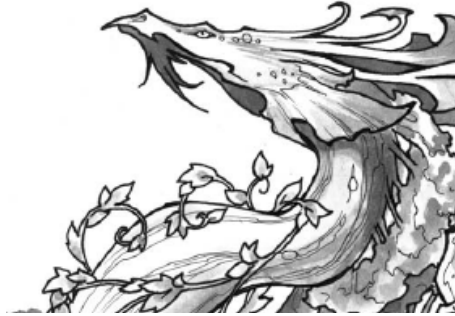


Bark at the Moon - 08/07/09



This Week's Recap

Journeys turn to waypoints as the Creation-Born walk, swim, fly, and think their way towards the Deep Wyld and the Elemental Pole at its far edge.

In the Valley of Immaculate Conception they find women screaming in agony as children tear their way through intact hymens. The next expanse of forest seems normal except for the almost instant fever that accosts all but Lily and Kro-Tan Aura. But this plague-ridden glade is no Great Contagion, and they push through.

Almost as soon as the fevers are gone, they slide into a chapel whose fountain splashes blood. When they see that the fountain is itself alive, the search for Life and the road to the Pole leads them to cut it open and crawl inside.

Cavernous vessels lead to ventricles, and then to _____. Inside the beating heart is a grassy glade, and at the center of that a tiny bottle. But after walking for what feels like days, the bottle's size is proven to be an illusion of perspective, and they find themselves outside the bottle city of Ge' org-e.

As they pass through a cool wooded glen to get a closer look, Lily gasps and looks towards the horizon. "Wyld Storm, brace yourself."

All around them the trees turn to a sandstorm of glass, tearing at their flesh. Only Lily's fragile form succumbs, and then only with a few scratches, but there is worse on the way.

The wind does not stop, but the glass turns to flames. Surrounded by fire, they pull their clothes tight, but Lily cannot bear it and takes a breath. The fire sears her lungs and she almost passes out.

Almost as if it knows it can't get to them that way, the flames turn wispy and white, passing through their flesh to burn away at their souls. Lily screams in agony, and this time nobody escapes the agony. Kro-tan Aura suffers the worst, throwing himself onto his mother in an attempt to protect the Raksha. Angry soul fire rakes out and around the half-caste, and only his force of will keeps him from dying there.

It's fury spent, the Wyldstorm rolls out as it rolled in. Soul fire turns to normal flames, then to a sandstorm of glass, and finally back to a calm, wooded glen.

With the storm passed, they pull themselves together and head towards the city in a bubble. A field of yellow bell flowers plays songs which are danced to by clouds of rainbow butterflies. One

cloud dances briefly with Lily, then flitters away on swift wings of song.

A subtle breath of ruin rolls in on a cold wind. The wind turns the bell music to cacophony and the butterflies to ash. The city grows in the distance, living inside a bubble and protected from the Wyld. This overriding construct of fate seems to be the pinnacle of what the Enshrined Confederacy aims for: Fae, human, and beastmen living together in harmony.

An entryway irises open in the bubble's shell, and the path of strongest life leads to a nursery where Raksha and human mothers nurse their Fae-blooded children. The beauty of it cuts deep into Lily's heart, filling her with longing and regret. Needing to find a place to relax and recuperate, everyone follows her in.

Three of the women bring their babies forward, and one places her child in Lily's hands, drawing forth tears from the Raksha queen. She holds the baby still for several minutes, her heart caught in a twisting spiral of collapse. Then she returns it to her mother, and hums a somber eulogy for greatness lost, renewed purpose shining in her eyes.

Brug waits for sunset and begins the ritual to call forth a stomach bottle bug. Though not enthusiastic about the choice, Tse allows the thing to swim through his stomach and into his belly, where it begins rapidly knitting together the fragments of his seared spirit. Lily admires the thing's handiwork and is reminded of a wyld creature she just imagined. Calling out into the Pure Chaos nearby, she sings into being a crablike creature, which wraps her in itself as both armor and a healing womb.

Afterwards, Ming meets with the city elders and learns that they are the wards of Whisperer in the Leaves, an ancient Unshaped whose goal is to unify

Creation and the Wyld. He barter for trade between Ge' org-e and the Enshrined Confederacy; insisting on, and receiving, equitable terms.

They stay long enough for Kro-Tan's wounds to heal, and then press on towards the Pole.

Beyond a swamp where frogs war with toads over prime fly-catching real estate they find a land where birds dart into the night sky to devour the stars. Past that is a land of mercury, with quicksilver rivers and chrome trees.

Farther in a whispering forest invites them into a quiet glen, where Whisperer in the Leaves's Heart Grace Semiramis introduces herself. Her form vaguely reminiscent of her adoptive mother, Gaia. Every Lunar notices the resemblance, having seen many icons of the consort of Luna. Like Gaia, Semiramis has a desire to protect Creation, though as an Unshaped she is much less capable of that than her Primordial role model.

