry shards from the curse-screen to the actual culprit. When he accepts, he will bring the hex upon himself. The third is to persuade themselves (at their undoubtedly reduced ratings) that their fears are spurious, at which point the curse will dissolve. There is also the possibility that PCs might find a tomb with a contradictory curse and bring that upon themselves as well. It is highly unlikely that anyone would lay a curse of personal confidence, or for a nice creature to appear and render a favor, but a curse of unending tedium or recklessness would both work against the fear.

Grave goods

- ✱ Two transparent vases, with brass stoppers, half-filled with a thick, transparent pale golden liquid. Huge bubbles rise and fall through it. The bubbles are of gas from Jangk. They will not burst on their own, but a fine tube could be inserted into them. This is hazardous: inhaling the vapor inspired a fighting spirit among the Kang, by making everything seem, as they did to T'sais, 'loathsome and ugly, and anything ugly unutterably vile.' PCs who make a Wherewithal roll with a penalty of 2 can resist this effect. Luckily, the effect of gas lasts for only three minutes.

Drinking the liquid is difficult; it is thick, gelatinous and slightly poisonous. Its potency is 2, its interval is half an hour and its effect is to turn their fingernails, toenails and hair into electric blue scales, interleaved with greasy black feathers. These are demonic features and can be reversed by excising the mutations and allowing the natural versions to regrow.

- ✱ A dinner service for twenty, still set with a formal meal, now dried to stones and dust.
- ✱ Two golden carafes, one red, one white. They hold the dried sediment of fine old wines. If reconstituted, an experienced vintner could harvest a useable yeast culture from each.
- ✱ Four pots, each containing 120 gold coins. These will be accepted everywhere as terces, but in fact are simon-pure gold. PCs who use Appraisal successfully will realize the coins are



worth ten times their face value. Obviously, trying to persuade an innkeeper of the intrinsic merits of a real gold coin when a terce serves just as well is another matter entirely.

- ✱ A board, dice and pieces for an unknown game, in variegated coral. It seems to set deodands against pelgranes in a race around circular tracks, which intersect in six places. If the PCs set the pieces up correctly (deodands at each intersection and a pelgrane inside each circle) then the game will start on its own, with the deodands rushing away from each other and the pelgranes attempting to hop from one circle to the next. The dice will grow cold in the observers' hands, but serve no obvious purpose.



The Valley of Graven Tombs†

A day to the west of Taun Tassel, the Scaum flows for many miles through the Valley of Graven Tombs. The sepulchers are so old and numerous that they are piled on top of each other. The river has gouged deeply into the earth exposing the sides of the older tombs, some of which have collapsed into it. On each side of the river, a narrow path winds its way between the mausoleums. The northern way is prone to landslides and is currently impassable, but on the south, it is still open. It is not often used, as travelers prefer to either make a detour far to the south or to take the river route, rather than spend a night in the valley.

The Tanvilkat Vineyard

The entire north bank is thick with graves, ghosts, monuments and mausoleums, tomb built over tomb for millennia. Here the Tanvilkat vineyard was created with one vine draping itself over each tomb. Grapes from each tomb are picked separately and each tomb produces its own wine. Winetitle to any tomb is a very acceptable gift, while winetitle to one of the more celebrated sepulchers is much sought after.

A Fellow Traveler

Whenever a party are prospecting deep among the graven tombs, especially those up the side valley of the Viliyat river where the vines do poorly in the heavy shade, they are likely to be visited by Sad Neric. He will drift up at the rear of the party and seamlessly join in the conversation. Eventually someone will notice him and he will tell a sad tale of woe, a droning story of lost love and inaccurate bookkeeping. Players must roll their Resist Indolence or they settle themselves comfortably and eventually drift to sleep. At this point Neric rifles through their purses and helps himself before fading, still talking in a bland monotone, back among the tombs.

Sad Neric

"After all that, it was a simple error in of addition that any child could make."

Neric is pale and gaunt to the point of being skeletal. A shroud is his only garment. Sad Neric has developed a proclivity for convoluted monologues with which he bores his potential victims to sleep. It is possible that he embeds a long-forgotten sleep contrap in his stories.

Ratings: Persuade (Obfuscatory) 1.5-, Rebuff (Obtuse) 8, Attack (Cunning) 4, Defense (Intuition) 3, Health 7, Appraisal 6, Athletics 5, Concealment 6, Gambling 10, Living Rough 4, Quick Fingers 5, Stealth 9, Tracking 6

Resistances: Avarice 0

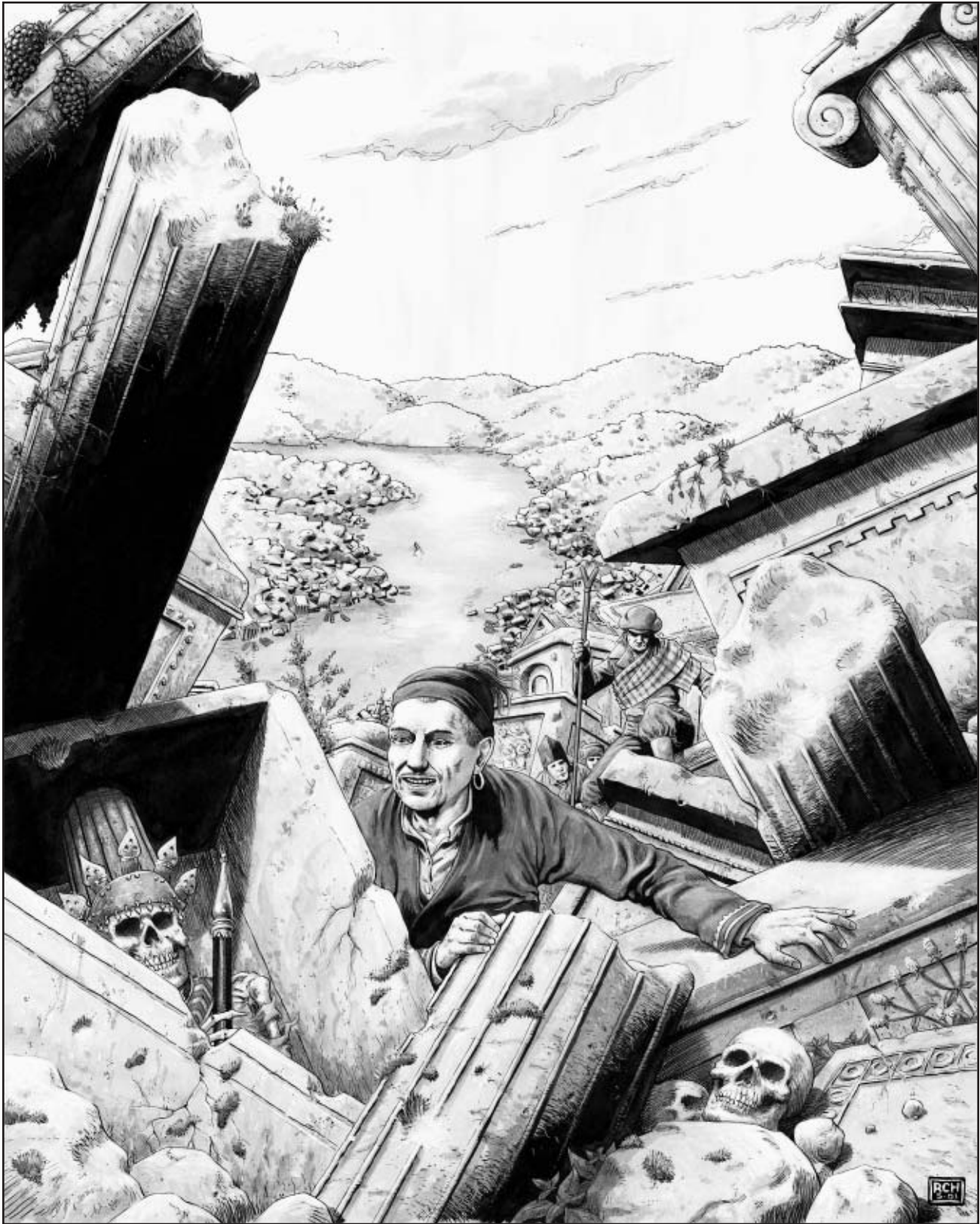
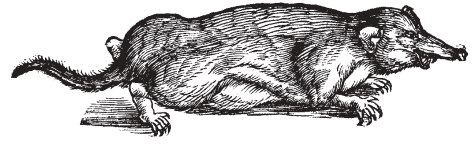
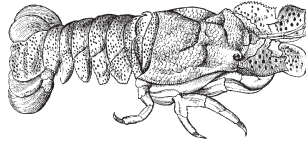
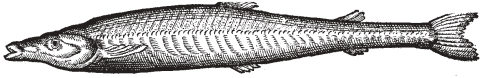


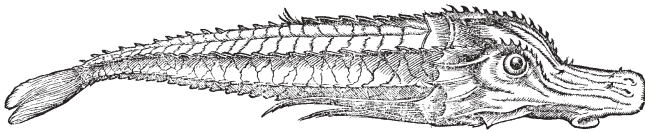
Aungrane's Ghost

So thick is the valley with the ghosts of those entombed there that the vine tedders can find their way at night by listening to the characteristic groans and screams. Among these is a ghost purporting to be of the Kang Emperor Aungrane, who will appear to travelers on the northern bank, particularly to those equipped with digging equipment, lily masks (to ward off noxious effluvia), and so forth. The apparition is usually a gaunt old man with a terrible head wound, who

† A detailed history of the Valley and its viticulture can be found in *The Excellent Prismatic Spray* 3, in the eponymous article.

Valley of Graven Tombs





will beseech the party to cross the Scaum to the southern bank, there to remove a certain rune from around the neck of his mummy and so release his ghost to an eternity of rapture. In return, they will be allowed to loot his tomb, which is buried untouched beneath the accretion.

In practice, the ghost is a madling of inferior sort summoned by certain of the mages of the Scholasticarium to help keep tomb robbers away from the vine tombs on the northern bank. Should they accompany the apparition to the ghostly skiff on which he crosses the Scaum, they will discover that it, and he, dissolve into nothingness halfway across, in the middle of Water's Gleam. Any PC with Pedantry who doubts Aungrane's story may make a roll with a limit of one on encountering Aungrane's Ghost, with the following results.

- ✱ Illustrious Success: the PC will know the full story and earn the chance of persuading the madling to help them in return for not spreading the story.
- ✱ Prosaic Success: the PC will know that the true Aungrane was buried in Azenomei and died by choking on a whole carp in sweet jelly.
- ✱ Hair's-breadth Success: the PC will know that Aungrane was a late Kang Emperor and be suspicious as to why his ghost is so thin.
- ✱ Exasperating Failure: the PC will accept the story but have doubts.
- ✱ Quotidian Failure: the PC will accept the story.
- ✱ Dismal Failure: the PC will accept the story absolutely, and attempt to cross the Scaum, only for the skiff to dematerialize next to a floating log to which three wet and angry erbs are clinging.

Aungrane's Ghost, madling

"Since my death, the invitations have slowed to a bicentennial trickle. I am assured that many polite gatherings await me in the Overworld."

The madling that purports to be Aungrane's ghost takes the guise of a stately, worn dignitary in a flannel nightshirt. In this form, he can neither inflict nor suffer from physical damage. His indenture is large due to a past misdemeanor, and it can only be reduced by inconveniencing potential tomb robbers.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 1.5-, Rebuff (Wary) 7, Health 6, Etiquette 8, Imposture 10, Pedantry 4, Perception 3

The South Bank

On the south bank there is no natural rise in the ground as you move away from the river but tombs built over tombs have mimicked nature in this regard. Few travelers realize that the south wall of the valley, to the left of the river, is almost entirely artificial. Many of these sepulchers are the tombs of mages of some renown and the lingering thaumaturgical fields have a strange warping effect on the area. Tiny nighthaunts buzz the ears of travelers and inflict painful blisters to those who have inadequate hygiene.

Gunikon's Hut

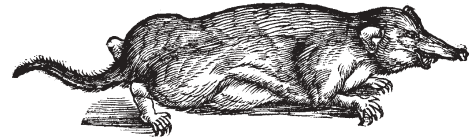
Gunikon lives in a small hut near a hot spring at the entrance to the valley. He sells candles. They do not shed much light, but act as a powerful repellent to small insects, nidchickers and even deodands. The candles that he sells are easily recognizable from their orange color and musty, unsettling odor.

Gunikon takes advantage of the nighthaunts' nest building material: human earwax.[†] Nighthaunts settle in the ears of travelers and chisel away tiny amounts of earwax, which they carry back to their nest. He in turn uses the nest material to make the candles. As nighthaunts are repelled by the odor of burning earwax, they only attack those who do not utilise Gunikon's wares.

Under his dwelling is a large nighthaunt pit containing all the wax they have gathered over the years. Heat from the spring keeps the wax ductile and easy to shape into candles. The smell from the wax, to which Gunikon has not yet grown accustomed, keeps deodands and other unwelcome visitors away.



[†] This strange habit was instilled into the nighthaunt by Motopp the Fastidious, who used the creatures to assist with his ablutions.



Doomerth

With a commanding view of the valley, this monumental folly is Baron Baumevaunt's retreat from the commotion of Taun Tassel. Doomerth is a mixed confection of three lofty turrets, heavy granite buttresses, plinths, and gargoyles. Pelgranes roost in the upper lofts; they do not swoop on anyone with a mile of the castle without the Baron's permission. Doomerth was conceived by the first Baron, Baumevaunt the Blind, who disputed the very existence of the sun, let alone the proximity of its demise. His son, Egmont, completed the construction. Egmont's negotiations with the contractors and local magicians were colored by his belief that the sun was mere months from its death. After four generations, the Baron's family is still repaying the loans. The servants are indentured families who live there by ancient right, and must be supported by the owner. Most of the rooms are unoccupied and the structure is falling into disrepair. The current Baron would be happy to transfer title, including the outstanding loans and indentures to any person dim-witted enough to accept. The contract is backed by Menisment, a languorous sandestin, who is reluctant to be involved, and will deal out penalties with an even-handed liberality to anyone who disputes, or breaches, its terms.

Menisment, contract sandestin

"If I must be involved in these crass negotiations, please stop the alarming excretions that exude from your bodies."

Menisment is the reluctant supervisor of the Doomerth contract, and enforcer of loan repayments on the property. His guise usually reflects the severity of the contract breach; if a servant is not given suitable food, he might take the guise of a Jitian Auditor; if a payment is late, a red-robed magister. In any event, he is authorized to use any spell[†] to exact revenge. He would rather return to his study of phydropoid interstices, and if anyone can find a suitable loophole in the contract, he will depart. His contract is terminated when "...any and all contractual obligations relating to the outstanding loan, past, present, future and sidereal are fulfilled in their entirety."

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 2-, Rebuff (Obtuse) 2-, Attack (any) 2-, Defence(any) 2-, Health 2-, Etiquette 9, Gambling 8, Imposture 9, Pedantry 10, Perception 7, Scuttlebutt 5, Stewardship 8, Wherewithal 5

The Tomb of Oldiswinon

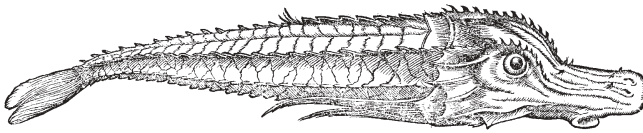
A legendary tomb believed by many to have never been robbed. It is unusual in that it is located on the South side of the valley somewhere overlooking Water's Gleam. Tomb robbers talk about it as "the last really big one" and there is much discussion as to where exactly it is. There is a clue to its location on page 37 of Fianber's *Thaumaturgical Dictionary* which mentions Oldiswinon was buried under a slab of green obsidian cut with runes just above the water line.

Clever PCs may remember that the waterline was higher in the past. Armed with this knowledge and a reliable antique map, adventures will soon find a slab of green obsidian and, on moving it, they can view a many-arched vault. The vault is empty but from it a passage runs steadily uphill. After an hour or so the traveler encounters a door of considerable antiquity. This door is stiff but can be opened, and leads onto a spiral stair case. Off this stair case there are several chambers, the lowest being a strong room in which can be found a considerable quantity of bullion protected by seven curses. In the next there are clothes of obsolete cut, and following the stair up to the top one comes to a storeroom full of food at the peak of freshness. The door off this leads to Baron Baumevaunt's kitchen in Doomerth, where his loyal domestics are prone to asking difficult, even pointed questions to which they give emphasis by gestures made using fierce knives and skewers.

Bonefield Ale

Downstream of the tombs lies the bonefield, a fan of silt and debris spread on the south bank of the river, where a levee is prone to breaking. Here bones have been washed out of the valley walls by spring rains and lie mixed with silt. The inhabitants of nearby Viliyat sow barley to produce bonefield ale. Local brewers purport that bonefield ale is to beer what

[†] He has access to all those listed in the *Dying Earth RPG*.



Tanvilkat is to wine. Unfortunately, while the ale is certainly a very acceptable brew, the local vintners hotly dispute its claim to magical properties.

The Tomb of Harberimus Trantis

Deep among the other tombs, under the shade of a hangman's tree, lies the tomb of Harberimus Trantis. It is half buried beneath the compost of leaves and wind-blown detritus, but the first part of the inscription can clearly be read. The carving is of immensely rich quality and there is no apparent curse, merely the beginning of a strange statement: "Come in to leave and leave to enter, riches." The rest is buried beneath the debris. Clearing away the dirt will reveal the rest of the inscription: "...hidden at the center."

Much digging will be required to unearth the tomb door fully, but after all, there are riches inside and the tomb appears to be undisturbed. Unfortunately, getting into the tomb is rather harder than it at first appears. Anyone trying to walk through the door will suffer a moment of dizziness before finding himself or herself walking straight back out again. Observers will experience a momentary fuzziness of vision, leaving them unable to explain what just happened. Of course, the tomb is protected, but Harberimus was a well-known prankster in his day and instead of the rather mundane maiming curse, he had a riddle attached to his door. Walking forwards into the tomb will always throw you right back out again; walking backwards through the door will get you inside and the same goes for trying to get back out again.

The inside of the tomb is gaudy, rich with reliefs



and embellishments. In the center is a box, badly decayed. If the PCs can get it open safely (after all, it is trapped with acid) they will find a few coins but nothing to support the apparent opulence of the interior. True to form, Harberimus isn't here but is actually buried inside the hangman's tree with his collection of tricks and amusements. Should they check the position of the hangman's tree, it is over the center of the tomb. Harberimus' cache includes marked decks and other items suitable for persons with a flexible attitude to the law.

Curses

Many of the tombs in the Valley have curses; those that are not despoiled after aeons certainly have. Many are simply irrelevant: an admonition that "all your hair grubs will wilt", potent amongst the insectivorous Quellom people may have little effect on a traveler in the 21st Aeon. The local vintners consider curses a hazard of their trade and know cures for the most common.

The Curse of Nelisous

Traditionally laid upon tombs in the Early Kang period, this curse is engraved as a series of icons around the doorway of the tomb. Initially, the curse was very specific; anyone moving through the doorway was immediately seized by an Agent of Far Dispatch and deposited on the roof of the temple of I'lin in Jalaspa. Alas, Jalaspa is no longer to be found and it is believed that it sank below the waves an aeon ago. Scholars suspect that the Agent leaves its passengers off shore near the Islands of Cloud.

The initial curse could be foiled by the simple expedient of a banishing spell. However, over the years not only have many of the icons become worn, but as knowledge waned, the symbols were carved by those who did not understand what they were doing, the curse being regarded as some form of decorative frieze.

This means that the curse may be inoperable or act in a totally unforeseen manner (in one case the entire tomb seems to have disappeared). Indeed, an innocent traveler might unwittingly activate a flawed version of the curse by brushing dirt off the top of a tomb to try and read the inscription.

Xambr Farmers' Curses

Near Viliyat, on the south bank of the Valley, a cluster



of gaudy, over-large tombs forms an unavoidable eyesore to the discerning traveler. These tombs were constructed in the 16th Aeon for a brief dynasty of farmers styled 'the Xambr'.

Before the 16th Aeon, Xambr farmers were not formally buried. In their rude and conservative fashion, they were just ploughed back into their fields to improve the next year's crop. If the farmer was noteworthy, the field might then be named after him. In the 16th Aeon, their farming practices underwent a revolution with the invention, quite by accident, of the doubled-bladed scythe. Production soared, revenues increased twelve-fold and the farmers found themselves with an embarrassment of riches. Unaccustomed to such good fortune, the Xambr were obliged to send to the great city of Jit for advisors to help them spend their bounty. The Jitians advised, in keeping with their own customs, the building of great mausoleums to honor the passing of the farmers and their families.

Priests were brought from the city to lay vicious curses on the tombs and prevent any desecration. In keeping with local mores these were such homilies as: 'May all your pigs all get gout' or 'May your barn be hit by lightning a week next Tuesday'. While these scathing deprecations were indeed terrifying to the locals, they provided little protection against the more perceptive thieves from the city who came in the priests' entourages and had little or nothing to do with barns or pigs. The thieves were soon disheartened to discover that the grave goods consisted mainly of livestock, swine and poultry, all still alive – the farmers' families were far too canny to let a decent barn-sized mausoleum go to waste. It is sad, then, that the Xambr, forgetting the Jitian counter-curses, were often cursed themselves as they sought to retrieve their animals. This led to the fall of Xambr economy and the eventual desolation of the region.

The tombs were reused in 17th Aeon by a more worldly culture, that of the River Skaters. In that time of great cold they would be entrusted with carrying messages up and down the river on skates pulled hither and thither by nepiphans, a vat-grown arthropod. In order to make good use of the tombs, they employed groups of metaphoricians whose task was to explain the less obvious hidden meanings of the curses. For example, the 'pigs' in 'May all your pigs all get gout' is an obvious allusion to the toes and



Night Ghouls

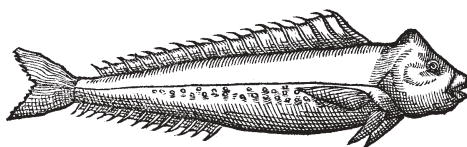


One denizen of the valley that does not appear to be found anywhere else, night ghouls are thought to be an accumulation of ghosts trapped in some sort of fleshy miasma. They are only ever glimpsed out of the corner of the eye, should you managed to stare directly at one they fade and vanish, leaving a few white rags draped limply over some long dead sticks.

Scholars postulate that they come into being when many ghosts are forced to inhabit the same small area of ground. Between them, they generate enough essence to manifest themselves in corporeal form and they can then slink around the wider area, no longer trapped to one specific location. While posing no threat in daylight or to parties three or four people strong equipped with torches or lanterns, should anyone be foolish enough to venture among the tombs by night and on their own, they will be stalked by this creatures. While many may be slain by staring at them more – or perhaps the others reborn – will gather. We must note that we have no record of how these creatures kill their prey, but many travelers have been found lifeless and cold in the morning, their faces contorted with terror, their hearts having given out. We can only assume that the night ghoul subsumes the victims' spiritual essence into its own being.



gout is an inordinate swelling. As such, this means that a transgressor will suffer *The Spell of the Macroid Toe* on all his, or her, carpals. With the curses thus reinvigorated by sharp linguistic practice, the tombs of the Skaters were made safe for many a year. The more knowledgeable traveler will be able to discern whether the curse on a Xambr tomb has been metaphoricised.



The Palace of Delights

This is an inn on the south bank three miles from the Valley of Graven Tombs, which provides a mooring point for Scaum boatmen. The Palace caters for those who would journey through the valley, allowing them one last, safe night. The innkeeper, Therimple, runs the Palace for a local magician, Maguippe, who, despairing of employees from Falu village, uses its staff as a source of reliable retainers and apprentices.[†]

The building, despite the grand title, is a barn. It has a set of large double doors at one end and a shack leaning against each of its longer sides. These accommodate a rough stable (1 terce per beast per night) and a slaughterhouse. Those who do not pay their stabling fees quickly find their animals made into stew. Otherwise, they will kill, butcher and cook any animal for the modest fee of its ears, tails and hooves. These they cook down into a jelly called thrumpke, flavored with herbs and served as an appetizer in the barn. Boatmen often carry a lump with them in a side pouch and cut pieces from it that they suck whilst they work. If the jelly is made from wherriots then they will add the plentiful marrow to give it a reddish-brown hue and add a meaty aroma.

Inside, the layout is simple. A bar splits the barn in two. In front of the bar are some rough benches and tables on which are served the simple meals, bread trenchers with a stew from whatever animal has most recently been slaughtered. Beyond the bar is a large pile of hay that serves as bed for customers and fodder for their mounts whose heads poke through from the stables so they can eat. As the clientele passes out from

over-indulgence they are unceremoniously thrown into the hay. As a result, various body parts can be seen sticking out the pile. They serve only two drinks here, a rather insipid small beer, Asple, tinged with elderberries and a more rumbustuous ale called Hausabaust. This has a fruity tang and a rich, meaty flavor; it also contains small cubes of thrumpke.

The smell of the stew and the noise of the rowdy customers attract a number of predators. A guard, armed with three rocks,[‡] keeps these at bay. The roof mounts a cacotron: a tortured mass of trumpets, earhorns and cogs that whirr and spin as it works. It collects all the noise from the room below and retransmits it a higher register, one that is painful for deodands, grues, hoons and pelgranes. This works very well for most of the night, although in the small hours when the hubbub has died down, a traveler is occasionally devoured. The outcry that accompanies this is usually enough to reactivate the cacotron and drive off any further attacks.[§]

Most of the clientele are bargees. Although, they do not fear the valley, they avoid it at night and sing loud songs as they pass through, to drown out any tempting noises that ghosts might make.

Therimple, Innkeeper of the Palace of Delights

"My policy is serve honest boatmen first, then inflated cock-weasels."

Therimple has a free hand to run the Palace as he wishes. His main purpose is to train polite, efficient staff for the Palace's owner, Maguippe, a magician and anatomist. When in Maguippe's employment, any such retainers pass on to Therimple a small percentage of their unaccounted expenses.[¶]

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 10, Rebuff (Rebuff (Contrary)) 9, Attack (Attack (Strength)) 9, Defense (Misdirection) 8, Health 10, Athletics 5, Appraisal 6, Stewardship 10, Wherewithal 8



[†] It is rumored that less successful employees and non-paying clients become Maguippe's experimental subjects.

[‡] Three rocks are, by tradition, enough to kill a deodand if they all strike true.

[§] PCs might be tempted to remove this annoyance, before they bother to learn of its purpose.

[¶] Even with such meticulous planning, Maguippe's henchmen are no better than any other magicians', but that their dishonesty remains unnoticed.



Viliyat to Tsmouth

*In which travelers are advised to remain alert
to opportunity even in settled and prosperous lands*

Viliyat†

Viliyat is a distinguished village with appealing proportions and a fine setting. It stands on an inselberg to the southwest of the bonefield. Huge statues of human heads and shoulders line the route from the river to the settlement. Each had a different model; all ages and both sexes are represented. They have the same expression, of confidence and determination, and all the statues face northwest.

Viliyat's houses are narrow with steep roofs. Their lowest floors are always stone walled storehouses with no communicating doors to the rest of the building. The living quarters are above them, and can only be reached by a ladder. The inhabitants work among the vines and grow crops for their own use.

The Viliyat Inn

To visitors, the most attractive building in the town is the Viliyat Inn. It is also the largest by far. Instead of storerooms, it has a common room on the first floor.‡ It has stone flags, and heavy wooden tables, each of which has two benches drawn up to it. At one side is a long bar with a door leading to both kitchen and ale store. The common room is busy from evening to late at night, and then quiet, but for the snores of those

travelers who sleep under the tables, there being no other accommodation. The upper floor affords privacy for the innkeeper and his family. The common room tends to be quietly brisk through the day with Horswort the innkeeper serving meals and providing hospitality to thirsty travelers. Horswort is innately wary, and he will ask all visitors to justify their presence. He serves premium bonefield ale, but his wine is fermented from grapes collected from some of the less well-known tombs. The wine is acceptable and the house specialty – mashed roots, marinated in red wine, before being fried with grated salt meat and diced vegetables – is excellent.

Horswort, Innkeeper of the Viliyat Inn and Dabbler

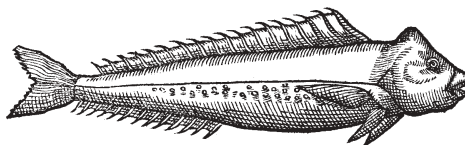
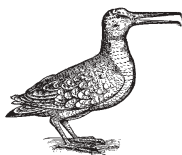
"I do not supply fine wine to unrefined nomads. Make do with the ale; you are unlikely to appreciate the difference."

Horswort has a suspicious temperament, darting eyes and a thin face. He wears a tall cylindrical hat that ties under his chin, huge leather trousers which he ties round his middle, and a tight-fitting red shirt. He wears Laccodel's Rune on a pendant and knows three spells.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 8, Rebuff

† Further information on Viliyat may be perused in 'The Gold and Amber Cabal', *The Excellent Prismatic Spray* 3.

‡ Here our attempts at internationalism fail us. British buildings begin with a ground floor, which Americans call the 'first.' We stick to the American usage. Disgruntled British readers should remember that Jack Vance is an American.



(Lawyerly) 7, Attack (Finesse) 6, Defense (Intuition) 7, Magic (Forceful) 8, Health 10, Appraisal 4, Athletics 5, Craftsmanship 9, Etiquette 6, Perception 9, Scuttlebutt 4, Stewardship 5

Resistances: Arrogance 1

Spells: Spell of the Loyal Servitor, Clambard's Rein of the Long Nerves, Lugwiler's Dismal Itch. He also possesses a grimoire with four more spells.

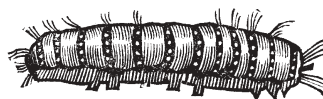
Mice and Owls

Horswort is worried by a problem that seems to be threatening his livelihood. He has winetitle to a score of minor tombs on the edge of the valley. Recently a thick black liquid has been bubbling up and is threatening his vines. He would be most grateful if a suitable group can work out what is happening and effect a solution.

The problem is simple. The valley walls are home to gid-miniscule hybrids. They burrow into

the soft loess soil to make their nests. One pair, when digging their lair, dug into the forgotten tomb of Tharwue the Avuncular. Tharwue was a noted diabolist and in his tomb are several artifacts that he used to help him reach down to the lower planes and summon various demonic servants. Unfortunately, the hybrids disturbed the tomb and in their excavations actually rubbed one artifact, a Portal Hoop two ells across. This created a link into one of the lesser hells. This portal is slowly leaking demonic essence into the watercourse and it is bubbling up near one of Horswort's tombs.

If the PCs offer to help Horswort he will have Virian, his latest tap boy, take them to the site. Once there, a careful search will show a stream of clear water further up the valley wall. This disappears into a cleft in the rocks. A hundred feet lower down on the valley floor it bubbles up, seriously contaminated. Close investigation of the valley side between where the stream disappears and where it reappears again reveals the entrance of

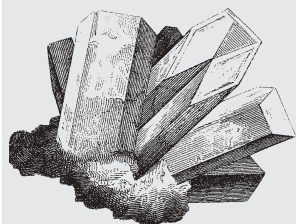


a burrow half hidden behind a sticky vermit bush. Anyone groveling about near the bush will get vermit burrs stuck to their clothing. These have no ill effects beyond making the wearer look scruffy. The burrow is just too narrow for an average-sized person to crawl down, but it can be widened easily with a shovel. Twelve hours of digging will produce a tunnel high enough to move down on hands and knees, leading to the edge of the tomb. There is a narrow gap between the tops of the stone slabs. It is definitely not wide enough for a person to squeeze through, but shining a light through will elicit the glint of gold. It is a day's work to excavate around the slabs enough to move one, and a further day to make the passage wide enough to remove the slab. Cunning explorers will merely bury the slab on the tunnel floor, a course of action that takes less than half an hour and is far easier than pulling half a ton of rock along a narrow tunnel.

Once in the tomb, the problem is obvious. There is a portal hoop stood propped against one wall of the crypt. Viscous black ooze is dripping out of it and has eroded a narrow hole straight down to where it joins the watercourse. The hoop has two ivory plaques set into its surface. One has 'Open' written on it, the other 'Close' in Cazdalene. To open, rub the 'Open' plaque, to close just rub the 'Close' plaque. Rubbing the wrong one, that is rubbing the 'Close' plaque if the portal is not open, will invert its effect, opening a one-way portal from Sadal Suud and inflicting a swarm of inconvenienced owls and mice upon whoever is holding the hoop.

Also in the tomb there are coins and small gems with a total value over a thousand terces. Unfortunately, the coin has picked up a demon taint from the black ooze, so no Pure-Hearted person will accept it.[†] In addition to this, they may find a whistle in the form of a winged fiend.

Blowing it summons a being very similar in appearance to that carved on the whistle. The creature can be dismissed by anyone saying its true name. Any standard text on



demonology will name this demon, 'Mishka', and an Illustrious Success with a Pedantry roll could well bring the name to mind as well. The demon is not interested in harming the party, it prefers its victims alive, but unless it is brought to heel very quickly, it will snatch up one bystander for an unspecified purpose and then leave with the unfortunate tucked under one arm. (If its potential victim takes a wound, Mishka will have grabbed him and lifted off). Returning to the Overworld, or any other place the GM finds amusing, will take three minutes of uninterrupted growling and wing flapping. If Mishka is wounded, it will leave without its prey, perhaps to return at an inconvenient moment some days later. If wounded whilst carrying a victim, the consequences should be obvious.

Mishka will not perform any useful tasks for the party. The whistle was intended to summon an Overworld sacrifice for an Arch-Magician and so could be sold to one. It has no other value.[‡]

Mishka, demon

"Seventeen time-slices in ruin, a new demi-world unthreaded, and an inadequate victim as payment..."

Mishka is indistinguishable from other demons used as Agents of Far Dispatch, except that his dorsal pinions are over six inches in length.

Ratings: Persuasion (Intimidating) 0, Rebuff (Wary) 8, Attack (Strength) 16, Defense (Dodge) 16, (Defense (Parry) 8 if carrying a victim), Health 10

The last artifact is a long mirror a full six feet in height. If a living being stands in front of it, it reflects back the proportion and type of any demon within them. Tharwue used it to check on the nature of hybrids.

If they return, Horswort will reward them with a copy of *Phalajun's Perfection of Manners*, a spell of dubious utility.



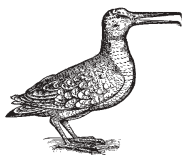
Phalajun's Perfection of Manners

Range: Self

Duration: Feat

[†] The PCs now have a foolproof way to identify such people, so should be able to avoid them.

[‡] Any magician who blows the whistle will find, as a strange consequence, that Mishka acts as the magician's Agency of Far Dispatch when she casts the Laganetic Transfer.

**Difficulty:** Straightforward

This spell assists magicians in behaving properly. It allows one unfamiliar with polite customs to perform a single service with the nicest precision. Examples include removing the correct end of an egg with a neat incision, decanting a bottle of old wine without spillage, or proffering the correct fork for the fish course. All known accounts agree that it leaves a lasting impression.



GM: This spell was never satisfactorily differentiated from Phalajun's Imposing Demonstration. Like it, this spell summons up a greater daihak. Unlike it, the enchantment of Perfection of Manners enjoins the demon not to attack anyone. It must take the most direct route to the caster's side, regardless of furniture or architecture. When there it performs the demonstration of correct manners, glowers, then departs into a vent in the floor, leaving behind it a persistent cloud of actinic green droplets. The exact agency is not apparent until the spell is cast.

Lake Island

The Scaum flows out of the Valley of Graven Tombs and enters a broad, level valley. Here the river divides, to create an island a couple of miles long and, in places, as much as a hundred yards wide. Because the river widens and slows, local inhabitants regard it as a lake, hence the name 'Lake Island'. It is the site of HOLAM HOUSE, the home of Shaunica, a lady of exquisite beauty and considerable wit and intelligence.[†] A recent visitor, the diarist Parefis from Kaiin, described Holam House:

'The house, of cream-colored stone, is laid out in a semicircle, the interior aligned to the path of the sun. As the day passes, sunlight illuminates each segment in turn through polychromatic glass. Inside, every sound, sight, and scent match the mood of the hour.

At sunrise, naked and scented with olus, Lady Shaunica walks the length of the velvet-lined Corridor of Dawn and Dusk, proceeding from her bedchambers in the east to the great dressing rooms in the west.

In the Crystal Suite, she takes her breakfast, a

compote of sea fruit and sunapples, to the tinkling of rhodoscrite and Yu-sapphires.

At midday, she moves to the camphor-wood Record Room, where she studies the geophysiology of the Overworld. The room is lined with stuffed creatures, leather-clad books on shelves of polished daobado wood, and filled with furniture of great antiquity. Light passes through a domed roof of stained glass, which depicts scenes from Kemper's Hunt of the Orobus, to illumine the room with irregular patterns.

After lunch in the Arboretum, she receives guests in the Aquatic Chamber, a spacious room painted in tones of blue, hung with jade streamers and filled with the sound of cascading foam. The floor is inset with a bronze tantalum frieze: a sea keak constricting a Jhardine pirate clipper. Discerning guests are aware of Lady Shaunica's joke – we are all as aquatic beasts in a glass tank, performing for pleasure, with dire consequences for failure.

As to the rooms beyond, I know nothing, as Lady Shaunica expressed her regrets. She was forced to attend to urgent business, and our conversation was brought to a sudden end.'

The Giant with Two Heads

In the Great Da lives a gigantic monster with two heads, one a man's, one a woman's. The creature traps victims by using its sweet girl's voice to lure them into the woods, then its man's roar to fill them with dread. PCs must make a Wherewithal roll to resist paralysis. The heads then devour their stupefied victim alive. Some people have bargained for their lives, swearing faithfully to bring other victims to the creature and survive for as long as they do so.

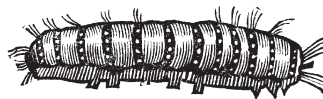
The Giant with Two Heads

"You may barely make a meal, but I am not one to sneer at a snack."

Demador is an omnivorous giant with a preference for human flesh. He wears a motley patchwork made from his victims' clothing. One of his heads, Dema, is female, the other, Dor, is male. How, or even if, this creature can reproduce is not known; it is not topic that we recommend potential victims raise when faced with ingestion.

[†] As readers of Rhialto the Marvelous are aware, Lady Shaunica shared her favors with Rhialto the Marvelous at one of Duke Tambasco's balls. This has not endeared her to Rhialto's fellow Arch-Magicians.

Taun Sfere



Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 0.5~, Rebuff (Obtuse) ~, Attack (Strength) 2~, Defense (Parry) 1.5~, Health 10, Athletics 10, Living Rough 10, Tracking 10, Wherewithal 10,
Resistances: Gourmandism 0

offer some protection against falling masonry. As the buildings are closely packed in the city, the advantage of building high is that it affords one a glimpse of the sun from a roof or solarium. Unfortunately, higher buildings are more likely to collapse when a tremor strikes.

Taun Sfere

Below Lake Island, the Scaum meanders lazily over a broad flood plain. The land is lush and fertile, for every spring the river overflows with the cold waters from the thaw of snows from the mountains to the east. The farmers have been here for a long time and have built up great mounds of earth, on which their dwellings rest safely above the waters. Visitors can easily spot the evidence of a marriage in the area, because new farmsteads are built on stilts and the earth is slowly piled up underneath the farm, mixed in with straw and dung for extra strength, over many seasons. When at last the farm rests on the good dry earth, the farmer is considered 'ripe' and is admitted to the local council. The only town in the area is Taun Sfere and it too pokes up out of the spring thaw like a spicy dumpling in a polgaster stew.

The townspeople of Taun Sfere are full of civic pride; their buildings are in various states of disrepair and crews of workmen work incessantly to shore up the high wall that surrounds the place. The town needs the wall as a dyke against the high spring waters. The inner town, further up the solitary hill, needs no such protection from flooding but suffers frequent earth tremors, which damage the buildings. Wide-brimmed, stiff, felt hats are a constant in Taun Sfere fashion: they



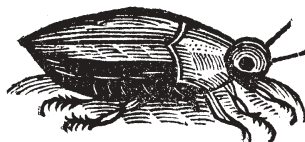
Polgaster Stew



Collect the roots of six mimiver bushes and leave to dry in the sun. In the meantime, put out some traps for polgasters, preferably baited with a sweet mixture of crushed cardamom pods and cinnamon. Go to the market and purchase half a dozen onions. On your way back pause a while at a stream, consider the state of the sun, how the fish dart and scatter as a shadow passes over, and, avoiding pelgranes, pick all the sorrel you can lay your hands on. Gently fry the onions and sweat the sorrel in the steam. When the onions are gold, mix in the sorrel and reserve. By now, your spouse should have had ample time to turn the mimiver roots into flour. If not, scold roundly and consider remarriage. Take the flour and scent it with any of the bait that went uneaten, add some ghee. Mix in some yeast and leave to rise in a warm place. Check your traps. You should have at least four polgasters. Skin and clean them in the usual manner, taking care to avoid any bursting. Drain off any ichor and use it to deglaze the pan. Add some stock, preferably pelgrane but usual hoon will do. Stew the polgaster chunks for at least one hour. Take the dough and kneed it, forming palm-sized balls. Use these to create a crust on the stew and return to the oven for 20 minutes. Serve with a full-bodied Azenomei red.

The Demon Bauntberd

The reason for these tremors is that the hill on which Taun Sfere stands is the soil-covered head of the demon, Bauntberd. This creature fell to Earth during a particularly violent period in the history of the Overworld that coincides with the 14th Aeon. So precipitous was the fall that the demon sank into the ground, like a nail. A few of its scales became



dislodged and its body has become partially filled with soil. Over the aeons, the head has become completely covered, first by grass and tree, then by Taun Sfere. So far the demon has been unable to free itself, but still attempts to do so by shaking its head.

The townspeople have found that it is possible to keep the demon 'amused' and reduce its shaking by entering into caverns inside the demon's head and performing entertainments. This is not an activity worthy of gentlefolk desirous of maintaining their tanned complexions, so it is left to vagabonds and miscreants to perform this service on pain of sacrifice to an enormous pelgrane. For some time, she nested on Taun Sfere, before the townspeople were able to drive her away. She still returns, looking for food, and the locals are happy to put miscreants in a cage, which they leave by the north gate. The beast carries it off full and returns it empty. The monster's nest is believed to nest somewhere to the north. One of her eggs is on display in the municipal museum.[†]

The Civic Buildings

The Civic Buildings, two domed and handsomely be-columned basilicas stand near the bottom of the hill. In bad years, water laps at the steps and fills the basements. To avoid the town records turning into a sodden mass, they are kept on lines that hang from the ceilings and clerks attached to systems of ropes and pulleys swing across the vaults in the course of their duties. Visitors to the town are asked to sign the town register when they arrive. This means they must visit the Civic Buildings.

Inns

Visitors have a choice of four inns: we recommend the HASTROFURGE, where the food is excellent, or the FIVE OWLS, which offers five separate tariffs. The BAUNTBIRD'S DISTRESS is noisy, while the atmosphere in the WATER'S EDGE is a trifle over-ripe due to the waters that lap against its windows.

Militiaman

"Our role is more one of chasing than catching."

