

Log 1

A Night at the Opera

The Group:

Ella Pipeleaf: Halfling Paladin of the Morninglord. Her family, originally from Tepest, moved to Mordent when Ella was ten. They moved hurriedly in the middle of the night, Ella does not know why. Ella received her calling from the Barovia deity when she was young. Being so far away from the church has stunted Ella's growth as a paladin.

Featon Mosstem: Elven Rogue. Originally from Sithicus, not much is known about Featon. He is working with the group to repay the museum for profits lost when he tried to rob them.

Sharuk Tamal: Dwarven Fighter. Sharuk's family hail from the Mountains of Misery, but his parents moved to the Rue des les Pistolets in Port-a-Lucine because of their fascination with smokepowder weapons.

Phillipe Loeu: Human Wizard. Loeu's history is his alone to know. None of the party know he spend time in prison for manslaughter. Since his release, he has tried to find his love, though she has fallen for his rival.

The Setting:

Le Musee National de Dementlieu has recently set up an Acquisitions Department. The Curator, the relatively young Pierre Marcel, thought that by having his own band of professionals to

retrieve artefacts from the Core and Islands was safer than hiring out to third party companies, such as the Red Vardo Traders. All except Featon were already employed by the museum in the various departments, Marcel did not want to hire new people when there were those he could trust already available.

The First Item:

The first artefact Marcel had the team recover was a priceless Rokuma Vase, being donated by Ricardo Diosa, the owner of the Port-a-Lucine Opera House. The party are to go to the Opera House and collect the vase after the opening night of "Carmina," a new Opera to be performed for the first time ever that night.

A Night at the Opera

The party were gathered in their new headquarters in the Museum, a room specially equipped for them, with their own separate bedrooms available. The party were expected to live in the Museum permanently now. As they got to know one another, after only having a passing familiarity with the other employees from different departments, Pierre Marcel came into the room and gave them their assignment.

They agreed and set off for the Opera, with the correct attire supplied by the Museum and Featon dressed as a servant. When they stepped from their

carriage, they noticed a smartly dressed, portly man and an equally eloquently dressed lady crossing the road. An out-of-control carriage was hurtling towards them. Phillipe and Sharuk ran towards the couple, shouting warning. The dwarf pushed the man to safety and Phillipe swept the woman off her feet to safety. The man introduced himself as Ricardo Diosa, owner of the Opera House, the girl his daughter Maria. Maria haughtily excused herself and left to get ready, Phillipe escorting her into the building.

Whilst mingling in the foyer, they noticed several notable members of society. Celeste d'Honaire and her cousin Dominic had come to see the Opera, as had Lord Balfour of the University of Dementlieu. Whilst mingling, Phillipe overheard people discussing a body that had been found near to Sharuk's home of le Rue des les Pistolets. Apparently, one operagoer said, the body's face was twisted into a hideous grin and the eyes were bulging to the point of popping out of the sockets. Ella began to grow annoyed at the number of people mistaking her for a little girl.

The opera started, it was enjoyable and funny in parts. Just before the interval Maria stepped forward for her solo. She began to sing. Her voice was beautiful. Suddenly, all lights in the auditorium extinguished and a loud, booming voice called "People of Port-a-Lucine, mark my words. For as long as Maria Diosa continues to profane this stage with her pitiful performances, the opera house will be a place of death! You have heard my words of doom; now learn them to be true!"

When the lights returned, Maria was

crying on the stage, a blonde, beautiful elven woman trying to comfort her. Featon noticed that the chandelier above the auditorium was shaking; Ella noticed that the rope had started to fray. They watched as with each swing, the chandelier fell lower and lower. Bravely, Sharuk and Ella poised themselves at the edge of the box to jump at the chandelier. Featon and Phillipe started shouting at the people below to move, screaming that the chandelier was falling. Ella and Sharuk both leapt, but Sharuk misjudged his jump. He fell thirty feet to the ground below. Ella landed on the chandelier. Using her, admittedly slight, weight, she forced the chandelier to swing into a corner as it fell. As it passed under the balcony, Ella leapt and caught the edge. The chandelier fell to the ground with an almighty smash.

Fortunately, Maria had been pulled to safety by her friend, the elven woman and no one on stage was injured. Phillipe helped Ella to safety whilst Featon saw to the dwarf. After gathering in the bar area of the Opera House, the patrons leave, leaving the party and the rest of the cast. Ricardo tells the party that the elven woman is named Angel Pajaro.

Phillipe went to the fallen chandelier with Featon whilst Sharuk had a whiskey to sooth his pain. Ella tried to talk to Maria and Angel.

At the fallen chandelier, Phillipe examined the rope. He could tell it had not been cut, but the break did not look like wear and tear. He asked to speak to the person who was in charge of raising and lowering the chandelier. A stagehand rushed backstage. As the stagehand left, Ricardo explained that

there were rumours of a ghost that inhabited the Opera House. He said that it had only become a malevolent spirit in the last few months. Before he could continue the stagehand returned and asked Ricardo to follow him. Featon and Phillipe waited by the chandelier, examining for more clues.

Maria was inconsolable. Ella tried to calm her down with Angel's help, but she soon realised that the diva was simply playing for sympathy. A stagehand appeared and asked her to follow them; she was taken backstage where Featon and Phillipe had been called too. Ricardo was sitting on a chair, his face white. When questioned, he gestured to the flies. All looked up. Hanging, cloaked in shadow was a body. All looked shaken, but Ella couldn't keep her calm. She excused herself, saying that she wanted to check the chandelier's fixing in the rafters. Featon's sharp elven sight noticed some grooves on the floor. Five scratches on a diagonal slope were marked into the floor, each was the same length. Phillipe asked Ricardo who had been with the Opera House the longest and the shortest, he said that some people had been there for years, but Angel had only been there for six months.

In the rafters, Ella found some silver hair caught in the rope that held the chandelier. On the body, which was identified as Henri, the man in charge of the chandeliers was found a tub of greasepaint and a piece of white silk. Quickly pocketing these clues, without really examining them, Phillipe left to talk to Maria. In the bar he called Sharuk over. They decided that the dwarf should speak to Angel alone.

As Phillipe tried to get some sense out of Maria, Angel spoke quietly with Sharuk. With a coy glance here and a flirtatious smile there, he was ensnared by her beauty. Ella returned to the party and they all gathered in the bar. Phillipe decided that he had better speak to the chorus whilst Featon and Ella went to speak with the lead Tenor, Jean Pierre Cambier. Cambier, being the arrogant man he is, assumed that they were fans that wanted to check on his wellbeing after the accident. He offered them autographs and smiles. Learning that the preening peacock had little to offer their investigation, Ella and Featon bid him goodbye.

In the chorus girl's dormitories, Phillipe was accosted by Madame Flaubert, the chorus mistress. She shouted at him for being in a place he shouldn't and informed him that if he wanted to question the chorus girls, he had better come back in the morning. When the party had re-gathered in the foyer, they went back to the museum to gather their thoughts. Before she left, Ella went to check on Maria, who had retired to her room earlier, aided by Angel. She knocked on the door, asking if there was anything she could do. Maria replied no, though she sounded strange to Ella. Ella asked if she could meet with Maria the next day. Maria agreed and Ella bid her goodbye and left. Just as she got to the top of the stairs she heard a door open and close. Turning back she saw that Maria's door was not closed tightly as it was a minute ago. Assuming that Maria had left to see to personal business, Ella went back to the party. They returned to the museum for the night.

In the morning at breakfast, Sharuk received a letter from Angel, asking him

to meet her at a secluded cafe. Phillippe left with him to visit the Anchorites in Ste. Mere des Larmes. He wished to examine the body found near the Rue des les Pistolets. The Warden allowed him, but was confused. He told Phillippe that the person had died from natural causes, the rictus grin aside. Phillippe explained about the tragedy in the Opera House and said he just wanted to rule out a connection. The Warden reluctantly agreed and Phillippe examined the body. He concluded that the person had indeed died from natural causes, but that grin was something wholly unnatural.

After leaving Phillippe at the church, Sharuk continued on to his rendezvous with Angel. When he got there he found Angel wearing a long veil. When he sat she lifted it, revealing a large welt on the side of her face. She said that Jean Pierre had struck her in anger when he heard her speaking to Maria about Sharuk. Filled with anger, Sharuk stormed to the Opera House.

Meanwhile, Ella and Featon were back at the Opera House. Ella went to speak to Maria, who had no recollection of their conversation last night. Very rudely, she told Ella to leave her alone. Persevering, Ella invited Maria to lunch. Maria agreed and said she would like to dine at the Governor's Hotel, the most expensive restaurant in Port-a-Lucine. Ella agreed, after all the Museum had said it would pay all expenses.

Phillippe arrived and started to interview the chorus. They turned out to be the most vapid, self absorbed people he had ever met. One continuous string in their conversations about unusual sightings was that some said they had seen a silver fox around the Opera House. As Phillippe

was speaking to the chorus, Sharuk arrived at the Opera House, demanding to see Jean Pierre. Ella asked him what was wrong and he said that Jean Pierre had struck Angel. He told them about the welt on Angel's cheek.

Over lunch, Ella asked Maria about the welt on Angel's cheek. Maria said that Angel did not have a welt as she left that morning, but she was in a hurry to leave the Opera House. Ella asked why and Maria explained that someone had sent Angel roses and she was heavily allergic to the blooms and had to leave. They caused her skin to develop a rash that could turn into horrible welts.

After his mind numbing conversations with the chorus, Phillippe went to speak to the barman. The barman revealed that whilst he had never seen the so-called ghost in the fifteen years he had worked for the Opera House, the weirdest thing he had seen was a strange, gangly creature with silver hair behind the Opera House one night. He'd been drinking that night, but when he saw that creature he drank himself senseless.

Phillippe went to the back of the Opera House and searched the alleyway. There he found a footprint that was elongated and had claws on the toes. He took a drawing of the footprint and went to find Featon. The pair searched the alley for more clues, and Featon found markings on a nearby manhole that indicated it had been moved in the last few days.

They opened the manhole and entered. In the sewers, they found that the wall to the Opera House's basement had bricks loosened so they could be pulled out. They followed the sewer, which was straight and all connecting passages

where either blocked or had large grates over them. After around 100 feet, the tunnel widened into a small room carved from the rock. Posters covered the room's walls, all from the Opera House, all with the faces they displayed torn away. Featon read the name on the bottom of them all; "Maria Diosa." There was a table in the room. On the table was a sheet of parchment and a book. On the parchment was written "HATEHATEHATEHATEHATE! KILL THE BITCH! I AM THE GREATER!" Searching the room, Featon found a blood-stained silver dagger.

Phillipe grabbed the book. As he turned towards the entrance to the tunnel, the pair heard something fall. It could have been water, or pebbles being dislodged from the tunnel. They looked at each other, wary over the noise. It came again, louder and closer. The pair stepped back in fear. Suddenly, a rat ran from the tunnel. As it ran past Phillipe, he swung at it with his cane in frustration. The pair left the tunnel and returned to the museum. Meanwhile, Sharuk had found Jean Pierre. The pair went to a secluded box and Sharuk confronted the Tenor about Angel. Jean Pierre denied striking Angel, and Sharuk could tell he was telling the truth.

Eventually, when they had all met back up at the Museum, Ella, Featon and Phillipe used the Museum's library to research the beast. Sharuk got blind drunk. After a few hours search, Phillipe found a text entitled *Van Richten's Guide to Werebeasts*. Using the sample footprints from the back, he identified the creature as some sort of werewolf. Ella pointed out that the foot print was smaller than the sample in Dr. Van

Richten's book. Seeing as Angel was the only non-human employed by the Opera House, they could rule out dwarven or halfling werecreatures.

The three came to the conclusion that Angel was a werebeast. Through more research, they found that there was a type of werecreature called a werefox, a rare lycanthrope that only affects human, elven or half-elven women. They came to the further conclusion that Angel was one of these werefoxes. Phillipe read the book they found, which turned out to be a diary. In it, Angel admitted to being a werefox. It chronicled her life from childhood until recently. For that day's entry, it read "Tonight, Maria Diosa dies."

