



✿ My Master's Manse ✿

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‘Your grace, to be candid, I do not care to enter the hole, by reason of extreme fear.’

This adventure, as written, assumes that the party will travel by river from Kaiin to the Pastel Manse, arriving just before dusk. Naturally, the adventurers could simply come upon the manse in their travels and decide to raid it, or even be forced to take refuge there. For dramatic reasons it is as well for the adventure to start in late afternoon. At night, an impervious protective barrier rises from the haha to cover the manse. No one can get in or out unless it is dropped (although, at the GM's option, a magical effect might suspend its operation).

Adventure Outline

Tabarant, a powerful, vain, gourmandising, sensualist of a wizard, dwells in a fine manse sited on a bluff north of the river Scaum. In this elaborate home, he toys with hybrid botany, life creation and the design of automata. In the process, he has bred two acceptable vat-creatures, who variously assist and distract him. These are Lux and Flook. Lux serves their master as a valet, Flook as a night-steward and workroom assistant. To prevent Flook from turning upon him, Tabarant has found a sandestin, Destrin, to watch her on his behalf. Destrin, for reasons so obvious that he feels their disclosure to be mere boring recapitulation, prevents Flook from threatening the master's life directly. Tabarant omitted to bar Flook from commissioning his demise and, falsely reasoning from Lux's wretched state that he had no sensibilities, felt it superfluous to extend Destrin's commission to cover him.

Flook began her existence grateful for the opportunity merely to be, but soon her master's attentions became an irritating, rather than unremarkable, and the quality of her life diminished. Repeated exposures to her master's tastes turned irritation into outright rebellion. Noting that Lux responded well to courtesy and attention, she made friends with him. Then, with his help, she determined to end their enslavement to Tabarant. During an elaborate calligynic exercise, which required Tabarant's left arm and right leg to be tied to a low stool, while he sipped on a sherbet, Flook treacherously obliged his entire body into Lux's maw, sucking out all current knowledge of cantraps and suspending the action of the magician's talismans and adjuncts. Then, regurgitated and impotent, the master lay helpless while Flook glued his mouth shut, rendered him minuscule and cast the Charm of Untiring Nourishment upon him. She stuck him, helpless, in a full brandy bottle. Once she had emptied it, she placed it in the Room of Lenses. Every night she and Lux toast his feet with a lit candle.

Flook made herself Mistress of the Manse, taking care to dismiss all sandestins and other elementals not summoned by and contracted to herself. In preference to such aids, she has devoted herself to the creation of automated vignettes or tableaux, and to the design of such servants. She retains the services of Parren, the manse's ostler and Roambard, the gardener. For their sake, she pretends that Tabarant is traveling and will return eventually.

Aware that her tenure of the Manse is uncertain – Lux has misgivings and apart from being scratched around the eyestalks and washed in perfumed soap, has noticed little improvement in the new regime – Flook has devised a plan to kill Tabarant once and for all.

In the valley and across the Scaum, is a monastery where the monks make their devotions while peasants work in the fields. The Monastery has a bell which tolls constantly, and a contact with a demon, Perino, who will appear if the bell ever ceases and chastise any who have harmed the monks. The peasants, oppressed by the monks and easy to provoke into rash action, dislike the monastery intensely and will be happy to see it brought down.

Flook, who knows how to banish the demon, has hit upon a plan of commendable subtlety. She will lure naïve, greedy adventurers to the manse and have them destroy the monastery bell on some pretext, which she will tailor to the expectations of her agents. Once the bell is destroyed, Perino will appear and Flook will save her stooges from him. In

consideration for this service, she will invoke the Law of Equivalences and have them perform one small service for her. Namely, to feed a certain minuscule to a deodand. This will dispose of Tabarant and, conveniently, misdirect his dying curse.

She has caused rumors to circulate in Kaiin to the effect that the Pastel Manse is untenanted, so that bravos will come and investigate. To help this along, she has retained the services of a trader in gears and cams, Calufax, who will commission a likely party to travel up the river in a boat that he will provide, and loot the premises on his behalf.

BILL OF FARE

Flook does not want the party to stay in the manse for more than two nights, so her hospitality is hearty, but basic.

Supper

A FLAME-BORSCHT, a stew of meat and roots, simmered in dark beer and about to be enlivened when Lux fires the warmed vodka he is now pouring on it.

Crab-apple and quince crumble with custard

Mead, brought at great personal discomfort and indignity from the Land of the Falling Wall

or

A chaud-froid of pullets, stuffed with honeyed grains and sour-grapes, served on a bed of march-rice, accompanied by a lightly dressed salad.

Tear-berry brulée

Wines: a fine Azenomei white with the bird, a Tankilivat Nectar with the desert



Breakfast

Devilled kidneys, smoked fish and omelettes of bacon and cheese, accompanied by a fine mulled wine and followed by a baked cheesecake



Refreshments

Cakes, sparkling wine served in saucer-bowled glasses, glacé fruits, nuts, bread and cheeses.

A light snack: *petits fours*, tea, herb-flavoured vodka and salted ghall-nuts.



Involving the Party

If this adventure is the start of a campaign, then the player characters might simply be the most impressionable people in Kaiin, whom Flook has discovered through adroit use of the soul portraits in the Oval Lobby (see below) and identified to Calufax. The GM could begin play with the adventurers being punted up river by large bargee. Alternatively, they may make their own arrangements.

If the party approaches from the landward side, they will see a long, Palladian building in the middle of a lawn, surrounded by a haha. There is a break in the haha, marked by a sentry box. A track leads through it and to the house. To the east of the manse are some low buildings, obviously stables and a workmen's cottage.

The adventure assumes that Flook knows that the PCs are coming to call and has prepared for their arrival. If the GM decides that she does not, then she will be elsewhere in the manse, as indicated in "*A day in the life of...*"

Setting Out¹

The player characters are upstream of white-walled Kaiin, in the land of Ascolais. The sun sinks beyond the far-off sea, its ruby light picks out ripples in the turgid Scaum's flow. The sky is cloudy, dark like lead. In the distance a large creature flaps lazily up the valley.

The PCs are travelling up-river in an overlong punt. To their right, a dolorous bell tolls from a walled, towered monastery. To their left, the ground rises in a long, steep-sided mound, uncharacteristic of the broad Scaum valley. This bluff is crested by a large, involved building. The adventurers know it to be their destination.

