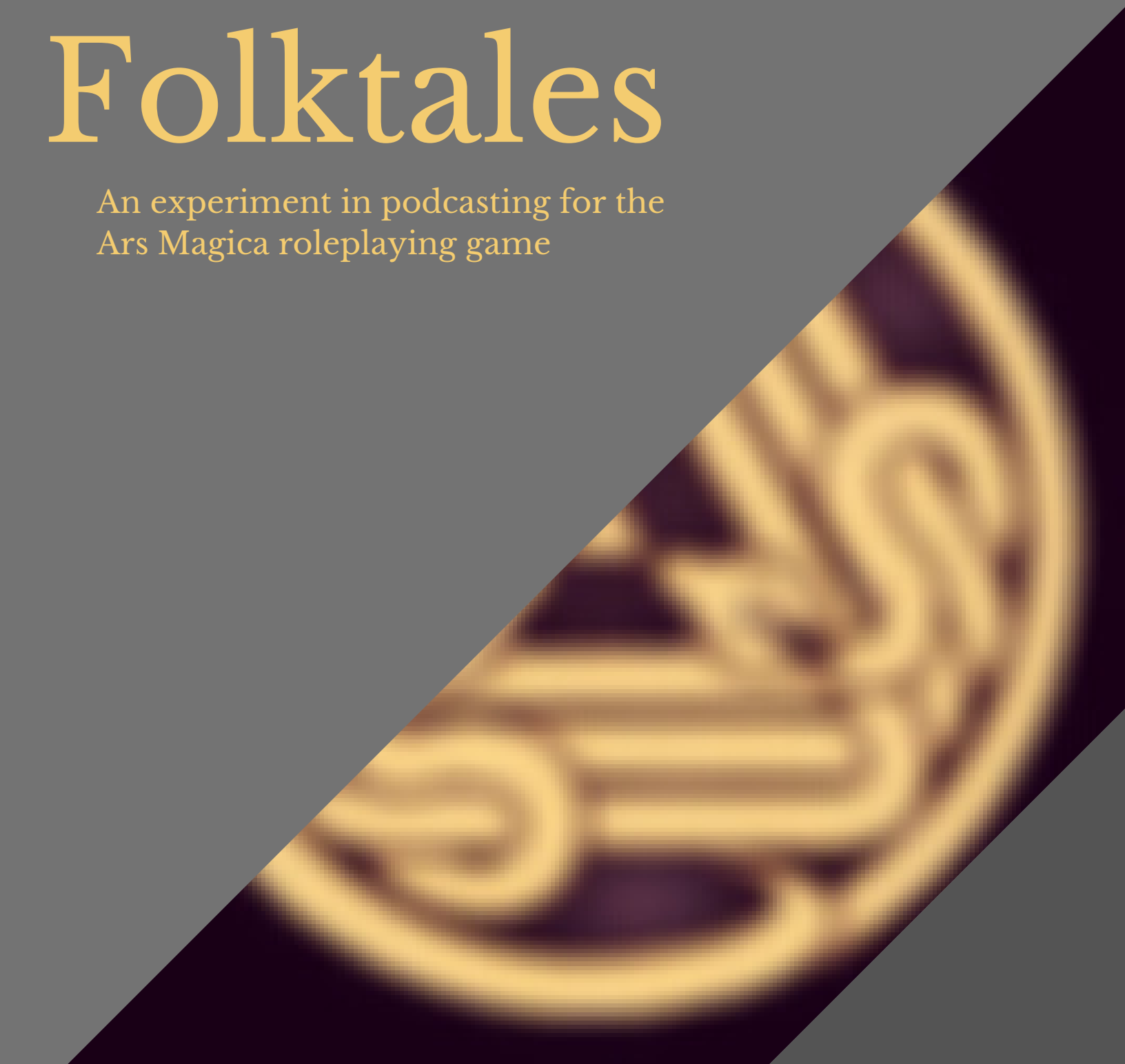
Games from Folktales 2020

An experiment in podcasting for the Ars Magica roleplaying game



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

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

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

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

"And you?" he said to Morano.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So there's a lot to unpack there.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cock crows are really bad for certain types of magic.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Plot hooks

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

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

A Princess of Serpents

Faerie Might: 10 (Animal)
Characteristics: Int* 0, Per −2, Pre −6, Com −6, Str +1, Sta -6, Dex +2, Qik +4 Size: −4 Virtues and Flaws: 2 x Little, Faerie Ally (father), Faerie Beast; Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Highly Cognizant, Increased Characteristics, Personal Faerie Power (Constant Damaging Effect) Personality Traits: Regal +3, Tired all the time +2 Combat: Fangs: Init +4, Attack +15, Defense +10, Damage -6
Constriction*: Init 0, Attack +9, Defense +5, Damage +8
* +6 to Defense against grapple attacks
** May grapple -4 Size enemies.
*** Does not include the Constant Damaging Effect power, which adds +5 when appropriate.
Soak: +2
Wound Penalties: −1 (1), −3 (2), −5 (3), Incapacitated (4), Dead (5+)
Powers:
Constrict:* When successfully struck with a constrict attack, the character is encoiled and unable to use mêlée weapons. The orm automatically does damage in each subsequent round, without requiring an Attack roll. The victim may still Soak damage. At the end of each round, including the round in which the constriction attack succeeds, the character may attempt to break free by an opposed Strength roll. To do this, he rolls Strength + a stress die, and compares it to the orm's Strength + a stress die. Success indicates he is free, and may attack normally in the following round. For each character assisting him to break free, he may add +1 to the Strength roll, but an assistant is unable to attack the orm in that round. A character unable to break free for 30 seconds (6 combat rounds) needs to make deprivation rolls, as described on page 179 of ArM5.
Constant Damaging Effect, 3 points, constant, Auram: Many orms emit a noxious slime or have toxic breath, and poison their surroundings, but many other damaging effects are known. This effect does +5 Damage, but is always active. 25 spell levels (Base 5 +1 Part, +2 Sun, +1 Constant)
Venomous Bite:* When the orm attacks, compare its Attack Advantage to the victim's armor Protection (not his Soak). If the orm's advantage is higher, the victim suffers the effects of adder venom as listed in the Poison Table on page 180 of ArM5, regardless of whether the bite inflicts an actual wound. The storyguide may adjust the required Attack Advantage for special circumstances.
* These are natural abilities of the faerie's form, and do not require the Personal Faerie Powers Virtue.
Pretenses: Area Lore 3 (home territory), Awareness 3 (prey), Brawl 7 (bite), Hunt 4 (rodents), Faerie Speech 5 (threats), Folk Ken 1 (humans in her home territory), Intrigue 5 (faerie dragons), Stealth 3 (stalking prey)
Equipment: Has treasure, but does not carry it with her.
Vis: 2 pawns (Animal) snakeskin
Appearance: Appears to be a normal snake, if a little apathetic.
Source: Simon, the friend of dsnakes by A. G. Seklemian
Blog post: https://wordpress.com/block-editor/post/timothyferguson.wordpress.com/12781
Podcast: http://traffic.libsyn.com/gamesfromfolktales/236_-_Simon_the_friend_of_snakes.mp3

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

God's Judgement on a Wicked Bishop

Magical Might: 20 (Mentem – these are human ghosts in animal form). The Might is shared by the swarm, not vested in a single leader.
Characteristics:
Single rat: Int +1, Per +1, Pre +1, Com -2, Str -16, Sta +2, Dex +2, Qik +9
When swarming in hundreds, treat as an environmental effect (+10 damage per round, Soaked until the rats destroy the person's clothes or armor.)
Size: -8 (In swarm, +3)
Season: Summer
Confidence: 1
Virtues and Flaws: Magical Animal; Greater Immunity (diseases), Second Sight, Sharp Ears, Strong-Willed; Avaricious (hunger, Major), Magical Monster
Qualities and Inferiorities: Greater Power (Hound enemy), Improved Damage x3 (bite), Improved Might x2, Lesser Power x2(Gnashing Teeth of Iron, Devouring Iron),
Combat (Bite – single rat*) : Init +6, Attack +7, Defense +12, Damage -2**.
* When swarming in hundreds, treat as an environmental effect (+10 damage per round, Soaked until the rats destroy the person's clothes or armor.)
** Does not include Gnashing Teeth of Iron Power.
Personality Traits: Vengeful +4, Ignores the needy +3
Reputations: None – they come and destroy, then disappear.
Abilities: Athletics (climbing) 3, Awareness (location of victim) 5, Brawl (teeth) 4, Concentration (eating) 1, Leadership (rats) 3, Stealth (shadow) 6, Survival (urban) 4, Swim (rivers) 3
Powers: When a power is used, the whole swarm develops the power: not merely a single rat. The Intellego effect needs only be resisted once – not once per rat.

Devour Stone (1 might): Can burrow holes into stone or metal. (PeTe 5, +1 Touch, +1 concentration) [level 15, -2 might]
Gnashing Teeth of Iron (2 might): The teeth of the swarm can be as hard as iron. This grants individual rats +2 damage, and lets the rats damage things they normally could not. (MuAn(Te) base 4, +1 Te Req, +1 diameter, +2 Group) [level 20, -2 might]
Hound Enemy (4 might): The rats always know the direction to their foe, and can manifest near him. (Non-Hermetic – Treat as InCo40 for resistance).
Vis: 4 Mentem – bodies of the rats. Can be harvested proportionally.

The Rotting Princess

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

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

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

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

This is where it began.

This is when something happened to Venice.

Something answered her prayers.

Something expelled her demons.

Something took the reward her husband had so rashly offered.

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

Welcome to Serenissima.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sabrina of the Severin

The easiest way to design Sabrina is as a White Lady, which is a sort of Breton water faerie. The most powerful are the Ladies of the Lake, in the Lancelot Cycle.
Faerie Might: 40+10 (Aquam)
Characteristics: Int +4, Per 0, Pre+4, Com+3, Str +2, Sta +2, Dex 0, Qik +1
Size: 0
Virtues and Flaws: 2 x Focus Power, 3 x Greater Faerie Powers, Highly Cognizant, Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, 2 x Great Characteristic, Human Form, 6 x Improved Characteristics, 7 x Increased Faerie Might, 2 x Personal Faerie Powers, Place of Power (river and banks); Traditional Ward (The Dominion)
Personality Traits: Favours children and women suffering oppression +2
Combat:
Brawl (fist): Init +1, Attack +1, Defense +2, Damage +2
Uses magical effects rather than weapons.
Soak: +2
Wound Penalties: −1 (1-5), −3 (6-10), −5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)
Pretenses: (Area) Lore 6 (sites of historic significance or power), Artes Liberales 3 (history), Animal Handling 2 (seabirds), Athletics 6 (dance), Awareness 2 (humans), Bargain 7 (magi), Brawl 1 (escaping), Carouse
6 (dancing), Charm 6 (children), Concentration 3 (humans), Craft:
(weaver) 6 (repair), Etiquette 7 (courtly), Faerie Speech 6, Finesse 6 (Rego), Folk Ken 3 (customs of surrounding area), Guile 2 (men), Intrigue 4 (against abusers), Leadership 6 (in warfare), Order of Hermes Lore 5 (conflicts), Penetration 6 (using Arcane Connections), Swim 9 (home waters).
Powers:
Break Curses: 5 points, Init −4, Vim: (R: Eye / T: Ind / D: Mom.)
Destroys minor charms.
(Perdo Vim 20, +5 Eye.)
Extended Glamor: 0 points, constant,
Focus Power (Water within her realm): up to 10 points, Init −9, Aquam.
Can kill with versions of Ice of Drowning, Mighty Torrent of Water, Pull of the Watery Grave, and Tower of Whirling Water using this power. Note that in character creation, the same focus power has been selected twice to gain this higher level.
Touch of the Mermaid: 3 points, Init −2, Aquam: Kiss of the Mermaid, for characters too regal to kiss a magus for ease of transport.
Torrent from the Lungs: 3 points, Init −2, Aquam.
Transform into Current: 2 points, Init −4, Aquam: (Until Duration) (3 intricacy points to reduce cost)
Transform Victim into Seagull: 2 points, Init −3, Animal. (2 intricacy
points to reduce cost)
Equipment: A small kingdom of faerie servants. Mystical artifacts which include a scrying pool (see ArM5 page 122 for a spell that simulates this device). Centuries of lost treasure, including a chariot. Clothed in white wool, with flowers in her long hair.
Vis: 8 pawns Rego, a hair comb, +2 if in kingdom
Appearance: A beautiful woman with long hair eyes, in a robe of the finest wool. Oddly, her feet do not touch the ground – they do not bend plants as she walks the shore.

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

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

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

“Let us go and see what is there.”

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

“I will go and revenge my father’s death.”

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

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

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

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

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

Again, shockingly Arthurian.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This form of words appears in a lot of stories in this collection. It seems to be a traditional ward. The faerie says "You cannot be here because niether X nor Y could make it here." and the human says they have been bought by the faerie's love. This offers the faerie a role in the story other than as monster.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

She's rich as Croesus.

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

So she's a shapeshifter of some type.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The men at once went to the witch, saying:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Presumably she just has the Gift.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Call to Slumber.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Zoolvisia

Faerie Might: 15 (Mentem)
Characteristics: Int +1, Per +1, Pre +3*, Com +1, Str 0*, Sta 0*, Dex 0*, Qik 0*.
* These statistics are provided by Mormo's host.
Size: 0 (as host)
Virtues and Flaws: Focus Faerie Powers (Possession, see below), 2 x Increased Might, Loosely Material*; Incognizant.
* Modified to a minor Virtue: may only take forms using possession power.
Personality Traits: Stern +3, Challenging +2
Combat:
Sword*: Init +0, Attack +7, Defense +7, Damage +6
Modified by the body's statistics. Uses poison and ambush to boost damage. Has armed servants.
Soak: 0, but often wears white armor that has +6 Soak.
Wound Penalties: –1 (1–5), –3 (6–10), –5 (11–15), Incapacitated (16–20), Dead (21+)
Pretenses: Carouse 6, Intrigue 6, Ride 6, Single Weapon 6 (sword), but may use the abilities of the host.
Powers:
Possession, 1 or more points, Init +2, Mentem:
If this power penetrates, the victim is possessed by Zoolvisia and is under her direct control. Any attempt to force the victim to act contrary to her nature, or to use any of the host's own magical powers requires that Zoolvisia spends Might. A supernatural power (including spell-casting) requires 1 Might point per magnitude to produce. A questionable action that is contrary to the nature of the host requires Zoolvisia to exceed the possessed being's Personality Trait roll on a stress die + Might points spent. The storyguide may give a modifier to the Personality Trait roll based on the nature of the command (see the Entrancement power, ArM5 page 65, for suggestions). Both Might costs must be met if the use of a supernatural power is also contrary to the victim's nature. If Zoolvisia is in direct control of its host's actions, the host acquires its Magic Resistance, but is also affected by wards that would normally exclude her. If the host is acting under her own free will, then she does not benefit from Magic Resistance, but may also walk through wards with impunity. This power's costs are not based on the Hermetic system of magic. It is instead based on material in Realms of Power: Magic.
Killing scream: Zoolvisia doesn't seem to be able to control the timing of her scream, so it has no cost: it's just a thing that happens. It's a Sight-based PeCo40 effect. In a covenant setting, it might be an Evil Custom Flaw.
Equipment: Someone else's body, all of their material goods. In this case, Zoolvisia took control of the host in childhood, so she has little personal will, and even calls herself after the monster.
Vis: 3 Mentem, in the saliva of the possessed victim.
Appearance: Zoolvisia does not have a material body, but if seen with Faerie Sight, or Second Sight outside a body, it looks like the a suit of white armor.

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

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

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

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

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

The Legend of St Warna

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The False Saint Warna

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

Order: Aerial Power
Infernal Might: 25 (Auram)
Characteristics: Int +3, Per +1, Pre +2, Com +2, Str +7, Sta +2, Dex +3, Qik +2
Size: +3 (can appear as human in dream, though)
Confidence Score: 5 (5)
Virtues and Flaws: Enjoys worship +3
Personality Traits: Untameable +4.
Reputations: Goddess of Wreckers 5 (Infernal)
Combat (uses an oar as an improvised weapon, in mockery of the real saint): Init +2, Attack +17, Defense +15, Damage +14
Soak: +6 – her body is loosely material
Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, 0, –1, –1, –3, –3, –5, Unconscious.
Wound Penalties: –1 (1–8), –3 (9–16), –5 (17–24), Incapacitated (25–32), Dead (33+)
Abilities: Various, including Single Weapon 8 (oar)
Powers:
Coagulation, 1 point, Init –1, Corpus.
Elemental Control, variable points, Init. -1, Auram. May create and Creo, Muto or Rego effect in the Auram for for 1 Might per magnitude of effect. Cannot create an effect with a level higher than the demons current Might, or duplicate Ritual effects.
Envisioning; 1 point, Init +0, Mentem.
Obsession, 1 point, Init –5, Vim: Avaricious.
Recalcitrance: 0 points, Init constant, Vim. Any attempt to control (but not destroy) an Aerial Power with any supernatural power, of any Realm, treats the demon's Might as if it was 50% higher. Ease factors are similarly 50% higher.
Weakness: Cannot directly harm the ordained.
Vis: 6 pawns Auram vis (sordida).
Appearance: Looks like the crude statuette of the Irish saint found by her well, but made of cloud and expanded.

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

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

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

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

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

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Scrumping Sprites

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

Faerie Might: 5 (Corpus)
Characteristics: Int, Per 0, Pre 0, Com 0, Str –20, Sta +1, Dex +3, Qik +10
Size: –10
Virtues and Flaws: Greater Faerie Power; Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Humanoid Faerie, Faerie Ally or Personal Power (Flight); Narrowly Cognizant; 2 x Little, Personality Flaw (theft), Traditional Ward (varies by location, but often some sort of bribe)
Personality Traits: Love risk +3
Combat:
Bow: Init +8, Attack +13, Defense +15, Damage –11*
* Often used in conjunction with Grant Flaw, some other power, or poison.
Soak: +6 (tiny jerkin)
Wound Penalties: Dead (1+)
Pretenses: Area Lore (vis sources) Awareness 5 (humans), Athletics 4 (flight), Awareness 5 (intruders), Bow 6 (intruders), Carouse 3 (feasts), Charm 2 (marks), Etiquette 2 (people they have stolen from) Faerie Speech 5, Hunt 1 (humans).
Powers:
Cause Sickness: 0 points, Init +9, Corpus. (3 intricacy points spent on cost, 2 on initiative):
This power usually causes strokes. The strike of a messenger's arrow can cause this effect. Strokes have an Ease Factor of 6, and cause a Heavy wound.
Flight: 0 points, constant, 2 intricacy points reducing Might cost.
A faerie that wishes to use magical arrows often, for combat, might trade its Greater Power for the following selections:
Improved Damage Virtue (+5 Damage)
Improved Soak Virtue (+2 Soak)
Damaging Effect Lesser Power: 1 point, Init +4: (2 intricacy points on cost),
Provides a mystical effect based on the court's motif, that increases the damage of the messenger's arrows by +5 for 2 minutes.
Equipment: Bow, jerkin with clan mark. Some faeries of this
type fly using mounts, purchased as the Faerie Ally Virtue, in lieu of the
Fly power. They have Pretenses of 2 in Ride and 1 in Animal Handling, and
lower their Athletics to 3.
Vis: 1 pawn Herbam, dead bug.
Appearance: These faeries are tiny humanoid figures that can fly, a power they use to perform interesting feasts of gymnastics for their lords. They are armed with tiny bows, and prefer to attack in confusing swarms. Note that winged faeries are not known in much of Mythic Europe. If your saga proceeds as history did, they do not enter English literature until the 18th century. Most faeries fly either simply by wishing to, or by riding mounts that fly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Vile, miserable knave," replied Rodriguez.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Indeed, it is nothing," he answered.

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

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

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

The stranger smiled: the idea appealed to him.

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

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

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

“Giddy, only giddy,” said the stranger.

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

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

“But I am somewhat giddy,” said the other.

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

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

“I will bandage my right eye also,” said Rodriguez, “and if this cannot equalise it …”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The young hidalgo dropped silently.

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

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 an 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 to 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, Prideful, 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.

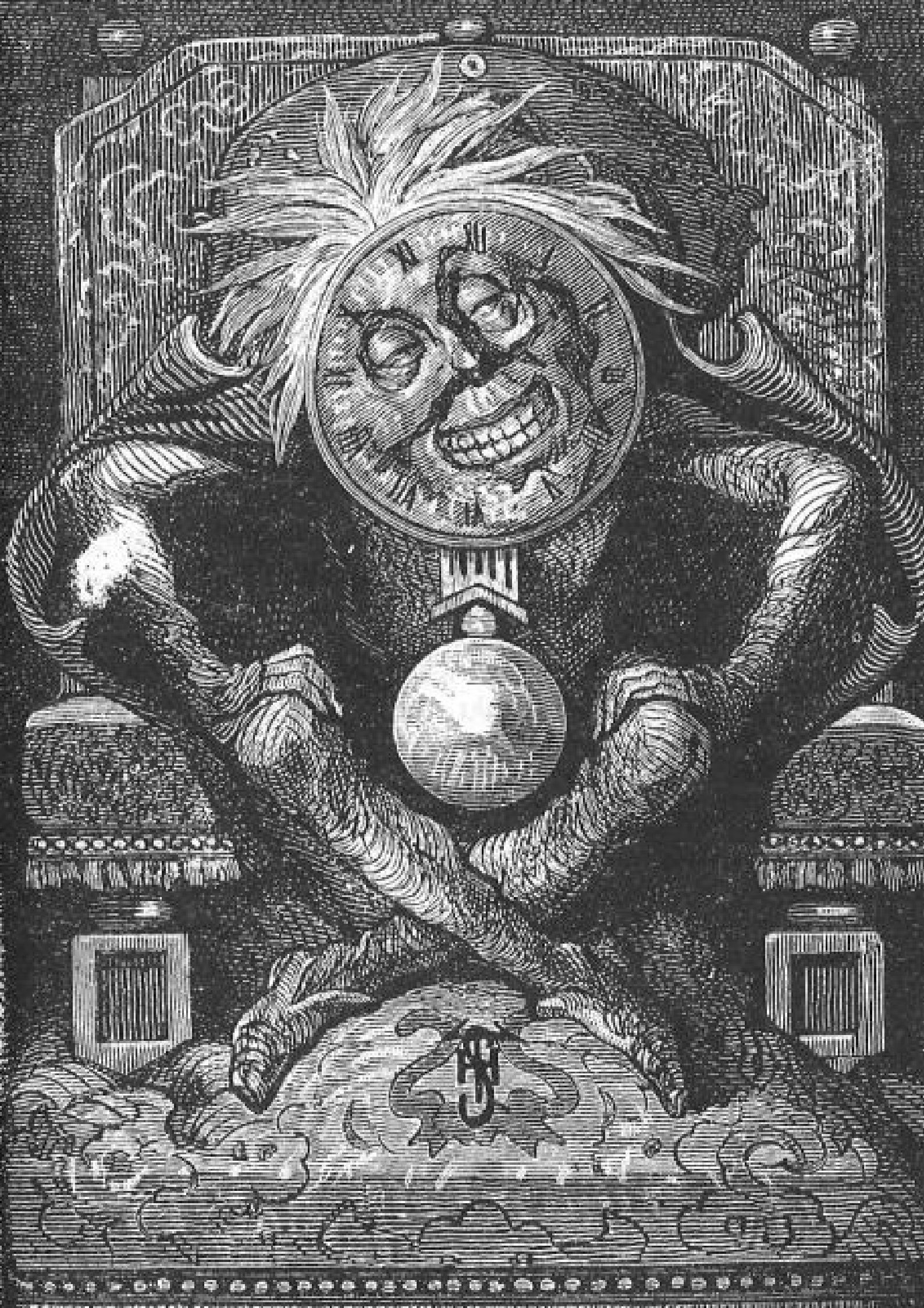
Command the works of man to fail: 1 point, Init -1, Terram/Herbam/Animal: This minor power destroys an essential piece of a single item. Master Zacharius makes use of this power easy for the demon by having a comprehensive list of every clock he has ever made, who owns it, and where it is.

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 Paloeonophis 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 grimmest 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 alchemichal, 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 Phyrigian 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 is Venice. This was dedicated to the patron saint of the dogaressas. She also founded Sant Illario and Sant Zaccaria, where doges and dogaressesas 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 throve amazingly, and everybody had a floral or arboreal hobby."

So, we all have herb and flower gardens, ready for the arrival of the perfumerers 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: "II 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 Charlemange. His history is poor, though, because he doesn't mention here that Pepin, the son of Charelmange, tried to invade the city on his father's orders, which led to the seat of power moving to the modern site. Charlemange explicitly says that although he is the rightful heir to the Roman Empire's territories, it doesn't include Venice, which belongs to the Emporer 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 Quiincey. 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 educo, with the penultimate short, was derived (by a process often exemplified in the crystallisation of languages) from the word educo, with the penultimate long. Whatever educes, or developes, 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 Parcce 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 oflfences 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 fhe 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 mathought 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 though 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-eastrsn 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: it the modern day we thin it is because of the 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 is 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 Heraclean 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 mevynge [moving] that comyth by tornynge 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, Abaraxses 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, hat is found in the Alps usesl ocal 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.

Teasdale: Guenivere

These episodes were two lengthy poems from an American poet, Sara Teasdale.

I've been looking at Teasdale's work because in the Cornwall material I'm collecting together. I have the Infernal Saint of Sorrow, but for her to be effective she can't go around constantly being Dolores of the Seven Sorrows. She has to fool people by taking other forms. Sara Teasdale's poems are about powerful historical women and their melancholy, so two of them suit what I'm looking for.

That being said I don't want to say that every time you see either Helen of Troy or Guinevere in Mythic Europe it's the Saint of Sorrow. Helen of Troy is found in Faerie form on an island in the Black Sea, where she rules with Achilles, and Guinevere is found in many parts of the west of England and in Wales. Indeed "Guinevere" may be a title: there are clearly at least three Gueniveres simultaneously in some of the Welsh Arthurian stories.

The quoted recordings have been made by Molly Armisen through LibriVox thanks to Molly and to her production team.

Stats eventually.

I was a queen, and I have lost my crown;
A wife, and I have broken all my vows;
A lover, and I ruined him I loved: –
There is no other havoc left to do.
A little month ago I was a queen,
And mothers held their babies up to see
When I came riding out of Camelot.
The women smiled, and all the world smiled too.
And now, what woman's eyes would smile on me?
I am still beautiful, and yet what child
Would think of me as some high, heaven-sent thing,
An angel, clad in gold and miniver?
The world would run from me, and yet I am
No different from the queen they used to love.
If water, flowing silver over stones,
Is forded, and beneath the horses' feet
Grows turbid suddenly, it clears again,
And men will drink it with no thought of harm.
Yet I am branded for a single fault.

I was the flower amid a toiling world,
Where people smiled to see one happy thing,
And they were proud and glad to raise me high;
They only asked that I should be right fair,
A little kind, and gownèd wondrously,
And surely it were little praise to me
If I had pleased them well throughout my life.

I was a queen, the daughter of a king.
The crown was never heavy on my head,
It was my right, and was a part of me.
The women thought me proud, the men were kind,
And bowed down gallantly to kiss my hand,
And watched me as I passed them calmly by,
Along the halls I shall not tread again.
What if, to-night, I should revisit them?
The warders at the gates, the kitchen-maids,
The very beggars would stand off from me,
And I, their queen, would climb the stairs alone,
Pass through the banquet-hall, a hated thing,
And seek my chambers for a hiding-place,
And I should find them but a sepulchre,
The very rushes rotted on the floors,
The fire in ashes on the freezing hearth.

I was a queen, and he who loved me best
Made me a woman for a night and day,
And now I go unqueened forevermore.

A queen should never dream on summer nights,
When hovering spells are heavy in the dusk: –
I think no night was ever quite so still,
So smoothly lit with red along the west,
So deeply hushed with quiet through and through.
And strangely clear, and sharply dyed with light,
The trees stood straight against a paling sky,
With Venus burning lamp-like in the west.
I walked alone among a thousand flowers,
That drooped their heads and drowsed beneath the dew,
And all my thoughts were quieted to sleep.
Behind me, on the walk, I heard a step –
I did not know my heart could tell his tread,
I did not know I loved him till that hour.
The garden reeled a little, I was weak,
And in my breast I felt a wild, sick pain.
Quickly he came behind me, caught my arms,
That ached beneath his touch; and then I swayed,
My head fell backward and I saw his face.

All this grows bitter that was once so sweet,
And many mouths must drain the dregs of it,
But none will pity me, nor pity him
Whom Love so lashed, and with such cruel thongs.

Teasdale: Helen of Troy

Wild flight on flight against the fading dawn
The flames' red wings soar upward duskily.
This is the funeral pyre and Troy is dead
That sparkled so the day I saw it first,
And darkened slowly after. I am she
Who loves all beauty — yet I wither it.
Why have the high gods made me wreak their wrath —
Forever since my maidenhood to sow
Sorrow and blood about me? Lo, they keep
Their bitter care above me even now.
It was the gods who led me to this lair,
That tho' the burning winds should make me weak,
They should not snatch the life from out my lips.
Olympus let the other women die;
They shall be quiet when the day is done
And have no care to-morrow. Yet for me
There is no rest. The gods are not so kind
To her made half immortal like themselves.
It is to you I owe the cruel gift,
Leda, my mother, and the Swan, my sire,
To you the beauty and to you the bale;
For never woman born of man and maid
Had wrought such havoc on the earth as I,
Or troubled heaven with a sea of flame
That climbed to touch the silent whirling stars
And blotted out their brightness ere the dawn.
Have I not made the world to weep enough?
Give death to me. Yet life is more than death;
How could I leave the sound of singing winds,
The strong sweet scent that breathes from off the sea,
Or shut my eyes forever to the spring?
I will not give the grave my hands to hold,
My shining hair to light oblivion.
Have those who wander through the ways of death,
The still wan fields Elysian, any love
To lift their breasts with longing, any lips
To thirst against the quiver of a kiss?
Lo, I shall live to conquer Greece again,
To make the people love, who hate me now.
My dreams are over, I have ceased to cry
Against the fate that made men love my mouth
And left their spirits all too deaf to hear
The little songs that echoed through my soul.
I have no anger now. The dreams are done;
Yet since the Greeks and Trojans would not see
Aught but my body's fairness, till the end,
In all the islands set in all the seas,
And all the lands that lie beneath the sun,
Till light turn darkness, and till time shall sleep,
Men's lives shall waste with longing after me,
For I shall be the sum of their desire,
The whole of beauty, never seen again.

And they shall stretch their arms and starting, wake
With "Helen!" on their lips, and in their eyes
The vision of me. Always I shall be
Limned on the darkness like a shaft of light
That glimmers and is gone. They shall behold
Each one his dream that fashions me anew; —
With hair like lakes that glint beneath the stars
Dark as sweet midnight, or with hair aglow
Like burnished gold that still retains the fire.
Yea, I shall haunt until the dusk of time
The heavy eyelids filled with fleeting dreams.

