

Scenario 16

Golden Mounts

"The Bacchanal has come! Euoi! Euoi!"

Plot Development Notes

- Golden Mounts: Source of dreamflower. Satyrs roam among tall mountain peaks, luring travellers away forever. A favourite haunt of the **Bacchanal**.
- Wishbone needs to Face her Fate: Save Gecko on the Wall, even though he's turned into a satyr. How to tie this into Wishbone's Fate (Eagle - Mind prevails vs Thoughtlessness)?
 - See if Wishbone follows her flaw and gets tempted by one the indulgences on route.
 - Obvious temptation is to take Dreamflower, which means she cannot plan how to trick the Bacchanal. She goes to a dreamflower grove - to drug the satyrs. The hazy scents of the flowers puts her in a dream state. *Get the other players to help by being dream versions of themselves.*
- The other heroes will want to find the gate to get on with the quest. It really has to be in the Satyr Heights to force them to deal with the Bacchanal.
- Ways of dealing with the Bacchanal:
 - Poison them with Dreamflower. This will need to be collected from the Dreamflower Glades in the Sunhills.
 - Enlist the Maenads. All female, very violent. Dismembered animals. They think that the satyrs don't worship Dionysus in the proper way.
 - Persuade Pholos and the centaurs to attack or distract the satyrs.
 - Use the Pearl and/or the Book. Most magic won't work on the Bacchanal, but that will.
- Powers of the Bacchanal:

Anyone getting within 50 feet of the Bacchanal gets one of the following attacks. FC to determine which one. Second attack after 5 min. If the attack succeeds, the player starts doing the action. They can stop if they make an E+FC 6, then 5 etc.

- *Go on, Just a Drop:* A satyr who offers wine or another intoxicant cannot be resisted by normal humans - A+FC 6. Drinking or inhaling anything instantly makes you drunk/stoned.
- *L'Odeur Agreeable:* Food provided by the Bacchanal has a powerful scent. E+FC 6 or become ravenously hungry. Eating anything binds you to the Bacchanal.
- *Feel the Rhythm:* When the satyr band starts playing, you pop til you drop. F+FC 6 to resist dancing until you are exhausted.
- *Beast with Many Backs:* Despite not being most people's idea of a desirable partner, satyrs give off a smell that is highly arousing. Make a W+FC 6 check to cool your ardour. You are in control, but only just. And if satyrs aren't your thing, there are plenty of other sensuous temptations nearby...
- *Long-term Transformation:* Humans who stay with the Bacchanal for more than a few days start to transform into a centaur, satyr or maenad depending on their core nature. The process is complete after six months or so. Victims may notice that they are changing size and shape, but why would they want to leave?

Visions

An empty village. Houses have been abandoned - a broom dropped on a front doorstep. An

overturned bucket with the dried curdled remains of milk. Deer in the streets flee.

A magical mountain top. Fir trees with glimmering lights. Fires. The sound of drums. Amphorae resting in a bush.

A field of golden dream flowers. Heavy, intoxicating scent. Just the place for a rest...

The Maenad caverns. Where female followers of Dionysos live - human woman in shape, but with monstrous claws and pointed teeth. "Goat-men must die!"

Characters

Gecko on the Wall. Wishbone's brother. Partly transformed into a satyr.

Prolix Buttertongue. Boarholt's resident teacher.

Silenus - head of the Bacchanal.

Telete - Dionysus' daughter

Ino - head of the Maenads.

Pholos - head of the centaurs

Nessus

Sapience the Owl

The Realm



Virtue:

Fertility: Growth. The land is blessed by Dionysus and all living things grow well.

Flaw:

Knowledge: Falsehood. The people are lying to themselves about the effects of all their indulgence.

Fate:

The Eagle (Mind Prevails / Thoughtlessness). If the Bacchanal can be forced away, the people stand a chance of getting themselves sufficiently organised to survive. Otherwise their lack of thought for the future will eventually kill them.

Usurper:

The Celebrant. Live in the moment vs Plan for the future.

The People:

The people have thick, deep brown hair, ochre-coloured skin and green eyes. The men have short goatee beards and wear tunics, surcoats and trousers. The women wear white headscarves, blouses and billowing skirts. They are mostly farmers and shepherds.

Craft:

Olive oil, wine, cheese, honey, figs.

Tamed Animals:

Goats, sheep, chickens.

Deities:

The people worship Dionysus.

Rule:

They live in independent villages each ruled by an elected Archon.

The Land:

A land-locked realm of light woods, rolling hills and mountains. Mediterranean scenery. The weather is clement for most of the year. There are many shady dells and grottos which have a dreamy, magical feel.

History:

The realm is dominated by the Bacchanal, who have been coming here for centuries, attracted by dreamflower and the pliance of the local inhabitants. This has prevented the society from developing in any meaningful way, because any sort of long-term planning is constantly disrupted by the latest celebration. The Maenads and the Centaurs are consequences of the long-term residence of the Bacchanal.

