



2011 Dungeons & Dragons Tournament

The World Below

Players' Notes

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All characters appearing in this work are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental. Any resemblance to fictional persons from previous tournaments is an homage and not indicative of anything.

1 Dramatis Personæ

The Party

Evangeline Tyrell	– a minstrel
Natalie Goldwaithe	– a street magician and amateur scholar
Søren Davenport	– a noble traitor
Krusk Skullcrusher	– a schoolteacher
Alanna Kinisson	– a grizzled veteran and sheriff

The People

Doctor Agatha von Stockmar	– an elderly scholar from Librim, searching for ruins beneath Con Truldecby
Lorna ó Duinn	– a miner of precious metals
Baldric Stonehammer	– her lover, a smelter
Moloch the Blind	– a vagabond half-orc who talks to his pet mouse
Joseph Landlayer	– a farmer who grows the best cider apples around
Gaius Stychrene	– a clerk, and something of an alcoholic
Gerni Durand	– a gnomish carpenter and loving father
Mardwick Durand	– his wife, an apothecary
Nacklenock Durand	– their baby child
Falbraëthaneällëón	– a brewmaster who claims to have seen the world and bested it in his youth
Weddapeire Scotchmare	– a merchant whose love of gold is perhaps too strong
Abigail Berzalius	– a hunter of pelts, beasts, and bounties
Lord Fenthorp-Greywood	– the Lord of Con Truldecby, known for his generosity, not his ability to rule
Sárríáléreithägàn	– a friend of Lord Fenthorp-Greywood, visiting from Caldra
Diana Tallimin	– a jaded and worldweary priest who wanders the land
Johnny Greenmarsh	– an eleven-year-old child, well-behaved and polite
Karen Greenmarsh	– his twin sister, loves danger and breaking the rules
Edward Radcliffe	– a philanthropist born into money but not nobility

2 The Stage

2.1 Rules

There are a few non-standard rules which take place in this tournament. The first (and potentially most important) is with respect to priestly magic: divine magic, in this world, takes a long time to cast. Casting a spell – even the most basic cure spell – takes at least half an hour: several minutes to inscribe a holy symbol upon the ground, set out candles and sticks of burning incense, and so on; then several more minutes spent in deep concentration of prayer. Scrolls, however, have all this preparation already done and so can be cast quickly; hence, they are somewhat more useful than normal. Further, undead are things of stories, so turning does not exist as a concept.

Bardic magic has the same effects, but in terms of flavour, is much more focused as the result of exceptional performance and music with a bit of sleight of hand than magic. Bards are viewed as highly-skilled performers but not magical. Bardic healing in particular is slightly different. It can raise moral and make people ignore their injuries and such, so it retains the effect of restoring HP. However, bardic magic is not capable of healing broken bones or other grievous injury.

2.2 The World Above

2.2.1 History

The World Above consists of tens, hundreds, or maybe thousands skylands hanging in the air; no one has any idea as to their number. They are far enough apart that, whilst one can see many other skylands from any given one, communication and travel are impossible. Far beneath the skylands is a never lifting shroud of cloud; to those living in the World Above, the clouds are the bottom of the world.

Our story begins on the Skyland Voltavia. History for the past few thousand years has been more or less generic and irrelevant, until the last hundred years or so. Voltavia has long been united as a single Kingdom, with a capital in the city of Voltæ. The rule has been fair; not outstanding, but not unacceptable, either. However, eighty-five years ago, the region of Kwibak rebelled.

Kwibak refers to the lands in eastern Voltavia (and the largest city therein), populated mainly by Gnomes. The cause of the rebellion is not entirely clear – some claim the problem was unreasonable taxation, some say it was a cultural issue, some maintain it was just people making a grab for power – but for whatever reason, Kwibak declared itself a nation independent of Voltavia. Naturally, King Aleksei William Edvard Ragnarsson Voltaus XXVII did not approve of part of his kingdom seceding; the result was a bloody war lasting nearly seven years, at the end of which the Gnomes were defeated, their weapons confiscated, and the kingdom restored. To this day, there is still an animosity between Kwibak and the rest of Voltavia, and discrimination against Gnomes is not uncommon (since the majority of Gnomes are Kwibakkers, and the majority of Kwibakkers are Gnomes).

Con Truldecby is a small town on the west end of Voltavia. It is far out of the way and often forgotten in the day-to-day lives of people elsewhere. No trade routes run through it, as it is near the tip of the skyland. However, it is here that our story shall begin.

About eighty years ago, the elf Søren Davenport was led into Con Truldecby in chains, and thrown into the gaol. He was found guilty of treason, and sentenced by King Aleksei XXVII himself to rot behind bars. The sheriff asked why the punishment for treason was so light, but was not told. Two years later, the Kwibak rebellion ended, and two years after that, a dwarf named Alanna Kinisson – a veteran of the war – arrived in town, seeking a place far from the remembered horrors of Kwibak. She became a deputy of the sheriff's office, and eventually, after about fifty years, worked her way to the position of Sheriff itself.

