

Games From Folktales

A free podcast for
the Ars Magica
roleplaying game

Dunsany

A Tale of the Idle City

The King of Elfland's Daughter 4, 5, 6, 7

Pentamerone 2, 3, 4

Poetry

The Inchcape Rock by Robert Southey

Hjalmar Speaks to the Raven by James Elroy Flecker

Three Characters From the Poetry of Edna St Vincent Milay.

Some poems for Samhain

Venice

The Arrival of the Order?

Marriage to the Sea

With statistics for eleven monsters and a recipe for dead man's arm, a pudding that will save you from vanishing away into Faerie.

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Dunsany:

A Tale of the Idle City

When we were going through Lord Dunsay's short stories we missed one, because it was connected with a couple of others we could not use in a single larger frame story. I've chopped that top bit off, because I love how the end of it is a completely confused Realm Interaction Table. Stats aren't necessary, but I may steal this for Venice and work it into something bigger.

There was once a city which was an idle city, wherein men told vain tales.

And it was that city's custom to tax all men that would enter in, with the toll of some idle story in the gate.

So all men paid to the watchers in the gate the toll of an idle story, and passed into the city unhindered and unhurt. And in a certain hour of the night when the king of that city arose and went pacing swiftly up and down the chamber of his sleeping, and called upon the name of the dead queen, then would the watchers fasten up the gate and go into that chamber to the king, and, sitting on the floor, would tell him all the tales that they had gathered. And listening to them some calmer mood would come upon the king, and listening still he would lie down again and at last fall asleep, and all the watchers silently would arise and steal away from the chamber.

A while ago wandering, I came to the gate of that city. And even as I came a man stood up to pay his toll to the watchers. They were seated cross-legged on the ground between him and the gate, and each one held a spear. Near him two other travellers sat on the warm sand waiting. And the man said:

"Now the city of Nombros forsook the worship of the gods and turned towards God. So the gods threw their cloaks over their faces and strode away from the city, and going into the haze among the hills passed through the trunks of the olive groves into the sunset. But when they had already left the Earth, they turned and looked through the gleaming folds of the twilight for the last time at their city; and they looked half in anger and half in regret, then turned and went away for ever. But they sent back a Death, who bore a scythe, saying to it: 'Slay half in the city that forsook us, but half of them spare alive that they may yet remember their old forsaken gods.'

"But God sent a destroying angel to show that He was God, saying unto him: 'Go into that city and slay half of the dwellers therein, yet spare a half of them that they may know that I am God.'

"And at once the destroying angel put his hand to his sword, and the sword came out of the scabbard with a deep breath, like to the breath that a broad woodman takes before his first blow at some giant oak. Thereat the angel pointed his arms downwards, and bending his head between them, fell forward from Heaven's edge, and the spring of his ankles shot him downwards with his wings furled behind him. So he went slanting earthward through the evening with his sword stretched out before him, and he was like a javelin that some hunter hath hurled that returneth again to the earth: but just before he touched it he lifted his head and spread his wings with the under feathers forward, and alighted by the bank of the broad Flavro that divides the city of Nombros. And down the bank of the Flavro he fluttered low, like to a hawk over a new-cut cornfield when the little creatures of the corn are shelterless, and at the same time down the other bank the Death from the gods went mowing.

"At once they saw each other, and the angel glared at the Death, and the Death leered back at him, and the flames in the eyes of the angel illumined with a red glare the mist that lay in the hollows of the sockets of the Death. Suddenly they fell on one another, sword to scythe. And the angel captured the temples of the gods, and set up over them the sign of God, and the Death captured the temples of God, and led into them the ceremonies and sacrifices of the gods; and all the while the centuries slipped quietly by, going down the Flavro seawards.

"And now some worship God in the temple of the gods, and others worship the gods in the temple of God, and still the angel hath not returned again to the rejoicing choirs, and still the Death hath not gone back to die with the dead gods; but all through Nombros they fight up and down, and still on each side of the Flavro the city lives."

And the watchers in the gate said, "Enter in."

The King of Elfland's Daughter 4

CHAPTER VI: The Rune of the Elf King

On the high balcony of his gleaming tower the King of Elfland stood. Below him echoed yet the thousand steps. He had lifted his head to chant the rune that should hold his daughter in Elfland, and in that moment had seen her pass the murky barrier; which on this side, facing toward Elfland, is all lustrous with twilight, and on that side, facing towards the fields we know, is smoky and angry and dull. And now he had dropped his head till his beard lay mingled with his cape of ermine above his cerulean cloak, and stood there silently sorrowful, while time passed swift as ever over the fields we know.

And standing there all blue and white against his silver tower, aged by the passing of times of which we know nothing, before he imposed its eternal calm upon Elfland, he thought of his daughter amongst our pitiless years. For he knew, whose wisdom surpassed the confines of Elfland and touched our rugged fields, knew well the harshness of material things and all the turmoil of Time. Even as he stood there he knew that the years that assail beauty, and the myriad harshnesses that vex the spirit, were already about his daughter. And the days that remained to her now seemed scarce more to him, dwelling beyond the fret and ruin of Time, than to us might seem a briar rose's hours when plucked and foolishly hawked in the streets of a city. He knew that there hung over her now the doom of all mortal things. He thought of her perishing soon, as mortal things must; to be buried amongst the rocks of a land that scorned Elfland and that held its most treasured myths to be of little account. And were he not the King of all that magical land, which held its eternal calm from his own mysterious serenity, he had wept to think of the grave in rocky Earth gripping that form that was so fair forever.

Or else, he thought, she would pass to some paradise far from his knowledge, some heaven of which books told in the fields we know, for he had heard even of this. He pictured her on some apple-haunted hill, under blossoms of an everlasting April, through which flickered the pale gold haloes of those that had cursed Elfland. He saw, though dimly for all his magical wisdom, the glory that only the blessed clearly see. He saw his daughter on those heavenly hills stretch out both arms, as he knew well she would, towards the pale-blue peaks of her elfin home, while never one of the blessed heeded her yearning. And then, though he was king of all that land, that had its everlasting calm from him, he wept and all Elfland shivered. It shivered as placid water shivers here if something suddenly touches it from our fields.

Then the King turned and left his balcony and went in great haste down his brazen steps. He came clanging to the ivory doors that shut the tower below, and through them came to the throne-room of which only song may tell. And there he took a parchment out of a coffer and a plume from some fabulous wing, and dipping the plume into no earthly ink, wrote out a rune on the parchment. Then raising two fingers he made the minor enchantment whereby he summoned his guard. And no guard came.

I have said that no time passed at all in Elfland. Yet the happening of events is in itself a manifestation of time, and no event can occur unless time pass. Now it is thus with time in Elfland: in the eternal beauty that dreams in that honied air nothing stirs or fades or dies, nothing seeks its happiness in movement or change or a new thing, but has its ecstasy in the perpetual contemplation of all the beauty that has ever been, and which always glows over those enchanted lawns as intense as when first created by incantation or song. Yet if the energies of the wizard's mind arose to meet a new thing, then that power that had laid its calm upon Elfland and held back time troubled the calm awhile, and time for awhile shook Elfland.

We spend a lot of time with the King of Elfland in these chapters. Here we discover he's like the faeries in *Ars Magica*. The king is, in a very real sense, his land.

In the 1300s Edward III restricted ermine-wearing in England to the royal family. Later it spread out a little more. The placement of the black dots (which are the tips of the tails of the ermines) could be read to tell a person's status.

Ermines are stoats, a kind of mustelid related to weasels and ferrets. In summer they have chestnut coloured coats, but they have a white winter coat, and that's what's desired by furriers. There's a myth that the ermine would rather die than soil his coat, which is an allegory of moral purity, but for Magonomia it reminds me of one of the networks of intelligencers where "I'll die before I damage my impeccable clothes" seems an entirely plausible sort of credo. I may have to name one of the handlers in that group "The Ermine". Actually, there are ermine variants, so the leaders could be the Ermine, the Counter-ermine, the Erminios and the Pean, with an enforcer who may or may not exist called the Erminites.

We have discussed the history of cerulean blue in the Venice episode on the election of the first Doge. (Audio 271).

So, he chooses not to weep, because his emotional state is reflected directly into the land, and he cares too much for its inhabitants to pass his pain on to them.

Characters with ties to Faerie can feel this: the aura of the place undergoes a change as the temper of the king changes.

Much as in *Ars Magica* there is some question of if faeries do anything at all when humans are not watching them, so when the king is calm, time does not pass in Elfland. It doesn't need to, because nothing is happening.

Cast anything into a deep pool from a land strange to it, where some great fish dreams, and green weeds dream, and heavy colours dream, and light sleeps; the great fish stirs, the colours shift and change, the green weeds tremble, the light wakes, a myriad things know slow movement and change; and soon the whole pool is still again. It was the same when Alveric passed through the border of twilight and right through the enchanted wood, and the King was troubled and moved, and all Elfland trembled.

So, Alveric brings Time, by bringing change.

When the King saw that no guard came he looked into the wood which he knew to be troubled, through the deep mass of the trees, that were quivering yet with the coming of Alveric; he looked through the deeps of the wood and the silver walls of his palace, for he looked by enchantment, and there he saw the four knights of his guard lying stricken upon the ground with their thick elvish blood hanging out through slits in their armour. And he thought of the early magic whereby he had made the eldest, with a rune all newly inspired, before he had conquered Time. He passed out through the splendour and glow of one of his flashing portals, and over a gleaming lawn and came to the fallen guard, and saw the trees still troubled.

“There has been magic here,” said the King of Elfland.

And then though he only had three runes that could do such a thing, and though they only could be uttered once, and one was already written upon parchment to bring his daughter home, he uttered the second of his most magical runes over that elder knight that his magic had made long ago. And in the silence that followed the last words of the rune the rents in the moon-bright armour all clicked shut at once, and the thick dark blood was gone and the knight rose live to his feet. And the Elf King now had only one rune left that was mightier than any magic we know.

This seems an odd choice. A human monarch would just hire a new guard. The King's creations are, in a real sense, an extension of himself.

The other three knights lay dead; and, having no souls, their magic returned again to the mind of their master.

It seems that at least some of the King's actions are drawn from a Might pool that is permanently depleted, until the effect is finished..

He went back then to his palace, while he sent the last of his guard to fetch him a troll.

Note that any troll would do. This is not the most cunning troll, or the one that knows the fields of humans best. Perhaps the rune is so powerful it cannot help but be delivered.

Dark brown of skin and two or three feet high the trolls are a gnomish tribe that inhabit Elfland. And soon there was a scamper in the throne-room that may only be told of in song, and a troll lit by the throne on its two bare feet and stood before its king. The King gave it the parchment with the rune written thereon, saying: “Scamper hence, and pass over the end of the Land, until you come to the fields that none know here; and find the Princess Lirazel who is gone to the haunts of men, and give her this rune and she shall read it and all shall be well.”

Stats for the troll eventually. Note he is a short creature that scampers and moves in great leaps, not a troll in the traditional sense.

And the troll scampered thence.

And soon the troll was come with long leaps to the frontier of twilight. Then nothing moved in Elfland any more; and motionless on that splendid throne of which only song may speak sat the old King mourning in silence.

So, until the King does something new, time stops again. Time requires action.

CHAPTER VII: The Coming of the Troll

When the troll came to the frontier of twilight he skipped nimbly through; yet he emerged cautiously into the fields we know, for he was afraid of dogs. Slipping quietly out of those dense masses of twilight he came so softly into our fields that no eye had seen him unless it were gazing already at the spot at which he appeared. There he paused for some instants, looking to left and right; and, seeing no dogs, he left the barrier of twilight. This troll had never before been in the fields we know, yet he knew well to avoid dogs, for the fear of dogs is so deep and universal amongst all that are less than Man, that it seems to have passed even beyond our boundaries and to have been felt in Elfland.

So, this is a Sovereign Ward.

In our fields it was now May, and the buttercups stretched away before the troll, a world of yellow mingled with the brown of the budding grasses. When he saw so many buttercups shining there the wealth of Earth astonished him. And soon he was moving through them, yellowing his shins as he went.

He had not gone far from Elfland when he met with a hare, who was lying in a comfortable arrangement of grass, in which he had intended to pass the time till he should have things to see to.

When the hare saw the troll he sat there without any movement whatever, and without any expression in his eyes, and did nothing at all but think.

When the troll saw the hare he skipped nearer, and lay down before it in the buttercups, and asked it the way to the haunts of men. And the hare went on thinking.

“Thing of these fields,” repeated the troll, “where are the haunts of men?”

The hare got up then and walked towards the troll, which made the hare look very ridiculous, for he had none of the grace while walking that he has when he runs or gambols, and was much lower in front than behind. He put his nose into the troll’s face and twitched foolish whiskers.

“Tell me the way,” said the troll.

When the hare perceived that the troll did not smell of anything like dog he was content to let the troll question him. But he did not understand the language of Elfland, so he lay still again and thought while the troll talked.

And at last the troll wearied of getting no answer, so he leaped up and shouted “Dogs!” and left the hare and scampered away merrily over the buttercups, taking any direction that led away from Elfland. And though the hare could not quite understand elvish language, yet there was a vehemence in the tone in which the troll had shouted Dogs which caused apprehension to enter the thoughts of the hare, so that very soon he forsook his arrangement of grass, and lolloped away through the meadow with one scornful look after the troll; but he did not go very fast, going mostly on three legs, with one hind leg all ready to let down if there should really be dogs. And soon he paused and sat up and put up his ears, and looked across the buttercups and thought deeply. And before the hare had ceased to ponder the troll’s meaning the troll was far out of sight and had forgotten what he had said.

And soon he saw the gables of a farm-house rise up beyond a hedge. They seemed to look at him with little windows up under red tiles. “A haunt of man,” said the troll. And yet some elvish instinct seemed to tell him that it was not here that Princess Lirazel had come.

Still, he went nearer the farm and began to gaze at its poultry. But just at that moment a dog saw him, one that had never seen a troll before, and it uttered one canine cry of astonished indignation, and keeping all the rest of its breath for the chase, sped after the troll.

The troll began at once to rise and dip over the buttercups as though he had almost borrowed its speed from the swallow and were riding the lower air. Such speed was new to the dog, and he went in a long curve after the troll, leaning over as he went, his mouth open and silent, the wind rippling all the way from his nose to his tail in one wavy current. The curve was made by the dog’s baffled hopes to catch the troll as he slanted across. Soon he was straight behind; and the troll toyed with speed; breathing the flowery air in long fresh draughts above the tops of the buttercups. He thought no more of the dog, but he did not cease in the flight that the dog had caused, because of the joy of the speed. And this strange chase continued over those fields, the troll driven on by joy and the dog by duty. For the sake of novelty then the troll put his feet together as he leaped over the flowers and, alighting with rigid knees, fell forwards on to his hands and so turned over; and, straightening his elbows suddenly as he turned, shot himself into the air still turning

This gives us an indication of his height. As an Australian, the thing I call a buttercup is apparently entirely different from what Lord Dunsany was thinking about, so I thought the troll was a lot taller than he actually is.

It’s odd that -everything- knows the language of Elfland, except this hare, who, as we have said, is of a species commonly associated with witches. Does this indicate Magic Resistance protecting against the communicative glamour?

He apparently has a version of the faerie power Hound. How he gets through Lirazel’s resistance is unclear: possibly it has something to do with a penetration bonus due to the Rune.

over and over. He did this several times, increasing the indignation of the dog, who knew well enough that that was no way to go over the fields we know. But for all his indignation the dog had seen clear enough that he would never catch that troll, and presently he returned to the farm, and found his master there and went up to him wagging his tail. So hard he wagged it that the farmer was sure he had done some useful thing, and patted him, and there the matter ended.

The troll -almost- flies. Remember that winged faeries are basically a Victorian invention.

And it was well enough for the farmer that his dog has chased that troll from his farm; for had it communicated to his livestock any of the wonder of Elfland they would have mocked at Man, and that farmer would have lost the allegiance of all but his staunch dog.

Glamour, here, is mildly infectious.

And the troll went on gaily over the tips of the buttercups.

Presently he saw rising up all white over the flowers a fox that was facing him with his white chest and chin, and watching the troll as it went. The troll went near to him and took a look. And the fox went on watching him, for the fox watches all things.

He had come back lately to those dewy fields from slinking by night along the boundary of twilight that lies between here and Elfland. He even prowls inside the very boundary, walking amongst the twilight; and it is in the mystery of that heavy twilight that lies between here and there that there clings to him some of that glamour that he brings with him to our fields.

“Well, Noman’s Dog,” said the troll. For they know the fox in Elfland, from seeing him often go dimly along their borders; and this is the name they give him.

The fox knows the borders of faerie. Handy for a Bjornaer magus? Foxes of course are tricky creatures in European folklore. They are a little less-well intentioned than the hare or the spider, who have a similar job.

“Well, Thing-over-the-Border,” said the fox when he answered at all. For he knew troll-talk.

“Are the haunts of men near here?” said the troll.

The fox moved his whiskers by slightly wrinkling his lip. Like all liars he reflected before he spoke, and sometimes even let wise silences do better than speech.

Note that any troll would do. This is not the most cunning troll, or the one that knows the fields of humans best. Perhaps the rune is so powerful it cannot help but be delivered.

“Men live here and men live there,” said the fox.

“I want their haunts,” said the troll.

Stats for the troll eventually. Note he is a short creature that scampers and moves in great leaps, not a troll in the traditional sense.

“What for?” said the fox.

“I have a message from the King of Elfland.”

The fox showed no respect or fear at the mention of that dread name, but slightly moved his head and eyes to conceal the awe that he felt.

So, until the King does something new, time stops again. Time requires action.

“If it is a message,” he said, “their haunts are over there.” And he pointed with his long thin nose towards Erl.

“How shall I know when I get there?” said the troll.

“By the smell,” said the fox. “It is a big haunt of men, and the smell is dreadful.”

“Thanks, Noman’s Dog,” said the troll. And he seldom thanked anyone.

“I should never go near them,” said the fox, “but for ...” And he paused and reflected silently.

So, this is a Sovereign Ward.

“But for what?” said the troll.

“But for their poultry.” And he fell into a grave silence.

“Good-bye, Noman’s Dog,” said the troll and turned head-over-heels, and was off on his way to Erl.

Presently he went nearer and looked at it again. He did not like the look of the smoke and that crowd of gables: certainly it smelt dreadfully. There had been some legend in Elfland of the wisdom of Man; and whatever respect that legend had gained for us in the light mind of the troll now all blew lightly away as he looked at the crowded houses. And as he looked at them there passed a child of four, a small girl on a footpath over the fields, going home in the evening to Erl. They looked at each other with round eyes.

This is an interesting development. Is this before Babel?

“Hullo,” said the child.

“Hullo, Child of Men,” said the troll. He was not speaking troll-talk now, but the language of Elfland, that grander tongue that he had had to speak when he was before the King: for he knew the language of Elfland although it was never used in the homes of the trolls, who preferred troll-talk. This language was spoken in those days also by men, for there were fewer languages then, and the elves and the people of Erl both used the same.

“What are you?” said the child.

“A troll of Elfland,” answered the troll.

“So I thought,” said the child.

“Where are you going, child of men?” the troll asked.

“To the houses,” the child replied.

“We don’t want to go there,” said the troll.

“N-no,” said the child.

“Come to Elfland,” the troll said.

The child thought for awhile. Other children had gone, and the elves always sent a changeling in their place, so that nobody quite missed them and nobody really knew. She thought awhile of the wonder and wildness of Elfland, and then of her own home.

“N-no,” said the child.

“Why not?” said the troll.

“Mother made a jam roll this morning,” said the child. And she walked on gravely home. Had it not been for that chance jam roll she had gone to Elfland.

Bill Bryson does a lovely line in one of his books about how the English are the only people to put jam in things to make it really special, and how he loves them for it. That being said, jam roll is delicious and faerie is always there...

“Jam!” said the troll contemptuously and thought of the tarns of Elfland, the great lily-leaves lying flat upon their solemn waters, the huge blue lilies towering into the elf-light above the green deep tarns: for jam this child had forsaken them!

Then he thought of his duty again, the roll of parchment and the Elf King’s rune for his daughter. He had carried the parchment in his left hand when he ran, in his mouth when he somersaulted over the buttercups. Was the Princess here he thought? Or were there other haunts of men? As evening drew in he crept nearer and nearer the homes, to hear without being seen.

Let us return to the jam roll and the mysteries thereto. I doubt this a modern jam Swiss roll. It's too early. Basically the modern Swiss roll is a thin sponge coated with an adhesive layer, then rolled. In my part of the world it is then sometimes baked with a sugar syrup drizzled over it. I presume this is the older jam rolypoly, the evocatively named "dead man's arm". The recipe below is from "*A plain cookery book for the working classes*" by Charles Elmé Francatelli.

"Ingredients, one pound of flour, six ounces of suet, half a pint of water, a pinch of salt, one pound of any kind of common jam, at 7d. Mix the flour, suet, water, and salt into a firm, compact kind of paste; roll this out with a rolling-pin, sprinkling some flour on the table to prevent the paste from sticking to either; fold up the paste, and roll it out again; repeat the rolling-out and folding three times; this operation will make the paste lighter. Next, roll out the paste one foot long by eighteen inches wide, spread the jam all over this, roll up the pudding in the form of a bolster, roll it up in a well-greased and floured cloth, tie it up tightly at both ends; put the pudding into a pot of boiling water, and boil it for nearly two hours; when done, turn out carefully on to its dish, without breaking the crust."

You'll note the only leavening in the pastry here is air mechanically trapped by layering. Suet, for those of you fortunate enough to be unaware of it, is a sort of spongy animal fat. In modern times you can get a vegan version, which smells less like being forsaken by God. Arguably this would also put little holes in the pastry, as some of the fat liquifies and drains out into the boiling water. The pudding is also sometimes called shirt-sleeve pudding, as a shirt sleeve makes a perfect pudding cloth for it. From this it also gets the name "dead man's arm". or "dead man's leg".

Pentamerone 2

This went live in a slightly garbled way – if this was a professional podcast with a budget, I'd replace it, but...such is not our lot.

The three stories this week survive much of the bowdlerisation found in the others. Goat Face is much the same. In Parsley, the child has a tuft of parsley on her chest, so that might be a vis source. Her story leaves an enchanted tower abandoned in a woodland, so it might serve as a covenant site. The large changes are in the Enchanted Doe.

The fertility charm works somewhat differently. Once the heart of the sea dragon is produced the process of cooking it makes people, and things, which can smell the process pregnant. It is still fed to the queen and causes conception, but the lady in waiting who cooked it becomes pregnant herself. The bed gives birth to a child's bed, the wardrobe gives birth to a cabinet, and the chamber pot gives birth to a tiny, child's pot.

The princes presented as twins in this story are not, in the original, biological twins: they are the children of the queen and her serving maid. This explains the queen's hatred for one of the boys: she is jealous that her son loves this brother from another mother more than her. She flings boiling lead into the boy's face, creating a scar which is significant later in the story.

The rescued prince was buried under a stone to be fattened up, but in the original he's one of many people in that larder: this could be the origin stories for a group of grogs. It also seems similar to a mystery cult initiation.

So, sea dragons can be caught off southern Italy and children conceived by eating their hearts have a strong magical nature. This one can make familiar-like objects. Strangely the twins don't have the sort of psychic connection you see in some folktales..

VIII : GOAT-FACE

All the ill-deeds that a man commits have some colour of excuse—either contempt which provokes, need which compels, love which blinds, or anger which breaks the neck. But ingratitude is a thing that has no excuse, true or false, upon which it can fix; and it is therefore the worst of vices, since it dries up the fountain of compassion, extinguishes the fire of love, closes the road to benefits, and causes vexation and repentance to spring up in the hearts of the ungrateful. As you will see in the story which I am about to relate.

A peasant had twelve daughters, not one of whom was a head taller than the next; for every year their mother presented him with a little girl; so that the poor man, to support his family decently, went early every morning as a day labourer and dug hard the whole day long. With what his labour produced he just kept his little ones from dying of hunger.

He happened, one day, to be digging at the foot of a mountain, the spy of other mountains, that thrust its head above the clouds to see what they were doing up in the sky, and close to a cavern so deep and dark that the sun was afraid to enter it. Out of this cavern there came a green lizard as big as a crocodile; and the poor man was so terrified that he had not the power to run away, expecting every moment the end of his days from a gulp of that ugly animal. But the lizard, approaching him, said, "Be not afraid, my good man, for I am not come here to do you any harm, but to do you good."

When Masaniello (for that was the name of the labourer) heard this, he fell on his knees and said, "Mistress What's-your-name, I am wholly in your power. Act then worthily and have compassion on this poor trunk that has twelve branches to support."

"It is on this very account," said the lizard, "that I am disposed to serve you; so bring me, to-morrow morning the youngest of your daughters; for I will rear her up like my own child, and love her as my life."

At this the poor father was more confounded than a thief when the stolen goods are found on his back. For, hearing the lizard ask him for one of his daughters, and that too, the tenderest of them, he concluded that the cloak was not without wool on it, and that she wanted the child as a titbit to stay her appetite. Then he said to himself, "If I give her my daughter, I give her my soul. If I refuse her, she will take this body of mine. If I yield her, I am robbed of my heart; if I deny her she will suck out my blood. If I consent, she takes away part of myself; if I refuse, she takes the whole. What shall I resolve on? What course shall I take? What expedient shall I adopt? Oh, what an ill day's work have I made of it! What a misfortune has rained down from heaven upon me!"

While he was speaking thus, the lizard said, "Resolve quickly and do what I tell you; or you will leave only your rags here. For so I will have it, and so it will be." Masaniello, hearing this decree and having no one to whom he could appeal, returned home quite melancholy, as yellow in the face as if he had jaundice; and his wife, seeing him hanging his head like a sick bird and his shoulders like one that is wounded, said to him, "What has happened to you, husband? Have you had a quarrel with any one? Is there a warrant out against you? Or is the ass dead?"

"Nothing of that sort," said Masaniello, "but a horned lizard has put me into a fright, for she has threatened that if I do not bring her our youngest daughter, she will make me suffer for it. My head is turning like a reel. I know not what fish to take. On one side love constrains me; on the other the burden of my family. I love Renzolla dearly, I love my own

life dearly. If I do not give the lizard this portion of my heart, she will take the whole compass of my unfortunate body. So now, dear wife, advise me, or I am ruined!"

When his wife heard this, she said, "Who knows, husband, but this may be a lizard with two tails, that will make our fortune? Who knows but this lizard may put an end to all our miseries? How often, when we should have an eagle's sight to discern the good luck that is running to meet us, we have a cloth before our eyes and the cramp in our hands, when we should lay hold on it. So go, take her away, for my heart tells me that some good fortune awaits the poor little thing!"

These words comforted Masaniello; and the next morning, as soon as the Sun with the brush of his rays whitewashed the Sky, which the shades of night had blackened, he took the little girl by the hand, and led her to the cave. Then the lizard came out, and taking the child gave the father a bag full of crowns, saying, "Go now, be happy, for Renzolla has found both father and mother."

Masaniello, overjoyed, thanked the lizard and went home to his wife. There was money enough for portions to all the other daughters when they married, and even then the old folks had sauce remaining for themselves to enable them to swallow with relish the toils of life.

Then the lizard made a most beautiful palace for Renzolla, and brought her up in such state and magnificence as would have dazzled the eyes of any queen. She wanted for nothing. Her food was fit for a count, her clothing for a princess. She had a hundred maidens to wait upon her, and with such good treatment she grew as sturdy as an oak-tree.

It happened, as the King was out hunting in those parts, that night overtook him, and as he stood looking round, not knowing where to lay his head, he saw a candle shining in the palace. So he sent one of his servants, to ask the owner to give him shelter. When the servant came to the palace, the lizard appeared before him in the shape of a beautiful lady; who, after hearing his message, said that his master should be a thousand times welcome, and that neither bread nor knife should there be wanting. The King, on hearing this reply, went to the palace and was received like a cavalier. A hundred pages went out to meet him, so that it looked like the funeral of a rich man. A hundred other pages brought the dishes to the table. A hundred others made a brave noise with musical instruments. But, above all, Renzolla served the King and handed him drink with such grace that he drank more love than wine.

When he had thus been so royally entertained, he felt he could not live without Renzolla; so, calling the fairy, he asked her for his wife. Whereupon the fairy, who wished for nothing but Renzolla's good, not only freely consented, but gave her a dowry of seven millions of gold.

The King, overjoyed at this piece of good fortune, departed with Renzolla, who, ill-mannered and ungrateful for all the fairy had done for her, went off with her husband without

uttering one single word of thanks. Then the fairy, beholding such ingratitude, cursed her, and wished that her face should become like that of a she-goat; and hardly had she uttered the words, when Renzolla's mouth stretched out, with a beard a span long on it, her jaws shrunk, her skin hardened, her cheeks grew hairy, and her plaited tresses turned to pointed horns.

When the poor King saw this he was thunderstruck, not knowing what had happened that so great a beauty should be thus transformed; and, with sighs and tears he exclaimed, "Where are the locks that bound me? Where are the eyes that transfixed me? Must I then be the husband of a she-goat? No, no, my heart shall not break for such a goat-face!" So saying, as soon as they reached his palace, he put Renzolla into a kitchen, along with a chambermaid; and gave to each of them ten bundles of flax to spin, commanding them to have the thread ready at the end of a week.

The maid, in obedience to the King, set about carding the flax, preparing and putting it on the distaff, twirling her spindle, reeling it and working away without ceasing; so that on Saturday evening her thread was all done. But Renzolla, thinking she was still the same as in the fairy's house, not having looked at herself in the glass, threw the flax out of the window, saying, "A pretty thing indeed of the King to set me such work to do! If he wants shirts let him buy them, and not fancy that he picked me up out of the gutter. But let him remember that I brought him home seven millions of gold, and that I am his wife and not his servant. Methinks, too, that he is somewhat of a donkey to treat me this way!"