The three tried to wake Sharuk, who was unconscious with drink. Leaving the dwarf, the three headed to the Opera House. The place was deserted. Back at the museum, Sharuk felt someone shaking him. He awoke to find Angel standing over him, looking scared. She begged him to hide her in the museum, that his friends were planning to kill her. He agreed to hide her, secreting her in the Akiri Exhibition.

Ella, Featon and Phillipe returned from the Opera House. They woke the dwarf, who had fallen asleep again, and asked him if he knew where Angel was. He lied and said he didn't, but the group could see through it. Phillip said that Angel was a werecreature and Sharuk refused to believe him, the pair argued and Sharuk drew his pistol and shot Phillipe. The noise woke Pierre Marcel who came to the group's quarters. Ella mouthed to him to get the *gendarme* and Marcel fled. Ella then spoke to Sharuk and convinced him to lower his gun.

When Marcel returned with the *gendarme* and the Museum's resident Ezran Anchorite, Ella had showed Sharuk the evidence against Angel. Sharuk agreed and asked to have the silver dagger. The priest healed Phillippe and Marcel asked if the wizard wanted to press charges. He declined.

Just then a song filled the museum, the same song that Maria Diosa had sang the night before, her solo from the new opera. Sharuk took the group to where he had hidden Angel, but all that was there was her dress. All came to the same conclusion: she was at the Opera House.

They ran to the stables and got on their horses and rode as fast as they could to the Opera House. When they arrived they saw that the front doors had been broken down. Cautiously, they entered. Leaning against the ticket office was Ricardo Diosa. He had a gaping wound in his chest and was struggling to breath. Ella immediately helped him. The rest ran into the auditorium. As soon as they set foot in the room the same song started to be sung. Slowly, the curtains opened. Hanging from the ceiling by a rope was Maria Diosa. Ella joined the rest of the party.

Cautiously, they went to the stage. Sharuk gently lowered Maria to the stage. As soon as she touched the boards, the singing stopped. Phillippe searched the orchestra pit, Featon the opposite side of the stage to Sharuk and Ella opened the door to the stairs to the attic. When she started to climb the stairs a voice behind her snarled, "You've ruined everything."

She turned and saw a hideous sight. A

monstrous combination of woman and fox stood behind her. Angel's fingers were long and slender, her skin was taut on her bones. A bushy tail twitched from behind her. Ella feebly brought her sword up to attack, but her unenchanted blade had no effect on the werefox. Angel sang a brief aria and a bright light blinded the halfling.

On stage, the three men were shocked when the door Ella had just stepped through burst open and the halfling was thrown out. Four long, grey fingers grasped the door frame and the spindly form of Angel Pajaro stepped through the door. Sharuk recoiled in horror at the sight of the woman he loved twisted into this form. Angel dived on the halfling and took a bite from her neck. Featon unslung his shortbow and fired an arrow at Angel. It stuck in her shoulder, but she pulled it out and snapped it, the wound closing almost immediately. Sharuk attacked with the silver dagger Featon had found and stuck the monster in the ribs. Angel roared in anger, but a *magic missile* from Phillippe knocked her back. She dived on Sharuk and tried to bite him, but missed and her jaws snapped shut inches from his head.

Featon unleashed another arrow at Angel. His aim was true, and the arrow stuck in the werefoxes shoulder. Phillippe followed with an *acid splash* spell, but his aim was off. Ella thrust out with her longsword, but missed the creature. Angel looked in a great deal of pain. Her body contorted and she changed into the form of a silver fox and bolted for the door. Before she reached safety, Sharuk threw the silver dagger at her. It struck the fox in the back. It fell to the floor and started to convulse. In matter of second, the body of Angel Pajaro was

lying on the floor, dead.

Quickly, the party recovered their senses. They checked out Maria, only to find a large bite on her shoulder, a bite like that of a fox. Ella immediately argued that she could possibly be uninfected, but Sharuk said that the best thing to do would be to kill her now and spare the world from another werecreature. As he said this, he felt a chill on his spine, like an icy draft was running up and down his back. He felt like some dark lover had pulled him into her embrace and was whispering dark secrets in his ear. His face twisted into an unpleasant snarl, and he suddenly knew how to cause cuts to appear on a person's flesh with a touch.

Phillipe went out into the street and told a beggar to fetch a doctor for a silver

piece. The beggar ran off and soon returned with an anchorite who preached from the top of a box at the docks. The anchorite said he'd take care of Ricardo and Maria. Before they left, Ricardo gave them the Rokuma vase they had come for in the first place and told them they had his thanks.

They burnt the body of Angel Pajaro, giving her an Ezran funeral.

When they returned to the Museum, Pierre Marcel was ecstatic with the vase. He told them he already had their next assignment. The Marquis Stezan d'Polarno from the isle of Ghastria had offered to sell a painting to the Museum and they had to go and collect it. He told the party they could leave when healed, and they agreed.

DM's Notes

The Group:

Ella Pipeleaf: Halfling Paladin of the Morninglord. Her family, originally from Tepest, moved to Mordent when Ella was ten. They moved hurriedly in the middle of the night, Ella does not know why. Ella received her calling from the Barovia deity when she was young. Being so far away from the church has stunted Ella's growth as a paladin.

I have plans for Ella. Her flight from Tepest just after the Grand Conjunction. The anti-fey sentiment was growing, and her father was threatened by a drunken human teenager. Her father fought back and accidentally killed the boy. Instead of staying to face certain death, he and his wife decided to flee to Mordent. They settled in Tumbletown. Ella knows nothing of her father's crime.

I don't know what I'm going to do with Featon, Sharuk and Phillipe yet.

The Setting:

Le Musee National de Dementlieu has recently set up an Acquisitions Department. The Curator, the relatively young Pierre Marcel, thought that by having his own band of professionals to retrieve artefacts from the Core and Islands was safer than hiring out to third party companies, such as the Red Vardo Traders. All except Featon were already employed by the museum in the various departments, Marcel did not want to hire new people when there

where those he could trust already available.

I'm bored of taverns.

The First Item:

The first artefact Marcel had the team recover was a priceless Rokuma Vase, being donated by Ricardo Diosa, the owner of the Port-a-Lucine Opera House. The party are to go to the Opera House and collect the vase after the opening night of "Carmina," a new Opera to be performed for the first time ever that night

I decided to start with this adventure for two reasons: 1) Because the Opera setting would help show the differences between Ravenloft and other worlds and 2) I think Angel is a good example of how you can't take everything at face value.

A Night at the Opera

The party were gathered in their new headquarters in the Museum, a room specially equipped for them, with their own separate bedrooms available. The party were expected to live in the Museum permanently now. As they got to know one another, after only having a passing familiarity with the other employees from different departments, Pierre Marcel came into the room and gave them their assignment.

I got this idea from the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen. A group of skilled individuals working for a museum? Too good to pass up.

They agreed and set off for the Opera, with the correct attire supplied by the Museum and Featon dressed as a servant. When they stepped from their carriage, they noticed a smartly dressed, portly man and an equally eloquently dressed lady crossing the road. An out-of-control carriage was hurtling towards them. Phillipe and Sharuk ran towards the couple, shouting warning. The dwarf pushed the man to safety and Phillipe swept the woman off her feet to safety. The man introduced himself as Ricardo Diosa, owner of the Opera House, the girl his daughter Maria. Maria haughtily excused herself and left to get ready, Phillipe escorting her into the building.

Slightly modified from the adventure in CotN: Werebeasts, but I needed to introduce the party to Ricardo and Maria *and* place Ricardo in the party's debt.

Whilst mingling in the foyer, they noticed several notable members of society. Celeste d'Honaire and her cousin Dominic had come to see the Opera, as had Lord Balfour of the University of Dementlieu. Whilst mingling, Phillipe overheard people discussing a body that had been found near to Sharuk's home of le Rue des les Pistolets. Apparently, one operagoer said, the body's face was twisted into a hideous grin and the eyes were bulging to the point of popping out of the sockets. Ella began to grow annoyed at the number of people mistaking her for a little girl.

Before I get "A Darklord? At first level?" Dominic is there only to show that the advisor to the Council of Brilliance has an interest in opera. And there was someone in the party who

thought he knew loads about Ravenloft (i.e. He's read Domains of Dread, the Ravenloft Player's Handbook and the Ravenloft DMG) and I slipped Dominic in to scare him. Sue me, I like cheap scares.

Also note the corpse found. Toben's not going to appear for a while, but I want to sew the seeds for his appearance now. This corpse is a body of his he's discarded.

The opera started, it was enjoyable and funny in parts. Just before the interval Maria stepped forward for her solo. She began to sing. Her voice was beautiful. Suddenly, all lights in the auditorium extinguished and a loud, booming voice called "People of Port-a-Lucine, mark my words. For as long as Maria Diosa continues to profane this stage with her pitiful performances, the opera house will be a place of death! You have heard my words of doom; now learn them to be true!"

The song I used was "L'Amour Est Un Oiseau Rebelle" from Bizet's Carmen. It's my favourite piece of Opera.

When the lights returned, Maria was crying on the stage, a blonde, beautiful elven woman trying to comfort her. Featon noticed that the chandelier above the auditorium was shaking; Ella noticed that the rope had started to fray. They watched as with each swing, the chandelier fell lower and lower. Bravely, Sharuk and Ella poised themselves at the edge of the box to jump at the chandelier. Featon and Phillipe started shouting at the people below to move, screaming that the chandelier was falling. Ella and Sharuk both leapt, but Sharuk misjudged his jump. He fell

thirty feet to the ground below. Ella landed on the chandelier. Using her, admittedly slight, weight, she forced the chandelier to swing into a corner as it fell. As it passed under the balcony, Ella leapt and caught the edge. The chandelier fell to the ground with an almighty smash.

I wouldn't have allowed this plan, normally. But the image of a halfling in an opera gown jumping onto a swinging chandelier was too good to pass up. Ella made a jump check and got a result of 21, so I allowed it. Sharuk got 7, so he fell 30 feet and took 8 points of damage from the fall (I rolled a 2, 5 and 1).

Fortunately, Maria had been pulled to safety by her friend, the elven woman and no one on stage was injured. Phillipe helped Ella to safety whilst Featon saw to the dwarf. After gathering in the bar area of the Opera House, the patrons leave, leaving the party and the rest of the cast. Ricardo tells the party that the elven woman is named Angel Pajaro.

One aspect I was keen to play up is that everyone LOVED Angel, not only the men, but the women considered her a good and true friend.

Phillipe went to the fallen chandelier with Featon whilst Sharuk had a whiskey to sooth his pain. Ella tried to talk to Maria and Angel.

At the fallen chandelier, Phillipe examined the rope. He could tell it had not been cut, but the break did not look like wear and tear. He asked to speak to the person who was in charge of raising and lowering the chandelier. A stagehand rushed backstage. As the stagehand left, Ricardo explained that

there were rumours of a ghost that inhabited the Opera House. He said that it had only become a malevolent spirit in the last few months. Before he could continue the stagehand returned and asked Ricardo to follow him. Featon and Phillipe waited by the chandelier, examining for more clues.

What broke the rope? Angel. She chewed through it in fox form, hence the silver hair Ella finds later.

Maria was inconsolable. Ella tried to calm her down with Angel's help, but she soon realised that the diva was simply playing for sympathy. A stagehand appeared and asked her to follow them; she was taken backstage where Featon and Phillipe had been called too. Ricardo was sitting on a chair, his face white. When questioned, he gestured to the flies. All looked up. Hanging, cloaked in shadow was a body. All looked shaken, but Ella couldn't keep her calm. She excused herself, saying that she wanted to check the chandelier's fixing in the rafters. Featon's sharp elven sight noticed some grooves on the floor. Five scratches on a diagonal slope where marked into the floor, each was the same length. Phillipe asked Ricardo who had been with the Opera House the longest and the shortest, he said that some people had been there for years, but Angel had only been there for six months.

Ella failed a horror check here at the sight of the corpse. Her player rolled aversion and she wanted to get out of there quickly. Angel hung Henri. She threw the rope over his head and dislodged a sandbag so he was strung up. The silk and the greasepaint where red

herrings, the silk was a rag Henri used as a handkerchief and the greasepaint he found and was going to return to the makeup room. The grooves on the floor where from Angel's hybrid form's claws marking the wood. I know werefoxes have the *pass without trace* ability, but she was struggling.