I wait for one who comes with sword to slay —
The king I wronged who searches for me now;
And yet he shall not slay me. I shall stand
With lifted head and look within his eyes,
Baring my breast to him and to the sun.
He shall not have the power to stain with blood
That whiteness — for the thirsty sword shall fall
And he shall cry and catch me in his arms,
Bearing me back to Sparta on his breast.
Lo, I shall live to conquer Greece again!

That final little twist, where she will leave to conquer Greece again, is what put me in mind for her as a potential cover story for the infernal Saint of Sorrow.

Stats eventually.

Chronicles of Shadow Valley: The Green Bowmen

These This episode follows on from some of our other explorations of the work of Lord Dunsany.

In this episode, Don Rodriguez is held up by some bowmen. In a previous chapter, which isn't included in the series of podcast episodes, he has saved a man and, in exchange, was given a talisman or amulet, then told to wear it when he reaches Shadow Valley. The amulet is a gold piece that's been carved with an intricate symbol by the rescued man. It becomes clear as the book unfolds that the man was the King of Shadow Valley and, if he is not a faerie, he is a human holding a faerie office. This is familiar to Magi – particularly from House Merinita, who are familiar with the King of Golden Bough. The talisman marks Rodriguez as a Prince of the Forest and without giving away too many spoilers, eventually he takes over the role of King of the Forest himself through a series of initiations.

I'm going to leave a large chunk of the chapter intact here. It was read into the public domain by Ed Humple through LibriVox. It's interesting because it contains two potentially faerie creatures – the king himself and his bowmen – who may be human, or may have faerie blood, or may have a mystogogic initiation, or may be the beneficiaries of an odd natural law of the king's sacred space.

Statistics eventually.

"Señor, all travellers here bring tribute to the King of Shadow Valley," at the mention of whom all touched hats and bowed their heads. "What do you bring us?"

Rodriguez thought of no answer; but after a moment he said, for the sake of loyalty: "I know one king only."

"There is only one king in Shadow Valley," said the bowman.

"He brings a tribute of emeralds," said another, looking at Rodriguez' scabbard. And then they searched him and others search Morano. There were eight or nine of them, all in their leaf-green hats, with ribbons round their necks of the same colour to hold the copper disks. They took a gold coin from Morano and grey greasy pieces of silver. One of them took his frying-pan; but he looked so pitifully at them as he said simply, "I starve," that the frying-pan was restored to him.

They unbuckled Rodriguez' belt and took from him sword and scabbard and three gold pieces from his purse. Next they found the gold piece that was hanging round his neck, still stuffed inside his clothes where he had put it when he was riding. Having examined it they put it back inside his clothes, while the leader rebuckled his sword-belt about his waist and returned him his three gold-pieces.

Others returned his money to Morano. "Master," said the leader, bowing to Rodriguez, his green hat in hand, "under our King, the forest is yours."

Morano was pleased to hear this respect paid to his master, but Rodriguez was so surprised that he who was never curt without reason found no more to say than "Why?"

"Because we are your servants," said the other.

"Who are you?" asked Rodriguez.

"We are the green bowmen, master," he said, "who hold this forest against all men for our King."

t"That, master, we cannot do," said the chief of the bowmen. "There be many trees in this forest, and behind any one of them he holds his court. When he needs us there is his clear horn. But when men need him who knows which shadow is his of all that lie in the forest?" Whether or not there was anything interesting in the mystery, to Rodriguez it was merely annoying; and finding it grew no clearer he turned his attention to shelter for the night, to which all travellers give a thought at least once, between noon and sunset.

"Is there any house on this road, señor," he said, "in which we could rest the night?"

"Ten miles from here," said he, "and not far from the road you take is the best house we have in the forest. It is yours, master, for as long as you honour it."

"Come then," said Rodriguez, "and I thank you, señor."

So they all started together, Rodriguez with the leader going in front and Morano following with all the bowmen. And soon the bowmen were singing songs of the forest, hunting songs, songs of the winter; and songs of the long summer evenings, songs of love. Cheered by this merriment, the miles slipped by.

And Rodriguez gathered from the songs they sang something of what they were and of how they lived in the forest, living amongst the woodland creatures till these men's ways were almost as their ways; killing what they needed for food but protecting the woodland things against all others; straying out amongst the villages in summer evenings, and always welcome; and owning no allegiance but to the King of the Shadow Valley.

And the leader told Rodriguez that his name was Miguel Threegeese, given him on account of an exploit in his youth when he lay one night with his bow by one of the great pools in the forest, where the geese come in winter. He said the forest was a hundred miles long, lying mostly along a great

along a great valley, which they were crossing. And once they had owned allegiance to kings of Spain, but now to none but the King of the Shadow Valley, for the King of Spain's men had once tried to cut some of the forest down, and the forest was sacred.

Behind him the men sang on of woodland things, and of cottage gardens in the villages: with singing and laughter they came to their journey's end. A cottage as though built by peasants with boundless material stood in the forest. It was a thatched cottage built in the peasant's way but of enormous size. The leader entered first and whispered to those within, who rose and bowed to Rodriguez as he entered, twenty more bowmen who had been sitting at a table. One does not speak of the banqueting-hall of a cottage, but such it appeared, for it occupied more than half of the cottage and was as large as the banqueting-hall of any castle. It was made of great beams of oak, and high at either end just under the thatch were windows with their little square panes of bulging bluish glass, which at that time was rare in Spain. A table of oak ran down the length of it, cut from a single tree, polished and dark from the hands of many men that had sat at it. Boar spears hung on the wall, great antlers and boar's tusks and, carved in the oak of the wall and again on a high, dark chair that stood at the end of the long table empty, a crown with oak leaves that Rodriguez recognised. It was the same as the one that was cut on his gold coin, which he had given no further thought to, riding to Lowlight, and which the face of Serafina had driven from his mind altogether. "But," he said, and then was silent, thinking to learn more by watching than by talking. And his companions of the road came in and all sat down on the benches beside the ample table, and a brew was brought, a kind of pale mead, that they called forest water. And all drank; and, sitting at the table, watching them more closely than he could as he walked in the forest, Rodriguez saw by the sunlight that streamed in low through one window that on the copper disks they wore round their necks on green ribbon the design was again the same. It was much smaller than his on the gold coin but the same strange leafy crown. "Wear it as you go through Shadow Valley," he now seemed to remember the man saying to him who put it round his neck. But why? Clearly because it was the badge of this band of men. And this other man was one of them.

His eyes strayed back to the great design on the wall. "The crown of the forest," said Miguel as he saw his eyes wondering at it, "as you doubtless know, señor."

Why should he know? Of course because he bore the design himself. "Who wears it?" said Rodriguez.

"The King of Shadow Valley."

Morano was without curiosity; he did not question good drink; he sat at the table with a cup of horn in his hand, as happy as though he had come to his master's castle, though that had not yet been won.

The sun sank under the oaks, filling the hall with a ruddy glow, turning the boar spears scarlet and reddening the red faces of the merry men of the bow.

A dozen of the men went out; to relieve the guard in the forest, Miguel explained. And Rodriguez learned that he had come through a line of sentries without ever seeing one. Presently a dozen others came in from their posts and unslung their bows and laid them on pegs on the wall and sat down at the table. Whereat there were whispered words and they all rose and bowed to Rodriguez. And Rodriguez had caught the words "A prince of the forest." What did it mean?

Soon the long hall grew dim, and his love for the light drew Rodriguez out to watch the sunset. And there was the sun under indescribable clouds, turning huge and yellow among the trunks of the trees and casting glory munificently down glades. It set, and the western sky became blood-red and lilac: from the other end of the sky the moon peeped out of night. A hush came and a chill, and a glory of colour, and a dying away of light; and in the hush the mystery of the great oaks became magical. A blackbird blew a tune less of this earth than of fairy-land.

Rodriguez wished that he could have had a less ambition than to win a castle in the wars, for in those glades and among those oaks he felt that happiness might be found under roofs of thatch. But having come by his ambition he would not desert it.

Now rushlights were lit in the great cottage and the window of the long room glowed yellow. A fountain fell in the stillness that he had not heard before. An early nightingale tuned a tentative note. "The forest is fair, is it not?" said Miguel.

Rodriguez had no words to say. To turn into words the beauty that was now shining in his thoughts, reflected from the evening there, was no easier than for wood to reflect all that is seen in the mirror.

"You love the forest," he said at last.

"Master," said Miguel, "it is the only land in which we should live our days. There are cities and roads but man is not meant for them. I know not, master, what God intends about us; but in cities we are against the intention at every step, while here, why, we drift along with it."

"I, too, would live here always," said Rodriguez.

"The house is yours," said Miguel. And Rodriguez answered: "I go tomorrow to the wars."

They turned round then and walked slowly back to the cottage, and entered the candlelight and the loud talk of many men out of the hush of the twilight. But they passed from the room at once by a door on the left, and came thus to a large bedroom, the only other room in the cottage.

"Your room, master," said Miguel Threegeese.

It was not so big as the hall where the bowmen sat, but it was a goodly room. The bed was made of carved wood, for there were craftsmen in the forest, and a hunt went all the way round it with dogs and deer. Four great posts held a canopy over it: they were four young birch-trees seemingly still

wearing their bright bark, but this had been painted on their bare timber by some woodland artist. The chairs had not the beauty of the great ages of furniture, but they had a dignity that the age of commerce has not dreamed of. Each one was carved out of a single block of wood: there was no join in them anywhere. One of them lasts to this day.

The skins of deer covered the long walls. There were great basins and jugs of earthenware. All was forest-made. The very shadows whispering among themselves in corners spoke of the forest. The room was rude; but being without ornament, except for the work of simple craftsmen, it had nothing there to offend the sense of right of anyone entering its door, by any jarring conflict with the purposes and traditions of the land in which it stood. All the woodland spirits might have entered there, and slept—if spirits sleep—in the great bed, and left at dawn unoffended. In fact that age had not yet learned vulgarity.

When Miguel Threegeese left Morano entered.

“Master,” he said, “they are making a banquet for you.”

“Good,” said Rodriguez. “We will eat it.” And he waited to hear what Morano had come to say, for he could see that it was more than this.

“Master,” said Morano, “I have been talking with the bowman. And they will give you whatever you ask. They are good people, master, and they will give you all things, whatever you asked of them.”

Rodriguez would not show to his servant that it all still puzzled him.

“They are very amiable men,” he said.

“Master,” said Morano, coming to the point, “that Garda, they will have walked after us. They must be now in Lowlight. They have all to-night to get new shoes on their horses. And to-morrow, master, to-morrow, if we be still on foot…”

Rodriguez was thinking. Morano seemed to him to be talking sense.

“You would like another ride?” he said to Morano.

“Master,” he answered, “riding is horrible. But the public garrotter, he is a bad thing too.” And he meditatively stroked the bristles under his chin.

“They would give us horses?” said Rodriguez.

“Anything, master, I am sure of it. They are good people.”

“They’ll have news of the road by which they left Lowlight,” said Rodriguez reflectively. “They say la Garda dare not enter the forest,” Morano continued, “but thirty miles from here the forest ends. They could ride round while we go through.”

“They would give us horses?” said Rodriguez again.

“Surely,” said Morano.

And then Rodriguez asked where they cooked the banquet, since he saw that there were only two rooms in the great cottage and his inquiring eye saw no preparations for cooking about the fireplace of either. And Morano pointed through a window at the back of the room to another cottage among the trees, fifty paces away. A red glow streamed from its windows, growing strong in the darkening forest.

“That is their kitchen, master,” he said. “The whole house is kitchen.” His eyes looked eagerly at it, for, though he loved bacon, he welcomed the many signs of a dinner of boundless variety.

As he and his master returned to the long hall great plates of polished wood were being laid on the table. They gave Rodriguez a place on the right of the great chair that had the crown of the forest carved on the back.

“Whose chair is that?” said Rodriguez.

“The King of Shadow Valley,” they said.

“He is not here then,” said Rodriguez.

“Who knows?” said a bowman.

“It is his chair,” said another; “his place is ready. None knows the ways of the King of Shadow Valley.”

“He comes sometimes at this hour,” said a third, “as the boar comes to Heather Pool at sunset. But not always. None knows his ways.”

“If they caught the King,” said another, “the forest would perish. None loves it as he, none knows its ways as he, no other could so defend it.”

“Alas,” said Miguel, “some day when he be not here they will enter the forest.” All knew whom he meant by they. “And the goodly trees will go.” He spoke as a man foretelling the end of the world; and, as men to whom no less was announced, the others listened to him. They all loved Shadow Valley.

In this man’s time, so they told Rodriguez, none entered the forest to hurt it, no tree was cut except by his command, and venturous men claiming rights from others than him seldom laid axe long to tree before he stood near, stepping noiselessly from among shadows of trees as though he were one of their spirits coming for vengeance on man.

All this they told Rodriguez, but nothing definite they told of their king, where he was yesterday, where he might be now; and any questions he asked of such things seemed to offend a law of the forest.

And then the dishes were carried in, to Morano’s great delight: with wide blue eyes he watched the produce of that mighty estate coming in through the doorway cooked. Boars’ heads, woodcock, herons, plates full of fishes, all manner of small

eggs, a roe-deer and some rabbits, were carried in by procession. And the men set to with their ivory-handled knives, each handle being the whole tusk of a boar. And with their eating came merriment and tales of past huntings and talk of the forest and stories of the King of Shadow Valley.

And always they spoke of him not only with respect but also with the discretion, Rodriguez thought, of men that spoke of one who might be behind them at that moment, and one who tolerated no trifling with his authority. Then they sang songs again, such as Rodriguez had heard on the road, and their merry lives passed clearly before his mind again, for we live in our songs as no men live in histories. And again Rodriguez lamented his hard ambition and his long, vague journey, turning away twice from happiness; once in the village of Lowlight where happiness deserted him, and here in the goodly forest where he jilted happiness. How well could he and Morano live as two of this band, he thought; leaving all cares in cities: for there dwelt cares in cities even then. Then he put the thought away. And as the evening wore away with merry talk and with song, Rodriguez turned to Miguel and told him how it was with la Garda and broached the matter of horses. And while the others sang Miguel spoke sadly to him. “Master,” he said, “la Garda shall never take you in Shadow Valley, yet if you must leave us to make your fortune in the wars, though your fortune waits you here, there be many horses in the forest, and you and your servant shall have the best.”

“Tomorrow morning, señor?” said Rodriguez.

“Even so,” said Miguel.

“And how shall I send them to you again?” said Rodriguez.

“Master, they are yours,” said Miguel.

But this Rodriguez would not have, for as yet he only guessed what claim at all he had upon Shadow Valley, his speculations being far more concerned with the identity of the hidalgo that he had fought the night before, how he concerned Serafina, who had owned the rose that he carried: in fact his mind was busy with such studies as were proper to his age. And at last they decided between them on the house of a lowland smith, who was the furthest man that the bowmen knew who was secretly true to their king. At his house Rodriguez and Morano should leave the horses. He dwelt sixty miles from the northern edge of the forest, and would surely give Rodriguez fresh horses if he possessed them, for he was a true man to the bowman. His name was Gonzalez and he dwelt in a queer green house.

They turned then to listen a moment to a hunting song that all the bowmen were singing about the death of a boar. Its sheer merriment constrained them. Then Miguel spoke again. “You should not leave the forest,” he said sadly.

Rodriguez sighed: it was decided. Then Miguel told him of his road, which ran north-eastward and would one day bring him out of Spain. He told him how towns on the way, and the river Ebro, and with awe and reverence he spoke of the mighty Pyrenees. And then Rodriguez rose, for the start was to be at dawn, and walked quietly through the singing out of the hall to the room where the great bed was. And soon he slept, and his dreams joined in the endless hunt through Shadow Valley that was carved all round the timbers of his bed.

All too soon he heard voices, voices far off at first, to which he drew nearer and nearer; thus he woke grudgingly out of the deeps of sleep. It was Miguel and Morano calling him.

When at length he reached the hall all the merriment of the evening was gone from it but the sober beauty of the forest flooded in through both windows with early sunlight and bird-song; so that it had not the sad appearance of places in which we have rejoiced, when we revisit them next day or next generation and find them all deserted by dance and song.

Rodriguez ate his breakfast while the bowmen waited with their bows all strung by the door. When he was ready they all set off in the early light through the forest.

Rodriguez did not criticise his ambition; it sailed too high above his logic for that; but he regretted it, as he went through the beauty of the forest among these happy men. But we must all have an ambition, and Rodriguez stuck to the one he had. He had another, but it was an ambition with weak wings that could not come to hope. It depended upon the first. If he could win a castle in the wars he felt that he might even yet hope towards Lowlight.

Little was said, and Rodriguez was all alone with his thoughts. In two hours they met a bowman holding two horses. They had gone eight miles.

“Farewell to the forest,” said Miguel to Rodriguez. There was almost a query in his voice. Would Rodriguez really leave them? it seemed to say.

“Farewell,” he answered.

Morano too had looked sideways towards his master, seeming almost to wonder what his answer would be: when it came he accepted it and walked to the horses. Rodriguez mounted: willing hands helped up Morano. “Farewell,” said Miguel once more. And all the bowmen shouted “Farewell.”

“Make my farewell,” said Rodriguez, “to the King of Shadow Valley.”

A twig cracked in the forest.

“Hark,” said Miguel. “Maybe that was a boar.”

“I cannot wait to hunt,” said Rodriguez, “for I have far to go.”

“Maybe,” said Miguel, “it was the King’s farewell to you.”

Rodriguez looked into the forest and saw nothing.

“Farewell,” he said again. The horses were fresh and he let his go. Morano lumbered behind him. In two miles they came to the edge of the forest and up a rocky hill, and so to the plains again, and one more adventure lay behind them. Rodriguez

turned round once on the high ground and took a long look back on the green undulations of peace. The forest slept there as though empty of men.

Then they rode. In the first hour, easily cantering, they did ten miles. Then they settled down to what those of our age and country and occupation know as a hound-jog, which is seven miles an hour. And after two hours they let the horses rest. It was the hour of the frying-pan. Morano, having dismounted, stretched himself dolefully; then he brought out all manner of meats. Rodriguez looked wonderingly at them.

“For the wars, master,” said Morano. To whatever wars they went, the green bowmen seemed to have supplied an ample commissariat.

They ate. And Rodriguez thought of the wars, for the thought of Serafina made him sad, and his rejection of the life of the forest saddened him too; so he sought to draw from the future the comfort that he could not get from the past.

They mounted again and rode again for three hours, till they saw very far off on a hill a village that Miguel had told them was fifty miles from the forest.

“We rest the night there,” said Rodriguez pointing, though it was yet seven or eight miles away.

“All the Saints be praised,” said Morano.

They dismounted then and went on foot, for the horses were weary. At evening they rode slowly into the village. At an inn whose hospitable looks were as cheerfully unlike the Inn of the Dragon and Knight as possible, they demanded lodging for all four. They went first to the stable, and when the horses had been handed over to the care of a groom they returned to the inn, and mine host and Rodriguez had to help Morano up the three steps to the door, for he had walked nine miles that day and ridden fifty and he was too weary to climb the steps.

And later Rodriguez sat down alone to his supper at a table well and variously laden, for the doors of mine hosts’ larder were opened wide in his honour; but Rodriguez ate sparingly, as do weary men.

And soon he sought his bed. And on the old echoing stairs as he and mine host ascended they met Morano leaning against the wall. What shall I say of Morano? Reader, your sympathy is all ready to go out to the poor, weary man. He does not entirely deserve it, and shall not cheat you of it. Reader, Morano was drunk. I tell you this sorry truth rather than that the knave should have falsely come by your pity. And yet he is dead now over three hundred years, having had his good time to the full. Does he deserve your pity on that account? Or your envy? And to whom or what would you give it? Well, anyhow, he deserved no pity for being drunk. And yet he was thirsty, and too tired to eat, and sore in need of refreshment, and had had no more cause to learn to shun good wine than he had had to shun the smiles of princesses; and there the good wine had been, sparkling beside him merrily.

And now, why now, fatigued as he had been an hour or so ago (but time had lost its tiresome, restless meaning), now he stood firm while all things and all men staggered.

“Morano,” said Rodriguez as he passed that foolish figure, “we go sixty miles to-morrow.”

“Sixty, master?” said Morano. “A hundred: two hundred.”

“It is best to rest now,” said his master.

“Two hundred, master, two hundred,” Morano replied.

And then Rodriguez left him, and heard him muttering his challenge to distance still, “Two hundred, two hundred,” till the old stairway echoed with it.

And so he came to his chamber, of which he remembered little, for sleep lurked there and he was soon with dreams, faring further with them than my pen can follow.

Chronicles of Shadow Valley: The Building of Castle Rodriguez

This is the last episode in our series based on The Chronicles of Shadow Valley by Lord Dunsany.

For the listeners who've been following these episodes, we have a sudden leap in the narrative. We've gone from about Chapter 4 straight to the end because I wish to particularly note only those things which can be easily harvested for plot hooks for role-playing games. In this chronicle Don Rodriguez gains his castle, but his castle is an odd one built by a man who – although he is not a fairy himself – clearly has fairy followers and assistance. He is a king of the wood, a role that Don Rodriguez comes to play, perhaps through the many investitures seen in previous episodes.

And so to the construction of a fairy castle. Our reader again is Ed Humple through LibriVox. Thanks to Ed and all of his production team.

When the King of Shadow Valley met Rodriguez, for the first time in the forest, and gave him his promise and left him by his camp-fire, he went back some way towards the bowmen's cottage and blew his horn; and his hundred bowmen were about him almost at once. To these he gave their orders and they went back, whence they had come, into the forest's darkness. But he went to the bowmen's cottage and paced before it, a dark and lonely figure of the night; and wherever he paced the ground he marked it with small sticks. And next morning the hundred bowmen came with axes as soon as the earliest light had entered the forest, and each of them chose out one of the giant trees that stood before the cottage, and attacked it. All day they swung their axes against the forest's elders, of which nearly a hundred were fallen when evening came. And the stoutest of these, great trunks that were four feet through, were dragged by horses to the bowmen's cottage and laid by the little sticks that the King of Shadow Valley had put overnight in the ground. The bowmen's cottage and the kitchen that was in the wood behind it, and a few trees that still stood, were now all enclosed by four lines of fallen trees which made a large rectangle on the ground with a small square at each of its corners. And craftsmen came, and smoothed and hollowed the inner sides of the four rows of trees, working far into the night. So was the first day's work accomplished and so was built the first layer of the walls of Castle Rodriguez.

On the next day the bowmen again felled a hundred trees; the top of the first layer was cut flat by carpenters; at evening the second layer was hoisted up after their under sides had been flattened to fit the layer below them; quantities more were cast in to make the floor when they had been gradually smoothed and fitted: at the end of the second day a man could not see over the walls of Castle Rodriguez. And on the third day more craftsmen arrived, men from distant villages at the forest's edge, whence the King of Shadow Valley had summoned them; and they carved the walls as they grew. And a hundred trees fell that day, and the castle was another layer higher. And all the while a park was growing in the forest, as they felled the great trees; but the greatest trees of all the bowmen spared, oaks that had stood there for ages and ages of men; they left them to grip the earth for a while longer, for a few more human generations.

On the fourth day the two windows at the back of the bowmen's cottage began to darken, and that evening Castle Rodriguez was fifteen feet high. And still the hundred bowmen hewed at the forest, bringing sunlight bright on to grass that was shadowed by oaks for ages. And at the end of the fifth day they began to roof the lower rooms and make their second floor: and still the castle grew a layer a day, though the second storey they built with thinner trees that were only three feet through, which were more easily carried to their place by the pulleys. And now they began to heap up rocks in a mass of mortar against the wall on the outside, till a steep slope guarded the whole of the lower part of the castle against fire from any attacker if war should come that way, in any of the centuries that were yet to be: and the deep windows they guarded with bars of iron.

The shape of the castle showed itself clearly now, rising on each side of the bowmen's cottage and behind it, with a tower at each of its corners. To the left of the old cottage the main doorway opened to the great hall, in which a pile of a few huge oaks was being transformed into a massive stair. Three figures of strange men held up this ceiling with their heads and uplifted hands, when the castle was finished; but as yet the carvers had only begun their work, so that only here and there an eye peeped out, or a smile flickered, to give any expression to the curious faces of these fabulous creatures of the wood, which were slowly taking their shape out of three trees whose roots were still in the earth below the floor. In an upper storey one of these trees became a tall cupboard; and the shelves and the sides and the back and the top of it were all one piece of oak.

All the interior of the castle was of wood, hollowed into alcoves and polished, or carved into figures leaning out from the walls. So vast were the timbers that the walls, at a glance, seemed almost one piece of wood. And the centuries that were coming to Spain darkened the walls as they came, through autumnal shades until they were all black, as though they all mourned in secret for lost generations; but they have not yet crumbled.

The fireplaces they made with great square red tiles, which they also put in the chimneys amongst rude masses of mortar: and these great dark holes remained always mysterious to those that looked for mystery in the family that whiled away the ages in that castle. And by every fireplace two queer carved creatures stood upholding the mantlepiece, with

mystery in their faces and curious limbs, uniting the hearth with fable and with tales told in the wood. Years after the men that carved them were all dust the shadows of these creatures would come out and dance in the room, on wintry nights when all the lamps were gone and flames stole out and flickered above the smouldering logs.

In the second storey one great saloon ran all the length of the castle. In it was a long table with eight legs that had carvings of roses rambling along its edges: the table and its legs were all of one piece with the floor. They would never have hollowed the great trunk in time had they not used fire. The second storey was barely complete on the day that Rodriguez and Don Alderon and Morano came to the chains that guarded the park. And the King of Shadow Valley would not permit his gift to be seen in anything less than its full magnificence, and had commanded that no man in the world might enter to see the work of his bowmen and craftsmen until it should frown at all comers a castle formidable as any in Spain.

And then they heaped up the mortar and rock to the top of the second storey, but above that they let the timbers show, except where they filled in plaster between the curving trunks: and the ages blackened the timber in amongst the white plaster; but not a storm that blew in all the years that came, nor the moss of so many Springs, ever rotted away those beams that the forest had given and on which the bowmen had laboured so long ago. But the castle weathered the ages and reached our days, worn, battered even, by its journey through the long and sometimes troubled years, but splendid with the traffic that it had with history in many gorgeous periods. Here Valdar the Excellent came once in his youth. And Charles the Magnificent stayed a night in this castle when on a pilgrimage to a holy place of the South.

It was here that Peter the Arrogant in his cups gave Africa, one Spring night, to his sister's son. What grandeurs this castle has seen! What chronicles could be writ of it! But not these chronicles, for they draw near their close, and they have yet to tell how the castle was built. Others shall tell what banners flew from all four of its towers, adding a splendour to the wind, and for what cause they flew. I have yet to tell of their building.

The second storey was roofed, and Castle Rodriguez still rose one layer day by day, with a hauling at pulleys and the work of a hundred men: and all the while the park swept farther into the forest.

And the trees that grew up through the building were worked by the craftsmen in every chamber into which they grew: and a great branch of the hugest of them made a little crooked stair in an upper storey. On the floors they laid down skins of beasts that the bowmen slew in the forest; and on the walls there hung all manner of leather, tooled and dyed as they had the art to do in that far-away period in Spain.

When the third storey was finished they roofed the castle over, laying upon the huge rafters red tiles that they made of clay. But the towers were not yet finished.

At this time the King of Shadow Valley sent a runner into Lowlight to shoot a blunt arrow with a message tied to it into Don Alderon's garden, near to the door, at evening.

And they went on building the towers above the height of the roof And near the top of them they made homes for archers, little turrets that leaned like swallows' nests out from each tower, high places where they could see and shoot and not be seen from below. And little narrow passages wound away behind perched battlements of stone, by which archers could slip from place to place, and shoot from here or from there and never be known. So were built in that distant age the towers of Castle Rodriguez.

And one day four weeks from the felling of the first oak, the period of his promise being accomplished, the King of Shadow Valley blew his horn. And standing by what had been the bowmen's cottage, now all shut in by sheer walls of Castle Rodriguez, he gathered his bowmen to him. And when they were all about him he gave them their orders. They were to go by stealth to the village of Lowlight, and were to be by daylight before the house of Don Alderon; and, whether wed or unwed, whether she fled or folk defended the house, to bring Dona Serafina of the Valley of Dawnlight to be the chatelaine of Castle Rodriguez.

For this purpose he bade them take with them a chariot that he thought magnificent, though the mighty timbers that gave grandeur to Castle Rodriguez had a cumbrous look in the heavy vehicle that was to the bowmen's eyes the triumphal car of the forest. So they took their bows and obeyed, leaving the craftsmen at their work in the castle, which was now quite roofed over, towers and all. They went through the forest by little paths that they knew, going swiftly and warily in the bowmen's way: and just before nightfall they were at the forest's edge, though they went no farther from it than its shadows go in the evening. And there they rested under the oak trees for the early part of the night except those whose art it was to gather news for their king; and three of those went into Lowlight and mixed with the villagers there.

When white mists moved over the fields near dawn and wavered ghostly about Lowlight, the green bowman moved with them. And just out of hearing of the village, behind wild shrubs that hid them, the bowmen that were coming from the forest met the three that had spent the night in taverns of Lowlight. And the three told the hundred of the great wedding that there was to be in the Church of the Renunciation that morning in Lowlight: and of the preparations that were made, and how holy men had come from far on mules, and had slept the night in the village, and the Bishop of Toledo himself would bless the bridegroom's sword. The bowmen therefore retired a little way and, moving through the mists, came forward to points whence they could watch the church, well concealed on the wild plain, which here and there gave up a field to man but was mostly the playground of wild creatures whose ways were the bowmen's ways. And here they waited.

This was the wedding of Rodriguez and Serafina, of which gossips often spoke at their doors in summer evenings, old women mumbling of fair weddings that each had seen; and they had been children when they saw this wedding; they

were those that threw small handfuls of anemones on the path before the porch. They told the tale of it till they could tell no more. It is the account of the last two or three of them, old, old women, that came at last to these chronicles, so that their tongues may wag as it were a little longer through these pages although they have been for so many centuries dead. And this is all that books are able to do.

First there was bell-ringing and many voices, and then the voices hushed, and there came the procession of eight divines of Murcia, whose vestments were strange to Lowlight. Then there came a priest from the South, near the border of Andalusia, who overnight had sanctified the ring. (It was he who had entertained Rodriguez when he first escaped from la Garda, and Rodriguez had sent for him now.) Each note of the bells came clear through the hush as they entered the church. And then with suitable attendants the bishop strode by and they saw quite close the blessed cope of Toledo. And the bridegroom followed him in, wearing his sword, and Don Alderon went with him. And then the voices rose again in the street: the bells rang on: they all saw Dona Mirana. The little bunches of bright anemones grew sticky in their hands: the bells seemed louder: cheering rose in the street and came all down it nearer. Then Dona Serafina walked past them with all her maids: and that is what the gossips chiefly remembered, telling how she smiled at them, and praising her dress, through those distant summer evenings. Then there was music in the church. And afterwards the forest-people had come. And the people screamed, for none knew what they would do. But they bowed so low to the bride and bridegroom, and showed their great hunting bows so willingly to all who wished to see, that the people lost their alarm and only feared lest the Bishop of Toledo should blast the merry bowmen with one of his curses.

