

Games From Folktales

A free podcast for
the Ars Magica
roleplaying game

Chronicles of Shadow Valley 5: The Sun
Simon, the friend of snakes
God's Judgement on a Wicked Bishop

The Rotting Princess

Comus by Milton: A return to Sabrina of the Severin
Zoolvisia

Cornwall: The Saint of the Wreckers
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Chronicles of Shadow Valley 6: The Pan

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Then the Professor drew forth his wand and went to his cupboard of wonder. Thence he brought condiments, oils, and dews of amazement. These he poured into a vessel that was in the midst of the room, a bowl of agate standing alone on a table. He lit it and it all welled up in flame, a low broad flame of the colour of pale emerald. Over this he waved his wand, which was of exceeding blackness. Morano watched as children watch the dancer, who goes from village to village when spring is come, with some new dance out of Asia or some new song. Rodriguez sat and waited.

The Professor explained that to leave this Earth alive, or even dead, was prohibited to our bodies, unless to a very few, whose names were hidden. Yet the spirits of men could by incantation be liberated, and being liberated, could be directed on journeys by such minds as had that power passed down to them from of old. Such journeys, he said, were by no means confined by the hills of Earth. "The Saints," exclaimed Morano, "guard us utterly!" But Rodriguez smiled a little. His faith was given to the Saints of Heaven. He wondered at their wonders, he admired their miracles, he had little faith to spare for other marvels; in fact he did not believe the Slave of Orion.

"Do you desire such a journey?" said the Professor.

"It will delight me," answered Rodriguez, "to see this example of your art."

"And you?" he said to Morano.

The question seemed to alarm the placid Morano, but "I follow my master," he said.

At once the Professor stretched out his ebony wand, calling the green flame higher. Then he put out his hands over the flame, without the wand, moving them slowly with constantly tremulous fingers. And all at once they heard him begin to speak. His deep voice flowed musically while he scarcely seemed to be speaking but seemed only to be concerned with moving his hands. It came soft, as though blown faint from fabulous valleys, illimitably far from the land of Spain. It seemed full not so much of magic as mere sleep, either sleep in an unknown country of alien men, or sleep in a land dreamed sleeping a long while since. As the travellers heard it they thought of things far away, of mythical journeys and their own earliest years.

They did not know what he said or what language he used. At first Rodriguez thought Moorish, then he deemed it some secret language come down from magicians of old, while Morano merely wondered; and then they were lulled by the rhythm of those strange words, and so enquired no more. Rodriguez pictured some sad wandering angel, upon some mountain-peak of African lands, resting a moment and talking to the solitudes, telling the lonely valley the mysteries of his home. While lulled though Morano was he gave up his alertness uneasily. All the while the green flame flooded upwards: all the while the tremulous fingers made curious shadows. The shadow seemed to run to Rodriguez and beckon him thence: even Morano felt them calling. Rodriguez closed his eyes. The voice and the Moorish spells made now a more haunting melody: they were now like a golden organ on undiscoverable mountains. Fear came on Morano at the thought: who had power to speak like this?

He grasped Rodriguez by the wrist. "Master!" he said, but at that moment on one of those golden spells the spirit of Rodriguez drifted away from his body, and out of the greenish light of the curious room; unhampered by weight, or fatigue, or pain, or sleep; and it rose above the rocks and over the mountain, an unencumbered spirit: and the spirit of Morano followed.

The mountain dwindled at once; the Earth swept out all round them and grew larger, and larger still, and then began to dwindle. They saw then that they were launched upon some astounding journey. Does my reader wonder they saw when they had no eyes? They saw as they had never seen before, with sight beyond what they had ever thought to be possible.

This week another of our episodes from Lord Dunsany's Don Rodrigo: The Chronicles of Shadow Valley. In this episode Don Rodriguez and his servant Morano have been accepted as guests (and kind of captured) by a wizard who holds the Chair of Magic at the University of Sagossa, and he is almost forcing them through an investiture into astrological sect.

The start of the story talks about how they're both suffering from melancholy. That's an effect of the magical mirrors he showed them in a previous episode, which caused them to see all of the wars of human history – including the wars of the future. This has made them so despondent that when he asks them to agree to be forced into another initiation almost immediately, they agree.

I'll be popping up during the telling of the story, which is by Ed Humple through LibriVox (thanks, Ed!) to discuss the mechanical effects of the things described.

Morano may be onto something here: is the magician using the Entrancement Virtue to force them to relax?

Spirits called out by this process have certain useful features for Ars Magica. They don't suffer wounds or fatigue, they require no sustenance, and they require no sleep.

So, in this state, every Perception roll, or roll where perception is coupled with an Ability, is automatically incredible successful. If something is sensible your character, in this form, cannot fail to notice it.

Our eyes gather in light, and with the little rays of light that they bring us we gather a few images of things as we suppose them to be. Pardon me, reader, if I call them things as we suppose them to be; call them by all means Things As They Really Are, if you wish. These images then, this tiny little brainful that we gather from the immensities, are all brought in by our eyesight upside-down, and the brain corrects them again; and so, and so we know something. An oculist will tell you how it all works. He may admit it is all a little clumsy, or for the dignity of his profession he may say it is not at all. But be this as it may, our eyes are but barriers between us and the immensities. All our five senses that grope a little here and touch a little there, and seize, and compare notes, and get a little knowledge sometimes, they are only barriers between us and what there is to know. Rodriguez and Morano were outside these barriers. They saw without the imperfections of eyesight; they heard on that journey what would have deafened ears; they went through our atmosphere unburned by speed, and were unchilled in the bleak of the outer spaces.

Thus freed of the imperfections of the body they sped, no less upon a terrible journey, whose direction as yet Rodriguez only began to fear.

They had seen the stars pale rapidly and then the flash of dawn. The Sun rushed up and at once began to grow larger. Earth, with her curved sides still diminishing violently, was soon a small round garden in blue and filmy space, in which mountains were planted. And still the Sun was growing wider and wider. And now Rodriguez, though he knew nothing of Sun or planets, perceived the obvious truth of their terrible journey: they were heading straight for the Sun. But the spirit of Morano was merely astounded; yet, being free of the body he suffered none of those inconveniences that perturbation may bring to us: spirits do not gasp, or palpitate, or weaken, or sicken.

The dwindling Earth seemed now no more than the size of some unmapped island seen from a mountain-top, an island a hundred yards or so across, looking like a big table.

Speed is comparative: compared to sound, their pace was beyond comparison; nor could any modern projectile attain any velocity comparable to it; even the speed of explosion was slow to it. And yet for spirits they were moving slowly, who being independent of all material things, travel with such velocities as that, for instance, of thought. But they were controlled by one still dwelling on Earth, who used material things, and the material that the Professor was using to hurl them upon their journey was light, the adaptation of which to this purpose he had learned at Saragossa. At the pace of light they were travelling towards the Sun.

They crossed the path of Venus, far from where Venus then was, so that she scarcely seemed larger to them; Earth was but little bigger than the Evening Star, looking dim in that monstrous daylight.

Crossing the path of Mercury, Mercury appeared huger than our Moon, an object weirdly unnatural; and they saw ahead of them the terrific glare in which Mercury basks, from a Sun whose withering orb had more than doubled its width since they came from the hills of Earth. And after this the Sun grew terribly larger, filling the centre of the sky, and spreading and spreading and spreading. It was now that they saw what would have dazzled eyes, would have burned up flesh and would have shrivelled every protection that our scientists' ingenuity could have devised even today. To speak of time there is meaningless. There is nothing in the empty space between the Sun and Mercury with which time is at all concerned....Rodriguez and Morano had been travelling about six or seven minutes, but it seems idle to say so.

And then the Sun began to fill the whole sky in front of them. And in another minute, if minutes had any meaning, they were heading for a boundless region of flame that, left and right, was everywhere, and now towered above them, and went below them into a flaming abyss.

So, in this state, every Perception roll, or roll where perception is coupled with an Ability, is automatically incredible successful. If something is sensible your character, in this form, cannot fail to notice it.

Bodiless spirits are unable to make Personality trait rolls, if those rolls are determined by the balance of the humors. In Mythic Europe, that covers most emotional states. These spirits are passionless intelligences which is important to note, considering what is about to happen to Morano.

And now Morano spoke to Rodriguez. He thought towards him, and Rodriguez was aware of his thinking: it is thus that spirits communicate.

"Master," he said, "when it was all spring in Spain, years ago when I was thin and young, twenty years gone at least; and the butterflies were come, and song was everywhere; there came a maid bare-footed over a stream, walking through flowers, and all to pluck the anemones." How fair she seemed even now, how bright that far spring day. Morano told Rodriguez not with his blundering lips: they were closed and resting deeply millions of miles away: he told him as spirits tell. And in that clear communication Rodriguez saw all that shone in Morano's memory, the grace of the young girl's ankles, the thrill of Spring, the anemones larger and brighter than anemones ever were, the hawks still in clear sky; earth happy and heaven blue, and the dreams of youth between. You would not have said, had you seen Morano's coarse fat body, asleep in a chair in the Professor's room, that his spirit treasured such delicate, nymph-like, pastoral memories as now shone clear to Rodriguez. No words the blunt man had ever been able to utter had ever hinted that he sometimes thought like a dream of pictures by Watteau. And now in that awful space before the power of the terrible Sun, spirit communed with spirit, and Rodriguez saw the beauty of that far day, framed all about the beauty of one young girl, just as it had been for years in Morano's memory. How shall I tell with words what spirit sang wordless to spirit? We poets may compete with each other in words; but when spirits give up the purest gold of their store, that has shone far down the road of their earthly journey, cheering tired hearts and guiding mortal feet, our words shall barely interpret.

Love, coming long ago over flowers in Spain, found Morano; words did not tell the story, words cannot tell it; as a lake reflects a cloud in the blue of heaven, so Rodriguez understood and felt and knew this memory out of the days of Morano's youth. "And so, master," said Morano, "I sinned, and would indeed repent, and yet even now at this last dread hour I cannot abjure that day; and this is indeed Hell, as the good father said."

Rodriguez tried to comfort Morano with such knowledge as he had of astronomy, if knowledge it could be called. Indeed, if he had known anything he would have perplexed Morano more, and his little pieces of ignorance were well adapted for comfort.

But Morano had given up hope, having long been taught to expect this very fire: his spirit was no wiser than it had been on Earth, it was merely freed of the imperfections of the five senses and so had observation and expression beyond those of any artist the world has known. This was the natural result of being freed of the body; but he was not suddenly wiser; and so, as he moved towards this boundless flame, he expected every moment to see Satan charge out to meet him: and having no hope for the future he turned to the past and fondled the memory of that one spring day. His was a backsliding, unrepentant spirit. As that monstrous sea of flame grew ruthlessly larger Rodriguez felt no fear, for spirits have no fear of material things: but Morano feared. He feared as spirits fear spiritual things; he thought he neared the home of vast spirits of evil and that the arena of conflict was eternity. He feared with a fear too great to be borne by bodies. Perhaps the fat body that slept on a chair on earth was troubled in dreams by some echo of that fear that gripped the spirit so sorely. And it may be from such far fears that all our nightmares come.

So there's a lot to unpack there.

Much as spirits cannot fail Perception rolls, when they are communicating with each other, they cannot fail Communication rolls. Their ability to seamlessly send thoughts and memories is perfect, and this means that as a teaching tool, the mystagogue can step outside the limitations of the Ability system and directly transmit knowledge in its purest and most noiseless form into the mind and spirit of the acolyte.