The local militia wears sturdy, thigh-length leather waders with attachment hooks, black waistcoats, heavily brocaded in the colors of each watch and shiny gold helmets sporting feathers from their

mounts. These, known as Hastrofurges, are large flightless waterfowl with long necks and slender, webbed feet. They can carry one rider each whilst running or swimming. More unusually, the neck comes out of the back of the body and stretches up and over the rider's head, affording him some measure of comfort as a backrest. The riders use lances and nets to capture bandits. They will not venture beyond the traditional municipality, which is marked by obelisks in the surrounding area, the tips of which are just visible during floods.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 6, Rebuff (Penetrating) 6, Attack (Finesse) 6, Defense (Dodge) 6, Health 4, Athletics 4, Ride (Hastrofurge) 6.

Hastrofurge

"Skwark!"

The hastrofurge is a large, flightless bird that acts as the militiamen's mounts.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 4, Rebuff (Obtuse) 10, Attack (Speed) 4 Defense (Dodge) 4 Health 8 Athletics 2,

Resistances: Gourmandism 2 fish 4, shiny objects 0[‡]

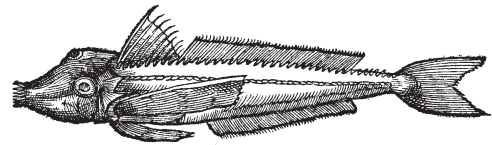
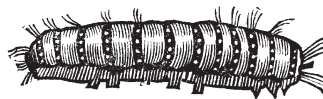
Dibicias' Tomb

Should travelers find themselves without funds in Taun Sfere, rather than having to dance for Bauntberd's delight, they might seek paid employment. It is perhaps a sign of the times that, while there is regular employment for the dung weavers who build up the mounds beneath each farm house, and also for sextons who paddle the cadavers upriver to the valley of graven tombs using the coffin as a canoe, there are few honorable positions open and even fewer lucrative ones. Nonetheless, for those with wit and daring, a way to earn money can be found.

While signing the town register, the clerk Quaintabas will instruct the adventurers to salvage documents from a partially flooded cellar, as an earnest of civic devotion. If the travelers respond that, as visitors, they have none, nor could they reasonably be expected to do so, he will inform them that to disagree with a civic official is a crime of the third order and that they must obey him without further prevarication. Two militiamen,

[†] Readers who wish to experience this pelgrane's hospitality vicariously are referred to the *Excellent Prismatic Spray 3*, our adventure compendium. In accordance with the Law of Equipoise this will naturally involve modest but prudent expenditure.

[‡] The militia's main source of income is the retrieval of terces discarded by vagabonds intent on escape from local justice.



Earnse and Groude, are on hand to assist the clerk. (Unknown to the PCs, a small volume will attach itself to one of their boots, and remain magically invisible there until late that evening). When undressing for bed, the book's victim will find it. On inspection, it proves to be Blunergel and Vrazkode's *The Treasure of Dibicias*.

Anyone reading this slim book will discover that it is a short account of Dibicias Hoon-Bait. A petty thief, he was staked out by the last of the God Kings of Taun Sfere. He escaped when the hoon who had come to devour him cut him loose and picked him up to eat later. A hunting party wounded the hoon, which loped off taking its supper with it. It died just outside its lair. Dibicias entered the lair and discovered a rich treasure. He used this wealth to hire desperadoes and usurp the God King (a small, portly ex-missionary and failed supplier of silk to discerning houses of pleasure). From the book, it is obvious that Dibicias used his position to enrich himself further, collecting river tolls and sponsoring piracy and extortion throughout the area. While on his deathbed, he had his treasure secretly buried by slaves whom he then had killed to keep the secret. The book purports to show where this treasure is buried.

Dibicias did not want to die. He obtained counsel from Sennion, a local wizard of middling ability and over-weaning ambition. The magician commiserated with his patron (although he neglected to tell him that it was possible simply to renew his youth) and suggested an extravagant remedy to his dilemma. Dibicias could, through the correct ritual, arrange to steal the lives of those who came to rob his grave, provided that he allowed himself to be interred in it alive, and in stasis. To attract the very greedy to the tomb, Sennion, now long dead, created the book for Dibicias.[†]

Unfortunately, for Dibicias, his grave remained undisturbed for too long, the stasis has collapsed, and he has turned to clay. As has his treasure. Sennion apparently substituted enchanted stones and potsherds for the gold and jewels. His handiwork still looks and feels real, but will revert to its true nature the next sunrise after it leaves the tomb.

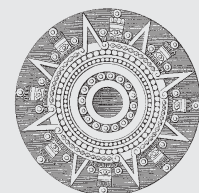
Treasure seekers attempting to exhume him will



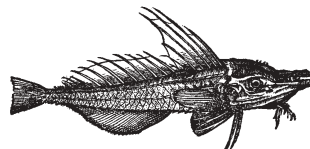
discover that Hoon-Bait lies under a substantial farmstead. The farmer, Trandine and his wife, Esmelsa will allow the adventurers to excavate the tomb in return for half the treasure and a payment of ten terces per day, in respect of the inconvenience of having strangers digging through their floor. For an additional five terces each, they may stay at the farm. Trandine and Esmelsa's daughter Natanya shovels dirt back in the hole when the diggers are asleep, to increase the farmers' takings. Each day, all participating diggers make an Athletics roll. When their accumulated tally reaches 18, they have succeeded. Natanya also rolls once per night and her tally is subtracted from the PCs'.

The actual grave is a stone mausoleum seven feet by twelve, carved with a deodand's scowling face. Dibicias' ghost rises, like thin yellow smoke, from the mouth. Buried alive, and betrayed, he threatens to curse them if they go further and desecrate his grave. All their ill-gotten wealth will do them more harm than good, from the next sunrise. Should they proceed, they will find the dead tyrant's body, now yellow-brown ridges in the soil, surrounded by antique terces (all identical, which should pique a Pedant's curiosity). There are two thousand of them in all. Other grave goods; pearls, rich clothes, flasks of wine and books; have already succumbed to flooding and are no more than a mass of lumps in the floor.

The farmers will be so pleased with their share of the treasure that they will serve the party with a lavish meal of seven courses, each with a different wine. They have no motive beyond gratitude for this sudden hospitality.



[†] Sennion had intended to rule Taun Sfere in the tyrant's stead, but Dibicias had him put to death as a precautionary measure.



Vaulvuve

Some three miles north of Taun Sferre, a small village clusters stands by a tree-fringed oxbow lake, which is rapidly drying up. The inhabitants are cheerful, energetic people who burst into debilitating laughter when anyone mentions the Sun's doomed condition.

The community is poor, comprising fifteen wooden huts in a crescent around a small fishpond. Travelers may find shelter in the huts, but the price is high. They must undertake to arrange a local woman's pregnancy, or to deliver up a baby for fostering. In return, they receive a warm bed, some outlandish conversation and substantial meals, cooked with enthusiasm, if not with skill or delicacy.

Vaulvuve was settled by refugees from the Neotenites, an extinct sect incorrectly suspected of infanticide and cannibalism. They are the last of their kind and have a simple belief. For people, senility and infancy have similar features and it is the same with the world at large. So the sun is not dying, it is simply going through its birth pangs. If strangers seek to debate this with them, the result will be uncontrolled mirth and the occasional pitying glance.

Tsmouth South

West of the juncture of the Ts and the Scaum, things become more orderly. In this area several great mages have their abodes: Rhialto at Falu just a few miles up the Ts; Ildefonse the Preceptor two days march down the Scaum at Boumergarth. Paved roads connect all major townships together. Were anyone to rebuild one of the Scaum bridges, it might be possible to do away entirely with water travel in this area. One paved road passes along the side of the Ts valley and heads south to Val Ombrio, passing close to Falu on its way.



Falu

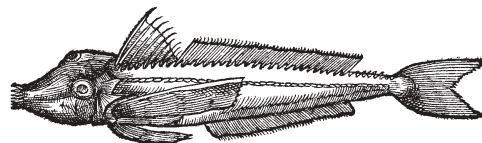
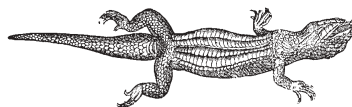
Falu, Rhialto's manse, stands on the Lower Meadow overlooking the Great Forest Da. On this stretch, the Ts is lined with aspen trees. A small stone bridge gives Rhialto access to the Were Woods beyond and Wilda Water. In *The Transcendent Residence: Arch-Magicians at Home*, the diarist Parefis describes Falu:

'The manse proper is roofed with white jade and adorned with many cupolas. Inside, the Great Hall lined with lustrous tiles, spacious parlors and newly refurbished guest rooms. Outside, guests might take refreshment in the purple plumanthia arbor, examine the aviary, walk through the silvanissa tendrils on the south sward, or admire the way-post. The grounds are encompassed with a low wall pierced by two gates, and protected by a potent boundary curse.'

Falu lacks the sublime splendor of Vermoulion's Peregrine Palace, and is less grand than Boumergarth, but it is a perfect expression of Rhialto's desire to entertain guests. Falu demonstrates Rhialto's refined taste without ostentation, and enhances his sobriquet. My only reservation is in the service. Even that more than his peers, Rhialto has difficulty with staff. At one point, whilst discussing autochthonous grue, a vague-eyed man dished up verbena tea in a 14th Aeon bronze urn used for distasteful ablutions. When I raised this with Rhialto in a subtle manner, he was overcome with embarrassment at his social error, requested that I leave, to return only when he had found suitable silverware.'

Falu village

A couple of miles south of Rhialto's home, the road passes through the Falu village. Many locals work as domestic staff for mages in the area. There is a high standard of education and all children are taught the useful skills of domestic service, how to house and serve wine, what biscuit is served with which tea, and the resale value of silver cutlery. The village of substantial houses has an air of smug prosperity. Travelers can expect to be patronized and condescended to but, should they adopt a suitably humble attitude, they may well discover many



embarrassing little facts about the local grandees.

Kuttlemes' Revenge

There are two inns. The one on the roadside is the Kuttlemes' Revenge, kept by one Narule, whose aim is as much to train the staff as to provide hospitality to the traveler. It is not unknown for a patron to sit down to a meal only to have it served six times until Narule is happy with the standard of service. That the meal is by then cold and unappetizing is not a consideration. Similarly, it is commonplace for a sleeping guest to be awakened early in the morning, when Narule wants to check that the upstairs maids have made the bed correctly.

Narule, Innkeeper of the Kuttlemes' Revenge

"Remove this soup and serve it in the Kaainian manner, clockwise and with the brass ladle."

Narule is the bitter ex-steward of Hache-Moncour, the disgraced Arch-Magician who was stripped of his powers. His resentment fuels unreasonable perfectionism: his staff and guests suffer the consequences.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 9, Rebuff (Wary) 8, Attack (Speed) 4, Defense (Misdirection) 3, Health 7, Appraisal 5, Etiquette 10, Perception 7, Physician 2, Seamanship 3, Seduction 7, Stewardship 8, Wherewithal 4

Resistances: Arrogance 0, Pettifoggery 0

Quiet House

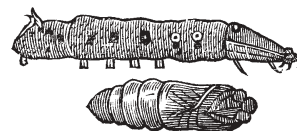
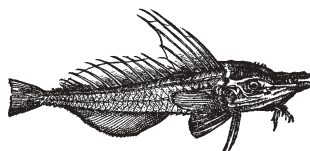
Tucked down a side street, with no obvious sign that it is anything but a private home, is the Quiet House. The locals frequent this inn. The prices are reasonable, the ale excellent and the food of a high standard. There are only two bedrooms, each with a double bed, because most of the trade is local people. Unless the party is lucky, the rooms are already taken by salt merchants, who travel this route regularly, and know the area. Should strangers enter the Quiet House, the talk at the bar tends to stop, as everyone discretely looks the newcomers up and down. If the new arrivals act with good manners and quiet dignity then they will be accepted and even included in the general talk.

Discreet work

There are several reasons for travelers to stop at Falu. Rhialto the Marvelous, if convinced of the party's discretion, may ask them to perform a small task for him. Some time ago, he formed a liaison with a lady known as Shalukhe the Swimmer. However, he had previously been enamored of Lady Shaunica of Lake Island and exchanged tokens and letters of an intimate nature. It appears that old Funk, Rhialto's manservant, had quietly removed a packet of these letters as a hedge against poverty in his declining years. Since Funk's unfortunate demise, Rhialto has become worried that this packet might fall into the wrong hands. He has instructed his sandestin, Topo, to retrieve it for him.

Happily, Rhialto's instructions were less than ideally precise, leaving the sandestin to apply his natural faculties and take the most economical and expedient course. Topo is more interested in examining a backlash in the inter-aeon sutures than in grubbing through Falu village; he has decided to delegate the task. Taking on Rhialto's guise, he hires the party to locate the packet and return it to him. He will obviously offer to cover reasonable expenses. As Topo must retrieve the letters, he will accept no prevarication, substitutions or lame excuses. If Topo fails to recover the package, he will gain extra and wholly unwelcome indenture points. The sandestin directs the party to the village and instructs them only to talk to him there: he will be in the saloon at Kuttlemes' Revenge. Topo has made a homunculus in his master's image. On its own, it can only sit and drink beer. When the party approaches it, a monitor will alert the sandestin to their presence and he will animate it. When animated it is somewhat like Rhialto, otherwise it is flaccid, unresponsive and vacant.

Funk is still warmly remembered in Falu. He was discrete but generous, giving to his family and friends many small but significantly valuable items, which he had chanced to find. His elderly sister, Cherias, is still living. As a widow, she boards with her daughter and son-in-law. She still has the package and is fully aware of its value. She is so cognizant of this that she has totally neglected to even hint of its existence to her daughter, whom



she holds in gentle contempt, or her son-in-law, whom she despises. The package is hidden beneath a loose floorboard under her bed in the first floor bedroom. (Cherias has trouble with stairs, walking as she does with two sticks).

When the party arrives at Falu and make inquiries after Funk and any family he may have left, they are met with general interest. Local people all mention Cherias, but make sure that she knows that strangers are looking for her. The widow has been expecting visitors and is perfectly prepared to deal with them. If the party approaches her openly, she will deal fairly. She expects to be paid at least 500 terces. Only the most innocent character would be willing to advance so large a sum, and the PCs probably will not have it, so will have to approach the homunculus. Topo will gladly purloin 500 terces from Rhialto.

As Cherias is perfectly aware of the potential of *Brassman's Twelve-fold Bounty*, she will demand that the money be paid over to Narule, who will hold it in his strong box for a night and a day. If the money is still there when the strongbox is again opened, Cherias will hand over the package. Of course, this will mean that the party will have to spend at least one night at the Kuttlems' Revenge. So, of course will the homunculus. PCs might consider this behavior eccentric in an Arch-Magician. Narule will take advantage of this opportunity to test his staff to the utmost. Some meals will be huge and some courses will be excellently cooked. Others, prepared by younger trainees will not be. The beds will be remade several times a day, occasionally while the guests are sleeping. Further, the guests will spend most of their time walking around barefoot as their boots are constantly being cleaned.

If the party decides to take advantage of an old woman, and steal the package back, their prospects for success turn on how well they scout out her home. If they have visited her then they will know where her room is, but obviously, she will be expecting them. If they have not visited her then she is still expecting them, but they will not know the layout of the house. There are three rooms downstairs, Cherias' room, a kitchen and a washhouse. Upstairs there are two bedrooms and a

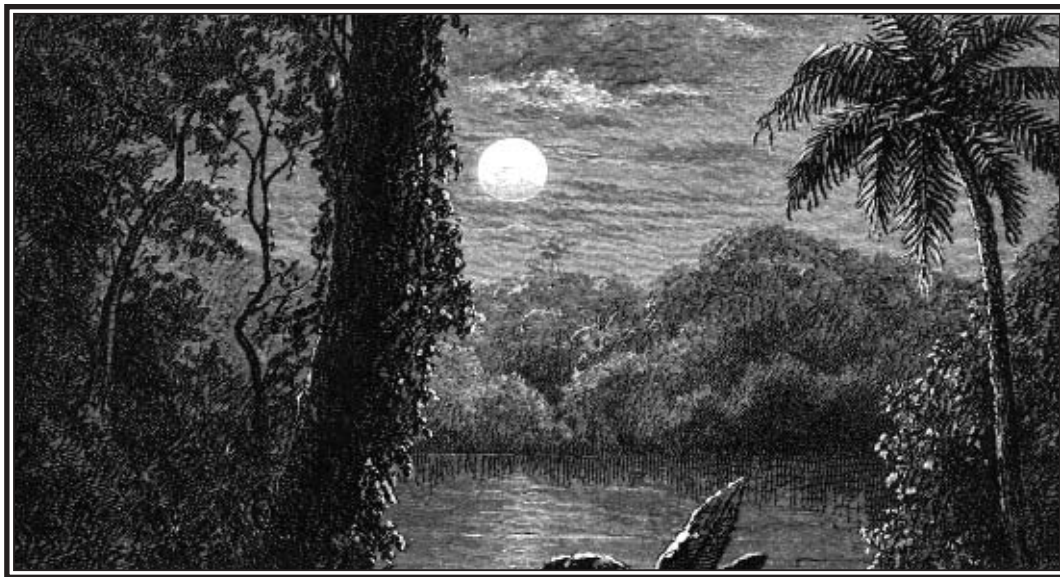
storeroom. As her son-in-law and daughter sleep upstairs, Cherias will use a cantrap she knows to summon scorpions out of the garden and into the house. These are the Almerly Red Scorpion which are the size of a good lobster (and, incidentally, excellent eating if dropped into hot oil and then served with a cheese and spasebud sauce) By the time she has finished her cantrap, there will be fifty or more of them wandering around the first floor. This will come as an unpleasant surprise for her family, if they should chance to come downstairs in the course of the night (a trip to an outside privy can be an adventurous undertaking at times) but Cherias has no time for them anyway. She will disperse the scorpions with her cantrap in the morning.

When the PCs have the letters, and are on the point of delivering them, the real Rhialto will choose to visit the village and, by some horrid coincidence, call in at the Kuttlems' Revenge. Topo's creation will leave hurriedly by the back door, with a poorly coordinated gait. Rhialto will take its seat.

The Arch-Magician is completely unaware of Topo's activities. He will accept the letters from the PCs and, when they ask for payment, will ask them to remind him what, precisely, the terms of their contract with him were. He will point out that paying a ransom to secure the return of one's own property is far from the invariable practice among the arch-mages, and will wonder out aloud why they presumed to do so on his behalf. If the PCs fail to Resist Pettifoggery, they will be unable to stop themselves annoying Rhialto further. If they mention the 500 terces, he will insist that they retrieve them for him, as a point of pride.

GM: Although it is highly unusual for a magician to do so, Rhialto will chastise Topo in the PCs' presence, so that the players can know what really happened.





Val Ombrio

A brief, attractive and potentially profitable diversion south to the Songan Sea

South of Falu, the road forks. The northeast route runs to Taun Tassel while the other fork winds south for five days swift march and eventually leads to Val Ombrio. It passes through pleasant but virtually uninhabited countryside, rolling hills and pretty glens abound. Pelgranes can be a problem but, apart from small bands of half-men or occasional transients from the Old Forest, the road is reasonably safe.

Val Ombrio

Val Ombrio stands on the Caruffa Bay, an inlet of the Songan Sea. It has a natural harbor, sheltered from storms by an old sandbar stabilized by forgotten magic and now put to use as a pleasure garden.

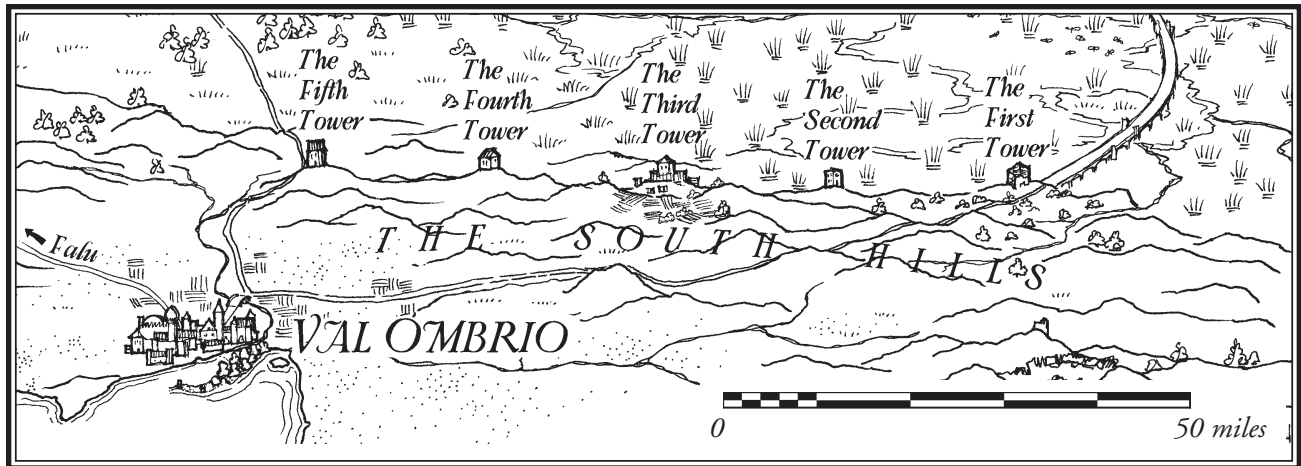
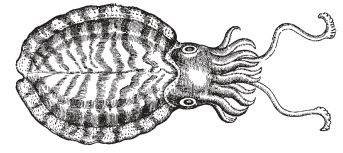
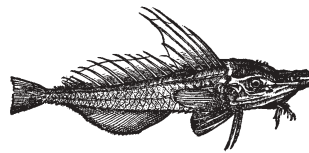
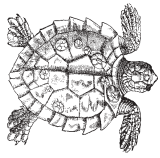
It is a pleasant city, very green and warm. Given its casual attitude to traders and plentiful supply of Kauchique lobster, Melantine spraling and candlefish, many traders regard it as a far more sensible port of entry to Almerly than Kaiin and well worth an extra week of sailing. Gourmets remark favorably on its seafood. The lobster in particular is excellent, while other crustaceans, mollusks and pentabrachs abound. The general townsfolk are subtle and precise, if less so than the natives of the Sousanese Coast to the south.

Etiquette is important to them, and although they might be judged bucolic by the standards of Kaiin, they are by no means uncivilized. Fruit is served cut into elaborate shapes. While the lesser classes merely create pretty patterns, among the savants the fruit is sliced fine and arranged in obscure geometric patterns on the plate. Diners are expected to remove no more than two pieces of fruit from the arrangement at a time, always leaving a harmonious geometric pattern on the central plate. Other notable idiosyncrasies are that scarlet is considered the color of the deranged, and that the leucomorph is considered to represent one aspect of the Great God Bampath. Bampath is worshipped with great formality but no real fervor in a temple in the town.

The well-ordered, genteel and peaceable town is subject to occasional attack by certain dwellers in the deserts of southern Almerly as well as those half-men to the north who have avoided the patrols of Kieradd, Lord of the Last Tower. This forces the inhabitants to maintain a degree of organization that would be unthinkable in Kaiin. Citizens openly wear long daggers and both spears and dart pistols are held in racks in public buildings.

The Sapitentiary

In addition to the common townsfolk there is an



abundance of sages, savants and so forth, exceeded only in Romarth and, possibly, Kaiin. These migrate here to visit the excellent Sapitentiary, which is a substantial repository of knowledge, although it falls short of the legendary Museum of Man. Scholars are divided into three classes, Students (a necessary evil), Savants (the working professors and researchers) and Sapients (superannuated savants and magicians).

Students wear a lose garment of material strips, each representing a marked paper submitted to their tutors. Colors range from deep red for a failure through azure for a quotidian mark and lime green for an exalted success. This system means new students are practically naked (an incentive to submit work quickly), and it is easy to judge the scholastic achievement of established students by the color of the amassed strips.[†]

The curator is a certain Abich, a scholar of worth and a mage of some skill.

Abich, Curator of the Sapitentiary

"Your theory is a mish-mash of conjecture, poor scholarship and blind ignorance."

Abich is a professor of Critical Theory. He demonstrates his theories of criticism by publishing critiques of all the other scholars' papers. He vehemently attacks other critics for their substandard methodology. His universal unpopularity and magical skill makes him an ideal curator. He is one of the few Arch-Magicians who enjoys the rigors of debate with his sandestins.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 20, Rebuff

(Penetrating) 19, Attack (Finesse) 8, Defense (Vexation) 8, Magic (Studious) 21, Specialism (Counter-magic) 15, Appraisal 18, Etiquette 5, Pedantry 20, Stewardship 18, Wealth 14

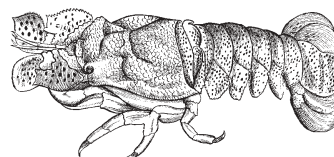
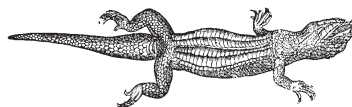
The Val Ombrio Pleasaunce

The sandbar, covered with groves of haruscade trees decked in jasmine, has been a pleasure-garden for hundreds of years. Citizens and visiting sailors use its bowers, gazebos and grottos for private entertainment and public carnivals; performers, hawkers and revelers wander through it from dusk until dawn.

The main industry is salt collection from the great salt pans that were laid out at the end of the 20th Aeon. Clean seawater from the bay floods into the pans at high tide and is allowed to slowly evaporate in the sun's rays. This salt is superior to that collected anywhere else, and is traded by land to the Scaum valley and by sea to the Cities of the Sousanese Coast and the Kauchique Littoral.

The great storms in the Songan Sea are a noteworthy phenomenon. They brew thousands of miles away and cast up their wrack onto the beaches. Beach combing, in the hope of discovering esoterica from foreign parts or perhaps even torn from the sea floor, is popular amongst the Savant class. It is a common sight to see a family picnic on the beach, where the Savant, himself in stiff formal robes of brocade, directs operations. At the edge of the water his daughters, or more especially his wife (there being no nudity taboo for married women) splash around in the shallows hauling things in for his inspection.

[†] Students have their own color-coded strips; black represents a drinking binge; purple, the secret humiliation of a tutor; and yellow, a success in the pleasure garden.



Shil

Should the party be short of employment in Val Ombrio they can be approached by one Shil, who poses as a dabbler in magic. He claims that he has discovered a ship of outlandish design, which was wrecked not far off the coast to the west of Val Ombrio and is bound to be worth salvaging. He is too old and frail to do this on his own but is willing to split the proceeds evenly with the party. He will cast the *Charm of Untiring Nourishment* on them, which will enable them to walk underwater to the ship and unload what they want from it. He will organize two wagons drawn by farlocks to carry the salvage back to town.

If the adventurers are agreeable, then everything proceeds apace. Shil has two wagons, one of which he will drive, expecting the party to have a driver for the other. It is half a day west along the coast to a promontory that projects into the sea. At the end of the headland, a line of rocks protrudes a short way into the waves. Shil explains that the ship hit the end rocks, capsized and sank. He was watching from the headland at the time.

The truth is rather different. Shil is an accomplished mage who has been projected forward in time by a rival. He was aboard the ship at the time, transporting much of the impedimenta of his craft to a new manse. The vessel was transported with him, but he became separated from it and, while he ended up in Val Ombrio, his ship sank two centuries ago and he has only just found its location. His problem is that loss of his artifacts has severely weakened him. Even now, when he knows of their location, he cannot get to them because the hulk has become the refuge of a keak of considerable size. When the players walk out to the ship they will have to defeat the keak and then start to carry things back. The only items that interest Shil are two locked chests. They are a matching set and can only be opened by magic. There is plenty of other cargo on the boat, principally statuary for a temple to the Great God Vitzbet, who has long since been forgotten. There is also a set of four ornate gold candlesticks for the altar of the temple. These are taller than a man and are virtually impossible for less than five people to lift. Each is be worth a thousand terces to the Temple of Bampath. In addition, there is an

assortment of debris that might be worth sifting though, yielding cooking implements, pots and pans plus the occasional trinket.

Shil is perfectly willing to play fair by the party. If they give him the two chests, they can have the rest. If they try to open the chests, he will carefully explain that they are identical mirror chests, which can only be opened when they are placed keyhole to keyhole. When the chests are so arranged, he will simultaneously touch both and say the command word, which plunges both him and the chests back to the 19th Aeon.

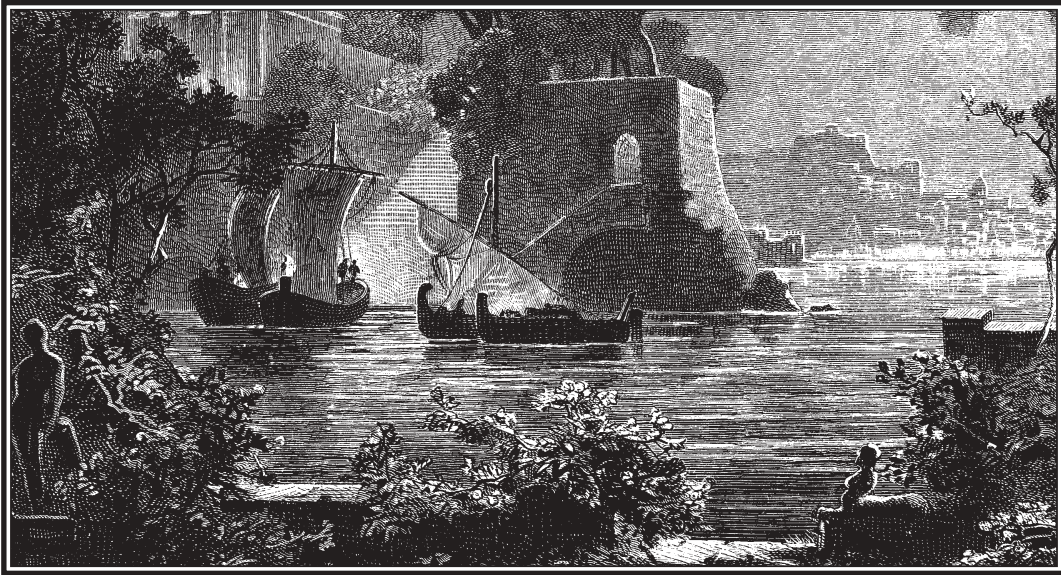
The specimen in the ship is an immature male keak[†] some thirty feet long. It intends to make the ship a temporary shell, to protect its young during the dangerous first month after their hatching. So far, the keak has not secured the services of a mate, so will allow the party to loot the ship, if they can attract a female for him. A Pedant might know how to attract a female, as will any local Savant. Any technique that amuses the GM will work, such as scattering red flower petals onto the waves, disguising one of the adventurers as a scarlet fish, or discharging firearms from a boat. In the last case, the female will attack the party and they will have to hurry past the male. When she sees him, she will forget them.

As few PCs know, keak eat their mates during coitus. The female's cannibalistic tendencies will not be evident until she first sinks her teeth into his eager flank. The PCs will have to continue their salvage operation while the frenzied act proceeds, perhaps an hour. This time can be prolonged if PC wizards cast healing magic on the male.

After his death, the female will lay her eggs in the male's remains, inside the cave that he has found. She will attack anyone approaching this site, which may prove awkward for the PCs, if they still have treasure to recover.



[†] KEAK According to the prolific essayist and tired roué Grashpotel, an elongated black creature with a superficial resemblance to an eel. This appearance is the result of its ancestry, which is one half deep-sea fanged eel and one half demon.



Tsmouth to Kaiin

In which we follow the flow of wealth and water to Kaiin and the sea

Tsmouth West

One character to look out for in the Tsmouth area is Slayomund with his boat, *Slayomund's Wanderer*. This vessel hardly warrants inclusion in the tally of riverboats, being barely twenty-four feet long and fifteen abeam. The crew consists of Slayomund and his aged mother, Phanpen the Toothless, who sits on the stern in a rocking chair, knitting.

Slayomund runs an irregular ferry service and plies for hire. He has been known to charge passengers for the fish they might have caught while traveling in his boat and for a time, his favorite practice was to ferry passengers half-way across Tsmouth before demanding a double fee. He will charge for breakfast, which, when served, proves to consist of thin ale and a slab of bread so hard that desperate travelers have been known to tie it to a piece of string and trail it behind them in the Scaum to soften before eating.

West of Tsmouth, a day's march or more down the south bank of the Scaum, one arrives at the dwelling of Ildefonse the Preceptor at Boumergarth. Ildefonse values his privacy in these darkening days and it is as well to deny an Arch-Magician nothing.

Boumergarth

'Ildefonse lived in castle above the river Scaum, a vast and complex structure of a hundred turrets, balconies, elevated pavilions and pleasaunces...'

Morreion

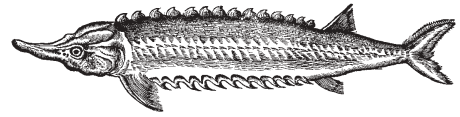
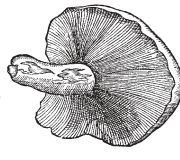
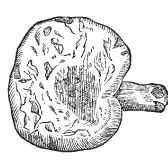
During Ildefonse's time as Preceptor of the Blue Principle magicians, Boumergarth is a hive of activity. Arch-Magicians gather in the Great Hall, debating and gesticulating, the work-room emits clouds of yellow gas, and sandestins perch in the rafters. Later, only a wing of the castle is left occupied, and the rest "abandoned to dust, owls, and ancient ghosts."

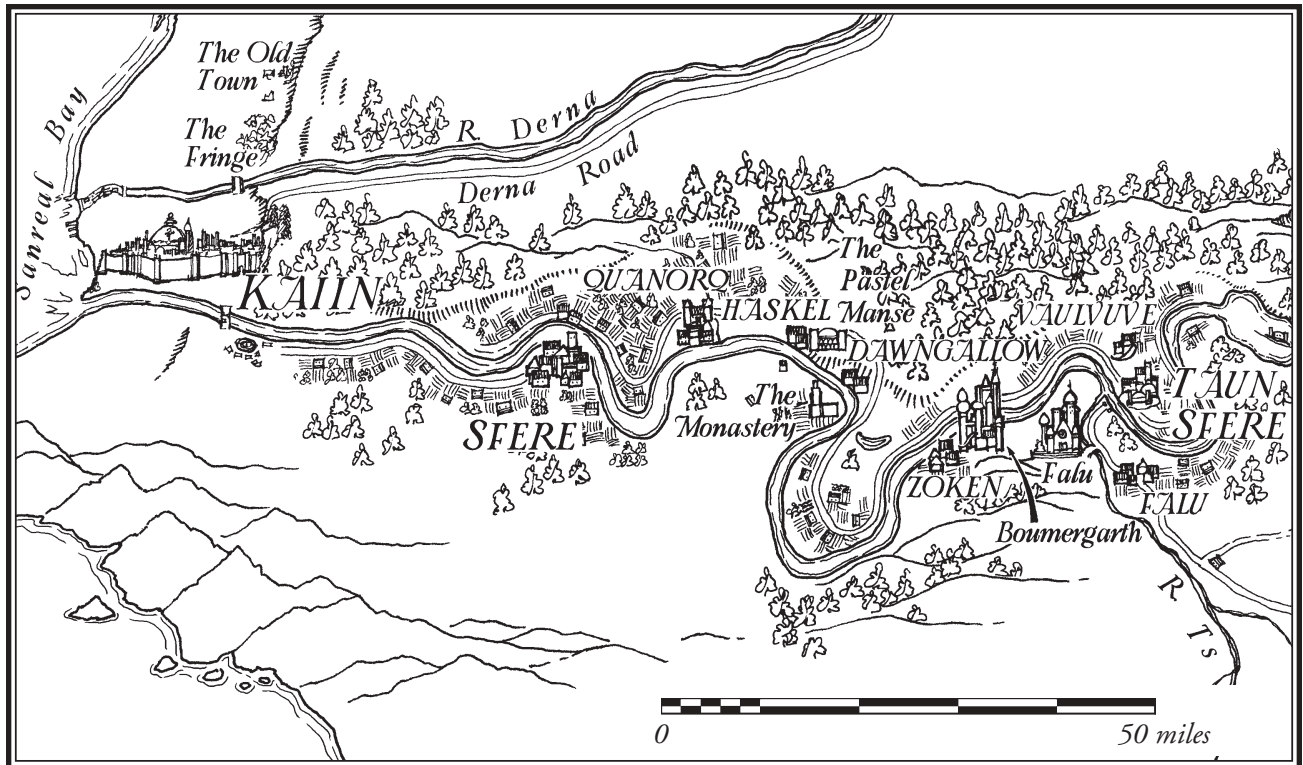
In *The Transcendent Residence: Arch-Magicians at Home*, the diarist Parefis describes Boumergarth:

Boumergarth is based on a 17th-Aeon castle of four huge towers. Over the centuries, bartizan turrets, terraces and extensive remodeling have transformed the imposing fortress into an extraordinary vertical maze, staffed with maidens, footmen and dunnyboys. It is surely the largest and most formidable residence in the Scaum Valley.

A weighty bronze portal leads to the most impressive room is the massive Great Hall, where

Boumergarth





Ildefonse convenes his conclave of magicians. The Preceptor occupies a massive chair behind a podium. A ghost watches here for intruders of any kind, even those with dimension.

Pryffwyd, Ildefonse's Chamberlain, assures me that only he knows the layout of the entire complex. He manages the staff with effortless aplomb, and assists Ildefonse in his more taxing experiments, without thought of recompense or recognition.

I met Ildefonse in his herb garden, where a maiden, addressing Ildefonse as "Lord Magician", served us goblets of chilled hyperglossom. I gently chastised the Preceptor for his treatment of the noble Pryffwyd. Ildefonse choked on his drink and said that he should not have taught Pryffwyd to be so charming. Perhaps, he said, it was time to reward his chamberlain suitably for his efforts. With that, he made his apologies and asked me to leave, mentioning only that he can weave a web of impermeability around Boumergarth, preventing any form of entrance or exit.[†]



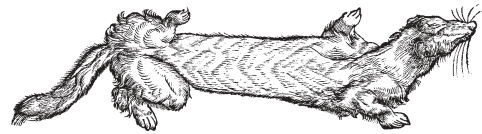
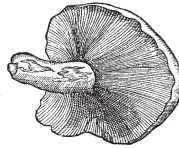
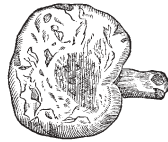
Zoken

Just downstream from Boumergarth is Zoken. The village clusters around the pier and the road up to Boumergarth. The villagers make an interesting study. They consort, or at least drink in the same four-ale bar as mages and nobility, yet the major employment in the village is the tannery just a short way downstream.

The Old Inn at Zoken

The largest building is the local inn called, with stunning originality, The Old Inn at Zoken. The linen is clean, the menu is excellent and the tariff is unreasonably cheap. On a normal evening, one can dine on fowl stuffed with a thousand peeled thrush eggs; baked haramax beans individually sculpted into the likeness of local grandees; and a sunapple mountain, covered in essence of mitaxis and flambéed. Such is the reputation of Lankeys, chef of The Old Inn, that it attracts distinguished patrons. Ildefonse himself has been known to walk down to the village to dine, and members of the household of Duke

[†] A description of Ildefonse himself may be found in the *DERPG*, p156.



Tambasco, as well as sundry notables from both Kaiin and Azenomei, may occasionally be seen there. People of quality who have business with the Preceptor are advised to take rooms in the inn and send one of the potboys to Boumergarth to request an audience.

Lankeys, Chef of the Old Inn

"I must inspect every dish. Everything that leaves my kitchen must be the physical embodiment of an Ideal recipe."

Lankeys is from an ancient Val Ombrio Savant family who are chef-philosophers. For generations, they have devised theoretical dishes of transcendent quality; Lankeys has been chosen as the first to attempt their creation.

His ingredients are expensive and abstruse, but his family sponsors the Inn, and he need spare no expense. He will employ itinerants to collect the more obscure or difficult-to-obtain components, and he uses magical ivory weighing scales to ensure that he is not being defrauded.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 1.5~, Rebuff (Contrary) ~, Attack (Cunning) 5, Defense (Dodge) 4, Health 5, Appraisal 6, Athletics 5, Craftsmanship 12, Etiquette 7, Gambling 5, Pedantry 10, Perception 9, Quick Fingers 5, Stewardship 8

Frequent Guests

In addition to the many dignitaries and magicians of the Scaum Valley, a group of holy men frequent the Inn. They are a party of Dominie of the Order of the Blood Sun. There are three of them, all men, Perlios, Garvet and Wabstome.

Their Order believes that the sun is dying from a shortage of blood and it is their intent to fund an expedition to the sun. This expedition, when mounted, will take with it huge containers of blood drawn from the farlocks owned by the Order. So far funding remains elusive but the Dominie travel extensively and will actively solicit funds from the party.

The Order is meritocratic, with the quantity of blood collected counting heavily towards promotion. To keep an accurate tally, members wear a red jade ring. When fresh blood flows over the ring, it acquires

a charge in proportion to the volume of fluid gathered. Although the Order intends the system to function solely within the context of a formal sacrifice, none of the Dominie is above cheating, and takes every opportunity to wash his ring in new blood. PCs might note that all three of them insist on dining on rare steak, which they squeeze over their rings. Each guards his ring attentively and will pay for its return, should he lose it.

PCs who fail to Resist Avarice will find themselves stealing one of these rings. There are consequences, of course. First, if the ring is not worn, it begins to leak rancid blood on the next sunrise. If its possessor takes a wound, or if the ring even comes into contact with blood flowing freshly from her, she will take a levy of 1 to every subsequent Health roll until the wound is treated.

If the PC chooses to wear such a livid accessory, the other monks will be able to find her instinctively.

Perlios, Garvet and Wabstome, Dominie of the Order of the Blood Sun

"The blessings of a new-born sun upon this house."

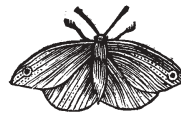
These three are fanatical in their beliefs, but do not allow this to get in the way of temptation. They wear long flowing pale green robes with pink trim. All have a pale complexion and blonde hair.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 8, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 7, Attack (Strength) 6, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 7, Health 8, Athletics 4, Etiquette 3, Gambling 7, Pedantry 9, Perception 5, Physician 5

Resistances: Avarice 1, Indolence 1, Gourmandism 1

The Tannery

Employees of the tannery tend to be burly individuals possessing an under-developed sense of smell and a penchant for wearing leather garments made of cheap offcuts and slightly damaged hides. Other villagers are professional hunters who make a living trapping creatures for hides to supply the tannery. Hache-Moncour, Rhialto's former rival, works here after his attempts to subvert the Blue Principles. The other workers find him haughty and disdainful. There is always work at the Tannery. Unfortunately, it tends to be heavy, ill-smelling work, which pays poorly.



Anyone bringing good quality hides will find a ready market, especially deodand and erb skins. The master tanner, Ershott, has even cured archveult hides to order.



Ershott, Master Tanner

"I apologize for my personal chife. It is necessary to repel women, who would otherwise consume my taschar."[†]

Ershott is a 45-year-old man, hugely muscled yet graceful, but with an unrelenting fear of women. He acts as arbiter of disputes in the village. He is an Orthodox Androlite.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 7, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 5, Attack (Strength) 7, Defense (Sure-footedness) 7, Health 8, Appraisal 6, Athletics 10, Craftsmanship 8, Perception 5, Stewardship 6, Wherewithal 6,

Resistances: Rakishness 0

Agents of Matrimony

Ershott may be a great tanner but he is singularly unimaginative in other regards. He is also terrified of women. This quirk in his character has the unintended consequence of ensuring that females are immensely curious about him. Some weeks ago, he ventured out of the tannery to drink a glass or two of ale at the wedding of one of his apprentices who had begged that Ershott grace the festivities. Unfortunately, the conviviality of the occasion overcame Ershott's native caution and he drank not merely a glass or two of ale, but several, followed by two large glasses of aquavit and the best part of a bottle of wine with the meal.

