

Games From Folktales

A free podcast for
the Ars Magica
and Magonomia
roleplaying games

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A legend of Mont St Michel by Guy de Maupassant

St Michael is the patron saint of Normandy. He's a Warrior Saint: the one who cast Satan from Heaven. It shouldn't surprise us that the Normans chose him as their Patron, since they started as Vikings and evolved into the world's most dangerous polo team. Mont Sant Michel, and its daughter house in Cornwall which shares its name, are both of great interest to us. Early in the writing of *Ars Magica* it is quite clear this is what covenants look like. If you had half a dozen magicians you wanted to store far away from the rest of the universe, this is where you'd put them.

I was originally told this story as a tiny primary schoolboy, where it was the story of a dog and a fox.

Thanks to our LibriVox reader Michelle Fry.

I had first seen it from Cancale, this fairy castle in the sea. I got an indistinct impression of it as of a grey shadow outlined against the misty sky. I saw it again from Avranches at sunset. The immense stretch of sand was red, the horizon was red, the whole boundless bay was red. The rocky castle rising out there in the distance like a weird, seignorial residence, like a dream palace, strange and beautiful—this alone remained black in the crimson light of the dying day.

The following morning at dawn I went toward it across the sands, my eyes fastened on this gigantic jewel, as big as a mountain, cut like a cameo, and as dainty as lace. The nearer I approached the greater my admiration grew, for nothing in the world could be more wonderful or more perfect.

As surprised as if I had discovered the habitation of a god, I wandered through those halls supported by frail or massive columns, raising my eyes in wonder to those spires which looked like rockets starting for the sky, and to that marvellous assemblage of towers, of gargoyles, of slender and charming ornaments, a regular fireworks of stone, granite lace, a masterpiece of colossal and delicate architecture.

As I was looking up in ecstasy a Lower Normandy peasant came up to me and told me the story of the great quarrel between Saint Michael and the devil. A sceptical genius has said: "God made man in his image and man has returned the compliment." This saying is an eternal truth, and it would be very curious to write the history of the local divinity of every continent, as well as the history of the patron saints in each one of our provinces... Every village in France is under the influence of some protecting saint, modelled according to the characteristics of the inhabitants.

Saint Michael watches over Lower Normandy, Saint Michael, the radiant and victorious angel, the swordcarrier, the hero of Heaven, the victorious, the conqueror of Satan. But this is how the Lower Normandy peasant, cunning, deceitful and tricky, understands and tells of the struggle between the great saint and the devil. To escape from the malice of his neighbour, the devil. Saint Michael built himself, in the open ocean, this habitation worthy of an archangel; and only such a saint could build a residence of such magnificence. But, as he

still feared the approaches of the wicked one, he surrounded his domains by quicksands, more treacherous even than the sea.

The devil lived in a humble cottage on the hill, but he owned all the salt marshes, the rich lands where grow the finest crops, the wooded valleys and all the fertile hills of the country, while the saint ruled only over the sands. Therefore Satan was rich, whereas Saint Michael was as poor as a church mouse. After a few years of fasting the saint grew tired of this state of affairs and began to think of some compromise with the devil, but the matter was by no means easy, as Satan kept a good hold on his crops. He thought the thing over for about six months; then one morning he walked across to the shore.

The demon was eating his soup in front of his door when he saw the saint. He immediately rushed toward him, kissed the hem of his sleeve, invited him in and offered him refreshments. Saint Michael drank a bowl of milk and then began: "I have come here to propose to you a good bargain."

The devil, candid and trustful, answered: "That will suit me."

"Here it is. Give me all your lands."

Satan, growing alarmed, wished to speak: "But—

The saint continued: "Listen first. Give me all your lands. I will take care of all the work, the ploughing, the sowing, the fertilizing, everything, and we will share the crops equally. How does that suit you?"

The devil, who was naturally lazy, accepted. He only demanded in addition a few of those delicious grey mullet which are caught around the solitary mount. Saint Michael promised the fish. They grasped hands and spat on the ground to show that it was a bargain, and the saint continued: "See here, so that you will have nothing to complain of choose that part of the crops which you prefer: the part that grows above ground or the part that stays in the ground."

Satan cried out: "I will take all that will be above ground."

"It's a bargain!" said the saint. And he went away. Six months later, all over the immense domain of the devil, one could see nothing but carrots, turnips, onions, salsify, all the plants whose juicy roots are good and savoury and whose useless leaves are good for nothing but for feeding animals.

Satan wished to break the contract, calling Saint Michael a swindler. But the saint, who had developed quite a taste for agriculture, went back to see the devil and said: "Really, I hadn't thought of that at all; it was just an accident, no fault of mine. And to make things fair with you, this year I'll let you take everything that is under the ground."

"Very well," answered Satan. The following spring all the evil spirit's lands were covered with golden wheat, oats as big as beans, flax, magnificent colza, red clover, peas, cabbage, artichokes, everything that develops into grains or fruit in the sunlight. Once more Satan received nothing, and this time he completely lost his temper. He took back his fields and remained deaf to all the fresh propositions of his neighbour.

A whole year rolled by. From the top of his lonely manor Saint Michael looked at the distant and fertile lands and watched the devil direct the work, take in his crops and thresh the wheat. And he grew angry, exasperated at his powerlessness. As he was no longer able to deceive Satan, he decided to wreak vengeance on him, and he went out to invite him to dinner for the following Monday.

"You have been very unfortunate in your dealings with me," he said; "I know it, but I don't want any ill feeling between us, and I expect you to dine with me. I'll give you some good things to eat." Satan, who was as greedy as he was lazy, accepted eagerly. On the day appointed he donned his finest clothes and set out for the castle.

Saint Michael sat him down to a magnificent meal. First there was a vol-au-vent, full of cocks' crests and kidneys, with meat-balls, then two big grey mullet with cream sauce, a turkey stuffed with chestnuts soaked in wine, some salt-marsh lamb as tender as cake, vegetables which melted in the mouth and nice hot pancake which was brought on smoking and spreading a delicious odour of butter. They drank new, sweet, sparkling cider and heady red wine, and after each course they whetted their appetites with some old apple brandy.

The devil drank and ate to his heart's content; in fact he took so much that he was very uncomfortable, and began to retch.

Then Saint Michael arose in anger and cried in a voice like thunder: "What! before me, rascal! You dare—before me!" Satan, terrified, ran away, and the saint, seizing a stick, pursued him. They ran through the halls, turning round the pillars, running up the staircases, galloping along the cornices, jumping from gargoyle to gargoyle. The poor devil, who was woefully ill, was running about madly and trying hard to escape.

At last he found himself at the top of the last terrace, right at the top, from which could be seen the immense bay, with its distant towns, sands and pastures. He could no longer escape, and the saint came up behind him and gave him a furious kick, which shot him through space like a cannon-ball. He shot through the air like a javelin and fell heavily before the town of Mortain. His horns and claws stuck deep into the rock, which keeps through eternity the traces of this fall of Satan.

He stood up again, limping, crippled until the end of time, and as he looked at this fatal castle in the distance, standing out against the setting sun, he understood well that he would always be vanquished in this unequal struggle, and he went away limping, heading for distant countries, leaving to his enemy his fields, his hills, his valleys and his marshes.

And this is how Saint Michael, the patron saint of Normandy, vanquished the devil. Another people would have dreamed of this battle in an entirely different manner.

The Highwayman by Alfred Noyes

I've thought about doing this poem before but I've excluded it for two reasons. It's far later than the medieval period, although it is in the Magonomia period Well it's Georgian theoretically.

The other reason is it's a very popular poem here in Australia: pretty much every school child learns it. It may have taken me some years to realize that most of the listeners to this podcast are Americans and they aren't necessarily as acquainted with the landlord's daughter.

Thanks to the LibriVox reader.

PART ONE

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees.
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas.
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
And the highwayman came riding—
Riding—riding—
The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead, a bunch of lace at his chin,
A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-skin.
They fitted with never a wrinkle. His boots were up to the thigh.
And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,
His pistol butts a-twinkle,
His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.

Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark inn-yard.
He tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was locked and barred.
He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Bess, the landlord's daughter,
Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

And dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket creaked
Where Tim the ostler listened. His face was white and peaked.
His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy hay,
But he loved the landlord's daughter,
The landlord's red-lipped daughter.
Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber say—

“One kiss, my bonny sweetheart, I'm after a prize to-night,
But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the morning light;
Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through the day,
Then look for me by moonlight,
Watch for me by moonlight,
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way.”

He rose upright in the stirrups. He scarce could reach her hand,
But she loosened her hair in the casement. His face burnt like a brand
As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over his breast;
And he kissed its waves in the moonlight,
(O, sweet black waves in the moonlight!)
Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and galloped away to the west.

PART TWO

He did not come in the dawning. He did not come at noon;
And out of the tawny sunset, before the rise of the moon,
When the road was a gypsy's ribbon, looping the purple moor,
A red-coat troop came marching—
Marching—marching—
King George's men came marching, up to the old inn-door.

They said no word to the landlord. They drank his ale instead.
But they gagged his daughter, and bound her, to the foot of her narrow bed.
Two of them knelt at her casement, with muskets at their side!
There was death at every window;
And hell at one dark window;
For Bess could see, through her casement, the road that he would ride.

They had tied her up to attention, with many a sniggering jest.
They had bound a musket beside her, with the muzzle beneath her breast!
“Now, keep good watch!” and they kissed her. She heard the doomed man say—
Look for me by moonlight;
Watch for me by moonlight;
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way!

She twisted her hands behind her; but all the knots held good!
She writhed her hands till her fingers were wet with sweat or blood!
They stretched and strained in the darkness, and the hours crawled by like years
Till, now, on the stroke of midnight,
Cold, on the stroke of midnight,
The tip of one finger touched it! The trigger at least was hers!

The tip of one finger touched it. She strove no more for the rest.
Up, she stood up to attention, with the muzzle beneath her breast.
She would not risk their hearing; she would not strive again;
For the road lay bare in the moonlight;
Blank and bare in the moonlight;
And the blood of her veins, in the moonlight, throbbed to her love's refrain.

Tlot-tlot; tlot-tlot! Had they heard it? The horsehoofs ringing clear;
Tlot-tlot; tlot-tlot, in the distance? Were they deaf that they did not hear?
Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the hill,
The highwayman came riding—
Riding—riding—
The red coats looked to their priming! She stood up, straight and still.

Tlot-tlot, in the frosty silence! Tlot-tlot, in the echoing night!
Nearer he came and nearer. Her face was like a light.
Her eyes grew wide for a moment; she drew one last deep breath,
Then her finger moved in the moonlight,
Her musket shattered the moonlight,
Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him—with her death.

He turned. He spurred to the west; he did not know who stood
Bowed, with her head o'er the musket, drenched with her own blood!
Not till the dawn he heard it, and his face grew grey to hear
How Bess, the landlord's daughter,
The landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Had watched for her love in the moonlight, and died in the darkness there.

Back, he spurred like a madman, shrieking a curse to the sky,
With the white road smoking behind him and his rapier brandished high.
Blood red were his spurs in the golden noon; wine-red was his velvet coat;
When they shot him down on the highway,
Down like a dog on the highway,
And he lay in his blood on the highway, with a bunch of lace at his throat.

. . .

And still of a winter's night, they say, when the wind is in the trees,
When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
When the road is a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
A highwayman comes riding—
Riding—riding—
A highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-door.

Over the cobbles he clatters and clangs in the dark inn-yard.
He taps with his whip on the shutters, but all is locked and barred.
He whistles a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Bess, the landlord's daughter,
Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

Dee's Showstones from the biography by G M Hort

Ars Magica and Magonomia players are interested in how other wizards comport themselves, and how they arrange their laboratories. While I was reading through the biography of John Dee, I found a section about how his lab was laid out. He upgraded it by adding extra furniture and equipment, some of which comes from a supernatural source.

Before I read it for you, I'll just remind you that John Dee was an astrologer and cartographer. He did not believe he had the Second Sight. He was an alchemist only in the most basic of senses and his great desire was to be a Theurgist: to speak with angelic beings. His way of managing this, since he himself could not see these beings, was to have a person with sensitivity (from his perspective) who he led into trances and then questioned. He had several of these over his career. The one he has at the start of this episode is the most notorious one, his long-term partner Edward Kelley. With that background we'll move onto the text.

Angelic visions in the showstone came thick and fast now. Angelic voices sounded often in the little inner room, once a bedchamber, where the philosopher, withdrawn from the household's comings and goings, and denied even to important guests, gave himself over more and more to the life of dreams.

There were not wanting all the "magical" accessories of ceremonial scrying. By the end of the spring Kelley had obtained, with Dee's aid and approval, the so-called "table of practice" on which the stone was to be set, with a red silk cloth of peculiar make spread under it, and an inscribed tablet of wax to serve as a pedestal. The legs of the table itself were also to be supported by similar, but smaller, tablets of wax. Then, in late autumn, came the acquisition of another crystal, called, from the circumstances of its giving, "the angelical stone."

Towards sunset, in the November of 1582, in the western window of the laboratory, there came to Dee's tranced eyes a vision of a child-angel, bearing in his hand "a bright object, clear and glorious, of the bigness of an egg." Later, Dee spoke to the Emperor Rudolph of this crystal as the gift of Uriel, the spirit of light, and said that it was of greater value than any earthly kingdom.

It is almost certain that this showstone, however obtained, is the one still to be seen in the British Museum, together with three of the inscribed tablets of wax. Of these mystic seals it should here be mentioned that they bore, on their upper sides, the familiar cabalistic figure of interlaced triangles—the so-called pentacle or seal of Solomon—together with the seven "hidden names" of God and the names of certain angels and spirits.

The "table of practice," which was made of "sweet wood," and was two cubits, or about 3 feet, in height, was also inscribed with sacred characters and with a mystic cruciform sign. In the accounts of the sittings, we sometimes hear, moreover, of "the curtain of the stone." But this was seen in the crystal, and belonged, not to the material, but to the psychic, accessories. The peculiar clouding of the stone which precedes the vision, and follows after its departure, is familiar to all crystalgazers.

Stress has often been laid on the fact that Dee himself saw little or nothing. We have his own regretful statement: "You know I cannot see or scry." But although both the

character of his gift and the imperiousness of his temper made Kelley seem the leading spirit in this strange partnership, Dee, the careful recorder, eager questioner, and learned interpreter, was still, in a sense, the dominant force. The complaint of Kelley that the spirits address him in learned tongues which are incomprehensible to him is, to say the least of it, significant. And the angelic visitants were certainly more likely to have used Dee than Kelley for such a message, addressed to the younger man, as this: "Thou, youngling, but old sinner, why dost thou suffer thy blindness to increase? Why not yield thy limbs to the service and fulfilling of an eternal

verity? Pluck up thy heart and follow the way that leadeth to the knowledge of the end." Again, on an occasion of Dee's absence, we hear of Kelley's unsuccessful attempt to summon a spirit known as Medicina, who had, in Dee's presence, previously appeared in the crystal.

We have to bear in mind that the phenomena of these seances cannot be explained as mere crystallogomancy. The crystal purports to give no more than a fleeting vision of some future or far-off event. It utters no voice; and the figures that move in its dream-like scenes are silent as puppets. Here the part played by the crystal irresistibly reminds us of "the cabinet" of modern spiritualistic seances. It is, generally speaking, a place from which materialised spirits emerge, and to which, having made themselves known and conversed for awhile, they again return.

The language of Dee's Liber Mysteriorum, or Book of Mysteries, otherwise known as the Spiritual Diary, in which the record of the transactions is set down, is often vague and ambiguous; but at least it leaves us in no doubt that the spiritual creatures were heard as well as seen, and that many of them manifested themselves outside the limits of the crystal. Dee, if he never actually saw them, was conscious of their presence; and, as we have already said, there were many occasions when he, and not Kelley, seems to have been the mouthpiece of their messages.

There is no doubt that he also had mediumistic gifts, though not of the showier order. Equally there is no doubt that he did not knowingly employ those gifts in mere necromancy. The spirits he

wished to converse with were not spirits of the dead, but ” the living angels of God,” the higher ranks of creatures. But although the scrying now took up so much time and thought, and was rewarded by such frequent visions, it could not be said to be of much practical assistance in Dee’s involved personal affairs. We know that he had expected that it would be, and that he repeatedly put questions to the apparitions upon matters that troubled him ; for instance, the refusal of the Queen’s advisers to reform the Calendar according to the calculations he (Dee) had made, and the baffling characters of some manuscripts of Kelley’s which were supposed to relate to hidden treasure or the means of manufacturing gold.

Worldly . anxieties were natural, since his debts at this time amounted to £300. But the spiritual voices answered him but vaguely. Even Michael, the spirit of wisdom, who frequently appeared in, and sometimes outside, the limits of the crystal, said little that could be used for practical guidance. He gave but mystic encouragements, and counselled faith and patience.

Nor did the scryer invariably have sight of such heavenly apparitions. ” Merry ” spirits of fantastic dress and foolish speech came and went, and vexed the grave scholar with occasional ribaldries. Yet withal Dee’s confidence remained unbroken. His profound piety probably made him blame himself that knowledge was withheld. When the spirit known as Medicina finely said that there were” no secrets save those that were “buried in the shadow of men’s souls,” he voiced Dee’s own belief that God desired to hide nothing from the faithful seeker. And to Kelley’s frequent outbursts of angry impatience, and threats to leave the unprofitable scrying and ” follow some study whereby he may live,” the scholar answered with firm serenity that he, for his part, was content to wait God’s time.

Mythic Venice March #City23 #Dungeon23

This year I'm participating in Dungeon 23, which is a writing challenge where people write each day to build up a series of rooms for a megadungeon. In the City 23 variant, which is what I'm doing, a mass of material to be used to write a gazetteer for *Ars Magic* or *Magonomia* about the City of Venice. I had to take some time off for illness, so there are only 19 entries in my journal for March.

THE DUCAL PALACE

The cool thing about writing on real places is that real maps exist.

The Ducal Palace is now a museum, and their webpage has floor plans, so you know where the facilities are when you visit. They also have room descriptions and illustrations of the development of the palace over time. During the *Ars Magica* period it is the Zianni Palace, but by *Magonomia* it's the 15th century Foscari Palace. See Palazzoducale.visitmuv.it. Their maps are presumably copyright, but as the palace is real, an illustrator making floor plans for me is fine because it's real data, not artistic IP.

I could go room by room in the description, I won't now, but I might in the final book.

There is a virtual tour on Google Art and Culture that allows you to walk through it, and also there are further maps on Wikiarchitettura.

NOTES FROM CHROMATOPIA BY DAVID COLES.

Colours and dyes are interesting in RPGs because they are treasures and spell components.

I'm going to use "Chromatopia" as my basic book for this, because it sorts by historical period and is generously photographed. I may then supplement with "Colour" by Victoria Finlay and with "The secret lives of colour" by Kassia St Clair. Each of these also has a textile history for weaving magic.

There are still painters making their own materials in Mythic Venice, but they can now also buy paint, varnish and other supplies at *speziale* stores, which are apothecaries.

COLES INTRODUCTION : NOTES FOR SHAPE AND MATERIAL TABLE

Alum is used to turn dyes, liquid, into pigment which is insoluble. Note Venice has an alum monopoly because they use alum in glass making. Paint made this way is referred to as a "lake".

Distemper is painting with a mix of warm rabbit-skin glue, chalk, and pigment, yet another use for monster hides.

Encaustic is painting with molten wax.

Gesso is a mixture of chalk and glue, made of rabbit skins and bones.

Glair is clear egg white binder used for manuscripts and paints.

Gum Arabic is acacia sap used for watercolour and gouache binder.

Natron is a historically significant alkali.

Paint is pigment plus a binder.

Pink is the historical name for a lake pigment, it's not a colour.

Potash is the historical source for alum from burned plants.

Tempera is an animal binder, egg tempera is albumen from eggs.

Coles's problems in affording a mill, page 6, are a background for an *Ars* companion or a *Magonomia* alchemist.

Coles can recognise the paints he made in finished works. In game this would let you determine if there's been a theft or a forger in some cases. Also, an alchemist may know his secret formula has been stolen but can't prove it, because it's not obvious to others that it is a version of his paint, which is in the painting.

The Craftsman's Handbook by Cennini is a 15th century manual of medieval painting techniques which I will add to the length list of books to follow up with.

When you mix two colours to make a secondary, the new colour is less bright than the originals. With weak medieval paints you can't just get a good red, blue and yellow and then mix out your colours the way you can with modern paints.

BLUE

The further you are from a thing the paler and bluer it looks.

Blue is not a primary colour to the ancients. It becomes popular in Europe in the 13th century when ultramarine, which comes from across the sea is the name, costs more than gold. It's a symbol of the Virgin Mary and is made of ground lapis lazuli. 96% of the mineral is lost in the purification process. It's bright in egg tempera, dark in oil. In oil you need to add white and this is the first crack in the painter's axiom, of the time, of not mixing colours. Most modern blues are 18th century inventions.

Egyptian blue is a lost alchemical technique that creates a glaze which was an alternative to lapis lazuli. It's called cerulean blue but it's also used as a generic name for sky blue from smalt or azurite.

In Roman culture blue was a low status colour for barbarians, it only gets a boost during the 12th century when it's considered holy.

Venetian worker clothes are a pale blue because of a vegetable dye,

An artificial azurite called blue verditer was really popular in the Middle Ages according to Coles but I can't find a pre-16th century source, there's some argument that it's all azurite until the 17th century.

Indigo is known in Europe but it's rare, it's a luxury product from India which is where it gets its name. You can make an identical chemical either by fermenting balls of wood in urine or by letting air get into the murex purple process but do you want to make blue when you could be making royal purple.

Woad is annoying because it destroys the soil where it grows while the dye is being made a scum rises out of it that can be used as paint, I'm not sure if it's colour fast. Wode dye is clear to yellowish I believe, the clothing becomes blue as the dye oxidizes.

The biggest deposit of azurite is in Hungary, azurite is mined alongside malachite, it's sometimes sold as the more expensive lapis lazuli.

it's hard, it needs to be washed and sieved many times and needs many layers to build up hue because it's so translucent. Still it's the best that the artists can afford and in Venice the gruelling prep work can be done by your apothecary.

Chrysocolla is a solder for gold, it's found with azurite and malachite and is used as a pale blue in watercolour and egg tempera painting. It's also very translucent and is sometimes called cedar green.

Smalt is a blue pigment made of grinding cobalt glass and that appears around the 1540s. In *Ars Magica*, we've done the kobold/cobalt thing before, I expect the paint is made from bloom of cobalt, blue crystals found with the metal, which may be a vis source.

French ultramarine was introduced in 1828 and it could be a treasure as a process. The traditional method of true ultramarine manufacture is detailed in calls in page 182 which is basically an enormous amount of washing and grinding.

PURPLE

In *Ars Magica* we've already written a lot about Tyrian purple: dye made for murex shells and lichen from the Canary Islands. Purple dye is ridiculously expensive, in Venice you'd be an idiot to wear purple because what you wear tells people how you expect them to treat you. If you wear purple you're asking to be treated like a king. I believe one doge was violently deposed for dressing like a king.

The modern tendency to paint shadows as violet isn't known in period.

The technique for making true imperial purple was lost in 1204 and rediscovered in 1888. it was lost in 1204 when the Venetian sect Constantinople, so secrets can be treasured as there's a chance that someone found something that the characters can use as a sort of reconstructive archaeology.

There's another dye called Orchil which reaches Europe from the Levant in 14th century, first found in Florence.

RED

The earliest red dyes are ochres, one of which (Veneto red) is exported from Venice for use as the colour of blood in painting. That's useful for sympathetic magic.

In ancient Greece, people manufacture red lead which is more famous in alchemical circles as the beginning ingredient for all kinds of potions.

In the 8th century, people manufacture vermilion, it's a very bright red made from sulphurous mercury which are the two parent substances in alchemy, this is cinnabar, mercury sulphide and the name Vermilion means it looks like kermes (discussed later) Cinnabar is the older name, the king of Spain sends prisoners to mine mercury at Almedin which is a natural source of cinnabar.

Kermes dye comes from shieldbugs. In the Eastern Roman Empire decrees were written in this red.

In Venice, red is permitted but an opulent colour. Red is so popular for merchants that the highest quality of fabric, scarlet, now makes people think of a particular colour of red.

Cinnabar is very toxic,

Coles has dragon's blood on page 48 but it's mostly what's in the "Ancient Magic" book so I won't cover it now.

Alchemists take note, you can change yellow ochre to red or brown by baking it. This is where the 'burnt' colours come from like burnt sienna.

Vermillion is what magi in *Ars Magica* use to rubricate texts.

The little drawings are named after lead, minium, and your gaming miniatures are named after the colour, minium originally came from Spain.

Red lead is cheaper than vermilion so it's the most common red in medieval painting.

Lac is made from an insect that infests fig trees. It's first imported into Europe in 1220 which is the starting year for *Ars Magica*. It gives its name to lake pigments and becomes the primary red dye, alchemists mucking about with the pH level of lac can get it to go from red to orange to violet, and it's also one of the few paints that is edible. Its downside is that it's not light fast.

Medieval people called kermes "baca" or "berries" because under the medieval paradigm they might be berries rather than insects. A related product was called "grain" and 'ingrained' comes from the colour fastness of kermes dye. It's also the source of the names of crimson and carmine. It's slightly purple. Cochineal comes from the Americas and eventually it outcompetes kermes.

Brazilwood is a dye from Sri Lanka and it's very popular although not light fast. It's what the country of Brazil is named after, it has a fiery colour and its name means "brazier" wood.

Madder is imported to Europe by returning crusaders in the 13th century. The process of turning the dye into a pigment is extremely complex: the lake process has post-game development. Dependent on the mordant (that's the fixative) used madder can turn brown or purple.

Cochineal exports from South America begin after the Spanish invasion in 1529. The Spaniards spread the story that the cochineal is a pea-like plant, it's not.

Crocus martinus are iron oxide colours made alchemically from the 15th century onwards and it needs aqua regia which is a mixture of hydrochloric and nitric acid or iron sulphate, which needs marshal vitriol to make. It comes in red, yellow, orange and brown colours. It's not made industrially until the 18th century and it replaces some ochres, cardinals swap from purple to red in their robes in 1464.

ORANGE

orange is one of those weird colours that show up late, historically. In *Ars Magica*, people won't know what you mean when you say "orange", and if you show them something that is orange, in English at least they'll say it's golden-red. The name orange enters English when the Portuguese traders lob up to flog their fruit during Elizabeth I's reign. The colour becomes associated with the ruling house of the Netherlands.

That being said there were orange paints, ochres, red leads, even Vermillion is on the yellowish side of red. The main orange paint from Roman times is is realgar (other than "red" lead) which is an arsenic-laced mineral. Have you noticed that pretty much everything I've described so far is very poisonous.

Realgar and orpiment are mined together. It's a red crystal that grinds into an orange powder. It's also handy as a rat poison.

It wrecks copper and lead paints. Titian was a huge fan though and we are talking Venice so you'll see some. The Dutch flag used to have an orange stripe but they gave it up in the 17th century because they couldn't find a colourfast dye.

YELLOW

Ochre, "red" lead and gold can be used instead. There are some yellow plant dyes.

Venetians really push yellow along by inventing powdered gold painting techniques and running slave plantations to harvest saffron. Saffron needs hand pollination and each flower gives three tiny stamens. We have covered this in *Ars Magica* before, because making spices how some magi make money. The Venetian spice markets are where these shenanigans can be hidden most easily. I'd note that saffron isn't light stable and that Zoroastrian priests used to use it to write demon banishing prayers.