The sun begins to set. In the distance, shadows move in the abandoned and overgrown vineyards and orchards. Throughout the fields, farmers set lights above their doors to guide the workers home.

Ahead of them, on the river, a bargee, yellow kerchief knotted against a stiffening breeze from the hills, poles his craft, laden with well-filled sacks, away from a boathouse and into the current. The punt ties up at the jetty. On the opposite bank stand a rude hut and a pier. A small boat is moored there.

When the characters debark, their boat turns into the stream once more. Its pilot nods towards her departing passengers. Or perhaps she was nodding to someone watching from the manse. The vines around a burgundy loggia twitch, almost imperceptibly.



The Manse²

Above the boathouse, which accommodates a jetty, a bell on a post (ringing it summons the boat mentioned above, crossing the river costs a terce a trip) and a picturesque pergola, the land rises in to a low bluff. Stretched along it is a long, low manse with perhaps six different roofs, two towers and five elegant cupolas. One tower holds an immense rod clock, the other an Aeolian orchestra and water organ.

A path zigzags up the bluff, between long-abandoned terraces. Higher up, the garden wall bulges out, yielding, over the years, to the weight of the soil and action of the plant roots behind it. Many of the plants are fleshy, with stalks the thickness and texture of a forearm, deep green in color, with a purple mottling. Each bears one powder-blue flower, about the size of a splayed hand. At the center is a rudimentary face – a mouth and two goat-like eyes. The lips purse and relax soundlessly, as though the bloom is suckling on the air. When disturbed, they keen weirdly, if damaged they shriek and scream.

On closer examination, their petals are miniature arms with small hands, which snatch passing insects from the air and press them into the mouth. They also clutch at the clothes of passers-by. Each flower has a ring of twitching, dog-like ears about its base.

The path reaches the top of the bluff and turns sharply to the west. Before them is the haha. Two steps lead up to a sweeping lawn of chamomile and bloodwort. Plague wasps pasture on the flowers and lay their eggs in a dead deodand caught in an ornamental vampire tree.

The party can see the gable end of an heroically proportioned hall. Two lower buildings project out from its sides, forming, with it, three edges of a quadrangle. The left (northern) wing abuts on the orchestra tower. The great hall apparently has a balcony on its second floor, edged with lantern vines. The Aeolian orchestra is responding to a change in wind direction by ululating in a minor key.

While the party are considering this prospect, Lux attacks.



Behind the party appears a creature like a grey sack filled with something viscous and lumpy – porridge, perhaps – with a huge toothy maw across its body and some many-jointed, many clawed arms growing from its apex. Bounding, silently, on some of its limbs, it stretches out others, clearly intending to push the trespassers off the cliff to their deaths in the river below . . .

Why? Lux will attempt to swallow the PCs, then spit them out, nullifying any magic they might have (Flook has developed an unease about any magic, other than her own).

1. Consider the benefits of reading this section aloud to the players in its entirety, as it sets the scene with an elegance few could emulate.
2. Perceptive readers will have noted that there were maps associated with this document. As you suspected, one indeed shows the manse.

Assuming they triumph ...

If the PCs look for entrances at this end of the building, they find one at the junction of the southern wing and the main building and one in the east side of the Orchestra Tower. If they go around the front (north side) of the house, through the dark, ghoul-haunted garden, they will come to the main door.

The South Door

This is unlocked, of thick, two-ply timber and opens onto a vestibule. Once inside, to the left is a closed door, straight ahead an embrasure with a window seat. To the right, a long room lined with racks of tools, plant pots and jars of soil, the rudiments of gardening. Should any of the party be concerned about improvising weapons, a turf cutter and a billhook would serve tolerably well.

Running down the center is a long workbench, with thick D-rings bolted sturdily to it. Three large men could be tied to this bench without touching. The workbench accommodates a selection of small implements of curious design. Bone handled hooked knives, little crescent shaped saws, skewers, some tweezers and two long, thin spoons. At one end is a copy of the 20th Aeon classic *Smoan's Advanced Hybridisation Techniques*,³ which is open at the chapter on human/creeper grafting.

There are drawers down each of the long sides of the table. They hold a variety of instruments of use to gardeners – cucumber straighteners, wads of putty, twine, pegs and sticks. There is one small oil lamp, cast in the shape of an obese, ravenous pelgrane. The body is the reservoir, the wick – which is absent – would go into the secondary beak. Neither is there any oil. A small bottle of hinge-oil might make an adequate fuel and the twine a passable wick. The lamp appears to be awaiting repair; it is clearly intended to depend from an embrasure, and its eyelet has cracked.

Underneath the bench is a loosely stoppered bottle of wine. It is most of the way to unpalatable if not actually vinegar, being resinated and flavored with anise and owing its dull green color to having previously acted as the preservative for a barrel of gooseberries.

The east door opens into a corridor, eleven feet high by nine wide. To the south is a niche containing a set of pigeonholes. In these are a stock of candles, three candlesticks and a store of tapers. A minute, low-burning oil lamp hangs above the embrasure. The floor is scrupulously clean, and of strangely tessellated stone tiles in variegated green, red and dull gold. Fifteen feet way on the south side is a doorway (see The Tea Room, below). The entire northern (left) wall is a pierced stone and glass screen between thick columns.

The wall is carved into a relief of Phandaal's last supper, consequent flight and dismemberment (the PCs will have to walk the entire length of the frieze to establish this). The nooks are filled with colored glass. Through them, the party can dimly see a huge banquet, apparently frozen in time. At the western end is the L of a high and subordinate table (presumably the whole layout will prove to be an inverted U). Guests sit, motionless, in their places.

The corridor continues through a wide lobby (oval Lobby to the north, Library to the south), past a staircase leading up and down, other salon doors and the east hall. The walls here are decorated with swirling moiré patterns, which change whenever the party looks away. At the far end, the corridor lets in to the Fountain Terrace.

Further along are the Dining Room, the Clock Tower and beyond that, the Jasmine Bower.

The Tea Room

The door opens into the middle of the short side of a room 33 X 22 ft in dimension, which itself lets onto a loggia. The walls are clad in malachite and marble. It is furnished with five occasional tables, each serving four substantial overstuffed leather chairs.