In the rafters, Ella found some silver hair caught in the rope that held the chandelier. On the body, which was identified as Henri, the man in charge of the chandeliers was found a tub of greasepaint and a piece of white silk. Quickly pocketing these clues, with out really examining them, Phillipe left to talk to Maria. In the bar he called Sharuk over. They decided that the dwarf should speak to Angel alone.

As Phillipe tried to get some sense out of Maria, Angel spoke quietly with Sharuk. With a coy glance here and a flirtatious smile there, he was ensnared by her beauty. Ella returned to the party and they all gathered in the bar. Phillipe decided that he had better speak to the chorus whilst Featon and Ella went to speak with the lead Tenor, Jean Pierre Cambier. Cambier, being the arrogant man he is, assumed that they where fans that wanted to check on his wellbeing after the accident. He offered them autographs and smiles. Learning that the preening peacock had little to offer their investigation, Ella and Featon bid him goodbye.

Sharuk failed a will save and fell under Angel's non-magical charm. Phillipe tried to see if a spell had been cast on the dwarf, but naturally found nothing. I played Maria as every bit the diva, playing for sympathy. Cambier was a bore and an arrogant fop. I enjoyed

playing him, especially when Ella asked for his autograph!

In the chorus girl's dormitories, Phillipe was accosted by Madame Flaubert, the chorus mistress. She shouted at him for being in a place he shouldn't and informed him that if he wanted to question the chorus girls, he had better come back in the morning. When the party had re-gathered in the foyer, they went back to the museum to gather their thoughts. Before she left, Ella went to check on Maria, who had retired to her room earlier, aided by Angel. She knocked on the door, asking if there was anything she could do. Maria replied no, though she sounded strange to Ella. Ella asked if she could meet with Maria the next day. Maria agreed and Ella bid her goodbye and left. Just as she got to the top of the stairs she heard a door open and close. Turning back she saw that Maria's door was not closed tightly as it was a minute ago. Assuming that Maria had left to see to personal business, Ella went back to the party. They returned to the museum for the night.

I knew something was going right when out of game, Phillipe's player said he'd put money on the "ghost" being the Chorus mistress. Who was Ella speaking to? Angel. I made Angel make a bluff role to speak like Maria and Ella make a Sense Motive role against Angel's bluff. Ella failed and believed Angel to be Maria. The noise she heard was Angel slipping out of Maria's room. If she'd gone inside, she'd have found Maria asleep in the bed. Angel was going to murder her, but Ella interrupted.

In the morning at breakfast, Sharuk received a letter from Angel, asking him to meet her at a secluded cafe. Phillipe

left with him to visit the Anchorites in Ste. Mere des Larmes. He wished to examine the body found near the Rue des les Pistolets. The Warden allowed him, but was confused. He told Phillippe that the person had died from natural causes, the rictus grin aside. Phillippe explained about the tragedy in the Opera House and said he just wanted to rule out a connection. The Warden reluctantly agreed and Phillippe examined the body. He concluded that the person had indeed died from natural causes, but that grin was something wholly unnatural.

When he picked the letter up I said that the envelope was scented, but before I said of what someone said "Roses!" I smiled and said, "Surprisingly not. It smells of violets." I decided that Angel would have the chemical bane of Rose petals, because she was a diva and all divas are given bunches of roses after a successful performance.

Phillippe going to inspect the body of the Toben zombie came as a surprise to me, but it allowed me to show a Toben zombie up close. The grin had subsided a bit by this point, so no fear/horror check was needed.

After leaving Phillippe at the church, Sharuk continued on to his rendezvous with Angel. When he got there he found Angel wearing a long veil. When he sat she lifted it, revealing a large welt on the side of her face. She said that Jean Pierre had struck her in anger when he heard her speaking to Maria about Sharuk. Filled with anger, Sharuk stormed to the Opera House.

Because of their sniffing around the previous night, and them foiling her attempt to murder Maria, Angel saw the

party as a threat. Her charming of Sharuk paid off when she made him think Jean Pierre had struck her. In reality, she had struck her self with a silver-handled brush.

Meanwhile, Ella and Featon were back at the Opera House. Ella went to speak to Maria, who had no recollection of their conversation last night. Very rudely, she told Ella to leave her alone. Persevering, Ella invited Maria to lunch. Maria agreed and said she would like to dine at the Governor's Hotel, the most expensive restaurant in Port-a-Lucine. Ella agreed, after all the Museum had said it would pay all expenses.

The expression of Ella's player's face was priceless. He was genuinely confused.

Phillippe arrived and started to interview the chorus. They turned out to be the most vapid, self absorbed people he had ever met. One continuous string in their conversations about unusual sightings was that some said they had seen a silver fox around the Opera House. As Phillippe was speaking to the chorus, Sharuk arrived at the Opera House, demanding to see Jean Pierre. Ella asked him what was wrong and he said that Jean Pierre had struck Angel. He told them about the welt on Angel's cheek.

Here's where Angel's plan begins to fall. I decided she hadn't been as careful as she could have been in her movements and people had glimpsed her in fox form.

Over lunch, Ella asked Maria about the welt on Angel's cheek. Maria said that Angel did not have a welt as she left that morning, but she was in a hurry to leave

the Opera House. Ella asked why and Maria explained that someone had sent Angel roses and she was heavily allergic to the blooms and had to leave. They caused her skin to develop a rash that could turn into horrible welts.

I didn't really know how to let the party know Angel's chemical bane, but when Ella asked why Angel had left early, it came to me- someone sent her roses was her excuse. Angel would have had to tell everyone she had an allergy to roses, what with the tradition towards divas.

After his mind numbing conversations with the chorus, Phillipe went to speak to the barman. The barman revealed that whilst he had never seen the so-called ghost in the fifteen years he had worked for the Opera House, the weirdest thing he had seen was a strange, gangly creature with silver hair behind the Opera House one night. He'd been drinking that night, but when he saw that creature he drank himself senseless.

This was throwing them a bone, a rather large bone at that. They hadn't a clue until this point that they were dealing with a lycanthrope.

Phillipe went to the back of the Opera House and searched the alleyway. There he found a footprint that was elongated and had claws on the toes. He took a drawing of the footprint and went to find Featon. The pair searched the alley for more clues, and Featon found markings on a nearby manhole that indicated it had been moved in the last few days.

They compared the footprint to the strange marks inside and guess what? The claws on the foot matched up exactly to the claw marks on the floor.

They opened the manhole and entered. In the sewers, they found that the wall to the Opera House's basement had bricks loosened so they could be pulled out. They followed the sewer, which was straight and all connecting passages where either blocked or had large grates over them. After around 100 feet, the tunnel widened into a small room carved from the rock. Posters covered the room's walls, all from the Opera House, all with the faces they displayed torn away. Featon read the name on the bottom of them all; "Maria Diosa." There was a table in the room. On the table was a sheet of parchment and a book. On the parchment was written "HATEHATEHATEHATEHATE! KILL THE BITCH! I AM THE GREATER!" Searching the room, Featon found a blood-stained silver dagger.

I never liked how the adventure ended in CotN: Werebeasts. It seemed more, more *operatic* to me to have it end on the stage. But I used the cavern as Angel's secret base. The blood on the dagger was Angel's creators.

Phillipe grabbed the book. As he turned towards the entrance to the tunnel, the pair heard something fall. It could have been water, or pebbles being dislodged from the tunnel. They looked at each other, wary over the noise. It came again, louder and closer. The pair stepped back in fear. Suddenly, a rat ran from the tunnel. As it ran past Phillipe, he swung at it with his cane in frustration. The pair left the tunnel and returned to the museum. Meanwhile, Sharuk had found Jean Pierre. The pair went to a secluded box and Sharuk confronted the Tenor about Angel. Jean

Pierre denied striking Angel, and Sharuk could tell he was telling the truth.

The rat was a great scene. The players panicked, thinking Angel had returned, they had nowhere to go, no way to protect themselves and when the rat ran in they didn't know what to do. Fantastic.

Sharuk passed a Sense Motive check with Jean Pierre (DC 15) and was torn. Jean Pierre was telling the truth, but why would Angel lie? The dwarf was so confused he did the only thing he could. He got drunk.

Eventually, when they had all met back up at the Museum, Ella, Featon and Phillipe used the Museum's library to research the beast. Sharuk got blind drunk. After a few hours search, Phillipe found a text entitled *Van Richten's Guide to Werebeasts*. Using the sample footprints from the back, he identified the creature as some sort of werewolf. Ella pointed out that the foot print was smaller than the sample in Dr. Van Richten's book. Seeing as Angel was the only non-human employed by the Opera House, they could rule out dwarven or halfling werecreatures.

Unfortunately, I forgot to take my copy of VRGtt *Werebeasts*. We live and learn.

The three came to the conclusion that Angel was a werebeast. Through more research, they found that there was a type of werecreature called a werefox, a rare lycanthrope that only affects human, elven or half-elven women. They came to the further conclusion that Angel was one of these werefoxes. Phillipe read the book they found, which turned out to be a diary. In it, Angel admitted to being a

werefox. It chronicled her life from childhood until recently. For that day's entry, it read "Tonight, Maria Diosa dies."

During this scene, I couldn't help but think "Don't you wish you'd read the diary before the 5 hours of research?"

The three tried to wake Sharuk, who was unconscious with drink. Leaving the dwarf, the three headed to the Opera House. The place was deserted. Back at the museum, Sharuk felt someone shaking him. He awoke to find Angel standing over him, looking scared. She begged him to hide her in the museum, that his friends were planning to kill her. He agreed to hide her, secreting her in the Akiri Exhibition.

I reasoned that Angel would know by now that the PCs knew she was not a natural creature. If the PCs thought she was in the museum however, they would be busy searching there and she'd be free to kill Maria.

Ella, Featon and Phillipe returned from the Opera House. They woke the dwarf, who had fallen asleep again, and asked him if he knew where Angel was. He lied and said he didn't, but the group could see through it. Phillip said that Angel was a werecreature and Sharuk refused to believe him, the pair argued and Sharuk drew his pistol and shot Phillipe. The noise woke Pierre Marcel who came to the group's quarters. Ella mouthed to him to get the *gendarme* and Marcel fled. Ella then spoke to Sharuk and convinced him to lower his gun. When Marcel returned with the *gendarme* and the Museum's resident Ezran Anchorite, Ella had showed Sharuk the evidence against Angel.

Sharuk agreed and asked to have the silver dagger. The priest healed Phillipe and Marcel asked if the wizard wanted to press charges. He declined.

Phillipe was reduced to -4 hp. The scene actually played out quite well. It also helped stall the search for Angel, allowing her more time to get to the Opera House. On the way, she stopped at the Diosa's and told them something was in the Opera House, hence their appearance in the last scene.

Just then a song filled the museum, the same song that Maria Diosa had sang the night before, her solo from the new opera. Sharuk took the group to where he had hidden Angel, but all that was there was her dress. All came to the same conclusion: she was at the Opera House.

The players were all arguing about Angel. I said nothing and just pressed play on the CD player. It took them a moment to notice the music was playing and Featon's player said, "That's just creepy."

The music seemed as though it was coming from everywhere. I went for story over rules here and allowed Angel's *Ghost Sound* to go off late. She had a magic item that the PCs never found, a small music box that turned an entire building into a speaker; it could only play the song programmed into it at the time of creation.

They ran to the stables and got on their horses and rode as fast as they could to the Opera House. When they arrived they saw that the front doors had been broken down. Cautiously, they entered. Leaning against the ticket office was

Ricardo Diosa. He had a gaping wound in his chest and was struggling to breathe. Ella immediately helped him. The rest ran into the auditorium. As soon as they set foot in the room the same song started to be sung. Slowly, the curtains opened. Hanging from the ceiling by a rope was Maria Diosa. Ella joined the rest of the party.

I was worried I was over-using Carmen, but I was assured I wasn't. More DM trickery as the curtains opened of their own accord.

Cautiously, they went to the stage. Sharuk gently lowered Maria to the stage. As soon as she touched the boards, the singing stopped. Phillipe searched the orchestra pit, Featon the opposite side of the stage to Sharuk and Ella opened the door to the stairs to the attic. When she started to climb the stairs a voice behind her snarled, "You've ruined everything."