Thus fortified, he first danced a strutting gallop with the bride (as was his duty as tannery master) then, in great good humor, enjoyed a polka with her little sister, and then, greatly daring and almost certainly due to the influence of the liquor he attempted a triple-polka with their mother, Widow Garthnod. He awoke next morning remembering

little, but the occasional recollection brings him out in a cold sweat and leave him weak at the knees. Since that day, he has never left the tannery and prefers to keep to his room behind the hide loft.

Unfortunately for him, the Widow Garthnod knows a good man when she sees one and has decided that something must be done. She is confident that if she can get Ershott out of the tannery and perhaps converse gently with him, she can convince him of the advantages of matrimony, even for those of mature years. Most of the village agrees, but the main discussion revolves around just how these circumstances can be achieved.

When the party is at The Old Inn at Zoken, drinking quietly or just relaxing after a fine meal, the general conversation around the bar centers on the plight of Ershott and Garthnod. The widow herself is present and, when one of the villagers suggests that such distinguished travelers, being people of the world, would obviously be able to help, she will approach them on bended knee and beg them to help.

She cannot offer riches; the only reward will be an invitation to the wedding, an excellent meal at The Old Inn at Zoken and an enviable reputation as decent people in Zoken itself. If they succeed and it makes a good story, then it is inevitable that their names shall come to the ear of the Preceptor himself, who takes a paternal interest in the doings of the villagers. Even the most mercenary of hirelings would consider this an adequate reward.

Widow Garthnod

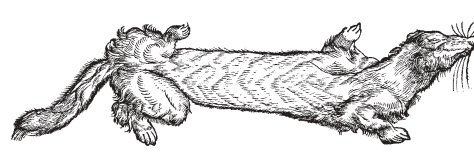
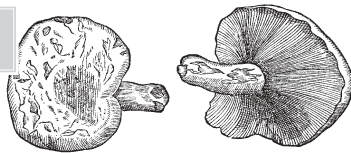
"He must be given an opportunity to make the correct matrimonial decision."

The widow is self-confident and opinionated, but lonely. If her go-betweens are unable to secure a match, she will turn her eyes to less suitable candidates for matrimony.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) ~, Rebuff (Penetrating) ~, Attack (Finesse) 4, Defense (Dodge) 4, Health 9, Athletics 4, Etiquette 5, Pedantry 7, Seduction 3, Stewardship 8, Wherewithal 3,

Resistances: Rakishness 3

[†] Taschar is believed by the Androlites to be an invisible fluid that fills men's bodies. The mere proximity of women will leech it, with the inevitable consequence that the man's extremities will shrivel.



Dawngallow

Two days' good walk from Zoken, on the north bank of the river, stands Dawngallow. This is a small village of wooden houses with pan tile roofs, filling each side of a track joining the road to a simple wharf. The community has a dance hall, and a tavern, the **DUKE'S HEAD**. A dishonest barker, Quence, stands on the pier, inviting passing boats to sample Dawngallow's attractions. The inhabitants affect tricorn hats, and wear them with one point at the front.

The landward end has altogether a different advertisement, as three sturdy H-framed gallows stand over the road and track, like gates. Bodies, some still kicking, others rotted and disintegrating, hang there until they drop to pieces. Scavengers and the hooves or boots of passing travelers pound the bones into the road surface. Local ordinances are presumably sufficiently strict that the gibbets seldom want for tenants.

Quence, barker and local constable

"I fear that you misunderstood. The tariff is per person, not per vessel."

Quence arranges accommodation for river traffic, and determines docking fees. He will claim the legal authority to extract taxes from any stranger he meets. Quence is transparently dishonest, but not to those who meet him for the first time. He is without a trace of scruples in his pursuit of terces.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 8, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 7, Attack (Finesse) 5, Defense (Misdirection) 5, Health 7, Appraisal 8, Athletics 3, Perception 8, Scuttlebutt 4, Seamanship 5, Stewardship 6,

Resistances: Avarice 0, Pettifoggery 0

The Pastel Manse†

Two miles from Dawngallow, the ground rises to a substantial bluff, which accommodates the Pastel Manse, home to Tabarant, a reclusive wizard of local significance. The Manse stands above a two-tiered garden, to the south of the road and immediately above the river. It is Palladian in style, with many domes and cupolas and a substantial tower at each end. The eastern tower accommodates a glowing hydraulic rod-clock and the western, a water organ and belfry. The Manse even has a small, private jetty.

Tabarant, Arch-Magician and unfashionable host

"Welcome, travelers. The woods are dangerous and I insist that you stay the night."

Tabarant is a decrepit man with evil, intense eyes, spindly arms and legs, and patches of sparse, wiry white hair over his body and pate. If stretched to his full height he would be six and a half feet tall. Aside from professional jealousy, other wizards do not like him because of his habit of taking soul portraits of them while they slept under his roof as his guests.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 12, Persuade (Eloquent) 7, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 12, (Rebuff (Wary) 7, Attack (Finesse) 8, Attack (Caution) 3, Defense (Parry) 8, (Defense (Dodge) 3), Health 10, Magic (Forceful) 15, Specialization (Automata and Vat Creatures) 13, Appraisal 16, Engineering 14, Pedantry 14, Wealth 12

Possessions: Tabarant has the enormous array of paraphernalia you might expect of any Arch-Magician. He carries the following about his person:

Laccodel's Rune on a pendant

The Cloud of Knives

A pot of Soul Wax (see the adventure *An Unexpected Toothache* below)

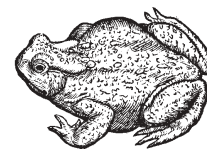
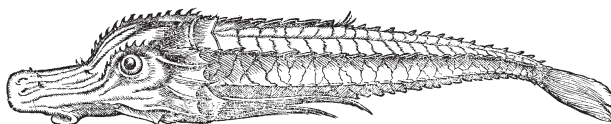
Spells: Tabarant has an extensive library, which includes the following additional spells



Adarban's Vacant Phantasm

Range: As for spell mimicked

† *My Master's Manse*, a traditional roleplaying adventure set in and around the Pastel Manse is available for free download at <http://www.dyingearth.com/xpsonline.htm> If you do not have web access, please write to Pelgrane Press to receive a copy.



Duration: As for spell mimicked

Difficulty: Complex

This spell mimics the outward appearance of any other spell known to its caster, but will also seem to fail. Adarban was the cousin of one of Phandaal's mentors, and was instrumental in causing the celebrated extermination of the wizards of Grand Motholam. It was the casting of this spell, designed to flatter the Emperor and persuade of him that magic was no threat, which instead convinced him that magicians were a disposable nuisance. Vacant Phantasm is now an unfashionable spell, but has some devoted adherents. Three of them, the Arkas brothers of Cansaspara, collect tales of the charm's casting, paying in strict ratio to the story's provenance and plausibility.



Angwantibo's First Chilling Preservation

Range: Touch

Duration: Instant

Difficulty: Straightforward

This charm freeze-dries its target, which can be of anything up to a deodand in volume. The spell is only useful against things with some water content. Those half-men and foodstuffs simply dehydrate and can be reconstituted by immersion in warm liquid. The re-hydrated item is readily distinguishable from its pre-magical self, at least to gourmets. Again the exception is the deodand, who comes back stronger and angrier.



Dibarcas' Wondrous Reduction

Range: Touch

Duration: Instant

Difficulty: Complex

This spell reduces one creature to as little as a 144th of its original size and mass, as specified by the caster at the time of casting. The reduced living costs and ability to perform detailed work make being shrunk an attractive option for many artisans, or at least their employers.



Cloud of Knives (30 points)



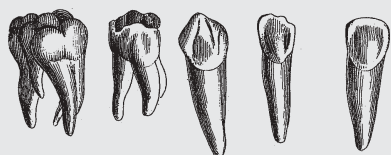
A chain, worn doubled loosely around the waist, supporting 48 minute, white gold knives. This device only works if it is worn openly. The knives fly from the chain on command and places themselves between the wearer owner and any one threat, nominated at the time of activation. The result is a cloud of little magical blades, that will attack with Speed 24, taking all appropriate Wallop options. Once imbedded in their target, they must be removed by hand and reattached to the chain. They remain active until they have made a kill, have been recalled, or have been outwitted somehow (GM's decision). Should the cloud become damaged, or some of the knives lost, the item's skill is the same as the number of blades remaining.

An Unexpected Toothache

Guests who stay overnight at Tabarant's mansion will find the Arch-Magician a considerate host. No matter what their quality, the wizard and his staff of two – Flook, a gray-haired exotic dancer and Lux, a strange sack-like creature – attend to their every need. The hospitality will be so lavish that it is unlikely that PCs will remember much beyond their arrival.

The next morning, after a leisurely breakfast, their host will wish them a safe journey. Some days after the party member with the lowest Sympathy rating (or, in the case of a tie, one selected by the GM) will feel a sudden pain in his lower jaw. He can ignore this on an Illustrious Success at Wherewithal (appropriate balms will add a Bonus of one). If the victim succumbs, he will hear Tabarant's voice in his ear: "Pay attention, slave. I have your eyes and ears in my grasp. Your limbs and mind are your own, but you will do my bidding or suffer." To illustrate, Tabarant will cause the PC's nose to sink into his face, then pop back out again; there will be a spray of blood and a crack of cartilage. The Arch-Magician will put his victim to occasional use, spying, sneaking stealing and murdering on his behalf.

Any attempt to tell others of the malady, or to have it examined might result in sanctions, unless



Tabarant happens to be otherwise occupied. PCs might be able to guess or reason this out for themselves, or just might happen on the realization that enquiring pokes in the eye or twinges in the ear happen rarely, mostly after breakfast and before supper. The truth is that the wizard has many agents and only checks on their activities sporadically.

Tabarant is not paranoid; he is rightly concerned that no one has asked him to sign the Blue Principles and that he might therefore come under sanction. To fight back, he has created a shadowy army of slaves, whom he controls through soul portraits. Tabarant makes masks of deserving guests' faces with a flexible, magical wax while they sleep. When properly enchanted, any injury done to the mask affects its subject. By staring through its eyes or listening at its ears, the Arch-Magician can see and hear what his slave experiences. Damage to the mask can never inflict a lasting injury on its subject; the injuries are short-lived, but painful. Naturally, the mask will deteriorate with use.

PCs who want to be free of Tabarant's masks may either seek out independent advice, or confront the Arch-Magician (who will, of course know that they are coming). *Liberation of Warp* and *The Second Retrotropic* will remove the curse – the subject can expect some discomfort while obtaining the cure – as will touching an IOUN stone to the face.

After a while, the PC will cease to feel Tabarant's influence. Should he want to investigate, the GM is encouraged to download and run *My Master's Manse* (see † p96).

Flook, Turjan-level vat creature

"Very well, Gentlemen, I shall perform for your pleasure. Lux – bring the dream-powder and the ropes."

Flook has the form of a beautiful woman. She is

5'6" and slender, with cream skin and storm-cloud grey eyes and hair. She served Tabarant as a night-steward and entertainer, she assists in the creation of automata and in the working of magic. Although superficially charming, Flook has an unpleasant character – she is willful, bad tempered and unreliable.

She wears a heavily embroidered rose-colored dress, falling to just below the knee, with spell formulae stitched into its lining and a burgundy beret and cape. She is rumoured to know the Dance Of The 15 Silken Movements.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 15, (Persuade (Glib) 9), Rebuff (Lawyerly) 15, (Rebuff (Contrary) 9), Attack (Ferocity) 13, Attack (Speed) 8, Defense (Vexation) 13, Defense (Misdirection) 8, Health 10, Magic (Daring) 12

Resistances: Arrogance 1

Possessions: A small box of dream-powder
A selection of knives, worn in her left boot (Flook is left handed), down either side of her bodice, and openly, at her waist.

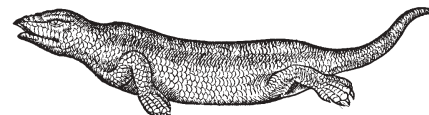
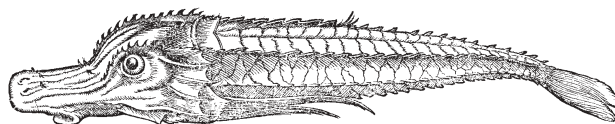


The Glowing Trees

Immediately opposite the Pastel Manse, the Great Da curves to the south, encroaching on an old estate. The sunapple orchard still survives and glows softly from late afternoon until early morning. Occasionally, and usually at night, screams, followed by the sounds of pleading and gnawing, issue from the eaves.

Sunapples store the light that falls upon them by day and re-radiate it at night. They have a rich, nutty, honeyed taste and people who eat them glow in the dark as the fruits' juices enter the bloodstream and travel round the body.





Haskel

Three miles from Tabarant's home stands the village of Haskel. It is identical, in all but two respects, to Dawngallow. The barker is called Misaune and the residents wear their tricorns with the point to the rear.

Misaune, barker and local constable

"You are under a misapprehension. The fee is payable by each member of your group, not as a single sum."

Misaune cries out advertisements for Haskel's attractions and arranges wharf payments and lodging. He will declare his authority to wrest excise payments from all unfamiliar persons he encounters. Misaune is blatantly deceitful. He has no conscience in his quest for wealth.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) ~, Rebuff (Lawyerly) .75~, Attack (Ferocity) 10, Defense (Dodge) 5, Health 6, Athletics 3, Seamanship 4, Stewardship 6, Wherewithal 3

Resistances: Arrogance 4, Indolence 2

The Gibbet Race

Dawngallow, Haskel and the Pastel Manse constitute a small community under Tabarant's protection. Like the mage, they are conscious that order and respect for the law left the Dying Earth some time ago, but feel that this is no excuse for slackness. They apply their judicial codes with zest.

Visitors to either village break the law with curious frequency, despite the authorities' belief in deterrence and retribution. Offences include, but are not limited to, murder, rape, assault, theft, calumny, gossip and disrespect. Speaking with approval of the other village is an offense in either Dawngallow or Haskel. Expressing disdain is acceptable, although the fact that both communities possess identical facilities, laws and remedies complicates this.

When a crime has been committed, the local constable (who is also the barker) arrests the most likely malefactor. If need be, he can deputize citizens to help him. When caught, the prisoner is charged and tried. A court convenes immediately in the dance hall, with a magistrate (appointed annually by Tabarant) and a jury of four, selected from the most

robust drinkers in the tavern, as decided by the publican. The trial process is simple. The constable lays the charges, the defendant enters a plea and the jury advises the judge that he is guilty. Then magistrate then requires the convict to perform some callisthenic exercises and to run on the spot for a count of 300. The court notices the prisoner's apparent fitness.

Sentencing is concise. The only punishment available to the court is death, by hanging. Luckily, a local tradition of great antiquity offers some hope of mercy. Each village loathes the other so much that it will offer amnesty to any condemned criminal who can gain its boundary, that is pass under the crossbar of its gibbet, although the court does not inform the condemned of this.

The villagers assemble in the street for the execution of the sentence. They drag the prisoner to the gibbet, fit a noose around his neck, throw the rope over the bar and turn his head towards the Pastel Manse. They then grip the tag end of the rope and take up the slack. They do not tighten the noose or bind the prisoner's hands or feet. Instead, the judge begins a solemn count. Usually, the condemned will take the hint and run for his life down the road. When the judge stops counting, the crowd hares off in pursuit.

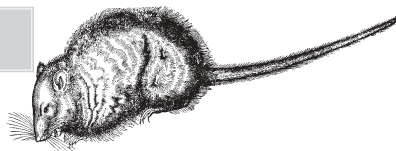
At the finishing point, felons are met by a crowd in motley, with hobbyhorses, bells, drums and ribbons, who cut a caper to ridicule unsuccessful pursuers. Should the fugitive keep running, as would seem wise, these villagers will in their turn, pursue him for discourtesy. If they catch him, they will drag him back and institute another heat of the race.

On those happy occasions, when both villages wish to hang the same person, and both catch him on the road, they hold a tug of war. Each side slips a noose around the still living convict's neck and they nail him through his feet to an old tree stump opposite Tabarant's garden gate. The mage graciously condescends to officiate, sounding a somber chord on the water organ as a start signal.





Haskel



The Thing in the Orchard

The sunapple orchard stands behind an old boundary ditch, which is now filled with rotted leaves and fruit. It is rectangular, one hundred yards from north to south and one hundred and fifty from east to west. It is a mile to the northeast of the manse. The local drovers' road swings south to avoid it.

Invisible from outside, there is an old, ruined terrace in the orchard, twenty yards along the diagonal from the southwest corner. This oblong stone platform, thirty feet by twenty, and three feet thick, has five steps leading up to it in the middle of its shorter sides. Its long axis runs north-south. It was once roofed; there are broken columns running along its long sides, and forming the ruins of porches either side of the steps. Much of its structure seems to have been thrown outwards and lies scattered across the fields.

Tabarant has made a prisoner of a local deodand, which he secured in the old pavilion by a strong wire hooked to the creature's kidney and fixed to a fallen pillar. The deodand eats passersby. Occasionally, the Arch-Magician feeds ungracious houseguests to it. There have been less of these of late, and a general decline in passing trade, so the deodand is hungry.

If approached cautiously, and promised its freedom, the half-man will be happy to apprise adventurers of Tabarant's habits and demeanor and even of things that lie deeper in the forest. He is a knowledgeable creature, because of his inquiring mind and his victims' hope that, provided they talk for long enough, some means of escape might present itself. Alert characters might construe from the deodand's famished state that there is something amiss in the manse.

Given the chance, the deodand will negotiate for his release, offering a cache of treasure, stolen from previous victims, in consideration. The deodand is wearing scraps of his victims' clothes, including a pearlescent, green taffeta bodice and a mutton-chop left sleeve made from burgundy velvet, both of which could be retrieved and used for inspiration. His harness is two sets of rather fine wherriot bridles, with silver and garnet fittings. He also has a pile of broken, bulbous glass bottles. Scattered about are the possessions of his victims:

- ☛ A pack of watersodden, marked cards
- ☛ Six dice, some crooked
- ☛ A bent tin whistle
- ☛ A small fob, which seems magical, but which does nothing
- ☛ A few terces (from 2 to 12)
- ☛ A dented hip flask, still half filled with arrack
- ☛ A left boot in brown leather with red and beige accents, intended for riding and featuring an integral spur projecting from the heel. The deodand will adopt a half smile of private amusement, should anyone ask what happened to the other boot.



The Inverted Villa

To the north of the pavilion and beyond the orchard, once stood the country seat of the Dukes of Asmalai, a proud land apparently founded by the illegitimate crossbreeds of the noble houses of Almeri and Ascolais. Less anciently, it was the home of the Asmalettu, the landlords of Dawngallow and Haskel. More recently still, indeed within living memory, it became inverted and deserted. Shortly afterward, the Pastel Manse appeared on the bluff, which was previously called Felons' Drop.

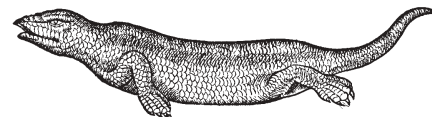
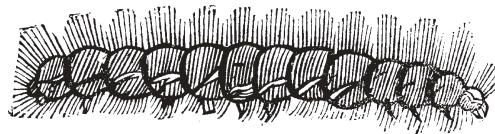
To the visitor, the villa appears as a rough, grass covered slope, with a scattering of stunted trees, rising out of the much more overgrown orchard and forests. Without warning, the ground drops precipitously to reveal a straight sided hole, three hundred feet wide by one hundred and eighty across and seventy deep, lined with stonework and possessing a slanted, tiled floor. Just as if a building had been turned inside out and upside down, which is exactly the case.[†]

The Spoils of Asmalai

The villa's contents and interior structure were scattered outside, and with time, have become buried under soil, fallen leaves and animal skeletons. There is a resident leucomorph, who does not like bones.

The leucomorph will shadow any explorers, waiting until all but their guard obligingly goes to sleep. He will then stalk and overpower the sentry,

[†] Tabarant performed the Inside Out and Over as a means ridding himself of any difficulties with planning permission for the Pastel Manse.



carrying him off into the forest for a pleasant conversation and supper. If the adventurer shouts loudly enough, he might rouse his colleagues and survive the leucomorph's attentions.

The villa can be mined for recoverable spoils; either by climbing down the inverted walls and excavating through windows, or by sinking pits directly into the slopes.

There will be few finds of any value, but many that bear testimony to the distressed state of the gentlefolk who once lived here:

- ☛ A case of dueling daggers, with jeweled pommels. Despite appearances, these are mild steel with glass and paste furniture.
- ☛ A hobbyhorse, seemingly gilded and upholstered in velvet, in fact wrapped in spun brass and buckram.
- ☛ A set of decanters in a Tantalus, of poorly molded, rather than cut glass.
- ☛ A set of glasses, ditto.
- ☛ A gold-frogged baldric, the back half - which would be covered by a cloak - of plain canvas.
- ☛ A set of wooden plates and cups, well used. They bear the remains of agrarian motifs.
- ☛ A canteen of silver-plated brass cutlery, worn and chipped.
- ☛ A portrait of the family, apparently painted, but in reality printed, with faces added by hand.
- ☛ Copious oilcloth floor coverings.
- ☛ A suede frock coat, patched at cuff and elbow.
- ☛ A single riding boot, the mate to that owned by the deodand (*The Thing in the Orchard*, p100) showing a re-built heel.
- ☛ A linen handkerchief, threadbare, monogrammed, and bearing the letter 'A' (cursory scrutiny shows that it once said 'D').[†]



The Order of Dolorous Obeisance

From Tsmouth West to Sfere, the south side of the river is a rural idyll of worked fields, cottages, smallholdings, riverside shacks, ruined pavilions and coppiced woodland. Travel is easy and the only dangers are the attentions of deodands by night and Twk-men at all times.

There are a hut and jetty, complete with a punt, opposite the Pastel Manse. Rundan Joone operates his ferry service from here, mostly taking fugitives and their pursuers from Dawngallow or Haskel across the river. He will pole across to anyone who calls out to him and negotiate terms. When not otherwise engaged, he digs for oysters, or fishes, either from his boat or the end of his dock. If his passengers seem wealthy, he will mention that he has "many curios at home", dredged from the riverbed.

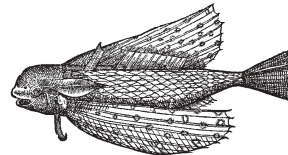
Joone's bric-a-brac

Should anyone express an interest in Joone's curios, he will take them to his hut, where he has hidden some knick-knacks under a floorboard. He will offer

- ☛ "*One hundred and seventeen antique coins, in their grimed state, as numismatists prefer, 5 terces each.*" The proportion of real coins (10 terces each), cloakroom tokens (no value) and nympharium chips (from 1 to 14 terces, depending on the Silken Movement depicted), is a matter for the GM, or a Pedantry roll.
- ☛ "*An oarlock, obviously very old, 12 terces.*" (Utterly worthless.)
- ☛ "*A set of twelve drinking cups in bronze, 24 terces.*" Worthless without the extra cup, which holds the pencils on Grashpotel's[‡] desk. Pedants will recognize the demon-carved verdigris as most of a Cursing Set, used by the witches in their war with the wizards. Twelve coven members would pour wine, blood and curses into their own cups. This activity filled the thirteenth with magical bile of great potency. How they learn of and obtain this last vessel is up to them and the GM.
- ☛ "*A fine, shell-encrusted drinking bottle, from Old Kauchique, 3 terces.*" Perceptive PCs will note that the bottle is stopped, covered in wax and sealed with cabalistic sigils. Something rattles inside it. Joone will not allow them to open the bottle until they have bought it. Close

[†] The publisher failed to grasp that the handkerchief had been recycled and wanted to insert some hackneyed back-story here. Should the reader have as little taste, then the item once belonged to a girl called Dabanithe and was stolen by her maid, Abinta.

[‡] Grashpotel is an Arch-Magician of superior standing in the Symposium of Kaiin; his details can be found in *The Player's Guide to Kaiin*.



examination of the seal shows that it is inscribed “*at greatest need*” The flask contains three big, sharp teeth, with armed stick-men scratched on them crudely. The PCs will doubtless try to throw these down in a fight, or plant them. They do nothing. They are just wherriot teeth, filed to a point. Joone adds the carvings himself. He possesses a stamp for the warding inscription, and simply takes old bottles, covers them in glue and rolls them in freshwater oyster shells.

- ☛ “*A statue of an unknown god, perhaps a gaming piece, 7 terces.*” This is Falarandana, a twk-man condemned to magical stasis by Tabarant. If released, he will eventually offer “useful information about many subjects”.

Rundan Joone, ferryman

“Your tally already stands at two terces; you have taken me from my other work and caused me loss.”

Short, muscular, with a striped, yellow and blue shirt, and black bell-bottoms, rolled to the knee. He wears a bargee’s yellow bandana and carries a heavy knife.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 10, Rebuff (Penetrating) 6, Attack (Strength) 9, Defense (Dodge) 8, Health 10, Athletics 4, Craftsmanship 5, Pedantry 3, Seamanship 9, Wherewithal 6

Falarandana, twk-man

“I did not ask you to release me. I thought that I need worry no longer over the morbid sun, but you have brought me back. I insist on recompense.”

The GM may use Falarandana to pass on any information – or misinformation – that the PCs should know.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) ~, Rebuff (Wary) 1.5~, Attack (Speed) 3, Defense (Dodge) 1.5~, Health 2, Appraisal 5, Athletics 6, Living Rough 4, Pedantry 5, Perception 6, Scuttlebutt 10, Wherewithal 4

An old ruined pavilion stands behind the jetty, but the most obvious landmark is a monastery, a couple of miles east of Tabarant’s manse, surrounded by worked fields, cottages, smallholdings and ruins.

The Ruined Pavilion

This was once a fine building of good lines and fair proportions. Now its columns have collapsed, its roof has fallen in and all that remains are the outlines of an ancient knot-garden and the north wall, nine feet high, sporting three pilasters. Twk-men pasture their dragonflies here. Determined looters will turn up the following:

- ☛ Some herbs of culinary or medicinal use.
- ☛ A deep shaft, filled from top to bottom with broken plates. Remarkably, none of the shards comes from the same piece of crockery.
- ☛ A dead Twk-man, his brains sucked out by a noophagous hummingbird.

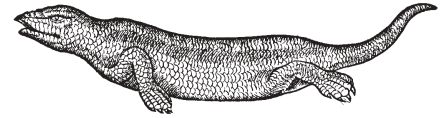
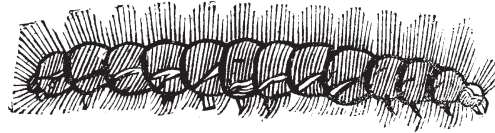
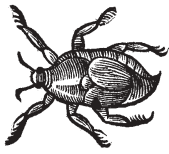


The Monastery

The adventure *My Master’s Manse* (see † p96) contains a complete description of the establishment, suitable for armed raiders or burglars. Here it is sufficient to observe that the building is a substantial, square, stone compound, with a high tower and a persistently tolling bell.

Travelers calling are made welcome; the lower orders are fed and housed in the stables. If male and of sound wind and good physique they may find leaving more difficult, as the monastery always needs more peasants. They will be assigned a peasant wife and find themselves compelled to work in the fields. More notable guests will be housed with the confreres and may even dine with the abbot Pensture, especially if they are persons of learning. They will find a visit exhausting as they will be constantly quizzed about their travels and the scholars will not be really happy until everything a guest knows is taken down in writing.

The Monks are of the Order of Dolorous



Obeisance. By their own account, they are rational agnostics, rather than a community of the credulous and faithful. Although aware that the divers demiurges, divinities and avatars might be mischievous sandestins amusing themselves at our expense, they do admit the possibility that the gods might really exist and be amenable to answering the occasional prayer in the affirmative. So, they pray to them, although it offends their intellects to do so.

Pensture, Abbot

"The sun fades and everything learned has been forgotten. Some wine, I think, and this excellent oyster pie."

Pensture's short, tidy black hair peaks out from under his large, sugar-loaf hat. He has a goatee and a neat moustache. Like his brothers, he wears a red and green surplice. His has heavy frogging and embroidery.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 6, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 10, Attack (Cunning) 6, Defense (Misdirection) 5, Health 7, Appraisal 4, Athletics 6, Craftsmanship 8, Etiquette 2, Pedantry 10, Perception 6, Physician 3, Stewardship 5, Wherewithal 6, **Resistances:** Gourmandism 0

Martuce, Jebishe, Duzna, scholars

"We preserve what remains and find what has been lost. We shun novelty and innovation."

These monks wear skullcaps, which must contain their hair. Until they have re-compiled a complete text, they must shave their top lips. They wear red and green surplices, which bear the silhouette of the scholar whose work they are preserving on the left shoulder.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 7, Rebuff (Contrary) 5, Attack (Speed) 3, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 2, Health 7, Appraisal 6, Athletics 5, Pedantry 7, Physician 2, Seduction 0

Resistances: Pettifoggery 0

Cambill, Dimbertuce, Jyoh, militants

"I will not accept your challenge. We prefer to fight with a numerical advantage."

The militants have short-cropped hair cut above the ears. They wear small metal skullcaps and all-in-one silk undergarments worn under their red

surplices. They are armed with either a stout staff or a humbug – a thin rod of iron with a ball at one end and a demi-lune blade at the other.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 6, Rebuff (Penetrating) 7, Attack (Strength) ~, Defense (Parry) ~, Health 5, Athletics 6, Gambling 4, Living Rough 2, Stealth 5, Tracking 2

Cassipreem, confrere and Funambulous Evangel

"This History is arrant nonsense – it lists twenty-three aeons, instead of the customary twenty-nine!"

The Funambulous Evangels hold with Gilfig's doctrines, but also believe that to walk on the earth would be a sacrilege against all the millions who have died and contributed to the topsoil. They choose to navigate using tightropes where available and on sanctified footwear otherwise. Cassipreem has been granted permission to add a network of ropes, pulley and eye hooks to his quarters and the library.

He has thus discerned a collection of books behind a discreet panel, otherwise inaccessible, and not known to the current monks. The tomes are very valuable, and include a rare copy of Jubalim's *Valedictory Precepts*, *The Merry Periwinkle* and a four-volume spell research book stolen from Vermoulilian five hundred years ago.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) ~, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 1.5~, Attack (Finesse) 5, Defense (Intuition) 6, Health 6, Appraisal 4, Athletics 5, Etiquette 5, Living Rough 4, Pedantry 10, Stealth 4, Wherewithal 4

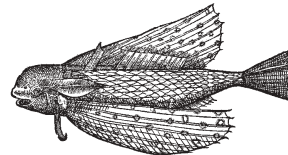
Resistances: Pettifoggery 3

Among their accoutrements is a warding bell, which, they claim, both preserves them from otherworldly scrutiny and magical attack. It also perturbs deodands, who do not like its tone.

The monastery's inhabitants divide into three groups, the militants, the confreres and the scholars. The militants police the peasant workforce, collect the rents and guard the gates. They have some value in a fight – two of them can hold out against a motivated adventurer for a while. They are astute tacticians and are unswayed by calls to honorable combat. They will erect barricades, throw furniture, and gang up on



The Monastery



opponents. They will happily cheat to secure victory. The confreres are visiting scholars and pilgrims who have temporary residence and access to the library. The scholars run the monastery. They are copyists, editors, researchers and administrators. They interview strangers, both to gather tales of far off lands and to identify new sources of labor. Each takes it in turn to patrol the fields to this end.

The peasants are merely oppressed churls, waiting for a catalyst to overthrow the nearest representatives of authority, the monks. While they wait, they pass the time by working in the fields, paying rents and being oppressed. Any stimulus, and particularly ensqualment or the performance of strident music, will set them into a killing frenzy. They have been conditioned to work to the tolling of the bell. Close observation will show that they move to its rhythm. Unless the characters' prior actions in *My Master's Manse* cause its destruction,[†] the monastery can be a source of employment, whether honest or profitable. Travelers who look reliable will be asked to collect documents and similar sources of knowledge from distant places to help expand the collection. Those who look fierce may well find a welcome serving as militants, at least for a short period. One of the most impressive aspects of the monastery library is the completeness of the catalogue. This is a huge card index file watched over by two indentured elementals. Within a day, any work that the monastery possesses can be made available to the scholar. Not only that, but any work on the same subject can also be made available at the same time. This is not an achievement to be taken lightly. The library is regarded by many as the ultimate point of reference in the area.

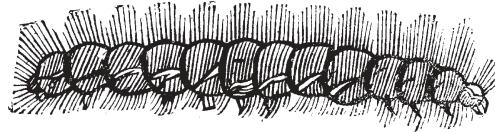
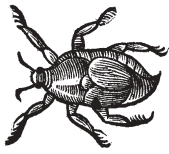


A Delicate Matter...

Duchess Simnip, wife of Duke Tambasco (see *Quanorq*, below) will hire the party to perform a secret little errand for her. She claims to derive from the ancient line of House Araggio, which ruled Dai Passant for much of the last epoch of the 20th Aeon. The 51st Count Araggio, was an elderly man, and childless, the last of his line when a youth appeared, claiming to be the child of a bastard spawned by Araggio during a trip to Old Romarth. The old Count welcomed this youth with open arms and declared him his heir, and thus the dynasty continued, only to be expelled some three generations later and given shelter by the Dukes of Ombalique. This then is the ancient and noble line, into which Tambasco married, or at least, so he believes.

The facts are somewhat different. Once the youth had been firmly accepted, he quickly became boastful and arrogant, saving his former blend of the obsequious and the fey for his supposed grandfather. Rumors circulated in the taverns that he was the son of an itinerant mermelant farrier from Mahaze. Unfortunately, this gossip is not merely true but, by pure chance, Duchess Simnip has discovered that an account written by the youth's mother is contained in the second volume of Maulders' *The Descent of the Ascolais Grandees*. Simnip has quietly had a scribe in Val Ombrio make several copies of the four volume set, but has had the offending second volume altered, to ensure that no doubt be cast on her parentage. She wants the party to substitute her set for that held in the library at the Monastery. If asked why she wants them to do this, she will assess the party. If they look greedy or keep asking for money she will tell them that the set she wants is a valuable collector's edition. The monks merely need the contents of the book and are not interested in collectibles. She claims that she hopes to make 500 terces on the deal and will pay them 250. If, on the other hand, they look to be persons of honor, she tells them that she once read the copy at the monastery and vowed to all the gods and none that, if she ever managed to overcome a small personal difficulty, she would replace the monastery's set with a new edition. Obviously, no gentleman would require a lady to reveal what this small personal difficulty

[†] Discerning GMs will take this as a strong hint to run this adventure first. As a relatively peaceable outing, it will serve as a sorbet, to freshen the palate before the inevitable bloodbath.



actually was, and her obvious embarrassment at even mentioning it is ample reason why she does not wish to explain her actions to the monks.

All the characters have to do is go to the Monastery, present themselves as traveling scholars, seek to view the Monastery's copy of the book and substitute the new copy for the old. There are several problems.

Firstly, the monastery copy has a farlock-leather binding with iron clasps. This is easily distinguished from the party's version, which is bound in vellum with silver clasps. They will have to ensure that the book is handed back to a different monk from the one who loaned it out to them. They must also ensure that the monk they give the book to is not familiar with it. Secondly, the book and its description are mentioned in the catalog, a large card index file. The party will have to replace the old card with a new one, containing a current description of the book, but the card must be made to look old. The elementals will not object to this procedure, but neither will they cover up for the adventurers. So, if they just hand their card to an elemental and tell it to substitute it for the original card, it will do so. The elementals will not volunteer information but will always answer truthfully.

Thirdly, the party must do all this while monastic scholars attempt to question them on their personal researches.



although most make do with partisans and short swords. They patrol the whole area within a full day's ride of the village. When they encounter strangers, they are courteous and professional.

The peasantry are not afraid to work in the fields and it is safe to travel, even at night. The Haskel gallows mark the western extremity of the patrols. Should the riders arrive during an execution, they will not interfere but, if the condemned reaches them and requests asylum, they will grant it.

Quanorq village is composed of well-built houses, which exude an air of quiet prosperity. Inland there is a network of winding lanes that connect the innumerable little hamlets and farms where the Duke's tenants live. These link up with the road that winds above the north bank of the Scaum to Taun Tassel. The land is rich and well cared for. It is so heavily manicured that portions of it look more like gardens than farms. This inhabited area extends at least twenty miles north from the river, right up to the outskirts of the Forest Da. The Duke has a passion for hunting and the fringes of the forest are almost entirely depopulated of dangerous and offensive creatures. The hunters of the Zoken Tannery also take a fair number of creatures out of this area. North of the Duke's bailiwick the forest gets more dangerous the further one ventures. It is an area of mystery and violent death with a great marsh, lost cities and short stretches of road leading nowhere..

The Duke lives in great style in a palace that defies description and which is rumored to rearrange itself magically when no one is looking. Tambasco thoughtfully has servants wandering around, so that at least somebody will remember the way from the kitchen to the bedchambers and dining rooms. He holds many formal balls and similar affairs, which have drawn guests from as far away as Octorus and Val Ombrio.

Persons of good standing are afforded a warm welcome that normally includes the invitation to a day's hunting. Gentlemen of more advanced years and ladies of all ages will be invited to go hawking instead. The Duchess (a strikingly handsome woman of middle years who looks younger) organizes these outings with the assistance of her youngest daughter, Maura, a high-spirited young blonde. Her activities and healthy appetites mean that she is the only daughter still unmarried and living at home.

Quanorq

The sedate village of Quanorq stands on the riverbank a day and a half downstream of Haskel. Duke Tambasco's palace rises behind it. The countryside is pretty rather than grand, and is both densely inhabited and well cultivated. Duke Tambasco charges high rents but provides excellent security. Travelers in the area regularly meet small parties of his men at arms who ride farlocks and wear leather jerkins displaying the Duke's blazon. Some carry longbows



A Grand Day Out

If an adventuring party has members of varying quality, then Tambasco's staff will draw off the lesser members, believing them to be servants. While their betters enjoy a fine banquet, these lower creatures will learn the rudiments of falconry. Ilkuth the Head Falconer is in ultimate charge of all matters and



directs the actual hunts. He is happy to take on trainee under-falconers, as the craft is dangerous, uncomfortable and unpaid – these workers rely on gratuities and thefts of bird food. There are five grades of Under-Falconer, Prime being the highest and Trainee the lowest. The hawks are as tall as a man, with wingspan to match, but are neither large nor docile enough to take a rider. Unfortunately, the birds have poor tempers and lack stamina, so require careful treatment.

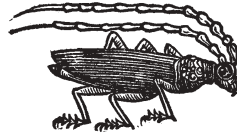
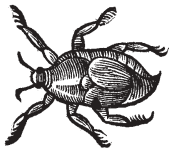
Fourth Grade Under-Falconers provide this treatment, dutifully sharpening and polishing their talons, cleaning offal from their beaks and combing detritus out of their feathers.

The Third Grade ensures that the birds rest well, feeding them a hot, spicy seed mixture and cooing comfortingly to them while they roost.

The Second Grade transports the hawks from their mews to the hunting grounds. The birds ride hooded on great, wheeled frames, drawn by farlocks.

Prime Under-Falconers each supervise one hawk. When Ilkuth signals them, they remove their birds' hoods and follow the creatures' progress in the air. They are responsible for retrieving their raptors, returning them hooded to their frames and tying them down.

Hawking is a genteel pursuit. The party rides, in palanquins, to a pretty area with plenty of level open space, accompanied by the birds, the Under-Falconers and the trainees. These lowest under-falconers carry the palanquins, manhandle the handcarts of food and drink, and serve the picnic. Hawking is a spectator event. When the party arrives at the hunting ground – an attractive, flat clearing chosen by the best-dressed guest – they recline on rugs, sip fine wine and indulge in conversation while watching the activity provided for their edification. A fund of gossip and a fine line in flattery or coquetry are far more valued than any actual knowledge of the sport. Each guest may sponsor one bird for the day. The bird with the most kills wins and its sponsors receive all the terces laid on the losers. Guests may only share sponsorship if all the hawks have backers. The Head Falconer makes careful records, holds the money, and to ensure impartiality, takes $\frac{1}{10}$ as a commission. Successful sponsors pay their Prime Under-Falconer an honorarium. They might similarly reward any other staff who made a good impression. When the guests have concluded their



business, Ilkuth asks their permission to release a lure to entice pelgranes. Ordinarily, the party allows him to use his professional judgment, but he must defer to them on this one point. If it is up to Ilkuth, he will pick the most fit and agile trainee. If the party decides to pick for themselves, then they might select any one of the candidates, based on idiosyncratic criteria. The lure must walk out into the middle of the open area. When suitable quarry appears he may run away, although it is sporting not to do so until the pelgrane has started to glide in his direction. The pelgrane will dive after him and Ilkuth signals the great hawks to be released. If the prey eats the trainee before the hawks get to it, the event is void. Surviving trainees rise to Fourth Grade. Ilkuth stuffs and mounts the pelgranes. On those occasions when the prey suffers too much damage, he makes coat hangers out of its horny carapace.

The hawks are occasionally flown at ground-living quarry. Deodands are thought to be excellent sport and erbs to can be taken by two or more hawks striking from above and behind.

Ilkuth, Head Falconer

"A zesty lure catches my eye, so will enrapture a pelgrane's."

Ilkuth is a tall, strong man, with weather-beaten skin. His dark hair grays at the temples. When not caring for his birds or supervising his staff, he pursues his interests in archery, pugilism and taxidermy.

Ilkuth wears tight black britches made from deodand hide, peeled off its previous owner in one piece. His boots, jerkin and hood are bottle-green pelgrane suede.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) ~, Rebuff (Obtuse) ~, Attack (Strength) 8, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 8, Health 9, Athletics 7, Craftsmanship 5, Etiquette 1, Falconery 10, Perception 9, Riding 3, Stewardship 6, Wherewithal 6

Meflume, Tersian, Gambid and Dandone, Prime Falconers

"Fly proud my beauty and make me my fortune."

The Primes wear Tabasco's livery on their tabards and boiled-leather hats. Their other clothes are

threadbare britches and blouses, now stained and faded to a muted charcoal.

Meflume and Tersian have chipped yellow teeth and affect ankle boots. Gambid has no teeth at all and wears clogs. Dandone is, by comparison a dandy and by far the worst prime.

The Primes use lures made from pelgrane skulls with holes drilled in them. When whirled around the head, each emits a distinct throbbing wail. Dandone augments this with a bell and pieces of meat, to his colleagues' disgust.

Ratings: *Meflume, Gambid, and Tersian* Persuade (Obfuscatory) 5, Rebuff (Obtuse) 6, Attack (Ferocity) 6, Defense (Misdirection) 4, Health 7, Athletics 7, Craftsmanship 4, Perception 3, Scuttlebutt 3, Stewardship 4, Wherewithal 6,

Ratings: *Dandone* Persuade (Charming) 8, Rebuff (Penetrating) 5, Attack (Finesse) 4, Defense (Dodge) 5, Health 7, Athletics 7, Craftsmanship 4, Etiquette 7, Falconery 2, Perception 3, Scuttlebutt 3, Seduction 8, Stewardship 4, Wherewithal 6

Resistances: Rakishness 1

Kang, Maots, Xei Cambael and Qahr, Giant Hawks

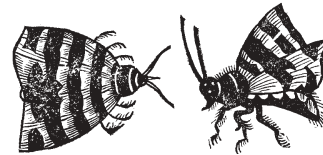
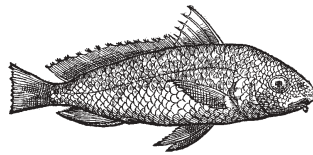
"I will not speak to you again until you ruffle my tail."

