

Games From Folktales

A free podcast for
the Ars Magica
roleplaying game

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Precious Stones:

Hematite, Jacinth, and Jasper

Lapis Lazuli, Lodestone, and Malachite

Moonstone, Onyx, and Opal

Rock Crystal and Ruby

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A horological demon from Jules Verne

There's an odd little demon in Master Zacharius by Jules Verne. He's a little too technologically sophisticated for 1220, but a similar idea may be used for any mastercrafter, or for a Verditus magus.

The horological demon has sent a plague against the master clockmaker's works so that, in defiance of physical laws, the springs not longer have elasticity. People return the clocks and watches he has made, which drives him into penury. He also becomes obsessed with the idea that his life is tied to his clocks, and that so long as one of them remains ticking, he is immortal, but if the last one is silenced, he will pass away.

The last clock, his masterpiece, has been purchased and corrupted by the demon. It offers to show Zacharius how to preserve his clocks in exchange for the hand of his daughter Gerande, who is engaged to Zacharius's apprentice, Aubert. The demon is stoking Zacharius's sin of Pride the whole time, and his daughter is merely the culmination of that seduction. In the end Gerande escapes, but Zacharius is likely damned anyway, because he compares himself to God, in his mastery of mechanisms, and his supposedly eternal life. He also claims one of his clocks is a sure guide to salvation of the soul.

So, though Gerande and Aubert were ignorant of it, all Geneva was soon talking of their speedy union. But it happened also that, while the worthy folk were gossiping, a strange chuckle was often heard, and a voice saying, "Gerande will not wed Aubert."

If the talkers turned round, they found themselves facing a little old man who was quite a stranger to them.

How old was this singular being? No one could have told. People conjectured that he must have existed for several centuries, and that was all. His big flat head rested upon shoulders the width of which was equal to the height of his body; this was not above three feet. This personage would have made a good figure to support a pendulum, for the dial would have naturally been placed on his face, and the balance-wheel would have oscillated at its ease in his chest. His nose might readily have been taken for the style of a sun-dial, for it was narrow and sharp; his teeth, far apart, resembled the cogs of a wheel, and ground themselves between his lips; his voice had the metallic sound of a bell, and you could hear his heart beat like the tick of a clock. This little man, whose arms moved like the hands on a dial, walked with jerks, without ever turning round. If any one followed him, it was found that he walked a league an hour, and that his course was nearly circular.

This strange being had not long been seen wandering, or rather circulating, around the town; but it had already been observed that, every day, at the moment when the sun passed the meridian, he stopped before the Cathedral of Saint Pierre, and resumed his course after the twelve strokes of noon had sounded. Excepting at this precise moment, he seemed to become a part of all the conversations in which the old watchmaker was talked of; and people asked each other, in terror, what relation could exist between him and Master Zacharius. It was remarked, too, that he never lost sight of the old man and his daughter while they were taking their promenades.

One day Gerande perceived this monster looking at her with a hideous smile. She clung to her father with a frightened motion.

"What is the matter, my Gerande?" asked Master Zacharius.

"I do not know," replied the young girl.

"But thou art changed, my child. Art thou going to fall ill in thy turn? Ah, well," he added, with a sad smile, "then I must take care of thee, and I will do it tenderly."

"O father, it will be nothing. I am cold, and I imagine that it is—"

"What, Gerande?"

"The presence of that man, who always follows us," she replied in a low tone.

Master Zacharius turned towards the little old man.

"Faith, he goes well," said he, with a satisfied air, "for it is just four o'clock. Fear nothing, my child; it is not a man, it is a clock!"

Gerande looked at her father in terror. How could Master Zacharius read the hour on this strange creature's visage?

"By-the-bye," continued the old watchmaker, paying no further attention to the matter, "I have not seen Aubert for several days."

We will leave the story there, with thanks to the recorder from Librivox, Zachary Katz-Stein.

The horological demon

Order: Spirit of Deceit

Infernal Might: 10 {Terram}

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

Size: -2, about three feet tall. .

Virtues and Flaws: Many. Effectively it has Dwarf and has sufficient riches to pretend to nobility.

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Personality Traits: Merciless +3, Methodical +2*

*Technically, the creature isn't methodical, it's an obsessive completist, which makes it act as if it had the virtue of patience.

Reputations: Spirit of Deceit 1 (Infernal)

Combat:

Sword: Initiative +1, Attack +13, Defense +7, Damage +6

Brawl*: Initiative +0, Attack +9, Defense +6, Damage +3

* Hands are metallic, and so they do damage as though the demon were wearing guntlets.

Soak: +4. Oddly metallic skin.

Fatigue Levels: Does not suffer fatigue

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-3), -3 (4-6), -5 (7-9), Incapacitated (10-13), Dead (14+)

Abilities: As required for story, but these statistics assume Brawl (fists) 3, Single weapon (short sword) 3.

Powers:

Coagulation, 0 points, Init 0, Terram: The creature can manifest in a single human shape, as described in the story

Hound: 1 point, Init +3, Corpus. This power allows the demon to always know his victim's location.

Envisioning, 1 point, Init 0, Mentem: For 1 point, allows the demon to enter and twist dreams. If used to terrify, the victim can ignore it with a Brave Personality trait roll against an Ease factor of 9 or more. Failure to resist leads to a profound physical reaction. In Master Zacharius's case, he develops depression, which is represented as long term Fatigue levels, then Wound levels, which he believes, wrongly, are being caused by the failure of the mechanisms in his clocks.

Obsession: 1-3 points, Init -5, Mentem: May force characters to make Personality Trait rolls to resist a temporary trait, Proudful, which has a score equal to the Might points spent.. If the roll is successful, the trait vanishes. If it fails, they gain the trait permanently at +1, although they can remove it by the usual means of reducing traits.

Command the works of man to fail: 1 point, Init -1, Terram/Herbam/Animal: This minor power destroys an essential piece of a single item. Master Zacharius makes use of this power easy for the demon by having a comprehensive list of every clock he has ever made, who owns it, and where it is.

Trust of the Innocent: 1 point, Init -1, Mentem: The target believes a single lie for as long as possible, until presented evidence to the contrary. An Int roll against Ease factor 6 allows a character to resist this effect. This power is also used to appear to change the religious guidance in Zacharius's masterwork clock.

Weakness: .Cannot act on saint's days, holy feasts, or Sundays, which gives characters a respite from him about one-third of the time.

Vis: 2 pawns, Terram.

Appearance: As per story and illustration.



The flowering of the strange orchid

by H.G. Wells

I was listening to Jim Moon's Hypnogoria podcast, an episode about the triffids, and he reminded me of this story. I'd looked at it before, but the creature seemed too weak to challenge magi. I'd made a mistake there, though. This creature may not be particularly combat worthy, but I can see it as a familiar, a minion, or a laboratory security device.

I'd also like Herbam magi to try growing varietals of the orchids. I'm a great fan of the Nero Wolfe novels, and he's a detective who collects and grows orchids in the greenhouse on his roof. Would magi show them to each other? Swap cuttings?

Stats eventually – I'm about twenty creatures behind.

Over to H.G. Wells. The recording included is Lauren Randall, via Librivox: thanks to the gang there.

The buying of orchids always has in it a certain speculative flavour. You have before you the brown shrivelled lump of tissue, and for the rest you must trust your judgment, or the auctioneer, or your good luck, as your taste may incline. The plant may be moribund or dead, or it may be just a respectable purchase, fair value for your money, or perhaps—for the thing has happened again and again—there slowly unfolds before the delighted eyes of the happy purchaser, day after day, some new variety, some novel richness, a strange twist of the labellum, or some subtler colouration or unexpected mimicry. Pride, beauty, and profit blossom together on one delicate green spike, and, it may be, even immortality. For the new miracle of nature may stand in need of a new specific name, and what so convenient as that of its discoverer? "John-smithia"! There have been worse names.

It was perhaps the hope of some such happy discovery that made Winter Wedderburn such a frequent attendant at these sales—that hope, and also, maybe, the fact that he had nothing else of the slightest interest to do in the world. He was a shy, lonely, rather ineffectual man, provided with just enough income to keep off the spur of necessity, and not enough nervous energy to make him seek any exacting employments. He might have collected stamps or coins, or translated Horace, or bound books, or invented new species of diatoms. But, as it happened, he grew orchids, and had one ambitious little hothouse.

"I have a fancy," he said over his coffee, "that something is going to happen to me to-day." He spoke—as he moved and thought—slowly.

"Oh, don't say that!" said his housekeeper—who was also his remote cousin. For "something happening" was a euphemism that meant only one thing to her.

"You misunderstand me. I mean nothing unpleasant... though what I do mean I scarcely know.

"To-day," he continued, after a pause, "Peters' are going to sell a batch of plants from the Andamans and the Indies. I shall go up and see what they have. It may be I shall buy something good unawares. That may be it."

He passed his cup for his second cupful of coffee.

"Are these the things collected by that poor young fellow you told me of the other day?" asked his cousin, as she filled his cup.

"Yes," he said, and became meditative over a piece of toast.

"Nothing ever does happen to me," he remarked presently, beginning to think aloud. "I wonder why? Things enough happen to other people. There is Harvey. Only the other week; on Monday he picked up sixpence, on Wednesday his chicks all had the staggers, on Friday his cousin came home from Australia, and on Saturday he broke his ankle. What a whirl of excitement!—compared to me."

"I think I would rather be without so much excitement," said his housekeeper. "It can't be good for you."

"I suppose it's troublesome. Still ... you see, nothing ever happens to me. When I was a little boy I never had accidents. I never fell in love as I grew up. Never married... I wonder how it feels to have something happen to you, something really remarkable.

"That orchid-collector was only thirty-six—twenty years younger than myself—when he died. And he had been married twice and divorced once; he had had malarial fever four times, and once he broke his thigh. He killed a Malay once, and once he was wounded by a poisoned dart. And in the end he was killed by jungle-leeches. It must have all been very troublesome, but then it must have been very interesting, you know—except, perhaps, the leeches."

