

**TRANSCRIPTS FOR  
JULY 2019**

# **GAMES FROM FOLKTALES**

**PARROT GRIFFINS  
CORNWALL: JELLYFISH  
MAN: THE FAERIE PIG  
CORNWALL: THE LEGEND OF HOLY VALE  
A CHURN SONG  
RENASCE**

**An experiment in podcasting for the  
Ars Magica roleplaying game**



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# Parrot Griffins

Over on the Ars Magica Discord server, Dinonerd1 was asking about griffons with a parrot head. Here's my take on them. It's a reskinning of the juvenile female griffon statistics from Legends of Hermes.

The Psitticine Griffon, more commonly the psitticogrif, is a smaller and even rarer creature than the conventional griffon, found on the edges of Mythic Europe. It is primarily found in wooded areas, rather than the rocky cliffs on which its more gigantic cousins roost. The psitticogrif prefers to hunt in flocks, particularly against opponents which are armoured, which it is clever enough to discern.

The social structure of the flocks is unclear, but may form around a cluster of related females alloparenting the chicks, which exclusion of adolescent males, much like domestic cat prides. A contrary report indicates lifelong pair-bonds, like parrots. Psitticogrifs are not strongly sexually dimorphic. They do not share the pronounced physical differences between male and female aquiline griffons. Male psitticogrifs have wings, and lack the joint spurs of aquilogrifs.

Like the Parrot of Virtue, the parrot griffin is extremely intelligent. It is capable of conversational speech, not merely mimicry. Much as the bestiaries say that the best way to train a parrot is to hit it upon the head with an iron bar, which will cause pain but no lasting injury, so the psitticogrif shrugs off damage from blunt force weapons to its head (simulated as a high Soak score).

There are reports of psitticogrifs making, then using, tools. This isn't unique, but the parrot griffins appear to be able plan processes of multiple steps. Reports that they have constructed clever, if materially rudimentary, hunting traps seem plausible. Other birds are known to steal campfire sticks for hunting, even the exceptional claim that they can cook food is not completely implausible. Two psitticogriffic features are key to their potential tool use.

The forefoot of the psitticogrif is like that of a parrot, rather than an eagle. Instead of having three forward facing toes with one rearward hook, as is common in raptors, the psitticogrif has two forward facing toes paired with two backward facing toes. This allows perching on branches, but it also permits the creature, if reports are to be believed, to grip cylindrical tools.

There are no reports of the sort of fine motor skills necessary to write, only club-style gripping of cylindrical tools. The second feature is that much as domestic cats, when warding predators, can stand for prolonged periods on their hind legs, so too can this sort of griffin. This leaves its forelimbs free to attack simultaneously, but it also leaves them free to manipulate tools. The rear half of the griffin is heavier than the bird half, and this imbalanced weight distribution also favours the rampant stance.

The rear half of the parrot griffin is not a lion, but a pard, a rare African creature of virtue known for its shimmering colours, and the tiny vibrant circles found all over its pelt. These pelt-patterns appear to be individually unique. Some psitticogrifs appear able to alter their colouration when hunting or fleeing, to more closely blend with their surroundings. Psitticogrifs have feline ears, but unlike a conventional griffin, its ears aren't triangular: they are a curved on the outer edge. The ears are also difficult to spot because their edges are disguised by the shifting colours of the pelt.

Aquilogrifs are known to guard eggs made from agates in nests woven from gold. The psitticogrifs do not do this. It is claimed that their eggs are literally invisible until they hatch, after which they have an opalescent sheen. The parents tend them using Second Sight. The nests are of conventional materials. They often contain primitive spike traps to discourage predators: when thorns are not available, the psitticogriffs make these spikes themselves by gnawing sticks into wickedly sharp barbs.

Several houses are interested in the possibility of breeding these creatures. Their capacity for speech, potential for tool use, and symbolic tie to the art of Imaginem make them interesting as potential familiars, and as messengers for the redcaps.



# PARROT GRIFFINS

Magic (Faerie?) Might: 15 (Animal)

Characteristics: Int -1, Per +3, Pre +2, Com 0, Str -2, Sta +1, Dex +2, Qik +6

Size:-1

Confidence: 1 (3 points)

Virtues and Flaws: Magical Monster; Ferocity (may use Confidence points only when flock threatened), Homing Instinct (always knows where flock is in relation to self), Keen Vision

Qualities and Inferiorities: Focus Power (Nests of Gold), Improved Abilities, Improved Attack x 2 (beak and claws), Improved Damage x 2 (beak and claws), Improved Soak x 2, Minor Virtue (Improved Characteristics), Minor Virtue (Long Winded), Minor Virtue (Puissant Athletics), Minor Virtue (Second Sight), Minor Virtue (Strong Willed).

