



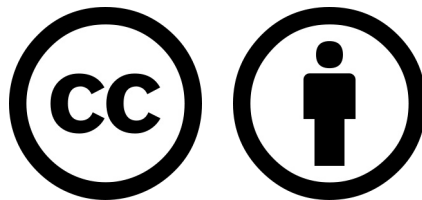
The Logic of Tales and Dreams

Being the Fragments of a Story Game, Come From Afar



Authored by Reason.

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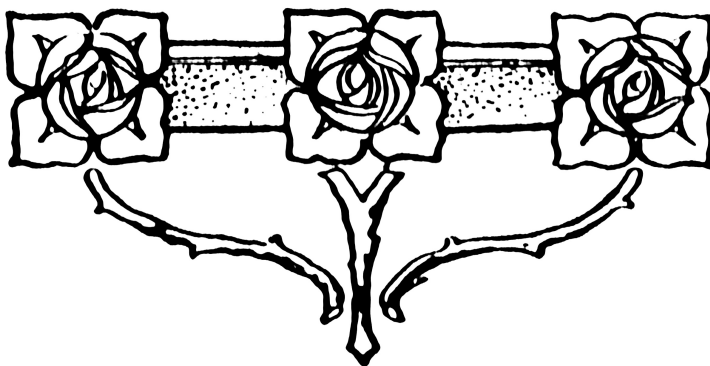
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I. A Few Words on the Origin of this Work

The Logic of Tales and Dreams is not a game of our world, and found herein are evidently mere fragments of the original whole. It is not recorded from whence these fragments came, nor how they were transcribed into this form – but perhaps we may learn from them despite these obstacles.

Readers familiar with role-playing games as a form of collaborative storytelling might best think of the Logic of Tales and Dreams as an artefact fallen through the cracks of the universe, its origin a faraway place in which the role-playing game - as it is understood here - never came to be. The games that occupy that world's social gatherings focus upon the creation of ornate narratives, intricate histories, and sweeping backdrops. The playing of roles is merely a means to that end, necessary because a fictional setting only truly exists in the eyes of the fictional people who inhabit it. This is a culture of story gaming that has a greater connection to shared authorship or improvisational theatre than with the familiar totems of character sheets, heroic quests, and rattling dice.

Story games and Tale-tellers do exist in our world, however, albeit within a culture small in comparison to that of the role-players. Readers who find the Logic of Tales and Dreams pleasing might consider seeking out other story games, for many are worthy of time and attention.



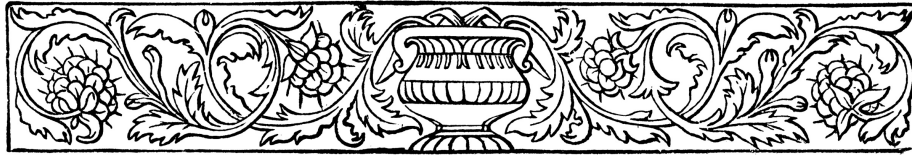
II. A Place in the Taletellers' Circle

The Logic of Tales and Dreams is a modest array of guidelines, intended to assist a small group of imaginative gentlefolk in forming a Circle for the telling of Tales. Each takes on the mantle of a Taleteller or a Dreamer, the better to spin Tales that will be used to create and nurture intriguing Settings. There is no greater craft than to coax forth a new world from the merest seed of an idea, and Tales are the very foundation of a Setting. At each new gathering of the Circle, Taletellers bring life to the deeds of Heroes, invent new details for the backdrop, and debate the twists and turns of fate. This is the role of Taletellers and Dreamers: invention, challenge, and collaboration in the act of creation.

While rules and strategies are a part of the Logic of Tales and Dreams, enabling Taletellers to make a game of their Tales and Settings should they so desire, neither scoring of points nor conditions of victory are found herein. Taletellers of the Circle win when they consider their time at play to be well spent, or when they are well pleased by what they have together created.

A Glossary of Taletellers

Circle	A group of Taletellers who gather regularly.
Dreamer	A alternate term for a Taleteller, perhaps one more given to flights of fancy.
Hero	A character who is the focus of a Tale, voiced and steered by a Taleteller.
Setting	The backdrop against which a Tale is told, and which is expanded in the Tale's telling.
Tale	A story, a parable, events which concern the acts and fates of Heroes.
Taleteller	A visionary who tells Tales, gives a voice to Heroes, and thereby grows a Setting.