"I am sure it was not good for him," said the lady with conviction.

"Perhaps not." And then Wedderburn looked at his watch. "Twenty-three minutes past eight. I am going up by the quarter to twelve train, so that there is plenty of time. I think I shall wear my alpaca jacket—it is quite warm enough—and my grey felt hat and brown shoes. I suppose—"

He glanced out of the window at the serene sky and sunlit garden, and then nervously at his cousin's face.

"I think you had better take an umbrella if you are going to London," she said in a voice that admitted of no denial. "There's all between here and the station coming back."

When he returned he was in a state of mild excitement. He had made a purchase. It was rare that he could make up his mind quickly enough to buy, but this time he had done so.

"There are Vandas," he said, "and a Dendrobe and some Palaeonophis." He surveyed his purchases lovingly as he consumed his soup. They were laid out on the spotless tablecloth before him, and he was telling his cousin all about them as he slowly meandered through his dinner. It was his custom to live all his visits to London over again in the evening for her and his own entertainment.

"I knew something would happen to-day. And I have bought all these. Some of them—some of them—I feel sure, do you know, that some of them will be remarkable. I don't know how it is, but I feel just as sure as if some one had told me that some of these will turn out remarkable.

"That one"—he pointed to a shrivelled rhizome—"was not identified. It may be a Palaeonophis—or it may not. It may be a new species, or even a new genus. And it was the last that poor Batten ever collected."

"I don't like the look of it," said his housekeeper. "It's such an ugly shape."

"To me it scarcely seems to have a shape."

"I don't like those things that stick out," said his housekeeper.

"It shall be put away in a pot to-morrow."

"It looks," said the housekeeper, "like a spider shamming dead."

Wedderburn smiled and surveyed the root with his head on one side. "It is certainly not a pretty lump of stuff. But you can never judge of these things from their dry appearance. It may turn out to be a very beautiful orchid indeed. How busy I shall be to-morrow! I must see to-night just exactly what to do with these things, and to-morrow I shall set to work."

They found poor Batten lying dead, or dying, in a mangrove swamp—I forget which," he began again presently, "with one of these very orchids crushed up under his body. He had been unwell for some days with some kind of native fever, and I suppose he fainted. These mangrove swamps are very unwholesome. Every drop of blood, they say, was taken out of him by the jungle-leeches. It may be that very plant that cost him his life to obtain."

"I think none the better of it for that."

"Men must work though women may weep," said Wedderburn with profound gravity.

"Fancy dying away from every comfort in a nasty swamp! Fancy being ill of fever with nothing to take but chlorodyne and quinine—if men were left to themselves they would live on chlorodyne and quinine—and no one round you but horrible natives! They say the Andaman islanders are most disgusting wretches—and, anyhow, they can scarcely make good nurses, not having the necessary training. And just for people in England to have orchids!"

"I don't suppose it was comfortable, but some men seem to enjoy that kind of thing," said Wedderburn. "Anyhow, the natives of his party were sufficiently civilised to take care of all his collection until his colleague, who was an ornithologist, came back again from the interior; though they could not tell the species of the orchid, and had let it wither. And it makes these things more interesting."

"It makes them disgusting. I should be afraid of some of the malaria clinging to them. And just think, there has been a dead body lying across that ugly thing! I never thought of that before. There! I declare I cannot eat another mouthful of dinner."

"I will take them off the table if you like, and put them in the window-seat. I can see them just as well there."

The next few days he was indeed singularly busy in his steamy little hothouse, fussing about with charcoal, lumps of teak, moss, and all the other mysteries of the orchid cultivator. He considered he was having a wonderfully eventful time. In the evening he would talk about these new orchids to his friends, and over and over again he reverted to his expectation of something strange.

Several of the Vandas and the Dendrobium died under his care, but presently the strange orchid began to show signs of life. He was delighted, and took his housekeeper right away from jam-making to see it at once, directly he made the discovery.

"That is a bud," he said, "and presently there will be a lot of leaves there, and those little things coming out here are aerial rootlets."

"They look to me like little white fingers poking out of the brown," said his housekeeper. "I don't like them."

“Why not?”

“I don’t know. They look like fingers trying to get at you. I can’t help my likes and dislikes.”

“I don’t know for certain, but I don’t think there are any orchids I know that have aerial rootlets quite like that. It may be my fancy, of course. You see they are a little flattened at the ends.”

“I don’t like ’em,” said his housekeeper, suddenly shivering and turning away. “I know it’s very silly of me—and I’m very sorry, particularly as you like the thing so much. But I can’t help thinking of that corpse.”

“But it may not be that particular plant. That was merely a guess of mine.”

His housekeeper shrugged her shoulders. “Anyhow I don’t like it,” she said.

Wedderburn felt a little hurt at her dislike to the plant. But that did not prevent his talking to her about orchids generally, and this orchid in particular, whenever he felt inclined.

“There are such queer things about orchids,” he said one day; “such possibilities of surprises. You know, Darwin studied their fertilisation, and showed that the whole structure of an ordinary orchid flower was contrived in order that moths might carry the pollen from plant to plant. Well, it seems that there are lots of orchids known the flower of which cannot possibly be used for fertilisation in that way. Some of the *Cypripediums*, for instance; there are no insects known that can possibly fertilise them, and some of them have never been found with seed.”

“But how do they form new plants?”

“By runners and tubers, and that kind of outgrowth. That is easily explained. The puzzle is, what are the flowers for?”

“Very likely,” he added, “my orchid may be something extraordinary in that way. If so I shall study it. I have often thought of making researches as Darwin did. But hitherto I have not found the time, or something else has happened to prevent it. The leaves are beginning to unfold now. I do wish you would come and see them!”

But she said that the orchid-house was so hot it gave her the headache. She had seen the plant once again, and the aerial rootlets, which were now some of them more than a foot long, had unfortunately reminded her of tentacles reaching out after something; and they got into her dreams, growing after her with incredible rapidity. So that she had settled to her entire satisfaction that she would not see that plant again, and Wedderburn had to admire its leaves alone. They were of the ordinary broad form, and a deep glossy green, with splashes and dots of deep red towards the base. He knew of no other leaves quite like them. The plant was placed on a low bench near the thermometer, and close by was a simple arrangement by

which a tap dripped on the hot-water pipes and kept the air steamy. And he spent his afternoons now with some regularity meditating on the approaching flowering of this strange plant.

And at last the great thing happened. Directly he entered the little glass house he knew that the spike had burst out, although his great *Palaeonophis Lowii* hid the corner where his new darling stood. There was a new odour in the air, a rich, intensely sweet scent, that overpowered every other in that crowded, steaming little greenhouse.

Directly he noticed this he hurried down to the strange orchid. And, behold! the trailing green spikes bore now three great splashes of blossom, from which this overpowering sweetness proceeded. He stopped before them in an ecstasy of admiration.

The flowers were white, with streaks of golden orange upon the petals; the heavy labellum was coiled into an intricate projection, and a wonderful bluish purple mingled there with the gold. He could see at once that the genus was altogether a new one. And the insufferable scent! How hot the place was! The blossoms swam before his eyes.

He would see if the temperature was right. He made a step towards the thermometer. Suddenly everything appeared unsteady. The bricks on the floor were dancing up and down. Then the white blossoms, the green leaves behind them, the whole greenhouse, seemed to sweep sideways, and then in a curve upward.

At half-past four his cousin made the tea, according to their invariable custom. But Wedderburn did not come in for his tea.

“He is worshipping that horrid orchid,” she told herself, and waited ten minutes. “His watch must have stopped. I will go and call him.”

She went straight to the hothouse, and, opening the door, called his name. There was no reply. She noticed that the air was very close, and loaded with an intense perfume. Then she saw something lying on the bricks between the hot-water pipes.

For a minute, perhaps, she stood motionless.

He was lying, face upward, at the foot of the strange orchid. The tentacle-like aerial rootlets no longer swayed freely in the air, but were crowded together, a tangle of grey ropes, and stretched tight, with their ends closely applied to his chin and neck and hands.

She did not understand. Then she saw from under one of the exultant tentacles upon his cheek there trickled a little thread of blood.

With an inarticulate cry she ran towards him, and tried to pull him away from the leech-like suckers. She snapped two of these tentacles, and their sap dripped red.

Then the overpowering scent of the blossom began to make her head reel. How they clung to him! She tore at the tough ropes, and he and the white inflorescence swam about her. She felt she was fainting, knew she must not. She left him and hastily opened the nearest door, and, after she had panted for a moment in the fresh air, she had a brilliant inspiration. She caught up a flower-pot and smashed in the windows at the end of the greenhouse. Then she re-entered. She tugged now with renewed strength at Wedderburn's motionless body, and brought the strange orchid crashing to the floor. It still clung with the grimest tenacity to its victim. In a frenzy, she lugged it and him into the open air.

Then she thought of tearing through the sucker rootlets one by one, and in another minute she had released him and was dragging him away from the horror.

He was white and bleeding from a dozen circular patches.

The odd-job man was coming up the garden, amazed at the smashing of glass, and saw her emerge, hauling the inanimate body with red-stained hands. For a moment he thought impossible things.

"Bring some water!" she cried, and her voice dispelled his fancies. When, with unnatural alacrity, he returned with the water, he found her weeping with excitement, and with Wedderburn's head upon her knee, wiping the blood from his face.

"What's the matter?" said Wedderburn, opening his eyes feebly, and closing them again at once.

"Go and tell Annie to come out here to me, and then go for Dr. Haddon at once," she said to the odd-job man so soon as he brought the water; and added, seeing he hesitated, "I will tell you all about it when you come back."

Presently Wedderburn opened his eyes again, and, seeing that he was troubled by the puzzle of his position, she explained to him, "You fainted in the hothouse."

"And the orchid?"

"I will see to that," she said.

