



**∇ VOYAGES
OF THE BLACK
◊ BELISK**



L u k a
R e j
e c

0.2



PSYCHEDELIC METAL RPG

SEACAT

ART AND WRITING © 2020 LUKA REJEC

Preconceptualization v0.21, January 2021

LAYOUT: Luka Rejec

EDITING: Someday

PUBLISHING: WTF Studio

PATREON: www.patreon.com/wizardthieffighter

SITE: www.wizardthieffighter.com

Sincere thanks to the 530 heroes who made this booklet possible.

Contents

This Palimpsest 4
Big Mud: Waters Years Forgot..... 7
 Froschlings..... 8
 Ischi's Children..... 9
 The Bled Army..... 10
Lexicon 13
Appendix M 14
Fin. 15

THIS PALIMPSEST

"Eerie gates and portals to strange places emerge from the hazy Times Before Times throughout the Ultraviolet Grasslands ... intelligent travellers... avoid them ... fools ... believe that plunder and treasure lie just beyond the gate."

—UVG, page 18.

Welcome to the layered worlds behind the gates. Welcome to the tunnel worlds drilled through the palimpsest creation. Welcome to worlds of eternal champions and cosmic misunderstanding. Welcome to travellers in time and space. Welcome, ill-conceived creators and accidental destroyers of worlds.

Is this document-in-writing the UVG2? Yes, no, sort of, maybe. It ramifies from the UVG. It explicitly builds on the same madcap anti-canon mythology.

But its origins are older and darker. I conceived of the Voyages of the Black Obelisk a year or two before I began writing the UVG. It was a dark time for me when I struggled to make sense of workplace harassment. The original notes and structures of VotBO were grim, dark, and laced with despair. As I recovered, I found it harder to continue in that vein. Less and less did I want to plumb the shallows of sociopathology. More and more was I tempted by the absurdity of Zardo and Barbarella and the Incal.

And yet, a fragment of that alien madness should remain, a reminder that curiosity yet kills cats.

—Luka, 2020

"The Obelisk is a shard in the minds of men. A crystal lesion. An interloper. A foreigner. An alien that seems glorious. A hollow god made of hunger and ambition and vanity and madness."

—Ironika Geitvalkerova, *The Trouble With Tunnel Worlds* (2.5 • 105 UR)

Hexers of the Cauldron

Some of this document's content, particularly several of the finer tables, is the result of the collaborative creativity of the members of the Stratometaship discord. Collectively, this group is referred to as the Hexers of the Cauldron in the text. These wonderful individuals' ideas are edited by yours truly. All credit for great ideas goes to them. All blame for horrible puns and poorly thought out implementation is mine alone.

GATES

...lorem

GOLEMKRAFTWAGEN

Food of Golems

The words of 4-tone Guarréz, golemmafex:

"No ka to speak of in these creatures. No soul. What are they, how do they live? They have been among us since the First Forever, since the spark of creation, since the Builders came to World.

In the Lexa of Uir, the collected memory writes itself, "Golems are soulless automaton powered directly from the source of creation."

Yes, true, but also not. Once, perhaps, the Builders' golemmaficers created automata powered by pure creation, perfect impossible machines. Can today we to such power pretend? Alas, no. We must provide our un-ka brothers mechanical stomachs and engine innards to multiply the power of the feeble sparks within their crystal hearts."

This golem consumes [d12]

1. Creationstone, the solid stuff of the Builders, ground to fines and sediment.
2. Metal, the more precious, the better. It converts it to lead and clay.
3. Crystals and glass, the more it sparkles, the more joy for the golem.
4. Charcoal and anthracite, fossilized plants, relics of another age.
5. Petroleum, refined or crude.
6. Wood and leaf, fresh from the soil.
7. Sunlight through glittery crystal scales and diaphanous wings.
8. Blood and life, siphoned with a chitinous proboscis.
9. Meat, raw and cooked.
10. Bread, baked to unleavened perfection.
11. The sweat of the electric goddess, trapped in batteries.
12. Souls, powdered or juiced, for the horror of humanity.

loremlorem

lore



VECHS

Vech | \vɛk\

1. *A domesticated or feral biomachine large enough to carry people or cargo.*
2. *Any substantial, autonomous means of transportation. Including large transport golems, neo-elephants, drone cars, and boatfish.*

Etymology: From VEhicular biomeCHANism via veh-mech.

