

IT CAME FROM THE WIDE BLUE YONDER!

Chris Sakkas

THE TERMAGANT

is loose on the fields of Frangistan! Who can stop its heathen passage? If the call to prayer is for the flock, where's the shepherd?

MISS TEAK

is of marriageable age, but wooing this fiery sorceress will require more than a bouquet of lilies from Darkest Punt – she is enslaved to her wicked fire demon!

CORPUS MITRI,

the Zombie Messiah! You've eaten his body and his blood, and now he's here to repay the favour! On a dragon!

BEDLAM IN BEDLAM

as the solar scream of things Man Was Not Meant to Know infuses the mad with terrible, truthful visions. There's a coven of cackling Cassandras calling Cthulhu!

THE LEVIATHAN STIRS,

but which continents will be caught in its yawn?

Year of LIVING free



<www.yearoflivingfree.info>

Medieval, Cthulhu superhero role-playing inspired by Lady Blackbird

Many thanks to John Harper, whose *Lady Blackbird* was a great inspiration. If you find this game confusing or incomplete, please download *Lady Blackbird* and read it through (<<http://www.onesevendesign.com/ladyblackbird/>>)

Thanks also to Eric Provost (*Red Box Hack*) and Gremlinlegions (*Castle Blackbird*).

Please contact the author at <sanglorian@gmail.com> if you have any thoughts or feedback.

Typeset in Linux Biolinum O, Droid Sans and Droid Serif.

*This document is licensed under a **Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 license**.*

<<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/us/>>

Copyright Chris Sakkas 2010. Release 1.

HERE, THERE AND YONDER

The West (Frangistan; Mithradom)

Here lies **Aurileaux**, a land of vineyards whose dirty cities hold intellectuals and whores.

To the west lie the **Albion Isles**, their white chalk cliffs the trapped bodies of ages-old sea beasts.

To the south lies **Umbria**, whose people squat in rude huts between marble pillars.

To the north lies the **Slovak Tsardom**, seal hunters and heirs to the Holy Empire.

To the east lies **Brilliantine**, the last bastion against the swarthy, devil-worshipping hordes.

The Centre (Where the Termagant Treads)

Here lies **Babel**, where ziggurat is piled upon ziggurat in vain attempt to escape the profane.

To the west lies **Brilliantine**, the bastion of the unbelievers and the prison of the devout.

To the south lie **Old Qem** and **New Qem**, where bygone kings truck with bull-headed slaves.

To the north lies the **Horse Runs**, where people eat meat raw and shoot from wicked bows.

To the east lies **Fars**, a land of long nights and gently-scented rose gardens.

The East (The Orient)

Here lies **Fang**, a land fed by mud-choked rivers, taxed by berobed bureaucrats under a Jade King.

To the west lies **Fars**, where tales are enchanting but civilisation scarce.

To the south lies **Sind**, the jungled land, where the lion and the lizard dwell in vast stone temples.

To the north lie the **Islands of the Retreating Sun**, where honour is valued above a man's life.

To the east lies the unabated waters.

The South (Here Be Dragons)

Here lies the **Abyss**, into whose sheer sides are cut cathedrals from the stone.

To the west lies **Prester John's Kingdom**.

To the south lies **Punt**, that forgotten land, where dusky kings keep old treasures.

To the north lies **Old Qem** and **New Qem**, where the floodwaters flow through deep ruins.

To the east lies **Badhiqa**, the oases of the camel raiders and their sacred city between the dunes.

THE RULES AND THE CHARACTERS

Obstacles and the Pool

When your character faces an obstacle, you roll dice. If one of your traits is applicable to the obstacle, you may roll an additional die – and one additional die for every tag on that trait that is also applicable. You can only use one such trait in this way for each risk.

You can also add any number of dice from your pool to your roll.

Look at the results of your roll. For every 4, 5 or 6, you gain one 'hit'. Overcoming easy obstacles requires only two hits, while more difficult ones may require 3, 4, 5 or even 6.

If you succeed, the obstacle is overcome and you lose all the pool dice you used in the roll. If you fail, the situation escalates in some way and you might acquire a condition. You also keep all the pool dice you used and may add another die to your pool.

Helping: If you help someone who is taking a risk, you may give them a die from your pool to roll along with their dice. If the roll fails, you get your die back.

Pool: Your pool begins with 7 dice and can never exceed 10 dice.