And presently the bride and bridegroom entered the chariot, and the people cheered; and there were farewells and the casting of flowers; and the bishop blessed three of their bows; and a fat man sat beside the driver with folded arms, wearing bright on his face a look of foolish contentment; and the bowmen and bride and bridegroom all went away to the forest.

Four huge white horses drew that bridal chariot, the bowmen ran beside it, and soon it was lost to sight of the girls that watched it from Lowlight; but their memories held it close till their eyes could no longer see to knit and they could only sit by their porches in fine weather and talk of the days that were.

So came Rodriguez and his bride to the forest; he silent, perplexed, wondering always to what home and what future he brought her; she knowing less than he and trusting more. And on the untended road that the bowmen shared with stags and with rare, very venturous travellers, the wheels of the woodland chariot sank so deep in the sandy earth that the escort of bowmen needed seldom to run any more; and he who sat by the driver climbed down and walked silent for once, perhaps awed by the occasion, though he was none other than Morano. Serafina was delighted with the forest, but between Rodriguez and its beautiful grandeur his anxieties crowded thickly. He leaned over once from the chariot and asked one of the bowmen again about that castle; but the bowman only bowed and answered with a proverb of Spain, not easily carried so far from its own soil to thrive in our language, but signifying that the morrow showeth all things. He was silent then, for he knew that there was no way to a direct answer through those proverbs, and after a while perhaps there came to him some of Serafina's trustfulness. By evening they came to a wide avenue leading to great gates.

Rodriguez did not know the avenue, he knew no paths so wide in Shadow Valley; but he knew those gates. They were the gates of iron that led nowhere. But now an avenue went from them upon the other side, and opened widely into a park dotted with clumps of trees. And the two great iron shields, they too had changed with the changes that had bewitched the forest, for their surfaces that had glowed so unmistakably blank, side by side in the firelight, not many nights before, blazoned now the armorial bearings of Rodriguez upon the one and those of the house of Dawnlight upon the other. Through the opened gates they entered the young park that seemed to wonder at its own ancient trees, where wild deer drifted away from them like shadows through the evening: for the bowmen had driven in deer for miles through the forest. They passed a pool where water-lilies lay in languid beauty for hundreds of summers, but as yet no flower peeped into the water, for the pond was all hallowed newly.

A clump of trees stood right ahead of their way; they passed round it; and Castle Rodriguez came all at once into view. Serafina gasped joyously. Rodriguez saw its towers, its turrets for archers, its guarded windows deep in the mass of stone, its solemn row of battlements, but he did not believe what he saw. He did not believe that here at last was his castle, that here was his dream fulfilled and his journey done. He expected to wake suddenly in the cold in some lonely camp, he expected the Ebro to unfold its coils in the North and to come and sweep it away. It was but another strayed hope, he thought, taking the form of dream. But Castle Rodriguez still stood frowning there, and none of its towers vanished, or changed as things change in dreams; but the servants of the King of Shadow Valley opened the great door, and Serafina and Rodriguez entered, and all the hundred bowmen disappeared.

Here we will leave them, and let these Chronicles end. For whoever would tell more of Castle Rodriguez must wield one of those ponderous pens that hangs on the study wall in the house of historians. Great days in the story of Spain shone on those iron-barred windows, and things were said in its banqueting chamber and planned in its inner rooms that sometimes turned that story this way or that, as rocks turn a young river. And as a traveller meets a mighty river at one of its bends, and passes on his path, while the river sweeps on to its estuary and the sea, so I leave the triumphs and troubles of that story which I touched for one moment by the door of Castle Rodriguez.

My concern is but with Rodriguez and Serafina and to tell that they lived here in happiness; and to tell that the humble Morano found his happiness too. For he became the magnificent steward of Castle Rodriguez, the majordomo, and upon august occasions he wore as much red plush as he had

ever seen in his dreams, when he saw this very event, sleeping by dying camp-fires. And he slept not upon straw but upon good heaps of wolf-skins. But pining a little in the second year of his somewhat lonely splendour, he married one of the maidens of the forest, the child of a bowman that hunted boars with their king. And all the green bowmen came and built him a house by the gates of the park, whence he walked solemnly on proper occasions to wait upon his master. Morano, good, faithful man, come forward for but a moment out of the Golden Age and bow across all those centuries to the reader: say one farewell to him in your Spanish tongue, though the sound of it be no louder than the sound of shadows moving, and so back to the dim splendour of the past, for the Señor or Señora shall hear your name no more.

For years Rodriguez lived a chieftain of the forest, owning the overlordship of the King of Shadow Valley, whom he and Serafina would entertain with all the magnificence of which their castle was capable on such occasions as he appeared before the iron gates. They seldom saw him. Sometimes they heard his horn as he went by. They heard his bowmen follow. And all would pass and perhaps they would see none. But upon occasions he came. He came to the christening of the eldest son of Rodriguez and Serafina, for whom he was godfather. He came again to see the boy shoot for the first time with a bow. And later he came to give little presents, small treasures of the forest, to Rodriguez' daughters; who treated him always, not as sole lord of that forest that travellers dreaded, but as a friend of their very own that they had found for themselves. He had his favourites among them and none quite knew which they were.

And one day he came in his old age to give Rodriguez a message. And he spoke long and tenderly of the forest as though all its glades were sacred.

And soon after that day he died, and was buried with the mourning of all his men in the deeps of Shadow Valley, where only Rodriguez and the bowmen knew. And Rodriguez became, as the old king had commanded, the ruler of Shadow Valley and all its faithful men. With them he hunted and defended the forest, holding all its ways to be sacred, as the old king had taught. It is told how Rodriguez ruled the forest well.

And later he made a treaty with the Spanish King acknowledging him sole Lord of Spain, including Shadow Valley, saving that certain right should pertain to the foresters and should be theirs for ever. And these rights are written on parchment and sealed with the seal of Spain; and none may harm the forest without the bowmen's leave.

Rodriguez was made Duke of Shadow Valley and a Magnifico of the first degree; though little he went with other hidalgos to Court, but lived with his family in Shadow Valley, travelling seldom beyond the splendour of the forest farther than Lowlight.

Thus he saw the glory of autumn turning the woods to fairyland: and when the stags were roaring and winter coming on he would take a boar-spear down from the wall and go hunting through the forest, whose twigs were black and slender and still against the bright menace of winter. Spring found him viewing the fields that his men had sown, along the forest's edge, and finding in the chaunt of the myriad birds a stirring of memories, a beckoning towards past days. In summer he would see his boys and girls at play, running through shafts of sunlight that made leaves and grass like pale emeralds. He gave his days to the forest and the four seasons. Thus he dwelt amidst splendours such as History has never seen in any visit of hers to the courts of men.

Of him and Serafina it has been written and sung that they lived happily ever after; and though they are now so many centuries dead, may they have in the memories of such of my readers as will let them linger there, that afterglow of life that remembrance gives, which is all that there is on earth for those that walked it once and that walk the paths of their old haunts no more.

The Gouty Merchant and the Stranger

This poem was originally recorded for the April Fool's Day episode for 2020, but I've shifted everything forward so that people in the Corona lockdown have more material to enjoy.

It's by Horace Smith, and was recorded by a group of people at Librivox. Thanks to all of the recorders.

Statistics eventually.

In Broad Street building (on a winter night),
Snug by his parlor-fire, a gouty wight
Sat all alone, with one hand rubbing
His feet rolled up in fleecy hose:
With t' other he 'd beneath his nose 5
The Public Ledger, in whose columns grubbing,
He noted all the sales of hops,
Ships, shops, and slops;
Gum, galls, and groceries; ginger, gin,
Tar, tallow, turmeric, turpentine, and tin;
When lo! a decent personage in black
Entered and most politely said,—
"Your footman, sir, has gone his nightly track
To the King's Head,
And left your door ajar; which I
Observed in passing by,
And thought it neighborly to give you notice."
"Ten thousand thanks; how very few get,
In time of danger,
Such kind attention from a stranger!
Assuredly, that fellow's throat is
Doomed to a final drop at Newgate:
He knows, too, (the unconscionable elf!)
That there 's no soul at home except myself."
"Indeed," replied the stranger (looking grave),
"Then he 's a double knave;
He knows that rogues and thieves by scores
Nightly beset unguarded doors:
And see, how easily might one
Of these domestic foes,
Even beneath your very nose,
Perform his knavish tricks;
Enter your room, as I have done,
Blow out your candles—thus—and thus—
Pocket your silver candlesticks,
And—walk off—thus"—
So said, so done; he made no more remark
Nor waited for replies,
But marched off with his prize,
Leaving the gouty merchant in the dark.

New England

There's the fragment of a story – barely a folktale – about a kingdom on the shore of the Black Sea called "England". It's an odd little saga kernel.

Basically, in the 11th Century, a group of Saxons fled the Norman invasion of England by putting to sea. They raided their way through the Mediterranean, until they came to the aid of the Emperor of Constantinople. In exchange for their service he granted them lands on the Black Sea coast.

There are only two sources for the story. The earliest is Chronicon Universale Anonymi Laudunensis which was written by an English monk i Picardy, and covers the history of the world until 1219. Note the suspcious date, for Ars Magica purposes. The other is the Játvarðar Saga which is an Icelandic saga about the, fictionalised, life of Edward the Confessor. It was written in the 14th Century, and may have drawn on the previously-mentioned book for its core details, elaborating them.

The saga is a little more prolix. Basically Siward of Glouxester leads the people who had stood again the Normans into exile. In the Pircardian book he's called Standardus, because it's in Latin. They are lead by three earls and eight barons, and fill a fleet of 350 (or 245) ships. On their way south they plunder Ceuta in Africa, then seize the Balearic Islands. Proceeding to Sicily (or perhaps Sardinia), they continue to cause trouble, until they heard Constantinople is under siege.

The English arrive and break the siege. Alexios I Komnenos, the Emporer, offers to take them all on as royal bodyguards. He died in 1118, which gives us a date range for the story. This is apparently not an origin story for the Varangian Guard, although some of the English do stay on to join that group. The rest are granted land that the Empire had previously lost, six days sail from the capital. They took it by force, then sent for Hungarian priests (as the didn't want to embrace Eastern Orthodoxy). The towns in New England were named after those in the old country: the largest being called London. In Latin their area is called Nova Anglia, and they are refered to as the Angli orientales (eastern English), The Chronicon adds that they killed an Imperial messenger sent to demand tribute, which caused their bretheren who had remained in the capital to flee to the new homeland. They then took up piracy.

Where the English settled is an open question. Oderic Vitalis has some of them in a town called Civiltot in Anatolia. Later historians have suggested the current city of Novorossiysk was an English town., called Susaco in period. Susaco clearly existed: it's on trading maps, but there's great doubt that it's the name "Sussex" translated into Greek. The maps also show a river north-east of Susaco, called Londina, which is claimed as "London". Christine Fell mentions that the Vulan River might be the Londina, although it is not in the correct location compared to modern Novorossiysk .

This puts them on the very edge of the Crimea. On the same maps there are also two cities with names referring to Varangians on the Crimean Peninsula, and one at the mouth of the Don, the river that empties into the Sea of Azov. This gives them effective control of the Kerch Strait and control of the trade route down the Don to Constantinople.

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A final historical note is that the Pope sent ambassadors to the Mongols in 1241, and they passed through this area, describing the people as "Saxi", noting they were Christians, fierce warriors, and lived in fortified cities. This keeps the settlements active well past the Ars Magica start date.

If you have a covenant in Stonehenge, which is a popular choice for new groups, you might consider that the emigration to the East was a covenant fleeing the Tytalus-inspired Normans. Alternatively, a covenant in the far east and your own covenant might be linked: an emigree may have taken an Arcane Connection, so that the two groups are able to communicate, or event travel between sites.

A spring covenant sent to Eastern England might prove interesting. At home you have the English culture, which is readily understood by most players, but outside the covenant you have Tartar magicians, Mongol shapeshifters, Russian forest spirits and the ruins of the Roman province of Cherson. Across the sea is the disrupted Theban Tribunal, and even closer is the proffered, but habituating, assistance of the Tremere.

Two ways to defy maps

I was listening to Journeys to Baghdad by Charles S Brooks, and it reminded me of an idea I had for Ars Magica. In 1220 there are no modern, topographic maps. There are way-maps, which look, to me, a little like the route maps of subways, and there are portolans, which are sailing angles and times. The way we think about space is not the way our characters think about space. Mythic Europe is, to an Australian, a tiny space, as I mentioned in one of the very first episodes.

I've been toying with this idea of maps since I heard the musical Fun Home. My favourite lyric from it is in "Maps", in which the narrator sings she could draw a circle that her father lived his life inside. In a very short space, Brooks covers the Mercere and the Merinita view of maps.

The following was released into the public domain through Librivox by Christine Lehman. The illustration is from the original book, which was published in 1915.

In what pleasurable mystery would we live were it not for maps! If I chance on the name of a town I have visited, I locate it on a map. I may not actually get down the atlas and put my finger on the name, but at least I picture to myself its lines and contour and judge its miles in inches. And thereby for a thing of ink and cardboard I have banished from the world its immensity and mystery. But if there were no maps—what then? By other devices I would have to locate it. I would say that it came at the end of some particular day's journey; that it lies in the twilight at the conclusion of twenty miles of dusty road; that it lies one hour nightward of a blow-out. I would make it neighbor to an appetite gratified and a thirst assuaged, a cool bath, a lazy evening with starlight and country sounds. Is not this better than a dot on a printed page?

That is the town, I would say, where we had the mutton chops and where we heard the bullfrogs on the bridge. Or that town may be circumstanced in cherry pie, a comical face at the next table, a friendly dog with hair-trigger tail, or some immortal glass of beer on a bench outside a road-inn. These things make that town as a flame in the darkness, a flame on a hillside to overtop my course. Many years can go grinding by without obliterating the pleasant sight of its flare. Or maybe the town is so intermingled with dismal memories that no good comes of too particularly locating it. Then Tony Lumpkin's advice on finding Mr. Hardcastle's house is enough. "It's a damn'd long, dark, boggy, dirty, dangerous way." And let it go at that.

Maps are toadies to the thoroughfares. They shower their attentions on the wide pavements, holding them up to observation, marking them in red, and babbling and prattling obsequiously about them, meanwhile snubbing with disregard all the lanes and bypaths. They are cockney and are interested in showing only the highroads between cities, and in consequence neglect all tributary loops and windings. In a word, they are against the jog-trot countryside and conspire with the signposts against all loitering and irregularity.

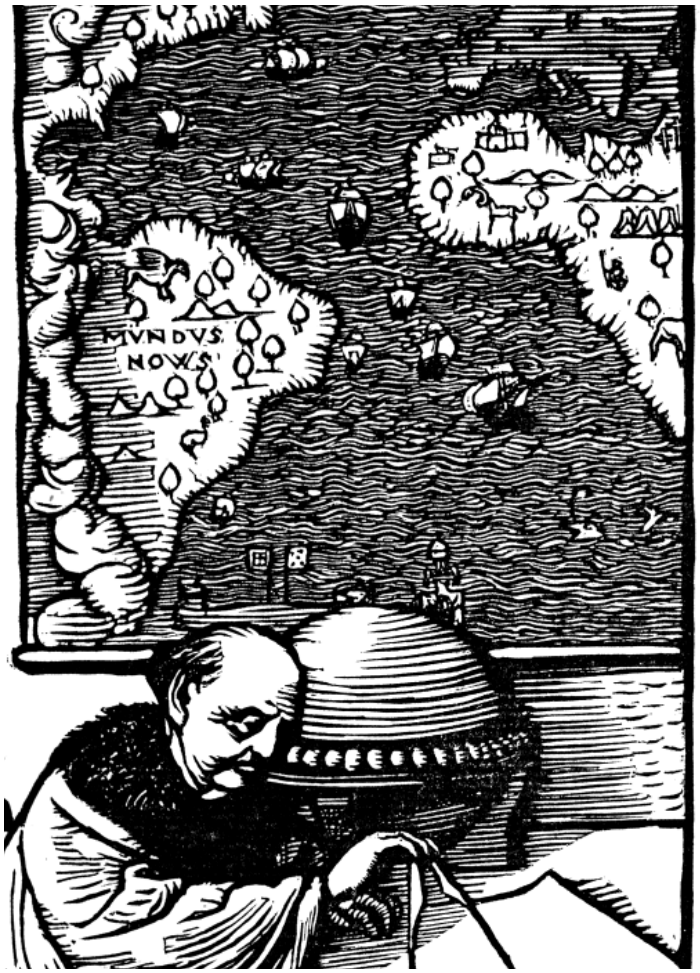
As for me, I do not like a straight thoroughfare. To travel such a road is like passing a holiday with a man who is going about his business. Idle as you are, vacant of purpose, alert for distraction, he must keep his eyes straight ahead and he must attend to the business in hand. I like a road that is at heart a vagabond, which loiters in the shade and turns its head on occasion to look around the corner of a hill, which will seek out obscure villages even though it requires a zigzag course up a hillside, which follows a river for the very love of its company and humors its windings, which trots alongside and listens to its ripple and then crosses, sans bridge, like a schoolboy, with its toes in the water. I love a road which goes with the easy, rolling gait of a sailor ashore. It has no thought of time and it accepts all the vagaries of your laziness. I love a road which weaves itself into eddies of eager traffic before the door of an inn, and stops a minute at the drinking trough because it has heard the thirst in your horse's whinny; and afterwards it bends its head on the hillside for a last look at the kindly spot. Ah, but the vagabond cannot remain long on the hills. Its best are its lower levels. So down it dips. The descent is easy for roads and cart wheels and vagabonds and much else; until in the evening it hears again the murmur of waters, and its journey has ended....

A monk uses dividers, a map and a globe are behind him. Story-writers have nearly always been the foes of maps, finding in them a kind of cramping of their mental legs. And in consequence they have struck upon certain devices for getting off the map and away from its precise and restricting bigotry. Davy fell asleep. It was Davy, you remember, who grew drowsy one winter afternoon before the fire and sailed away with the goblin in his grandfather's clock. Robinson Crusoe was driven off his bearings by stress of weather at sea. This is a popular device for eluding the known world. Whenever in your novel you come on a sentence like this—On the third night it came on to blow and that night and the three succeeding days and nights we ran close-reefed before the tempest—whenever you come on a sentence like that, you may know that the author feels pinched and cramped by civilization, and is going to regale you with some adventures of his uncharted imagination which are likely to be worth your attention.

Then there was Sentimental Tommy! Do you remember how he came to find the Enchanted Street? It happened that there was a parade, "an endless row of policemen walking in single file, all with the right leg in the air at the same time, then the left leg. Seeing at once that they were after him, Tommy ran, ran, ran until in turning a corner he found himself wedged between two legs. He was of just sufficient size to fill the aperture, but after a momentary lock he squeezed through, and they proved to be the gate into an enchanted land." In that lies the whole philosophy of going without a map. There is magic in the world then. There are surprises. You do not

know what is ahead. And you cannot tell what is about to happen. You move in a proper twilight of events. After that Tommy went looking for policemen's legs. Doubtless there were some details of the wizardry that he overlooked, as never again could he come out on the Enchanted Street in quite the same fashion. Alice had a different method. She fell down a rabbit-hole and thereby freed herself from some very irksome lessons and besides met several interesting people, including a Duchess. Alice may be considered the very John Cabot of the rabbit-hole. Before her time it was known only to rabbits, wood-chucks, and dogs on holidays, whose noses are muddy with poking. But since her time all this is changed. Now it is known as the portal of adventure. It is the escape from the plane of life into its third dimension.

Children have the true understanding of maps. They never yield slavishly to them. If they want a pirates' den they put it where it is handiest, behind the couch in the sitting-room, just beyond the glimmer of firelight. If they want an Indian village, where is there a better place than in the black space under the stairs, where it can be reached without great fatigue after supper? Farthest Thule may be behind the asparagus bed. The North Pole itself may be decorated by Annie on Monday afternoon with the week's wash. From whatever house you hear a child's laugh, if it be a real child and therefore a great poet, you may know that from the garret window, even as you pass, Sinbad, adrift on the Indian Ocean, may be looking for a sail, and that the forty thieves huddle, daggers drawn, in the coal hole. Then it is a fine thing for a child to run away to sea—well, really not to sea, but down the street, past gates and gates and gates, until it comes to the edge of the known and sees a collie or some such terrible thing. I myself have fine recollection of running away from a farmhouse. Maybe I did not get more than a hundred paces, but I looked on some broad heavens, saw a new mystery in the night's shadows, and just before I became afraid I had a taste of a new life.



The Buried Wings of Bavaria

I was listening to *Dragons of the Air: An Account of Extinct Flying Reptiles* by H. G. Seele and a vis source emerged.

In Bavaria, near Solenhofen, there is a layer of white, lithographic limestone which is deep within the earth. It contains the bones of small wyverns, perhaps three feet across. Their wings contain Auram vis. These wyverns lack the scorpion sting common to their tribe, and have something almost like a hand at the front to of their wings. Perhaps they are a hybrid of the wyvern and dragon types?

The wings are strange, and characters skilled in Animal will notice their peculiarity. There are only so many forms of wing, and we can categorise the endoskeletal ones by comparing them to human hands. Bats have a webbing between four fingers, with a thumb extending from the front of the wing. This form is often followed in dragons, which is why they, too, have a claw at the front of their wings, and their wings that have obvious internal bone supports. Birds have three sets of phalanges within their wing creating a plane. These parallel the second, third and fourth human fingers. Some dragons have these sorts of wings: they are generally feathered.

The Bavarian wyverns, the deepest buried source of Auram known to the Order, differ. They are not as reptilian as the batwinged kind of dragon. They have extended skulls and gracile skeletons like birds, but with conical teeth in their elongated beaks. They are not, however, winged like the feathered serpents. They have a three fingered claw on the front of each wing. The wing's span is supported by a ridiculously enlarged fourth finger at its fore-edge.

Story hooks

No Hermetic wizard has, yet, used a ritual to create one of these dragons. The Tremere would like to, because they are always looking for odd animals to reuse as weapons and tools. The Bjornaer would also like to, because they want to understand how such strange wings work.

Auram vis is generally used to alter weather, but there is one group who prize it in military applications. There is a small lineage of lightning magi who dwell in the Alps, and are rumoured to be the core of House Guernicus's defacto standing army, made up of the hoplite stations throughout the order.

Yeats: The Wind Among the Reeds

Oh that it would come to this! 250 episodes in and we're finally doing some WB Yeats. Yeats is a hereditary enemy of Ars Magica authors, because he was part of the Celtic Twilight, the late 19th century / early 20th century movement which made our fairies all twee and weird.

However some of his material is useful: some of his characters can be stolen. You will notice his most famous fairy poem, which is *The Stolen Child* isn't among these stories, because these all come from *The Wind Among the Reeds* which is it one of his earlier works. If you enjoy these poems *The Stolen Child*, particularly the Lorenna McKennit version, is well worth listening to.

The recordings used were released into the public domain through LibriVox. Thanks again to the recorders and production teams.

Song of the wandering Aengus

I went out to the hazel wood,
Because a fire was in my head,
And cut and peeled a hazel wand,
And hooked a berry to a thread;
And when white moths were on the wing,
And moth-like stars were flickering out,
I dropped the berry in a stream
And caught a little silver trout.

When I had laid it on the floor
I went to blow the fire a-flame,
But something rustled on the floor,
And someone called me by my name:
It had become a glimmering girl
With apple blossom in her hair
Who called me by my name and ran
And faded through the brightening air.

Though I am old with wandering
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,
I will find out where she has gone,
And kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk among long dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done,
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun.

Nympholepts are (generally) men who have been initiated into mysteries by nymphs. Aengus has been cursed to wander and waste his life seeking a fae maiden. He's suitable as a player character or a useful as a contact for Magi who need to know how reach strange Faerie places.

Acording to Yeats its based on a Greek story, so Aengus could turn up anywhere in Mythic Europe.

The Hosting of the Sidhe

The host is riding from Knocknarea
And over the grave of Clooth-na-bare;
Caolte tossing his burning hair
And Niamh calling Away, come away:
Empty your heart of its mortal dream.
The winds awaken, the leaves whirl round,
Our cheeks are pale, our hair is unbound,
Our breasts are heaving, our eyes are a-gleam,
Our arms are waving, our lips are apart;
And if any gaze on our rushing band,
We come between him and the deed of his hand,
We come between him and the hope of his heart.
The host is rushing 'twixt night and day,
And where is there hope or deed as fair?
Caolte tossing his burning hair,
And Niamh calling Away, come away.
The golden apples of the sun.

The initially obvious plot hooks are he two characters who are described. Beyond that it's useful in that it gives us material about how the Faerie Host looks. Generally the Host that we've used in Ars Magica has been either a sort of wild thing like Hearne's Hunt or a chivalric thing with knights in silver armor prancing about the place. A point to notice here is that the Sidhe refers to fairies can also refer, according to Yates, to the wind. They always have streaming locks. They always have dishevelled clothes. When people see whirlwinds in the street they believe that's a sidhe passing by, so they don't look at them. There is strangely a similar custom among some Australian Aborigines but they believe that the creature that is inside the whirlwind is a sort of human cassowary hybrid....sorry I'm wandering.

This gives us a different way of portraying the Sidhe as an elemental force – hence the term that turns up in urban fiction all the time: the Queen of Air and Darkness.

The Cap and Bells

IThe jester walked in the garden:
The garden had fallen still;
He bade his soul rise upward
And stand on her window-sill.
It rose in a straight blue garment,
When owls began to call:
It had grown wise-tongued by thinking
Of a quiet and light footfall;
But the young queen would not listen;
She rose in her pale night gown;
She drew in the heavy casement
And pushed the latches down.
He bade his heart go to her,
When the owls called out no more;
In a red and quivering garment
It sang to her through the door.
It had grown sweet-tongued by dreaming,
Of a flutter of flower-like hair;
But she took up her fan from the table
And waved it off on the air.
'I have cap and bells,' he pondered,
'I will send them to her and die;'
And when the morning whitened
He left them where she went by.
She laid them upon her bosom,
Under a cloud of her hair,
And her red lips sang them a love song:
Till stars grew out of the air.
She opened her door and her window,
And the heart and the soul came through,
To her right hand came the red one,
To her left hand came the blue.
They set up a noise like crickets,
A chattering wise and sweet,
And her hair was a folded flower
And the quiet of love in her feet.

I'd like to flag this as an example both of ekstasis, the ability to spiritually wander, and as a source for the Ghostly Warder Virtue. After the jester dies he becomes the Ghostly Warder of the Queen (possibly because he has True Love which allows him to transcend death),

Aedh Wishes His Lover Were Dead

Were you but lying cold and dead,
And lights were paling out of the West,
You would come hither, and bend your head,
And I would lay my head on your breast;
And you would murmur tender words,
Forgiving me, because you were dead:
Nor would you rise and hasten away,
Though you have the will of the wild birds,
But know your hair was bound and wound
About the stars and moon and sun:
O would beloved that you lay
Under the dock-leaves in the ground,
While lights were paling one by one.

Aedh Pleads With the Elemental Powers

The Powers whose name and shape no living creature knows
Have pulled the Immortal Rose;
And though the Seven Lights bowed in their dance and wept,
The Polar Dragon slept,
His heavy rings uncoiled from glimmering deep to deep:
When will he wake from sleep?
Great Powers of falling wave and wind and windy fire,
With your harmonious choir[58]
Encircle her I love and sing her into peace,
That my old care may cease;
Unfold your flaming wings and cover out of sight
The nets of day and night.
Dim Powers of drowsy thought, let her no longer be
Like the pale cup of the sea,
When winds have gathered and sun and moon burned dim
Above its cloudy rim;
But let a gentle silence wrought with music flow
Whither her footsteps go.

In Ars Magica the elemental powers – strictly speaking – are a type of demon. We might stretch it, because he mentions a couple of constellations, to say that instead these are magical spirits. This enchanter is asking the magical spirits to protect his beloved – to give her magic resistance and other Virtues, such that her life is more comfortable .

That Polar Dragon though – it really does need statistics.

Mongan Thinks of His Past Greatness

I have drunk ale from the Country of the Young
And weep because I know all things now:
I have been a hazel tree and they hung
The Pilot Star and the Crooked Plough
Among my leaves in times out of mind:
I became a rush that horses tread:
I became a man, a hater of the wind,
Knowing one, out of all things, alone, that his head[62]
Would not lie on the breast or his lips on the hair
Of the woman that he loves, until he dies;
Although the rushes and the fowl of the air
Cry of his love with their pitiful cries.

One of the mystic initiations – in certain faerie traditions – are illusory lives spent either in Faerie or in a sacred place. The character lives as a different creature. In Lycaneon, for example, there are people who were transformed into wolves. In other places people are transformed into trees. Some people suggest that the Druids go through cyclical reincarnation so House Diedne could be showing up any time now (see Sub Rosa issue 13).

I'd just play this straight: a lot of the spiritual necomancers we've seen from the Order's history are deeply disturbed and antisocial individuals. One might hire the PCs to kill someone they love just to make them easier to communicate with, or someone they are fixated on, just to make them, more biddable. If the PCs shelter the victim, that's the Enemy Flaw / Hook.

Kingsley: The Ballad of Earl Haldan's Daughter

One of the very first things I wrote for Ars Magica was a fairy queen with a courtship based on a series of impossible tasks. I'd stolen it from a folk song called *Scarborough Fair.* I've been looking for a way to bring that back in and reskin it, without being obvious, but times being what they are...a little view behind the curtain.

I found something that I think could be the same sort of creature. Here is a princess (or perhaps a fairy queen) and to wed her you must give her a mantle that is trimmed with the hair of other princesses.

I this scenario, I'm not sure if she's the fairy, or the knight who comes to court her is. Alternatively, the knight might be a magus who is collecting vis.

This recording of the poem was released into the public domain through Librivox. Thanks again to the reader (it's Sonia, who is one of my favourite readers).

Statistics eventually.

It was Earl Haldan's daughter,
She looked across the sea;
She looked across the water;
And long and loud laughed she:
'The locks of six princesses
Must be my marriage fee,
So hey bonny boat, and ho bonny boat!
Who comes a wooing me?'

It was Earl Haldan's daughter,
She walked along the sand;
When she was aware of a knight so fair,
Came sailing to the land.
His sails were all of velvet,
His mast of beaten gold,
And 'Hey bonny boat, and ho bonny boat!
Who saileth here so bold?'

'The locks of five princesses
I won beyond the sea;
I clipt their golden tresses,
To fringe a cloak for thee.
One handful yet is wanting,
But one of all the tale;
So hey bonny boat, and ho bonny boat!
Furl up thy velvet sail!'

He leapt into the water,
That rover young and bold;
He gript Earl Haldan's daughter,
He clipt her locks of gold:
'Go weep, go weep, proud maiden,
The tale is full to-day.
Now hey bonny boat, and ho bonny boat!
Sail Westward ho! away!'

Henry: The New "Bard's Legacy"

A brief one this time – another little poem.

My plan for this one is to imagine a scribe or Bonisagus magus that has haunted or possessed an ink bottle so that when the player characters (or anyone) uses it they have the Inventive Genius Virtue. I'll be statting that up eventually, as I catch up on this backlog.