The hawks like flying but tire easily. They have a strong bloodlust and an inborn hatred of pelgranes. They claim that, when they are hunting, they lose all capacity for conscious thought and enter a world of pure instinct. Only the lures their Primes carry will bring them back. The hawks seldom condescend to speak to flightless people, and only do so in payment for grooming or feeding. When hunting, they taunt and insult their prey effusively. They deny all knowledge of bad language at all other times.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 0.5~, Rebuff (Obtuse) 2~, Attack (Speed) 2~, Defense (Dodge) ~, Health 8, Athletics 10, Etiquette 3, Perception 10, Stealth 9, Tracking 10

Resistances: Correct Grooming and Feeding 1





"Three thimbles of salt, and no arguments"

Tambasco's hawking activities have caught the imagination of Arnarantala, the twk-man king to his north. It has occurred to him that, if he owned a giant hawk, he could take trade goods from travelers, rather than be forced to trade for it. He hires the PCs to steal a bird for him, in return for a copy of a rare spell that they do not know. Should the PCs succeed, they will find themselves the object of a Prime Under-Falconer's pure hatred. He's lost his bird and has reverted to Trainee status.

Arnarantala, Twk-man King

"I have invented a novelty. It might even be the last – I call it aerial piracy."

The king is a Turjan-level mage with a character to match. His obsession is to mount a howdah on a giant hawk and rule the skies above the Great Da. He is aware that his people need to be persuaded as to the merits of his plan, so he seeks to enrich them. Arnarantala wears a pair of purple slippers that will make him the same size as his opponent. They will similarly enlarge his equipment, so enemies will find themselves facing a full-sized, envenomed lance.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 2-, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 0.75-, Attack (Speed) 0.75-, Defense (Dodge) 2-, Daring 16, Health 7, Appraisal 5, Athletics 7, Craftsmanship 10, Etiquette 12, Living Rough 1, Pedantry 13, Riding 13, Scuttlebutt 15, Seduction 10, Stewardship 15, Tracking 9, Wealth 12, Wherewithal 10

Resistances: Arrogance 0

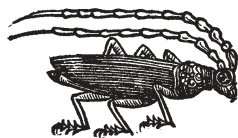
Possessions: The Green and Purple College Slippers (enlarges the King and his possessions), Teman Blossom (summons a swarm of enraged humbestah beetles who attack up to four of his opponents, Ferocity -, Dodge 10, Health 5) and a vial of dew wine.



An Erb Hunt

Should visitors be taken hunting by the Duke himself, rather than hawking by his wife, the experience is very different. Because the area around Quanorq has been hunted out, guests are rowed up or down stream to one of the hamlets at the edge of the Duke's domain, where the forest still hugs the riverbank. At the hamlet, the participants will be issued with an erb spear and a farlock. The Duke then leads the party deep into the forest. Normally about four men at arms ride with the hunt, armed with longbows.

The Duke prefers to hunt erbs, with a simple technique. One takes a very long spear with a long narrow blade. There is a cross guard set into the shaft about equidistant between huntsman and spearhead. The huntsman insults the quarry so much that it becomes enraged and hurls itself at him. He aims the spear to catch the creature on the pectoral groove, where the wound is both fatal and provides the opening cut for skinning the beast. The Duke will also cheerfully tackle hoons, gids, deodands or grues, all of which can be found. A generous host, he does not bring his guests along merely to marvel at his prowess but expects them to actively participate and feels a hunt is a failure if every participant doesn't manage at least one kill.



Λ Sensitive Matter

Perceptive observers may note that the Duchess does not often sit down and when she does, she always looks uncomfortable. While not something she discusses easily, the truth is that some time ago she harassed a wandering scholar who she felt was leading Maura, her daughter, astray. A colleague of his heard of this episode and, in the spirit of comradeship, sent a madling to place ulcerous carbuncles on the crests of both the Duchesses' buttocks.[†] Obviously, anyone curing her of this affliction would undoubtedly win her undying gratitude (although the only true affection Duchess Simnip has ever manifested is for her own interests). They would also win the gratitude of Duke Tambasco, who has become ever more oppressed and harassed by his wife. He does not know the cause of the problems but if he feels that the party is 'the right sort,' he will ask them to investigate.

Discovering the cause of Simnip's inability to sit down is not easy. Investigators would have to win the confidence of two elderly and well-trusted ladies maids, Tadmin and Xipbila or of Hullop, a very senior laundress who launders nothing but the Duchess's small clothes. These people do know the problem but are absolutely loyal and not prone to loose gossip. They will take into their confidence people whom they regard as of utmost respectability and who could provide a remedy.

Once the investigators have discovered the



problem (ulcerous carbuncles) they could try a cure. Unfortunately, because these carbuncles are magically inflicted, they do not respond to conventional medicaments. The Duchess has tried them virtually every known remedy anyway and should anyone offer her a

conventional treatment which doesn't work, they will feel the full measure of her contempt. Worse, not only have they clearly committed what she regards as the crime of snooping into her affairs, they have compounded it with incompetence.

In the interests of completeness, we offer the following three remedies for the Duchess. Inventive players will doubtless arrive at better solutions.

The first, restricted to Arch-Magicians, is to instruct a sandestin to remove the carbuncles. The second involves casting the spell *Felofun's Thaumaturgic Poultice*. This is trickier than it appears; as to cast the spell properly one has to touch the effected part.

The third course of action would be to cast the spell *Liberation of Warp*, which will dispel the carbuncles without any unnecessary personal intimacies. Indeed, the spell could be cast without the Duchess being aware of the process – but for one small matter. The Duchess knows a small cantrap that enhances her natural appearance, and this is, of course, dispelled by the spell. The Duchess will suddenly look twenty years older, her clothes will not fit properly, her hair will become thin and rather straggly. Should this occur in a public place, if she ever finds the person or persons responsible she will commission retribution in accordance with the Law of Equipose.

Simnip, Duchess Tambasco

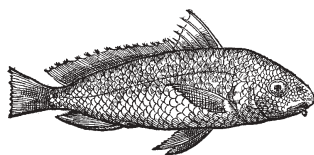
"*Guards, take him outside and deal with him somewhere where it neither stains the furnishings nor vexes the Duke.*"

Simnip, Dutchess Tambasco, is tall, elegant, and physically very attractive. Her air is imperious, her manner abrupt and intolerant.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 10, Rebuff (Wary) 11, Attack (Caution) 6, Defense (Vexation) 10, Health 6, Appraisal 2, Etiquette 8, Gambling 2, Imposture 4 Pedantry 3, Perception 6, Riding 4, Seduction 6, Stewardship 7, Wealth 20, Wherewithal 4

Resistances: Indolence 2, Pettifoggery 6, Gourmandism 3

[†] Fastidious readers, who prefer to believe that Jack Vance would not stoop to such coarseness, are referred to *Fader's Waft*, Chapter 13, where Osherl inflicts a similar penalty on the anthropophagous Doulka.



Sfere

Down river from the happy domain of Duke Tambasco, and on the opposite bank, lies Sfere. Travelers have often been perplexed as to whether Sfere is a region or a town. Sfere has no inn as such; instead, there is THE GUILD HOUSE, home of the various craft guilds whose members still ply their trade in the town. For a reasonable sum, travelers can sleep in a single-bedded room and eat at the general refectory. The food will disappoint all but the meanest diner, for it is depressingly simple and wholesome. The local gentry enjoy finer fare in relaxed eating-houses serving such delicacies as seckel-apples from Jabbernowl's orchard and boned kursim table fowl.

The terrain rises gently on the south bank of the river. From any one vantage point the traveler can see another six or seven other pleasant villas, each the center of its own estate, with a cluster of laborers' cottages tucked discretely just out of sight of the house.

The inhabitants are a well-formed and generally courteous people. Indeed, most are connected to the estate owners by family ties, for marriage between the 'Great House' and the 'Village' is the norm. The inhabitants of each estate specialize in an esoteric craft: Euraz and Cardiss catalog antiques of unknown purpose; Miatham the Apothegmic creates alembics lined with golanthier imported from Murant; Jocarass distills fine blossom liqueurs; Folka Doremell sculpts gossamer castles which she burns at the Summer Fair. Trade with the outside follows traditional, well-established channels; the etiquette of commerce is complex and outsiders find themselves the cause of awkward silences when they attempt to buy or sell. Traveling tradesmen are recommended to wait until the Summer Fair, during which they may indulge in commerce without attracting sneers.

The Summer Fair

Once a year at the Summer Fair, the Sferese open their doors to strangers, display the goods they have chosen to trade this year, and haggle ferociously in a manner that is quite out of character. The Sferese burn any combustible goods unsold at nightfall – they would rather do this than get an insulting price. Folka Doremell's gossamer sculptures are a strange exception – she burns them all, sold or not, at the end of the

fair. Even so, arch-magicians and grantees vie for the chance to own one if only for a few hours.[†]

After the fair, they allow outsiders to join them in a feast where they consume any unsold wine or victuals in a visceral fashion, without any apparent enjoyment. Any guest caught leaving the feast with food, wine or cutlery will be hung from ankle hooks in the nearest suitable tree until he or she can recite Mortiquan's *First Ode* backwards.

A Restless Night

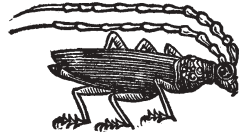
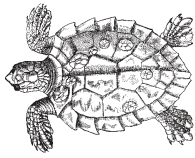
The Glefts, a race of spirit-creatures, who draw nourishment from confusion and distress, haunt the Sfere hills. They are small, an ell or so high, and look like mannequins made of dry sticks, so can hide in bushes easily. Should anyone fall asleep near them, one will insert its third finger in an exposed ear and stir the brain around. They then settle down and bask in their victim's discomfort. The gleft gets bored and leaves long before the sleeper wakes, so misses the after-effects. The brain settles back to its prior routines in time, but for the day after an attack, the victim (in this case a PC) will show the following symptoms:

- ☞ An insatiable and irritating curiosity
- ☞ The belief that one can encompass spells in someone who cannot
- ☞ A sudden loss of innate magical competence
- ☞ A change in character, simulated by selecting a radically different style of rolling Persuade and Rebuff
- ☞ Abstinence from a beloved activity
- ☞ Sudden quixotic folly compelling the PC to help strangers
- ☞ The PC believes herself to be the beneficiary of a divine revelation and feels the need to spread the word.

The affliction is temporary and lasts for as long as the players and GM find it amusing. A specific event could trigger a relapse.



[†] Panderleou, collector of wonderful artifacts, was inconsolable at a recent fair when, despite his offer of a dimensional jaunt, Folka ignited a replica of his panchromatic mansion.



Kaiin

From Sfere, the river flows slowly and with quiet dignity west to Kaiin. Too busy, too complex to cover in a mere travelogue,[†] this white-walled city straddles the Derna and stands by the Scaum. Legend claims that every citizen lives in a palace, although it must be confessed that some palaces are rather more palatial than others.

The Derna road crosses the Porphiron Scar and descends by a zigzag staircase down to the market. Beyond the market lie the ruins of the great raised arena of Mad King Shin, beyond which lies the palace of Kandive the Golden, in a grove of bay trees. North of the palace runs the Pannone Wall. South of the wall and west of the Palace is a tangle of narrow streets and alleys where many-balconied houses crowd the little squares known as 'the Threek'. North of the wall lies the old town, a mass of ruins and wasteland. The Derna runs through the city in a maze of canals and both open and closed sewers, which discharge under the rotting wharves of the old town. One particularly fast-flowing stream passes under the north wing of the

palace. It is presumed that some of the more exotically maimed corpses that bob up in the harbor originated in Kandive's home.

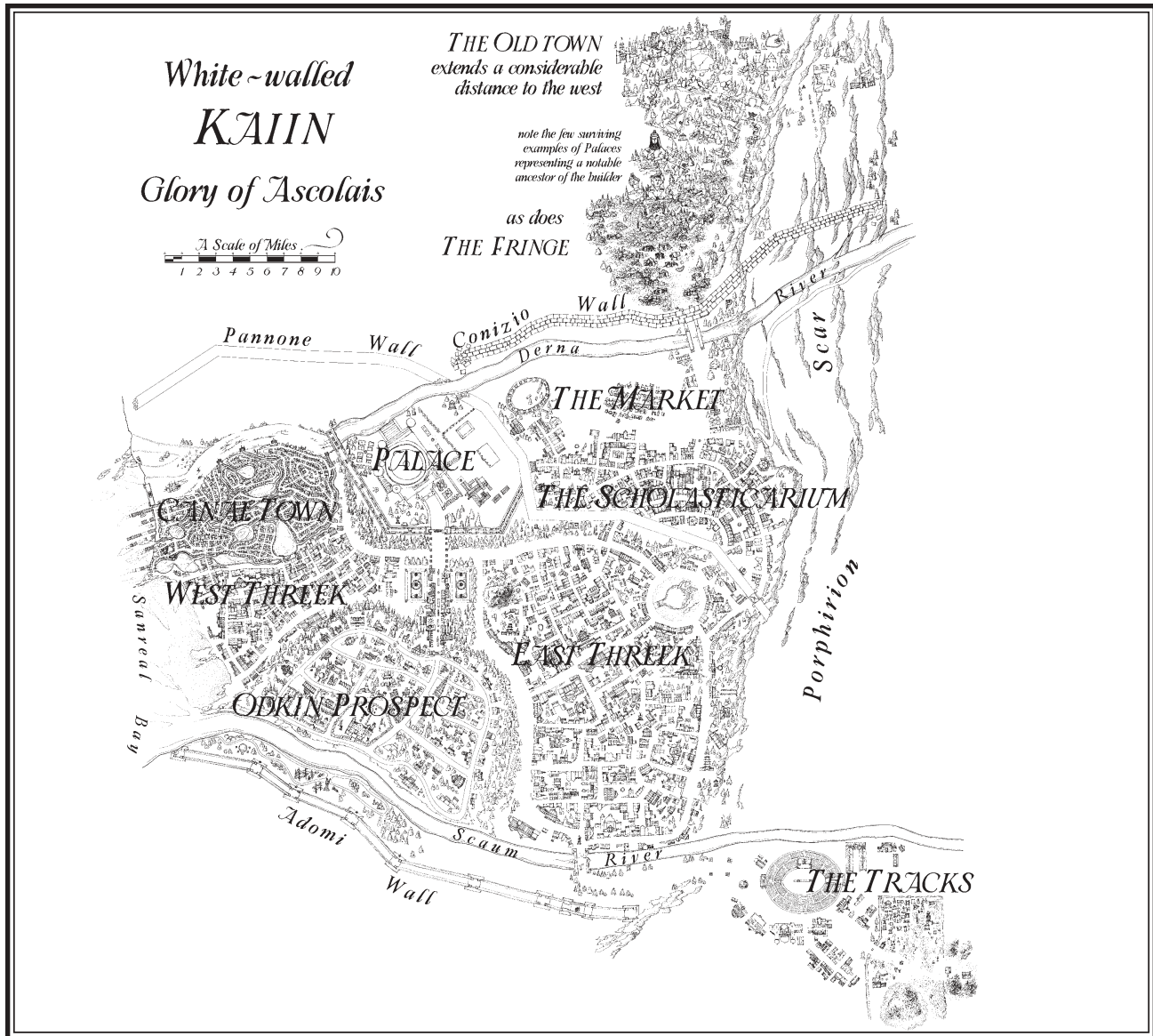
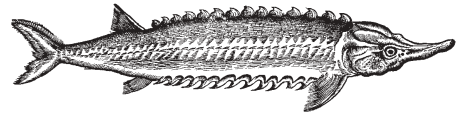
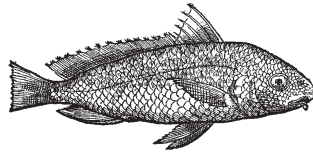
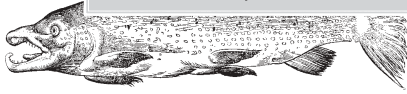
Southwest of the Palace, the houses grow more opulent and many genuinely warrant the title of palaces, especially those on Odkin Prospect, which grace the banks of the Scaum, whose broad and slow waters form the southern edge of the city. There is a new harbor where the Scaum meets the sea. Merchants prefer to take palaces nearby, so that they can watch their ships dock from their roof gardens. Along the foreshore and on the mud flats at the mouth of the Scaum shore combers prowl, alert to anything of value carried in by the tide. Wearing the traditional cloak of old sacking stained purple with gort urine and carrying mud flange and patty turner, they form an aromatic edge to respectable society.

Splitting the city into North and South is the great Processional Way which stretches from the Palace to the Harbor and down which Prince Kandive the Golden will process in times of rejoicing, or merely when he wishes to travel to his pleasure barge. North of the Processional Way is the Threek. It is here, in mean houses lining narrow streets, that the small folk of Kaiin live. To have a house in this area is to end all hope of entering society and mingling with the grandees. The warren is where those servants too insignificant to dwell in the main house live. It is the home of those who empty earth closets and catch vermin for a living. True, there are taverns that might be worth visiting but only those either along the Processional Way or just behind it, those further in are the haunt of the lowest sort of scoundrel.

For those arriving by boat, there is the problem of officialdom, which soon loses both its novelty and its charm. Kandive the Golden has refined tastes and visitors to his city help him to indulge them. One source of funds is a tariff charged on all goods landed in Kaiin, whether brought in from by sea or down river. At one point, the whole matter was coordinated by the Grand Bureaucrat of the Orgulous Objugatory Verein. He controlled two organizations; the first was a hereditary guild of Customs Officials. The guild has an involved hierarchy – at its top sits the Grand Tribune, beneath him a High Prefect, then six Sub-Prefects of the Service. The Sub-Prefects, actually board the ships to collect the revenue. They are easy to recognize in their nautical blue four-tiered hats, each



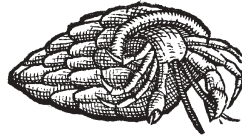
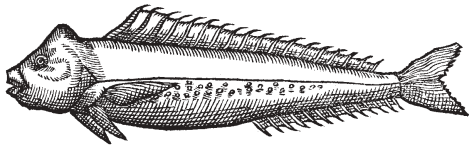
[†] The Kaiin Sourcebook covers the rotting metropolis in all its faded glory. The cynical reader might take the view that commercial motives outweigh any considerations of complexity. She would be correct.



resplendent with the orange plume and gilded pendant of their guild. The Customs Officials render a chest filled with terces to Kandive every year, in return for the right to collect tolls on the Scaum and on the Derna. They have the prince's permission to wear their guild colors in civic parades, and charge a tax of 30 terces on every deodand carried through the streets of Kaiin in daylight.

Currently the Guild is headed by the Tumbling Tarjun Brothers, hereditary clowns and moonlighting confidence tricksters. The Tarjun Brothers are the sons of Pikel Tarjun, who married the only daughter of

Histuin, previous hereditary head of the Guild of Customs officials. On Histuin's sad demise the headship automatically devolved on the Tarjun Brothers who legitimately fulfill their functions both as clowns and as excise men. Whilst their collecting of dues and tariffs has become somewhat more erratic, if not to say distinctly eccentric (with traders being fined for having the wrong sort of laugh or too dour a demeanor) the Guild's participation in civic parades is now much welcomed. Even their detractors freely admit that the Tarjun Brothers have made great strides in that department.



Kandive also employs two Excise officers, Massel and his understudy Gudge, who wear frock coats and tall, brimless hats of midnight blue, with a white cockade pinned to them. The pin has an anchor and knout motif. Although the two are hardly sufficient for the task, they are wonderfully industrious and of unimpeachable integrity. They are, however, less than intelligent and extremely gullible. They are employed because Kandive accepted a legacy from 'The Society for the Protection of the Original and Pure Customs of Kaiin'. Their task is to ferret out such imported contraband as they feel will undermine the morals and ancient customs of the white-walled city. They work at this task with a will, receiving a modest honorarium from the Prince, who spends the rest of the legacy on maintaining his pleasure boat. Kandive did hand pick them and their stupidity is such that Kaiin no longer imports alcohol, narcotics or stimulating etchings, but does import vast quantities of medicinal substances and diagrams said to be for the edification of students of the medical arts. Traders are advised to watch for the activities of their manservant, Jigor. He is an officer of the Green Legion and is constantly alert for anything that smacks of demonology. If his suspicions are aroused then the matter is dealt with expeditiously by senior associates of Valdaran the Just.

The bold and clever trader, on approaching Kaiin, will wait until the wind is of optimum strength and direction, set all sail and drive in with all possible speed towards the Scaum mouth. By the time he is clear of the bar, the various port officials are likely still to be arguing precedence. They may not even have

completed donning their ceremonial costumes.

This course of action is not without risk. Should Prince Kandive chance to be watching, he may well chose to use the incoming ship for a spot of thaumaturgical target practice, although some claim he has been known to do this anyway. Sandbars and floating debris are also hazardous, and many a cargo has gone to enrich only the shore combers. Then, of course, there is the problem of the ferry from Sfere. This has precedence over any craft sailing up or down the river so, when it crosses, they must ride at anchor, tempting the communities of wefkins who infest the lower reaches of the river to swarm aboard. The wefkins offer the useful service of repelling the local water sprites, which would otherwise saturate the cargo and make it unsaleable. Any suggestion that these creatures collude with the ferry is denied hotly by both sides. Indeed, the ferrymen usually offer to buy part of the cargo from the ship's master while the wefkins are making their boarding attempt.

The most cautious and knowing of traders will wait until the rise of one of the notorious Scaum fogs and then come in towed by longboats using muffled oars and taking constant soundings. The wefkins remain a problem, but by and large the stratagem is successful, although some embarrassment may be caused should the fog lift suddenly.

This method of approach has one small snag, which is not apparent to most. River-keaks rise from the riverbed to mate when the miasma rolls down from the Porphiron Scar. They sometimes mistake river craft for coquettes, especially so as the oar blades mimic the rising and falling of a keak's flukes, while she is in oestrus.† See *Shil* (p90) for details of keak mating behavior.

It is easy to understand why many traders would regard Val Ombrio as the most sensible port of entry for Almerey and willingly haul their goods overland to the Scaum valley rather than risk running the gauntlet of Kaiin's somewhat erratic officialdom.



† GMs should know that the following reference to *Shil* was composed in the spirit of insufferable smugness.



The River Sune & Lands to the North

We forsake the fleshpots of the south for a harsh but intriguing landscape

If our ancient world could be said to lend any sense of importance to travel and trade, the valley of the Sune forms the end of an important route from Cuirnif, which eventually leads via Taun Tassel to Val Ombrio. Travelers from Cuirnif travel to Flath Foiry before covering the last 130 Azenomeian leagues to Taun Tassel either by boat down the Sune or along the Old Ferghaz High-road. The latter, a paved road of great antiquity, had a charm of protection cast upon it in the latter days of the 20th Aeon and this enchantment still lingers, making the road more popular than the river.

The Blue Moor

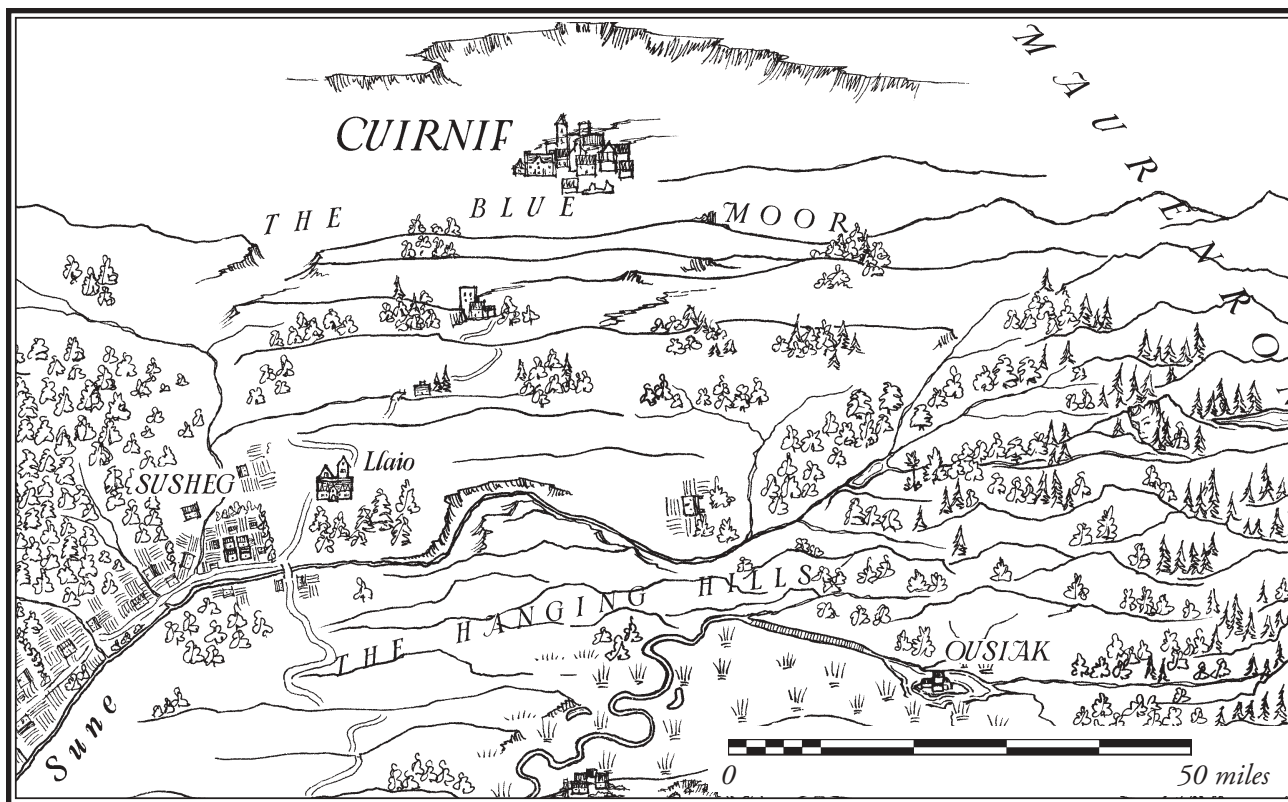
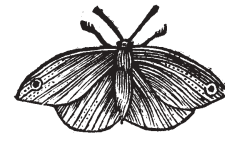
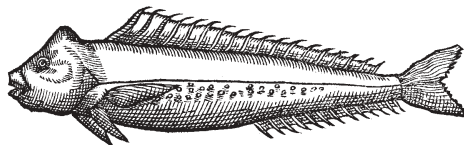
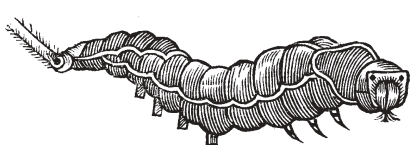
Described as 'a blue moor, patched here and there with small forests', the region has an air of quiet solitude. No people live here any more, although robber asms lurk in the forests. The moor stretches a good day's journey from south of Cuirnif to the Iron Man Inn.

The Iron Man Inn

This is the first safe resting place south of Cuirnif, so is popular with travelers. The landlord, Cilman Redmaulde, is a convivial host. He runs the business with the help of his three wives and a large brood of children.

The Inn itself is a large tower with a scattering of other houses around it. There are still signs of the Inn's martial past visible, the upper wall is crenellated and there is a portcullis. The cluster of houses that huddle around the tower form a small farming township. The land that runs down from the moor towards the river is fertile and grows reasonable crops. The people round here grow cobwheat, millet, hog bean, shrub allsike and flowering ditch-berry. The cobwheat is eaten, the others are sold up and down the river as poultry feed. Because the forest is so near, most of the houses are timber while the usual roofing material is either thatch or wooden shingles. A rough palisade surrounds the community, a watch is maintained on the gate.

The Iron Man Inn is named for a rarely remembered figure from early in the 21st Aeon, the self-styled Kinnu the Inexorable. Determined to impress the inhabitants of the area with his own inflexibility, he built an automaton of iron whose duty was to dispense justice and maintain order. Although mentally unsophisticated, the automaton proved competent at its duties and survived its creator by several centuries. It was not until the mechanical policeman's moving parts wore out that people once more returned to live in the area. The first thing they did was break the automaton into many pieces, the



arms being fastened about the main door of the Iron Man Inn. The head is in a locked cabinet behind the bar. Locals use it to settle disputes. It is well known that the head will answer Redmaulde's questions infallibly in return for wine. Each glass procures one answer, which is always "yes" or "no."

Every day, at sunset, Redmaulde takes the head from its case and mounts it on a spike in the main common room. He then rings a handbell and calls out "The court is in session. All who desire justice buy a drink at the bar and draw near. The head will hear you". When Redmaulde pours a glass of wine into the mouth, it provides the head with enough power to answer one question with either "yes" or "no". Both sides present their case to the landlord, who asks the head if one of the parties is guilty. If head answers "no", Redmaulde presents the case other point of view. This process might seem long-winded, but it affords entertainment and gossip as both sides struggle not to implicate themselves while presenting their cases. Patrons believe that the Iron Man's head answer fairly, and cannot be bribed, but this is not entirely true. It responds according to the litigant's choice of wine. If

the wine comes from the north bank of the Valley of Graven Tombs, then the Head answers "yes," otherwise it says "no." Redmaulde has a fund of gossip and obscure lore and usually knows the answers himself, so phrases his questions accordingly.

Cilman Redmaulde, landlord

"Tell me, oh Head; could this be true, as related to me and recounted to you?"

A short, bald, clean shaven, burly man in a dark green, velvet waistcoat, cream shirt and britches, and calf-boots. He usually wears a heavy linen apron when behind the bar. The Iron Man's head is a major source of income, as it draws the curious and litigious to his inn.

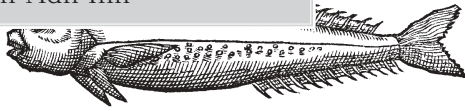
Ratings: Persuade (Obfuscatory) 1.5-, Persuade (Eloquence) 1, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 1.5-, Attack (Ferocity) 1-, Defense (Intuition) 1-, Health 10, Pedantry 10, Scuttlebutt 10

Ripkiss and Balane, locals

"I once asked the Head if asms shun the color umber."



The Iron Man Inn



I will tell you the answer for a mug of ale."

These two under-fed, work-worn farm hands in leather waistcoats, muslin shirts, canvas britches, gaiters and clogs are regular patrons.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 5, Rebuff (Contrary) 7, Attack (Strength) 4, Defense (Intuition) 5, Health 6, Craftsmanship 5, Gambling 4, Living Rough 3, Scuttlebutt 3

Resistances: Avarice 0, Resist Indolence 0, Resist Gourmandism 0

Mandry, Floresse and Arimelle, the three Mrs Redmauldes

"Our husband is otherwise engaged, or he might be. What is your pleasure, gentlemen?"

These three pretty women dress alike in gray pastel velvet dresses. They are respectively a blonde, a redhead and a brunette. Like their husband, they wear a linen apron when working.

Redmaulde bought all three as a job lot from Wakdun the Panderer and they despise him for it. They are all natives of Kaiin and were once maids at the Scholasticarium. They have been stealing from Redmaulde and saving their gratuities so that they can hire guards to take them back to civilization. They deal with their husband's tiresome pettifoggery by mouthing platitudes, then ignoring him completely.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) ~, Rebuff

(Obtuse) 0.5~, Attack (Finesse) ~, Defense (Vexation) 0.5~, Health 6, Appraisal 7, Concealment 8, Etiquette 4, Gambling 4, Perception 9, Quick Fingers 6, Scuttlebutt 4, Seduction 7, Stealth 3, Wherewithal 3

Resistances: Avarice 0

The Iron Head

Kinnu the Inexorable did not make the Iron Man's head himself. Rather he looted it from a late 19th Aeon pleasure-jitney that once carried the Wizard-Tyrant Phlang Derspinax from Sadal Suud to Earth and back. When Derspinax visited the village of Kaiin, standing on stilts in the Sanreal lagoon, he demanded tribute from its sullen inhabitants. Their chief Sanurone offered his brother Tandal, explaining that Tandal had an exceptional palate and would infallibly alert the Wizard-Tyrant to noxious or insipid refreshments. Derspinax did not care for the rest of his food-taster's body, so had his head severed, enchanted and plated with iron. The jitney failed to access a suitable trail of time-light and crashed in the mountains. The Tyrant fell under his food taster. With its last volition, Tandal's steel teeth tore out the wizard's throat.

Kinnu the Inexorable found the wreckage two aeons later. He had been collecting metal body parts for some time and was delighted that the head would



WAKDUN THE PANDERER

PURVEYOR of EROTIC APPURTENANCES & GENTLEMEN'S REQUISITES

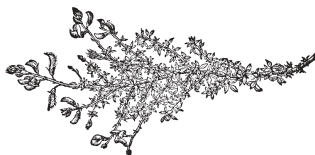
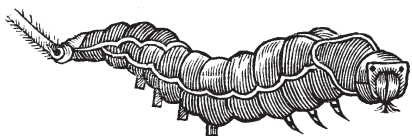
Even the most elegant prose is enhanced when it is READ ALOUD, for you avoid the stigma of being so destitute as to be forced to read for oneself

We are pleased to offer for IMMEDIATE PURCHASE a fine selection of body slaves trained to perfection to read in the most cultured tones. Statuesque and, where appropriate, **lightly oiled**, they are available at prices high enough to inculcate respect in your neighbours.



Anyone presenting themselves at our establishment in Kaiin bearing a copy of *The Scaum Valley Gazetteer* will gain a small discount





enable him to construct a complete, if patchwork automaton. Tandal's clear desires for justice and revenge were encouraging, so Kinnu used him as the iron watchman's sensorium. The assembly took two years and Tandal paid close attention, so is an authority on automata.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 10, Rebuff (Penetrating) 10, Health 15, Pedantry (Automata, 19th Aeon history) 12, Scuttlebutt 10, Wherewithal 10

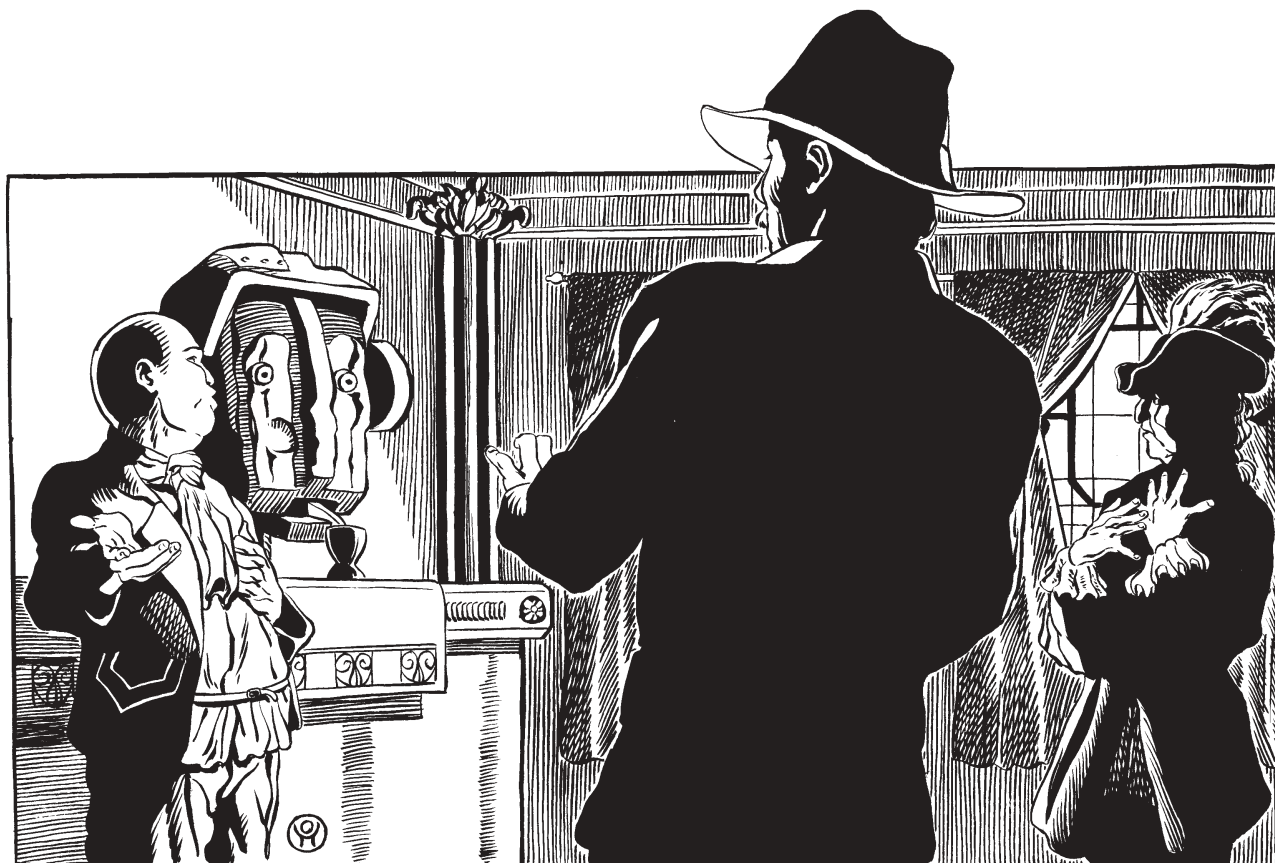
Note that Tandal cannot move anything but his jaw unless he obtains a body.

Tandal, the Iron Head

"Yes. No."

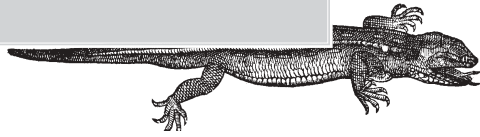
The head, again severed from its body and reduced rendering bivalent answers for cheap wine, wants to travel and see the world. It is capable of speech, but hides this talent from all but the innkeeper, awaiting the opportunity to speak to morally dubious travellers willing to release it. If rescued from its servitude, it will work as a food taster and historian, as well as providing lessons in automaton construction so that the PCs can make it a new body. As a further inducement, Tandal will observe that he traveled widely in the 19th Aeon, so knows where many lost cities once stood.

From the Iron Man Inn the road winds down towards the river and Llaio, the Manse of the four wizards, Disserl, Vasker, Pelasias and Archimbaust, who all fell foul of Iucounu.





Llaio



Llaio†

‘... the two arrived at Llaio, a large manse of 16 Gables... Bazzard conducted Cugel through a tall iron-bound door, across a reception hall and into a parlour. High windows, each of twelve violet panes dimmed the afternoon sunlight; fusty magenta beams, slanting down across the room, warmed the dark oak wainscoting. A long table rested on dark green carpeting.’

Cugel’s Saga

Llaio and its inhabitants have known better times – only their stoicism and a belief that their enemy Iucounu will falter keep them going. They are as hospitable as they can manage although their kitchen can only afford meals of fair quality. The Laughing Magician keeps them under close scrutiny. Luckily, he does not know about the alarm web in their trophy room, which hisses when spies are near. If one of Iucounu’s red-eyed wisps of smoke is eavesdropping, they start droning inconsequentially until it gets bored and leaves through the chimney. The manse has something to offer adventurers. Its inhabitants know how to make diambroid, a high explosive, for instance. They also have an extensive library, including the *Vapurial Index* and Boberg’s *Pandaemonium*.

Disserl, Vasker, Pelasias and Archimbaust, the Four Wizards

“Do you prefer Forlorn Encystment at a depth of forty-five miles to an ounce or two of diambroid?”

‘Close together with their backs to the fire sit four men of unusual aspect, in that they shared between them a single eye, a single ear, a single arm and a single leg. In other respects the four were much alike: small and slight, with round serious faces and black hair cut short’.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 1.5~, Rebuff (Penetrating) 2~, Attack (Caution) 2, Defense (Misdirection) 2, Devious 2, Health 8, Etiquette 5, Pedantry 9, Stewardship 3

Spells: The Charm of Untiring Nourishment, Spell of the Tireless Legs, Spell of Internal Effervescence, and Brassman’s Twelve-fold Bounty, Charm of Piscine Conversation,‡ Dibarcas’ Wondrous Reduction (p97)

Bazzard, Craftsman and Entertainer

“A single father often boasts four sons, but how does a single son boast four fathers?”

Bazzard is an optimistic fellow, and an obedient son. He makes enthusiastic suggestions which are not fully considered – he once remarked that reducing the quantity of diambroid attached to Cugel’s hat would allay Cugel’s fears, even though it would still decapitate him if it exploded. He dabbles a little in magic and is a capable jeweller. He once created a likeness of an Overworld scale, which even fooled the Laughing Magician.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 10, Rebuff (Wary) 10, Attack (Speed) 5, Defense (Dodge) 4, Magic (Curious) 4, Health 7, Appraisal 9, Athletics 2, Craftsmanship 9, Driving 3, Living Rough 4, Perception 10, Stewardship 5

Spells: Brassman’s Twelve-fold Bounty
The Restoration of Limbs

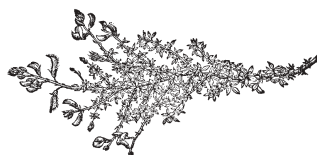
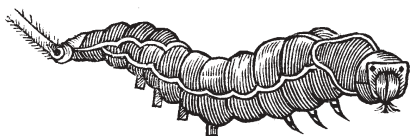
After a fine meal and lucid conversation, Bazzard and his four fathers will inveigle the PCs to assist the latter



Iucounu, the laughing magician

† This entry precedes the events described in *Cugel’s Saga*.

‡ This delightful spell enables conversation with fish.



with their paucity of limbs. Here are some of their suggestions, which should at least provide some amusement for the GM.[†]

- ⊕ They might replace the limbs with prosthetics. This could be accomplished by stealing the Iron Head (p117) or by persuading Flook with her knowledge of automata to assist (p98)
- ⊕ They could steal the body parts back from Iucounu, or perhaps even kill him. This is very likely to end in failure, and a duplication of Cugel's journey.
- ⊕ Go to Jabbernowl or Tabarant who may be able to use their knowledge of vat creatures to create new limbs and organs.[‡]

The Discine Choir

Bazzard has hit on a plan to win the Exposition of Marvels – to train his fish to sing in close harmony. Regrettably, he lacks the skill to do so and enlists the PCs' aid. If they agree to help him, he will pay them with the knowledge of one spell from his fathers' repertoire, or a day studying in the library.

Once they have agreed, his fathers render them minuscule, cast Untiring Nourishment on them and drop them into the aquarium.

The PCs will have to persuade the fish not to eat them, then coach them and help them select a good repertoire. Suitable inducements include bribery and flattery. The fish will consider bits of meat, live insects and bread, and they are impressed by any knowledge of their home in the Clantic Sea.

Piscine Choir

"Oh, the Clantic Sea! The green light permeates the rolling kelp."

