Games From Folktales

A free podcast for the Ars Magica roleplaying game

April - June 2021

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Venice

A Faerie for Aprils Fool's Day

This is a short bonus episode, to wish you a happy April Fool's Day. There's a brief part of Edgcumb Staley's work, which I'm using as the current main text for the Venetian material, which suits our purposes on this day. Here's the quote:

"It was in the days of Doge Vitale Michielo II. that three brothers came to Venice from Morea, and settled themselves and their goods in a small casa on the Fondaco de' Mastelli. Rioba, Sando, and Africo were their names, but because of their origin they were popularly called Mori…They soon acquired wealth and set about rebuilding their humble residence. At the corner of the new palace, on the Campo de'Mori, they stuck up three sculptured figures of themselves under the guise of Saints Mark, Theodore, and John Baptist. They were very highly coloured and soon became laughing-stocks to passers-by. Two of the figures disappeared mysteriously, and the Baptist alone remained, but his name was changed to "Sior Antonio Rioba Pantaleone."

It became a custom for jocular Venetians to send unsophisticated youths and over-trustful strangers with messages to the "Sior," much as we were wont to treat our friends on "April- Fool Day !" At a later date Sior Rioba's mouth became the receptacle for denunciations of enemies —so fitful are the customs of people."

Stories which are believed feed faeries, so this Sior Pantalone will eventually generate a faerie. Presumably this one is different from the Commedia del Arte figure of Panatlone, which I'll cover in more depth in an episode of its own. He's also a separate character from St Pantaleon, the patron of physicians, apothecaries, midwives, and lottery winners, although he's also of use to us in this land with a cult of female alchemists.

Stats eventually

The Fakenham Ghost

A monster for April Fool's Day

A little poem by Robert Bloomfield, read for Librivox by Colleen McMahon. Thanks to the Librivoxians. I was going to save it until Halloween, but I'm sure I can find other ghosts before then.

The Fakenham Ghost : A Ballad.

The Lawns were dry in Euston Park;
(Here Truth [1] inspires my Tale)
The lonely footpath, still and dark,
Led over Hill and Dale.
Benighted was an ancient Dame,
And fearful haste she made
To gain the vale of Fakenham,
And hail its Willow shade.
Her footsteps knew no idle stops,
But follow'd faster still;
And echo'd to the darksome Copse
That whisper'd on the Hill;
Where clam'rous Rooks, yet scarcely hush'd,
Bespoke a peopled shade;
And many a wing the foliage brush'd,
And hov'ring circuits made.
The dappled herd of grazing Deer
That sought the Shades by day,
Now started from her path with fear,
And gave the Stranger way.
Darker it grew; and darker fears
Came o'er her troubled mind;
When now, a short quick step she hears
Come patting close behind.
She turn'd; it stopt;—nought could she see
Upon the gloomy plain!
But, as she strove the Sprite to flee,
She heard the same again.
Now terror seiz'd her quaking frame;
For, where the path was bare,
The trotting Ghost kept on the same!
She mutter'd many a pray'r.
Yet once again, amidst her fright
She tried what sight could do;
When through the cheating glooms of night,
A MONSTER stood in view.
Regardless of whate'er she felt,
It follow'd down the plain!
She own'd her sins, and down she knelt,
And said her pray'rs again.
Then on she sped: and Hope grew strong,
The white park gate in view;
Which pushing hard, so long it swung
That Ghost and all pass'd through.
Loud fell the gate against the post!
Her heart-strings like to crack:
For, much she fear'd the grisly Ghost
Would leap upon her back.
Still on, pat, pat, the Goblin went,
As it had done before:—
Her strength and resolution spent,
She fainted at the door.
Out came her Husband much surpris'd:
Out came her Daughter dear:
Good-natur'd Souls! all unadvis'd
Of what they had to fear.
The Candle's gleam pierc'd through the night,
Some short space o'er the green;
And there the little trotting Sprite
Distinctly might be seen.
An Ass's Foal had lost its Dam
Within the spacious Park;
And simple as the playful Lamb
Had follow'd in the dark.
No Goblin he; no imp of sin:
No crimes had ever known.
They took the shaggy stranger in,
And rear'd him as their own.
His little hoofs would rattle round
Upon the Cottage floor:
The Matron learn'd to love the sound
That frighten'd her before.
A favorite the Ghost became;
And, 'twas his fate to thrive:
And long he liv'd and spread his fame,
And kept the joke alive.
For many a laugh went through the Vale;
And some conviction tod:—
Each thought some other Goblin
Perhaps, was just as true.

[Footnote 1: This Ballad is founded on a fact. The circumstance occurred perhaps long before I was born: but is still related by my Mother, and some of the oldest inhabitants in that part of the country. R.B.]

Pentamerone 5

This trio of stories doesn't need a lot of work. I shall, therefore, laze about and let you listen, breaking in for minor notes.

XVII: CANNETELLA

It is an evil thing to seek for better than wheaten bread, for a man comes at last to desire what others throw away, and must content himself with honesty. He who loses all and walks on the tops of the trees has as much madness in his head as danger under his feet, as was the case with the daughter of a King whose story I have now to tell you.

There was once on a time a King of High-Hill who longed for children more than the porters do for a funeral that they may gather wax. And at last his wife presented him with a little girl, to whom he gave the name Cannetella.

The child grew by hands, and when she was as tall as a pole the King said to her, "My daughter, you are now grown as big as an oak, and it is full time to provide you with a husband worthy of that pretty face. Since, therefore, I love you as my own life and desire to please you, tell me, I pray, what sort of a husband you would like, what kind of a man would suit your fancy? Will you have him a scholar or a dunce? a boy, or man in years? brown or fair or ruddy? tall as a maypole or short as a peg? small in the waist or round as an ox? Do you choose, and I am satisfied."

In the original, she is offered a "man of letters or a swashbuckler". This becomes "dunce" presumably because pirates have not always had the oddly jolly image they have now. He also asks if she wants a husband who has black, white or red skin. The idea that she might prefer a black guy has been removed because Victorian children were not to be exposed to that sort of thing. Early enough in Italian history, people seemed to care about that a lot less than later people.

Cannetella thanked her father for these generous offers, but told him that she would on no account encumber herself with a husband.

In the Penguin edition she had "dedicated her virginity to Diana." This is a completely different thing to just not wanting a husband.

However, being urged by the King again and again, she said, "Not to show myself ungrateful for so much love I am willing to comply with your wish, provided I have such a husband that he has no like in the world."

Her father, delighted beyond measure at hearing this, took his station at the window from morning till evening, looking out and surveying, measuring and examining every one that passed along the street. And one day, seeing a good-looking man go by, the King said to his daughter, "Run, Cannetella! see if yon man comes up to the measure of your wishes." Then she desired him to be brought up, and they made a most splendid banquet for him, at which there was everything he could desire. And as they were feasting an almond fell out of the youth's mouth, whereupon, stooping down, he picked it up dexterously from the ground and put it under the cloth, and when they had done eating he went away. Then the King said to Cannetella, "Well, my life, how does this youth please you?" "Take the fellow away," said she; "a man so tall and so big as he should never have let an almond drop out of his mouth."

When the King heard this he returned to his place at the window, and presently, seeing another well-shaped youth pass by, he called his daughter to hear whether this one pleased her. Then Cannetella desired him to be shown up; so he was called, and another entertainment made. And when they had done eating, and the man had gone away, the King asked his daughter whether he had pleased her, whereupon she replied, "What in the world should I do with such a miserable fellow who wants at least a couple of servants with him to take off his cloak?"

"If that be the case," said the King, "it is plain that these are merely excuses, and that you are only looking for pretexts to refuse me this pleasure. So resolve quickly, for I am determined to have you married."

In the Penguin edition, it's "have my line germinate".

To these angry words Cannetella replied, "To tell you the truth plainly, dear father, I really feel that you are digging in the sea and making a wrong reckoning on your fingers. I will never subject myself to any man who has not a golden head and teeth." The poor King, seeing his daughter's head thus turned, issued a proclamation, bidding any one in his kingdom who should answer to Cannetella's wishes to appear, and he would give him his daughter and the kingdom.

Now this King had a mortal enemy named Fioravante, whom he could not bear to see so much as painted on a wall. He, when he heard of this proclamation, being a cunning magician, called a parcel of that evil brood to him, and commanded them forthwith to make his head and teeth of gold.

In the Penguin edition this is clearer: the foe is a “necromancer”, which in period just means a black magician. The evil brood he calls to him are not other magicians but “those expelled by God”. They say it is difficult and offer him golden horns instead, but he forces them to his will with charms and spells.

So they did as he desired, and when he saw himself with a head and teeth of pure gold he walked past under the window of the King, who, when he saw the very man he was looking for, called his daughter. As soon as Cannetella set eyes upon him she cried out, “Ay, that is he! he could not be better if I had kneaded him with my own hands.”

When Fioravante was getting up to go away the King said to him, “Wait a little, brother; why in such a hurry! One would think you had quicksilver in your body! Fair and softly, I will give you my daughter and baggage and servants to accompany you, for I wish her to be your wife.”

“I thank you,” said Fioravante, “but there is no necessity; a single horse is enough if the beast will carry double, for at home I have servants and goods as many as the sands on the sea-shore.” So, after arguing awhile, Fioravante at last prevailed, and, placing Cannetella behind him on a horse, he set out.

In the evening, when the red horses are taken away from the corn-mill of the sky and white oxen are yoked in their place, they came to a stable where some horses were feeding. Fioravante led Cannetella into it and said, “Listen! I have to make a journey to my own house, and it will take me seven years to get there. Mind, therefore, and wait for me in this stable and do not stir out, nor let yourself be seen by any living person, or else I will make you remember it as long as you live.” Cannetella replied, “You are my lord and master, and I will carry out your commands exactly, but tell me what you will leave me to live upon in the meantime.” And Fioravante answered, “What the horses leave of their own corn will be enough for you.”

Only conceive how poor Cannetella now felt, and guess whether she did not curse the hour and moment she was born! Cold and frozen, she made up in tears what she wanted in food, bewailing her fate which had brought her down from a royal palace to a stable, from mattresses of Barbary wool to straw, from nice, delicate morsels to the leavings of horses. And she led this miserable life for several months, during which time corn was given to the horses by an unseen hand, and what they left supported her.

But at the end of this time, as she was standing one day looking through a hole, she saw a most beautiful garden, in which there were so many espaliers of lemons, and grottoes of citron, beds of flowers and fruit-trees and trellises of vines, that it was a joy to behold. At this sight a great longing seized her for a great bunch of grapes that caught her eye, and she said to herself, “Come what will and if the sky fall, I will go out silently and softly and pluck it. What will it matter a hundred years hence? Who is there to tell my husband? And should he by chance hear of it, what will he do to me? Moreover, these grapes are none of the common sort.” So saying, she went out and refreshed her spirits, which were weakened by hunger.

A little while after, and before the appointed time, her husband came back, and one of his horses accused Cannetella of having taken the grapes. Whereat, Fioravante in a rage, drawing his knife, was about to kill her, but, falling on her knees, she besought him to stay his hand, since hunger drives the wolf from the wood. And she begged so hard that Fioravante replied, “I forgive you this time, and grant you your life out of charity, but if ever again you are tempted to disobey me, and I find that you have let the sun see you, I will make mincemeat of you. Now, mind me; I am going away once more, and shall be gone seven years. So take care and plough straight, for you will not escape so easily again, but I shall pay you off the new and the old scores together.”

So saying, he departed, and Cannetella shed a river of tears, and, wringing her hands, beating her breast, and tearing her hair, she cried, “Oh, that ever I was born into the world to be destined to this wretched fate! Oh, father, why have you ruined me? But why do I complain of my father when I have brought this ill upon myself? I alone am the cause of my misfortunes. I wished for a head of gold, only to come to grief and die by iron! This is the punishment of Fate, for I ought to have done my father’s will, and not have had such whims and fancies. He who minds not what his father and mother say goes a road he does not know.” And so she lamented every day, until her eyes became two fountains, and her face was so thin and sallow, that her own father would not have known her.

At the end of a year the King’s locksmith, whom Cannetella knew, happening to pass by the stable, she called to him and went out.

In the Penguin edition it is the sewer-cleaner. Sewer cleaners have a certain magic to them, as noted in the very early episode about their goddess, Cloacina.

The smith heard his name, but did not recognise the poor girl, who was so much altered; but when he knew who she was, and how she had become thus changed, partly out of pity and partly to gain the King’s favour, he put her into an empty cask he had with him on a pack-horse, and, trotting off towards High-Hill, he arrived at midnight at the King’s palace.

The cask being a nightsoil barrel explains its serendipitous presence. There's something to be said for the use of nightsoil barrels from covenants in smuggling people. Many have simple ring spell around the mouth to make the inside clean. People hate checking them, so a relatively simple illusion would work.

Then he knocked at the door, and at first the servants would not let him in, but roundly abused him for coming at such an hour to disturb the sleep of the whole house. The King, however, hearing the uproar, and being told by a chamberlain what was the matter, ordered the smith to be instantly admitted, for he knew that something unusual must have made him come at that hour. Then the smith, unloading his beast, knocked out the head of the cask, and forth came Cannetella, who needed more than words to make her father recognise her, and had it not been for a mole on her arm she might well have been dismissed. But as soon as he was assured of the truth he embraced and kissed her a thousand times. Then he instantly commanded a warm bath to be got ready; when she was washed from head to foot, and had dressed herself, he ordered food to be brought, for she was faint with hunger. Then her father said to her, "Who would ever have told me, my child, that I should see you in this plight? Who has brought you to this sad condition?" And she answered, "Alas, my dear sire, that Barbary Turk has made me lead the life of a dog, so that I was nearly at death's door again and again. I cannot tell you what I have suffered, but, now that I am here, never more will I stir from your feet. Rather will I be a servant in your house than a queen in another. Rather will I wear sackcloth where you are than a golden mantle away from you. Rather will I turn a spit in your kitchen than hold a sceptre under the canopy of another."

Meanwhile Fioravante, returning home, was told by the horses that the locksmith had carried off Cannetella in the cask, on hearing which, burning with shame, and all on fire with rage, off he ran towards High-Hill, and, meeting an old woman who lived opposite to the palace, he said to her, "What will you charge, good mother, to let me see the King's daughter?" Then she asked a hundred ducats, and Fioravante, putting his hand in his purse, instantly counted them out, one a-top of the other. Thereupon the old woman took him up on the roof, where he saw Cannetella drying her hair on a balcony. But—just as if her heart had whispered to her—the maiden turned that way and saw the knave. She rushed downstairs and ran to her father, crying out, "My lord, if you do not this very instant make me a chamber with seven iron doors I am lost and undone!"

"I will not lose you for such a trifle," said her father; "I would pluck out an eye to gratify such a dear daughter!" So, no sooner said than done, the doors were instantly made.

When Fioravante heard of this he went again to the old woman and said to her, "What shall I give you now? Go to the King's house, under pretext of selling pots of rouge, and make your way to the chamber of the King's daughter. When you are there contrive to slip this little piece of paper between the bed-clothes, saying, in an undertone, as you place it there—

Let every one now soundly sleep,
But Cannetella awake shall keep."

Usually you need a hand of glory for this sort of thing. He must really know his business.

So the old woman agreed for another hundred ducats, and she served him faithfully.

The Penguin edition really dislikes door-to-door makeup salespeople. It's not clear why they do such damage to a person's honour. It must be a cultural thing.

Now, as soon as she had done this trick, such a sound sleep fell on the people of the house that they seemed as if they all were dead. Cannetella alone remained awake, and when she heard the doors bursting open she began to cry aloud as if she were burnt, but no one heard her, and there was no one to run to her aid. So Fioravante threw down all the seven doors, and, entering her room, seized up Cannetella, bed-clothes and all, to carry her off. But, as luck would have it, the paper the old woman had put there fell on the ground, and the spell was broken.

In the Penguin edition the paper falls and "the powder in it spills out" which terminates the spell. This seems to be an activated charm with a material component.

All the people of the house awoke, and, hearing Cannetella's cries, they ran—cats, dogs, and all—and, laying hold on the ogre, quickly cut him in pieces like a pickled tunny.

"Like a salami" in the Penguin edition. A pickled tunny seems an odd sort of thing to eat in Italy. They do get tuna in the Mediterranean, though, so…they pulled him apart like a can of tuna seems like a possible thing.

Thus he was caught in the trap he had laid for poor Cannetella, learning to his cost that—

"No one suffereth greater pain
Than he who by his own sword is slain."

XVIII: CORVETTO

I once heard say that Juno went to Candia to find Falsehood. But if any one were to ask me where fraud and hypocrisy might truly be found, I should know of no other place to name than the Court, where detraction always wears the mask of amusement; where, at the same time, people cut and sew up, wound and heal, break and glue together—of which I will give you one instance in the story that I am going to tell you.

There was once upon a time in the service of the King of Wide-River an excellent youth named Corvetto, who, for his good conduct, was beloved by his master; and for this very i going backward like a rope-maker, and getting from bad to worse, though we slave like dogs, toil like field-labourers, and run about like deer to hit the King's pleasure to a hair? Truly one must be born to good fortune in this world, and he who has not luck might as well be thrown into the sea. What is to be done? We can only look on and envy." These and other words fell from their mouths like poisoned arrows aimed at the ruin of Corvetto as at a target. Alas for him who is condemned to that den the Court, where flattery is sold by the kilderkin, malignity and ill-offices are measured out in bushels, deceit and treachery are weighed by the ton!

A kilderkin is half of a barrel. It's a Dutch measure originally. A ton is 2240 pounds at this stage, what's now called a long ton. As a metric person I don't understand the point of that.

But who can count all the attempts these courtiers made to bring him to grief, or the false tales that they told to the King to destroy his reputation! But Corvetto, who was enchanted, and perceived the traps, and discovered the tricks, was aware of all the intrigues and the ambuscades, the plots and conspiracies of his enemies. He kept his ears always on the alert and his eyes open in order not to take a false step, well knowing that the fortune of courtiers is as glass. But the higher the lad continued to rise the lower the others fell; till at last, being puzzled to know how to take him off his feet, as their slander was not believed, they thought of leading him to disaster by the path of flattery, which they attempted in the following manner.

Ten miles distant from Scotland, where the seat of this King was, there dwelt an ogre,

So, we are in England, apparently. Is the Wide River the Esk?

the most inhuman and savage that had ever been in Ogreland, who, being persecuted by the King, had fortified himself in a lonesome wood on the top of a mountain, where no bird ever flew, and was so thick and tangled that one could never see the sun there..

He's an ogre, so not a lot of surprise here: he's going to die. Then there's a castle in a distant woodland that needs little work for magi to move their covenant in.

This ogre had a most beautiful horse, which looked as if it were formed with a pencil; and amongst other wonderful things, it could speak like any man. Now the courtiers, who knew how wicked the ogre was, how thick the wood, how high the mountain, and how difficult it was to get at the horse, went to the King, and telling him minutely the perfections of the animal, which was a thing worthy of a King, added that he ought to endeavour by all means to get it out of the ogre's claws, and that Corvetto was just the lad to do this, as he was expert and clever at escaping out of the fire. The King, who knew not that under the flowers of these words a serpent was concealed, instantly called Corvetto, and said to him, "If you love me, see that in some way or another you obtain for me the horse of my enemy the ogre, and you shall have no cause to regret having done me this service."

Corvetto knew well that this drum was sounded by those who wished him ill; nevertheless, to obey the King, he set out and took the road to the mountain. Then going very quietly to the ogre's stable, he saddled and mounted the horse, and fixing his feet firmly in the stirrup, took his way back. But as soon as the horse saw himself spurred out of the palace, he cried aloud, "Hollo! be on your guard! Corvetto is riding off with me." At this alarm the ogre instantly set out, with all the animals that served him, to cut Corvetto in pieces. From this side jumped an ape, from that was seen a large bear; here sprang forth a lion, there came running a wolf.

That's a werewolf.

The term "Hollo!" is used several times in this version of the text. At this time it means "I have discovered something" rather than the modern "Greetings!". As I recall from QI, the crossover is in the early 20th century, where songs like "Hello, Hello, who's your lady friend?" show both forms of "hello" together.

But the youth, by the aid of bridle and spur, distanced the mountain, and galloping without stop to the city, arrived at the Court, where he presented the horse to the King.

Then the King embraced him more than a son, and pulling out his purse, filled his hands with crown-pieces

Crowns don't exist yet: they are an English coin that turns up with the Tudoirs.

At this the rage of the courtiers knew no bounds; and whereas at first they were puffed up with a little pipe, they were now bursting with the blasts of a smith's bellows, seeing that the crowbars with which they thought to lay Corvetto's good fortune in ruins only served to smooth the road to his prosperity. Knowing, however, that walls are not levelled by the first attack of the battering-ram,

they resolved to try their luck a second time, and said to the King, “We wish you joy of the beautiful horse! It will indeed be an ornament to the royal stable. But what a pity you have not the ogre’s tapestry, which is a thing more beautiful than words can tell, and would spread your fame far and wide! There is no one, however, able to procure this treasure but Corvetto, who is just the lad to do such a kind of service.”

Then the King, who danced to every tune, and ate only the peel of this bitter but sugared fruit, called Corvetto, and begged him to procure for him the ogre’s tapestry. Off went Corvetto and in four seconds was on the top of the mountain where the ogre lived; then passing unseen into the chamber in which he slept, he hid himself under the bed, and waited as still as a mouse, until Night, to make the Stars laugh, puts a carnival-mask on the face of the Sky. And as soon as the ogre and his wife were gone to bed, Corvetto stripped the walls of the chamber very quietly, and wishing to steal the counterpane of the bed likewise, he began to pull it gently.

A “counterpane” is a quilted blanket.

Thereupon the ogre, suddenly starting up, told his wife not to pull so, for she was dragging all the clothes off him, and would give him his death of cold.

Clothes in the sense of cloths, not his pyjamas.

“Why you are uncovering me!” answered the ogress.

“Where is the counterpane?” replied the ogre; and stretching out his hand to the floor he touched Corvetto’s face; whereupon he set up a loud cry,—”The imp! the imp! Hollo, here, lights! Run quickly!”—till the whole house was turned topsy-turvy with the noise. But Corvetto, after throwing the clothes out of the window, let himself drop down upon them. Then making up a good bundle, he set out on the road to the city, where the reception he met with from the King, and the vexation of the courtiers, who were bursting with spite, are not to be told. Nevertheless they laid a plan to fall upon Corvetto with the rear-guard of their roguery, and went again to the King, who was almost beside himself with delight at the tapestry—which was not only of silk embroidered with gold, but had besides more than a thousand devices and thoughts worked on it. And amongst the rest, if I remember right, there was a cock in the act of crowing at daybreak, and out of its mouth was seen coming a motto in Tuscan: IF I ONLY SEE YOU. And in another part a drooping heliotrope with a Tuscan motto: AT SUNSET—with so many other pretty things that it would require a better memory and more time than I have to relate them.

When the courtiers came to the King, who was thus transported with joy, they said to him, “As Corvetto has done so much to serve you, it would be no great matter for him, in order to give you a signal pleasure, to get the ogre’s palace, which is fit for an emperor to live in; for it has so many rooms and chambers, inside and out, that it can hold an army. And you would never believe all the courtyards, porticoes, colonnades, balconies, and spiral chimneys which there are—built with such marvellous architecture that Art prides herself upon them, Nature is abashed, and Stupor is in delight.”

The King, who had a fruitful brain which conceived quickly, called Corvetto again, and telling him the great longing that had seized him for the ogre’s palace, begged him to add this service to all the others he had done him, promising to score it up with the chalk of gratitude at the tavern of memory. So Corvetto instantly set out heels over head; and arriving at the ogre’s palace, he found that the ogress, whilst her husband was gone to invite the kinsfolk, was busying herself with preparing the feast.

Then Corvetto entering, with a look of compassion, said, “Good-day, my good woman! Truly, you are a brave housewife! But why do you torment the very life out of you in this way? Only yesterday you were ill in bed, and now you are slaving thus, and have no pity on your own flesh.”

In the Penguin edition, she has just given birth to a beautiful orgette, and the reason for the feast is to celebrate the baby’s birth. She was not so much “ill” as “in labour”.

“What would you have me do?” replied the ogress. “I have no one to help me.”

“I am here,” answered Corvetto, “ready to help you tooth and nail.”

“Welcome, then!” said the ogress; “and as you proffer me so much kindness, just help me to split four logs of wood.”

“With all my heart,” answered Corvetto, “but if four logs are not enow, let me split five.” And taking up a newly-ground axe, instead of striking the wood, he struck the ogress on the neck, and made her fall to the ground like a pear. Then running quickly to the gate, he dug a deep hole before the entrance, and covering it over with bushes and earth, he hid himself behind the gate.

Her child disappears from the story here. In some of the eastern parts of Europe, Giants give birth to witches, so she might come back for revenge.

As soon as Corvetto saw the ogre coming with his kinsfolk, he set up a loud cry in the courtyard, “Stop, stop! I’ve caught him!” and “Long live the King of Wide-River.” When the ogre heard this challenge, he ran like mad at Corvetto, to make a hash of him. But rushing furiously towards the gate, down he tumbled with all his companions, head over heels to the bottom of the pit, where Corvetto speedily stoned them to death.

That pit is full of Corpus vis.

Then he shut the door, and took the keys to the King, who, seeing the valour and cleverness of the lad, in spite of ill-fortune and the envy and annoyance of the courtiers, gave him his daughter to wife; so that the crosses of envy had proved rollers to launch Corvetto's bark of life on the sea of greatness; whilst his enemies remained confounded and bursting with rage, and went to bed without a candle; for—

"The punishment of ill deeds past,
Though long delay'd, yet comes at last."

XIX: THE BOOBY

The Booby is a variant of the Atalanta story. In it, the girl is distracted with flung golden apples. These exist in Ars Magica: they are guarded by one of my oldest NPCs, Denis the Hydra, who is over in the Hesperides.

An ignorant man who associates with clever people has always been more praised than a wise man who keeps the company of fools; for as much profit and fame as one may gain from the former, so much wealth and honour one may lose by the fault of the latter; and as the proof of the pudding is in the eating, you will know from the story which I am going to tell you whether my proposition be true.

There was once a man who was as rich as the sea, but as there can never be any perfect happiness in this world, he had a son so idle and good-for-nothing that he could not tell a bean from a cucumber. So being unable any longer to put up with his folly, he gave him a good handful of crowns, and sent him to trade in the Levant; for he well knew that seeing various countries and mixing with divers people awaken the genius and sharpen the judgment, and make men expert.

Moscione (for that was the name of the son) got on horseback, and began his journey towards Venice, the arsenal of the wonders of the world, to embark on board some vessel bound for Cairo; and when he had travelled a good day's journey, he met with a person who was standing fixed at the foot of a poplar, to whom he said, "What is your name, my lad? Whence are you, and what is your trade?" And the lad replied, "My name is Lightning; I am from Arrowland, and I can run like the wind." "I should like to see a proof of it," said Moscione; and Lightning answered, "Wait a moment, and you will see whether it is dust or flour."

When they had stood waiting a little while, a doe came bounding over the plain, and Lightning, letting her pass on some way, to give her the more law, darted after her so rapidly and light of foot, that he would have gone over a place covered with flour without leaving the mark of his shoe, and in four bounds he came up with her. Moscione, amazed at this exploit, asked if he would come and live with him, and promised to pay him royally.

So Lightning consented, and they went on their way together; but they had not journeyed many miles when they met another youth, to whom Moscione said, "What is your name, comrade? What country are you from? And what is your trade?" "My name," replied the lad, "is Quick-ear; I am from Vale-Curious; and when I put my ear the ground I hear all that is passing in the world without stirring from the spot. I perceive the monopolies and agreements of tradespeople to raise the prices of things, the ill-offices of courtiers, the appointments of lovers, the plots of robbers, the reports of spies, the complaints of servants, the gossiping of old women, and the oaths of sailors; so that no one has ever been able to discover so much as my ears can."

"If that be true," said Moscione, "tell me what they are now saying at my home."

So the lad put his ear to the ground, and replied, "An old man is talking to his wife, and saying, 'Praised be Sol in Leo! I have got rid from my sight of that fellow Moscione, that face of old-fashioned crockery, that nail in my heart. By travelling through the world he will at least become a man, and no longer be such a stupid ass, such a simpleton, such a lose-the-day fellow, such a——'"

"Stop, stop!" cried Moscione, "you tell the truth and I believe you. So come along with me, for you have found the road to good-luck."

"Well and good!" said the youth. So they all went on together and travelled ten miles farther, when they met another man, to whom Moscione said, "What is your name, my brave fellow? Where were you born? And what can you do in the world?" And the man answered, "My name is Shoot-straight; I am from Castle Aimwell; and I can shoot with a crossbow so point-blank as to hit a crab-apple in the middle."

This is a chickpea in the original. They are oddly late arrivals in British cuisine. Castle Aimwell would be a great place to hire grogs. I presume it's full of faeries.

"I should like to see the proof," said Moscione. So the lad charged his crossbow, took aim, and made a pea leap from the top of a stone; whereupon Moscione took him also like the others into his company. And they travelled on another day's journey, till they came to some people who were building a large pier in the scorching heat of the sun, and who might well say, "Boy, put water to the wine, for my heart is burning." So Moscione had compassion on them, and said, "My masters, how is it you have the head to stand in this furnace, which is fit to roast a buffalo?"

In the Penguin edition this is a buffalo's placenta. Please do not attempt to look this up online. There's a guy in the University of Buffalo who really likes smoothies with odd ingredients. Have you wondered if there's something I won't research for the podcast? We've found a the limit.

And one of them answered, “Oh, we are as cool as a rose; for we have a young man here who blows upon us from behind in such a manner that it seems just as if the west wind were blowing.” “Let me see him, I pray,” cried Moscione. So the mason called the lad, and Moscione said to him, “Tell me, by the life of your father, what is your name? what country are you from? and what is your profession!” And the lad replied, “My name is Blow-blast; I am from Windy-land; and I can make all the winds with my mouth. If you wish for a zephyr, I will breathe one that will send you in transports; if you wish for a squall, I will throw down houses.”

“Seeing is believing,” said Moscione. Whereupon Blow-blast breathed at first quite gently, so that it seemed to be the wind that blows at Posilippo towards evening; then turning suddenly to some trees, he sent forth such a furious blast that it uprooted a row of oaks.

When Moscione saw this he took him for a companion; and travelling on as far again, he met another lad, to whom he said, “What is your name, if I may make so bold? Whence are you, if one may ask? And what is your trade, if it is a fair question?” And the lad answered, “My name is Strong-back; I am from Valentino; and I have such strength that I can take a mountain on my back, and it seems to me only a feather.”

“If that be the case,” said Moscione, “you deserve to be the king of the custom-house, and you should be chosen for standard-bearer on the first of May. But I should like to see a proof of what you say.”

Then Strong-back began to load himself with masses of rock, trunks of trees, and so many other weights that a thousand large waggons could not have carried them; which, when Moscione saw, he agreed with the lad to join him.

So they travelled on till they came to Fair-Flower, the King of which place had a daughter who ran like the wind, and could pass over the waving corn without bending an ear; and the King had issued a proclamation that whoever could over-take her in running should have her to wife, but whoever was left behind should lose his head.

When Moscione arrived in this country and heard the proclamation, he went straight to the King, and offered to run with his daughter, making the wise agreement either to win the race or leave his noddle there. But in the morning he sent to inform the King that he was taken ill, and being unable to run himself he would send another young man in his place. “Come who will!” said Ciannetella (for that was the King’s daughter), “I care not a fig—it is all one to me.”

This is one occasion where the English version is ruder than the Penguin translation from the Italian: the fig here is a hand signal that is meant to look a little like genitals.

So when the great square was filled with people, come to see the race, insomuch that the men swarmed like ants, and the windows and roofs were all as full as an egg, Lightning came out and took his station at the top of the square, waiting for the signal. And lo! forth came Ciannetella, dressed in a little gown, tucked half-way up her legs, and a neat and pretty little shoe with a single sole. Then they placed themselves shoulder to shoulder, and as soon as the tarantara and too-too of the trumpets was heard, off they darted, running at such a rate that their heels touched their shoulders, and in truth they seemed just like hares with the grey-hounds after them, horses broken loose from the stable, or dogs with kettles tied to their tails. But Lightning (as he was both by name and nature) left the princess more than a hand’s-breadth behind him, and came first to the goal. Then you should have heard the huzzaing and shouting, the cries and the uproar, the whistling and clapping of hands of all the people, bawling out, “Hurra! Long life to the stranger!” Whereat Ciannetella’s face turned as red as a schoolboy’s who is going to be whipped,

It’s a different part of the anatomy that reddens, and spanked, rather than whipped in the Italian. Note that in the English version, whipping children seems to be a perfectly normal thing, whereas in the Italian, the idea that you’d whip a kid just doesn’t come up. I remember seeing something similar in the “Amityville Horror”, where suddenly whipping your children was seen as a thing slightly less alarming that a cross flipping upside down and some flies turning up.

and she stood lost in shame and confusion at seeing herself vanquished. But as there were to be two heats to the race, she fell to planning how to be revenged for this affront; and going home, she put a charm into a ring of such power that if any one had it upon his finger his legs would totter so that he would not be able to walk, much less run; then she sent it as a present to Lightning, begging him to wear it on his finger for love of her.

She can make rings that cause paralysis. That’s not just a natal power, like her running.

Quick-ear, who heard this trick plotted between the father and daughter, said nothing, and waited to see the upshot of the affair. And when, at the trumpeting of the birds, the Sun whipped on the Night, who sat mounted on the jackass of the Shades, they returned to the field, where at the usual signal they fell to plying their heels. But if Ciannetella was like another Atalanta, Lightning had become no less like an old donkey and a foundered horse, for he could not stir a step. But Shoot-straight, who saw his comrade’s danger, and heard from Quick-ear how matters stood, laid hold of his crossbow and shot a bolt so exactly that it hit Lightning’s finger, and out flew the stone from the ring, in which the virtue of the charm lay; whereupon his legs, that had been tied, were set free, and with four goat-leaps he passed Ciannetella and won the race.

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As noted in our episodes on *The Curious Lore of Precious Stones*, the magic in rings is due to a theurgic spirit which lives in the gemstone.

The King seeing this victory of a blockhead, the palm thus carried off by a simpleton, the triumph of a fool, bethought himself seriously whether or no he should give him his daughter; and taking counsel with the wiseacres of his court, they replied that Ciannetella was not a mouthful for the tooth of such a miserable dog and lose-the-day bird, and that, without breaking his word, he might commute the promise of his daughter for a gift of crowns,

Again, they are using an English coin here.

which would be more to the taste of a poor beggar like Moscione than all the women in the world.

This advice pleased the King, and he asked Moscione how much money he would take instead of the wife who had been promised him. Then Moscione, after consulting with the others, answered, “I will take as much gold and silver as one of my comrades can carry on his back.” The king consented; whereupon they brought Strong-back, on whom they began to load bales of ducats, sacks of patacas, large purses full of crowns, barrels of copper money, chests full of chains and rings; but the more they loaded him the firmer he stood, just like a tower, so that the treasury, the banks, the usurers, and the money-dealers of the city did not suffice, and he sent to all the great people in every direction to borrow their silver candlesticks, basins, jugs, plates, trays, and baskets; and yet all was not enough to make up the full load. At length they went away, not laden but tired and satisfied.

When the councillors saw what heaps and stores these six miserable dogs were carrying off, they said to the King that it was a great piece of assery to load them with all the sinews of his kingdom, and that it would be well to send people after them to lessen the load of that Atlas who was carrying on his shoulders a heaven of treasure. The King gave ear to this advice, and immediately despatched a party of armed men, foot and horse, to overtake Moscione and his friends. But Quick-ear, who had heard this counsel, informed his comrades; and while the dust was rising to the sky from the trampling of those who were coming to unload the rich cargo, Blow-blast, seeing that things were come to a bad pass, began to blow at such a rate that he not only made the enemies fall flat on the ground, but he sent them flying more than a mile distant, as the north wind does the folks who pass through that country. So without meeting any more hindrance, Moscione arrived at his father’s house, where he shared the booty with his companions, since, as the saying goes, a good deed deserves a good meed.

“Meed” is praise.

So he sent them away content and happy; but he stayed with his father, rich beyond measure, and saw himself a simpleton laden with gold, not giving the lie to the saying

“Heaven sends biscuits to him who has no teeth.”

The Kingdom of the Worm

by Clark Ashton Smith

I'm a huge fan of Clark Ashton Smith, but have not been able to record his material for two reasons. First, he died after the US public domain year, which prevents me using his work. Second, TSR had a license for his work, and even used in in Dungeons and Dragons. It's in X2 Castle Amber and The Principalities of Glantri. That means Averoigne, his setting most like Ars Magica, is fenced off from us.

There's a bit of loophole here, though: some of his work was not sent to major publishing houses: it was sent to fanzines which folded, so they didn't renew their rights to stories. And so I can present a story, a monster, and perhaps an initiation for the archnecromantrix Guorna the Fetid's brood.

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Now in his journeying Sir John Maundeville had passed well to one side of that remarkable province in the kingdom of Abchaz which was called Hanyson; and, unless he was greatly deceived by those of whom he had inquired the way, could deem himself within two days' travel of the neighboring realm of Georgia.

He had seen the river that flowed out from Hanyson, a land of hostile idolators on which there lay the curse of perpetual darkness; and wherein, it was told, the voices of people, the crowing of cocks and the neighing of horses had sometimes been heard by those who approached its confines. But he had not paused to investigate the verity of these marvels; since the direct route of his journey was through another region; and also Hanyson was a place into which no man, not even the most hardy, would care to enter without need.

However, as he pursued his wayfaring with the two Armenian Christians who formed his retinue, he began to hear from the inhabitants of that portion of Abchaz the rumor of an equally dread demesne, named Antchar, lying before him on the road to Georgia. The tales they told were both vague and frightful, and were of varying import: some said that this country was a desolation peopled only by the liches of the dead and by loathly phantoms; others, that it was subject to the ghouls and afrits, who devoured the dead and would suffer no living mortal to trespass upon their dominions; and still others spoke of things all too hideous to be described, and of dire necromancies that prevailed in Antchar even as the might of emperors doth prevail in more usually ordered lands. And the tales agreed only in this, that Antchar had been within mortal memory one of the fairest domains of Abchaz, but had been utterly laid waste by an unknown pestilence, so that its high cities and broad fields were long since abandoned to the desert and to such devils and other creatures as inhabit waste places. And the tellers of the tales agreed in warning Sir John to avoid this region and to take the road which ran deviously to the north of Antchar; for Antchar was a place into which no man had gone in latter times.

The good knight listened gravely to all these, as was his wont; but being a stout Christian, and valorous withal, he would not suffer them to deter him from his purpose. Even when the last inhabited village had been left behind, and he came to the division of the ways, and saw verily that the highway into Antchar had not been trodden by man or beast for generations, he refused to change his intention but rode forward stoutly while the Armenians followed with much protest and some trepidation.

Howbeit, he was not blind to the sundry disagreeable tokens that began to declare themselves along the way. There were neither trees, herbs nor lichens anywhere, such as would grow in any wholesome land; but low hills mottled with a leprosy of salt, and ridges bare as the bones of the dead.

Anon he came to a pass where the hills were strait and steep on each hand, with pinnacled cliffs of a dark stone crumbling slowly into dust and taking shapes of wild horror and strangeness, of demonry and Satanry as they crumbled. There were faces in the stone, having the semblance of ghouls or goblins, that appeared to move and twist as the travellers went by; and Sir John and his companions were troubled by the aspect of these faces and by the similitudes which they bore to one another. So much alike, indeed, were many of them, that it seemed as if their first exemplars were preceding the wayfarers, to mock them anew at each turn. And aside from those which were like ghouls or goblins, there were others having the features of heathen idols, uncouth and hideous to behold; and others still that were like the worm-gnawed visages of the dead; and these also appeared to repeat themselves on every hand in a doubtful and wildering fashion.

The Armenians would have turned back, for they swore that the rocks were alive and endowed with motion, in a land where naught else was living; and they sought to dissuade Sir John from his project. But he said merely, "Follow me, an ye will," and rode onward among the rocks and pinnacles.

Now, in the ancient dust of the unused road, they saw the tracks of a creature that was neither man nor any terrestrial beast; and the tracks were of such unwonted shape and number, and were so monstrous withal, that even Sir John was disquieted thereby; and perceiving them, the Armenians murmured more openly than before

And now, as they still pursued their way, the pinnacles of the pass grew tall as giants, and were riven into the likeness of mighty limbs and bodies, some of which were headless and others with heads of Typhoean enormity. And their shadows deepened between the travellers and the sun, to more than the umbrage of shadows cast by rocks. And in the darkest depth of the ravine, Sir John and his followers met a solitary jackal, which fled them not in the manner of its kind but passed them with leisurely pace and bespoke them with articulate words, in a voice hollow and sepulchral as that of a demon, bidding them to turn back, since the land before them was an interdicted realm. All were much startled thereat, considering that this was indeed a thing of enchantment, for a jackal to speak thus, and being against nature, was fore-ominous of ill and peril. And the Armenians cried out, saying they would go no further; and when the jackal had passed from sight, they fled after it, spurring their horses like men who were themselves ridden by devils.

Seeing them thus abandon him, Sir John was somewhat wroth; and also he was perturbed by the warning of the jackal; and he liked not the thought of faring alone into Antchar. But, trusting in our Savior to forfend him against all harmful enchantments and the necromancies of Satan, he rode on among the rocks till he came forth at length from their misshapen shadows; and emerging thus, he saw before him a grey plain that was like the ashes of some dead land under extinguished heavens.

At sight of this region, his heart misgave him sorely, and he misliked it even more than the twisted faces of the rocks and the riven forms of the pinnacles. For here the bones of men, of horses and camels, had marked the way with their pitiable whiteness; and the topmost branches of long dead trees arose like supplicative arms from the sand that had sifted upon the older gardens. And here there were ruinous houses, with doors open to the high-drifting desert, and mausoleums sinking slowly in the dunes. And here, as Sir John rode forward, the sky darkened above him, though not with the passage of clouds or the coming of the simoon, but rather with the strange dusk of midmost eclipse, wherein the shadows of himself and his horse were blotted out, and the tombs and houses were wan as phantoms.

Sir John had not ridden much further, when he met a horned viper, or cerastes, crawling toilsomely away from Antchar in the deep dust of the road. And the viper spoke at it passed him, saying with a human voice, “Be warned, and go not onward into Antchar, for this is a realm forbidden to all mortal beings except the dead.”
Now did Sir John address himself in prayer to God the Highest, and to Jesus Christ our Savior and all the blessed Saints, knowing surely that he had arrived in a place that was subject to Satanical dominion. And while he prayed the gloom continued to thicken, till the road before him was half nighted and was no longer easy to discern. And though he would have still ridden on, his charger halted in the gloom and would not respond to the spur, but stood and trembled like one who is smitten with palsy.

Then, from the twilight that was nigh to darkness, there came gigantic figures, muffled and silent and having, as he thought, neither mouths nor eyes beneath the brow-folds of their sable cerements. They uttered no word, nor could Sir John bespeak them in the fear that came upon him; and likewise he was powerless to draw his sword. And they plucked him from his saddle with fleshless hands, and led him away, half swooning at the horror of their touch, on paths that he perceived only with the dim senses of one who goes down into the shadow of death. And he knew not how far they led him nor in what direction; and he heard no sound as he went other than the screaming of his horse far off, like a soul in mortal dread and agony: for the footfalls of those who had taken him were soundless and he could not tell if they were phantoms or haply were veritable demons. A coldness blew upon him, but without the whisper or soughing of wind; and the air he breathed was dense with corruption and such odors as may emanate from a broken charnel. For a time, in the faintness that had come upon him, he saw not the things that were standing beside the way, nor the shrouded shapes that went by in funereal secrecy. Then, recovering his senses a little, he perceived that there were houses about him and the streets of a town, though these were but scantly to be discerned in the night that had fallen without bringing the stars. Howbeit, he saw, or deemed, that there were high mansions and broad thoroughfares and markets; and among them, as he went on, a building that bore the appearance of a great palace, with a facade that glimmered vaguely, and domes and turrets half swallowed up by the lowering darkness.

As he neared the facade, Sir John saw that the glimmering came from within and was cast obscurely through open doors and between broad-spaced pillars. Too feeble was the light for torch or cresset, too dim for any lamp; and Sir John marvelled amid his faintness and terror. But when he had drawn closer still, he saw that the strange gleaming was like the phosphor bred by the putrefaction of a charnel.