She turned and saw a hideous sight. A monstrous combination of woman and fox stood behind her. Angel's fingers were long and slender, her skin was taugth on her bones. A bushy tail twitched from behind her. Ella feebly brought her sword up to attack, but her unenchanted blade had no effect on the werefox. Angel sang a brief aria and a bright light blinded the halfling.

On stage, the three men were shocked when the door Ella had just stepped through burst open and the halfling was thrown out. Four long, grey fingers grasped the door frame and the spindly form of Angel Pajaro stepped through the door. Sharuk recoiled in horror at the sight of the woman he loved twisted into this form. Angel dived on the halfling

and took a bite from her neck. Featon unslung his shortbow and fired an arrow at Angel. It stuck in her shoulder, but she pulled it out and snapped it, the wound closing almost immediately. Sharuk attacked with the silver dagger Featon had found and stuck the monster in the ribs. Angel roared in anger, but a *magic missile* from Phillipe knocked her back. She dived on Sharuk and tried to bite him, but missed and her jaws snapped shut inches from his head.

Featon unleashed another arrow at Angel. His aim was true, and the arrow stuck in the werefoxes shoulder. Phillipe followed with an *acid splash* spell, but his aim was off. Ella thrust out with her longsword, but missed the creature. Angel looked in a great deal of pain. Her body contorted and she changed into the form of a silver fox and bolted for the door. Before she reached safety, Sharuk threw the silver dagger at her. It struck the fox in the back. It fell to the floor and started to convulse. In matter of second, the body of Angel Pajaro was lying on the floor, dead.

Angel was CR4; she should have been a challenge. Though the fight was fun, I felt it was too short. Lucky dice roles helped the PCs here, especially Featon's critical sneak-attack that did a total of 25 points of damage, 10 because of Angel's DR.

Quickly, the party recovered their senses. They checked out Maria, only to find a large bite on her shoulder, a bite like that of a fox. Ella immediately argued that she could possibly be uninfected, but Sharuk said that the best thing to do would be to kill her now and spare the world from another werecreature. As he said this, he felt a

chill on his spine, like an icy draft was running up and down his back. He felt like some dark lover had pulled him into her embrace and was whispering dark secrets in his ear. His face twisted into an unpleasant snarl, and he suddenly knew how to cause cuts to appear on a person's flesh with a touch.

I really didn't want the PCs to fail a powers check this early, but before I started, I decided that I would go with the dice, no fudging. Because of his suggestion to kill Maria, I gave Sharuk a 4% chance of failure. I rolled 1%. His ability is that he can now cast *cause minor wounds* 3/day, but his OR has permanently increased by 1. Is Maria infected? Well, I'm not sure yet. It depends how often she appears in the campaign.

Phillipe went out into the street and told a beggar to fetch a doctor for a silver piece. The beggar ran off and soon returned with an anchorite who preached from the top of a box at the docks. The anchorite said he'd take care of Ricardo and Maria. Before they left, Ricardo gave them the Rokuma vase they had come for in the first place and told them they had his thanks.

They burnt the body of Angel Pajaro, giving her an Ezran funeral.

And all was happy in the land of the Sprites. I thought the adventure went really well, allot better than I was expecting. I was pleased with how things turned out.

When they returned to the Museum, Pierre Marcel was ecstatic with the vase. He told them he already had their next assignment. The Marquis Stezan

d'Polarno from the isle of Ghastria had offered to sell a painting to the Museum and they had to go and collect it. He told the party they could leave when healed, and they agreed.

So what next for our band of heroes?

Well, I don't want to spoil anything, but the ship the museum has chartered is called the *Sunset Empires*...

Angel Pajaro

Female Elf Infected Werefox

Exp2/Brd1; CR4, Size M Humanoid (elf) (5ft 7 in); HD 2d6+1d6+1d10 21hp; Init +7 (+11 in Hybrid or Animal); Spd 30ft (60ft in Hybrid or Animal); AC 13 (17 in Hybrid or Animal) (flat footed 10, touch 10) Atk +1, +3 dagger (1d4 +1) +2 dagger (1d4 in Hybrid) +8 bite (1d4); SQ Alternate form, chemical bane (rose petals), DR 15/silver, elf traits, pristine, scent, pass without trace (hybrid or animal) SA Spells, Bewitching gaze, curse of lycanthropy (hybrid or animal); SR - :AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +5 (+9 in animal or hybrid), Will +4; Str 14 (12 in hybrid or animal), Dex 17 (25 in hybrid or animal), Con 14, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 20

Skills and feats

Bluff +11, Concentration +7, Disguise +12, Forgery +9, Listen +6, Knowledge (Opera) +8, Perform (Opera Singer) +14, Spot +6, Survival +5, Deceitful, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Perform), Weapon Finesse (bite)

Spells/day (4) DC 15

Spells Known: 0th: Flare, Ghost Sound, Prestidigitation, Open/Close

Log 2

Neither Man nor Beast I

The Requisitioners rested for three weeks after the incident with Angel Pajaro as Marcel negotiated a price with the Marquis d'Polarno for the painting. When a price had been agreed, Pierre Marcel went to the group. When he entered their private quarters, Ella noticed he had been crying. Inquiring why, Pierre told her that he had found his wife's favourite scarf that morning, whilst going through some personal things. An uncomfortable silence fell on the room.

Pulling himself together, Pierre informed the group that he had chartered the ship the *Sunset Empires* to take the Requisitioners to Ghastria. He told them that they should contact Captain Stewart before the voyage. The Captain could be found at *The Mutinied Sailor* at the docks. When everything was settled, they should then come to Pierre's office to collect the money for the painting.

The party left the museum immediately and set off for tavern. When they got there they noticed that the sign was a hanging man, though they couldn't tell if it was real or not. When they entered the tavern, the stench of the place hit them hard. A combination of stale ale, piss, excrement and sweat washed over them. Ella asked a redheaded barmaid if she could tell them where the Captain was.

The woman gestured to a corner, where a man was singing sea shanties. Ella, Sharuk and Featon (Phillipe stayed at the museum) went over to speak. The

captain, deep in his cups, told them they needed to speak to his first mate, Mr Monterery. He was at the dock, supervising the loading of provisions onto the *Sunset Empires*. Mr Monterery, a caliban with a hunched-back and twisted arm, told the party that the ship was going to leave at daybreak the next day. They would wait for the heroes, but only until midday.

The heroes thanked the caliban and left, heading back to the museum. When they arrive, Pierre shows them the chest containing the golden solars they will need, all 500 of them. The chest is plated in steel and has an odd lock. It doesn't require a key, just the cylinders twisted to the right order. Pierre says it is a new invention from the gnomes of Mayvin, called a combination lock. The Requisitioners take the chest to their common room and go to bed.

Before dawn, when it is still dark, they set out to the docks. Mr Monterery is waiting by the gangplank. He tells them that the captain said they are late and that they very nearly left with out them. The chest is loaded aboard and the ship sets sail. The Requisitioners saw a big cage holding a panther on the deck. Mr Monterery shrugged and simply said it was the captain's pet.

A day into the journey and the ship hits dead calm. The crew are served a weak stew by the cook, Old Singe, who gives the heroes some extra, with a sly wink. The cook, a portly man with one leg, tells the party stories of old sailors he'd

met, like "Captain Hawkins, a good man, strong and true. We found a fortune and he said he'd split it between us. Unfortunately, we got trapped in the waters of Sargass. The cap'n refused to give up his treasure, and some of the lads, meself included, took the long boat and took our chances in the Mists. Never heard from Cap'n Hawkins again. Shame, good man that."

On the second day, one sailor, an old dog named Shanty sang a song about a sailor and his love, and a promise from beyond the grave. Ella shook at the song, her hatred of undead not known to the singer.

On the third day of sailing, dolphins started to jump and play in the foam at the side of the moving ship. Mr Monterery manned the bastilla and fired at the dolphins with a blank, emotionless face at the dolphins. When Featon asked him why, the first mate simply replied, "Why not?"

After three shots, the first mate stopped firing. Shanty looked edgy, saying that dolphins are a good omen and Mr Monterery is playing with fire shooting at them. The mood amongst the crew as they bunked down was one of unease. Storm clouds started to gather on the horizon. Ella looked inward to see if the future would be pleasant and saw an image of an overcast sunrise. Feeling uneasy, she fell asleep.

On the fourth day, the storm broke. The party where below decks, but felt the rocking of the ship. Water started to seep through the boards, showing that the ship hadn't been tarred properly. They hurried on deck. Through the blinding rain, Featon thought he saw another ship

through the rain. The ship was heading for a collision with the *Sunset Empires*, but passed by silently. The elf caught the name *Relentless* on the side, just as the ship faded to nothing.

Just when things couldn't get worse, a large, translucent tentacle smashed down on the deck, pinning a sailor to the floor. Another one wrapped around the other side of the ship, cracking the wood. The creature was breaking the ship! Ella attacked with the guisarme, and sliced at the translucent flesh. Sharuk shot the creature, but missed.

Another tentacle slammed onto the deck, breaking the ship in half. The Requisitioners sank, feeling themselves drown. The corpse of the captain floated passed, and they knew they were going to die. As the light dimmed, a human face appeared before them, smiling beatifically. Then all went black.

When they awoke, they were on the beach of a tropical island.

When everyone awoke, there was much confusion. Ella quickly checked who'd survived, roughly half the crew minus Captain Stewart and Mr Monterery and the only other passenger, a woman who they had had little contact with.

Sharuk was more concerned with his gun and his gunpowder than helping Ella with the survivors or Featon go through the wreckage. Featon found the cage that held the panther, though no trace of the animal could be found. Ella and Featon tended to the wounded, Featon even finding Old Singe a new crutch to replace the one he lost in the wreck. As the survivors bedded down for the night, the jungle fell silent. A hard-rendering

scream split the air. The scream sent shivers down the survivors' necks. Warily, the group bunked down for the night.

In the morning, Sharuk and Ella decided they needed to explore the jungle, whilst Featon looked for food for the group. As Featon found bananas and coconuts, Ella and Sharuk went deeper into the jungle. A rustling sound caught their attention and suddenly a bear-like creature with ram horns charged towards them. Sharuk fired his gun and missed the creature whilst Ella stabbed with her sword. Before the creature could attack, a voice called, "Mitzzy! Down!"

A large man came blundering out of the jungle behind the bear-thing. He rubbed its head in a friendly manner and it bounded back off into the woods. He introduced himself as Dr Fran and told them that he was sorry to hear about their accident. Suddenly he turned and disappeared into the jungle once more. After a few moments he reappeared holding a basket of fruit and nuts. He told them it was a beach-warming present. He invited them to his house, but Ella said she had to get back to the survivors. Sharuk went with Dr Fran. Whilst at the manor, Fran gave Sharuk a map of the island, saying that he would be honoured if they would join him for dinner. He pointed out where the *Sunset Empires'* wreck had grounded.

Sharuk agreed and went back to the beach. He told Ella and Featon about what happened, so they and Phillipe carried the injured woman to Dr Fran's house to talk to the Doctor, leaving Old Singe in charge at the beach.

The doors to the manor opened and the party were greeted by a short, incredibly ugly man. The man's nose was more like a snout and his ears were far too high on his bald head. He snorted to the party and led them into Dr Fran's manor where they were greeted by the Doctor himself. He showed Sharuk to the guest rooms where they left the unconscious woman. He showed them to his library telling them to, "Look around! No need to stand on ceremony, eh?"

Dr Fran excused himself to check on the meal, leaving the party to flick through his library. Featon found a metal skull on top of a pile of papers. He gave it a curious prod and it spluttered to life. "The outer-planar city of Sigil is found atop of the Spire and is ruled by Razzapoltiolosadafz," the thing spluttered.

Cautiously, he prodded it again. "Baatezu come from the plane of Baator and are weak against clorpai, nevariz and xporjoo."

Featon touched the thing a third time. This time its eyes glowed red and a different voice whispered, "*Beware the one who leads.*"

The elf backed away from the contraption. Sharuk looked through a book on dwarven anatomy, noting the crossings out of pictures and words such as "rot!" and "Completely wrong!" in the margin. Ella found a map labelled, "Map of the Known World." She knew the map was not of the Core, but she didn't know where it was from.

