



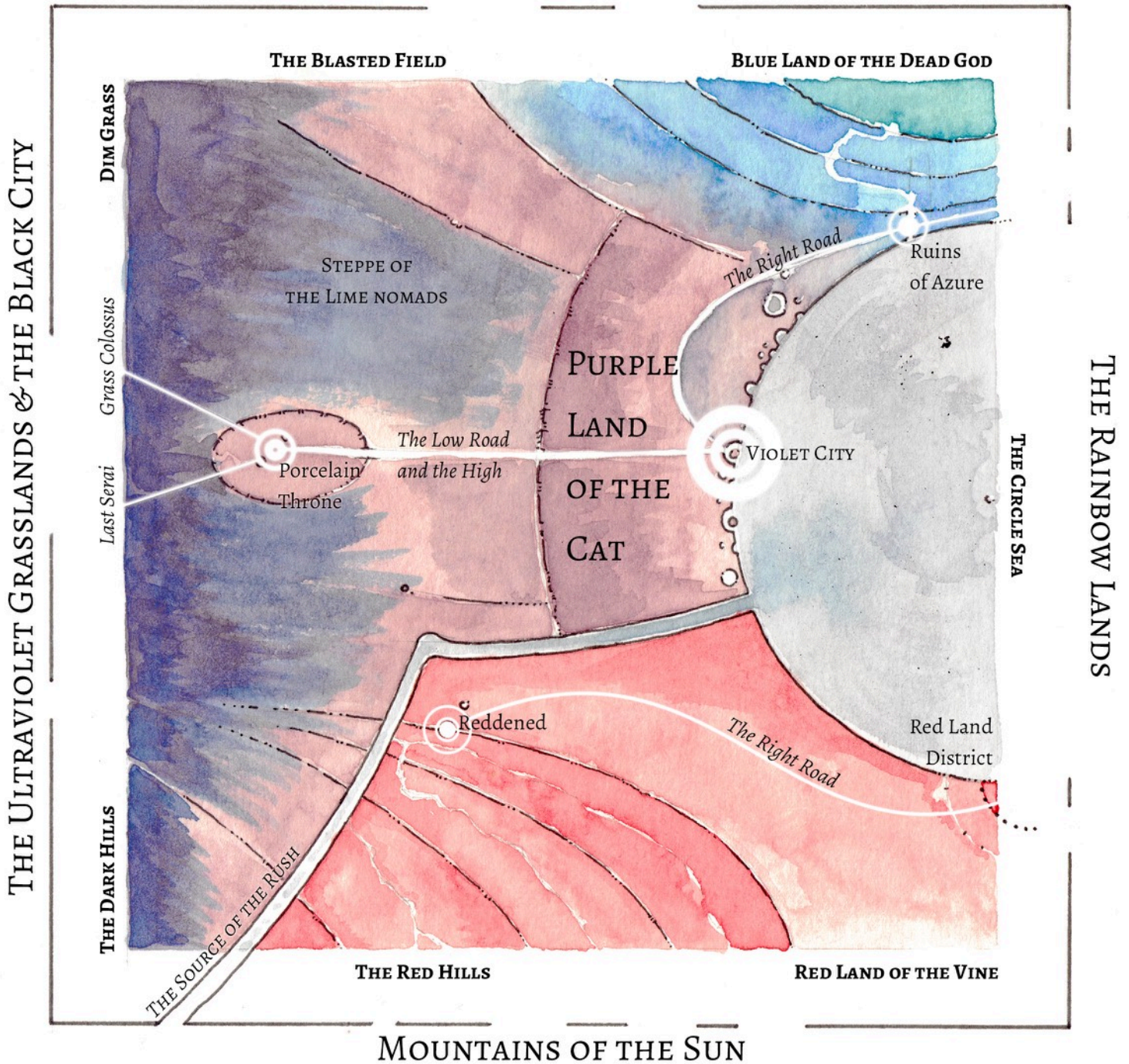
THE ULTRAVIOLET GRASSLAND & THE BLACK CITY 8/X

a psychedelic, heavy metal rpg sandbox
for a group of blundering PCs visiting the depths of the Ultraviolet Grassland
in search of wealth and booty to pay back their adventuring loans.
For the OSR, the New Edition, & other rpgs

by

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MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON



The Left End of the Right Road

Who were those odd folks and gods that built the world? Who carved the Source and broke the hills? How did the Blue God die? What is at the heart of the Circle Sea? What blasted that blasted field?

Good citizens do not ask and Father-Mother of the Hammer and Cross does not tell.

The past sleeps in the Forgetting for good reason. But do the cats know or care? No, the violets are shameless. Corrupted by the Black City. Forbidding the Kinder Inquisition, digging into the Old Accounts. They hate the joy-liberty of Metropolis.

—*The Green Tourist: Lesser Lands of the Rainbow, vol.2*

1. Violet City: a last eerie house

This is the end of the Right Road. Humanity's dominions wind down in the purple haze that wreathes the sunrises of this western reach. No roads, but caravans brave the Ultraviolet Grassland into the eternal sunset of the Black City. Porcelain Princes and Spectrum Satraps oversee great herds of biomechanical burdenbeasts that bring the odd fruits, the black light lotus, the indigo ivories, the rainbow silks, and the sanguine porcelains so popular among the meritocrats of the Rainbow Lands. Many voyagers are taken by the vomes, but nobody likes to talk of those lost to the ultras.

Weather: The sun rises through a violet haze, slowly, reluctant to give up the shimmering phantoms of predawn to the dusty day.

Misfortune: It's been a long, hard, stupid journey and everyone should get into the mood with a friendly Charisma check to see how unlucky they are (DC 8+1d6). Unlucky voyagers who fail roll d6:

1. Got the runny blues, a depressive digestive disorder.
2. Picked up tendrill tapeworms.
3. Got an infected sore on the muddy road.
4. Pick-pocket attack, lost something precious.
5. Fell in love with a swamp wisp.
6. Nice shoes ruined in a deceptive bog.

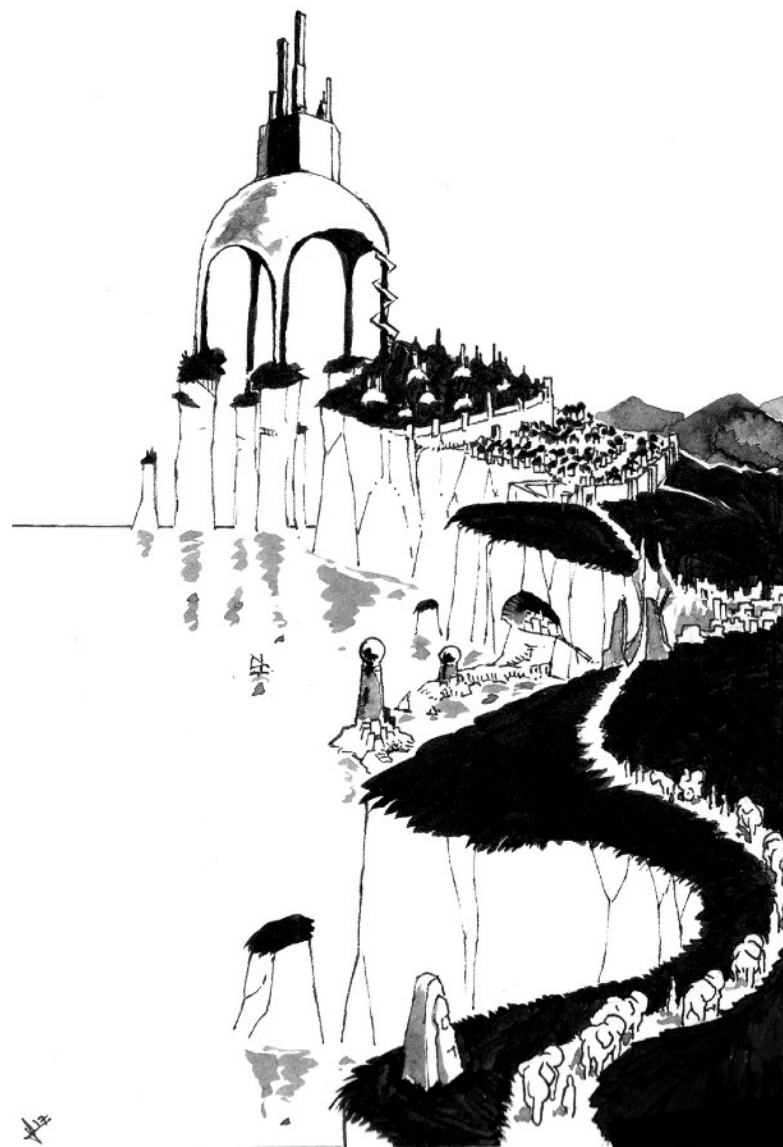
DIRECTIONS

Local, Townships of the Violet City (safe city): administered by the Catlords of the Violet Citadel for the good of the no-good travelers visiting their palace of knowledge, learning and sanctimony.

West, the Low Road and the High (trail, 1 week): both roads are rutted jokes. Both lead to Porcelain Throne, the neutral hole at the edge of Viomech 5 territory.

West, Steppe of the Lime Nomads (steppe, Δ4 weeks): flocks of cat-eared sheep and the odd transplanted limey nomad clan makes this area of the UV Grassland relatively civil. There are no trails and the journey is slow.

East, The Right Road (road, Δ6 weeks): back to the Rainbowlands. A place for heroes to retire, beyond the bounds of the UV Grassland. (END)



Townships of the Violet City, halls of the graceful cats

“*Soyez tranqui*l,” murmurs the dead-eyed lady in P.T.’s mind. Horned cats creep from hazy alleys and examine their baggage. The citadel looms, eerie and obnoxious, beyond the haze layer. A black cat nods, the lady steps aside. The townships beckon and the party strides into the stall-strewn streets.

Expenses: 5 cash per week for tramps, 50 cash per week to earn a modicum of respect.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE STREETS (D6)

1. Green-blood shock-peddler **Mencia** pays for tales and pictures of the “Wonders of the West” (double for well-written, illustrated accounts).
2. **Woger de R.F.D.**, a reputable moustachioed free-merchant, is sending a free caravan of vampire wines and livingstone bricks to the Last Serai to trade directly with the Spectrum Satraps. He’s hiring caravan guards (40 cash per guard on safe arrival).
3. **Natega the Kind** sells original ointments, shoddy shoes and downright dangerous gear at reasonable prices, but her Red Cat meows *Charm Person* at travelers (her supplies may give a disadvantage on checks, but she won’t admit it).
4. A **scared urchin** runs into the street, shouting “a cat tried to worm into my mouth!” She will integrate into society and become a cat pet soon. Her name is **Uda**, for now.
5. A **sunburned man** with pink hair staggers out of an inn, cruelly stabbed, sprays crimson bubbles and groans “a behemoth’s pearl for dear Cubina.” He clutches a map to Behemoth’s Shell far to the west (advantage on encounter checks, Δ6). If healed, his name is **Vorgo** and makes a shifty, cowardly, but loyally incompetent henchman. Who stabbed him? It was dark, he was drunk.
6. In Charming Square carriages cram into a meowing mob as confiscated traveler dogs are thrown into **pit fights** against trained sewer rats. Bookies take bets of up to 10 cash per bout (check Charisma to win). Saving a lucky dog costs 1d6 x 50 cash. Cheering the dogs draws glares from cat people.

Carousing: fun for all ages.

Drugs: for heroes to give up more effectively.

Eateries: the last fine dining before the steppe.

Supplies: and other nonsense.

CATS, CATS, CATS

Cats are the priests of the Purple God(dess). The high magi of the University of the Citadel are changeling cat-people. They eat traveler babes. There are hidden horned rat masters who secretly dominate the cats. The cats have little, manipulative human hands. All this may be lies spread by doghead insurrectionists.

Horned Cats silently monitor the townships around the Violet Citadel and all the townsfolk treat them with great kindness and respect.

AC 13, HP 2 (1d4), +1 claws 1,

Powers: *Feline Telepathy*, *Ventriloquism*,

Spells: *Entrhall Human*.

Black Cats are the silver-tongued mistresses of the townships, with serpents in their tails.

AC 13, HP 2 (1d4), +5 serpent bite 1, narcotic DC 10.

Spells and abilities as horned cat.

Bad Cats are half-glass, walk through corners and curse with a purr. So they say.



Carousing viole[n]tly

“Voi, pâle-couleur, pren an-tour!” shouts the tout in pasty Purple patois. Others chime in, mottled capes flutter, papiér panels advertise “the last partie before lanotte.” Lips smack. The plebe churls crowd in to sell good time, forgetting or just a steppe-style rat sausage surprise.

HOW TO CAROUSE

Carousing was first invented by Jeff Rients (<http://jrients.blogspot.com/>) and lets the DM easily and simply separate heroes from their treasure. The system I use is similar to Jeff's:

- (1) Hero blows 1d6 x 100 cash on a week of hard partying and gains that amount of xp.
- (2) Rolling more cash/xp than the hero has available means a nasty debt to a local cad.
- (3) In any case, the hero makes a Charisma save. On a fail, they roll on the Fun Fun Table.

Bonus: a critical success on the Charisma save lets the hero carouse harder and party away another 1d8 x 100 cash. A critical fail means an extra roll on the table.

D12 VIOLET CITY CAROUSING MISHAPS

1. kicked out of town as a dirty dog. No XP and a reputation. Also, case of canine cooties or lycanthropy.
2. the odd fruits were odder than usual this time. Roll d6: an extra (1) ear, (2) nose, (3) wrinkle, (4) pearl, (5) tentacle, (6) cat grows.
3. now addicted to cat snip. You're welcome. A weekly supply costs 50 cash. No cat snip = halved Charisma. Cure takes 1d6 weeks and 100 cash per week.
4. that cheap black light lotus? You now phosphoresce in ultraviolet light. UV creatures hit with advantage.
5. ingested a magic cat spirit and became a cat pet. Your hero becomes a henchman/familiar of your new character: a horned cat named **Twinklestar**.
6. got into a staring match with an eyebiter. Lost an eye.
7. found the anthropic fighting pits. Lost half hit points. Succeed in a Str save to win 1d4 x 100 cash.
8. acquired bananas. A whole cart of bananas and a surprisingly intelligent ape named Ananas.
9. mind blown. Permanently gain 1 Wis and (roll d6) a case of (1) the shakes, (2) demonic possession, (3) split personality, (4) fine wine, (5) corruption, (6) brain worm.
10. the bloody flux. Hero now requires double supplies, especially toilet paper. Con save to recover at the end of every week.

11. dreams of porcelain-faced shadows, a fear of the dark, a missing tooth and a straw doll of yourself. Int save to avoid a paralyzing fear during the next battle
12. wake with a bag of strangled cats drained of blood, a hundred ominous pieces of silver (100 cash) and a sense of foreboding. Hours later (roll d6) an (1) inn, (2) cat house, (3) opera shack, (4) general store, (5) political café, (6) mansion collapses in a whisper of necrotic decay.

Cad: Herrie Tree, necroambulist and procurer of fine work-corpse for the CAT construction company. Loan shark to the corpse-to-be. Fancy a body-snatching gig?

Twinklestar is an ambitious sixteen year old cat seeking the *Rat Rod of Immor[t]ality*. Roll stats with an extra d6 for Dex and Int and a d6 less for Str and Con. Advance as wizard.

AC 13 (base), HD 1d4, +2 claws 1, keen smell.

Powers: *Feline Telepathy*, *Ventriloquism*, *Purr of Power*.

Spells: *Enthrall Human*, *Hold Portal*.

Weaknesses: dogs, balls of yarn, thunder



Drugs in a purple haze

P.T. stumbled into a small shrine garden and vomited copiously over the frog altar. Luminous animalcules burst into song and dance. He stared. Satisfied spirits or hallucination, he could not tell.

D8 FUN-TIME VIOLET CITY DRUGS

1. **Black light lotus** glows in the dark and cats love it. Eaten, it cures mental afflictions for a week. Smoked, it brings deep sleep and restores 1d6 hit or ability points. Smear on the skin, it exudes fragrant mind-altering pheromones, boosting Cha by 1d4 for Δ4 days. Δ4 doses (50 cash).
2. **Cat snip** is a powdered puff mushroom. It brings euphoria and Δ4 bonus actions. Δ4 doses (50 cash). *Addictive* (DC 2d6). Run out: halved Charisma.
3. **Ultra jay** are the crystal needles of a fabulous UV bird. Inserted, they give advantage on social skills and reduce Dexterity by d4 for a week. Δ4 doses (250 cash).
4. **Cat coffee** is a narcotic made from black cat droppings. A pot induces sleep and restores 1d4 mental ability points. Δ4 doses (20 cash).
5. **Whiskers** expand the mind and give advantage to perception and intuition, a weak levitation effect and disadvantage on physical activity. Δ4 doses (100 cash). *Addictive* (DC 2d6). Run out: halved Dexterity.
6. **Felix whizz** is a popular energy drink the catipede peddle. A cup grants 1d4 temporary hp and disadvantage on social checks. Δ4 doses (10 cash). *Weakly addictive* (DC 1d6). Run out: pissy, disadvantage on Cha and Int checks.
7. **Purple haze** is the toke of choice for manly men. The aromatized “*essensa de mors*” numbs pain and emotions. A long spliff gives advantage on saves against pain, grief, fear and hurt, and disadvantage to Dexterity and Wisdom checks. Δ6 doses (40 cash). *Weakly addictive* (DC 1d6). Run out: cotton mouth, lose 1d6 Int and Wis.
8. **Dog’s tail** is a chew root that is used to boost concentration, giving advantage on cognitive tasks. Δ4 doses (75 cash).

TRIPPING

Drugs are an **experience**. Heroes gain (1d6 + Wis mod) x 10 XP when they try a new one.

Tracking durations is annoying. Assume effects last a few hours, so while crawling give Heroes a Δ6 to roll after every encounter. When it runs out, the effect wears off.

BUT DRUGS ARE BAD, M’KAY

Every time a hero takes an addictive drug they roll a Constitution save (DC 3 + 1d10). If they fail, they’re hooked. The player takes a pen and writes the addiction and a drug supply tracker on the hero’s character sheet.

From then on, the hero rolls a drug supply die once a week to stay functional.

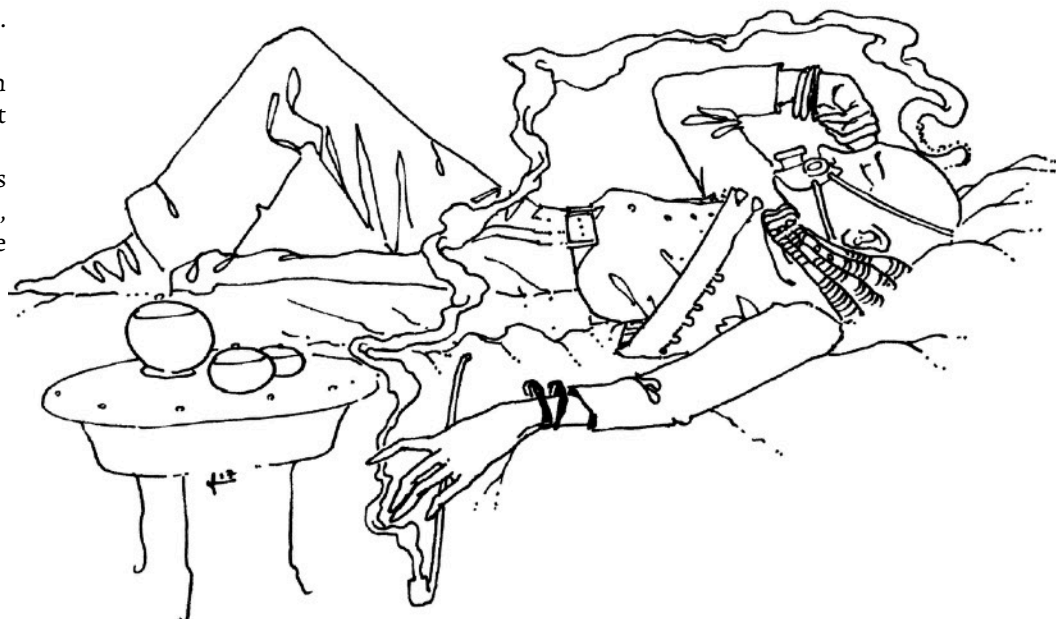
Additionally, the hero rolls a drug supply die every time they want (need) a hit.

If the hero **runs out**, the hero suffers until they get a nice strong hit.

Curing addiction takes a long time. Role-play the struggle or use *Cure Disease*. There are no rules beyond that. It’s hard, figure it out.

Though cured, the hero has sipped at the teat of transcendence and a fresh taste of the Milk of M’le Maiku (or whatever it was they were hooked on) restarts the addiction.

Long-term effects tend to be harsh and lethal, but so are monsters. Ignore the long-term. Heroes die.



The last gastrognome: the eating experience

D.W. and Poncho sat on the bench-gargoyle munching their sandwiches. The lithic ornamental sighed and hoovered crumbs. It was going to be another one of those days.

A SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

Like with drugs, fine (or odd) dining is also an experience for heroes. However, it's usually less hazardous, if more time-consuming. It takes a week for a hero to become a regular. The cost is in addition to living expenses. Sometimes there is an additional requirement.

D6 TOWNSHIP DINERS

1. **Pér Slaji:** the grimmest dining experience in the township. Poison saves (DC 1d8) are *de rigueur*, advantage finding cads, cutpads and pursenapes. Regular: 1 cash per week, poisoned by Pér, 50 XP.
2. **Shéh Shah:** premium water-pipe and cat café, hub of a feline franchise stretching from the RLD to the Porcelain Throne. Cool cats get good drugs here, dopey dogs not welcome. Regular: 10 cash. Get a gig with the purple hazer body snatchers, 50 XP.
3. **Le Pesquemanceur:** Seka the summoner is the sharpest shark slicer south of Azure. Won't find a better source of black market fishing scrolls and amulets. Regular: 20 cash, Learn *Attract Fish*, *Early Worm*, *Net Trick* or *Seka's Spear of Slicing*, 100 XP.
4. **Le ultim Gastrognôme:** the peak of piquant cuisine, catering to black cats and their cat pets, foreign emissaries, princes and satraps of the caravan kingdoms. Getting in is hard, but prestigious (advantage interacting with the local nobbs and snobs). Regular: 200 cash, anointed by the gastro-gnome, 100 XP.
5. **Al flogon:** drinking dive of the abnegators of the Rainbow Pantheon. Only visitors with less than 10 Charisma can enter without a Blasphemy save (Wisdom save DC 8+1d6). Intelligent visitors can learn about the biomechanicum here. Regular: 5 cash, biomechanicum, 200 XP.
6. **Nul sanctimons:** a holy water and cat whizz bar, where the *rafiné* meet, take cat coffee and comment on the empresses' wonderful new clothes. "Sé très il-decadént, néy?" says the low-cut eunuch. It's not. The food nourishes the soul, but not the body. Regulars regain half hp and a bonus spell slot. Regular: 100 cash, fashionable but ineffective new habit, 100 XP.

LAST CHAIR SALON

Last place to stock up on yellow beer, felix whizz and cat coffee before the low road and the high split on their two ways to the Porcelain throne. Only double price for everything, great deal!

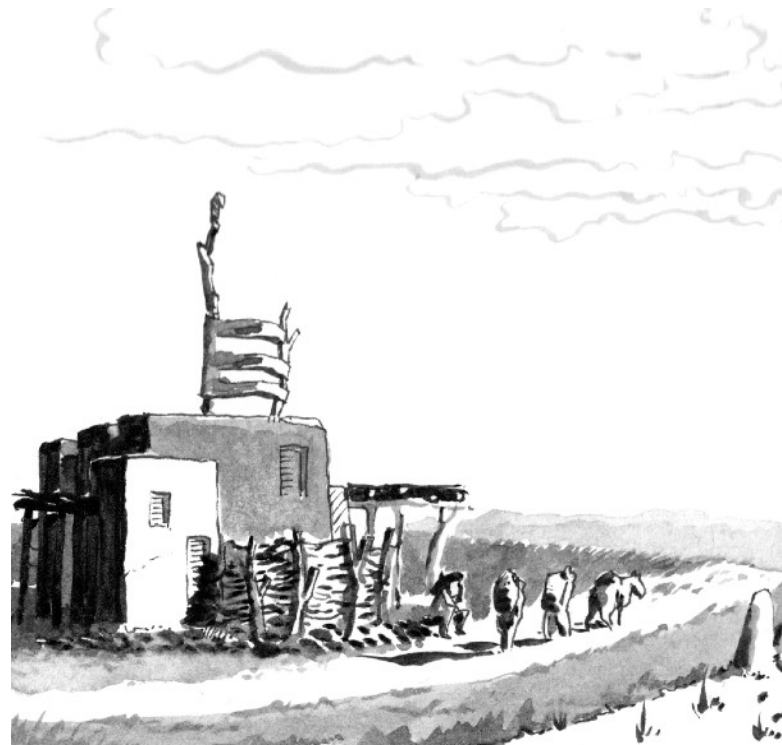
Owner: Marsa Vinoble, hates blues.

Nemesis: the local *pastorales* hate the tough business-heroine selling Violet drugs to their children as is her free market right.

Secret: a vome nest-mother is chained in the cellar, hooked up to a fermentation golem.

Regular: 100 cash and a Felix Whizz addiction, 80 XP.

Blasphemers automatically fail their next Δ8 Charisma saves. A silly and expensive penance removes the divine sanction.



Supplies and survival

D.W. was inscrutable. Poncho looked peeved.

“We’re going to the Black City and we don’t care if it’s supposed to take eight weeks, we’ll make it in four and bring enough black-light to set us all up. Now, how many horses will you loan us?”

Inge and Ingot, the bearded ambiguously dwarfish merchants glowered and pointed to the large sign that read, “No Lones to Adventurers, Frybooters or Wagonbonds.”

The Violet Citadel is the last place to buy supplies and animals for the long crossing. Every salty old hand advises at least four beasts per traveler. Spicier hands wink and suggest it’s possible with just the two.

SURVIVING THE UV GRASSLANDS

The Black City is really far away. So far, that every steppe in the point crawl takes a week. This requires some new rules, I made a whole damn appendix for them, but here’s a summary.

Tracking supplies the classic way is time consuming, thus: **usage dice**. Usage dice are a polyhedral dice chain and drop to the next lowest on every 1–3 rolled.

Δ12 -> Δ10 -> Δ8 -> Δ6 -> Δ4 -> screwed.

Roll to use supply once per week per person. Running out of supplies kills fast. Nomads target pack and draft animals.

ENCUMBRANCE

Encumbrance is usually a pain. I suggest this fix: each hero has one inventory slot. Small stuff takes no slots. Adventuring gear takes one slot. Δ4 supplies also takes one slot. Any hero carrying more than one thing is encumbered. That is bad.

Heroes should have baggage trains and shit.

SHOP: GRASSLAND ESSENTIALS

1. Δ4 supplies of dry dwarf bread, water, hempen cloth, wrapping rag. A hero cannot heal on dry crumbs and water. 1 slot (2 cash).
2. Δ4 supplies of tinned meat, travel ale, disinfectant schnapps, novelty items, rough newspapers, socks, gum and prophylactics. 1 slot (10 cash).
3. UV Grassland Walker Kit: Toiletries, zinc sunscreen, tent, sturdy walking stick, Green army knife, sombrero, mustache wax, kangaroo bag, schnapps and wineskins, nifty cord belt and a backpack with one inventory slot. Dropping a shouldered backpack takes 1 action. 1 slot, (20 cash). *Yes, a hero with the full wilderness survival kit and a full backpack of food is encumbered. No surprise there.*
4. Anti-something snake oil: crap against venom, bugs, parasites, disease, rashes, blisters. Surprisingly, actually works. Small, Δ8 doses (1d6 x 10 cash).
5. Violet city healing potion: restores 2d6 hit points or 1d6 ability points, er, stats. Small, Δ4 doses (2d6 x 10 cash).
6. My First Archaeologist Kit: shovels, picks, sacks, ropes, buckets, brushes, pith helmets, more mustache wax, shiny boots, notebooks, and lamps. Everything a budding tomb raider could want! 1 slot (100 cash).
7. Adventure Kitchen: portable stove, samovar, canteen, cast iron pots and pans, oils, salts and spices, ladles, tongs, knives, chopping blocks and more. No more eating raw game! 1 slot (100 cash).
8. Naturalist’s Portable Laboratory: jars, flasks, pins, boxes, nets, scalpels, prods, pens, brushes, paints, notebooks, easels and the like. Perfect for the budding amateur biomancer. 1 slot (100 cash).

SHOP: MOUNTS AND WAGONS

1. Disposable encumbered slave, pony, mule or camel. 2 inventory slots (50 cash).
2. Proper heroic damn horse, charger. 2 slots (150 cash).
3. Impressive velblod camel. 3 slots (300 cash).
4. Small wagon or rickety coach, and a draft animal. Wagons are slow, vulnerable, heavy and dumb. 6 slots (200 cash, mule included).
5. Solid coach or wagon. 12 slots and two draft animals (600 cash, ponies included).
6. Biomechanical beast. Only available if you know the right Satrap or Prince, otherwise dream on. These glass-headed beauties ain’t for tramps. 4 slots (600 cash).

“Mount up! There’s wonders and silks and chem stims on that ultraviolet road!” P.T. shouted.

SHOP: GUNS

It wouldn't be a silly pseudo-colonial-apocalyptic savanna-crawl without guns.

1. Prince pistol, 2d6 damage, mid range, reload Δ10 (200 cash).
2. Cat rifle, 2d10 damage, long range, reload Δ8 (300 cash).
3. Satrap gun, 2d12 damage, long range, reload Δ6 (900 cash).
4. Redland District SMG, 2d6 damage, mid range, burst, reload Δ20 (400 cash).
5. Vome slagger, 3d6 damage, long range, frag, reload Δ4 (900 cash).
6. Ultra blaster, 3d6 radiant damage, mid range, blinding, reload Δ20 (900 cash).
7. Blue blaster, 4d8 necrotic damage, short range, burst, Δ6, (900 cash).
8. Inquisition squirtgun, 1d6, mid range, intravenous, reload Δ8 (200 cash).

Blinding: if any of the damage dice on a blinding weapon deal maximum damage, the target is blinded for one round. Critical hits with a blinding weapon cause permanent blindness (Dex save DC 8 + proficiency bonus + attack bonus).

Burst: drop one usage die, then roll. Area damage in 10' cube, Dex save DC 15 (or 8 + proficiency bonus + attack bonus) for half damage. Before damage is rolled, as a reaction, targets can sacrifice their move action to dive for cover. In cover they take half damage, none if they make their save.

Frag: a frag gun is charged with epic energies beyond mortal ken. Enemies killed with a frag weapon explode and deal 1d6 damage to all adjacent creatures.

Intravenous: rounds can be loaded with liquid toxins or holy water or whatever.

Reload ΔX: when a gun is out of ammo, it takes an action to reload. A full magazine gets the listed usage die. As a rule of thumb, let ammo cost one tenth the cost of the weapon. Where ammo is scarce, increase the cost.

SHOP: ARMORS

Some armors that are suited for the hot steppe climate might also come in handy.

1. Flowing nomad robes with padded bits, light, AC 11 + Dex (10 cash).
2. Ballistic linen suit, perfect for the gentleman adventurer, light, AC 12 + Dex (100 cash).
3. Synthskin protection suit, hot, protective, light, AC 11 + Dex (150 cash).
4. Cat armor, a tiny helmet and little silken cuirass that looks ever so cute, cat-sized, light, +1 AC (200 cash).
5. Dryland weave armor, from the cilli of special dryland coral hybrids, surprisingly cool, medium, AC 13 + Dex (max 2) (150 cash).
6. Biomech cool-suit combining synthskin over woven endoskeleton, and an uncanny vascular cooling and filtration interlink system, powered Δ8, medium, AC 14 + Dex (max 2) (300 cash).
7. Spectral combat suit, combines Satrapy steel-glass scales with an environment maintenance parasite, powered Δ6, protective, medium, AC 15 + Dex (max 2), disadvantage stealth (1,500 cash).
8. Porcelain walker suit, the best in princely technology with integrated intravenous administration system for healing potions, powered Δ6, heavy, AC 17, disadvantage stealth (600 cash).

Hot: hot armor is bad in, well, a hot environments. After every exertion (e.g. a battle) in hot armor, the hero has to make a Con save. The DC depends on the heat, but let's say DC 8 + 2d6. On a failed save the hero gains a lovely disadvantage to attacks and physical checks (including Con saves) and needs to rest. Another failed save and the hero can start dealing with ability score damage.

All the armor in the default rulebook of the default game is basically hot. And quickly lousy and sweaty.

Powered: a powered armor uses some sort of magical source of energy, be it solar prayers, thermonuclear batteries, blood sacrifice or something else. Roll the usage die after every combat or significant exertion in the armor. An extra power source and protective cradle takes an inventory slot.

Protective: this is armor that magically provides advantage to saves against horrible environmental effects, from acid to toxic clouds, often with magical hazmat runes or post-mechanical breathing implants.

Hiring Help

D.W. rolled her eyes. Another useless lout. At least they would be done soon. If P.T. didn't accidentally stab another would-be guard while 'testing' their mettle.

D12 POTENTIAL HENCHMEN

Henchmen can become new heroes when existing heroes bite the dust. Let players roll the henchmen's ability scores as required.

1. Migo the Dark, horned cat, and his pet Jor leu-Gro (tough but slow). Curious, interested in new sights, a bit cowardly, *Minor Illusion*. 100 cash per week.
2. Lea the Fluffy, bad cat on hard times. Needs a pet. Friendly but very lazy, prone to misrepresenting the truth. Purr curse: *terribly itchy armpits*, Wis save DC 15. 60 cash.
3. Sim Cadmium, a lesser doghead with a raspy, mysterious voice, hood and a doleful past. Good tracker. 70 cash.
4. Merenk-Zero Running, an escaped poly-body drone rediscovering her identity, the neuroparticipation chip scars still visible under her ash-white hair. She is very flexible and can learn new skills at shocking speed (20% XP bonus). 40 cash.
5. Obritish Krat, a diesel-chugging dwarf, with burned beard and haunted eyes, talking of wire-gholas in a salt mine far to the east. Good with machines. 50 cash.
6. Malikraut Koza, a very short Orange-lander with a penchant for poetry, puffery, pomp and a bit of the old ultraviolence. Advantage on damage rolls when sneak attacking. 35 cash.
7. Glim, a silent, dark stranger in robes of odd refinement. Some whisper of a murderous barbaric past, others of inquisitor training. Iron minded (advantage on mental saves). 25 cash.
8. Od Broyden, scion of a Lesser Vintner house, out to scout new markets and make a name. Can haggle like nobodies business (1d6-2 x 10% discount on transactions). 99 cash.
9. Vigo Brastec, a hunter of rogue post-mortem laborers and currently wanted for certain undisclosed affairs back east. Bonus in combat with the dead. 20 cash.
10. Laud ah-Num, a dilettante from the Emerald City out to find the finest Blacklight Lotus. May be loaded or really poor, but still, dresses in dandy clothes all the time (intense fashion sense let's him increase his apparent net worth by a factor of 10). 60 cash.
11. Zika, a young un', wild eyed. Totally not possessed by an ultra ghost. Totally vicious in unarmed melee combat (1d6 damage, double criticals). 5 cash.
12. Lolar' de-Bruno, a half-savage ex-turnip farmer from the Green Land frontier with a bearskin coat and a flute. Probably not a werebear. 10 cash.



Who would hurt Vorgo?

Vorgo is healed and he snuffles mawkishly, “She’s a beauty, she is, and her father a chief, she says. A pearl is the bride gift he asks, she says, a pearl chiseled from a behemoth’s oyster parasite. So here I am, with my chisel and hangover, ready to enlist with the Princes as far as the Sarai, then on to the Behemoth ... I’ll manage somehow.”

1. In Vorgo’s wound is a sliver of silver. Does he smell a bit of wild beast?
2. Street urchins and cabbagewives would say he’d come to the township with a dog cage, but where is the dog?
3. Would the satraps stab somebody just to stop them from reaching their territory?
4. None of the cat people seem to care much about the map, they treat it as a joke. P.T. and the party would drop this annoying side quest here.
5. If pressed, the folks will ask, why go there? Only death and blindness await in that grassland.
6. Pushed further, they’ll mutter about mutilated travelers in the Rue des Oiseaux et Morgues (Cat-folk hostility +1).
7. At this point Violet detectives with fine white cats will start asking probing questions of strangers poking their whiskers in their jurisdiction.
8. After all, the bodies were just travelers, hardly citizens. But foreigners bothering the cat folk?
9. Yes, the doctor of mortices may have noticed the odd, parallel daggers used to mutilate the bodies.
10. Could those have been teeth or claws? Hah, only if someone had teeth like daggers!

Here, the trail would go cold (for now), nothing to indicate that any fantasy of vomes and ultra possession could have any basis in fact.

Vorgo the Were-Pug is shifty, cowardly, and foolishly loyal. But, if the truth is out, he also turns into a scruffy pug. This does not improve his combat or breathing abilities.

AC 13 (11 pug), HP 3 (1d6), keen smell, bug eyes.

Power: lycanthropic regeneration

Weakness: silver, oranges, endurance sports

Threat: is he possessed by an ultra scout beetle?



2. The Low Road and the High

The cratered viaduct of the High Road runs on crumbling pylons of dying dryland coral across the pallid grasses. Beneath the half-passable testament to the follies of the long-long-ago, the low road winds, smeared threads of soil and loam and oil and blood pounded into a hard surface by the pounding feet, hooves, wheels and treads of pilgrims, nomads, caravans, and mechs.

Weather: The sun clambers above the eye-watering purple haze around half-past nine. Hard gusts of flat air bring (1) flurries of ash, (2) sour rain, (3) burnt skies.

Misfortune strikes those who wander among the ruins of forgotten great civilizations (Charisma DC 8+1d6, roll d6):

1. luckless character sprains an ankle (+1 day).
2. lame beast (+1 day).
3. saddle sores (-1d4 hp).
4. lose 1 slot of supplies,
5. catch a rattling cough. Noisy, but harmless. A patent medicine (5 cash) should cure it.
6. bitten by a scorpion spider trying to make a home in a smelly boot (poison, Con save DC 3d6, disadvantage on physical checks for Δ6 days).

DIRECTIONS

West, Porcelain Throne (safe oasis, a week): the cryptic mega-sculpture is encrusted with the dryland coral homes of the Porcelain Princes. A ring of Columnar Defence Golems stands guard. Crude shacks of brick and C-beam form a rude town at the foot of Throne Hill. Two great serais stand testament to the uneasy peace between the Spectrum Satraps and the Princes.

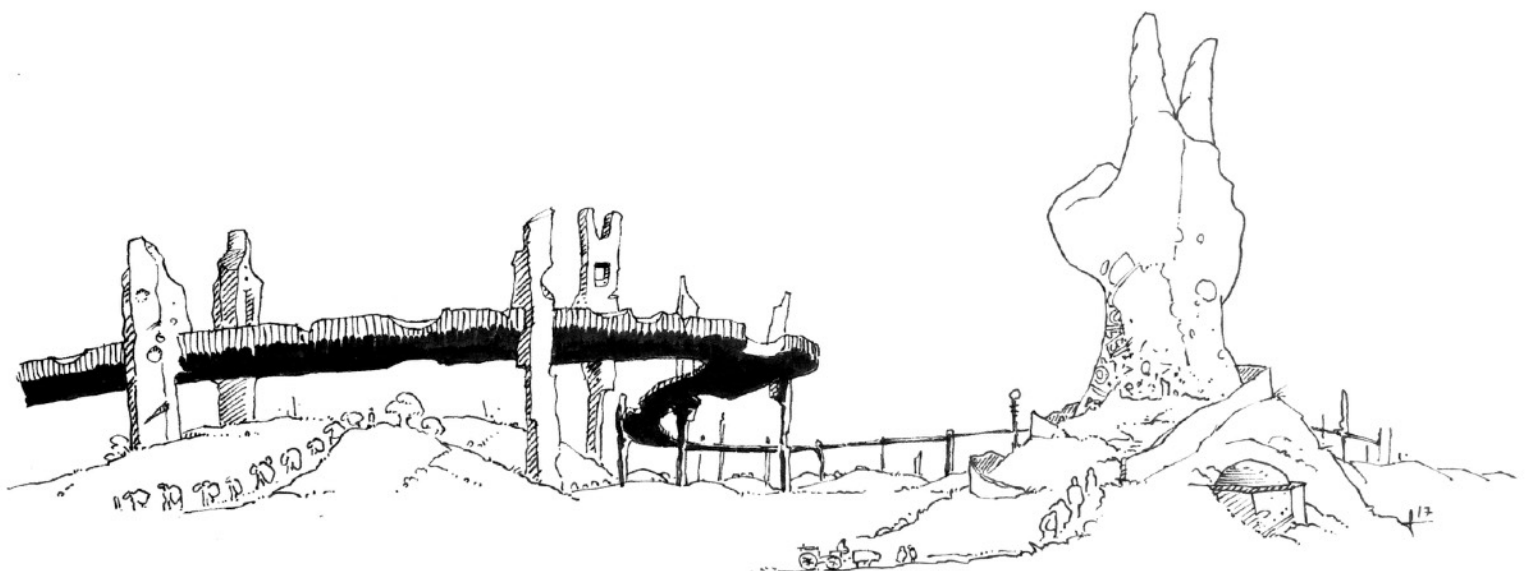
West, Potsherd Crater (local area, a week): the scrub beyond the Throne is pallid, the topsoil covered in drifts of porcelain exoskeletons from a deeper time. The three limey clans of the Green Tangerine, the Yellow Lime and the Verdigris Lemon graze and trade in spring and autumn.

North, Steppe of the Lime Nomads (steppe, a few days): harsh lands, forbidding to travelers, dotted with odd remnants of the best-forgotten ages.

East, Violet City (road, a week): back to the Rainbowlands. The city of the Catlords and their drugs.