Along one side is a large counter of dark, varnished wood, supporting a metal box, a samovar in the style of Almerly and a display case containing a tea service. Rugs woven in the Land of the Falling Wall, with an abstract pattern, cover the floor.

Opposite it is a hearth between two fireside chairs. The fireplace is under a mirror, between two three-branch candle sconces. None of these items is alight, although the room is spotlessly clean.

3. Copies may still be available from <http://www.dyingearth.com/order.htm>

The Library

The library looks out over the valley. Its third level has two comfortable window seats in an embrasure, with a Juliet balcony between them. It occupies four stories, including the basement, and contains folios encompassing a variety of ephemera, formulae, lore, scribblings and weak-minded ranting. Tabarant has not yet catalogued his collection. He might never do so. Flook finds this frustrating, as she has only managed to uncover and transcribe a few formulae. PCs who search might discover a small section containing three librams and one scroll which detail spells. This little cache is remarkable because it is the only evidence of systematic organization in the whole library.

The Square Room

This chamber, to the east of the library, holds Tabarant's collection of songbirds, in a shimmering cage of fuchsia-scented force, surrounded by divans and low tables. Some of the noophagous humming birds have died since Flook stopped feeding Twk-men to them, others have developed a taste for pelgranitic sparrows. About sixty species are represented, mostly as breeding pairs.

The Menagerie

The four rooms between the Square Room and the Dining Room hold Tabarant's collection of wild animals, exhibited in their native habitats. All are miniature, except for two creatures in the war room. The master travels widely to collect exhibits and replace casualties, but the rooms contain, from east to west; a forest and lake, populated by oasts and pelgranics; a seascape with shell-creatures, sea-worms and stalking angues; a tundra scene, with formations suggestive of a falling wall, anthropomorphic mice, land fish and grue.

The War Room

Tabarant took an insolent Twk-man, complete with his dragonfly and, in the east end room, enlarged them until their limbs snapped and the steed's wings sheared off, then continued to grow them so that they now form a great "T" across the floor. Tabarant cast the Charm of Untiring Nourishment upon them, so they could not die. Deeming this appropriate terrain for wargames, the magician then kidnapped wandering bravos, vagabonds and bandits, then shrank them, to the size of ants. He set them to fight over the body. Their prize was freedom. Neither Flook nor Lux are willing to continue with this sport. Nor can they dispose of the giant Twk-man, but do not know why.



The Dining Room

An octagonal chamber, with three doors, letting onto the southern corridor (north), the kitchen (east), and to a conservatory (southwest). The small dining room is seemingly walled with bottle-ends, which bulge out into it. Inside each, a small creature beats its fists against the glass in futile desperation. Lux holds a candle to one. It hops from one foot to another. Flook smirks. She then takes she candle and toasts a few other captives' feet.



Alert PCs could deduce that there's something special about the one minuscule Flook does not toast. Examination will show that he is identical to the two mystery portraits (Bath House, Oval Lobby) in all ways but one.

The round table has [party+1] places set. There is fine cutlery, tall-stemmed bulbous glasses, china bowls, side plates and mounds of parti-colored bread and pats of butter. A large, murky bottle sits next to a huge tureen at the table's center. Flook sits, Lux serves.

The Conservatory

This is an hexagonal room, mostly clear glass, but with a stained edges and an art-deco roof. Plants from the coasts of South Almerly grow here. There are three exits, one to the Dining Room, one to the War Room and one to the outside. This lets onto a covered staircase that drops twenty six steps, to an owl-friezed arbor overlooking the river terraces.

The Kitchen

This is a long thin room with a buttery and a pantry. There is a huge range with a comprehensive selection of ovens, grills and spits. All are arranged for easy operation by Lux. All the usual tools, pans, knives, skewers, crockery, cutlery, are present. There are stairs and a hoist going down to the cellar and a dumb waiter running to the first floor. A door leads from the south kitchen wall into a small herb garden.

The Clock Tower

There is a postern at the base of the clock tower's west wall. It opens into the tower itself. Straight ahead, stairs climb upwards. To the south, a narrow landing runs to a door into the south corridor. Immediately in front and to the east of this exit, stairs lead downwards.

The clock tower has a staircase winding up the inside of its shell, leading to the cellar and to the clock itself. The clock is hydraulic, so pipes, pumps and maintenance platforms fill the center of the tower. If the pipes were breached, the liquid (which is not water, but some non-evaporating fluid) would flood the basement to a depth of five inches. The columns drive little mannequins on top of the tower, which beat out the hours on chimes. The pipes themselves are transparent and the fluid luminous, so the tower glows eerily in the dark.

The Jasmine Bower

This structure is at the end of the south corridor. It looks like a huge Chinese lantern, but is grown from the sorcerous hybrid, the Night Jasmine. Dense leaves, which exude a natural lacquer, form the roof, living branches the uprights, and interwoven translucent petals the walls. At night star moss, which carpets the floor, gives off a warm, soft iridescence. The bower has a heady scent.

The Fountain Terrace

This runs north to south across the eastern end of the East Hall, and permitting access from it to the Dawn Fountain in the East Court. Its northern end connects with the east-west corridor, which lets onto three workrooms. To the east is a Bath House, complete with hot and cold plunge rooms. A sandestin called Munze is employed in blowing bubbles in the hot tub. Munze will, but only if specifically so directed, clean the water and supply soap, bathing oils and perfumes. An automaton specializing in massage is available, although Flook cannot recommend its services without qualification.

Big Clue

There's a mosaic, being prepared by Lux, in the bath suite's hot tub. It shows a naked Llorio slithering into the water (pedants and the perceptive will find that odd). Close examination will show that the work is being applied over another feature, a bas relief of an unknown wizard. He is likewise naked and trying to make the sobriquet of "the Marvellous" his own.

If asked, Flook will shrug, but Lux (if they've made friends with him) will explain that he finds the portraits upsetting and Flook suggested he replace them. When he's finished with the bathhouse, he's going to swing across the inside of the dome on a strand of his own mucilage and replace "the other portrait too" ... with luck the PCs will get to the Oval Lobby in time to investigate.

The Orchestra Tower Door...

lets onto a stairwell. There is a further door in the east wall, presumably letting into the manse proper. The stairs lead upwards, past long, hanging chimes and pipes, strange pumps and valves, all the way to the roof, where grotesque regulators and pendula open and close chokes and switches to the capricious whims of the wind.

