

## DISCLAIMER

Dungeonlands is not reality. The GM sets a scene in a fictional realm and the players play characters in it. Repeat after me, *"I am not my character. I cannot do the things that my character can do because he is a fictional character in a fictional universe."* Don't try to fly just because your character can fly. Don't kill anyone just because your character is a master of the Scottish claymore. Roleplaying is meant to be fun, but comes with serious responsibilities.

## THANK YOU

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Hope you love this book as much as I do... hope you don't lose too many characters! Let us know how you do at [www.savagemojo.com](http://www.savagemojo.com) or at our [hello@savagemojo.com](mailto:hello@savagemojo.com) email address.

G'Andy

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# LEGEND OF THE NINE FRAGMENTS

Time passes, like grains of sand in an hourglass, and while an hourglass may be turned, even the finest sand abrades, the glass wearing thin until it finally breaks. Just so with a mortal shell. Like an ancient hourglass, its crazed glass overlaid with the films and resins of alchemy, reinforced with an artificer's steel wire and brazen struts, a body's lifespan may be extended via incantations, sorcery, and by ingesting the life essence of the strongest of spirits.

I know this because I am Ayrawn, the Lich Queen of Paxetel, and have lived many lives beyond my allotted span, turning my glass so many times I have lost count.

I also know that a mind is even less easily maintained. When weighed down with the weight of years, it tends towards fracturing, shards of memory drifting off here and there, like a glacier calving into a saline sea, memories melting away if not preserved. Sanity soon follows suit.

I have focused my will on retaining sanity, as I prize it more greatly than an occasional reminiscence, many of which I am glad to be rid of or, at very least, wish to deal with on my own schedule, bottled up like an alchemist's tinctures or filed away like a scrivener's scrolls and paper ephemera.

Philosophers sometimes speak of creating a memory palace, constructing in one's mind a mental edifice where, for example, the imagined bust of some long dead philosopher serves as a mnemonic device to remember a significant lecture from that

same worthy, an imaginary manuscript similarly holds the words of an otherwise unrecorded poem, and the archways and galleries that lead from one palace chamber to another serve as a wending charm to find one's route to a specific memory put aside long ago.

A memory palace is thus a useful thing to any mage, given the dizzying number of facts one needs to have at a moment's notice, from the whispered names of powerful spirits and gods to the astrological correspondences and medicinal properties of humble garden herbs. It is also of use, if one has time and the wherewithal, to reflect such a memory palace with its mirror in reality. A place for everything and everything in its place, oddments and curios arranged in rooms and chambers. When one encounters the mementos while strolling about, it summons the desired memories when one wills them and not when not.

Of course, an earthquake puts everything into disarray, like a blow to the head can addle the brain - or a shock to one's world view can fracture the psyche. Some memories become misaligned, others broken as easily as a fragile vase falling from a high shelf to a tiled floor, dashed into a thousand indistinguishable fragments.

I will wander my palace, hall to hall, take stock of the damage, and chronicle some of the memories floating there before they are lost. This is not mere sentimentality. 'Sentimental' is not a word people associate with me and rightly so. I am Ayrawn, the Lich Queen. Only a fool would mistake me for a doddering beldame obsessed with her mementos and trinkets, mewling for the misremembered glories of a past that was never that golden to begin with.



Rather, my witch's intuition tells me there may be value in retaining some knowledge of these long-passed times. Auguries and divinations have informed me they have a role to play in future events which, left unchecked, may change everything.

My mirrors stand smashed and no longer see such things. Are these future events for better or worse? I cannot tell. As such, I make this chronicle as a bolster to the better and a buffer against the worse.

## THE FIRST FRAGMENT

After the prolonged and inexplicable absence of his former master, Ranalek the Terrible, the younger conjurer, Horarion – sometimes called Horarion the Subtle – had taken over Ranalek's seat on the Mage's Council as well as his apartments in the corner of the Mages' Citadel. Djinn redecorated to his taste, that being spacious airiness and comfortable luxury, mostly a superfluity of soft rugs and low divans with an occasional ornament. The main chamber gave more of an impression of the display room of a rug merchants' consortium than the private sanctum of a master of the arts. But my lover relished the role of the eccentric, even more so among mages.

"Not as splendid or awe-inspiring as before, but far more comfortable." Horarion gave an offhand wave to the former domain of his master, then smiled back at me and made a self-deprecating gesture to himself. "I am my father's son, as always."

He turned then, resting one hand atop a stand with an oddly placed drapery. "Ranalek would do this more ceremony, but we can forego the ceremony this once, I think." He pulled off the



cloth, unveiling his latest creation, the purported reason for this invitation.

"A spirit house?" I guessed hesitantly. "It looks like an elaborate birdcage." Beads and baubles spangled the twisted wires, silver and gold alchemically fused to base brass. "Some mystery of alchemy?"

Horarion smiled. "Cages are silvered and gilded because birds love beauty." Crystals glittered hypnotically, casting rainbows about his quarters as he tapped the hanging cage. "They are not very different from men in that regard. Or spirits, for that matter."

As if by sympathy, living rainbows appeared, ruby-throated hummingbirds, diamond-yellow canaries, clever little finches, and a dozen different songbirds I could not readily identify, flitting in through the wide windows of the chamber. They fluttered into the waiting birdhouse, each supping



on their favorite foods provided, sweet syrups and crumbs of seedcake. They perched on the barred doors, flitting in and out, resting as they ate their fill like a bevy of rainbow-robed courtiers at a sultan's wedding feast.