The Plot

Opening: The heroes arrive with their 1000 refugees. The gate is in a clearing in a wood. There is a small village (*Boarholt*) nearby, which is completely empty.

Interaction: The heroes can investigate the abandoned village. There are many signs that the inhabitants left in a hurry and with no preparation about a week ago - a broom dropped on a front doorstep, an overturned bucket with the dried curdled remains of milk. Investigating the local school will uncover the diary of the schoolmaster, *Prolix Buttertongue*. The last words in it are "The Bacchanal has come! *Euoi! Euoi!*".

Decision: The heroes need to decide what to do now. Boarholt is an ideal location for the refugees, some of whom are badly in need of rest and healing. But the original inhabitants might come back. Also, Prolix's diary has some interesting hints that he knows something about the whereabouts of the Twisted Library. And they have to find the other Gate from this realm, the location of which annoyingly is not clear.

The heroes can follow the path out of the village, which leads north. An experienced tracker (there are some among the refugees) can tell them which way the villagers went.

Action:

The path splits in three. It is not clear which way the villagers went.

One path leads east to the Maenad Caverns

One path goes northwest to the Sunhills

One path goes to Centaurs' Haunt and Satyr Heights

Progress:

- If the heroes head east, evidence of the Maenads' activities become increasingly apparent in the trail of animal body parts and blood splashes. The Maenads (all female) dress in the rags of clothing. They have long wild hair and sharp teeth and nails. Any men approaching are likely to be attacked. Their leader, Ino, hates the "goat-men" and can easily be persuaded to attack them. Preventing them from attacking the partying villagers, however, may be more difficult.
- If they go northwest, they reach the Sunhills, an area of rolling meadows covered in yellow grass. Patches of dreamflowers cover the hillsides, making things seriously weird for the unwary. Particularly if they visit the Owlcliffs nearby.
- If they go north, they reach Centaurs' Folly, an abandoned and overgrown palace ruin that is the base for a group of centaurs. The heroes can befriend their drunken leader, Pholos, by bringing him honey (from the forest - beware angry bees) and/or figs (from Boarholt), and can learn much useful information about what they are up against.

Rising Tension:

By one means or another, the heroes approach Satyr Heights, a steep mountain peak with a magic forest at its top. Firefly lights glimmer in the treetops, small faces peek out of the thick undergrowth, and the air is full of the heady scents of roast meat, wine, and sex. The heroes soon find the missing villagers singing, dancing and fornicating with each other and the goat-men of the Bacchanal. They may meet its leader, Silenus, who will invite them to join him in a drink.

Conflict:

If they are wise, the heroes will be prepared. If not, the powerful lures of the Bacchanal may capture them before they can find Prolix or Gecko on the Wall. The heroes may have to beat a retreat to re-think their plans.

Rising Tension:

The heroes can re-visit places they have already been, go somewhere new, or seek information from Pholos.

Decision:

How will the heroes get the better of the Bacchanal and find Prolix and Gecko? They could enlist the help of Ino and the Maenads, but things could get bloody. Pholos and the centaurs could stage a distraction, if they can be kept on-mission. Or the heroes could brave the Sun Hills and collect Dreamflower to spike the satyrs' drinks. Or they could use their own resources - the satyrs will be resistant to the party's normal magic, but the Pearl and the Book together could create an illusion powerful enough to distract the Bacchanal sufficiently to rescue Prolix and Gecko.

Climax and Resolution:

This could end many ways:

- The heroes succeed in neutralising the satyrs. Gecko on the Wall has satyr horns but is otherwise okay - he can stay with the villagers until it's safe to return to Shifting Sands. The villagers can return to Boarholt - they may not be best pleased with having to share it with 1000 refugees, but Rathgard and Tranquil can persuade them. Prolix Buttertongue can tell them where the Gate is. It leads to a realm that Rathgard knows -

Shimmersand...

- The heroes succumb to the satyrs' temptations and get completely wasted. When they come to, they discover that the Bacchanal has moved. The shady forest is now improbably situated on a rocky outcrop in the middle of a hot desert. Not the ideal environment for walking off a hangover... Gecko on the Wall is halfway to being a satyr and will need to be dragged bodily away. Prolix Buttertongue is permanently drunk and cannot tell them anything useful.
- The heroes manage to get away from the Bacchanal, possibly with Gecko on the Wall, but don't succeed in getting directions out of Prolix Buttertongue. If they haven't already, they encounter Sapience the Owl, who demands mice. If they succeed in catching some for her (build a better mouse trap...), she shows them the way to the Gate and flies through it. She can be followed all the way to the Twisted Library, where she becomes one of the owl statues, OR Wishbone could take her as a second animal companion boon.