Murano is clearly in love with this maiden. If he merely lusted after her, he could no longer feel it, because that's an emotion governed by a bodily humor, He can't have too much heat in the blood, because he currently has no blood. He is able to give a vision of True Love, which is a reflection of the Divine in Ars Magica, to his master. This may do Rodriguez a great deal of good, because up until now all his discussion of love has been troubadouric and performative, and his faith in mandolins under balconies has been rattled by the visions of endless wars. He's able to throw this off by the next chapter, where he meets Serafina, the love of his life.

I'd like to stress that the benefits of the spiritual form (increased Perception and Communication) don't require you to be outside the sphere of the Earth, they simply require you to be outside the body. Some hedge magicians do this regularly (a feat called ekstasis), as do Criamon on the Path of the Body, and technically some Tremere Certamen masters. Some magi can also do this with Rego Mentem spells.

In past discussions we have not seen this purifying effect: ghosts in Calebais, for example, don't deduce everything about the adventuring party. The closest things we've seen to this are faeries and demons. Demons pretend to know the future by observing so much of the present. Faeries pretend to see and know: but because the faerie is basically the avatar of an environmental effect swarming around you, it knows a lot about you regardless.

There is a spell in Ars Magica that causes this level of fear: it causes death in its victims. Murano has not died, because he currently doesn't have anything to die with.

When they had travelled nearly ten minutes from Earth and were about to pass into the midst of the flame, that magician who controlled their journey halted them suddenly in Space, among the upper mountain-peaks of the Sun. There they hovered as the clouds hover that leave their companions and drift among crags of the Alps: below them those awful mountains heaved and thundered. All Atlas, and Teneriffe, and lonely Kenia might have lain amongst them unnoticed. As often as the earthquake rocked their bases it loosened from near their summits wild avalanches of gold that swept down their flaming slopes with unthinkable tumult. As they watched, new mountains rode past them, crowned with their frightful flames; for, whether man knew it or not, the Sun was rotating, but the force of its gravity that swung the planets had no grip upon spirits, who were held by the power of that tremendous spell that the Professor had learned one midnight at Saragossa from one of that dread line who have their secrets from a source that we do not know in a distant age.

There is always something tremendous in the form of great mountains; but these swept by, not only huger than anything Earth knows, but troubled by horrible commotions, as though overtaken in flight by some ceaseless calamity.

Rodriguez and Morano, as they looked at them, forgetting the gardens of Earth, forgetting Spring and Summer and the sweet beneficence of sunshine, felt that the purpose of Creation was evil! So shocking a thought may well astound us here, where green hills slope to lawns or peer at a peaceful sea; but there among the flames of those dreadful peaks the Sun seemed not the giver of joy and colour and life, but only a catastrophe huger than everlasting war, a centre of hideous violence and ruin and anger and terror. There came by mountains of copper burning everlasting, hurling up to unthinkable heights their mass of emerald flame. And mountains of iron raged by and mountains of salt, quaking and thundering and clothed with their colours, the iron always scarlet and the salt blue. And sometimes there came by pinnacles a thousand miles high that from base to summit were fire, mountains of pure flame that had no other substance. And these explosive mountains, born of thunder and earthquake, hurling down avalanches the size of our continents, and drawing upward out of the deeps of the Sun new material for splendour and horror, this roaring waste, this extravagant destruction, were necessary for every tint that our butterflies wear on their wings...

We will skip a bit here, where we see why Dunsany was such an influence on H P Lovecraft. Essentially he describes the Sun as a Lovecraftian horror.

And yet to Rodriguez and Morano all that they saw seemed wholly and hideously evil. How long they may have watched there they tried to guess afterwards, but as they looked on those terrific scenes they had no way to separate days from minutes: nothing about them seemed to escape destruction, and time itself seemed no calmer than were those shuddering mountains. Then the thundering ranges passed; and afterwards there came a gleaming mountain, one huge and lonely peak, seemingly all of gold. Had our whole world been set beside it and shaped as it was shaped, that golden mountain would yet have towered above it: it would have taken our moon as well to reach that flashing peak. It rode on toward them in its golden majesty, higher than all the flames, save now and then when some wild gas seemed to flee from the dread earthquakes of the Sun, and was overtaken in the height by fire, even above that mountain. As that mass of gold that was higher than all the world drew near to Rodriguez and Morano they felt its unearthly menace; and though it could not overcome their spirits they knew there was a hideous terror about it. It was in its awful scale that its terror lurked for any creature of our planet. Though they could not quake or tremble they felt that terror. The mountain dwarfed Earth.

Man knows his littleness, his own mountains remind him; many countries are small, and some nations: but the dreams of Man make up for our faults and failings, for the brevity of our lives, for the narrowness of our scope; they leap over boundaries and are away and away. But this great mountain belittled the world and all: who gazed on it knew all his dreams to be puny. Before this mountain Man seemed a trivial thing, and Earth, and all the dreams Man had of himself and his home.

The golden mass drew opposite those two watchers and seemed to challenge with its towering head the pettiness of the tiny world they knew. And then the whole gleaming mountain gave one shudder and fell into the awful plains of the Sun. Straight down before Rodriguez and Morano it slipped roaring, till the golden peak was gone, and the molten plain closed over it; and only ripples remained, the size of Europe, as when a tumbling river strikes the rocks of its bed and on its surface heaving circles widen and disappear. And then, as though this horror left nothing more to be shown, they felt the Professor beckon to them from Earth.

Over the plains of the Sun a storm was sweeping in gusts of howling flame as they felt the Professor's spell drawing them home. For the magnitude of that storm there are no words in use among us; its velocity, if expressed in figures, would have no meaning; its heat was immeasurable. Suffice it to say that if such a tempest could have swept over Earth for a second, both the poles would have boiled. The travellers left it galloping over that plain, rippled from underneath by the restless earthquake and whipped into flaming foam by the force of the storm. The Sun already was receding from them, already growing smaller. Soon the storm seemed but a cloud of light sweeping over the empty plain, like a murderous mourner rushing swiftly away from the grave of that mighty mountain.

And now the Professor's spell gripped them in earnest: rapidly the Sun grew smaller. As swiftly as he had sent them upon that journey he was now drawing them home. They overtook thunders that they had heard already, and passed them, and came again to the silent spaces which the thunders of the Sun are unable to cross, so that even Mercury is undisturbed by them.

I have said that spirits neither fade nor weary. But a great sadness was on them; they felt as men feel who come whole away from periods of peril. They had seen cataclysms too vast for our imagination, and a mournfulness and a satiety were upon them. They could have gazed at one flower for days and needed no other experience, as a wounded man may be happy staring at the flame of a candle.

Crossing the paths of Mercury and Venus, they saw that these planets had not appreciably moved, and Rodriguez, who knew that planets wander in the night, guessed thereby that they had not been absent from Earth for many hours.

They rejoiced to see the Sun diminishing steadily. Only for a moment as they started their journey had they seen that solar storm rushing over the plains of the Sun; but now it appeared to hang halted in its mid anger, as though blasting one region eternally.

Moving on with the pace of light, they saw Earth, soon after crossing the path of Venus, beginning to grow larger than a star. Never had home appeared more welcome to wanderers, who see their house far off, returning home.

And as Earth grew larger, and they began to see forms that seemed like seas and mountains, they looked for their own country, but could not find it: for, travelling straight from the Sun, they approached that part of the world that was then turned towards it, and were heading straight for China, while Spain lay still in darkness.

But when they came near Earth and its mountains were clear, then the Professor drew them across the world, into the darkness and over Spain; so that those two spirits ended their marvellous journey much as the snipe ends his, a drop out of heaven and a swoop low over marshes. So they came home, while Earth seemed calling to them with all her voices; with memories, sights and scents, and little sounds; calling anxiously, as though they had been too long away and must be home soon. They heard a cock crow on the edge of the night; they heard more little sounds than words can say; only the organ can hint at them. It was Earth calling.

I've cut several comments like that out while presenting Lord Dunsany's material to you. He served in the First World War and in Unhappy Far Off Things he uses his entire skill as a storyteller to explain how dreadful war is.

Cock crows are really bad for certain types of magic.

For, talk as we may of our dreams that transcend this sphere, or our hopes that build beyond it, Mother Earth has yet a mighty hold upon us; and her myriad sounds were blending in one cry now, knowing that it was late and that these two children of hers were nearly lost. For our spirits that sometimes cross the path of the angels, and on rare evenings hear a word of their talk, and have brief equality with the Powers of Light, have the duty also of moving fingers and toes, which freeze if our proud spirits forget their task for too long.

And just as Earth was despairing they reached the Professor's mountain and entered the room in which their bodies were.

Blue and cold and ugly looked the body of Morano, but for all its pallor there was beauty in the young face of Rodriguez.

The Professor stood before them as he had stood when their spirits left, with the table between him and the bodies, and the bowl on the table which held the green flame, now low and flickering desperately, which the Professor watched as it leaped and failed, with an air of anxiety that seemed to pinch his thin features.

With an impatience strange to him he waved a swift hand towards each of the two bodies where they sat stiff, illumined by the last of the green light; and at those rapid gestures the travellers returned to their habitations.

They seemed to be just awakening out of deep sleep. Again they saw the Professor standing before them. But they saw him only with blinking eyes, they saw him only as eyes can see, guessing at his mind from the lines of his face, at his thoughts from the movements of his hands, guessing as men guess, blindly: only a moment before they had known him utterly. Now they were dazed and forgetting: slow blood began to creep again to their toes and to come again to its place under fingernails: it came with intense pain: they forgot their spirits. Then all the woes of Earth crowded their minds at once, so that they wished to weep, as infants weep.

The Professor gave this mood time to change, as change it presently did. For the warm blood came back and lit their cheeks, and a tingling succeeded the pain in their fingers and toes, and a mild warmth succeeded the tingling: their thoughts came back to the things of every day, to mundane things and the affairs of the body. Therein they rejoiced, and Morano no less than Rodriguez; though it was a coarse and common body that Morano's spirit inhabited. And when the Professor saw that the first sorrow of Earth, which all spirits feel when they land here, had passed away, and that they were feeling again the joy of mundane things, only then did he speak..

We will leave off there. The professor attempts to force them through a third initiation, but Morano prevents it, because he thinks his master almost dead from the travails of the last one.

The King of the Snakes lives in the ruins of a big tower between Nineveh and Babylon, and rules all the snake tribe, both on land and sea. Once the King's son, who was viceroy of the province of Diarbekir, wrote a letter to his royal father, as follows:

"Long live the King! May Heaven bestow upon you life everlasting. Amen. Be it known to you that your daughter-in-law and grandchildren were sick last summer, and the doctors advised that they must have a change of climate and must go to Mount Ararat and bathe in its pure streams, and eat its fragrant flowers, and this will immediately heal them. Consequently I sent her and the children, with their attendants, to Mount Ararat. I also wrote letters to the provincial viceroys and princes to assist the Princess and her train during their sojourn in that district. But the Prince of Aderbadagan, after receiving my letter, instead of giving help to the traveling Princess, collected his troops and assaulted her and her train. The attendants of the Princess met them bravely, and there, at the foot of Mount Ararat, occurred a bloody battle, which would doubtless have resulted in the total defeat of the Princess' train, on account of the superior numbers of the enemy, if a human being, Simon the Shepherd, who was tending his flock in a neighboring field, had not come to the assistance of our fatigued combatants. He took his great club, and entering the ranks of the warriors, beat and killed and pursued the assaulting brigands of the Prince of Aderbadagan, and saved the life of your daughter-in-law, who thus came safely through this perilous journey. You see, my liege, that there is good even among men. I will punish the vile Prince of Aderbadagan for his wicked conduct; but it remains for you to reward the goodness of this noble human being as you deem best, and oblige your affectionate son."