The Cellar

The stairs also go downwards to a cellar. Here adventurers will find aisles of strong columns, groins and vaults, which support the weight of the building. Other staircases lead up to the eastern extremity, the kitchen and the lobby.

Here and there are stores, wine racks, or old cases filled of rusting machine parts and strange tools of obscure function. Functioning engines, whose purpose and operation will mystify even the most knowledgeable sage, block some of the aisles. Other devices clearly serve the manse in some way – cranks and drive shafts disappear into the walls and ceiling.



Tampering with these devices is hazardous. Nevertheless, some characters will probably do so. Should this be the case then, the moment they successfully dismantle something or stop it moving, they will have to contend with clouds of scalding steam or choking dust, or even sheets of shrapnel (exploding gear boxes). The precise damage should be sufficient to force them to expend any healing salves they have to hand.

The North Corridor

The ground floor door lets onto a corridor, which runs along the north side of the manse, as far as the main entrance. It comes out next to a staircase leading and opposite a bronze door flanked by two caryatids. The doors to elegant rooms, which look over the north lawn pierce the north side of the hallway. They are not in use at present, but, if aired, cleaned and heated, would form pleasant salons. The south wall is exactly like the north wall of the south corridor, except that the frieze depicts the war between the witches and the wizards, and Llorio's eventual defeat and exile.

The Main Entrance

The Manse has a large porch with a twelve foot wide double door in the middle of its north aspect. The door opens into a lobby, with a further double valved portal beyond it. The outer door is as thick as a leg, of brass-bound, three-ply wood. The leaves open outwards and are barred by three, thick iron-bound beams. The eastern leaf has an inward opening wicket. The wicket has a spy-hole and a large knocker. The knocker makes a loud, flat thud, no matter how lightly it is rapped.

The inner doors are of bronze with tinted glass panels. The metal is green with age. They let into a wide, shallow hall. To the west is the corridor leading to the orchestra tower. To the east are two lewd caryatids, outside a small, profane satire on a chapel. Inside are divans, sturdy tables and tapestries, all pornographic. The hangings show representations of dancing-girls of the Kauchique Littoral. Snapped taut, these pictures take on three dimensions and make themselves available to the celebrant and congregation. They are in need of laundering. In the western wall opposite the caryatids is a large hourglass on an embrasure. It looks heavy and seems to be seized up, but is, in fact, easy to turn. It raises and lowers the protective shell around the manse.

Straight ahead and up four steps, is a lobby, apparently circular, but, to the trained eye, oval. It has four entrances. To the west is the dining vignette with automata. To the east a suite of connected halls. Straight ahead, to the south, is the other axial corridor and beyond it the library.

The walls of the oval lobby are decorated with remarkable pictures of people in distress. The floor has interlocking tiles, some bearing a distorted visage, some of them inhuman. If asked, Flook will say that these the are tanned faces of Tabarant's victims, frozen in semi-life, at their expressions set at moment that they understood their fate.



If the adventurers have made friends with Lux ... he will explain that these are the soul portraits. Tabarant likes to paint his sleeping guests' faces with a quick setting, magical cream. When peeled off, it captured some of the victim's spirit, enabling the picture's owner to compel its subject in certain ways.

Moistening the lips of one with wine forces the actual person represented to relay what is happening where he is to his questioner in the lobby. Damaging the portrait will hurt the subject, who can be coerced into perform actions. This might destroy the artifact, of course and this is more likely the greater the torment applied. To remove the charm, the subject needs to wear soul portrait as a mask then to wash with soap and water. The device dissolves, as does the spell. If the mask is washed anywhere other than on its subject's face, the victim will drown.

Big Clue

The domed ceiling of the Oval Lobby carries a great mosaic of the portraits of the great archmagas. Characters with pedantry will recognise all but one of them – Phandaal the Great, both Amberlins, Male Lel Laio, Zinquin, Kyrol, Clacanctus and one other. Characters with good Perception scores might find this fact significant, for the figure is that same wizard Tabarant whose likeness Lux is obliterating from the bathroom.

The Halls

Both halls are three floors high and receive natural light through the great skylights under the roof.

The west hall holds one cavernous room, with tables arranged in a U shape, as for a formal banquet. The far wall holds three immense niches, each accommodating a statue of a demon on a throne. Flook will claim that these can be animated, but that she would only do so *in extremis*, as the consequences of their awakening are grave. In this she is only relaying what Tabarant told her, and he was lying. These are complex mechanisms, linked to cranks and cams below, which make them shake, emit roars and move their heads around.

Seated at the tables are masses of automata, with empty soup bowls before them. The automata are dressed in the fashion of Grand Mothlam. Flook intends them to become her mechanical army, but lacks the skill to get them to work. The floor of the chamber is covered with tools and machine parts.

GM: this is where the PCs will first encounter Flook:

“You see a woman in a low-waisted, high-bodiced rose dress standing, hands on hips, her attitude and shaking head betraying considerable frustration”.

The eastern suite is as long as the western, but is divided into three wide rooms, with large doors between them. Each with central and side tables, and the suite lets out through a patio onto the eastern court. Before his reputation as a host spread, Tabarant served the famous 17th Aeon three-fold buffet here, followed by a breakfast dance around the Dawn Fountain.

Upstairs

Apart from the library and the north porch (which have three floors), the Manse is two storeyed. The two corridors, joined by the galleries either side of (and looking into) the Oval Lobby let onto chambers on their outside edges. At either end, closing off the “H”, are two terraces, intended for breakfast and evening drinks respectively. These overlook the Morning and Evening Courts. The south corridor has two notable chambers: the Music Room, which is at the western end, and Flook’s octagonal bedroom (above the dining room), at the eastern end.

All the other chambers are for guests and offer identical comforts: large beds, with quilts and clean sheets, comprehensive plumbing and fire places, although those off the northern corridor are larger than those off the southern one. The East and West halls continue right up to the central roofs: the corridors have windows and balconies, which look onto them.

Song Ivy grows around all the upper floor windows. This is a bird/creeper hybrid with little rose-like flowers poking out from among its tendrils and leaves. On closer examination, the blooms have curled feathers rather than petals and these are wrapped around a beak. The creature’s syrinx and digestive system are in a sac behind the flower. They eat insects and small birds, and have long, sticky tongues for catching them. At dawn Song Ivy sounds like a blackbird and at dusk like a nightingale. Tabarant has trained the plant to always remain in tune with the Aeolian orchestra.