Hook

- You emerge to the sound of twittering birds and trickling water and the smell of oleander. The Gate is at the base of small cliff that forms one side of a shallow, bubbling spring. You have to wade through cold, knee-high water to reach the nearby bank which is covered in rushes and oleander bushes. The air is warm with just a hint of autumn chill.

Slight and Wishbone may be relieved to know that their sense of dread is gone.
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- The spring is in the middle of an oak wood. A path follows a rocky stream that winds away through the trees down a gentle slope to the north.

The cliff is 30 foot high - not quite high enough to see over the trees. The path is fairly worn.

- The going is not too difficult, though there are treacherous tree roots and rocks.
- After half a mile or so, the trees start to thin out. There is a sound of distressed bleating from a nearby bush, where a goat has got its horns tangled. It has a cowbell round its neck.
- The path abruptly emerges onto a meadow where a mixture of goats, sheep and cows are grazing on the thick grass. There is a smell of thyme and oregano. In the distance a small village with whitewashed houses can be seen, surrounded by gardens and fields. Beyond it, the ground slopes up in a series of forested ridges towards a low mountain range in the hazy distance. There is not a soul in sight.

Heroes with agricultural knowledge will realise that there is something wrong. Livestock should not be left to wander alone like this. Alert types may notice that none of the chimneys in the village are smoking.

Boarholt

- The village is a hamlet of approximately 40 whitewashed and red-tiled houses, each covered with fig or grape vines and with its own garden, arranged around a circular main square with a crude wooden statue of a boar at its centre. A single road runs through it north to south.
- There are some larger buildings:
 - A conical grain tower with a tiled roof near the fields at the outskirts of the village.
 - A grape press.
 - The Archon's residence, a larger house by the main square.
 - The Dairy, a large open-sided building surrounded by animal pens near the meadow.
 - A Smithy. The smith's hammer lies abandoned on the floor next to the anvil which has an unfinished horseshoe stuck to it.

- A communal storehouse next to the Archon's residence. It is full of the produce from the recent harvest: dried meats, apples, figs, nuts and root vegetables.

A number of circular blank spaces and empty racks indicate where wine amphorae and beer barrels were stored. They are all empty.

- A porticoed school, on the far side of the village. *See below.*
- A hospital building near the school. Has a supply of herbs and bandages. Several unmade beds.
- There is not a single person in the village. There are many signs that it was abandoned suddenly about a week ago:
 - A couple of deer dart off the main street as anyone approaches
 - Chickens are wandering freely. Chicken droppings are everywhere.
 - Several front doors have been left propped open.
 - An abandoned broom on a path by a door.
 - Food abandoned on tables. Now rotten and maggoty.
 - An overturned bucket lies abandoned in the street near the dairy. It contains the dried curdled remains of milk.
- A path heads off east into the woods. It leads to a small circular stone temple with a wooden roof. Inside is an altar with some rotting offerings in front of a wooden statue of a man wearing a circlet of vine leaves and holding a staff with a large pinecone at the top (thyrsos) in one hand and a bunch of grapes in the other (knowledgeable heroes will recognise him as Dionysus). A frieze on the wall behind the statue depicts the same man leading a troupe of satyrs in a dance.

The village is just big enough to house all the refugees, though it will be a squash. Tranquil, Humility and Callus will offer to get things organised, including cooking rotas, building temporary accommodation, hunting and gathering expeditions to replace food taken and to collect medicinal herbs. Pebble will quickly start to recover. Walker and Flame will have to decide what to do with Winnow Tallgrass - he offers to stay behind and help tend the fields until the heroes get back.

The School

The main clue to what has happened is in the neat, whitewashed school building. Benches for about 40 pupils are arranged around a writing desk and a chair. Books, styluses and wax tablets have been thrown down on the floor. On the desk is the teacher's diary. The florid title page indicates that it belongs to "Prolix Buttertongue", a "humble student of literature" who is recording his observations for the benefit of "the others who will come after me". Mostly it is a routine account of daily village life, occasionally interspersed with conversations with travellers passing through the village. Some of these are of potential interest to the heroes. Frustratingly, Prolix doesn't give precise dates, instead using terms like "Autumn, five days after the harvest" or "Spring, thirteen days after the second new moon".

- A couple of reports of villagers being injured after getting too close to the "Maenads".
- Visits to the "old palace" to see "Pholos", who seems to be a rather drunken friend. Most of these accounts end "Hangover next morning."
- Many of the travellers are spherewalkers heading from "the gate to the north" to Everway. (frustratingly, Prolix never states to which realm the "gate in the north" leads). Most originate from realms the heroes have never heard of. Exceptions:
 - A group of refugees from a religious war in Caer Gloria.
 - describes spending a night in a translucent house made of trees tied together in Jellytree.
 - A couple of references from Wormwood's notes: Westerly (Count Roderick) and

Sentinel's Flame (the Copper Duke).