Nevertheless, when Saturday morning came, seeing that the maid had spun all her share of the flax, Renzolla was greatly afraid; so away she went to the palace of the fairy and told her misfortune. Then the fairy embraced her with great affection, and gave her a bag full of spun thread, to present to the King and show him what a notable and industrious housewife she was. Renzolla took the bag, and without saying one word of thanks, went to the royal palace; so again the fairy was quite angered at the conduct of the graceless girl.

When the King had taken the thread, he gave two little dogs, one to Renzolla and one to the maid, telling them to feed and rear them. The maid reared hers on bread crumbs and treated it like a child; but Renzolla grumbled, saying, "A pretty thing truly! As my grandfather used to say, Are we living under the Turks? Am I indeed to comb and wait upon dogs?" and she flung the dog out of the window!

Some months afterwards, the King asked for the dogs; whereat Renzolla, losing heart, ran off again to the fairy, and at the gate stood the old man who was the porter. "Who are you," said he, "and whom do you want?" Renzolla, hearing herself addressed in this off-hand way, replied, "Don't you know me, you old goat-beard?"

"Why do you miscall me?" said the porter. "This is the thief accusing the constable. I a goat-beard indeed! You are a goat-beard and a half, and you merit it and worse for your

presumption. Wait awhile, you impudent woman; I'll enlighten you and you will see to what your airs and impertinence have brought you!"

So saying, he ran into his room, and taking a looking-glass, set it before Renzolla; who, when she saw her ugly, hairy visage, was like to have died with terror. Her dismay at seeing her face so altered that she did not know herself cannot be told. Whereupon the old man said to her, "You ought to recollect, Renzolla, that you are a daughter of a peasant and that it was the fairy that raised you to be a queen. But you, rude, unmannerly, and thankless as you are, having little gratitude for such high favours, have kept her waiting outside your heart, without showing the slightest mark of affection. You have brought the quarrel on yourself; see what a face you have got by it! See to what you are brought by your ingratitude; for through the fairy's spell you have not only changed face, but condition. But if you will do as this white-beard advises, go and look for the fairy; throw yourself at her feet, tear your beard, beat your breast, and ask pardon for the ill-treatment you have shown her. She is tender-hearted and she will be moved to pity by your misfortune."

Renzolla, who was touched to the quick, and felt that he had hit the nail on the head, followed the old man's advice. Then the fairy embraced and kissed her; and restoring her to her former appearance, she clad her in a robe that was quite heavy with gold; and placing her in a magnificent coach, accompanied with a crowd of servants, she brought her to the King. When the King beheld her, so beautiful and splendidly attired, he loved her as his own life; blaming himself for all the misery he had made her endure, but excusing himself on account of that odious goat-face which had been the cause of it. Thus Renzolla lived happy, loving her husband, honouring the fairy, and showing herself grateful to the old man, having learned to her cost—

"It is always good to be mannerly."

IX: THE ENCHANTED DOE

Great is the power of friendship, which makes us willingly bear toils and perils to serve a friend. We value our wealth as a trifle and life as a straw, when we can give them for a friend's sake. Fables teach us this and history is full of instances of it; and I will give you an example which my grandmother used to relate to me. So open your ears and shut your mouths and hear what I shall tell you.

There was once a certain King of Long-Trellis named Giannone, who, desiring greatly to have children, continually made prayers to the gods that they would grant his wish; and, in order to incline them the more to his petition, he was so charitable to beggars and pilgrims that he shared with them all he possessed. But seeing, at last, that these things availed him nothing; and that there was no end to putting his hand into his pocket, he bolted fast his door, and shot with a cross-bow at all who came near.

Now it happened one day, that a long-bearded pilgrim was passing that way, and not knowing that the King had turned over a new leaf, or perhaps knowing it and wishing to make him change his mind again, he went to Giannone and begged for shelter in his house. But, with a fierce look and terrible growl, the King said to him, "If you have no other candle than this, you may go to bed in the dark. The kittens have their eyes open, and I am no longer a child." And when the old man asked what was the cause of this change, the King replied, "To further my desire for children, I have spent and lent to all who came and all who went, and have squandered all my treasure. At last, seeing the beard was gone, I stopped shaving and laid aside the razor."

"If that be all," replied the pilgrim, "you may set your mind at rest, for I promise that your wish shall forthwith be fulfilled, on pain of losing my ears."

"Be it so," said the King, "I pledge my word that I will give you one half of my kingdom." And the man answered, "Listen now to me—if you wish to hit the mark, you have only to get the heart of a sea-dragon, and have it cooked and eaten by the Queen, and you will see that what I say will speedily come to pass."

"That hardly seems possible," said the King, "but at the worst I lose nothing by the trial; so I must, this very moment, get the dragon's heart."

So he sent a hundred fishermen out; and they got ready all kinds of fishing-tackle, drag-nets, casting-nets, seine-nets, bow-nets, and fishing-lines; and they tacked and turned and cruised in all directions until at last they caught a dragon; then they took out its heart and brought it to the King, who gave it to the Queen to cook and eat. And when she had eaten it, there was great rejoicing, for the King's desire was fulfilled and he became the father of two sons, so like the other that nobody but the Queen could tell which was which. And the boys grew up together in such love for one another that they could not be parted for a moment. Their attachment was so great that the Queen began to be jealous, at seeing that the son whom she destined to be heir to his father, and whose name was Fonzo, testified more affection for his brother Canneloro than he did for herself. And she knew not in what way to remove this thorn from her eyes.

Now one day Fonzo wished to go a-hunting with his brother; so he had a fire lighted in his chamber and began to melt lead to make bullets; and being in want of I know not what, he went himself to look for it. Meanwhile the Queen came in, and finding no one there but Canneloro, she thought to put him out of the world. So stooping down, she flung the hot bullet-mould at his face, which hit him over the brow and made an ugly wound. She was just going to repeat the blow when Fonzo came in; so, pretending that she was only come in to see how he was, she gave him some caresses and went away.

Canneloro, pulling his hat down on his forehead, said nothing of his wound to Fonzo, but stood quite quiet though

he was burning with the pain. But as soon as they had done making the balls, he told his brother that he must leave him. Fonzo, all in amazement at this new resolution, asked him the reason: but he replied, "Enquire no more, my dear Fonzo, let it suffice that I am obliged to go away and part with you, who are my heart and my soul and the breath of my body. Since it cannot be otherwise, farewell, and keep me in remembrance." Then after embracing one another and shedding many tears, Canneloro went to his own room. He put on a suit of armour and a sword and armed himself from top to toe; and, having taken a horse out of the stable, he was just putting his foot into the stirrup when Fonzo came weeping and said, "Since you are resolved to abandon me, you should, at least, leave me some token of your love, to diminish my anguish for your absence." Thereupon Canneloro struck his dagger into the ground, and instantly a fine fountain rose up. Then said he to his twin-brother, "This is the best memorial I can leave you. By the flowing of this fountain you will follow the course of my life. If you see it run clear, know that my life is likewise clear and tranquil. If it is turbid, think that I am passing through troubles; and if it is dry, depend on it that the oil of my life is all consumed and that I have paid the toll which belongs to Nature!"

Then he drove his sword into the ground, and immediately a myrtle-tree grew up, when he said, "As long as this myrtle is green, know that I too am green as a leek. If you see it wither, think that my fortunes are not the best in this world; but if it becomes quite dried up, you may mourn for your Canneloro."

So saying, after embracing one another again, Canneloro set out on his travels; journeying on and on, with many adventures which it would be too long to recount—he at length arrived at the Kingdom of Clear-Water, just at the time when they were holding a most splendid tournament, the hand of the King's daughter being promised to the victor. Here Canneloro presented himself and bore him so bravely that he overthrew all the knights who were come from divers parts to gain a name for themselves. Whereupon he married the Princess Fenicia, and a great feast was made.

When Canneloro had been there some months in peace and quiet, an unhappy fancy came into his head for going to the chase. He told it to the King, who said to him, "Take care, my son-in-law; do not be deluded. Be wise and keep open your eyes, for in these woods is a most wicked ogre who changes his form every day, one time appearing like a wolf, at another like a lion, now like a stag, now like an ass, like one thing and now like another. By a thousand stratagems he decoys those who are so unfortunate as to meet him into a cave, where he devours them. So, my son, do not put your safety into peril, or you will leave your rags there."

Canneloro, who did not know what fear was, paid no heed to the advice of his father-in-law. As soon as the Sun with the broom of his rays had cleared away the soot of the Night he set out for the chase; and, on his way, he came to a wood where, beneath the awning of the leaves, the Shades had assembled to maintain their sway, and to make a conspiracy

against the Sun. The ogre, seeing him coming, turned himself into a handsome doe; which, as soon as Canneloro perceived he began to give chase to her. Then the doe doubled and turned, and led him about hither and thither at such a rate, that at last she brought him into the very heart of the wood, where she raised such a tremendous snow-storm that it looked as if the sky was going to fall. Canneloro, finding himself in front of a cave, went into it to seek for shelter; and being benumbed with the cold, he gathered some sticks which he found within it, and pulling his steel from his pocket, he kindled a large fire. As he was standing by the fire to dry his clothes, the doe came to the mouth of the cave, and said, "Sir Knight, pray give me leave to warm myself a little while, for I am shivering with the cold."

Canneloro, who was of a kindly disposition, said to her, "Draw near, and welcome."

"I would gladly," replied the doe, "but I am afraid you would kill me."

"Fear nothing," answered Canneloro, "trust to my word."

"If you wish me to enter," rejoined the doe, "tie up those dogs, that they may not hurt me, and tie up your horse that he may not kick me."

So Canneloro tied up his dogs and hobbled his horse, and the doe said, "I am now half assured, but unless you bind fast your sword, I dare not come in." Then Canneloro, who wished to become friends with the doe, bound his sword as a countryman does, when he carries it in the city for fear of the constables. As soon as the ogre saw Canneloro defenceless, he re-took his own form, and laying hold on him, flung him into a pit at the bottom of the cave, and covered it up with a stone—to keep him to eat.

But Fonzo, who, morning and evening visited the myrtle and the fountain, to learn news of the fate of Canneloro, finding the one withered and the other troubled, instantly thought that his brother was undergoing misfortunes. So, to help him, he mounted his horse without asking leave of his father or mother; and arming himself well and taking two enchanted dogs, he went rambling through the world. He roamed and rambled here, there, and everywhere until, at last, he came to Clear-Water, which he found all in mourning for the supposed death of Canneloro. And scarcely was he come to the court, when every one, thinking, from the likeness he bore him, that it was Canneloro, hastened to tell Fenicia the good news, who ran leaping down the stairs, and embracing Fonzo cried, "My husband! my heart! where have you been all this time?"

Fonzo immediately perceived that Canneloro had come to this country and had left it again; so he resolved to examine the matter adroitly, to learn from the Princess's discourse where his brother might be found. And, hearing her say that he had put himself in great danger by that accursed hunting, especially if the cruel ogre should meet him, he at once concluded that Canneloro must be there.

The next morning, as soon as the Sun had gone forth to give the gilded frills to the Sky, he jumped out of bed, and neither the prayers of Fenicia, nor the commands of the King could keep him back, but he would go to the chase. So, mounting his horse, he went with the enchanted dogs to the wood, where the same thing befell him that had befallen Canneloro; and, entering the cave, he saw his brother's arms and dogs and horse fast bound, by which he became assured of the nature of the snare. Then the doe told him in like manner to tie his arms, dogs, and horse, but he instantly set them upon her and they tore her to pieces. And as he was looking about for some traces of his brother, he heard his voice down in the pit; so, lifting up the stone, he drew out Canneloro, with all the others whom the ogre had buried alive to fatten. Then embracing each other with great joy, the twin-brothers went home, where Fenicia, seeing them so much alike, did not know which to choose for her husband, until Canneloro took off his cap and she saw the mark of the old wound and recognised him. Fonzo stayed there a month, taking his pleasure, and then wished to return to his own country, and Canneloro wrote by him to his mother, bidding her lay aside her enmity and come and visit him and partake of his greatness, which she did. But from that time forward, he never would hear of dogs or of hunting, recollecting the saying—

“Unhappy is he who corrects himself at his own cost.”

X: PARSLEY

This is one of the stories which that good soul, my uncle's grandmother (whom Heaven take to glory), used to tell; and, unless I have put on my spectacles upside down, I fancy it will give you pleasure.

There was, once upon a time, a woman named Pascadozzia, and one day, when she was standing at her window, which looked into the garden of an ogress, she saw such a fine bed of parsley that she almost fainted away with desire for some. So when the ogress went out she could not restrain herself any longer, but plucked a handful of it. The ogress came home and was going to cook her pottage when she found that some one had been stealing the parsley, and said, “Ill luck to me, but I'll catch this long-fingered rogue and make him repent it; I'll teach him to his cost that every one should eat off his own platter and not meddle with other folks' cups.”

The poor woman went again and again down into the garden, until one morning the ogress met her, and in a furious rage exclaimed, “Have I caught you at last, you thief, you rogue; prithee, do you pay the rent of the garden that you come in this impudent way and steal my plants? By my faith, I'll make you do penance without sending you to Rome.”

Poor Pascadozzia, in a terrible fright, began to make excuses, saying that neither from gluttony nor the craving of hunger had she been tempted by the devil to commit this

fault, but from her fear lest her child should be born with a crop of parsley on its face.

“Words are but wind,” answered the ogress, “I am not to be caught with such prattle; you have closed the balance-sheet of life, unless you promise to give me the child, girl or boy, whichever it may be.”

The poor woman, in order to escape the peril in which she found herself, swore, with one hand upon the other, to keep the promise, and so the ogress let her go free. But when the baby came it was a little girl, so beautiful that she was a joy to look upon, who was named Parsley. The little girl grew from day to day until, when she was seven years old, her mother sent her to school, and every time she went along the street and met the ogress the old woman said to her, “Tell your mother to remember her promise.” And she went on repeating this message so often that the poor mother, having no longer patience to listen to the refrain, said one day to Parsley, “If you meet the old woman as usual, and she reminds you of the hateful promise, answer her, Take it.”

When Parsley, who dreamt of no ill, met the ogress again, and heard her repeat the same words, she answered innocently as her mother had told her, whereupon the ogress, seizing her by her hair, carried her off to a wood which the horses of the Sun never entered, not having paid the toll to the pastures of those Shades. Then she put the poor girl into a tower which she caused to arise by her art, having neither gate nor ladder, but only a little window through which she ascended and descended by means of Parsley's hair, which was very long, just as sailors climb up and down the mast of a ship.

Now it happened one day, when the ogress had left the tower, that Parsley put her head out of the little window and let loose her tresses in the sun, and the son of a Prince passing by saw those two golden banners which invited all souls to enlist under the standard of Beauty, and, beholding with amazement, in the midst of those gleaming waves, a face that enchanted all hearts, he fell desperately in love with such wonderful beauty; and, sending her a memorial of sighs, she decreed to receive him into favour. She told him her troubles, and implored him to rescue her. But a gossip of the ogress, who was for ever prying into things that did not concern her, and poking her nose into every corner, overheard the secret, and told the wicked woman to be on the look-out, for Parsley had been seen talking with a certain youth, and she had her suspicions. The ogress thanked the gossip for the information, and said that she would take good care to stop up the road. As to Parsley, it was, moreover, impossible for her to escape, as she had laid a spell upon her, so that unless she had in her hand the three gall-nuts which were in a rafter in the kitchen it would be labour lost to attempt to get away.

Whilst they were thus talking together, Parsley, who stood with her ears wide open and had some suspicion of the gossip, overheard all that had passed. And when Night had

spread out her black garments to keep them from the moth, and the Prince had come as they had appointed, she let fall her hair; he seized it with both hands, and cried, "Draw up." When he was drawn up she made him first climb on to the rafters and find the gall-nuts, knowing well what effect they would have, as she had been enchanted by the ogress. Then, having made a rope-ladder, they both descended to the ground, took to their heels, and ran off towards the city. But the gossip, happening to see them come out, set up a loud "Halloo," and began to shout and make such a noise that the ogress awoke, and, seeing that Parsley had run away, she descended by the same ladder, which was still fastened to the window, and set off after the couple, who, when they saw her coming at their heels faster than a horse let loose, gave themselves up for lost. But Parsley, recollecting the gall-nuts, quickly threw one of the ground, and lo, instantly a Corsican bulldog started up—O, mother, such a terrible beast!—which, with open jaws and barking loud, flew at the ogress as if to swallow her at a mouthful. But the old woman, who was more cunning and spiteful than ever, put her hand into her pocket, and pulling out a piece of bread gave it to the dog, which made him hang his tail and allay his fury.

Then she turned to run after the fugitives again, but Parsley, seeing her approach, threw the second gall-nut on the ground, and lo, a fierce lion arose, who, lashing the earth with his tail, and shaking his mane and opening wide his jaws a yard apart, was just preparing to make a slaughter of the ogress, when, turning quickly back, she stripped the skin off an ass which was grazing in the middle of a meadow and ran at the lion, who, fancying it a real jackass, was so frightened that he bounded away as fast as he could.

The ogress having leaped over this second ditch turned again to pursue the poor lovers, who, hearing the clatter of her heels, and seeing clouds of dust that rose up to the sky, knew that she was coming again. But the old woman, who was every moment in dread lest the lion should pursue her, had not taken off the ass's skin, and when Parsley now threw down the third gall-nut there sprang up a wolf, who, without giving the ogress time to play any new trick, gobbled her up just as she was in the shape of a jackass. So Parsley and the Prince, now freed from danger, went their way leisurely and quietly to the Prince's kingdom, where, with his father's free consent, they were married. Thus, after all these storms of fate, they experienced the truth that—

"One hour in port, the sailor, freed from fears,
Forgets the tempests of a hundred years."

The King of Elfland's Daughter 5

CHAPTER VIII: The Arrival of the Rune

On a sunny May morning in Erl the witch Ziroonderel sat in the castle nursery by the fire, cooking a meal for the baby. The boy was now three years old, and still Lirazel had not named him; for she feared lest some jealous spirit of Earth or air should hear the name, and if so she would not say what she feared then. And Alveric had said he must be named.

And the boy could bowl a hoop; for the witch had gone one misty night to her hill and had brought him a moon-halo which she got by enchantment at moonrise, and had hammered it into a hoop, and had made him a little rod of thunderbolt-iron with which to beat it along.

And now the boy was waiting for his breakfast; and there was a spell across the threshold to keep the nursery snug, which Ziroonderel had put there with a wave of her ebon stick, and it kept out rats and mice and dogs, nor could bats sail across it, and the watchful nursery cat it kept at home: no lock that blacksmiths made was any stronger.

Suddenly over the threshold and over the spell the troll jumped somersaulting through the air and came down sitting. The crude wooden nursery-clock hanging over the fire stopped its loud tick as he came; for he bore with him a little charm against time, with strange grass round one of his fingers, that he might not be withered away in the fields we know. For well the Elf King knew the flight of our hours: four years had swept over these fields of ours while he had boomed down his brazen steps and sent for his troll and given him that spell to bind round one of his fingers.

"What's this?" said Ziroonderel.

That troll knew well when to be impudent, but looking in the witch's eyes saw something to be afraid of; and well he might, for those eyes had looked in the Elf King's own. Therefore he played, as we say in these fields, his best card, and answered: "A message from the King of Elfland."

"Is that so?" said the old witch. "Yes, yes," she added more lowly to herself, "that would be for my lady. Yes, that would come."

The troll sat still on the floor fingering the roll of parchment inside of which was written the rune of the King of Elfland. Then over the end of his bed, as he waited for breakfast, the baby saw the troll, and asked him who he was and where he came from and what he was able to do.

When the baby asked him what he was able to do the troll jumped up and skipped about the room like a moth on a lamp-lit ceiling. From floor to shelves and back and up again he went with leaps like flying; the baby clapped his hands, the cat was furious; the witch raised her ebon stick and made a charm against leaping, but it could not hold the troll.

He leaped and bounced and bounded, while the cat hissed all the curses that the feline language knows, and Ziroonderel was wrath not only because her magic was thwarted, but because with mere human alarm she feared for her cups and saucers; and the baby shouted all the while for more. And all at once the troll remembered his errand and the dread parchment he bore.

"Where is the Princess Lirazel?" he said to the witch.

And the witch pointed the way to the princess's tower; for she knew that there were no means nor power she had by which to hinder a rune from the King of Elfland. And as the troll turned to go Lirazel entered the room. He bowed all low before this great lady of

Speaking of names I can't believe I missed this before: Alveric's name is filled with portents. Alf is the old English for "elf". Eric is from Eoric (Middle English), from the Norse Eiríkr. Ei means "ever" and "rikir" means "ruler". So, his name basically means "Immortal ruler of the elves". Even if you don't use this rest of this, it's a great NPC name.

Lirazel doesn't want to create the Arcane Connection of True Names.

Hoop rolling is one of the few childhood games which has fallen close to extinction in the West. It was considered a martial sport in ancient times, and was played by university students in Cambridge right up until the 19th century. The tendency of small boys to use their hoops to bash the shins of the gentry, and break the legs of horses, led to their denunciation in some quarters. Moon halos are caused by ice crystals. There's something symbolic there, in that he has a circle of ice, and his mother wore a crown of ice. I'm not sure what to do with it now, but I want to flag it.

So, it's a ward. A it's broadly powerful, but apparently it that doesn't penetrate even basic magic resistance.

So, the time dilation is quite severe. Note that the charm of grass may remain in the game world. It's not that time actually stops, it's that it creates a tiny timeless bubble around the wearer.

Faeries can speak to babies.

She can't get through his magical resistance, perhaps, or his leaping may be a non-magical power: just a thing of the nature of the form of his body. Alternatively, since he's an incarnation of the will of the King of Elfland, he may carry his protection. A third option is that the Rune itself twists things so that it is delivered – in that sense it's a daimon, like most spells.

and, with all his impudence in a moment lost, kneeled on one knee before the blaze of her beauty and presented the Elf King's rune. The boy was shouting to his mother to demand more leaps from the troll, as she took the scroll in her hand; the cat with her back to a box was watching alertly; Ziroonderel was all silent.

And then the troll thought of the weed-green tarns of Elfland in the woods that the trolls knew; he thought of the wonder of the unwithering flowers that time has never touched; the deep, deep colour and the perpetual calm: his errand was over and he was weary of Earth.

For a moment nothing moved there but the baby, shouting for new troll antics and waving his arms: Lirazel stood with the elfin scroll in her hand, the troll knelt before her, the witch never stirred, the cat stood watching fiercely, even the clock was still. Then the Princess moved and the troll rose to his feet, the witch sighed and the cat gave up her watchfulness as the troll scampered away. And though the baby shouted for the troll to return it never heeded, but twisted down the long spiral stairs, and slipping out through a door was off towards Elfland. As the troll passed over the threshold the wooden clock ticked again.

Lirazel looked at the scroll and looked at her boy, and did not unroll the parchment, but turned and carried it away, and came to her chamber and locked the scroll in a casket, and left it there unread. For her fears told her well the most potent rune of her father, that she had dreaded so much as she fled from his silver tower and heard his feet go booming up the brass, had crossed the frontier of twilight written upon the scroll, and would meet her eyes the moment she unrolled it and waft her thence.

This scroll could wait forever in the casket – pity the descendant who opened the box.

When the rune was safe in the casket she went to Alveric to tell him of the peril that had come near her. But Alveric was troubled because she would not name the baby, and asked her at once about this. And so she suggested a name at last to him; and it was one that no one in these fields could pronounce, an elvish name full of wonder, and made of syllables like birds' cries at night: Alveric would have none of it. And her whim in this came, as all the whims she had, from no customary thing of these fields of ours, but sheer over the border from Elfland, sheer over the border with all wild fancies that rarely visit our fields. And Alveric was vexed with these whims, for there had been none like them of old in the Castle of Erl: none could interpret them to him and none advise him. He looked for her to be guided by old customs; she looked only for some wild fancy to come from the south-east. He reasoned with her with the human reason that folk set much store by here, but she did not want reason. And so when they parted she had not after all told anything of the peril that had sought her from Elfland, which she had come to Alveric to tell.

She went instead to her tower and looked at the casket, shining there in the low late light; and turned from it and often looked again; while the light went under the fields and the gloaming came, and all glimmered away. She sat then by the casement open towards eastern hills, above whose darkening curves she watched the stars. She watched so long that she saw them change their places. For more than all things else that she had seen since she came to these fields of ours she had wondered at the stars. She loved their gentle beauty; and yet she was sad as she looked wistfully to them, for Alveric had said that she must not worship them.

How if she might not worship them could she give them their due, could she thank them for their beauty, could she praise their joyful calm? And then she thought of her baby: then she saw Orion: then she defied all jealous spirits of air, and, looking toward Orion, whom she must never worship, she offered her baby's days to that belted hunter, naming her baby after those splendid stars.

And when Alveric came to the tower she told him of her wish, and he was willing the boy should be named Orion, for all in that valley set much store by hunting. And the hope came back to Alveric, which he would not put away, that being reasonable at last in this, she would now be reasonable in all other things, and be guided by custom, and do what others did, and forsake wild whims and fancies that came over the border from Elfland. And he asked her to worship the holy things of the Freer. For never had she given any of these things their due, and knew not which was the holier, his candlestick or his bell, and never would learn for ought that Alveric told her.

And now she answered him pleasantly and her husband thought all was well, but her thoughts were far with Orion; nor did they ever tarry with grave things long, nor could tarry longer amongst them than butterflies do in the shade.

This is the flaw we discussed before. She can't learn mortal skills, like Folk Lore and Theology.

All that night the casket was locked on the rune of the King of Elfland.

And next morning Lirazel gave little thought to the rune, for they went with the boy to the holy place of the Freer; and Ziroonderel came with them but waited without. And the folk of Erl came too, as many as could leave the affairs of man with the fields; and all were there of those that had made the parliament, when they went to Alveric's sire in the long red room. And all of these were glad when they saw the boy and marked his strength and growth; and, muttering low together as they stood in the holy place, they foretold how all should be as they had planned. And the Freer came forth and, standing amongst his holy things, he gave to the boy before him the name of Orion, though he sooner had given some name of those that he knew to be blessed. And he rejoiced to see the boy and to name him there; for by the family that dwelt in the Castle of Erl all these folk marked the generations, and watched the ages pass, as sometimes we watch the seasons go over some old known tree. And he bowed himself before Alveric, and was full courteous to Lirazel, yet his courtesy to the princess came not from his heart, for in his heart he held her in no more reverence than he held a mermaid that had forsaken the sea.

And the boy came even so by the name of Orion. And all the folk rejoiced as he came out with his parents and rejoined Ziroonderel at the edge of the holy garden. And Alveric, Lirazel, Ziroonderel and Orion all walked back to the castle.

And all that day Lirazel did nothing that caused anybody to wonder, but let herself be governed by custom and the ways of the fields we know. Only, when the stars came out and Orion shone, she knew that their splendour had not received its due, and her gratitude to Orion yearned to be said. She was grateful for his bright beauty that cheered our fields, and grateful for his protection, of which she felt sure for her boy, against jealous spirits of air. And all her unsaid thanks so burned in her heart that all of a sudden she rose and left her tower and went out to the open starlight, and lifted her face to the stars and the place of Orion, and stood all dumb though her thanks were trembling upon her lips; for Alveric had told her one must not pray to the stars. With face upturned to all that wandering host she stood long silent, obedient to Alveric: then she lowered her eyes, and there was a small pool glimmering in the night, in which all the faces of the stars were shining. "To pray to the stars," she said to herself in the night, "is surely wrong. These images in the water are not the stars. I will pray to their images, and the stars will know."

Orion is a particularly powerful daimon, but it's difficult to get its personal intervention.

And on her knees amongst the iris leaves she prayed at the edge of the pool, and gave thanks to the images of the stars for the joy she had had of the night, when the constellations shone in their myriad majesty, and moved like an army dressed in silver mail, marching from unknown victories to conquer in distant wars. She blessed and thanked and praised those bright reflections shimmering down in the pool, and bade them tell her thanks and her praise to Orion, to whom she might not pray. It was thus that Alveric found her, kneeling, bent down in the dark, and reproached her bitterly. She was worshipping the stars, he said, which were there for no such purpose. And she said she was only supplicating their images.

She's hit a fine point of theology there. In some places, you can venerate saints, as a separate spiritual act from worship, and consider their icons to be blessed..

We may understand his feelings easily: the strangeness of her, her unexpected acts, her contrariness to all established things, her scorn for custom, her wayward ignorance, jarred on some treasured tradition every day. The more romantic she had been far away over the frontier, as told of by legend and song, the more difficult it was for her to fill any place once held by the ladies of that castle who were versed in all the lore of the fields we know. And Alveric looked for her to fulfil duties and follow customs which were all as new to her as the twinkling stars.

But Lirazel felt only that the stars had not their due, and that custom or reason or whatever men set store by should demand that thanks be given them for their beauty; and she had not thanked them even, but had supplicated only their images in the pool.

That night she thought of Elfland, where all things were matched with her beauty, where nothing changed and there were no strange customs, and no strange magnificences like these stars of ours to whom none gave their due. She thought of the elfin lawns and the towering banks of the flowers, and the palace that may not be told of but only in song.

Still locked in the dark of the casket the rune bided its time.

CHAPTER IX: Lirazel Blows Away

And the days went by, the Summer passed over Erl, the sun that had travelled northward fared South again, it was near to the time when the swallows left those eaves, and Lirazel had not learnt anything. She had not prayed to the stars again, or supplicated their images, but she had learned no human customs, and could not see why her love and gratitude must remain unexpressed to the stars. And Alveric did not know that the time must come when some simple trivial thing would divide them utterly.