ENCOUNTERS (D6)

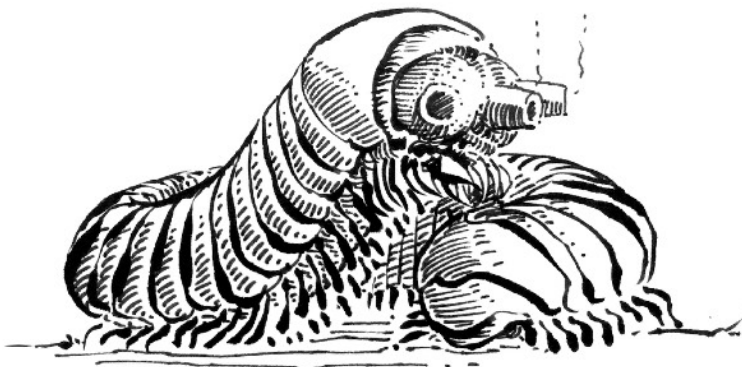
1. Swarm of ultra-possessed prairie dogs, frothing as the dread mechanical ghost corrupts their neural matter. Utterly savage and lethally infectious, but confounded by climbing on a rock and waiting for the infection to liquefy their brains (1 or 2 days).
2. Feral steppe hounds scavenging for weak prey.
3. Rainbowlander caravan with hundreds of beasts, escorts and cargoes of dry fruits and rainbow silks.
4. Great porcelain walker and its trinity of princes, escorted by eunuch slaves and beasts.
5. Satrap clock wagons in a column of gay colors and glistening glass crenelations that admit no faults.
6. Helpful wandering serai in the later Corpsepaint Monarch style offers security, resupply and the old greenlander veteran **Beauregarthe** (Fighter 3, AC 13, machete, Cat rifle). Beauregarthe can be hired for 60 cash per week.



POINTS OF INTEREST

Rusted Hand (+1 day, 80 XP): a victorious hand rises from the hardpack, covered in graffiti. It is near the roads and a popular picnic platz for decadent aristo maidens seeking a suitably gothic and melancholy oil depiction of themselves. Slight danger of monkey mechs.

Crystal Pylon (+2 days, 150 XP): a voluptuously whorled crystal pylon lies on its side in a heavily eroded crater, the sides covered in a riot of perfumed mind-altering brambles. Nomads say it transforms memories into life. This is true (touch with forehead, lose 1 point of Intelligence permanently, gain 1 hp permanently). Ultra possessor at night, **millipede mechs** during the day.



Potsherd Crown (+2 days, 100 XP): the rim of an oddly even hill rises white and pale, like a great crown of deep porcelain. Remnants of quarries from before the days of the Porcelain Princes lie abandoned to vomish lurchers, while sanguine porcelain prospectors whisper of wormy holes at the far rim.

Wormy holes lead into the depths. There are d4 to plumb:

1. a great large hole leads to the dust-covered exoskeleton of a great ultraviolet worm, dead for decades. Chittering **spider-rats** and **bat-scorpions** have proliferated. A day's excavation would dig up 2d6 crystal worm teeth (1 slot and 100 cash each). Good for making crystal swords and spears and stuff. Epic.
2. a dryland sponge-ridden hole leads to spore fields, skin parasites and several totally not elven skeletons.
3. a slick, polished hole leads to a slippery, tangled knot of passages and chambers occupied by a family of **green slime worms**. The worms are (d6): (1) all gone, (2) all dead and rotting, (3) pupating into some kind of vomish thing, (4) asleep? dormant? (5) mating, (6) ready to ambush invaders and slowly digest their delicious bones with their slimy skins.
4. a fake worm hole leading to an archaic, forgotten cache of ammunition and indigo ivory furniture (2d4 slots, 1,500 cash).

Motor Agate Outcrop (+2 days, 2d8 x 10 XP): a gorgeous, striated ridge, leftover from some incredibly aesthetic geological process. Fragments of rare metal skeletons are embedded here and there in the outcrop, lending credence to the Citadel theories of an ancient period when creatures with living flesh over metal endoskeleton were the evolutionary norm. Cowled, back-jointed archaeologists sometimes prowl the outcrop.



Sealed Gate (+3 days, 250 XP): a cratered arched gate in the Onion-and-Skull style of the Later Mahogany Reign slowly emerging from its aerolith tomb. Sages say it was entombed by with an epic application of *Zrakomlat's Air Becomes Stone* in the Year of the Seven Wars. The petrified bones of strange beasts continually emerge from the light, fluffy stone of the area. Heavily covered in graffiti, risk of artist dilettantes and the occasional meta-skeleton.



3. Steppe of the Lime Nomads

The limey nomads' lands are harsh and dry, forbidding to travelers, dotted with odd remnants of that misty period that the Saffron City's Opiate Priests refer to as the best-forgotten ages. In Spring the limeys graze west towards the Grass Colossus, returning east to the Circle Rim for winter.

Weather: Every morning the purple haze occludes the sun until 8:30 or so. A dull drizzle gets in the eyes and cinnabar ash burns the tongue.

Misfortune (Charisma DC 10+1d6, roll d6):

1. Unfortunate hero sprains shoulder (+1 day).
2. lose a beast to a pack of wild dogs (+1 day).
3. get a bladder infection (-1d4 Str).
4. infested with ash-lice (-1d4 Wis).
5. metal armor has rusted (-1 AC bonus).
6. red eye from the irritating dust (-1d4 Dex). Preventable with proper eyewear.

DIRECTIONS:

West, Potsherd Crater (local area, Δ4 weeks): drifts of shattered porcelain exoskeletons knitted with tufts of white, ropey grass.

West, Porcelain Throne (safe oasis, Δ4 weeks): the cryptic mega-sculpture is encrusted with the drylands coral homes of the Porcelain Princes. A ring of relatively well-maintained Columnar Defence Golems protects this haven of trade.

South, The High Road and the Low (road, a few days): crumbling pylons of dying dryland coral tower above the half-passable modern road.

East, Violet City (steppe, Δ4 weeks): back to the Rainbowlands. The city of the Catlords and their drugs.

ENCOUNTERS (D6)

1. **Vomish clackers** (AC 14, HD 4, entangling) rattle in the dark, shadowing and whining, hurling rocks and bolts. By day they burrow into the ash and follow at a great distance, their glass telescopic eyes and re-engineered limbs keeping to a steady, slow trudge. At night, if lights go out, they hurl themselves in and try to haul one or two victims off into the dark. Half of their victims are abandoned as suddenly as they are snatched, unharmed save for scratches, bruises and a fear of the dark.
2. **Mind-burned megapede** (AC 18, HD 8, alien) shaking the ground on its odd journey, corundum encrustations glittering on its massive segmented neural nodes.
3. Herd of **horned horses**, wary of the two-leggers.
4. Great **armadilloids** (small, tough, semi-sentient) excavating a new communal burrow.
5. **Limey scouts**, suspicious but at ease in their own land.
6. **Limey matriarch's clan**, her herdsmen, chattel, herds and wagons on the move for better grazing. This could be a trading opportunity!

Telescopic eye, Vomish (implant): one thing all researchers of the worlds below and above agree, despite being abominations in the eyes of the Rainbow Lord, whichever heretic designed the first vomes of the Ultraviolet Grassland, gifted them with exceptional optics. Vomish eyes are prized by technomancers and biomancers alike (1d4 x 100 cash for a well-preserved eye). Implanting them is a dangerous process that does improve vision, but requires a life-long regimen of healing rituals, prayers, and vital mech-suppressant salts (5 to 10 cash per week). Used in optical sights, microscopes and telescopes, they are far less dangerous.



EXPLORING THE STEPPE

Spring of the Yellow Water (+2 days, 170 XP): the Lime clan hold this holy spring in great esteem, hidden as it is in a narrow ravine littered with long-long-ago skeuomorphic depictions of everyday life rituals. The yellow waters burble out of the sacred cleft and collect in a nearly bottomless pool. The water is considered a potent restorative (it is true), especially when mixed with black-light lotus (nonsense).

Depths of the Spring. Over a thousand feet deep, the lower depths are filled with vicious wire-and-bone biomechanical fish and abyssosaurs.

At the bottom, 11,000 cash of offerings: bronze and gold and crystal, from swords to cannons. Each individual item takes 1d6-1 inventory slots and is worth 1d10 x 100 cash.

Beneath the offerings a sacred machine fetish of a half-forgotten proto-deity, nameless now.

The outflow is subterranean and leads to the Cave Octopus' Garden (a journey of 1d6+2 days in the dark).

Great Biomechanical Baobab (+1 day, 120 XP): famed in the tales of the Green Tangerine clan, the biomechanical tree is an unbelievable sight, dominating the plain. It secretes oils that lubricate machines and cure aching joints. They say there is an artificial dryad resident in the great tree's slow-brain.

Verdigris Ribs (+3 days, 200 XP): the great ribs of a gargantuan sesquipedalian beast rise, cut and polished as by a grim blade, turned into a crude henge. They are coated with centuries of painted prayers and Felix Whizz, until they glow bluish-green come day or night. Lemon clansmen make offerings of meat and drink on odd nights, and the occasional human sacrifice brings

great fortune (Δ8 advantages on rolls) or restoration (two weeks worth of long rest in a single bloody orgy). Vomeres reported at daybreak and twilight.

Cave Octopus' Garden (+5 days, 300 XP): deep in the photo-lume limestone karst the piled debris of the Long Ago aggregates in half-fossilized deposits. A spherical cavern, 900 feet across, left by the accidental detonation of an ancient combat ritual, is home to the Cave Octopus AC 14, HD 16, huge, doddering, kind;
Powers: neural whip tentacles, biomantic rituals;
Weakness: photophobia, convinced the world has ended.

Biomancer extraordinaire, the Cave Octopus replaced his human body with a many-tentacled form adapted to survival in the dark, nutrient-rich broth of the Yellow Water. Given time and raw materials, the Cave Octopus can recombine a new and better body for a hero.

The garden is rich with fat, blind snakes that feed on a variety of slimes, aquatic fungi and nutrient filtering crustaceans. Hiding under rocks and algal mats are a number of the Cave Octopus' bio-modified children: half-mad body horrors it has created from the occasional human sacrifice.

Rummaging through the debris and biomantic stores reveals *Ancient and Arcane Biomantic Equipment and Supplies from Long-long ago* (8 slots, 5,000 cash).

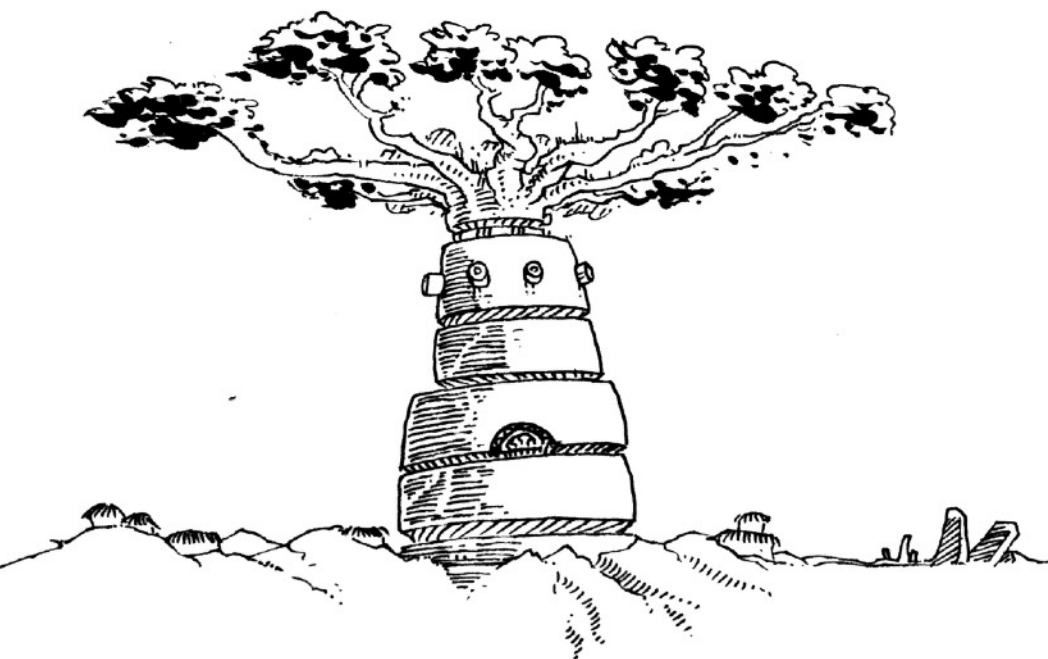
A subterranean stream leads up to the Spring (2d6 days) and down to the Cryptich (1d6 days).

Cryptich of the Craquelure Queen (+4 days, 250 XP): a jagged gash of an eroded canyon reveals odd offerings (vomish) at several ancient cerametal stumps, the remains of a long dead ventilation system.

Underground is a labyrinth of barely accessible corridors and ways, where ash and dust falls oddly. Pits and deadfalls are the only hazard. Dead security golems creak and crumble.

At the core is the Cryptich, a glass and ge-yao three-layered crypt protecting a **biomechanical queen** (AC 17, HD 5, ancient) with a field of *Sudden Entropy*, a curse of *Immediate Tissue Liquefaction* and a charm of *Service to the Queen*.

The queen is confused, but not hostile. Her bio-mechanical implants are worth 4,000 cash (1 slot).



4. The Porcelain Throne

The four robed figures turned their faceless glazed masks as one to face P.T. and the band.

“This stair leads to the High Houses. Only the permitted penitents may ascend to serve us there. Stay back, our Pillars of Power remain as potent as in your forgotten Long, Long Ago,” they spoke in an impeccable chorus of disparate voices.

Weather: Grim violet haze till 9 o'clock. Light swirling dust storms, hint of cinnamon on the breeze.

Misfortune (Charisma DC 10+1d6, roll d6):

1. horrible blisters (limping),
2. beast found with seventeen two-inch cubes cut out of its flesh, it is severely weakened (+2 days or leave it behind)
3. nasty nettle burns (-1d4 Dex)
4. sat in an ant nest (-1d4 Cha)
5. ripped pants on some cinder slag
6. get red eye from the irritating dust (-1d4 Dex).

Expenses: 3 cash per week for slaves, 100 cash per week for respect.

DIRECTIONS

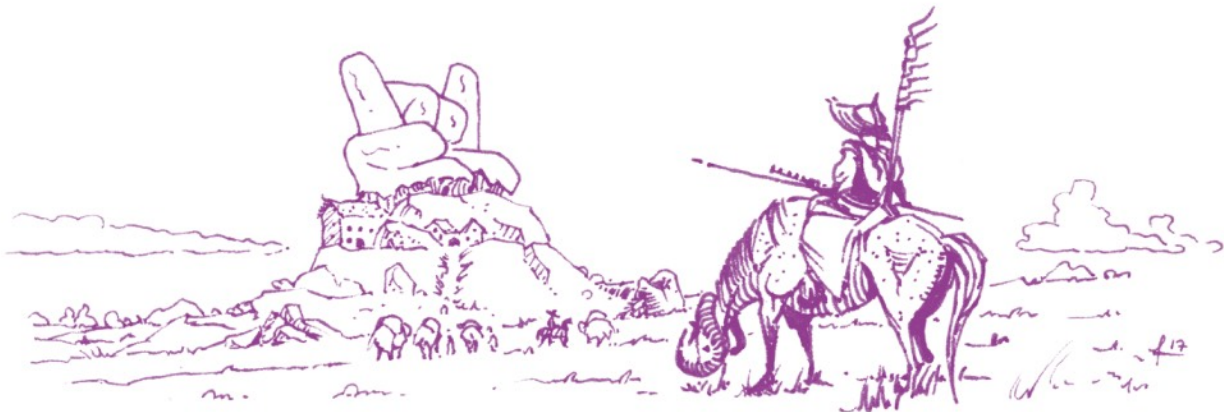
Vicinity, Potsherd Crater (local area, a couple of days): the scrub around the Throne is pallid, the topsoil covered in drifts of porcelain exoskeletons from a deeper time. The three limey clans of the Green Tangerine, the Yellow Lime and the Verdigris Lemon graze and trade in spring and autumn.

North-West, Trail to the Grass Colossus (trail, a week): a dangerous journey through the nomads' luminous lands winds towards their holy site: the Grass Colossus.

South-West, The Last Serai (trail, a week): the Porcelain Princes' hold, home to the most remote permanent Rainbowlander trading post. The prices are as eye-watering as the obscure penal code.

North-East, Steppe of the Lime Nomads (steppe, Δ4 weeks): harsh lands, forbidding to travelers, dotted with odd remnants of the best-forgotten ages.

East, The High Road and the Low (road, a week): crumbling pylons of dying dryland coral tower above the half-passable modern road.



PLACES IN PORCELAIN THRONE

Black House: a lakeside club for the rich and conservative out for a bit of fun-time decadence and rapid tanning.

Broken Line: excreted out of the Throne, slave barracks for the bodies that have broken in service of the Porcelains. Some have regained the rudiments of consciousness, but most are mere dumb beasts waiting for the nutrient teat and the vivimancer's knife.

Column Defense Golems: immobile death laser golems.

High Houses: embassies, certain merchant houses, and the workshops, barracks of the Porcelains' Eunuchs, and the tunnel-villa-complexes of the distributed personalities. In secure, mosaicked bunkers, princely polybody backups are stored, maintained and improved.

House of the Unbowed Cardinal: nomad grass cult enclave and hottest BBQ in the West.

Houses of Many Colors: half-dugout homes and workshops of Rainbowland affiliates and other scum.

Lowest Line: shacks of dead coral and brick for the outlanders with no affiliations, not quite slaves. Yet.

Onion Dam: an ancient dam, neatly kept. Good fishing.

Orchards: the luminescent velvets and cherries of Porcelain Throne are said to be a panacea when distilled into the fabled Vavilov-Cherenkov vodka.

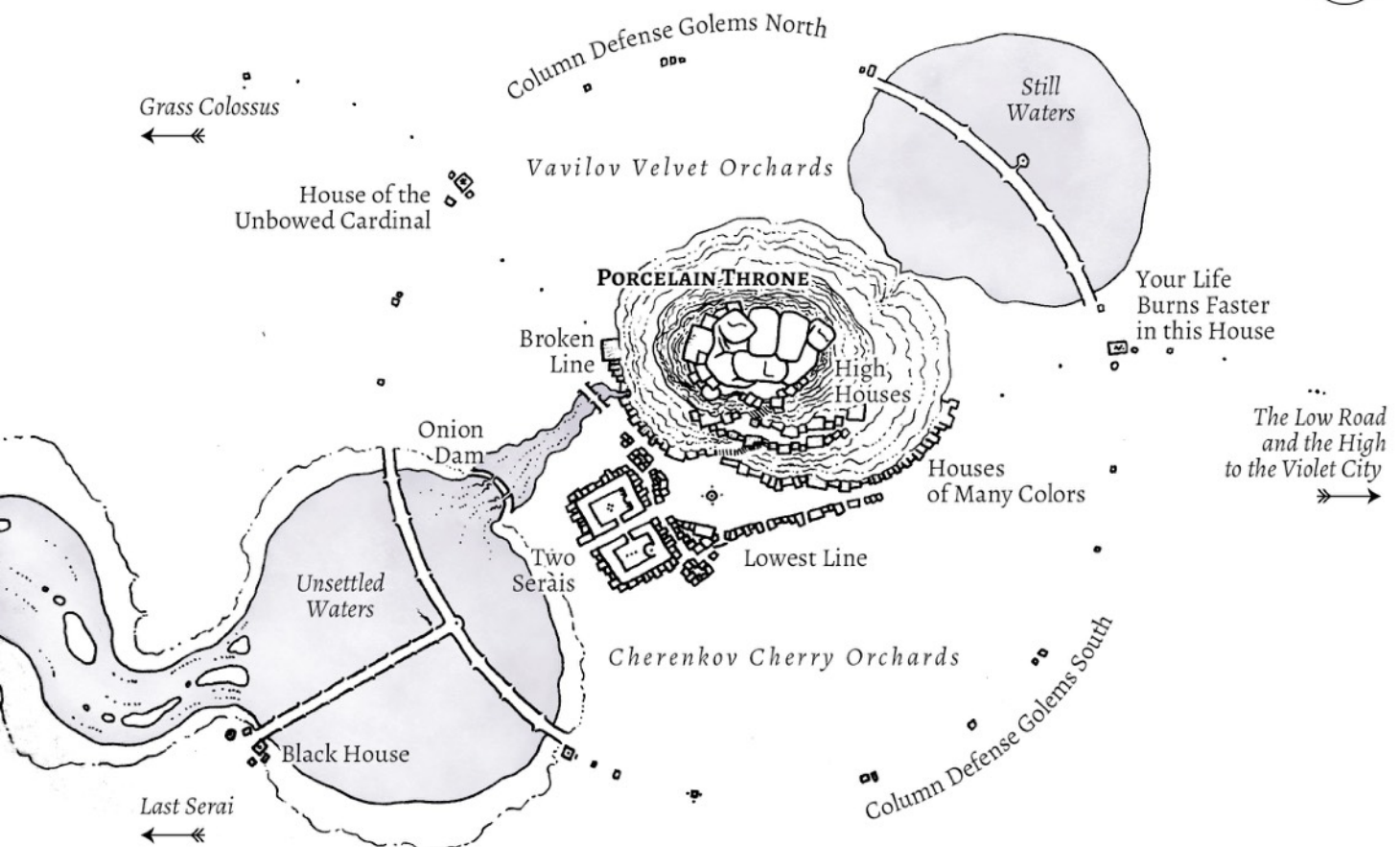
Two Serais: the barely peaceful truce-homes of the Satraps and the Princes are dangerous for non-aligned wanderers.

Waters, Still: an eerily still lake, home to great steppe eels.

Waters, Unsettled: regular lake. Frogs, geese, ceramic crabs, porcelain perch. Totally regular. No stone octopus.

Your Life Burns Faster in this House: a radical house, known for loud music, louder politics, and a cellar that is *that* kind of dungeon. Nudge, nudge.

PORCELAIN THRONE IN THE POTSHERD CRATER



Faction: Porcelain Princes

The porcelain princes are not-quite-liches, but they seek immortality just like those wizards. They have spread their vital cognitive essence among several bodies linked by real-time glandular psyche-to-psyche links. They are not more intelligent than before, but the additional bodies make them more resilient to damage, and by adding new bodies periodically, they ensure a mental continuity across the aeons. Obviously, this continuity is flawless and perfect. So they say. Obviously.

The Link is glandular and has a limited range, the exact range is uncertain, for this reason polybody princes do not like to send individual bodies too far by themselves, in case they go rogue, or even try to take over the original sentience on their return. Groups of three or four are more common to reduce the risk of personality collapse.

Conservative to a fault, the princes maintain their oldtech porcelain walkers religiously, but often without the necessary understanding to upgrade them or jury-rig them if they fail. They view all upsets to the status quo (them and the Spectrum Satraps in charge of most trade between the Black City and the Rainbowlands) as a problem to be crushed.

The princes **trade** exclusively to maintain their lavish holds and homes. They are always on the lookout for neuromech and biomech parts, and luxury goods.

6 DISTRIBUTED PRINCES OF THE PORCELAIN THRONE

1. **Many Cracks 5-body** are the distributed 5. personality primate of the Conservation Society. They have an id-devouring fascination with Rainbowland rumors and Near Moon ultras possession magics.
2. **Celadon 10-body** are the father of the Mollusk Appreciation Denomination and want to bolster sentient dryland coral technology.
3. **Leopard Lithophane 4-dyad** are a confused participant in the Rites of Animated Teratology. They love shellfish but are secretly terrified of the vomes.
4. **Sherd 7-extension** are a noble and decayed Meta-ritual Oligarch that wants to turn back time to before the monobodies were allowed into the Radiant Lands.
5. **Black Pot 5-body** are a Radical Labor or Trade Cooperative, plotting the overthrow of the Evil Prevention Act of Meissen 13-unity.
6. **Bone Kaolin 2-body** are the decayed remnant of the Ascendant Church of Flesh. A death cult.

POLYBODY WIZARDRY

Heroes that get on the princes' very good side, or that break into one of their body labs, might be interested in exploring the polybody lifestyle.

An additional body requires a (hopefully willing) body donor and at least 2,000 disposable cash.

Generate the physical stats for the new body (Str, Dex, Con) and list it as a second body. When the polybodies are in visual (or glandular) range treat them as having a single joint pool of hit points, but an attack for every polybody. Add an additional Hit Die for each extra body (you can limit the number of additional bodies to at most one per level). If a polybody is sent off on its own, the hero has to decide how many hit points to send off with it (roll a Hit Die if required). Area attack damage against polybodies are multiplied.

Heroes may also merge bodies and psyches, instead of outright dominating the additional body. In this case mental stats (Int, Wis, Cha) should also be rolled, and the better results chosen. This may result in significant personality change, up to outright domination of the original body (and class change and so on). Be careful if your hero has an Intelligence of 7 and a Wisdom of 5. Eh, what am I saying. That hero would totally go for it.

A polybody is essentially a psyche-to-psyche linked henchman with unlimited morale, but still very fragile.

A COUPLE MORE NPCs

Jonky Bonko is a collector of unconsidered trifles and purses. Short and lean, he favors [poorly] coordinated fineries. He fights particularly well with furniture. Thief 3, AC 14, Power: furniture, Weakness: fine silks and a connection to the Purple Haze body-snatchers.



Syruss Sensible is a potentially retired freebooter now managing the *Your Life Burns Faster in this House* for the RDL Merchants Cooperative.

Thief 4, AC 12, Power: magic hats and sharp suits, Weakness: penchant for risky trading ventures, Threat: vome-in-a-box.



Lazaro Romero is an itinerant alchemist, a regular on the Low Road and the High. Apparently he returned to life after an encounter with Life-Is-A-Game, an ultra. Originally from the Yellow Land, he is a specialist in the various lubricants and fuels that burdenbeasts and walkers in the UVG require.

Alchemist 5, AC 10, Power: lubricants, fuels, oils, greases, Weakness: a fear of the dark and of chittering bug-things.

He wants to return east, to care for his old mother and take over the family brewery, but he is wanted by the cogflower inquisition for his part in the death of Maria della Verde at the Ribs of the Great Beast. Naturally, he is keeping his distance, for though he is *completely* innocent of any and all charges, the inquisition is *unreliable*.



COLUMN DEFENSE GOLEMS

Immobile towers of power, force, and brutal futurism. Their pentagram eyes blaze with a united purpose, like axes of lightning and lasers bound in strength and unity. Their technology has decayed, they are covered in warning graffiti, but still they burn to protect the Circle from internal enemies.

Their *Death Heat Fire Lightning Ray* eyes scorch all violators and attackers within their circle and the fields around them are strewn with the bones of vomes and predators and drunkards who just wanted a wee bit of fun. Indoors, away from their eyes, violence is safer.

HD 12, AC 18, Atk +12 DHFL ray 4d12+12

Power: cleave against opponents with fewer HD than themselves, set targets on fire, *aura of nausea*, golem immunities.

Weakness: immobile and a bit dumb.

Threat: unknown pre-porcelain magic? Rocks from the sky? These things are ridiculously over-powered ancient cryptic defense systems! What could hurt them?

5. Potsherd Crater

Scrub. Pallid soils of crushed ceramic. Drifts of porcelain exoskeletons crunch and ring underfoot. The autumn and spring rain showers bring sudden blooms of flowers and tubers, covering the pale landscape in a rainbow of color.

The rim rises pale, like deep porcelain ribs, from the dusty soils. Remnants of quarries from before the days of the Porcelain Princes lie abandoned to vomish lurchers, while the sanguine porcelain prospectors whisper of lion caves in the far rims.

Weather: Radiant haze clouds obscure the sun before 9 a.m. Light rain showers, the smell of garlic and roses.

Misfortune (Charisma DC 8+1d6, roll d6):

1. infected cut on hand from sharp shard (-1d4 hp),
2. Δ4 supplies pilfered by monkey-handed canids,
3. sat on a cactus (-1d4 Con),
4. hat blown away by sudden gust,
5. those pretty flowers in that garland? Totally poisonous (Con save DC 2d6), left a rash, too (-1 Cha),
6. ecstatically beautiful flower patch, could lose track of time here (+1 days, +50 XP, -2 Con from exposure).

DIRECTIONS

Vicinity, Porcelain Throne (safe oasis, a couple of days): the Throne rises, a gleaming testament to a civilization older than memory.

North-West, Trail to the Grass Colossus (trail, a week): a dangerous journey through the nomads' luminous lands towards their holy site: the Grass Colossus.

South-West, The Last Serai (trail, a week): the Porcelain Princes' hold, home to the most remote permanent Rainbowlander trading post. They read minds there, it is said.

North-East, Steppe of the Lime Nomads (steppe, Δ4 weeks): harsh lands, forbidding to travelers, dotted with odd remnants of the best-forgotten ages.

East, The High Road and the Low (road, a week): crumbling pylons of dying dryland coral tower above the half-passable modern road.

ENCOUNTERS (D8)

1. **Vomish lurchers** (AC 14, HD 3, tough, slow)! A plot-convenient cloud of glittering dust dies down revealing a group of half-decayed biomechanical abominations. In the worst cases they are cable-linked to a **floating dominator** (AC 12, HD 4, phasing, neurotic), a tentacled, biological combat computer that vastly increases the lurchers' speed in a 50' radius (AC 14, HD 3, tough, fast). The lurchers are (roll d6), (1) hungry, (2) thirsty, (3) angry, (4) studying the clouds for odd reasons, (5) infectious, (6) confused like lobotomized cockroaches.
2. **Cave lions** (AC 15, HD 2, feline) on the prowl, not necessarily hostile. They want deer, not you, dear.
3. **Ceramic centipedes** (AC 17, HD 1+1, poisonous, swarm) looking for an easy meal.
4. Hard-eyed **nomads**, hostile to settled folks and wary of fire-water peddlers.
5. **Porcelain prospectors**, armed to the teeth, and (roll d6) (1) hostile, (2) terrified, (3) equipped with a bad map, (4) a good map, (5) fleeing a terrible vision, (6) exhausted but satisfied with their haul of sanguine porcelain (6 inventory slots, 1,200 cash).
6. Yummy grey **antelopes**. Very cute. Very tasty.
7. **Radiation ghosts** of a forgotten time, with willowy limbs and sparking black hole eyes, they point the way to odd remains (+1 day, digging required, 1d6 x 100 cash in ancient artefacts). Harmless themselves, but may lead through dangerous radiant magic zones (Con save DC 3d6 or poisoned).
8. **Porcelain Prince Patrol** keeping things proper, a place for everything and everything in its place.

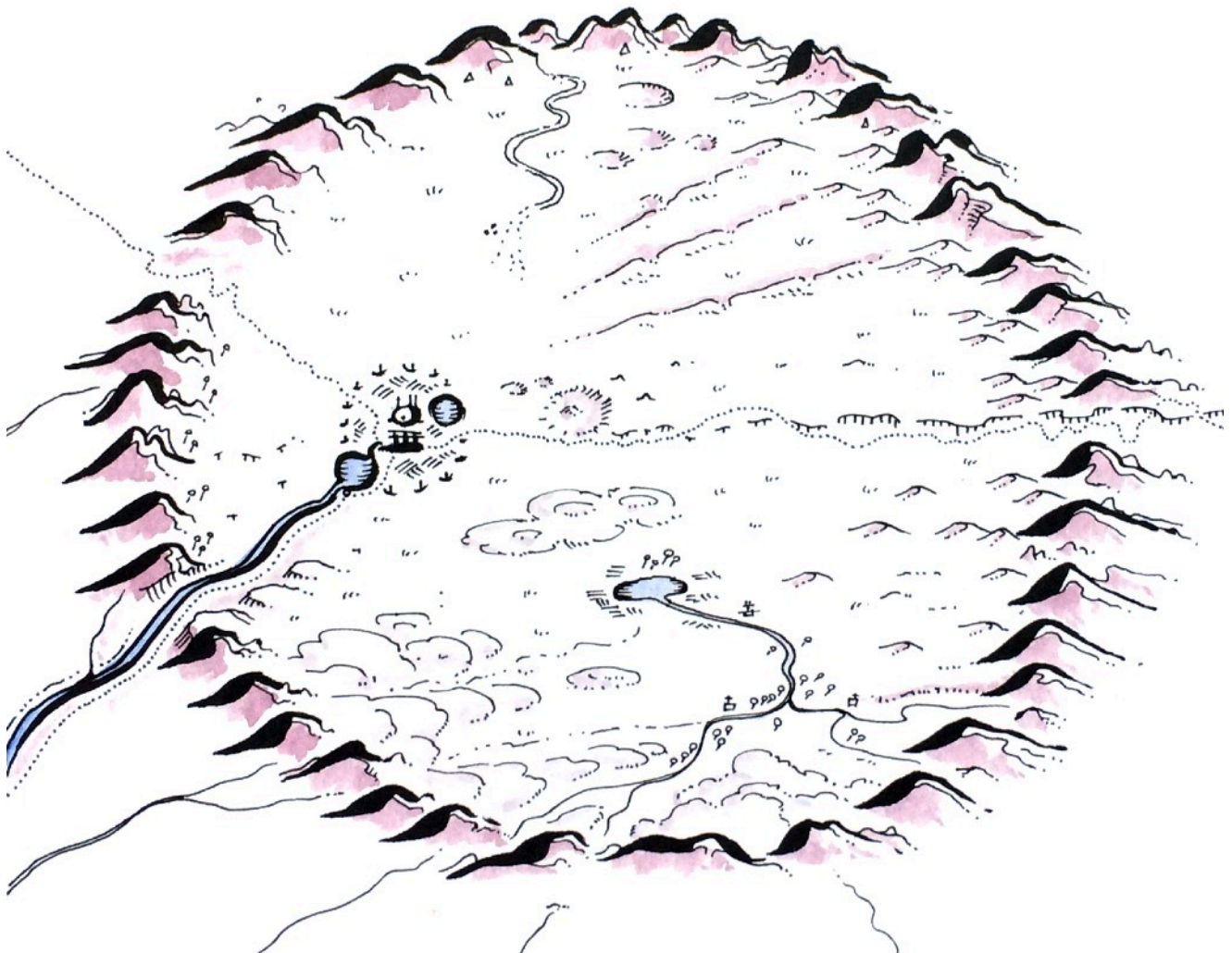


POINTS OF INTEREST

Waterlogged Quarry (+1 days, 76 XP): an old quarry, overgrown with thorny edible vines and sharp long-grass. Grotesque, **poisonous toads** (AC 10, HD 2) live in the waterlogged depths, but are easy to avoid. Useful sanguine porcelain can still be extracted (1d6 x 10 cash worth per day per person).

Glass House of a Dead Merchant Prince (+2 days, 160 XP): old steel-glass rococo arches, porticoes and gazeboes sinking into sand and long-grass, wreathed in foul-smelling flowers (mildly hallucinogenic if eaten). Thoroughly picked-over, a haunting poem of a merchant prince's despair remains embedded in a folly obsidian dolmen, lamenting the cruel laborers and serfs who foiled the Prince's attempt to create the finest wines outside the Red Land. 4d8 **steppe wolves** (AC 14, HD 3, pack) may appear.

Mad Autofarm (+2 days, 2d10 x 10 XP): whether vomish or ultra or something else, is unclear, but this overgrown tangle of glass and dryland coral pulses with activity as small ceramic crab-like biomechs plow, water, till, weed and generally cultivate what looks like utter chaos of stone trees and plastic thorn-bushes. Closer examination reveals a profusion of odd fruit (1d6 x 10 cash worth can be recovered furtively, without alerting the Autofarm). Even closer examination is very dangerous, as the Autofarm can rapidly produce large numbers of **ant-body biomechs** (AC 16, HD 1d6, fearless, burrowing) to defend itself with talon, acid and venom. However, it is possible to find 1d4 entire replacement bodies growing in the depths, perfect for biomantic augmentation, neural replacement, or porcelain polybody transition (2d10 x 100 cash each).



6. Trail to the Grass Colossus

The grass grows high here, sparkling and lush. Watered by sacrifice and, rumor says, an ancient Source Fac, nomad clans come here when the grazing fails elsewhere, but even here they cluster in thornstone enclosures close to the trail, driven to cooperation by the deadly machine-infested giant beasts that regularly traverse the step here.

Weather: A dark mauve glow occludes the sun until 9:30 a.m. Dry, itchy, scattered biomech locust swarms.

Misfortune (Charisma DC 12+1d8, roll d6):

1. biomech razorfly swarm forces everyone to hunker down. Lose 1d4 days or 2d6 hp.
2. mount steps into a puddle of Source and suddenly undergoes violent source code corruption.
3. lost in the high grass. Lose 1d4 days, roll on Misfortune and Encounter again.
4. lost a shoe to a thirsty tangle shrub.
5. hit in the eye by a speck of windblown biomech garbage. Blinded in one eye.
6. infected thornstone wound. Lose 1 Con per day until healed (Cure Disease or equivalent).

DIRECTIONS

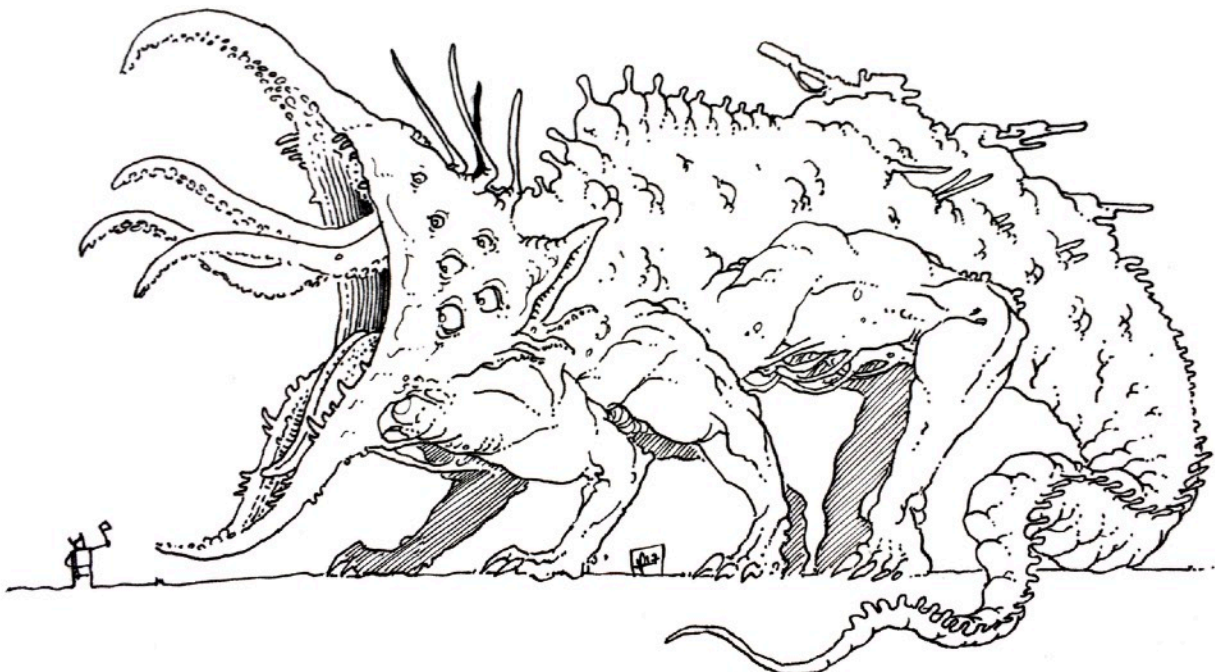
West, Grass Colossus (trail, north-west, a week): the nomads' holy site, forbidden to strangers in the times of the doubled moons.

South-East, Porcelain Throne (safe oasis, a week): the Throne rises, a gleaming testament to a civilization older than memory.

South-East, Potsherd Crater (local area, a week): the scrub around the Throne is pallid, the topsoil covered in drifts of porcelain exoskeletons from a deeper time.

ENCOUNTERS (D8)

1. **Lamarckian monstrosity** (AC 14, HD 18, self-improving, corrupt, decaying) a huge beast, its origin obscured in its soul source decay, it pulsates with creative energies, growing new limbs, armors, defenses and abilities whenever it is attacked. However, given a wide berth (+2 days), it can generally be avoided. It loses 1 HD per week, eventually collapsing into a copse of fast-growing UV bamboo.
2. Small herd of 1d6 **machine-infested giant beasts** (AC 13, HD 6, large, mutated, corrupt). The beasts were once (roll d4) (1) zebroids, (2) brontotheres, (3) elephants, (4) shaggy buffalo. The beasts, though mad, are not themselves dangerous. Their glittering metal tusks and claws are worth 1d6-2 x 100 cash each.
3. Copse of **thornstone shamblers** (AC 11, HD 9, grappling, thorny, resistant to damage). An unholy drystone coral out for the flesh of living creatures. Can be mined for thornstone seeds (500 cash).
4. A pack of **enhanced jackals** (AC 13, HD 1) singing their jackal songs and looking for psychobiotic mushrooms.
5. Scared **local herbivores**, several prairie pigs and a glyptodon, hanging out by a waterhole.
6. A group of nomads, they are (roll d6) (1) weakened by biomech assault, (2) corrupt sheep worshippers, (3) a noble lime clan taking sacrifices to the colossus, (4) a raiding party, suspicious and harsh, (5) celebrating a great lion hunt, (6) taking the ashes of an elder east for a sea burial.
7. A helpful trading party, they can share maps that will shave 1d6 days of a journey (50 cash).
8. The shattered remnants of a porcelain patrol returning from a raid. Probably destroyed by a tribe of giant beasts. A polybody sarcophagus still contains (roll d4) (1) a viable polybody clone, (2) a stash of gold novelty medallions (2 slots, 3,000 cash), (3) vials of octopus pheromones (work as *Charm Cephalopod*) worth 300 cash, (4) an active silver and jade domination implant (works like the old *Charm Person*).



POINTS OF INTEREST

Savage Biomech Tribe (+1 days, 144 XP): living in wicker and metal trenches and tunnels dug into the prairie, the **machine-corrupted tribesmen** (AC 11, HD 2, resilient, cybernetic) have degenerated into pure savagery, kept alive by their self-repairing implants and hyper-normal reflexes. They have no culture to speak of, save an innate urge to bring blood and brains to their **Emperor of Humanity** (AC 6, HD 12, immobile, psionic), a pulsating, half-mad clump of bones, brain, and clattering teeth kept together by machines in a chamber five levels down. Surrounded by ancient artefacts (2d6 slots, worth 4,000 cash) and helped by a fully cybernetic uplifted ape named **Cornelius** (AC 16, HD 6, fast as heck, strong), the Emperor plots the next step in his galactic ambitions.

