Games From Folktales

Podcast transcripts
July - December 2023

Lud-in-the-Mist by Hope Mirleess
Brunanburh: a covenant site?
The Colony Of Cats by Andrew Lang
The Ghoul by Clark Ashton Smith
An apology for manners from Il Galateo
Mythic Venice – August #Dungeon23 #City23
Venice – Shipbuilding
Venice – Servants
The Wood of the Dead by Algernon Blackwood
The Dragon of Cos in Mandeville
Cider Fauns
The Phantom Town
Strange Event in the Life of Schalken the Painter by J. Sheridan Le Fanu
The Child who Went with the Fairies by J Sheridan Le Fanu

Games From Folktales is a labour of love for me, but it is covering all of its hosting bills thanks to the Patreonage of the following people:

Jason Vines
Sardonic Laughter
Michael Tree
Lee
Alex Marsh
False Wingz
Angela Jordan Black
Ian F
Antonio G.
Steve Parenteau
Imreai
Zale
Mesona
Raúl Trullenque Viudas
Benjamin Gratch
The Ranting Savant
Thomas Stewart
Ben McFarland
Christopher R
Jason Tondoro
Daniel Jensen
Dan Cassar
Pantelis Polakis

To join them, please visit https://www.patreon.com/TimothyFerguson

Original images sourced from CC0 sites

The theme music for the podcast comes from Free Music Archive's public domain collection. It is "The Fall of the Village of the Infinitesimal Forest at the Hands of the Royal Aggressor : An Epic in Seven Parts" by Room 34.

Librivox is an online community group that records books published before 1925 into the public domain.
Thanks to the readers, producers and editors.

Legalese

Lud-in-the-Mist by Hope Mirrlees

I originally planned to string Lud-in-the-Mist across months, commenting on each episode, the way I did with "The Erl-King's Daughter" by Lord Dunsany. I shan't, because although I still think its an excellent book full of material which Ars Magica Players can, and should, steal, it doesn't need an explanation. A secret passage is a secret passage. A fair in the Elfin Marches is a faerie fair. A vis source is a vis source. There are tiny pieces, like the herm in the garden and Duke Aubery's name, which could be given a folkloric context, but a quick Google will sort that out far better than me stretching the book for a year.

I present here the first two chapters of the book, as delivered into the public domain by Nicole J. LeBoeuf and her team via LibriVox. I strongly recommend you read, or listen, to this book.

CHAPTER I
MASTER NATHANIEL CHANTICLEER

The Free State of Dorimare was a very small country, but, seeing that it was bounded on the south by the sea and on the north and east by mountains, while its centre consisted of a rich plain, watered by two rivers, a considerable variety of scenery and vegetation was to be found within its borders. Indeed, towards the west, in striking contrast with the pastoral sobriety of the central plain, the aspect of the country became, if not tropical, at any rate distinctly exotic. Nor was this to be wondered at, perhaps; for beyond the Debatable Hills (the boundary of Dorimare in the west) lay Fairyland. There had, however, been no intercourse between the two countries for many centuries.

The social and commercial centre of Dorimare was its capital, Lud-in-the-Mist, which was situated at the confluence of two rivers about ten miles from the sea and fifty from the Elfin Hills.

Lud-in-the-Mist had all the things that make an old town pleasant. It had an ancient Guild Hall, built of mellow golden bricks and covered with ivy and, when the sun shone on it, it looked like a rotten apricot; it had a harbour in which rode vessels with white and red and tawny sails; it had flat brick houses—not the mere carapace of human beings, but ancient living creatures, renewing and modifying themselves with each generation under their changeless antique roofs. It had old arches, framing delicate landscapes that one could walk into, and a picturesque old graveyard on the top of a hill, and little open squares where comic baroque statues of dead citizens held levees attended by birds and lovers and insects and children. It had, indeed, more than its share of pleasant things; for, as we have seen, it had two rivers.

Also, it was plentifully planted with trees.

▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪

One of the handsomest houses of Lud-in-the-Mist had belonged for generations to the family of Chanticleer. It was of red brick and the front, which looked on to a quiet lane leading into the High Street, was covered with stucco, on which flowers and fruit and shells were delicately modelled, while over the door was emblazoned a fine, stylized cock—the badge of the family. Behind, it had a spacious garden, which stretched down to the river Dapple. Though it had no lack of flowers, they did not immediately meet the eye, but were imprisoned in a walled kitchen-garden, where they were planted in neat ribands, edging the plots of vegetables. Here, too, in spring was to be found the pleasantest of all garden conjunctions—thick yew hedges and fruit trees in blossom. Outside this kitchen-garden there was no need of flowers, for they had many substitutes. Let a thing be but a sort of punctual surprise, like the first cache of violets in March, let it be delicate, painted and gratuitous, hinting that the Creator is solely preoccupied with aesthetic considerations, and combines disparate objects simply because they look so well together, and that thing will admirably fill the role of a flower.

In early summer it was the doves, with the bloom of plums on their breasts, waddling on their coral legs over the wide expanse of lawn, to which their propinquity gave an almost startling greenness, that were the flowers in the Chanticleers' garden. And the trunks of birches are as good, any day, as white blossom, even if there had not been the acacias in flower. And there was a white peacock which, in spite of its restlessness and harsh shrieks, had something about it, too, of a flower. And the Dapple itself, stained like a palette, with great daubs of colour reflected from sky and earth, and carrying on its surface, in autumn, red and yellow leaves which may have fallen on it from the trees of Fairyland, where it had its source—even the Dapple might be considered as a flower growing in the garden of the Chanticleers.

There was also a pleached alley of hornbeams. To the imaginative, it is always something of an adventure to walk down a pleached alley. You enter boldly enough, but soon you find yourself wishing you had stayed outside—it is not air that you are breathing, but silence, the almost palpable silence of trees. And is the only exit that small round hole in the distance? Why, you will never be able to squeeze through that! You must turn back … too late! The spacious portal by which you entered has in its turn shrunk to a small round hole.

▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪

Master Nathaniel Chanticleer, the actual head of the family, was a typical Dorimarite in appearance; rotund, rubicund, red-haired, with hazel eyes in which the jokes, before he uttered them, twinkled like a trout in a burn. Spiritually, too, he passed for a typical Dorimarite; though, indeed, it is never safe to classify the souls of one's neighbors; one is apt, in the long run, to be proved a fool. You should regard each meeting with a friend as a sitting he is unwittingly giving you for a portrait—a portrait that, probably, when you or he die, will still be unfinished. And, though this is an absorbing pursuit, nevertheless, the painters are apt to end pessimists. For however handsome and merry may be the face, however rich may be the background, in the first rough sketch of each portrait, yet with every added stroke of the brush, with every tiny readjustment of the "values," with every modification of the chiaroscuro, the eyes looking out at you grow more disquieting. And, finally, it is your own face that you are staring at in terror, as in a mirror by candle-light, when all the house is still.

All who knew Master Nathaniel would have been not only surprised, but incredulous, had they been told he was not a happy man. Yet such was the case. His life was poisoned at its springs by a small, nameless fear; a fear not always active, for during considerable periods it would lie almost dormant—almost, but never entirely.

He knew the exact date of its genesis. One evening, many years ago, when he was still but a lad, he and some friends decided as a frolic to dress up as the ghosts of their ancestors and frighten the servants. There was no lack of properties; for the attics of the Chanticleers were filled with the lumber of the past: grotesque wooden masks, old weapons and musical instruments, and old costumes—tragic, hierophantic robes that looked little suited to the uses of daily life. There were whole chests, too, filled with pieces of silk, embroidered or painted with curious scenes. Who has not wondered in what mysterious forests our ancestors discovered the models for the beasts and birds upon their tapestries; and on what planet were enacted the scenes they have portrayed? It is in vain that the dead fingers have stitched beneath them—and we can picture the mocking smile with which these crafty cozeners of posterity accompanied the action—the words "February," or "Hawking," or "Harvest," having us believe that they are but illustrations of the activities proper to the different months. We know better. These are not the normal activities of mortal men. What kind of beings peopled the earth four or five centuries ago, what strange lore they had acquired, and what were their sinister doings, we shall never know. Our ancestors keep their secret well.

Among the Chanticleers' lumber there was also no lack of those delicate, sophisticated toys—fans, porcelain cups, engraved seals—that, when the civilisation that played with them is dead, become pathetic and appealing, just as tunes once gay inevitably become plaintive when the generation that first sang them has turned to dust. But those particular toys, one felt, could never have been really frivolous—there was a curious gravity about their colouring and lines. Besides, the moral of the ephemeral things with which they were decorated was often pointed in an aphorism or riddle. For instance, on a fan painted with wind-flowers and violets were illuminated these words: "Why is Melancholy like Honey? Because it is very sweet, and it is culled from Flowers."

These trifles clearly belonged to a later period than the masks and costumes. Nevertheless, they, too, seemed very remote from the daily life of the modern Dorimarites.

Well, when they had whitened their faces with flour and decked themselves out to look as fantastic as possible, Master Nathaniel seized one of the old instruments, a sort of lute ending in the carving of a cock's head, its strings rotted by damp and antiquity, and, crying out, "Let's see if this old fellow has a croak left in him!" plucked roughly at its strings. They gave out one note, so plangent, blood-freezing and alluring, that for a few seconds the company stood as if petrified.

Then one of the girls saved the situation with a humourous squawk, and, putting her hands to her ears, cried, "Thank you, Nat, for your cat's concert! It was worse than a squeaking slate." And one of the young men cried laughingly, "It must be the ghost of one of your ancestors, who wants to be let out and given a glass of his own claret." And the incident faded from their memories—but not from the memory of Master Nathaniel.

He was never again the same man. For years that note was the apex of his nightly dreams; the point towards which, by their circuitous and seemingly senseless windings, they had all the time been converging. It was as if the note were a living substance, and subject to the law of chemical changes—that is to say, as that law works in dreams. For instance, he might dream that his old nurse was baking an apple on the fire in her own cosy room, and as he watched it simmer and sizzle she would look at him with a strange smile, a smile such as he had never seen on her face in his waking hours, and say, "But, of course, you know it isn't really the apple. It's the Note."

The influence that this experience had had upon his attitude to daily life was a curious one. Before he had heard the note he had caused his father some uneasiness by his impatience of routine and his hankering after travel and adventure. He had, indeed, been heard to vow that he would rather be the captain of one of his father's ships than the sedentary owner of the whole fleet.

But after he had heard the Note a more stay-at-home and steady young man could not have been found in Lud-in-the-Mist. For it had generated in him what one can only call a wistful yearning after the prosaic things he already possessed. It was as if he thought he had already lost what he was actually holding in his hands.

From this there sprang an ever-present sense of insecurity together with a distrust of the homely things he cherished. With what familiar object—quill, pipe, pack of cards—would he be occupied, in which regular recurrent action—the pulling on or off of his nightcap, the weekly auditing of his accounts—would he be engaged when IT, the hidden menace, sprang out at him? And he would gaze in terror at his furniture, his walls, his pictures—what strange scene might they one day witness, what awful experience might he one day have in their presence?

Hence, at times, he would gaze on the present with the agonizing tenderness of one who gazes on the past: his wife, sitting under the lamp embroidering, and retailing to him the gossip she had culled during the day; or his little son, playing with the great mastiff on the floor.

This nostalgia for what was still there seemed to find a voice in the cry of the cock, which tells of the plough going through the land, the smell of the country, the placid bustle of the farm, as happening now, all round one; and which, simultaneously, mourns them as things vanished centuries ago.

From his secret poison there was, however, some sweetness to be distilled. For the unknown thing that he dreaded could at times be envisaged as a dangerous cape that he had already doubled. And to lie awake at night in his

warm feather bed, listening to the breathing of his wife and the soughing of the trees, would become, from this attitude, an exquisite pleasure.

He would say to himself, “How pleasant this is! How safe! How warm! What a difference from that lonely heath when I had no cloak and the wind found the fissures in my doublet, and my feet were aching, and there was not moon enough to prevent my stumbling, and IT was lurking in the darkness!” enhancing thus his present well-being by imagining some unpleasant adventure now safe behind him.

This also was the cause of his taking a pride in knowing his way about his native town. For instance, when returning from the Guildhall to his own house he would say to himself, “Straight across the market-place, down Appleimp Lane, and round by the Duke Aubrey Arms into the High Street.... I know every step of the way, every step of the way!”

And he would get a sense of security, a thrill of pride, from every acquaintance who passed the time of day with him, from every dog to whom he could put a name. “That’s Wagtail, Goceline Flack’s dog. That’s Mab, the bitch of Rackabite the butcher, I know them!”

Though he did not realise it, he was masquerading to himself as a stranger in Lud-in-the-Mist—a stranger whom nobody knew, and who was thus almost as safe as if he were invisible. And one always takes a pride in knowing one’s way about a strange town. But it was only this pride that emerged completely into his consciousness.

The only outward expression of this secret fear was a sudden, unaccountable irascibility, when some harmless word or remark happened to sting the fear into activity. He could not stand people saying, “Who knows what we shall be doing this time next year?” and he loathed such expressions as “for the last time,” “never again,” however trivial the context in which they appeared. For instance, he would snap his wife’s head off—why, she could not think—if she said, “Never again shall I go to that butcher,” or “That starch is a disgrace. It’s the last time I shall use it for my ruffs.”

This fear, too, had awakened in him a wistful craving for other men’s shoes that caused him to take a passionate interest in the lives of his neighbors; that is to say if these lives moved in a different sphere from his own. From this he had gained the reputation—not quite deserved—of being a very warm-hearted, sympathetic man, and he had won the heart of many a sea-captain, of many a farmer, of many an old working-woman by the unfeigned interest he showed in their conversation. Their long, meandering tales of humble normal lives were like the proverbial glimpse of a snug, lamp-lit parlour to a traveller belated after nightfall.

He even coveted dead men’s shoes, and he would loiter by the hour in the ancient burying-ground of Lud-in-the-Mist, known from time immemorial as the Fields of Grammary. He could justify this habit by pointing out the charming view that one got thence of both Lud and the surrounding country. But though he sincerely loved the view, what really brought him there were such epitaphs as this:

BAKER
WHO HAVING PROVIDED THE CITIZENS
OF LUD-IN-THE-MIST FOR SIXTY YEARS
WITH FRESH SWEET LOAVES
DIED AT THE AGE OF EIGHTY-EIGHT
SURROUNDED BY HIS SONS AND
GRANDSONS.

How willingly would he have changed places with that old baker! And then the disquieting thought would come to him that perhaps after all epitaphs are not altogether to be trusted.

CHAPTER II
THE DUKE WHO LAUGHED HIMSELF OFF A THRONE AND OTHER TRADITIONS OF DORIMARE

Before we start on our story, it will be necessary, for its proper understanding, to give a short sketch of the history of Dorimare and the beliefs and customs of its inhabitants.

Lud-in-the-Mist was scattered about the banks of two rivers, the Dapple and the Dawl, which met on its outskirts at an acute angle, the apex of which was the harbour. Then there were more houses up the side of a hill, on the top of which stood the Fields of Grammary.

The Dawl was the biggest river of Dorimare, and it became so broad at Lud-in-the-Mist as to give that town, twenty miles inland though it was, all the advantages of a port; while the actual seaport town itself was little more than a fishing village. The Dapple, however, which had its source in Fairyland (from a salt inland sea, the geographers held) and flowed subterraneously under the Debatable Hills, was a humble little stream, and played no part in the commercial life of the town. But an old maxim of Dorimare bade one never forget that ‘The Dapple flows into the Dawl.’ It had come to be employed when one wanted to show the inadvisability of despising the services of humble agents; but, possibly, it had originally another application.

The wealth and importance of the country was mainly due to the Dawl. It was thanks to the Dawl that girls in remote villages of Dorimare wore brooches made out of walrus tusks, and applied bits of unicorns’ horns to their toothache, that the chimney-piece in the parlour of almost every farm-house was adorned with an ostrich egg, and that when the ladies of Lud-in-the-Mist went out shopping or to play cards with their friends, their market-basket or ivory markers were carried by little indigo pages in crimson turbans from the Cinnamon Isles, and that pigmy peddlers from the far North hawked amber through the streets. For the Dawl had turned Lud-in-the-Mist into a town of merchants, and all the power and nearly all the wealth of the country was in their hands.

But this had not always been the case. In the old days Dorimare had been a duchy, and the population had consisted of nobles and peasants. But gradually there had arisen a middle-class. And this class had discovered—as it always does—that trade was seriously hampered by a ruler unchecked by a constitution, and by a ruthless, privileged class. Figuratively, these things were damming the Dawl.

Indeed, with each generation the Dukes had been growing more capricious and more selfish, till finally these failings had culminated in Duke Aubrey, a hunchback with a face of angelic beauty, who seemed to be possessed by a laughing demon of destructiveness. He had been known, out of sheer wantonness, to gallop with his hunt straight through a field of standing corn, and to set fire to a fine ship for the mere pleasure of watching it burn. And he dealt with the virtue of his subjects’ wives and daughters in the same high-handed way.

As a rule, his pranks were seasoned by a slightly sinister humour. For instance, when on the eve of marriage a maid, according to immemorial custom, was ritually offering her virginity to the spirit of the farm, symbolised by the most ancient tree on the freehold, Duke Aubrey would leap out from behind it, and, pretending to be the spirit, take her at her word. And tradition said that he and one of his boon companions wagered that they would succeed in making the court

jester commit suicide of his own free will. So they began to work on his imagination with plaintive songs, the burden of which was the frailty of all lovely things, and with grim fables comparing man to a shepherd, doomed to stand by impotent, while his sheep are torn, one by one, by a ravenous wolf.

They won their wager; for coming into the jester's room one morning they found him hanging from the ceiling, dead. And it was believed that echoes of the laughter with which Duke Aubrey greeted this spectacle were, from time to time, still to be heard proceeding from that room.

But there had been pleasanter aspects to him. For one thing, he had been an exquisite poet, and such of his songs as had come down were as fresh as flowers and as lonely as the cuckoo's cry. While in the country stories were still told of his geniality and tenderness—how he would appear at a village wedding with a cart-load of wine and cakes and fruit, or of how he would stand at the bedside of the dying, grave and compassionate as a priest.

Nevertheless, the grim merchants, obsessed by a will to wealth, raised up the people against him. For three days a bloody battle raged in the streets of Lud-in-the-Mist, in which fell all the nobles of Dorimare. As for Duke Aubrey, he vanished — some said to Fairyland, where he was living to this day. During those three days of bloodshed all the priests had vanished also. So Dorimare lost simultaneously its Duke and its cult.

In the days of the Dukes, fairy things had been looked on with reverence, and the most solemn event of the religious year had been the annual arrival from Fairyland of mysterious, hooded strangers with milk-white mares, laden with offerings of fairy fruit for the Duke and the high-priest.

But after the revolution, when the merchants had seized all the legislative and administrative power, a taboo was placed on all things fairy.

This was not to be wondered at. For one thing, the new rulers considered that the eating of fairy fruit had been the chief cause of the degeneracy of the Dukes. It had, indeed, always been connected with poetry and visions, which, springing as they do from an ever-present sense of mortality, might easily appear morbid to the sturdy common sense of a burgher-class in the making. There was certainly nothing morbid about the men of the revolution, and under their regime what one can only call the tragic sense of life vanished from poetry and art.

Besides, to the minds of the Dorimarites, fairy things had always spelled delusion. The songs and legends described Fairyland as a country where the villages appeared to be made of gold and cinnamon wood, and where priests, who lived on opobalsum and frankincense, hourly offered holocausts of peacocks and golden bulls to the sun and the moon. But if an honest, clear-eyed mortal gazed on these things long enough, the glittering castles would turn into old, gnarled trees, the lamps into glow-worms, the precious stones into potsherds, and the magnificently-robed priests and their gorgeous sacrifices into aged crones muttering over a fire of twigs.

The fairies themselves, tradition taught, were eternally jealous of the solid blessings of mortals, and, clothed in invisibility, would crowd to weddings and wakes and fairs—wherever good victuals, in fact, were to be found—and suck the juices from fruits and meats—in vain, for nothing could make them substantial.

Nor was it only food that they stole. In out-of-the-way country places it was still believed that corpses were but fairy cheats, made to resemble flesh and bone, but without any real substance—otherwise, why should they turn so quickly to dust? But the real person, for which the corpse was but a flimsy substitute, had been carried away by the Fairies, to tend their blue kine and reap their fields of gillyflowers. The country people, indeed, did not always clearly distinguish between the Fairies and the dead. They called them both the "Silent People"; and the Milky Way they thought was the path along which the dead were carried to Fairyland.

Another tradition said that their only means of communication was poetry and music; and in the country poetry and music were still called "the language of the Silent People."

Naturally enough, men who were teaching the Dawl to run gold, who were digging canals and building bridges, and seeing that the tradesmen gave good measure and used standard weights, and who liked both virtues and commodities to be solid, had little patience for flimsy cheats. Nevertheless, the new rulers were creating their own form of delusion, for it was they who founded in Dorimare the science of jurisprudence, taking as their basis the primitive code used under the Dukes and adapting it to modern conditions by the use of legal fictionS.

Master Josiah Chanticleer (the father of Master Nathaniel), who had been a very ingenious and learned jurist, had drawn in one of his treatises a curious parallel between fairy things and the law. The men of the revolution, he said, had substituted law for fairy fruit. But whereas only the reigning Duke and his priests had been allowed to partake of the fruit, the law was given freely to rich and poor alike. Again, fairy was delusion, so was the law. At any rate, it was a sort of magic, moulding reality into any shape it chose. But, whereas fairy magic and delusion were for the cozening and robbing of man, the magic of the law was to his intention and for his welfare.

In the eye of the law, neither Fairyland nor fairy things existed. But then, as Master Josiah had pointed out, the law plays fast and loose with reality—and no one really believes it.

Gradually, an almost physical horror came to be felt for anything connected with the Fairies and Fairyland, and society followed the law in completely ignoring their existence. Indeed, the very word "fairy" became taboo, and was never heard on polite lips, while the greatest insult one Dorimarite could hurl at another was to call him "Son of a Fairy."

But, on the painted ceilings of ancient houses, in the peeling frescoes of old barns, in the fragments of bas-reliefs built into modern structures, and, above all, in the tragic funereal statues of the Fields of Grammary, a Winckelmann, had he visited Dorimare, would have found, as he did in the rococo Rome of the eighteenth century, traces of an old and solemn art, the designs of which served as poncifs to the modern artists. For instance, a well-known advertisement of a certain cheese, which depicted a comic, fat little man menacing with knife and fork an enormous cheese hanging in the sky like the moon, was really a sort of unconscious comic reprisal made against the action depicted in a very ancient Dorimarite design, wherein the moon itself pursued a frieze of tragic fugitives.

Well, a few years before the opening of this story, a Winckelmann, though an anonymous one, actually did appear in Lud-in-the-Mist; although the field of his enquiries was not limited to the plastic arts. He published a book, entitled *Traces of Fairy in the Inhabitants, Customs, Art, Vegetation and Language of Dorimare*.

His thesis was this: that there was an unmistakable fairy strain running through the race of Dorimarites, which could only be explained by the hypothesis that, in the olden days, there had been frequent intermarriage between them and the Fairies. For instance, the red hair, so frequent in Dorimare, pointed, he maintained, to such a strain. It was also to be found, he asserted, in the cattle of Dorimare. For this assertion he had some foundation, for it was undeniable that from time to time a dun or dapple cow would bring forth a calf of a bluish tinge, whose dung was of a ruddy gold. And tradition taught that all the cattle of Fairyland were blue, and that fairy gold turned into dung when it had crossed the border. Tradition also taught that all the flowers of Fairyland were red, and it was indisputable that the cornflowers of Dorimare sprang up from time to time as red as poppies, and the lilies as red as damask roses. Moreover, he discovered traces of the Fairies' language in the oaths of the Dorimarites and in some of their names. And, to a stranger, it certainly produced an odd impression to hear such high-flown oaths as; by the Sun, Moon and Stars; by the Golden Apples of the West; by the Harvest of Souls; by the White Ladies of the Fields; by the Milky Way, come tumbling out in the same breath with such homely expletives as Busty Bridget; Toasted Cheese; Suffering Cats; by my Great-Aunt's Rump; or to find names like Dreamsweet, Ambrose, Moonlove, wedded to such grotesque surnames as Baldbreech, Fliperarde, or Pyepowders.