Personality Traits: Defends flock +3, Sneaky +2

Combat\*: Beak: Init +8, Attack +13, Defense +15, Damage +3

Grapple:\*\* Init: +8, Attack +8, Defense +14, Damage: special (On subsequent rounds may add Grapple Strength to Attack Roll for beak attacks.)

Claws: Init +8, Attack +14, Defense +13, Damage +4

\* Psitticogrif flocks fight as trained units.

\*\* The parrot beak of the psitticogrif does less piercing damage than the beak of an eagle, but is particularly suited to cracking open armor and sheering through limbs at the bones.

Soak: +7 (the skull of a parrot griffon is harder than steel)

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-4), -3 (5-8), -5 (9-12), Incapacitated (13-17), Dead (18+)

Abilities: Animal Handling 1 (griffons), Area Lore 4 (home territory), Area Lore 1 (gold rich territory), Athletics 5+2\* (flight), Awareness 5 (prey), Brawl 5 (claws), Hunt 4 (horses), Second Sight 3 (Illusions), Survival 4 (home terrain). Some have Single Weapon or Thrown Weapon skills.

.Powers:

Bemuse the eye and ear, 5 points, Init -1, Imaginem: A catch-all power that allows the creature to disguise itself, using Imaginem spells up to level 25, at the cost of 1 Might per magnitude. Most psitticogrifs only use Personal range, but some can use extended ranges. What this difference signifies is unknown, but is speculated to relate to nest tending behaviour.

Mimic: 0 points. A psitticogrif can naturally mimic a wide variety of sounds, and is capable of human speech.

Vis: 3 of Imaginem, feathers

Appearance: A psitticogrif is the size of a large dog, and its features combine those of a pard and a parrot. The head, forequarters and forelimbs of the griffon are avian, while the hind legs, torso and tail are feline. Psitticogrifs are intelligent, colourful, swift and have a magical ability to change appearance. As they hunt in flocks, and are able to mould their environment using tools, they are dangerous despite their modest size.

# Cornwall: Jellyfish

I was recently at a jellyfish spawning lab, where I discovered the jellies I'd swum through during my SCUBA lessons were Moon Jellyfish. This led me down a rabbit hole of thought – the largest jellyfish in the world wash up occasionally on the shores of Cornwall. Could a magus take one as a familiar? What other uses could we find for the lion's mane jellyfish?

The largest observed lion's mane jellyfish had a bell 2.3 meters wide, and tentacles 37 meters long, although most are smaller, with bells in the 50 cm range. The further north you are, the larger they tend to be. The largest have the darkest colouration, a sort of purple, while smaller ones are red, blue, orange or transparent. The link of purple and lions suggest Rego vis.

Statistically, a jellyfish is tricky to model. Unlike a squid, you don't want to work out an attack for each tentacle. The way around that is to treat the tentacles like an environmental effect. We've done this for swarms before, and for the body mass of elementals. I'd suggest the same for jellyfish.

The lion's mane lacks useful propulsive capability. It just bobs with its bell parallel to the surface, depending on currents to travel any great distance. This reminds me of the early Criamon who saw themselves as the followers of a universal principle of the inevitable, and their Prima, who floated about the place, never touching the ground, using magical powers that had become second nature to her. Could you make a familiar that, similarly, just sort of floats in the air, or even in a column of water in your covenant?

If you take something as amorphous as a jellyfish as a familiar, does this change the physical structure of the jellyfish markedly? We know that the sigil of the magus will transition across, and that pets come to look like their owners. Is this one way that your magus might get a floating brain as a familiar? After all, once you attach the silver chord, it gains intelligence. Presumably it stores that intelligence in an organ of some type?

A related, species, the barrel jellyfish, is also found in Cornish waters. Their maximum size is smaller than the lion's mane, about six feet long. They weigh about 70 pounds, so they are arguably Size 0 or -1. Lion's mane jellyfish tend to be smaller the further south you go, so the barrel jellyfish near Cornwall are often larger.

This species has a wider variety of colours than the lion's mane, although deep blue is the most common. Instead of the great net of stinging tentacles found on the lion's mane, it has four feeding arms. This allows it to be written up as a variant of the water elements or squid we've seen before. It doesn't have stingers, but it does have frills that give it a distinctive look.

Barrel jellyfish are capable of swimming at a constant rate of about 5 centimetres per second, which they mostly use to resist tidal flows, so they aren't swept out into the open ocean. This has only recently been discovered, but assuming they do it in Mythic Europe, that's about 18 kilometres per hour, extrapolated out to an extraordinary degree. That speed is comfortably placed between human jogging speed and distance running speed, so if a barrel jellyfish were adapted to life on land by the familiar bond, it could keep up with a travelling magus.