Flook’s Room

This octagonal chamber, with its pink and green glass ceiling, is very light and airy. Apart from a bathroom and a dressing table, all at the door end, it is a many stepped pit, covered with cherry red and cream cushions. The bed, also octagonal, has alternate fabric-hung and open panels, the fabric flowing from a casement in the center of the ceiling. It rests in the middle of the floor on the arms of four crouching automata. On command they will straighten up and lift it to head height.

GM: alternatively, they can hold the bed at head height and drop it on people who go underneath.

The Music Room

This chamber looks out both down and over the Scaum. It has windows and balconies along three sides (so tends to get cold) and has a console that affords control of the Aeolian orchestra and water organ. This is not magical, but a sophisticated and unreliable system of levers, pulleys and plumbing, which runs down to the cellar, through pipes under the courtyard and up into the Orchestra Tower.

The North Porch

This is a high room (both first and second storeys), with a single apsidal window giving out onto a balcony, which looks onto the forest to the north. The walls are hung with dusty tapestries: Lux has been too busy of late to clean them.

The Private Infinity

Hanging down from the center of the North porch is an immense chandelier, in the shape of a peacock feather. This is, in fact, a small private infinity. It contains a stool. When seated on it, the occupant can observe and talk to people in any familiar place. When occupied, the private infinity may not be assaulted from without.



The Monastery

This is an L-shaped building with a bell tower in the inside angle of the L. The buildings make up two walls of a square compound. There is one entrance, in the south-east wall. The walls are one hundred and twenty feet long and eighteen feet high. There is no sentry-way. There is, a secret way in: a 100 yard sewer, running north lets out into a drainage ditch. It has a grille at each end, with a captive erb between them. This watch-beast subsists on burglars, rats and lazy peasants.

The Monastery's vertices are aligned with the cardinal points. The buildings run along the north-west and north-east walls. They have no windows on their outer faces for their first eighteen feet.

The monastery buildings are one hundred and twenty feet long (exterior) one ninety feet long (interior), thus thirty feet deep. They are three storeys – thirty six feet – tall, with fifteen foot high roofs on top, The tower is 120 feet high and 20 feet across the base. The exterior and supporting walls of all buildings are three feet thick.

The buildings in front of the gate (the northwest) form the residential and spiritual portion of the monastery. The westernmost 60 feet are the chapel, which extends to the ceiling. The other half are, running vertically, a vestibule and kitchen, the confreres' and abbots quarters and at the top, the monks' cells. The buildings to the northeast are from top to bottom, the library, the copyists work-room and the stables and stores. There are further stores and a jail for malefactors, in the cellar.



What if ...

- ☛ the PCs kill Lux? *Lux regenerates – he will return to full function when the adventurers are not looking. If they put bits of him in pots, they will grow inside their containers and burst them.*
- ☛ the PCs try to attack Flook? *Lux will intervene. Don't forget that, before she enlists them into her service, Flook has used Lux to nullify the characters' magic. If attacked herself, she will resort to the Second Hypnotic Spell and, if necessary, Mantle of Stealth. After this, the adventurers will awake in a bottle-end, having their feet toasted.*
- ☛ the PCs try to get to Flook while Lux is absent or regenerating? *This won't happen. Flook will hide beneath the Mantle of Stealth until Lux is respectively present or recovered.*
- ☛ the PCs wander the Manse at night? *The Blue Jades will get them.*
- ☛ the party frees the peasants from the monks' control? *They turn into a vengeful mob, who spare no effort, or risk to their own lives, in killing their masters and destroying the monastery.*
- ☛ the party enters the monastery as guests of the monks, then abuses their hospitality? *They will doubtless succeed. The monks are unaware of Flook's plan – even of her existence – and will suspect nothing. They will be gracious, if ascetic, hosts and the adventurers will be left to their own devices in the guest quarters, but will be expected to join in the noon, dawn, dusk and midnight services.*
- ☛ the party sneaks through the sewer? *If they beat the erb, and get through the grilles (NB these are fixed – the erb was introduced as a puppy and allowed to grow whilst inside), they will find themselves in the bottom of a cesspit, under the L of the building. Drains from all sides let into it. By climbing, they can emerge into a privy, the yard drain or the kitchen sluice.*

- ☉ they rush the gate? *A few monks will delay them whilst others secure the doors to the building. Any surviving monks will then run outside, closing the gate behind them. Once the party are in the killing ground (i.e. compound) the monks will unleash maledictions, blue concentrate, fire darts, roof tiles, chamber pots and sarcasm upon them.*
- ☉ they are discovered inside the tower? *The monks throw things at them, while calling for blue concentrate.*
- ☉ they talk to the peasants? *The churls will hang their heads and mumble.*
- ☉ they beat Perino? *That's hardly likely, but Flook will lend him a hand, via the Twk-men. She needs to frighten the PCs and have them beholden to her.*
- ☉ they free Tabarant? *He will refrain from killing them, but will take them into service until they have compensated him for the loss of his pet monks, destruction of his property and whatever else happened. Once Tabarant is able to speak, he will regain control of Lux. Flook will make every effort to run away.*
- ☉ they divine Tabarant's identity, but keep him in his bottle? *The party has an item of high resale value. Other wizards would be delighted to acquire so vulnerable a rival.*
- ☉ the PCs make friends with Parren and Roambard? *These two will swear friendship to anyone who gives them money, a drink, performs an intimate service or produces a weapon. They will be no help at all, but will try to ingratiate themselves by telling the adventurers whatever they want to hear.*
- ☉ the PCs make friends with Lux? *The party will acquire a loyal, helpful companion. If they betray him, he will become most upset and vengeful.*
- ☉ the PCs decide to stay outside the manse at night? *Deodands will eat them.*



Personages

Dorasno

Dorasno is the scholar monk on field patrol on the day the adventurers cross the river. He is interested in flowers and music (and suspects that a living harp is a possible magical construct). He will seek out the party and interview them.

Flook

A vat creature, approximately of the Turjan level, Flook has the form of a beautiful woman. She is 5'6" and slender, with cream skin and storm cloud grey eyes and hair. She served Tabarant as a night-steward and entertainer, she assists in the creation of automata and in the working of magic.