Beneath the guidance of those who held him helpless, he entered the building. They led him through a stately hall, in whose carven columns and ornate furniture the opulence of kings was manifest; and thence he came into a great audience-room, with a throne of gold and ebony set on a high dais, all of which was illumed by no other light than the glimmering of decay. And the throne was tenanted, not by any human lord or sultan, but a grey, prodigious creature, of height and bulk exceeding those of man, and having in all its over-swollen form the exact similitude of a charnel-worm. And the worm was alone, and except for the worm and Sir John and those beings who had brought him thither, the great chamber was empty as a mausoleum of old days, whose occupants were long since consumed by corruption.

Then, standing there with a horror upon him such as no man had ever envisaged, Sir John became aware that the worm was scrutinizing him severely, with little eyes deep-folded in the obscene bloating of its face, and then, with a dreadful and solemn voice, it addressed him, saying:

“I am king of Antchar, by virtue of having conquered and devoured the mortal ruler thereof, as well as all those who were his subjects. Know then that this land is mine and that the intrusion of the living is unlawful and not readily to be condoned. The rashness and folly thou hast shown in thus coming here is verily most egregious; since thou wert warned by the peoples of Abchaz, and warned anew by the jackal and the viper which thou didst meet on the road into Antchar. Thy temerity hath earned a condign punishment. And before I suffer thee to go hence, I decree that thou shalt lie for a term among the dead, and dwell as they dwell, in a dark sepulcher, and learn the manner of their abiding and the things which none should behold with living eyes. Yea, still alive, it shall be thine to descend and remain in the very midst of death and putrefaction, for such length of time as seemeth meet to correct thy folly and punish thy presumption.”

Sir John was one of the worthiest knights in Christendom, and his valor was beyond controversy. But when he heard the speech of the throned worm, and the judgement that it passed upon him, his fear became so excessive that once again he was nigh to swooning. And, still in this state, he was taken hence by those who had brought him to the audience-room. And somewhere in the outer darkness, in a place of tombs and graves and cenotaphs beyond the dim town, he was flung into a deep sepulcher of stone, and the brazen door of the sepulcher was closed upon him.

Lying there through the seasonless midnight, Sir John was companioned only by an unseen cadaver and by those ministrants of decay who were not yet wholly done with their appointed task. Himself as one half dead, in the sore extremity of his horror and loathing, he could not tell if it were day or night in Antchar; and in all the term of endless hours that he lay there, he heard no sound, other than the beating of his own heart, which soon became insufferably loud, and oppressed him like the noise and tumult of a great throng.

Appalled by the clamor of his heart, and affrighted by the thing which lay in perpetual silence beside him, and whelmed by the awesomeness and dire necromancy of all that had befallen him, Sir John was prone to despair, and scant was his hope of returning from that imprisonment amid the dead, or of standing once more under the sun as a living man. It was his to learn the voidness of death, to share the abomination of desolation, and to comprehend the unutterable mysteries of corruption; and to do all this not as one who is a mere insensible cadaver, but with soul and body still inseparate. His flesh crept, and his spirit cringed within him, as he felt the crawling of worms that went avidly to the dwindling corpse or came away in glutted slowness. And it seemed to Sir John at that time (and at all times thereafter) that the condition of his sojourn in the tomb was verily to be accounted a worse thing than death.

At last, when many hours or days had gone over him, leaving the tomb’s darkness unchanged by the entrance of any beam or the departure of any shadow, Sir John was aware of a sullen clangor, and knew that the brazen door had been opened. And now, for the first time, by the dimness of twilight that had entered the tomb, he saw in all its piteousness and repulsion the thing with which he had abode so long. In the sickness that fell upon him at this sight, he was haled forth from the sepulcher by those who had thrust him therein: and, fainting once more with the terror of their touch, and shrinking from their gigantic shadowy stature and cerements whose black folds revealed no human visage or form, he was led through Antchar along the road whereby he had come into that dolorous realm.

His guides were silent as before; and the gloom which lay upon the land was even as when he had entered it, and was like the umbrage of some eternal occultation. But at length, in the very place where he had been taken captive, he was left to retrace his own way and to fare alone through the land of ruinous gardens toward the defile of the crumbling rocks.

Weak though he was from his confinement, and all bemazed with the things which had befallen him, he followed the road till the darkness lightened once more and he came forth from its penumbral shadow beneath a pale sun. And somewhere in the waste he met his charger, wandering through the sunken fields that were covered up by the sand; and he mounted the charger and rode hastily away from Antchar through the pass of the strange boulders with mocking forms and faces. And after a time he came once more to the northern road by which travellers commonly went to Georgia; and here he was rejoined by the two Armenians, who had waited on the confines of Antchar, praying for his secure deliverance.

Long afterwards, when he had returned from his wayfaring in the East and among the peoples of remote isles, he told of the kingdom of Abchaz in the book that related his travels; and also he wrote therein concerning the province of Hanyson. But he made no mention of Antchar, that kingdom of darkness and decay ruled by the throned worm.

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Stats eventually.

Pentamerone 6

Welcome to one of the longest, and swearyest, episodes of Games From Folktales If you usually listen in with small children nearby, you'll want to skip this one. The Neapolitans nobles are still indulging in their great love for potty humour, but things also get violent in these stories.

XX: THE STONE IN THE COCK'S HEAD

The robber's wife does not always laugh; he who weaves fraud works his own ruin; there is no deceit which is not at last discovered, no treachery that does not come to light; walls have ears, and are spies to rogues; the earth gapes and discovers theft, as I will prove to you if you pay attention.

There was once in the city of Dark-Grotto a certain man named Minecco Aniello, who was so persecuted by fortune that all his fixtures and moveables consisted only of a short-legged cock, which he had reared upon bread-crumbs.

Naples is a city with many dark grottoes beneath it: it may suit. It's notorious for buildings suddenly subsiding into caverns. It was a centre of the Sybiline cult that predates House Tytaus and Tremere.

But one morning, being pinched with appetite (for hunger drives the wolf from the thicket), he took it into his head to sell the cock, and, taking it to the market, he met two thievish magicians, with whom he made a bargain, and sold it for half-a-crown. So they told him to take it to their house, and they would count him out the money. Then the magicians went their way, and, Minecco Aniello following them, overheard them talking gibberish together and saying, "Who would have told us that we should meet with such a piece of good luck, Jennarone? This cock will make our fortune to a certainty by the stone which, you know, he has in his pate. We will quickly have it set in a ring, and then we shall have everything we can ask for."

In the original they are called necromancers. I'd caution that "necromancer" just means evil magician, not necessarily worker with the undead. Note also that the "gibberish" in the original is a "thieves' cant". Now, that's interesting. In English thieves' cant dates from the Elizabethan period. Folkloristically it evolved from Romani, was created by a man given the title of the King of Gypsies, and he invented it in a cave called The Devil's Arse. The cave actually exists: it's in Derbyshire. This is all profoundly unlikely, but by the Jacobean period its well enough known that people can slip words of it into plays to make them sound more street. What argot the Neapolitans were speaking is profoundly unclear.

"Be quiet, Jacovuccio," answered Jennarone; "I see myself rich and can hardly believe it, and I am longing to twist the cock's neck and give a kick in the face of beggary, for in this world virtue without money goes for nothing, and a man is judged of by his coat."

When Minecco Aniello, who had travelled about in the world and eaten bread from more than one oven, heard this gibberish he turned on his heel and scampered off. And, running home, he twisted the cock's neck, and opening its head found the stone, which he had instantly set in a brass ring. Then, to make a trial of its virtue, he said, "I wish to become a youth eighteen years old."

Hardly had he uttered the words when his blood began to flow more quickly, his nerves became stronger, his limbs firmer, his flesh fresher, his eyes more fiery, his silver hairs were turned into gold, his mouth, which was a sacked village, became peopled with teeth; his beard, which was as thick as a wood, became like a nursery garden—in short, he was changed to a most beautiful youth. Then he said again, "I wish for a splendid palace, and to marry the King's daughter." And lo! there instantly appeared a palace of incredible magnificence, in which were apartments that would amaze you, columns to astound you, pictures to fill you with wonder; silver glittered around, and gold was trodden underfoot; the jewels dazzled your eyes; the servants swarmed like ants, the horses and carriages were not to be counted—in short, there was such a display of riches that the King stared at the sight, and willingly gave him his daughter Natalizia.."

Meanwhile the magicians, having discovered Minecco Aniello's great wealth, laid a plan to rob him of his good fortune, so they made a pretty little doll which played and danced by means of clockwork; and, dressing themselves like merchants, they went to Pentella, the daughter of Minecco Aniello, under pretext of selling it to her. When Pentella saw the beautiful little thing she asked them what price they put upon it, and they replied that it was not to be bought with money, but that she might have it and welcome if she would only do them a favour, which was to let them see the make of the ring which her father possessed, in order to take the model and make another like it, then they would give her the doll without any payment at all.

The history of automata has been covered with great thoroughness in Ars Magica. These mechanisms are of deep interest to House Verditus. As it happens, that house is based in Sardina, which is a sort of fey place in these stories.

Pentella, who had never heard the proverb, “Think well before you buy anything cheap,” instantly accepted this offer, and, bidding them return the next morning, she promised to ask her father to lend her the ring. So the magicians went away, and when her father returned home Pentella coaxed and caressed him, until at last she persuaded him to give her the ring, making the excuse that she was sad at heart, and wished to divert her mind a little.

When the next day came, as soon as the scavenger of the Sun sweeps the last traces of the Shades from the streets and squares of Heaven, the magicians returned, and no sooner had they the ring in their hands than they instantly vanished, and not a trace of them was to be seen, so that poor Pentella had like to have died with terror.

But when the magicians came to a wood, where the branches of some of the trees were dancing the sword-dance, and the boughs of the others were playing together at hot-cockles, they desired the ring to destroy the spell by which the old man had become young again. And instantly Minecco Aniello, who was just at that moment in the presence of the King, was suddenly seen to grow hoary, his hairs to whiten, his forehead to wrinkle, his eyebrows to grow bristly, his eyes to sink in, his face to be furrowed, his mouth to become toothless, his beard to grow bushy, his back to be humped, his legs to tremble, and, above all, his glittering garments to turn to rags and tatters.

The King, seeing the miserable beggar seated beside him at table, ordered him to be instantly driven away with blows and hard words, whereupon Aniello, thus suddenly fallen from his good luck, went weeping to his daughter, and asked for the ring in order to set matters to rights again. But when he heard the fatal trick played by the false merchants he was ready to throw himself out of the window, cursing a thousand times the ignorance of his daughter, who, for the sake of a silly doll had turned him into a miserable scarecrow, and for a paltry thing of rags had brought him to rags himself, adding that he was resolved to go wandering about the world like a bad shilling, until he should get tidings of those merchants. So saying he threw a cloak about his neck and a wallet on his back, drew his sandals on his feet, took a staff in his hand, and, leaving his daughter all chilled and frozen, he set out walking desperately on and on until he arrived at the kingdom of Deep-Hole, inhabited by the mice, where, being taken for a big spy of the cats, he was instantly led before Rosecone, the King. Then the King asked him who he was, whence he came, and what he was about in that country; and Minecco Aniello, after first giving the King a cheese-paring, in sign of tribute, related to him all his misfortunes one by one, and concluded by saying that he was resolved to continue his toil and travel, until he should get tidings of those thievish villains who had robbed him of so precious a jewel, taking from him at once the flower of his youth, the source of his wealth, and the prop of his honour.

Rosecone doesn’t seem to appear in other stories, but he’s an interesting sort of fellow. He might be a suitable ally for the covenant.

At these words Rosecone felt pity nibbling at his heart, and, wishing to comfort the poor man, he summoned the eldest mice to a council, and asked their opinions on the misfortunes of Minecco Aniello, commanding them to use all diligence and endeavour to obtain some tidings of these false merchants. Now, among the rest, it happened that Rudolo and Saltariello were present—mice who were well used to the ways of the world, and had lived for six years at a tavern of great resort hard by; and they said to Aniello, “Be of good heart, comrade! matters will turn out better than you imagine. You must know that one day, when we were in a room in the hostelry of the Horn,’ where the most famous men in the world lodge and make merry, two persons from Hook Castle came in, who, after they had eaten their fill and had seen the bottom of their flagon, fell to talking of a trick they had played a certain old man of Dark-Grotto, and how they had cheated him out of a stone of great value, which one of them, named Jennarone, said he would never take from his finger, that he might not run the risk of losing it as the old man’s daughter had done.”

When Minecco Aniello heard this, he told the two mice that if they would trust themselves to accompany him to the country where these rogues lived and recover the ring for him, he would give them a good lot of cheese and salt meat, which they might eat and enjoy with his majesty the King. Then the two mice, after bargaining for a reward, offered to go over sea and mountain, and, taking leave of his mousy majesty, they set out.

After journeying a long way they arrived at Hook Castle, where the mice told Minecco Aniello to remain under some trees on the brink of a river, which like a leech drew the moisture from the land and discharged it into the sea. Then they went to seek the house of the magicians, and, observing that Jennarone never took the ring from his finger, they sought to gain the victory by stratagem. So, waiting till Night had dyed with purple grape-juice the sunburnt face of Heaven, and the magicians had gone to bed and were fast asleep, Rudolo began to nibble the finger on which the ring was, whereupon Jennarone, feeling the smart, took the ring off and laid it on a table at the head of the bed. But as soon as Saltariello saw this, he popped the ring into his mouth, and in four skips he was off to find Minecco Aniello, who, with even greater joy than a man at the gallows feels when a pardon arrives, instantly turned the magicians into two jackasses; and, turning his mantle over one of them, he bestrode him like a noble count, then he loaded the other with cheese and bacon, and set off toward Deep-Hole, where, having given presents to the King and his councillors, he thanked them for all the good fortune he had received by their assistance, praying Heaven that no mouse-trap might ever lay hold of them, that no cat might ever harm them, and that no arsenic might ever poison them.

Then, leaving that country, Minecco Aniello returned to Dark-Grotto even more handsome than before, and was received by the King and his daughter with the greatest affection in the world. And, having ordered the two asses to be cast down from a rock, he lived happily with his wife, never more taking the ring from his finger that he might not again commit such a folly, for—

“The cat who has been burnt with fire ever after fears the cold hearthstone.”

A few minor changes: the merchant gives them lard and cheese, not bacon. The asses are thrown off a mountain and, oddly, the saying at the end is changed from a dog scalded by hot water will be afraid of cold water too.

It’s interesting to wonder where the ring went, and how the magicians knew it had the stone in its head.

XXI: THE THREE ENCHANTED PRINCES

Once upon a time the King of Green-Bank had three daughters, who were perfect jewels, with whom three sons of the King of Fair-Meadow were desperately in love. But these Princes having been changed into animals by the spell of a fairy, the King of Green-Bank disdained to give them his daughters to wife. Whereupon the first, who was a beautiful Falcon, called together all the birds to a council; and there came the chaffinches, tomtits, woodpeckers, fly-catchers, jays, blackbirds, cuckoos, thrushes, and every other kind of bird. And when they were all assembled at his summons, he ordered them to destroy all the blossoms on the trees of Green-Bank, so that not a flower or leaf should remain. The second Prince, who was a Stag, summoning all the goats, rabbits, hares, hedgehogs, and other animals of that country, laid waste all the corn-fields so that there was not a single blade of grass or corn left. The third Prince, who was a Dolphin, consulting together with a hundred monsters of the sea, made such a tempest arise upon the coast that not a boat escaped.

Now the King saw that matters were going from bad to worse, and that he could not remedy the mischief which these three wild lovers were causing; so he resolved to get out of his trouble, and made up his mind to give them his daughters to wife; and thereupon, without wanting either feasts or songs, they carried their brides off and out of the kingdom.

The peasants get very little interest in these stories. The stories are pitched to the nobility, or at least the clerisy. These things above would cause famine: basically the princes are mass murderers and it will be ignored.

On parting from her daughters, Granzolla the Queen gave each of them a ring, one exactly like the other, telling them that if they happened to be separated, and after a while to meet again, or to see any of their kinsfolk, they would recognise one another by means of these rings.

Perhaps these are Arcane connections?

So taking their leave they departed. And the Falcon carried Fabiella, who was the eldest of the sisters, to the top of a mountain, which was so high that, passing the confines of the clouds, it reached with a dry head to a region where it never rains; and there, leading her to a most beautiful palace, she lived like a Queen.

The court of the birds is described in some detail in RoP:Magic, but he seems more like a faerie prince to me.

The Stag carried Vasta, the second sister, into a wood, which was so thick that the Shades, when summoned by the Night, could not find their way out to escort her. There he placed her, as befitted her rank, in a wonderfully splendid house with a garden.

The translation we are using cuts out half a line from the Penguin “splendid house with a garden, where he had her live as his equal.” At least he’s not a misogynist?

The Dolphin swam with Rita, the third sister, on his back into the middle of the sea, where, upon a large rock, he showed her a mansion in which three crowned Kings might live.

Meanwhile Granzolla gave birth to a fine little boy, whom they named Tittone. And when he was fifteen years old, hearing his mother lamenting continually that she never heard any tidings of her three daughters, who were married to three animals; he took it into his head to travel through the world until he should obtain some news of them. So after begging and entreating his father and mother for a long time, they granted him permission, bidding him take for his journey attendants and everything needful and befitting a Prince; and the Queen also gave him another ring similar to those she had given to her daughters.

Tittone went his way, and left no corner of Italy, not a nook of France, nor any part of Spain unsearched. Then he passed through England, and traversed Slavonia,

Flanders in the Penguin version. Flanders is not exotic at all by this stage. in England.

and visited Poland, and, in short, travelled both east and west. At length, leaving all his servants, some at the taverns and some at the hospitals,

You could track him with these people.

he set out without a farthing in his pocket, and came to the top of the mountain where dwelt the Falcon and

and Fabiella. And as he stood there, beside himself with amazement, contemplating the beauty of the palace—the corner-stones of which were of porphyry, the walls of alabaster, the windows of gold, and the tiles of silver

Porphyry is a purple stone associated with emperors. The Pope also has a throne of porphyry. It was originally a birthing chair so it has a hole in the bottom, which has led to odd myths about Pope Joan and the fondling of the papal testicles after his election.

—his sister observed him, and ordering him to be called, she demanded who he was, whence he came, and what chance had brought him to that country. When Tittone told her his country, his father and mother, and his name, Fabiella knew him to be her brother, and the more when she compared the ring upon his finger with that which her mother had given her; and embracing him with great joy, she concealed him, fearing that her husband would be angry when he returned home.

As soon as the Falcon came home, Fabiella began to tell him that a great longing had come over her to see her parents. And the Falcon answered, “Let the wish pass, wife; for that cannot be unless the humour takes me.”

“Let us at least,” said Fabiella, “send to fetch one of my kinsfolk to keep my company.”

“And, pray, who will come so far to see you?” replied the Falcon.

“Nay, but if any one should come,” added Fabiella, “would you be displeased?”

“Why should I be displeased?” said the Falcon, “it would be enough that he were one of your kinsfolk to make me take him to my heart.”

When Fabiella heard this she took courage, and calling to her brother to come forth, she presented him to the Falcon, who exclaimed, “Five and five are ten; love passes through the glove, and water through the boot. A hearty welcome to you! you are master in this house; command, and do just as you like.” Then he gave orders that Tittone should be served and treated with the same honour as himself.

Now when Tittone had stayed a fortnight on the mountain, it came into his head to go forth and seek his other sisters. So taking leave of Fabiella and his brother-in-law, the Falcon gave him one of his feathers, saying, “Take this and prize it, my dear Tittone; for you may one day be in trouble, and you will then esteem it a treasure. Enough—take good care of it; and if ever you meet with any mishap, throw it on the ground, and say, Come hither, come hither!’ and you shall have cause to thank me.”

Tittone wrapped the feather up in a sheet of paper, and, putting it in his pocket, after a thousand ceremonies departed. And travelling on and on a very long way, he arrived at last at the wood where the Stag lived with Vasta; and going, half-dead with hunger, into the garden to pluck some fruit, his sister saw him, and recognised him in the same manner as Fabiella had done. Then she presented Tittone to her husband, who received him with the greatest friendship, and treated him truly like a Prince.

At the end of a fortnight, when Tittone wished to depart, and go in search of his other sister, the Stag gave him one of his hairs, repeating the same words as the Falcon had spoken about the feather. And setting out on his way, with a bagful of crown-pieces which the Falcon had given him, and as many more which the Stag gave him, he walked on and on, until he came to the end of the earth, where, being stopped by the sea and unable to walk any further, he took ship, intending to seek through all the islands for tidings of his sister. So setting sail, he went about and about, until at length he was carried to an island, where lived the Dolphin with Rita. And no sooner had he landed, than his sister saw and recognised him in the same manner as the others had done, and he was received by her husband with all possible affection.

Now after a while Tittone wished to set out again to go and visit his father and mother, whom he had not seen for so long a time. So the Dolphin gave him one of his scales, telling him the same as the others had; and Tittone, mounting a horse, set out on his travels.

Dolphins are fish in Mythic Europe and have armoured scales.

But he had hardly proceeded half a mile from the seashore, when entering a wood—the abode of Fear and the Shades, where a continual fair of darkness and terror was kept up—he found a great tower in the middle of a lake, whose waters were kissing the feet of the trees, and entreating them not to let the Sun witness their pranks. At a window in the tower Tittone saw a most beautiful maiden sitting at the feet of a hideous dragon, who was asleep. When the damsel saw Tittone, she said in a low and piteous voice, “O noble youth, sent perchance by heaven to comfort me in my miseries in this place, where the face of a Christian is never seen, release me from the power of this tyrannical serpent, who has carried me off from my father, the King of Bright-Valley, and shut me up in this frightful tower, where I must die a miserable death.”

“Alas, my beauteous lady!” replied Tittone, “what can I do to serve thee? Who can pass this lake? Who can climb this tower? Who can approach yon horrid dragon, that carries terror in his look, sows fear, and causes dismay to spring up?

The last phrase is actually “generates diarrhea” Is this a spell-like power that can be countered with a Brave check? We have a spell that does this sort of thing in the Faerie Magic section of House Merinita.

But softly, wait a minute, and we’ll find a way with another’s help to drive this serpent away. Step by step—the more haste, the worse speed: we shall soon see whether tis egg or wind.” And so saying he threw the feather, the hair, and the scale, which his brothers-in-law had given him, on the ground, exclaiming, “Come hither, come hither!” And falling on the earth like drops of summer rain, which makes the frogs spring up,

This is an example of spontaneous generation – the frogs don’t reproduce: they just appear.

suddenly there appeared the Falcon, the Stag, and the Dolphin, who cried out all together, “Behold us here! what are your commands?”

When Tittone saw this, he said with great joy, “I wish for nothing but to release this poor damsel from the claws of yon dragon, to take her away from this tower, to lay it all in ruins, and to carry this beautiful lady home with me as my wife.”

“Hush!” answered the Falcon, “for the bean springs up where you least expect it. We’ll soon make him dance upon a sixpence, and take good care that he shall have little ground enough.”

“Let us lose no time,” said the Stag, “troubles and macaroni are swallowed hot.”

So the Falcon summoned a large flock of griffins, who, flying to the window of the tower, carried off the damsel, bearing her over the lake to where Tittone was standing with his three brothers-in-law; and if from afar she appeared a moon, believe me, when near she looked truly like a sun, she was so beautiful.

Whilst Tittone was embracing her and telling her how he loved her, the dragon awoke; and, rushing out of the window, he came swimming across the lake to devour Tittone. But the Stag instantly called up a squadron of lions, tigers, panthers, bears, and wild-cats,

Bogeys for wild-cats here.

who, falling upon the dragon, tore him in pieces with their claws. Then Tittone wishing to depart, the Dolphin said, “I likewise desire to do something to serve you.” And in order that no trace should remain of the frightful and accursed place, he made the sea rise so high that, overflowing its bounds, it attacked the tower furiously, and overthrew it to its foundations.

When Tittone saw these things, he thanked the animals in the best manner he could, telling the damsel at the same time that she ought to do so too, as it was by their aid she had escaped from peril. But the animals answered, “Nay, we ought rather to thank this beauteous lady, since she is the means of restoring us to our proper shapes; for a spell was laid upon us at our birth, caused by our mother’s having offended a fairy, and we were compelled to remain in the form of animals until we should have freed the daughter of a King from some great trouble. And now behold the time is arrived which we have longed for; the fruit is ripe, and we already feel new spirit in our breasts, new blood in our veins.” So saying, they were changed into three handsome youths, and one after another they embraced their brother-in-law, and shook hands with the lady, who was in an ecstasy of joy.

When Tittone saw this, he was on the point of fainting away; and heaving a deep sigh, he said, “O Heavens! why have not my mother and father a share in this happiness? They would be out of their wits with joy were they to see such graceful and handsome sons-in-law before their eyes.”

“Nay,” answered the Princes, “’tis not yet night; the shame at seeing ourselves so transformed obliged us to flee from the sight of men; but now that, thank Heaven! we can appear in the world again, we will all go and live with our wives under one roof, and spend our lives merrily. Let us, therefore, set out instantly, and before the Sun to-morrow morning unpacks the bales of his rays at the custom-house of the East, our wives shall be with you.”

So saying, in order that they might not have to go on foot—for there was only an old broken-down mare which Tittone had brought—the brothers caused a most beautiful coach to appear, drawn by six lions, in which they all five seated themselves; and having travelled the whole day, they came in the evening to a tavern, where, whilst the supper was being prepared, they passed the time in reading all the proofs of men’s ignorance which were scribbled upon the walls.

Redcaps leave each other messages in graffiti, I presume.

At length, when all had eaten their fill and retired to rest, the three youths, feigning to go to bed, went out and walked about the whole night long, till in the morning, when the Stars, like bashful maidens, retire from the gaze of the Sun, they found themselves in the same inn with their wives, whereupon there was a great embracing, and a joy beyond the beyonds. Then they all eight seated themselves in the same coach, and after a long journey arrived at Green-Bank, where they were received with incredible affection by the King and Queen, who had not only regained the capital of four children, whom they had considered lost, but likewise the interest of three sons-in-law and a daughter-in-law, who were verily four columns of the Temple of Beauty. And when the news of the

of the adventures of their children was brought to the Kings of Fair-Meadow and Bright-Valley, they both came to the feasts which were made, adding the rich ingredient of joy to the porridge of their satisfaction, and receiving a full recompense for all their past misfortunes; for—

“One hour of joy dispels the cares
And sufferings of a thousand years.”

XXII: THE DRAGON

He who seeks the injury of another finds his own hurt; and he who spreads the snares of treachery and deceit often falls into them himself; as you shall hear in the story of a queen, who with her own hands constructed the trap in which she was caught by the foot.

There was one time a King of High-Shore, who practised such tyranny and cruelty that, whilst he was once gone on a visit of pleasure to a castle at a distance from the city, his royal seat was usurped by a certain sorceress. Whereupon, having consulted a wooden statue which used to give oracular responses, it answered that he would recover his dominions when the sorceress should lose her sight.

Faerie oracle?

But seeing that the sorceress, besides being well guarded, knew at a glance the people whom he sent to annoy her, and did dog’s justice upon them, he became quite desperate, and out of spite to her he killed all the women of that place whom he could get into his hands.

Oddly he’s still technically the hero. Clearly the sorceress is breaking the Code of Hermes, but at least she’s not as terrible as the king. Her spell to determine falsehood in servants is known to the Order.

Now after hundreds and hundreds had been led thither by their ill-luck, only to lose their lives, there chanced, among others, to come a maiden named Porziella, the most beautiful creature that could be seen on the whole earth, and the King could not help falling in love with her and making her his wife. But he was so cruel and spiteful to women that, after a while, he was going to kill her like the rest; but just as he was raising the dagger a bird let fall a certain root upon his arm, and he was seized with such a trembling that the weapon fell from his hand.

That’s a Magonomia spell, I presume. In Ars Magica, there’s already a spell that creates palsy in the hands.

This bird was a fairy, who, a few days before, having gone to sleep in a wood, where beneath the tent of the Shades Fear kept watch and defied the Sun’s heat, a certain satyr was about to rob her when she was awakened by Porziella, and for this kindness she continually followed her steps in order to make her a return.

Oddly it does seem to be rob. Satyrs are notorious for other crimes.

When the King saw this, he thought that the beauty of Porziella’s face had arrested his arm and bewitched the dagger to prevent its piercing her as it had done so many others. He resolved, therefore, not to make the attempt a second time, but that she should die built up in a garret of his palace. No sooner said than done: the unhappy creature was enclosed within four walls, without having anything to eat or drink, and left to waste away and die little by little.

This seems a convoluted sort of way to go about this… also, would you blame Porziella if she grabbed his knife and drove it into his gut at this point? If she’d done that, she might need some helpful magicians to sort out her many problems.

The bird, seeing her in this wretched state, consoled her with kind words, bidding her be of good cheer, and promising, in return for the great kindness she had done for her, to aid her if necessary with her very life. In spite, however, of all the entreaties of Porziella, the bird would never tell her who she was, but only said that she was under obligations to her, and would leave nothing undone to serve her. And seeing that the poor girl was famished with hunger, she flew out and speedily returned with a pointed knife which she had taken from the king’s pantry, and told her to make a hole in the corner of the floor just over the kitchen, through which she would regularly bring her food to sustain her life. So Porziella bored away until she had made a passage for the bird, who, watching till the cook was gone out to fetch a pitcher of water from the well, went down through the hole, and taking a fine fowl that was cooking at the fire, brought it to Porziella; then to relieve her thirst, not knowing how to carry her any drink, she flew to the pantry, where there was a quantity of grapes hanging, and brought her a fine bunch; and this she did regularly for many days.

The bird bringing her a fowl to eat is kind of disturbing, but faeries are like that. Perhaps its a predatory bird?

Meanwhile Porziella gave birth to a fine little boy, whom she suckled and reared with the constant aid of the bird. And when he was grown big, the fairy advised his mother to make the hole larger, and to raise so many boards of the floor as would allow Miuccio (for so the child was called) to pass through; and then, after letting him down with some cords which the bird brought, to put the boards back into their place, that it might not be seen where he came from. So Porziella did as the bird directed her; and as soon as the cook was gone out, she let down her son, desiring him never to tell whence he came nor whose son he was.

When the cook returned and saw such a fine little boy, he asked him who he was, whence he came, and what he wanted; whereupon, the child, remembering his mother’s

advice, said that he was a poor forlorn boy who was looking about for a master. As they were talking, the butler came in, and seeing the spritely little fellow, he thought he would make a pretty page for the King. So he led him to the royal apartments; and when the King saw him look so handsome and lovely that he appeared a very jewel, he was vastly pleased with him, and took him into his service as a page and to his heart as a son, and had him taught all the exercises befitting a cavalier, so that Miuccio grew up the most accomplished one in the court, and the King loved him much better than his stepson. Now the King's stepmother, who was really the queen, on this account began to take a dislike to him, and to hold him in aversion; and her envy and malice gained ground just in proportion as the favours and kindness which the King bestowed on Miuccio cleared the way for them; so she resolved to soap the ladder of his fortune in order that he should tumble down from top to bottom.

Accordingly one evening, when the King and his stepmother had tuned their instruments together and were making music of their discourse, the Queen told the King that Miuccio had boasted he would build three castles in the air. So the next morning, at the time when the Moon, the school-mistress of the Shades, gives a holiday to her scholars for the festival of the Sun, the King, either from surprise or to gratify the old Queen, ordered Miuccio to be called, and commanded him forthwith to build the three castles in the air as he had promised, or else he would make him dance a jig in the air.

When Miuccio heard this he went to his chamber and began to lament bitterly, seeing what glass the favour of princes is, and how short a time it lasts. And while he was weeping thus, lo! the bird came, and said to him, "Take heart, Miuccio, and fear not while you have me by your side, for I am able to draw you out of the fire." Then she directed him to take pasteboard and glue and make three large castles; and calling up three large griffins, she tied a castle to each, and away they flew up into the air.

The faerie obviously doesn't want to rescue the woman, because she has three griffins under her control. She could crack the top off the tower that Ponziella is in like an egg.

Thereupon Miuccio called the King, who came running with all his court to see the sight; and when he saw the ingenuity of Miuccio he had a still greater affection for him, and lavished on him caresses of the other world, which added snow to the envy of the Queen and fire to her rage, seeing that all her plans failed; insomuch that, both sleeping and waking, she was for ever thinking of some way to remove this thorn from her eyes. So at last, after some days, she said to the King, "Son, the time is now come for us to return to our former greatness and the pleasures of past times, since Miuccio has offered to blind the sorceress, and by the disbursement of her eyes to make you recover your lost kingdom."

The King, who felt himself touched in the sore place, called for Miuccio that very instant, and said to him, "I am greatly surprised that, notwithstanding all my love for you, and that you have the power to restore me to the seat from which I have fallen, you remain thus careless, instead of endeavouring to relieve me from the misery I am in—reduced thus from a kingdom to a wood, from a city to a paltry castle, and from commanding so great a people to be hardly waited on by a parcel of half-starved menials. If, therefore, you do not wish me ill, run now at once and blind the eyes of the fairy who has possession of my property, for by putting out her lanterns you will light the lamps of my honour that are now dark and dismal."

When Miuccio heard this proposal he was about to reply that the King was ill-informed and had mistaken him, as he was neither a raven to pick out eyes nor an auger to bore holes;

It's a latrine cleaner to unclog holes in the Penguin edition.

but the King said, "No more words—so I will have it, so let it be done! Remember now, that in the mint of this brain of mine I have the balance ready; in one scale the reward, if you do what I tell you; in the other the punishment, if you neglect doing what I command."

Miuccio, who could not butt against a rock, and had to do with a man who was not to be moved, went into a corner to bemoan himself; and the bird came to him and said, "Is it possible, Miuccio, that you will always be drowning yourself in a tumbler of water? If I were dead indeed you could not make more fuss. Do you not know that I have more regard for your life than for my own? Therefore don't lose courage; come with me, and you shall see what I can do." So saying off she flew, and alighted in the wood, where as soon as she began to chirp, there came a large flock of birds about her, to whom she told the story, assuring them that whoever would venture to deprive the sorceress of sight should have from her a safeguard against the talons of the hawks and kites, and a letter of protection against the guns, crossbows, longbows, and bird-lime of the fowlers.

We've discussed birdlime in the episode about eating ortolans. It's a sticky substance that adheres birds to branches so the can be plucked off like fruit.

There was among them a swallow who had made her nest against a beam of the royal palace, and who hated the sorceress, because, when making her accursed conjurations, she had several times driven her out of the chamber with her fumigations;

Feels alchemical? There are fumigations in some other sorts of spellcasting, though: theurgy and sorcery may require expensive smoke to charm spirits.

for which reason, partly out of a desire of revenge, and partly to gain the reward that the bird promised, she offered herself to perform the service. So away she flew like lightning to the city, and entering the palace, found the fairy lying on a couch, with two damsels fanning her. Then the swallow came, and alighting directly over the fairy, pecked out her eyes.

This sounds unlikely. Swallows have tiny bills. We might ask if it differs for the African swallow, which has, perhaps, a higher wing speed velocity when laden with a coconut, but how would it get to Italy? Are they migratory? Some call me Tim, but they are wrong.

Anyway, in the Penguin edition the swallow shits in her eyes. There are several ways this may have proven efficacious. One is that the blindness, however temporary, fulfils the condition of the prophecy and the sorceress, being a faerie, must leave. Another is that the bird faeces is particularly caustic. A third, and perhaps my favourite because it's so disgusting is that the bird droppings causes a magically-accelerated case of ocular histoplasmosis. This is a disease caused, in the real world, by contact with spores found in bird dung. The spores flourish in the eyes, and create scaring, that is interpreted as dark spots in the field of vision. Severe cases can cause legal blindness. In the real world it takes decades to get to this stage.

Whereupon the fairy, thus seeing night at midday, knew that by this closing of the custom-house the merchandise of the kingdom was all lost; and uttering yells, as of a condemned soul, she abandoned the sceptre and went off to hide herself in a certain cave, where she knocked her head continually against the wall, until at length she ended her days.

There's some Corpus vis. One thing you must say about Hermetic magi is they tidy the place up a lot better than adventurers in Dungeons and Dragons.

When the sorceress was gone, the councillors sent ambassadors to the King, praying him to come back to his castle, since the blinding of the sorceress had caused him to see this happy day. And at the same time they arrived came also Miuccio, who, by the bird's direction, said to the King, "I have served you to the best of my power; the sorceress is blinded, the kingdom is yours. Wherefore, if I deserve recompense for this service, I wish for no other than to be left to my ill-fortune, without being again exposed to these dangers."

But the King, embracing him with great affection, bade him put on his cap and sit beside him; and how the Queen was enraged at this, Heaven knows, for by the bow of many colours that appeared in her face might be known the wind of the storm that was brewing in her heart against poor Miuccio.

Not far from this castle lived a most ferocious dragon, who was born the same hour with the Queen;

In the Penguin edition they are literal twins: "born of the same womb".

and the astrologers being called by her father to astrologise on this event, said that his daughter would be safe as long as the dragon was safe, and that when one died, the other would of necessity die also.

This is a familiar bond, at least in a non-Hermetic sense.

One thing alone could bring back the Queen to life, and that was to anoint her temples, chest, nostrils, and pulse with the blood of the same dragon.

That seem unwise. At best you get a sort of corpse possessed by its own ghost, unless she's a faerie.

Now the Queen, knowing the strength and fury of this animal, resolved to send Miuccio into his claws, well assured that the beast would make but a mouthful of him, and that he would be like a strawberry in the throat of a bear. So turning to the King, she said, "Upon my word, this Miuccio is the treasure of your house, and you would be ungrateful indeed if you did not love him, especially as he had expressed his desire to kill the dragon, who, though he is my brother, is nevertheless your enemy; and I care more for a hair of your head than for a hundred brothers."

..So it's literally her brother, even in the bowdlerised version.

The King, who hated the dragon mortally, and knew not how to remove him out of his sight, instantly called Miuccio, and said to him, "I know that you can put your hand to whatever you will; therefore, as you have done so much, grant me yet another pleasure, and then turn me whithersoever you will. Go this very instant and kill the dragon; for you will do me a singular service, and I will reward you well for it."

Miuccio at these words was near losing his senses, and as soon as he was able to speak, he said to the King, "Alas, what a headache have you given me by your continual teasing! Is my life a black goat-skin rug that you are for ever wearing it away thus? This is not a pared pear ready to drop into one's mouth, but a dragon, that tears with his claws, breaks to pieces with his head, crushes with his tail, crunches with his teeth, poisons with his eyes, and kills with his breath.

And in Magonomia each of those would be a Stunt. In Ars, each is a power.

Wherefore do you want to send me to death? Is this the sinecure you give me for having given you a kingdom? Who is the wicked soul that has set this die on the table? What son of perdition has taught you these capers and put these words into your mouth?" Then the King, who, although he let himself be tossed to and fro as light as a ball, was firmer than a rock in keeping to what he had

snce said, stamped with his feet, and exclaimed, “After all you have done, do you fail at the last? But no more words; go, rid my kingdom of this plague, unless you would have me rid you of life.”

Poor Miuccio, who thus received one minute a favour, at another a threat, now a pat on the face, and now a kick

“in the ass.” It doesn’t have the right rhythm in the sentence if you just cut the words out.

, now a kind word, now a cruel one, reflected how mutable court fortune is, and would fain have been without the acquaintance of the King. But knowing that to reply to great men is a folly, and like plucking a lion by the beard, he withdrew, cursing his fate, which had led him to the court only to curtail the days of his life. And as he was sitting on one of the door-steps, with his head between his knees, washing his shoes with his tears and warming the ground with his sighs,

He is “warming his balls with his sighs” in the Penguin, as his head is between his knees.

behold the bird came flying with a plant in her beak, and throwing it to him, said, “Get up, Miuccio, and take courage! for you are not going to play at unload the ass’ with your days, but at backgammon with the life of the dragon. Take this plant, and when you come to the cave of that horrid animal, throw it in, and instantly such a drowsiness will come over him that he will fall fast asleep; whereupon, nicking and sticking him with a good knife, you may soon make an end of him. Then come away, for things will turn out better than you think.”

So, that’s a spell. Also, the fairy tells him to stick the knife in a particularly vulgar place in the dragon.

“Enough!” cried Miuccio, “I know what I carry under my belt; we have more time than money, and he who has time has life.” So saying, he got up, and sticking a pruning-knife in his belt

The “pruning knife” is basically a large fighting knife in the other version. Imagine a machete or a cane knife rather than a gardener’s knife.

and taking the plant, he went his way to the dragon’s cave, which was under a mountain of such goodly growth, that the three mountains that were steps to the Giants would not have reached up to its waist. When he came there, he threw the plant into the cave, and instantly a deep sleep laid hold on the dragon, and Miuccio began to cut him in pieces.

Which is a bit anticlimactic.

Now just at the time that he was busied thus, the Queen felt a cutting pain at her heart; and seeing herself brought to a bad pass, she perceived her error in having purchased death with ready money. So she called her stepson and told him what the astrologers had predicted —how her life depended on that of the dragon, and how she feared that Miuccio had killed him, for she felt herself gradually sliding away. Then the King replied, “If you knew that the life of the dragon was the prop of your life and the root of your days, why did you make me send Miuccio? Who is in fault? You must have done yourself the mischief, and you must suffer for it; you have broken the glass, and you may pay the cost.”

Who is this stepson, exactly? That seems to be a mistake in the translation.

And the Queen answered, “I never thought that such a stripling could have the skill and strength to overthrow an animal which made nothing of an army, and I expected that he would have left his rags there. But since I reckoned without my host, and the bark of my projects is gone out of its course, do me one kindness if you love me. When I am dead, take a sponge dipped in the blood of this dragon and anoint with it all the extremities of my body before you bury me.”

A bark, here, is a ship, as noted in previous episodes.

“That is but a small thing for the love I bear you,” replied the King; “and if the blood of the dragon is not enough, I will add my own to give you satisfaction.” The Queen was about to thank him, but the breath left her with the speech; for just then Miuccio had made an end of scoring the dragon.

No sooner had Miuccio come into the King’s presence with the news of what he had done than the King ordered him to go back for the dragon’s blood; but being curious to see the deed done by Miuccio’s hand, he followed him. And as Miuccio was going out of the palace gate, the bird met him, and said, “Whither are you going?” and Miuccio answered, “I am going whither the King sends me; he makes me fly backwards and forwards like a shuttle, and never lets me rest an hour.” “What to do?” said the bird. “To fetch the blood of the dragon,” said Miuccio. And the bird replied, “Ah, wretched youth! this dragon’s blood will be bull’s blood to you, and make you burst; for this blood will cause to spring up again the evil seed of all your misfortunes. The Queen is continually exposing you to new dangers that you may lose your life; and the King, who lets this odious creature put the pack-saddle on him, orders you, like a castaway, to endanger your person, which is his own flesh and blood and a shoot of his stem.;

He is literally “brocolli” of the same stem. Apparently the English were not familiar with this most formidable of vegetables. My wife loves it. I got her some for Valentine’s Day one year, but enough about me.

But the wretched man does not know you, though the inborn affection he bears you should have betrayed your kindred. Moreover, the services you have rendered the

King, and the gain to himself of so handsome a son and heir, ought to obtain favour for unhappy Porziella, your mother, who has now for fourteen years been buried alive in a garret, where is seen a temple of beauty built up within a little chamber."

While the fairy was thus speaking, the King, who had heard every word, stepped forward to learn the truth of the matter better; and finding that Miuccio was his own and Porziella's son, and that Porziella was still alive in the garret, he instantly gave orders that she should be set free and brought before him. And when he saw her looking more beautiful than ever, owing to the care taken of her by the bird, he embraced her with the greatest affection, and was never satisfied with pressing to his heart first the mother and then the son, praying forgiveness of Porziella for his ill-treatment of her, and of his son for all the dangers to which he had exposed him. Then he ordered her to be clothed in the richest robes,

The dead Queen's richest robes are specifically mentioned in the Penguin edition.

and had her crowned Queen before all the people. And when the King heard that her preservation, and the escape of his son from so many dangers were entirely owing to the bird, which had given food to the one and counsel to the other, he offered her his kingdom and his life. But the bird said she desired no other reward for her services than to have Miuccio for a husband; and as she uttered the words she was changed into a beautiful maiden, and, to the great joy and satisfaction of the King and Porziella, she was given to Miuccio to wife.

This is disturbing. I mean, this goes beyond Master Maid level shenanigans. She's literally known him since birth.