Also: vemek, vech-mech, shuffer (combining shuffle and suffer), drome (a driven mechanism).

Our Co-Evolution

Long ago, even before the demiurges gave the world to the living, the line between evolved life and machine life blurred. Microscopic synthetics crawled in the bloodstreams, meat machines served the creators, and post-organic plants vivified whole dead fast stars. Meanwhile, human-brained void swimmers played the solar fire lines and engineered gravity to build constellations of living worlds in the sky above.

But that was long, long ago.

Few now living recall those days, but all now living know of the great biomechanical beasts beyond the farthest reach of home and gate.

And everyone treasures the smaller vehicular mechanisms that carry people and cargo, dig ditches and throw up ramparts, create roads and channel rivers. Whole communities of semi-nomadic biomachine maintainers grow up around giant individual vechs and rich wizard-barons command fleets of dozens of war vechs. In the Deep Vast inscrutable decadent ancient cultures hold dominion over kingdoms with their vechs.

On the Intelligence of Vechs

According to the sciencers of the Skinbox Automaton Movement (SAM), vechs are no more intelligent than a cockroach or a brick golem. They are capable of autonomous movement and following simple instructions, but this is no sign of consciousness. Instead, they are reflex-bundles without awareness of self or even an ability to feel emotions or pain.

According to the Pansapience Movement, this is complete and utter bullshit. They accuse the SAMmites of blinkered anthropocentrism and an inability to accept how far superior oldtech was to the modern wonders of magitech.

Folk Categories

Most common categorization derive from the vocabulary of the Lime nomads and the Green semi-nomads. These cultural groups have the most contact with the strange feral vechs found in the Vast.

1. **Aerovechs** • Flying vechs. Not very numerous in the Ultraviolet Grasslands due to the stuckforce air-traps. Segmented and armoured in aerolith, they regulate their elevation using aerostatic organs to modulate their density. Most propel themselves with wing-pairs used like oars. Some use gas propulsion to escape danger at speed.
2. **Clockwalkers** • Brass-and-jewel elements driven by golem-style lemma imperatives that directly modify physical energy states.
3. **Crystal-powered, crystallines** • Built around a synthetic biocrystal lattice which serves as a central processing organ, energy source, and beam weapon focus. Magitech primarily controlled by the Spectrum Satraps.
4. **Dwarven diesels, dee-dees** • Heat engines powered using the “death salt” (die-sel) mined from the Black Gold civilization layers—a dirty but powerful solution. Many historico-fetishists claim passionately and eloquently that the dwarves are actually burning the preserved ba-personalities of a lost civilization to power their vechs.
5. **Grafihatschki** • One of the rare types of vech attributed to a historical personality. Grafihatsch was a counter-wizard who successfully developed a levitating, gas-vesicle based barge vech from deep-sea kelp, wicker golems, and giant hamsters. The feral grafihatschki congregate in small herds like floating forests. Most are the size of a petite montgolfier.
6. **Facspawn: Mass-produced base units and drones spawned by autofacs.** Usually require significant adaptation and jury-rigging to fit the needs of the modern world. Some scholars suspect that the dominant human morphs of long, long ago were more seal-shaped than today's people.
7. **Florimorphics** • Plant and mussel-derived organs, self-growing ironwood wheels, pearlite ball bearings, gall-like vesicles for cargo and passengers.
8. **Lafineries** • Some of the largest vechs, growing to the size of cathedrals or factories. Move by a combination of peristalsis and organic tracks. Many show a tendency to split up and reorganize, prompting many to suggest they are actually vech colony organisms or even mobile autofacs.
9. **Living machinery, wormetallics** • Alternative-periodic metals that give off a disturbing non-euclidean aura also prove to be surprisingly effective at mimicking biological systems, though at ridiculous tensile strengths. Preferred for cargo vechs. May cause madness.
10. **Porcelain crabs, porcarcinotes** • Glazed inorganic exoskeleton provides superior environmental protection for organic inner workings. Magitech ritually maintained by the Porcelain Princes.
11. **Rotiforms** • Wheeled or wheel-shaped vechs. The larger they grow, the more wheels they tend to acquire. Many are segmented, betraying something annelid or myriapodal in their ancestry.
12. **Theers, Theres** • About the size of a rhino or a beetle golem. Mostly quadrupedal or hexapedal. Lightly armoured for a vech, most domesticated theers have elaborate wicker-like growths on their back for passengers and cargo. Feral forms sport elaborate dendriforms, antlers, and sails, which they use for communication, thermoregulation, and sometimes hunting.
13. **Zoofoms** • Living creatures used as basal templates for the vechs. Quadrodont experimentation in the Yellowlands is showing promise when it comes to heavy hauliers. Still, the deserts continue to limit the utility of such vechs. Often viewed with suspicion because they are capable of autonomous reproduction, much like the dreaded vomes.