Should any of the characters persuade Flook to perform the Fifteen Silken Movements...

Flook is now dressed in harem trousers and a cropped blouse of light pink. She has white gold and lapis lazuli anklets, bracelets, navel, nose and ear rings, all showing a skull and heart motif and enclosing small bells. As she moves, dream-powder trails from them. Her hair spills out over a tiara. Try as he might, no one who has seen this dance can remember any of the details, only that it was wonderful.

Although superficially charming, Flook has an unpleasant character: she is willful, bad tempered and unreliable. When coercing the characters to act for her she might bribe them, claim that the bell causes her distress or interferes with her work, or argue that the PCs are burglars and that this service is their punishment.

Ratings: Persuasion (Primary) Charming 16; Persuasion (Secondary) Glib 11; Rebuff (Primary) Lawyerly 16
 Rebuff (Secondary) Contrary 11; Attack (Primary) Ferocity 13⁴; Attack (Secondary) Speed 8; Defence (Primary) Vexation 13; Defence (Secondary) misdirection 8; Magic (Daring) 12; Engineering 6; Etiquette 10; Pedantry 6; Seduction 16

Resistances: Arrogance 0

4. Flook is a knife wielding maniac, but will use anything heavy that comes to hand, Glenn Close motivation, Michelle Pfeiffer looks.

Spells: Macroïd Toe, Agency of Far Dispatch, Phandaal's Gyrator, Excellent Prismatic Spray, Charm of Untiring Nourishment, Brassman's Twelvelfold Bounty, Phandaal's Mantle of Stealth, Dibarcas' Wondrous Reduction, Dibarcas' Devastating Enlargement, Felojun's Second Hypnotic Spell, Adarban's Vacant Phantasm.
(See *New Rules for the last four spells*)

Possessions: A heavily embroidered rose-colored dress, falling to just below the knee, with spell formulae stitched into its lining; Lacconel's Rune; a burgundy beret and cape; black knee boots; a dancing costume (see below); a chain, worn as a double necklace loosely around the waist, supporting 48 minute, white gold knives (see *Cloud of Knives*, below), a small box of dream-powder, a selection of knives, worn in her left boot (Flook is left handed), down either side of her bodice, and openly at her waist.

A day in the life of ... Flook

Flook begins her day just after sunrise, by drinking a cup of camomile tea in bed, served to her by Lux, who then draws her bath and lowers the protective charm around the manse. She performs some callisthenic and stretching exercises, bathes, and dresses. Then she consults the soul portraits and receives intelligence reports in the owl-friezed arbor from the Twk-men. Based on what they tell her, she selects spells to memorise and does so in the library. She repeats this procedure at noon and sunset, unless disturbed.

Unless she is expecting company, she has a leisurely breakfast on the east terrace, then usually returns to the library to continue her magical studies. She breaks for lunch, then visits the workrooms or the West Hall depending on her mood. After the night-time intelligence reports, she raises the defensive magics and sits in the Jasmine Bower, scratching Lux around his eyestalks and cleaning him with a wire brush.



Cloud of Knives

This device only works if it is worn openly. The knives fly from the chain on command and place themselves between the wearer owner and any one threat, nominated at the time of activation. The result is a cloud of little magical blades, that will attack with a speed of 24, taking all appropriate wallop and sudden death options. Once imbedded in their target, they must be removed by hand and reattached to the chain. They remain active until they have made a kill, have been recalled, or have been outwitted somehow (GM's decision). Normally the only defense is misdirection (GM's decision on exceptions). Should the cloud become damaged, or some of the knives lost, the item's skill is the same as the number of blades remaining.



Lux:

A vat creature, approximately of the Cugel level. About hip-high, like a grey sack of cold porridge, tied off at the top. Four great, three-jointed arms radiate from its tip. Above them, on stalks are two big, luminous eyes. Across the thing's belly is a huge, toothy mouth. Lux walks, surprisingly quickly, on his hands. He leaps extremely high, too. He can swallow a person whole and spit him out, stickily (as it dries, Lux's spit becomes a strong cement – only alcohol works as a solvent).

Lux, whose embryonic form Tabarant bathed in the light of the star Algol, refracted through three IOUN stones, is inherently unmagical. He can also drain the magical properties, albeit temporarily, from anything he places in his mouth.

Lux served his Master as a valet, and Flook as a bodyguard and confidant. Lux can talk, (he has a fine sense of humour), but does not, except to Flook. He is lonely and desires, more than anything else, that people be nice to him. Lux in fact attempts to engage strangers in conversation and will respond well to courtesy and even better to kindness. This fact is the source of Flook's control over him and she regards it as a secret.

Ratings: Persuasion (Primary) Intimidating 8; Persuasion (Secondary) Obfuscatory 3; Rebuff (Primary) Pure Hearted 8; Rebuff (Secondary) (Obtuse) 3; Attack (Primary) Strength 2.5~; Attack (Secondary) Speed 8; Defence (Primary) Intuition 2.5~; Defence (Secondary) Sure Footed 8; Art 16; Cooking 16; Stewardship 16

Resistances: Lux is lonely. He wants people to like him for who he is – not on the list, but there you go.

Possessions: none.

☉ Lux is immune to all magic and can suspend the operation of magical items or entities (including memorised spells)

by swallowing their possessor. This effect lasts until the item/ability has refreshed or been recharged. Afflicted wizards have to re-study their spells.

- ☉ Lux regenerates damage at an unspecified rate. (He falls in combat, but is better the next time the villains see him).
- ☉ Being injured hurts Lux, although it is never fatal to him.
- ☉ Lux can spit glue at opponents – range as for a rock – with a skill of 14. The glue works a bit like the Paralysis spell.

A Day in the Life of ... Lux

Lux begins his day in the kitchen, some two hours before dawn, cleaning and firing the range. He then draws water to heat a kettle for Flook's bath and for their tea. Lux makes a cup of nettle tea for himself and camomile for Flook, then goes to wake her. He always knows when she is about to stir, so times his arrival to perfection. He cooks breakfast, then goes on his rounds.