Then the newly-married couple, to give still greater festivals, went their way to their own kingdom, where they were anxiously expected, every one ascribing this good fortune to the fairy, for the kindness that Porziella had done her; for at the end of the end—

"A good deed is never lost."

Venice : Coral and Lace

In this little fragment of The Dogaressas of Venice, Edgecumb Staley gives the origin of Venetian lace weaving. There's an idea I've had in earlier writing for the podcast, although not so much in the formal line, that the representation of a thing grants a weak material bonus related to that thing. So, if a herb has +6 healing, then a painting of that herb has +2. Basically to me this explains why the decorative arts seem to matter so much in magic item creation. Following this line of thinking, according to the following folklore, Venetian lace is a representation of coral, and as such it offers +3 versus demons. As a piece of clothing, it has move self +2, protect self +4, transform self +4.

Also this myth points out that lacemaking and netmaking are the same craft, so if lace is, for all purposes, a type of decorative net, it gains the bonuses for nets (Immobilization +5) If you are having trouble making the connection between nets, I'd ask you to consider the intermediate historical forms of filet lace, which is a lace woven onto a decorative net of squares or diamond-shapes, and reticella, which was originally made by pulling thread out of fabric, but eventually developed into making decorative netting. The ancestor of lacemaking, punto a groppo, is still practiced today, although it's known by the a French version of its Turkish name macrame.

Upon the smiling little islet of San Giorgio in Alga, midway between the Punta di Santa Maria — the westernmost limit of Venice proper, and Fusina — the principal port of the Laguna Morta, there lived, once upon a time, a good-looking young fisherman. Zian Zorzio della Laguna,— so named after his patron Saint, Saint George of Cappadoccia, — as skilful in his calling as he was comely in his person. Zorzio had wooed and won the prettiest girl in all Rialto, as hard-working as himself and as good to look upon. One day Bella offered her lover an extraordinarily fine fishing-net which she had, unknown to him, knotted with her own fair hands; and, Zorzio delighted with the gift, tossing it over his shoulder, went off to dedicate it to his saintly patron in the island Sanctuary.

Kissed on both cheeks, coloured with the ripest peach-bloom, her golden hair coiled neatly around her shapely head, save for one rebellious love-knot upon her brow, the beauteous innamorata waved lovinsf farewells to her Zorzio as he sculled off in his light barca to make trial of his treasure. With a daring cast the spider-web-like mesh sank beneath the gentle ripples of the lambent water, and the young fellow, confident of a worthy haul, presently began to pull in his net. " Per Bacco!" cried he, for something eerie had caught itself in the all but invisible strands of Bella's handiwork. A piece of petrified sea-weed,—very delicate in form, very beautiful in colour, very exquisite in texture, verily a scudding flake of opalescent sea foam transformed by the mermaids of the deep into lovely coral lace,—yielded itself to his ready hand. Zorzio had never beheld such a perfectly beautiful object, and in a transport of delight he hailed his prize as the pledge of his success in life. Speeding homewards in the evening he made Bella the sharer o of his good fortune, and she locked up the bit of coral lace safely in the simple home they had prepared against the next festival of the " Brides."

Alas, the even tenor of their lives was rudely shattered by a call to arms, and brave Zorzio was enrolled among seamen drafted for service in the Orient. Broken-hearted Bella surveyed his empty seat, and her tears fell fast. Should she ever see her Zorzio again she wondered and whispered. Looking up at last, her eyes fell upon her lover's gift—the lovely spray of coral seaweed. An inspiration seized her mind, and with alacrity she reached down her lace-pillow, and guided by an unseen power, she crossed and crossed her bobbins of fine thread until she had completed, in interlacing arabesques, a similitude of her treasured model. Thus was invented the far – famed and precious merletto a piombini—the point-lace of Venice. It is a charming story and it has a striking moral. That piece of coral seaweed was the mascot of the Venetian Renaissance.

The one problem with this story is that bobbin lace became popular in the 16th century, but we can push it back in history for game purposes. Venice's most famous lace isn't this bobbin lace: it's a sort of needle lace made on the island of Burano. There's one form of lace which magicians could develop faster than mundanes. Punto et aira was the first lace designed to be stitched without a substrate of fabric (hence its name "stitched in the air"). A magician could make the substrate using Creo, so that it simply vanished after the piece was complete.

Bobbin lace was made, in period, all over the place, but is particularly centred on the island of Pallestrina. It's again, a bit ahistorical for Ars Magica, but it adds to the desired themes of women's magical craft. Larger pieces of bobbin lace are made by women working in groups, each doing a particular subskill in which they have the greatest talent. This seems a great excuse to get the coven together and weave spells.

Bobbins are made of bone or lead, generally, because they need to be of identical weight. That being said, mostly-ornamental ones have been made of glass, precious stones, and whalebone, although I'm not sure of this last one for Italian lace. Different weight materials could make spellcasting easier, and a set of weights might make an unusual talisman.

The King of Elfland's Daughter 8

A long episode this time, to cover an arc in the novel. We start with a truly excellent description of the "Way of the Woods" virtue. I won't be inculcating a lot of comments this time. Here we are seeing the plot pay out the bits of folklore Dunsany has collected up in earlier chapters. In the original plan I had cut this section out, but basically Dunsany's descriptions are wonderful and I wanted to share them with you, so they have remained in.

CHAPTER XVI: Orion Hunts the Stag

There passed ten years over the fields we know; and Orion grew and learned the art of Oth, and had the cunning of Threl, and knew the woods and the slopes and vales of the downs, as many another boy knows how to multiply figures by other figures or to draw the thoughts from a language not his own and to set them down again in words of his own tongue. And little he knew of the things that ink may do, how it can mark a dead man's thought for the wonder of later years, and tell of happenings that are gone clean away, and be a voice for us out of the dark of time, and save many a fragile thing from the pounding of heavy ages; or carry to us, over the rolling centuries, even a song from lips long dead on forgotten hills. Little knew he of ink; but the touch of a roe deer's feet on dry ground, gone three hours, was a clear path to him, and nothing went through the woods but Orion read its story. And all the sounds of the wood were as full of clear meaning to him as are to the mathematician the signs and figures he makes when he divides his millions by tens and elevens and twelves. He knew by sun and moon and wind what birds would enter the wood, he knew of the coming seasons whether they would be mild or severe, only a little later than the beasts of the wood themselves, which have not human reason or soul and that know so much more than we.

And so he grew to know the very mood of the woods, and could enter their shadowy shelter like one of the woodland beasts. And this he could do when he was barely fourteen years; and many a man lives all his years and can never enter a wood without changing the whole mood of its shadowy ways. For men enter a wood perhaps with the wind behind them, they brush against branches, step on twigs; speak, smoke, or tread heavily; and jays cry out against them, pigeons leave the trees, rabbits pad off to safety, and far more beasts than they know slip on soft feet away from their coming. But Orion moved like Threl, in shoes of deer-skin with the tread of a hunter. And none of the beasts of the wood knew when he was come.

And he came to have a pile of skins like Oth, that he won with his bow in the wood; and he hung great horns of stags in the hall of the castle, high up among old horns where the spider had lived for ages. And this was one of the signs whereby the people of Erl came to know him now for their lord, for no news came of Alveric, and all the old lords of Erl had been hunters of deer. And another sign was the departing of the witch Ziroonderel when she went back to her hill; and Orion lived in the castle now by himself, and she dwelt in her cottage again where her cabbages grew on the high land near to the thunder.

And all that Winter Orion hunted the stags in the wood, but when Spring came he put his bow away. Yet all through the season of song and flowers his thoughts were still with the chase; and he went from house to house wherever a man had one of the long thin dogs that hunt. And sometimes he bought the dog, and sometimes the man would promise to lend it on days of hunting. Thus Orion formed a pack of brown long-haired hounds and yearned for the Spring and Summer to go by. And one Spring evening when Orion was tending his hounds, when villagers were mostly at their doors to notice the length of the evening, there came a man up the street whom nobody knew. He came from the uplands, wrapped in the most aged of clothes, which clung to him as though they had clung forever, and were somehow a part of him and yet part of the Earth, for they were mellowed by the clay of the high fields to its own deep brown. And folk noticed the easy stride of a mighty walker, and a weariness in his eyes: and none knew who he was.

And then a woman said "It is Vand that was only a lad." And they all crowded about him then, for it was indeed Vand who had left the sheep more than ten years ago to ride with Alveric no one in Erl knew whither. "How fares our master?" they said. And a look of weariness came in the eyes of Vand.

"He follows the quest," he said.

"Whither?" they asked.

"To the North," he said. "He seeks for Elfland still."

"Why have you left him?" they asked.

"I lost the hope," he said.

They questioned him no more then, for all men knew that to seek for Elfland one needed a strong hope, and without it one saw no gleam of the Elfin Mountains, serene with unchanging blue. And then the mother of Niv came running up. "Is it indeed Vand?" she said. And they all said "Yes, it is Vand."

And while they murmured together about Vand, and of how years and wandering had changed him, she said to him, "Tell me of my son." And Vand replied "He leads the

quest. There is none whom my master trusts more." And they all wondered, and yet they had no cause for wonder, for it was a mad quest.

But Niv's mother alone did not wonder. "I knew he would," she said. "I knew he would." And she was filled with a great content.

They are trying to use a nympholept to as a guide to a portal guardian.

There are events and seasons to suit the mood of every man, though few indeed could have suited the crazed mood of Niv, yet there came Alveric's quest of Elfland, and so Niv found his work.

And talking in the late evening with Vand the folk of Erl heard tales of many camps, many marches, a tale of profitless wandering where Alveric haunted horizons year after year like a ghost. And sometimes out of Vand's sadness that had come from those profitless years a smile would shine as he told of some foolish happening that had taken place in the camp. But all was told by one that had lost hope in the quest. This was not the way to tell of it, not with doubts, not with smiles. For such a quest may only be told of by those who are fired by its glory: from the mad brain of Niv or the moonstruck wits of Zend we might have news of that quest which could light our minds with some gleam of its meaning; but never from the story, be it made out of facts or scoffs, told by one whom the quest itself was able to lure no longer. The stars stole out and still Vand was telling his stories, and one by one the people went back to their houses, caring to hear no more of the hopeless quest. Had the tale been told by one who clung yet to the faith that still was leading Alveric's wanderers on, the stars would have weakened before those folk left the teller, the sky would have brightened so widely before they left him that one would have said at last "Why! It is morning." Not till then would they have gone.

And the next day Vand went back to the downs and the sheep and troubled himself with romantic quests no more.

And during that Spring men spoke of Alveric again, wondering awhile at his quest, speaking awhile of Lirazel, and guessing where she had gone, and guessing why; and where they could not guess telling some tale to explain all, which went from mouth to mouth till they came to believe it. And Spring went by and they forgot Alveric and obeyed the will of Orion.

And then one day as Orion was waiting for the Summer to go by, with his heart on frosty days and his dreams with his hounds on the uplands, Rannok the lover came over the downs by the path by which Vand had come, and walked down into Erl. Rannok with his heart free at last, with all his melancholy gone, Rannok without woe, careless, care-free, content, looking only for rest after his long wandering, sighing no more. And nothing but this would have made Vyria care to have him, the girl he had sought once. So the end of this was that she married him, and he too went roaming no more on fantastic quests.

The quest has burned out negative personality traits and Flaws, much as the pilgrimage rules do.

And though some looked to the uplands through many an evening, till the long days wore away and a strange wind touched the leaves, and some peered over the further curves of the downs, yet they saw none more of the followers of Alveric's quest coming back by the path that Vand and Rannok had trod. And by the time that the leaves were a wonder of scarlet and gold men spoke no more of Alveric but obeyed Orion his son.

And in this season Orion arose one day before dawn and took his horn and his bow and went to his hounds, who wondered to hear his step before light was come: they heard it all in their sleep and awoke and clamoured to him. And he loosed them and calmed them and led them away to the downs. And to the lonely magnificence of the downs they came when the stags are feeding on dewy grasses, before men are awake. All in the wild wet morning they ran over the gleaming slopes, Orion and his hounds, all rejoicing together. And the scent of the thyme came heavy with the air that Orion breathed, as he trod its wide patches blooming late in the year. To the hounds there came all the wandering scents of the morning. And what wild creatures had met on the hill in the dark and what had crossed it going upon their journeys, and whither all had gone when the day grew bright, bringing the threat of man, Orion guessed and wondered; but to the hounds all was clear. And some of the scents they noted with careful noses, and some they scorned, and for one they sought in vain, for the great red deer were not on the downs that morning.

And Orion led them far from the Vale of Erl but saw no stag that day, and never a wind brought the scent that the anxious hounds were seeking, nor could they find it hidden in any grass or leaves. And evening came on him bringing his hounds home, calling on stragglers with his horn, while the sun turned huge and scarlet; and fainter than echoes of his horn, and far beyond downs and mist, but clear each silver note, he heard the elfin horns that called to him always at evening.

With the great comradeship of a common weariness he and his hounds came home dark in the starlight. The windows of Erl at last flashed to them the glow of their welcome. Hounds came to their kennels and ate, and lay down to contented sleep: Orion went to his castle. He too ate, and afterwards sat thinking of the downs and his hounds and the day, his mind lulled by fatigue to that point at which it rests beyond care.

And many a day passed thus. And then one dewy morning, coming over a ridge of the downs, they saw a

stag below them feeding late when all the rest were gone. The hounds all broke into one joyous cry, the heavy stag moved nimbly over the grass, Orion shot an arrow and missed; all these things happened in a moment. And then the hounds streamed away, and the wind went over the backs of them with a ripple, and the stag went away as though every one of his feet were on little dancing springs. And at first the hounds were swifter than Orion, but he was as tireless as they, and by taking sometimes shorter ways than theirs he stayed near them till they came to a stream and faltered and began to need the help of human reason. And such help as human reason can give in such a matter Orion gave them, and soon they were on again. And the morning passed as they went from hill to hill, and they had not seen the stag a second time; and the afternoon wore away, and still the hounds followed every step of the stag with a skill as strange as magic. And towards evening Orion saw him, going slowly, along the slope of a hill, over coarse grass that was shining in the rays of the low sun. He cheered on his hounds and they ran him over three more small valleys, but down at the bottom of the third he turned round amongst the pebbles of a stream and waited there for the hounds. And they came baying round him, watching his brow antlers. And there they tore him down and killed him at sunset. And Orion wound his horn with a great joy in his heart: he wanted no more than this. And with a note like that of joy, as though they also rejoiced, or mocked his rejoicing, over hills that he knew not, perhaps from the far side of the sunset, the horns of Elfland answered.

CHAPTER XVII: The Unicorn Comes in the Starlight

And winter came, and whitened the roofs of Erl, and all the forest and uplands. And when Orion took his hounds afield in the morning the world lay like a book that was newly written by Life; for all the story of the night before lay in long lines in the snow. Here the fox had gone and there the badger, and here the red deer had gone out of the wood; the tracks led over the downs and disappeared from sight, as the deeds of statesmen, soldiers, courtiers and politicians appear and disappear on the pages of history. Even the birds had their record on those white downs, where the eye could follow each step of their treble claws, till suddenly on each side of the track would appear three little scars where the tips of their longest feathers had flicked the snow, and there the track faded utterly. They were like some popular cry, some vehement fancy, that comes down on a page of history for a day, and passes, leaving no other record at all except those lines on one page.

And amongst all these records left of the story of night Orion would choose the track of some great stag not too long gone, and would follow it with his hounds away over the downs until even the sound of his horn could be heard no longer in Erl. And over a ridge with his hounds, he and they all black against red remnants of sunset, the folk of Erl would see him coming home; and often it was not until all the stars were glowing through the frost. Often the skin of a red deer hung over his shoulders and the huge horns bobbed and nodded above his head.

Orion is beginning to embody faerie kings like Herne. There are many kinds of wild hunt in European folklore.

And at this time there met one day in the forge of Narl, all unknown to Orion, the men of the parliament of Erl. They met after sunset when all were home from their work. And gravely Narl handed to each the mead that was brewed from the clover honey; and when all were come they sat silent.

Clover honey is the boring honey everyone likes, so I'm not sure why Dunsany went with it here. Perhaps it's a bit mystical for him because it's made from shamrocks. Beekeeping is one of the ways to concentrate vis out of Herbam sources or, in Magonomia, to do alchemy without the whole beaker and retort business.

And then Narl broke the silence, saying that Alveric ruled over Erl no more and his son was Lord of Erl, and telling again how once they had hoped for a magic lord to rule over the valley and to make it famous, and saying that this should be he. "And where now," he said, "is the magic for which we hoped? For he hunts the deer as all his forefathers hunted, and nothing of magic has touched him from over there; and there is no new thing."

And Oth stood up to defend him. "He is as fleet as his hounds," he said, "and hunts from dawn to sunset, and crosses the furthest downs and comes home untired."

"It is but youth," said Guhic. And so said all but Threl.

And Threl stood up and said: "He has a knowledge of the ways of the woods, and the lore of the beasts, beyond the learning of man."

"You taught him," said Guhic. "There is no magic here."

"Nothing of this," said Narl, "is from over there."

Thus they argued awhile lamenting the loss of the magic for which they had hoped: for never a valley but history touches it once, never a village but once its name is awhile on the lips of men; only the village of Erl was utterly unrecorded; never a century knew it beyond the round of its downs. And now all their plans seemed lost which they made so long ago, and they saw no hope except in the mead that was brewed from the clover honey. To this they turned in silence. Now it was a goodly brew.

And in a while new plans flashed clear in their minds, new schemes, new devices; and debates in the parliament of Erl flowed proudly on. And they would have made a plan and a policy; but Oth arose from his seat. There was in a flint-built house in the village of Erl an ancient Chronicle, a volume bound in leather, and in it at certain seasons folk wrote all manner of things, the wisdom of farmers concerning the time to sow, the wisdom of hunters concerning the tracking of stags, and the wisdom of prophets that told of the way of Earth. From this Oth quoted now, two lines that he remembered on one of the aged pages; and all the rest of that page told of hoeing; these lines he said to the parliament of Erl as they sat with the mead before them at their table: ”Hooded, and veiled with their night-like tresses, The Fates shall bring what no prophet guesses.”

And then they planned no more, for either their minds were calmed by a certain awe that they seemed to find in the lines, or it may be the mead was stronger than anything written in books. However it be they sat silent over their mead. And in early starlight while the West still glowed they passed away from Narl’s house back to their own homes grumbling as they went that they had no magic lord to rule over Erl, and yearning for magic, to save from oblivion the village and valley they loved. They parted one by one as they came to their houses. And three or four that dwelt near the end of the village on the side that was under the downs were not yet come to their doors, when, white and clear in the starlight and what remained of the gloaming, they saw hard-pressed and wearied a hunted unicorn coming across the downs. They stopped and gazed and shaded their eyes and stroked their beards and wondered. And still it was a white unicorn galloping wearily. And then they heard drawing nearer the cry of Orion’s hounds.

CHAPTER XVIII: The Grey Tent in the Evening

On the day that the hunted unicorn crossed the valley of Erl Alveric had wandered for over eleven years. For more than ten years, a company of six, they went by the backs of the houses by the edge of the fields we know, and camped at evenings with their queer material hung greyly on poles. And whether or not the strange romance of their quest mirrored itself in all the things about them, those camps of theirs seemed always the strangest thing in the landscape; and as evening grew greyer around them their romance and mystery grew.

And for all the vehemence of Alveric’s ambition they travelled leisurely and lazily: sometimes in a pleasant camp they stayed for three days; then they went strolling on. Nine or ten miles they would march and then they would camp again. Someday, Alveric felt sure in his heart, they would see that border of twilight, someday they would enter Elfland. And in Elfland he knew that time e was not as here: he would meet Lirazel unaged in Elfland, with never one smile lost to the raging years, never a furrow worn by the ruin of time. This was his hope; and it led his queer company on from camp to camp, and cheered them round the fire in the lonely evenings, and brought them far to the North, travelling all along the edge of the fields we know, where all men’s faces turned the other way, and the six wanderers went unseen and unheeded. Only the mind of Vand hung back from their hope, and more and more every year his reason denied the lure that was leading the rest. And then one day he lost his faith in Elfland. After that he only followed until a day when the wind was full of rain, and all were cold and wet and the horses weary; he left them then.

And Rannok followed because he had no hope in his heart and wished to wander from sorrow; until one day when all the blackbirds were singing in trees of the fields we know, and his hopelessness left him in the glittering sunshine, and he thought of the cosy homes and the haunts of men. And soon he too passed out of the camp one evening and set off for the pleasant lands.

And now the four that were left were all of one mind, and under the wet coarse cloth that they hung on poles there was deep content in the evenings. For Alveric clung to his hope with all the strength of his race, that had once won Erl in old battles and held it for centuries long, and in the vacant minds of Niv and Zend this idea grew strong and big, like some rare flower that a gardener may plant by chance in a wild untended place. And Thyl sung of the hope; and all his wild fancies that roamed after song decked Alveric’s quest with more and more of glamour. So all were of one mind. And greater quests whether mad or sane have prospered when this was so, and greater quests have failed when it was otherwise.

They had gone northwards for years along the backs of those houses; and then one day they would turn eastwards, wherever a certain look in the sky or a touch of weirdness at evening, or a mere prophecy of Niv’s, seemed to suggest a proximity of Elfland. Upon such occasions they would travel over the rocks, that for all those years lay bordering the fields we know, until Alveric saw that provisions for men and horses would barely bring them back to the houses of men. Then he would turn again, but Niv would have led them still onward over the rocks, for his enthusiasm grew as they went; and Thyl sang to them prophesying success; and Zend would say that he saw the peaks and the spires of Elfland; only Alveric was wise. And so they would come to the houses of men again, and buy more provisions. And Niv and Zend and Thyl would babble of the quest, pouring out the enthusiasm that burned in their hearts; but Alveric did not speak of it, for he had learned that men in those fields neither speak of nor look towards Elfland, although he had not learned why.

Soon they were on again, and the folk that had sold them the produce of fields we know gazed curiously after them

as they went, as though they thought that from madness alone or from dreams inspired by the moon came all the talk they had heard from Niv and Zend and Thyl.

Thus they always travelled on, always seeking new points from which to discover Elfland; and on the left of them blew scents from the fields we know, the scent of lilac from cottage gardens in May, and then the scent of the white-thorn and then of roses, till all the air was heavy with new-mown hay. They heard the low of cattle away on their left, heard human voices, heard partridges calling; heard all the sounds that go up from happy farms; and on their right was always the desolate land, always the rocks and never grass nor a flower. They had the companionship of men no more, and yet they could not find Elfland. In such a case they needed the songs of Thyl and the sure hope of Niv.

And the talk of Alveric's quest spread through the land and overtook his wanderings, till all men that he passed by knew his story; and from some he had the contempt that some men give to those who dedicate all their days to a quest, and from others he had honour; but all he asked for was provender, and this he bought when they brought it. So they went on. Like legendary things they passed along the backs of the houses, putting up their grey shapeless tent in the grey evenings. They came as quietly as rain, and went away like mists drifting. There were jests about them and songs. And the songs outlasted the jests. At last they became a legend, which haunted those farms for ever: they were spoken of when men told of hopeless quests, and held up to laughter or glory, whichever men had to give.

In Ars Magica, this, itself, would eventually generate a band of wandering faeries.

And all the while the King of Elfland watched; for he knew by magic when Alveric's sword drew near: it had troubled his kingdom once, and the King of Elfland knew well the flavour of thunderbolt iron when he felt it loom on the air. From this he had withdrawn his frontiers far, leaving all that ragged land deserted of Elfland; and though he knew not the length of human journeys, he had left a space that to cross would weary the comet, and rightly deemed himself safe.

But when Alveric with his sword was far to the North the Elf King loosened the grip with which he had withdrawn Elfland, as the Moon that withdraws the tide lets it flow back again, and Elfland came racing back as the tide over flat sands. With a long ribbon of twilight at its edge it floated back over the waste of rocks; with old songs it came, with old dreams, and with old voices. And in a while the frontier of twilight lay flashing and glimmering near the fields we know, like an endless Summer evening that lingered on out of the golden age. But bleak and far to the North where Alveric wandered the limitless rocks still heaped the desolate land; only to fields from which he and his sword and his adventurous band were remotely gone that mighty inlet of Elfland came lapping back. So that close again to the leather-worker's cottage and to the farms of his neighbours, a bare three fields away, lay the land that was heaped and piled with all the wonder for which poets seek so hard, the very treasury of all romantic things; and the Elfin Mountains gazed over the border serenely, as though their pale-blue peaks had never moved. And here the unicorns fed along the border as it was their custom to do, feeding sometimes in Elfland, which is the home of all fabulous things, cropping lilies below the slopes of the Elfin Mountains, and sometimes slipping through the border of twilight at evening when all our fields are still, to feed upon earthly grass. It is because of this craving for earthly grass that comes on them now and then, as the red deer in Highland mountains crave once a year for the sea, that, fabulous though they are on account of their birth in Elfland, their existence is nevertheless known among men. The fox, which is born in our fields, also crosses the frontier, going into the border of twilight at certain seasons; it is thence that he gets the romance with which he comes back to our fields. He also is fabulous, but only in Elfland, as the unicorns are fabulous here.

Can Bjornaer foxes do this?

And seldom the folk on those farms saw the unicorns, even dim in the gloaming, for their faces were turned forever away from Elfland. The wonder, the beauty, the glamour, the story of Elfland were for minds that had leisure to care for such things as these; but the crops needed these men, and the beasts that were not fabulous, and the thatch, and the hedges and a thousand things: barely at the end of each year they won their fight against Winter: they knew well that if they let a thought of theirs turn but for a moment towards Elfland, its glory would grip them soon and take all their leisure away, and there would be no time left to mend thatch or hedge or to plough the fields we know.

Faerie eats anything fanciful on the border, so it filters the border communities, forcing them to be mundane.

But Orion lured by the sound of the horns that blew from Elfland at evening, and that some elvish attuning of his ears to magical things caused him alone in all those fields to hear, came with his hounds to a field across which ran the frontier of twilight, and found the unicorns there late on an evening. And, slipping along a hedge of the little field with his hounds padding behind him, he came between a unicorn and the frontier and cut it off from Elfland. This was the unicorn that with flashing neck, covered with flecks of foam that shone silvery in the starlight, panting, harried and weary, came across the valley of Erl, like an inspiration, like a new dynasty to a custom-weary land, like news of a happier continent found far-off by suddenly returned sea-faring men.

CHAPTER XIX: Twelve Old Men Without Magic

Now few things pass by a village and leave no talk behind them. Nor did this unicorn. For the three that saw it going by in the starlight immediately told their families, and many of these ran from their houses to tell the good news to others, for all strange news was accounted good in Erl, because of the talk that it made; and talk was held to be needful when work was over to pass the evenings away. So they talked long of the unicorn.

And, after a day or two, in the forge of Narl the parliament of Erl was met again, seated by mugs of mead, discussing the unicorn. And some rejoiced and said that Orion was magic, because unicorns were of magic stock and came from beyond our fields.

“Therefore,” said one, “he has been to lands of which it does not become us to speak, and is magic, as all things are which dwell over there.”

And some agreed and held that their plans had come to fruition.

But others said that the beast went by in the starlight, if beast it were, and who could say it was a unicorn? And one said that in the starlight it was hard to see it at all, and another said unicorns were hard to recognize. And then they began to discuss the size and shape of these beasts, and all the known legends that told of them, and came no nearer to agreeing together whether or not their lord had hunted a unicorn. Till at last Narl seeing that they would not thus come by the truth, and deeming it necessary that the fact should be established one way or the other forever, rose up and told them that the time had come for the vote. So by a method they had of casting shells of various colours into a horn that was passed from man to man, they voted about the unicorn as Narl had commanded. And a hush fell, and Narl counted. And it was seen to have been established by vote that there had been no unicorn.

Sorrowfully then that parliament of Erl saw that their plans to have a magic lord had failed; they were all old men, and the hope that they had had for so long being gone they turned less easily to newer plans than they had to the plan that they made so long ago. What should they do now, they said? How come by magic? What could they do that the world should remember Erl? Twelve old men without magic. They sat there over their mead, and it could not lighten their sadness.

But Orion was away with his hounds near that great inlet of Elfland where it lay as it were at high tide, touching the very grass of the fields we know. He went there at evening when the horns blew clear to guide him, and waited there all quiet at the edge of those fields for the unicorns to steal across the border. For he hunted stags no more.

And as he went over those fields in the late afternoon folk working on the farms would greet him cheerily; but when still he went eastwards they spoke to him less and less, till at last when he neared the border and still kept on they looked his way no more, but left him and his hounds to their own devices.

And by the time the sun set he would be standing quiet by a hedge that ran right down into the frontier of twilight, with his hounds all gathered close in under the hedge, with his eye on them all lest one of them dared to move. And the pigeons would come home to trees of the fields we know, and twittering starlings; and the elfin horns would blow, clear silver magical music thrilling the chilled air, and all the colours of clouds would go suddenly changing; it was then in the failing light, in the darkening of colours, that Orion would watch for a dim white shape stepping out of the border of twilight. And this evening just as he hushed a hound with his hand, just as all our fields went dim, there slipped a great white unicorn out of the border, still munching lilies such as never grew in any fields of ours. He came, a whiteness on perfectly silent feet, four or five yards into the fields we know, and stood there still as moonlight, and listened and listened and listened. Orion never moved, and he kept his hounds silent by some power he had or by some wisdom of theirs. And in five minutes the unicorn made a step or two forward, and began to crop the long sweet earthly grasses. And as soon as he moved there came others through the deep blue border of twilight, and all at once there were five of them feeding there. And still Orion stood with his hounds and waited.

Little by little the unicorns moved further away from the border, lured further and further into the fields we know by the deep rich earthly grasses, on which all five of them browsed in the silent evening. If a dog barked, even if a late cock crew, up went all their ears at once and they stood watchful, not trusting anything in the fields of men, or venturing into them far.

But at last the one that had come first through the twilight got so far from his magical home that Orion was able to run between him and the frontier, and his hounds came behind him. And then had Orion been toying with the chase, then had he hunted but for an idle whim, and not for that deep love of the huntsman’s craft that only huntsmen know, then had he lost everything: for his hounds would have chased the nearest unicorns, and they would have been in a moment across the frontier and lost, and if the hounds had followed they would have been lost too, and all that day’s work would have gone for nothing. But Orion led his hounds to chase the furthest, watching all the while to see if any hound would try to pursue the others; and only one began to, but Orion’s whip was ready. And so he cut his quarry off from its home, and his hounds for the second time were in full cry after a unicorn.

As soon as the unicorn heard the feet of the hounds, and saw with one flash of his eye that he could not get to his enchanted home, he shot forward with a sudden spring of his limbs and went like an arrow over the fields we know. When he came to hedges he did not seem to gather his limbs to leap but seemed to glide over them with motionless muscles, galloping again when he touched the grass once more.

In that first rush the hounds drew far ahead of Orion, and this enabled him to head the unicorn off whenever it tried to turn to the magical land; and at such turnings he came near his hounds again. And the third time that Orion turned the unicorn it galloped straight away, and so continued over the fields of men. The cry of the hounds went through the calm of the evening like a long ripple across a sleeping lake following the unseen way of some strange diver. In that straight gallop the unicorn gained so much on the hounds that soon Orion only saw him far off, a white spot moving along a slope in the gloaming. Then it reached the top of a valley and passed from view. But that strong queer scent that led the hounds like a song remained clear on the grass, and they never checked or faltered except for a moment at streams. Even there their ranging noses picked up the magical scent before Orion came up to give them his aid.

And as the hunt went on the daylight faded away, till the sky was all prepared for the coming of stars. And one or two stars appeared, and a mist came up from streams and spread all white over fields, till they could not have seen the unicorn if he had been close before them. The very trees seemed sleeping. They passed by little houses, lonely, sheltered by elms; shut off by high hedges of yew from those that roamed the fields; houses that Orion had never seen or known till the chance course of this unicorn brought him suddenly past their doors. Dogs barked as they passed, and continued barking long, for that magical scent on the air and the rush and the voice of the pack told them something strange was afoot; and at first they barked because they would have shared in what was afoot, and afterwards to warn their masters about the strangeness. They barked long through the evening.

And once, as they passed a little house in a cluster of old thorns, a door suddenly opened, and a woman stood gazing to see them go by: she could have seen no more than grey shapes, but Orion in the moment as he passed saw all the glow of the house, and the yellow light streaming out into the cold. The merry warmth cheered him, and he would have rested awhile in that little oasis of man in the lonely fields, but the hounds went on and he followed; and those in the houses heard their cry go past like the sound of a trumpet whose echoes go fading away amongst the furthest hills.

A fox heard them coming, and stood quite still and listened: at first he was puzzled. Then he caught the scent of the unicorn, and all was clear to him, for he knew by the magic flavour that it was something coming from Elfland.

But when sheep caught the scent they were terrified, and ran all huddled together until they could run no more.

Cattle leaped up from their sleep, gazed dreamily, and wondered; but the unicorn went through them and away, as some rose-scented breeze that has strayed from valley gardens into the streets of a city slips through the noisy traffic and is gone.

Soon all the stars were looking on those quiet fields through which the hunt went with its exultation, a line of vehement life cleaving through sleep and silence. And now the unicorn, far out of sight though he was, no longer gained a little at every hedge. For at first he lost no more pace at any hedge than a bird loses passing clear of a cloud, while the great hounds struggled through what gaps they could find, or lay on their sides and wriggled between the stems of the bushes. But now he gathered his strength with more effort at every hedge, and sometimes hit the top of the hedge and stumbled. He was galloping slower too; for this was a journey such as no unicorn made through the deep calm of Elfland. And something told the tired hounds they were drawing nearer. And a new joy entered their voices.

They crossed a few more black hedges, and then there loomed before them the dark of a wood. When the unicorn entered the wood the voices of the hounds were clear in his ears. A pair of foxes saw him going slowly, and they ran along beside him to see what would befall the magic creature coming weary to them from Elfland. One on each side they ran, keeping his slow pace and watching him, and they had no fear of the hounds though they heard their cry, for they knew that nothing that followed that magical scent would turn aside after any earthly thing. So he went labouring through the wood, and the foxes watched him curiously all the way.

The hounds entered the wood and the great oaks rang with the sound of them, and Orion followed with an enduring speed that he may have got from our fields or that may have come to him over the border from Elfland. The dark of the wood was intense but he followed his hounds' cry, and they did not need to see with that wonderful scent to guide them. They never wavered as they followed that scent, but went on through gloaming and starlight. It was not like any hunt of fox or stag; for another fox will cross the line of a fox, or a stag may pass through a herd of stags and hinds; even a flock of sheep will bewilder hounds by crossing the line they follow; but this unicorn was the only magical thing in all our fields that night, and his scent lay unmistakable over the earthly grass, a burning pungent flavour of enchantment among the things of every day. They hunted him clear through the wood and down to a valley, the two foxes keeping with him and watching still: he picked his feet carefully as he went down the hill, as though his weight hurt them

while he descended the slope, yet his pace was as fast as that of the hounds going down: then he went a little way along the trough of the valley, turning to his left as soon as he came down the hill, but the hounds gained on him then and he turned for the opposite slope. And then his weariness could be concealed no longer, the thing that all wild creatures conceal to the last; he toiled over every step as though his legs dragged his body heavily. Orion saw him from the opposite slope.

And when the unicorn got to the top the hounds were close behind him, so that he suddenly whipped round his great single horn and stood before them threatening. Then the hounds bayed about him, but the horn waved and bowed with such swift grace that no hound got a grip; they knew death when they saw it, and eager though they were to fasten upon him they leaped back from that flashing horn. Then Orion came up with his bow, but he would not shoot, perhaps because it was hard to put an arrow safely past his pack of hounds, perhaps because of a feeling such as we have to-day, and which is no new thing among us, that it was unfair to the unicorn. Instead he drew an old sword that he was wearing, and advanced through his hounds and engaged that deadly horn. And the unicorn arched his neck, and the horn flashed at Orion; and, weary though the unicorn was, yet a mighty force remained in that muscular neck to drive the blow that he aimed, and Orion barely parried. He thrust at the unicorn's throat, but the great horn tossed the sword aside from its aim and again lunged at Orion. Again he parried with the whole weight of his arm, and had but an inch to spare. He thrust again at the throat, and the unicorn parried the sword-thrust almost contemptuously. Again and again the unicorn aimed fair at Orion's heart; the huge white beast stepped forward pressing Orion back. That graceful bowing neck, with its white arch of hard muscle driving the deadly horn, was wearying Orion's arm. Once more he thrust and failed; he saw the unicorn's eye flash wickedly in the starlight, he saw all white before him the fearful arch of its neck, he knew he could turn aside its heavy blows no more; and then a hound got a grip in front of the right shoulder. No moments passed before many another hound leaped on to the unicorn, each with a chosen grip, for all that they looked like a rabble rolling and heaving by chance. Orion thrust no more, for many hounds all at once were between him and his enemy's throat. Awful groans came from the unicorn, such sounds as are not heard in the fields we know; and then there was no sound but the deep growl of the hounds that roared over the wonderful carcase as they wallowed in fabulous blood.

In modern fantasy killing unicorns is a terrible sin. For example, its one of the things which damns the soul of Voldemort in the Harry Potter books. To medieval people, though, a unicorn was an actual thing: a real monster, that spent its spare time hunting elephants. What's the national animal of Scotland? A Unicorn. Originally they were described as smaller than horses, but that has passed out of most modern fantasy, because people want to ride them.

In this hunt scenario, one thing a Unicorn could do is flee toward the aura of a covenant. Who's side to you take?

Orion's hounds can now scent at least one type of vis, which is likely a useful trait.

Eating vis has odd effects. These secondary benefits were initially included to make vis a useful treasure for companions as well as magi, but they have fallen by the wayside a little. How do hounds affected by eating the unicorn's meat differ from strictly mortal hounds? Remembering that some of Orion's dogs are borrowed, he's putting a heap of oddness into his village by handing them back to their owners.

We will go into unicorn horns in detail later, but unicorns were, at least theoretically, considered a feast-animal. Hunting them, for trophies, for their assassination preventing horns, or for their succulent meat, might be something a covenant does regularly. I can't think of any example of unicorn hippoculture, but if anyone can farm unicorn meat it's the Order of Hermes, which is, in much part, cheerfully ambivalent to boundaries, moral and aesthetic.

CHAPTER XX: A Historical Fact

Amongst the weary hounds refreshed with fury and triumph, Orion stepped with his whip and drove them away from the monstrous dead body, and sent the lash quivering round in a wide circle, while in his other hand he took his sword and cut off the unicorn's head. He also took the skin of the long white neck and brought it away dangling empty from the head. All the while the hounds bayed and made eager rushes one by one at that magical carcase whenever one saw a chance of eluding the whip; so that it was long before Orion got his trophy, for he had to work as hard with his whip as with his sword. But at last he had it slung by a leather thong over his shoulders, the great horn pointing upwards past the right side of his head, and the smeared skin hanging down along his back. And while he arranged it thus he allowed his hounds to worry the body again and taste that wonderful blood. Then he called to them and blew a note on his horn and turned slowly home towards Erl, and they all followed behind him. And the two foxes stole up to taste the curious blood, for they had sat and waited for this.

Foxes usually avoid hunting packs, but this pair have been opportunistically planning this. It could be the origin story for something like a kitsune.

While the unicorn was climbing his last hill Orion felt such fatigue that he could have gone little further, but now that the heavy head hung from his shoulders all his fatigue was gone and he trod with a lightness such as he had in

the mornings, for it was his first unicorn. And his hounds seemed refreshed as though the blood they had lapped had some strange power in it, and they came home riotously, gambolling and rushing ahead as when newly loosed from their kennels.

If Orion had drunk it, perhaps he would have been able to explain how it made him feel, but if we argue that it makes them feel younger, then Dunsany has predicted Rowling.

Thus Orion came home over the downs in the night, till he saw the valley before him full of the smoke of Erl, where one late light was burning in a window of one of his towers. And, coming down the slopes by familiar ways, he brought his hounds to their kennels; and just before dawn had touched the heights of the downs he blew his horn before his postern door. And the aged guardian of the door when he opened it to Orion saw the great horn of the unicorn bobbing over his head.

This was the horn that was sent in later years as a gift from the Pope to King Francis. Benvenuto Cellini tells of it in his memoirs. He tells how Pope Clement sent for him and a certain Tobbia, and ordered them to make designs for the setting of a unicorn's horn, the finest ever seen. Judge then of Orion's delight when the horn of the first unicorn he ever took was such as to be esteemed generations later the finest ever seen, and in no less a city than Rome, with all her opportunities to acquire and compare such things. For a number of these curious horns must have been available for the Pope to have selected for the gift the finest ever seen; but in the simpler days of my story the rarity of the horn was so great that unicorns were still considered fabulous. The year of the gift to King Francis would be about 1530, the horn being mounted in gold; and the contract went to Tobbia and not to Benvenuto Cellini. I mention the date because there are those who care little for a tale if it be not here and there supported by history, and who even in history care more for fact than philosophy. If any such reader have followed the fortunes of Orion so far he will be hungry by now for a date or a historical fact. As for the date, I give him 1530. While for the historical fact I select that generous gift recorded by Benvenuto Cellini, because it may well be that just where he came to unicorns such a reader may have felt furthest away from history and have felt loneliest just at this point for want of historical things. How the unicorn's horn found its way from the Castle of Erl, and in what hands it wandered, and how it came at last to the City of Rome, would of course make another book.

This is Francis I and Clement VII, who is a Medici, hence the artists. Alicorn, as the substance is called is, in the real world, narwhal ivory. There was a steady traffic of it into Europe. The Throne of Denmark is basically made of them. Dunsany's slightly off with the dates: the gift happened in 1533, at the wedding of his niece, Catherine de Medici.

In the thoughts of the people of the time, if poison was placed in an alicorn cup, it would heat up and smoke. Francis also carried a bag of alicorn powder with him, for travel, and for showing off his wealth. Catherine is mentioned in some detail in the Magonomia core rules, so I don't want to give too much of the game away, but she's a brilliant character.

But all that I need say now about that horn is that Orion took the whole head to Threl, who took off the skin and washed it and boiled the skull for hours, and replaced the skin and stuffed the neck with straw; and Orion set it in the midmost place among all the heads that hung in the high hall. And the rumour went all through Erl, as swift as unicorns gallop, telling of this fine horn that Orion had won. So that the parliament of Erl met again in the forge of Narl. They sat at the table there debating the rumour; and others besides Threl had seen the head. And at first, for the sake of old divisions, some held to their opinion that there had been no unicorn. They drank Narl's goodly mead and argued against the monster. But after a while, whether Threl's argument convinced them, or whether as is more likely, they yielded from generosity, which arose like a beautiful flower out of the mellow mead, whatever it was the debate of those that opposed the unicorn languished, and when the vote was put it was declared that Orion had killed a unicorn, which he had hunted hither from beyond the fields we know.

And at this they all rejoiced; for they saw at last the magic for which they had longed, and for which they had planned so many years ago, when all were younger and had had more hope in their plans. And as soon as the vote was taken Narl brought out more mead, and they drank again to mark the happy occasion: for magic at last, said they, had come on Orion, and a glorious future surely awaited Erl. And the long room and the candles and the friendly men and the deep comfort of mead made it easy to look a little way forward into time and to see a year or so that had not yet come, and to see coming glories glowing a little way off. And they told again of the days, but nearer now, when the distant lands should hear of the vale they loved: they told again of the fame of the fields of Erl going from city to city. One praised its castle, another its huge high downs, another the vale itself all hidden from every land, another the dear quaint houses built by an olden folk, another the deep of the woods that lay over the sky-line; and all spoke of the time when the wide world should hear of it all, because of the magic that there was in Orion; for they knew that the world has a quick ear for magic, and always turns toward the wonderful even though it be nearly asleep. Their voices were high, praising magic, telling again of the unicorn, glorying in the future of Erl, when suddenly in the doorway stood the Freer. He was there in his long white robe with its trimming of mauve, in the door with the night behind him. As they looked, in the light of their candles, they could see he was wearing an emblem, on a chain of gold round his neck. Narl bade him welcome, some moved a chair to the table; but he had heard them speak

of the unicorn. He lifted his voice from where he stood, and addressed them. “Cursed be unicorns,” he said, “and all their ways, and all things that be magic.”

In the awe that suddenly changed the mellow room one cried: “Master! Curse not us!”

“Good Freer,” said Narl, “we hunted no unicorn.”

But the Freer raised up his hand against unicorns and cursed them yet. “Curst be their horn,” he cried, “and the place where they dwell, and the lilies whereon they feed, curst be all songs that tell of them. Curst be they utterly with everything that dwelleth beyond salvation.”

