

Children of Dunsain

Drastic fantasy drama

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Contents

About the game

| | |
|--|----|
| Children of Dunsain – introduction..... | 2 |
| Aesthetics..... | 4 |
| Practical advice..... | 5 |
| Becoming and Unfolding..... | 6 |
| Mechanics for Unfolding: Moves..... | 8 |
| The role of the game master, and GM moves..... | 8 |
| Your tricks..... | 12 |
| Player moves..... | 13 |
| <i>Open your mind to the dreams of Dunsain</i> | 14 |
| <i>Help or hinder</i> | 15 |
| Temper moves..... | 16 |
| Motivations and talents..... | 18 |
| Becoming in details..... | 22 |
| Unfolding in details..... | 26 |

Handouts and aid sheets

| | |
|--|----|
| Table of handouts and aid sheets..... | 28 |
| Handouts for Becoming..... | 29 |
| Handouts and aid sheets for Unfolding..... | 36 |
| Game master's aid sheets..... | 41 |
| Character sheets..... | 44 |
| Pictures..... | 57 |

PRINT THE GAME single sided, in portrait format. The six pictures on pp. 57-62 like being in colour, but it's not strictly necessary. The rest can be printed in black and white.



Children of Dunsain – introduction

Her hair is forest, Her shoulders hills. The goddess Dunsain is the land itself, and the lives of the people is what She dreams. The game is not about Her, but about a handful of unusual people who dream the goddess to life. Their forbidden love, their lust for power, their thirst for revenge and justice is the nerve in Her dreams. They are the children of Dunsain.

Children of Dunsain is fantasy drama for three or four players and a game master, and takes about four hours to play.



The game is about creating the children as characters, and the world they live in, and then playing them to find out who they are. The game is in two parts, *Becoming* and *Unfolding*. In the first you create the world and the characters based on some constraints and exercises, and play them forth. This is play, not just preparation. In the second you place them in terrible conflict with one another to see what they'll do. The plot is what they do, and success and failure is determined by a dice mechanic. The game stops when you have come to know the children.

Children of Dunsain is inspired by the old (pre Tolkien wave) fantasy short stories of Lord Dunsany. You could say that it's a bit like *Game of Thrones*, but weirder. As a game, **Children of Dunsain** aims to create a situation where the players (and the GM) have power but not much control, both regarding the lives of the player characters in the fiction, and regarding the creation of setting and story in play, at the table. Making an exciting experience out of emergent co-creation is an important goal of the game.

The fuel in the engine of the game is injustice and oppression. Not in order to wallow in badness, but because injustice and oppression have an ambiguity to them. One person's resource or justification is another's problem, shame or nightmare. And injustice ties the player characters' own issues to setting and society. The characters' own motivations revolve around power, revenge and forbidden love – all things connected with injustice.

The heart of the game is the struggling, dreaming, passionate, awful and wonderful characters that the players create and play in the beautiful, bloody, strange land of Dunsain. Their relations with each other are the meat of the game. Everything in the game must serve the purpose of helping us understand the land and in particular Her children. There will be much conflict between the player characters, but the interesting thing is who they are, not whether they attain their goals. There's no fixed plot and it's not really very important how things turn out. Understanding and the joy of creation is the order of the day.

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A handful of Danish roleplaying games are ancestors of Dunsain: Anne Vinkel's *The City Melolonthinae* took on single-session *Apocalypse World*-type play, Mads Kirchoff's *Towards the Stars* did interesting things with cooperative and constraint-based setting creation, and Lærke Pedersen's *Verona* had characters based on the four tempers with good room for player interpretation. This game is illustrated with Sidney Sime's illustrations for Lord Dunsany's wondrous stories. Mechanically, *Children of Dunsain* is an adapted and simplified version of D. Vincent Baker's game *Apocalypse World*, so thanks to him too.



Aesthetics

The game has no proper plot, but it has a structure, some themes and not least an aesthetic. Now "aesthetic" can mean a great many rather hairy things, but what I mean by it in THIS context is standards for what is to be considered beautiful and desirable; what sort of an experience we're aiming for here.

It's fantasy. Something with magic and drastic drama in a pre- or non-modern context. There's really just one very fantastic element in the game, and that's the notion that the land is a dreaming goddess, and that the player characters can seek knowledge, blessings and curses by opening their minds to Her – which in practice means to you, as game master. Apart from Her it's a setting where actions have consequences and the shit smells. It's a setting where injustice and oppression shape and twist people's lives, which makes it worthwhile to stand up for yourself and maybe even for others. Not just because it's beautiful that people fight (and it IS beautiful in the somewhat violent aesthetic of this game), but because it *matters*. Because with oppression and people's attempts to live with it or fight it, there's something *at stake*.

Established facts about Dunsain as a setting are to be found on the sheet "What we know of Dunsain and Her children" (Becoming a). Here are some of the things that define the game aesthetically and genre-wise:

- **Dunsain is the name of the land**, and the land is also a dreaming goddess.
- **The player characters are "Children of Dunsain"**, some of the unusual people who can open their minds to the dreams of the goddess.
- **Magic is real** but subtle; visions, illusions and curses, not fireballs and people flying around.
- **Swords and spears**, not guns and bombs.
- People are **human**, not orcs and elves
- There are **no intelligent monsters**. If there are dragons, they're dumb animals.

Injustice and violence are (as mentioned) important elements of the game. On some level it's (aesthetically) cool that it's wild and violent, but it's also a core element of the style of the game that violence and oppression *matter* beyond pure style. The same can also be said of sex in **Children of Dunsain**.

An important element in the aesthetic of the game is the names. The name list is populated by old French and German names, but jumbled and de-grammatized to make them usable by both genders, as well as a little strange. Any name in the game is gender neutral and *maybe* becomes gendered when attached to a person.

Practical advice

Children of Dunsain is a game where you as game master have a lot of things to keep track of. Read the game carefully. If you're already Apocalypse World-savvy, please don't make too many assumptions. There's a lot of handouts and aid sheets for the game, which you and the players will need during the game. It will be a lot easier if you are well organized, about like this:

First, print the game single sided, in portrait format. The six pictures on pp. 57-62 like being printed in colour, but it's not strictly necessary. The rest of the game can be printed in black and white. Cut out in advance tempers/names (page 46) and motivations/talents (pp. 55-56). Cut horizontally, not vertically.

Second, you'll need quite a bit of space on the table where you play. There will be a lot of papers on the table that both you and your players must have access to.

Third, organize all your papers in piles and in the right order, so that you have them at hand when you need them. Do this during point 1 of *Becoming*, while the players are looking at pictures. If possible, lay out your paper piles on a separate table. Lay out the six pictures on the main table, and prepare the following piles:

- *Becoming* sheet a-l
- *Unfolding* sheet a-e
- *Character sheets*: Tempers/names, character sheets and motivations/talents, with tempers/names on top.

Also lay out your two GM cheat sheets and your sheet for GM notes in front of your own seat at the play table.

After entering play, the two maps of Dunsain and Kora, as well as the name list, should always end up in the middle of the table, where everyone can reach them.

The phase *Becoming* should take something like 1½ hours, *Unfolding* 2-2½ hours.

Of **other materials** you'll need pens or pencils, six-sided dice (two per player is good, the GM needs none) and clear tape to attach names/tempers and motivations/talents to the character sheets.

Becoming and Unfolding

The game has two parts, *Becoming* and *Unfolding*. *Unfolding* resembles traditional roleplaying most, but both are important and coherent parts of *Children of Dunsain*. In *Becoming* you'll transform the setting and the player characters from sketches into colourful but necessarily slightly flat portrayals. In *Unfolding* you'll pound and test the player characters, and through them the world, and put them in situations where the choices aren't easy. In this way you'll make them deep and richly textured, as much as fiction invented in one sitting can be. This, rather than the non-existent plot, or the question of how it will all end, is the focus of the game. It's quite possible the game won't end neatly wrapped up, and that's OK.

All this will be explained in concrete instructions in the sections **Becoming in details** and **Unfolding in details**. Here are the ideas behind doing it this way.

One of the first parts of *Becoming* is the players agreeing on what injustices they want to have in play. The game has four categories: Class & wealth, religion, racism and gender & sexuality. They must pick two of the categories to be truly, terribly unfair, one to be ordinarily tiresome and one to be hardly unfair at all. Thus the players can choose what they want to fight for and over, and also pick a way for their fantasy to be nice. The last bit also puts the injustice in perspective. Later on the just category should be visible, as well as the unjust ones – if there's no racism, there should be people of all colours around, not just invisibly assumed white folks. And if gender and sexuality are not a problem, there should be warrior women and gay couples, as common and unproblematic things. The action of the game in *Unfolding* can get a little transgressive, so here at the start of *Becoming*, the players have a chance to pick and choose what they do and don't want to play with. Not everyone likes to play with everything.

The Goddess and Religion

If religion is important in the game, society probably has lots of opinions about Dunsain and Her will. *We* know that she has no plan, and can be persuaded to curse or bless arbitrarily. Thus religious oppression isn't really about the will of Dunsain, but about society using the *idea* of Her will to justify itself, imposing lots of opinions on Her in the process. Religion: It's about people.

After a more traditional brainstorm of colour for Dunsain it's time for a semi-meditative "sensuality exercise", where the players close their eyes and imagine the land and the people, and then answer some questions from the GM to get them to apply concrete expressions and consequences to the injustices, in a way that doesn't involve agreeing and negotiating. This exercise is mirrored in the epilogue at the end of *Unfolding*.

Then the players divide the four classical tempers between them. Each temper comes with a name and a temper move (see **Mechanics for Unfolding: Moves**). The players should pick a temper unlike their own. Mention that the primary role of the tempers is to handle problems by playing the temper hard; this is what the mechanical move does.

Then the players brainstorm their childhood, and get to know the mechanics by playing a couple of childhood scenes, and we get to learn more about the characters and the dreaming goddess that they have in common through yet another sensuality exercise about their mystical dreams.

After that it's time to choose motivations, but without knowing about the talents that come with them. When the players have had a moment to integrate motivations and (in some cases perhaps surprising) talents into their budding player characters, they must agree on about how old they'll be at the start of *Unfolding* (they're about the same age), and give tentative answers to three questions:

- What *specifically* is it that you desire?
- Why can't you get it, or keep it?
- Who do you love?

Finally you'll help determine the starting situation of *Unfolding* with provocative questions for the players and a couple of non-violent scenes, and then you leave consensus-ish storytelling behind for the rougher play of *Unfolding*.

In *Unfolding* you'll play fast-paced drama with violence, sex and fierce words and actions, all to find out if the easy answers you came up with really hold true. How far will they go to get things their way? Who do they really love? How do they handle serious adversity? Because the player characters' motivations and the unstable situation ensure conflict between the players rather than party style concerted action against an external enemy, *Unfolding* might resemble "player versus player", but winning or not isn't the *point*. *Unfolding* ends when you have a good sense of who the characters are, not necessarily when all loose ends are wrapped up.

Unfolding is played in three parts. In each part, every player must have opportunity to do something strongly proactive AND to react to what the other players might have thrown their way. As game master, you must give the players space as well as challenge them (and help them challenge each other), and make sure that their action have the consequences that they need. Your goals, constraints and guidelines are described in the section **Mechanics for Unfolding: Moves**, and summed up on one of your cheat sheets (the other one deals with talents). Very briefly, you must keep the focus on the unfolding of the characters and of Dunsain, keep the heat up and refrain from blocking the players. If a player character should die during the two first parts (and this can easily happen), they still have a chance to affect the game through the handout **You're dead – now what?**, which gives the rules for haunting.