He drops the protective screen and makes a circuit of the estate. On his way, he inventories any supplies delivered to the land gate and chastises Parren if the count is short. Similarly, he ensures that Roambard is doing the appropriate tasks for the season and administers sanctions as warranted. He has long since given up hope of making friends with Parren and Roambard, whose surliness and dishonesty are complete.

Next, he cleans the manse (he has four arms and boundless energy) and does the laundry, all the while keeping watch for deliveries from Kaiin, which the bargees leave at the quay, and for any travellers. Lux carries goods up from the quay himself. Flook is building automata to do all these things. When he feels like it, he works on his mosaics.

At the appropriate times, Lux prepares lunch (usually a cold collation) and supper. In the evening, he raises the barrier and then repairs with Flook to the bower, where she gives him his bath. He lets the range go out, then sleeps in the cooling oven.

Tabarant

A Rhialto-level wizard, fallen on hard times. Tabarant begins the game as a minuscule, in a bottle, in the dining room. Flook intends that he end it as a morsel inside a deodand. Should he be freed, he has neither spells memorised nor magical adjuncts to hand.

Physically, he is a decrepit man with spindly arms and legs, patches of sparse, wiry white hair over his body and pate and evil, intense eyes. If stretched to his full height he would be six and a half feet tall. Aside from professional jealousy, other wizards do not like him because of his habit of taking soul portraits of them while they slept under his roof as his guests.

A magic-nullifying spell, or Lux's touch will return him to full size.

Ratings: Persuasion (Primary)– Intimidating 12; Persuasion (Secondary) Eloquent 7; Rebuff (Primary) Lawyerly 12; Rebuff (Secondary) Wary 7; Attack (Primary) Finesse 8; Attack (Secondary) Caution 3; Defence (Primary) Parry 8; Defence (Secondary) Dodge 3; Magic (Forceful Style) 30; Appraisal 16; Engineering 16; Pedantry 16

Resistances: Rakishness 0

Spells: He begins play without any spells, but knows all those in the Library.

Possessions: there's the Manse...

Flook and Lux are recalcitrant retainers (at best), Parren and Roambard are Unctuous.

The Blue Jades

These are more successful automata, with limited function. They are structures of blue jadeite plates, in frames of platinum wire, with the faces of long-dead courtesans. By their expressions, their subjects did not die peacefully. The Blue Jades wander the Manse by night. By day, they are hidden inside the fixed tables in the eastern hall. There are three of them. If destroyed, they disassemble with a huge crash. The Blue Jades are programmed to restrain their victims, not kill them, but as Tabarant only requires a captive to survive to answer questions, losing limbs is a possibility.

Ratings: Persuasion/Rebuff N/A; Attack (Strength) 1.5~; Defence (Parry) 1.5~

Parren the ostler and Roambard the gardener

These two are both sub-Cugel.

Parren is a characteristically surly servant, the last of a line which has served Tabarant for as long as there has been a fair at Azenomei. He has no children and incorrectly ascribes his bachelor's estate to the predations of Wakdun the Panderer. In fact he only has himself to blame, being both unkempt and unappealing. Parren is tall, hirsute, stooped, balding and bearded. What hair on his head retains is lank and black. Far more sprouts from the open collar of his shirt, on the backs of his hands and out of his nostrils and ears. He wears olive corduroy trousers, clogs, a grimy cream shirt and a tan leather waistcoat. A falchion hangs from his waist and he keeps a rusty faussal inside his sentry box. He brews a pungent liquor from onions, garlic and beets, which he and Roambard sit and drink together in the evenings while they play chess.

His duties are simple and hardly onerous, to care for Tabarant's wherriots and those of any visitors who happen by. He also minds the land gate and takes deliveries. He occasionally steals, but is subject to severe corporal punishment from Lux. He is usually to be found asleep or drunk in his sentry box, or brushing Tabarant's mangy animals down, under Lux's supervision.

Roambard is physically the opposite of Parren, being short, lithe and energetic. He is clean shaven, with thick yellow hair that grows straight up out of his head like bristles on a brush. He is a dutiful gardener, carefully planting rows of cash crops behind Tabarant's more exotic creations. He ascribes occult virtues to these and sells them to the local peasants, so, to preserve his income, is careful that none of his produce arrives on the table in the manse. He achieves this by keeping moving, so that Lux, curious to see what he is up to, follows him around and away from the crops. Although he is very unlikely to fight anybody, Roambard has a billhook on a filch, which he uses to trim back the Song Ivy. He is an early riser and, in the hope of seeing Flook naked, spends the early morning working in the kitchen garden.

Ratings: Persuasion (Obfuscatory) 8; Rebuff (Obtuse) 8; Attack (Ferocity) 8 *with weapon, Parren's faussal or a garden tool of some kind*; Defence (Parry) 8; Ostling and Gardening respectively, 8.

Resistances: Indolence 0 (Parren) and Avarice 0 (Roambard)

The Monks

Ratings: Persuasion (Forthright) 8; Rebuff (Penetrating) 8; Attack (Caution) 8; Defence (Parry) 8; Pedantry 16

Resistances: Pettifoggery 0

The Peasants

Ratings: Persuasion (Forthright) 5; Rebuff (Obtuse) 3; Attack (Ferocity) 15; Defence (Parry) 1; Peasant Stuff 16

Resistances: Indolence 0

Perino

A cultured voice says "Good morning. Generally I approve of vicarious destruction and anguished death, but I regret that I am subject to contractual obligations. My admiration for your style and verve notwithstanding, and with profuse apologies for the violence I am obliged to visit upon you, I must require you to prepare to have a little accident. In the spirit of fair play, I invite you each to strike the first blow and would advise you to make them as telling as possible."

The speaker is a slight fellow of middling years, dressed in a red and green domino. He has a net in one hand and a rod in the other. The rod terminates in a mummified talon, probably a pelgrane's. His hat is an elongated tricorne. Instead of bells, shrunken heads hang from its points. He raises the net like a matador's cloak. "Shall we?"

Perino's rod hurts – it's a clawed club, and the effect is much like being hit with a claw hammer. The net is more interesting – it moves autonomously, can float with the breeze, or creep along the ground. It attempts to enmesh an opponent, then it contracts with a cheese wire effect.

Perino himself may be banished to the netherworlds with the appropriate incantation, or taken somewhere inconvenient by Far Despatch. Otherwise, his flesh knits back together. He may not be drowned or incinerated. He likes the smell and taste of blue concentrate. If dismembered and stored in separate pots, he would be inconvenienced long enough to guarantee that each of the adventurers would die from a different, but unpleasant, cause.