He paused to allow them to renounce the unicorns, standing still in the doorway, looking sternly into the room.

And they thought of the sleekness of the unicorn’s hide, his swiftness, the grace of his neck, and his dim beauty cantering by when he came past Erl in the evening. They thought of his stalwart and redoubtable horn; they remembered old songs that told of him. They sat in uneasy silence and would not renounce the unicorn.

And the Freer knew what they thought and he raised his hand again, clear in the candle-light with the night behind him. “Curst be their speed,” he said, “and their sleek white hide; curst be their beauty and all that they have of magic, and everything that walks by enchanted streams.”

And still he saw in their eyes a lingering love for those things that he forbade, and therefore he ceased not yet. He lifted his voice yet louder and continued, with his eye sternly upon those troubled faces: “And curst be trolls, elves, goblins and fairies upon the Earth, and hypogriffs and Pegasus in the air, and all the tribes of the mer-folk under the sea. Our holy rites forbid them. And curst be all doubts, all singular dreams, all fancies. And from magic may all true folk be turned away. Amen.”

He turned round suddenly and was into the night. A wind loitered about the door, then flapped it to. And the large room in the forge of Narl was as it had been but a few moments before, yet the mellow mood of it seemed dulled and dim. And then Narl spoke, rising up at the table’s end and breaking the gloom of the silence. “Did we plan our plans,” he said, “so long ago, and put our faith in magic, that we should now renounce magical things and curse our neighbours, the harmless folk beyond the fields we know, and the beautiful things of the air, and dead mariners’ lovers dwelling beneath the sea?”

“No, no,” said some. And they quaffed their mead again.

And then one rose with his horn of mead held high, then another and then another, till all were standing upright all round the light of the candles. “Magic!” one cried. And the rest with one accord took up his cry till all were shouting “Magic.”

The Freer on his homeward way heard that cry of Magic, he gathered his sacred robe more closely around him and clutched his holy things, and said a spell that kept him from sudden demons and the doubtful things of the mist.

CHAPTER XXI: On the Verge of Earth

And on that day Orion rested his hounds. But the next day he rose early and went to his kennels and loosened the joyous hounds in the shining morning, and led them out of the valley and over the downs towards the frontier of twilight again. And he took his bow with him no more, but only his sword and his whip; for he had come to love the joy of his fifteen hounds when they hunted the one-horned monster, and felt that he shared the joy of every hound; while to shoot one with an arrow would be but a single joy.

This feels like a virtue. It’s not quite a familiar bond, but he’s got some sort semi-mystical thing going on here with his pack. Arguably killing the unicorn was an Ordeal so his pack now has a mystical virtue as a group. I’d suggest that military groups could similarly have Ordeals the effects of which are passed down, hence the ceremonial things like French and Roman legion eagles. Could a turb of grogs have something similar? Is this where turb boons come from?

All day he went over the fields, greeting some farmer here and there, or worker in the field, and gaining greetings in return, and good wishes for sport. But when evening came and he was near the frontier, fewer and fewer greeted him as he passed, for he was manifestly travelling where none went, whence even their thoughts held back. So he went lonely, yet cheered by his eager thoughts, and happy in the comradeship of his hounds; and both his thoughts and his hounds were all for the chase.

And so he came to the barrier of twilight again, where the hedges ran down to it from the fields of men and turned strange and dim in a glow that is not of our Earth and disappeared in the twilight. He stood with his hounds close in against one of these hedges just where it touched the barrier. The light just there on the hedge, if like anything of our Earth, was like the misty dimness that flashes upon a hedge, seen only across one field, when touched by the rainbow: in the sky the rainbow is clear, but close across one wide field the rainbow’s end scarcely shows, yet a heavenly strangeness has touched and altered the hedge. In some such light as that glowed the last of the hawthorns that grew in the fields of men. And just beyond it, like a liquid opal, all full of wandering lights, lay the barrier through which no man can see, and no sound come but the sound of the elfin horns, and only that to the ears of very few. The horns were blowing now,

piercing that barrier of dim light and silence with the magical resonance of their silver note, that seemed to beat past all things intervening to come to Orion's ear, as the sunlight beats through ether to illumine the vales of the moon.

The horns died down, and nothing whispered from Elfland; and all the sounds thenceforth were the sounds of an earthly evening. Even these grew few, and still no unicorns came.

A dog barked far away: a cart, the sole sound on an empty road, went homeward wearily: someone spoke in a lane, and then left the silence unbroken, for words seemed to offend the hush that was over all our fields. And in the hush Orion gazed at the frontier, watching for the unicorns that never came, expecting each moment to see one step through the twilight. But he had done unwisely in coming to the same spot at which he had found the five unicorns only two days before. For of all creatures the unicorns are the wariest, guarding their beauty from the eye of man with never ceasing watchfulness; dwelling all day beyond the fields we know, and only entering them rarely at evening, when all is still, and with the utmost vigilance, and venturing even then scarcely beyond the edges. To come on such animals twice at the same spot within two days with hounds, after hunting and killing one of them, was more unlikely than Orion thought. But his heart was full of the triumph of his hunt, and the scene of it lured him back to it in the way that such scenes have. And now he gazed at the frontier, waiting for one of these great creatures to come proudly through, a great tangible shape out of the dim opalescence. And no unicorn came.

And standing gazing there so long, that curious boundary began to lure him till his thoughts went roaming with its wandering lights and he desired the peaks of Elfland. And well they knew that lure who dwelt on those farms lying all along the edge of the fields we know, and wisely kept their eyes turned ever away from that wonder that lay with its marvel of colours so near to the backs of their houses. For there was a beauty in it such as is not in all our fields; and it is told those farmers in youth how, if they gaze upon those wandering lights, there will remain no joy for them in the goodly fields, the fine, brown furrows or the waves of wheat, or in any things of ours; but their hearts will be far from here with elfin things, yearning always for unknown mountains and for folk not blessed by the Freer.

And standing now, while our earthly evening waned, upon the very edge of that magical twilight, the things of Earth rushed swiftly from his remembrance, and suddenly all his care was for elfin things. Of all the folk that trod the paths of men he remembered only his mother, and suddenly knew, as though the twilight had told him, that she was enchanted and he of a magical line. And none had told him this, but he knew it now.

For years he had wondered through many an evening and guessed where his mother was gone: he had guessed in lonely silence; none knew what the child was guessing: and now an answer seemed to hang in the air; it seemed as though she were only a little way off across the enchanted twilight that divided those farms from Elfland. He moved three steps and came to the frontier itself; his foot was the furthest that stood in the fields we know: against his face the frontier lay like a mist, in which all the colours of pearls were dancing gravely. A hound stirred as he moved, the pack turned their heads and eyed him; he stood, and they rested again. He tried to see through the barrier, but saw nothing but wandering lights that were made by the massing of twilights from the ending of thousands of days, which had been preserved by magic to build that barrier there. Then he called to his mother across that mighty gap, those few preserved by magic to build that barrier there. Then he upon one side Earth and the haunts of men, and the time that we measure by minutes and hours and years, and upon the other Elfland and another way of time. He called to her twice and listened, and called again; and never a cry or a whisper came out of Elfland. He felt then the magnitude of the gulf that divided him from her, and knew it to be vast and dark and strong, like the gulfs that set apart our times from a bygone day, or that stand between daily life and the things of dream, or between folk tilling the Earth and the heroes of song, or between those living yet and those they mourn. And the barrier twinkled and sparkled as though so airy a thing never divided lost years from that fleeing hour called Now.

He stood there with the cries of Earth faint in the late evening, behind him, and the mellow glow of the soft earthly twilight; and before him, close to his face, the utter silence of Elfland, and the barrier that made that silence, gleaming with its strange beauty. And now he thought no more of earthly things, but only gazed into that wall of twilight, as prophets tampering with forbidden lore gaze into cloudy crystals. And to all that was elvish in Orion's blood, to all that he had of magic from his mother, the little lights of the twilight-builded boundary lured and tempted and beckoned. He thought of his mother dwelling in lonely ease beyond the rage of Time, he thought of the glories of Elfland, dimly known by magical memories that he had had from his mother. The little cries of the earthly evening behind him he heeded no more nor heard. And with all these little cries were lost to him also the ways and the needs of men, the things they plan, the things they toil for and hope for, and all the little things their patience achieves. In the new knowledge that had come to him beside this glittering boundary that he was of magical blood he desired at once to cast off his allegiance to Time, and to leave the lands that lay under Time's dominion and were ever scourged by his tyranny, to leave them with no more than five short paces, and to enter the ageless land where his mother sat with her father while he reigned on his misty throne in that hall of bewildering beauty at which only song has guessed. No more was Erl his home, no more were the ways of man

his ways: their fields to his feet no more! But the peaks of the Elfin Mountains were to him now what welcoming eaves of straw are to earthly labourers at evening; the fabulous, the unearthly, were to Orion home. Thus had that barrier of twilight, too long seen, enchanted him; so much more magical was it than any earthly evening.

And there are those that might have gazed long at it and even yet turned away; but not easily Orion; for though magic has power to charm worldly things they respond to enchantment heavily and slowly, while all that was magic in Orion's blood flashed answer to the magic that shown in the rampart of Elfland. It was made of the rarest lights that wander in air, and the fairest flashes of sunlight that astonish our fields through storm, and the mists of little streams, and the glow of flowers in moonlight, and all the ends of our rainbows with all their beauty and magic, and scraps of the gloaming of evenings long treasured in aged minds. Into this enchantment he stepped to have done with mundane things; but as his foot touched the twilight a hound that had sat behind him under the hedge, held back from the chase so long, stretched its body a little and uttered one of those low cries of impatience that amongst the ways of man most nearly resembles a yawn. And old habit, at that sound made Orion turn his head, and he saw the hound and went up to him for a moment, and patted him and would have said farewell; but all the hounds were around him then, nosing his hands and looking up at his face. And standing there amongst his eager hounds, Orion, who but a moment before was dreaming of fabulous things with thoughts that floated over the magical lands and scaled the enchanted peaks of the Elfin Mountains, was suddenly at the call of his earthly lineage. It was not that he cared more to hunt than to be with his mother beyond the fret of time, in the lands of her father lovelier than anything song hath said; it was not that he loved his hounds so much that he could not leave them; but his fathers had followed the chase age after age, as his mother's line had timelessly followed magic; and the call towards magic was strong while he looked on magical things, and the old earthly line was as strong to beckon him to the chase. The beautiful boundary of twilight had drawn his desires towards Elfland, next moment his hounds had turned him another way: it is hard for any of us to avoid the grip of external things.

For some moments Orion stood thinking among his hounds, trying to decide which way to turn, trying to weigh the easy lazy ages, that hung over untroubled lawns and the listless glories of Elfland, with the good brown plough and the pasture and the little hedges of Earth. But the hounds were around him, nosing, crying, looking into his eyes, speaking to him if tails and paws and large brown eyes can speak, saying "Away! Away!" To think amongst all that tumult was impossible; he could not decide, and the hounds had it their way, and he and they went, together, home over the fields we know.

Venice: Crafts, Princess, Fire

A short episode this week, to fill the hole caused when two episodes went live last week. This is a weaker section of Staley, but a necessary one for a few reasons. It covers the game period for Ars Magica. It lists the industries which the magical skills hide behind. It contains a terrible sin that cracks the Dominion in Venice, and leaves it damaged during the game period.

Away back in the ninth century, in the days of the "Grand" Doge Agnello Partecipazio, the Emperor Lothair issued his " Constitutiones Olonenses," wherein eight cities and towns of Northern Italy are named as suitable centres for the establishment of the revived Roman "Collegia" or " Scholce" — Bologna, Cremona, Firenze, Ivrea, Milano, Padua, Torino and Rivoalto (Venice). In each place the designation of the Scholce varied : in Venice they were called "Fragilia" —from " Flagelli," —whips,— the exact meaning of which it is difficult to state, perhaps "training schools " wherein learners were whipped into shape !

Each " Fragilia" had its teachers, its pupils, its officers, its constitution, its duties, and its bylaws. The earliest distinct mention of a " Trade " is in 826, when a maker of lead pipes for organs was working away near San Giacomo di Rialto : doubtless the artificer in question was a Greek, his name has not been preserved. Orso Partecipazio employed clock-makers in 864 and silversmiths and carvers of ivory : these craftsmen were Greeks however. The "Cassellari" —makers of arcelle and cassoni — formed already a vigorous Corporation in the time of the rape of the "Venetian Brides."

The first notice of " Fabbri'—blacksmiths, was in 1184 as forming a '"Fragilia," but the Calle de Fabbri was a well-known lane in the tenth century. The Altino Chronicle names Fishermen, Smiths, Saddlers, Carriers by water. Shepherds, Butchers, Masons, Carpenters, Cabinetmakers, Shoemakers and Furriers as the earliest incorporated craftsmen in the islands of the lagunes. "Marzeri" or silk-mercers were established in Rivoalto in 942.

Doge Pietro Polani, in 1143 drafted a "Table of Precedence," which established as the premier "Fragilia" or Trade-Guild, the Corporation of Fishermen. Thirty years later Doge Sebastiano Ziani set up the first ' Corte delta Giutizia " in the interest of traders and operatives. Thereafter numerous other Crafts are named in Venetian history ; but Venice never attained to the eminence of Florence in the development of her Guilds — she was sui generis a great sea-port rather than a metropolis of industry. The thirteenth century first saw the cradle of the Crafts rocking effectively, — just as the fourteenth furnished the nursery of the Fine Arts,—and Venice felt the impulse of the new industries, along with the rest of Italy.*

Doge Arrigo Dandolo had annexed one-fourth of the old Roman Empire to the tutelage of Venice, and ten great Turkish galleons brought home, with the remnant of her forces, vast treasures,—the loot of Constantinople and the islands of the Greek Archipelago. Upon the Piazzetta was outpoured the wealth of the Levant. Never before had Venetian eyes and hands beheld or handled such creations of art and craft. Every church and monastery, every palace and mansion, and every poor man's home, were enriched by things of joy and beauty. Mothers and maidens laid up in honoured hiding – places tokens of their heroes resting in Paradise, and all the sons of Venice gathered objects of interest which engrossed their intelligences and set their minds and hands at work to imitate—the fall of Constantinople was the rise of craftsmanship in the Lagunes.

The Conquest of Constantinople—a notable turning-point in the history of Venice—was the initial mark of a new era throughout Europe. By common consent every class of the Venetians welcomed the promise of new conditions, — social and political,—and set to work to exchange Oriental ideas and sympathies for the pushful methods and modes of Northern and Western Europe. The first step was the election of a Doge, who should be, not only a desirable figurehead for the State, but who, by his force of character and personal experience, should lead the Commonwealth along progressive ways.

The qualifications for the Dogado were : (i) Ripe age ; (2) Urbane temperament ; (3) Good birth ; and (4) Ample private means. One man, and one man alone, stood out head-and-shoulders above his peers, as possessed of these four qualities, a man whose thirty years of distinguished public service placed him in the unique position of first citizen of Venice. By universal acclamation Pietro Ziani was chosen to wear the laurel-wreathed berretta of the great Dandolo. The son of one of the most distinguished of the Doges—Sebastiano Ziani— he had borne himself nobly as a successful naval commander, a tactful ambassador, and an upright magistrate. Handsome above the ordinary, pious without hypocrisy, talented in linguistic and forensic aptitude, and passionately loyal to the Constitution, he was calmly awaiting his destiny at his country residence at Arbe in Dalmatia.

A deputation of the Lords of the Council The Dogaressas of Venice boarded the magnificent " Bucintoro" and accompanied by thirty galleys, all splendidly decorated with rare brocades and tapestries, set off to meet and escort the new Doge. Pietro Ziani's progress was a triumphal procession, calling to mind the unanimous and felicitous election of Domenigo Selvo one hundred and fifty years before. Almost the first act of the new regime was the affirmation of the cordial relations which his

father, Sebastiano, had entered into with Guglielmo II. —"The Good," King of Sicily.

In confirmation of the new treaty the new Doge, in 1213, sought and gained the hand of the Princess Costanza, daughter of King Tancredo, Guglielmo's son and successor. She was the first Norman Dogaressa of Venice, daughter of a brave and ardent race, a woman of conspicuous ability and ambition, and an ideal consort for the Head of a rejuvenated Venice. Pietro Ziani had but lately buried his first wife, the modest and beautiful Countess Maria Baseggio —whose father held the high office of Procurator of San Marco — nobilis et decora nimis Maria Dukessa — as she is called in the Altino Chronicle. The sole offspring of this union was a son, Giorgio, but, alas, when yet a child, he was torn to pieces by the savage mastiff watch-dogs of the monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore. It was said that the Doge was so infuriated by this misfortune that he ordered the church and monastery with all the animals, — the poor monks as welly—to be consumed with fire : one may hope the innocent Religious escaped the fury. Anyhow the rest were all burnt, and then the remorse of Ziani was pitiable. By way of reparation he set to work at once to rebuild and re-endow what he had so petulantly sacrificed.

Dogaressa Costanza was handsome and gracious, and wore her Royal honours with distinction. Palazzi wrote thus of her—" A Queen by birth, Dogaressa of Venice by marriage, she exhibited all the attributes of her royal station,—she was also Duchess of Calabria,—and her high breeding, no less than her beauty, raised her above all petty jealousies." In the ancient pack of playing-cards, at the Venetian Museo Civico, we find her represented upon the "Ten of Spades," with the following legend :—" Costanza, daughter of Tancredo King of Naples, wife of Doge Pietro Ziani, was accustomed to meet all the malcontents against the Doge and herself with the saying :—' I have nothing to do with you !"

The State being involved in tremendous financial difficulties on account of the cost of the Crusades, and also in behalf of the purchase of the island of Crete, in view of the Doge's great private wealth, — 'Ziani"was quite as true of Pietro as of Sebastiano—reduced his official salary to 2800 lire, with 100 thrown in as a free gift. It was further decreed that all tributes to the Doge should henceforth be shared between him and the treasury of San Marco. Moreover he was required to make an offering of three silver trumpets for ceremonial processions, and to undertake the repairs of the Ducal Palace, —rather a one-sided bargain!

Fifteen years of marital happiness fell to the lot of the Doge and Dogaressa. Three children were borne by imperious Costanza—Marco, Marchesina, and Maria. Some authorities say that the Dogaressa died suddenly in 1228 and that the Doge, brokenhearted, followed her within a month. The Altino Chronicle however records the abdication of Pietro Ziani, and adds that he and his Consort, with their family, retired into private life and went to reside in their palace upon the fondamento of Santa Giustina, where he died, and then received sepulchre in the church of San Giorgio Maggiore, in the tomb of his father Sebastiano.

There is still a third version of the deaths of Doge Pietro and Dogaressa Costanza. In the terrible earthquake of 1220, when the church and monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore were destroyed, and the islands of Amiano and Costanzina swallowed up, it was said that many people died of fright, and among them the Dogaressa. The Doge, sharing the universal sense of insecurity in Venice, proposed to move the seat of Government to Constantinople, but, upon the cessation of the seismic disturbances, wiser counsels prevailed, and he set to work to rebuild the shattered edifices. In 1229 Pietro Ziani exchanged the silk-brocaded robe of State for the worsted habit of a Benedictine, and ended his days in the new monastery of San Giorgia which he had built.

Next time, Venice's stupidest war.

Pentamerone 8

We return to the Pentamerone. I've not mentioned the scatological humour this time unless it illuminates a particular point. Just assume it's there.

XXVI: THE MONTHS

It is a saying worthy to be written in letters as big as those on a monument, that silence never harmed any one: and let it not be imagined that those slanderers who never speak well of others, but are always cutting and stinging, and pinching and biting, ever gain anything by their malice; for when the bags come to be shaken out, it has always been seen, and is so still, that whilst a good word gains love and profit, slander brings enmity and ruin; and when you shall have heard how this happens, you will say I speak with reason.

Once upon a time there were two brothers—Cianne, who was as rich as a lord, and Lise, who had barely enough to live upon: but poor as one was in fortune, so pitiful was the other in mind, for he would not have given his brother a farthing were it to save his life; so that poor Lise in despair left his country, and set out to wander over the world. And he wandered on and on, till one wet and cold evening he came to an inn, where he found twelve youths seated around a fire, who, when they saw poor Lise benumbed with cold, partly from the severe season and partly from his ragged clothes, invited him to sit down by the fire.

Lise accepted the invitation, for he needed it greatly, and began to warm himself. And as he was warming himself, one of the young men whose face was such a picture of moroseness as to make you die of fright, said to him, "What think you, countryman, of this weather?"

The young man who talks is covered in hair and has a frightening expression.

"What do I think of it?" replied Lise; "I think that all the months of the year perform their duty; but we, who know not what we would have, wish to give laws to Heaven; and wanting to have things our own way, we do not fish deeply enough to the bottom, to find out whether what comes into our fancy be good or evil, useful or hurtful. In winter, when it rains, we want the sun in Leo, and in the month of August the clouds to discharge themselves; not reflecting, that were this the case, the seasons would be turned topsy-turvy, the seed sown would be lost, the crops would be destroyed, the bodies of men would faint away, and Nature would go head over heels. Therefore let us leave Heaven to its own course; for it has made the tree to mitigate with its wood the severity of winter, and with its leaves the heat of summer."

"You speak like Samson!" replied the youth; "but you cannot deny that this month of March, in which we now are, is very impertinent to send all this frost and rain, snow and hail, wind and storm, these fogs and tempests and other troubles, that make one's life a burden."

"You tell only the ill of this poor month," replied Lisa, "but do not speak of the benefits it yields us; for, by bringing forward the Spring, it commences the production of things, and is alone the cause that the Sun proves the happiness of the present time, by leading him into the house of the Ram."

The youth was greatly pleased at what Lise said, for he was in truth no other than the month of March itself, who had arrived at that inn with his eleven brothers; and to reward Lise's goodness, who had not even found anything ill to say of a month so sad that the shepherds do not like to mention it, he gave him a beautiful little casket, saying, "Take this, and if you want anything, only ask for it, and when you open this box you will see it before you." Lise thanked the youth, with many expressions of respect, and laying the little box under his head by way of a pillow, he went to sleep.

As soon, however, as the Sun, with the pencil of his rays, had retouched the dark shadows of Night, Lise took leave of the youths and set out on his way. But he had hardly proceeded fifty steps from the inn, when, opening the casket, he said, "Ah, my friend, I wish I had a litter lined with cloth, and with a little fire inside, that I might travel warm and comfortable through the snow!" No sooner had he uttered the words than there appeared a litter, with bearers, who, lifting him up, placed him in it; whereupon he told them to carry him home.

When the hour was come to set the jaws to work Lise opened the little box and said, "I wish for something to eat." And instantly there appeared a profusion of the choicest food, and there was such a banquet that ten crowned kings might have feasted on it.

One evening, having come to a wood which did not give admittance to the Sun because he came from suspected places, Lise opened the little casket, and said, "I should like to rest to-night on this beautiful spot, where the river is making harmony upon the stones as accompaniment to the song of the cool breezes."

There's been a change in musical style between the two editions: the Penguin, which is closer to the original, has the river play counterpoint to the plainsong of the breeze. Basically, what counts as "good" music changes over time and this is partially driven by technology. In "How Music Works" by David Byrne, for example, he mentions that the modern way of singing, which is to tremble about the note rather than hitting it exactly and holding it, only became popular with the invention if the vinyl record. Vibrato hides slight imperfections in the pressing that

clear notes expose. That being said, I believe he was writing before digital downloads and pitch correction. This matters to magi who use Performance Magic, for example, because “bad” performances matter much as mispronunciations of somantic components matter to other magi.

And instantly there appeared, under an oilcloth tent, a couch of fine scarlet, with down mattresses, covered with a Spanish counterpane and sheets as light as a feather.

I’m not sure why a Spanish counterpane is considered the opulent thing, but it appears in both versions. In the Penguin it’s a “waxed tent”, not an oilcloth, but that’s still a puzzle, because I didn’t think either waxed cotton or oilcloth went back that far historically.

Oilcloth is made of cotton that has been repeatedly coated with layers of linseed oil and lead salts. Originally both oilcloth and waxed cloth (which is a very similar process using beeswax) were made for sails, and offcuts were used to make waterproof clothing for sailors.

Then he asked for something to eat, and in a trice there was set out a sideboard covered with silver and gold fit for a prince, and under another tent a table was spread with viands, the savoury smell of which extended a hundred miles.

It’s a cupboard, or credenza, in the Penguin edition. A sideboard is where English people had their servants leave dishes, to the side of the actual dining table.

When he had eaten enough, he laid himself down to sleep; and as soon as the Cock, who is the spy of the Sun, announced to his master that the Shades of Night were worn and wearied, and it was now time for him, like a skilful general, to fall upon their rear and make a slaughter of them, Lise opened his little box and said, “I wish to have a handsome dress, for to-day I shall see my brother, and I should like to make his mouth water.” No sooner said than done: immediately a princely dress of the richest black velvet appeared, with edgings of red camlet and a lining of yellow cloth embroidered all over, which looked like a field of flowers. So dressing himself, Lise got into the litter and soon reached his brother’s house.

“Camlet” is, in the Penguin edition, translated directly as “camel hair”. There was quite an industry making camlet, and the less fine cameline, in France during the game period. There’s a pretty solid argument that the fur was actually from Angora goats. It was, as here, used for collars and cuffs. The yellow lining is felt in the Penguin edition. Felt is made by pressing fibres together, rather than weaving them. It is probably the oldest textile. In the game period needle felting isn’t practiced in Europe, so far as I’m aware, but wet felting is, and it could be used to make cloth out of all sorts of odd fibres. This would, in turn, grant strange material bonuses.

When Cianne saw his brother arrive, with all this splendour and luxury, he wished to know what good fortune had befallen him. Then Lise told him of the youths whom he had met in the inn, and of the present they had made him; but he kept to himself his conversation with the youths.

Cianne was now all impatience to get away from his brother, and told him to go and rest himself, as he was no doubt tired; then he started post-haste, and soon arrived at the inn, where, finding the same youths, he fell into chat with them. And when the youth asked him the same question, what he thought of that month of March, Cianne, making a big mouth, said, “Confound the miserable month! the enemy of shepherds, which stirs up all the ill-humours and brings sickness to our bodies. A month of which, whenever we would announce ruin to a man, we say, Go, March has shaved you!’ A month of which, when you want to call a man presumptuous, you say, What cares March?’ A month in short so hateful, that it would be the best fortune for the world, the greatest blessing to the earth, the greatest gain to men, were it excluded from the band of brothers.”

The very first curse Cianne makes in the Penguin edition is “enemy of those with the French disease!” That’s syphilis, and is first recorded in the 15th century, attributed to French troops attacking Naples.

March, who heard himself thus slandered, suppressed his anger till the morning, intending then to reward Cianne for his calumny; and when Cianne wished to depart, he gave him a fine whip, saying to him, “Whenever you wish for anything, only say, Whip, give me a hundred!’ and you shall see pearls strung upon a rush.”

In the Penguin edition it’s a flail. Flails are an agricultural tool, but they’d gone out of use by the Victorian era. The type of flail described, the scorriato, is two rods of wood with a leather belt between, so it’s similar to nunchaku.

Cianne, thanking the youth, went his way in great haste, not wishing to make trial of the whip until he reached home. But hardly had he set foot in the house, when he went into a secret chamber, intending to hide the money which he expected to receive from the whip. Then he said, “Whip, give me a hundred!” and thereupon the whip gave him more than he looked for, making a score on his legs and face like a musical composer, so that Lise, hearing his cries, came running to the spot; and when he saw that the whip, like a runaway horse, could not stop itself, he opened the little box and brought it to a standstill. Then he asked Cianne what had happened to him, and upon hearing his story, he told him he had no one to blame but himself; for like a blockhead he alone had caused his own misfortune, acting like the camel, that wanted to have horns and lost its ears;

This is a reference to one of Aesop's fables, where a camel envies the horns of a bull. He prays to Zeus asking why he lacks horns, and he is punished by having his ears made comically short.

but he bade him mind another time and keep a bridle on his tongue, which was the key that had opened to him the storehouse of misfortune; for if he had spoken well of the youths, he would perhaps have had the same good fortune, especially as to speak well of any one is a merchandise that costs nothing, and usually brings profit that is not expected. In conclusion Lise comforted him, bidding him not seek more wealth than Heaven had give him, for his little casket would suffice to fill the houses of thirty misers, and Cianne should be master of all he possessed, since to the generous man Heaven is treasurer; and he added that, although another brother might have borne Cianne ill-will for the cruelty with which he had treated him in his poverty, yet he reflected that his avarice had been a favourable wind which had brought him to this port, and therefore wished to show himself grateful for the benefit.

When Cianne heard these things, he begged his brother's pardon for his past unkindness, and entering into partnership they enjoyed together their good fortune, and from that time forward Cianne spoke well of everything, however bad it might be; for—

"The dog that was scalded with hot water, for ever dreads that which is cold."

XXVII: PINTOSMALTO

It has always been more difficult for a man to keep than to get; for in the one case fortune aids, which often assists injustice, but in the other case sense is required. Therefore we frequently find a person deficient in cleverness rise to wealth, and then, from want of sense, roll over heels to the bottom; as you will see clearly from the story I am going to tell you, if you are quick of understanding.

A merchant once had an only daughter, whom he wished greatly to see married; but as often as he struck this note, he found her a hundred miles off from the desired pitch, for the foolish girl would never consent to marry, and the father was in consequence the most unhappy and miserable man in the world.

She doesn't just refuse to marry, she refuses to date, or, as the Penguin edition puts it "She banned the passage of any man through her territory as if it were a no-trespass zone or a private hunting ground. Her tribunal was always closed for holidays, her school on vacation, her bank always closed for court festivities."

Now it happened one day that he was going to a fair; so he asked his daughter, who was named Betta, what she would like him to bring her on his return. And she said, "Papa, if you love me, bring me half a hundredweight of Palermo sugar, and as much again of sweet almonds, with four to six bottles of scented water, and a little musk and amber, also forty pearls, two sapphires, a few garnets and rubies, with some gold thread, and above all a trough and a little silver trowel." Her father wondered at this extravagant demand, nevertheless he would not refuse his daughter; so he went to the fair, and on his return brought her all that she had requested.

It's half a quintal of sugar and the same of ambrosial almonds in the Penguin edition. The trowel is a scalpel and the trough a bowl.

As soon as Betta received these things, she shut herself up in a chamber, and began to make a great quantity of paste of almonds and sugar, mixed with rosewater and perfumes, and set to work to form a most beautiful youth, making his hair of gold thread, his eyes of sapphires, his teeth of pearls, his lips of rubies; and she gave him such grace that speech alone was wanting to him. When she had done all this, having heard say that at the prayers of a certain King of Cyprus a statue had once come to life, she prayed to the goddess of Love so long that at last the statue began to open its eyes; and increasing her prayers, it began to breathe; and after breathing, words came out; and at last, disengaging all its limbs, it began to walk.

The king of Cyprus is Pygmalion and the statue Galatea. We have not really worked that story very hard in Ars Magica. I presume the statue is possessed by a faerie and the people who are descended from it have strong faerie blood, but you could argue instead that it is an Aspect of Venus, and she's a Titan, so the children would have Strong Magical Blood. Either way their descendants founded the city of Paphos on Cyprus, so they'd probably be found there still, were magi to look. That being said, descendants of the Emperors of Constantinople turn up in medieval Cornwall, so put weird offshoots of the family anywhere you like.

With a joy far greater than if she had gained a kingdom, Betta embraced and kissed the youth, and taking him by the hand, she led him before her father and said, "My lord and father, you have always told me that you wished to see me married, and in order to please you I have now chosen a husband after my own heart." When her father saw the handsome youth come out of his daughter's room, whom he had not seen enter it, he stood amazed, and at the sight of such beauty, which folks would have paid a halfpenny a head to gaze at, he consented that the marriage should take place. So a great feast was made, at which, among the other ladies present, there appeared a great unknown Queen, who, seeing the beauty of Pintosmalto (for that was the name Betta gave him), fell desperately in love with him. Now Pintosmalto, who had only opened his eyes on the wickedness of the world three hours before, and was as innocent as a babe, accompanied the strangers who had come to celebrate

his nuptials to the stairs, as his bride had told him; and when he did the same with this Queen, she took him by the hand and led him quietly to her coach, drawn by six horses, which stood in the courtyard; then taking him into it, she ordered the coachman to drive off and away to her country.

The Penguin edition notes he's a "simpleton", which has theological consequences. For example, I'm not sure how he can possibly be married, given that he's basically made of marzipan and sacraments are for humans. That aside, if he lacks the knowledge of the nature of the contract he can't consent to marriage.

After Betta had waited a while in vain expecting Pintosmalto to return, she sent down into the courtyard to see whether he were speaking with any one there; then she sent up to the roof to see if he had gone to take fresh air;

She also checks to see if he had gone to serve his "vital needs". I wasn't going to mention the toilet humour this time,. but wanted to mark that she believes he eats and excretes.

but finding him nowhere, she directly imagined that, on account of his great beauty, he had been stolen from her. So she ordered the usual proclamations to be made; but at last, as no tidings of him were brought, she formed the resolution to go all the world over in search of him, and dressing herself as a poor girl, she set out on her way. After some months she came to the house of a good old woman, who received her with great kindness; and when she had heard Betta's misfortune,

In the Penguin edition, she's also pregnant.

she took compassion on her, and taught her three sayings. The first was, "Tricche varlacche, the house rains!" the second, "Anola tranola, the fountain plays!"; the third, "Scatola matola, the sun shines!"—telling her to repeat these words whenever she was in trouble, and they would be of good service to her.

Two of these sets of words are from Italian children's games.

Betta wondered greatly at this present of chaff, nevertheless she said to herself, "He who blows into your mouth does not wish to see you dead, and the plant that strikes root does not wither; everything has its use; who knows what good fortune may be contained in these words?"

To blow or, as the Penguin edition points out, spit in the mouth of someone who had fainted was believed to prevent the spirit leaving the body. Primitive resuscitation?

So saying, she thanked the old woman, and set out upon her way. And after a long journey she came to a beautiful city called Round Mount, where she went straight to the royal palace, and begged for the love of Heaven a little shelter in the stable.

…for she was about to give birth.

So the ladies of the court ordered a small room to be given her on the stairs; and while poor Betta was sitting there she saw Pintosmalto pass by, whereat her joy was so great that she was on the point of slipping down from the tree of life. But seeing the trouble she was in, Betta wished to make proof of the first saying which the old woman had told her; and no sooner had she repeated the words, "Tricche varlacche, the house rains!" than instantly there appeared before her a beautiful little coach of gold set all over with jewels, which ran about the chamber of itself and was a wonder to behold.

When the ladies of the court saw this sight they went and told the Queen, who without loss of time ran to Betta's chamber; and when she saw the beautiful little coach, she asked whether she would sell it, and offered to give whatever she might demand. But Betta replied that, although she was poor she would not sell it for all the gold in the world, but if the Queen wished for the little coach, she must allow her to pass one night at the door of Pintosmalto's chamber.

In the Penguin edition, it's far more direct: the heroine says her own pleasure is more important to her than wealth, and so the Queen must allow her to sleep with her husband for a night.

The Queen was amazed at the folly of the poor girl, who although she was all in rags would nevertheless give up such riches for a mere whim; however, she resolved to take the good mouthful offered her, and, by giving Pintosmalto a sleeping-draught, to satisfy the poor girl but pay her in bad coin.

The sleeping draft is literally opium in the Penguin edition, so it's available for our characters in Ars Magica, particularly our Venetian herbalist witches.

As soon as the Night was come, when the stars in the sky and the glowworms

Fireflies in the original. In the UK they have a beetle they call both "glow worm" and "firefly". Their light is green, which, to an Australian, is about as odd as learning your swans are white. Here, glow worm caves are filled with blue lights, which mimic stars, as a hunting strategy.

on the earth were to pass in review, the Queen gave a sleeping-draught to Pintosmalto, who did everything he was told, and sent him to bed. And no sooner had he thrown himself on the mattress than he fell as sound asleep as a dormouse.

Dormice hibernate. They aren't a true mouse, and the Romans used to eat them. I think I put a recipe for them in Sanctuary of Ice, because House Jerbiton likes its little luxuries.

Poor Betta, who thought that night to relate all her past troubles, seeing now that she had no audience, fell to lamenting beyond measure, blaming herself for all that she had done for his sake; and the unhappy girl never closed her mouth, nor did the sleeping Pintosmalto ever open his eyes until the Sun appeared with the aqua regia of his rays to separate the shades from the light,

Aqua regia is etching acid. It was of interest to alchemists because it can dissolve gold. It's a mixture of nitric and hydrochloric acid in the modern day, but in the game period its made directly by mixing nitric acid with sal ammoniac. It's only attested in writing at about 1300, so it might be a discovery made by the player characters through Original Research. By the Magonomia period its widely enough known that a coded representation appears in an alchemical treatise. There's an image from a German treatise published in 1600. The fox eating the rooster is aqua regia eating gold, and the dragon at the forefront represents the red crystal the precipitates from the reaction.

when the Queen came down, and taking Pintosmalto by the hand, said to Betta, "Now be content."

"May you have such content all the days of your life!" replied Betta in an undertone; "for I have passed so bad a night that I shall not soon forget it."

The poor girl, however, could not resist her longing, and resolved to make trial of the second saying; so she repeated the words, "Anola tranola, the fountain plays!" and instantly there appeared a golden cage, with a beautiful bird made of precious stones and gold, which sang like a nightingale. When the ladies saw this they went and told it to the Queen, who wished to see the bird; then she asked the same question as about the little coach, and Betta made the same reply as before. Whereupon the Queen, who perceived, as she thought, what a silly creature Betta was, promised to grant her request, and took the cage with the bird. And as soon as night came she gave Pintosmalto a sleeping-draught as before, and sent him to bed. When Betta saw that he slept like a dead person, she began again to wail and lament, saying things that would have moved a flintstone to compassion;

A person whose throat had been cut and a flagstone, in the Penguin edition. Flint is particularly hard, hence, hard-hearted, but I'm not able to find a first attestation. There are Biblical references to faces set like flint.

and thus she passed another night, full of trouble, weeping and wailing and tearing her hair. But as soon as it was day the Queen came to fetch her captive, and left poor Betta in grief and sorrow, and biting her hands with vexation at the trick that had been played her.

In the morning when Pintosmalto went to a garden outside the city gate to pluck some figs, he met a cobbler, who lived in a room close to where Betta lay and had not lost a word of all she had said.

In the Penguin edition it's a junk seller, which I take to mean a tinker, or rag and bone man.

Then he told Pintosmalto of the weeping, lamentation, and crying of the unhappy beggar-girl; and when Pintosmalto, who already began to get a little more sense, heard this, he guessed how matters stood, and resolved that, if the same thing happened again, he would not drink what the Queen gave him.

Betta now wished to make the third trial, so she said the words, "Scatola matola, the sun shines!" and instantly there appeared a quantity of stuffs of silk and gold, and embroidered scarfs, with a golden cup;

In the Penguin edition this is sea shells, which I'd keep to tie in with Venus emerging from the ocean on a half-shell.

in short, the Queen herself could not have brought together so many beautiful ornaments. When the ladies saw these things they told their mistress, who endeavoured to obtain them as she had done the others; but Betta replied as before, that if the Queen wished to have them she must let her spend the night at the door of the chamber. Then the Queen said to herself, "What can I lose by satisfying this silly girl, in order to get from her these beautiful things?" So taking all the treasures which Betta offered her, as soon as Night appeared, the instrument for the debt contracted with Sleep and Repose being liquidated, she gave the sleeping-draught to Pintosmalto; but this time he did not swallow it, and making an excuse to leave the room, he spat it out again, and then went to bed.

His excuse to leave the room is a call of nature, so she's clearly made him able to eat and excrete. Then again, sleeping draughts wouldn't work if he wasn't organic in some sense – if you put drugs in a cake, it isn't a sleepy cake.

Betta now began the same tune again, saying how she had kneaded him with her own hands of sugar and almonds, how she had made his hair of gold, and his eyes and mouth of pearls and precious stones, and how he was indebted to her for his life, which the gods had granted to her prayers, and lastly how he had been stolen from her, and she had gone seeking him with such toil and trouble. Then she went on to tell him how she had watched two nights at the door of his room, and for leave to do so had given up two treasures, and yet had not been able to hear a single word from him, so that this was the last night of her hopes and the conclusion of her life.

When Pintosmalto, who had remained awake, heard these words, and called to mind as a dream all that had passed, he rose and embraced her; and as Night had just come forth with her black mask to direct the dance of the Stars, he went very quietly into the chamber of the Queen, who was in a deep sleep, and took from her all the things that she had taken from Betta, and all the jewels and money which were in a desk, to repay himself for his past troubles. Then returning to his wife, they set off that very hour, and travelled on and on until they arrived

At fine lodgings where she gave birth to a baby boy, then they travelled on to…

at her father's house, where they found him alive and well; and from the joy of seeing his daughter again he became like a boy of fifteen years. But when the Queen found neither Pintosmalto, nor beggar-girl, nor jewels, she tore her hair and rent her clothes, and called to mind the saying—

"He who cheats must not complain if he be cheated."

XXVIII: THE GOLDEN ROOT

A person who is over-curious, and wants to know more than he ought, always carries the match in his hand to set fire to the powder-room of his own fortunes; and he who pries into others' affairs is frequently a loser in his own; for generally he who digs holes to search for treasures, comes to a ditch into which he himself falls—as happened to the daughter of a gardener in the following manner.

There was once a gardener who was so very very poor that, however hard he worked, he could not manage to get bread for his family. So he gave three little pigs to his three daughters, that they might rear them, and thus get something for a little dowry. Then Pascuzza and Cice, who were the eldest, drove their little pigs to feed in a beautiful meadow; but they would not let Parmetella, who was the youngest daughter, go with them, and sent her away, telling her to go and feed her pig somewhere else. So Parmetella drove her little animal into a wood, where the Shades were holding out against the assaults of the Sun; and coming to a pasture—in the middle of which flowed a fountain, that, like the hostess of an inn where cold water is sold, was inviting the passers-by with its silver tongue—she found a certain tree with golden leaves. Then plucking one of them, she took it to her father, who with great joy sold it for more than twenty ducats, which served to stop up a hole in his affairs. And when he asked Parmetella where she had found it, she said, "Take it, sir, and ask no questions, unless you would spoil your good fortune." The next day she returned and did the same; and she went on plucking the leaves from the tree until it was entirely stript, as if it had been plundered by the winds of Autumn. Then she perceived that the tree had a large golden root, which she could not pull up with her hands; so she went home, and fetching an axe set to work to lay bare the root around the foot of the tree; and raising the trunk as well as she could, she found under it a beautiful porphyry staircase.

So, in the Penguin edition the trunk is gold and she cuts off the roots to allow her to take the trunk home. Porphyry is a purple gemstone of particular interest to the Emperors of Constantinople. There was a room used for royal births in the Palace veneered with it, so those born after their father had taken power were called Porphyrogenitus "born in the purple". Purple born brides turn up twice in our look at Venetian magic – once to start things off, with Teodora Selvo, and once with the Dogaressa in 1220.

Parmetella, who was curious beyond measure, went down the stairs, and walking through a large and deep cavern, she came to a beautiful plain, on which was a splendid palace, where only gold and silver were trodden underfoot, and pearls and precious stones everywhere met the eye. And as Parmetella stood wondering at all these splendid things, not seeing any person moving among so many beautiful fixtures, she went into a chamber, in which were a number of pictures; and on them were seen painted various beautiful things—especially the ignorance of man esteemed wise, the injustice of him who held the scales, the injuries avenged by Heaven—things truly to amaze one. And in the same chamber also was a splendid table, set out with things to eat and to drink.

Seeing no one, Parmetella, who was very hungry, sat down at a table to eat like a fine count; but whilst she was in the midst of the feast, behold a handsome Slave entered, who said, "Stay! do not go away, for I will have you for my wife, and will make you the happiest woman in the world." In spite of her fear, Parmetella took heart at this good offer, and consenting to what the Slave proposed, a coach of diamonds was instantly given her, drawn by four golden steeds, with wings of emeralds and rubies, who carried her flying through the air to take an airing; and a number of apes, clad in cloth of gold, were given to attend on her person, who forthwith arrayed her from head to foot, and adorned her so that she looked just like a Queen.

When night was come, and the Sun—desiring to sleep on the banks of the river of India untroubled by gnats—had put out the light, the Slave said to Parmetella, "My dear, now go to rest in this bed; but remember first to put out the candle, and mind what I say, or ill will betide you." Then Parmetella did as he told her; but no sooner had she closed her eyes than the blackamoor, changing to a handsome youth, lay down to sleep.