The reader is, again, Sonia from Librivox. Thanks again.

(Air: Bard's Legacy.)

WheN in death I shall calm recline,
Oh! bear my watch to my mistress dear;
Tell her I rose when it pointed Nine,
On every morning all round the year.
Bid her not shed one tear of sorrow
To sully a gem so precious and bright,
But a pocket of crimson velvet borrow,
And hang it beside her bed every night.
When the light of mine eyes is o'er,
Take my specs to Optician's Hall,
And let the porter that answers the door,
Show them to all that happen to call.
Then if some bard, who roams forsaken,
Should beg a peep through them in passing along,
Oh ! let one thought of their master awaken
Your warmest smile for the child of song.
Keep this inkbottle, now o'erflowing,
To write your letters when I 'm laid low;
Never, Oh! never one drop bestowing
On any who how to write don't know.
But if some pale, wan -wasted scholar
Shall dip his goosequill at its brim,
Then, then my spirit around shall hover,
And hallow each jet black drop for him.

Thoughts on Masks

I've been trying to find a way of modelling mask magic for many years. There's an arena in Istria, in the Transyvanian book, which has an ancient Roman theatre, for example, where if you pick up the actors' masks you are possessed by faerie spirits and gain their powers. It was a way of bringing superheroes into the game which I never fully explored.

For a long time I've thought about mask magic. I don't have a good name for it, but it occurs to me that it should be called Hypocritical Magic because a hypokrite was a an actor, or a person who figuratively wore a mask, so this means that the Tytalus magicians who take on an entirely new persona are hypocrites.

We have three works today. I see the first one as a Criamon magician, perhaps the second one as a Tytalus wearing a persona (although be cautious – it's from Jonathan Swift so it's full of misogyny) and the third one is a person who, to take the poem literally, is using hypocrite magic.

The three recordings come from Librivox. Thanks to the readers and their production teams.

Prologue to *The Madman* by Khalil Gibran

You ask me how I became a madman. It happened thus: One day, long before many gods were born, I woke from a deep sleep and found all my masks were stolen,—the seven masks I have fashioned and worn in seven lives, —I ran maskless through the crowded streets shouting, "Thieves, thieves, the cursed thieves."

Men and women laughed at me and some ran to their houses in fear of me.

And when I reached the market place, a youth standing on a house-top cried, "He is a madman." I looked up to behold him; the sun kissed my own naked face for the first time. For the first time the sun kissed my own naked face and my soul was inflamed with love for the sun, and I wanted my masks no more. And as if in a trance I cried, "Blessed, blessed are the thieves who stole my masks."

Thus I became a madman.

And I have found both freedom and safety in my madness; the freedom of loneliness and the safety from being understood, for those who understand us enslave something in us.

But let me not be too proud of my safety. Even a Thief in a jail is safe from another thief.

I'd take the poet literally here. The seven masks become treasures. Each of them has powers and if you assemble all of them you can recreate the god that has become the madman.

We wear the mask by Paul Laurence Dunbar

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask!

To take the poem literally, there's a body horror element here. A previous episode dealt with very prosthetic limbs. Could this mask be a faerie prosthetic face? A thing that interacts with the world on your behalf feeding on your joys and sorrows, so that they are never fully expressed to the people outside?

A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed by Johnathan Swift

iCorinna, pride of Drury-Lane
For whom no shepherd sighs in vain;
Never did Covent Garden boast
So bright a battered, strolling toast;
No drunken rake to pick her up,
No cellar where on tick to sup;
Returning at the midnight hour;
Four stories climbing to her bow'r;
Then, seated on a three-legged chair,
Takes off her artificial hair:
Now, picking out a crystal eye,
She wipes it clean, and lays it by.
Her eye-brows from a mouse's hide,
Stuck on with art on either side,
Pulls off with care, and first displays 'em,
Then in a play-book smoothly lays 'em.
Now dexterously her plumpers draws,
That serve to fill her hollow jaws.
Untwists a wire; and from her gums
A set of teeth completely comes.
Pulls out the rags contrived to prop
Her flabby dugs and down they drop.
Proceeding on, the lovely goddess
Unlaces next her steel-ribbed bodice;
Which by the operator's skill,
Press down the lumps, the hollows fill,
Up goes her hand, and off she slips
The bolsters that supply her hips.
With gentlest touch, she next explores
Her shankers, issues, running sores,
Effects of many a sad disaster;
And then to each applies a plaister.
But must, before she goes to bed,
Rub off the dawbs of white and red;
And smooth the furrows in her front
With greasy paper stuck upon't.
She takes a bolus ere she sleeps;
And then between two blankets creeps.
With pains of love tormented lies;
Or if she chance to close her eyes,
Of Bridewell and the Compter dreams,
And feels the lash, and faintly screams;
Or, by a faithless bully drawn,
At some hedge-tavern lies in pawn;
Or to Jamaica seems transported,
Alone, and by no planter courted;
Or, near Fleet-Ditch's oozy brinks,
Surrounded with a hundred stinks,
Belated, seems on watch to lie,
And snap some cully passing by;
Or, struck with fear, her fancy runs
On watchmen, constables and duns,
From whom she meets with frequent rubs;
But, never from religious clubs;
Whose favor she is sure to find,
Because she pays 'em all in kind.
Corinna wakes. A dreadful sight!
Behold the ruins of the night!
A wicked rat her plaster stole,
Half eat, and dragged it to his hole.
The crystal eye, alas, was missed;
And puss had on her plumpers pissed.
A pigeon picked her issue-peas;
And Shock her tresses filled with fleas.
The nymph, tho' in this mangled plight,
Must ev'ry morn her limbs unite.
But how shall I describe her arts
To recollect the scattered parts?
Or shew the anguish, toil, and pain,
Of gath'ring up herself again?
The bashful muse will never bear
In such a scene to interfere.
Corinna in the morning dizened,
Who sees, will spew; who smells, be poison'd.

I like the idea of starting up Corina as character who has legendary beauty but only so long as she uses her arts to maintain her facade. She can act as a completely separate character when unmasked.

It occurs to me that that anyone who has the same set of materials called theoretically be Corina, to the public at least, and so it may be a shared persona. In time the shared persona may become so well known that the props, absent of a human within them, can walk the streets being Corina

Henley: Song of the Sword

Eventually this will become a creature. Originally I was going to have it as a Spirit which could talk psychically but now that I look at it again I think this is actually a demon of pride: a tiny false prophet that you carry around with you, which makes it a familiar. This poem was originally dedicated to Rudyard Kipling in the late 1800s. It's been read into the public domain by a LibriVox reader (I think it's Phil Schiff – Thanks again to Phil).

There are two things I'd like you to think about. The person writing this seriously thought that this was true. They are utterly unironic in their belief that God created swords for the purpose of making the world a better place by massacring vast numbers of people, so that the world oozes like a honeycomb.

That being said Ars Maagica is not the game of what the Victorian English believed: it's about what medieval people thought. Your average medieval peasant, if handed a sword and told to just randomly massacre people, would probably say "Ah! This has come from Satan!"

The Sword
Singing—
The voice of the Sword
from the heart of the Sword
Clanging imperious
Forth from Time's battlements
His ancient and triumphing Song.

In the beginning,
Ere God inspired Himself
Into the clay thing
Thumbed to His image,
The vacant, the naked shell
Soon to be Man:

Thoughtful He pondered it,
Prone there and impotent,
Fragile, inviting
Attack and discomfiture:
Then, with a smile—
As He heard in the Thunder
That laughed over Eden
The voice of the Trumpet,
The iron Beneficence,
Calling His dooms
To the Winds of the world—
Stooping, He drew
On the sand with His finger
A shape for a sign
Of His way to the eyes
That in wonder should waken,
For a proof of His will
To the breaking intelligence:

That was the birth of me:
I am the Sword.

Hard and bleak, keen and cruel,
Short-hilted, long-shafted,
I froze into steel:
And the blood of my elder,
His hand on the hafts of me,
Sprang like a wave
In the wind, as the sense
Of his strength grew to ecstasy,
Glowed like a coal
At the throat of the furnace,
As he knew me and named me

The War-Thing, the Comrade,
Father of honour
And giver of kingship,
The fame-smith, the song-master,

Bringer of women
On fire at his hands
For the pride of fulfilment,
Priest (saith the Lord)
Of his marriage with victory.
Ho! then, the Trumpet,
Handmaid of heroes,
Calling the peers
To the place of espousal!
Ho! then, the splendour
And sheen of my ministry,
Clothing the earth
With a livery of lightnings!
Ho! then, the music
Of battles in onset
And ruining armours,
And God's gift returning
In fury to God!

Glittering and keen
As the song of the winter stars,
Ho! then, the sound
Of my voice, the implacable
Angel of Destiny!—
I am the Sword.

Heroes, my children,
Follow, O follow me,
Follow, exulting
In the great light that breaks
From the sacred companionship:
Thrust through the fatuous,
Thrust through the fungous brood
Spawned in my shadow
And gross with my gift!
Thrust through, and hearken,
O hark, to the Trumpet,

The Virgin of Battles,
Calling, still calling you
Into the Presence,
Sons of the Judgment,
Pure wafts of the Will!

Edged to annihilate,
Hilted with government,
Follow, O follow me
Till the waste places
All the grey globe over
Ooze, as the honeycomb
Drips, with the sweetness
Distilled of my strength:
And, teeming in peace
Through the wrath of my coming,
They give back in beauty
The dread and the anguish
They had of me visitant!

Follow, O follow, then,
Heroes, my harvesters!
Where the tall grain is ripe
Thrust in your sickles:
Stripped and adust
In a stubble of empire,
Scything and binding
The full sheaves of sovranty:
Thus, O thus gloriously,
Shall you fulfil yourselves:
Thus, O thus mightily,
Show yourselves sons of mine—
Yea, and win grace of me:
I am the Sword.

I am the feast-maker:
Hark, through a noise
Of the screaming of eagles,

Hark how the Trumpet,
The mistress of mistresses,
Calls, silver-throated
And stern, where the tables
Are spread, and the work
Of the Lord is in hand!
Driving the darkness,
Even as the banners
And spears of the Morning;
Sifting the nations,
The slag from the metal,
The waste and the weak
From the fit and the strong;
And stern, where the tables
Are spread, and the work

Of the Lord is in hand!
Driving the darkness,
Even as the banners
And spears of the Morning;
Sifting the nations,
The slag from the metal,
The waste and the weak
From the fit and the strong;
Fighting the brute,
The abysmal Fecundity;
Checking the gross,
Multitudinous blunders,
The groping, the purblind

Excesses in service,
Of the Womb universal,
The absolute Drudge;
Changing the charactry
Carved on the World,
The miraculous gem
In the seal-ring that burns
On the hand of the Master—
Yea! and authority
Flames through the dim,
Unappeasable Grisliness
Prone down the nethermost
Chasms of the Void;
Clear singing, clean slicing;
Sweet spoken, soft finishing;
Making death beautiful,
Life but a coin
To be staked in the pastime

Whose playing is more
Than the transfer of being;
Arch-anarch, chief builder,
Prince and evangelist,
I am the Will of God:
I am the Sword.

The Sword
Singing—
The voice of the Sword
from the heart of the Sword
Clanging majestical,
As from the starry-staired
Courts of the primal Supremacy,
His high, irresistible song.

Mythic Venice : Surrounding Powers

Before we start cataloguing the mysteries of Venice, we need to look at the powers which surround the city, and the history that embodies.

Venice was built by refugees, who took to the islands of their lagoon to avoid the waves of barbarians who entered Italy as the Empire in the West declined. They were not, however, conquered by these wandering people. It's important to Venice's identity that it is Rome Unfallen. For a long time Venice was, in some sense, distantly beholden to the Roman Emperor in Constantinople.

It is the only part of Italy that is explicitly not in the Carolingian Empire. Charlemange's son Pepin attempted to invade Venice, on his father's orders. He was able to take a sliver of their land, but he was unable to force their surrender. This is thought to have forced the Venetians deeper into the lagoon, around the Rialto area, which is now the centre of their government. When he withdrew, Pepin, and his father, agreed that Venice belonged to the Empire of the East.

It's in the Roman Tribunal because, I presume, whoever laid out the Tribunal maps just put all of modern Italy together, much as the Langedoc Tribunal is in the wrong place, and the Normandy Tribunal doesn't include Norman possessions in either Aquitaine or England.

Although Venice is beholden to the Emperors, they are far away, and for many centuries now, have not really had the capacity to punish Venetian insubordination. The Venetians have the last republic in the West, excepting the Order. Power is effectively held by an elaborately constrained oligarchy of wealthy families. The Doge, the leader of Venice, is deliberately checked at virtually every turn, and the idea that the role might be inherited is abominable. Technically he's a duke of the Eastern Empire, which grants him a certain amount of magic resistance.

Spiritual Powers

The Venetian Church is not a prominent landholder, so its potentates have a lot less money than elsewhere. Lacking money, they also lack military power. Venice sits out the Investiture Controversy, which pits the Pope against the western Emperor. It supplies aid to the Lombard League and Pope surreptitiously,, but acts as the broker between the two sides. The battles end in the Treaty of Venice. in 1177, where Venice's allies basically get what they want.

Venice's resident bishop is at Castello. It is part of the Patriarchate (essentially an archibishopric) of Grado. The Patriarchs of Grado have done business from Venice itself for decades, from a church which would otherwise be in Castello, and this causes tension. Grado is also in feud with the patriarchate of Aquileia, from which is was formed by a, now healed, schism centuries ago, and the Patriarchate of Zara (Zadar). Technically Grado is senior to Zara, but it is weird for an archbishop to be inferior to another archbishop – unique in Italy – and the Croato-Hungarians keep trying to be free of it.

Temporal Powers

More directly relevant to the history of the Venetians is city of Ravenna. It was the headquarters of the final Western Roman Emperors, and also the Byzantine governor of Italy, during the periodic re-establishments of Imperial rule. There are several occasions when the ruler of the Italian mainland uses the area around Ravenna to try to invade Venice.

Venice has commercial rivals in Genoa and Pisa, but these are on west coast of Italy. They don't challenge Venice's hold over the trading lanes in the Adriatic. There are three main sites of significance here that Venice needs to worry about: Zara, Bari, and Corfu.

Zara is a city on the Dalmatian coast, in lands which the Venetians claim trading rights to. It is rebellious, is a nest of pirates, and tries to play Venice, Hungary and Constantinople off against each other. When the leaders of the Fourth Crusade were unable to pay for the ships and supplies they had ordered from the Venetians, they took the sack of the city of Zara in trade, eliminating this rival.

Bari is the second most powerful trade port in the Adriatic, after Venice. It has many of the advantages of Venice, without the long sail up the Adriatic. It was the final fortress of the Byzantine empire in southern Italy before it was taken by the Normans in the 11th Century. In 1220 it is a rising power: the Holy Roman Emperor is Frederick II, king of Sicily, and this is one of his great ports. A sufficiently strong Bari could bottle Venice inside the Adriatic.

Corfu is an island of the coast of mainland Greece, at the base of the Adriatic. Like Bari, a strong fleet based there can disrupt Venice's trade, which happens when the Normans hold it for a time. During the Xth century, the Venetians conquered it and gave it back to the Byzantine Emperors- but after the damage to the Empire in the Fourth Crusade, it was seized first by Venice, then by Venice's rivals, the Genoese. Things get complicated here, but after about a century, Corfu becomes Venice's main naval base – they simply can't allow their enemies to hold it. This is a decisive shift, because Venice has previously not wanted to be an colonial power.

Venice : City of Women

When I originally designed the Venetian episodes, I was going to write a cumulative story like "Thirty Objects of Desire" or the Rosaline stories. As such there was a twist at the end and I'd been keeping the twist to myself. Since this is now going to become a supplement, somewhat like the Cornish supplement, there's no point in keeping the twist to myself.

It's this: the city of Venice has – behind each corner and under the water of the lagoon – a parallel, mirror city – called Serenissima. Serenissima is ruled by a Doge, but the Doge is ruled by a faerie, mentioned only once in Ars Magica literature. It's called the Master of Games, in Latin the Magister Ludi.

I put together the Magister Ludi because I wanted something at the upper end of the Might frame that is given for the design of characters. The frame tops out at 75 Might. For magical creatures that's the Great Drake of the Pyrenees. Saint Mary is as powerful as saints may become, and the Dukes of Hell that are able to walk the earth reach 75 Might. For faeries, originally, it was Hermes, but Hermes Who Steals Away can be simulated with a far less powerful creature.

I didn't get the chance to completely unfold his backstory. He claims to be what's left of the Founder Tytalus. He went into the fae lands and was distorted by them. Now he is using the city as an engine to build a new embodiment for a queen of the fae: a powerful piece that allows whatever is in deep Arcadia to make itself known and felt in the mortal world.

Faeries are dependent on humans because they are dependent on our stories, but with a powerful piece like the Queen can force an early Renaissance. As she is dawning, anachronistic things appear in Serenissima. Faeries are forcing humans to tell original stories – the Master is changing the way we tell stories about ourselves, in turn changing the stories told about his servants, making them more powerful.

My way of collecting together material for this is, by recording a LibriVox biography of the history of the Dogeressas of Venice. I've already mentioned one of them in the story of the Rotting Princess. I was being a little bit careful and secretive there because I'm used to holding the twist until the last episode.

The husband of the Rotting Princess offered to whatever powers could save his wife whatever they wanted. In the same way that in Second Edition Ars Magica there was concern that a faerie queen of Winter was going to make a treaty with the Normans so that she could rampage across England and Aquitaine whenever she wanted, and help the English take Normandy, so by making this treaty the Doge has allowed the Master of Games to inhabit his city. That is, his Aura is coterminous with the city's borders. This is why Venice is a city of strange sights. and weird delights. and passions. It's because all of that is being distilled into the Princess of Glass who is gradually becoming more and more real in the heart of the city.

So to veer away from that I'm going to now give you a little bit of information about Venetian women that appears in the preface of the biographies of the Dogearessas. The writer over-admires the women of Venice: he seems cringy and excessive and slightly smarmy. I do apologize for that tone. As we go through we're going to look at how we can turn the items that the women regularly use into story hooks.

The women of Venice were always distinguished for their natural quickness and intelligence – this sprightliness and vivacity of manner, their talkativeness and coaxing ways, in their fondness of music song and dance. Perhaps the most characteristic talent however was their devotion to the toilet, to their love of beauty and have clothes.

The book this a sourced from is from the 19th century rather than saying toilet we now for some reason used the french toilette.

In person that were usually somewhat short of stature, but endowed with grace of carriage. Their figures, especially their bosoms, were full even to the degree of stoutness. This was in a great measure due to the softness of the nation's climate, which induced a natural and becoming indolence. Nevertheless they were vigorous in action and quite able to give a good account of themselves in marital and other squabbles.

The slightly voyeuristic tone of that aside it allows us to describe characters from Venice who are of the old families. They generally speaking are of such and such a height have eyes of such-and-such a colour.

Their features were clearly cut and yet not too severe their heads were well shaped and their eyes blue like their skies, or grey like their seas. Their hands and feet was small. Their most attractive attributes were the fair, peach-like delicacy of their skin and the brilliant luster and golden sheen of their abundant light auburn hair.

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The treatment of the skin was a speciality of the Venetian women. The use of the baths was one of their inheritances. They bathed the whole body frequently, sometimes in the sea at the Lido, but every house has its bath – in humble homes of wood or common metal, in patrician palaces of porcelain glass or silver, with the water infused with simple or exotic perfumes. One of their secrets was to remain with the whole body immersed and motionless for at least half an hour and another was they never rubbed the skin but just dabbed at it and let it dry naturally.

Then the nostrums of the masseuses art were exploited. A not uncommon custom was to lay a slice of raw veal dipped in new milk upon the face at night.

When I was a boy my family owned a butchery and the same trick placing steak upon the face was used for black eyes caused in pub fights, but moving along…This is how people who live in the middle of a marsh don't suffer negative ageing modifiers. They bathe a lot and they have a sort of folk alchemy that they use to treat their illnesses.

For richer women other artifices prevailed: puffs and powders to gently temper the epidermis or hide unsightly blotches and pigments. Rouge and others which art might most effectively color crude or innovated nature. Every woman and girl in Venice at all times painted, even the poorest of them. The cult is still practiced: you never see a woman without artificial color there. By the way I still see the true Venetian type of female beauty, sitting leisuredly under shade or shelter while some sympathetic voice reads Aristo or some other favorite poet

One very delightful attribute of Venetian women was their fragrance. They were always perfumed. Whenever a gentle Dona passed she left behind her a delicious aroma. If she paused the air around her became saturated with the sweetest odours. This seductive charm is still characteristic of the real Venetian. Her love of scent is hereditary and delightful.

We'll come back to this in a later episode but selling perfume is one way that magi can make money for their covenant without trading. Another hooks is that going to a perfume shop and sitting around, sampling different perfumes, and having a chat with your friends is a very common way for patrician women to spend their time/ This allows magicians who run such places to develop a web of contacts and to hear intriguing stories/ This habit comes from the dogaressa who became the rotting princess that is she introduced the style of socialising.

In a very real sort of way the Venetian gentledonna was a living embodiment of Venus, the fairest and sweetest of all the goddesses, hence Venice has been quite aptly called the City of Venus the city of fair women.

As a reminder Venus is a liminal creature. People think that she should be a faerie because she's a goddess, but she was born from the foam that rose up when Zeus cut off his father's genitals and threw them into the sea. She's technically a Titaness, and a member of the Magical Realm

In the 16th century the far-famed Portuguese bucchero got to Venice – little charms of sweet-smelling clay – and they very soon became every woman's treasures. The odour dispensed when a bucchero was dipped in hot water was very refreshing and resembled the aroma which arises from parched ground on a hot summer's day after a copious shower of rain.

Modern internet people call this scent "petrichor". I like the idea of these little balls of clay as magical items for illusionists, so I'm tempted to sneak them in, along with many of the other wonderful Venetian things that we can't have in 1220. That's one of the reasons why the presence of the Master of Games pushes excess a little further, a little faster, so that the material culture of Venice evolves towards what we expect a couple of hundred years later in Mythic Europe.

When dipped in essences they gave forth forever so long the sweetest of perfumes. Women wore them in their bosoms and were accustomed to place them often upon their lips, so that their kisses might be scented too.

Not only were the girls and women of Venice, the city of saints, much drawn to the general claims and duties of religion, but in particular they were exponents of some of its mayor behests. The Apostle speaks of the hair of women: it was given to them to be a protection and a glory. The Venetians exactly carried out the apostolic injunction. From the very first foundation of the river Alto away in the fifth century the women of the lagoons were accustomed to resort daily to the altane, or flat roofs of their dwellings, and they spend much time in combing and dressing their hair in the sunshine.

And now we may see where the one Kiss Ranged spell we have, Kiss of Death, comes from. The other kiss ranged effect I can think of is Kiss of the Mermaid from the Fairies book. It is also perfectly fine for people living in a city where the streets are made out of water.

So an altane – that is a rooftop – could be a ritually prepared boundary space. Since women are meant to be spending a lot of time up there anyway and no one pays much attention, why not do what the urban Magi do and create a ritual space with enormous props that boost your power?

This habit they undoubtedly inherited from their Greek ancestresses. Homer sings about the beautiful fair hair of the Greeks and he has painted the captivating Helen of Troy with abundant locks of gold. The general color of Grecian women's hair was brown, light and dark, and such naturally was the hue of Venetian women's tresses. The poets, however, made a dead set against that tint and stated their case so broadly that brown hair was regarded, with aversion, as a pertaining to traitors, murderers, and other evildoers.

Fairies, being creatures of story, will hold to this cultural value: murderous fairies will have brown hair in Venice, much in the same way that werewolf fairies have red hair in Slavic areas.

The painters took up their cue. We rarely see in the pictures of Titian, Tintoretto or Veronese women with brown hair. Auburn, or as they called it "golden", hair was the most popular, most beautiful, and most expressive. The more it glittered the better was it liked and what nature made art embellished.

As a reminder the shape and material table suggests a +4 bonus for enchantments that affect the image of the wearer of a hat.

A primitive but withal most effective device…was the superimposition upon the top of the head (the hair being welcomed out and rippling over the shoulders) of a crownless wide-brimmed straw hat called a solana (sun frame).

The brim shielded the neck and bosom whilst the sunlight, not the heat, got at the roots of the hair and blanched its growth. Every altane had its group of animated mushrooms – each woman and girl sitting thus, and ever and anon damping the exposed cuticle with a small sponge stuck at the end of a spinning spindle or some such sceptre, and dipped in tinctures.

There's a lot of space for folk magic and domestic magic here or even high alchemy.

Beneath the brim of the solana big long tooth combs of yellow tortoiseshell we use to keep the hair supple, or frizzing irons, or bones to make it curl or wave. This method was admirably effective and is still adopted privately by many a beautiful Venetian girl and buxom dame.

The shape and material bonus table gives the following: combs hair +7 beauty +5. Tortoiseshell does not appear on the table. I did write something about it a while ago. The ancient Romans believed that tortoiseshell was a paradox because it was a fundamentally unclean substance that had been made beautiful enough that you could put it into inserts in tables.

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With respect to the recipes employed in the concussion of the tinctures little can be authoritatively said, for each fair one kept her elixir and its secret to herself. Anyhow generally speaking one may say that the finest Lido golden sand, crushed vitreous blocks of Murano, ivory sawdust, powdered seashells, and in exuberant and extravagant humor, even powdered pearls and precious gold dust, were employed.

The powdered Murano mentioned is glass. Murano is the island where the best glass is made at one point in Venice's history.

Vegetable compounds, the juice of grapes, berberis, ivy berries, lemon squash and orange flavor with aromatic powders of all sorts and kinds were also used. Dyes, strictly so-called, were not in favor: their effect was the ephemeral.

Magic can generate many of these substances or, alternatively, they can be leftovers from lab experiments. Where else are you going to get ivory sawdust? Lemon juice is still used in my part of Australia for this blonding ritual, or so I'm led to believe.

Venetian women and girls owed a great deal to Dogaressa Teodora Selvo, in the 11th century, for she introduced toilet batteries fully furnished with all the requisites for skin, hair, and teeth, together with delicious eastern perfumes.

That's literally the Rotting Princess.

Venetians were past mistresses in the mysteries of hairdressing. The Greek style was always that must in favor, where the hair, not being too dry nor too tightly plaited, was drawn off the face and neck, tied in a ribbon at the back and then coiled round and round the head and stuck fast with combs and pins. The hard line of the forehead was tempered by a small row of curls under a semi-diadem fillet or crescent, called a gabbia – literally a cage – and usually made of precious metal and jeweled.

I had thought that diadems were in the Shape and Material bonus table, but I can't see them. I can see crowns (wisdom. wisdom 3, to control people 3 gain respect or exercise authority 5) does this count as a crown or would we prefer something else I'm sure diadem's had been started up because Calebais had diadems rather than true crowns.

Another fashion affected by gay and opulent courtesans was called al Corno with reference to the conventional headdress of the dogaressas. Sometimes only one horn was projected, at other two or even three or more, an invisible bandeau was hidden under the hair bearing spikes of tortoiseshell or whale bone, at which single strands of hair were twisted and curled until they assumed the appearance of vine spirals and tendrils…It was a very difficult feat to arrange these horns becomingly so as to avoid any idea of the ridiculous, the animal, or the demoniacal. Crescenti they were euphemistically called, as suggestive of the crescent moon of Diana the Huntress of the Gods.

Sometimes historical material just hands you a headdress like now why is the dagger of Venice who has her own patron saint wandering around with the headdress of the cult of Diana the obvious thing to do would be to place her at the center of something like a court of the Golden Bough which is covered in one of the early wrasse magical books it's the thing that Frazer got very excited about about a sacrificial King the implementation alludes me for the moment but it's important to mark that it's there

The painters never admired this style of hairdressing and very few, if any of them, have depicted the al Corno. Giacomo Franco and other engravers however had preserved for us illustrations of this peculiar mode. A third manner of hairdressing was popular amongst quite young girls and aged women, the two extremes, the cap of Juliet. The hair was combed out and smoothed down and then tight-fitting jaunty caps or nets were fitted close over the head behind the ears leaving the long locks of hair spread out like fans upon on the neck behind or in small ringlets. These caps usually very beautifully made, as often as not gold or silver thread, or net, or wire, and gemmed.

The shape and material bonuses don't help us much here. Juliet caps are presumably just another type of hat, so they have the same bonuses as the solana I mentioned before. Hair nets are technically nets which means that they have immobilise, and then whatever material they're made out of. I'd like to suggest however that they instead have the same bonus as helmets (at least one of the bonuses) and that they affect the mind of the wearer with a bonus of 4. Beyond that, of course, they are jewelry and jewelry is protection of various scores (so maybe protection 3).

A favorite style was a delicate net of silk, or very small artificial flowers of blue, as contrasting most serenely with the golden glitter of the hair.

Perhaps I have an older version of the shape and material collection because I'd swear that silk had been written up somewhere. House Tremere magi wear a special sort of silk as their uniform. It's made by ethereal fishermen spiders, which are grown in the depths of their covenants.

The fashionable always carried fans, not those with which we are familiar but little flags set on stems or poles. Ventolini "wind guards" they were called. Strong sea breezes, not strong sunbeams, were to be warded off for they disturbed the hair and roughened the skin. Venetian beauties never, as we say, fanned themselves, they had no need to do so because the sea breeze tempered the sun's heat.

These fans were from six to twelve inches square and were made of cloth of gold, richly embroidered silk, Burano lace, or feathers. They were fringed with beads and shells, through which the wind whistled musically when shaken by the air. The stem a foot or more long was usually of tortoisell, carved cedar wood, or of gold and silver and jeweled for state occasions.

Venetians never used parasols or sun shades. They wore their dress sleeves short in order to expose the arm with its jeweled bracelets above the elbow (obvious magic items) and their bare or lace-covered breasts to the soft sea air of the lagoons and the not too ardent rays of the golden sun.

So I love these. Back in "Sanctuary of Ice" I suggested that female magicians should carry a spindle, rather than a wand. It performs much the same function, and when someone sees you carrying one they think "Well it's a woman. She's carrying a spindle. Women carry spindles everywhere/" Now these little flags aren't like the fans from the English Empire lobbing into China. These wind guards are similar things that women carry everywhere and could use instead of a wand. Listen to the description and you'll see that there are all sorts of ways you can customise yours to suit your magician: different woods, different fabrics, different rattling little beads, different symbols on the front. They're perfect, and they're lovely, and I'm so glad we found them.

So there we have an introduction to Venetian women and particularly the magic items that your maga could wear surreptitiously as she strides about Venice.

Venice: Female Warriors and the Death of Attila

I'm recording a biography of the Dogaressas of Venice over at Librivox, and as I'm going I'm pulling out folklore which is of particular interest to Ars Magica players. In this episode, the author of the biography goes to some length to describe the militancy of the forebears of the Venetians.

Venice's history begins with a flight to the lagoons, as the the cities of Italy fall to the Huns. The women with young children, and the people too young or old to fight, are sent to take refuge on the islands. The cities fall, one by one, through a series of bloody skirmishes, until Padua, according to folklore, wins a Pyrrhic victory that halts the Hun advance.

