
THE REST

By HaikuShane.

O / XXII. FOOL

“Underking”, “Pauper”, Abijah the Orphan.

Abijah is sometimes strong. If he fancies it, he can whip up a frenzy of the common man and guide them to his bidding, or as is more often, help them realise their power when standing together. He is more often weak, slinking around sewers, graveyards, or landfill. It is hard for anyone interested to keep track of where he’s fallen or how quickly he’s rising.

These changes in fate don’t appear to be out of his control though. At his lowest, he wouldn’t consider himself down on his luck, but happy. A humble prince, wherever. With a change of the wind – a force he’s said to have some control of also – his position changes.

The Rest tend to stay away from him. He’s been known to be fickle with his friends and overly generous to his enemies. Such a person is to be avoided as his power turned towards you presents itself suddenly, randomly, and devastatingly.

I. MAGE

“Bagatto”, Barnivall of the Four, Barberye of the Earth.

Barnivall was once utterly powerful. He held dominion over all the physicality of the Earth, the fluidity of Water, the omnipresence of Air, and burning fury of Fire. Continents could be bathed in lava oceans with a twitch of his finger. Every word uttered carried to him by the atmosphere around.

His power was enough to threaten the Rest into submission and it was only when they all turned on him – with the exception of his dubious ally in Abijah – that they could topple him. They stripped his power through trickery, torture, and treatise until his powers were shattered to mere illusions.

Still too powerful to kill though. In truth, certain of the Rest were scared to prove that they could die. So it was decided to let the maimed wizard go into self-exile, humiliated and neutered.

He has, however, amassed a large material wealth and managed to keep it quite the secret. Mankind, and the Hierophant alike, seek him out for potions that only he understands. He trades coin for illusions too; removing a beauty spot, enlarging this, shrinking that.

THE CULT OF WANDS

Barnivall had followers outside of the Rest. There are a few who remain, even now, outside of even his knowledge who work towards bringing him back to power. It’s a commonly known fact that there is a

balance in all things. If that's so, where did Barnivall's power go? Finding it will bring them all back to the glory days they enjoyed.

II. THE PRIESTESS

"Her", "The Quiet One", "Nehemetawy", Cisseley of the Holy See.

There are gods who have long been forgotten, and that is very much the way they want it to continue. Still though, they must be worshiped and given a voice when required. Darrenanto's mother took on this role willingly, as is only right for someone of the Holy See.

Her temple is lost – intentionally so. Her congregation is small. Most those within it do not know of the others. Quietly, they worship Thoth, one of the last of the old gods who now hides from the others whilst waiting to make their move.

Cisseley is protected by Thoth, benefiting from his wisdom, and kept alive by his magic. Her writings become scrolls of magical ability and primates trust and understand her every word. The temple is predominantly populated with monkeys of all kinds.

Though the Old are gone, Thoth still does it best to maintain order through his Priestess.

III. EMPRESS

"The Green Woman", "Rumour", Valentine the True.

No one has seen Valentine in quite some time, but new stories of her ripple through crowds. She's not been spotted handing out food, or blessing the swollen belly of a pregnant woman, or even acting as muse for an artist, but there are stories – recent stories! – of her doing these things.

In truth, she left that life long ago when her and her sister's gods were stolen from her. Her sister, Cisseley, remains the last link between this world and the Old.

The woman's past reputation for life is one she clings to publicly, setting rumours about that make their way into folk tales. The reality couldn't be further though; she's become more of a shepherd away from life. Her city, the Necropolis, is surrounded by the Dirge Marshes. Its population the shambling dead; failures of undeath and eager liches. These liches gather and nag at their Empress to spread the quagmire, to make a show of her knew strength. She resists the urge for now.

IV. EMPEROR

"Moorbane", "Mars", Martyne, Emperor of all Mapped Lands and Whatever Lays Beyond.

Gods can grant health, money, love, and victory. But they do so ambiguously, and with surprising frequency, spitefully. Though no one wishes to turn their backs on the gods, such uncertainty is no way to run a business or organise welfare for the common man.

This job falls to the Emperor, who holds the mantle for their entire life. Once dead, the next to hold the title simply emerges. Bloodshed and struggle to claim the role is common but brief as order is far more important than being a ruler. Martyne has been Emperor for thirty years now and shows no sign of slowing.

It is known across the world that having a benevolent unifier of regulation raising the quality of life for the rich and the poor, though maybe not equally. They enforce contracts between businesses, delegate power to Jurors to oversee law, and tax to fund health care and schooling.

Despite being grouped with the Rest for as long as the role has existed, he is one of the few of them who are not granted their power through some unearthly aid. They can still, however, change the face of the world overnight.