Treat these creatures as a single entity for the purposes of Persuasion. They will form a tight shoal after each suggestion and discuss its merits, casting an occasional glance to the PCs.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) ~, Rebuff (Wary) 1.5-, Attack (Speed) 10 *against shrunken person*, Defense (Dodge) 10, Health 4, Athletic 7

A couple of hours' walk from Llaio, one reaches the Black Glass Bridge across the river Sune, which marks the eastern border of Almerly. Here the road forks, the Old Ferghaz Way follows the Sune though a countryside of small farms, their boundaries marked by mulgoon trees. The other fork runs along the Kang Kingdom March-way and down the valley of the River Twish.



Susheg

A few hours' brisk walk down the Sune from the glass bridge is the relatively new village of Susheg. The settlement is has the unique distinction of being a Sfereite colony. Sfere gradually evolved into a collection of large agricultural estates clustered round a handful of civic buildings. Produce from the estates, many of which are hamlets in their own right, was and still is, shipped down the river to Kaiin. Some generations ago, a proportion of the population came to espouse the philosophy of Entropic Abstention. They decided that Sfere was too disorganized, so emigrated en masse to found a new town in the valley of the Sune. Here they build rigidly geometric single story houses, all similar. They allotted themselves smallholdings of equal extent and fertility, necessarily widely scattered. In an attempt to maintain this order they instituted a constitution of absolute equality.

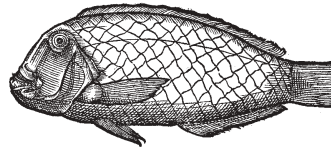
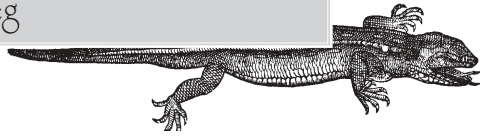
Each person capable of walking to a town meeting unassisted could vote on matters put before the populace by three elected delegates, one of who chairs the meetings and acts as Thrumpdelther. Each delegate was elected for a term of three months, so timed that each month a new delegate had to stand for election. The three Delegates go bareheaded and walk around in leg irons for the duration of their service. Children are encouraged to spit on them and throw clods of earth if the Delegates leave the hall where town meetings are held. Adults no longer throw

[†] Players will know that many of these schemes are doomed, of course.

[‡] Of course, it was Cugel who restored the four wizards' limbs, but GMs might still allow players to succeed if they allow deviation from the canon.



Susheg



stones, or at least not large ones. Originally, no one could be delegate twice in the same three-year period, but this stipulation has fallen into disuse.

All plans and projects, ranging from putting a new door on a house to breaking new lands for cultivation, had to be both agreed by the delegates and then passed by the town meeting. In spite of the inefficacy of this system, the citizens assume that every major service ought to be provided by the municipality. Hence, there is one large tavern, ENTROPY CONFOUNDED! selling one sort of ale, one sort of wine and provides well cooked but otherwise basic food. It houses guests in one of two communal dormitories, one for each gender. The municipality also manages the gynagora, which is staffed by citizens of the town on a strict rota. Clients are issued to a room without having any choice over whom they see there, although they can at least specify which sex entertains them.

This is perhaps an example of how the initial egalitarianism has been somewhat watered down over the years. Houses now show some slight differences, but the populace still tend to dress similarly in dark brown tunics, matching britches of whipcord with leather knee pads, and a hat of two tiers, made from off-cuts of the bright colored cloth that was normally reserved for nether garments and babies' swaddling bands. In private, the inhabitants flaunt their individuality to an extreme, rare even in the last days of the sun. Each house may look similar to its neighbors outside, but inside each is vastly different. Just as the inhabitants of Susheg dress almost identically yet each wears underclothing of outrageous cut and almost incandescent color, so their private houses are filled with trinkets from forgotten aeons and prints and hangings by long dead artists. No matter how ill-crafted or even hideous an artifact is, the collector knows that he can always sell it for reasonable money in Susheg.

The citizens buy their bright cloth, furnishings



and paints from Laish, who also trades in rush lights. Despite his being the sole source of color and variety in the town, the populace affects not to be aware of his activities. Instead they buy from him at his warehouse from dusk onwards, whispering through a hole, carved like a deodand's ear, in the door.

There is a small jetty that sticks out into the river where boats can be loaded. Produce is stored in a large warehouse, the only building in the township which isn't square or flat roofed. Just as Sfere ships much of its produce down river to Kaiin, Susheg tends to supply basic foodstuffs down river to Flath Foiry and Taun Tassel.

For the itinerant traveler, Susheg provides many opportunities for honest toil. There are barges to load with sacks of cobwheat or hogbean, the streets are swept daily and any traveler can have their name put on the rota to do so. At the end of a day's hard work one is assured to a satisfying meal of good plain food, followed by a comfortable bed in the communal dormitory. The traveler will sink into a sound sleep comforted by the knowledge that no one has insulted him by offering mere terces for the sweat of his brow.

Laish, clandestine purveyor of private consumables

"Stranger, I have a keak-headed spatula that would complement the skillets you bought from me last week."

The town's black marketer is a small, thin man with pencil moustache, swept back black hair, restless gray eyes.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 2-, Rebuff (Obtuse) 10, Attack (Finesse) 9, Defense (Vexatious) 5, Health 8, Appraisal 12, Scuttlebutt 12

Bukebas, local, unappreciated hedge wizard

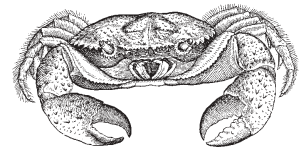
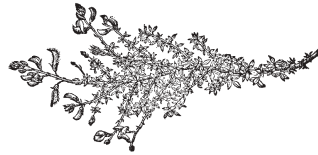
"Modesty and equality keep my magic circumspect."

The wizard is tall, gangling and bald. He affects a stoop to avoid attention.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 5, Rebuff (Wary) 5, Health 5, Magic (Daring) 6

Derish, the Thrumdelther

"Every man is elite in his own eyes. My task is to ensure that he does not become so to anyone else."



Derish dresses and comports himself with aggressive modesty. He is short, broad-shouldered and overweight, with brown eyes, a broad flat nose and short ginger hair. Unusually, Derish has held his office for four years.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 12, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 8, Attack (Strength) 14, Defense (Parry) 10, Health 10

Lalin, Derish's wife

"My husband's office keeps him away from me, to our mutual satisfaction."

In private, Lalin unpins her bun of dark red hair and it falls to her knees. Derish has only seen this happen once, while Laish is well acquainted with the sight. Lalin has dark amber eyes and heavily freckled pale skin.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 14, Rebuff (Wary) 10, Attack (Finesse) 3, Defense (Dodge) 3, Quick Fingers 10, Seduction 14

Ostentatious Behavior

It may be that the traveler is a low and mean-spirited individual, who craves terces. Even in Susheg, there are opportunities for this sort of enterprise. One is presented by the ambitions of a petty mage Bukebas. His craft, while not specifically forbidden in Susheg, is frowned upon and the current Thrumpdelther, Derish, is using his office to persecute Bukebas, accusing him of thaumaturgical ostentation. The wizard will not mention this when commissioning the adventurers. Instead, he will allege that Derish is jealous of Bukebas' small garden. Here he grows a very acceptable cabbage known as Bluberdie's Purple Ruin. Its excellence has inspired Derish to accuse Bukebas of elitism and has led him to demand that the cabbage plants be destroyed. Bukebas wants the party to paint his persecutor's house a bright color. If asked why, he will explain that it is a prank. In reality, he plans to counter-charge Derish with elitism and ostentation. Pigments and medium are available from Laish's secret warehouse. By coincidence, Derish's wife Lalin has taken Laish as a lover.

Once the party has acquired paint they still have to apply it. This cannot be done during the day or

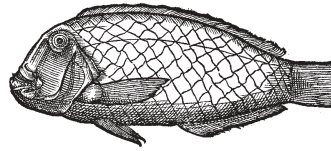
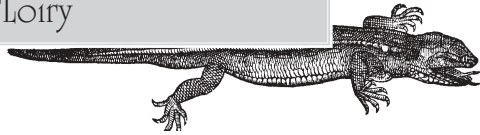
Derish would make some comment. Painting a single floored house should not be a difficult operation, although there are complications. During the night Lalin creeps out to keep a rendezvous with her paramour. He will arrive just after midnight and hide in an orchard across the road. As he keeps the building under observation, he will be more than a little put out by the adventurers' activity. He will assume that the work is being done at the behest of Derish and, if spotted and approached by the people he has mentally pigeonholed as workmen employed by Lalin's husband, he will flee. If cornered he will become belligerent and accuse Derish of blatant elitism and ostentation. Should the party reveal the truth, he will be vastly amused and will continue to wait for his lover. He will also inform them that Laish normally gives Derish a sleeping draught to ensure that he doesn't notice her absence. If the party claim they are working for Derish, he will set up a clamor and will summon all citizens to witness this crime. As Derish will convincingly deny ever having instructed the party to paint his house, it is likely that the party will find itself in trouble. The penalty would be a period spent in the gynagora as employees.

When Lalin does emerge from the house, she will be more than a little shocked by the activity, but will soon see her chance for a more permanent solution to her problems, deciding to abandon Derish. Laish will agree to this wholeheartedly and will suggest that she pack a few valuables for the trip. She will go back into the house to do this and will ask party members to help her collect some small but significantly valuable curios. Effectively, she is willing to pay them to help her pillage the house. There are many rather valuable trinkets and a character could soon emerge with a bundle worth 1000 terces as Derish has a good collection of 20th Aeon jade.

It is about this point that the final act of our domestic drama is played out. Derish, suspicious of his wife, did not drink his evening wine and is currently struggling to put his clothes on in the dark, so that he can pursue her and catch her and her paramour in compromising circumstances. Armed with a heavy steel poker, he will creep out of the marital chamber only to be confronted by



Flath FLoiry



strangers ransacking his house. It is not, at this point, the place of an unworthy writer of travelogues to enumerate all the possible permutations that could unfold. Needless to say Bukebas will not get involved. Derish has a very limited sense of humor, and his wife and Laish may well feel that they could win plaudits by appearing to have merely stumbled on a burglary by accident rather than try to explain to the assembled citizenry their part in the felony.



Flath Foiry

Downriver from Susheg lies the town of Flath Foiry, which is governed by the Aspirants, an elite group drawn from the citizenry. They are chosen from among the prosperous and well heeled who 'aspire' to serve their fellow citizens. They perform many minor public functions and their Convocation acts as a town council. They have two officers, a Superintendent of Morals, who serves for a five year term and a Deputy Presumptive, who is appointed as needed, holds authority during an interregnum and "when or if the Convocation deems it expedient."

Notable mainly for the presence of the INN OF FIVE FLAGS, the town has other lesser-known features. The reusing of buildings is a common practice: most of the houses seem to be of considerable antiquity, and many seem initially to have served other purposes. Most are in good condition. There is a busy quarry, sunk into an ancient palace. The workers split and break old pillars and statues and shape them into crude building blocks. Every so often, they will come across some artifact or curio. Apprentices from the local apothecaries extract bones from the pit. The commonest species appears to be a large carnivore, apparently related to the modern grue. Missen Sporlik owns the quarry. The town also accommodates the emporium of the good milliner Ghulinip.

Missen Sporlik, quarry owner

"Your tale has the ring of truth. It would be more convenient if you were lying."

The robust Sporlik reacts poorly to the criticism that his artisans do the minimum work necessary to dress the stone, insisting that the surviving features – usually noses, chins or navels – add character. If purchasers think to ask, he will agree to supply specific body parts to order.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 7, Rebuff (Wary) 0.5-, Attack (Finesse) 3, Defense (Misdirection) 2, Health 6, Appraisal 8, Craftsmanship 7, Perception 8, Scuttlebutt 3, Wherewithal 2

Resistances: Pettifoggery 0,

Ghulinip, milliner

"Your face and head are the wrong shape for a cloche. I suggest this bonnet and that veil."

Ghulinip was expelled from Taun Tassel by jealous rivals in the millinery trade for some crime, which most observers cannot even pretend to understand.[†] His specialty is women's hats. His detractors observe that he is inordinately fond of lace ruffles. The shop is an old converted tower, which was falling into ruin. It may well be all that is left of the town wall. Ghulinip lives upstairs, his stock is held downstairs and his shop itself is a sprawling extension that might once have been a stable.

Ratings: Persuade (Obfuscatory) 8, Rebuff (Obtuse) 0.5-, Attack (Cunning) 5, Defense (Misdirection) 4, Health 3, Appraisal 6, Athletics 4, Craftsmanship 6, Rebuff (Contrary) 8

Zaminda Grine Deputy Presumptive

"Begin your unlikely tales – we are not mooncalves and will see through your outlander tricks."

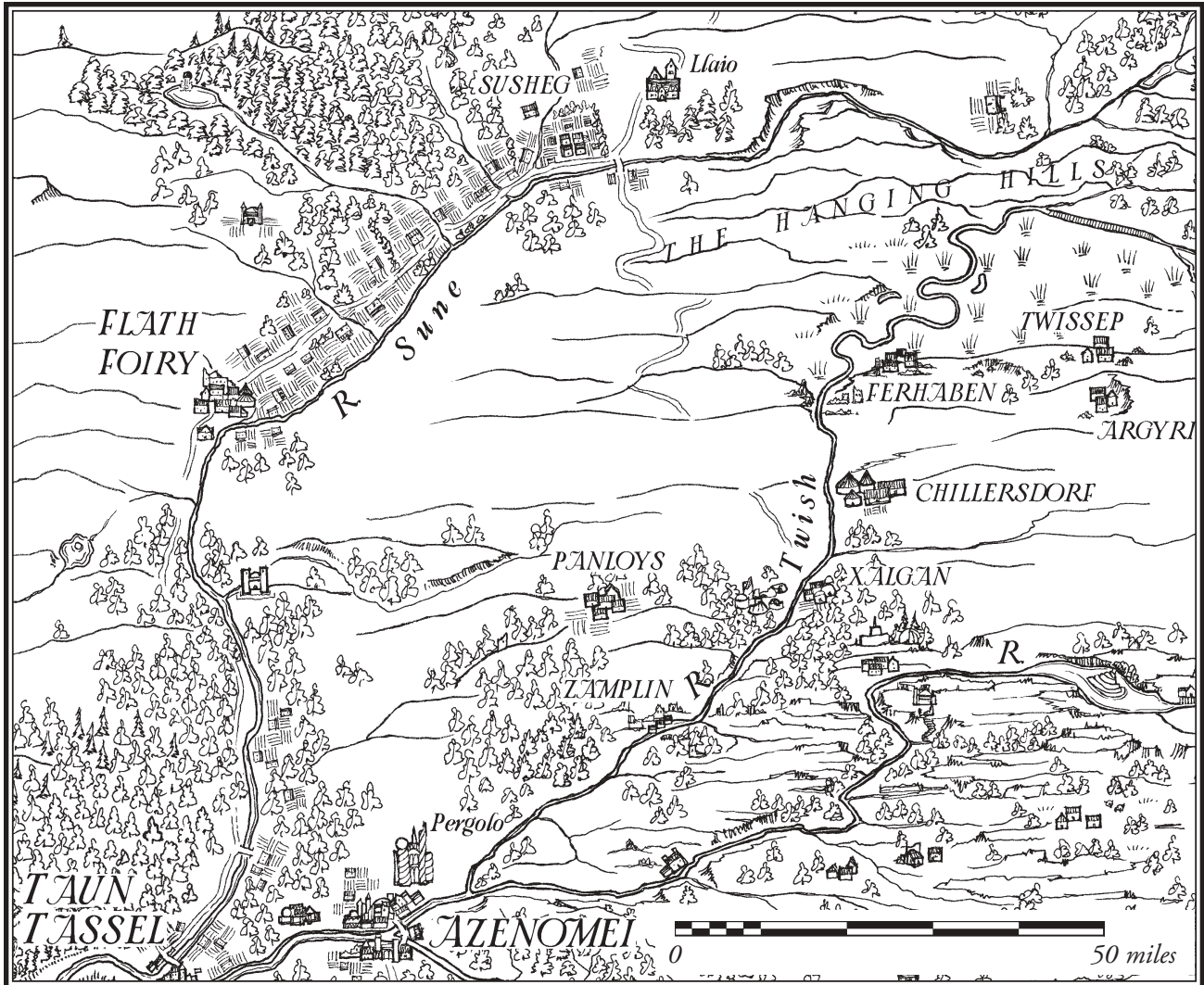
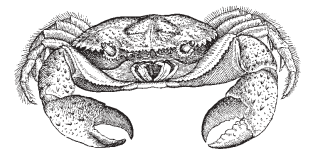
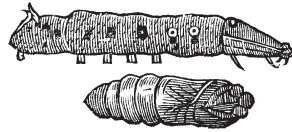
Zaminda is a well-formed woman of middle age. She is anxious to fulfil her civic duty – finding a new superior. Her robes of office consist of an all-in-one green cotton suit under diaphanous spider silk.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) -, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 1.5-, Attack (Finesse) 5, Defense (Misdirection) 6, Health 4, Appraisal 6, Athletics 3, Etiquette 8, Perception 7, Scuttlebutt 3, Stewardship 5

Brisothar, the missing Superintendent

"I am satisfied with the rewards of my office even though they are predominantly spiritual."

[†] It seems to have involved thread of an unacceptable gauge.



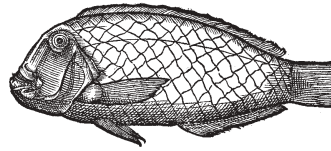
Brisothar is a true quixotic hero – active, brave and unintelligent. He is tall, strongly built and handsome, with thick dark hair and obsidian eyes.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 6, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 6, Attack (Strength) 16, Defense (Parry) 12, Health 10, Athletics 6, Perception 7

Possessions: Brisothar wandered off with the civic sword. The blade criticizes any wielder who fails to live up to its own lofty and unrealistic view of virtue. In combat, it will allow the user to spend Pure-Hearted Rebuff points as Attack points.

The Superintendent of Moral Exactitude

While there is much that an itinerant traveler can do to earn a crust in Flath Foiry, one important role they have is helping to choose the Superintendent of Moral Exactitude. The Superintendent is responsible for maintaining standards. When the town needs a new Superintendent, the Deputy Presumptive Zaminda Grine, will ask travelers to help them adjudicate, for which 'generous' out of pocket expenses are mentioned but no specific sum is discussed. In this particular instance, she will explain, the Superintendent has disappeared while in office but will not discuss the details.



GM: The previous Superintendent, Brisothar, was a rare instance of a worthy post-holder. Brisothar took to his office gleefully, out of some obscure ethical conviction. He was last seen heading off to the Great Da, the civic sword in hand, to attend to an incursion by deodands. If one of the PCs becomes Superintendent and the others remain to keep her company, Brisothar will return. At the GM's whim he might insist on fighting a duel to reclaim his post. Alternatively, he could resign in the new incumbent's favor, reasoning that it would be selfish of him to deny another the opportunity for spiritual growth. Naturally, he will assist her in the execution of her duties for the remainder of her term.

She will present Sporlik and Ghulinip as the aspirants and will stress that it is necessary for the Superintendent to be a person of impressive rectitude. It is well known that an honest man, who cannot tell a lie, will be impossible to lie to. So, the Conclave will pay the characters ten terces each to tell both Missen Sporlik and Ghulinip two stories of their travels. One may be the truth, the other must be a convincing falsehood.

Sporlik and Ghulinip will endeavor to give the impression that they wish to become the Superintendent of Moral Exactitude without actually saying as much.

The procedure is simple. Each party member tells two stories, one true[†] and one false. He then rolls to Persuade both Aspirants using the appropriate ability at a levy according to the perceived improbability of the tale. The players may, if they like spend points or even Wallop to persuade their audience that a particular story is fact. Each player takes his turn to tell the two tales to an audience composed of the entire population of the town with time to kill, and the two Aspirants. It is then a case of seeing who does best. The GM should note down a score for each adventurer. They get 3 points for each Aspirant who believed the lie, and 1 point if the Aspirant believed the truth. They should deduct 1 point if the Aspirant disbelieved the truth and three points if the Aspirant saw through the lie.

The good citizens of Flath Foiry assume that the best liar will have the highest score, the poorest the lowest score. The townsfolk stitch the character



True Apparel



In the Kang Kingdom, these garments, True Apparel, were much used in the rehabilitation of those prisoners lucky enough not to be shot from the muzzle of a punishment tube – some such tubes are still in use, at Cuirnif, although Duke Orbal's grandfather used the last of the propellant in celebration of his grandson's birth.

with the highest score into True Apparel, a tight-fitting knee-length coat, sewn all over with little bells. All the PCs then receive accommodation overnight at municipal expense at the Inn of Five Flags, and are treated to an excellent meal. The character with the lowest score is announced to the assembled populace as the Superintendent of Moral Exactitude. The people applaud her and demand that she be ushered to the Most Exclusive Suite of Office. This is a small house in the center of the town, adequate but not overly commodious. This sudden and unexpected appointment might come as a shock to the successful candidate.

It is when the new Superintendent is led into her new accommodation that the rules of the job are explained to her.

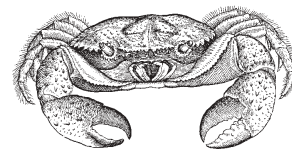
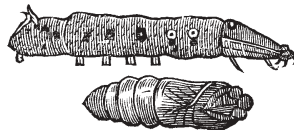
The Superintendent must be above reproach. So that she cannot flaunt her wealth, all her property is locked in the town vault. It will be given back when her five-year term of duty is over.

She will receive no salary, as this would place them under an obligation to the community that would prevent her from carrying out her duties. She will only wear the drab gray garments provided by the community, intended to instill humility.

Meals will be provided by the community, and served at a table outside his official residence house, whatever the weather. The meals will be such as to encourage the rest of the populace to emulate her frugal diet.

Should the town's environs be threatened by such creatures as deodands, erbs or grues, it is the duty of the Superintendent to sally forth and deal

[†] As the player is inventing these tales, both are obviously fictitious. The story the player presents as true for her character could be an account of a previous adventure, or an incident from the PC's past. This story, once known, might have ramifications: if, for example, it featured a daring theft from Kandive the Golden, then it would be reasonable to expect his thief-takers to act upon it, once they heard the report.



with the creature in an exemplary manner. By doing so, she demonstrates the virtues of courage and self-reliance to the inhabitants. As the official sword is missing, the new Superintendent must improvise.

At the end of the five-year term a sum of money will be provided for the retiring Superintendent, to be not more than 100 terces per year served. Naturally, the Superintendent is invited to reapply for the position and, even if she declines, might still serve another five-year term at public discretion.

Should the Superintendent decide to desert her post, she will develop a persistent stomach irritation so severe that she cannot eat. Anyone with a grasp of toxicology will observe that she has been poisoned and that, presumably, the remedy was being administered daily in Flath Foiry.



Prince of Ferghaz

A few hours' walk from Flath Foiry may be found the Prince of Ferghaz Inn, often shown on maps, but rarely in the correct place. The landlord Croidle resents this, on the curious grounds that, if they knew where his inn was, they would plan to break their journeys there, rather than just turning up. Such lack of consideration is vexing to his wife, Amantha, and his two sons, Gurdine and Baylude, and barmaids Pherinda and Lorcass, all of whom work hard to serve meals and drinks at their set times of day. Guests dine well, specialties are new bread and a stew seasoned with peppers and served with side dishes including sliced hoon tongues in a Fazola sauce. The Inn is named for its founder, Ganthold, the first Prince of Ferghaz, who made his winter quarters at this site his third pacification campaign. The building follows his command tent's outline exactly. Ganthold was a man of particular tastes and insisted on the correct times and rituals for everything.[†] The inn has been in continuous use and owned by the same family since the Prince's time. The proprietors have a love of history so strong that they refuse to amend the serving times that Ganthold preferred to accommodate paying customers. Breakfast may only be eaten for the hour

before and after dawn, lunch can only be the hour around midday, and supper must commence at sunset and end two hours later. At all other times, only light refreshments – pickled, hard-boiled eggs served on jaw-breaking salted biscuits and thin, acrid beer – are available. The staff will offer warmed milk or herbal infusions to the sick, but not otherwise.[‡]

Dot Boys

As a hoon's tongue is three feet long and sits, rolled up between rows of long, sharp teeth set in strong mobile jaws, it is absurd to think that this meat would be available sufficiently regularly to appear on a menu. PCs who make this observation will meet an amused glance. Croidle will conduct them to an outhouse, where he has a Cansasparan langule, a magical, fleshy hybrid of hoon and minuscule daobado, whose leaves are strikingly tongue-like. Between its branches, it has a sucking maw, ringed with small, functional teeth.

If their reaction is favorable, the landlord will offer them a short-term commission. The tree requires special nutrients, which are available locally, but at disproportionate inconvenience to his family and employees. The hoon-tree, like its animal relatives, craves people. Croidle has no intention of damaging his reputation, so cannot feed incidental customers to his plant. Luckily, he has established that mutton, wrapped in human hair, is a reasonable substitute. He requires a bucket-load of hair, which does not have to come from the same head. He will pay them fifty terces to gather it for him and they have three days to do so, during which they may stay at the inn. Unless they specifically ask, Croidle will not tell them that he will deduct their room and board from their pay.

Merrow grows along the roads near Flath Foiry. More commonly seen north of the Falling Wall, this is the southern extent of its range. This plant is occasionally fed to draught animals by mistake, mixed in with other cut fodder. Within hours of eating it, pack beasts to hallucinate,[§] then collapse with symptoms so similar to Rhialto's *Green Turmoil* that dilettantes of the magical arts might even consider them ensorcelled.

[†] It was just this fastidiousness that doomed his military adventures. Although an enthusiastic soldier, he was entirely predictable and his enemies found him easy to avoid.

[‡] Ganthold felt that regular eating times led to self-assurance and good health. He also wanted to discourage his soldiers from eating while on guard or marching. The uniform he designed, entirely without pockets, assisted this by offering nowhere to conceal tidbits.

[§] Mermelants report that they see vistas of fluffy white bellies, rising from lakes of beer.

The Sune Plain



Treatment involves dosing the animal with an infusion of milwig leaves with a tablespoon of zasilanke powder. (The latter is a useful specific for mange and raig-mite so is normally carried by most caravan masters.) Within the hour, the collapsed beast might return to its feet, but it will be a day before it is fit to travel. Pack beasts find

merrow very pleasant and soon come to prefer it to all other foodstuffs. Unfortunately, they starve to death on a diet of it.

Tender Loving Care

The PCs' mermelant[†] becomes fond of merrow and is soon an indolent, ill-groomed excuse for a pack beast. The adventurers should both effect a cure and ensure that their animal never again eats the plant. They can expect to cope with bad temper, self-pity, lassitude, disinterest in beer and indifference to being rubbed on the belly. In time and with the proper support and encouragement, the mermelant will recover.

For the purposes of this vignette, the beast in question Rebuffs with Contrary 1.5 ~.



The Sune Plain

The rest of the trip to Taun Tassel, whether on the Sune or along the Old Ferghaz Way is perilous for the lone traveler. The Great Da is to the west. It is bleak country, home of half-men and worse. For those who cling to the road and travel in strong parties, the charm of protection still has some lingering power, but many prefer to travel by boat down the Sune. Ironically, once one gets south of the manse of the Diabolist Shruë, the east bank of the Sune is the more hospitable for all that the old road follows the west bank.



Three days from the Prince of Ferghaz Inn, one can cross the river by a bridge suspended from fine silvery cables. On the other side, there are scattered small farms and nameless hamlets that cover the fertile plain between Scaum and Sune. A day from the bridge, the road brings the traveler to Taun Tassel.

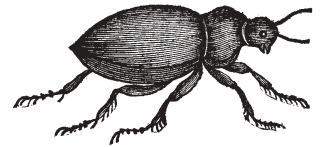
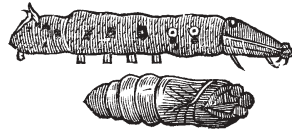
The inhabitants of this area tend to wear clothes of somber hue and very plain cut, perhaps in reaction to the excesses of Taun Tassel. They are also known for their enthusiastic adherence to the law of equivalencies. While they are not unfriendly, they are judgmental: every action is weighed and balance is actively striven for. So should the traveler stop for a glass of milk or advice on the road, an invoice for the precise amount will be tendered. However should a visitor wish one of the inhabitants a casual good day as he chances to pass, the inhabitant will respond with a similar level of good wishes, no more, no less.

The inhabitants adhere to the *Comprehensive Equivalences* (CE), a commonly held list of prices, weights and measures, both for authentic trade items and for their notional equivalents (horseradish for mustard, for example). Although many of these pairings are not good, they were entered in the CE by people who knew better than their sorry descendants, and must have made sense at the time, so are better than anything that could be compiled currently. The CE resides in a locked box in the Mercantile Repository (for which see *The New Equivalences*, below), which lies in an ancient yet prosperous farmstead a half-days travel north of Taun Tassel. The local people have true copies of the entire book. These are burned once a year, and new copies made. PCs will note that the locally held copies are charcoal rubbings of an embossed original.

Any deviation from the CE is a capital offense, the sentence being death by stoning. When a stranger



[†] GM: if no mermelant retains the services of a group of PCs, then you should arrange for one to do so.



attempts to dicker, the locals assume that she is mad, or that they misheard, and will give her another chance to consult the CE and tender the correct sum. Any further overtures will prompt disgusted snorts and a hue and cry for the community to assemble. When they do, the malefactor is informed of her crime and how close she came to death. Attempting to bargain is also a serious offense, punishable by the confiscation of all goods and chattels beyond the minimum necessary to pursue the offender's current trade.[†] The sentence is executed immediately.

The New Equivalences

Onescko, a traveler in tiles of interesting hues from Flath Foiry, feels that he knows the realities of trade better than the Plainsfolk. He commissions the PCs to make the appropriate adjustment to the *Comprehensive Equivalences*, which is held in the MERCANTILE REPOSITORY.

The Repository is a Kang era granary that still retains the original pierced stone floor. The strongroom is a lead-lined stone chamber, nine feet on each side, welded shut with the CE inside it. The original true copy of the CE (which says "First Original Copy" on the cover) sits on top of the strong room. It is a book of heavy, embossed brass pages.

Naturally, there is a guard, a small, bored demon called Tanfastin. He will only allow people who wish to copy the CE to enter, and will not believe that anyone with neither charcoal nor paper has good intentions. If such people do not leave, he will attempt to help them make a copy by grasping them and forcing their foreheads down onto the book, so that the text makes a dent.

Should they defeat Tanfastin, he will depart for the sub-hell of Daczta, taking the First Original Copy with him. If they open the strongroom, (presumably, they will have the means to re-weld the seal) they will find that the CE volume has dried out entirely. If touched, it turns to dust.

The annual burning ceremony takes place a few days after Onescko hires the PCs. Enterprising PCs who can write quickly may choose to compose their own version of the book.

Onescko, a traveler in tiles

"This is a rare chance to earn a substantial reward from limited effort."

Onescko trades in tiles extracted from a giant mosaic he has discovered just north of Flath Foiry in ruins from the Jenggonnic period. The CE lists tiles as 'Unwarranted Fancies', and assigns them a lower price than Onescko deems apt.

Onescko wears a beaded cotton blouse and a short leather skirt over leggings of tanned hide.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) ~, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 0.75~, Attack (Speed) 6, Defense (Vexation) 7, Health 6, Appraisal 8, Athletics 3, Concealment 5, Craftsmanship 3, Engineering 6, Perception 8, Stewardship 4, Wherewithal 3

Tanfastin a demon of the sub-hell of Daczta

"Well, get scribbling then. Then leave. Why not just leave?"

He fights with a back-curved ax.

Ratings: Rebuff (Lawyerly) 8, Attack (Strength) 12, Defense (Parry) 8, Health 4.

Resists magic at 8, but has no spells of his own.



[†] As assessed by the locals, so an itinerant adventurer would be allowed to retain her clothes and shoes.



The River Twish

In which we see that opportunities abound in unusual places

Ouisiak

Aside from abandoned crofts and bothies, the easternmost settlement on the Twish is Ouisiak. This small community of thirty houses, an inn, a watchtower and a smithy, stands on low hill, rising from a shallow wide, marshy lake. The hill is gentle on one side and steep on the other, where a noticeable current moves through the water. The inhabitants practice an intensive horticulture on artificial mounds of dredged lake mud, held in place by weeping stave-yews. Oddly, few people are to be seen working the land by light of day, but at night, glowing lights illuminate people tending their gardens.

Access to the village is by punt: travelers call out from the lake-shore and a boat, with a crew of two, comes to meet them: or by stepping -stones. The second method is, obviously less than ideal, except in summer.

The inn, the MOTHER'S LOVE, doubles as a shop, and offers a fine selection of fresh or preserved fruits and vegetables, fish, insect eggs, sliced, deep-fried marsh scum and robust, if slightly musty herbal liquors. The landlord imports wine and beer, but distills his own aquavit.

The residents weave jute and linen fabric, which

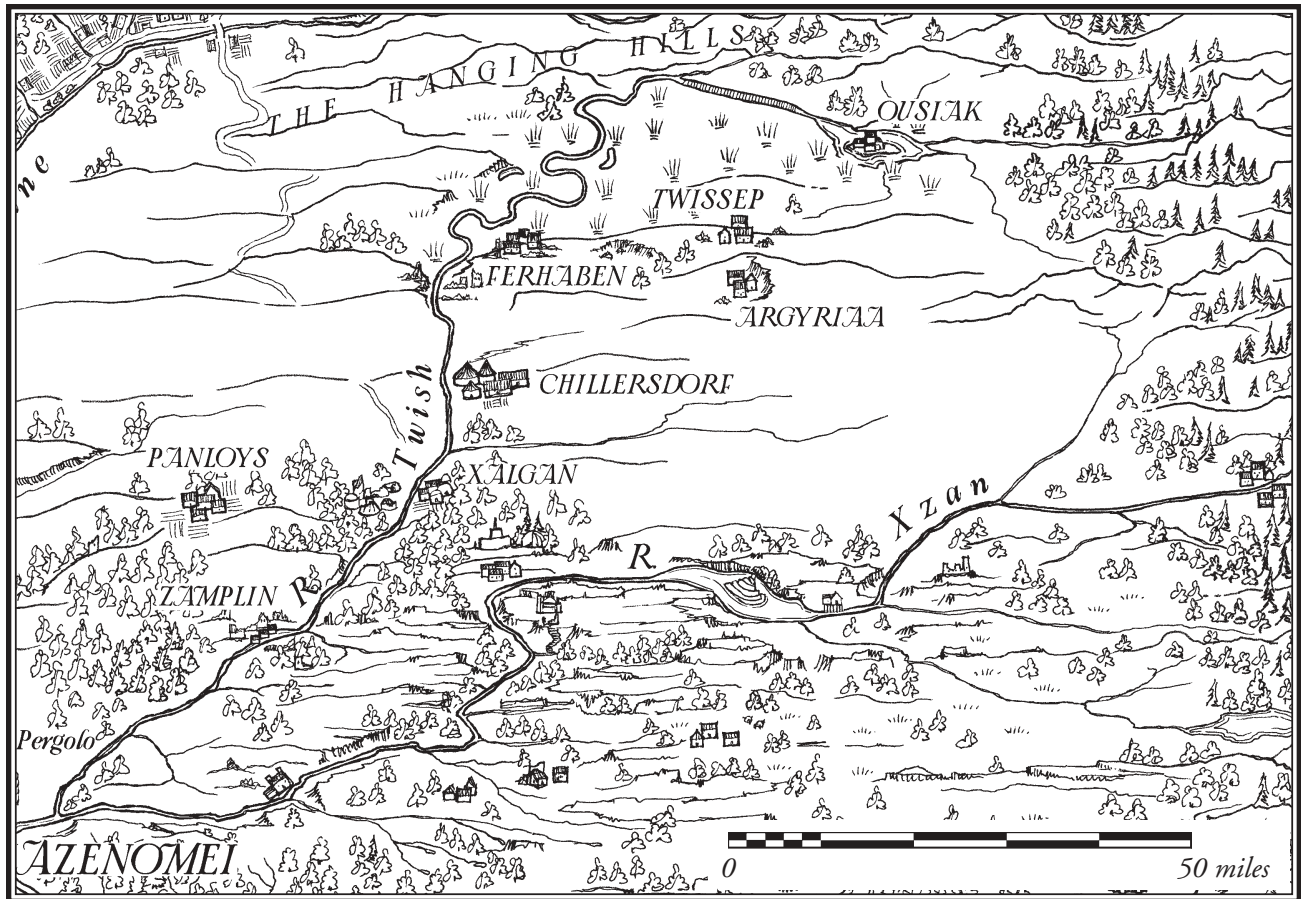
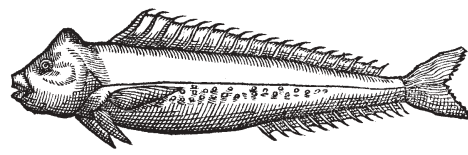
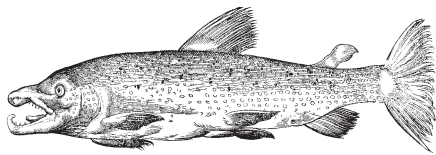
they dye yellow, brown or blue. They also manufacture bug-lamps, translucent gourds filled with angry fireflies. When agitated they buzz around, emitting a glow as bright as five candles. The price of all their goods and services is a matter for case-by-case negotiation and the landlord, Falben, regards disinclination to haggle as a sign of intellectual and social incapacity. On those occasions when Falben is asleep, his daughter Shezirle attends to the business. She is less inclined to dicker, but tends to set, and keep to, higher prices.

Local fashions incline to knee length culottes or skirts, vests and blouses, predominantly of local manufacture, and brightly embroidered with cornucopia and intertwined floral motifs. The villagers wear reed-soled slippers and, an oddity: a thick, leather stock, stitched around the neck and difficult to remove. Whatever their sex, age and apparent physical prowess, the residents never go about alone by day and always carry broad, saw-backed dirks, scabbarded at their belts.

Falben, landlord

"Come, madam, your companion is clearly a dolt, but you are a lady with an eye for a bargain."

Falben is a middle-aged man, of medium height



and build, with thinning red hair and gray eyes. He wears a waxed, mustard, jute apron over his blue culottes and cream shirt.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 10, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 8, Attack (Cunning) 6, Defense (Vexation) 6, Health 3, Scuttlebutt 10, Stewardship 4

Shezirle, landlord's daughter

"Three terces for room and simple fare. Meat and wine will cost a further terce each, as will newly laundered sheets."

Shezirle tucks her hair collar-length dark red hair into a green beret while she works. She usually wears a skirt and blouse of un-dyed linen, under an embroidered green vest.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 10, Rebuff (Penetrating) 10, Attack (Finesse) 4, Defense (Dodge) 4, Health 5, Scuttlebutt 4, Stewardship 10

Casdar and Lupale Stwane, boatmen

"Why yes, we will punt you. A terce each. If you die it's your own fault and our mother keeps all the fish."

Casdar and Lupale are young men, perhaps sixteen and seventeen years old. They have dirty blond hair, and brown eyes. They wear serviceable gray britches and red shirts.

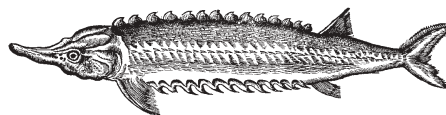
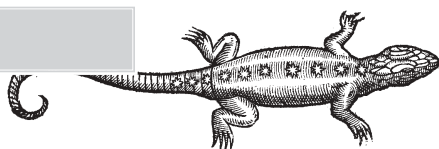
Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 4, Rebuff (Contrary) 4, Attack (Strength) 6, Defense (Surefooted) 6, Health, 6

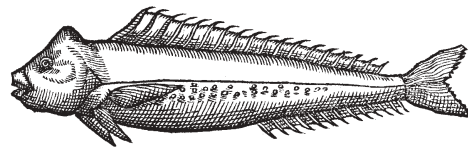
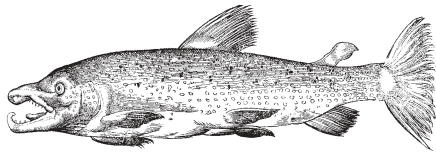
The Head Taker, a monster

"Please don't struggle. I will make much better use of your thoughts than you would."

In life, Faddar Jalgash was a depraved cannibal wizard. In death, he is The Head Taker, an emaciated ghoul with mean, dark, oily flesh clinging to his bones. He wears the remains of the purple velvet robe he was buried in.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 6, Rebuff





(Penetrating) 6, Attack (Ferocity) 10, Defense (Dodge) 10, Health 4, Pedantry 12, Perception 10, Stealth 16, Magic (Insightful) 4 *was 20 when he was alive.*

Spells: The Astounding Oral Projection, Felojun's Second Hypnotic Spell, The Morbid Recollections of Faddar Jalgash.



The Morbid Recollections of Faddar Jalgash

Range: Self

Duration: Feat

Difficulty: Simple

This spell enables the magician to access the last day's memories of a specific dead creature. The caster takes a freshly severed head, and trepans it. He then pounds narcotic herbs into the brain, adds alcohol and stirs it into a thick posset, while uttering the right incantations. The caster then drinks the liquid and experiences the victim's last day's worth of thoughts and memories. The cup will provide similar memories every time its manufacturer drinks wine from it, but these will attenuate to a slight impression, perhaps of bitterness, surprise or of regret.



The Head Taker

Within living memory, the hill sloped smoothly down to the river, and the village covered it. Following a severe flood, half of the mound slid into the water, damming the stream and forming the lake. The villagers adapted as best they could. About this time, the Head Taker first struck.

Unless they are, by chance, wearing cravats or similar neckwear, visitors to Ouisiak, attract the attention of local children, who dance around them, singing

*'Lizvet Honi, alone in bed,
The Stalker came and stole his head,
The Taker strikes by light of day,
You'll be his cup if he comes your way.'*

If asked to explain the song, they will run away. Any adult they approach will refer them to Falben or Shezirle. PCs who succeed in a Perception roll will notice that the locals rub their neck stocks reflexively, while looking at their bare-necked visitors with a combination of profound regret and

guilty relief.

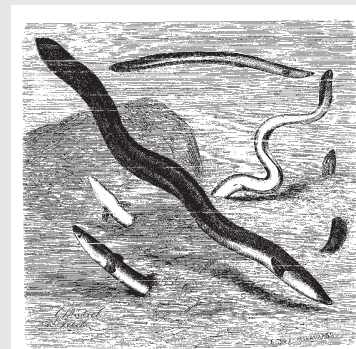
Either the publican or his daughter will explain that the village is cursed. People going out alone seldom return, Falben's wife among them. Search parties find their headless bodies lying in the marsh. Decapitated travelers float by in the current, or fetch up on a dike, after a storm, sometimes with empty wineskins. Understandably, a taboo against daytime solitude has developed. Even Falben himself is reluctant to go about alone; he retains two large and taciturn valets who accompany him everywhere, even standing outside his lock-bed. Shezirle is attractive, so is attended by local bravos. If the travelers show an interest in her, she will ask them to deputize for her usual admirers. This will lead to some bad feeling and, perhaps to a corrective encounter behind a shed.

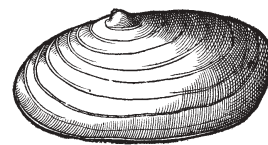
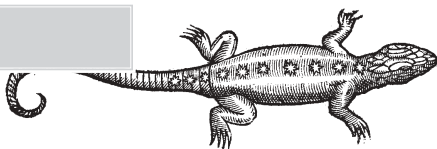
If they ask, the PCs will learn that the neck stocks are merely symbolic, and serve to remind the residents that there is danger out in the marsh.