After a while, Dr Fran came to collect them. As they sat and enjoyed their

meal, they quizzed Dr Fran on the island and he in turn quizzed them. He was eager to hear about the Museum. He told them the island had no name, though he was thinking of naming it after himself, "France sounds good."

After the meal, Dr Fran told the heroes about the plight of the natives. He showed them on the map a monastery that he thought held the key to the plague which was causing "Men to revert to the form of beasts and visa versa." He claimed he was trying to stop and even reverse the process. Orson, the pig-man, was one of his best successes. He claimed the monks had something called *The Table of Life*, which was the cause of the disease. If the heroes retrieved it for him, then he could study the *table* and use its powers to help the beastmen.

The heroes agreed to investigate the monastery, leaving at first light. Dr Fran looked at the unconscious woman, bringing her around with smelling salts. She told them she was a witch of Hala named Nimue. She agreed to travel with the party, as they were trying to escape the island. As they travelled towards the monastery, they were attacked by a group of the island's animal-men that Dr Fran warned them about. The heroes fought valiantly and, though Ella was knocked unconscious, they managed to fend off the attack.

Hurrying, they reached the monastery. Finding nothing but a large, bronze tube embedded into the base of a cliff, the group stood and wondered what to do. Nimue tentatively banged on the tube, creating a hollow ringing sound. She rapped on the tube again, harder. This time the tube let out a large booming

sound. After a moment's silence, a basket was lowered from above the cliff.

Cautiously, the party clambered aboard the basket. After a moment, the basket started to rise. Near the top of the cliff, the basket stopped suddenly. After a moment, it continued its ascent of the cliff. When it reached the top, the party found themselves on a balcony overlooking the island, which was attached to a hut of some kind. They went through a door into the hut and saw a strange device which they deduced raised and lowered the basket. Featon noticed footprints in the heavy dust. The party followed the footprints into a small library. Ella looked at the titles of some of the books, "*The Key to the Abyss*," was the title of one. She deduced from these titles that Fran was right, these monks were evil. Sharuk saw one book, entitled "*The History of Markovia*," but pocketed it without reading it.

Featon lost the footprints, here was cleaner than the lift room. Nimue guessed that the light in the room came from a *continual light* spell, as there were no windows. They left the library through a door which led onto a dirt courtyard. To their left they spotted a large building, Featon said that that was where the *Table* was as it was the largest building and where the monks would keep their sacred artefact.

The rest agreed and they all went to the large building. They cautiously opened the doors and saw a man kneeling before an altar that had a large slab of dark green marble with golden veins running through it. The man didn't turn, but he did say in a pleasant, Baritone voice, "Please, take a seat. I will have finished my prayers in a moment."

The group did as asked. After a few moments, the man stood and walked towards them. He looked healthy and wise, a childish twinkle in his eye belied his playfulness and a spring in his step made him seem younger than he actually was. He greeted each of the party and introduced himself as Brother Milhouse. He asked what their business was at the monastery. They told him that they were there for the *Table of Life*. He graciously told them that removing the *Table* from the monastery was out of the question. Ella explained about Dr Fran

and the monk frowned. He led them to the library and to the shelf containing the multiple copies of "*The History of Markovia*." He noted the missing copy and turned to the party. He smiled politely and told them to read from the book they had taken.

Sharuk read aloud the tale of Frantisek Markov. That's when the party realised they'd been duped. Brother Milhouse asked what they were going to do now. They replied they didn't know.

DM's Notes:

Neither Man nor Beast

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I want the PCs to really feel sorry for the Curator. Finding the line between bereaved widower and pathetic sob is difficult.

Pulling himself together, Pierre informed the group that he had chartered the ship the *Sunset Empires* to take the Requisitioners to Ghastria. He told them that they should contact Captain Stewart before the voyage. The Captain could be

found at *The Mutinied Sailor* at the docks. When everything was settled, they should then come to Pierre's office to collect the money for the painting.

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Chandra Gynn in a blink-and-you'll-miss-it cameo.

The woman gestured to a corner, where a man was singing sea shanties. Ella, Sharuk and Featon (Phillipe stayed at the museum) went over to speak. The captain, deep in his cups, told them they needed to speak to his first mate, Mr Monterery. He was at the dock, supervising the loading of provisions

onto the *Sunset Empires*. Mr Monterery, a caliban with a hunched-back and twisted arm, told the party that the ship was going to leave at daybreak the next day. They would wait for the heroes, but only until midday.

It made more sense to me to have Mr Monterery a Caliban than a half-elf.

The heroes thanked the caliban and left, heading back to the museum. When they arrive, Pierre shows them the chest containing the golden solars they will need, all 500 of them. The chest is plated in steel and has an odd lock. It doesn't require a key, just the cylinders twisted to the right order. Pierre says it is a new invention from the gnomes of Mayvin, called a combination lock. The Requisitioners take the chest to their common room and go to bed.

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One of the players was impressed with the combination lock. I just liked the idea and it made it harder for the PCs to break in, if they wanted to.

A day into the journey and the ship hits dead calm. The crew are served a weak stew by the cook, Old Singe, who gives the heroes some extra, with a sly wink. The cook, a portly man with one leg, tells the party stories of old sailors he'd met, like "Captain Hawkins, a good man,

strong and true. We found a fortune and he said he'd split it between us. Unfortunately, we got trapped in the waters of Sargass. The cap'n refused to give up his treasure, and some of the lads, meself included, took the long boat and took our chances in the Mists. Never heard from Cap'n Hawkins again. Shame, good man that."

Old Singe is fun to play. I wanted to play him as a salty and worldly wise sea dog. The players took to Old Singe, which makes it more fun with what I did to him later.

On the second day, one sailor, an old dog named Shanty sang a song about a sailor and his love, and a promise from beyond the grave. Ella shook at the song, her hatred of undead not known to the singer.

I sung the song. It had no tune, so I sang it to the tune of "A Fairy Tale in New York" by the Pogues and Kristy MacColl, with out the chorus.

On the third day of sailing, dolphins started to jump and play in the foam at the side of the moving ship. Mr Monterery manned the bastilla and fired at the dolphins with a blank, emotionless face at the dolphins. When Featon asked him why, the first mate simply replied, "Why not?"

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image of an overcast sunrise. Feeling uneasy, she fell asleep.

Ella has the red-headed feat from the RCS. Her player chose the spell *Omen of Peril* from complete divine. The spell basically allows you to tell how dangerous the next hour will be. Ella sees a glorious sunrise for a good future; an over cast sunrise for a perilous future and a sunset for a dangerous future.

On the fourth day, the storm broke. The party where below decks, but felt the rocking of the ship. Water started to seep through the boards, showing that the ship hadn't been tarred properly. They hurried on deck. Through the blinding rain, Featon thought he saw another ship through the rain. The ship was heading for a collision with the *Sunset Empires*, but passed by silently. The elf caught the name *Relentless* on the side, just as the ship faded to nothing.

Just when things couldn't get worse, a large, translucent tentacle smashed down on the deck, pinning a sailor to the floor. Another one wrapped around the other side of the ship, cracking the wood. The creature was breaking the ship! Ella attacked with the guisarme, and sliced at the translucent flesh. Sharuk shot the creature, but missed.

Enter the Soul Kraken.

Another tentacle slammed onto the deck, breaking the ship in half. The Requisitioners sank, feeling themselves drown. The corpse of the captain floated passed, and they knew they where going to die. As the light dimmed, a human face appeared before them, smiling beatifically. Then all went black.

When they awoke, they where on the beach of a tropical island.

I toyed with them seeing the wreckage of the ship, a la *Lost*, but had a better idea for the final encounter for the game.

When everyone awoke, there was much confusion. Ella quickly checked who'd survived, roughly half the crew minus Captain Stewart and Mr Monterery and the only other passenger, a woman who they had had little contact with.

Sharuk was more concerned with his gun and his gunpowder than helping Ella with the survivors or Featon go through the wreckage. Featon found the cage that held the panther, though no trace of the animal could be found. Ella and Featon tended to the wounded, Featon even finding Old Singe a new crutch to replace the one he lost in the wreck. As the survivors bedded down for the night, the jungle fell silent. A hard-rendering scream split the air. The scream sent shivers down the survivors' necks. Warily, the group bunked down for the night.

Sharuk is slowly becoming an annoyance to the rest of the party. Not to me, I love intra-party conflict; I think it adds to a game. Sharuk's ignorance of the suffering of others meant that he rolled another powers check (about his fifth now) and passed. I've warned the player that if his alignment shifts to evil, Sharuk becomes an NPC and he has to role a new character. Intra-party conflict is all well and good when it adds to a game, when it detracts; however, steps have to be taken.

In the morning, Sharuk and Ella decided they needed to explore the jungle, whilst

Featon looked for food for the group. As Featon found bananas and coconuts, Ella and Sharuk went deeper into the jungle. A rustling sound caught their attention and suddenly a bear-like creature with ram horns charged towards them. Sharuk fired his gun and missed the creature whilst Ella stabbed with her sword. Before the creature could attack, a voice called, "Mitzzy! Down!" A large man came blundering out of the jungle behind the bear-thing. He rubbed its head in a friendly manner and it bounded back off into the woods. He introduced himself as Dr Fran and told them that he was sorry to hear about their accident. Suddenly he turned and disappeared into the jungle once more. After a few moments he reappeared holding a basket of fruit and nuts. He told them it was a beach-warming present. He invited them to his house, but Ella said she had to get back to the survivors. Sharuk went with Dr Fran. Whilst at the manor, Fran gave Sharuk a map of the island, saying that he would be honoured if they would join him for dinner. He pointed out where the *Sunset Empires'* wreck had grounded.

I decided to play Dr Fran like a Discworld character. Make him soft and friendly, so when the rug is pulled away from the players it's more shocking.

Sharuk agreed and went back to the beach. He told Ella and Featon about what happened, so they and Phillipe carried the injured woman to Dr Fran's house to talk to the Doctor, leaving Old Singe in charge at the beach.

The unconscious woman is a new PC. Phillipe doesn't do much in this adventure because his player was absent

from the session. I will note when he returns.

The doors to the manor opened and the party were greeted by a short, incredibly ugly man. The man's nose was more like a snout and his ears were far too high on his bald head. He snorted to the party and led them into Dr Fran's manor where they were greeted by the Doctor himself. He showed Sharuk to the guest rooms where they left the unconscious woman. He showed them to his library telling them to, "Look around! No need to stand on ceremony, eh?"

Another change from the adventure here. I changed Orson from a bear to a pig quite accidentally. I thought he was a pig because I got confused with the old cartoon "*Garfield and Friends*" where Orson was a pig.

Dr Fran excused himself to check on the meal, leaving the party to flick through his library. Featon found a metal skull on top of a pile of papers. He gave it a curious prod and it spluttered to life. "The outer-planar city of Sigil is found atop of the Spire and is ruled by Razzapoltiolosadafz," the thing spluttered.

Cautiously, he prodded it again. "Baatezu come from the plane of Baator and are weak against clorpai, nevariz and xporjoo."

Featon touched the thing a third time. This time its eyes glowed red and a different voice whispered, "*Beware the one who leads.*"

The Mimir was fun. It also allowed me to sneak in a vague reference to be wary of Pierre Marcel. But the party think the

Mimir is referring to Ella, as she has sort of become the party's *de facto* leader.

The elf backed away from the contraption. Sharuk looked through a book on dwarven anatomy, noting the crossings out of pictures and words such as "rot!" and "Completely wrong!" in the margin. Ella found a map labelled, "Map of the Known World." She knew the map was not of the Core, but she didn't know where it was from.

It's strange that they never thought to ask why Dr Fran knew so much about demi-human physiology. The Known World map from Mystara was pretty much ignored too, Ella knew she didn't know the places and assumed she would never need to.

After a while, Dr Fran came to collect them. As they sat and enjoyed their meal, they quizzed Dr Fran on the island and he in turn quizzed them. He was eager to hear about the Museum. He told them the island had no name, though he was thinking of naming it after himself, "France sounds good."

The "France" thing is in the adventure. I kept it because it added to Dr Fran being harmless and dodderly.