The King of the Snakes, receiving this letter, took with him a vast quantity of gold and jewels, and went to his palace, in a ruined castle between Aleppo and Diarbekir. He posted his attendants on the highways to keep watch and inform him when Shepherd Simon should pass. The Shepherd was employed by dealers in live-stock, who did business with Damascus and Aleppo, and was now on his way to Aleppo. As soon as he approached the palace of the Snake King the watchers informed their sovereign, and in the twinkling of an eye the whole army of snakes stood near the highway and began to conjure. Simon the Shepherd felt a strange dizziness,—the heavens above and the earth below seemed to change. He stood there bewitched, while his companions drove away. Presently he opened his eyes, and lo! he was surrounded by innumerable snakes of all sizes and colors. Upon a golden throne was sitting a snake as thick as the body of an elephant, and upon his head there was a crown of costly jewels and diamonds. One of the snakes read a paper praising the goodness of the Shepherd, his natural fondness for the snake tribe, and his gallant defense of the weak and the wronged.

"Now, noble human being," said the King, "here is gold for you, precious jewels and diamonds; take as much as you like; and in addition to these, if you have a desire in your heart tell it to me and I will cause it to be satisfied."

Simon, after filling his shepherd's bag and his pockets with gold and jewels, said:

"I wish to understand the language of all animals, reptiles and birds."

"Let it be so," said the King; "but the day on which you shall tell anything of what you have seen or heard, you shall die."

The spell was removed, the snakes vanished, and Simon the Shepherd returned to his home near the foot of Mount Ararat. On the way he heard the animals talking, and lo! they knew all the secrets of men, and foretold events that would happen. Sometimes he laughed at what he heard, and sometimes he was terrified so that his hair stood erect upon his head. He entered his native village, and lo! all the dogs, cats, chickens, and even the long-legged storks were hallooing to one another and saying:

"Simon the Shepherd has come; his bag and pockets are full of gold and jewels."

This is an Armenian folktale, from a collection called "The Golden Maiden" by A G Seklemian. This story, and the one which will follow next week, are both possible starting points for a Spring covenant. This one is also of interest to us, because it suggests there is a political structure in the least-powerful tribe of dragons, the orms, and that the smallest orms look much like common snakes. Statistics for the king, and his daughter, will eventually land on the blog which accompanies the podcast.

The audio used in this episode was released into the public domain by Noel Badrian through Libivox. Thanks to Noel, and the production team. I'll pop back in at the end with a few plot hooks.

Simon came to his house and put his treasure before his wife who, being a very curious woman, instantly asked him where and how he obtained so much wealth.

"Enjoy it, but never ask," answered Simon.

Simon heard his dog and chickens talking in regard to the secrets of his house. Sometimes he laughed and sometimes he was angry. His wife, noticing Simon's strange conduct towards the animals, asked the reason. He refused to tell, but she begged and importuned him, weeping all the time. Finally he could resist her entreaties no longer, and he promised to tell her everything on the following day. That evening he heard the dog talking to the cock, which was leading the chickens to roost, chuckling and gurgling:

"Tell me, master rooster," said the dog, "what is the use of your chuckling and gurgling, since our master has promised his wife to-morrow to tell her everything? He will die; people will come and kill you, shoot me, and plunder and ruin everything which belongs to our master."

"Eh! the sooner it is ruined the better," answered the rooster, contemptuously. "I have a family of forty wives, who are all obedient to me; if our master was as wise as he is rich, he would not pay attention to the vain inquisitiveness of his wife; he himself would not die, and no harm would befall us or his house. But now he deserves death."

I'll cut the story there, because it ends with the threat of domestic violence, and that gains us nothing for the game.

Plot hooks

Simon has undergone some sort of mystagogic initiation here: he has a sort of permanent Intelligo Animal effect. A similar thing is gained, in German folklore, by consuming a dragon's heart. The virtue's weak enough that a companion could take it.

The king has a palace in a ruined castle, and a throne in a regio. Mixed with the treasure, this is sufficient to begin a covenant. The serpents also act as spies, informers, guards and familiars.

A Princess of Serpents

Faerie Might: 10 (Animal)

Characteristics: Int* 0, Per -2, Pre -6, Com -6, Str +1, Sta -6, Dex +2, Qik +4 Size: -4 Virtues and Flaws: 2 x Little, Faerie Ally (father), Faerie Beast; Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Highly Cognizant, Increased Characteristics, Personal Faerie Power (Constant Damaging Effect) Personality Traits: Regal +3, Tired all the time +2 Combat: Fangs: Init +4, Attack +15, Defense +10, Damage -6

Constriction*: Init 0, Attack +9, Defense +5, Damage +8

* +6 to Defense against grapple attacks

** May grapple -4 Size enemies.

*** Does not include the Constant Damaging Effect power, which adds +5 when appropriate.

Soak: +2

Wound Penalties: -1 (1), -3 (2), -5 (3), Incapacitated (4), Dead (5+)

Powers:

Constrict: When successfully struck with a constrict attack, the character is encoiled and unable to use mêlée weapons. The orm automatically does damage in each subsequent round, without requiring an Attack roll. The victim may still Soak damage. At the end of each round, including the round in which the constriction attack succeeds, the character may attempt to break free by an opposed Strength roll. To do this, he rolls Strength + a stress die, and compares it to the orm's Strength + a stress die. Success indicates he is free, and may attack normally in the following round. For each character assisting him to break free, he may add +1 to the Strength roll, but an assistant is unable to attack the orm in that round. A character unable to break free for 30 seconds (6 combat rounds) needs to make deprivation rolls, as described on page 179 of ArM5.

Constant Damaging Effect, 3 points, constant, Auram: Many orms emit a noxious slime or have toxic breath, and poison their surroundings, but many other damaging effects are known. This effect does +5 Damage, but is always active. 25 spell levels (Base 5 +1 Part, +2 Sun, +1 Constant)

Venomous Bite: When the orm attacks, compare its Attack Advantage to the victim's armor Protection (not his Soak). If the orm's advantage is higher, the victim suffers the effects of adder venom as listed in the Poison Table on page 180 of ArM5, regardless of whether the bite inflicts an actual wound. The storyguide may adjust the required Attack Advantage for special circumstances.

* These are natural abilities of the faerie's form, and do not require the Personal Faerie Powers Virtue.

Pretenses: Area Lore 3 (home territory), Awareness 3 (prey), Brawl 7 (bite), Hunt 4 (rodents), Faerie Speech 5 (threats), Folk Ken 1 (humans in her home territory), Intrigue 5 (faerie dragons), Stealth 3 (stalking prey)

Equipment: Has treasure, but does not carry it with her.

Vis: 2 pawns (Animal) snakeskin

Appearance: Appears to be a normal snake, if a little apathetic.

Source: Simon, the friend of dsnakes by A. G. Seklemian

Blog post: <https://wordpress.com/block-editor/post/timothyferguson.wordpress.com/12781>

Podcast: http://traffic.libsyn.com/gamesfromfolktale/236_-_Simon_the_friend_of_snakes.mp3

The summer and autumn had been so wet,
That in winter the corn was growing yet,
Twas a piteous sight to see all around
The grain lie rotting on the ground.

Every day the starving poor
Crowded around Bishop Hatto's door,
For he had a plentiful last-year's store,
And all the neighbourhood could tell
His granaries were furnish'd well.

At last Bishop Hatto appointed a day
To quiet the poor without delay;
He bade them to his great Barn repair,
And they should have food for the winter there.

Rejoiced such tidings good to hear,
The poor folk flock'd from far and near;
The great barn was full as it could hold
Of women and children, and young and old.

Then when he saw it could hold no more,
Bishop Hatto he made fast the door;
And while for mercy on Christ they call,
He set fire to the Barn and burnt them all.

"I'faith 'tis an excellent bonfire!" quoth he,
"And the country is greatly obliged to me,
For ridding it in these times forlorn
Of Rats that only consume the corn."

So then to his palace returned he,
And he sat down to supper merrily,
And he slept that night like an innocent man;
But Bishop Hatto never slept again.

In the morning as he enter'd the hall
Where his picture hung against the wall,
A sweat like death all over him came,
For the Rats had eaten it out of the frame.

As he look'd there came a man from his farm—
He had a countenance white with alarm;
"My Lord, I open'd your granaries this morn,
And the Rats had eaten all your corn."

Another came running presently,
And he was pale as pale could be,
"Fly! my Lord Bishop, fly," quoth he,
"Ten thousand Rats are coming this way,...
The Lord forgive you for yesterday!"

"I'll go to my tower on the Rhine," replied he,
"Tis the safest place in Germany;
The walls are high and the shores are steep,
And the stream is strong and the water deep."

Bishop Hatto fearfully hasten'd away,
And he crost the Rhine without delay,
And reach'd his tower, and barr'd with care
All the windows, doors, and loop-holes there.

He laid him down and closed his eyes;...
But soon a scream made him arise,
He started and saw two eyes of flame
On his pillow from whence the screaming came.

He listen'd and look'd;... it was only the Cat;
And the Bishop he grew more fearful for that,
For she sat screaming, mad with fear
At the Army of Rats that were drawing near.

For they have swum over the river so deep,
And they have climb'd the shores so steep,
And up the Tower their way is bent,
To do the work for which they were sent.

They are not to be told by the dozen or score,
By thousands they come, and by myriads and more,
Such numbers had never been heard of before,
Such a judgement had never been witness'd of yore.

Down on his knees the Bishop fell,
And faster and faster his beads did he tell,
As louder and louder drawing near
The gnawing of their teeth he could hear.

And in at the windows and in at the door,
And through the walls helter-skelter they pour,
And down from the ceiling and up through the floor,
From the right and the left, from behind and before,
From within and without, from above and below,
And all at once to the Bishop they go.

They have whetted their teeth against the stones,
And now they pick the Bishop's bones:
They gnaw'd the flesh from every limb,
For they were sent to do judgement on him!

This week a little bit of folklore from the Rhineland. The rats that you're about to encounter may, initially, seem like demons (particularly those who claim to mete out punishment for God) or angels. The interpretation I prefer is that they're ghosts and that this is tiny version of the ghostly processions that we dealt with in Ars Magica fourth edition.

Statistics for the rats are based, with permission, on a creature already written up by Raccoonmask on the Forum.

The following recording was released into the public domain by LibriVox. Thank you to all the LibriVox readers: Sonia (narrator) Jason in Canada (the bishop), Leon (the first farmer) and Thomas Peter (the second farmer).

God's Judgement on a Wicked Bishop

Magical Might: 20 (Mentem – these are human ghosts in animal form). The Might is shared by the swarm, not vested in a single leader.

Characteristics:

Single rat: Int +1, Per +1, Pre +1, Com -2, Str -16, Sta +2, Dex +2, Qik +9

When swarming in hundreds, treat as an environmental effect (+10 damage per round, Soaked until the rats destroy the person's clothes or armor.)

