



**WOLF
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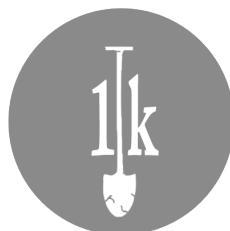
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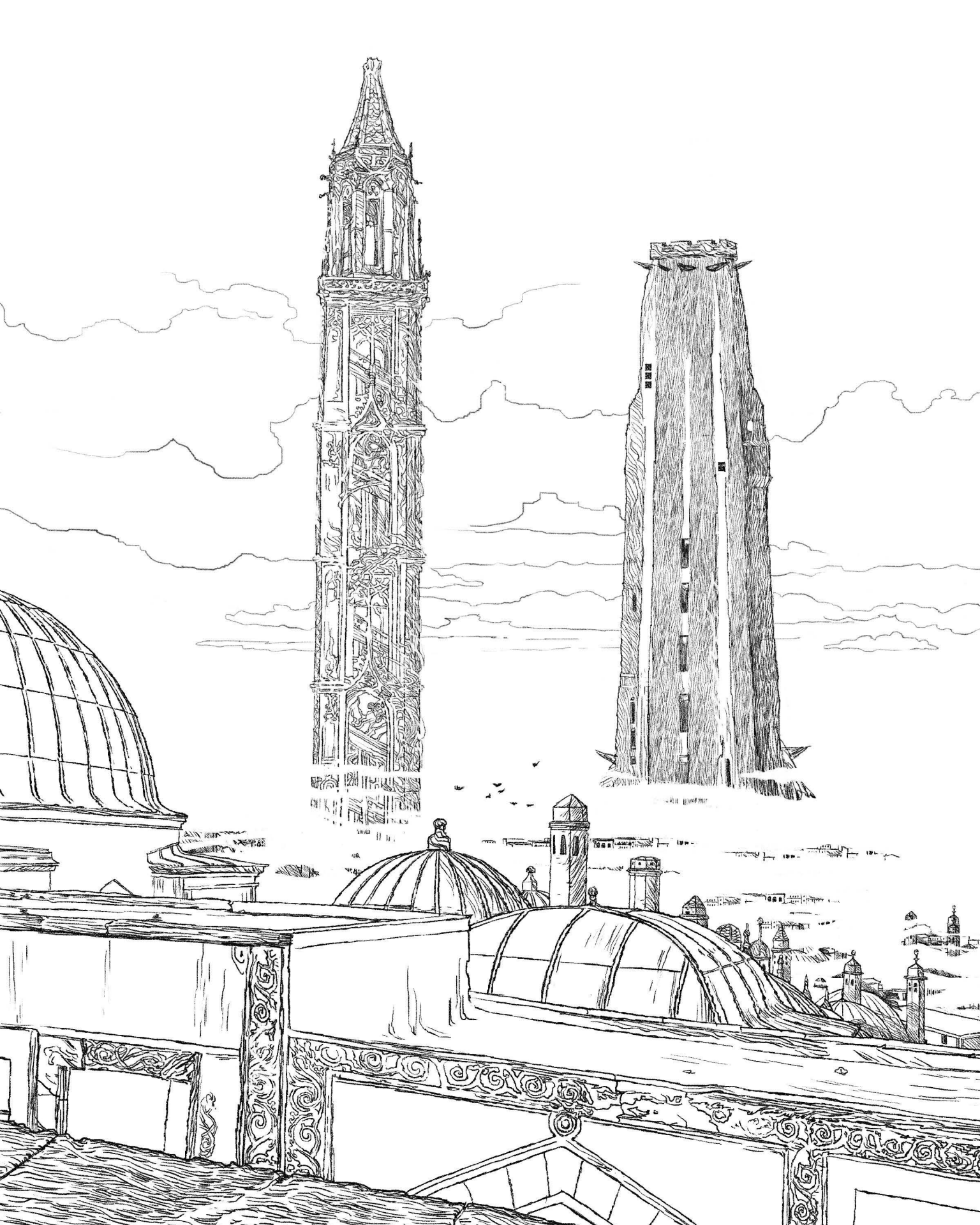
A tale by Epidiah Ravachol

Illustrated by Dagmara Matuszak

The schism began when Eyslre hammered a sheet of brass into a rough sphere upon which he painstakingly etched a map of the known world as recorded by Queen Sof in her once celebrated, but now obscure, *Twenty-Three Hundred Forays into Realms Strange and Familiar Beneath the Shifting Sky*. With will, a thread of silver, and an imperfect cantrip, Eyslre suspended the globe above a grand table made of azure glass in the largest of the dining halls in his spire. Roasted lamb, honeyed pastries, and heady ales joined vine-fruits freshly plucked by imp claw and carried upon batwing from every known clime at Eyslre's table where he hosted a collection of dignitaries, sorcerous scholars, and traveled adventurers whose paths only crossed here, at the nexus of the world: the City of Fire and Coin.

The affair lasted a week and a day, stretching from somber mornings punctuated with curiosity-seekers pretending to appreciate the sum of all accomplishments this humble globe represented to nights filled with the orgies of ecstatic sycophants driven to wild frenzy by the revelation. At the heart of it all stood Eyslre in his alchemically preserved youth, a lithe and beautiful man, a boundless host with unblemished charm, who—to the ceaseless amusement of his guests—clothed himself in fashions stolen by magic from the world's most secretive societies.

On the eighth night, Eyslre, whose buttery skin betrayed no shade or scar earned by worldly travel, drifted from a bed of writhing pleasures to slake his thirst at his azure table. A small crowd of scraggy sea captains, weathered caravan masters, and wizen astrologers gathered there to moot on the nature of his discovery. The world—Eyslre would explain to them, highlighting his now well-rehearsed lecture with simple enough tricks of light and noise—is not, of course, a sphere. Were that the case, those unfortunate people encamped halfway around the world from the City of Fire and Coin could only hope to cling to the steep arc of the globe and dangle over the abyss below. The world, instead, was flat, but of a unique and heretofore unknown shape of flatness that could best be represented only by a globe. Here, nearly directly across the globe from where they stood stand now, a place that could only be reached after months of hard ocean travel, is one of the seams in the brass sphere dividing two small islands. Here, the shape of the world is such that, were it drawn out in its properly flat fashion, an unassailable gulf would sunder these two islands. And yet, Queen Sof, in the twenty-second volume of her *Forays* traveled back and forth among these islands seventeen times in a single day to secure a royal marriage between the local peoples and the right to build an idol to one of her forgotten gods. So it was not possible for the islands to be so sundered.



Awe descended on these travelers and knowers of the world, who had on many occasions been led astray by their own charts and maps. Each of them coveted the globe and fell to silent contemplation on how to best wrest it from its gaudy, floating perch and put it to real work. In their silence, a single scoff echoed and struck Eyslre as a real and tangible blow. He covered the rage in his violet eyes with a smile and sought out this guest of his who so flagrantly announced their doubt.

Hunched Vulenthuwanhu leapt upon the rippled plane of azure glass with a shocking spryness. Her body had been aged decades beyond her youth by her eldritch studies. She was a speaker with the dead and had learn more secrets and paid more tolls in her fifteen years than most families have in as many generations. There she stood, peering up at the brass globe as if she meant to pluck it from Eyslre's sky with her withered brown hand. In front of these academics and adventurers, where she was unknown by sight, her apparent age stretched well beyond that of Eyslre's and lent her gravitas as she counter-posed that the origin of the spherical illusion was not in the nature of the world's flat shape, but in the very orbs through which we view it. The eyes were, of course, globular.

So anything so vast as the horizon witnessed through them would obviously tend toward a natural curve. Careful to catch each navigator and stargazer by eye, Vulenthuwanhu asked "Do we not see the stars and those who wander among them as spheres? The moons? And the sun, who travels across the world each day in a long arc when such a journey would best be served by a straight line?"

Thusly satisfied, she turned from the globe and shuffled from Eyslre's hall and spire. As the dark hours faded into morning, the rest of the guests slowly followed suit and the embers of the eight-night conflagration cooled in a gray dawn.

Vulenthuwanhu also maintained a spire within the City of Fire and Coin—a modest, but foreboding structure with high, window-sparse walls. Though many of this strange city's sorcerous denizen held far older residencies that gather dark rumors about them for centuries, few had gathered so many as Vulenthuwanhu. The spire had been built only on moonless nights and the laborers appeared only as flickering shadows casts by the City's many torches and lamps. Some claimed, in whispers, the insides of the

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walls were engraved with rune and sigil to bar against the dead and devilry that Vulenthuanhu's art was known to attract. Others alleged, in softer whispers yet, the thick walls were made from stone stolen from ancient tombs and arranged just so to bar against the escape of the dead and devilry that Vulenthuanhu's art surely summoned.

The City of Fire and Coin was not overcrowded with spires, but to stand anywhere within the City and to look beyond the monkey-haunted rooftops in any direction was to see a handful of towers stabbing the sky. Rare were the spires that were found together. Most stood alone among neighborhoods that sprouted beneath them to support the studies, pleasures, and whims of their masters and mistresses.

