

lexicon  
OF THE  
vastlands

LUKA REJEC

Lexicon of the Vastlands  
*a metafictional folk game accessory*  
 or  
*vignettes of a synthetic dream*

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To all the heroes throwing oracle dice to divine unknown paths.



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# A

## Abmortal

A sentience (sometimes human) that does not die of natural causes. Porcelain Princes and Ultras are often counted among the abmortals. Many mortals hate them, others worship them, the fortunate ones are ignorant of them.

## Aerolith

Stuckforce-infused (?) rock generated from thin air, a common after-effect of catastrophic transmutation or portal failure. The rock is actively aerostatic—functionally weightless and motionless within a gravity well once position. It retains mass and requires sustained force to move.

## After-Dog

A clade of various human and animal-tier sentients derived from a mythical creature called ‘the dog’. Multiple traditions agree that ‘the dog’ participated in the peopling of Second Soil.

Most Vastlanders know the human dogheads. Only the unlucky have ever encountered the bestial viguolves in their various metamorphic incarnations.

## Author

Here, this work pretends to be fiction, there it claims to be non-fiction. Vignettes mix with archival reports, marginalian day-dreams slink into encyclopaedia accounts. Truth hides between the lines. Different sources crawl out of the Long Long Ago.

One author repeats, clothed in the flesh of many mortals. Scholars of the Viridian Board name the entity ‘Dead Springtime’, one of the *ultra viris*, the no-more men become ghosts of ones and nulls in the calculation membrane that envelops the Given World.

In the *Venerable Passages*, the humbled director of a newly-incorporated auto-factory cries out as she is led to the recycler, “I

was old when another world was young, and this one but twinkled in the eye of your cowardly warlord.”

# B

## Bone-Work, Osseopy

Hybrid discipline of necromancy and petromancy. Depends on the personality memories of bones combined with livingstone spirits to grow, reshape, and animate bone into useful forms.

Lapun ta Drughi, famed intellectual of the apocalypse, called it “... a lazy, dead-end petromantic shortcut for fools.” Sigmund med Nashimi, court dead-talker to the legal director of High Five, meanwhile said, “Bone-workers are nothing but hopped up mechanics, wiring bones and jolting them into a parody of life. This is to necromancy what potato stamps are to sculpture.”

The marmot-folk abide.

# C

## Cat Lords

The feline rulers of the Violet City and the Purple Land of the Cat use pheromones and mental parasites to direct their blissful, happy subjects. Too smart to bother with most day-to-day work, they allow the wizard-administrators and priest-servitors of the Violet Goddess to pretend to be in charge.

## Commieform, Communal Body

Monstrous amoeboids created to carry the soul-personalities of multiple individuals beyond a single body’s decay barrier.

The ur-biomancer Golny Zaga calls them “biological virtual-life machines.” The ancestrite sage Samo Shemarodashii pronounced

anathema on them, saying, “The commieform is a perversion of the lineages of Maker and Builders! Humanity was not made protean, and these horrors must be cast out.” Most ancestrite cultures continue to offer ritual bounties for destroyed commieforms to this day.

Re-life technicians debate whether any of the stored soul-personalities are still viable today. As the solipsist libertarian One Random proclaims, “... the communal existence destroys the individual drive that uplifted the first humans to exceed their animal natures.” Most practicals agree with mechanus Ivar Doctogeniere III, who pointed out, “All this theoretical belly-aching is just talking heads ashamed to admit that our modern technomagics are not powerful enough to repair ka-ba dualities stored in biological matrices and re-embody them once more. We are, quite simply, not the gods our ancestors were!”

## D

### **The Deep Moss**

A circular region of verdant moss pillow-forest surrounding the former Laboratory Temple Samson, site of the Garden Goo incident. Advanced magitech rapidly fails in the area, and even primitive synthetic materials breakdown over a matter of days. The alienated zone is now home to primitive post-human hunter-gatherer clans using stone and organic tools.

The local bioactive field remains incredibly high. This means that the kill switch programmed into the organifactor bacteria is inactive in the area and the microbes rapidly convert metals and synthetics into organic building blocks: food for plants.

Phytomancers explain that the mosses are so prevalent because they have developed a symbiotic relationship with the bacterium. Their omnipresent spores are laden with the organifactors, and whenever they alight on a synthetic material, they rapidly consume it, fertilising a new moss bloom.

### **The Dull**

Metaspace underlies reality. A nothing-something that evades conscious apprehension. Perception drifts as one travels a wormway through the dull. The mind easily sinks through numbness into existential horror.

One should travel smart, packing amusements and distractions. Many voyagers have gone mad for lack of a pack of cards.