- A recent entry describes a conversation with a spherewalker called **Polder Highmoon** who had just visited the fabled Twisted Library, which revealed to her the secret location of a great treasure. Knowing that much of what the books in the Twisted Library say is a lie, she was going to the Library of All Worlds to try to verify the information.
- The spherewalkers *from* Everway are more interesting. Prolix gets very excited when he meets someone from one of the Everway families.
 - Some older reports of a blue-robed woman with long fingers accompanied by two green-cloaked bodyguards who refused to give her name or explain what she was doing ("though I believe she must be a Mother!"). She asked for directions to the Sunhills. Prolix records that she passed through the village again a few more times, but there is no recent mention of her.
 - Another regular visitor is a young woman with a military bearing: **Morrigan Crow**, a personal adjutant of General Victor Crow. Prolix befriended her on a return trip from seeing Pholos when he found her lost in the forest in a state of heavy dreamflower intoxication. Prolix guided her back to the village and helped her to recover. Morrigan has come back at regular intervals ever since; it seems that her task is to gather dreamflowers for her master, who has a medical condition.
 - The most recent entry in the diary is particularly interesting. Dated "15 days after harvest", it describes a conversation with one **Lightfoot Moondance**, "one of the fabled priests of Everway" the previous day. She was seeking the Twisted Library, and having recently spoken to a spherewalker who had just been there, Prolix was able to advise her of its most recent location, in - unfortunately the entry trails off at this point, and the only other words on the page, in considerably shakier handwriting, are "**The Bacchanal has come! Euoi! Euoi!**".

Get Wishbone to describe her previous encounter with the Bacchanal.

Tracking the Villagers

Hopefully the heroes will now be strongly motivated to find the villagers. This is not difficult for an experienced tracker (the heroes can borrow some of the Hunter's Moon refugees if necessary) - there are prints of booted feet and cloven hoofprints in the muddy area next to the stream as it turns east to the north of the village. Away from the water, things are more difficult, but broken undergrowth and bits of smashed jugs indicate that the villagers roughly followed the road as it climbs up an east-west-running ridge.

At the top of the ridge, things become more difficult. The road passes between two herms and then splits in three. One path follows the crest of the ridge to the east, one continues down the other side of the ridge to the north, and the third branches towards some striking-looking rounded yellow hills that are just visible above the tree-tops to the northwest. It is not clear which way the villagers went - there are signs in all three directions.

If someone asks, the herms are facing north.
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To the East - The Maenad Caves

- The path follows the ridge for half a mile or so and then descends into the forest.
- Some disturbing signs:
 - Blood splashes on the trees.
 - Old, gnawed bones tossed into the undergrowth
 - A cloud of flies billows up from a goat's head that is lying by the side of the path. It appears to have been ripped from the body.

- A torn-off bird wing in a pile of feathers.
- A pile of guts that has been ripped out of a torso. It is draped over a small wooden altar with scrolled edges.
- A grove contains the scattered dismembered remains of a deer.

If the heroes ask, the trail of wine-stains, vomit and smashed pottery that marks the villagers' trail is not in evidence here.

- The path opens up into a swampy area - reeds, flies, fish and croaking frogs. To the north is a rocky cliff about fifty feet high. Dark holes mark the entrance of caves. The area outside them is splashed with blood and festooned with bones and entrails.
- *On a lucky FC* the Maenads are asleep on a pile of festering animal skins in their cave. *On an unlucky FC*, they are on the hunt. High-pitched cries echo through the forest. Humanoid shapes can be seen darting through the trees. If the heroes move, they are chased. If they turtle up, they are attacked from all sides, including the trees. The Maenads primarily target men. There are about two dozen of them. They are muddy females with claws for hands, pointed teeth and long tangled hair, dressed in the rags of human clothes and stained animal skins.

Maenads: A1 E5 F6 W3

Special power: The Maenads' cries elicit panic. W+FC 7 or run away for number of rounds equal to the value missed by.

Negotiations with Ino

- Ino is the most human-looking of the Maenads, with flashing brown eyes, a mane of dark curly hair held in place with a gold circlet, and a lion-skin cloak.
- Rathgard's rhetoric will be ineffective ("Be silent, puny man-child!") but she will listen to Flame or Wishbone.
- Her chief motivation is her utter disgust and loathing for the "goat-men" who "profane the worship of the Wine God". She wants to tear them limb from limb. She was not aware that they have returned and it will take very little provocation to get her to launch an attack. Persuading her to follow a plan will be rather more difficult.

Ino A3 E6 F7 W4 Special power: Dismember - E+FC 4 to resist.