In the Penguin edition it says :her eyes were sprinked with poppy dust" as a way of saying she fell asleep. This is another reference to opium.

But the next morning, ere the Dawn went forth to seek fresh eggs in the fields of the sky the youth arose and took his other form again, leaving Parmetella full of wonder and curiosity.

And again the following night, when Parmetella went to rest, she put out the candle as she had done the night before, and the youth came as usual and lay down to sleep. But no sooner had he shut his eyes than Parmetella arose, took a steel which she had provided, and lighting the tinder applied a match; then taking the candle, she raised the coverlet, and beheld the ebony turned to ivory, and the coal to chalk.

Coal and chalk are English additions: the Penguin edition gives “The caviar had turned to milk”, which indicates caviar was known in medieval Italy. I’d make the point that caviar wasn’t necessarily a luxury good at the time – I’ll need to check. In the United States they used to serve it free on saloon bars, much like they serve salty peanuts today, to encourage drinkers to consume more.

And whilst she stood gazing with open mouth, and contemplating the most beautiful pencilling that Nature had ever given upon the canvas of Wonder, the youth awoke, and began to reproach Parmetella, saying, “Ah, woe is me! for your prying curiosity I have to suffer another seven years this accursed punishment. But begone! Run, scamper off! Take yourself out of my sight! You know not what good fortune you lose.” So saying, he vanished like quicksilver.

In the Penguin edition he flies away. This is obviously Cupid and Psyche. At least she didn’t burn him with the candle.

The poor girl left the palace, cold and stiff with affright, and with her head bowed to the ground. And when she had come out of the cavern she met a fairy, who said to her, “My child, how my heart grieves at your misfortune! Unhappy girl, you are going to the slaughter-house, where you will pass over the bridge no wider than a hair.

The bridge in Hell that is no wider than a hair is Islamic folklore, so I’m surprised to see it here.

Therefore, to provide against your peril, take these seven spindles with these seven figs, and a little jar of honey, and these seven pairs of iron shoes, and walk on and on without stopping, until they are worn out; then you will see seven women standing upon a balcony of a house, and spinning from above down to the ground, with the thread wound upon the bone of a dead person. Remain quite still and hidden, and when the thread comes down, take out the bone and put in its place a spindle besmeared with honey, with a fig in the place of the little button. Then as soon as the women draw up the spindles and taste the honey, they will say—

‘He who has made my spindle sweet,
Shall in return with good fortune meet!’

And after repeating these words, they will say, one after another, ‘O you who brought us these sweet things appear!’ Then you must answer, Nay, for you will eat me.’ And they will say, We swear by our spoon that we will not eat you!’ But do not stir; and they will continue, We swear by our spit that we will not eat you!’ But stand firm, as if rooted to the spot; and they will say, We swear by our broom that we will not eat you!’ Still do not believe them; and when they say, We swear by our pail that we will not eat you!’ shut your mouth, and say not a word, or it will cost you your life.

Just to remind you that this is the Pentamerone, in the Penguin edition, that’s a chamber pot not a pail. The cost for answering at this point is fatal diarrhoea.

At last they will say, We swear by Thunder-and-Lightning that we will not eat you!’ Then take courage and mount up, for they will do you no harm.”

When Parmetella heard this, she set off and walked over hill and dale, until at the end of seven years the iron shoes were worn out; and coming to a large house, with a projecting balcony, she saw the seven women spinning. So she did as the fairy had advised her; and after a thousand wiles and allurements, they swore by Thunder-and-Lightning, whereupon she showed herself and mounted up. Then they all seven said to her, “Traitress, you are the cause that our brother has lived twice seven long years in the cavern, far away from us, in the form of a blackamoor! But never mind; although you have been clever enough to stop our throat with the oath, you shall on the first opportunity pay off both the old and the new reckoning. But now hear what you must do. Hide yourself behind this trough, and when our mother comes, who would swallow you down at once, rise up and seize her behind her back; hold her fast, and do not let her go until she swears by Thunder-and-Lightning not to harm you.”

The instruction is literally to “seize her tits, which she carries on her shoulders”. This is oddly similar to the Irish method of avoiding doom at the hands of the Washer At The Ford.

Parmetella did as she was bid, and after the ogress had sworn by the fire-shovel, by the spinning-wheel, by the reel, by the sideboard, and by the peg, at last she swore by Thunder-and-Lightning; whereupon Parmetella let go her hold, and showed herself to the ogress, who said, “You have caught me this time; but take care, Traitress! for, at the first shower, I’ll send you to the Lava.”

One day the ogress, who was on the look-out for an opportunity to devour Parmetella, took twelve sacks of various seeds—peas, chick-peas, lentils, vetches, kidney-beans, beans, and lupins—and mixed them all together; then she said to her, “Traitress, take these seeds and sort them all, so that each kind may be separated from the rest; and if they are not all sorted by this evening, I’ll swallow you like a penny tart.”

A threepenny fritter.

Poor Parmetella sat down beside the sacks, weeping, and said, “O mother, mother, how will this golden root prove a root of woes to me! Now is my misery completed; by seeing a black face turned white, all has become black before my eyes. Alas! I am ruined and undone—there is no help for it. I already seem as if I were in the throat of that horrid ogress; there is no one to help me, there is no one to advise me, there is no one to comfort me!”

As she was lamenting thus, lo! Thunder-and-Lightning appeared like a flash, for the banishment laid upon him by the spell had just ended. Although he was angry with Parmetella, yet his blood could not turn to water, and seeing her grieving thus he said to her, “Traitress, what makes you weep so?” Then she told him of his mother’s ill-treatment of her, and her wish to make an end of her, and eat her up. But Thunder-and-Lightning replied, “Calm yourself and take heart, for it shall not be as she said.” And instantly scattering all the seeds on the ground he made a deluge of ants spring up, who forthwith set to work to heap up all the seeds separately, each kind by itself, and Parmetella filled the sacks with them.

When the ogress came home and found the task done, she was almost in despair, and cried, “That dog Thunder-and-Lightning has played me this trick; but you shall not escape thus! So take these pieces of bed-tick, which are enough for twelve mattresses, and mind that by this evening they are filled with feathers, or else I will make mincemeat of you.”

The poor girl took the bed-ticks, and sitting down upon the ground began to weep and lament bitterly, making two fountains of her eyes. But presently Thunder-and-Lightning appeared, and said to her, “Do not weep, Traitress,—leave it to me, and I will bring you to port; so let down your hair, spread the bed-ticks upon the ground, and fall to weeping and wailing, and crying out that the king of the birds is dead, then you’ll see what will happen.”

Parmetella did as she was told, and behold a cloud of birds suddenly appeared that darkened the air; and flapping their wings they let fall their feathers by basketfuls, so that in less than an hour the mattresses were all filled. When the ogress came home and saw the task done, she swelled up with rage till she almost burst, saying, “Thunder-and-Lightning is determined to plague me, but may I be dragged at an ape’s tail if I let her escape!” Then she said to Parmetella, “Run quickly to my sister’s house, and tell her to send me the musical instruments; for I have resolved that Thunder-and-Lightning shall marry, and we will make a feast fit for a king.” At the same time she sent to bid her sister, when the poor girl came to ask for the instruments, instantly to kill and cook her, and she would come and partake of the feast.

Parmetella, hearing herself ordered to perform an easier task, was in great joy, thinking that the weather had begun to grow milder. Alas, how crooked is human judgment! On the way she met Thunder-and-Lightning, who, seeing her walking at a quick pace, said to her, “Whither are you going, wretched girl? See you not that you are on the way to the slaughter; that you are forging your own fetters, and sharpening the knife and mixing the poison for yourself; that you are sent to the ogress for her to swallow you? But listen to me and fear not. Take this little loaf, this bundle of hay, and this stone; and when you come to the house of my aunt, you will find a bulldog, which will fly barking at you to bite you; but give him this little loaf, and it will stop his throat. And when you have passed the dog, you will meet a horse running loose, which will run up to kick and trample on you; but give him the hay, and you will clog his feet. At last you will come to a door, banging to and fro continually; put this stone before it, and you will stop its fury. Then mount upstairs and you find the ogress, with a little child in her arms, and the oven ready heated to bake you. Whereupon she will say to you, Hold this little creature, and wait here till I go and fetch the instruments.’ But mind—she will only go to whet her tusks, in order to tear you in pieces. Then throw the little child into the oven without pity,

Thunder-and-Lightning says not to worry for she is “of ogre meat”. Originally I read this as being an instruction meaning that the girl was of no moral account as non-human, but that doesn’t make sense, since he’s of the same family. Maybe he means she’s not harmed by the process due to her magical nature?

No, having checked the rest of the story, he does not. It’s just a plot hole.

take the instruments which stand behind the door, and hie off before the ogress returns, or else you are lost. The instruments are in a box, but beware of opening it, or you will repent.”

Parmetella did all that Thunder-and-Lightning told her; but on her way back with the instruments she opened the box, and lo and behold! they all flew out and about—here a flute, there a flageolet, here a pipe, there a bagpipe, making a thousand different sounds in the air, whilst Parmetella stood looking on and tearing her hair in despair.

The instruments are the same in the Penguin edition, even the bagpipe (well, it’s a chiucherio, but close enough), with one difference. The flageolet is a shawm. A flageolet is a sort of flute that is related to the tin whistle or recorder. Why it’s named after a particularly delicious type of bean is unclear. A shawm is a double reed instrument that looks like a wooden medieval trumpet. It was popular in the Ars Magica period but it was the ancestor of the oboe, which has basically driven it to extinction.

Meanwhile the ogress came downstairs, and not finding Parmetella, she went to the window, and called out to the door, “Crush that traitress!” But the door answered:

“I will not use the poor girl ill,
For she has made me at last stand still.”

Then the ogress cried out to the horse, “Trample on the thief!” But the horse replied:

“Let the poor girl go her way,
For she has given me the hay.”

And lastly, the ogress called to the dog, saying, “Bite the rogue!” But the dog answered:

“I’ll not hurt a hair of her head,
For she it was who gave me the bread.”

Now as Parmetella ran crying after the instruments, she met Thunder-and-Lightning, who scolded her well, saying, “Traitress, will you not learn at your cost that by your fatal curiosity you are brought to this plight?” Then he called back the instruments with a whistle, and shut them up again in the box, telling Parmetella to take them to his mother. But when the ogress saw her, she cried aloud, “O cruel fate! even my sister is against me, and refuses to give me this pleasure.”

Meanwhile the new bride arrived—a hideous pest, a compound of ugliness, a harpy, an evil shade, a horror, a monster, a large tub, who with a hundred flowers and boughs about her looked like a newly opened inn. Then the ogress made a great banquet for her; and being full of gall and malice, she had the table placed close to a well, where she seated her seven daughters, each with a torch in one hand; but she gave two torches to Parmetella, and made her sit at the edge of the well, on purpose that, when she fell asleep, she might tumble to the bottom.

Now whilst the dishes were passing to and fro, and their blood began to get warm, Thunder-and-Lightning, who turned quite sick at the sight of the new bride, said to Parmetella, “Traitress, do you love me?” “Ay, to the top of the roof,” she replied. And he answered, “If you love me, give me a kiss.” “Nay,” said Parmetella, “You indeed, who have such a pretty creature at your side! Heaven preserve her to you a hundred years in health and with plenty of sons!” Then the new bride answered, “It is very clear that you are a simpleton, and would remain so were you to live a hundred years, acting the prude as you do, and refusing to kiss so handsome a youth, whilst I let a herdsman kiss me for a couple of chestnuts.”

At these words the bridegroom swelled with rage like a toad, so that his food remained sticking in his throat; however, he put a good face on the matter and swallowed the pill, intending to make the reckoning and settle the balance afterwards. But when the tables were removed, and the ogress and his sisters had gone away, Thunder-and-Lightning said to the new bride, “Wife, did you see this proud creature refuse me a kiss?” “She was a simpleton,” replied the bride, “to refuse a kiss to such a handsome young man, whilst I let a herdsman kiss me for a couple of chestnuts.”

Thunder-and-Lightning could contain himself no longer; the mustard got up into his nose, and with the flash of scorn and the thunder of action, he seized a knife and stabbed the bride, and digging a hole in the cellar he buried her. Then embracing Parmetella he said to her, “You are my jewel, the flower of women, the mirror of honour! Then turn those eyes upon me, give me that hand, put out those lips, draw near to me, my heart! for I will be yours as long as the world lasts.”

They then go to bed and have intercourse.

The next morning, when the Sun aroused his fiery steeds from their watery stable, and drove them to pasture on the fields sown by the Dawn, the ogress came with fresh eggs for the newly married couple, that the young wife might be able to say, “Happy is she who marries and gets a mother-in-law!”

The giving of eggs to newlyweds is also a custom in Venice. It’s a fertility ritual.

But finding Parmetella in the arms of her son, and hearing what had passed, she ran to her sister, to concert some means of removing this thorn from her eyes without her son’s being able to prevent it. But when she found that her sister, out of grief at the loss of her daughter, had crept into the oven herself and was burnt, her despair was so great, that from an ogress she became a ram, and butted her head against the wall under she broke her pate.

She splatters her brains about. Also, the smell of the two cooked ogres is so disgusting it fills the whole neighbourhood, perhaps attracting magi.

Then Thunder-and-Lightning made peace between Parmetella and her sisters-in-law, and they all lived happy and content, finding the saying come true, that—

“Patience conquers all.”

“Those who resist win”.

A Criamon Magus Listens to the Rain

There was a virtue Lands of the Nile, called in Wisdom From Ignorance, which allowed practitioners to gain Abilities from documents which they can not understand. I was reminded of this recently by a minor essays from Aldous Huxley. He discusses a similar state of mind, but in his case he's not meditating on heiroglyphs, but on the sound of dripping water. Later in the essay he uses other sounds, like railroads, so I've trimmed his essay down.

For your reference, Wisdom From Ignorance is described on page 49 of Lands of the Nile. It is a Minor Virtue, found most often among a school of Egyptian Sufis. They are able to use books as sources of training provided they are unable to read the language the books are written in. The sufis use this ability to gain understanding of spiritual matters, so players create Ability books normally, and when sufis use this Virtue, switch the Ability learned from the book to Theology, Organisation Lore: Sufis or similarly uplifting subjects. In the case of Criamon magi, this would be Enigmatic Wisdom. A sufi using this Virtue may occasionally gain experience in materially practical Abilities, but this only occurs in the context of overcoming specific challenges on spiritual journeys. Directly applicable learning like this is considered a miracle by the sufi, and troupes should police this like any other miracle.

And now to Huxley. Thanks to the Librivox production team, and to the reader, Daniel Davidson.

The house in which I live is haunted by the noise of dripping water. Always, day and night, summer and winter, something is dripping somewhere. For many months an unquiet cistern kept up within its iron bosom a long, hollow-toned soliloquy. Now it is mute; but a new and more formidable drip has come into existence. From the very summit of the house a little spout—the overflow, no doubt, of some unknown receptacle under the roof—lets fall a succession of drops that is almost a continuous stream. Down it falls, this all but stream, a sheer forty or fifty feet on to the stones of the basement steps, thence to dribble ignominiously away into some appointed drain. The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep; but my lesser waterfalls play a subtler, I had almost said a more "modern" music. Lying awake at nights, I listen with a mixture of pleasure and irritation to its curious cadences.

The musical range of a dripping tap is about half an octave. But within the bounds of this major fourth, drops can play the most 44surprising and varied melodies. You will hear them climbing laboriously up small degrees of sound, only to descend at a single leap to the bottom. More often they wander unaccountably about in varying intervals, familiar or disconcertingly odd. And with the varying pitch the time also varies, but within narrower limits. For the laws of hydrostatics, or whatever other science claims authority over drops, do not allow the dribblings much licence either to pause or to quicken the pace of their falling. It is an odd sort of music. One listens to it as one lies in bed, slipping gradually into sleep, with a curious, uneasy emotion.

Drip drop, drip drap drep drop. So it goes on, this watery melody, for ever without an end. Inconclusive, inconsequent, formless, it is always on the point of deviating into sense and form. Every now and then you will hear a complete phrase of rounded melody. And then —drip drop, di-drep, di-drap—the old inconsequence sets in once more. But suppose there were some significance in it! It is that which troubles my drowsy mind as I listen at night. Perhaps for those who have ears to hear, this endless dribbling is as pregnant with thought and emotion, as significant as a piece of Bach. Drip drop, di-drap, di-drep. So little would 45suffice to turn the incoherence into meaning. The music of the drops is the symbol and type of the whole universe; it is for ever, as it were, asymptotic to sense, infinitely close to significance, but never touching it. Never, unless the human mind comes and pulls it forcibly over the dividing space. If I could understand this wandering music, if I could detect in it a sequence, if I could force it to some conclusion—the diapason closing full in God, in mind, I hardly care what, so long as it closes in something definite—then, I feel, I should understand the whole incomprehensible machine, from the gaps between the stars to the policy of the Allies. And growing drowsier and drowsier, I listen to the ceaseless tune, the hollow soliloquy in the cistern, the sharp metallic rapping of the drops that fall from the roof upon the stones below; and surely I begin to discover a meaning, surely I detect a trace of thought, surely the phrases follow one another with art, leading on inevitably to some prodigious conclusion. Almost I have it, almost, almost…. Then, I suppose, I fall definitely to sleep. For the next thing I am aware of is that the sunlight is streaming in. It is morning, and the water is still dripping as irritatingly and persistently as ever.

Sometimes the incoherence of the drop music is too much to be borne. The listener insists that the asymptote shall somehow touch the line of sense. He forces the drops to say something. He demands of them that they shall play, shall we say, "God Save the King," or the Hymn to Joy from the Ninth Symphony, or Voi che Sapete. The drops obey reluctantly; they play what you desire, but with more than the ineptitude of the child at the piano. Still they play it somehow. But this is an extremely dangerous method of laying the haunting ghost whose voice is the drip of water. For once you have given the drops something to sing or say, they will go on singing and saying it for ever. Sleep becomes impossible, and at the two or three hundredth repetition of Madelon or even of an air from Figaro the mind begins to totter towards insanity.

Drops, ticking clocks, machinery, everything that throbs or clicks or hums or hammers, can be made, with a little perseverance, to say something.

The Giant Legless Bird and the Cosmic Metronome

In Against the Dark I tried to have House Tremere researching ways to overcome the Parma Magica using massed fire. This doesn't work, because hte Parma is not ablative and cannot be made so by research. In the process, I discovered there's a a new Greater Limit of magic, one that's clear not just to players as a rule, but to player characters.

You can only cast one spell in every six seconds.

You can work the edges of this rule. Multicasting and using Wizard's Fork hedge it a little. Setting off a battery of magic items with a single triggering gesture. At its core, though, you get one spell per round.

There's one way to wobble the six second rule. Effectively there are two tracks: the fast cast and formulaic tracks. Its possible to shave seconds off the six by fast casting, but then you still get one fast cast per six seconds unless you drop back to the fomulaic track and lose the second you caught before. Effectively there's a bright line just before the capacity to fast-casting resets. You can't research your way past this – there's no Breakthrough there.

This is different from combat. A round, in combat, is just an aggregation of attacks and defences. It's plausible to deal damage multiple times in a round, because the round in just an out-of-world convention, in an in-setting one. As an example, the creature I was going to write up, which led to this post, is a Great Beast from House Bjonaer, that is a Swift of Virtue. This in turn was inspired by the first verse of a song called "The Ballad of Barry Allen".

I've got time to think about the beauty
Of a thousand variations
Of the beating of a wing
Of a hummingbird suspended
in the aspic of the world
Moving slower than molasses
As I'm off to catch the girl
Who is falling off the bridge

A magus who has this problem (which I didn't know the Flash has, but it's explicitly why Quicksilver over at Marvel is a jerk to people – he finds them exhausting).can attack dozens of times in a round, but can't cast more than one spell. Hummingbirds are an American bird, hence I used a swift instead. They never land, so they have no feet, mythically.

If you could muck with this, the other realms would. Even the Infernal seems caught in this six second cycle – there are no demons who use both tracks simultaneously, and if they could, they would.

The one exception to this is magic power use in regiones. To an observer within the regio the powers work normally, but if you were scrying into a regio the click rate is alarmingly high. For example in my personal games, there's a regio where the Tremere have an R&D lab where time dilates. One day spent outside is experienced as a week inside. If you were scrying in, a magical strobe light set to ignite each round would blink faster than once a second. Within the frame, though, the rule holds – you can't break your experienced rhythm.

Is there a physical embodiment of this limit? We know that, mechanically, the magic of Mythic Europe is powered by a metaphorical sea of energy. Within this fluid there are waves. Traditionally we have acted as if these are caused by a mixture of magical geography, astral influences, and the residual echoes of cataclysms. Might we add to these a steady, metronomic heartbeat from deep in the Earth. In regiones, the flow is faster or slower, but the pulse still exists.

This has some mechanical effects. It means magi have a sense of time that verges on innate, as they can use InVi level 1 spells to feel the click track. It allows precise clocks, which solves the longitude problem from the age of European expansion.

The King of Elfland's Daughter 9

This is another one of the episodes I can sit out, while Dunsany pays off his earlier work, but I'll note a few things. Orion offers a story to the troll, and he accepts it, redefining his statistics. Orion can not stray into Faerie or his faerie half will claim his mortal half, much as his mother, who we learn here is a half-fae, is also claimed. The stuff the planets swim in, which is the medium of the great music of Elfland, is ether, but for our purposes is the Vim ocean that pours about the Earth, and seems to be part of Arcadia. The King's power calls down the daemons of the sky and makes Cthulinoid horrors wake and dance and their lightless caverns.

Thanks again to Michele Fry for her recording, and the whole Librivox team for the production.

CHAPTER XXII: Orion Appoints a Whip

And many times again, while the winter wore away, Orion went back again with his hounds to that wonderful boundary, and waited there while the earthly twilight faded; and sometimes saw the unicorns come through, craftily, silently, when our fields were still, great beautiful shapes of white. But he brought back no more horns to the castle of Erl, nor hunted again across the fields we know; for the unicorns when they came moved into our fields no more than a few bare paces, and Orion was not able to cut one off again. Once when he tried he nearly lost all his hounds, some being already within the boundary when he beat them back with his whip; another two yards and the sound of his earthly horn could never more have reached them. It was this that taught him that for all the power that he had over his hounds, and even though in that power was something of magic, yet one man without help could not hunt hounds, so near to that edge over which if one should stray it would be lost forever.

After this Orion watched the lads at their games in evenings at Erl, till he had marked three that in speed and strength seemed to excel the rest; and two of these he chose to be whippers-in. He went to the cottage of one of them when the games were over, just as the lights were lit, a tall lad with great speed of limb; the lad and his mother were there and both rose from the table as the father opened the door and Orion came in. And cheerily Orion asked the lad if he would come with the hounds and carry a whip and prevent any from straying. And a silence fell. All knew that Orion hunted strange beasts and took his hounds to strange places. None there had ever stepped beyond the fields we know. The lad feared to pass beyond them. His parents were full loth to let him go. At length the silence was broken by excuses and muttered sentences and unfinished things, and Orion saw that the lad would not come.

He went then to the house of the other. There too the candles were lit and a table spread. There were two old women there and the lad at their supper. And to them Orion told how he needed a whipper-in, and asked the lad to come. Their fear in that house was more marked. The old women cried out together that the lad was too young, that he could not run so well as he used to, that he was not worthy of so great an honour, that dogs never would trust him. And much more than this they said, till they became incoherent. Orion left them and went to the house of the third. It was the same here. The elders had desired magic for Erl, but the actual touch of it, or the mere thought of it, perturbed the folk in their cottages. None would spare their sons to go whither they knew not, to have dealings with things that rumour, like a large and sinister shadow, had so grimly magnified in the hamlet of Erl. So Orion went alone with his hounds when he took them up from the valley and went eastwards over our fields where Earth's folk would not go.

It was late in the month of March, and Orion slept in his tower, when there came up to him from far below, shrill and clear in the early morning, the sound of his peacocks calling. The bleat of sheep far up on the downs came to wake him too, and cocks were crowing clamourously, for Spring was singing through the sunny air. He rose and went to his hounds; and soon early labourers saw him go up the steep side of the valley with all his hounds behind him, tan patches against the green. And so he passed over the fields we know. And so he was come, before the sun had set, to that strip of land from which all men turned away, where westward stood men's houses among fields of fat brown clay and eastward the Elfin Mountains shone over the boundary of twilight.

He went with his hounds along the last hedge, down to the boundary. And no sooner had he come there than he saw a fox quite close slip out of the twilight between Earth and Elfland, and run a few yards along the edge of our fields and then slip back again. And of this Orion thought nothing, for it is the way of the fox thus to haunt the edge of Elfland and to return again to our fields: it is thus that he brings us something of which none of our cities guess. But soon the fox appeared again out of the twilight and ran a little way and was back in the luminous barrier once more. Then Orion watched to see what the fox was doing. And yet again it appeared in the field we know, and dodged back into the twilight. And the hounds watched too, and showed no longing to hunt it, for they had tasted fabulous blood.

Orion walked along beside the twilight in the direction in which the fox was going, with his curiosity growing the more that the fox dodged in and out of our fields. The hounds followed him slowly and soon lost their interest in what the fox was doing. And all at once the curious thing was explained, for Lurulu all of a sudden skipped through

the twilight, and that troll appeared in our fields: it was with him that the fox was playing.

“A man,” said Lurulu aloud to himself, or to his comrade the fox, speaking in troll-talk. And all at once Orion remembered the troll that had come into his nursery with his little charm against time, and had leaped from shelf to shelf and across the ceiling and enraged Ziroonderel who had feared for her crockery.

“The troll!” he said, also in troll-talk; for his mother had murmured it to him as a child when she told him tales of the trolls and their age-old songs.

“Who is this that knows troll-talk?” said Lurulu.

And Orion told his name, and this meant nothing to Lurulu. But he squatted down and rummaged a little while in what answers in trolls to our memory; and during his ransacking of much trivial remembrance that had eluded the destruction of time in the fields we know, and the listless apathy of unchanging ages in Elfland, he came all at once on his remembrance of Erl; and looked at Orion again and began to cogitate. And at this same moment Orion told to the troll the august name of his mother. At once Lurulu made what is known amongst the trolls of Elfland as the abasement of the five points; that is to say he bowed himself to the ground on his two knees, his two hands and his forehead. Then he sprang up again with a high leap into the air; for reverence rested not on his spirit long.

“What are you doing in men’s fields?” said Orion.

“Playing” said Lurulu.

“What do you do in Elfland?”

“Watch time,” said Lurulu.

“That would not amuse me,” said Orion.

“You’ve never done it,” said Lurulu. “You cannot watch time in the fields of men.”

“Why not?” asked Orion.

“It moves too fast.”

Orion pondered awhile on this but could make nothing of it; because, never having gone from the fields we know, he knew only one pace of time, and so had no means of comparison.

“How many years have gone over you,” asked the troll, “since we spoke in Erl?”

“Years?” said Orion.

“A hundred?” guessed the troll.

“Nearly twelve,” said Orion. “And you?”

“It is still to-day” said the troll.

And Orion would not speak any more of time, for he cared not for the discussion of a subject of which he appeared to know less than a common troll.

“Will you carry a whip,” he said, “and run with my hounds when we hunt the unicorn over the fields we know.”

Lurulu looked searchingly at the hounds, watching their brown eyes: the hounds turned doubtful noses towards the troll and sniffed enquiringly.

“They are dogs,” said the troll, as though that were against them. “Yet they have pleasant thoughts.”

“You will carry the whip then,” said Orion.

“M, yes. Yes,” said the troll.

So Orion gave him his own whip there and then, and blew his horn and went away from the twilight, and told Lurulu to keep the hounds together and to bring them on behind him.

And the hounds were uneasy at the sight of the troll, and sniffed and sniffed again, but could not make him human, and were loth to obey a creature no larger than them. They ran up to him through curiosity, and ran away in disgust, and straggled through disobedience. But the boundless resources of that nimble troll were not thus easily thwarted, and the whip went suddenly up, looking three times as large in that tiny hand, and the lash flew forward and cracked on the tip of a hound’s nose. The hound yelped, then looked astonished, and the rest were uneasy still: they must have thought it an accident. But again the lash shot forward and cracked on another nose-tip; and the hounds saw then that it was not chance that guided those stinging shots, but a deadly unerring eye. And from that time on they reverenced Lurulu, although he never smelt human.

So went Orion and his pack of hounds in the late evening homewards, and no sheep-dog kept the flock on wolf-haunted wold safer or closer than Lurulu kept the pack: he was on each flank or behind them, wherever a straggler was, and could leap right over the pack from side to side. And the pale-blue Elfin Mountains faded from view before Orion had gone from the frontier as much as a hundred paces, for their gloomless peaks were hid by the earthly darkness that was deepening wide over the fields we know.

Homeward they went, and soon there appeared above them the wandering multitude of our earth-seen stars. Lurulu now and then looked up to marvel at them, as we have all done at some time; but for the most part he fixed his attention on the hounds, for now that he was in

earthly fields he was concerned with the things of Earth. And never one hound loitered but that Lurulu's whip would touch him, with its tiny explosion, perhaps on the tip of its tail, scattering a little dust of fragments of hair and whipcord; and the hound would yelp and run in to the others, and all the pack would know that another of those unerring shots had gone home.

A certain grace with a whip, a certain sureness of aim, comes when a life is devoted to the carrying of a whip amongst hounds; comes, say, in twenty years. And sometimes it runs in families; and that is better than years of practice. But neither years of practice nor the wont of the whip in the blood can give the certain aim that one thing can; and that one thing is magic. The hurl of the lash, as immediate as the sudden turn of an eye, its flash to a chosen spot as direct as sight, were not of this Earth. And though the cracks of that whip might have seemed to passing men to be no more than the work of an earthly huntsman, yet not a hound but knew that there was in it more than this, a thing from beyond our fields.

There was a touch of dawn in the sky when Orion saw again the village of Erl, sending up pillars of smoke from early fires below him, and came with his hounds and his new whipper-in down the side of the valley. Early windows winked at him as he went down the street and came in the silence and chill to the empty kennels. And when the hounds were all curled up on their straw he found a place for Lurulu, a mouldering loft in which were sacks and a few heaps of hay: from a pigeon-loft just beyond it some of the pigeons had strayed, and dwelt all along the rafters. There Orion left Lurulu, and went to his tower, cold with the want of sleep and food; and weary as he would not have been if he had found a unicorn, but the noise of the troll's chatter when he had found him on the frontier had made it useless to watch for those wary beasts that evening. Orion slept. But the troll in the mouldering loft sat long on his bundle of hay observing the ways of time. He saw through cracks in old shutters the stars go moving by; he saw them pale: he saw the other light spread; he saw the wonder of sunrise: he felt the gloom of the loft all full of the coo of the pigeons; he watched their restless ways: he heard wild birds stir in near elms, and men abroad in the morning, and horses and carts and cows; and everything changing as the morning grew. A land of change! The decay of the boards in the loft, and the moss outside in the mortar, and old lumber mouldering away, all seemed to tell the same story. Change and nothing abiding. He thought of the age-old calm that held the beauty of Elfland. And then he thought of the tribe of trolls he had left, wondering what they would think of the ways of Earth. And the pigeons were suddenly terrified by wild peals of Lurulu's laughter.

CHAPTER XXIII
Lurulu Watches the Restlessness of Earth

As the day wore on and still Orion slept heavily, and even the hounds lay silent in their kennels a little way off, and the coming and going of men and carts below had nothing to do with the troll, Lurulu began to feel lonely. So thick are the brown trolls in the dells they inhabit that none feels lonely there. They sit there silent, enjoying the beauty of Elfland or their own impudent thoughts, or at rare moments when Elfland is stirred from its deep natural calm their laughter floods the dells. They were no more lonely there than rabbits are. But in all the fields of Earth there was only one troll; and that troll felt lonely. The door of the pigeon loft was open some ten feet from the door of the hayloft, and some six feet higher. A ladder led to the hayloft, clamped to the wall with iron; but nothing at all communicated with the pigeon-loft lest cats should go that way. From it came the murmur of abundant life, which attracted the lonely troll. The jump from door to door was nothing to him, and he landed in the pigeon-loft in his usual attitude, with a look of impudent welcome upon his face. But the pigeons poured away on a roar of wings through their windows, and the troll was still lonely.

He liked the pigeon-loft as soon as he looked at it. He liked the signs that he saw of teeming life, the hundred little houses of slate and plaster, the myriad feathers, and the musty smell. He liked the age-old ease of the sleepy loft, and the huge spiders-webs that draped the corners, holding years and years of dust. He did not know what cobwebs were, never having seen them in Elfland, but he admired their workmanship.

The age of the pigeon-loft that had filled the corners with cobwebs, and broken patches of plaster away from the wall, shewing ruddy bricks beneath, and laid bare the laths in the roof and even the slates beyond, gave to the dreamy place an air not unlike to the calm of Elfland; but below it and all around Lurulu noted the restlessness of Earth. Even the sunlight through the little ventilation-holes that shone on the wall moved.

Presently there came the roar of the pigeons' returning wings and the crash of their feet on the slate roof above him, but they did not yet come in again to their homes. He saw the shadow of this roof cast on another roof below him, and the restless shadows of the pigeons along the edge. He observed the grey lichen covering most of the lower roof, and the neat round patches of newer yellow lichen on the shapeless mass of the grey. He heard a duck call out slowly six or seven times. He heard a man come into a stable below him and lead a horse away. A hound woke and cried out. Some jackdaws, disturbed from some tower, passed over high in the air with boisterous voices. He saw big clouds go

hurrying along the tops of far hills. He heard a wild pigeon call from a neighbouring tree. Some men went by talking. And after a while he perceived to his astonishment what he had had no leisure to notice on his previous visit to Erl, that even the shadows of houses moved; for he saw that the shadow of the roof under which he sat had moved a little on the roof below, over the grey and yellow lichen. Perpetual movement and perpetual change! He contrasted it, in wonder, with the deep calm of his home, where the moment moved more slowly than the shadows of houses here, and did not pass until all the content with which a moment is stored had been drawn from it by every creature in Elfland.

And then with a whirring and whining of wings the pigeons began to come back. They came from the tops of the battlements of the highest tower of Erl, on which they had sheltered awhile, feeling guarded by its great height and its hoary age from this strange new thing that they feared. They came back and sat on the sills of their little windows and looked in with one eye at the troll. Some were all white, but the grey ones had rainbow-coloured necks that were scarce less lovely than those colours that made the splendour of Elfland; and Lurulu as they watched him suspiciously where he sat still in a corner longed for their dainty companionship. And, when these restless children of a restless air and Earth still would not enter, he tried to soothe them with the restlessness to which they were accustomed and in which he believed all folk that dwelt in our fields delighted. He leaped up suddenly; he sprang on to a slate-built house for a pigeon high on a wall; he darted across to the next wall and back to the floor; but there was an outcry of wings and the pigeons were gone. And gradually he learned that the pigeons preferred stillness.

Their wings roared back soon to the roof; their feet thumped and clicked on the slates again; but not for long did they return to their homes. And the lonely troll looked out of their windows observing the ways of Earth. He saw a water-wagtail light on the roof below him: he watched it until it went. And then two sparrows came to some corn that had been dropped on the ground: he noted them too. Each was an entirely new genus to the troll, and he showed no more interest as he watched every movement of the sparrows than should we if we met with an utterly unknown bird. When the sparrows were gone the duck quacked again, so deliberately that another ten minutes passed while Lurulu tried to interpret what it was saying, and although he desisted then because other interests attracted him he felt sure it was something important. Then the jackdaws tumbled by again, but their voices sounded frivolous, and Lurulu did not give them much attention. To the pigeons on the roof that would not come home he listened long, not trying to interpret what they were saying, yet satisfied with the case as the pigeons put it; feeling that they told the story of life, and that all was well. And he felt as he listened to the low talk of the pigeons that Earth must have been going on for a long time.

Beyond the roofs the tall trees rose up, leafless except for evergreen oaks and some laurels and pines and yews, and the ivy that climbed up trunks, but the buds of the beech were getting ready to burst: and the sunlight glittered and flashed on the buds and leaves, and the ivy and laurel shone. A breeze passed by and some smoke drifted from some near chimney. Far away Lurulu saw a huge grey wall of stone that circled a garden all asleep in the sun; and clear in the sunlight he saw a butterfly sail by, and swoop when it came to the garden. And then he saw two peacocks go slowly past. He saw the shadow of the roofs darkening the lower part of the shining trees. He heard a cock crow somewhere, and a hound spoke out again. And then a sudden shower rained on the roofs, and at once the pigeons wanted to come home. They alighted outside their little windows again and all looked sideways at the troll; Lurulu kept very still this time; and after a while the pigeons, though they saw that he was by no means one of themselves, agreed that he did not belong to the tribe of cat, and returned at last to the street of their tiny houses and there continued their curious age-old tale. And Lurulu longed to repay them with curious tales of the trolls, the treasured legends of Elfland, but found that he could not make them understand troll-talk. So he sat and listened to them talking, till it seemed to him they were trying to lull the restlessness of Earth, and thought that they might by drowsy incantation be putting some spell against time, through which it could not come to harm their nests; for the power of time was not made clear to him yet and he knew not yet that nothing in our fields has the strength to hold out against time. The very nests of the pigeons were built on the ruins of old nests, on a solid layer of crumbled things that time had made in that pigeon-loft, as outside it the strata are made from the ruins of hills. So vast and ceaseless a ruin was not yet clear to the troll, for his sharp understanding had only been meant to guide him through the lull and the calm of Elfland, and he busied himself with a tinier consideration. For seeing that the pigeons seemed now amicable he leapt back to his hayloft and returned with a bundle of hay, which he put down in a corner to make himself comfortable there. When the pigeons saw all this movement they looked at him sideways again, jerking their necks queerly, but in the end decided to accept the troll as a lodger; and he curled up on his hay and listened to the history of Earth, which he believed the tale of the pigeons to be, though he did not know their language.

But the day wore on and hunger came on the troll, far sooner than ever it did in Elfland, where even when he was hungry he had no more to do than to reach up and take the berries that hung low from the trees, that grew in the forest that bordered the dells of the trolls. And it is because the trolls eat them whenever hunger comes on them, which it rarely does, that these curious fruits are called trollberries. He leaped now from the pigeon-loft and scampered abroad, looking all round for trollberries. And there were no berries at all, for there is but one season for berries, as we know well; it is one of the tricks of time. But that all the berries on Earth should pass

away for a period was to the troll too astounding to be comprehended at all. He was all among farm-buildings, and presently he saw a rat humping himself slowly along through a dark shed. He knew nothing of rat-talk; but it is a curious thing that when any two folk are after the same thing, each somehow knows what the other is after, at once, as soon as he sees him. We are all partially blind to other folks' occupations, but when we meet anyone engaged in our own pursuit then somehow we soon seem to know without being told. And the moment that Lurulu saw the rat in the shed he seemed to know that it was looking for food. So he followed the rat quietly. And soon the rat came up to a sack of oats, and to open that took him no longer than it does to shell a row of peas, and soon he was eating the oats.

"Are they good?" said the troll in troll-talk.

The rat looked at him dubiously, noting his resemblance to man, and on the other hand his unlikeness to dogs. But on the whole the rat was dissatisfied, and after a long look turned away in silence and went out of the shed. Then Lurulu ate the oats and found they were good.

When he had had enough oats the troll returned to the pigeon-loft, and sat a long while there at one of the little windows looking out across the roofs at the strange new ways of time. And the shadow upon the trees went higher, and the glitter was gone from the laurels and all the lower leaves. And then the light of the ivy-leaves and the holm-oaks turned from silvery to pale gold. And the shadow went higher still. All the world full of change.

An old man with a narrow long white beard came slowly to the kennels, and opened the door and went in and fed the hounds with meat that he brought from a shed. All the evening rang with the hounds' outcry. And presently the old man came out again, and his slow departure seemed to the watchful troll yet more of the restlessness of Earth.

And then a man came slowly leading a horse to the stable below the pigeon-loft; and went away again and left the horse eating. The shadows were higher now on walls and roofs and trees. Only the tree-tops and the tip of a high belfry had the light any longer. The ruddy buds on high beeches were glowing now like dull rubies. And a great serenity came in the pale blue sky, and small clouds leisurely floating there turned to a flaming orange, past which the rooks went homewards to some clump of trees under the downs. It was a peaceful scene. And yet to the troll, as he watched in the musty loft amongst generations of feathers, the noise of the rooks and their multitude thronging the sky, the dull continual sound of the horse eating, the leisurely sound now and then of homeward feet, and the slow shutting of gates, seemed to be proof that nothing ever rested in all the fields we know; and the sleepy lazy village that dreamed in the Vale of Erl, and that knew no more of other lands than their folk knew of its story, seemed to that simple troll to be a vortex of restlessness.

And now the sunlight was gone from the highest places, and a moon a few days old was shining over the pigeon-loft, out of sight of Lurulu's window, but filling the air with a strange new tint. And all these changes bewildered him, so that he thought awhile of returning to Elfland, but the whim came again to his mind to astonish the other trolls; and while this whim was on him he slipped down from the loft, and went to find Orion.

CHAPTER XXIV
Lurulu Speaks of Earth and the Ways of Men

The troll had found Orion in his castle and had laid his plan before him. Briefly the plan was to have more whips for the pack. For one alone could not always guard every hound from straying when they went to the boundary of twilight, where but a few yards away lay spaces from which if a hound ever came home, as lost hounds do at evening, it would come home all worn and bedraggled with age for its half hour of straying. Each hound, said Lurulu, should have its troll to guide it, and to run with it when it hunted, and be its servant when it came home hungry and muddy. And Orion had seen at once the unequalled advantage of having each hound controlled by an alert if tiny intelligence, and had told Lurulu to go for the trolls. So now, while the hounds were sleeping on boards in a doggy mass in each of their kennels, for the dogs and the bitches dwelt each in a separate house, the troll was scurrying over the fields we know through twilight trembling on the verge of moonlight, with his face turned toward Elfland.

He passed a white farm-house with a little window towards him that shone bright yellow out of a wall pale blue with a tint that it had from the moon. Two dogs barked at him and rushed out to chase him, and this troll would have tricked them and mocked them on any other day, but now his mind was full to the brim with his mission, and he heeded them no more than a thistledown would have heeded them on a windy day of September, and went on bouncing over the tips of the grasses till the pursuing dogs were far behind and panting.

And long before the stars had paled from any touch of the dawn he came to the barrier that divides our fields from the home of such things as him, and leaping forward out of the earthly night, and high through the barrier of twilight, he arrived on all fours on his natal soil in the ageless day of Elfland. Through the gorgeous beauty of that heavy air that outshines our lakes at sunrise, and leaves all our colours pale, he scampered full of the news he had with which to astonish his kith. He came to the moors of the trolls where they dwell in their queer habitations, and uttered the squeaks as he went whereby the trolls summon their folk; and he came to the forest in which the trolls have made dwellings in boles of enormous trees; for there be trolls of the forest and trolls

of the moor, two tribes that are friendly and kin; and there he uttered again the squeaks of the trolls' summons. And soon there was a rustling of flowers throughout the deeps of the forest, as though all four winds were blowing, and the rustling grew and grew, and the trolls appeared, and sat down one by one near Lurulu. And still the rustling grew, troubling the whole wood, and the brown trolls poured on and sat down round Lurulu. From many a tree-bole, and hollows thick with fern, they came tumbling in; and from the high thin gomaks afar on the moors, to name as are named in Elfland those queer habitations for which there is no earthly name, the odd grey cloth-like material draped tent-wise about a pole. They gathered about him in the dim but glittering light that floated amongst the fronds of those magical trees, whose soaring trunks out-distanced our eldest pines, and shone on the spikes of cacti of which our world little dreams. And when the brown mass of the trolls was all gathered there, till the floor of the forest looked as though an Autumn had come to Elfland, strayed out of the fields we know, and when all the rustling had ceased and the silence was heavy again as it had been for ages, Lurulu spoke to them telling them tales of time.