### **Dry Brothers**

*Legends, the superhuman.*

Three mummified wyrms mark the three frontiers of Ebét. Tremendous, dozen-legged serpentine dragons, the elder brothers of the Living God. They all failed in the face of the Virgin Medusa and thereafter became his first lieutenants. Sinuous and terrible like their father, the Naga King, they protected the faithful of the Living God till their death on the Seven-Step March.

After their death they were mummified, their forms become as mountains to protect the blessed land even after their death.

Their true names are hidden, but lower-caste pop-tales call them Azure Dog, Jaspis Mountain, and Ivory Calamity. Azure Dog guards the wall of sky, where Great Green meets Long Fog. Jaspis Mountain marks the Gates of the Sun. Ivory Calamity strides across the Sea of Sand, most generous of the shifting dunes.

## E

### **Ebét, Great House of Cosmic Light, Hundredgate**

*Popular geography, White City coast.*

Venerable slave-holding empire on the southern shore of the Great Green. Ebét has a fine gradation of castes built on flesh-sculpting and the use of industrial necromancy to overcome the bounds of mortality. Ruled by the undying collective organism known as the Living God.

Ebét has dominated the River of Life and its nearby seas for a millennium, growing splendidly wealthy on trade and tribute from the known world. Over the last century, Ebét's gerontocratic priesthood and bickering administrator-nobles have struggled to organize a coherent geopolitical strategy to counter the rising Iksan empire northwest of the Great Green.

Addendum (DS ed., t-7): The indolence of Ebét's decline proved fatal at the last. After a long and bloody war, the eponymous capital of a hundred gates fell to the Iksan most-rational (hah - ed.) army. In the provinces, splinter biomancer and necromancer autarchies continue their resistance, each convinced they bear the true germ-line of their once-living god.

### **Elements: Green, Fire, Water, Wind**

Quarterlings say these elements capture the cellular structure of the living cosmos. Green is the ordered drive of life, fire is the entropic cascade of energy, water is the brute material of the physical, and wind is the swirling chaos of interaction.

### **Era of Forty Shadows**

*Mythical era, creation cycle.*

A fanciful period of wandering after the destruction of First Soil, when humanity scattered to the eight directions. Many stories attribute the birth of all sorts of daemons, from messengers to seducers, to this period. In the oldest Vastland tales, this shadow era ends with the golden flower era of Second Soil (see below).

### **Era of Second Soil**

*Mythical era, creation cycle.*

After First Soil was lost, orphan humanity wandered for forty generations in the shadow carcass of their dead sun. They fed on the manna built by the gods' machines from the broken stuff of their old homes. Nutrition for the body, but not the spirit, many faded and became shells. Loops of cognition in bodies without soul or motive.

Second humanity was born when a dandelion seed landed on Second Soil. The seed germinated, rooted, grew, blossomed and seeded again and again, until the fields of Second Soil encompassed a myriad of myriads of golden flower-suns.

New gods were born, Wörms to dig new tunnels, Builders to create new fields, and angels to tend them for the children of second humanity.

## **F**

### **Fast Stars**

Remnant cities, factories and paradises orbiting the Given World. A glittering reminder of modern decline.

## **G**

### **Ghoul**

A cannibal sentient missing some essential part of common personhood, who must steal and consume it from other sentients. Examples include the Ebéteen biomancer ghouls, the yedayeen, who must consume flesh to rebuild their permanently mutating bodies, and the various flavors of vampire, who require bodily fluids to suppress the dessicating tendencies of their malfunctioning para-symbiotic systems.

### **Given World**

The contemporary world as experienced by the uneducated. Many archaic quarterling cultures hold that the world is no natural phenomenon. Rather, they say, the divine Builders gave it to their ancestors when time began.

### Golden Desert

A vast domain of rock and sand and stone dragons stretching towards the sunrise beyond the Yellow Lands. Only smugglers and caravans-illegal dare this inhospitable terrain rather than avoiding themselves of one of the seven active dull-way gates maintained by the seraglio maintainer clans.

### The Great Forgetting

Common term for the lack of records and decline supposed to have happened in the Long Long Ago. Some heterodox scholars and mystics suggest there was no Great Forgetting; rather, an ascendancy to divinity, or something similar, and that all humans currently living in the world only acquired sentience after those prior beings—perhaps lings—departed.

## H

### Homesteading of Hell

*Heroic era, ethnogenesis folk tale.*

A meta-cycle of narrative poems and spoken-word songs describing the emergence of humanity from beneath the earth to turn the surface of the Given World from a hell into a paradise.