Venetians also import Indian yellow which is manganese salts. The technique for making it is lost. Modern studies hint it may have been from the urine of cows fed exclusively on mango leaves. Again secrets can be treasures. Europeans don't import gamboge, which is the Buddhist robe colour, until the 17th century. It's plant-based and not poisonous, which is odd for a paint in the period.

Coles mentions there are no dark yellows: you can add black to red or blue but if you add it to yellow you get green. If you invent it you get a new treasure, much in the same way as the person who invented mauve became terribly rich. I'd note this is a problem even today, I'm a bit of a fountain pen fan and many people quest for their perfect yellow. The problem is that if you have a yellow that's too bright when you put it on a page you can't see it. The temptation by people who make fountain pen ink is to give it a bit more depth of colour by putting a little bit of red in, which makes it an orange.

There is a yellow paint called orpiment (auripigmentum in Latin). As destiny would have it that Latin name was shortened to "arphenicum" from which we get the modern word "arsenic". Caligula said he could get gold out of it

but that's not how it's done in most Renaissance alchemical texts. Orpiment hates other paints, it turns lead and copper based paints black.

The basic yellow of medieval painting is called giallodini. Modern scholars call it lead-tin yellow. It doesn't mix with sulfur and literally vanished from human memory in the 18th century to recently when it was rediscovered. Naples Yellow folkloristically comes from Mount Vesuvius (likely from 1600 onwards). It's a lead-antimony blend and it uses the same name in period as tin-lead yellow so it's hard to tell one from the other in documents.

Arzica is made from weld, a dye or glaze. It fades in sunlight and is used as cheap opiment. Its name is likely is a derivative of "arsenic" just because the colour is similar.

Stil de gran, which is yellow madder berries, can produce yellow, orange or green dye. It's not light fast but it's used to illuminate books. It's sold as a syrup in bladders not as a powder.

GREEN

A safe, light-fast green is a sort of alchemical holy grail. In real life, it's a 19th century thing which is why landscapes before look so varnishy brown and then they go absolutely nuts for pastoral scenes.

There are green ochres but they're rare and there's lots of green plant dyes but they're not colourfast. You can grind up emerald which is expensive or malachite which is hard to source and tends to blue or you can mix blue and yellow but then it can't be bright. Also the good blue is made up of ground-up semi-precious stones at this point and yellow is a poisonous nightmare.

The alchemical workaround is by making verdegriis. This is done by boiling vinegar under copper sheets. Long time listeners may recall this is one of the ingredients in artificial saltpetre, used to make gunpowder. Do you want to sell your salt to poor artists so they can paint things or to well-financed kings so that they can shoot people? Verdegriis isn't a great green. It's got a lot of blue in it but it's there. Seriously make a decent green and the world will beat a path to your door,

I'm missing one ochre there: Verona green. It's a pale, weak green used to underpaint skin tones in medieval art. For Venetians it's mined nearby in Verona and in Cyprus. Modern artists call it terra verde or "green earth". It's not toxic and it binds well in oil but it has those colour limitations.

Malachite is found alongside azurite which is why it tends to blue. Its crushed and washed and panned to get a green powder but oddly for a paint material you don't grind it fine, because once it's too fine it's translucent. So it can't hold a bright colour, many people try and many people fail. Some Renaissance paintings have brown foliage in them because there was a brief fashion for verdegriis resin paint which was unstable, but only in the medium term, so the painters at the time didn't know that centuries on we would be looking at brown foliage.

WHITE

Lead white is very popular as a cosmetic but incredibly toxic. The basics of making it are well understood. You take clay pots which are purpose built with an internal division. Put coils of lead foil in one side and vinegar in the other. Stack them high and cover them within manure. Seal the room and wait. Coles says you wait for 90 days: St Clair says 30, I'd note that Coles has photos of the result of him doing this. One also says it's a 15th century invention and the other one says it's in Pliny. The point of the manure is that it releases carbon dioxide and there is heat from the decay, so it's cooking the lead. It is ridiculously toxic so it's replaced by zinc white in 1782, and then in modern painting by titanium white in 1916.

Most silver in Europe comes from Spanish colonies in South America and is mined by slaves.

Chalk is used to make gesso which is the plaster used to prepare wood for painting. This is phased out once canvas becomes the substrate of choice. Chalk is brittle and that means that you can't roll the paintings. It's also used as a paint extender.

Talc is of great interest to Caterina Sforza who uses talc water as a base for many of her preparations.

Bone white is a great way of using up monster bits. Hartshorn white is made from shed deer antlers. It is gritty and it's used to size paper for silverpoint. Silverpoint is when you draw using a thin silver pencil much in the same way that you would use a modern lead pencil. You can't erase as easily and you don't get the same sort of pressure gradings that you can with modern pencils but I'm off into the weeds. Librarian note: sizing is the spray that's put on the surface of the paper to make it ready for ink. Modern paper uses starch which is why when you

get modern books even a little bit wet they become mould farms. Bone white is toothier. (Hello anyone else who's into stationery) That means it resists the pen more than modern sprayed starch paper.

BLACK

Lampblack is ancient and just turns up as a freebie in most alchemical practices. Lamp black is basically what happens when hot smoke hits a cold surface. Technically it's bluish black and the Romans burned wine dregs to make it bluer. Modern lampblack is purer than Renaissance lampblack.

Bone black is made by roasting bones with a little oxygen to make a charcoal. This is washed and ground. A use for monster bones. Ivory black is a way of using up the offcuts of the ivory carving trade, it sounds kind of necromantic.

Vine black: You know those charcoal sticks that people sketch with? They're made in game period from grape vines. Modern ones are made from willow. Grapes are sacred to Venice's first saint, Guistiana, and she has this whole Diana cult thing going on. Similarly char blocks can be made from the stones of fruit, notably peaches.

Graphite is often mistaken for lead. Actual lead and silverpoint are used to draw. In 1565 a huge deposit of graphite is found in Borrowdale in England. The first pencils have string or hide jackets. It's also used for cannonball moulds, so the Crown watches the mine intensely.

Gall ink has been written about extensively in *Ars Magica*. I finally bought myself some gall ink although it isn't made from oak galls. It's made from tea, but it is chemically similar. I can't put it in my fountain pens because it'll rot them out from the inside. It's purplish in *Ars Magica*, after it oxidises. Technichally gall ink is clear untile it oxidises so they put lampblack in it so you can tell where you've put it on the page. Mine isn't: has a sunset yellow guide in, and it goes to a strange muddy grey-green over time.

Logwood is an early, true black that comes from the Americas in the 17th century, True black dyes appear from about 1360 onwards. Before that people just used very dark browns, which fade. Brown becomes more fashionable after black is colorfast.

Kohl is the eye treatment that you see in Egyptian art. Its active ingredient is galena. They added color and scent to it. It's mildly poisonous, which is why it's used around the eyes: it prevents eye infections.

Printing presses use lampblacks, which are suspended in linseed oil. Venice is the European centre of printing.

BROWN

I've discussed ochres at some length already so I'll just skip those.

Bistre is beechwood resin from the 14th century. It's a charcoal used on a water base. It's called caligo in Latin.

Asphaltum is a richer brown but it's tarry and it won't mix with water. It's made out of asphalt.

Sepia is cuttlefish ink. It's used as writing ink from the Romans onwards. It's a drawing ink in the Renaissance. It's made from carefully-dried ink sacks, so it is transportable. It is also an example of how you can make treasures out of monster innards. The process is given in detail, in Coles on page 89.

Walnut comes from nuts. It's warm brown, colour fast, light fast, and the full process is in Coles on page 91,

Mummy or mummet is literally made from mummies. It was originally used medicinally. Mummy was originally the bitumen they were wrapped in, rather than the bodies themselves. Eventually the demand was so high that you got bits of people. It's used in painting from the 16th Century. Obvious plot hooks like haunting, possession, necromancy, multiple possessions by shared people eating bits from the same mummy. By preference some people use mummified animals, so it's a little less disgusting.

On from colour...

THE SHAPE OF THE EMPIRE

The empire is broken into three chunks. The bit run by the doge directly, which is called the degardo, has been covered in detail. The Stato Dio Mar, which means the state of the sea, is the navally-supported empire. The Domini de Terraferma are the dominions of the land.

What's in the two non-degardo bits changes a lot. In 1220, the Ars period, the Stato Dio Mar contains Istria, the podesta of Constantinople, Euboea, the Cyclades and

Crete, which is a weird case. By 1600 we add Corfu, Argos, Napulia, Duazzo, Alessio, Scutari, Drivasto, Lepanto, Patras, Navarino, Cyprus and some other places. They lost Istria, then added back bits (Cres, Reb, Pag, Zadar, Vrana, Novigrad) The Domini di Terraferma spreads out over northern Italy.

THE DUCAL CORNO

The Corno is not a crown: it's deliberately a hat. Sure, it's a silk hat, with a gold circle around the brim, but if you get too fancy with it, other nobles will overthrow you. Every Easter the doge leads a procession to the deeply-suspicious nunnery of San Zaccharia and they give him a new hat.

Lots of writers suggest that it's related to the Phrygian cap. This is the signature cap of House Mercere and their ancestors, the Milvi. They are hawk-formed shapeshifters and Egyptian priests, mentioned in their housebook. A note on Wikipedia links its shape to the hedjet, which is the white crown of Upper Egypt. Could the corno be sacred to Nekhbet like the White Crown? She's the vulture-headed funeral goddess. Does it link to the Rotting Princess? Nekbet is related to the Eileithyia, the chthonic lady of the Eleusinian Mysteries. If so, is there a shen with an annual duration in the corno?

A shen, by the way, is a protective circle of rope. The descendant of it is something you'll see as a cartouche. So, cartouches are a name surrounded by a protective magical rope. They're called cartouches, because when the French saw them, the shape reminded them of the cartridges from their weapons. That's not a term that's used in period.

THE LOVE SONG OF J ALFRED PRUFROCK BY T.S. ELIOT.

I'm going to harvest this for, at minimum, a monster, and as an inspiration for split character sheets.

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question ...
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;

I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.
I do not think that they will sing to me.
I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

DANDOLO'S WAGER

(inspired by the History of Byzantium podcast episode 259)

We are so used to thinking of the sack of Constantinople in 1204 as fixed history that we don't ever seem to consider that, to the Venetians at the time, this was the final throw of the dice. Enrico Dandolo had re-gear'd Venice's entire economy around the Crusade, then found out that his customers had no money. Annual trading voyages had been foregone. There was no way of getting in external money. The government had paid out of fortune in materials and labour. Could Venice go broke? What would that have done to the West?

Contrarily, what happens if the Order, or some magi, or some demons, front up with a loan for the Crusaders and say, here's 85,000 marks. It's a lot, but the plunder of Egypt might be worth it. Sole trade privileges to Egypt, well Alexandria, are hugely significant to the Venetians. Remember that the crusade that took out Constantinople was originally going to attack Alexandria. This was so that they had the wherewithal to sustain an army in an Outremer.

15,000 soldiers are shipped to the Lido, so they can't attack the Venetians. Innocent III is much annoyed. The papal legate is left behind. Zara, which is one of the points of resistance on the shore of the Tyrrhenian Sea, offers to surrender to Dandolo. When he leaves to consult with the other leaders of the crusade, Simon de Montfort tells the Zaran ambassadors that their city is under papal protection. When Dandolo returns, they have left. He chooses a siege.

As the new emperor flails about, Dandolo needs to keep him in power. If he's deposed, Venice loses the cost of the fleet, Egyptian access, and Byzantine access. He needs to double down and he needs to do it every time something goes wrong. It ends with the sack and it claims some territory, but was a really great strategy to impoverish Venice's largest trading partner? You can pour out Eastern treasure on the Lido shore and everyone thinks that's fantastic, but the daily life of the people making the exports and shipping them takes a terrible battering in 1204.

THE MOST HOLY LEAGUE AND THE TREATY OF LODI

The Treaty of Lodi sits between the Ars and Magonomia period. It ushers in four decades of guarded peace in northern Italy, based on constantly-changing factions that seek a balance of power. Venice being rich is one of the heavyweights in this balance.

A direct effect of the treaties following Lodi is that embassies change from trips with a particular purpose to physical places with permanent staff. Venice gives its ambassadors a private budget for intelligence gathering as a matter of course. This is shocking to some of the other states, for whom spying is either irregular or done by a unit reporting directly to the monarch.

So the doge runs the Council of Ten, the doge may have agents, the Council of Ten do have agents, and they are appointed by a council which has a secret police. Then they appoint ambassadors who also have agents. There are agents everywhere. The Venetian argument is that this is cheaper than an army, and also it's less likely to seize power than an army.

THE GRAND SCHOOLS

A school isn't an educational institution, it's a confraternity. There are "great" and "little" schools. The six great schools are supported by, and function for, the state. The little ones could be centred on a trade, a nationality, or a charitable cause. The great schools are all religiously motivated, the little schools are more flexible for PC and storytelling uses.

Scuole members are meant to be citizens but not nobles. Also, officebearers kept their role for ages, not like the patrician roles in the government, which were deliberately cycled rapidly to "prevent" corruption. Eventually, the state regulates the schools and delegates its social functions to them, so medicine, drugs, hospices, pauper burials, pilgrim support, all of that remains a government function but it's run by the great schools. It also regulates their legal articles, which are called capitulars.

The standard structure after the state takes an interest for the great schools is that the financial members of a school elect as a board: a leader, his deputy, a treasurer, a scribe, and two staff members per sestiere, then another group to check the board's finances on a

regular basis. Most small schools were linked to a church. Great schools each had a meeting hall. The first floor is a large hall for business and charity and upstairs is a salon for meetings of the members and a smaller room for the boardroom. These are sometimes lavishly decorated. Sounds a bit covenanty.

INITIAL THOUGHTS ON MASKS

I've been working on mask magic on and off for decades and there's a version of it mentioned in the Istrian section of "Against the Dark". I've also stated them up as a type of parasitic prosthetic in Episode 18 podcast, (yes it was that long ago). I think I was over-complicating it though, ours already has mechanics for possession, not just demons but fairies. Certainly Mormo is terrible, but it's a model we could use. Similarly in Maginomia there's an example of a symbiotic possessing spirit. It isn't public yet so I'm going to stop talking about it and keep moving on.

Loosely male masks are white and female masks are black. Carnival lasts roughly from Christmas to Lent. Some people wear masks out of season. A person in a mask is socially anonymous. Even if you know who they are you are required not to say. There are rules for noppera-bo already in Ars Magica and I will probably reuse them now, Noppera-bo are a Japanese monster that has a face like an egg.

THE ZANNI

This is a servant type that comes in two varieties, the foolish servant and the cunning servant.

Zanni generally wears patched clothes. After the Magonomia period this changes into the diamond shapes of Harlequin's costume. He wears a mask but it doesn't cover his mouth so that he can talk to his master. The longer his nose the stupider he is meant to be. This isn't an anti-Semitic thing: it is a phallic thing. Although the gait of most Zanni emphasize that they carry heavy loads for living, they also do physical comedy and acrobatics. One of their walks is intended to indicate they are going off stage, which is a handy magical power. They also borrow props from other characters in a sort of magical way. They're driven by their appetites.

VARIANTS OF THE ZANNI

Arlechinno – see below

Scapino is an escape artist and he has green stripes on his costume.

Scaramouche is a little skirmisher, dressed in black like a Spanish Don.

Pedrolino is in all white clothes which are comically oversized and he doesn't wear masks. He wears infarinato instead, which is a white flour makeup paste. It's a possible ancestor of modern clown whiteface.

Brighella is a cruel, vindictive, clever master of lies and an alcoholic who loves money. He wears white clothes and has an olive green mask.

Mezzetino is a variant of Brighella but less violent, more musical and rather more creepily flirtatious. He has a brown or rust mask and a short cape.

Punchinella has black or dark brown for a mask. He's from Naples. Has baggy clothes which are white and carries a short stick as a weapon and a coin purse. He accidentally triumphs. He untangles the problems of others but not his own. There is a common saying in Venice: "a punchinella secret". This is a truth widely known but not spoken of – a widely known truth, treated as a secret.

Pierrot is a late 17th century invention. He's a sad clown and he's a rival for Columbine's affections. He wears whiteface instead of a mask and oversized white clothes.

ARLECCHINO OR HARLEQUIN

So he's a servant but he's a clever one. He often tricks his master and his romantic rival Pierrot. He is the lover to Columbine. He can't do simple physical movements when acrobatic ones are possible. He often carries a wooden sword. He's always hungry and he's afraid of his master. He's likely descended from a French demon, Hellequin. He's possibly related to the Herla Cyning, the Earl King, in Walter maps book from the 12th century. There is a version of him in Dante's Inferno. Oddly for a male character his mask is black. This could be because of his infernal origin. His mask has warts, small eyes, a short nose, and hollow cheeks. This could be a default demon.

VECCIO

The Veccio are a class of characters. The name means “elderly”. They often serve as a barrier to prevent the lovers getting together. They’re generally the antagonists. Pantalone is the decadent merchant and he’s the source of Shakespeare’s pantaloons. There is a Saint Pantalone. I’m not sure that they’re related. Anyway he’s the butt of jokes. He’s usually the father of one of the lovers. He has enough money to meddle in the lives of others. He’s petty. He’s single. He does hell of a flirt. But he never marries. He’s violently over-emotional.

His costume is red with a cap, a codpiece, or coin purse. He has a sword, a medal, or a walking stick.

Balanzone, or Il Dottore, is a decadent, erudite doctor, often linked to Bologna. He is rich, vain and wordy. He’s a parody of the educated class. He’s either boring or clearly out of his depth. He wears a one-third mask and the robes of a scholar. He, optionally, has rouge cheeks, which is meant to demonstrate that he’s an alcoholic.

Il Capitano is a coward, a braggart. He tells tall tales about his exploits. He’s greedy, he changes sides. He wears a parody of military uniform, carries an oversized sword, and wears a mask with a phallic nose. The original of these is Magnifico Gloriosus, which dates back to Roman theatre. There is a competent, useful variant of the Capitano. He’s called a Scaramouchia, or Scaramouche in French.

NON-COMIC MASKS

Mattasin / Frombolatore

This is a warning costume. The person is warning you that they are armed with scented eggs.

Batua wears a classic white mask. The mask bows out at the base for speech and eating, so there is no mouth. It’s held on by a tricorn, a hat, no strap. The more I read, the more I see women wearing this, and a tricorn and a tabard.

A volto has a white ghostly mask, male or female.

A moretta is a small black female mask with no mouth, that is held in place by a button between the teeth. It’s sometimes called a virtue mask because the woman can’t talk. It’s considered very mysterious and erotic.

The De Coltra is a person who is bundled in a blanket. They are a spirit of fornication.

A Spirito Folleto is a screaming devil mask. It’s a female mask.

A Gnaga is a man dressed as a parody of a nanny.

A Viloti is a peasant or rustic mask.

A Povereto is a beggar costume.

A Vechia is an old woman.

A Bullo is a braggart in armour.

A Bernardon is a fake beggar with fake shoes. Pushed about in a barrow. He’s bandaged. He pretends to be syphilitic. He sings bawdy songs.

Salvadego is a savage man

A burritin is some dressed as a puppet.

Notes on the law enforcement for the poor. The rich get away with more.

1338, you’re no longer allowed to travel through the streets after dark wearing a mask.

1448, beggars may not wear masks.

In 1585, if you have a mask, you’re not allowed to carry a gun in the street anymore. Carrying blades is allowed.

1606, you’re not allowed to wear masks in church.

1703, you’re not allowed to wear masks while in gambling houses.

1718, you’re told to stop wearing them during the Lent

The mascheri, the mask makers, are legally speaking, painters. Masks are made of plaster of Paris, fortified with wax or leather. The leather ones are heavier and less comfortable for long-term use.

OVI ODORIFERI: SCENTED EGGS.

These are blown eggs filled with rosewater, and they are thrown or slung at women flirtatiously, particularly during Carnival, when street vendors sell them. In 1241, they are banned from the Piazza. People were making noxious ovi, and some of them have ink inside. This is a classic splash potion.

Basically, it’s a potion grenade like a water balloon. I know there’s a modern version in Central and South America, which have confetti inside instead.

There is an odd note on italiancarnival.com, when you’re looking up these eggs. It shows a fortune-teller from Venice that’s communicating with someone by whispering through a hollow cane into their ear. I’ve got no idea why they’re doing that. I’ll come up with a good reason.

And I find that I have gone into the April material. So, let us stop there.

Lost in a Pyramid, or the Mummy's Curse by Louisa May Alcott

This week I come to you with a plot hook from a most unlikely source: the book “Little Women” by Louisa May Alcott. Louisa May Alcott was a 19th century author and in addition to the novel, which has been turned into a movie several times, she also used to write what she called “blood and thunder tales”. These are short, sensational stories that she could sell to magazines. She found them easier to write than something as detailed as a novel.

In “Little Women” Jo March, who is not entirely an author-insert character but depends strongly on some of author’s experiences, is an author herself. Jo also writes “blood and thunder” tales and is fascinated by the Egyptians. The story that she may have written is meant to parallel this story. It was written simultaneously with “Little Women” and it contains a sorceress, a vis source, a curse, and possibly a possession.

Now over to our LibriVox reader, Louise Bell.

“And what are these, Paul?” asked Evelyn, opening a tarnished gold box and examining its contents curiously.

“Seeds of some unknown Egyptian plant,” replied Forsyth, with a sudden shadow on his dark face, as he looked down at the three scarlet grains lying in the white hand lifted to him.

“Where did you get them?” asked the girl.

“That is a weird story, which will only haunt you if I tell it,” said Forsyth, with an absent expression that strongly excited the girl’s curiosity.

“Please tell it, I like weird tales, and they never trouble me. Ah, do tell it; your stories are always so interesting,” she cried, looking up with such a pretty blending of entreaty and command in her charming face, that refusal was impossible.

“You’ll be sorry for it, and so shall I, perhaps; I warn you beforehand, that harm is foretold to the possessor of those mysterious seeds,” said Forsyth, smiling, even while he knit his black brows, and regarded the blooming creature before him with a fond yet foreboding glance.

“Tell on, I’m not afraid of these pretty atoms,” she answered, with an imperious nod.

“To hear is to obey. Let me read the facts, and then I will begin,” returned Forsyth, pacing to and fro with the far-off look of one who turns the pages of the past.

Evelyn watched him a moment, and then returned to her work, or play, rather, for the task seemed well suited to the vivacious little creature, half-child, half-woman.

“While in Egypt,” commenced Forsyth, slowly, “I went one day with my guide and Professor Niles, to explore the Cheops. Niles had a mania for antiquities of all sorts, and forgot time, danger and fatigue in the ardor of his pursuit. We rummaged up and down the narrow passages, half choked with dust and close air; reading inscriptions on the walls, stumbling over shattered mummy-cases, or coming face to face with some shriveled specimen perched like a hobgoblin on the little shelves where the dead used to be stowed away for ages. I was desperately tired after a few hours of it, and begged the professor to return. But he was bent on exploring certain places, and would

not desist. We had but one guide, so I was forced to stay; but Jumal, my man, seeing how weary I was, proposed to us to rest in one of the larger passages, while he went to procure another guide for Niles. We consented, and assuring us that we were perfectly safe, if we did not quit the spot, Jumal left us, promising to return speedily. The professor sat down to take notes of his researches, and stretching myself on the soft sand, I fell asleep.

“I was roused by that indescribable thrill which instinctively warns us of danger, and springing up, I found myself alone. One torch burned faintly where Jumal had struck it, but Niles and the other light were gone. A dreadful sense of loneliness oppressed me for a moment; then I collected myself and looked well about me. A bit of paper was pinned to my hat, which lay near me, and on it, in the professor’s writing were these words:

“‘I’ve gone back a little to refresh my memory on certain points. Don’t follow me till Jumal comes. I can find my way back to you, for I have a clue. Sleep well, and dream gloriously of the Pharaohs. N N.’

“I laughed at first over the old enthusiast, then felt anxious then restless, and finally resolved to follow him, for I discovered a strong cord fastened to a fallen stone, and knew that this was the clue he spoke of. Leaving a line for Jumal, I took my torch and retraced my steps, following the cord along the winding ways. I often shouted, but received no reply, and pressed on, hoping at each turn to see the old man poring over some musty relic of antiquity. Suddenly the cord ended, and lowering my torch, I saw that the footsteps had gone on.

“‘Rash fellow, he’ll lose himself, to a certainty,’ I thought, really alarmed now.

“As I paused, a faint call reached me, and I answered it, waited, shouted again, and a still fainter echo replied.

“Niles was evidently going on, misled by the reverberations of the low passages. No time was to be lost, and, forgetting myself, I stuck my torch in the deep sand to guide me back to the clue, and ran down the straight path before me, whooping like a madman as I went. I did not mean to lose sight of the light, but in my eagerness to find Niles I turned from

the main passage, and, guided by his voice, hastened on. His torch soon gladdened my eyes, and the clutch of his trembling hands told me what agony he had suffered.

“‘Let us get out of this horrible place at once,’ he said, wiping the great drops off his forehead.

“‘Come, we’re not far from the clue. I can soon reach it, and then we are safe’; but as I spoke, a chill passed over me, for a perfect labyrinth of narrow paths lay before us.

“Trying to guide myself by such landmarks as I had observed in my hasty passage, I followed the tracks in the sand till I fancied we must be near my light. No glimmer appeared, however, and kneeling down to examine the footprints nearer, I discovered, to my dismay, that I had been following the wrong ones, for among those marked by a deep boot-heel, were prints of bare feet; we had had no guide there, and Jumal wore sandals.

“Rising, I confronted Niles, with the one despairing word, ‘Lost!’ as I pointed from the treacherous sand to the fast-waning light.

“I thought the old man would be overwhelmed but, to my surprise, he grew quite calm and steady, thought a moment, and then went on, saying, quietly:

“‘Other men have passed here before us; let us follow their steps, for, if I do not greatly err, they lead toward great passages, where one’s way is easily found.’

“On we went, bravely, till a misstep threw the professor violently to the ground with a broken leg, and nearly extinguished the torch. It was a horrible predicament, and I gave up all hope as I sat beside the poor fellow, who lay exhausted with fatigue, remorse and pain, for I would not leave him.

“‘Paul,’ he said suddenly, ‘if you will not go on, there is one more effort we can make. I remember hearing that a party lost as we are, saved themselves by building a fire. The smoke penetrated further than sound or light, and the guide’s quick wit understood the unusual mist; he followed it, and rescued the party. Make a fire and trust to Jumal.’

“‘A fire without wood?’ I began; but he pointed to a shelf behind me, which had

escaped me in the gloom; and on it I saw a slender mummy-case. I understood him, for these dry cases, which lie about in hundreds, are freely used as firewood. Reaching up, I pulled it down, believing it to be empty, but as it fell, it burst open, and out rolled a mummy. Accustomed as I was to such sights, it startled me a little, for danger had unstrung my nerves. Laying the little brown chrysalis aside, I smashed the case, lit the pile with my torch, and soon a light cloud of smoke drifted down the three passages which diverged from the cell-like place where we had paused.

“While busied with the fire, Niles, forgetful of pain and peril, had dragged the mummy nearer, and was examining it with the interest of a man whose ruling passion was strong even in death.

“‘Come and help me unroll this. I have always longed to be the first to see and secure the curious treasures put away among the folds of these uncanny winding-sheets. This is a woman, and we may find something rare and precious here,’ he said, beginning to unfold the outer coverings, from which a strange aromatic odor came.