And then one day, hoping still, he took her with him to the house of the Freer to teach her how to worship his holy things. And gladly the good man brought his candle and bell, and the eagle of brass that held up his book when he read, and a little symbolic bowl that had scented water, and the silver snuffers that put his candle out. And he told her clearly and simply, as he had told her before, the origin, meaning and mystery of all these things, and why the bowl was of brass and the snuffer of silver, and what the symbols were that were carved on the bowl. With fitting courtesy he told her these things, even with kindness; and yet there was something in his voice as he told, a little distant from her; and she knew that he spoke as one that walked safe on shore calling far to a mermaid amid dangerous seas

As they came back to the castle the swallows were grouped to go, sitting in lines along the battlements. And Lirazel had promised to worship the holy things of the Freer, like the simple bell-fearing folk of the valley of Erl: and a late hope was shining in Alveric's mind that even yet all was well. And for many days she remembered all that the Freer had told her.

And one day walking late from the nursery, past tall windows to her tower, and looking out on the evening, remembering that she must not worship the stars, she called to mind the holy things of the Freer, and tried to remember all she was told of them. It seemed so hard to worship them just as she should. She knew that before many hours the swallows would all be gone; and often when they left her her mood would change; and she feared that she might forget, and never remember more, how she ought to worship the holy things of the Freer.

So she went out into the night again over the grasses to where a thin brook ran, and drew out some great flat pebbles that she knew where to find, turning her face away from the images of the stars. By day the stones shone beautifully in the water, all ruddy and mauve; now they were all dark. She drew them out and laid them in the meadow: she loved these smooth flat stones, for somehow they made her remember the rocks of Elfland.

She laid them all in a row, this for the candlestick, this for the bell, that for the holy bowl. "If I can worship these lovely stones as things ought to be worshipped," she said, "I can worship the things of the Freer."

Then she knelt down before the big flat stones and prayed to them as though they were Christom things.

And Alveric seeking her in the wide night, wondering what wild fancy had carried her whither, heard her voice in the meadow, crooning such prayers as are offered to holy things.

When he saw the four flat stones to which she prayed, bowed down before them in the grass, he said that no worse than this were the darkest ways of the heathen. And she said "I am learning to worship the holy things of the Freer."

This chapter is not one which we can really dig into for roleplaying materials. I'm going to include it because it seems odd, nine chapters in, to start cutting out chunks of the narrative.

"It is the art of the heathen," he said.

Now of all things that men feared in the valley of Erl they feared most the arts of the heathen, of whom they knew nothing but that their ways were dark. And he spoke with the anger which men always used when they spoke there of the heathen. And his anger went to her heart, for she was but learning to worship his holy things to please him, and yet he had spoken like this.

And Alveric would not speak the words that should have been said, to turn aside anger and soothe her; for no man, he foolishly thought, should compromise in matters touching on heathenness. So Lirazel went alone all sadly back to her tower. And Alveric stayed to cast the four flat stones afar.

And the swallows left, and unhappy days went by. And one day Alveric bade her worship the holy things of the Freer, and she had quite forgotten how. And he spoke again of the arts of heathenness. The day was shining and the poplars golden and all the aspens red.

Then Lirazel went to her tower and opened the casket, that shone in the morning with the clear autumnal light, and took in her hand the rune of the King of Elfland, and carried it with her across the high vaulted hall, and came to another tower and climbed its steps to the nursery.

And there all day she stayed and played with her child, with the scroll still tight in her hand: and, merrily though she played at whiles, yet there were strange calms in her eyes, which Ziroonderel watched while she wondered. And when the sun was low and she had put the child to bed she sat beside him all solemn as she told him childish tales. And Ziroonderel, the wise witch, watched; and for all her wisdom only guessed how it would be, and knew not how to make it otherwise.

And before sunset Lirazel kissed the boy and unrolled the Elf King's scroll. It was but a petulance that had made her take it from the coffer in which it lay, and the petulance might have passed and she might not have unrolled the scroll, only that it was there in her hand. Partly petulance, partly wonder, partly whims too idle to name, drew her eyes to the Elf King's words in their coal-black curious characters.

And whatever magic there was in the rune of which I cannot tell (and dreadful magic there was), the rune was written with love that was stronger than magic, till those mystical characters glowed with the love that the Elf King had for his daughter, and there were blended in that mighty rune two powers, magic and love, the greatest power there is beyond the boundary of twilight with the greatest power there is in the fields we know. And if Alveric's love could have held her he should have trusted alone to that love, for the Elf King's rune was mightier than the holy things of the Freer.

Lirazel's intent, to worship, may have affected these stones. They could, in theory, be icons now. Casting icons into the wilderness is how you get animal folk-saints and weird woodland church faeries.

Well, that's confusing, because aspens are a type of poplar, called the Trembling poplar.. Let's assume he means the black poplar and he's talking about the leaves?

The black poplar is an odd tree that I've not really worked up for *Ars Magica*. Its strangeness comes from the fact that although its a British native tree, it has no name in Saxon. Our modern name is from Latin (*populus*), and that's weird. The Saxons called it *beorc*, a "birch", when it is clearly not a birch at all. Some people argue this is because Saxons used leaves for their taxonomy of trees, and the birch and black poplar have similar leaves. It might also be that in Saxon times poplars didn't exist, and they became native after some magical event created them, or transformed birches into them. There is a child's story that the poplar's branches have a distinctive upward tilt because, in ancient times, a thief hid something in the tree, and its new posture is to show it's not carrying any loot. Its material bonus could be useful to force honesty, which would interest the *Quaesitores*..

Aspen is a light, soft wood, and it's name comes from the Greek for "shield" because it's really good for making shields. Similarly it is useful for warding magic. In parts of ancient Greece the dead wore crowns of aspen as a defence against the horrors of the trip to Hades. In Scotland there are prohibitions against using it as a building material, or for agricultural tools, because it has a touch of fay about it. Putting a leaf under your tongue might make you more eloquent.

In *Ars Magica*, love is a gift from the True Empyrean. Basically you can't do stuff to it with magic, because it is made of the same stuff as God. God is love in a not entirely metaphoric sense.

No sooner had Lirazel read the rune on the scroll than fancies from Elfland began to pour over the border. Some came that would make a clerk in the City to-day leave his desk at once to dance on the sea-shore; and some would have driven all the men in a bank to leave doors and coffer open and wander away till they came to green open land and the heathery hills; and some would have made a poet of a man, all of a sudden as he sat at his business. They were mighty fancies that the Elf King summoned by the force of his magical rune. And Lirazel sat there with the rune in her hand, helpless amongst this mass of tumultuous fancies from Elfland. And as the fancies raged and sang and called, more and more over the border, all crowding on one poor mind, her body grew lighter and lighter. Her feet half rested half floated, upon the floor; Earth scarcely held her down, so fast was she becoming a thing of dreams. No love of hers for Earth, or of the children of Earth for her, had any longer power to hold her there.

And now came memories of her ageless childhood beside the tarns of Elfland, by the deep forest's border, by those delirious lawns, or in the palace that may not be told of except only in song. She saw those things as clearly as we see small shells in water, looking through clear ice down to the floor of some sleeping lake, a little dimmed in that other region across the barrier of ice; so too her memories shone a little dimly from across the frontier of Elfland. Little queer sounds of elfin creatures came to her, scents swam from those miraculous flowers that glowed by the lawns she knew, faint sounds of enchanted songs blew over the border and reached her seated there, voices and melodies and memories came floating through the twilight, all Elfland was calling. Then measured and resonant, and strangely near, she heard her father's voice.

She rose at once, and now Earth had lost on her the grip that it only has on material things, and a thing of dreams and fancy and fable and phantasy she drifted from the room; and Ziroonderel had no power to hold her with any spell, nor had she herself the power even to turn, even to look at her boy as she drifted away.

And at that moment a wind came out of the north-west, and entered the woods and bared the golden branches, and danced on over the downs, and led a company of scarlet and golden leaves, that had dreaded this day but danced now it had come; and away with a riot of dancing and glory of colour, high in the light of the sun that had set from the sight of the fields, went wind and leaves together. With them went Lirazel.

There's a question as to if faeries can have true love, because of the ensoulment problem. That is, do they have the capacity to love, given that they are basically meat mechanicals? The church had occasional debates about this with regard to animals. Can a dog love its master, given that it is only a dog, and not ensouled? Folk tradition, which goes so far as to create animal saints, verges on belligerent on the issue of the salvation of animals. The medieval theological view is that there are clearly no puppies or kittens in Heaven. The medieval folk view is, speaking broadly, that this is Not What We Signed Up For.

Lirazel is compared to a mermaid who forsook the sea several times, and that's also apt here. Many of those stories involve a child left behind, that the mother loves, and wants to protect, but cannot carry away.

The Inchcape Rock

by Robert Southey

No stir in the air, no stir in the sea,
The ship was still as she could be;
Her sails from heaven received no motion;
Her keel was steady in the ocean.

Without either sign or sound of their shock,
The waves flowed over the Inchcape Rock;
So little they rose, so little they fell,
They did not move the Inchcape Bell.

The Abbot of Aberbrothok
Had placed that Bell on the Inchcape Rock;
On a buoy in the storm it floated and swung,
And over the waves its warning rung.

When the Rock was hid by the surge's swell,
The mariners heard the warning Bell;
And then they knew the perilous Rock,
And blest the Abbot of Aberbrothok.

The sun in heaven was shining gay;
All things were joyful on that day;
The sea-birds screamed as they wheeled round,
And there was joyance in their sound.

The buoy of the Inchcape Bell was seen,
A dark spot on the ocean green;
Sir Ralph the Rover walked his deck,
And he fixed his eye on the darker speck.

He felt the cheering power of spring;
It made him whistle, it made him sing;
His heart was mirthful to excess,
But the Rover's mirth was wickedness.

His eye was on the Inchcape float.
Quoth he, "My men, put out the boat
And row me to the Inchcape Rock,
And I'll plague the Abbot of Aberbrothok."

The boat is lowered, the boatmen row,
And to the Inchcape Rock they go;
Sir Ralph bent over from the boat,
And he cut the Bell from the Inchcape float.

Down sank the Bell with a gurgling sound;
The bubbles rose and burst around.
Quoth Sir Ralph, "The next who comes to the Rock
Won't bless the Abbot of Aberbrothok."

Sir Ralph the Rover sailed away;
He scoured the sea for many a day;
And now grown rich with plundered store,
He steers his course for Scotland's shore.

So thick a haze o'erspread the sky,
They cannot see the sun on high:
The wind hath blown a gale all day,
At evening it hath died away.

On the deck the Rover takes his stand;
So dark it is they see no land.
Quoth Sir Ralph, "It will be brighter soon,
For there is the dawn of the rising moon."

"Canst hear," said one, "the broken roar?
For methinks we should be near the shore."
"Now where we are I cannot tell,
But I wish I could hear the Inchcape Bell."

They hear no sound; the swell is strong;
Though the wind hath fallen, they drift along
Till the vessel strikes with a shivering shock:
"O Christ! it is the Inchcape Rock!"

Sir Ralph the Rover tore his hair,
He curst himself in his despair:
The waves rush in on every side;
The ship is sinking beneath the tide.

But, even in his dying fear,
One dreadful sound could the Rover hear,—
A sound as if with the Inchcape Bell
The Devil below was ringing his knell.

I've wanted to do some of Southey's poetry for years, because he has a cavernous city beneath the Mediterranean where there are a college of necromancers. We won't be looking into that today: instead we have a pirate whose ghost, magical or infernal, would let you reuse the material in *Tales of Power*.

Inchcape Rock is about thirteen miles east of Scotland so it's in Loch Leagean Tribunal, but you could move it if you wished.

An odd little note: for a while there was an attempt in England to set up relays of bells to aid lost shepherds. Thomas de Quincey wanted to spread this poem as a way to convince people not to damage the bells. Thomas is the writer who gave us the *Three Mothers*.

The following is from *Librivox* by Daniel Davison. Thanks to Daniel and his production team. I won't be statting this one up, because you can just reskin Eustace the Monk from *Tales of Power*.

Hialmar Speaks to the Raven

by James Elroy Flecker

Night on the bloodstained snow: the wind is chill:
And there a thousand tombless warriors lie,
Grasping their swords, wild-featured. All are still.
Above them the black ravens wheel and cry.

A brilliant moon sends her cold light abroad:
Hialmar arises from the reddened slain,
Heavily leaning on his broken sword,
And bleeding from his side the battle-rain.

“Hail to you all: is there one breath still drawn
Among those fierce and fearless lads who played
So merrily, and sang as sweet in the dawn
As thrushes singing in the bramble shade?”

“They have no word to say: my helm’s unbound,
My breastplate by the axe unriveted:
Blood’s on my eyes; I hear a spreading sound,
Like waves or wolves that clamour in my head.

“Eater of men, old raven, come this way,
And with thine iron bill open my breast:
To-morrow find us where we lie to-day,
And bear my heart to her that I love best.

“Through Upsala, where drink the Jarls and sing,
And clash their golden bowls in company,
Bird of the moor, carry on tireless wing
To Ylmer’s daughter there the heart of me.

“And thou shalt see her standing straight and pale,
High pedestalled on some rook-haunted tower:
She has two earrings, silver and vermeil,
And eyes like stars that shine in sunset hour.

“Tell her my love, thou dark bird ominous;
Give her my heart, no bloodless heart and vile
But red compact and strong, O raven. Thus
Shall Ylmer’s daughter greet thee with a smile.

“Now let my life from twenty deep wounds flow,
And wolves may drink the blood. My time is done.
Young, brave and spotless, I rejoice to go
And sit where all the Gods are, in the sun.”

In *Ars Magica* the True Love Virtue allows you to do ridiculously powerful things: essentially it's a sort of pocket miracle that you don't quite control. It's a way of God, in the setting, granting humility to people like magicians.

If you are a young Bjornar magus with a group of ravens at a battlefield and one of the fallen knights stares at you and says “Tomorrow when i'm dead, come crack my corpse open. Extract my heart and fly it to the north of Stockholm.” usually you could say “No.” Even if he is some strange northern magician – a viktir or something – your *Param Magica* would protect you from the control. With a touch of True Love, there's the chance that you'll find yourself a suddenly-migratory bird and, worse, because True Love is undetectable, you may not know what has made you suddenly so biddable.

This would be shocking. Would you go to House Bjornaer and tell them what has happened? They have a strict code concerning who is allowed to carry on their bloodline. Would you instead seek out a group of young magi from a mixture of Houses who have something of a reputation of dealing with problems privately and skillfully?

Eleven reskinned monsters

Mask creatures

The mask creatures are an idea I've been playing with since *Against the Dark*. This is a general template for them: when we get to the part of the Venice writeup where we discuss carnival I'll be using it to make individual examples.

Faerie Might: 15 (Mentem)

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

These statistics are provided by the host.. Some masks provide bonuses to Physical Characteristics.

Size: 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: Vary by character, generally +3 based on role

Combat: Bite*: Init +0, Attack +8, Defense +6, Damage +1 (Modified by the host's statistics.) Some mask roles have the ability to use props like swords.

Soak: 0 (as host, modified by any Characteristic changes)

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

Pretenses: Vary depending on role, capping out at 5 (with added specialisation). May use the pretenses or abilities of the host.

Powers:

Possession, 1 or more points, Init +2, Mentem: If this power penetrates, the host is possessed by the mask and is under the spirit's direct control. Some masks have cooperative relationships with their hosts and allow them to control their bodies. Some do not. Any attempt to force a host to act contrary to her nature, or to use any of the host's own magical powers requires the spirit to spend 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 the mask spirit 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 host's nature.

If the mask is in direct control of its host's actions, the host acquires the mask spirit's 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 the creature's 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*.

Equipment: Someone else's body, all of their material goods.

Vis: 3 Mentem, in the saliva of the host.

Appearance: Does not have a material body beyond the mask, but if seen with Faerie Sight, or Second Sight it looks like an animal matching the temperament of the mask's role.

Base creature: The Mormo (RoP:F)

Episode: Loosely <https://timothyferguson.wordpress.com/2020/04/03/thoughts-on-masks/>

When you need a monster quickly, the fastest way to stat them up is to reskin one that already exists. I'm going on a reskinning marathon get my backlog of creatures under control.. This was my attempt for the 30 posts in November challenge we try each year. I came nowhere close to winning, but...we still get 11 monsters out of the deal.

These will be added to the next release of "Half-remembered Monsters." which brings it up to roughly 90, I believe.

Eleven reskinned monsters

Ghostly Jester

x

Magic Might: 10 (Mentem)

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

Size: 0 (but non-physical)

Age: n/a

Decrepitude: Already dead

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: None (may take Virtues and Flaws as a grog, if desired by the troupe.) Arguably has True Love.

Personality Traits: Protective +3, Dramatic +2, Joyous +2,

Reputations: None

Combat: n/a The ghost is non-physical, and so cannot be harmed by combat or harm others in combat.

Abilities: [Area] Lore 5 (court), Awareness 5 (where his beloved is), Carouse 1 [being the butt of jokes], Church Lore 1 (funerals), Folk Ken 4 (stories), Living Language 5 (courtly), Magic Lore 2 (ghosts), Profession (jester) 5 (storytelling)

Powers:

Kinesis, 5 points, Init 0, Terram: The ghost can move an object as if he were still physically present. One expenditure of Might allows him to move one object until he puts it down again. He has no combat Abilities, so she cannot fight wielding an object as a weapon. One exception is that the jester can move a group of traditional props of his trade, like juggling balls, at the same cost as a single object.

Equipment: Apparently clothing and tools, but these are all ghostly and really part of him.

Vis: None. Magi cannot render other characters' Ghostly Warders down for vis.

Appearance: A jester who watches over the woman he fell in love with. Note that he is invisible to characters without an appropriate Virtue.

Base Creature: Ghostly Warder (RoP:M)

Episode: <https://timothyferguson.wordpress.com/2020/04/03/the-wind-among-the-reeds/>

Supposed ghost of a lost love

Faerie Might: 10 (Mentem)

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

Size: 0 (but non-physical)

Age: n/a

Virtues and Flaws: Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Incognizant.

Personality Traits: Forlorn +3

Reputations: None

Combat: n/a The ghost is non-physical, and so cannot be harmed by combat or harm others in combat.

Pretenses: [Area] Lore 5 (local), Awareness 5 (home), Charm 3 [causing regret], Folk Ken 4 (hauntings), Faerie Lore 2 (ghosts), Profession (as suits) 5 (as suits)

Powers:

Kinesis, 5 points, Init 0, Terram: The creature can move an object as if she were still physically present. One expenditure of Might allows it to move one object until she puts it down again. She has no combat Abilities, so she cannot fight wielding an object as a weapon. As an exception, the creature can freely move objects to gain the attention of a single, designated victim.

Equipment: Apparently clothing.

Vis: 2 Mentem – a hair of the dead.

Appearance: Seems to be a ghost, but is actually a faerie feeding on grief.

Base Creature: Ghostly Warder (RoP:M)

Episode: <https://timothyferguson.wordpress.com/2020/11/06/walter-de-la-mare-5/>

Nerida

Order: Spirit of Deceit

Infernal Might: 10 {Terram}

x

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

Size: -1.

Virtues and Flaws: Effectively has Non-combatant.

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Personality Traits: Merciless +3, Enjoys tricking mortals +2

Reputations: Spirit of Deceit 1 (Infernal)

Combat: n/a (Cannot move).

Soak: +8 A stone casing around a puddle of vileness.

Fatigue Levels: Does not suffer fatigue

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-4), -3 (5-8), -5 (9-12), Incapacitated (13-16), Dead (17+)

Abilities: As required for story, but assume high social abilities.

Powers:

Coagulation, 0 points, Init 0, Terram: The creature can manifest in a single statuesque shape. Although the statue is not articulated, the demon may move itself to follow a victim, appearing in their home, or in shops they pass.

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 this case the demon prefers to seduce the victims with a story of being a stone-locked mermaid. .

Obsession: 1-3 points, Init -5, Mentem: May force characters to make Personality Trait rolls to resist a temporary trait, Lovelorn, 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.

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 used to suggest that killing people will free Nerida, or that a person might find peace through drowning.

Weakness: .The demon is essentially a puddle of slime in the middle of a immobile shell. It's incapable of combat (although if you want to make it combat worthy, the moving statues in Lands of the Nile would provide suitable statistics.)

Vis: 2 pawns, Terram.

Appearance: As per story and illustration.

Base creature: The demon from Master Zacharias. (<https://timothyferguson.wordpress.com/2020/06/11/a-horological-demon-from-jules-verne/>)

Episode: <https://timothyferguson.wordpress.com/2020/05/01/unprofessional-tales-nerida-by-normyx-norman-douglas/>

Nerida can't move in the story, but if you wanted her to, you could use a version of the animated statues of a from Lands of the Nile. I'm giving her a weapon and a shield because its in the original I'm reskinning and, why not?

Combat:

Viciously sharpened limbs and large sheet of rock as shield: Init +1, Attack +17, Defense +14, Damage +12.

Kick: Init -1, Attack +8, Defense +5, Damage +11. * Includes Increased Initiative, Attack and Damage.

Soak: +15 (statue)

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

Powers:

Possess statue, 0 points, Init 0, Terram: ReTe30.

Base monster: Guardian statue

Tiger Moon

The Tiger Moon is a lovely example of how a tiny spirit can do terrible things to non-magical characters. The temptation is to always push the upper edge of the power envelope. I could build it up as a Prince of Hell, but instead you can do much the same thing by just making it tiny and setting it on dependant NPCs.

Order: Evil Spirit

Infernal Might: 5 {Imaginem}

Characteristics: Int +1, Per +2, Pre +2, Com +0, Str N/A , Sta tireless, Dex 0, Qik 0

Size: Immaterial.

Virtues and Flaws: Effectively has Non-combatant.

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Personality Traits: Cruel +3

Reputations: Evil Spirit 1 (Infernal)

Combat: n/a

Soak: n/a

Fatigue Levels: Does not suffer fatigue

Wound Penalties: n/a

Abilities: As required for story.

Powers:

Coagulation, 0 points, Init 0, Terram: The creature manifests as an immaterial, terrifying image.

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 this case the demon prefers to find an image that causes fear or pain, and use it to torment the victim.

Obsession: 1-3 points, Init -5, Mentem: May force characters to make Personality Trait rolls to resist a temporary trait, Anxious, 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.

Sleep without rest: 1 point, Init 0 Corpus. This power causes the loss of a long term Fatigue level ,and prevents the recovery of Fatigue during the night. It may be used on successive nights on the same victim. (Taken from the Hag riding power in RoP:I)

Weakness: .The demon is incapable of harming people who don't feel guilty about anything, and so it can be easily repelled by people sincerely undergoing the Rite of Reconciliation.

Vis: 1 pawn, Perdo sordida.

Appearance: The face of a tiger, appearing initially in dreams, then in reflective surfaces, then as apparent hallucinations.

Base creature: The demon from Master Zacharias, (<https://timothyferguson.wordpress.com/2020/06/11/a-horological-demon-from-jules-verne/>) but Sleep Without Rest is the succubus/incubus power of hag riding. (RoP:I]

Episode: <https://timothyferguson.wordpress.com/2020/05/01/unprofessional-tales-tiger-moon-by-normyx-norman-douglas/>

Messenger Troll

Faerie Might: 5 (Terram)

Characteristics: Int 0, Per +2, Pre -3, Com -2, Str -5, Sta +3, Dex +2, Qik +6

Size: -4

x

Virtues and Flaws: Immunity from Terram, 2 x Great Characteristic; Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Humanoid Faerie, 2 x Improved Characteristic, Observant; Little (twice), Sovereign Ward (dogs)

Personality Traits: Obedient +3

Combat:

Brawl (fist): Init +6, Attack +9, Defense +13, Damage -1*

Improvised weapon (two handed): Init +9, Attack +8, Defense +13, Damage +7*

*Includes +1 for pretense specialization

Soak: +6, Immunity from Terram

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

Pretenses: Athletics 2 (digging), Awareness 2 (hazards underground), Bargain 5 (with mortals), Brawl 6 (fist),

Craft (smith) 5 (weapons), Great Weapon 5 (pick, as pole arm)

Powers:

Tumbles almost like flight: 2 points, constant, Corpus The character is capable of almost flying. He may use the Athletics skill to simulate difficult maneuvers, but may not engage

in combat while bouncing about swiftly. The faerie may not tumble when heavily encumbered,

Costs 15 spell levels: (ReFo Base 4, +2 Sun, +1 constant. This base is deliberately lower than Hermetic magic might suggest and is based on the RoP:F power Flight.)

Spirit Away [special] – Note that the troll does not spirit away those who do not volunteer to be taken.

Equipment: The rune the troll carries may force it to be successful (basically it has a Destiny while it is carrying the rune).

Vis: 1 pawn, in main tool or body residue.

Appearance: As per creature

Base creature: Dwarf (RoP:F)

Episode: <https://timothyferguson.wordpress.com/2020/11/13/king-of-elflands-daughter-2/>

Strange Orchid

Order: Corrupted plant

Infernal Might: 5 Herbam

Characteristics: Int 1, Per -2, Pre -6, Com -6, Str -8, Sta +3, Dex +4, Qik +8

Size: -2

Virtues and Flaws: Giant, Puissant Brawl,

Personality Traits: Ambush predator +6

Combat: Brawl: Init +9, Atk +5, Dfn +8*, Dam -6

(* As the creature is effectively trapped in a pot, its Dfn is only this high if people are attacking its lashing tendrils. If people strike at its roots, the Dfn falls to -4)

Soak: +3

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-3), -3 (4-6), -5 (7-9), Incapacitated (10-12), Dead (13+)

Abilities: Awareness 2 (food), Brawl 2 (grapple).

Powers:

Exsanguinate: 0 points, Init 0, Herbam: If a target is immobile, the plant can painlessly drain its blood, doing 1 Fatigue level of Damage per turn. Once the character's Fatigue is exhausted, it begins draining Wound levels.

Somniferous perfume: 0 points, Init 0, Herbam: The room in which the plant is stored fills with a scent that makes humans and animals drowsy, as per Call to Slumber. with Duration boosted to Diameter.

Vis: 1 pawn (Perdo)

Appearance: An ugly orchid.

Base creature: <https://timothyferguson.wordpress.com/2019/03/12/supplemental-monsters-march-2019/>

Episode: <https://timothyferguson.wordpress.com/2020/08/06/the-flowering-of-the-strange-orchid-by-h-g-wells/>

Demon of the Altar

Arguably the creature is far larger in the poem, so you could up its Size. That would make its wound brackets wider, add to its Damage, and reduce its Defense. x

Order: Corrupted Beast

Infernal Might: 15 (Animal)

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

Size: 2

Confidence: 1 (3 points)

Virtues and Flaws: Magical Monster; Ferocity, Homing Instinct (always knows where altar is in relation to self), Keen Vision, Horrifying Appearance

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

Personality Traits: Defends altar +5, Brave +3

Combat:

Draconic tail stinger: Init +3, Attack +12, Defense +10, Damage +8*

Grapple: Init: +3, Attack +7, Defense +9, Damage: special (On subsequent rounds may add Grapple Strength to Attack Roll for stinger attacks.)

Large Leonine Claws: Init +3, Attack +14, Defense +12, Damage +8

* add poison if you like.

Soak: +7

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

Wound Penalties: –1 (1–7), –3 (8–14), –5 (15–21), Incapacitated (22–28), Dead (29+)

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

Vis: 3 Animal, heart

Appearance: The body of a dog, the claws of a lion, the wings of an eagle, the stinging tail of a dragon.

Base creature: Juvenile female griffon from Legends of Hermes

Episode: <https://timothyferguson.wordpress.com/2020/10/18/a-demon-from-spenser/>

Monks of the Miserere

Gustavo Bécquer was a Spanish author who wrote stories in the Romantic style during the Nineteenth Century. I'd love to record them for Librivox, but I have a lot of Venice to get through, so can I suggest a recording put out by a different podcast? Please see The Miserere episode from Haunted Places : Ghost Stories.

<https://www.parcast.com/haunted-places-ghost-stories>

I don't want to over-elaborate my explanation here, because the episode I've cross-referenced frames it well, but essentially there's a murderer who believes his sin will be forgiven if he writes a perfect Miserere. The Miserere is the 51st Psalm set to music. It was, in the period we are considering, only sung in the Sistine Chapel, never written down, and performed in the Tenebrae: the days between the anniversary of the death of Jesus and his resurrection. The murderer hears that there's a ghostly choir at a ruined abbey that sings the miserere, similarly trying to atone for their sins, and he goes to benefit from their work.

Becquer's theology doesn't work in Ars Magica: certainly the monks die unshriven, but they are monks performing service killed by enemies of the church, and so they are technically martyrs. This leads me to believe that, in Ars Magica terms, these are demons. There need to be at least nine monks to perform the miserere – it is performed by two choirs, one of four singers and one of five.

Order: Tempters

Infernal Might: 10 (Corpus) Note, they monks live in an Infernal Aura of 3, with a higher regio level of 5.

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

Size: 0

Confidence Score: 3 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Weak-willed

Personality Traits: Sad +5

Combat: do not engage in physical combat

Soak: +5

x

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -2 (6-10), -3 (11-15), Inc (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Many, including Sing 9 (Miserere)

Powers:

Chant of the Monks: 2 points, Init -2, Mentem. The chant of the monks creates a powerful dread in a character, forcing him to make a Personality trait roll of 6 or higher before he can leave the abbey. If the roll succeeds, the curse is broken. If it fails, the character will not attempt to leave the abbey until dawn. If multiple monks are using this power simultaneously it affects everyone who can hear it. Individual monks can only affect a single victim per use of the power. The group variant of the Miserere can cause Warping.

Coagulation, 1 point, Init -1, Corpus.

Envisioning; 1 point, Init +0, Mentem. The monks use the Envisioning power on humans who fall asleep in their regio, to make them think they are spending many days, and even years, working on the Miserere while the monks sing.

Drawn into darkness, 1 point, Init -10, Vim. This is similar to the Faerie Spirit Away power: it draws a human into a higher level of Infernal regio on this site, where they go slowly mad trying to write a perfect Miserere.

