



CHAPTER TWO

RUNNING TURJAN-LEVEL ADVENTURES

Vagrant rogues like Cugel are amusing, but inconsequential. Arch-Magicians like Rhialto are refined and influential. Between them are the true adventurers, callous, ambitious and rash. These powerful, driven magicians face deodands with impunity – if they have a suitable spell to hand. They spend little or no time haggling with innkeepers, conning others in card games or arguing points of order in committee meetings. Instead, they seek lost cities and lost spells, rescue the trapped and search for the Museum of Man.

The words “Turjan” and “Turjanic” have two senses. Firstly, to mean “characters similar in power to Turjan of Miir,” secondly, to denote the tone, themes and content of the original *Dying Earth* book. *Turjan’s Tome* includes material to help gamers to evoke the feeling of the early stories: the cosmic justice, the grim, laconic humor, and the deliriously bizarre tableaux.

The Dying Earth, the first novel (actually, a collection of inter-linked short stories), differs from the rest of the cycle. It is almost more fantastic, but is far less playful. A series of protagonists – not all of them pleasant – have formative experiences in its dark, atmospheric environment. Turjan starts out callous, Mazirian and Liane are psychopaths, pure and simple, T’sain is a scared but determined, T’sais is broken (but gets fixed), Guyal and Ulan Dhor are obsessive and insipid respectively. By the time their stories end, T’sain’s love redeems Turjan, Mazirian and Liane overreach themselves, T’sais finds out there isare good and bad and that love’s beautiful, Guyal satisfies his curiosity, marries and settles down in a museum, and Ulan Dhor wins the lady and returns home a man.

The moral sense in *The Dying Earth* is more obvious than it is in the Cugel and Rhialto stories. Cugel more or less gets what he deserves, Rhialto doesn’t, but *The Dying Earth’s* protagonists always do. We last see Mazirian collapsed in a stand of whipping plants and we leave Liane, his eyes torn out, dead in a small, dark, pocket dimension. Inhumanity and hubris put them there. Similarly, Turjan is moved to resurrect the woman he first grew as a toy, because her – successful – attempt to save him killed her; and T’sais, Guyal and Ulan Dhor receive rewards for their wholesomeness. The *Dying Earth’s* stories suggest karma – appropriate things happen to characters for reasons beyond human interactions, while Cugel’s and Rhialto’s difficulties all arise from their relationships, not from some overarching cosmic sense of justice.

By the time ‘*Eyes of the Overworld*’ came out, Vance had published in a variety of genres, and had found his own voice. His vision of what the *Dying*



Rhialto the Marvellous

Earth should be had solidified and differed markedly from the one presented in his earlier work.

Getting the Right Atmosphere

This vision of fantasy, doom-laden and beautiful, violent, alien and treacherous, is what Turjanic games should be about. A Turjan character doesn't actually need to be as powerful as Turjan – in game terms T'sais, Liane and Guyal are Cugel-level – but the adventurers do need a few changes to the atmosphere. Remember the feel of the place. Dying Earth isn't vanilla fantasy, all medieval castles with modern plumbing. It's the end of time: the ruins are packed miles thick underfoot, with soil and plants on top. The sun's a dim red orb. People doubt that they'll see another sunrise. It's as well to consider what it would be like to live like that – do you, for instance, bother to plant crops or save money for later? Probably not. Certainly not if you live in white-walled Kaiin: "they were gay, these people of waning Earth, feverishly merry for infinite night was close at hand, when the red sun should finally flicker and go black." It helps immensely to remember that Jack Vance didn't stint on his descriptions when he wrote *The Dying Earth*. There are few places in fantasy writing where a reader can come across the simile "like bubbles rising through mead," or concise observations like "the streets surged with the wine-flushed populace, costumed in a multitude of bizarre modes." When GMs are describing events, they should remember that all is strange and fantastic.