Semiramis invites the group to join her, and turns to walk into a small green cottage that rapidly grows behind her. All but Lily follow her in, and the doors glide shut behind them as the house grows inward, surrounding the Lunars and forcing its way into their every open orifice.

But where Semiramis touches their Moonsilver tattoos, her grass and vines turn to vapor. With a confused shout, Semiramis demands to know what sort of creatures they are, and resumes her humanoid form.

As Ming rushes to pull away the plants consuming Kro-Tan, they see the stomach of the Unshaped distend into a point, as if something inside is forcing its way out. She tells it to be still, that she can handle the situation, but her

words are not enough. The golden blade of an orichalcum daiklave rips Semiramis in half and as she falls, still pleading for peace, a pale-skinned man with cold dead eyes steps out. His Dawn Caste mark glows with the fire of the Unconquered sun, and he pulls his blade into striking position.

Nhogg, Whisperer in the Leaves' Sword Grace and a being shrouded in mystery dives into battle with those who would threaten him and refuse glorious union. His Dawn mark glows bright, but necrotic energy flows and pulses around him and he slashes his sword with excellent form at and into both Ming and Tse. The blade ignores their flesh and cuts straight into their souls, tearing apart the Essence that makes them Exalted. Tse strikes back with his massive club, but it is easily batted aside. Brug moves away and begins to summon his soul blade, while Ming drops into Tiger stance and leaping at their foe. Unfortunately, the paragon of perfection they face seems to know exactly how to parry any attack.

Tse blurs into a magical flurry of blows, and every single one is blocked by the massive orichalcum blade. But before it is over, Nhogg's anima is flaring high. The golden halo around his head drips black blood that sizzles and burns, disappearing moments before it hits his massive shoulders. The Raksha (if that is what it is) responds with another flurry, tearing away at Tse and Ming's essence again, while also dipping into a defensive stance. His magical sword now in hand, Brug calls out a plan to surround and conquer the man, but just as he finishes relaying it the chaotic terrain shifts from a cool grassy plain to purple trees with wingless birds for flowers. Ming draws his claws into a fist and strikes a powerful blow that glances off the man's rock-hard black robes.

Again Nhogg sprays blackened essence as he dives towards Tse with a pair of soul-cleaving strikes, one of which lands and nearly kills the Lunar. Tse retaliates with another magical flurry, but Nhogg's defense is too strong for him, and each one gets batted aside.

Brug again formulates a plan, and this time the terrain stays steady long enough for them to enact it. Tse flies up and out of the Grace's reach, so Nhogg turns to the lizard-man Ming and manages to drive his blade through the Lunar's soul twice. But it is to no avail, as the three soon drop the thing.

Unsure of what it is, they subdue Nhogg rather than killing him, and bundle him up for return to Creation and possible salvation from the grip of the Wyld. They then return to the Ge'org-e to recuperate from the battle and give their exalted souls time to mend.

Shortly after, they arrive at the edge of the Elemental Pole of Wood. Lily excuses herself, as does Kro-Tan, for neither of them can survive inside the destructive pole.

The Lunars are met just inside the borders of the Pole and greeted by a swarm of wood spiders and their leader, Fodreth, King of the Wood. Ming asks them what is going on, and after a little verbal maneuvering to make sure everyone is on the same side, the elementals explain about Kotomaro's transgressions. Apart from being a horrible ruler, which is dangerous but livable, she has treated with Abyssals, and even invited the Deathlord Dowager of Unrent Veils into her sanctum.

The fallen Solars are teaching Kotomaro powerful martial arts in exchange for access to the Pole, and privacy while there. None of the spirits know what is going on, and they are unable to act as long as Kotomaro orders them not to.

The Lunars are led to the dragon's chamber, a huge empty room formed from constantly growing vines, and before long they are met by Kotomaro, the Hidden Lightning, herself. Pleasantries are hurled out the window when they see graying and decomposing leaves within the elemental's form, something that should not happen here in the seat of all Life. Ming accuses Kotomaro of being tainted by the Underworld, and the dragon proves him correct by dropping into the unmistakable death-rage called Dark Messiah Form.

Brug calls to the elementals to join them in defeating the dragon and protecting the pole, but they cannot go against their lord's commands. Ming leaps in and claws flash, ripping away at the monstrous form of the elemental dragon.

Kotomaro responds by flaring inky blackness from his eyes and darting around the room lightning-swift. He rakes at Brug and Tse, dropping them both to their knees and sending them prostrate with grievous agony from his ravenous blows. But Ming barely manages to avoid the strike aimed at his heart, and retaliates quickly.

As Kotomaro falls, lesser elementals swarm in to devour him, returning him to the cycle of life in the Pole.