Wedderburn had lost a good deal of blood, but beyond that he had suffered no very great injury. They gave him brandy mixed with some pink extract of meat, and carried him upstairs to bed. His housekeeper told her incredible story in fragments to Dr. Haddon. "Come to the orchid-house and see," she said.

The cold outer air was blowing in through the open door, and the sickly perfume was almost dispelled. Most of the torn aerial rootlets lay already withered amidst a number of dark stains upon the bricks. The stem of the inflorescence was broken by the fall of the plant, and the flowers were growing limp and brown at the edges of the petals. The doctor stooped towards it, then saw that one of the aerial rootlets still stirred feebly, and hesitated.

The next morning the strange orchid still lay there, black now and putrescent. The door banged intermittently in the morning breeze, and all the array of Wedderburn's orchids was shrivelled and prostrate. But Wedderburn himself was bright and garrulous upstairs in the glory of his strange adventure.

Venice:

The Election of the First Doge

Edgecumbe Stanley's history if the dogeressas has a lengthy section on the election of the first doge, but it's not of great interest to us. I've cut it down so it contains only the pieces which Ars Magica characters, six hundred years later, might interact with.

"The Greek protection of Veneto and the lagunes was withdrawn in 641...Parliaments representative of every class—work-people, middle class, and patricians,—with the clergy at their head, were called together for deliberation and unity of action...wisely chosen, one from each of twelve most important settlements, who had exercised their tribuneship to good account, forgathered at Eraclea to elect a worthy guardian of the State, a leader —"Dux," "Doxe" or "Doge" of the Venetians."

So, we see here why the Venetians are the last republic in the West. People of all classes elect the twelve tribunes, and then they elect a Doge. The title of Doge is actually a Roman one (in the Byzantine sense). It means "leader" and is the same word that leads to the English "duke". It was given by the Greeks before their protection fell away as the Empire contracted.

The women and the girls of the islands brought with them to Eraclea armfuls of sea-pinks and sprays of jessamine, red poppies and yellow flags, fragrant orange flowers and the sweet bays of myrtle, gathered from their gardens. They wove gay garlands with the tenacious dune rushes and coiled them about with the tendrils of the vine. Every street shrine in Eraclea. every Virgin ikon in her modest homes, was adorned with floral offerings, and the altars of her sanctuaries were covered with pure white fragrant lilies.

Stanley notes that flowers are a luxury, but a mandatory one, in Venice. The salt winds of the city destroy most weak plants, and so flowers are time consuming and difficult to grow. Dogaressa Elena, who we will meet slightly later, is one of the first to make the little courtyard at the centre of Venetian houses into a flower garden. This sets a fashion. This is also why our putative Dianic cult of Venetian witches all have alchemical, perfumed gardens and pots of herbs in their altanes.

The twelve electors held their parliament in the modest basilica and cast their votes in secret, but all were satisfied when Paolo Lucio Anafesto of Aquileia was hailed as the first of Venice Doges — judge, general, and pope combined. Promptly the Patriarch of Grado blessed the new Head of the State, and the twelve electors joined in crowning him with the "Corno"—the horned Phrygian bonnet of renown and liberty.

So, the Doge wasn't actually the pope of Venice, but remember that the Church of Venice had no land, and relatively little wealth, so the doges eventually become its great patrons.

The Phrygian cap is the symbol of House Mercere. We've talked about the red cap being descended from the Milvi, the Egyptian magicians who joined the Cult of Mercury in the House books. For shape and material bonuses, It's a hat, effectively, but a lot of people wear a pin in it, and that can be made of metals, which allows more potent effects to be enchanted into the item.

The Phrygian cap was given to Roman slaves upon manumission, and represented liberty. It was the symbol of the Roman republic, and was used by the people who killed Ceasar to signal the return to the older ideal. In Venice it is deliberately not a crown. Remember that in medieval France and England, even some barons have crowns. The hat also has a link with Mithranism, which I can't use yet, but want to record as a promising thread.

The day's solemnities performed all held picnic in the woods ; Eraclea kept open house. Night fell all too soon and lines of gaily-lighted gondolas made off to homes across the phosphorescent waves and the summer moon smiled upon a scene of perfect peace and content.

Picnics in the woods are popular with the Venetians after major events. Is this a Diana cult link again?

Alas for the stability of mundane matters—two short years were scarcely spent when Doge Anafesto met with his death, lamentably enough, in a conflict between the citizens of Eraclea and Jesolo... Three Doges only ruled at Eraclea, and then in 742 the seat of the Government was removed to Malamocco as being less open to attack, and more favourably placed for the development of trade with the east. The Doge was elected for life and his family, if of plebeian origin, ennobled : his wife however had no precedence and was regarded pretty much as one of her spouse's goods and chattels.

The mosaics at San Marco's show that velvets and brocades were worn with handsome furs and folds of lace. Blue was the favourite colour with all classes—a cerulean tint, like the reflection of the azure skies in the still waters of the lagunes.

I note this because it helps us imagine what our characters wear. Cerulean blue is the theme colour for Venice, apparently. Modern cerulean is a dye that only comes into use in the 17th century, so I'm not sure of the source of the period dye.

Venice: Wherein we find the forest

In this extract for the biography of the dogaressas of Venice, Edgecumb Stanley describes how the city was made. It suggests terrible powers for Herbam wizards, and it gives us a reason why the Cult of Diana we have seen in glimpses so far through the book has taken on a strange, urban form. In this section, we find the forest.

"The first "Grand" Doge and Founder of Venice was Agnello Badoero, better known perhaps to historians by his Greek title "Ipato" or " Protospataro,"— in the Rialto vernacular Partecipazio...Agnello was Tribune of Malamocco, although a native of Eraclea, a man of many parts, he exhibited remarkable talents in almost every walk of life. A Greek of the Greeks by descent, he was a pronounced humanist in the school of Plato. A born legislator, he was by inclination an engineer and builder, and excelled his peers in mercantile industry and political acumen."

This little is necessary because he is the first of the Grand Doges, the big historical figures who we will be tinkering with. The next section describes historical houses in Venice, and that's handy for scenery in storytelling.

"Long before he was called to the supreme office of Doge he had fixed ideas about, and matured plans for, the conservation and development of the conditions of the islands of the Lagunes. Immediately after his election in 810, he broke with the traditions of the dogado, by removing the seat of Government to Rivo-Alto as being far and away a more convenient centre and at the same being much more secure from the attacks of enemies. Already there was a considerable population in the new capital and churches and houses of some importance had been erected—many of them of stone. All the same the ordinary Rivo-Alto dwellings were of modest dimensions and few rose beyond one storey in height. A marked feature of them all was the outside staircase, which gave access to the living rooms, and also led directly to the altana or look-out tower upon the flat roof. They were furnished with a solario or liago—an open balcony whereupon the inmates could sit and take the air and hold chit-chats with their friends."

Upon the flat roof the women of the household performed their toilet, combing out their hair and exposing it to the sunshine. Various domestic duties also were transacted upon the "sun-traps," for example newly-washed linen bleached nowhere as effectively as there. Bedrooms occupied the upper part, and the plan of the ground floor provided kitchens and offices with rooms for meals and the reception of guests. These, in the large structures, were arranged upon three sides of a square forming a courtyard or garden patch."

So, servants on the bottom floor, stairs to the bedrooms on the upper floors. and also to the outdoor room of the roof, which was a place of women. I'm not sure if the linen will come up again, but there's a lot of folk magic about it in English sources. You need to leave it to decay in water, then weave it skillfully, then stretch it out over fields to bleach. This makes it very different from, for example, wool.

Also, note that some people had towers, rather than altanes? We don't know why wizards have towers in Mythic Europe. The spell to make them descends from the Cult of Mercury, apparently, but it must have looked odd when it was first used because the towers it creates are circular. That's an innovation in castle building in the c13th. The Romans didn't build circular towers in their forts: they built square ones, I believe. Still, we now have towers up where the women are doing their magic, which increases their Sight range.

In the next section we meet Dogaressa Elena. We know she was Christian, in the real world, because she founded Santa Giustina in Venice. This was dedicated to the patron saint of the dogaressas. She also founded Sant Illario and Sant Zaccaria, where doges and dogaresses retired into the contemplative life. We will deal with them later.

"Donna Elena occupied herself in cultivating "simples" and sweet-smelling flowers, without which no Venetian considered his home complete. Perhaps no people set greater store by fragrant flowers and succulent herbs than did those Venetian children of the sea-mists and salt-sands. The simplest bloom that the saline breeze allowed to grow was as precious as the most luxuriant rambler-rose, or flowering laurel. Vines grew everywhere and thrived amazingly, and everybody had a floral or arboreal hobby."

So, we all have herb and flower gardens, ready for the arrival of the perfumers and alchemists, later in history.

"Having established himself in his primitive palace, Doge Agnello set to work to carry out his ideas of utility and expansion. First of all, in view of the many inroads of ruthless invaders into Veneto, he turned his attention to the strengthening of the defences of the islands. Strong cables were slung across the narrower channels, disused hulks of vessels were sunk in the deeper water-ways, and a system of signals by day and of beacons by night was established. The chief life's work of the sapient Head of the State was the protection of the low-lying lidi from floods and denudation. Thousands and thousands of great timber balks from the Pineta of Ravenna were secured and driven far down into the yielding mud and sand. From pile to pile was woven a basket-work of unbreakable osiers, and then the pumping out of needless channels and the draining of wet marsh-lands was followed by the sinking of innumerable loads of solid earth and gravel, until the reclaimed areas assumed something of the appearance and consistency of terra-firma."

This is the forest of the urban Diana cult. Venice is basically a set of tree houses, standing high on thousands of pine logs that have ossified in the odd salt water of the lagoons. It doesn't look like it is floating atop a forest, because the forest is buried out of sight, but the forest is there.

If you're a Herbam magus, Venice gives you a lot of extra scope for your powers. Many of the tricks of Terram magic, like earthquakes, can be done instead by rattling the wooden framework on which the soil holding up the city rests.