To the North West - The Sunhills

- The path leads for a mile through the trees and opens out into an upland of rolling sunlit meadows that are covered in dry grass interspersed with patches of bright yellow flowers. There is a sweet scent in the air. It reminds you of something, but you can't think what. The air over the meadows is hazy with pollen.
- There are two weathered herms on either side of the road. Unusually, they have an arm outstretched, palm facing towards you. There is writing around their base, but it is weathered and faded. The word "Beware" can just be made out on one of them.

The yellow plants are dreamflowers. Their pollen is a powerful narcotic that puts people into a waking dream. The effect is not magical. It can be resisted with high Earth (7) or, if the person says they are concentrating, with their choice of Water or Fire (6). A check must be made for each dreamflower patch approached. Use of a wetted cloth around the mouth and nose will reduce the checks by 2. Holding your breath is entirely effective for a minute or two (or in Walker's case, longer).

Hero Dreams

FC to see if it's a good dream or a bad one. Depending on how much they engage with the dream (suggesting things that could happen etc.) they will spend more or less time lost in it. Unless helped, they will wander off in various directions, following their particular dreams.

Heroes who somehow manage to resist the dreamflower effects (most likely Walker) can attempt to revive their companions. Physical interference (slapping, dragging them away etc) will manifest as adverse effects in the dream, which the dreamer may resist. Dreamers cannot be snapped out of the dream, but getting them away from the Sunhills will cause them to revive.

Fish Trader:

- Good: You are a bit surprised to see your cart standing on the road. It's full of fish. They seem to be staring at you. They start to flip and flop as you get closer. Now they are in a circle all around you. Their flips and flops are synchronised. You realise they are doing a dance.
- Bad: A mist springs up around you and the air turns cool and damp. From out of the mist spring several of your Peacemaster companions in their natural shapes. They have a brand on their foreheads in the shape of a scorpion - a white paint has been applied to the scar tissue. "Kill! Kill!"

Flame:

- Good: Walker is with you. "Let's play horsey". Walker goes down on all fours and starts to turn into a horse with a bridle. You get on his back and gallop across the hills. "Horsey! Horsey!"
- Bad: You see a cave in front of you from which a red glow is issuing. Now you are inside it - you're back in Phoenix Caves. Your wizard master is in front of you - his face is shadowed so you can't see what he looks like, but you can hear his whispery voice. "Why have you not learned wisdom? Why are you so useless?"

Rathgard:

- Good: You're in the royal bedchamber in Rath. Queen Elian is asleep in bed beside you. You get up and wander out onto the balcony that overlooks the streets of Rath. It's a beautiful sunny day and people are looking up at you, You realise you're naked, but you don't care.
- Bad: Somehow you're back in Everway, in the cellars. It's a mess - there's a riot or raid going on, and gang members' bodies litter the floor. Voulges and half a dozen gang members are cornered, surrounded by Watchers. He turns and looks at you. "How could you leave us? How could you?"

Slight:

- Good: You feel a tugging from your pocket. It's the Pearl. You get it out. It cracks open, revealing a grinning mouth with lots of teeth. "Hello Slight. I have something to tell you". And it tells you something very important, but you immediately forget what it was.
- Bad: Somehow you're back in Everway, in Crookstaff plaza. It's dark - menacing black clouds crackling with lightning have blocked the sky. The magical sigil that hangs over Crookstaff tower is flickering and trails of black smoke are twining round it. You're in a crowd of frightened citizenry clustered around the edge of the square, where Crookstaff magicians are performing some sort of ritual under the guidance of Glimmer Moondance, Necropolis Crookstaff, and Blemish Scratch, who is holding a large book with a binding of leprous skin, which you intuitively sense is evil. In fact this whole ceremony is wrong - they think it will banish the Mist, but it will just make it stronger. You push through the crowd, but it takes an agonisingly long time. You reach the front just as the ceremony come to a climax - Glimmer, Necropolis and Blemish take their places in specially inscribed magical circles and start chanting. Suddenly black lightning streaks down from the clouds above, striking the ground at their feet. They rise screaming into the air, pinned on columns of black smoke.

Walker:

- Good: You're on your own, wandering through a wood by a river. You see a fisherman casting his net into the water. You remember seeing him before. He drags the net onto

shore. It's full of small pyramidal stones. The fisherman, a large humanoid figure with a strangely blank face, starts to sort through them. He mustn't be allowed to find the stone he is looking for.

- **Bad:** Somehow you find yourself wandering back into Boarholt. Humility is there, tending to the sick who are lying on the grass. Suddenly tendrils of black mist emerge from the surrounding forest. Through them come fearsome warriors with white scorpion marks painted on their foreheads. They start to lay about them with swords, slashing at the helpless victims. You start to run towards Humility, but you don't seem to be getting any closer. A white scorpion warrior emerges from the mist and slashes her throat. She turns and looks at you accusingly, rivers of red blood staining the front of her white robe. "You ran away. Whenever it's difficult, you always run away."