Refreshment Scenes: A flashback, an intimate moment with another character or another scene that gives insight into your character. Your pool returns to 7 dice if it was at less than 7 dice, and if appropriate you may regain the use of a spent secret or remove a condition.

Keys and Experience

When you hit your key, add a die to your pool or gain 1 XP. If hitting your key leads you to danger, add two dice to your pool or gain 2 XP. If you turn your key, add five dice to your pool or gain 5 XP. You never have to turn your key if you don't want to.

You may spend 5 XP to buy a new key, trait or secret, or to add a new tag to an existing trait.

Conditions

- **Controlled:** You act under the influence of another. How will you break free?
- **Drained:** Your will and fortitude are sapped. What will it take to restore you?
- **Entrapped:** You cannot bring yourself to act. How will you break free?
- **Erratic:** Powerful emotions or the like have made you unpredictable.
- **Exposed:** Your schemes are now public. What are the consequences?
- **Hindered:** Your body or mind have lost their strength or sharpness. How will you get better?
- **Hunted:** You are hounded and pursued. How will you escape the attention?
- **Indebted:** Someone else holds something over you. How can you make it right?
- **Lost:** You are alone or in parts unknown. How will you make your way back?
- **Misguided:** You are misapplying your force and focus. How will you see the truth?
- **Presumed Dead:** You seem to be dead. Are you?
- **Tainted:** You are infected, embittered, ambitious or otherwise becoming warped. How will you restore yourself – and do you even want to?

THE HYALINE MAN

The apprentice to a great mage had an eye for that which did not belong to him. When he stole a ruby slipper from the sultan's foyer, he lost his left hand. When he stole a golden knife from the sultan's kitchen, he lost his right hand. When he crept into the sultan's garden, he lost his left leg. When he hopped into the sultan's prayer room, he lost his right leg. When he snuck into the sultan's harem, he was cut into pieces.

Loathe to lose a servant, the mage conjured back his soul. 'The devil makes work for idle hands,' the mage said, 'but I shall make work for an idle spirit.'

TRAITS

GHOSTLY

Escape Notice, Spook, Unease, Hear Whispers, Smell Thoughts, [Slip through Objects], [Fly].

LEARNED

Fars and Babel, Qem and Punt, Mithraic Mysteries, The Termagant, [Aurileaux and the Albion Isles], [History], [Geography], [The Birth of the World], [The Doom of the World].

MAGICIAN'S APPRENTICE

Knock spell, Spark spell, Smell spell, Song spell, [Charm spell], [Gash spell], [Thunder spell].

SECRETS

INFESTATION

You can curl inside an item or an animal (though not a thinking being) and see through its eyes – and cause it to move a little. Harm that comes to the item or the animal comes to you as well.

TRANSLOCATION

Squint your eyes and imagine another place. You arrive there when you open your eyes.

KEYS

CURE

You desperately want to inhabit a body once more. Hit this key when you work towards corporeal being.

Turn: You give up on ever returning fully to the world; you find a body.

BEATRICE

You love a mortal woman who does not love you back. Hit this key when you pursue her.

Turn: She loves you; you stop loving her.

INK DEVIL

The dark Satanic engines that churn out books, pamphlets and tracts in the smoky cities of Albion require more workers than those small isles can provide. Chained to the printing press are black-skinned demons conjured from deep pits. They turn the wheels while their black blood splatters upon the pages of freshly printed manuscripts.

One of these printer's devils escaped and, wearing his overseer's face as a mask, patrols the night.

TRAITS

PRINTER'S DEVIL

Overseer's Face, Inky Blood, Long Claws, Ink Form, [Hellfire], [Smoke and Ash], [Dust to Dust].

SPRINGING JACK

Leap, Terrorise, Smell Fear, [Smell Guilt], [Lusty], [Torture].

LITERARY

Binding, Titles and Authors, Languages, History, [Grimoires], [Codexes], [Pamphleteering].

SECRETS

READ THE ENDING

Once per session, you may reroll a failure. If you fail a second time, however, things go very badly for you.

THE PATH TO HELL

You know the path to Hell, and can lead others upon it.

KEYS

TEXT

You marvel at the written word, a feat never accomplished in Heaven or Hell. Hit this key when you discover an important work or express yourself in writing.

Turn: You are published.

RETURN TO HELL

You long to wallow in pits of boiling oil and tar, not in this frigid land. Hit this key when you commune with your fellow demons or make progress towards returning home.