Imagine all of the usual tropes of faerie-affiliated Herbam magic, but with the forest always beneath your feet. Are there's ents down there? Faerie rings? Odd pixies? The drowned forests of Cornwall have merfolk...does Venice?

One odd and useful point is that the churches in Venice grabbed the bits of solid land when the city was first developing, under the miraculous guidance of St Guistiana, so the places with the strongest Dominion Aura re on solid rock, and the rest of the city is on the top of a forest. Even there, though, there's an odd hint of the pagan. The girl saint's instructions were "wherever you find a vine, plant a church". Presuming these to be grape vines, why would she put the churches there, or, alternatively, why is her sign of favour the grape vine? Let's just pin that for later, but there seems to be a hint that she's not all that averse to whatever is going to rise up from the vines and forests.

"With such primitive appliances as were at hand, the success achieved was little short of marvellous. To his new-made plots of land Doge Agnello gave the name of "Fondamenti" To Rivo-Alto as the centre of his plan, he connected all the neighbouring islands by throwing across the water-ways wooden bridges,—thus Venice assumed her present form... The crowning labour of Doge Agnello Badoero, so far as the building of Venice was concerned, was the erection of the Ducal Palace in 820. This was purely Byzantine in design, very large, and built of rare marbles and mosaics: "Il Palazzo" it was called."

I'll just note that this gets burned down before the game period in an anti-tyranny riot when a doge tries to make himself king by bringing in foreign mercenaries.

"The times were strenuous and many an one, weary of the toil of the world and yearning for the consolation of religion was irresistibly drawn to assume the habit of the monastery. Men and women of worth became founders of religious houses and, among them. Doge Agnello and Dogaressa Elena, who with their eldest son Giustiniano, built the monasteries of Sant' Ilario and San Zaccaria."

So, doges seem to keep popping off to San Zaccaria.. He's an odd choice: his body was handed over by the eastern Emperors as a gift. He's not the saint "of" anything in particular – he was the father of John the Baptist, and a minor prophet. He's sometimes said to aid the patient. I'm tempted to suggest this is where the serious work of the Diana cult goes down, but let's hold off on that for a while until we gather more information.

Sant'Ilario is another odd choice. I presume this is Saint Hillary of Parma. He's a patron of charity and cobblers, and his decorative feast biscuits look vaguely like shoes. Again, we need more here to understand his significance.

Venice: The weapon of the urban Diana cult?

In Edgecumb Stanley's biography of the dogaressas, the next incident of note was the rise of Charlemagne. His history is poor, though, because he doesn't mention here that Pepin, the son of Charlemagne, tried to invade the city on his father's orders, which led to the seat of power moving to the modern site. Charlemagne explicitly says that although he is the rightful heir to the Roman Empire's territories, it doesn't include Venice, which belongs to the Emperor of the East.

There are a few seeds of useful material we can glean from this part of Stanley.

The Franks shared the sporting instincts of the Venetians and they were emulous of the boasts of the men of Venice :—" One can catch more fish in a month in the lagunes than in a whole year in all the Mediterranean ! ", and, " One can entrap more birds at Malamocco than anywhere else in Italy"

Grebe – shooting was a favourite pastime, and ladies entered into the sport quite as enthusiastically as their lords. Cross-bows and clay pellets were the weapons, snaring was barred as unsportsmanlike, and heads were nailed on barn doors as trophies.

In reference to this I'd like to point back to episode 63, which is about ortolans, the bird so good that one hides from God to eat it. I presume they kept grebe heads as trophies because the greater crested grebe has prominent head feathers. They were almost hunted to extinction in the UK for these feathers, which were popular on hats and undergarments. I'm not familiar with any relevant mythology about grebes. There's a tribe of Russian witches who can become grebes, as I distantly recall.

Here we have women skilled with firing clay pellets from a crossbow. I note that it's permitted, in *Ars Magica*, to have potions in ampules, and that poisons are more skillfully brewed in a city filled with alchemists. If we combine this with the previously noted property of Venetian women's hair, to increase the range and durability of ranged weapons, we begin to see a sacred weapon for the urban Diana cult we have been slowly constructing. Do they use the bolero, the perfumed balls popularised under the Rotting Princess, as poisoned projectiles?

Whilst Charlemagne and his courtiers were pleased to meet the Venetians, in sport, or when on marriage bent, he and they never quite concealed their designs upon the lagunes ; but the monarch's chagrin was bitter when he was forced to admit the impossibility of success. "As my brand sinks out of sight, nor ever shall appear to me again, so let all thoughts of seizing Venice vanish from my will," —he once exclaimed, as, standing upon his royal galley off the coast of Padua, he cast his sword far, far away, out into the sea !

This was not his favourite sword, or course, but it does represent his ambition to take Venice, and so if it could be recovered it would be a valuable vessel for enchantment.

From here we follow the story of the first dogaressa. It doesn't have a lot of relevance to *Ars Magica*, but as the following episodes follow the many holders of the role, we need to mark the beginning, at least in brief.

The first actual Dogaressa—not merely the wife of the Doge, but the First Lady in Venice and his official consort, was a Frenchwoman—the Countess Carola,—a lady of honour at the Court of Aix-la- Chapelle. Obelario Antenorio and his brother Beato, who was associated with him in the dogado, were the guests of Charlemagne at Aix, and there the Doge saw and wooed his bride. How they got there nobody knows : it was a stupendous journey in those days.

The Emperor approved the match and promised his friendship and protection for the island Republic. Carola was a woman of great energy of character, remarkable for the exercise of a strong will, and endowed with the faculty of attracting respect and obedience. She had a difficult role, for the ladies of Venice resented the introduction of a Frenchwoman as consort of their Doge.

Beato Antenorio, it appears, played a double part, for whilst acting as best man to his brother and paying court to Countess Carola, he was negotiating with the Emperor at Constantinople for a union with a Byzantine princess with a view to supplant the Doge and Dogaressa.

Carola very soon took the measure of Beato's perfidy, and when he brought his imperial bride to Venice, she adroitly placed Valentino, her husband's youngest brother, an attractive youth, in the young girl's way. There was little love lost between Beato and Cassandra, and the brothers very soon became estranged, and thus the Dogaressa held her own triumphantly. The story goes however that, consistent with woman's ever changing mood, having set Beato against his wife, the Dogaressa became her rival in the affections of Valentino.

Obelario Antenorio, who had been Tribune of Malamocco, was "an indolent man, irresolute and faithless." When a Greek fleet approached the lagunes with peaceful intentions, but viewed by the Doge as supporting the pretensions of Beato, he had recourse to the French Court for assistance. This was regarded by the Greeks as an hostile act, and they attacked and destroyed Eraclea, Jesolo, Fossone, Chioggia, and other Venetian ports. The chief men of Venice were slain or taken captive, and Obelario and Beato Antenorio were carried away as hostages to Constantinople, where they and their wives, Carola and Cassandra, died.

Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow

Four goddesses described by Thomas de Quincey. He was famous for his “Confessions of an English Opium Eater” and his time in Cambridge seems to coincide with his experiments with psychoactive substances. Statistics will arrive, once per month, for the next few months. Levanna appears to be a Roman goddess. The three Ladies of Sorrow are, perhaps, dark faeries, but they claim, in the twist ending, a commission to cause humans to suffer, on behalf of God, to make people reach their fullest expression. This might make them Accusers, or Tempters.

OFTENTIMES at Oxford I saw Levana in my dreams. I knew her by her Roman symbols. Who is Levana ? Reader, that do not pretend to have much leisure for very much scholarship, you will not be angry with me for telling you. Levana was the Roman goddess that performed for the new-born infant the earliest office of ennobling kindness,—typical, by its mode, of that grandeur which belongs to man everywhere, and of that benignity in powers invisible which even in pagan worlds sometimes descends to sustain it. At the very moment of birth, just as the infant tasted for the first time the atmosphere of our troubled planet, it was laid on the ground. But immediately, lest so grand a creature should grovel there for more than one instant, either the paternal hand, as proxy for the goddess Levana, or some near kinsman, as proxy for the father, raised it upright, bade it look erect as the king of all this world, and presented its forehead to the stars, saying, perhaps, in his heart, “Behold what is greater than yourselves 1 ” This symbolic act represented the function of Levana. And that mysterious lady, who never revealed her face (except to me in dreams), but always acted by delegation, had her name from the Latin verb (as still it is the Italian verb) *levare*, to raise aloft.

This is the explanation of Levana, and hence it has arisen that some people have understood by Levana the tutelary power that controls the education of the nursery. She, that would not suffer at his birth even a prefigurative or mimic degradation for her awful ward, far less could be supposed to suffer the real degradation attaching to the non-development of his powers. She therefore watches over human education. Now the word *educare*, with the penultimate short, was derived (by a process often exemplified in the crystallisation of languages) from the word *educare*, with the penultimate long. Whatever educates, or develops, educates. By the education of Levana, therefore, is meant,—not the poor machinery that moves by spellingbooks and grammars, but by that mighty system of central forces hidden in the deep bosom of human life, which by passion, by strife, by temptation, by the energies of resistance, works for ever upon children,—resting not night or day, any more than the mighty wheel of day and night themselves, whose moments, like restless spokes, are glimmering for ever as they revolve.

If, then, these are the ministries by which Levana works, how profoundly must she reverence the agencies of grief. But you, reader! think,—that children are not liable to such grief as mine. There are two senses in the word generally[^]—the sense of Euclid, where it means universally (or in the whole extent of the

genus), and in a foolish sense of this word, where it means usually. Now, I am far from saying that children universally are capable of grief like mine. But there are more than you ever heard of who die of grief in this island of ours. I will tell you a common case. The rules of Eton require that a boy on the foundation should be there twelve years : he is superannuated at eighteen, consequently he must come at six. Children torn away from mothers and sisters at that age not unfrequently die. I speak of what I know. The complaint is not entered by the registrar as grief ; but that it is. Grief of that sort, and at that age, has killed more than have ever been counted amongst its martyrs.