With regard to the designs of old tapestries and old bas-reliefs, he maintained that they were illustrations of the flora, fauna, and history of Fairyland, and scouted the orthodox theory which explained the strange birds and flowers as being due either to the artists' unbridled fancy or to their imperfect control of their medium, and considered that the fantastic scenes were taken from the rituals of the old religion. For, he insisted, all artistic types, all ritual acts, must be modelled on realities; and Fairyland is the place where what we look upon as symbols and figures actually exist and occur.

If the antiquary, then, was correct, the Dorimarite, like a Dutchman of the seventeenth century, smoking his churchwarden among his tulips, and eating his dinner off Delft plates, had trivialised to his own taste the solemn spiritual art of a remote, forbidden land, which he believed to be inhabited by grotesque and evil creatures given over to strange vices and to dark cults … nevertheless in the veins of the Dutchman of Dorimare there flowed without his knowing it the blood of these same evil creatures.

It is easy to imagine the fury caused in Lud-in-the-Mist by the appearance of this book. The printer was, of course, heavily fined, but he was unable to throw any light on its authorship. The manuscript, he said, had been brought to him by a rough, red-haired lad, whom he had never seen before. All the copies were burned by the common hangman, and there the matter had to rest.

In spite of the law's maintaining that Fairyland and everything to do with it was non-existent, it was an open secret that, though fairy fruit was no longer brought into the country with all the pomp of established ritual, anyone who wanted it could always procure it in Lud-in-the-Mist. No great effort had ever been made to discover the means and agents by which it was smuggled into the town; for to eat fairy fruit was regarded as a loathsome and filthy vice, practised in low taverns by disreputable and insignificant people, such as indigo sailors and pigmy Norsemen. True, there had been cases known from time to time, during the couple of centuries that had elapsed since the expulsion of Duke Aubrey, of youths of good family taking to this vice. But to be suspected of such a thing spelled complete social ostracism, and this, combined with the innate horror felt for the stuff by every Dorimarite, caused such cases to be very rare.

But some twenty years before the opening of this story, Dorimare had been inflicted with a terrible drought. People were reduced to making bread out of vetches and beans and fern-roots; and marsh and tarn were rifled of their reeds to provide the cattle with food, while the Dawl was diminished to the size of an ordinary rill, as were the other rivers of Dorimare—with the exception of the Dapple. All through the drought the waters of the Dapple remained unimpaired; but this was not to be wondered at, as a river whose sources are in Fairyland has probably mysterious sources of moisture. But, as the drought burned relentlessly on, in the country districts an ever-increasing number of people succumbed to the vice of fairy fruit-eating … with tragic results to themselves, for though the fruit was very grateful to their parched throats, its spiritual effects were most alarming, and every day fresh rumours reached Lud-in-the-Mist (it was in the country districts that this epidemic, for so we must call it, raged) of madness, suicide, orgiastic dances, and wild doings under the moon. But the more they ate the more they wanted, and though they admitted that the fruit produced an agony of mind, they maintained that for one who had experienced this agony life would cease to be life without it.

How the fruit got across the border remained a mystery, and all the efforts of the magistrates to stop it were useless. In vain they invented a legal fiction (as we have seen, the law took no cognisance of fairy things) that turned fairy fruit into a form of woven silk and, hence, contraband in Dorimare; in vain they fulminated in the Senate against all smugglers and all men of depraved minds and filthy habits—silently, surely, the supply of fairy fruit continued to meet the demand. Then, with the first rain, both began to decrease. But the inefficiency of the magistrates in this national crisis was never forgotten, and "feckless as a magistrate in the great drought" became a proverb in Dorimare.

As a matter of fact, the ruling class of Dorimare had become incapable of handling any serious business. The wealthy merchants of Lud-in-the-Mist, the descendants of the men of the revolution and the hereditary rulers of Dorimare had, by this time, turned into a set of indolent, self-indulgent, humorous gentlemen, with hearts as little touched to tragic issues as those of their forefathers, but with none of their forefathers' sterling qualities.

A class struggling to assert itself, to discover its true shape, which lies hidden, as does the statue in the marble, in the hard, resisting material of life itself, must, in the nature of things, be different from that same class when chisel and mallet have been laid aside, and it has actually become what it had so long been struggling to be. For one thing, wealth had ceased to be a delicate, exotic blossom. It had become naturalised in Dorimare, and was now a hardy perennial, docilely renewing itself year after year, and needing no tending from the gardeners.

Hence sprang leisure, that fissure in the solid masonry of works and days in which take seed a myriad curious little flowers—good cookery, and shining mahogany, and a fashion in dress, that, like a baroque bust, is fantastic through sheer wittiness, and porcelain shepherdesses, and the humours, and endless jokes—in fact, the toys, material and spiritual, of civilisation. But they were as different as possible from the toys of that older civilisation that littered the attics of the Chanticleers. About these there had been something tragic and a little sinister; while all the

manifestations of the modern civilisation were like fire-light—fantastic, but homely.

Such, then, were the men in whose hands lay the welfare of the country. And, it must be confessed, they knew but little and cared still less about the common people for whom they legislated.

For instance, they were unaware that in the country Duke Aubrey's memory was still green. It was not only that natural children still went by the name of "Duke Aubrey's brats"; that when they saw a falling star old women would say, "Duke Aubrey has shot a roe"; and that on the anniversary of his expulsion, maidens would fling into the Dapple, for luck, garlands woven out of the two plants that had formed the badge of the Dukes—ivy and squills. He was a living reality to the country people; so much so that, when leakages were found in the vats, or when a horse was discovered in the morning with his coat stained and furrowed with sweat, some rogue of a farm-hand could often escape punishment by swearing that Duke Aubrey had been the culprit. And there was not a farm or village that had not at least one inhabitant who swore that he had seen him, on some midsummer's eve, or some night of the winter solstice, galloping past at the head of his fairy hunt, with harlequin ribbands streaming in the wind, to the sound of innumerable bells.

But of Fairyland and its inhabitants the country people knew no more than did the merchants of Lud-in-the-Mist. Between the two countries stood the barrier of the Debatable Hills, the foothills of which were called the Elfin Marches, and were fraught, tradition said, with every kind of danger, both physical and moral. No one in the memory of man had crossed these hills, and to do so was considered tantamount to death.

Brunanburh: a covenant site?

One of the largest battlefields in Mythic Britain is missing. Could it be hidden with magic like "The Shrouded Glen" to allow a covenant to dwell on a site filled with summonable dead?

"Never, before this, were more men in this island slain by the sword's edge–as books and aged sages confirm–since Angles and Saxons sailed here from the east, sought the Britons over the wide seas, since those warsmiths hammered the Welsh, and earls, eager for glory, overran the land."

-*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Crossley-Holland translation)

Let's frame the idea historically. The first King of England, on most modern lists, is Athelstan. In 926, having taken control of all of the Anglo-Saxon territories in what's now southern England, he marches north and takes York, then raids Scotland and Strathclyde. The next year their kings each acknowledge him as overlord. The Welsh are pacified through a series of wars and alliances. He also takes Exeter from the Cornish, at least according to folklore. The material evidence on that one doesn't stack up. In brief, Athelstan holds everything on the island of Great Britain, in a tenuous way.

A great alliance formed against Athelstan. Its leader is Olaf, king of Dublin, who has a claim to the area about York and is able to raise a lot of Norse-descended soldiers from Northumbria. He marries the daughter of Constantine, the King of Scots, to cement the alliance. Owen, the King of Strathclyde, is a Scottish ally. They mustered, and the two sides make so bloody a battle that for a couple of generations afterward, when people said "the great battle" this was the one they were presumed to mean. We call it the Battle of Brunanburh, after a poem written about it, but it has other names in various English, Welsh, Irish, Norse and Gaelic sources. Some of these sources state that the goal of the alliance was to divide England up, so that it could no longer threaten them. At least one says that the hope is to roll the English back into the sea.

Athelstan crushes the alliance: literally massacring the opposing army to a degree that shocked most of the people who chronicled it. How important his victory was is disputed by modern scholars. Some say it was Pyrrhic, because he was unable to maintain his grip on the Scots, Welsh and Cumbrians, and on his death the King of Dublin pops across and grabs Northumbria before Athelstan's son can fortify it. Others point out that this is where the borders of England stabilize. I've been playing a bit of Crusader Kings 3 recently and there's this idea of the natural rulers of places: England's borders come from this battle. Sure, they are mucked about with a bit later, when a bite gets taken out of Scotland. James I tried to move the Welsh border east so that his son gets a bigger Wales to be prince of. Basically, though: this is the bit where people accept roughly where "England" is. It's the biggest and bloodiest and most important battle until 1066.

So, it seems odd that no-one can agree where it was. Modern scholars have suggested sites from Scotland to Shropshire, because one of the texts says that Athelstan allows the invaders to over-extend by coming deep into his territory. One site which has a bit of public recognition is Bromborough, on the Wirral, near Liverpool. In Ars Magica, however, I like the idea that this is the site of a covenant, and the necromantically-inclined Tremere would find an enormous army of pagan dead extremely useful. The Dubliners are not yet Christians here. If you wanted to keep Blackthorn in Wales, that's easy enough: even in period there some evidence of Welsh involvement in setting up the alliance, although there doesn't seem to have been a Welsh contingent at the battle itself.

The Colony of Cats by Andrew Lang

I was listening to a recording of The Crimson Fairy book by Andrew Lang, recorded by Jenny Lundak for Librivox, and struck a colony of the malkins I wrote about in the Medieval Bestiary for Magonomia. I haven't really used Lang for much. His spider-headed man turns up in Ars Magica, but other than that I've just not used him, and I'm not sure why.

Long, long ago, as far back as the time when animals spoke, there lived a community of cats in a deserted house they had taken possession of not far from a large town. They had everything they could possibly desire for their comfort, they were well fed and well lodged, and if by any chance an unlucky mouse was stupid enough to venture in their way, they caught it, not to eat it, but for the pure pleasure of catching it. The old people of the town related how they had heard their parents speak of a time when the whole country was so overrun with rats and mice that there was not so much as a grain of corn nor an ear of maize to be gathered in the fields; and it might be out of gratitude to the cats who had rid the country of these plagues that their descendants were allowed to live in peace. No one knows where they got the money to pay for everything, nor who paid it, for all this happened so very long ago. But one thing is certain, they were rich enough to keep a servant; for though they lived very happily together, and did not scratch nor fight more than human beings would have done, they were not clever enough to do the housework themselves, and preferred at all events to have some one to cook their meat, which they would have scorned to eat raw. Not only were they very difficult to please about the housework, but most women quickly tired of living alone with only cats for companions, consequently they never kept a servant long; and it had become a saying in the town, when anyone found herself reduced to her last penny: "I will go and live with the cats," and so many a poor woman actually did.

Now Lizina was not happy at home, for her mother, who was a widow, was much fonder of her elder daughter; so that often the younger one fared very badly, and had not enough to eat, while the elder could have everything she desired, and if Lizina dared to complain she was certain to have a good beating.

At last the day came when she was at the end of her courage and patience, and exclaimed to her mother and sister: "As you hate me so much you will be glad to be rid of me, so I am going to live with the cats!"

"Be off with you!" cried her mother, seizing an old broom-handle from behind the door. Poor Lizina did not wait to be told twice, but ran off at once and never stopped till she reached the door of the cats' house. Their cook had left them that very morning, with her face all scratched, the result of such a quarrel with the head of the house that he had very nearly scratched out her eyes. Lizina therefore was warmly welcomed, and she set to work at once to prepare the dinner, not without many misgivings as to the tastes of the cats, and whether she would be able to satisfy them.

Going to and fro about her work, she found herself frequently hindered by a constant succession of cats who appeared one after another in the kitchen to inspect the new servant; she had one in front of her feet, another perched on the back of her chair while she peeled the vegetables, a third sat on the table beside her, and five or six others prowled about among the pots and pans on the shelves against the wall. The air resounded with their purring, which meant that they were pleased with their new maid, but Lizina had not yet learned to understand their language, and often she did not know what they wanted her to do. However, as she was a good, kindhearted girl, she set to work to pick up the little kittens which tumbled about on the floor, she patched up quarrels, and nursed on her lap a big tabby—the oldest of the community—which had a lame paw. All these kindnesses could hardly fail to make a favourable impression on the cats, and it was even better after a while, when she had had time to grow accustomed to their strange ways. Never had the house been kept so clean, the meats so well served, nor the sick cats so well cared for. After a time they had a visit from an old cat, whom they called their father, who lived by himself in a barn at the top of the hill, and came down from time to time to inspect the little colony. He too was much taken with Lizina, and inquired, on first seeing her: "Are you well served by this nice, black-eyed little person?" and the cats answered with one voice: "Oh, yes, Father Gatto, we have never had so good a servant!"

At each of his visits the answer was always the same; but after a time the old cat, who was very observant, noticed that the little maid had grown to look sadder and sadder. "What is the matter, my child has any one been unkind to you?" he asked one day, when he found her crying in her kitchen. She burst into tears and answered between her sobs: "Oh, no! they are all very good to

me; but I long for news from home, and I pine to see my mother and my sister."

Old Gatto, being a sensible old cat, understood the little servant's feelings. "You shall go home," he said, "and you shall not come back here unless you please. But first you must be rewarded for all your kind services to my children. Follow me down into the inner cellar, where you have never yet been, for I always keep it locked and carry the key away with me."

Lizina looked round her in astonishment as they went down into the great vaulted cellar underneath the kitchen. Before her stood the big earthenware water jars, one of which contained oil, the other a liquid shining like gold. "In which of these jars shall I dip you?" asked Father Gatto, with a grin that showed all his sharp white teeth, while his moustaches stood out straight on either side of his face. The little maid looked at the two jars from under her long dark lashes: "In the oil jar," she answered timidly, thinking to herself: "I could not ask to be bathed in gold."

But Father Gatto replied: "No, no; you have deserved something better than that." And seizing her in his strong paws he plunged her into the liquid gold. Wonder of wonders! when Lizina came out of the jar she shone from head to foot like the sun in the heavens on a fine summer's day. Her pretty pink cheeks and long black hair alone kept their natural colour, otherwise she had become like a statue of pure gold. Father Gatto purred loudly with satisfaction. "Go home," he said, "and see your mother and sisters; but take care if you hear the cock crow to turn towards it; if on the contrary the ass brays, you must look the other way."

The little maid, having gratefully kissed the white paw of the old cat, set off for home; but just as she got near her mother's house the cock crowed, and quickly she turned towards it. Immediately a beautiful golden star appeared on her forehead, crowning her glossy black hair. At the same time the ass began to bray, but Lizina took care not to look over the fence into the field where the donkey was feeding. Her mother and sister, who were in front of their house, uttered cries of admiration and astonishment when they saw her, and their cries became still louder when Lizina, taking her handkerchief from her pocket, drew out also a handful of gold.

For some days the mother and her two daughters lived very happily together, for Lizina had given them everything she had brought away except her golden clothing, for that would not come off, in spite of all the efforts of her sister, who was madly jealous of her good fortune. The golden star, too, could not be removed from her forehead. But all the gold pieces she drew from her pockets had found their way to her mother and sister.

"I will go now and see what I can get out of the pussies," said Peppina, the elder girl, one morning, as she took Lizina's basket and fastened her pockets into her own skirt. "I should like some of the cats' gold for myself," she thought, as she left her mother's house before the sun rose.

The cat colony had not yet taken another servant, for they knew they could never get one to replace Lizina, whose loss they had not yet ceased to mourn. When they heard that Peppina was her sister, they all ran to meet her. "She is not the least like her," the kittens whispered among themselves.

"Hush, be quiet!" the older cats said; "all servants cannot be pretty.

No, decidedly she was not at all like Lizina. Even the most reasonable and large-minded of the cats soon acknowledged that.

The very first day she shut the kitchen door in the face of the tom-cats who used to enjoy watching Lizina at her work, and a young and mischievous cat who jumped in by the open kitchen window and alighted on the table got such a blow with the rolling-pin that he squalled for an hour.

With every day that passed the household became more and more aware of its misfortune.

The work was as badly done as the servant was surly and disagreeable; in the corners of the rooms there were collected heaps of dust; spiders' webs hung from the ceilings and in front of the window-panes; the beds were hardly ever made, and the feather beds, so beloved by the old and feeble cats, had never once been shaken since Lizina left the house. At Father Gatto's next visit he found the whole colony in a state of uproar.

"Caesar has one paw so badly swollen that it looks as if it were broken," said one. "Peppina kicked him with her great wooden shoes on. Hector has an abscess in his back where a wooden chair was flung at him; and Agrippina's three little kittens have died of hunger beside their mother, because Peppina forgot them in their basket up in the attic. There is no putting up with the creature—do send her away, Father Gatto! Lizina herself would not be angry with us; she must know very well what her sister is like."

"Come here," said Father Gatto, in his most severe tones to Peppina. And he took her down into the cellar and showed her the same two great jars that he had showed Lizina. "In which of these shall I dip you?" he asked; and she made haste to answer: "In the liquid gold," for she was no more modest than she was good and kind.

Father Gatto's yellow eyes darted fire. "You have not deserved it," he uttered, in a voice like thunder, and seizing her he flung her into the jar of oil, where she was nearly suffocated. When she came to the surface screaming and struggling, the vengeful cat seized her again and rolled her in the ash-heap on the floor; then when she rose, dirty, blinded, and disgusting to behold, he thrust her from the door, saying: "Begone, and when you meet a braying ass be careful to turn your head towards it."

Stumbling and raging, Peppina set off for home, thinking herself fortunate to find a stick by the wayside with which to support herself. She was within sight of her mother's house when she heard in the meadow on the right, the voice of a donkey loudly braying. Quickly she turned her head towards it, and at the same time put her hand up to her forehead, where, waving like a plume, was a donkey's tail. She ran home to her mother at the top of her speed, yelling with rage and despair; and it took Lizina two hours with a big basin of hot water and two cakes of soap to get rid of the layer of ashes with which Father Gatto had adorned her. As for the donkey's tail, it was impossible to get rid of that; it was as firmly fixed on her forehead as was the golden star on Lizina's. Their mother was furious. She first beat Lizina unmercifully with the broom, then she took her to the mouth of the well and lowered her into it, leaving her at the bottom weeping and crying for help.

Before this happened, however, the king's son in passing the mother's house had seen Lizina sitting sewing in the parlour, and had been dazzled by her beauty. After coming back two or three times, he at last ventured to approach the window and to whisper in the softest voice: "Lovely maiden, will you be my bride?" and she had answered: "I will."

Next morning, when the prince arrived to claim his bride, he found her wrapped in a large white veil. "It is so that maidens are received from their parents' hands," said the mother, who hoped to make the king's

son marry Peppina in place of her sister, and had fastened the donkey's tail round her head like a lock of hair under the veil. The prince was young and a little timid, so he made no objections, and seated Peppina in the carriage beside him.

Their way led past the old house inhabited by the cats, who were all at the window, for the report had got about that the prince was going to marry the most beautiful maiden in the world, on whose forehead shone a golden star, and they knew that this could only be their adored Lizina. As the carriage slowly passed in front of the old house, where cats from all parts of world seemed to be gathered a song burst from every throat:

Mew, mew, mew!
Prince, look quick behind you!
In the well is fair Lizina,
And you've got nothing but Peppina.

When he heard this the coachman, who understood the cat's language better than the prince, his master, stopped his horses and asked:
"Does your highness know what the grimalkins are saying?" and the song broke forth again louder than ever.

With a turn of his hand the prince threw back the veil, and discovered the puffed-up, swollen face of Peppina, with the donkey's tail twisted round her head. "Ah, traitress!" he exclaimed, and ordering the horses to be turned round, he drove the elder daughter, quivering with rage, to the old woman who had sought to deceive him. With his hand on the hilt of his sword he demanded Lizina in so terrific a voice that the mother hastened to the well to draw her prisoner out. Lizina's clothing and her star shone so brilliantly that when the prince led her home to the king, his father, the whole palace was lit up. Next day they were married, and lived happy ever after; and all the cats, headed by old Father Gatto, were present at the wedding.

The Ghoul by Clark Ashton Smith

Clark Ashton Smith is one of my favourite fantasy authors but I haven't been able to use much of his material here on the podcast. He died slightly too late for his material to be available to us in the public domain. Also TSR bought the role-playing rights to his material at some stage and his fantasy settings (particularly Averoigne) are found in the Mystara "Principalities of Glantri" gazetter and in module X2 "Castle Amber". Nobody wants to fight Hasbro, so we have to look for little bits of material that have fallen into the public domain because their copyright was not renewed. This story was sent to a tiny magazine called "The fantasy fan" that was wound up by its editor after the first dozen (or so) issues.

This story has a great deal of orientalism. Its "Arabic" characters that are lampshaded as stolen from a book called Vathek. All of that in an Ars Magica game would likely be stripped away and you would be left with the core premise, which is that there is a serial killer behaving in an unusual way. The player characters need to discover why.

Now over to Ben Tucker. Thanks to him and to his LibriVox team.

During the reign of the Caliph Vathek, a young man of good repute and family, named Noureddin Hassan, was hauled before the Cadi Alimed ben Becar at Bussorah. Now Noureddin was a comely youth, of open mind and gentle mien; and great was the astonishment of the Cadi and of all others present when they heard the charges that were preferred against him. He was accused of having slain seven people one by one, on seven successive nights, and of having left the corpses in a cemetery near Bussorah, where they were found lying with their bodies and members devoured in a fearsome manner, as if by jackals. Of the people he was said to have slain, three were women two were traveling merchants, one was a mendicant, and one a graved digger.

Abmed ben Becar was filled with the learning and wisdom of honorable years, and withal was possessed of much perspicacity. But he was deeply perplexed by the strangeness and atrocity of these crimes and by the mild demeanor and well-bred aspect of Noureddin Hassan, which he could in no wise reconcile with them. He heard in silence the testimony of witnesses who had seen Noureddin bearing on his shoulders the body of a woman at yester-eve in the cemetery; and others who on several occasions had observed him coming from the neighborhood at unseemly hours when only thieves and murderers would be abroad. Then, having considered all these, he questioned the youth closely.

"Noureddin Hassan," he said, "thou hast been charged with crimes of exceeding foulness, which thy bearing and lineaments belie. Is there haply some explanation of these things by which thou canst clear thyself, or in some measure mitigate the heinousness of thy deeds, if so it be that thou art guilty? I adjure thee to tell me the truth in this matter."

Now Noureddin Hassan arose before the Cadi; and the heaviness of extreme shame and sorrow was visible on his countenance.

"Alas, O Cadi," he replied, "for the charges that have been brought against me are indeed true. It was I and no other, who slew these people; nor can I offer an extenuation of my act."

The Cadi was sorely grieved and astonished when he heard this answer.

"I must perforce believe thee," he said sternly. "But thou hast confessed a thing which will make thy name hence forward an abomination in the ears and mouths of men. I command thee to tell me why these crimes were committed, and what offense these persons had given thee, or what injury they had done to thee; or if perchance thou slewest them for gain, like a common robber."

"There was neither offense given nor injury wrought by any of them against me," replied Noureddin. "And I did not kill them for their money or belongings or apparel, since I had no need of such things, and, aside from that, have always been an honest man."

"Then," cried Ahmed ben Becar, greatly puzzled, "what was thy reason if it was none of these ?"

Now the face of Noureddin Hassan grew heavier still with sorrow; and he bowed his head in a shamefaced manner that bespoke the utterness of profound remorse. And standing thus before the Cadi, he told this story:

The reversals of fortune, O Cadi, are swift and grievous, and beyond the foreknowing or advertence of man. Alas! for less than a fortnight agone I was the happiest and most guiltless of mortals, with no thought of wrongdoing toward anyone. I was wedded to Amina, the daughter of the jewel-merchant Aboul Cogia; and I loved her deeply and was much beloved by her in turn; and moreover we were at this time anticipating the birth of our first child. I had inherited from my father a rich estate and many slaves; the cares of life were light upon my shoulders; and I had, it would seem, every reason to count myself among those Allah had blest with an earthly foretaste of Heaven.