Should the party offer to investigate the curse, or if the Head Taker thins out their numbers (if the adventurers camp by the lake, he will attack their guard at dawn – if they are all asleep, he will leave them undisturbed – he much prefers waking thoughts to dreams) and they decide to seek revenge, the villagers will help them, with reservations. Most will decline to join them on the search, but siblings Casdar and Lupale Stwane will offer to punt them around the marsh.

The brothers stand at either end of their boat, using very long, broad-tipped spears, butt spike downwards, to pole it along. Occasionally, one of them will invert his spear and thrust it into the water, to impale a large eel, which he stuffs in a sack at his feet.

Unless they have a direction in mind, the





searchers will bob about in the marsh until it gets dark, then return to the hill. If the PCs decide to investigate the Twish's inlet to the lake, they might notice the keystone of a submerged arch, under the roots of a whipping mangrove. This is the entrance to a submerged crypt, where, in ancient times, murderous but superstitious apprentices put to rest the desiccated body of their mentor, a depraved wizard. The crypt itself is flooded to a depth of five feet and the entrance is entirely underwater. Only the tops of a burst-open sarcophagus and the proprietary altar are dry. There is light inside, provided by a bug lamp.

The doorway is wide enough for only one person at a time and, unless the GM decides that the stalker is elsewhere (or if the PCs think to lay bait for him outside the lair), entering by daylight will provoke an attack in the dark, while the PC is underwater.

If they go in at night, they will find the Head Taker squatted among severed, trepanned heads, some bone, some with rotting flesh still clinging to them, muttering to himself and pounding a pestle – a thigh bone apparently – into an evacuated brain case. A long, hook-bladed filch sits beside him and a skinner's knife hangs from a peg on the far wall.

The first person through has the element of surprise, otherwise, there might be a battle royal between the cornered monster and his hunters. Should the adventurers think of it, there is some scope for negotiation with the creature, who would prove willing to move to a more populous region. In return for their assistance, he will teach them his *Morbid Recollections*.

If asked, the Head Taker will explain that he is frightened of the dark, so goes about in daylight. In no circumstances will he volunteer the information that he is readily combustible, although PCs might notice that he flinches away from naked flames and has an oily cast to his skin. If the PCs are actively polite and accommodating, he will teach them the spells he can encompass and will state that he knows *Phalajun's Perfection of Manners*, "a most serviceable spell, suitable for people of substance, like yourselves."

For the Head Taker's rating see p130.

The Cascades

From Ouisiak the Twish flows over a series of wide, low, stony ridges, for seventeen miles. These outcrops are all seven yards thick and fifty-six yards long, and are one hundred and three yards apart. They are clearly artificial. A narrow path of obvious antiquity and paved with tessellated stones, runs to either side of the river. No matter what the season or the height of the river, the water always laps against the path, but never floods it.

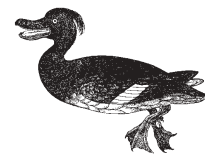
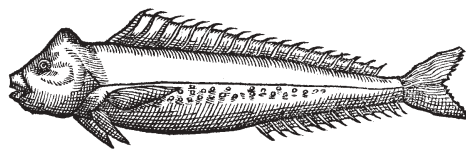
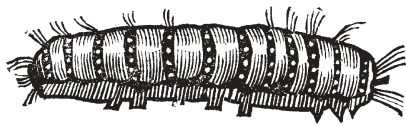
The Cascades are the last relic of a 17th Aeon attempt to create an ascent to the Overworld. Turbole the Mighty, who some believe to have founded Grand Motholam, or at least to have amended the *General Universal History* to that effect, reasoned that a mystical canal, complete with locks and a tow-path, could secure him great and eternal power. Amused sandestins did the actual work. The otherworldly nature of the Cascades is not immediately apparent, although travelers who take the time to study the masonry might observe that the pavement is of tessellating octagons. Close inspection of the outcrops will show that they are constructed from long, octagonal prisms, a yard across and standing vertically, all of which fit together perfectly. They glow when touched. Any who choose to dive into the water will find that slime and algae do not grow on the outcrops.

South of the Cascades, the Twish turns sharply to the south and flows in a generous meander before resuming its westward course. Here its valley widens to accommodate a marsh, infested with hoons. Divers in the oxbows and meres occasionally find the drowned bodies of earlier travelers, whose gold and gems have survived long immersion.

Ferhaben†

Below the marsh, the river deepens and the land on the left bank rises slightly. Here stands the village of Ferhaben, the upper limit of navigation on the Twish. Perhaps a thousand years ago, it was a booming mining town. Now it is a village of twenty houses, sitting in the middle of a collection of ruins. There are two smaller hamlets, Twisep and Argyriaa, both about twenty miles further east. No one works the mines

† Known to pedants of the Irascible Symposium as "Ironport". See *The Excellent Prismatic Pray 2*, for the source of ziosite crystals.



anymore, but scavengers do pick through the spoil heaps and salvage metal from the pithead gear. About once a decade, someone finds a new seam and everybody gets briefly excited, but who is going to dig and delve when the sun could go out before the mine becomes profitable? This attitude has prevailed for several lifetimes: travelers regularly find the remains of old mines, lost roads or overgrown spoil heaps.

For all their reluctance to do any mining, the populace of Ferhaben and the two villages still regard themselves as miners. All, male or female, wear padded hats, which would protect their scalps should they bang their heads on low, rock roofs. The men have leather kneepads sewn into their voluminous britches, while the women have leather shoulder pads on their blouses. These would stop ropes chaffing were they to pull ore carts.

Mereina's Last Servant

The miners always examine visitors closely. Should any women come to the area wearing trousers or a man sport a garment with shoulder pads, the locals will find them ridiculous and will tease them mercilessly. Alert PCs will notice that locals refer to them by their perceived gender "Ooh, look at her" or "comb your beard out, miss?" This lack of esteem means that PCs will interact at a levy of 1. As it is unlikely that PCs will simply happen to be wearing the wrong clothes, GMs may want them to meet Rugande, a widely traveled practical joker, who typically poses as an itinerant trader.

Rugande serves Mereina, a "capricious and almost forgotten goddess," who blessed him with life for as long as he performs one practical joke a day. With his two mermelants, he wanders upstream of Azenomei performing random acts of mischief. Thief takers from Taun Tassel once required him to explain himself and he volunteered that the sun could go out at any time and he, at least, would die smiling.

The PCs will find Rugande sitting by the roadside, cooking himself a thin gruel and arguing with his mermelants. The two beasts are shills, who assist him by whining and complaining that he is too useless a trader to keep them well supplied with beer. As a good trader, Rugande will try to leave the PCs with the impression that they got the best of the deal.

Anyone who kills Rugande will attract Mereina's enmity. The loss of her sole remaining human worshipper will leave her only one sanction, to haunt the killer's reflection. Whenever Rugande's killer looks in a mirror, Mereina will cloud his vision so that, although he thinks he looks presentable, he is, in fact, extremely badly turned out.

Rugande, prankster

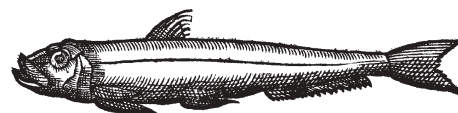
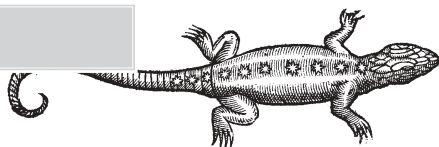
"I can assure you that my motives are pure and my merchandise exceptional."

Rugande wears threadbare traveling clothes; a dark blue frock coat with (readily detached) shoulder boards, a tall, black, bicorn hat, brown britches and worn black boots.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 8, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 12, Attack (Caution) 6, Defense (Vexation) 10, Health 5, Wherewithal 5, Scuttlebutt 5, Gambling 7 Magic 0

Possessions: an assortment of garments, including hoon-colored "camouflaged" scarves, leather pads, trousers and hats with even numbers points, lappets or tiers. These clothes are all inappropriate attire somewhere; PCs who wear them are sure to cause amazement, incredulity, ridicule or outrage as they travel the valley. His other trade goods include a judge's gavel from Grand Motholam, which Rugande will insist is a contemporary roach-hammer; and what he describes as a "game of strategy, from the Last Kingdom;" a small leather bag holding a circular silken cloth, decorated with concentric blue and red circles and twenty-four white stone blocks which might once have been inscribed 'Knights of Canopus' and 'War-Wagons', although the markings have faded with age





The main source of wealth for the inhabitants are the ziosite crystals which they find in many of the waste tips. These are graded carefully by color and purity, before being gently wrapped and crated for shipment down river. They are much sought by many of the mages of the lower Scaum for the way they enhance certain thaumaturgical processes. Of special importance are those of a rosy hue, which are especially valued for their focusing abilities. Many a vat creature's matrix has been stored on these stones. Good rose crystal is worth its weight in terces. More ordinary stones are worth perhaps a fifth of that.

While the decline of organized mining contributed to the fall in the population, a far more important cause is the population's propensity for vendetta and feud. The inhabitants of Ferhaben, Twissep and Argyriaa no longer converse with each other. Indeed there is a tradition of secret murder, many a man going out to search for new unplundered spoil heaps has disappeared and not even a body has been found. It is only at the two Crystal Fairs, one in Spring, the other in Autumn, that a truce prevails and men of all three villages collect together at the Crystal-field just upstream of Ferhaben. It is here that they sell their finds and peddlers and traders from down river open booths for six days to proffer everything from needles and salt to sulfur, herbal medicines and fine wine. Most sensible people will not leave the fair ground. Even during the truce, anyone wandering off is at grave risk of being robbed and murdered.

A potentially difficult situation is made worse by the fact that each village is dominated by one family, the Tok family in Ferhaben, the Radnark family in Twissep and the Mirchkode family in Argyriaa. These feuds are long established, so these families are very inbred. Toks tend to be tall, wiry individuals with pronounced facial features. The Radnark family is traditionally thickset, even squat. They seem to have no necks. The Mirchkode are less inbred than the others are – they have a tradition of transporting their own crystal down river rather than just selling it to middlemen at the fairs, many have fetched spouses back. They still have far more people with red hair than might be expected.

When setting out into the wilds to look for old spoil heaps, the men arm themselves. Every adult

carries a knife with a blade over an ell long, even at the Crystal Fair. Out of town, they will also carry muskets.[†] The three villages still manufacture (more accurately, “concoct” or just “mix up”) and use large quantities of black powder. The area is also troubled by numbers of unusual hoon;[‡] so much so that anyone lurking in the undergrowth wearing hoon-colored clothing will be shot at as a reasonable precaution. While it is generally accepted that it takes a musket ball to down a hoon, many men also carry a pistol in their waist sashes. These pistols are heavy weapons loaded with a fierce charge of powder and a mixture of shot and miscellaneous sharp metal fragments. (Experienced hoon slayers prefer to insert a piece of burning string into the touch-hole and throw the pistol at the target.) In the unlikely circumstance that this fails to stop the beast, the pistol, reversed, will serve as a club.

Crystals

Azvan the Astronomer[§] has discovered that attuning ziosite crystals to the fourth stellar chromatic will dampen the effect beating on of the *Gong of His Life*. He contacts the PCs mystically, perhaps by projecting his face into a reflecting pool on a star-lit night.

Azvan has divined that Chazim Radnark of Twissep has found a lode of extremely fine rose crystal. This is actually in the native rock, rather than in a spoil heap, and the crystals are much larger than usual. He is expected to be at the Crystal Fair with his wares.

The Crystal Fair attracts traders from as far afield as Azenomei. Regular attendees include:

Lank the Bagman, a peddler

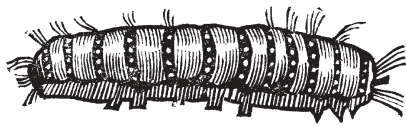
“...less than the price of a set of cheap lead sphincter clasps and you try to beat me down lower?”

Lank has spindly arms and legs, a thin, angular body and a long, sharp face. His green and red clothes are threadbare and stained. He travels the roads with a pack on his back selling fine needles, thread of thrice-spun silk, pendants carved from grues' neck bones, small packets of rare spices, and rings of great antiquity, robbed years ago from a long-forgotten tomb.

[†] These weapons are very unreliable, as they are made by crimping shut one end of a pipe salvaged from pumping gear. Carrying one is a sign of reckless courage; in old times, the villagers demonstrated similar élan by refusing to bother with pit props.

[‡] Seekers after knowledge are referred to *Tooth, Talon and Pinion* for elucidation of the adjective “unusual,” particularly its usage in the hoon context.

[§] Readers will, of course remember him from *Mazirian the Magician*; his details are given in *Turjan's Tome*.



Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 2~, Rebuff (Contrary) 1~, Attack (Ferocity) 8, Defense (Vexations) 5, Health 5, Appraisal 8

Drope Sudaff, a wine merchant

"I say nothing, wine such as this speaks for itself. At the moment I hear three crates of fine wine pleading with me to turn you away, as they could not bear to be drunk by one as miserly as yourself."

Drope regularly makes the three to five day journey by boat along the Twish from Azenomei. He dresses like a sea captain, in a fine tailed coat, transverse bicorn and high leather boots. He sells a fine range of wine, even some of the less prestigious Tankilvats.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 2~, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 1~, Attack (Cunning) 8, Defense (Dodge) 8, Health 6, Appraisal 10, Pedantry (Wine) 6

Sedarbras, a merchant who sells

☞ VIRTUALLY EVERYTHING ☞

"If it isn't to hand, a small deposit will ensure that I fetch it next trip."

Sedarbras has oiled, curled moustaches and a bald head, tattooed like fish scales. He is sturdy and compact, with fair skin and green eyes. He displays pots and pans, glassware from the 18th Aeon, pure sulfur, long, Cunningly engraved knives, pendant earrings of delicate filigree and fine white flour.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 2~, Rebuff (Obtuse) 0.5~, Attack (Strength) 5, Defense (Intuition) 5, Health 4, Appraisal 8

Branwe, a merchant who deals in fine fabrics

"See how this allows my natural beauty to shine through! You need it less than I do, but it is yours for a trifle."

Branwe has black hair and eyes and pale, almost translucent skin. She wears pastels and pale furs.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 2~, Rebuff (Penetrating) 1~, Attack (Speed) 4, Defense (Misdirection) 6, Health 5, Appraisal 8, Etiquette 6

Seebor, a merchant who buys crystal

"What do I offer? Why, nothing but terces, softly glinting gold terces! Wonder at their delicate beauty,

glory in their antiquity, ponder the messages hidden in the heads of long dead rulers stamped upon them! Come, let me press upon you an abundance of my beautiful terces for your hard-won crystal."

Seebor enjoys the exclusive patronage of some of Almerý's finest wizards. He is tall, thin and saturnine. He stands on a battered chest when he conducts business. He wears good quality, somber clothes – a gray suede campaign coat and ankle boots, moleskin trousers and vest, a dove gray shirt and a modest two-tiered, burgundy hat. His right coat pocket seems to be bottomless – he drops things (money, merchandise) into it and can draw whatever he calls for out of it.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 3~, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 2~, Attack (Caution) 5, Defense (Dodge) 7, Appraisal 10, Pedantry (Crystals) 15

Krovitz, a disaffected Overworld entity in a box

"Hello, is anybody there? It is dark in here and I am too small to reach the keyhole. Please help me."

Seebor's chest contains Krovitz, a demon whose purpose is to open and close the pocket infinity where Seebor keeps his money, stock and supplies. The Almerý Arch-Magicians procured and imprisoned the creature so that Seebor could trade with them from a position of mutual trust. No one except Krovitz may access the infinity, and only when he is securely locked up in the chest.

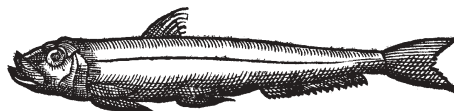
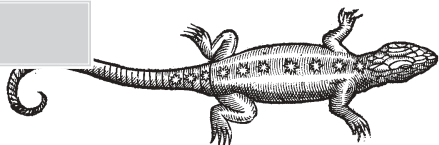
Seebor communicates with Krovitz by reaching into his pocket and commanding the demon, either to place whatever is in the merchant's hand in the infinity, or by calling for an item that he knows is in storage. Seebor must be on the chest for his pocket to connect with it.

Perceptive adventurers may hear the chest muttering to itself. If they investigate, a sweet little voice will ask them to open the box and let it see the world. Should the PCs oblige, then Krovitz, a small creature with a chicken's feet and body, but a lemur's head and arms and a snow leopard's tail, will bow gracefully and leave. There will then be the "pop" of a private infinity winking out of existence. Seebor and his patron wizards will not take this well.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 12, Rebuff (Obtuse) 16



Ferhaben



Fusc Radnark, matriarch

"You have the look of a Mirchkode. Or is it a Tok?"

Chazim's wife is a suspicious, bitter woman. She is strong and work-worn, with salt and pepper hair, hard blue eyes, a lined, tanned face and big hands.

Ratings: Rebuff (Wary) 8, Persuade (Forthright) 8, Attack (Strength) 8, Defense (Parry) 8, Health 6, Perception 10

Where is Chazim?

The one person travelers will not meet at the fair will be Chazim Radnark.[†] Should they ask other traders, Seebor knows him and is surprised not to see him there as he had been promised a consignment of fine crystal. The only other trader who is any help is Lank the Bagman, who has dealt with Chazim and even knows where he lives. Any Radnark will know him and will admit to being worried by his absence, ask a Tok or Mirchkode and they will simply spit and say that they assume he is dead and trust that any friends of his join him soon.

After two days at the fair with no sign of Chazim Radnark, Seebor will contact the party. He was approached by a woman he did not know, a Tok by the look of her, who said that Chazim was dead and that Seebor ought to buy elsewhere. Seebor makes the party an offer. He will pay them twenty terces to make inquiries at Chazim's home, a day away. Should they bring Chazim back, he will pay them a further two hundred terces. If they return with crystal, he will buy it from them for 700 and transport them and any crystal they wish to keep down river as far as Azenomei. Seebor knows only that Chazim lives in Twissep. Lank the Bagman can tell them how to get there. So can any local man, but few will.

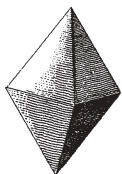
If the PCs have Lank's directions they can travel to Twissep in a day. As the men from the three communities are all at the fair, the journey is relatively safe, with only hoons and erbs to worry about. If the party gets directions from anyone else they will be ambushed by a small band of locals. Should they survive the fracas, they will be able to extract directions from survivors among the attackers.

The correct trail is easy to follow, winding along the banks of small streams and through the dense woodland. Twissep is in the middle of a large clearing over 1,000 yards across. The handful of houses clusters together around a central watchtower, the rest of the clearing is taken up by crops; gussip and sweet vetch being the most obvious. A handful of fruit trees cluster near the well. Meat-bred farlocks, smaller and more thick-set than those kept as draught animals or mounts, graze in a paddock, with thick hedges effectively providing the village with a wall on two sides.

The watchtower mounts four huge muskets on swivels. Periodically, the villagers load these with balls an inch across, confident that even a glancing blow from one would kill a hoon. To minimize the danger of being caught in a breach explosion, they use long-handled tapers to light them and the weapons are thus very inaccurate. The village women and the elderly keep guard, day and night. The village has only women, old men, children, and those males so inbred as to be unfit for display left; all other men are at the fair. If any of the party are tall or red haired, then they will be met with open suspicion and must take a levy against any persuasion attempts. If they are predominantly short and stout then their welcome will be extremely cordial.

The villagers who welcome them, two heavily

Ziosite crystals take a variety of forms, each valued according to its uses



Pellucid Rose



Lucid Roseate



Limpid Flushed



Translucent Serene

[†] Chazim fell into the river while drunk and fetched up, cold, wet and concussed on an old statue in the Valley of Graven Tombs. He now works in a vineyard, picking and treading grapes..



armed old men escorted by a drooling collection of shambling kinsmen who giggle to each other and nervously finger rusty battle-scythes, are obviously suspicious. If the party manages to win them over, they will be allowed into the village and introduced to Fusc, Chazim's wife.

Fusc is tearful but not distraught. In the house, there are a handful of fine pieces of rose crystal, which are worth about 50 terces. Fusc knows Chazim kept a secret cache of crystal hidden somewhere. She was only told to look for the hanging tree.

Adventurers can get the story from any one of the older men, if they are sufficiently persuasive. A hefty bribe, successful use of Scuttlebutt, or several drinks will inspire them rack their brains, to remember a sad and unexplained incident some years ago, where the bodies of two Radnarks and a Tok were found hanging from a tree in a woodland clearing a couple of miles to the East.

It is obvious that the villagers do not wish to begin a search until their men return from the fair. Neither do they wish strangers to undertake independent action on their behalf. They will procrastinate, raising all sorts of problems (The hoons are bad this year, or the weather has been so wet the paths will be impassable). If the adventurers decide to go anyway, the villagers will take precautions. To ensure they do not merely make off with anything they find, one of the elders and a band of giggling kinsfolk will guide the party to the glade. The sheer numbers in the band will keep off hoons[†] and similar predators. In the clearing itself, the travelers will eventually notice that some fallen timber has been disturbed. On dragging it to one side, they will see signs of digging. Three feet down, they will find a crate with one thousand terces worth of crystal in it. If they have the money, they can pay the elders there and then. If not, then Fusc and a couple of boys weighted down with borrowed battle-scythes, will accompany the party back to the crystal fair. How the party members react to these arrangements is up to them.

The party will be constantly be aware of the pressure of time. The men are relatively safe at the Crystal Fair. However, once they return the PCs should fear being robbed and murdered.



Raulk

Once a sprawling town on both banks of the river, Raulk is now a collection of ruins, abandoned to the half-men and creeping things. Riverboats stick to the middle channel as they pass between the ruins. At night they drape blankets over the portholes: only the steersman stands outside to guide the boat onwards. In daylight the occasional boat will pull in to allow adventurous spirits to investigate. Few find anything of value and it is only rarely that a treasure seeker disappears, never to be seen again.

A Night in the Ruins

Travelers may be forced to camp overnight in Raulk. It may have an unsavory reputation, but strangers are hardly likely to know of it, so might even seek the place out. Bad weather may require them to find shelter.

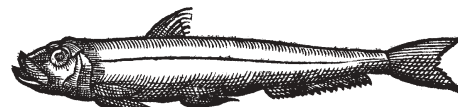
When they arrive, they will see fallen, rotted, overgrown buildings and a few, obviously unsafe structures still standing. If they need to get out of the rain, the best cover available is under a stone staircase, which climbs around the angle between two walls, but no longer leads anywhere. Firewood, albeit a bit damp and rotten, is easy to gather from the ruins. Aside from visible decay, the place seems unremarkable.

On closer inspection, Raulk is welcoming. There are occasional small arrangements of animal bones, little stones and broken pots. Rusty knives line the riverbank, just below water level. Some have fish and rats impaled on them. Someone will find two bodies, still dressed in jongleur's motley, lying in a cesspit, their necks broken, their flesh eaten and their bones gnawed. Characters who make Quotidian or Exasperating Failures on a Perception

[†] Certain scholars of hoonish ways disagree: the hoons see themselves as the operators of a world-wide meat farm, so prefer not to kill all the breeding stock. Hence they will eat sentries but leave their sleeping comrades unmolested.



Chillersdorf



Roll will wrongly believe that they are being watched (the GM should make this roll). Those who roll an Illustrious Success notice a bona fide skulker as he hurries away, too fast to become the target of a missile or a spell. Those who Fail Dismally will, if alone and unobserved by other party members, become the subject of a half-man attack.[†] Although there are a lot of watchers, the PCs should get the impression that there is only one. Close scrutiny of bite radius and dentition on the marks on the two dead jugglers will lead to this conclusion.

The half-men outnumber visitors, by three to two but will stay out of sight. They very badly want to kill and eat the trespassers, then sell their possessions to passing traders, but do not care to expose themselves to undue danger. Rather, they hope, by careful stage management, that the characters will split up to hunt the one skulker, so, by themselves sticking together, to overwhelm the search parties individually.

If the PCs merely settle down for the evening, the half-men will only attack if they set a modest watch and do not raise any magical defenses. Instead of concentrating on the watchers, their first targets will be their sleeping friends. Statistics for suitable half-men can be found in the *Creatures* chapter of the *DERPG*.



Chillersdorf

Chillersdorf stands on the left bank of the river, nearly two days' walk downstream, where the Twish starts to swing south and the moorland merges imperceptibly with the Hanging Hills. Most of the inhabitants are herders, whose flocks of sheep or meat-bred farlocks[‡] graze the moor on both sides of the river. The locals all own a bow or sling, which they use to great effect to keep pelgranes from their flocks. The men wear long coats of either farlock hide or sheepskin over a short woolen tunic and britches. On the moor, they wear boots and gaiters of hardened leather. The women dress in short, woolen dresses that rarely come

below the knee. Their clothes, unlike those worn by the men, are brightly patterned.

In Chillersdorf, the use of a sling or a bow is no mere preference, but an intrinsic cultural bias, an outward sign of two very different philosophies. The Slingers regard their weapon as a summary of their belief that time is cyclical; in general, events repeat themselves. This is insufficiently reliable to count as prophecy; time's wheel may spin round again, but the potter can always expect little splatters of clay and water to fly off at a tangent. To the Slingers, all of humanity's feeble attempts to better itself are mere flecks from the pot of creation. All of the Slingers' activities, even their music and clothing follow from their strong preference for the circle and the curve. Slingers tend to be well-fed, they decorate their clothes with hoops and discs. They wear rings, bracelets and torcs wherever they will fit. Their favorite musical instruments are whistles tied to string then whirled around the head. Their dances are complicated, whirling waltzes where the partners trace out circular or figure of eight patterns. Slingers are usually Glib, Eloquent and Obfuscatory. For preference, they are potters, repairers, peat cutters or launderers. They also spin yarn.

The Archers, by contrast believe in Time's Arrow and the inevitable triumph of entropy. They consider themselves Time's victims, who must cope as best they can with the vicissitudes of life. Consequently, they are direct, energetic people, but easily discouraged. The Archers tend to be thin, and regard tallness as



[†] Although the author feels that a PC should die at this point, the publisher disagrees, so the attack will be half-hearted or directed at a GMC.

[‡] Or to some zoologists "ubiquitous farlocks".



beautiful. They wear tight-fitting clothes that accent their wearers' height and slim lines. Vertical stripes are common, but belts, which cinch at the waist, are not. When they need them, Archers rely on braces. Their music emphasizes stringed instruments, whether of the guitar or violin families. Archers tend to be Forthright, Charming and Intimidating. They prefer to work as carpenters, hunters or weavers.

Their Archers' houses are long and low, while the Slingers prefer round huts. On entering, the visitor immediately realizes that they are upturned riverboats or large coracles, with a layer of sod and stone for weatherproofing. With no trees immediately to hand they build with whatever is available. Next to each house is a pile of peat, stacked ready for winter.

The Philosophy of the Moment

Slingers and Archers maintain good relations, each secure in the superiority of her philosophy, except during the Days of Immanent Truth.

Every day, at dawn, an Archer and a Slinger try to shoot an arrow and a sling stone respectively into a small pot, without breaking it. Whenever both succeed, the villagers conclude that the philosophies have somehow become equivalent, so must again be differentiated. As no one local is suitably unbiased, this duty falls to strangers.

The PCs will, inevitably be called upon to adjudicate. They have three days to make their decision and may do so on whatever grounds they choose. Similarly, the Slingers and Archers may offer any inducements that they feel will work. Once the PCs rule, the two sides will, seemingly revert to their previous mutual toleration and the adventurers will be invited to remain in Chillersdorf, as guests of the community. This provides the losers with the opportunity to discredit the judges, thus forcing a reversion to the status quo. The aggrieved side will begin to scheme to disqualify the PCs on grounds of partiality or incompetence, again using whatever resources present themselves.

Chillersdorf's people sell pottery, meat, fleeces and woven garments. The money they earn buys them their tools and their flour. Other than this, they have little connection with the outside world. Occasionally

a mage will arrive, bringing with him a person with few memories and no useful skills, whom he apprentices to one family or another. It is also not unknown for close-mouthed men, more used to wearing the livery of a noble family than their current nondescript garb, to appear with a babe in arms for one of the women to adopt. The good people of Chillersdorf accept all these without question and keep their own counsel. In this way, Chillersdorf avoids the problems of inbreeding.

The Dispossessed are another group of people who may be met at Chillersdorf. Occasionally a haggard figure in tattered clothing and skins will wander into the village from off the moor. These people are received courteously, fed and allowed to rest. After a few days they will leave again, taking a small bag of food with them. For the rest of the time they survive alone on the moor, living by hunting and foraging for roots. Many a herder has been grateful for their aid when his flock was being harried by pelgrane.

Occasionally a villager will walk off out onto the moor and not come back for a year or more, this is something the foundlings are particularly prone to do. The most common contact the villagers have with the outside world is their trips north and west. It will take a shepherd two days to drive his animals to the Black Glass Bridge over the Sune and one day to walk back. Their animals are in demand in Susheg, and Flath Foiry, and mutton is served at the Iron Man Inn. Travelers may find themselves spending time with these people, whose Archers are the only available guides across the moor.

The Lost Heir

Occasionally, more intricate matters arise. The relatives of the children, smuggled away to Chillersdorf in linen baskets, often look for them. Nilam Arenduk, a past favorite of Kandive the Golden, hires the party to do just that. She insists they act with great discretion. While she now lives quietly in her family's palace overlooking the harbor of Kaiin, she still keeps her finger on the pulse of political life in the city. Twenty years ago, well before she was properly ensconced as Kandive's favorite, she became pregnant by him in a casual encounter. Realizing that a child might become an embarrassment, she had the baby in secret and had him smuggled up the Twish to



Chillersdorf

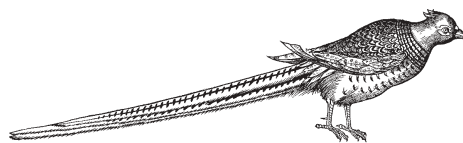
Chillersdorf. Now, older and maudlin, she wishes to have her firstborn back. She also feels that a son of Kaiin's dangerous politics, and looks forward to her lithe, handsome son's return. She will give the party an earring of cunningly carved jade, the mate to which accompanied the child. They are to take this to Chillersdorf and try and fetch her son back. As the earrings are valuable, she offers them to the party as payment. She will estimate their value, conservatively, at 207 terces.

When the adventurers arrive at the village, the headman, Lixdaal and his wife Phanfo (Slings) will introduce themselves, as they do to all strangers. No one else in the village will discuss any matter with visitors until these two have met them. The adventurers must explain what they want and convince them that they should be allowed to meet the young man they are searching for. Once these two believe that the party mean the best for the young man in question, they will then inform the party that the boy, whom they named Turich, is away taking sheep to the Iron Man Inn. He only set off the previous day so the party should catch up with him.

Once they do so, they find that he needs to be persuaded to go back to Kaiin with them. He is utterly unused to large communities. Flath Foiry, the biggest place he has ever seen, frightened him. If they want to get him to the white-walled city, they must persuade, drug or otherwise kidnap him. His mother would not be pleased if he were harmed.

This seemingly simple commission will prove more difficult than the PCs might imagine. The earrings are in fact part of an Achnarian nest (a fact well-known to the truly Pedantic); once held together, close to a living creature, they attract settlers from that far star,[†] which set up residence in the nearest available host. They will take three nights to arrive; a beam of starlight from Achnar will alight on their intended victim and the creatures will ride down it.

The target is whoever is closest to both earrings. Ideally, that would be Turich, but a PC could very well be a victim. Achnar infestation can be fatal, but the onset is slow and the remedy well known, at least among wizards.



Unless the adventurers take Nilam's comments about a lithe, handsome son to heart and inflict a callisthenic and dietary regime on him (or just slim him down with magic), Turich's mother will refuse to recognize him publicly in Kaiin. Neither will she pay the PCs until they remake him in a more fashionable shape.[‡]

Nilam Arenduk, a lady of Kaiin

"He will be an adult now, perhaps golden haired. Certainly he will be tall, slim and handsome."

This courtesan is a heart-faced, snub-nosed brunette with brown eyes and pale skin. She has a pleasant, obviously cultivated voice. Her violet and silver silks are cut in the Canasparan style: flowing and diaphanous, but cinched at the waist.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 10, Rebuff (Penetrating) 10, Attack (Cunning) 4, Defense (Misdirection) 4, Health 4, Etiquette 16, Perception 10, Seduction 16, Scuttlebutt (Kaiin) 12.

Possessions: Nilam possesses Arvanur's Mirror, an ancient magical device. Once an owner takes possession of it, it makes her immune to one emotion for twenty years. Unfortunately, it stores the feelings and visits them on its possessor when the time is up. It will not work for the same person again. The mirror may be traded voluntarily or even stolen, but this immediately returns the stored emotions. In game terms, the possessor is gaining infinite Resistance to a particular temptation or infinite Wherewithal in the face of a specific emotion.

Lixdaal, village headman

"Welcome, again, strangers. The great wheel has brought you back to us for the first time."

Lixdaal is a portly, middle aged man, with thick, unkempt dark blond hair and a large, squashed nose. His clothes are blue-green, with red-brown hoops.

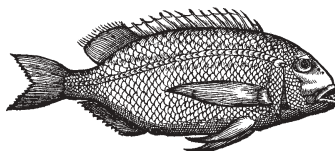
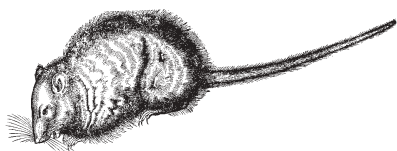
Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 9, Rebuff (Contrary) 4, Attack (Speed) 8, Defense (Intuition) 8, Health 6, Etiquette 5, Stewardship 10.

Phanfo, the headman's wife

"Naturally, it happened and I saw it as I did. I

[†] See Firx, inserted into Cugel's viscera in *The Eyes of the Overworld*, for details.

[‡] Optionally, the youth the PCs take to be Turich could be an imposter who came by the earring by chance. Nilam might insist that they seek out the true heir, should she discover the mistake.



would tell you about it, but I need to understand what you are asking.”

Phanfo is a woman past her child-bearing years, and can see her own ankles, so is dangerously thin for a Slinger. Her clothes are a flighty pink and yellow, her hair and eyes are dark brown.

Ratings: Persuade (Obfuscatory) 10, Rebuff (Obtuse) 5, Attack (Speed) 6, Defense (Misdirection) 6, Health 8.

Turich, the lost heir

“Yes, sirs. I have traveled and seen big towns. Once was enough for me.”

Turich is a large, surprisingly nimble man with thinning, dark brown hair. He wears a homespun tunic and trousers of un-dyed wool, with hoops embroidered in yellow, brown and green.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 8, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 8, Attack (Speed) 12, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 12, Health 10, Animal Husbandry (Sheep) 6, Athletics 6, Living Rough 8

Resistances: Gourmandism 0, Avarice Ω

town is mostly self-sufficient; the people fish in the river and farm or tend herds in the surrounding land. The locals cross the river to collect timber, which they use both in their buildings and in making fine furniture, whose elegant lines mean that it is well received as far a way as Kaiin.

Xalgan’s makes the erroneous claim that it contains the only Inn on the Twish (see Ouisiak, above). In the FARLOCKS HEAD one can find comfortable accommodation, plain food, well cooked, and good ale. The landlord even serves wines from as far south as Val Ombrio, should the passing riverboats have any to sell.



Xalgan

This village stands where a branch of the old Kang Kingdom Marchway used to cross the Twish by a great stone bridge. Then, the village was a town with houses on both sides of the river. Now the bridge is long gone, save for two of the four piers, which still stick out of the water. A sandbar joins the pilings nearest the left bank to the land. Of the town itself, that part of it that once stood on the left bank is deserted and ruinous, haunt of ghosts and ghouls. At night, strange lights can be seen in the windows of ruined houses and fishermen, who anchor their boats in the middle of the river, claim to have heard soft voices trying to entice them to the derelict town.

Xalgan itself is a quiet place. Its people follow the teachings of Concinuous Lemniscation.[†] Wherever possible, everything they make is built up of long flowing curves. They suggest that this is the ideal, and that straight lines or square corners are unnatural. The

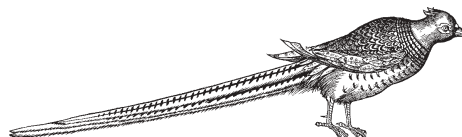
Panloys

Panloys stands between the Sune and the Twish. It has twelve houses, a natural spring, and a shared communal hall and barn. All the buildings are wooden, with turf roofs. Once a free farming village, this small community of barely a hundred very poor people, has been taken over by Domlo, Emperor of Almery.

The route from Xalgan to Flath Foiry is currently impassable to all but strong parties due to the efforts of Domlo of Panloys. As Flath Foiry is one of Xalgan’s better markets for small pieces of furniture this is a pressing concern.

So far, the Empire consists entirely of Panloys, and the Imperial Guard comprises thirteen ill-armed ruffians who are supporting themselves by terrorizing the populace of Panloys and robbing travelers on the road to Xalgan. These brigands originally lived rough in the Hanging Hills but now have more comfortable billets. Armed with axes and clubs and fuelled with enough strong liquor to ensure they are always furious in combat, they have yet to attract the attention of anyone powerful enough to disperse them. The

[†] The Concinuous Lemniscators are an intransigent Slinger sect from Chillersdorf. They left the village rather than disavow their faith in arc, chord and wave.



Diabolist Shrue doubtless will if they ever cross his path.

Anyone taking the trouble to exterminate Domlo and his pestiferous horde will gain little direct financial remuneration, but will win the gratitude of the inhabitants of Flath Foiry, Xalgan and, perhaps, even that of the local Arch-Magician. Anyone wishing a favor from Shrue could do worse than to eliminate Domlo on his way to visit the Diabolist. The villagers' gratitude for their liberation will be sincere and eloquently expressed. It will only manifest verbally, never materially.

Domlo

"Grovel before me, I am an emperor in the making, strong in magic."

Domlo wears an antique casque, which seems to protect him from magic. His sword has a life of its own. He straps a small helmet to his head with a scarf of spotted hoon skin. Under his war-gear, are stained velvet britches and jacket, mostly dark red, but with green and purple patches. He fights with a battered rapier in his right hand and a serrated axe in his left.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 12, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 8, Attack (Strength) 1.5-, Defense (Parry) 10, Health 10

Possessions: The sword has a madling bound to it, so will parry with unerring precision, the first Defense roll against any attack will always succeed, treat any failure as a Hair's-Breadth Success. This does not improve attacks made with the weapon in any way. Between them, the helmet and armor have five arcane runes embossed on them. When the entire panoply is worn together, these runes each provide one point of magic resistance. They refresh the next dusk.

and the confluence of the Twish with the Xzan. At Zamplin, the river is broader and far more sluggish than in its upper reaches, perhaps a hundred yards wide. The few inhabitants who remain drive piles into the riverbed and build timber-framed houses or open platforms on them. They carve the timbers with sigils and runes, designed to deter and repel the creatures that lurk on the riverbanks at night.

The handful of fisher folk who live in these houses travel up and down the river as far as Azenomei to sell their catch. They also offer artifacts they have dug up from among the ruins. These items attract treasure hunters from throughout Alмеры. Tales, such as that of Lasnod the Lucky, who discovered what is assumed to have been a municipal treasury and left Zamplin with two carts loaded with gold terces, are still told in inns and ale houses the length of the Scaum valley. The fact that, on his return visit, he disappeared and no trace of his body has ever been found are merely taken as evidence that he has found a larger even more valuable hoards. Finds of this size are rare but most who visit will collect enough 20th and early 21st Aeon household goods, cutlery, crockery, ornaments and sundry bric-a-brac to furnish a house or a stall on Kaiin market.

Most of those exploring the city will stay at the ancient and decrepit NEW INN. Possibly the only Inn known where the cellar is above the tap room, entry to the Inn is though a trap door in the tap room floor which leads by a ladder down to a landing stage. There is one long common room reserved for sleeping and excess patrons can sleep on the floor of the taproom. The landlord, Peltfag serves mainly fish dishes, all caught locally. River-weed, sprawlwort and bladdergrout, all grow profusely in the slow-flowing river waters and are the most usual vegetables. When chopped and then soused, in the Inn's famous heavy ale, they make an excellent accompaniment to most river fish.

Zamplin

All the evidence suggests that, early in the 21st Aeon, Zamplin was a city to rival Azenomei in size. Now, it is a series of low mounds that spread for several miles on both sides of the river half way between Xalgan





Trans-portage Scaum and the Xzan

*Wherein those tiring of the frenzied social whirl
may seek solace in true wilderness*

From Osier it is relatively easy sailing for a few more miles until travelers reach the village of Giesberd.

Giesberd

This village has a water-powered lumber mill and timber yard, a community hall where visitors can stay overnight or share the local food: unctuous pinkish stew, ditch-lime biscuits, Giesola, a runny yellow cheese, indifferently dried fruits and thin sour ale, all of it produced locally, although they import the barley for their beer. The inhabitants douse their cheese with beer before eating it and commend visitors to do likewise. Any who do not will contract Crimson Shivers (see *DE* p59).

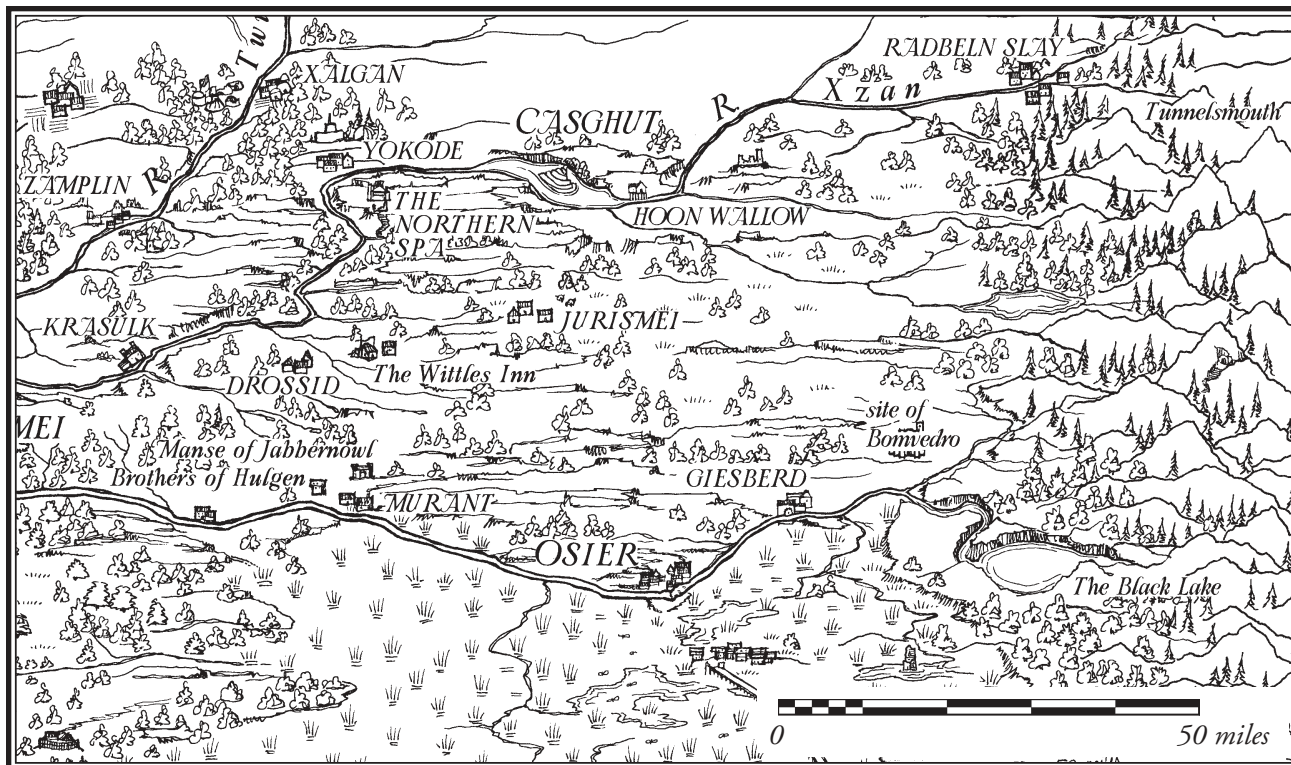
Aside from its civic buildings, the village has ten other houses, and some people live in the mill, which works all the time. All these structures are dwarfed by the celebrated Endless Rope: a huge pylon, which supports two taut cables that stretch upstream. Travelers who come to the village by day will note that this somehow carries rafts both up and down stream.