Morality

In the *Dying Earth*, there's cosmic justice. Given that the protagonists get what's coming to them, good or bad, it's puzzling that malicious sorcerers choose to embrace evil at all, but they do. It's possible that the likelihood of imminent universal extinction outweighs the fear of a personal nemesis. Of course, in their stories, Mazirian, Javanne and Liane don't know that impartial retribution is on its way, and they are usually very proud of their capabilities and actions. GMs can get emulate this theme of flirting with disaster by allowing Turjanic PCs free rein, but offering them the occasional path to redemption – an opportunity to do something selfless, perhaps. Keeping track of Sympathy points and meting out appropriate consequences are important in Turjan-level games.

In the stories, the protagonists earn their fates through their behavior, and there's no particular reason for the game to go any differently. Just as Mazirian and Liane believe that they can outwit doom, so can villainous PCs attempt to fight and trick their way past what the GM has in mind for them. Cosmic justice doesn't mean that PCs' fates are predestined, just that the GM is keeping score. Some players dislike even this degree of control, and a few of them will complain about it. Discourage this whining by awarding extra Improvement points to players who cooperate by playing their characters, good or bad, to the hilt. Yes, this does mean that evil characters can prosper. Don't worry, though – the cosmos will still get them. The Sympathy rules will ensure this.

The Transition

Cugel-level dabblers can progress to Turjanic heights if their players really want them to, and if the GM can be bothered to change the series' tempo. In in-

The Influence of Clark Ashton Smith

The first novel has more in common with a strand in American fantasy exemplified by Clark Ashton Smith, a precursor of Vance – one that Tolkien's imitators pretty much killed off. This kind of fantasy appeared in *Weird Tales*, a pulp magazine that ran from March 1923 to September 1954. In Smith's mind, his stories of opulent, eldritch vistas, often set in the remote future or a strange antediluvian past, were a rebuff to the self-absorbed intellectualism of contemporary highbrow writing. This divide still exists, but Smith's genre is all but forgotten. He's worth seeking out, though – instead of kingdoms and snooty elves, he has city-states, wide deserts, deep, damp forests, demon-summoning priests, plagues from space and capricious divinities and forgotten gods. Unavoidable doom, too – Smith, wasn't always keen on heroes; no matter how hard they tried, people just died anyway. This non-Tolkien fantasy overlaps with occult horror – it's remarkably easy to summon up something whose only purpose is to eat you, and the architecture, as often as not, follows an alien canon. People can be nasty, and good looks are no guide – a handsome man is more likely to shrink you and stick you in a bottle with a couple of flies than to save you from an unwanted marriage. A gorgeous woman can save, or be saved, or might just swap your face for a demon's, then fly away laughing.



game terms, what the PCs need is a solid foundation in magical theory and a defensible base of operations. In game mechanic terms, they must spend improvement points on a tutor, or an authoritative magical primer, and on a manse. Most likely, they will need to increase their magical ability as well. All in all, this will cost a lot of points, and the player will have to save them up over several Cugel-level stories. Sympathetic GMs can tailor events so that the PC comes into contact with suitable people and places, or (particularly if using the *Player's Guide to Kaiin*) the player can demand to go where these things – tutors, lost books of lore, vacant castles – are to be found. Alternatively, a wizard-patron could trade lessons for difficult personal services. We know from Turjan that the going rate for advanced magical tuition is – a theft from a wizard-prince, followed by saving the patron's life from a demon. Players would feel let down if their GM did not drive just as hard a bargain with them.

Once established, the new magician should seek out the Enchantment of Youth Renewed as, to acquire and enjoy real power, a wizard really has to plan to live for a long time. Occupying a manse and beginning serious magical work represent a complete change of pace for practitioners. They spend much of their time tracking down lost knowledge, deciphering and collating ancient formulae, or attempting to replicate old techniques. Turjan and Mazirian have their vat creatures, and Mazirian has his perverse hybrid garden. Unless there is a compelling reason to be out and about they remain at home. Unlike Cugel-level rogues, Turjanic magicians don't travel for survival, or for pleasure, as the Arch-Magicians do. The lesser wizards travel to work. They trade knowledge with colleagues, or they locate items of use or interest and acquire them by more direct means.