Therefore it is that Levana often communes with the powers that shake a man's heart : therefore it is that she dotes on grief. “These ladies,” said I softly to myself, on seeing the ministers with whom Levana was conversing, “these are the Sorrows; and they are three in number, as the Graces are three, who dress man's life with beauty : the Parcces are three, who weave the dark arras of man's life in their mysterious loom, always with colours sad in part, sometimes angry with tragic crimson and black ; the Furies are three, who visit with retribution called from the other side of the grave offences that walk upon this; and once even the Muses were but three, who fit the harp, the trumpet, or the lute, to the great burden's of man's impassioned creations. These are the Sorrows, all three of whom I know.” The last words I say now ; but in Oxford I said, “One of whom I know, and the others too surely I shall know.” For already, in my fervent youth, I saw (dimly relieved upon the dark background of my dreams) the imperfect lineaments of the awful sisters. These sisters—by what name shall we call them If I say simply, “The Sorrows,” there will be a chance of mistaking the term ; it might be understood of individual sorrow,—separate cases of sorrow, —whereas I want a term expressing the mighty abstractions that incarnate themselves in all individual sufferings of man's heart ; and I wish to have these abstractions presented as impersonations, that is, as clothed with human attributes of life, and with functions pointing to flesh. Let us call them, therefore, Our Ladies of Sorrow. I know them thoroughly, and have walked in all their kingdoms.

Three sisters they are, of one mysterious household; and their paths are wide apart ; but of their dominion there is no end. Them I saw often conversing with Levana, and sometimes about myself. Do they talk, then? O, no! mighty phantoms like these disdain the infirmities of language. They may utter voices through the organs of man when they dwell in human hearts, but amongst themselves there is no voice nor sound ; eternal silence reigns in their kingdoms. They spoke not, as they talked with Levana; they whispered not ; they sang not ; though oftentimes mighthought they might have sung, for I upon earth had heard their mysteries oftentimes deciphered by harp and timbrel, by dulcimer and organ. Like God, whose servants they are, they utter their pleasure, not by sounds that perish, or by words that go astray, but by signs in heaven, by changes on earth, by pulses in secret rivers, heraldries painted on darkness, and hieroglyphics written on the tablets of the brain. They

wheeled in mazes ; / spelled the steps. They telegraphed from afar ; / read the signals. They conspired together ; and on the mirrors of darkness my eye traced the plots. Theirs were the symbols ; mine are the words.

What is it the sisters are? What is it that they do? Let me describe their form, and their presence : if form it were that still fluctuated in its outline, or presence it were that for ever advanced to the front, or for ever receded amongst shades.

The eldest of the three is named *Mater Lachrymarum*, Our Lady of Tears. She it is that night and day raves and moans, calling for vanished faces. She stood in Rama, where a voice was heard of lamentation,—Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted. She it was that stood in Bethlehem on the night when Herod's sword swept its nurseries of Innocents, and the little feet were stiffened for ever, which, heard at times as they tottered along floors overhead, woke pulses of love in household hearts that were not unmarked in heaven.

Her eyes are sweet and subtle, wild and sleepy, by turns; oftentimes rising to the clouds, oftentimes challenging the heavens. She wears a diadem round her head. And I knew by childish memories that she could go abroad upon the winds, when she heard the sobbing of litanies or the thundering of organs, and when she beheld the mustering of summer clouds. This sister, the eldest, it is that carries keys more than papal at her girdle, which open every cottage and every palace.

She, to my knowledge, sat all last summer by the bedside of the blind beggar, him that so often and so gladly I talked with, whose pious daughter, eight years old, with the sunny countenance, resisted the temptations of play and village mirth to travel all day long on dusty roads with her afflicted father. For this did God send her a great reward. In the spring-time of the year, and whilst yet her own Spring was budding, he recalled her to himself. But her blind father mourns for ever over her; still he dreams at midnight that the little guiding hand is locked within his own; and still he wakens to a darkness that is now within a second and a deeper darkness. This *Mater Lachrymarum* has also been sitting all this winter of 1844–5 within the bed-chamber of the Czar, bringing before his eyes a daughter (not less pious) that vanished to God not less suddenly, and left behind her a darkness not less profound. By the power of the keys it is that Our Lady of tears glides a ghostly intruder into the chambers of sleepless men, sleepless women, sleepless children, from Ganges to Nile, from Nile to Mississippi. And her, because she is the first-born of her house, and has the widest empire, let us honour with the title of “*Madonna!*”

The second sister is called *Mater Suspiriorum*—Our Lady of Sighs. She never scales the clouds, nor walks abroad upon the winds. She wears no diadem. And her eyes, if they were ever seen, would be neither sweet nor subtle; no man could read their story; they would be found filled with perishing dreams, and with wrecks of forgotten delirium. But she raises not her eyes; her head, on which sits a dilapidated turban, droops for ever, for ever fastens on the dust. She weeps not. She groans not. But she sighs inaudibly at intervals. Her sister, *Madonna*,

is oftentimes stormy and frantic, raging in the highest against heaven, and demanding back her darlings. But Our Lady of Sighs never clamours, never defies, dreams not of rebellious aspirations. She is humble to abjectness.

Hers is the meekness that belongs to the hopeless. Murmur she may, but it is in her sleep. Whisper she may, but it is to herself in the twilight; Mutter she does at times, but it is in solitary places that are desolate as she is desolate, in ruined cities, and when the sun has gone down to his rest. This sister is the visitor of the Pariah, of the Jew, of the bondsman to the oar in the Mediterranean galleys; and of the English criminal in Norfolk Island, blotted out from the books of remembrance in sweet far-off England; of the baffled penitent reverting his eyes for ever upon a solitary grave, which to him seems the altar overthrown of some past and bloody sacrifice, on which altar no oblations can now be availing, whether towards pardon that he might implore, or towards reparation that he might attempt. Every slave that at noonday looks up to the tropical sun with timid reproach, as he points with one hand to the earth, our general mother, but for him a stepmother,—as he points with the other hand to the Bible, our general teacher, but against him sealed and sequestered;—every woman sitting in darkness, without love to shelter her head, or hope to illumine her solitude, because the heaven-born instincts kindling in her nature germs of holy affections which God implanted in her womanly bosom, having been stifled by social necessities, now burn sullenly to waste, like sepulchral lamps amongst the ancients; every nun defrauded of her unreturning May-time by wicked kinsman, whom God will judge; every captive in every dungeon; all that are betrayed and all that are rejected outcasts by traditionary law, and children of hereditary disgrace,—all these walk with Our Lady of Sighs.

She also carries a key; but she needs it little. For her kingdom is chiefly amongst the tents of Shem, and the houseless vagrant of every clime. Yet in the very highest walks of man she finds chapels of her own; and even in glorious England there are some that, to the world, carry their heads as proudly as the reindeer, who yet secretly have received her mark upon their foreheads.

But the third sister, who is also the youngest—! Hush, whisper whilst we talk of her! Her kingdom is not large, or else no flesh should live; but within that kingdom all power is hers. Her head, turreted like that of Cybele, rises almost beyond the reach of sight. She droops not; and her eyes rising so high might be hidden by distance; but, being what they are, they cannot be hidden; through the treble veil of crape which she wears, the fierce light of a blazing misery, that rests not for matins or for vespers, for noon of day or noon of night, for ebbing or for flowing tide, may be read from the very ground.

She is the defier of God. She is also the mother of lunacies, and the suggestress of suicides. Deep lie the roots of her power; but narrow is the nation that she rules. For she can approach only those in whom a profound nature has been upheaved by central convulsions; in whom the heart trembles, and the brain rocks under conspiracies of tempest from without and tempest from within. *Madonna* moves with uncertain steps, fast or slow, but still with tragic grace. Our Lady of Sighs creeps timidly and stealthily. But this youngest sister moves with

incalculable motions, bounding, and with tiger's leaps. She carries no key; for, though coming rarely amongst men, she storms all doors at which she is permitted to enter at all. And her name is Mater Tenebrarum—Our Lady of Darkness.

These were the Semnai Theai, or Sublime Goddesses, these were the Eumenides, or Gracious Ladies (so called by antiquity in shuddering propitiation), of my Oxford dreams. Madonna spoke. She spoke by her mysterious hand. Touching my head, she said to Our Lady of Sighs; and what she spoke, translated out of the signs which (except in dreams) no man reads, was this:—“Lo! here is he, whom in childhood I dedicated to my altars. This is he that once I made my darling. Him I led astray, him I beguiled, and from heaven I stole away his young heart to mine. Through me did he become idolatrous; and through me it was, by languishing desires, that he worshipped the worm, and prayed to the wormy grave. Holy was the grave to him; lovely was its darkness; saintly its corruption. Him, this young idolater, I have seasoned for thee, dear gentle Sister of Sighs! Do thou take him now to thy heart, and season him for our dreadful sister. And thou,”—turning to the Mater Tenebrarum, she said,—“wicked sister, that temptest and hatest, do thou take him from her. See that thy sceptre lie heavy on his head. Suffer not woman and her tenderness to sit near him in his darkness. Banish the frailties of hope, wither the relenting of love, scorch the fountain of tears, curse him as only thou canst curse. So shall he be accomplished in the furnace, so shall he see the things that ought not to be seen, sights that are abominable, and secrets that are unutterable. So shall he read elder truths, sad truths, grand truths, fearful truths. So shall he rise again before he dies, and so shall our commission be accomplished which from God we had,—to plague his heart until we had unfolded the capacities of his spirit.”

Toads and adders

‘Back in Episode 237, I discussed a piece of German folklore, about a bishop eaten by rats. These creatures were sent by God to punish the bishop for leaving his peasants to starve during a famine, or worse, for killing them. I thought it was a bit later than the game period, but I’ve found a mention of the story in Giraldus Cambrensis, who records hearing it during his travels in Wales during 1188. Note that the toads in this story are, like many in period tales, actively venomous, like adders or spiders.

I’ve also included a second story, which I think is a lovely little assassination. I’m not sure if I want a magus to be the source of the fatal prophecy, or a demon using their power to twist dreams.