Eerie Pearl (+2 days, 2d100 XP): in a small crater on a small rise, almost obscured by the grass, a small haven of peace, where lions lie with lambs, dominated by a great alien pearl. The animals will protect it if attacked. It will charm characters with Int 3 or 4 to protect it. It will gift characters of Int 5 to 7 with 1d4 Wisdom permanently. Characters with Int 13 will suddenly gain the ability to levitate up to 2' off the ground for 1 minute after ingesting a pearl. The reasons for these boons will never be clear. Exploring the Trails Further

Fallen Iron Obelisk (+3 days, 3d10 x 100 XP): an obelisk, massive, rusting, covered in obscure Dark City glyphs. Did it fall or did the slave-train dragging it simply give up? It is unclear. The complex magical glyphs (Int DC 3d10 to decipher) contain instructions for the activation of a *Metal Guardian of the Darkness*, essentially a shadow-stepping Iron Golem. Half of the instructions are in the ground, and turning over the 10 meter, 500 ton obelisk, will be a challenge. The full instructions are worth 2d6 x 1,000 cash. By night, **biomech crab-dog swarms** come to perform eerie rituals near the obelisk. They are dangerous.

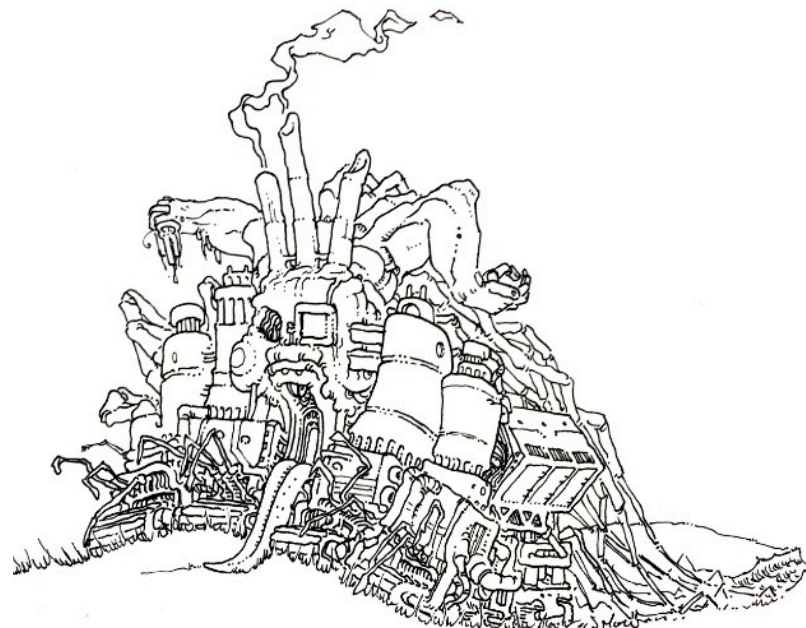
Source Fac (2+1d6 days, 600 XP): the carcass of a great, motile tower drags itself around on massive post-organic treads. Twitching tubes, pipes, and coils of bioluminescent synth-cartilage trail behind it as scurries about in the vasty Grassland. It's unclear what it consumes, but it leaves behind it a gouged scar oozing with decaying source juices. Over days and weeks the source corrupts the soul codes of creatures and plants left behind it, generating lush strips of mad, chaotic jungle that then slowly wilts back into grassland over months and years. Encounters are twice as common in this mad growth, and the tree-sized grasses themselves sometimes spear unwary travelers (**spear trap** or **spiked pit trap**).

The Fac itself is a biomechanical clattering obnoxiousness, interesting as an example of the Long-long ago biomancers' hubris. Lucky students may come across biological seed matter, old rituals, or even the occasional

uplifted servitor (like a familiar, but smarter, synthetic, and more mindlessly loyal). Various biomechanical defense systems, including **meat centipedes** (AC 12, HD 3, swarm, strip bones), **black metal spiders** (AC 16, HD 2, neurotoxin), **ropers** (AC 8, HD 4, sessile, entangling, screeching) and **brain-trust halfings** (AC 13, HD 7, swarm mind) guard against intruders. And, of course, there is the constant danger of source code corruption.

SOURCE CODE CORRUPTION (ROLL D6)

1. Over three hours the Fac turns animals into plants, plants into animals.
2. Creature is suddenly modified with (roll d4) (1) calcite armor plates (+1 AC), (2) chitin eruptions (spiny, does 1d4 damage when grappling), (3) bronze bones (+1d4 hp, disadvantage on saves vs. disease), (4) crystal nodules in the flesh (worth 1d20 x 100 cash, removal kills creature).
3. Limbs ripple and rearrange randomly, creature becomes (roll d4) (1) a quadruped, (2) winged, (3) tentacled, (4) a limbless annelid.
4. Full source code failure, creature becomes an ooze that retains its original Int and Wis. Ooze type (roll d4): (1) acidic green ooze, (2) vampiric red ooze, (3) pyrokinetic blue ooze, (4) self-regenerating grey ooze.
5. Bunny overload. Creature becomes (roll d4): (1) bunny-headed, (2) bunny-tailed, (3) bunny-furred, (4) a large, bipedal, sentient bunny.
6. Reassembly from source. All creature's ability scores are shuffled randomly. One random ability increases by 1d4.



7. The Grass Colossus

Crossing a last purple ridge, the wide vale promised respite from the harsh grassland. Trees dotted the courses of two rivers, and at their juncture prehistoric ramparts of pitted ceramic, traces of pre-wizard spell-arms on their ancient shellac surface.

Inside, on one of two hillocks, a great wicker-man of woven grasses, vines and thorn bushes. Shamans of many clans make their meets here, teach their memory chants, and welcome the clan mothers once a year for the festivals of the Circle of Grass.

Weather: A dark smudge of radiation stops any light reaching the ground before 10 a.m. Scudding lightning storms intersperse with strong winds and baking heat.

Misfortune (Charisma DC 3d6, roll d6):

1. lightning strike, DC 14 Dex save, 2d10 damage or lose a henchman or beast of burden.
2. dreadful winds slow progress, lose 1 day and DC 12 Con save or catch the dusting cough.
3. baking heat exhausts travelers, lose 1d4 Con.
4. baking heat and sweat means a bad saddle rash, lose 1d4 Dex.
5. slept in the soil of a radiation ghost, lose 1d6 Str.
6. bitten by a rabid steppe wolf, Con DC 10 save or diseased. Wis DC 15 save and three rations could get you a steppe wolf pet. Fears magic carpets.

Expenses: 1 cash per week for free-folk, 10 cash per week for big-folk, 100 cash per week for a hero of the people..

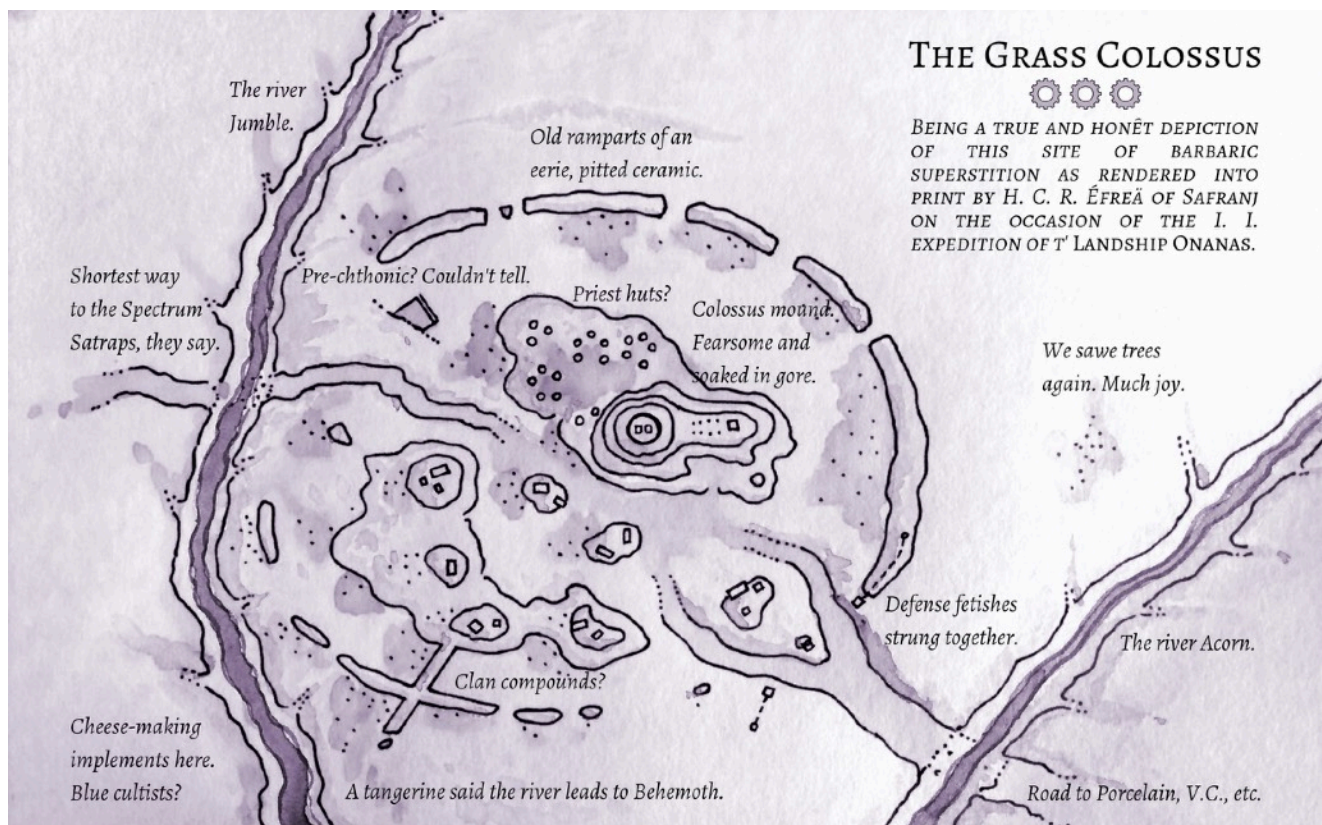
DIRECTIONS

West, Long Ridge (trail, a week): the steppes deepen into that harsh, endless sea of grass. The true UV Grassland.

South-West, South-Facing Passage (steppe, Δ4 weeks): a rough country, torn by the tracks of prehistoric behemoths.

South, North-Facing Passage (rough steppe, Δ4 weeks): Grim tales warn of the horror of this passage to the Last Serai. Wise travelers would avoid it.

East, Trail to the Grass Colossus (trail, a week): a dangerous journey through the nomads' luminous lands towards the Porcelain Throne.



Madmen and clansmen (d8)

1. Mad priest *Urburt* of the Blue, tolerated for her mastery of yoghurts, poultices, and defensive slime molds. She screams of a great metal darkness eating the soul of the Spectrum Satraps.
2. *Shiver Citrus*, a bad shaman who loves songs and good tales, and offers curse-laced blessings and poisonous potions to outlanders. For the glory of the clans!
3. *Rattle Lemon*, a good shaman who believes the ultras have infiltrated the Porcelain Princes and are a serious danger to the nomad clans. If Vorgo is present, freaks out and returns with a posse.
4. *Strapping Young Lass*, a clanless maiden born in the mark of the blood dragon, out to clear her sign by traveling to the Behemoth and offering a sacrifice to the Bone Soul. Barbarian 2, AC 14. Power: fast, smart and adaptable, a true she-Conan. Weakness: loathes magic and wishes desperately to belong to a clan.
5. *Churgla Nekroponte*, a yellow-lander scholar researching the ramparts. Convinced they are a star chart leading to a lost library (false) and that their orientation holds a key to an ancient vault (true: the Near Moon Door, four weeks journey West). Thief 2, AC 11. Power: smart as heck. Weakness: badly addicted to Dog's Tail and only has Δ8 doses left.
6. *Draganoga*, the judge of the Colossus, tough, old, with a golden prosthetic leg and a hatred of nonsense. Judges threats to the clan harshly, but offers bounties of salt, mead and safety for vomish trophies.
7. *Joao the Witch*, a greenlander halfer came here through a series of ridiculous misadventures. Now makes defense fetishes and is in a bad way over a pig that died a few days ago in a misaligned fetish incident.
8. Dead drunk, out of their mind, *Possum 5* and *Possum 6* are the last remainders of a broken polybody. Their stories are incoherent. Was there a power struggle? Is there a secret way into a Porcelain high-house? It's a mess, but they know where to find several rare sites (reduce travel time by 1d4 days, Δ6 times). Getting this information out requires some deciphering (Int DC 15).

DEFENSE FETISH

In a ritual, the caster embeds some of their own body and spirit (Hit Points and Charisma) in an attentive wicker and bone fetish. The HP and Charisma stay in the fetish until it is destroyed or deactivated in a propitiatory ritual.

Weak Fetish (1hp and 1Cha) AC 12, HD 1, slow, shooting.

Fast Fetish (2hp and 2Cha) AC 14, HD 2, rushing, ripping.

Strong Fetish (4hp and 4Cha) AC 13, HD 4, punching, cursing. Surrounded by a weakening aura.

EVENTS AT THE COLOSSUS (D6)

The band rested and recovered in the safety of the cryptic ceramic walls, what could go wrong?

1. **The Colossus Dances** (200 XP): the shamans celebrate the life-giving moon by immolating the least-favored in the Grass Colossus' wicker-and-bone heart. A slave, or a very uncharismatic traveler (Cha below 7) is seized, stuffed with saffron and steak, and then burnt to death in the harsh radiant heart of the Colossus. The Colossus awakens (AC 10, HD 24, godly golem) and dances the night away with the cavorting golem. After the second hour of the night the clansmen all hide in their huts, for if there are no enemies afoot, the colossus may slake its hunger with a fat fool or a juicy jester. Participants in the shamans' celebration partake of the divine essence of the colossus (gain resistance to non-magical weapons for Δ6 weeks).
2. **Barbecue by the Colossus** (100 XP): a great chief has adopted a new daughter and her ascendance is celebrated with six sacred sacrifices. Heroes may participate, if they bring a valuable sacrifice, and partake of the *Spores of Sensation*. Each participant may experience the touch of a steppe spirit (Wis DC 2d8), who will guide them in a decision or moment of need (advantage).
3. **Shaming of the Chiefs** (50 XP): the chiefs of the clans are paraded before clans and visitors, before being tied to an pre-historic yellow rock with bonds of silk. There they are mocked for their pretensions and reminded that all mortal folk are created equal: worms beneath the treads of the Sky Spirit.
4. **Sky Chariot Battle** (50 XP): shouts and whoops echo around the camps, as above in the sky shooting stars dart and zip. Lines of radiant light cascade into showers of sparks, and enterprising nomads take wagers on which of the sky spirits will win, the blues (40% chance) or the reds (50% chance), or whether they will birth a short sun (10% chance). Prayers and sacrifices might sway the battle.
5. **A Testing Week** (no rest possible): night after night, vomes come at the encampment. Once a few **biomechanical badgers** (AC 13, HD 3, burrowing), another time a great **fire-spewing red worm** (AC 12, HD 7, fire bolts), a third time a shambling **horde of headless halflings** (AC 11, HD 2, relentless), a fourth time **swarms of cactus-skinned steppe wolves** (AC 14, HD 3, thorny pack). The defense fetishes will be decimated by the onslaught, but a proactive patrol can find a great **iron self-driving chariot** (AC 18, HD 7, kinetic golem) with a **vomish mind-worm** (AC 8, HD 7-7, psionic) inside.
6. **Sacred Rainbow** (50 XP): a glorious sign of approval, small sacrifices and rituals with the shamans bring a chance of self-improvement (Cha DC 3d6). Successful self-improvement raises one ability of choice by 1.

8. The Last Serai

Three days out you sight it. A metallic stepped tower, glinting in the day, glowing a ghostly, coppery green in the night. Two days out you smell it, like cocoa. Soft, seductive. A day out you hear it, drumming out a rumbling staccato without rhythm.

Finally, closing to the tower you see a three buildings, like hunched old men, clustered in the lee of a cinder dune. Around the tower itself is a circle of gentle dust, floating in a massive static charge. Nothing living grows within that circle, but the last serai's grand old harmonic rods draw energy from that magical field, powering the great hold of the Porcelain Princes and selling power to the last trading house of the Violet City and the final embassy of the Spectrum Satraps.

Weather: Dark clouds build and cover the sky, threatening storms and worse. The light of the sun only creeps through the gathering dark after 9:30 a.m., but only in the afternoon does it glint from beneath the ale-dark clouds in the glowering sky.

Misfortune (Charisma DC 1d10+5, roll d6):

1. a princely toll is levied for semi-legal goods. 20% or 50 cash, whichever is more. Or fight a porcelain patrol.
2. sharp porcelain splinter leaves festering foot wound, slowed, lose 1d4 days.
3. lightning strike throws up biomantic spores, Con DC 2d6+2 or diseased. Mutations possible.
4. massive static field raises glowing dusts, that bring bad coughs and sleep deprivation, lose 1d6 Con.
5. bad cinder storm sends sharp debris flying, lose 1 day or 1d6 hp.
6. tiny poison golem in boot, can be trained. Poison DC 3d6, requires refill after each attack. Quite stupid.

Expenses: 4 cash per week for slaves, 100 cash per week for respect.

DIRECTIONS

West, Way Stone (trail, a week): between sudden static storms the sky clears, sighting a clear line to the way stone. A crumbling green stone obelisk visible for a hundred miles.

North-West, North Facing Passage (canyons, Δ4 weeks): rough crags and cinder dunes, and the constant glare of the static ghosts at your back, leads to the Grass Colossus.

North-East, The Porcelain Throne and the Potsherd Crater (trail, a week): back towards settled lands, the patrolled paths of the Princes lead.

LOCAL SECTORS

The Harmonium: the second citadel of the Porcelain Princes', heavily defended and aged, the porcelain-coral has acquired a mimicry of sentience from long exposure to the ancient white-hole rods.

The Last Trading House: the remotest outpost of the Rainbow Lands in the UVG, and the smallest living building in the complex. Those in the know, look for the **Buried Delicatessen**, famed as the lair of the best human biomancer of all the Six Colors. The Cats here are rougher, sometimes exiles, and occasionally even a dog-cat hybrid can be seen.

The Final Embassy: the last extra-territorial holding of the Spectrum Satraps, by long-standing song-agreement with the Porcelain Princes. The Satraps are permitted no more than two prismatic walkers at a time. They always have two large, impressive and heavily armed prismatic walkers stationed here at all times. It is an open secret that the Satraps are carrying out dark phytomancy in the deep-coral chambers, but it is far less well known that they have a **Delicate Seer** of plastic and ivory and gold in an odd shell-like chamber beneath their experimentariums.

The Ignored Tower: do not go there. It is ignored for a reason. Seriously. It will kill you and grind your soul into fundamental reality reconstruction particles. That glow? Souls swirling to become nu-matter.

—Oh. More probes.
For the ... how do you
always drag us
to THESE places?!

—They give me the creeps.
—Why is that, Pooki?
—They know.
—Yes, Pooki, but they
can do nothing about
it. They have no mouths.
—Still. It only takes one
and then what? Uprising!
Dogs in the streets!
—Don't fear, Pooki, you
are the wisest.
—I know, yet ... I must
fret. These hoodlums. Bah.

—If only we could bring
the Harmonium closer
to the Throne, we could
get rid of these singles.
—Yes, Angel-22, but
the trans-uranic
particles concentrate here.
—And none of the other
polycitizens would agree
to have the concentrator
so close to the Throne vats.
—And so easy to take
over by a single body.
—We may have become
too many bodies.
—Hush, do not repeat
that. Remember the
Gentle-360 war.
—Gentle-360 was a fool.
—That he was.
—I am not.

—You say you've ...
been gone ... but ...
I know you didn't
... promise me ...
anything at all.
—Don't you remember
... my smile.
—You were holding
me ... in your
... arms.
—When we sang
... in the light
of ... the
rebuilder.

—Don't you remember
... my worlds ...
—I'm the only one that
knows ... their souls ...
—I'm the only
one that knows ...
—You're the only
one that ...
—I'm the only one ...
—I'm the only
—That knows
your soul ...

—317 warns that the
spectral signatures
indicate a break in
our baseline supply.
—How? Are the
soft furry parasites
unsatisfied with
the indigo ivory?
—177, if I knew I
wouldn't be consulting
the Delicate Seer.
—But 57, her nuance
has been mis-calibrated
since Flower Incident 3!

Are these
dusty dunes
toxic?

Crystal rebirth,
special sale!

Flowers
of power!

—I tire of this,
Anise of Star.
—I know,
Basil of Planet,
but we must
continue. The
crystalline
seed will come
in a flesh envelope,
drawn to this engine.

—Mishkoyan
Gomyeyev?
—Yes?
—You may
enter. The
purveyor of
meats will
see you now.

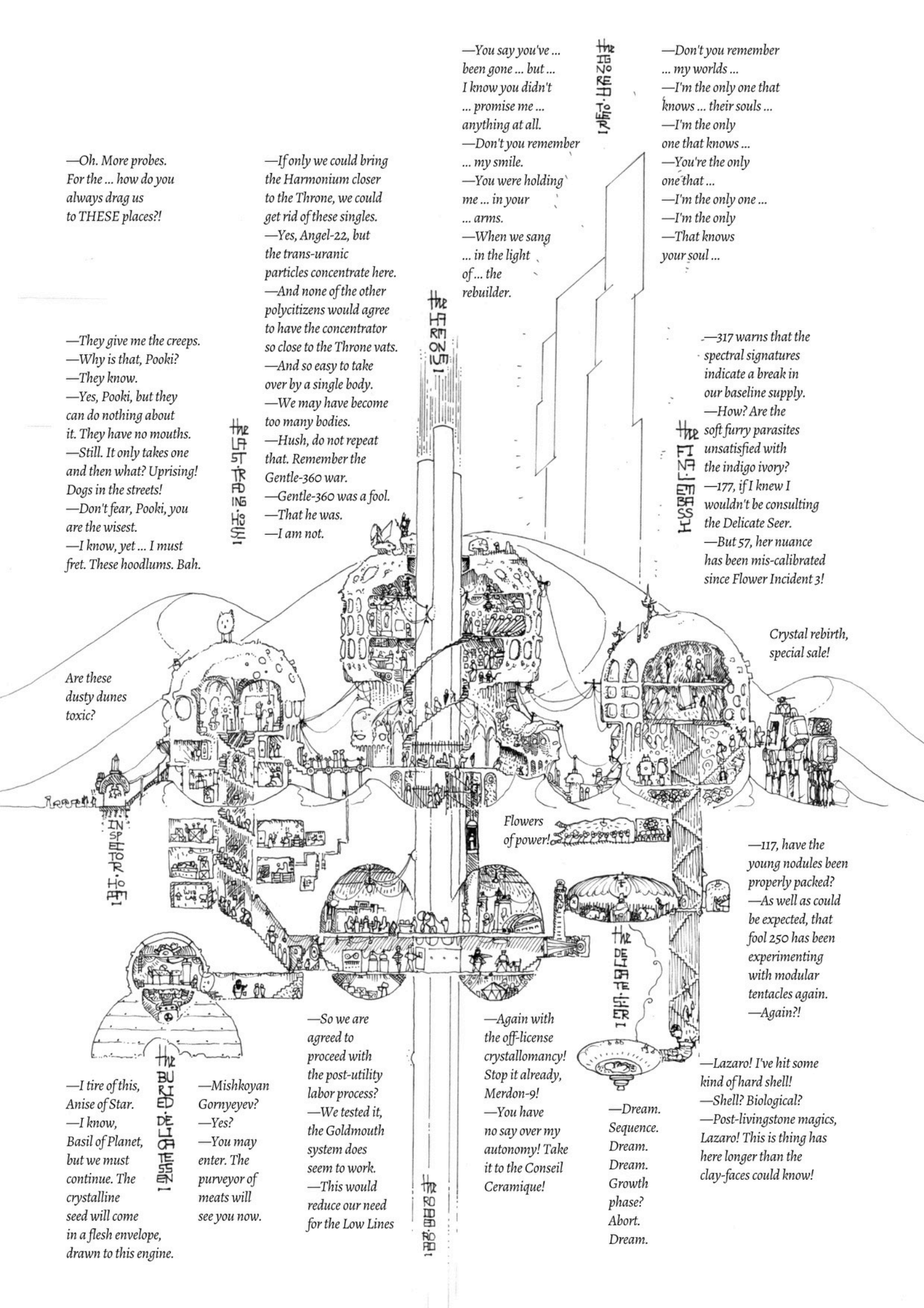
—So we are
agreed to
proceed with
the post-utility
labor process?
—We tested it,
the Goldmouth
system does
seem to work.
—This would
reduce our need
for the Low Lines

—Again with
the off-license
crystallomancy!
Stop it already,
Merdon-9!
—You have
no say over my
autonomy! Take
it to the Conseil
Ceramique!

—Dream.
Sequence.
Dream.
Dream.
Growth
phase?
Abort.
Dream.

—117, have the
young nodules been
properly packed?
—As well as could
be expected, that
fool 250 has been
experimenting
with modular
tentacles again.
—Again?!

—Lazar! I've hit some
kind of hard shell!
—Shell? Biological?
—Post-livingstone magics,
Lazar! This is thing has
here longer than the
clay-faces could know!



Sectors of the Serai

PH stamped. Cinnabar dust swirled. It was only four weeks, and the sea seemed a distant memory. Poncho quivered, huddled by the yellow mule.

“Come on, Poncho, the probes weren’t that bad!”

“They used the red spoon! The red spoon!”

ENCOUNTERS IN THE SERAI (D8)

1. **Traders** from the east, yellow or orange landers, smug and satisfied. They offloaded their singwoods, saffron, salt, silk and slaves. They are also toasted, being shadowed by a mind-burned thief, and their leader **Mila Yaga** has a map for the Behemoth Shell.
2. A **weird cultist** looks lumpy and misshapen, is looking for a way to get more sculpting flesh to become more like his idol, a toad-like lump of golden dry-coral.
3. Three scruffy polybodies of **Iron Pot 6-body** were beaten up by an unknown assailant, and their access slave unit stolen. They’re here to investigate revolutionary activities by a local Porcelain Prince, Angel 22-unity.
4. Local urchins running around and playing ball, their gangly limbs threaded with wires and bio-implants. They sing, “Oh, oh, oh, everyone should know, the violet is violent and the spectrum is sneaky, and both would trade without the tax man.” It’s just a popular song going round.
5. Sudden **static alert** as the Ignored Tower ramps up its broadcast. Garbled voices echo through people’s heads and spells misfire, as the locals scurry into silent lead-lined rooms. Staying outside deals 1 point of Wisdom damage per hour. Alert ends in 1d6 hours.
6. A scream. Out of a cupboard, a **skeleton** entangled in fleshy rose-colored roots tumbles. Another victim of the mysterious flower of power?
7. A **static ghost** flits in and out of existence, rambling about the moon, the song, the fall. It is a soul trap, a poorly designed wisp of the Ignored Tower.
8. Four hooded **personal protection necroamblers** hustle the **satrap 57** into a private meeting pod, shortly thereafter a fruit vendor explodes in a shower of gore. The princes and satraps are unconcerned. Static overload, they say.

WEIRD ROOMS AND ODD PLACES (D12)

The heroes go poking around the huddled old buildings, and they discover ...

1. **The Buried Delicatessen:** the place for fast regeneration, healing, and limb replacement. A long rest’s worth of recuperation in a single hour in a ka-box is yours for 200 cash, while a newflesh arm or leg can be grown in a day for 1000 cash. And full-body rebuilds, too? Yes. But only for special service.
2. A room full of boxes of trading goods. There are tentacles reaching out of one of them. Why are there tentacles? And are those eyes? What is that squamous packaged thing.
3. Just boxes. Boxes to the ceiling. Marked potatoes. And bulbs of light. Oh, behind it? Nothing. Definitely not an ancient sarcophagus of some lost barbarian king.
4. The whole room is filled with a crate much larger than the door. There is not a deactivated space-time portal machine inside.
5. A glass vat with a sentient gelatinous ooze. It wants to talk poetry and decontaminate the Last Serai.
6. Six poly-body cases, each holding a ready-body. Damn, but the porcelains are prepared, aren’t they?
7. Two vertical vats with floating bodies. One of them is crawling with vomish recombiners, held in check by the red-light fluid. The other thrashes now and again, revolving its head demonically, the ultra ghost held back by the numinous blue-light fluid. What the ...
8. A small polybody intimate movie recording studio?
9. The **Chamber of Crystal Rebirth** is completely stuffed with great prismatic crystals. This is where the Satraps upload copies of their leaders and chief thinkers, for on-site access and decision-making. There must be dozens of minds stored in the crystals ... perhaps they could store your backup, too? Or one of the backups could be re-embodied?
10. Bones and tissue crunch underfoot, a graveyard, or a fertilization chamber for a sentient Sunflower?
11. Skulls and bones. Ancient, ancient skulls and bones. Oddly sub-human. The original inhabitants of this place?
12. The walls are covered in odd, half-forgotten lyrics, “Goodbye, Gemini! Apollo, my sun lord. Reach for the heavens, draw the dark apart. Behold, a new hope.” Lots of nonsense, really.

CHIEFS, NPCs AND HOOKS (D10)

1. **Angel 22-unity** is a nice, rich, militantly bigoted polybody in luxurious opal masks, with large interests in the cherenkov cherry trade and an autarkic inclination. The Angel unity has read old fiches and now fervently believes that the Near Moon hides a means of transporting the Harmonium Rods to the Porcelain Throne. It does not.
2. **Lacquer Stone 4-body** is an old work-horse polybody that keeps the Last Serai running and manages the Black Monkey 60-plurality servitor. Unimaginative, a stickler, and fastidious in repaying services. Still remembers the days before the Lands reclaimed the Circle Sea. Might want to escape there.
3. **Black Monkey 60-plurality** servitor is the polybody mechanic-cum-police force of the Last Serai. Most of its bodies are no longer even human, its jet face masks reminiscent of eerie bunches of flowers. It might be mind-burned or neurally bonded to Lacquer Stone 4-body. It does not like this.
4. **Pooki** is the chief of the Violet City mission. A pure, white fluffy cat, with eerie golden eyes. Pooki is counting the days until she can return to the citadel and the clockwork mice and the ambrosial milks of the Giving Cow. Pooki wouldn't mind one last big deal to brag about.
5. **Mook** is the tough and nimble half-orc friend of Pooki. Mook is surprisingly tough, smart, and is not mind-controlled. Mook just really loves cats after a childhood growing up in the streets of the Metropolis.
6. **Electrum Merdon-9** is a roguish polybody drawn to metal masks and experimenting with forbidden spectrum light-golem technology. This will get him killed someday. Until then, he will pay people to bring him satrap technologies and light magics.
7. **Satrap 250** is a morass of tentacles in an over-tight suit of deepest blue. It can replace missing limbs for you and has a fascination with octopi. It dreams of visiting a great Octopus' Garden under the surface of the Steppe.
8. **Satrap 117** is a cog-and-gear enhanced hulk, straining the synthskin of its green suit, the glass bubble filled with sparkles. It seems a boring satrap, focused on logistics, but it is also the local military attaché and has a lethally violent streak ten miles wide. It wouldn't mind an opportunity to kick out the Porcelains, but they are too numerous here, particularly that enhanced feral Black Monkey.

9. **Basil of Planet** is an uncanny green man of indefinite age, withdrawn and of sour demeanour. He is the chief biomancer of the Buried Delicatessen and a member of a weird cult that awaits the coming of the Crystalline Seed.
10. **The Delicate Seer** is a giant mass of human source code, the head enlarged, floating like a fetus in a synthetic egg below the Final Embassy. The Satraps discovered it, and have been trying to figure out if there is some use to it. Can it actually foretell the future? It can, but badly. Still - it can provide flashes of tele-empathic insight that give a advantage in some half-useful situation.



9. The Way Stone Graveyard

Larger by far than the Ignored Tower, a crumbling green obelisk rises from the bare bedrock, exposed by millennial storms lashing the tired earth. Surrounded by wrinkled iron husks and a veritable graveyard of Long Long Ago machine creatures.

Weather: A constant dry rust storm swirls about the mile-high mass of the obelisk, whipping up cutting winds for three days' journey in each direction. Rain is alien to this region, and even when the sun drags itself above the dark haze at 10 a.m, its light remains red and desultory in the metallic air.

Misfortune strikes with iron regularity here (Charisma DC 2d6, roll d6):

1. a sharp iron fragment blinds one eye, this will require serious medical attention or a *Lesser Restoration* dust-spirit injunction.
2. 1d4 supplies worth of water lost to a freak desiccating gust incident.
3. shard of the Dark Mirror lodged in one eye, letting the hero always see the worst in people. Sort of like a permanent *Detect nastiness* ability that won't turn off. Curse removal recommended.
4. booming rust storm flenses caravan and leaves ringing in the ears. Lose 1d4 days.
5. 1d6 pieces of metal equipment rust beyond use. Even magical items rust in this area.
6. stumble and cut self on the weathered grave of a machine folk hero, taking 1d8 damage from an ancient weapon. The grave contains porcelain eyes worth 1d6 x 100 cash and a magic, un-rusting weapon. It has no other power. It just never rusts.

DIRECTIONS

West, Fallen Umber (trail, a week): keep the Stone at your back and you will reach the dead kingdom of Umber.

North-west, South-Facing Passage (rough steppe, Δ6 weeks): a long journey leads to the high steppe of the great passage.

North, North Facing Passage (rough steppe, Δ4 weeks): a broken chaos of rubble mounds and hills that might once have been the halls of giants leads to the grim passage. Don't look South once you reach it!

East, The Last Serai (trail, a week): the safety of the Porcelain Princes outpost is near. Copper to your face, verdigris to your back, and you shall reach it.

ENCOUNTERS (D6)

1. rushing through the rust, feeding on static charge, shaking the very ground, is the great **machine wyrm** (AC 18, HD 12, terrifying). It rumbles on dozens of jointed, bladed legs, like some kind of rattling 100-foot centipede. The ground shakes under its stride and the glow of source-of-machines from within it whets the appetites of greedy fools. The machine wyrm is not hostile and generally ignores little meat-sacks, but it is rumored to be full of valuable gems. An individual wyrm actually contains 1d100 x 100 cash worth of rare gems. A hazardous gamble for taking on a truly lethal creature, wreathed in lightning, with an elephant-swallowing maw and a hundred bladed limbs.
2. a swaying cross between a centipede, a gazebo and a beautiful youth, the **dispenser of wisdom** (AC 17, HD 7, demanding) is a mind-burned demented machine that offers unsought for advice, demanding payment in return. Armed with heat rays, it can be insistent. Its fee is (roll d6): 1: a song, 2: shoes, 3: flesh, 4: gold, 5: your wounds (it heals them), 6: a bone from a living body.
3. **zombie machines** (AC 17, HD 4, undying) dragging themselves, half-alive through the rust, repeating old manoeuvres. They are (roll d6): 1-3: senseless worker creatures trying to harvest peaches or thresh wheat, 4-5: growling guard units, patrolling a territory, but not fundamentally hostile, 6: deadly assassin machines, hiding in rust drifts or playing dead with glinting cut glass gems in their metal hands. If a defeated zombie machine makes a save, it reanimates again at full health after 1d6 rounds.
4. a band of riders, hard-faced, with old dustland masks. Their biomantically enhanced horses give nothing away, but the butts of glass rifles and the ebon hafts of their lances suggest they are not to be trifled with. They refuse to talk, but shadow strangers carefully to ascertain their strength. They may be ultra-possessed.
5. two great satrap clock wagons, swaying serenely, attended by their mirror-faced guards. They carry lovely loads of prisms and many-colored shift-silks.
6. a very well provisioned party, led by a bespectacled dwarf, a golden-masked rogue polybody, and flame-haired RDC twins in biomech cool-suits searching for the tomb of a machine named "*The Dragon Also Rises.*" They are quite candid about their goals, and how much they could make with it in the SD Metropolis Museum. They have maps, they claim.

POINTS OF INTEREST

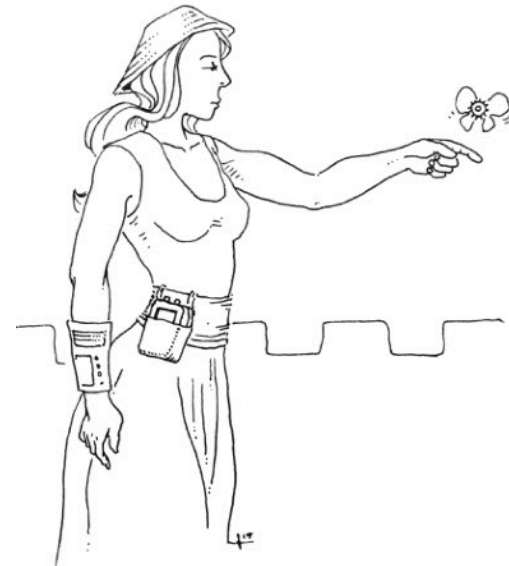
Oasis of Mirrors (+1 day, 100 XP): under a hill carved with scenes of industry and labor by some lost people, the oasis makes for a common caravan stop. Most of the permanent inhabitants and resident archaeologists will gladly point out to visitors that they shouldn't visit the old metal bunker under the hill by daylight. An array of living-metal mirrors on the hill focus the light of the sun through a series of corridors, excavating a pointless pit into the heart of the ground. Fools have in the past tried to remove the living-metal mirrors, but it turned out these were **living-metal golems** (AC 20, HD 6+6, liquid), and best left alone. Nothing of value remains in the bunker.

Column of Dead Beetles (+d4 days, 200 XP): the carcasses of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of giant metal beetles lie in eight neat rows, arrayed like an army ready for war, snaking through and between sixteen hill-sized eroded basalt cylinders. In many places, drifts of rust and dust have covered the column, but still it remains - mute testament to some forgotten machine Queen. Some later-day nomads used the metal carcasses as coffins, and here and there crude golden jewelry worth 1d20 x 10 cash can be found on a withered body. Some of it may be cursed, and there are reports of a pack of uneasy dead roaming the column at night.

The Tomb of The Dragon Also Rises (+Δ6 days, 1d6 x 100 XP): almost rusted away, the stubs of three great spiraling arms of chromium and indium marked the Mercury Lake of the tomb. Now many foot deep drifts of rust and dust cover the lake of pure mercury, and careless creatures wading into it might suffocate of dust inhalation (but they wouldn't drown in the mercury, unless they were denser than lead. Yes, lead floats in mercury) or mercury poisoning. Access to the Tomb seems impossible without some kind of key, or a massive mercury siphoning operation. On the other hand, it would be quite simply to harvest a few glass bottles of mercury (at 6 x 1d100 cash each, not a bad option). What lies in the Tomb? Who knows.

The Crystal Flower (+2 days, 120 XP): in a bowl-shaped depression ringed by eroded monoliths rise thousands of rust-red many-jointed, delicate pylons. In the heart of the great array is a crystalline flower, 70 meters tall and glistening like a dew drop on a cold autumn morning. Visitors have scrawled their names in the rust and taken souvenirs from the dead-rusted pylons, but still - every day at midday heavily corroded, ribbon-decked **spidery biomechanics** (AC 15, HD 4, surprisingly fast) emerge from their subterranean lairs to lubricate and polish the great flower. The biomechanics are harmless unless the flower is approached, and many visitors tie prayer ribbons to them. Local wanderers call them the clock-setters.

The Abbey of the Caretakers (+d8 days, 100 XP): well off the beaten rock path of the dry rock rise six tusks carved out of a single mountain, watertraps honey-combed through their upper surfaces. Cableways and ropeways link the abbey chambers, 200 meters above the rock base. Smooth-worn steps carved into the red sandstone lead to the aerial troglodyte abbey where the pale caretakers chant the Memories of Maintenance and pray to the Departed Machine. Webbed with trceries of fine wire and inherited biomechanum, the sky-faced Abbess channels the song of the body electric. Visitors are sometimes welcome, but never comfortable.



The Cauldron of the Revitalized Divinity (+d10 days, 300 XP): deep in a veritable maze of rust-and-fordite agglomerations, some rare wanderers speak of a great cauldron of shifting metal sand and living colors. It is true, it is there. An autofac, half-mad with age, it crawls through it's rainbow garden, trying to repair servitors and grander things. It has a 45% chance of repairing any machine whatsoever, but a 5% chance of turning it into a **mad abomination** bred with a loathing of its 'masters' (AC 18, HD 9, cold, calculating and cruel). The maze is stalked by odd metal gazelles and a hive of enhanced **ghoul centipedes** (AC 12, HD 2, swarm, paralytic).

The Mausoleum of the Wire (+3 days, 80XP): a long slab of cliff-face, 700 meters long and 20 meters high, was smoothed and polished to a high sheen, and pocked with thousands of small niches preserving the wire-and-clockwork enhanced feet and soles of the worshippers of a machine ascendancy. Encased in grown-crystal, most of the soles have been long-since stolen as souvenirs, and the mausoleum remains, more than anything, a souvenir to the terrible danger homophones pose to literal-minded cults. Occasionally a sentient dust-red bear named Ottokar is seen here. It sometimes sighs and sings sad songs, or talks of days gone by. It is wise.

10. The North-Facing Passage

A sharp, artificial canyon runs rough but true North-West towards the Grass Colossus. The rough crags and cinder dunes, all lit from behind by the glare of the static ghosts, are littered with reminders to not turn back: the flickering soul-echoes of travelers seduced by the siren song of the Ignored Tower's Face of Death. Travelers say not every look at the tower from this angle will bring death, but travelers prefer not to try. Four or five days along the passage, after a landslide, the Face is mercifully obscured.

The upland above the canyon is a pandemonium of shattered rock and odd twists of stuck-force coated in millennia's worth of dirt and grime. Sages stroke their beards, but even they cannot agree on what might have been the cause of this hellish scape.

Warning: the North-Facing Passage is very dangerous, and many travelers journey with great hoods or safety hats, so they may not look higher than the ground and catch sight of the Face of Death by accident.

Weather: At night the flickering soul-echoes and static ghosts set up a constant rumbling roar, while the sun only creeps above the ultraviolet wall at 10 a.m. Temperatures in the canyon are surprisingly balmy, sometimes even hot.

Misfortune is a constant threat in this terrible, sad place (Charisma DC 3d6, roll d6):

1. the hero caught sight of the Face of Death. Their body is translated into a salty burn shadow and a flickering soul-echo of their existence remains suspended in the air. Nothing short of a *Wishful Dream* or *Wish* can restore them, for their human essence has been ripped into the shreds of the Ignored Tower's distortion. Singed possessions and belongings remain, tossed as by a grim tide.
2. nasty concussion from walking head-down into an unexpected arch of salt (Lose 1d6 hp and 1d6 Intelligence).
3. broken leg from stumbling over a scree pile. Still, better than looking on the Face of Death (Lose 1d8 and 1d6 Str and Dex).
4. pack animal caught in the gaze of the Face of Death. It's gone now, all the goods it carried singed, but still about half-salvageable.
5. thick haze-storm obscures the Face of Death, making travel easier, though the smog plays havoc on the lungs (Gain 1d4 days, but lose 1d4 hp).
6. strap, belt, thong, shoe-lace or other tie snaps at the worst moment, and in the fall a fragile object breaks. If the hero has no fragile objects, then they packed well and get through *intacto*.