Size: -8 (In swarm, +3)

Season: Summer

Confidence: 1

Virtues and Flaws: Magical Animal; Greater Immunity (diseases), Second Sight, Sharp Ears, Strong-Willed; Avaricious (hunger, Major), Magical Monster

Qualities and Inferiorities: Greater Power (Hound enemy), Improved Damage x3 (bite), Improved Might x2, Lesser Power x2(Gnashing Teeth of Iron, Devouring Iron),

Combat (Bite – single rat*) : Init +6, Attack +7, Defense +12, Damage -2**.

* When swarming in hundreds, treat as an environmental effect (+10 damage per round, Soaked until the rats destroy the person's clothes or armor.)

** Does not include Gnashing Teeth of Iron Power.

Personality Traits: Vengeful +4, Ignores the needy +3

Reputations: None – they come and destroy, then disappear.

Abilities: Athletics (climbing) 3, Awareness (location of victim) 5, Brawl (teeth) 4, Concentration (eating) 1, Leadership (rats) 3, Stealth (shadow) 6, Survival (urban) 4, Swim (rivers) 3

Powers: When a power is used, the whole swarm develops the power: not merely a single rat. The Intellego effect needs only be resisted once – not once per rat.

Devour Stone (1 might): Can burrow holes into stone or metal. (PeTe 5, +1 Touch, +1 concentration) [level 15, -2 might]

Gnashing Teeth of Iron (2 might): The teeth of the swarm can be as hard as iron. This grants individual rats +2 damage, and

lets the rats damage things they normally could not. (MuAn(Te) base 4, +1 Te Req, +1 diameter, +2 Group) [level 20, -2 might]

Hound Enemy (4 might): The rats always know the direction to their foe, and can manifest near him. (Non-Hermetic – Treat as InCo40 for resistance).

Vis: 4 Mentem – bodies of the rats. Can be harvested proportionally.

Have you heard the story of the rotting princess? She usually gets a paragraph in the histories of Venice. Just a small one, near the beginning. She's a useful starting point. She's where you can say things started to careen off course. She's to blame for all of the vanities of Venice.

She was an **imperial** princess from Constantinople. She demanded the pomp of her father's court. She bathed in dew. She invented the custom of Venetians wearing scented gloves, and had her rooms smoked with incense before she entered them. The Venetian love of cosmetics is her legacy, and their habit of having social gatherings in the shops of perfumers. Worst and most delicate of all, and this is tellingly stated by historians, she was too delicate to eat with her fingers and insisted on using a tiny golden instrument, with two prongs, to lift food to her mouth.

For her vanity she was blasted by God, to rot and yet not die. To be a horror so foul, in form and odour, that no person could be near her. She languished in a nunnery. All the riches of Venice were offered to anyone who could cure her, and yet no mortal science could take away her pain, or her shame.

The main history you may have read can't be right. There weren't a lot of princesses who became dogaressa, and so the story has tended to stick to one: Teodora Selvo, but it was first recorded before she took the mantle. Who knows then, who she was? Perhaps Maria Argyropoulina, who was wed to the doge in 1004? It matters little to historians, but it matters to us.

This is where it began.

This is when something happened to Venice.

Something answered her prayers.

Something expelled her demons.

Something took the reward her husband had so rashly offered.

In 2020, we explore the Serene Republic, through the lives of its dogeressas, through the folktales of fabulists, and through the nascent Empire it is demanding from the sea.

Welcome to Serenissima.

Spirit:
What! have you let the false enchanter scape?
O ye mistook; ye should have snatched his wand,
And bound him fast. Without his rod reversed,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the Lady that sits here
In stony fetters fixed and motionless.
Yet stay: be not disturbed; now I bethink me,
Some other means I have which may be used,
Which once of Melibœus old I learnt,
The soothest shepherd that e'er piped on plains.
There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream:
Sabrina is her name: a virgin pure;
Whilom she was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the sceptre from his father Brutus.
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit
Of her enraged stepdame, Guendolen,
Commended her fair innocence to the flood
That stayed her flight with his cross-flowing course.
The water-nymphs, that in the bottom played,
Held up their pearly wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall;
Who, piteous of her woes, reared her lank head,
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectared lavers strewed with asphodel,
And through the porch and inlet of each sense
Dropt in ambrosial oils, till she revived,
And underwent a quick immortal change,
Made Goddess of the river. Still she retains
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs
That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,
Which she with precious vailed liquors heals:
For which the shepherds, at their festivals,
Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,
If she be right invoked in warbled song;
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin, such as was herself,
In hard-besetting need. This will I try,
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

Song
Sabrina fair,
Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
Listen for dear honour's sake,
Goddess of the silver lake,
Listen and save!
Listen, and appear to us,
In name of great Oceanus.
By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,
And Tethys' grave majestic pace;

This week I am cheating by having another look at a creature already covered on the blog that accompanies the podcast. A very long time ago, we created some introductory material for Ars Magica called the Covenant of Sabrina's Rest.

Sabrina's Rest is named after the goddess of the River Severn. As source material I was using a historian's account of a poem which only contained a tiny amount of the original. I'm going to restate Sabrina having discovered the poem on which she's based. It's by Milton, and in the recording that follows it's been read into the public domain by three readers from LibriVox.

You'll notice that Sabrina involuntarily undergoes Becoming – that is she becomes a faerie – using a procedure that magi might follow, if they wished. After this she becomes a sort of folk saint as well, she defends maidens and she breaks spells. The early version had her as a relatively normal water nymph: clearly she needs a little bit of extra work.

By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
And the Carpathian wizard's hook;
By scaly Triton's winding shell,
And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell;
By Leucothea's lovely hands,
And her son that rules the strands;
By Thetis' tinsel-slipped feet,
And the songs of Sirens sweet;
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
And fair Ligea's golden comb,
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks
Sleeking her soft alluring locks;
By all the Nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance;
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave,
Till thou our summons answered have.
Listen and save!

Sabrina rises, attended by Water-nymphs, and sings.
By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grows the willow and the osier dank,
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate, and the azurn sheen
Of turkis blue, and emerald green,
That in the channel strays;
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
That bends not as I tread.
Gentle swain, at thy request
I am here!
Spirit. Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charméd band
Of true virgin here distressed
Through the force and through the wile
Of unblessed enchanter vile.
Sabrina. Shepherd, 'tis my office best
To help ensnared chastity.
Brightest Lady, look on me.
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops that from my fountain pure
I have kept of precious cure;
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip:
Next this marble venomous seat,
Smeared with gums of glutinous heat,
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold.
Now the spell hath lost his hold;
And I must haste ere morning hour
To wait in Amphitrite's bower.
Sabrina descends, and the Lady rises out of her seat.

When the singer is calling up Sabrina he mentions various sea gods. In amongst them all he mentions the "Carpathian Wizard's crook". The Carpathian Wizards are House Tremere. What are they doing here?

Strangely enough there are two homophonic terms in English – Carpathian meaning from the Carpathian Mountains and Carpathian meaning from Carpathos, which is an island in Greece. Or at least it was: it's now called Scarpanto. The wizard who comes from Carpathos, and who is often represented as having a hook, was called Proteus.

Proteus was a sea god. His fluidity allowed him to change into any shape he wished and although he could predict the future he didn't like doing so, and would only give prophecies to someone who was able to overcome his habit of shifting into multiple shapes to flee.

Milton brings up Proteus again in Paradise Lost, where his ability to change his nature and form gives him some sort of link to the Philosopher's Stone to the idea that you could internally purify yourself to become immortal. Shakespeare also mentions Proteus. Richard the Third uses him as a model of being able to take on a new shape or form to deceive other people. He compares himself to Proteus and to a chameleon, so he's a master of Muto magic.

Sabrina of the Severin

The easiest way to design Sabrina is as a White Lady, which is a sort of Breton water faerie. The most powerful are the Ladies of the Lake, in the Lancelot Cycle.

Faerie Might: 40+10 (Aquam)

Characteristics: Int +4, Per 0, Pre+4, Com+3, Str +2, Sta +2, Dex 0, Qik +1

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: 2 x Focus Power, 3 x Greater Faerie Powers, Highly Cognizant, Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, 2 x Great Characteristic, Human Form, 6 x Improved Characteristics, 7 x Increased Faerie Might, 2 x Personal Faerie Powers, Place of Power (river and banks); Traditional Ward (The Dominion)

Personality Traits: Favours children and women suffering oppression +2

Combat:

Brawl (fist): Init +1, Attack +1, Defense +2, Damage +2

Uses magical effects rather than weapons.

Soak: +2

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Pretenses: (Area) Lore 6 (sites of historic significance or power), Artes Liberales 3 (history), Animal Handling 2 (seabirds),

Athletics 6 (dance), Awareness 2 (humans), Bargain 7 (magi), Brawl 1 (escaping), Carouse

6 (dancing), Charm 6 (children), Concentration 3 (humans), Craft:

(weaver) 6 (repair), Etiquette 7 (courtly), Faerie Speech 6, Finesse 6 (Rego), Folk Ken 3 (customs of surrounding area), Guile 2 (men), Intrigue 4 (against abusers), Leadership 6 (in warfare), Order of Hermes Lore 5 (conflicts), Penetration 6 (using Arcane Connections), Swim 9 (home waters).

Powers:

Break Curses: 5 points, Init -4, Vim: (R: Eye / T: Ind / D: Mom.)

Destroys minor charms.

(Perdo Vim 20, +5 Eye.)

Extended Glamor: 0 points, constant,

Focus Power (Water within her realm): up to 10 points, Init -9, Aquam.

Can kill with versions of Ice of Drowning, Mighty Torrent of Water, Pull of the Watery Grave, and Tower of Whirling Water using this power. Note that in character creation, the same focus power has been selected twice to gain this higher level.

Touch of the Mermaid: 3 points, Init -2, Aquam: Kiss of the Mermaid, for characters too regal to kiss a magus for ease of transport.

Torrent from the Lungs: 3 points, Init -2, Aquam.

Transform into Current: 2 points, Init -4, Aquam: (Until Duration) (3 intricacy points to reduce cost)

Transform Victim into Seagull: 2 points, Init -3, Animal. (2 intricacy points to reduce cost)

Equipment: A small kingdom of faerie servants. Mystical artifacts which include a scrying pool (see ArM5 page 122 for a spell that simulates this device). Centuries of lost treasure, including a chariot. Clothed in white wool, with flowers in her long hair.

Vis: 8 pawns Rego, a hair comb, +2 if in kingdom

Appearance: A beautiful woman with long hair eyes, in a robe of the finest wool. Oddly, her feet do not touch the ground - they do not bend plants as she walks the shore.

This week, Zoolvisia, which is an Armenian folk tale. The story is split into two distinct parts and the first half would be a great origin story for a covenant. The second half is a sort of jailbreak adventure story that the characters may take the role of the lead character in. Plot hooks will be inculcated in green.

The recording used in the episode was released into the public domain through LibriVox. Thanks to the reader and to the production team.

Once upon a time there was a King who was very fond of hunting. He had extensive forests full of all kinds of game. But at the farthest boundaries of his dominions was a strip of land, surrounded by steep hills, which the people of the country considered enchanted ground, because none who had gone thither for the purpose of hunting had ever returned. One day the King said to his noblemen:

"Let us go and see what is there."

His men asked him to be advised and not to go. But the King insisted; they started upon the fatal journey and never came back. The King had two sons, the eldest of whom succeeded him. One day the younger brother said to the new King:

"I will go and revenge my father's death."