To quote Gerald of Wales:

“Two circumstances occurred in the province of Cemmeis, the one in our own time, the other a little before, which I think right not to pass over in silence. In our time, a young man, native of his country, during a severe illness, suffered as violent a persecution from toads, as if the reptiles of the whole province had come to him by agreement; and though destroyed by his nurses and friends, they increased again on all sides in infinite numbers, like hydras’ heads. His attendants, both friends and strangers, being wearied out, he was drawn up in a kind of bag, into a high tree, stripped of its leaves, and shred; nor was he there secure from his venomous enemies, for they crept up the tree in great numbers, and consumed him even to the very bones. The young man’s name was Sisillus Esceir-hir, that is, Sisillus Long Leg. It is also recorded that by the hidden but never unjust will of God, another man suffered a similar persecution from rats. In the same province, during the reign of king Henry I., a rich man, who had a residence on the northern side of the Preseleu mountains, was warned for three successive nights, by dreams, that if he put his hand under a stone which hung over the spring of a neighbouring well, called the fountain of St. Bernacus, He would find there a golden torques. Obeying the admonition on the third day, he received, from a viper, a deadly wound in his finger; but as it appears that many treasures have been discovered through dreams, it seems to me probable that, with respect to rumours, in the same manner as to dreams, some ought, and some ought not, to be believed.

A Night in March

by Duncan Campbell Scott

This is a poem that I was going to try and stat up a variety of ways, but it is just imprecise enough to make that more a work of addition than translation, so I can spend my time better on monsters made more concrete by their authors. The creature might be, according to the poet, what magi would call an elemental, a demonic aerial power, a faerie, a psychopomp, or even an adulteration. The poem might be used, in saga, as a vague clue concerning the disappearance of the author.

The recording which follows is from Librivox. Thanks again to the crew, particularly Newgate Novelist.

*At eve the fiery sun went forth
Flooding the clouds with ruby blood,
Up roared a war-wind from the north
And crashed at midnight through the wood.*

*The demons danced about the trees,
The snow slipped singing over the wold,
And ever when the wind would cease
A lynx cried out within the cold.*

*A spirit walked the ringing rooms,
Passing the locked and secret door,
Heavy with divers ancient dooms,
With dreams dead laden to the core.*

*'Spirit, thou art too deep with woe,
I have no harbour place for thee,
Leave me to lesser griefs, and go,
Go with the great wind to the sea.'*

*I faltered like a frightened child,
That fears its nurse's fairy brood,
And as I spoke, I heard the wild
Wind plunging through the shattered wood.*

*'Hast thou betrayed the rest of kings,
With tragic fears and spectres wan,
My dreams are lit with purer things,
With humbler ghosts, begone, begone.'*

*The noisy dark was deaf and blind,
Still the strange spirit strayed or stood,
And I could only hear the wind
Go roaring through the riven wood.*

*'Art thou the fate for some wild heart,
That scorned his cavern's curve and bars,
That leaped the bounds of time and art,
And lost thee lingering near the stars?'*

*It was so still I heard my thought,
Even the wind was very still,
The desolate deeper silence brought
The lynx-moan from the lonely hill.*

*'Art thou the thing I might have been,
If all the dead had known control,
Risen through the ages' trembling sheen,
A mirage of my desert soul?'*

*The wind rushed down the roof in wrath,
Then shrieked and held its breath and stood,
Like one who finds beside his path,
A dead girl in the marish wood.*

*'Or have I ceased, as those who die
And leave the broken word unsaid,
Art thou the spirit ministry
That hovers round the newly dead?'*

*The auroras rose in solitude,
And wanly paled within the room,
The window showed an ebon rood,
Upon the blanched and ashen gloom.*

*I heard a voice within the dark,
That answered not my idle word,
I could not choose but pause and hark,
It was so magically stirred.*

*It grew within the quiet hour,
With the rose shadows on the wall,
It had a touch of ancient power,
A wild and elemental fall;*

*Its rapture had a dreaming close:
The dawn grew slowly on the wold,
Spreading in fragile veils of rose,
In tender lines of lemon-gold.*

*The world was turning into light,
Was sweeping into life and peace,
And folded in the fading night,
I felt the dawning sink and cease.*

Precious Stones : Lapis-Lazuli, Lodestone, Malachite

Time to return to Kunz's Curious Lore of Precious Stones.

Lapis-Lazuli

Lapis Lazuli is a vibrantly blue semiprecious stone, but to Mythic Europeans, it's a terribly rare thing. First, let me note that when I was a lad, we were told all of that blue material in Egyptian art was lapis lazuli. This is simply not true. The Egyptians did have access to lapis lazuli, and used it for jewellery, but far less than I thought.

Imagine, if you will, the mask of King Tutankhamen. The broad horizontal blue stripes in his head-dress are not lapis lazuli. There's a tiny amount of lapis lazuli in the mask: it's in his eyes and eyebrows. That other material is, I believe, a sort of fired porcelain coloured with a mineral called Egyptian Blue. The Romans called this other material *caeruleum*, which lets me rope in the discussion of Cerulean Blue we had in a previous episode. Unhelpfully what we now call lapis lazuli the Imperial Romans called *sapphirus*, which leads to the question of if the Biblical sapphires are really lapis lazuli.

The modern name first emerges in the Middle Ages. Ground into a dye, it has been found in European materials from before the game period, but not in great quantity. A century after the game period, it was the most expensive pigment known to Italian artists. Yes, it was even more expensive than murex purple, our old favourite. It's worth more than its weight in gold. The name for the dye, *ultramarine*, is literal: Italians imported it from "over the sea" in Asia Minor.

There are two reasons why *ultramarine* is so expensive. During the game period, it is only mined in one place in the world: a small region of what is now north-eastern Afghanistan. The second problem is a technical one: Even once the lapis lazuli is mined, it needs to be processed to make *ultramarine*. At the start of the 13th century, Europeans found a way of grinding lapis lazuli so that it didn't just become grey dust. The process is time consuming and uses caustics like lye to remove the impurities from the ground stone.

Kunz notes that "*Lapis-lazuli, "a blue stone with little golden spots," was a cure for melancholy and for the "quartern fever," an intermittent fever returning each third day, or each fourth day counting in the previous attack.*" *The gold spots were one way of telling what we now call lapis lazuli from what we now call sapphire.*

The current rules give Lapis Lazuli: keep limbs healthy 5, cure boils and ulcers 5, obsession power of demons 6. Lapis Lazuli (powder) aphrodisiac 3 but I'm not sure where any of that comes from, folkloristically. I'd like to note that I

gave the Jerbion blue and gold robes in Sanctuary of Ice. That's even more deliberately opulent now we know that *ultramarine* and gold are literally the two most expensive pigments. You could argue that this is a hint the Jerbitons have some sort of settlement in the far East: some of their brethren occasionally head out along the Silk Road.

Loadstone

For this stone I'll be quoting Kunz heavily. Before launching in, I'd like to note that "lode" is an archaic English word meaning to travel, and that the European discovery of these stones may have been by Anatolian Greeks, around Magnesia. Lodestones are made of a mineral called magnetite, which is found in several places in Mythic Europe. How it gets magnetised is a bit of a puzzle to ancient people: in the modern day we think it is because of the magnetic fields which surround lightning strikes. I'd note that Switzerland, which is the home of one of the many commercial deposits of magnetite, is also the home of the Lightning tradition in House Flambeau. It may be it assists their magic.

In the modern day, magnetite is mined for iron. The objects made from this might have different properties, for enchantment, to things made from meteoric, geolithic or bog iron.

I went to University in Townsville, and the island sheltering the harbour is Magnetic Island. Captain Cook named it that because it was mucking with his compass. Oddly the lodestones there are laying in reverse to what you'd expect – the magnetic north end points toward the geographic south. This is because they were laid down when the Earth's poles were in reversed positions to what they are today. I've no proof of similar "reversed" lodestones in Mythic Europe, but I love the idea they can be used as shielding against the vim field, much as lead can be used to block radiation.

We have the authority of Plato for the statement that the word magnetis was first applied to the loadstone by the tragic poet Euripides, the more usual name being "the Heracleian stone." These designations refer to two places in Lydia, Magnesia and Herakleia, where the mineral was found. Pliny states, on the authority of Nicander, that a certain Magnes, a shepherd, discovered the mineral on Mount Ida, while pasturing his flock, because the nails of his shoes clung to a piece of it.

We are told by Pliny that Ptolemy Philadelphus, planning to erect a temple in honor of his sister and wife Arsinoë, called in the aid of Chirocrates, an Alexandrian architect. The latter engaged to place therein an iron statue of Arsinoë which should appear to hang in mid-air without

support. However, both the Egyptian king and his architect died before the design could be realized. This story of an image held in suspense by means of powerful magnets set in the floor and roof, and sometimes also in the walls of a temple, is repeated in a variety of forms by early writers. Of course, there was no real foundation for such tales, as the thing is altogether impracticable.

The Roman poet Claudian (fifth century a.d.) relates that the priests of a certain temple, in order to offer a dramatic spectacle to the eyes of the worshippers, caused two statues to be executed,—one of Mars in iron, and another of Venus in loadstone. At a special festival these statues were placed near to each other, and the loadstone drew the iron to itself.

There was current as early as the fourth century a curious belief that a piece of loadstone, if placed beneath the pillow of a sleeping wife, would act as a touchstone of her virtue. This first appears in the Alexandrian poem “Lithica,”

The same writer attempts an explanation of the popular fancy that when powdered loadstone was thrown upon coals in the four corners of a house, the inmates would feel as though the house were falling down; of this he says: “That seemynge is by mevyng [moving] that comyth by toryng of the brayn.”

In classical writings the fascination exercised by a very beautiful woman is sometimes likened to the attractive power of the loadstone, as notably by Lucian, who says that if such a woman looks at a man she draws him to her, and leads him whither she will, just as the loadstone draws the iron. To the same idea is probably due the fact that in several languages the name given to the loadstone indicates that its peculiar power was conceived to be a manifestation of the sympathy or love of one mineral substance for another.