Three Primal Axioms

These are the axioms of the Logic of Tales and Dreams, the core conceits from which all else follows:

Firstly: A Setting, what we might call a world or a background, is built of the Tales that its Heroes tell to one another. The Setting is wholly formed of the voices, recollections, and prejudices of those who live and strive within its boundaries.

Secondly: The view and personality of a Hero is the lens through which an outsider views a Setting. A Setting has no existence beyond its Tales or beyond the voices of its Heroes.

Thirdly: To know a Setting, an outsider must know its Heroes and its Tales. To expand a Setting, an outsider must tell Tales in the voice and manner of one of that Setting's Heroes.

What do the axioms imply? That is for the Taletellers to decide. Truth is neither more nor less than what Taletellers make of it.





Taletellers and Dreamers

Taletellers come together in their Circles to enjoy evenings of discussion and shared creation, a fine distraction from the world outside. These are ordinary people, for to tell Tales requires no rare skill, nor any mystical training. That one wishes to craft a Tale is more than sufficient.

Amaryth, Balthazar, and Corinthine are Taletellers whom we shall look in on over the course of the Logic of Tales and Dreams. Amaryth is practical and straightforward, Balthazar a grumbling perfectionist, and Corinthine would be the first to admit to being a dreamer, fierce in defence of her visions. But together as a Taletellers' Circle they take pleasure in spinning Tales from next to nothing, and growing esoteric Setting Seeds into sprawling Settings.

The discussions and disputes of these Taletellers shed light on the ways in which the Logic of Tales and Dreams works in practice, and on the way in which some Circles approach the telling of Tales.

Three and Seven

Three and seven are magical numbers, important in stories of every age and provenance. They occur throughout the Logic of Tales and Dreams, and a good Taleteller learns to anticipate their happenstance.


III. The Crafting of Setting Seeds

Every Tale requires a backdrop, a collection of shared assumptions about who, why, and wherefore - the foundation upon which all else is built. Here these bare bones are known as the Setting Seed, an evocative but minimal description of a Setting that Taletellers might one day bring into existence.

A Setting Seed is assembled from a modest handful of components: no fewer than three and no more than seven each of Motifs, Heroes, Powers, Places, Truths, and Hidden Tales. Fewer is too little and more is too much.

A Glossary of Setting Seeds

Certainty	A self-assured conviction that sustains a Hero or Power.
Crux	The essence of a Hero in his own words, a Hero's own self-image.
Hero	He who stands at the centre of the Tale, a figure given voice by a Taleteller.
Hidden Tale	A story written elsewhere, beyond the Circle, that can still influence a Tale.
Motif	A single word that captures some vital part of a Setting's essence.
Place	A location within a Setting, a part of the backdrop against which a Tale is told.
Power	A figure of significance within a Tale, but of lesser import than a Hero.
Setting Seed	The stone in the soup cauldron, the seed from which a Setting is grown.
Truth	A shared tradition, belief, or expectation that steers the course of Tales.



"I feel positively Palaeolithic today," said Corinthine, wrinkling her nose as she looked over the handwritten records of Settings presently guided by the Circle.

Balthazar sighed, shuffled papers to one side, and racked them neatly. "Let us then put away present concerns for now, and set to making a new Seed. A Palaeolithic one, I presume?"

The Name of the Seed

Taletellers name their Seeds carefully, for names have power. Long after all else is forgotten, buried by life's grey woes, the name will remain.

"Oh!" exclaimed Amaryth, "A name has just occurred to me. It is, I assure you, very Palaeolithic."

"Names should really be set last in line. That is the more elegant path," Balthazar declared, just as always.

"Last unless they are first," said Corinthine, lazily. "I think that the name first of all is a fine way to proceed."

"Only if it's a good name, mind," Amaryth cautioned. "But you will like this one: 'Uth Peoples Who Follow Black Mammoth.'"

Balthazar conceded that this was, indeed, a fine name.

Motifs

A Motif is a single word, imbued with meaning, that hints at much more than it says. Taken together, Motifs are the colour and the essence of a Setting Seed, and they will echo in the Tales that grow that Seed.

