

Games From Folktales

Transcripts for June 2017

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An experiment in podcasting for the Ars Magica roleplaying game

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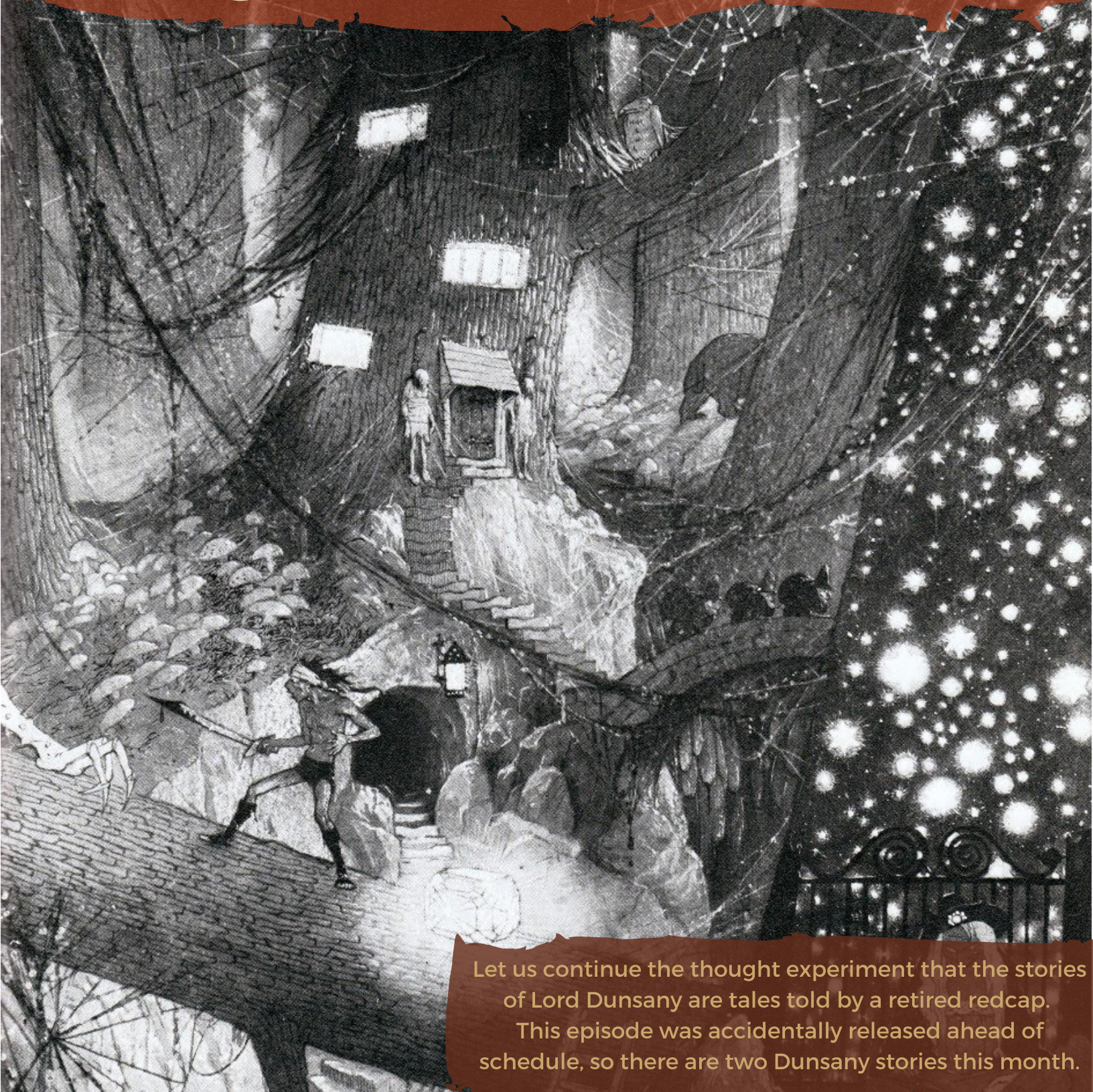
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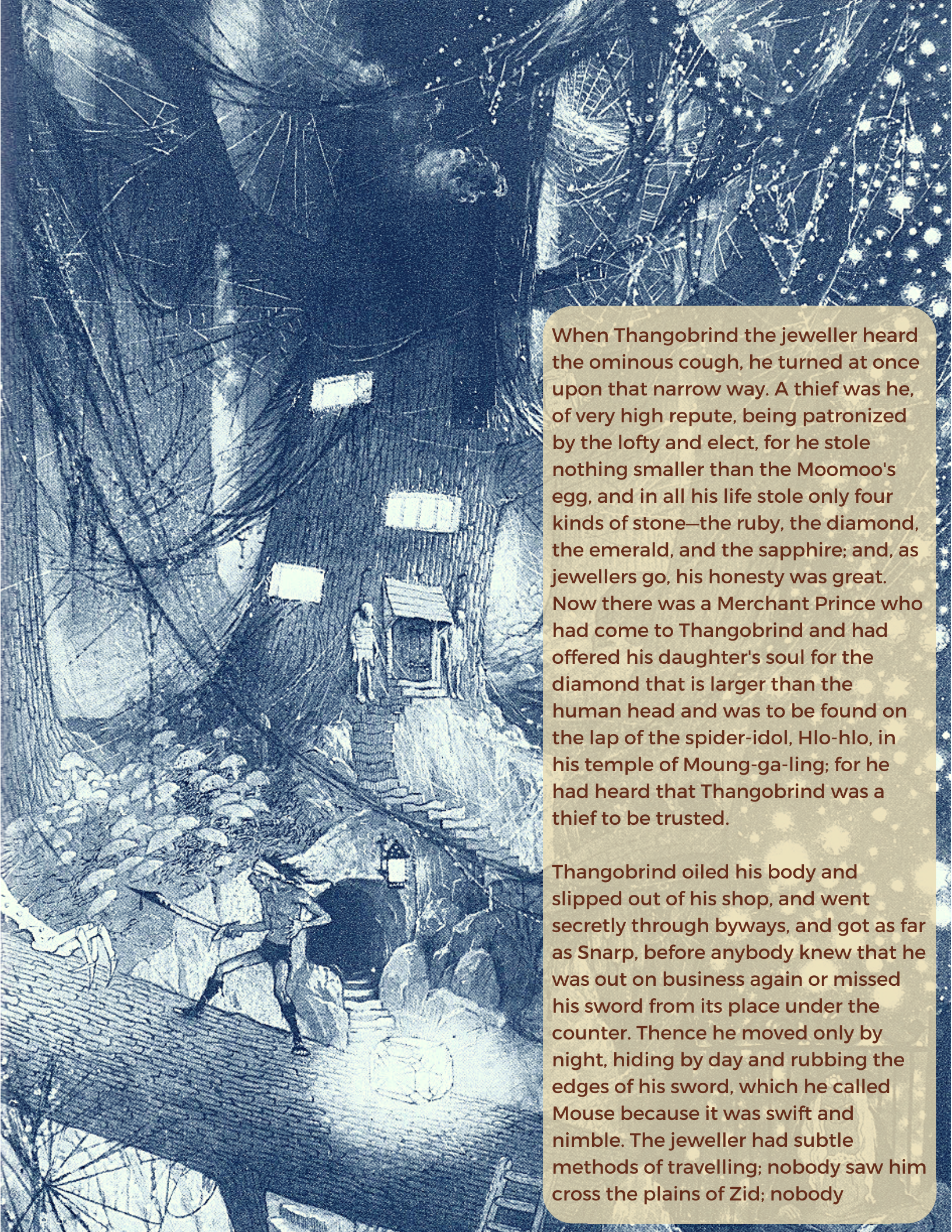
Excellent people all...

Dunsany fragments : The Distressing Tale of Thangobrind the Jeweller



Let us continue the thought experiment that the stories of Lord Dunsany are tales told by a retired redcap.

This episode was accidentally released ahead of schedule, so there are two Dunsany stories this month.



When Thangobrind the jeweller heard the ominous cough, he turned at once upon that narrow way. A thief was he, of very high repute, being patronized by the lofty and elect, for he stole nothing smaller than the Moomoo's egg, and in all his life stole only four kinds of stone—the ruby, the diamond, the emerald, and the sapphire; and, as jewellers go, his honesty was great. Now there was a Merchant Prince who had come to Thangobrind and had offered his daughter's soul for the diamond that is larger than the human head and was to be found on the lap of the spider-idol, Hlo-hlo, in his temple of MOUNG-GA-LING; for he had heard that Thangobrind was a thief to be trusted.