Above the settlement, the river becomes much swifter as it passes though the notorious Giesberd race, where normal means of propulsion are slow, laborious

and precarious. The villagers did once maintain a ladder of locks but these have long since fallen into disrepair. Those boats that wish to continue up river must therefore use the Endless Rope. The Arch-Magician Phaeton set his last apprentice Geomalacus this as a technical problem. The student created a loop of cable, which is wound round two drums, one of which has quasi-human grotesques trapped inside it,[†] to drive the cable. There is a timber raft attached to the loop. The boat going upstream is attached to the bottom of the loop while the raft is at the top. The raft, laden with newly felled timber, is heavy enough to pull the riverboat up the river to above the head of the race. The raft is then towed into Giesberd where its cargo goes through the mill. Acutely aware of the dignity and exclusivity of the magical arts, Geomalacus instructed the villagers never to tamper with the rope. The locals still tell the story of Laufrew, the only person who ever ignored this injunction. Apparently, he climbed the pylon, got caught on the cable and was carried around the loop and was crushed against the drums. They believe that his body was ground to paste and now impregnates the rope. Laufrew has attained folkloric status in Giesberd; he broke every rule, poured scorn on every taboo and tradition and never, ever took beer with his cheese.

Set on a flat rocky shelf that runs down to the

[†] Aficionados of *Cugel's Saga* will recall Gark and Gookin, the clerks at Flutic.



river there is no real agriculture in Giesberd, merely some rough pasture and a handful of fruit trees that are harvested but otherwise grow untended on the fringe of the forest. There are few jobs in the village other than at the timber yard. The lumber mill sends wood downriver on rafts that can float though the Osier portage and on to Kaiin. Most grain and clothing (other than some locally treated hides) is also shipped into Giesberd from the West.

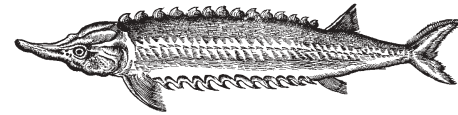
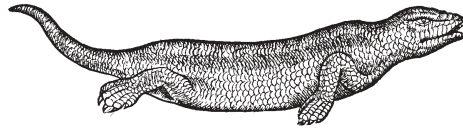
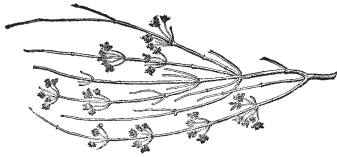
The people are prone to melancholy, delighting in doleful songs and tales of unrequited love and bitter tragedy. Visitors are greeted with sad resignation, it is assumed they will successfully cheat the naïve inhabitants and leave with their pockets filled with ill-gotten gold. The villagers overlook the fact that this seldom happens. Experienced travelers regard the inhabitants as honest but prone to drive hard bargains.[†] The hetman is one Disstanger, a lugubrious individual, for whom every action seems a constant fight against ill luck and his own bad judgment.

The Worst Cheese in the World

Disstanger and the people of Giesberd have a problem. As it involves the celebrated Endless Rope, they need outsiders' help. The loop of cable, which allows controlled navigation of the race, is being attacked by a strange growth. This first appeared at the same time as Bomvedro, the manse of the lost Arch-Magician Phaeton, disappeared (see p150). This growth looks very much like slime-mold or perhaps lichen, is iridescent yellow and glows in the dark. A Perception roll will reveal that this is much the same fungus as the mold that forms the rind on Giesola, the local cheese. It has obviously been exposed to considerable energy, which has led to magically induced changes.[‡] It is now markedly different in habits and appearance and has a distinct appetite for magical appliances. The rope comes into this category, as do many artifacts that the party may be carrying. Merely examining the substance will spread its spores over their persons, where it will slowly and methodically start to devour anything magical they possess. It will take up to a month to do so. Obviously, they will have an incentive to eradicate this new species.

[†] Any villagers with whom they trade Persuade in the Forthright style and Rebuff Warily.

[‡] Experienced magicians could conclude that the rope has interacted somehow with Laufrew, or perhaps with the unfortunate's curse and almost certainly with his stomach contents.



The use of magic merely encourages it to greater efforts.

The PCs should be able to resolve the matter easily enough. Simply douse the rope with beer. The GM should allow them to use any reasonable means to do so. The blight will improve within hours and the villagers will hold a party in the adventurers' honor.

Late into the evening, the rope will begin to work erratically. At times it will slow, at others speed up. Occasionally, the winding gear will lurch and pitch, causing the raft to shed its load of timber into the valley. Voices, at times petulant, at others raised in boisterous song, emerge from the drums. Eventually, the wheels slow down and then stop entirely.

Suddenly dissatisfied with the PCs' actions to date, Disstanger requires them to make amends by investigating. He will place them under arrest unless they agree to do so. The adventurers will discover that the grotesques are drunk. They are also hungry. The servitors had previously been sustained by the *Charm of Undying Nourishment*; as soon as they consumed the beer, the spell ceased. When they are sober enough to talk, the grotesques will elect two of their number, Murg and Margam to speak for them. They will not resume their work unless the villagers agree to support them, which, they claim will cost the village a hogshead of beer a week. They also ask for paper and a pen, to prepare a bill for their efforts to date. Initially, they will ask for twelve hogsheads (600 gallons) of beer, and will press their case persuasively, Murg persuading and Margam rebuffing.

The villagers will not react well to this turn of events. Eventually they will reach an accommodation with the grotesques, but their first instinct will be to note that the pylon could well serve as a gibbet. The PCs might care to avoid the hysterical mob.

As they flee along the river, the fugitives who succeed in an Appraisal or Stewardship roll will be able to reflect that the costs of



shipping to the upper Scaum valley are likely to be prohibitive, unless the inhabitants of Giesberd repair the river locks.

Disstanger, a hetman

"Once again the vagaries of fortune have dealt me a heavy blow. I accede, reluctantly to your request."

Disstanger has thinning dirty blond hair, parted to conceal a receding hairline. His eyes are watery blue and he is thin, but obviously unfit.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 6, Rebuff (Wary) 8, Attack (Caution) 8, Defense (Parry) 8, Health 4, Stewardship 6

Murg and Margam, grotesques

"Your proposed compromise returns us to the status quo. It is, therefore unacceptable. We demand full restitution for decades of bondage."

The grotesques have pig-like snouts, sharp fangs and small round ears. They wear brass-buttoned cerulean uniforms with pillbox caps. Their skin is shiny and mud-colored.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 2~ (Murg), Rebuff (Lawyerly) 1.5~ (Margam)

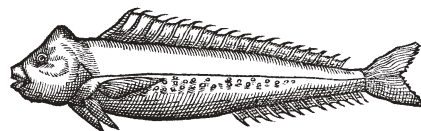
Spells: Spell of Brachial Fortitude, Agency of Carnal Affection



Towards the Black Lake

Travelers wishing to journey upstream can pole their boats against the current, and arrive at the Black Lake in three days. Alternatively, they can follow an old loggers' path that follows the Scaum intermittently, cutting across several well established curves, and save a day. The land here is thickly wooded and the whole area abounds with erbs, gids and hoons. The path is far less arduous than the river, but not so safe; the forest is thick with vampire grass, nests of militant ants and, according to the villagers, a gang of feral mermelants.[†] Travelers who leave the path deserve to suffer the full range of assaults and indignities associated with the phrase "got lost in the forest". Even deodands rarely venture here as they find the area unacceptably dangerous.

[†] See *Tooth, Talon and Pinion* for complete details of mermelant society.



The Vale of Flowers

Five miles from Giesberd, travelers will come across a tree stump, planed flat and varnished, with a small wooden gong pegged to it. If anyone beats the gong, a Twk-man will shortly appear and offer to trade information for salt, fabric or oil. He will even reveal the location of a great twk-man country, the Vale of Flowers, which lies seven miles to the east, if the party pays well enough. His starting price is six grains of dream-powder, but he will drop it to four.[†]

The Flower Race

The PCs, whether on land or on water, discover two fallen stone heads, each ten feet across, glaring at each other across the Scaum. The bank-side track runs between one of them and the stream. This head is the focus for a large congregation of twk-men, attended by water sprites, wood wefkins and Atten, a feral mermelant. The twk-men are maneuvering two battalions of ants across the forest floor: the insects are snipping dew-myrtle petals (respectively yellow and white) from either end of a clump of thorny bushes and laying them end to end, as causeways across the river's surface. The minuscule half-men are clearly holding a race: the bridges are running out towards a pair of pouting twk-woman Shierls,[‡] who are on the other head, dressed in insubstantial tunics in their team's colors, and must stand by three-inch high pennons (large flags for twk-men). The water sprites keep the Scaum glass-smooth.

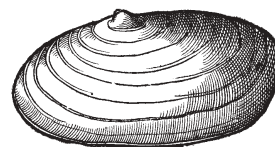
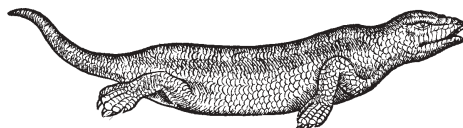
The wefkins will identify themselves as Grand Adjudicators, and require all travelers to respect the sanctity of the annual petal race (otherwise, they will explain, the twk-men will fall murderously upon each other). They will happily explain the rules and, if asked will provide a commentary and suggestions for making wagers on the outcome. Should the PCs fail to cooperate, the Adjudicators will call upon the mermelant to take stern measures on their behalf. The twk-men have set aside a supply of strong thyle-beer to enrage the mermelant.

The travelers will fare no better afloat: no boatman will attempt to sail into the stilled water and, should the adventurers take the matter into



[†] The Vale of Flowers is further detailed in the *Excellent Prismatic Spray*.

[‡] Mascots or cheerleaders, in the inadequate terminology of the Larval Age.



their own hands, they will soon notice that holes appear in the bottom of their vessel.

The rules of the race are quite simple. The two teams construct a bridge of flower petals of a specific color, running from one fallen stone head across the river to another, very similar statue, on the other side. The bridges are aimed at the opposing team's Shierl, who may not leave her post on the head. As soon as a team completes its bridge, a runner crosses and returns, leading the opposing team's Shierl (a Great Victory), or her dress (a Lesser Victory). The first runner to return to the starting head wins for his team.

The prize is most desirable: the team securing a Lesser Victory may choose to enjoy a trade monopoly in salt, perfumed oil or water-silk for the next year. A team that enjoys Greater Victory wins the concession in all three commodities.

Should the PCs be interested in making a book on the outcome, then the wood wefkins will draw important features to their attention. Particularly, they will point to the teams' runners and Shierls. Each side has two athletes, naked save for appropriately colored headbands, limbering up on the stone head. One, the Speedwell, is light-framed and lithe, the other, the Mugwump, is muscular and thickset. Although either can return with the dress or the twk-woman, the Speedwell's intended job is to secure a Lesser Victory with the mascot's tunic; while the Mugwump should try to carry back the Shierl herself. The Shierls may use any ruse or stratagem they like to resist or delay the runner.[†] Each team may only send one runner and its Grand Despot decides which should go. As the wefkins will explain, the Despots consider the progress and sturdiness of their opponent's bridge and the likely ferocity, style and quality of the Shierl's resistance when deciding strategy.

The Adjudicators will emphasize that the race is as much a test of ant-handling as it is of athletics. The teams must use ants to cut, transport and lay the petals, but cannot do so to motivate the opposition Shierl. Ant-Marshals may use any reasonable means to control their insects. Generally, they use hand-siphons, made from harvested bee-stings, to project sprays of coercive scents. Individual ant mahouts have hooked goads primed with actinic resin. The bridges must be of

petals, laid at least end to end (and, ideally overlapping), and must only be of blooms in the team's color.

Finally, the wood wefkins will advise on past form. The White team usually secures a Lesser Victory by building a flimsy bridge and employing their Speedwell. This strategy is reliable but hardly exciting. Fuscianadil has been their Shierl for the past three years. The Yellow team wins far less often but is the only side ever to have secured a Greater Victory. Their style is more flamboyant and their new Shierl, Orchaisily, is an unknown quantity.

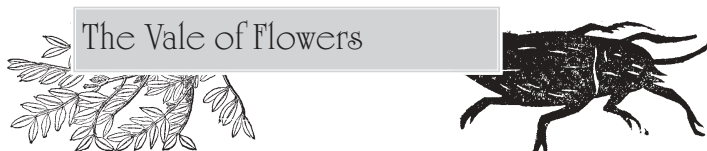
At the GM's whim, the Yellow Ant-Marshals might decide that the PCs' assistance would be so detrimental that they should secure it for their opponents. They send Farasanstanda to talk to them. He will explain that the petals at the top of the dew-myrtle bush are larger than the others and more robust, so are intrinsically preferable for bridge building than those from the more accessible flowers lower down. Obviously, he is keen to secure their services and will instruct them in how to prune trees with ants: simply position a petal's stem in an ant's mandibles and then twist the creature's head off, which causes the jaw to snap shut. As an inducement, the twk-man will claim (truthfully) that the fallen heads mark the location the two halves of a bifurcated 17th Aeon town. He knows where the treasury stood, as one of his ants came back from a deep excavation with gold leaf on its left antenna.[‡]

Should the adventurers accept, the Grand Adjudicators will allow them to cross to the White end of the dew-myrtle stand and commence harvesting.

Farasanstanda will attempt to pass off the White team's screams of protest as the applause of grateful teammates and encourage the PCs to wave back. This assistance will, most likely, result in a net loss for the White team, but the PCs might actually help. The players can make a roll with a limit of 2, using the Quick Fingers skill, for every five minutes of game time, with a Penalty of 1. The Tally is the net gain in petals for the White team. Dew-myrtle bushes are villainously thorny. Pushing a hand into one is the same as suffering a strong attack (with a Limit of 1) for every petal

[†] Such as the Charms of Carnal Affection or Amorous Inclination (p149).

[‡] GMs whose humor is more mordant than our own could even have Farasanstanda provide the inestimable *Green and Purple Agency of Gathering* (p149) for the PCs.



they try to gather. This will not inflict a lasting injury, but will cause a loss of Health points.[†] The pain might very well make the PCs clumsy and there is a slight danger that they might[‡] drop something and injure the White team's runners. The Adjudicators will invoke the Law of Equipose and transform the two most appropriate PCs into twk-man sized athletes. They will revert to their usual size on the completion of the race.

Atten, a feral mermelant

"I have had beer and I am told that you deserve pain."

The mermelant will knock his opponents down, rendering them helpless on the turf. More importantly, their clothes will become rumpled and grass-stained, requiring PCs whose Persuasion style is Glib, Eloquent, Charming or Intimidating to operate at a Levy of 1, until they can repair their appearance. Obviously, skills that rely on an impeccable appearance, such as Etiquette, will be similarly affected.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 1.5~, Rebuff (Lawyerly) ~, Strength 3~, Vexation 1.5~, Health ~

Fuscianadil, White Shierl

"There is no need to rush back with me, I have a strong grip and I am skilled in pleasure."

Fuscianadil wears her purple hair in a high chignon, studded with little silver bells. The neckline of her white gossamer tunic runs under her right arm and over her left shoulder.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 1.5~, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 2~, Attack (Ferocity) 0.5~, Defense (Intuition) 1.5~, Defense (Dodge) 1~, Health 3, Magic (Curious) 4



Agency of Carnal Affection

Range: Near

Duration: Feat

Difficulty: Straightforward

Effects the prompt physical union of two people, neither of whom is the caster. The spell in no way influences the targets' true feelings for each other, so they are more likely than not to resent the caster

deeply.

The targets will have a boon to resist the spell if it works against their true feelings. Conversely, if they are genuinely enthusiastic, they will have a Levy of 1, should they choose to resist at all.



Wystanil, White Speedwell

"My apologies, but your arts cannot distract me from my purpose. I will have your tunic and the victory."

Wystanil has shaved his head and has greased his headband to decrease wind resistance.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 0.5~, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) ~, Attack (Caution) 1.5~, Defense (Dodge) ~, Health 5, Magic (Studious resistance only, no spells) 1, Athletics 10

Avacelan, White Mugwump

"I have you now and struggle as you might, I will hold you."

Avacelan covered his hands and forearms in resin and is rubbing them in grit to improve his grip.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) ~, Rebuff (Contrary) ~, Attack (Strength) 1.5~, Defense (Parry) 1.5~, Defense (Dodge) ~, Health 6, Magic (Daring resistance only, no spells) 1

Sprudelion, Grand White Despot

"I have noted that Yellow are using the petal-stems as well as the petals and shall lodge a complaint."

Sprudelion is surveying the race from his magnificent dragonfly. He his white tunic has silver frogging and his lance has a white pennon.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 2~, Persuade (Obfuscatory) ~, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 2~, Rebuff (Wary) ~, Attack (Finesse) 1~, Attack (Speed) 0.5~, Defense (Dodge) 3~, Health 4, Scuttlebutt 16

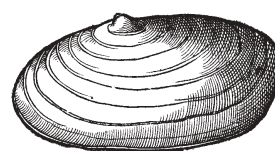
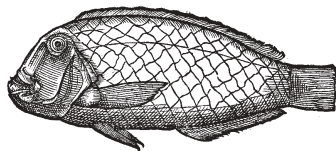
Orchaisily, Yellow Shierl

"You will not get me, you will not take my gown and your friends will point at you and laugh."

Orchaisily has wound her sage-green hair into a tight bun at the nape of her neck, under a luxuriant wig. Her off-the-shoulder gown is little more than gauze spread over a fine golden net. This mesh is actually very strong and the Shierl has secretly pegged it to the statue. She has also

[†] anyone who has encountered a pineapple plant will know what we mean.

[‡] OK, will, with no question of error.



covered her body in telanxis oil, which imposes a levy of 1 on anyone who attempts to grapple her. Strictly, these stratagems are against the rules.

Sprudelion knows that Orchaisily has emotion-affecting magic, but has formed the (incorrect) opinion that she uses it to repel suitors. The Shierl will cast her spell on the White runner as he approaches. As he presses his suit, she will lure him up the stone head, in an attempt to persuade him into an eyesocket, where she will tie him, unresisting, to a clump of lichen with his own headband.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) ~, Rebuff (Contrary) ~, Attack (Cunning) 0.5~, Defense (Vexation) 2~, Defense (Dodge) 1~, Magic (Forceful) 3



The Charm of Amorous Inclination

Range: Near

Duration: Hours

Difficulty: Straightforward

Does what the title suggests, perhaps to the detriment of the caster, who must then address the urgent physical attentions of the spell's target. Magicians of any note know that this spell is easy to terminate; she need only present a wilting flower to the target. Should the victim accept the token, the attraction ceases, to be replaced by a day's worth of ill-feeling. Obviously, the target may very well harbor resentment for far, far longer.



Cycaliantis, Yellow Speedwell

"See me, Shierl, I have come for your raiment. I will come for you tonight."

Cycaliantis has wound his headband tightly around his apple-green hair, which stands proud on the top of his head, like a plume.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib)~, Rebuff (Obtuse) ~, Attack (Cunning) 1.5~, Sure-footed 1.5~, Defense (Dodge) 1~, Health 5, Magic (Forceful resistance only no spells) 1, Athletics 8

Cabananto, Yellow Mugwump

"I will repeat my success, for my own glory and for

the good of my tribe."

Cabananto is very muscular and notably agile. He has dyed his white hair black, so improve the contrast with his yellow headband.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 1~, Rebuff (Wary) 1~, Attack (Finesse) 2.5~, Defense (Sure-footedness) 1.5~, Defense (Dodge) 1~, Magic (Insightful resistance only, no spells) 2, Athletics 4

Cactalandus, Grand Yellow Despot

"We have the measure of them and they are still unsure of us. We shall take the victory that we deserve. Watch for the Shierl, though – she may be stronger than you expect."

Cactalandus rides in a palanquin, carried by eight bearers. His trained dragonfly hovers patiently above him. He is aware that Fuscianadil knows the Spell of Brachial Fortitude.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 2~, Rebuff (Penetrating) 1.5~, Attack (Speed) 0.5~, Defense (Dodge) 1~, Health 6, Scuttlebutt 15

Farasanstanda, Imposter

"Greetings, I have information to trade for service."

Farasanstanda is a Yellow team twk-man dressed in white, mounted on a small dragonfly. He possesses a copy of *The Green and Purple Agency of Gathering*, cut into a blade of vampire grass. He also possesses a copy of *The Green and Purple Improvement on Nature*, a necessary partner to the Agency, but is unlikely to reveal this.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 2~, Rebuff (Obtuse) ~, Attack (Finesse) 0.5~, Defense (Dodge) 3~, Health 3, Magic (Devious) 4



The Green and Purple Agency of Gathering

Range: Near

Duration: Feat

Difficulty: Straightforward

This spell ensqualms a nest of small creatures, such as ants, termites or even naked mole rats, to retrieve a specified substance, such as gold leaf, human flesh or even purple velvet. The caster must provide a sample for the Agents' instruction.[†]

The intended result of this spell is that the Agents render themselves homeless; they fill their

[†] GM: yes, this spell can be used to kill, or at least maim a living creature, but not a specific target. If the sample is human flesh and the caster is the nearest human...well, work it out for yourself.

The Black Lake



nest with whatever it is that the caster required. The magician can then excavate the concentrated mother lode at her convenience.

Regrettably, the working of the Law of Equivalence requires the beneficiary compensate her agents by building them a better home than their previous one. They, or their heirs, will pursue her (or, if small enough, infest her hair and clothes) until she does so.



The Green and Purple Improvement on Nature

Range: Near

Duration: Feat

Difficulty: Straightforward

This spell perplexes many students of the magical arts. Only adepts familiar with the Agency of Gathering (above) would appreciate the necessity of compensating a homeless swarm of ants, termites, land-wasps or enraged mole rats with a new, superior nest.



The Black Lake & The Source of the Xzan

A day and a half out from Giesberd, the land rises steeply and the Scaum cuts deep into it, forming a series of incised meanders. The path snakes above the river, on ledges and cuttings. The Scaum is fast-flowing and very deep, so the crew push against the canyon. After half a day of this, the boats sail through a narrow cleft and into the Black Lake, the source of the Scaum. Just north of this fissure, a small area of violet luminosity on a bare hilltop, marks the former site of Phaeton's manse, Bomvedro, lost in an altruistic attempt to restore the sun.[†]

Black Lake is shaped like a teardrop, surrounded on all sides by high cliffs. Walls. Streams cascade from sheer rock walls at the eastern end and drain away to the west. The lake is also very turbulent – water rises directly from its bed. The path follows the north shore of the lake, dropping hundreds of feet to water level. It leads to several caves, big enough to accommodate



riverboats. These caves were once the site of a great subterranean mining-city, whose ruins also stretch under the lake's waters.

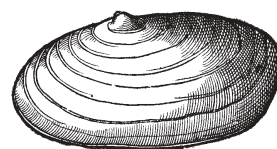
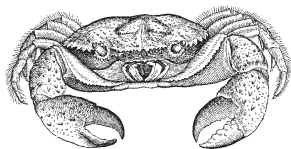
The Zokbersc, a small group who call themselves the 'the first and last men' live here. They claim that they will never notice when the sun goes out. Living as they do in a network of tunnels, rooms and chambers, some natural, some not, they rarely venture into the outside world. They scavenge the old workings for precious stones and rare ores, even opening up new veins when they discover them. They trade for food. They also eat the fungi that grow in profusion in some of the caverns. They sell the more exotic mushrooms and spores to adventurous merchants. They secure a good profit with black apple, which the finest chefs use to add savor to a score of dishes. Another, green wrack, is inedible; its spores are used to infect both vines and the grapes they bear, producing a wine with distinctly musky overtones, much sought after in Cansaspara and its hinterland.

Although the Zokbersc claim to have cut all the tunnels themselves most savants consider them to be refugees from the outside world who stumbled on a deserted warren of underground passages and who have merely taken them over for their own use. The most spectacular passage of all runs almost due north for nearly fifty miles, from an underground lading dock. This canal passage carries lake-water into the Xzan valley, thus the Black Lake is also the source of that river. The canal is substantial: wide enough for two riverboats to pass, with a towpath on either side. Although the Zokbersc will show fine stonework at the lading dock end as proof that they cut the entire tunnel, once inside the traveler discovers the walls are mirror-smooth, fashioned by enormous energies focused with unimaginable precision. The tunnel is also supported by powerful thaumaturgy; impressive enchantments are woven into the walls, preserving them from time and decay.

A Feast in the Dark

For all their much-vaunted independence the Zokbersc currently need assistance. The long tunnel is not longer safe. Several small boats passing through it have been attacked in the darkness and passengers have been lost. The Zokbersc are not going to hire someone to deal

[†] See *DERPG* p102. Geomalacus, Phaeton's errant retainer, is said to have moved to Azenomei, but is wanted for questioning in fifteen jurisdictions along the Scaum alone, so is unlikely to be easily found.



with the menace. They suspect it would be cheaper just to pay someone to transport goods down tunnel to the upper Xzan. Hence, they will neglect to mention any problems, merely offering a reasonable wage. The hired party and their boat will be followed by several more Zokbersc craft, all carrying sundry trade goods. They all have knives, barge poles (which they will snap short for use hand to hand) and spears. They will move in to attack whatever assails the lead boat.

What the party does not realize is that waiting in ambush is Zard, a virtually mindless vat creature of Phaeton's that has taken up residence in the tunnel. Phaeton had grown this cephalopod from a hard squid-shaped black nodule, for use as gardening adjunct, to keep a pond near his manse clear of scum. The Arch-Magician found that its mirror surface provided him something profound to meditate on and that any creatures living in or over the water disturbed his sense of peace. Hence Zard, which devoured everything that approached the pond. Geomalacus tricked Phaeton's sandestin into disposing of the pond cleaner. The elemental did so by transporting it to the canal.

Zard can sense the presence of people and, should they remain relatively still, he is programmed to accept them as meditating mages and will not attack.

The locals will respond well to any assistance the PCs provide. So well in fact, that they will insist on preparing their best dishes for them in a victory feast. Zard will take pride of place – its maw will serve as a centerpiece and the Zokbersc will fricassee its tentacles. They will provide novel side

dishes: Mosando; rotted, blind cave fish and spell-tome fungus[†] and River's Bounty; washed-up bloated dead animals, stuffed with morbid matter then beaten to a gritty paste with stones. Needless to say, any loss of appetite is an insult to the tribe.

The PC with the highest Sympathy rating will discover a squid-shaped bit of grit in her food. This is a



Zard-seed. Immersed in a substance (pond scum, or inferior wine, for instance), it will grow back into Zard. The reborn creature will attempt consume the substance that gave it life, traveling wherever necessary to do so.

Zard, vat creature

"Blop, blop"

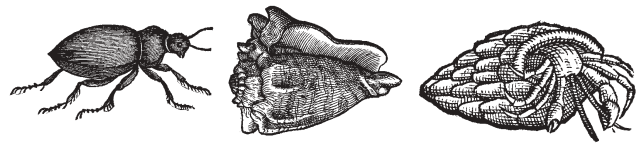
Zard has fitted his rump firmly into a silt trap he has found in the tunnel floor. He allows his six tentacles to lie flaccid on the surface of the water where he can use them to detect life moving either in the stream or on either of the two walkways. As the party moves down the tunnel, he will first pluck anyone walking off the towpath and drop them entire into his cavernous stomach-sack. Then the tentacles will search the surface of the boat, tracking down anyone else who is moving. Each tentacle has an Attack (Caution) 6 and a Defense (Dodge) 3. Designed to deal with fish and birds Zard has a Health of only 4 but each tentacle only has a Health of 1, so if the tentacle is defeated it will play no further part in the struggle. Once four of the tentacles have been defeated Zard will sink down further into the silt trap. He will then be overwhelmed and killed by the Zokbersc in the following boats.



Tunnelsmouth

At the far end of the tunnel from the Black Lake Caves lies Tunnelsmouth. Here the dock lies deserted and the tunnels, which lead off under the mountain are walled up. Only one door remains, steel faced and locked from the outside. Travelers who spend several hours sitting by the door claim to have heard a sad whining noise from inside and the sound of something scratching at the steel. If any have ever ventured inside, no accounts of their travails have survived.

[†] A rubbery horizontal-spreading mushroom with page-like striations.



The Store of Sunlight

Late in the 19th Aeon, the Fadarazi (who dug the caves beneath the mountains) realized that they could save sunlight in crystals, and thus survive the sun's end, at least for a while. They enlisted the aid of Orhado, an Overworld entity, to gather suitable crystals and collect the necessary luminescence. They reneged on the deal to play music to him in return for his services when they discovered that the crystals would shatter through harmonic vibration.

Orhado expelled them from his caves. In retaliation, the Fadarazi locked him in, physically and magically. Orhado still sits by the door calling for them, but they are long dead. All Orhado wants is to return home and he needs to hear music to open a gateway.

Should the PCs listen for long enough, and successfully use the Pedantry skill, they will begin to understand his archaic dialect. Orhado will offer them a cave full of sun crystals in return for some music.

Orhado, an Overworld entity

"I have been alone in this cave for an eternity. I want to hear music more than I want to live."

Orhado is a squat four-legged creature with a pyramidal body and an eye in each surface. Two arms grow out of each of his knee joints.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 10, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 10, Attack 0, Defense (Dodge) Ω

the forest around the village is once more the undisputed home of the erb and the gid. The last eight inhabitants are elderly, hungry and scared. They will beg for passage downstream.

Because of the village's long association with Phaeton, many of the inhabitants worked in the manse or provided various services for it, even if it was only the carriage of goods up from the river. Hence, over the years, a considerable number of minor artifacts have somehow managed to migrate from Bomvedro to Radbeln Slay. In the two still-occupied houses there are three very nice (and complete) sets of cutlery dating as far back as the early 20th Aeon. Two are silver, inset with a black metal, whose exact provenance is no longer known; the third set is of polished crystal. There is also a collection of 19th Aeon gold hair clasps, some beautifully polished chug rings and a pair of stoneware goblets, which enhance the quality of anything drunk out of them. So, while a fine wine tastes finer, a weak poison will become assuredly fatal.

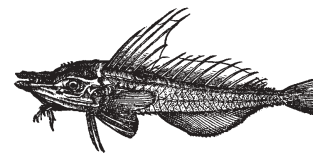
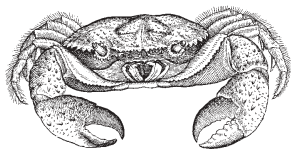
The houses away from the river are abandoned. They were pretty well stripped of anything valuable and have been partially looted for firewood by those who remain. Adventurers are perfectly at liberty to see if there is anything left of value. One house has become the lair of a bull gid, another has had so much wood stripped out of it for burning that it is no longer safe and may collapse at any time. Careful examination of these houses will confirm that they have been picked bare (including, in one case the iron brackets which supported the timber staircase) and there is nothing left worth taking.

Radbeln Slay

The small village of Radbeln Slay is on the Xzan, a few miles downstream of Tunnelmouth. Initially, it was significant only as the nearest landing stage to the manse of Phaeton at Bomvedro but, since that disappeared, the community has declined further. Now all that remains is a handful of people living barricaded in the two houses closest to the waterfront. Without Phaeton to maintain control, it seems that

The Dancing Deodands

Should anyone venture into the woods, she will hear a shrill piping. If she tries and locate the piping they will finally find themselves looking down into a clearing where an elderly man is playing sprightly jigs on a seven-holed ocarina. In front of him in the clearing, there are twenty deodands. They are dancing. Anyone with any musical skill or who makes a Pedantry roll will realize that the deodands are treading a very stately measure popular in the inner court of the Ajha-Khail Empire. Certainly, the dance bears no relation to the music being played. Should the characters watch for long enough, the ocarina falls



silent, the deodands formally bow to their partners and retire, arm and arm, into the woods out of sight. The elderly man also leaves the clearing, in a different direction. Should the characters wish to follow him, despite having seen that at least twenty deodands live in this wood; they will soon catch

up with him. He is Crayoszard, liberator of antiquities. Something of a transient, he owns a palace in Kaiin where his wife lives, but may not be in the city from one month's end to the next. Rumor has it that the presence of his wife rather encourages his absence. He travels the length and breadth of the Scaum river system and supports himself by selling the artifacts he has found. While courteous, he is very unlikely to discuss his business.

Crayoszard, liberator of antiquities

"Panguire made deodands first, unfortunately, his successors did not understand his methods."

Crayoszard is resplendent in velveteen and pink satin. Wisps of white hair snake out from under his four tiered hat. He discovered *The Deodand Quadrille of Ajha-Khail* while peeling the gold leaf off some manuscripts in the Kaiin Scholasticarium. He will not admit to using spells. If asked, he will claim that his ocarina is enchanted and protects him from half-men. He will volunteer that he is keen to retire, but lacks the funds. He will surreptitiously cast his spell, if they wish to test the ocarina.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) ~, Rebuff (Penetrating) ~, Attack (Finesse) ~, Defense (Misdirection) ~, Health 4, Magic (Studious) 6, Pedantry 7



The Deodand Quadrille of Ajha-Khail

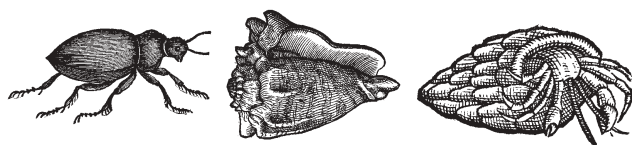
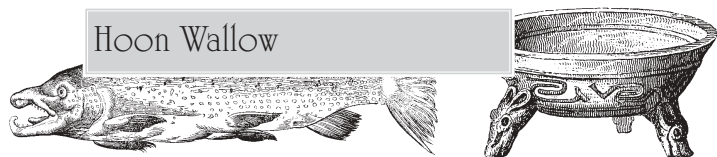
Range: Near

Duration: Feat

Difficulty: Straightforward

This spell compels four or more deodands to dance a stately measure, to the exclusion of all other activity. At the end of it they wander off, confused. The caster may likewise exit at the same time, provided that he does so slowly and calmly. In the event of their being fewer than four deodands, the nearest other humanoids, excluding the caster, will make up the numbers.





Hoon Wallow

From Radbeln Slay, the Xzan flows in two great meanders, first south, then west, then north, then east, then north again. Two days' march (or less than a day's panic stricken flight, this being the more normal method of travel by land in this area) downstream of Radbeln Slay is the almost vanished settlement of Hoon Wallow. It is on the bend of the river where the Xzan once more flows west. All that is left is a house on piles out in the water and a mud pool where the right bank has been cut away to flood some of the land.

Visitors to the court of Kandive the Golden in Kaiin have often commented on the depth of his deodand pit. One of his predecessors, Panguire the Old, had had it constructed to hold hoons, and it was at Hoon Wallow that they were captured alive at the Prince's request. The hoons come to luxuriate in the mud in hot weather; there are still nets and ropes in the house on the piles, but they are rotten and perished with age. The structure is the official residence of the Lord Keeper of the Prince Panguire Hoon Hunt. An elderly scholar, one Bashott, has managed to acquire this sinecure, which he has used as a bolthole to escape from trouble in Kaiin (trouble that has been forgotten for at least a generation). His honorarium is still collected by Tanax, a distant nephew, who purchases what he imagines the old man needs and sends it upriver by boat; Bashott lives in reasonable state. The house, while apparently dilapidated, is still sound, the walls are hung with fine tapestries, the floor deep with thick rugs and the roof recently covered with new shingles. Bashott controls Rincz, a madling of modest capacity. He lives happily with his books and his various studies. He has published several erudite studies of the hoon and even communicates with them. Relations are cordial and he has been known to have Rincz, deliver to them the occasional barrel of strong spirit, which they appreciate.

Educated guests are always welcome and are entertained in comfort to good food and fine wine, which merely enhance the quality of the conversation. Riffraff may not even tie up at the jetty, and lurking hoons discourage many travelers from hanging around outside. For all that he lives many miles from

civilization, Bashott's opinion is still sought by some for not only is he an expert on the hoon, his knowledge of herbalism, with special reference to the medicinal use of water plants, is unsurpassed. Hence, it is not uncommon for him to receive petitioners seeking his advice on various cures. Indeed, a party may be hired purely to go to Bashott to solicit a cure for a wealthy but bed-ridden client.



The Drunken Uncle

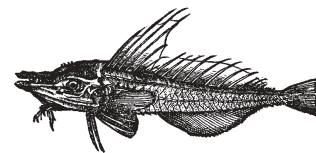
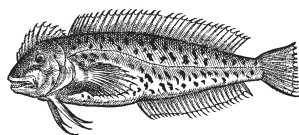
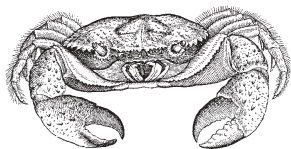
The last couriers to deliver supplies to Bashott formed the opinion that communication between Tanax and his uncle was one way, so substituted Fisherman's Spit[†] and bloat fish[‡] for the fine Sfere hams and Golden Porphiron his nephew had intended for him. Incensed, Bashott wrote to Tanax in heated terms, and suggested that the idle youth should take more care with the next consignment. To this end, Rincz made a secure box to hold the courier's payment. The container will only open if Bashott willingly presses his signet ring into its seal. He will only do so if satisfied with the product.

Tanax commissions the PCs to deliver four cases of wine (two each of Porphiron and Tanvilkat), two huge vintage Cansasparan cheeses (rich, nutty, pale yellow, with rinds covered with minced sultanas) and four fine Sfere hams (the pigs fed only chestnuts and their hams were boiled in honey for a day) to Hoon Wallow. He explains the concept of 'satisfactory delivery' exactly and in every particular noting especially that the manifest describes the cargo precisely. GMs may care to remember that not all players would have remembered to buy resistance to Gourmandism for their PCs.

On arrival at Hoon Wallow, the couriers will discover Rincz fishing from under a parasol on the jetty. When satisfied of their identity, he will refer

[†] Dockside saliva, collected in the early morning, fermented in casks for three weeks, then bottled for the dedicated drinker.

[‡] The excess catch, returned by market traders, stored in barrels of fresh water in a cool cellar until it swells up and becomes rank.



them to his master in the house. They will find Bashott lying in the wreck of a tun of bloat-fish, his head under the spigot of a disreputable barrel, marked with the face of a gurning fisherman. The scholar is far from at his best, he evidently has had recourse to the Fisherman's Spit and is insensibly drunk.

If they want to be paid, they must somehow sober Bashott up. Taking his drink away and forcing water and sleep upon him will reveal a second problem. Fisherman's Spit renders its persistent drinkers imbecilic.[†] The party can either steal the food or effect a cure. If asked Rincz, will explain that a simple potion will reverse the imbecility. Its formula is in one of the master's books. He will then refuse to help further, pointing out that his current situation, fishing in the sunshine or strolling along the riverbank by starlight, is idyllic: far preferable to running errands and making magical bagatelles. Rincz will rebuff any form of persuasion or inducement aside from acts that will reduce his indenture. Although contractually prevented from saying so, the simple destruction of his contract and tally should effect this; without the written record, Bashott would only be able to compel Rincz to perform one final service.

Once the parties have arrived at an understanding, the madling's cunning directions will bring his contract to the PCs' attention. While he cannot request them specifically to destroy it, he will certainly give answers that encourage them to do so.

The actual recipe for the potion is given on p66–67 of the *Lesser Philanthropist's Encyclical*:

NETTER'S DROPSY: an amnesiac mania following a surfeit of fish-flavored, fermented saliva.

To concoct a cure for Netter's Dropsy, simply take the blood of a still-living hoon, the hair from the subject's head, the scales of a fish, caught by starlight, three gold coins (freely given) and mix them together at dawn in a green glass beaker, chanting the patient's name fifty times. The cure will follow soon after.

Which items satisfy the various conditions is a matter for the GM's determination, but we would like to remind her that a Tanvilkat bottle, less its

neck and shoulders, makes a serviceable beaker. The cruel and perverse GM may like to notice the nicety of phrasing in the last sentence. The patient does not have to drink the potion – should the PCs try to make Bashott do so, Rincz will intervene to defend him from assault, thus providing the final service and the scholar will think that the adventurers were trying to poison him.

Moderators bear the phrase “amnesiac mania” in mind. Bashott comes around dehydrated, hung over, with appalling indigestion and no memory whatsoever of his fall from dignity. So far as he can tell, strangers have turned up, demanding payment for wine that they drank themselves.[‡] They have also released a perfectly good madling from service.

Bashott, a scholar in hiding

“If you must steal my wine, at least respect the vintage enough to decant it.”

Bashott is a portly, old man dressed in faded charcoal robes with brown suede patches. Dulce-Lolo obtained Rincz' services for him, in consideration of past favors.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 8, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 8, Attack (Caution) 4, Defense (Parry) 4, Health 4, Magic (studious) 6, Etiquette 8, Pedantry 12.

Spells: Excellent Prismatic Spray, Mantle of Stealth, Thandaval's Stolen Life

Tanax, Bashott's nephew

“I trust that you will prove worthy of your hire and have ways to check.”

Tanax is of medium height and weight, with dark brown hair and gray eyes. He dresses in rust and dove gray.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 8, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 8, Attack (Finesse) 6, Defense (Sure-Footedness) 6, Health 6, Appraisal 8, Stewardship 8

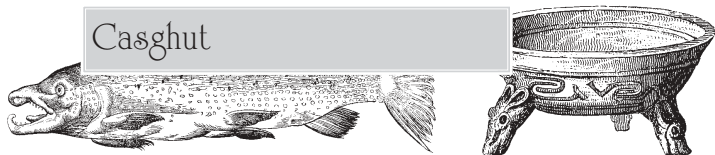
Rincz, a recalcitrant madling

“I would point out that my considerable experience and knowledge merit rewards of themselves. I would require further recompense, if I were to perform an actual service.”

[†] Habitues of Kaiin docks know perfectly well about Netter's Dropsy—for GMs who need their hands held, for a PC to discover this would require a Pedantry roll with a bonus of 2.

[‡] If only one bottle. Remembering to decant it would lessen Bashott's annoyance.

Casghut



Rincz usually appears as a fish-headed, feathered spider monkey.