## PLOT HOOKS

Barrel jellyfish gather in huge groups, which makes it suitable for vis harvesting.

It's usual to bind an animal which has abilities you want to develop yourself. Many combat magi have eagle familiars because it gives them extended Sight Range, for example. There's one species of jellyfish that is effectively immortal: it can repeatedly transform into its adolescent state, age to maturity, and then cycle back. These were not known in medieval Europe, but make a really interesting treasure for a high fantasy game. They don't necessarily overpower the game, because the process of deaging would not prevent Twilight points accruing.

This species of jellyfish was the cause of death in one of the Sherlock Holmes stories. You might reskin that story, and add a Guernicus magus, trying to discover if a character had killed a romantic rival. Although the lion's mane is poisonous, it generally doesn't kill humans: it hurts, but only ends life in those with low Stamina, possibly due to Decrepitude.

Bjornaer magi often become enormous versions of their Heartbeats, rather than falling into Twilight. I've been trying to find a likely candidate for an Irish cryptid called the Whale Eater. This isn't it, but it does make me wonder if there's a Bjornaer magus who has headed to the cold north, to become a lion's mane of tremendous size.

Characters based on the Scilly Islands are possibly seeking a strange little sept of Criamon magi. Could they have had jellyfish familiars? Could one of these familiars have survived to provide clues as to where the magi have gone? A jellyfish is up to 95% water. What if a magical spirit in the form of jellyfish was filled to 95% with the material that makes up the current of vim that allows magic to be performed in Mythic Europe? What if, further, the magi had taken that ability upon themselves in an attempt to reach rapidly into the Hall of Heroes or into Twilight? Could characters find the notes for such a bizarre practice. What happens if they follow it themselves? It might lead to rapid advancement in one of the Criamon paths, but your saga may vary.



# Man: The Faerie Pig

The Fairy Pig this is a story about elfstroke. Elfstroke is a supernatural power covered by various cursing virtues.

When I was a little boy, we lived over by Sloc. One day, when I was six years old, my mother and my grandmother went up the mountain to make hay and I was left by myself. It was getting rather late, and they had not come back, so I was frightened, and started off up the mountain to try and find them. I had not gone far when I saw running before me a little snow-white pig. At first I thought it was some neighbour's pig and I tried to catch it, but it ran from me and I ran after it. As it went I saw that it was not like an ordinary pig—its tail was feathery and spread out like a fan, and it had long lapping ears that swept the ling. Now and again it turned its head and looked at me, and its eyes were burning like fire. We went higher and higher up the mountain, and all of a sudden I found myself at the edge of a steep brow and was all but over. I turned just in time, and ran as hard as I could go down the mountain and the pig after me. When I looked back over my shoulder, I saw that it was jumping over the big stones and rocks on the mountain side as if they had been butts of ling. I thought it would catch me; it was close behind me when I ran in at our garden gate, but I was just in time, and I slammed the door upon it.

I told my mother and my grandmother what had happened, and my grandmother said it was a Fairy Pig. I was not like myself that night; I could not eat any supper, and I went soon to my bed; I could not sleep, but lay tossing about; and was burning hot. After a time my mother opened the door to see if I was asleep, and when she looked at me, HER EYES WERE LIKE THE PIG'S EYES. I felt a sharp pain go through my right leg like a stab. After that the pain never left me; it was so bad that I could not bear to be touched, and I could eat nothing. I grew worse and worse, and after some days my father said he would take me to a Charmer at Castletown. They lifted me in the sheet, four men taking the four corners, and carried me to a cart. Never will I forget the shaking and jolting I had in that cart. When we got to Castletown I was more dead than alive.

The Charmer lived in Arbory Street and they took me to his house. When he saw me he said that they must all go away and leave me alone with him, so my father and my mother went to wait for me at The George. The Charmer carried me to a room upstairs and sent his wife away, and laid me on the floor and locked the door. Then he took down a big book and placed it on the floor beside me. He opened it at the picture of a little plant—I can see the plant to this day—and he pointed with his left hand to the picture, and with his right hand he made the sign of the cross on my leg, where the stab went through me, and said:

'Ta mee skeaylley yn guin shoh ayns ennym yn Ayr, as y Vac, as y Spyrryd Noo, Ned Quayle. My she guin, ayns ennym y Chiarn, ta mee skealley eh ass yn eill, ass ny fehyn, as ass ny craueyn,' which means in English—I spread this fairy shot in the name of the Father, and of the

Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Ned Quayle. If it is a fairy shot, in the name of the Lord, I spread it out of the flesh, out of the sinews, and out of the bones. That minute the pain left me. I felt very hungry, and the Charmer's wife set me at a table and gave me dinner. The Charmer went to fetch my father and my mother, and when they came in I was eating like two.