Equipment: Monastic cowl

Weakness: Prayers to Saint Veronica, the patron of kindness and charity.

Vis: 1 pawn each of Rego and Imaginem vis sordida in cowl

Appearance: Superficially like blackrobed monks, these demons are skeletal when they first appear, but put on flesh as they sing.

Base creature: Infernal monks in Tales of Power.

Episode: no episode.

Our Ladies of Sorrow

These three demons are queens of suffering who claim to be working on behalf of God to make human souls more perfect. Unusually for a family of demons, they appear to belong to different Orders, and to work in easy co-operation. This has led to some speculation that they are not true demons at all, merely faeries so infernally tainted and skilled at playing demons that there is little effective difference.

The eldest is Mater Lachrymarum, Our Lady of Tears. She is the weeper who refuses to be comforted. She raves, and moans, and grieves. She thunders against Heaven demanding the return of the dead.

Our Lady of Tears

Order: Prince of the Furies

Infernal Might: 45 {Mentem}

Characteristics: Int +2, Per +2, Pre +2, Com +1, Str +3, Sta +5, Dex +2, Qik +6

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Self controlled -6.

Personality Traits: Grief stricken +4, Angry +3, Drawn to suffering +3

Reputations: If all humanity roared its pain in a single shout +9

Combat: Brawl: Init +6, Atk +12*, Dfn +16*, Dam +5 *includes specialisation

Soak: +5

Fatigue Levels: Cannot suffer fatigue.

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

Abilities: As required for story, Brawl (humans) 9.

Powers:

Beserk Rage: 1 point, Init. 0, The mother can grant anyone the Beserk virtue, until they calm down.

Bitter Tears, 0 points, Init 0, Aquam: The mother's tears are, at her discretion, strongly alkaline, and can be used to dissolve and burn things which contact them (+5 damage). She is not affected by her own tears.

Rumours that her bitterest tears are given to her servants as poisons are difficult to confirm, but plausible.

Call the Tempest: 3 points, Init. -10, Auram. Creates a thunderstorm to match the Mother's mood. The use of

this power apparently requires no conscious choice.

Coagulation, 0 points, Init 0, Corpus: Can form a body of ambient matter. The Mother's keys that open any door are symbolic – she can just flow through obstructions. Sometimes she does make locks spring open because it is dramatic, but that's treated as a free aspect of this power.

Endurance of the enraged: 0 points, Init. 0, As a Fury, the Mother of Tears can ignore Wound penalties, except on Defense totals.

Envisioning, 1 point, Init 0, Mentem: Allows the Mother of Tears to enter and twist dreams – does not cause seizures like some demons.

Flight, 3 points, Init -10, Auram: Can be pulled aloft by a storm-wind. The negative Init. score can be increased if a storm is already raging.

Inescapable, 0 points, Init 0, Corpus: Can unfailingly track prey, so long as she has a starting point, like physical track, Arcane connection, or name. She loses the track if the subject is warded beyond her ability to penetrate. Oddly, this power is not hindered by the presence of relics or by Divine Auras.

Waxing Tide of Humors: 3 points, Init +6, Mentem. This power causes passion to overcome sense. A character can resist this effect with a roll against an Ease Factor of 9, modified by Traits like Calm.

Weakness: Can only target the grieving. Cannot use her powers in strong Divine Auras, but can enter them if she wishes.

Vis: 9 pawns, Perdo sordida

Appearance: "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."

Our Lady of Sighs

The second sister is called Mater Suspiriorum—Our Lady of Sighs. She never scales the clouds, nor walks abroad upon the winds...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...; 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...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.

Order: Prince of the Accusers

Infernal Might: 40 {Mentem}

Characteristics: Int +2, Per +2, Pre +2, Com +1, Str +5, Sta +7, Dex +1, Qik +1

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Self controlled -6.

Personality Traits: Humiliated +4, Drawn to suffering +3

Reputations: If all humanity roared its pain in a single shout +9

Combat: Non-combatant

Soak: +10

Fatigue Levels: Constantly suffers fatigue that has no mechanical effect.

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-4), -3 (5-8), -5 (9-12), Incapacitated (13-16), Dead (17+)

Abilities: As required for story.

Powers:

Betrayal of the Heart, 2 points, Init 0, Mentem: Each use of this power draws forth from the victim one fact they would never share. It does not work on the truly sinless, but remember that in period deep despair is a form of sin (it's a failure to trust in Divine Providence) so the Lady can use this power to find precisely the right psychological injuries to target with her other powers.

Coagulation, 0 points, Init 0, Corpus: Can form a body of ambient matter. The Mother's key that opens any door is symbolic – she can just flow through obstructions. Sometimes she does make locks spring open because it is dramatic, but that's treated as a free aspect of this power.

Envisioning, 1 point, Init 0, Mentem: Allows the Mother of Sighs to enter and twist dreams, so that people see the wreckage of all they desire. Does not cause seizures like some demons.

Inescapable, 0 points, Init 0, Corpus: Can unfailingly track prey, so long as she has a starting point, like physical track, Arcane connection, or name. She loses the track if the subject is warded beyond her ability to penetrate. Oddly, this power is not hindered by the presence of relics or by Divine Auras.

Sighs, 3 points, Init +6, Auram: The mother's sighs are, at her discretion, audible at Sight range. Hearing a sigh forces a Personality check for hopelessness against an ease factor of 9, odified by positive traits.

Whispers behind the back, 2 points, Init 0, Mentem: Much like Pains of Perpetual Worry, this power makes the target think that their secret is already known, and that people are discussing it behind their back. Its effects last a month.

Weakness: Can only target the grieving. Cannot use her powers in strong Divine Auras, but can enter them if she wishes.

Vis: 8 pawns, Perdo sordida

Appearance: "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....She is humble to abjectness."

Our Lady of Darkness

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.

Order: Prince of the Avengers of Evil

Infernal Might: 45 {Mentem}

Characteristics: Int +2, Per +2, Pre +2, Com +1, Str +24, Sta +2, Dex +2, Qik -5

Size: 10 – literally touches the sky. If she takes a Size 0 form for some reason, her Str drops to 4 and her Qik rises to 5)

Personality Traits: Defiant +5, Drawn to suffering +3

Reputations: Imagine a lighthouse that could suggest you killed yourself with its light +9

Combat: Brawl: Init +1, Atk +34*, Dfn +12*, Dam +29 *includes specialisation

Soak: +30

Fatigue Levels: Cannot suffer fatigue.

Wound Penalties : -1 (1–15), -3 (16–30), -5 (31–45), Incapacitated (46–60), Dead (61+)

Abilities: As required for story, Brawl (humans) 9.

Powers:

Punish the Sinner: 5 points, Init. +6, Mentem: This power does damage based on the sins the target carries. If they have a unshrived mortal sin, they take an automatic Heavy Wound. If the person has vices as Personality traits, add all of the absolute values together and that's the damage modifier Soaked by a stress die plus Stamina. The Lady can inflict this power on anyone within her Sight range, and she's taller than a mountain. She can only harm each target this way once.

Coagulation , 0 points, Init 0, Corpus: Can form a body of ambient matter. Does not carry a key because she can smash virtually any barrier.

Envisioning , 1 point, Init 0, Mentem: Allows the Mother of Darkness to enter and twist dreams. She does not cause seizures like some demons, but tries to break people's spirit.

Flight , 3 points, Init -10 , Auram: Doesn't truly fly, but moves in great leaps.

Inescapable , 0 points, Init 0, Corpus: Can unfailingly track prey, so long as she has a starting point, like physical track, Arcane connection, or name. She loses the track if the subject is warded beyond her ability to penetrate. Oddly, this power is not hindered by the presence of relics or by Divine Auras.

Waxing Tide of Humors: 3 points, Init +6, Mentem. This power causes passion to overcome sense, driving suicide. A character can resist this effect with a roll against an Ease Factor of 9, modified by Traits like Calm. Player characters may have plot armor against this effect – discuss at your table.

Weakness: “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.”

Vis: 9 pawns, Perdo sordida

Appearance: “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.”

Pentamerone 3

XI: THE THREE SISTERS

It is a great truth that from the same wood are formed the statues of idols and the rafters of gallows, kings' thrones and cobblers' stalls; and another strange thing is that from the same rags are made the paper on which the wisdom of sages is recorded, and the crown which is placed on the head of a fool. The same, too, may be said of children: one daughter is good and another bad; one idle, another a good housewife; one fair, another ugly; one spiteful, another kind; one unfortunate, another born to good luck, and who being all of one family ought to be of one nature. But leaving this subject to those who know more about it, I will merely give you an example in the story of the three daughters of the same mother, wherein you will see the difference of manners which brought the wicked daughters into the ditch and the good daughter to the top of the Wheel of Fortune.

There was at one time a woman who had three daughters, two of whom were so unlucky that nothing ever succeeded with them, all their projects went wrong, all their hopes were turned to chaff. But the youngest, who was named Nella, was born to good luck, and I verily believe that at her birth all things conspired to bestow on her the best and choicest gifts in their power. The Sky gave her the perfection of its light; Venus, matchless beauty of form; Love, the first dart of his power; Nature, the flower of manners. She never set about any work that it did not go off to a nicety; she never took anything in hand that it did not succeed to a hair; she never stood up to dance, that she did not sit down with applause. On which account she was envied by her jealous sisters and yet not so much as she was loved and wished well to by all others; as greatly as her sisters desired to put her underground, so much more did other folks carry her on the palms of their hands.

Now there was in that country an enchanted Prince who was so attracted by her beauty that he secretly married her. And in order that they might enjoy one another's company without exciting the suspicion of the mother, who was a wicked woman, the Prince made a crystal passage which led from the royal palace directly into Nella's apartment, although it was eight miles distant. Then he gave her a certain powder saying, "Every time you wish to see me throw a little of this powder into the fire, and instantly I will come through this passage as quick as a bird, running along the crystal road to gaze upon this face of silver."

Having arranged it thus, not a night passed that the Prince did not go in and out, backwards and forwards, along the crystal passage, until at last the sisters, who were spying the actions of Nella, found out the secret and laid a plan to put a stop to the sport. And in order to cut the thread at once, they went and broke the passage here and there; so that, when the unhappy girl threw the powder into the fire, to give the signal to her husband, the Prince, who used always to come

This month the three stories we have from the Pentamerone don't need a lot of elucidation on plot, but they have been bowdlerised in ways of interest to Ars Magica players.

running in furious haste, hurt himself in such a manner against the broken crystal that it was truly a pitiable sight to see. And being unable to pass further on he turned back all cut and slashed like a Dutchman's breeches. Then he sent for all the doctors in the town; but as the crystal was enchanted the wounds were mortal, and no human remedy availed. When the King saw this, despairing of his son's condition, he sent out a proclamation that whoever would cure the wounds of the Prince—if a woman she should have him for a husband—if a man he should have half his kingdom.

Now when Nella, who was pining away from the loss of the Prince, heard this she dyed her face, disguised herself, and unknown to her sisters she left home to go to see him before his death. But as by this time the Sun's gilded ball with which he plays in the Fields of Heaven, was running towards the west, night overtook her in a wood close to the house of an ogre, where, in order to get out of the way of danger, she climbed up into a tree. Meanwhile the ogre and his wife were sitting at table with the windows open in order to enjoy the fresh air while they ate; as soon as they had emptied their cups and put out the lamps they began to chat of one thing and another, so that Nella, who was as near to them as the mouth to the nose, heard every word they spoke.

Among other things the ogress said to her husband, "My pretty Hairy-Hide, tell me what news; what do they say abroad in the world?" And he answered, "Trust me, there is no hand's breadth clean; everything's going topsy-turvy and awry." "But what is it?" replied his wife. "Why I could tell pretty stories of all the confusion that is going on," replied the ogre, "for one hears things that are enough to drive one mad, such as buffoons rewarded with gifts, rogues esteemed, cowards honoured, robbers protected, and honest men little thought of. But, as these things only vex one, I will merely tell you what has befallen the King's son. He had made a crystal path along which he used to go to visit a pretty lass; but by some means or other, I know not how, all the road has been broken; and as he was going along the passage as usual, he has wounded himself in such a manner that before he can stop the leak the whole conduit of his life will run out. The King has indeed issued a proclamation with great promises to whoever cures his son; but it is all labour lost, and the best he can do is quickly to get ready mourning and prepare the funeral."

I missed something on the way through "The Three Sisters" so here's an extra comment.

The part that struck me on a relisten is "This is not a fever that will yield to medicine and diet, much less are these ordinary wounds which require lint and oil; for the charm that was on the broken glass produces the same effect as onion juice does on the iron heads of arrows, which makes the wound incurable. There is one thing only that could save his life, but don't ask me to tell it to you, for it is a thing of importance." The thing is the rendered fat of the ogres.

I was surprised by this idea – that onions poison arrowheads. It's not a unique concept: many people have wanted to make their projectiles more dangerous with whatever is about. For example, there are stories of English archers urinating onto the ground into which they have stuck their arrows, to encourage sepsis.

I'm surprised it was onions, though, because onions were used in precisely the opposite way in later periods. For example, during the American Civil War, oil of onions was used on burns wounds. It's a mild antibiotic – but back then that was about as good as you were going to get, and onions can be carted about anywhere provided you keep them dry.

During the American Civil War, they had got to the point of not salving all wounds with unguents, so the use of onion oil on burns was an exception. The odd thing is if they needed to suture wounds, they'd put a piece of onion in the wound before sewing, and then reopen it in a few days. What they were hoping for was laudable pus – a sort of yellow-white pus that they saw as the leftover of the body's process of digestion of ill humours in the wound.. Since the time of the Greeks people had noticed that pus-filled wounds tend to heal and those without pus were more likely to be fatal. "Not pus filled", in this case, meaning injuries where the tissues had become necrotic. It seemed odd to have onions go the other way, to make wounds not seal.

For Magonomia, it does give me an idea for an Alchemical preparation – I wouldn't like to make it a standard effect of raw onion juice, because otherwise every chef in Europe will eventually bleed out through the fingertips. In *Ars Magica* you'd just make it a folk charm that duplicates *The Wound That Weeps*.

When Nella heard the cause of the Prince's illness she sobbed and wept bitterly and said to herself, "Who is the wicked soul who has broken the passage and caused so much sorrow?" But as the ogress now went on speaking Nella was as silent as a mouse and listened.

"And is it possible," said the ogress, "that the world is lost to this poor Prince, and that no remedy can be found for his malady?"

"Hark-ye, Granny," replied the ogre, "the doctors are not called upon to find remedies that may pass the bounds of nature. This is not a fever that will yield to medicine and diet, much less are these ordinary wounds which require lint and oil; for the charm that was on the broken glass produces the same effect as onion juice does on the iron heads of arrows, which makes the wound incurable. There is one thing only that could save his life, but don't ask me to tell it to you, for it is a thing of importance."

"Do tell me, dear old Long-tusk," cried the ogress; "tell me, if you would not see me die."

"Well then," said the ogre, "I will tell you provided you promise me not to confide it to any living soul, for it would be the ruin of our house and the destruction of our lives."

"Fear nothing, my dear, sweet little husband," replied the ogress; "for you shall sooner see pigs with horns, apes with tails, moles with eyes, than a single word shall pass my lips." And so saying, she put one hand upon the other and swore to it.

"You must know then," said the ogre, "that there is nothing under the sky nor above the ground that can save the Prince from the snares of death, but our fat. If his wounds are anointed with this his soul will be arrested which is just at the point of leaving the dwelling of his body."

Nella, who overheard all that passed, gave time to Time to let them finish their chat; and then, getting down from the tree and taking heart, she knocked at the ogre's door crying, "Ah! my good masters, I pray you for charity, alms, some sign of compassion. Have a little pity on a poor, miserable, wretched creature who is banished by fate far from her own country and deprived of all human aid, who has been overtaken by night in this wood and is dying of cold and hunger." And crying thus, she went on knocking and knocking at the door.

Upon hearing this deafening noise, the ogress was going to throw her half a loaf and send her away. But the ogre, who was more greedy of flesh than the squirrel is of nuts, the bear of honey, the cat of fish, the sheep of salt, or the ass of bran, said to his wife, "Let the poor creature come in, for if she sleeps in the fields, who knows but she may be eaten up by some wolf." In short, he talked so much that his wife at length opened the door for Nella; whilst with all his pretended charity he was all the time reckoning on making four mouthfuls of her. But the glutton counts one way and the one way and the host another; for the ogre and his wife drank till they were fairly tipsy. When they lay down to sleep Nella took a knife from a cupboard and made a hash of them in a trice. Then she put all the fat into a phial, went straight to the court, where, presenting herself before the King, she offered to cure the Prince. At this the King was overjoyed and led her to the chamber of his son, and no sooner had she anointed him well with the fat than the wound closed in a moment just as if she had thrown water on the fire, and he became sound as a fish.

When the King saw this, he said to his son, "This good woman deserves the reward promised by the proclamation and that you should marry her." But the Prince replied, "It is hopeless, for I have no store-room full of hearts in my body to share among so many; my heart is already disposed of, and another woman is already the mistress of it." Nella, hearing this, replied, "You should no longer think of her who has been the cause of all your misfortune." "My misfortune has been brought on me by her sisters," replied the Prince, "and they shall repent it." "Then do you really love her?" said Nella. And the Prince replied, "More than my own life." "Embrace me then," said Nella, "for I am the fire of your heart." But the Prince seeing the dark hue of her face answered, "I would

sooner take you for the coal than the fire, so keep off—don't blacken me." Whereupon Nella, perceiving that he did not know her, called for a basin of clean water and washed her face. As soon as the cloud of soot was removed the sun shone forth; and the Prince, recognising her, pressed her to his heart and acknowledged her for his wife. Then he had her sisters thrown into an oven, thus proving the truth of the old saying—

"No evil ever went without punishment."

In the original the prince who rushes to his lover's bedside whenever she uses her magical Powder of Booty Calling does so naked, and the injuries of a naked man in a shattering tube of glass-like crystal need little imagination. This is arguably a faerie trod – how a prince who is apparently mortal can make himself crystal tunnel and summoning powder are never clearly explained. Also, the washing of the face might be a race ting : the book is full of it, or it might be a class thing.

The punishment at the end, where the Prince has the sisters tossed into an over, is different in the original: they are bricked into a chimney so their envy can be rendered out by the heat. It's not clear if they are supposed to survive this process, or if there is a distilled liquid envy left afterward. Presumably this is infernally-tainted vis.

XII: VIOLET

Envy is a wind which blows with such violence, that it throws down the props of the reputation of good men, and levels with the ground the crops of good fortune. But, very often, as a punishment from Heaven, when this envious blast seems as if it would cast a person flat on the ground, it aids him instead of attain the happiness he is expecting sooner even than he expected: as you will hear in the story which I shall now tell you.

There was once upon a time a good sort of man named Cola Aniello, who had three daughters, Rose, Pink, and Violet, the last of whom was so beautiful that her very look was a syrup of love, which cured the hearts of beholders of all unhappiness. The King's son was burning with love of her, and every time he passed by the little cottage where these three sisters sat at work, he took off his cap and said, "Good-day, good-day, Violet," and she replied, "Good-day, King's son! I know more than you." At these words her sisters grumbled and murmured, saying, "You are an ill-bred creature and will make the Prince in a fine rage." But as Violet paid no heed to what they said, they made a spiteful complaint of her to her father, telling him that she was too bold and forward; and that she answered the Prince without any respect, as if she were just as good as he; and that, some day or other, she would get into trouble and suffer the just punishment of her offence. So Cola Aniello, who was a prudent man, in order to prevent any mischief, sent Violet to stay with an aunt, to be set to work.

Now the Prince, when he passed by the house as usual, no longer seeing the object of his love, was for some days like a nightingale that has lost her young ones from her nest, and goes from branch to branch wailing and lamenting her loss;

but he put his ear so often to the chink that at last he discovered where Violet lived. Then he went to the aunt, and said to her, "Madam, you know who I am, and what power I have; so, between ourselves, do me a favour and then ask for whatever you wish." "If I can do anything to serve you," replied the old woman, "I am entirely at your command." "I ask nothing of you," said the Prince, "but to let me give Violet a kiss." "If that's all," answered the old woman, "go and hide yourself in the room downstairs in the garden, and I will find some pretence or another for sending Violet to you."

As soon as the Prince heard this, he stole into the room without loss of time; and the old woman, pretending that she wanted to cut a piece of cloth, said to her niece, "Violet, if you love me, go down and fetch me the yard-measure." So Violet went, as her aunt bade her, but when she came to the room she perceived the ambush, and, taking the yard-measure, she slipped out of the room as nimbly as a cat, leaving the Prince with his nose made long out of pure shame and bursting with vexation.

When the old woman saw Violet come running so fast, she suspected that the trick had not succeeded; so presently after, she said to the girl, "Go downstairs, niece, and fetch me the ball of thread that is on the top shelf in the cupboard." So Violet ran, and taking the thread slipped like an eel out of the hands of the Prince. But after a little while the old woman said again, "Violet, my dear, if you do not go downstairs and fetch me the scissors, I cannot get on at all." Then Violet went down again, but she sprang as vigorously as a dog out of the trap, and when she came upstairs she took the scissors and cut off one of her aunt's ears, saying, "Take that, madam, as a reward for your pains—every deed deserves its need. If I don't cut off your nose, it is only that you may smell the bad odour of your reputation." So saying, she went her way home with a hop, skip, and jump, leaving her aunt eased of one ear and the Prince full of Let-me-alone.

Not long afterwards, the Prince again passed by the house of Violet's father; and, seeing her at the window where she used to stand, he began his old tune, "Good-day, good-day, Violet!" Whereupon she answered as quickly as a good parish-clerk, "Good-day, King's son! I know more than you." But Violet's sisters could no longer bear this behaviour, and they plotted together how to get rid of her. Now, one of the windows looked into the garden of an ogre, so they proposed to drive the poor girl away through this; and letting fall from it a skein of thread with which they were working a door-curtain for the queen, they cried, "Alas! alas! we are ruined and shall not be able to finish the work in time, if Violet, who is the smallest and lightest of us, does not let herself down by a cord and pick up the thread that has fallen."

Violet could not endure to see her sisters grieving thus, and instantly offered to go down; so, tying a cord to her, they lowered her into the garden. But no sooner did she reach the ground than they let go the rope. It happened that just at that time the ogre came out to look at his garden, and having caught cold from the dampness of the ground, he gave such

a tremendous sneeze, with such a noise and explosion, that Violet screamed out with terror, "Oh, mother, help me!" Thereupon the ogre looked round and seeing the beautiful maiden behind him, he received her with the greatest care and affection; and treating her as his own daughter, he gave her in charge of three fairies, bidding them take care of her, and rear her up on cherries.

The Prince no longer seeing Violet, and hearing no news of her, good or bad, fell into such grief that his eyes became swollen, his face became pale as ashes, his lips livid; and he neither ate a morsel to get flesh on his body, nor slept a wink to get any rest to his mind. But trying all possible means and offering large rewards, he went about spying and inquiring everywhere until, at last, he discovered where Violet was. Then he sent for the ogre and told him that, finding himself ill (as he might see was the case) he begged of him permission to spend a single day and night in his garden, adding that a small chamber would suffice for him to repose in. Now, as the ogre was a subject of the Prince's father he could not refuse him this trifling pleasure; so he offered him all the rooms in his house; if one was not enough, and his very life itself. The Prince thanked him, and chose a room which by good luck was near to Violet's; and, as soon as Night came out to play games with the Stars, the Prince, finding that Violet had left her door open, as it was summertime and the place was safe, stole softly into her room, and taking Violet's arm he gave her two pinches. Then she awoke and exclaimed, "Oh, father, father, what a quantity of fleas!" So she went to another bed and the Prince did the same again and she cried out as before. Then she changed first the mattress and then the sheet; and so the sport went on the whole night long, until the Dawn, having brought the news that the Sun was alive, the mourning that was hung round the sky was all removed.

As soon as it was day, the Prince, passing by that house, and seeing the maiden at the door, said, as he was wont to do, "Good-day, good-day, Violet!" and when Violet replied, "Good-day, King's son! I know more than you!" the Prince answered, "Oh, father, father, what a quantity of fleas!"

The instant Violet felt this shot she guessed at once that the Prince had been the cause of her annoyance in the past night; so off she ran and told it to the fairies. "If it be he," said the fairies, "we will soon give him tit for tat and as good in return. If this dog has bitten you, we will manage to get a hair from him. He has give you one, we will give him back one and a half. Only get the ogre to make you a pair of slippers covered with little bells, and leave the rest to us. We will pay him in good coin."

Violet, who was eager to be revenged, instantly got the ogre to make the slippers for her; and, waiting till the Sky, like a Genoese woman, had wrapped the black taffety round her face, they went, all four together, to the house of the Prince, where the fairies and Violet hid themselves in the chamber. And as soon as ever the Prince had closed his eyes the fairies made a great noise and racket, and Violet began to stamp with her feet at such a rate that, what with the clatter

of her heels and the jingling of her bells, the Prince awoke in great terror and cried out, "Oh, mother, mother, help me!" And after repeating this two or three times, they slipped away home.

The next morning the Prince went to take a walk in the garden, for he could not live a moment without the sight of Violet, who was a pink of pinks. And seeing her standing at the door, he said, "Good-day, good-day, Violet!" And Violet answered, "Good-day, King's son! I know more than you!" Then the Prince said, "Oh, father, father, what a quantity of fleas!" But Violet replied, "Oh, mother, mother, help me!"

When the Prince heard this, he said to Violet, "You have won—you wits are better than mine. I yield—you have conquered. And now that I see you really know more than I do, I will marry you without more ado." So he called the ogre and asked her of him for his wife; but the ogre said it was not his affair, for he had learned that very morning that Violet was the daughter of Cola Aniello. So the Prince ordered her father to be called and told him of the good fortune that was in store for his daughter; whereupon the marriage feast was celebrated with great joy, and the truth of the saying was seen that—

"A fair maiden soon gets wed."

So, in *Ars Magica* we know the finest horses in the world have magical blood, because their mothers are impregnated by the North Wind. Where these horses come from is questionable: in the *Pentamerone* it's Iberia, in some other sources Scythia. Now, in this story, originally, the sneeze which so frightens the young woman that she cries out is a fart, and the giant believes that he has created a fart of such force that he has, much like the north wind, made one of his trees pregnant, and that the young woman is his daughter, which is why he treats her so well. He later discovers that his "nether eye has been deceived" and gives her back to her real father.

I originally thought the coarseness of these stories was because they were not meant for children and the later bowdlerisation was to make them suitable as nursery stories. I note, though, that in the original they are flagged by the author as "tales for the little ones". They are full of jokes about excrement and flatulence. My children having aged sufficiently that they are now afficianados of the works of Dav Pilkey, writer of the *Captain Underpants* stories, and I now understand my mistakes. An ogre farting so hard he thinks he's made a tree pregnant is just the sort of thing Pilkey would write, if his society were a bit more open on matters of reproduction, as the agrarian communities of Renaissance Italy were.

XIII PIPPO

Ingratitude is a nail, which, driven into the tree of courtesy, causes it to wither. It is a broken channel by which the foundations of affection are undermined; and a lump of soot, which, falling into the dish of friendship, destroys its scent and savour—as is seen in daily instances, and, amongst others, in the story which I will now tell you.

There was one time in my dear city of Naples an old man who was as poor as poor could be. He was so wretched, so bare, so light, and with not a farthing in his pocket, that he went naked as a flea. And being about to shake out the bags of life, he called to him his sons, Oratiello and Pippo, and said to them, "I am now called upon by the tenor of my bill to

pay the debt I owe to Nature. Believe me, I should feel great pleasure in quitting this abode of misery, this den of woes, but that I leave you here behind me—a pair of miserable fellows, as big as a church, without a stitch upon your backs, as clean as a barber's basin, as nimble as a serjeant, as dry as a plum-stone, without so much as a fly can carry upon its foot; so that, were you to run a hundred miles, not a farthing would drop from you. My ill-fortune has indeed brought me to such beggary that I lead the life of a dog, for I have all along, as well you know, gaped with hunger and gone to bed without a candle. Nevertheless, now that I am a-dying, I wish to leave you some token of my love. So do you, Oratiello, who are my first-born, take the sieve that hangs yonder against the wall, with which you can earn your bread; and do you, little fellow, take the cat and remember your daddy!" So saying, he began to whimper; and presently after said, "God be with you—for it is night!"

Oratiello had his father buried by charity; and then took the sieve and went riddling here, there, and everywhere to gain a livelihood; and the more he riddled, the more he earned. But Pippo, taking the cat, said, "Only see now what a pretty legacy my father has left me! I, who am not able to support myself, must now provide for two. Whoever beheld so miserable an inheritance?" Then the cat, who overheard this lamentation, said to him, "You are grieving without need, and have more luck than sense. You little know the good fortune in store for you; and that I am able to make you rich if I set about it." When Pippo had heard this, he thanked Her Pussyship, stroked her three or four times on the back, and commended himself warmly to her. So the cat took compassion on poor Pippo; and, every morning, when the Sun, with the bait of light on his golden hook, fishes for the shakes of Night, she betook herself to the shore, and catching a goodly grey mullet or a fine dory, she carried it to the King and said, "My Lord Pippo, your Majesty's most humble slave, sends you this fish with all reverence, and says, A small present to a great lord." Then the King, with a joyful face, as one usually shows to those who bring a gift, answered the cat, "Tell this lord, whom I do not know, that I thank him heartily."

Again, the cat would run to the marshes or the fields, and when the fowlers had brought down a blackbird, a snipe, or a lark, she caught it up and presented it to the King with the same message. She repeated this trick again and again, until one morning the King said to her, "I feel infinitely obliged to this Lord Pippo, and am desirous of knowing him, that I may make a return for the kindness he has shown me." And the cat replied, "The desire of my Lord Pippo is to give his life for your Majesty's crown; and tomorrow morning, without fail, as soon as the Sun has set fire to the stubble of the fields of air, he will come and pay his respects to you."