I smiled back to Horarion. "You'd already caught your prisoners, trained them to return."

"Some, but not all." He pointed to a multicolored songbird fluttering nervously about, unable to choose between nectar or seedcake and seemingly bemused that such bounty could exist. "My pretty ones brought a new friend."

"What is it?" I asked.

"A rarity," he answered. "The jenko bird, the herbalist's helpmeet. A female, by the coloration. I've only seen them in faded paintings. But birds travel to valleys that men have never discovered, and just so, spirits travel to worlds that conjurers have yet to know. And while Ranalek taught that you can wring secrets from spirits by means of threats and dire torments, my father was a rug merchant. He showed me that you can learn a great deal more with sherbets, sweetmeats, and an attentive ear."

Horarion had the jenko bird perching on his fingers as he fed her intoxicating crumbs. "What a sweet bird," he cooed. "Do you have anything to tell me?"

The jenko hopped to his shoulder, twittered and sang, looking quizzically at his ear as if it were a flower, then whispered a soft and conspiratorial chirp.

Horarion nodded. He had somewhere either learned the fabled Language of the Birds or was playing a game with a mummer's show. "Very

interesting," the conjurer, my lover, said. "Very interesting indeed. I shall be sure to tell my companion."

He rewarded the jenko with another crumb, then turned to me. "That world you were seeking, Ayrawn? I believe I have found where it is."

I did not know whether to be amused or annoyed. Horarion loved jests and riddles as much as he liked delights and surprises. It was part of what made him interesting.

But a mage lives by secrets as well. I had discovered an old manuscript among the papers of my old master, Sarlenio, describing a lost world in the Maelstrom, a tiny pocket realm inhabited by gnomes at once of earth and of vegetative matter. It was somewhere on the verge of something, betwixt and between, but nothing the demons of knowledge I had tortured or the angels of wisdom I'd beseeched had been able to tell me aught of other than that it might exist.

Now here Horarion stood, with his rare bird on his shoulder and a familiar gleam in his eye. For a mage, he was peculiarly unjealous of knowledge and secrets, more inclined to share than hide them, but almost always able to elicit one equal or greater in return in the course of convivial conversation.

"So where is this world?" I asked. "Did your little bird tell you?"

"Somewhat," Horarion admitted. "I speak the language of the birds, but I don't fly, let alone between realms, so what she said is rather confusing." He smiled. "But the lady jenko informed me that she'd be flying there next, for that's where her nest lies. And asked if she might have one of the baubles from my palace to brighten her home and amuse her chicks."



Horarion produced a glittering bead, a faceted crystal hung on a twist of twine, a tiny spangle like a maiden would braid into her hair. "I am nothing if not a good host."

"I thought the purpose of a cage was to hold birds."

"Indeed," he agreed, "but there's no need to cage their bodies if you've caught their eyes and ensnared their hearts."

The orange bird took the bauble in her beak and began to flutter lazily away, half-drunk on nectar and seeds.

Horarion grinned, "And the easiest way to gain a service is to let someone do what they were going to do anyway."

Were he another mage, I would not have trusted him. But when you share a bed, you learn something of trust, and when you are a mage, you learn something of spells.

I am better at flying than Horarion, knowing the words of the flying spell from my late master, Sarlenio, and thus I stepped from my lover's window and off into the air beyond the Mage's Citadel.

The jenko bird fluttered down into the valley and up the peaks, turning around this spire and then circling that, once, twice, thrice, or more, a seemingly meaningless meandering. But from Grandmother Maugh, who had first taught me witchcraft, I had learned how to recognize the pattern of a wending charm, the apparently aimless wandering which navigated a pattern leading between worlds.

Leaving behind the peaks of our realm of Relic, I flew after the jenko bird through the buffeting currents of the Maelstrom. I saw worlds I knew,

islets in the sea of dreams, and ones I had heard of or suspected. But on the jenko flew, doubling back at times like a girl who's spied some new distraction at the souk, circling other worlds like a leaf caught in the spiral of a drain, until I recognized that we had not finished with the wending charm.

The lady jenko traced her secret way, the crystal still glittering in her beak while I muttered charms of farsightedness to keep it in my view, and then the mist parted and a world hove into view. The world of the Vergers.

The jenko dove down and I lost sight of her. But not of the world, the secret realm described in the alchemist's manuscript in Sarlenio's library.

## THE SECOND FRAGMENT

The world of the Vergers was both old and new, like an ancient root that puts forth fresh flowers for spring. Though the realm of Relic is old, I suspected the Verger demesne to be a thing of antiquity, perhaps even left from some world that came before.

The Vergers themselves were vegetative gnomes which is a way of saying that they were both spirits of the earth as well as plants, but grew in mimicry of animals, like the vegetable lamb grows on its stalk or the barnacle goose ripens on the branches of its tree until taking wing as a bird of flesh. And like the protea, the flower that takes hundreds of shapes, from lowly bush to towering tree, the floral kingdom of the Vergers' world took a thousand different forms: bipeds, quadrupeds, octopodes which crawled on eight tentacular vines like the octopus or eight leggy stalks in the manner of a basilisk, avians that flew on wings like maple seeds or floated on parasols like dandelion fluff.