After the meal, Dr Fran told the heroes about the plight of the natives. He showed them on the map a monetary that he thought held the key to the plague which was causing "Men to revert to the form of beasts and visa versa." He claimed he was trying to stop and even reverse the process. Orson, the pig-man, was one of his best successes. He claimed the monks had something called *The Table of Life*, which was the cause of the disease. If the heroes retrieved it

for him, then he could study the *table* and use its powers to help the beastmen.

The heroes bought this story, no questions asked. They agreed to go along with Dr Fran's plan. After all, they had no reason to doubt him.

The heroes agreed to investigate the monetary, leaving at first light. Dr Fran looked at the unconscious woman, bringing her around with smelling salts. She told them she was a witch of Hala named Nimue. She agreed to travel with the party, as they were trying to escape the island. As they travelled towards the monetary, they were attacked by a group of the islands animal-men that Dr Fran warned them about. The heroes fought valiantly and, though Ella was knocked unconscious, they managed to fend off the attack.

Introducing Akanga's rogue broken ones. Akanga has learnt of the party by this point and sent these broken ones to test their strength. His animal cunning has started to formulate a plan.

Hurrying, they reached the monetary. Finding nothing but a large, bronze tube embedded into the base of a cliff, the group stood and wondered what to do. Nimue tentatively banged on the tube, creating a hollow ringing sound. She rapped on the tube again, harder. This time the tube let out a large booming sound. After a moment's silence, a basket was lowered from above the cliff. Cautiously, the party clambered aboard the basket. After a moment, the basket started to rise. Near the top of the cliff, the basket stopped suddenly. After a moment, it continued its ascent of the cliff. When it reached the top, the party found themselves on a balcony

overlooking the island, which was attached to a hut of some kind. They went through a door into the hut and saw a strange device which they deduced raised and lowered the basket. Featon noticed footprints in the heavy dust. The party followed the footprints into a small library. Ella looked at the titles of some of the books, "*The Key to the Abyss*," was one of the titles she read. She deduced from these titles that Fran was right, these monks were evil. Sharuk saw one book, entitled "*The History of Markovia*," but pocketed it without reading it.

I asked three times if the player wanted to read "*The History of Markovia*" but he never. Of course, I knew he wanted it because this was the same player who knows a little about Ravenloft. Not enough, apparently, to figure out he was on Markovia. The Key to the Abyss will become another major theme later, when the PCs face off against the Whistling Fiend.

Featon lost the footprints, here was cleaner than the lift room. Nimue guessed that the light in the room came from a *continual light* spell, as there were no windows. They left the library through a door which led onto a dirt courtyard. To their left they spotted a large building, Featon said that that was where the *Table* was as it was the largest building and where the monks would keep their sacred artefact.

The rest agreed and they all went to the large building. They cautiously opened the doors and saw a man kneeling before an altar that had a large slab of dark green marble with golden veins running through it. The man didn't turn, but he did say in a pleasant, Baritone voice, "Please, take a seat. I will have finished my prayers in a moment."

I think Jeff Grubb is a *Simpsons* fan. There's a sailor called Homer and now Brother Milhouse.

The group did as asked. After a few moments, the man stood and walked towards them. He looked healthy and wise, a childish twinkle in his eye belied his playfulness and a spring in his step made him seem younger than he actually was. He greeted each of the party and introduced himself as Brother Milhouse. He asked what their business was at the monastery. They told him that they were there for the *Table of Life*. He graciously told them that removing the *Table* from the monastery was out of the question. Ella explained about Dr Fran and the monk frowned. He led them to the library and to the shelf containing the multiple copies of "*The History of Markovia*." He noted the missing copy and turned to the party. He smiled politely and told them to read from the book they had taken.

Sharuk read aloud the tale of Frantisek Markov. That's when the party realised they'd been duped. Brother Milhouse asked what they were going to do now. They replied they didn't know.

Actually, I read the Markovia section aloud. There was no way I was hiding over the adventure and I didn't have access to a photocopier. That's when the player realised they were on Markovia and shouted out, "You're sending us against a darklord at this level?" and proceeded to tell everyone who Frantisek Markov was.

Punishment is heading his way, though I'm not sure how yet.

Milhouse revealed to the PCs the fact that he was dead, telling them he would tell them no lies and hold no secrets from them. At the end of the first session, the PCs stood in the monastery, unsure of what to do next.

Log 3

Neither Man Nor Beast II

Confused at the revelations, the party decided to stay over at the monastery after Brother Milhouse offered them a place to rest. Whilst resting, Ella suggested that they get the help of the Broken Ones, citing that they would want revenge on Markov. As she said this, she felt the cold touch of a stranger caress her neck and spine, as if someone had reached out, but just missed her. She shuddered and amended her statement, claiming that Markov should be brought to justice.

The party was split on Dr Fran. Half believed that the monks were lying, that Dr Fran was a genuine, whilst the other believed the monks and thought Dr Fran was the liar. The party continued to discuss their feelings late into the night, and then they slept, uneasily, in the monastery. In the morning Phillipe asked Brother Milhouse about the map Dr Fran had given the party. Brother Milhouse claimed the map was wrong, that Dr Fran had incorrectly marked areas on the map. He told them that the areas marked "Broken Ones" did not, in fact, have any Broken One settlements, that there was only gently rolling meadows in at least two of the places. Ella asked how he could know this, and Brother Milhouse pulled a spyglass from his belt and instructed the halfling to look towards where the settlements were supposed to be. She saw only the meadows Brother Milhouse had said there would be.

Meanwhile, Nimue was examining the plant that Delphi had put in Featon's hair before they had left the manor. She

looked confused and said that the plant couldn't exist: it was a hybrid of a rose and an orchid. The monks warned them that all plants on the island like the rose/orchid were poisonous.

The party left the monastery to get a closer view of these so-called "Broken One settlements". On the way a rustling in the bushes further ahead caught their attention. Cautiously, Ella and Featon approached. Some *thing* crawled out of the bushes. It had a twisted, malformed face. It was dragging its body from the undergrowth and making mewling sounds, like an animal in pain. As the rest of the party approached, it dawned on them all that this creature was actually Old Singe, the ship's cook. They could make out his features in the thing's face, but they could also see the features of some great cat, like a panther, the panther from the ship.

At the realisation of this, Ella ran away, but after a few steps collapsed into a ball. Sharuk could not tear his eyes from the scene. Phillipe, who had not seen the cook on the ship so felt less sympathy for him, asked the dwarf what they should do. The normally quiet and rational Featon said, quietly, "I think we should kill Dr Fran."

Shocked at the elf's hatred, the party argued over killing Fran. Phillipe argued that this could be a ploy by the monks to kill Fran for them. Old Singe coughed, and told them Dr Fran did this to him. He struggled for breath and begged the party to kill him. Phillipe nodded and slit

his throat. The party continued to argue as they set off through the jungle. After a couple of hours Broken Ones burst from the foliage, surrounding the party. One stepped forward and asked if they liked their present. It took a while, but the party realised that it was talking about Old Singe. It ordered them to follow it to speak to Akanga. They complied, realising that refusal would mean attack from 50 Broken Ones.

When they reached Akanga they found him to be a barrel-chested combination of man and lion. He told them that he demanded their assistance, that they were to help him kill Diosamblet. Ella refused, saying she thought Diosamblet should be brought to justice. Akanga replied killing him would be justice. Akanga mentioned Markov and Diosamblet in the same sentence, and Phillipe asked where they two people. Akanga got confused, he didn't know. He told the party that he would prove Diosamblet was evil, that they had been tricked by Dr Fran.

That night two of Akanga's best "men" took the party deep into the jungle. They could hear drums and chanting coming from ahead. The two Broken Ones hushed the party when they got close. In a clearing where hundreds of Broken Ones of all kinds were performing some sort of blasphemous rite. Suddenly, they all started chanting "Diosamblet! Diosamblet!" A masked figure walked into the centre of the clearing and started shouting commandments. There was no mistaking the voice: it was Dr Fran.

As the party watched in horror, Featon sneaked away from the party. Piercing the mutated plants with his arrows to

coat them in poison, he took aim at Dr Fran. Out of the corner of his eye, Phillipe spotted him. He nudged Ella and Sharuk. The two moved quickly to the elf, pinning him to the ground. Ella covered his mouth with a hand. The two Broken Ones helped them subdue the elf and they returned to camp, shaken at what they had just seen.

As they bunked down, a Broken One approached Ella. Speaking timidly and in the language of Halflings, the creature asked if they were leaving the island. Ella nodded, looking at the creature in pity. It was a combination of halfling and rabbit. It looked meek and terrified. Ella promised to take the halfling away from the island.

As the paladin tried to sleep, her mind was filled with images of Old Singe being chased by a panther. She awoke after barely half an hour screaming. Akanga growled that she should be silenced or he would silence her himself. Nimue gave the halfling some leaves to chew and muttered a prayer over the frightened paladin.

Soon, Ella was in a deep sleep. Sharuk stayed awake, cleaning his gun, replaying the image of Old Singe over and over in his head. It took him a while to fall asleep.

Finally, the entire party slept uneasily, trying to mentally prepare themselves for the morning.

In the morning, Akanga explained that the party would sneak into the manor and attack Felix and Orson. When they were dead Akanga and his Broken Ones would attack. The signal to show the servants were dead would be their

bodies being thrown over the wall. The party told Akanga that they could just walk into the manor, that Dr Fran didn't know they knew the truth. When they could, they'd signal him some how. Akanga grudgingly agreed.

They set off for Dr Fran's manor an hour before Akanga started to muster his armies. When they got to the manor they found Delphi in the courtyard washing clothes and humming a song. With a sense of dread they realised the song she was humming was Maria Diosa's big solo from Carmina, which would be impossible for Delphi to know because the Opera had only opened a week ago and had closed after one night. Ella cautiously asked her where she had heard the tune and Delphi shrugged and replied she had just made it up.

Featon stayed with Delphi whilst the rest of the party went to find Dr Fran. When they did, he greeted them with a wide smile and asked if they had the table. Phillipe shook his head and told him that the monks had been taken care of, but the table was too big to carry back on their own. Dr Fran agreed, and said he'd send Orson and Felix back with Sharuk to claim it. Ella said that Delphi looked lonely and suggested that she and Nimue could take Delphi to the beach perhaps. Dr Fran was wary, but Nimue said it would be no trouble. In the end, Dr Fran agreed.

After Delphi, Nimue and Ella had left the compound Featon was attacked from behind by someone. Sharuk was too, but his assailant missed. They both turned and saw Orson and Felix standing there. Orson called out to Dr Fran, saying that they had fought back. Dr Fran snarled and attacked Phillipe. The six started to

fight, with Phillipe firing off a magic missile at Felix before Dr Fran attacked him. The Doctor's body changed. It wasn't like when he'd seen Angel transform in the Opera house, and this scarred Phillipe. Dr Fran's clothes ripped as his arms grew. His skin turned grey and wrinkly and his body filled out. In a matter of seconds he had the body of an elephant and was pinning Phillipe to the ground.

Sharuk fired his pistol at Felix, shattering the bear-thing's shoulder. Featon backed off from Orson and fired some arrows at the pig-man. The two animal men attacked, but both missed, too excited in the heat of the battle.

In the jungle, Ella, Nimue and Delphi heard the gunshot. Delphi started to panic, saying her "papa" was in danger. Ella offered to return to the manor, to see what was wrong. Both members of the party were confused because Sharuk had said he wouldn't fire his guns unless it was an emergency.

She headed back to the manor, but was stopped by Akanga. The Broken One wanted to know what was going on, but Ella couldn't speak to him as they couldn't speak the same language. Akanga turned back into the jungle, striding back in a matter of seconds holding the rabbit-halfing by the head. He used the creature as an interpreter and demanded to know what was happening. Ella said she didn't know and thought that the others were in danger. Akanga nodded and launched his assault. Ella bandaged the rabbit-halfing and told it to go to the beach.

Back at the manor, Sharuk fired his pistol again, this time hitting Felix in the

head. The Broken One's skull exploded and its body fell to the ground. Featon had similar luck with Orson, skewering the pig with some arrows. Dr Fran saw his minions fall and with a shout of rage, he transformed into a sparrow and flew away. Phillipe tried to grab him, but the evil Doctor was too quick for him. At the same time that Akanga arrived, so did Ella. The Broken One demanded a search of the manor, which revealed Doctor Fran was no where to be seen. His menagerie was empty and his laboratory blood stained. Akanga explained that they had broken Old Singe out of the manor and given him to the party as a gift, returning the last of their survivors to them.