The Charmer told my mother I must not go on the mountain alone between the lights again. The pain never came back. I have been sound from that day to this, but I have the mark on my leg where the stab went through as clear as glass to the bone.

The recording this week was released into the public domain by Alex Finch: thanks to Alex and her support team at LibriVox.

We've seen elf stroke before, but the story also seems to demonstrate the pig either taking the shape of the mother or entering Ned Quayle's dreams. This means it is capable of Envisioning, the power to invade dreams, which is generally a demonic power. Is this a Faerie that is Infernally aligned?

The fairy doctor who treats the elf stroke does so by opening a book and reciting a charm from the page. The book shows an illustration of a herb. Can this person use illustrations of healing herbs in place of the herbs themselves? There is some precedent for this in Shape and Material bonuses such that a person who has a drawing or artistic representation of a thing can gain some fraction of the benefit that that thing would otherwise give them. This turned out particularly in lands of the Nile where representations of things are treated as, spiritually, an identical version of that thing in ancient Egyptian magic. It would be particularly useful to Hermetic magicians because it would mean that you could create catalogues of items of virtue, and use the natural magical powers of those items, without having to have a copy of each. This would also be a great use to other magical traditions who use the natural virtues of items. In this case I'm thinking of the Virgilians, who are in Rival Magic.

Also note that the scar looks like glass: it makes the flesh transparent. I haven't seen that particular feature before but it's a lovely one and it is somewhat sigil-like. Could the pig actually have been a magician or does the sigil belong to the fairy doctor?

# Cornwall: The Legend of Holy Vale

The legend which follows comes from "Scilly and its Legends" by Reverend Whitfield. When I originally read it I just gave up and said "No, we obviously aren't going to be getting anything more of value from the good Reverend." I was mistaken because, superficially the following story sounds like a simple miracle. Simple miracles make for bad stories, because there's nothing much the player characters can do about them.

Instead it brings to mind a plot hook that one of the other authors put into the Normandy book. There is a Jerbiton magus who tracks down the heirs of royal families and saves them from assassination: perhaps similarly someone has saved the talented, young lady you're about to meet from a living interment in a nunnery. She is literate. She can illuminate manuscripts. She appears to have beauty that causes ill luck and she seems to be the keeper of a relic. Does she have a particularly effective prayer to Mary, Mother of God and inspirer of romantic troubadours?

Is she, alternatively, the sort of person who knows how to head for the hills and live in a covenant? She could live there for an extended period of time, take a longevity potion. When close to death she might arrange to have her body snuck back into the church, so she'll be protected from any of her sins at the Final Day.

Also notice that her boyfriend just disappeared off to the Holy Land. No-one knows where he's gone. Could these two characters be companions in your saga? One of them carries a Relic. They seem to have the True Love Virtue and, between the two of them, some incredibly useful skills.

Now over to our LibriVox reader for this week: I'm going to cut as much of his work out as I can because Whitfield was quite prolix (also because the reader this week is a slightly younger version of myself).

I don't want to inculcate comments in one of my own recordings : it's just confusing. Think about whether this whole thing might be a con. Then again some of you may be more pious and for you: your saga may vary.

*It was Tuesday in Easter-week. The feast [started] late at the season of which I write, so that the beautiful as full of blossoms, and of green leaves, forth their gems timidly, as if aware boldness in thus venturing out so early into the world. A spell of loveliness seemed to lie over the little enchanted hollow, birds sang sweetly, in the fresh and fragrant shade...[cut lots of pastoral loveliness] peradventure, arose on high, with less of the serpent to clog their wings. It was, indeed, a bright day, and man strove to make it brighter still.*

*After the season of that dread Passion, succeeding the painful vigils of Lent, it was the custom of the day to indulge the people with many sports and pastimes, some of them strangely inconsistent with our ideas of ancient medieval discipline. The Abbot of Misrule was there, and the dragon, and the monastic orders parodied and travestied, and the great Tempter himself, and pretty winged children representing, not unfitly, angels, as they may be seen, even now, on the Continent, in the procession of the Fete Dieu. With a keen knowledge of human nature, and somewhat too of confidence in their own strength, the religious fraternities, and both the secular and regular priests, allowed and even encouraged, some apparently irreverent excesses. These were licensed to an unwonted extent, that day, at Holy Yale.*