Vech Stats

Level • $6+1d6$

Defence • $7+2d6$

Life • $60 + (2d6*10)$

Sum • $4+1d8$

Damage • $1d4*level$

Capacity • $2*level$ sacks, 25% chance additional $0.5*level$ passenger bays

Requires • $1d4$ sacks-worth of biomass per week

Cost • $1000*level$ cash

Particularities [d10]

1. **Brainless** • Does not have a central processing unit, its mind is distributed throughout its entire body. Immune to critical hits.
2. **Photosynthetic** • Does not require food when not travelling.
3. **Heavily armoured** • Half damage from physical attacks.
4. **Springs** • Can launch itself up to $1d6$ times its body length. Terrifying when attacking.
5. **Fast** • Surprisingly fast for its size, easily swifter than a running human.
6. **Cannoned** • Has organic bioelectric accelerators which fire organic shells.
7. **Beamed** • Focussing crystals shoot energy beams.
8. **Matter decomposer** • Can feed on inorganic materials. Probably derived from mining equipment.
9. **Metaempathetic** • Mimics emotions. Driven to rage by anger. When injured, deals x3 damage with criticals.
10. **Infested** • Covered in small symbiotes. These attack as a swarm when their host is threatened.

 *to add map here*

**BIG
MUD**

Waters Years Forgot

“What care for time in the nine-fold infinity? The people lived there, in their cycles. Praise the Rainmaker. Plead the Waterstealer. Raise new generations to zaug air, to remember their forebears, to preserve the Given Land for the achterkomets.”

—Neomedede Pankratios, *An Ethnography of the Froschlings* (350, p. 27),
Emerald City Catholicum Press

Deep in the Yellow Desert, in the great sea of sand and rock, where Vulkana and Safranjan are only hints of moisture on the fragrant airs, the ways and roads break apart. The ways are as lost as the caravans who tried to sail their forgotten tracks of steel and magnetism. Travellers use the services of secretive local waymakers who use ancient amplifiers and gates to create wormways through the dull.

Wild-eyed astromancers and dull-baked wanderers claim that the Yellow Desert is not all really there, not entirely in the Given World. That many of the wormways lead to other deserts and other times, where suns are strange, and skies glow otherwise.

This might apply to the verdant swamps of Big Mud, the great inland delta of the native Froschlings. Sunlight lenses strangely there, the days are always a little too long, the nights a little too short. Lances of flame suddenly criss-cross the sky and sonic booms like dragons laughing rumble across the land. Charred birds and bats then fall to ground, called “grill manna” by the Froschlings.

The Big Mud is created by the Engine river that foams from the earth beneath Fraxion’s Gap and vomits hundreds of cubic metres of water per second into the basin known as Engine Huck. The flow fills the dry river beds, canals, lagoons, and pans in the hot summers, leaving salt islands blazing in the middle of great serene lakes. As the waters recede with the dry, cooler winters, Big Mud’s exotic animals cluster together at waterholes and surviving channels. A cornucopia for trophy hunters who can reach this isolated place.

Froschlings

The smooth-skinned humans of Big Mud have lived there as long as records of Big Mud exist. Slender and covered in fine scales, they are at home in both the waters of their inland delta and on the dusty wastes of the endorrheic Engine Huck basin.