By Way of Example

The Blackened Lands Setting Seed hints at grim intrigues and open conflict between the rulers of patchwork kingdoms, and of the corruption, misery, and loss that comes of war amongst nobles. Where it rains and armies march there is mud, and sorcery cannot or will not prevent the decay brought by warfare and mistrust. The Motifs of the Seed are as follows: Sorcery, Rulers, Treachery, Swords, Armies, Mud, Decay

Questing for the Right Motif

But how to find the Motifs when they hide within shifting ideas or longer descriptions? The Talletellers might try to answer these questions cleverly and with passion, and in doing so discover the words that lie at the Setting Seed's core.


What is the meaning of Heroes to those who listen to Tales?

What purpose is there to a Tale, what does it teach?

To what sort of places do Tales inevitably lead?

What forms of conflict make Tales twist and turn?

What do Heroes see ahead, and what lies in the wake of their passing?



"Well," said Balthazar, "We concur at least that our new Seed concerns the moderately realistic trials and triumphs of a primitive, stone-age peoples. But I have heard the word 'Palaeolithic' so many times in the past few minutes that it has quite lost its meaning in my ears. Please let us not adopt it as one of the Seed's Motifs."

Corinthine made a face.

"Besides," Balthazar continued, "it is far too obvious."

"Obviousness is a merit of its own," Amaryth offered, "for how else are we to guide ourselves? Subtlety, obscurity, and human memory are not given to mix well."

"I don't see why we can't just take turns to name Motifs, given that we did as much before," muttered Corinthine.

"We do tend to do better when we argue for consensus," sighed Amaryth, recalling a doleful and rather failed Seed that resulted when turns were taken.

"When we debate," corrected Balthazar. "A civilized and polite manner is the foundation of debate rather than argumentation. But I have an alternative Motif to propose, one which I feel captures the spirit sought after whilst simultaneously providing greater opportunity for diversity in the Tales ahead. What are your thoughts on 'Prehistory?'"

Corinthine pursed her lips. "I suppose I might make an allowance, given your graceful concession on the matter of the name."

Heroes

Heroes are the protagonists of Tales that spring forth from the Setting Seed. Heroes shake establishments, upend convention, and define the world they inhabit - but are not necessarily allied with one another, pleasant altruists, or even in fact people. A Hero is a Hero solely by virtue of holding an important place in Tales yet told, and will usually given voice and guided by a Taleteller. Each of Seed's Hero is defined by his Name, a Crux, and three Certainties.

Name

All things have names, and Heroes no less so than any other. Remember that here, as everywhere, names have power.

Crux

The Hero's Crux is his own view of his strength, his role, or his place in the world. It is the central pillar of his self-image, described in brief.

Three Certainties

A Certainty describes something so important to a Hero, so central to his character, that he is sure of it in each and every moment. A Certainty might encompass an opinion, a talent, a memory, a possession, an oft-spoken phrase, a relationship, or indeed anything else a Hero might hold close to his heart.

Brief, Evocative, and Focused

The Crux is the essence of the Hero, and a Hero's Certainties are employed by a Taleteller to change the course of a Tale. To best aid the Taleteller caught up in the Tale's midst, both Crux and Certainties should be brief, evocative, and focused: each a single sentence, or at most two brief sentences to put the point across.

Always Three Certainties

A Hero always possesses three Certainties. Certainties may change over time, a new Certainty added as a result of a Tale told. When a new Certainty is gained, an old Certainty must be lost.

By Way of Example

The description of Lord Namul of the Blackened Lands Setting Seed illustrates one way in which Crux and Certainties, brief as they are, can capture a Hero's nature. Lord Namul's Certainties are his most important opinions, oft-spoken and widely quoted.

Name

Lord Namul of Tarnish

Crux

Swordsman, then commander, and now, reluctantly, acclaimed leader of these ragged free peoples.

Three Certainties

Truth and true nature are only found in battle, more is the pity.

Twenty sword-arms - well led and willing to lay down their lives - can break a kingdom.

Emissaries are a vile necessity for a man to suffer.

Thavvogh of Uttar, on the other hand, is a Hero defined by simpler Certainties: his lusts, a prized possession, and the expectation of his foes' terror. This befits the Setting Seed of pulp sword and sorcery that bears Thavvogh's name.

Name

Thavvogh of Uttar

Crux

Only mighty Thavvogh is left to show how men of fallen Uttar once gifted their friends and made a bloody slaughter of their foes.