*The mummers and guisers were more numerous than usual, and seemed to have full permission to jest, until an impious step even intruded itself upon holy ground. The Lady Abbess was a dame of high birth, and of unquestioned sanctity. Yet the dragon of Wantley profanely ventured to compare her to the maid Marian who figured among the masquers, and whose condition, to tell the truth, sadly belied her assumed character of single blessedness, the pious superior being afflicted with an infirmity that showed itself in an ungraceful rotundity of figure, hardly differing, to worldly eyes, from that of the buxom matron herself.*

*It was not altogether the brightness of the day, nor the celebration of Easter sports, which created this more than usual animation and bustle. A ceremony was being performed in the little chapel of the convent, which is always one of solemnity and of importance in the Catholic world. And this, too, as an event of the kind, was of no common order. The profession of a sister is ever an occasion of interest for the community in which it occurs. But the young being, now dedicated to God was, in herself, an object of attention, from the peculiar circumstances in which she had hitherto been placed.*

*She was, so it was given out, an orphan, brought up in strict seclusion, under the care of an aged maiden lady, in the castle of the Earl of Cornwall, at Old Town. No one knew ought of her parentage, nor of her name. She was simply called the demoiselle Maude, and treated with such respect as, at that time, was accorded only to one of the highest rank.*

*To the mystery of her birth was added another and a more potent charm. She was exceeding fair, fair beyond all rivalry, rich in intellectual gifts, peerless in her lofty beauty. The wise monk, who was her preceptor, could teach her nothing more, for she had surpassed the limits of his old world lore. The brother limner, at the great Abbey of Tresco, confessed himself vanquished by her exquisite creations. The illuminated Bible, done by her, was worth a king's ransom. The broideress at St. Mary's Nunnery looked with reverence at the work of the lady Maude's hands. And with all this superiority of gifts, natural and acquired, she had the simplicity and the purity of a child.*

*One clue only to the secret of her position was found, even by the most curious inquirers. This was in her face. Gentle and loving as she was, she had about her that which brooked no familiarity, and no intrusion. There was in her lineaments a likeness felt, but of which men never spoke. There was a sparkle of Plantagenet in her proud thoughtful eye. Such, and in so secluded a fashion, dwelt the demoiselle Maude in the gloomy castle a fresh and radiant spirit budding into womanhood and waiting, apparently, with a heart untouched, for the hour which should unite her fate to that of another.*

Her days were peaceful and monotonous, with little to enliven or to vary them. They were precisely the mode of existence calculated to throw a tender and confiding bosom off its guard. Full of impulse and of affection, it encountered no danger to startle it, and to teach it, by that instinctive warning sent by Providence to woman's heart, to examine its own feelings, and to analyse emotions which are never so perilous or deceitful, as when there is no suspicion of their approach. Few visitors sought the castle, and, of them, fewer still were young. Pilgrims there were, and priests, who brought tidings of the world, and talked in a simple and antique manner with the Dame de Barentin. But they took little heed of the lady Maude, as she bent over her embroidery-frame, or illumined in gold and colours, some quaint legend or heraldic device. And she was left to her own maiden meditations with none to direct or share them.

There was, indeed, in the fortress one beside herself, whom his age and position, to a certain extent, drew closer to her than to its other inmates. Jocelyn de St. Martin was the son of an old knight, who had been a former seneschal there, and was now page of honour to the Chatelaine, with a hope of admittance into the Earl's household, as an esquire. He was of the same age as the demoiselle, and they had been associates from their childhood.

Oh, the danger of that seclusion, that unconscious sacrament of love, between young undoubting hearts ! Not a word had been whispered on either side, not a pledge given, not a syllable of troth plighted or received and yet, though the world dreamed not of it, the secret was no longer theirs to breathe. The youth loved that mysterious maiden and the maiden smiled to know that she was loved. The dream was a bright one, as bright, alas ! as brief.

Some passage between the two, some touch or look, some of those eloquent nothings which are the language and the soul of passion, betrayed their unspoken secret to the Dame de Barentin. She knew her duty, and acted on it instantly. The page was despatched, ostensibly, with a missive for the Earl, then residing at his castle of Launceston, but, in reality, to be the bearer of the news of this perplexing occurrence.

The result of the intelligence may be conveyed in a few words. Jocelyn de St. Martin was attached to his lord's person, as esquire, and ordered to remain and to begin his duties at once. The fate of the beautiful orphan was, to our eyes, far more sad. It did not suit the Earl's purpose that she, whom he called his ward, should be mated with one of birth inferior to her own. In those days, there was but one alternative. The demoiselle was to be the daughter of Heaven. With a rich dower, as became her guardian's rank, she was at once to begin her novitiate, and to vow herself, and all her matchless charms, and her young gifted mind, at God's altar, as His virgin bride.