Anti-canons of the Froschlings

1. Froschlings are divided into nine exogamous clans, one for each aspect of the nine-fold infinity.
2. They claim to predate the Given World itself.
3. They are protandrous sequential hermaphrodites.
4. They have a fondness for elaborate theatre and music.
5. They can breathe water.
6. They look quite commonplace, though with a greenish-blue tinge from their cyanobacterial skin symbiotes.
7. Their society is organised into age-based castes.
8. They look androgynous.
9. Newly hatched Froschlings are capable of work within a few days.
10. Young Froschlings are called tadproles and labor instinctually in creche farms, mines and factories.
11. They do not grow weaker with age.
12. When Froschlings acquire language they graduate from tadproles to warfodder and take up weapons to protect their society.
13. As warfodder become older they start to develop a sense of self and lose their natal ability to sacrifice themselves on command.
14. They have somewhat webbed fingers and toes.
15. As Froschlings become sexually mature they develop fatty dorsal humps.
16. Froschling matriarchs implant hundreds of eggs in males' dorsal humps. The males fertilise and carry them for several months as they gestate.
17. The fetuses developing in a male Froschling's dorsal hump cannibalise one another and only the strongest few survive until birth.
18. Most Froschlings eventually die in child birth, cannibalised by their own tadprole children.
19. Froschlings who become matriarchs develop a strong chemical tele-empathy, which helps bind their society together.
20. They believe it is their duty to preserve their land for a future people, the Achterkomets, who will arrive from the heavens on seven shooting stars.

Names • Alba, Bupho, Garal Garal, Igril, Kawa, Regel, Schwa, Tamal Tamal, Yabbo.

As Characters

Amphibious • Froschlings can survive underwater for several hours.

Cannibalistic Tragedy • Froschlings live with the knowledge that they have only grown to full sentience and maturity through horrible and inhumane acts. Their auras are stronger for their new-found wisdom, but this also predisposes them towards pacifism.

Chemical Tele-empathy • Froschlings can pick up what others are feeling, making many of them very good at soothing or inflaming emotions.

Scaled • Froschlings can survive very well in dry environments.

Ischi's Children

Small parasitic humans live on the fringes of Froschling civilisation and as wandering bands of hunter traders in the Yellow Desert and along the wormways. Terrifying stories are told about their exploits.

Anti-canons of Ischi's Children

1. They give thanks to their progenitor god, Ischi Maker.
2. Most Ischi's Children stay short and slender their whole lives.
3. Ischi's Children have no sex or gender.
4. They say Ischi Maker was an ordinary human who ascended to divinity through their feats of creation.
5. Ischi's Children extend their lifespans by consuming human stem cells.
6. They reproduce parasitically, kidnapping lonely travellers to use as koinobont hosts for their egg-children.
7. They have a venomous bite which paralyses mammals. Their venom has no analgetic properties.
8. An implanted egg-child recombines their genes with those of their host.
9. The birth of an Ischi's Child kills its host.
10. Some of them keep their hosts penned up for the several months until a new Ischi's Child eats its way free. Others let their hosts roam wild to add a bit of fire to the newborn's belly.
11. Ischi's Children are born looking like a scuttling endoskeletal crab with a child's face and scalpel claws.
12. After growing and fattening for several months a newborn Ischi's Child spins a cocoon around themselves, metamorphosing from its crablike form to emerge as a hominiform.
13. An Ischi's Child is born with the facial features of their host.
14. An Ischi's Child acquires many of its host's memories and skills, including language abilities.
15. They are immune to most diseases thanks to the blessing of Ischi Maker.
16. They have a near instinctive need to hide their true identity and band with their ilk for mutual protection.
17. Isolated Ischi's Children are often found out and killed with fire to "burn out the curse."
18. The blood of Ischi's Children has very powerful antiviral properties.
19. Older Ischi's Children are very prone to cancers.
20. They have no imagination.

Names • Darai, Festei, Irshai, Kutui, Na Ui, Perui, Shamai, Shalei, Ui Ischei.

As Characters:

Blood Drinker • Ischi's Children recuperate when they drink blood.

Cancer Prone • Their body regularly

Disease Immunity • Ischi's gift makes them immune to most transmissible diseases.

Healing Blood • They can donate their nanite-infested blood to cure viral, bacterial, and parasitical diseases in other humans.

Nanite Regeneration • Even lost limbs eventually regrow as their body reforms itself.

Ovipositor • Ischi's Children have an additional limb in their bellies, like a muscular jointed finger ending in a thick needle. Used to implant eggs.