The King tried to dissuade him, but all in vain; the lad insisted. He had some very faithful servants who said they would accompany him, and they all set out upon the perilous journey.

As soon as they entered the enchanted ground they saw a beautiful antelope running before them. They began to chase the animal, which seemed to mock them with its graceful bounds over the bushes and rocks.

They continued chasing it until late in the day, when they came to a thick forest surrounded by steep rocks. The antelope leaped over the rocks and disappeared in the forest. But the hunters' horses could go no farther, and they all dismounted.

They were surprised to find an elegant tent pitched among the trees beside a fountain of pure water.

Entering the tent, they saw a table spread with all kinds of delicious foods. They were very hungry and began to devour the food with ravenous appetites; after that they quenched their thirst from the crystal waters of the fountain. But the lad never tasted the food or the water; he thought to himself that there must be some deviltry at the bottom of this banquet. While his men gave themselves up to eating and drinking, the lad occupied himself in examining the neighborhood. To his great terror he saw not far from the tent a heap of human skeletons bleached and showing their grinning teeth. What could these be if not the bones of those who, from time to time, had come to hunt in that enchanted ground and been lost? Among these, perchance, were the bones of his own father. How could he have been killed?

With these thoughts he came back to the tent, and to his great horror and grief saw that some of his men were already dead and others were breathing their last. He wished to help them, but in vain; they were soon as dead as stones. He could plainly see the cause; both the food and the water were poisoned. He now understood how all human beings who hunted in this region were done away with and heaped up on the pile of skeletons.

But who was the perpetrator of this devilish crime? His blood began to boil, and he determined to do battle with the perpetrator whether human being, fairy or demon, until he had revenged the victims of this diabolical plot. He was buried in this meditation when he heard the footsteps of approaching horsemen, and he immediately withdrew to the depths of the forest, bound his horse to a sycamore tree, and concealed himself behind the bushes, whence he could see the tent and the neighbourhood without himself being perceived.

This story is Armenian, so there are not fairy forests: there are instead strips of liminal land where odd things happen.

A similar thing happens in Welsh and early English folklore: Arthur's knights seem to chase white harts, deer, about in forests for a surprising fraction of their time. It often leads to trouble.

Again, shockingly Arthurian.

If using this in Ars Magica you might want the poison to be something other than immediately fatal. Let the characters cure it by expending resources, or trading a story for the cure. Alternatively, use something like Curse of Circe instead, which turns them into useful animals.

These pile of bones is full of people who have not had regular burial, so they are able to be contacted via Whispers Through The Black Gate.

Soon a number of horsemen arrived, who appeared to be greatly pleased at seeing the dead men, and at once began to strip them of their clothes. They loaded each man's property upon his own horse, and prepared to drive the horses away. One of the riders, who no doubt was their leader, wore a complete suit of white armor, had locks of long hair and a graceful countenance, feminine in its beauty.

The lad who was watching them closely, took aim with his bow and arrow and was just about to shoot the leader in the forehead, when he suddenly stopped. "That is a woman," he said to himself. "I will not shoot at a woman." At once he jumped out from the place of his concealment and standing before the leader exclaimed:

"Are you a human being, a fairy or a demon? Disclose yourself. To lead people astray and to destroy human life by poison are not the deeds of heroes. Come, let me measure swords with you."

These words of the lad at first called forth expressions of rage upon the countenance of the leader. But the next second the natural feminine grace again bloomed upon her cheeks, and she answered with a sweet musical voice, the sweetest that ever fell upon a human ear:

"Youth, I spare your life provided that your heart is as brave as your words. Zoolvisia is my name. If you want to show your courage before me, you must come where I live."

And she spurred her horse, and galloping disappeared behind the trees and rocks. The lad stood stone-still as if struck by lightning. The beauty of the horsewoman had charmed him; her face was of light, her hair of gold, her horse of lightning. Was she a maiden?

"Zoolvisia! Zoolvisia!" the lad exclaimed suddenly, "I will find you."

And at once he mounted his horse and started in the direction whither Zoolvisia and her followers had gone. It was late in the evening, the sun having long before disappeared behind the horizon. After groping his way in the darkness for a while, he saw a light gleaming at a distance and turned his horse in that direction. When he arrived he saw a cave where a fairy woman was kneading dough.

"The goodness of the hour upon you, mother!" said the lad.

"Heaven bless you, son!" said the old dame. "Neither the snake on its belly, nor the bird with its wing could come here; why did you venture to come?"

"Your love brought me hither, mother," answered the lad.

The fairy woman was pleased with the lad, and said to him:

"The seven fairies, my sons, have just gone out a-hunting; they hunt all night long and come back in the morning. If they find you here they will devour you. Let me hide you."

So speaking, she hid the lad in a hole near the cave. At daybreak the seven fairies returned, and smelling a human being, exclaimed:

"O mother! last night you ate a human being; have you not kept at least some bones for us to pick?"

"I have eaten no human being," said their mother; "but my nephew, the son of a human sister, has come to visit us."

"Where is he, mother? we want to see our human cousin," said the fairies.

The old woman brought the lad out from the hole and presented him to the fairies, who were much pleased with him and asked him the reason for his journey. The lad said that he was going after Zoolvisia.

Note the unnatural colour of the armour. This tends to indicate faerie magic.

So, you can't attack women with a bow, but you can with a sword? I'm not sure if this is an Armenian cultural difference, here.

So, that's Enchanting Voice, which may explain the sudden change in his passions.

We've run into horses of lightning before in Ars Magica. They are common in Slavic folklore. Basically they are fathered by the north wind, and so they are part elemental. They can fly and cause storms.

This form of words appears in a lot of stories in this collection. It seems to be a traditional ward. The faerie says "You cannot be here because neither X nor Y could make it here." and the human says they have been bought by the faerie's love. This offers the faerie a role in the story other than as monster.

"Zoolvisia!" exclaimed the seven brothers. "Be advised, cousin, do not go. This is a most dangerous journey. Zoolvisia is a cruel tyrant. No human being who has ever undertaken this journey, has returned. Come, cousin, stay with us; be our elder brother, we your subordinates, and let us live together in happiness."

"No," said the lad, "let come what may; I will go." Thereupon he gave the seven brothers a pair of scissors, saying:

"When you see blood dripping from the scissors, know that I am in danger and come to my rescue."

And he took leave of his adopted cousins. On his way he came to another cave where seven fairies lived with their mother, the sister of the former fairy woman, who accepted him as their cousin and tried to dissuade him from going. He gave to them a looking-glass, saying:

"When you see the glass covered with sweat, know that I am in trouble, and hasten to my rescue."

Then he came to a third abode, where seven fairies lived with their mother, who was a sister of the former two. They also accepted him as cousin, and sought to dissuade him from going. He gave them a razor, saying:

"When you see drops of blood falling from the edge of this razor, know that my life is in danger, and run to my rescue."

Departing on his way he met an old monk in a cottage, who also tried to dissuade him; but as the lad insisted, the monk said:

"Let me advise you; Zoolvisia is the most beautiful maiden in the world. She is a princess endowed from above with a talisman. She has forty maids under her command who play the part of Amazons.

She goes up to the top of the tower of her castle every morning at daybreak, dressed in her robe of pearls.

Thence she gazes all about her realm, to see whether human beings or genii have trespassed upon her boundaries. Three times she cries out with a loud voice, and all who have been on her ground, on hearing her voice immediately drop dead as if struck by lightning.

It is she who, taking the shape of an antelope, leads hunters astray and destroys them by poisonous food and water.

Now, do as I advise you. As soon as you reach the vicinity of her castle, set up a stick and put on it your cloak and cap, and dig a trench in the neighborhood and conceal yourself, at the same time sealing both your ears with beeswax, so that no sound can penetrate them. At the beginning of daybreak watch her on the top of the tower. Do not stir at her first nor second call, but as soon as her third call is ended, jump up from your place of concealment and stand before her. By this means you will break her talisman, and subdue her."

If we stretch the Slavic metaphor, the sons of witches are giants. A band of giants has just asked this man to become the leader of their gang: that's what the "older brother" role entails. An interesting background for a companion might just be to stop there, so that your character is the leader of a small band of giants.

Your familiarity with Western fairy stories may now lead you to believe that the young man is going to face three dangers, and use the three groups to deal with them. In this case, no. In this case they all turn up at once.

How he is able to give them these communicative items is never explained. They are presumably from his shaving kit, so they are arcane connections to him.

So, she has legendary Presence, and is served by a grog turb that might be related to the Amazons in Rivals of Hermes. Her curse is granted from above, so technically it's a charism. These can ignore magical resistance, because they are of the Divine. I'd suggest it works better in game if it is a faerie power.

She's rich as Croesus.

This banshee-like power is easily modelled, by stealing it from the original creature. That she uses it three times is just a cosmetic effect.

So she's a shapeshifter of some type.

So the power is less like a banshee's than a mandrake's. You are likely familiar with the root that, when pulled from the ground, screams and kills the people who hear it. The traditional way of drawing it up is to tie it to a dog, plug you ears and call the dog, which then dies. Why you can't just use a long rope I don't know: there is some sacrificial element there, perhaps. It's the hearing that's fatal, rather than a wave of explosive force. This may mean that the deaf are immune to her. That the monk gets the hero to make a decoy for her or waste her screams on may indicate that the power is Sight ranged. Alternatively she may only be able to use her talisman once per day, and may need to be tricked into not reserving her single use.

The lad thanked the old monk, and continuing his journey soon saw, at a distance, Zoolvisia's magnificent castle decorated with gold and jewels. He did just as the monk had advised him, and at Zoolvisia's third call jumped up and stood before her gazing at her. Zoolvisia recognized him, and said:

"You have overcome me; you are brave and a real hero worthy of me. No one except you has ever heard my voice and lived. Now my talisman is broken, and I have become a mere woman. Come in, hero, I and my forty maids will serve you."

The lad's heart began to yearn. All the hatred he cherished toward her who had perpetrated such terrible crimes had vanished. He had fallen in love with her, and Zoolvisia on her part loved the lad.

She let the rich locks of her golden hair hang down from the window. The lad approached, took hold of them and kissed them, and lo! he was drawn up to the castle by them.

They accepted one another as husband and wife, and celebrated their wedding for forty days and nights. The forty maids served them.

At the end of forty days Zoolvisia presented to the lad her horse of lightning. The animal seemed to be greatly pleased with his new master. The lad mounted the steed and prepared to go hunting when Zoolvisia gave him as a keepsake one of the locks of her hair in a pearl box. So the lad continued to hunt every day. One day, as he was chasing a deer on the precipitous borders of the river, the pearl box fell into the water and disappeared. The lad was sorry, but he could not help it, and came home without it. The pearl box was carried by the current of the river to the country of the King of the East, where the King's fishermen drew it from the water and took it to their master. The King, opening the box, was surprised to see the lock of golden hair. He called his noblemen and peers in council, and placing the box before them, said:

"You must tell me whose hair this is. If you do not give me an answer in three days I will cut off your heads."

"Long live the King!" answered the men. "In three days we will bring you word."

Forthwith they sat in council and asked the advice of all the learned men and magicians of the country, but in vain; they could not solve the riddle within the three days. On the third day, a witch hearing of the case, came to the King's noblemen, saying:

"I can tell you what it is, but what will you give me?"

"If you save our heads," said the noblemen, "every one of us will give you a handful of gold coins."