So when the morning came, the cat went to the King, and said to him: "Sire, my Lord Pippo sends to excuse himself for not coming, as last night some of his servants robbed him and ran off, and have not left him a single shirt to his back."

When the King heard this, he instantly commanded his retainers to take out of his own wardrobe a quantity of clothes and linen, and sent them to Pippo; and, before two hours had passed, Pippo went to the palace, conducted by the cat, where he received a thousand compliments from the King, who made him sit beside himself, and gave him a banquet that would amaze you.

While they were eating, Pippo from time to time turned to the cat and said to her, "My pretty puss, pray take care that those rags don't slip through our fingers." Then the cat answered, "Be quiet, be quiet; don't be talking of these beggarly things." The King, wishing to know the subject of their talk, the cat made answer that Pippo had taken a fancy to a small lemon; whereupon the King instantly sent out to the garden for a basketful. But Pippo returned to the same tune about the old coats and shirts, and the cat again told him to hold his tongue. Then the King once more asked what was the matter, and the cat had another excuse to make amends for Pippo's rudeness.

At last, when they had eaten and conversed for some time about one thing and another, Pippo took his leave; and the cat stayed with the King, describing the worth, the wisdom, and the judgment of Pippo; and, above all, the great wealth he had in the plains of Rome and Lombardy, which well entitled him to marry even into the family of a crowned King. Then the King asked what might be his fortune; and the cat replied that no one could ever count the moveables, the fixtures, and the household furniture of this rich man, who did not even know what he possessed. If the King wished to be informed of it, he had only to send messengers with the cat, and she would prove to him that there was no wealth in the world equal to his.

Then the King called some trusty persons, and commanded them to inform themselves minutely of the truth; so they followed in the footsteps of the cat, who, as soon as they had passed the frontier of the kingdom, from time to time ran on before, under the pretext of providing refreshments for them on the road. Whenever she met a flock of sheep, a herd of cows, a troop of horses, or a drove of pigs, she would say to the herdsmen and keepers, "Ho! have a care! A troop of robbers is coming to carry off everything in the country. So if you wish to escape their fury, and to have your things respected, say that they all belong to the Lord Pippo, and not a hair will be touched."

She said the same at all the farmhouses, so that wherever the King's people came they found the pipe tuned; for everything they met with, they were told, belonged to the Lord Pippo. At last they were tired of asking, and returned to the King, telling seas and mountains of the riches of Lord Pippo. The King, hearing this report, promised the cat a good drink if she should manage to bring about the match; and the cat, playing the shuttle between them, at last concluded the marriage. So Pippo came, and the King gave him his daughter and a large portion.

At the end of a month of festivities, Pippo wished to take his bride to his estates, so the King accompanied them as far as the frontiers; and he went on to Lombardy, where, by the cat's advice, he purchased a large estate and became a baron.

Pippo, seeing himself now so rich, thanked the cat more than words can express, saying that he owed his life and his greatness to her good offices; and that the ingenuity of a cat had done more for him than the wit of his father. Therefore, said he, she might dispose of his life and his property as she pleased; and he gave her his word that when she died, which he prayed might not be for a hundred years, he would have her embalmed and put into a golden coffin, and set in his own chamber, that he might keep her memory always before his eyes.

The cat listened to these lavish professions; and before three days she pretended to be dead, and stretched herself at full length in the garden. When Pippo's wife saw her, she cried out, "Oh, husband, what a sad misfortune! The cat is dead!" "Devil die with her!" said Pippo. "Better her than we!" "What shall we do with her?" replied the wife. "Take her by the leg," said he, "and fling her out of the window!"

Then the cat, who heard this fine reward when she least expected it, began to say, "Is this the return you make for my taking you from beggary? Are these the thanks I get for freeing you from rags that you might have hung distaffs with? Is this my reward for having put good clothes on your back when you were a poor, starved, miserable, tatter-shod ragamuffin? But such is the fate of him who washes an ass's head! Go! A curse upon all I have done for you! A fine gold coffin you had prepared for me! A fine funeral you were going to give me! Go, now! serve, labour, toil, sweat to get this fine reward! Unhappy is he who does a good deed in hope of a return. Well was it said by the philosopher, He who lies down an ass, an ass he finds himself.' But let him who does most, expect least; smooth words and ill deeds deceive alike both fools and wise!"

So saying, she drew her cloak about her and went her way. All that Pippo, with the utmost humility, could do to soothe her was of no avail. She would not return; but ran on and on without ever turning her head about, saying—

"Heaven keep me from the rich grown poor,
And from the beggar who of wealth gains store."

Note that the Renaissance Italians and Victorians both thought poor people who gained wealth were still not gentlefolk.

The first major NPC I wrote for my university *Ars Magica* games was a version of Angela Carter's Puss in Boots. If you get the chance to read "The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories" you should. I'm pleased to see an early version which leaves Puss able to head out into the world and join the players characters. Note that Puss is female here.

The King of Elfland's Daughter 6

CHAPTER X: The Ebbing of Elfland

Next morning Alveric came up the tower to the witch Ziroonderel, weary and frantic from searching all night long in strange places for Lirazel. All night he had tried to guess what fancy had beckoned her out and whither it might have led her; he had searched by the stream by which she had prayed to the stones, and the pool where she prayed to the stars; he had called her name up every tower, and had called it wide in the dark, and had had no answer but echo; and so he had come at last to the witch Ziroonderel.

"Whither?" he said, saying no more than that, that the boy might not know his fears. Yet Orion knew.

And Ziroonderel all mournfully shook her head. "The way of the leaves," she said. "The way of all beauty."

But Alveric did not stay to hear her say more than her first five words; for he went with the restlessness with which he had come, straight from the room and hastily down the stair, and out at once into the windy morning, to see which way those glorious leaves were gone.

And a few leaves that had clung to cold branches longer, when the gay company of their comrades had gone, were now too on the air, going lonely and last: and Alveric saw they were going south-east towards Elfland.

Hurriedly then he donned his magical sword in its wide scabbard of leather; and with scanty provisions hastened over the fields, after the last of the leaves, whose autumnal glory led him, as many a cause in its latter days, all splendid and fallen, leads all manner of men.

And so he came to the upland fields with their grass all grey with dew; and the air was all sparkling with sunlight, and gay with the last of the leaves, but a melancholy seemed to dwell with the sound of the lowing of cattle.

In the calm bright morning with the north-west wind roaming through it Alveric came by no calm, and never gave up the haste of one who has lost something suddenly: he had the swift movements of such, and the frantic air. He watched all day over clear wide horizons, south-east where the leaves were leading; and at evening he looked to see the Elfin Mountains, severe and changeless, unlit by any light we know, the colour of pale forget-me-nots. He held on restlessly to see their summits, but never they came to view.

And then he saw the house of the old leather-worker who had made the scabbard for his sword; and the sight of it brought back to him the years that were gone since the evening when first he had seen it, although he never knew how many they were, and could not know, for no one has ever devised any exact calculation whereby to estimate the action of time in Elfland. Then he looked once more for the pale-blue Elfin Mountains, remembering well where they lay, in their long grave row past a point of one of the leather-worker's gables, but he saw never a line of them. Then he entered the house and the old man still was there.

The leather-worker was wonderfully aged; even the table on which he worked was much older. He greeted Alveric, remembering who he was, and Alveric enquired for the old man's wife. "She died long ago," he said. And again Alveric felt the baffling flight of those years, which added a fear to Elfland whither he went, yet he neither thought to turn back nor reined for a moment his impatient haste. He said a few formal things of the old man's loss that had happened so long ago. Then "Where are the Elfin Mountains," he asked, "the pale-blue peaks?"

In this episode the parallel plot lines diverge. One is filled with useful material, the other, not so much at this stage, but we've gone too far in for excerpts. Thanks again to Michelle Fry and the Librviozers for this audio.

There might be Faerie or Magic Auras at these two spots. In standard Ars cosmology there would not be, but they are emotionally-tied places that a lesser faerie might inhabit as stories about them spread.

The mountains have been withdrawn, because the king and the land are co-terminal. The king has pulled himself back from the mortal world, so that the entry vanishes and the mundane land beneath is visible.

A look came slowly over the old man's face as though he had never seen them, as though Alveric being learned spoke of something that the old leather-worker could not know. No, he did not know, he said. And Alveric found that to-day as all those years ago, this old man still refused to speak of Elfland. Well, the boundary was only a few yards away; he would cross it and ask the way of elfin creatures, if he could not see the mountains to guide him then. The old man offered him food, and he had not eaten all day; but Alveric in his haste only asked him once more of Elfland, and the old man humbly said that of such things he knew nothing.

Then Alveric strode away and came to the field he knew, which he remembered to be divided by the nebulous border of twilight. And indeed he had no sooner come to the field than he saw all the toadstools leaning over one way, and that the way he was going; for just as thorn trees all lean away from the sea, so toadstools and every plant that has any touch of mystery, such as foxgloves, mulleins and certain kinds of orchis, when growing anywhere near it, all lean towards Elfland.

By this one may know before one has heard a murmur of waves, or before one has guessed an influence of magical things, that one comes, as the case may be, to the sea or the border of Elfland. And in the air above him Alveric saw golden birds, and guessed that there had been a storm in Elfland blowing them over the border from the south-east, though a north-west wind blew over the fields we know. And he went on but the boundary was not there, and he crossed the field as any field we know, and still he had not come to the fells of Elfland.

Then Alveric pressed on with a new impatience, with the north-west wind behind him. And the Earth began to grow bare and shingly and dull, without flowers, without shade, without colour, with none of those things that there are in remembered lands, by which we build pictures of them when we are there no more; it was all disenchanted now. Alveric saw a golden bird high up, rushing away to the south-east; and he followed his flight hoping soon to see the mountains of Elfland, which he supposed to be merely concealed by some magical mist.

But still the autumnal sky was bright and clear, and all the horizon plain, and still there came never a gleam of the Elfin Mountains. And not from this did he learn that Elfland had ebbed. But when he saw on that desolate shingly plain, untorn by the north-west wind but blooming fair in the Autumn, a may tree that he remembered a long while since, all white with blossom that once rejoiced a Spring day far in his childhood, then he knew that Elfland had been there and must have receded, although he knew not how far. For it is true, and Alveric knew, that just as the glamour that brightens much of our lives, especially in early years, comes from rumours that reach us from Elfland by various messengers (on whom be blessings and peace), so there returns from our fields to Elfland again, to become a part of its mystery, all manner of little memories that we have lost and little devoted toys that were treasured once. And this is part of the law of ebb and flow that science may trace in all things; thus light grew the forest of coal, and the coal gives back light; thus rivers fill the sea, and the sea sends back to the rivers; thus all things give that receive; even Death.

Next Alveric saw lying there on the flat dry ground a toy that he yet remembered, which years and years ago (how could he say how many?) had been a childish joy to him, crudely carved out of wood; and one unlucky day it had been broken, and one unhappy day it had been thrown away. And now he saw it lying there not merely new and unbroken, but with a wonder about it, a splendour and a romance, the radiant transfigured thing that his young fancy had known. It lay there forsaken of Elfland as wonderful things of the sea lie sometimes desolate on wastes of sand, when the sea is a far blue bulk with a border of foam.

Is this man a border guardian? Regardless the king has not only withdrawn Elfland, but the memory of Elfland. That's not how these things usually work in *Ars Magica*: for us this would imply the man was already in the edge of the faerie realm, and that as the realm was pulled back he lost some of his fantastical qualities.

This is a lovely little bit of folklore that characters with Faerie Lore may know. We've discussed orchis and foxglove, but mulleins are new. They are used to make torches and wicks. They are called Hags' Tapers because witches use it for their potions and torches. Simultaneously, the light from the a hag's taper is thought to dispel demons. That's a useful wood for magical items, as it has links to Ignem, Vim, and Rego.

Many migratory birds go to Elfland during the winter. If you were looking for a Bjornaer with a strong faerie tinge, one of these great migratory birds would be suitable.

In this cosmology, as you enter Faerie, things you have lost come back to you. I'd argue that items to which you have a strong connection, such as an arcane connection, are the most likely to be found. Are these the real objects, or facsimiles generated from the memories of the human? For object this does not matter so much, but can this create faerie copies of living people, or even faerie copies of the beloved dead?

I like the imagery here of faerie washing back your personal treasures, much as the sea disgorges shells and wonders. Can this be predictably used by the Merinta? Can they reverse the process, doing the equivalent of throwing a message in a bottle in the ocean? Given the Faerie propensity to complete stories, the likelihood of these bottles being lost seems far lower than in the uncaring sea. Places where these things predicably work might be under an Unnatural Law. I love this as a covenant concept – I realise its basically the "Where the spare socks go" idea I've used before, but because it is tied to people and their emotional needs, it's less an economic resource than a story hook.

Dreary with lost romance was the plain from which Elfland had gone, though here and there Alveric saw again and again those little forsaken things that had been lost from his childhood, dropping through time to the ageless and hourless region of Elfland to be a part of its glory, and now left forlorn by this immense withdrawal. Old tunes, old songs, old voices, hummed there too, growing fainter and fainter, as though they could not live long in the fields we know.

And, when the sun set, a mauve-rose glow in the East, that Alveric fancied a little too gorgeous for Earth, led him onward still; for he deemed it to be the reflection cast on the sky by the glow of the splendour of Elfland. So he went on hoping to find it, horizon after horizon; and night came on with all Earth's comrade stars. And only then Alveric put aside at last that frantic restlessness that had driven him since the morning; and, wrapping himself in a loose cloak that he wore, ate such food as he had in a satchel, and slept a troubled sleep alone with other forsaken things.

At the earliest moment of dawn his impatience awoke him, although one of October's mists hid all glimpses of light. He ate the last of his food and then pushed on through the greyness.

No sound from the things of our fields came to him now; for men never went that way when Elfland was there, and none but Alveric went now to that desolate plain. He had travelled beyond the sound of cock-crow from the comfortable houses of men and was now marching through a curious silence, broken only now and then by the small dim cries of the lost songs that had been left by the ebb of Elfland and were fainter now than they had been the day before.

And when dawn shone Alveric saw again so great a splendour in the sky, glowing all green low down in the south-east, that he thought once more he saw a reflection from Elfland, and pressed on hoping to find it over the next horizon. And he passed the next horizon; and still that shingly plain, and never a peak of the pale-blue Elfin Mountains.

Whether Elfland always lay over the next horizon, brightening the clouds with its glow, and moved away just as he came, or whether it had gone days or years before, he did not know but still kept on and on. And he came at last to a dry and grassless ridge on which his eyes and his hopes had been set for long, and from it he looked far over the desolate flatness that stretched to the rim of the sky, and saw never a sign of Elfland, never a slope of the mountains: even the little treasures of memory that had been left behind by the ebb were withering into things of our every day. Then Alveric drew his magical sword from its sheath. But though that sword had power against enchantment it had not been given the power to bring again an enchantment that was gone; and the desolate land remained the same, for all that he waved his sword, stony, deserted, unromantic and wide.

For a little while he went on; but in that flat land the horizon moved imperceptibly with him, and never a peak appeared of the Elfin Mountains; and on that dreary plain he soon discovered, as sooner or later many a man must, that he had lost Elfland.

CHAPTER XI: The Deep of the Woods

In those days Ziroonderel would amuse the boy by charms and by little wonders, and he was content for a while. And then he began to guess for himself, all in silence, where his mother was. He listened to all things said, and thought long about them. And days passed thus and he only knew she had gone, and still he said never a word of the thing with which his thoughts were busy. And then he came to know from things said or unsaid, or from looks or glances or wagging of heads, that there was a wonder about his mother's going. But what the wonder was he could not find, for all the marvels that crossed his mind when he guessed. And at last one day he asked Ziroonderel.

And stored though her old mind was with ages and ages of wisdom, and though she had feared this question, yet she did not know it had dwelt in his mind for days, and could find no better answer out of her wisdom than that his mother had gone to the woods. When the boy heard this he determined to go to the woods to find her.

This is a personalised wasteland. It's filled with things he loved which are returned to him, so that he can watch them die.

He's become a lost thing himself. Arguably that's an effect of his accidental mystogic initiation. He's arguably a sort of nypholept now.

Could you save these songs? Could they be stored in some way? Can they crawl into your head and live in your memory?

So, the witch is not merely an old woman who has made herself appear young: she has "ages" of wisdom. An age is roughly 2100 years (hence "Age of Aries" and "Age of Pisces", "dawning of the age of Aquarius"). If Dunsany's literal, and she has ages and ages of wisdom, she's at least 8500 years old.

Now in his walks abroad with Ziroonderel through the little hamlet of Erl, Orion would see the villagers walking by and the smith at his open forge, and folk in their doorways, and men that came in to the market from distant fields; and he knew them all. And most of all he knew Threl with his quiet feet, and Oth with his lithe limbs; for both of these would tell him tales when they met of the uplands, and the deep woods over the hill; and Orion on little journeys with his nurse loved to hear tales of far places.

There was an ancient myrtle tree by a well, where Ziroonderel would sit in the Summer evenings while Orion played on the grass; and Oth would cross the grass with his curious bow, going out in the evening, and sometimes Threl would come; and every time that one of them came Orion would stop him and ask for a tale of the woods. And if it were Oth he would bow to Ziroonderel with a look of awe as he bowed, and would tell some tale of what the deer did, and Orion would ask him why. Then a look would come over Oth's face as though he were carefully remembering things that had happened very long ago, and after some moments of silence he would give the ancient cause of whatever the deer did, which explained how they came by the custom.

Sometimes a myrtle tree is just a tree. The myrtle is sacred to Aphrodite and Demeter. Wreaths of it were used to mark victories that didn't include battle in parts of the Classical world.

He's making really high Folk Lore rolls there.

If it were Threl that came across the grass he would appear not to see Ziroonderel and would tell his tale of the woods more hastily in a low voice and pass on, leaving the evening, as Orion felt, full of mystery behind him. He would tell tales of all manner of creatures; and the tales were so strange that he told them only to young Orion, because, as he explained, there were many folk that were unable to believe the truth, and he did not wish his tales to come to the ears of such. Once Orion had gone to his house, a dark hut full of skins: all kinds of skins hung on the wall, foxes, badgers, and martens; and there were smaller ones in heaps in the corners. To Orion Threl's dark hut was more full of wonder than any other house he had ever seen.

I suppose these are stories about really high Survival rolls? They might be Area Lore.

But now it was Autumn and the boy and his nurse saw Oth and Threl more seldom; for in the misty evenings with the threat of frost in the air they sat no longer by the myrtle tree. Yet Orion watched on their short walks; and one day he saw Threl going away from the village with his face to the uplands. And he called to Threl, and Threl stood still with a certain air of confusion, for he deemed himself of too little account to be clearly seen and noticed by the nurse at the castle, be she witch or woman. And Orion ran up to him and said "Show me the woods." And Ziroonderel perceived that the time had come when his thoughts were roaming beyond the lip of the valley, and knew that no spell of hers would hold him long from following after them.

There's something there in his Essential Nature.

And Threl said, "No, my Master," and looked uneasily at Ziroonderel, who came after the boy and led him away from Threl. And Threl went on alone to his work in the deep of the woods.

And it was not otherwise than the witch had foreseen. For first Orion wept, and then he dreamed of the woods, and next day he slipped away alone to the house of Oth and asked him to take him with him when he went to hunt the deer. And Oth, standing on a wide deer-skin in front of blazing logs, spoke much of the woods, but did not take him then. Instead he brought Orion back to the Castle. And Ziroonderel regretted too late that she had idly said his mother was gone to the woods, for those words of hers had called up too soon that spirit of roving which was bound to come to him, and she saw that her spells could bring content no more.

Does he have a Passion?

So in the end she let him go to the woods. But not until by lifting of wand and saying of incantation she had called the glamour of the woods down to the nursery hearth, and had made it haunt the shadows that went from the fire and creep with them all about the room, till the nursery was all as mysterious as the forest. When this spell would not soothe him and keep his longing at home she let him go to the woods.

This is a lovely spell.

He stole away once more to the house of Oth, over crisp grass one morning; and the old witch knew he had gone but did not call him back, for she had no spell to curb the love of roving in man, whether it came early or late. And she would not hold back his limbs when his heart was gone to the woods, for it is ever the way of witches with any two things to care for the more mysterious of the two.

Arguably also true of most magi.

So the boy came alone to the house of Oth, through his garden where dead flowers hung on brown stalks, and the petals turned to slime if he fingered them, for November was come and the frosts were abroad all night. And this time Orion just met with a mood in Oth, which in less than an hour would have gone, that was favourable to the boy's longing. Oth was taking down his bow from the wall as Orion went in, and Oth's heart was gone to the woods; and when the boy came yearning to go to the woods too the hunter in that mood could not refuse him.

So Oth took Orion on his shoulder and went up out of the valley. Folk saw them go thus, Oth with his bow and his soft noiseless sandals, and his brown garments of leather, Orion on his shoulder, wrapped in the skin of a fawn which Oth had thrown round him. And as the village fell behind them Orion rejoiced to see the houses further and further away, for he had never been so far from them before. And when the uplands opened their distances to his eyes he felt that he was now upon no mere walk, but a journey. And then he saw the solemn gloom of the wintry woods far off, and that filled him at once with a delighted awe. To their darkness, their mystery and their shelter Oth brought him.

So softly Oth entered the wood that the blackbirds that guarded it, sitting watchful on branches, did not flee at his coming, but only uttered slowly their warning notes, and listened suspiciously till he passed, and were never sure if a man had broken the charm of the wood. Into that charm and the gloom and the deep silence Oth moved gravely; and a solemnness came on his face as he entered the wood; for to go on quiet feet through the wood was the work of his life, and he came to it as men come to their heart's desire.

I thought Oth had Way of the Woods, but he's got something else here. is it some sort of personality virtue? It's almost like Higher Calling.

And soon he put the boy down on the brown bracken and went on for a while alone. Orion watched him go with his bow in his left hand, till he disappeared in the wood, like a shadow going to a gathering of shadows and merging amongst its fellows. And although Orion might not go with him now, he had great joy from this, for he knew by the way Oth went and the air he had that this was serious hunting and no mere amusement made to please a child; and it pleased him more than all the toys he had had. And quiet and lonely the great wood loomed round him while he waited for Oth to return.

And after a long while he heard a sound, all in the wonder of the wood, that was less loud than the sound that a blackbird made scattering dead leaves to find insects, and Oth had come back again.

He had not found a deer; and for a while he sat by Orion and shot arrows into a tree; but soon he gathered his arrows and took the boy on his shoulder again and turned homewards. And there were tears in Orion's eyes when they left the great wood; for he loved the mystery of the huge grey oaks, which we may pass by unnoticed or with but a momentary feeling of something forgotten, some message not quite given; but to him their spirits were playmates. So he came back to Erl as from new companions with his mind full of hints that he had from the wise old trunks, for to him each bole had a meaning.

He's developed the Way of the Woods.

And Ziroonderel was waiting at the gateway when Oth brought Orion back; and she asked little of his time in the woods, and answered little when he told her of it, for she was jealous of them whose spell had lured him from hers. And all that night his dreams hunted deer in the deeps of the wood.

Next day he stole away again to the house of Oth. But Oth was away hunting, for he was in need of meat. So he went to the house of Threl. And there was Threl in his dark house amongst manifold skins. "Take me to the woods," said Orion. And Threl sat down in a wide wooden chair by his fire to think about it and to talk of the woods. He was not like Oth, speaking of a few simple things which he knew, of the deer, of the ways of the deer, and of the approach of the seasons; but he spoke of the things that he guessed in the deep of the wood and in the dark of time, the fables of men and of beasts; and especially he cared to tell the fables of the foxes and badgers, which he had come by from watching their ways at the falling of dusk. And as he sat there gazing into the fire, telling reminiscently of the ancient ways of the dwellers in bracken and bramble, Orion forgot his longing to go to the woods, and sat there on a small chair warm with skins, content. And to Threl he told what he had not said to Oth, how he thought that his mother might come one day round the

woods, and sat there on a small chair warm with skins, content. And to Threl he told what he had not said to Oth, how he thought that his mother might come one day round the trunk of one of the oak-trees, for she had gone for a while to the woods. And Threl thought that that might be; for there was nothing wonderful told of the woods that Threl thought unlikely.

And then Ziroonderel came for Orion and took him back to the Castle. And the next day she let him go to Oth again; and this time Oth took him once more to the wood. And a few days later he went again to Threl's dark house, in whose cobwebs and corners seemed to lurk the mystery of the forest, and heard Threl's curious tales.

And the branches of the forest grew black and still against the blaze of fierce sunsets, and Winter began to lay its spell on the uplands, and the wiser ones of the village prophesied snow. And one day Orion out in the woods with Oth saw the hunter shoot a stag. He watched him prepare it and skin it and cut it into two pieces and tie them up in the skin, with the head and horns hanging down. Then Oth fastened up the horns to the rest of the bundle and heaved it on to his shoulder, and with his great strength carried it home. And the boy rejoiced more than the hunter.

And that evening Orion went to tell the story to Threl, but Threl had more wonderful stories.

And so the days went by, while Orion drew from the forest and from the tales of Threl a love of all things that pertain to a hunter's calling, and a spirit grew in him that was well-matched with the name he bore; and nothing showed in him, yet, of the magical part of his lineage.

Three characters from the poetry of Edna St Vincent Millay

Edna St Vincent Millay was an American poet prolific in the 1920s, but her characters studies are brilliant for roleplaying games. I'm not sure if I want them more for *Ars Magica* or *Magonomia*. The second one, the *Singing-Woman*, seems to cross the realm alignment table one time too many. So, the first is a ghost, the second a human with strong faerie blood, and the third a faerie.

The Little Ghost

I knew her for a little ghost
That in my garden walked;
The wall is high—higher than most—
And the green gate was locked.
And yet I did not think of that
Till after she was gone—
I knew her by the broad white hat,
All ruffled, she had on.
By the dear ruffles round her feet,
By her small hands that hung
In their lace mitts, austere and sweet,
Her gown's white folds among.
I watched to see if she would stay,
What she would do—and oh!
She looked as if she liked the way
I let my garden grow!
She bent above my favourite mint
With conscious garden grace,
She smiled and smiled—there was no hint
Of sadness in her face.
She held her gown on either side
To let her slippers show,
And up the walk she went with pride,
The way great ladies go.
And where the wall is built in new
And is of ivy bare
She paused—then opened and passed through
A gate that once was there.

Witch-Wife

She is neither pink nor pale,
And she never will be all mine;
She learned her hands in a fairy-tale,
And her mouth on a valentine.
She has more hair than she needs;
In the sun 'tis a woe to me!
And her voice is a string of coloured beads,
Or steps leading into the sea.
She loves me all that she can,
And her ways to my ways resign;
But she was not made for any man,
And she never will be all mine.

The Singing-Woman from the Wood's Edge

WHAT should I be but a prophet and a liar,
Whose mother was a leprechaun, whose father was a friar?
Teethed on a crucifix and cradled under water,
What should I be but a fiend's god-daughter?
And who should be my playmates but the adder and the frog,
That was got beneath a furze-bush and born in a bog?
And what should be my singing, that was christened at an altar,
But Aves and Credos and Psalms out of Psalter?
You will see such webs on the wet grass, maybe,
As a pixie-mother weaves for her baby,
You will find such flame at the wave's weedy ebb
As flashes in the meshes of a mer-mother's web,
But there comes to birth no common spawn
From the love of a priest and a leprechaun,
And you never have seen and you never will see
Such things as the things that swaddled me!
After all's said and after all's done,
What should I be but a harlot and a nun?
In through the bushes, on foggy days,
My Da would come a-swishing of the drops away,
With a prayer for my death and a groan for my birth,
A-mumbling of his beads for all he was worth.
And there sit my Ma, her knees beneath her chin,
A-looking in his face and a-drinking of it in,
And a-marking in the moss some funny little saying
That would mean just the opposite of all he was praying!
He taught me the holy-talk of Vesper and of Matin,
He heard me my Greek and he heard me my Latin,
He blessed me and crossed me to keep my soul from evil,
And we watched him out of sight, and we conjured up the devil!
Oh, the things I haven't seen and the things I haven't known,
What with hedges and ditches till after I was grown,
And yanked both ways by my mother and my father,
With a "Which would you better?" and a "Which would you rather?"
With him for a sire and her for a dam,
What should I be but just what I am?

Venice – The Arrival of the Order?

We need an idea of why the Order of Hermes has developed so oddly in Venice. It's all very well to say it's because a powerful Faerie being is there, creating a regio, but why go into his realm in the first place? Why did several separate sets of magi set up little chapter houses here, so that they were forced to compromise and develop the strange culture of tolerance they now practice? I think we may have now found the point where that occurs, and it's due to the Dogaressa two on from Teodora Selvo.

Fashion swings away from the opulence of Teodora's reign. Under the second dogaressa after her this peaks, when the Crusading movement flourishes. Dogaressa Felicia Michielo was a local, tied to a Doge of a house of the second rank, and she called off the games of status which were so popular both before and after her period. A chronicler of the time notes " Having made it their aim to be peaceful and religious, they kept on an equality with one another, that equality might induce stability and concord. They made their dress a matter of conscience, conformable to their seriousness of demeanour—concealing the figure."

Felicia was deeply religious, and the Crusading movement lurched forward in Venice under her patronage. The Venetians had rebalanced their loyalty to favour the German emperors and were in the main, content to ignore the Crusades as a Greek problem. The Dogaressa is the person who spearheaded efforts on behalf of Christian refugees in Venice. She also persuaded her husband to call a meeting of the heads of the great families to discuss supporting the Crusade. To raise funds for the Crusade she sold her jewellery and dresses, a fashion she commended in other great ladies of the city, and cut back on her hospitality.