So when a tide of ten thousand crustaceans clamored from the City's harbor and washed Eyslre's tower of carved marble and delicately colored glass away as an undertow pulls castles of sand from a beach, only to redeposit it but four bowshots from Vulenthuanhu's own dark spire, observers of the incident were more troubled by its portent than by its execution.

The top of Eyslre's reborn spire was now fixed with cyclopean lenses of rippled glass that reflected the ocean glare into the depths of Vulenthuanhu's chambers by day and obscured her view of vital stars that danced along the northern horizon by night.

By feathered beast, by night creature, by drugged laborer, and by regretful prayers, the seclusia grew over the course of a year in response to each other until they stood to rival the gleaming palace of the Shining Lord himself. By day, Vulenthuanhu's tower of stone and iron cast a sweeping shadow that we of the City never willfully crossed. Fires lit nightly shone through the glasses in Eyslre's spire to shower the district with rainbows and wills-o'-the-wisp. These were, as historians would come to name them, the Seasons of the Spires. Little was seen of Eyslre and Vulenthuanhu during these months. Yet the those of us who resided near each tower were eventually possessed by wicked

meddlesomeness. When the summer heat should have driven sober folk to midday naps in cool shade, makeshift militia claiming allegiance to one or another of the two wizards clashed in the streets, eventually drawing the attention of the Shining Lord's tigerback guard whose savage attempts to restore order were met with stone, blade and cudgel.

On one red morn, as a riderless tiger dragged a casualty from the night's skirmishes into a nearby alley to feed undisturbed, Eyslre left his spire accompanied by a retinue of seven beautiful and serene thugs—led by tall, fair-bearded man more pleasing than most to Eyslre's eye—and crossed the city to the foot of Vulenthuanhu's abode. She met him with a company of her own cutthroats kept secreted within the shadows of her spire—chief among them a dark, broad and powerful woman taller yet than any in Eyslre's employ.

Separated only by the shadow's edge carved by the rosy dawn, the two sorcerers spoke for the first time since the insult in Eyslre's hall. "I have dreamt, dear Vulenthuanhu, of us, tangled in green sea tendrils, unable to face each other. As I swam, so would you in opposition and as you struggled, so would I, unwittingly, against your course. Every attempt to free ourselves only tighten our bonds further. I fear we are the tide, pushing and tugging upon the ocean waters, all the while building an alien shore, weaving a spell beyond our comprehension. And I do not trust that our wills are our own in this matter."

Here a length of silence bound them as a new and unaccustomed chill poured through Vulenthuanhu. For she had dreamt of a long, silvery web draped between and penetrating their spires and their flesh so that the delicate strands were tied with gentle care around their teeth and bones. There was no movement she could make, however mundane, that did not pull taut one thread and let slack another and so command his movements. It had pleased her to think that she seized control over such a wizard as he. But now, as the shadow of her spire retreated from the rising sun, she could not recall if he danced to her tugs or she to his.

“Bah, you bring me theories of hedge-wizardry! You believe me a child only capable of souring her neighbor’s milk? What you do not understand about the shape of your own will is what you do not understand about the shape of the world. All you have done has been as I wished and allowed. Your entanglement is my amusement and you can expect freedom from it when I tire of the distraction.”

The hot blush of dawn filled Eyslre’s cheeks, and with fury-strained grace he said, “Your confidence is as unearned as your knowledge and neither is accompanied by the experience to know the storm you are soaring in. You have soured more than milk this day. Take your leave of the City while you still have the will to.”

But all was left as threat that morning. Both wizards had prepared delicate machinations that they wished not to see spoiled by bloodshed. For the leader of Eyslre’s guard was a rogue of Vulenthuwanhu’s choosing. She knew that his fair, northern complexion and ear for poetry would prove a temptation too far for Eyslre’s appetites. She charged him with seducing Eyslre’s confidence as insurance against violence the warlock might plan against her.

So he did, by laying bare Vulenthuwanhu’s plan before Eyslre upon introduction. Eyslre, mistaking this honesty for trustworthiness, implored him to recruit just such a rogue to infiltrate Vulenthuwanhu’s house. Thus he came to recommend to Vulenthuwanhu a woman of fearsome stature and silent footfall to be the captain of her guard.

Between the rising of the moons on the third night after the wizards spoke, each commanded their rogue to bind and steal the other from their spire and carry them to lands unknown. Instead, the two rogues chose to rob their own magi of jeweled tomes, forbidden numbers, bottled vapors, stores of sweetmeats and wine, and the very globe from Eyslre’s hall before fleeing by ship to the port of Daninuah.

In the seasons since, those rogues have returned to the City many times, as have two of the forbidden numbers, but the globe was forever lost to the corrupting influence of the sea air.

The two spires fell silent in the months following the theft. Unnatural, but not altogether repugnant, odors wafted down from high windows. A fever crawled through the still air. Malformed beasts and other

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unwelcome omens gathered at the base of the towers. Those ill-fated souls who haplessly wandered between the spires found themselves evermore severed from their dreams and the restfulness of sleep. The City drew back from them as cautious travelers retreat from great bears circling each other.

We were soon to learn that Eyslre and Vulenthuwanhu toiled those days and nights, seeking ancient aid to end the parade of insults and indignities. In their adyta, they each called upon gods so long forgotten that their tales no longer echoed in the arcana. Gods from when the world was but endless, roiling sea and sky. Gods so fitting to their temperament, so perfect for their rage. Gods who were witness to the true shape of the world.

As the spires themselves had been erected, vessels were prepared by sorcery in the form of two beautiful men, thrice the size of any mortal. Eyslre crafted his out of sodalite and azurite malachite with opal eyes and teeth and crowned it with a mane of same shifting hues of the sunset. Vulenthuwanhu built hers from night stone and draped it with a web of silver and stars. Prideful of their wondrous arts, they both employed teams of servants to drag the massive statues into an abandoned market that sat betwixt their spires so that they could publicly anoint their works with oils and ocean foam. Neither acknowledging the other's work or presence, only a few strides away.

At sundown, the gods awoke. Only once before had the fires gone out in the City, though this time none cried out in shock. Terror had struck all our tongues, even Eyslre's. All our tongues, but Vulenthuwanhu's, for she was inured to such horrors.

"Speak, creature before time, of shape of the world so that this dabbler's shame would be known before all."

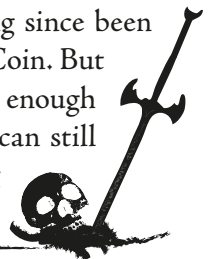
Against the violet of a twilit sky, the god in night stone stood as a silhouette dressed in a map of the cosmos. He spoke in a language that commanded comprehension, looking only into the other's opal eyes, "Since the coming of the horizon and the sundering

of our world, I have longed to reunite with you. From above, I have mourned as the arid land rose from your depths and gave birth to the beasts that walk and fly. I have conspired with my stars to shape the orb of their vision so that when they look upon the plane of the world, they would see a globe and drag us, inevitably, to this moment."

Waves thundered against the shore as the god in sapphire laughed, "Oh love, since the fleeing of the stars and their wanderers, I have longed for you. From below, I have called forth the steppe and the mountaintop to grant vistas to these creatures that could see farther in the world. I have thrashed my currents and storms against their shores to carve this plane into a shape that could only be mapped as a sphere in the hopes that I could arrange for this very moment."

The giants embraced and world tipped over. That which once held fast to the ground, rose. Comets fell into the sea. Waves leapt the shores, flooded the City and cast sea foam against the night sky. Senseless, we gibbered into the night, clinging to what we could until, finally, silence and darkness.

By morning, the fires were lit. For the love of these gods, and the scorn of these wizards, we had lost many in the night. Homes, fortunes, and family washed away into ocean or flung into the sky. The two great spires had been washed out into the bay, where they lay as mur against inattentive navigators at low tide. The fates of Eyslre and Vulenthuwanhu remain unknown as none cared to search for them. Their final works, those two exquisite statues, have long since been plundered from the City of Fire and Coin. But on a clear night, if you wander far enough away from the glow of the city, you can still see the stain of the ocean arcing across the sky.



THE SPIRITS OF THE FOREST APES

A tale by Dylan Craine

Illustrated by Tina X Filic

"You seem unusually smart for a forest-ape," said Kassmamon, "if also unusually corpulent." He prodded it with his black and chitinous leg. "It's very strange," he added, "to hear the elegant clicks and whistles of my own language spoken with a voice better suited for your own guttural babbling. I wonder who taught you?"

The anthropoid did not answer, but merely moaned and stared down at the forest floor far below it. It dangled, wrapped tidily in silk webbing, from a branch of a tall tree. Kassmamon had done this with such nimble dexterity that the creature hadn't awoken until it was too late.

"The question isn't rhetorical," added Kassmamon. "You owe me a debt. I want repayment in the form of answers."

"I tell you," said the creature, feebly, "they kill me."

"As it happens, I'm ravenously hungry right now, and you look extremely appetizing. If you won't give me the information I need, then I also will kill you. I can find it out some other way."

"Won't kill me," said the creature, shaking its blood-reddened head. "How claim debt?"

