

Selected Papers from the Chamber of the Twelve, #1

The Founding of Chamber Pasheen

by Madder Scratch, 1904.

A biography of Guile Snakering (1841-1883), describing the origins of the Secret Project at the height of the Blood Plague in 1875. Guile persuaded the king to set up "Chamber Pasheen" as an elite council of the most respected scholars in Chamber Platinum (in practise, hand-picked by Guile). Its overt purpose was to identify the ultimate cause of the Blood Plague and to ensure that nothing like it could affect Everway again. However, Guile had a secret agenda. He had come to the conclusion that the Blood Plague was an attack on Everway by the gods. In order to protect itself, the city had need of gods of its own - ones that were actually present, unlike the Walker. He proposed a Secret Project, hidden from the King and even from the members' families - that the members of the Chamber become those gods. To do this, the nature of the gods must be understood and a means of deification must be established. It is not clear if Guile intended the Twelve to be his means of obtaining power and influence within Everway - if so, he was to be disappointed as he died in the last major outbreak of the Blood Plague in 1883, without any breakthroughs in the secret research.

A New Scheme of Study for The New Chamber

by Coffin Tender, 2114.

A proposal for a new approach that expresses frustration with the lack of progress in identifying the nature of the gods through exploration and research over the last 200 years. It suggests using the new narcotic Dreamflower to achieve a higher state of awareness where understanding will surely come. Associated papers suggest that a lot of people got high over the next 20 years, but "none of the insights they received proved worthy of further study".

Selected Papers from the Chamber of the Twelve, #2

A Comparative Study of the Tales of the Rainbow-Haired Girl

by Ink Scratch, submitted for inclusion in Chamber Platinum in 2237.

A thesis describing her experience of meeting "the being who called herself Silly Me". Ink had been investigating stories of a "rainbow-haired girl" which she had encountered in several widely disparate realms. She eventually managed to meet her by getting herself imprisoned in Giggle, a realm where all the adults behave like children (she played a game with them which left her locked in a cave). The rainbow-haired girl, who called herself Silly Me, told her that there were gods who were associated with the Fortune Deck, but that they did not appear as gods but as humans or objects with unusual powers that she called avatars. Silly Me said that she was an avatar and mentioned Mother Harvest and one or two others that she had met.

A "rejected" stamp accompanied by the comment "Much too fanciful" and the signature of Sand Scratch appears in the frontispiece. Comments written in the margins, however, indicate that Sand was much more interested than he seemed. One reads "Hooded Councillor = Cockatrice = Blood Plague!!!" Another: "Death = ???" Another: "Usurper = Walker?"

On the Origins of the Avatars

by Whiteice Crookstaff, 2307.

This treatise examines several theories relating to the origins of the avatars. After reviewing the stories about avatar-like beings that have been collected over the past 80 years, Whiteice comes to the conclusion that they were ordinary humans who had transcended to a higher state, whence came their special powers. He investigated means of achieving this transcendent state, and eventually came to the conclusion that it was necessary for people to be "born" into a sphere of pure spirit in which they could strengthen themselves, and then return to the real world. The problem was finding a sphere of pure spirit.

Selected Papers from the Chamber of the Twelve, #3

A Tale of the Basahn - Spheremaker and the Enchanted Chair

by Coiner Gold, submitted for inclusion in Chamber Platinum in 2354.

[This is the story that Cunning told the heroes]

The story tells of a great Basahn magician called Spheremaker who sought to create a new world. Much of the tale describes a series of quests he performed to obtain the Instruments of Odin - the Pearl of Making, the Edge of Light and Darkness and the Book of Words - which involved fighting a great red dragon, entering the realm of the dead and a journey to an undersea kingdom, all the while harried by his dark twin, Shadow, who is determined to stop him. The final quest is to capture a godling to sacrifice, which he does by tricking him into sitting in an enchanted throne. At the tale's climax, Spheremaker takes the instruments to the Sacred Place for the creation ritual, carrying the bound god on his back. Setting the Pearl into the Edge's handle, Spheremaker speaks words from the Book and then slices the godling in two, cutting away his spirit and shaping it into a new world. Alas, it is all in vain - Shadow arrives and corrupts the ritual, and the newly created world explodes. Spheremaker retreats to his castle, sadder and wiser, and never tries to create a world again.

A Proposal for Transcendence

by Firebolt Crookstaff, 2376.