“Reluctantly I obeyed, for to me there was something sacred in the bones of this unknown woman. But to beguile the time and amuse the poor fellow, I lent a hand, wondering as I worked, if this dark, ugly thing had ever been a lovely, soft-eyed Egyptian girl.

“From the fibrous folds of the wrappings dropped precious gums and spices, which half intoxicated us with their potent breath, antique coins, and a curious jewel or two, which Niles eagerly examined.

“All the bandages but one were cut off at last, and a small head laid bare, round which still hung great plaits of what had once been luxuriant hair. The shriveled hands were folded on the breast, and clasped in them lay that gold box.”

“Ah!” cried Evelyn, dropping it from her rosy palm with a shudder.

“Nay; don’t reject the poor little mummy’s treasure. I never have quite forgiven myself for stealing it, or for burning her,” said Forsyth, painting rapidly, as if the recollection of that experience lent energy to his hand.

“Burning her! Oh, Paul, what do you mean?” asked the girl, sitting up with a face full of excitement.

“I’ll tell you. While busied with Madame la Momie, our fire had burned low, for the dry case went like tinder. A faint, far-off sound made our hearts leap, and Niles cried out: ‘Pile on the wood; Jumal is tracking us; don’t let the smoke fail now or we are lost!’

“‘There is no more wood; the case was very small, and is all gone,’ I answered, tearing off such of my garments as would burn readily, and piling them upon the embers.

“Niles did the same, but the light fabrics were quickly consumed, and made no smoke.

“‘Burn that!’ commanded the professor, pointing to the mummy.

“I hesitated a moment. Again came the faint echo of a horn. Life was dear to me. A few dry bones might save us, and I obeyed him in silence.

“A dull blaze sprung up, and a heavy smoke rose from the burning mummy, rolling in volumes through the low passages, and threatening to suffocate us with its fragrant mist. My brain grew dizzy, the light danced before my eyes, strange phantoms seemed to people the air, and, in the act of asking Niles why he gasped and looked so pale, I lost consciousness.”

Evelyn drew a long breath, and put away the scented toys from her lap as if their odor oppressed her.

Forsyth’s swarthy face was all aglow with the excitement of his story, and his black eyes glittered as he added, with a quick laugh:

“That’s all; Jumal found and got us out, and we both forswore pyramids for the rest of our days.”

“But the box: how came you to keep it?” asked Evelyn, eyeing it askance as it lay gleaming in a streak of sunshine.

“Oh, I brought it away as a souvenir, and Niles kept the other trinkets.”

“But you said harm was foretold to the possessor of those scarlet seeds,” persisted the girl, whose fancy was excited by the tale, and who fancied all was not told.

“Among his spoils, Niles found a bit of parchment, which he deciphered, and this inscription said that the mummy we had

so ungallantly burned was that of a famous sorceress who bequeathed her curse to whoever should disturb her rest. Of course I don't believe that curse has anything to do with it, but it's a fact that Niles never prospered from that day. He says it's because he has never recovered from the fall and fright and I dare say it is so; but I sometimes wonder if I am to share the curse, for I've a vein of superstition in me, and that poor little mummy haunts my dreams still."

A long silence followed these words. Paul painted mechanically and Evelyn lay regarding him with a thoughtful face. But gloomy fancies were as foreign to her nature as shadows are to noonday, and presently she laughed a cheery laugh, saying as she took up the box again:

"Why don't you plant them, and see what wondrous flower they will bear?"

"I doubt if they would bear anything after lying in a mummy's hand for centuries," replied Forsyth, gravely.

"Let me plant them and try. You know wheat has sprouted and grown that was taken from a mummy's coffin; why should not these pretty seeds? I should so like to watch them grow; may I, Paul?"

"No, I'd rather leave that experiment untried. I have a queer feeling about the matter, and don't want to meddle myself or let anyone I love meddle with these seeds. They may be some horrible poison, or possess some evil power, for the sorceress evidently valued them, since she clutched them fast even in her tomb."

"Now, you are foolishly superstitious, and I laugh at you. Be generous; give me one seed, just to learn if it will grow. See I'll pay for it," and Evelyn, who now stood beside him, dropped a kiss on his forehead as she made her request, with the most engaging air.

But Forsyth would not yield. He smiled and returned the embrace with lover-like warmth, then flung the seeds into the fire, and gave her back the golden box, saying, tenderly:

"My darling, I'll fill it with diamonds or bonbons, if you please, but I will not let you play with that witch's spells. You've enough of your own, so forget the 'pretty seeds' and see what a Light of the Harem I've made of you."

Evelyn frowned, and smiled, and presently the lovers were out in the

spring sunshine reveling in their own happy hopes, untroubled by one foreboding fear.

II

"I have a little surprise for you, love," said Forsyth, as he greeted his cousin three months later on the morning of his wedding day.

"And I have one for you," she answered, smiling faintly.

"How pale you are, and how thin you grow! All this bridal bustle is too much for you, Evelyn," he said, with fond anxiety, as he watched the strange pallor of her face, and pressed the wasted little hand in his.

"I am so tired," she said, and leaned her head wearily on her lover's breast. "Neither sleep, food, nor air gives me strength, and a curious mist seems to cloud my mind at times. Mamma says it is the heat, but I shiver even in the sun, while at night I burn with fever. Paul, dear, I'm glad you are going to take me away to lead a quiet, happy life with you, but I'm afraid it will be a very short one."

"My fanciful little wife! You are tired and nervous with all this worry, but a few weeks of rest in the country will give us back our blooming Eve again. Have you no curiosity to learn my surprise?" he asked, to change her thoughts.

The vacant look stealing over the girl's face gave place to one of interest, but as she listened it seemed to require an effort to fix her mind on her lover's words.

"You remember the day we rummaged in the old cabinet?"

"Yes," and a smile touched her lips for a moment.

"And how you wanted to plant those queer red seeds I stole from the mummy?"

"I remember," and her eyes kindled with sudden fire.

"Well, I tossed them into the fire, as I thought, and gave you the box. But when I went back to cover up my picture, and found one of those seeds on the rug, a sudden fancy to gratify your whim led me to send it to Niles and ask him to plant and report on its progress. Today I hear from him for the first time, and he reports that the seed has grown marvelously, has budded, and that he intends to take the first flower, if it blooms in time, to a meeting of famous scientific men, after which he will

send me its true name and the plant itself. From his description, it must be very curious, and I'm impatient to see it."

"You need not wait; I can show you the flower in its bloom," and Evelyn beckoned with the mechante smile so long a stranger to her lips.

Much amazed, Forsyth followed her to her own little boudoir, and there, standing in the sunshine, was the unknown plant. Almost rank in their luxuriance were the vivid green leaves on the slender purple stems, and rising from the midst, one ghostly-white flower, shaped like the head of a hooded snake, with scarlet stamens like forked tongues, and on the petals glittered spots like dew.

"A strange, uncanny flower! Has it any odor?" asked Forsyth, bending to examine it, and forgetting, in his interest, to ask how it came there.

"None, and that disappoints me, I am so fond of perfumes," answered the girl, caressing the green leaves which trembled at her touch, while the purple stems deepened their tint.

"Now tell me about it," said Forsyth, after standing silent for several minutes.

"I had been before you, and secured one of the seeds, for two fell on the rug. I planted it under a glass in the richest soil I could find, watered it faithfully, and was amazed at the rapidity with which it grew when once it appeared above the earth. I told no-one, for I meant to surprise you with it; but this bud has been so long in blooming, I have had to wait. It is a good omen that it blossoms today, and as it is nearly white, I mean to wear it, for I've learned to love it, having been my pet for so long."

"I would not wear it, for, in spite of its innocent color, it is an evil-looking plant, with its adder's tongue and unnatural dew. Wait till Niles tells us what it is, then pet it if it is harmless."

"Perhaps my sorceress cherished it for some symbolic beauty—those old Egyptians were full of fancies. It was very sly of you to turn the tables on me in this way. But I forgive you, since in a few hours, I shall chain this mysterious hand forever. How cold it is! Come out into the garden and get some warmth and color for tonight, my love."

But when night came, no-one could reproach the girl with her pallor, for she glowed like a pomegranate-flower, her eyes were full of fire, her lips scarlet, and all her old vivacity seemed to have returned. A more brilliant bride never blushed under a misty veil, and when her lover saw her, he was absolutely startled by the almost unearthly beauty which transformed the pale, languid creature of the morning into this radiant woman.

They were married, and if love, many blessings, and all good gifts lavishly showered upon them could make them happy, then this young pair were truly blest. But even in the rapture of the moment that made her his, Forsyth observed how icy cold was the little hand he held, how feverish the deep color on the soft cheek he kissed, and what a strange fire burned in the tender eyes that looked so wistfully at him.

Blithe and beautiful as a spirit, the smiling bride played her part in all the festivities of that long evening, and when at last light, life and color began to fade, the loving eyes that watched her thought it but the natural weariness of the hour. As the last guest departed, Forsyth was met by a servant, who gave him a letter marked "Haste." Tearing it open, he read these lines, from a friend of the professor's:

"DEAR SIR—Poor Niles died suddenly two days ago, while at the Scientific Club, and his last words were: 'Tell Paul Forsyth to beware of the Mummy's Curse, for this fatal flower has killed me.' The circumstances of his death were so peculiar, that I add them as a sequel to this message. For several months, as he told us, he had been watching an unknown plant, and that evening he brought us the flower to examine. Other matters of interest absorbed us till a late hour, and the plant was forgotten. The professor wore it in his buttonhole—a strange white, serpent-headed blossom, with pale glittering spots, which slowly changed to a glittering scarlet, till the leaves looked as if sprinkled with blood. It was observed that instead of the pallor and feebleness which had recently come over him, that the professor was unusually animated, and seemed in an almost unnatural state of high spirits. Near the close of the meeting, in the midst of a lively discussion, he suddenly dropped, as if smitten with apoplexy. He was conveyed home insensible, and after one lucid interval, in which he gave me the message I have recorded above, he died in great agony, raving of mummies,

pyramids, serpents, and some fatal curse which had fallen upon him.

"After his death, livid scarlet spots, like those on the flower, appeared upon his skin, and he shriveled like a withered leaf. At my desire, the mysterious plant was examined, and pronounced by the best authority one of the most deadly poisons known to the Egyptian sorceresses. The plant slowly absorbs the vitality of whoever cultivates it, and the blossom, worn for two or three hours, produces either madness or death."

Down dropped the paper from Forsyth's hand; he read no further, but hurried back into the room where he had left his young wife. As if worn out with fatigue, she had thrown herself upon a couch, and lay there motionless, her face half-hidden by the light folds of the veil, which had blown over it.

"Evelyn, my dearest! Wake up and answer me. Did you wear that strange flower today?" whispered Forsyth, putting the misty screen away.

There was no need for her to answer, for there, gleaming spectrally on her bosom, was the evil blossom, its white petals spotted now with flecks of scarlet, vivid as drops of newly spilt blood.

But the unhappy bridegroom scarcely saw it, for the face above it appalled him by its utter vacancy. Drawn and pallid, as if with some wasting malady, the young face, so lovely an hour ago, lay before him aged and blighted by the baleful influence of the plant which had drunk up her life. No recognition in the eyes, no word upon the lips, no motion of the hand—only the faint breath, the fluttering pulse, and wide-opened eyes, betrayed that she was alive.

Alas for the young wife! The superstitious fear at which she had smiled had proved true: the curse that had bided its time for ages was fulfilled at last, and her own hand wrecked her happiness for ever. Death in life was her doom, and for years Forsyth secluded himself to tend with pathetic devotion the pale ghost, who never, by word or look, could thank him for the love that outlived even such a fate as this.

Mythic Venice #Dungeon23 #City23 April

This year I've been participating in **Dungeon 23**, which is a daily writing challenge, to get together material for a **Venice Gazette** here for **Ars Magica** or **Magonomia**. The first four entries for **April** have already been published as part of the **March** episode because they were to do with carnival masks, so I kept all of that material together.

NAVIGUM ISIDIS

This mystery cult was imported into Imperial Rome from Egypt. It focuses on Isis and uses a model ship in its rituals, hence the name Ship of Isis. Its sacred days the 5th of March. Some scholars claim that the procession, the Carras Navalus, is the ancestor of carnival. This may or may not be true in real life, but it might work for us in **Ars Magica**. It's a cult for seafarers and merchants, which includes most of the ruling class, the Venice.

LISTON DE MASCHERE

At the start of carnival, people dress up, mask and promenade in the Campos and Stefano. Later, the Liston, the promenade, moves to St. Mark's. It was so popular it needed the largest space. On the 26th of December, since Stefano's Saints Day, men wear a tabarro, a heavy cloak, some women do also. Women usually wear the zendale, which is a black shawl, although some men do also. The tall shoes mentioned in earlier episodes are called chopines, apparently, and the fans mentioned in an earlier episode, where I discussed fans as a replacement for wands, are called ventuoles.

FAT THURSDAY

Fat Thursday is the final day before Lent, feasting, dancing, ball fights and baiting, and from 1548 an acrobat walks from a ship up to the Campanile, then down again, saluting the doge on the way. I haven't made clear there that they're walking up a rope from a ship, which is moving with the tide, up to the top of the bell tower.

There are boating contests for both men and women. There are fights on the San Barbara Bridge, and it ends with fireworks. There is art on Italiancarnival.com.

There's also a mention in my notes of Hunting Thursday, which is apparently a bull sacrifice.

CARDS

Bassetta was invented in 1593, it's a game for 3 to 4 players and a banker, 13 cards per hand, players each show a card, or more, and bet, and then the dealer shows the bottom card and pays out half bets. Then he deals four cards and pays matches, one to one, and then he deals another card and takes the matches for himself. You go until the money or the pack are exhausted. There's also a replay rule for higher odds. The bank has a very severe advantage.

In English it's called Basset. When it gets to France, only the sons of nobles are legally permitted to be bankers. It's played mostly by the very wealthy. Its inventor was sent into exile for the destitution it bought on some of the noble families.

The Biribissi is a lottery: There's a mention of burning lotto balls in Dante's Inferno.. The public lottery, the Pirie e Botteghe a Rialto, was first held in 1522 and the prize was real estate.

Primiera is a late 15th century game, it's the ancestor of poker, it has raising, bluffing, and card combinations. The cards in Primiera are as follows, four high card, a seven is equal to 21, a six is equal to 18, a five is equal to 15, a four is equal to 14, a three is equal to 13, a two is equal to 12, a face card is equal to 10, and an ace is equal to 16.

A chorus is what we would call four of a kind.

A fluxus is what we would call a flush, A supremus is the seven six and ace of a single suit.

A primiera is one card per suit.

Numbers are two and three of one suit.

THE FIRST THEATRE AND NOTES ON KEYSELLERS.

The first modern theatre in the world is built in Venice in the Magonomia period, it's called the Michieli theatre.

There are no tickets, people who want what we would now call a season ticket instead are given a key to a theatre box. If you want using your box you can rent out your key for the night, there's even a particular peddler that people trust with their keys to hand

them out in haggle prices. At some point ambassadors are banned from hiring theatre boxes because these are great places for running agents.

The first opera house was opened in 1637, the Teatro San Casino. "Casino" just means "little house" by the way,

The apparati of the theatre (the sets and props) are side-lines for some famous painters.

MY SHOPPING LIST

Master Alexis's book.
Monsters and statistics.
Generic human NPCs
Covenant creation guide
Maps of significant places
Deck plans for the Bucintoro and for a generic gondola.
Deck plans for a generic galley, great galley, and a round ship..
Generic palazzo and nunnery plans,
Generic pharmacy floorplan
Stats for the mask characters: all lists of their advantages and virtues
The Pantamerone monsters I've been putting off for years
Consider some production details

MASTER ALEXIOUS OF PIEDMONT'S BOOK OF SECRETS, VOLUME 1.

It has the following spells which I am going to try and map across to **Ars Magica** and **Magonomia**.
Curing lunacy caused by double headed passion worms.
Cure for the falling sickness (which is epilepsy)
Oil of brimstone
To draw out the poison of wounds made by envenomed blades.
To draw out animal venom.
To draw out arrowheads and iron.
A perfect remedy for blows of sword or staff or stone
A water to heal all manner of wounds that every man should always have in his house
To make red oil of St John's Wort
To cure withered limbs
Remedies for malaria, pleurisy, rabies and scrofula.
Plague cures and protective charms,
Scented waters, oils and powders, soaps, perfumes, pomanders, jams, sugared fruit, sugared place settings.
Waters that make the face look 25 or 15.
Face treatments, depilatory creams, hair

and beard colours, dyes, paints, inks, silverpoints.
Powder to erase letters or mistakes
Recipes to make quicksilver, cinnabar aqua fortis and to make metals.
How to gild iron with water, foil and quicksilver.
How to gild silver
How to counterfeit a diamond with a white sapphire
How to fuse rubies or emeralds into larger rubies or emeralds
How to gild copper

THE SECOND BOOK

Spells to:
make cosmetics
make oil of vitriol
colour stone or metal gold
make iron or steel soft
harden iron or steel
make a glue that holds like a nail
cause marvellous dreams
have a good memory
make no dog bark at you
have steel cut iron like lead
make bones soft
make invisible ink triggered by water
make invisible ink triggered by fire,
make wild beasts not hurt you
be safe from serpents
see wild beasts in a dream
make an apple or ball that provokes sleep
dye copper into gold
make oil of brimstone
make sal ammoniac
dye iron gold
dye iron silver
erase letters from parchment,
make dry vinegar
cure sickness, sea sickness, deafness
create magical fish bait
remedy scorpion stings
make magical bait for fowls
cure salamander bites
cure snake bite
cure rabies
cure venomous stings
drive venomous beasts from your house
defend against poison, eaten or drunk
not be stung by scorpions
not be stung by wasps or bees
cure one who has eaten toadstools
grant safety from all sorcery and enchantment
grant safety against all lightning and tempest
grind gold and silver
imprint metals
make metals seem like silver
make a light in the night (to attract fish)
make a stone which creates flame when it is wetted with spit
make oil of laudanum,
make leather look like gold or silver

help one who cannot sleep
detect arsenic
restore letters, and equine medicine.
to brew an emetic for poison

THE THIRD AND FOURTH BOOKS OF MASTER ALEXIS OF PIEDMONT

Cures for epilepsy, tinnitus, toothache, quinsy, throat puss, pleurisy, stomach pain, dropsy, colic, flux, and thrush
An inducer of birth
An easer of birth pain
Cures for incontinence of the bladder, swollen testicles, gravel (bladder stones), psoriasis
To staunch blood
To create opiates
To soften or harden iron
To soften or harden crystals
A solder for metals
To cast horn in a mould
To cast amber in a mould
How to capture salamanders
How to make gold using salamanders
How to make petroleum using walnuts
How to solidify mercury with aqua lunaris

Book four is all very similar with a couple of standouts like “a plaster to cure a rupture of the skull.”

PRIVATE LIVES IN RENAISSANCE VENICE BY PATRICIA FORTINI-BROWN – KNIGHTHOOD

There are two orders of knighthood in Venice. The knights of St. Marco, who are virtually all foreigners, are honoured by the state and have no role in government. The knights of the Stola d'Oro, are named after the gold sash they wear. The role is granted by the Senate to Venetian men who have served in foreign courts and been knighted. They have no inherent power in government, but to be an ambassador you need to have political power and connections.

PULLING DOWN PALACES

The Querini Palace was pulled down after the Tiepolo-Querini plots failed. The state pulled down to thirds of the Querini Palace, because it was owned in common by three brothers, only two of whom were plotters. They bought the remaining third from the innocent brother, then designated the surviving structure as the city's slaughterhouse. After the Tiepolo doge tried to seize the state with a popular uprising, the state pulled down his palace and made its footprint into a public park. There's a pillar explaining the sentence,.

THE FRATERNA

The basic commercial unit is the fraterna, which is an extended family unit. In Venice, only one or two sons in each generation marry. They live in their casa together with their parents and unmarried siblings. Married siblings may get a floor, the unmarried siblings get a room. Venetian casas are large with a shared central corridor and stairs. There are side rooms that lead into each other. This means that as the family changes, the suites can flex.

It's a cheaper way of living than living independently, because it allows extended families to share servants into kitchen. There's not a lot of privacy, however. Despite the lack of space, idealized versions have husbands and wives with separate connected rooms.

MANNERISM OR MANIERA

Mannerism is a style of art which became popular in the 1520s, vying with the High Renaissance style and ending around 1590, extinguished by the Baroque style. The term is an 18th century one, so it's not used in period by characters, but it is useful to us.

Mannerist art doesn't have the formality in design and perspective of High Renaissance art. The core principle is for the art to appear effortlessly elegant, so artists do odd things to sidestep problems in formal art. Limbs are elongated, they can quill weirdly, heads sometimes seem shrunk from true proportion. Space distorts. Symbols are jumbled together. It looks artificial. It's not naturalistic, This might be our new Demon type, just humans that are done in this Mannerist style.

Mannerist art is meant to look good, as opposed to being functional or religious, much as it might be one of those two. Mannerist paintings are deliberately tense and unbalanced compositions with twisted poses and exaggerated facial expressions. They have garish colours and weird lighting choices.

MANNERIST GARDENS

The idea of Mannerist gardens and grottoes is to express the elegance, intellectualism, shock, and style of art in a navigable real world space. Oddly, some look quite like regiones, from an Ars Magica perspective. These gardens are designed for drama, so they are great for scenes and stories. In real life. They often hosted masques.

Water flows through the garden in a deliberate, dramatic way, often aided by water pumps. This may motivate automaton like musical instruments. They also sometimes have hidden squirters.

The best modern example is the Sacra Bosco, the Sacred Wood. Rough statues provide shocks in settings reached by paths hidden and revealed by landscaping tricks. The biggest sculpture is Hell’s Mouth, which was used for dining in the masques. Guests could eat while simultaneously being eaten by the Hell’s Mouth. There is an inscription on it which says “Abandon all thought, you who enter here.” and this is probably a deliberate nod to Dante. I have a note here that a giardino segreto might work as a lab.

HYPNEROTOMACHIA POLIPHILI

This is a very popular book at the time, complete with illustrations. It’s highly symbolic, and its stories are filled with mannerist imagery. It reminds me a lot of Ars Magica’s “The Travels of Fedoso” in that it’s imprecise, and so can be read as a prophecy, as a life guide, or as entertainment. Similarly, the art is copied into real-world gardens and the processions are copied by the Venetian calza. I may steal some of the images for the final art in this project.

NOTES FROM “SWEETS” BY TIM RICHARDSON

Just as a note, for a long time I was working on an idea of a civil war in the Grocers’ Guild in London. In the real world, the Grocers split in half during the Magonomia period. The ones who made a great deal of money out of sugar gained their independence through various forms of legal chicanery. Eventually they gained the sponsorship of James I. This is why their symbol is a rhinoceros (which was meant to represent a unicorn) over a shield supported by two unicorns (these being the symbol of Scotland). Anyhow, because we’re using speziale, or

pharmacies, so much in this project, I decided to combine the two.

We will get a lot of shapes and materials out of this for the Shape and Material table in Ars Magica.

Unicorns are known to love liquorice. Since Roman times, soldiers were issued liquorice as a thirst suppressant. It was first planted in England, in York, in the 16th century.

A comfit is a sugar-coated seed or nut used generally to freshen the breath. Dragees, for example, are a comfit. Dragees were invented in France in the 13th century. A pennet is a tube of sugar, sometimes twisted, and they’re prescribed for colds and consumption. Elizabeth’s brother Edward was prescribed them for his final illness.

A sucket is a candied fruit peel, originally from citrons, certainly later oranges and lemons. Preserves come in two forms, the wet form in the dry form. Wet forms are rather like jam or fruit in syrup, and dry is like old-fashioned quince paste. It can be sliced and rolled. Lozenges, originally, are the diamond shapes cut from the dry forms.

Pastilles have gum trachanth in them, and they may be post-period. The idea of that is to keep the medicine in your mouth longer, trickling down your throat to extend the duration of the effect. Turkish delight was originally a throat medicine, too, although it uses a different mechanism.

The highest quality of fruit paste is called Paste of Genoa, regardless of where it actually comes from.

Isinglas is sometimes used as a firming agent. That’s airbladder juice from fish. Fruit leather exists.

What we Australians call hundreds and thousands are called non-parallels and can be used as magic dust.

Blanche powder is granulated, white sugar flavoured with spices to be sprinkled on fruit before eating. You can have blends or singled-out flavours so a diner can pick and mix at the table.

The French word for a box you keep sweets in is a dragéor.

An electuary is a syrup or jelly. Sherbet is a mixture of sugar and fruit juice and ice.

A cordial is heart medicine in liquid form and it’s fruity.

Spice bread, rolls or cakes spiced as a potion alternative.

Sometimes colour codes flavour, but some people didn’t code by colour. They used pure white because that was seen as a sign of quality in sugar.

I have a note here to check “The names of all kinds of wares” by Thomas Newbury.

It notes that as a quick cheat, you can dip something in egg white and then shake it in sugar to make coarse but quick comfits.

Marzipan was likely invented around 1150 in northern Italy. A movable edible prop of marchpane is called a subtlety in English, and it’s called an entremet in French and an intermezzo in Italian. They are also known as “warners” in English because they herald the arrival of the next course.

Pastillage is a multiple mix of sugar and gum trachanth.

A subtlety is top level confection work and if you needed one, you might seek out a specialist to create it for you, rather than depending on your own servant.

CONTINUED NOTES FROM “SWEETS”

The first sugar warehouse in Venice was in 966. It imported sugar in conical loaves. Sugar comes in grades. The highest grade is “Egyptian” from Alexandria. It’s refined in Venice, and then often refined at the point of sale, and then sometimes refined again by the user. The first bulk shipment from Venice to England is in 1319 and lands at Southampton. It contains 10,000 pounds of sugar and 1,000 pounds of candy. Their return cargo is wool.

Smaller amounts of sugar are clearly present earlier. It’s clearly known from the 13th century. Candies were preserved fruit, pastes and suckets. They were easy to ship because they’re hydrophilic which makes them antibacterial. The first trace of a Venetian shop specifically for confections is in 1150 and spreads to Sicily in the North Italian cities by 1220.

Confectioners have candied fruit. Hard sweets however are found apothecaries.

Confectionery is seen as an Italian skill. Catherine de Medici brings those skills to France creating their industry there.

MANUS CHRISTI

Manus Christi is a sweet, believed to be of great medicinal value and it differs slightly between makers. It’s a stick of hard sugar flavoured with violet, cinnamon, rose water and often flaked with gold leaf. It’s taken to maintain health. It’s not an emergency medicine. A variant of it, Manus Christi Parala has crushed pearls in it. Chests of Manus

Christi are used as gifts between very rich people.

CANDIED FRUIT FLOWERS AND ROOTS

Candying allows out of season use. Flowers are kept from decay by candying. They retain their scent. Violets and roses seem quite popular. Blue borage, rosemary, dianthus and marigold are also preserved. Candied flowers are considered a Spanish thing in origin so “Spanish” is used as an adjective to mean “containing edible petals”.

Candied roots include ginger, parsley, fennel, elecampane, angelica, eringo and orchid roots (satyricons) are all mentioned. Eringo is sea-holy. There’s an industry in England centred on Colchester, which candies this because it’s valued as an aphrodisiac

Fruits, apples, pears, plums, quinces, damsons, gooseberries, cherries, barberries, oranges and lemons are candied. Dried fruit fills a price point under candied fruit but above honey. By the 16th century the English love to eat raw fruit as a snack in the street and this disgusts some visitors. It’s considered healthy and virtuous not indulgent.