"I have no problem with claiming it from your flesh."

"No need! No need! You save me," it said, hurriedly, "you make me safe, I show you where. All I ask."

"That's acceptable," said Kassmamon. He untied the line from the branch he'd anchored it to and slowly lowered the anthropoid to the forest floor, descending after. "Fortunately for you," he added as they reached the ground, "I have other food stashed nearby."

The creature reclaimed its sack and its forked dagger from the base of a tree. "Come after me," it said, nervously.

As they walked, it spoke.

"Two spiders," it said. "They give me mask, cutter, sack of silks." It pulled a red collar from the sack and showed it to Kassmamon. "Red for the impure, they told me." Then the forked dagger with the shimmering green handle. "Pot of poison juice from their mouths. Goes in handle." Flipping the dagger around revealed a capped well in its hilt. It sloshed gently with spider venom. There was a small channel in the blade that allowed the venom to leak out over the edges. "Lost mask," said the anthropoid, ruefully. "Mask show I am servant of greatfather longlegs."

"Greatfather longlegs, who ate the impure."

"Yes. I found who have bad hearts and give red collar. 'O greatfather longlegs, harvest the unworthy and leave



those who are pure!’ They teach that, also. Longlegs eat the ‘unworthy’ and leave rest, who have white collar.”

“Why did the spiders care about your worthiness?”

The creature turned and gave what Kassmamon thought was a blank look, though he had trouble reading the expressions on its rubbery face.

“They didn’t say?” he asked. “You didn’t think to ask them? Did they simply come to you and give you these things one day? Why you, and not some other anthropoid?”

“Because I have good heart! So they say!” It sounded proud of this, and Kassmamon didn’t have it in him to disillusion the poor wretch.

“Never mind,” he said, “I’ll ask them myself. Are we almost there?”

“They are past that,” said the creature, pointing as they came around a wall of thick, dark-wooded trees. Ahead of them grew a twisted and gnarled juniper, its trunk arched over almost into a spiral. The trunk framed one end of a large funnel of gossamer webbing, the strands of which were twisted into strange and confusing patterns, and the narrow end of which could not be seen. Following a single cord led the eye to impossible places.

“A spirit funnel,” said Kassmamon to himself. “A big one.”

“What is?”

“Cold and unwholesome arts. There is a way of anchoring silk lines to surfaces that lie beyond this world. I suppose we’ll have to go through it?”

“I not go. When meet, they meet here.”

“Very well. I will go alone. Assuming you’ve led me truly, you can consider your debt repaid. Do as you wish.”

So released, the creature ran off into the woods.

Kassmamon turned to the mouth of the web. Its fibers traced concentric patterns before him, hypnotic in their complexity, but Kassmamon knew how to walk webs, and did not hesitate before entering.

From the inside, it did not appear as a funnel, but as a tube, its opposite end small because of distance rather than shape, though that distance seemed to vary with every step. As he walked, strange sounds began around him: hisses and howls, pulses and vibrations, a syncopated and rhythmic susurrations that he felt in his joints. Bands of colors traced helices across the walls, though the strands simultaneously remained white. He began to feel faint and hollow. The walls pressed in and clung to his body. As he pushed through them, it became harder and harder to move, and the tunnel pressed down on him more and more, pulling his body away from him, as though he was dragging himself out of his own exoskeleton.

At last, the noises rose to a crescendo and the exit was before him. He squeezed forward, slithering towards it like a snake, his physical form distorted or gone entirely—he wasn’t sure which. There was nothing of him but a mote that, not knowing what else to do, pressed on.

All of a sudden, he could move no farther. The mote was stuck in the end of the web like a glass marble in a narrow-necked bottle. The spirit plane swam and flickered in front of him, unreachable.

Something had gone wrong, he thought. Perhaps there was some ward in place, or the tunnel was defective. He didn’t know. But there was no turning back. To turn back now would be to die, or else to wander the world forever as an insubstantial ghost.

He struggled with the limbs he didn’t have anymore, bit and tore at the walls with fangs that weren’t there. Even as a disembodied spirit, he knew what it was to have limbs and fangs, and surely this barrier was no more real than they were false. He thrust the idea of his chelicerae at the glossy surface of the opening with

all of his fierce stubbornness - and suddenly it gave. He felt himself squirt from the tube, and then he was tumbling freely through the air and the tunnel was gone.

He landed in smooth, wet sand on all eight of his real, physical legs. His body seemed intact and solid. He even had his belt pouches still strapped to him. This was no dream or vision, then, or sending of his spirit. Wherever he was, he was really here.

Something pulled at his abdomen. A long cord of silk extended from his spinnerets into the sky. He vaguely recalled setting down an anchor line by instinct as he fell from the tube, though he'd thought he'd had no body to set it with. It glistened in the strange light. Best to leave it attached, he thought, just in case.

Above him, the sky was silver and dark and washed with golden, hazy lights like water reflecting off a pond. There was a round, bright globe, but he couldn't decide if it was a sun, or a moon, or something else entirely. Below him was the sand. It was brassy and metallic and damp. It spread in ripples to all horizons. Other than that, the world appeared empty.

There was a disturbance in the patterns of sand which indicated someone had passed. Kassmamon, a skilled tracker, spotted it immediately and followed it. He laid out more silk line behind him as he walked.

With strange suddenness, a structure appeared over the horizon. It was an intricate cage of smooth, polished red branches set in the sand, walled and anchored with spider-silk. Though he walked slowly, he arrived swiftly, abruptly realizing that he was already close enough to reach out and touch it with a pedipalp. He did so. The silk felt old and dry, but still quite strong. The branches were polished to flawlessness, and the red dye was unblemished. A red pole rose from the roof of the structure to infinity.

He walked around its circumference, looking for an opening. It struck him that there were patterns of light behind the silk, which moved irregularly, as though someone were shifting lamps about inside.

He reached a door flap stretched across an arch of branches. He was growing tired of this business and threw it open with no concern for subterfuge.

"Whoever lives here," he called, "come and face me!"

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The inside of the tent was entirely empty of furnishing or floor, containing nothing but a multitude of bobbing lights. The lights muttered and gibbered faintly. They moved with no semblance of purpose. Below them stood a single spider, her back to Kassmamon. Her fur was gray with age and her legs trembled. She didn't seem to have heard him. She was slowly wrapping something in silk, something round and slightly luminescent. One of the lights, Kassmamon assumed. He suspected these lights were spirits, akin to the mote he'd become in the web-funnel.

"Who are you?"

The voice was angry and came from behind him. He spun around in surprise. There was another spider, male, with faded green chelicerae and fur as gray as that of the female. The stranger stood with fangs thrust defiantly toward Kassmamon. Somehow, this feeble old spider had snuck up on him without making a noise he could hear or a motion he could see with his posterior eyes.

Kassmamon reached into one of his belt pouches and produced a dome of leather with two tiny black beads stitched into its front and eight dangling legs on either side. It was the anthropoid's mask.

"Did you make this?" he asked.

The spider's chelicerae twitched in surprise.

"Gredlekki," he said, "you'd better come out here."

The female looked up. "What is it? Who is that?" She thrust her chelicerae out in a scowl. "How can he be here? You sealed the tunnel, I thought."

"I thought so, too," said the male spider, "yet here he is. With the mask we gave that forest-ape, no less. Where did you get this?"

"The anthropoid dropped it. I found it. I want to know what business spiders have dealing with harvestmen."

"None of yours! Leave the way you came and close it behind you, or I'll rend your spirit from your body and add it to our collection."

"Wait, Saloccod," said Gredlekki, approaching. "Let's hear what he knows."

"I know that a group of anthropoids was conducting sacrifices to a harvestman. I gather that you two were responsible for inspiring this practice. What mischief do you intend to conduct with these spirits that the harvestman has harvested for you?"

"No mischief," said Saloccod. "We only require them for sustenance."

"Sustenance?"

"We wished to retire from the world, so that we could contemplate the higher mysteries in quiet isolation," explained Gredlekki. "We came here to this spirit realm for that purpose. But of course there is no food here. We know many secrets of the body and mind, but food is still a necessity to us. We gave the anthropoids the idea to feed their own to the harvestman and provided a set of collars to mark the victims. The collars are anchored with spirit-strands to the pole above this structure. When the harvestman eats the bodies of the anthropoids, their spirits slide down the spirit-strands like beads of water until they are trapped here for us to consume in turn. As long as the anthropoids continue, we will have the food we need."

"This is more than you need to know," added Saloccod. "You are an intruder here."

"It is enough," said Kassmamon. "I confess I was expecting to find a darker purpose at work here, that might trouble the forest above. But though your story is strange, I can see no harm. My apologies for intruding. However, you should know that the harvestman is dead."

"Dead? How do you know this?" asked Gredlekki.

"I watched it happen." He did not admit the role he'd personally played.

"You lie! What could kill a harvestman?"

"It's not important," said Kassmamon. "Rest assured, the beast is dead."

"If your words are true, then we are ruined!" wailed Saloccod. "There are few harvestmen in the world, and no other creature severs the spirits of its prey from their bodies so neatly! It was only with the greatest difficulty that we found the one, and convinced it to cooperate."