At the end of *Unfolding*, you'll all do the sensuality exercise Epilogue, where you say goodbye to the characters and to the land.

Mechanics for Unfolding: Moves

This section describes how you as game master are to handle the actions of the players in the second part of the game, *Unfolding*.

Children of Dunsain has a drama system, not a combat system. We deal with combat mechanically because it can be dramatically interesting. Forget about combat rounds, hit points and so on, and use the system to drive and handle the drama – which might or might not involve violence.

Moves, the mechanics of the game

The basis of the mechanics of the game is *moves*. Moves are both character traits and ways to do something decisive – and ultimately, you are what you do.



The players must roll dice for their moves if they want to do something that it isn't clear that they could just do. The GM has moves too, though they are less obvious and don't involve dice rolls; they are described below. Both player moves and GM moves are what happens when someone says something decisive which changes the situation in the game, and which helps us get to know the characters better. *When someone makes a move, it changes the situation.*

The mechanics are inspired by Vincent Baker's *Apocalypse World*, but I advise seasoned *Apocalypse World* players to read carefully and not assume too much.

The role of the game master, and GM moves

In *Children of Dunsain*, the relation between players, GM and writer isn't quite like in most other roleplaying games. First and foremost, there's no plot which I have written and through which you must lead the players. I've provided constraints, rules and the means to hit a certain aesthetic, and written some tools and explanations. The players are to create the setting based on the aesthetic and some of the constraints, and then to play their characters with a view to exploring them while continuing to flesh out the setting. As game master you are to help the players and challenge them, and make the fictional world around them seem dynamic and alive.

You are NOT to guard the plot, and you are not to create a story – the story is who the player characters turn out to be, in their proper context, which is the version of Dunsain that you and the players create.

Here follows, in bullet point form, how you as game master should play the game. There's a GM cheat sheet with ends, constraints and important pointers (page 43).

Your ends: These should be the clear and immediate purpose of everything you do and say as GM. Do nothing that doesn't further these two.

- **Find out who the PC's are.** This is the primary focus of the game, and everything else should support it. We already know that they're unusual and formidable, but how and why, and what are their secret pains?
- **Make Dunsain dynamic and believable.** That doesn't necessarily mean realistic in the classical sense. Dunsain is fantastic! Both as land and goddess.

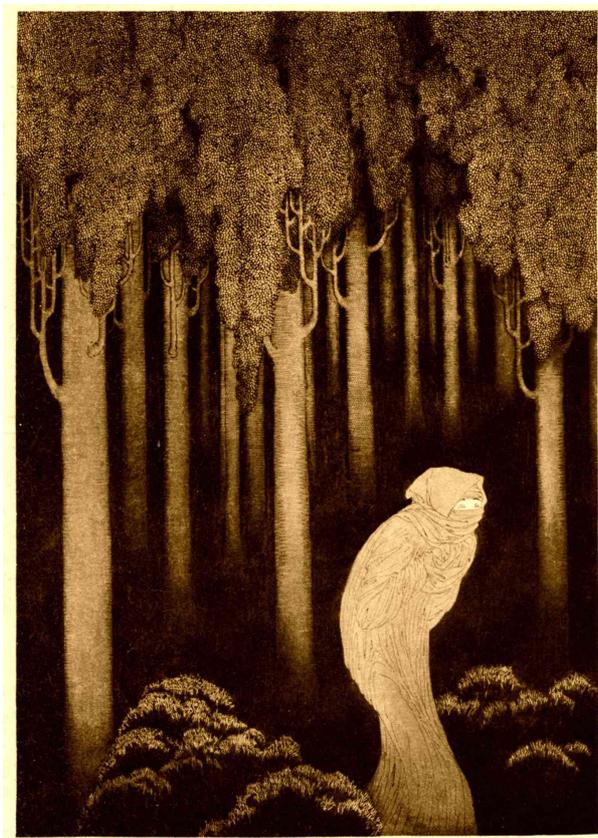
Your constraints: Here are the most important differences from how one "normally" runs games. These constraints might sound a little harsh, but I promise that they make it interesting and exciting to run the game.

- **Don't block the players.** Let their actions have consequences, whether good or bad. When they make moves, it *must* cause changes. You are in charge of handling consequences in the game, and this is your duty.
- **Don't plan outcomes.** Seriously, don't. The plot is what the players do. Pushing the players to find out what they'll do (and thus who their characters are), good. Tweak to bring themes into play at relevant times, fine. Pushing players towards pre-planned situations in the name of "the good story", no!
- **Don't protect your people and places.** The actions of the players must have their full consequences. You're not to protect the status quo more than the status quo protects itself, and since you can't plan outcomes, you have no reason to save people and places for later. Be ready to let anyone and anything come to a terrible end if that is what makes the most sense in context. You're also not to protect player characters, just give the players a chance to react.

Your means: When the players fail a dice roll, do something catastrophic or look expectantly at you, it's time for you to make a **move**. Your moves are less formalized than those of the players, and you don't call your moves "moves", just say something that moves the game along. Below are some guidelines and ideas for kinds of things you can do, but the central idea is simply this:

*Say something that **moves the game forward**, in a way that is **believable and close to the fiction** and the actions of the players, and that **challenges and presses the players**.*

The most important thing is that you change the situation or move on, so rolling again isn't relevant, and that you respect your GM constraints. You don't roll dice for non-player characters or other things under your control – only the players ever roll dice. Instead, you have **risk** of a given outcome, which you name. **Risk** is a key word that you use when you want to push the players with your moves. It means



that the players can avoid the stated outcome by making a move that averts the risk in a meaningful manner. Also, if this is what makes sense, you can simply declare that something happens. You're not competing with the players as GM – that's not what you're here for. You don't have to let yourself be constrained by game mechanical fairness, if fairness isn't what best serves your two main ends.

Both for you and for the players, a few decisive moves are better than many. The outcomes are more interesting than blow-by-blow, and this is NOT a system that uses "combat rounds". Also you can say things without it being a move. Describe to the players, answer their questions – it doesn't have to be moves. Moves are for when you MOVE!

Examples of GM moves

Here are four overall categories of things that you can do with GM moves. Don't worry about the the exact details of just what category you're doing using for what, just stick to the central idea of GM moves.

Foreshadow danger. Give warnings of potential future danger or bad things happening elsewhere. It's a bit soft when you move like this, close to just talking, but it gives an amazing feeling of both pressure and coherence. Any challenge in the game seems much more dramatic if it's been foreshadowed. Also, it's convenient not to be obliged to strike with crushing blows every time you make a move.

Example: *Frieder, Placide looks at you and for a moment she looks cunning, as if she's smelling profit. Then she smiles and hands you the bag. What do you do?*

Change the conditions. Separate them (could be with cunning scene framing rather than with force), put them together (ditto), capture them (with physical or social violence).

Example: *Korbeld, the city guard seizes you, and they are too numerous to resist. Moments later, the iron door of the jail cell slams behind you.*

Threaten and promise. You can offer them an opportunity, if only they're willing to seize it, hard. Or it can be a danger that they have to deal with. It can be "if you do that, this happens" (keep your word! if they do that, this happens) or "if you do that, you run the **risk** of this happening". Remember that **risk** is a key word that means they can avoid the stated consequences by making a move.

Example: *Mazaire, there are three of them, they're armed with clubs and they're angry. If you try to force your way past them, you risk a serious beating. What do you do?*

Deal out hard consequences. Wounds, death or abuse, for PC's or for NPC's that the players care about. Harm is told rather than counted, but that makes it no less serious. Hard consequences is often what happens when a risk is realized.

Example: *Seidel, Thierre beats aside your parry and strikes you to the ground with a sword pommel to the face. Now that you can't protect him, they fall upon Nathal and stab him until the screaming stops.*

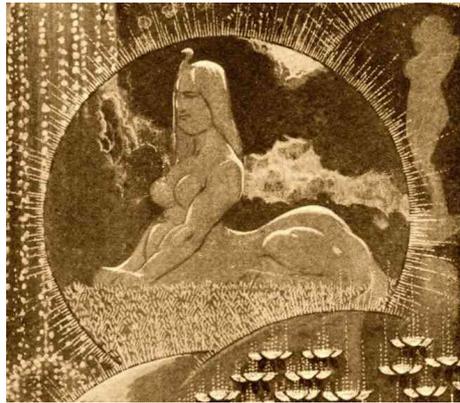
After most moves, ask "what do you do?"

You make your moves when it's time for you as game master to say something decisive. It's time to frame a scene, and a player isn't doing it, or a player has failed a dice roll (five or less), or if the scene stops and the players look at you expectantly.

Thus:

- **When you frame a scene.** Perhaps after having asked a player what they want to do, and perhaps by promising them an opportunity. Foreshadowing is good too.
- **When the players say something that demands a clear reaction from you.** They need you in order to interact with the fiction when there's more at stake than conversation and colour. Be there for them.
- **When a player fails a roll.** That is gets a total result of five or less. Make it felt; what happens should be more than just nothing, the circumstances should change in such a way that rolling again won't be relevant. If a player can "spam" a move in a given situation, you're doing something wrong.

- **When no player takes clear initiative.** And if it doesn't seem like the scene is over. Consider if the scene might benefit from just being cut to other PC's elsewhere, but otherwise, make a move to give the players something to react to.
- **When you want to end a scene with a bang.** Use a move to make a cliffhanger. Note that you can also end a scene quietly, and that the players will often be drastic for you. Do it to be dramatic, not to be annoying.



Your tricks: These are rules of thumb, not the law.

- **Address the player characters, not the players.** As soon as the player characters have names, call your players by those names when you address them inside or about the fiction.
- **Be generous.** With information, with cooperative NPC's. If the players give NPC's a good motive to cooperate, let it pay off if it could be believable.
- **Make your NPC's people.** They're not game pieces, they have hopes and fears and reasons to do what they do. Sometimes really bad reasons, but reasons that aren't "what's best for the story". Give them names if it makes any sense at all. When you think NPC's, consider how they're affected by the in/justices, and how they take part in them. That gives you an idea of something to grasp for, if you need something to say about them.
- **Ask questions.** If you're wondering about some aspect of Dunsain. Not always, but often, and not always of the obvious player.
- **Build upon what the players come up with.** *Especially* if it doesn't fit neatly and intuitively into the context.

Player moves

"Moves" work a bit differently for players and GM, but there's a common core: Making a move is when you say something that seriously changes the situation. The players' moves are mechanically formalized, or take place if they simply do something drastic that they would be able to do just like that. GM moves are for when it's time for the GM to say something decisive that the players have to deal with. Both players and GM can say lots of good and beautiful things without it necessarily being moves, but moves are where the game *moves*.

The players have three formalized moves each. *Open your mind to the dreams of Dunsain*, which everyone has, *temper moves* that everyone has a slightly different one of, usable as generic problem handling move, and a *talent move* which comes attached to their motivation. Finally it's also a move if they do and say things which have drastic consequences. *Open your mind* and *temper moves* require dice rolls. *Talent moves* normally don't, but using them might entail *risk*, which makes it relevant to use temper moves. The same is true for "ordinary" drastic action.

All mechanical player moves follow the model failure on 5 or less on 2d6, weak success or success-but on 6-8 and strong success (almost) without side effects on 9 or better. For *open your mind* the middle result is already defined in the move, but with temper moves you'll have to define the "but" in the yes-but of the middle result. Naturally, you should use the "but" to poke at the players to learn who they are. See more details under GM notes for temper moves.