Thangobrind oiled his body and slipped out of his shop, and went secretly through byways, and got as far as Sharp, before anybody knew that he was out on business again or missed his sword from its place under the counter. Thence he moved only by night, hiding by day and rubbing the edges of his sword, which he called Mouse because it was swift and nimble. The jeweller had subtle methods of travelling; nobody saw him cross the plains of Zid; nobody

saw him come to Mursk or Tlun. O, but he loved shadows! Once the moon peeping out unexpectedly from a tempest had betrayed an ordinary jeweller; not so did it undo Thangobrind: the watchman only saw a crouching shape that snarled and laughed: "'Tis but a hyena," they said. Once in the city of Ag one of the guardians seized him, but Thangobrind was oiled and slipped from his hand; you scarcely heard his bare feet patter away. He knew that the Merchant Prince awaited his return, his little eyes open all night and glittering with greed; he knew how his daughter lay chained up and screaming night and day. Ah, Thangobrind knew. And had he not been out on business he had almost allowed himself one or two little laughs. But business was business, and the diamond that he sought still lay on the lap of Hlo-hlo, where it had been for the last two million years since Hlo-hlo created the world and gave unto it all things except that precious stone called Dead Man's Diamond. The jewel was often stolen, but it had a knack of coming back again to the lap of Hlo-hlo. Thangobrind knew this, but he was no common jeweller and hoped to outwit Hlo-hlo, perceiving not the trend of ambition and lust and that they are vanity.

How nimbly he threaded his way through he pits of Snood!—now like a botanist, scrutinising the ground; now like a dancer, leaping from crumbling edges. It was quite dark when he went by the towers of Tor, where archers shoot ivory arrows at strangers lest any foreigner should alter their laws, which are bad, but not to be altered by mere aliens. At night they shoot by the sound of the strangers' feet. O, Thangobrind, Thangobrind, was ever a jeweller like you! He dragged two stones behind him by long cords, and at these the archers shot. Tempting indeed was the

snare that they set in Woth, the emeralds loose-set in the city's gate; but Thangobrind discerned the golden cord that climbed the wall from each and the weights that would topple upon him if he touched one, and so he left them, though he left them weeping, and at last came to Theth. There all men worship Hlo-hlo; though they are willing to believe in other gods, as missionaries attest, but only as creatures of the chase for the hunting of Hlo-hlo, who wears Their halos, so these people say, on golden hooks along his hunting-belt. And from Theth he came to the city of MOUNG and the temple of MOUNG-ga-ling, and entered and saw the spider-idol, Hlo-hlo, sitting there with Dead Man's Diamond glittering on his lap, and looking for all the world like a full moon, but a full moon seen by a lunatic who had slept too long in its rays, for there was in Dead Man's Diamond a certain sinister look and a boding of things to happen that are better not mentioned here. The face of the spider-idol was lit by that fatal gem; there was no other light. In spite of his shocking limbs and that demoniac body, his face was serene and apparently unconscious.

A little fear came into the mind of Thangobrind the jeweller, a passing tremor—no more; business was business and he hoped for the best. Thangobrind offered honey to Hlo-hlo and prostrated himself before him. Oh, he was cunning! When the priests stole out of the darkness to lap up the honey they were stretched senseless on the temple floor, for there was a drug in the honey that was offered to Hlo-hlo. And Thangobrind the jeweller picked Dead Man's Diamond up and put it on his shoulder and trudged away from the shrine; and Hlo-hlo the spider-idol said nothing at all, but he laughed softly as the jeweller shut the door.

grip of the drug that was offered with the honey to Hlo-hlo, they rushed to a little secret room with an outlet on the stars and cast a horoscope of the thief. Something that they saw in the horoscope seemed to satisfy the priests.

It was not like Thangobrind to go back by the road by which he had come. No, he went by another road, even though it led to the narrow way, night-house and spider-forest.

The city of Mounng went towering by behind him, balcony above balcony, eclipsing half the stars, as he trudged away with his diamond. Though when a soft pittering as of velvet feet arose behind him he refused to acknowledge that it might be what he feared, yet the instincts of his trade told him that it is not well when any noise whatever follows a diamond by night, and this was one of the largest that had ever come to him in the way of business. When he came to the narrow way that leads to spider-forest, Dead Man's Diamond feeling cold and heavy, and the velvety footfall seeming fearfully close, the jeweller stopped and almost hesitated. He looked behind him; there was nothing there. He listened attentively; there was no sound now. Then he thought of the screams of the Merchant Prince's daughter, whose soul was the diamond's price, and smiled and went stoutly on. There watched him, apathetically, over the narrow way, that grim and dubious woman whose house is the Night. Thangobrind, hearing no longer the sound of suspicious feet, felt easier now. He was all but come to the end of the narrow way, when the woman listlessly uttered that ominous cough.

The cough was too full of meaning to be disregarded. Thangobrind turned round and saw at once what he feared. The spider-idol had not stayed at home. The jeweller put his diamond gently upon the ground and drew his sword called Mouse. And then began that famous fight upon the narrow way in which the grim old woman whose house was Night seemed to take so little interest. To the spider-idol you saw at once it was all a horrible joke. To the jeweller it was grim earnest. He fought and panted and was pushed back slowly along the narrow way, but he wounded Hlo-hlo all the while with terrible long gashes all over his deep, soft body till Mouse was slimy with blood. But at last the persistent laughter of Hlo-hlo was too much for the jeweller's nerves, and, once more wounding his demoniac foe, he sank aghast and exhausted by the door of the house called Night at the feet of the grim old woman, who having uttered once that ominous cough interfered no further with the course of events. And there carried Thangobrind the jeweller away those whose duty it was, to the house where the two men hang, and taking down from his hook the left-hand one of the two, they put that venturesome jeweller in his place; so that there fell on him the doom that he feared, as all men know though it is so long since, and there abated somewhat the ire of the envious gods.

And the only daughter of the Merchant Prince felt so little gratitude for this great deliverance that she took to respectability of a militant kind, and became aggressively dull, and called her home the English Riviera, and had platitudes worked in worsted upon her tea-cosy, and in the end never died, but passed away at her residence.



Comments



You can't bargain other people's souls in Mythic Europe. Loss of the soul is something that requires sin: an active defiance of God.

Some demons will approach characters and claim their parents sold their souls. This is a lie, if a popular one with certain demons.

The Old Woman Whose House Is Night may be a faerie. Her house is in a narrow way, and she represents a boundary of time. The relationship between her and Hlo-Hlo is unclear, as is Thangobrind's motive in surrendering to her.

If you recover the halo of a fallen god, can you resurrect that god?

This is apparently not the largest diamond the jeweller has stolen. What was the biggest?

The function of placing bodies on her lintel posts may just be to store food for the spider god. Alternatively, Thangobrind may still be alive, hung as Odin was from the World Tree, undergoing an Ordeal. He may be able to reward rescuers. Given that he's the sort of person who laughs at the torture of people, and wants to buy souls, might the player characters be tempted to rescue the other figure instead, or as well? Who is this other person?

A player characters may similarly lose a battle with Hlo-Hlo, to gain the same insights. The obstacles faced by Thangobrind would, similarly, face the player characters. These might be in Faerie.

Hlo-Hlo appears able to teach his priests astrology, or seeks priests from astrologers, or their readings are bunkum: merely seeing he has left his pedestal indicates all is well in their world.

The version of Hlo-hlo given here is designed to be suitable as a player character, swapped in for a magus: that being said he lacks depth, and is unsuited for many sagas.

Faerie Might: 25 (Animal)

Characteristics: Int 0, Per +2, Pre -3, Com -3, Str +3, Sta +3, Dex +2, Qik +2

Size +4

Virtues and Flaws: Greater Powers, Huge, Ritual Powers, Faerie Beast, Faerie Speech, Faerie Sight, Feast of the Fae, Monstrous Form, Incognizant, Personal Powers, Slow Might Recovery. Note there is no Ward: this allows expansion in a player character.

Personality Traits: Mocking +3. Laughter is not magical, but can force Bravery checks.

Combat:

Brawl (bite): Init +2 Attack +13, Defense +11, Damage +7

Brawl (pedipalps): Init +4 Attack +13*, Defense +12*, Damage +5 (*Includes +1 for pretense specialisation)

Soak: +3 (described as soft bodied: add +6 if you'd prefer chitin).