"I will believe it when it is proven!" proclaimed Gredlekki. "I go now to my divining loom."

"I will not wait," said Saloccod. "This one has entered our realm uninvited, and I suspect he had a thread of his own in the harvestman's demise. I will have my revenge against him!"

Kassmamon did not hesitate. Before the other spider had finished speaking, he'd dashed past him through the door flap. Saloccod gave chase immediately, shouting potent curses and invoking the names of the great demons. Suddenly, the old spider leapt magnificently over him, carried by dark energies, and landed in his path. He neatly nipped Kassmamon's line in two, whereupon the other end was pulled swiftly away by gravity and the strange spatial properties of the realm. Kassmamon could no longer follow it back to the funnel.

Kassmamon, thinking quickly, jumped onto the hut and ran to the pole above it, then up the pole itself, into the sky. Saloccod followed after, fangs dripping with a foul miasma. Kassmamon climbed and climbed, keeping just ahead of Saloccod, until his cephalothorax brushed against the rippling gold of the sky above. He paused briefly, then pushed against it, knowing this pole had a spirit-bond with the world above.

There came a familiar dizzying sensation. Again he felt his body reduced to a mote, but he knew what to

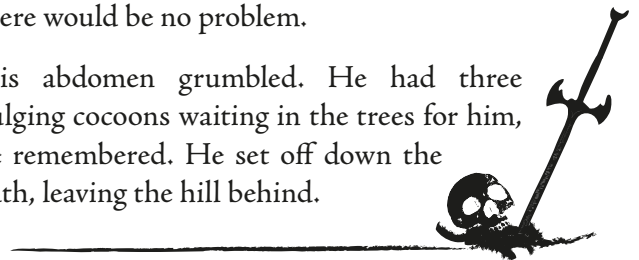
do, and wasted no time tearing a new hole in the spirit-stuff with the fangs he didn't have. He pulled himself through and all of a sudden was tumbling down the side of the very same hill where he'd first encountered the harvestman.

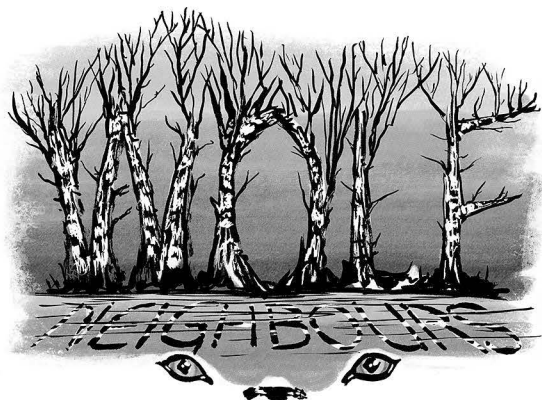
There was a great frayed tear in the air at its crown, through which brass sands and a red pole were visible. A pair of graying legs thrust their way out and tore it further. Kassmamon ran back up the hill and grabbed the legs, biting at Saloccod's joints as they grappled. At first it was uncertain, but Saloccod had reached the limits of his demon-granted strength. Without it, Kassmamon was far stronger, and easily forced him back inside. Quickly, before Saloccod could make another attempt to climb through, Kassmamon took a length of his own silk and, using his fangs as awls, deftly sewed the rent shut, until there was nothing left but the brown grass of the hill and the dead trees behind it.

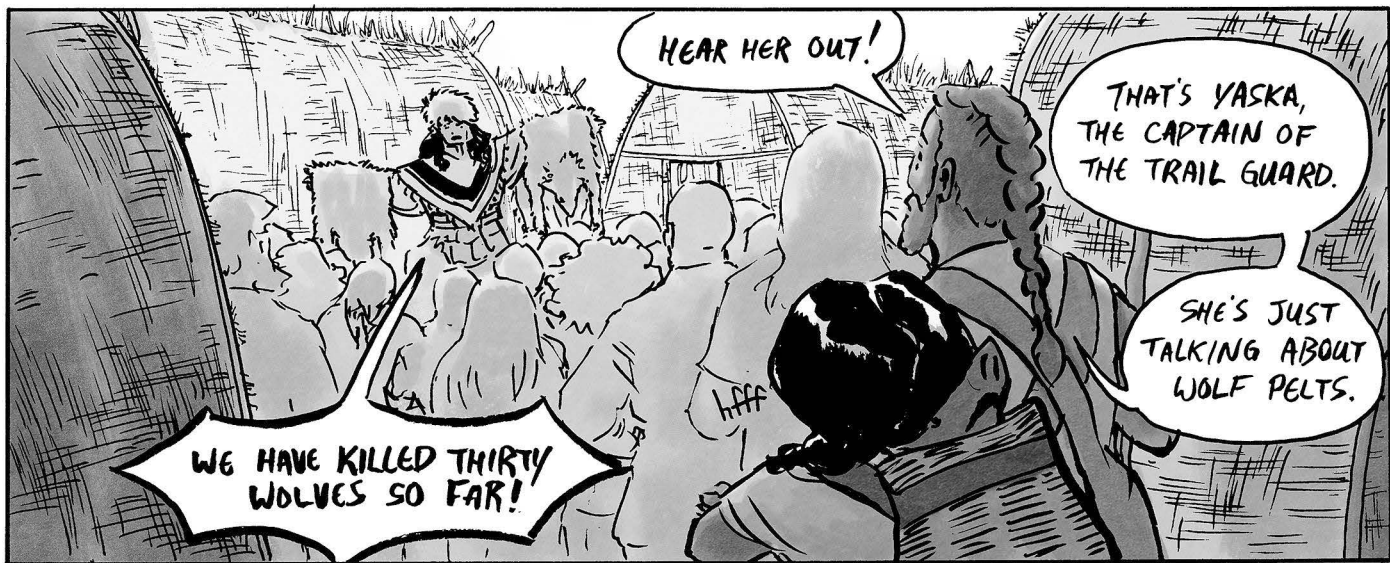
Almost nothing. A short length of the red pole remained, protruding from nowhere into the blue sky. It was capped with a brass sphere. Kassmamon pushed it with all his strength, but could not snap it.

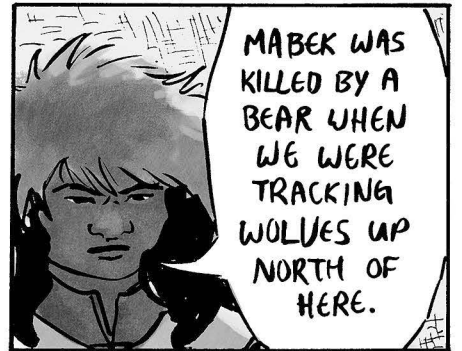
Oh well, he thought, there are stranger things in this forest than a mere wooden pole. If his silk held, there would be no problem.

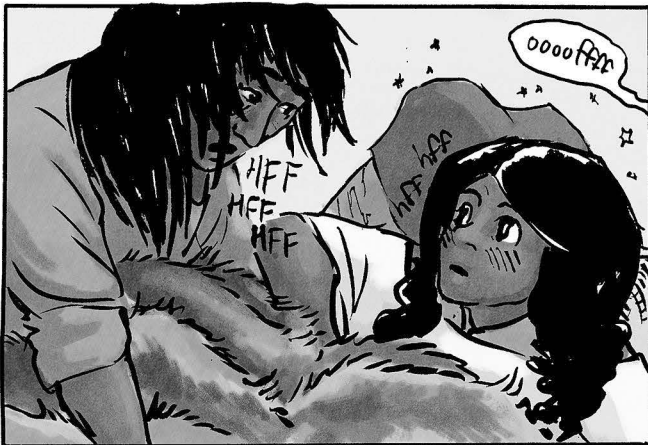
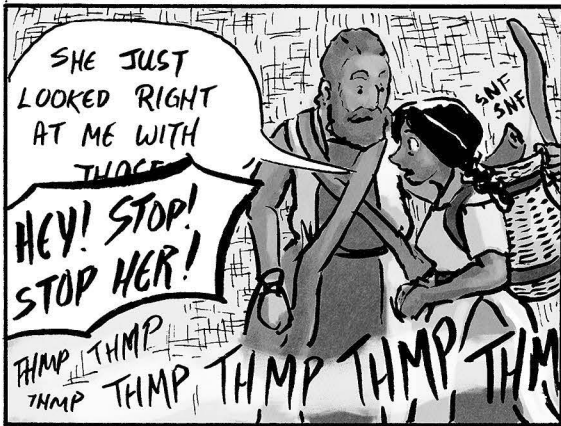
His abdomen grumbled. He had three bulging cocoons waiting in the trees for him, he remembered. He set off down the path, leaving the hill behind.