Paralytic Bite • Lower canines extend and inject paralytic venom.

Parasitic Reproduction • They view other humans as hosts and cattle, so they easily act with cruelty and violence that disgusts and terrifies most people.

The Bled Army

Mummified warriors recruited to an ancient dialectical cause by now half-forgotten under layers upon layers of dogma and propaganda.

Anti-canons of the Bled Army

1. They criss-cross the Yellow Desert on a mission of permanent revolutionary post-mortem equalisation.
2. This is the seventy-fourth Bled Army.
3. They secrete seed corps in time capsules to re-emerge in the Deep Wastes decades, centuries or millennia later.
4. All soldiers of the Bled Army have equal rights.
5. The Bled soldiers are kept alive (or undead) with symbiotic super-cellular slime moulds.
6. They raid settlements and caravans to procure living subjects they can mummify and turn into new members of the Bled Army.
7. They are incredibly resistant to injury and hurt.
8. The soldiers are leached of all colour, pale as bone.
9. Even dismemberment or decapitation will not stop a Bled soldier from moving. Reassembled, the severed limbs of a Bled soldier send out symbiotic cellular stalks which reconnect the damaged tissue.
10. They regularly transmit propaganda messages into the void.
11. A Bled soldier can almost completely suspend its metabolism. Covered in dust or sand they become nearly invisible. A whole corps might leave a few lookouts, while the rest merge into their environment.
12. The Bled Army feeds on sunlight and radiation.
13. The Bled Army has no central organisation, functioning like a distributed super-colony.
14. Individual soldiers exhibit personality and individuality, but it is automatically subsumed to accommodate the needs of the Army.
15. There are cities of suspended Bled Army soldiers in the Yellow Desert, waiting for unwary travellers to walk into them and join the collective.
16. Survivors have described the Bled mummification process as euphoric. A letting go of the self and becoming part of something larger and more purposeful.
17. From the air their encampments look like occult symbols and writing.
18. Bled soldiers sometimes develop gas-filled fruiting bodies, which lift them up into the air and carry them on the wind, like oversized mummified militarised dandelion seeds.
19. The mummified soldiers have an instinctual ability to self-organise into collective industrial manufacturing teams, producing weapons and equipment from plans encoded at their symbiotes' genetic level.
20. They are capable of singing in perfect unison.

Names • Aleksander, Artem, Ava, Emma, Evgen, Liëm, Nastiä, Noä, Oliver, Olivia, Roman, Sofiä, Viktoria, Xenia.

As Characters:

Flammable • Bled Army soldiers are highly flammable.

Independent Action • A severed Bled Army soldier limb or head or body continues to function and communicate with the rest of the soldier.

Post-mortal • Bled Army soldiers are effectively post-mortal. They do not need air, water, food, or money to survive, subsisting entirely on sunlight.

Regenerating • Reassembled, the body parts of a Bled army soldier reknit themselves over a matter of hours.