The party knew then that they had to escape the island. Under the pretence of going to the beach to search for Dr Fran, they found Delphi, Nimue and the rabbit-halfling and ran to the wreck of the Sunset Empires, which was where Dr Fran had told them it was. They got close and started to scan the wreck for a longboat to escape in, but noticed a vulture circling ahead. The vulture landed on the hull of the ship. It was Dr Fran. He cursed them for ruining his island and lying to them, Sharuk took aim, but the wreck quivered. Something slithered from within the carcass of the boat. Dr Fran laughed and told them that they where never to escape the island of Markovia. The thing raised itself from the bowels of the ship. It was a tentacle from the soul kraken, but it had the head of Captain Stewart grafted onto it, "Behold," Dr Fran shouted, "The one who brought you here will be the one to stop you leaving. Know that Frantisek Markov has brought your death and suffer for it."

The creature attacked, going for Ella first. She swiped at it with her glaive, slicing through its rubbery hide. Sharuk shot at it, but missed. The creature's jaw split down the centre and its tripartite jaw bit Nimue. The Halan cleric screamed in agony and fell to the ground bleeding. Delphi screamed and pulled the rabbit-halfling to safety. Phillipe cast acid splash at the monster. It turned to face him and bit him too. He fell to the ground, unmoving. Featon fired arrows into the creature. Some hit, some missed. But the elf stayed out of the creature's reach. Sharuk fired his gun again, hitting the creature in the side, causing some of its flesh to explode off. Ella struck with her glaive again, slicing a large gash in the creature's side. The creature bit her too, but she managed to stay standing.

Featon fired again, striking the creature in its human face, piercing an eye. Sharuk fired his gun again, his bullet ripping through whatever the creature had for a spine. It fell to the ground, dead.

Quickly, those still standing tended to the fallen. Ella bandaged Phillip, Featon doing the same for Nimue. Sharuk called when he found a miraculously intact longboat in the ruins of the ship. He and Featon pulled the boat from the wreckage, and then with the help of Ella, they eased Nimue and Phillipe into the longboat. Delphi looked nervous about leaving the island, but the rabbit-halfling pulled her by the arm, climbing into the boat. She climbed aboard and Featon and Sharuk pushed the boat into the sea.

The further from the island the boat sailed, the more agitated Delphi got and the more excitable the rabbit-halfling got. An opposite transformation was

occurring to the pair of them. Delphi's skin grew grey, her ears fell off and her face distorted. Her voice sounded like squeals of pain and her hair started to fall out. As they watched, Delphi became more and more dolphin like as the moments passed. Featon and Sharuk gently lowered her into the water, where she swam away. Conversely, the halfling was loosing more and more of its rabbit like appearance. Within moments it was a normal female halfling. She was young, timid and scared, probably why Markov operated on her with a rabbit. Ella put her cloak around the halfling and held her close.

The boat sailed towards the World's End Mists, but the crew couldn't alter its course. Soon thin tendrils of fog circled the boat. In a matter of minutes the fog was so thick that the party couldn't see each other, then they couldn't even see their hands when they were inches from their faces.

One by one, the party began to hear things. Ella thought she could hear whisperings. She bowed her head and sent silent prayers to the Morninglord, hoping her god could hear her. A voice only she could hear whispered *He's not listening, he never does. How can something that doesn't exist listen? Your faith is a sham, your life a lie. Give it up, do what you were destined to do, be like your mother.*

Unaware of what was happening to Ella; Sharuk could feel icy fingers playing with his spine. A touch as intimate as a lover's tickled his back and sides. It was the same feeling he got when he learnt he had the ability to hurt people with a touch. A voice whispered in his ear, *Such power you can attain, but unworthy*

of it you are. You are weak and feeble, not worthy of gifts that you have. No church will cure you, accept your repentance. You might as well end it all, go on, end it.

Featon suffered a different experience. He could hear the clink of the locks, the rattle of the straps. He could feel the tight, cotton straight jacket binding his arms. He could hear the mocking laughter of the other patients, the monotone voices of the orderlies. A voice whispered to him *You should never have left, lunatic.*

The smell of burning entered Nimue's nostrils, the sound of fire and the tortured screams of a burning witch filled her ears. She could feel the heat on her skin. She panicked, trying to blot out the noise, the smell, the feel of the flames. A voice whispered in her ear, *You're next, witch.*

Phillipe stirred in his unconscious state, he could hear the incident from his past, he could hear the screams of his love, her voice slicing through his soul. He could hear the grunts from the other man; he could hear the knife as it plunged into flesh. It was an accident, his mind raced, manslaughter! I didn't mean to kill him! *Yes you did,* a voice laughed in his ear.

Eventually the Mists cleared. A town came into view. After a moment Ella recognised it as her home town, Tumbledown. The boat floated into the dock and a dock hand came up and started to tell them they couldn't leave the boat there. The dock hand recognised Ella and told her that he'd sort everything out. Her father used to work on the docks until he was sacked. The

party left the boat with the dock hand and borrowed his horse and cart to go to Ella's house. On the journey, Ella learnt that the other halfling's name was Sandy and that she was from Tumbledown. Ella remembered something about a family on a fishing boat going missing 15 years ago, but Sandy was still a little girl. Ella took the girl to her mother, who was delighted to see Ella. She explained that two months ago the museum had sent notice that Ella had been lost at sea, missing presumed dead and they were very apologetic.

The rest of the party headed to a church of Hala that Ella's mother pointed them towards. Ella and her mother had a long conversation, and Ella found out her father was now working at a blacksmith's. Ella left and headed towards the blacksmith's shop. There she found her father, Eric Pipeleaf, making nails and getting shouted at by the blacksmith. Ella asked the blacksmith to stop shouting at her father and the

blacksmith sacked Eric, telling him that it was out of order bringing his filthy family to work and they shouldn't boss the blacksmith about. Eric and Ella left and went home, where they heard an argument in the house. A man was shouting at her mother, saying he couldn't protect her and that she owed him money.

Ella went inside and confronted the man who commented that a younger version, like Ella, would get more business than a dried up hag like her mother. Ella was furious and sent the man away. As he left, he winked and blew a kiss at Ella. Ella was distraught when she found her mother had turned to prostitution and her father was taking dead end jobs just to make ends meet. Ella gave her parents 100gp, but her father refused it. Ella pushed and her father relented. She told them that they did not have to live in such away. Then she went to her room, leaving her parents and Sandy alone.

DM's Notes

Confused at the revelations, the party decided to stay over at the monastery after Brother Milhouse offered them a place to rest. Whilst resting, Ella suggested that they get the help of the Broken Ones, citing that they would want revenge on Markov. As she said this, she felt the cold touch of a stranger caress her neck and spine, as if someone had reached out, but just missed her. She shuddered and amended her statement, claiming that Markov should be brought to justice.

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The party genuinely was split. It was a great moment for me as a DM to have convinced both sides of the argument that what they believed was the truth.

They had no reason to suspect Brother Milhouse, but again, no reason to trust Markov. Even what happened next couldn't sway the Markov supporters. Phillippe's player was back for this session.

Meanwhile, Nimue was examining the plant that Delphi had put in Featon's hair before they had left the manor. She looked confused and said that the plant couldn't exist: it was a hybrid of a rose and an orchid. The monks warned them that all plants on the island like the rose/orchid were poisonous.

I ruled that most, if not all, of the plants on Markovia were hybrids of multiple species, I also ruled that 99.9% of these plants were poisonous.

The party left the monastery to get a closer view of these so-called "Broken One settlements". On the way a rustling in the bushes further ahead caught their attention. Cautiously, Ella and Featon approached. Some *thing* crawled out of the bushes. It had a twisted, malformed face. It was dragging its body from the undergrowth and making mewling sounds, like an animal in pain. As the rest of the party approached, it dawned on them all that this creature was actually Old Singe, the ship's cook. They could make out his features in the thing's face, but they could also see the features of some great cat, like a panther, the panther from the ship.

At the realisation of this, Ella ran away, but after a few steps collapsed into a ball. Sharuk could not tear his eyes from

the scene. Phillipe, who had not seen the cook on the ship so felt less sympathy for him, asked the dwarf what they should do. The normally quiet and rational Featon said, quietly, "I think we should kill Dr Fran."

Three failed horror checks. Everyone made them but, strangely, only the PCs who had met Old Singe were affected. Ella suffered from "nightmares" so cowered in fear, Sharuk "obsession" and Featon "rage."

Shocked at the elf's hatred, the party argued over killing Fran. Phillipe argued that this could be a ploy by the monks to kill Fran for them. Old Singe coughed, and told them Dr Fran did this to him. He struggled for breath and begged the party to kill him. Phillipe nodded and slit his throat. The party continued to argue as they set off through the jungle. After a couple of hours Broken Ones burst from the foliage, surrounding the party. One stepped forward and asked if they liked their present. It took a while, but the party realised that it was talking about Old Singe. It ordered them to follow it to speak to Akanga. They complied, realising that refusal would mean attack from 50 Broken Ones.

Akanga, after testing their mettle, had decided the PCs were strong enough to help him. He "liberated" Old Singe from Markov's table before the operation was complete and left him for the party to find.

When they reached Akanga they found him to be a barrel-chested combination of man and lion. He told them that he demanded their assistance, that they were to help him kill Diosamblet. Ella refused, saying she thought Diosamblet

should be brought to justice. Akanga replied killing him would be justice. Akanga mentioned Markov and Diosamblet in the same sentence, and Phillipe asked where they two people. Akanga got confused, he didn't know. He told the party that he would prove Diosamblet was evil, that they had been tricked by Dr Fran.

DM boo-boo here. I accidentally had Akanga refer to Diosamblet as Markov, confusing the players.

That night two of Akanga's best "men" took the party deep into the jungle. They could hear drums and chanting coming from ahead. The two Broken Ones hushed the party when they got close. In a clearing where hundreds of Broken Ones of all kinds were performing some sort of blasphemous rite. Suddenly, they all started chanting "Diosamblet! Diosamblet!" A masked figure walked into the centre of the clearing and started shouting commandments. There was no mistaking the voice: it was Dr Fran.

I didn't like the way Markov dealt with the "traitor" as published, so I left that part out entirely.

As the party watched in horror, Featon sneaked away from the party. Piercing the mutated plants with his arrows to coat them in poison, he took aim at Dr Fran. Out of the corner of his eye, Phillipe spotted him. He nudged Ella and Sharuk. The two moved quickly to the elf, pinning him to the ground. Ella covered his mouth with a hand. The two Broken Ones helped them subdue the elf and they returned to camp, shaken at what they had just seen.

The effects of Featon's rage. He was on the monk's side of the argument, so he blamed Dr Fran for the state of Old Singe, all of lucky dice rolls meant that the elf didn't succeed in his plan to assassinate Markov.

As they bunked down, a Broken One approached Ella. Speaking timidly and in the language of Halflings, the creature asked if they were leaving the island. Ella nodded, looking at the creature in pity. It was a combination of halfling and rabbit. It looked meek and terrified. Ella promised to take the halfling away from the island.

This halfling is going to become a major NPC eventually.

As the paladin tried to sleep, her mind was filled with images of Old Singe being chased by a panther. She awoke after barely half an hour screaming. Akanga growled that she should be silenced or he would silence her himself. Nimue gave the halfling some leaves to chew and muttered a prayer over the frightened paladin.

Soon, Ella was in a deep sleep. Sharuk stayed awake, cleaning his gun, replaying the image of Old Singe over and over in his head. It took him a while to fall asleep.

Finally, the entire party slept uneasily, trying to mentally prepare themselves for the morning.

Nimue cast *remove fear*, removing the effects of the Horror check. But she never cast the spell on Featon and Sharuk, however.

In the morning, Akanga explained that the party would sneak into the manor and attack Felix and Orson. When they were dead Akanga and his Broken Ones would attack. The signal to show the servants were dead would be their bodies being thrown over the wall. The party told Akanga that they could just walk into the manor, that Dr Fran didn't know they knew the truth. When they could, they'd signal him some how. Akanga grudgingly agreed.