In the podcast, I'm not going to give you five straight minutes of how terribly skilled the women, who would be the progenitors of Venice, were at war. As a caution, there is mention of rape and the murder of children. I'll be back at the end with comments about plot hooks. There are two versions of the death of Attila given, but I'll be using the first for this project, because it leaves a mystical artefact where the player characters can obtain it. The second I include only because it contains a powerful maga, and calls her by the charming and, for me, novel title of "incantrice".

Padua's King, alone of leaders, withstands the brunt of battle in 421—brave Giano. Flight is not for him, and by his side stands, and stands she will, or with her master fall, his wife. Queen Adriana the Heroine.

Giano challenges Attila to personal conflict, whilst, wild and remorseless as they are, the Huns look on with admiration and encourage each valiant prince in turn. The Paduan skilfully parries the fierce onslaught of the " Scourge of God " and, at last, although nigh bested, he lays his enemy low, and the victims of Veneto are avenged!

The Queen has stood all through the fell encounter close behind her consort, stripped ready for the fray, for, should Giano fall, then she would try conclusions with Attila! Snatching the fallen chieftain's weapon, all gory with her husband's blood — it had entered nearly into his vitals—out of the death-grip of his strong right hand, she holds it aloft calling upon Heaven to avenge the blood of her people. To Rivo-Alto she bears it, in a lordly galley, a ghastly token of deliverance, and, there, upon hallowed ground she sets it up, where she plants her foot, in pledge of the church and convent which she vows she will erect, in memory of a hardly-won victory, to the honour of holy Raphael—the Archangelic healer of human wounds.

Quite a different story with respect to the death of Attila is set forth eloquently in the erotic poem, " La Venezia Edificata," composed by Giulio Strozzi —a grandson of the great Filippo. Therein Oriana Augusta, daughter of the Empress Galla Placida, titular Queen of Dalmatia, is represented as consort by rape of the Hunnish King. Making her escape from the camp of her captor she fled to Venetia-al-Lido pursued by Attila. To prevent violation she leaped from the ship into the sea and came near perishing, until rescued by kindly hands from Aquileia.

The barbarian chieftain vowed to be avenged upon the Aquileiese, and, they in their turn, vowed to guard the Queen. Attila had recourse to a famous fortune-teller of Aquileia, " La Maga Irene," who, in consideration of a heavy bribe, consented to aid his vengeance. By woman's craft, or witch'swiles, Irene contrived to set the people of Aquileia all agog with their neighbours of the littoral, and at variance with one another,—so that their quarrels might screen an attack by the Huns.

The enchantment entirely failed in its object, for Giovanni Anafesto and Sostinio Rinieri,—leaders at Aquileia of rival parties—joined hands to repel the invader. Irene, by the way, had fooled them both by crossing them in love. Whether mesmerised by the black art of the enchantress, or incited by personal jealousy the captains of Attila's host rose against him and against each other. Intrigue and counterplot divided the councils of the Hunnish chieftains. Nadasto, Attila's second in command, made court to Fulvia,—a lady of Altino—wife of his rival Aetis, and won over to his cause her beauteous young daughter, Idilia, whom Attila had tried to seduce.

One evening, when the incantatrice Irene had cast her spell upon the Hunnish leader, and Ariana, her mystic-magic singer, had lulled him to slumber in his tent, and when Nadasto had bribed and rendered drunk the soldiers of his guard, Idilia stole silently through the darkness to the couch whereon Attila was heavily sleeping. Like Jael she hesitated not to make use of her opportunity to avenge her wrong and aid her lover. Driving, with all the force of a strong desperate woman, the sword she found by the sleeper's side, she pierced Attila through the breast, and pinned his body to the bed-board beneath. Thus died the " Scourge of God,"—the ravisher of women—by a woman slain!

Not alone was heroic Adriana of Padua in deeds of woman-prowess,—Martza d'Aquileia, standing astride her husband's stricken body, his sword in her hand, hurled bold defiance and hardy blows together at her foes, until overborne by numbers she fell fighting to the last!

Degna too, of Aquileia, daughter of the Queen of Dalmatia, dignified and devoted matron that she was, her spouse and sons slaughtered before her eyes, took refuge with her young daughters within the gateway-tower, and thence threw down copingstones and coals of fire upon the heads of their enemies. Short was that attack on woman's valour, for brawny arms and hands were soon stretched out to seize the brave defenders. Degna slew her children by dashing them to the ground, and she, fearless of death, followed them to preserve their honour and hers!

The skill and courage of the women of Veneto in the use of bow and arrow, and in the casting of the javelin, came to be the undoing of many a stalwart barbarian. The Huns were amazed at the heroism, no less than at the beauty, of their fair opponents. Those viragoes had in their veins the blood of Greek heroes, and their muscles were of iron like the Romans. Noble and bold in heart were they, vigorous and graceful in form and feature, and well dowered with mental capacity and resource.

Not once, but many a time, when the ropehawsers, which worked the defenders' catapults, gave out and the defence seemed doomed to failure, the women and the girls of besieged towns cut off their tresses of strong, fine, lustrous hair, with which to weave new stout cords for the disabled machines!

Plot hooks

The Sword of God

So, the Sword of Attila is kept in a church dedicated to Saint Michael. It's not an ordinary blade. Roman authors call it the Sword of Mars, although in Hungarian it is simply called the Sword of God. Whoever uses it is destined to conquer the earth. There is a modern sword identified with the myth: it was previously thought to be Joyuese, the sword of Charlemagne, which is odd because, as we will see later, Charlemagne does toss one of his swords into the sea off Venice. The modern sword might have once belonged to the Arpad dynasty,. who were a group of Hungarian kings that claimed to be descended from Attila.

The blade is not only kept in a Divine Aura, which may wash out its powers, but is coated in the blood of a man who, arguably, died for his faith, which means he's a martyr, and his blood is a Relic. The saint who is overseeing this Aura is, however, Archangel Michael, who is Marshal of the Host of Heaven, and is the one sent by God when someone really needs sharp cutlery applied to their face. He could just be holding onto it until it is useful to the Divine Plan.

Every megalomaniac in Europe probably wants it, so one of his many angelic captains may need to spend their time gently preventing the theft of the sword. Helping the endlessly-patient but not omnipotent captain would, by definition, be the right thing to do. Alternatively, they might want to steal if for themselves.

Notes on the Mysteries of Diana

I noted in a previous episode that we had the beginning of a Diana-themed mystery cult in the dress of the dogaressas. This continues here. The women of Veneto were skilled in the bow and the javelin. Physically and mentally they seem to meet the ideals of the Artemis cult. Finally, their hair, which I discussed in an earlier episode, seems to be capable of magical effects. When it is cut off, it seems to let them make catapult hawsers, so why not bowstrings? Is this a distant relative magical sacrifices we have seen before? Druids biting their thumbs through the bone to fuel their spells? Viktir plucking out their eyes? Later we will learn that Venetian woman are mistresses of the crossbow, and practice shooting clay pellets, in place of grebes. There's something there: not yet coherent enough for a mystagogic script, but well worth marking.

The magician Irene seems powerful for a hedge witch. She even has the title maga. Might she be a remnant of the Cult of Mercury, which was not entirely dead? Her illusions and spells that affect emotions seem to place her in the Jerbitonian mold, and her name is Greek. Perhaps she is one more of the ancestresses of the Order. For example, do we know who trained the magus Pendule, who did not join the Order, but passed on his teachings concerning the magic of colour and emotion?

Lear: The New Vestments

Back in Sanctuary of Ice I reused one of my favourite Jerbiton types, who are characters who can turn your clothes against you. Edward Lear, a little more directly, describes what happens if a person's clothes become food, and then you summon a horde of hungry animals.

The recording that follows was released into the public domain through Librivox. Spell design notes at the end.

(There lived an old man in the Kingdom of Tess,
Who invented a purely original dress;
And when it was perfectly made and complete,
He opened the door and walked into the street.

By way of a hat he'd a loaf of Brown Bread,
In the middle of which he inserted his head;
His Shirt was made up of no end of dead Mice,
The warmth of whose skins was quite fluffy and nice;
His Drawers were of Rabbit-skins, so were his Shoes;
His Stockings were skins, but it is not known whose;
His Waistcoat and Trowsers were made of Pork Chops;
His Buttons were Jujubes and Chocolate Drops;
His Coat was all Pancakes, with Jam for a border,
And a girdle of Biscuits to keep it in order;
And he wore over all, as a screen from bad weather,
A Cloak of green Cabbage-leaves stitched all together.

He had walked a short way, when he heard a great noise,
Of all sorts of Beasticles, Birdlings, and Boys;
And from every long street and dark lane in the town
Beasts, Birdies, and Boys in a tumult rushed down.
Two Cows and a Calf ate his Cabbage-leaf Cloak;
Four Apes seized his Girdle, which vanished like smoke;
Three Kids ate up half of his Pancaky Coat,
And the tails were devour'd by an ancient He Goat;
An army of Dogs in a twinkling tore up his
Pork Waistcoat and Trowsers to give to their Puppies;
And while they were growling, and mumbling the Chops,
Ten Boys prigged the Jujubes and Chocolate Drops.
He tried to run back to his house, but in vain,
For scores of fat Pigs came again and again:
They rushed out of stables and hovels and doors;
They tore off his stockings, his shoes, and his drawers;
And now from the housetops with screechings descend
Striped, spotted, white, black, and gray Cats without end:
They jumped on his shoulders and knocked off his hat,
When Crows, Ducks, and Hens made a mincemeat of that;
They speedily flew at his sleeves in a trice,
And utterly tore up his Shirt of dead Mice;
They swallowed the last of his Shirt with a squall,—
Whereon he ran home with no clothes on at all.

And he said to himself, as he bolted the door,
"I will not wear a similar dress any more,
Any more, any more, any more, never more!"

For animal based clothes: MuAn 30 (Base 3: turn an animal product into a different animal product. +3 Sight, +2 Conc, +2 Group.)

For plant based clothes: MuHe 30 (Base change an item made from plant products.+3 Sight, +2 Conc, +2 Group.)For both MuCo(He) 35 (as above, but +1 for complexity).

Swarms of mammals are CrAn45 (Base 15 +1 Touch +3 Sun +2 Group.) You might want an extra magnitude for variety of animals. You need a Rego requisite to force them to chase the person in the suit, but their natural inclination may serve sufficiently to motivate them. To make it a little easier you may want to cut it down to Concentration, but for that you'd want the spell that creates the clothes of meat to have a non-Concentration duration. Alternatively, a swarm of biting insects has a base ten levels lower and doesn't have a possible complexity modifier.

Sangster: Night and Morning

For the Cornish material I was looking at sea stories and songs, which might serve as plot hooks. Here's one that the players could overhear, sung in a resting place while they are on the way to another adventure, that would later serve as a hook.

The recording was released into the public domain through Librivox.

The winds are piping loud to-night,
And the waves roll strong and high;
God pity the watchful mariner
Who toils 'neath yonder sky!

I saw the vessel speed away,
With a free, majestic sweep,
At evening as the sun went down
To his palace in the deep.

An aged crone sat on the beach,
And, pointing to the ship,
'She'll never return again,' she said,
With a scorn upon her lip.

—

The morning rose tempestuous,
The winds blew to the shore,
There were corpses on the sands that morn,
But the ship came nevermore!

Nesbit: The Enchanted Tower

Another little poem or song that the characters could hear while on the road, serving as a later hook.

THE waves in thunderous menace break
Upon the rocks below my tower,
And none will dare the Sea-king's power
And venture shipwreck for my sake.

Yet once,–my lamp a path of light
Across the darkling sea had cast–
I saw a sail; at last, at last,
It came towards me through the night.

My lamp had been the beacon set
To lead the ship through mist and foam,
The ship that came to take me home,
To that far land I half forget.

But since my tower is built so high,
And surf-robed rocks curl hid below,
I quenched my lamp–and, weeping low
I saw my ship go safely by!

Morris: Near Avalon

This is one of the little sea stories I've putting out in a group. It's part of a larger work called *The Defence of Guenevere,* which I'll be going back to later.

A ship with shields before the sun,
Six maidens round the mast,
A red-gold crown on every one,
A green gown on the last.

The fluttering green banners there
Are wrought with ladies' heads most fair,
And a portraiture of Guenevere
The middle of each sail doth bear.

A ship with sails before the wind,
And round the helm six knights,
Their heaumes are on, whereby, half blind,
They pass by many sights.

The tatter'd scarlet banners there
Right soon will leave the spear-heads bare.
Those six knights sorrowfully bear
In all their heaumes some yellow hair.

Emerson: The Snow-storm

I like this poem as a description of a spirit that a Verditius, from the a sacred architecture Mystery Cult, wants as his familiar.

Stats eventually. It'll probably be based on Crystalize by Lindsey Stirling, so the spirit will probably be a dancing violinist.The recording which follows was released into the public domain through Librivox.

Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,
Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air
Hides hills and woods, the river, and the heaven,
And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.
The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit
Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed
In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

Come see the north wind's masonry.
Out of an unseen quarry
Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer
Curves his white bastions with projected roof
Round every windward stake, or tree, or door.
Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work
So fanciful, so savage, nought cares he
For number or proportion. Mockingly,
On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths;
A swan-like form invests the hidden thorn;
Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall,
Maugre the farmer's sighs; and at the gate
A tapering turret overtops the work.
And when his hours are numbered, and the world
Is all his own, retiring, as he were not,
Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art
To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone,
Built in an age, the mad wind's night-work,
The frolic architecture of the snow.

Carman: The Sailing of the Fleet

The last of the little sea songs being put up as plot hooks in a single pack.

NOW the spring is in the town,
Now the wind is in the tree,
And the wintered keels go down
To the calling of the sea.

Out from mooring, dock, and slip,
Through the harbor buoys they glide,
Drawing seaward till they dip
To the swirling of the tide.

One by one and two by two,
Down the channel turns they go,
Steering for the open blue
Where the salty great airs blow;

Craft of many a build and trim,
Every stitch of sail unfurled,
Till they hang upon the rim
Of the azure ocean world.

Who has ever, man or boy,
Seen the sea all flecked with gold,
And not longed to go with joy
Forth upon adventures bold?

Who could bear to stay indoor,
Now the wind is in the street,
For the creaking of the oar
And the tugging of the sheet!

Now the spring is in the town,
Who would not a rover be,
When the wintered keels go down
To the calling of the sea?

Norman Douglas wrote a set of short stories called *Unprofessional Tales* under the pseudonym Normyx. Two of these have monsters that can be usefully grabbed for Ars Magica. Both of them are demons. *In the Red Sea* is a beautiful example of what demonic oppression feels like in the Ars Magica game.

Stats eventually.

Unprofessional Tales by Normyx (Norman Douglas): The Tiger Moon from *In The Red Sea*

(IT began in the Red Sea.
Let me at once admit, gentlemen, that the matter is quite unintelligible to me. Convince yourselves that I am perfectly calm. I do not pose as a prophet, a seer, a dreamer of dreams. I do not profess to know what it means or whether, indeed, it means anything. That-will—be for you to-decide. Is it a mere accident? A warning? A punishment? Who knows? . . .

Alcohol? – Certainly not. I have been accustomed to it all my life and perhaps I drink more than some men. Why not? I am my own master and those who know me well may have guessed why I sometimes drink more than necessary. They know that if I indulged in excesses there would be some excuse for me. For twenty years I have tried to forget. In vain. My life has been clouded by an affliction such as falls to the lot of very few.

My happiness has been blasted. I wonder, gentlemen, if you fully realise what these words mean? I doubt it. But let that pass. Look at me ! I am old and robust. I have served in a dozen campaigns. My hand is as steady as yours. I have never suffered from any of the evils incident to an abuse of spirits.

Spirits. . . .
Are there spirits?
Perhaps it is a spirit.
It comes often nowadays. I see it before me, on all sides of me, and behind me. Yes, I see it behind me. You, who know everything—how do you explain that? It used to come much seldomer. Nowadays, the moment my mind is unoccupied, the moment I am not actively engaged in some pursuit or conversation, there it is, staring at me. It lies in wait for my idle moments. That is what has made me so nervous. I used to be anything but excitable, but now I do and say the strangest things in order to escape from it. It wears me out. You would not believe how I suffer. . . .

It began in the Red Sea.

We were coming home, last year, from India, and just entering the Gulf of Suez. It was prodigiously hot weather — the hottest I ever remember. I have made the trip about forty times. Perhaps the heat had something to do with it. The heat affects some persons strangely. . . .

I recollect that we sat up on deck, three or four of us, to a late hour. It was past mid night, but old campaigners like ourselves keep out an extra bottle of whisky and buy our soda water before the bar closes. The lights were out. But the moon was magnificent. I never saw such a fine moon, and I have seen a good many. It seemed to soar in the sky like a living thing. We were running close to the shore, and one could see every line of those African mountains, parched and mysterious, with their fantastic peaks and clefts. A barren desola tion — almost worse than India. Someone— I think it was Major Keane—said that there was good lion-shooting still to be had, and hyenas, no doubt. . . .

Hideous brutes, hyenas.

Then I told them about my sport with the lions in Kattywar many years ago. I believe there are not many of them left now. The Ghuzerati lion, you know, has generally not much of a mane. He seems to feel the indignity of it and looks unhappy. Now the tiger never looks unhappy. Then Keane put down his glass and said:—

'I have met with an exception, general. I remember once wounding a tigress in Bangalore, an enormous beast. We tracked her to a nullah, where she lay dying beside a pool of dirty water. Couldn't move —wounded in the spine. And, Lord! you should have seen the expression on her face. It was horrible —perfectly human, I assure you, perfectly human. The skin was spoilt but I kept the head and had it set up on a round shield. Good head, capital head."

I am a weak old fool in some things, but I cannot help it. Whenever others talk of suffering, I must always think of my poor daughter. She was all I had in this world. She died nearly twenty years ago. Twenty years. I might have forgotten by this time. Curiously enough, I cannot recall her exact features. I have often spent hours trying to do so. But it is not so easy as you might think to call up a vanished face again. Have you ever tried ? –
Sometimes her face visits me in my dreams, but it leaves me, waking.

I nursed her through a long illness. And how she suffered ! My friends hardly realise to what an extent this bereavement has weighed on my mind. I try to be cheerful. But the sudden recollection, at times, positively unnerves me.

It was the same that evening. I could not listen to them any longer. I got up to go to my berth.
"Turning in already, general?'
'Yes. I suppose I must try to sleep an hour or two."
'Why not sleep on deck in this heat?'
'I dislike the moon. Good-night.'

'Dislike the moon! Ha, ha! Good-night!'

But it was vain to attempt to sleep. The heat was intense and not a breath of air entered the cabin. I tossed about for an hour or more. Then I gradually became more drowsy. I caught myself repeating scraps of ridiculous conversation —a sign of weariness, they say. I remember thinking of that stuffed tiger head. Everyone was asleep. The ship was dark and quiet. There was not a sound save the regular throbbing of the screw and the swirl of the water at the ship's side. I suppose it was two or three o'clock. But the moon was still bright.

She must be on my side of the ship, I calculated. I hoped she would not come down as low as my port. I detest the moon shining on me—ask any old Anglo-Indian and he will tell you there is nothing more unhealthy. Europeans know nothing about the moon in southern climates. Sometimes they suffer for it. I have seen a man totter home, looking exactly like a corpse, after sleeping a few hours in the moonlight. I suppose I slept, after all, for about half an hour. Yes, I must have dozed. Then I suddenly woke up with the feeling that something was wrong. You know that feeling? The feeling as if one were no longer alone.

And, sure enough, there was something looking into my cabin from the outside. My window looked straight on to the water. The object was round and bright, and filled up the port-hole exactly. I looked at it. There was not a shadow of doubt about the matter. I sat up and rubbed my eyes to see more clearly. Was I awake? I pinched myself. I was as wide awake as you are. It never moved. At first I could distinguish nothing more than a luminous disc, The moon?

Nothing of the kind. It might have been the moon, so far as roundness and whiteness were concerned. But it was not the moon. For, as I continued to look, I was surprised to discover features painted upon it. It was a face—a mask. I saw it distinctly. Ah! that tiger story. . . . A tiger's face? No. Not exactly. A human face? Also not—not quite human.

The features partook both of the man and of the tiger! For the eyes were human in shape and meaning, the rest was of the beast. And it was completely-round and white. Conceive it, if you can. It looked in at the port-hole and stared at me.

All this, gentlemen, is perfectly true. I can discuss it quite dispassionately—I take a rational view of the matter. I said to myself at the time: the nerves play strange tricks occasionally, especially upon persons who have lived long in unhealthy climates. Then I remember saying, "Wake up ! Wake up ! you are half asleep still !'

But I was not half asleep. And yet I was not frightened beyond all measure.

Why?

Because, in spite of its hellish disguise, the countenance—the human part of it—was familiar to me.

It had visited me before, many times, in my dreams.

I think I can hear you say, 'Optical illusion.'

'How I hate those words! I willingly admit that we may be the dupes of our imagination now and then. But I know too much ! Besides, why should you disbelieve me? Do I look like a liar? I have not that reputation. Let me therefore tell you, once and for all, that I am past persuading against what I know to be a fact.

What happened next? I slowly stretched out my arm, and, without taking my eyes off the face, turned on the electric light. It vanished. Then I turned it off. It was there again. But a change was taking place. It began to die, slowly and painfully. It gnashed its ferocious fangs in agony. It gasped and struggled for breath. The eyelids quivered a while, and closed. Then they suddenly opened wide once more. It looked at me. Just like she did Suddenly it was withdrawn; it had melted away before my eyes; and a breath of air—I felt it distinctly —came into the cabin.

I looked for my whisky bottle, found it, and then took a turn on deck in my pyjamas. They were all lying about asleep. It was an hour before sunrise—the quietest hour. How quiet a ship can be. When I returned to my cabin I fully expected to see it again. But it never came and I slept soundly. . . .

I only saw it once again during that voyage, but it made a more fearful impression on me, for up to that moment I had been inclined to believe—I had secretly hoped—that I had experienced nothing but a kind of vivid dream.

We were off Port Said. I was paying the steward for something and thrust my hand into my pocket to take out a shilling. At that moment I had a curious presentiment that something was about to happen—a peculiar feeling that I often have nowadays. I took out the shilling, looked at it, and there, before my very eyes, was the face graven in miniature upon the coin.

I fainted away, and there was some little commotion. Since that day I have never been the same man. It is a living reality to me. And it will never leave me. It has become a companion for life. I know!

A day or two later, when I was sufficiently recovered from the shock, I mentioned the matter to the ship's doctor. He was rather astonished.
'Seen it before ?'
'Only once.' And I related all the circumstances.
'Drink?' he suggested.
'No.'
'Touch of the sun, maybe.'
"Or the moon . . ."
Then he endeavoured to prove to me that it was a mere optical illusion. His arguments doubtless represented the medical view of the case, and they so discouraged me that I determined not to mention the matter in future to anyone.

Perhaps I ought to have done so. Latterly, indeed, I have not been so sure of myself. Yes, gentlemen, I may as well confess that I am beginning to be afraid . . . afraid. . . . I have fears which I dare not put into words. Things cannot go on in this fashion. How will it end ?

'Every day there is some new difficulty. Since that affair at the Club, I dislike being left alone in the streets. For nowadays I not only see it; I have begun to hear it. It comes into the room with me. And after I have been for some time in one place, it drives me out. I see it every where. Whenever I think of her, it comes. From the clouds, from the houses, it stares down upon me. It expands and contracts in unearthly fashion. I see it plainly in the eyes of a friend—in the jewel of a ring. And, imagine to yourselves—yesterday, whilst crossing the Serpentine Bridge, I happened to glance over the water.

There it lay, enormous, with half-closed eyes, stretched in horrid grimace from one shore to the other. . . .

I have forgotten to tell you when I first saw it behind me. That was three weeks ago. I suddenly left London for Whitehurst (I cannot remain long in one place nowadays), although I knew that this house would call up old memories. I ought not to have gone, but I went. It was cold and foggy. In the evening I wrote in the old library. I used to detest writing, but now it distracts me. I write feverishly and never pause to think. That evening, however, I must have paused to think. I said to myself:— 'I have escaped from it for to-day.' I wrote, and then paused again. 'Have I?'
And then I said to myself:
"I believe I felt it enter the room behind me.'
I took up my pen again.
'It is looking at me out of the fireplace.'
I began to write again, or, rather, I pretended to write busily—even as I am doing at this moment—knowing full well that what I had said was true. But the pen refused to work, and then, without turning my head, I saw it. It was looking at me from behind I saw it distinctly, even — even as I see it now...

God! How will it end?

Unprofessional Tales by Normyx (Norman Douglas): Nerida

This was a tiny episode that I snuck into the last few minutes of my monthly podcasting plan.

There's a story, in Unprofessional Tales by Normyx, called "Nerida", which he later expanded it into a full novel. I'm going to stat Nerida up eventually: she's a succubus but here are the perambulations away from that basic idea.

The narrator of the story is an Englishman. He's a nobleman, or at least he's very wealthy, and he takes his sister for a tour of the continent because he's suffering depression of some variety. He's had some sort of psychic shock and we aren't entirely sure what it. It has left him not merely misogynistic but misanthropic. His sister suggests that he should find a suitable girl to marry and they have a philosophical discussion where he says that the best girl for him would be no girl at all, essentially.

One day they're in a museum for the casts of the dead from Pompeii. You've seen these in the Internet I imagine. They're vaguely human shapes: except in this particular museum one figure has been restored to the point where she looks as though she is merely sleeping/ When this man sees this figure he can sense that she is about to wake. He can sense that she is nearby
and that she is interested in speaking to him/

He starts dreaming about her. She says that her name is Nerida. She was never really a human, actually she was a water nymph, but she is now trapped in this form, and has been trapped asleep for centuries. If he could just touch her, he could let her out.

The narrator tries to find ways of sneaking into the museum. He becomes vaguely obsessed with her and people notice, including the custodian of the museum. He's a cashiered officer so he is willing to take the large sums of money the Englishman gives him to let him come in at unusual hours and view the collection.

The Englishman is careful not to let on that he's particularly interested in Nerida until he tries to unlock the case, at which point the man from the museum intervenes. There is a struggle and in a fit of rapturous love for Nerida the nobleman stabs the museum curator to death, so that his blood may bring Nerida back to life. He then attempt to join her by throwing himself into the sea, which is mistaken for a suicide attempt.

So we have a succubus or False God, pretending to be a fairy that is demanding human sacrifice. I can't include the full story in the podcast because it's hours long, but at some future stage when I catch up on all of the backlog for the podcast, stats for this odd hybrid creature will appear here on the blog.

A saint for Hermetic Magi: notes from “El Magico Prodigioso”

Vast oceans of time ago, I noted an almost-saint for Hermetic magicians. Cyprian was a student who sold his soul for infernal tutoring in spellcasting. He then turned on his tutor, and became a Christian martyr. In Hermetic Europe he became a saint. He’s the St Cyprian of Antioch after whom the church at Valnastium is named, in which the Founder Jerbiton is buried.

The version of his story I’m familiar with probably originally came from Arabic folklore, and was retooled to a Christian narrative in Spain. That being said, he apparently was a saint – I thought he was just a holy martyr. Remember that “Sanctuary of Ice” was published before Google. Slightly later than 1220 there was a popular book called the Golden Legend (Legenda Aurea), by Jacobus da Varagine and it lists Cyprian as a saint, under the story of his beloved – Saint Justina. They were martyred in 290, and their saint’s day is on 26 September. As paired saints, it would have been better to have named the church of Valnasitum for them both.

Pedro Calderon de la Barca wrote a play about them in the 17th century, and it was translated into English in the 19th Century. The ever-enterprising people over at Librivox have done a full table read of it, freely downloadable and copyright clear. The demon in it has some excellent little speeches. You may hear my voice turn up, as I play one of the minor parts.

I’m terrible at writing up saints, but clearly I should put that problem aside and write up these tow, since they are particularly concerned with magi. The Infernal Saint of Sorrow, who was written up in full in the Cornish material, has a weakness to the Cult of the Virgin, and it might be that Saints Justina and Cyprian are a source of aid against her corrupting influence.

Stats eventually.

Venice:
The translation of San Marco

In this next little section, Edgecumb Stanley talks about the arrival of the relics of Saint Mark in Venice. The shrine of Saint Mark is important to player characters, because it's the strongest Dominion Aura in the City of Venice and also, unfortunately, its where a lot of government ritual is solemnised by blessings of the bishop. Social magi are going to be there a lot, and it is where their power is weakest. Mark is particularly important in Venetian marriage customs, which we will cover in a later episode.

Stanley starts this little section in the dogado of Giustiniano, the son of the doge and dogaressa we were consiering last time. Note that his name is a masculinisation of the name of the patron saint of the dogaressas: he's been dedicated to the girl saint with the grape vines since birth.

The brief and quiet reign of Giustiniano Badoero was remarkable for one eminent event—the translation of the body of Saint Mark the Evangelist, from Alexandria to Venice.

The pious Venetians were well aware of the importance of possession of relics of the Saints. At Aquileia, Eraclea, Padua and the other cities, whence their forebears had fled to the islets of the lagunes, the churches were the depositories of such treasures, and the revenues of the ecclesiastical authorities were greatly augmented by the devotion of the religiously minded inhabitants. Besides, such holy shrines drew pilgrims and visitors from other states and so enhanced their reputation.

Venetian envoys to Constantinople and travellers generally in the Orient were admonished to secure if possible relics for translation to the lagune city. Accordingly in 828 news reached Venice that two sea captains of Venetian merchant galleys, wintering in the port of Alexandria, had entered into relations with the ruler of the city. On their part they were to smuggle arms and provisions for the use of the Egyptian forces against the Eastern Emperor, and in exchange to take whatever they might like from ruined temples near the sea-shore, one was the traditional burial-place of the second Evangelist.

So, let's pause there: the Venetians earned the right to loot the tomb of Saint Mark by selling weapons to the Egyptians so that they could fight the Eastern, Christian, Empire. Saint Mark is apparently fine with this, and no-one in Venice seems to think it's an impious act. This tells us something about the practical bent of Venetian theology at the time.

I would like to note that Stanley tells a different story to the Venetians here. In the shrine of St Mark in Venice, there's a mosaic which shows the Venetians hiding the saint's relics in pork and cabbage leaves, so that the Egyptians (who were Muslims) wouldn't inspect them too carefully. Their version is that some Greek monks helped them save the saint's treasures before the local, Muslim, rulers could find them. Use whichever you want…

Treasures of all sorts were unearthed, and, at length, the tomb of the Saint yielded up a corpse undecayed and arrayed in episcopal vestments. Acknowledged and venerated upon the spot the hallowed remains were reverently conveyed to Venice, and received there with tumultuous acclamations and temporarily enshrined within the ancient church of San Pietro di Castello.

Doge Giustiniano and Dogaressa Felicita presided at the religious ceremonies, which brought together and cemented the people of the outlying islands and the inhabitants of the coast towns of terra-firma. Religious fervour overspread all Venice, men and women surrendered themselves, their children, and their goods, in honour of the Saint, who then and there was hailed one of the patrons of Venice, sharing the distinction with St Mary the Virgin, St Teodoro, and St Giustina of Padua.