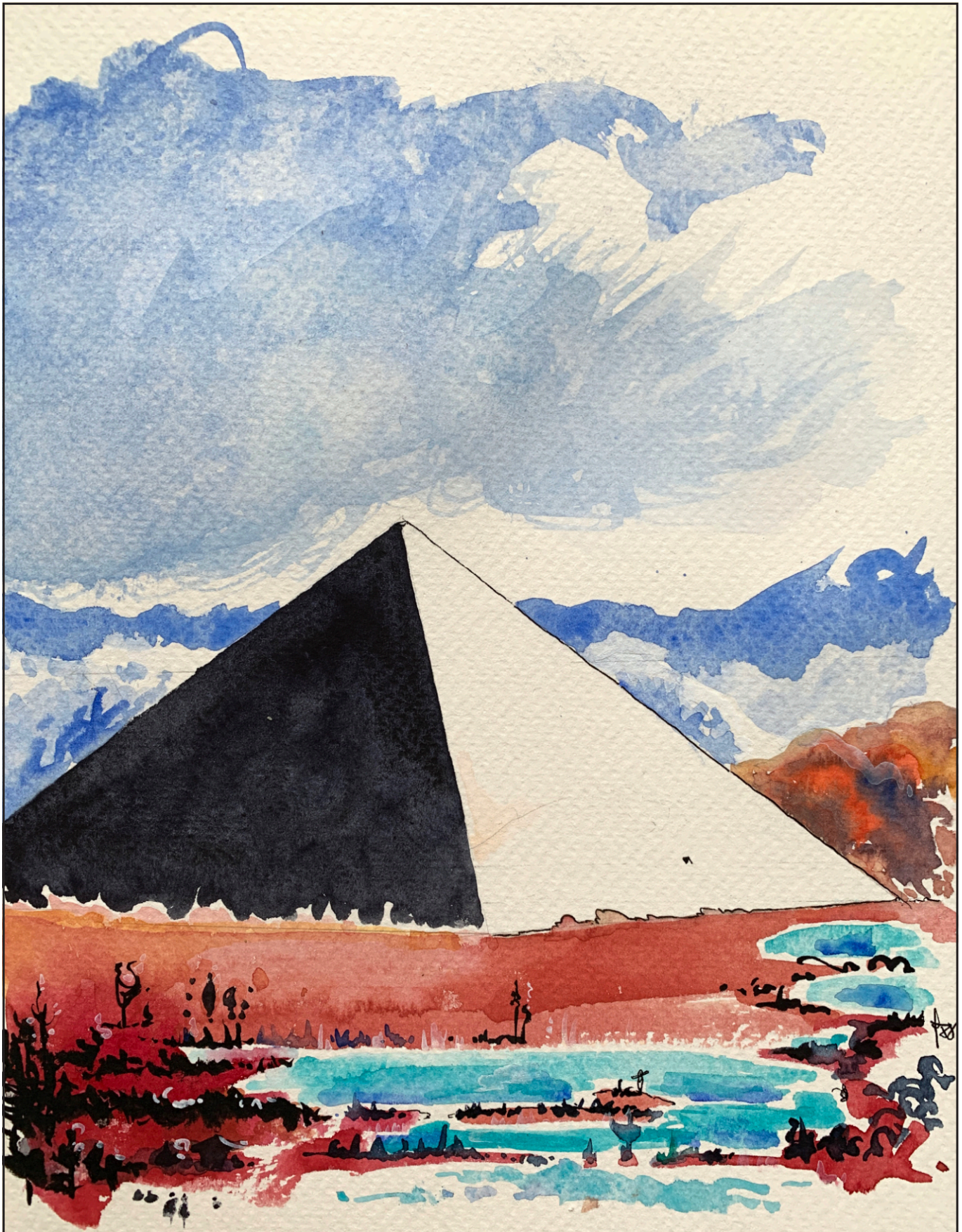
Resilient • Their mummified shells are resistant to hurt.

Shut Down • A Bled Army soldier can shut down for years to preserve energy reserves.

Solar Dependency • Without a powerful source of radiation, they are weakened. Deprived for long enough, they eventually shut down.

Symbiotic Slime Mould Memory • They can store information, plans, and spells in their slime mould's memory.

Symbiotic Slime Mould Override • Their symbiotes can turn them into cogs in a super-organism as required.



THE GRIM PYRAMID

This is Known

Even in the villages of the Second Circle people have heard merchants and adventurers tell tall tales of the Grim Pyramid surrounded by tangerine gorse and crimson heather; bathed by heart-chill winds off the northy ice and its sapphire green meltwater lakes and rivers.

In the towns of the First Circle more is known. Academics write theses on the accounts of travellers. Sailors boast they have walked beyond the Last Cathedral, among the wild strawheads of that desolate place, home to vlights and other curses of the fall of Ill Nano.

D20	MISFORTUNES
1	A gruelling ice storm traps the traveller. Time is lost. Supplies are lost and eaten. The weak fall ill.
2-3	Wind and mud trap and delay.
4-6	Bogs and quicksand steal away vehicles and steeds and shoes.
7	A sudden bone-fever afflicts. Its source, a rich flightling's bunker catacomb.
8-12	The cold demands more fuel and food, or travellers risk falling ill.
13	Treacherous ice. Slip and fall. Crash through to gelid water below. Time lost. Bones found. They clutch time-lost tools or treasures.
14-19	Wind whistles. Cold bites. The stars smile and dance with the aurorae.
20+	A trapped beast or native. Saved, their loyalty will serve. Slain, a small treasure of ivory to be had.