Mint only becomes popular after the 19th century. It’s too difficult to make a strong flavour from its oil with the equipment on hand in period.

LADY CONFECTIONERS

Confectionery, as a branch of food preparation, is part of the daily domestic alchemy expected of even well-off women. Lady confectioners have some sort of eroticism about them in some places and periods because they smell sweet, and spicy, and exotic. This might be a Fate Aspect. Also, they have sweets of course, which are considered a healthy pleasure.

BANQUETS

Until the 16th century, the final course of an English feast is called a voidee. After that, it changes to a banquet (or a banquette) or sometimes a banker.

Banquet also include wafers and hypocras. Hypocras is spiced wine named after Hippocrates. The dessert course is believed to medically be good for you. The sweet dishes move from being interspersed through the courses to a dessert course in the 17th century.

THEOLOGY OF SUGAR

Aquinas ends the debate on if you can eat sugar on fast days and his answer is yes.

Although nutritious, sweets are not eaten with nutrition as an intent. They are eaten to ease digestion and therefore they are medicine and therefore they are exempt from fasts.

Note that this is an easy demonic ploy. You give the conclusion then you undercut the medicinal intent. This encourages gluttony so, thanks Aquinas.

VENETIAN SPUN SUGAR

Instead of marchpane, or perhaps in addition to marchpane, the Venetians use spun sugar. Its sugar strands that are made by flicking an implement across a couple of sticks so that you get sugar thread. This is used to make complicated, glassy shapes while cooling. It could possibly be animated by magic.

It can be used to make visually perfect copies of most things. At one banquet, all the items on the table including the tablecloth were made of spun sugar. This was 1,286 items in total. It can be gilded and silvered, so tableware and cutlery are popular choices. There are recipes from 1562 in alchemy manuals.

English people prefer sugar paste instead.

SUGAR FOR THE APOTHECARY

Sugar is mildly hot and moist. It comes in a variety of consistencies. It preserves other medicines. It makes other medicines easy to take. It binds other ingredients together. It aids in the digestion of medicine. It tunes the strength of other medicines via dilution and the highest quality of sugar may not be moist. It may be dry.

What I mean by tuning the strength by dilution is this: if you get a potent batch or a weak batch of a herb, you can cut it with more or less sugar so that the potency is correct.

LONDON NOTES

Pepperers are gathered around the Spicery of Westcheap, which is near the docks. I should check the history of the Society of Apothecaries, which was published in 1998 (Penelope Hunting.) By the 14th century, there were about 50 spices regularly traded in London. There were some itinerant traders. By the 14th century, every great

town has an apothecary or a spicer. Grocers are people who engage in bulk trades. That’s where their name comes from. It’s German gross, meaning large.

Richardson says that the dispute between the apothecaries and groceries is one part of a 500 year long war that wages across the continent over monopolies on medicine. The apothecaries get their own guilds between 1294 in Freberg in Saxony and 1617 in London. Sometimes this ascendancy is joined to import restrictions on sweets, hence local specialisations and secret recipes.

Eventually in some places, confectioners break off again from the apothecaries.

TRADE CHANGES IN THE 15TH CENTURY

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 blocks Venetian sugar supplies from the east. Some trade continues from Crete and Cyprus. In 1450, the Portuguese start sugar plantations in Madeira and later expand that to the Azores in Brazil. The first Madeira sugar to land in England arrives in Bristol in 1456. The centre of the sugar trade then moves to Amsterdam and then Antwerp. Volumes are very high compared to the Middle Ages, but the Spanish and Portuguese duopoly keeps prices low but stable. Eventually large brokerages in Amsterdam, London, Hamburg and Rouen form. All of this money helps fuel the Dutch-Spanish war, which is covered in the core Magonomia book in some detail.

A NOTE ON CONFECTIONERS SKILLS FROM THE ITALIAN CONFECTIONER 1820 TRANSLATED BY TIM RICHARDSON

"To make gum paste properly, great care and dexterity, much patience, some knowledge of mythology, of history, and of the arts and modelling and design, are requisite."

That’s the end of Tim Richardson’s *Sweets*. Next we will move on to Venetian legends and ghost stories by Alberto Toso Fei and then go back to the shopping list.

But that will be for the May episode.

Ken's Mystery by Julian Hawthorne

A ghost story for your monster of the month. Over to Ben Tucker. Thanks to him and his production team at Librivox.

One cool October evening—it was the last day of the month, and unusually cool for the time of year—I made up my mind to go and spend an hour or two with my friend Keningale. Keningale was an artist (as well as a musical amateur and poet), and had a very delightful studio built onto his house, in which he was wont to sit of an evening. The studio had a cavernous fire-place, designed in imitation of the old-fashioned fire-places of Elizabethan manor-houses, and in it, when the temperature out-doors warranted, he would build up a cheerful fire of dry logs. It would suit me particularly well, I thought, to go and have a quiet pipe and chat in front of that fire with my friend.

I had not had such a chat for a very long time—not, in fact, since Keningale (or Ken, as his friends called him) had returned from his visit to Europe the year before. He went abroad, as he affirmed at the time, “for purposes of study,” whereat we all smiled, for Ken, so far as we knew him, was more likely to do anything else than to study. He was a young fellow of buoyant temperament, lively and social in his habits, of a brilliant and versatile mind, and possessing an income of twelve or fifteen thousand dollars a year; he could sing, play, scribble, and paint very cleverly, and some of his heads and figure-pieces were really well done, considering that he never had any regular training in art; but he was not a worker. Personally he was fine-looking, of good height and figure, active, healthy, and with a remarkably fine brow, and clear, full-gazing eye. Nobody was surprised at his going to Europe, nobody expected him to do anything there except amuse himself, and few anticipated that he would be soon again seen in New York. He was one of the sort that find Europe agree with them. Off he went, therefore; and in the course of a few months the rumor reached us that he was engaged to a handsome and wealthy New York girl whom he had met in London. This was nearly all we did hear of him until, not very long afterward, he turned up again on Fifth Avenue, to every one’s astonishment; made no satisfactory answer to those who wanted to know how he happened to tire so soon of the Old World; while, as to the reported engagement, he cut short all allusion to

that in so peremptory a manner as to show that it was not a permissible topic of conversation with him. It was surmised that the lady had jilted him; but, on the other hand, she herself returned home not a great while after, and, though she had plenty of opportunities, she has never married to this day.

Be the rights of that matter what they may, it was soon remarked that Ken was no longer the careless and merry fellow he used to be; on the contrary, he appeared grave, moody, averse from general society, and habitually taciturn and undemonstrative even in the company of his most intimate friends. Evidently something had happened to him, or he had done something. What? Had he committed a murder? or joined the Nihilists? or was his unsuccessful love affair at the bottom of it? Some declared that the cloud was only temporary, and would soon pass away. Nevertheless, up to the period of which I am writing, it had not passed away, but had rather gathered additional gloom, and threatened to become permanent.

Meanwhile I had met him twice or thrice at the club, at the opera, or in the street, but had as yet had no opportunity of regularly renewing my acquaintance with him. We had been on a footing of more than common intimacy in the old days, and I was not disposed to think that he would refuse to renew the former relations now. But what I had heard and myself seen of his changed condition imparted a stimulating tinge of suspense or curiosity to the pleasure with which I looked forward to the prospects of this evening. His house stood at a distance of two or three miles beyond the general range of habitations in New York at this time, and as I walked briskly along in the clear twilight air I had leisure to go over in my mind all that I had known of Ken and had divined of his character. After all, had there not always been something in his nature—deep down, and held in abeyance by the activity of his animal spirits—but something strange and separate, and capable of developing under suitable conditions into—into what? As I asked myself this question I arrived at his door; and it was with a feeling of relief that I felt the next moment the cordial grasp of his hand, and his voice bidding me welcome in a tone that indicated unaffected gratification at my presence. He drew me at once into the studio, relieved me of my hat and cane, and then put his hand on my shoulder.

I am glad to see you,” he repeated, with singular earnestness—”glad to see you and to feel you; and to-night of all nights in the year.”

“Why to-night especially?”

“Oh, never mind. It’s just as well, too, you didn’t let me know beforehand you were coming; the unreadiness is all, to paraphrase the poet. Now, with you to help me, I can drink a glass of whisky and water and take a bit draw of the pipe. This would have been a grim night for me if I’d been left to myself.”

“In such a lap of luxury as this, too!” said I, looking round at the glowing fire-place, the low, luxurious chairs, and all the rich and sumptuous fittings of the room. “I should have thought a condemned murderer might make himself comfortable here.”

“Perhaps; but that’s not exactly my category at present. But have you forgotten what night this is? This is November-eve, when, as tradition asserts, the dead arise and walk about, and fairies, goblins, and spiritual beings of all kinds have more freedom and power than on any other day of the year. One can see you’ve never been in Ireland.”

“I wasn’t aware till now that you had been there, either.”

“Yes, I have been in Ireland. Yes—” He paused, sighed, and fell into a reverie, from which, however, he soon roused himself by an effort, and went to a cabinet in a corner of the room for the liquor and tobacco. While he was thus employed I sauntered about the studio, taking note of the various beauties, grotesquenesses, and curiosities that it contained. Many things were there to repay study and arouse admiration; for Ken was a good collector, having excellent taste as well as means to back it. But, upon the whole, nothing interested me more than some studies of a female head, roughly done in oils, and, judging from the sequestered positions in which I found them, not intended by the artist for exhibition or criticism. There were three or four of these studies, all of the same face, but in different poses and costumes. In one the head was enveloped in a dark hood, overshadowing and partly concealing the features; in another she seemed to be peering duskily through a latticed

casement, lit by a faint moonlight; a third showed her splendidly attired in evening costume, with jewels in her hair and ears, and sparkling on her snowy bosom. The expressions were as various as the poses; now it was demure penetration, now a subtle inviting glance, now burning passion, and again a look of elfish and elusive mockery. In whatever phase, the countenance possessed a singular and poignant fascination, not of beauty merely, though that was very striking, but of character and quality likewise.

"Did you find this model abroad?" I inquired at length. "She has evidently inspired you, and I don't wonder at it."

Ken, who had been mixing the punch, and had not noticed my movements, now looked up, and said: "I didn't mean those to be seen. They don't satisfy me, and I am going to destroy them; but I couldn't rest till I'd made some attempts to reproduce—What was it you asked? Abroad? Yes—or no. They were all painted here within the last six weeks."

"Whether they satisfy you or not, they are by far the best things of yours I have ever seen."

"Well, let them alone, and tell me what you think of this beverage. To my thinking, it goes to the right spot. It owes its existence to your coming here. I can't drink alone, and those portraits are not company, though, for aught I know, she might have come out of the canvas to-night and sat down in that chair." Then, seeing my inquiring look, he added, with a hasty laugh, "It's November-eve, you know, when anything may happen, provided its strange enough. Well, here's to ourselves."

We each swallowed a deep draught of the smoking and aromatic liquor, and set down our glasses with approval. The punch was excellent. Ken now opened a box of cigars, and we seated ourselves before the fire-place.

"All we need now," I remarked, after a short silence, "is a little music. By-the-by, Ken, have you still got the banjo I gave you before you went abroad?"

He paused so long before replying that I supposed he had not heard my question. "I have got it," he said, at length, "but it will never make any more music."

"Got broken, eh? Can't it be mended? It was a fine instrument."

"It's not broken, but it's past mending. You shall see for yourself."

He arose as he spoke, and going to another part of the studio, opened a black oak coffer, and took out of it a long object wrapped up in a piece of faded yellow silk. He handed it to me, and when I had unwrapped it, there appeared a thing that might once have been a banjo, but had little resemblance to one now. It bore every sign of extreme age. The wood of the handle was honeycombed with the gnawings of worms, and dusty with dry-rot. The parchment head was green with mold, and hung in shriveled tatters. The hoop, which was of solid silver, was so blackened and tarnished that it looked like dilapidated iron. The strings were gone, and most of the tuning-screws had dropped out of their decayed sockets. Altogether it had the appearance of having been made before the Flood, and been forgotten in the fore-castle of Noah's Ark ever since.

"It is a curious relic, certainly," I said. "Where did you come across it? I had no idea that the banjo was invented so long ago as this. It certainly can't be less than two hundred years old, and may be much older than that."

Ken smiled gloomily. "You are quite right," he said; "it is at least two hundred years old, and yet it is the very same banjo that you gave me a year ago."

"Hardly," I returned, smiling in my turn, "since that was made to my order with a view to presenting it to you."

"I know that; but the two hundred years have passed since then. Yes; it is absurd and impossible, I know, but nothing is truer. That banjo, which was made last year, existed in the sixteenth century, and has been rotting ever since. Stay. Give it to me a moment, and I'll convince you. You recollect that your name and mine, with the date, were engraved on the silver hoop?"

"Yes; and there was a private mark of my own there, also."

"Very well," said Ken, who had been rubbing a place on the hoop with a corner of the yellow silk wrapper; "look at that."

I took the decrepit instrument from him, and examined the spot which he had rubbed. It was incredible, sure enough; but there were the names and the date precisely as I had caused them to be engraved; and there, moreover, was my own private mark, which I had idly made with an old etching point not more than eighteen

months before. After convincing myself that there was no mistake, I laid the banjo across my knees, and stared at my friend in bewilderment. He sat smoking with a kind of grim composure, his eyes fixed upon the blazing logs.

"I'm mystified, I confess," said I. "Come; what is the joke? What method have you discovered of producing the decay of centuries on this unfortunate banjo in a few months? And why did you do it? I have heard of an elixir to counteract the effects of time, but your recipe seems to work the other way—to make time rush forward at two hundred times his usual rate, in one place, while he jogs on at his usual gait elsewhere. Unfold your mystery, magician. Seriously, Ken, how on earth did the thing happen?"

"I know no more about it than you do," was his reply. "Either you and I and all the rest of the living world are insane, or else there has been wrought a miracle as strange as any in tradition. How can I explain it? It is a common saying—a common experience, if you will—that we may, on certain trying or tremendous occasions, live years in one moment. But that's a mental experience, not a physical one, and one that applies, at all events, only to human beings, not to senseless things of wood and metal. You imagine the thing is some trick or jugglery. If it be, I don't know the secret of it. There's no chemical appliance that I ever heard of that will get a piece of solid wood into that condition in a few months, or a few years. And it wasn't done in a few years, or a few months either. A year ago today at this very hour that banjo was as sound as when it left the maker's hands, and twenty-four hours afterward—I'm telling you the simple truth—it was as you see it now."

The gravity and earnestness with which Ken made this astounding statement were evidently not assumed. He believed every word that he uttered. I knew not what to think. Of course my friend might be insane, though he betrayed none of the ordinary symptoms of mania; but, however that might be, there was the banjo, a witness whose silent testimony there was no gainsaying. The more I meditated on the matter the more inconceivable did it appear. Two hundred years—twenty-four hours; these were the terms of the proposed equation. Ken and the banjo both affirmed that the equation had been made; all worldly knowledge and experience affirmed it to be impossible. "What was the explanation? What is time? What is life? I felt myself beginning to

doubt the reality of all things. And so this was the mystery which my friend had been brooding over since his return from abroad. No wonder it had changed him. More to be wondered at was it that it had not changed him more.

“Can you tell me the whole story?” I demanded at length.

Ken quaffed another draught from his glass of whisky and water and rubbed his hand through his thick brown beard. “I have never spoken to any one of it heretofore,” he said, “and I had never meant to speak of it. But I’ll try and give you some idea of what it was. You know me better than any one else; you’ll understand the thing as far as it can ever be understood, and perhaps I may be relieved of some of the oppression it has caused me. For it is rather a ghastly memory to grapple with alone, I can tell you.”

Hereupon, without further preface, Ken related the following tale. He was, I may observe in passing, a naturally fine narrator. There were deep, lingering tones in his voice, and he could strikingly enhance the comic or pathetic effect of a sentence by dwelling here and there upon some syllable. His features were equally susceptible of humorous and of solemn expressions, and his eyes were in form and hue wonderfully adapted to showing great varieties of emotion. Their mournful aspect was extremely earnest and affecting; and when Ken was giving utterance to some mysterious passage of the tale they had a doubtful, melancholy, exploring look which appealed irresistibly to the imagination. But the interest of his story was too pressing to allow of noticing these incidental embellishments at the time, though they doubtless had their influence upon me all the same.

“I left New York on an Inman Line steamer, you remember,” began Ken, “and landed at Havre. I went the usual round of sight-seeing on the Continent, and got round to London in July, at the height of the season. I had good introductions, and met any number of agreeable and famous people. Among others was a young lady, a countrywoman of my own—you know whom I mean—who interested me very much, and before her family left London she and I were engaged. We parted there for the time, because she had the Continental trip still to make, while I wanted to take the opportunity to visit the north of England and Ireland. I landed at Dublin about the

1st of October, and, zigzagging about the country, I found myself in County Cork about two weeks later.

“There is in that region some of the most lovely scenery that human eyes ever rested on, and it seems to be less known to tourists than many places of infinitely less picturesque value. A lonely region too: during my rambles I met not a single stranger like myself, and few enough natives. It seems incredible that so beautiful a country should be so deserted. After walking a dozen Irish miles you come across a group of two or three one-roomed cottages, and, like as not, one or more of those will have the roof off and the walls in ruins. The few peasants whom one sees, however, are affable and hospitable, especially when they hear you are from that terrestrial heaven whither most of their friends and relatives have gone before them. They seem simple and primitive enough at first sight, and yet they are as strange and incomprehensible a race as any in the world. They are as superstitious, as credulous of marvels, fairies, magicians, and omens, as the men whom St. Patrick preached to, and at the same time they are shrewd, skeptical, sensible, and bottomless liars. Upon the whole, I met with no nation on my travels whose company I enjoyed so much, or who inspired me with so much kindness, curiosity, and repugnance.

“At length I got to a place on the sea-coast, which I will not further specify than to say that it is not many miles from Ballymacheen, on the south shore. I have seen Venice and Naples, I have driven along the Cornice Road, I have spent a month at our own Mount Desert, and I say that all of them together are not so beautiful as this glowing, deep-hued, soft-gleaming, silvery-lighted, ancient harbor and town, with the tall hills crowding round it and the black cliffs and headlands planting their iron feet in the blue, transparent sea. It is a very old place, and has had a history which it has outlived ages since. It may once have had two or three thousand inhabitants; it has scarce five or six hundred to day. Half the houses are in ruins or have disappeared; many of the remainder are standing empty. All the people are poor, most of them abjectly so; they saunter about with bare feet and uncovered heads, the women in quaint black or dark-blue cloaks, the men in such anomalous attire as only an Irishman knows how to get together, the children half naked. The only comfortable-looking people are the monks and the priests, and the soldiers in the fort. For there is a fort there, constructed on the huge ruins of one which may have done duty in the reign of Edward

the Black Prince, or earlier, in whose mossy embrasures are mounted a couple of cannon, which occasionally sent a practice-shot or two at the cliff on the other side of the harbor. The garrison consists of a dozen men and three or four officers and non-commissioned officers. I suppose they are relieved occasionally, but those I saw seemed to have become component parts of their surroundings.

“I put up at a wonderful little old inn, the only one in the place, and took my meals in a dining-saloon fifteen feet by nine, with a portrait of George I (a print varnished to preserve it) hanging over the mantel-piece. On the second evening after dinner a young gentleman came in—the dining-saloon being public property of course—and ordered some bread and cheese and a bottle of Dublin stout. We presently fell into talk; he turned out to be an officer from the fort, Lieutenant O’Connor, and a fine young specimen of the Irish soldier he was. After telling me all he knew about the town, the surrounding country, his friends, and himself, he intimated a readiness to sympathize with whatever tale I might choose to pour into his ear; and I had pleasure in trying to rival his own outspokenness. We became excellent friends; we had up a half-pint of Kinahan’s whisky, and the lieutenant expressed himself in terms of high praise of my countrymen, my country, and my own particular cigars. When it became time for him to depart I accompanied him—for there was a splendid moon abroad—and bade him farewell at the fort entrance, having promised to come over the next day and make the acquaintance of the other fellows. ‘And mind your eye, now, going back, my dear boy,’ he called out, as I turned my face homeward. ‘Faith, ’tis a spooky place, that graveyard, and you’ll as likely meet the black woman there as anywhere else!’

“The graveyard was a forlorn and barren spot on the hill-side, just the hither side of the fort: thirty or forty rough head-stones, few of which retained any semblance of the perpendicular, while many were so shattered and decayed as to seem nothing more than irregular natural projections from the ground. Who the black woman might be I knew not, and did not stay to inquire. I had never been subject to ghostly apprehensions, and as a matter of fact, though the path I had to follow was in places very bad going, not to mention a hap-hazard scramble over a ruined bridge that covered a deep-lying brook, I reached my inn without any adventure whatever.

"The next day I kept my appointment at the fort, and found no reason to regret it; and my friendly sentiments were abundantly reciprocated, thanks more especially, perhaps, to the success of my banjo, which I carried with me, and which was as novel as it was popular with those who listened to it. The chief personages in the social circle besides my friend the lieutenant were Major Molloy, who was in command, a racy and juicy old campaigner, with a face like a sunset, and the surgeon, Dr. Dudeen, a long, dry, humorous genius, with a wealth of anecdotal and traditional lore at his command that I have never seen surpassed. We had a jolly time of it, and it was the precursor of many more like it. The remains of October slipped away rapidly, and I was obliged to remember that I was a traveler in Europe, and not a resident in Ireland. The major, the surgeon, and the lieutenant all protested cordially against my proposed departure, but, as there was no help for it, they arranged a farewell dinner to take place in the fort on All-halloween.

"I wish you could have been at that dinner with me! It was the essence of Irish good-fellowship. Dr. Dudeen was in great force; the major was better than the best of Lever's novels; the lieutenant was overflowing with hearty good-humor, merry chaff, and sentimental rhapsodies anent this or the other pretty girl of the neighborhood. For my part I made the banjo ring as it had never rung before, and the others joined in the chorus with a mellow strength of lungs such as you don't often hear outside of Ireland. Among the stories that Dr. Dudeen regaled us with was one about the Kern of Querin and his wife, Ethelind Fionguala—which being interpreted signifies 'the white-shouldered.' The lady, it appears, was originally betrothed to one O'Connor (here the lieutenant smacked his lips), but was stolen away on the wedding night by a party of vampires, who, it would seem, were at that period a prominent feature among the troubles of Ireland. But as they were bearing her along—she being unconscious—to that supper where she was not to eat but to be eaten, the young Kern of Querin, who happened to be out duck-shooting, met the party, and emptied his gun at it. The vampires fled, and the Kern carried the fair lady, still in a state of insensibility, to his house. 'And by the same token, Mr. Keningale,' observed the doctor, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, 'ye're after passing that very house on your way here. The one with the dark archway underneath it, and the big

mullioned window at the corner, ye recollect, hanging over the street as I might say—'

"Go 'long wid the house, Dr. Dudeen, dear,' interrupted the lieutenant; 'sure can't you see we're all dying to know what happened to sweet Miss Fionguala, God be good to her, when I was after getting her safe upstairs—'

"Faith, then, I can tell ye that myself, Mr. O'Connor,' exclaimed the major, imparting a rotary motion to the remnants of whisky in his tumbler. 'Tis a question to be solved on general principles, as Colonel O'Halloran said that time he was asked what he'd do if he'd been the Book o' Wellington, and the Prussians hadn't come up in the nick o' time at Waterloo. 'Faith,' says the colonel, 'I'll tell ye—'

"Arrah, then, major, why would ye be interruptin' the doctor, and Mr. Keningale there lettin' his glass stay empty till he hears—The Lord save us! the bottle's empty!"

"In the excitement consequent upon this discovery, the thread of the doctor's story was lost; and before it could be recovered the evening had advanced so far that I felt obliged to withdraw. It took some time to make my proposition heard and comprehended; and a still longer time to put it in execution; so that it was fully midnight before I found myself standing in the cool pure air outside the fort, with the farewells of my boon companions ringing in my ears.

"Considering that it had been rather a wet evening in-doors, I was in a remarkably good state of preservation, and I therefore ascribed it rather to the roughness of the road than to the smoothness of the liquor, when, after advancing a few rods, I stumbled and fell. As I picked myself up I fancied I had heard a laugh, and supposed that the lieutenant, who had accompanied me to the gate, was making merry over my mishap; but on looking round I saw that the gate was closed and no one was visible. The laugh, moreover, had seemed to be close at hand, and to be even pitched in a key that was rather feminine than masculine. Of course I must have been deceived; nobody was near me: my imagination had played me a trick, or else there was more truth than poetry in the tradition that Halloween is the carnival-time of disembodied spirits. It did not occur to me at the time that a stumble is held by the superstitious Irish to be an evil omen, and had I remembered it it would only have been to laugh at it. At all events, I was physically none the worse for my fall, and I resumed my way immediately.

"But the path was singularly difficult to find, or rather the path I was following did not seem to be the right one. I did not recognize it; I could have sworn (except I knew the contrary) that I had never seen it before. The moon had risen, though her light was as yet obscured by clouds, but neither my immediate surroundings nor the general aspect of the region appeared familiar. Dark, silent hill-sides mounted up on either hand, and the road, for the most part, plunged downward, as if to conduct me into the bowels of the earth. The place was alive with strange echoes, so that at times I seemed to be walking through the midst of muttering voices and mysterious whispers, and a wild, faint sound of laughter seemed ever and anon to reverberate among the passes of the hills. Currents of colder air sighing up through narrow defiles and dark crevices touched my face as with airy fingers. A certain feeling of anxiety and insecurity began to take possession of me, though there was no definable cause for it, unless that I might be belated in getting home. With the perverse instinct of those who are lost I hastened my steps, but was impelled now and then to glance back over my shoulder, with a sensation of being pursued. But no living creature was in sight. The moon, however, had now risen higher, and the clouds that were drifting slowly across the sky flung into the naked valley dusky shadows, which occasionally assumed shapes that looked like the vague semblance of gigantic human forms.

"How long I had been hurrying onward I know not, when, with a kind of suddenness, I found myself approaching a graveyard. It was situated on the spur of a hill, and there was no fence around it, nor anything to protect it from the incursions of passers-by. There was something in the general appearance of this spot that made me half fancy I had seen it before; and I should have taken it to be the same that I had often noticed on my way to the fort, but that the latter was only a few hundred yards distant therefrom, whereas I must have traversed several miles at least. As I drew near, moreover, I observed that the head-stones did not appear so ancient and decayed as those of the other. But what chiefly attracted my attention was the figure that was leaning or half sitting upon one of the largest of the upright slabs near the road. It was a female figure draped in black, and a closer inspection—for I was soon within a few yards of her—showed that she wore the calla, or long hooded cloak, the most common as well as the most ancient garment of Irish women, and doubtless of Spanish origin.

"I was a trifle startled by this apparition, so unexpected as it was, and so strange did it seem that any human creature should be at that hour of the night in so desolate and sinister a place. Involuntarily I paused as I came opposite her, and gazed at her intently. But the moonlight fell behind her, and the deep hood of her cloak so completely shadowed her face that I was unable to discern anything but the sparkle of a pair of eyes, which appeared to be returning my gaze with much vivacity.

"“You seem to be at home here,” I said, at length. “Can you tell me where I am?”