Judge, then, the excessive nature of my grief when Amina died in the same hour when she was to have been delivered. From that time, in the dire extremity of my lamentation, I was as one bereft of light and knowledge; I was deaf to all those who sought to condole with me, and blind to their friendly offices.

After the burial of Amina my sorrow became a veritable madness, and I wandered by night to her grave in the cemetery near Bussorah and flung myself prostrate before

the newly lettered tombstone, on the earth that had been digged that very day. My senses deserted me, and I knew not how long I remained on the damp clay beneath the cypresses, while the horn of a decrescent moon arose in the heavens.

Then, in my stupor of abandonment, I heard a terrible voice that bade me rise from the ground on which I was lying. And lifting my head a little, I saw a hideous demon of gigantic frame and stature, with eyes of scarlet fire beneath brows that were coarse as tangled rootlets, and fangs that overhung a cavernous mouth, and earth-black teeth longer and sharper than those of the hyena. And the demon said to me:
"I am a ghoul, and it is my office to devour the bodies of the dead. I have now come to claim the corpse that was interred today beneath the soil on which thou art lying in a fashion so unmannerly. Begone, for I have fasted since yester-night, and I am much anhungered."

Now, at the sight of this demon, and the sound of his dreadful voice, and the still more dreadful meaning of his words, I was like to have swooned with terror on the cold clay. But I recovered myself in a manner, and besought him, saying:
"Spare this grave, I implore thee; for she who lies buried therein is dearer to me than any living mortal; and I would not that her fair body should be the provender of an unclean demon such as thou."

At this the ghoul was angered, and I thought that he would have done me some bodily violence. But again I besought him, swearing by Allah and Mohammed with many solemn oaths that I would grant him anything procurable and would do for him any favor that lay in the power of man if he would leave undespoiled the new-made grave of Amina. And the ghoul was somewhat mollified, and he said:

"If thou wilt indeed perform for me a certain service, I shall do as thou askest." And I replied:

"There is no service, whatsoever its nature, that I will not do for thee in this connection, and I pray thee to name thy desire."

Then the ghoul said: "It is this, that thou shalt bring me each night, for eight successive nights, the body of one whom thou hast slain with thine own hand. Do this, and I shall neither devour nor dig the body that lies interred hereunder."

Now was I seized by utter horror and despair, since I had bound myself in all honor to grant the ghoul his hideous requirement. And I begged him to change the terms of the stipulation, saying to him: "Is it needful to thee, O eater of corpses, that the bodies should be those of people whom I myself have slain?"

And the ghoul said: "Yea, for all others would be the natural provendor of myself or of my kin in any event. I adjure thee by the promise thou hast given to meet me here tomorrow night, when darkness has wholly fallen or as soon thereafter as thou art able, bringing the first of the eight bodies."

So saying, he strode off among the cypresses, and began to dig in another newly made grave at a little distance from that of Amina.

I left the graveyard in even direr anguish than when I had come, thinking of that which I must do in fulfillment of my sworn promise, to preserve the body of Amina from the demon. I know not how I survived the ensuing day, torn as I was between sorrow for the dead and my horror of the coming night with its repugnant duty.

When darkness had descended I went forth by stealth to a lonely road near the cemetery; and waiting there amid the low-grown branches of the trees, I slew the first passer with a sword and carried his body to the spot appointed by the ghoul. And each night thereafter, for six more nights, I returned to the same vicinity and repeated this deed, slaying always the very first who came, whether man or woman, or merchant or beggar or gravedigger. And the ghoul awaited me on each occasion, and would begin to devour his provender in my presence, with small thanks and scant ceremony. Seven persons did I slay in all, till only one was wanting to complete the agreed number; and the person I slew yester-night was a woman, even as the witnesses have testified. All this I did with utmost repugnance and regret, and sustained only by the remembrance of my plighted word and the fate which would befall the corpse of Amina if I should break the bond.

This, O Cadi, is all my story. Alas! For these lamentable crimes have availed me not, and I have failed in wholly keeping my bargain with the demon, who will doubtless this night consume the body of Amina in lieu of the one corpse that is still lacking. I resign myself to thy judgment, O Ahmed ben Becar, and I beseech thee for no other mercy than that of death, wherewith to terminate my double grief and my twofold remorse.

When Noureddin Hassan had ended his narrative, the amazement of all who had heard him was verily multiplied, since no man could remember hearing a stranger tale. And the Cadi pondered for a long time and then gave judgment, saying:

"I must needs marvel at thy story, but the crimes thou hast committed are none the less heinous, and Iblis himself would stand aghast before them. However, some allowance must be made for the fact that thou hadst given thy word to the ghoul and wast bound as it were in honor to fulfill his demand, no matter how horrible its nature. And allowance must likewise be made for thy connubial grief which caused thee to forfend thy wife's body from the demon, Yet I cannot judge thee guiltless, though I know not the punishment which is merited in a case so utterly without parallel. Therefore, I set thee free, with this injucnttion, that thou shalt make atonement for thy crimes in the fashion that seemeth best to thee, and shalt render justice to thyself and to others in such degree as thou art able."

"I thank thee for this mercy," replied Noureddin Hassan; and he then withdrew from the court amid the wonderment of all who were present. There was much debate when he had gone, and many were prone to question the wisdom of the Cadi's decision. Some there were who maintained that Noureddin should have been sentenced to death without delay for his abominable actions though others argued for if the sanctity of his oath to the ghoul, and would have exculpated him altogether or in part. And tales were told and instances were cited regarding the habits of ghouls and the strange plight of men who had surprised such demons in their nocturnal delvings. And again the discussion returned to Noureddin, and the judgment of the Cadi was once more upheld or assailed with divers arguments. But amid all this, Ahmed ben Becar was silent, saying only:
"Wait, for this man will render justice to himself and to all othes concerned, as far as the rendering thereof is possible."

So indeed, it happened, for on the morning of the next day another body was found in the cemetery near Bussorah lying half-devoured on the grave of Noureddin Hassan's wife, Amina. And the body was that of Noureddin, self-slain, who in this manner had not only fulfilled the injunction of the Cadi but had also kept his bargain with the ghoul by providing the required number of corpses.

An apology for manners from Il Galateo

The manners in the court of Queen Elizabeth the First are a difficult thing for most modern Magonomia players, because our various countries now see them, rightly, as repressive.

Why this is varies a little: I'm an Australian, and the manners that they are using were, for a long time, used as a racial marker to separate the rulers (the English and perhaps Scots) from the rest of us. Here I'm using "race" in its historical English sense: in my country Italians, Greeks and Spaniards were legally not white until after the Second World War. Well, modern ones: Alexander, Julius Caesar and Jesus were all sort of grandfathered in. As for America, I've only visited it briefly, but I consume many of its cultural products, and it seem to me De Tocville was onto something when he said that Americans made it difficult for him by formally professing equality, and then getting quite annoyed if you didn't know who was in charge in the room. Elizabethans do not do this: indeed they think that formidable people who take humility past the point of making life difficult for other people are rude.

Over a Librivox, a pack of us have been recording one of the most popular courtesy books in Elizabeth's court. It was published mid-reign in Venice, and rapidly translated. In future weeks I'll share examples of poor etiquette so you can add to the in your characters so you can add them to your characters particularly in PCs. This week though I thought I'd share the insider's view on why they thought elaborate etiquette was good and moral. It's one of the few apologies I've seen which is from the time and tries to sincerely make the point.

Now over to a slightly younger version of myself. The text below is from the original text: the Librivox version is a later modernisation. Its original can't be copied, however, as it is a graphical format.

Good luck on the period typography

For as muche as thou doste now enter the iourny, wherof I haue allredy ronne forth the better parte (as thou seest) I meanethe transitorie waye of this mortall life: I haue determined (such is the Loue I bearethee) toshewe all the daungerous straights thou must passe: For my experience maketh me feare, y' walking that way thou mayst easily eyther fall, or by some meanes or other go astray. To the ende thou maist once, taughte both by my instructions and experience, be able to keepe the right waye, as well for the helthe of thy Soule, as the commendation and prayse of the Honourable and Noble house thou doest come of. And bycause thy tender Age, is unfit (as yet) to receaue more principall and higher precepts, reseruing them for fytter time, I will beginn to discourse of such things as many men wyll deeme, perchance, but trifles.

I meane what manner of Countenance and grace, behoueth a man to vse, that hee may be able in Communication and familiar acquaintance with me, to shewe him selfe plesant, courteous, and gentle: which neuerthelesse is either a vertue, or the thing that comes very nere to vertue. And albeit Liberalitie, or magnanimitie, of themselues beare a greater prayse, then, to be a well taught or ma nored man: yet perchaunce, the courteous behauiour and entertaynement with good maners and words, helpe no lesse, him that hath them: then the high minde and courage, aduaũceth him in whome they be. For these be such things as a mã shall neede alwayes at all hads to vse, because a man must necessarily be familiar with me at all times, & euer haue talk & communication with them: But iustice, fortitude, and the other greater, and more noble vertues, are seldome put in vse. Neyther is y liberall and noble minded man, caused euery hower to doe bountifull things: for to vse it often, cannot any man beare the charge, by any meanes. And these valiât men yt be so full of hyghe minde and courage: are very seldome driuen to trye their valour & vertue by their deeds. Then as muche as these last, doe passe those fyrst, in greatnes (as it were) & in weight: so much do the other surmout these in number, & ofte occasio to vse thẽ. And, if I could wel intend it, I could name you many, whoe, (being otherwise of litle account) haue ben & be styll, muche estemed & made of, for their cherefull & plesaunt behauiour alone: which hath byn suche a helpe & aduauncemẽt vnto them, that they haue gotten greate preferments, leauing farre behinde them, such men as haue byn endowed with those other noble and better vertues, spoken of before. And as these plesaut & getle behauiours, haue power to draw their harts & mynds vnto vs, with whome we liue : so côtrarywise, grosse and rude maners, procure me to hate and despise vs. Wherby albeit the lawes, haue inioyned no payne for vnmanerly & grose behauiours, as the fault that is thought but light (& to saye a trueth, it is not greate) yet we see notwithstanding, y' nature herselfe punisheth the w' sharpe & shrewde correction, putting them by this meanes, besydes ye cõpanie & fauour of men. And truly euẽ as greate & foule faults, doe muche harme: so doe these lyght, much hurt, or hurte at least more ofte. For, as mẽ doe comoly fereye beasts y' be cruell & wild, & haue no maner of feare of som litle ones, as ye gnats and the flyes, & yet by ye côtinual noiauce they find by the, cõplaine the selues more of thes the of y other: so it chauceth yt most me do hate in manerasmuche, ye vnmanerly & vnsaught, as ye wicked, & more.

So there is no doubte, but who so disposeth himselfe to liue, not in solitarie and deserte places, as Heremites, but in fellowship with men, and in populous Cities, will think it a very necessarie thing, to haue skill to put himselfe forth comely and seemely, in his fashions, gestures and maners: the lacke of which parts doth make those other vertues lame, and litle or nothing can they work to good effect, without other helpes: wheare this ciuilitie and courtesie, without other releefe or patrimonie, is riche of itselfe, & hath substance enough, as a thing y' standeth in speache and gestures alone.

And that y" mayst now more easily learne the way vnto it, thou must vnderstand, it behoues thee, to frame and order thy maners and doings, not according to thyne owne minde and fashion: but to please those, with whome thou lyuest, and after that sort direct thy doings: And this must be done by Discretion and Measure. Forwho so applieth himself to much, to feede other mens humors, in his familiar conuersation, and behauiour with men, is rather to be thought a Jester, a Jugler or flatterer, then a gentleman wel taught and .nourtured: As contrarywise, whoe so hath no care or mind to please, or displese, isa rude, vntaught, and vncourteous fellowe. For asmuche then, as our maners, have some pleasure in them when we respect other men, and not our owne pleasure: if we diligẽtly searche forthe what those things be.

Mythic Venice – August #Dungeon23 #City23

This week, we return to Venice. I'm taking part in #City23, which is a writing challenge. Participants try write some material for a city for a role playing game each day. I've been using Venice. I've reached the stage in the project where I'm going back through a shopping list of material that seems necessary to have a Venice book that hasn't come up in my general research.

While I was looking at books on Venetian shipbuilding, which will probably be next month's Venice episode, I found a strange little book by mystery author Donna Leon. Leon used to live in Venice but never allowed her books to be translated into Italian because she didn't want to have to deal with celebrity fandom. Now that she's in Switzerland perhaps she'll change her mind. Anyway, one of her friends built a gondola from scratch and she observed the process. We're going to go through her notes and look for useful things. In my earlier episode where I laid out the shopping list, I mentioned that I wanted a floor plan for a gondola but in hindsight that's ridiculous. It's like asking for a floor plan for a limousine. So let's go through these notes.

Gondolas have a heap of structural bits that could be enchanted for various effects. The bit interesting me right now is the pontapie, the inclined foot brace that the gondolier pushes against.

The gondola is corked with resin-dipped cotton string wedged into the joints. I think this can be crossed with the magical hair from the very first Venice episode. It's then sealed with resin and then pitched layers, resin on the exterior, pitch on the interior, and then paint.

A gondola moves at walking speed. Donna Leon's friend weighs his gondola and it's 350 kilos.

Gondolas are mentioned in 1094 in a law and this is hundreds of years before my other sources say they exist. The common usage of the word gondola appears in the 16th century and the boat at that time is symmetrical and has two rowers standing and facing forward. It differs from other boats in that a gondola is for people rather than goods. The rowers in gondolas are forward facing because Venice was built on a swamp and it's a tidal swamp so the obstructions move about. The forward facing is to allow you to see if there's an obstruction unlike a rowboat for example.

Modern gondolas are from the 19th century. They are slimmer and they are asymmetrical. I did wonder why gondolas in art are wider in the middle than modern ones.

Making a gondola takes about two years. It's made of eight different types of wood for large oak, elm, cherry, mahogany, lime, and walnut. It's around 11 metres long and has a flat bottom to make it faster and more manoeuvrable and a fully laden gondola weighs 700 kilos. There's a quote here. "It uses no more energy than if he were walking at a normal pace."

Tourist gondolas have two oarsmen because of the weight of 12 or more passengers at once.

Modern gondolas are asymmetrical because the thrust comes from only one side. Gondolas are black but why is legendary. Sumptuary laws probably cut down on the decoration. Liveried gondolas used to be a thing. There are notes that ambassadors are exempt from sumptuary laws so some of them had gilded gondolas and she suggests black is a practical colour for covering scrapes and collision damage. She mentions the myth that it is an act of piety to thank God for deliverance from a particular plague.

The little tent thing is called a felze and it protects passengers from the weather. It's very common before the modern period and opens at the front and back. It's made of bright coloured fabric originally and it is originally removable. Later it is black and fixed open on the sides with curtains. Later it has wooden shutters which are the etymological ancestor of Venetian blinds.

Donna Leon on dwells on gondoliers' attractiveness. There are kind of close personal servants like a particularly stacked valet so they make good sidekicks.
The big metal piece at the front has six teeth representing the six districts and the back it has one representing Giudecca. Many of my other sources said these were purely decorative. Leon notes that the front one counterbalances the gondolier at the back. If so, does the whole boat yaw forward when he steps off? The back piece is simpler and it's for collisions.

The top bit may look like the Rialto bridge or the ducal Corno. The ferry, the metal bits, were very ornamental until century laws made them plain which was to get smith's back to work on military gear.

The forcola is the opening of the oar rests in. It is always made from a single piece of walnut root. It is carved to suit the height and weight of the particular gondolier. It is made by master crafters. It is maintained religiously by gondoliers. They use linseed oil or private magical potions. In the modern day they use Vaseline. It may need a diagram. The oar is 4.2 meters long and made of beechwood. It is thinner and broader at the far end. It is not a pole. The call for "Look out! I'm coming! is "Oi" which as an Australian pleases me inordinately.

She notes that in 1514 the Magistrato alle pompe, who enforced sumptory laws, are empowered. In 1562 plain undecorated boats were passed into law by the Senate but the law did not work and so the law is restated in 1584.

And those are Donna Leon's notes on gondolas. The rest of the book is filled out with translations of barcarolles, which are the songs that gondoliers sing, at least in theory.

There's a note from another source that the modern striped shirts of gondoliers are from after the Second World War. They wore all black from the 1600s..
Before I leave quick apology for the missing fortnight this month. Little medical issues, everything's sorted out now. Your saga continues to possibly vary.

Venice - Shipbuilding

I had thought that the book I've just gone through for material would be the last one for the project. It's "Venetian ships and shipbuilders in the Renaissance" by Frederick Lane. I haven't been posting these daily on X (as was Twitter) because they removed the feature that allowed me to do it automatically, and I didn't have the time to post each of them individually. I think the project will be continuing on Threads and Instagram.

While I was looking at this book for material about Venetian shipbuilding, I ran across another book called "Housecraft and Statecraft: Domestic Servants in Renaissance Venice," and I will also be cutting that one down before I start drafting because it's full of material that's useful when writing up grogs and companions. Also, I'm hoping it gives me a method of treating the subject of Venetian slavery with some accuracy and sensitivity.

But onto the research for Venetian shipbuilding. Much of it confirms what we already wrote up in City and Guild. There are two basic types of ships until the late 15th century when a hybrid emerged. There are more specialised forms in the Mediterranean, or ships are more useful in the Mediterranean, but they are less common in the Atlantic. The basic division is between the long ship and the round ship. Long ships have always their low narrow. They're called galleys. They have one deck, to begin with at least, and they're used for precious cargo. And the other side of the division are round ships which have sails, they're high and wide. They're called buses or turettes. They may have up to three decks and they're used to bulk cargo.

The book begins with a discussion of the Battle of Susano, which was in 1264. The Venetians let their small round ships with bulk cargo just drift off. And their galleys clustered around one great round ship. Round ships, even small ones, could hold off galleys. They moved all their portable valuables to the round ship and used it as a fortress. It had high sides and for-and-off castles which made it very defensible, but it couldn't protect other ships and it couldn't project force because it had no guns.

Galleys can choose or decline combat and can work as a unit and can board or ram. This allows you to use them in formations roughly like cavalry. Before the 16th century, so, the Magonomia period, oarsmen were free and they used weapons for melee. They were recruited in the Piazza San Marco and they were paid off on return to Venice.

In the late 13th century, the Great Galley replaces round ships for trade and small galleys continue to be used for war. Small galleys are fast and have a deck of about 120 feet long, about 15 feet wide, and the deck is 5 to 6 feet above the keel. They're built to a frame for strength and the strength is in the frame, not in the hull, and this is because they need to handle the weight of all the oarsmen. Between 1219 and 1540, the trireme is standard and there are 25 to 30 benches per side, three oarsmen per bench, one or per oar, and a single deck.

The deck has three parts, a fighting platform at the front, a stern castle and the rowing space with a gangway at the centre. The deck is extended by an outrigger frame to 22 feet wide and 106 feet long, benches are slanted toward the poop deck so that all ores could be in parallel. The ores end with a lead weight on the rower's end. The rower climbs a set of small steps and falls backwards to stroke the oar. They have bowmen as marines, when not in battle they're stationed between the rows of the oarsmen so they're not in the way of the sailors. There is some note of an archer on every bench. In battle they might be on the fighting platform or the castle or the gangway, the commander is always on the castle. There are also at least eight sailors for the rudder and sail.

There is usually one mast, it's lanteen rigged and it's stepped forward. At this stage there are three rudders, a sternpost and two side-rudders. Over time the stern rudder replaces the side-rudders. Stern-rudders appear in the Mediterranean in about 1300.

They are not good sailers: they are speedier under oar. By the 16th century captains complain they are so low in the water their wave swept and they cannot take turn to windward without dragging the ores, which causes them to lose speed and snaps their oars.

Guns make their forecastles so heavy that it dips into the waves, when headed into the wind. There are also small galley-like ships with one or two oarsmen per bench used for dispatches or patrols. These are called fragantes, bragantes, galottis and fustes and they're technically a bireme. The great galleys were invented in 1294 or 1298 and were in general use within ten years. They are more seaworthy than the small galleys, they have more cargo per crew member and they are slower so small galleys are still used for portable and valuable cargo.

Just after 1299 they start using merchant caravaning which is where all the ships form together into a fleet. A great galley has a crew of over 100, all goods save exceptions in great galleys must be in caravans. The state elects the commanding officer of the fleet, they arrange the crew, the equipment of the galleys and the sailing time and the destination, renting out space to merchants. Late in the 14th century, all of the galleys are owned by the state and space on them is rented, although the merchants pay for arming. Private ships are forbidden to follow the same routes as the great caravans. There's no high foredeck or castle, there's one deck, different routes have slightly different designs, the largest are the ones that travel to Flanders and have a displacement of 140 times. And that's in the 14th century, in the 15th century they reach 200 tons and in the mid 15th century there is one dominant design which is 250 tons below deck. Great galleys are snubber than small galleys, small galleys are about eight times as long as they are wide, great galleys are only about six times as long as they are wide. They are difficult to row under cargo because they're low in the water, they have bad or geometry and they are mostly road to enter or leave port or in some emergencies. Some commanders leave two-thirds of their oars at home because they're penalised when they lose or break oars.

There is a note of a fleet sailing from Southampton to Otranto in 31 days. My notes here say that the castle is in three stories. The three stories, the first story is the ? and compass, the middle is the lord or captain and his mess mates and the lowest is the ladies and treasure and it's unlit say by a hatchway above it. There are two boats for landing in harbour and there are steps down the side for embarking into a boat. The kitchen is on deck, it's not covered in, there is a cellar beneath. It has three masts, the central mast is the largest, two swivel guns and then I made an attempt at a diagram which just won't translate into a podcast at all. I am not certain that is particularly good. I would love to get a decent deck plan for this so I will have to rummage around further or pass this onto someone who does deck plans and hope they can make sense of it.

At the start of the 15th century the ships had two masts and the foremast was the largest. By the mid-15th century they have three masts and by the late 15th century the main mast is at the centre and the four and aft masts are mostly used for manoeuvring. Oars are used to avoid waiting by the shore for favourable wind because this is a dangerous time and it means if you have oars you never are on a lee shore.

The crew is 200 plus and 20 of these are bowmen, a term which continues to be used even once they start using guns in 1486. There is a public contest to get the job and they hire the best shots in Venice. If the Senate believes a particular voyage is especially dangerous they may up the number of sailors by 10 or 20. Space on galleys cost more rent than space on round ships but it's quicker and the insurance is lower and some skipped insurance entirely so that weighed into the consideration.

Notes on cargo in the end of the great galleys. The tonnage seems low but extra was carried on deck and it was not usually used for bulk goods. Each sailor also had some personal wares. I have an idea saying half of galley freight is customs duty but I need to double check that. That seems high. About 1500 one fleet brings two and a half million pounds of spices from Alexandria and I presume he means pounds mainly not pounds weight. Fleets headed east carried 300,000 ducats in cash as well as their cargo. They suddenly go extinct from 1500 to 1535 due to new round ship models with fewer crew full rig and artillery. Galleys continue as warships for a while. In 1569 Drake demonstrates broadsides across open galley decks and people start thinking they're a bad idea.

The topsail, and foresail are more easily handled and they are safer than the great galley. The monopoly of galleys in the caravans ceases temporarily in 1514 and permanently in 1534 round ships take over as passenger ships for pilgrims. Previously there were privately owned great galleys which would anchor each day along the coastline. By 1546 round ships take over because they're cheaper, if less pleasant, to travel in.

From 1500 onward great galleys are remodeled as gunships one or pulled by many men is developed to allow great and light galleys to manoeuvre together. In extremes there are eight men to a bench. By the 17th century the standard is five men to an oar. My notes say 70 cannon, or is that a 20? 70 cannon, 8 on the prow, 10 on the poop and the rest between the oars. These throw a three to five-pound ball. Ships of the line drive them to extinction. Note that the term buss in this book does not match the Danish fishing vessel the same name which often appears in English naval history.