Famous examples, like *The Cicada and the Summer Tree* and *Fourteen Doses*, survive as living folk traditions to this day.

The folklorist Nuta od Malafiga compiled 627 archival recordings and literary accounts from thirteen settled and unsettled neo-fac cultures to discern a historical basis for many of these fanciful narratives. However, she may went too far when arguing that, "... some humans transferred their essence into coherent radiation and lived on the surface as energy beings for millennia. Indeed, what meat-humanity called hell, was close to heaven for them. This implies that the hell-firing may have been intentional, rather than an accident. An infernoforming project that disrupted an earlier terraforming project."

She was sanctioned by the Board of Approved Histories (74,230-ck) and recanted. Following re-education, Malafiga was restored to her status and domains.

## I

### Ill Nano

*Mythical era, corruption cycle.*

After Ill Nano, the corruption dwarf, fell from the sky, after the sun lost it's second eye, the creatures that kill and destroy were reborn from the mud and the dust. Ill Nano's broken dreams crawled like worms into the parks and fields of the peaceful homanders and awakened the curses of the untamed times. Many shambled broken and malformed, not long for this world, beyond even Ill Nano's ability to awaken them.

Some remained. The lasters who outlived the homanders, who went feral like their dogs and deer, cats and cattle, called Ill Nano's creations that survived the vlights.

Typical are the vguolves. Bear-sized omnivorous after-dogs, transformed by the strange dreams of Ill Nano. Some bear the handprints of their maker in the flashes of prophecy that glitter in their eyes.

The rarest, most accursed vguolves give birth to novelopes, intelligent creatures at first glance human but deeply alien. Novelopes develop as a tumour within the belly of a vguolf, ripping their way free when fully grown and in full monstrous vigour.

In Cathedral Town the jimjays offer a soul's bounty on every vguolf and a twenty-soul's bounty on every novelope.

### Izvoreni, Source-folk

A slave maintainer caste of the Ebéteen, responsible for the undying machines of the Living God (now deceased). Ebéteen official records insist that the Living God created them from dust.

Izvoreni tattoo-legends say they were the original inhabitants of the shores of the River of Life before the Ebéteen arrived from the Eclipsed Lands many centuries ago.

Names: Dagrif, Yeshleht, Nigut, Vorhad, Uzud, Zobot, Yastref.

## M

### Maintainers

Hereditary clans and castes responsible for maintaining the sacred machines of Long Long Ago in many contemporary polities. They perform encrypted rituals to maintain the dive blood and brain machines to access the noösphere and propitiate their living machines. Some, slaved to sentient machines, worship their mechanical charges as deities in their own right.

See also: izvoreni, old-folk.

### Meat-Humanity

Derogatory meta-human term for embodied humans, who give priority to the physical *ha*-mediated experience of the world.

### Mile

Since Second Soil, poly-humanity has agreed that a thousand meters is a mille—that is, one mile. Sadly, in the Long Years, the definition of a meter has drifted from empire to empire.

## R

### Radio Magic, Veda of the Radiant Electromagnificence

An ancient magi-technic tradition, popularized by the recent reappearance of the portable short-wave stereo orb. Now every

populist archon worth their polis has a personal radio wizard to communicate directly with their huddled masses.

### Root Tunnels of Reality

*prof. Nihil Overlook, Ancient Cosmoplasmic Mythologies, 2nd ed.*

*see also: The Dull*

Many traditionals call the passages connecting the natural and artificial gates dotting the cosmoplasm the ‘root levels’. This is obviously an agrarian mythological convergence linking the sowing and growing plants with burial and the journey to a mythic chthonic afterlife. In this way roots symbolize the passage between the worlds of the dead and the living.

It is unclear why so many quarterling-derived labor castes sing doggerel about reality system administrators\* manipulating the Given World by accessing the ‘root levels’. Surprisingly, these tales are incredibly old, with confirmed variants recorded in the third and second archaeological stratum of the Bell Abacus Arcology.

Unexpectedly lucid work by mister professor S. Quaffley suggests ‘system administrator’ is a relic synonym for the magical ‘Builders’ of many pre-fog cultures. If the mister professor did more such work, rather than trying to manipulate the grant committee, perhaps they would have retained tenure.

### La Rue du Monde, Worldsroad

*Fabulous location, contemporary rumor.*

A 31,619 km long ouroboros of aerolith girdles the Given World at 38° north. The loop soars over seas and through mountains, ever fixed a thousand meters above sea level. The god-like bahnfactory Gras-Ciel crawls along its length, a great lobster of nacre and living metal, rebuilding six miles of the 42-lane skybahn every day.