It's worth noting that there aren't necessarily moves for making NPC's do what you want, though a number of the talents make it easier. Getting NPC's to do what you want requires believable and relevant rewards, promises or threats. That in turn can create dangerous situations that might involve risk and thus moves, but NPC's do what PC's want them to if the PC's give them something they desire or threaten them with something they actually fear.

When players speak

In a sense the players aren't just acting when they make moves, but also when they speak about Dunsain and the background. The standard way for players to speak is by asking the GM about what's happening in the fiction, and then saying what their characters do. We could call that **asking**. *Children of Dunsain* also has the potential for another kind of player speech, which is **telling**. Here, players openly co-create the setting without necessarily involving mechanics. Rejoice, create with them, use their input! Do put your own fingerprints on it, but for Dunsain's sake don't turn it against them and trick and punish them for making things up. If they use co-creation aggressively to undermine other players in a tiresome way, address it directly, without manipulation.

Common moves

The player characters have their relationship with Dunsain in common, and their different tempers work in much the same way. Finally the procedure for helping or hindering other PC's is also a general rule.

Open your mind to the dreams of Dunsain

Do it for one of the following (the player chooses):

- She grants you **knowledge you can put to immediate practical use** (to accomplish something decisive).
- She comforts you and **cleanses you of poison, illness or madness**.
- She **curse one of your enemies** with poison, illness or madness. You choose the enemy, Dunsain shapes the curse.

You open your mind with trance or fierce ritual, **she** asks you a question – answer it with complete honesty.

Roll 2d6 if you use mental discipline or a minimal ritual, or 2d6+1 if you use a fierce ritual and bring a sacrifice of heart's blood or sex in Her honour.

- 9+: Dunsain grants your request, and tells you something interesting about your situation.
- 6-8: Dunsain grants your request, and tells you something interesting about your situation. Also, you're exhausted and can't call upon the Goddess again until after you've had a good night's rest.

to 5: It is dangerous for mortals to open up to divine madness.

GM notes for *Open your mind*: Use the opportunity to ask about their secrets! It is a critical element of the game, which rewards them for being co-creators through questions about their secrets – here they can tell you just what parts of the game interest them the most right now, if you ask cleverly. Refer to your notes for things to ask about, and allow yourself to be actively curious – in your capacity of being Dunsain. Be very generous and a little cruel. This move makes all the player characters mighty sorcerers and visionaries. Failed rolls can for example be used to *foreshadow* with disquieting visions, to *capture* by locking them temporarily in dreams (and moving the spotlight to others), to *harm* by striking them or theirs with curses or to *threaten* them with problems (and maybe at the same time make *promises* to others) by having them blurt out secrets in their ecstasy.

Example of *Open your mind*: Mazaire has been cursed with oozing boils because Frieder has called down the wrath of Dunsain.

- M: *I seek refuge in the stables, close my eyes and open my mind to the dreams of the Goddess to seek comfort and healing.* (chooses cleansing)
- M: Rols 2d6 to use trance and gets 8, a middling result. (If Mazaire had, say, killed a horse to call upon Dunsain, the same roll would have given a result of 9, a clear success.)
- GM: *Dunsain comes to you, clad in the night sky, lifts you up and takes you to her bosom, "What do you fear more than death, my child?"* (Asks a question.)
- M: *Humiliation. I couldn't bear hearing the mocking laughter of the mob again.* (Answers.)
- GM: *You see a vision of the crowd in the market square in Kora. They glare angrily towards the palace, beggars, traders and fishwives alike.* (Tells something interesting.) *Then the vision is gone, and the gentle hands of Dunsain wash away your aching boils. "Shh, my child, everything will be alright." Then you wake up, exhausted but cured.* (GM confirms the cleansing.) *Remember that you can't call upon Dunsain again until you've had a good night's rest.*
- M: *Oof! I have no time for sleep, I saddle up and hurry towards the palace...*

What is the Goddess?

The bit about the Goddess, her dreams and her children is of course a metaphor, but in a fantasy game like this, it's also literal. The game at the table and the fiction of the game mirror each other. Within some rules and boundaries, the players have influence over the fiction, both in co-operation and in conflict, and so it is for the player characters too. They're powerful and able to literally change their situation, but they're also bound by their society, their background and their nature, and by each other. And in the end, that's what the theme of the game is: We're able to shape our own situation, but we're also bound by our society and condition, and for better or worse, we're in it together.

Help or hinder other player characters. This is not an independent move in itself, but using a move to back up or sabotage the efforts of another player.

If you do something that will obviously help or hinder another player character in something they're doing now, you can either give +1 (help) or -2 (hinder). No matter how many help or hinder, help or hindrance can't in total exceed +1 or -2. If another player character is trying to do bad things to you, hindering is a *great* idea.

If you follow up hard on a move just successfully made by someone else, it counts as them having helped you.

Temper moves

There are four tempers, and they come with character names and a basic description. Each temper also has a move. Temper moves are used to do things under pressure, but can't work miracles.

In practice all players pick a temper, preferably one unlike their own. Each can be chosen by one player. Name and move are not gender specific.

- ***Phlegmatic***. Frieder. When you act or speak, calmly, to bring the chaotic situation under control, roll 2d6.
- ***Choleric***. Korheld. When you lash out in anger, in word or deed, and use the fire in your blood to defeat your problems, roll 2d6.
- ***Melancholy***. Mazaire. With a heavy heart, you take drastic action or speak dramatic words to escape a tight spot – roll 2d6.
- ***Sanguine***. Seidel. When you speak or act, wildly and with singing blood, to break free of trouble, roll 2d6.

Note that if you want to roll the dice and thus get a chance of success, you *must* hit the move's activation condition in the fiction. You can't just name the move and roll.

9+: You get away with it.

6-8: You get out of trouble, mostly. The game master gives you a cost or a hard choice.

to 5: It goes terribly wrong.

GM notes for temper moves: When you want to press the players, work in the key word *risk* and some ugly consequence. This means that it happens if they DON'T make a move and roll dice (or use their talent strongly). Be aware of two things regarding temper moves: They MUST hit the move's activation condition to be allowed to roll, and 6-8 means they have success BUT that there are ALSO costs. Middle results need teeth, but not so many that it's no success at all. Do make up complications which...

- ...make things more interesting in ways that you would like to see, and which puts the players and their motivations on collision course.
- ...which poke the players' core conflicts and help us discover who they really are (but again, remember that 6-8 is a success).

Here's a couple of things to fall back on that will usually work OK.

- In a social situation, someone gets suspicious but doesn't act on it right now.
- In a physically challenging situation, Our Hero gets lightly wounded. This doesn't mean much right now, but sets the stage for worse outcomes.

Example of a temper move in use:

Korheld (choleric) is bringing the children Renie and Ulrein to safety from the street riots that Seidel has incited.

GM: *Korheld, there's a crowd in terrified flight coming your way down the narrow alley, and you **risk** being separated and maybe trampled. What do you do?* (Makes a threatening GM move. Note "risk".)

K: *I keep cool and pull us to the side.*

GM: *That doesn't sound very angry?* (Helpfully points out that this doesn't activate Korheld's **choleric** move.)

K: *Err, I mean, I shout and brandish my knife at the crowd, while pushing the children behind me.* (An acceptable activation.)

GM: *Great, roll the dice.*

K: *Rolls 2d6, gets 7. I seem to succeed in standing against the first rush of the crowd.*

GM: (Thinks for a few seconds, which is OK.) *Yes, of course, and you draw blood from several people who are more or less pushed onto your knife. But they are too many to stand against for long, and then you hear Renie and Ulrein scream behind you as they're about to get dragged away from you. You can reach out and hold on to one of them, but not both. What do you do?* (This is a "hard choice." A "cost" could have been that Korheld succeeded in protecting both children, but got hurt in the process.)

K: *Argh! I grab ...Ulrein. Then I'll have to ask the Goddess later what happened to Renie.*

Motivations and talent moves

Everyone picks a motivation. From your motivation you also get your special move, the thing that makes you quite unusually formidable, that is aside from being able to open your mind to the dreams of Dunsain (which is pretty badass, too!).

- *Wants to keep on ruling Kora.* Gives **Ruler**.
- *Wants to seize power over Kora.* Gives **Tempter**.
- *Mortally, permanently in love.* And in one of the other PC's. Gives **Deadly**.
- *Terribly, permanently in love.* And in one of the other PC's. Gives **Fiery speaker**.
- *Wants to avenge, free and raise up an oppressed group.* Gives **Mighty**.
- *Wants horrible revenge against the one who wronged you.* Naturally, that's one of the other PC's. Gives **Fascinating**.

The way **all the talents** work is that in some field, you can do much more than normal people. That is, you as GM should let the PC's get away with much more in that area. They can do more than others without it entailing *risk*, and if they take *risks* they can do truly impressive things.

The talents are a bit "askew" on the motivations and the situations they come with. They are amazingly strong and useful, but they're not necessarily the talent that would help most with your motivation, and the combinations will often put people in slightly awkward situations. For example, you get the talent **Mighty** from the motivation *Wants to avenge, free and raise up an oppressed group*, and it means that you win any fair and open fight. But the motivation will often mean that you end up in fights that very much *aren't* fair...

A number of the talents primarily serve to affect NPC's singly, namely **Ruler**, **Tempter** and **Fascinating** (**Ruler** and **Tempter** can also work collectively if the players thing big). The important thing to remember as game master is that the advice to be generous with cooperative NPC's applies that much more when these talents are in play. When they're used, NPC's only struggle if complying would do complete violence to the very core of their personalities.

And now, the individual talents and advice on how to deal with them as GM.

Talent: *Ruler*

When you play upon the two main injustices of your society, people do as you tell them. Threaten the oppressed with your power and right to dominate them, or promise them a bit of protection. Or remind your subjects of their fear of external or internal enemies. Then, they'll almost always do as you say.

You don't have to like it, but this is how you really get people to obey. If the situation is very tense, you *risk* trouble from using your talent.

GM notes on *Ruler*: This talent gives the ruler an incentive for exploiting and supporting the status quo. Two things are important to keep in mind, that the talent doesn't require the player to *like* being terrible, and that you as GM must remember to let NPC's respond strongly to the talent, whether it's used overtly or discreetly. Be extra generous with cooperative NPC's when this talent is used.

Talent: *Tempter*

You have an eye for people's hope and greed, and by appealing to greed and hopes with promises of reward, you can get people to serve you, and to risk a lot for you (though rarely to throw away their lives for you).

You do have to offer them something that it makes sense for them to desire and hope for, and if you ask them to betray strong loyalties, you *risk* them turning on you.

GM notes on *Tempter*: This talent is in a way the positive version of *Ruler*. On the other hand it's also a talent with which it's easy to lure poor NPC's way out of their depth, to terrible grief. What you lure them with must make some sort of sense, but interpret it generously. Perhaps it appeals to a hidden side of an NPC, even if it doesn't make the most immediate sense? This talent can lead the player to walk a fine line between liberator and charlatan.

Talent: *Deadly*

Killing is incredibly easy for you. Not in open battle (though you're no weakling), but in the shadows. A push at the top of the stairs, a little knife in the dense crowd, a discreet visit to the kitchens.

If you decide to commit murder, cunningly, your chosen victim is in mortal danger. It might get innocents hurt, it might put you in danger, but if your plan is not completely foolish, your chosen victim won't be alive for long.

GM notes for *Deadly*: When this is in play, remember your constraint of not protecting your places and people! If a player character is the target, it should always require *risk* for the murderer, and the victim should have a chance to *binder*, but be generous in supporting the talent by not unduly hindering access to the victim, and remember: Even if there's risk, and even with a middling result, the murder should always at least have an accomplished murder as option in a hard choice, or have some cost other than the victim not being quite dead. Don't block the murderer from murdering!