In 1286 the biggest vessel offered the king of France was the Roqforte which was 500 tons. It was dish shaped its keel was less than twice the size of its beam. Smaller ships in the same fleet had keels that were two and a half times the size of their beam. It had fore- and aft castles and fighting platforms 39 and a half feet above the keel. Two or three masts, lateen rig. The foremast was the larger. The mast was as long as the keel and the yard was longer than the keel

It had two side rudders. In 1303 Basque pirates bring square rigs and stern rudders into the Mediterranean. Castles become part of the ship's hull design. This is the cog used in the 14th and 15th century and covered in city and gilled. Cogs are cheaper and better in storms than round ship they also have a smaller crew. In the 13th century a 240 ton ship needs 50 sailors by law and that doesn't count soldiers or pilgrims or people who are under 18. In the 14th and 15th century 20 sailors over 21, eight apprentices, and four bowmen were legally required for an identical ship (with the difference that because they had a square sail they didn't need to yaw the sail and so they needed fewer people.) At the start of the 15th century ships for the Syrian voyage are 300 tons and ships for military voyages are 400 tons and the biggest ships are 720 tons. Buss and turrett caravans are made up of round ships of about 300 tons. In the mid 15th century the new rigging leads to a new ship called the carrack, which is nearly universal by 1485. Its hull's two and a half times it's beam and it lasts until the 17th century when Dutch innovations drive it to extinction.

In the 12th and 13th century there were caravans to Alexandria, Cyprus and Syria twice a year but each ship only did one circle per year leaving either in March or September. By the 15th century a ship can do two voyages in a year returning with bulk cargo of cotton and alum. By 1400 merchantmen were larger they could be a little over 400 tons by 1450. The fleet has six that are 600 tons and by 1500 there is at least one that's over a thousand tons.

MILITARY SHIPS

In 1486 a 2,400 tons ship is reported but sources on it aren't good. In 1500 there are many reports of 1500 tons vessels and officially war round ships were between 1200 and 1500 tons. Merchantmen of that size were not economical and instead they were about 600 tons and they were introduced in the middle of the 15th century for bulk good like wine to England from Crete and the Grand Fleet's salt and oil. The book notes that you could compare those to East Indiamen which were up to 600 tons but were generally 300 to 400 tons.

Round ships were used for patrols and to control pirates. Pirates used round ships because round ships are easier to take if you yourself have a round ship. Eventually these develop into their own ship class the bars in the late 15th century and they are about 1200 tons.

The first galleons arrive in Venice between 1526 and 1530 and they're not a successful class at first because they're quite top heavy. Caravels become popular in the late 15th century. By 1500 they're used a lot in Dalmatia, the Adriatic and Greased as coastal traders and they have a lateen rig.

Shipbuilding is controlled by a proty or foreman, generally from a family of foremen chosen by reputation for skill. Foreman could read, write and studied mathematics. The Foreman of the Arsenal were not always the best at ship design because they also needed people and managerial skills so a virtuoso foreman was sometimes skipped often skipped for more dependable people.

The foreman of the arsenal from 1498 to 1540 was Leonardo Bressan and he invented the Barza. His second attempt at a ship in this class at 1200 tons cargo had 450 plus men as crew and had 400 guns by which we must hope they mean marines.

The guilds in Venice were not as powerful as those in other Italian cities because the oligarchy was too strong. Their role was religious, vocational and insurance, a measure of the schule and the arte, both of which had been discussed in previous episodes. The schule are for worship, banquets and insurance and the arte are for the insurance of professional quality work out to the state and for resolving disputes between members. The arte is ruled by the government through appointed justices. By the end of the 13th

century basically these two methods of organizing tradesmen had combined.

There are three great ship building guilds, the carpenters, the corkers and the sawyers. The head of each guild is called a Gestaldo and he is aided by judges who settle disputes and deacons who look after the guild property. The Gestaldo and judges must be at a booth in San Marco every Sunday to judge cases. Gestaldo are not elected, they are effectively appointed by their predecessors. They must not hold more than two business meetings a year by law and only one banquet. The Aston Lotty were powerful but not as a trade guild. We'll get to them later. Each guild has a chapel, tomb, altars, relics and art. They give insurance like sick pay, dowries, burials and pensions. The sawyers kept this money in the chest that needed three keys to open, held by the Gestaldo, a steward and one guy whose purpose was just to hold a key. Corkers had to be hired by lottery for complicated historical reasons.

In 1323 the Venetians did something a little unusual for the Italian city states and said that if you're a master you could take as many apprentices as you liked simultaneously. The carpenters of the arsenalotti were required to be officers on ships if asked.

Then there's a lengthy section on the heads of independent shipyards. I looked into this in some detail because I thought a covenant might be built around an independent shipyard as a source of finance.

One of the doges, when he dies, leaves a letter (the testament) in 1423. In 1423 the fleet is 3000 ships of less than 100 tons, 300 ships that are larger than 100 tons and 45 galleys. That breaks down like this. The 300 vessels larger than 100 tons are about 35 round ships of 240 tons plus and about 265 round ships of 100 to 239 tons. The larger class of round ships are used for trade to England, Syria and Crimea. The 45 galleys contain at least 25 light galleys and 18 grade galleys and the difference is 2 or maybe 3 pilgrim galleys which are probably 250 tons plus each.

Pilgrim galleys are used for transporting pilgrims to various holy sites. The author notes that the margin for error in these figures is very high. Ship-building slumps in the 1480s no ships were being made in 1487 but just after that six additional 600 ton ships were added to be used for pirate control and battle. The 1499 survey of the fleet says that there are 25 private ships of 240 tons or higher plus four state-owned ships. There is a note that in 1560 no Venetian is making trade ships in the 120 to 140 ton class. All of them are bought overseas and reflagged in Venice. By 1558 to 1559 there are almost 40 ships in the 240 ton class. The author estimates that the normal size of the fleet is about 30 to 40 ships in the 240 ton class.

The average ship wears out every 10 years so Venice needs to build say four or five a year to cover wrecks. The problem there is that their minimum is quite close to the operating number so the state is constantly concerned that they're going to run out of ships. Bunk ships elsewhere is illegal from 1533 but people seem to do it quite a lot.

There are effectively interest-free loans on large ships from that period on but by 1606 about half of all large merchant ships are foreign built. The process of ship building. A group of merchants gets together and seeks finance. Shares in ships have been bought and sold in the city since the 11th century. The partnership is called a companion or company. They elect a leader to keep accounts. He may have reserved cargo space on the ship to compensate for that labor. They then hire a foreman. They appoint a neutral party for resolving disputes between the partners. They define if the foreman or the manager is providing supplies like wood and iron. Then either way someone hires a steward of supplies, a master for the corkers and an accountant for the wages and the uses of materials. And then they hire a shipyard. In the later period occasionally the owner of the shipyard and the foreman are the same guy. This is generally however not the case.

THE ARSENALE

From 1104 to the 14th century it's about eight acres in size. It has five large warehouses and docks for the storage or building of 24 light galleys. It's governed by three nobles elected by the Grand Council. They must live near the Asanal. Their houses are called Paradiso, Purgatorio, and Inferno. And no, I don't know why. I should look that up. These lords are technically required to supervise work, inspect buildings every three days, inspect the vessels every three months, and inspect the weapons and rigging every six months. There is a reserve fleet of four galleys plus two smaller ships. I mentioned before that they sent a fleet in the 13th century of about 100 ships. That was done by enlisting merchants. In 1303 and 1325 the new Asanal is added which quadruples the size of the Arsenal and it stays like this until 1470ish. It builds the galleys which are rented out for trade caravans. In peaceful years 10 guard galleys are the reserve fleet and if a war starts a captain general that the sea is appointed and usually given a fleet of 20 to 30 light galleys.

During the Genoa siege of Choggia, Venice built nine great and 25 light galleys to replace the fleet that they'd previously lost to the Genoa. The fleet sent against Genoa in 1431 it was 24 galleys and in 1432 it was 32 galleys. From 1325 to 1470 there were 10 reserve galleys and 10 to 12 more in mothballs that is they didn't have their corking or rigging but could be made ready quite rapidly. By 1417 the law changes so that the reserve fleet is 25 in law although in practice it is less. Trade fleets 1333 eight galleys were sent to the Black Sea, seven galleys were sent to Cyprus and Liser Armenia and eight or more to Flanders these were 140 ton galleys. Initially government galleys were sent out and other private ships could tag along.

Mid-century the number of galleys is halved but the size of the galleys gets larger they're 200 tonnes. In the 15th century caravans of 14 great galleys are sent to the Black Sea, Flanders, Cyprus, Alexandria, and Beirut and they continue to get larger and larger. By the end of the 15th century 20 ships are sent out per year and four to five ships are constructed every year. Many ships last 12 years but some are lost at sea. The police fleet requires two galleys a year and great galleys take twice the work of light galleys.

For the Arsenalotti in the 15th century there was a 250 day work year, or a 22 month, so 270 day work year. A note on labor force: five sawers, 10 carpenters, 13 caucus plus apprentices and stevedores were required to complete five great galleys every second year. To complete four light galleys in under two years required two sawyers, five carpenters and five caucus and once during the war when they needed 20 light galleys in six months they did that with 32 sawyers, 96 carpenters, 96 caucus and great galleys at that time were built in groups of four or five.

By habit they sent their newest galleys to Flanders because it was a more difficult trip and their oldest galleys were sent to Beirut or the Barbary coast because they were in the Mediterranean which is less rough. The leaving dates of the Caravans were Romania before July the 25th Beirut before the 24th August, Alexandria at the end of August and this bought the Arsenal in the following income:

- Beirut and Alexandria rents of 12,000 ducats a year
- Flanders and Romania, 6,000 ducats a year
- plus about 9,600 ducats a year as a supplement from the state.

The year 1504 is the high point of merchant ship making at the Arsenal. In 1504 they have seven galleys on voyage, nine ready for use, 20 in mid construction and three over 14 years old. Almost all trading voyages end by 1535 and the Arsenal switches over to the war fleets to counter the Turkish expansion.

In 1442 they finished 50 galleys and were ready 25 more and in 1453 they make another 50.

The Venetian fleets in 1461 and 1466 were 20 to 30 galleys. In 1470 they once again face the Turks with a fleet of 40 galleys that arrive at Negroponte with their 40 galleys to find out that the Turks have bought 300 to 400 ships. They freak out, they flee to Crete, they chase to Crete, their fleet is utterly destroyed. The Venetians grab every ship they can, 73 galleys of both sizes, save 24 which are left in Venice because they're unfinished and the fleet is expanded up to 70 to 100 galleys in 1474.

At this point the Venetians decide that the fleet should be 75 great and 100 light galleys but the Arsenal says we can't do that. So between 1450 and 1460 the Arsenal builds up another 20 or so sheds each of which can house two galleys. Eventually they had sufficient sheds for eighty (stored or building) and in 1473 the Arsenal doubles again in size with an area called the newest Arsenal. In 1525 they build 50 light galleys and place them immediately in mothballs on land ready for activation. As they create new galleys they cycle out these mothballed ones rather than using the newest ones.
In 1537 after war with the Turks the reserve fleet is up to in law and theory (if not in practice) 100 light galleys, 4 and then 10 great galleys, 8 foots, 8 brigantines, 8 longboats. Of these 25 were armed and equipped to sail and the rest were on land uncorked and with their gear in warehouses. By 1633 this was so expensive they couldn't keep it up and they knocked the total size of the reserve fleet down to 50.

Shipbuilding is done in three stages: framing, planking and then the third bit which is the bit that Venetians are really fast at. This is corking, launching, adding deck fixings, rigging, mooring, oars and arming the crew. In 1570 the whole fleet of galleys was made ready, pulled from reserve, in 50 days.

Once the Arsenal's in six acres it has between 1,000 and 2,000 workers. It's also in charge of lighthouses, salvage ships, lumber yards for merchant spares, ropes for merchant spares, all of that. No private personal property may be bought into the envians of the arsenal so it's an anti-theft measure. You can't walk out with anything because there's no chance that you bought your hammer from home or something. The doorkeepers of the arsenal, which is surrounded by 15 towers, may not leave their posts. Centuries in the towers call to each other every hour. Watchmen walk the walls. Doors must not be open at night. Boats must not come in at night.

There is a vast amount of waste and graft in the Arsenal. There is an extensive list of staff who live at the arsenal in the book which I won't read through now.

Gunpowder is mostly kept separated from the Arsenal until 1569 when an explosion convinces people that keeping it absolutely separate would be a great idea. I think that the expansion of the arsenal will be a form of regio expansion in this supplement.

THE ARSENALOTTI

Arsenal workers are used as guards in the piazza during unrest, as firefighters, as torchbearers for the doge's funeral. They carry the new doge on their shoulders around the piazza. They guard the palace when it's vacant. They guard the great council and they also labour in the mint. Wine is passed about in the Arsenal five to six times a day by a wine steward as part of their pay. Pay stewards were the doorkeepers. Thieves could be whipped while wearing a necklace of nails to show that they were a thief. Pay stewards search the workers as they leave.

Ships are made out of oak, larch, fir and come from near to Venice. Elm and walnut are desired for some parts but they're not essential. Venice has been an exporter of wood since the 10th century which considering it's a group of artificial islands in a swamp is really something. Venice supplies wood to Corfu and Crete for their buildings and ships. There are laws for the conservation of oak groves which are first passed in 1470 to 1492. The most important woodland is the Val di Montona in Istria. In 1557 it has one captain and in 1565 he is given nine subordinate guardians. In the Livenza, oaks were bent as they grew so that they would grow into curved timbers which were prized for shipbuilding. There are also important groves at Montello, Carpeneda and Clavi and these could be Faerie sites.

Then I have a lengthy series of references that I won't read into the podcast because they don't make good audio.

The ducat or zecchio is a coin of three and a half grams of gold and then we talk about units of account and coins and this is so bad we're going to use the mythic penny instead but to explain it here we go.

One lira is split into ten soldi which is split into 240 denarii which is the pound and shilling and pence system that we're all familiar with but that's a unit of account. When we talk about coins each unit has a separate system.

The lira de grossi a oro is 20 soldii de grossi a oro or 270 denari or 7,680 piccoli de grossi a oro which is to say one denarius is equals 32 piccoli. Now this gives you the gold ducat coin.

One lira a grossi is 20 soldii a grossi and 240 denari a grossi and this gives you the silver grossi coin and it's worth 26 denari.

A lira de piccoli divides into 20 soldi de piccoli and 240 denari de piccoli and this gives you the silver solino coin. There are also other coins.

Eventually the ducat coin and the ducat unit completely part ways and the ducat coin is called the ducat di auro or the "ducat of gold". The unit is based on the silver subdivisions so as an example in 1545 a ducat in gold is worth eight ducats 12 soldi in lira di piccoli.

So to focus back in again the reason all of that's important to us is that characters who set up a covenant in Venice are almost certainly going to want to be involved in the shipping trades. Most of what I've found works perfectly well with *City and Guild* rules and will be laid over the top for flavour. Next month the research phase of this whole thing should be complete.

Venice - Servants

This is, thank whichever divine you follow, the final research episode for the Venice material. It isn't that I've researched all of the things that were on the shopping list that I put in a previous episode, it's that you get to a point where the research begins to make you want to give the project up, and at that point you really should start writing.

The final set of notes are from *Housecraft and Statecraft: Domestic Service in Renaissance Venice, 1400 to 1600.*

OSTENTION CLOCK

Ostention an idea from modern folklore studies. That is, I think it's from Foucault. It's when your actions make a piece of folklore real. That is, they bring the piece of folklore into the real world by allowing it to alter your actions. He has stolen the term in Catholic services. The Ostention is the bit where the priest holds up the wafer to allow you to see Jesus. The idea of the Ostention Clock is, as the characters complete their adventures, if they favour the Player of Games, the Faerie Aura of Venice will get deeper, so achronal elements will become more severe. The Carnival will become less and less like it is in the 12th century, and more like it is in the 15th and 16th century. The Great Fleets will be less like they are in the 12th century, and more like they are at the high point of the nation's ship building. When the Ostention Clock gets to the maximum setting, 10, then at that point the Dogaressa in Stone manifests into the world through the stones of Venice. As it gets higher the Carnivale gets longer. Servants become more worldly and corrupt and rebellious. The Arsanel gets bigger. Those of you who have played Pendragon have seen something similar to this. It's the Pendragon era system.

NOTES ON THE CORRUPTION OF SERVANTS

The writing about servants in medieval Venice is generally by rich people, and they depict their servants as childlike and carefree. They also say that they are less sinful than their masters because they have less temptation, because they have less freedom, and therefore the master is doing their servant a favour by keeping all the worries of the world away from them. In parallel, there are other works that say that servants are generally lazy and still from their masters. Servants are later seen as a reflection of their masters. Witnesses are thought to impress flaws into the children who they nurse, and so there are some substantial authors who suggest noble women must breastfeed their own children so that the children are impressed with nobility. Notably, most noble women don't agree with them. Children are sometimes given governance over servants so that they can learn how to rule a household, because ruling a household is seen as a parallel of ruling estate. Similarly, a person who is in public office who can't rule his own servants is suspected of being incompetent in his role as a politician. Yet more books for me to cross check.

De Forza notes that servants are generally healthier than their masters, because work is good for their health, and he notes that there is a precipitate decline in the health of doges once they gain the position. That being said, most doges are in their 80s, so I think his point that stress in sitting down are bad for them, however true it may be, may be exaggerated.

TRICKS FROM GONDOLIERS

Gondoliers charge tourists more than the legally set fair, and they do this by claiming that it's a feast day, or that they're against the tide, or that the weather is bad. Sometimes they refuse to land until they're paid off, and sometimes they rock the boat until they're paid to travel more smoothly.

A ferry station is called a Traghetti, and we'll get back to those later. Most gondoliers don't work in service to a nobleman, they pick up fares from the Traghetti. But those who do hire out to a nobleman for an extended period are believed to conspire with his other servants to rip him off because they have a method of getting smuggled goods out of the house, to punish him for not letting the gondolier live in the house by keeping him waiting at weird places at night, to get tips and treats from the women in the house of the children, when carrying the house's wood, wine, or other supplies to steal some and put it under the poop of the gondola, and to take a share of any picnics that the family has, and if they don't get a share of the food to steal a gilded knife or a silver fork.

SECOND CHAPTER, LAWS ON SERVANTS.

The first big set of laws on servants are passed in 1541. The Council of Ten passes a law that enables two censors and one state attorney to cut down on the insolence of boatmen and servants, and their goals are to break up bonds and agreements between the lower classes, anti-union activity essentially, to enforce humility, to stop them being immoral and disgusting, and these three were allowed to punish by the drawing of blood if two of them agreed, and punish with death if all three agreed. This has parallel to the city's control of labour guilds which we've discussed in previous episodes.

Originally, servants were restrained by the capi di sestieri. The capi di sestiari, as a position were created in 1171, that's a traditional date. Each was supported by four guards or wardens and they patrolled that sestieri. They also had at least one notary to keep track of who'd been caught and what they'd been doing. The capi was elected by the nobles who live in that sestieri, and they supervise the Capi di Contrade, who are the heads of the approximately 70 parishes in the city. The capi di sestieri are required to be out their officers in the Rialto for three days a week to hear cases. They also supervise inns and taverns and the capi di contrade are required to spy on foreigners. The capi di sestieri are in charge of sex work and at least originally have control of the contracts between masters and servants.

Apprentices are not in this system. They're under the Capi di Giustizieri Vecchi and registration is required. In 1402, all contracts of apprenticeship need to be witnessed directly by the justices Vecchi. The distinction between apprenticeships and servitude is not clear at the time. There are law cases that try and distinguish it and it is particularly blurry in female-dominated trades. In 1368, a law is passed that all slave sales must be from the Rialto and that there is a license required from the capi di sestireri to sell slaves.

In 1386, the capi di sestieri start registering anime, that is indentured servants, to make sure they're not resold later as slaves. No indenture can be longer than four years. The anime tend to be young people from the Balkans, which is being invaded at the time. In 1388, the maximum length of the indenture is lengthened to 10 years. Note that salaried servants are not at this point registered. In 1541, the censors take the role of looking after servants from the capi di sestieri and extend their role to salaried servants.

In 1503, all laws on servants are collected into a single capitulary, single book, and it has some useful things. For a servant contracts can't be longer than 10 years, beating servants to trick them into breaking their contract by flight is popular and it's explicitly disallowed. Fornicating servants could be whipped, but only if the act was in the master's house. Similarly, they could be branded. Torture is permitted in such cases, but that's carried out by the Signori di Notte.

In 1410, Niccolo Barbo, who is the son of a prominent political figure, can't remember who, was murdered. And this is because he discovers that his Tatar slave, Bona, is pregnant, and he beats her with a sort of harness used to carry water. So she goes to a pharmacy on St Pantaleon, and she buys arsenic, which is used for killing rats and other domestic things. It's also used as makeup, moving on. So she buys some poison, she doses him the first time he doesn't die, she doses him again, he dies, and she's caught and she's burned at the stake in the middle of the Piazza. There's a ban put on all toxins and poisons for sale anywhere, but the Merceria, which is a particular street of merchants. There is one exception, there are two streets from San Zulian to the Rialto, which are still allowed to sell poison, but the poison has to be kept under lock and key, only handled by the druggist, not by their servants, and you can only buy it if you already have a receipt from the Giustizeri Vecchi saying that you are allowed to have it. There is a list of prescribed substances, but I don't have that list. I'll use that for a plot hook.

Citizenship is progressively withheld from the children of slaves, serving girls and women of, quote, low status. This could also go into the extension clock. The censors are created in 1517 to uncover electoral corruption, and then they're dismissed in 1521, and then they're restarted again in 1524. When that happens, they add policing gambling to their functions. In 1541, they take over all cases involving servants. In 1544, the signore di notte are divided into two branches: the signore di notte al civil and the signore di notte al criminal. When this happens, the capi di sestiari are discontinued as no longer having a non-parallel function.

There is a lot of whipping and branding threatened in the capitulary that was previously mentioned. There's also a note that servants may not wear silk, and that if a noble catches a servant wearing silk, they get the clothes. In 1537, there is a new policing office, the executors against blasphemy, and then in 1547, there is another new office which investigates heresy.

The capitulary sets maximum wages. Nobles were not meant to bid higher and higher rates to steal each other servants. In the plague of 1575 to 1577, servants become scarce and their pay increases substantially regardless. In the 16th century, servants are seen as accessories and accoutrements, particularly male servants who are taken out of the house. They're given uniforms – even in silk – and it's considered better to have two gondoliers than one. This makes their masters more vulnerable to shame because of the disloyalty or disorderly conduct of their servants.

There's a note here that street brawls are dealt with by neighbourhood patrols appointed by the capi di sestiari or the cinque alla pace, which are the police magistrates. Theft, rape and murder are investigated by the segnori di notte al criminal, and the censors look after masters and servants.

Then there's a list of servant offences, but we'll skip that. The doge's promissione says he has twenty servants between the ages of twenty and sixty male and armed at his expense with iron weapons. They are a bodyguard of last resort. Every member must be a Venetian. From 1275, no one can bring weapons into the ducal palace while the great council is in session. They essentially leave them together like a cloakroom.

After 1266, no one may wear the arms of a noble on their shield or on their weapon because these are treated as gang signs. After 1266, underlings in public service are not allowed to wear noble badges. They must wear the insignia of mark on their sleeve or shield. In 1310, the Querini-Tiepolo conspiracy breaks out. That's an attempt by a noble family with some military support to take over the government and institute and autocracy similar to that found in other northern Italian city cities. Some changes to the ducal household in 1289, the ducal household has two knights and these act as master of the bedchamber and they have a rule against the receipt of gifts. Three kitchen supervisors, a notary a keeper of the seal, a priest and an acolyte, say mass, and there's a note that this retinue is far smaller than northern kings or other northern dukes.