Adversaries

If the GM agrees, and is willing to incorporate the extra inconvenience into a series, players might also like to consider taking Adversaries. A personal Nemesis fits the background – Turjan, Kandive and Mazirian are actively hostile to each other and Eterr certainly has it in for Javanne. Adversaries aren't for every game; there are arguments that they interfere with the orderly development of the plot, and more seriously that they are really *points for free*, as PCs attract antagonism and incident anyway. This last concept has intellectual purity in its favor, and GMs who agree with it are – obviously – free to disallow enemies entirely.

Besides, if PCs overcome their foes, they can take their stuff. Obviously, if they don't pay for the loot with improvement points, this property becomes fair game for other, equally acquisitive thugs.

Adversaries can be worth up to five points. Part of this award derives from the GM's assessment of the relative power of each party, and of the opponent's persistence. Liane would be worth little as the enemy of a PC magician as he seems to lack staying power, while Cugel is worth more because he is both vindictive and persistent. Note that neither of them has much in the way of magic. As a guideline, a GMC with less magic than the PC should be worth no points, one with equivalent magic should net one, while a more powerful foe might rate two. Persistent threats are worth one point, as are resourceful pests. Particularly indolent enemies are worth one less point than normal. Hence, while Kandive has superior magic (+2) and superior resources (+1), he's also as

"She looked back in awe at the expression of Mazirian's lust for life. He staggered about it a cloud of whips, his furious obstinate figure dimly silhouetted ... he tried to rise, but fell back."

Mazirian receives
cosmic justice

Humor in Turjan-level Adventure

Wry Humor, not Belly Laughs

The Dying Earth is a lot less humorous than the three later books. Instead of the daft communities and the outlandish clothes, only occasional grim statements raise a smile – when the demons Javanne calls stamp their feet in frustration because they won't get to eat their summoner, for instance. Many other fantasy books and role-playing games are similarly deficient in chuckles, but the Dying Earth is wry about it. Liane doesn't take the hint when even mentioning Chun the Unavoidable by name empties an entire bar; T'sain straightforwardly bribes the Twk-men to lie to Mazirian.



Keep it Serious

There's nothing more likely to kick the stuffing out of a Turjan-level game than a bout of levity. GMs should remember the outright ban on quoting Monty Python during play, and should be alert for what can best be described as low humor.

lazy as a pimp, “not known to scorn the pleasures of wine, couch and table” so he’s only a two pointer.

The other part of the award comes from the back story that the player develops. Moderators should reward a creative rationale, as well as the antagonist’s power. Something like “Kandive hates me because I stole his all-encompassing spyglass” is about the most rudimentary that a GM should accept, so is worth no creation points at all.

PCs can get rid of their Adversaries by paying Improvement points to buy them off (and justifying why the enmity no longer exists.) If they kill their adversaries, they will need to make up the point balance somehow – the improvement points earned by defeat of the average Adversary will usually be more than enough to do this.

No More Taglines

Some GMs may feel that the tagline system, which encourages Vancean dialogue rather than aggressive, acquisitive play, doesn’t really fit the mood of the early stories. We’ve made it an option for Turjan-level play. Turjan and Mazirian both attempt to win through in the standard fantasy RPG way – they steal from, frustrate or kill their enemies. Turjan’s better at it because he isn’t a psychopathic loner like Mazirian, so he has a friend or two to help him out. GMs should encourage pithy dialogue, with lots of threats and presumptuous demands, but they needn’t reward them with Improvement points. We have included taglines in the Tome for those GMs who wish to use them (p. 154).

Spell Swapping

Strict enforcement of the “Finding new spells in play” rule is an important part of keeping your players in a suitable frame of mind. A spell swap between players costs both parties an improvement point, and requires a Resist Arrogance roll (limited to once per session) even to request such a swap.

Dismal Failures should be feared rather than provide fuel for laughs. Only an Arch-Magician would bother to inflict a trifling indignity on an opponent; Turjan-level wizards are arrogant and anxious to show off – the Excellent Prismatic Spray is the standard response to abuse.



Avoid Silly Places

Do not, whatever you do, send your players’ characters anywhere intrinsically funny. There are quite a few of these places in the later books. Lausicaa, where the sexually frustrated women lure men to their tents with promises of fried spraling, springs to mind. There is no way to avoid these locales bringing Vance’s later, bawdier humor into the game, other than summoning a big demon to eat the residents.¹



1. And in *Cugel’s Saga*, Vance manages to make this funny.

Creating Turjan-level adventures

Before you even start creating your adventures, you should consult the players over their choice of PC goals. It is vital that you give the PCs a chance in every adventure to further their characters' aims and give them a sense of progress.