Three Certainties

The great-ax Ribcleaver.


Scents of lush women and fine wine.

Fear in the foe's bowels.

"Why, oh why, must a Certainty be a single sentence? I simply cannot make this fit," Corinthine complained.

"Limits encourage artistry, else we would all ramble on to produce epics where brevity is clearly superior," said Balthazar. "But you know as much."

"Some of us use too many commas and ramble on regardless," said Corinthine darkly, shooting a look at Amaryth.



Amaryth spread her hands. "Commas are a tool of language like any other, and quite valid. Show us your Certainty and why don't we all see if we can make it fit."

"You are ever so reasonable, and it quite takes the fun out of any form of protestation. It isn't always intended to produce results - it is just that any self-imposed limit comes to seem like a cage given enough time." Corinthine flourished her quill pen, and pushed her sheaf of papers across the table.

Balthazar peered at Corinthine's penwork. "As to fitting, I had thought we were of a mind to keep Certainties shorter than usual in this Seed, suited to a simpler era possessed of fewer words and less language. Certainly there should be an absence of rambling."

"I do not ramble," Corinthine scolded. "No, the problem lies with the Hero Yat. In my mind's eye, he is bullish. Forceful. Sure of himself. Thus one of his Certainties should be of himself."

"I see nothing-", began Balthazar.

"Don't interrupt! Now, there is a theatrical manner of speech common in Nippon wherein this vigorous demeanour is communicated by short rushes of words and strategic pauses in between. To my mind Yat's first Certainty absolutely must be 'Yat is the best Uth name! You do as I say!' rather than any softer version that simply strides forward as a single sentence."

"My!" exclaimed Amaryth, "and there stood I of a mind that I was the one who put too much thought into Certainties."

"These concepts come to me in the twinkling of an eye, I'll have you know, fully formed and ready. It is only the explaining of it that requires time," said Corinthine, tapping her quill pen upon the table's edge.

"We should simply make an exception," declared Balthazar. "Do rules serve us, or vice versa? Evidently the former, and the spirit of the single sentence rule is clarity. I do not see why two short sentences that together serve a single concept should be rejected out of hand."

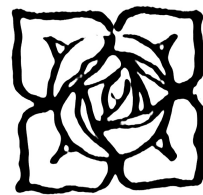
"So long as, I suppose, your exception does not mean we shall forever more be writing bifurcated Certainties. The rule has served us well, and should continue," cautioned Amaryth.

"Perhaps one more for this Seed," said Corinthine, thoughtfully.

Powers, Both Allies and Foes

Powers are figures of lesser influence than Heroes, but who are nonetheless important in Tales that grow from this Seed. A Power may be an ally of Heroes in one Tale and a foe in the next, for such is the way of the world. Should a Seed's Tale circle about one Power too often, however, then he may become a Hero - for he has captured the Taleteller's attention.

A Power possesses three attributes only: Name, Crux, and a single Certainty, for he is less influential than a Hero.



By Way of Example

Queen Vift of the Blackened Lands is a good example of a Power. No Tale will rest upon her bowed shoulders, but she stands above the masses as a figure of interest to the Taletellers.

Name

Vift, the Beggared Queen

Crux

A broken-hearted Lady, ruler over the waste and pain left by war.

Certainty

Do as you will to us. We of Feligath have nothing left but our suffering.

A quite different form of Power is the winter storm of the Uth Peoples Who Follow Black Mammoth Setting Seed. In the eyes of the Uth Peoples, the ferocious storms from the mountains are as dangerous and disruptive a foe as any other. These events can change the course of Tales.

Name

Storm from the Mountains

Crux

A wind to bring the killing cold from on high.

Certainty

Cold, wet, and frozen.

"Come, now," said Balthazar impatiently. "It seems evident to me that another example of the animist viewpoint does no harm to the overall concept, and indeed even improves it."

"It looks out of place, I say," Corinthine complained. "All of the Heroes are people - this is a Setting Seed for Tales of people."

"But some of our Powers are beasts, mind," noted Amaryth. "And we did agree that animism in the instance of beasts made sense, given that the Seed is so firmly rooted in the prehistoric viewpoint of our Uth Peoples."

"I acquiesced on the matter of the beasts, I'll have you know, because I am minded to be reasonable this evening. That is far from agreement," said Corinthine, heatedly.