In which it is proposed that a modified form of the Spheremaker ritual should achieve the Twelve's goal of transcendence into godly beings. It celebrates the fact that the Edge and the Pearl have been acquired through the offices of the thief Redfox, and that many years of study have concluded that they are the genuine artifacts despite his refusal to say where they came from. "The lack of the Book is a drawback, but careful study of the legend suggests that it is but a minor component in the construction of the dweomeric resonances and substitution from other Cleacuun sources should suffice". As for the sacrifice, Firebolt is convinced that the energy severed from the godling was magical rather than spiritual, meaning that the sacrifice of any great-souled human would provide all the raw material required.

Selected Papers from the Chamber of the Twelve, #4

The Transcendence Experiment: A Failure of Language?

by Ulrich Crookstaff, 2401

In it he critiques the main theory that the cause of the failure was a missing component - the "Book of Words" which could stabilise the "Transcended Realm" - and instead suggests that the number of avatars is limited to the number of cards in the Fortune Deck. This means that in order to be successful, an existing Avatar will need to be destroyed.

Uses for the Dragonlord

by Ulrich Crookstaff, 2463

A paper suggesting possible uses for the Dragonlord, now that a measure of control has been achieved over him through use of the Guardian protocol. The chief suggestion is that he is sent to track down and destroy avatars, allowing members of the Twelve to transcend in their place. The article acknowledges difficulties, including the Dragonlord's child-like character, which is easily distracted from the task in hand, and the hostility of his dragon companion to the Twelve's interventions. It proposes the avatar of Death as the first target, as it will appeal to the Dragonlord's hero complex.

Letter from Cunning to Slight in the Lizard Pyramid

17 Scales, 2473

My dear Son,

If you are reading this, then I am probably dead. It was always possible that Ulrich or one of the others might have a nasty surprise awaiting. I hope you have managed to achieve what I did not, and have acquired the Pearl. It is important for our people.

I am aware that we have only known each other for a few weeks, which is not enough to make up for the time we have lost. But one thing I beg you to do for me, as your father's dying wish - take the Pearl to Urumora. Perhaps she will be able to use it to create a place where our people can finally cease their centuries of wandering. I include a translation of her most recent letter in the hope that it will help you find her.

I do not regret the liaison with your mother that resulted in your existence - Watchful was not kind to her, and we found comfort in each other. But I do regret that, on visiting some years later, I did not pay more attention to the little boy who could so easily make himself scarce. Perhaps if I had, we could have been the family that we truly should have been.

Your loving father,

Cunning.

Letter from Urumora to Cunning in the Lizard Pyramid

(Translated from the Cleacuun by Cunning Gold)

10 Maiden, 2473

My dear Cunning,

I may have news of our mutual enemy. My contacts in Remnant have heard tales of a powerful sorcerer in the realm of Everguard. His name is given variously as Blackjack, First of Wands, Thousand Eyes and Oakstaff - I am sure that all of these are false. He is reputed to have a castle high in the mountains, but no-one has seen it. Some say that the castle moves from place to place, others that it is invisible, others that its entrance is a Gate to another dimension, still others that all entering his realm come under the influence of a powerful misdirection spell. The wizard rules the mountains and the authorities in Everguard have not dared to challenge him. He is reputed to have transformed an entire army sent against him into sheep, which his soldiers then cooked and ate. These stories are many decades old - no traveller that I have met has visited Everguard in years. Perhaps you could ask your associates in Chamber Platinum?

I have attempted to reach Everguard, but it has proved impossible. Woodhall is now rife with White Scorpion Warriors, presumably from Great Plains. The Gate from Skylight has recently been destroyed by persons unknown. I shall seek another entrance.

I fear that Darga is about to make another attempt on the Eternal City. The Glorious Empire is massing an army under General Ten Sticks, who I believe is one of her agents. Have a care.

Nuy has borne another son, Magor. Saelna and Xederin are joined. We have had good trading with the Wind River People.

May Odin protect you,

Your loving grandmother,
Urumora

PS [Here Urumora describes the heroes (Slight, Flame, Walker, Jayson, Why, Fish Trader), including the news that Slight is Lynx's half-brother, and says that they are "sympathetic to our cause"].

Handout #1: The true tale of Spheremaker and the Enchanted Throne

AKA what really happened during Spheremaker's/Guren's sphere creation ritual.