For example: You can go through with the murder BUT if you want to quite finish him off it'll take another stab, and you'll get caught standing over the body, knife in hand. Or you can jump out of the window now, and he's only badly wounded.

Talent: *Fiery speaker*

You have an amazing talent for inciting a leaderless crowd and getting them to take drastic action by telling them ***the truth*** about something important to them.

It doesn't work if you lie, and you *risk* the crowd turning on you, but you can rouse the passion of the crowd to action with fiery words.

GM notes for *Fiery speaker*: Remember that it *only* works if you speak the truth (and a truth which is relevant to the crowd). This move is a little difficult to bring into play, so be sure to make the angry crowd an extremely large and heavy club! Here, you must really, really not block the full effect!

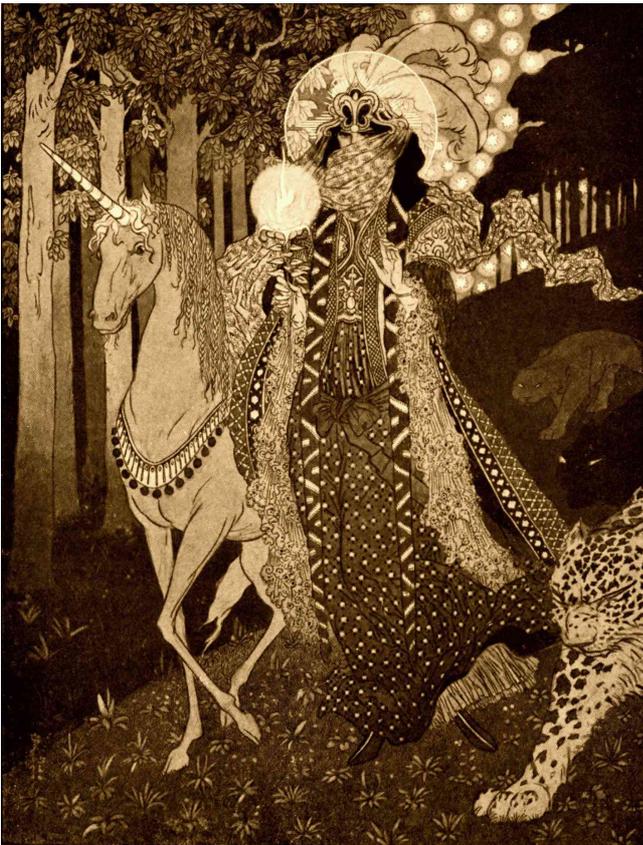
That the fiery speaker doesn't necessarily have actual control of the crowd is an interesting aside. When the wrath of the people is roused, it is not easily reined in.

Talent: *Mighty*

In open battle, you're unmatched. You win any open fight on equal terms, and have a good chance even if circumstances are very much against you.

You are not invincible, but you are truly terrifying in battle.

GM notes for *Mighty*: The mighty warrior is worth something like ten ordinary warriors in a fight. Excellent, and in the right place perhaps enough to turn the tide, but remember that many fights aren't fair...



Talent: *Fascinating*

You're an incredibly beautiful and fascinating person; for better or worse someone people fall in love with. People's habits regarding partners are no hindrance for your beauty.

People easily fall in love with you, but also easily get obsessed with you. If you think someone should fall in love with you, you must either seduce them or describe your fascinating beauty, and if it makes sense for them to fall for you, they do. It doesn't quite allow you to exercise mind control, but it's close – no one is unaffected by you.

GM noted for *Fascinating*: Be generous! The fascinating character can hijack the loyalties of practically anyone, and only truly loyal people can resist. Costs and complications in connection with infatuation can be things like jealousy, possessiveness and NPC's taking drastic initiative of their own accord in what they perceive as the interests of their beloved. If this talent is used against player characters and they wish to resist, they can't be forced to become loyal, but they can suffer *risk* of temporary loss of control.

Becoming in details

This is the concrete guide to the first part of the game. It should take a bit less than half the available time, 1½-2 hours, and it begins as soon as the players get seated. Along with this section, you'll also need a lot of aids, here in order of appearance:

a: What we know of Dunsain and Her children

b: In/justice in Dunsain

c: Map of Dunsain

d: Names in Dunsain

e: Sensuality

f: Menu of tempers

(g: Tempers and names, under *Character sheets*)

(h: Character sheets, under *Character sheets*)

i: Map of Kora

j: Dreams of the Goddess

k: Menu of motivations

(l: Motivations and talents, under *Character sheets*)

You'll also need clear tape to fasten the tempers and motivations to the character sheets. There's a table of all the handouts and aid sheets on page 28.

Questions to keep in mind during character creation

The players have these questions on their sheets. Do poke them with these in mind during *Becoming* (and *Unfolding* too). They're key to the characters.

- What *specifically* is it that you desire?
- Why can't you get it, or keep it?
- Who do you love?

Becoming, step by step

Here's a guide to *Becoming* for you as game master. For most of the steps there are also one or more sheets for you to use or hand to the players. Consider this section the recipe, and the handouts and aid sheets the physical ingredients.

1. **Lay out the six pictures** on the table as soon as you're together in the room. They're at the back of the scenario. Ask the players to be quiet and look at the pictures. Wait a moment, then ask what the pictures make them feel. Leave the pictures on the table during the rest of the game. Possibly use the time to organize your own many papers.
2. **Introduce the concept**, the aesthetic and the given facts, that is Dunsain and Her children, and that we're in a city (or something) named Kora. Use the sheet "What we know of Dunsain and Her children (a)". Here, you can talk a little more freely. Note the names/places of the players for use during step 5. Tell them about *Becoming* and *Unfolding*, and that *Becoming* is proper play where they'll both create and roleplay, starting very soon.
3. **Agree on the injustice**. This is both about getting at what the players positively want to play with, and what they really don't want to deal with. Generally not-wanting should trump wanting, though you can promise that whatever is dealt with will be dealt with seriously. Use the aid sheet "In/justice in Dunsain (b)". *The injustices will shape the rest of the game, but they're NOT necessarily tasks to be solved*, and it's important that you say this. Keep the discussion reasonably brief – don't overthink this to death. Remember, for the rest of the game, to bring the two injustices AND the one good thing into play.
4. **Brainstorm flavour**. Climate, and very generally. Return to "What we know of Dunsain and Her children (a)". Ask the players to sketch a map of Dunsain (on the sheet "Map of Dunsain (c)"). Also lay out "Names in Dunsain (d)".
5. **Sensuality**. Now the time of preparation is over, and actual play begins. Ask the players to close their eyes and dream along, and answer with eyes closed. We start producing fiction about the setting through questions from the game master to the players. Use questions that are sensual and concrete but tie into the chosen injustices. See the sheet "Sensuality (e)".

6. **Distribute tempers/names.** They are character cores to be rounded out with motivations and talents. Lay out the menu of tempers (f). Ask people to choose a temper which is clearly unlike their own. When they've agreed on a distribution, give the players their tempers and names (g), and ask them to tape the tempers/names to the character sheets (h). From now on, call the players by character names. Also tell them that *the duty of the players in the game is first and foremost to explore their characters and the situation*, without worrying too much about plot and storytelling.

7. **Brainstorm their childhood**, as fairly terse and playful cooperative storytelling, rather than as negotiated agreement. That means, let the player agree on the most basic things, and then ask them to start telling about things from their childhood. Take things that one player says and use it to build questions for the others. Ask the players to sketch a map of Kora (on the sheet "Map of Kora (i)"), and take lots of notes yourself. Ask more questions about dress, food habits and manners, as well as the physical surroundings, to bring in/justice back into view. Also note a relevant NPC or two, though it's fine that the players focus on each other.

8. **Play a couple of situations** from childhood and adolescence to demonstrate the moves mechanic via the tempers and get a little meat on the relations. Try to look for both loyalty and rivalry that you can draw on later. Take care to demonstrate strong success/weak success/failure, the *risk* key word and help/hinder. It's OK that the scenes take a little time – it's the first time we meet the children of Dunsain face to face, and that's important. Also do make sure that ways the the dice fall are decisive in shaping the lives of the characters going forward.

9. **Dreams of the Goddess.** This is another sensuality exercise to put some meat on what it means to be the children of Dunsain, and to teach the players to use the move *open your mind to the dreams of Dunsain*. Use the sheet "Dreams of the Goddess (j)".

10. **Distribute motivations** based on the menu of motivations (k). Then hand out the chosen motivations with talents attached (l). The players should choose based on motivations, NOT talents. Let people tape them onto their character sheets and reflect on what motivations and talents mean for their characters. Do mention that the talents are fixed, not something for the players to make up on the fly – unlike so much else in the game. Make sure that motivations and talents are public at the table.

11. **From childhood to adulthood.** How old are they? Anything from 20-50 is possible, and the players should agree on this. Then let the players make choices about their characters' lives, rather than agree on everything with each other – but it's OK for them to be inspired by each other, as long as it doesn't devolve into negotiations. Use the three motivation questions, and get a concrete idea about who loves and/or hates who (you don't have to assume heterosexuality). End up with asking the players to openly give brief answers to the three questions.
- What *specifically* is it that you desire?
 - Why can't you get it, or keep it?
 - Who do you love?
12. **Determine the situation at the start of *Unfolding*** by asking provocative questions to prepare the shift from mostly collaborative storytelling to something resembling hard player on player conflict. Your notes should give you a lot to work with. It might be a good idea to ask if someone has been out travelling, and is just returning from war, trade, exile or the like. Together, create an unstable and explosive situation.

Examples of questions:

- "What threat to your power do you fear the most right now?"
- "Who in Kora do you think you can trust after all this time?"
- "What rumours have you heard in the market recently?"

13. **They meet each other.** Play two or three short scenes where they meet each other in everyday situations or after a long time apart. *Here it is a rule that nothing drastic can happen.* No violence, no using moves – so don't frame scenes that would tend to explode in violence. The purpose is to get their relations up and running in the present, so we're sure to see them together without them stabbing each other from the word "go". Everyone must see play together with one or two other player characters.

And now you should be ready for *Unfolding*. Remind the players that *their duties in the game are primarily to explore their characters and the situation of their characters*, without worrying about plot and storytelling.

Unfolding in details

In *Unfolding* you must challenge the players, and they must challenge each other, to find out who their characters really are. The motivations of the player characters function as individual premises, statements so strong that they're really questions (and remember "Why can't you get it, or keep it?"). As game master, let your actions in *Unfolding* be guided by your ends, constraints and principles for making moves, as described in the chapter on moves.

Run *Unfolding* in three parts. Start off each part by briefly summarizing the situation and laying out the guidelines for this part for the players, based on your GM aid sheet for the part (Unfolding a, b and c). This way, the players have an idea of where in the game they are, and don't get surprised by the game suddenly ending. The details are outlined below, but run it from the aid sheets.

In each part, make sure that all players have opportunity to take strong initiative beyond mere reaction to what you and the other players do to them. Keep an eye on who has had a clear opportunity to act, and find fitting moments to cut to those who have only reacted thus far, or not appeared at all. The part is done when everyone has had a chance to make a significant move. If a player character dies during part 1 or 2, give the player the handout "You're dead – now what?" (Unfolding d) to help them haunt. This way they sort of stay in the game, and also do try to send more of your general setting questions their way.