This is, I'd argue, when the Order comes to the City. Generally when the royalty sells off its jewels, it sells them to the next level of nobility, but she has made it a fashion, so who is she selling them to? They are clearly being sold out to the agents of powers outside the city. In the real world, it probably craters the value of jewels, because the kings of the west are trying to do something similar. In *Ars Magica*, it explains why suddenly you get a group of merchants setting up in the Merceria, off Saint Mark's Square.

They buy a heap of gemstones and fine fabrics during what's clearly a fire sale. The rules preventing the magical creation of wealth have not yet become widespread. Agents from the rival covenants in Italy all send someone to snap up bargains. So do the Tremere, who may have been here for a while, since the Venetians control Dalmatia, which is the edge of their Tribunal. The Jerbitons may not have already had agents here, as they could get many "Venetian" luxuries cheaper in Constantinople. Regardless they know a bargain when they see one, and aside from the gemstones, they want the Venetian art and Egyptian artefacts available here.

In 1099 a fleet of two hundred ships left the Lido, to carry the Second Crusade east. The Venetian section was commanded by a bishop, who took the teenaged son of the doge and dogaressa in his retinue. The Dogaressa concentrated on establishing hospitals and pilgrimage waystops. The Crusaders returned victorious with, among other treasures, the body of Saint Nicholas of Morea.

Pentamerone 4

Strap in for a long one, listeners. We hit some juicy folklore in these three stories. If we can't find a use for a dragon cruising the streets of a town in a car powdered by by four golden elephants, what are we even doing here? The unbowlerised story is very similar to the one below.

There is the scatological humor we have come to expect. The farmer's wife calls her husband a hernia. When the palace is turned to gold, it is "like a gilded a pill that makes a hundred houses constipated by ill-fortune evacuate their poverty". This presumably perpetual antimony pills which I thought were a far later invention, but it turns out they are medieval. In the section where the maiden asks the prince to forget his love, he says he cannot, even if his love gives him a "dose of senna to purge it with". Senna's a herb that's still used in over-the-counter laxatives.

XIV: THE SERPENT

It always happens that he who is over-curious in prying into the affairs of other people, strikes his own foot with the axe; and the King of Long-Furrow is a proof of this, who, by poking his nose into secrets, brought his daughter into trouble and ruined his unhappy son-in-law—who, in attempting to make a thrust with his head was left with it broken.

There was once on a time a gardener's wife, who longed to have a son more than a man in a fever for cold water, or the innkeeper for the arrival of the mail-coach.

It chanced one day that the poor man went to the mountain to get a faggot, and when he came home and opened it he found a pretty little serpent among the twigs. At the sight of this, Sapatella (for that was the name of the gardener's wife) heaved a deep sigh, and said, "Alas! even the serpents have their little serpents; but I brought ill-luck with me into this world." At these words, the little serpent spoke, and said, "Well, then, since you cannot have children, take me for a child, and you will make a good bargain, for I shall love you better than my mother." Sapatella, hearing a serpent speak thus, nearly fainted; but, plucking up courage, she said, "If it were for nothing else than the affection which you offer, I am content to take you, and treat you as if you were really my own child." So saying, she assigned him a hole in a corner of the house for a cradle, and gave him for food a share of what she had with the greatest goodwill in the world.

The serpent increased in size from day to day; and when he had grown pretty big, he said to Cola Matteo, the gardener, whom he looked on as his father, "Daddy, I want to get married." "With all my heart," said Cola Matteo. "We must look out for another serpent like yourself, and try to make up a match between you." "What serpent are you talking of?" said the little serpent. "I suppose, forsooth, we are all the same with vipers and adders! It is easy to see you are nothing but a country bumpkin, and make a nosegay of every plant. I want the King's daughter; so go this very instant and ask the King for her, and tell him it is a serpent who demands her." Cola Matteo, who was a plain, straightforward kind of man, and knew nothing about matters

of this sort, went innocently to the King and delivered his message, saying—

"The messenger should not be beaten more
Than are the sands upon the shore!"

"Know then that a serpent wants your daughter for his wife, and I am come to try if we can make a match between a serpent and a dove!" The King, who saw at a glance that he was a blockhead, to get rid of him, said, "Go and tell the serpent that I will give him my daughter if he turns all the fruit of this orchard into gold." And so saying, he burst out a-laughing, and dismissed him.

When Cola Matteo went home and delivered the answer to the serpent, he said, "Go to-morrow morning and gather up all the fruit-stones you can find in the city, and sow them in the orchard, and you will see pearls strung on rushes!" Cola Mateo, who was no conjurer, neither knew how to comply nor refuse; so next morning, as soon as the Sun with his golden broom had swept away the dirt of the Night from the fields watered by the dawn, he took a basket on his arm and went from street to street, picking up all the stones of peaches, plums, nectarines, apricots, and cherries that he could find. He then went to the orchard of the palace and sowed them, as the serpent had desired. In an instant the trees shot up, and stems and branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit were all of glittering gold—at the sight of which the King was in an ecstasy of amazement, and cried aloud with joy.

But when Cola Matteo was sent by the serpent to the King, to demand the performance of his promise, the King said, "Fair and easy, I must first have something else if he would have my daughter; and it is that he make all the walls and the ground of the orchard to be of precious stones."

When the gardener told this to the serpent, he made answer, "Go to-morrow morning and gather up all the bits of broken crockery-ware you can find, and throw them on the walks and on the walls of the orchard; for we will not let this small difficulty stand in our way." As soon, therefore, as the Night, having aided the robbers, is banished from the sky, and goes about collecting the faggots of twilight, Cola Matteo took a basket under his arm, and went about collecting bits of tiles, lids and bottoms of pipkins, pieces of plate and dishes, handles of jugs, spouts of pitchers. He picked up all the spoiled, broken, cracked lamps and all the fragments of pottery he could find in his way. And when he had done all that the serpent had told him, you could see the whole orchard mantled with emeralds and chalcedonies, and coated with rubies and carbuncles, so that the lustre dazzled your eyes. The King was struck all of a heap by the sight, and knew not what had befallen him. But when the serpent sent again to let him know that he was expecting the

performance of his promise, the King answered, "Oh, all that has been done is nothing, if he does not turn this palace into gold."

I'll pause the story here to note that it gives quite detailed instructions on what is required to make this potion. The fox seems to want it as a traveller's restorative. How he (originally she) handles the bottle (originally flask) is unclear – is he a faerie or a shapeshifter? That being said, might a witch of an experimental bent try the potion and see what it cures? Presumably it works on normal humans, but even if it only works on faeries, it might have value.

Let's consider these birds for a moment. The list has been changed from Italian to English birds. One that turns up in both lists are goldfinches. These are a little songbird that has a red patch on the top of its head. Folkloristically it is linked to the redcap goblins who provide the faerie blood in one line of House Mercere. It is thought to cure illness through its song, and to omen wealth due to its gold feathers.

A group of goldfinches is called a "Charm". This is obviously interesting to magi, but linguistically it comes from the word "chime" because a group of goldfinches sound a little like a carillon of bells.

Grannonia was so overjoyed that she hardly touched the ground; but the fox said to her, "What fine joy in a dream is this, my daughter! You have done nothing, unless you mix my blood also with that of the birds"; and so saying he set off to run away. Grannonia, who saw all her hopes likely to be destroyed, had recourse to woman's art—flattery; and she said to him, "Gossip fox, there would be some reason for your saving your hide if I were not under so many obligations to you, and if there were no other foxes in the world. But you know how much I owe you, and that there is no scarcity of the likes of you on these plains. Rely on my good faith. Don't act like the cow that kicks over the pail which she has just filled with milk. You have done the chief part, and now you fail at the last. Do stop! Believe me, and come with me to the city of this King, where you may sell me for a slave if you will!"

The fox never dreamed that he could be out-forced by a woman; so he agreed to travel on with her. But they had hardly gone fifty paces, when she lifted up the stick she carried and gave him such a neat rap that he forthwith stretched his legs. Then she put his blood into the little bottle; and setting off again she stayed not till she came to Big Valley, where she went straightway to the royal palace, and sent word that she was come to cure the Prince.

Then the King ordered her to be brought before him, and he was astonished at seeing a girl undertake a thing which the best doctors in his kingdom had failed to do. However, a trial could do no harm; and so he said he wished greatly to see the experiment made. But Grannonia answered, "If I succeed, you must promise to give him to me for a husband." The King, who looked on his son to be even as already dead, answered her, "If you give him to me safe and sound, I will give him to you sound and safe; for it is no great matter to give a husband to her that gives me a son."

So they went to the chamber of the Prince, and hardly had she anointed him with the blood, when he found himself just as if nothing had ever ailed him. Grannonia, when she saw the Prince stout and hearty, bade the King keep his word; whereupon he, turning to his son, said, "My son, a moment ago you were all but dead, and now I see you alive, and can hardly believe it. Therefore, as I have promised this maiden that if she cured you she should have you for a husband, now enable me to perform my promise, by all the love you bear me, since gratitude obliges me to pay this debt."

When the Prince heard these words, he said, "Sir, I would that I was free to prove to you the love I bear you. But as I have already pledged my faith to another woman, you would not consent that I should break my word, nor would this maiden wish that I should do such a wrong to her whom I love; nor can I, indeed, alter my mind!"

Grannonia, hearing this, felt a secret pleasure not to be described at finding herself still alive in the memory of the Prince. Her whole face became crimson as she said, "If I could induce this maiden to resign her claims, would you then consent to my wish?" "Never," replied the Prince, "will I banish from this breast the fair image of her whom I love. I shall ever remain of the same mind and will; and I would sooner see myself in danger of losing my place at the table of life than play so mean a trick!"

Grannonia could no longer disguise herself, and discovered to the Prince who she was; for, the chamber having been darkened on account of the wound in his head, he had not known her. But the Prince, now that he recognised her, embraced her with a joy that would amaze you, telling his father what he had done and suffered for her. Then they sent to invite her parents, the King and Queen of Long Field; and they celebrated the wedding with wonderful festivity, making great sport of the great ninny of a fox, and concluding at the last of the last that—

"Pain doth indeed a seasoning prove
Unto the joys of constant love."

XV: THE SHE-BEAR

Again, this lies close to the non-bowdlerised version. There is a bit of frame narrative that says people found the previous story uproariously funny.

Truly the wise man said well that a command of gall cannot be obeyed like one of sugar. A man must require just and reasonable things if he would see the scales of obedience properly trimmed.

From orders which are improper springs resistance which is not easily overcome, as happened to the King of Rough-Rock, who, by asking what he ought not of his daughter, caused her to run away from him, at the risk of losing both honour and life.

There lived, it is said, once upon a time a King of Rough-Rock, who had a wife the very mother of beauty, but in the full career of her years she fell from the horse of health and broke her life. Before the candle of life went out at the auction of her years she called her husband and said to him, "I know you have always loved me tenderly; show me, therefore, at the close of my days the completion of your love by promising me never to marry again, unless you find a woman as beautiful as I have been, otherwise I leave you my curse, and shall bear you hatred even in the other world."

The Queen threatens to squeeze the curse from her breasts, which has a cultural element in it that may have been removed not so much for its risqué nature as it requiring a level of cultural competency beyond the period readers.

The King, who loved his wife beyond measure, hearing this her last wish, burst into tears, and for some time could not answer a single word. At last, when he had done weeping, he said to her, "Sooner than take another wife may the gout lay hold of me; may I have my head cut off like a mackerel! My dearest love, drive such a thought from your mind; do not believe in dreams, or that I could love any other woman; you were the first new coat of my love, and you shall carry away with you the last rags of my affection."

The bit about the mackerel is new, unless the one word of Italian I can't get is a reference to that fish. He also says "May I be killed by a Catalan spear."

As he said these words the poor young Queen, who was at the point of death, turned up her eyes and stretched out her feet. When the King saw her life thus running out he unstopped the channels of his eyes, and made such a howling and beating and outcry that all the Court came running up, calling on the name of the dear soul, and upbraiding Fortune for taking her from him, and plucking out his beard, he cursed the stars that had sent him such a misfortune. But bearing in mind the maxim, "Pain in one's elbow and pain for one's wife are alike hard to bear, but are soon over," ere the Night had gone forth into the place-of-arms in the sky to muster the bats he began to count upon his fingers and to reflect thus to himself, "Here is my wife dead, and I am left a wretched widower, with no hope of seeing any one but this poor daughter whom she has left me. I must therefore try to discover some means or other of having a son and heir. But where shall I look? Where shall I find a woman equal in beauty to my wife? Every one appears a witch

A harpy in the Penguin edition.

in comparison with her; where, then, shall I find another with a bit of stick, or seek another with the bell, if Nature made Nardella (may she be in glory), and then broke the mould? Alas, in what a labyrinth has she put me, in what a perplexity has the promise I made her left me! But what do I say? I am running away before I have seen the wolf; let me open my eyes and ears and look about; may there not be some other as beautiful? Is it possible that the world should be lost to me? Is there such a dearth of women, or is the race extinct?"

So saying he forthwith issued a proclamation and command that all the handsome women in the world should come to the touch-stone of beauty, for he would take the most beautiful to wife and endow her with a kingdom. Now, when this news was spread abroad, there was not a woman in the universe who did not come to try her luck—not a witch, however ugly, who stayed behind; for when it is a question of beauty, no scullion-wench

Hag, in the Penguin edition. Note the classism in "scullion-wench".

will acknowledge herself surpassed; every one piques herself on being the handsomest; and if the looking-glass tells her the truth she blames the glass for being untrue, and the quicksilver for being put on badly.

When the town was thus filled with women the King had them all drawn up in a line, and he walked up and down from top to bottom, and as he examined and measured each from head to foot

In the Penguin edition "Like the Grand Turk entering his seraglio seeking a way to sharpen his Damascus knife". This was considered subtlety and wit at the time.

one appeared to him wry-browed, another long-nosed, another broad-mouthed, another thick-lipped, another tall as a may-pole,

Bean pole in the Penguin. The history of maypoles is something we need to do an episode about.

another short and dumpy, another too stout, another too slender; the Spaniard did not please him on account of her dark colour,

"Sallow" in the Penguin, which means an unhealthy yellow or brown. This is still a racist jibe, but it's a different racist jibe based on the two audiences.

the Neopolitan was not to his fancy on account of her gait,

"because of the platform heels she walked on" in the Penguin edition. These were used by people from the great metropolis because the streets were too filthy to walk around the muck.

the German appeared cold and icy, the Frenchwoman frivolous and giddy, the Venetian with her light hair looked like a distaff of flax.

Her hair is "bleached" in the Penguin edition, and we've covered that in some detail over in the Venice episodes. In Venice, a great deal of effort is taken to make the hair pale and fine.

At the end of the end, one for this cause and another for that, he sent them all away, with one hand before and the other behind; and, seeing that so many fair faces were all show and no wool, he turned his thoughts to his own daughter, saying, "Why do I go seeking the impossible when my daughter Preziosa is formed in the same mould of beauty as her mother? I have this fair face here in my

house, and yet go looking for it at the fag-end of the world. She shall marry whom I will, and so I shall have an heir."

The father uses a phrase which has been trimmed here because it needs a bit of historical depth to understand, but it appears in the Penguin as "Why am I looking for Maria per Ravenna?" This refers to something you know you cannot find. This is theoretically a reference to a 15th century erotic poem, but I can't find it – its trail is obscured by a 19th century erotic novel based on the poem and my lack of skill in Italian.

The "fag-end" in this case is the "asshole" of the world. Oddly this isn't a coded homophobic slur, as that use for the word appears continents and decades away from the work I'm quoting here.

When Preziosa heard this she retired to her chamber, and bewailing her ill-fortune as if she would not leave a hair upon her head; and, whilst she was lamenting thus, an old woman came to her, who was her confidant.

In the Penguin edition, she is not so meek: she so insults her father that he tells her to come to terms with it, or the "largest part of her left will be her ear".

As soon as she saw Preziosa, who seemed to belong more to the other world than to this, and heard the cause of her grief, the old woman said to her, "Cheer up, my daughter, do not despair; there is a remedy for every evil save death. Now listen; if your father speaks to you thus once again

"Wishes to act the stallion tonight" in the Penguin edition.

put this bit of wood into your mouth, and instantly you will be changed into a she-bear; then off with you! for in his fright he will let you depart, and go straight to the wood, where Heaven has kept good-fortune in store for you since the day you were born, and whenever you wish to appear a woman, as you are and will remain, only take the piece of wood out of your mouth and you will return to your true form." Then Preziosa embraced the old woman, and, giving her a good apronful of meal, and ham and bacon, sent her away.

As soon as the Sun began to change his quarters,

In the Penguin edition "like an unsuccessful whore". They really don't seem to like the Sun.

the King ordered the musicians to come, and, inviting all his lords and vassals, he held a great feast. And after dancing for five or six hours,

It's marked as "Moorish" dancing. This is, of course, racism, but I like to think of them as a troupe of Morris Dancers.

they all sat down to table, and ate and drank beyond measure. Then the King asked his courtiers to whom he should marry Preziosa, as she was the picture of his dead wife. But the instant Preziosa heard this, she slipped the bit of wood into her mouth, and took the figure of a

terrible she-bear, at the sight of which all present were frightened out of their wits, and ran off as fast as they could scamper.

This scene takes place with fewer courtiers, and in her bedroom, in the Penguin edition. Why she doesn't tear them apart and leave no piece larger than an ear is not clear to me.

Meanwhile Preziosa went out, and took her way to a wood, where the Shades were holding a consultation how they might do some mischief to the Sun at the close of day. And there she stayed, in the pleasant companionship of the other animals, until the son of the King of Running-Water came to hunt in that part of the country, who, at the sight of the bear, had like to have died on the spot. But when he saw the beast come gently up to him, wagging her tail like a little dog and rubbing her sides against him, he took courage, and patted her, and said, "Good bear, good bear! there, there! poor beast, poor beast!"

In the Penguin he makes animal noises to her. Why he thinks impersonating a cat or dog should avail him anything is unclear. In *Realms of Power*: Magic I believe all quadrupeds share some sort of language, though, so there might be a grain of sense in his actions.

Then he led her home and ordered that she should be taken great care of; and he had her put into a garden close to the royal palace, that he might see her from the window whenever he wished.

One day, when all the people of the house were gone out, and the Prince was left alone, he went to the window to look out at the bear; and there he beheld Preziosa, who had taken the piece of wood out of her mouth, combing her golden tresses. At the sight of this beauty, which was beyond the beyonds, he had like to have lost his senses with amazement, and tumbling down the stairs he ran out into the garden. But Preziosa, who was on the watch and observed him, popped the piece of wood into her mouth, and was instantly changed into a bear again.

When the Prince came down and looked about in vain for Preziosa, whom he had seen from the window above, he was so amazed at the trick that a deep melancholy came over him, and in four days he fell sick, crying continually, "My bear, my bear!" His mother, hearing him wailing thus, imagined that the bear had done him some hurt, and gave orders that she should be killed. But the servants, enamoured of the tameness of the bear, who made herself beloved by the very stones in the road, took pity on her, and, instead of killing her, they led her to the wood, and told the queen that they had put an end to her.

When this came to the ears of the Prince, he acted in a way to pass belief. Ill or well he jumped out of bed, and was going at once to make mincemeat of the servants. But when they told him the truth of the affair, he jumped on horseback, half-dead as he was, and went rambling about and seeking everywhere, until at length he found the bear. Then he took

her home again, and putting her into a chamber, said to her, "O lovely morsel for a King, who art shut up in this skin! O candle of love, who art enclosed within this hairy lanthorn! Wherefore all this trifling? Do you wish to see me pine and pant, and die by inches? I am wasting away; without hope, and tormented by thy beauty. And you see clearly the proof, for I am shrunk two-thirds in size, like wine boiled down, and am nothing but skin and bone, for the fever is double-stitched to my veins. So lift up the curtain of this hairy hide, and let me gaze upon the spectacle of thy beauty! Raise, O raise the leaves off this basket, and let me get a sight of the fine fruit beneath! Lift up that curtain, and let my eyes pass in to behold the pomp of wonders! Who has shut up so smooth a creature in a prison woven of hair? Who has locked up so rich a treasure in a leathern chest? Let me behold this display of graces, and take in payment all my love; for nothing else can cure the troubles I endure."

But when he had said, again and again, this and a great deal more, and still saw that all his words were thrown away, he took to his bed, and had such a desperate fit that the doctors prognosticated badly of his case. Then his mother, who had no other joy in the world, sat down by his bedside, and said to him, "My son, whence comes all this grief? What melancholy humour has seized you? You are young, you are loved, you are great, you are rich—what then is it you want, my son? Speak; a bashful beggar carries an empty bag. If you want a wife, only choose, and I will bring the match about;

"Put down the deposit." Dowries are a big business in period, particularly in Italy. This leads us back to a very early episode of Games From Folktales, number 26, about dowry bargains in Shakespeare. His characters were pretending to be Italian.

do you take, and I'll pay. Do you not see that your illness is an illness to me? Your pulse beats with fever in your veins, and my heart beats with illness in my brain, for I have no other support of my old age than you. So be cheerful now, and cheer up my heart, and do not see the whole kingdom thrown into mourning, this house into lamentation, and your mother forlorn and heart-broken."

The mother threatens to shave off all her hair in the Penguin edition.. I'm not sure of the cultural connotation. I believe it's a mourning ritual?

When the Prince heard these words, he said, "Nothing can console me but the sight of the bear. Therefore, if you wish to see me well again, let her be brought into this chamber; I will have no one else to attend me, and make my bed, and cook for me, but she herself; and you may be sure that this pleasure will make me well in a trice."

"Four snaps."

Thereupon his mother, although she thought it ridiculous enough for the bear to act as cook and chambermaid, and feared that her son was not in his right mind, yet, in order to gratify him, had the bear fetched. And when the bear came

up to the Prince's bed, she raised her paw and felt the patient's pulse, which made the Queen laugh outright, for she thought every moment that the bear would scratch his nose. Then the Prince said, "My dear bear, will you not cook for me, and give me my food, and wait upon me?" and the bear nodded her head, to show that she accepted the office. Then his mother had some fowls brought, and a fire lighted on the hearth in the same chamber, and some water set to boil; whereupon the bear, laying hold on a fowl, scalded and plucked it handily, and drew it, and then stuck one portion of it on the spit, and with the other part she made such a delicious hash that the Prince, who could not relish even sugar, licked his fingers at the taste.

The "hash" above is what a 19th century English person apparently would have called a gratin, which, for the non-culinary among us, is a sort of casserole with a browned upper crust, generally made of cheese, breadcrumbs and various other things. I'm not sure how you make one on a fireplace. I could do it with a camp oven, because that lets you pile coals on top of the lid so the heat is directional.

And when he had done eating, the bear handed him drink with such grace that the Queen was ready to kiss her on the forehead. Thereupon the Prince arose, and the bear quickly set about making the bed; and running into the garden, she gathered a clothful of roses and citron-flowers and strewed them over it, so that the queen said the bear was worth her weight in gold, and that her son had good reason to be fond of her.

Citron-flowers here is a mistake, but an informative one. In English the term citron originally covered what we now call a citron, but also what the French call a citron (a lemon) and perhaps some other citruses. It's not much of a stretch to suggest the fruit meant here is the orange, as translated in the Penguin edition, because it is known for its strongly scented, somewhat aphrodisiacal, flowers.

For my fellow Australians, I'm not talking about the Buddha's Hand, which is the citron I see locally most often or the yuzu, which is the citron I eat most often. The citron being discussed is knobbly like a Eureka lemon, but larger and orange.

But when the Prince saw these pretty offices they only added fuel to the fire; and if before he wasted by ounces, he now melted away by pounds, and he said to the Queen, "My lady mother, if I do not give this bear a kiss, the breath will leave my body." Whereupon the Queen, seeing him fainting away, said, "Kiss him, kiss him, my beautiful beast! Let me not see my poor son die of longing!" Then the bear went up to the Prince, and taking him by the cheeks, kissed him again and again. Meanwhile (I know not how it was) the piece of wood slipped out of Preziosa's mouth, and she remained in the arms of the Prince, the most beautiful creature in the world; and pressing her to his heart, he said, "I have caught you, my little rogue! You shall not escape from me again without a good reason." At these words Preziosa, adding the colour of modesty to the picture of her natural beauty, said to him, "I am indeed in your hands—only guard me safely, and marry me when you will."

“My little finch” “The colour of her of her embarrassment”.

Then the Queen inquired who the beautiful maiden was, and what had brought her to this savage life; and Preziosa related the whole story of her misfortunes, at which the Queen, praising her as a good and virtuous girl, told her son that she was content that Preziosa should be his wife. Then the Prince, who desired nothing else in life, forthwith pledged her his faith; and the mother giving them her blessing, this happy marriage was celebrated with great feasting and illuminations, and Preziosa experienced the truth of the saying that—

“One who acts well may always expect good.”

Let us pause to consider what a “light display” is here. The temptation is to think they are fireworks. I was looking at the history of fireworks for a Magonomia spell the other day and found out that in the Elizabethan period they were known (in Arabic they are called “Chinese Flowers” which is lovely) but they were not as bright or colourful as now. It turns out that one of the things that gives the distinctive silver shine to modern fireworks is powdered aluminium. That wasn’t known to exist in period. Similarly, most of the colours are due to adulterants in the gunpowder that have yet to be discovered in Europe. I know Napoleonic navies had some sort of signal flares, but I’ve not followed up their history.

XVI: THE DOVE

He who is born a prince should not act like a beggar boy.

“Scoundrel” – remember the poor are evil in the Victorian English translation.

The man who is high in rank ought not to set a bad example to those below him; for the little donkey learns from the big one to eat straw. It is no wonder, therefore, that Heaven sends him troubles by bushels—as happened to a prince who was brought into great difficulties for ill-treating and tormenting a poor woman, so that he was near losing his life miserably.

The prince has “a gadfly up his arse” in the Penguin edition, which is the earliest version I’ve heard of someone having a “bug in their butt”.

About eight miles from Naples there was once a deep wood of fig-trees and poplars. In this wood stood a half-ruined cottage, wherein dwelt an old woman, who was as light of teeth as she was burdened with years. She had a hundred wrinkles in her face, and a great many more in her purse, and all her silver covered her head, so that she went from one thatched cottage to another, begging alms to keep life in her. But as folks nowadays much rather give a purseful of crowns to a crafty spy than a farthing to a poor needy man,

In the translation used here, the coins have been adjusted for inflation and nation.

she had to toil a whole day to get a dish of kidney-beans, and that at a time when they were very plentiful. Now one day the poor old woman, after having washed the beans,

put them in a pot, placed it outside the window, and went on her way to the wood to gather sticks for the fire. But while she was away, Nardo Aniello, the King’s son, passed by the cottage on his way to the chase; and, seeing the pot at the window, he took a great fancy to have a fling at it; and he made a bet with his attendants to see who should fling the straightest and hit in the middle with a stone. Then they began to throw at the innocent pot; and in three or four casts the prince hit it to a hair and won the bet.

The old woman returned just after they had gone away, and seeing the sad disaster, she began to act as if she were beside herself, crying, “Ay, let him stretch out his arm and go about boasting how he has broken this pot! The villainous rascal who has sown my beans out of season. If he had no compassion for my misery, he should have had some regard for his own interest; for I pray Heaven, on my bare knees and from the bottom of my soul, that he may fall in love with the daughter of some ogress, who may plague and torment him in every way. May his mother-in-law lay on him such a curse that he may see himself living and yet bewail himself as dead; and being spellbound by the beauty of the daughter, and the arts of the mother, may he never be able to escape, but be obliged to remain. May she order him about with a cudgel in her hand, and give him bread with a little fork, that he may have good cause to lament over my beans which he has spilt on the ground.”

In the Penguin edition, the curses, which are slightly different, make it clear that the woman knows she is cursing a nobleman, because she refers to his coat of arms.

The old woman’s curses took wing and flew up to Heaven in a trice; so that, notwithstanding what a proverb says, “for a woman’s curse you are never the worse, and the coat of a horse that has been cursed always shines,” she rated the Prince so soundly that he well-nigh jumped out of his skin.

“You may sow a woman’s curses in your arsehole” is the Penguin translation. I remind you this was written for children, and that it reminds me of Dav Pilkey.

Scarcely had two hours passed when the Prince, losing himself in the wood and parted from his attendants, met a beautiful maiden, who was going along picking up snails and saying with a laugh—

“Snail, snail, put out your horn,
Your mother is laughing you to scorn,
For she has a little son just born.”

When the Prince saw this beautiful apparition he knew not what had befallen him; and, as the beams from the eyes of that crystal face fell upon the tinder of his heart, he was all in a flame, so that he became a lime-kiln wherein the stones of designs were burnt to build the houses of hopes.

Now Filodoro (for so the maiden was named) was no wiser than other people; and the Prince, being a smart young

fellow with handsome moustachios, pierced her heart through and through, so that they stood looking at one another for compassion with their eyes, which proclaimed aloud the secret of their souls.

The mustachos do not come into the other translation at all. It says she does not “waste her time peeling medlars” but falls for him right away. Let's unpack that phrase. Medlars are a fruit that was popular in the Middle Ages, but have fallen out of modern favour. They fruit in the winter, which was welcome, but they can only be eaten once they have bletted. That is, they can't be eaten until they start to decay due to frost damage. This is much like quinces, mentioned in the episode about the Goblin Market. They also have freaky little tentacles on them and are brown, which does not help their shelf appeal. That they are not ripe before they rot was used for various metaphors in the Elizabethan period, particularly to sex work. Peeling medlars is a waste of time because by the time you can eat the fruit the skins are soft and edible.

After they had both remained thus for a long time, unable to utter a single word, the Prince at last, finding his voice, addressed Filadoro thus, “From what meadow has this flower of beauty sprung? From what mine has this treasure of beauteous things come to light? O happy woods, O fortunate groves, which this nobility inhabits, which this illumination of the festivals of love irradiates.”