The PCs didn't really want to work with Akanga, but they knew that they had no choice.

They set off for Dr Fran's manor an hour before Akanga started to muster his armies. When they got to the manor they found Delphi in the courtyard washing clothes and humming a song. With a sense of dread they realised the song she was humming was Maria Diosa's big solo from *Carmina*, which would be impossible for Delphi to know because the Opera had only opened a week ago and had closed after one night. Ella cautiously asked her where she had heard the tune and Delphi shrugged and replied she had just made it up.

Angel's not dead. Well, she is, but you can't keep a bad NPC down. She's risen as a ghost and, as the PCs will learn, she isn't happy.

Featon stayed with Delphi whilst the rest of the party went to find Dr Fran. When they did, he greeted them with a wide smile and asked if they had the *table*. Phillipe shook his head and told him that the monks had been taken care of, but the *table* was too big to carry back on their own. Dr Fran agreed, and said he'd send Orson and Felix back with Sharuk

to claim it. Ella said that Delphi looked lonely and suggested that she and Nimue could take Delphi to the beach perhaps. Dr Fran was wary, but Nimue said it would be no trouble. In the end, Dr Fran agreed.

After Delphi, Nimue and Ella had left the compound Featon was attacked from behind by someone. Sharuk was too, but his assailant missed. They both turned and saw Orson and Felix standing there. Orson called out to Dr Fran, saying that they had fought back. Dr Fran snarled and attacked Phillipe. The six started to fight, with Phillipe firing off a *magic missile* at Felix before Dr Fran attacked him. The Doctor's body changed. It wasn't like when he'd seen Angel transform in the Opera house, and this scarred Phillipe. Dr Fran's clothes ripped as his arms grew. His skin turned grey and wrinkly and his body filled out. In a matter of seconds he had the body of an elephant and was pinning Phillipe to the ground.

Why did Markov's men attack? Well, Markov believed the PCs when they said the monks were dead, so he didn't feel he needed them anymore. He was going to subdue them and operate on them. He didn't have the foresight to see his plans unravelling. As has always been the case with Darklords, he believed that his plan would work, because it was his.

Sharuk fired his pistol at Felix, shattering the bear-thing's shoulder. Featon backed off from Orson and fired some arrows at the pig-man. The two animal men attacked, but both missed, to excited in the heat of the battle.

In the jungle, Ella, Nimue and Delphi heard the gunshot. Delphi started to

panic, saying her "papa" was in danger. Ella offered to return to the manor, to see what was wrong. Both members of the party were confused because Sharuk had said he wouldn't fire his guns unless it was an emergency.

Sharuk really likes his gun. It's something I plan to manipulate later on.

She headed back to the manor, but was stopped by Akanga. The Broken One wanted to know what was going on, but Ella couldn't speak to him as they couldn't speak the same language. Akanga turned back into the jungle, striding back in a matter of seconds holding the rabbit-halfing by the head. He used the creature as an interpreter and demanded to know what was happening. Ella said she didn't know and thought that the others were in danger. Akanga nodded and launched his assault. Ella bandaged the rabbit-halfing and told it to go to the beach.

All the PCs felt sorry for this halfing. One even said he felt bad that Dr Fran could do such a thing. Ella, being the paladin she is, kept her promise to save it.

Back at the manor, Sharuk fired his pistol again, this time hitting Felix in the head. The Broken One's skull exploded and its body fell to the ground. Featon had similar luck with Orson, skewering the pig with some arrows. Dr Fran saw his minions fall and with a shout of rage, he transformed into a sparrow and flew away. Phillipe tried to grab him, but the evil Doctor was too quick for him. At the same time that Akanga arrived, so did Ella. The Broken One demanded a search of the manor, which revealed Doctor Fran was no where to be seen.

His menagerie was empty and his laboratory blood stained. Akanga explained that they had broken Old Singe out of the manor and given him to the party as a gift, returning the last of their survivors to them.

Markov decided on the better part of valour, and fled. Whilst searching the manor, Featon grabbed the *Mimir*, thinking it to be something Pierre Marcel would like for the museum.

The party knew then that they had to escape the island. Under the pretence of going to the beach to search for Dr Fran, they found Delphi, Nimue and the rabbit-halfling and ran to the wreck of the *Sunset Empires*, which was where Dr Fran had told them it was. They got close and started to scan the wreck for a longboat to escape in, but noticed a vulture circling ahead. The vulture landed on the hull of the ship. It was Dr Fran. He cursed them for ruining his island and lying to them, Sharuk took aim, but the wreck quivered. Something slithered from within the carcass of the boat. Dr Fran laughed and told them that they where never to escape the island of Markovia. The thing raised itself from the bowels of the ship. It was a tentacle from the soul kraken, but it had the head of Captain Stewart grafted onto it, "Behold," Dr Fran shouted, "The one who brought you here will be the one to stop you leaving. Know that Frantisek Markov has brought your death and suffer for it."

I know the soul-kraken was technically undead, but this made for a better ending.

The creature attacked, going for Ella first. She swiped at it with her glaive,

slicing through its rubbery hide. Sharuk shot at it, but missed. The creature's jaw split down the centre and its tripartite jaw bit Nimue. The Halan cleric screamed in agony and fell to the ground bleeding. Delphi screamed and pulled the rabbit-halfling to safety. Phillipe cast *acid splash* at the monster. It turned to face him and bit him too. He fell to the ground, unmoving. Featon fired arrows into the creature. Some hit, some missed. But the elf stayed out of the creature's reach. Sharuk fired his gun again, hitting the creature in the side, causing some of its flesh to explode off. Ella struck with her glaive again, slicing a large gash in the creature's side. The creature bit her too, but she managed to stay standing.

Featon fired again, striking the creature in its human face, piercing an eye. Sharuk fired his gun again, his bullet ripping through whatever the creature had for a spine. It fell to the ground, dead.

The snake thing was a killer; it nearly wiped out the party. For those interested, I used the stats for a huge constrictor snake in the MM, a CR5 monster.

Quickly, those still standing tended to the fallen. Ella bandaged Phillip, Featon doing the same for Nimue. Sharuk called when he found a miraculously intact longboat in the ruins of the ship. He and Featon pulled the boat from the wreckage, and then with the help of Ella, they eased Nimue and Phillipe into the longboat. Delphi looked nervous about leaving the island, but the rabbit-halfling pulled her by the arm, climbing into the boat. She climbed aboard and Featon and Sharuk pushed the boat into the sea.

The further from the island the boat

sailed, the more agitated Delphi got and the more excitable the rabbit-halfling got. An opposite transformation was occurring to the pair of them. Delphi's skin grew grey, her ears fell off and her face distorted. Her voice sounded like squeals of pain and her hair started to fall out. As they watched, Delphi became more and more dolphin like as the moments passed. Featon and Sharuk gently lowered her into the water, where she swam away. Conversely, the halfling was losing more and more of its rabbit like appearance. Within moments it was a normal female halfling. She was young, timid and scared, probably why Markov operated on her with a rabbit. Ella put her cloak around the halfling and held her close.

I didn't call for horror checks here, because the sight of the halfling healing and the dolphin changing played out well because the PCs justified it by saying it was what was meant to happen. They calmed Delphi down and lowered her into the water. Ella calmed the frightened halfling, telling her it was alright.

The boat sailed towards the World's End Mists, but the crew couldn't alter its course. Soon thin tendrils of fog circled the boat. In a matter of minutes the fog was so thick that the party couldn't see each other, then they couldn't even see their hands when they were inches from their faces.

In my last Ravenloft campaign, I never gave much thought to the Mists and what happens when you enter. This party had been a little relaxed about the weird goings on they had seen, so I decided to teach them a lesson.

One by one, the party began to hear things. Ella thought she could hear whisperings. She bowed her head and sent silent prayers to the Morninglord, hoping her god could hear her. A voice only she could hear whispered *He's not listening, he never does. How can something that doesn't exist listen? Your faith is a sham, your life a lie. Give it up, do what you were destined to do, be like your mother.*

First off, Ella. Ella's calling so far from Barovia has struck her a little odd at times. The voice in the fog played on her fears, hinting at what her mother was doing, something Ella had no clue about.

Unaware of what was happening to Ella; Sharuk could feel icy fingers playing with his spine. A touch as intimate as a lover's tickled his back and sides. It was the same feeling he got when he learnt he had the ability to hurt people with a touch. A voice whispered in his ear, *Such power you can attain, but unworthy of it you are. You are weak and feeble, not worthy of gifts that you have. No church will cure you, accept your repentance. You might as well end it all, go on, end it.*

Sharuk's failed powers check has left the dwarf shaken. The player wants redemption as soon as possible, not realising how hard it will be.

F Eaton suffered a different experience. He could hear the clink of the locks, the rattle of the straps. He could feel the tight, cotton straight jacket binding his arms. He could hear the mocking laughter of the other patients, the monotone voices of the orderlies. A voice whispered to him *You should never have left, lunatic.*

Featon escaped from an asylum when he was younger. Little does he realise it was Heinfroth's asylum in Gundarak.

The smell of burning entered Nimue's nostrils, the sound of fire and the tortured screams of a burning witch filled her ears. She could feel the heat on her skin. She panicked, trying to blot out the noise, the smell, the feel of the flames. A voice whispered in her ear, *You're next, witch.*

What does every Tepestani witch fear? Stereotypical, I know, but the character had only been around two sessions (out of three, admittedly), but her story hadn't developed, yet.

Phillipe stirred in his unconscious state, he could hear the incident from his past, he could hear the screams of his love, her voice slicing through his soul. He could hear the grunts from the other man; he could hear the knife as it plunged into flesh. It was an accident, his mind raced, manslaughter! I didn't mean to kill him! *Yes you did*, a voice laughed in his ear.

Phillipe once killed a man in self defence. He was tried for manslaughter. It's not something he wished to remember.

Eventually the Mists cleared. A town came into view. After a moment Ella recognised it as her home town, Tumbledown. The boat floated into the dock and a dock hand came up and started to tell them they couldn't leave the boat there. The dock hand recognised Ella and told her that he'd sort everything out. Her father used to work on the docks until he was sacked. The

party left the boat with the dock hand and borrowed his horse and cart to go to Ella's house. On the journey, Ella learnt that the other halfling's name was Sandy and that she was from Tumbledown. Ella remembered something about a family on a fishing boat going missing 15 years ago, but Sandy was still a little girl. Ella took the girl to her mother, who was delighted to see Ella. She explained that two months ago the museum had sent notice that Ella had been lost at sea, missing presumed dead and they were very apologetic.

DM error: Tumbledown isn't on the coast. Well, it is in my world. It wasn't on the Mordent map in the *Gaz. III*, so I arbitrarily placed it by the sea, to allow the story to flow.

The rest of the party headed to a church of Hala that Ella's mother pointed them towards. Ella and her mother had a long conversation, and Ella found out her father was now working at a blacksmith's. Ella left and headed towards the blacksmith's shop. There she found her father, Eric Pipeleaf, making nails and getting shouted at by the blacksmith. Ella asked the blacksmith to stop shouting at her father and the blacksmith sacked Eric, telling him that it was out of order bringing his filthy family to work and they shouldn't boss the blacksmith about. Eric and Ella left and went home, where they heard an argument in the house. A man was shouting at her mother, saying he couldn't protect her and that she owed him money.

Ella's player had no idea what I had in store for his PC. I had decided awhile ago that his mother was a whore and his

father desperate for money. Ella now wants to bring the pimp to justice.

Ella went inside and confronted the man who commented that a younger version, like Ella, would get more business than a dried up hag like her mother. Ella was furious and sent the man away. As he left, he winked and blew a kiss at Ella. Ella was distraught when she found her mother had turned to prostitution and her father was taking dead end jobs just to make ends meet. Ella gave her parents 100gp, but her father refused it. Ella pushed and her father relented. She told them that they did not have to live in such away. Then she went to her room, leaving her parents and Sandy alone.

Ella's generous donation to her parents is significant: it allows them to better themselves and the community, but also allows for a bigger shock later.

So what's next for our band of heroes?

Well, not to give it away but there is an encounter with the *Galen Saga's* favourite Vistani and Phillippe acquires an item that the party want him rid of more than anything in the world.