Adventure Checklist

Some elements of Cugel- and Rhialto- level adventures apply equally to Turjan-level adventures – others work with adjustment, and some not at all. This section will help you piece together the right elements to create an adventure.

Essential Elements

Opportunity for bloodshed
Horror
Ruined Wonders
Lost Knowledge

Important Elements

Casual Cruelty
Weird Magic
Strange Vistas
Odd Customs

Inessential Elements

Crafty Swindles
Heated Protests and Presumptuous Claims
Exotic Food
Foppish Apparel



Opportunity for bloodshed

This new adventure element was mentioned in *The Dying Earth RPG* p. 145. It's an essential element of all Turjan-level adventures. Unlike their Rhialto- and Cugel-level counterparts, Turjanic characters often fight, sometimes with relish. T'sais meets four separate would-be ravishers and only escapes because of their cockiness and her dancing, blood-seeking rapier. Mazirian destroys Thrang the Ghoul-Bear with the Excellent Prismatic Spray. Valdarán's legion launches a full-scale assault on a Black Sabbath.

Turjanic PCs have heads full of violent spells, and swords twitching to be used. Debates and archeology aren't enough – give PCs a chance to test their mettle against suitable foes.

Non-Magical Foes

Non-magical opponents provide little challenge unless they have over-the-top Attack ratings – one playtesting GM reported that his group took down a pack of erbs in seconds. Such encounters are fun, show the PCs' power, but provide little challenge. We recommend at least one such encounter in a session to let the PCs stretch their legs. Weak opponents may well flee on their first injury or even Health roll if they fail a Wherewithal roll. Figure that each PC can kill one non-magical beast a round, for a couple of rounds using deadly spells.

Optional Rule

Pure Turjan

Jack Vance wrote the Dying Earth stories long before he wrote the later three books. There are certain elements in common, and we have retrofitted some of the later works' concepts into *The Dying Earth RPG*. For example, we consider Turjan, Cugel, Rhialto and his fellow Arch-Magicians to be co-existent, so that a Turjan-level character might encounter a sandestin or madling. If you wish to base your series on the first book alone, then make the following changes:

- ✦ There are no sandestins, Arch-Magicians, madlings or chugs. Spells are created by a mysterious unknown mechanism based on Mathematics.
- ✦ Pandelume of Embelyon, who has a little knowledge of Mathematics and knows most runes and spells, is at the pinnacle of the Magician's art.
- ✦ There are no IOUN stones.
- ✦ The stars are young, fresh, and ripe for exploration.



Powerful Enemies

Even enemy magicians need to be supported with allies to wear down the PCs, and should be prepared with protective spells and amulets. Clever magicians will use observational magic to ensure that they appear when the party is at its weakest. Multiple magical foes, whilst not strictly canon, provide the real challenge, particularly when combined with the well-timed appearance of an Adversary (see p. 22).

Demons, demonists, witches and their acolytes are useful opponents – breaking up a Black Sabbath can form a challenge for any group of PCs. The forthcoming Demons supplement covers such things in detail.

“Turjan of Miir skulks through my palace!” snarled Kandive.

“With ready death on my lips,” spoke Turjan. “Turn your back, Kandive, or I speak a spell and run you through with my sword”

The Skill of the Players

Our playtester-GMs reported a wide variation in player competence. Some PCs had difficulty against fairly weak opponents, others took down enemies with relative ease. This is a game where the players’ knowledge and cleverness really makes a difference in combat – and combat can be deadly. We suggest therefore that you go easy on inexperienced players in the first session, but if they seem to be knocking aside your creatures with ease, have a nasty encounter ready to test them more thoroughly.

The value of ~

In The Dying Earth RPG, we use ~ (tilde) to denote the average of your players’ ratings in a particular ability. A deodand with a 2~ Attack rating has twice as many points as the average PC. For Cugel-level adventures, this makes sense, but the average deodand should not survive a sword-battle with Turjan-level adventurers with Attack ratings of 13 or more. We therefore cap the value of ~ at 8 points. The above deodand has a maximum attack rating of 16 points – very respectable, but not ridiculously high.