Make oppression visible

You have two strong injustices; make them significant in everyday life and in people's motives. Not that people should whine unceasingly, but it should be visible that people's lives are shaped by the oppression whether they suffer under it or benefit from it. And the non-injustice? If sexuality and gender are free, there should be gay couples and people both in and outside the stereotypical pursuits of their gender. If there's no racism, there should be people of different origins, not just a homogenous mass.

1. **Part 1.** Start and instruct as the sheet Unfolding part 1 says. First, get a fairly aggressive player to *open their mind to the Goddess*. Let events unfold, and don't drive the players too hard at each other with your scene framing.
2. **Part 2.** Start and instruct as the sheet Unfolding part 2 says. Push them harder at each other now, and use NPC's and scene framing to put a little pressure on alliances that might have been made.
3. **Part 3.** Start and instruct as the sheet Unfolding part 3 says. If one of them has had it a little too easy so far, possibly apply pressure, but hopefully they'll do it of their own accord. And remember that the story doesn't need to end neatly.

4. **Epilogue.** End the game with a last, third sensuality exercise, and ask the players to reflect, quietly, on who the children of Dunsain turned out to be, and on what they leave behind. Use the aid sheet **Epilogue**.

And that's it, really. Talk about the game as you clear away the papers and pack up. If there have been intense and transgressive moments, you can do a proper debriefing. The very brief version of what that is, is that everyone in turn say how they feel about themselves and the game, with no arguing or interrupting allowed, before having a more free discussion about the game.

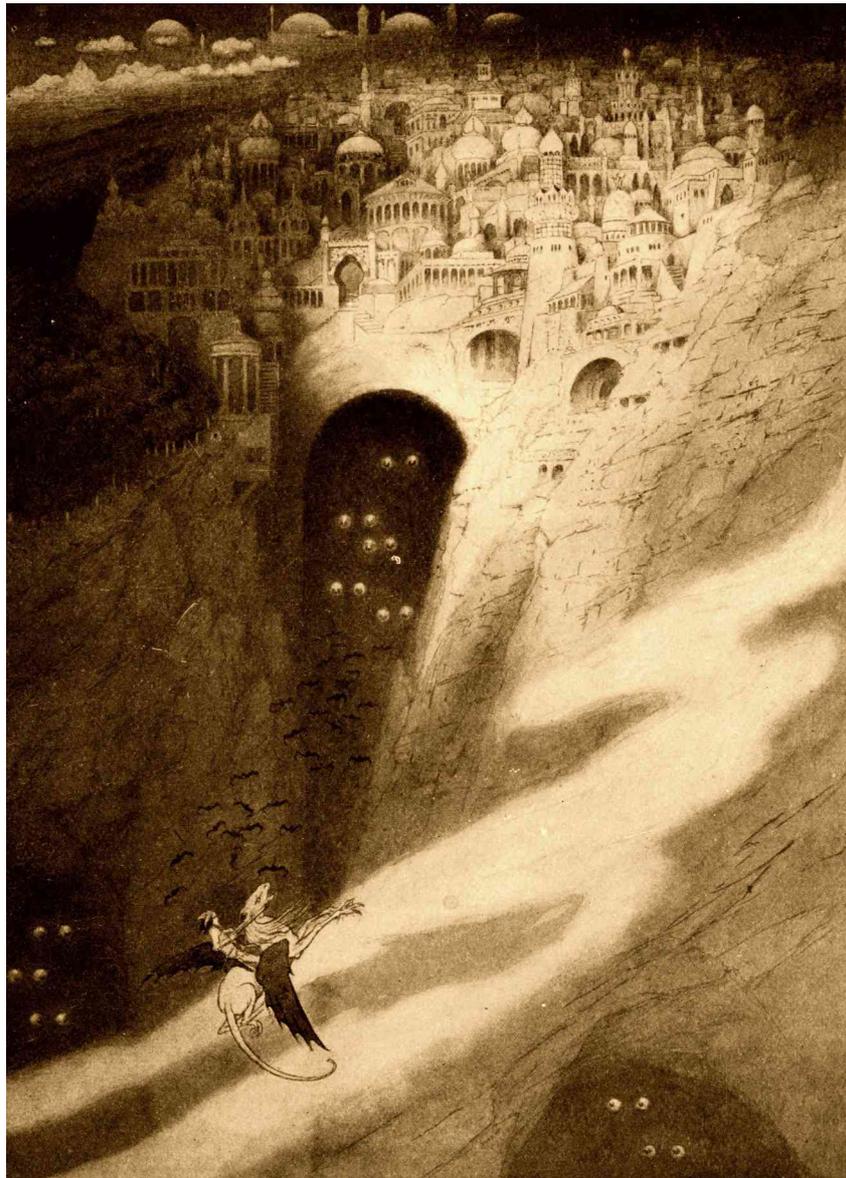


Table of handouts and aid sheets

Becoming (in the order in which you'll need them)

| | |
|---|----|
| a: What we know of Dunsain and Her children..... | 29 |
| b: In/justice in Dunsain..... | 30 |
| c: Map of Dunsain..... | 31 |
| d: Names in Dunsain..... | 32 |
| e: Sensuality..... | 33 |
| f: Menu of tempers..... | 34 |
| g: Tempers and names, under <i>Character sheets</i> | 46 |
| h: Character sheets 1-4, under <i>Character sheets</i> | 47 |
| i: Map of Kora..... | 35 |
| j: Dreams of the Goddess..... | 36 |
| k: Menu of motivations..... | 37 |
| l: Motivations and talents, under <i>Character sheets</i> | 55 |

Unfolding

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| a: Part 1..... | 38 |
| b: Part 2..... | 39 |
| c: Part 3..... | 40 |
| d: You're dead – now what?..... | 41 |
| e: Epilogue..... | 42 |

Game master's aid sheets

| | |
|---|----|
| a: GM's cheat sheet, ends and means..... | 43 |
| b: GM's cheat sheet, motivations and talents..... | 44 |
| c: GM's notes in play..... | 45 |

Character sheets

| | |
|---|----|
| Tempers and names (Becoming g)..... | 46 |
| Character sheets 1-4 (Becoming h)..... | 47 |
| Motivations and talents (Becoming l)..... | 55 |

| | |
|---|----|
| <i>Pictures</i> – Six pictures by Sidney Sime..... | 57 |
|---|----|

What we know of Dunsain and Her children

– Becoming a

Some things are fixed, and based on those you must determine at least some of the things that we don't know. You don't have to determine everything about all things.

- **Dunsain is the name of the land**, and the land is also a dreaming goddess.
- **The player characters are "Children of Dunsain"**, some of the unusual people who can open their minds to the dreams of the goddess.
- **Magic is real** but subtle; visions, illusions and curses, not fireballs and people flying around.
- **Swords and spears**, not guns and bombs.
- People are **human**, not orcs and elves
- There are **no intelligent monsters**. If there are dragons, they're dumb animals.
- **You come from Kora**. Kora is a busy trading city, or a sparsely populated city of ruins, or a mighty fortress, or a tent camp that springs into existence when the tribes meet every four years, or a fleet of ships, or something else. But Kora is an important hub, which is your home and place of origin.

Also, Our Heroes are about the same age.

What we *don't* know about Dunsain and Her children

Everything else.

- Hot or cold, lush or barren?
- Glittering spires or fur tents? Creaking wooden ships or overgrown temples?
- How do people look? How do politics look? How do wealth and poverty look?
- What does it *mean* in practice, that you're Children of Dunsain?

When you have determined justice and injustice, start there and half-finish the land based on that. Work out the basics.

In/justice in Dunsain – Becoming b

In TWO ways, Dunsain is a terribly unfair place, in ONE way normally unfair, and in ONE way hardly unfair at all. You decide how, and just what that means. Discuss, cross out the two statements in each category that aren't true, and decide what the last one means in practice.

Powerful and unusual people (like the Children of Dunsain) can to some degree get away with flouting the norms of society. That doesn't mean that the norms don't exist.

Class/Wealth

- Slave economy and/or caste society.
- Ordinary class society with beggars in the streets.
- Equitable social distribution of resources.

Religion

- Heretics must burn, and the impious be punished for their sins.
- Deviants from proper religion and morality are tolerated. Often, so too is violence and discrimination against them.
- Let all find comfort and blessing however they can and will.

Racism

- The others look like people – but we know better.
- Neighbouring tribes and those folks from up north are strange and suspect.
- Different tribes and peoples are alike in the ways that matter.

Gender/sexuality

- Deviations from the norm are crimes to be harshly punished.
- For the most part, deviations from the norms are tolerated but despised.
- People do what they can that makes them happy.

In the categories racism and gender/sexuality, it can make sense to reverse the familiar direction of normal or gross unjustive, so we get fantasies of amazon societies where the black oppress the white and straight guys are hunted for sport. But you don't have to (and it can easily get tiresome).

Map of Dunsain

– Becoming c, draw as you please

Names in Dunsain – Becoming d

All these names can apply to men as well as women. Underline as you use them. And very, very seriously:

Use these names and no others.

| | | |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Adel | Benaiz | Constanz |
| Dietheld | Evelin | <u>Frieder</u> |
| Ginevel | Heldreid | Isoré |
| Jacinth | <u>Korheld</u> | Leonwin |
| <u>Mazaire</u> | Nathal | Ortheld |
| Placide | Quinter | Renie |
| <u>Seidel</u> | Thierre | Ulrein |
| Valhaut | Wolfreid | Xerny |
| Yanic | Zharin | |

Place names in Dunsain

Use the names below, or use words, as in "Summer Grove" or "The Great Ox Road".

| | | |
|-------|-----------|-------------|
| Axern | Ban-Elair | <u>Kora</u> |
| Nairm | Tuel | Valfriede |

Sensuality – Becoming e

Explain that the point of the exercise is exploring the land Dunsain more sensually and closely. Ask them to sit back in their chairs, close their eyes and relax. You'll ask them to imagine some things and to answer some questions, briefly and still with their eyes closed. Possibly pick questions from the list before you start talking.

Begin like this:

Her hair is forest, Her shoulders hills. The goddess Dunsain is the land itself, and the lives of the people is what She dreams. The game is not about her, but about a handful of unusual people who dream the goddess to life. Their forbidden love, their lust for power, their thirst for revenge and justice is the nerve in Her dreams. They are the children of Dunsain.

See [something mentioned during the brainstorm, like snow-covered mountains].

Hear [something else you've talked about, like the crashing of the waves].

Feel the smell of [some third thing, like the campfires at nightfall].

Ask **one player one of the questions** from the list below, preferably something that engages with one of your injustives in an interesting way.

Ask **a second player** one of the questions.

Ask **a third player** one of the questions.

Ask **a fourth player** one of the questions, if there are four players.

Finally, say "**See the land, feel Dunsain.**" Then wait about ten seconds before you ask them to open their eyes.

Here are questions to ask:

- How are the rich women of Kora dressed?
- How do the foreign merchants look?
- How are the mercenaries from out west equipped?
- What do common people of Kora eat for dinner?
- Where do the slaves come from, and how do they look?
- How do fine folk travel?

Menu of tempers – Becoming f

For players to choose from. Only one player per temper, and one temper per player. It's best to choose a temper different from what you yourself are like.

* *Phlegmatic*

Under pressure: You act or speak, calmly, to bring the chaotic situation under control. Cool, not uncaring.

* *Choleric*

Under pressure: You lash out in anger, in word or deed, and use the fire in your blood to defeat your problems. Fierce, not foolish.

* *Melancholy*

Under pressure: With a heavy heart, you take drastic action or speak dramatic words to escape a tight spot. Dramatic, not mopey.