"Hereupon the mysterious personage broke into a light laugh, which, though in itself musical and agreeable, was of a timbre and intonation that caused my heart to beat rather faster than my late pedestrian exertions warranted; for it was the identical laugh (or so my imagination persuaded me) that had echoed in my ears as I arose from my tumble an hour or two ago. For the rest, it was the laugh of a young woman, and presumably of a pretty one; and yet it had a wild, airy, mocking quality, that seemed hardly human at all, or not, at any rate, characteristic of a being of affections and limitations like unto ours. But this impression of mine was fostered, no doubt, by the unusual and uncanny circumstances of the occasion.

"“Sure, sir,” said she, “you’re at the grave of Ethelind Fionguala.”

"As she spoke she rose to her feet, and pointed to the inscription on the stone. I bent forward, and was able, without much difficulty, to decipher the name, and a date which indicated that the occupant of the grave must have entered the disembodied state between two and three centuries ago.

"“And who are you?” was my next question.

"“I’m called Elsie,” she replied. “But where would your honor be going November-eve?”

"I mentioned my destination, and asked her whether she could direct me thither.

"“Indeed, then, ’tis there I’m going myself,” Elsie replied; “and if your honor’ll follow me, and play me a tune on the pretty instrument, ’t isn’t long we’ll be on the road.”

"She pointed to the banjo which I carried wrapped up under my arm. How she knew that it was a musical instrument I could not imagine; possibly, I thought, she may have seen me playing on it as I strolled about the environs of the town. Be that as it may, I offered no opposition to the bargain, and further intimated that I would reward her more substantially on our arrival. At that she laughed again, and made a peculiar gesture with her hand above her head. I uncovered my banjo, swept my fingers across the strings, and struck into a fantastic dance-measure, to the music of which we proceeded along the path, Elsie slightly in advance, her feet keeping time to the airy measure. In fact, she trod so lightly, with an elastic, undulating movement, that with a little more it seemed as if she might float onward like a spirit. The extreme whiteness of her feet attracted my eye, and I was surprised to find that instead of being bare, as I had supposed, these were incased in white satin slippers quaintly embroidered with gold thread.

"“Elsie,” said I, lengthening my steps so as to come up with her, “where do you live, and what do you do for a living?”

"“Sure, I live by myself,” she answered; “and if you’d be after knowing how, you must come and see for yourself.”

"“Are you in the habit of walking over the hills at night in shoes like that?”

"“And why would I not?” she asked, in her turn. “And where did your honor get the pretty gold ring on your finger?”

"The ring, which was of no great intrinsic value, had struck my eye in an old curiosity-shop in Cork. It was an antique of very old-fashioned design, and might have belonged (as the vender assured me was the case) to one of the early kings or queens of Ireland.

"“Do you like it?” said I.

"“Will your honor be after making a present of it to Elsie?” she returned, with an insinuating tone and turn of the head.

"“Maybe I will, Elsie, on one condition. I am an artist; I make pictures of people. If you will promise to come to my studio and let me paint your portrait, I’ll give you the ring, and some money besides.”

"“And will you give me the ring now?” said Elsie.

"“Yes, if you’ll promise.”

And will you play the music to me?” she continued.

"“As much as you like.”

"“But maybe I’ll not be handsome enough for ye,” said she, with a glance of her eyes beneath the dark hood.

"“I’ll take the risk of that,” I answered, laughing, “though, all the same, I don’t mind taking a peep beforehand to remember you by.” So saying, I put forth a hand to draw back the concealing hood. But Elsie eluded me, I scarce know how, and laughed a third time, with the same airy, mocking cadence.

"“Give me the ring first, and then you shall see me,” she said, coaxingly.

"“Stretch out your hand, then,” returned I, removing the ring from my finger. “When we are better acquainted, Elsie, you won’t be so suspicious.”

"She held out a slender, delicate hand, on the forefinger of which I slipped the ring. As I did so, the folds of her cloak fell a little apart, affording me a glimpse of a white shoulder and of a dress that seemed in that deceptive semi-darkness to be wrought of rich and costly material; and I caught, too, or so I fancied, the frosty sparkle of precious stones.

"“Arrah, mind where ye tread!” said Elsie, in a sudden, sharp tone.

"I looked round, and became aware for the first time that we were standing near the middle of a ruined bridge which spanned a rapid stream that flowed at a considerable depth below. The parapet of the bridge on one side was broken down, and I must have been, in fact, in imminent danger of stepping over into empty air. I made my way cautiously across the decaying structure; but, when I turned to assist Elsie, she was nowhere to be seen.

"What had become of the girl? I called, but no answer came. I gazed about on every side, but no trace of her was visible. Unless she had plunged into the narrow abyss at my feet, there was no place where she could have concealed herself—none at least that I could discover. She had vanished, nevertheless; and since her disappearance must have been premeditated, I finally came to the conclusion that it was useless to attempt to find her. She would present herself again in her own good time, or not at all. She had given me the slip very cleverly, and I must make the best of it. The adventure was perhaps worth the ring.

“On resuming my way, I was not a little relieved to find that I once more knew where I was. The bridge that I had just crossed was none other than the one I mentioned some time back; I was within a mile of the town, and my way lay clear before me. The moon, moreover, had now quite dispersed the clouds, and shone down with exquisite brilliance. Whatever her other failings, Elsie had been a trustworthy guide; she had brought me out of the depth of elf-land into the material world again. It had been a singular adventure, certainly; and I mused over it with a sense of mysterious pleasure as I sauntered along, humming snatches of airs, and accompanying myself on the strings. Hark! what light step was that behind me? It sounded like Elsie’s; but no, Elsie was not there. The same impression or hallucination, however, recurred several times before I reached the outskirts of the town—the tread of an airy foot behind or beside my own. The fancy did not make me nervous; on the contrary, I was pleased with the notion of being thus haunted, and gave myself up to a romantic and genial vein of reverie.

“After passing one or two roofless and moss-grown cottages, I entered the narrow and rambling street which leads through the town. This street a short distance down widens a little, as if to afford the wayfarer space to observe a remarkable old house that stands on the northern side. The house was built of stone, and in a noble style of architecture; it reminded me somewhat of certain palaces of the old Italian nobility that I had seen on the Continent, and it may very probably have been built by one of the Italian or Spanish immigrants of the sixteenth or seventeenth century. The molding of the projecting windows and arched doorway was richly carved, and upon the front of the building was an escutcheon wrought in high relief, though I could not make out the purport of the device. The moonlight falling upon this picturesque pile enhanced all its beauties, and at the same time made it seem like a vision that might dissolve away when the light ceased to shine. I must often have seen the house before, and yet I retained no definite recollection of it; I had never until now examined it with my eyes open, so to speak. Leaning against the wall on the opposite side of the street, I contemplated it for a long while at my leisure. The window at the corner was really a very fine and massive affair. It projected over the pavement below, throwing a heavy shadow aslant; the frames of the diamond-paned lattices

were heavily mullioned. How often in past ages had that lattice been pushed open by some fair hand, revealing to a lover waiting beneath in the moonlight the charming countenance of his high-born mistress! Those were brave days. They had passed away long since. The great house had stood empty for who could tell how many years; only bats and vermin were its inhabitants. Where now were those who had built it? and who were they? Probably the very name of them was forgotten.

“As I continued to stare upward, however, a conjecture presented itself to my mind which rapidly ripened into a conviction. Was not this the house that Dr. Dudeen had described that very evening as having been formerly the abode of the Kern of Querin and his mysterious bride? There was the projecting window, the arched doorway. Yes, beyond a doubt this was the very house. I emitted a low exclamation of renewed interest and pleasure, and my speculations took a still more imaginative, but also a more definite turn.

“What had been the fate of that lovely lady after the Kern had brought her home insensible in his arms? Did she recover, and were they married and made happy ever after; or had the sequel been a tragic one? I remembered to have read that the victims of vampires generally became vampires themselves. Then my thoughts went back to that grave on the hill-side. Surely that was unconsecrated ground. Why had they buried her there? Ethelind of the white shoulder! Ah! why had not I lived in those days; or why might not some magic cause them to live again for me? Then would I seek this street at midnight, and standing here beneath her window, I would lightly touch the strings of my bandore until the casement opened cautiously and she looked down. A sweet vision indeed! And what prevented my realizing it? Only a matter of a couple of centuries or so. And was time, then, at which poets and philosophers sneer, so rigid and real a matter that a little faith and imagination might not overcome it? At all events, I had my banjo, the bandore’s legitimate and lineal descendant, and the memory of Fionguala should have the love-ditty.

“Hereupon, having retuned the instrument, I launched forth into an old Spanish love-song, which I had met with in some moldy library during my travels, and had set to music of my own. I sang low, for the deserted street re-echoed the lightest sound, and what I sang must reach only my lady’s ears. The words were warm with the fire of the ancient Spanish chivalry, and I threw into their expression all the passion

of the lovers of romance. Surely Fionguala, the white-shouldered, would hear, and awaken from her sleep of centuries, and come to the latticed casement and look down! Hist! see yonder! What light—what shadow is that that seems to flit from room to room within the abandoned house, and now approaches the mullioned window? Are my eyes dazzled by the play of the moonlight, or does the casement move—does it open? Nay, this is no delusion; there is no error of the senses here. There is simply a woman, young, beautiful, and richly attired, bending forward from the window, and silently beckoning me to approach.

“Too much amazed to be conscious of amazement, I advanced until I stood directly beneath the casement, and the lady’s face, as she stooped toward me, was not more than twice a man’s height from my own. She smiled and kissed her finger-tips; something white fluttered in her hand, then fell through the air to the ground at my feet. The next moment she had withdrawn, and I heard the lattice close. I picked up what she had let fall; it was a delicate lace handkerchief, tied to the handle of an elaborately wrought bronze key. It was evidently the key of the house, and invited me to enter. I loosened it from the handkerchief, which bore a faint, delicious perfume, like the aroma of flowers in an ancient garden, and turned to the arched doorway. I felt no misgiving, and scarcely any sense of strangeness. All was as I had wished it to be, and as it should be; the mediaeval age was alive once more, and as for myself, I almost felt the velvet cloak hanging from my shoulder and the long rapier dangling at my belt. Standing in front of the door I thrust the key into the lock, turned it, and felt the bolt yield. The next instant the door was opened, apparently from within; I stepped across the threshold, the door closed again, and I was alone in the house, and in darkness.

“Not alone, however! As I extended my hand to grope my way it was met by another hand, soft, slender, and cold, which insinuated itself gently into mine and drew me forward. Forward I went, nothing loath; the darkness was impenetrable, but I could hear the light rustle of a dress close to me, and the same delicious perfume that had emanated from the handkerchief enriched the air that I breathed, while the little hand that clasped and was clasped by my own alternately tightened and half relaxed the hold of its soft cold fingers. In this manner, and treading lightly, we

traversed what I presumed to be a long, irregular passageway, and ascended a staircase. Then another corridor, until finally we paused, a door opened, emitting a flood of soft light, into which we entered, still hand in hand. The darkness and the doubt were at an end.

“The room was of imposing dimensions, and was furnished and decorated in a style of antique splendor. The walls were draped with mellow hues of tapestry; clusters of candles burned in polished silver sconces, and were reflected and multiplied in tall mirrors placed in the four corners of the room. The heavy beams of the dark oaken ceiling crossed each other in squares, and were laboriously carved; the curtains and the drapery of the chairs were of heavy-figured damask. At one end of the room was a broad ottoman, and in front of it a table, on which was set forth, in massive silver dishes, a sumptuous repast, with wines in crystal beakers. At the side was a vast and deep fire-place, with space enough on the broad hearth to burn whole trunks of trees. No fire, however, was there, but only a great heap of dead embers; and the room, for all its magnificence, was cold—cold as a tomb, or as my lady’s hand—and it sent a subtle chill creeping to my heart.

“But my lady! how fair she was! I gave but a passing glance at the room; my eyes and my thoughts were all for her. She was dressed in white, like a bride; diamonds sparkled in her dark hair and on her snowy bosom; her lovely face and slender lips were pale, and all the paler for the dusky glow of her eyes. She gazed at me with a strange, elusive smile; and yet there was, in her aspect and bearing, something familiar in the midst of strangeness, like the burden of a song heard long ago and recalled among other conditions and surroundings. It seemed to me that something in me recognized her and knew her, had known her always. She was the woman of whom I had dreamed, whom I had beheld in visions, whose voice and face had haunted me from boyhood up. Whether we had ever met before, as human beings meet, I knew not; perhaps I had been blindly seeking her all over the world, and she had been awaiting me in this splendid room, sitting by those dead embers until all the warmth had gone out of her blood, only to be restored by the heat with which my love might supply her.

“‘I thought you had forgotten me,’ she said, nodding as if in answer to my thought. ‘The night was so late—our one night of the year! How my heart rejoiced when I heard your dear voice singing the song I know so well! Kiss me—my lips are cold!’

“Cold indeed they were—cold as the lips of death. But the warmth of my own seemed to revive them. They were now tinged with a faint color, and in her cheeks also appeared a delicate shade of pink. She drew fuller breath, as one who recovers from a long lethargy. Was it my life that was feeding her? I was ready to give her all. She drew me to the table and pointed to the viands and the wine.

“‘Eat and drink,’ she said. ‘You have traveled far, and you need food.’

“‘Will you eat and drink with me?’ said I, pouring out the wine.

“‘You are the only nourishment I want,’ was her answer.’ This wine is thin and cold. Give me wine as red as your blood and as warm, and I will drain a goblet to the dregs.’

“At these words, I know not why, a slight shiver passed through me. She seemed to gain vitality and strength at every instant, but the chill of the great room struck into me more and more.

“She broke into a fantastic flow of spirits, clapping her hands, and dancing about me like a child. Who was she? And was I myself, or was she mocking me when she implied that we had belonged to each other of old? At length she stood still before me, crossing her hands over her breast. I saw upon the forefinger of her right hand the gleam of an antique ring.

“‘Where did you get that ring?’ I demanded.

“She shook her head and laughed. ‘Have you been faithful?’ she asked. ‘It is my ring; it is the ring that unites us; it is the ring you gave me when you loved me first. It is the ring of the Kern—the fairy ring, and I am your Ethelind—Ethelind Fionguala.’

“‘So be it,’ I said, casting aside all doubt and fear, and yielding myself wholly to the spell of her inscrutable eyes and wooing lips. ‘You are mine, and I am yours, and let us be happy while the hours last.’

“‘You are mine, and I am yours,’ she repeated, nodding her head with an elfish smile. ‘Come and sit beside me, and sing that sweet song again that you sang to me so long ago. Ah, now I shall live a hundred years.’

“We seated ourselves on the ottoman, and while she nestled luxuriously among the cushions, I took my banjo and sang to her. The song and the music resounded through the lofty room, and came back in throbbing echoes. And before me as I sang I saw the face and form of Ethelind Fionguala, in her jeweled bridal dress, gazing at me with burning eyes. She was pale no longer, but ruddy and warm, and life was like a flame within her. It was I who had become cold and bloodless, yet with the last life that was in me I would have sung to her of love that can never die. But at length my eyes grew dim, the room seemed to darken, the form of Ethelind alternately brightened and waxed indistinct, like the last flickerings of a fire; I swayed toward her, and felt myself lapsing into unconsciousness, with my head resting on her white shoulder.”

Here Keningale paused a few moments in his story, flung a fresh log upon the fire, and then continued:

“I awoke, I know not how long afterward. I was in a vast, empty room in a ruined building. Rotten shreds of drapery depended from the walls, and heavy festoons of spiders’ webs gray with dust covered the windows, which were destitute of glass or sash; they had been boarded up with rough planks which had themselves become rotten with age, and admitted through their holes and crevices pallid rays of light and chilly draughts of air. A bat, disturbed by these rays or by my own movement, detached himself from his hold on a remnant of moldy tapestry near me, and after circling dizzily around my head, wheeled the flickering noiselessness of his flight into a darker corner. As I arose unsteadily from the heap of miscellaneous rubbish on which I had been lying, something which had been resting across my knees fell to the floor with a rattle. I picked it up, and found it to be my banjo—as you see it now.

“Well, that is all I have to tell. My health was seriously impaired; all the blood seemed to have been drawn out of my veins; I was pale and haggard, and the chill—Ah, that chill,” murmured Keningale, drawing nearer to the fire, and spreading out his hands to catch the warmth—“I shall never get over it; I shall carry it to my grave.”

The Byland Ghost Stories

The Byland ghost stories were written into a 12th or 13th century book. They refer to the reign of Richard II as having completed. They take up the afterpage and some small gaps on the pages within the volume, and they are presumably written with the consent, or perhaps encouragement, of whoever looked after the library at Byland Monastery. The stories are all from Yorkshire in the UK, save two. One of them takes place during a pilgrimage to Compostella, which is in Spain, so it could be anywhere along the way. The other is arguably in Exeter.

They demonstrate that ghosts in this period are similar to what, in *Ars Magica*, we would call Reveners. That is, they have a physical shape, are able to shape shift, and can be wrestled with or carried away. Their flesh, when it is touched, seems spongy or decayed. .

These ghosts aren't able to speak to you directly until you speak to them first. This is a process that's referred to in these stories as conjuring. Ghosts can, however, trick you into talking to them by making cries or screaming. When these ghosts speak they don't "speak from their tongue" The sound comes from deep in their bowels. It sounds hollow. There is also heat coming from their bowels, so some of them appear to have heat or even fire coming from their mouths.

These ghosts are able to cause greater harm than the ghosts we used to purely through their physical actions. We see them wrestling, we see one tearing the clothes of a man that it's combating. We see another one which blows out the eye of his mistress from when he was alive. What exactly that means is not entirely clear. The podcast that put me onto this "The Boggart And The Banshee" seems to suggest that blowing out the eye is a sort of breath weapon, if I'm understanding what they're saying, however the 'blow' could be a blow of the hand as well I suppose.

Seeing a ghost makes light dangerous to people. The way of avoiding this danger is to see a fire before you see a candle or a lamp. Another way it's put in the stories is "to see a light before the light sees you."

This gives me some ideas for an enhanced version of the Ghostly Warder Virtue. The ghostly warder in *Ars Magica*

basically flits around, being a spy and giving you information or advice. What if, occasionally, it could turn up as a big, spongy zombie?

A lot of these ghosts have final business which is something in *Ars Magica* that we're used to. Here, however, we see something new. A ghost sincerely tries to finish its final business and cannot because of human obstruction. This gives the ghost the power to curse. There is a ghost procession in one of the latest stories. These have already been stated up in *Ars Magica*: the king of the ghost procession is a Criamon Magus.

The original book is one of the royal manuscripts. It was copied into a magazine by M.R. James, famous ghost story author, but he did it in Latin. It was translated from the Latin into English and published in the *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*. I've cut most of the footnotes out, however, if there's material which may be of use to roleplayers I've kept them in. The M.R.J. and A.H.T. which are mentioned in those footnotes are these two transcribers and translators. M.R. James puts a troll story into his footnotes which, as he admits, has little to do with the ghost stories that are around it, however I've included it because it might prove useful to roleplaying groups.

ONE: CONCERNING THE GHOST OF A CERTAIN LABOURER AT RIVAUX, WHO HELPED A MAN TO CARRY BEANS.

A certain man was riding on his horse, carrying on its back a peck of beans. The horse stumbled on the road and broke its shin bone, which, when the man saw, he took the beans on his own back, and while he was walking on the road, he saw, as it were, a horse standing on its hind feet and holding up its fore feet. In alarm he forbade the horse in the name of Jesus Christ to do him any harm.

Upon this it went with him in the shape of a horse, and in a little while appeared to him in the likeness of a revolving haycock with a light in the middle. [Footnote: in number two a ghost is said to appear as a thorn bush. In several of these stories the ghosts are liable to many changes of form, M.R.J.] To which the man said, God forbid that you bring evil upon me. At these words it appeared in the shape of a man and the traveller conjured him.

Then the spirit told him his name, and the reason of his walking, and the remedy, and he added, permit me to carry your beans, and to help you. And thus he did as far as the Beck, but he was not willing to pass over it, and the living man knew not how the bag of beans was placed again on his own back. And afterwards he caused the ghost to be absolved and masses to be sung for him, and he was eased.

TWO. CONCERNING A WONDERFUL ENCOUNTER BETWEEN A GHOST AND A LIVING MAN. IN THE TIME OF KING RICHARD II.

It is said that a certain tailor of the name of, blank, Snowball, was returning on horseback one night from Gilling to his home in Ampleforth, and on the way he heard, as it were, the sound of ducks washing themselves in the Beck, and soon after he saw, as it were, a raven that flew round his face and came down to the earth, and struck the ground with its wings as though it were on the point of death. And the tailor got off his horse to take the raven, and as he did so he saw sparks of fire, shooting from the sides of the raven, whereupon he crossed himself, and forbade him in the name of God, to bring at that time any harm upon him. Then it flew off, with a great screaming for about the space of a stone's throw. Then again he mounted his horse, and very soon the same raven met him as it flew, and struck him on the side, and threw the tailor to the ground, from the horse upon which he was riding, and he lay stretched upon the ground, as it were, in a swoon and lifeless, and he was very frightened.

Then rising, and strong in the faith, he fought with him with his sword until he was weary, and it seemed to him that he was striking a peat-stack, and he forbade him and conjured him in the name of God, saying, "God forbid that you have power to hurt me on this occasion, but be gone." And again it flew off with a horrible screaming, as it were, the space of the flight of an arrow.

And the third time it appeared to the tailor, as he was carrying the cross of his sword upon his breast for fear, and it met him in the likeness of a dog with a chain on its neck, and when he saw it the tailor strong in the faith thought within himself, what will become of me? I will adore him in the name of the Trinity, and by the virtue of the blood of Christ, from his five

wounds, that he speak with me and do me no wrong, but stand fast, and enter my questions and tell me his name, and because of his punishment and the remedy that belongs to it, and he did so, and the spirit- panting terribly and groaning said “Thus and thus did I, and for thus doing, I have been excommunicated.”

[Footnote: Great pains have been taken throughout to conceal the name of the ghost. He must have been a man of quality whose relatives might have objected to stories being told about him. MRJ.]

“Go therefore to a certain priest and ask him to absolve me, and it behoves me to have the full number of nine times twenty masses, celebrated for me, and now of two things you must choose one. Either you shall come back to me on a certain night alone, bringing to me the answer of those whose names I have given you, and I will tell you how you may be made whole, and in the meantime you need not fear the sight of a wood-fire.”

[Footnote: In Danish tales something like this is to be found. “After seeing a phantom funeral, the man was wise enough to go to the stove, and look at the fire before he saw candle or lamp-light. For when people see anything of the kind, they are sick, if they cannot get at fire before light...he was very sick when he caught sight of the light.” “When you see anything supernatural, you should peep over the door before going into the house. You must see the light before the light sees you.” “When he came home he called to his wife to put out the light before he came in, but she did not, and he was so sick, they thought he would have died. These examples are enough to show that there was risk attached to seeing the light after a ghostly encounter, MRJ.”]

“Or otherwise your flesh shall rot and your skin shall dry up, and shall fall off from you utterly in a short time. No more over that I have met you now, because today you have not heard Mass, nor the Gospel of John, namely in Principio, and have not seen the consecration of our Lord’s body and blood, for otherwise I should not have had full power of appearing to you.”

[Note, this rather suggests that you might be reckoned to have kept Mass if you only came in time for the last Gospel, A.H.T.]

And as he spoke with the tailor, he was, as it were, on fire, and his inner parts could be seen through his mouth, and he formed his words in his entrails and did not speak with his tongue, then the tailor asked permission from the ghost that he might have with him on his return some companion, but the ghost said, “No, but have upon you the four Gospels, and the name of victory, namely Jesus of Nazareth, on account of two other ghosts that abide here, of whom one cannot speak when he is conjured, and abides in the likeness of fire or of a bush, and the other is in the form of a hunter, and they are very dangerous to meet. Pledge me further on this stone, that you will defame my bones, to no one except to the priests who celebrate on my behalf, and the others to whom you are sent on my behalf who may be of use to me.”

[Footnote, defaming is the formal accusation of crime which renders a man liable to spiritual censure, and puts him in a state of infamia, from which he must free himself by compurgation, or by establishing a suit against his defamer in the spiritual court. The infirmia of a dead man, resting here on his own acknowledgement, would place him outside the privilege of Christian burial, and lead to the disinterment of his remains, confer the posthumous defamation and disinterment of Wycliffe for heresy, A.H.T.]

And he gave his word upon the stone that he would not reveal the secret, as has been already explained, then he conjured the ghost to go to Hodgebeck, and await his return.

[Footnote, I suppose in order that the ghost might not haunt the road in the interval before the tale’s return, M.R.J.]

And the ghost said “No, no.” and screamed, and the tailor said, go then to the Byland Bank, where at he was glad.

The man of whom we speak was ill for some days, but then got well and went to York to the priest, who had been mentioned, who had excommunicated the dead man, and asked him for absolution, but he refused to absolve him, and called him another chaplain to take counsel with him, and that chaplain called in another, and that other a third, to advise secretly concerning the absolution of this man. [Footnote: the reluctance of the priest at York to absolve, and the number of advisors called in, testified to the importance of the case, M.I.J.] And the tailor asked of him, “Sir, you know the mutual token that I hinted in your ear.”

And he answered “Yes, my son.”, then after many negotiations the tailor made satisfaction and paid five shillings, and received the absolution written on a piece of parchment, and he was sworn not to defame the dead man, but to bury the absolution, in his grave, near his head, and secretly. And when he had got it he went to a certain brother Richard of Pickering, a confessor of repute, and asked him whether the absolution was sufficient and lawful, and he answered that it was.

Then the tailor went to all the orders of the friars of York, and he had almost all the required masses celebrated, during two or three days, and coming home he buried the absolution in the grave, as he had been ordered. And when all these things had been duly carried out he came home, and a certain officious neighbour of his, hearing that he had to report to the ghost on a certain night, all that he had done at York, adured him saying, “God forbid that you go to this ghost without telling me of your going, and of the day and the hour.”

And being so constrained for fear of displeasing God, he told him, waking him up from sleep and saying, “I am going now,

the performance was going on saw that party had a great mass book open, before them, and wrote out what they would confer the other sacred words which the present spirit ordered his conjurer to bring with him. Are the monillia necessarily reliquaries? I should have thought that in the present case there might rather be medallions on which the title triumphalis were engraved, like the laminate of lead inscribed with figures of Oberion, Storax, and other spirits, which formed part of the Halifax conjurer's equipment. The text seems to imply a figure of this kind. A-H-T.]

He came at length in the form of a she-goat and went thrice around the circle, saying "Ah, ah, ah!" and when he conjured the she-goat she fell prone upon the ground and rose up again in the likeness of a man, of great stature, horrible and thin, and like one of the dead kings in pictures. [Footnote, I think the illusion is to the pictures of the three living and three dead, so often found painted on church walls, the dead and living are often represented as kings. MRJ] And when he was asked whether the tailor's labour had been of service to him, he answered "Yes, praised be God, and I stood at your back when you buried my absolution in my grave at the ninth hour and were afraid. No wonder you were afraid, for three devils were present there, who have tormented me in every way, from the time when you first conjured me to the time of my absolution, suspecting that they would have me but very little time in their custody, to torment me. Know therefore that on Monday next I shall pass into everlasting joy with thirty other spirits. Go now to a certain beck, and you will find a broad stone, lift it up, and under it you will find a sand stone, wash your whole body with water and rub it with the stone, and you will be whole in a few days. [Footnote, the need of a prescription for healing the tailor was due to the blow in the side which the raven had given him, MRJ.]