THE MINING COMPANIES OF DWARVES

Society of man has little interest to the dwarves of the far west, and whatever goes on in their mountains doesn't matter much to the Emperor. It is beneficial for both sides to acknowledge each other – purchasing their gem stones and rare metals, and minding country borders – and so the fourteen major Companies each year send golden coins to the Emperor as a sign of respect, which he takes as fealty. They're both aware that fealty is not what the gift implies, but there's no need to push it.

V. HIEROPHANT

“The One Who Sees”, Darrenanto, the first of his name, of the Holy See.

The gods are difficult to understand and rarely make themselves clear. Darrenanto doesn't struggle to sift out their message, however. There are those that don't believe in his abilities. Those that used to believe in his abilities. And those who will be persuaded. Predominantly though, Darrenanto's perfect record leaves most kneeling to him as if he himself had control over the messages he translates.

It's unknown why he was chosen. Many think his longevity to be part of his blessing, but those closest to the Holy See know that his hundreds of years are unnaturally prolonged with expensive healing potions and ointments. His family around him know that his gift won't likely be passed onto another member of the See, and so keeping him alive means they can live within the Holy See forever.

With his mother away caring for a secret temple, and his aunt vanished, without the One Who Sees the city-state is vastly weakened.

The Hierophant finds himself with two roles; keep his followers loyal, ready to fight for him, and as a speaker for the gods. These two sometimes are at odds, especially as the gods never intended for their messenger to linger for so long...

VI. LOVERS

“The Twinned Stars”, “The Abhorrence”, Jacobi of the Highest Common Estate and Oswald of the Harmony Merchant Estate.

They're hated in polite culture, not for the reason you're thinking, but for marrying across their social boundaries. The marriage was indeed performed at a time when such a situation had never been considered – there was no law mentioning the marriage of two men, and since one has not been added. The issue, at the time though less so today, was the breach of social boundaries. Someone from the Common estate should not presume to enter the home of a Merchant, invited or otherwise.

This commotion is what caught the attention of the new gods. In particular, Saitada who broke from her grief to watch such a powerful and brave declaration of love. Since then, the couple have been watched by this god, and their love protected. Their sense of temptation dulled outside their love for each other but yet a keener eye than ever for beauty in the world, a subconscious seeking out of that feeling. This

patronage comes with benefits for the boys: their lives extended, to be together forever, and to feel the emotions of others.

VII. CHARIOT

“The Stablemaster”, “Equus”, Expo of the Beasts’ Realm

Expo stands taller than any man, his muscles more defined, his voice deeper. He is, in the eyes of his goddess mother at least, the perfect human. Brigantia used considerable energy to form on Earth and bear seed to create what she hoped was the start of the next step for humanity. Instead, she produced an infertile yet ever-living man.

Expo can be found in the Great Forests, also known as the Beasts’ Realm for the dangers they contain, building a city which he alone lives in. The elves of the forest come to him for company, but never stay long. His wooden buildings feel like tombs to them.

The beasts of the forests all kneel to him. In fact, all beasts understand and sympathize with him and are willing to lend him aid. Two in particular follow him loyally and would lay down their lives; Ptericious and the much younger Flight are two unicorn. Flight was born only from the love Ptericious had for Expo.

VIII. FORTITUDE

“Earth”, Mother Nature.

The land under your feet, not matter how dry or saturated, how barren or fruitful, is the embodiment of Fortitude. She will always be there, long after you. If you are the one destined to destroy her, you will lose yourself quickly after. She will always have the last laugh.

The druids worship her best and try to understand the glacially paced story Mother is telling. Her painful cries are heard by these earth-dwellers and they come to her rescue to purge the harm that has come to her.

IX. HERMIT

“The Greenwoman’s Acolyte”, “Lamplight”, Luciam of the Lords Wake.

Luciam lives just outside of the Holy See and not quite within the Emperor’s land. Bad mapping and unproductive conversations lead to this no man’s land which neither party want to claim, for fear of looking to provoke. Luciam lives here, physically, and socially trapped between the two worlds.

She is the most devote follower of the Empress and acts as her eyes and ears whilst the latter is away. The jackaladon seen flying around the area is Luciam’s faithful pet, and flies messages to the Empress.

The arrangement is frustrating for the acolyte though. With the Old gods gone, few people need the aid of her liege, so she finds herself cramped up in this castle with rarely a guest. It is time, she decides, to begin investigating the whereabouts of the Old. They’re gods, for goodness sake. Whoever heard of gods dying.

With them returned, the Empress shall too.

X. WHEEL OF FORTUNE

“The Emperor’s Whores”, “Women in Waiting”, “The Fates”

There are now thirteen women, and one feminine man, locked away in the Seers Castle. The Emperor, should talk of them come up, makes it as clear as he can that they all approached him for protection. Once their foresight becomes common knowledge, each of them are at risk. Seers Castle is paradise on Earth.