* *Sanguine*

Under pressure: You speak or act wildly, blood singing, to break free of trouble. Wild, not silly.

Map of Kora

– Becoming i, draw as you please

Dreams of the Goddess – Becoming j

This is the second sensuality exercise. Here we get to know both Dunsain and Her children better. They've all dreamt of Her since they were little children, and they've all, when it really mattered, been able to find hidden secrets and call down curses by asking Dunsain in dreams. It's not without dangers and costs, though...

- **First, she must be described.** Her appearance is neither unchanging nor without recognizable features. Ask the players to *close their eyes* and think of the dreams they dreamt of the Goddess when they were very young. They must keep their eyes closed for the whole exercise.
- **Ask them to dream a place.** Ask each player, going round the table, to say something about the place. ("In the woods", "by a lake", "the sun is shining".)
- Then say that **Dunsain comes into view**, in a manner fitting the landscape. Ask each player to say one thing about how she looks. Then add one detail of your own.
- Next, ask them to take turns **telling about a dream of the Goddess** that they had as children, and about what they were trying to accomplish (learn a secret, call down a curse, cleanse themselves). Work from the move, but roll no dice and assume success. Use the occasion to build characters and fiction! Start with a player who seems reasonably comfortable with speaking and making up things.
- They must keep their eyes closed, all of them.
- Finish by saying, **see Her. Feel Her presence.**

Now they can open their eyes.

Menu of motivations – Becoming k

For players to choose from. Only one player per motivation, and one motivation per player.

* ***Wants to keep on ruling Kora***

– that means you already do, but not securely

* ***Wants to seize power over Kora***

– and you're in position to make an attempt

* ***Mortally, permanently in love***

– with one of the other Children of Dunsain, naturally

* ***Terribly, permanently in love***

– with one of the other Children of Dunsain, naturally

* ***Wants to free the oppressed***

– whatever that means in your version of Dunsain

* ***Wants horrible revenge***

– on one of the other Children of Dunsain.
Death is too gentle a fate!

Unfolding part 1 – Unfolding a

Game master: This is the time to draw the lines and launch the intrigues. Play based on the guidelines in the section *Mechanics for Unfolding: Moves*. Continue until everyone has had a good opportunity to take significant initiative.

Sum up the situation in Kora for the players, based on the scenes you played at the end of *Becoming*.

Now instruct the players for this part of the game: This is part 1 of 3 of *Unfolding*. You're free to do as you will to pursue your agendas and explore your characters and their situation. You don't have to get drastic right now, but you're very much allowed to. It's both OK to set everything on fire and to go more subtly about it. The point isn't to win, but to explore a conflict-filled situation.

As they play, follow these instructions yourself:

- **To begin with:** Choose a fairly aggressive player (not just player character), preferably one with an aggressive motivation. Ask that player to get things going by *opening their mind to the dreams of Dunsain*. Use your own goddess question to fan the flames from the start – there will be time enough for doubt and regret later, right now just throw on more fuel. This shouldn't count as that player's opportunity to take initiative in part 1.
- **Along the way:** Use NPC's to challenge the players and to bring the injustices into play. Follow up on the ideas of the players and build on them, and be generous. Don't force them to fight each other, but let them if they want to. Remember to make the not-injust element in the game visible.
- **Should someone be killed in part 1 or 2:** If they've had a chance to defend themselves or otherwise react, it's OK, even though it's early in the game. Give the player of the first dead character the handout **You're dead – now what?** (Unfolding d), so that player still has a leg in the game, and address more of your curiosity questions to that player. If more people die, the game shouldn't be flooded with ghosts; instead give them a scene with the first dead character, before the second one disappears into the bosom of the Goddess.
- **End part 1** by asking the players some questions about everyday life in Kora, ordinary details from the lives of ordinary people, preferably details that lightly touch upon the injustices ("where do the beggars sleep?", "how does it smell in the evening meal-time in the quarter of the Westerners?"). This gives a little breathing space in the game.

Say that you're rounding off part 1 now, and if it makes sense, push the time forward. Let the night pass, and maybe the next day, so the game doesn't feel like constant running around.

Unfolding part 2 – Unfolding b

Game master: If open strife has yet to break out, apply more pressure. If obvious alliances have formed between players, look for cracks and incompatible interests. Play based on the guidelines in the section *Mechanics for Unfolding: Moves*. Continue with part 2 until everyone has had a good opportunity to take strong initiative.

Sum up the situation in Kora for the players, based on what happened in part 1.

Now instruct the players for this part of the game: This is part 2 of 3 of *Unfolding*. It's time now to let loose and press yourselves and each other, and to see where your motivations take you, regarding who you and what you love and desire. Do as you like, as long as it makes sense in the game..

As they play, follow these instructions yourself:

- **To begin with:** Give the initiative and spotlight to a player who was in a weak position at the end of part 1. If noone is in a clearly weak position, start with something that arouses your curiosity and that of the Goddess.
- **Along the way:** If they aren't already locked in strife, push them with NPC's who point out that the situation is unstable, or with scene framing that confronts them with their disagreements and the consequences of each other's actions and background.
- **Find an opportunity** to have a reasonably likable NPC state how one of the two really ugly injustices *is in fact fair*. Hatred and oppression are a lot less scary if they're just for monsters. If you don't manage to work it in, that's OK. This is nice but not strictly necessary.
- **Should someone be killed in part 1 or 2:** Give the player of the first dead character the handout **You're dead – now what?** (Unfolding d), so that player still has a leg in the game, and address more of your curiosity questions to that player. If more people die, the game shouldn't be flooded with ghosts; instead give them a scene with the first dead character, before the second one disappears into the bosom of the Goddess.
- **End part 2** by asking the players some questions which indirectly touch upon the consequences of the actions of the players, or the potential consequences of their plans ("what do you think Wolfreid's daughter is doing right now?", "what are the slaves talking about in the kitchens right now?").

Say that you're rounding off part 2, and if it makes sense, push time forward, but don't force it at any cost. Let the night pass, and maybe the next day, so the game doesn't feel like constant running, screaming and dying – if it makes sense.

Unfolding part 3 – Unfolding c

Game master: Part 3 is the time to get those characters who aren't already out of their depth right out there. Rounding off the story nicely should NOT be your first priority. Play based on the guidelines in the section *Mechanics for Unfolding: Moves*. Continue with part 3 until everyone has had a good opportunity to take strong initiative.

Sum up the situation in Kora for the players, based on what happened in part 2.

Now instruct the players for this part of the game: This is part 3 of 3 of *Unfolding*. We're approaching the end of the game, so it's time to do what you can to push yourself and the others. Don't worry about wrapping up your personal stories or finding out how it all ends – that's less important.

As they play, follow these instructions yourself:

- **To begin with:** Frame a scene or let an eager player take the initiative, whatever you think will best serve the purpose of finding out who the characters are.
- **Along the way:** Follow your ends and constraints, hard. Loose ends are NOT important.
- **If someone dies now** they're just dead. They'll have a chance to shine a little in the epilogue.
- **End part 3** when it makes sense to you and everyone has had a chance, whether that means that you reach some conclusion or that everything is just smoke and bloody chaos. Say that the game ends now, and go to the epilogue (with the sheet **Epilogue**, unfolding e).

It should be fairly intuitive if you just let the notion of the plot go. Don't let them get away with just hating, keep some focus on who they love, if noting else throught the questions that Dunsain asks. Without love, it doesn't matter.

You're dead – now what? – Unfolding d

Your life is over, but not yet quite gone. As one of the Children of Dunsain, you live on in Her dreams for a little while yet, before she forgets you and you go the way of the candle's flame. Meanwhile, you can do two things, each of them once.

You can *Open your mind to the dreams of Dunsain*, with 2d6

You live in her dreams, so it's kind of obvious. By calling down a curse, you can affect the world of the living, and you can learn secrets that you can use with the other ability.

You can appear before a mortal

In a lucid and clearly remembered dream, or as a hallucination. You can talk to the living person, but you can't touch each other.

Once each. Use them well. When you've used them both you're really gone.

Epilogue – Unfolding e

This is the third and last sensuality exercise. Ask your players to close their eyes.

- 1) First, ask them to **sense a couple of concrete details from Kora**, preferably things that have been mentioned in play. For example "see the red tiles on the roofs of Kora. Smell the fried fish that the street vendors sell", or whatever you've had in play.
- 2) **See** [living player character], **where they are right now**. [Briefly describe where they are right now, based on where we left them.] **Feel** [her/him]! **Remember** [her/him]! [Go through all living player characters]
- 3) [Do the same with the corpses of dead characters, describing them where they are.] **Think of** [dead player characters in a really memorable scene]!
- 4) **Zoom out** from Kora and Dunsain with sensual details through three statements, from close up and then out in bird's eye perspective. Again draw on things that have seen play.
- 5) **See Her, see Dunsain!**

Wait five to ten seconds, then ask them to open their eyes and say thank you for the game.

GM's cheat sheet, ends and means – GM a

Your ends:

- ☐ *Find out who the PC's really are*
- ☐ *Make Dunsain living and believable*

Do nothing that doesn't serve these ends.

Your constraints:

Don't block the players. That also means don't plan outcomes, and don't protect places and people.

Moves: *When you or a player makes a move, the game **MUST MOVE**. Something has to change.*

Remember ***risk*** when you need to press the players.

When they open their minds to the Goddess,
ask questions.

GM's cheat sheet, motivations and talents – GM b

Draw lines, cross out irrelevant boxes, note content

Frieder (phlegmatic)

– calm, temperate, affable

Korheld (choleric)

– aggressive, direct, angry

Mazaire (melancholy)

– reflective, dramatic, sad

Seidel (sanguine)

– impulsive, sociable, wild

Wants to keep on ruling Kora

– ruler, can threaten with injustices

Wants to seize power over Kora

– tempter, can lure with greed and hope

Mortally, permanently in love

– deadly, can murder sneakily

Terribly, permanently in love

– fiery speaker, can incite the crowd

Wants to free the oppressed

– mighty, can win any fair fight

Wants horrible revenge

– fascinating, people fall in love

GM's notes in play – GM c

NPC's have names, they're people.

What would you like to know about the player characters?

- What *specifically* is it that you desire?
- Why can't they have it, or keep it?
- Who do they love?

And who are they, really?