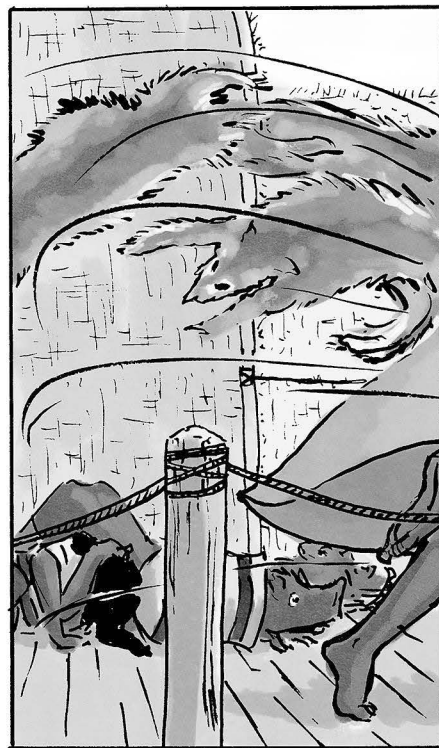














AMAZONS

A game of adventure & devotion by Vincent Baker

Illustrated by Jabari Weathers

You will need:

- ♦ 2 players to play Amazons.
- ♦ 2 or more additional players to play their World.
- ♦ 2 six-sided dice for each Amazon player.
- ♦ Pencils and paper.
- ♦ 1–2 hours per session for one or more sessions.

The object of the game:

For the Amazon players, the object of the game is to mark as many experiences as you can and want to.

For the World players, the object of the game is to see the Amazon players mark as many experiences as they can and want to, yes, but especially to see them mark experiences under “Danger,” experiences under “Valor,” and “Bad Experiences.”

THE AMAZON PLAYERS’ SECTION

To create your Amazon:

Choose or make up a name.

Classical Amazon names: Toxoanassa, Alkippe, Hipponike, Ainippe, Oistrophe, Polemusa, Aella, Deianeira, Charope, Isocrateia, Antianeira. However,

I recommend that you choose a name that’s easy to say and remember.

Assign your stats: +2, +2, +1, +1, and +0, in any order you choose.

Choose bow & arrows, a sword, and armor.

- ♦ **Bow & arrows:** powerful, sturdy, fast-drawing, accurate, penetrating, broad-headed.
- ♦ **Sword:** leaf-shaped, straight, sickle-shaped, curved, spade-shaped.
- ♦ **Armor:** layered linen, laced scales, heavy hide.

Mark one past experience in each group, then two past experiences more in any group.

Compare past experiences with the other Amazon. For each, decide between the two of you whether you were together or apart. If you were together, you can mark the other Amazon’s past experiences, and she can mark yours.

You’re devoted to each other. Write one promise you’ve made, outstanding, to the other Amazon. Consult with the other player and arrive at a pair of promises that illustrates or illuminates your devotion.

To begin play, ask the World players where you’ve come and what’s happening.



I am: _____

I have...

...Guts _____

(to call others to action; to rise to a threat)

...Heart _____

(to reach out in compassion; to surpass your own limits)

...Knowledge _____

(to bring forth a nightmare; to count the living and the dead; to name sorcery)

...Patience _____

(to endure; to labor)

...Will _____

(to commit yourself to violence)

...Promises: _____

...Arms & Armor:

◆ _____

◆ _____

◆ _____

BAD EXPERIENCES

1 Peril:

- ◆ I was brought up short ○
- ◆ I avoided harm by pure blind luck ○
- ◆ I was pushed off balance ○
- ◆ I had to leap back ○
- ◆ I was thrown sprawling ○

2 Peril:

- ◆ I was dismayed & feared for my life ○
- ◆ I was hurt, but not badly ○
- ◆ I was pressed into desperate retreat ○
- ◆ I was barely able to fight free ○
- ◆ I was dazed and fell senseless ○

3 Peril or more:

- ◆ I was grievously wounded (as below) ○
- ◆ I was felled & left for dead ○
- ◆ I was killed outright ○
- ◆ I was at my enemy's mercy ○

Grievous Wounds:

- ◆ My guts were spilled ○
- ◆ I was skewered or impaled ○
- ◆ My arm or leg was shattered or severed ○

Others:

◆ _____

◆ _____

◆ _____

EXPERIENCES:

Adventure:

- ✦ I've come friendless to a new land ○○
- ✦ I've sailed a ship across the sea ○○
- ✦ I've crossed mountain and desert ○○
- ✦ I've died and lived again ○○
- ✦ I've seen the earth from afar ○○

Danger:

- ♣ I've faced down an army ○○○
- ♣ I've faced down death ○○○
- ♣ I've faced down demons ○○○
- ♣ I've faced down a god ○○○
- ♣ I've faced down a monster ○○○○
- ♣ I've faced down sorcery ○○○

Family:

- ♣ I've married & kept house ○○
- ♣ I've raised children ○○○○○○
- ♣ I've lived as a man ○○
- ♣ I've tended a dying parent ○○

Valor:

- ◆ I've kept a promise despite challenge & danger ○○○
○○○
- ◆ I've helped restore courage to the broken ○○○
- ◆ I've helped restore dignity to the diminished ○○○
- ◆ I've helped restore freedom to the enslaved ○○○

- ◆ I've helped restore liberty to the subjugated ○○○○
- ◆ I've helped restore peace to the embattled ○○○○
- ◆ I've helped restore virtue to the desperate ○○○○
- ◆ I've helped restore vision to the lost ○○○○

Violence:

- ◆ I've carried a spear in war ○○
- ◆ I've served in a king's vanguard ○○
- ◆ I've abandoned military duty ○○○
- ◆ I've killed a man ○○○○○
- ◆ I've killed a woman ○○○○○

NOTES

[illegible]

THE AMAZONS' POWERS

All the powers ask questions. These questions are for the table to answer. For questions like “what do you do?” your own answer should stand. For the rest, you should participate, but the World players’ answers should stand.

To call others to action:

You have the power to call others to action. When you do, what happens?

First, do they answer your call at once, or are they too hesitant, uncertain, reserved, unresolved, or afraid?

If they hold back, you can choose to rally them. Roll your guts.

- ♦ On 10+, you can rally them with words. What do you say?
- ♦ On 7–9, you can rally them with action. What do you do?
- ♦ On a miss, you can rally them only with self-sacrifice. What do you do?

To rise to a threat:

You have the power to rise to a threat. When you do, what happens?

First, is your simple act of resistance enough to make your enemy back down, or to dissuade what threatens you?

If it’s not and the threat remains, then you’re standing against it. Roll your guts.

- ♦ On 10+, you’re unflinching, commanding, fearless, tireless, and imposing. What happens?
- ♦ On 7–9, you’re strong and resolute, but afraid, weary, small, or desperate. What happens?
- ♦ On a miss, you flinch, hesitate, stall, falter, or hedge. What happens?

To reach out in compassion:

You have the power to reach out in compassion. When you do, what happens?

First, is your simple act enough to disarm, comfort, relieve, or bring peace to your counterpart?

If it’s not, then you can choose to empathize with them. Roll your heart.

- ♦ On 10+, you have true insight. Ask their player a few questions; your character realizes the answers, with no need for conversation. What do you do now?
- ♦ On 7–9, you have a hunch. Ask their player one question; your character realizes the answer. What do you do now?
- ♦ On a miss, you’re impatient, frustrated, hurt, or baffled. What do you do?

To surpass your own limits:

You have the power to surpass your own limits. When you do, what happens?

First, what you’re undertaking to do, is it something you can do yourself after all?

If it is, then you do it.

If it is not, then you can choose to try anyway. Roll your heart.

- ♦ On 10+, you find impossible strength, skill, or endurance within yourself, or else you have impossible good luck. What happens?
- ♦ On 7–9, you find the strength, skill, or endurance to overcome, but you’ve committed yourself fully, and you’re exhausted, spent, exposed, or in danger. What happens?
- ♦ On a miss, you can’t do it yourself after all, but must either fail or find help. What happens?

To bring forth a nightmare:

You have the power to bring forth a nightmare. When you do, you must roll your knowledge.

- ♦ On 10+, choose a nightmare creature, and it must serve you.
- ♦ On 7–9, choose a nightmare creature, and it must serve you, but it may expect recompense or consideration.
- ♦ On a miss, choose a nightmare creature, and it must serve you, but it can demand your service or its freedom in return.

Choose a nightmare creature of blood, of darkness, of fear, of flame, of illusion, of loss, or of silence.

To count the living and the dead:

You have the power to count the living and the dead. When you do, what happens?

First, are the living alive, and are the dead still?

If they are, then your count confirms it.

If they are not, then you can choose to stand at the boundary. Roll your knowledge.

- ♦ On 10+, your voice can speak life to the living and death to the dead. What do you say?
- ♦ On 7–9, your weapons are death, and your tools are life. What do you do?
- ♦ On a miss, you step across the boundary, robbing the living of life and giving life to the dead. What happens?

To name sorcery:

You have the power to name sorcery. When you do, what happens?

First, does the act of naming it, dispel it?

If it does not, then nevertheless you have named it. Roll your knowledge.

- ♦ On 10+, this sorcery is known or evident to you. How could you dispel it?
- ♦ On 7–9, this sorcery is mysterious to you, but not inimical. How could you study and come to understand it?
- ♦ On a miss, this sorcery is inimical to you, malignant and disturbing. What is it able to do to you, and can you protect yourself from it?