That must have been a busy time for the Dogaressa and her ladies, and, indeed, for all the well-disposed women-folk of Venice. There were rich hangings to embroider, fine linen to weave and stitch, delicate lace to fret out, flowers to arrange, and sweet odours to confection. For St Mark nothing was spared, and even the poorest of the poor put on the best attire she could obtain and made festival with her richer sisters.

We might, folkloristically, start seeing his symbol, the Lion of Saint Mark at this time. By 1220 it's on all kinds of things. – the famous statue was restored last century. The statue itself is probably a repurposed Egyptian griffin, on a column of Egyptian marble, which we can make some use of at a later point. It stands opposite a similarly recycled column and statue. This is of Saint Theodore standing upon, and spearing, a crocodile, which is meant to be read as a dragon. Note that the winged lion appears on the flag of Venice, with a Bible in times of peace and a sword in times of war.

Not content with the splendours of the day of translation, the last day of January was for ever set apart as an annual festival in honour of St Mark ; and with it was associated the ancient and beautiful custom of public marriage upon the Eve of the Feast of the Purification.

Giustiniano Badoero very soon wearied of the responsibilities of office and retired, with Donna Felicita his wife Into the cloister of San Servilio, which he had enriched by gifts of lands near the coast city of Abondia Vigilla.

To the third Doge of the Badoero family, Giovanni, second son of the "Grand Agnello," belongs the glory of founding " the most resplendent Christian shrine In Europe," San Marco dl Venezia." He succeeded his brother as sole Doge in 829. What special part he and his Dogaressa took in the actual building and first dedicatory celebration, history has not recorded.

Here we again see Edgecumb Stanley making his history more polite. When St Mark's body came to Venice, Doge Guistiniano didn't give it to the church, he kept in in the Ducal Palace. In his will, he asked his widow to create the basilica that his brother dedicated. This was a political move. Much as Constantinople claimed the ecumenical status of the New Rome, so Grado, the local archbishopric, wanted to see itself as the heir to the Patriarchate of Alexandria. Except they couldn't, because the Apostle's relics weren't church property – they belonged to he Doge.

Even when they gave them up, it wasn't to the local bishop or archbishop: it was to a purpose built structure between the palace and the basilica of the previous patron of Venice. The Basilica is connected to the ducal palace and is, legally, the private chapel of the doge. As his chapel, he gets to say who leads services there.

If you are looking it up online, the original was burned down in the Tenth Century, with a doge inside it, by an anti-tyrannical mob. A new one was built on the same site. In the game period the domes are being extended upward, so they are visible from the piazza. Its nickname "the Church of Gold" might date from slightly later.

The reign of Giovanni Badoero lasted seven years—a season of consolidation of Venetian power and also of family Influence. The house of Partecipazio gave seven Doges to Venice, — men of approved probity, ruling their households and themselves with simple dignity, and the State with firmness and distinction. They one and all, with their consorts, when public cares and duties became excessive, sought the solace of the cloister.

…which,. as I've noted, is suspscious.

De la Mare: I met at Eve

We've previously visited the poetry of Walter de La Mare on Games From Folktales, with his most famous work, The Listeners, in episode 115. For the next few months, we will be going through his early works, grabbing anything which might be an Ars Magica faerie or magical location. Let's start with this.

I met at eve the Prince of sleep,
His was a still and lovely face;
He wander'd through a valley steep,
Lovely in a lonely place.

His garb was grey of lavender,
About his brows a poppy wreath
Burned like dim coals,
And everywhere
The air was sweeter for his breath.

His twilight feet no sandals wore,
His eyes shone faint in their own flame,
Fair moths that gloomed his steps before
Seemed letters of his lovely name.

His house is in the mountain ways,
A phantom house of misty walls,
Whose golden flocks at evening graze,
And witch the moon with muffled calls.

Upwelling from his shadowy springs
Sweet waters shake a trembling sound,
There flit the hoot owl's silent wings,
There hath his web the silk worm wound.

Dark in his pools clear visions lurk,
And rosy, as with morning buds,
Along his dales of broom and birk
Dreams haunt his solitary woods.

I met at eve the Prince of sleep,
His was a still and lovely face;
He wander'd through a valley steep,
Lovely in a lonely place.

Thanks to Larry Wilson for the recording.

So, the King of Sleep has faerie eyes, and his castle is a regio. His presence, or his breath, is morphiating, and might be addictive. He can grant visions of the future. He is attended by glowing moths which enchant the viewer with pareidolic fancies.

Venice: The customs of romance

In the early days of the republic, women followed the Byzantine custom, which was to be veiled outside the house and remain in a male free-space much of the time. This is not still followed in 1220, but there are remnant practices which we can use for plot hooks. The altanes, for example, which we are investing as magical spaces, are a type of male-free space that is now desegregated in theory, but not in daily custom. Similarly the romantic overtures which were developed at this time persist, even as the strictures which made them necessary loosen.

Over to Edgecum Staley:

Courtship

In public women were veiled,—matrons in black, maidens in white,—except upon festivals, which happily, for the sake of dear Prince Cupid, were frequent enough, when they were allowed to appear at church, on the Piazza, and in barca or gondola uncovered,—these were lovers' opportunities !

When a youth had become familiar with the form and carriage of a girl, and was taken therewith, he was wont to haunt the neighbourhood of her father's house, in order to get a good look at her features and expression when she came out. If the opinion he had formed was confirmed then he was accustomed of a night to stand beneath the iron-barred window of his innamorata, and there breathe out his love ditty, or twang amorously the strings of his guitar. If the girl responded to the youth's ecstasy, she was permitted to flash a light through the open shutter. The repetition of this signal was an intimation that the wooer might address himself to her father.

The father's consent was regarded as the first step of the betrothal, and then the happy young couple were required to await the festal day of good San Marco, for the public acknowledgement of the suit. Liberty was meanwhile allowed for interviews and negotiations…with respect to equality of family and amount of dowry, etc. The girl dressed simply in white was permitted to receive visits from her lover and his young companions.

Upon the eve of the festival when many friends were assembled, serious and gay, the bridegroom-elect took his bride's hand in his and slipped upon her finger a ring, penge they called it, — as a pledge of his honourable intentions. The girl immediately withdrew with her mother, whilst the guests were feasted. Nobody went to bed that night, for there was much to be done in preparation for the morrow's nuptials. The bride had to be bathed and her hair plaited in two great coils, her dress and her ornaments had to be arranged, and finishing touches put to the festal decorations of the house.

Attendance at early Mass was de rigueur. and then the bride, covered with a lace or fine net veil knelt to receive her father's blessing, and at the same time she had placed in her hands by her two sponsors—the most estimable and influential of her father's acquaintances—a casket or purse, in which was deposited her dowry.

These receptacles were called arcella and were objects of considerable value from an artistic point of view. If caskets they were of embossed silver, or carved wood, or painted by hand, and if they took the form of purses they were of the richest material, very beautifully embroidered, and often enough ornamented with pearls and precious stones.

A procession was formed of gaily-decorated gondolas with the wedding guests—the bride's contained herself, and her father with her sponsors, and bore silken streamers of blue and white with two captive white doves at the prow ; and all made for the island cathedral of San Pietro di Castello. The bride bearing her arcella suspended from her neck by a blue silk ribbon knelt by her father's side before the Bishop, and then the groom, ushered by his witnesses, took his place at her right hand offering the wedding-ring for the episcopal benediction.

Removing the penge,—which he slipped upon his own finger, —he replaced it with the golden hoop of matrimony. Lighted candles were placed in the hands of the couple, whilst the Bishop blessed their union. An offering in their behalf is made by the bridegroom's next friend, and the religious ceremony ended with the singing of a marriage ode. A merry, happy party betook themselves one and all to the fleet of gala gondolas, scattering on their way sweetmeats and small current coins, among the bystanders. A banquet with dancing and singing filled the afternoon and, at dark, the minstrel band led the newly-married pair to the bridegroom's brilliantly lighted house.

The best man held a position of importance, he it was who found the beverages for the guests, toasted the nuptial couple, and gave drink and money all round. Early in the morning following the marriage he repaired to the nuptial chamber, and knocking loudly at the door, offered the happy spouse two fresh-laid eggs,—often enough stained and painted exquisitely,—and a casket of aromatic pastilles—tokens of good wishes for marital felicity.

The bride's girl friends too laid beside the door little wicker-work baskets beautifully trimmed with silk and decorated with fresh flowers, and full of delicious sweetmeats and fresh fruit —emblematic again of what married life should ever be. Such were some of the pretty wedding observances in old Venice.

The Boccola

One of the prettiest of the many charming customs, which illustrate so delightfully the ever fascinating story of Venice, —"the Venus City of the Adriatic,"—was the annual presentation of the boccola—the rose nosegay of San Marco. For its origin we must hie us back to a very distant century —the ninth. Doge Orso Badoero, grandson of the " Grand" Doge Agnello Partecipazio, had a lovely only daughter, Maria was her name in baptism, but, by reason of the ardent flashes of her brilliant jet-black eyes she was known as Vulcana—" Vulcana of the black eyes !

" Then one day, there came from far Provence a handsome troubadour with his light guitar. He was called Tancred—a child of chance as it appears ; and he sang outside the dark-eyed beauty's iron-barred window the doughty deeds of knightly prowess..

Prince Cupid set to work…and began to shoot his love-dipped arrows up and down, till he had transfixed both Vulcana and Tancredo. Alas ! the maiden knew full well her father would never listen to the plea of a simple singing youth, and so she wept and sighed, and sighed and wept!

"Go, gentle minstrel," she cried, "tarry not, seek the Court of the King of France, and clothe thyself with the glory of martial renown, I, thy Maria, will wait for thee !"

With a tender embrace, and the maiden's thin gauze scarf for guerdon tied round his arm, the troubadour set off to fight the Moors. Seasons came and seasons went and beauteous Maria Vulcana upon the altana of her father's palace scanned in vain the wide lagune for signs of the warrior's return. " Will Tancredo never come back ?" she asked herself, and she wept and yearned for him. At last rumours of bold adventure and the names of many goodly knights were banded from tongue to tongue. The dreaded Moors had been vanquished, and the hero of the fights was a youthful soldier of fortune one Tancredo of Provence !

Well-a-day, an embassy presently arrived in Venice from great Charlemagne, its leader was Sir Roland the Invincible. He sought here and there for Maria Badoero the Doge's weeping daughter, but she never showed herself—her heart was with Tancredo—she cared for none beside. At length they met and Roland bending over her, sighing, said, " Lady fair, I kiss thy hand for brave Tancredo, and bid thee weep no more for him, he died in these arms of mine breathing out thy name,— see he bid me with his last words give thee this red rosebud, which he had plucked for thee, saying, ' Bid her pray for me always.'

Maria was silent, she paled, her heart gave no more than one big throb, as she placed the pledge of her Tancredo's love between her breasts, and then she laid her down and died!

This is the " Legend of the Boccola."

The day that heart-broken Maria Vulcana breathed her last was the name-day of Saint Mark the Evangelist, 25th April. Thereafter every lovelorn lad in the islets of the lagunes offered to the girl he loved best a freshly gathered red rosebud as a fragrant pledge of his devotions. The innamorate were accustomed to place the sweet tokens in their open bosoms, as did the beauteous but unhappy maiden of old times, and proudly wear it all that livelong day. Sometimes to be sure, the girl rejected her admirer's tender gift, but she who could show no rosebud in her bosom suffered mighty heartburns all the same, and her girl companions and the young men of her acquaintance looked askance at her.

At the sounding of the curfew all were safe of course indoors, and then the simple offering, withered as it was, was taken lovingly between both the maiden's hands, caressed affectionately, and placed in the most secret hiding-place she had. It might be a long, or it might be a little, while before her parents acknowledged the successful suitor ; but that frail blossom of early summer never lost its fragrance, and many a dewdrop of a tear fell upon the faded petals, whilst the loved one waited impatiently for the next Festa delle Marie.

Festa Delle Marie

T*he name of Pietro Candiano III. has come down to us in gracious valiant guise. It was the Feast of the Purification in the year 944, and the "Brides of Venice " were kneeling before the Bishop in the church of San Pietro di Castello. The Doge and Dogaressa, and their household were assisting at the ceremony, when, suddenly wild figures of daring buccaneers from Trieste dashed into the sacred building. Robbery not rape was their primary intention, for the maidens' arcelle were well worth the risk the robbers ran. The girls held tightly to their dowries, and so they were borne off bodily by their captors, arcelle and all!*

Recovering from their consternation the menfolk of the congregation and the hangers-on outside laid hands on weapons, tools and anything, and were swiftly on the heels of the ravishers. Luckily the barcas of the Guild of Marriage-chest makers were moored in the canal, and so available for use. Doge Pietro, divesting himself of his State mantle, and girding on his sword, headed the pursuers. Calling on Heaven for vengeance he boarded the foremost boat and bade every armed man to follow : it was the barca of Andrea de' Cappelli of the fondamento of Santa Maria Formosa, — the quarter of the makers of hats. He was one of the bridegrooms-elect, and, mad with rage, he and his companions swore to be avenged and to bring back their brides to Venice.

That was a stern chase to be sure, the robbers rowed their hardest, and the lovers of the " Brides " bent to their sweeps with all their wind and thew. Not till the pirates had crossed the Caorle lagune did Andrea de' Cappelli's boat grapple with the quarry. Then it was a fight hand-to-hand, pole-to-pole,—but at last, Andrea, leaping into the batello of the pirate chief struck the villain down, and gathered to his breast his fainting bedraggled bride.

Bearing her light form under his left arm he neatly beheaded his enemy and, holding aloft the gory trophy, regained his boat. Victory,—as by well-bound convention, —crowned virtue, and back to Venice rowed swiftly the proud flotilla—the happy maidens waving aloft their bridal veils in token of their deliverance. Landing at the campo of Santa Maria Formosa all entered the sacred edifice, hard by, where the clergy sang " Te Deum. " The assembly broke up hilariously to spend the evening in universal merriment.

Coming out of the church the Master of the Guild of Hat-Makers requested a favour of the Doge,—by whose side walked the motherly figure of the Dogaressa, her face radiant with smiles,—namely that an annual commemoration of the gallant rescue of the " Brides of Venice " should be instituted whereat the Doge and Dogaressa should preside. Dandolo gives an amusing account of the interview :
—
"But if it rains ? " asked Doge Candiano."
"Why, we will give you hats to cover you !"
"And if we come hungry ?"
"Well then you shall have the finest catch of fish and the sweetest basket of fruit."
"But if we are thirsty too ?"
"We will refresh you with the best vintage we possess!"

And so it came to pass. Every year the Doge and Dogaressa, with all their households and the members of the Grand Council, paid a ceremonial visit to Santa Maria Formosa. Each dignitarv received a brand-new straw hat,—richlv gilt and decorated with flowers. a flask of finest Malvaggia—ruddy and rare, and a silver fish with a golden orange apiece. This is the origin of the Festa delle Marie.

Stanley's not very clear about this, but the celebration which follows is described relatively simply. 12 poor women, engaged to be married, are each assigned a rich family, who provides them a dowry and costume. They are feted for a time, and it is considered good luck to see one of the twelve "Marias" at a party. There's a lot of competition to have the most widely regarded Maria as a protege of the family and, since her dowry may be far larger than previously expected, there's some attempt to supplant each lady's betrothed. This is a Background Virtue, providing wealth and social contacts, but it"s only available to women of high Presence.

De la Mare: Never-to-Be

Another faerie creature or nypholeptic human from the poetry of Walter De La Mare. Statistics eventually. Thanks again to Amy Koenig and the gang at Librivox.

Down by the waters of the sea,
Reigns the King of Never-to-be.
His palace walls are black with night;
His torches star and moonès light,
And for his timepiece deep and grave
Beats on the green unhastening wave.

Windswept are his high corridors;
His pleasance the sea-mantled shores;
For sentinel a shadow stands
With hair in heaven, and cloudy hands;
And round his bed, king's guards to be,
Watch pines in iron solemnity.

His hound is mute; his steed at will
Roams pastures deep with asphodel;
His queen is to her slumber gone;
His courtiers mute lie, hewn in stone;
He hath forgot where he did hide
His sceptre in the mountain-side.

Grey-capped and muttering, mad is he –
The childless King of Never-to-be;
For all his people in the deep
Keep everlasting fast asleep;
And all his realm is foam and rain,
Whispering of what comes not again.

Venice:

A banshee

It's useful for us when a monster reskins itself. This is basically the origin story for a banshee-like creature, but found in Venice. We can just shift the stats across and change the appearance. It also describes an instance of Venetian love magic, which is useful to us.

It was in the dogado of Memo that seven unmarried sisters —a prodigious number of spinsters as Venice society went —lived together in their own house opposite the Ponte della IMaravigie just below the Palazzo Bembo. Six were plain and one was fair, the youngest — and their spinsterhood was regarded with suspicion.

One day there chanced along the Rivo di San Trovaso a gondolier who had just gained laurels at the regatta. Something constrained the stalwart youth to linger by the iron-grilled window of the spinsters home, but strange sensations pervaded his whole anatomy so that he became weak and incapable of movement. His companions chided him and threw the name of the least prepossessing of the sextette, Dulcina, in his teeth, and they said he was bewitched! No face was shown at the lattice, and no sound issued from the darkened room, still poor Giovanni was rooted to the spot. At last with a fierce effort he threw off the enchantment, if such it was, and determined to unfathom the mystery, and if the sisters were witches to out upon them!*

Good Friday came round and Giovanni sought once more the mysterious dwelling. It was broad daylight and climbing up the grille he peered into a room, and there beheld not Dulcina, but Marina, the pretty sister, upon her knees before a crucifix! The athlete entered the room, and, as he did so, he beheld in the water of the canal the reflection of seven brilliant stars, —all paled, as he looked up, but one, —and that one flashed its beams upon the kneeling girl. She was astounded at his presence, and, when he straightly charged her with witchcraft, she weepingly replied: —'My art is not that of a witch, goodly youth, but of Cupid. I have prayed for thee, that Heaven would make thee strong and true. See, my star is shining o'er thy head— "

""And my arms," exclaimed the enraptured Giovanni, "are around thy breast, witch or no witch thou hast gained me for thine own." With that he held her tightly to his bosom, and, unresisted planted hot kisses upon her lips and with his finger removed her tears.

No doubt there was a wedding, and possibly the six plain bridesmaids were transformed into comely brides as well : but the story has no such ending. No, —alas, —brave Giovanni was stabbed in a night affray and beauteous Marina drowned herself in the canal ! Sometimes they say, an eerie sound comes round the corner of the bridge — people call it "Marina's Wail."

Precious Stones : Sapphire, Serpentine, Turquoise

Time for a final visit to Kunz's "Curious Lore of Precious Stones".

Initially I'd cut this into two episodes, because I thought sapphires would have so much material attached to them that they could stand alone. I'd expected them to be everywhere, because they are common in fantasy stories. Also, I come from central Queensland, which has the largest sapphire fields in the southern hemisphere, so they are cheap and popular here. It turns out there are no good sources of sapphire in Mythic Europe. It's a mysterious stone which comes from the East.

Mythic Europeans don't know that rubies and sapphires are colour variation of the same basic stone, corundum, and do not really have a term for what we call fancies, which are corundums in other colours. The name is vaguely related to the planet Saturn, through a string of etymology that Mythic Europeans would not understand, and to the blue colour of the stone. The Romans used to call modern lapis lazuli sapphirus as noted in an earlier episode in this series.

Corundum is exceptionally hard, and it is difficult to wear away. This is why it is used in things like the movements in watches. Presumably House Verditus knows this, and uses artificial stones. Non-gemstone quality corundum is used to grind less durable gemstones down, so they may also use it as an abrasive in their machines.

A puzzle can be referred to as a corundum, but the word itself is post-game period latecomer to English, from Tamil, so the desire to embrace the pun and have Guernicus magi using it for Intelligo spells, or Tytalus magi using it for disguises, has to be resisted.

Sapphire

The sapphire is noted as a regal gem by Damigeron, who asserts that kings wore it about their necks as a powerful defence from harm. The stone preserved the wearer from envy and attracted divine favor. For royal use, sapphires were set in bracelets and necklaces, and the sacred character of the stone was attested by the tradition that the Law given to Moses on the Mount was engraved on tablets of sapphire. While we should probably translate here "lapis-lazuli" instead of "sapphire," all such passages were later understood as referring to the true sapphire, which is not found in pieces of the requisite size.

In the twelfth century, the Bishop of Rennes lavishes encomiums upon this beautiful stone. It is quite natural that this writer should lay especial stress upon the use of the sapphire for the adornment of rings, for it was in his time that it was beginning to be regarded as the stone most appropriate for ecclesiastical rings. The sapphire was like the pure sky, and mighty Nature had endowed it with so great a power that it might be called sacred and the gem of gems. Fraud was banished from its presence and necromancers honored it more than any other stone, for it enabled them to hear and to understand the obscurest oracles.

To step away from Kunz for a moment, the pope who declared all bishop's rings should be of gold and unengraved sapphire was Innocent III, who died three and a half years before the usual start date for the game.

The traditional virtue of the sapphire as an antidote against poison is noted by Bartolomæus Anglicus, who claims to have seen a test of its power, somewhat similar to that recorded by Ahmed Teifashi of the emerald.

Voicing the general belief that the sapphire was endowed with power to influence spirits, Bartolomæus says that this stone was a great favorite with those who practised necromancy, and he adds: "Also wytches love well this stone, for they wene that they may werke certen wondres by vertue of this stone."

The asteria, or star sapphire, might be called a "Stone of Destiny," as the three cross-bars which traverse it are believed to represent Faith, Hope, and Destiny. As the stone is moved, or the light changes, a living star appears….One of the most unique of talismanic stones, it is said to be so potent that it continues to exercise its good influence over the first wearer even when it has passed into other hands.

Among the rich gifts offered at the shrine of St. Erkinwald, in Old Saint Paul's, was a sapphire given in 1391 by Richard Preston, "a citizen and grocer of London." He stipulated that the stone should be kept at the shrine for the cure of diseases of the eyes, and that proclamation should be made of its remedial virtues.

The usefulness of the sapphire as an eyestone for the removal of all impurities or foreign bodies from the eye is noted by Albertus Magnus, who writes that he had seen it employed for this purpose. He adds that when a sapphire

was used in this way it should be dipped in cold water both before and after the operation. This was probably not so much to make the stone colder to the touch as to cleanse it, certainly a very necessary proceeding when the same stone was used by many persons suffering from contagious diseases of the eyes.

Richard Preston's sapphire appears to have been only one of a class regarded as having special virtue to cure diseased eyes, as is shown by the existence of various other similar sapphires in different parts of Europe. It is not very easy to determine the precise reason—if there be one—which rendered any single sapphire more useful than another in this respect. An entry in the inventory of Charles V notes "an oval Oriental sapphire for touching the eyes, set in a band of gold." Possibly the fact that a particular gem of this kind was used remedially, and was not set for wear as an ornament, may have been the only cause for a belief in its special virtue.

The proper method of applying a sapphire to cure plague boils is given at some length by Van Helmont. A gem of a fine, deep color was to be selected and rubbed gently and slowly around the pestilential tumor. During and immediately after this operation, the patient would feel but little alleviation; but a good while after the removal of the stone, favorable symptoms would appear, provided the malady were not too far advanced. This Van Helmont attributes to a magnetic force in the sapphire by means of which the absent gem continued to extract "the pestilential virulency and contagious poyson from the infected part."

Previously published material bonuses include: knowledge 2 Perdo vim against spirits 2, versus malign corpus 2, healing 3, reducing anger 3. I'd like to add healing eyes or sight +5, and I think the whole necromancy angle should be stronger than +2, perhaps +5.

Serpentine

The serpentines are a family of minerals which have a sort of scaly appearance, hence the name, refering to the skin of a snake. They aren't precious, but can be polished into stones which display this surface decoration.

The Italian peasants of to-day believe that pebbles of green serpentine afford protection from the bites of venomous creatures. These stones are usually green with streaks or veins of white, and the name was derived from their fancied resemblance to a serpent's skin. In addition to their prophylactic powers, if any one has been bitten by such a creature, the stone, when applied to the wound, is supposed to draw out the poison. Here, as in the case of coral, the hand of man must not have shaped the amulet; it should be in its natural state. As a general rule, however, the belief that the touch of any iron instrument, such as the tool of the gem-cutter, destroys the magic efficacy of the substance, is less firmly held in regard to stones than in reference to coral.

Serpentine has previously been published with a material bonus versus infection and animal poison of +3. I think we might also give the stone a little fire resistance, because some serpentines naturally contain asbestos, which ties into the whole salamander mythology. +2, perhaps?

Turquoise

With turquoise we have an odd plot hook, for characters interested in the Magica Lithica. This stone, much as we know it now, and have seen it in all kinds of roleplaying games, has no real role in Medieval European jewelry prior to the game period. There are small; sources of it in Europe, in Cornwall and Saxony, but it only really comes to Europe in volume after the Crusades begin. It's name comes from French, and literally means the "Turkish stone", although the Turks were actually just shipping stones from Persia.

It is also mined in Egypt, and was used for thousands of years there, but the artisans of Khemet found several ways to make cheap, artificial turquoise, which is more durable than the real stone. This means that if you find turquoise-like treasures from Egypt, they are more likely to be a durable, ceramic impostor than a real stone.

While there was a tendency to attribute the virtues originally ascribed to one particular stone to others of the same or similar color and appearance, certain stones were regarded as possessing special virtues not commonly attributed to others. A notable instance of this is the quality supposed to inhere in the turquoise. This stone was known in Egypt from a very early period and is later described by Pliny under the name of callais. For Pliny, and for all those who derived their information from him or from the sources he used, the turquoise only participated in the virtues assigned to all blue or greenish-blue stones; but from the thirteenth century, when the name turquoise was first employed, we read that the stone possessed the power to protect the wearer from injury by falling, more especially from horseback; later, this was extended to cover falls from a building or over a precipice. A fourteenth century authority, the "Lapidaire" of Sir John Mandeville, states that the turquoise protected horses from the ill-effects resulting from drinking cold water when overheated by exertion, and it is said that the Turks often attached these stones to the bridles and frontlets of their horses as amulets.

Probably the earliest notice of the peculiar superstition in regard to the turquoise—namely, that it preserves the wearer from injury in case of falling—is contained in Volmar's thirteenth century "Steinbuch," where we read: whoever owns the true turquoise set in gold will not injure any of his limbs when he falls, whether he be riding or walking, so long as he has the stone with him.

A singular virtue ascribed to the turquoise was that of striking the hour correctly, if the stone were suspended from a thread held between the thumb and index-finger in such a way that a slight vibration would make the stone strike against the side of a glass.

The shape and material bonus tables grant turquoise, or at least green turquoise, necromancy +4. I'd really like to give it an undiscovered, but very high, score for protecting from falling. +7 or so.

As a stone that prevents you being hurt from an involuntary dismount, and stops you colicking horses by giving them cold water after exercise, it seems the cavalier's friend. I'd note that colic thing is effectively just folklore, by the way. To extend this, it might also serve to stop Bjornaer magi injuring an ankle when trotting in horse form, and be of similar assistance to Merinitas mimicking centaurs.

And that brings us to the end of these collected bits of folklore from Kunz.

De la Mare: Time Passes

Another poem by Walter de La Mare. This time it is a location.

There was nought in the Valley
But a Tower of Ivory,
Its base enwreathed with red
Flowers that at evening
Caught the sun's crimson
As to Ocean low he sped.

Lucent and lovely
It stood in the morning
Under a trackless hill;
With snows eternal
Muffling its summit,
And silence ineffable.

Sighing of solitude
Winds from the cold heights
Haunted its yellowing stone;
At noon its shadow
Stretched athwart cedars
Whence every bird was flown.

Its stair was broken,
Its starlit walls were
Fretted; its flowers shone
Wide at the portal,
Full-blown and fading,
Their last faint fragrance gone.

And on high in its lantern
A shape of the living
Watched o'er a shoreless sea,
From a Tower rotting
With age and weakness,
Once lovely as ivory.

A demon from Spenser

Thanks to Eva Davis from Librivox for the recording, which is from her version of Elizabethan Demonology. Statistics eventually.

Spenser has clothed with horror this conception of the appearance of a fiend, just as he has enshrined in beauty the belief in the guardian angel. It is worthy of remark that he describes the devil as dwelling beneath the altar of an idol in a heathen temple. Prince Arthur strikes the image thrice with his sword—

"And the third time, out of an hidden shade,
There forth issewed from under th' altar's smoake
A dreadfull feend with fowle deformèd looke,
That stretched itselfe as it had long lyen still;
And her long taile and fethers strongly shooke,
That all the temple did with terrour fill;
Yet him nought terrifide that fearèd nothing ill.

"An huge great beast it was, when it in length
Was stretchèd forth, that nigh filled all the place,
And seemed to be of infinite great strength;
Horrible, hideous, and of hellish race,
Borne of the brooding of Echidna base,
Or other like infernall Furies kinde,
For of a maide she had the outward face
To hide the horrour which did lurke behinde
The better to beguile whom she so fond did finde.

"Thereto the body of a dog she had,
Full of fell ravin and fierce greedinesse;
A lion's clawes, with power and rigour clad
To rende and teare whatso she can oppresse;
A dragon's taile, whose sting without redresse
Full deadly wounds whereso it is empight,
And eagle's wings for scope and speedinesse
That nothing may escape her reaching might,
Whereto she ever list to make her hardy flight."

De la Mare:

The Supper

A wolf he pricks with eyes of fire
Across the night's o'ercrusted snows.
    Seeking his prey,
    He pads his way
Where Jane benighted goes,
  Where Jane benighted goes.

He curdles the bleak air with ire,
Ruffling his hoary raiment through,
    And lo! he sees
    Beneath the trees
Where Jane's light footsteps go,
  Where Jane's light footsteps go.

No hound peals thus in wicked joy,
He snaps his muzzle in the snows,
    His five-clawed feet
    Do scamper fleet
Where Jane's bright lanthorn shows,
  Where Jane's bright lanthorn shows.

Now his greed's green doth gaze unseen
On a pure face of wilding rose,
    Her amber eyes
    In fear's surprise
Watch largely as she goes,
  Watch largely as she goes.

Salt wells his hunger in his jaws,
His lust it revels to and fro,
    Yet small beneath
    A soft voice saith,
"Jane shall in safety go,
  Jane shall in safety go."

He lurched as if a fiery lash
Had scourged his hide, and through and through
    His furious eyes
    O'erscanned the skies,
But nearer dared not go,
  But nearer dared not go.

He reared like wild Bucephalus,
His fangs like spears in him uprose,
    Even to the town
    Jane's flitting gown
He grins on as she goes,
  He grins on as she goes.

In fierce lament he howls amain,
He scampers, marvelling in his throes
    What brought him there
    To sup on air,
While Jane unharmèd goes,
  While Jane unharmèd goes.

The Horn

Hark! is that a horn I hear,
  In cloudland winding sweet—
And bell-like clash of bridle-rein,
  And silver-shod light feet?