There was just one, who stood by the previous Emperor, but over the past two dozen years more have been found. This is good news, as in their numbers they can come to clearer prophecies. Alone, their vision is clouded by bias and fear.

XI. JUSTICE

“The Jurors”, Dosum.

The Jurors have final say in all matters of law, deferring only reverentially to the Emperor. They comply only with matters of law, and rarely consider the ramifications. The law is changed once an unexpected verdict is ruled. Their numbers change from time to time, but it is accepted that they are all One.

They are masked and draped in black. They offer their verdict by scroll, read aloud by their foreman, who works closely with them. No one knows what lurks underneath the mask. Men appointed by the Emperor, maybe? Ancient beings of immense power? They are neither.

Dosum are creatures who cling to the urges of the most powerful being they can find, and the Emperor has fit this bill for many years. They’ve cyclopean eyes which can see through lies. Stretched, bruised flesh. Claws where hands should be. They can be found in the Netherrealm, where the Emperor sometimes makes expeditions to.

XII. HANGED MAN

“The Coward’s Ghost”, “The Mage’s Traitor”, Dionise of Narovia Lord’s Estate.

Dionise hanged themselves after betraying their close friend, Barnivall. Dionise was the only one of the Rest who knew what tied the Mage’s magic to the Earth and Fire, his strongest magics. When the Rest came to him to indict his friend, he had no choice but to give up the information.

After Barnivall was disgraced, Dionise couldn’t handle the shame and killed himself. Barnivall noticed this and captured his soul and tied it to the Earth. The tie remains in place now, even at considerable cost the Mage’s dwindling energies.

Dionise wanders as a ghost now with his feet tied to the ground, rarely able to communicate or make himself known. He has been of use sometimes when it’s crucial, even in his form. Mostly though, the Rest see him as a coward and deservedly stuck forever.

In his past life, Dionise drew power from sacrifices others made to him, or ones he made to himself during his most self-obsessed, hedonistic times. He oozed this power over time, filling himself and those around him with joy and agelessness.

No one sacrifices to him anymore. Who even knows what it would do.

XIII. DEATH

“The Last Levyman”, Death.

Death has a book filled with names – not given names, but real names – and real names have power. Deleting them snatches the life from that person and ferries them onto the next place. These names are not in any such order, but he goes one by one crossing them off and checking the process is completed.

A mortal may well die before Death gets to their name, and in that case the soul is bound to the Earth until he gets to them. These earth-bound ghosts can only wait and hope to not be driven mad in their solitude. It's these souls, the mad ones, which Valentine usurps. Death is not pleased about this, but he knew her father, and so will give her some time.

Another soul, of course, is Dionise. Death could use his scythe to split the Earth magic tying it down, but like the Rest he finds Dionise disdainful. The madder he gets the better. He deserves it. Dionise is at the top of his list and has been for centuries now.

XIV. TEMPERANCE

“The First Light”, “The Last Light”, “The Most Blessed One”, Grace of the Archangels.

The archangels were a mistake which got away from the gods, too powerful now to clean up. Grace is the most powerful of these creatures and is Good with a blind fury towards it. They have no time for evil and crush it effortlessly. They no longer kneel to the gods, who themselves have shown propensity towards darkness as well as light, and it appears no one has ever reprimanded them for not doing so.

Something to the Archangels is either evil or not, and the punishment is the same for all shades of grey; it must be utterly purged. As arrogant as they've become, they've steered well asides of the Rest. Valentine's evil is quickly catching up with her though, for one. Their preoccupation with the Satyr King slows them.

XV. DEVIL

“Satyr King”, “Satyr Queen”, “The Fallen”, Kather of the Archangels.

The standards of the Archangels are far too high for some, even amongst themselves. They turned on Kather when they faltered and Kather fled.

Kather now hides, using every ounce of his powers, and tries to live simply. She has no intention of lowering his guard or fighting back against a regime that has become vicious and tyrannical. Even cultish.

They linger in a subrealm he created for herself, which he found brimming with hedonistic life. Impressed, the satyrs listen to him, when they can be wrangled together for long enough.

XVI. TOWER

“The orcneas place.” Red Tower.

The Northern Polar Isles are home to the orcneas, birthed from the volcanic Red Tower. It's not known who it was that built the Tower, and the adventurers to discover it are also under suspicion. Between anywhere and there is a frozen ocean, then hundreds of miles more of freezing ocean, before the warmer seas make our coasts.

The orcneas are trapped there, cannibalistic and furious with their lot. The Tower continues to make them though, turning volcanic lava, frozen hearts, and an endless supply of darkness into beasts of rage. The darkness was a parting gift from Belenus, an old god.