When he was asked the names of the two ghosts he answered, "I cannot tell you their names." and when asked about their condition he answered that "one was a layman and a soldier, and was not of these parts, and he killed a woman great with child, and he will find no remedy before the day of judgement, and you will see him in the form of a bloke without mouth or eyes or ears, and however you conjure him he will not be able to speak, and the other was a man of religion in the shape of a hunter blowing upon a horn,

and he will find a remedy and he will be conjured by a certain boy who has not yet come to manhood, if the Lord will." And then the tailor asked the ghost of his own condition and received the answer "You are keeping wrongfully the cap and coat of one who was your friend and companion in the wars beyond the seas, give satisfaction to him or you will pay dearly for it."

And the tailor said "I do not know where he lives." and the ghost answered "He lives in such a town, near to the castle of Alnwick."

When further he asked, "What is my greatest fault?"

The ghost answered "Your greatest fault is because of me." and the man said, "How? And in what way?" and the ghost answered "Because the people sin telling lies concerning you, and bringing scandal on other dead men, saying the dead man who was conjured was he or he or he", and he asked the ghost, "What shall I do? I will reveal your name?" and he said "No, but if you stay in one place you will be rich, and in another place you will be poor, and you have here certain enemies."

[Footnote, this does not seem logically to follow upon the prohibition to tell the ghost's name, I take it as advice to the tailor to change his abode, MRJ.]

Then the spirit said, "I can no longer stay talking with you." and as they went their different ways the deaf and dumb and blind bullock went with the man, as far as the town of Ampleforth, whom he conjured in all the ways that he knew, but by no means could he make answer, and the ghost that had been aided by him advised him to "Keep all his best writings by his head until he went to sleep, and say neither more nor less than I advise you, and keep your eyes on the ground and look not on a wood fire for this night at least." And when he came home he was ill for several days.

[Footnote, I do not quite understand how this fire business worked. The Danish case is cited are not quite explanatory. Presumably the spirit, whom he had helped, meant that the tailor need not look at the fire as a precaution when he went home now that it all was well, and that all he need do was to keep his thoughts under control. The force of, for this night at least, seems to be that it would be well to look at the fire another night the bullock was still about, and might be met again, A.H.T.]

THREE: CONCERNING THE GHOST OF ROBERT, THE SON OF ROBERT DE BOLTBY, OF KILBURN, WHICH WAS CAUGHT IN A CHURCHYARD.

I must tell you that this Robert the Younger died and was buried in a churchyard, but he had the habit of leaving his grave by night. And disturbing and frightening the villagers, and the dogs of the village used to follow him and bark loudly, then some young men of the village talked together and determined to catch him if they possibly could, and they came together to the cemetery, but when they saw the ghosts they all fled with the exception of two.

One of these, called Robert Foxton, seized him at the entrance to the cemetery, and placed him on the stile [and the other] cried..."Keep him fast until I come to you."

The first one answered "Go quickly to the parish priest, that the ghost may be conjured, for, with God's help, I will hold firmly what I have got until the arrival of the priest." The parish priest made all haste to come and conjured him in the name of the Holy Trinity, and in the virtue of Jesus Christ, that he should give him and answer to his questions. And when he had been conjured he spoke in the inside of his bowels, and not with his tongue, but as it were in an empty cask, and he confessed his different offences. And when these were known the priest absolved him, but charged those who had seized him not to reveal his confession in any way, and henceforth as God-willed he rested in peace.

It is said more over than before his absolution, he would stand at the doors of houses and windows and walls, as it were, listening. Perhaps he was waiting to see if anyone would come out and conjure him and give help to him in his necessity. Some people say that he had been assisting and consenting to the murder of a certain man, and that he had done other evil things, of which I must not speak, in detail at present.

FOUR

Moreover, the old Ben tell us that a certain man, called James Tankley, formerly rector of Kirby, was buried in front of the chapter house at Byland, and used to walk at night as far as Kirby, and one night he blew out the eye of his concubine there. And it is said that the abbot and the convent caused his body to be dug up from the tomb along with the

coffin, and they compelled Roger Wainman to carry it as far as Gore Mire. And while he was throwing the coffin into the water, the oxen were almost drowned for fear. [Footnote, when Wainman was throwing the coffin into Gormire, the oxen, which drew his cart almost sank into the town from fear. This, I suppose, is the sense of this rather obscure sentence, M.I.J.] God forbid that I be in any danger, for even as I have heard from my elders so have I written, made the Almighty have mercy upon him, if indeed he were of the number of those destined to salvation.

FIVE

What I write is a great marvel. It is said that a certain woman laid hold of a ghost and carried him on her back into a certain house. In presence of some men, one of them reported that he saw the hands of the woman sink deeply into the flesh of the ghost as though the flesh were rotten and not solid but phantom flesh. [Footnote, this is most curious. Why did the woman catch the ghost and bring it indoors? M.I.J.]

SIX

Concerning a certain canon of Newburgh, who was seized after his death by blank. It happened that this man was talking with the master of the plowmen, and I was walking with him in the field, and suddenly the master fled in great terror, and the other man was left struggling with a ghost who...tore his garments, and at last he gained the victory and conjured him, and he being conjured confessed that he had been a certain canon of Newburgh, and that he had been excommunicated for certain silver spoons which he had hidden in a certain place. He therefore begged the living man that he would go to the place he mentioned and take them away and carry them to the prior and ask for absolution. And he did so, and he found the silver spoons in the place mentioned, and after absolution the ghost henceforth rested in peace, but the man was ill and languished for many days, and he affirmed that the ghost had appeared to him in the habit of a canon.

SEVEN

So, serving a certain ghost in another place who being conjured, confessed that he was severely punished because, being the hired servant of a certain householder, he stole his master's corn and gave it his oxen that they might look fat, and there was another thing which troubled him even more namely, that he

plowed the land not deeply but on the surface, wishing his oxen to keep fat, and he said there were fifteen spirits in one place severely punished for sins like his own which they had committed. He begged his conjurer therefore to ask his master for pardon and absolution so that he might obtain the suitable remedy.

EIGHT

Concerning another ghost that followed William of Breadforth, and cried, "How, how, how" thrice on three occasions. It happened that on the fourth night, about midnight, he went back to the new place from the village of Ampleforth, and as he was returning by the road he heard a terrible voice shouting far behind him, and as it were on the hillside, and a little after it cried again in like manner but nearer, and the third time it screamed at the crossroads ahead of him, and at last he saw a pale horse, and his dog barked a little, but then hid itself in great fear between the legs of the said William.

Whereupon he commanded the spirit the name of the Lord, and in virtue of the blood of Jesus Christ to depart and not to block his path, and when he heard this he withdrew like a revolving piece of canvas with four corners and kept on turning, so that it seems that he was a ghost that mightily desired to be conjured, and to receive effective help. [For three nights William of Breadford had heard the cries, on the fourth he met the ghost, and I suspect he must have been imprudent enough to answer the cries for there are many tales Danish and other, a person who answered the shrieking ghost with impertinent words, and the next moment they hear it close to their ear. Note the touch of the frightened dog, M.I.J.]

NINE: CONCERNING THE GHOST OF A MAN OF AYTON IN CLEVELAND

It is reported that this ghost followed a man for four times twenty miles, that he should conjure and help him, and when he had been conjured he confessed that he had been excommunicated for a certain matter of six months, but after absolution and satisfaction he rested in peace. In all these things as nothing evil was left unpunished nor contourwise anything good and unrewarded, God showed himself to be a just rewarder.

It is said too that the ghost before he was conjured through the living man over a hedge and caught him on the other side as he fell. When he was conjured he replied, "If you had done so first I would not have hurt

you, but here and there you were frightened, and I did it." [The ghost throws him over the hedge and catches him as he falls on the other side, so the troll, who's supposed daughter married the blacksmith, when he heard that all the villagers shunned her, came to the church on Sunday before service, when all the people were in the churchyard and drove them into a compact group.

"Then he said to his daughter, Will you throw or catch?"

"I will catch." said she, in kindness to the people.

"Very well. Go round to the other side of the church". And he took them one by one, and threw them over the church and she caught them and put them down and hurt.

"[Next] time I come" said the troll, "She shall throw, and I will catch, if you don't treat her better."

Not very relevant, but less well known than it should be, M.I.J.,]

TEN: HOW PENITENT THIEF AFTER CONFESSION VANISHED FROM THE EYES OF THE DEMON.

It happened formerly in Exeter, that a ditcher, a hard worker, and a great eater lived in the cellar of a great house, which had many cellars, with connected walls but only one living room. The ditcher, when he was hungry, used often to climb up into the living room and cut off slices from the meat that was there hung up, had cooked them, and eat them, even if it were lent.

And the Lord of the House, saying that his meat was cut, examined his servants concerning the matter, and, as they all denied, and cleared themselves by oath, he threatened that he would go to a certain, sorceress necromancer and make inquiry through him into this wonderful event.

With the ditcher heard this, he was much afraid, and went to the friars and confessed his crime, and received the sacrament of absolution, but the Lord of the House went, as he had threatened, to the necromancer, who anointed the nail of a small boy and by incantation, asked him what he saw, and the boy answered, "I see a serving man with cliqueur."

The necromancer said “Conjure him, therefore, to appear to you, in the fairest form he can.” and so he did, and the boy said, “Behold, I see a very beautiful horse”, and then he saw a man in a form like that of the ditcher, climbing up the ladder and carving the meat, with the horse following him, and the clerk said, “What are the men in the horse doing now?”

And the child said, “look, he is cooking and eating the meat.” And when he was asked again, what is he doing now, the little boy answered, “They are going both of them to the church of the friars, but the horse waits again outside, and the man is going in and he kneels and speaks with the friar, who places his hand on his head.”

Then the clerk asked the boy “What are they doing now?”

And he answered “They are both vanished from my eyes, and I can see them no longer, and I have no idea where they are.”

ELEVEN: CONCERNING A WONDERFUL WORK OF GOD, WHO CALLS THINGS WHICH ARE NOT AS THOUGH THEY WERE, THINGS WHICH ARE, AND WHO CAN ACT WHEN AND HOW HE WILLS, AND CONCERNING A CERTAIN MIRACLE.

It has been handed down to memory that a certain man of Cleveland called Richard Roundtree left his wife great with child, and went with many others to the Tomb of St James, and one night they passed the night in a wood near to the king’s highway. Wherefore one of the party kept watch for a part of the night against night fears and the other slept in safety, and it happened that in that part of the night in which the man we speak of was guardian and night watchmen. He heard a great sound of people passing along the king’s highway, and some rode sitting on horses and sheep and oxen, and some on other animals and all the animals were those that had been given to the church when they died. [Footnote. There are multitudinous examples of the nightly processions of the dead, but I do not know another case where they ride on their own mortuaries, the beasts offered to the church or claimed by it at their decease. It is a curious reminiscence of the pagan fashion of providing means of transport for the dead by bearing beasts with them, M.I.J.] and at last he saw what seemed a small child wriggling along on

the ground wrapped in a stocking, and he conjured him and he asked him who he was and why he thus wriggled along, and he made answer. “You ought not to conjure me, for you were my father and I was your abortive son buried without baptism and without name.” and when he heard this the pilgrim took off his shirt and put it on his small child and gave him a name in the name of the Holy Trinity and he took with him the old stocking in witness of the matter, and the child when he thus received a name jumped with joy and henceforth walked erect upon his feet though previously he had wriggled.

And when the pilgrimage was over he gave her banquet to his neighbours and asked his wife for his hose, she showed him one stocking but could not find the other, then the husband showed her the stocking in which the child was wrapped and she was astonished, and as the midwives confessed the truth concerning the death and burial of the boy, in the stocking a divorce took place between the husband and the wife, inasmuch as he was the godfather of the abortive child, but I believe that this divorce was highly displeasing to God. [Evidently the wife was not an accessory to the indecent burial of the child and the sympathy of the writer is with her, the divorce does seem superfluous, since those sponsors were not allowed to marry, he is but one sponsor, but I know not the canon law, M.I.J. I cannot conceive what the grounds of the divorce were unless it could be argued that the father by standing godfather to his own child after marriage entered into a relationship which was irregular, parents could not be sponsors for their children and if the story is true, it may have been held that this irregular act dissolved the marriage and that in taking upon him the sponsorship he renounced his rights as a husband. On the face of it this was the view taken, the incident was so remarkable that it must have been hard to cite precedent, A.H.T.]

TWELVE: CONCERNING THE SISTER OF OLD ADAM OF LUND AND HOW SHE WAS SEIZED AFTER HER DEATH ACCORDING TO THE ACCOUNT GIVEN BY OLD MEN.

It must be understood that this woman was buried in the churchyard of Ampleforth and shortly after her death she was seized by William Trower, the elder, and being conjured she confessed that she wandered in his road at night and I count as certain charters which she had given wrongfully to Adam her brother. This was because a quarrel had arisen between her husband

and herself and therefore she had given the papers to her brother to the injury of her husband and her own children, so that after her death her brother expelled her husband from his house, namely from a toft and croft in Ampleforth with their appurtenances and from an ox gang of land in Hesleton and its appurtenances and all this by violence.

She begged therefore this William to suggest to her brother that he should restore these charters to her husband and her children and give back to them their land for otherwise she could by no means rest in peace until the day of judgement. So William according to her commands made this suggestion to Adam but he refused to restore the charter saying, “I don’t believe what you say”, and he answered, “My words were true in everything therefore if God will you shall hear your sister talking to you of this matter ere long.”

And on another night he seized her again and carried her to the chamber of Adam and she spoke with him and her hardened brother said, as some report, “If you walk forever I won’t give back the charters.”

Then she groaned and answered, “May God judge between you and me. Know then that until your death I shall have no rest wherefore after your death you will walk in my place.” It is said moreover that her right hand hung down and it was very black and she was asked why this was and she answered that it was because often in her disputes she had held it out and sworn falsely. At length she was conjured to go to another place on account of the night fear and terror which caused the folk of that village.

I ask pardon if by chance I have offended in writing what is not true. It is said however that Adam...the younger, made partial satisfaction to the true heir, after the death of the elder Adam.

Viol d'Amor by Count Stanislaus Eric Stenbock

Count Stenbock was a 19th century nobleman of Swedish descent who held a domain in what is now Estonia. His father died when he was a boy, as did his maternal grandfather, so he was incredibly wealthy for much of his life, although his property was administered for him by his paternal grandfather during childhood. Many of his other relatives perished during his youth, so he was always a bit morbid and melancholy. His collected works, both poetry and prose, focus on death. This was deeply fashionable at the time, but in his work there's a sincerity that seems, to me, to go past the bravado of some of his contemporaries.

He went to Oxford where he was a leading light, and something of a financier, of a set of young men of Decadent and homophilic tendency that loosely overlapped with the Pre-Raphaelites. Once his grandfather died he returned to his homeland for eighteen months, then returned to England, where he made a fine show as an eccentric.

It's not so much that he kept a zoo in his garden, or that he insisted on taking a monkey with him when he travelled, that led to his reputation: It was not that he sampled a new religion every week and eventually developed his own syncretic blend, much as a gentleman might with tea or tobacco. The problem was his "son".

The Little Count was a wooden, life-sized doll of a boy. The Count took it everywhere and conversed with it. He checked in on it daily: if he could not visually assure his son's wellbeing, he enquired after its health. It appears, according to the Count's family, that he spent a great deal of money on his son's education, which was supervised by Jesuit priest.

Stenbock suffered deeply from depression, and self-medicated with increasing amounts of alcohol until his death in 1895, of cirrhosis of the liver.

Just a warning there's a little bit of anti-Semitism in this one: it's not a lot by Nineteenth Century standards, but a pivotal plot point is that a Jewish doctor is incompetent. This is a bit odd for period folklore, either for *Ars Magica* or *Magonomia*. Since medicine was one of the few professions Jews were allowed to

practice in much of Europe, they were thought to be extremely gifted at it, as a stereotype.

The following story suits well the Italian focus of the Venetian material, and the haunted instrument which is mentioned in the upcoming *Magonomia Bestiary*. To briefly touch on the viol d'amor itself, they are a baroque instrument which is the size of a modern viol and played under the chin. Stenbock is wrong to suggest they are no longer made. Most had six or seven played strings with paired, sympathetic strings beneath. They are unfretted. The peg box is, by tradition, adorned with the blindfolded head of Cupid. The shape of the sound holes is called, in modern manufacture, the "Flaming Sword of Islam".

The story is a reworking of a poem of the same title, which was published the year before. Short fiction was a popular form in Stenbock's day, but it also gives him space to expand his theme and frees him of the rhyming scheme. Thanks to the reader, Ben Tucker, who sounds a decade younger in this recording. Does he have a new microphone, or better software? Also thanks to the Librivox production team.

VIOL D'AMOR

One time there was much in vogue a peculiarly sweet-toned kind of f violin, or rather, to be accurate, something between a viola and a violoncello. Now they are no longer made. This is the history of the last one that was ever made, I think. This somewhat singular story might in some way explain why they are made no longer. But though I am a poetess, and consequently inclined to believe in the unlikely, this I do not suppose was the history of Viol d'Amors in general. I may add, by way of prefix, that its peculiar sweetness of tone was produced by the duplicated reverberation of strings below, with yet another reverberation within the sounding-board. But to my story.

I was once in Freiburg—Freiburg in Baden, I mean. I went one Sunday to High Mass at the Cathedral. Beethoven's glorious Mass in C was magnificently rendered by a string quartette. I was specially impressed by the first violin, a dignified, middle-aged man, with a singularly handsome face, reminding one of the portraits of Leonardo da Vinci. He was dressed in a mediaeval-looking black robe; and he played with an inspiration such as I have seldom, if ever, heard. There was likewise a most beautiful boy's treble.

Boys' voices, lovely in their timbre as nothing else, are generally some what wanting in their expression. This one united the most exquisite timbre with the most complete possible expression. I was going to stay in Freiburg some time, as I knew people there. The first violinist had aroused my curiosity. I 'learnt that he was an Italian, a Florentine, of the ancient noble family of da Ripoli. But he was now a maker of musical instruments, not very well off—who nevertheless played at the Cathedral for love, not money; also that the beautiful treble was his youngest son, and he was a widower with five children. As he interested me, I sought to procure an introduction, which I succeeded in getting without difficulty.

He lived in one of those beautiful old houses which linger still in towns like Freiburg. He seemed somewhat surprised that an Englishwoman should go out of her way to visit him. Fortunately I was familiar with Italian, being myself an Italian on the mother's side, and was at that time on my way to Italy. He received me with much affability. I was ushered into a long Gothic room, done in black oak : there was a very beautiful Gothic window, which was open. It was spring-time, and the most delight weather. There was a strong scent of May about the room, emanating from a hawthorn-tree immediately opposite the window, which had the extraordinary peculiarity of bearing red and white blossoms at the same time. The room was full of all sorts of odds and ends of things—caskets, vessels, embroideries—all exquisitely artistic. He told me these were executed by a son and daughter of his. We began to interest one another, and had a long talk. As we were talking, in walked a tall, grave-looking young man. He was of the pure Etruscan type—dark, and indeed somewhat sombre.

With a perturbed air, not noticing me, he suddenly made this singular remark, 'Saturn is in conjunction with the moon : I fear that ill may betide Guido.'

'This is my son Andrea,' his father explained, 'my eldest son; he goes in much for astronomy, and indeed also for astrology, in which you probably do not believe.' At that moment in walked another young man. This was the second son, Giovanni. He was also dark, like his brother, and tall, but had a very pleasing smile. He reminded me rather of the

portrait of Andrea del Sarto. It was he who manufactured—to use the word in its proper sense—these beautiful objects which were lying about the table. After him came in two sisters: the elder, whose name was Anastasia, was a tall, stately girl, with dark hair and grey eyes, but pale face: very much like the type we are familiar with from the pictures of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The younger sister was quite different: she was fair, but fair in the Italian manner: that glorious, ivory-white complexion so different from the pink and white of the North. Her hair was of that glorious red-gold colour which we see in Titian's pictures, but her eyes were dark. Her name was Liperata. It appears Anastasia was the eldest of the family, then came Andrea and Giovanni, then Liperata, and lastly, Guido, whom I had not seen as yet.

I omitted to mention, though it does not seem here of any significance at all, that Anastasia wore a blue gown of somewhat stiff mediaeval cut, but very graceful all the same. I learnt afterwards it was both designed and made by herself.

Presently there entered the room a boy of about fourteen. This was Guido. He was fairer than his brothers, though also somewhat of the Etruscan type, and was not so tall for his age. He looked singularly fragile and delicate. His complexion was more delicate than a rose-petal: he had those long, supple, sensitive hands which indicate the born musician. His somewhat long hair, of a shade of brown, had a shadow of gold on it, as if it had been golden once. But in his strange-coloured eyes, which were grey-blue, streaked with yellow bars, there was a far-off look, like a light not of this world, shining on a slowly-rippling river of music. He went straight to the window, also not noticing there was a stranger in the room, and said, "Ah, how beautiful the May-tree is! I shall only see it bloom once more." He seemed indeed to be looking through the blooming hawthorn at that pale planet Saturn, which then was, for it, singularly large and brilliant. Andrea shuddered, but Giovanni bent down and kissed him, and said, "What, Guido, another fit of melancholia?"

As you may imagine, I was interested in this singular family, and soon our acquaintance ripened into intimacy. It was to Anastasia that I was specially drawn, and she to me. Anastasia inherited the musical tastes of her father, and was herself no mean executant on the violin.

Andrea was not only occupied with astronomy and astrology, but (even with alchemy and such like things, and occult sciences generally.

The whole family was very superstitious. They seemed to take astrology and magic as matters of course. But Andrea was by far the most superstitious of them all. It was Giovanni who was the breadwinner of the family, together with his special sister, Liperata, who assisted him in his work, and herself did the most charming embroideries. The only thing was that their materials were too costly, and required a large outlay to be made before they could sell anything.

For though the musical instruments the father produced were super-excellent of their kind, and fetched large prices, he took so much care about his work that he was sometimes years in producing one violin. He was then absorbed in one idea, in producing a Viol d'Amor, an instrument which he said was the most beautiful in all the world, and which had unjustly fallen into disuse. And his Viol d'Amor was to excel all others that had ever been made. He had left Florence, he said, because he could not stand this great Republic (for though of one of the most ancient noble families, he was an ardent Republican) being converted into the capital of a tenth-rate monarchy. "They will be taking Rome next," he said. And he did not know that what he was saying was soon to come true.

They were not well off, certainly, but it was Anastasia who managed the household and cared for every one. And she was the most excellent of manageresses. And so their life was very simple, but nevertheless was elegant and refined. I very often enjoyed their simple, truly Italian hospitality, recompensing them by purchasing some specimens of Giovanni's excellent workmanship, and a violin from the old Signor da Ripoli, which I have still, and would not part with for the world. Though, alas! I myself cannot play upon it. To cut a long story short, I had to go on with my journey, but I did not wholly lose sight of them, so to speak, and I corresponded frequently with Anastasia.

One day, just about a year afterwards, I received the following letter from Anastasia:— * Dear Cecilia,—A great calamity has fallen upon us. It is so out of the common that you would hardly believe it. Of course you know how my father is devoted to his Viol d'Amor. You also know that we are all rather superstitious, but none to the same degree as Andrea.

It appears that one day Andrea was poring into some old book, which was in that mongrel tongue, half Latin and half Italian, before the days of Dante, when he came across a passage (you know, I know nothing about the manufacture of musical instruments; but it appears that leather thongs are necessary to procure the complete vibration of the Viol d'Amor). In this passage it said that preternatural sweetness of tone could be procured, if the thongs were made of the skin of those who loved the viol maker.

[I had heard of this superstition before: I think there is some story in connection with Paganini of a similar nature, but nevertheless quite different. For as the legend goes about Paganini, the strings of a violin were made of the entrails of a person, which necessitated their murder; but here it would appear from the rest of the letter it did not do so, and was a freewill offering,]

Andrea conceived the fantastic idea of cutting off part of his own skin and having it tanned unbeknown to our father, telling him he had got it from the Clinic, because he had heard human leather was the best. To effect this he had to invoke the assistance of Giovanni, who, as you know, is so skilful with all instruments, and is also, as perhaps you do not know, a most skilful surgeon.

Giovanni, not to be outdone by his brother, performed the same operation on himself. They were obliged to confide in me, and, as you know, I am very good as a nurse, and clever at bandages and such like. So I managed, with a little bandaging, and nursing, and sewing up the scars, to get them quite well again in a very short time. Of course no word of this was ever said to Liperata or Guido.

And now comes the dreadful part of my story. How Guido could have divined anything I cannot understand. The only explanation I can offer is this. He is a very studious boy, and very fond of poring into the old books in Andrea's library. He might have seen the same passage, and with his extraordinary quick intuition have guessed. Anyhow he appears to have gone to some quack...doctor, and had a portion of his skin cut off in the same manner, and brought the skin to his brothers to be dealt with in the same way, which it was. The operation had been performed badly, and, as you know, the child is very delicate, and it has had the most disastrous results. He is hopelessly ill, and we do not know what to do.

As you may imagine, I was interested in this singular family, and soon our acquaintance ripened into intimacy. It was to Anastasia that I was specially drawn, and she to me. Anastasia inherited the musical tastes of her father, and was herself no mean executant on the violin.

Of course we cannot tell our father. It is equally impossible to tell a doctor. Fortunately our father does not believe in doctors and trusts in us. It is a good thing all three of us know something of medical science : I think things are getting a little better. He rallied a little yesterday, and asked to be taken from his bed to the sofa in the long room. At his own request he was placed just opposite the May-tree, with the window open. This seemed to revive him.

He became, comparatively speaking, quite animated, especially when a slight wind blew some of the red and white blossoms on to his coverlet. Giovanni and I have some hope, but Andrea has not. Liperata of course does not understand what it all means. Nor does our father, who is intensely anxious about Guido, whom he loves best of us all.

— Ever affectionately,
Anastasia.

P.S.—Good news at last! the Viol d’Amor is completed. Father came down and played it to us. Oh ! what a divine tone it has! Guido first burst into tears, and then seemed to grow quite well again for some time afterwards. Father left the Viol d’Amor with me, that I should play to Guido whenever he wished it. Yes, there is hope after all, whatever Andrea may say.’

Not long afterwards I received another letter from Anastasia in deep mourning. It ran thus :—

“The worst has happened. Last Friday, after having been for several days considerably better, Guido seemed almost himself again. I was alone with him in the long room. (One thinks of trivialities in great grief; I was wearing that same blue dress I had on when I first saw you.) There was a wind, also rain, which pattered against the window-pane, and the wind blew the blossoms of the May-tree like red-white snow to the ground. This seemed to depress Guido. He begged me to sing to him, and accompany myself on the Viol d’Amor. “ It is so sweet of tone,” he said, with a sweet, sad smile, “I am rather tired, though I do not feel much pain now. I shall not see the hawthorn bloom again.”.’

I began to sing an old Etruscan ballad—one of those songs that linger about the country parts of Tuscany, of a very simple, plaintive cadence, accompanied softly on the Viol d’Amor. It would be soothing, I thought, at any rate. And it was. Guido laid his head back and closed his eyes. Gradually the rain ceased and the wind stilled. Guido looked up. “That is better,” he said, “I was afraid of the wind and the rain ; and you stopped them with the Viol d’Amor! Look! the moon is beginning to shine again!” There was a full moon, and it shone through the hawthorn-tree, making strange shadows on the window, and one ray shot direct on Guido’s pale face. “Go on singing,” he said faintly. So I sang on and played on the Viol d’Amor. I felt some dreadful presentiment. I dared not stop singing and playing. It seemed that a shadow literally crept through the doorway, and came up to the bed, and bent over it. Then suddenly all the strings of the Viol d’Amor. snapped! A strange wail seemed to come from the sounding-board. I dropped it, and looked! Then I saw it was too late. Father took the Viol d’Amor and broke it in pieces, and cast it into the fire. His silent agony is too terrible to describe. I cannot tell you any more now.