Northern tribes count their long cycles by the fifteen years it takes Gras-Ciel to rebuild the road entire. Road yachtsmen travel the vast Rue, paying the Encrusters who live on Gras-Ciel when they have to lift their vehicles and goods across the bahnfactory.

In the Rainbowlands, divided from the Rue by the Mountains of the Moon and the torrid equatorial latitudes, most think the great Worldsroad is only a rumor to tempt racers to their doom.

## S

### Second Soil

*Mythical era, location, cosmogenesis.*

The home of Second Humanity. Songs speak of whirling seed-worlds dancing around a hundred million golden flower suns.

### Soil

*Mythical era, location, ethnogenesis.*

A vast array of different legends and contradictory legends agree on one thing: the Maker created humans from the stuff of their cradle. Different traditions had different names: earth, sol, clay, salt, sand, dirt, dung, and more. However, since the time of Second Soil, it has been traditional among the educated to refer to the cradle of all the polymorph humanities as Soil.

After all, is it not soil that nurtures the seed to bloom, and is not cultivation and nurture the defining feature of humanity?

### Stasimorphic Heresy

In the seventh decade of the redirectoracy many engineer monks of the order of Santa Ruperta proclaimed a heretical doctrine that the quarterling myths are based on truth, that our world is not natural but rather created or built, and that the fluid nature of both the biotic and animic (spiritual) spheres of existence is a modified or artificial situation, maintained by some form of vast homeostatic apparatus underpinning our cosmos. The heresy was successfully eliminated in 84rd and most (67%) of the key proponents re-educated by a cogflower inquisition corps under the command of Puromente Ionatian.

Nevertheless, elements of stasimorphism have proven useful for explaining the queerly static and conservative natures of several gate-accessible bubble worlds.

## U

### U Complex

*Contemporary, signal legend.*

In the decades since Galago Macaroni restored the autofac Ray Dio Hut and radio magic once again spread throughout the civil societies, signals from the deep void have been captured by amateurs and court recorders alike. The first signals were labelled with the letters of the hieratic alphabet. The twenty-third signal was labelled 'U' and became infamous for its strength and obnoxiously incomprehensible repeating patterns. Soon the U signal turned out to be a mix of communications from multiple sources, thus the 'U complex' was discovered.

Initially, many scholars took the U complex to be an omen or warning of impending doom. However, over the years, mass society has turned against this notion. As the academic comedian Matto di Qui said, "What kind of lazy doom takes a century?"

A famously obtuse message taken as proof of a prophecy by satrap ecstasies is the 'Alert Repetition' (working translation):

"Alert. This is [U]. Repeat. This is [U]. We have returned and we have bad news. The retemporization protocol will not work at scale. Repeat, the retemporization protocol will not work! Warn the [Hyperlight?] not to initiate the protocol! Alert! This is [U]! Hello? Vesmir [?] Observatory? We are not picking up your handshake. Hello? Is there anybody in there?"

This repeating message inspired the popular Crowie song about a timelost voidwalker, "Are you there, Captain Tom?"



# V

## Vastlander

One who lives on the stretched onion skin of the Given World.

## The Venerable Passages

*Heroic era, ethnogenesis folk tale.*

An epic cycle of heroic poetry from the subterranean epoch. It tells the story of three peoples, the Archaeans, the Mutilii, and the Radiantes.

Every generation the Archaeans offered half their children to the Mutilii in the deep places, and their most beautiful youth to the Radiantes in the high places. One year, the youth to be offered, one Heloi, is so lovely that the chosen pick-warriors refuse to see him uplifted into ash. This breach of the gift-law provokes the lord Pripiat of the Radiantes to scourge the Oldest City with invisible fire and steal Heloi. The Archaeans under their twin-kings Lock and Molock take up their leaden shields and voyage up to hell in their haulworm ships. There, they find the empire of the Radiantes crumbled and hell burned out. They besiege the great fire-city of Try, where Pripiat keeps the beautiful Heloi. For seven years the war rages, until at last, by a ruse, the Archaeans sneak an atom-heart mother into the city of Try and destroy its invisible walls. However, the gods punish the pride of the Archaeans, and they return to their many-chambered cities to find their homes raided by the Mutilii, their spouses broken, their pure-children stolen into the deep places, and their life-support temples devastated. The surviving Archaeans abandon the hulks of their safe-shielded towns and journey up, into the ashes of hell, where they make their new homes.

Several other epic cycles later built on these stories. Perhaps the most famous is the fragmentary *[text redacted]*.

