

Bark at the Moon - 06/26/09

This Week's Recap

Darik summons up a handful of stalwart servitors, and orders them to begin destruction of the ivory tower, and a short while later the jade obelisk crashes to the ground. Maneuvering it is difficult, but they begin the long journey back to Creation.

Once there, they are met in the woods near Black Branches by a tall man with Moonsilver-colored scales along his shoulders and neck. Behind him walk a dozen silver-scaled snakemen in plain gold robes. The air around him is filled with an imperceptible aroma that draws their subconscious minds into patterns of friendship and harmony, and the man introduces himself.

"I am Silver Python." Everyone recognizes the name of one of the most famous Lunars still living from the First Age, and the man continues. "I have hunted Primordial Beasts," he shifts in the twinkle of an eye to the form of Sayla, a forty foot long yellow wyrm that Tse recognizes as being an ancient behemoth from the South, capable of trapping spirits within her claws.

"I hunt the Wyld," another flash and Silver Python is a lion made of pure gold, his dripping saliva causing the undergrowth to smolder. Tse recognizes the form of an abacasterai, horrific wyld beasts whose bites leave aggravated wounds.

"Even Heaven has felt my sting." With a fluid motion, Silver Python leaps into the air and transforms into a giant elemental dragon, his fiery mane lighting braches and trees ablaze. Before the fire can spread, the dragon hurtles skyward and turns from red to blue.

Silver Python spins in the air and a storm grows around him, drenching the area and extinguishing the flames.

The entire display took mere seconds, and it is over almost before they realize it began. "I am Silver Python, and I am glad to meet you."

They introduce themselves and Silver Python explains why he is here. He has heard through their pack that they intend to take the obelisk to Halta and use it to assault and drive away the Fair Folk living within the city. While he expresses no disapproval towards the act itself, he is unhappy with the timing. Halta has a treaty with the Fair Folk which will last for two more years, and he wishes to see that period end peacefully. Afterwards, he says, the Haltans are on their own to fend for themselves.

The group agrees, though they are concerned that Voice of Many may not like the delay, as it was his plan to begin with. But Silver Python tells them not to fear, he will speak to the Full Moon and smooth things out. He lets them know he appreciates their support, and will not forget it. He can be found at his manse in Sal-Maneth to the north, and if he is not there, his beastmen will know how to contact him.

The two groups part ways and the Lunars take the obelisk to Black Branches to keep it safe.

A little over a week later they have traversed the Wyld again, following up on the tales of the Mushroom King and his healing fountain. The Mushroom King lives in the Valley of Golden Needles, so named for its metallic pine

trees. At the edge of the valley they come across a village. Walking around the village are many hale and hearty people, though none seem to own more than a loincloth.

Abisi scouts ahead and sees people fishing at a small pond. There appears to be no danger at all in this sleepy, peaceful hollow.

The group comes into town and is quickly met by several people speaking Old Realm, which Darik translates. They are introduced to a Dragon Blooded sorcerer who does not give his name, but is otherwise very free with information.

It seems their trip was less successful than they'd hoped, but not a complete loss. The fountain's waters cannot be carried off, and one must offer up a sacrifice of something truly held important in order to access it. But the waters can heal not only physical wounds, but also mental ones, making it a useful spot should anyone succumb to the derangements of the Wyld.

Tse notices mold growing on the back of Ming's neck and they brush it away. The Mushroom King himself wears a cloak of mold that is believed to whisper to

him, possibly being the source of the immortal's infrequent hunts of men in the valley. But as they do not need to reach the fountain yet, they do not stick around to meet him.

They return to Black Branches and begin preparing for battle. Tse hones his speed and agility, gaining the rapidity of a wasp's sting and flexibility of a many-armed monkey. He also vows to avoid senseless killing in the future, and practices techniques for subduing honorable foes.

Ming spends a short while studying the runes and engravings on the obelisk alongside Darik, and gleans much on how to create or repair artifacts of the Old World. He then disappears into the forest for almost a year. When he returns he has discovered an ancient manse held by Tiger Men, and befriended their leader. He now bears their Hearthstone and has begun walking the Path of Tiger Style martial arts.

Abisi also heads into the forest, but towards civilization rather than away from it. As the waiting period comes close to an end, he is nowhere to be found.