I was in Freiburg once again, and of course the first thing I did was to go and see my old friends. The Signor da Ripoli was very much aged. He still plays in the Cathedral. Did he, or did he not, ever know what had happened? Anyhow, he has made no further attempt to construct a Viol d’Amor; nor may the word even be mentioned in his presence. Giovanni and Liperata have gone back to Italy, where they have set up a workshop for themselves. It is rumoured that Liperata is shortly to be married. But Anastasia remains with her father. I do not think that she will ever marry. Andrea has become a victim to settled melancholy. He lives quite by himself in a lonely tower. It was he who had the following inscription put on Guido’s tomb:—

“La musica e l’Amor che mouve
il Sole e l’altre Stelle.”

Seventh annual report

Each year I do a brief episode to say how the podcast is going and what the plan for the year is. First, however, thanks. Games From Folktales comes to you from the unceded lands of the Yugambeh People. Games From Folktales is made possible by its the patrons, who are covering its current hosting fees. In the past when the monthly patron amount has gone a little over what's needed for hosting, I've splurged on extra podcast time. I don't need to do that any more, so I'm gathering a little war chest to pay for deck plans, cover art and maps to suit the Venice book. More on that later.

Last year my podcast host changed my price structure so I get a lot more podcast minutes per month. I'm writing more than in previous years, but I've been filling a lot of that extra time with Librivox recordings of relevant material. This has altered the balance of the podcast. It doesn't seem to have put people off, so I'll be continuing with that.

Statistically there were 10 150 visits to the blog last year (via Jetpack) and 7 070 episode downloads (according to Libsyn). That technically means the number of listeners has doubled in the last year to 195 per episode. I know those statistics can be a bit flaky because of bot scrapes from people writing their own podcatchers, but regardless, if I could get 150 people together at a con every week to talk Ars, that'd be great. I'm not trying to have a commercially-successful podcast as a side hustle, so I don't need to hit the thousand downloads per episode that unlocks automatically inserted advertising. I'm glad people like it.

So far there's been no replacement for the Celinni materials which you were getting one per month last year: soon there will be. It's a book called Lud-in-the-Mist by Hope Mireless which came into the public domain this year. It's marvellous and I was going to record it myself, but someone else at Librivox pipped me at the post by a literal day, and so we will use her recording. That team is just barrelling through the book at multiple chapters a week. Between now and then we may fill in with a courtesy book from Venice which affected Elizabeth's court called Il Galateo. After that, The Discoverie of Witches, which is a Tudor skeptic's guide to how stage magic was done in period.

The Venice book is going well and the Patreons voted that it will start as an Ars book, then I'll consider how to recut the material into Magonomia/Fate and a single-player journalling game.

Most of my writing time this year has been focused on City#23, which is a challenge to write every day about, in my case, Mythic Venice. The amount of material is already quite large. It's sufficient to write a set of adventures now, but not quite a gazetter, for which it needs a few extra bits and pieces as laid out in the "shopping list" episode at the end of April. The current plan is to write up all of the suitable characters from the "Facetious Nights of Straporola" as faerie guides, then go back to the shopping list, fill that then condense it down into the rough draft of a book. After that I'll need to give serious thought as to if it is an ashcan or if I want to try to make it a formal product with a Kickstarter, professional art and distribution.

Venice – Dungeon #23 for May has been delayed for a few days which is why you had (what was going to be) November's monster of the month instead. Similarly the quarterly digest for April is now so late that I'm just going to roll it and the June one together.

In terms of future episodes the ones currently loaded on the Libsyn server are as follows. An asterisk means its the monster of the month:

June

1* The Marrying Monster (Japanese folklore through an American lens. A sort of ghoul or witch).

15 The Shrine of Death by Lady Dilke (Mystery cult initiation)

? The cider magic episode needs to come out after the Bestiary is live because it has spoilers and rights issues. It'll be in here somewhere.

July

6* The Horror of Chilton Castle by Lady Dilke (straight up monster in a basement).

20 A Vision of Learning by Lady Dilke (straight up monster in the covenant courtyard)

August

3* The Seventh Incantation by Joseph Brennan (A cthulhu Mythos story now in the public domain).

September

7* The Visitor in the Vault by Lady Dilke (A haunting – frankly Lady Dilke rocks and more people should know about her.)

AGAIN. THANK YOU ALL FOR LISTENING.

The Marrying Monster by Claus Stamm

This will be an odd episode. Claus Stamm is one of those authors who writes a few children's books and a poem or two, but is hard to track down electronically. I'm not sure why his work was focused on Japan, or which yokai he thought he was writing about here. The name he uses – "yamam'ba" – is a variant of a sort of forest witch, but the monstrous features here aren't ones I can directly trace to a story. I do note that Goro the bath maker is a character in a popular game series, so that's either a striking coincidence or there's a deeper pocket of lore I've missed.

Regardless, I liked the story and thought the monster would interest *Ars Magica* and *Magonomia* players. Statistics eventually. Thanks to Quartertone and their production team for the recording.

Goro put down his tools and relaxed into a pile of wood shavings, his back against a half-finished bathtub. To enjoy the evening cool, he told himself, wiping his face with a blue and white rag. Actually, he wanted to postpone the evening meal. Either the rice would be overcooked to a sticky goo or he would be picking hard, underdone kernels out of his teeth all night. And bean soup, when he made it, always had things swimming in it that had no business there.

A night insect went weep-weep-weep. The sound, the night falling, and the thought of his own cooking made him think of his dead wife.

"She was a good cook, poor thing," he thought out loud. "My, my—how I miss her."

He gave a deep sigh. Oh, to have a wife again—a jolly, round wife and a good cook. Just like the old one with perhaps the small exception that she would not eat a man out of house and home and herself into the grave in the bargain. Had he said that aloud? Bad sign, when a man talks to the night insects—better to go into the house, better to eat rice and bean soup. He shuddered.

He began to get up and paused halfway, one hand against the wood of the tub, the other shielding his eyes. He peered into the forest that came almost to the work yard. Someone was coming through there, he heard it. He sat down again. Fireflies flitted among the trees. What if it were his wife's spirit—would it be a chubby ghost? It should be.

A woman walked out of the forest.

She was tall, he noticed, watching her thread her way among finished and unfinished buckets and tubs, tall and slender—almost gaunt. She had her sleeves tied back out of the way with a white tasuki cord, as though ready for hard work, and her bare arms were wiry and capable looking.

She bowed.

Goro scrambled to his feet, catching a splinter or two in his shoulder on the way up. He bowed.

"Good evening," said the woman. "Is this the house of Goro, the cooper who wants a wife that does not eat too much and is a good cook?"

Goro's eyes crossed and his mouth fell open. His fingers scrabbled.

"You do look unwell ... like a starved goldfish," said the woman, "—I don't mean to seem rude."

"I haven't had dinner ..." said Goro, for want of anything brilliant to say. He felt wondrously helpless; things like this did not usually come up in the tub-making business.

"Naturally, poor thing. I'm sure you can't cook well, either," said the woman and Goro marvelled how ever she had guessed it. "Well, I can cook. I can do the work of three women. Into the house with you now, before you catch cold. Shoo!"

She drove him ahead of her into the house.

"I would say I'm quite charming," she said, closing the door behind them, "when one gets used to me. As for my name, why, 'wife', I think, will do nicely."

And sometime in the next few days still with the feeling that he was being left out of things, Goro found himself married.

The new wife was an excellent cook and indeed did the work of three ordinary women. Dinner was never late, and the house was generally spotless. She spoke neither too much nor too little. On evenings when Goro came home discouraged, she always had some good remark ready about the tub-making business—how much artistry and labor went into a good bucket, how unreasonably little money went to the hard-working artist—cheering things, flattering things. Goro gained weight and was not unhappy. At mealtimes his wife ate a little more than a bird but not quite so much as a large cat.

The food bills went up and up.

Goro gradually discovered that with the little eating going on, he was using up food at a rate to feed six or seven coopers together with a few aunts and uncles.

"Curious ...," he muttered, "... very," and determined to investigate.

One morning he made a great fuss about getting measuring equipment together. He told his wife that he was going to a

village half a day's walk away, to take measurements for the village head-man's new tub. Then he went a short distance into the forest and waited behind a tree.

When he saw his wife go to a nearby meadow to gather mushrooms, he flitted around to the back of the house. Hiding his tools behind the rear door, he crept inside. He shinnied up the center pole and flattened out against one of the big ceiling beams. And waited.

His wife came back and put on the fire the largest pot in the house. From the storage bins she took about five pounds of rice and fell to washing it. She ladled out enough bean paste to nearly fill another big pot, and made bean soup.

"Who," wondered Goro on his beam, "is she expecting, and how many of them?" He blinked, blinked again—his eyes rather rolled up.

She had slid the kitchen door out of its frame and was using it for a dumpling factory, lining the dumplings up—lines and lines of rice dumplings like fat well-paid soldiers.

Then she stretched and peered about as if to make sure she had not forgotten something. Satisfied that she had not, she parted her hair and exposed the mouth in the center of her head.

Goro made a circle of his thumbs and forefingers, trying to calculate the size of the thing and nearly fell off his perch. It was fairly large.

Into this crater, his wife pushed dumplings by ones and twos and they disappeared. To make certain, she washed them down with all the bean soup, ladles of bean soup.

When she had disposed of everything she waited a moment, expectantly. A cheery, satisfied rumble came from the top of her head.

"Burps, too," thought Goro. "A regular volcano. Wonder if there'll be smoke." He was too interested to be frightened.

But nothing further happened. She bound her hair back neatly, smiled, and left the house on some errand like any good, wifely wife.

Goro slipped down and out of the house, picking up his tools on the way. He went back into the forest, found a comfortable

tree and sat down against its trunk to smoke his tiny pipe and think.

"I must have married one of the monsters the priests and old men talk about, a yamam'ba. A 'mountain-mother'. Hmm," he nodded, bit his lip, and squinted his eyes.

"Now why do you suppose they call them that?" he asked a squirrel that sat upright near his left foot, like an attentive, furry little doctor. "They come from the mountains—fine. But what's motherly about them, I do not understand.

"Squeerp!" said the squirrel, and ran halfway up the tree. From there it peered down and examined Goro's head.

He tilted his head back so that the squirrel could get a better look and told it that, at any rate, this was no kind of wife for a good man.

Then he stood up and began to walk home, looking down at the ground, kicking thoughtfully at fallen leaves and occasionally scratching his head.

He came out from among the trees and across the yard of his home, dragging his feet like a man who has walked a long way.

He started speaking as soon as he put down his tools.

"Wife, I have been thinking about our marriage and—it hurts me to say it, you understand—but it was too sudden. No—don't interrupt," he said, though his wife had shown no sign of breaking in. "I'm very sorry, but I feel that we're simply not suited to each other."

"All right, husband, I'll leave," she answered in quite an ordinary voice, "even if it makes me unhappy. Could you do only one thing for me before I go? Nothing much—I'd like you to make me a tub—as a kind of souvenir. A very large one. For bathing in."

"The simplest thing in the world," said Goro, glad to get off so easily. "I have one ready, it happens. The very one I was sitting against when you came out of the forest. A very sound tub, one of my best."

"It has a lid, I hope," she said.

"All of my tubs have lids," said Goro. "Well-fitting lids. Water stays warm in my tubs, even without a fire, once that lid is on. Come, I'll show it to you."

He led her out to the tub.

"See? There's the lid, right up against it," he said, thumping the tub with his fist. "Feel that wood! Isn't it a beauty?"

She looked into the tub and agreed that it was getting harder and harder to find real quality in tubs. "Too bad there's that large hole in it," she said.

"Hole?" said Goro. "Hole? A hole in one of my tubs? Impossible ... where's that hole!"

He put his hands on the edge to raise himself and peered over.

"There. Bottom right," she said. "Can't you see it?"

"Oh, the bottom ..." said Goro, leaning further over the edge. "It's too dark to—"

She seized Goro's trousers in a firm grip and heaved.

"—see," he finished, at the bottom of the tub. He was still wondering how he had gotten down there when the lid came down, bang, and it grew very dark. He felt the tub sail up, come to rest on something and begin to move forward with an up and down rocking movement.

It did not take Goro long, in his bucket-shaped night, to realize that the yamam'ba, having no further reason to pretend a feminine weakness she probably despised anyway, had placed the tub on her head and was on her way home. To the mountain.

"Excuse me," he called out. "Where are we going?"

"To dinner," came his former wife's voice through the wood. It grated unpleasantly. He decided to ask no more questions.

Deep into the woods went the yamam'ba, cutting through thicket and underbrush, the tub jouncing easily on her head, up and up into the mountains. Tireless on her long, rangy legs, she travelled along dead, forgotten roads lined with gnarled ugly trees. Goro heard their branches, bump-crack-bump, against his self-made prison. A thin edge of lesser darkness began to show at the top. He hoped it was the first time the lid had slipped on a tub made by Goro; this sort of thing could ruin years of reputation. But it might mean a way out of the tub.

The opening grew wider. Looking up, he was able to see a few stars. Did he imagine it, or was the tub slowing down? He hoped he was not going to be eaten immediately.

The tub stopped and settled.

Something rough, twisted, and snakelike appeared in the opening. It did not move. Nothing moved. He put out his hand—it was a branch.

He gave the branch a delicate jiggle; it felt solid. The yamam’ba, he guessed, must have tired and sat down to rest against a tree. Very cautiously he lifted himself by the branch, trying to move neither the lid nor the tub which must still be resting on the monster’s head.

He heard a faint snore. Top or forward mouth, he wondered. He pulled himself to his feet, trying not to breathe and at last stood with his head out of the tub. The branch was thick, and the next branch, right above, looked dependable. Healthy wood; he appreciated that. Then came a few feet of bark—that would be hard climbing—but above that, four or five branches, almost a ladder. Further, it was too dark to see.

He tensed, took a deep breath, then gave a push and sent the heavy lid crashing down on the sleeping yamam’ba. Up she leaped, and the tub went flying, but Goro was already climbing from branch to branch. In a nearby tree some monkeys woke up and watched Goro’s footwork with shame and envy.

From the ground the yamam’ba stared up at him. It was a rare chance to see just what a yamam’ba really wore for a face, and he decided it was not very attractive.

Down below, the monster was letting down her horrible hair in a businesslike manner.

“Dinner will be early,” she said with a ghastly, girlish laugh. “I was getting quite hungry.”

She started up the tree, the top mouth opening and closing. There were teeth in it.

“We yamam’ba are very good with trees,” she said, climbing steadily. “Don’t climb any higher. It will only make you tired and sweaty and bitter to the taste. Say prayers instead and become calm and delicious.”

“I hope I burn your tongue if you have one in there,” said Goro, a little beside himself. “And try not to be such a chatterbox. You’re making my head buzz.”

He did hear a distinct buzzing, a small roaring right by his head where he was holding on to a thin branch. He tried to move his hand away from the sound. Something small sat down on his thumb and set it on fire.

“Ya-yowch!” he said, loudly.

“Tee-hee-hee!” went the yamam’ba, coming up with an intimate rustling of leaves.

Goro sucked his thumb which had swollen surprisingly and stared at the ball-like thing hanging only an arm’s length away. The buzzing came from it. Very carefully he reached out to see if he would be able to grab it instantly. He thought the size would be about right.

A hard, scaly hand with claws came groping through the branches. He moved his foot out of the way and waited for the head. It appeared, the top mouth gaping.

“Tee-hee-hee,” said the yamam’ba, using both mouths.

“Tee-hee-hee yourself,” said Goro. “Have a goody.” And into the top of her head he dropped the buzzing ball.

“Whatever it was, it had a bad taste and your blood will wash it away,” said the yamam’ba but just then the hornets woke up, highly irritated from lack of sleep.

They flew ’round and ’round inside the yamam’ba. A few of them tickled. Most of them stung. And all of them together worked a havoc in the delicate equipment that makes up the yamam’ba interior.

The yamam’ba made a noise like a frying and a noise like a boiling, and a noise like nameless things running through the night with their ears on fire. She tumbled from the tree, into the tub waiting below and bounced about inside it making unpleasant sounds too numerous to mention.

Goro followed, but more slowly. He arrived in time to see the tub skipping and hopping at the edge of the road which at that point was quite narrow. It teetered for a moment and then sailed out in a gracious curve, trailing its uproar behind it. Goro kneeled and peered down. It was very dark. From far below came a soft boompety-boomp. Then a mere whisper of a crash.

Goro got up, shaking his head. He dusted his knees and went away down the road, growing smaller in the cold, lonely night.

The Seventh Incantation by Joseph Payne Brennan

I’ve made an error here: this item can’t be transcribed by an Australian due to weird differences in copyright law. Sorry gang!

Mythic Venice - May #Dungeon23 #City23

In case you missed the previous episodes in the series, *Dungeon 23* is a writing challenge, once a day for a year. These are my notes for a Mythic Venice setting for *Ars Magica* as recorded in May.

My entry for May the first was included in the April episode because it was connected with the material discussed that month. This month we start on a travellers guide and set of folktales recorded by Alberto Toso Fei, who is a folklorist and travel writer native to Venice.

GHOSTS OF THE THREE DOGES

The spectre of the traitorous doge, Marino Falier, wanders Venice searching for his missing head. The spectre of Enrico Dandolo wanders hunting for Falier. He is blind and has hot coals where his eyes should be. He carries a sword by its blade so he is in constant pain. No one knows what happens if these two meet. Dandolo is doing this as a curse because of the sack of Constantinople.

Tommaso Mocenigo's ghost cannot speak. As he wanders he pulls a continuous piece of paper from his mouth. It says Veritas. Sometimes the ribbon becomes so long that it tangles around his legs. He is momentarily happy if people free him from the ribbon. Why he is cursed, Toso Fei does not say.

THE JAR OF HEROIC SKIN

In the church of San Giovanni et Paolo there is an urn full of skin. It belongs to Marcantonio Bragadin. He was skinned by the Turks at Famagosta. It was stolen from Constantinople in 1596.

Plot hooks: Steal it earlier; mask magic; mysterious superhero.

THE BELLRINGER'S SKELETON

This is a 17th century myth. A bell-ringer was hugely tall, so a master from an anatomical college offered to buy the bellringer's skeleton after his death. He paid the man for a written contract giving over his body.

At midnight the Skeleton climbs the bell tower and rings 12 chimes. Then he

walks down to his old house ringing his bell and begging for funds to buy his skeleton back. As I recall the thing doing the begging is his ghost. So it's an example of two undead from the same person.

SAN MICHELE

I've said before that the island of San Michele was created in the 19th century. It turns out I'm wrong. San Michele is merged with the neighbouring island of San Cristoforo della Pace and so the island itself does predate the Napoleonic demand for a cemetery island.

The church of San Michele in Isola was begun in 1469. It was the home of Brother Mauro, one of the finest cartographers of the late medieval period. He died in 1459 so he was in the previous church. He had a factory for maps. He gets international commissions in real life and he took information from Venetian navigators to make his maps more accurate. Mythically he stole the information from Satan's dreams and could project Satan's dreams into the clouds. The dreams can still sometimes be seen just before lightning storms.

THE MEMORY WITCH BY KENNETH RAND.

This is a street song that I may steal for Serenissima.

Fresh spells! New spells! True spells today!
A charm to keep the frost away,
that makes the rose-time never die.
Come buy.
A bit of sun and summer-breeze
of love and life and leafy trees,
When zephyrs sigh.

Fresh spells! New spells! True spells today.
A bit of magic from May.
A snatch of song where swallows fly.
Come by.
A spring day when the pulses leap
and all the southern breezes sweep
the sapphire sky.

Fresh spells! New spells, True spells today!
That point the road to yesterday.
That start the tear-drop in the eye.
Come buy.
A ghost of long-forgotten love.
The tryst, the silver moon above.
The last goodbye.

ANOTHER BURNING SKELETON

The ghost of Bartolomio Zenni carries a heavy bag down the Campo d'Abazia. During a fire he didn't help rescue children, because he was too busy stuffing his own possessions into a bundle, then he drowned in the canal. If anyone helps him carry his bundle to the Church of St. Fosca, he'll be able to rest. If anyone touches his bundle, the ghost involuntarily turns into a flaming skeleton, which tends to frighten any aid away.

THE STATUE OF JUDAS

The Church of Madonna Dell'Orto was built in the 14th century and was originally dedicated to St. Christopher. They found a statue of Mary in a veggie patch nearby, via a miracle, and there was a rededication. It has statues of the Apostles on the facade.

The sculptor was a Satanist, so he has Judas rather than Matthew. The Judas statue contains one of the thirty pieces of silver stained with Judas's blood.

Remember he is meant to have committed suicide by hanging himself. It has an infernal aura. On Good Friday night the statue flies to the Akeldama. The Akeldama (Biblical trivia) is the name of the land that Judas bought with the pieces of silver.

STATUES OF THE MASTELLI BROTHERS

Four merchants were turned to stone by Mary Magdalene, they were cheats and hypocrites who used to swear "If I'm lying, may God turn my left hand to stone."

THE WITCH IN TINTORETTO'S HOUSE.

On her way to First Communion at the Church of Madonna Dell'Orto, Tintoretto's daughter was stopped by a woman. This witch told the girl that she could be like the Madonna if she retained ten weeks' worth of Communion wafers. After hiding some wafers for weeks, she became afraid and told her father. He knew this was an initiation ritual for witches, so on the tenth week he asked his daughter to trick the witch into their house. Tintoretto locked the door after she entered and started beating her with his walking stick. She changed into a cat and couldn't escape, so she changed into black smoke and vanished through his wall.

THE GHOSTLY NUN

Chiaretta, the daughter of Lorenzo Loredan, haunts the convent of Sant'Anna. She fell in love with a carpenter, so her father forced her to take the veil. She tried to escape, but her father found out and murdered her as she was making the attempt. There is a story that her ghost sometimes helps lovers in surrounding campos or rescues the suicidal.

INFERNAL AURA / ST PETER'S MOTHER

God allows St Peter's mother out of Hell for his Saint's Day and the week before and after.

She is a vicious old woman, so the Infernal Aura rises, and the winds are strange and strong.

HAN DONG

Toso Fei says that Marco Polo married a daughter of Chinngis Khan. When Polo was imprisoned, she spent her evenings singing a Cathayan love song over the canals from the balcony of her palace. When he was moved to Genoa, Polo's sister told the princess that he had been put to death for marrying a non-Christian. She dressed in her finery, set herself aflame, and then threw herself into the canal. Toso Fei says they found the body of an Asian woman buried with a tiara during a restoration.

NOTES

There is a version of the Devil and the Mason about the Rialto Bridge. Black candles burn every night at the Virgin of the Sea to remember the Baker's Boy.

Page 142, there is the use of a false fleet to get the Genoans to flee. This battle is commemorated with two great Palazzo columns.

Page 145, between the 9th and 10th columns on the upper level of the Doge's Palace is where death sentences were proclaimed.

Page 147, Cheba: tortured by a hanging cage on the southern side of the Bell Tower.

Page 149, There was a third column with a crocodile on top. It was sunk in the ocean during transport. Some nights it rises, roaring from the sea. And on those nights, a girl always vanishes.

Page 150, Story about Elizabeth I's goddaughter, a guy who kept meeting her on the down low, was executed for espionage. She was then privately told to flee the city. Instead, she gatecrashed the Doge's Palace, passionately explained that this wasn't espionage just adultery and got a public declaration, and an apology to her lovers' family.

GIORDANO BRUNO

Bruno was an alchemist who worked for, and tutored, the doge from 1591 to 1592. Doge Mochenigo didn't develop magical powers, so he handed him over to the local church authorities. Bruno fled to Rome, was arrested, tortured by the Inquisition and burned at the stake in 1600. On the night of his death, he does water-related pranks, but only in front of women 85 years old or older.

And then there's a break for some time.

THE FADE

The fairies (Fade) often appear in the night and look like women in white. They have hooves and bestial reflections. You must hide knives and mirrors in their presence if you don't want to enrage them. They give wealth and beauty, but they are devious.

FURTHER NOTES

Page 186: There is a description of Giacomo Cassanova's method of immortality and lifestyle, either magical longevity or constant reincarnation in Venice. This is noted as a post-period 18th century piece of folklore.

Page 200: there is a story of a young man who kicked the skull from the graveyard into a canal, who was then punished on his wedding night.

Page 201: There are annual parades to celebrate deliverance from plague. During plagues proper burial customs were skipped, and this creates genius locis, where burial masses are needed.

Page 207: a deep part of the Punta della Dogana is home to a horse-headed sea monster or serpent

Page 210-12: there is a story from the Pentamerone

Now we move on from Toso Fei

We have to deal with the elephant in the room, Giovanni Straparola. When I did the Pentamerone it sidetracked me for a year, and so I wanted to leave Straparola's "Facetious Nights" alone. I was worried that it would do the same thing. However, I've gone through the 75 stories and set myself some ground rules in this note, which I then promptly ignored.

The entry for May 29th is a text sheet of which stories I would include, and so I'm going to skip reading that, because it will become obvious in future entries.

CASSANDRINO, A VARIANT OF THE MASTER THIEF, SET IN PERUGIA.

Cassandrino has a bet with a local governor that he will steal the governor's bed and decoys him with a corpse dressed in the thief's clothes. While the governor buries the corpse, which he thinks is the thief who has volunteered his death because of the bet, the thief steals his bed by breaking in through his roof. Next he steals a horse.

The governor sets the thief a task – bring me a particular holy man in a sack or I'll hang you. The thief thinks this is a trap so he dresses as an angel, tricks the priest into the sack, and then delivers him. The governor gives the thief 400 florins and says, if he doesn't give up his thievery, he'll be hanged, and so he becomes a merchant.

My idea for the unusual characters from Straparola is that they could be guides to Venice, that they would take the place of portal fairies.

FATHER SCARPATICO, SET IN IMOLA.

The priest, Scarpatico, is a miser and has a lame foot, so his housekeeper Nina convinces him to buy a horse. He buys a mule for seven florins, and then is tricked out of it by three thieves. For revenge, he tricks them into paying him money, then murdering their wives, then murdering a shepherd, so Scarpatico can steal his flock, and then committing suicide by convincing them that they will have magical powers, if Scarpatico is allowed to put a sack and heave them into the river. He even uses a bladder filled up with blood to fake murder.

TEBALDO OF SALERNO

King Tebaldo is in Venice pretending to be a merchant. Unlike most guides, he desperately wishes to stay in Venice because he thinks he's possessed. He's not, he's an incognisant faerie, and his story is in abeyance, while he is caught in the mesh of the Player of Games' meta-plot.

He thinks he's the King of Solerno, and a widower. When his wife died, he believes she made him promise to only remarry if her wedding rings fits the new bride. Only his daughter's finger fits the ring. She flees locked in a chest with a potion that, with one dose of less than a spoonful, nourishes you for a long time.

Tebaldo dresses as a merchant, gets a great store of jewels and gems, and sets out to find her.

He also has a sleeping poison. Then he gets to Venice and his story pauses. He doesn't consciously know that he'll murder his grandkids and get put to death by incineration at the end of his story. But he knows if he leaves he's going to be... possessed...again.