Never before had such tales been heard in Elfland. Trolls had appeared before in the fields we know, and had come back wondering: but Lurulu amongst the houses of Erl had been in the midst of men; and time, as he told the trolls, moved in the village with more wonderful speed than ever it did in the grass of the fields of Earth. He told how the light moved, he told of shadows, he told how the air was white and bright and pale; he told how for a little while Earth began to grow like Elfland, with a kinder light and the beginning of colours, and then just as one thought of home the light would blink away and the colours be gone. He told of stars. He told of cows and goats and the moon, three horned creatures that he found curious. He had found more wonder in Earth than we remember, though we also saw these things once for the first time; and out of the wonder he felt at the ways of the fields we know, he made many a tale that held the inquisitive trolls and gripped them silent upon the floor of the forest, as though they were indeed a fall of brown leaves in October that a frost had suddenly bound. They heard of chimneys and carts for the first time: with a thrill they heard of windmills. They listened spell-bound to the ways of men; and every now and then, as when he told of hats, there ran through the forest a wave of little yelps of laughter.

Then he said that they should see hats and spades and dog-kennels, and look through casements and get to know the windmill; and a curiosity arose in the forest amongst that brown mass of trolls, for their race is profoundly inquisitive. And Lurulu stopped not here, relying on curiosity alone to draw them from Elfland into the fields we know; but he drew them also with another emotion. For he spoke of the haughty, reserved, high, glittering unicorns, who tarry to speak to trolls no more than cattle when they drink in pools of ours trouble to speak to frogs. They all knew their haunts, they should watch their ways and tell of these things to man, and the outcome of it would be that they should hunt the unicorns with nothing less than dogs. Now however slight their knowledge of dogs, the fear of dogs isâ€"as I have saidâ€"universal amongst all creatures that run; and they laughed gustily to think of the unicorns being hunted with dogs. Thus Lurulu lured them toward Earth with spite and curiosity; and knew that he was succeeding; and inwardly chuckled till he was well warmed within. For amongst the trolls none goes in higher repute than one that is able to astound the others, or even to show them any whimsical thing, or to trick or perplex them humorously. Lurulu had Earth to show, whose ways are considered, amongst those able to judge, to be fully as quaint and whimsical as the curious observer could wish.

Then up spake a grizzled troll; one that had crossed too often Earth's border of twilight to watch the ways of men; and, while watching their ways too long, time had grizzled him.

"Shall we go," he said, "from the woods that all folk know, and the pleasant ways of the Land, to see a new thing, and be swept away by time?" And there was a murmur among the trolls, that hummed away through the forest and died out, as on Earth the sound of beetles going home. "Is it not to-day?" he said. "But there they call it to-day, yet none knows what it is: come back through the border again to look at it and it is gone. Time is raging there, like the dogs that stray over our frontier, barking, frightened and angry and wild to be home."

"It is even so," said the trolls, though they did not know; but this was a troll whose words carried weight in the forest. "Let us keep to-day," said that weighty troll, "while we have it, and not be lured where to-day is too easily lost. For every time men lose it their hair grows whiter, their limbs grow weaker and their faces sadder, and they are nearer still to to-morrow."

So gravely he spoke when he uttered that word "to-morrow" that the brown trolls were frightened.

"What happens to-morrow?" one said.

"They die," said the grizzled troll. "And the others dig in their earth and put them in, as I have seen them do, and then they go to Heaven, as I have heard them tell." And a shudder went through the trolls far over the floor of the forest.

And Lurulu who had sat angry all this while to hear that weighty troll speak ill of Earth, where he would have them come, to astonish them with its quaintness, spoke now in defence of Heaven.

"Heaven is a good place," he blurted hotly, though any tales he had heard of it were few.

“All the blessed are there,” the grizzled troll replied, “and it is full of angels. What chance would a troll have there? The angels would catch him, for they say on Earth that the angels all have wings; they would catch a troll and smack him forever and ever.”

And all the brown trolls in the forest wept.

“We are not so easily caught,” Lurulu said.

“They have wings,” said the grizzled troll.

And all were sorrowful and shook their heads, for they knew the speed of wings.

The birds of Elfland mostly soared on the heavy air and eyed everlastingly that fabulous beauty which to them was food and nest, and of which they sometimes sang; but trolls playing along the border, peering into the fields we know, had seen the dart and the swoop of earthly birds, wondering at them as we wonder at heavenly things, and knew that if wings were after him a poor troll would scarcely escape. “Welladay,” said the trolls.

The grizzled troll said no more, and had no need to, for the forest was full of their sadness as they sat thinking of Heaven and feared that they soon might come there if they dared to inhabit Earth.

And Lurulu argued no more. It was not a time for argument, for the trolls were too sad for reason. So he spoke gravely to them of solemn things, uttering learned words and standing in reverend attitude. Now nothing rejoices the trolls as learning does and solemnity, and they will laugh for hours at a reverend attitude or any semblance of gravity. Thus he won them back again to the levity that is their natural mood. And when this was accomplished he spoke again of Earth, telling whimsical stories of the ways of man.

I do not wish to write the things that Lurulu said of man, lest I should hurt my reader’s self-esteem, and thereby injure him or her whom I seek only to entertain; but all the forest rippled and squealed with laughter. And the grizzled troll was able to say no more to check the curiosity which was growing in all that multitude to see who it was that lived in houses and had a hat immediately above him and a chimney higher up, and spoke to dogs and would not speak to pigs, and whose gravity was funnier than anything trolls could do. And the whim was on all those trolls to go at once to Earth, and see pigs and carts and windmills and laugh at man. And Lurulu who had told Orion that he would bring a score of trolls, was hard set to keep the whole brown mass from coming, so quickly change the moods and whims of the trolls: had he let them all have their way there were no trolls left in Elfland, for even the grizzled troll had changed his mind with the rest. Fifty he chose and led them towards Earth’s perilous frontier; and away they scurried out of the gloom of the forest, as a whirl of brown oak-leaves scurries on days of November’s worst.

CHAPTER XXV
Lirazel Remembers the Fields We Know

As the trolls scurried earthwards to laugh at the ways of man, Lirazel stirred where she sat on her father’s knee, who grave and calm on his throne of mist and ice had hardly moved for twelve of our earthly years. She sighed and the sigh rippled over the fells of dream and lightly troubled Elfland. And the dawns and the sunsets and twilight and the pale blue glow of stars, that are blended together forever to be the light of Elfland, felt a faint touch of sorrow and all their radiance shook. For the magic that caught these lights and the spells that bound them together, to illumine forever the land that owes no allegiance to Time, were not so strong as a sorrow rising dark from a royal mood of a princess of the elvish line. She sighed, for through her long content and across the calm of Elfland there had floated a thought of Earth; so that in the midmost splendours of Elfland, of which song can barely tell, she called to mind common cowslips, and many a trivial weed of the fields we know. And walking in those fields she saw in fancy Orion, upon the other side of the boundary of twilight, remote from her by she knew not what waste of years. And the magical glories of Elfland and its beauty beyond our dreaming, and the deep deep calm in which ages slept, unhurt unhurried by time, and the art of her father that guarded the least of the lilies from fading, and the spells by which he made day-dreams and yearnings true, held her fancy no longer from roving nor contented her any more. And so her sigh blew over the magical land and slightly troubled the flowers.

And her father felt her sorrow and knew that it troubled the flowers and knew that it shook the calm that lay upon Elfland, though no more than a bird would shake a regal curtain, fluttering against its folds, when wandering lost upon a Summer’s night. And though he knew too it was but for Earth that she sorrowed, preferring some mundane way to the midmost glories of Elfland, as she sat with him on the throne that may only be told of in song, yet even this moved nothing in his magical heart but compassion; as we might pity a child who in fanes that to us seemed sacred might be found to be sighing for some trivial thing. And the more that Earth seemed to him unworthy of sorrow, being soon come soon gone, the helpless prey of time, an evanescent appearance seen off the coasts of Elfland, too brief for the graver care of a mind weighted with magic, the more he pitied his child for her errant whim that had rashly wandered here, and become entangledâ€”alasâ€”with the things that pass away. Ah, well! she was not content. He felt no wrath against Earth that had lured her fancies away: she was not content with the innermost splendours of Elfland, but she sighed for something more: his tremendous art should give it. So he raised his right arm up from the thing whereon it rested, a part of his mystical throne that

was made of music and mirage; he raised his right arm up and a hush fell over Elfland.

The great leaves ceased from their murmur through the green deeps of the forest; silent as carven marble were fabulous bird and monster; and the brown trolls scampering earthwards all halted suddenly hushed. Then out of the hush rose little murmurs of yearning, little sounds as of longing for things that no songs can say, sounds like the voices of tears if each little salt drop could live, and be given a voice to tell of the ways of grief. Then all these little rumours danced gravely into a melody that the master of Elfland called up with his magical hand. And the melody told of dawn coming up over infinite marshes, far away upon Earth or some planet that Elfland did not know; growing slowly out of deep darkness and starlight and bitter cold; powerless, chilly and cheerless, scarce overcoming the stars; obscured by shadows of thunder and hated by all things dark; enduring, growing and glowing; until through the gloom of the marshes and across the chill of the air came all in a glorious moment the splendour of colour; and dawn went onward with this triumphant thing, and the blackest clouds turned slowly rose and rode in a sea of lilac, and the darkest rocks that had guarded night shone now with a golden glow. And when his melody could say no more of this wonder, that had forever been foreign to all the elvish dominions, then the King moved his hand where he held it high, as one might beckon to birds, and called up a dawn over Elfland, luring it from some planet of those that are nearest the sun. And fresh and fair though it came from beyond the bourn of geography, and out of an age long lost and beyond history's ken, a dawn glowed upon Elfland that had known no dawn before. And the dewdrops of Elfland slung from the bended tips of the grasses gathered in that dawn to their tiny spheres and held there shining and wonderful that glory of skies such as ours, the first they had ever seen.

And the dawn grew strangely and slowly over those unwonted lands, pouring upon them the colours that day after day our daffodils, and day after day our wild roses, through all the weeks of their season, drink deep with voluptuous assemblies in utterly silent riot. And a gleam that was new to the forest appeared on the long strange leaves, and shadows unknown to Elfland slipped out from the monstrous tree-boles, and stole over grasses that had not dreamed of their advent; and the spires of that palace perceiving a wonder, less lovely indeed than they, yet knew that the stranger was magic, and uttered an answering gleam from their sacred windows, that flashed over elvish fells like an inspiration and mingled a flush of rose with the blue of the Elfin Mountains. And watchers on wonderful peaks that gazed from their crags for ages, lest from Earth or from any star should come a stranger to Elfland, saw the first blush of the sky as it felt the coming of dawn, and raised their horns and blew that call that warned Elfland against a stranger. And the guardians of savage valleys lifted horns of fabulous bulls and blew the call again in the dark of their awful precipices, and echo carried it on from the monstrous marble faces of rocks that repeated the call to all their barbarous company; so Elfland rang with the warning that a strange thing troubled her coasts. And to the land thus expectant, thus watchful, with magical sabres elate along lonely crags, summoned from blackened scabbards by those horns to repel an enemy, dawn came now wide now golden, the old old wonder we know. And the palace with every marvel and with all its charms and enchantments flashed out of its ice-blue radiance a glory of welcome or rivalry, adding to Elfland a splendour of which only song may say.

It was then that the elfin King moved his hand again, where he held it high by the crystal spires of his crown, and waved a way through the walls of his magical palace, and showed to Lirazel the unmeasured leagues of his kingdom. And she saw by magic, for so long as his fingers made that spell; the dark green forests and all the fells of Elfland, and the solemn pale-blue mountains and the valleys that weird folk guarded, and all the creatures of fable that crept in the dark of huge leaves, and the riotous trolls as they scampered away towards Earth: she saw the watchers lift their horns to their lips, while there flashed a light on the horns that was the proudest triumph of the hidden art of her father, the light of a dawn lured over unthinkable spaces to appease his daughter and comfort her whims and recall her fancies from Earth. She saw the lawns whereon Time had idled for centuries, withering not one bloom of all the boundary of flowers; and the new light coming upon the lawns she loved, through the heavy colour of Elfland, gave them a beauty that they had never known until dawn made this boundless journey to meet the enchanted twilight; and all the while there glowed and flashed and glittered those palace spires of which only song may tell. From that bewildering beauty he turned his eyes away, and looked in his daughter's face to see the wonder with which she would welcome her glorious home as her fancies came back from the fields of age and death, whither - alas - they had wandered. And though her eyes were turned to the Elfin Mountains, whose mystery and whose blue they strangely matched, yet as the Elf King looked in those eyes for which alone he had lured the dawn so far from its natural courses, he saw in their magical deeps a thought of Earth! A thought of Earth, though he had lifted his arm and made a mystical sign with all his might to bring a wonder to Elfland that should content her with home. And all his dominions had exulted in this, and the watchers on awful crags had blown strange calls, and monster and insect and bird and flower had rejoiced with a new joy, and there in the centre of Elfland his daughter thought of Earth.

Had he shown her any wonder but dawn he might have lured home that fancy, but in bringing this exotic beauty to Elfland to blend with its ancient wonders, he awoke memories of morning coming over fields that he knew not, and Lirazel played in fancy in fields once more with Orion, where grew the unenchanted earthly flowers amongst the English grasses.

“Is it not enough?” he said in his strange rich magical voice, and pointed across his wide lands with the fingers that summoned wonder.

She sighed: it was not enough.

And sorrow came upon that enchanted King: he had only his daughter, and she sighed for Earth. There had been once a queen that had reigned with him over Elfland; but she was mortal, and being mortal died. For she would often stray to the hills of Earth to see the May again, or to see the beechwoods in Autumn; and though she stayed but a day when she came to the fields we know, and was back in the palace beyond the twilight before our sun had set, yet Time found her whenever she came; and so she wore away, and soon she died in Elfland; for she was only a mortal. And wondering elves had buried her, as one buries the daughters of men. And now the King was all alone with his daughter, and she had just sighed for Earth. Sorrow was on him, but out of the dark of that sorrow arose, as often with men, and went up singing out of his mourning mind, an inspiration gleaming with laughter and joy. He stood up then and raised up both his arms and his inspiration broke over Elfland in music. And with the tide of that music there went like the strength of the sea an impulse to rise and dance which none in Elfland resisted. Gravely he waved his arms and the music floated from them; and all that stalked through the forest and all that crept upon leaves, all that leaped among craggy heights or browsed upon acres of lilies, all things in all manner of places, yea the sentinel guarding his presence, the lonely mountain-watchers and the trolls as they scampered towards Earth, all danced to a tune that was made of the spirit of Spring, arrived on an earthly morning amongst happy herds of goats.

And the trolls were very near to the frontier now, their faces already puckered to laugh at the ways of men; they were hurrying with all the eagerness of small vain things to be over the twilight that lies between Elfland and Earth: now they went forward no longer, but only glided in circles and intricate spirals, dancing some such dance as the gnats in Summer evenings dance over the fields we know. And grave monsters of fable in deeps of the ferny forest danced minuets that witches had made of their whims and their laughter, long ago long ago in their youth before cities had come to the world. And the trees of the forest heavily lifted slow roots out of the ground and swayed upon them uncouthly and then danced as on monstrous claws, and the insects danced on the huge waving leaves. And in the dark of long caverns weird things in enchanted seclusion rose out of their age-long sleep and danced in the damp.

And beside the wizard King stood, swaying slightly to the rhythm that had set dancing all magical things, the Princess Lirazel with that faint gleam on her face that shone from a hidden smile; for she secretly smiled forever at the power of her great beauty. And all in a sudden moment the Elf King raised one hand higher and held it high and stilled all that danced in Elfland, and gripped by a sudden awe all magical things, and sent over Elfland a melody all made of notes he had caught from wandering inspirations that sing and stray through limpid blue beyond our earthly coasts: and all the land lay deep in the magic of that strange music. And the wild things that Earth has guessed at and the things hidden even from legend were moved to sing age-old songs that their memories had forgotten. And fabulous things of the air were lured downwards out of great heights. And emotions unknown and unthought of troubled the calm of Elfland. The flood of music beat with wonderful waves against the slopes of the grave blue Elfin Mountains, till their precipices uttered strange bronze-like echoes. On Earth no noise was heard of music or echo: not a note came through the narrow border of twilight, not a sound, not a murmur. Elsewhere those notes ascended, and passed like rare strange moths through all the fields of Heaven, and hummed like untraceable memories about the souls of the blessed; and the angels heard that music but were forbidden to envy it. And though it came not to Earth, and though never our fields have heard the music of Elfland, yet there were then as there have been in every age, lest despair should overtake the peoples of Earth, those that make songs for the need of our grief and our laughter: and even they heard never a note from Elfland across the border of twilight that kills their sound, but they felt in their minds the dance of those magical notes, and wrote them down and earthly instruments played them; then and never till then have we heard the music of Elfland.

For a while the Elf King held all things that owed him allegiance, and all their desires and wonders and fears and dreams, floating drowsy on tides of music that was made of no sounds of Earth, but rather of that dim substance in which the planets swim, with many another marvel that only magic knows. And then as all Elfland was drinking the music in, as our Earth drinks in soft rain, he turned again to his daughter with that in his eyes that said “What land is so fair as ours?” And she turned towards him to say “Here is my home forever.” Her lips were parted to say it and love was shining in the blue of her elfin eyes; she was stretching her fair hands out towards her father; when they heard the sound of the horn of a tired hunter, wearily blowing by the border of Earth.

Venice - The Stupidest War [Treviso]

And here we see Venice's absolutely stupidest causus beli. Literally ever.

It starts six years before the game period, and ends four years before, so a new group of magi might meet at a gathering held to watch the festivities.

During his dogado a year of Jubilee was appointed by the Pope—1214—in thankfulness for the general peace ; and every Italian State held festivals and fetes. Treviso led the way, for nothing could exceed the beauty and the human interest of the " Marca Amorosa" The centre of the most fruitful and delightful region of all Northern Italy, Treviso, with her borders, was renowned for the richness of her vegetation, the salubrity of her climate, the beauty of her women, and chivalry of her cavaliers. The rallying-point too of knights and champions from the vigorous Teutonic north and the vivacious Prankish west Treviso was the fascinating rendezvous of all that was romantic, brave and fair.

The Crusades had been the making of the soldiery of all Europe,—not indeed in the elements of warfare but in the courtesies of the battle-field. Men went forth to fight the Saracen and the Turk to vindicate the nobility of the Cross and the gentleness of the Son of Mary. For the weak and the oppressed they gave and took sword-thrust and arrow-tip, and not as men fighting men alone. Heroes returned to Venetian, Trevisan and Paduan homes famous for their valour and their virtue : the Crusades were schools of Christian chivalry. To fight for women and for children in Palestine meant to honour and exalt those of their own dear land, but this was quite a new idea. Saint Mary and the Saints of God held the hands of their own babes and youths, the hands of their own girls and women, and men worshipped at human shrines as well as in saintly sanctuaries.

Trexiso put forth her best efforts in the way of pageant, spectacle, and mask—albeit she did not forget to dress her altars, light her candles, and burn her incense, in honour of the Jubilee. In the centre of the Piazza della Spineda, the Guild of Carpenters erected a grandiose palace—"Castle of Love" it was named, overlaid with gilding and painting, and decorated with rich silk velvets, costly furs, and precious tapestries. Trophies from Palestine and spoils from Constantinople were raised aloft, with rose-trees full of roses, myrtles in white flower, and jessamine, the marriage bloom, and many another decorative feature. All this bravery was the mise-en-scene for such a castle garrison as no knight's eyes had beheld nor indeed his heart imagined.

Two hundred of the fairest damsels of Treviso and Padua, and with them not a few noble matrons of attractive personality, manned or shall we say "womaned" the lofty battlements. Dressed in most becoming garbs and covered with jewels, with faces painted and hair coiffured in exquisite taste, the fascinating amazons have at hand no weapons or grenades of lethal warfare, but baskets of sweet flowers, cornucopias of ripe fruit, and crystal vases filled with delicious scents, ready for the besiegers. Three Companies in turn assault the "Castle of Beauty"—gallant knights and esquires of Venice, Padua, and Treviso. Strange are their battle-cries. Lately singing Litanies to the Saints, their lips have learned compelling dulcet tones, as they have prayed at or for the Holy Sepulchre, and now they again give forth the refrain " Ora pro Nobis"—addressed not to St Giustina, St Catherine, or St Barbara, but to Donna Beatrice, Donna Fioretta, Donna Felicita, and to all the beauteous two hundred!

Amid the plaudits of thousands of spectators on pavement, in window, on balcony, on roof, drawn from all the plains of Lombardy the Company of Treviso—as gallant goodly lads as ever donned tight hose and well-shaped tunic,—deliver the first attack, making trial of their knighthood. Appealing to the tender unsullied hearts of the fair defenders of the Castle, with gentle words, they shower such things as affect most the eye of woman—lovely flowers, amorous billets-doux, and delicate scentsachets.

Not so can they obtain the battlements, and falling back, the second line of attack is opened out by the Company from Padua. Clever pleasant youths are they and full of artistic fancies, well groomed too, they rally to the charge with such things as may please their ladies" palates.—boxes of expensive sweetmeats, baskets of delicious fruits, and fresh rissoles of fish and chicken. The fair ones catch all they can. but yield not their portcullis. Now comes the turn of the fresh-complexioned, well-figured. fair-haired, silent, haughty young Venetians. They step boldly forward, in silken ti2:hts. each lad a lord in self-esteem : they have special ammunition for their service, attractive to all the senses of woman-kind, — scented walnuts,, Oriental sweeties, and sugared roseleaves, but, in their scarlet satchels they have a wealth of good gold ducats, and with them the day is won. for the maidens toss the glittering spoil from hand to hand and laugh and sing- right merrily I

But before the conquerors can carry- off their bewitching prisoners, the defeated warriors rally to the call of "Down with Venice."' and rush the standard-bearers. In a trice the red banner of San Marco is trailing- on the ground and the Venetians have whipped out their swords! Messer Paolo da Sermedole. the Master of the Pageant, and his assistants intervene, and the tears of the captured maidens arrest the flow of blood, but the Venetians leave the "Marca Amorosa" vowing vengeance for the insult. War was declared forthwith against the sister cities and the end of it came not till two years had

passed, when at Bebe near Chioggia, the Paduans accepted the Venetian terms. Doge Pietro Ziani stipulated, as a condition of peace, that twenty-five Paduan Knights, who had participated in the ”Marca Amorosa” at Treviso, should present themselves at the Ducal Palace, submissive to the orders of his Serenity.

In Venice the gallant Company was welcomed right nobly, as became magnanimous foes, feasted for ten days, and well laden with costly presents, and so were speeded home again. History has not exactly told us whether any, or all of that gallant band, took away things more precious still than the splendid offerings,—the hearts of Venetian maidens ! The revenge of the conquered, in true chivalry, is the spoiling of the conqueror. Anyhow at least one Venetian bride was led away to Padua, and with her went a goodly trousseau :

The Pentamerone 7

This week, we continue our charge through the Pentamerone. Thanks again to Joy Chan for her recording. I'll be popping in with bits of folklore, and a surprising amount of culinary lore.

XXIII: THE TWO CAKES

In the Penguin edition, the word "pizza" is used wherever "cake" is used here. It's not a modern pizza, as it lacks the tomato, which was a result of the Columbian Exchange. You might instead think of it as a focaccia.

I have always heard say, that he who gives pleasure finds it: the bell of Manfredonia says, "Give me, I give thee": he who does not bait the hook of the affections with courtesy never catches the fish of kindness; and if you wish to hear the proof of this, listen to my story, and then say whether the covetous man does not always lose more than the liberal one.

There were once two sisters, named Luceta and Troccola, who had two daughters, Marziella and Puccia. Marziella was as fair to look upon as she was good at heart; whilst, on the contrary, Puccia by the same rule had a face of ugliness and a heart of pestilence, but the girl resembled her parent, for Troccola was a harpy within and a very scare-crow without.

Now it happened that Luceta had occasion to boil some parsnips, in order to fry them with green sauce; so she said to her daughter, "Marziella, my dear, go to the well and fetch me a pitcher of water."

"With all my heart, mother," replied the girl, "but if you love me give me a cake, for I should like to eat it with a draught of the fresh water."

"By all means," said the mother; so she took from a basket that hung upon a hook a beautiful cake (for she had baked a batch the day before), and gave it to Marziella, who set the pitcher on a pad upon her head, and went to the fountain, which like a charlatan upon a marble bench, to the music of the falling water, was selling secrets to drive away thirst. And as she was stooping down to fill her pitcher, up came a hump-backed old woman, and seeing the beautiful cake, which Marziella was just going to bite, she said to her, "My pretty girl, give me a little piece of your cake, and may Heaven send you good fortune!"

Marziella, who was as generous as a queen, replied, "Take it all, my good woman, and I am only sorry that it is not made of sugar and almonds, for I would equally give it you with all my heart."

The old woman, seeing Marziella's kindness, said to her, "Go, and may Heaven reward you for the goodness you have shown me! and I pray all the stars that you may ever be content and happy; that when you breathe roses and jessamines may fall from your mouth; that when you comb your locks pearls and garnets may fall from them, and when you set your foot on the ground lilies and violets may spring up."

Marziella thanked the old woman, and went her way home, where her mother, having cooked a bit of supper, they paid the natural debt to the body, and thus ended the day. And the next morning, when the Sun displayed in the market-place of the celestial fields the merchandise of light which he had brought from the East, as Marziella was combing her hair, she saw a shower of pearls and garnets fall from it into her lap; whereupon calling her mother with great joy, they put them all into a basket, and Luceta went to sell a great part of them to a usurer, who was a friend of hers. Meanwhile Troccola came to see her sister, and finding Marziella in great delight and busied with the pearls, she asked her how, when, and where she had gotten them. But the maiden, who did not understand the ways of the world, and had perhaps never heard the proverb, "Do not all you are able, eat not all you wish, spend not all you have, and tell not all you know," related the whole affair to her aunt, who no longer cared to await her sister's return, for every hour seemed to her a thousand years until she got home again. Then giving a cake to her daughter, she sent her for water to the fountain, where Puccia found the same old woman. And when the old woman asked her for a little piece of cake she answered gruffly, "Have I nothing to do, forsooth, but to give you cake? Do you take me to be so foolish as to give you what belongs to me? Look ye, charity begins at home."

In the Penguin it's "Have you made my donkey pregnant that I should give you my stuff? Teeth are closer than relatives."

And so saying she swallowed the cake in four pieces, making the old woman's mouth water, who when she saw the last morsel disappear and her hopes buried with the cake, exclaimed in a rage, "Begone! and whenever you breathe may you foam at the mouth like a doctor's mule, may toads drop from your lips, and every time you set foot to the ground may there spring up ferns and thistles!"

In the Penguin edition there are no toads from her lips: she is instead cursed with lice whenever she combs her hair.

Puccia took the pitcher of water and returned home, where her mother was all impatience to hear what had befallen her at the fountain. But no sooner did Puccia

open her lips, than a shower of toads fell from them, at the sight of which her mother added the fire of rage to the snow of envy, sending forth flame and smoke through nose and mouth.

The Penguin edition calls this a “stream of alchemical animals”.

Now it happened some time afterwards that Ciommo, the brother of Marziella, was at the court of the King of Chiunzo;

Possibly the Valico de Chiunzi, in southern Italy?

and the conversation turning on the beauty of various women, he stepped forward, unasked, and said that all the handsome women might hide their heads when his sister made her appearance, who beside the beauty of her form, which made harmony on the song of a noble soul, possessed also a wonderful virtue in her hair, mouth, and feet, which was given to her by a fairy.

He says they will “throw their bones from the Chianzo bridge”.

When the King heard these praises he told Ciommo to bring his sister to the court; adding that, if he found her such as he had represented, he would take her to wife.

Now Ciommo thought this a chance not to be lost; so he forthwith sent a messenger post-haste to his mother, telling her what had happened, and begging her to come instantly with her daughter, in order not to let slip the good luck. But Luceta, who was very unwell, commending the lamb to the wolf, begged her sister to have the kindness to accompany Marziella to the court of Chiunzo for such and such a thing. Whereupon Troccola, who saw that matters were playing into her hand, promised her sister to take Marziella safe and sound to her brother, and then embarked with her niece and Puccia in a boat. But when they were some way out at sea, whilst the sailors were asleep, she threw Marziella into the water; and just as the poor girl was on the point of being drowned there came a most beautiful syren, who took her in her arms and carried her off.

A siren is a mermaid.

When Troccola arrived at Chiunzo, Ciommo, who had not seen his sister for so long a time, mistook Puccia, and received her as if she were Marziella, and led her instantly to the King. But no sooner did she open her lips than toads dropped on the ground; and when the King looked at her more closely he saw, that as she breathed hard from the fatigue of the journey, she made a lather at her mouth, which looked just like a washtub; then looking down on the ground, he saw a meadow of stinking plants, the sight of which made him quite ill. Upon this he drove Puccia and her mother away, and sent Ciommo in disgrace to keep the geese of the court.

Ducks. I’m not sure why the change is important.

Then Ciommo, in despair and not knowing what had happened to him, drove the geese into the fields, and letting them go their way along the seashore, he used to retire into a little straw shed, where he bewailed his lot until evening, when it was time to return home. But whilst the geese were running about on the shore, Marziella would come out of the water, and feed them with sweetmeats,

“royal almond paste”, which is what we’d call marchpane.

and give them rose-water to drink; so that the geese grew as big as sheep, and were so fat that they could not see out of their eyes.

Geese the size of sheep would be terrifying. Geese are aggressive – to the point that the Romans believe their city was saved once by barbarian creeping over their walls being outed by disturbed geese..

And in the evening when they came into a little garden under the King’s window, they began to sing—

“Pire, pire pire!

This is what they thought geese sounded like in Victorian England, apparently.

The sun and the moon are bright and clear,
But she who feeds us is still more fair.”

Now the King, hearing this goose-music every evening, ordered Ciommo to be called, and asked him where, and how, and upon what he fed his geese. And Ciommo replied, “I give them nothing to eat but the fresh grass of the field.” But the King, who was not satisfied with this answer, sent a trusty servant after Ciommo to watch and observe where he drove the geese. Then the man followed in his footsteps, and saw him go into the little straw shed, leaving the geese to themselves; and going their way they had no sooner come to the shore than Marziella rose up out of the sea; and I do not believe that even the mother of that blind boy who, as the poet says, “desires no other alms than tears,” ever rose from the waves so fair. When the servant of the King saw this, he ran back to his master, beside himself with amazement, and told him the pretty spectacle he had seen upon the seashore.

The curiosity of the King was increased by what the man told him, and he had a great desire to go himself and see the beautiful sight. So the next morning, when the Cock, the ringleader of the birds, excited them all to arm mankind against the Night, and Ciommo went with the geese to the accustomed spot, the King followed him closely; and when the geese came to the seashore, without Ciommo, who remained as usual in the little shed, the King saw Marziella rise out of the water. And after

giving the geese a trayful of sweetmeats to eat and a cupful of rose-water to drink, she seated herself on a rock and began to comb her locks, from which fell handfuls of pearls and garnets; at the same time a cloud of flowers dropped from her mouth, and under her feet was a Syrian carpet of lilies and violets.

When the King saw this sight, he ordered Ciommo to be called, and, pointing to Marziella, asked him whether he knew that beautiful maiden. Then Ciommo, recognising his sister, ran to embrace her, and in the presence of the King heard from her all the treacherous conduct of Troccola, and how the envy of that wicked creature had brought that fair fire of love to dwell in the waters of the sea.

The joy of the King is not to be told at the acquisition of so fair a jewel; and turning to the brother he said that he had good reason to praise Marziella so much, and indeed that he found her three times more beautiful than he had described her; he deemed her, therefore, more than worthy to be his wife if she would be content to receive the sceptre of his kingdom.

“Alas, would to Heaven it could be so!”

“If only the Sun in Leo allowed it to be so.” Flattery for the educated listener.

answered Marziella, “and that I could serve you as the slave of your crown! But see you not this golden chain upon my foot, by which the sorceress holds me prisoner? When I take too much fresh air, and tarry too long on the shore, she draws me into the waves, and thus keeps me held in rich slavery by a golden chain.”

Note the similarity to Neil Gaiman’s Stardust.

“What way is there,” said the King, “to free you from the claws of this syren?”

“The way,” replied Marziella, “would be to cut this chain with a smooth file, and to loose me from it.”

“Wait till to-morrow morning,” answered the King; “I will then come with all that is needful, and take you home with me, where you shall be the pupil of my eye, the core of my heart, and the life of my soul.” And then exchanging a shake of the hands as the earnest-money of their love, she went back into the water and he into the fire—and into such a fire indeed that he had not an hour’s rest the whole day long. And when the black old hag of the Night came forth to have a country-dance with the Stars, he never closed an eye, but lay ruminating in his memory over the beauties of Marziella, discoursing in thought of the marvels of her hair, the miracles of her mouth, and the wonders of her feet; and applying the gold of her graces to the touchstone of judgment, he found that it was four-and-twenty carats fine. But he upbraided the Night for not leaving off her embroidery of the Stars, and chided the Sun for not arriving with the chariot of light to enrich his house with the treasure he longed for—a mine of gold which produced pearls, a pearl-shell from which sprang flowers.

But whilst he was thus at sea, thinking of her who was all the while in the sea, behold the pioneers of the Sun appeared, who smooth the road along which he has to pass with the army of his rays. Then the King dressed himself, and went with Ciommo to the seashore, where he found Marziella; and the King with his own hand cut the chain from the foot of the beloved object with the file which they had brought, but all the while he forged a still stronger one for his heart; and setting her on the saddle behind him, she who was already fixed on the saddle of his heart, he set out for the royal palace, where by his command all the handsome ladies of the land were assembled, who received Marziella as their mistress with all due honour. Then the King married her, and there were great festivities; and among all the casks which were burnt for the illuminations, the King ordered that Troccola should be shut up in a tub, and made to suffer for the treachery she had shown to Marziella. Then sending for Luceta, he gave her and Ciommo enough to live upon like princes; whilst Puccia, driven out of the kingdom, wandered about as a beggar; and, as the reward of her not having sown a little bit of cake, she had now to suffer a constant want of bread; for it is the will of Heaven that—

“He who shows no pity finds none.”

XXIV THE SEVEN DOVES

He who gives pleasure meets with it: kindness is the bond of friendship and the hook of love: he who sows not reaps not; of which truth Ciulla has given you the foretaste of example, and I will give you the dessert, if you will bear in mind what Cato says, “Speak little at table.” Therefore have the kindness to lend me your ears awhile; and may Heaven cause them to stretch continually, to listen to pleasant and amusing things.

There was once in the county of Arzano a good woman who every year gave birth to a son, until at length there were seven of them, who looked like the pipes of the god Pan, with seven reeds, one larger than another. And when they had changed their first teeth, they said to Jannetella their mother, “Hark ye, mother, if, after so many sons, you do not this time have a daughter, we are resolved to leave home, and go wandering through the world like the sons of the blackbirds.”

When their mother heard this sad announcement, she prayed Heaven to remove such an intention from her sons, and prevent her losing seven such jewels as they were. And when the hour of the birth was at hand, the sons said to Jannetella, “We will retire to the top of yonder hill or rock opposite; if you give birth to a son, put an inkstand and a pen up at the window; but if you have a

little girl, put up a spoon and a distaff. For if we see the signal of a daughter, we shall return home and spend the rest of our lives under your wings; but if we see the signal of a son, then forget us, for you may know that we have taken ourselves off."

Soon after the sons had departed it pleased Heaven that Jannetella should bring forth a pretty little daughter; then she told the nurse to make the signal to the brothers, but the woman was so stupid and confused that she put up the inkstand and the pen. As soon as the seven brothers saw this signal, they set off, and walked on and on, until at the end of three years they came to a wood, where the trees were performing the sword-dance to the sound of a river which made music upon the stones. In this wood was the house of an ogre whose eyes having been blinded whilst asleep by a woman, he was such an enemy to the sex that he devoured all whom he could catch.

When the youths arrived at the ogre's house, tired out with walking and exhausted with hunger, they begged him for pity's sake to give them a morsel of bread. And the ogre replied that if they would serve him he would give them food, and they would have nothing else to do but to watch over him like a dog, each in turn for a day. The youths, upon hearing this, thought they had found father and mother; so they consented, and remained in the service of the ogre, who, having gotten their names by heart, called once for Giangrazio, at another time for Cecchitiello, now for Pascale, now Nuccio, now Pone, now Pezzillo, and now Carcavecchia, for so the brothers were named; and giving them a room in the lower part of the house, he allowed them enough to live upon.

This is an interesting sort of covenant set-up.

Meanwhile their sister had grown up; and hearing that her seven brothers, owing to the stupidity of the nurse, had set out to walk through the world, and that no tidings of them had ever been received, she took it into her head to go in search of them. And she begged and prayed her mother so long, that at last, overcome by her entreaties, she gave her leave to go, and dressed her like a pilgrim. Then the maiden walked and walked, asking at every place she came to whether any one had seen seven brothers. And thus she journeyed on, until at length she got news of them at an inn, where having enquired the way to the wood, one morning, at the hour when the Sun with the penknife of his rays scratches out the inkspots made by Night upon the sheet of Heaven, she arrived at the ogre's house, where she was recognised by her brothers with great joy, who cursed the inkstand and the pen for writing falsely such misfortune for them. Then giving her a thousand caresses, they told her to remain quiet in their chamber, that the ogre might not see her; bidding her at the same time give a portion of whatever she had to eat to a cat which was in the room, or otherwise she would do her some harm. Cianna (for so the sister was named) wrote down this advice in the pocket-book of her heart, and shared everything with the cat, like a good companion, always cutting justly, and saying, "This for me—this for thee,—this for the daughter of the king," giving the cat a share to the last morsel.

"To the fennel", which, in this case, is served at the conclusion of the meal. I assume it's fennel seeds and they are chewed much like mukhwas at Indian restaurants. They are functionally like after dinner mints, but have a more licoricey flavour.

Now it happened one day that the brothers, going to hunt for the ogre, left Cianna a little basket of chick-peas to cook; and as she was picking them, by ill-luck she found among them a hazel-nut, which was the stone of disturbance to her quiet; for having swallowed it without giving half to the cat, the latter out of spite jumped on the table and blew out the candle.

"Ran to the fireplace and peed on the fire until it went out." I've been listening to a lot of stuff about medieval courtesy, and basically the use of bodily secretions as a way to insult was a lot more popular then than now. It's a way of saying you are outside the circle of courtesy: a lesser person.

Cianna seeing this, and not knowing what to do, left the room, contrary to the command of her brothers, and going into the ogre's chamber begged him for a little light. Then the ogre, hearing a woman's voice, said, "Welcome, madam! wait awhile,—you have found what you are seeking." And so saying he took a Genoa stone, and daubing it with oil he fell to whetting his tusks. But Cianna, who saw the cart on a wrong track, seizing a lighted stick ran to her chamber; and bolting the door inside, she placed against it bars, stools, bedsteads, tables, stones, and everything there was in the room.

As soon as the ogre had put an edge on his teeth he ran to the chamber of the brothers, and finding the door fastened, he fell to kicking it to break it open. At this noise and disturbance the seven brothers at once came home, and hearing themselves accused by the ogre of treachery for making their chamber a refuge for one of his women enemies,

The "benevento" of his enemies. Benevento is a city in southern Italy. It was the centre of the southern Papal States. I'm not sure how the name comes to mean "refuge" here. Etymologically the name means "good wind"…possible meaning something like "lucky break"? The opposite of ill wind?

Giangrazio, who was the eldest and had more sense than the others, and saw matters going badly, said to the ogre, "We know nothing of this affair, and it may be that this wicked woman has perchance come into the room whilst we were at the chase; but as she has fortified herself inside, come with me and I will take you to a place where we can seize her without her being able to defend herself."

Then they took the ogre by the hand, and led him to a deep, deep pit, where, giving him a push, they sent him headlong to the bottom; and taking a shovel, which they found on the ground, they covered him with earth. Then they bade their sister unfasten the door, and they rated her soundly for the fault she had committed, and the danger in which she had placed herself; telling her to be more careful in future, and to beware of plucking grass upon the spot where the ogre was buried, or they would be turned into seven doves.

“Heaven keep me from bringing such a misfortune upon you!” replied Cianna. So taking possession of all the ogre’s goods and chattels, and making themselves masters of the whole house, they lived there merrily enough, waiting until winter should pass away, and the Sun, on taking possession of the house of the Bull,

Note second reference to astrology, playing to the noble audience.

give a present to the Earth of a green gown embroidered with flowers, when they might set out on their journey home.

Now it happened one day, when the brothers were gone to the mountains to get firewood to defend themselves against the cold, which increased from day to day, that a poor pilgrim came to the ogre’s wood, and made faces at an ape that was perched up in a pine-tree;

A “bogeyman” rather than an ape in the Penguin edition. I don’t have anything more precise there, sadly.

whereupon the ape threw down one of the fir-apples from the tree upon the man’s pate, which made such a terrible bump that the poor fellow set up a loud cry. Cianna hearing the noise went out, and taking pity on his disaster, she quickly plucked a sprig of rosemary from a tuft which grew upon the ogre’s grave; then she made him a plaster of it with boiled bread and salt, and after giving the man some breakfast she sent him away.

Literally a plaster of starch and antimicrobials.

Whilst Cianna was laying the cloth, and expecting her brothers, lo! she saw seven doves come flying, who said to her, “Ah! better that your hand had been cut off, you cause of all our misfortune, ere it plucked that accursed rosemary and brought such a calamity upon us! Have you eaten the brains of a cat, O sister, that you have driven our advice from your mind? Behold us, turned to birds, a prey to the talons of kites, hawks, and falcons! Behold us made companions of water-hens, snipes, goldfinches, woodpeckers, jays, owls, magpies, jackdaws, rooks, starlings, woodcocks, cocks, hens and chickens, turkey-cocks, blackbirds, thrushes, chaffinches, tomtits, jenny-wrens, lapwings, linnets, greenfinches, crossbills, flycatchers, larks, plovers, kingfishers, wagtails, redbreasts, redfinches, sparrows, ducks, fieldfares, woodpigeons and bullfinches! A rare thing you have done! And now we may return to our country to find nets laid and twigs limed for us! To heal the head of a pilgrim, you have broken the heads of seven brothers; nor is there any help for our misfortune, unless you find the Mother of Time, who will tell you the way to get us out of trouble.”

Cianna, looking like a plucked quail at the fault she had committed, begged pardon of her brothers, and offered to go round the world until she should find the dwelling of the old woman. Then praying them not to stir from the house until she returned, lest any ill should betide them, she set out, and journeyed on and on without ever tiring; and though she went on foot, her desire to aid her brothers served her as a sumpter-mule, with which she made three miles an hour. At last she came to the seashore, where with the blows of the waves the sea was banging the rocks which would not repeat the Latin it gave them to do. Here she saw a huge whale, who said to her, “My pretty maiden, what go you seeking?” And she replied, “I am seeking the dwelling of the Mother of Time.” “Hear then what you must do,” replied the whale; “go straight along this shore, and on coming to the first river, follow it up to its source, and you will meet with some one who will show you the way: but do me one kindness,—when you find the good old woman, beg of her the favour to tell me some means by which I may swim about safely, without so often knocking upon the rocks and being thrown on the sands.”

“Trust to me,” said Cianna, then thanking the whale for pointing out the way, she set off walking along the shore; and after a long journey she came to the river, which like a clerk of the treasury was disbursing silver money into the bank of the sea. Then taking the way up to its source, she arrived at a beautiful open country, where the meadow vied with the heaven, displaying her green mantle starred over with flowers; and there she met a mouse who said to her, “Whither are you going thus alone, my pretty girl?” And Cianna replied, “I am seeking the Mother of Time.”

“You have a long way to go,” said the mouse; “but do not lose heart, everything has an end. Walk on, therefore, toward yon mountains, which, like the free lords of these fields, assume the title of Highness, and you will soon have more news of what you are seeking. But do me one favour,—when you arrive at the house you wish to find, get the good old woman to tell you what you can do to rid us of the tyranny of the cats; then command me, and I am your slave.”

Cianna, after promising to do the mouse this kindness, set off towards the mountains, which, although they appeared to be close at hand, seemed never to be reached. But having come to them at length, she sat down tired out upon a stone; and there she saw an army of ants, carrying a large store of grain, one of whom turning to Cianna said, “Who art thou, and whither art

thou going?" And Cianna, who was courteous to every one, said to her, "I am an unhappy girl, who, for a matter that concerns me, am seeking the dwelling of the Mother of Time."

"Go on farther," said the ant, "and where these mountains open into a large plain you will obtain more news. But do me a great favour,—get the secret from the old woman, what we ants can do to live a little longer; for it seems to me a folly in worldly affairs to be heaping up such a large store of food for so short a life, which, like an auctioneer's candle, goes out just at the best bidding of years."

"Be at ease," said Cianna, "I will return the kindness you have shown me."