Seven years ago, a young woman, scarcely more than a girl, calling herself Talia the Munificent began busking in the town square, performing what is widely believed to be some of Voltavia's best sleight of hand. She was a little crazy, though, claiming that she could perform *actual* magic, which is (of course) ridiculous. Naturally, whenever anyone suggested she do something truly magical that wasn't just sleight of hand, she made excuses about it not working right. Still highly entertaining, though.

Six years ago, Lord Perceval Carle Oliver Fenthorp-Greywood XIX died peacefully, and was succeeded by his son, Lord Emmanuel XIV.

Five years in the past, a half-orc calling himself Krusk Skullcrusher rode into Con Truldecby. Now, orcs are commonly known to be warmongering, violent, rude, and stupid (or, occasionally, very sly and cunning); something of a "lesser" race. Krusk, however, was polite, soft-spoken, and claimed to have been educated by the monks at the Allurean Monastery. Further, Krusk asked for permission to serve as the town's schoolteacher. The people were loath to trust him, but the old teacher, Master Heliotrope, had died sixteen months ago and no one else had the time, desire, and knowledge to be his replacement. In the end, he was allowed to teach but only under guard to ensure the safety of the children.

Three years ago, disaster struck during the festival celebrating the Day of the Death of Israfel. Martin Laplace, one of the greatest minstrels of Voltavia, was performing a ballad of some hero from the Kwibak rebellion, when the stage beneath him erupted in holy flame. Martin was incinerated and died instantly, although his apprentice, who was performing next to him, dove from the stage in time to suffer only mild burns to her face and hands and have her fiddle destroyed. No one figured

out what caused the eruption, and so it was attributed to an act of the gods. To this day the ground where the stage was remains scorched and grows nothing.

2.2.2 Beliefs

First and foremost, there are three types of magic. The first is divine magic, which is performed by the clergy, who act as channels for the will of the gods. Divine magic is the most powerful, although slow; it can cure the sick, mend broken bones, bless a family or a farm to good luck, or even, rarely, call down the wrath of the gods. Casting it is a long and laborious process, and usually leaves the priest exhausted. Secondly, bardic magic. It is not clear whether bardic magic is in fact magical or not; some scholars maintain that it is merely that bards are adept at manipulating those around them to a high degree as well as very skilled with sleight of hand, whilst others maintain that there is some extra inexplicable power to bardic magic. Whatever it is, it is weak and pitiful when compared to arcane magic, with one exception: it exists. Arcane magic is the magic of legends of the past; it is said that once, mighty magi walked the skylands, bending the world to their will. The magi flew between the islands, built castles that hung in the air, and could burn entire cities to the ground with merely a thought. Almost no one seriously believes in arcane magic. (Flying islands are not magic, that's just how skylands work. Nothing magical about it.)

The pantheon of Voltavia is somewhat crowded and of minor relevance to the campaign. The gods include:

- Thetius, God of Balance, who is the most worshipped and keeps peace in the world;
- Israfel, God of Music and Sacrifice, who died hanging the skylands to the firmament;
- Markath, God of Harmony and Insanity, who was driven mad by Israfel's death;
- Fænmillaniel, God of Life and Creation, who sleeps until the end of the age;
- Ril Tallis, God of Trickery and Shadows, who gambles with the world as the stakes;
- Yirros, God of Thunder and Battle, who slew a thousand demons to create the skylands from chaos;
- Zarathon, God of Destruction and Death, who will devour the world at the end of days;
- Bäl Rioch, God of Day and the Sun, who rides through the skies searching for the sword he lost;
- Ellenisar Mariol, God of the Moon and Stars, who keeps the innocent safe as the sleep; and
- Acanathios, God of Time and Fate, who knows all but cannot speak.

There are several different holy days and festivals throughout the year, although the largest and most celebrated is the Day of the Death of Israfel. Traditionally, it is celebrated by holding a grand feast and festival, with performances of music from dawn until dawn of the next day. Worshippers of Markath (who are few and far between) declare the day a High Holy Day, and are somewhat more strict in their observance of the day.

2.2.3 Culture

The society of Voltavia is basically medieval feudalism. The monarch, Queen Natalía Clarice Ada Alekseisdattir Voltaus XII, rules from Voltæ, and many areas of land (as well as most towns and all cities) are ruled by Lords who have sworn fealty to her; Con Truldecby is ruled by Lord Emmanuel Richard Sebastian Fenthorp-Greywood XIV. The common people are represented before Queen Natalía XII by five elected officials from across Voltavia – one each from Central, Eastern, Northern, and Western Voltavia, as well as one from the caverns within the island – who have no power except the right to speak to the Queen freely and without fear of reprisal. These elected representatives also serve as the Regency Council when the monarch is, for any reason, unable or unfit to rule for an extended time.