To endure, or to labor:

You have the power to endure, and the power to labor. When you do, what happens?

First, does your trial or your task test your endurance after all?

If it does not, then you accomplish it.

If it does, then you must roll your patience.

- ♦ On 10+, your vision and force of will carry you through. What happens?
- ♦ On 7–9, your vision and will see you through, but at cost to your health, courage, resources, or spirit, or to the quality of your labor. What happens?
- ♦ On a miss, you break or your efforts fall short. What happens?

To commit yourself to violence:

You have the power to commit yourself to violence. When you do, what happens?

First, is the threat of your intention enough to make your enemy back down?

If it is not, is a show of force enough?

If it is not, then you must fight. Roll your will.

- ♦ On 10+, bid peril, with a 1-peril advantage.

- ♦ On 7–9, bid peril.
- ♦ On a miss, bid peril, with a 1-peril disadvantage.

If you commit yourself to violence against the other Amazon, the game ends, with the outcome of your fight unresolved.

To roll a save:

Any World player can call for you to save on any stat, whenever they can see two ways the current circumstances might resolve.

Ask whether it's an easy save or a hard save. You're also entitled to ask if there's a way to avoid making the save.

- ♦ For an easy save, a 7+ is a successful save and a roll of 6 or less is a failed save. On 10+, the World players might, at their option, give you an extra advantage or bonus going forward.
- ♦ For a hard save, a 10+ is a successful save and a roll of 9 or less is a failed save. On 7–9, the World players might, at their option, mitigate your failure in some way.

TO BID PERIL:

–1–

Determine your raw peril:

Your raw peril is 1 for your nature, plus 1 for your weapon, plus 1 for your armor, for a possible total of 3.

Your enemy's raw peril depends on their nature. Ask what it is.

If you are out of your enemy's reach, their raw peril drops to 0. If your enemy is out of your reach, yours drops to 0.

If you have a 1-peril advantage or disadvantage for committing yourself to violence, add it to your raw peril now.

–2–

Determine your baseline peril:

Whichever of you has the lower raw peril, your baseline peril is 0. Whichever of you has the higher raw peril, your baseline peril is equal to the difference.

Example: If your raw peril is 3, and your enemy's is 5, your baseline peril is 0 to 2.

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-3-

Bid peril up:

You have the first option to bid peril up. If you decline, your enemy has the option.

When you bid peril up, you add 1 to both your own and your enemy's peril, starting from baseline.

Example: If your baseline peril is 0 to 2, and you bid it up, now it's 1 to 3. If your enemy bids it up again, now it's 2 to 4.

Alternate bidding peril up until either you or your enemy declines to do so. As soon as someone declines to bid, the bidding ends, and peril stands as it is.

Example: If you and your enemy have bid peril up to 2 to 4, and you decline to bid it up to 3 to 5, it stands at 2 to 4 and the bidding ends.

-4-

Bad experiences:

You inflict a bad experience according to your final standing peril, and suffer a bad experience according to your enemy's final standing peril.

You choose your own bad experience.

It's over, and consequences fall out as they happen to fall out. You are allowed to commit yourself to violence again immediately, if you choose and are able.

Once you have marked three bad experiences under the same peril, erase all three marks. Until then, do not duplicate bad experiences.

Complications:

When you and the other Amazon fight side by side, you count as one combatant. Both of you commit yourselves to violence. Sum your raw perils, including any modifiers. When it's your turn to bid peril up, you don't need to agree; if either of you chooses to bid, you do. At the end of the fight, you split the peril you suffer between you. You can agree to any split you prefer. If

you can't agree, split it evenly between you (rounding up).

When you fight side by side with other characters, add their raw peril to yours, bid as you choose, and assign them as a group any portion of the peril you suffer, as you see fit.

WHEN AN AMAZON DIES

When you die, you come before the court of Death. You can confront them or submit to their judgment.

If, by your choice or by their judgment, you come to a forgetting of your life, so that your soul is free to seek a new birth, the game ends.

Otherwise, should anyone count the living and the dead, they will find that though you are still, you live; or else that though you are dead, you are not still.

A DEAD AMAZON'S POWERS

To appear as one living:

You have the power to appear as one living. When you do, what happens?

First, is it enough to appear as a shadow, able only to whisper a few words before fading again? If it is, you may.

If it is not, roll your heart.

- ♦ On 10+, you can appear in all ways as your living self, physical, capable, and self-possessed. You are able to remain so for a full hour, but when each hour passes, you must surpass your own limits or return to shadow.
- ♦ On 7-9, you can appear, and are physical, but you bear on you the unmistakable and dreadful marks of your death. You are able to persist for only one hour, and then you must return to shadow.
- ♦ On a miss, you have brought forth a nightmare to represent you instead. Exercise that power now.

To spy upon your enemies:

Dead, you have the power to spy upon your enemies.

First, do they have safeguards against the dead? If they do, you must rise to the threat, surpass your own limits, commit to violence, or labor to overcome them. Which?

If they do not, or if you overcome them, what do you learn?

You may suppose that most free people have safeguards against the intrusion of the dead, in the form of ritual, priests, and charms, and that most sorcerers have safeguards even more potent. You may suppose that the court of Death does not have safeguards, but welcomes the dead always. As for monsters, tyrants, gods, and demons, is it in their particular nature, and would it serve their particular purposes?

To Return to Life:

You do not certainly have the power to restore your body and return to life, but there are ways. Seek them out.

THE WORLD PLAYERS' SECTION

CREATING AN ENEMY ALLIANCE

While the Amazon players are creating their characters, you together create an evil alliance. One enemy—a sorcerer, a god, a demon, a tyrant, a monster, or death—has allied with another, with terrible consequences for the free people here. Create both enemies, the nature of their alliance, the free people here, and the terrible consequences they're suffering.

Create each of them only in outline. Decide as little as you need to decide, so that you can all build on it in the future. This is the principle that you each follow throughout play: outline and share.

For Each of the Enemies:

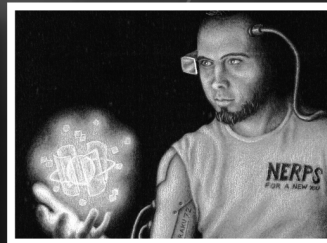
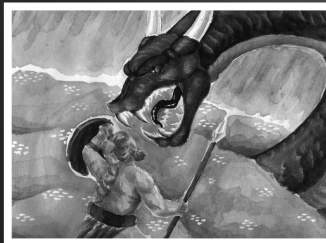
Choose its kind: a sorcerer, a god, a demon, a tyrant, a monster, or death.

Don't choose anything else about it, unless you really need to. Read out the things that its kind always has, under "The Amazons' Enemies," below. Outline and share.

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With your fellow World players, flesh out, in simple brainstorming and conversation, some of the things it has. Leave it incomplete.

Whichever of you ultimately brings it into play, make it concrete and final only insofar as you need to. Leave as much for the other World players to create as you're able.

For Their Alliance:

What does each offer the other? What does their alliance allow them, that they were not able to achieve alone?

For the Free People:

Name them: the river people, the woods people, the people of this island, or the like.

Read out the things that a free people always has, under "Free People," below. Outline and share.

With your fellow World players, flesh out, in simple brainstorming and conversation, some of the things it has. Leave it incomplete.

For the Terrible Consequences:

The enemies' alliance has terrible consequences for the free people.

Who bears the worst burden? What are they called upon to do? Who has been killed? Who has fled? Who has been enslaved? What atrocities do they suffer? How has resistance been denied them?

BEGINNING PLAY

To begin play, the Amazons ask you where they've come and what's happening. The answer is that they've come among the free people, and what's happening is the terrible consequences of their enemies' alliance.

Describe these things concretely. You have come here. This is happening. Ask the Amazons what they do.

THE WORLD PLAYERS' ACTIONS

At any point in play, any World player can choose any of these actions and take it. If ever play falls still, one World player must choose one of these actions and take it.

Ask the Amazons what they do:

Always ask the Amazons what they do.

Outline and share:

To create anything new, create it just in outline. Decide as little as you need to decide; say as little as you need to say.

Now share it; it belongs to everyone.

Create a new enemy for the Amazons:

Choose its kind: a sorcerer, a god, a demon, a tyrant, a monster, or death.

Don't choose anything else about it, unless you really need to. Read out the things that its kind always has. Outline and share.

With your fellow World players, flesh out, in simple brainstorming and conversation, some of the things it has. Leave it incomplete.

Whichever of you ultimately brings it into play, make it concrete and final only insofar as you need to. Leave as much for the other World players to create as you're able.

Create a new free people:

Name them: the river people, the woods people, the people of this island, or the like.

Read out the things that a free people always has. Outline and share.

With your fellow World players, flesh out, in simple brainstorming and conversation, some of the things it has. Leave it incomplete.

As you bring individuals into play, make them concrete and final only insofar as you need to. Leave as much for the other World players to create as you're able.

Ask and answer about the world and circumstances:

Whenever you are curious about anything in the game's world or the current circumstances, ask the table.

When someone else asks about something, participate in answering. If you have insights or ideas, offer them up.