The triumphant saviors stride back into the Deep Wyld, ready for another long trek back to Creation, but are instead



greeted by an ecstatic Lily. Ming's bride welcomes him home, and when he looks confused

she taps her foot gently on the hard green ground beneath their feet. From a few hundreds yards away a hauntingly plaintive song arises, wordless and unfamiliar. The ground trembles and slowly rises, as a distant hill rolls away to reveal the spires of a white and orange castle.

Lily leads them to the gates and through the halls to a room atop the foremost spire. She takes her place in a gossamer throne before a huge window, and beckons her king to sit beside her in his silver one. A wave of her hand sends the castle into the air and hurtling through the Wyld towards the Bordermarches.

A few short hours later they are back in the Enshrined Confederacy, where Lily asks her husband to use his earth-shaping powers to clear a place for their new capitol building.

Seat of the confederacy

The wyld ship crafted by Lily is both a vehicle in Creation and a shift-ship designed for travel in the Wyld. Within the borders of Creation it flies at a respectable speed of 250 mph. In the Wyld, the ship greatly enhances the pilot's ability to traverse waypoints, allowing her to make up to six journeys in the time it would normally take to make one. Even faster speeds are possible in the Wyld, though this may strain the pilot's shaping powers.

Should the ship's occupants become the target of Shaping combat, the vessel is so intimidating that it helps protect against assaults by weaker Raksha.

OOO Status

Seat of the Confederacy:

Speed: 125/250mph

Maneuverability: +3R (Lore 2, Ride 4)

Endurance: Requires maintenance every 20 hours of use or 40 hours of rest, lest it suffer one level of unsoakable lethal damage per 10 hours in arrears.

Crew: 1/1

Cargo: 150 passengers plus 3 tons of goods

Armor: 10L/15B

Health Levels: Ux10/Mx5/Cx4/Ix2/D

Weapons: Ram (Speed 8, Accuracy -3 ([Dexterity +Ride] to hit), Damage 24B (30B with dive), Defense –, Rate 1);

Other Notes:

- Riders have 75% cover, or 100% cover if completely within the palace and out of combat.
- 250mph in Creation
- Reduces the multiple action penalty for journeys by 3
- Triples the number of waypoints passed through in a single journey action
- Adds 3 soak against Shaping attacks for all passengers
- Can act as a Monster in sword shaping combat, with an additional +1 accuracy and -1 Speed
- Has been made permanent, and so can survive on its own in Creation (see Endurance).

Ming:

Lily's hold over Ming has solidified, and he is now addicted to her beauty. After a month of being apart, he must roll Willpower difficulty 4 or want to return to her. He can spend 1 Willpower and get a point of Limit to resist for another month, and after 3 points are spent he is cured, at least until she turns into the hottest thing he's ever seen again.

He is also addicted to the powers she bestows upon him. This uses the rules for Wyld addiction (core page 288), but he doesn't have to seek out the Wyld: Lily's boons suffice. The boons she is granting him are:

- 1 mote: get a 2-die bonus on any action that fosters camaraderie between Creation and the Wyld
- 5 motes: give a -(Essence) penalty to someone's action if you can explain how a feeling of camaraderie between Creation and the Wyld would interfere.

He got himself a Ring Grace that looks like a fancy pair of artifact tiger claws. Details on sword and ring shaping can be found [here](#).

Ming, Brug, and Lily:

The oath is still going strong at rating 5 (5-die Oathsworn pool, perfect detection to 50 yards, and a difficulty 5 Conviction test to break it temporarily).

Brug:

Brug modified a recipe for Demon-Trapping Powder, reversing its effects to instead prevent the dematerialization of an already materialized spirit. This Thaumaturgical ritual is part of the Art of Alchemy and has the following stats:

Demon-Trapping Powder (3, Intelligence, 4, 10 hours) – The alchemist brews enough demon-trapping powder for a single use.

Ectoplasmic Net (3, Intelligence, 4, 10 hours) – The alchemist brews enough ectoplasmic netting for a single use.

Tse:

The ectoplasmic nets Tse carries have the following stats:

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Minimums	Cost	Tags
6	+0	Special	3	10	Str ••	Special	-

An Ectoplasmic Net does no damage. Instead, each success above the target's DV prevents the target from dematerializing for 1 action. The net may be dodged as normal, but if successfully parried, whatever weapon was used to block the projectile suffers the effects for 3 actions. If parried with a natural weapon, this prevents the target from dematerializing for 3 actions. If parried with a weapon, only the weapon itself is blocked, the target may dematerialize as normal (provided he is willing to leave his weapon behind).

An alternate form of this alchemical item is called Demon-Trapping Powder. It functions exactly the same except that it must be spread in the air around a dematerialized spirit (usually requiring some form of spirit sight) and it prevents that spirit from materializing for 1 action per threshold success on the attack roll.

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:

In accord with the flavor text, 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.