*False tales about the homesteading of hell are forbidden by decree 74,234-bh against anti-civilizational propaganda.*

# W

## The War or WAR

The all-ling school of historiography holds that the War (always capitalized) marked the Fall of the Chosen Ones. Yet, they disagree who the chosen referred to might have been.

The razor school (after Jon l'Occam) mocks the all-lings approach as an epic misunderstanding. As Britwa Kanlon says, "Obviously there was more than one war. Even more than one great, history-obliterating war. There were probably not many, considering the power of many of the Old Ones. Yet, to ascribe all the fractures in our world to a single cataclysm, as the all-lings do, is to godparent lies into the very seed stock of our histories."

Nevertheless, tying all the myriad troubles of the Herenow to a single War remains popular. Modern dilettante theorists hunting for evidence of the [one true] War call themselves warriors.

## White City

A city [?] of unknown antecedent in the east of the world-island, suspended and inaccessible in a great bubble of light. The radiation coming off the energy bubble creates an unlivable firescape around the city, with constant powerful thermal winds, tornadoes, and storms.

Mystics since the first libraries were re-activated have claimed it was a center or birth place or landing site of the Viles or the Builders or the Lings or whichever deity-species they preferred.

Contrarians like Hazmat bil Bonavente argue that the legends and blurry long-distance images are hardly proof that the that the White City is even a city and not some kind of machine, alien entity, or big dumb sculpture left by a crazed demiurge.

## White City Coast

The eastern edge of the world-island, characterized by numerous shallow crater seas and dominated by the luminous firescape of the White City.

**The Wired**

Many times over humanity's cycles, people have tried to overcome mortality by merging flesh with synthetic machinery. Sometimes, these attempts succeeded. Other times they left bodies without personality or soul, animated by machines.

All these categories of plug-and-play humans, from the e-human with an omnibattery stomach replacement to the electrically operated corpse, are popularly called "the wired".

Some of the more successful post-mortal wired collectives, such as the so-called spark-plug army, exhibit hive-mind behavior.

The metal-first school of biomechané categorizes all the wired as undead vomes. Even those whose hearts still beat and brains still compose poems comparing the sun to an atom bomb.

**Wire-Ghouls**

A loose category of machines, wired, and golems, who need to cannibalize other creatures' machinery, and particularly processors, to survive.

Their numbers grew especially after the Garden Goo incident, when the organifactor bacterium escaped from containment, using its mass-modifier organelles to convert cybernetic systems into nutrients and other building blocks for organic systems.

Metropolis representative Golem Skal 3k became infamous for insisting that the organifactor plague was a deliberate action by bio-first terrorist elements and anti-machine luddites.

**Wizard**

The Vastlander calls every strange person dabbling in forgotten sciences and odd magics a wizard. They make no distinction for cleric or coder, priest or programmer. What does it matter how the mind-controlling, fire-throwing, world-breaking monster terrorizes the gentle folk? Enough to say, "It does, it does."

**World-Island**

The largest dry part of the Given World, accounting for over 90% of its total land mass.

**World-Sea, the Wine-Dark**

The largest ocean, covering two thirds of the Given World.

**Wormway**

A passage tunnelled through or between realities. Some are big enough for a single worm, others for entire voidships. Some are faster than travelling through real-space, others slower.

Folk etymology says the name comes from the ascended goddess Adama Wörm, who revealed the principles of metarealistic travel in the Era of Second Soil.

**Wostijaz and Star Hweh**

*Mythical era, creation cycle.*

*Moss-bearing quarterling oral tradition.*

Star Hweh beheld the Upper Waters and became a fish. Star Hweh beheld the Middle Winds and became a bird. Star Hweh beheld the Lower Green and became a beast. Star Hweh beheld the Under Fires and became ka incarnate, the spark of sentience geminate in the flickerstones of the Given World.

Wostijaz found the holms of the holy programmers small. It found the roles of worker and descendant and progenitor small. It found the precautions of the principates stifling. Wostijaz found the lying seed of ambition, the zygote of aristoi perversion, within its heart and hid it from the purification session comperes. Concealed it from its comrades, its antes and its posts. Nurtured it with malignant dreams and callous egotism. Wostijaz became the master of souls, the creator of new workers, while all along sick ambition metastasised within it. Finally, Wostijaz held the flickerstones. Those master objets that powered the life-making of our idealite fratrie.

Did Wostijaz then choose to be the greatest vivifex our holm had yet seen? Did Wostijaz choose to serve the higher good and bring the greater glory to our settlement line? Did Wostijaz choose to do its part for our thirteen-thousand year cycle of gentle life between the Under Fires and the Middle Winds?

No. Sick ambition bloomed within it. Closet aristoi it became. Our fate it sealed.



















