It was no wonder then that all was joy and festivity at Holy Vale. The Earl had intimated his desire that there should be no delay. A commission, annulling the usual period of probation, had been forwarded by John Grandison, 'Bishop of Exeter, to Robert Deneys, the Lord Prior of Scilly. On receiving it, notice was sent to the Dame de Barentin who ordered her train to horse, and conveyed her unsuspecting charge to Holy Vale. She was there placed in the hands of the Lady Abbess, who was henceforth responsible for her. The fair girl was conducted to a cell, where she was visited by the Superior, who confirmed, in language, decided i

ndeed, though not unkind, the suspicions excited by the sudden journey in the maiden's breast.

The effect of such a revelation may be imagined but cannot be described. It was less despair than an absence of life and its functions. It was an earthquake, crushing at once sense and vitality. It was the mind's death, while, amid that dreadful paralysis, the body still lived on. But if the likeness of Plantagenet was seen upon the brow of the unhappy girl, the spirit of that haughty race was in her heart. She was one to die, and make no sign. If her bosom became ice, and her being stagnated, on hearing her doom, she never for a moment stooped to remonstrate or to complain.

She signified her willingness to proceed to the chapel without delay. No victim ever went to the scene of her sacrifice with a prouder step, or with a face more marble or more serene. Not a shadow crossed it, during the whole of that impressive solemnity. She laid aside her bridal trappings with an air of indifference. She unloosed, and even with her own hands gathered together, the silken volumes of her dark hair, as the Abbess severed it, lock by lock, from her head. When the rites were concluded, she came forward, and received the kisses of the Abbess and of the nuns with a cheek, calm, but so chill, that it seemed to freeze the lips that touched it. As soon as all was done, she retired to her cell, which was in future to be her living tomb. as haughtily as before.

Her favourite tirewoman had, as an act of grace, been left for a season with her, and she came to her, and, as soon as they were alone, fell at the feet of her lady, now only Sister Mary, with an irrepressible and natural burst of indignation and of compassion. But the high-born damsel raised her in silence, and kissed her brow. There was in her eye a glassy stare, and a vacant agony, a kind of unconscious convulsion, in her smile, that spoke of something fearful within. But whatever she felt, she gave it no utterance. The very evil spirit, that would have maddened another, seemed to obey her.

The poor damsel, who loved her mistress tenderly, with the love of a common mind, looked at her with astonishment, and could hardly believe what she saw. The Sister took no heed of her wonder, but gently dismissed her, and remained in her cell alone. Whatever the secrets of that prison-house, they were sacred, and hidden from every eye, but that of God. Nothing was seen of Sister Mary until vespers, when she appeared in the chapel, and petitioned, after the conclusion of the service, that she might be allowed to remain, in prayer, before the high altar, through the night.

The request was at once granted. It was no unusual thing, indeed; and in the case of one thus suddenly, for some mysterious reason, cut off from the world, it seemed natural to come unto the shrine of the Virgin, and there to pray for support and comfort. There could be no refuge for a bleeding heart like the love and pity of her, whose bosom had been pierced by pangs so great. So the Sister's prayer was accorded cheerfully, and she was left, at the altar, to commence her painful vigil, in communion only with the dead that slept below, and with the Mother of God, who looked down upon her, with a smile of pity, from her niche above. Then appeared to come upon her spirit that shadow, which the cross flings upon the bosoms of those vowed to the cloistered solitude of a religious life.

The girl had departed from those walls, but the nun remained. She seldom spoke, and never complained. Her tirewoman visited her often, and was permitted to remain with her for hours in her cell, for the strict rules of the Order were tacitly remitted, in her favour. She could not be called haughty, nor was she reserved, but there was no fellowship between the other Sisters and herself, and, it may be unconsciously, she occupied a place, both in feeling and intellect, which they could not reach.



*The never mingled with them. Instead of the usual equality of the conventual life, when by chance they met her moving about, looking so proud, yet so woe-begone withal, they made her a hurried reverence, and passed on. Her only occupation seemed to be the care of a rose-bush, said to have some miraculous properties, and consecrated to the Virgin. It was from this bush that the place was called Holy Vale. One of its flowers was deemed to have the power, if worn, to preserve its bearer from mortal sin. And one of its crimson buds was always borne upon her bosom, for the bush had the gift of perpetual spring, and blossomed through the entire year.*