“Kiss this hand, my lord,” answered Filadoro, “not so much modesty; for all the praise that you have bestowed on me belongs to your virtues, not to my merits. Such as I am, handsome or ugly, fat or thin, a witch or a fairy, I am wholly at your command; for your manly form has captivated my heart, your princely mien has pierced me through from side to side, and from this moment I give myself up to you for ever as a chained slave.”

At these words the Prince seized at once her hand, kissing the ivory hook that had caught his heart.

The hook joins the “bell to the dinner of delight” and a call to horse for amorous battle.

At this ceremony of the prince, Filadoro's face grew as red as scarlet.

There's a lot more here, and as we are looking at the alchemy of makeup over in the Venice episodes I'd like to tarry a bit. Her face is a blend of the “Minium of embarrassment, the cerise of fear, the verdigris of hope and the cinnabar of desire”. Minium is red lead, used for the rubrication of capital letters in books. It comes from Iberia. Cerise is cherry pink. Verdigris is green, usually copper carbonate. Cinnabar is a red oxide of mercury, and the main producer in period is a single mine in Spain. Cinnabar and minium are used, in the modern day, as synonyms, and there was some confusion in period about the two.

But the more Nardo Aniello wished to continue speaking, the more his tongue seemed tied; for in this wretched life there is no wine of enjoyment without dregs of vexation. And just at this moment Filadoro's mother suddenly appeared, who was such an ugly ogress that Nature seemed to have formed her as a model of horrors. Her hair was like a besom of holly; her forehead like a rough stone; her eyes were comets that predicted all sorts of evils; her mouth had tusks like a boar's—in short, from head to foot she was ugly beyond imagination. Now she seized Nardo Aniello by the nape of his neck, saying, “Hollo! what now, you thief! you rogue!”

The “rough” stone is “Genoese” stone. I have not been able to trace this reference. It is to sharpen the knife of fear that rips open chests. She also causes “diarrhoea of the soul”.and her mouth is as big as a scorpion-fish's. It also notes that if he did not die of shock it must be because he has a “story of Marco and Fiorella sewn in his jacket.” That's a reference to a popular, but now lost, work by William of Blois. We know Flauro et Marcus was a tragedy, but virtually nothing else.

“Yourself the rogue,” replied the Prince, “back with you, old hag!” And he was just going to draw his sword, when all at once he stood fixed like a sheep that has seen the wolf and can neither stir nor utter a sound, so that the ogress led him like an ass by the halter to her house. And when they came there she said to him, “Mind, now, and work like a dog, unless you wish to die like a dog. For your first task to-day you must have this acre of land dug and sown level as this room; and recollect that if I return in the evening and do not find the work finished, I shall eat you up.” Then, bidding her daughter take care of the house, she went to a meeting of the other ogresses in the wood.

Nardo Aniello, seeing himself in this dilemma, began to bathe his breast with tears, cursing his fate which brought him to this pass. But Filadoro comforted him, bidding him be of good heart, for she would ever risk her life to assist him. She said that she ought not to lament his fate which had led him to the house where she lived, who loved him so dearly, and that he showed little return for her love by being so despairing at what had happened. The Prince replied: “I am not grieved at having exchanged the royal palace for this hovel; splendid banquets for a crust of bread; a sceptre for a spade; not at seeing myself, who have terrified armies, now frightened by this hideous scarecrow; for I should deem all my disasters good fortune to be with you and to gaze upon you with these eyes. But what pains me to the heart is that I have to dig till my hands are covered with hard skin—I whose fingers are so delicate and soft as Barbary wool; and, what is still worse, I have to do more than two oxen could get through in a day. If I do not finish the task this evening your mother will eat me up; yet I should not grieve so much to quit this wretched body as to be parted from so beautiful a creature.”

The Barbary wool is new. He says “I have to work with a hoe and spit on my hands a hundred times a day, when before I would not spit on a boil.”

So saying he heaved sighs by bushels, and shed many tears. But Filadoro, drying his eyes, said to him, “Fear not that my mother will touch a hair of your head. Trust to me and do not be afraid; for you must know that I possess magical powers, and am able to make cream set on water and to darken the sun. Be of good heart, for by the evening the piece of land will be dug and sown without any one stirring a hand.”

She says she can curdle water in the Penguin edition. Curdling milk is, in the later period, seen as a sign of evil, and curdling water would be due to legendary vileness, so it seems to have changed to her being

able to make magical cheese. That's a handy talent: very Tiffany Aching.

When Nardo Aniello heard this, he answered, "If you have magic power, as you say, O beauty of the world, why do we not fly from this country? For you shall live like a queen in my father's house." And Filadoro replied, "A certain conjunction of the stars prevents this, but the trouble will soon pass and we shall be happy."

General Divination Astrology, for the Magonomia players. Alternatively, she's a faerie and needs him to suffer for a while for Ars players.

With these and a thousand other pleasant discourses the day passed, and when the ogress came back she called to her daughter from the road and said, "Filadoro, let down your hair," for as the house had no staircase she always ascended by her daughter's tresses. As soon as Filadoro heard her mother's voice she unbound her hair and let fall her tresses, making a golden ladder to an iron heart. Whereupon the old woman mounted up quickly, and ran into the garden; but when she found it all dug and sown, she was beside herself with amazement; for it seemed to her impossible that a delicate lad should have accomplished such hard labour.

But the next morning, hardly had the Sun gone out to warm himself on account of the cold he had caught in the river of India, than the ogress went down again, bidding Nardo Aniello take care that in the evening she should find ready split six stacks of wood which were in the cellar, with every log cleft into four pieces, or otherwise she would cut him up like bacon and make a fry of him for supper.

On hearing this decree the poor Prince had liked to have died of terror, and Filadoro, seeing him half dead and pale as ashes, said, "Why! What a coward you are to be frightened at such a trifle."

She calls him a "pants shitter" in the Penguin edition. Remember that that this is a story for children, and told as if it is to a demanding queen among the noble ladies of her court. Remember also that this woman is utterly in love with the man, so this is apparently not a particularly unkind thing to say.

"Do you think it a trifle," replied Nardo Aniello, "to split six stacks of wood, with every log cleft into four pieces, between this time and the evening? Alas, I shall sooner be cleft in halves myself to fill the mouth of this horrid old woman." "Fear not," answered Filadoro, "for without giving yourself any trouble the wood shall all be split in good time. But meanwhile cheer up, if you love me, and do not split my heart with such lamentations."

Now when the Sun had shut up the shop of his rays, in order not to sell light to the Shades, the old woman returned; and, bidding Filadoro let down the usual ladder, she ascended, and finding the wood already split she began to suspect it was her own daughter who had given

her this check. At the third day, in order to make a third trial, she told the Prince to clean out for her a cistern which held a thousand casks of water, for she wished to fill it anew, adding that if the task were not finished by the evening she would make mincemeat of him. When the old woman went away Nardo Aniello began again to weep and wail; and Filadoro, seeing that the labours increased, and that the old woman had something of the brute in her to burden the poor fellow with such tasks and troubles, said to him, "Be quiet, and as soon as the moment has passed that interrupts my art, before the Sun says I am off, we will say good-bye to this house; sure enough, this evening my mother shall find the land cleared, and I will go off with you, alive or dead." The Prince, on hearing this news, embraced Filadoro and said, "Thou art the pole-star of this storm-tossed bark, my soul! Thou art the prop of my hopes."

A bark here is a ship. In the Penguin, it's "You are the North Wind of the ship of my soul!" We sometime spell it barque here, because Captain Cook rocked up in one and we don't want it to sound like he had a canoe.

Now, when the evening drew nigh, Filadoro having dug a hole in the garden into a large underground passage, they went out and took the way to Naples.

But when they arrived at the grotto of Pozzuolo, Nardo Aniello said to Filadoro, "It will never do for me to take you to the palace on foot and dressed in this manner. Therefore wait at this inn and I will soon return with horses, carriages, servants, and clothes." So Filadoro stayed behind and the Prince went on his way to the city. Meantime the ogress returned home, and as Filadoro did not answer to her usual summons, she grew suspicious, ran into the wood, and cutting a great, long pole, placed it against the window and climbed up like a cat. Then she went into the house and hunted everywhere inside and out, high and low, but found no one. At last she perceived the hole, and seeing that it led into the open air, in her rage she did not leave a hair upon her head, cursing her daughter and the Prince, and praying that at the first kiss Filadoro's lover should receive he might forget her.

But let us leave the old woman to say her wicked curses and return to the Prince, who on arriving at the palace, where he was thought to be dead, put the whole house in an uproar, every one running to meet him and crying, "Welcome! welcome! Here he is, safe and sound, how happy we are to see him back in this country," with a thousand other words of affection. But as he was going up the stairs his mother met him half-way and embraced and kissed him, saying, "My son, my jewel, the apple of my eye, where have you been and why have you stayed away so long to make us all die with anxiety?" The Prince knew not what to answer, for he did not wish to tell her of his misfortunes; but no sooner had his mother kissed him than, owing to the curse, all that had passed went from his memory. Then the Queen told her son that to put an end to his going hunting and wasting his time in the woods, she wished him to get married. "Well and good," replied the Prince, "I am ready and prepared to do

what you desire.” So it was settled that within four days they should lead home to him the bride who had just arrived from the country of Flanders; and thereupon a great feasting and banquets were held.

Powerful Perdo Mentem.

But meanwhile Filadoro, seeing that her husband stayed away so long and hearing (I know not how) of the feast, waited in the evening till the servant-lad of the inn had gone to bed, and taking his clothes from the head of the bed, she left her own in their place, and disguising herself like a man, went to the court of the king, where the cooks, being in want of help, took her as kitchen boy. When the tables were set out and the guests all took their seats, and the dishes were set down and the carver was cutting up a large English pie which Filadoro had made with her own hands, lo, out flew such a beautiful dove

So, we know I'm a fool for the history of pies, but did I ever write my episode about the idea that a pie is a perfect sort of vessel for a potion? English pies in period have a hard outer shell called a coffin, which just means something like box or container in period. The pie crust is not eaten, generally – its function is to exclude air from the contents so they do not spoil. Pies are raised on wooden molds, called dollies, and baked, so they are waterproof, before succulent morsels are put inside, and then a lid is put on. Generally something will go over the top of the pie filling to exclude the air that would otherwise lie under the lid. Aspic, which is a sort of savoury gelatin, works best.

As the sides of the pie are self-supporting, you can put things inside. Songbirds are common, but I did read of one pie that had a diminutive jester inside it, who emerged much like a lady from a cake. The empty space inside pies can also be used to store clockworks, which can animate little figurines upon the top of the pie. One might put a bomb in a pie, but the lack of accurate and discrete fuses makes this more difficult than simple poison.

that the guests in their astonishment, forgetting to eat, fell to admiring the pretty bird, which said to the Prince in a piteous voice, “Have you so soon forgotten the love of Filadoro, and have all the services you received from her, ungrateful man, gone from your memory? Is it thus you repay the benefits she has done you: she who took you out of the claws of the ogress and gave you life and herself too? Woe to the woman who trusts too much to the words of man, who ever requites kindness with ingratitude, and pays debts with forgetfulness. But go, forget your promises, false man. And may the curses follow you which the unhappy maiden sends you from the bottom of her heart. But if the gods have not locked up their ears they will witness the wrong you have done her, and when you least expect it the lightning and thunder, fever and illness, will come to you. Enough, eat and drink, take your sports, for unhappy Filadoro, deceived and forsaken, will leave you the field open to make merry with your new wife.”

In the Penguin edition it asks if he has eaten a cat's brain. I presume that's an alchemical charm for forgetfulness.

So saying, the dove flew away quickly and vanished like the wind. The Prince, hearing the murmuring of the dove, stood for a while stupefied. At length, he inquired whence the pie came, and when the carver told him that a scullion boy who had been taken to assist in the kitchen had made it, he

ordered him to be brought into the room. Then Filadoro, throwing herself at the feet of Nardo Aniello, shedding a torrent of tears, said merely, “What have I done to you?” Whereupon the Prince at once recalled to mind the engagement he had made with her; and, instantly raising her up, seated her by his side, and when he related to his mother the great obligation he was under to this beautiful maiden and all that she had done for him, and how it was necessary that the promise he had given should be fulfilled, his mother, who had no other joy in life than her son, said to him, “Do as you please, so that you offend not this lady whom I have given you to wife.” “Be not troubled,” said the lady, “for, to tell the truth, I am very loth to remain in this country; with your kind permission I wish to return to my dear Flanders.” Thereupon the Prince with great joy offered her a vessel and attendants; and, ordering Filadoro to be dressed like a Princess, when the tables were removed, the musicians came and they began the ball which lasted until evening.

There's an extra scene in the Penguin edition, where a terrible mask appears and tells the prince it is the ghost of the woman whose beans he spilled. She explains her curse, then the ogress's curse on the kiss. She then curses him again with a traditional saying (“He that spills beans grows horns”) and vanishes. The faerie bride says not to worry about the curse and that she'll get him out of it. Horns here could refer to going to Hell, but it may also refer to cuckoldry, and if that's the case, her assurances aren't worth very much.

So the feast being now ended, they all betook themselves to rest, and the Prince and Filadoro lived happily ever after, proving the truth of the proverb that—

“He who stumbles and does not fall,
Is helped on his way like a rolling ball.”

Some poems for Samhain

Happy Samhain dear listener.

You may be thinking "Timothy, you have gone mad. Samhain is Hallowe'en, and that is in October." to which I answer "Ah, but I am in the Southern Hemisphere. Summer's end is this weekend." Also, I have too many Hallowe'en poems, and some extra space in my data plan for the podcast, so...some poems for Summer's End.

First, two by Thomas Hall Shastid recorded for Librivox by Andrew Gaunce. I like the idea that the first one has two demons. I'll write statistics for them eventually.

The Spectres

In a palace sad and lonely
Flit two spectres all the day—
Spectres chasing joy and brightness
From each window far away.

One is Sorrow clad in raiment,
Sombre as the shades of night,
While her trailing robes of darkness
Chase away each ray of light.

But the other one is Envy
Clad in blackness, clad with woe,
Sorrow's only sad companion,
Flitting ever to and fro.

By the windows ever gliding,
Filling all with thoughts of pain;
All who gaze are doomed forever,
Ne'er to see bright joy again.

Ghosts

Here the columned cliffs far out have planted
Their daring shafts in the Northern foam,
There hangs a castle that should be haunted,
A ruin meet for a phantom's home.
For heavily in the caverns under
The hidden tide like a muffled drum,
Beats distinct through the level thunder
Of the wintry waste whence storm-winds come.
And fire has blackened the mouldering rafter,
And stairs have crumbled from bolted doors ;
At night there's a sound of wail and laughter.
And footsteps crossing the creaking floors.
And in and out through the courts forsaken
Wild shapes are drifted from hall to hall.
With a trumpet sound the towers are shaken,
And banners flutter along the wall.
'Tis but the storms and the seas enchant it.
Its ghosts are shadow and wind and spray.
If ever a phantom used to haunt it,
That too was mortal and passed away.

The Haunted House

See the grass upon its threshold;
See the ivy on its wall;
Vacant are its crumbling windows,
Vacant is its mossy hall.

Ah! the step of man upon it
Shall resound along no more,
For the spirits of the dead ones
Ever flit about the door.

There the whisperings of the voices
Of the spirits of the dead;
Those of friends and enemies
Ever murmur 'round your head.{10}

Let us leave the haunted ruin;
Spirits walk the crumbling floor;
Light their step, but oh! their voices
Haunt the building evermore.

Now a couple from a Librivox reader who I really enjoy, called Newgate Novelist.

Ghosts

by Margaret Louisa Woods.

The ghosts have found where the hills embosom
A windless garden—they walk at noon,
When the beds and branches burn with blossom,
And hardly wait for the rising moon.

When the starry charm of the night is broken
And the day but lives as a child unborn,
They pass with echoes of words once spoken
And silent footsteps and eyes forlorn.

From the blind gray house where all are sleeping
A mocking music sounds wild and clear,
The faint lights glimmer and past them sweeping
The dancers appear and disappear.

And the swinging branches close to cover
The two who tremble there heart to heart,
The ghostly lady and phantom lover,
The souls long parted that cannot part.

They seem as shadows of morn and even,
For ever fading to come again ;
They are as shadows of tempest driven,
Stormily sighing across the plain.

For these depart as the rest departed.
The garden under the hill shall be
As ghost-forsaken, as past-deserted
As the castle over the Northern sea.

The Boy on the Moor

by Annette von Droste-Hülshoff

'Tis an eerie thing o 'er the moor to fare
When the eddies of peat-smoke justle,
When the wraiths of mist whirl here and there
And wind-blown tendrils tussle,
When every step starts a hidden spring
And the trodden moss-tufts hiss and sing—
*Tis an eerie thing o 'er the moor to fare
When the tangled reed-beds rustle.
The child with his primer sets out alone
And speeds as if he were hunted,
The wind goes by with a hollow moan—
There's a noise in the hedge-row stunted.
'Tis the turf-digger's ghost, near-by he dwells,
And for drink his master's turf he sells.
' Whoo ! whoo ! ' ' comes a sound like a stray cow 's groan ;
The poor boy's courage is daunted.
Then stumps loom up beside the ditch,
Uncannily nod the the bushes.
The boy running on, each nerve a-twitch,
Through a jungle of spear-grass pushes.
And where it trickles and crackles apace
Is the Spinner's unholy hiding-place,
The home of the cursed Spinning-witch
Who turns her wheel 'mid the rushes.
On, ever on, goes the fearsome rout,
In pursuit through that region fenny,
At each wild stride the bubbles burst out.
And the sounds from beneath are many.
Until at length from the midst of the din
Comes the squeak of a spectral violin,
That must be the rascally fiddler lout
Who ran off with the bridal penny
The turf splits open, and from the hole
Bursts forth an unhappy sighing,
*Alas, alas, for my wretched soul!"
'Tis poor damned Margaret crying!
The lad he leaps like a wounded deer,
And were not his guardian angel near
Some digger might find in a marshy knoll
Where his little bleached bones were lying.
But the ground grows firmer beneath his feet,
And there from over the meadow
A lamp is flickering homely-sweet;
The boy at the edge of the shadow
Looks back as he pauses to take his breath,
And in his glance is the fear of death.
'Twas eerie there 'mid the sedge and peat,
Ah, that was a place to dread, !

Hallowe'en

by Joel Benton in *Harper's Weekly*, Oct. 31, 1896.

Pixie, kobold, elf, and sprite
All are on their rounds to-night,—
In the wan moon's silver ray
Thrives their helter-skelter play.
Fond of cellar, barn, or stack
True unto the almanac,
They present to credulous eyes
Strange hobgoblin mysteries.
Cabbage-stumps—straws wet with dew—
Apple-skins, and chestnuts too,
And a mirror for some lass
Show what wonders come to pass.
Doors they move, and gates they hide
Mischiefs that on moonbeams ride
Are their deeds,—and, by their spells,
Love records its oracles.
Don't we all, of long ago
By the ruddy fireplace glow,
In the kitchen and the hall,
Those queer, coof-like pranks recall?
Eery shadows were they then—
But to-night they come again;
Were we once more but sixteen
Precious would be Hallowe'en.

Venice – Marriage to the Sea

We've covered this ritual in *City and Guild*, but time for some extra material. I thought this ritual was a pagan survival, but no, it was begun by the Pope himself. Ah, Catholics, doing pagan-sounding things right up until you research.

We've reached the dogado of Sebastian Ziani. He's from the richest family in Venice, although not from the tier of highest status. They are the wealthiest because of the intervention of the treasure of the goddess Juno. This may lead me to rethink my urban Dianic cult a little.

The splendid dogado of Sebastiano Ziani was remarkable for one event, at least, of romantic and historic interest—the first “Espousals of Venice and the Sea.” In March 1177 Pope Alexander III. arrived at the Lido after weary stately wanderings through Europe. He was received with joy and honour by all classes of the community : they were fervent Catholics and cared little about questions and parties for or against Papacy which moved other States.

Residing pompously at the Palace of the Patriarch of Grado, his Holiness entered fully into the ecclesiastical and political affairs of the city. Doe Ziani was absent in command of the Venetian fleet, and in May news reached Venice that he had gained a decisive victory at Salboro over the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa, and that his son and heir, Prince Otto, was a prisoner of war. The whole city turned out to welcome the victors, with their rich booty and many captives.

Upon the beach of Lido stood the Pontiff—the centre of a notable group of dignitaries in full robes of state. Alexander was the first to cong-ratulate the victorious Doge, and at the same time he publicly blessed the brave seamen and their leaders. Raising the kneeling Doge to his feet the Pope embraced him, and, taking off one of his own signet rings, he placed it upon Ziani's thumb. “ Take this, my son,” he said, ” as a token of the true and perpetual dominion of the sea, which thou and thy successors shall wed every year upon this auspicious festival of the Ascension, that all men may know that the sea belongs to Venice, and that she is indissolubly joined thereto as a bride to her husband.” Then the whole company adjourned to the venerable church of San Niccolo where ” Te Deum ” was sung pontifically. By gondola, and barca, and in flat-keeled galley, a water pageant made its way to the Piazzetta, and the rest of the day was spent in general merry-making.

The annual commemoration was made the occasion of universal rejoicing and pageantry. The Doge and the most distinguished members of the Council and the foreign ambassadors to Venice took their places on board a wonderful vessel, ‘ Bucintoro’ it was called, and in stately procession went off to the Lido. We must not suppose that only statesmen and seamen took part in the pageant, for, obviously, it was an occasion for the display of the personal charms and elegant fashions of the gentildonne. For the use of the Dogaressa and her ladies a splendid galley was built

shaped like a Grecian temple, and tethered to a pair of wooden sea monsters, wherein the forty rowers were seated.

Arrived at the historic spot the Doge and Dogaressa, with their ecclesiastical and official attendants, embarked in a gaily decorated boat and set out to sea. Thence the Doge cast a superb ring into the deep—a ring of gold, enriched with onyx, lapis-lazuli, and malachite, engraved with the sign of St Mark holding a book of the Gospel. ” Sponsamus te mare nostrum in signum veri et perpetui dominii,” were the words he uttered solemnly, whilst the clergy from golden vases sprinkled holy water upon the company and upon the smiling rippling sea. The Dogaressa and the ladies of her suite cast into the clear water the lovely nosegays they had brought with them—roses, carnations, and lilies.

Returning to Venice, after devotions in San Niccolo, the Doge gave a magnificent banquet in the palace to the notables of the city, and then all the lovely girls and the comely youths of every class were entertained at a vast ball, which overflowed the Piazza, and found relief only in the most distant calli. By old prescription the workmen of the Arsenal were entertained at supper by the Doge and Dogaressa. Each man had the privilege of keeping his knife and spoon, his glass and his napkin, and he received besides a silver medal—bearing the effigies of the Most Serene couple, a case of useful medicines, a beautiful box of comfits, and a flask of Greek Muscat wine.

In later times the “Marriage of the Sea” was made a second carnival—lasting fifteen days, during which a great fair was held in the Piazza with fireworks such as Venetians only knew how to make, each evening at the Lido.

From Doge Ziani's day came the annual athletic festival on the Lido. Lads turned fifteen, and young men up to thirty, after careful training in their various sestieri or city wards, went off to the butts and tracks set up upon the beach to contest for prizes in shooting, wrestling, boxing, running, and other sports. The competitors were arranged in twelve groups called, ‘ Duodene’ and every one was expected to be a proficient bowman. Merchant ships always carried a certain number of such expert young bowmen.

All ” catches ” were permissible—indeed kicking, wringing the neck, and all the features, — brutal as they were,— of the Olympian grievous boxing were not disallowed. Bamboos as well as fists were used ! All classes of the male folk of the islands were eligible to compete in every contest and upon equal terms. Matrons and maids thronged to watch and encourage sons and sweethearts, each fair one scrupulously careful about her dress and veil. Many a Venetian ” Venus du Milo ” doubtless longed to try herself against her companions, but such maiden contests were inadmissible by the State laws.

Incidentally these sports, which revived the athletic contests inaugurated by the Dogaressa Teodora Selvo, gave rise to rivalries between the inhabitants of the eastern and western halves of the City, which were ultimately resolved into two opposing parties—the "Castellani" and the "Nicolotti." A neutral zone was ultimately marked out, whereupon stood the church of San Trovaso. The sacred building had doors opening west and east so that adherents of both parties might attend the Divine Offices without encountering one another. Difficulties however soon arose through the wantonness of women: maidens of one party were constantly falling in love with men of the other, and then trouble ensued!

The Emperor Frederic Barbarossa himself came to Venice in July 1177—reconciling himself to the power of the world in the person of Doge Sebastiano Ziani, and to the power of the Church in the person of Pope Alexander III. He was sumptuously entertained by the Doge and Dogaressa. Conquerors and conquered joined together in scenes of gaiety and splendour. The Doge appeared in regal guise, accompanied by the new insignia of office, bestowed by the Sovereign Pontiff,—a folding Chair of State, a Royal Cushion, a golden Sword of State, a great painted lighted candle, and four silver trumpets. The Dogaressa wore a jewelled diadem around her Ducal horned cap, the gift of the Pope, and a cape or mantle of gold brocade, bearing the Imperial cognisance placed around her shoulders by the Emperor.

Happily Sebastiano Ziani was a wealthy man and so was able to maintain the Ducal dignity without reproach. He was born in 1102—the son of Marino Ziani of Santa Giustina in Castello, a noble of ambassadorial rank. A curious legend was treasured in the family: an ancestor at Altino, discovered among the ruins of the Temple of Juno, a cow moulded in solid gold! This was the foundation of the vast riches of the family,—the wealthiest by far of all in Venice, and known by the sobriquet "Fa Tuiglia della Vacca doro." "Z'aver de Ziani!" became a proverb—synonymous of the possession of great wealth.

Sebastiano lavished munificence unstintingly in Venice—new bridges, new facades to buildings, new churches, were witnesses to his benevolence, and dying, in 1175, he left the bulk of his fortune for the decoration of San Marco. He abdicated in 1170 and entered the monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore. No historian has preserved the date of Dogaressa Cecilia's death,—probably she too found a refuge in the ducal convent of San Zaccaria.

Games of chance and gambling were always restricted in old Venice, but in 1175 Niccolo Barattieri, as a reward—*onesta grazia*,—in the words of the Doge,—for having succeeded when many others had failed, in lifting and placing the two great pillars of Samos granite at the end of the Piazzetta, claimed the privilege of opening a gaming saloon or tent, between the columns. The promise could not be gainsaid—"whatever the successful engineer likes to ask"—but to prevent so far as possible the success of the undertaking it was ordained that all public executions should be carried out on the spot. Between the two pillars a raised flat stone was placed, and upon it "are laid, and hath ever been, for the space of three days and three nights, the heads of all such as are enemies or traitors to the State, or some notorious offender."

Plot Hooks

- Giant wooden sea monsters that could be animated.
- A tiny Infernal Aura between the columns in the Piazzetta.
- The richest family in Venice owes their wealth to a literal golden calf
- There is sufficient manufacturing depth that every worker at the Arsenal can be given a box of useful medicines each year.
- Pageantry and parties as settings for stories.
- If you're a faerie, discovering people are going to douse each other with holy water may prove uncomfortable.
- The two factions let us reuse all the Green vs Blue material that has turned up at various times.

The King of Elfland's Daughter 7

This section is made up of a series of small chapters, and they are light on folklore. In the original plan these were cut out, but that would make the rest of the story skip about oddly. so I've included four this time.

Dunsany waxes metaphysical in the story, so there's not much need for me to pop in with subtext, but here are a few brief notes for you to recall when you strike the ideas they relate to in the later story.

Squirrel meat isn't much eaten in period English works. It is discussed a lot in North American frontier works, where people speak highly of it, as sweet and nutty. Hedgehogs taste a bit like pork, but are chewy. One way to cook them is to wrap them in clay, bake them, and then crack the clay. This skins the hedgehog, removing the bristles.

As mentioned in the last episode, the withdrawal of Elfland affects the people who were at the border, and time in Elfland stops when the Elf king chooses not to act.

Next time, we see Orion's Strong Faerie blood Virtue come to the fore.

CHAPTER XII: The Unenchanted Plain

When Alveric understood that he had lost Elfland it was already evening and he had been gone two days and a night from Erl. For the second time he lay down for the night on that shingly plain whence Elfland had ebbed away: and at sunset the eastern horizon showed clear against turquoise sky, all black and jagged with rocks, without any sign of Elfland. And the twilight glimmered, but it was Earth's twilight, and not that dense barrier for which Alveric looked, which lies between Elfland and Earth. And the stars came out and were the stars we know, and Alveric slept below their familiar constellations.

He awoke in the birdless dawn very cold, hearing old voices crying faintly far off, as they slowly drifted away, like dreams going back to dreamland. He wondered if they would come to Elfland again, or if Elfland had ebbed too far. He searched all the horizon eastwards, and still saw nothing but the rocks of that desolate land. So he turned again toward the fields we know.

He walked back through the cold with all his impatience gone; and gradually some warmth came to him from walking, and later a little from the autumnal sun. He walked all day, and the sun was growing huge and red when he came again to the leather-worker's cottage. He asked for food, and the old man made him welcome: his pot was already simmering for his own evening meal: and it was not long before Alveric was sitting at the old table before a dish full of squirrels' legs, hedge-hogs and rabbit's meat.

The old man would not eat till Alveric had eaten, but waited on him with such solicitude that Alveric felt that the moment of his opportunity was come, and turned to the old man as he offered him a piece of the back of a rabbit, and approached the subject of Elfland.

"The twilight is further away," said Alveric.

"Yes, yes," said the old man without any meaning in his voice, whatever he had in his mind.

"When did it go?" said Alveric.

"The twilight, master?" said his host.

"Yes," said Alveric.

"Ah, the twilight," the old man said.

"The barrier," said Alveric, and he lowered his voice, although he knew not why, "between here and Elfland."

At the word Elfland all comprehension faded out of the old man's eyes.

"Ah," he said.

"Old man," said Alveric, "you know where Elfland has gone."

"Gone?" said the old man.