Speeding Up Combat

Initiative tends to be the biggest factor in slowing down play. Emphasize that Turjan-level play is full of quick, even rash, decision making. At the beginning of every round each player should quickly declare the ability they are using and the current pool (for example Magic, 13.) If they are too slow, push them to the end of the round. This will help the determination of initiative. It is each player’s responsibility to keep track of any benefit of their styles, weapons, spells and tweaks, and remind the GM if appropriate. There is no going back if a player forgets. We suggest that one player keep an eye on trumping, pointing out when one style trumps another. Use the optional ‘Smaller They Are’ rule to speed up combats with weak opponents.

Optional Rule

Cautious Magicians Rewarded

The way the rules stand, Magicians get a one-point bonus when casting Straightforward spells. However, they don’t get a bonus to resist such spells. This means that aggressive magicians who attack first will get a great advantage over cautious ones. If you would prefer to balance this out, give Magicians a one-point bonus to resist Straightforward spells. This will slow down play a little. A second option, which this writer prefers, is that when a Magician faces a Magician, neither gains a bonus when casting or resisting a Straightforward spell.

Basic Surprise Rules

Surprise attacks are handled as follows. If you are within 10 yards of a person you wish to attack, and he does not currently see you, you may contest Stealth against his Perception. If you succeed, you get a +1 bonus on your first Attack roll against your opponent, and it costs him 5 points to force you to reroll any Illustrious Successes.

PCs in the midst of being sneaked up upon will have their Perception rolls made by the GM, as per usual.



Horror

- ✦ Chun the Unavoidable follows his quarry wherever they hide, and leaves their eyeless corpses in the fearsome ruins of the Old Town.
- ✦ Etarr's face is transposed with that of a hideous demon. T'sais' flawed brain sees only evil in the world.
- ✦ Javanne holds a Black Sabbath to bring forth the cavorting spawn of the demon lands.

The disturbing and horrifying, whether supernatural or human, form a central element in the Dying Earth. Vance's stories create suspense with hints and suggestions, and then culminate in a shocking, but satisfying climax. Include a horrific, barely perceived mystery in your plots – in the early stages, a few secret Perception and Pedantry rolls will give half-glimpsed clues to what awaits. The reaction of GMCs is vital, too. Look at the wizards in Liane the Wayfarer as he speaks the name of Chun the Unavoidable – they fall silent then disperse. Use darkness and lack of information to make your players fear what awaits. Show them the handiwork of evil, the scarred minds, ravaged bodies and damaged faces. Don't ham it up to much – this requires subtlety – but when they encounter the final horror, make it scary and dangerous. However, whilst Vance was influenced by Clark Ashton Smith and indirectly, Lovecraft, Turjanic characters have the right stuff to defeat such threats and come through triumphant.

"Here grew trees like feathered parasols, trees with transparent trunks threaded with red and yellow veins, trees with foliage like metal foil, each leaf a different metal – copper, silver, blue tantalum, bronze, green iridium."

Mazirian's garden

Strange Vistas

- ✦ Embelyon, home of Pandelume is a place of blurred horizons and a sky full of many-colored shafts.
- ✦ The witch Lith stares longingly at her half of the tapestry of Ariventa. She must earn the remaining threads from Chun the Unavoidable so that she might return.

Turjan-level adventures encounter alien landscapes, perhaps not on every adventure, but as a recurrent theme of a series. Only the Demon Realms are truly alien, the others have one or two features that differ from the Earth in subtle ways. Traveling to or from such domains should require magic, and such places should be a source of knowledge or power.