*So passed away the months of her novitiate. Winter — such as winter is in this land of the aloe, the myrtle, and the geranium — ^was melting before the smile of spring. The day was approaching when the irrevocable black veil was to be assumed. The demeanour of the novice was unchanged. It was as cold, as formal, and as still as ever. Her faithful tirewoman spent with her the eve of the fatal day, and when Sister Mary had dismissed her from the cloister gate, after vespers, she asked permission to spend in the chapel the solemn night, that was to usher in for her as solemn a dawn. The Abbess gave the desired leave, with her blessing on the head of the fair nun, so soon to be affianced to heaven, by the last awful tie. She went alone, through the holy place, to the high altar, and there was seen, by those who casually observed her, like a prostrate statue, absorbed in an agony of prayer.*

*There they parted from her, but, on the morrow they sought her there in vain. She left no relic of her presence. They found no traces of her flight. One thing only showed that she had been lately near. By the rose-bush of the Virgin was found a bough broken off, and thrown down upon the ground, one opening bud alone being taken from its stem. Save this slight indication of her taste, and of the tenderness of a crushed heart for even an inanimate thing, her fate and her history were a void. The wrath of the stern Earl was terrible, but it was as vain as the quiet lamentations of the sisterhood. She, whom they deemed a perjured nun, was gone, and, apparently, gone for ever.*

*The solemn beauty of her pale countenance was missed for a time, but, as no tidings of the fugitive were received, the impression caused by her loss waxed fainter and yet more faint. The name of the fugitive was scarcely ever mentioned ; her empty place was filled up by another ; her memory was, as it were, a tale that is told. Years glided along, and passed lightly, as time ever passes, over the community of Holy Vale.*

*Yet still, even in a religious society, the hand of the great leveller comes down, gathering, one by one, the human blossoms on the tree of life. The sisters were called from their simple duties, and left the grey walls for a home more lasting, but scarcely more silent or more sad. The stately Abbess laid down her life and her authority together, and bequeathed her mild sceptre to her successor. Those who had known Sister Mary, and had pondered tearfully over her disappearance, at the moment when they deemed her about to win an immortal crown were removed from the scene.*

*Two or three only, at an advanced age, still lingered on. They spoke sometimes of the mystery of Sister Mary's flight, but all hope of clearing it up was gone. The register of the angel on high could alone solve the terrible problem. To earth, and to mortal eyes, it was^ apparently, a sealed volume, to be opened only by a mightier hand than that of man. So, however, it was not fated to be.*

*The eve of Easter Tuesday had again come round, and had fallen late in the year, on exactly the same day as that on which sister Mary had been lost to God and to them, as it seemed, for ever. The eve of the same Tuesday had once more brought its duties, and its religious observances ; for a solemn mass was performed for her who had so unaccountably vanished, and Heaven was entreated for her. It was observed that the rose-bush put forth its earliest and*

*choicest blossoms, in loving profusion. A spirit of peace, and a sacred blessing, appeared to be floating over the hallowed spot.*

*During vespers, a sweet voice seemed to mingle with the choir, as though an angel sang. Next morning the great doors of the chapel were thrown open, as was usual on occasions of state, for matins. The Abbess entered, at the head of her train, but the building was not untenanted. It was already occupied by One, upon whom was impressed the grandeur, and the sanctity, conferred by an immortal power from its contact with that which is mortal. Death, that consecrates by its touch, and hallows even while it slays, had been busy there.*

*A form lay upon the highest step, before the great altar, its hands clasped upon its bosom in the attitude of prayer, and so marble-like and motionless that it might have been deemed an effigy on a tomb. There was no mistaking its dread repose, nor its rigid limbs, nor the stony expression of its upturned face.*

*Death was frozen in its lineaments of rare beauty, but the expression was as calm and child-like as though they were but composed in sleep, and a sweet smile played about the lips, fixed there, perhaps, by the guardian angel, that bore away the departing spirit from a frame so fair. The form was one of early womanhood, and was clothed in the dress of a novice of the house. Upon the cold bosom, and on the heart that throbbed no more with life, was placed a rose bud, apparently long gathered, but yet as fresh as though newly plucked from its stem.*

*The sisters crowded round the figure, sleeping in its awful loveliness. The two aged nuns recognised it at once. It was their lost sister, Mary. They buried her where she lay. It was vain to ask by what miracle she. had been preserved and given back, in her pure and perfect innocence, for by her outward beauty they might be assured of that within. Perhaps the rose bud had guarded her from temptation, and had imparted to her strength to resist it. So they committed her to the dust, with her body sinless and undefiled, and raised above her a marble monument; and the fame of Holy Vale, and of its sacred flower, flourished in the land.*