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-9), -3 (10-18), -5 (19-27), Incapacitated (28-35), Dead (36+)

Pretenses: Athletics 3 (spider acrobatics), Awareness 3 (prey), Brawl 7 (pedipalps), Cult Lore 4 (priests), Faerie Speech 5 (mockery), Stealth 3 (prey)

Powers:

Grant visions: 1 point, Init -8, Mentem. Used to teach priests astrology (4 intricacy points on cost).

Hound: 0 points, Init 0, Corpus. Allow Hlo-hlo to know the direction and distance of his prey. (2 intricacy points on cost)

Silent Motion: 1 point, constant, Imaginem

Supernatural agility: 0 points, constant, Animal. (3 intricacy points on cost).

Optional: as an NPC, you might want to add a Poison. Prefers not to use it: likes killing prey.


Poison: 4 points, constant, Animal. Fatal poison Ease 9 (see Ars Magica: Fifth edition page 180) 35 spell levels (base 20, +2 Sun, +1 constant) +15 penetration.

Equipment: Hunting belt. Diamond the size of your head.

Vis: 5 pawns, Perdo (dead spider), possibly more in the halos of dead gods.

Appearance: As per story.

Hlo-hlo



Dunsany fragments: Miss Cubbidge and the Dragon of Romance

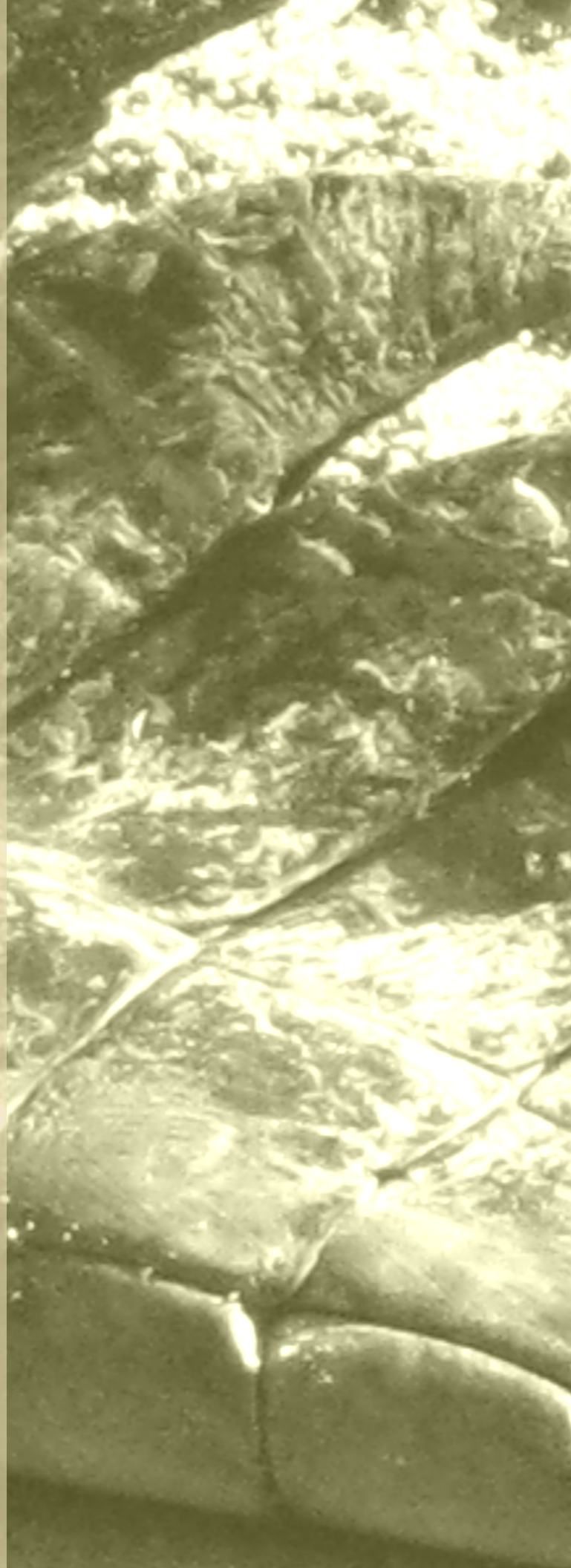
Little upon her eighteenth birthday thought Miss Cubbidge, of Number 12A Prince of Wales' Square, that before another year had gone its way she would lose the sight of that unshapely oblong that was so long her home. And, had you told her further that within that year all trace of that so-called square, and of the day when her father was elected by a thumping majority to share in the guidance of the destinies of the empire, should utterly fade from her memory, she would merely have said in that affected voice of hers, "Go to!"

There was nothing about it in the daily Press, the policy of her father's party had no provision for it, there was no hint of it in conversation at evening parties to which Miss Cubbidge went: there was nothing to warn her at all that a loathsome dragon with golden scales that rattled as he went should have come up clean out of the prime of romance and gone by night (so far as we know) through Hammersmith, and come to Ardle Mansions, and then had turned to his left, which of course brought him to Miss Cubbidge's father's house.

There sat Miss Cubbidge at evening on her balcony quite alone, waiting for her father to be made a baronet. She was wearing walking-boots and a hat and a low-necked evening dress; for a painter was but just now painting her portrait and neither she nor the painter saw anything odd in the strange combination. She did not notice the roar of the dragon's golden scales, nor distinguish above the manifold lights of London the small, red glare of his eyes. He suddenly lifted his head, a blaze of gold, over the balcony; he did not appear a yellow dragon then, for his glistening scales reflected the beauty that London puts upon her only at evening and night. She screamed, but to no knight, nor knew what knight to call on, nor guessed where were the dragons' overthrowers of far, romantic days, nor what mightier game they chased, or what wars they waged; perchance they were busy even then arming for Armageddon.

Out of the balcony of her father's house in Prince of Wales' Square, the painted dark-green balcony that grew blacker every year, the dragon lifted Miss Cubbidge and spread his rattling wings, and London fell away like an old fashion. And England fell away, and the smoke of its factories, and the round material world that goes humming round the sun vexed and pursued by time, until there appeared the eternal and ancient lands of Romance lying low by mystical seas.

You had not pictured Miss Cubbidge stroking the golden head of one of the dragons of song with one hand idly, while with the other she sometimes played with pearls brought up from lonely places of the sea. They filled huge haliotis shells with pearls and laid them there beside her, they brought her emeralds which she set to flash among the tresses of her long black hair, they brought her threaded sapphires for her cloak: all this the princes of fable did and the elves and the gnomes of myth. And partly she still lived, and partly she was one with long-ago and with those sacred tales that nurses tell, when all their children are good, and evening has come, and the fire is burning well, and the soft pat-pat of the snowflakes on the pane is like the furtive tread of fearful things in old, enchanted woods. If at first she missed those dainty novelties among which she was reared, the old, sufficient song of the mystical sea singing of faery lore at first soothed and at last consoled her. Even, she forgot those advertisements of pills that are so dear to England; even, she forgot political cant and the things that one discusses and the things that one does not, and had perforce to content herself with seeing sailing by huge golden-laden galleons with treasure for Madrid, and the merry skull-and-cross-bones of the pirateers, and the tiny nautilus setting out to sea, and ships of heroes trafficking in romance or of princes seeking for enchanted isles.





It was not by chains that the dragon kept her there, but by one of the spells of old. To one to whom the facilities of the daily Press had for so long been accorded spells would have palled—you would have said—and galleons after a time and all things out-of-date. After a time. But whether the centuries passed her or whether the years or whether no time at all, she did not know. If anything indicated the passing of time it was the rhythm of elfin horns blowing upon the heights. If the centuries went by her the spell that bound her gave her also perennial youth, and kept alight for ever the lantern by her side, and saved from decay the marble palace facing the mystical sea. And if no time went by her there at all, her single moment on those marvellous coasts was turned as it were to a crystal reflecting a thousand scenes. If it was all a dream, it was a dream that knew no morning and no fading away. The tide roamed on and whispered of mastery and of myth, while near that captive lady, asleep in his marble tank the golden dragon dreamed: and a little way out from the coast all that the dragon dreamed showed faintly in the mist that lay over the sea. He never dreamed of any rescuing knight. So long as he dreamed, it was twilight; but when he came up nimbly out of his tank night fell and starlight glistened on the dripping, golden scales.