I'd note here Kunz is failing to account for Lucian being a satirist. He's not suggesting this seriously, much as he does not seriously suggest in True Story that he actually visited the moon.

A rich growth of Mohammedan legends grew up about the exploits of Alexander the Great, a striking example being given on another page, and in one of them it is related that the Greek world-conqueror provided his soldiers with loadstones as a defence against the wiles of the jinns, or evil spirits; the loadstone, as well as magnetized iron, being regarded as a sure defence against enchantments and all the machinations of malignant spirits

A man in armor, graven on a magnet, or loadstone, has the power to aid in incantations and makes the wearer victorious in war.

I think the current rules give shape and material bonuses for magnets as : Rego 2, Rego Corpus 4, Rego Terram 4, Animal 3. Clearly this should be pushed out to Travel +9. It's literally in the name.

Malachite

Malachite is what happens when copper ores weather: for example I sometimes teach children how to make penny batteries in my library, and this produces a layer of malachite on the coins. I'm fond of it, myself, because it has a lovely green colour, like the leaves of the mallow plant, which is loosely where it derives its name from. In mythic Europe the biggest deposits of Malachite are in Lyon and, I presume, Wales. The Welsh mines were pre-Roman, though, so it might have been exhausted. Malachite is mined to melt down for copper.

For some reason not easy to fathom, malachite was considered to be a talisman peculiarly appropriate for children. If a piece of this stone were attached to an infant's cradle, all evil spirits were held aloof and the child slept soundly and peacefully. In some parts of Germany, malachite shared with turquoise the repute of protecting the wearer from danger in falling, and it also gave warning of approaching disaster by breaking into several pieces. This material was well known to the ancient Egyptians, malachite mines having been worked between Suez and Sinai as early as 4000 b.c.

The appropriate design to be engraved upon malachite was the image of the sun. Such a gem became a powerful talisman and protected the wearer from enchantments, from evil spirits, and from the attacks of venomous creatures. The sun, as the source of all light, was generally regarded as the deadly enemy of necromancers, witches, and demons, who delighted in the darkness and feared nothing more than the bright light of day.

Because of its peculiar markings, some of which suggest the form of an eye, malachite was worn in some parts of Italy (e.g., in Bettona) as an amulet to protect the wearer from the spell of the Evil Eye. Such stones were called “peacock-stones,” from their resemblance in color and marking to the peacock's tail. The form of these malachite amulets is usually triangular, and they were mounted in silver. It is curious to note, as a proof of the persistence of superstitions, that in an Etruscan tomb at Chiusi there was found a triangular, perforated piece of glass, each angle terminating in an eye formed of glass of various colors.

I don't think malachite is in the current shape and material table, but I'd suggest causing sleep +7, protecting children +6, protection +3. As such it's particularly suited as a stone to be used for items designed to protect apprentices, either on adventure, or when assisting in laboratory work. the conduct of his affairs.

Precious Stones :

Hematite, Jacinth, and Jasper

Another little bit of Kunz's "Curious Lore of Precious Stones".

Hematite

Azchalias, as cited by Pliny... asserted that the hematite, when used as a talisman, procured for the wearer a favorable hearing of petitions addressed to kings and a fortunate issue of lawsuits and judgments. It is a red oxide of iron, which when abraded shows a red streak; whence the name hematite, from the Greek haima, "blood." As an iron ore and hence associated with Mars, the god of war, this substance was also considered to be an invaluable help to the warrior on the field of battle if he rubbed his body with it. Probably, like the loadstone, it was believed to confer invulnerability.

Kunz mentions you can make red streaks with haematite, and its red is what gives ochre its colour, so it may have some connection to House Jerbiton for art, or House Tytalus, for the weird red chalk drawings they make on the floor for cthonic magic. I'd suggest Rego Mentem +3 and Blood +6. Haematite can be found in large volumes at nine sites in Mythic Europe, so it's one of the easier semiprecious stones to find.

Jacinth

I'd never heard of jacinths before this, presumably because in Australia we call them zircons. They are sometimes called "hyacinths" in some older English works, but the stone meant by this is unclear: most of these hyacinths are sapphires, garnets, or, in the case of Compostella hyacinths, a sort of red quartz. The world's largest supplier of zircons is Australia, so we've driven the word "hyacinth" almost to extinction. Kunz, who were are quoting voluminously in this series, was a huge fan of coloured zircon jewellery, and suggested they be sold as "starlite". At the time colourless faux diamonds were often made of zircon, and so the name was associated with a less luxurious product than he wanted to sell (he was a buyer for Tiffany's.) I'm not sure of a Mythic European source for them: I know they are found in Sri Lanka, and there are some gems that have travelled that far to reach Europe.

The jacinth was more especially recommended as an amulet for travellers, because of its reputed value as a protection against the plague and against wounds and injuries, the two classes of perils most feared by those who undertook long journeys. Moreover, this stone assured the wearer a cordial reception at any hostelry he visited. It was said to lose its brilliancy and grow pale and dull if the wearer or any one in his immediate neighborhood became ill of the plague. In addition to these qualities the jacinth augmented the riches of the owner, and endowed him with prudence in the conduct of his affairs.

St. Hildegard, the Abbess of Bingen (d. 1179), gives the following details as to the proper use of the jachant (jacinth): If any one is bewitched by phantoms or by magical spells, so that he has lost his wits, take a hot loaf of pure wheaten bread and cut the upper crust in the form of a cross,—not, however, cutting it quite through,—and then pass the stone along the cutting, reciting these words: "May God, who cast away all precious stones from the devil ... cast away from thee, N., all phantoms and all magic spells, and free thee from the pain of this madness."

The patient is then to eat of the bread; if, however, his stomach should be too feeble, unleavened bread may be used. All other solid food given to the sick person should be treated in the same manner. We are also told that if any one has a pain in his heart, the pain will be relieved provided the sign of the cross be made over the heart while the above mentioned words are recited.

The wearer of a jacinth was believed to be proof against the lightning, and it was even asserted that wax that had been impressed by an image graven on this stone averted the lightning from one who bore the seal. That the stone really possessed this power was a matter of common report, it being confidently declared that in regions where many were struck by lightning, none who wore a jacinth were ever harmed. By a like miracle it preserved the wearer from all danger of pestilence even though he lived in an air charged with the disease. A third virtue was to induce sleep.

This seems handy to House Mercere. Different colours of zircon likely have different properties. The Victorians were keen on blue zircon mourning jewellery, so that might be tied to necromantic use. Blue hyacinth was worn by the priests of Apollo, and who was the lover of the deified human of the same name. Hyacinth died, and eventually Apollo was able to have him reincarnated as a minor God. He had a mystery cult in Sparta and dwelt with Apollo in Hyperborea part of the time. In the interim, while he was dead, Hyacinthus his spirit lived in a flower which has the Greek "ai-ai" written on the petals. This means "alas", and so the stone and flower are linked to magic that causes despair.

Jasper

Jasper is a pretty common stone in the modern day, but was valuable to the ancients. It is found in small amounts in various places, but the big deposits in Mythic Europe are in Egypt and Russia. Jasper, at the time, was prized as a green stone, whereas today it is often red.

The jasper had great repute in ancient times as a rain-bringer, and the fourth century author of "Lithica" celebrates this quality in the following lines: The gods propitious hearken to his prayers, Whoe'er the polished grass-green jasper wears; His parched glebe they'll satiate with rain, And send for showers to soak the thirsty plain.

Evidently the green hue of this translucent stone suggested its association with the verdure of the fields in an even closer degree than was the case with transparent green stones such as the emerald, etc. Another early authority, Damigeron, mentions this belief, and states that only when properly consecrated would the jasper do service in this way. Jasper was also credited in the fourth century with the virtue of driving away evil spirits and protecting those who wore it from the bites of venomous creatures. An anonymous German author of the eleventh or twelfth century recommends the use of this stone for the cure of snake bites, and states that if it be placed upon the bitten part the matter will come out from the wound. Here the cure is operated, not by the absorbent quality of the stone, but by its supposed power to attract poison or venom to itself, thus removing the cause of disease.

A popular etymology of the Greek and Latin name for jasper is reported by Bartolomæus Anglicus, who writes that "in the head of an adder that hyght Aspis is founde a lytyl stone that is called Jaspis." The same authority pronounces this stone to be of "wunder vertue," and says that "it hath as many vertues as dyvers coloures and veines."

A lion or an archer, on a jasper, gives help against poison and cures from fever.

Finding the stone called jasper, bearing graven or figured a huntsman, a dog, or a stag, the wearer, with God's help, will have the power to heal one possessed of a devil, or who is insane.

A curious amulet, apparently belonging to the Gnostic variety, and intended to bring success to the owner of a racehorse, is now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York. The material is green jasper with red spots. On the obverse the horse is figured with the victor's palm and the name Tiberis; on the reverse appears the vulture-headed figure of the Abraxas god and the characters, "zacta iaw bapia," which have been translated, "Iao the Destroyer and Creator." Possibly this amulet may have been attached to the horse during his races to insure victory, as we know that amulets of this kind were used in this way.

Many explanations have been offered as to the origin and significance of the characteristic figure of the Abrasax god engraved on a number of Gnostic amulets. There seems to be no doubt that this figure was invented by Basilides, chief of the Gnostic sect bearing his name, and who flourished in the early part of the second century a.d. While the details of the type as perfected were undoubtedly borrowed from the eclectic symbolism of the Egyptian and western Asiatic world it is almost impossible to conjecture the reasons determining the selection of this particular form.