There is something of a public education system, although it is far from adequate; about half the population of Voltavia is literate, and far fewer have anything beyond the most rudimentary knowledge. Science does progress, however, albeit slowly.

2.2.4 Geography

The farthest separated parts of Voltavia are about seven days' ride apart. The island is shaped somewhat like a capital 'T', with arms to the north, east, and west. At the centre of the skyland lies the Sea of Voltæ, deep and pure. Water falls from one of the skylands far above Voltavia into the Sea, which is the main source of water on the skyland. On the northern shore of the Sea sits the capital city of Voltæ.

The River of Blood flows out of the Sea of Voltæ to the north, passing beside the walls of Voltæ. It winds its way through the foothills of the Allurean Mountains, before flowing over the edge of Voltavia and disappearing into the clouds below. The northern arm of Voltavia is largely uninhabited, although there are a few small homesteads on the plains east of the mountains, and the mountains themselves house the Allurean Monastery. From the south-eastern edge of the Sea flows

the Silver River; it winds its way down the eastern arm of Voltavia, terminating at Lake Arles; water flows out of the lake underground, winding its way through the great caverns and eventually out the bottom of the skyland. Where the Silver River flows into the Lake is the city of Kwibak; where it flows out of the Sea is the small city of Caldra. Half way down the river, about a day's ride from each of Kwibak and Caldra is the village of Monn Trail, which makes a decent profit on all the merchants and travellers riding along the river.

Beneath the surface of the island is another realm at least as large as the land on the surface. The bulk of the island is about a mile deep, and is filled with caverns, mines, and the realm of the dwarves. Despite the age of the island, the rock beneath it has not been fully mined; it is rumoured that it replenishes itself for some unknown reason, albeit extremely slowly. There are stories of caves being found behind solid rock walls, containing the remains of miners dead for an unknowable number of years, with no sign of how they could have been sealed within. At the heart of the island lies the great crystal city of Solorum.

On the south face of the skyland, about half a mile below the surface yet open to the sky above, is a ledge, and on it, the city Librim. Librim, which can only be reached by traveling through the dark of the mines, was once the greatest city of Voltavia, long ago, when the ancients still worked their wonders. It is a city of secrets of the past, full of strange wonders no one can understand any more. It is also the location of Voltavia's greatest library, and the centre of learning of the entire skyland. Scholars pore over ancient texts, or experiment with alchemy and natural philosophy.

Finally, to the west of the Sea the land is heavily forested, but beyond the forest lies the small town of Con Truldecby. Con Truldecby is mostly surrounded by farmland. The town itself, though, is home to some of the best artisans and artists in all Voltavia. The best ale and the best carpentry both come from Con Truldecby, and the best metalworks and masonry of the dwarves come from the tunnels and mines just below it. To the north of the city is a lumber mill; to the west, a quarry; to the south, dyes are made; and to the east are the vineyards.

3 Prologue

It was the day before the Day of the Death of Israfel, and a day much like any other. Early in the morning, preparations for tomorrow's festival were well underway. Suddenly, inexplicably, disaster struck. The ground began to shake, suddenly and violently, and then the island fell from the sky.

Those unfortunate to be outside screamed as the ground tore itself from beneath them, and found themselves entirely unable to return to the relative safety of what was no longer solid ground. The skyland fell faster than those above it, who watched – knowing the certainty of their own deaths – as the island fell away beneath them. As the island flung itself suddenly towards the clouds at the bottom of the world, people under a roof did not fair much better; the suddenness of the drop slammed them – and their furniture and anything else not bolted to the ground – into the ceilings. Some people broke their necks or were crushed by furniture, others broke through weak thatch roofs and were thrown into the sky, but most people fortunate enough to be inside survived.

Voltavia continued to fall for what felt like an hour, picking up speed the entire time. Eventually it crossed into the veil of clouds at the bottom of the world, but it did not stop. The air screaming by turned thick and dark, heavy with moisture. More surprising, eventually, Voltavia crossed the threshold at the bottom of the cloud, and fell into the World Below.

An instant later, there was a deafening roar as Voltavia crashed into the surface of whatever skyland lay beneath the clouds. A deluge of water was thrown into the air – apparently Voltavia had landed in a great body of water. As it fell, Voltavia had spun out of alignment; the ground now sloped steeply towards what was once the east. Far off in that direction – although much closer than the nearest village – lay the edge of the water; apparently, Con Truldecby was now the only settlement on Voltavia above the surface.

The impact of the crash collapsed several buildings, and killed most of those lucky (or unlucky) enough to still be alive. Slowly, the few survivors made their way to the town square of Con Truldecby, once a lively and busy place, now tragically almost empty.