Wishbone:

- **Good:** You walking along the floor of a small gorge, a stream gurgling at your feet. There are holes in the walls which are homes to owls which are looking out at you. Owls are wise. One particularly fine tufted eared owl is talking to you. She is called Sapience, and she wants mice. You should go looking for mice.
- **Bad:** Your feet leave the ground and you go flying up in the air. Wheel! You glide and swoop, just like Hawk. But then there's an agonising pain in your chest and you look down to see an arrow stuck through it. As you spin and flutter towards the ground, you see the archer. It's your brother Gecko on the Wall. "That's for leaving me! You could have rescued me, but you didn't!"

To the North - Centaurs' Folly

- The path dips down into a valley and then climbs up another ridge. It crosses a couple more ridges with streams running in the gaps between them, then rises up to a flat plateau in the middle of the forest which is ringed by an ancient, crumbling earthworks. A couple more herms guard the gap to which the path leads.
- The earthworks enclose a field of short scrubby grass with patches of bare earth. At the far end, hard against the forest edge, are the remains of a grand building made of grey stone. Broken pillars line its front and the remains of colourful frescoes can be seen on its walls. The building once had several storeys but only the first couple remain. The walls are smothered in vines and little bushy plants grow in the cracks in the stones.
- The ground is uneven and littered with pot shards. Hoofprints can be seen in the dust. There is a surprising amount of horse dung, some of it quite fresh. Its pungent smell lingers on the breeze - it smells wrong, not like horses at all.
- There is what was once clearly a grand portico at the front of the building, but the gates have gone and there is now just a shadowy entrance tunnel. As you approach, you see movement. A figure detaches itself from the wall. It's hard to make out because it's in a shadow, but you can just make out the shoulders and head of a man and the gleam of a spear tip. There is something not right about his legs - they are long and spindly.
- If the heroes approach in a non-threatening fashion, the figure comes forward, revealing that he is, in fact, a centaur, with the upper half of a skinny young man and the lower half of a rowan stallion. He is wearing a small round helmet. The spear he is carrying would look more threatening if it wasn't wavering around. "'Aven't seen you before. What are you doing 'ere? 'Ave you got any wine?"

Smart heroes may figure out that Pholos is a centaur. The guard centaur, whose name is Nessos but was formerly Quiverly Shardspear of Boarholt, can be persuaded to let the heroes in by wine or the promise of it.

Meeting Pholos

- The interior of the Palace consists of a 100' wide courtyard surrounded by the remains of rooms on two storeys. Most are open to the elements, having lost their doors and in some cases, part of their retaining walls. Water butts, amphorae, boxes and tables are ranged

around the walls. There is a large banqueting table set up in the centre which is wreathed in swathes of dried laurel leaves.

- There are about a dozen centaurs of both sexes here. Some are engaged in food preparation - one is treading grapes in a large bath in one of the side rooms. Others are setting or lying on their sides in the sun. There is a rich smell of horse sweat, man sweat, old food and sour wine.
- Pholos has the upper half of a somewhat paunchy, balding middle-aged man and the lower half of a dapple grey. He is wearing a circlet of laurel leaves and a scrappy wolfskin slung over one shoulder and has a wine flagon in one hand. He looks distinctly the worse for wear.
- In a slurred voice, he demands that the heroes bring honey and figs before he will talk to them. "Mead. I want to make mead. Meeeeaaaaad."
 - Honey can found in the forest near the Maenads' cave. Beware angry bees.
 - Figs were growing in Boarholt.
 - Alternatively, if Slight is present, he can just magick up the impression of figs and honey on something. Whatever it is will go into the mead, which may have interesting consequences.

What Pholos can tell them:

- The Bacchanal is a few miles to the north, in Satyr Heights. It consists of about two dozen satyrs led by one called Silenus. They worship Dionysus and Pan.
- The villagers are with them. They went through about a week ago. They stole some wine. Pholos is expecting some new recruits.
- Don't get touched by Silenus' thyrsos. It transforms you into your basest self. Pholos wanted to be hung like a horse, so he got turned into a centaur.
- The Bacchanal is extremely powerful and won't be easy to defeat or reason with. It has powerful persuasive magicks and the satyrs themselves are well-nigh unkillable. Tricking or distracting them is probably the best approach.
- Possible allies: Those the Bacchanal has transformed and abandoned on the way: The Maenads and the Centaurs.
 - Pholos and his centaurs are not keen to fight, but could be strong-armed into it if Rathgard is persuasive enough.
- If the heroes come up with idea of using dreamflower, Pholos says that that could work. It's the pollen that has the effect, so it could be trapped in an airtight container and released, or included in food.