Should further clarification of Perino's status be required "The substance of my contract with the monks is that in return for my smiting their enemies they will ring their most mellifluous bell, thus assisting my sleep in my sub-world. As the agents of the order's destruction, I am compelled to visit mortal chastisement upon you all."

GM: If the PCs need to learn how lethal Perino is, let them watch him enmesh, cube and shred a few peasants.

Ratings: Persuasion (Forthright) 20, Persuasion (Eloquent) 16; Rebuff (Lawyerly) 20; Rebuff (Penetrating) 16; Attack (Finesse) 20; Attack (Cunning) 15; Defense (Dodge) 20; Defense (Vexation) 15; Health 20

Resistances: Pettifoggery 0

Possessions: The Net, a self willed, flying grid of cheesewire with Attack (Speed) 16; Defense (Misdirection) 16; Health 10, The Stick. It hits, tears, it shreds. It's a deodand's claw on a baton.

The Twk-men

Flook has a standing contract with the local kingdom. In return for her capturing the local insectivorous birds, they act as her eyes and ears. In specific circumstances, they will lend actual aid, squirting soporific ichor from miniature bellows into the faces of Flook's opponents.

Beyond the loosely framed "not acting against her interests", the Twk-men will enter into contracts with others. They can, for instance tell the party what hours the monks keep, what they do during the day and that there is a secret way into the monastery. Disclosing the terms of their contract with Flook is acting against her interests, incidentally.

Ratings: Persuasion (Eloquent) 8-16; Rebuff (Penetrating) 8-16; Attack N/A; Defence (Dodge) 8-16

Resistances: Avarice 0

Calufax

Flook's agent in Kaiin, Calufax hangs around taverns and the waterfront, waiting for Flook's instructions. She encourages compliance by sticking infected needles into the lips of his soul portrait, making his gums and tongue ulcerate terribly.

He is a rogue and a hedge wizard, with hazel eyes and mousy hair. He dresses in short jackets, cut generously across the shoulders, and cinching at the waist; above tight britches and knee boots. He favors maroon, bottle green cream and either dove or slate gray. Calufax is left handed and hangs his rapier from his belt, rather than from a baldric. He seldom wears the same hat twice. He has a pendant, sporting a tear of jade hanging from his left ear.

Ratings: Persuade (Glib) 13; Persuade (Intimidating) 8; Rebuff (Penetrating) 13; Rebuff (Wary) 8; Attack (Speed) 8; Defence (Intuition) 8; Health 8; Etiquette 4; Perception 8; Scuttlebutt 12; Magic (Forceful) 4

Spells: Spell of the Long Hour, Excellent Prismatic Spray, Phandaal's Gyrator.

Possessions: Calufax always has at least fifty terces on his person in a wallet attached to his belt. His earring is worth another twenty.



In the Chest You Find...

In addition to many items of aesthetic appeal, antiquarian interest, or resale value, the Manse contains several items of note.

- ☉ In the third workroom on the North side (i.e. the third that the PCs search) are Tabarant's notes on breeding automata.
- ☉ In a pot in the library (middle level, fourth shelf on the east wall, seventh book in – the book is hollow), is a little pot of viscous fluid and a brush. This is a pot of soul paint. If daubed on the face of a living being, allowed to dry, then peeled off, the resultant mask can be stretched on a frame, and used as a soul portrait.
- ☉ Four tubes of blue concentrate. One is inside a hollow priapic statute in the chapel. One is under a pillow in Flook's bed. One is inside a hollow balustrade in the north porch. One is under a stool in the owl-friezed arbour.
- ☉ An illustrated manual, dog-eared and well used, for the Fifteen Silken Movements. If a page is lit from behind, the dancer appears naked.

- ☉ Folios with formulae for the following spells: Macroid Toe, Second Hypnotic Spell, Agency of Far Dispatch, Phandaal's Gyration, Excellent Prismatic Spray, Charm of Untiring Nourishment, Brassman's Twelffold Bounty, Mantle of Stealth, a spell to render people minuscule
- ☉ A carved sandalwood box containing five ounces of dream powder, in Flook's dressing table.

It will prove impossible to find Tabarant's IOUN stones. Although he will indicate to captors that he will buy his release with them, he will then attempt to renege on the deal.

In the Monastery...

The peasants will, if allowed, erupt into pyromaniac frenzy and many of the monastery treasures are readily flammable.

Adventurers will be able to carry away books, tomes and compilations of all sorts. It is suggested that they not acquire any complete spell formulae.

- ☉ The monks had several tubes of blue concentrate and a spring-powered dart pistol. Depending on the stratagem the PCs devise, there might be 1-3 tubes and 2-12 fire darts remaining.
- ☉ There are two hundred terces in the monastery strongbox. Most of the monks' wealth is in books and agricultural products.



Further Ideas

Depending on the PCs actions, there could be opportunities for them in the Scaum valley:

- ☉ If Flook's plan works in every particular, they will have a dying magician's curse to worry about...
- ☉ If Tabarant somehow gets free, he could coerce the PCs to work for him...
- ☉ If Flook runs away from him, the PCs could be instructed to bring her back...
- ☉ Alternatively, they could be given a port of Face Paint and told to go and collect specimens for Tabarant's collection...
- ☉ Or they could be sent out to catch Twk-men to feed to Tabarant's birds...
- ☉ Or they could be shrunk, then forced to battle something unpleasant – ordinary mice, perhaps – over the body of a gigantically enlarged, dead Twk-man...
- ☉ On the other hand, if they somehow get the better of Flook, Lux, Tabarant and Perino, they will be masters of the manse, but will face invasion from waves of opportunists, just like themselves. They might never discover how to raise the defensive spell, after all...



The Big Question: what's a haha, then?

A *haha* is the riser between two tiers of a stepped lawn. The grounds are arranged in tiers rising as one approaches the house, to create an obstacle to animals that might otherwise eat the manicured lawns around the house. The difference in level, about 2-4 feet, is too much for sheep to handle but low enough that when someone in the big house looks out downhill across the garden, the boundaries are invisible and the vista stretches for miles. Viewed from below, looking toward the house, the haha appears to be a low wall with lawn along the top.