Is it the elfin laughter
  Of fairies riding faint and high,
Beneath the branches of the moon,
  Straying through the starry sky?

Is it in the globèd dew
  Such sweet melodies may fall?
Wood and valley—all are still,
  Hushed the shepherd's call.

The Salamander

When I go free,
I think 'twill be
A night of stars and snow,
And the wild fires of frost shall light
My footsteps as I go;
Nobody—nobody will be there
With groping touch, or sight,
To see me in my bush of hair
Dance burning through the night.

The "hair" mentioned above is asbestos, which was thought of as salamander hair. There are vague records of garments made of asbestos which were laundered back to white by hanging them in the centre of hot flames. It seems like the sort of thing House Flambeau would do.

Beware!

An ominous bird sang from its branch,
    "Beware, O Wanderer!
Night 'mid her flowers of glamourie spilled
    Draws swiftly near:

"Night with her darkened caravans,
    Piled deep with silver and myrrh,
Draws from the portals of the East,
    O Wanderer near."

"Night who walks plumèd through the fields
    Of stars that strangely stir—
Smitten to fire by the sandals of him
    Who walks with her."

Dame Hickory

“Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
  Here’s sticks for your fire,
Furze-twigs, and oak-twigs,
  And beech-twigs, and briar!”
But when old Dame Hickory came for to see,
She found ’twas the voice of the False Faerie.

“Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
  Here’s meat for your broth,
Goose-flesh, and hare’s flesh,
  And pig’s trotters both!”
But when old Dame Hickory came for to see,
She found ’twas the voice of the False Faerie.

“Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
  Here’s a wolf at your door,
His teeth grinning white,
  And his tongue wagging sore!”
“Nay!” said Dame Hickory, “ye False Faerie!
But a wolf ’twas indeed, and famished was he.

“Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
  Here’s buds for your tomb,
Bramble, and lavender,
  And rosemary bloom!”
“Wh-s-st!” said Dame Hickory, “ye False Faerie,
Ye cry like a wolf, ye do, and trouble poor me.”

Note that the faeries use the ilusionist's trick here: the deception's already been done before the woman hears the wolf.

Sunken Garden

Speak not—whisper not;
Here bloweth thyme and bergamot;
Softly on the evening hour,
Secret herbs their spices shower.
Dark-spiked rosemary and myrrh,
Lean-stalked, purple lavender;
Hides within her bosom, too,
All her sorrows, bitter rue.

Breathe not—trespass not;
Of this green and darkling spot,
Latticed from the moon’s beams,
Perchance a distant dreamer dreams;
Perchance upon its darkening air,
The unseen ghosts of children fare,
Faintly swinging, sway and sweep,
Like lovely sea-flowers in its deep;
While, unmoved, to watch and ward,
Amid its gloomed and daisied sward,
Stands with bowed and dewy head
That one little leaden Lad.

Haunted

From out the wood I watched them shine,—
  The windows of the haunted house,
Now ruddy as enchanted wine,
  Now dark as flittermouse.

There went a thin voice piping airs
  Along the grey and crooked walks,—
A garden of thistledown and tares,
  Bright leaves, and giant stalks.

The twilight rain shone at its gates,
  Where long-leaved grass in shadow grew;
And black in silence to her mates
  A voiceless raven flew.

Lichen and moss the lone stones greened,
  Green paths led lightly to its door,
Keen from her hair the spider leaned,
  And dusk to darkness wore.

Amidst the sedge a whisper ran,
  The West shut down a heavy eye,
And like last tapers, few and wan,
  The watch-stars kindled in the sky.

The Stranger

In the woods as I did walk,
  Dappled with the moon’s beam,
I did with a Stranger talk,
  And his name was Dream.

Spurred his heel, dark his cloak,
  Shady-wide his bonnet’s brim;
His horse beneath a silvery oak
  Grazed as I talked with him.

Softly his breast-brooch burned and shone;
  Hill and deep were in his eyes;
One of his hands held mine, and one
  The fruit that makes men wise.

Wondrously strange was earth to see,
  Flowers white as milk did gleam;
Spread to Heaven the Assyrian Tree,
  Over my head with Dream.

Dews were still betwixt us twain;
  Stars a trembling beauty shed;
Yet—not a whisper comes again
  Of the words he said.

The Journey

Heart-sick of his journey was the Wanderer;
    Footsore and sad was he;
And a Witch who long had lurked by the wayside,
    Looked out of sorcery.

‘Lift up your eyes, you lonely Wanderer,’
    She peeped from her casement small;
‘Here’s shelter and quiet to give you rest, young man,
    And apples for thirst withal.’

And he looked up out of his sad reverie,
    And saw all the woods in green,
With birds that flitted feathered in the dappling,
    The jewel-bright leaves between.

And he lifted up his face towards her lattice,
    And there, alluring-wise,
Slanting through the silence of the long past,
    Dwelt the still green Witch’s eyes.

And vaguely from the hiding-place of memory
    Voices seemed to cry;
‘What is the darkness of one brief life-time
    To the deaths thou hast made us die?

‘Heed not the words of the Enchantress
    Who would us still betray!’
And sad with the echo of their reproaches,
    Doubting, he turned away.

‘I may not shelter ‘neath your roof, lady,
    Nor in this wood’s green shadow seek repose,
Nor will your apples quench the thirst
    A homesick wanderer knows.’

‘”Homesick,” forsooth!’ she softly mocked him:
    And the beauty in her face
Made in the sunshine pale and trembling
    A stillness in that place.

And he sighed, as if in fear, the young Wanderer,
    Looking to left and to right,
Where the endless narrow road swept onward,
    In the distance lost to sight.

And there fell upon his sense the briar,
    Haunting the air with its breath,
And the faint shrill sweetness of the birds’ throats,
    Their tent of leaves beneath.

And there was the Witch, in no wise heeding;
    Her arbour, and fruit-filled dish,
Her pitcher of well-water, and clear damask –
    All that the weary wish.

And the last gold beam across the green world
    Faltered and failed, as he
Remembered his solitude and the dark night’s
    Inhospitality.

His shoulders were bowed with his knapsack;
    His staff trailed heavy in the dust;
His eyes were dazed, and hopeless of the white road
    Which tread all pilgrims must.

And he looked upon the Witch with eyes of sorrow
    In the darkening of the day;
And turned him aside into oblivion;
    And the voices died away….

And the Witch stepped down from her casement:
    In the hush of night he heard
The calling and wailing in dewy thicket
    Of bird to hidden bird.

And gloom stole all her burning crimson;
    Remote and faint in space
As stars in gathering shadow of the evening
    Seemed now her phantom face.

And one night’s rest shall be a myriad,
    Midst dreams that come and go;
Till heedless fate, unmoved by weakness, bring him
    This same strange by-way through:

To the beauty of earth that fades in ashes,
    The lips of welcome, and the eyes
More beauteous than the feeble shine of Hesper
    Lone in the lightening skies:

Till once again the Witch’s guile entreat him;
    But, worn with wisdom, he
Steadfast and cold shall choose the dark night’s
    Inhospitality.

The Ghost

‘Who knocks? ‘ ‘I, who was beautiful
Beyond all dreams to restore,
I from the roots of the dark thorn am hither,
And knock on the door.’

‘Who speaks? ‘ ‘I — once was my speech
Sweet as the bird’s on the air,
When echo lurks by the waters to heed;
‘Tis I speak thee fair.’

‘Dark is the hour!’ ‘Aye, and cold.’
‘Lone is my house.’ ‘Ah, but mine? ‘
‘Sight, touch, lips, eyes gleamed in vain.’
‘Long dead these to thine.’

Silence. Still faint on the porch
Brake the flames of the stars.
In gloom groped a hope-wearied hand
Over keys, bolts, and bars.

A face peered. All the grey night
In chaos of vacancy shone;
Nought but vast sorrow was there —
The sweet cheat gone.

The Ogre

‘Tis moonlight on Trebarwith Vale,
  And moonlight on an Ogre keen,
Who, prowling hungry through the dale,
  A lone cottage hath seen.

Small, with thin smoke ascending up,
  Three casements and a door—
The Ogre eager is to tap,
  And here seems dainty store.

Sweet as a larder to a mouse,
  So to him staring down,
Seemed the small-windowed moonlit house,
  With jasmine overgrown.

He snorted, as the billows snort
  In darkness of the night;
Betwixt his lean locks tawny-swart,
  He glowered on the sight.

Into the garden sweet with peas
  He put his wooden shoe,
And bending back the apple trees
  Crept covetously through;

Then, stooping, with a gloating eye
  Stared through the lattice small,
And spied two children which did lie
  Asleep, against the wall.

Into their dreams no shadow fell
  Of his disastrous thumb
Groping discreet, and gradual,
  Across the quiet room.

But scarce his nail had scraped the cot
  Wherein these children lay,
As if his malice were forgot,
  It suddenly did stay.

For faintly in the ingle-nook
  He heard a cradle-song,
That rose into his thoughts and woke
  Terror them among.

For she who in the kitchen sat
  Darning by the fire,
Guileless of what he would be at,
  Sang sweet as wind or wire:—

“Lullay, thou little tiny child,
  By-by, lullay, lullie;
Jesu in glory, meek and mild,
  This night remember thee!

“Fiend, witch, and goblin, foul and wild,
  He deems them smoke to be;
Lullay, thou little tiny child,
  By-by, lullay, lullie!”

The Ogre lifted up his eyes
  Into the moon’s pale ray,
And gazed upon her leopard-wise,
  Cruel and clear as day;

He snarled in gluttony and fear—
  “The wind blows dismally—
Jesu in storm my lambs be near,
  By-by, lullay, lullie!”

And like a ravenous beast which sees
  The hunter’s icy eye,
So did this wretch in wrath confess
  Sweet Jesu’s mastery.

Lightly he drew his greedy thumb
  From out that casement pale,
And strode, enormous, swiftly home,
  Whinnying down the dale.

The Pilgrim

‘“Shall we carry now your bundle,
You old grey man?
Over hill and dale and meadow
Lighter than an owlet’s shadow
We will whirl it through the air,
Through blue regions shrill and bare,
So you may in comfort fare—
Shall we carry now your bundle,
    You old grey man?”

The Pilgrim lifted up his eyes
And saw three fiends, in the skies,
Stooping o’er that lonely place
    Evil in form and face.

“Nay,” he answered, “leave me, leave me,
  Ye three wild fiends!
Far it is my feet must wander,
And my city lieth yonder
I must bear my bundle alone,
    Till the day be done.”
The fiends stared down with leaden eye,
Fanning the chill air duskily,
‘Twixt their hoods they stoop and cry:—

“Shall we smooth the path before you,
    You old grey man?
Sprinkle it green with gilded showers,
Strew it o’er with painted flowers,
Lure bright birds to sing and flit
In the honeyed airs of it?
Shall we smooth the path before you,
    Grey old man?”

“O, ’tis better silence, silence,
    Ye three wild fiends!
Footsore am I, faint and weary,
Dark the way, forlorn and dreary,
Beaten of wind, torn of briar,
Smitten of rain, parched with fire:
O, silence, silence, silence,
    Ye three wild fiends!”

It seemed a smoke obscured the air,
Bright lightning quivered in the gloom,
And a faint voice of thunder spake
Far in the lone hill-hollows—”Come!”
Then, half in fury, half in dread,
The fiends drew closer down, and said:

‘“Nay, thou stubborn fond old man,
    Hearken awhile!
Thorn, and dust, and ice and heat,
Tarry now, sit down and eat:
Heat, and ice, and dust and thorn;
Stricken, footsore, parched, forlorn—
Juice of purple grape shall be
Youth and solace unto thee.
Music of tambour, wire and wind,
Ease shall bring to heart and mind;
Wonderful sweet mouths shall sigh
Languishing and lullaby;
Turn then! Curse the dream that lures thee;
Turn thee, ere too late it be,
Lest thy three true friends grow weary
    Of comforting thee!”

The Pilgrim crouches terrified
As stooping hood, and glassy face,
Gloating, evil, side by side,
Terror and hate brood o’er the place;
He flings his withered hands on high
With a bitter, breaking cry:—
“Leave me, leave me, leave me, leave me,
    Ye three wild fiends!
If I lay me down in slumber,
Then I lay me down in wrath;
If I stir not in dark dreaming,
Then I wither in my path;
If I hear sweet voices singing,
‘Tis a demon’s lullaby:
And, in ‘hideous storm and terror,’
    Wake but to die.”

And even as he spake, on high
Arrows of sunlight pierced the sky.
Bright streamed the rain. O’er burning snow
From hill to hill a wondrous bow
Of colour and fire trembled in air,
Painting its heavenly beauty there.
Wild flapped each fiend a batlike hood
Against that ‘frighting light, and stood
Beating the windless rain, and then
Rose heavy and slow with cowering head,
Circled in company again,
And into darkness fled.

Marvellous sweet it was to hear
The waters gushing loud and clear;
Marvellous happy it was to be
Alone, and yet not solitary;
Oh, out of terror and dark to come
    In sight of home!

The Pedlar

There came a Pedlar to an evening house;
Sweet Lettice, from her lattice looking down,
Wondered what man he was, so curious
His black hair dangled on his tattered gown:
Then lifts he up his face, with glittering eyes, –
'What will you buy, sweetheart? – Here's honeycomb,
And mottled pippins, and sweet mulberry pies,
Comfits and peaches, snowy cherry bloom,
To keep in water for to make night sweet:
All that you want, sweetheart, – come, taste and eat!'

Ev'n with his sugared words, returned to her
The clear remembrance of a gentle voice: –
'And O! my child, should ever a flatterer
Tap with his wares, and promise of all joys
And vain sweet pleasures that on earth may be;
Seal up your ears, sing some old happy song,
Confuse his magic who is all mockery:
His sweets are death.' Yet, still, how she doth long
But just to taste, then shut the lattice tight,
And hide her eyes from the delicious sight!

'What must I pay?' she whispered. 'Pay!' says he,
'Pedlar I am who through this wood do roam,
One lock of hair is gold enough for me,
For apple, peach, comfit, or honeycomb!'
But from her bough a drowsy squirrel cried,
'Trust him not, Lettice, trust, oh trust him not!'
And many another woodland tongue beside
Rose softly in the silence – 'Trust him not!'
Then cried the Pedlar in a bitter voice,
'What, in the thicket, is this idle noise?'

A late, harsh blackbird smote him with her wings,
As through the glade, dark in the dim, she flew;
Yet still the Pedlar his old burden sings, –
'What, pretty sweetheart, shall I show to you?
Here's orange ribands, here's a string of pearls,
Here's silk of buttercup and pansy glove,
A pin of tortoiseshell for windy curls,
A box of silver, scented sweet with clove:
Come now,' he says, with dim and lifted face,
'I pass not often such a lonely place.'

'Pluck not a hair!' a hidden rabbit cried,
'With but one hair he'll steal thy heart away,
Then only sorrow shall thy lattice hide:
Go in! all honest pedlars come by day.'
There was dead silence in the drowsy wood;
'Here's syrup for to lull sweet maids to sleep;
And bells for dreams, and fairy wine and food
All day thy heart in happiness to keep'; –
And now she takes the scissors on her thumb, –
'O, then, no more unto my lattice come!'

O sad the sound of weeping in the wood!
Now only night is where the Pedlar was;
And bleak as frost upon a too-sweet bud
His magic steals in darkness, O alas!
Why all the summer doth sweet Lettice pine?
And, ere the wheat is ripe, why lies her gold
Hid 'neath fresh new-pluckt sprigs of eglantine?
Why all the morning hath the cuckoo tolled,
Sad to and fro in green and secret ways,
With lonely bells the burden of his days?

And, in the market-place, what man is this
Who wears a loop of gold upon his breast,
Stuck heartwise; and whose glassy flatteries
Take all the townsfolk ere they go to rest
Who come to buy and gossip? Doth his eye
Remember a face lovely in a wood?
O people! hasten, hasten, do not buy
His woful wares; the bird of grief doth brood
There where his heart should be; and far away
Dew lies on grave-flowers this selfsame day!

Is the pedlar a goblin costermonger from episode 50?

The gage

“Lady Jane, O Lady Jane!
Your hound hath broken bounds again,
And chased my timorous deer, O;
If him I see,
That hour he’ll dee;
My brakes shall be his bier, O.”

“Hoots! lord, speak not so proud to me!
My hound, I trow, is fleet and free,
He’s welcome to your deer, O;
Shoot, shoot you may,
He’ll gang his way,
Your threats we nothing fear, O.”

He’s fetched him in, he’s laid him low,
Drips his lifeblood red and slow,
Darkens his dreary eye, O;
“Here is your beast,
And now at least
My herds in peace shall lie, O.”

“‘In peace!’ my lord, O mark me well!
For what my jolly hound befell
You shall sup twenty-fold, O!
For every tooth
Of his, in sooth,
A stag in pawn, I hold, O.

“Huntsman and horn, huntsman and horn,
Shall scour your heaths and coverts lorn,
Braying ’em shrill and clear, O;
But lone and still
Shall lift each hill,
Each valley wan and sere, O.

“Ride up you may, ride down you may,
Lonely or trooped, by night or day,
My hound shall haunt you ever:
Bird, beast, and game
Shall dread the same,
The wild fish of your river.”

Her cheek burns angry as the rose,
Her eye with wrath and pity flows:
He gazes fierce and round, O—
“Dear Lord!” he says,
“What loveliness
To waste upon a hound, O.

“I’d give my stags, my hills and dales,
My stormcocks and my nightingales
To have undone this deed, O;
For deep beneath
My heart is death
Which for her love doth bleed, O.”

He wanders up, he wanders down,
On foot, a-horse, by night and noon:
His lands are bleak and drear, O;
Forsook his dales
Of nightingales,
Forsook his moors of deer, O,
Forsook his heart, ah me! of mirth;
There’s nothing gladsome left on earth;
All thoughts and dreams seem vain, O,
Save where remote
The moonbeams gloat,
And sleeps the lovely Jane, O.

Until an even when lone he went,
Gnawing his beard in dreariment—
Lo! from a thicket hidden,
Lovely as flower
In April hour,
Steps forth a form unbidden.

“Get ye now down, my lord, to me!
I’m troubled so I’m like to dee,”
She cries, ‘twixt joy and grief, O;
“The hound is dead,
When all is said,
But love is past belief, O.

“Nights, nights I’ve lain your lands to see,
Forlorn and still—and all for me,
All for a foolish curse, O;
Now here am I
Come out to die—
To live unloved is worse, O!”

In faith, this lord, in that lone dale,
Hears now a sweeter nightingale,
And lairs a tenderer deer, O;
His sorrow goes
Like mountain snows
In waters sweet and clear, O!

What ghostly hound is this that fleet
Comes fawning to his mistress’ feet,
And courses round his master?
How swiftly love
May grief remove,
How happy make disaster!

Now here he smells, now there he smells,
Winding his voice along the dells,
Till grey flows up the morn, O
Then hies again
To Lady Jane
No longer now forlorn, O.

Ay, as it were a bud, did break
To loveliness for her love’s sake,
So she in beauty moving
Rides at his hand
Across his land,
Beloved as well as loving.

This poem is called “The Gage”, and in the audio we are using it seems to have been read as “The Cage”. presumably because it was thought a spelling mistake. I don’t think it is: a gage is a thing promised as a forfeit for a broken promise

The King of Elfland's Daughter 1

Games From Folktales has been working its way through the early stories from Lord Dunsany for several years now. Due to the vagaries of US copyright law “The King of Elfland’s Daughter“, his masterpiece, only became available to us this year. I was planning to record it myself, but one of the other Librivoxians is more skilled at this than I am. She recorded it in 2019, but did not publish it until it was copyright clear, which is apparently legal. Well played Michele Fry!

I intend to go through this book, much as I went through Chronicles of Shadow Valley, cutting out the useful bits and describing them in game terms. If we go through a chapter a month, that’ll last for years, so I’ll try to cut it down two chapters a month. I’ll keep chapter one intact, though.

Chapter one introduces the main characters, and I’d need to describe them later if I cut them now. Additionally, I hope it’ll tempt you to head on over to Librivox and listen to the whole thing for free. I’m going to break in at various points with explanations and plot hooks.

Chapter I:
The Plan of the Parliament of Erl

In their ruddy jackets of leather that reached to their knees the men of Erl appeared before their lord, the stately white-haired man in his long red room. He leaned in his carven chair and heard their spokesman.

And thus their spokesman said.

“For seven hundred years the chiefs of your race have ruled us well; and their deeds are remembered by the minor minstrels, living on yet in their little tinkling songs. And yet the generations stream away, and there is no new thing.”

“What would you?” said the lord.

“We would be ruled by a magic lord,” they said.

“So be it,” said the lord. “It is five hundred years since my people have spoken thus in parliament, and it shall always be as your parliament saith. You have spoken. So be it.”

And he raised his hand and blessed them and they went.

They went back to their ancient crafts, to the fitting of iron to the hooves of horses, to working upon leather, to tending flowers, to ministering to the rugged needs of Earth; they followed the ancient ways, and looked for a new thing. But the old lord sent a word to his eldest son, bidding him come before him.

And very soon the young man stood before him, in that same carven chair from which he had not moved, where light, growing late, from high windows, showed the aged eyes looking far into the future beyond that old lord’s time. And seated there he gave his son his commandment.

“Go forth,” he said, “before these days of mine are over, and therefore go in haste, and go from here eastwards and pass the fields we know, till you see the lands that clearly pertain to faery; and cross their boundary, which is made of twilight, and come to that palace that is only told of in song.”

“It is far from here,” said the young man Alveric.

The people of Erl have a parliament, and that’s not all that unusual this early on. You’ll notive the parliament has made no other demand for five hundred years, and that it has been active for seven hundred. In the standard Ars Magica setting that means the parliament was founded about 520, which is at the start or end of the Arthurian period, depending on which dating system you prefer.

Erl appears to have a Saxon name. It’s an English town 25 miles from faerie, according to a foreword in the book. The Erl King, in English literature, is the elf king, but Erl is a mortal kingdom, at least so far. The word mean “elder” hence the titles of descending from “earldoman”, the modern “earl” and “alderman.”. So, the name means the Kingdom of the Old Ways.

We don’t know if the throne of Erl gives the Visons Virtue or if this is just a poetic way of saying he plans past his own lifetime.

“Yes,” answered he, “it is far.”

“And further still,” the young man said, “to return. For distances in those fields are not as here.”

“Even so,” said his father.

Unusually Faerie here seems to be to the east: generally it is to the west. He goes east following the light of twilight, which implies the sun sets in the east. In Ars Magica we’d just flip these directions. Dunsany is using similar rules to us regarding time dilation in Faerie.

“What do you bid me do,” said the son, “when I come to that palace?”

And his father said: “To wed the King of Elfland’s daughter.”

The young man thought of her beauty and crown of ice, and the sweetness that fabulous runes had told was hers. Songs were sung of her on wild hills where tiny strawberries grew, at dusk and by early starlight, and if one sought the singer no man was there. Sometimes only her name was sung softly over and over. Her name was Lirazel.

Lirazel is the point-of-view character in several of the later chapters, and we’ll deal with her in depth there. Her name appears to be unique to Dunsany.

She was a princess of the magic line. The gods had sent their shadows to her christening, and the fairies too would have gone, but that they were frightened to see on their dewy fields the long dark moving shadows of the gods, so they stayed hidden in crowds of pale pink anemones, and thence blessed Lirazel.

There are hints in Ars Magica that deep powers lie behind Faerie and use its inhabitants as their way of reaching into the mortal world. These could be the Gods listed here. Anemones turn up in several of Dunsany’s stories. They are one of his tropes.

“My people demand a magic lord to rule over them. They have chosen foolishly,” the old lord said, “and only the Dark Ones that show not their faces know all that this will bring: but we, who see not, follow the ancient custom and do what our people in their parliament say. It may be some spirit of wisdom they have not known may save them even yet. Go then with your face turned towards that light that beats from fairyland, and that faintly illumines the dusk between sunset and early stars, and this shall guide you till you come to the frontier and have passed the fields we know.”

Then he unbuckled a strap and a girdle of leather and gave his huge sword to his son, saying: “This that has brought our family down the ages unto this day shall surely guard you always upon your journey, even though you fare beyond the fields we know.”

And the young man took it though he knew that no such sword could avail him.

Near the Castle of Erl there lived a lonely witch, on high land near the thunder, which used to roll in Summer along the hills. There she dwelt by herself in a narrow cottage of thatch and roamed the high fields alone to gather the thunderbolts. Of these thunderbolts, that had no earthly forging, were made, with suitable runes, such weapons as had to parry unearthly dangers.

The thunderbolts are meteorites, and the Fallen Fane supplement has weapons made out of the same material. They seem particularly common in this area, which may be why the witch has her garden in this place.

And alone would roam this witch at certain tides of Spring, taking the form of a young girl in her beauty, singing among tall flowers in gardens of Erl. She would go at the hour when hawk-moths first pass from bell to bell. And of those few that had seen her was this son of the Lord of Erl. And though it was calamity to love her, though it rapt men’s thoughts away from all things true, yet the beauty of the form that was not hers had lured him to gaze at her with deep young eyes, till—whether flattery or pity moved her, who knows that is mortal?—she spared him whom her arts might well have destroyed and, changing instantly in that garden there, showed him the rightful form of a deadly witch. And even then his eyes did not at once forsake her, and in the moments that his glance still lingered

upon that withered shape that haunted the hollyhocks he had her gratitude that may not be bought, nor won by any charms that Christians know. And she had beckoned to him and he had followed, and learned from her on her thunder-haunted hill that on the day of need a sword might be made of metals not sprung from Earth, with runes along it that would waft away, certainly any thrust of earthly sword, and except for three master-runes could thwart the weapons of Elfland.

The master runes will be back.

As he took his father's sword the young man thought of the witch.

It was scarcely dark in the valley when he left the Castle of Erl, and went so swiftly up the witch's hill that a dim light lingered yet on its highest heaths when he came near the cottage of the one that he sought, and found her burning bones at a fire in the open. To her he said that the day of his need was come. And she bade him gather thunderbolts in her garden, in the soft earth under her cabbages.

Burning bones is a traditional and powerful warding spell. It's literally where we get the word "bonfire" from.

And there with eyes that saw every minute more dimly, and fingers that grew accustomed to the thunderbolts' curious surfaces, he found before darkness came down on him seventeen: and these he heaped into a silken kerchief and carried back to the witch.

Cabbages also show up in the Dunsany story about the death of the Gladsome Beast. I'd note that the cabbage has a cruciform flower, so it may be that burying the meteorites under the cabbages places them under a protection from malign influences.

On the grass beside her he laid those strangers to Earth. From wonderful spaces they came to her magical garden, shaken by thunder from paths that we cannot tread; and though not in themselves containing magic were well adapted to carry what magic her runes could give. She laid the thigh-bone of a materialist down, and turned to those stormy wanderers.

Faint trace of the Realm of Reason there.

She arranged them in one straight row by the side of her fire. And over them then she toppled the burning logs and the embers, prodding them down with the ebon stick that is the sceptre of witches, until she had deeply covered those seventeen cousins of Earth that had visited us from their etherial home.

I'm not sure about this ebon stick – presumably it's not true ebony, which comes from Africa. It may just be that it is black.

She stepped back then from her fire and stretched out her hands, and suddenly blasted it with a frightful rune. The flames leaped up in amazement. And what had been but a lonely fire in the night, with no more mystery than pertains to all such fires, flared suddenly into a thing that wanderers feared.

As the green flames, stung by her runes, leaped up, and the heat of the fire grew intenser, she stepped backwards further and further, and merely uttered her runes a little louder the further she got from the fire. She bade Alveric pile on logs, dark logs of oak that lay there cumbering the heath; and at once, as he dropped them on, the heat licked them up; and the witch went on pronouncing her louder runes, and the flames danced wild and green; and down in the embers the seventeen, whose paths had once crossed Earth's when they wandered free, knew heat again as great as they had known, even on that desperate ride that had brought them here. And when Alveric could no longer come near the fire, and the witch was some yards from it shouting her runes, the magical flames burned all the ashes away and that portent that flared on the hill as suddenly ceased, leaving only a circle that sullenly glowed on the ground, like the evil pool that glares where thermite has burst. And flat in the glow, all liquid still, lay the sword.

The one work of Lord Dunsany's that's in the public domain, which I've not harvested from is Unhappy Far Off Things, which is his war diary. He travels through places destroyed in the First World War and he describes what he sees. I tried to work up parts of it for remnants of Schism War, but couldn't find anything fantastical. The work is one of deep and extraordinary melancholy. So, when he mentions the glow of thermite, it is something that he has seen, and it symbolises unnaturalness and evil.

The witch approached it and pared its edges with a sword that she drew from her thigh. Then she sat down beside it on the earth and sang to it while it cooled. Not like the runes that enraged the flames was the song

she sang to the sword: she whose curses had blasted the fire till it shrivelled big logs of oak crooned now a melody like a wind in summer blowing from wild wood gardens that no man tended, down valleys loved once by children, now lost to them but for dreams, a song of such memories as lurk and hide along the edges of oblivion, now flashing from beautiful years of glimpse of some golden moment, now passing swiftly out of remembrance again, to go back to the shades of oblivion, and leaving on the mind those faintest traces of little shining feet which when dimly perceived by us are called regrets. She sang of old Summer noons in the time of harebells: she sang on that high dark heath a song that seemed so full of mornings and evenings preserved with all their dews by her magical craft from days that had else been lost, that Alveric wondered of each small wandering wing, that her fire had lured from the dusk, if this were the ghost of some day lost to man, called up by the force of her song from times that were fairer. And all the while the unearthly metal grew harder. The white liquid stiffened and turned red. The glow of the red dwindled. And as it cooled it narrowed: little particles came together, little crevices closed: and as they closed they seized the air about them, and with the air they caught the witch's rune, and gripped it and held it forever. And so it was it became a magical sword. And little magic there is in English woods, from the time of anemones to the falling of leaves, that was not in the sword. And little magic there is in southern downs, that only sheep roam over and quiet shepherds, that the sword had not too. And there was scent of thyme in it and sight of lilac, and the chorus of birds that sings before dawn in April, and the deep proud splendour of rhododendrons, and the litheness and laughter of streams, and miles and miles of may. And by the time the sword was black it was all enchanted with magic.

In Magonomia, which is another project I'm working on at the moment, CJ's put forward this idea that faeries are beautiful stoners. They aren't like Ars Magica where they take vitality from humans – they are individually extant. Either way, this sword because it is forged with mortal regret, brings to them something they cannot experience. It forces part of the human experience into their little dreamy bubble. It carries the passage of time, and the scent of thyme and lilacs, which are for sleep..

Nobody can tell you about that sword all that there is to be told of it; for those that know of those paths of Space on which its metals once floated, till Earth caught them one by one as she sailed past on her orbit, have little time to waste on such things as magic, and so cannot tell you how the sword was made, and those who know whence poetry is, and the need that man has for song, or know any one of the fifty branches of magic, have little time to waste on such things as science, and so cannot tell you whence its ingredients came.

By chance, there are fifty branches of magic in Dunsany;s ciosmology, and five times ten technique and form combinations in Ars Magica.