"Acquiescence for beasts rather demands acquiescence for my storm Power, I think," Balthazar claimed. "Constancy is a virtue, and the two are one and the same beneath the skin. Animism is animism, no more, no less."

Corinthine threw up her hands. "Well," she said. "I suppose I am willing to be convinced, if only because I enjoy listening to you paint yourself into a corner. Convince me. How is it that a winter storm is in any way the same as a mammoth, or one of your fanged cats?"





Places

Places are the locations and backdrops against which a Tale takes place, additional colours with which to paint the Setting. A Place is described by a Name and Crux only, where the Crux is that thing which all people think of first in connection with the Place.

"That is most peculiar," noted Amaryth. "We have four of the five elements represented in our places. Each one but air."

Balthazar looked over the handwritten notes, frowning. "How inappropriate for the theme. Really, it is too bad. Now that you have mentioned it, of course, I cannot help but see the elements in all we have written."

"You were about to write in a wind-blown pass, quite unaware, were you not?" exclaimed Corinthine, with a flourish. "There is nothing for it but to break the pattern. Make the last of the Places another cave, or some similar ilk."

"Perhaps if I simply make a few strategic edits..." Balthazar paused, then shook his head. "But the feel of it. Let us simply move on, and with luck the coincidence will have slipped our minds a week from today."

"I must say, I am sorry," said Amaryth, contrite.

"No, no, it is one of those unfortunate happenstances. No-one is at fault," sighed Balthazar.

Corinthine rolled her eyes.

By Way of Example

The great painting stones of the Uth Peoples Who Follow Black Mammoth Setting Seed is an example of a Place. It is important to the Uth, a Place where events may twist a Tale or take on an interpretation shaded by their location.

Name

Tall painting stones

Crux

Where Uth Peoples paint on rock when the moon is whole.

Truths

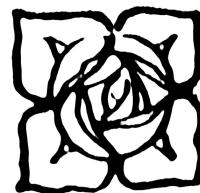
Truth is no more and no less than what we all agree it to be, or what we can convince others of. This Truth might be factual or might be an outright lie by any measure, but it has an undeniable power regardless. Within a Setting Seed, each Truth illustrates beliefs and expectations that are second nature to Heroes and Powers. A Truth can take many forms, and some examples are offered below.


A fragment of a myth recounted far and wide

A common aphorism or article of folk wisdom held in high respect

The prevailing view of an important event in recent history

A widespread belief, accepted with little debate





Truths are used by Taletellers to steer the direction of a Tale in defiance of fate and happenstance; a Truth shows what is expected by Heroes, and thus what should happen if a Tale is to please its listeners.

New Truths are written into a Setting as Tales are told - sometimes accurate representations of a Tale's events, sometimes outright lies, more often something in between. A Setting's expanding collection of Truths will come to form a contradictory morass, a tangled hedge within which details collide and cunning Taletellers can find whatever answer they wish. The whole will only make sense and show its artistry when seen from a distance, but such is the manner of Truth.

The Limits of Truth

A Truth may be no more than three sentences long, which is more than enough to hide subtlety if a Taleteller wishes. Truths may reference locations and people that appear nowhere else in the Setting Seed - when well done, these hints can aid in the telling of later Tales.

By Way of Example

The Truths of the Uth Peoples Who Follow Black Mammoth Setting Seed are fragments of a recent history; events the Uth recall well, have spoken of often, and that paint their expectations for the future. This Truth, for example, illustrates both the role of Uth women and the sanctity of their Place.

Truth

When Zub went into the women's cave, Uth women did a secret thing to him and Zub shouted. Then the women took Zub's fur and Zub was cold.

"I enjoy writing Truths. I think it might be the most entertaining part of making a new Seed," mused Amaryth.

"That all things are history, and in defining history, you define the present?" Balthazar asked.

"No, no, not at all. Well, yes, but that wasn't my meaning," answered Amaryth. "I mean to say it is like a reading night in the tea room cast in miniature - a little creation, a little presentation. A chance to perform something clever and be applauded for it."

"Do stop talking - you are most distracting, and I am almost done with this last Truth." Corinthine grumbled.