Satyr Heights

- Getting to Satyr Heights involves serious climbing. There is a trail from the rear of Centaurs' Folly, and another from the Sunhills.
- The land slopes steeply upwards and the woodland changes to a mixture of fir, cedar and pine. The undergrowth thins out to the occasional bush and the ground becomes covered with brown dried out pine needles. Ridges and outcrops of grey rock become increasingly common and the air turns cold.
- After 2-3 miles, the edge of the treeline is reached. Ridges of rock run up to the top of the mountain ahead, with only the occasional hardy tree or bush tucked in out of the wind. The footing turns treacherous due to scree.
- Up ahead, at the mountain top, the trees begin again. This is clearly a magical forest however - it is dark, thick and green, and small lights move between the trees.

Slight and possibly Wishbone can sense that the forest is immensely old and powerful. Its magic is very like that of the Wasted Woman that the heroes encountered in Plenty.

The Bacchanal

- The forest is full of old trees and thick bushes. Narrow paths twist between them.
- Lights hang in the trees or drift along the paths.
- Looking up, you see a full moon hanging in a dark cloudy sky.
- The air is cool and smells of many things - pine resin, roasting meat, sour wine and a musky animal odour that is strangely arousing.
- There is a faint sound of drumming. Hidden owls hoot in the branches.
- Things the heroes may see on the way:
 - The corpse of an old woman with a festering leg. She has dragged herself a few yards from the makeshift stretcher on which she was evidently carried here.
 - A bottlebrush bush with clothing hanging from it. Nearby is a naked couple asleep, slumped over it each other.
 - Another corpse, lying face up. Judging from the jug near one outstretched hand and the splatter round his mouth, he choked on his own vomit.
 - A rustling in the bushes. A small fawn makes a run for it, slowing after a few paces and turning to look at you with wide human eyes.
 - An ivy-covered statue of a satyr holding a drinking horn.

The Grove of Silenus

Following the sound of drums or the smell of meat leads to a grove on the summit of the mountain. It's a giant party - hundreds of people are here, dancing, drinking, kissing. Satyrs wreathed in foliage dart between them, plying them with more drink or food.

- 30 or so children, each wearing a flower crown, are dancing in a ring. They seem to be enjoying themselves, but judging from the looks of exhaustion on their faces they should have gone to bed hours ago.
- The drink comes from a bushy bay tree which is festooned with dozens of amphorae.
- The food is on a large trestle table which is festooned with vines. There are cooking fires nearby. The smell of meat and spices sets your saliva flowing.
- A satyr band is energetically playing pipes and drums. Some of the villagers have acquired instruments too and are enthusiastically joining in. The drumming sets your blood pounding and the sound of the wailing pipes gets in your head, encouraging you to forget all your cares and responsibilities and just dance. A thick crowd of sweaty people are shuffling and capering in an ecstatic trance, heads throw back and eyes glazed, calling out "Euoi! Euoi!". They look exhausted, but the music won't let them stop.
- Round the edges of the grove, shadowy, intertwined bodies, usually two, but some in groups of three or more, are writhing on the ground. Satyrs are among them.

Anyone getting within 50 feet of Silenus gets one of the following attacks. FC to determine which one. Second attack after 5 min. If the attack succeeds, the player starts doing the action. They can stop if they make an E+FC 6, then 5 etc.

- *Go on, Just a Drop*: A satyr who offers wine or another intoxicant cannot be resisted by normal humans - A+FC 6. Drinking or inhaling anything instantly makes you drunk/stoned.

- *L'Odeur Agreeable*: Food provided by the Bacchanal has a powerful scent. E+FC 6 or become ravenously hungry. Eating anything binds you to the Bacchanal.

- *Feel the Rhythm*: When the satyr band starts playing, you pop til you drop. F+FC 6 to resist dancing until you are exhausted.

- *Beast with Many Backs*: Despite not being most people's idea of a desirable partner, satyrs give off a smell that is highly arousing. Make a W+FC 6 check to cool your ardour. You are in control, but only just. And if satyrs aren't your thing, there are plenty of other sensuous temptations nearby...

- Silenus himself is holding court under an oak tree at the centre of the crowd of dancers. He is a larger than average satyr with thick curly hair and impressive goats horns. He gazes benignly at the frenzied crowd, winecup in one hand, thyrsos in the other.
- His winebearer is a slim, gawky sixteen year old with straight black hair, a feeble pencil moustache and a light sprinkling of dark hairs on his chin. He is dressed in the remnants of clothing that looks very similar to Wishbone's and two short goat horns protrude from his forehead. This is **Gecko on the Wall**.
- Silenus is welcoming to those who approach in a spirit of party, but inexorable and inflexible when it comes to bargaining. Humanitarian appeals will have no effect and he will not part with Gecko without a very good counter offer. Gecko himself will vigorously decline to leave Silenus' side.
- Silenus has a deep and sexy voice. He urges liberation from civilization's rules and constraints and a return to primordial nature. "Escape from your socialized personalities and egos - see what lies beyond! Joining the primal herd!" He is very convincing.