If you have trouble coming to easy agreement, nevertheless, don't contradict or wrangle. Keep asking questions until you understand.

Have someone act:

As World players, you share responsibility for the actions of every person in the world, except the Amazons themselves: individuals of the free peoples, the Amazons' enemies, and their servants and agents.

To choose someone's action:

When someone's nature, interests, and sentiment align, have her act on them.

Otherwise, you can have her act according to her nature, against her interests and sentiment; or else according to her interests and sentiment, against her nature.

To introduce someone new, imagine her nature, her interests, and her sentiment, in outline. Have her take action that brings her into play.

You can have people react to the Amazons, or take action on their own initiative.

To have two or more people plan together, take the time to say where they are. Play out or summarize what they say to one another, as a flashback or aside.

Call for a save:

You can call for the Amazon player to save on any stat, whenever you can see two ways the current circumstances might resolve.

Call for an easy save or a hard save, and name the stat. If the player asks if there's a way to avoid making the save, she's entitled to an answer.

- ♦ For an easy save, a roll of 7+ is a successful save and a roll of 6 or less is a failed save. On 10+, you can give the player an extra advantage or bonus going forward, if one comes to mind.
- ♦ For a hard save, a roll of 10+ is a successful save and a roll of 9 or less is a failed save. On 7–9, you can mitigate the failure in some way, if a way comes to mind.

FREE PEOPLE

A free people always has: a home; customs; sustenance and trade; children and elders; men, women, and others.

A warrior of the free people inflicts 1 peril for their nature as a warrior, 1 peril for their arms (if they are armed), and 1 peril for their armor (if they are armored), for a possible total of 3 peril.

In a band, unseasoned or exhausted warriors inflict 1 peril per their number, while warriors competent and deadly inflict 2 peril per their number.

When they suffer peril, they suffer it as mortal warriors.

1 peril:

- ♦ I hold my ground, bloody.
- ♦ I calmly retreat.
- ♦ I cede the field and the matter.

2 peril:

- ♦ I'm wounded, and flee.
- ♦ I'm disarmed and at your mercy.

3 peril or more:

- ♦ I'm mortally wounded, and flee.
- ♦ I'm killed outright.

Free people who are not warriors inflict 0 peril. In a band, they inflict only ½ peril per their number (rounding up). They suffer peril as mere mortal creatures

1 peril:

- ♦ I throw myself on your mercy.
- ♦ I flee blindly.
- ♦ I fall into desperate retreat.

2 peril:

- ♦ I'm wounded, and flee.
- ♦ I'm wounded, and fall.

3 peril or more:

- ♦ I'm mortally wounded, and flee.
- ♦ I'm killed outright.
- ♦ The Amazons' Enemies

SORCERERS

A sorcerer always has: a place of dread, human victims, sorcerous ambitions, and instruments of magical violence.

Disarmed of sorcery, a sorcerer inflicts 0 peril and suffers peril as the merest mortal creature.

1 peril:

- ♦ I throw myself on your mercy.
- ♦ I flee blindly.
- ♦ I fall into desperate retreat.

2 peril:

- ♦ I'm wounded, and flee.
- ♦ I'm wounded, and fall.

3 peril or more:

- ♦ I'm mortally wounded, and flee.
- ♦ I'm killed outright.

But first, choose 1 or more, depending on the grandness of the sorcerer:

- ♦ The sorcerer commands protective sorceries, which reduce any natural peril the sorcerer suffers by 1 or 2.
- ♦ The sorcerer commands sorceries of rage and violence, which inflict 3–5 peril.
- ♦ The sorcerer commands bolts, spears, or meteors of sorcerous force, which strike at range.
- ♦ The sorcerer can retreat calmly into a sorcerous otherworld instead of suffering any natural peril.
- ♦ When the sorcerer suffers any natural peril, sorceries of bondage transfer it to his human victims instead.
- ♦ When the sorcerer inflicts peril, he chooses his victim's bad experience, not they, unless his victim has supernatural protection from this power.

Sorcerous protection from natural peril is not certain to protect against supernatural peril.

GODS

A god always has: a holy place, human priests, rites of sacrifice, rites of devotion, and a guise of glory and terror.

A god, in violence, inflicts significant peril: 5–12 peril, depending on its nature.

If it chooses, it can lash out with the violence of its will, at range.

Natural peril cannot harm gods, but can only discourage them.

1–4 peril:

- ◆ I disdain your efforts to injure me.
- ◆ I am offended by your efforts to injure me.

5 peril:

- ◆ I withdraw, with dignity and calm.
- ◆ I withdraw, with a display of divine wrath.

6 peril or more:

- ◆ I withdraw in haste.

When a god withdraws, it removes itself to its divine otherworldly domain.

Some gods may be vulnerable to some forms of supernatural peril, suffering them as a mortal warrior or a mere mortal creature.

DEMONS

A demon always has: a game it's trying to win, an opponent it intends to outplay, rules it must follow, and powers of enticement and malice.

A demon inflicts 3–8 peril, depending on its ferocity in violence.

Like gods, natural peril cannot harm demons.

1–3 peril:

- ◆ I disdain your efforts to injure me.
- ◆ I am entertained by your efforts to injure me.

4 peril:

- ◆ I withdraw, with dignity and calm.
- ◆ I withdraw, pronouncing my curse.

5 peril or more:

- ◆ I withdraw in haste.

When a demon withdraws, it removes itself to its underworldly abode.

Some demons may be vulnerable to some forms of supernatural peril, suffering them as a mortal warrior or a mere mortal creature.

TYRANTS

A tyrant always has: a citadel, warriors, slaves, and earthly ambitions.

A tyrant alone inflicts 1 peril for his nature as a warrior, plus 1 peril for his arms (if he is armed), plus 1 peril for his armor (if he is armored), for a possible total of 3.

The tyrant's warriors are competent and deadly, 2 peril per their number. There might be as many as 1,000 warriors in the tyrant's host, organized into bands of 30 or companies of 100.

When tyrants suffer peril, they do so as mortal warriors.

1 peril:

- ◆ I hold my ground, bloody.
- ◆ I calmly retreat.
- ◆ I cede the field and the matter.

2 peril:

- ♦ I'm wounded, and flee.
- ♦ I'm disarmed and at your mercy.

3 peril or more:

- ♦ I'm mortally wounded, and flee.
- ♦ I'm killed outright.

MONSTERS

A monster always has: a lair, means of violence, means of escape, and monstrous appetites.

A monster inflicts 1 peril for its nature as a monster, plus additional peril for its monstrous qualities, for a possible total of 2 or more.

When it is able to sate its monstrous appetite upon someone, it chooses their bad experience, not they.

When monsters suffer peril, they do so as mortal creatures.

1 peril:

- ♦ I hold my ground, bloody.
- ♦ I retreat, roaring and fighting the way.
- ♦ I make a silent escape.

2 peril:

- ♦ I'm wounded, and flee.
- ♦ I'm wounded, and fall.

3 peril or more:

- ♦ I'm mortally wounded, and flee.
- ♦ I'm killed outright.

But first, choose 1 or more monstrous qualities:

- ♦ The monster is huge, as big as an elephant or bigger. It inflicts an additional 1 peril for its size and power.

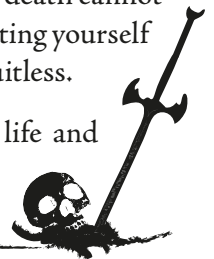
- ♦ The monster is gargantuan, as big as a tower or a sailing ship. It inflicts an additional 2 peril for its size and power.
- ♦ The monster has terrible scything claws, teeth, or horns. It inflicts an additional 1 peril for its natural weapons.
- ♦ The monster has armor plates, scales, or hide as thick as an elephant's. It inflicts an additional 1 peril for its natural armor.
- ♦ The monster is impossibly quick, perhaps supernaturally quick, or impossibly subtle, perhaps invisible. It inflicts an additional 1-2 peril for its quickness or subtlety.
- ♦ The monster has supernatural protection, which reduces any natural peril it suffers to 1 or 2. There might be some exception to this protection - silver or fire, for instance - or perhaps the monster can be killed only by supernatural means.

DEATH

Death is one of: murder, old age, disease, ruin, starvation, addiction, or stillbirth, personified. These together make up the Court of Death. They sit in judgment and rule over all the dead, and also walk upon the earth where they are called.

No violence can ever harm death, and death cannot strike the Amazons directly. Committing yourself to violence against death is always fruitless.

It is possible that words or tools of life and death can sway death.



THREE DOZEN VISTAS ON THE EDGE OF VISION

A miscellany by Epidiah Ravachol

■.□.—Moonlight cast through massive wings of gossamer.

■.□.—The red light of a port tower warning passing ships of the plague on its shores.

■.□.—A blizzard of vicious white consuming hue and warmth from the horizon.

■.□.—Giant birds playing in distant clouds.

■.□.—White-capped waves of a turbulent ocean hiding a distressed ship and crew.

■.□.—A ziggurat of crystal shattering the rays of the morning sun into rainbows.

■.□.—Blood red clouds at sunrise echoing the faces of the recent dead.