Hidden Tales

A Setting Seed may come wholly from a Taleteller's mind, but even so there usually exist one or more Hidden Tales. A Hidden Tale is a reference work created beyond the Circle, yet whose genre and spirit are captured within the Seed: perhaps a novel, perhaps a moving picture, perhaps some other form of artist's labours. After the Seed is set and its Hidden Tales decided, Taletellers may use the contents of a Hidden Tale - in a manner similar to the employment of a Truth - to steer the course of a Tale.



Corinthine laughed and clapped her hands. "The both of you have read *Clan of the Cave Bear*, and the neither of you said anything this whole time?"

"I see nothing wrong in the occasional guilty literary pleasure," said Amaryth, hotly.

Corinthine pressed on, "Nonetheless, with this newfound revelation in hand I would expect no further objections to adding the book to this Seed's Hidden Tales."

Balthazar exchanged glances with Amaryth and shrugged. "We did preface 'realistic' with 'moderately,' and much as I am loathe to admit it, the point is hers."

A Seed's Origins and Growth

Taletellers might steal a Setting Seed from a faraway dreamer who will never notice its loss, or perhaps prefer to debate amongst themselves and forge a Seed to their own liking. Regardless, it is only a Seed - anything might grow from it with the labours of the Taletellers, and those labours and the end result are more important than the Seed could ever be.

The telling of each new Tale grows the Setting Seed through the inventiveness of the Taletellers, painting new vistas and filling in yawning voids with strange detail. New Truths will be discovered, new Places established, new Powers proposed. Once day the Seed will be gone, and in its place a Setting will flourish. But the Seed is needed as the starting point, as the stone in the soup cauldron.

IV. A Gift of Seeds

Herein find Setting Seeds scattered to the winds in the hope that someone, somewhere, will find pleasure in the Tales told and Settings grown.

"I think the Seed turned out rather splendidly, all things considered," said Amaryth, smiling.

"Palaeolithic indeed," agreed Balthazar.

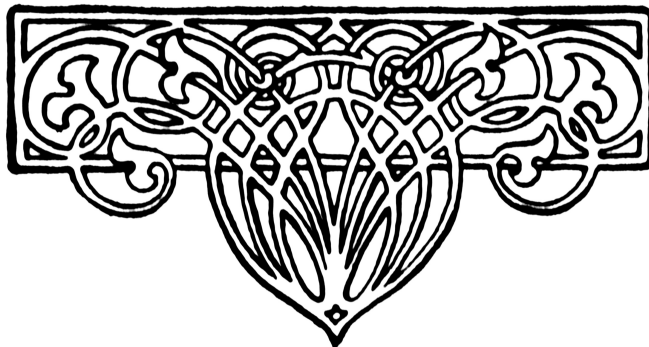
Uth Peoples Who Follow Black Mammoth

Motifs

Prehistory. Hunger. Death. Triumph. Clan.

Hidden Tales

Works of imagined prehistory and primitive, animist man in the vein of Clan of the Cave Bears or The Inheritors.



Heroes

Name

Gog

Crux

An Uth man to hunt meat and feed hungry Uth Peoples.

Three Certainties

Hunt under the sun.

Gog wears mammoth hide now.

After the feast, Gog makes sharp killing bones.

Name

Yat

Crux

Yat is the biggest and strongest of Uth men.

Three Certainties

Yat is the best Uth name! You do as I say!

Breaking bones for marrow with bare hands.

Burned meat is good!

Name

Ba Firemaker

Crux

An Uth man to know secrets in the way of Uth women.

Three Certainties

The fire-making cave secret.

Paint tales and wishes upon rock.

An old beard to speak of many winters.

Name

Ku

Crux

An Uth woman to know secrets and pull the hair of Uth men.

Three Certainties

Birth secrets and blood secrets of the womens' cave.

Gathering and finding with wide, darting eyes.

No! Not now!

Powers

Name

Mah

Certainty

Great laughter, so that Uth women know Mah is here.

Crux

An Uth man to find beasts in the hunt.

Name

Gi

Certainty

Show the lust secrets without shame.

Crux

An Uth woman to make Uth men fight.

Name

Black Mammoth

Certainty

Trample killing bones and hunters.

Crux

The greatest beast, who tramples all when angry.

Name

Long Tooth Cat

Certainty

Steal the meat of beasts and hunters.

Crux

The sly beast who eats warm, bloody heart-meat.

Name

Reh Peoples

Certainty

Uth Peoples are ugly.

Crux

The only Peoples who follow Black Mammoth.