Slight can tell that Silenus is a magically powerful Personage akin to the Wasted Woman and is the heart of the complex knot of magic that is the Bacchanal.

Defeating the Satyrs

- Tackling Silenus physically is likely to be ineffective. He is immune to all the party's usual magicks - Flame cannot burn him, Rathgard cannot persuade him and Slight cannot fool him.
- Use of the Pearl or the Book will work, however, as will a face full of dreamflower pollen or a dreamflower-laced sweetmeat.

For all other purposes, Silenus is **A8, E8, F8, W8**.

Special power: Thyrsos. Anyone touched by the pinecone must resist being turned into an animal-human hybrid reflecting their essential nature (**E5** to resist).

Attacking Silenus will pull in nearby satyrs, who are **A5, E5, F5, W5**. There are several dozen in total.

- A maenad attack will also be effective - the maenads are resistant to the satyrs' magic. However things could get bloody very fast. The villagers will panic and stampede due to the maenads' cries, and the maenads themselves will want to dismember things.

Ino: Ino **A3 E6 F7 W4** Special power: Dismember - E4 to resist

24 Maenads: **A1 E5 F6 W3**

Special power: The Maenads' cries elicit panic. W 7 or run away for number of rounds equal to the value missed by. This also applies to satyrs.

- Likewise, Pholos' centaurs could also help to disrupt things. They are likely to be distracted by the food and drink, however, unless the heroes keep them focused.

12 Centaurs: **A4 E6 F6 W3** Special power: Charge. F6 to resist being trampled.

The Bacchanal Departs

- If the heroes succeed in creating enough disruption, a cry goes up amid the satyrs - "move on! move on!" They start singing in an unknown tongue. Silenus raises his thyrsos to the sky, where the moon starts to shift.

- Or the heroes could succeed in knocking out Silenus and the majority of his satyrs.
 - The villagers emerge from their trance and make a run for it.
 - The heroes have ten minutes to get out of the forest or they are carried to the Bacchanal's next destination.
 - If the satyrs are still conscious, Gecko will not go willingly, but can be dragged away by the heroes. The satyrs will not stop them.
 - If the heroes run, they whip through branches, trip over roots and have to find their way round large rocks. The twisty paths are difficult to follow - they keep twisting back towards the centre. As they run, they hear birdsong in the trees and the sky above lightens. The trees start to turn transparent.
- Assuming they make it, the heroes collapse on the ground exhausted just as the forest fades away completely. They find themselves on a bare mountain top, surrounded by seriously hung-over villagers. One of the most hungover of them, a balding William Shakespeare lookalike wearing a bedraggled schoolmaster's robe, is **Prolix Buttertongue**.

Rewards and Consequences

The heroes succeed in neutralising the satyrs. Gecko on the Wall has satyr horns but is otherwise okay - he can stay with the villagers until it's safe to return to Shifting Sands. The villagers can return to Boarholt - they may not be best pleased with having to share it with 1000 refugees, but Rathgard and Tranquil can persuade them. Prolix Buttertongue can tell them where the Gate is. It leads to a realm that Rathgard knows - Shimmersand...

Or:

The heroes succumb to the satyrs' temptations and get completely wasted. When they come to, they discover that the Bacchanal has moved, leaving most of the villagers behind. The shady forest is now improbably situated on a rocky outcrop in the middle of a hot desert. Not the ideal environment for walking off a hangover... Gecko in the Wall is halfway to being a satyr and will need to be dragged away. Prolix Buttertongue cannot tell them anything useful.

Or:

The heroes manage to get away from the Bacchanal, possibly with Gecko on the Wall, but don't succeed in getting directions out of Prolix Buttertongue. If they haven't already, they encounter Sapience the Owl, who demands mice. If they succeed in catching some for her (build a better mouse trap...), she shows them the way to the Gate and flies through it. She can be followed all the way to the Twisted Library, where she becomes one of the owl statues, OR Wishbone could take as a second animal companion boon.

Wishbone

One way or another, Wishbone will have **faced her fate**. She can have a boon - perhaps a talking owl, or an improvement to her relationship with Hawk. She will have to decide what to do with Gecko, if she got him out.

Prolix Buttertongue

Prolix cannot add a great deal more to what was in his journal, other than the information that Lightfoot Moondance was seeking the Twisted Library to look for maps of the Thousand Spheres. Polder Highmoon said that it was in Shimmersand.

The Gate

The gate is some two days journey northwest of Satyr Heights, located on a plain at a place called the Henge of Priapus, which looks exactly as you would expect. The main street of the local town of **Redwine** is lined with merchants trying to sell you fertility and performance charms in the shape of the stones.

- Walker and Flame will have to decide whether to take Winnow Tallgrass with them.