There he and his captive either defeated Time or never encountered him at all; while, in the world we know, raged Roncesvalles or battles yet to be—I know not to what part of the shore of Romance he bore her. Perhaps she became one of those princesses of whom fable loves to tell, but let it suffice that there she lived by the sea: and kings ruled, and Demons ruled, and kings came again, and many cities returned to their native dust, and still she abided there, and still her marble palace passed not away nor the power that there was in the dragon's spell.

And only once did there ever come to her a message from the world that of old she knew. It came in a pearly ship across the mystical sea; it was from an old school-friend that she had had in Putney, merely a note, no more, in a little, neat, round hand: it said, "It is not Proper for you to be there alone "

I hope you'll pardon that this isn't started up: the dragon has the basic form, however beautifully described, and has the power Spirit Away, which allows it to steal humans and shift them into faerie.

Comments

When I was reviewing stories for the podcast, I didn't think this one had much promise. I was going to merge it with The Magic Window and throw it away later in the sequence. Dan Casar, one of the Patreons, mentioned something on Twitter: an arch in Malta with a region of Atlanteans behind it, and it clicked somehow with this story, and gave me a way to use it with a little more depth, even though it has nothing to do with Atlanteans or Malta. Thanks, Dan!

There is no rule which indicates that Aura scores need to be positive. The way we often talk about the Divine and Infernal in Ars Magica often describes them as opposites, and effectively makes the Infernal a negative Divine. This is a heresy in Mythic Europe: God does not have an opposite in Satan. Satan is even, technically, the adversary of Man. God is so vastly powerful that calling him the adversary of God is like calling a head louse your adversary. Mechanically, however, Hell is the furthest place from Heaven. If you are a Holy Magus, in some mathematical sense, Infernal auras are negative Divine auras.

My insight for this story was this: there's no rule that says Faerie Aura scores need to be positive numbers. It is possible that there are places behind and underneath Mythic Europe that are more mundane than Mundane, and so if you wanted to include places like Victoria's Empire, you'd merely need to state that they come from a level less magical, less romantic, less mythic, than an Aura of zero provides.

Now, within that place, faeries would be rare and weaker, but in specific situations it might be possible for a faerie to nip into that place and spirit away the few fragments of enchantment that remain. Miss Cubbidge is an attractive young woman, on the verge of adulthood, being painted at twilight, in a Romantic manner, by an artist with Free Expression. The dragon, which must have extraordinary Might, dips into her realm to take her to Arcadia.

In this story it takes her to Arcadia: in your own campaign, it could just leave her in Mythic Europe. This allows you to play characters from other genres, like Steampunk, and allows your magi to travel outside their genre, by going to the places with negative Faerie Auras. There is some question as to if Magic also has negative layers. This is likely true if the Crialmon cosmology about Time being an upward spiral has any merit. That's covered a little in the books of the line, so I won't go into detail about it here.

The dragon steals away Miss Cubbidge, and what happens to her is illustrative of what may happen to magi who fail to complete the Mystery of Becoming, which makes a person into a faerie (arguably) while allowing them to retain human personality, memory and volition. Miss Cubbidge, a bit like Peter Pan, has a damaged memory. He forgets the people he kills, she forgets the mundanities of the previous world: patent medicines of her home, and the details of political causes.

The dragon emerges in Hammersmith which, as Neil Gaiman notes, may have a relationship to Wayland the Smith. Miss Cubbidge lives on Prince of Wales Street, and the symbol of Wales is the dragon.

Miss Cubbidge's father is becoming a baronet. Baronets don't exist in Mythic Europe. They were invented by James I, as the lowest level of nobility. The role was not inherited, and was purchased by the rising middle class. Miss Cubbidge is stepping into the role of a noblewoman, but does not know any "true" knights, or any other method to defend herself from dragons.

The lands of Romance are the parts of Faerie people tell stories about, so, Arcadia. The haliotis shells filled with pearls are mentioned are abalone or ormer. They are coated with mother of pearl on their internal side, giving an oily, prismatic appearance suitable for Imaginem vis. Their name means "sea ear", which refers to their shape. . This is important because in this story the sea is teaching Miss Cubbidge Faerie Lore via Exposure, by whispering its knowledge. She may or may not need the sea ears to learn. Characters taking the sea ears home may be able to study from them by listening to the whispering of the sea within the shells. Also, I like both Aquam magic an puns, so I like the idea of a player character seeking out a seer, but instead finding a se ear, then being disappointed until they learn the sea itself can predict future events.

The dreams fo the dragon that she can see seem to be linked with the real world, or at least the literary world. The pirate flag described is not a flag often used in the real world. When the nautilus sails,, does it mean the tiny paper nautilus, with its shell and tentacles, or the submarine of Jules Verne? The characters can learn from the dreams of the dragon, but perhaps only the odd faerie lore of the weakly enchanted places.

As a player, however, the dreams of the dragon allow stories from outside Mythic Europe to escape into the game setting, carried in the brains of the player characters. A visual representation of a literary source is a movie. The dragon might be able to show you Lord ofthe Rings, or the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Faeries in Mythic Europe can then read the stories from the characters, or from those they tell them to, and take the forms of characters from our literary tradition.

Miss Cubbidge is locked in a cycle of twilight and night, and is either ageless or is in a place that is timeless. Events occur, so from a game perspective she is progressing through seasons, but she does not seem to care about events. Princes come and go, kings fall and demons rise, then they fall and kings rule again. She may find the changes in this cycle uncomfortable enough to seek allies in Mythic Europe, offering some of her enormous treasure, the chance to study the wisdom of the sea, or the opportunity to watch the dreams of the dragon to the magicians.

I'm not sure what the part about the pearl ship from Putney comes from. English listeners: write in! The note makes it clear she is transgressing a social boundary.

Miss Cubbidge may be a pet or a muse for the dragon, but there's also the possibility that this is how the creatures from Deep Faerie recruit agents to go into the places with negative Auras, to spirit away the few scraps of enchantment. If that's the case then this whole story is background for her character, and underlies her Virtue selections.

Gaze no more in the bitter glass
The demons, with their subtle guile,
Lift up before us when they pass,
Or only gaze a little while;
For there a fatal image grows
That the stormy night receives,
Roots half hidden under snows,
Broken boughs and blackened leaves.
For all things turn to barrenness
In the dim glass the demons hold,
The glass of outer weariness,
Made when God slept in times of old.
There, through the broken branches, go
The ravens of unresting thought;
Flying, crying, to and fro,
Cruel claw and hungry throat,
Or else they stand and sniff the wind,
And shake their ragged wings; alas!
Thy tender eyes grow all unkind:
Gaze no more in the bitter glass.

- Yeats, from "The Two Trees"

I recommend Loreenna McKennitt's musical version of
this poem.

The Shattered Mirror Plague

Acedia

Acedia is a sin of spiritual sloth. It is a listlessness, considered particularly troubling to those outside society (hermits, monks magi?), that is similar to depression. According to Hans Christian Andersen, it is caused by contamination by the parts of a shattered, magical mirror.

You must attend to the commencement of this story, for when we get to the end we shall know more than we do now about a very wicked hobgoblin; he was one of the very worst, for he was a real demon. One day, when he was in a merry mood, he made a looking-glass which had the power of making everything good or beautiful that was reflected in it almost shrink to nothing, while everything that was worthless and bad looked increased in size and worse than ever. The most lovely landscapes appeared like boiled spinach, and the people became hideous, and looked as if they stood on their heads and had no bodies. Their countenances were so distorted that no one could recognize them, and even one freckle on the face appeared to spread over the whole of the nose and mouth. The demon said this was very amusing. When a good or pious thought passed through the mind of any one it was misrepresented in the glass; and then how the demon laughed at his cunning invention. All who went to the demon's school—for he kept a school—talked everywhere of the wonders they had seen, and declared that people could now, for the first time, see what the world and mankind were really like. They carried the glass about everywhere, till at last there was not a land nor a people who had not been looked at through this distorted mirror. They wanted even to fly with it up to heaven to see the angels, but the higher they flew the more slippery the glass became, and they could scarcely hold it, till at last it slipped from their hands, fell to the earth, and was broken into millions of pieces. But now the looking-glass caused more unhappiness than ever, for some of the fragments were not so large as a grain of sand, and they flew about the world into every country. When one of these tiny atoms flew into a person's eye, it stuck there unknown to him, and from that moment he saw everything through a distorted medium, or could see only the worst side of what he looked at, for even the smallest fragment retained the same power which had belonged to the whole mirror. Some few persons even got a fragment of the looking-glass in their hearts, and this was very terrible, for their hearts became cold like a lump of ice. A few of the pieces were so large that they could be used as window-panes; it would have been a sad thing to look at our friends through them. Other pieces were made into spectacles; this was dreadful for those who wore them, for they could see nothing either rightly or justly. At all this the wicked demon laughed till his sides shook—it tickled him so to see the mischief he had done. There were still a number of these little fragments of glass floating about in the air, and now you shall hear what happened with one of them.



from "The Snow Queen by Hans Christian Andersen"

No further quotation is required, in brief, a grain of the glass catches in the eye of a boy. He becomes so cold-hearted that the Snow Queen, a potent faerie claims him. The girl next door, who loves the boy, goes on a quest, awakens the True Love Virtue, and the boy regains the ability to cry, which washes out the grain of glass, saving him. They return to their lives, marry and are happy.