Name

Storm from the Mountains

Certainty

Cold, wet, and frozen.

Crux

A wind to bring the killing cold from on high.



Places

Name

Cave of Ba Firemaker

Crux

Where the fire is made to burn, always, even in rain,
even in wind.

Name

Tall painting stones

Crux

Where Uth Peoples paint on rock when the moon is
whole.

Name

Cave of women

Crux

Where Uth women hide secrets.

Name

Forest where Ot ate sick-
berries

Crux

Where nothing is good to eat, and thorns are long.

Name

River that runs fast

Crux

Where Reh Peoples spear fish.

Name

Valley where Gur was lost
crying

Crux

A place hard to find behind big rocks and thick bushes.

Name

Hill named Uth like Uth
Peoples

Crux

Where black mammoth mate and trample all flat.

Truths

When Zub went into the women's cave, Uth women did a secret thing to him and Zub shouted. Then the women took Zub's fur and Zub was cold.

When there was cold ice and no meat, Bok was angry and killed a great deer by himself. Bok would not give anyone meat until Ret who is dead now told Uth women to give Bok rotten berries and pull Bok's hair.

When storms come, Uth Peoples hide from the sky. When the sun returns, Uth Peoples hunt.

When Gur was lost, the Uth women did secret things. But Kug who broke bones with Gur shouted and hit Mah at the fire-pit. Kug ran and shouted on each hill and the hunters chased Kug and hit him many times.

Ba Firemaker painted Dak and Ibb and Yab on the big stone when he was young. He did this because Reh Peoples came from the river and struck Dak and Ibb and Yab with killing bones, and so they were dead.

Ebe was bigger than Yat, but only some Uth remember Ebe. Ebe became old and thin and weak, and then was dead - just like Ret and Wur and Ot who young Uth do not know and do not speak of.

"How interesting it is that the primacy of womankind positively leaps from these Truths, and yet we discussed nothing of the sort beforehand," Amaryth commented as she read the assembled Seed once more.

"Perhaps the incessant Archaeological Society newsprints from Palestine seep into even our endeavours," said Balthazar. He indicated the most recent daily, folded upon the floor to prop a table leg. "Certainly it is all I hear of at the tea house. Matriarchal Antiquity has become quite the talking point of late."

The Blackened Lands

Motifs

Sorcery. Rulers. Treachery. Swords. Armies. Mud. Decay.

Hidden Tales

Low fantasy stories of struggling kingdoms, plotting lords, hidden sorcerers, and mud-strewn armies in the fashion of a Game of Thrones or the Black Company.

Heroes

Name

High Lord Crulvaine

Crux

The only descendant of the Old Lords strong enough to rule these lands in the harsh manner their peoples both need and deserve.

Three Certainties

Kill the transgressors! But let it be both public and slow.

Fear amongst the populace is the lifeblood of rulers.

My heirs shall inherit this dominion I have created.



Name

Lord Namul of Tarnish

Crux

Swordsman, commander, and now, reluctantly, acclaimed leader of these ragged free peoples.

Three Certainties

Truth and true nature are only found in battle, more is the pity.

Twenty sword-arms - well led and willing to lay down their lives - can break a kingdom.

Emissaries are a vile necessity for a man to suffer.

Name

Ekranul the Dark

Crux

Sorcerous assassin since time immemorial, inscrutable chooser of kings and lords.

Three Certainties

What matters it who rules?

Love is the death of strength, and none are immune, not even Ekranul.

Act and you will be acted against - this is as sure as the next dawn.

Name

Lady Caliwyn of Coinhold

Crux

The only descendant of the Old Lords who strives to bring change to those made blind by tradition.

Three Certainties

In time, common people take on the aspect of their Lord. What lies in your heart?

Never will I wed if this is all there is to choose from!

Great evil has been built on silver coins, where once there was great good.

Powers

Name

Trantail, Anointed of the Allfather

Crux

A master of worship, corrupt and wealthy, who begs the Allfather's forgiveness each night.

Certainty

Corruption and coin is the only way for the Cathedral to survive.

Name

Councillor Lafane

Crux

The right hand and voice of High Lord Crulvaine, loathed and courted.

Certainty

Power is its own reward, fineries and deference merely the spice upon the sweetmeat.