(Hint: search "enchanted throne" in the write-up to find the original version of this story)

From Maba's notes:

- The "godling" was the avatar of Death, which Guren tried to sacrifice. However, it did not go to plan - instead, the Edge split the avatar into two, creating an avatar of Stasis ("which the humans call the Walker") and an avatar of Change.
- The Walker left the avatar of Change bound at "the Heart of All" and sought midianite with which to wall it up for ever. The Walker kept the Edge, as it was the one object in the Thousand Spheres capable of cleaving midianite into blocks.
- Maba realised the danger almost too late. If the Walker succeeded in its aim of walling up its opposite, then all change in the Thousand Spheres would cease and the Returners would never succeed in their ambition of re-taking Everway. So he reluctantly joined forces with his "fool brother" to stop that happening.
- They found the Walker in the remote sphere of Bleak, on the point of discovering the capstone. Guren and Maba created a mirror in the sky that translated the Edge away from the Walker and created a thousand false copies of the capstone to hide the real one (using the powers of a captured avatar - the Door Opener, representing Hope / Despair). The copies needed to be renewed regularly as the Walker found and destroyed them, a process taking much energy, and Guren and Maba agreed to take it in turns to do this.

Handout #2: The true tale of Slate and Ocean

AKA Guren's sacrifice

(Hint: search "shadow league" in the write-up to find the original version of this story)

From Maba's notes:

- Building on his learnings from the capstone mirror, Maba created a powerful new artefact - the Mirror of Shadows - that could translate away anything its wielder could focus it on. He decided to give it to a minion, a wizard called Slate, or the Kingmaster, to see what he would do with it. Slate decided to use it to take over a realm called the Daring Kingdom by translating away the head of its king.
- Maba was of course opposed by his twin Guren, who fell in love with Ocean, the Daring Kingdom's new ruler. When Slate translated away her hand, leaving her dying of blood loss, Guren joined his hand to hers and gave up his life in her place. Ocean founded the Shadow League, recognised by their mismatched hands, which opposed Maba and eventually destroyed the Mirror of Shadows.
- Maba quickly found Guren's base and helped himself to the Edge of Light and Darkness, the Pearl of Making and the Book of Words. While doing so he encountered an image of Guren, who warned him that "you will be destroyed by your children" (Guren claimed that he had acquired the gift of prophecy later in life). Maba did not take this very seriously, and in a fit of mischief misled the tellers of the tale of the creation of the Shadow League into believing that he, rather than Guren, had been responsible, and that it was named after him.
- Maba only realised the subtlety of Guren's revenge later. The capstone mirror renewal spell now devolved entirely to him, and it slowly but surely sapped his life force. Maba was forced to negotiate with some renegade Crookstuffs from Deadwalk Coven for necromantic magicks to keep himself alive.
- At about this time, the Pearl and the Edge were stolen from him by persons unknown. Maba suspected that it was Redfox, the avatar of Trickery.

Handout #3: Actions against Everway

(In the Returner HQ)

- Some notes detailing Maba's various attempts to take Everway, including his fury that his protégé **Earthshaker** (the original owner of this very castle), was defeated by Ulrich Crookstaff using the Edge of Light and Darkness that was stolen from him. Ulrich's use of the Edge created a permanent gash in reality which the Everwayan authorities have covered up.
- Maba's encounter with Painter. It started twenty years ago when he encountered an innocent-looking young woman in a black dress who was painting a picture of a landscape. Shadow immediately recognised her as a powerful magician, specialising in a form of picture magic which he had never encountered before. They got to talking - Painter explained that she was painting the picture as a trap for a dangerous and powerful enemy who was lurking somewhere in the Thousand Spheres. Shadow explained that he was trying to bring about the downfall of a city whose inhabitants had wronged his people (not something he would normally have told anyone, but she seemed so innocent...). They agreed to help one another. Painter would teach Shadow something of her magic, and in return, Shadow would deliver to her the Book of Words.
- Painter created pictures for the Hooded Councillor and Innocence, and helped to trap them into the working. She then demanded the Book. Shadow refused, saying that he wanted to be sure that his spell worked first. Painter went off to look for her rival, saying she would send for the Book later. In the last few months she has done so, and Shadow gave it to "an amusing servant" to take to her in Everway.
- Recently Shadow has been able to enhance the Mist's effects in two ways. Painter had taught him how to create paintings which have allowed him to spread the Mist much more quickly by bypassing several spheres. Secondly, Shadow managed to trap the Phoenix Queen using a picture. It did not go entirely to plan - the Queen became an egg - but nonetheless her power has given the Mist a destructive edge in the form of storms of black lightning.