In my first few attempts to convert this to Ars Magica, I wanted to design the demon, or the snow queen, or a horde of tiny contagious demons, but I don't think any of that is necessary. I think the grains are a new sort of Infernal vis, which I'll term vis malevola.

Vis malevola has few sources, but can apparently be widely scattered. It acts as vis infesta (see Realms of Power : the Infernal, p. 38) with the following additional qualities:

A person under the effect of a piece of vis malevola

- * gains the Personality trait: Acedia +1.

- * gains 1 Experience in the Acedia Personality trait each time the character makes a Personality trait roll, or player choice, that supports the acedic mindset.

- * cannot see happy or good things. This is represented as a penalty equal to the Acedia trait on all Personality trait rolls that oppose acedia.

If the piece of vis malevola is removed, the Acedia trait ceases to increase, and can be decreased via opposed rolls, much as other traits. Alternatively, it can be removed entirely by the aid of the Divine. Those suffering from mystical acedia, however, often cannot see the point in seeking Divine assistance, as they are unable to see the good in, or use of, anything. In the original story the boy is saved by True Love, which is an emendaion of the Divine.

Story hook

As a great lover of faerie stories, I'm struck by the question of how much the Snow Queen knows. She's on the side of the angels here, at least in the sense that C.S. Lewis, in his younger and less empathetic years, would have classified her as delivering the chisel strokes of God, which hurt us so much, but bring us to perfection. Is she a highly cognizant faerie forcing the victims of the plague to embrace True Love? Is she utterly incognizant, and merely adapted to her role by the environmental pressure of the vis malevola? Is she a tainted faerie that collects a tiend of souls for Hell?

If the mirror maker still has students and servants, what do they think of her meddling? What will they do, and how can she fight back? What horrors has the mirror maker created since?

I was listening to the MonsterTalk podcast, and Blake Smith mentioned his examination of the SS Watertown ghost photograph.

You may know the story: two sailors were buried at sea, and their ghostly faces followed the vessel for weeks.

Smith arranged to receive deck plans of one of the Watertown's sister ships, and took photographs from an identical elevation.


His conclusion is that the ghostly heads would have had to be seven feet long to have the dimensions shown in the photograph.

This reminded me of the primitive ghosts found in the Carnacki stories, which are, structurally, human body parts magnified past sensible size.

I choose to call these ghosts Enormities. The word means "out of the normal": in a sense both moral and corporeal.

Enormities

A new class of ghost




...it still conveyed that peculiar sense of something whistling quietly to itself - can you understand? Though, for all the meditative lowness of the note, the horrible, gargantuan quality was distinct - a mighty parody of the human, as if I stood there, and listened to the whistling from the lips of a monster with a man's soul.

"And then, you know, I saw something. The floor in the middle of the huge, empty room, was puckered upwards in the centre into a strange, soft-looking mound, parted at the top into an ever-changing hole, that pulsated to that great, gentle hooning. At times, as I watched, I saw the heaving of the indented mound, gap across with a queer, inward suction, as with the drawing of an enormous breath; then the thing would dilate and pout once more to the incredible melody. And suddenly, as I stared, dumb, it came to me that the thing was living. I was looking at two enormous, blackened lips, blistered and brutal, there in the pale moonlight....

"Abruptly, they bulged out to a vast pouting mound of force and sound, stiffened and swollen, and hugely massive and clean-cut in the moonbeams. And a great sweat lay heavy on the vast upper-lip. In the same moment of time, the whistling had burst into a mad screaming note, that seemed to stun me, even where I stood, outside of the window. And then, the following moment, I was staring blankly at the solid, undisturbed floor of the room - smooth, polished stone flooring, from wall to wall; and there was an absolute silence.

From "The Whistling Room"
in Carnaki the Ghost Finder
by William Hope Hodgson..



An enormity takes the form of a grossly oversized human body part or tool. Many Gothic authors have gigantic mailed fists, helmets, and candle flames in their stories. They are easier to design than conventional ghosts, because their final business is simple, they express a single emotion, they generally have only one Characteristic, and their skill set is narrow. Their suite of supernatural powers is, similarly, limited. Most can only call victims and then harm them.

To create an enormity, first decide on a personality trait. This drives the enormity to act. It then usually has one important Characteristic. Carnacki faces an enormous hand that taps on walls to summon people, then crushes them. It batters his mystical protection. It has a Strength score, but doesn't need anything else. The Watertown ghosts need Presence, but nothing else. The Jester's Lips can communicate, but have no physical attacks. This is then coupled with a small smattering of Abilities.

The supernatural abilities of the Enormity tend to be simple: they have all of the powers of Magic Spirits (outlined in Realms of Power : Magic) Some depend on purely physical force to cause harm. Others have a single power which allows them to express their Personality trait. Enormities have Final Business like most ghosts, but choose something open ended: "defend a room", "kill the descendants of the king". Add a background, if you wish, to explain the enormity's presence.

If you use a point-balanced design system, like the standard one for Ars Magica, then Enormities, because they are so narrow in focus, tend to become "glass cannons", able to do a great deal of harm if a victim falls into their area of power, but not able to defend themselves from a suitably prepared player character. This makes them better suited to stories which feature companions as protagonists, stories where players enjoy the power of their magi, or as tools for player character necromancers.

One idea I like is that if you assemble enough Enormities together, you might make a greater spirit, like something from the Hall of Heroes. How do you collect immaterial treasures that try to murder you?

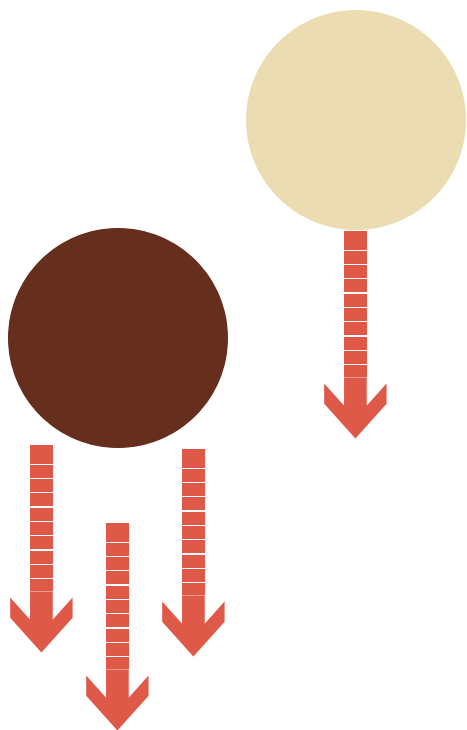
Proportionality bias and the creation of faerie roles

One of the cognitive fallacies which fuels real-world conspiracy theories is proportionality bias. This suggests that large effects need to have large causes. At the most extreme, Descartes suggested a God was necessary because there were minds, so something greater than a mind need to cause the mind. Hermetic magic says that there needs to be a thing greater than an apple for there to be an apple, and thus the Realm of Forms exists to house the primordial Apple of which all other apples are but shadow. In more recent discussion, the example often given is that the belief that a lone gunman could have shot JFK is counter-intuitive for many people.

In Mythic Europe, this bias takes on an extra danger, because it can create roles for faeries to slip into. If an archbishop dies falling out of bed, and that's unbelievable enough that a counter-story circulates about a conspiracy to do him in, faeries may take the roles of the conspirators. If the story explains the goals of the conspiracy, the faeries may blithely continue along that road, toward a terrible event, merely because the humans around them are forcing the story upon the faeries. The faeries' actions create physical evidence, which strengthens the story about a conspiracy, until a community constructs the instrument or its own doom.