Tempers and names – Becoming g/character sheets

| | |
|---|---|
| <h2>Frieder</h2> <p>Your temper is <i>phlegmatic</i>. You're mild, affable, intuitive and maybe a little lazy. What you desire, you desire strongly, but you pursue your goals in a sensible manner. You're calm, maybe even cool, and you like your affairs well-ordered. That coolness is the core of who you are.</p> <p><i>You choose your gender quite freely.</i></p> | <h2>Phlegmatic</h2> <p>When you act or speak, calmly, to bring the chaotic situation under control, roll 2d6.</p> <p>9+: You get away with it.</p> <p>6-8: You get out of trouble, mostly. The game master gives you a cost or a hard choice.</p> <p>to 5: It goes terribly wrong.</p> |
| <h2>Korheld</h2> <p>Your temper is <i>choleric</i>. You're ambitious, direct, violent and angry. You're no fool, and your anger isn't ineffectual – it's a source of strength for you to attain your goals with, for yourself and for those that you love. That fire in your belly is the core of who you are.</p> <p><i>You choose your gender quite freely.</i></p> | <h2>Choleric</h2> <p>When you lash out in anger, in word or deed, and use the fire in your blood to defeat your problems, roll 2d6.</p> <p>9+: You get away with it.</p> <p>6-8: You get out of trouble, mostly. The game master gives you a cost or a hard choice..</p> <p>to 5: It goes terribly wrong.</p> |
| <h2>Mazaire</h2> <p>Your temper is <i>melancholy</i>. You're a deep and strong thinker, but also self-centered, depressive and self-destructive. Your emotions and visions are grand and dramatic, and even you do not fully understand your pain and longing. That darkness in your breast is the core of who you are.</p> <p><i>You choose your gender quite freely.</i></p> | <h2>Melancholy</h2> <p>With a heavy heart, you take drastic action or speak dramatic words to escape a tight spot – roll 2d6.</p> <p>9+: You get away with it.</p> <p>6-8: You get out of trouble, mostly. The game master gives you a cost or a hard choice.</p> <p>to 5: It goes terribly wrong.</p> |
| <h2>Seidel</h2> <p>Your temper is <i>sanguine</i>. You're energetic, sociable, charismatic and entertaining, but also wild and irresponsible. If others mistake your impulsive nature for stupidity, though, they make a bad mistake. You're well prepared to improvise. Your singing, rushing blood is the core of who you are.</p> <p><i>You choose your gender quite freely.</i></p> | <h2>Sanguine</h2> <p>When you speak or act, wildly and with singing blood, to break free of trouble, roll 2d6.</p> <p>9+: You get away with it.</p> <p>6-8: You get out of trouble, mostly. The game master gives you a cost or a hard choice.</p> <p>to 5: It goes terribly wrong.</p> |

Name, temper and temper move here

You choose your gender quite freely

Open your mind to the dreams of Dunsain

Do it for one of the following (you choose):

- She grants you **knowledge that you can put to immediate practical use** (to accomplish something decisive).
- She comforts you and **cleanses you of poison, illness or madness**.
- She **curses one of your enemies** with poison, illness or madness. You choose the enemy, Dunsain shapes the curse.

You open your mind with trance or fierce ritual, **she** asks you a question – answer it with complete honesty.

Roll 2d6 if you use mental discipline or a minimal ritual, or 2d6+1 if you use a fierce ritual and bring a sacrifice of heart's blood or sex in Her honour.

9+: Dunsain grants your request, and tells you something interesting about your situation.

6-8: Dunsain grants your request, and tells you something interesting about your situation. Also, you're exhausted and cannot call upon the Goddess again until after you've had a good night's rest.

to 5: It is dangerous for mortals to open up to divine madness.

Motivation and talent here

Any temper can be combined with any motivation

The motivation is your hook, not your eternal duty

Your notes about who you are, and why

What specifically is it that you desire?

Why can't you get it, or keep it?

Who do you love?

Moves: Drama system, not combat system

Make your move *IN THE FICTION*. If the outcome is in doubt, the game master will ask you to roll dice.

Combat is treated like any other dramatic conflict; with few rolls – or none.

Consequences are what is told. You have no hit points. You're "just" hurt or killed.

If you want **someone to do something for you**, give them a reason.

Help or hinder other player characters

If you do something that will obviously help or hinder another player character in something they're doing now, you can either give +1 (help) or -2 (hinder). No matter how many help or hinder, help or hindrance can't in total exceed +1 or -2. If another player character is trying to do bad things to you, hindering is a *great* idea.

If you follow up hard on a move just successfully made by someone else, it counts as them having helped you.

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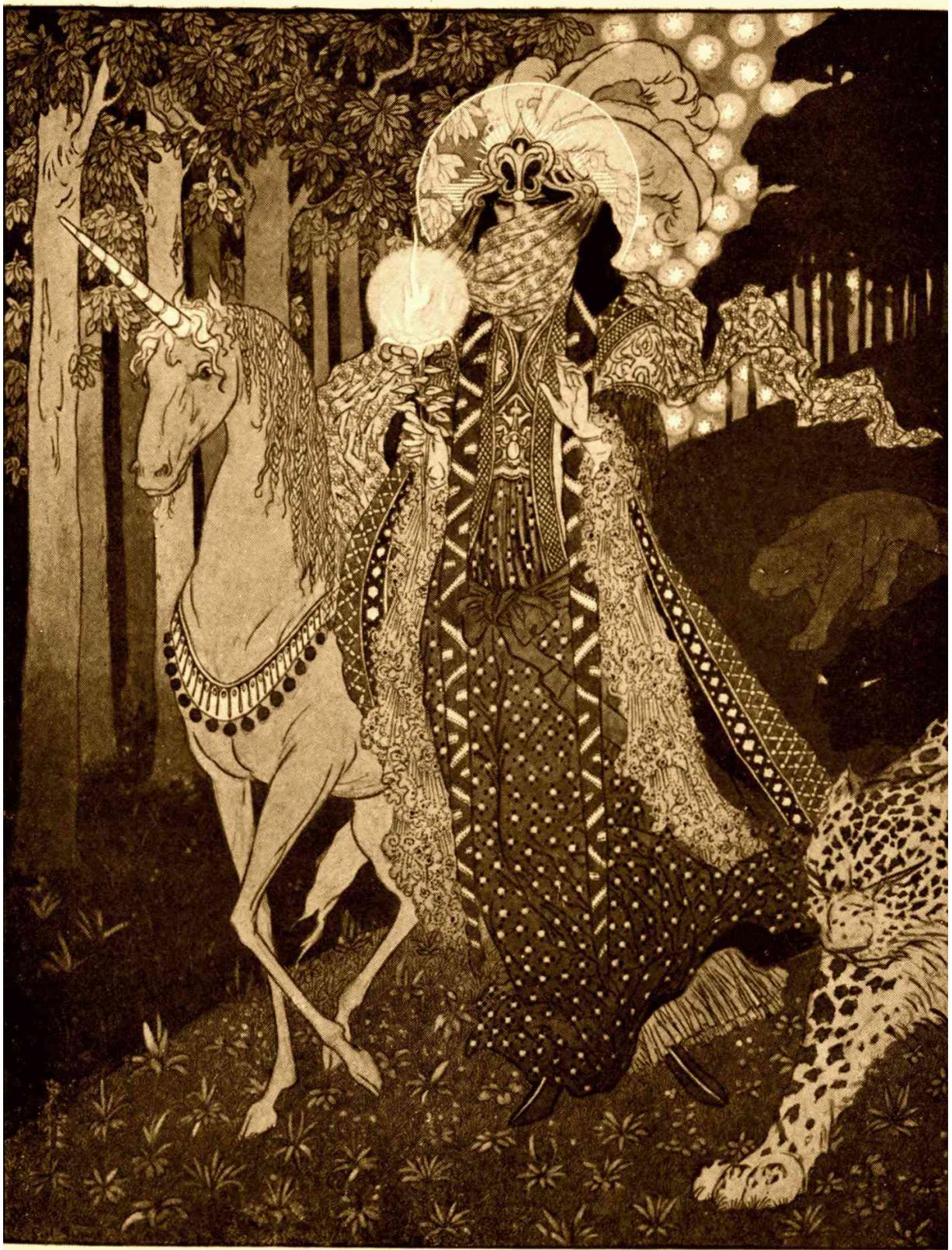
Motivations and talents I – Becoming 1/character sheets

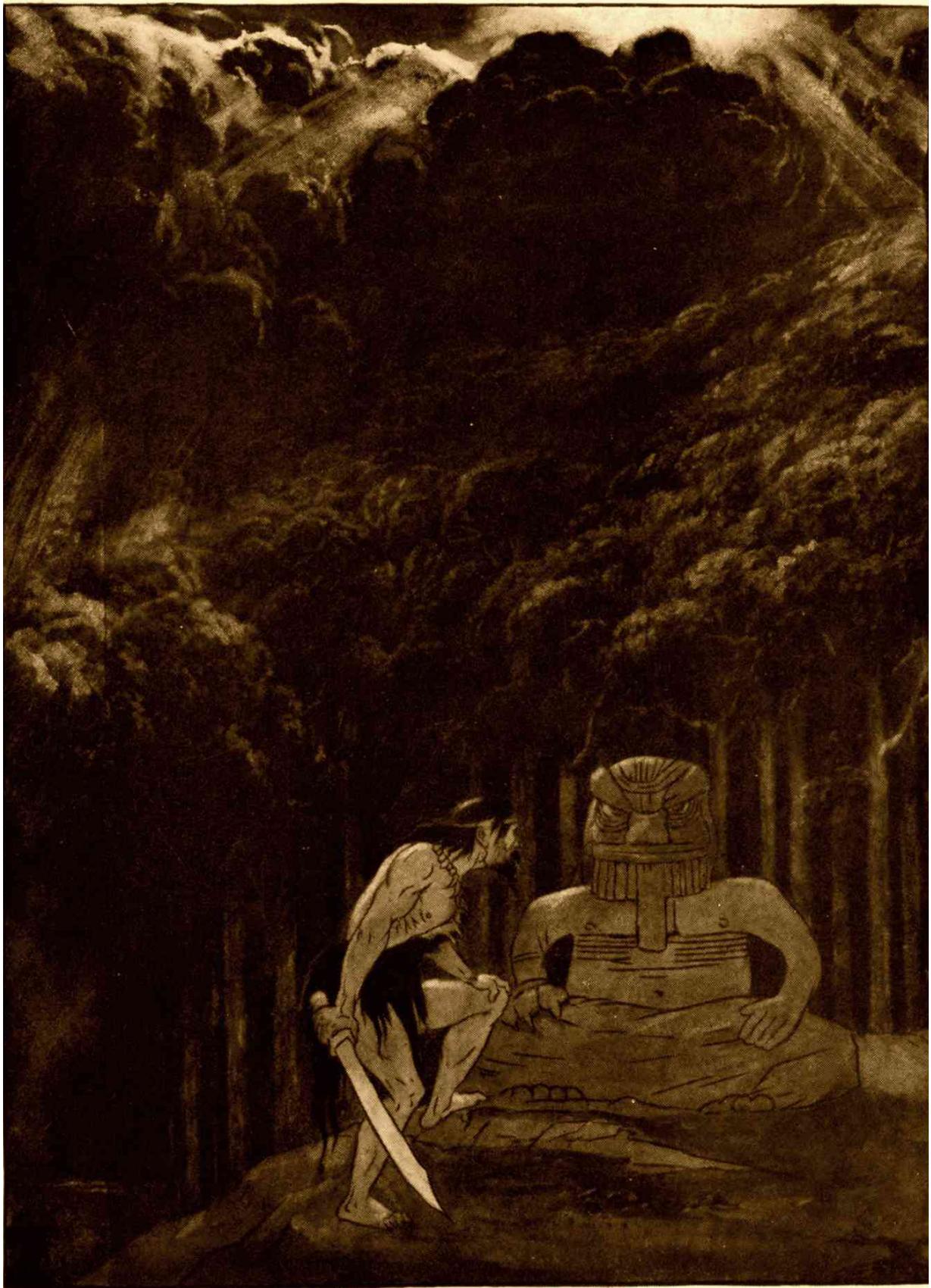
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|---|---|
| <p><i>Wants to keep ruling Kora</i></p> <p>The power is in your grip, whatever that means. Others want to take it away from you, you want to keep it. What do you want to do with the power? How far are you willing to go?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What <i>specifically</i> is it that you desire? • Why can't you get it, or keep it? • Who do you love? | <p>Talent: Ruler</p> <p>When you play upon the two main injustices of your society, people do as you tell them. Threaten the oppressed with your power and right to dominate them, or promise them a bit of protection. Or remind your subjects of their fear of external or internal enemies. Then, they'll almost always do as you say.</p> <p>You don't have to like it, but this is how you really get people to obey. If the situation is very tense, you <i>risk</i> trouble from using your talent.</p> |
| <p><i>Wants to seize power over Kora</i></p> <p>You should be in charge of Kora and the people. It is your right, your duty and your destiny. What do you want to do with the power? How far are you willing to go?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What <i>specifically</i> is it that you desire? • Why can't you get it, or keep it? • Who do you love? | <p>Talent: Tempter</p> <p>You have an eye for people's hope and greed, and by appealing to greed and hopes with promises of reward, you can get people to serve you, and to risk a lot for you (though rarely to throw away their lives for you).</p> <p>You do have to offer them something that it makes sense for them to desire and hope for, and if you ask them to betray strong loyalties, you <i>risk</i> them turning on you.</p> |
| <p><i>Mortally, permanently in love</i></p> <p>You have tried to forget your love, but in vain. It is your destiny, and now you are firmly determined to win your beloved's heart or die trying. Your beloved is <i>one of the other player characters</i>. Your love need not conform to social conventions of acceptable love.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What <i>specifically</i> is it that you desire? • Why can't you get it, or keep it? • Who do you love? | <p>Talent: Deadly</p> <p>Killing is incredibly easy for you. Not in open battle (though you're no weakling), but in the shadows. A push at the top of the stairs, a little knife in the dense crowd, a discreet visit to the kitchens.</p> <p>If you decide to commit murder, cunningly, your chosen victim is in mortal danger. It might get innocents hurt, it might put you in danger, but if your plan is not completely foolish, your chosen victim won't be alive for long.</p> |