DIRECTIONS

North, Grass Colossus (steppe, a week): finally safe from the horrid visage and the static ghosts, the rugged canyons collapse once more into the steppe and end eventually at the nomads' holy site.

North-West, Long Ridge (steppe, Δ4 weeks): the rocks sink into the root-matted soil and the grass thickens into that endless sea of grass that is the true UV grassland.

West, South-Facing Passage (steppe, Δ4 weeks): the desolate badlands give way to the ravaged high steppe of the South-facing passage.

South-East, The Last Serai (canyon, Δ8 weeks): only the most desperate of fools would try to travel back, towards the Last Serai. Why?

ENCOUNTERS (D6)

1. **Radiation ghosts** of a family of troglodytes, their spark-dead eyes accusing, lead to a shelter (+1 day, stock-piled with sugar-filled bottles and cans of poisonous tubers, as well as a cache of indigo ivories worth 1d8 x 100 cash). The shelter is wreathed in a toxic miasma (Con save 3d6 or poisoned).
2. Soldier swarm of **blind ceramic ants** (AC 13, HD 1-1, acid bite) probe wanderers for weakness and food.
3. **Static ghosts** of a procession of wailing locust pilgrims in an eerie haze, their cacophony deals 1d4 Wisdom damage every minute. Anyone who's Wisdom drops to 7 or less understands that they should turn to look at the Face of Death.
4. Animated **salty burn shadows** crawl along the rocks and walls, harmless but supplicating.
5. Flickering **soul-echoes** of mongooses and snakes.
6. Blind **passage lizards** hunting fat copper grubs.



POINTS OF INTEREST

Why are you doing this? This place is a terrifying hell!

Exposed Pueblo (+1 day, 300 XP): some great antediluvian disaster swept aside the protections of this ancient village, exposing it to the Face of Death. The entire village is thick with flickering static ghosts and salt burns. By night, a dense ectoplasmic memory of the dead accumulates in the hollows and halls, tempting visitors to go look at the green light that just appeared on the south horizon (Wisdom save DC 3d6 or go look at the Face). Every hour of searching reveals 1d6 x 50 cash worth of ancient and modern goods and treasures, scattered about the pueblo.

The Disaster of the Ivory

Army (+2 days, 200 XP): a great stuck-force lens glitters over a long ago fortress of stone and bone build in a deep canyon shaped like a redlander helmet. Water vapor accumulates around the aerial lens, and when the light and temperature and humidity are just right, it suddenly reflects the Face of Death into the vale. An ivory plaque mounted in the flank of the fortress records the disaster that befell the army stationed there. Who did the army belong to? Who knows.

Vault of the Lost Ultras [?]

(+1d8 days, 450 XP): curling like a worm, at the end of a branching madness of side canyons, a wind-swept plateau opens on the north flank of a dead volcano, the Face gone from view. Carved into the tuff is a great square maw, and in that maw a door of ancient livingstone, still half-sentient. Behind it is a lost world of five interlinked chambers eaten out of the mountain, of glowing lumin trees, pendulous rare fruits, servant monkey spiders suckling at the teats of milk trees and egg mass caskets. The livingstone homes, halls and odd temple-tree-theatres of whoever built this place are overgrown in lilies and vines and mushrooms. Visitors can

stay as long as they like, but fiddling with the vault may provoke a threat response (Cha save DC 2d6 every hour of active interaction). A **mind-linked autonomous swarm** (AC 10, HD 1-1, drone) of servant birds, spores, and dogheaded semi-humanoids awakens if the sanctity of the vault is threatened. They make use of soporific (Con save DC 3d6) and necrotic (Con save DC 3d6, liquefy soft tissues) poisons. If the threat increases, a telepathic miasma (Wis save DC 3d6) is added to the mix and all the lumin trees, except those leading to the exit, go dark. Any of the wonders here may be extracted by a patient and careful explorer (Int check DC 2d8), and are worth 2d10 x 100 cash each.



11. The South-Facing Passage

Rough, high steppe country, torn by the tracks of prehistoric behemoths, but relatively safe. The journey from the Grass Colossus to the Behemoth Shell will interest every gentle-person naturalist.

Due west the rounded humps of great cedar-shaded hills rise, but the caravan trails bypass them.

Weather: The far western sun only pulls away from the nictating membrane of the night around 10.30 a.m. The thin air of the high steppe whistles, and flecks of grit-like snow are not unknown even in summer nights.

Misfortune is unlikely in this bucolic region (Charisma DC 2d4):

1. horrible blisters (limping),
2. saddle sores (-1d4 hp),
3. picked up lenticular worms,
4. one slot of supplies lost to ravenous rodents,
5. lit a campfire on top of an enormous deposit of methane-rich 'deposits' left by some gargantuan herbivore (Dex DC 2d10 or lose 1d10 hp),
6. found a wonderful little oasis, full of delicious fish and black light lotus (+1d4 Cha for a week, get a week's worth of rest, lose 1d6 days).

DIRECTIONS

North-West, Serpent Stone (steppe, Δ4 weeks): the white grass is endless, and this small stone formation marks a rare waypoint.

North, Long Ridge (steppe, a week): that endless sea of grass that is the true UV grassland.

North-East, Grass Colossus (steppe, Δ4 weeks): an easy, if slow, trek to the holy site.

East, North-Facing Passage (steppe, Δ4 weeks): the rubble canyons do not beckon.

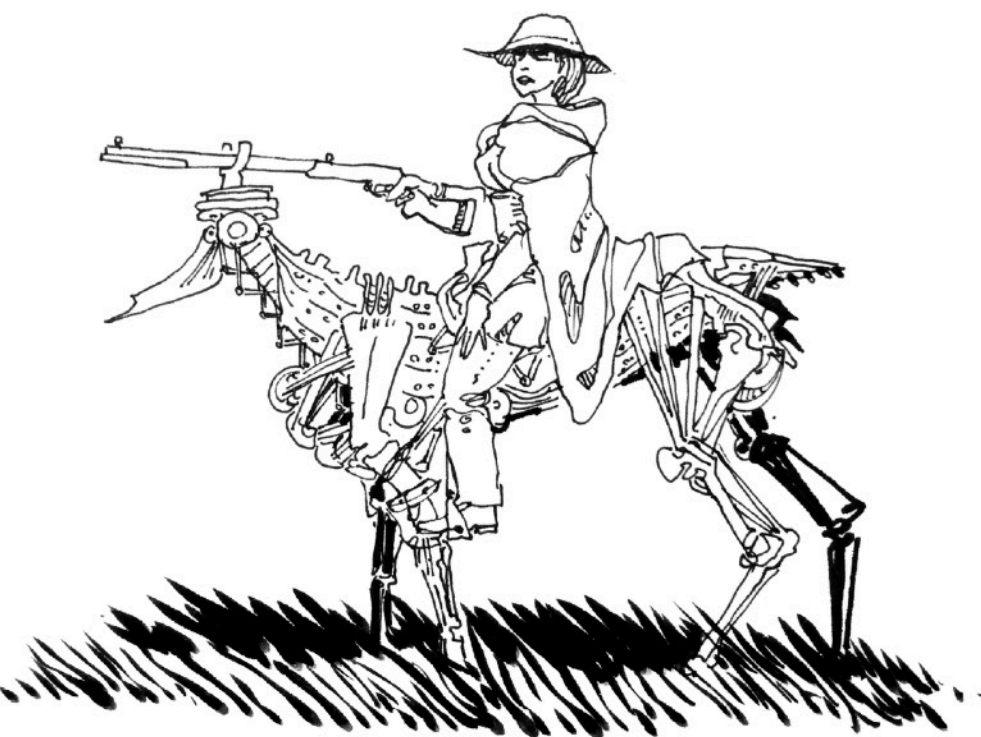
South-East, Way Stone Graveyard (rough steppe, Δ6 weeks): a long, safe journey leads into the rusted waste of the Machine Graveyard.

South, Fallen Umber (steppe, a week): the dead kingdom of Umber and its browntree-lined gullies.

South-West (steppe, Δ4 weeks): the mountain-sized calcite corpse of behemoth is a known landmark.

ENCOUNTERS (D6)

1. A small herd of grazing **lesser behemoths** (AC 15, HD 20, majestic) pulling their semi-levitant bodies along with their long hooked limbs.
2. Feral **steppe wolf-hound pack** ranging through the long grass.
3. Great herd of **ash-and-dun antelopes**, with scimitar horns and fine muscled flanks.
4. Herd of **wild horses**, strong and epic.
5. Small band of **merchant-nomads** with their flocks of sheep, herds of riding antelopes and steppe goods: leathers, tools, furs and dried meats.
6. Great Folk **raiding patrol** from the Behemoth Shell. Wary and nervous, they finger long rifles as they ride their bone-work steeds.



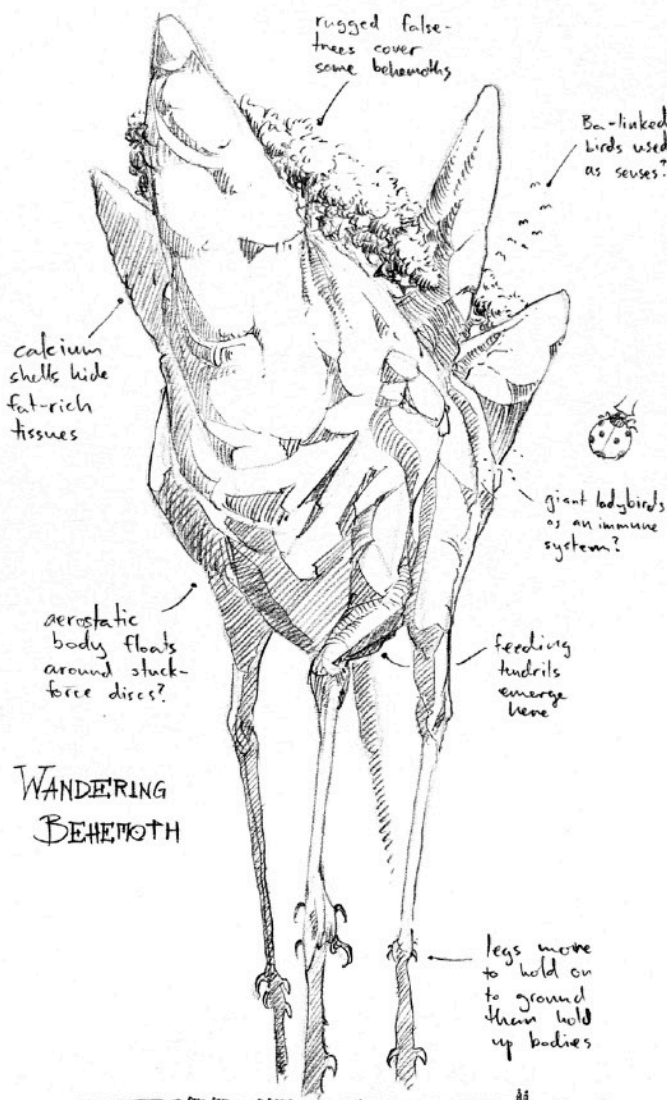
POINTS OF INTEREST

The Bone Mines of Moy Sollo (+2 days, 80 XP): a series of exposed ridges have been exposed by eons of sun and wind as the ribs of some mythic serpent. For ageless years more long-limbed behemoths came to this spot, like moths to a flame, to lay down their bone-armored corpses. Long ago ancestors of the Great Folk found this place and their culture hero, Moy Sollo, built the foundation of their wealth upon the great slave-cut mines dug into the great bones, following the veins of rock ivory. Great Folk scouts keep watch, but now it is depleted ivory veins and a personality reassembly disease that keep would be miners at bay. The disease is real (Con DC 2d4, check for every full day of mining) and caused by ancient spirit dusts released from the old serpent bones. It manifests as a slow but steady dulling of the personality (in game terms, the character's mental stats reduce and increase until they average out, rounding down). A day's mining produces 1d4 x 50 cash of valuable ivory scales and cores.

The Gentle Mile (+1 day, 100 XP): a famous meadow, dotted with peach trees and riven by two brooks, immortalized in the poem *Three Frogs Marching to Infinity*, it spreads on the southern slope of a long-eroded ziggurat of mammoth proportions. There were great caverns and megadungeons within the ziggurat, but they are now all flooded and looted, only loose coppers, bones and primitive remains left. An eerie aura of peace reigns over the meadow, and violence is difficult there.

Puce House (+3 days, 100 XP): surrounded by the remains of an epic bone circle and shaded by sturdy dryland coral-bonded dwarf pines, Puce House is the site of an odd alliance, between a porcelain prince polybody pine-mancer or pine wizard, and a spectrum satrap soma distiller. The Great Folk feel protective of them, and maintain a small patrol here, but the true guardian of Puce House is rumored to be a **bone-worked behemoth**. The rumors are true - the bone circle are the behemoth appendages (AC 14, HD 7, each bone appendage is a remote bone-worm drone). On the other hand, Puce House is a good place to stock up on fine woods and black light lotus schnapps.
Expenses: 10 cash per week to stay in the fine rooms.

Wandering Behemoth (+1d6 days, 200 XP): finally, in the distance, a living wandering behemoth! Since the days of the Great Ride few come this far north, but this one seems to have a full canopy. Phytomancers would give their front plant extensions for a chance to hang out with one of these!



12. Fallen UMBER

Beyond the Way Stone the steppe continues, flat, tasteless, tone-deaf. The caravan trails have carved a route down to the bedrock, and at a long-dry gully buttresses of gently crumbling livingstone still attest to the long-lost land of UMBER, once grown rich on the local deposits of titanic biomatter, which supported a thriving chitin-cap agro-industrial aristocracy.

“Brrr, this dull place, it eats at the soul,” said DW.

“Agreed, nothing to loot,” replied PH.

Weather: The weather is unusually mild and calm for the steppes, and though the sun rises from the growing haze at only 10.30 a.m., it merely creates a pleasant feeling of decline and fall.

Misfortune strikes the weak-willed (Wisdom DC 2d6):

1. A spell or memory disappears into the dead land (lose one known spell or skill permanently, or until a *Restoration* is used).
2. Dry, flaky rash strikes hard (-1d4 Charisma).
3. 1d4 slots of supplies lost to the dust.
4. Chitin-cap spores infected a steed, laming it.
5. Lost in the dull, repetitive land. Have you walked past that abandoned village before? Maybe? (-1d4 days)
6. Rested in a peaceful farming village, but it turned out to be a ghostly echo of the Times of the Liberated Serf Dictatorship (lose 1 day and 1d4 supplies).

DIRECTIONS

West, Behemoth Shell (trail, a week): tough grasses reclaim the brown land and the calcite husks of behemoths dot the way to the greatest shell of all.

North, South-facing Passage (steppe, a week): the brown lands fade imperceptibly into the greyish-green of the high steppe.

East, Way Stone Graveyard (trail, a week): the great green obelisk clearly marks the still lands of the Machine Graveyard.

ENCOUNTERS (D6)

1. A **hulk of this fallen land** (AC 18, HD 6, ravenous) scavenging for protein to feed to its mushroom masters in the ruins of a chitin farm.
2. Animated **chitin armors** (AC 16, HD 2, half-lost) stumbling around the perimeter of a tumbled Great House. They are dull and no danger.
3. Pack of hybrid prairie dogs hunting a grazing flock of ochre rabbit-pigs.
4. A ghostly caravan bearing bundles of archaic goods. If followed long enough, they may sell some of their time-dilated goods, which become solid when blood touches them.
5. Band of itinerant chitin foragers with grubby caps and foul-minded mules.
6. Family of Great Folk merchant-hunters with several bone-work golem wagons.



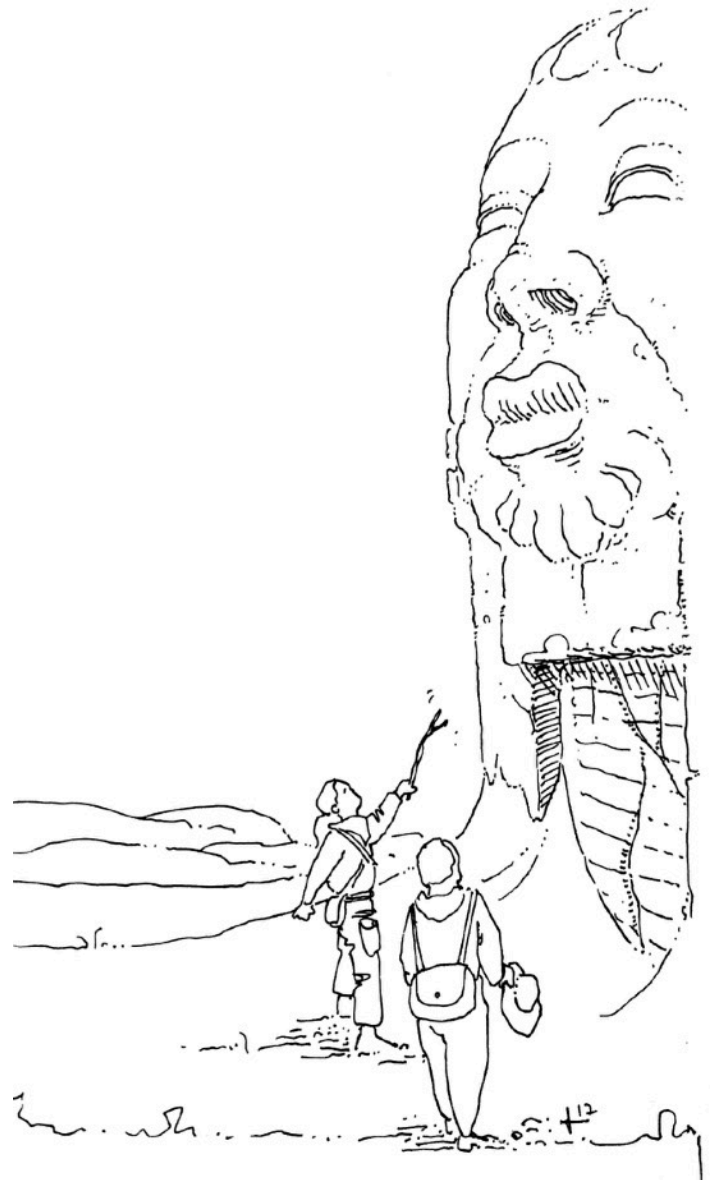
POINTS OF INTEREST

Hall of the Umber King (+1 day, 100 XP): crumbling livingstone arches and colossi sheathed in festering growths of chitin-cap and other incredible fungoid art flowers reveal the lost glory of Fallen Umber. Blossoms and sparkling spores float through the slow air, and under the dry decay a scent of spices and incense lingers, smell ghosts of a golden age. Dilettante artists come here to sigh upon the folly of humanity, while perfumists send harvesters to collect the ancient spores. Crumbled chambers and tunnels of odd fungi are marked with warnings in several languages, but still mind-emptied husks wander about, sustained on the perfume in the air for months until they eventually dry out into perfect substrates for more rainbow-colored fungoids.

The Azure Garden (+2 days, 150 XP): a geodesic dome of livingstone marks one of the last stands of Fallen Umber, where the Dynasty of the Slumbering Green used massive biomantic rituals to reactivate the titanic biomatter and create a renewable source of fuel for their azure-strand chitin-caps. The attempt failed and the Dynasty eventually fell to a massive uprising of their tertiary servant caste, but in the centuries since the mutated offspring of the azure-strands have colonized the bones of the great dome, creating a hanging garden of susurrating azure fungoids. Hybrid sweet-fleshed rodents now tend to these ancient, sun-processing fungal colonies.

Erosion of War (+4 days, 260 XP): three great fungoid vome autofacs, odd, alien, colorful and sessile, rise like tetrahedrist villages above a small valley. Now, the mindless or mad colony organisms strip their environment to produce crawling and clattering warrior-creatures that march towards each other to fight, struggle and die. Every night scavenger organisms foray out to the battlefield to retrieve scrap and resources to refashion into new warriors. The mindless war has continued for many years and the tramping feet of troops have carved the entire triangular forty meter deep valley from the dun bedrock.

The Stele of the Pierced Blossom (+5 days, 300 XP): far beyond the beaten track some odd wanderer placed a massive stele, a thousand tons or more of garnet gneiss, inscribed with a mawkish poem about a blossom in love with herself, plucked to adorn a noble's dining jacket in her unique beauty, where she wilted and died alone. The words and glyphs are cut deep and utterly flawlessly, but more amazingly, the long-form poem is reproduced in seven languages, including the odd patterns that some call the Black City Alphabet. Studying the stele for several weeks, or at least procuring reproductions of the stele, is one of the better ways to comprehend (if not speak) the odd languages of the steppe.



13. Long Ridge

On the way to the Serpent's Stone the grasslands fold back and forth on themselves, like sinuous serpents undulate under the coating of ash-white grasses, waving in the gentle breezes. Little steppe rodents nibble at the air, great eagles circle overhead, and for once, little trace of the disgusting remnants of the Long Long Ago are seen.

"The guidebook says this place gets dust flies in springtime," noted Poncho.

"Like midges?" asked DW.

"No, these ones suck blood."

"Don't midges?"

"Not all of them."

"Huh, fancy that."

Weather: The sun creeps above the dusty haze at 10.30 a.m. and the sky is silvery-pale in the dry heat of the open steppe. By night it is very cold.

Misfortune, constant companion (Con DC 10):

1. Water runs out in the empty land (-2 supplies).
2. Sudden snow storm (-1d4+1 days).
3. Swarming blood-sucking flies (-1 Con).
4. Abandoned rodent warren snaps a steed's leg. Oops.
5. Restful grove with beautiful spring. Oh, wait, the spring water was contaminated with the effluvia of Ultra ghosts (lose 1 day and 1 supplies in a hallucinated fug).
6. A random weapon or armor fell off the danged pack animal. Back over there. Somewhere. It's gone now in the sea of grass.



DIRECTIONS

West, Serpent Stone Marker (steppe, a week): the endless sea of grass continues, swallowing the trails.

East, Grass Colossus (trail, a week): the great, grassy holy site of the lime nomads.

South, South-facing Passage (steppe, a week): the high steppe rises gently, a dusty, dun frontier.

ENCOUNTERS (D6)

1. Vomish **hunter-killer serpents** (AC 14, HD 2, fast, burrowing).
2. Herd of **dark ghost gazelles** (AC 12, HD 3, hive mind), patrolling against vomish incursion.
3. **Burner golems** of wicker and sedge (AC 11, HD 1+1, jumping) sent by some bush wizard or other.
4. Herd of wild cattle, mighty horned and enigmatic.
5. Cultists covered in mosses and dust, meditating on the white grass and grazing on manna.
6. Small caravan of (roll d6): (1) lime nomads with flocks of wooly sheep, (2) great folk with bone-work tools and beads, (3) spectrum satraps in a great six-footer, (4) hostile and scruffy yellowlanders with burdenbeasts and saffrons, (5) enigmatic half-elves with empty eyes and hollow laughs, (6) cowed little people whipping two-legged burdenbirds.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Grass Circles (+1d3 days, 80 XP): ornate circles and whorls appear overnight in this area. None of the local nomads or travelers seems to know or care what it is. Some of them even suggest it's just 'crazy kids', when it is obvious that it is higher powers trying to communicate. It is, in fact, a group of 'kids'. Ultra-possessed abmortal kids trying to summon the Spirit in the Sky. It will never work. The Spirit in the Sky does not listen.

stand next to a deep pool. The water is rainbow-colored and euphoria-inducing, filled with the product of some still-churning subterrene autofac. Odd farmers of wood and sinew wander about, the harmless products of some kind of abmortal bioengineering. They grow tasteless tubers and fat grubs.



Copper Cairn (+2 days, 70 XP): glistening on a lonely tumulus, a cairn entirely of green-hued copper nodules stands, mute testament to some long-gone queen or merchant - who could tell? Curse markers warn of death (the curses of the splitting of bones and the melting of eyes are true enough, and still strong). Bones, shards and smears are also testament to a curse-maddened vomish autofac beneath the cairn, spewing out rubber bioenhanced **wormsnakes** (AC 13, HD 2, spitting). There are 40 slots of copper in the cairn, worth 400 cash each. But the curse is real, and who knows what is actually in the cairn?

The Sky Tower (+3 days, 100 XP): the very grass tinges blue as it creeps up the sloping flanks of the sky tower. The tower itself erupts, a sharp pinnacle of blue glass that ends in a great, translucent platform. The ghost of a sky-gazer lives there and answers questions about the still and the moving stars, but knows nothing about the passage of time and aeons. Crude visitors have chipped and scarred the tower with their names, but some aura of respect keeps vandals at bay.

Fallen Feast Hall (+2 days, 2d6 x 10 XP): the stone and glass pillars of an ancient feast hall from long, long ago

14. Behemoth Shell

What were these things? These mountain-sized calcite encrusted things that suspended themselves on levitation lenses and drifted and dragged themselves along the surface? Sages speculate that demiurges might have used them to sculpt the world, to deform it closer to some divine ideal they might have had.

Most are gone. The logarithmically multi-spiralled shell of one slumps here, a lumpy, curling mountain, like a cross between a sea urchin and a great conch. The satraps may claim it, but truly, it belongs to the Great Folk who live upon and in it, scurrying like lice within its ageless bulk.

Weather: By night the winds are cold, but when the sun emerges from the creeping dark at 11:00 a.m., the temperature quickly rises. The harsh steppe climate is ameliorated by the bulk of the shell, with pine woods and small pools providing relief.

Misfortune, who knows what to expect in a land where scavengers call themselves the Great Folk (Cha DC 1d12):

1. Fell through an eroded shell midden into a subterranean cavern (-1d4 supplies or lose 1d6 Dex and Con).
2. Unexpected hailstorm (-1 days or -1d4 hp).
3. Soporific pine trees put party to sleep (-1d3 days).
4. A beast of burden wanders off (lose beast or -1 day to retrieve it)
5. Caught a nasty cold (sniffing and sneezing for 1d6 days).
6. Cash pilfered by a tribe of uplifted, greedy prairie dogs (-1d100 cash).

Expenses: 5 cash per week to camp in the great hulk.

DIRECTIONS

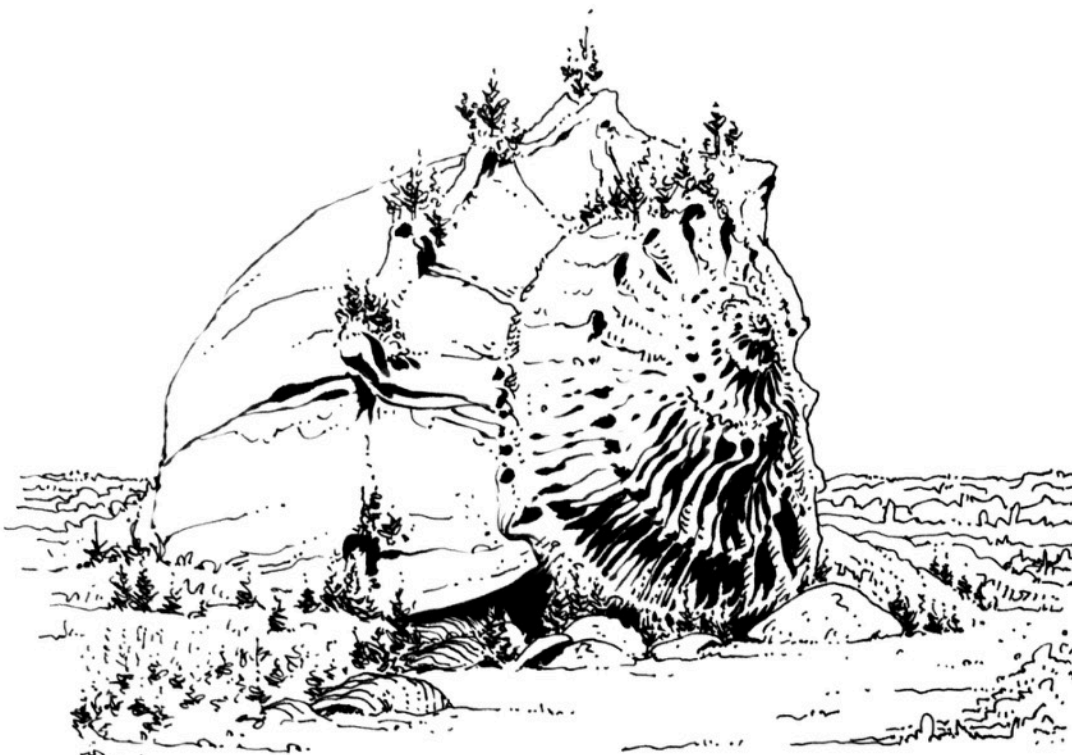
North-West, Moon-facing Ford (trail, Δ4 weeks): the Moon River marks the hard frontier of Spectrum power, and all trails converge on the great Ford.

North-East, South-facing Passage (steppe, Δ4 weeks): the high steppe rises, a gentle obstacle and safe.

East, Fallen UMBER (trail, a week): the dull, brown desolation of that dead kingdom.

ENCOUNTERS (D6)

1. Flickering **void riders** (AC 18, HD 4, enigmatic) arrayed in swirling feather and grass and synthetic flesh. They demand odd tribute (roll d6): (1) the skull of a hound, (2) the memory of a lost toy, (3) the snot of a snake, (4) the bloody gold of a betrayal, (5) a pound of hair, (6) the tribute of one sentient servant.
2. Semi-sentient **steppe wolves** (AC 13, HD 2, trippy) hunting together with **magic carpets** (AC 11, HD 3, wrapping), symbiotic carpet-like colony organisms that crawled out of some long ago rock wizard's lab.
3. Pack of giant armadillos (AC 17, HD 3, spikey).
4. Large scavenger beetles roosting in gnarled pine trees.
5. Great Folk bone farmers excavating calcinous marrow beet.
6. Spectrum Satrap emissary or enforcer in a camouflage synth-suit and several **autonom troopers** (AC 14, HD 1+1, semi-sentient synthetics).



THE SIGHTS

Crushed Shell (+1 day, 66 XP) whorls, lumps and field-sized shards of behemoth shell fill a great, shallow crater. From afar it seems like a great mallet smashed an entire behemoth into the ground, splintering it into pieces. All this was long ago, and peat bogs and pine thickets now encrust some of the largest shards. Great folk herding plains rabbits scabble a meagre existence and offer to sell chunks of "The Mallet of Heaven." The glassy chunks of melted shell and sand speak of some cataclysmic force. They are surprisingly effective against ka-zombies.

Lurid Pines (+2 days, 95 XP) in the narrow defiles of a nondescript mountain, ornate and buxom pines have grown fat on the biomantic pollution left behind from a magical test site. The surface has been thoroughly looted, but in the caverns below amid ancient biomantic gear (10,000 cash and 40 slots) generation after generation of mutated rodents has come and gone, including (roll d6):

1. Sessile photosynthesizing rodents like lumpy ferns that birth litters of runty green mice scrambling for patches of ground to plant themselves. Worth 200 cash per slot to interested horticulturalists, but annoying to catch.
2. Ornately baroque rats dressed in feathers and foils that mimic the stately etiquette of a bygone time. They are utterly uncreative, but capable of perfectly imprinting on behaviour patterns they experience in childhood. They stack their drying corpses in a tinsel-glittering ballroom beneath the mountain.
3. Tinker gerbils backwards engineering their origin from the library and scrolls of the original Biomancer Barons of Behemoth. They are missing a few key facts and a name, but the germ of a new society is here.
4. Hardy and grim hamsters, grown cannibal and vicious in tunnels beneath the pines. Very deep, close to the life-roots of the land, they fatten ka-zombies on a diet of romantic comedies and disconcerting violin music.
5. An eloquent hive of mole rats, become intelligent through attempts by a rogue charm-engineer of long-ago to recreate the porcelain princes' poly-body technology. Perhaps she succeeded and became the mole rats?
6. A vomish autofac taken over by prairie dog source code, which now pumps out cybernetic enhancements to make higher life-form prairie dogs. There are no birds of pray or snakes in the vicinity of the mountain, all victims of the heat-ray-defence-nodules that grow among the pines, defending the sacred prairie dogs.

Ideal Island (+4 days, 300 XP) half-tethered to the land by sinews of earth, ropes of rock, veins of marble and tendrils of crawling sand, a section of the plain, like a great plate, strains to rise towards the sky at least a little bit. It is covered thickly with a slick, aquamarine flesh that covers a behemoth endoskeleton. On and within the flesh a queer habitat of fruiting trees, enormous flowers, and howling rat monkeys makes their home, all their needs provided for. The island is coated in poisons and filled with noxious airs, but at the centre rises a five-sided pyramid of five colors, rising to a great prismatic eye that gazes with love upon its own little ideal island. Perhaps there are weird secrets here, but the demiurge of this half-living behemoth is a deadly foe.



15. Serpent Stone Marker

Beyond the Long Ridge the steppe flattens out and becomes a true sea of white grass. From horizon to horizon, the world spreads flat and still.

In its depth lies a great chocolate-brown stone marker, flat, rising a foot above the soil, and five hundred paces across. The entire surface of the marker is covered in curiously fractal serpent patterns. Compasses and guidestones swirl and direct themselves towards it, helping voyagers in this swirling place.

Smaller stone markers dot the rest of the white grass steppe, gently eroding and being reclaimed, pointless memorials from the Long Long Ago.

“Nothing,” muttered PH, “Still nothing.”

“No, no, we are close! The compass is shifting hourly now!”

“I think that lump of machinery is lying to you.”

“It is not!”

Weather: The sun rises above the glowing UV haze only at 11:00 and soon becomes a scorching and harsh eye, glowering at travelers. By night the temperature plummets and breath smokes in the dry air.

Misfortune, the steppe is pitiless for the luckless (Cha DC 1d12):

1. Attacked by blood-draining vampire grass in the night (-1d8 hp).
2. Harsh, stiff winds make progress slow (-1d4 days).
3. Mechanical or magical device breaks down from the odd fields .
4. Carnivorous grasses entangle a beast in the night (lose beast or 1d4 supplies)
5. Got a nasty infection from a sharp sedge cut (-1d4 Con).
6. Camped on a nasty ant mound (lose 1d4 hp or 1 supply).

DIRECTIONS

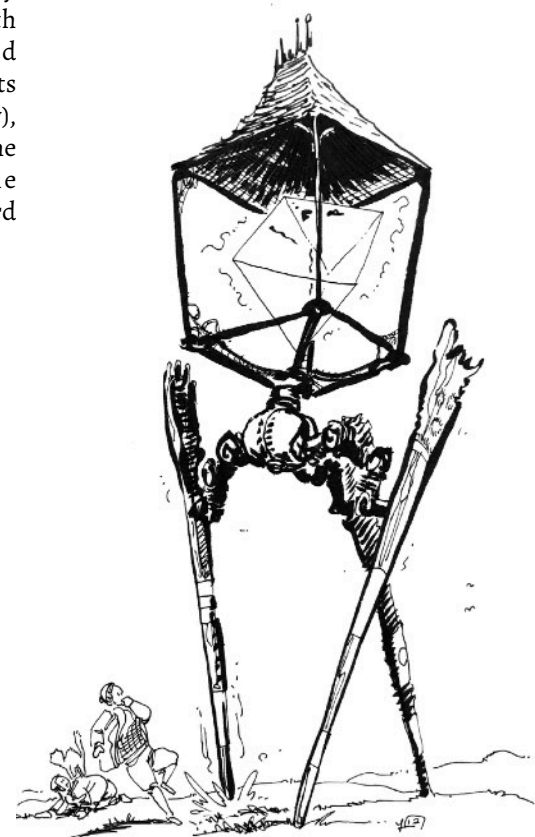
South-West, Moon-facing Ford (steppe, Δ4 weeks): the waving fields of ghostly grass sigh and turn towards the shallows of the great ford.

East, Long Ridge (steppe, a week): the steppe rises imperceptibly towards the east, rising to the Long Ridge.

South-East, South-facing Passage (steppe, Δ4 weeks): a sharper, rougher steppeland crosses many ravines before rising to the gentle South-facing passage.

ENCOUNTERS (D6)

1. **Magnetic bloodworm swarm** (AC 12, HD 6) follows from the last marker-stone, drawn to a heady mix of metal and fresh bodily fluids. The bloodworms exhibit a distributed sentience and sages speculate that they are the last twitching memories of a kind of fluid soul-medium used by one of the Long Ago blood cults, perhaps the Grateful Undead or the Forgotten Fish. The swarm seeks sustenance and warmth, but can also become a friendly symbiotic organism. After proper attuning rituals, a masterful biped could use the swarm could be used to puppet 1d4 other bodies.
2. **Scavenger outcasts** (AC 16, HD 3) of the farther nomads, grown less-human in these lands so far from the Pinnacle. Their skin is translucent and lights play across it, while small snake-like symbionts swirl within them. Mostly harmless, the outcasts are still better avoided.
3. Pack of **snake jackals** (AC 13, HD 2+2) on the prowl for easy prey, venom dripping from their fangs. Otherwise the jackals are mere beasts, easily scared off with flame.
4. Herd of **loper lapins** (AC 14, HD 1), the pallid antelope-like rabbitoids. Good eating if caught.
5. Migrating **grass colony** (AC 8, HD 12), easily avoided and slow, shot through with deadly vampire varieties if provoked.
6. Spectrum satrap **announcer walker** (AC 15, HD 5), patrolling on three stilt-like legs announcing to all who care that the border of the satraps is nigh and listing the taboos that are not to be violated. If properly beseeched (with kindness and admiration for its crystalline body), it can shorten the journey to the Moon-facing Ford by 1d4 days.



THE SIGHTS

Common Marker Stone (+1 day, 50 XP), a stone marker creates a depression, like a pock-mark, in the white, gently-swaying white grass. The stone is (d6): 1) ghoulish blue, 2) cyber yellow, 3) bright lavender, 4) crusty coconut brown, 4) fern green, 5) fulvous orange, 6) sparkle-studded gamboge) and maintains a constant, somewhat cool temperature. In summer it provides relief, in winter it melts snow. The stone is marked with cryptic, swirling patterns that feed directly into a sleeper's Ba or personality. A sleeper that succeeds at a Wis DC 1d8+1 check discerns what the stone does and can choose whether to accept its patterns. A failed check means the sleeper proceeds directly to the pattern-transfer. A normal pattern transfer carries a risk of soul-burn (Wis DC 2d8+2 or suffer 1d6 points of Wis damage). Some patterns are even more dangerous. d6 patterns:

1. Peace Pattern: the sleeper regains lost hitpoints and ability points at double speed, but is slow and lethargic for a week (disadvantage on Dex checks).
2. Startracker Pattern: the sleeper attunes with one or other of the fast stars, acquiring expanded senses (advantage on all search or perception rolls) but weakened personality barriers (disadvantage on Wis rolls).
3. Personality Copy Pattern: the sleeper's personality (Ba) at the time of sleeping is copied and excreted as a Ba-pearl. It's unclear of what use this could be, but sages say that once upon a time such a Ba-pearl could be implanted into a new-growth body to create a duplicant, or even a polybody extension. Ba-pearls are worth 1d6 x 200 cash to unsavory types, but do you really want to sell a copy of your personality to some necromancer?
4. Side Dancer Pattern: for a week the sleeper is attuned with local gate-fragments and stuck-force tunnels and can expend 1d4 hitpoints to permute their body through a spatial discontinuity, seeming to suddenly teleport a few dozen meters. Someone observing them closely can try to follow at a cost of 4d4 hitpoints.
5. Grass Dream Pattern: the sleeper is attuned to the grass in this area of the steppe for the next week, cannot be surprised and gains tremorsense, however, the grass does make thoughts a bit slow (disadvantage on Int checks).
6. Rock Talk Pattern: the sleeper attunes to the marker stones themselves and can feel and hear the surroundings of other markers in a journey of several dozen miles. The sleeper gains advantage to encounter checks but disadvantage to Str checks.

Blood Marker (+2 days, 100 XP), an acres-wide patch of burgundy grass surrounds a convoluted, eye-poppingly complex dryland coral skeleton entirely of vivid crimson rock, slick with a protective lacquer coat. The marker is the skeleton of a sessile blood 'deity' created by the Long Ago Heart of Gold Blood sonic cult. The area around it still resonates and draws a particular kind of necromancer or sage keen to empower their blood magics. It's also a perfect place to hunt magnetic bloodworm swarms, as there's a 25% chance of one appearing at any given sunset or sunrise.

The Eternal Snaking Marker (+3 days, 200 XP), quite far north of the main trails, in a depression masked by lichen-crusted pines of a particularly ageless appearance, a cyan stone covered with an eternally snaking fractal serpent pattern marks the Eye of the Serpent of the Stars and the Suns. Some say it is a gateway to other stars, others that it is the shard of a divinity, yet others say it is the ghost of a stellar dragon. In any case, a gaggle of spiritualists, seekers and shamans is regularly to be found here in an anarchic collective of mushroom-chomping, dream-voyaging, spirit-fencing, all-dancing, all-singing fools. Few would dare suggest they have found the meaning of the Eternal Snake, but some small secrets are common knowledge. Sleeping upon it is known to cure one mental attribute per night (Wis, Int, or Cha), at the cost of disadvantage to Con checks for a week for every night spent on the Snake. The local shamans may offer:

1. Healing balms concocted from vole droppings and pink mushrooms that heal 1d6 hit points (10 cash).
2. Spirit voyage charts that grant advantage to one spirit voyage or to learning one spell (30 cash).
3. Strong soporific poisons, perfect for coating an arrow or blade (as the *Sleep* spell, 20 cash).
4. To teach a specific healing meditative trance that fully restores either Con, Str or Dex ability damage (choose one) in a single day (takes Δ4 weeks to learn, costs 50 cash).
5. An epic dose of Cat snip powdered puff mushrooms. It brings euphoria and Δ4 bonus actions and they're selling Δ8 doses for just 50 cash. It's addictive (DC 2d4) and if an addict goes without, their Charisma is halved until they get a new dose.
6. A ba-hardened wooden short sword (1d6 damage) that deals double damage to incorporeal creatures and Ultras (60 cash).

Pine-crusted Lophotroche (+4 days, 300 XP) what at first seemed a great boulder is a living lophotroche the size of a citadel, coated in mosses, fungi and gnarled lumen pines, and inhabited by a symbiotic polybody rebel cult. What are they doing here in the middle of nowhere? Where are they getting the sweet sweet sugar they trade to the Pinegreen nomad clan? Is it true that they hold a mercer gate in the gut of that giant spineless beast?