The witch consented, took the gold and told them of Zoolvisia and her golden hair. The men told the King what they had heard from the witch, at the same time boasting that it was they who solved the riddle.

"Well, then," said the King, "I wish you to bring me Zoolvisia. I desire to marry her. I give you forty days' grace; if you do not bring her by that time I will cut off your heads."

The men at once went to the witch, saying:

"Witch, it is only you who can accomplish this and save our heads. We will give you whatever you demand if you will bring Zoolvisia."

The witch promised. Immediately she caught a score of snakes, and putting them in a large pitcher, corked its mouth. She then made a whip of a great black snake, and mounting upon the pitcher, gave it three blows. Thereupon the pitcher began to fly through the sky as if it had wings, with the witch on its back.

This could mean she was a human possessed by a faerie spirit, but she might simply be lying, much as a Selkie wife pretends to be human right until she finds her skin, and then she's off.

The removal of an evil spirit makes her less culpable for the death of the man's father, or it could be an enchantment.

A minute ago she said she was a normal woman again. She has Rapunzel long hair, but how is it prehensile?

This ends the first half of the story, and you have the setup for a covenant. There's a castle, a turb of warrior women, treasure, a possible magical chatelaine, and a noble pawn.

Zoolvisia has the Beauty that Attracts Trouble Flaw. Note again the importance of hair as an arcane connection.

This woman comes from a separate tradition, but her witchcraft has some similarities to the witchcraft of Thessaly, the native tradition of Trianoma and the rival Amazonian order..

Soon she came to Zoolvisia's garden, and hiding the pitcher under the weeds, she went and sat on the roadside where the lad would pass on his way from hunting. She had intentionally put on her torn dress, and her worn and dusty shoes. In the evening, the lad seeing her, asked her who she was and how she had come there.

"O son!" the witch exclaimed with a pitiful voice, "may Heaven bless you! I am a pilgrim to Jerusalem. I missed the caravan and went astray; seeing your house at a distance, I came to take rest. For Heaven's sake, give me bread and water, and let me lodge with your dog at your gate."

The lad had compassion on her and took her on the back of his horse. But the wise animal knew by instinct that she was a wicked woman, and standing on his hind legs, caused her to fall down.

Presumably she just has the Gift.

"I will follow slowly, son," said the witch. "Do you go ahead with your horse."

Zoolvisia, hearing that the lad had brought an old woman, said:

"Don't let her enter our house; she may be a witch and bring calamity upon us."

The lad gave orders to the maids to keep the old woman apart and not let her appear before Zoolvisia. But the witch was clever, and soon won the favor of the maids, who praised her before their mistress and asked her for the sake of merriment to summon her to her presence, at least once. She consented, and the witch was brought before her. The witch had a thousand and one ways of winning a young woman, and she soon became a great favorite with Zoolvisia, who could not spend an hour without her. One day she said to Zoolvisia:

"Blessed are you that have for a husband such a hero, who encounters and overcomes all, and himself is never destroyed. He discovered your secret, broke your talisman, and won your love. Of course you know his secret of bravery. May Heaven preserve his life! But can you tell me what his secret is?"

"No," answered Zoolvisia, "I don't know what his secret is."

"What sort of a husband and wife are you?" said the witch, scornfully. "He knows your secret, and you do not know his; and he says he loves you. Strange, strange!"

These words were enough to excite the curiosity of Zoolvisia, who in the evening again and again importuned the lad, until he was induced to tell her that the secret of his bravery was his magic dagger, which he carried in his belt in daytime and put under his pillow at night.

As soon as that dagger was taken away, he would lose all his power. With that they exchanged vows that nobody should know the secret, and also they exchanged rings as a sign to be true to one another, even to death.

But woman is frail. On the following day Zoolvisia told the secret to the witch, adding:

"I have told you this to show you how my husband loves me from his heart."

But she did not tell her anything in regard to the vows and exchange of rings. On that night the witch, using her craft, caused a heavy sleep to fall on all the inmates of the house.

At midnight she entered the lad's room, and taking the magic dagger from under his pillow, threw it from the window into the neighboring pond. Then she went to bed and pretended to sleep. In the morning Zoolvisia and the maids saw that their master did not rise. They entered the room, and lo! the lad had fallen from his bed and lay benumbed, foaming at the mouth. They called him; but there was no answer.

This is an odd twist. Where did he get the magical dagger of bravery, and is he a hero if he's using a magic item to do what anyone else with the same item could do?

Here I'd like to flag something different about Armenian folklore: Armenia was the first country in the world to declare Christianity the state religion. The Armenian Church is the oldest established church in the world. As such, the dagger might not be a magical or faerie item, it may just be where his virtues are stored, much as Samson's strength was in his hair.

The rings symbolise the True Love virtue which makes them virtually immune to magic.

Call to Slumber.

"Look under the pillow and see whether the magic dagger is there," exclaimed Zoolvisia. They looked, and lo! it had been stolen. Then they all began to wail and cry. Thereupon the witch came in to see if the lad were really dead. She beat her breast, she beat her knees, she pulled her hair, crying and yelling all the time. Then she went out, brought the pitcher to the door of the castle, and re-entered surrounded by scores of snakes, which were hissing with their forked tongues. All were stricken with terror and began to scream and yell. She bade the snakes bite the maidens, who all fell down in a swoon.

Then she said to Zoolvisia: "Now you must obey me and come with me, else I will set on you all these snakes, which will bite you and tear you into pieces."

Zoolvisia was terrified and mute. The witch pushed her down the stairs, and thrusting her into the pitcher, shut its mouth. She then mounted the pitcher, and gave three strokes with the snake whip, which caused it to fly. She alighted in the country of the King of the East, and taking Zoolvisia out, gave her to the King's ministers, who paid her with a horse-load of gold. Zoolvisia was taken to the King's palace.

Let us return to the lad. The twenty-one fairies, the lad's adopted cousins, seeing that blood was dripping from the scissors and the razor, and that the looking-glass was covered with sweat, understood that their human kinsman was in danger, and hastened to his rescue. Reaching the castle they saw the lad still in a torpor, and the maids covered with snakes. On killing the snakes, all the maids revived, and told the fairies what had happened.

They looked everywhere for the dagger, but in vain. In the evening they were all hungry, but there was nothing at home to eat. The fairies, seeing that large fishes were swimming in the pond, dove in and threw the fishes ashore. A great fish being thrown ashore, was divided into two halves, and lo! the magic dagger fell out. The fish had swallowed it. The moment the dagger was put under the lad's pillow he jumped up, washed himself, and was surprised to see that his fairy cousins had come. They told him everything. Immediately he ran to the stable. The horse was there, but in a pitiable condition; it had neither eaten nor drunk; it had fallen in the dust. As soon as the animal saw the lad and smelled him it jumped up, neighing. The lad gave it food to eat and water to drink, brushed it clean, and kissing it on the forehead, said:

"O my wise horse! you foresaw the calamity by your unerring instinct, for you threw the hag from your back; and lo! what she has brought upon us. Now let us go after Zoolvisia."

The animal, as if understanding what the lad said, neighed and beat the ground with its hoofs, and seemed to say, "Yes, let us go; I am ready to go."

The lad came back to the castle, gave to the maidens many precious presents, and sent them away free. He gave the castle and the treasures in it to the fairies, himself taking only his saddlebags full of gold coins. He mounted the horse and went down the river until he came to the city of the King of the East. He stopped before the cottage of an old woman on the outskirts of the city and knocked at the door.

"Have you a night's lodging for me, mother?" asked the lad.

"No, master, I have no place for you," answered the dame. "You had better go elsewhere."

"Here is something for you," said the lad, giving her a handful of gold. "You are the crown of my head, son!" exclaimed the old woman. "I have room both for you and your horse."

Note the snakes cause sleep, they don't kill. This is a second link to Thessalian witchcraft, where the witches cause sleep to allow them to defile corpses.

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Here we find the snake binding, which is the spell Trianoma and Veia tried to use on Bonisagus.

The horse has a familiar-like link to the health of its rider.

I like to think that this old lady isn't a faerie,: she's just a cunning grandmotherly figure who, when a young man with vast wealth arrives, decides this seems like fun and becomes his sidekick.

The lad entered in to lodge. After the meal he asked the old woman in regard to the news in the city, and was told that Zoolvisia was in the King's palace, where for thirty-five days there had been a wedding festival, and after five days she would be married to the King. But she had said to the King that she did not wish to marry him, as she was the wife of some one else, and that rather than to be forced to it she would die by drinking poison, which she had ready in her hand. She therefore received nobody.

"Well, well, mother; that is enough," said the lad. "You keep a secret, don't you?"

"Oh, better than you desire," answered the old woman.

"Here is another handful of gold coins," said the lad; "go to the market place and buy a suit of costly garments. Put them on, and go and see Zoolvisia. Take this ring, put it on your finger, and show it to her; then bring me word what she says."

The old woman did just as he had told her. The palace servants thought she was the wife of the prime minister, and told Zoolvisia that the greatest lady in the realm had come to visit her.

"I don't want her, I don't!" cried Zoolvisia; "let her not come near me."

The old woman did not pay any attention to the words of the servants, who told her that Zoolvisia did not want to see her, but pushed on and opened the door of the room where Zoolvisia was confined, and held the ring before her eyes. As soon as Zoolvisia caught a glance of the ring, she became as tame as a lamb.

"You are welcome, kind lady!" she exclaimed, with her sweet voice; "please be seated," and she shut the door. When they were alone she said:

"Where is the owner of that ring, mother?"

"He is a guest in my house," replied the woman, "and is waiting to know your will."

"Go tell him," said Zoolvisia, "to rest for three days. Do you immediately go to the King, and say that you have persuaded me to become his wife. Let him be of good cheer. On the third day I shall go for recreation to the public garden. It is the business of your guest to do the rest. Farewell!"

"Farewell!" said the old woman, and went directly to the King's apartment, saying proudly that she had persuaded Zoolvisia, who early on the third day would go to the public garden for recreation, and when she returned would become his wife. The King was delighted, and gave the old woman costly presents.

She came and told her guest all that had happened. Early on the third day, as Zoolvisia had gone to the public garden with great pomp, the lad came on the back of his horse like a flash of lightning, put his arm about Zoolvisia's waist, and in the twinkling of an eye, disappeared. The crowd thought it was a hurricane, and all were stricken with terror. As soon as the King and his men realized the fact that she had been taken away, they mounted their horses and started in pursuit of the unknown horseman. The lad, having put Zoolvisia in a safe place, came back with his horse of lightning, killed the King and his favorites with his magic dagger, and told the crowd in the public garden who he was. The people, who were tired of their tyrannical King, prayed that he would become their King and Zoolvisia their Queen. The lad went and brought Zoolvisia back. A crowd conducted them with great pomp to the throne, where they are still reigning as King and Queen.

Three apples fell from heaven; one for me, one for the story-teller, and one for him who entertained the company.

She's a perfectly normal woman, except for the Rapunzel hair and being able to summon vials of deadly poison...

The old lady is making bank off both sides in this: I like her for an autocrat for the covenant you may be building.

The last little bit is a traditional ending. We may assume the East is a faeire court, since they rule there still. They've left the castle, giants, amazons and treasure with no-one to look after them. Maybe some young magi could help them out...

Zoolvisia

Faerie Might: 15 (Mentem)

Characteristics: Int +1, Per +1, Pre +3*, Com +1, Str 0*, Sta 0*, Dex 0*, Qik 0*.