Odd Customs

The Dying Earth has less ethnographic data than the three later books, and only the observations about Kaiin are pleasant. Not that such considerations matter much to Turjan and his ilk; like the Arch-Magicians in Rhialto the Marvellous, the magicians of the Dying Earth, and their cousin Iucounu the Laughing Magician, couldn't care less about the odd customs that surround

Optional Rule

The Smaller They Are

Combat with large numbers of weak creatures can be treated as an attempt to reach a Tally, with a Health roll for any PCs if they allow a failure to stand. PCs can contribute to the Tally with Magic (unnamed cantraps), Attack or Defense points. Each weak creature can add from 1 to 3 points to the tally.



them. Ulan Dhor and Gual of Sfere, twin innocents abroad, might fall foul of the natives, but anyone who is strong with magic can – indeed should – pay the locals as little heed as possible. This does not mean that the little people have to take it lying down – wizards are obvious targets for burglary, simply because they are where the good stuff accumulates.

Crafty Swindles

The Law of Equipose is a seemingly complete barrier to wizards swindling each other, and a mostly justified pride in their own abilities (as evidenced by Lucounu's treatment of Cugel) means that they would seldom need to dupe a mere peon. Contrarily, ordinary people can and do swindle magicians; T'sais pragmatically bribes a Twk-man to misdirect Mazirian, and Fiansother (in 'Eyes of the Overworld') does attempt to keep the Laughing Magician occupied so that Cugel can burgle his house. Swindles are, therefore, the mundane world's way of striking back at sorcerers. Apparently, wizards are prone to being duped because they are conceited. It never occurs to Mazirian that an ordinary creature would lie to him. The kind of long con games that most Cugel-level adventurers encounter should be rare, however.

Heated Protests and Presumptuous Claims

The Saponids' assertion that their law is correct because it is ancient, and thus superior to the present day, certainly qualifies as a presumptuous claim. Equally, Gual's objections are heated, if doomed. Turjan accepts Pandelume's demands in order to receive wisdom.

Long arguments, red-faced shouting matches and social posturing do not form a central element of Turjan-games. You can plan an adventure without the presence of this element. Haggling with innkeepers, fighting for audiences with majordomos or discussing the appropriateness of a particular garment are not ingredients of Turjan-level adventures. The easiest way to avoid such debates is to remove the "annoying functionary" and "avaricious tradesmen" archetypes from all encounters. Talking mounts also come into this category – stick with horses or other dumb riding beasts. Mermelants discussing their bunions and demanding beer are not Turjan-level encounters.

PCs should not argue too fiercely with mentors who offer new spells or powers in exchange for dangerous tasks. To reflect this, apply strong levies to the Rebuff of those who argue against such tasks – it isn't heroic to do so.

Casual Cruelty

It is uncertain whether the Cobalt Mountain witch whom the Kaiinites use as a dartboard was brought in specially, or whether they just used what was to hand; but there is so much planned sadism in the Dying Earth stories that adding casual cruelty on top of it might seem redundant. This is a shortsighted attitude, as Mazirian's treatment of the anonymous deodand shows. The magician takes the time to lift the half-man into the path of pelgranes, gloat over its predicament and then, bored at last, has Phandaal's Gyrator tear it apart. Many Turjanic characters don't feel hampered by any moral constraints when the opportunity for some mordant fun presents itself. Of course, the overarching cosmic justice of the Dying Earth does mean that they will eventually get paid back in full, but there's no reason why they shouldn't make hay

The Law of Equipotence

This rule is followed by most magicians, and we have referred to it in other supplements. Here, we quote from Pandlume the most precise version of it:

"The universe is methodized by symmetry and balance; in every aspect of existence is this equipotence observed. Consequently, even in the trivial scope of our dealings, this equivalence must be maintained thus and thus. I agree to assist you; in return, your perform a service of equal value to me. When you have completed this small work, I will instruct and guide you to your complete satisfaction."²

Turjan, realizing that Pandelume's offer is fair, does not argue with the terms of the compact, he gets on with the job.



2. In *Cugel's Saga*, Weamish is more succinct: "...all is exact, and every jot balances against a corresponding title."



while the sun shines. Naturally, a PC who takes an enemy should be resigned to the prospect of becoming the victim of similar treatment.

Weird Magic

The set pieces in T'sais – summoning and torturing an ancient goddess, and the appeal for justice to an old deity – are the most obvious instances of weird magic in the Dying Earth, and provide inspiration for workable plots; but the PCs' own ignorance also qualifies. Turjan-level mages exist to expand their sorcerous knowledge in a competitive environment. As Turjanic mages are firmly convinced that 90% of arcane lore has been lost, anything that they don't know should startle and excite them. This book is full of spells and wondrous items that any mage would happily kill for, and the best way for them to find out how desirable these things are is to have GMCs use them on the PCs first.