All of these jobs are jobs for life and over time they become sinecures for people who are politically skilled. The chevalier (the knight – in a later stage the title changes to the French form) physically supports the doge. They're the doge's bodyman. This is because the doges are mostly in their 80s. The servants, who are called scuderi, gather each morning to accompany the Duke to the Collegio. They do crowd control and they also carry symbols of office during important parades. Two of them act as guards on the ducal bedchamber. They have a weekly rotation. Once many of these roles become stipendiary, the actual work is done by other people. The steward arranges feasts. Servants of the upper level are lodged in the Ducal palace.

Many of these posts are deliberately held by people of middle or low rank, for example, in 1578 one of the scuderi was an ex-slave. The reason for this is so that a noble family can't get its hooks into the government. The doge, in addition to this public staff, has a private staff of personal servants who do the non-role related duties, like cooking non-banquets and looking after their personal possessions.

In the late 16th century, the dogearessa's role is amped up and so she requires more servants. Similarly, widowed dogearessa's are given government subsidies so that they can have a certain number of servants for the dignity of the state.

Then it moves on to discussing a patricians household. It again defines the fraterna, which we've covered in previous episodes. Essentially, rich Venetian families like to keep the money concentrated by working as a single business unit and to stop the money spilling out. Only one or two of the children would marry and have children of their own. The surplus women would go to convents, the surplus men would either enter the church or become sort of merchant adventurers, who, if they made enough bank, would separate themselves from the fraterna and have their own household or alternatively leave all of their wealth to their nephews and their mistresses. Living in fraterna is cheaper because it allows each of the nuclear households in the fraterna to share servants: cooks, for example.

The Priuli family, which is discussed, has a member of the Council of Ten, so the highest level of society. It notes that the oldest son has one male servant and the next son, who is married, has one male, one female and two witness servants. The third son is not in Venice, he's in England. In a later census, the head of the family, Lorenzo, his wife, Paola and their three sons, their two wives and up to six grandchildren, have at least ten servants.

Each adult essentially has one servant of the same gender, plus there are witnesses and governesses for the children, and as the children age, there are fewer servants because the witnesses and governesses are reduced enough. Toward the end of the records we have for this return, the oldest brother gets a second servant, he gets a gondolier, but there's reason to believe that these were shared around throughout the family, so he was the brother's gondolier legally, but in terms of his daily work, he probably ferried around everyone in the house.

Then there's the census information from the Babarico family, they are not a political family. It was a young, up-and-coming man who wanted to keep all of his money liquid so he didn't buy a house, he rented a house, and he rented a slave until he marries and has a couple of sons. Around this time he buys three more slaves, but he rents out one for the rest of that slave's life because he has more slaves than he needs. As his children are born, he hires a witness each time, although he's unusual in that he doesn't have any male servants. The first half of the 15th century is the peak for the slave trade. In 1469, after Babarico dies, his widow buys the house that they are renting, his children, who are brothers, live in fraternor, the oldest one has a wife and two children, and their servants are Lina, who is a companion for the widowed mother, who used to be a witness for one of the brothers. One male indentured servant, two female indentured servants, two witnesses, and one or two slaves. Slaves were considered cheaper because you paid everything up front. The younger brother dies without children, the older has 11 children with his wife, four of these are boys, one of these, when it grows up, separates off because he wants to be in politics and so he rents closer to the center of power and the process of separating off is a legal process. He's split from the fratera. The three brothers are served by one or two female servants.

Male servants are more likely to live away from the house and commute, especially gondoliers. Accommodation is often part of the wage and salary package given to servants. Sometimes elderly servants are left the use of accommodation, particularly if it's not in the main house.

A cittidano household is the next social status down, a citizen. The most significant citizen is the grand chancellor, who mustn't be noble. They are elected for life. They supervise the chancery and they officiate at the most important meetings of state. The politics for the election are intense and they have a similar pattern of one servant per adult, although at one stage the grand chancellor, because he may not be, noble but he is rich, has a household of himself, his wife, 10 other adults, and eight children of that household four are male and eight are female servants.

The Spinelli family accounts of two middle class adults and they have one female servant and they constantly have one female servant ticking over to a new female servant as each one retires. They were clearly quite good to their servants. They have expenses for medicine burials and loans after they retire. Their servants stay with them from an extremely long time. Those servants stay less than a year and when they're looking to fill places, they fill them in some cases in a couple of days.

After 1539, prostitutes were not allowed to have servants under 30 years of age because it was thought that they would apprentice them in sex work. There were similar laws for Jews with the additional burden that Christians could not leave in with Jews. Jews were required to have a licence to our Christian servants.

Adoptees are a relatively common occurrence in medieval Venice and it's increasingly popular in the 15th and 16th century. Adoptees are in some senses similar to servants. The population of the city peaks in 1575 or thereabouts. Estimates are anywhere between 120,000 and 196,000 people and then the plague in 1575 to 1577 kills off 10% of the population. It works its way but up again and then in the plague of 1630 to 1631 30% of the population die. The 1563 census says that there were 15,117 nobles, 18,939 citizens, 127,746 artisans, 539 poor or beggars, and 6,233 religious and Jewish persons in the city. But religious breakdown is Friars, 1196 nuns, 2,134 hospital patients, 1479 and Jews, 1424. In the census there are 12,908 servants which makes up 7.65% of the population. However, in this census no artist has a servant. This is clearly wrong.

There are more female servants than male servants. So as a rough rule of thumb for design of covenants there is one servant per noble man, woman and child, one servant for every two and a half citizens, and after the plague the proportion of servants plummets. Also the male proportion of servants is somewhere between 30% at its lowest and 40% at its highest.

The author I'm following is not sure if there were slave markets or servant markets. A lot of hiring is by social connections, often hire the relatives of their current servants. Rapid turnover is a problem because you have to train your new servants. Servants expect wages, some get them monthly, some get them annually, wages and tips are expected at new year and at sensor. Sensa is a special festival for servants held at the ascension. There is a table of wages but we're going to skip it because we'll just use an arithmetic penny. Female servants are far cheaper and that's why there are more of them. Payments for wages are sometimes delayed if the master is strapped for cash. Some masters keep their servants' wages in trust which is called "in salvo".

Bachelors sometimes have quasi-marital relationships with their servants and when the bachelor dies the servant then needs to sue for their wages to support themselves.

Many people formally enter service about the age of 9 or 10, says here early teens, maybe 9 to an average. Many girls in the artisan class spend 5 to 10 years in service to save for dowry. Some contracts make the employers responsible for marrying off their servant girls. They often leave service at marriage and return later if their finances require. The primary duties of male servants are to clear a path through crowds for their master and to carry torches at night. Also, to lead their master's funeral procession, collect the master's goods, receive goods at the house and deliver messages. They also participate in the master's quarrels and crimes. In addition to this, of course, the gondoliers have to care for the master's boats and provide transport.

Gondoliers wait for their masters a lot. The government hates this because they're worried that the gondoliers will get together and organise. They also think they make the Rialto look scruffy.

There are traghetto stations along the Grand Canal and around the city periphery. Traghetti act like guilds, so you might have one run by magi. They are closed corporations. Membership is only by vote of members and the major duties of Traghetti are election of new members, scheduling work shifts so that there are always gondoliers around, protecting their territory from neighbouring traghetti, maintaining the cavana, which is the mooring station, and the casoto, which is the hut, and many of them maintain scule, which are the semi-religious organisations that we've

discussed in previous episodes. Many male servants want to save up, get a boat, leave service, and join a traghetta station.

Theft, smuggling, and rape by male servants are common. It's harder for female servants to pinch things because they don't leave the house as often so they can't pass material off as easily. Boatmen hang out at the traghetto and the quays at the Rialto, San Marco and at the boatyards. They drink and gamble and gossip.

They curse a lot. Their habit of cursing and using obscene gestures is, in the book I'm following, called an anti-language. Its purpose is to create a sense of solidarity within the social group.

The main duties of female servants are to maintain the home care for children and accompany the mistress. There are three types. The most respected are wet nurses and governesses. They are also the best head. Below them are chambermaids who look after the family's provisions and accompany the mistresses in travel and underneath that are the what we'd call maids of work in the English situation. They do the cooking, the cleaning, manual work. Among servants, informal friendship networks are very important.

For female servants, the schule piccola, the local parish church fraternity, is where they tend to socialise. They also socialise at wellheads and at the parties of their masters. The largest of the schoula attended by female servants is the scholar of St Ursula and it has devotees across the city.

Then there are some notes on the Sensa Fair. Tips and advances in pay are given so that servants can attend the Centre. It's a fair not for the great goods that foreign traders come for. It's small gifts and ornaments and, for female servants, stuff for trousseaux.

Aged servants often lost their job once they could not perform physical labour. They resorted to begging food selling, washing and keeping vigil over dead bodies, candle selling, prayer reciting, joining convents under third order vows or accompanying their mistress into a convent. Hospitals existed for the deserving poor but could not fully accommodate all of the aged servants. And some of them were maintained in the master's home. There are no servant guilds and then there is once again another note that Venetian households are far smaller than those of nobles in other states.

The Wood of the Dead by Algernon Blackwood

Algernon Blackwood is easy to underestimate for roleplaying material.

When I first read this story I left it alone because I thought it was just a ghost, not much use for roleplayers. I was wrong. If you look at this, is this not a psychopomp? A fairy border guardian? Now over to Dan Gurzynski, thanks to Dan and his production team at Librivox.

One summer, in my wanderings with a knapsack, I was at luncheon in the room of a wayside inn in the western country, when the door opened and there entered an old rustic, who crossed close to my end of the table and sat himself down very quietly in the seat by the bow window. We exchanged glances, or, properly speaking, nods, for at the moment I did not actually raise my eyes to his face, so concerned was I with the important business of satisfying an appetite gained by tramping twelve miles over a difficult country.

The fine warm rain of seven o'clock, which had since risen in a kind of luminous mist about the tree tops, now floated far overhead in a deep blue sky, and the day was settling down into a blaze of golden light. It was one of those days peculiar to Somerset and North Devon, when the orchards shine and the meadows seem to add a radiance of their own, so brilliantly soft are the colourings of grass and foliage.

The inn-keeper's daughter, a little maiden with a simple country loveliness, presently entered with a foaming pewter mug, enquired after my welfare, and went out again. Apparently she had not noticed the old man sitting in the settle by the bow window, nor had he, for his part, so much as once turned his head in our direction.

Under ordinary circumstances I should probably have given no thought to this other occupant of the room; but the fact that it was supposed to be reserved for my private use, and the singular thing that he sat looking aimlessly out of the window, with no attempt to engage me in conversation, drew my eyes more than once somewhat curiously upon him, and I soon caught myself wondering why he sat there so silently, and always with averted head.

He was, I saw, a rather bent old man in rustic dress, and the skin of his face was wrinkled like that of an apple; corduroy trousers were caught up with a string below the knee, and he wore a sort of brown fustian jacket that was very much faded. His thin hand rested upon a stoutish stick. He wore no hat and carried none, and I noticed that his head, covered with silvery hair, was finely shaped and gave the impression of something noble.

Though rather piqued by his studied disregard of my presence, I came to the conclusion that he probably had something to do with the little hostel and had a perfect right to use this room with freedom, and finished my luncheon without breaking the silence and then took the settle opposite to smoke a pipe before going on my way.

Through the open window came the scents of the blossoming fruit trees; the orchard was drenched in sunshine and the branches danced lazily in the breeze; the grass below fairly shone with white and yellow daisies, and the red roses climbing in profusion over the casement mingled their perfume with the sweetly penetrating odour of the sea.

It was a place to dawdle in, to lie and dream away a whole afternoon, watching the sleepy butterflies and listening to the chorus of birds which seemed to fill every corner of the sky. Indeed, I was already debating in my mind whether to linger and enjoy it all instead of taking the strenuous pathway over the hills, when the old rustic in the settle opposite suddenly turned his face towards me for the first time and began to speak.

His voice had a quiet dreamy note in it that was quite in harmony with the day and the scene, but it sounded far away, I thought, almost as though it came to me from outside where the shadows were weaving their eternal tissue of dreams upon the garden floor. Moreover, there was no trace in it of the rough quality one might naturally have expected, and, now that I saw the full face of the speaker for the first time, I noted with something like a start that the deep, gentle eyes seemed far more in keeping with the timbre of the voice than with the rough and very countrified appearance of the clothes and manner. His voice set pleasant waves of sound in motion towards me, and the actual words, if I remember rightly, were–
"You are a stranger in these parts?" or "Is not this part of the country strange to you?"

There was no "sir," nor any outward and visible sign of the deference usually paid by real country folk to the town-bred visitor, but in its place a gentleness, almost a sweetness, of polite sympathy that was far more of a compliment than either.

I answered that I was wandering on foot through a part of the country that was wholly new to me, and that I was surprised not to find a place of such idyllic loveliness marked upon my map.

“I have lived here all my life,” he said, with a sigh, “and am never tired of coming back to it again.”

“Then you no longer live in the immediate neighbourhood?”

“I have moved,” he answered briefly, adding after a pause in which his eyes seemed to wander wistfully to the wealth of blossoms beyond the window; “but I am almost sorry, for nowhere else have I found the sunshine lie so warmly, the flowers smell so sweetly, or the winds and streams make such tender music. . . .”

His voice died away into a thin stream of sound that lost itself in the rustle of the rose-leaves climbing in at the window, for he turned his head away from me as he spoke and looked out into the garden. But it was impossible to conceal my surprise, and I raised my eyes in frank astonishment on hearing so poetic an utterance from such a figure of a man, though at the same time realising that it was not in the least inappropriate, and that, in fact, no other sort of expression could have properly been expected from him.

“I am sure you are right,” I answered at length, when it was clear he had ceased speaking; “or there is something of enchantment here–of real fairy-like enchantment–that makes me think of the visions of childhood days, before one knew anything of–of–“

I had been oddly drawn into his vein of speech, some inner force compelling me. But here the spell passed and I could not catch the thoughts that had a moment before opened a long vista before my inner vision.

“To tell you the truth,” I concluded lamely, “the place fascinates me and I am in two minds about going further–“

Even at this stage I remember thinking it odd that I should be talking like this with a stranger whom I met in a country inn, for it has always been one of my failings that to strangers my manner is brief to surliness. It was as though we were figures meeting in a dream, speaking without sound, obeying laws not operative in the everyday working world, and about to play with a new scale of space and time perhaps. But my astonishment passed quickly into an entirely different feeling when I became aware that the old man opposite had turned his head from the window again, and was regarding me with eyes so bright they seemed almost to shine with an inner flame. His gaze was fixed upon my face with an intense ardour, and his whole manner had suddenly become alert and concentrated. There was something about him I now felt for the first time that made little thrills of excitement run up and down my back. I met his look squarely, but with an inward tremor.

“Stay, then, a little while longer,” he said in a much lower and deeper voice than before; “stay, and I will teach you something of the purpose of my coming.”

He stopped abruptly. I was conscious of a decided shiver.

“You have a special purpose then–in coming back?” I asked, hardly knowing what I was saying.

“To call away someone,” he went on in the same thrilling voice, “someone who is not quite ready to come, but who is needed elsewhere for a worthier purpose.” There was a sadness in his manner that mystified me more than ever.

“You mean–?” I began, with an unaccountable access of trembling.

“I have come for someone who must soon move, even as I have moved.”

He looked me through and through with a dreadfully piercing gaze, but I met his eyes with a full straight stare, trembling though I was, and I was aware that something stirred within me that had never stirred before, though for the life of me I could not have put a name to it, or have analysed its nature. Something lifted and rolled away. For one single second I understood clearly that the past and the future exist actually side by side in one immense Present; that it was *I* who moved to and fro among shifting, protean appearances.

The old man dropped his eyes from my face, and the momentary glimpse of a mightier universe passed utterly away. Reason regained its sway over a dull, limited kingdom.

“Come to-night,” I heard the old man say, “come to me to-night into the Wood of the Dead. Come at midnight–“

Involuntarily I clutched the arm of the settle for support, for I then felt that I was speaking with someone who knew more of the real things that are and will be, than I could ever know while in the body, working through the ordinary channels of sense–and this curious half-promise of a partial lifting of the veil had its undeniable effect upon me.

The breeze from the sea had died away outside, and the blossoms were still. A yellow butterfly floated lazily past the window. The song of the birds hushed–I smelt the sea–I smelt the perfume of heated summer air rising from fields and flowers, the ineffable scents of June and of the long days of the year–and with it, from countless green meadows beyond, came the hum of myriad summer life, children’s voices, sweet pipings, and the sound of water falling.

I knew myself to be on the threshold of a new order of experience–of an ecstasy. Something drew me forth with a sense of inexpressible yearning towards the being of this strange old man in the window seat, and for a moment I knew what it was to taste a mighty and wonderful sensation, and to touch the highest pinnacle of joy I have ever known. It lasted for less than a second, and was gone; but in that brief instant of time the same terrible lucidity came to me that had already shown me how the past and future exist in the present, and I realised and understood that pleasure and pain are one and the same force, for the joy I had just experienced included also all the pain I ever had felt, or ever could feel. . . .

The sunshine grew to dazzling radiance, faded, passed away. The shadows paused in their dance upon the grass, deepened a moment, and then melted into air. The flowers of the fruit trees laughed with their little silvery laughter as the wind sighed over their radiant eyes the old, old tale of its personal love. Once or twice a voice called my name. A wonderful sensation of lightness and power began to steal over me.

Suddenly the door opened and the inn-keeper’s daughter came in. By all ordinary standards, her’s was a charming country loveliness, born of the stars and wild-flowers, of moonlight shining through autumn mists upon the river and the fields; yet, by contrast with the higher order of beauty I had just momentarily been in touch with, she seemed almost ugly. How dull her eyes, how thin her voice, how vapid her smile, and insipid her whole presentment.

For a moment she stood between me and the occupant of the window seat while I counted out the small change for my meal and for her services; but when, an instant later, she moved aside, I saw that the settle was empty and that there was no longer anyone in the room but our two selves.

This discovery was no shock to me; indeed, I had almost expected it, and the man had gone just as a figure goes out of a dream, causing no surprise and leaving me as part and parcel of the same dream without breaking of continuity. But, as soon as I had paid my bill and thus resumed in very practical fashion the thread of my normal consciousness, I turned to the girl and asked her if she knew the old man who had been sitting in the window seat, and what he had meant by the Wood of the Dead.

The maiden started visibly, glancing quickly round the empty room, but answering simply that she had seen no one. I described him in great detail, and then, as the description grew clearer, she turned a little pale under her pretty sunburn and said very gravely that it must have been the ghost.

"Ghost! What ghost?"

"Oh, the village ghost," she said quietly, coming closer to my chair with a little nervous movement of genuine alarm, and adding in a lower voice, "He comes before a death, they say!"

It was not difficult to induce the girl to talk, and the story she told me, shorn of the superstition that had obviously gathered with the years round the memory of a strangely picturesque figure, was an interesting and peculiar one.

The inn, she said, was originally a farmhouse, occupied by a yeoman farmer, evidently of a superior, if rather eccentric, character, who had been very poor until he reached old age, when a son died suddenly in the Colonies and left him an unexpected amount of money, almost a fortune.

The old man thereupon altered no whit his simple manner of living, but devoted his income entirely to the improvement of the village and to the assistance of its inhabitants; he did this quite regardless of his personal likes and dislikes, as if one and all were absolutely alike to him, objects of a genuine and impersonal benevolence. People had always been a little afraid of the man, not understanding his eccentricities, but the simple force of this love for humanity changed all that in a very short space of time; and before he died he came to be known as the Father of the Village and was held in great love and veneration by all.

A short time before his end, however, he began to act queerly. He spent his money just as usefully and wisely, but the shock of sudden wealth after a life of poverty, people said, had unsettled his mind. He claimed to see things that others did not see, to hear voices, and to have visions. Evidently, he was not of the harmless, foolish, visionary order, but a man of character and of great personal force, for the people became divided in their opinions, and the vicar, good man, regarded and treated him as a "special case." For many, his name and atmosphere became charged almost with a spiritual influence that was not of the best. People quoted texts about him; kept when possible out of his way, and avoided his house after dark. None understood him, but though the majority loved him, an element of dread and mystery became associated with his name, chiefly owing to the ignorant gossip of the few.

A grove of pine trees behind the farm–the girl pointed them out to me on the slope of the hill–he said was the Wood of the Dead, because just before anyone died in the village he saw them walk into that wood, singing. None who went in ever came out again. He often mentioned the names to his wife, who usually published them to all the inhabitants within an hour of her husband's confidence; and it was found that the people he had seen enter the wood–died. On warm summer nights he would sometimes take an old stick and wander out, hatless, under the pines, for he loved this wood, and used to say he met all his old friends there, and would one day walk in there never to return. His wife tried to break him gently off this habit, but he always had his own way; and once, when she followed and found him standing under a great pine in the thickest portion of the grove, talking earnestly to someone she could not see, he turned and rebuked her very gently, but in such a way that she never repeated the experiment, saying–

"You should never interrupt me, Mary, when I am talking with the others; for they teach me, remember, wonderful things, and I must learn all I can before I go to join them."

This story went like wild-fire through the village, increasing with every repetition, until at length everyone was able to give an accurate description of the great veiled figures the woman declared she had seen moving among the trees where her husband stood. The innocent pine-grove now became positively haunted, and the title of "Wood of the Dead" clung naturally as if it had been applied to it in the ordinary course of events by the compilers of the Ordnance Survey.

On the evening of his ninetieth birthday the old man went up to his wife and kissed her. His manner was loving, and very gentle, and there was something about him besides, she declared afterwards, that made her slightly in awe of him and feel that he was almost more of a spirit than a man.

He kissed her tenderly on both cheeks, but his eyes seemed to look right through her as he spoke.

"Dearest wife," he said, "I am saying good-bye to you, for I am now going into the Wood of the Dead, and I shall not return. Do not follow me, or send to search, but be ready soon to come upon the same journey yourself."

The good woman burst into tears and tried to hold him, but he easily slipped from her hands, and she was afraid to follow him. Slowly she saw him cross the field in the sunshine, and then enter the cool shadows of the grove, where he disappeared from her sight.

That same night, much later, she woke to find him lying peacefully by her side in bed, with one arm stretched out towards her, *dead*. Her story was half believed, half doubted at the time, but in a very few years afterwards it evidently came to be accepted by all the countryside. A funeral service was held to which the people flocked in great numbers, and everyone approved of the sentiment which led the widow to add the words, "The Father of the Village," after the usual texts which appeared upon the stone over his grave.

This, then, was the story I pieced together of the village ghost as the little inn-keeper's daughter told it to me that afternoon in the parlour of the inn.

"But you're not the first to say you've seen him," the girl concluded; "and your description is just what we've always heard, and that window, they say, was just where he used to sit and think, and think, when he was alive, and sometimes, they say, to cry for hours together."

"And would you feel afraid if you had seen him?" I asked, for the girl seemed strangely moved and interested in the whole story.

"I think so," she answered timidly. "Surely, if he spoke to me. He did speak to *you*, didn't he, sir?" she asked after a slight pause.

"He said he had come for someone."

"Come for someone," she repeated. "Did he say–" she went on falteringly.

"No, he did not say for whom," I said quickly, noticing the sudden shadow on her face and the tremulous voice.

"Are you really sure, sir?"

"Oh, quite sure," I answered cheerfully. "I did not even ask him." The girl looked at me steadily for nearly a whole minute as though there were many things she wished to tell me or to ask. But she said nothing, and presently picked up her tray from the table and walked slowly out of the room.

Instead of keeping to my original purpose and pushing on to the next village over the hills, I ordered a room to be prepared for me at the inn, and that afternoon I spent wandering about the fields and lying under the fruit trees, watching the white clouds sailing out over the sea. The Wood of the Dead I surveyed from a distance, but in the village I visited the stone erected to the memory of the "Father of the Village"–who was thus, evidently, no mythical personage–and saw also the monuments of his fine unselfish spirit: the schoolhouse he built, the library, the home for the aged poor, and the tiny hospital.