Enough that it was once beyond our Earth and was now here amongst our mundane stones; that it was once but as those stones, and now had something in it such as soft music has; let those that can define it.

And now the witch drew the black blade forth by the hilt, which was thick and on one side rounded, for she had cut a small groove in the soil below the hilt for this purpose, and began to sharpen both sides of the sword by rubbing them with a curious greenish stone, still singing over the sword an eerie song.

I don't know what the green stone is – it's the colour of Faerie.

Alveric watched her in silence, wondering, not counting time; it may have been for moments, it may have been while the stars went far on their courses. Suddenly she was finished. She stood up with the sword lying on both her hands. She stretched it out curtly to Alveric; he took it, she turned away; and there was a look in her eyes as though she would have kept that sword, or kept Alveric. He turned to pour out his thanks, but she was gone.

He rapped on the door of the dark house; he called "Witch, Witch" along the lonely heath, till children heard on far farms and were terrified. Then he turned home, and that was best for him.

Be unalarmed, the witch will be back. She's one of my favourite characters in this story. One of the stalwarts of the Ars Community, Jason, contacted me straight after this came out in audio with his statistics for the witch, so I hope to share those once I've checked that he's willing to have them available.

Venice :
Another love-struck Romeo sings the canals a serenade

A story from Edgecumb Stanley that magi might intervene in at any point. It may sound familiar…

The love-story of Gerardo Guoro and Elena Candiano is as touching as any in the gentle annals of romance. She was the daughter of Doge Pietro Candiano IIL,—a girl in whose veins coursed the bluest of noble Venetian blood, whilst her lover was base-born, though of a respectable family. He was probably as the Venetian proverb has it " Erser in Candia,"—"Without a farthing in his pocket!" Such unequal affairs of the heart, as the world has always called them, are just where the romance of love runs riot!

It was so when Gerardo and Elena, plighted their troth secredy, and told nobody but Elena's doting old nurse Marta, who contrived the interviews, bore the messages, and shielded the secret from the Doge and Dogaressa… With the very first bud of their rosetree of happiness, alas, gallant Gerardo was summoned to join his company and to embark for the Orient. Elena's mother, noting the girl's tearful pallor, decided that matrimony was the only remedy.

"A maiden fretting
Is cured by wedding."

A very eligible partner appeared duly on the scene, one Messir Vettor Belegno, a patrician of ripe age and wealthy, whose widowed home looked for a new mistress. Broken-hearted Elena refused her rich paramour, but a daughter of the Doge has no will of her own, and the marriage contract was duly signed, and she, more dead than alive, ever fretting for her absent Gerardo, was led to her nuptials in San Pietro di Castello.

The fatal knot was tied, but it had nearly compassed a fatality, for, no sooner had the ring of the wedded wife been slipped upon her finger, than poor Elena, clad in her bridal garb of purity, swooned in Belegno's arms. A speechless awe pervaded the brilliant wedding party, for when the beauteous bride came not back again to consciousness, the Bishop pronounced her dead!

The joyous notes of the nuptial ceremony were abruptly changed to the dirge of burial, and, there, wrapped in her bridal dress, she lay crowned with fresh spring flowers until a place was prepared for her cold body in the crypt. As fate would have it the morrow of her funeral, when the fair alabaster-like form of the lovely girl lay alone in that dark place, saw brave Gerardo's troop of gallant warriors landed at the Lido. News of the tragedy was swiftly conveyed to the fleet, and the disconsolate young husband hastened fearfully to the old church on Olivolo. Slipping aside the heavy marble cover of Elena's tomb, he kneeled upon his knees imploring Heaven's pardon and Heaven's favour.

Then, in a paroxysm of grief he stretched his body along the silent form of his beloved one, and, looking into her eyes, he pressed his breast to hers, and there they lay. Presently he is conscious of a pulse and a movement in the bridal shrouded corpse, and, joy of joys, her eyes open, and she knows that her Gerardo has come home to claim her!

Beside himself with transports of love and sorrow he carries the unresisting girl to his mother, by whose care and Gerardo's kisses, she is nursed back to life and happiness. But who shall break the news to the Doge and Dogaressa? Gerardo answers the query manfully. He has gained laurels in the East, and his grateful city has honours to bestow. Kneeling before the Doge to receive his guerdon he bravely recounts the story he has to tell.

The Doge is incredulous, but confirmation is ready to hand, when his daughter, running to Gerardo, takes his hand in hers, and craves her father's benediction. The bridegroom of the tragedy gracefully stepping aside renounces, quite nobly, the marriage dowry, and joins the Doge and Dogaressa in sanctioning Elena's secret wedding with Gerardo. As story-books relate—they lived ever after in perfect happiness and great content.

Magonomia:
The Ghost of Anne Bolyen

Over on the Shewstone Publishing site they've put out a brief story of mine as their monthly saga hook.

A few extra props…

First a drinking song on YouTube. It is called "With her head tucked underneath her arm" and is a series of jokes about the ghosts of the Tower of London. The servants of the hall may sing it and give the player characters a clue. It's still under copyright so I can't record it or give lyrics.

In her final days Anne wrote poem, which I've not recorded as my voice doesn't make a good prop for a dead queen. On YouTube you can find several versions of "O death! Rock me asleep" by folk and opera singers. These could be used as the words of the ghost as she walks the hall.

O death! rock me asleep,
Bring me the quiet rest;
Let pass my weary guiltless ghost
Out of my careful breast:
Toll on the passing bell,
Ring out the doleful knell,
Let thy sound my death tell,
Death doth draw nigh;
There is no remedy
There is no remedy
My pains who can express?
Alas! they are so strong,
My dolour will not suffer strength
My life for to prolong:
Toll on, thou passing bell,
Ring out my doleful knell,
Let thy sound my death tell,
Death doth draw nigh;
There is no remedy.
Alone in prison strong,
I wait my destiny,
Woe worth this cruel hap that I
Should taste this misery?
Toll on, thou passing bell,
Let thy sound my death tell,
Death doth draw nigh,
There is no remedy.
Farewell my pleasures past,
Welcome my present pain!
I feel my torments so increase
That life cannot remain.
Cease now,thou passing bell;
Rung is my doleful knell,
For the sound my death doth tell,
Death doth draw nigh,
There is no remedy.

The King of Elfland's Daughter 2

The second chapter of the King of Elfland's daughter is a slow start, with little we can harvest for roleplaying games. It's going to be included here because it sets a baseline which Dunsany calls back to later, to show the effects of the powers of the King of Elfland. I hope listeners will, therefore, pardon the relatively mundane parts which take up the first few minutes. This episode also contains chapter three, which is within Elfland, where we see some fantastic elements. Stats for the various guards eventually.

Chapter II:
Alveric comes in sight of the Elfin Mountains

To the long chamber, sparsely furnished, high in a tower, in which Alveric slept, there came a ray direct from the rising sun. He awoke, and remembered at once the magical sword, which made all his awaking joyous. It is natural to feel glad at the thought of a recent gift, but there was also a certain joy in the sword itself, which perhaps could communicate with Alveric's thoughts all the more easily just as they came from dreamland, which was pre-eminently the sword's own country; but, however it be, all those that have come by a magical sword, have always felt that joy while it still was new, clearly and unmistakably.

He had no farewells to make, but thought it better instantly to obey his father's command than to stay to explain why he took upon his adventure a sword that he deemed to be better than the one his father loved. So he stayed not even to eat, but put food in a wallet and slung over him by a strap a bottle of good new leather, not waiting to fill it for he knew he should meet with streams; and, wearing his father's sword as swords are commonly worn, he slung the other over his back with its rough hilt tied near his shoulder, and strode away from the Castle and Vale of Erl. Of money he took but little, half a handful of copper only, for use in the fields we know; for he knew not what coin or what means of exchange were used on the other side of the frontier of twilight.

Now the Vale of Erl is very near to the border beyond which there is none of the fields we know. He climbed the hill and strode over the fields and passed through woods of hazel; and the blue sky shone on him merrily as he went by the way of the fields, and the blue was as bright by his feet when he came to the woods, for it was the time of the bluebells. He ate, and filled his water-bottle, and travelled all day eastwards, and at evening the mountains of faery came floating into view, the colour of pale forget-me-nots.

Hazel's an odd and useful wood. It usually takes the form of multiple thin stems, which are pliable either after they are harvested, or even while they are still growing. The hazel responds really well to coppicing, which makes the tree live longer and produce more thing canes for staves. There's some folkloristic link to wisdom (the Well of Wisdom in some Welsh stories is surrounded by hazel trees). Also, it has edible nuts, which could contain vis. The nuts from the trees about the Well of Wisdom feeds the Salmon of Wisdom and grants him this virtue.

Bluebells are an odd and useful flower for storyguides. They are thought to be a sign that faeries have laid traps in a woodland – children who pick them may be stolen. That aisde, the bulbs of bluebells contain a starch that's usefuk for all kinds of things. It used to be used to glue fletchings to arrows, and to bind books. The glue is mildly toxic, so it repels insects. Magonomia players – this starch keeps ruffs stiff.

Alveric's sword can, conceivably, communicate with him while he dreams. In Ars Magica we mostly see this power in demons; they use it to cause nightmares. Regardless it gives us a mechanical model for the power. We can just tone the cost back, since it doesn't seem to have the demonical capacity to cause seizures.

A few notes. A wallet, in this sense, is a bag or backpack. Wallet in its current meaning, a foldable container for money, is from American English in the 19th Century. The lesser coins of Erl are copper, and Alveric does not know what is used on the other side. He bears two swords, one at his hip in the normal fashion and the other over his back in a rough scabbard. Knights with two swords are rare in European writing. The main one I can think of is the cursed Sir Balin Le Sauvage, from the Arthurian stories. He is cursed by the second sword, and kills his brother with it, taking a mortal wound himself. He also gives the Dolourous Stroke to the Fisher King, the keeper of the Grail.

As the sun set behind Alveric he looked at those pale-blue mountains to see with what colour their peaks would astonish the evening; but never a tint they took from the setting sun, whose splendour was gilding all the fields we know, never a wrinkle faded upon their precipices, never a shadow deepened, and Alveric learned that for nothing that happens here is any change in the enchanted lands.

Time is different there.

He turned his eyes from their serene pale beauty back to the fields we know. And there, with their gables lifting into the sunlight above deep hedgerows beautiful with Spring, he saw the cottages of earthly men. Past them he walked while the beauty of evening grew, with songs of birds, and scents wandering from flowers, and odours that deepened and deepened, and evening decked herself to receive the Evening Star. But before that star appeared the young adventurer found the cottage he sought; for, flapping above its doorway, he saw the sign of huge brown hide with outlandish letters in gilt which proclaimed the dweller below to be a worker in leather.

An old man came to the door when Alveric knocked, little and bent with age, and he bent more when Alveric named himself. And the young man asked for a scabbard for his sword, yet said not what sword it was. And they both went into the cottage where the old wife was, by her big fire, and the couple did honour to Alveric. The old man then sat down near his thick table, whose surface shone with smoothness wherever it was not pitted by little tools that had drilled through pieces of leather all that man's lifetime and in the times of his fathers. And then he laid the sword upon his knees and wondered at the roughness of hilt and guard, for they were raw unworked metal, and at the huge width of the sword; and then he screwed up his eyes and began to think of his trade. And in a while he thought out what must be done; and his wife brought him a fine hide; and he marked out on it two pieces as wide as the sword, and a bit wider than that.

And any questions he asked concerning that wide bright sword Alveric somewhat parried, for he wished not to perplex his mind by telling him all that it was: he perplexed that old couple enough a little later when he asked them for lodging for the night. And this they gave him with as many apologies as if it were they that had asked a favour, and gave him a great supper out of their cauldron, in which boiled everything that the old man snared; but nothing that Alveric was able to say prevented them giving up their bed to him and preparing a heap of skins for their own night's rest by the fire.

This isn't actually all that odd. Even nobles do this- they gives their bedroom, as the best, to their lord. In the Elizabethan period, they build prodigy houses, and the best bedroom is the guest room, so they don't need to give up their own.

And after their supper the old man cut out the two wide pieces of leather with a point at the end of each and began to stitch them together on each side. And then Alveric began to ask him of the way, and the old leather-worker spoke of North and South and West and even of north-east, but of East or south-east he spoke never a word. He dwelt near the very edge of the fields we know, yet of any hint of anything lying beyond them he or his wife said nothing. Where Alveric's journey lay upon the morrow they seemed to think the world ended.

We need to mark this, because it benchmarks for some magic we will see later.

And pondering afterwards, in the bed they gave him, all that the old man had said, Alveric sometimes marvelled at his ignorance, and yet sometimes wondered if it might have been skill by which those two had avoided all the evening any word of anything lying to the East or south-east of their home. He wondered if in his early days the old man might have gone there, but he was unable even to wonder what he had found there if he had gone. Then Alveric fell asleep, and dreams gave him hints and guesses of the old man's wanderings in Fairyland, but gave him no better guides than he had already, and these were the pale-blue peaks of the Elfin Mountains.

Remember – it is bad luck to even name the faeries. The euphemisms of the "fair folk" and the "good neighbours" exist to avoid notice and punishment.

The old man woke him after he had slept long. When he came to the day-room a bright fire was burning there, his breakfast was ready for him and the scabbard made, which fitted the sword exactly. The old people waited on him silently and took payment for the scabbard, but would not take aught for their hospitality. Silently they watched him rise to go, and followed him without a word to the door, and outside it watched him still, clearly hoping that he would turn to the North or West; but when he turned and strode for the Elfin Mountains, they watched him no more, for their faces never were turned that way. And though they watched him no longer yet he waved his hand in farewell; for he had a feeling for the

cottages and fields of these simple folk, such as they had not for the enchanted lands. He walked in the sparkling morning through scenes familiar from infancy; he saw the ruddy orchis flowering early, reminding the bluebells they were just past their prime; the small young leaves of the oak were yet a brownish yellow; the new beech-leaves shone like brass, where the cuckoo was calling clearly; and a birch tree looked like a wild woodland creature that had draped herself in green gauze; on favoured bushes there were buds of may.

An orchis is a sort of temperate orchid. The other trees mentioned here, oak and beech also have folkloristic roles. The oak is the king of trees, that draws and survives the lightning. The beech is the queen of trees, and her wood is best for divination and dowsing. Note that it is autumn when he is leaving, and that in faerie it is eternally summer.

Alveric said over and over to himself farewell to all these things: the cuckoo went on calling, and not for him.

This is a reference to Christina Rosetti's Dirge. The cuckoo calls for a young man who is to die prematurely.

And then, as he pushed through a hedge into a field untended, there suddenly close before him in the field was, as his father had told, the frontier of twilight. It stretched across the fields in front of him, blue and dense like water; and things seen through it seemed misshapen and shining. He looked back once over the fields we know; the cuckoo went on calling unconcernedly; a small bird sang about its own affairs; and, nothing seeming to answer or heed his farewells, Alveric strode on boldly into those long masses of twilight.

This is one of the earliest representations of a regio boundary in fiction.

A man in a field not far was calling to horses, there were folk talking in a neighbouring lane, as Alveric stepped into the rampart of twilight; at once all these sounds grew dim, humming faintly, as from great distances: in a few strides he was through, and not a murmur at all came then from the fields we know. The fields through which he had come had suddenly ended; there was no trace of its hedges bright with new green; he looked back, and the frontier seemed lowering, cloudy and smoky; he looked all round and saw no familiar thing; in the place of the beauty of May were the wonders and splendours of Elfland.

The pale-blue mountains stood august in their glory, shimmering and rippling in a golden light that seemed as though it rhythmically poured from the peaks and flooded all those slopes with breezes of gold. And below them, far off as yet, he saw going up all silver into the air the spires of the palace only told of in song. He was on a plain on which the flowers were queer and the shape of the trees monstrous. He started at once toward the silver spires.

Is this glamour, or vim, flowing tidally off the mountains?

To those who may have wisely kept their fancies within the boundary of the fields we know it is difficult for me to tell of the land to which Alveric had come, so that in their minds they can see that plain with its scattered trees and far off the dark wood out of which the palace of Elfland lifted those glittering spires, and above them and beyond them that serene range of mountains whose pinnacles took no colour from any light we see. Yet it is for this very purpose that our fancies travel far, and if my reader through fault of mine fail to picture the peaks of Elfland my fancy had better have stayed in the fields we know. Know then that in Elfland are colours more deep than are in our fields, and the very air there glows with so deep a lucency that all things seen there have something of the look of our trees and flowers in June reflected in water. And the colour of Elfland, of which I despaired to tell, may yet be told, for we have hints of it here; the deep blue of the night in Summer just as the gloaming has gone, the pale blue of Venus flooding the evening with light, the deeps of lakes in the twilight, all these are hints of that colour. And while our sunflowers carefully turned to the sun, some forefather of the rhododendrons must have turned a little towards Elfland, so that some of that glory dwells with them to this day. And, above all, our painters have had many a glimpse of that country, so that sometimes in pictures we see a glamour too wonderful for our fields; it is a memory of theirs that intruded from some old glimpse of the pale-blue mountains while they sat at easels painting the fields we know.

Colours are deeper and fewer than in our world. We discussed this a little all the way back in Episode 4 of Games From Folktales: it may be that the added colours of Earth appear as the background aura of the world, which is nominally flagged as Magic 0 in 1220, rises.

Rhododendrons aren't naturally found in England: White ones first reach England in the Elizabethan period with Huguenot refugees from the Alps. The large, colourful ones which are presumably being described here arrived in the Eighteenth Century from Spain as part of the Columbian Exchange. Then again, the narrator has already compared things to thermite...

So Alveric strode on through the luminous air of that land whose glimpses dimly remembered are inspirations here. And at once he felt less lonely. For there is a barrier in the fields we know, drawn sharply between men and all other life, so that if we be but a day away from our kind we are lonely; but once across the boundary of twilight and Alveric saw this barrier was down. Crows walking on the moor looked whimsically at him, all manner of little creatures peered curiously to see who was come from a quarter whence so few ever came; to see who went on a journey whence so few ever returned; for the King of Elfland

guarded his daughter well, as Alveric knew although he knew not how. There was a merry sparkle of interest in all those little eyes, and a look that might mean warning.

They know what he's about, much like Ars Magica faeries

There was perhaps less mystery here than on our side of the boundary of twilight; for nothing lurked or seemed to lurk behind great boles of oak, as in certain lights and seasons things may lurk in the fields we know; no strangeness hid on the far side of ridges; nothing haunted deep woods; whatever might possibly lurk was clearly there to be seen, whatever strangeness might be was spread in full sight of the traveller, whatever might haunt deep woods lived there in the open day.

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And, so strong lay the enchantment deep over all that land, that not only did beasts and men guess each other's meanings well, but there seemed to be an understanding even, that reached from men to trees and from trees to men. Lonely pine trees that Alveric passed now and then on the moor, their trunks glowing always with the ruddy light that they had got by magic from some old sunset, seemed to stand with their branches akimbo and lean over a little to look at him. It seemed almost as though they had not always been trees, before enchantment had overtaken them there; it seemed they would tell him something.

So, in this land, things go beyond Faerie Speech to allowing humans to feel something of the empathy that allows the faeries to sense human vitality.

But Alveric heeded no warnings either from beasts or trees, and strode away toward the enchanted wood.

Chapter III:
The Magical Sword Meets Some of the Swords of Elfland

When Alveric came to the enchanted wood the light in which Elfland glowed had neither grown nor dwindled, and he saw that it came from no radiance that shines on the fields we know, unless the wandering lights of wonderful moments that sometimes astonish our fields, and are gone the instant they come, are strayed over the border of Elfland by some momentary disorder of magic. Neither sun nor moon made the light of that enchanted day.

This faerie is not literally timeless – humans here age as they act.

A line of pine trees up which ivy climbed, as high as their lowering black foliage, stood like sentinels at the edge of the wood. The silver spires were shining as though it were they that made all this azure glow in which Elfland swam. And Alveric having by now come far into Elfland, and being now before its capital palace, and knowing that Elfland guarded its mysteries well, drew his father's sword before he entered the wood. The other still hung on his back, slung in its new scabbard over his left shoulder.

And the moment he passed by one of those guardian pine trees, the ivy that lived on it unfastened its tendrils and, rapidly letting itself down, came straight for Alveric and clutched at his throat.

Killer vines. Classic opening move there.

The long thin sword of his father was just in time; had it not been drawn he would have scarcely got it out, so swift was the rush of the ivy. He cut tendril after tendril that grasped his limbs as ivy grasps old towers, and still more tendrils came for him, until he severed its main stem between him and the tree. And as he was doing this he heard a hissing rush behind him, and another had come down from another tree and was rushing at him with all its leaves spread out. The green thing looked wild and angry as it gripped his left shoulder as though it would hold it forever. But Alveric severed those tendrils with a blow of his sword and then fought with the rest, while the first one was still alive but now too short to reach him, and was lashing its branches angrily on the ground. And soon, as the surprise of the attack was over and he had freed himself of the tendrils that had gripped him, Alveric stepped back till the ivy could not reach him and he could still fight it with his long sword. The ivy crawled back then to lure Alveric on, and sprang at him when he followed it.

It is clever enough to lay little ambushes. There's method and technique there.

But, terrible though the grip of ivy is, that was a good sharp sword; and very soon Alveric, all bruised though he was, had so lopped his assailant that it fled back up its tree. Then he stepped back and looked at the wood in the light of his new experience, choosing a way

through. He saw at once that in the barrier of pine trees the two in front of him had had their ivy so shortened in the fight that if he went mid-way between the two the ivy of neither would be able to reach him. He then stepped forward, but the moment he did so he noticed one of the pine trees move closer to the other. He knew then that the time was come to draw his magical sword.

So he returned his father's sword to the scabbard by his side and drew out the other over his shoulder and, going straight up to the tree that had moved, swept at the ivy as it sprang at him: and the ivy fell all at once to the ground, not lifeless but a heap of common ivy. And then he gave one blow to the trunk of the tree, and a chip flew out not larger than a common sword would have made, but the whole tree shuddered; and with that shudder disappeared at once a certain ominous look that the pine had had, and it stood there an ordinary unenchanted tree. Then he stepped on through the wood with his sword drawn.

So, Alveric's sword does not extra damage, but removes the faerie glamour from things. This is a Perdo Vim effect he can use whenever he wants.

He had not gone many paces when he heard behind him a sound like a faint breeze in the tree-tops, yet no wind was blowing in that wood at all. He looked round therefore, and saw that the pine trees were following him. They were coming slowly after him, keeping well out of the way of his sword, but to left and right they were gaining on him, so that he saw he was being gradually shut in by a crescent that grew thicker and thicker as it crowded amongst the trees that it met on the way, and would soon crush him to death. Alveric saw at once that to turn back would be fatal, and decided to push right on, relying chiefly on speed; for his quick perception had already noticed something slow about the magic that swayed the wood; as though whoever controlled it were old or weary of magic, or interrupted by other things.

There's some question as to whether these are ent-like creatures, or puppets being controlled by a distracted magician,.

So he went straight ahead, hitting every tree in his way, whether enchanted or not, a blow with his magical sword; and the runes that ran in that metal from the other side of the sun were stronger than any spells that there were in the wood. Great oak trees with sinister boles drooped and lost all their enchantment as Alveric flashed past them with a flick of that magical sword. He was marching faster than the clumsy pines. And soon he left in that weird and eerie wood a wake of trees that were wholly unenchanted, that stood there now without hint of romance or mystery even.

Alveric is basically creating the inverse of a faerie trod here. It's a mortal path through a faerie wood, completely stripped of glamour.

And all of a sudden he came from the gloom of the wood to the emerald glory of the Elf King's lawns. Again, we have hints of such things here. Imagine lawns of ours just emerging from night, flashing early lights from their dewdrops when all the stars have gone; bordered with flowers that just begin to appear, their gentle colours all coming back after night; untrodden by any feet except the tiniest and wildest; shut off from the wind and the world by trees in whose fronds is still darkness: picture these waiting for the birds to sing; there is almost a hint there sometimes of the glow of the lawns of Elfland; but then it passes so quickly that we can never be sure. More beautiful than aught our wonder guesses, more than our hearts have hoped, were the dewdrop lights and twilights in which these lawns glowed and shone. And we have another thing by which to hint of them, those seaweeds or sea-mosses that drape Mediterranean rocks and shine out of blue-green water for gazers from dizzy cliffs: more like sea-floors were these lawns than like any land of ours, for the air of Elfland is thus deep and blue.

It's possible this is literal. One of the points of mystogogic imitation is that some secrets keep themselves. They can't be discussed, because there is no frame of reference for the discussion to take place within until you learn the Cult Lore.

At the beauty of these lawns Alveric stood gazing as they shone through twilight and dew, surrounded by the mauve and ruddy glory of the massed flowers of Elfland, beside which our sunsets pale and our orchids droop; and beyond them lay like night the magical wood. And jutting from that wood, with glittering portals all open wide to the lawns, with windows more blue than our sky on Summer's nights; as though built of starlight; shone that palace that may be only told of in song.

Harebells are a purple flower that are found in England and Scotland. They are sometimes called witch thimbles, and are said to grow where hares are seen. Hares have strong folkloric links to witchcraft.

As Alveric stood there with his sword in his hand, at the wood's edge, scarcely breathing, with his eyes looking over the lawns at the chiefest glory of Elfland; through one of the portals alone came the King of Elfland's daughter. She walked dazzling to the lawns without seeing Alveric. Her feet brushed through the dew and the heavy air and gently pressed for an instant the emerald grass, which bent and rose, as our harebells when blue butterflies light and leave them, roaming care-free along the hills of chalk.

And as she passed he neither breathed nor moved, nor could have moved if those pines had still pursued him, but they stayed in the forest not daring to touch those lawns.

She wore a crown that seemed to be carved of great pale sapphires; she shone on those lawns and gardens like a dawn coming unaware, out of long night, on some planet nearer than us to the sun. And as she passed near Alveric she suddenly turned her head; and her eyes opened in a little wonder. She had never before seen a man from the fields we know.

And Alveric gazed in her eyes all speechless and powerless still: it was indeed the Princess Lirazel in her beauty. And then he saw that her crown was not of sapphires but ice.

“Who are you?” she said. And her voice had the music that, of earthly things, was most like ice in thousands of broken pieces rocked by a wind of Spring upon lakes in some northern country.

And he said: “I come from the fields that are mapped and known.”

And then she sighed for a moment for those fields, for she had heard how life beautifully passes there, and how there are always in those fields young generations, and she thought of the changing seasons and children and age, of which elfin minstrels had sung when they told of Earth.

And when he saw her sigh for the fields we know he told her somewhat of that land whence he had come. And she questioned him further, and soon he was telling her tales of his home and the Vale of Erl. And she wondered to hear of it and asked him many questions more; and then he told her all that he knew of Earth, not presuming to tell Earth’s story from what his own eyes had seen in his bare score of years, but telling those tales and fables of the ways of beasts and men, that the folk of Erl had drawn out of the ages, and which their elders told by the fire at evening when children asked of what happened long ago.

Here we see the most important Folk Lore roll in the history of Ars Magica.

Thus on the edge of those lawns whose miraculous glory was framed by flowers we have never known, with the magical wood behind them, and that palace shining near which may only be told of in song, they spoke of the simple wisdom of old men and old women, telling of harvests and the blossoming of roses and may, of when to plant in gardens, of what wild animals knew; how to heal, how to sow, how to thatch, and of which of the winds in what seasons blow over the fields we know.

And then there appeared those knights who guard that palace lest any should come through the enchanted wood. Four of them they came shining over the lawns in armour, their faces not to be seen. In all the enchanted centuries of their lives they had not dared to dream of the princess: they had never bared their faces when they knelt armed before her. Yet they had sworn an oath of dreadful words that no man else should ever speak with her, if one should come through the enchanted wood. With this oath now on their lips they marched towards Alveric.

Lirazel looked at them sorrowfully yet could not halt them, for they came by command of her father which she could not avert; and well she knew that her father might not recall his command, for he had uttered it ages ago at the bidding of Fate. Alveric looked at their armour, which seemed to be brighter than any metal of ours, as though it came from one of those buttresses near, which are only told of in song; then he went towards them drawing his father’s sword, for he thought to drive its slender point through some joint of the armour. The other he put into his left hand.

These knights in chrome bright armour remind me of the humans in the movie Excalibur. I like the idea that they have never taken their helmets off.

As the first knight struck, Alveric parried, and stopped the blow, but there came a shock like lightning into his arm and the sword flew from his hand, and he knew that no earthly sword could meet the weapons of Elfland, and took the magical sword in his right hand.

This disarming manoeuvre is a magical power.

With this he parried the strokes of the Princess Lirazel's guard, for such these four knights were, having waited for this occasion through all the ages of Elfland. And no more shock came to him from any of those swords, but only a vibration in his own sword's metal that passed through it like a song, and a kind of a glow that arose in it, reaching to Alveric's heart and cheering it.

But as Alveric continued to parry the swift blows of the guard, that sword that was kin to the lightning grew weary of these defences, for it had in its essence speed and desperate journeys; and, lifting Alveric's hand along with it, it swept blows at the elvish knights, and the armour of Elfland could not hold it out.

For Magonomia players, Speed and Desperate Journeys are Aspects of the sword.

Thick and curious blood began to pour through rifts in the armour, and soon of that glittering company two were fallen; and Alveric, encouraged by the zeal of his sword fought cheerily and soon overthrew another, so that only he and one of the guard remained, who seemed to have some stronger magic about him than had been given to his fallen comrades. And so it was, for when the Elf King had first enchanted the guard he had charmed this elvish soldier first of all, while all the wonder of his runes were new; and the soldier and his armour and his sword had something still of this early magic about them, more potent than any inspirations of wizardry that had come later from his master's mind.

The Elf King's glamour seems to lose potency over repetition. His earliest spells are the strongest. Repetitions are ever weaker. Those he has neglected become clumsy, like the pine trees in the Enchanted Wood. Alveric can sense this, because the first guard has stronger wards.

Yet this knight, as Alveric soon was able to feel along his arm and his sword, had none of those three master runes of which the old witch had spoken when she made the sword on her hill; for these were preserved unuttered by the King of Elfland himself, with which to hedge his own presence. To have known of their existence she must have flown by broom to Elfland and spoken secretly alone with the King.

The Witch knows the King of Elfland, personally.

And the sword that had visited Earth from so far away smote like the falling of thunderbolts; and green sparks rose from the armour, and crimson as sword met sword; and thick elvish blood moved slowly, from wide slits, down the cuirass; and Lirazel gazed in awe and wonder and love; and the combatants edged away fighting into the forest; and branches fell on them hacked off by their fight; and the runes in Alveric's far-travelled sword exulted, and roared at the elf-knight; until in the dark of the wood, amongst branches severed from disenchanted trees, with a blow like that of a thunderbolt riving an oak tree, Alveric slew him.

That's very cinematic: the sword and armour give off different firework-like sparks when struck. A Magic Theory roll might explain that.

At that crash, and at that silence, Lirazel ran to his side.

"Quick!" she said. "For my father has three runes …" She durst not speak of them.

"Whither?" said Alveric.

And she said: "To the fields you know."