■.□.—Crenellations that remain high over castle ruins, though the walls beneath have long since crumbled.

■.□.—The polar stars dancing backwards in their great wheel throughout a single night.

■.□.—Volcanic ash and fire choking the horizon.

■.□.—The titanic blue-green coils of the serpent who holds the oceans to the land.

■.□.—The welcoming warmth and gleam of the City of Fire and Coin on a cold night.

■.□.—A shimmer of heat in distant, still air that warps the horizon and pulls travelers off course.

■.□.—A windmill high on a hill that stirs on a windless day.

■.□.—Beautiful figures of azure that wordlessly beckon travelers from afar.

■.□.—Dark green clouds holding a sharp border against a clear and calm sky.

■.□.—Three comets, on after another, arising from a still sea.

■.□.—The evening bloom of green, orange, and violet yurts across the steppe.

■.□.—The iron gates of the Dominion of Hatarne, said to have been erected by cyclopean slaves, that can be spied days before they are reached.

■.□.—A planet that ceases chasing the sun to rest on the horizon for seven nights.

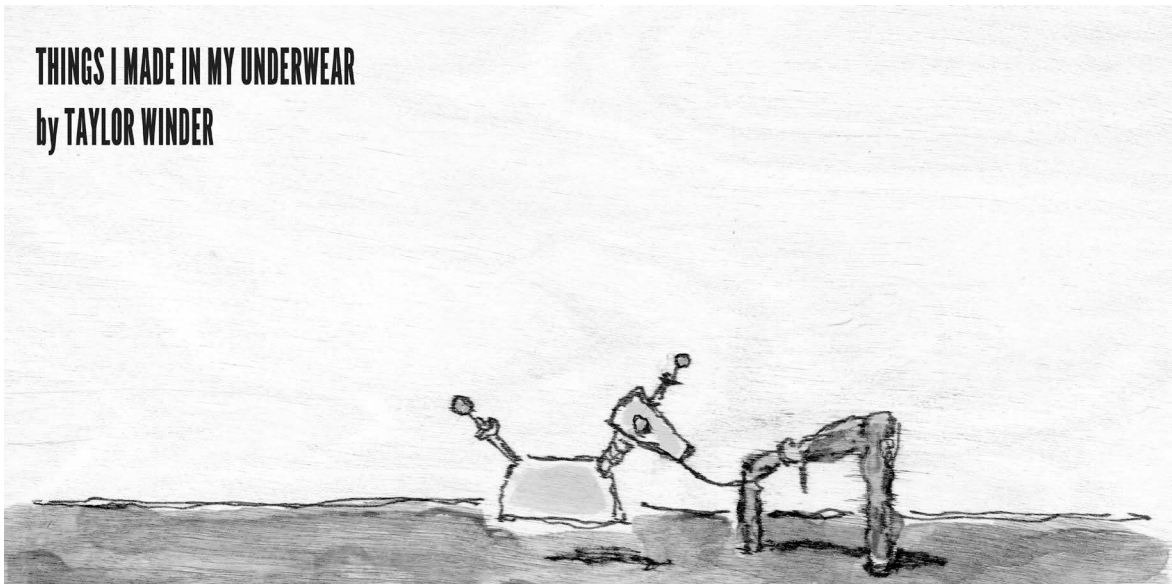
- Two vessels becalmed at sea, unable to approach or flee each other, communicating through lantern and spyglass.
- Long shadows cast by northern crags that are said to paint strange script upon the ground on particular days.
- The breaching of an ancient and learned whale over placid waters.
- Cyclones thundering across black sands.
-
- A weary war waged with spear and sling for too long over a once fertile river delta.
- Two moons rising as one.
- Low dark clouds of stinging insects eclipsing the sun.
- The distant silhouette of Her Joyous City, which has not stood for a thousand years.
- A glimpse of the setting sun between the keel of a distant ship and the waves it sails above.
- A shower of falling stars lighting the horizon with an opalescent glow.
-
- The amber and gray smoke of a thousand evening campfires.
- Vertical shafts of thunderous lightning reaching into the depths of a blue-dark dusk.
- A brilliant valley of motley, chattering birds that, once startled, flee revealing only barren trees and rock.
- A tree-bearing hill creeping along a course parallel to yours.
- A great migration of hooved beasts seen long before they are heard.
- A convocation of planets on an early horizon heralding the coming sun and an auspicious birth.



— Advertisement —

THINGS I MADE IN MY UNDERWEAR

by TAYLOR WINDER



— www.TaylorWinder.com —

THE CONTRIBUTORS

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Dagmara Matuszak is a Polish painter and illustrator. She lives and works in a small village by the Baltic Sea along with seven cats, three horses and a boyfriend. When not drawing or painting, she can be found reading SF&F books, playing video games, and thinking a lot about the Middle Ages.
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Jabari Weathers is an illustrator based in Baltimore, Maryland. He uses his work to foster and explore worlds of strange, fantastic and sometimes horrible realization. Armed with some paints, inks and a computer, he's managed to stay alive yet! You can see the fruits of his exploits at jmwillustration.com, or follow him during his travels at fortuneandfey.tumblr.com and twitter.com/JabariWeathers.

THE REALMS

You do not take up sword and spell to tag along with someone else's adventure. You do it to change the course of your destiny. To mold the world to your wants and desires.

Listed below are the stories, games, articles, and miscellanies in this issue that represent worlds available for you to craft your own adventures in. If you should so desire, you may take the characters, settings, and situations from any of these, create something new, and submit it to *Worlds Without Master*.

By default, any submission to *Worlds Without Master* is not part of any shared world. Creators have the usual controls over their creative properties. The following options exist only for creators who expressly want to take part in this endeavor.

Additionally, the following agreements exist solely between the creators and *Worlds Without Master*, and do not govern the creators' rights in regards to any other publication.

The Free & Chaotic Realms

Anyone may submit material using the characters, settings, situations and any other part of this body of work as if it were their own as long as they also agree to make their work part of this Free & Chaotic Realm. This is as open as it gets, with the only curation being the *Worlds Without Master* submission process.

The Curated Realms

Material submitted using the characters, settings, situations and any other part of this body of work will be sent to the original creator or the creator's designated curator for approval before being accepted by *Worlds Without Master*. If accepted, this new material is bound to that particular curated realm.

Other Shared Realms

Groups of creators who wish to find their own agreement on how to share their worlds are welcome to do so however they wish.

Edicts

Creators are welcome to make up a list of rules other creators must follow while using their works. These rules are set in stone. *Worlds Without Master* will not accept any work that appears to violate an applicable edict that is not also created by the original creator.

More about the realms policy can be found at: WorldsWithoutMaster.com/realms.

"Three Dozen Vistas on the Edge of Vision" belongs to the Free & Chaotic Realms.

"The Shape of the World" belongs to the realms curated by Epidiah Ravachol. Its edicts may be found at: WorldsWithoutMaster.com/edicts.





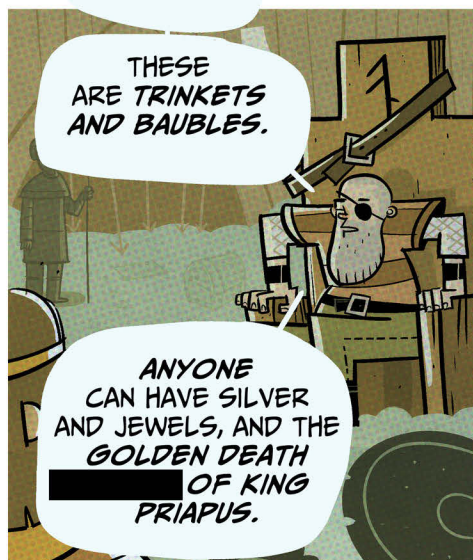
BAH.
YOU CALL
THIS RICH?

FAVORITE
UNCLE?



HOW DID
YOU GET
TO BE SO
RICH?

WAS IT
SELLING
GRIT?

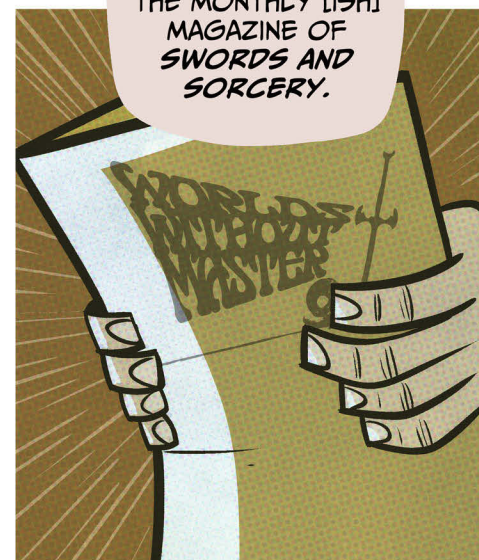


THESE
ARE TRINKETS
AND BAUBLES.

ANYONE
CAN HAVE SILVER
AND JEWELS, AND THE
GOLDEN DEATH
OF KING
PRIAPUS.



YOU WANT
REAL WEALTH?
THIS IS REAL
WEALTH.



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SWORDS AND
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