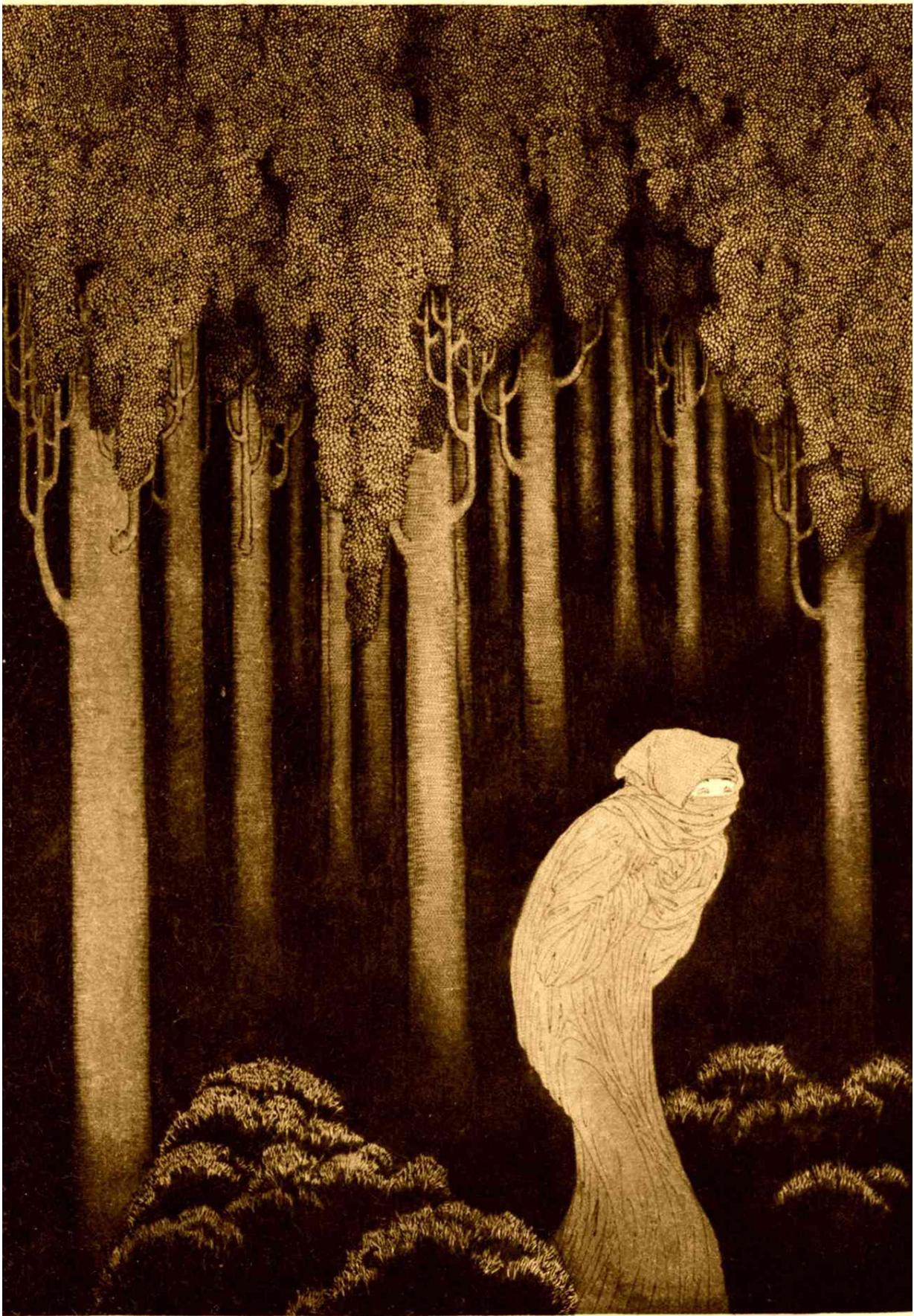
Motivations and talents II – Becoming 1/character sheets

| | |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Terribly, permanently in love</i></p> <p>You have tried to forget your love, but in vain. It is your destiny, and now you are firmly determined to win your beloved's heart or die trying. Your beloved is <i>one of the other player characters</i>. Your love need not conform to social conventions of acceptable love.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What <i>specifically</i> is it that you desire?• Why can't you get it, or keep it?• Who do you love? | <p>Talent: Fiery speaker</p> <p>You have an amazing talent for inciting a leaderless crowd and getting them to take drastic action by telling them <i>the truth</i> about something important to them.</p> <p>It doesn't work if you lie, and you <i>risk</i> the crowd turning on you, but you can rouse the passion of the crowd to action with fiery words.</p> |
| <p><i>Wants to free the oppressed</i></p> <p>Your heart beats for the unfairly treated, and now, enough is enough. After years in exile, you return now to avenge, free and raise up an oppressed group. Based on the determination of injustice there must be at least two; choose one.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What <i>specifically</i> is it that you desire?• Why can't you get it, or keep it?• Who do you love? | <p>Talent: Mighty</p> <p>In open battle, you're unmatched. You win any open fight on equal terms, and have a good chance even if circumstances are very much against you.</p> <p>You are not invincible, but you are truly terrifying in battle.</p> |
| <p><i>Wants horrible revenge</i></p> <p>Someone has horribly wronged you. How? Your heart knows no ease until your tormentor is destroyed. Not dead, but broken. Death is too merciful a fate. And the one who wronged you is <i>one of the other player characters</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What <i>specifically</i> is it that you desire?• Why can't you get it, or keep it?• Who do you love? | <p>Talent: Fascinating</p> <p>You're an incredibly beautiful and fascinating person, for better or worse someone people fall in love with. People's habits re. partners are no hindrance for your beauty.</p> <p>People easily fall in love with you, but also easily get obsessed with you. If you think someone should fall in love with you, you must either seduce them or describe your fascinating beauty, and if it makes sense for them to fall for you, they do. It doesn't quite allow you to exercise mind control, but it's close – no one is unaffected by you.</p> |

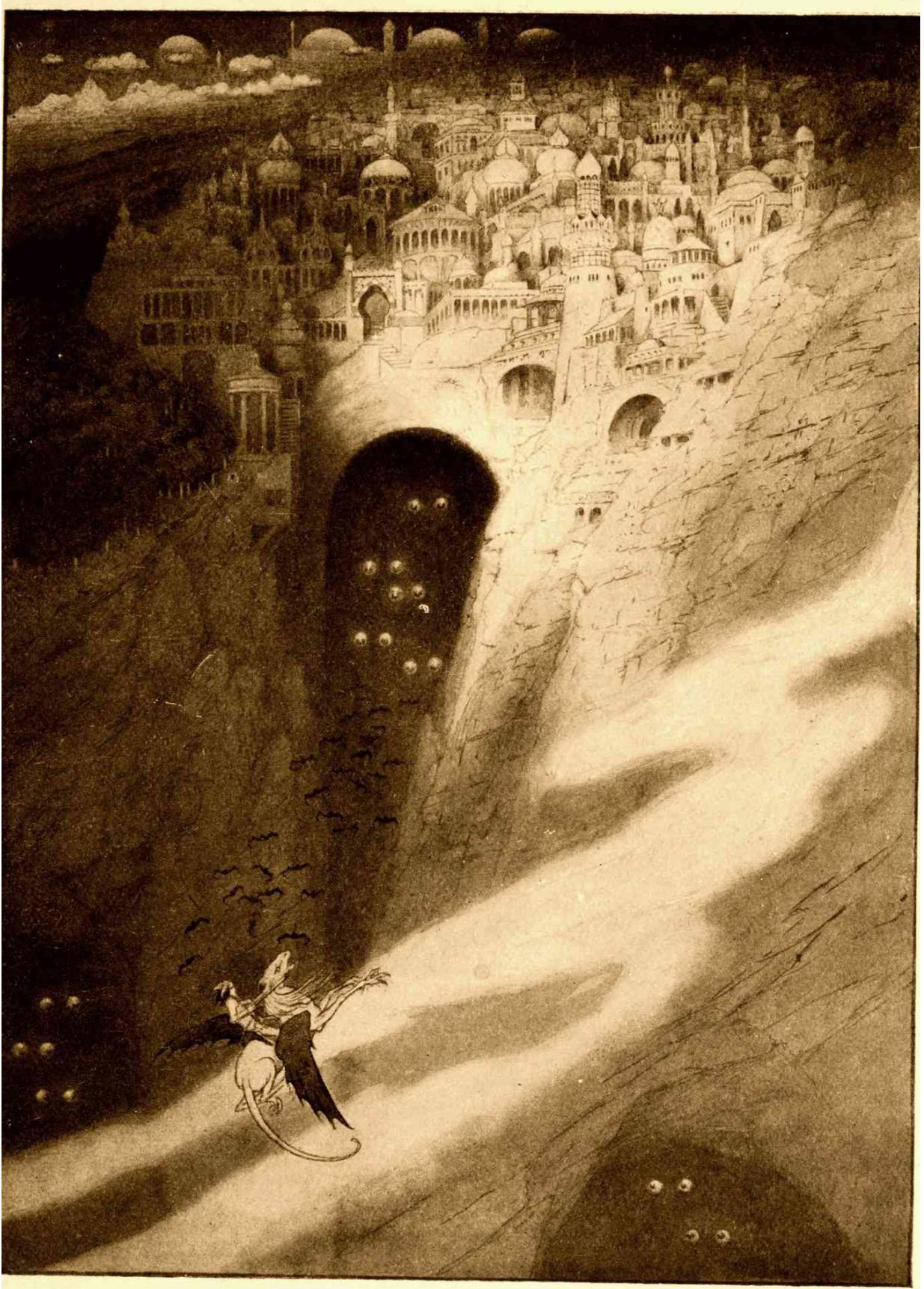












*Her hair is forest, Her shoulders hills.
The goddess Dunsain is the land itself,
and the lives of the people is what She
dreams. The game is not about Her,
but about a handful of unusual people
who dream the goddess to life. Their
forbidden love, their lust for power,
their thirst for revenge and justice is the
nerve in Her dreams. They are the
children of Dunsain.*