That night, as the clock in the church tower was striking half-past eleven, I stealthily left the inn and crept through the dark orchard and over the hayfield in the direction of the hill whose southern slope was clothed with the Wood of the Dead. A genuine interest impelled me to the adventure, but I also was obliged to confess to a certain sinking in my heart as I stumbled along over the field in the darkness, for I was approaching what might prove to be the birth-place of a real country myth, and a spot already lifted by the imaginative thoughts of a considerable number of people into the region of the haunted and ill-omened.

The inn lay below me, and all round it the village clustered in a soft black shadow unrelieved by a single light. The night was moonless, yet distinctly luminous, for the stars crowded the sky. The silence of deep slumber was everywhere; so still, indeed, that every time my foot kicked against a stone I thought the sound must be heard below in the village and waken the sleepers.

I climbed the hill slowly, thinking chiefly of the strange story of the noble old man who had seized the opportunity to do good to his fellows the moment it came his way, and wondering why the causes that operate ceaselessly behind human life did not always select such admirable instruments. Once or twice a night-bird circled swiftly over my head, but the bats had long since gone to rest, and there was no other sign of life stirring.

Then, suddenly, with a singular thrill of emotion, I saw the first trees of the Wood of the Dead rise in front of me in a high black wall. Their crests stood up like giant spears against the starry sky; and though there was no perceptible movement of the air on my cheek I heard a faint, rushing sound among their branches as the night breeze passed to and fro over their countless little needles. A remote, hushed murmur rose overhead and died away again almost immediately; for in these trees the wind seems to be never absolutely at rest, and on the calmest day there is always a sort of whispering music among their branches.

For a moment I hesitated on the edge of this dark wood, and listened intently. Delicate perfumes of earth and bark stole out to meet me. Impenetrable darkness faced me. Only the consciousness that I was obeying an order, strangely given, and including a mighty privilege, enabled me to find the courage to go forward and step in boldly under the trees.

Instantly the shadows closed in upon me and "something" came forward to meet me from the centre of the darkness. It would be easy enough to meet my imagination half-way with fact, and say that a cold hand grasped my own and led me by invisible paths into the unknown depths of the grove; but at any rate, without stumbling, and always with the positive knowledge that I was going straight towards the desired object, I pressed on confidently and securely into the wood. So dark was it that, at first, not a single star-beam pierced the roof of branches overhead; and, as we moved forward side by side, the trees shifted silently past us in long lines, row upon row, squadron upon squadron, like the units of a vast, soundless army.

And, at length, we came to a comparatively open space where the trees halted upon us for a while, and, looking up, I saw the white river of the sky beginning to yield to the influence of a new light that now seemed spreading swiftly across the heavens.

"It is the dawn coming," said the voice at my side that I certainly recognised, but which seemed almost like a whispering from the trees, "and we are now in the heart of the Wood of the Dead."

We seated ourselves on a moss-covered boulder and waited the coming of the sun. With marvellous swiftness, it seemed to me, the light in the east passed into the radiance of early morning, and when the wind awoke and began to whisper in the tree tops, the first rays of the risen sun fell between the trunks and rested in a circle of gold at our feet.

"Now, come with me," whispered my companion in the same deep voice, "for time has no existence here, and that which I would show you is already *there*!"

We trod gently and silently over the soft pine needles. Already the sun was high over our heads, and the shadows of the trees coiled closely about their feet. The wood became denser again, but occasionally we passed through little open bits where we could smell the hot sunshine and the dry, baked pine needles. Then, presently, we came to the edge of the grove, and I saw a hayfield lying in the blaze of day, and two horses basking lazily with switching tails in the shafts of a laden hay-waggon.

So complete and vivid was the sense of reality, that I remember the grateful realisation of the cool shade where we sat and looked out upon the hot world beyond.

The last pitchfork had tossed up its fragrant burden, and the great horses were already straining in the shafts after the driver, as he walked slowly in front with one hand upon their bridles. He was a stalwart fellow, with sunburned neck and hands. Then, for the first time, I noticed, perched aloft upon the trembling throne of hay, the figure of a slim young girl. I could not see her face, but her brown hair escaped in disorder from a white sun-bonnet, and her still browner hands held a well-worn hay rake. She was laughing and talking with the driver, and he, from time to time, cast up at her ardent glances of admiration–glances that won instant smiles and soft blushes in response.

The cart presently turned into the roadway that skirted the edge of the wood where we were sitting. I watched the scene with intense interest and became so much absorbed in it that I quite forgot the manifold, strange steps by which I was permitted to become a spectator.

"Come down and walk with me," cried the young fellow, stopping a moment in front of the horses and opening wide his arms. "Jump! and I'll catch you!"

"Oh, oh," she laughed, and her voice sounded to me as the happiest, merriest laughter I had ever heard from a girl's throat. "Oh, oh! that's all very well. But

remember I'm Queen of the Hay, and I must ride!"

"Then I must come and ride beside you," he cried, and began at once to climb up by way of the driver's seat. But, with a peal of silvery laughter, she slipped down easily over the back of the hay to escape him, and ran a little way along the road. I could see her quite clearly, and noticed the charming, natural grace of her movements, and the loving expression in her eyes as she looked over her shoulder to make sure he was following. Evidently, she did not wish to escape for long, certainly not for ever.

In two strides the big, brown swain was after her, leaving the horses to do as they pleased. Another second and his arms would have caught the slender waist and pressed the little body to his heart. But, just at that instant, the old man beside me uttered a peculiar cry. It was low and thrilling, and it went through me like a sharp sword.

He had called her by her own name–and she had heard.

For a second she halted, glancing back with frightened eyes. Then, with a brief cry of despair, the girl swerved aside and dived in swiftly among the shadows of the trees.

But the young man saw the sudden movement and cried out to her passionately– "Not that way, my love! Not that way! It's the Wood of the Dead!"

She threw a laughing glance over her shoulder at him, and the wind caught her hair and drew it out in a brown cloud under the sun. But the next minute she was close beside me, lying on the breast of my companion, and I was certain I heard the words repeatedly uttered with many sighs: "Father, you called, and I have come. And I come willingly, for I am very, very tired."

At any rate, so the words sounded to me, and mingled with them I seemed to catch the answer in that deep, thrilling whisper I already knew: "And you shall sleep, my child, sleep for a long, long time, until it is time for you to begin the journey again."

In that brief second of time I had recognised the face and voice of the inn-keeper's daughter, but the next minute a dreadful wail broke from the lips of the young man, and the sky grew suddenly as dark as night, the wind rose and began to toss the branches about us, and the whole scene was swallowed up in a wave of utter blackness.

Again the chill fingers seemed to seize my hand, and I was guided by the way I had come to the edge of the wood, and crossing the hayfield still slumbering in the starlight, I crept back to the inn and went to bed.

A year later I happened to be in the same part of the country, and the memory of the strange summer vision returned to me with the added softness of distance. I went to the old village and had tea under the same orchard trees at the same inn.

But the little maid of the inn did not show her face, and I took occasion to enquire of her father as to her welfare and her whereabouts.

"Married, no doubt," I laughed, but with a strange feeling that clutched at my heart.

"No, sir," replied the inn-keeper sadly, "not married–though she was just going to be– but dead. She got a sunstroke in the hayfields, just a few days after you were here, if I remember rightly, and she was gone from us in less than a week."

z

The Dragon of Cos in Mandeville

This is your Monster of the Month. This week we revisit Sir John Mandeville, an entirely fictitious author, whose travel journals in the 14th century gave the Christians great hope that there was a great Christian Emperor in India who was going to rescue the Holy Land.

Mandeville talks about how he goes to Prester John's Court, and on the way there he stops on the island of Cos, where there are stories of a dragon, and also of great treasure, and the right to assume the kingship of all the surrounding islands.

Oh, that's the one that's meant to be full of vampires, it's a bit like Santorini. And moving on.

Thanks to Daniel Davison who released this recording into the public domain. Also thanks to his production team.

And then pass men through the isles of Colcos and of Lango, of the which isles Ypocras was lord of. And some men say, that in the isle of Lango is yet the daughter of Ypocras, in form and likeness of a great dragon, that is a hundred fathom of length, as men say, for I have not seen her. And they of the isles call her Lady of the Land. And she lieth in an old castle, in a cave, and sheweth twice or thrice in the year, and she doth no harm to no man, but if men do her harm. And she was thus changed and transformed, from a fair damosel, into likeness of a dragon, by a goddess that was clept Diana. And men say, that she shall so endure in that form of a dragon, unto [the] time that a knight come, that is so hardy, that dare come to her and kiss her on the mouth; and then shall she turn again to her own kind, and be a woman again, but after that she shall not live long.

And it is not long sithen, that a knight of Rhodes, that was hardy and doughty in arms, said that he would kiss her. And when he was upon his courser, and went to the castle, and entered into the cave, the dragon lift up her head against him. And when the knight saw her in that form so hideous and so horrible he fled away. And the dragon bare the knight upon a rock, maugre his head; and from that rock, she cast him into the sea. And so was lost both horse and man.

And also a young man, that wist not of the dragon, went out of a ship, and went through the isle till that he came to the castle, and came into the cave, and went so long, till that he found a chamber; and there he saw a damosel that combed her head and looked in a mirror; and she had much treasure about her. And he trowed that she had been a common woman, that dwelled there to receive men p. 18to folly. And he abode, till the damosel saw the shadow of him in the mirror. And she turned her toward him, and asked him what he would? And he said, he would be her leman or paramour. And she asked him, if that he were a knight? And he said, nay. And then she said, that he might not be her leman; but she bade him go again unto his fellows, and make him knight, and come again upon the morrow, and she should come out of the cave before him, and then come and kiss her on the mouth and have no dread,—for I shall do thee no manner of harm, albeit that thou see me in likeness of a dragon; for though thou see me hideous and horrible to look on, I do thee to wit that it is made by enchantment; for without doubt, I am none other than thou seest now, a woman, and therefore dread thee nought. And if thou kiss me, thou shalt have all this treasure, and be my lord, and lord also of all the isle.

And he departed from her and went to his fellows to ship, and let make him knight and came again upon the morrow for to kiss this damosel. And when he saw her come out of the cave in form of a dragon, so hideous and so horrible, he had so great dread, that he fled again to the ship, and she followed him. And when she saw that he turned not again, she began to cry, as a thing that had much sorrow; and then she turned again into her cave. And anon the knight died. And sithen hitherward might no knight see her, but that he died anon. But when a knight cometh, that is so hardy to kiss her, he shall not die; but he shall turn the damosel into her right form and kindly shape, and he shall be lord of all the countries and isles abovesaid.

Cider Fauns

When I was writing up the fauns for the Magonomia Bestiary I missed a trick. The player characters discover they can make faun-like creatures with different alcoholic beverages. I missed an important one: cider.

Cider and beer are rivals for English drinkers over centuries, but cider is in the ascendant in the Ars Magica period. This is because one of its great cultural centres is Normandy, and the 1066 invasion makes it popular in the upper classes. That's not to say cider wasn't already made elsewhere, it was: it's just that when you look at nobles they are mostly wine drinkers in most of Europe. Among peasants it was also popular, because it was cheaper to make than beer.

It's cheap to make cider, because you don't need to boil the apple juice in the way that you boil the barley mash. You don't need fuel, which is handy in a kingdom that has deforested itself and not yet discovered the widespread use of sea coal. Cider apples are also usually picked in October during the period, which is after many of the other duties of the agricultural year.

If you look at the basic information about variants, you'll read that there are three essential types of apple. These are dessert, the cooking and crab apples. The last one's used to make cider, and you'll read is is full of tannins which make it too astringent to eat, but which add flavour to the cider and clarifies it. These divisions are essentially rubbish in modern Australia, and may be where you are too. I've eaten apples sold as crab apples, and they were just dessert or cooking apples that were too small to be accepted by supermarkets. Australia's favourite cooking apple, the Granny Smith, is probably a weird natural mutation of the French Crab, which is a cider apple people also use for desserts. Basically you can mix and match your apples to create different flavours and qualities.

A better way of thinking about apples is along two axes: sweetness and bitterness. This divides apples into four groups and I'd like to suggest that you could map these to the four humours so that you could program the personality of the faun-like creature you make with cider. The types are:

Bittersharp: This is the classic ancient cider apple, that can be used without being mixed with other apple varieties. It is high in tannins (bitter) and acid (sharp). The acid slows fermentation, but that's not a bad thing sometimes: it means that your apple juice is less likely to pick up stray yeasts and ferment weirdly.

Bittersweet: This is a high tannin apple, but it is low in acid, so it tastes sweeter than a bittersharp. Lower acid in the juice makes fermentation faster, so these let you speed up and bulk out your cider.

Sharp (or, in the French system, **acidic**): A sharp apple is low tannin and high acid. It can be added to up the acidity level, see above for how that preserves apple juice. A lot of cooking apples are sharps, because the acid generally breaks down under heat. So, the Granny Smith is a sharp apple. To show how useless the three-way division of apples is, the Harrision Cider Apple is also a sharp cultivar.

Sweet: this is a high sugar, low acid apple Basically, that's a table apple. Sugar doesn't add a lot of flavour to cider, but it does add extra alcohol after fermentation, so, handy to have. In the Faun chapter, you are initially looking for highly potent alcohol, and so you'd load up on sweet apples when making a faun. In the four humour model that would push all of the fauns toward the sanguine humour, and your tuning would be along the tannic axis, so you could push some into phlegmatic (by making the cider bitter). After you work out that the strength of the alcohol doesn't matter, you could pull back on the sugar and add more sharpness (acid) to pull your fauns back toward melancholic or phlegmatic. I'd argue silenii are pretty phlegmatic, so you might be able to make something a little like them that way.

Would there be a physical divergence? I have thought of these creatures as a sort of woodwose, but I'm not tied to that idea. I have also considered them as serpent people.

The Dragon of Cos in Mandeville

This week, The Phantom Town, recorded into the public domain by Colleen McMahon through LibriVox, thanks to Colleen and her production team.

This is a piece of Irish folklore that was originally written into a newspaper in the late 19th century.

Clearly useful in other Ars Magica or Magonomia.

Sir, the following story is founded on the legend well-known on the carry shore of the Shannon. I imagine it originated in something like the fatal morgana of the Bay of Naples, or some such appearances as those noticed in a former number of your journal, as having been observed along the Causeway Coast.

W.F.G

***

On a bright summer's morning, as I stood on one of the tremendous cliffs which overhang the broad Shannon at its mouth, where the unceasing war of the Atlantic's gigantic waves had fretted and foamed for ages, among the caves and hollows of this iron-bound coast. Gradually a shade was thrown on the bosom of the placid glass-like river. As I gazed on the smooth waters, the shadows increased, and imperceptibly began to take palpable forms. My wonder increased on perceiving, slowly developed, the shadowy forms of towers, steeples and pterodid castles which spread themselves on every side. There was to be seen clearly defined a noble town. On a sudden I heard a noise as of rushing waters, accompanied with what I took to be whalings and lamentations. Looking towards the sea, I saw the white crested waves rushing with impetuosity, towards the shadowy town. On they came, and in a moment all had vanished, except one solitary castle at its farthest extremity. From this, as I gazed with increased astonishment, issued the form of a warrior, armed, and mounted on a jet-black horse. On his crupper was seated, a female form, who clung closely to the warrior with one hand. The other she alternately waved towards where the town was and the shore where I stood. They buffeted with the waves for a few moments, then sunk amidst the boiling surges. As I turned with melancholy feelings from viewing these strange appearances, I heard a voice calling me in a commanding tone to remain. I stood transfixed. A venerable old man in the garb of a monk was advancing from the face of the cliffs towards me.

"Stay, O man," said he, "and hear from me the melancholy story of the strange sights to which you have been an unbidden spectator. I alone destined for my punishment to remain on earth, till time shall be no more, can explain these wonders."

"Centuries have passed", he continued, "since these now deserted shores were in livens by the neighborhood of a large and populous town, such as you have just now seen reflected on the waters. Buried many fathoms beneath these waves led the palaces and castles of princes and barons of this land."

"How so great a calamity happened, you shall hear."

The castle of King Ulic was illuminated for a general banquet in rejoicing. His queen had given birth to a daughter, heiress to his throne and possessions. The numerous retainers of the king occupied each side of the immense board, which reached from end to end of the great hall. At the head, on a throne elevated above the rest, sat the king himself.

The night was nearly spent, and many of the revellers retired, when a stranger was observed standing just within the threshold, intently gazing on the king. All eyes were quickly turned on the intruder, who, seeing he was observed, walked deliberately up the hall. When he approached the king, he drew from under his ample robe a scroll of parchment, placed it before him and retired, as if to observe its effect. The king took up the parchment and read as follows,

"O King, when thy daughter a stranger shall wed,
whose hand with the blood of her father is read,
where thy castles now stand, the broad Shannon shall cover,
and thy courtyard the grave of the maid and her lover."

"Seize that evil-boding stranger!" cried the king, greatly excited by what he had read. A hundred armed men started to their feet, but the stranger was nowhere to be found. How he had entered, or how departed, no man could tell. All present, deeply moved to the incident, deserted the banquet, and retired to rest.

Adjoining Ulic's territories were those of Mac-Murchard, the powerful chieftain of Leinster. These princes had united in enmity in order to repel the English invader. Mac-Murchard had a son, then six years old, to whom Ulric determined to betroth his infant daughter. He sent a trusty messenger to negotiate this treaty, and the marriage contract was ratified with the full consent of all parties. Mac-Murchard, in order that his son should possess that learning of the schools which his ancestors despised, sent him to his brother's convent in France, where he was to remain until able to bear arms.

16 years had passed, the young Mac-Murchard had long since returned, and became a successful wooer in person to the beautiful Eva. The day was fixed for the ceremony, and all was preparation for the festivity.

Some days previous to the marriage, Mac-Murchard's brother, the monk, unexpectedly arrived from France. He came, he said, to look once more on his native land before he died. At length, the bridal morn arrived, most inauspiciously gloomy and tempestuous. The young Mac-Murchard led his timid bride to the altar. They pledged their mutual vows, and the ceremony was finished.

At this moment, a voice was heard saying, "Ulic! Ulic, thy destiny is nearly accomplished!". All eyes immediately turned towards that part of the chapel from which the voice came, and Ulic's followers instantly recognized to the figure of the stranger monk, who had so mysteriously entered with the prophetic scroll.

"Ulic, said he, as he advanced, "Look on me and recognize the enemy of thy youth, Alan Mac-Murchard. Has thou forgotten the day when you disgraced my manhood with a vile blow? Thinkest thou that because my father, treating me as a hot-brained boy, interfered to prevent my staining my hands with thy coward blood, that I have forgotten that degrading stain? You were my senior in years in strength. You struck me. I sworn oath that I would not die until I'd amply revenged the dishonor. That hour is now arrived. Far towards the black north I traveled to a mighty sorceress, to procure that prophetic scroll. I, it was, who placed it on thy board. By my means thy daughter is wedded to a stranger and thy ruin certain."

"Know, proud king, that my brother's son, the young Mac-Murchard, lived but a few hours after his arrival at the convent. I, knowing of the marriage contract with your daughter, reared up an orphan peasant as the heir of Mac-Murchard, and a base-born Frenchman's son as the bridegroom you have chosen."

"Then perish minion!" said Ulic, drawing his sword, "and with thy death leave that accursed spell still unaccomplished." He made a lunge toward the bridegroom. But the monk, seeing his intention, threw himself between them, received the wound in his side and fell.

The young Mac-Murchard, as we shall still call him, then obliged to defend himself from the furious king. Being hard-pressed made a desperate pass at Ulic, who fell mortally wounded.

"Fly!", cried the monk with a faint voice. "Hear you not the roar of the raging waters? Take up your fainting bride and fly while there is yet hope." All fled from the chapel on hearing this awful announcement of the dying monk.

The young Mac-Murchard, bearing the inanimate form of the lady, hastened toward the stables and led forth his trusty black warhorse. The lady, now restored to animation, he placed behind him, and prepared to ride from the threatened danger, but it was too late. The lamentations and drowning cries of the inhabitants, born on the winds, announced that some dreadful occurrence had taken place. As he advanced to the gate, the rush of the mighty ocean was heard. In a moment, the gates were closed by the violence of the waves.

Mack-Murchard, still hoping to escape, clung to his horse, supporting his bride. But a gigantic billow was seen rolling along with resistless impetuosity. They rode on its summit for a moment and were overwhelmed to rise no more. All that inhabited that peninsula were totally swallowed up by the rapacious element. Once in a hundred years, the phantom town is seen in its wanted situation, and the events of that tremendous day are acted over again, and I, the guilty monk, Mac-Murchard, an unwilling spectator of my evil work.

He ceased. I looked once more at the waters, now ruffled by the western breeze, and turned again to address the spectre monk. He was gone.

I departed and never since visited the neighbourhood of the phantom town.

W.F.G

Strange Event in the Life of Schalken the Painter by J. Sheridan Le Fanu

This is your Monster of the Month. The story we'll be listening to is Schalken the Painter by J. Sheridan Le Fanu, as read for Librivox by Tony Addison. Thanks to Tony and his team.

Le Fanu was an early Irish fantasy author who was very influential on Poe and Lovecraft. His family, ancestrally, were Protestant Huguenots, who had fled the persecutions which were occurring in France during the Magonomia period. This story is set in amongst a Dutch community and could be easily moved to the immigrant community in Norwich, for example, or London.

The reason I haven't done this story before is because I just wrote it off as a ghost story. There is obviously some sort of phantom lover or phantom husband. My question is, what is the second spirit? You'll see what I mean when you get there. Is it, in some sense, a vampire in that it seems to have an infectious capacity?

You will no doubt be surprised, my dear friend, at the subject of the following narrative. What had I to do with Schalken, or Schalken with me? He had returned to his native land, and was probably dead and buried before I was born; I never visited Holland, nor spoke with a native of that country. So much I believe you already know. I must, then, give you my authority, and state to you frankly the ground upon which rests the credibility of the strange story which I am about to lay before you.

I was acquainted, in my early days, with a Captain Vandael, whose father had served King William in the Low Countries, and also in my own unhappy land during the Irish campaigns. I know not how it happened that I liked this man's society, spite of his politics and religion: but so it was; and it was by means of the free intercourse to which our intimacy gave rise that I became possessed of the curious tale which you are about to hear.

I had often been struck, while visiting Vandael, by a remarkable picture, in which, though no connoisseur myself, I could not fail to discern some very strong peculiarities, particularly in the distribution of light and shade, as also a certain oddity in the design itself, which interested my curiosity. It represented the interior of what might be a chamber in some antique religious building—the foreground was occupied by a female figure, arrayed in a species of white robe, part of which was arranged so as to form a veil. The dress, however, was not strictly that of any religious order. In its hand the figure bore a lamp, by whose light alone the form and face were illuminated; the features were marked by an arch smile, such as pretty women wear when engaged in successfully practising some roguish trick; in the background, and (excepting where the dim red light of an expiring fire serves to define the form) totally in the shade, stood the figure of a man equipped in the old fashion, with doublet and so forth, in an attitude of alarm, his hand being placed upon the hilt of his sword, which he appeared to be in the act of drawing.

"There are some pictures," said I to my friend, "which impress one, I know not how, with a conviction that they represent not the mere ideal shapes and combinations which have floated through the imagination of the artist, but scenes, faces, and situations which have actually existed. When I look upon that picture, something assures me that I behold the representation of a reality."

Vandael smiled, and, fixing his eyes upon the painting musingly, he said,—

"Your fancy has not deceived you, my good friend, for that picture is the record, and I believe a faithful one, of a remarkable and mysterious occurrence. It was painted by Schalken, and contains, in the face of the female figure which occupies the most prominent place in the design, an accurate portrait of Rose Velderkaust, the niece of Gerard Douw, the first and, I believe, the only love of Godfrey Schalken. My father knew the painter well, and from Schalken himself he learned the story of the mysterious drama, one scene of which the picture has embodied. This painting, which is accounted a fine specimen of Schalken's style, was bequeathed to my father by the artist's will, and, as you have observed, is a very striking and interesting production."