Turn: You find your way back to Hell; you come to love a mortal woman.

BEHEMOTH, LOST TRIBESMAN

When Behemoth's people were scattered like seeds to the wind, ten tribes survived to pass into Frangistan. Two tribes were lost in the desert, and no one knows where they have now settled.

Behemoth hails from one of these lost tribes, though he is tight-lipped about their fate. He can summon a hideous angel from atop the heavens to gird him in its rarefied flesh.

TRAITS

TRIBESMAN

Ritualist, Priest, Healer, [Prophet], [Anointed].

ANGEL-HOST

Five Wings of Fire, Thrice-Crowned Heads, Lion-Maned, Seven-Ring'd, [Dragon-Mawed], [Spider-Eyed], [Sceptre-Blessed].

EXILE

Improvised Weapons, Tracker, Sneakthief, [Cajole], [Cartography], [Trek].

SECRETS

THROUGH THE DESERT

You know the way through the Abyss, and can bring others with you.

MIRACLE

To overcome an obstacle, you can call upon the power of the Father. Roll all your pool dice, and only your pool dice. If successful, you are helped in some profound and tremendous way.

KEYS

MY LOST TRIBE

You never speak of them, but you fear for your people. Hit this key when you seek them or act in their memory.

Turn: Give up on ever finding them; bring them to safety.

RELIGIOUS LAW

You are bound by the customs and rituals of your people. Hit this key when your actions accord with them.

Turn: Convert or otherwise cast off your old beliefs.

ZIZ, LOST TRIBESMAN

When Ziz's people were scattered like seeds to the wind, ten tribes survived to pass into Frangistan. Two tribes were lost in the desert, and no one knows where they have now settled.

Ziz is an emissary from one of these lost peoples, but he dare not speak about their current location until he has summoned the Ten Tribes. He wears as armour a tremendous golem – lost technology once known to the Twelve Tribes – in whose clay hands lies great strength.

TRAITS

TRIBESMAN

Judge, Warrior, Lawkeeper, Sentinel, [Guardian], [General], [Anointed].

MESSENGER

Trek, Intuit Direction, Boating, Camels, [Rally], [Olifont], [Lead].

GOLEM-HOST

Head of Bronze, Body of Iron, Fists of Clay, [Eyes of Diamond], [Teeth of Glass], [Heart of Flesh].

SECRETS

TREMENDOUS STRENGTH

Physical objects cannot withstand the great force of your blows.

SECOND SKIN

Once a session, if you fail to defeat an obstacle using your Golem-Host trait, you may try again with a new roll and a new trait – or if you fail to defeat an obstacle using a trait other than Golem-Host, you may try again with Golem-Host. Pool dice you used on the first roll must be used again, and you may add more pool dice if you wish.

KEYS

MY NEEDY TRIBE

You speak often of the urgent needs of your people. Hit this key when you pursue their agenda.

Turn: Give up on ever rescuing them; bring them to safety.

AMBITION

You desire power and influence above all other things. Hit this key when you accrue power or set a complicated plan in motion.

Turn: Surrender your influence to another.

THE BLACKBIRD

The Blackbird struck bargains with hawk-headed gods in witching tombs and watches from gargyle's perches. Her feet are talons and her nose is long and sharp.

TRAITS

TRICKY

Fast, Acrobatics, Low Blow, Escape Artist, [Contortion], [Legerdemain], [Tumbling], [Stiletto].

BAKED IN A PIE

Jab, Flutter, Claw, Twinkle in the Eye, [Sense Blue], [Pidgeon], [Flap].

SLY

Cunning, Stealthy, Distract, Slang, [Throw Off], [Bluff], [Like a Tack], [Disguises].

SECRETS

CHALK DOOR

Chalk, paint, ink. Use these to draw your own doors. They open for you and anyone else with this secret. Shutting them is easy. Erasing them is not, and things slip through the cracks.

CONTACTS

Everywhere you go there is someone you know. A network for help and information and a place to sleep when things get rough.

BIRD FEET

Water, leaves, crumbling rooftops, falling snowflakes. Any surface can support you while you run. If you stop running, you fall.

KEYS

MAGPIE

You cannot help but be attracted to shiny and novel things. Hit this key when your curiosity or greed gets the better of you.

Turn: You give up or lose all your possessions.