The Throne of Sajaukts

The manse known as The Throne of Sajaukts is at the heart of a rain forest. The manse itself covers an area within the rain forest that is roughly 600 yards in diameter. The manse is always cold and wet. It rains often and occasionally snows as well. The forest has many edible plants, yet many of them are poisonous. An ancient forest god, known as Sajaukts, guards the manse, both for her own benefit as well as for the owner of the manse. The manse's constant funneling of power into Sajaukts' form has granted her power that puts her on par with that of the elemental dragons. If the manse were to be destroyed, she would lose all the power it has bestowed upon her. For this reason, Sajaukts guards her throne with great tenacity. The hearth room is a massive mound of gnarled roots that randomly seems to move about within the manse.

Minimally Habitable: Unless an individual brings their own provisions and some sort of portable shelter (such as blankets and a tent) to feed them and protect them from the

environment, then they will need to make survival rolls if they wish to stay within the borders of the manse for any extended period of time.

Geomantic Subtlety: All of the forests within the trees, rocks, and other landmarks all seem almost identical. Tracks are erased quickly by the unfriendly weather of the environment. The guardian Sajaukts and the owner of the manse are both immune to this effect.

Puzzle Manse: The paths and trees of the forest shift at the whim of the manse in order to protect itself from intruders. Many people that stumble into the manse are unaware that they were ever in a manse to begin with as they are herded quickly through or around it by the manse's shifting nature. The guardian Sajaukts and the owner of the manse are both immune to this effect.

Guardian: A Forest Walker named Sajaukts, who's power and abilities have been greatly boosted by the the manse.

The Barless Cage (Artifact ●●)

When the Exalted of the First Age locked away the Eyeless Face and its minions, not all were content with incarceration. A small cabal of Twilights worked together to develop the spells for summoning both lesser and greater Minions of the Eyeless Face. These two spells have survived to this day, and proven to be fairly popular, as the summons are highly customizable and lack the danger inherent in summon a First or Second Circle demon. What is less known is that Kairos, a vengeful Solar who lost his Lunar mate in the battle with the Eyeless Face demanded not only servitude and complete loyalty, but also that his summoned servants never be allowed in the world without his permission. To that end, he crafted the Barless Cage, a round rug woven of the finest Essence Spider silk and Orichalcum threads.

The precursors of Cache Eggs (Wonders of the Lost Age, p. 58), Barless Cages allow the storing of things in Elsewhere, but in this case the artifacts are limited to minions of the Eyeless Face (lesser or greater). Doing so requires unrolling the rug and placing it in a location geomantically appropriate for transportation magics. Finding such a spot is a diceless action requiring five long ticks. The Exalt then spends one mote of essence to activate the rug, creating a pillar of white light atop it. For two motes each, he may either banish a minion standing within the pillar to Elsewhere, or call forth a minion previously banished. As many minions as are available can enter or leave the cage as part of the same action, provided the total cost is paid.

Although Kairos never did it, an exalt with a Barless Cage may give his summoned minions names as they enter the cage. If he does, future uses of the cage can call a specific minion by repeating that minion's name. If he does not, the minion which steps out of the pillar is chosen at random from all those currently locked away. A minion given a name clings to it desperately, and will sometimes fail to respond to calls that do not include its name. Much like the trinkets they collect, a name is an article of individuality and a prized possession until the Minion's death. Named minions have been reported to spend their downtime in the world contorting and pantomiming in an

attempt to find the perfect set of gestures with which to show everyone they meet what their name is.

Design thoughts: Dots are based on the cost for a Cache Egg with a capacity for 10 cubic yards, which is normally 4 dots, and more than would be used to store the maximum number of minions a caster can summon. Given the severe limitation of what can be stored, and the length of time it takes to banish or retrieve the minions, the cage becomes a useful tool but not a "significant advantage in a broad range of circumstances," the guideline for a 3-dot artifact.

Rules of the Game (house rules introduced, rules questions raised and answered, etc.)

Regaining Willpower:

Exalts roll their highest virtue every day in order to regain Willpower, instead of always rolling Conviction.

Mass Combat:

Unless one side is immune to fatigue, we're ignoring the extra rolls created by the fatigue rules in mass combat.

Gem of Adamant Skin:

This only protects from wounds. Damage taken from poison or other non-external sources is not reduced.

Creature Stats:

Creatures from the core book are not in line with those from the setting books in terms of stats, so are not allowed. Creatures from other books are available, and can be re-skinned as desired.

Attack Speed:

Attack speed has a minimum of 3.

Combos:

Adding a charm to a combo d require relearning it, just paying the difference in cost between the two.

High Dice Pools:

If a pool goes over 10, extra dice can be divided by 2 instead of rolled, leaving just 10 or 11 dice to roll. If it's a damage pool, divide by 3 instead.

Craft:

For Exalted (and some supernatural creatures), combine all elemental crafts into a single skill.