BIANCABELLA AND SAMARITANA

A baby girl is born with a snake wrapped around her neck. She also has a shining gold chain between her skin and muscle in her neck. The snake flees at birth but comes back when her sister is a young woman, and it goes through a ritual with the girl massaging a milk bath into her skin and then dowsing her with rose water. This makes the girl, Biancabella, supernaturally beautiful, and gemstones fall from her hair when it is combed. In her story she is then maimed and blinded, but she is cured by her sister the snake who has the name Samaritana. They then go home for revenge. Her story is stuck after the healing. She's rich gorgeous and has a sister who's a sorceress because the snake can take human shape.

They are staying in Venice. Her new hands are not her hands reconnected or regenerated. I'd like them to be a magical prosthetics.

FORTUNIO

Fortunio, a boy off to make his fortune, meets three magical animals arguing over a deer carcass. He gives the flesh and bones to the wolf because their teeth, the innards to the eagle, and the squishy brain to the ant.

They reward him with the magical power of changing to their shapes by saying "Would that I were a... (wolf/eagle/ant)" he can change into the appropriate animal. He later turns up at a joust as a mystery knight, clad in bejeweled white caparisons and armour, so he's really, really, really rich. At the end of his story he marries a princess and eats his foster parents in wolf form.

CONSTANZA AND THE SATYR

The king of Thebes is old and divides his land between his three daughters, who marry neighbouring kings. Then he has a fourth baby girl later in life. When she grows up the king offers the little bit of land he has kept back for expenses as her dowry and he arranges a marriage with the son of a neighbour. She refuses to marry anyone less than a king.

She changes her name to Constanza, dresses as a man and becomes a courtier in the kingdom of Bettinia. The queen tries to seduce him, but he declines, so she's angry, and she gets the king to send him on dangerous missions. On one he captures a satyr, who he names Chiappino.

Chirpino can sense hypocrisy and deception and finds it hilarious, for example he laughs at a child's funeral, and when asks why he reveals that the child was not the grieving father's, but that of the priest solemnly chanting the funeral service.

GABRINA

Gabrina is an infernal sorceress who does magic by commanding demons. She can fly across Europe, divine answers to questions, change appearance, become invisible, affect others with the powers previously mentioned, and command demons generally. Her workings use a ritual circle and a drop of the magical elixir she carries in a flask. If she's casting a spell on someone, verbal prayers ward against her powers.

THE PRISONER AGLEA

Aglea, daughter of Apollo, used to live in a tower with her treasures, a pet dragon and a guardian basilisk. There was a prophecy that whoever scaled the tower would be her master. Three magical brothers worked together to take her. The first heard the prophecy in a bird's song, the second built swift ship, and sailed it through winds and currents with superhuman skill, and the third quickly scaled the tower, using a dagger in each hand.

They split the treasure, but could never agree, who deserved to marry Aglea. She uses them as servants, it is waiting for them to die of old age. She's immortal, and her curse is inconvenient, but she's patient, and can just poison the three and go home, if she decides to

DIIGINI THE NECROMANCER

A man is apprentice to a tailor and is terrible at it. His master is, however, a necromancer and thinking his apprentice is simpleton, performs magic where he can be observed. His apprentice, Diogini, learns mastery of shapes, and then leaves his service.

Diogini and his father do the escaping horse scam, but the old tailor traps Diogini in horse form. He then beats and starves Diogini until the tailor's daughters take pity on him, and they take him to the creek for a drink. He changes into a fish and disappears.

Later he changes into a ruby, a handful of pomegranate seeds, and a fox. He participates in a game of transformations with his old master, who he throttles, while the elder is in the shape of a chicken. He marries a girl who hid him while he was a ruby.

CONSTANTINO

This is the origin of the Puss in Boots story as per the Pentamorone episode, It ends rather better for the cat.

Bertuccio. This is a ghostly warder that can give gifts like horses and clothes.

That is us for May, and a large start of June. Your saga may vary.

The Shrine of Death by Lady Dilke

It's always a pleasure to discover new, early, female, horror authors and today I'm bringing you a mystery cult initiation by Lady Dilke. Lady Dilke married a couple of times so her surname changes a bit, but essentially she was an early feminist and horror author. She died just after the turn of the 20th Century. I any of you are Middlemarch fans, she was the model for Casaubon.

Anyway over to Ben Tucker who we seem to be depending on awfully hard this year.

Life has many secrets! These were the first words that fell on the ears of a little girl baby, whose mother had just been brought to bed. As she grew up she pondered their meaning, and, before all things, she desired to know the secrets of life. Thus, longing and brooding, she grew apart from other children, and her dreams were ever of how the secrets of life should be revealed to her.

Now, when she was about fifteen years of age, a famous witch passed through the town in which she dwelt, and the child heard much talk of her, and people said that her knowledge of all things was great, and that even as the past lay open before her, so there was nothing in the future that could be hidden from her. Then the child thought to herself, "This woman, if by any means I get speech of her, can, if she will, tell me all the secrets of life."

Nor was it long after, that walking late in the evening with other and lesser children, along the ramparts on the east side of the town, she came to a corner of the wall which lay in deep shadow, and out of the shadow there sprang a large black dog, baying loudly, and the children were terrified, and fled, crying out, "It is the witch's dog!" and one, the least of all, fell in its terror, so the elder one tarried, and lifted it from the ground, and, as she comforted it for it was shaken by its fall, and the dog continued baying — the witch herself came out of the shadow, and said, "Off with you, you little fools, and break my peace no more with your folly."

And the little one ran for fear, but the elder girl stood still, and laying hold of the witch's mantle, she said, "Before I go, tell me, what are the secrets of life?"

And the witch answered, "Marry Death, fair child, and you will know." At the first, the saying of the witch fell like a stone in the girl's heart, but ere long her words, and the words which she had heard in the hour of her birth, filled all her thoughts, and when other girls jested or spoke of feasts and merriment, of happy love and all the joys of life, such talk seemed to her mere wind of idle tales, and the gossips who would have made a match for her schemed in vain, for she had but one desire, the desire to woo Death, and learn the secrets of life. Often now she would seek the ramparts in late evening, hoping that in the shadows she might once more find the witch, and learn from her the way to her desire; but she found her not.

Returning in the darkness, it so happened, after one of these fruitless journeys, that she passed under the walls of an ancient church, and looking up at the windows, she saw the flickering of a low, unsteady light upon the coloured panes, and she drew near to the door, and, seeing it ajar, she pushed it open and entered, and passing between the mighty columns of the nave, she stepped aside to the spot whence the light proceeded. Having done so, she found herself standing in front of a great tomb, in one side of which were brazen gates, and beyond the gates a long flight of marble steps leading down to a vast hall or chapel below; and above the gates, in a silver lamp, was a light burning, and as the chains by which the lamp was suspended moved slightly in the draught from the open door of the church, the light which burnt in it flickered, and all the shadows around shifted so that nothing seemed still, and this constant recurrence of change was like the dance of phantoms in the air. And the girl, seeing the blackness, thought of the corner on the ramparts where she had met the witch, and almost she expected to see her, and to hear her dog baying in the shadows.

When she drew nearer, she found that the walls were loaded with sculpture, and the niches along the sides were filled with statues of the wise men of all time; but at the corners were four women whose heads were bowed, and whose hands were bound in chains. Then, looking at them as they sat thus, discrowned but majestic, the soul of the girl was filled with sorrow, and she fell weeping, and, clasping her hands in her grief, she cast her eyes to heaven. As she did so, the lamp swayed a little forwards, and its rays touched with light a figure seated on the top of the monument. When the girl caught sight of this figure she ceased weeping, and when she had withdrawn a step or two backwards, so as to get a fuller view, she fell upon her knees, and a gleam of wondrous expectation shone out of her face; for, on the top of the tomb, robed and crowned, sat the image of Death, and a great gladness and awe filled her soul, for she thought, "If I may but be found worthy to enter his portals, all the secrets of life will be mine."

And laying her hands on the gates, she sought to open them, but they were locked, so after a little while she went sadly away. Each day, from this time forth, when twilight fell, the girl returned to the church, and would there remain

kneeling for many hours before the shrine of Death, nor could she by any means be drawn away from her purpose. Her mind was fixed on her desire, so that she became insensible to all else ; and the whole town mocked her, and her own people held her for mad.

So then, at last, they took her before a priest, and the priest, when he had talked with her awhile, said , “ Let her have her way. Let her pass a night within the shrine ; on the morrow it may be that her wits will have returned to her.”

So a day was set, and they robed her in white as a bride, and in great state , with youths bearing torches, and many maidens, whose hands were full of flowers, she was brought through the city at night fall to the church ; and the gates of the shrine were opened , and as she passed within , the youths put out their torches and the maidens threw their roses on the steps beneath her feet.

When the gates closed upon her, she stood still awhile upon the upper steps, and so she waited until the last footfall had ceased to echo in the church, and she knew herself to be alone in the long desired presence. Then, full of reverent longing and awe, she drew her veil about her, and as she did so , she found a red rose that had caught in it, and, striving to dislodge it, she brought it close to her face, and its perfume was very strong, and she saw , as in a vision, the rose garden of her mother’s house , and the face of one who had wooed her there in the sun ; but, even as she stood irresolute, the baying of a hound in the distant street fell on her ears, and she remembered the words of the witch, “ Marry Death, fair child, if you would know the secrets of life , ” and casting the rose from her, she began to descend the steps.

As she went down, she heard, as it were, the light pattering of feet behind her ; but turning, when she came to the foot, to look, she found that this sound was only the echoing fall from step to step of the flowers which her long robes had drawn after her, and she heeded them not, for she was now within the shrine, and looking to the right hand and to the left, she saw long rows of tombs, each one hewn in marble and covered with sculpture of wondrous beauty.

All this, though, she saw dimly ; the plainest thing to view was the long black shadow of her own form , cast before her by the light from the lamp above, and as

she looked beyond the uttermost rim of shadow , she became aware of an awful shape seated at a marble table whereon lay an open book . Looking on this dread shape, she trembled, for she knew that she was in the presence of Death. Then, seeing the book, her heart was up lifted within her, and stepping boldly for wards, she seated herself before it, and as she did so , it seemed to her that she heard a shiver from within the tombs.

Now, when she came near , Death had raised his finger, and he pointed to the writing on the open page, but, as she put her hands upon the book , the blood rushed back to her heart, for it was ice-cold, and again it seemed to her that something moved within the tombs. It was but for a minute, then her courage returned , and she fixed her eyes eagerly upon the lines before her and began to read, but the very letters were at first strange to her, and even when she knew them she could by no means frame them into words, or make any sentence out of them, so that, at the last, she looked up in her wonderment to seek aid .

But he, the terrible one, before whom she sat, again lifted his finger, and as he pointed to the page, a weight as of lead forced down her eyes upon the book ; and now the letters shifted strangely, and when she thought to have seized a word or a phrase it would suddenly be gone, for, if the text shone out plain for an instant, the strange shadows, moving with the movements of the silver lamp, would blot it again as quickly from sight.

At this, distraction filled her mind, and she heard her own breathing like sobs in the darkness, and fear choked her ; for ever, when she would have appealed for help, her eyes saw the same deadly menace, the same uplifted and threatening finger. Then, glancing to left and right, a new horror took possession of her, for the lids of the tombs were yawning wide, and whenever her thoughts turned to flight, their awful tenants peered at her from above the edges, and they made as though they would have stayed her.

Thus she sat till it was long past midnight, and her heart was sick within her, when again the distant baying of a hound reached her ears ; but this sound, instead of giving her fresh courage, seemed to her but a bitter mockery, for she thought, “ What shall the secrets of life profit me, if I must make my bed with Death ? ”

And she became mad with anger, and she cursed the counsels of the witch , and in her

desperation, like a creature caught in the toils, she sprang from her seat and made towards the steps by which she had come. Ere she could reach them , all the dreadful dwellers in the tombs were before her , and she, seeing the way to life was barred for ever, fell to the ground at their feet and gave up her spirit in a great agony.

Then each terrible one re turned to his place, and the book which lay open before Death closed with a noise as of thunder, and the light which burnt before his shrine went out, so that all was darkness. In the morning, when that company which had brought her came back to the church, they wondered much to see the lamp extinguished , and, fetching a taper, some went down fearfully into the vault. There all was as it had ever been , only the girl lay face downwards amongst the withered roses, and when they lifted her up they saw that she was dead ; but her eyes were wide with horror. And so another tomb was hewn in marble, and she was laid with the rest, and when men tell the tale of her strange bridal they say, “ She had but the reward of her folly. God rest her soul ! ”

A Vision of Learning by Lady Dilke

This week we return to the works of Lady Dilke, an early feminist, socialist, and horror writer. The following story I think is a useful parable, perhaps to be told to apprentices in the Ars Magica game to convince them to remain at the Covenant rather than going to University.

Thanks to Ben Tucker and his production team.

There was once a boy who was born to all the joys of the South, and day and night he was glad of his life till in his dreams he had a vision of Learning, even as she appeared to men in the lands of the far North . Ever after this he was aware of something wanting to him ; at the first, he scarcely knew whether it were so or no, but thenceforth with every hour his need became plainer, till it mastered him, and, turning his back upon the sun, he passed over mountains and rivers, and vast plains teeming with the life of cities, and nothing stayed him till he came to the Northern Sea. There he took ship, and crossed the narrow strait which divided the land in which he was born from that island shrouded in the Western mists, where, as he had heard, Learning held her court.

When he landed, the ghostly wreaths of fog which hang for ever about those coasts arose and embraced him . But, though he felt their kisses on his lips, he was not dismayed, and pressed forward on his way till, after two days' journey, he saw, rising amidst the woods and waters, the towers and spires of that town wherein , as he believed , Learning herself abode. And the people of the town came out to meet him and welcomed him, and when he entered within their gates he marvelled to see the beauty of their city, nor could he praise sufficiently the lordly ways and noble buildings which he beheld on every hand ; but at the last he spoke and said : “ In which of these palaces, I pray you, hath Learning herself her dwelling – place ? “

Then all these people answered him as one man : “ All these be her palaces, and we are all her servants, and dwell within her walls.” And they conducted him within the portals of one of the fairest, and coming to an inner court they led him up many stairs, and opening the door of a little chamber, they bade him welcome once more and left him.

When he was alone he was surprised, for the chamber allotted to him seemed scarcely such as one should have been found within a fabric so splendid in outward seeming ; and the staircase by which he had ascended thither had appeared to him very dark, and so narrow that two could not have stood abreast upon its steps ; but, in his humility, he deemed it only fitting that one who as yet could scarcely claim to be the least among her servants should find no spacious lodging in the house of Learning. And as he thought these things, looking from his window he saw close opposite to him the grey and crumbling walls of an ancient chapel, pierced with windows of many – coloured glass, and behind the windows he saw lights moving in the gathering darkness, and as he looked he heard voices chanting.

And he said with joy : “ Lo, day by day every dweller within these walls lifts up his soul in the praise of the beauty of Holiness. When Holiness hath become my portion, and Learning herself hath looked upon me, then shall I have entered into my reward , and shall be as one new -born .” So he became a student i n that place.

But when many days and months had passed and he saw not Learning, nor even so much as the skirts of her clothing , a great doubt came upon him which made his soul very heavy . After long silence, he spoke to the doctors and teachers and masters and said : “ Surely, sirs, Learning hath left you for space ; she hath gone upon a journey, or is holding her court in other lands. ”

But the doctors and teachers and masters were angry at this, crying out : “ What strange folly hath possessed you ? By whom, then, are ? our words inspired ? In whose name, too , we pray you , do we bear rule over this Shall a student who is as yet a dweller but in the outer courts put questions to us ? ” And they said also : “ When you have gotten to yourself all the knowledge of the schools, then may you look to enter her sanctuary.” At this the student was abashed , and he thought : “ In the days to be, when I have gotten the knowledge of the schools, I shall, perhaps, as these have said , discover her sanctuary ”

This was in the summer. Now , though there was no heat in the summer, yet it was very close in the little court wherein the student had his chamber. Often in the evening he

would walk in the dusk below his own windows, and on one evening he remained thus walking till it was well nigh dark .

Just as he turned himself, thinking that he would go once more within, he heard , on a sudden , a voiceless shriek which filled the air with terror, and looking whence it had come, he saw , perched on the edge of the decaying battlements which encompassed the roof of the chapel, a bird , in shape like to the birds which were common in his own land ; but never before had he heard one that cried in such a fashion – a note of warning, of fear, of agony! So standing there white to the lips – for the hideous sound thus breaking upon the silence had shocked him – he watched and listened, thinking that if it should cry again the bird might perhaps utter the low appeals, the idle chatter, and the laughter with which it had been wont to fill the dusk at springtide in the South . But the bird was silent, and presently spreading its wings, soared far away . Then the student longed to follow it, and for a while he believed almost that it had bidden him do so ; but at this time the masters praised him, saying he had done well, so he remained .

The summer drew to a close, and the woods lost their leaves, and the rain fell in torrents every day, so that the sky of that country, never very bright, had become an inky grey, and the waters without the walls of the city rose and flooded the adjacent meadows. The student could now longer go forth beyond the gates, and there were but few dwelling in the inner court where was his chamber, so that when he looked out all was empty and silent, and the windows had that eyeless aspect which gives a ghostly air to uninhabited houses.

And, sitting in his chamber, he listened to the perpetual dripping from the eaves, and as the heavy raindrops fell they seemed to smite him, for though he had now gotten to himself much of the knowledge of the schools, and the masters and teachers and doctors spoke fair things of him, yet he knew in himself that he was none the nearer to his purpose.

Sometimes, now , in his weariness he would close his eyes, and for a little space it would be to him as though he trod once more the sunny slopes of his ancient home beyond the seas, and in the breeze

the blossoms of the cistus floated as if they had taken wings to meet him in his joy, and all around him there arose the scent of thyme and of lavender and of cassia, and his nostrils pricked with the resinous odour of the dark pines, and he saw their slender columns standing black athwart the silver sky. But when, dreaming thus, he had almost for gotten the vision which had lured him to the North, the dull, metallic echo of the raindrops falling from roof to gutter awoke him, and there was pain in his awaking.

When the autumn was far drawn into winter, it so happened that, rousing himself from one of these fits of stupor – which had now grown common to him the student went to his window, and looking up he counted, as he had often done before, the lines of a black network formed by the branches of a leafless tree just where the sky was to be seen in a little cleft between the roof of the chapel and that of the court.

As he gazed on this, the motionless empty grey of the rain -clouds was stirred as it were by something moving, and slowly, on broad black wings, once more a bird – a bird this time of evil omen – came through the sky and settled down upon the branches. Then the student thought of that other bird, and half he expected to hear again its cruel note; but this one remained silent, only it ruffled its black plumes and folded its wings. The movement which it made as it did so was like to that made by the doctors and teachers and masters, as they wrapped their robes about them and took their seats in a place of honour, and the student called to mind how many questions he had asked of them, and in vain. Yet it seemed to him as if this bird had a message for him, and knew, perhaps, more than they all of the vision which he had seen in the South.

Then he began to be curious about the tree which it had chosen for its resting – place, and in the wildness of his fancy he thought: “If I can but find the place in which that tree hath its root upon which this bird hath chosen her seat, it may be that I shall then discover the sanctuary of which all the doctors and masters and teachers have spoken.” But whilst he was still looking on the bird, the snow began to fall, and in a little while both the bird and the tree were hidden from sight.

It now became his chief thought how he might enter the court which lay on the farther side of the chapel, and from which

he, like others of his age, had always been excluded; so he went down at night (for not even the snow, which fell heavily, could keep him from trying the adventure) and strove to find some way by which he might pass; but though he succeeded in opening a little iron gate hard by the door of the chapel, he was stopped at the end of the passage into which it led by another which he could by no means unfasten.

Night after night did the student continue to essay this second gate, but the fastening was difficult, and there was no light in the sky by which he might have seen how to handle it; the snow, too, lay always on the ground, and the unaccustomed cold was very bitter to him. At last, there came a great storm of wind, which cleared the sky, so that the moon, then in her full, showed forth all her splendour, and on that night the student, when he went down, found that he could open both the gates with ease.

So he entered straightway into where there was a garden, only all things were covered with the snow; except where the drift having been swept to one side by the great storm of wind, there was, as it were, a path before him leading into the shadow cast under the farther wall. Looking about, he saw that the garden, like the courts of the building within which he dwelt, was shut in on all sides by high walls, and seeing no issue, he was daunted; when, on a sudden, the bells in an old tower on the farther side chimed with a solemn tolling sound, and there arose an echo of that sound from the other side of the wall, and looking again more steadfastly into the shadow, the student was aware of a little door in the wall, and hastening along the path and coming to it he found it ajar, and pushing it open he stepped within, and knew that he was in a graveyard.

The graves, of which there were many, were all open, and in each there sat men clothed in robes of black or of scarlet, which were strangely bright, trailing in the sheets of snow all dazzling with the moon beams. They were holding with each other high dispute, and the sound of their voices in the frosty air fell on the ears of the student like the echo of passing bells. But he was full of his quest, and after a little pause, going up to the nearest, he said: “Tell me, o master! where shall I find Learning?” And he who sat in the grave shook his head, but he answered not, neither did he lift his eyes. Then the student went to the next, and said: “Tell me, have you seen Learning?” and he likewise answered him not. Then the student turned to a third, and said, with a great agony of praying: “Answer me, I beseech you, have

they, the masters, teachers, and doctors of this city – have they seen Learning?”

At this all the ghosts shrieked with laughter, crying out: “Neither to them, nor to us, nor to any that have ever abided in this city hath Learning revealed herself.” And the sound of their voices crying thus was as the knell of his soul.

So the student, seeing at his feet an open grave in which no one sat, asked no more, but saying, “This is my place,” he laid himself down in it.

On the morrow, when he was missed, a great search was made for him, nor was it long before he was found. When they had found him they upbraided him with his folly, but he replied: “You are all liars, and now I know you for such; for neither you, nor those that went before you, have at any time seen Learning in this city; the dead have spoken, and have put you to shame.”

At this all the doctors, teachers, and masters declared: “He is mad.” So the student was bound hand and foot, and they carried him to a mad house, and there, because he was very violent, they put chains on him, and the reproaches of his ravings were very terrible to hear, and by no means could the wrath of his tongue be appeased.

For many years he remained in this state, but by chance there came a woman who felt great compassion and sorrow for those in suffering and in bonds; frequently she visited the mad – house, and brought at the least some word of calm or look of pity to the afflicted. It was a long while before the keepers of the house would suffer her to speak of approaching the student, for they feared lest evil should befall her from his great violence. In the end, however, she persuaded them to take her to him.

And they said to her: “Should he ask you if you be Learning, then you will do well, perhaps, to humour his folly, and to make answer that it is even so, and that you indeed are she.”

So, bearing in mind their cautions, the woman entered the student’s cell, and on the instant, even as the keepers of the house had foretold, he asked her if she were not indeed Learning herself come to visit him. But she, seeing him so all distraught and well nigh dead for Learning’s sake, was filled with a yearning of grief, and, forgetting all their cautions,

she cried out : “ God forbid , my poor lad ! I am but Love.”

And at these words the student began to weep bitterly.

Then the woman , without speaking, took from her bosom a red rose and put it in his fingers, and the student, taking it, made as though he would have carried it to his lips ; as he did so his chains rattled loudly, and lifting his skeleton arms to heaven, he seemed once more about to call down curses upon men, but the scent of the flower changed his purpose, and he turned his face to the wall in silence.

Then the woman prayed that his chains might be taken off him, and before she left him she had prevailed , and this was done ; but on the third day, when she returned to know how he did, she was told, “ He is dead, ” nor could she learn the place of his burial .

The Vale of the Devil's Head from “The Travels of Sir John Mandeville”

This week a brief extract from the travels of Sir John Mandeville. Sir John Mandeville didn't exist. We don't know who really wrote his book: we do know that they tacked it together from previous travel journals. Most of it is highly dubious, but in ours Magica there's a little section that works really well as an Infernal regio.

Now over to John Moore who released this recording into the public domain: thanks to him, his production team, and everyone at LibriVox.

Beside that Isle of Mistorak upon the left side nigh to the river of Pison is a marvellous thing. There is a vale between the mountains, that dureth nigh a four mile. And some men clepe it the Vale Enchanted, some clepe it the Vale of Devils, and some clepe it the Vale Perilous. In that vale hear men often-time great tempests and thunders, and great murmurs and noises, all days and nights, and great noise, as it were sound of tabors and of nakers and of trumps, as though it were of a great feast. This vale is all full of devils, and hath been always. And men say there, that it is one of the entries of hell. In that vale is great plenty of gold and silver. Wherefore many misbelieving men, and many Christian men also, go in oftentime for to have of the treasure that there is; but few come

again, and namely of the misbelieving men, ne of the Christian men neither, for anon they be strangled of devils.

And in mid place of that vale, under a rock, is an head and the visage of a devil bodily, full horrible and dreadful to see, and it sheweth not but the head, to the shoulders. p. 186But there is no man in the world so hardy, Christian man ne other, but that he would be adread to behold it, and that it would seem him to die for dread, so is it hideous for to behold. For he beholdeth every man so sharply with dreadful eyen, that be evermore moving and sparkling as fire, and changeth and stirreth so often in diverse manner, with so horrible countenance, that no man dare not neighen towards him. And from him cometh out smoke and stinking fire and so much abomination, that unnethe no man may there endure.

But the good Christian men, that be stable in the faith, enter well without peril. For they will first shrive them and mark them with the token of the holy cross, so that the fiends ne have no power over them. But albeit that they be without peril, yet, natheles, ne be they not without dread, when that they see the devils visibly and bodily all about them, that make full many diverse assaults and menaces, in air and in earth, and aghast them with strokes of thunder-blasts and of tempests. And the most dread is, that God will take vengeance then of that that men have misdane against his will.

And ye shall understand, that when my fellows and I were in that vale, we were in great thought, whether that we durst put our bodies in adventure, to go in or not, in the protection of God. And some of our fellows accorded to enter, and some not. So there were with us two worthy men, friars minors, that were of Lombardy, that said, that if any man would enter they would go in with us. And when they had said so, upon the gracious trust of God and of them, we let sing mass, and made every man to be shriven and houseled. And then we entered fourteen persons; but at our going out we were but nine. And so we wist never, whether that our fellows were lost, or else turned again for dread. But we saw them never after; and those were two men of Greece, and three of Spain. And our other fellows that would not go in with us, they went by another coast to be before us; and so they were.

And thus we passed that perilous vale, and found therein gold and silver, and precious stones and rich jewels, great plenty, both here and there, as us seemed. But whether that it was, as us seemed, I wot never. For I touched none, because that the devils be so subtle to make a thing to seem otherwise than it is, for to deceive mankind. And therefore I touched none, and also because that I would not be put out of my devotion; for I was more devout then, than ever I was before or after, and all for the dread of fiends that I saw in diverse figures, and also for the great multitude of dead bodies, that I saw there lying by the way, by all the vale, as though there had been a battle between two kings, and the mightiest of the country, and that the greater part had been discomfited and slain. And I trow, that unnethe should any country have so much people within him, as lay slain in that vale as us thought, the which was an hideous sight to see. And I marvelled much, that there were so many, and the bodies all whole without rotting. But I trow, that fiends made them seem to be so whole without rotting. But that might not be to mine advice that so many should have entered so newly, ne so many newly slain, with out stinking and rotting. And many of them were in habit of Christian men, but I trow well, that it were of such that went in for covetise of the treasure that was there, and had overmuch feebleness in the faith; so that their hearts ne might not endure in the belief for dread. And therefore were we the more devout a great deal. And yet we were cast down, and beaten down many times to the hard earth by winds and thunders and tempests. But evermore God of his grace help us. And so we passed that perilous vale without peril and without encumbrance, thanked be Almighty God.