Climate and Environment [d8]

1. Snow dusts the ground, whether the sun is high or low.
2. For half the year, the sun's last eye remains hidden, but the pyramid then glows with a leering light.
3. Rain, when it comes, is greasy and malicious. It leaves a rainbow sheen.
4. Lichens grow the size of stunted bushes.
5. Landcoral mounds accumulate at the mouths of ancient heat-shafts, venting sulfurous airs from the lower earth.
6. The abolished bunkers were turned to catacombs Long Ago. Undead trees now blossom upon their beton carcasses.
7. The sun gleams with a sickly halo.
8. The wind is omnipresent. Harsh and cold as knives from the north, or clammy as rotting fish from the west.

Encounters [d8]

1. Infectious six-legged vlight tusker (L9, mammoth), freshly rebirthed.
2. Novelope (L6, mad avatar) singing the blood songs of a new uplifted aurora.
3. Viguolf pack (L4, wolf-bear) hunting polar thorndeer.
4. Lost wizard (L3, fabulist) building a transmission tower in the ruins of a catacomb bunker.
5. Ill Nano worm sign (L1, pit trap) marks the passage or arrival of that remaker's curse (L7, trans-evolutionary).
6. Vlightling (L2, post-hominid) clan in the undead skins of a lost era.
7. Strawhead hunters or foragers (L1, stealthy) carefully skirting danger.
8. Cathedral jilljacks (L2, vome-graded) patrolling the ways and the wefts of the settled people.

Last Cathedral Sights [d8]

On the tidal beach, the downed cathedral hunkers. Concrete, floatstone and jaspis sinking into the sand, but not yet. Not today.

1. Green-robed jimjay monks glide half-visible, violet orielana merchants gesticulate and shout in the highwind patois, brickflower acolytes make mockeries of First Circle faiths.
2. Rat urchins attempt robberies. Jilljacks with vome-grade implants keep the peace. Labor johnjanes in rust-and-whites file from mess to factory.
3. Rusting metal gulls slowly winding down. Rubber-skinned sea automata fishing for supplies and compliments.
4. Strawheads trade ivory and furs. Timelost flightlings beg for citizenship or to be taken on as bondsfolk.
5. Noodle sellers with hooch on the side. Would-be tour guides with vidys and Ministry forehead pass-plants.
6. A metal-handed preacher stands on a midden and cries, "The end! The crystal ship! The fools!" Crabbers and fishers pay the preach no heed.
7. Touts ashout, "Shop here, prices won't be better north! Flightlings and vlights is all you'll find there!"
8. Savvies mutter, "Get to know the aboriginal strawheads, they don't die in the red tundra."

Strawhead Camps [d6]

The aboriginals of this wind-beat place. Skin like soot, hair like spun glass straw.

1. A sky sacrifice. The weak and infirm, the malborn, the vlight-touched. Left out on the wish-washed rocks.
2. Hunters of vlights and riders of viguolfs, their ironbone lances and secondhide parasite armours adapted to this land.
3. Foragers and scavengers, techno-magical mongrels, sifting through the timecorpse bunkers of the flightlings.
4. Hotspring shrimp and crab farmers, boiling scumfilm macroalgae and chalkwhite turnips to make soups.
5. Singers of songs culled from the time of the homanders, from before the rich flightlings abandoned the masses to the Ill Nano.
6. Stronger, nearly after-human, with Ill Nano's blessing-curse.

Viguolves and Other Vlights

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

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

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

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

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

Tales of Ill Nano [d6]

1. The Builder's pet lizard uplifted to become an angel at the Builder's side.
2. They were the Builder God responsible for crawling things and mountains.
3. A magiscientist from Far Away who sought to revive Eden's creatures killed by the betrayers of life.
4. The first dwarf, made small to work upon the source codes of all life.
5. A human servant of the builders, who were seven-fingered, four-eyed giants.
6. A mechanical behemoth with fiery eyes, who baked the bodies with which Builder peopled the Given World.

That Expedition

Jane Everyman

Jane remembered the first coalem cart. She was ten, and the whole village had turned out. The seeress had said it would be more amazing than the mechanical clothes washer. Jane had wondered what could be more amazing than the centrifuge. The whirlwind of colourful socks, cloths, kerchiefs, turbans and cloaks. She could watch that for hours. They took bets, the kids. They bet which white linen would be pink after. And whose sock would be eaten by the mechanical wonder.