A jasper engraved with the famous Gnostic symbol was set in the ring worn by Seffrid, Bishop of Chichester (a.d. 1159). This ring was found on the skeleton of the bishop and is now preserved in the treasury of the Cathedral of Chichester. Undoubtedly the curious symbolic figure was given a perfectly orthodox meaning, and, indeed, it was not really a pagan symbol, as the Gnostics were "indifferent Christians," although their system was a fanciful elaboration of the doctrines of the late Alexandrian school of Greek Philosophy and an adaptation of this to the teachings of Christian tradition. In many cases, however, gems with purely pagan designs were worn by Christians, designs such as Isis with the child Horus, which was taken to be the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus.

Jasper: healing wounds 2, versus demons 2, Abaraxes have astological connections, but may also be used by theurgists.

Precious Stones: Moonstone, Onyx, Opal

In a return to Kunz's "Lore of Precious Stones", we find an interesting covenant site, we discover that the Pale Mountains are even more enchanting than we recall, and we discover how Roman soldiers kept their spirits up.

Moonstone

As a gift for lovers the moonstone takes a high rank, for it is believed to arouse the tender passion, and to give lovers the power to read in the future the fortune, good or ill, that is in store for them. To gain this knowledge, however, the stone must be placed in the mouth while the moon is full.

Antoine Mizauld tells us of a selenite or moonstone owned by a friend of his, a great traveller. This stone, about the size of the gold piece known as the gold noble, but somewhat thicker, indicated the waxing and waning of the moon by a certain white point or mark which grew larger or smaller as did the moon. Mizauld relates that to convince himself of the truth of this he obtained possession of the stone for one lunar month, during which time he sedulously observed it. The white mark first appeared at the top. It was like a small millet-seed, increasing in size and moving down on the stone, always assuming the form of the moon until, on reaching the middle, it was round like the full moon; then the mark gradually passed up again as the moon diminished. The owner declared that he had "vowed and dedicated this stone to the young king [Edward VI], who was then highly esteemed because he had good judgment in regard to rare and precious things."

A swallow, on a celonite, establishes and preserves peace and concord among men.

In one of those lovely coincidences, the sources of moonstone in Mythic Europe are near Rheinwaldhorn, which is one of the tallest mountains in the part of the Swiss Alps that's near all of those moon faeries I mentioned a long time ago in Sanctuary of Ice. Also that book mentions the Mercere having magic items called lickstones, which are small items which adhere to the roof of the mouth. This prevents them being stolen from the Mercere. Again, this is a coincidence, but it's a suggestive one given the oral application of moonstones.

I'd suggest measuring time +6, calming emotions +3. People with the True Love Virtue get an extra +3.

Onyx, Sardonyx, Sard

Onyx is a banded stone, white and black. In Mythic Europe the large deposits are in Germany, Britain and the Maghreb. The coloured bands are great for making intaglios, because if you slice the stone so that the colours are flat sheets, you can carve out the white to show the darker colour underneath, creating strikingly two-tones relief images.

"The onyx, if worn on the neck, was said to cool the ardors of love, and Cardano relates that everywhere in India the stone was worn for this purpose. This belief is closely related to the idea commonly associated with the onyx,—namely, that it provoked discord and separated lovers.

A camel's head or two goats among myrtles, if on an onyx, has the power to convoke, assemble, and constrain demons; if any one wears it, he will see terrible visions in sleep."

Sardonyx swaps out the black chalcedony for sard, which is brown to red. Beyond what I'm quoting from Kunz, Roman soldiers used to wear amulets of Mars made of sardonyx, for bravery.

The sard was regarded as a protection against incantations and sorcery, and was believed to sharpen the wits of the wearer, rendering him fearless, victorious, and happy. The red hue of this stone was supposed to neutralize the malign influence of the dark onyx, driving away the bad dreams caused by the latter and dispelling the melancholy thoughts it inspired.

A curious amulet to avert the spell of the Evil Eye is an engraved sard showing an eye in the centre, around which are grouped the attributes of the divinities presiding over the days of the week. Sunday, the dies Solis, is represented by a lion; Monday, the dies Lunæ, by a stag; Tuesday, the dies Martis, by a scorpion; Wednesday, the dies Mercurii, by a dog; Thursday, the dies Jovis, by a thunderbolt; Friday, the dies Veneris, by a snake; and Saturday, the dies Saturni, by an owl. In this way the wearer was protected at all times from the evil influence.

Onyx: darkness +4, death +4. Suggested additions causing arguments +6, foolhardiness +6, melancholy+6, nightmares +4, summon and control demons +3.

Sardonyx: Bravery +6, protection from magic +3

Sard: Dreams +3, positive Mentem effects +3, protection from magic +3

Opal

Opal is a really soft gemstone: at it's molecular level its made up of balls of silicon dioxide held together by water and luck. Even the medieval people knew opals could dry out and crack. That it is so soft makes it easy to work, and the way that enchantment makes items more durable might protect them sufficiently to make them worth enchanting.

In parts of Mythic Europe, opals are considered unlucky (so carrying them grants a Flaw), but this is not a universal belief. One way to get around the problem was to donate the opal to the church: there's a statue of Mary in Spain with a particularly fine opal necklace, as a result of this sort of devotion. In some sources, I note, this is claimed to be a backformation of folklore: Sir Walter Scott may have popularised the idea that opals were evil in the C18th and people adjusted their folklore accordingly.

Opal was only found in one location in Europe: Červenica in modern Slovakia, and this seems perfect for a covenant placement. Opals are so rare only royalty and the princes of the church regularly wear them. For example, the central stone in the Crown of the Holy Roman Empire is an opal from Červenica. Far later Queen Elizabeth I was "delighted" to get a parure of opals, likely mined at Červenica, from Sir Christopher Hatton. He seems to be following my researches about at the moment, but more of him at another time. No wonder people thought they were a couple.

Modern opal is so cheap because in the Nineteenth Century the opal fields of Australia were discovered, and the price went through the floor. I'm Australian, and its our national gemstone. With the fakes you can now get, that are a sliver of opal with resin over the top, costume opal is ridiculously cheap here, and so I was shocked to discover it was the centrepiece of the Imperial Crown. I also notice a lack of discussion of opalised fossils in European sources.

Opal, at its simplest, forms when water leaks into a fracture in rock. It can also be laid down by biological processes, but let's skip that for now. Here in Australia, one of the largest opal fields is at Lightning Ridge, and the opals formed on the bottom of a shallow sea. The fractures in the rock were sometimes places where the bones of animals had decayed away, leaving a mold for a fossil to form. The largest opalised fossils I've seen are plesiosaur skeletons. For a few years I've been meaning to write up an opalised plesiosaur skeleton as a sort of dragon, and a necromancer doing similar things with human skeletons, but I haven't seen any reference to opalised fossils in Mythic Europe. My search has only been brief, however, so I still think it's a great idea for a covenant in Červenica to have luminescent Loch Ness monster skeleton as one of its guardians.

Opal: I'd suggest images +2, imagination +2, invisibility +2, memory +4, travel +4, eyes +6.

Folkloristically, opal is so valuable because it can express the virtue of every stone it has the colour of. This means opal can substitute for any other gemstone in an enchantment, so it has the material bonuses of any other gemstone. This seems wonderfully significant to, for example, House Verditus and re-enforced the need for a covenant in Červenica.

Precious Stones :

Rock Crystal and Ruby

A brief episode this week, returning to Kunz's "The Curious Lore of Precious Stones".

Rock crystal

The popular belief in his time as to the origin of rock-crystal is voiced by St. Jerome, when, using the words of Pliny, although not citing his authority, he says that it was formed by the congelation of water in dark caverns of the mountains, where the temperature was intensely cold, so that, "While a stone to the touch, it seems like water to the eye." This belief was evidently due to the fact that rock-crystal was so often found in mountain clefts and caverns. Symbolically, it signified that those within the portals of the Church should keep themselves free from stain and have a pure faith.

A griffin, imaged on a crystal, produces abundance of milk.

Note that Jerome and Pliny see rock crystal as a sort of ice. There's an ice cave in Transylvania where the ice remains hard at high temperatures, which is used in the training of monster slayers. The main source of rock crystal in Europe is, rather pleasingly, in the Alps, but it turns up in small amounts in several other places. We may assume that the version of The Art of Magic carved into rock crystal, and used for rubbings, that is found in the Alps uses local stone, not, as I thought magically created rocks.

The rules give

Crystal: related to water +5

Quartz: invisibility 5

Rock Crystal: healing 3, ice 3, clarity 4, clairvoyance 5.

I'd suggest Ice should be higher.

Ruby

Rubies are found in what's now Macedonia, in Europe. There are quite a few sources in Asia, which let the stones trickle west. Garnets and spinels are also often identified as rubies in medieval Europe, so you could argue that "What medieval people believed to be true is true" changes the garnets from the real world Ruby Bay in Scotland into actual rubies. Time for some Kunz.

The glowing hue of the ruby suggested the idea that an inextinguishable flame burned in this stone. From this fancy came the assertion that the inner fire could not be hidden, as it would shine through the clothing or through any material that might be wrapped around the stone. If cast into the water the ruby communicated its heat to the liquid, causing it to boil. The dark and the star rubies were called "male" stones, the others, more especially, however, those of lighter hue, being considered as "female" stones. All varieties served to preserve the bodily and mental health of the wearer, for they removed evil thoughts, controlled amorous desires, dissipated pestilential vapors, and reconciled disputes.

The many talismanic virtues of the ruby are noted in the fourteenth century treatise attributed to Sir John Mandeville. Here the fortunate owner of a brilliant ruby is assured that he will live in peace and concord with all men, that neither his land nor his rank will be taken from him, and that he will be preserved from all perils. The stone would also guard his house, his fruit-trees, and his vineyards from injury by tempests. All the good effects were most surely secured if the ruby, set in ring, bracelet, or brooch, were worn on the left side.

The beautiful and terrible figure of a dragon. If this is found on a ruby or any other stone of similar nature and virtue, it has the power to augment the goods of this world and makes the wearer joyous and healthy.

Ruby, in the core rules, has the shape and material bonuses of: courage 2, battle wounds 3, blood, bonus to affect 3, leadership in war 4, fire-related effect 6, Star Ruby has conjure/control occult entities 5.