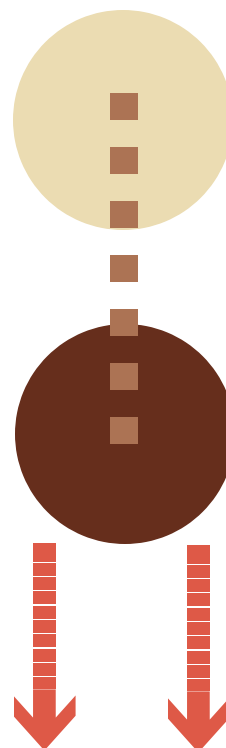
This serves as one explanation for characters who are tormented by faeries. The player character did something wrong, but the story surrounding it was so intense that a faerie has taken the role of the villain. The faerie torments the human, to defend the role from the sorts of change in story which the player character could wreak merely by admitting publicly to their wrongdoing. The faerie, because it is proportionate the the player character's grave offence, is far more powerful than the character.

In Mythic Europe, Aristotelian physics is true, so a conundrum posed by Galileo could be tested.

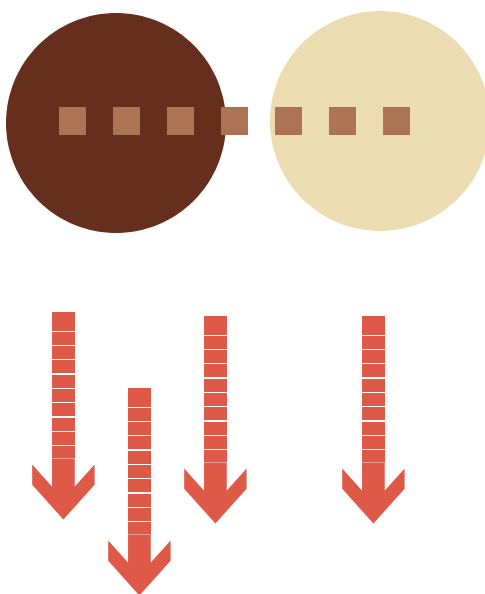


According to Aristotle, heavy objects fall faster than light objects, so if you imagine two balls, one heavier than the other, they fall at different speeds.

If you chain the two balls together, the slower ball acts as a sort of brake on the faster ball...



..but the combined weight of the two balls is greater than just the heavier ball, and they are now connected, so they are one object. They should fall faster than the heavy ball alone.



- Do some Criamon magi drop balls off towers to gain Enigmatic Wisdom?
- Can you gain Twilight scars by doing this?
- Can this let the Realm of Reason into Mythic Europe?
- Could this lead to Original Research in Hermetic Theory?

There have been many fictional explorations of the idea of a virtual reality so enticing the people do not wish to leave. One of the Dunsany stories we are not going to cover is the of this type, although the protagonist is schizophrenic, rather than using a mechanical aid to create the fantasy world. The first person to make waves with a philosophical paper on the subject was Nozick, in which he presented the thought experiment of the Experience Machine.

Arcadian

Nozick's experiment briefly goes like this: imagine that you could be placed in a failsafe machine where you lived an illusion which was indistinguishable from the real world. You could program the machine to give you a life of perfect happiness: even if, for you, perfect happiness implies overcoming challenges and obstacles. You could program those in. You might not know you were in the machine: you might pick if you know.

It doesn't matter.

His question is: why do so many people not want to hook themselves into the machine, even if they are utilitarians, who theoretically believe happiness to measure societal good?

He has three answers

We want to do certain things, not simply have the experience of doing them.

We want to be certain kinds of people. Floating in a tank makes us an "indeterminate blob".

Being in the machine limits us to a man-made reality, cutting us off from the deeper reality.

Machine

So, thinking on this model, and assuming Arcadia is an Experience Machine (at least the easily accessible bits) does this explain why the Jerbiton loathe it so much? In Aracadia, you cannot make art, be an artist, or respond to the real world with interpretation?



Cornwall: Graveyard of giants

Announcing a new column for Games From Folktales. Once a month, you'll get some Cornish material. At the end I hope it'll assemble into something like a gazetteer you can plug into Heirs to Merlin and the Vanilla Covenant project. For those wanting to play along my source text is "Popular romances of the west of England; or, The drolls, traditions, and superstitions of old Cornwall" by Robert Hunt. That being said, the original has seventeen chapters, so if I handle one a month, this is going to take a while. If any of the other bloggers want to take a piece, please do. There's no Librivox version of this book, so you will have to listen to me.

This is the first chapter, and first podcast. in this subproject. My hope is that as this expands I'll be able to layer the material together. This means that, in this case, you'll be getting a lot of raw material with dangling hooks. There are characters who aren't giants, mentioned here, that clearly are going to get their own episodes. Eventually these will all get boiled into a single text. I'm using older names here (like "Trecrobben Hill" but will convert them to more modern names at the end.

History

Once Cornwall had giants. They were the indigenous species. According to one story their first king was Albion, son of Neptune. According to another, they were descended from 33 Scythian princesses who had children with demons. Some argue they were the original Celts. This is, from a modern perspective, just silly. Some say they were the original Dumnovians, for whom Devon is named. This is similarly not true. The giants were driven to extinction by the Trojans when they arrived. Some people say they died of grief when their king was killed...

No, seriously. Trojans. The first British, under the rule of Brutus himself, were emigres from Troy: just like the Romans. They turned up, killed the giants off, and named the places after themselves. Cornwall's named after Cornieus, Brutus's general. The war with the giants ended with the giants' war leader, Gogmagog, a prisoner. Cornieus wrestled him, because Cornieus liked that sort of thing, then threw him to his death off the slightly-misnamed Gogmagog's Leap at Plymouth Hoe. Cornwall's filled with gigantic ruins from Dartmoor across to Sicily. It's a graveyard, but not a recent graveyard. Most of the great rocks and stones are named for the giants, and even the ones which didn't have real connections now have links to faeries.

The Great Castles

The giants of Cornwall had rival kingdoms at some point, presumably prior to the rule of Magog and his war with the humans.

Each of the great castles is now, at best, a ruin, although at least two are said to sit above tunnels filled with treasures and monsters.

Treasures and monsters?

Let's go pick the low-hanging fruit, shall we?

Trecrobben Hill

Here I might as well quote Hunt, who sells it entirely "On the summit of this hill, which is only surpassed in savage grandeur by Carn Brea, the giants built a castle the four entrances to which still remain in Cyclopean massiveness to attest the Herculean powers by which such mighty blocks were piled upon each other. There the giant chieftains dwelt in awful state. Along the serpentine road, passing up the hill to the principal gateway, they dragged their captives, and on the great flat rocks within the castle they sacrificed them. Almost every rock still bears some name connected with the giants...The treasures of the giants who dwelt here are said to have been buried in the days of their troubles, when they were perishing before the conquerors of their land. Their gold and jewels were hidden deep in the granite caves of this hill, and secured by spells as potent as those which Merlin placed upon his "hoarded treasures." They are securely preserved, even to the present day, and carefully guarded from man by the Spriggans, or Trolls, of whom we have to speak in another page."

Plot hook: Sacrificed to what?

who, or what was the god of these giants, and is there a mystery cult or infernal taint here?

St Michael's Mount

A castle was built here by a married pair of giants, Coromoran and Cormelian, who carried cubes of granite from far away to build the walls. While Coromoran slept, Cormelian decided to sneak a bit of local greenstone into the building, carrying it in her enormous apron. Cormorran awoke, saw what was happening and kicked his wife, snapping her apron string so that she dropped the schist.

Back then, the giants of Mount Saint Michael and Trecrobben Hill were friendly, and had only one cobbling hammer between them. They'd just fling it to each other as they needed it. One day, a poor throw by the giant of Trecrobben struck Cormelian on the forehead. She died, and the giants buried her under the schist. A chapel has been placed there since, so it is called Chapel Rock.

Cormoran was, according to 18th century folklore, killed by a farmer's son named Jack, during the reign of King Arthur. He lured the giant into a pit, then lodged a pick in his head. For this he was awarded the giant's land and treasure. Ever after he was known as Jack the Giant-Killer.

Jack really needs his own episode, because he's loaded down with magic items, fights sorcerers, and beheads Lucifer.



Other folklore says that when the final giant of the Mount became very old, he would wade across to the mainland to steal a cow whenever he felt hungry. The Lord of Pengerswick, who was an enchanter and will get his own episode, became annoyed at this reivery. He petrified the still-conscious giant, left him for a cold night, and then horsewhipped him soundly. The giant waded through the sea, back to his home, the salt stinging his wounds, and has not been seen since.