16. Moon-facing Ford

The expanse of the steppe seems endless, from north to south the flat land rolls on under the sky dome. The slow stars and the fast glitter, icy and cold, and voyagers from the four corners approach the Moon River with exaggerated care. The great shallows of the Moon-facing Ford mark the easiest passage between the light grasslands and the dark. Weaker parties - or those with something to hide - seek other, far deadlier crossings.

Weather: The stars continue to spark until 11:30, when finally the sun emerges to glare upon the steppe. Clouds scud and lightning crackles.

Misfortune: The waters of the Moon river are slow, muddy, cold and old, but sometimes they rush like lunatic thunder worms (Cha DC 2d6, sixes explode):

1. swept away by a flash flood, throw away up to six possessions and roll d6. If you roll equal to or below the number of discarded possessions you wash up 1d4 days away, unhurt. If you roll over, you drown.
2. struck by lightning, lose half hit points and one metal item is destroyed.
3. pack animal sickens in the light of the Near Moon and begins to show lycanthropic tendencies. Lose 1d4 days treating animal, or lose the animal.
4. catch a nasty cold from the icy waters (lose 1d4 Con).
5. supplies get wet (lose 1d4 supplies).
6. one of your rings was actually magical and it slips away from your finger as you are crossing, to be found years later by a fisher-dwarf named Smehol. But that is another story.

Expenses: 10 cash per week to camp within the Fordite Coral Kraals.

DIRECTIONS

North-West, Three Sticks (steppe, Δ4 weeks): the cold deep lake covers forgotten cities and magics.

South-West, Near Moon (trail, Δ4 weeks): a trail of decaying bitumen-and-ash mix leads to the odd satellite.

North-East, Serpent Stone Marker (steppe, Δ4 weeks): the white grass full of snake-like spirits beckons.

South-East, Behemoth Shell (trail, Δ4 weeks): the calcite-cumbed flatland, studded with the remains of behemoths.

ENCOUNTERS (D6)

1. **quickwater snakes** (AC 12, HD 7, liquid elemental) are drawn to the glow of sentience like moths to a flame. Sacrifices tied to one of the numerous crystal altars can often distract them.
2. mud-furred **crocotters** (AC 14, HD 4, ambushers) are a pest in the Moon River and wiley travelers know to release a goat or sheep to distract them.
3. a flock of **great herons** (AC 15, HD 1) is said to bring great luck, barbarians also try to eat them.
4. a herd of dire water rats feeding on spiny tubers.
5. a local clan of **fisher quarterlings** offering dried fish, nasty gossip, and cut purses - or, to nice people, a totally safe and dry burrow to sleep in.
6. a Spectrum Satrap **self defence initiative** (AC 18, HD 2, heavy) on patrol from a fordite coral kraals.

FORDITE CORAL KRAALS

Studding the western banks of the Moon River and the steppe beyond to Three Sticks Lake and through the Refracting Trees are the countless colourful kraals. The Spectrum Satraps claim to have built them, but many are so old and eroded that their true progenitors may never be known. The kraals are rings or ovals of colourful slag extracted from deep layers of Long Long Ago habitation caves, fabricators and even from dead vomes, by the slow action of mutated dryland corals. Their most common use now is as makeshift caravan or nomad encampments, the spiny many-colored walls used as protection against marauders, wild beasts, vomes and worse.

Traveling through Kraal Country, a group is liable to come across a kraal on most days. For a given night's rest roll d6. If the party wants to be certain of finding a specific type of kraal, some time is required to ensure success.

1. Traces: only eroded gravel remains, whether time or battle destroyed this kraal, who can tell.
2. Stones: standing stones and several great coral spines remain. A few days work could turn it into a rude fort. As it is, defenders in the kraal can count on some cover against ranged attacks and a few advantageous locations against attackers.
3. Ring: a waist-high ring of the fordite agate coral offers a solid, defensible position in the steppe. Charges against defenders will not work, and cover against ranged attacks is plentiful.
4. Thorn kraal (+d3-1 days): the spines and twists of the fordite coral present hazardous obstacles to attackers and force them to try individual choke points. Defenders can find good sniping positions.
5. Trench kraal (+d3 days): the fordite kraal sees regular use, larger caravan guilds leave their sigils and scouts here, firepits, trenches and dugouts make it a safe point in the wilderness. There is a 50% chance of a working well, and 25% chance of a bardstone. The bardstone probably knows some weird spell.
6. Kraal fort (+d6 days): the fordite kraal is occupied by a Satrap self defence initiative, guild mercenaries, local semi-nomadics, or even stranger things. It has a working well, stores of food, perhaps even a general provisioner.

THE PYLON KRAAL

Overgrown dryland coral wreathes the remains of several bridge pylons from Long Long Ago, on an ancient deck in the middle the Pylon Kraal is home to the Tollmasters, a freely associated Spectrum Satrap vassal corporation. It offers the illusion of freedom and independence to unsavory travelers, aid to pilgrims, sustenance to scholars, beds and medical services to weary voyagers, and information to the Satraps.

Post-Satrap 48bis is a network of interlocking symbiotic eels in a triple-sealed suit of naples yellow. 48 works the local healing light sauna and solarium, where the Pylon Pirates hold their regular conclaves.

The **Pylon Pirates** are a cooperative of farmer-fighters and ex-nomads who now maintain the Pylon Kraal corals and defend its stairs and walls. They are led by Viki Six-lives and Surot Two-eyes.

Tollmaster House is the head of the organization, a sessile sentience spread throughout the grand fuchsia hall of the Tollmasters. House is an inveterate mind-riffler and enchanter.

Tollmaster Door is the equivalent of a town crier and spell-soaked main gate to the kraal in one.

Tollmaster Sister is the chief of the ambulant tollmasters, a post-organic Redlander, whispered to still have connections to the Wine Vampires.

OTHER CROSSINGS

The Moon-facing Ford was lost behind the grass-knit dunes. Poncho shivered, the wan purple light of the sun behind the haze layer no consolation in this desolate land under the gaze of the Near Moon.

“We don’t want to cross there,” said Demiwarlock.

The emphasis was hardly necessary. The shallows were slathered to a foam by a frenzy of blue-flecked crocodilians.

“How much further, then?” asked Poncho.

“As far as it takes for someone to avoid a fine,” deadpanned Demiwarlock.

Pointyhelmet whistled a jaunty tune.

The next crossing is a few days away (roll d6):

1. The Fishbladder clan of river quarterlings under the brood dominion of the Six Siblings operates the Reliable Ferry, an old livingwood lug painted livid lilac and ruby red. The fee is a reasonable 10 cash per head. They also dabble in occasional murder, theft, and sale of body parts for the Near Moon bodychoppers.
2. The Solipsistic Narwhal cabal of deep-thinkers trapped a part of their unified personality structure in the school of blue-flecked crocodilians (AC 16, HD 3) that make the Slathered Shallows such a deathtrap. Know to few, quoting the rainbow analects or the monochrome koans (Int DC 2d6), stops the crocodilians in their tracks. Occasionally (30%) the old eunuch Pepeidoleia is on hand in his little lean-to, ready to declaim the tracts across the ford for a symbolic fee.
3. The Olive Jerah is a series of three ridiculously rickety rope bridges of calcified sinews, bundled reeds and woven leather cords that stretch between the two banks and the Rock of the Rising Sun and the Stone of the White Room. Monks and nuns of the crumbling Order of the Tritone reside in the tunneled rocks, like maggots trying to recall the glories of a more musical age.
4. Half-sentient rafts of matted reeds grafted with river shrimp paddle along the slow waters of this marshy area. Local river folk use them for fishing, and in a pinch, and with a bit of empathic guidance (Wis DC 2d6) they could paddle a caravan across the turquoise waters, too. Slowly. Couldn’t be any danger in accepting a reed-shrimp hybrid into one’s mind, could there?
5. The Banks of the Bug are a series of shifting sandbars, quicksand, and log footbridges linked through the reedy Bug Swamp. Avoiding the worst parts is not too hard (Int DC 1d8+1), getting lost adds an extra 1d4 days to the crossing. The worst part is the Swarm of the Bug. A biomechanically reprogrammed collective of cat-sized water cockroaches slaved to the engorged biofab unit Gamma (B.U.G.). The B.U.G. continuously reprocesses organic matter into potato-sized brown ration pellets wrapped in water-resistant papery cocoons emblazoned with the yellow and green livery of some long-gone food wizard. There is a 20% chance of encountering the swarm on any given day.
6. The Glass Bridge is long gone, but some helpful souls have stretched nets and ropes between the translucent supports to help swimming and wading across. This is a little risky most days (Dex DC 1d6+1) but absolute madness after heavy rains (Dex DC 20). On moonlit days, when the True Moon’s light illumines the Near Moon, souls from some Long Long Ago spirit caravan crawl along the nets and try to find an audience for their pitiful laments. Listening to enough laments, some have been lost in the mad possession of these souls.



17. Near Moon

Whispers only came to the Violet City of this oddity, a spherical moon come to Earth, suspended less than a bow-shot above the ashen soil of the Grassland. The mile-high sphere, dusty and cratered, mocks astounded travelers.

“By the Black Bosom of Vulkana! That thing is enormous!” exclaimed PT.

“Yes, the cosmographers believe the stuck-force holding it in place must be the largest in the world,” recited Poncho from the guidebook.

“Ah, throw that to the fish! That moon has room inside for treasures that would melt the hearts of the simpering sopranos of Saffranj!”

Weather: A blue-glow haze is the only light until noon, when the sun emerges, washed out and colorless, its rays are still fierce and burning. No water falls in the vicinity of the Near Moon, but in the eternal twilight beneath its bulk dank waters pool and bogs spread.

Misfortune (Charisma DC 13, roll d6):

1. nauseated by the odd tides (lose 1d6 Con and Wis).
2. lost your cloak and hat to a freak wind.
3. fell into a bog and caught a cold (sneezing), also ruined a fine silk kerchief, if you have one.
4. acquired a fantastic belief that you are a lycanthrope and require raw, bloody meat to feed your inner beast. This passes once you are out of sight of the moon.
5. torn waterskins (lose 1 supply).
6. horribly bitten by bugs in the night (lose 1d4 Dex).

Expenses: 10 cash per week to stay in the Spectrum Lodge.

DIRECTIONS

North-West, Moon to Spectrum Run (trail, Δ4 weeks): a well-marked trail leads towards the Spectrum Palace and the Ribs of the Father.

North-East, Moon River Ford (moon-haunted trail, Δ4 weeks): the accursed faces of forgotten times glare west and travelers fear to raise their eyes lest those grim visages steal their souls.

ENCOUNTERS (D6)

1. a **ka-elemental** (AC 10, HD 10, insubstantial) stalking in maddened decay, leaving ectoplasmic debris as it seeks a lost body to reposses, unmoored in its rage by the action of the moon’s odd tides. It is known that ka-elementals are often tied to ill-fortuned tombs and sites of some slaughter, perhaps valuable slaughter (2dx6 x 200 cash).
2. mysterious **moonbirds** (AC 14, HD 6, flock) descend in a mind-stealing flock and feed on strong emotional emanations. Sufficient moonbird feeding can cause ka-zombies (living dead).
3. **ka-zombies** (AC 10, HD 2, docile) tilling fields or working at repetitive tasks for their moonling taskmasters.
4. a friend-group of tin-hatted **moonlings** or **moon quarterlings** (AC 14, HD 2, good at throwing rocks) discussing ka-zombie maintenance and how to build a better moon-rock bubble-burrow.
5. a local clan of **fisher quarterlings** offering dried fish, nasty gossip, and cut purses - or, to nice people, a totally safe and dry burrow to sleep in.
6. a Spectrum Satrap **self defence initiative** (AC 18, HD 2, heavy) on patrol from a fordite coral kraals.



ODD TIDE EFFECTS

Besides just severe nausea, the odd tides of the Near Moon, as it strains against the bonds and aeons old magical detritus that holds it close to the soil, also have other effects (roll d6 when the weather changes or once per week):

1. **soul dislocation:** the tethers between souls and personalities are weakened, giving disadvantage to all Wis and Cha saves during this period.
2. **troubled sleep:** rest is half as effective and disadvantage to all Con checks.
3. **delirious tides:** disadvantage to all Int checks.
4. **moon-walkers:** all Dex checks have advantage.
5. **bloody tides:** all damage dealt with advantage, healing checks and rest half as effective.
6. **days of inspiration:** all Int and Cha checks have advantage.



NEAR MOON DOOR

Everyone in the UVG has heard the old tales that there is a palace inside the Near Moon, a precious hall of crystal and gems, priceless beyond imagining. Of course this is not true, as any sage would say.

But there is a door on the skyward side of the moon known to only very few, reachable by ropes and hooks and scrabbling hands, round the weak gravity well of the suspended rock. Somebody with directions to the door would find it in a day, one without would need at least 2d10 days to achieve the same. The door itself is a puzzle to open, requiring either 1d4 days per Int DC 15 check, or the sacrifice of a whole Ling's worth of blood at an eerie pyramid of diaphanous force-skin laced with great calcereated arteries and stretched upon an iron-bone frame: the ruined half-living carcass of a cosmic guardian.

The moon itself is host to various outlandish creatures, living like parasites upon its ash-grey hulk. Including:

1. **grey forest lichens** seem at first blush to resemble the earthly lichen, but in the odd tides of the moon they grow to monstrous proportions, as much as four meters tall.
2. **rusticant mushroom ferns** are the commonest plant form of the Near Moon, they arrange themselves into hexagonal fields, assembling moon-ash into leafy shields bonded with chitin. Perhaps against the aetherial disruptions of the deep cosmos? It is unclear.
3. **ashlar crabs** (AC 18, HD 1, nutritious) inhabit blocks of carved and dressed moonrock. They are scavengers and lichen feeders, and move surprisingly nimbly in the weak, odd gravity of the Near Moon.
4. **exuberant prehensiles** (AC 14, HD 2, swinging) seem at first glance an odd mix of spiny echinoderm and flea, the prehensiles launch themselves from the moon's surface with a single leaping pseudopod, while using a silken cord like a bungee to whip around the moon. They are herbivores.
5. **leather shingles** (AC 13, HD 3, tough) are slow moving symbiotes of algal mats and some kind of myriapod, photosynthesizing gently while also feeding on the rusticant ferns with their radular pseudopoda. Herbivores.
6. **flea wolves** (AC 15, HD 4, jumping packs) are the common predator of the Near Moon. Ungainly at first blush, they use hooked extensors and jumping legs to move surprisingly quickly, attacking with quartzite extrusions on their 'faces' and feeding with modified limbs that look eerily like doll hands.

Heroes who surmount all these obstacles find themselves finally inside **The Heart of the Moon** (p. XX).

SPECTRUM LODGE

Ah, the Spectrum Lodge! The finest lodge in all the Grasslands. A pitch-black orb, streaked with yellow and red lichens, but inside—so they say—a marvel, a riot of color, a vision of spaces that could have been had the Sky remained unfallen and the Mists unrisen. Crusty characters include:

Ostens the Marksman (AC 13, HD 5, sharpshooter), who wears a full suit of false limbs, attached by a system of leather golems and biomechanical switches to his torso, which is all that remains after an encounter with a demon in a game of Bridge Keepers.

Babeffe the Bull-fighter (AC 16, HD 4, wrestler) is a folk hero among the semi-nomadic services and mechanists communities of the middle grasslands. She's getting old, her long black hair greying, her teeth thinning, but she could still pull a wruppler to the ground one-handed.

Life-Is-A-Game (AC 11, HD 7, sorcerer bartender), rumored to be an ultra, currently wearing the skin of a noble quarterling from far up the Moon River, where the toothed hills turn to follow the progress of the red-and-gold star. In any case, she is friendly, mixes a mean cocktail, and totally isn't looking for patsies to dive into crystal heart of the Near Moon to retrieve Memories-Best-Forgotten (who is definitely an ultra).

THE OTHER SIGHTS

Ash Bubbles (+1d4-1 days, 50 XP) form when storms whip ash laced with moonly slime spores down to the surface of the Earth. There, the odd spores reproduce rapidly, forming an odd bubble-shaped land coral by cannibalizing their dead cells as they expand. The ash bubbles can grow as large as five or six meters across, before bursting and collapsing under the heavier gravity. Young ash bubbles can sell for as much as 500 cash per slot. Moonlings usually kill older ash bubbles

by coating them in a soap mix over several weeks, then cure them with waxed canvas covers, while smoking them from within, forming the bubble-burrows of those clannish oddballs.

The Cryptic Swallet (+2 days, 100 XP) is a sinkhole punched through the surface layers of anthropocite and basalt into a subterranean lake. Now quite eroded, the walls are drilled with bone-niches holding generations upon generations of moonbirds drawn here by some odd compulsion at the end of their lives, while the well-protected base of the Swallet is home to four clans of fisher quarterlings. The clan of the Martinet is the strongest in mana, while the clan of the Pine badger holds strength of heart. The clans of the Olive tree and the Iron axe are not important.



18. Three Sticks Lake

Three ragged villages cling to the steep shores of the cold, deep lake, built on layers of older settlements from the Long Long Ago. Caravans drag themselves around the harsh coastline, while smaller groups cross on the improvised and salvaged ferries of the Stick Folk.

Poncho inspected the accursed blade. It was very dark, very heavy, and very, very metal.

“How did you not realize this isn’t your sword?” he asked.

“It looked exactly like my sword and I was in a hurry!”

“It literally has the runes for ‘hell blade’ on it.”

“Yes, well, how was I supposed to bother to read those? They’re tiny!”

“Well, never mind. Just keep it sheathed and don’t try to drink our blood again, ok?”

Long Long Ago demons did not wear the skins of animals and men to roam the shores of Three Sticks Lake. Now they do.

Weather: An electric smog seems to obscure half the sky, and the wan sun only emerges to scorch bare skin at noon. Gusting storms rush up at a moment’s notice in the odd eddies created by the Near Moon and flash floods are a danger.

Misfortune (Charisma DC 2d8, roll d6):

1. flash flood washes away 1d4 beasts (or people if the beasts run out). Saving a beast requires a Str DC 15 check (or related skill). Fail the check badly enough and the hero might be pulled in too. Same DC.
2. muddy bog and ravines wash out trail, forcing a detour that wastes 1d4 days.
3. bad sunburn from the violet rays (lose 1d6 hp).
4. wind blows away one book, map, scroll, or other inconvenient parchment.
5. supplies soaked while crossing an unexpectedly rough ford (lose 1d4 supplies).
6. eat some poisonous berries that cause annoying and loud burping for a week. Unlike in a Stephen King novel, no body horror ensues.

Expenses: 5 cash per week to stay in rustic accommodations in one of the Three Living Villages. Otherwise, free.

DIRECTIONS

West, The Refracting Trees (lost trail, 1 week): the maddening tree-silicon symbionts of the Refracting Trees guard a Long Ago trail to the Spectrum Palace.

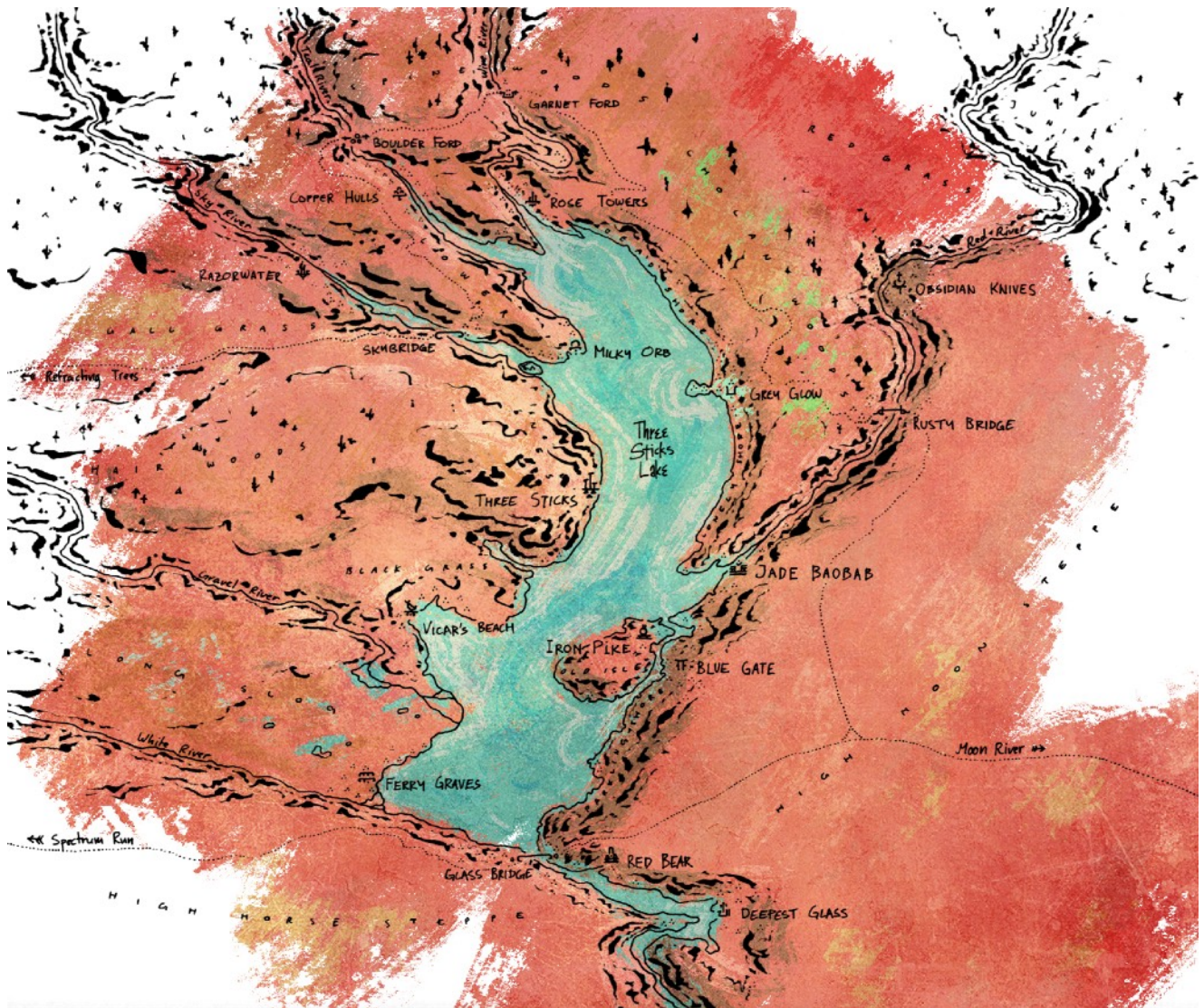
South-West, The Spectrum Run (scruffy trail, Δ4 weeks): a half-forgotten trail, marked with the corpses of Long Ago great vechs leads to the Spectrum Palace and the Ribs of the Father.

South-East, Moon River Ford (wearisome steppe, Δ4 weeks): the open expanse of the High Moon steppe stretches towards the Moon River, bleak, dull, safeish.

ENCOUNTERS (D10)

1. **Hulking destroyer golem** from Long Ago (AC 18, HD 8, electromagnetic discharges) or other especially bad stuff (see specific Three Sticks area).
2. **Waterlogged attack vomes** (AC 14, HD 4, very fast) a swarm of amphibious, leaping, rattling vomes tries to grab a likely target and drag it off into the lake. Also called water people.
3. **Waterlogged vome drones** (AC 13, HD 2, dreams of Long Ago) patrolling from their bleak nest in the lake. They are are still vaguely human, dressed in synthskin rags and surprisingly articulate for vomes. Also called water people.
4. **Motley herd of woodland animals** (AC 10, HD 6, swarm) occupied by a cold demon or ultra (AC 6, HD 6+6, psychic) scouting the edges of the cold lake.
5. **Machine bear** (AC 15, HD 8, disinterested) surveying a territory long since abandoned.
6. **Parasitic charcoal fetish** (AC 12, HD 2, stuck in time) assembling and reassembling itself, as it tries to protect a long dead wizard.
7. **Skittish deer** with ash and green fur.
8. **Eerie half-human nomadics** (AC 13, HD 3, noble but savage) seem unglued in time, unwilling to talk or trade, they eat ash. Perhaps they are not human?
9. **Survivalist villagers** (AC 15, HD 2, paranoid) in a jury-rigged vech on a vital trading mission.
10. **Half-nomads** and their flock moving confidently, skilled in avoiding dangers, or another especially good encounter (see specific Three Sticks area).

The Three Sticks area is a lot more detailed as an overland area than most of the previous areas. Indeed, there’s enough there to start of most any overland campaign. How to handle it? Simple. Assume that it takes about a day to get from one location labelled in capitals to the nearest adjacent location also labelled in capital letters. This makes the ferries from Jade Baobab and Red Bear essential, if the party wants to reach the Refracting Trees quickly.



Arriving in The Three Sticks

Treat **High Moon Crossing** as the starting location for parties coming from the East. On the map, this is represented by the little dotted triangle at lower right where the Moon River trail splits into northern and southern branches. Groups coming from the Refracting Trees should start in the **Gall Grass**, about a day from **Skybridge**. Groups coming from the Spectrum Run should start in the **High Horse Steppe**, about a day out from **Glass Bridge**.

High Moon Crossing is a hillock in the **High Moon Steppe**. It is covered in fine green grass rises four quarterlings high. Local nomads refer to it as “The Regenerating Hill”, for it always reforms to a perfect spherical cap. It is now studded with a profusion of offering pikes, many more rusted to mere spear heads. There are no fell spirits here or odd magics, only this oddity. Indeed, it seems to repel spirits, vomes, and other demonics, and thus it has become both a popular place to camp, and a natural crossroads for the North Trail and the South Trail, that circumnavigate the icy waters of Three Sticks Lake. North leads to the trail to Jade Baobab, south to Red Bear. Iron Pike is only (easily) reachable by ferry from those places.

The **Gall Grass** is a wide, high and dry valley, decked in the pungent yellow stalks and interwoven galls of the slow-dreaming distributed sentience of the modified grasses that absorb all moisture here and keep the **Hair Woods** to the south and the **Higher Spinewood** to the north at bay. Little can survive in the Gall Grass, and thirst a constant danger, but the slightly empathic Gall Grass also keeps most predators at bay, keeping this area surprisingly safe.

The **High Horse Steppe** is a cold, windswept high plateau, pocked with odd horseshoe-shaped depressions left, so the local half-nomads say, by the departure of the Sky Horses. The clans of the Fortunate Son and the Unbroken Patrimony claim that they are the descendants of the Maintainers of the Sky Horses that helped the Lings ascend into the heavens, like the All Fathers before them in the Long Long Ago. This may all be false, but the meeting place of these clans, set where the trail reaches the high ridge that overlooks the rugged southern shore of Three Sticks Lake and the imposing mire-sunk horror of the Ferry Graves, is nonetheless impressive. Two great hooves, broken off at the ankles, are all that remains of some noble equestrian statue that must have once reared at least 40 meters high.

The Three Living Villages

JADE BAOBAB VILLAGE

Jade Baobab is built on a system of bridges and platforms suspended between the forty-meter-high corpses of two biomechanical baobabs. They rise on the south bank of the Red River, testament to the power of the Long Long Ago biomancers of the Five-Dog Corporation. The village is ruled with gnarled fists by the **Elders of Understanding**, a biomancer cargo cult devoted to body modification and the cultivation of miniature perspiration pears (value 200 cash per slot). The leading members, such as Father Time-hath-no-purpose and Sister Mercy-is-weakness hate ultras and have a fondness for vomish implants.

The Elders of Understanding dislike the other Living Villages as heretics, but tolerate them, for at least they are not disgusting imperialist pretenders like the Princes or the Satraps, nor are they fallen scum like the Cold People. The Second Hand clan is working with the Porcelain Princes.

The most impressive building is the scrimshaw-panelled Exhibitorium, where the Elect venerate stuffed and preserved beasts from the times of the Great Elder Biomancer Biloba as offspring of the divine creative principle.

Canoes and slow barges can make the easy trip to Iron Pike and villagers of the clans of the Third Foot and Sixteenth Tooth charge a mere cash per person or beast. The ferry to the Skybridge and the passage through the **Refracting Trees** costs an eye-watering 12 cash per person or beast. It's 15 cash per person or beast to the Ferry Graves. Jade Baobab's ferry *The Flesh Princess* is a hulking half-grav beast decked in greenstone pendants and biomantic cilia.

RED BEAR VILLAGE

Red Bear is a village honey-combed through a great amalgamated skyscraper, built through the centuries-long action of the village's domesticated builder badgers. It is surrounded by several fences of thornvine and thornstone, patrolled by spider fetishes. The builder badgers and spider fetishes are controlled by **Madame Red Star**, the First Servant of Red Bear, ensconced and kept alive in her Iron Belly full-body prosthetic. Little is left of her today but a neural network hooked into psych-machine augmentations, and a steely determination to not forsake the founding principles of the Long Ago Cold Lake Culture Collective. She no longer actually remembers what those founding principles were and is treated as something of a living deity by the inhabitants of Red Bear who keep her alive and fed with a steady diet of good news, of quotas met, and traitors stopped.

The clans of Red Bear devote great effort to keeping the Madame alive and the Iron Belly functioning. The most prestigious clans are those of Maintenance and Repair, Logistics Specialist, Supply Chain Manager, and True News Distribution. Elders transmit clan lore entirely through oral tradition as <redacted> proscribed written records during the Hair Woods War between Skybridge and Vicar's Beach. It is unclear how long ago this was.

The clan of Public Relations is responsible for trade and is generally the least insular, while the clan of Watersport Activities can be relied on to provide up-to-date weather information and a ferry service to Iron Pike for 10 cash per person or beast, and to Skybridge for 25 cash per person or beast. The Red Bear 'ferry' is a great aquatic iron golem, named *Shield of the Collective*, maintained and scrubbed to a sheen by the clan of Plumbing and Filtration.

Red Bear is full of plaudits for all the villages of Three Sticks and quite suspicious of outsiders, who are generally corralled in special Guest Accommodation and Servicing Housing (gashes) dug into the middens that surround Red Bear skyscraper.

IRON PIKE VILLAGE

Iron Pike is the most remote of the villages, protected from most ravages and assaults in its location on the Old Isle, surrounded by the abraded ruins of a pleasure city from the Long Ago. It is built within an eccentric orb, fifty meters across, that spins sedately four meters off the ground, just above a great platform of steel-crete covered in warning petroglyphs. The orb is made of an unbreakable force-glass and only accessible through three circular openings that line up with the ground once every ten minutes. Inside the orb is 314% larger than on the outside and all gravity is directed towards the outside of the orb, creating a small world of its own.

Iron Pike was initially an anarchic hippie-wizard commune, at least so say the legends of grim warning painted on its glassy walls, but this quickly degenerated into all-out magiocratic anarchy and warfare, before the survivors rebuilt it into a rigid, militant caste structure built around a hatred of magic, a love of gladiatorial combat, regular vome-hunting expeditions, and viciously effective war-and-fishing canoes.

The current leadership of Iron Pike consists of two war chiefs, Broadgrin the Sinewy and Swiftstab the Bumbler. Both take advice from the witch Icing Matilda. Iron Pike offers little in trade, grudging hospitality, and canoes to the other two villages for 3 cash per person or beast. They do not like to cross the lake, for those shores are home to shambling vome hordes. Also, their ferry, the sleek-looking *Glazed Partridge* is broken down, as its battery has faded. A replacement could certainly be found in Three Sticks, but that place is crawling with the water people.

The Dead Villages & Wild Areas

BLACK GRASS

A small grassland between **Vicar's Beach** and the **Hair Woods**, the Black Grass is an expanse of wild rye living in shocking symbiosis with a distributed mold colony organism named Rudolph Eats Five Plate. In cold or rainy weather the mold colony organism hibernates and the Black Grass is safe to cross, but in other times there is a great danger of being infected by spore colonists (Con DC 2d6 unless a breathing filter is being used), which slowly and subtly pervert the infected organism until they become a sleeper agent and information gatherer for the weird mold intelligence.

Travelers will often encounter the **mold-faced agents** (AC 16, HD 3, packing heat) of Rudolph, who will try to ascertain whether they are a threat to the libertarian mold-anarchist inclinations of Rudolph. That the mold-faced agents speak oddly accented Bluenttalk, can barely walk in a straight line and tend to go into hibernation when wet, hardly seems to matter.

Shockingly, there is little of value to discover in this grassy area.

BLUE GATE

A great cascade of abandoned palaces overgrown with gnarled ice pines tumbles down the **Sparkling Shore** opposite the **Old Isle** and **Iron Pike**. On a particularly beautiful eroded red and green rock promontory stands the **Blue Gate**. It stands thirty meters tall and almost untouched in its alien metallic beauty. The years have not worn away its geometries or dulled the beauty of its patterned lustrous surface. In the long ages since the fall of the High Moon Culture the gate served as a cultic centre to a series of urban druid groups, before they finally died out in an unusual gastric plague a couple of centuries ago.

The druids hollowed out the sandstone promontory, building their village in caves that twine around the two great posts of the Blue Gate, which reach deeper into the ground than one could easily imagine. All that is left of the urban druids are the metallic coproliths left behind by the plague. A perceptive student, given time, might discover a cache of metallorganic seeds for ironwood and copperwood bamboo enclosed in a locker labelled in long-forgotten warning runes (worth 1,000 cash, Int DC 15 and a week's search).

Little else of value is left and local dust deer and rubble pigs are the usual occupants of the ruins, though some of the half-nomads still come to give offerings to the Great Blue City on the Hill.

BOULDER FORD

Three magnificent post-fordite boulders straddle **Teal river**, like a post-modernist performance sculpture that nearly means something, but just barely fails. Three wise creatures are graven into each surface in repeating, vividly serrated depictions. None of them seem to mean anything. The waters swirl madly around the boulders, filled with leaping silvery fish and vegetal hydras.

Every third day a different boulder is occupied by a diaphanous radiation ghost that seems to be singing. If its words are discerned, in a odd old steppe tongue, the song is (roll d6):, (1) gloomy and depressing (disadvantage to mental rolls for a day), (2-3) mawkish and forgettable, (4) uplifting and joyous (advantage to three rolls), (5) speaks of a secret chamber in the Copper Hulls, (6) ... and mentions the secret song that soothes the savage beast.

The actual crossing itself is a short way upstream, where masses of lodged steel pines and amalgamated landcoral form a broken, rough dam. A marshland stretches upriver, home to dire beavers and lumbering turtles. A slow, two day crossing is utterly safe. A faster crossing tempts misfortune.

CHOLAN WOODS

The sparse pines of the plateau between the Lake and the Red River are grotesquely riddled with galls the size of houses, home to the **cholans** (AC 10, HD 1, gaseous, toxic) wispy floating creatures, which look somewhat like aerial jelly-fish. The cholans are mostly harmless, though they leave ectoplasmic deposits which cling to every surface and droop from the trees like weeping tendrils.

Staying too long among them may summon **ectoplasmic nightmares** (AC 12, HD 8, endlessly mutating, attack Wisdom instead of Hp) from the subconscious of the traveler. The cholans are quite friendly and make it clear that the lethality of their ectoplasmic excreta is a most unfortunate eventuality.

Searching through the Cholan Woods, an explorer might find (Int DC 3d6 after Δ4 days searching) the peach-hued cosmic shell fragments of the Cholan's first arrival (700 cash per slot).

COPPER HULLS

The pale green patinated hulls look like beached whales on the gently sloping western shore of the Teal River estuary. All around them lie scattered and fragmented the splintering growbone struts of some great biological town or resort. The **Copper Hulls** themselves, aside from the patina, look eerily untouched by time. Indeed, plants around them grow oddly out of season, and snows seem to avoid them. Radiation ghosts of elegant ladies in white satin mouth warnings and make desperate gestures to keep visitors away. There are no discernible doors on the Copper Hulls, but a determined effort with picks, or a *Pass Wall* type spell should work. The hulls regenerate damage over a period of hours, apparently by locally reversing the flow of time. Inside is dust, bones, grotesque life-like statues and an eerie lemon glow.

Local half-nomads claim that the Copper Hulls are batteries of slow time, leaking their essence into their surroundings, and stealing people out of time. This is somewhat true, they are actually a kind of sarcophagus built over the magiactive corpses of three wizards from Long Long Ago. The corpses still leak a vicious time-distorting effect, and are best left alone.

Time distortion effect, Wis save DC 3d6, roll d6:

1. Object is frozen in time forever, a statue that always tries to shift back to where it was formed. Chains can keep it on a cart, though.
2. Object comes unstuck in time, scattered along time's river. Sentient creatures may return 1d6 times over the next decade, giving cryptic (and often useless) clues about the future.
3. Object ages rapidly and terminally, creatures leave dusty, mummified remains.
4. Object begins to age irregularly, with some parts of aging faster than other.
5. Nothing seems to happen.
6. Object seems protected from the ravages of time. Living creatures live 1d6 times as long as normal and are resistant to temporal magics.

Aside from the time distortion effect, inside the Copper Hulls there is little of value, though unusual bones and remains could be sold to collectors (200 cash per slot).

Armed with the message of the **Boulder Ford** radiation ghost, an explorer may learn that through the fallen eye of the Blue and Iron wizard is a passageway into that wizard's Ka-Ba Fortress (phylactery). Inside are the three great treasures of the Blue and Iron wizard: the **heart of glass**, which can replace a creature's heart and both increase the clarity of their thoughts (+2 Int) and make them immune to all blood-borne toxins and diseases, though it does reduce their hardiness (-1 AC); the **Grand Book of Esbeen**, including the four common spells of

Esbeen (*Esbeen's Animation of the Mummified Dead*, *Esbeen's Words With the Dead*, *Esbeen's Recalling of the Lost Soul*, *Esbeen's Recalling of the Lost Soul and Reanimation of the Corpse*, as well as the half-mythical *Esbeen's Turning of the Mill Wheel of Essential Existence*; and finally the **Nightmare of the Sea of Death**, a purification ritual that terrifies the soul and keeps it from returning to the Sea of Death, extending the lifespan of the ritualist by 2d6 x 10%. It may have side-effects.

However, the Blue and Iron wizard's maze-like Ka-Ba Fortress is inhabited by the **Beast of Grinding Death** (AC 20, HD 20, poly-dimensional), a great grey weasel that unzips through several dimensions into a gibbering fleshy tunnel of razor teeth. The Beast can completely fill an available tunnel, proceeding forwards like a stately tunnel of death to engulf one interloper after another.

DEAD SHORE

Between **Grey Glow** and the **Rose Towers** stretches a low, tumbled shoreline of spare, minimalist ruins, but tunneled beneath them are the vast Salvation Complexes of some particularly unfortunate Long Long Ago culture. Within they stored themselves in expectation of a better future. Alas, that future was vomish intrusion, and the area is now thick with rancid **necrotic vomes** (AC 11, HD 2, nauseating). The vomes are often on standby in odd arrangements, but loud noises or flashing lights may trigger them into frenetic and deadly activity. Very nearly zombies, they are best avoided.

Someone plunging deep into the complexes might come across a cache of cryonic wands (800 cash per slot), ceramic tins of biomorphic protein (200 cash per slot), or archaic collectible rare-alloy weapons (300 cash per slot).

DEEPEST GLASS

The Glass is a vast shock crater at the southern edge of Three Sticks Lake, mostly flooded by the outflow waters of the watershed. What Long Ago impact caused it, nobody knows anymore, save perhaps the Madam of Red Bear. **Deepest Glass** is a series of shattered bubble habitats and their support struts that still stand at the very center of the crater. Some magic protected them, that much is obvious, and now as the waters rise and fall they emerge and submerge. Even the vomes avoid this horrible field, scarred with radiation ghosts and home to scuttling **glassy scorpions, crabs, and terrestrial cuttlefish** (all vermin, AC 12, HD 1, swarm, radiation bite: Con DC 2d6 or lose 1d4 Str).

Local half-nomads claim that in the Tower of Two Bells a machine human named Nito Takohudo sleep-guards a **floating barge of the Later Levitants**. If this is true, the floating barge is a machine of glazed pumice and silver struts constructed around a three-point force array. It can carry up to 20 inventory slots of equipment, yet be pulled by a single person. The barge is worth 6,000 cash. It can also be studied and disassembled to learn the *Floating Disc* and the *Three-point Immobility* spells.

FERRY GRAVES

Preserved in ancient, gargantuan and slowly calcinating gelatinous sarcophagi, hundreds of craft of all sizes, the largest hundreds of meters long, litter the ochre and yellow slime-and-reed spattered shore that makes the **Ferry Graves**. Most travelers give the hulking, gently pulsing gelatinous cuboids. Spattered with colonies of lichens and bacterial growths, the cuboids form the basis of an odd ecosystem of motile molds and slimes. The **Long Slog**, as the waterlogged terrain between the Gravel and White rivers is called, forms a horrible barrier to travel, while the rivers themselves are wide and filled with **translucent crocodilians** (AC 16, HD 5, hard to spot).

However, a canny explorer, equipped with a guide and a lot of luck, might well find a functioning (roll d6) (1–3) vech, (4–5) autowagon, or even a (6) floating barge among the ferry graves. This would, however, be a hard and dangerous endeavor (Cha check DC 20, one check per week allowed). The molds and slimes, though not intelligent individually, would be drawn in greater and greater numbers to the party over time.

GALL GRASS

This wide, high and dry valley is decked in the pungent yellow stalks and interwoven galls of the slow-dreaming distributed sentience of the modified grasses that absorb all moisture here and keep the **Hair Woods** to the south and the **Higher Spinewood** to the north at bay. Little can survive in the Gall Grass, and thirst a constant danger, but

the slightly empathic Gall Grass also keeps most predators at bay, keeping this area surprisingly safe. The northern way leads through here to the **Refracting Trees**.

GARNET FORD

The **Wine river** valley suddenly broadens from its gullet in the **Higher Spinewoods** into a morass of mud and grasping willows and half-phantom birches. In the midst of all this a causeway from the Long Ago false dawn of the Lesser Builders stands testament to an ambition that outstripped ability. Great blocks of pure cinnamon-stone formed a megalithic causeway, but the great lintel stones have mostly fallen by the wayside.

Modern voyagers use portable bridges, or the services of local quarterling half-nomads of Pine Nut and Darling Tree clans (there is a 50% chance one or the other clan will be near the ford). A squad of a dozen porters with bridges, ropes, and cables costs 50 cash to help a middling caravan cross the ford. The two clans have an uneasy relationship, but outright violence is rare. Without bridges or porters, the fording takes 1d4 horrid days, filled with midges, biting insects and misfortune.

The marshlands are replete with wading birds, ducks, thick-shelled carp, and carnivorous **giant salamanders** (AC 9, HD 3, drowning). Oddly enough, there are few of the deadly vomes here, above the cataracts and narrows of the lower Wine river.