Ruined Wonders

Quite simply, the Dying Earth stories are full of past marvels. Pride of place has to go to Ampridatvir; without a doubt the finest ruined wonder in the Dying Earth. The city once had a fully functioning high-technology society, and its remnants – flying cars and big, strange machines – still survive. Scattered phrases, like the “fallen pylons” of Canaspara, hint at what else is around. Ruined wonders will be the location of many Turjanic adventures – they are an ideal place to find danger and ancient knowledge. Even where they are not central to the plot, they should be present to maintain a suitable atmosphere.

Lost Knowledge

Turjanic PCs have goals. These goals might involve seeking out lost spells, honing their weapon skills, searching for projectors for their vats or petitioning ancient gods. Lost knowledge forms the bait for PCs, but can also give them clues to solve the perils they face.

It's vital to remember that magical knowledge is a thirst and currency. Turjan accepts, ruefully, of course, that he will have to risk his own life to pay for Pandelume's offer of tuition. In *The Dying Earth*, the surviving practitioners struggle with a great inferiority complex: they are aware that most arcane knowledge was lost in the remote past. In Turjanic stories, the study of magic is a competitive scavenger hunt, played in some cases to the death. Luckily, discovering spells and learning new techniques present easy ways to kick off an adventure, and the suggestions in the “spell restriction” box will ensure that players will feel their characters' desperate thirst for power and knowledge.

Exotic Food

- ✦ A wine that brings a terrible melancholy and shows visions of a lost city;
- ✦ A gnawed bone left by a necrophage;
- ✦ A witch who drinks only pearls dissolved blood and milk;
- ✦ A bowl of gray pap with a long spoon to feed a malformed vat creature.

Kandive is an enthusiastic trencherman, of course but haute cuisine is not so evident in the Dying Earth as it is in the later books. There are the occasional mentions of meals, but they are less lovingly described than in *Cugel's Saga* or



“...only a few more than a hundred spells remain to the knowledge of man. Of these, Mazirian had access to seventy-three, and gradually by stratagem and negotiation, was securing the others.”



Rhialto the Marvellous. Turjan eats biscuits in a Kaiin tavern, and Liane sits down to a meal of oysters, mushrooms and wine, but that's about it, aside from the offer of oast that Gual declines. Turjan and company aren't really epicures – they eat for sustenance, and get nasty for pleasure. Food is no more important than in any other game, except as it enhances the other elements in the adventure checklist.

Foppish Apparel

Other than adding a little atmosphere, you needn't plan for clothing to form a central element of your adventures, and it needn't feature.

The mutual invisibility of Ampridatvir's green and gray societies is a neat idea, but couture is no more or less a feature of Dying Earth than the food is. If Valdaran the Just is notable because he dresses in basic black, then fashions can be outré in the extreme. This is certainly true of the party town of Kaiin, where the revelers sport all kinds of carnival outfits, up to and including black body-paint and a deodand's leather harness. Liane's a bit of a dandy too, with his green and scarlet outfit and cockscomb shoes, but the focused magician tends to practicality – shirt, trousers and cape. So, for that matter, do T'sais and T'sain. If you need to run and fight, pompoms and multi-tiered hats aren't necessarily a good idea.

Improvement Points

Turjan-level characters thirst for improvement points. To reach the giddy heights of magical power, they need to spend 16 Improvement points per magic point, improve their magical specializations and squander points on vat creature creation. Ten improvement points a session is not unreasonable.

Taglines: Taglines are optional in Turjan-level play, but you may give them out and award improvement points as usual if you wish (see p. 154 for sample taglines). If you do not use taglines, we recommend that you award up to 3 points per session for pithy Tujan-esque dialog.

Attendance: All players earn a well-deserved Improvement point for showing up.

Player Goals: At the end of the session, players are rewarded with 0 to 3 points for achieving something of their personal or shared goals.

Mission Goals: Players should receive 0 to 5 points for successfully completing the adventure.