The water freezes little by little each year making a land bridge edging closing to civilisation. That's surely some time away though.

XVII. STAR

"Old Guard", Overnide the Pure, Archon of the old world.

Overnide ruled everything before the first Emperor took his place. With the archangels on his side, ruling was as easy as it was severe. It was around the same time as the Old fell that society changed under their feet. Kather stood with the Rest and the new gods against the tyranny she'd help install. With an archangel on their side, Overnide fell.

The half giant still lives though, too powerful to be killed. He's now confined to the east, to a country named for him. *Overnide's Cell*. His power is great, but his spear gone. He rules there as a king, which provoked the title *Emperor* for his successor.

XVII. MOON

"The Wolf", Simond of the Lochdale Common Estate.

Simond was cursed with lycanthropy by some god or other. He has survived from long before the old gods fell, so which of them (and if they're still alive) may well be unknowable now, unless they wish to come forwards.

His age frozen just before thirty years old, he will be forever beautiful. But for the evenings when the moon is at its fullest, when he loses control of his body and turns to a great wolf. During these moonlit hours, his grace and tact are lost and violence overwhelms his senses.

Outside of those agency stealing moments, he is kind and a loyal friend. His friends have grown in number. With each bite that leaves his victim alive making new wolves to join his clan. This is never a choice he makes, at least not knowingly. Across the world there are people who scream his name as they transform. In passion, sometimes. Often anger.

XIX. SUN

"Tree of Knowledge", The Blessed Tree.

An apple from this tree will cure an ailment. The dew from its leaves can wash away a curse. The birds who nest in its branches, and those who eat of them, can see the future. Chewing its bark can provoke a wonderful vision quest, showing you your way to true happiness. The wood inside the soft, young growth is Enlightened Gold.

The tree does not stay in one place long. It's roots grew with the world, creating mountains with its protrusions. Its tell-tale white-and-brown bark can be spotted all over the world. It can kill off its fruit and sprout in another location within days of being disturbed.

THE ORDER OF THE WISE

The order's primary objective is to track down the Blessed Tree as quickly as possible, where ever it has escaped to. Once plucked too much, or over harvested, the tree escape but always reappears somewhere. The Wise do all they can to find it and make vast sums of money selling the fruits. There is a long waiting list of people who have willingly already paid up, despite no promise ever given that they will receive what they need.

Their second part in society is the running of air ships around the world. Travel by caravan or horse is slow, especially when hoping to be the first to find the Tree. Flight is vital to this. Once a tree is found, the air ships are used as taxis. This is a second and more continuous flow of cash.

The third aim of the order is to destroy any competition foolish enough to also hunt the tree. They do everything they can – including martyrdom if needed – to protect the technology behind their air ships. Once the Tree is found, they build a fortified encampment around it and slaughter those nearby who might spread the location.

Forth, of course, is that they are the only ones who know how to smelt the Enlightened Gold. The swords they produce are expensive and exquisite. Their aim is true and a duel with one has never been lost. They last only as long as the sunlight remains within the gold though – a year, maybe. This limitation, and the difficulty in manufacturing them, leaves them with only fourteen available at any one time, typically. One is always kept for the Wise King.

XX. JUDGEMENT

“The End Bringer”, “World Eater”, Wiggett the Closer of the Dusk.

Leaving Wiggett to sleep was much safer than attempting to kill him. If he had woken, the destruction this giant could do to the world would be absolute. The giant was born of the Earth, and as such Mother Nature has pledged to not defend herself once he awakes. His movements alone would shake the world. His steps would fling swathes of land into space.

Best leave him to sleep.

XXI. WORLD

The Europa, The World Ship.

The Europa is a living ship that has not had a captain for centuries, but does require a crew. It finds them in those who want to escape society, their reasons are their own, the ship does not care.

The crew has grown larger than the ship now though and have brought their own their own ships to add to the expanding flotilla. Some of the boats are tied together, making football pitch sized towns floating where the sea takes it.

The Europa leads raids on seaside towns and transports and is said to hold the largest hoard of wealth in the world. Like a dragon, it's all the ship seems to care about.

THE FOURTEEN CREWMEN

The crew of the Europa know what orders to follow from the ship, but not why they're to do it. Raiding treasure appears to be the main reason for the ship's thirst, but it is not true.

The Europa seeks its original crew. Or at least the goblets they last drank from. Deep within the bowls of the ship, further than should be allowed, are the fourteen bodies, including the Captain who the ship longs for his touch once again. Europa only cares for the intimacy with her family once again, but the world may be interested in the secrets the Captain took to his grave.

Tracking down the goblets is impossible, so a wide net must be cast, scooping up hundreds of thousands of golden trinkets along the way.