I had only to request Vandael to tell the story of the painting in order to be gratified; and thus it is that I am enabled to submit to you a faithful recital of what I heard myself, leaving you to reject or to allow the evidence upon which the truth of the tradition depends—with this one assurance, that Schalken was an honest, blunt Dutchman, and, I believe, wholly incapable of committing a flight of imagination; and further, that Vandael, from whom I heard the story, appeared firmly convinced of its truth.

There are few forms upon which the mantle of mystery and romance could seem to hang more ungracefully than upon that of the uncouth and clownish Schalken—the Dutch boor—the rude and dogged, but most cunning worker in oils, whose pieces delight the initiated of the present day almost as much as his manners disgusted the refined of his own; and yet this man, so rude, so dogged, so slovenly, I had almost said so savage in mien and manner, during his after successes, had been selected by the capricious goddess, in his early life, to figure as the hero of a romance by no means devoid of interest or of mystery.

Who can tell how meet he may have been in his young days to play the part of the lover or of the hero? who can say that in early life he had been the same harsh, unlicked, and rugged boor that, in his maturer age, he proved? or how far the neglected rudeness

which afterwards marked his air, and garb, and manners, may not have been the growth of that reckless apathy not unfrequently produced by bitter misfortunes and disappointments in early life?

These questions can never now be answered. We must content ourselves, then, with a plain statement of facts, leaving matters of speculation to those who like them.

When Schalken studied under the immortal Gerard Douw, he was a young man; and in spite of the phlegmatic constitution and excitable manner which he shared, we believe, with his countrymen, he was not incapable of deep and vivid impressions, for it is an established fact that the young painter looked with considerable interest upon the beautiful niece of his wealthy master.

Rose Velderkaust was very young, having, at the period of which we speak, not yet attained her seventeenth year; and, if tradition speaks truth, she possessed all the soft dimpling charms of the fair, light-haired Flemish maidens. Schalken had not studied long in the school of Gerard Douw when he felt this interest deepening into something of a keener and intenser feeling than was quite consistent with the tranquillity of his honest Dutch heart; and at the same time he perceived, or thought he perceived, flattering symptoms of a reciprocal attachment, and this was quite sufficient to determine whatever indecision he might have heretofore experienced, and to lead him to devote exclusively to her every hope and feeling of his heart. In short, he was as much in love as a Dutchman could be. He was not long in making his passion known to the pretty maiden herself, and his declaration was followed by a corresponding confession upon her part.

Schalken, howbeit, was a poor man, and he possessed no counterbalancing advantages of birth or position to induce the old man to consent to a union which must involve his niece and ward in the strugglings and difficulties of a young and nearly friendless artist. He was, therefore, to wait until time had furnished him with opportunity, and accident with success; and then, if his labours were found sufficiently lucrative, it was to be hoped that his proposals might at least be listened to by her jealous guardian. Months passed away, and, cheered by the smiles of the little Rose, Schalken's labours were redoubled, and with such effect and improvement as reasonably to promise the realization of his hopes, and no contemptible eminence in his art, before many years should have elapsed.

The even course of this cheering prosperity was, unfortunately, destined to experience a sudden and formidable interruption, and that, too, in a manner so strange and mysterious as to baffle all investigation, and throw upon the events themselves a shadow of almost supernatural horror.

Schalken had one evening remained in the master's studio considerably longer than his more volatile companions, who had gladly availed themselves of the excuse which the dusk of evening afforded to withdraw from their several tasks, in order to finish a day of labour in the jollity and conviviality of the tavern.

But Schalken worked for improvement, or rather for love. Besides, he was now engaged merely in sketching a design, an operation which, unlike that of colouring, might be continued as long as there was light sufficient to distinguish between canvas and charcoal. He had not then, nor, indeed, until long after, discovered the peculiar powers of his pencil; and he was engaged in composing a group of extremely roguish-looking and grotesque imps and demons, who were inflicting various ingenious torments upon a perspiring and pot-bellied St. Anthony, who reclined in the midst of them, apparently in the last stage of drunkenness.

The young artist, however, though incapable of executing, or even of appreciating, anything of true sublimity, had nevertheless discernment enough to prevent his being by any means satisfied with his work; and many were the patient erasures and corrections which the limbs and features of saint and devil underwent, yet all without producing in their new arrangement anything of improvement or increased effect.

The large, old-fashioned room was silent, and, with the exception of himself, quite deserted by its usual inmates. An hour had passed—nearly two—without any improved result. Daylight had already declined, and twilight was fast giving way to the darkness of night. The patience of the young man was exhausted, and he stood before his unfinished production, absorbed in no very pleasing ruminations, one hand buried in the folds of his long dark hair, and the other holding the piece of charcoal which had so ill executed its office, and which he now rubbed, without much regard to the sable streaks which it produced, with irritable pressure upon his ample Flemish inexpressibles.

"Pshaw!" said the young man aloud, "would that picture, devils, saint, and all, were where they should be—in hell!"

A short, sudden laugh, uttered startlingly close to his ear, instantly responded to the ejaculation.

The artist turned sharply round, and now for the first time became aware that his labours had been overlooked by a stranger.

Within about a yard and a half, and rather behind him, there stood what was, or appeared to be, the figure of an elderly man: he wore a short cloak, and broad-brimmed hat with a conical crown, and in his hand, which was protected with a heavy, gauntlet-shaped glove, he carried a long ebony walking-stick, surmounted with what appeared, as it glittered dimly in the twilight to be a massive head of gold; and upon his breast, through the folds of the cloak, there shone the links of a rich chain of the same metal.

The room was so obscure that nothing further of the appearance of the figure could be ascertained, and the face was altogether overshadowed by the heavy flap of the beaver which overhung it, so that no feature could be clearly discerned. A quantity of dark hair escaped from beneath this sombre hat, a circumstance which, connected with the firm, upright carriage of the intruder, proved that his years could not yet exceed threescore or thereabouts.

There was an air of gravity and importance about the garb of this person, and something indescribably odd—I might say awful—in the perfect, stone-like movelessness of the figure, that effectually checked the testy comment which had at once risen to the lips of the irritated artist. He therefore, as soon as he had sufficiently recovered the surprise, asked the stranger, civilly, to be seated, and desired to know if he had any message to leave for his master.

"Tell Gerard Douw," said the unknown, without altering his attitude in the smallest degree, "that Mynher Vanderhausen, of Rotterdam, desires to speak with him to-morrow evening at this hour, and, if he please, in this room, upon matters of weight; that is all. Good-night."

The stranger, having finished this message, turned abruptly, and, with a quick but silent step quitted the room before Schalken had time to say a word in reply.

The young man felt a curiosity to see in what direction the burgher of Rotterdam would turn on quitting the studio, and for that purpose he went directly to the window which commanded the door.

A lobby of considerable extent intervened between the inner door of the painter's room and the street entrance, so that Schalken occupied the post of observation before the old man could possibly have reached the street.

He watched in vain, however. There was no other mode of exit.

Had the old man vanished, or was he lurking about the recesses of the lobby for some bad purpose? This last suggestion filled the mind of Schalken with a vague horror, which was so unaccountably intense as to make him alike afraid to remain in the room alone and reluctant to pass through the lobby.

However, with an effort which appeared very disproportioned to the occasion, he summoned resolution to leave the room, and, having double-locked the door, and thrust the key in his pocket, without looking to the right or left, he traversed the passage which had so recently, perhaps still, contained the person of his mysterious visitant, scarcely venturing to breathe till he had arrived in the open street.

"Mynher Vanderhausen," said Gerard Douw, within himself, as the appointed hour approached; "Mynher Vanderhausen, of Rotterdam! I never heard of the man till yesterday. What can he want of me? A portrait, perhaps, to be painted; or a younger son or a poor relation to be apprenticed; or a collection to be valued; or—pshaw! there's no one in Rotterdam to leave me a legacy. Well, whatever the business may be, we shall soon know it all."

It was now the close of day, and every easel, except that of Schalken, was deserted. Gerard Douw was pacing the apartment with the restless step of impatient expectation, every now and then humming a passage from a piece of music which he was himself composing; for, though no great proficient, he admired the art; sometimes pausing to glance over the work of one of his absent pupils, but more frequently placing himself at the window, from whence he might observe the passengers who threaded the obscure by-street in which his studio was placed.

"Said you not, Godfrey," exclaimed Douw, after a long and fruitless gaze from his post of observation, and turning to Schalken —"said you not the hour of appointment was at about seven by the clock of the Stadhouse?"

"It had just told seven when I first saw him, sir," answered the student.

"The hour is close at hand, then," said the master, consulting a horologe as large and as round as a full-grown orange. "Mynher Vanderhausen, from Rotterdam—is it not so?"

"Such was the name."

"And an elderly man, richly clad?" continued Douw.

"As well as I might see," replied his pupil. "He could not be young, nor yet very old neither, and his dress was rich and grave, as might become a citizen of wealth and consideration."

At this moment the sonorous boom of the Stadhouse clock told, stroke after stroke, the hour of seven; the eyes of both master and student were directed to the door; and it was not until the last peal of the old bell had ceased to vibrate, that Douw exclaimed,—

"So, so; we shall have his worship presently —that is, if he means to keep his hour; if not, thou mayst wait for him, Godfrey, if you court the acquaintance of a capricious burgomaster. As for me, I think our old Leyden contains a sufficiency of such commodities, without an importation from Rotterdam."

Schalken laughed, as in duty bound; and, after a pause of some minutes, Douw suddenly exclaimed,—

"What if it should all prove a jest, a piece of mummery got up by Vankarp, or some such worthy! I wish you had run all risks, and cudgelled the old burgomaster, stadholder, or whatever else he may be, soundly. I would wager a dozen of Rhenish, his worship would have pleaded old acquaintance before the third application."

"Here he comes, sir," said Schalken, in a low, admonitory tone; and instantly, upon turning towards the door, Gerard Douw observed the same figure which had, on the day before, so unexpectedly greeted the vision of his pupil Schalken.

There was something in the air and mien of the figure which at once satisfied the painter that there was no mummery in the case, and that he really stood in the presence of a man of worship; and so, without hesitation, he doffed his cap, and courteously saluting the stranger, requested him to be seated.

The visitor waved his hand slightly, as if in acknowledgment of the courtesy, but remained standing.

"I have the honour to see Mynher Vanderhausen, of Rotterdam?" said Gerard Douw.

"The same," was the laconic reply.

"I understand your worship desires to speak with me," continued Douw, "and I am here by appointment to wait your commands."

"Is that a man of trust?" said Vanderhausen, turning towards Schalken, who stood at a little distance behind his master.

"Certainly," replied Gerard.

"Then let him take this box and get the nearest jeweller or goldsmith to value its contents, and let him return hither with a certificate of the valuation."

At the same time he placed a small case, about nine inches square, in the hands of Gerard Douw, who was as much amazed at its weight as at the strange abruptness with which it was handed to him.

In accordance with the wishes of the stranger, he delivered it into the hands of Schalken, and repeating *his* directions, despatched him upon the mission.

Schalken disposed his precious charge securely beneath the folds of his cloak, and rapidly traversing two or three narrow streets, he stopped at a corner house, the lower part of which was then occupied by the shop of a Jewish goldsmith.

Schalken entered the shop, and calling the little Hebrew into the obscurity of its back recesses, he proceeded to lay before him Vanderhausen's packet.

On being examined by the light of a lamp, it appeared entirely cased with lead, the outer surface of which was much scraped and soiled, and nearly white with age. This was with difficulty partially removed, and disclosed beneath a box of some dark and

singularly hard wood; this, too, was forced, and after the removal of two or three folds of linen, its contents proved to be a mass of golden ingots, close packed, and, as the Jew declared, of the most perfect quality.

Every ingot underwent the scrutiny of the little Jew, who seemed to feel an epicurean delight in touching and testing these morsels of the glorious metal; and each one of them was replaced in the box with the exclamation,—
"*Mein Gott*, how very perfect! not one grain of alloy—beautiful, beautiful!"

The task was at length finished, and the Jew certified under his hand that the value of the ingots submitted to his examination amounted to many thousand rix-dollars.

With the desired document in his bosom, and the rich box of gold carefully pressed under his arm, and concealed by his cloak, he retraced his way, and, entering the studio, found his master and the stranger in close conference.

Schalken had no sooner left the room, in order to execute the commission he had taken in charge, than Vanderhausen addressed Gerard Douw in the following terms:

"I may not tarry with you to-night more than a few minutes, and so I shall briefly tell you the matter upon which I come. You visited the town of Rotterdam some four months ago, and then I saw in the church of St. Lawrence your niece, Rose Velderkaust. I desire to marry her, and if I satisfy you as to the fact that I am very wealthy—more wealthy than any husband you could dream of for her—I expect that you will forward my views to the utmost of your authority. If you approve my proposal, you must close with it at once, for I cannot command time enough to wait for calculations and delays."

Gerard Douw was, perhaps, as much astonished as anyone could be by the very unexpected nature of Mynher Vanderhausen's communication; but he did not give vent to any unseemly expression of surprise. In addition to the motives supplied by prudence and politeness, the painter experienced a kind of chill and oppressive sensation—a feeling like that which is supposed to affect a man who is placed unconsciously in immediate contact with something to which he has a natural antipathy—an undefined horror and dread—while standing in the presence of the eccentric stranger, which made him very unwilling to say anything that might reasonably prove offensive.

"I have no doubt," said Gerard, after two or three prefatory hems, "that the connection which you propose would prove alike advantageous and honourable to my niece; but you must be aware that she has a will of her own, and may not acquiesce in what *we* may design for her advantage."

"Do not seek to deceive me, Sir Painter," said Vanderhausen; "you are her guardian—she is your ward. She is mine if *you* like to make her so."

The man of Rotterdam moved forward a little as he spoke, and Gerard Douw, he scarce knew why, inwardly prayed for the speedy return of Schalken.

"I desire," said the mysterious gentleman, "to place in your hands at once an evidence of my wealth, and a security for my liberal dealing with your niece. The lad will return in a minute or two with a sum in value five times the fortune which she has a right to expect from a husband. This shall lie in your hands, together with her dowry, and you may apply the united sum as suits her interest best; it shall be all exclusively hers while she lives. Is that liberal?"

Douw assented, and inwardly thought that fortune had been extraordinarily kind to his niece. The stranger, he deemed, must be most wealthy and generous, and such an offer was not to be despised, though made by a humorist, and one of no very prepossessing presence.

Rose had no very high pretensions, for she was almost without dowry; indeed, altogether so, excepting so far as the deficiency had been supplied by the generosity of her uncle. Neither had she any right to raise any scruples against the match on the score of birth, for her own origin was by no means elevated; and as to other objections, Gerard resolved, and, indeed, by the usages of the time was warranted in resolving, not to listen to them for a moment.

"Sir," said he, addressing the stranger, "your offer is most liberal, and whatever hesitation I may feel in closing with it immediately, arises solely from my not having the honour of knowing anything of your family or station. Upon these points you can, of course, satisfy me without difficulty?"

"As to my respectability," said the stranger, drily, "you must take that for granted at present; pester me with no inquiries; you can discover nothing more about me than I choose to make known. You shall have sufficient security for my respectability—my word, if you are honourable; if you are sordid, my gold."

"A testy old gentleman," thought Douw; "he must have his own way. But, all things considered, I am justified in giving my niece to him. Were she my own daughter, I would do the like by her. I will not pledge myself unnecessarily, however."

"You will not pledge yourself unnecessarily," said Vanderhausen, strangely uttering the very words which had just floated through the mind of his companion; "but you will do so if it is necessary, I presume; and I will show you that I consider it indispensable. If the gold I mean to leave in your hands satisfies you, and if you desire that my proposal shall not be at once withdrawn, you must, before I leave this room, write your name to this engagement."

Having thus spoken, he placed a paper in the hands of Gerard, the contents of which expressed an engagement entered into by Gerard Douw, to give to Wilken Vanderhausen, of Rotterdam, in marriage, Rose Velderkaust, and so forth, within one week of the date hereof.

While the painter was employed in reading this covenant, Schalken, as we have stated, entered the studio, and having delivered the box and the valuation of the Jew into the hands of the stranger, he was about to retire, when Vanderhausen called to him to wait; and, presenting the case and the certificate to Gerard Douw, he waited in silence until he had satisfied himself by an inspection of both as to the value of the pledge left in his hands. At length he said:

"Are you content?"

The painter said "he would fain have another day to consider."

"Not an hour," said the suitor, coolly.
"Well, then," said Douw, "I am content; it is a bargain."

"Then sign at once," said Vanderhausen; "I am weary."

At the same time he produced a small case of writing materials, and Gerard signed the important document.

“Let this youth witness the covenant,” said the old man; and Godfrey Schalken unconsciously signed the instrument which bestowed upon another that hand which he had so long regarded as the object and reward of all his labours.

The compact being thus completed, the strange visitor folded up the paper, and stowed it safely in an inner pocket.

“I will visit you to-morrow night, at nine of the clock, at your house, Gerard Douw, and will see the subject of our contract. Farewell.” And so saying, Wilken Vanderhausen moved stiffly, but rapidly out of the room.

Schalken, eager to resolve his doubts, had placed himself by the window in order to watch the street entrance; but the experiment served only to support his suspicions, for the old man did not issue from the door. This was very strange, very odd, very fearful. He and his master returned together, and talked but little on the way, for each had his own subjects of reflection, of anxiety, and of hope.

Schalken, however, did not know the ruin which threatened his cherished schemes.

Gerard Douw knew nothing of the attachment which had sprung up between his pupil and his niece; and even if he had, it is doubtful whether he would have regarded its existence as any serious obstruction to the wishes of Mynher Vanderhausen.

Marriages were then and there matters of traffic and calculation; and it would have appeared as absurd in the eyes of the guardian to make a mutual attachment an essential element in a contract of marriage, as it would have been to draw up his bonds and receipts in the language of chivalrous romance.

The painter, however, did not communicate to his niece the important step which he had taken in her behalf, and his resolution arose not from any anticipation of opposition on her part, but solely from a ludicrous consciousness that if his ward were, as she very naturally might do, to ask him to describe the appearance of the bridegroom whom he destined for her, he would be forced to confess that he had not seen his face, and, if called upon, would find it impossible to identify him.

Upon the next day, Gerard Douw having dined, called his niece to him, and having scanned her person with an air of satisfaction, he took her hand, and looking upon her pretty, innocent face with a smile of kindness, he said:

“Rose, my girl, that face of yours will make your fortune.” Rose blushed and smiled. “Such faces and such tempers seldom go together, and, when they do, the compound is a love-potion which few heads or hearts can resist. Trust me, thou wilt soon be a bride, girl. But this is trifling, and I am pressed for time, so make ready the large room by eight o’clock to-night, and give directions for supper at nine. I expect a friend to-night; and observe me, child, do thou trick thyself out handsomely. I would not have him think us poor or sluttish.”

With these words he left the chamber, and took his way to the room to which we have already had occasion to introduce our readers—that in which his pupils worked.

When the evening closed in, Gerard called Schalken, who was about to take his departure to his obscure and comfortless lodgings, and asked him to come home and sup with Rose and Vanderhausen.

The invitation was of course accepted, and Gerard Douw and his pupil soon found themselves in the handsome and somewhat antique-looking room which had been prepared for the reception of the stranger.

A cheerful wood-fire blazed in the capacious hearth; a little at one side an old-fashioned table, with richly-carved legs, was placed—destined, no doubt, to receive the supper, for which preparations were going forward; and ranged with exact regularity stood the tall-backed chairs whose ungracefulness was more than counterbalanced by their comfort.

The little party, consisting of Rose, her uncle, and the artist, awaited the arrival of the expected visitor with considerable impatience.

Nine o’clock at length came, and with it a summons at the street-door, which, being speedily answered, was followed by a slow and emphatic tread upon the staircase; the steps moved heavily across the lobby, the door of the room in which the party which we have described were assembled slowly opened, and there entered a figure which startled, almost appalled, the phlegmatic Dutchmen, and nearly made Rose scream with affright; it was the form, and arrayed in the garb, of Mynher Vanderhausen; the air, the gait, the height was the same, but the features had never been seen by any of the party before.

The stranger stopped at the door of the room, and displayed his form and face completely. He wore a dark-coloured cloth cloak, which was short and full, not falling quite to the knees; his legs were cased in dark purple silk stockings, and his shoes were adorned with roses of the same colour. The opening of the cloak in front showed the under-suit to consist of some very dark, perhaps sable material, and his hands were enclosed in a pair of heavy leather gloves which ran up considerably above the wrist, in the manner of a gauntlet. In one hand he carried his walking-stick and his hat, which he had removed, and the other hung heavily by his side. A quantity of grizzled hair descended in long tresses from his head, and its folds rested upon the plaits of a stiff ruff, which effectually concealed his neck.

So far all was well; but the face!—all the flesh of the face was coloured with the bluish leaden hue which is sometimes produced by the operation of metallic medicines administered in excessive quantities; the eyes were enormous, and the white appeared both above and below the iris, which gave to them an expression of insanity, which was heightened by their glassy fixedness; the nose was well enough, but the mouth was writhed considerably to one side, where it opened in order to give egress to two long, discoloured fangs, which projected from the upper jaw, far below the lower lip; the hue of the lips themselves bore the usual relation to that of the face, and was consequently nearly black. The character of the face was malignant, even satanic, to the last degree; and, indeed, such a combination of horror could hardly be accounted for, except by supposing the corpse of some atrocious malefactor, which had long hung blackening upon the gibbet, to have at length become the habitation of a demon—the frightful sport of satanic possession.

It was remarkable that the worshipful stranger suffered as little as possible of his flesh to appear, and that during his visit he did not once remove his gloves.

Having stood for some moments at the door, Gerard Douw at length found breath and collectedness to bid him welcome, and, with a mute inclination of the head, the stranger stepped forward into the room.

There was something indescribably odd, even horrible about all his motions, something undefinable, something unnatural, unhuman—it was as if the limbs

were guided and directed by a spirit unused to the management of bodily machinery.

The stranger said hardly anything during his visit, which did not exceed half an hour; and the host himself could scarcely muster courage enough to utter the few necessary salutations and courtesies: and, indeed, such was the nervous terror which the presence of Vanderhausen inspired, that very little would have made all his entertainers fly bellowing from the room.

They had not so far lost all self-possession, however, as to fail to observe two strange peculiarities of their visitor.

During his stay he did not once suffer his eyelids to close, nor even to move in the slightest degree; and further, there was a death-like stillness in his whole person, owing to the total absence of the heaving motion of the chest caused by the process of respiration.

These two peculiarities, though when told they may appear trifling, produced a very striking and unpleasant effect when seen and observed. Vanderhausen at length relieved the painter of Leyden of his inauspicious presence; and with no small gratification the little party heard the street door close after him.

“Dear uncle,” said Rose, “what a frightful man! I would not see him again for the wealth of the States!”

“Tush, foolish girl!” said Douw, whose sensations were anything but comfortable. “A man may be as ugly as the devil, and yet if his heart and actions are good, he is worth all the pretty-faced, perfumed puppies that walk the Mall. Rose, my girl, it is very true he has not thy pretty face, but I know him to be wealthy and liberal; and were he ten times more ugly—”

“Which is inconceivable,” observed Rose.

“These two virtues would be sufficient,” continued her uncle, “to counterbalance all his deformity; and if not of power sufficient actually to alter the shape of the features, at least of efficacy enough to prevent one thinking them amiss.”

“Do you know, uncle,” said Rose, “when I saw him standing at the door, I could not get it out of my head that I saw the old, painted, wooden figure that used to frighten me so much in the church of St. Laurence at Rotterdam.”

Gerard laughed, though he could not help inwardly acknowledging the justness of the comparison. He was resolved, however, as far as he could, to check his niece’s inclination to ridicule the ugliness of her intended bridegroom, although he was not a little pleased to observe that she appeared totally exempt from that mysterious dread of the stranger, which, he could not disguise it from himself, considerably affected him, as it also did his pupil Godfrey Schalken.