That innocent surprise, thought Alveric, must be real; but at least he knew where it had been; it used to be only two fields away from his door.

"Elfland was in the next field once," said Alveric.

And the old man's eyes roved back into the past, and he gazed as it were on old days awhile, then he shook his head. And Alveric fixed him with his eye.

"You knew Elfland," he exclaimed.

Still the old man did not answer.

"You knew where the border was," said Alveric.

"I am old," said the leather-worker, "and I have no one to ask."

When he said that, Alveric knew that he was thinking of his old wife, and he knew too that had she been alive and standing there at that moment yet he would have had no news of Elfland: there seemed little more to say. But a certain petulance held him to the subject after he knew it to be hopeless.

"Who lives to the East of here?" he said.

"To the East?" the old man replied. "Master, are there not North and South and West that you needs must look to the East?"

There was a look of entreaty in his face but Alveric did not heed it. "Who lives to the East?" he said.

"Master, no one lives to the East," he answered. And that indeed was true.

"What used to be there?" said Alveric.

And the old man turned away to see to the stewing of his pot, and muttered as he turned, so that one hardly heard him.

"The past," he said.

No more would the old man say, nor explain what he had said. So Alveric asked him if he could have a bed for the night, and his host showed him the old bed he remembered across that vague number of years. And Alveric accepted the bed without more ado so as to let the old man go to his own supper. And very soon Alveric was deep asleep, warm and resting at last, while his host turned over slowly in his mind many things of which Alveric had supposed he knew nothing.

When the birds of our fields woke Alveric, singing late in the last of October, on a morning that reminded them of Spring, he rose and went out of doors, and went to the highest part of the little field that lay on the windowless side of the old man's house toward Elfland. There he looked eastward and saw all the way to the curved line of the sky the same barren, desolate, rocky plain that had been there yesterday and the day before. Then the leather-worker gave him breakfast, and afterwards he went out and looked again at the plain. And over his dinner, which his host timidly shared, Alveric neared once more the subject of Elfland. And something in the old man's sayings or silences made Alveric hopeful that even yet he would have some news of the whereabouts of the pale-blue Elfin Mountains. So he brought the old man out and turned to the East, to which his companion looked with reluctant eyes; and pointing to one particular rock, the most noticeable and near, said, hoping for definite news of a definite thing, "How long has that rock been there?"

And the answer came to his hopes like hail to apple-blossom: "It is there and we must make the best of it."

The unexpectedness of the answer dazed Alveric; and when he saw that reasonable questions about definite things brought him no logical answer he despaired of getting practical information to guide his fantastic journey. So he walked on the eastward side of the cottage all the afternoon, watching the dreary plain, and it never changed or moved: no pale-blue mountains appeared, no Elfland came flooding back: and evening came and the rocks glowed dully with the low rays of the sun, and darkened when it set, changing with all Earth's changes, but with no enchantment of Elfland. Then Alveric decided on a great journey.

He returned to the cottage and told the leather-worker that he needed to buy much provisions, as much as he could carry. And over supper they planned what he should have. And the old man promised to go next day amongst the neighbours; telling of all the things he would get from each, and somewhat more if God should prosper his snaring. For Alveric had determined to travel eastward till he found the lost land.

And Alveric slept early, and slept long, till the last of his fatigue was gone which came from his pursuit of Elfland: the old man woke him as he came back from his snaring. And

the creatures that he had snared the old man put in his pot and hung it over his fire, while Alveric ate his breakfast. And all the morning the leather-worker went from house to house amongst his neighbours, dwelling on little farms at the edge of the fields we know; and he got salted meats from some, bread from one, a cheese from another, and came back burdened to his house in time to prepare dinner.

And all the provender that burdened the old man Alveric shouldered in a sack, and some he put in his wallet; and he filled his water-bottle and two more besides that his host had made from large skins, for he had seen no streams at all in the desolate land; and thus equipped he walked some way from the cottage, and looked again at the land from which Elfland had ebbed. He came back satisfied that he could carry provisions for a fortnight.

And in the evening while the old man prepared pieces of squirrels' meat Alveric stood again on the windowless side of the cottage, gazing still across the lonely land, hoping always to see emerge from the clouds that were colouring at sunset, those serene pale-blue mountains; and seeing never a peak. And the sun set, and that was the last of October.

Next morning Alveric made a good meal in the cottage; then took his heavy burden of provisions, and paid his host and started. The door of the cottage opened toward the West and the old man cordially saw him away from his door with godspeed and farewells, but he would not move round his house to watch him going eastward; nor would he speak of that journey: it was as though to him there were only three points of the compass.

The bright autumnal sun was not yet high when Alveric went from the fields we know to the land that Elfland had left and that nothing else went near, with his big sack over his shoulder and his sword at his side. The may trees of memory that he had seen were all withered now, and the old songs and voices that had haunted that land were all now faint as sighs; and there seemed to be fewer of them, as though some had already died or had struggled back to Elfland.

All that day Alveric travelled, with the vigour that waits at the beginning of journeys, which helped him on though he was burdened with so much provisions, and a big blanket that he wore like a heavy cloak round his shoulders; and he carried besides a bundle of firewood, and a stave in his right hand. He was an incongruous figure with his stave and his sack and his sword; but he followed one idea, one inspiration, one hope; and so shared something of the strangeness that all men have who do this.

Halting at noon to eat and rest he went slowly on again and walked till evening: even then he did not rest as he had intended, for when twilight fell and lay heavy along the eastern sky he continually rose from his resting and went a

little further to see if it might not be that dense deep twilight that made the frontier of the fields we know, shutting them off from Elfland. But it was always earthly twilight, until the stars came out, and they were all the familiar stars that look on Earth. Then he lay down among those unrounded and mossless rocks, and ate bread and cheese and drank water; and as the cold of night began to come over the plain he lit a small fire with his scanty bundle of wood and lay close to it with his cloak and his blanket round him; and before the embers were black he was sound asleep.

Dawn came without sound of bird or whisper of leaves or grasses, dawn came in dead silence and cold; and nothing on all that plain gave a welcome back to the light.

If darkness had lain forever upon those angular rocks it were better, Alveric thought, as he saw their shapeless companies sullenly glowing; darkness were better now that Elfland was gone. And though the misery of that disenchanting place entered his spirit with the chill of the dawn, yet his fiery hope still shone, and gave him little time to eat by the cold black circle of his lonely fire before it hurried him onward easterly over the rocks. And all that morning he travelled on without the comradeship of a blade of grass. The golden birds that he had seen before had long since fled back to Elfland, and the birds of our fields and all living things we know shunned all that empty waste. Alveric travelled as much alone as a man who goes back in memory to revisit remembered scenes, and instead of remembered scenes he was in a place from which every glamour had gone. He travelled somewhat lighter than on the day before, but he went more wearily, for he felt more heavily now the fatigue of the previous day. He rested long at mid-day and then went on. The myriad rocks stretched on and slightly jagged the horizon, and all day there came no glimpse of the pale-blue mountains. That evening from his dwindling provision of wood Alveric made another fire; its little flame going up alone in that waste seemed somehow to reveal the monstrous loneliness. He sat by his fire and thought of Lirazel and would not give up hope, though a glance at those rocks might have warned him not to hope, for something in their chaotic look partook of the plain that bred them, and they hinted it to be infinite.

CHAPTER XIII : The Reticence of the Leather-Worker

It was many days before Alveric learned from the monotony of the rocks that one day's journey was the same as another, and that by no number of journeys would he bring any change to his rugged horizons, which were all drearily like the ones they replaced and never brought a view of the pale-blue mountains. He had gone, while his fortnight's provisions grew lighter and lighter, for ten days over the rocks: it was now evening and Alveric understood at last that if he travelled further and failed soon to see the peaks

of the Elfin Mountains he would starve. So he ate his supper sparingly in the darkness, his bundle of firewood having long since been used, and abandoned the hope that had led him. And as soon as there was any light at all to show him where the East was he ate a little of what he had saved from his supper, and started his long tramp back to the fields of men, over rocks that seemed all the harsher because his back was to Elfland. All that day he ate and drank little, and by nightfall he still had left full provisions for four more days.

He had hoped to travel faster during these last days, if he should have to turn back, because he would travel lighter: he had given no thought to the power of those monotonous rocks to weary and to depress with their desolation when the hope that had somewhat illumined their grimness was gone: he had thought little of turning back at all, till the tenth evening came and no pale-blue mountains, and he suddenly looked at his provisions. And all the monotony of his homeward journey was broken only by occasional fears that he might not be able to come to the fields we know.

The myriad rocks lay larger and thicker than tombstones and not so carefully shaped, yet the waste had the look of a graveyard stretching over the world with unrecording stones above nameless heads. Chilled by the bitter nights, guided by blazing sunsets, he went on through the morning mists and the empty noons and weary birdless evenings. More than a week went by since he had turned, and the last of his water was gone, and still he saw no sign of the fields we know, or anything more familiar than rocks that he seemed to remember and which would have misled him northward, southward, or eastward, were it not for the red November sun that he followed and sometimes some friendly star. And then at last, just as the darkness fell blackening that rocky multitude, there showed westward over the rocks, pale at first against remnants of sunset, but growing more and more orange, a window under one of the gables of man. Alveric rose and walked towards it till the rocks in the darkness and weariness overcame him and he lay down and slept; and the little yellow window shone into his dreams and made forms of hope as fair as any that came from Elfland.

The house that he saw in the morning when he woke seemed impossible to be the one whose tiny light had held out hope and help to him in the loneliness; it seemed now too plain and common. He recognized it for a house not far from the one of the leather-worker. Soon he came to a pool and drank. He came to a garden in which a woman was working early, and she asked him whence he had come. "From the East," he said, and pointed, and she did not understand. And so he came again to the cottage from which he had started, to ask once more for hospitality from the old man who had housed him twice.

He was standing in his doorway as Alveric came, walking wearily, and again he made him welcome. He gave him milk and then food. And Alveric ate, and then rested all the day:

it was not till evening he spoke. But when he had eaten and rested and he was at the table again, and supper was now before him and there was light and warmth, he felt all at once the need of human speech. And then he poured out the story of that great journey over the land where the things of man ceased, and where yet no birds or little beasts had come, or even flowers, a chronicle of desolation. And the old man listened to the vivid words and said nothing, making some comments of his own only when Alveric spoke of the fields we know. He heard with politeness but said never a word of the land from which Elfland had ebbed. It was indeed as though all the land to the East were delusion, and as though Alveric had been restored from it or had awoken from dream, and were now among reasonably daily things, and there was nothing to say of the things of dream. Certainly never a word would the old man say in recognition of Elfland, or of anything eighty yards East of his cottage door. Then Alveric went to his bed and the old man sat alone till his fire was low, thinking of what he had heard and shaking his head. And all the next day Alveric rested there or walked in the old man's autumn-smitten garden, and sometimes he tried again to speak with his host of his great journey in the desolate land, but got from him no admission that such lands were, checked always by his avoidance of the topic, as though to speak of these lands might bring them nearer.

And Alveric pondered on many reasons for this. Had the old man been to Elfland in his youth and seen something he greatly feared, perhaps barely escaping from death or an age-long love? Was Elfland a mystery too great to be troubled by human voices? Did these folk dwelling there at the edge of our world know well the unearthly beauty of all the glories of Elfland, and fear that even to speak of them might be a lure to draw them whither their resolution, barely perhaps, held them back? Or might a word said of the magical land bring it nearer, to make fantastic and elvish the fields we know? To all these ponderings of Alveric there was no answer.

And yet one more day Alveric rested, and after that he set out to return to Erl. He set out in the morning, and his host came with him out of his doorway, saying farewell and speaking of his journey home and of the affairs of Erl, which were food for gossip over many farmlands. And great was the contrast between the good man's approval that he showed thus for the fields we know, over which Alveric journeyed now, and his disapproval for those other lands whither Alveric's hopes still turned. And they parted, and the old man's farewells dwindled, and then he turned back into his house, rubbing his hands contentedly as he slowly went, for he was glad to see one who had looked toward the fantastic lands turn now to a journey across the fields we know.

In those fields the frost was master, and Alveric walked over the crisp grey grass and breathed the clear fresh air thinking little of his home or his son, but planning how even yet he might come to Elfland; for he thought that further North there might be a way, coming round perhaps behind the pale-blue mountains. That Elfland had ebbed too far for him

to overtake it there he felt despairingly sure, but scarcely believed it had gone along the entire frontier of twilight, where Elfland touches Earth as far as poet has sung. Further North he might find the frontier, unmoved, lying sleepy with twilight, and come under the pale-blue mountains and see his wife again: full of these thoughts he went over the misty mellow fields.

And full of his dreams and plans about that phantasmal land he came in the afternoon to the woods that brood above Erl. He entered the wood, and deep though he was amongst thoughts that were far from there, he soon saw the smoke of a fire a little way off, rising grey among the dark oak-boles. He went towards it to see who was there, and there were his son and Ziroonderel warming their hands at the fire.

“Where have you been?” called Orion as soon as he saw him.

“Upon a journey,” said Alveric.

“Oth is hunting,” Orion said, and he pointed in the direction whence the wind was fanning the smoke. And Ziroonderel said nothing, for she saw more in Alveric’s eyes than any questions of hers would have drawn from his tongue. Then Orion showed him a deer-skin on which he was sitting. “Oth shot it,” he said.

There seemed to be a magic all round that fire of big logs quietly smouldering in the woods upon Autumn’s discarded robe that lay brilliant there; and it was not the magic of Elfland, nor had Ziroonderel called it up with her wand: it was only a magic of the wood’s very own.

And Alveric stood there for a while in silence, watching the boy and the witch by their fire in the woods, and understanding that the time was come when he must tell Orion things that were not clear to himself and that were puzzling him even now. Yet he did not speak of them then, but saying something of the affairs of Erl, turned and walked on toward his castle, while Ziroonderel and the boy came back later with Oth.

And Alveric commanded supper when he came to his gateway, and ate it alone in the great hall that there was in the Castle of Erl, and all the while he was pondering words to say. And then he went in the evening up to the nursery and told the boy how his mother was gone for a while to Elfland, to her father’s palace (which may only be told of in song). And, unheeding any words of Orion then, he held on with the brief tale that he had come to tell, and told how Elfland was gone.

“But that cannot be,” said Orion, “for I hear the horns of Elfland every day.”

“You can hear them?” Alveric said.

And the boy replied, “I hear them blowing at evening.”

CHAPTER XIV: The Quest for the Elfin Mountains

Winter descended on Erl and gripped the forest, holding the small twigs stiff and still: in the valley it silenced the stream; and in the fields of the oxen the grass was brittle as earthenware, and the breath of the beasts went up like the smoke of encampments. And Orion still went to the woods whenever Oth would take him, and sometimes he went with Threl. When he went with Oth the wood was full of the glamour of the beasts that Oth hunted, and the splendour of the great stags seemed to haunt the gloom of far hollows; but when he went with Threl a mystery haunted the wood, so that one could not say what creature might not appear, nor what haunted and hid by every enormous bole. What beasts there were in the wood even Threl did not know: many kinds fell to his subtlety, but who knew if these were all?

And when the boy was late in the wood, on happy evenings, he would always hear as the sun went blazing down, rank on rank of the elfin horns blowing far away eastwards in the chill of the coming dusk, very far and faint, like reveillÃ© heard in dreams. From beyond the woods they sounded, all those ringing horns, from beyond the downs, far over the furthest curve of them; and he knew them for the silver horns of Elfland. In all other ways he was human, and but for his power to hear those horns of Elfland, whose music rings but a yard beyond human hearing, and his knowledge of what they were; but for these two things he was as yet not more than a human child.

And how the horns of Elfland blew over the barrier of twilight, to be heard by any ear in the fields we know, I cannot understand; yet Tennyson speaks of them as heard “faintly blowing” even in these fields of ours, and I believe that by accepting all that the poets say while duly inspired our errors will be fewest. So, though Science may deny or confirm it, Tennyson’s line shall guide me here.

Alveric in those days went through the village of Erl, with his thoughts far from there, moodily; and he stopped at many doors, and spoke and planned, with his eyes always fixed as it seemed on things no one else could see. He was brooding on far horizons, and the last, over which was Elfland. And from house to house he gathered a little band of men.

It was Alveric's dream to find the frontier further North, to travel on over the fields we know, always searching new horizons, till he came to some place from which Elfland had not ebbed; to this he determined to dedicate his days.

When Lirazel was with him amongst the fields we know, his thoughts had ever been to make her more earthly; but now that she was gone the thoughts of his own mind were becoming daily more elvish, and folk began to look sideways at his fantastic mien. Dreaming always of Elfland and of elvish things he gathered horses and provender and made for his little band so huge a store of provisions that those who saw it wondered. Many men he asked to be of that curious band, and few would go with him to haunt horizons, when they heard whither he went. And the first that he found to be of that band was a lad that was crossed in love; and then a young shepherd, well used to lonely spaces; then one that had heard a curious song that someone sang one evening: it had set his thoughts roving away to impossible lands, and so he was well content to follow his fancies. One huge full moon one summer had shone all a warm night long on a lad as he lay in the hay, and after that he had guessed or seen things that he said the moon showed him: whatever they were none else saw any such things in Erl: he also joined Alveric's band as soon as he asked him. It was many days before Alveric found these four; and more he could not find but a lad that was quite witless, and he took him to tend the horses, for he understood horses well, and they understood him, though no human man or woman could make him out at all, except his mother, who wept when Alveric had his promise to go; for she said that he was the prop and support of her age, and knew what storms would come and when the swallows would fly, and what colours the flowers would come up from seeds she sowed in her garden, and where the spiders would build their webs, and the ancient fables of flies: she wept and said that there would be more things lost by his going than ever folk guessed in Erl. But Alveric took him away: many go thus.

And one morning six horses heaped and hung with provisions all round their saddles waited at Alveric's gateway, with the five men that were to roam with him as far as the world's edge. He had taken long counsel with Ziroonderel, but she said that no magic of hers had power to charm Elfland or to cross the dread will of its King; he therefore commended Orion to her care, knowing well that though hers was but simple or earthly magic, yet no magic likely to cross the fields we know, nor curse nor rune directed against his boy, would be able to thwart her spell; and for himself he trusted to the fortune that waits at the end of long weary journeys. To Orion he spoke long, not knowing how long that journey might be before he again found Elfland, nor how easily he might return across the frontier of twilight. He asked the boy what he desired of life.

"To be a hunter," said he.

"What will you hunt while I am over the hills?" said his father.

"Stags, like Oth," said Orion.

Alveric commended that sport, for he himself loved it.

"And some day I will go a long way over the hills and hunt stranger things," said the boy.

"What kind of things," asked Alveric. But the boy did not know.

His father suggested different kinds of beasts.

"No, stranger than them," said Orion. "Stranger even than bears."

"But what will they be?" asked his father.

"Magic things," said the boy.

But the horses moved restlessly down below in the cold, so that there was no time for more idle talk, and Alveric said farewell to the witch and his son and strode away thinking little of the future, for all was too vague for thought.

Alveric mounted his horse over the heaps of provisions, and all the band of six men rode away. The villagers stood in the street to see them go. All knew their curious quest; and when all had saluted Alveric and all had called their farewells to the last of the riders, a hum of talk arose. And in the talk was contempt of Alveric's quest, and pity, and ridicule; and sometimes affection spoke and sometimes scorn; yet in the hearts of all there was envy; for their reason mocked the lonely roving of that outlandish adventure, but their hearts would have gone.

And away rode Alveric out of the village of Erl with his company of adventurers behind him; a moonstruck man, a madman, a lovesick lad, a shepherd boy and a poet. And Alveric made Vand, the young shepherd, the master of his encampment, for he deemed him to be the sanest amongst his following; but there were disputes at once as they rode, before they came to make any encampment; and Alveric, hearing or feeling the discontent of his men, learned that on such a quest as his it was not the sanest but the maddest that should be given authority. So he named Niv, the witless lad, the master of his encampment; and Niv served him well till a day that was far thence, and the moonstruck man stood by Niv, and all were content to do the bidding of Niv, and all honoured Alveric's quest. And many men in numerous lands do saner things with less harmony.

They came to the uplands and rode over the fields, and rode till they came to the furthest hedges of men, and to the houses that they have built at the verge, beyond which even their thoughts refuse to fare. Through this line of houses at the edge of those fields, four or five in every mile, Alveric went with his queer company. The leather-worker's hut was

far to the South. Now he turned northward to ride past the backs of the houses, over fields through which once the barrier of twilight had run, till he should find some place where Elfland might seem not to have ebbed so far. He explained this to his men, and the leading spirits, Niv, and Zend who was moonstruck, applauded at once; and Thyl, the young dreamer of songs, said the scheme was a wise one too; and Vand was carried away by the keen zeal of these three; and it was all one to Rannok the lover. And they had not gone far along the backs of the houses when the red sun touched the horizon, and they hastened to make an encampment by what remained of the light of that short winter's day. And Niv said they would build a palace like those of kings, and the idea fired Zend to work like three men, and Thyl helped eagerly; and they set up stakes and stretched blankets upon them and made a wall of brushwood, for they were but just outside the hedgerows, and Vand helped too with rough hurdles and Rannok toiled on wearily; and when all was finished Niv said that it was a palace. And Alveric went in and rested, while they lit a fire outside. And Vand cooked a meal for them all, which he did every day for himself upon lonely downs; and none could have cared for the horses better than Niv.

And as the gloaming faded away the cold of winter grew; and by the time that the first star shone there seemed nothing in all the night but bitter cold, yet Alveric's men lay down by their fire in their leathers and furs and slept, all but Rannok the lover.

To Alveric lying on furs in his shelter, watching red embers glowing beyond dark shapes of his men, the quest promised well: he would go far North watching every horizon for any sign of Elfland: he would go by the border of the fields we know, and always be near provisions: and if he got no glimpse of the pale-blue mountains he would go on till he found some field from which Elfland had not ebbed, and so come round behind them. And Niv and Zend and Thyl had all sworn to him that evening that before many days were gone they would surely all find Elfland. Upon this thought he slept.

CHAPTER XV: The Retreat of the Elf King

When Lirazel blew away with the splendid leaves they dropped one by one from their dance in the gleaming air, and ran on over fields for a while, and then gathered by hedgerows and rested; but Earth that pulls all things down had no hold on her, for the rune of the King of Elfland had crossed its borders, calling her home. So she rode carelessly the great north-west wind, looking down idly on the fields we know, as she swept over them homewards. No grip had Earth on her any longer at all; for with her weight (which is where Earth holds us) were gone all her earthly cares. She saw without grief old fields wherein she and Alveric walked once: they drifted by; she saw the houses of men: these also passed; and deep and dense and heavy with colour, she saw the border of Elfland.

A last cry Earth called to her with many voices, a child shouting, rooks cawing, the dull lowing of cows, a slow cart heaving home; then she was into the dense barrier of twilight, and all Earth's sounds dimmed suddenly: she was through it and they ceased. Like a tired horse falling dead our north-west wind dropped at the frontier; for no winds blow in Elfland that roam over the fields we know. And Lirazel slanted slowly onward and down, till her feet were back again on the magical soil of her home. She saw full fair the peaks of the Elfin Mountains, and dark underneath them the forest that guarded the Elf King's throne. Above this forest were glimmering even now great spires in the elfin morning, which glows with more sparkling splendour than do our most dewy dawns, and never passes away.

Over the elfin land the elfin lady passed with her light feet, touching the grasses as thistledown touches them when it comes down to them and brushes their crests while a languid wind rolls it slowly over the fields we know. And all the elvish and fantastic things, and the curious aspect of the land, and the odd flowers and the haunted trees, and the ominous boding of magic that hung in the air, were all so full of memories of her home that she flung her arms about the first gnarled gnome-like trunk and kissed its wrinkled bark.

And so she came to the enchanted wood; and the sinister pines that guarded it, with the watchful ivy leaning over their branches, bowed to Lirazel as she passed. Not a wonder in that wood, not a grim hint of magic, but brought back the past to her as though it had scarcely gone. It was, she felt, but yesterday morning that she had gone away; and it was yesterday morning still. As she passed through the wood the gashes of Alveric's sword were yet fresh and white on the trees.

And now a light began to glow through the wood, then flash upon flash of colours, and she knew they shone from the glory and splendour of flowers that girdled the lawns of her father. To these she came again; and her faint footprints that she had made as she left her father's palace, and wondered to see Alveric there, were not yet gone from the bended grass and the spiders' webs and the dew. There the great flowers glowed in the elfin light; while beyond them there twinkled and flashed, with the portal through which she had left it still open wide to the lawns, the palace that may not be told of but only in song. Thither Lirazel returned. And the Elf King, who heard by magic the tread of her soundless feet, was before his door to meet her.

His great beard almost hid her as they embraced: he had sorrowed for her long through that elfin morning. He had wondered, despite his wisdom; he had feared, for all his runes; he had yearned for her as human hearts may yearn, for all that he was of magic stock dwelling beyond our fields. And now she was home again and the elfin morning brightened over leagues of Elfland with the old Elf King's joy, and even a glow was seen upon slopes of the Elfin Mountains.

And through the flash and glimmer of the vast doorway they passed into the palace once more; the knight of the Elf

King's guard saluted with his sword as they went, but dared not turn his head after Lirazel's beauty; they came again to the hall of the Elf King's throne, which is made of rainbows and ice; and the great King seated himself and took Lirazel on his knee; and a calm came down upon Elfland.

And for long through the endless elfin morning nothing troubled that calm; Lirazel rested after the cares of Earth, the Elf King sat there keeping the deep content in his heart, the knight of the guard remained at the salute, his sword's point downwards still, the palace glowed and shone: it was like a scene in some deep pool beyond the sound of a city, with green reeds and gleaming fishes and myriads of tiny shells all shining in the twilight on deep water, which nothing has disturbed through all the long summer's day. And thus they rested beyond the fret of time, and the hours rested around them, as the little leaping waves of a cataract rest when the ice calms the stream: the serene blue peaks of the Elfin Mountains above them stood like unchanging dreams.

Then like the noise of some city heard amongst birds in woods, like a sob heard amongst children that are all met to rejoice, like laughter amongst a company that weep, like a shrill wind in orchards amongst the early blossom, like a wolf coming over the downs where the sheep are asleep, there came a feeling into the Elf King's mood that one was coming towards them across the fields of Earth. It was Alveric with his sword of thunderbolt-iron, which somehow the old King sensed by its flavour of magic.

Then the Elf King rose, and put his left arm about his daughter, and raised his right to make a mighty enchantment, standing up before his shining throne which is the very centre of Elfland. And with clear resonance deep down in his throat he chaunted a rhythmic spell, all made of words that Lirazel never had heard before, some age-old incantation, calling Elfland away, drawing it further from Earth. And the marvellous flowers heard as their petals drank in the music, and the deep notes flooded the lawns; and all the palace thrilled, and quivered with brighter colours; and a charm went over the plain as far as the frontier of twilight, and a trembling went through the enchanted wood. Still the Elf King chaunted on. The ringing ominous notes came now to the Elfin Mountains, and all their line of peaks quivered as hills in haze, when the heat of summer beats up from the moors and visibly dances in air. All Elfland heard, all Elfland obeyed that spell. And now the King and his daughter drifted away, as the smoke of the nomads drifts over Sahara away from their camel's-hair tents, as dreams drift away at dawn, as clouds over the sunset; and like the wind with the smoke, night with the dreams, warmth with the sunset, all Elfland drifted with them. All Elfland drifted with them and left the desolate plain, the dreary deserted region, the unenchanted land. So swiftly that spell was uttered, so suddenly Elfland obeyed, that many a little song, old memory, garden or may tree of remembered years, was swept but a little way by the drift and heave of Elfland, swaying too slowly eastwards till the elfin lawns were gone, and the barrier of twilight heaved over them and left them among the rocks.

And whither Elfland went I cannot say, nor even whether it followed the curve of the Earth or drifted beyond our rocks out into twilight: there had been an enchantment near to our fields and now there was none: wherever it went it was far.

Then the Elf King ceased to chaunt and all was accomplished. As silently as, in a moment that none can determine, the long layers over the sunset turn from gold to pink, or from a glowing pink to a listless unlit colour, all Elfland left the edges of those fields by which its wonder had lurked for long ages of men, and was away now whither I know not. And the Elf King seated himself again on his throne of mist and ice, in which charmed rainbows were, and took Lirazel his daughter again on his knee, and the calm that his chaunting had broken came back heavy and deep over Elfland. Heavy and deep it fell on the lawns, heavy and deep on the flowers; each dazzling blade of grass was still in its little curve as though Nature in a moment of mourning said "Hush" at the sudden end of the world; and the flowers dreamed on in their beauty, immune from Autumn or wind. Far over the moors of the trolls slept the calm of the King of Elfland, where the smoke from their queer habitations hung stilled in the air; and in a forest wherein it quieted the trembling of myriads of petals on roses, it stilled the pools where the great lilies towered, till they and their reflections slept on in one gorgeous dream. And there below motionless fronds of dream-gripped trees, on the still water dreaming of the still air, where the huge lily-leaves floated green in the calm, was the troll Lurulu, sitting upon a leaf. For thus they named in Elfland the troll that had gone to Erl. He sat there gazing into the water at a certain impudent look that he had on. He gazed and gazed and gazed.

Nothing stirred, nothing changed. All things were still, reposing in the deep content of the King. The Knight of the Guard brought his sword back to the carry, and afterwards stood as still at his perpetual post as some suit of armour whose owner is centuries dead. And still the King sat silent with his daughter upon his knee, his blue eyes unmoving as the pale-blue peaks, which through wide windows shone from the Elfin Mountains.

And the Elf King stirred not, nor changed; but held to that moment in which he had found content; and laid its influence over all his dominions, for the good and welfare of Elfland; for he had what all our troubled world with all its changes seeks, and finds so rarely and must at once cast it away. He had found content and held it.

And in that calm that settled down upon Elfland there passed ten years over the fields we know.