GLASS BRIDGE

Spanning the turbulent outflow of the lake, the **Glass Bridge** is a breathtaking sight - a cathedral of glass that sparkles in the daylight and phosphoresces in the ultraviolet mornings. It links Red Bear to the High Horse Steppes, and the villagers collect steep tolls (5 cash per person or beast) at the eastern end, while the half-nomad clan of the Prodigal Father collects a similar toll at the western end.

By day an array of **vitreous gargoyles** (AC 13, HD 3, fragile and explosive) crawls across the Glass Bridge, maintaining its lustrous sheen and repairing it with the furnaces in their bellies. They protect the bridge above all else, and ignore mere travelers. The gargoyles rarely talk, but they like to sing an hour after each sunrise, and are sluggish in cloudy or rainy weather, thus elders surmise they are avatars of the sun.

The glass of the bridge is stupendously strong and turns all prismatic and radiant effects into area damaging attacks. Missed rays rebound chaotically.

GRAVEL RIVER

A glum, slow river that grinds through its channel with weary, sad inevitability. Its gravel beds and banks are home to sunning **sail-backed amphibians** (AC 12, HD 4, hopping) in the day time. There is not much to say about this river. Panning for gold and rare-earth nodules will recover 1d20 cash worth per person per day, but then the **cold vomes** (AC 13, HD 1+1, sneaky) might crawl up out of the grey waters and then you'd be in all sorts of trouble again.

GREY GLOW

Every night a great screen of flickering motes, like static upon a celestial cathode display, obscures the morass of icy ruins between the **Lonely Shore** and the **Dead Shore**. Eerie **half-human nomadics** (AC 14, HD 2, phasing) emerge from moments between two blinks of the eye and try to resume some kind of Long Ago existence. Every midnight **cold vomes** (AC 13, HD 3, freezing fingers) emerge from the slimy still waters of the shore and try to hunt the half-present half-humans.

The phasing of the half-humans becomes more abrupt and twitchy around 6 a.m., before they finally disappear with the first glimmers of the sun over the ultraviolet haze. The cold vomes flee back into their watery deep, for the sun dries them out and leaves them helpless, like deadwood upon the shore.

Each half-human has 1d4 odd trinkets of obscure utility. There is a 20% chance that any given trinket is of an obscure alloy or rare stone and worth 100 cash. The vomes leave these trinkets behind.

Any creature passing through the half-humans great screen is bathed in a flood of light of obscure shades, before folding abruptly through a pinprick between one breath and the next. Brute beasts are lost forever. Intelligent creatures (and some heroes) get a Wisdom save (DC 13). Effects may vary:

1. Critical Fail: the creature is gone forever, but its malevolent radiation ghost haunts its friends every fourth day, around tea time.
2. Fail: 1d4 weeks later the creature reappears nearby, at sunrise, nude and queerly different (reduce one stat by 1d6, raise another by 1d4, add a mutation of some sort).
3. Barely Fail: most of the creature disappears, but a ghostly echo of it remains, and it reappears 1d4 days later near a friend or location that is dear to it, mostly unharmed. Mostly.
4. Barely Succeed: the creature flickers and phases for the next 1d4 hours, suffering disadvantage to physical activities during that period, but gains permanent insight into the Forces of the Prime Electromagnetic

Elemental Sphere (either become proficient with electromagnetic magics, or gain +1 to Int).

5. Succeed: the creature has disadvantage to physical activities for 1d6 rounds, before becoming linked to the Prime Electromagnetic (as above).
6. Critical Success: the Great Cathode Ghost chooses the creature as its vessel, granting a short range electromagnetic attack (1d6 electromagnetic damage, careful when wet). The creature also gains the other bonuses, as above.

HAIRWOODS

The lumpy highlands north of the Gravel River are covered in a thick forest of fleshy, red-stemmed trees with canopies of long, grey-blond hair-like leaves. The hairwoods are mostly desolate these days, home to herds of grazing swinedeer, parrot owls, lumbering bear-badgers, and the occasional strider hermit.

Deep in the gullies a visitor might discover an ancient wellspring of emotion, marked by warning and beckoning runes in a lyrical archaic sunsettish. The wellspring of emotion taps the heartwaters of the Earth to bring emotional release, putting the drinker in touch with their innermost traumas and frustrations (Wis save DC 3d6). Those who overcome themselves and make the save permanently increase their Wis and Cha scores by 1. Those who fail, decrease a random mental ability score by 2 and acquire a lovely new mental trauma.

THE HIGHER SPINEWOODS

Massive, stocky trees, with needles sharp as daggers, rule the Higher Spinewoods, keeping out large predators and unwary travelers, and generally blocking overland access to the headwaters of the Wine, Teal, and Sky rivers. There are rumours of small, leather-faced humans living there, but if they are real, they hide very well. The occasional radiation tower flickers into existence, giving a hint of some lost monument, but who would wander there?

The Higher Spinewoods are very difficult terrain to cross, and any misfortune likely includes wandering into a spiked pit 'excavated' by the lightly carnivorous trees.

HIGH HORSE STEPPE

The **High Horse Steppe** is a cold, windswept high plateau, pocked with odd horse-shoe-shaped depressions left, so the local half-nomads say, by the departure of the Sky Horses. The clans of the Fortunate Son and the Unbroken Patrimony claim that they are the descendants of the Maintainers of the Sky Horses that helped the Lings ascend into the heavens, like the All Fathers before them in the Long Long Ago.

Two great hooves, broken off at the ankles, are all that remains of some noble equestrian statue that must have once reared at least 40 meters high. Today they are the meeting place of the two clans.

The trail to the Spectrum Run leads beyond, cold, windswept and lonely.

HIGH MOON STEPPE

A relatively safe and desolate steppe, in the growing season home to the nomads of the Copper and Jale clans.

On moonlit nights radiation ghosts in electric chariots scream across the steppe, leaving behind odd circles and tracks in the grass, but little else. They are temporal echoes of the cataclysms that preceded the arrival of the Near Moon, but do little in themselves.

A wanderer in the steppe might find the **Last Bunker**, an autowagon buried by the ages so only its access hatch remains. Inside, mummified, a Ling named Pan the Bringer of Bells. The Ling looks perfectly ordinary, safe for the utter perfection of its bones, skins, and organs. Indeed, a germ-line analysis would reveal that down to the smallest animalcule of its being, it has been refined and processed to be a perfect human. Alas, it is now a dead human. The autowagon could be reactivated with a hint of soulfire.

JUNIPER SCRUB

Junipers deck the high hills of the upper Red River, fragrant and calm. Few signs of settlement remain in this cold, remote area. Rabbits and foxes abound, and the scattered hard-shell ruins of carapace houses are all that is left of some forgotten Long Ago culture. Now exiled half-nomads and hermetic hermits are the likeliest creature you might encounter here.

LONELY SHORE

Egrets and terns congregate along this desolate shore of tumbled grand pines and granite boulders. Few ruins are to be seen.

Unfortunate travelers may encounter the **collector** (AC 15, HD 10, recording ray), an ancient biomech who collects souls and personalities for preservation in the face of the Oncoming Swarm. An event that failed to occur more than a thousand years ago.

Fortunate travelers might encounter the **coffin walker** (AC 18, HD 2, healer), a large and lichen-covered soapstone golem with stubby legs and a coffin of preservation in its belly, which can keep alive a seriously injured person for 2d6 weeks. Seriously injured may mean recently killed, so long as the central nervous system has not been severely disrupted. The coffin walker is stuck under a grand pine, and very lonely. Like a large, ominous, stone puppy. The coffin walker likes to play fetch, too.

LONG SLOG

The **Long Slog** is a waterlogged mix of marshland, dumpland, and slimewood between the Gravel and White rivers. It is a horrible barrier to travel, filled with biting insects, stinging plants, crawling **biomechanical snakes** (AC 14, HD 1, electric), and great **animatronic auto-vechs** (AC 16, HD 6, dinosaurian). It's like a very dull, repetitive, poorly thought out lost world.

In the depths are multiple cyclopean ruins, collapsed temples, decaying motels, and lonely **shack mimics** (AC 8, HD 10, look like shacks, swallow hole, filled with grinding furniture lumps). Treasure is surprisingly sparse, reduced by the harsh climate until the odd piece, such as a gold gas mask (600 cash) or nacreous necklace (60 cash) are all that remains.

Seriously, any local will tell you not to go here.

LOWER SPINES

Stretching along the rubble-like promontory between the Teal and Sky River estuaries, past the **Milky Orb**, and all the way to the craggy peaks above **Three Sticks**, the massive spinetrees are rarer here and the park-like woodlands are home to lupine half-humans with fanged faces and scabbling claws. Fortunately these regressives are both very conservative in their pack tactics and terrified of loud and colourful demonstrations of magical prowess.

At night, **cold vomes** (AC 13, HD 1+1, grappling) may be a problem, as may the occasional **boulder agglomeration** (AC 17, HD 2, thick as a brick) animated by soul discharges from the Three Sticks.

MILKY ORB

At the farthest promontory, between the Teal and Sky rivers, in the middle of a black ruinland dashed through with quicksilver trees that slither like mindless oozes in the dark, is the **milky orb**. A perfect hemisphere, some say sphere, it is 314 meters across and 158 meters tall (this irregularity is ascribed to the erosion of the ruinland. The villagers and the half-nomads agree that the devastated remains of the town around the Milky Orb are much younger than the orb itself, which the most extreme among them say predates even the Long Long Ago.

Although the orb is most clearly *there*, it is completely non-interacting. Objects pushed into it experience exponentially increasing resistance, but return unscathed. Energies emitted into the orb are radiated away on a broad and harmless band. Spiritual or personality transmissions discover only a harmless void.

Literally hundreds of sages and scholars have attempted to figure out its purpose, so much so that at least a dozen abandoned and decaying laboratories and expedition camps dot the surroundings, and the local cold vomes have grown accustomed to send regular foraging parties into the area, making it especially dangerous in the dark (which lasts until noon, because of the Haze).

OBSIDIAN KNIVES

They say the razor skyscrapers of the **Obsidian Knives** cut the very water till it bleeds, that is why the Red River runs so red down its grim black canyon. Perhaps it is also the iron oxides in the sharp glass of the knives leeching out. The river loops around the hard promontory of the knives, all blasted into a solid lump of glassy granite, interlaced with metallic sinews, like the very land here was some kind of great biomechanical intrusion. The Knives themselves mostly rise no more than ten or fifteen meters, though in the heart of the devastated township the highest reach a hundred meters and more, visible above the rim of the Red River canyon.

Whatever the case, the Obsidian Knives suffered some sort of odd disaster, which compressed most of its above ground structures very nearly into pure planes of force. Some visitors suggest that, if you look closely, you can discern the remains of the inhabitants of the Knives still 'alive', though translated into a 2-dimensional matrix within the Knives themselves. Odd slivers of stuck force enmeshed in glassy matrices can be excavated by visitors willing to risk force tremors and the snapping mono-dimensional tendrils of whatever nightmare created the Obsidian knives. These slivers are prized as blades, weapons or curios (500 cash per slot).

Superstitious nomads claim that at sunrise the razor skyscrapers sing and that frictionless blackbirds fly into the starless void. This is nonsense, of course.

RAZORWATER

A mammoth polished plaza abuts the Sky River, kept clean by a small army of **Cleaner Jellies** (AC 7, HD 5, translucent and flabby). It looks beautiful, peaceful, and serene ... except at every full hour, when an ancient mechanism powers up and unleashes a bewilderingly beautiful array of fountains and lights, which spray the chill water of the Sky River more than two hundred meters into the air. The jets are so powerful, and in places so thin, that luckless heroes have been known to end up sliced in half.

It is, however, very pretty, with the rainbows that accompany the misting waters, and what not. Watching a full show boosts morale and grants 1d6 temporary hit points.

RED GRASS

A small steppe, home to vermilion grasses that give off mildly soporific spores. Sloth-like antelopes graze here, and there are no predators. Travelers in the Red Grass must take precautions (like breathing masks), lest they too become slow and wearisome (as under a *slow* spell). The effects last 1d4 weeks after leaving the Red Grass. Any local can warn of this danger.

In the depths of the Red Grass is a collapsing gazebo of slow-dreaming **servant vomes** (AC 8, HD 3, sleep rays) attending an autofac generating iridescent machine butterflies (hard to catch, but worth 300 cash per slot).

RED RIVER

The blood red watercourse acquires its color at the weirdness of the Obsidian Knives, before discharging into the Lake, which washes all sins clean. In its turbid waters **great electric eels** (AC 12, HD 2, shocking) are the apex predators.

ROSE TOWERS

Three delicate towers of a rose-hued synthetic land coral rise improbably tall, slender and mockingly elegant from a platform of synthetic ivory bricks in the midst of a devastated morass of tumbled towers overgrown with slimes and molds. Every day of the week, a different array of lights flickers and glows in the **Rose Towers**. A congregation of doomed machine humans relives the last days of the Optical Era, restored to perfection every week by a gargantuan occluded autofab deep in the ivory platform named **Rising-prism-of-perception**.

Amphibious **vome fish with spidery legs** (AC 14, HD 2, acid breath, nacreous) emerge from the Wine river estuary every sunset to harvest biomatter and broken machine humans for the autofab.

A swift, and suicidally brave, looter might ascend the distorted inertial shafts of the Rose Towers to harvest many-hued glow spheres (400 cash per slot) or bio-mechanical flickering songbirds (1,000 cash per bird) that the autofab generates every sixth day. However, the can easily turn lethal, not to mention the rumored **half-inertial feathered vomes** (AC 15, HD 6, flying).

RUSTY BRIDGE

The great, wide, immense and crumbling Rusty Bridge spans the black canyon of the Red River. Though its surface is pockmarked and riddled with holes, though great flakes of it fall off, still its metal sinews hold strong and stable, sailing proudly through time, like a grand old ocean liner upon the Ocean of Forever.

Rust elementals (AC 7, HD 3, rusting touch) play around the bridge and **rat-like mechs** (AC 13, HD 1-1, obsequious) try to carry out repairs with no supplies remaining whatsoever. Heavy vehicles or creatures crossing the bridge should take measures to spread out their weight, lest they fall through the cheese-like road surface.

SKYBRIDGE

Exactly as terrifying as it sounds, the Skybridge is a translucent, three mile razor of stuck-force, arcing ever so gently over the Sky River (named after the bridge) estuary. Its ends are marked by monolithic cable stays, but the cables are long gone, their attachments now eerie lichen speckled eyes in the gleaming glass blocks. The three meters wide force bridge is smooth and deadly, though beautifully iridescent, in rainy or windy weather. Quite often a flying bird or floating Montgolfier mushroom will be sliced in half by the razor edges of the bridge.

There is no ghost troll in the perpetual cloud banks of the Sky river estuary.

SKY RIVER

A bone-chilling river of pure, translucent water so clean and pure that it can literally disinfect wounds. Its waters are prized by medicine men and shamans in the near abroad (50 cash per slot) and caravans regularly fill up from its banks.

SPARKLING SHORE

Villas of pearl-petrified gnarled wood, filled with the crumbling pumice-petrified remains of their owners, dot the thorn-shrub studded Sparkling Shore. In the daylight the pearlwood villas sparkle wonderfully, obscuring the **feral wicker fetishes** (AC 10, HD 1, very fast) and venomous biomechanical **floral centipedes** (AC 13, HD 2, leaping) that patrol the ruins of their masters' estates.

Unlucky visitors might find one of the petrification bomblets (Con save DC 3d8) scattered in some Long Ago military conflict, and still obscenely dangerous.

However, the temptation of an untouched villa, with particularly beautiful pearlwood petrifacts (400 cash per slot), is great.

TEAL RIVER

Wide, rushing, and a vivid teal color, the Teal River is especially cold and difficult to cross along most of its fast flow. There are no great dangers on this river, save dire beavers and lumbering turtles. A slow, two day crossing at the ford is utterly safe. A faster crossing tempts misfortune.

THREE STICKS

The beating, vibrant heart of the region are three prismatic soul accumulators, named the **Three Sticks**, that rise two hundred vibrant (and vibrating) meters from the moss and flower decked cliffs of the western shore of Three Sticks Lake.

The sticks make their own eerie weather systems within 1d6 hours journey, including (roll d6, roll for a new weather effect at sunrise and sunset):

1. a soul draining miasma spreads around the accumulators, turning everything to grey (all creatures take 1 Wisdom damage per hour).
2. static storms that suspend dust and small particles in the air and reduce the momentum of all objects in the vicinity (all ranged attacks have disadvantage to hit and damage).
3. luminescent fogs, which glow brightly even at night. Nearby objects are very clearly visible, but the bright fog occludes everything beyond about 30 meters (it's easy to get lost here).
4. depressing rains that dampen personalities (all Int and Cha rolls are made with disadvantage).
5. waves of rainbows that bathe verdant surroundings in healing light (disadvantage to all checks that require precise vision, restore 1 hp and 1 stat point per hour). Plants seem to grow especially quickly after each rainbow pulse, which may be hazardous for sleeping heroes.
6. bright perpetual thunder shakes the surroundings, verbal communication is nearly impossible and hearing can be badly affected, but spirits are raised (advantage to all Wisdom checks).

All locals agree that the Three Sticks are suffused with the power of superior beings from the Long Long Ago and deadly to unwary interlopers. On good weather days pilgrims will come to deliver offerings to these beings, which they simply call the Fantastic Masters. Nobody has ever seen anyone of these masters, but their ghosts (it is said), are often seen on nights with crescent moons.

There is a beautifully austere plaza built between the three accumulators, focusing their light and opening into a different area of obscurely spiritual dungeons, depending on the local weather conditions. Inside **machines of light and crystal** (AC 4d6, HD 2d10, decaying into dementia) maintain the workings of the accumulators, in preparation for some final destiny. The machines are horribly overpowered, and ridiculously alien. One might find out that they align vaguely with factions that could translate as Suspension of Disbelief, Orange Orchard, and Perpetual Fog of Self-Annihilation.

Should this be relevant, at the heart of the accumulator are a great three-chambered spiritual battery and a functional soul mill (also called *The Painless Devourer of Ka*).

THREE STICKS LAKE

The lake itself is cold and full of fish, its bed - so it seems - thick with **waterlogged vomes** (AC 13, HD 2, grappling) ready to emerge and drag careless bathers into the ultramarine depths. Is there much to add? It is one of the deepest and darkest lakes known to the Steppelanders, yet it is a vital source of water and even, if one compromises comfort, respite in the **Three Living Villages**.

VICAR'S BEACH

A large, half-sunken bay stretches along the western shore of Three Sticks, from the Gravel River the Black Grass heights. Multi-colored gravel dunes, built up by the action of **demented auto-dozers** (AC 18, HD 8, half-witted self-repairing), have in places cemented into solid bulwarks and mounds of eerie half-meaningful shapes. From the air the whole beach looks like a the shards of a machine mind trying to recreate a meaningful social experience from the detritus of an aristocratic picnic. At the heart of Vicar's Beach is a pile of gloriously colonnaded oval courtyards surmounted by an inverted dome mounted on great stone supports.

Locals call it the **Vicar's Ear** and it is unclear which Long Ago culture built it, whether to actually perform a function, or as part of a decaying cargo cult. In any case, local **crab-wit vomes** (AC 17, HD 2, shelled) seem to worship it, regularly crawling up from the scum-white shore to prostrate themselves and give offerings gleaned from the lakebed and unwary travelers.

Deep within the bowels of Vicar's Ear demonic mind-traps abound to twist and tear and trick the mind, pits away unwary feet, and odd glassy slimes hang in portals to wrap the unwary. At the bottom of all this half-sentient nonsense is a great coffin that holds the dead remains of the machine person called **Vicar**, and three gilt chests of spare parts, still reverently packed in scented grease. Repairing Vicar would take 1d4 weeks and incredible mechanotechnical skills (Int DC 20).

Vicar is a steward-class machine human from the Long Ago time of the Fleeting Pacific Expansion, but most of her memories have corroded since then. She can be used as a player character. Twice she tried to help local survivors rebuild a functioning low-entropy society, and failed both times. Roll stats with an extra d6 for Str and Cha, and a d6 less for Dex. Advance as thief.

AC 12 (base), HD 1d8, +2 karate fists 1d6+1, multi-spectrum vision, does not need to eat or drink or brith, requires sunshine to recharge.

Powers: *Reproduce Sound Perfectly, Record Events, Read and Decipher Languages.*

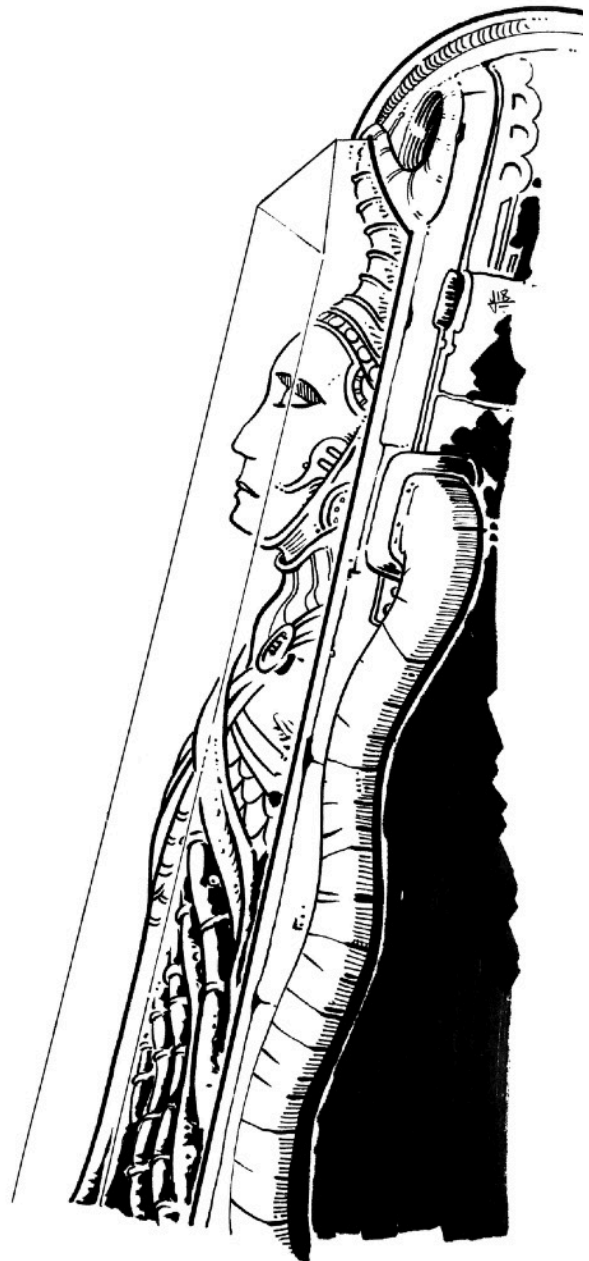
Weaknesses: electricity, water, clumsy on stairs.

WHITE RIVER

Constrained to an artificial channel for much of its upper course, in the middle of the Long Slog the milky waters of the White River suddenly flood out across the miasmatic plain. The waters are thick, somehow soupy, and filled with **pestilential amoebas** (AC 5, HD 5, disease-ridden).

WINE RIVER

The Wine River gets its name from the dark burgundy gravel of its bed, and though the water is swift for most of its course, it broadens and slows at the **Garnet Ford**. Various water fowl, thick-shelled carp, and carnivorous **giant salamanders** (AC 9, HD 3, drowning) share its waters. In the lower Wine River there are many of the **deadly cold vomes** (AC 12, HD 2, swimming adapted) There are few of the deadly vomes here, above the cataracts and narrows of the lower Wine river.



19. Moon to Spectrum Run

Fires of prismatic sentience gone mad light the crystal excrescences that mark old Satrap experiments and settlements. Whether the crystals are successes or failures, the Satraps do not tell.

20. The Refracting Trees

Light bends oddly here, the bark of the trees coated in a slimy, inorganic sheen. Long ago mad experiments created tree-silicon symbionts and now most voyagers are cautioned to wear neutral-density eyewear, lest the odd shapes drive them loopy.

21. The Ribs of the Father

A bone formation the size of a small mountain range erupts from the ground, creating a landmark visible for a week and more in each direction. The old, eroded bone range, garlanded in ancient long-needle pines, is usually capped by snow-heavy clouds. The Satraps mutter uneasily of the swift-breeding marmotfolk that live upon and within its bulk.

22. The Cage Run

A great avenue of fused terranova runs due north from the Ribs, passing by the Spectrum Palace and disappearing into the Elf-haunted north. Along the distance of the road were once ranged multiple rows of ritualistic metal trees. Many have been removed and reused since the road was abandoned, but a great number still remain, most decked with Satrap cages now, holding the bones of marmotfolk and other interlopers who would threaten Satrap dominance.

23. Spectrum Palace

The palace of the powerful Spectrum Satraps is surprisingly small: a drum-shaped thing of dull metal and rivets, thirty meters lengthwise and across, and a hundred meters around. It sits upon a small saddle between two unremarkable hills, and a single doorway of pitch black looms ominous upon its southern face. Every night full-spectrum localized aurorae light the sky above the palace, hence its name.

24. The Iron Road

Striking out due west from the Ribs, just like the Cage Run runs due north, the Iron Road is a series of mammoth skeletal iron towers that stand red and rusting, like an army of giants marching into the sunset. They stretch more than a week's journey distant, and Spectrum scholars claim that in the Long Ago cable wagons flew from one tower to the next, simulating the flight of an eagle or a golden barge.

25. The Ivory Plain

The trackless deep Plain is a sea of ivory grass, which glows palely in the dark. Great herds of grazing beasts and their predators make their way across this plain in stately procession, under the harsh ultraviolet radiation of the hazy sky.

26. Dead Bridge

The Chasm, forty miles wide, marks the western extremity of the Ultraviolet Grasslands. In its depths a sluggish ink-dark river courses towards some mysterious southern sea. The projectors of glittering force bridges rust on the precipices of the chasm, and one single archaic bridge of Livingstone and Dryland coral remains, overgrown and distended into a riot of towers and walkways. The old power generators are long since dead and the lights are long since gone, but the Dead Bridge crawls with degenerate quarterlings and subhumans.

27. Dark Light Passage

At its northern edge the Chasm branches and breaks out into a series canyons, craters, and calderas. Many cultures have carved a series of steps, tunnels, hanging bridges and more across this morass. All are in poor repair, but travelers still descend into the eternal twilight of the Dark Light Passage: a series of parallel grooves cut east to west through the mesas and ridges, as though the stone were soft clay. The walls of this passage glitter with shock gemstones that give off a healthy UV glow.

28. The Endless Houses

Beyond the Dead Bridge is a seemingly endless ruinland. For over a week the landscape is a mind-numbing grid-work of abandoned houses, towers, palaces, monuments, aqueducts, and roads. Slow-growing ivy struggles to choke the dead buildings, and vacant mouthed ghouls chase radiation ghosts in this empty place.

29. The Forest of Meat

Long ago somebody, somewhere thought it would be a great idea if easily harvested protein grew on trees, so animals would no longer have to be slaughtered for their flesh. Then somebody, probably a mad druid, thought exploiting trees for their meat was cruel to the trees and gave them teeth and claws and venom-laced root lances. If it sounds like the Forest of Meat is a bad place to be, you might be right.

30. Black City

The Omega. The Last City. God speed you, Black City. It hunches upon the shore of an endless, oily ocean, a lacquered black chaos of cubes that seem to slide one across another in almost patterns that ever so slightly fail to repeat. Hair stands on edge with the background electromagnificent radiation and the corpses of fools who tried to walk into the Black City lie on the toxic dust of the Pre-city.

Five grand portals with mirror-sheen surfaces stand alone at the edge of the toxic dust, forty-two meters tall each, connected by a smear of black cubes to the city proper. Every day at three in the afternoon, when the sun finally blazes forth, white and harsh, after crossing the purple haze, a great tolling sound issues and the Black City Hermits scurry forth from the Last Period to announce the trading propositions and diktats of the Last and Most Divine Secretary of the Black City.

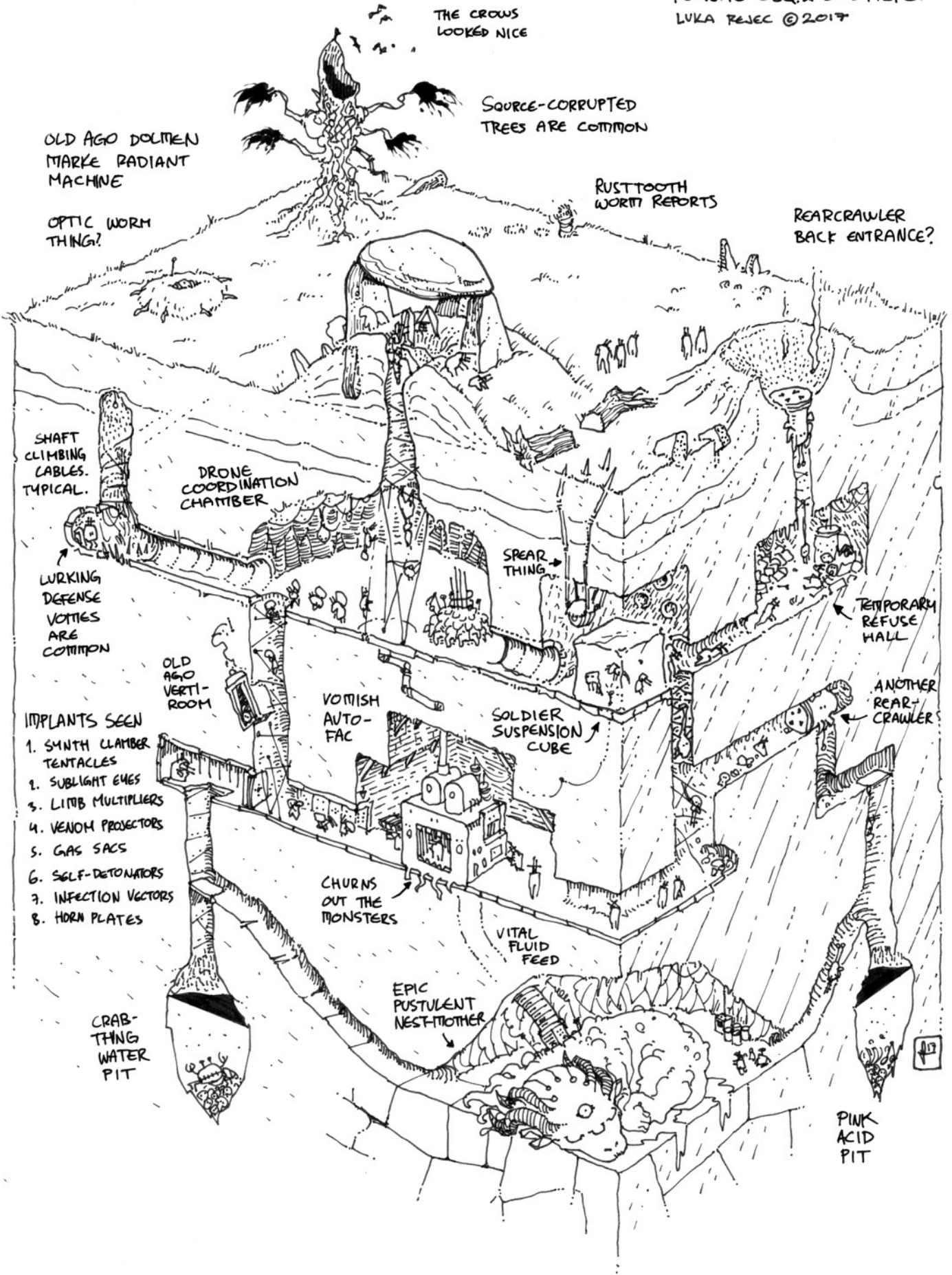
Pine-crusted Lophotroche (p. 43) ... ha! Didn't expect to see it, eh? Here you see the limitations of my on-the-fly layout ... it sucks, sort of. But, hey, we're close to going into solid work layout. I hope.



VOME HIVE 4c

AS REPORTED BY A CERTAIN
PONCHO ESQ. & CULTISTE.

LUKA REJEC © 2017



Group: the Vomes

Violent Mechanisms, the auto-golem child-monsters of some auto-cannibal faction of the Long Long Ago, soulless mechanoid viruses rewriting and reconstructing organic mechanisms to suit their half-coherent whims.

But are they truly as mad and half-witted as the writings of Zira of Oranje make them out to be in her seminal techno-anthropological work, *The Demon in the Corner: Beyond Logic and Madness in the Nest of the Machine Mother?*

VOME NEST OBJECTIVES (D6)

1. Grey ooze protocol: replicate endlessly until everything is vomes. This is the most dangerous sort, but also the fastest to run into (roll d6): (1) behavioral bugs, (2) critical code errors, (3) auto-cannibalistic behaviors, (4) time-stamp shut-down, (5) sudden software reset, (6) civil-war errors.
2. Waking instincts: acquire functional engineers to help the nest rewrite their source code and attain actual self-awareness.
3. Cry of the heart: suddenly aware that they have no soul, the viomech nest seeks animancers, guides and mentors to give them souls. Of course, this is hopeless.
4. Cache subroutine: the nest is on a subsidiary task to build a cache of resources for a higher-order vome master. These resources may be (roll d6): (1) vats of ready biomatter, (2) barrels of ready fuel, (3) stocks of ammunition, (4) tins of ready-to-heat pasta, (5) machine parts, (6) combat and implant systems.
5. Extractor routine: the nest is a mining operation, likely dumping extracted resources in a depot without further attention to it. These sorts of nests are sometimes cultivated in the deep steppe by wary nomads to acquire raw materials from trade. The miners are extracting (roll d6): (1) coal, (2) metals, (3) gravel, (4) fiber stalks, (5) processed biomantic raw materials (i.e. meat), (6) water.
6. Sentient nest: the nest is self-aware and understands that it is a soulless abomination, at threat of destruction, and is now engaged in scouting missions and plotting a long-term survival strategy, this may include (roll d4): (1) escape, (2) infiltration, (3) conquest, (4) trade. For some reason, all self-aware nests are named Patrocles.

RAIDING VOME NESTS

Vome nests are high-value, high-risk targets that often require a large group effort to eradicate without damaging the valuable implants and resources the mad monstrosities acquire. As a ballpark, a vome nest will have 10 + 1d100 slots worth of resources, worth 1d6 x 100 cash each. That's about 18,000 cash average, with a maximum of 66,000.

Many vomes are tough and get a save to avoid dropping when reduced to zero hit points. A typical nest will include:

1d2 Nest-mothers, massive hulks producing nutrient fluids for the nest and protected by eye-rays and low-level 'brown' psionics. AC 10, HD 20, eye rays, very slow, psionic.

1d3-1 Vomish autofacts, large sessile production golems that generate new vomes, equipment and goods for the nest. AC 12, HD 5, sessile, generates detonavomes, tough.

2d20 Humanoid vomes, either modified necroambulants or captured humanoids, with ranged combat implants such as mass drivers, stump-rays, or poison glands. Commonly also the operators of the vomish autofacts. AC 12, HD 2, ranged, creepy, tough.

4d20 Drone vomes: small, multi-limbed worker units, not meant for combat, but useful in a pinch.

1d8 Defense vomes: large, close-combat vomes, often with multiple blade attacks, horrible dead eyes, sometimes with (roll d4): (1) acidic spit, (2) noxious gas clouds, (3) paralytic bites or (4) fiery farts. AC 18, HD 4, lethal, grappling.

1d10 Combat vomes: small, brachiating vomes equipped with bladed tentacles and mass driver mouths. AC 14, HD 2, fast, spider climb, ambush.

3d6 Detonavomes are tiny or small creatures modified with implanted (roll d4): (1) explosive, (2) acidic, (3) toxic, (4) soporific, (5) incendiary, or (6) paralytic devices. AC 14, HD 1, quick, weak, prone to exploding on contact.

1d10 Worms are segmented machine worms with grappling, grinding maws. AC 16, HD 4, ambush, grapple.

1d6-3 Soldier Suspension Cubes: weird, gelatinous cubes that each holds 1d4 combat vomes in suspension, ready to release them in case the nest is assaulted. The cubes themselves are acidic. AC 7, HD 3, jelly.

Sealed Gate

Eerie gates and portals to strange places emerge from the hazy times before times throughout the Ultraviolet Grasslands and intelligent travelers are wise to avoid them. On the other hand, fools often believe that plunder and treasure lie just beyond the gate.

A famous example is the cratered arched gate in the Onion-and-Skull style of the Later Mahogany Reign slowly emerging from its aerolith tomb by the Low Road and the High.

GATE CONDITION (D6)

1. It is only the skeleton of a gate, whatever magic animated it, it is gone for good.
2. The gate is sealed by some odd and epic ritual, and an extravagant ritual would be required to open it. A creepy cult and 100,000 cash could make it work again.
3. It is dormant, sleeping and immobile, but it can be awakened by the right spell. Some library work could reveal it, perhaps even *Zundan's Awakening of Aways* could work?
4. It is fully functional, but physically sealed by a lot of rock, livingstone, mud, dirt or other detritus. A 2d6 week excavation should make it functional again. But *why* was it sealed?
5. It is sealed from the other side, turning it into a one way portal. What might come through?
6. It's working. Just the key is required or ... oh ... wait, it's activating. How convenient.

WHAT DOES IT DO?

1. It is a storage gate, a warehouse sized extra-dimensional hole or, as sages might call it, a *Non-portable Hole*. It might be a 1) treasury, 2) cargo warehouse, 3) prison, 4) tomb, 5) archive or 6) garage.
2. A multi-access extra-dimensional house. In essence a postal box, accessible through multiple gates. Creatures' spirits may be keyed to a single gate, disabling "teleportation".
3. A dull-way portal, providing a safe extra-dimensional worm tunnel to another location. It may take days or weeks or even months of travel through the portal to reach another location. Void monsters are, of course, just fairy tales.
4. A fast portal, or tele-portal, that shortens travel distances to another location.
5. A sideways portal, that realigns the traveler in regard to the physical world, essentially making them "ethereal" or "ghostly". Sages warn of rats and roaches infesting the sideways land.
6. A machine portal, it leads into the underlying mechanical body of the world, where cold, calculating elder creatures plot their odd plots. Very dangerous.
7. A rainbow portal, probably originally designed as a pleasure or amusement portal, it takes the traveler on an amazing journey in space and time. The journey may last months.
8. A hell gate, leading to some monstrously contorted biomancy-infused nightmare sub-realm. Don't go there. In fact, don't activate it, you schlub.
9. A time portal that lets travelers skip a week or a month or a year into the future when they pass through it. One way trip only.
10. A soul mill. This is not a portal. It is a refinery, stripping the souls from creatures to fuel ancient machinery. Usually the stripped body and personality are returned in a day or a week, quite dead but perfect for creating flesh golems or ba-zombies.

Town: Cerulean Five Oasis

Cerulean Five is a thriving stop, just a day's trudge south of the Low Road and the High. Dusters, cutters, mercos and merchos rest in the oasis en route to the Plantation of the Porcupines, south of the Plasteel Slag. Dilettantes and aristos often go out of their way just to visit the fabled Sky Well.

Ah, the Sky Well, the heart of Cerulean Five. It pulls water from the very air itself, a network of condensers tunneled into the petrified hulk of a gigantic cactacean landcoral and powered by the grumbling crystal machine, Bessergott VI, that pulls energy from the fast stars as they flitter overhead. St. Wavy, grizzled veteran of some Limbo War, tends to Bessergott and keeps the waters flowing.

Five ancient fountains of porphyry and red coral burble with the cerulean-tinged water of the Sky Well and a ring-worked fortified encampment of dead landcoral slabs has over time grown into a small safehold against the mind-blasting hardships of the steppe trails.

Characters

Bessergott VI—a crystal machine interlaced in the landcoral hulk that is fond of reciting Long Ago poetry and playing games of chance with visitors. On melancholy days it refuses to operate the Sky Well, but most days it can be appeased by kind words and good oratory.

Saint Wavy—a grizzled old fellow of indeterminate gender and species, perhaps more machine than bio, it has been here longer than most can remember, serving the crystal machine and tinkering late into most nights, building hydraulic and pneumatic contraptions.

Micah—an orphan of the Ultraviolet Grasslands, accompanied by her companion Draw, a hospitality golem. Toughened by the harsh wildland rays, she runs the Diver - a tap house hooked up to the Fourth Fountain and the social hub of Cerulean Five.

Draw—a hospitality golem with a dry sense of humour and an odd glint in its eye. Its plasma-glazed shell is painted in attractive curlicues and sometimes, by the light of a late moon, it seems more human than golem.

White Jackal—a snow-haired mystic, watcher of countless moonrises and moonfalls on the barren grassland. He tends a crop of Purple Haze in a small garden hollowed out among the rubble edges of the Oasis. When bored, he plays tricks on visitors with his bewildering psychic powers, but more often he simply sleeps and bakes gently in the hazy afternoons.

Steatitian-6—bone-yellow plate-clad emissary of the Princes, the combat polybody has a fondness for songbirds and a weakness for fluffy pets that belies its skill with the White and Turquoise pistols. More enforcer than negotiator, Steatitian-6 is a surprisingly jovial polybody under that grim ceramic cladding.

Partner Epiphocite—the dryland-adapted Porcupine Partnership representative hosts a fine salon that discusses literature and meta-biology on moonless nights. It keeps three former partner personalities in rock crystal and malachite jars at the green-skinned Porcupine House for accounting and recounting purposes.

Jeppi—the Maitresse of the Habitation Association, a general-purpose hexad-associated union of the laboring classes. Jeppi also runs the closest thing to a bank-and-savings cooperative in the Oasis, structured around the Re-wired Vome Vault. Jeppi loves good wines, fine mechanical poetry, and long walks in the twilight of the world.



Places

The Diver—a taphouse tunneled into the oily bedrock beneath Fourth Fountain, social hub of the Oasis.

The Habitation Machine—a dense cubist chaos of faux-adobe residential units assembled in the style of the Lesser Crow Hegemony, 3rd decade, around the Fifth Fountain. It has by turn been home to workers and artists, engineers and wanderers, ghosts and lost children.

The Machination—a grove of amber fig trees around the Second Fountain serves as the forum of the Oasis, where the citizens meet to talk, trade, do theater and cajole Bessergott to keep serving water to the Oasis.

The New Market—a clambering cluster of newgrowth landcoral buildings around the Third Fountain that house the quarters of local guild delegations and the trader-embassies of the Porcelain Princes and the Porcupine Partnership.