* These statistics are provided by Mormo's host.

Size: 0 (as host)

Virtues and Flaws: Focus Faerie Powers (Possession, see below), 2 x Increased Might, Loosely Material*; Incognizant.

* Modified to a minor Virtue: may only take forms using possession power.

Personality Traits: Stern +3, Challenging +2

Combat:

Sword*: Init +0, Attack +7, Defense +7, Damage +6

Modified by the body's statistics. Uses poison and ambush to boost damage. Has armed servants.

Soak: 0, but often wears white armor that has +6 Soak.

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Pretenses: Carouse 6, Intrigue 6, Ride 6, Single Weapon 6 (sword), but may use the abilities of the host.

Powers:

Possession, 1 or more points, Init +2, Mentem:

If this power penetrates, the victim is possessed by Zoolvisia and is under her direct control. Any attempt to force the victim to act contrary to her nature, or to use any of the host's own magical powers requires that Zoolvisia spends Might. A supernatural power (including spell-casting) requires 1 Might point per magnitude to produce. A questionable action that is contrary to the nature of the host requires Zoolvisia to exceed the possessed being's Personality Trait roll on a stress die + Might points spent. The storyguide may give a modifier to the Personality Trait roll based on the nature of the command (see the Entrancement power, ArM5 page 65, for suggestions). Both Might costs must be met if the use of a supernatural power is also contrary to the victim's nature. If Zoolvisia is in direct control of its host's actions, the host acquires its Magic Resistance, but

is also affected by wards that would normally exclude her. If the host is acting under her own free will, then she does not benefit from Magic Resistance, but may also walk through wards with impunity. This power's costs are not based on the Hermetic system of magic. It is instead based on material in Realms of Power: Magic.

Killing scream: Zoolvisia doesn't seem to be able to control the timing of her scream, so it has no cost: it's just a thing that happens. It's a Sight-based PeCo40 effect. In a covenant setting, it might be an Evil Custom Flaw.

Equipment: Someone else's body, all of their material goods. In this case, Zoolvisia took control of the host in childhood, so she has little personal will, and even calls herself after the monster.

Vis: 3 Mentem, in the saliva of the possessed victim.

Appearance: Zoolvisia does not have a material body, but if seen with Faerie Sight, or Second Sight outside a body, it looks like the a suit of white armor.

This week, perhaps, the last of our Cornish episodes. It's the last of the material from Scilly and Its Legends by Henry Whitfeld. There's an island called St Agnes and next to it is an area called "St Warna" but pronounced "Saint Waound". It's the home of a cult of wreckers, where it was considered perfectly normal to go to her holy well, throw pins in it, and hope that ships would be wrecked upon the coast.

The version that comes from Whitfield has them as deceived by a demon that takes the form of a saint, which in Ars Magica terms is a False God, but I've statted her as an Aerial Power. I have read other accounts of the cultists and their standard prayer was after dropping a pin into the well to say:

"Good night Mother.
Good night, Father.
Good night enemies and friends,
and a ship for us tomorrow."

In some other areas the usual prayer was something along the lines of "Blessed lady we do not wish for a wreck, but if there must be a wreck – if it is God's will – please let it be upon our shores." which is a little less homicidal, perhaps, given that you could pray for the wreck not to happen at all.

The sound used was a LibriVox recording. The original legend is about 20 minutes long, but I've just cut out the five minutes that I think gives us the best material for translation into a false god.

The Legend of St Warna

The power that dwelt in St Warna was believed to be strong over those who followed their business on deep waters. Many a time when a gallant ship was seen approaching land in safety, walking grandly upon her way, the dim shadow of the hostile Saint was thought to appear brooding like a cloud above her, and leading her unconsciously upon some one of the concealed terrors that lurked below. Many a time a light burning upon the shore, like a friendly signal, hurried the homeward bound barque and her trusting company upon rocks, from which you no human hand could rescue them. In all these cases St Warna was held to be the presiding influence – the unseen shade that did her terrible spiriting even at her own stone well,

At that period, as I before said, five families alone were left upon St. Agnes. They were unwilling to admit strangers among them, unless they should be obliged to share the advantages of their wicked gain with a greater number, and so diminish their unholy store. They bowed daily before the altar of St Warna, and daily threw pins into her well, and offered up their supplications for wrecks.

Many of these there were and their hearts were gladdened and they grew wealthy on their spoils. The corpses of the crews they stripped and then flung back into the sea. Some missionaries of the reformed belief assayed to come and teach them the things that concerned their peace, but the Islanders stoned them and drove them away. They were like the leeches of a craving for more blood, for those still unsatisfied even by the abundance of their ill got goods.

People prophesied against them and foretold for them an evil end, but those of St Agnes were ever and are now a dour race, disagreeing among themselves and only uniting to oppose some common enemy, so they went on sacrificing to St Warna, and laying snares for unhappy mariners and increasing their profits at the expense of their souls. The preachers of the gospel faith held that the demon was permitted for a time to personate the saint and so to do these works of darkness, and truly it seemed probable for they prospered in their ungodliness, and even went so far as to take up their parable against the new ministers and they appealed to their well-doing as a proof of the efficacy of their prayers, and the influence of St Warna.

One day a vessel was seen to approach the island in a quarter the most dangerous and generally and most carefully avoided. The five households of San Agnes were on the alert. They knelt before the shrine and made their offerings. In case their prayers were heard they then hurried to the shore, and saw there, as they believed, a plain proof of the power of their patroness. The vessel had, by some miraculous chance, passed Annet with its wide reefs and shoals. Tempted by the appearance of deep water and safe anchoring ground, the crew bore up and went straight for shore.

For some time there was no sign of danger. The tall ship came on bravely and without fear. At last however the foam ahead gave notice of breakers on the bow, and the helmsman endeavoured to wear, but in vain. The devoted craft missed stays and was next moment lifted upon a sharp rock, the peaks of which pierced her sides and held her fast. She struggled and reeled to and fro, but every shock lengthened her agony, and the water rushed in through the leak thus made. Then, as her timbers gaped and yawned from each successive blow, she parted amidships and the sea was covered with her fragments.

Her crew and passengers were beheld in the water, swimming with the energy of despair, or clinging to portions of the wreck on which they hoped to reach the shore, but men held out to them no helping hand. One by one they sunk and was seen no more. The wretched Islanders watched their expiring struggles, but made no effort to aid them. All their exertions were directed towards seizing and dragging forth, high and dry upon the beach, such articles of value as the tide had already begun to cast up.

We will drop out of the legend there. This legend is about how the folk of St Warna were destroyed. During the particular shipwreck that's being described they leave a missionary and a baby to die of exposure. The missionary's ghost appears and challenges the demon. He lays a curse on her followers, saying that they will all be killed.

The following Sunday they traveled to a nearby island to have an official marriage. It's required that they have it on the large island for legal reasons. As they are returning home, God smites them all by sinking all of their boats or, in other versions of the story, he just washes the entire island clear with a great wave.

The legend as you may have guessed, from continuous references to the Reformed faith in the original, and from some of the technology in the ship, is from far later than the usual game period: it's from the 16th or 17th century. In the 12th century, the cult is active – they have their little Infernal aura and their False God. They could wreck the covenant's ship.

The easiest way to stat up this group is just to reuse the material for Demonic Pirates in Tales of Power.

One tiny teaser of further folklore for Infernal auras: the way that people were put to death in Scilly at this time is that they would be taken out to a particular sea-swept rock and left there with two loaves of rye bread and a pitcher of water. As the tide came in they were swept to their death, and therefore no man had killed them. Still if somewhere's going to have an infernal aura, this is likely the place, because it's where a lot of inveterate sinners met their end.

In Scillonian folklore there's a surprising lack of ghosts. A few of them turn up on the big island, but other than that no ghosts anywhere. Why is that? I'd suggest it's because the entire place is under a Faerie regio, but we'll work that out in the eventual collection of all this Cornish material into a single ashcan.

The False Saint Warna

In the podcast episode I said Saint Warna is a False God, but for variety I've designed her as a variant of Argenta, the Goddess of Piracy in Tales of Power, but flipped her to being an Aerial Power.

Order: Aerial Power

Infernal Might: 25 (Auram)

Characteristics: Int +3, Per +1, Pre +2, Com +2, Str +7, Sta +2, Dex +3, Qik +2

Size: +3 (can appear as human in dream, though)

Confidence Score: 5 (5)

Virtues and Flaws: Enjoys worship +3

Personality Traits: Untameable +4.

Reputations: Goddess of Wreckers 5 (Infernal)

Combat (uses an oar as an improvised weapon, in mockery of the real saint): Init +2, Attack +17, Defense +15, Damage +14

Soak: +6 – her body is loosely material

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-8), -3 (9-16), -5 (17-24), Incapacitated (25-32), Dead (33+)

Abilities: Various, including Single Weapon 8 (oar)

Powers:

Coagulation, 1 point, Init -1, Corpus.

Elemental Control, variable points, Init. -1, Auram. May create and Creo, Muto or Rego effect in the Auram for for 1 Might per magnitude of effect. Cannot create an effect with a level higher than the demons current Might, or duplicate Ritual effects.

Envisioning; 1 point, Init +0, Mentem.

Obsession, 1 point, Init -5, Vim: Avaricious.

Recalcitrance: 0 points, Init constant, Vim. Any attempt to control (but not destroy) an Aerial Power with any supernatural power, of any Realm, treats the demon's Might as if it was 50% higher. Ease factors are similarly 50% higher.

Weakness: Cannot directly harm the ordained.

Vis: 6 pawns Auram vis (sordida).

Appearance: Looks like the crude statuette of the Irish saint found by her well, but made of cloud and expanded.

This week a quick episode it contains a poem by Thomas Randolph (based on a translation from the Latin by Leigh Hunt) that was published in the Nineteenth Century. It could be a clue as to why your characters keep losing their Herbam vis sources.

On LibriVox, where, Jason released this into the public domain, he calls it Fairies Song . The original title which I prefer but the Victorians disliked, was Song of The Fairies Robbing an Orchard.

*** Song of Faeries

*We, the Fairies, blithe and antic,
Of dimensions not gigantic,
Though the moonshine mostly keep us,
Oft in orchards frisk and peep us.*

*Stolen sweets are always sweeter,
Stolen kisses much completer,
Stolen looks are nice in chapels,
Stolen, stolen, be your apples.*

*When to bed the world are bobbing,
Then's the time for orchard-robbing;
Yet the fruit were scarce worth peeling,
Were it not for stealing, stealing.*

*** Robbing an Orchard

Scrumping Sprites

The sprites given in Realms of Power – Faerie (p.85) were designed for adaption as beginning player characters, and were tied to a faerie court. These have slightly stronger pretenses and are more interested in risky behaviour than service.

Faerie Might: 5 (Corpus)

Characteristics: Int, Per 0, Pre 0, Com 0, Str -20, Sta +1, Dex +3, Qik +10

Size: -10

Virtues and Flaws: Greater Faerie Power; Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Humanoid Faerie, Faerie Ally or Personal Power (Flight); Narrowly Cognizant; 2 x Little, Personality Flaw (theft), Traditional Ward (varies by location, but often some sort of bribe)

Personality Traits: Love risk +3

Combat:

Bow: Init +8, Attack +13, Defense +15, Damage -11*

* Often used in conjunction with Grant Flaw, some other power, or poison.