Adversaries: Players who defeat an Adversary should receive an amount equal to the number of points they have in that Adversary.

Roleplaying: Players should receive 1 to 3 points for roleplaying their Persuasion, Rebuff, and other personality-related abilities to the hilt.

Extras: At your option, PCs may earn Improvement points for perfecting spells, detailing their manses and performing bookkeeping chores in the game such as keeping track of trumps. Award up to 3 Improvement points for extras.



Liane the Wayfarer

Optional Rule **Refreshment**

Turjan-level play should be fairly fast paced. Certain methods of pool refreshment suitable for Cugel-level play may stop the flow of play or be inappropriate. We haven't found this to be a problem, but you may use the simple refreshment rule mentioned in *The Dying Earth RPG*, p. 27: two hour's rest for learning and knowledge-based skills, four hours for social interaction or non-strenuous physical skills, and eight for strenuous physical activities or use of Magic points. Note that spells are not refreshed – they are relearned using the rules on p. 83 of *The Dying Earth RPG*.

A new creation emerges from the vat



Other Sources of Inspiration

The *Dying Earth* is a slim book. Granted, the polished language is close-grained and the information content is high (it was only on perhaps the ninth re-reading that I noticed that Mazirian's vat is a big tank on the floor, and that a weird green light mounted above it energizes the creature growing in it), but GMs might want more ideas. The most obvious source for these is Vance's own fantasy and science fiction, some of which is still in print. Aside from being a good read in their own right, these books are a crash course in Vancean thought and attitudes. The end of time shtick might be absent, but the rest of it – the ornate style, the odd customs, crafty swindles, casual cruelty, ruined wonders, exotic food, foppish apparel, the heated protests and presumptuous claims – are all there, ready for the borrowing and insertion into the *Dying Earth*. Naturally, although perhaps less helpfully, there's plenty of weird magic in the *Lyonesse* trilogy, and even a discussion of sandestins in *Madouc*. The supporting cast of grotesque dowagers, obstructive bureaucrats, treacherous domestics, scheming politicians, capricious rulers and unashamed criminals should help the GM with characterization and dialogue for many games. Finally, and most gloriously, there are the – for want of a better word – “heroes.” These individuals really do epitomize what makes Turjanic games special. They're not quite hard-boiled – they talk too much and dress too well – but they are cool, focused individuals who get the job done with callous efficiency. They're not people anyone sane would want to know – while an evening with Rhalto or Turjan might pass pleasantly enough, few readers would voluntarily sit down to eat with someone like Glawen Clattuc.³

Vance's forebears also have the right stuff. Some of the aforementioned Clark Ashton Smith's work has recently been reissued. It's readable – chuckle-free Vance, more or less – and it has the right ambiance; an island exclusively inhabited by torturers, and a garden filled with monstrous plants, like a prehensile hybrid that has the hands of a particularly nimble-fingered harem slave. These stories reinforce the horror and fatalism of the *Dying Earth* at the expense of its humor, and they also provide an idea of what a doomed world with slightly more people in it might be like.

Robert E. Howard's Conan stories are in print too. Although that author is by modern – and was perhaps even by contemporary – standards a monstrous bigot, his writing is worth a look for his vivid, action-packed English. Hyboria – Howard's invented world – has few obviously Vancean traits, although there is a creepy familiarity to it. There's a prodigal distribution of lost cities, massive ruins and strange customs. Demons, nasty magic and near-unstoppable evil crawl out at night, and more than anything else there's a sense of age. Hyboria is massively old. Not end of time old, but ancient enough for the unwilling heels of human sacrifices to wear a deep groove between the threshold and the altar. On a lighter note, Howard's lost world is thick with floosies, just like the *Dying Earth* is; and the obliging, dark-haired women of Zamora would certainly feel as much at home in White-Walled Kaiin as in Shadizar the Wicked. Finally, Conan himself fits the Turjanic mold like a glove, aside from his detestation of magic, anyway. The steel-thewed barbarian is a pure psychopath, amoral, selfish and sentimental. He's also fit, big and attractive, and has very, very good hair.



3. From Jack Vance's *The Demon Princes*