It is said that the a family from Guval became rich from this. Tom, the Giant of Lelant , took one of the women of this family to sell the giant eggs and butter, which he paid for with treasures from vaults beneath the Mount.

Plot hook:

So, that's corpus vis, then?

Can you mine despite the Dominion Aura on the chapel?

Treryn

Time to quote Hunt again :

"The giant to whom all the rest of his race were indebted for this stronghold was in every way a remarkable mortal. He was stronger than any other giant, and he was a mighty necromancer. He sat on the promontory of Treryn, and by the power of his will he compelled the castle to rise out of the sea. It is only kept in its present position by virtue of a magic key. This the giant placed in a holed rock, known as the Giant's Lock, and whenever this key, a large round stone, can be taken out of the lock, the promontory of Treryn and its castle will disappear beneath the waters. There are not many people who obtain even a sight of this wonderful key. You must pass at low tide along a granite ledge, scarcely wide enough for a goat to stand on. If you happen to make a false step, you must be dashed to pieces on the rocks below. Well, having got over safely, you come to a pointed rock with a hole in it ; this is the castle lock. Put your hand deep into the hole, and you will find at the bottom a large egg-shaped stone, which is easily moved in any direction. You will feel certain that you can take it out, but try! Try as you may, you will find it will not pass through the hole ; yet no one can doubt but that it once went in...no one has ever yet succeeded in removing the key of the giant's castle from the hole in which the necromancer is said to have placed it when he was dying."

A slightly different version has the necromancer transform his wife into the Lady Logan Rock as he dies, stabbed and drowned by her lover. A logan rock is a huge stone that can be rocked like a cradle, with just the strength of a hand. There are some huge ones in Cornwall. They might be Rego vis related. What happens if you rock them at the same time?

Plot hook: Portable castle?

Is Treryn just a regio, with an entry pinned open, or is it, in some sense, portable? If you knew the rituals, could you use the key to make the castle appear anywhere you needed it by constructing a new lock? Are there keys to similar places? Are people or things in them? Whole communities?.

Independent giants

Aside from the three great castles, there were a lot of giants who lived either alone or in little castles with their immediate families. I've listed them here by the geographical feature they are associated with, except Tom of Lelant, who has so much material I've moved him to the end of the section. In addition to these there are many other village giants, some of whom are buried in hallowed ground. Giant graves are everywhere in Cornwall, and are even more prevalent in the Scilly Islands.

Land's End: Bellerian and Trebregan

The ancient name of this headland was Bellerian, named after the giant who built the first castle here. His Latinish sounding name may suit Hermetic magi better than the modern English. A village near Land's End, Tebregan, is named for a giant buried there. Oddly, for someone so clearly dead, he is used as a bogey to gain the obedience of children. He was so large he could pull sailors off ships. He ate children every day, preferably after frying them on a certain flat rock, near a cave which was said to be his lair. Tell children in Mythic Europoe a bogeyman will come for them, and you create a story a faerie will fill, so presumably something is in his cave.

St Agnes' Ball (now Saint Agnes Beacon) : The Giant Bolster

Time for some Hunt "Bolster must have been of enormous size : since it is stated that he could stand with one foot on St Agnes' Beacon and the other on Carn Brea; these hills being distant, as the bird flies, six miles, his immensity will be clear to all. In proof of this, there still exists, in the valley running upwards from Chapel Forth, a stone in which may yet be seen the impression of the giant's fingers...the giant Bolster became deeply in love with St Agnes, who is reputed to have been singularly beautiful, and a pattern woman of virtue. The giant allowed the lady no

repose. He followed her incessantly, proclaiming his love, and filling the air with the tempests of his sighs and groans. St Agnes lectured Bolster in vain on the impropriety of his conduct, he being already a married man. This availed not ; her prayers...were also in vain. The persecuted lady, finding there was no release for her, while this monster existed, resolved to be rid of him at any cost, and eventually succeeded by the following stratagem : Agnes appeared at length to be persuaded of the intensity of the giant's love, but she told him she required yet one small proof more. There exists at Chapel Forth a hole in the cliff at the termination of the valley. If Bolster would fill this hole with his blood the lady would no longer look coldly on him. This huge bestrider-of-the-hills thought that it was an easy thing which was required of him, and felt that he could fill many such holes and be none the weaker for the loss of blood.

Consequently, stretching his great arm across the hole, he plunged a knife into a vein, and a torrent of gore issued forth. Roaring and seething the blood fell to the bottom, and the giant expected in a few minutes to see the test of his devotion made evident, in the filling of the hole. It required much more blood than Bolster had supposed still it must in a short time be filled, so he bled on. Hour after hour the blood flowed from the vein, yet the hole was not filled. Eventually the giant fainted from exhaustion. The strength of life within his mighty frame

enabled him to rally, yet he had no power to lift himself from the ground, and he was unable to stanch the wound which he had made. Thus it was, that after many throes, the giant Bolster died! The cunning saint, in proposing this task to Bolster, was well aware that the hole opened at the bottom into the sea, and that as rapidly as the blood flowed into the hole it ran from it...The hole at Chapel Forth still retains the evidences of the truth of this tradition, in the red stain which marks the track down which flowed the giant's blood." This sounds like a well of Corpus vis.

Goran: an unnamed giant

Hunt again "The giant, who lived on the promontory, was the terror of the neighbourhood, and great were the rejoicings in Goran when his death was accomplished through a stratagem by a neighbouring doctor.

The giant fell ill through eating some food, children or otherwise, to satisfy his voracity, which had disturbed his stomach. His roars and groans were heard for miles, and great was the terror throughout the neighbourhood. A messenger, however, soon arrived at the residence of the doctor of the parish, and he bravely resolved to obey the summons of the giant, and visit him." From this point the story becomes similar to St Agnes: the physician bleeds him until he's unconscious and rolls him off a cliff.

Portreath : Ralph (or Wrath)

There's a sea channel here called Ralph's Cupboard. There was a giant here, long ago, who lived in a cave, from which he ventured out to catch fishing boats, and tie them to his belt, before walking home and eating the sailors. After his death, the roof of the cave fell in, leaving the current cutting. There's a second story that says Ralph was just a smuggler, who spread the story of the giant ot keep people away.

Holiburn of Cairn Galva

Hunt again : "Holiburn of the Cairn according to tradition, was a very amiable and somewhat sociable gentleman ; but, like his brethren, he loved to dwell amongst the rocks of Cairn Galva. He made his home in this remote region, and relied for his support on the gifts of sheep and oxen from the farmers around he, in return, protecting them from the predatory incursions of the less conscientious giants of Trecrobben."

The Giant of Morva

Hunt: "This great man, on the first day of August, would walk up to Bosprenis Croft, and there perform some magical rites, which were either never known, or they have been forgotten. On this day, for ,when thus engaged the giant was harmless, thousands of people would congregate to get a glimpse of the monster ; and as he passed them, all being seated on the stone hedges, every one drank

to the health of Mr Giant." At length the giant died, but the gathering on the 1st of August has never been given up, or rather, the day shifts, and is made to agree with Morva Feast, which is held on the first Sunday in August."

Giant of Nancledry

Hunt : "Rather more than thirty years since, some mouldering " clob " (mud) walls, indicating the existence at one time of a large dwelling, were pointed to as the former residence of a terrible giant. He appears to have led a solitary life, and to have lived principally on little children, whom he is said to have swallowed whole. His strength was indicated by several huge masses of granite which were scattered around the Bottoms, and in the neighbouring fields. These were carried by him in his pockets, to defend himself from the giants of Trecrobben, with whom he appears to have been on unfriendly terms. This giant is noteworthy as the only one recorded who lived in a house". He also presumably was the inventor of pockets... It is said that the a family from Guval became rich from this. Tom, the Giant of Lelant , took one of the women of this family to sell the giant eggs and butter, which he paid for with treasures from vaults beneath the Mount.

Plot hook:

So, that's corpus vis, then?

Can you mine despite the Dominion Aura on the chapel?

Mazarion: Tom of Lelant

Tom of Lelant was a giant, although small for that race, perhaps only twice the size of a man. He was a lazy fellow initially, but got a job delivering beer from a brewer in Mazarion. A giant, Blunderbuss, built hedges (which, here .means unmortared stone fences) across the road. Tom confronted him, and when the giant pulled up a tree to use as a club, Tom pulled the axle off his cart, and used a wheel as a buckler, and slew the giant. Tom thought this a fair thing, because the giant had a reputation for eating his wives. During the combat, Blunderbuss demonstrated a disgusting power: the blood that fountained from his wounds was so excessive that it baulked Tom. After pulling the axle out of the giant, he demanded that, in fairness, the larger giant put his hand over the hole until the battle is over.