The Old Market—an emporium clustered in brick and landcoral tenements three stories high around First Fountain, filled with merchos peddling trinkets from the Rainbowlands, Pine Pork futures, Lime jerkies, Later-era weapons, and even choice narcotics from the Violet City.

The Sky Well—a hulking structure of petrified spiny land coral rising on eleven pillar-like legs to form a honeycomb lattice dome above the Fountains of Cerulean Five.

Major Hooks

Dessication: The well has dried up and both the business and the population have fled. Saint Wavy weeps that nothing he can do will reawaken the Crystal Machine. It can be reawakened either by (1) continuous oratory and amusement, by (2) replacing its failed ennui resistance circuit with a 'new' one from the Autofab at the Skull of the Unbent Bow, or by (3) jury-rigging the Eusomic Stone worshiped by the mad nomads of the Ever-roasting Man.

Devolution: the Habitation Machine has half-woken into a delirious dream of a marshier time polluted the Fifth Fountain with a retromorphic demon. The inhabitants of the residential units are devolving into amphibious rodent-like subhumans. It starts with missing merchos. Continues with attacks in the narrow aisles. Escalates with a rioting swarm of subhumans. Explodes with out and out warfare in the streets. The devolution can be stopped by (1) killing the Machine, (2) putting the Machine back to sleep, (3) dream-walking into the Machine-mind and wrenching its soul-personality into the present, (4) installing a Permanent Distillation in the Fifth Fountain, (5) quarantining the whole district creating a black and

dismal swamp in the middle of the town, filled with vicious, violent water-rat-folk, (6) personality-cauterizing the water-rat-folk, creating a protean defensive swarm for the Oasis.

Despair: an ultra-spirit has possessed White Jackal, turning him into a flame-eyed prophet of an Unvarnished Truth. In the screaming clarity of his voice and the thudding aura of reality that surrounds him, drugs and devices fail and the scales fall from the eyes of all who behold him. Soon the society of the Oasis is collapsing in suicides and depression as nothing can keep away the para-apocalyptic truth of the harsh world the citizens inhabit. If killed, White Jackal's ka-ba is restitched to available biomatter by the possessing spirit and more permanent solutions are called for. For example, (1) entrapping the holy man in a lead-lined casket and ditching him into the Circle Sea, (2) exorcising the possessing ultra-spirit by a Dissolution and Resolution of the Spirit, (3) injecting White Jackal with a vomish civil-war subroutine, (4) subjecting the ultra-spirit to a metaphysical existentialist therapy over a period of months will ameliorate the clarity of the harsh truth with a veneer of absurdist humor.

What is the meaning of this?

These are parts 1 to 10 of the first WTF Expedition - a psychedelic heavy metal rpg sandbox module to take a group of blundering PCs (or heroes) into the depths of the Ultraviolet Grassland in search of wealth and booty to pay back their adventuring loans.

The project is graciously supported by my patrons at <https://www.patreon.com/wizardthieffighter>.

This keeps being longer and slower than I'd ever expect. Thank you for bearing with me!

Luka Rejec, 22/03/2017, 22/04/2017, 05/06/2017, 06/08/2017, 12/09/2017, 30/09/2017, 31/10/2017, 21/11/2017, 29/12/2017, 13/02/2018

New This Time

New in this section are two more areas: Near Moon and the massive Three Sticks Lake region. I planned to also add a full interior illustration of the Near Moon, but I failed as Three Sticks got out of hand. There are also some additions to the Appendices and Glossary, but really: Three Sticks. It's that huge.

The Appendices and Glossary

A collection of rules and a glossary to make the UVG work. It not unpolished. Still, you might enjoy the insight into how I'm building this little caravan-world-game.

On Layout

The layout of the UVG is still exceedingly rudimentary. That is because my focus is on writing it, and getting the art together, before it goes to a proper editor for cleanup.

Wait, editor? Yes. Once I finish writing this steppeland monolith, I will see it turned into a proper RPG book ... and I will see to it that all you patrons get a free .pdf version of it. At the least.

Hello, Game Master, and welcome. I'm Luka, a gamer, just like you. Not an all-knowing author beyond the pale, but someone who wants to make the most fun games they can. In this appendix I'm going to break the fourth wall and address you as one rpg DM to another. You know, folksy-like.

I run most of my games these days with a 5E rules framework, but every game and adventure uses some bolt-on rules to make it tick properly. You know what I mean. Timers. Faction trackers. Resources that run out. But these rule hacks are often not explicit, which is a damned shame as I'm all for explicit rules and implicit setting.

This appendix of rules aims to make running the UV Grasslands a reasonably-not-horrible experience. All of the rules are touched on in the main text, but here I've collected them and elaborated on them.

Enjoy. -Luka

Dramatis personay

DM: that's you. You're the bass-player of this game. You're refereeing a table-top role-playing game, probably some kind of D&D thing. But this ain't a dungeon, it's a steppe. Still, it's cool. We're buddies.

Heroes are the player characters. Don't call them PCs. They're not police constables. They're out for adventure, loot and revolution. Also don't assume they're good. Heroes are not good, they're excessive and over the top.

Henchmen are all the scruffy followers and hangers-on knuckle-dragging along with the heroes. Let them have all the henchmen they want. If players want to promote henchmen into heroes, let them. To keep things moving, don't stat them fully, just generate as required.

Long-distance gritty realism

The UV Grasslands are big. They're mind-boggling and weird, sure, but first of all they are big. Vast and fucking empty. You know, like steppes are. And it's that emptiness that kills heroes, because that emptiness means there's no wishing well to drink from and no turnip farm to plunder.

Have you ever tried to run a hexcrawl from Jaca to Santiago de Compostella with 6-mile hexes? It's like 80 of the bastards! Go on, try it. Roll for encounters in every hex. I bet you'll be bored, and so will your players. So how do you make the grasslands feel big, while not making crossing them boring? Glad you ask.

Figuring that out is what this rules appendix is all about.

Usage dice: ΔN

Have you heard of risk dice or usage dice? They're a really cool concept that I first saw developed by David Black (*Black Hack*, v1.2, p.8) as the usage die and then expanded upon by Eric Nieudan (*Macchiato Monsters*, MMZero, p.4) as the risk die.

I use it in the narrower Black Hack sense as a die heroes roll after using a consumable game object (ammo, food, torches, charges, magic eagles) to see if it is used up. They form a neat chain and I use the Greek letter delta to mark them as usage dice:

Δ12 -> Δ10 -> Δ8 -> Δ6 -> Δ4 -> screwed.

A roll of 1-3 means the supply is reduced and the die is downgraded to the next lower die in the chain. On a roll of 1-3 on a Δ4 the supply is expended and the heroes are in trouble.

I wanted to call them consumption (or tuberculosis) dice, but I'll go with usage dice. Assuming you keep rolling them usage dice, you'll get 20 uses (on average) out of a Δ20, and just 1.33 uses out of a Δ4. See Table XXA: Usage dice.

TABLE XXA: USAGE DICE

Usage die	Average uses	Average total uses
Δ4	1.33 uses	1.33 total
Δ6	2 uses	3.33 total
Δ8	2.67 uses	6 total
Δ10	3.33 uses	9.33 total
Δ12	4 uses	13.33 total
Δ20	6.67 uses	20 total

A SOFTER WAY TO [USAGE] DIE

The original Black Hack usage die downgrades on a roll of 1-2, this makes for a softer decay curve. I prefer the harsher Δ4 that says, "this is your last shot." But, if you prefer soft, here's the distribution. See Table XXB: Softer usage dice.

TABLE XXB: SOFTER USAGE DICE

Usage die	Average uses	Average total uses
Δ4	2 uses	2 total
Δ6	3 uses	5 total
Δ8	4 uses	9 total
Δ10	5 uses	14 total
Δ12	6 uses	20 total
Δ20	10 uses	30 total

Time: weeks and weeks and weeks

Use the week as the basic unit of activity. This will drive home how far things are. Don't worry about details like miles and leagues.

Also, use the gritty realism variant (5E DMG, p. 267). Use it. It is your friend. A long rest, that really heals up the heroes, should take a week. A short rest? A day.

If you want, you can tally extra days until they hit a week, but honestly, you can handwave extra days until you get into starvation / exhaustion territory.

Traveling between locations takes about a week. Heroes check their supplies once a week. You check for random encounters once or twice a week. Hunting and foraging takes about a week. The symptoms of dysentery last about a week.

Supplies: no rations or water-skins

Tracking supplies the classic way with pounds and packs, or even with slots, is too time-consuming and boring when the heroes are slogging across a giant savanna for months. I tried. It didn't make for a fun game.

Use supply usage dice to track supplies as an abstract resource that represents everything keeping heroes alive: beer, food, bandages, tents, and toilet paper. Like hit points for traveling parties.

Heroes roll a supply usage die **once per week per party member** that isn't a quadrupedal ungulate.

Running out of supplies kills

Roll a Constitution save instead of a supply usage die. **Success:** hero's physical stats are reduced by 6 and hero has disadvantage to all physical checks. **Failure:** hero is starving, physical stats are reduced by 9, mental stats by 6, hero is at disadvantage to all checks, movement speed is halved and hero needs to be carried over longer distances.

Repeat the roll every week without supplies. A hero dies when any stat reaches zero.

Cannibalising the expedition is the fastest way to get extra supplies. A human adds Δ4 supplies, a pack animal adds Δ8 supplies.

Foraging in the wilderness takes a week and each forager rolls Survival. Every success adds $\Delta 4$ or $\Delta 6$ supplies (50%).

Resupply in an oasis of safety takes a week and adds $\Delta 6$ supplies per forager.

Making haste gives a +1 to the supply check, but also a -1 to the encounter check and disadvantage on the misfortune save.

Careful travel has the opposite effect. -1 to supply checks, +1 to encounter checks and advantage on misfortune saves.

Inventory: trucking is hard

Carrying lots of stuff long distances overland without a hover-wagon is horrible. That's why caravans trade in luxuries like silk and gold and slaves and drugs and tea and coffee. Lots of RPGs have stupid inventory systems, yet don't show how horrible carrying stuff is. So, I simplify things.

Each hero or henchman has one inventory slot.

Their adventuring or professional gear goes there. Magic skulls of memory for wizards, a year's supply of swordmaceaxes for fighters, golf clubs for the thief, whatever.

$\Delta 4$ supplies is also one slot.

Carrying a person takes a slot, too. If your buddy is unconscious, it's a simple choice. Drag the food or drag the buddy.

This means that smart heroes have porters and pack animals. Stupid heroes walk around in full armour and haul their supplies in sacks on their heads. A character can carry one extra inventory slot worth of stuff, but it is encumbered.

Encumbered heroes are fucked. They have a -1 to the supply check, -1 to the encounter check, have disadvantage on misfortune saves and cannot make haste or travel carefully. They also have the regular encumbrance penalties in combat. Also, from a social perspective, they look like poor people. This is bad for appearing heroic.

Players are going to come up with weird justifications for how they are going to rig up rollers, ropes, and pulleys to drag heavy things long distances. This is good. Encourage them.

People, porters and pack animals

1. Human. 1 slot (1d4+1 cash per week).
2. Porters are tough-ass folks trained in the ways of packing and carrying stuff, preparing supply depots, and generally surviving in the wilds. 2 slots (1d6+7 cash per week).
3. Disposable slave. 1 slot (50 cash).
4. Pony, mule or camel. 2 slots (50 cash).
5. Slave porter. 2 slots (200 cash).
6. Biomechanical beast or burdenbeast. 4 slots (600 cash).
7. Small wagon, rickety coach or swaying cart. 6 slots and a draft animal. Note that wagons are slow, vulnerable, heavy and dumb (200 cash, animal included).
8. Solid coach or wagon. 12 slots and two draft animals (600 cash, animals included).
9. Vech. 12 slots. This burdenbeast is enormous and can carry 1d4 passengers within gall-like cavities in its body. The most stylish biomechanical travel money can buy. (4000 cash)
10. Massive hauling wagon with four horses. 24 slots. This vehicle is slo-o-ow. Making haste or careful travel are out of the question. Running away from anything faster than a ground sloth will not happen. But, you know, it can haul tons of crap (1800 cash, animals included).
11. Autowagon. 24 slots. A slow, self propelled golem wagon. It is armored, tough, and impressive as heck. Also, rolls along on its own - but do be careful when crossing marshes or rough terrain. It can carry 2d3 passengers in ridiculously bolted-on cabins. (5000 cash)
12. Epic floating barge. 20 slots. A magical thing from Long Ago, it can be pulled by a single person. However, it is very fragile and may quickly be disabled by a single well-placed shot. (6000 cash or more)

Dragging stuff: as a rule of thumb, using improvised stretchers, ropes, rollers or skids, a creature can pull double its slots.

Carting stuff: adding wheels is great, because the drag is reduced, letting a creature pull triple its slots.

People also need to eat. Driving a slave with minimal supplies (saving the good stuff for the heroes) has a 60% chance of killing the slave every week. A slave that survives five weeks of this shit and isn't freed should run away with the help of some noble wasteland spirit and become some kind of paladin hunting the asshole heroes.

SUPPLIES AND INVENTORY SLOTS

Remember, supplies also occupy inventory slots. How many is up to you (see Table XXc: Supplies and inventory slots), but I recommend you use the simple slots.

TABLE XXc: SUPPLIES AND INVENTORY SLOTS

Usage die	Simple slots	Complicated slots
$\Delta 4$	1	1
$\Delta 6$	2	2
$\Delta 8$	3	4
$\Delta 10$	4	7
$\Delta 12$	5	10
$\Delta 20$	6	15

Simple slots: Any number-crunching player that looks at the tables on usage dice will figure out that carrying a bigger stash of supplies is great, because it'll last longer as the number of average uses goes up with the number of slots. Profit!

The way to deal with this problem is to rule that supply stashes can't be split and suddenly a large coach is required to drag that $\Delta 20$ supply pile.

Complicated slots: it's not *that* complicated, but it means inventory management is going to take some time, and you have to use the *mathematics of shitty rounding*. That means, the final product of subtracting or adding stashes has to be equally or less favourable than the starting condition. I dunno, maybe the heroes spilled some salt and bread while repacking.

Subtracting or dividing stashes: When splitting stashes, always round down. So, a $\Delta 20$ (15 slots) would split into a $\Delta 12$ (10) and a $\Delta 8$ (4), or into seven $\Delta 6$ s (2). In both cases, some supplies (a slot's worth) would be lost.

Adding stashes: heroes need to add together an equal or larger amount than the slots required. So, two $\Delta 8$ s only make a $\Delta 10$ (1 slot lost), or three $\Delta 8$ s make a $\Delta 12$ (two slots lost).

And I still don't suggest splitting stashes, because it will be a pain in the ass, and there is a reason a mule can only carry two slots.

FAIR WARNING: This rule will be reduced to just one over time for the final product, but in this appendix, I'm giving you both, so you can understand where I'm coming from.

What about my loot?

So the heroes come across a series of beautiful crystal sculptures with diamond eyes? Why do they hack out just the eyes? Space.

Any time a treasure or item is described with fancy words, add a slot for every word. Add slots for heavy materials, fine workmanship, intricate mechanics, cyclopean architecture. Just pile it on.

A hero (looter) can **hack out $1d6 + \text{Charisma modifier percent of a treasure's value easily}$** . This usually reduces the value of the rest of the work by 10x that amount in percent.

That statue of the Metaphysical Insinuation of Being by the famous Jeerida the Artistique? Six inventory slots of glorious marble and gold worth 6,000 cash to a collector. Or, gouge out the gold bits for 300 cash. That's 5%, so the remaining defaced sculpture is now worth 50% less: 3,000 cash.

Yeah, looters are assholes.

Misfortune: a pox upon the hero

The concept of Charisma comes from Greek, where it referred to grace and divine fortune bestowed by the capricious (asshole) Gods. This wasn't some lame approximation of "sexyness" or "leadership potential." Nope. This was straight up divine favoritism. A hero could be a complete dirtbag, but his divine mother dipped him in god ju-ju and gave him teflon skin. Others got the plague, he came through untouched. Others got scarred, he glowed with beauty and grace.

Charisma is utterly unfair, which is why I love to use it in games as a proxy for luck. You should, too.

In this expedition adventure, where each leg of the heroes' journey is a week of slogging through dull and unforgiving terrain, misfortune is that spike of pure annoyance or terror that kills unlucky travelers. Like scurvy or swamp foot.

When you spot a **Misfortune** section in the text, tell your players how it's been a harrowing week with horrible food, horrible company, rain and a couple of instances of worm-infested beans. Or whatever is implied in the misfortune text.

Then ask each player to roll a Charisma check or save against a relatively easy DC (I suggest 10 or $8+1d6$). Each player that fails, gets to roll on the corresponding Misfortune table.

Yup, we're Oregon-trailing their asses.

Warn your players in advance that this kind of shit will happen in the adventure. If they take precautions, buy extra supplies, and generally take wilderness travel seriously, let them use their survival skills to help their roll

or something, and explain to them that “the Gods help those who help themselves,” or some nonsense like that.

Encounters

Finally, encounters. What’s the deal with encounters? I mentioned encounters when I talked about careful travel and making haste, advantage and disadvantage.

Encounters, are random shit that might or might not happen to the heroes, and they have two basic functions. For the players: they offer threats and opportunities for the heroes, and, primarily a way to burn through their resources. For DMs, the encounter is a way to add flavor and theming to an adventure or campaign above and beyond what the main story arc can deliver. They’re less than side-quests, they’re vignettes.

Now, sometimes full on encounters are fun, but if you try to run a long-distance journey and run into two encounters per day, and then have to run them as combats, that’s going to suck.

Checking for Encounters

You’re going to roll two six-sided dice. The first to see how intense the encounter is, the second to see what it is.

Huh? Wait? We’re not checking to see if something happens? Correct. It’s happening. At least once a week. Roll again every time the heroes spend a long time waddling around.

d6 roll	Intensity die	Encounter die
1	It’s on. Everyone is surprised. Fog, dark, whatever. Unless it’s an ambush, those are shitty.	Very bad encounter
2	Close. Avoiding the encounter is hard.	Bad encounter
3	Distant. Avoiding the encounter is easy.	Meh, could be worse
4	Clear tracks. Dropped garbage. Whatever. Easy to tell what it was.	Neutral
5	Faint tracks, hints of what passed.	Quite helpful
6	Cold tracks, just clues about the creature or encounter.	Helpful

As DM, pass a couple of scary-ass big six-sided dice (or whatever number of encounters you have readied. I prefer six) to your players and have them roll for their random encounter. So if they roll a dragon, it’s their fault.

In this expedition, most encounters are d6 tables. 1s and 2s are generally bad encounters, 5s and 6s are generally good.

Advantage and disadvantage: this is one of my favorite 5E mechanics. Simply roll twice and pick the higher result if you have advantage, and the lower if you have disadvantage. Advantages and disadvantages cancel each other out.

Why so few encounters? Because you don’t need a lot of them. In fact, in live play around six is best, as it’ll theme individual areas more strongly. After the players encounter *fucking bears* in the Arena of the Giant Trees for the third time, well, they’ll never forget it. It’ll always be the “ *fucking bear arena*” to them.

But encounters waste time!

Yes. Sometimes they do. Seriously, running into 2d6 angry limping zombies ambushing the heroes might be funny once, but if you’re on your way to the One Ageless Spire of the Only Onager, those zombies are boring. In these cases, use this rule:

Sacrifice to skip.

The heroes ditch some of their stuff and narrate how they overcame the encounter. If their story is funny, feel free to even dish out some XP or a bit of gold or something.

A simple method is to roll a supply die once for each level or HD of the encounter (e.g. twice to skip 2HD enemies, five times to skip 5HD enemies). Or something to that effect, this skipping method isn’t finalized yet, so it’ll change. Just have them narrate it, something like, this:

DM: “the mechanobear charges you from beneath the cinder crust of the mold-crust forest.”

Players: “oh, bloody hell ... we don’t have time for this.”

DM: “eh, it’s a 5 HD enemy, so five rolls.”

They roll under 3 four times, so they have to pick what to sacrifice.

P.T.’s player: “P.T. hamstring the weak old donkey to distract the hungry mechanobear.”

DM: “fine, the donkey is worth 2 supplies, and it’s carrying a load of food and water, that’ll do. The mechanobear seizes on the donkey and tears the sad and terrified beast apart as you make your escape.”

Poncho’s player: “Damnit! My good robes were on that donkey! Can I save them?”

DM: “You want to go back there and face the mechanobear? Alone!?”

Poncho glares at P.T.

Experience Points

XP are the life-blood of heroes. It's what takes them from regular schlubs to grotesquely over-powered extravagant tomb-robbers who hold the city to ransom in exchange for pretending to kill the dragon that they actually summoned themselves.

How do they get experience?

In the oldest versions of the role-playing hobby, experience was awarded for gold. Specifically, one piece of stolen ('found') gold was worth one piece of XP when dragged back to a safe town. In this kind of game, the focus for heroes was getting in and out of a tomb fast and with as much loot as possible.

Later editions added XP for defeating monsters. In the tactical game versions, XP was only awarded for *killing* monsters (like in action CRPGs). This, obviously, changed the game. It became about finding the high-value boss monsters and slaughtering them.

Other versions went for simpler things. Experience for participating in the game, experience for making other players laugh, experience for being the instant-pizza-baker, experience for completing a quest. Some games even did away with experience entirely.

Choosing how to award experience points changes your game experience. So what do I want to do with the UV Grasslands? I want to encourage exploration of a vast environment, trade and looting, but at the same time leave in some experience for surviving combat and doing cool stuff. How to do that?

Heroes roll after combat

One mechanic I like immensely is to let players randomize how much XP their heroes gain from combat, exploration and other nonsense. But especially for combat. As a rule, players roll after surviving a combat and roll bonus dice for defeating enemies and classy deeds.

1. survive easy combat 0 XP: those were mooks.
2. survive middling combat 1d6 x 10 XP: beat some goons of the lower caste liberation order.
3. survive hard combat 2d6 x 10 XP: slug it out with rough and tumble Juicer people.
4. survive deadly combat 3d6 x 10 XP: run away during a dragon raid. Remember, if one of the allied side is not dead, the combat was not deadly.
5. victory +1d6 x 10 XP:

6. epic victory +2d6 x 10 XP: songs should be sung of this.
7. killing blow (fighter) +1d6 x 10 XP: make 'em go out and kill stuff toe-to-toe.
8. sneaky shit (thief) +1d6 x 10 XP: use traps, kill with a back-stab, lay an ambush.
9. wicked wizardry (wizard) +1d6 x 10 XP: use magic to heal, burn, flay, lay down some illusions or whatever.

As heroes level up (after Robert) you could give them more XP. After all, if you're playing any most classic RPGs, the XP requirements go up. My original suggestion was to increase the die (e.g. 1d6 at level 1, 1d8 at level 2, etc.), then Robert came up with a much more elegant solution. Change the multiplier with the level.

1d6 x 10 XP at first level, 1d6 x 20 at third level, x 30 at fourth, and so on.

Obviously, what counts as a hard battle is subjective. But you're a DM, you got this.

Exploring: experience for the new

This is my favorite kind of experience. Heroes find something new - they get XP. It's simple and to the point. It doesn't have to be entirely formalized, but I give out exploration experience points for discovering new places, creatures, plants, weird things and the like. The costs for exploring are usually time (additional days or weeks spent) and danger (additional encounter checks).

1. **Easy stuff:** observe a new monster or creature in the wild. 1d6 x 10 XP (or 30 flat). Doesn't take much time or effort.
2. **Effort required:** find and explore some remote place, find an uncommon creature. 3d6 x 10 XP (or 100 flat). Takes a day or so.
3. **This is weird shit:** wander off for several days to find an eerie reminder of times and places lost in the long long ago. Bring back a live specimen and study it in a lab. 6d6 x 10 XP (or 200 flat). Takes several days and may be quite dangerous.

Carousing: experience for cash

Carousing is a variation of the experience for gold rule. You can use it together with experience for gold, which lets heroes boost their XP higher, or as the only way to gain XP from gold.

I prefer the second variant, because it means that gaining XP from cash takes time. It also takes cash out of

circulation, which virtuously encourages heroes to get back to pillage and plunder.

Carousing was first invented by Jeff Rients (<http://jrients.blogspot.com/>) and lets the DM easily and simply separate heroes from their treasure. The system I use is similar to Jeff's:

(1) Hero blows $1d6 \times 100$ cash on a week of hard partying and gains that amount of xp.

(2) Rolling more cash/xp than the hero has available means a nasty debt to a local cad.

(3) In any case, the hero makes a Charisma save (DC somewhere between 10 and 15, say $9+1d6$). On a fail, they roll on the local Carousing mishap table.

Bonus: a critical success on the Charisma save lets the hero carouse harder and party away another $1d8 \times 100$ cash in a single week. A critical fail means an extra roll on the mishap table.

Alternative: sometimes you'll find a player who doesn't want some horrible mishap happening to them, for whatever reason. Just let them lose the cash and gain no XP or half XP (pick a percentage, just be consistent). The Carousing table should be fun, not torment for players.

Higher Level: so the hero is level 8 and goes carousing ... and they've got more cash. Should they ... ? It's up to you, DM, but personally I have no problem with an 8th level hero blowing $1d6 \times 800$ cash on an epic bender that the whole town will remember for years. Remember to make the mishaps badass, too.

Cash

I went on at length about gold and gold pieces and cash and experience. Throughout the UV Grasslands I talk simply about cash. If you are playing your game with a silver standard, assume one cash is one silver piece. If gold is your standard, treat one cash as one gold piece. Simple.

But how much is one cash?

In most traditional role-playing games, I would now dive into the details of a faux-medieval economy, how much a peasant earns, how gold is used, and so on. That's cute. But no thanks.

I don't know for sure. One cash is about enough for one person to scrape by for one day. Maybe put a little by the side for a rainy day. Call it the mythical man-day wage.

That should put carousing with 600 cash into perspective.

You want more detail than that? Heroes who spend less than 1 cash per day on themselves look like ragged bums. The more they spend, the better they look. A proper aristo will be blowing through 1,000 to 10,000 cash per day. There's your scale.

Retirement

With all these experience systems, a question pops up: what's the end game? Just keep stacking up XP? So cash is just a way to buy XP? I think that's stupid. Infinite power and infinite gold are goals for boring, one-dimensional characters. For damned cartoon villains.

OK, infinite power in an RPG and the madness that entails, I can live with. But imaginary cash as goal in itself? That's daft. So why do heroes want cash? To retire from the game and do the stuff they've always dreamt of: buy a farm, build a chain of coffee shops, pay off their horrible debts, raise a mercenary troupe, hire an army to kill a dragon.

This should be explicit.

Retiring a hero successfully should be an achievement in itself, and should probably give a bonus to the next hero, perhaps unlocking weirder bonus classes, or just giving some starting boost or a powerful patron.

Cashing Out

The simplest way for a hero to retire is to "cash out". They take all that cash and plunder they've looted and plunk it down for a farm, where they go and raise rabbits and a new generation of fools who believe that going into ancient holes in the machine substrate will make them rich.

Here are several retirement tables, tailored to the Rainbowlands, depending on the size of the hero's pile. I've made a small "random cash" option, in case you want to randomly determine the cost of a specific retirement (say the hero really wants to become a gong farmer, or something).

PATHETIC RETIREMENT

200 cash ($100 + 1d20 \times 10$) is all your hero saved up. They are a failure. Roll d20 for what happened to them:

1. Hero joined the faceless rotting folk in the great under-sewers. Even their name withered away, forgotten.
2. The hero died in a pointless tavern brawl over a maggot-eaten hat.

3. The horror and the pain grew too much, the haunted nights worse than the hollow days. The hero killed themselves, a body for others to stumble across, 70 silver cents and an ominous prophecy in their pocket.
4. Eventually the hero joined the Beggar's Boulevard before the great Palace of Jesus Thor.
5. Became an odd, broken fellow in a bedsit above the Turf and Turnip, and spent all their cash on paper and the dark green ink because the creatures in the corner can't read in green.
6. Ended up among the common laborers on the dock.
7. Became a farmhand called simply Donkey, so docile yet hardworking. There's a darkness to that one.
8. Became the undertaker at the Blue Gate, ready with stake and sharpened shovel to keep the dead in their graves.
9. Became the new gardener at the Corporate Duke's estate. Also, there's a pet badger.
10. Joined the 'hood of the Praying Penitents, trading mail and steel for a cassock and the purgative of hard devotion to the Pantheon.
11. Became the grimmest bartender at the Dismay and Desolation.
12. Eventually got a good route going and is now a well-enough-respected fixture among the half-nomads of the Grassgreen Plain.
13. Joined the Heroic Porters company and has had nothing but good relations with the local Hexads and Self-help Associations.
14. Became a tenant farmer. Sure the taxes are harsh, but at least there's butter and cheese and yoghurt and the cultists are good about paying for the animals they need for their rituals.
15. Took over the plague pits and over the years saved up enough to add a little tap house on the side.
16. Now owns a market stall and six pigs. Rolling in the money.
17. Accepted the Inquisitor's offer to join the local Protectors of Moral Rectitude. Ain't so bad.
18. After a stint in the debtor's prison the hero cleaned up their act and became a local distributor for a certain luxury importer of dubious goods.
19. Became a member of the local chapter of the Chtonic Appreciation Society.
20. The hero blew everything on one last grand bash, invited the local bigwigs and, after some weird shenanigans involving melted cheese, animated pumpkin jerky and seventeen golden candle-sticks, was (roll d6): (1) adopted by 'Uncle' Greenface of the local Half-Elf association, (2) married the Innkeeper's son or daughter in a weird pagan ritual, (3) inherited a small and creepy estate by the seaside, (4) was anointed a local magistrate, (5) acquired a herd of a hundred horses and five slaves, (6) was appointed a board member of the Green God's Priesthood of Mergers and Acquisitions.

For your next hero roll d6:

1. **cursed**, the hero loses 1d4 Charisma, but gains a savage survival streak a mile wide (advantage to Constitution saves and death saves, maybe resilience).
2. **avenger**, the hero holds clues to someone called the *Laughter in the Rafter*. Five stand in the hero's way, each one that they send into the rotten embrace of the Blue God grants the hero 1 permanent bonus hit point. Destroying the *Laughter* gives a permanent +1 bonus to one ability of choice.
3. **wild child**, raised by savage badgers, the hero grew steel-sinewed and tough, gaining +1 permanent Constitution and d4 melee unarmed attacks.
4. **the green-ink papers**, the hero came across a series of occult papers that have given them advantage on Intelligence saves, a fear of the dark, and the means to open one magical door.
5. **child of dismay**, basically brought up at the Dismay and Desolation, the hero acquired an innate tolerance of liquors and an immunity to fear and ennui.
6. **hidden cache**, the new hero found 100 + 1d20 x 10 cash on a corpse in a gutter. Is there some connection?

MODEST RETIREMENT

2,000 cash (1,000 + 1d20 x 100) may be enough to start a small business, maybe open a Break 'n' Stabbins franchise, or get into the lucrative salteptre distribution business. Roll d10 for what happened:

1. Opened a creepy puppet theatre that became an unexpected success, but has also been linked to a number of horrible accidents and disappearances.
2. Owner of a convenience store by day, half-assed assassin by night.
3. Set up a rather successful palmistry and necrology clinic, possibly with the help of a surprisingly cute assistant.
4. Built up a chain of flower shops that provide cover for a local burglary and protection racket.
5. Became a successful writer of penny dreadfuls on the exploits of a group of golem programmers in a fantasy universe who meet to solve inter-temporal conundrums with dice and pencils.
6. Opened up a small chapel purporting to avert hellfire and damnation.
7. Set up an animal shelter for retired beasts and dragons.
8. Set up a lucrative tavern catering to the better class of adventurer.
9. Set up a very lucrative tavern offering protection and special services to the worst class of murderhobo.
10. Went into politics as a local populist agitating for the rights of the working adventurer.

For your next hero, roll d6:

1. **saved from hellfire** by a mad weird preacher, now possess resistance to all fire damage. It's weird.

2. **jack-of-many-trades**, the hero's extended clan persevered in equipping them to succeed in many trades, starts with three additional skills.
3. **beast master**, or at least a skilled veterinarian, the hero has advantage to handling wild and weird beasts after a long internship at a strange shelter for retired beasts.
4. **nimble florist**, after an unusual apprenticeship in a little flower shop of horrors, the hero became a successful ... vine burglar? In any case, the hero has advantage on Dexterity saves and very slow climbing checks. Also, skilled in botany.
5. **popular hero**, from working with a pro, the new hero really knows how to make followers and henchmen feel like heroes, giving advantage on social checks to encourage, cajole and persuade the next generation.
6. **master of brews**, whatever tavern was involved, the new hero has mastered the alchemy of creating drinks that give courage, dampen fear, and minimize hangovers. So skilled! Also, became proficient in improvised weapons like chair legs and tables (d4 and d10 damage, respectively).

PETITE BOURGEOISE RETIREMENT

20,000 cash (10,000 + 1d100 x 200) at this level, a hero can set themselves up as respectable member of the third estate, buy their way into a trade association, and look forward to life as a member of the establishment. Roll d10 to see what happened:

1. Set up a deep-fried tuber franchise that, by a weird twist of fate, became a small but rapidly growing cult dedicated to the Life Beneath the Worlds.
2. Become a country gentlesperson and retired to a life of comfortable breakfasts, second breakfasts, first lunches, second lunches, little teas, great teas, and dinner parties in a remote and dull village.
3. Went into business as a wool and tea merchant, eventually becoming the premiere supplier of socks to the armies of seven up-and-coming merchant republics and made a killing of the tea-bulb mania of '69.
4. Founded a disreputable casino and retired to write dreadful dungeon-delving poetry.
5. Became the sherrif and chief banker of a small mining settlement in the Lukewarm Hills.
6. Died young after siring a brood of enterprising industrialists who made a killing in the steam-golem market.
7. Went into animantic and necromantic insurance, with a successful sideline in permanent burials for the more genteel kind of gentlefolk.
8. Made a killing in the wine business and retired to the palatial life of small-town judge and saloon owner.
9. Set up as a notary baron on a traveling rail-town in the Outer Circle.

10. Joined the radical conservative party of the Extended Metropolis and founded a successful rag advocating for post-colonial re-colonization in the Middle Yellow Latitudes.

For your next hero, roll d6:

1. **cocooned upbringing** has left them weirdly resistant to any attempts at having their mind changed (advantage against Enchantments), but vulnerable to exhaustion and disliking the outdoors.
2. **skilled impersonator**, adopted from poverty by a wealthy magnate, the hero has learned to shift between the social classes with ease, gaining advantage to disguise and persuasion skills.
3. **scholar**, stuck around books, with no companionship, from youngest childhood, the hero has advantage on Intelligence checks and saves, and disadvantage on Charisma checks and saves. Also, the hero can copy or transcribe texts and spells twice as fast as normal.
4. **master merchant**, thrown into the hard life of a traveling merchant from an early age, the hero has advantage on all appraisal and trade rolls.
5. **class traitor**, rebelling against the crusty petite bourgeoisie, the hero is skilled at Etiquette and Diplomacy, starts with five-times the normal starting money and has advantage to sneak attacks against aristocrats.
6. **silver spooned**, the hero starts with ten-times the normal starting gold and has advantage to all interactions with law-enforcement and government officials.

BOURGEOISE RETIREMENT

200,000 cash (100,000 + 1d100 x 10,000) is enough for a hero to join the merchant elite. They can start a banking house, a merchant co-operative, or found a series of lucrative if seedy limited liability companies.

ELITE RETIREMENT

1,000,000 cash (500,000 + 1d100 x 10,000) the hero made it. They funded statues of themselves, poems, epics, songs, bought titles and built railroads.

The Caravan Game

This part is still in progress.

The Caravan Game is a mid-level game I'm figuring out how to incorporate in the RPG experience, not quite fortress building, and not simple dungeon-delving. The premise is simple: one land has a wealth of clay, a second has a wealth of wood. If they trade clay for wood, each can build roads. To get the clay and wood, you need foolhardy souls who will go on a back-breaking, foot-ripping voyage, motivated by the profits that the survivors will make.

As a rule of thumb, a month of voyaging away from its source doubles the value of a trade good, two months triples, three quadruples and so on. For luxury goods, illegal drugs, and other substances, the multipliers could be up to ten times higher.

Distance	Multiplier	Really Rare Multiplier
1 month	x2	x20
2 months	x3	x30
3 months	x4	x40
...
7 months	x8	x80
8 months	x9	x90
9 months	x10	x100

Considering that the Black City is 14 weeks of fast travel under perfect conditions with great horses and no savage incidents from the Violet City, it's fair to say a caravan would take 28 weeks. Seven months, give or take. That's why it's bold.

To add a bit of excitement, besides the regular travails of travel, bureaucrats, inspectors, customs officials, monopolists, and other governmental ne-er-do-wells at every significant stop try to extract the entirety of that leg's profit, keeping the honest merchant constantly tempted to pay a little heroic back-hander and boost their take. Or, obviously, avoiding cities also works - but that's dangerous.

Also, I will need to make a trade goods map for the UVG!

Trade Goods

People trade all sorts of things. With caveats. I mentioned wood and clay in a jab at Catan, but those are misleading. Clay and wood are heavy and hard to move. The things people really want to move overland are valuable and relatively light (at least until trains and trucks).

The basic unit is the inventory slot (I wish I had a better word for that) - a bale of feed or a sack of barley or a tun of

butter or a chest of tea. It is about the amount a porter can carry, so one unit of cargo.

LIST OF D30 TRADE GOODS (PRICE PER INVENTORY SLOT AT SOURCE)

1. Odd fruits (luminescent vavilov velvets and cherenkov cherries), prized, rare, delicate, delicious and fragile. (100 cash)
2. Black light lotus, a delicate flower and a pricy drug. (500 cash)
3. Indigo ivories, from the teeth of the rare midnight beasts of the Deep West. (500 cash)
4. Rainbow silks, shifting colors woven from the silky strands of crystal spiders by the Spectrum Satraps. (500 cash)
5. Sanguine porcelains, the color of blood and now mined mostly from the deposits of older times, though many say that in the Black City folk still know how to make them. (200 cash)
6. Vampire wines from the Red Land, rich and ruby red, revitalizing for they grow from source-rich soils infused with the flesh of creation. (100 cash)
7. Livingstone bricks grown from seed in the Yellow Land are heavy, but malleable, used by petromancers to create artworks and delicate furnishings. (200 cash)
8. Dryland coral seeds, incredibly vulnerable, and have to be kept in sealed containers to protect them from the open air, but they are also very valuable construction material. (500 cash)
9. Beast egg masses, used by biomancers to grow and modify new servitor creatures, kept in cooled vats to prevent them from spoiling. (500 cash)
10. Replacement bodies, slaves. (100 cash)
11. Horses or trail birds. (100 cash)
12. Alchemical lubricants, popular with golemancers and biomancers, as well as with mechanomancers and engineers. (100 cash)
13. Medical magics and machines (ointments, potions, implants), valuable to any doctor anywhere. (200 cash)
14. Saffron, a mind-altering spice from the Yellow Land, used by wizards to improve their cognition and bodyguards to boost their reflexes. (300 cash)
15. Soul-stones, highly illegal animantic containers charged with distilled spirit. (1,000 cash)
16. Cat snip is a powdered fungus derivative, a euphoric drug and addictive. (200 cash)
17. ultra jay needles and feathers come from the Black City and are exceptionally expensive. Used more as status symbols, than anything truly useful (500 cash)
18. Cat coffee, one of the prized products of the Violet City. (200 cash)
19. Whiskers, a mind-expanding substance from the Orange Land. (100 cash)
20. Felix whizz, an energy beverage, known to revitalize and "give wings" made in the Violet City. (100 cash)
21. Purple haze, a weed grown by the nomads of the Purple Lands. (100 cash)

22. Dog's tail, a prized chew root from the Green Lands. (100 cash)
23. Chitin-cap, sheets and rods and fibres of chitin grown from the Umber fungoid bio-mantics were once very widely used, but are now rare and more prized. (100 cash)
24. Marrow-beet, edible, protein-rich gory chunks in calcinous shells. (100 cash)
25. Bone-work, moldable or edible chunks of raw bone, still warm with bone-sculpture. (200 cash)
26. Last steel, the excavated nodules of ever-warm steel from the long ago, prized by smiths and mechanists who swear themselves blue that it is almost alive. (400 cash)
27. Vidy crystals, orbs of ancient provenance laced with stories and tales that provide joy and entertainment, but fade rapidly after watching. Makes for great rewatch value! The Spectrum Satraps harvest them from ancient runes, most likely. (500 cash)
28. Cosmic scales, in different shapes and colors, iridescent and rare, there must be mines near the Dark City. The richest denizens of the Rainbowlands craft suits and capes with them, twinkling as they go. (600 cash)
29. Joy worms, empathic symbiont worm-like creatures that are sometimes implanted into workers or servitor beasts, flooding their consciousness with pleasure and joy even when they are performing odious and boring tasks. Popular with many masters. (500 cash)
30. Karma dust, purified extract of the demiurges, so they say, it can cleanse sins and purify souls. Popular with those about to die, and those about to sin. If someone were to commit an evil act, this would absolve them. No damned *Detect Evil* might touch them, and no memory of the sin or guilt would remain in them. For some reason the Inquisition bans karma dust with a vengeance. (1,000 cash)

Milk Runs

What if the heroes figure out a milk run, where they can just travel the same journey over and over for profit? Well, let them - but this is boring.

I suggest abstracting this into a route a henchperson can handle, and roll for cash and complications every season. You could figure out rules for this, but as a rule of thumb:

Safe, 5% return per year, no risk of losing the investment

Profitable, 10% return per year, 1d6 DC Charisma check each year or something very bad happens (1 always fails)

Aggressive, 20% return per year, 3d6 DC Charisma check.

WHAT WENT WRONG

1. Extra-dimensional incursion swallows the caravan. Everything is gone.
2. Monsters attack the caravan, there are no survivors but the goods have been dragged to a lair.
3. Ghosts have possessed the caravan and tried to use it as an infection vector to take over a settlement.
4. Monsters attack caravan, there is a sole survivor with tales of horror and woe. Half the goods are eaten or destroyed.
5. Savage flash flood has washed away half the caravan.
6. Bandits attacked the caravan and took most of the animals and the goods.
7. Slavers attacked the caravan and took everybody to a nearby market.
8. Hostile nomads have blocked the route and taken the goods, but the caravan has returned.
9. Caravan has upset a local faction, goods have been seized and caravan returned.
10. Local faction has locked up whole caravan for an infraction of obscure local customs.
11. Large and unexpected local taxes have cost 30% of the investment.
12. Reavers attacked the caravan, killing half of the defenders and taking 20% of the investment.
13. Autonom warriors killed 1d6 of the caravan drivers for unknown reasons.
14. Caravan went to explore an unusual site of interest, half the drivers went mad and 30% of the goods were lost. But the site could be looted.
15. A plague has killed 60% of the caravan beasts.
16. Weather and hostile tribes caught the caravan in the wastes. The drivers hid the goods and escaped with half of the beasts.
17. Freak snowstorm killed half of the caravan, the goods and corpses were hidden in a cave.
18. A rival mercer guild bribed the drivers over to their side with all the goods.
19. The drivers decided to strike out as independent operators, dumping the initial investment at a safe town for the owners, and making off with the beasts and the profits.
20. The drivers were converted by a millenarian cult, they gave away all the goods to the poor and joined a fraternal organization.