They'd been waiting for a half an hour in the midmorning. The morning rain had passed and the ground steamed under the green sun. Pauli had run off to hunt birds, and Jane wondered if that wouldn't be more interesting than standing in the humid heat. Then she saw it.

The first puff of steam. A perfect circle rising on the breeze. Then a second. A third. A cheer went up as the brass and glass and polished limewood coalem cart trundled around First Bend. Jane's eyes went wide.

Grasshopper

Grasshopper was Shohanna's coalem. Its face was different. She called it mischievous. Jane called it sneaky. The way it grinned every time it broke down. The chuckle it gave when it ran out of coal.

It chuckled.

"I'll get it," said Jane and clambered to the coal hopper.

"Thanks, Jane. I've no idea what we'd do without you."

"Get another mechanic."

"Yes, I suppose we would," laughed Shohanna.

"But she wouldn't be as fun to watch," added Onyx.

The chunk of anthracite missed Onyx. Sort of. Nearly.

Grasshopper was watching her. It'd bite off her hand if she wasn't careful. Just as a warning. For motivation. Its compound eyes glimmered. Maybe it wasn't smarter than the average coalem, but it was meaner.

Tonight she'd need the long-handled coal tongs. Grasshopper didn't like the cold and made sure everybody knew it.

The Approach

Merim stomped his feet. Frost fell off his fur boots. "Bloody cold."

His breath smoked.

"That's the hell with the Overmountains," replied Doc.

"At least I've got proper shoes," Merim eyed Jane's mechanical slippers. They made clambering around Grasshopper easy, but they were liable to give her frostbite if she weren't careful. This wasn't the usual route.

Closer

"The local strawheads worship it as a deity."

"It?"

"The black pyramid we spotted yesterday."

"You said it was a funerary structure."

"It likely is. 29th Dynasty if I'm not mistaken."

"Then why are you bringing up the superstitions of the local savages?"

"They don't worship any other black pyramids."

"They also don't wash regularly."

"Exactly. It doesn't fit, which makes this one interesting."

"You're going to ask Shohanna to make a detour, aren't you?"

Hurshik Viguolfskein

The strawhead ran off, the fear of some pestilential curse upon him. He had his beads and the steel trading blade. No need for him to die with these fool nose-pokers.

The Eating Door

The obsidian pyramid seemed to suck in light so close to the great glacier. Boulders dotting the scoured tundra around it testament to the ages it had lain beneath the ice. They approached that black triangle. It grew above them, ancient, cold, dusty. The dust glimmered. An absence grew as they got closer.

The clouds of mosquitos had gone. The crying terns also avoided this place.

Merim shivered.

"That's the entrance right ahead. The strawheads say it moves to face the sun."

"An entrance on each face and sensors to track the light?"

"Probably."

The doorway shimmered like a pool of water disturbed by a boy and his skipping stone. It slid smoothly, tracking the low sun.

*frankly didn't have time to update
all the lay
outs*



Lexicon

The Dull • Metaspace underlying reality. A nothing-something that evades apprehension by the conscious mind. Perception slides off it and traveling wormways through the dull is invariably horrifically mind-numbing. Smart travellers pack amusements and distractions for their journeys as the boredom regularly drives voyagers mad.

Wormway • A passage tunnelled through or between realities. Some are big enough for a single worm, others for entire voidships. Some are faster than travelling through real-space, others are slower. Folklore names them for the ascended goddess Adama Wörm who revealed the principles of metarealistic travel in the Era of Second Soil.

Appendix M

The voyages linked by the glassy thread of the recurring black obelisk resound to music. Perhaps some of it will spark inspirations and ideas.

Belzebubs - "Cathedrals of Mourning"
- Pantheon of the Nightside Gods
(2019).

Carpenter Brut - Blood Machines
(2020)

Fleet Foxes - "The Shrine" -
Helplessness Blues (2011).

King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard -
"Robot Stop" - Nonagon Infinity
(2016).

Ministry - "Jesus Built My Hotrod" -
Psalm 69: The Way to Succeed and
the Way to Suck Eggs (1991).

Tommy Guerrero - "Organism" - Soul
Food Taqueria (2003).

FIN.