Then she passed the mountains and arrived at a wide plain; and proceeding a little way over it, she came to a large oak-tree,—a memorial of antiquity, whose fruit (a mouthful which Time gives to this bitter age of its lost sweetness) tasted like sweetmeats to the maiden, who was satisfied with little. Then the oak, making lips of its bark and a tongue of its pith, said to Cianna, "Whither are you going so sad, my little daughter? Come and rest under my shade." Cianna thanked him much, but excused herself, saying that she was going in haste to find the Mother of Time. And when the oak heard this he replied, "You are not far from her dwelling; for before you have gone another day's journey, you will see upon a mountain a house, in which you will find her whom you seek. But if you have as much kindness as beauty, I prithee learn for me what I can do to regain my lost honour; for instead of being food for great men, I am now only made the food of hogs."

"Leave that to me," replied Cianna, "I will take care to serve you." So saying, she departed, and walking on and on without ever resting, she came at length to the foot of an impertinent mountain, which was poking its head into the face of the clouds. There she found an old man, who, wearied and wayworn, had lain down upon some hay; and as soon as he saw Cianna, he knew her at once, and that it was she who had cured his bump.

When the old man heard what she was seeking, he told her that he was carrying to Time the rent for the piece of earth which he had cultivated, and that Time was a tyrant who usurped everything in the world, claiming tribute from all, and especially from people of his age; and he added that, having received kindness from Cianna, he would now return it a hundredfold by giving her some good information about her arrival at the mountain; and that he was sorry he could not accompany her thither, since his old age, which was condemned rather to go down than up, obliged him to remain at the foot of those mountains, to cast up accounts with the clerks of Time—which are the labours, the sufferings, and the infirmities of life—and to pay the debt of Nature. So the old man said to her, "Now, my pretty, innocent child, listen to me. You must know that on the top of this mountain you will find a ruined house, which was built long ago, time out of mind. The walls are cracked, the foundations crumbling away, the doors worm-eaten, the furniture all worn out—and, in short, everything is gone to wrack and ruin. On one side are seen shattered columns, on another broken statues; and nothing is left in a good state except a coat-of-arms over the door, quartered on which you will see a serpent biting its tail, a stag, a raven, and a phoenix. When you enter, you will see on the ground, files, saws, scythes, sickles, pruning-hooks, and hundreds and hundreds of vessels full of ashes, with the names written on them, like gallipots in an apothecary's shop; and there may be read Corinth, Saguntum, Carthage, Troy, and a thousand other cities, the ashes of which Time preserved as trophies of his conquests.

Saguntum is a city on the Valencia coast of Spain. It was a Roman ally and colony, which was beseiged and taken by Hannibal, which was the causus Belli of the Second Punic War. Before the Romans retook it and named it in Latin, it's name was "Arse" and I'm not sure that's not a really deep joke by the translator.

The ashes of cities could at the simplest be Perdo vis, but they might also act as libraries if you could find something similar to "Whispers through the Black Gate". that allowed a magus to speak to either the residents of the city, or the Genius Locus of the city.

"When you come near the house, hide yourself until Time goes out; and as soon as he has gone forth, enter, and you will find an old, old woman, with a beard that touches the ground and a hump reaching to the sky. Her hair, like the tail of a dapple-grey horse, covers her heels; her face looks like a plaited collar, with the folds stiffened by the starch of years. The old woman is seated upon a clock, which is fastened to a wall; and her eyebrows are so large that they overshadow her eyes, so that she will not be able to see you. As soon as you enter, quickly take the weights off the clock, then call to the old woman, and beg her to answer your questions; whereupon she will instantly call her son to come and eat you up. But the clock upon which the old woman sits having lost its weights, her son cannot move, and she will therefore be obliged to tell you what you wish. But do not trust any oath she may make, unless she swears by the wings of her son, and you will be content."

So saying, the poor old man fell down and crumbled away, like a dead body brought from a catacomb to the light of day.

The man is able to extend his life while on the mountains, until he betrays their master.

Then Cianna took the ashes, and mixing them with a pint of tears, she made a grave and buried them, praying Heaven to grant them quiet and repose. And ascending the mountain till she was quite out of breath, she waited until Time came out, who was an old man with a long,

long beard, and who wore a very old cloak covered with slips of paper, on which were worked the names of various people. He had large wings, and ran so fast that he was out of sight in an instant.

When Cianna entered the house of his mother, she started with affright at the sight of that black old chip; and instantly seizing the weights of the clock, she told what she wanted to the old woman, who, setting up a loud cry, called to her son. But Cianna said to her, “You may butt your head against the wall as long as you like, for you will not see your son whilst I hold these clock-weights.”

Thereupon the old woman, seeing herself foiled, began to coax Cianna, saying, “Let go of them, my dear, and do not stop my son’s course; for no man living has ever done that. Let go of them, and may Heaven preserve you! for I promise you, by the acid of my son, with which he corrodes everything, that I will do you no harm.”

“That’s time lost,” answered Cianna, “you must say something better if you would have me quit my hold.”

“I swear to you by those teeth, which gnaw all mortal things, that I will tell you all you desire.”

“That is all nothing,” answered Cianna, “for I know you are deceiving me.”

“Well, then,” said the old woman, “I swear to you by those wings which fly over all that I will give you more pleasure than you imagine.”

Thereupon Cianna, letting go the weights, kissed the old woman’s hand, which had a mouldy feel and a nasty smell. And the old woman, seeing the courtesy of the damsel, said to her, “Hide yourself behind this door, and when Time comes home I will make him tell me all you wish to know. And as soon as he goes out again—for he never stays quiet in one place—you can depart. But do not let yourself be heard or seen, for he is such a glutton that he does not spare even his own children; and when all fails, he devours himself and then springs up anew.”

Cianna did as the old woman told her; and, lo! soon after Time came flying quick, quick, high and light, and having gnawed whatever came to hand, down to the very mouldiness upon the walls, he was about to depart, when his mother told him all she had heard from Cianna, beseeching him by the milk she had given him to answer exactly all her questions. After a thousand entreaties, her son replied, “To the tree may be answered, that it can never be prized by men so long as it keeps treasures buried under its roots; to the mice, that they will never be safe from the cat unless they tie a bell to her leg to tell them when she is coming; to the ants, that they will live a hundred years if they can dispense with flying—for when the ant is going to die she puts on wings; to the whale, that it should be of good cheer, and make friends with the sea-mouse, who will serve him as a guide, so that he will never go wrong; and to the doves, that when they alight on the column of wealth, they will return to their former state.”

A sea mouse is a sort of furry marine worm. Its genus is Aphrodita, which is named for the Goddess of Love because the sea mouse supposedly looks like a vulva. That being said, if your vulva ever appears similar to a sea worm, you should seek medical assistance immediately. I’m almost certain this is a sex joke in the original, but I can’t quite parse it.

So saying, Time set out to run his accustomed post; and Cianna, taking leave of the old woman, descended to the foot of the mountain, just at the very time that the seven doves, who had followed their sister’s footsteps, arrived there. Wearied with flying so far, they stopped to rest upon the horn of a dead ox; and no sooner had they alighted than they were changed into handsome youths as they were at first. But while they were marvelling at this, they heard the reply which Time had given, and saw at once that the horn, as the symbol of plenty, was the column of wealth of which Time had spoken.

This is a reference to the Cornucopia – it’s more explicit in the Penguin edition.

Then embracing their sister with great joy, they all set out on the same road by which Cianna had come. And when they came to the oak-tree, and told it what Cianna had heard from Time, the tree begged them to take away the treasure from its roots, since it was the cause why its acorns had lost their reputation. Thereupon the seven brothers, taking a spade which they found in a garden, dug and dug, until they came to a great heap of gold money, which they divided into eight parts and shared among themselves and their sister, so that they might carry it away conveniently. But being wearied with the journey and the load, they laid themselves down to sleep under a hedge. Presently a band of robbers coming by, and seeing the poor fellows asleep, with their heads upon the clothfuls of money, bound them hand and foot to some trees and took away their money, leaving them to bewail not only their wealth—which had slipped through their fingers as soon as found—but their life; for being without hope of succour, they were in peril of either soon dying of hunger or allaying the hunger of some wild beast.

As they were lamenting their unhappy lot, up came the mouse, who, as soon as she heard the reply which Time had given, in return for the good service, nibbled the cords with which they were bound and set them free. And having gone a little way farther, they met on the road the ant, who, when she heard the advice of Time, asked Cianna what was the matter that she was so pale-faced and cast down. And when Cianna told her their misfortune, and the trick which the robbers had played them, the ant replied, “Be quiet, I can now requite the kindness you have done me. You must know, that whilst I

was carrying a load of grain underground, I saw a place where these dogs of assassins hide their plunder. They have made some holes under an old building, in which they shut up all the things they have stolen. They are just now gone out for some new robbery, and I will go with you and show you the place, so that you may recover your money."

So saying, she took the way towards some tumbled-down houses, and showed the seven brothers the mouth of the pit; whereupon Giangrazio, who was bolder than the rest, entering it, found there all the money of which they had been robbed. Then taking it with them, they set out, and walked towards the seashore, where they found the whale, and told him the good advice which Time—who is the father of counsel—had given them. And whilst they stood talking of their journey and all that had befallen them, they saw the robbers suddenly appear, armed to the teeth, who had followed in their footsteps. At this sight they exclaimed, "Alas, alas! we are now wholly lost, for here come the robbers armed, and they will not leave the skin on our bodies."

"Fear not," replied the whale, "for I can save you out of the fire, and will thus requite the love you have shown me; so get upon my back, and I will quickly carry you to a place of safety."

Cianna and her brothers, seeing the foe at their heels and the water up to their throats, climbed upon the whale, who, keeping far off from the rocks, carried them to within sight of Naples. But being afraid to land them on account of the shoals and shallows, he said, "Where would you like me to land you? On the shore of Amalfi?" And Giangrazio answered, "See whether that cannot be avoided, my dear fish. I do not wish to land at any place hereabouts; for at Massa they say barely good-day, at Sorrento thieves are plenty, at Vico they say you may go your way, at Castel-a-mare no one says how are ye."

In Naples, of course, people have better manners than this, according to the Neapolitans.

Then the whale, to please them, turned about and went toward the Salt-rock, where he left them; and they got put on shore by the first fishing-boat that passed. Thereupon they returned to their own country, safe and sound and rich, to the great joy and consolation of their mother and father. And, thanks to the goodness of Cianna, they enjoyed a happy life, verifying the old saying—

"Do good whenever you can, and forget it."

XXV THE RAVEN

It is truly a great proverb—"Rather a crooked sight than a crooked judgment"; but it is so difficult to adopt it that the judgment of few men hits the nail on the head. On the contrary, in the sea of human affairs, the greater part are fishers in smooth waters, who catch crabs; and he who thinks to take the most exact measure of the object at which he aims often shoots widest of the mark. The consequence of this is that all are running pell-mell, all toiling in the dark, all thinking crookedly, all acting child's-play,

The child's play here is "playing smash the top", which is a fighting top game that is not entirely extinct.

all judging at random, and with a haphazard blow of a foolish resolution bringing upon themselves a bitter repentance; as was the case with the King of Shady-Grove; and you shall hear how it fared with him if you summon me within the circle of modesty with the bell of courtesy, and give me a little attention.

It is said that there was once a king of Shady-Grove named Milluccio, who was so devoted to the chase, that he neglected the needful affairs of his state and household to follow the track of a hare or the flight of a thrush. And he pursued this road so far that chance one day led him to a thicket, which had formed a solid square of earth and trees to prevent the horses of the Sun from breaking through. There, upon a most beautiful marble stone, he found a raven, which had just been killed.

Crow. This is one of those myths that I've never seen in the wild – I originally read Angela Carter's version, and I knew it was out there somewhere, but this is the first time I've seen this sort of "Skin white as snow, lips red as blood, hair the shade of a raven's feather" story in full text frm a folk source.

The King, seeing the bright red blood sprinkled upon the white, white marble, heaved a deep sigh and exclaimed, "O heavens! and cannot I have a wife as white and red as this stone, and with hair and eyebrows as black as the feathers of this raven?" And he stood for a while so buried in this thought that he became a counterpart to the stone, and looked like a marble image making love to the other marble.

Making love in period means courting – he's not literally having intercourse with the stone. I first noticed this when doing a history degree, in which I was looking at early editions of "Scouting For Boys" and Baden-Powell was saying young men should make love to women earnestly or vigorously or something, as a way of eventually getting to marriage. Of course, they could prefer his alternative, which was to write romantic letters about men, marry the most tomboyish woman he could find, and sleep in a different bed. to prevent headaches. Look, I'm not saying he was gay, but his mum did once tell him to stop

sending letters about how he'd gone curtain shopping with his army room-mate, because BP seemed fixated on him, and she found it boring…still, enough about that turn of phrase.

And this unhappy fancy fixing itself in his head, as he searched for it everywhere with the lanthorn of desire, it grew in four seconds from a picktooth to a pole, from a crab-apple to an Indian pumpkin,

A jujube bean.to an Indian pumpkin. A jujube, in period, is a fruit from the Levant, from the genus Zizyphus, often eaten candied. I'm not sure what an Indian pumpkin is. The modern pumpkin is found in Europe as a result of the Columbian Exchange (or carried by Dragon for "Jane and the Dragon" fans). "Pumpkin" comes from a Greek word for "melon", however distantly, and the Inidan melon is what we'd now call bitter melon. Some of those reach thirty centimetres, so it might be that. It might also be the watermelon, which was grown in India in period, but it was introduced ot Europe by the Moors in Andalusia.

from barber's embers to a glass furnace, and from a dwarf to a giant; insomuch that he thought of nothing else than the image of that object encrusted in his heart as stone to stone. Wherever he turned his eyes that form was always presented to him which he carried in his breast; and forgetting all besides, he had nothing but that marble in his head; in short, he became in a manner so worn away upon the stone that he was at last as thin as the edge of a penknife; and this marble was a millstone which crushed his life, a slab of porphyry upon which the colours of his days were ground and mixed, a tinder-box which set fire to the brimstone match of his soul, a loadstone which attracted him, and lastly, a rolling-stone which could never rest.

The rolling stone above replaces a painful gallstone, thereby making more sense. Why the hyphen? I'd note that in the older forms of the saying "a rolling stone gathers no moss" this was considered a bad thing – as in "a tree often replanted yields less fruit" from Erasmus.

At length his brother Jennariello, seeing him so pale and half-dead, said to him, "My brother, what has happened to you, that you carry grief lodged in your eyes, and despair sitting under the pale banner of your face? What has befallen you? Speak—open your heart to your brother: the smell of charcoal shut up in a chamber poisons people—powder pent up in a mountain blows it into the air;

"Scabies shut up inside veins makes the blood rot" has been removed here, because it is gruesome and body horror sometimes gets cut in Victorian stories. It's an example of spontaneous generation. Much as medieval people believed that flies naturally rose from meat, flees from dirt and wasps from the corpses of horses, so scabies are caused by rotten blood in the skin. Aristotle, well known for being wrong in the real world and right in Mythic Europe, talks of pimples which, when you prick release mites – well, those are scabies. Aristotle believes they are spontaneously generated.

Mange, as in the piratical insult "you are a mangy cur", is a related parasitic infection in animals.

open your lips, therefore, and tell me what is the matter with you; at all events be assured that I would lay down a thousand lives if I could to help you."

Then Milluccio, mingling words and sighs, thanked him for his love, saying that he had no doubt of his affection, but that there was no remedy for his ill, since it sprang from a stone, where he had sown desires without hope of fruit—a stone from which he did not expect a mushroom of content—a stone of Sisyphus, which he bore to the mountain of designs, and when it reached the top rolled over and over to the bottom. At length, however, after a thousand entreaties, Milluccio told his brother all about his love; whereupon Jennariello comforted him as much as he could, and bade him be of good cheer, and not give way to an unhappy passion; for that he was resolved, in order to satisfy him, to go all the world over until he found a woman the counterpart of the stone.

Then instantly fitting out a large ship, filled with merchandise, and dressing himself like a merchant, he sailed for Venice, the wonder of Italy, the receptacle of virtuous men, the great book of the marvels of art and nature; and having procured there a safe-conduct to pass to the Levant, he set sail for Cairo. When he arrived there and entered the city, he saw a man who was carrying a most beautiful falcon, and Jennariello at once purchased it to take to his brother, who was a sportsman. Soon afterwards he met another man with a splendid horse, which he also bought; whereupon he went to an inn to refresh himself after the fatigues he had suffered at sea.

The following morning, when the army of the Star, at the command of the general of the Light, strikes the tents in the camp of the sky and abandons the post, Jennariello set out to wander through the city, having his eyes about him like a lynx, looking at this woman and that, to see whether by chance he could find the likeness to a stone upon a face of flesh. And as he was wandering about at random, turning continually to this side and that, like a thief in fear of the constables, he met a beggar carrying an hospital of plasters and a mountain of rags upon his back, who said to him, "My gallant sir, what makes you so frightened?"

"Have I, forsooth, to tell you my affairs?" answered Jennariello. "Faith I should do well to tell my reason to the constable."

"Softly, my fair youth!" replied the beggar, "for the flesh of man is not sold by weight. If Darius had not told his troubles to a groom he would not have become king of Persia. It will be no great matter, therefore, for you to tell

your affairs to a poor beggar, for there is not a twig so slender but it may serve for a toothpick."

When Jennariello heard the poor man talking sensibly and with reason, he told him the cause that had brought him to that country; whereupon the beggar replied, "See now, my son, how necessary it is to make account of every one; for though I am only a heap of rubbish, yet I shall be able to enrich the garden of your hopes. Now listen—under the pretext of begging alms, I will knock at the door of the young and beautiful daughter of a magician;

Literally a necromancer – which is so say a magician schooled in dark arts.

then open your eyes wide, look at her, contemplate her, regard her, measure her from head to foot, for you will find the image of her whom your brother desires." So saying, he knocked at the door of a house close by, and Liviella opening it threw him a piece of bread.

As soon as Jennariello saw her, she seemed to him built after the model which Milluccio had given him; then he gave a good alms to the beggar and sent him away, and going to the inn he dressed himself like a pedlar, carrying in two caskets all the wealth of the world. And thus he walked up and down before Liviella's house crying his wares, until at length she called him, and took a view of the beautiful net-caps, hoods, ribands, gauze, edgings, lace, handkerchiefs, collars, needles, cups of rouge, and head-gear fit for a queen, which he carried. And when she had examined all the things again and again, she told him to show her something else; and Jennariello answered, "My lady, in these caskets I have only cheap and paltry wares; but if you will deign to come to my ship, I will show you things of the other world, for I have there a host of beautiful goods worthy of any great lord."

Liviella, who was full of curiosity, not to belie the nature of her sex, replied, "If my father indeed were not out he would have given me some money."

In the Penguin edition, she has money but cannot come as her father is away, and she cannot leave the house lacking his permission.

"Nay, you can come all the better if he is out," replied Jennariello, "for perhaps he might not allow you the pleasure; and I'll promise to show you such splendid things as will make you rave—such necklaces and earrings, such bracelets and sashes, such workmanship in paper—in short I will perfectly astound you."

When Liviella heard all this display of finery she called a gossip of hers to accompany her, and went to the ship.

A gossip is, in this case, a friend who is acting as a chaperone.

But no sooner had she embarked than Jennariello, whilst keeping her enchanted with the sight of all the beautiful things he had brought, craftily ordered the anchor to be weighed and the sails to be set, so that before Liviella raised her eyes from the wares and saw that she had left the land, they had already gone many miles. When at length she perceived the trick, she began to act Olympia the reverse way; for whereas Olympia bewailed being left upon a rock, Liviella lamented leaving the rocks. But when Jennariello told her who he was, whither he was carrying her, and the good fortune that awaited her, and pictured to her, moreover, Milluccio's beauty, his valour, his virtues, and lastly the love with which he would receive her, he succeeded in pacifying her, and she even prayed the wind to bear her quickly to see the colouring of the design which Jennariello had drawn.

As they were sailing merrily along they heard the waves grumbling beneath the ship; and although they spoke in an undertone, the captain of the ship, who understood in an instant what it meant, cried out, "All hands aboard! for here comes a storm, and Heaven save us!" No sooner had he spoken these words than there came the testimony of a whistling of the wind; and behold the sky was overcast with clouds, and the sea was covered with white-crested waves. And whilst the waves on either side of the ship, curious to know what the others were about, leaped uninvited to the nuptials upon the deck, one man baled them with a bowl into a tub, another drove them off with a pump; and whilst every sailor was hard at work—as it concerned his own safety—one minding the rudder, another hauling the foresail, another the mainsheet, Jennariello ran up to the topmast, to see with a telescope if he could discover any land where they might cast anchor. And lo! whilst he was measuring a hundred miles of distance with two feet of telescope, he saw a dove and its mate come flying up and alight upon the sail-yard. Then the male bird said, "Rucche, rucche!" And his mate answered, "What's the matter, husband, that you are lamenting so?" "This poor Prince," replied the other, "has bought a falcon, which as soon as it shall be in his brother's hands will pick out his eyes; but if he does not take it to him, or if he warns him of the danger, he will turn to marble." And thereupon he began again to cry, "Rucche, rucche!" And his mate said to him, "What, still lamenting! Is there anything new?" "Ay, indeed," answered the male dove, "he has also bought a horse, and the first time his brother rides him the horse will break his neck; but if he does not take it to him, or if he warns him of the danger, he will turn to marble." "Rucche, rucche!" he cried again. "Alas, with all these RUCCHE, RUCCHE," said the female dove, "what's the matter now?" And her mate said, "This man is taking a beautiful wife to his brother; but the first night, as soon as they go to sleep, they will both be devoured by a frightful dragon; yet if he does not take her to him, or if he warns him of the danger, he will turn to marble."

Rucche is just the sound doves make in the Victorian version. It's "coo coo" in the Penguin. These doves are presumably faeries, because this is clearly not normal behaviour.

As he spoke, the tempest ceased, and the rage of the sea and the fury of the wind subsided. But a far greater tempest arose in Jennariello's breast, from what he had heard, and more than twenty times he was on the point of throwing all the things into the sea, in order not to carry to his brother the cause of his ruin. But on the other hand he thought of himself, and reflected that charity begins at home; and fearing that, if he did not carry these things to his brother, or if he warned him of the danger, he should turn to marble, he resolved to look rather to the fact than to the possibility, since the shirt was closer to him than the jacket.

In the Penguin edition he looks more to his personal name than his family name.

When he arrived at Shady-Grove, he found his brother on the shore, awaiting with great joy the return of the ship, which he had seen at a distance. And when he saw that it bore her whom he carried in his heart, and confronting one face with the other perceived that there was not the difference of a hair, his joy was so great that he was almost weighed down under the excessive burden of delight. Then embracing his brother fervently, he said to him, "What falcon is that you are carrying on your fist?" And Jennariello answered, "I have bought it on purpose to give to you." "I see clearly that you love me," replied Milluccio, "since you go about seeking to give me pleasure. Truly, if you had brought me a costly treasure, it could not have given me greater delight than this falcon." And just as he was going to take it in his hand, Jennariello quickly drew a large knife which he carried at his side and cut off its head. At this deed the King stood aghast, and thought his brother mad to have done such a stupid act; but not to interrupt the joy at his arrival, he remained silent. Presently, however, he saw the horse, and on asking his brother whose it was, heard that it was his own. Then he felt a great desire to ride him, and just as he was ordering the stirrup to beheld, Jennariello quickly cut off the horse's legs with his knife. Thereat the King waxed wrath, for his brother seemed to have done it on purpose to vex him, and his choler began to rise. However, he did not think it a right time to show resentment, lest he should poison the pleasure of the bride at first sight, whom he could never gaze upon enough.

When they arrived at the royal palace, he invited all the lords and ladies of the city to a grand feast, at which the hall seemed just like a riding-school full of horses, curveting and prancing, with a number of foals in the form of women. But when the ball was ended, and a great banquet had been despatched, they all retired to rest.

Jennariello, who thought of nothing else than to save his brother's life, hid himself behind the bed of the bridal pair; and as he stood watching to see the dragon come, behold at midnight a fierce dragon entered the chamber, who sent forth flames from his eyes and smoke from his mouth, and who, from the terror he carried in his look, would have been a good agent to sell all the antidotes to fear in the apothecaries' shops.

The Penguin edition specifies this as wormwood.

As soon as Jennariello saw the monster, he began to lay about him right and left with a Damascus blade which he had hidden under his cloak; and he struck one blow so furiously that it cut in halves a post of the King's bed, at which noise the King awoke, and the dragon disappeared.

When Milluccio saw the sword in his brother's hand, and the bedpost cut in two, he set up a loud cry, "Help here! hola! help! This traitor of a brother is come to kill me!" Whereupon, hearing the noise, a number of servants who slept in the antechamber came running up, and the King ordered Jennariello to be bound, and sent him the same hour to prison.

The next morning, as soon as the Sun opened his bank to deliver the deposit of light to the Creditor of the Day, the King summoned the council; and when he told them what had passed, confirming the wicked intention shown in killing the falcon and the horse on purpose to vex him, they judged that Jennariello deserved to die. The prayers of Liviella were all unavailing to soften the heart of the King, who said, "You do not love me, wife, for you have more regard for your brother-in-law than for my life. You have seen with your own eyes this dog of an assassin come with a sword that would cut a hair in the air to kill me; and if the bedpost (the column of my life) had not protected me, you would at this moment have been a widow." So saying, he gave orders that justice should take its course.

When Jennariello heard this sentence, and saw himself so ill-rewarded for doing good, he knew not what to think or to do. If he said nothing, bad; if he spoke, worse;

"It is bad to get scabies, it is worse to get ringworm". In Mythic Europe it's really difficult to permanently cure ringworm. Attempts to remove the worm surgically were a failure, because it's really a fungal ring, not a parasitic animal. By the Victorian period people knew it was a fungus, but they didn't have powerful antifungals. They even tried strapping blocks of radium on it in the affected area.

As a fungal ring, I've occasionally tortured my players by making a ringworm a portal to faerie, like any other ring of mushrooms.

and whatever he should do was a fall from the tree into the wolf's mouth. If he remained silent, he should lose his head under an axe; if he spoke, he should end his days in a stone. At length, after various resolutions, he made up his mind to disclose the matter to his brother; and since he must die at all events, he thought it better to tell his brother the truth, and to end his days with the title of an innocent man, than to keep the truth to himself and be sent out of the world as a traitor. So sending word to the King that he had something to say of importance to his state, he was led into his presence, where he first made a long preamble of the love he had always borne him; then he went on to tell of the deception he had practiced on Liviella in order to give him pleasure; and then what he had heard from the doves about the falcon, and how, to avoid being turned to marble, he had brought it him, and without revealing the secret had killed it in order not to see him without eyes.

As he spoke, he felt his legs stiffen and turn to marble. And when he went on to relate the affair of the horse in the same manner, he became visibly stone up to the waist, stiffening miserably—a thing which at another time he would have paid in ready money, but which now his heart wept at. At last, when he came to the affair of the dragon, he stood like a statue in the middle of the hall, stone from head to foot. When the King saw this, reproaching himself for the error he had committed, and the rash sentence he had passed upon so good and loving a brother, he mourned him more than a year, and every time he thought of him he shed a river of tears.

Meanwhile Liviella gave birth to two sons, who were two of the most beautiful creatures in the world. And after a few months, when the Queen was gone into the country for pleasure, and the father and his two little boys chanced to be standing in the middle of the hall, gazing with tearful eyes on the statue—the memorial of his folly, which had taken from him the flower of men—behold a stately and venerable old man entered, whose long hair fell upon his shoulders and whose beard covered his breast. And making a reverence to the King, the old man said to him, "What would your Majesty give to have this noble brother return to his former state?" And the King answered, "I would give my kingdom." "Nay," replied the old man, "this is not a thing that requires payment in wealth; but being an affair of life, it must be paid for with as much again of life."

Then the King, partly out of the love he bore Jennariello, and partly from hearing himself reproached with the injury he had done him, answered, "Believe me, my good sir, I would give my own life for his life; and provided that he came out of the stone, I should be content to be enclosed in a stone."

Hearing this the old man said, "Without putting your life to the risk—since it takes so long to rear a man—the blood of these, your two little boys, smeared upon the marble, would suffice to make him instantly come to life." Then he King replied, "Children I may have again, but I have a brother, and another I can never more hope to see." So saying, he made a pitiable sacrifice of two little innocent kids before an idol of stone, and besmearing the statue with their blood, it instantly became alive; whereupon the King embraced his brother, and their joy is not to be told. Then they had these poor little creatures put into a coffin, in order to give them burial with all due honour. But just at that instant the Queen returned home, and the King, bidding his brother hide himself, said to his wife, "What would you give, my heart, to have my brother restored to life?" "I would give this whole kingdom," replied Liviella. And the King answered, "Would you give the blood of your children?" "Nay, not that, indeed," replied the Queen; "for I could not be so cruel as to tear out with my own hands the apple of my eyes."

She calls them the "pupils of her eyes" in the Penguin edition. Apples are a bit evil in Latin and Italian. Their name "malus" comes from the same root as malefic.

"Alas!" said the King, "in order to see a brother alive, I have killed my own children! for this was the price of Jennariello's life!"

So saying, he showed the Queen the little boys in the coffin; and when she saw this sad spectacle, she cried aloud like one mad, saying, "O my children! you props of my life, joys of my heart, fountains of my blood! Who has painted red the windows of the sun? Who has without a doctor's licence bled the chief vein of my life? Alas, my children, my children! my hope now taken from me, my light now darkened, my joy now poisoned, my support now lost! You are stabbed by the sword, I am pierced by grief; you are drowned in blood, I in tears. Alas that, to give life to an uncle, you have slain your mother! For I am no longer able to weave the thread of my days without you, the fair counterpoises of the loom of my unhappy life.

A counterpoise is a weaving counterweight.

The organ of my voice must be silent, now that its bellows are taken away. O children, children! why do ye not give answer to your mother, who once gave you the blood in your veins, and now weeps it for you from her eyes? But since fate shows me the fountain of my happiness dried up, I will no longer live the sport of fortune in the world, but will go at once to find you again!"

So saying, she ran to a window to throw herself out; but just at that instant her father entered by the same window in a cloud, and called to her, "Stop, Liviella! I have now accomplished what I intended, and killed three birds with one stone. I have revenged myself on Jennariello, who came to my house to rob me of my daughter, by making him stand all these months like a marble statue in a block of stone.

“Like a date mussel” A date mussel is the average sort of Mediterranean mussel, scientifically called a Lithophaga litohphaga. The name means “stone eater” and this is because they can burrow into rock with their secretions.

I have punished you for your ill-conduct in going away in a ship without my permission, by showing you your two children, your two jewels, killed by their own father. And I have punished the King for the caprice he took into his head, by making him first the judge of his brother, and afterwards the executioner of his children. But as I have wished only to shear and not to flay you, I desire now that all the poison may turn into sweetmeats for you.

The sweetmeat is marzipan again. They -really- like marzipan. In the modern day chocolate has driven it from pre-eminence.

Therefore, go, take again your children and my grandchildren, who are more beautiful than ever. And you, Milluccio, embrace me. I receive you as my son-in-law and as my son. And I pardon Jennariello his offence, having done all that he did out of love to so excellent a brother.”

Worst father in law ever?

And as he spoke, the little children came, and the grandfather was never satisfied with embracing and kissing them; and in the midst of the rejoicings Jennariello entered, as a third sharer in them, who, after suffering so many storms of fate, was now swimming in macaroni broth.

Macaroni used to be an extraordinarily flash food in England, favoured by young rich people who had toured Europe, but I don’t think that’s the connection. It seems to occur in the originals, and so perhaps it means something lucky and luxurious?

But notwithstanding all the after pleasures that he enjoyed in life, his past dangers never went from his mind; and he was always thinking on the error his brother had committed, and how careful a man ought to be not to fall into the ditch, since—

“All human judgment is false and perverse.”

Was Pendule a follower of Plotinus?

In Second edition, there was a magus mentioned called Pendule. He refused to join the Order, but met with some members in secret, teaching them his techniques. The key sentence is that his magic was more sensual than Hermetic magic. He expected the magic to change the magus, not be dominated by the magus, as it was in the Hermetic system. He had about twenty decedents in 1187.

In the first edition of "The Mysteries", the authors expanded this out. They made him a sort of Orphic survival that used bacchanals to invest initiates. They used him as a way to explore the Orphic mysteries, Pythagoreanism and Apollonius of Tyana. Their Pendule cult re-enact stories of their ancestor outwitting Flambeau using small spells of sound and colour. These are clever ideas, and important to introduce to players who have not paddled into the depths of European occult history. The thing is, though, I was struck by a far simpler idea. What if Pendule is actually the mainstream, and Bonisagus the seculariser and innovator? What if Pendule was a follower of Plotinus?

To explain: Plotinus was a Hellenistic philosopher in Egypt whose thoughts defined the mainstream of Platonic thought in Medieval Europe. The term "neoplatonism", which we apply to these thoughts, was a Victorian invention, I believe, but in Ars Magica we have tended to hand neoplatonism off to Aristotle. In part this is because most of Plotinus's works are lost, and we have Aristotle's. As gamers, we need the idea of pure Forms and material Accidents for class protection.

Much as in the most popular roleplaying game, only clerics heal and wizards do not wear heavy armor, so, in Ars Magica, we have to carefully stop any Form or Technique growing too large for its story role. The obvious culprits are from the Third edition: Imagenonem which could effectively simulate most other Forms, and Muto which basically made Creo and Perdo pointless through over-reach. You might argue Rego is over-keyed in the current edition as a sort of visceral response to not making even more things Muto. That aside, my point is that our magi do have story roles, and we've chosen a metaphysics that suits these roles. We have slapped that metaphysics down on Aristotle, but I think that's not entirely fair to Plotinus.

I say he was a Greek from Alexandria, but that hides his role in a theoretical Cult of Mercury. After an adventurous life where he travelled to Persia and India, he moved to Rome and started a school there. He had male and female students, and was a friend of the Emperor. He treid to get imperial funding for what we'd regocnise as a covenant – a "City of Philosophers" to be run on the Platonic model, but that fell through. He moved to Sicily for a while, then back to Campagna to end his days on a holding left him by one of his students. So, he was in Rome, hob-nobbing with Emperors, and starting a school of magic that used Platonic thought.

Plotinus strikes me as a predecessor for Pendule, because his though isn't as strongly anti-materialist as the strict division we have between forms and accidents. I don't want to overplay his, but basically he thought that the point of life was to raise the divine within onself so that one could rejoin the One, which in later Christian though was read as God. He thought that the material world was the best guide we had to the intelligible, but supermaterial, world. Now, some of this sounds like Criamon magic, and he was in Sicily for a while, so we can see a link there if we like, but in one of his surviving writings, Against the Gnostics, he was critical of a group (who were not Gnostics in our later sense) for making philosophy jargon-filled and obscure. He'd have hated the Criamon idea that our language can't handle deeper truths and so they need to be communicated in other ways.

Plotinus thought the experiences of things, sound and light and colour, were a way for those things to communicate their essential nature to us. By understanding that essential nature, and allowing it to draw us into an elevated moral state, we gained enlightenment and power over the underlying mechanisms of the world (which he thought of as daemons). To me, that sounds a lot like Pendule's "magic is sensual and changes you". It's also whispering in the background when you hear the Church says "Great art is a teaching tool" and using stained glass and gold a lot to draw the illiterate closer to the Divine. The medieval Church has a lot of time for Plotinus's ideas, because he spent an awful lot of time thinking about how a spiritual being could be also a material being. He was thinking about all of us, but the Church liked the cut of his jib when discussing the Incarnation. Also, he held other ideas they liked – for example that stars aren't causal.

So, I see why the authors of Mysteries used Pendule as a way to introduce readers to the three interesting cults they chose. I accept my idea isn't nearly so strong as theirs, in terms of immediately useful plot hooks. At the same time I think its one of those interesting fragments leaders might use in their own sagas to make good the problems I've already discussed about the weak history we have for the Cult of Mercury. What if Pendule wasn't an odd little cult leader, but an embodiment of the backsliding tendencies of the Order, as it secularised under Bonjisagus and his philosophy of observation and experiment? What if Pendule was just the face given to the things which he could not wash away, as he lurched the history of magic from the neoplatonic to the Aristotelian track?

The King of Elfland's Daughter 10

Two minor notes for this section. Zironderel says she disenchants then reenchants the sword, but instead I'd argue she just supresses its magic. Statistics for the lesser wisps are already found in Realms of Power: Faerie, but statistics for Greater Wisps and the Kennel Trolls will be added eventually.

CHAPTER XXVI: The Horn of Alveric

Northward to lonely lands through wearying years Alveric wandered, where windy fragments of his grey gaunt tent added a gloom to chill evenings. And the folk upon lonely farms, as they lit the lights in their houses, and the ricks began to darken against the pale green of the sky, would sometimes hear the rap of the mallets of Niv and Zend coming clear through the hush from the land that no others trod. And their children peering from casements to see if a star was come would see perhaps the queer grey shape of that tent flapping its tatters above the last of the hedgerows, where a moment before was only the grey of the gloaming. On the next morning there would be guesses and wonderings, and the joy and fear of the children, and the tales that their elders told them, and the explorations by stealth to the edge of the fields of men, shy peerings through dim green gaps in the last of the hedgerows (though to look toward the East was forbidden), and rumours and expectations; and all these things were blended together by this wonder that came from the East, and so passed into legend, which lived for many a year beyond that morning; but Alveric and his tent would be gone.

So day by day and season after season that company wandered on, the lonely mateless man, the moonstruck lad and the madman, and that old grey tent with its long twisted pole. And all the stars became known to them, and all the four winds familiar, and rain and mist and hail, but the flow of yellow windows all warm and welcome at night they knew only to say farewell to: with the earliest light in the first chill of dawn Alveric would awake from impatient dreams, and Niv would arise shouting, and away they would go upon their crazed crusade before any sign of awakening appeared on the quiet dim gables. And every morning Niv prophesied that they would surely find Elfland; and the days wore away and the years.

Thyl had long left them; Thyl who prophesied victory to them in burning song, whose inspirations cheered Alveric on coldest nights and led him through rockiest ways, Thyl sang one evening suddenly songs of some young girl's hair, Thyl who should have led their wanderings. And then one day in the gloaming, a blackbird singing, the may in bloom for miles, he turned for the houses of men, and married the maiden and was one no more with any band of wanderers.

The horses were dead; Niv and Zend carried all they had on the pole. Many years had gone. One Autumn morning Alveric left the camp to go to the houses of men. Niv and Zend eyed each other. Why should Alveric seek to ask the way of others? For somehow or other their mad minds knew his purpose more swiftly than sane intuitions. Had he not Niv's prophecies to guide him, and the things that Zend had been told on oath by the full moon?

Alveric came to the houses of men, and of the folk he questioned few would speak at all of things that lay to the East, and if he spoke of the lands through which he had wandered for years they gave as little heed as if he were telling them that he had pitched his tent on the coloured layers of air that glowed and drifted and darkened in the low sky over the sunset. And the few that answered him said one thing only: that only the wizards knew.

When he had learned this Alveric went back from the fields and hedgerows and came again to his old grey tent in the lands of which none thought; and Niv and Zend sat there silent, eying him sideways, for they knew he mistrusted madness and things said by the moon. And next day when they moved their camp in the chill of dawn Niv led the way without shouting.

They had not gone for many more weeks upon their curious journey when Alveric met one morning, at the edge of the fields men tended, one filling his bucket at a well, whose thin high conical hat and mystical air proclaimed him surely a wizard. "Master," said Alveric, "of those arts men dread, I have a question that I would ask of the future."

And the wizard turned from his bucket to look at Alveric with doubtful eyes, for the traveller's tattered figure seemed scarce to promise such fees as are given by those that justly question the future. And, such as those fees are, the wizard named them. And Alveric's wallet held that which banished the doubts of the wizard. So that he pointed to where the tip of his tower peered over a cluster of myrtles, and prayed Alveric to come to his door when the evening star should appear; and in that propitious hour he would make the future clear to him.

And again Niv and Zend knew well that their leader followed after dreams and mysteries that came not from madness nor from the moon. And he left them sitting still and saying nothing, but with minds full of fierce visions.

Through pale air waiting for the evening star Alveric walked over the fields men tended, and came to the dark oak door of the wizard's tower which myrtles brushed against with every breeze. A young apprentice in wizardry opened the door and, by ancient wooden steps that the rats knew better than men, led Alveric to the wizard's upper room.

The wizard had on a silken cloak of black, which he held to be due to the future; without it he would not question the years to be. And when the young apprentice had gone away he moved to a volume he had on a high desk, and turned from the volume to Alveric to ask what he sought of the future. And Alveric asked him how he should come to Elfland. Then the wizard opened the great book's darkened cover and turned the pages therein, and for a long while all the pages he turned were blank, but further on in the book much writing appeared, although of no kind that Alveric had ever seen. And the wizard explained that such books as these told of all things; but that he, being only concerned with the years to be, had no need to read of the past, and had therefore acquired a book that told of the future only; though he might have had more than this from the College of Wizardry, had he cared to study the follies already committed by man.

Then he read for a while in his book, and Alveric heard the rats returning softly to the streets and houses that they had made in the stairs. And then the wizard found what he sought of the future, and told Alveric that it was written in his book how he never should come to Elfland while he carried a magical sword.

When Alveric heard this he paid the wizard's fees and went away doleful. For he knew the perils of Elfland, which no common sabre forged on the anvils of men could ever avail to parry. He did not know that the magic that was in his sword left a flavour or taste on the air like that of lightning, which passed through the border of twilight and spread over Elfland, nor knew that the Elf King learned of his presence thus and drew his frontier away from him, so that Alveric should trouble his realm no more; but he believed what the wizard had read to him out of his book, and so went doleful away. And, leaving the stairs of oak to time and the rats, he passed out of the grove of myrtles and over the fields of men, and came again to that melancholy spot where his grey tent brooded mournfully in the wilderness, dull and silent as Niv and Zend sitting beside it. And after that they turned and wandered southwards, for all journeys now seemed equally hopeless to Alveric, who would not give up his sword to meet magical perils without magical aid; and Niv and Zend obeyed him silently, no longer guiding him with raving prophesies or with things said by the moon, for they knew he had taken counsel with another.

By weary ways with lonely wanderings they came far to the South, and never the border of Elfland appeared with its heavy layers of twilight; yet Alveric would never give up his sword, for well he guessed that Elfland dreaded its magic, and had poor hope of recapturing Lirazel with any blade that was dreadful only to men. And after a while Niv prophesied again, and Zend would come late on nights of the full moon to wake Alveric with his tales. And for all the mystery that was in Zend when he spoke, and for all the exultation of Niv when he prophesied, Alveric knew by now that the tales and the prophecies were empty and vain and that neither of these would ever bring him to Elfland. With this mournful knowledge in a desolate land he still struck camp at dawn, still marched, still sought for the frontier, and so the months went by.

And one day where the edge of Earth was a wild untended heath, running down to the rocky waste in which Alveric had camped, he saw at evening a woman in the hat and cloak of a witch sweeping the heath with a broom. And each stroke as she swept the heath was away from the fields we know, away to the rocky waste, eastwards towards Elfland. Big gusts of black dried earth and puffs of sand were blowing towards Alveric from every powerful stroke. He walked towards her from his sorry encampment and stood near and watched her sweeping; but still she laboured at her vigorous work, striding away behind dust from the fields we know, and sweeping as she strode. And after a while she lifted her face as she swept and looked at Alveric, and he saw that it was the witch Ziroonderel. After all these years he saw that witch again, and she saw beneath the flapping rags of his cloak that sword that she had made for him once on her hill. Its scabbard of leather could not hide from the witch that it was that very sword, for she knew the flavour of magic that rose from it faintly and floated wide through the evening.

"Mother Witch!" said Alveric.

And she curtsied low to him, magical though she was and aged by the passing of years that had been before Alveric's father, and though many in Erl had forgotten their lord by now; yet she had not forgotten.

He asked her what she was doing there, on the heath with her broom in the evening.

"Sweeping the world," she said.

And Alveric wondered what rejected things she was sweeping away from the world, with grey dust mournfully turning over and over as it drifted across our fields, going slowly into the darkness that was gathering beyond our coasts.

"Why are you sweeping the world, Mother Witch?" he said.

"There's things in the world that ought not to be here," said she.

He looked wistfully then at the rolling grey clouds from her broom that were all drifting towards Elfland.

"Mother Witch," he said, "can I go too? I have looked for twelve years for Elfland, and have not found a glimpse of the Elfin Mountains."

And the old witch looked kindly at him, and then she glanced at his sword.