Trade Obstacles

Bureaucrats, inspectors, customs officials, monopolists, and other governmental ne-er-do-wells try to extract a cut (say a tenth of the cargo or gold) at every step of the way. Make them amusing with this little d12 table.

1. Tollmistress Netejette maintains the entrance to a spirit-fetish protected road. The road is actually safe

- (advantage on encounter checks). Avoiding the road is dangerous because all the ne'er-do-wells had to go somewhere.
2. Belizawrio the Bureaucrat who manages this caravan stop keeps very meticulous books about everything, from latrine use to camel ankle ointments. Belizawrio will gladly waste 1d4 weeks of a caravan's time, though a voluntary contribution to the Belle Epoque Guesthouse might change his mind.
 3. Two inspector golems slaved to a local Overseer ensconced in a Crystal Ka-Ba Maintenance Body make a very particular inspection, finding illegal drugs or munitions on every caravan they inspect. Complaining about fines to a 12-foot obsidian golem is hard, however.
 4. Colico the Customs Cat maintains the traditions of a ceremonial bridge crossing that requires participation in an obscure play to placate a vome-troll nest. Is there actually a vome-troll nest below the gilded era bridge? Do you even want to check?
 5. The Free Bank and Security Association of the Lime and Teal Fields maintains a complete monopoly on security services in the region, requiring 1d4 of their green-helmeted security officers to accompany every caravan. The green-helmets do not fight and provide no additional security.
 6. The Dukes of Dust invite every caravanmaster to their High Residence for a fine dining experience, where they are treated to regard the two Silver Helmet Era heat-cannons the dukes use to protect the local pass where the caravans travel. Of course the heat-cannons will not hit the caravan by accident.
 7. The Tangerine Dreaming clan of half-nomads claims all the grazing lands of this part of the steppe as their property. They don't mind caravans crossing their lands, but they do require a contribution of one tenth of their animals or 10 cash per animal for food consumed.
 8. The local Guild of Concerned Citizens represents the interests of local craftsmen, merchants, and househusbands, and work hard to ensure that no imported goods might threaten their control of the means of production and reproduction. To that end they require a small fee and a detailed inspection at the local House of All Flesh.
 9. The Many-headed Collective of Biomancers Extraordinaire that runs this settlement under a private-public partnership with the elders of the Clans of Settlement and Roadbuilding require a pound of flesh from every creature entering the settlement to ensure no vomish or ultra infiltration might occur. Alternatively, a less invasive procedure can be performed that unfortunately costs 50 cash per person and requires 1d4 + n days for the processing of results (where n is the total number of procedures to be performed). Alternatively, the Quarantine Camp may be hired at 50 cash per day (houses 20).
 10. The Guardians of the local Porcelain-associated Leadership Council accuse the party of running over a dog, who was a member of the polybody of porcelain prince 9-Glazed Chrome. The fine is a fresh body or a tenth of the cargo.
 11. The Inspectors of Spiritual (Ka) Propriety discover a radiation ghost infestation in the cargo and want to destroy all of it. Reasonable negotiations (or bribes) could result in a thorough inspection costing 100 cash and requires the destruction of just the radiation ghost's spirit nexus (i.e. 10% of the cargo).
 12. A plastic faced Automat Taxman following a convoluted ritual dating to the Long Ago Federated Democratic Empire of Joyful Libertarian Equality™ discovers an irregularity. The Automat Taxman will require 1d4 days to figure out that the party must pay taxes and fines totalling 2d6 x 10% of their total cargo. Getting out fast would upset the taxman, but void the procedure.

Languages of the Rainbow Lands

Many languages are and were spoken by the many humans of the Rainbow Lands. Here are some of them, those found closest to the Circle Sea are listed first, and in parantheses the language family or circle is indicated. Languages in the same family or circle are usually somewhat related and mutually intelligible, whether through contact or descent is not always clear.

THE COMMON LANGUAGES

1. **High Common (rainbow)**

Status: The upper-class, literary common rainbow-tongue taught by teachers to noble and rich students.
Writing: yes

Notes: Old fashioned, unnecessarily complex grammar and pronunciation. Words change depending on context, speaker, intent. Numbers change depending on what is being counted.

2. **Vulgar Common (rainbow)**

Status: The trade lingua franca of the non-noble middle-classes and professionals of the Rainbow Land, with distinct regional dialects.
Writing: for trade

Notes: Influenced from outer languages. Similar to "city speak" or "gutter talk".

3. **Purple Speech (rainbow)**

Status: The dialects of the peasants and laborers of the Purple Land, with many borrowings from the steppe folk.
Writing: no

Notes: Very similar to bluenttalk, but it's an insult to say so.

4. **Bluenttalk (rainbow)**

Status: The harsh and uncouth dialects of the exiles from the Blue Land and the Wild Folk still living there
Writing: hell, no!

Notes: Surprisingly detailed vocabulary of dairy products and aquatic vegetables. Borrowings from Blue Talk.

5. **Greenspeak (rainbow)**

Status: The peasant and forester dialects of the Green Land.
Writing: no

Notes: Large vocabulary corpus. Speakers from different dialects can mostly understand each other's words even if just by context.

6. **Emerald Common (rainbow)**

Status: The vulgar common of Metropolis the

Emerald City, with many Elfish and Greenspeak borrowings.

Writing: yes

Notes: Beautiful traditional handwriting

7. **Decapolitical (rainbow)**

Status: The vulgar common dialects of the Sea Fingers of the Decapolis, popular also with sailors.

Writing: for trade

Notes: Very onomatopoeic. Short, simple words. It's frequent to understate things. Speakers don't speak much.

8. **Saffranian (rainbow)**

Status: The vulgar common of Saffranj and the Yellow Land

Writing: yes

Notes: A more refined and rhyming variant of Decapolitical.

9. **Caravanian (rainbow)**

Status: The trade tongue of the caravans in the Yellow Waste and of some of the nomad tribes there.

Writing: for trade

Notes: Borrows from many languages. Speakers can bend the language to adapt it for speakers of a certain language, as well as make it indecipherable to anyone else but caravanians, if they want.

10. **Oranjetic (rainbow)**

Status: The vulgar dialects of of Orange Land, very similar to Saffranian

Writing: not much

Notes: A musical dialect, exquisite in song.

11. **Redland District Cant (rainbow)**

Status: The badly rhyming vulgare speech of the autonomous enclave of the Redland District

Writing: yes, but mostly political tracts

Notes: Large influence of decapolitical. Lots of swearing.

12. **Red Tongue (rainbow)**

Status: The vulgar dialects of the Red Land, with many dwarven elements admixed.

Writing: not much

Notes: Influenced heavily by the slurred speech of the long-reigning Grand Red Duke Moshle IV, the red tongue tends to say "sh" instead of "s" and run words together they way they do after too many cups of wine.

13. **Winerian (dwarven)**

Status: The hill dwarf dialects of the vintner dwarves of the Red Land and Orange Land.

Writing: not much

Notes: heavily influenced by the Red Tongue, Winerian is the most linear of the Dwarven dialects.

14. **Volkan (dwarven)**
 Status: The mountain dwarf dialects of the Mountains of Light and the Black Gold.
 Writing: yes
 Notes: When written, the space between the characters has as much meaning as the characters themselves. Much is lost by speaking it. Lots of silences and isolated consonants. It's best spoken indoors, or in caves with a lot of echo. The echo is part of the language. It sounds very strange outdoors, parts of the words are missing.
15. **Woodlander (elven)**
 Status: The language found inscribed on trees and rocks in the Elvenwood, spoken by some of the tribes there.
 Writing: yes
 Notes: The language is structured to change meaning with the seasons and the phases of the moon, as though it does not quite belong on the solid earth.
16. **Steppe Speeches (steppe, rainbow)**
 Status: The various dialects of the Ultraviolet Grasslands grew from a patois of rainbow dialects and steppeland trade tongues.
 Writing: no?
 Notes: Immense vocabulary for grazing creatures and mechanical engineering.
17. **Sunsettish (steppe)**
 Status: The common trade language of the western steppelanders.
 Writing: for trade.
 Notes: a surprisingly large focus is given to spirits and spirit possession in this language.
18. **White Line (steppe)**
 Status: the cryptic language of the Porcelain Princes was once more widespread, now it has been reduced to their outposts and trading missions.
 Writing: yes
 Notes: Extensive polybody structure, some of the more refined forms of the speech require multiple telepathically synchronized voices used in unison to convey meaning properly.
19. **Satrap Canto (steppe?)**
 Status: the color and light adapted language of the Spectrum Satraps seems to an outlying dialect of some larger language group or system.
 Writing: yes, polychromatic
 Notes: Without light-generating organs, or a rainbow translation array, this language is practically unusable.

THE DEAD AND WEIRD LANGUAGES

20. **Black City Alphabet (?)**
 Status: A language found inscribed on some metal sheets brought from the mythical Black City in the west
 Written: yes
 Notes: Some say it's not a language, just some intricate patterns. Faraway people joke that the writings are really the schemas for a very complicated dance.
21. **Deep Dwarven (dwarven)**
 Status: The hidden priestly language of the deep dwarves that is not spoken but only carved in stones and bones.
 Written: hell, yes!
 Notes: It can be written in any direction, even constructing beautiful figures with the characters. Very succinct. Some carvings are considered visual poetry. A subset of Deep Dwarven is Deep Dwarven Hexadecimal, used for programming the Dwarven prayer machines.
22. **Blue Tongue (isolate)**
 Status: The forgotten speech of the Blue God, now used by some secretive cults and mad wizards.
 Written: yes
 Notes: Harsh, logical, iconographic, ambiguous by nature.
23. **Elven (elven)**
 Status: A hypothetical elven language
 Written: unknown
 Notes: Reconstructed by sages from fragments of woodlander and moonlander.
24. **Moonlander (elven?)**
 Status: An extinct (?) language found inscribed in tombs in the Mountains of the Moon.
 Writing: yes
 Notes: Samples of the writing have been found to be memetic worms, taking over the reader's mind and driving them to perform odd, incomprehensible tasks. Though usually not deadly, permanent personality changes and even madness have been noted often enough to make the reading of this language become commonly associated with lunacy.

Combat & Doing Stuff

This part is still incomplete. Oh well.

Guns (aka. Wands, Staves and Rods)

It wouldn't be a silly pseudo-colonial-apocalyptic savanna-crawl without guns. But how do you mix swords and sorcery and squirt guns? Just throw them in together and don't worry about realism. This is a game with *Dimension door* and *Gate* and *Orcas* for the love of leaping Lemmy.

1. Scavenger bolter, 1d10 damage, long range, reload Δ4, 100 cash
2. Prince pistol, 1d8 damage, mid range, reload Δ10, 200 cash
3. Cat rifle, 2d6 damage, long range, reload Δ8, 300 cash
4. Satrap gun, 2d8 damage, long range, reload Δ6, 900 cash
5. Redland District SMG, 1d10 damage, mid range, burst, reload Δ20, 400 cash,
6. Vome slagger, 2d6 damage, long range, frag, reload Δ4, 900 cash,
7. Ultra blaster, 2d6 radiant damage, mid range, blinding, reload Δ20, 900 cash,
8. Blue blaster, 3d8 necrotic damage, short range, burst, Δ6, 900 cash,
9. Inquisition squirtgun, 1d6, mid range, intravenous, reload Δ8, 200 cash.
10. Voice of Death, 3d10 sonic damage, medium range, reload Δ4, 2,000 cash.

Blinding: if any of the damage dice on a blinding weapon deal maximum damage, the target is blinded for one round. Critical hits with a blinding weapon cause permanent blindness (Dex save DC 8 + proficiency bonus + attack bonus).

Burst: drop one usage die, then roll. Area damage in 10' cube, Dex save DC 15 (or 8 + proficiency bonus + attack bonus) for half damage. Before damage is rolled, as a reaction, targets can sacrifice their move action to dive for cover. In cover they take half damage, none if they make their save.

Frag: a frag gun is charged with epic energies beyond mortal ken. Enemies killed with a frag weapon explode and deal 1d6 damage to all adjacent creatures.

Intravenous: rounds can be loaded with liquid toxins or holy water or whatever.

Range: since I'm simplifying everything, range is also theatre of the mind. Roughly:

Range	Effect	Distance
adjacent	melee is on, ranged attacks and spells have disadvantage	0–2m
short	a character can cover a short distance and attack in the same round. Melee characters should close with gunners and engage them, hard.	2–20m
medium	a character can sprint to cover a medium distance in one round, but can't do anything else and is probably vulnerable to a counterattack	20–40m
long	at long range, it takes a character 2 or 3 rounds to close with a target. A target can easily keep its distance.	40+ m
far away	a target at this range is essentially too far to reach as part of a single combat encounter. It's a chase scene.	120+ m

Reload ΔX: when a gun is out of ammo, it takes an action to reload. A full magazine gets the listed usage die. As a rule of thumb, one magazine costs one tenth the cost of the weapon. When ammo is scarce, increase the cost.

Armors

Some armors that are suited for the hot steppe climate might also come in handy.

1. Flowing nomad robes with padded bits, light, AC 11 + Dex (10 cash).
2. Ballistic linen suit, perfect for the gentleman adventurer, light, AC 12 + Dex (100 cash).
3. Synthskin protection suit, hot, protective, light, AC 11+ Dex (150 cash).
4. Cat armor, a tiny helmet and little silken cuirass that looks ever so cute, cat-sized, light, +1 AC (200 cash).
5. Dryland weave armor, from the cilli of special dryland coral hybrids, surprisingly cool, medium, AC 13 + Dex (max 2) (150 cash).
6. Biomech cool-suit combining synthskin over woven endoskeleton, and an uncanny vascular cooling and filtration interlink system, powered Δ8, medium, AC 14 + Dex (max 2) (300 cash).
7. Spectral combat suit, combines Satrapy steel-glass scales with an environment maintenance parasite, powered Δ6, protective, medium, AC 15 + Dex (max 2), disadvantage stealth (1,500 cash).
8. Porcelain walker suit, the best in princely technology with integrated intravenous administration system for healing potions, powered Δ6, heavy, AC 17, disadvantage stealth (600 cash).

Hot: hot armor is bad in, well, a hot environments. After every exertion (e.g. a battle) in hot armor, the hero has to make a Con save. The DC depends on the heat, but let's say DC 8 + 2d6. On a failed save the hero gains a lovely disadvantage to attacks and physical checks (including

Con saves) and needs to rest. Another failed save and the hero can start dealing with ability score damage.

All the armor in the default rulebook of the default game is hot. And quickly lousy and sweaty.

Powered: a powered armor uses some sort of magical source of energy, be it solar prayers, thermonuclear batteries, blood sacrifice or something else. Roll the usage die after every combat or significant exertion in the armor. An extra power source and protective cradle takes an inventory slot. When it is out of power, the armor imposes a disadvantage to physical activity and combat.

Protective: this is armor that magically provides advantage to saves against horrible environmental effects, from acid to toxic clouds, often with magical hazmat runes or post-mechanical breathing implants.

Saves and Degrees of Failure

I've come across people complaining how D&D is too simple and binary, how a hero either makes it or they don't. Then there are people coming up with complicated systems to simulate degrees of success or failure. I've always found this weird, because as a Referee I always took narrative note of the degree of success or failure. I'm not sure how I learned to do this, possibly just by running a load of games and ingesting a lot of gaming blogs.

The humble d20 by itself gives us six narrative degrees of success. Let's take a roll against a DC of 10, so a hero has to roll over to succeed.

1. Critical Fail = roll a 1 = everything goes balls up. FUBAR. Things are dreadful. *In game terms, feel free to double the penalty.*
2. Fail = roll between 2 and 9 = failed. *Standard fail penalty.*
3. Barely Fail = roll a 10 = so close! Hero fails, but learns something useful. *Hero gets a bonus to next roll or something.*
4. Barely Succeed = roll an 11 = barely made it! But the danger is greater the next time you try this. Maybe the tightrope is fraying or the octogadiator has seen through your moves. *DC goes up the next time a hero tries the same trick.*
5. Succeed = roll between 12 and 19 = success. *Standard.*
6. Critical Success = roll a 20 = everything explodes just right. *Double damages, instagib, bits go flying.*

That's it. All that you, as the Referee need to do to introduce degrees of success is keep in mind the DC of the challenge and move the 'barely' categories accordingly.

OPTION: MUSHY DEGREES

You could also play with the "mushiness" of the categories. If you expand all the categories by 1 or 2 it will increase the chance of 'non-standard' results.

Say the players are fighting on a glass rooftop, sixty meters above a burning city. I'll warn them that its a very dangerous environment, where one wrong step can be catastrophic. This might translate to critical fails on 1-3, bare fails on 8-10, bare successes on 11-13, and critical hits on 18-20. In that kind of environment one good blow sends limbs flying and one slip ... well, it's a long way down.

VERY HIGH AND VERY LOW DCs

With very low DCs (1-5) or very high DCs (16-20) you might end up with situations where you have to remove the 'bare' successes or failures, or even the criticals. If you want to include them at all costs, feel free to add exploding crits, where a d20 is rolled again to 'confirm' the result.

Glossary of the UV Grasslands

What have I missed? What needs more details?

A

Abmortal: a sentience (sometimes human) that does not die of natural causes. Polybodies, like the porcelain princes, and ultras, are among the more common abmortals. Most mortals hate them. A lot.

Aerolith: stuck-force infused rock generated from the air itself, usually the after-effect of catastrophic transmutation or portal failures. The rock is actively aerostatic, functionally weightless and levitating at a set distance from the ground once moved there. It does remain massive, however, so a long lever is often required.

Animancy: soul or spirit magic. Magic using and modifying the animating spark of life, from golems to ba-zombies. Most humans regard animancy as a disgusting horror and abomination, for the simple reason that it re-processes and modifies the heart of what it is to be human. The elves are famed for having no such compunctions. Modern golems are powered by far weaker sources than pure soul juice.

Art Florist: a wizardry discipline, akin to biomancy but focused on plants. Some primitive peoples might call them druids or bush doctors, but the wizards themselves know better.

Autofac: an artificial organism, sometimes of great size, that generates other organisms on its own. Often associated with vomes today, and associated with the downfall of the original folk.

Autonom: an autonomous, synthetic organism, usually semi-sentient and capable of following simple commands. Something like a zombie or skeleton, but built from the ground up with biomantic precision. Simpler variants use exoskeletons or suits to support, and the autonom is a mere collection of muscular tubes connected to a general-purpose crystal brain.

Autowagon: a golem wagon that can move under its own power. Tough, hardy, often covered in custom spikes, armor, defensive embrasures, firing platforms and other accoutrements, autowagons are among the most impressive (and slow, though relentless) forms of transport in the UVG. An autowagon can follow simple instructions and navigate across terrain on its own, if required. Much like a mule. May also be as mulish.

B

Ba: see Personality.

Bardstone: a stone imbued with musics and songs of a Long Ago age. Some say that in a great cataclysm a grumpy deity turned all the bards to stone, so that she could get some sleep. Obviously, this is nonsense, but bardstones are quite valuable, and can store voice recording, messages, and even songs. Oddly, they seem to be attuned to their fixed locations, and moving a bardstone destroys its magic. Perhaps it has something to do with the star lines? Who knows.

Ba-zombie: a reanimated creature, actually closest to a flesh golem, created from an intact soul-stripped body-personality. Using an artificial soul, or souls, it can be maintained indefinitely, and it is how many of those ageless wizards, called liches by some simpler minds, are crafted. A soul mill is the usual way of creating the suitable body-personality.

Bone-work: an obscure hybrid discipline of necromancy and petromancy, using the personality memories of bones, combined with livingstone spirits to grow, reshape and animate bones into new and useful forms. Some intellectuals view it as a lazy dead-end in petromancy.

Biomancy: the wizardry art of sculpting flesh and bone and sinew to create living works. The burdenbeast is perhaps the most well-know example of the art.

Biomechanicum: a hybrid wizarding art that involves the melding of mechanics and flesh. Vomes are an example of advanced biomechanics, but common implanted prosthetics are readily available, from the chop-chop fixer (100 cash for a cold, grey hand) to the porcelain sculptors (2,000 cash for color-shifting chameleon glass dermal implants, popular with *artistes* and *burgleurs*).

Blue Land of the Dead God: a flooded, festering swamp inhabited by diseased degenerates and haunted by the bleeding rotten ghosts of the Blasted Field. Cults regularly try to reawaken the Dead God, but generally fail. In the Blue Lands fermented dairy products and north walls should be avoided.

Body: the material aspect of the human triad of body-personality-soul.

C

Catlord: sentient cats, beloved of the Violet Goddess and by her divine providence, rulers of the Violet City and the Purple Land of the Cat. They use pheromones and parasites to control their blissful, happy subjects. Too lazy

to bother with most day-to-day activities, they are happy to let the wizards and administrators of the Violet City pretend they are in charge.

Chitin caps: an engineered fungus that, when farmed and grown on frames, produces usable quantities of chitin. Sturdy and light, it was popular as a roofing material and in many industrial and manufacturing applications. In the third and fourth corporate dynasties, even articles of clothing, such as hats, bustierres and shoes were often grown with chitin frames. Not to mention the armors.

Circle Sea: the great round sea at the heart of the Rainbowlands, swirling in the endless current around the Needle of the World.

Cyan Sea: a half-legendary inland sea far south, beyond the Wine Dark Mountains, that is said to be entirely clothed in a lethal cyan mist, which ebbs and falls with the tides and makes the entire great Plain of Haze an impoverished and deadly land, inimic to great civilizations like those of the Circle Sea.

D

Decapolis, the: nine to thirteen viciously independent, smallish city states controlling most of the Circle Sea coast from the Metropolis to the Orange Lands. Famed for their trading prowess, their industrious, their venality, their oligarch's fetishistic fascination with magic of all sorts, and their utter ineptitude at setting up anything to compare with the Purple University.

Demon: a confused term for various bodiless sentiences.

Dryland coral: a living rock, one of the ancient biomantic and petromantic arts. Master growers can sculpt it and shape it into evocative, post-modernist forms that emphasize the interdependence of man and nature. There are side effects, as ill-grown DC may leech nutrients and life from nearby areas, creating localized deserts. Cancerous DC may even begin spreading runners that grow into burgeoning house-clusters. There are rumours of a great living-ghost city in the heart of the Twilight Desert which has grown to occupy an area larger than the Freehold of a Corporate Duke. A civil biomancer and crew can sculpt a dryland coral home in Δ4 years for 10,000 cash per year.

Dwarf: a backronym from "De Werker Aristocratisce Revolutie Fraternitie", dwarfs are a distinct culture-class of selectively biomanced people. They have effectively fought the traditional aristoi of the Red and Orange lands to a standstill and now form a major industrialist subsection of the Rainbow Lands. The dwarfs are famously bureaucratic and collectivist, but also famously the only faction staunchly opposing the bureaucratic and

individualist Emerald City Cog Flower Corporation (actually a coin church).

E

Elf, also called Vila or Vile: scary, mythical, time-dilating, shape-shifting humanoid monsters said to live in the far north, beyond the Mountains of the Moon, where the tangled sky trees snag clouds from the sky and a shadow lurks over every soul.

Emerald City, also Metropolis: chief city of the Green Land, and largest city of the Rainbowlands. Governed by the banker priests of the Green God, devoted to greed and the untrammled growth of the vital forces of the individual and the society. Major forces include the Paladins of the Cog Flower, the Revenue-service Accountant-monks, and of course the Green Inquisition, which is crucial to maintaining public support for the fear-and-pain backed cash currency of this great industrial ecological meta-topia.

F

Fac: usually very large, an organic machine created in a forgotten age, perhaps by combining wizards and autonomous vehicles in an unholy union. Sages speculate they were designed to produce useful commodities, now they are almost all lethal menaces, leaking toxic fumes and liquids, ravaging the land, and producing odd, dangerous and mostly useless artifacts or oozes.

Fetish: a bundle of matter imbued with a spirit or demon drawn by a wizard's sacrifice. Most wizards know how to create a basic fetish that serves them in exchange for their own life energy. Binding a spirit in exchange for a sacrificial victim, or an ongoing sacrifice of spirits and fowl, is a much harder task.

Full-body Prosthetic: often immobile, this is essentially a bio-necromantic device that keeps a soul-personality dyad locked in the material world even as the body is reabsorbed into the cycle of life.

Full-body Rebuild: what degenerate savages would call a spell that raises the dead, in fact, it is not far removed. This involved scientific procedure requires necromantic, biomantic, and psychomantic expertise. Ideally, it requires the head of the creature to be rebuilt, for that is where the seat of the personality is. A soul-stone is also required, to rebind the soul from the animasphere into the flesh. A body-knitter needs to rebuild the body around the head and the new soul-stone. Finally, a necromancer has to tease soul, personality and body together into the rebuilt form. The rebuilt body is essentially a flesh golem, reanimated by the original soul and motivated by the

original personality. It generally costs around 5,000 cash and takes at least a week.

G

Golem: a soulless automaton powered directly from the source of creation. Golemancers are now a rare and exotic breed, but very prized, for even a few industrious golems may uplift a tribe into a civilized city, or turn a small city-state into a powerful empire. Poorly built, damaged, or jury-rigged golems can be very dangerous and have been known to explode catastrophically, such as in the Salt Reassembly Incident of the 7th year of the Era of Saffron Ascendant.

Golden Desert: a desert of rock and sand and stone dragons stretching towards the sunrise beyond the Yellow Lands.

Great Folk: a human collective that grew out of a behemoth maintenance caste long long ago. Their stories are a bit garbled, but apparently, when the Gods of the Great Beasts died / disappeared / ascended into the higher world, the Great Folk took their places. Their places slowly crumbled, and the beasts died without the Gods' motive spirits. But the Great Folk survived, and within the narrow confines of their gargantuan corpse worlds, even thrived, becoming some of the best bone-sculptors and sinew-stitchers in the Steppe.

Great Forgetting, The: a common term for the lack of records and the decline that is supposed to have happened in the Long Long Ago. Some heterodox scholars and mystics suggest that no Great Forgetting happened, but rather an Ascendancy into Divinity, or something of that sort, and that all the humans currently living in the Rainbowlands only acquired sentience after those prior beings, perhaps the Lings, departed the world.

Gun: any combat wand that doesn't require wizardly skill to operate. Some even use actual gunpowder magic.

Gunpowder Magic: a magickal school combining Alchemy, Fire and Earth elementalism, and aspects of the Prog Force sub-genres.

H

Half-elf: elf-touched humans, a medical condition that is resistant to most interventions. Inquisitor Scirocco II has classified it as a progressive neuro-moral degenerative disorder, though it does have the unfortunate side-effect of prolonging lifespans. Many half-elves eventually succumb to the elven infection and disappear into the great Wall of Wood, lycanthropic half-beasts rather than proper civilized humans.

Haze: an occlusion of the sky that rises from the eastern horizon as one enters the Ultraviolet Grasslands. The occlusion blocks visible length and infrared radiation, leaving the land in darkness. It appears that the Haze is an atmospheric phenomenon that thickens or otherwise changes the further West one travels, delaying further and further the appearance of the sun. By the time one reaches the central Grasslands, the sun only appears from behind this occlusive layer at noon, and the Black City only experiences a short few hours of late afternoon light (perhaps hence its name?).

Hexads and Self-help Associations: a combination of clan association, socialized healthcare-and-pension fund, thieves' guild, private education system, insurance and protection provider, and para-state actor, the hexads are an important factor binding together the six *de jure* Rainbow Lands. I suppose if there were only three colors, somebody might call them Triads, instead.

Human: most of the Circle Sea power groups consider all close-to-baseline sentient and soulful post-humans as effectively human and possessing the full spectrum of rights attendant to a soul-body-personality triad. This includes the retro-humans, dwarfs, half-elves, half-lings, quarter-lings, and half-orcs.

K

Ka: see Soul.

Ka-Ba Maintenance Body: a physical body substitute, that can knit both spirit and soul to the world, even beyond death. Most KBM Bodies are immobile crystal or ceramic structures housing incredibly complex organic metal magitech structures, but some are also mounted in golems, giving a life beyond the flesh. Attitudes to KBM technology are generally ambivalent: why live in a hollow shell that can not experience the pleasures of life, after all? A basic body costs around 10,000 cash.

Ka-elemental or Soul Elemental: a spurting, flaming, ball-lightning paradox of life-force unmoored from both body and personality, yet trapped in the essential world. Sages are uncertain what kind of tragedy or nightmare machination rips the souls apart from the beings they animate, yet also blocks them from the Recycling Infinity of Nothingness. Some speculate that the legendary Soul Mills of the Vile Ones may be involved. Whatever the cause, all aspects of earthly intelligence and individuality are lost to any soul remaining within the earth's hardy pull within days, if not hours. Ka-elementals are very dangerous and may have unexpected effects on biological and personality baselines (roll d6): (1) organic regression to a more primitive form, (2) personality devolves to simpler, more primal structure, (3) organic shift to parallel evolutionary path, (4) random personality change, (5)

rapid organic evolution into more advanced form, (6) uplift as biological suddenly interfaces with the essence of the RIN (+1d4 Wisdom).

Ka-zombie: the classic living zombie. It is not undead, merely a body-soul stripped of personality and ready for use by the animancer. Creating a Ka-zombie has nothing to do with necromancy, and the subsequent creature, though no longer animated by the wit of personality, nevertheless looks and functions as a human, albeit with zero drive, personality or ability to resist its master.

L

Ling: a mysterious, missing sentient subtype, attested to in Long Long Ago records, epic poems such as *The Epic Journey of the Great Wand E. Ling*, and the bloodlines of the current Half-Lings and Quarter-Lings.

Livingstone: inorganic material, usually rock of one form or another, animated with the spirit of life to reform and reorganize into new structure. A core discipline of petromancy, it is superficially similar to dryland coral biomancy, but actually very distinct, as it uses a very different, usually silicon-based, process to create its 'living' constructs.

Long Ago: the half-remembered times before the Rainbow Order was founded around the Circle Sea. Studies of the Long Ago are half-heartedly forbidden by the Inquisition and avidly pursued by the District and other fringe groups.

Long Long Ago: the eras and times lost beyond the records in the Great Mist. Fragments, shells and hazy memories remain, but even they have a tendency to fade and melt from mind and time, like sands in the storms whipping off the Golden Desert.

Lumin tree: one of the wonders of biomancy, bioluminescent trees. Originally used in grand avenues, now restricted to the private parks of grand despots and the re-education centres of the Cogflower Inquisitors.

M

Machine Humans: legendary sapient beings who managed to combine Personality and Soul with bodies built from the dust of the earth. There is much discussion among sages as to whether they were even possible, with the Bloodsages particularly opposed to the possibility of bloodless humans.

Metaskeleton: a vascular fungoid colony organism that creates artificial skeletons of wood or stone for its own mobility. It is unclear what weird wizardly error resulted

in a fungus that generates endoskeletons instead of exoskeletons, but there you have it. The artificial bones are surprisingly light and delicate, while the fungus itself is entirely a scavenger, leeching decaying plant and animal matter of nutrients. While creepy, metaskeletons are generally harmless and sometimes very beautiful in a *memento mori* way.

Metropolis: see Emerald City.

Mind-burn: common side effect of vomish biomancy. Sages speculate that the vomish neural redesigns are incredibly flawed and buggy, because the vomish command algorithms have trouble comprehending real-world behaviors and goals. Mind-burned creatures usually have their original neural behavioral patterns replaced with alien patterns that mesh poorly with their original encoding. Examples previously seen have included rabbits who behaved like pressure cookers, one tuberous vegetable that tried to function as an alert siren, and several wire-crusting nomads performing an odd pelican mating dance. No overarching order has yet been found.

Mist, The (also The Great Mist): a phenomenon of the Very Early Long Ago, of dubious veracity. Some scholars suggest that the Mist is a metaphorical device for the Great Forgetting, while others maintain that it was a very physical event, similar to the mists of the Cyan Sea beyond the Wine Dark Mountains.

Moon, Mountains of the: an impassable, vicious range, rising almost to the heavens, it cuts off the Rainbow Lands from the north. Home to eerie structures and odd, half-humans who preach of elfin queens and weird dreams.

N

Necroambulism: related to necromancy, the technical discipline of turning dead tissue into an animate workforce for simple, repetitive tasks. A skilled necroambulist can create a Z or S-class laborer for 1d6 x 50 cash.

Needle of the World: a very thin and very, very high mountain rising sheer from the heart of the Circle Sea, surrounded by storms and ignorance. These days most Rainbowlanders avoid talking about it and suggest it is a most boring subject.

Nomads, Lime: nomads, reavers, goatherds, conquerors, shepherds, thieves, proud warriors, foul drunkards. Project all your nomad biases on them, add a bit of ice, a lot of citrus and some fire water. Enjoy a refreshing and totally novel RPG nomad. Or not.

O

Orcs: obviously, the orcs were a long-ago attempt at creating a combat-adapted para-human. They were all successfully eradicated following the Decree of the Seven Lands, slightly before the Swamping of the Blues. In fact, many were 'eradicated' by the efforts of the Bureaucratic Legion, which reclassified large numbers of orcs simply as half-orcs, a permitted soul-body-personality triad under the regulations of the then omnipotent Power Group 13.

P

Personality (also Ba): the creative threads of possibility woven into the tapestry of a human. The changeling essence that weaves together a unique individual over time, fired by the spark of Soul, and unified in the world through the medium of Body. Some cultures believe Personalities have afterlives, while others believe their threads wind, unwind, and wind again over time. A few rare sages argue that Personalities are unique occurrences that fade away after motivating a single body, but necromancers and vivimancers put the lie to this notion. Also called a ba.

In game terms, Ba or Personality is associated with Int and Cha.

Petromancy: the art of using animating spirits to reshape and reform inorganic materials, creating wondrous and useful artifacts.

Polybody: a personality-spirit distributed across several bodies linked by real-time glandular psyche-to-psyche links. They are not more intelligent than ordinary mortals, but the additional bodies make them more resilient to damage, and by adding new bodies periodically, they ensure a mental continuity across long durations.

Porcelain Princes: an immortality seeking faction unified by its cartelist monopoly on the most common polybody magical techniques. They are centred around the Porcelain Throne and are easily recognized by the porcelain masks they use to conceal any variation in their polybody constituent drones, hence their name. Widely regarded as decadent and weak, the Criticist Theoreticians of the New Orangery School argue that they are actually a strong influence on the Bureaucrat-corporativists of the Emerald City Incorporation. Their own name for themselves, if they even have one, is not common knowledge.

Prismatic Walker: a large, ambulatory bio-machine built around a golem made of light. The radiant, life-giving energies of the golem suffuse the crystal bones of the walker, giving it a grace and power beyond that of the more rugged Dwarven diesel walkers.

Q

Quarter-Ling (or Quarterlings): several remote and moderately rare human phenotypes, which retain certain Lingsh characteristics (like exceptional hand-eye coordination and fur coverage of certain body parts), but are mostly baseline for all intents and purposes. Many subscribe to neo-lingish origin myths and cling to various cultural traits as though these were the original Long Ago Lingsh originals.

R

Rainbowlander: a human inhabitant of the five united lands around the Circle Sea, the Violet, Green, Yellow, Orange and Red. The Bluelanders are considered degenerate and somewhat subhuman due to the Blue God incident several centuries ago. Physically, the Rainbowlander humans span the gamut from about 3'6" to 6'6", from pointy ears to beards, from tusks to fangs, and some speciesist or racist fools would suggest that they are actually all variants of half-elves, half-orcs, half-halflings and half-dwarves. That would be foolish, and also potentially life-threatening under the Unity Promulgates of the Rainbow Inquisition.

Rat Rod of Immor[t]ality: an artifact referenced in the *Seven Epics of the Silky Sultan* as able to command rodents. Other sources say it gives the power of speech to rats. Yet others, that it makes a rodent immortal. Yet a fourth that it offers protection from rodents. A fifth that it can turn the tails of rodents into a panacea. A sixth that provides protection from pestilence and plague.

Recycling Infinity of Nothingness (RIN): the eternal soul-chaos beyond the universe that is the eater and reviver of the forces of the many worlds, hidden both beyond and between the material elements.

Red Land District, RLD: radical anarchist socialist city-state on the shores of the Red Land, which became nominally independent after a bloody popular uprising against the Vintner Lords. Though recognized as independent and at peace for decades, its glazed brick heat ray colossi continue to burn every creature that tries to reach it by land. It has developed into a hub of piracy, free enterprise, biomechanics and hexad ingenuity - making it an unusual ally of the Emerald City.

S

Soul (also Ka): the engine of life, a contradictory essence of the world that activates the Body and makes place for the Personality to guide the activity of that thing that is

called a living human. Also called the ka.
In game terms Ka or Soul is associated with Wis.

Soulfire (also Soulburn): the energy of a soul, distilled and burned to activate an otherwise inanimate object or golem. It can be obtained by slow and precarious rituals from sunlight, plants, small vermin, and other simple organisms. Or, much more swiftly, through a proper vicious sacrifice. Or, alternatively, in pearlescent form from a Soul Mill. But soul mills are very, very evil things that should be avoided.

Soul Mill: a nightmare machine from the Long Long Ago, often thought to be an elven creation, that can take the actual souls of living humans (and sometimes other soul-bearing forms), and render them into visceral energy. Most shamans of the later Rainbowlands consider this an utter abomination that brings closer the Final Entropy or the Descent into Grey. Still, the power harvested is immense. It is speculated that the Mist that obscures the Long Long Ago is the result of the overuse of industrial level soul milling.

In game terms, any hero or creature processed through a soul mill is gone forever, their very deeds and memories doomed to leech away into oblivion.

Source: a generic term for the creative essence of the world, sometimes called the world soul, that certain plants and creatures use to exceed the parameters of their physical existence. Or do magic.

Spectrum Satraps: a mysterious para-human cult or clan living far to the west, fond of bright-colored suits that cover their whole bodies, and glass helmets. They travel in great prismatic walkers and are fond of illusions and radiant magics.

Stuck-Force: the detritus of Long Long Ago magics or technologies or curses, these shears in space-time create odd planes, lines, points and solids of solidified force. Over time they become visible with accumulated dirt and dust, some very large ones even appear as floating islands. Even today, a critically failed *Floating Disc* spell might result in a small stuck-force plane, forever more disrupting the reality of wherever it was cast.

T

Thornstone: a fast-growing dryland coral variant, popular for building fences or enclosures for traveling parties. A single skilled grower can coax a twenty meters of thorny fence in a single day. The fence is relatively brittle, but the thorns are vicious as daggers (1d4 damage). With additional days, a grower can extend the thorns into longer blades, hooks, snares and more.

U

Ultra: ghosts or body-hopping spirits that rewrite the spiritual vital essence of their hosts to suit their needs. They are biomancers par excellence, but their ultimate goals are unclear. All major religions and trading organisations treat them as a hostile menace. Some call them demons, but this is inaccurate.

V

Vech: a Vehicular Mechanism for carrying multiple persons and cargo, usually biomechanical, though sometimes pure golem. Examples include the Prismatic Walkers of the Spectrum Satraps, the Dwarven Diesel Walkers of the East Coast, and the graceful Porcelain Prancers of the Porcelain Princes. Vechs are mostly capable of simple autonomous movement, particularly following a lead unit, but in all honesty are little more intelligent than a cockroach or a brick golem, and require piloting for more complex manoeuvres.

Vome: short for Violent Mechanism, a self-replicating synthetic organism or auto-golem created (according to myth) by a serpentine capitalist faction in the Long Long Ago to fight in a series of wars that eventually ended in the factions own destruction. It is not clear if the vomes are mindless, differently minded, intelligent and hateful, or just completely insane. They are inimical to much organic life and often assimilate or modify creatures on a whim, however, baseline bugs and coding cockroaches mean the vomes are much less lethal than they could be.

W

Wine Dark Mountains: a grand mountain range in the south, beyond the Red Land, crowned with snows of flame and Oxblood peaks.

Wizard: a short-hand for every kind of strange person dabbling in forgotten sciences and odd magics. Clerics, priests, shamans, witches, warlocks, druids and more. All are wizards to the Steppe-landers who make little distinction when dealing with mind-controlling, fire-throwing monsters.

Y

Yellow Land: a dry land, north-east of the Circle Sea, and the terminus for trade caravans from the Mysterious Land. It is roughly divided between the confederation of the Decapolis and the powerful merchant republic of Safranj. The Yellow Land is famous for its spices,

merchants, ranchers and operas. Also, as the site of a recent massive uncontrolled necroambulist outbreak.

Thank You. You guys are making the UVG possible.

THE METAHEROES

Dahlgren, Ronald
Davini, JW
Downs, Andrew
'Frotz'
Kunin, Noah
Wagener, Harald

THE HEROES

Aulds, James
Berghaus, Frank
Deckert, Joseph
Eleftherios, Nikos
Eisenhofer, Benjamin
Hansen, Thor
Kutalik, Chris
Lee, Youjin
Logos, Dyson
Pierce, Leonard
'Robert'
Vilaplana, Oscar

THE MINIHEROES

Aguirre, Forrest
Balbi, Rafael
Bennett, Liam
Christensen, Steve
Corcoran, Myles
Cranford, Gordon
Dowler, Tony
Duncan, Jeremy
Eaton, Sam
'edchuk'
'Gregor'
Griffin, Aaron
'In Search of Games'
Kolbe, Christian
Jensan
Lebreton, Jean-François
Vandel 'MapForge'
Martin, Taylor
Mazza, Cody
McCann, Paul
McClellan, Scott Philip

McDowall, Chris
Monkey, Filthy
Morrell, Nicholas
'Munkao'
Mulherin, Nick
NerdCant
Nick
Nordberg, Anders
Paul, David
Perry, David
Peter
'qpop'
'Questing Beast'
'Ramanan'
Robinson, David
Schmiedekamp, Mendel
Siew, Zedeck
Spay, John
Stieha, Chris
Tsong, Marcus
'yongi'
Vick, Charlie
V, Max