Ratings: Rebuff (Lawyerly) 2-, Rebuff (Penetrating) 1.5-, Defense (Dodge) Ω



Casghut

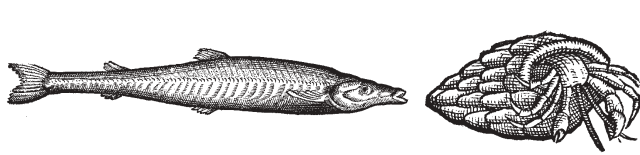
The remains of the stepped-city of Casghut stand on an island in the stream, just before the Xzan's second great bend. During the day, the city is a ruinous hump of eroded masonry, in places completely overgrown. Anyone viewing it at night will see it as an angular hill, with bobbing lights and busy crowds thronging the streets, drinking, dancing and singing.

Anyone going ashore to join the revelers never comes back. Whether it is the inhabitants or the grues that haunt the city of lights, no one knows; the bodies are never recovered.

The City on the Edge of Ecstasy

Casghut stands in the strange timelessness where base reality abuts Jamjain, the fourth purple sub-heaven, one of the thirteen pleasant Overworlds, and by far the most readily accessible. The city flits between the Dying Earth and Beyond – the sun's rays imprint mundanity on it, hence its time-scoured ruins. At night, it is more fully present, and travelers from Earth can enter it. As explorers from other places; witches from Sadal Suud, archvults from Jangk or animicules from Uthaw's world, loafing, indentured sandestins and other Overworld entities find Jamjain stimulating, it is a nexus for visitors and revelers. Anyone who visits wants desperately to stay, and those who leave long return. The carnivals, masquerades and bacchanals are frenzied, hypnotic and addictive. Any who enter Casghut find themselves drawn in and, for as long as they can follow the steps of the dance; they live happily in the city. Once they falter, the mood leaves them and they may explore.

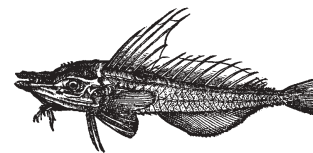
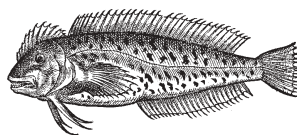
Casghut has nine concentric tiers of terraces, filled with buildings joined by ramps and set with bowers, balconies and cupolas. Night jasmine climbs everywhere and fire-imps, trapped in hanging jars shed



a flickering, multi-colored light.

At the city's apex is a small, domed turret, where a sandestin stands at a hexagonal table, furiously preparing food and mixing drinks. A man squats on the table, his hands stuck to a simple rope-clay jug. The elemental persistently presses refreshments on him, calling him "master" and assuring him that the vessel attached to him bears a curse and only their ministrations will prevent it from destroying him. The truth is that he is the mind-blasted relic of the Arch-Magician Camdalian, who moved his palace-town to Jamjain in an attempt to avoid the sun's death and so





live forever. Drinking the jug's contents will complete the charm. Unfortunately, he became distracted by the dimension's beauty. His sandestins Ingsial, Drajen, Corvus and Perinale take it in turns to distract him. So far, they have been successful, and the city has filled up with casual visitors who choose never to leave.

Naturally, any who have pressing business elsewhere, or who cannot find their dancing feet may depart. Those who do so simply walk down the lowest ramps and away from the lights. Where they end up is entirely dependent on capricious fate; so far, no one has returned to the Xzan valley in the dying light of the 21st Aeon.[†] Should the PCs assist Camdalian in finishing his spell, then the city will end up in Jamjain and the Arch-Magician will then expel any whom he would rather not have in eternity with him, including the PCs, although their exile to mundanity will be ascribed to the workings of Equipose.

Camdalian, a mind-blasted Arch-Magician

"You are dull and ugly. Leave my presence."

Camdalian has developed a drinker's belly, while his muscles have atrophied to uselessness. His dirty white hair is lank and falls to his knees. His robe, once purple, is covered in dust and streaked with drool. Should his mind return, he will lash out in embarrassed anger.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 2~, Rebuff (Penetrating) 2~, Attack (Finesse) 0.5~, Defense (Intuition) 0.5~, Health

Sandestins: Ingsial (4), Drajen (2), Corvus (1) and Perinale (1)

which both sexes wear in plaits. Both women and men have mustaches; women plait theirs in with the braids that fall down both sides of the face. The villagers maintain a solar cauldron, which is heated constantly on an open fire in the center of the village. Into this cauldron is placed any flower, plant or herb that is yellow or white. The steam that rises from the cauldron is collected in a sun tube, which is constantly rotated by hand so that it blasts its steam directly into the face of the sun. At night, the steam tube is taken out of the system and a condenser replaces it. The steam is condensed back into the cauldron but its essence is apparently held on a matrix built into the sides of the sun tube. As dawn, the condenser is taken out of the system and the first steam of the morning, heavy with the essence it releases from the matrix, is spurted forth at the sun, giving it the strength to rise and traverse the skies for another day. Such at least is the belief in Yokode.

Every three weeks, normally at night, they take one cauldron off the fire and replace it with the other cauldron. The contents of the cauldron are by this time a thick black brown paste, which they spread thinly on bread in lieu of butter. They also use it as a seasoning in stews and as a flavoring for ale. Each cask, prior to filling, has a spoonful of this paste dissolved in a mug full of boiling water and it is then swirled around the inside of the cask.

Travelers are neither sought after nor shunned, although the locals prefer them to deal with Kaldantine, the mayor or Ymantha, his wife, both of whom are hardened to foreign ways. The villagers buy a miscellany of items, cold iron and hard-wearing cloth are always wanted. In return, the villagers have various spices and pastes that they extract from flowers

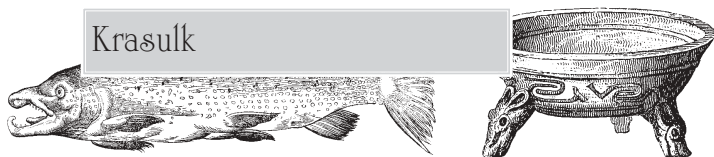
Yokode

Yokode lies on the north bank of the Xzan and sits on the edge of the moors, facing the forest across the river. It is barely a day's march from Xalgan on the Twish. It is also reasonably accessible from Chillersdorf and occasionally shepherds have been known to visit Yokode when their sheep are grazing at this edge of the moors.

The inhabitants are best described as homely, thick-limbed, fleshy featured with lank, brown hair,



[†] GMs should use Casghut as a portal to anywhere they like.



Krasulk

and herbs that they collect in the forest. They also sell small tubs of Yokode black paste.

Every quarter day the women of the village meet to discuss their husbands. A vote is taken and if there is suitable discontent, they may decide to hold a redistribution. Every male in the village over the age of sixteen has his name inscribed on a mauiler stone, which is dropped into a wicker swill. Each woman passes by and draws one stone out of the swill. She hands this stone to the Overseer of Actuality and Rapture. The Overseer checks the name on the stone and ensures that the male named on it is not related to a prohibited degree to the woman who drew it. If the man is, the stone is returned to the swill. If not then the woman hands the stone to the man who is now her new husband. The rest of the day is then spent in drunken celebration, or the equally drunken drowning of sorrows.

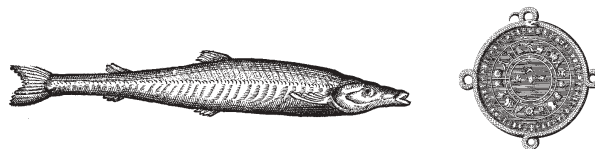
The Marriage Lottery

Male travelers automatically have their name inscribed on a stone and placed in the swill. As to their protestations of disinterest or even the fact that they already have a wife, these are brushed aside with the stock reply, that 'these are matters you can arrange to your convenience with your wife, after the ceremony'. Strangely, there are those among the women who may not be happy with a random husband. Indeed, some have an eye on a particular man. In these circumstances, travelers suspected of magical powers are sought out and asked to assist. In these situations, favors of all sorts are liberally promised and terces have been known to change hands. If the mage can cast a spell of Temporal Stasis and ensure that the 'correct' stone comes to the lady's hand, then this is all that is asked, inventive characters will doubtless know other methods of ensuring that the correct result is attained. What happens when two or more women make approaches and all seek the same man can only be resolved by those involved.

Kaldantine, the mayor

"Very well, show us your imported adjuncts and diversions..."

Kaldantine is tall and strong. He dresses in a long red velvet coat, lined with sheepskin, over gray pantaloons and a ruffled cream shirt.



Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 8, Rebuff (Wary) 8, Attack (Speed) 5, Defense (Vexation) 5, Health 5, Stewardship 6

Ymantha, his wife

"...and entertain us with tales of foreign parts, if you must."

Ymantha wears a long dress cut from the same cloth as her husband's coat. Heavy clogs poke out from under its hem.

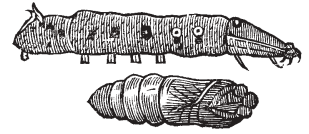
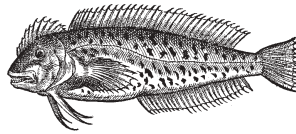
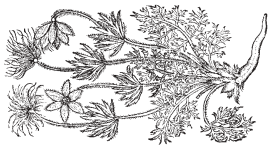
Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 8, Persuade (Obfuscatory) 8, Attack (Caution) 5, Defense (Dodge) 5, Health 4, Appraisal 6

Krasulk

The mounds of Krasulk are the only suggestion that a great city may once have stood here. The sole building remaining is THE OPULENT INVESTIGATOR, a large and ramshackle inn, which is kept by one Pelusileo, who is not merely the innkeeper but claims to be the owner of all Krasulk. He sells licenses to prospective treasure hunters, charges them fees for the hire of his landing stage, for the use of his river water, the right to cross his land to get to the plot you are licensed to explore, a finders charge of 20% of the value of anything you find (at Pelusileo's own estimation of value) and in certain extreme cases, a somewhat more than nominal charge to breathe the air, especially in the tap room, where he claims he has spent years struggling to achieve the correct ambiance.

It is Pelusileo who has hand bills printed in Kaiin and distributed around the streets. He adopts a somewhat more cunning tactic in Azenomei and Val Ombrio where drunkards sell 'treasure maps' of Krasulk to cunning and greedy adventurers for a few more drinks. He maintains a number of Maugifiers who patrol the area ensuring decorum between parties and who collect the various charges. These are large muscular gentlemen who carry danny-sticks and wear singularly unhelpful expressions.





Lich-mold

Pelusileo has ambitions to become a necrope, so feels obliged to collect and refine the most dank and compacted corpse-dust that he can find. The effort to do so in person is clearly excessive, so he delegates the responsibility to wandering treasure-seekers, who assume that the tailings and particularly the grime Pelusileo cleans from the relics before he assesses them are as much a nuisance to him as they are to them.

The landlord chooses not to be candid about his intentions because he desperately wants to avoid the full weight of the Law of Equivalence. Unless and until the excavators are paid in full for the lich-mold, they and not he will attract the enmity of any ghosts or dying curses associated with it. This will not become apparent until long after the PCs leave Krasulk. Things will begin to go wrong for them (GMs should impose Levies and Penalties, apparently whimsically), dead, scowling faces will look back at them from mirrors, they will begin to smell and their clothes will always look un-laundered. With time, the PCs' behavior will become more and more extreme; they will find themselves eating and drinking ever more (i.e. resisting Gourmandism at increasing Penalties and Levies), seemingly attempting to eat and drink themselves to death.

Should the PCs seek professional assistance, they will discover that the Diveranians, an expired religion from ages past, have infested their auras. The cultists' spirits want to return to their mortal parts, into which they had deliberately thrust their consciousness, gorging themselves on cheap food and rough spirits until they died at the table. Physically dead, their minds merged with the Earth and they reveled in the slow change of awareness as the planet died around them. They fully intend to return, using the PCs' bodies as vehicles to oblivion.

Investigating their condition and reversing it will prove problematic for the adventurers, as they will be persistently drunk and most unappealing to look at. GMs should allow PCs some moments of lucidity, in which they can attempt to resolve matters. *The Green and Purple Intelligence of Equipose* should prove most useful, hence highly priced.

Sysande, the sandestin who governs the spell, will advise the party that they can transfer both curse and infestation to Pelusileo by requiring him to observe Equipose strictly. As he wants the lich-mold, he owes them money, so will end up paying to acquire a death-curse. GMs will appreciate that the landlord has no intention of settling with the PCs, so they may have to resort to trickery, perhaps taking money for a service that they fail to perform. Then, when he goes to them to be reimbursed, they inform him that they took it in full and final settlement for the corpse-dust. Alternatively, the Pedantic will be aware that almost all practitioners of magic (which Pelusileo aspires to be, although there is no evidence of his studies) can be forced to obey the Law of Equivalence.



Green and Purple Intelligence of Equipose

Range: Near

Duration: Feat

Difficulty: Straightforward

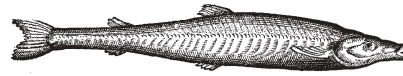
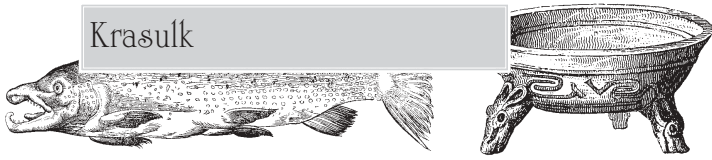
This spell informs its caster of the exact degree of indebtedness in which an individual or group is held. It therefore informs her of the correct actions to restore the balance. When a wizard casts this spell, Sysande, its governing sandestin, appears and adjudicates, in an extremely condescending, pedantic and self-satisfied manner. The elemental will not leave until the balance is exact and will provide continuous, precise directions

"The barmaid went to extra effort on your behalf, so deserves a personal gratuity..."

"...your gratitude moved from heartfelt to demeaning, hence the balance has tipped in your favor"

GM: Archmages tend not to use this spell, but recommend it heartily to lesser wizards. An encounter with Sysande is the occasion for unbridled mirth at the caster's expense. Zinqzin the Encyclopaedist rated this spell 'unperfected' in his immense catalogue. Regrettably, the abridged version does not contain that caveat, or discuss the quality of Sysande's attentions.





Things to Loot

GMs who send PCs out to acquire the Diveranians' curse will need to provide them with bona fide relics to discover:

- ☛ An enchanted saber, with a strong sense of fair play: it always calls out a warning. It guides its wielder's hand and fights with a Finesse of 12.
- ☛ A scowling god's head hat ornament. A very attractive piece in antique bronze and red gold, which yells abuse at any passing half-men, in a passable imitation of its wearer's voice (Imposture 10). The head will also advise on manners and deportment, increasing the wearer's Etiquette rating by 2.
- ☛ Two jade figurines of soldiers of Grand Motholam, each a small finger high, one red and one green and armed with rapiers and fighting-cloaks. If stood on a dining table, they will fight a spectacular, swashbuckling duel, plunging into soup, jumping through candle flames and swinging from trailing noodles. They will continue without let-up until dessert is served, as was the custom in dinner entertainment in the Glorious Times. Any who attempt to stop the fight will be subject to attack by both soldiers, who will insert their swords under fingernails, into tear ducts or the roots of teeth.
- ☛ An ear-clasp in the shape of a flantic that whispers one true statement about the person to whom the wearer is talking. The item expects to be well-treated and particularly dislikes low company, so whatever the wearer's circumstances, it pesters her to seek out better society. If she does not, the clasp will still work, but will complain all the time.
- ☛ A stoppered bottle, half-full of a sweet-smelling balm. Anciently used to preserve corpses, it can be applied to the feet, rendering them impervious to heat, cold and acidic or caustic substances. Its smell attracts tsaps.

Delusileo's Workroom

The student necrope keeps his studies to himself, so his ambitions are unknown. PCs who explore his cellar will find a sliding door hidden behind a wine rack (Perception roll at a Penalty of 1). This leads into a buried apsidal chamber where he keeps his copies of

the *Shorter Decretals*, *The Thanophile's Folio*[†] and Bartine's *Necrography*. A large table accommodates two retorts, a small still, a mortar and a pestle.

Pelusileo, an aspiring necrope

"This is good, old Kang work. I rate it at seventy terces, less my fee, of course."

Pelusileo has pale, sunken features and thin, wispy black hair. His deep set eyes are jet black. He wears a brown leather apron over olive corduroy trousers and a heavy linen shirt. His apron has pockets for his tools – knives, scalpels, hooks, tweezers, and reamers.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 1.5-, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 1.5-, Attack (Ferocity) 8, Defense (Misdirection) 8, Health 6, Magic (Studious) 1, Appraisal 6, Pedantry 8

Clanto, Garvan, Furgis, maugifiers

"We collect taxes and keep order. We do both with these sticks."

These are big, rough men, dressed in heavy leather coats and boots. They wear black tricorns.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) -, Rebuff (Contrary) -, Attack (Strength) -, Defense (Parry) -, Health 8

From Krasulk it is merely a few miles down stream to where the Xzan meets the Twish.



[†] A book of poetry in Old Naotic and not actually a grimoire, facts not readily apparent and unknown to Pelusileo.



Appendix I



DIVERS INCIDENTS

Here we provide a selection of themed vignettes for the GM's use. They are not tied to any specific geography, so she can use them wherever she pleases in the valley.

Brigandage

Assault

The road runs past some old culverts. These seem to be filled with gorse bushes, but are really just camouflaged hiding places. Half-men scuttle out and attack them timidly with an assortment of gardening tools, stolen from a nearby manse.

This gang is new to banditry, and uncertain as to what will happen. Any level of resistance will upset them, and actually suffering wounds will provoke shock and expressions of disgust.

Should the PCs press their advantage, they will find that the bodies have little saleable loot, although one has a wedge of cheese and half an onion in a pocket.

If both sides break off the fight, then the bandits will protest at their rough treatment and submit a claim for damages. They will exaggerate the cost of restitution to them, pointing out that the very act of traveling the roads is an invitation to brigandage, so the PCs brought the affair upon themselves and should have cooperated with their attackers.

Blandine, Perriman, Rossip, Faklum, Gustrue, Half-man robbers

"Stand and oblige us, your terces and your silence."

The robbers are verminous, debased and ugly. They wear tattered, ditch-stained clothes, slashed and puffed to fit their lumpy bodies.

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 4, Rebuff (Wary) 4, Attack (Caution) 0.5~, Defense (Parry) 0.5~, Health 6

Field of Fire

Polite bandits pepper the characters with arrows until they agree to surrender their worldly goods. Ever cautious, the robbers instruct them to strip, then step away from their possessions. Provided the PCs are courteous, their assailants will return their underwear. If they are not, the bandits will burn it.

Should the adventurers prevail, they will be able to loot jewelry, money and silver-chased weapons from their attackers. If they take any prisoner and persuade them to talk, their captives will explain that they are members of the House Discrete, the true royal family of Almery (or Ascolais, as appropriate). They might even take the party to their treasure, a chest hidden in an old chimney, now overgrown with dark blue ivy, and about half a day's travel. Naturally, the bandits will attempt to escape en route.

They will not volunteer that the chest is trapped with explosive diambroid and will blow the hands off the person who attempts to remove it. Should the party require their hostages to get the treasure for them, they will have to watch them carefully, as a tube of blue concentrate is also hidden in the chimney.

If the PCs eventually open the chest, they will find four belts of linked gold plates, supporting rapiers and pistol holsters, a crown, a scepter and an orb, and seven hundred terces. A leather wallet, stuck to the lid holds an extensive genealogy of the family. A cursory inspection will show that these items are tin, spun brass and paste. The coins too are counterfeit.

PCs with any skill in Pedantry will suspect that the documents are similarly bogus; on an Illustrious Success, the character will remember that these false pedigrees were sold in great quantities by Kandive's maternal grandfather, Sadante the Munificent.

If the chest blows up, all they will find is mangled metal.



Emphyrio, Cadwal, Allastor and Trullian, polite bandits

"Would you mind disrobing? You might otherwise forget to surrender your hidden wealth."

The four wear black knee boots, maroon britches, black tabards charged with a stylized scarlet flame, cloth of gold blouses and black berets with crimson cockades. They carry rapiers and bows.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) 1, Rebuff (Obtuse) 6, Attack (Caution) 1.5~, Defense (Misdirection) 1.5~, Health ~

Resistances: Arrogance 0

(Obtuse) 6, Attack (Cunning) 8, Defense (Misdirection) 6, Health 8, Athletics 6, Seamanship 6, Stealth 6

**Pursuit**

A corrective committee[†] chases the adventurers.

When the party has become habituated to the idea that they may loot and pillage, then leave,[‡] the GM may dispatch a posse of irate citizens, led by two thief takers. If the PCs stand and fight, they will most likely win, but may take losses. At the GM's whim, these casualties might not die outright, but be taken prisoner, eventually to be staked out for the pelgranes. Obviously, the local authorities will offer the PC mercy in return for information on his cohorts.

The next time the characters break the law, and sporadically thereafter, people will pursue them.

Pirates

The party is on a large rivercraft, which is assaulted at night by a strong, torch-lit force in three long boats. PCs of any quality will not volunteer their service to repel the borders.

Even if the captain and fellow passengers browbeat them into joining in, they can attempt to roll against Perception, with a penalty of 1. Successful PCs will notice that this attack, for all its apparent ferocity is a ruse: while the defenders line the rail to repel the attackers, accomplices swim out from the opposite bank, breathing through reeds. They sneak aboard the target and launch a surprise attack.

If the party is on the losing side, and survive, they will be left destitute. If they win, they will acquire a part share in the dead pirates' loot, although knives, wooden clubs, bell-bottomed britches and earrings do not fetch a good price at auction.

Andran, Thantane, Kandra, exemplary longboat raiders

"Our pardon, we almost missed your boat in the dark."

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 6, Rebuff (Contrary) 6, Attack (Strength) 6, Defense (Parry) 8, Health 8, Athletics 6, Seamanship 6.

Earoon, Galas, Mullbar, exemplary sneak attackers

"...!"

Ratings: Persuade (Obfuscatory) 6, Rebuff

Jemle and Renton, thief takers

"Come with us, you have charges to answer."

The thief takers wear sturdy dark clothes, heavy boots and well starched, wide brimmed felt hats.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) ~, Rebuff (Lawyerly) ~, Attack (Cunning) 1.5~, Defense (Intuition) 1.5~, Health ~, Athletics 6

Vantro, Grugal and Merthe, Elyyse, exemplary irate citizens

"You will regret robbing us."

Ratings: Persuade (Forthright) 4, Rebuff (Penetrating) 8, Attack (Ferocity) 4, Defense (Dodge) 4, Health 2

**Bounty**

The thief takers in one settlement decide that they want the party so badly that they post a reward for their capture. There might very well be a case to answer, or the characters might be victims of mistaken identity or even simply of unruly behavior on the part of the authorities. What is certain is that bounty hunters in any number, with skills ranging from 0.75~

[†] Pelgrane Press allows this phrase to appear only once in any publication. Here it is.

[‡] As reflected in their low Sympathy rating.



to 4~ will chase them. Confirmation that the bounty has been claimed, or that the issuer cannot pay it will save them. Creative PCs may find some other remedy, such as bribing each bounty hunter in turn to leave them alone.



Assassin

GMs should manufacture an opportunity for a PC to offend someone who seems entirely inconsequential. This person hires Mihiro Taroon, of the Stormcloud tribe from the Great Eastern Steppe, to effect his revenge.

Taroon's method is to reduce his victim to poverty through general ostracism, then to offer the destitute wreck a merciful death, while he roots for groats in the gutter. To prolong the suffering, he will begin by encouraging traders not to deal fairly with his victim. Wherever the PCs go they will find the locals already set against them. Not so much as to refuse their money, but to charge exorbitant prices for poor service. Taroon will suggest to local footpads that his victims are secretly wealthy, and await developments.

Mihiro Taroon

"There is more beneath your son's skin than you can easily imagine. I might be forced to demonstrate."

Taroon is a huge man, bow-legged from a life in the saddle. Like all his tribe, he lives entirely on the desert oast. They ride these creatures, eat their meat, drink their blood and wear their shaggy skins. His own beast is a gelding, grown to thirteen feet high on a diet of stolen barley and beer.

He wears an oast-tooth cap, even indoors, two fur coats, one pelt inwards, one outwards, britches, puttees and boots. His preferred weapons are sword and bow. Oddly for so frightening a man, he is a Cautious attacker, a Vexatious defender. PCs able to persuade anyone who has met Taroon to discuss him, will discover that he did not draw a weapon, rather, he shared his knowledge of how to skin a lank-lizard alive and in one piece.

Ratings: Persuade (Intimidating) 13, Rebuff (Wary) 8, Attack (Cautious) 6, Defense (Vexatious) 13, Health 8, Athletics 8, Perception 8, Riding (desert oast) 13.



Tricks and Swindles

Holding the baby

The party meets Irander, a man desperately scratching around to shore up his wagon, which has lost a wheel and is in danger of falling into a water-filled drainage ditch. He will explain that he is attempting to preserve a rich load of Canasparan silks from destruction. His associate has gone to get help (perhaps the adventurers met him?) but, for the moment, his main concern is to stop the vehicle falling over. He will pay the PCs two terces each to collect shingles and branches.

Once they have got into the rhythm of shoring up the wagon, he will take a break the work himself, at which point the characters will discover that they cannot stop themselves. He will thank them for helping him to escape a wizard's curse, and set off on his way.

Some hours later, a maroon homunculus with bottle-green hair will wander towards them across the field. He will ask them where Irander went. Presumably, they will tell him, then protest at their current plight. The imp will smirk and tell them that his master, Eshmiel, grew tired of salesmen calling at his manse, so cursed one of them as an example to the rest. Eshmiel very much enjoyed watching Irander's discomfort and is sad that the joke has ended. He requires the PCs to find a suitable, alternative distraction for him.[†]



Whatever You Desire

Morubo, a seller of trinkets, assures the most self-deceiving PC that one of his talismans, a miniature, unmarked plumb bob on a cord woven from blond, red and brown hair, will certainly win him his heart's true desire. Seers of unimpeachable integrity will assure him the trader is telling the complete, unvarnished truth. The problem is that the talisman does just what its seller claims for it. The GM decides,

[†] GM: Eshmiel is of Rhialto level, while the PCs are of Cugel's quality, so game statistics are irrelevant. The sight of them coming to remonstrate with him in person would count as sufficiently amusing.

in consultation with the other players, what this desire actually is, as the character's true wish is a secret from himself.

Although he will doubtless struggle against his fate for weeks to come, the talisman will keep turning him towards it. Naturally, being cursed, the talisman cannot be removed or its cord cut.



The Healer

A woman calls to the party from a canopied boat propelled by eight rowers. She introduces herself as Zamailinth. Baranale, a studious, winged demon takes soundings from the bow, while Fluperine, a capering violet imp works the tiller.

If the party is in need of aid, particularly if they are badly hurt, she will be happy to help them, free and gratis. If they ask her what the Law of Equipose has to say about this, she will laugh and tell them that she does not care about wizards and their rules.

If they accept her help, she will come ashore and treat their injuries. If they do not, she will shrug and assure them that her offer remains open. Naturally, there is a catch. Zamailinth will help any who come to her, without passing judgment upon them. Unfortunately, until they perform a service for her, they will likewise be unable to act with hostility or prejudice and will find themselves always giving people a chance to act well. She will not explain this to them until they have realized that their usual sentiments have left them. The services she requires are philanthropic, such as the diversion of a grandee's fortune to assist his oppressed tenants, acquiring healing herbs from deep in the forest, or simply for them to keep an old widow company, playing cards with her until she dies. She will never require them to kill on her behalf.

Zamailinth

"Equipose is an artifice, not a law."

The healer has red hair and blue eyes. She wears the traditional Kauchique costume of harem pants, halter and flowing scarves, all in powder blue, with gold thread.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 10, Rebuff (Obtuse) 10, Attack (Cunning)



5, Defense (Misdirection) 5, Health 10, Pedantry 10, Physician 15, Scuttlebutt 10, Magic (Insightful) 8

Spells: Charm of Untiring Nourishment, Felojun's Thaumaturgic Poultice, Felojun's Second Hypnotic Spell, Javanne's Enervation of Will, Liberation of Warp, The Second Retrotropic, Spell of the Slow Hour

Baranale

Ratings: Attack (Cautious) 12, Defense (Intuition) 12, Health 12, Pedantry 10

Fluperine

Ratings: Attack (Finesse) 12, Defense (Sure-footedness) 12, Health 12, Seamanship 10



Events and Encounters

A Child's Funeral

While taking refreshment from a wayside bank of brambles, with remarkably sweet, juicy fruit, the party comes across a little procession, which leaves the road and sets a small body down on the ground. They then dig a shallow grave and line it with flowers. They place the corpse in it and cover it over, planting a fruiting bramble in the grave soil. Then they leave. Obviously, the PCs have been eating fruit planted in other graves.



Witch Hunt

The party is disturbed, whether while on the road, or camping overnight, by a witch, Tisvet, who runs through them. A large, angry mob, with an aggregate Rebuff rating of Obtuse 1- is in hot pursuit. Unless she has reason to recognize the party, she will carry on running, otherwise, if she thinks that they might help her (based on their local reputation, if any), she will ask them to do so.



Nothing other than prompt and wholehearted assistance will win the good opinion of the mob. They outnumber the characters by three to two and have skills in the 0.75~ to 1.25~ range. The witch herself has a Magic rating of 6, but no available spells.

If the PCs save her, she will invite them to her coven. If they actively help the mob, they will attract her dying curse, and will turn up at the coven, but as sacrificial victims, not as guests.



The Coven

While traveling, the characters notice a strange glow off to the side of the road, beyond the forest margins. This is the ceremonial fire of a group of local witches. If the PCs sneak up upon them, they will come across twice their number of worshippers, (1~), eating, drinking and fornicating as directed by three celebrants, (Skirlike, Shayrle and Galinas, 1.5~). They are arranged in a loose circle around a fire pit, and sit with their backs to high, sturdy, sharpened but untenanted stakes.

Any players who feel that being able to approach a necromantic mass unobserved is too convenient, will soon be vindicated. The essential component of this celebration is a voluntary sacrifice, defined as someone who approached willingly and uninvited. As they watch and salivate, the witches' demonic guards will knit themselves out of the shadows and then impel the PCs into the circle. The congregation will give a great shout of triumph and the celebrants will gloatingly explain the available options.

First is to be killed as a blood sacrifice.[†] The witches prefer this to be excruciatingly painful and drawn out, so impale their victims on the stakes. PCs who make a pedantry roll will be aware that the coven will continue to celebrate until their last sacrifice is dead. They will also know that, should all the poles become tenanted, they will consign excess victims to the fire.

Next is to swap bodies with the oldest and most ugly worshipper, who has been toying with the idea of joining the opposite sex. To lessen the chance of this charm being reversible, the coven will dedicate the worshipper's previous body as a sacrifice.

Third is becoming the vessel for an Overworld entity, who is curious about physical appetites. This

will result in death through an excess of something, whether food, wine, dream-powder or simple exertion. The Overworlder will share the body with the possessed and will ask him to comment on how the sensual Odyssey is going. It cannot relinquish control, and must stay in the mundane world for as long as its host survives.

Fourth is to become a servitor of the coven. This also involves entering the fire, but only after receiving protective tattoos in ash and blood. The victim burns, but does not die, instead transforming into a demonic guard, a creature of smoke and shadow who only exists while the fire burns.

If a witch has invited the PCs to the service, then they may safely join the worshippers. If they enjoy themselves, then they may join the coven. Aside from an oath of secrecy, backed up with a curse (if they break faith, even under torture, they will attend the next celebration, as sacrifices, unless they can find a loophole in the curse), and a promise to help fellow witches, there are no dues or benefits beyond attendance at the next mass.

If the PCs are cursed attendees, they find themselves striding towards the fire, and watch helplessly as the witches brought about their doom. Obviously, persuasive or lucky adventurers should be able to talk their way out of this predicament. GMs should certainly allow them to try to persuade the witches that they are more use to them alive than dead. An apparent capacity for crime and murder and a willingness to perform such discrete work for them would count in their favor. Romantic proposals might also have positive results.

In the ensuing discussions, the witches will mention that the Green Legion is inconvenient and that any damage the PCs could render to it or its personnel, past or present, would earn them the Coven's good will.

Should the PCs somehow obliterate the coven, they will attract a dying curse, to be taken for witches whenever each is out, alone and at night. They will find items of value among the bodies: tubes of blue concentrate, spell books, exotic herbs and rich clothes in an assortment of styles.

Demon guards: Attack (Cunning) 10, Defense (Misdirection) 6, Health 4. They may be beaten down to tenuous shadows, which reform over the next hour. They may only be killed by quenching

[†] GMs should select a GMC, perhaps a straggler from a mob for this privilege.

the sacred fire. When the PCs encounter this ceremony, there are four such guards. One of them has Magic (Forceful) 2 and has encompassed *The Excellent Prismatic Spray* and *Lugwiler's Dismal Itch*.



The Pilgrims

The adventurers come across a cofile of trudging humanity, some fifty strong, dressed in sacking, making its way along the road, herded by six white robed riders, mounted on wherriots. They are heading towards the Valley of Graven Tombs. A river barge, being poled along by more people in white, is clearly supplying them en route. If the party happen to be watching the column nearby and from hiding, they might note that the guards treat their charges with courtesy and respect and do not seem to be driving them anywhere against their will.

Should the party approach the procession, the guards will form a screen. At this range, the PCs will be able to see that the troops are outfitted after the style of Grand Motholam's Death's Head Dragoons, with a brace of dart guns, and swords. They are even wearing blued metal cuirasses and sallets under their bone white leather coats and hoods, and their mounts carry chamfons and half-barding, of some iridescent creamy substance. These escorts will tell the adventurers to mind their own business, and to keep their distance.

If, in a fit of quixotic bravura, the party decides to attack the procession, they will find that the half the riders fire volleys of darts at them while the rest seek cover, from which they harass their attackers. The mounted contingent reloads, then attempts either to ride down the enemy or circle behind them. Four of the soldiers have skills of 1~, the second in command Junevan has 1.5~ and the leader Borriad 2~. Should the adventurers lose, the pilgrims will express the opinion that river creatures should consume their bodies. The chained figures will command the soldiers to throw them into the water, even to break their limbs to hamper attempts to swim to safety.

GMs may amuse themselves by making the PCs plead for mercy. Ultimately, the troops will refuse to murder them, but will extort money and services from their prisoners anyway.

If they win, the people in sacking will complain

indignantly that the PCs have interrupted a holy rite. They are the Masters, walking in honest humility to the tomb of Garutobe the Luctivore, to petition his still-living ghost to re-ignite the sun. They will have to wait for seven years to make another attempt, and, should the sun go out first, it will be the party's fault.



The Man-Island

Sitting by the Scaum, watching the mist rise from the water, whichever of the PCs who is on guard will see a remarkable sight. A long-legged blue and orange bird is standing on a hemispherical, flesh colored rock, which seems to be moving with the current.

If she investigates, she will find that the rock is the huge, drum-taut belly of an immensely fat man, who is floating downstream, head first, unconscious and naked. The bird has fixed its talons into his flesh and seems to be steering him: when it clenches its right foot, he moves to port, if it uses its left, he veers to starboard. Perceptive characters will note that the talons cause a reflexive sculling of one of his hands, which diverts his body.

If the PCs do nothing but watch, and perhaps keep pace with the man, he will wake up and chat happily with them. His name is Lutashko, and he is so fat as always to be buoyant. No matter how choppy the water, he will not sink, neither will he capsize. The bird is his best friend, Abantnay, who speaks, but only in the tongue of the Kang Successors, which it has taught him. Abantay is a member of a migrating species which winters in Sanreal Bay and nests above Black Lake. He is too old to fly so instead rides Lutashko downstream every year. In Kaiin, Abantnay works on translations for the local scholars and pays a boat to tow both himself and Lutashko back to Osier. As they watch, the huge man raises one ponderous leg out of the water, revealing a night line, with two fish on it. He places these on his stomach and Abantnay guts them for him. The bird eats the intestines, then shreds the meat and drops it into Lutashko's mouth. Should the party offer him other food or drink, he will accept happily, provided that the offer also extends to the bird. He will not leave the water to eat or drink, but Abantnay will.

If the PCs decide to rescue him while he is asleep, they will find that, on dry land, he suffocates under



his own weight. If they decide that the bird is some sort of demon or construct and kill it, he will be disconsolate. He will not lay curses, but on his arrival at Kaiin, delayed by having to extract himself from reeds, rushes and river weeds, he will tell the scholars who killed their translator. They will take remedial action, of a magical kind.

Should the PCs happen upon him in Kaiin, they will find him moored by a toe near the Derna outflow. Day or night, skiff-loads of scholars attend him and Abantnay, holding up folios for the bird to read, and taking down Lutashko's translations of the creature's Kangese. A notary records the fees owed and local bakers feed pies and ale to the man-island, and nuts, seeds and shrimp to the bird.

Lutashko, man-island

"I regret that my clumsy translation does not catch the nuances of my companion's Kangese."

In his hometown of Azenomei, Lutashko was regarded as an amusingly obese attraction, whom they kept in a sideshow booth at the fair. Lutashko left and now floats in the Scaum, living on what he can catch or earn through honest work.

Ratings: Persuade (Charming) 6, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 12, Attack (Strength) 5, Defense (Parry) 5, Health 10, Athletics (Swimming only) 15, Pedantry (Old Kangese) 6,

Resistances: Gourmandism 0.

Abantnay, avian antiquarian and linguist

"About the time of the war of the Motholam succession, the proto-Kangese took to burying their dead in the verticle position, but head down, so their exposed feet would act as a road surface. Your mummy has unworn soles, so is a clumsy fabrication."

Abantnay has a long, strong beak, dark red eyes and glossy plumage. Regrettably, his flight feathers are afflicted with ague, and he cannot fly.

Ratings: Persuade (Eloquent) (only in Old Kangese) 12, Rebuff (Lawyerly) 12 AttAttack (Speed)ack () 6 Defense (Dodge) 6, Health 3 Pedantry (Old Kangese) 16, Evaluate 12,

Resistances: Arrogance 0



A Bubble Full of Dreams

The PCs note a multicolored flare off in the woods and upwind. Sometime later, they will see a large, transparent bubble, with an oily, rainbow-tinted surface, bouncing towards them. As it approaches, it grows larger. Seen more closely, it is 20 feet across, and moving towards them, skipping on the surface of something much as a stone does across still water.

If the PCs let it brush against them, then the thing that tempts them most will no longer do so.[†] It bursts if they hack at it, spattering everything around with oily liquid. Those hit will fall prey to another temptation, determined by the GM. In addition, the fewest Sympathy points will have her Rebuff converted to Pure-Hearted, to be played accordingly.[‡]

The bubble is a dream wisp, which forms part of Vermoulian's ongoing categorization of the subconscious. It absorbs the most pressing desire of anything it touches (so, for example, a great swathe of forest no longer wants to reach for the sun). Should it burst, its skin will scatter as iridescent, droplets. These impress their stored emotion on any living thing, for as long as they touch it.

If the PCs want to get their old feelings back, they might apply to Vermoulian (*DERPG* p160). They do not need to; the magician wants these motivations for his great dream index, but, once categorized, he has no need for the originals, and will send them back. A burst bubble is another matter entirely. The droplets from it are of great worth and their creator wants them collected and returned to him. Although a sandestin could do this work, it would represent an unnecessary expenditure of indenture points. The culprits, after all, stand idle.

The bubbles issue from Vermoulian's Peregrine Palace, which the PCs might observe, hovering on the horizon. On the way, they will meet a deodand who isn't hungry, and an honest, good-natured twk-man.



Lost and found

A pit, lined with ash and brick, now filled with peat. Excavators will find round masses the size and shape of human heads, which if cut open, will prove to be unsalted butter, hidden there in the past and still perfectly edible.

[†] Their lowest Temptation, other than Arrogance becomes Ω.

[‡] If the PC already has a Rebuff of Pure-Hearted, then her player has been not been inculcated with the spirit of the game.



Appendix II



TAGLINES

*My congratulations on your success. My hat and
purse clasp will suit you well, although they show
your current ensemble to its disadvantage.*

*Surely amity would be more productive, especially
when you have a deodand behind you.*

*Whilst you may believe that you have the advantage,
arcane forces beyond your comprehension act in my favor.*

*Nonsense. I was simply protecting your
decorative footwear from the river's mud.*

*Removing both of my legs seems an excessive punishment.
What threat is a hopping vagabond?*

*Another "corrective committee"?
Have you no vocabulary of your own?*

I nominate you to enforce my edicts.

*I claim my right to hospitality and generous treatment,
as is the usual custom towards travellers.*

*You exude such a personal chafe into the air that the
stench of the blood may well be redundant.*

I see but a single flaw in your argument.

It is not, in any sense, a nice touch.

I see that my intercession is useless.

*Mercy? Why? Your current situation is
the consequence of your life.*

I will not have my veracity assailed.

The charges would seem to be impalpable.

*I declare the matter concluded, so claim
first share of the spoils.*

*A person of the proper quality would
reject the idea out of hand.*

*Your claims of "comprehensive experience"
would seem to be well founded.*

In such a case my bare denial carries no great weight.

*I suspect that my continued presence will only distract
you from your private business. I bid you my leave.*

*I have a superstitious nature: my appeal for divine aid
was a reflex, not a spell.*

I suspect that your mental capacity is of a low order.

You are, after all, a volunteer.

*I am in no way dispirited by the evident lack of
volunteers. I shall merely resort to conscription.*

*The response I expected was gratitude,
not open-mouthed disgust.*

*Our first expenditure must be on clothes
appropriate for our new rank.*

First, I must assess the source of your discomfort.

*Indeed, the word can have that meaning
amongst the uneducated.*

*As you are a stranger to reasoned argument,
I will not exert myself in that regard.*

I would add "corruptibility" to that list of virtues.

It is time for you to realize your moral turpitude.

A defensible position, if delivered with smugness.

*I do not concede, I merely lack the inclination
to develop my argument.*

You have violated my usufructary privileges!

*I see that you are familiar with
the abridged version of the text.*



This is undeniably the work of a diseased imagination.

I have seldom seen objects so studiously repulsive.

Please address your demands to my factor, who is accustomed to conversing with the lower orders.

Let us rely upon reasoned argument, rather than an infantile impulse to violence.

You misinterpreted a well-meant criticism, intended to improve your station.

But of course you must stay for dinner.

My work proceeds apace but they conspire to stop me.

If I dressed like that, I too would live in a rural backwater.

I'm sure that if only your mother could remember anything about your fathers identity, you could claim kinship with the people hereabouts.

Ignore my companions remarks, he is the victim of a fell enchantment.

Note I do not draw my sword to threaten you, merely as a precaution against the deodand which lurks in the bush behind you.

My friend here laughs at death. Beware lest he strike you down in a fit of merriment.

At least when the sun blinks out we shall no longer see your waistcoat.

Why does it appear to me that the cruel fates foul our soup cauldron at every turn?

I refute your slanderous accusation and declare this last round to have been null and void.

It has an unseemly number of teeth, and I for one am not eager to disturb its repose.

You are insufficiently distinguished to merit a sobriquet.

It is imperative that you proffer us your assistance, as our arrival in the countryside is due to an unfortunate error.

Be off with you; do not return until you have reconsidered your preposterous charges.

I am constrained by my nature to attempt perfection.





Indices of Variable Utility

In all cases an emboldened figure indicates the most detailed entry



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