The giant likes what a sporting fellow Tom is as seen in this quote, when he is dying "I have no near relations. There is heaps of gold, silver, copper, and tin down in the vaults of the castle, guarded by two dogs. Mind there names are Catchem and Tearem. Only call them by these names and they'll let thee pass. The land from this to the sea is all mine. There is more head of oxen, cows, sheep, goats, and deer, than thee canst count. Take them all, only bury me decent."

Tom claims the castle, and no-one knows the dread giant is dead, save a little human

named Jane, the giant's most recent wife. She flirts with Tom, and he thinks she's quite a catch, so they pretend the giant has survived, and live comfortably on his treasure for a few years. They had many children, who are the ancestors of a line of people with a touch of giant blood in modern Cornwall.

After a few years, a tinker named Jack came to challenge the giant for hedging the road, and Tom, pretending to be the giant's son, fought the man at singlestick. He lost badly, but the tinker taught him the finer points of fencing and they had dinner together. They became friends over time, and the tinker told his origin, which was that he came from a far land (although not across the sea) where there were many giants that mined for tin. Wise men came from further away with tools for the giants, and they taught the tinker his trade. He'd been travelling south and, believing that the larger a giant the more gentle he is, he heard of Blunderbuss and decided to seek him out.

The tinker taught Tom how to till a garden, the first in Cornwall. He also taught the arts of malting and brewing to Jane. The tinker was also the first man in Cornwall to skin a beast as a single piece of hide, and taught the arts of leatherwork made possible by these large pieces.

Seriously, this Tinker is just a Cornish Wayland Smith...he does a heap of stuff.

When they are throwing quoits, Tom breaks the surface of the grass on the green banks about the castle, finding off dark stuff beneath. The tinker tells him they are made of tin, and that Tom is now a rich man. Tom says he has all he desires, and doesn't know how to dress tin, but the tinker offers to do it for him, in exchange for a share of the money. When they had dressed the tin, they took it to Mazarion, where the tinsmelter, who was also the mayor and the brewer, gave them a very fair price. He was such an outstanding man that he's still used as a byword for honesty today. The tin was so good a deal for all around that he breaks open a barrel of beer and declares a fair (a courrant, in the local terms) which is so loud it attracts the Lord of Pengerswick, who needs his own episode, because he's clearly a magus.

The brewer of Mazarion was also the tinsmelter and the mayor and an ally of the Lord of Pengerswick. He introduces Tom, who then invited Pengerswick to his castle. Pengerswick teleports them all to Tom's house, and won't tell Tom how it was done, but it's clear Jack knows. Pengerswick tries to fool Tom into telling him where the tin is, but Jack is onto him and politely deflects the conversation. Eventually the Lord gets sick of this and casts a spell to make everyone fall asleep. This does not work on Jack, because he's basically awesomeness on a stick, and instead he sits there "whistling

like an old troll" which feels lovely and modern. Time to quote Hunt again "At last Pengerswick became enraged, and he drew from his breast a dagger and slyly struck at Jack. The dagger, which was of the finest Eastern steel, was bent like a piece of soft iron against Jack's black hide. (which is his clothes, by the way)

"Art thou the devil?" exclaimed Pengerswick. "As he 's a friend of yours," says Jack, "you should know his countenance." "Devil or no devil," roared Pengerswick, "you cannot resist this," and he held before Jack a curiously-shaped piece of polished steel. Jack only smiled, and quietly unfastening his cow's hide, he opened it. The cross, like a star of fire, was reflected in a mirror under Jack's coat, and it fell from Pengerswick's grasp. Jack seized it, and turning it full upon the enchanter, the proud lord sank trembling to the ground, piteously imploring Jack to spare his life and let him go free. Jack bade the prostrate lord rise from the ground. He kicked him out of the castle, and...thus he saved Tom and his family from the power of this great enchanter."

Time for some Hunt:

"Tom's daughter became of marriageable years, and Jack wished to have her for a wife. Tom, however, would not consent to this, unless he got rid of a troublesome old giant who lived on one of the hills in

Morva, which was the only bit of ground between Hayle and St Just which Tom did not possess. The people of Morva were kept in great fear by this giant, who made them bring him the best of everything. He was a very savage old creature, and took exceeding delight in destroying every one's happiness.

Some of Tom's cousins lived in Morva, and young Tom fell in love with one of his Morva cousins seven times removed, and by Jack's persuasion, they were allowed by Tom and Jane to marry. It was proclaimed by Jack all round the country that great games would come off on the day of the wedding. He had even the impudence to stick a bill on the giant's door, stating the prizes which would be given to the best games. The happy day arrived, and, as the custom then was, the marriage was to take place at sundown.

A host of people from all parts were assembled, and under the influence of Jack and Tom, the games were kept up in great spirit. Jack and Tom, by and by, amused themselves by pitching quoits at the giant's house on the top of the hill. The old giant came out and roared like thunder. All the young men were about to fly, but Jack called them a lot of scurvy cowards, and stayed their flight.

Jack made faces at the giant, and challenged him to come down and fight him.

The old monster thought he could eat Jack, and presently began to run down the hill, when, lo ! he disappeared.

When the people saw that the giant was gone, they took courage, and ran up the hill after Jack, who called on them to follow him. There was a vast hole in the earth, and there, at the bottom of it, lay the giant, crushed by his own weight, groaning like a volcano and shaking like an earthquake. Jack knew there was an adit level driven into the hill, and he had quietly, and at night, worked away the roof at one particular part, until he left only a mere shell of rock above, so it was, that, as the giant passed over this spot, the ground gave way. Heavy rocks were thrown down the hole on the giant, and there his bones are said to lie to this day.

Jack was married at once to young Jane, her brother Tom to the Morva girl, and great were the rejoicings. All this took place on a Sunday, and was the origin of Morva Feast and Morva Fair.

Notes

Quoits, wrestling and slinging, the skills in Cornish games, are combat skills for covenfolk in *Ars Magica*.

Notes

A note on Herbam vis sources, from when Jack teaches gardening “(Tom) had hitherto contented himself with gathering wild herbs, such as nettles, wild beet, mallows, elecampane, various kinds of lentils, and chick or cat-peas. Jack now planted a garden for his friends, the first in Cornwall, and they grew all kinds of good vegetables. The tinkeard also taught Jane to make malt and to brew beer ; hitherto they had been content with barley-wort, which was often sour. Jack would take the children and collect bitter herbs to make the beer keep, such as the alehoof (ground ivy), mugwort, bannell (the broom), agrimony, centuary, woodsage, bettony, and pellitory.

Plot hooks

One idiot with a pen...

Giants may be extinct, but in the Thirteenth Century a new story starts to circulate. It's about an Anglo-Norman knight called Guy of Warwick. He hunts dragons and fights a Danish giant called Colibrand. The Norman ruling class have a separate set of stories, different to those of the Cornish. Faeries flock to stories. Can one convincing bard bring the giants back, to the amusement of the distant Norman court, and the horror of the locals?

Hidden resources

“Jack wandered around the castle, and was struck by seeing a window which he had not before observed. Jack was resolved to discover the room to which this window belonged, so he very carefully noticed its position, and then threw his hammer in through it, that he might be certain of the spot when he found the tool inside of the castle. The next day, after dinner, when Tom was having his snooze, Jack took Jane with him, and they commenced a search for the hammer near the spot where Jack supposed the window should be, but they saw no signs of one in in any part of the walls. They discovered, however, a strangely fashioned, worm-eaten oak hanging-press. They carefully examined this, but found nothing. At last Jack, striking the back of it with his fist, was convinced, from the sound, that the wall behind it was hollow. He and Jane went steadily to work, and with some exertion they moved the press aside, and disclosed a stone door. They opened this, and there was Jack's hammer lying amidst a pile of bones, evidently the relics of some of old Blunderbuss's wives, whom he had imprisoned in the wall, and who had perished there. Jane was in a great fright, and blessed her good fortune that she had escaped a similar end. Jack, however, soon consoled her by showing her the splendid dresses which were here, and the gold chains, rings, and bracelets, with diamonds and other jewels, which were scattered around. ”