*Save those survivors of her sisterhood, there remained, indeed, none to inquire into her fate. Men spoke of a secret passage, leading from the chapel to St. Mary's, at Old Town, by which she had escaped, and joined her faithful tirewoman; but these surmises led to no result. The stern Earl was dead. Jocelyn de St Martin had died too, in harness, warring against the infidels. When she thus came back, raised, as it were, from the grave, only to be restored to it for ever, she had as little affinity to the old and feeble nuns, as she had felt, when, more than a generation before, she had walked in haughty solitude, beneath that roof. Her presence there troubled them, with its unearthly brightness, and its strange gift of youth, and the contrast of its angelic freshness with their wrinkled and forbidding brows. So they buried her where she lay, in the odour of her sanctity, and in her undying beauty.*

# Magonomia and the Churn Supper Song

This bonus episode isn't an advert for Magonomia, which is a game of Renaissance wizardry, published by some of the Ars Magica authors, but you should check it out at <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/shewstonepublishing/magonomia-the-rpg-of-rennaissance-wizardry> A note on conflict of interest: if it funds I will be writing some of their stretch goals.

It's a game of a Renaissance wizardry it doesn't use as magic as noun and verb system and it uses wizardry from the time, rather than Ars Magica's high fantasy wizardry. It allows us to start mining without filing the serial numbers off for some of the folklore that appeared somewhat later than we usually use. The other thing is that because Magonomia is set in England, at least in its initial publications, this allows us to do something slightly different with fairies.

When I reworked fairies, conceptually, I used the idea that they were the spirits of borderlands: of liminal states. One of the advantages of this is that it allows us to take widely dispersed cultural traditions and put them in the same category. You can put djinn and ghula and sprites in the same group. In Magonomia, because it's geographically more isolated, the faerie traditions are more coherent. You can be rather more exact about what fairies are.

So to celebrate the launch of Magonomia, I'd like to share with you something from LibriVox. The following is a Churn supper song. Churn suppers are an English tradition, I believe, from the north of England. To celebrate the end of the harvest, the landlord would pass around a churn of cream, as a luxury to be shared by the field workers. When you listen to this churn song you'll notice that it's a spell. One of its functions is that when fairies are attendants of the churn supper, they are welcomed, but after they've participated they're unable to harm anyone who's at the churn supper while they're on their way home.

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*Text from "Ancient Poems, Ballads and Songs of the Peasantry of England, taken down from oral recitation and transcribed from private manuscripts, rare broadsides and scarce publications" edited by Robert Bell.*

*God rest you, merry gentlemen!  
Be not moved at my strain,  
For nothing study shall my brain,  
But for to make you laugh:  
For I came here to this feast,  
For to laugh, carouse, and jest,  
And welcome shall be every guest  
To take his cup and quaff.*

*Chorus:  
Be frolicsome, every one,  
Melancholy none;  
Drink about!  
See it out,  
And then we'll all go home,  
And then we'll all go home!*

*This ale it is a gallant thing,  
It cheers the spirits of a king;  
It makes a dumb man strive to sing,  
Aye, and a beggar play!  
A cripple that is lame and halt,  
And scarce a mile a day can walk,  
When he feels the juice of malt,  
Will throw his crutch away.*

*Chorus*

*'Twill make the parson forget his men,—  
'Twill make his clerk forget his pen  
'Twill turn a tailor's giddy brain,  
And make him break his wand,  
The blacksmith loves it as his life,  
It makes the tinkler bang his wife,  
Aye, and the butcher seek his knife  
When he has it in his hand!*

*Chorus.*

*.So now to conclude, my merry boys, all  
,Let's with strong liquor take a fall,  
Although the weakest goes to the wall  
The best is but a play!  
For water it concludes in noise,  
Good ale will cheer our hearts, brave boys;  
Then put it round with a cheerful voice,  
We meet not every day.*

*]Chorus*

In some of the more remote dales of Craven it is customary at the close of the hay-harvest for the farmers to give an entertainment to their men; this is called the churn supper; a name which Eugene Aram traces to 'the immemorial usage of producing at such suppers a great quantity of cream in a churn, and circulating it in cups to each of the rustic company, to be eaten with bread.' At these churn-suppers the masters and their families attend the entertainment, and share in the general mirth. The men mask themselves, and dress in a grotesque manner, and are allowed the privilege of playing harmless practical jokes on their employers, &c. The churn-supper song varies in different dales, but the following used to be the most popular version. In the third verse there seems to be an allusion to the clergyman's taking tythe in kind, on which occasions he is generally accompanied by two or three men, and the parish clerk. The song has never before been printed. There is a marked resemblance between it and a song of the date of 1650, called A Cup of Old Stingo. See Popular Music of the Olden Time, I., 308.