Soak: +6 (tiny jerkin)

Wound Penalties: Dead (1+)

Pretenses: Area Lore (vis sources) Awareness 5 (humans), Athletics 4 (flight), Awareness 5 (intruders), Bow 6 (intruders), Carouse 3 (feasts), Charm 2 (marks), Etiquette 2 (people they have stolen from) Faerie Speech 5, Hunt 1 (humans).

Powers:

Cause Sickness: 0 points, Init +9, Corpus. (3 intricacy points spent on cost, 2 on initiative):

This power usually causes strokes. The strike of a messenger's arrow can cause this effect. Strokes have an Ease Factor of 6, and cause a Heavy wound.

Flight: 0 points, constant, 2 intricacy points reducing Might cost.

A faerie that wishes to use magical arrows often, for combat, might trade its Greater Power for the following selections:

Improved Damage Virtue (+5 Damage)

Improved Soak Virtue (+2 Soak)

Damaging Effect Lesser Power: 1 point, Init +4: (2 intricacy points on cost),

Provides a mystical effect based on the court's motif, that increases the damage of the messenger's arrows by +5 for 2 minutes.

Equipment: Bow, jerkin with clan mark. Some faeries of this type fly using mounts, purchased as the Faerie Ally Virtue, in lieu of the Fly power. They have Pretenses of 2 in Ride and 1 in Animal Handling, and lower their Athletics to 3.

Vis: 1 pawn Herbam, dead bug.

Appearance: These faeries are tiny humanoid figures that can fly, a power they use to perform interesting feasts of gymnastics for their lords. They are armed with tiny bows, and prefer to attack in confusing swarms. Note that winged faeries are not known in much of Mythic Europe. If your saga proceeds as history did, they do not enter English literature until the 18th century. Most faeries fly either simply by wishing to, or by riding mounts that fly.

What sorrows had Rodriguez known in his life that he made so sad a melody? I know not. It was the mandolin. When the mandolin was made it knew at once all the sorrows of man, and all the old unnamed longings that none defines. It knew them as the dog knows the alliance that its forefathers made with man. A mandolin weeps the tears that its master cannot shed, or utters the prayers that are deeper than its master's lips can draw, as a dog will fight for his master with teeth that are longer than man's. And if the moonlight streamed on untroubled, and though Fate was deaf, yet beauty of those fresh strains going starward from under his fingers touched at least the heart of Rodriguez and gilded his dreams and gave to his thoughts a mournful autumnal glory, until he sang all newly as he never had sung before, with limpid voice along the edge of tears, a love-song old as the woods of his father's valleys at whose edge he had heard it once drift through the evening. And as he played and sang with his young soul in the music he fancied (and why not, if they care aught for our souls in Heaven?) he fancied the angles putting their hands each one on a star and leaning out of Heaven through the constellations to listen.

"A vile song, señor, and a vile tune with it," said a voice quite close.

However much the words hurt his pride in his mandolin Rodriguez recognised in the voice the hidalgo's accent and knew that it was an equal that now approached him in the moonlight round a corner of the house with the balcony; and he knew that the request he courteously made would be as courteously granted.

"Señor," he said, "I pray you to permit me to lean my mandolin against the wall securely before we speak of my song."

"Most surely, señor," the stranger replied, "for there is no fault with the mandolin."

"Señor," Rodriguez said, "I thank you profoundly." And he bowed to the gallant, whom he now perceived to be young, a youth tall and lithe like himself, one whom we might have chosen for these chronicles had we not found Rodriguez.

Then Rodriguez stepped back a short way and placed his kerchief on the ground; and upon this he put his mandolin and leaned it against the wall. When the mandolin was safe from dust or accident he approached the stranger and drew his sword.

"Señor," he said, "we will now discuss music."

"Right gladly, señor," said the young man, who now drew his sword also. There were no clouds; the moon was full; the evening promised well.

Scarcely had the flash of thin rapiers crossing each other by moonlight begun to gleam in the street when Morano appeared beside them and stood there watching. He had bought his bacon and gone straight to the house with the balcony. For though he knew no Latin he had not missed the silent greeting that had welcomed his master to that village, or failed to interpret the gist of the words that Rodriguez' dumb glance would have said. He stood there watching while each combatant stood his ground.

And Rodriguez remembered all those passes and feints that he had had from his father, and which Sevastiani, a master of arms in Madrid, had taught in his father's youth: and some were famous and some were little known. And all these passes, as he tried them one by one, his unknown antagonist parried. And for a moment Rodriguez feared that Morano would see those passes in which he trusted foiled by that unknown sword, and then he reflected that Morano knew nothing of the craft of the rapier, and with more content at that thought he parried thrusts that were strange to him. But something told Morano that in this fight the stranger was master and that along that pale-blue, moonlit, unknown sword lurked a sure death for Rodriguez.

He moved from his place of vantage and was soon lost in large shadows; while the rapiers played and blade rippled on blade with a sound as though Death were gently sharpening his scythe in the dark. And now Rodriguez was giving ground, now his

This is one of those occasions when followers of Games From Folktales just need to let me have my little enthusiasms. I was going to cut this piece out because it's a comic aside, but it's easy to ignore physical comedy in roleplaying games, so I hope you find it useful. The reader is Ed Humpel via Librivox - thanks, as always to Ed.

antagonist pressed him; thrusts that he believed invincible had failed; now he parried wearily and had at once to parry again; the unknown pressed on, was upon him, was scattering his weakening parries; drew back his rapier for a deadlier pass, learned in a secret school, in a hut on mountains he knew, and practised surely; and fell in a heap upon Rodriguez' feet, struck full on the back of the head by Morano's frying-pan.

"Most vile knave," shouted Rodriguez as he saw Morano before him with his frying-pan in his hand, and with something of the stupid expression that you see on the face of a dog that has done some foolish thing which it thinks will delight its master.

"Master! I am your servant," said Morano.

"Vile, miserable knave," replied Rodriguez.

"Master," Morano said plaintively, "shall I see to your comforts, your food, and not to your life?"

"Silence," thundered Rodriguez as he stooped anxiously to his antagonist, who was not unconscious but only very giddy and who now rose to his feet with the help of Rodriguez.

"Alas, señor," said Rodriguez, "the foul knave is my servant. He shall be flogged. He shall be flayed. His vile flesh shall be cut off him. Does the hurt pain you, señor? Sit and rest while I beat the knave, and then we will continue our meeting."

And he ran to his kerchief on which rested his mandolin and laid it upon the dust for the stranger.

"No, no," said he. "My head clears again. It is nothing."

"But rest, señor, rest," said Rodriguez. "It is always well to rest before an encounter. Rest while I punish the knave."

And he led him to where the kerchief lay on the ground. "Let me see the hurt, señor," he continued. And the stranger removed his plumed hat as Rodriguez compelled him to sit down. He straightened out the hat as he sat, and the hurt was shown to be of no great consequence.

"The blessed Saints be praised," Rodriguez said. "It need not stop our encounter. But rest awhile, señor."

"Indeed, it is nothing," he answered.

"But the indignity is immeasurable," sighed Rodriguez. "Would you care, señor, when you are well rested to give the chastisement yourself?"

"As far as that goes," said the stranger, "I can chastise him now."

"If you are fully recovered, señor," Rodriguez said, "my own sword is at your disposal to beat him sore with the flat of it, or how you will. Thus no dishonour shall touch your sword from the skin of so vile a knave."

The stranger smiled: the idea appealed to him.

"You make a noble amend, señor," he said as he bowed over Rodriguez' proffered sword.

Morano had not moved far, but stood near, wondering. "What should a servant do if not work for his master?" he wondered. And how work for him when dead? And dead, as it seemed to Morano, through his own fault if he allowed any man to kill him when he perceived him about to do so. He stood there puzzled. And suddenly he saw the stranger coming angrily towards him in the clear moonlight with a sword. Morano was frightened.

As the hidalgo came up to him he stretched out his left hand to seize Morano by the shoulder. Up went the frying-pan, the stranger parried, but against a stroke that no school taught or knew, and for the second time he went down in the dust with a reeling head. Rodriguez turned toward Morano and said to him ... No, realism is all very well, and I know that my duty as author is to tell all that happened, and I could win mighty praise as a bold, unconventional writer; at the same time, some young lady will be reading all this next year in some far country, or in twenty years in England, and I would sooner she should not read what Rodriguez said. I do not, I trust, disappoint her. But the gist of it was that he should leave that place now and depart from his service for ever. And hearing those words Morano turned mournfully away and was at once lost in the darkness. While Rodriguez ran once more to help his fallen antagonist. "Señor, señor," he said with an emotion that some wearing centuries and a cold climate have taught us not to show, and beyond those words he could find no more to say.

"Giddy, only giddy," said the stranger.

A tear fell on his forehead as Rodriguez helped him to his feet.

"Señor," Rodriguez said fervently, "we will finish our encounter come what may. The knave is gone and ..."

"But I am somewhat giddy," said the other.

"I will take off one of my shoes," said Rodriguez, "leaving the other on. It will equalise our unsteadiness, and you shall not be disappointed in our encounter. Come," he added kindly.

"I cannot see so clearly as before," the young hidalgo murmured.

"I will bandage my right eye also," said Rodriguez, "and if this cannot equalise it ..."

"It is a most fair offer," said the young man.

"I could not bear that you should be disappointed of your encounter," Rodriguez said, "by this spirit of Hell that has got itself clothed in fat and dares to usurp the dignity of man."

"It is a right fair offer," the young man said again.

"Rest yourself, señor," said Rodriguez, "while I take off my shoe," and he indicated his kerchief which was still on the ground.

The stranger sat down a little wearily, and Rodriguez sitting upon the dust took off his left shoe. And now he began to think a little wistfully of the face that had shone from that balcony, where all was dark now in black shadow unlit by the moon. The emptiness of the balcony and its darkness oppressed him; for he could scarcely hope to survive an encounter with that swordsman, whose skill he now recognised as being of a different class from his own, a class of which he knew nothing. All his own feints and passes were known, while those of his antagonist had been strange and new, and he might well have even others. The stranger's giddiness did not alter the situation, for Rodriguez knew that his handicap was fair and even generous. He believed he was near his grave, and could see no spark of light to banish that dark belief; yet more chances than we can see often guard us on such occasions. The absence of Serafina saddened him like a sorrowful sunset.

Rodriguez rose and limped with his one shoe off to the stranger, who was sitting upon his kerchief.

"I will bandage my right eye now, señor," he said.

The young man rose and shook the dust from the kerchief and gave it to Rodriguez with a renewed expression of his gratitude at the fairness of the strange handicap. When Rodriguez had bandaged his eye the stranger returned his sword to him, which he had held in his hand since his effort to beat Morano, and drawing his own stepped back a few paces from him. Rodriguez took one hopeless look at the balcony, saw it as empty and as black as ever, then he faced his antagonist, waiting.

"Bandage one eye, indeed!" muttered Morano as he stepped up behind the stranger and knocked him down for the third time with a blow over the head from his frying-pan.

The young hidalgo dropped silently.

Rodriguez uttered one scream of anger and rushed at Morano with his sword. Morano had already started to run; and, knowing well that he was running for his life, he kept for awhile the start that he had of the rapier. Rodriguez knew that no plump man of over forty could last against his lithe speed long. He saw Morano clearly before him, then lost sight of him for a moment and ran confidently on pursuing. He ran on and on. And at last he recognised that Morano had slipped into the darkness, which lies always so near to the moonlight, and was not in front of him at all.