“He’s afraid of my magic,” she said; and thought or mystery dawned in her eyes as she spoke.

“Who?” said Alveric.

And Ziroonderel lowered her eyes.

“The King,” she said.

And then she told him how that enchanted monarch would draw away from whatever had worsted him once, and with him draw all that he had, never supporting the presence of any magic that was the equal of his.

And Alveric could not believe that such a king cared so much for the magic he had in his old black scabbard.

“It is his way,” she said.

And then he would not believe that he had waved away Elfland.

“He has the power,” said she.

And still Alveric would face this terrible king and all the powers he had; but wizard and witch had warned him that he could not go with his sword, and how go unarmed through the grizzly wood against the palace of wonder? For to go there with any sword from the anvils of men was but to go unarmed.

“Mother Witch,” he cried. “May I come no more to Elfland?”

And the longing and grief in his voice touched the witch’s heart and moved it to magical pity.

“You shall go,” she said.

He stood there half despair in the mournful evening, half dreams of Lirazel. While the witch from under her cloak drew forth a small false weight which once she had taken away from a seller of bread.

“Draw this along the edge of your sword,” she said, “all the way from hilt to point, and it will disenchant the blade, and the King will never know what sword is there.”

“Will it still fight for me?” said Alveric.

“No,” said the witch. “But once you are over the frontier take this script and wipe the blade with it on every spot that the false weight has touched.” And she fumbled under her cloak again and drew forth a poem on parchment. “It will enchant it again,” she said.

And Alveric took the weight and the written thing.

“Let not the two touch,” warned the witch.

And Alveric set them apart.

“Once over the frontier,” she said, “and he may move Elfland where he will, but you and the sword will be within his borders.”

“Mother Witch,” said Alveric, “will he be wroth with you if I do this?”

“Wroth!” said Ziroonderel. “Wroth? He will rage with a most exceeding fury, beyond the power of tigers.”

“I would not bring that on you, Mother Witch,” said Alveric.

“Ha!” said Ziroonderel. “What care I?”

Night was advancing now, and the moor and the air growing black like the witch’s cloak. She was laughing now and merging into the darkness. And soon the night was all blackness and laughter; but he could see no witch.

Then Alveric made his way back to his rocky camp by the light of its lonely fire.

And as soon as morning appeared on the desolation, and all the useless rocks began to glow, he took the false weight and softly rubbed it along both sides of his sword until all its magical edge was disenchanted. And he did this in his tent while his followers slept, for he would not let them know that he sought for help that came not from the ravings of Niv, nor from any sayings that Zend had had from the moon.

Yet the troubled sleep of madness is not so deep that Niv did not watch him out of one wild sly eye when he heard the false weight softly rasping the sword.

And when this was secretly done and secretly watched, Alveric called to his two men, and they came and folded up his tattered tent, and took the long pole and hung their sorry belongings upon it; and on went Alveric along the edge of the fields we know, impatient to come at last to the land that so long eluded him. And Niv and Zend came behind with the pole between them, with bundles swinging from it and tatters flying.

They moved inland a little towards the houses of men to purchase the food they needed; and this they bought in the afternoon from a farmer who dwelt in a lonely house, so near to the very edge of the fields we know that it must have been the last house in the visible world. And here they bought bread and oatmeal, and cheese and a cured ham, and other such things, and put them in sacks and slung them over their pole; then they left the farmer and turned away from his fields and from all the fields of men. And as evening fell they saw just over a hedge, lighting up the land with a soft strange glow that they knew to be

not of this Earth, that barrier of twilight that is the frontier of Elfland.

“Lirazel!” shouted Alveric, and drew his sword and strode into the twilight. And behind him went Niv and Zend, with all their suspicions flaming now into jealousy of inspirations or magic that were not theirs.

Once he called Lirazel; then, little trusting his voice in that wide weird land, he lifted his hunter’s horn that hung by his side on a strap, he lifted it to his lips and sounded a call weary with so much wandering. He was standing within the edge of the boundary; the horn shone in the light of Elfland.

Then Niv and Zend dropped their pole in that unearthly twilight, where it lay like the wreckage of some uncharted sea, and suddenly seized their master.

“A land of dreams!” said Niv. “Have I not dreams enough?”

“There is no moon there!” cried Zend.

Alveric struck Zend on the shoulder with his sword, but the sword was disenchanted and blunt and only harmed him slightly. Then the two seized the sword and dragged Alveric back. And the strength of the madman was beyond what one could believe. They dragged him back again to the fields we know, where they two were strange and were jealous of other strangeness, and led him far from the sight of the pale-blue mountains. He had not entered Elfland.

But his horn had passed the boundary’s edge and troubled the air of Elfland, uttering across its dreamy calm one long sad earthly note: it was the horn that Lirazel heard as she spoke with her father.

CHAPTER XXVII: The Return of Lurulu

Over hamlet and Castle of Erl, and through every nook and crevice of it, Spring passed; a mild benediction that blessed the very air and sought out all living things; not missing even the tiny plants that had their dwelling in most secluded places, under eaves, in the cracks of old barrels, or along the lines of mortar that held ancient rows of stones. And in this season Orion hunted no unicorns; not that he knew in what season the unicorns bred in Elfland, where time is not as here; but because of a feeling he had from all his earthly forefathers against hunting any creature in this season of song and flowers. So he tended his hounds and often watched the hills, expecting on any day the return of Lurulu.

And Spring passed by and the Summer flowers grew, and still there was no sign of the troll returning, for time moves through the dells of Elfland as over no field of man. And long Orion watched through fading evenings till the line of the hills was black, yet never saw the small round heads of trolls bobbing across the downs.

And the long autumnal winds came sighing out of cold lands, and found Orion still watching for Lurulu; and the mist and the turning leaves spoke to his heart of hunting. And the hounds were whining for the open spaces and the line of scent like a mysterious path crossing the wide world, but Orion would hunt nothing less than unicorns, and waited yet for his trolls.

And one of these earthly days, with a menace of frost in the air and a scarlet sunset, Lurulu’s talk to the trolls in the wood being finished, and their scamper swifter than hares having brought them soon to the frontier, those in our fields who looked (as they seldom did) towards that mysterious border where Earth ended might have seen the unwonted shapes of the nimble trolls coming all grey through the evening. They came dropping, troll after troll, from the soaring leaps they took high through the boundary of twilight; and, landing thus unceremoniously in our fields, came capering, somersaulting and running, with gusts of impudent laughter, as though this were a proper manner in which to approach by no means the least of the planets.

They rustled by the small houses like the wind passing through straw, and none that heard the light rushing sound of their passing knew how outlandish they were, except the dogs, whose work it is to watch, and who know of all things that pass, their degree of remoteness to man. At gipsies, tramps, and all that go without houses, dogs bark whenever they pass; at the wild things of the woods they bark with greater abhorrence, knowing well the rebellious contempt in which they hold man; at the fox, for his touch of mystery and his far wanderings, they bark more furiously: but to-night the barking of dogs was beyond all abhorrence and fury; many a farmer this night believed that his dog was choking.

And passing over these fields, staying not to laugh at the clumsy scared running of sheep, for they kept their laughter for man, they came soon to the downs above Erl; and there below them was night and the smoke of men, all grey together. And not knowing from what slight causes the smoke arose, here from a woman boiling a kettle of water, or there because one dried the frock of a child, or that a few old men might warm their hands in the evening, the trolls forbore to laugh as they had planned to do as soon as they should meet with the things of man. Perhaps even they, whose gravest thoughts were just under the surface of laughter, even they were a little awed by the strangeness and nearness of man sleeping there in his hamlet with all his smoke about him. Though awe in these light minds rested no longer than does the squirrel on the thin extremest twigs.

In a while they lifted their eyes up from the valley, and there was the western sky still shining above the last of the gloaming, a little strip of colour and dying light, so lovely that they believed that another elfland lay the other side of the valley, two dim diaphonous magical elfin lands hemming in this valley and few fields of men close upon either side. And, sitting there on the hillside peering westward, the next thing they saw was a star: it was Venus low in the West brimming with blueness. And they all bowed their heads many times to this pale-blue beautiful stranger; for though politeness was rare with them they saw that the Evening Star was nothing of Earth and no affair of man's, and believed it came out of that elfland they did not know on the western side of the world. And more and more stars appeared, till the trolls were frightened, for they knew nothing of these glittering wanderers that could steal out of the darkness and shine: at first they said "There are more trolls than stars," and were comforted, for they trusted greatly in numbers. Then there were soon more stars than trolls; and the trolls were ill at ease as they sat in the dark underneath all that multitude. But presently they forgot the fancy that troubled them, for no thought remained with them long. They turned their light attention instead to the yellow lights that glowed here and there on the hither side of the greyness, where a few of the houses of men stood warm and snug near the trolls. A beetle went by, and they hushed their chatter to hear what he would say; but he droned by, going home, and they did not know his language. A dog far off was ceaselessly crying out, and filling all the still night with a note of warning. And the trolls were angry at the sound of his voice, for they felt that he interfered between them and man. Then a soft whiteness came out of the night and lit on the branch of a tree, and bowed its head to the left and looked at the trolls, and then bowed over to the right and looked at them again from there, and then back to the left again for it was not yet sure about them. "An owl," said Lurulu; and many besides Lurulu had seen his kind before, for he flies much along the edge of Elfland. Soon he was gone and they heard him hunting across the hills and the hollows; and then no sound was left but the voices of men, or the shrill shouts of children, and the bay of the dog that warned men against the trolls. "A sensible fellow," they said of the owl, for they liked the sound of his voice; but the voices of men and their dog sounded confused and tiresome.

They saw sometimes the lights of late wayfarers crossing the downs towards Erl, or heard men that cheered themselves in the lonely night by singing, instead of by lantern's light. And all the while the Evening Star grew bigger, and great trees grew blacker and blacker.

Then from underneath the smoke and the mist of the stream there boomed all of a sudden the brazen bell of the Freer out of deep night in the valley. Night and the slopes of Erl and the dark downs echoed with it; and the echoes rode up to the trolls and seemed to challenge them, with all accursed things and wandering spirits and bodies unblessed of the Freer.

And the solemn sound of those echoes going alone through the night from every heavy swing of the holy bell cheered that band of trolls among all the strangeness of Earth, for whatever is solemn always moves trolls to levity. They turned merrier now and tittered among themselves.

And while they still watched all that host of stars, wondering if they were friendly, the sky grew steely blue and the eastern stars dwindled, and the mist and the smoke of men turned white, and a radiance touched the further edge of the valley; and the moon came up over the downs behind the trolls. Then voices sang from the holy place of the Freer, chaunting moon matins; which it was their wont to sing on nights of the full moon while the moon was yet low. And this rite they named moon's-morning. The bell had ceased, chance voices spoke no more, they had hushed their dog in the valley and silenced his warning, and lonely and grave and solemn that people's song floated up from before the candles in their small square sacred place, built of grey stone by men that were dead for ages and ages; all solemn the song welled up in the time of the moon's rising, grave as the night, mysterious as the full moon, and fraught with a meaning that was far beyond the highest thoughts of the trolls. Then the trolls leaped up with one accord from the frosted grass of the downs and all poured down the valley to laugh at the ways of men, to mock at their sacred things and to dare their singing with levity.

Many a rabbit rose up and fled from their onrush, and thrills of laughter arose from the trolls at their fear. A meteor flashed westwards, racing after the sun; either as a portent to warn the hamlet of Erl that folk from beyond Earth's borders approached them now, or else in fulfilment of some natural law. To the trolls it seemed that one of the proud stars fell, and they rejoiced with elvish levity.

Thus they came giggling through the night, and ran down the street of the village, unseen as any wild creature that roams late through the darkness; and Lurulu led them to the pigeon-loft, and they all poured clambering in. Some rumour arose in the village that a fox had jumped into the pigeon-loft, but it ceased almost as soon as the pigeons returned to their homes, and the folk of Erl had no more hint till the morning that something had entered their village from beyond the borders of Earth.

In a brown mass thicker than young pigs are along the edge of a trough the trolls encumbered the floor of the pigeons' home. And time went over them as over all earthly things. And well they knew, though tiny was their intelligence, that by crossing the border of twilight they incurred the wasting of time; for nothing dwells by the brink of any danger and lives ignorant of its menace: as conies in rocky altitudes know the peril of the sheer cliff, so they that dwell near Earth's border knew well the danger of time. And yet they came. The wonder and lure of Earth had been overstrong for them. Does not many a

young man squander youth as they squandered immortality?

And Lurulu showed them how to hold off time for a while, which otherwise would make them older and older each moment and whirl them on with Earth's restlessness all night long. Then he curled up his knees and shut his eyes and lay still. This, he told them, was sleep; and, cautioning them to continue to breathe, though being still in other respects, he then slept in earnest: and after some vain attempts the brown trolls did the same.

When sunrise came, awaking all earthly things, long rays came through the thirty little windows and awoke both birds and trolls. And the mass of trolls went to the windows to look at Earth, and the pigeons fluttered to rafters and jerked sidelong looks at the trolls. And there that heap of trolls would have stayed, crowded high on each other's shoulders, blocking the windows while they studied the variety and restlessness of Earth, finding them equal to the strangest fables that wayfarers had brought to them out of our fields; and, though Lurulu often reminded them, they had forgotten the haughty white unicorns that they were to hunt with dogs.

But Lurulu after a while led them down from the loft and brought them to the kennels. And they climbed up the high palings and peered over the top at the hounds.

When the hounds saw those strange heads peering over the palings they made a great uproar. And presently folk came to see what troubled the hounds. And when they saw that mass of trolls all round the top of the palings they said to each other, and so said all that heard of it: "There is magic in Erl now."

CHAPTER XXVIII: A Chapter on Unicorn-Hunting

None in Erl was so busy but that he came that morning to see the magic that was newly come out of Elfland, and to compare the trolls with all that the neighbours said of them. And the folk of Erl gazed much at the trolls and the trolls at the folk of Erl, and there was great merriment; for, as often happens with minds of unequal weight, each laughed at the other. And the villagers found the impudent ways of the bare brown nimble trolls no funnier, no more meet for derision, than the trolls found the grave high hats, the curious clothes, and the solemn air of the villagers.

And Orion soon came too, and the folk of the village doffed their long thin hats; and, though the trolls would have laughed at him also, Lurulu had found his whip, and by means of it made the mob of his impudent brethren give that salutation that is given in Elfland to those of its royal line.

When noonday came, which was the hour of dinner, and the folk turned from the kennels, they went back to their houses all praising the magic that was come at last to Erl.

During the days that followed Orion's hounds learned that it was vain to chase a troll and unwise to snarl at one; for, apart from their elvish speed, the trolls were able to leap into the air far over the heads of the hounds, and when each had been given a whip they could repay snarling with an aim that none on Earth was able to equal, except those whose sires had carried a whip with hounds for generations.

And one morning Orion came to the pigeon-loft and called to Lurulu early, and he brought out the trolls and they went to the kennels and Orion opened the doors, and he led them all away eastwards over the downs. The hounds moved all together and the trolls with their whips ran beside them, like a flock of sheep surrounded by numbers of collies. They were away to the border of Elfland to wait for the unicorns where they come through the twilight to eat the earthly grasses at evening. And as our evening began to mellow the fields we know, they were come to the opal border that shut those fields from Elfland. And there they lurked as Earth's darkness grew, and waited for the great unicorns. Each hound had its troll beside it with the troll's right hand along its shoulder or neck, soothing it, calming it, and holding it still, while the left hand held the whip: the strange group lingered there motionless, and darkened there with the evening. And when Earth was as dim and quiet as the unicorns desired the great creatures came softly through, and were far into Earth before any troll would allow his hound to move. Thus when Orion gave the signal they easily cut one off from its elfin home and hunted it snorting over those fields that are the portion of men. And night came down on the proud beast's magical gallop, and the hounds intoxicate with that marvellous scent, and the leaping soaring trolls.

And, when jackdaws on the highest towers of Erl saw the rim of the sun all red above frosted fields, Orion came back from the downs with his hounds and his trolls, carrying as fine a head as a unicorn-hunter could wish. The hounds weary but glad were soon curled up in their kennels, and Orion in his bed; while the trolls in their pigeon-loft began to feel, as none but Lurulu had felt ever before, the weight and the weariness of the passing of time.

All day Orion slept and all his hounds, none of them caring how it slept or why; while the trolls slept anxiously, falling asleep as fast as ever they could, in the hope of escaping some of the fury of time, which they feared had begun to attack them. And that evening while still they slept, hounds, trolls and Orion, there met again in the forge of Narl the parliament of Erl.

From the forge to the inner room came the twelve old men, rubbing their hands and smiling, ruddy with health

and the keen North wind and the cheerfulness of their forebodings; for they were well content at last that their lord was surely magic, and foresaw great doings in Erl.

“Folklings,” said Narl to them all, naming them thus after an ancient wont, “is it not well with us and our valley at last? See how it is as we planned so long ago. For our lord is a magic lord as we all desired, and magical things have sought him from over there, and they all obey his hests.”

“It is so,” said all but Gazic, a vendor of beeves.

Little and old and out-of-the-way was Erl, secluded in its deep valley, unnoticed in history; and the twelve men loved the place and would have it famous. And now they rejoiced as they heard the words of Narl, “What other village,” he said, “has traffic with over there?”

And Gazic, though he rejoiced with the rest, rose up in a pause of their gladness. “Many strange things,” he said, “have entered our village, coming from over there. And it may be that human folk are best, and the ways of the fields we know.”

Oth scorned him, and Threl. “Magic is best,” said all.

And Gazic was silent again, and raised his voice no more against the many; and the mead went round, and all spoke of the fame of Erl; and Gazic forgot his mood and the fear that was in it.

Far into the night they rejoiced, quaffing the mead, and by its homely aid gazing into the years of the future, so far as that may be done by the eyes of men. Yet all their rejoicing was hushed and their voices low, lest the ears of the Freer should hear them; for their gladness came to them from lands that lay beyond thought of salvation, and they had set their trust in magic, against which, as well they knew, boomed every note that rang from the bell of the Freer whenever it tolled at evening. And they parted late, praising magic in no loud tones, and went secretly back to their houses, for they feared the curse that the Freer had called down upon unicorns, and knew not if their own names might become involved in one of the curses called upon magical things.

All the next day Orion rested his hounds, and the trolls and the people of Erl gazed at each other. But on the day that followed Orion took his sword and gathered his band of trolls and his pack of hounds, and all were away once more far over the downs, to come again to the border of nebulous opal and to lurk for the unicorns coming through in the evening.

They came to a part of the border far from the spot which they had disturbed only three evenings before; and Orion was guided by the chattering trolls, for well they knew the haunts of the lonely unicorns. And Earth’s evening came huge and hushed, till all was dim as the twilight; and never a footfall did they hear of the unicorns, never a glimpse of their whiteness. And yet the trolls had guided Orion well, for just as he would have despaired of a hunt that night, just when the evening seemed wholly and utterly empty, a unicorn stood on the earthward edge of the twilight where nothing had stood only a moment before: soon he moved slowly across the terrestrial grasses a few yards forward into the fields of men.

Another followed, moving a few yards also; and then they stood for fifteen of our earthly minutes moving nothing at all except their ears. And all that while the trolls hushed every hound, motionless under a hedge of the fields we know. Darkness had all but hidden them when at last the unicorns moved. And, as soon as the largest was far enough from the frontier, the trolls let loose every hound, and ran with them after the unicorn with shrill yells of derision, all sure of his haughty head.

But the quick small minds of the trolls, though they had learned much of Earth, had not yet understood the irregularity of the moon. Darkness was new to them, and they soon lost hounds. Orion in his eagerness to hunt had made no choice of a suitable night: there was no moon at all, and would be none till near morning. Soon he also fell behind.

Orion easily collected the trolls, the night was full of their frivolous noises, and the trolls came to his horn, but not a hound would leave that pungent magical scent for any horn of man. They straggled back next day, tired, having lost their unicorn.

And while each troll cleaned and fed his hound on the evening after the hunt, and laid a little bunch of straw for it on which to lie down, and smoothed its hair and looked for thorns in its feet, and unravelled burrs from its ears, Lurulu sat alone fastening his small sharp intelligence, like the little white light of a burning glass, for hours upon one question. The question that Lurulu pondered far into the night was how to hunt unicorns with dogs in the darkness. And by midnight a plan was clear in his elvish mind.

CHAPTER XXIX: The Luring of the People of the Marshes

As the evening that followed was beginning to fade a traveller might have been seen approaching the marshes, which some way south-eastwards of Erl lay along the edge of the farmsteads and stretched their terrible waste as far as the sky-line, and even over the border and into the region of Elfland. They glimmered now as the light was leaving the land.

So black were the solemn clothes and the high grave hat of the traveller that he could have been seen from far against the dim green of the fields, going down to the edge of the marsh through the grey evening. But none were there to see at such an hour beside that desolate place, for the threat of darkness was already felt in the fields, and all the cows were home and the farmers warm in their houses; so the traveller walked alone. And soon he was come by unsure paths to the reeds and the thin rushes, to which a wind was telling tales that have no meaning to man, long histories of bleakness and ancient legends of rain; while on the high darkening land far off behind him he saw lights begin to blink where the houses were. He walked with the gravity and the solemn air of one who has important business with men; yet his back was turned to their houses and he went where no man wandered, travelling towards no hamlet or lonely cottage of man, for the marsh ran right into Elfland. Between him and the nebulous border that divides Earth from Elfland there was no man whatever, and yet the traveller walked on as one that has a grave errand. With every venerable step that he took bright mosses shook and the marsh seemed about to engulf him, while his worthy staff sank deep into slime, giving him no support; and yet the traveller seemed only to care for the solemnity of his pacing. Thus he went on over the deadly marsh with a deportment suitable to the slow procession when the elders open the market on special days, and the gravest blesses the bargaining, and all the farmers come to the booths and barter.

And up and down, up and down, song-birds went wavering home, skirting the marsh's edge on their way to their native hedges; pigeons passed landward to roost in high dark trees; the last of a multitude of rooks was gone; and all the air was empty.

And now the great marsh thrilled to the news of the coming of a stranger; for, no sooner had the traveller gravely set a foot on one of those brilliant mosses that bloom in the pools, than a thrill shot under their roots and below the stems of the bulrushes, and ran like a light beneath the surface of the water, or like the sound of a song, and passed far over the marshes, and came quivering to the border of magical twilight that divides Elfland from Earth; and stayed not there, but troubled the very border and passed beyond it and was felt in Elfland: for where the great marshes run down to the border of Earth the frontier is thinner and more uncertain than elsewhere.

And as soon as they felt that thrill in the deep of the marshes the will-o'-the-wisps soared up from their fathomless homes, and waved their lights to beckon the traveller on, over the quaking mosses at the hour when the duck were flighting. And under that whirr and rush and rejoicing of wings that the ducks make in that hour the traveller followed after the waving lights, further and further into the marshes. Yet sometimes he turned from them, so that for a while they followed him, instead of leading as they were accustomed to do, till they could get round in front of him and lead him once more. A watcher, if there had been one in such bad light and in such a perilous place, had noticed after a while in the venerable traveller's movements a queer resemblance to those of the hen green plover when she lures the stranger after her in Spring, away from the mossy bank where her eggs lie bare. Or perhaps such a resemblance is merely fanciful, and a watcher might have noticed no such thing. At any rate on that night in that desolate place there was no watcher whatever.

And the traveller followed his curious course, sometimes towards the dangerous mosses, sometimes towards the safe green land, always with grave demeanour and reverent gait; and the will-o'-the-wisps in multitudes gathered about him. And still that deep thrill that warned the marsh of a stranger throbbed on through the ooze below the roots of the rushes; and did not cease, as it should as soon as the stranger was dead, but haunted the marsh like some echo of music that magic has made everlasting, and troubled the will-o'-the-wisps even over the border in Elfland.

Now it is far from my intention to write anything detrimental to will-o'-the-wisps, or anything that may be construed as being a slight upon them: no such construction should be put upon my writings. But it is well known that the people of the marshes lure travellers to their doom, and have delighted to follow that avocation for centuries, and I may be permitted to mention this in no spirit of disapproval.

The will-o'-the-wisps then that were about this traveller redoubled their efforts with fury; and when still he eluded their last enticements only on the very edge of the deadliest pools, and still lived and still travelled, and the whole marsh knew of it, then the greater will-o'-the-wisps that dwell in Elfland rose up from their magical mire and rushed over the border. And the whole marsh was troubled.

Almost like little moons grown nimbly impudent the people of the marshes glowed before that solemn traveller, leading his reverend steps to the edge of death only to retrace their steps again to beckon him back once more. And then in spite of the great height of his hat and the dark length of his coat that frivolous people began to perceive that mosses were bearing his weight which never before had supported any traveller. At this their fury increased and they all leaped nearer to him; and nearer and nearer they flocked wherever he went; and in their fury their enticements were losing their craftiness.

And now a watcher in the marshes, if such there had been, had seen something more than a traveller surrounded by will-o'-the-wisps; for he might have noticed that the traveller was almost leading them, instead of the will-o'-the-wisps leading the traveller. And in their impatience to have him dead the people of the marshes

had never thought that they were all coming nearer and nearer to the dry land.

And when all was dark but the water they suddenly found themselves in a field of grass with their feet rasping against the rough pasture, while the traveller was seated with his knees gathered up to his chin and was eyeing them from under the brim of his high black hat. Never before had any of them been lured to dry land by traveller, and there were amongst them that night those eldest and greatest among them who had come with their moon-like lights right over the border from Elfland. They looked at each other in uneasy astonishment as they dropped limply onto the grass, for the roughness and heaviness of the solid land oppressed them after the marshes. And then they began to perceive that that venerable traveller whose bright eyes watched them so keenly out of that black mass of clothes was little larger than they were themselves, in spite of his reverend airs. Indeed, though stouter and rounder he was not quite so tall. Who was this, they began to mutter, who had lured will-o'-the-wisps? And some of those elders from Elfland went up to him that they might ask him with what audacity he had dared to lure such as them. And then the traveller spoke. Without rising or turning his head he spoke where he sat.

"People of the marshes," he said, "do you love unicorns?"

And at the word unicorns scorn and laughter filled every tiny heart in all that frivolous multitude, excluding all other emotions, so that they forgot their petulance at having been lured; although to lure will-o'-the-wisps is held by them to be the gravest of insults, and never would they have forgiven it if they had had longer memories. At the word unicorns they all giggled in silence. And this they did by flickering up and down like the light of a little mirror flashed by an impudent hand. Unicorns! Little love had they for the haughty creatures. Let them learn to speak to the people of the marshes when they came to drink at their pools. Let them learn to give their due to the great lights of Elfland, and the lesser lights that illumined the marshes of Earth!

"No," said an elder of the will-o'-the-wisps, "none loves the proud unicorns."

"Come then," said the traveller, "and we will hunt them. And you shall light us in the night with your lights, when we hunt them with dogs over the fields of men."

"Venerable traveller," said that elder will-o'-the-wisp: but at those words the traveller flung up his hat and leaped from his long black coat, and stood before the will-o'-the-wisps stark naked. And the people of the marshes saw that it was a troll that had tricked them.

Their anger at this was slight; for the people of the marshes have tricked the trolls, and the trolls have tricked the people of the marshes, each of them so many times for ages and ages, that only the wisest among them can say which has tricked the other most and is how many tricks ahead. They consoled themselves now by thinking of times when trolls had been made to look ludicrous, and consented to come with their lights to help to hunt unicorns, for their wills were weak when they stood on the dry land and they easily acquiesced in any suggestion or followed anyone's whim.

It was Lurulu who had thus tricked the will-o'-the-wisps, knowing well how they love to lure travellers; and, having obtained the highest hat and gravest coat he could steal, he had set out with a bait that he knew would bring them from great distances. Now that he had gathered them all on the solid land and had their promise of light and help against unicorns, which such creatures will give easily on account of the unicorns' pride, he began to lead them away to the village of Erl, slowly at first while their feet grew accustomed to the hard land; and over the fields he brought them limping to Erl.

And now there was nothing in all the marshes that at all resembled man, and the geese came down on a huge tumult of wings. The little swift teal shot home; and all the dark air twanged with the flight of the duck.

Venice - The Place of Saint Mark

This week a break from the historical work we are following, to shift over to a travel diary by the American consul of Venice during the Austrian occupation. It describes the centre of Venice, and notes that the seasons seem to alter the Personality Traits of the inhabitants. It also gives us the commercial structure of the general Venetian neighbourhood, and notes to us that these courtyards were originally the cemeteries of Venice. Over to the Librivox reader, who is a younger version of me.

The Place of St. Mark is the heart of Venice, and from this beats her life in every direction through an intricate system of streets and canals that bring it back again to the same centre. So, if the slightest uneasiness had attended the frequency with which I lost my way in the city at first, there would always have been this comfort: that the place was very small in actual extent, and that if I continued walking I must reach the Piazza sooner or later. There is a crowd constantly tending to and from it, and you have but to take this tide, and be drifted to St. Mark's—or to the Rialto Bridge, whence it is directly accessible.

Of all the open spaces in the city, that before the Church of St. Mark alone bears the name of Piazza, and the rest are called merely campi, or fields. But if the company of the noblest architecture can give honor, the Piazza San Marco merits its distinction, not in Venice only, but in the whole world; for I fancy that no other place in the world is set in such goodly bounds. Its westward length is terminated by the Imperial Palace; its lateral borders are formed by lines of palace called the New Procuratie on the right, and the Old Procuratie on the left;…and the Church of St. Mark fills up almost its whole width upon the east, leaving space enough, however, for a glimpse of the Gothic perfection of the Ducal Palace. The place then opens southward with the name of Piazzetta, between the eastern façade of the Ducal Palace and the classic front of the Libreria Vecchia, and expands and ends at last on the mole, where stand the pillars of St. Mark and St. Theodore; and then this mole, passing the southern façade of the Doge's Palace, stretches away to the Public Gardens at the eastern extremity of the city, over half a score of bridges, between lines of houses and shipping—stone and wooden walls—in the long, crescent-shaped quay called Riva degli Schiavoni. Looking northward up the Piazzetta from the Molo, the vision traverses the eastern breadth of the Piazza, and rests upon the Clock Tower, gleaming with blue and gold, on which the bronze Giants beat the hours; or it climbs the great mass of the Campanile San Marco, standing apart from the church at the corner of the New Procuratie, and rising four hundred feet toward the sky—the sky where the Venetian might well place his heaven, as the Moors bounded Paradise in the celestial expanse that roofed Granada.

My first lodging was but a step out of the Piazza, and this vicinity brought me early into familiar acquaintance with its beauty. But I never, during three years, passed through it in my daily walks, without feeling as freshly as at first the greatness of this beauty. The church, which the mighty bell-tower and the lofty height of the palace-lines make to look low, is in nowise humbled by the contrast, but is like a queen enthroned amid upright reverence. The religious sentiment is deeply appealed to, I think, in the interior of St. Mark's; but if its interior is heaven's, its exterior, like a good man's daily life, is earth's; and it is this winning loveliness of earth that first attracts you to it, and when you emerge from its portals, you enter upon spaces of such sunny length and breadth, set round with such exquisite architecture, that it makes you glad to be living in this world. Before you expands the great Piazza, peopled with its various life; on your left, between the Pillars of the Piazzetta, swims the blue lagoon, and overhead climb the arches, one above another, in excesses of fantastic grace.

Whatever could please, the Venetian seems to have brought hither and made part of his Piazza, that it might remain forever the city's supreme grace; and so, though there are public gardens and several pleasant walks in the city, the great resort in summer and winter, by day and by night, is the Piazza San Marco. Its ground-level, under the Procuratie, is belted with a glittering line of shops and caffè, the most tasteful and brilliant in the world, and the arcades that pass round three of its sides are filled with loungers and shoppers, even when there is music by the Austrian bands; for, as we have seen, the purest patriot may then walk under the Procuratie, without stain to the principles which would be hopelessly blackened if he set foot in the Piazza. The absence of dust and noisy hoofs and wheels tempts social life out of doors in Venice more than in any other Italian city, though the tendency to this sort of expansion is common throughout Italy. Beginning with the warm days of early May, and continuing till the villeggiatura (the period spent at the country seat) interrupts it late in September, all Venice goes by a single impulse of dolce far niente, and sits gossiping at the doors of the innumerable caffè on the Riva degli Schiavoni, in the Piazza San Marco, and in the different squares in every part of the city. But, of course, the most brilliant scene of this kind is in St. Mark's Place, which has a night-time glory indescribable, won from the light of uncounted lamps upon its architectural groups. The superb Imperial Palace—the sculptured, arcaded, and pillared Procuratie—the Byzantine magic and splendor of the church—will it all be there when you come again to-morrow night? The unfathomable heaven above seems part of the place, for I think it is never so tenderly blue over any other spot of earth. And when the sky is blurred with clouds, shall not the Piazza vanish with the azure?—People, I say, come

to drink coffee, and eat ices here in the summer evenings, and then, what with the promenades in the arcades and in the Piazza, the music, the sound of feet, and the hum of voices, unbroken by the ruder uproar of cities where there are horses and wheels—the effect is that of a large evening party, and in this aspect the Piazza, is like a vast drawing-room….

By all odds, the loungers at Florian's were the most interesting, because they were the most various. People of all shades of politics met in the dainty little saloons, though there were shades of division even there, and they did not mingle….They were curious to look at, those tranquil, indolent, Italian loafers, and I had an uncommon relish for them. They seldom spoke together, and when they did speak, they burst from silence into tumultuous controversy, and then lapsed again into perfect silence. The elder among them sat with their hands carefully folded on the heads of their sticks, gazing upon the ground, or else buried themselves in the perusal of the French journals. The younger stood a good deal about the doorways, and now and then passed a gentle, gentle jest with the elegant waiters in black coats and white cravats, who hurried to and fro with the orders, and called them out in strident tones to the accountant at his little table; or sometimes these young idlers make a journey to the room devoted to ladies and forbidden to smokers, looked long and deliberately in upon its loveliness, and then returned to the bosom of their taciturn companions. By chance I found them playing chess, but very rarely. They were all well-dressed, handsome men, with beards carefully cut, brilliant hats and boots, and conspicuously clean linen. I used to wonder who they were, to what order of society they belonged, and whether they, like my worthless self, had never any thing else but lounging at Florian's to do; but I really know none of these things to this day. Some men in Venice spend their noble, useful lives in this way, and it was the proud reply of a Venetian father, when asked of what profession his son was, "È in Piazza!" That was, he bore a cane, wore light gloves, and stared from Florian's windows at the ladies who went by…

I hope that the reader adds to this sketch, even in the winter time, occasional tourists under the Procuratie, at the caffè, and in the shops, where the shop-keepers are devouring them with the keenness of an appetite unsated by the hordes of summer visitors. I hope that the reader also groups me fishermen, gondoliers, beggars, and loutish boys about the base of St. Mark's, and at the feet of the three flag-staffs before the church; that he passes me a slatternly woman and a frowzy girl or two through the Piazza occasionally; and that he calls down the flocks of pigeons hovering near. I fancy the latter half ashamed to show themselves, as being aware that they are a great humbug, and unrightfully in the guide-books.

Meantime, while I sit at Florian's, sharing and studying the universal worthlessness about me, the brief winter passes, and the spring of the south—so unlike the ardent season of the north, where it burns full summer before the snows are dried upon the fields—descends upon the city and the sea. But except in the little gardens of the palaces, and where here and there a fig-tree lifts its head to peer over a lofty stone wall, the spring finds no response of swelling bud and unfolding leaf, and it is human nature alone which welcomes it. Perhaps it is for this reason that the welcome is more visible in Venice than elsewhere, and that here, where the effect of the season is narrowed and limited to men's hearts, the joy it brings is all the keener and deeper. It is certain at least that the rapture is more demonstrative. The city at all times voiceful, seems to burst into song with the advent of these golden days and silver nights. Bands of young men go singing through the moonlit streets, and the Grand Canal reëchoes the music of the parties of young girls as they drift along in the scarcely moving boats, and sing the glories of the lagoons and the loves of fishermen and gondoliers. In the Public Gardens they walk and sing; and wandering minstrels come forth before the caffè, and it is hard to get beyond the tinkling of guitars and the scraping of fiddles. It is as if the city had put off its winter humor with its winter dress; and as Venice in winter is the dreariest and gloomiest place in the world, so in spring it is the fullest of joy and light. There is a pleasant bustle in the streets, a ceaseless clatter of feet over the stones of the squares, and a constant movement of boats upon the canals.

We say, in a cheap and careless way, that the southern peoples have no homes. But this is true only in a restricted sense, for the Italian, and the Venetian especially, makes the whole city his home in pleasant weather. No one remains under a roof who can help it; and now, as I said before, the fascinating out-door life begins. All day long the people sit and drink coffee and eat ices and gossip together before the caffè, and the soft midnight sees the same diligent idlers in their places. The promenade is at all seasons the favorite Italian amusement; it has its rigidly fixed hours, and its limits are also fixed: but now, in spring, even the promenade is a little lawless, and the crowds upon the Riva sometimes walk as far as the Public Gardens, and throng all the wider avenues and the Piazza; while young Venice comes to take the sun at St. Mark's in the arms of its high-breasted nurses,—mighty country-women, who, in their bright costumes, their dangling chains, and head-dresses of gold and silver baubles, stride through the Piazza with the high, free-stepping movement of blood-horses, and look like the women of some elder race of barbaric vigor and splendor, which, but for them, had passed away from our puny, dull-clad times. and now young girls steal to their balconies, and linger there for hours, subtly conscious of the young men sauntering to and fro, and looking up at them from beneath. Now, in the shady little courts, the Venetian housewives, who must perforce remain indoors, put out their heads and gossip from window to window; while the pretty water-carriers, filling their buckets from the wells below, chatter and laugh at their work. Every street down which you look is

likewise vocal with gossip; and if the picturesque projection of balconies, shutters, and chimneys, of which the vista is full, hide the heads of the gossipers, be sure there is a face looking out of every window for all that, and the social, expansive presence of the season is felt there.

The poor, whose sole luxury the summer is, lavish the spring upon themselves unsparingly. They come forth from their dark dens in crumbling palaces and damp basements, and live in the sunlight and the welcome air. They work, they eat, they sleep out of doors. Mothers of families sit about their doors and spin, or walk volubly up and down with other slatternly matrons, armed with spindle and distaff while their raven-haired daughters, lounging near the threshold, chase the covert insects that haunt the tangles of the children's locks. Within doors shines the bare bald head of the grandmother, who never ceases talking for an instant.

Before the winter passed, I had changed my habitation from rooms near the Piazza, to quarters on the Campo San Bartolomeo, through which the busiest street in Venice passes, from St. Mark's to the Rialto Bridge. It is one of the smallest squares of the city, and the very noisiest, and here the spring came with intolerable uproar. I had taken my rooms early in March, when the tumult under my windows amounted only to a cheerful stir, and made company for me; but when the winter broke, and the windows were opened, I found that I had too much society.

Each campo in Venice is a little city, self-contained and independent. Each has its church, of which it was in the earliest times the burial-ground; and each within its limits compasses an apothecary's shop, a mercer's and draper's shop, a blacksmith's and shoemaker's shop, a caffè more or less brilliant, a green-grocer's and fruiterer's, a family grocery—nay, there is also a second-hand merchant's shop where you buy and sell every kind of worn-out thing at the lowest rates. Of course there is a coppersmith's and a watchmaker's, and pretty certainly a wood-carver's and gilder's, while without a barber's shop no campo could preserve its integrity or inform itself of the social and political news of the day. In addition to all these elements of bustle and disturbance, San Bartolomeo swarmed with the traffic and rang with the bargains of the Rialto market.

Here the small dealer makes up in boastful clamor for the absence of quantity and assortment in his wares; and it often happens that an almost imperceptible boy, with a card of shirt-buttons and a paper of hair-pins, is much worse than the Anvil Chorus with real anvils. Fishermen, with baskets of fish upon their heads; peddlers, with trays of housewife wares; louts who dragged baskets of lemons and oranges back and forth by long cords; men who sold water by the glass; charlatans who advertised cement for mending broken dishes, and drops for the cure of toothache; jugglers who spread their carpets and arranged their temples of magic upon the ground; organists who ground their organs; and poets of the people who brought out new songs, and sang and sold them to the crowd;—these were the children of confusion, whom the pleasant sun and friendly air woke to frantic and interminable uproar in San Bartolomeo.

Yet there was a charm about all this at first, and I spent much time in the study of the vociferous life under my windows, trying to make out the meaning of the different cries, and to trace them back to their sources. There was one which puzzled me for a long time—a sharp, pealing cry that ended in a wail of angry despair, and, rising high above all other sounds, impressed the spirit like the cry of that bird in the tropic forests which the terrified Spaniards called the alma perdida. After many days of listening and trembling, I found that it proceeded from a wretched, sun-burnt girl, who carried about some dozens of knotty pears, and whose hair hung disheveled round her eyes, bloodshot with the strain of her incessant shrieks.

In San Bartolomeo, as in other squares, the buildings are palaces above and shops below. The ground-floor is devoted to the small commerce of various kinds already mentioned; the first story above is occupied by tradesmen's families; and on the third or fourth floor is the appartamento signorile. From the balconies of these stories hung the cages of innumerable finches, canaries, blackbirds, and savage parrots, which sang and screamed with delight in the noise that rose from the crowd. All the human life, therefore, which the spring drew to the casements was perceptible only in dumb show. One of the palaces opposite was used as a hotel, and faces continually appeared at the windows. By all odds the most interesting figure there was that of a stout peasant serving-girl, dressed in a white knitted jacket, a crimson neckerchief, and a bright-colored gown, and wearing long dangling ear-rings of yellowest gold. For hours this idle maiden balanced herself half over the balcony-rail in perusal of the people under her, and I suspect made love at that distance, and in that constrained position, to some one in the crowd. On another balcony, a lady sat and knitted with crimson yarn; and at the window of still another house, a damsel now looked out upon the square, and now gave a glance into the room, in the evident direction of a mirror. Venetian neighbors have the amiable custom of studying one another's features through opera-glasses; but I could not persuade myself to use this means of learning the mirror's response to the damsel's constant "Fair or not?" being a believer in every woman's right to look well a little way off. I shunned whatever trifling temptation there was in the case, and turned again to the campo beneath—to the placid dandies about the door of the caffè; to the tide of passers from the Merceria; the smooth-shaven Venetians of other days, and the bearded Venetians of these; the dark-eyed, white-faced Venetian girls, hooped in cruel disproportion to the narrow streets, but richly clad, and moving with southern grace; the files of heavily burdened soldiers; the little policemen loitering lazily about with their swords at their sides…

As the spring advances in Venice, and the heat increases, the expansive delight with which the city hails its coming passes into a tranquiler humor, as if the joy of the beautiful season had sunk too deeply into the city's heart for utterance. I, too, felt this longing for quiet, and as San Bartolomeo continued untouched by it, and all day roared and thundered under my windows, and all night long gave itself up to sleepless youths who there melodiously bayed the moon in chorus, I was obliged to abandon San Bartolomeo, and seek calmer quarters where I might enjoy the last luxurious sensations of the spring-time in peace.

Now, with the city's lapse into this tranquiler humor, the promenades cease. The facchino gives all his leisure to sleeping in the sun; and in the mellow afternoons there is scarcely a space of six feet square on the Riva degli Schiavoni which does not bear its brown-cloaked peasant, basking face-downward in the warmth. The broad steps of the bridges are by right the berths of the beggars; the sailors and fishermen slumber in their boats; and the gondoliers, if they do not sleep, are yet placated by the season, and forbear to quarrel, and only break into brief clamors at the sight of inaccessible Inglesi passing near them under the guard of valets de place. Even the play of the children ceases, except in the Public Gardens, where the children of the poor have indolent games, and sport as noiselessly as the lizards that slide from shadow to shadow and glitter in the sun asleep. This vernal silence of the city possesses you,—the stranger in it,—not with sadness, not with melancholy, but with a deep sense of the sweetness of doing nothing, and an indifference to all purposes and chances. If ever you cared to have your name on men's tongues, behold! that old yearning for applause is dead. Praise would strike like pain through this delicious calm. And blame? It is a wild and frantic thing to dare it by any effort. Repose takes you to her inmost heart, and you learn her secrets—arcana unintelligible to you in the new-world life of bustle and struggle. Old lines of lazy rhyme win new color and meaning. The mystical, indolent poems whose music once charmed away all will to understand them, are revealed now without your motion…

The slumbrous bells murmur to each other in the lagoons; the white sail faints into the white distance; the gondola slides athwart the sheeted silver of the bay; the blind beggar, who seemed sleepless as fate, dozes at his post.