Early on the next day there arrived from various quarters of the town, rich presents of silks, velvets, jewellery, and so forth, for Rose; and also a packet directed to Gerard Douw, which, on being opened, was found to contain a contract of marriage, formally drawn up, between Wilken Vanderhausen of the Boom-quay, in Rotterdam, and Rose Velderkaust of Leyden, niece to Gerard Douw, master in the art of painting, also of the same city; and containing engagements on the part of Vanderhausen to make settlements upon his bride far more splendid than he had before led her guardian to believe likely, and which were to be secured to her use in the most unexceptionable manner possible—the money being placed in the hands of Gerard Douw himself.

I have no sentimental scenes to describe, no cruelty of guardians or magnanimity of wards, or agonies of lovers. The record I have to make is one of sordidness, levity, and interest. In less than a week after the first interview which we have just described, the contract of marriage was fulfilled, and Schalken saw the prize which he would have risked anything to secure, carried off triumphantly by his formidable rival.

For two or three days he absented himself from the school; he then returned and worked, if with less cheerfulness, with far more dogged resolution than before; the dream of love had given place to that of ambition.

Months passed away, and, contrary to his expectation, and, indeed, to the direct promise of the parties, Gerard Douw heard nothing of his niece or her worshipful spouse. The interest of the money, which was to have been demanded in quarterly sums, lay unclaimed in his hands. He began to grow extremely uneasy.

Mynher Vanderhausen’s direction in Rotterdam he was fully possessed of. After some irresolution he finally determined to journey thither—a trifling undertaking, and easily accomplished—and thus to satisfy himself of the safety and comfort of his ward, for whom he entertained an honest and strong affection.

His search was in vain, however. No one in Rotterdam had ever heard of Mynher Vanderhausen.

Gerard Douw left not a house in the Boom-quay untried; but all in vain. No one could give him any information whatever touching the object of his inquiry; and he was obliged to return to Leyden, nothing wiser than when he had left it.

On his arrival he hastened to the establishment from which Vanderhausen had hired the lumbering, though, considering the times, most luxurious vehicle which the bridal party had employed to convey them to Rotterdam. From the driver of this machine he learned, that having proceeded by slow stages, they had late in the evening approached Rotterdam; but that before they entered the city, and while yet nearly a mile from it, a small party of men, soberly clad, and after the old fashion, with peaked beards and moustaches, standing in the centre of the road, obstructed the further progress of the carriage. The driver reined in his horses, much fearing, from the obscurity of the hour, and the loneliness of the road, that some mischief was intended.

His fears were, however, somewhat allayed by his observing that these strange men carried a large litter, of an antique shape, and which they immediately set down upon the pavement, whereupon the bridegroom, having opened the coach-door from within, descended, and having assisted his bride to do likewise, led her, weeping bitterly and wringing her hands, to the litter, which they both entered. It was then raised by the men who surrounded it, and speedily carried towards the city, and before it had proceeded many yards the darkness concealed it from the view of the Dutch chariot.

In the inside of the vehicle he found a purse, whose contents more than thrice paid the hire of the carriage and man. He saw and could tell nothing more of Mynher Vanderhausen and his beautiful lady. This mystery was a source of deep anxiety and almost of grief to Gerard Douw.

There was evidently fraud in the dealing of Vanderhausen with him, though for what purpose committed he could not imagine. He greatly doubted how far it was possible for a man possessing in his

countenance so strong an evidence of the presence of the most demoniac feelings to be in reality anything but a villain; and every day that passed without his hearing from or of his niece, instead of inducing him to forget his fears, tended more and more to intensify them.

The loss of his niece's cheerful society tended also to depress his spirits; and in order to dispel this despondency, which often crept upon his mind after his daily employment was over, he was wont frequently to prevail upon Schalken to accompany him home, and by his presence to dispel, in some degree, the gloom of his otherwise solitary supper.

One evening, the painter and his pupil were sitting by the fire, having accomplished a comfortable supper. They had yielded to that silent pensiveness sometimes induced by the process of digestion, when their reflections were disturbed by a loud sound at the street-door, as if occasioned by some person rushing forcibly and repeatedly against it. A domestic had run without delay to ascertain the cause of the disturbance, and they heard him twice or thrice interrogate the applicant for admission, but without producing an answer or any cessation of the sounds.

They heard him then open the hall door, and immediately there followed a light and rapid tread upon the staircase. Schalken laid his hand on his sword, and advanced towards the door. It opened before he reached it, and Rose rushed into the room. She looked wild and haggard, and pale with exhaustion and terror; but her dress surprised them as much even as her unexpected appearance. It consisted of a kind of white woollen wrapper, made close about the neck, and descending to the very ground. It was much deranged and travel-soiled. The poor creature had hardly entered the chamber when she fell senseless on the floor. With some difficulty they succeeded in reviving her, and on recovering her senses she instantly exclaimed, in a tone of eager, terrified impatience,—

"Wine, wine, quickly, or I'm lost!"

Much alarmed at the strange agitation in which the call was made, they at once administered to her wishes, and she drank some wine with a haste and eagerness which surprised him. She had hardly swallowed it, when she exclaimed with the same urgency,—

"Food, food, at once, or I perish!"

A considerable fragment of a roast joint was upon the table, and Schalken immediately proceeded to cut some, but he was anticipated; for no sooner had she become aware of its presence than she darted at it with the rapacity of a vulture, and, seizing it in her hands, she tore off the flesh with her teeth and swallowed it.

When the paroxysm of hunger had been a little appeased, she appeared suddenly to become aware how strange her conduct had been, or it may have been that other more agitating thoughts recurred to her mind, for she began to weep bitterly, and to wring her hands.

"Oh! send for a minister of God," said she; "I am not safe till he comes; send for him speedily."

Gerard Douw despatched a messenger instantly, and prevailed on his niece to allow him to surrender his bedchamber to her use; he also persuaded her to retire to it at once and to rest; her consent was extorted upon the condition that they would not leave her for a moment.

"Oh that the holy man were here!" she said; "he can deliver me. The dead and the living can never be one—God has forbidden it."

With these mysterious words she surrendered herself to their guidance, and they proceeded to the chamber which Gerard Douw had assigned to her use.

"Do not—do not leave me for a moment," said she. "I am lost for ever if you do."

Gerard Douw's chamber was approached through a spacious apartment, which they were now about to enter. Gerard Douw and Schalken each carried a wax candle, so that a sufficient degree of light was cast upon all surrounding objects. They were now entering the large chamber, which, as I have said, communicated with Douw's apartment, when Rose suddenly stopped, and, in a whisper which seemed to thrill with horror, she said,—

"O God! he is here—he is here! See, see—there he goes!"

She pointed towards the door of the inner room, and Schalken thought he saw a shadowy and ill-defined form gliding into that apartment. He drew his sword, and raising the candle so as to throw its light with increased distinctness upon the objects in the room, he entered the chamber into which the figure had glided. No figure was there—nothing but the furniture which belonged to the room, and yet he could not be deceived as to the fact that something had moved before them into the chamber.

A sickening dread came upon him, and the cold perspiration broke out in heavy drops upon his forehead; nor was he more composed when he heard the increased urgency, the agony of entreaty, with which Rose implored them not to leave her for a moment.

"I saw him," said she. "He's here! I cannot be deceived—I know him. He's by me—he's with me—he's in the room. Then, for God's sake, as you would save, do not stir from beside me!"

They at length prevailed upon her to lie down upon the bed, where she continued to urge them to stay by her. She frequently uttered incoherent sentences, repeating again and again, "The dead and the living cannot be one—God has forbidden it!" and then again, "Rest to the wakeful—sleep to the sleep-walkers."

These and such mysterious and broken sentences she continued to utter until the clergyman arrived.

Gerard Douw began to fear, naturally enough, that the poor girl, owing to terror or ill-treatment, had become deranged; and he half suspected, by the suddenness of her appearance, and the unseasonableness of the hour, and, above all, from the wildness and terror of her manner, that she had made her escape from some place of confinement for lunatics, and was in immediate fear of pursuit. He resolved to summon medical advice as soon as the mind of his niece had been in some measure set at rest by the offices of the clergyman whose attendance she had so earnestly desired; and until this object had been attained, he did not venture to put any questions to her, which might possibly, by reviving painful or horrible recollections, increase her agitation.

The clergyman soon arrived—a man of ascetic countenance and venerable age—one whom Gerard Douw respected much, forasmuch as he was a veteran polemic, though one, perhaps, more dreaded as a combatant than beloved as a Christian—of pure morality, subtle brain, and frozen heart. He entered the chamber which communicated with that in which Rose reclined, and immediately on his arrival she requested him to pray for her, as for one who lay in the hands of Satan, and who could hope for deliverance only from Heaven.

That our readers may distinctly understand all the circumstances of the event which we are about imperfectly to describe, it is necessary to state the relative positions of the parties who were engaged in it. The old clergyman and Schalken were in the ante-room of which we have already spoken; Rose lay in the inner chamber, the door of which was open; and by the side of the bed, at her urgent desire, stood her guardian; a candle burned in the bedchamber, and three were lighted in the outer apartment.

The old man now cleared his voice, as if about to commence; but before he had time to begin, a sudden gust of air blew out the candle which served to illuminate the room in which the poor girl lay, and she with hurried alarm, exclaimed:

“Godfrey, bring in another candle; the darkness is unsafe.”

Gerard Douw, forgetting for the moment her repeated injunctions in the immediate impulse, stepped from the bedchamber into the other, in order to supply what she desired.

“O God! do not go, dear uncle!” shrieked the unhappy girl; and at the same time she sprang from the bed and darted after him, in order, by her grasp, to detain him.

But the warning came too late, for scarcely had he passed the threshold, and hardly had his niece had time to utter the startling exclamation, when the door which divided the two rooms closed violently after him, as if swung to by a strong blast of wind.

Schalken and he both rushed to the door, but their united and desperate efforts could not avail so much as to shake it.

Shriek after shriek burst from the inner chamber, with all the piercing loudness of despairing terror. Schalken and Douw applied every energy and strained every nerve to force open the door; but all in vain.

There was no sound of struggling from within, but the screams seemed to increase in loudness, and at the same time they heard the bolts of the latticed window withdrawn, and the window itself grated upon the sill as if thrown open.

One last shriek, so long and piercing and agonized as to be scarcely human, swelled from the room, and suddenly there followed a death-like silence.

A light step was heard crossing the floor, as if from the bed to the window; and almost at the same instant the door gave way, and yielding to the pressure of the external applicants, they were nearly precipitated into the room. It was empty. The window was open, and Schalken sprang to a chair and gazed out upon the street and at the canal below. He saw no form, but he beheld, or thought he beheld, the waters of the broad canal beneath settling ring after ring in heavy circular ripples, as if a moment before disturbed by the immersion of some large and heavy mass.

No trace of Rose was ever after discovered, nor was anything certain respecting her mysterious wooer detected or even suspected; no clue whereby to trace the intricacies of the labyrinth, and to arrive at a distinct conclusion was to be found. But an incident occurred, which, though it will not be received by our rational readers as at all approaching to evidence upon the matter, nevertheless produced a strong and a lasting impression upon the mind of Schalken.

Many years after the events which we have detailed, Schalken, then remotely situated, received an intimation of his father’s death, and of his intended burial upon a fixed day in the church of Rotterdam. It was necessary that a very considerable journey should be performed by the funeral procession, which, as it will readily be believed, was not very numerously attended. Schalken with difficulty arrived in Rotterdam late in the day upon which the funeral was appointed to take place. The procession had not then arrived. Evening closed in, and still it did not appear.

Schalken strolled down to the church—he found it open; notice of the arrival of the funeral had been given, and the vault in which the body was to be laid had been opened. The official who corresponds to our sexton, on seeing a well-dressed gentleman, whose object was to attend the expected funeral, pacing the aisle of the church, hospitably invited him to share with him the comforts of a blazing wood fire, which as was his custom in winter time upon such occasions, he had kindled on the hearth of a chamber which communicated by a flight of steps with the vault below.

In this chamber Schalken and his entertainer seated themselves; and the sexton, after some fruitless attempts to engage his guest in conversation, was obliged to apply himself to his tobacco-pipe and can to solace his solitude.

In spite of his grief and cares, the fatigues of a rapid journey of nearly forty hours gradually overcame the mind and body of Godfrey Schalken, and he sank into a deep sleep, from which he was awakened by some one shaking him gently by the shoulder. He first thought that the old sexton had called him, but he was no longer in the room.

He roused himself, and as soon as he could clearly see what was around him, he perceived a female form, clothed in a kind of light robe of muslin, part of which was so disposed as to act as a veil, and in her hand she carried a lamp. She was moving rather away from him, and towards the flight of steps which conducted towards the vaults.

Schalken felt a vague alarm at the sight of this figure, and at the same time an irresistible impulse to follow its guidance. He followed it towards the vaults, but when it reached the head of the stairs, he paused; the figure paused also, and turning gently round, displayed, by the light of the lamp it carried, the face and features of his first love, Rose Velderkaust. There was nothing horrible, or even sad, in the countenance. On the contrary, it wore the same arch smile which used to enchant the artist long before in his happy days.

A feeling of awe and of interest, too intense to be resisted, prompted him to follow the spectre, if spectre it were. She descended the stairs—he followed; and, turning to the left, through a narrow passage she led him, to his infinite surprise, into what appeared to be an old-fashioned Dutch apartment, such as the pictures of Gerard Douw have served to immortalize.

Abundance of costly antique furniture was disposed about the room, and in one corner stood a four-post bed, with heavy black cloth curtains around it. The figure frequently turned towards him with the same arch smile; and when she came to the side of the bed, she drew the curtains, and by the light of the lamp which she held towards its contents, she disclosed to the horror-stricken painter, sitting bolt upright in the bed, the livid and demoniac form of Vanderhausen. Schalken had hardly seen him when he fell senseless upon the floor, where he lay until discovered, on the next morning, by persons employed in closing the passages into the vaults. He was lying in a cell of considerable size, which had not been disturbed for a long time, and he had fallen beside a large coffin which was

supported upon small stone pillars, a security against the attacks of vermin.

To his dying day Schalken was satisfied of the reality of the vision which he had witnessed, and he has left behind him a curious evidence of the impression which it wrought upon his fancy, in a painting executed shortly after the event we have narrated, and which is valuable as exhibiting not only the peculiarities which have made Schalken's pictures sought after, but even more so as presenting a portrait, as close and faithful as one taken from memory can be, of his early love, Rose Velderkaust, whose mysterious fate must ever remain matter of speculation.

The picture represents a chamber of antique masonry, such as might be found in most old cathedrals, and is lighted faintly by a lamp carried in the hand of a female figure, such as we have above attempted to describe; and in the background, and to the left of him who examines the painting, there stands the form of a man apparently aroused from sleep, and by his attitude, his hand being laid upon his sword, exhibiting considerable alarm; this last figure is illuminated only by the expiring glare of a wood or charcoal fire.

The whole production exhibits a beautiful specimen of that artful and singular distribution of light and shade which has rendered the name of Schalken immortal among the artists of his country. This tale is traditionary, and the reader will easily perceive, by our studiously omitting to heighten many points of the narrative, when a little additional colouring might have added effect to the recital, that we have desired to lay before him, not a figment of the brain, but a curious tradition connected with, and belonging to, the biography of a famous artist.

The Child who Went with the Fairies by J Sheridan Le Fanu

For our Monster of the Month, we're returning to the works of J. Sheridan Le Fanu.

Weirdly, I'm starting this story halfway through. The reason I'm doing that is because Le Fanu was an Irish author writing for an English audience, and he spends the first half of his story explaining that you can keep away fairies with horseshoes, and rowan trees, and holy water, and it goes on forever, and we don't need any of it.

So now, over to Sandra Callum: thanks to her and her production team at Librirox.

And the door being barred, the two children, sometimes speaking together, often interrupting one another, often interrupted by their mother, managed to tell this strange story, which I had better relate connectedly and in my own language.

The Widow Ryan's three children were playing, as I have said, upon the narrow old road in front of her door. Little Bill or Leum, about five years old, with golden hair and large blue eyes, was a very pretty boy, with all the clear tints of healthy childhood, and that gaze of earnest simplicity which belongs not to town children of the same age. His little sister Peg, about a year older, and his brother Con, a little more than a year elder than she, made up the little group.

Under the great old ash-trees, whose last leaves were falling at their feet, in the light of an October sunset, they were playing with the hilarity and eagerness of rustic children, clamouring together, and their faces were turned toward the west and storied hill of Lisnavoura.

Suddenly a startling voice with a screech called to them from behind, ordering them to get out of the way, and turning, they saw a sight, such as they never beheld before. It was a carriage drawn by four horses that were pawing and snorting, in impatience, as it just pulled up. The children were almost under their feet, and scrambled to the side of the road next their own door.

This carriage and all its appointments were old-fashioned and gorgeous, and presented to the children, who had never seen anything finer than a turf car, and once, an old chaise that passed that way from Killaloe, a spectacle perfectly dazzling.

Here was antique splendour. The harness and trappings were scarlet, and blazing with gold. The horses were huge, and snow white, with great manes, that as they tossed and shook them in the air, seemed to stream and float sometimes longer and sometimes shorter, like so much smoke–their tails were long, and tied up in bows of broad scarlet and gold ribbon. The coach itself was glowing with colours, gilded and emblazoned. There were footmen in gay liveries, and three-cocked hats, like the coachman's; but he had a great wig, like a judge's, and their hair was frizzed out and powdered, and a long thick "pigtail," with a bow to it, hung down the back of each.

All these servants were diminutive, and ludicrously out of proportion with the enormous horses of the equipage, and had sharp, sallow features, and small, restless fiery eyes, and faces of cunning and malice that chilled the children. The little coachman was scowling and showing his white fangs under his cocked hat, and his little blazing beads of eyes were quivering with fury in their sockets as he whirled his whip round and round over their heads, till the lash of it looked like a streak of fire in the evening sun, and sounded like the cry of a legion of "fillapoueeks" in the air.

"Stop the princess on the highway!" cried the coachman, in a piercing treble.

"Stop the princess on the highway!" piped each footman in turn, scowling over his shoulder down on the children, and grinding his keen teeth.

The children were so frightened they could only gape and turn white in their panic. But a very sweet voice from the open window of the carriage reassured them, and arrested the attack of the lackeys.

A beautiful and "very grand-looking" lady was smiling from it on them, and they all felt pleased in the strange light of that smile.

"The boy with the golden hair, I think," said the lady, bending her large and wonderfully clear eyes on little Leum.

The upper sides of the carriage were chiefly of glass, so that the children could see another woman inside, whom they did not like so well.

This was a black woman, with a wonderfully long neck, hung round with many strings of large variously-coloured beads, and on her head was a sort of turban of silk striped with all the colours of the rainbow, and fixed in it was a golden star.

This black woman had a face as thin almost as a death's-head, with high cheekbones, and great goggle eyes, the whites of which, as well as her wide range of teeth, showed in brilliant contrast with her skin, as she looked over the beautiful lady's shoulder, and whispered something in her ear.

"Yes; the boy with the golden hair, I think," repeated the lady.

And her voice sounded sweet as a silver bell in the children's ears, and her smile beguiled them like the light of an enchanted lamp, as she leaned from the window with a look of ineffable fondness on the golden-haired boy, with the large blue eyes; insomuch that little Billy, looking up, smiled in return with a wondering fondness, and when she stooped down, and stretched her jewelled arms towards him, he stretched his little hands up, and how they touched the other children did not know; but, saying, "Come and give me a kiss, my darling," she raised him, and he seemed to ascend in her small fingers as lightly as a feather, and she held him in her lap and covered him with kisses.

Nothing daunted, the other children would have been only too happy to change places with their favoured little brother. There was only one thing that was unpleasant, and a little frightened them, and that was the black woman, who stood and stretched forward, in the carriage as before. She gathered a rich silk and gold handkerchief that was in her fingers up to her lips, and seemed to thrust ever so much of it, fold after fold, into her capacious mouth, as they thought to smother her laughter, with which she seemed convulsed, for she was shaking and quivering, as it seemed, with suppressed merriment; but her eyes, which remained uncovered, looked angrier than they had ever seen eyes look before.

But the lady was so beautiful they looked on her instead, and she continued to caress and kiss the little boy on her knee; and smiling at the other children she held up a large russet apple in her fingers, and the carriage began to move slowly on, and with a nod inviting them to take the fruit, she dropped it on the road from the window; it rolled some way beside the wheels, they following, and then she dropped another, and then another, and so on. And the same thing happened to all; for just as either of the children who ran beside had caught the rolling apple, somehow it slipt into a hole or ran into a ditch, and looking up they saw the lady drop another from the window, and so the chase was taken up and continued till they got, hardly knowing how far they had gone, to the old cross-road that leads to Owney. It seemed that there the horses' hoofs and carriage wheels rolled up a wonderful dust, which being caught in one of those eddies that whirl the dust up into a column, on the calmest day, enveloped the children for a moment, and passed whirling on towards Lisnavoura, the carriage, as they fancied, driving in the centre of it; but suddenly it subsided, the straws and leaves floated to the ground, the dust dissipated itself, but the white horses and the lackeys, the gilded carriage, the lady and their little golden-haired brother were gone.

At the same moment suddenly the upper rim of the clear setting sun disappeared behind the hill of Knockdoula, and it was twilight. Each child felt the transition like a shock–and the sight of the rounded summit of Lisnavoura, now closely overhanging them, struck them with a new fear.

They screamed their brother's name after him, but their cries were lost in the vacant air. At the same time they thought they heard a hollow voice say, close to them, "Go home."

Looking round and seeing no one, they were scared, and hand in hand–the little girl crying wildly, and the boy white as ashes, from fear, they trotted homeward, at their best speed, to tell, as we have seen, their strange story.

Molly Ryan never more saw her darling. But something of the lost little boy was seen by his former playmates.

Sometimes when their mother was away earning a trifle at haymaking, and Nelly washing the potatoes for their dinner, or "beatling" clothes in the little stream that flows in the hollow close by, they saw the pretty face of little Billy peeping in archly at the door, and smiling silently at them, and as they ran to embrace him, with cries of delight, he drew back, still smiling archly, and when they got out into the open day, he was gone, and they could see no trace of him anywhere.

This happened often, with slight variations in the circumstances of the visit. Sometimes he would peep for a longer time, sometimes for a shorter time, sometimes his little hand would come in, and, with bended finger, beckon them to follow; but always he was smiling with the same arch look and wary silence–and always he was gone when they reached the door. Gradually these visits grew less and less frequent, and in about eight months they ceased altogether, and little Billy, irretrievably lost, took rank in their memories with the dead.

One wintry morning, nearly a year and a half after his disappearance, their mother having set out for Limerick soon after cockcrow, to sell some fowls at the market, the little girl, lying by the side of her elder sister, who was fast asleep, just at the grey of the morning heard the latch lifted softly, and saw little Billy enter and close the door gently after him. There was light enough to see that he was barefoot and ragged, and looked pale and famished. He went straight to the fire, and cowered over the turf embers, and rubbed his hands slowly, and seemed to shiver as he gathered the smouldering turf together.

The little girl clutched her sister in terror and whispered, "Waken, Nelly, waken; here's Billy come back!"

Nelly slept soundly on, but the little boy, whose hands were extended close over the coals, turned and looked toward the bed, it seemed to her, in fear, and she saw the glare of the embers reflected on his thin cheek as he turned toward her. He rose and went, on tiptoe, quickly to the door, in silence, and let himself out as softly as he had come in.

After that, the little boy was never seen any more by any one of his kindred.

"Fairy doctors," as the dealers in the preternatural, who in such cases were called in, are termed, did all that in them lay–but in vain. Father Tom came down, and tried what holier rites could do, but equally without result. So little Billy was dead to mother, brother, and sisters; but no grave received him. Others whom affection cherished, lay in holy ground, in the old churchyard of Abington, with headstone to mark the spot over which the survivor might kneel and say a kind prayer for the peace of the departed soul. But there was no landmark to show where little Billy was hidden from their loving eyes, unless it was in the old hill of Lisnavoura, that cast its long shadow at sunset before the cabin-door; or that, white and filmy in the moonlight, in later years, would occupy his brother's gaze as he returned from fair or market, and draw from him a sigh and a prayer for the little brother he had lost so long ago, and was never to see again.