Name

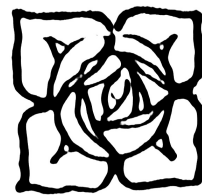
Vift, the Beggared Queen

Crux

A broken-hearted Lady, ruler over the waste and pain left by war.

Certainty

Do as you will to us. We of Feligath have nothing left but our suffering.



Name

Sage of the Golwastes

CrUX

A seer who did not foresee his own downfall, and paid with his name and his place in the land.

Certainty

That all is as it is does not make it right.

Name

Namul's Free Company

CrUX

Rough and clever men, scarred by battles, tired of war - but unafraid of it.

Certainty

All that is good and worthy must be bought with blood and lives.

Name

The Circle of Knives

CrUX

A secret society of spies, assassins, and those tempted to treachery, its eyes everywhere.

Certainty

The servant and the master are weak roles to play upon any stage, so easily reversed.



Places

Name

The Golwastes

Crux

Desolation, where dead armies rot.

Name

Cathedral of the Allfather

Crux

The source of all ills that beset the faith, where worship rusts and corruption festers.

Name

Feligath

Crux

A ravaged city of the war-lorn and wretched.

Name

Tarnish

Crux

The free town of vigour and rebellion, built amidst ruins.

Name

Luwening Forest

Crux

Darkened and haunted, where those who betray their Lord are hung until dead.

Name

Coinhold

Crux

A free town sustained by its silver mine, safe atop the high Vassak pass.



Truths

An army is exactly like a sword in one respect only. Once raised it must be blooded, or great misfortune will fall upon he who wields it.

Hidden within every Lord's hold lie the remains of a dozen noble lives cut short by the assassin's knife. Forgotten, each and every one, their dominions and deeds gone to the mists of time and march of armies.

Feligrath fell as Old Tarnish fell, not by sword and spear from without, but by the crumbling of once-stout hearts within. Whilst a city remains undaunted and proud, its peoples can be humbled, even slain, but never defeated.

An army routed is a slow blade directed to its Lord's heart. Yet this is a ruinous purchase in comparison to the equally capable blades of fear, doubt, and well-wrought treachery.

Faith in the Allfather is as the rain that falls. It gives life to the fields, which must be celebrated. Yet it also damps the fires of injustice in the hearts of men, and makes the road to uprising one of clinging mud and obscuring mist.

No good ever comes of sorcery or foreknowledge, but neither do the resulting ills reliably fall upon the most deserving. To that end, only good blades and steadfast soldiers will suffice.

A battle of armies is a fulcrum upon which the future course of Lords and commoners alike stands poorly balanced. The fulcrum tilts this way and that, and so great change comes of the least acts undertaken upon the fields of war.

Thavvogh the Barbaric

Motifs

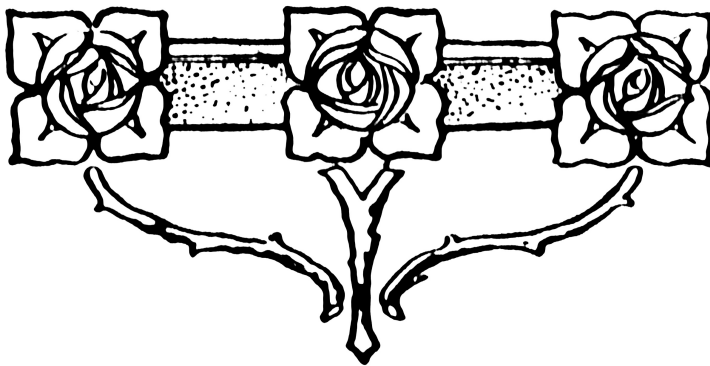
Barbarians. Rogues. Wilderness. Temples. Opulence. Decadence.

Hidden Tales

The barbarians and primordial Earth of pulp tales, of which Conan is king.

"The Thavvogh of Ashton Smith, absolutely," asserted Corinthine, putting her foot down once more. "Lovecraft's Thavvogh has little but the name in common, and is as much wholly an excuse to tell tales about the dread powers of the cosmos as any of his New Hollander protagonists."

"It is just you say, I am sure," said Balthazar, quill pen poised. "Howard's Konan remains first in the Hidden Tales, however. That, at least, is incontestable."



Heroes

Name

Thavvogh of Uttar

Crux

Only mighty Thavvogh is left to show how men of fallen Uttar once gifted their friends and made a bloody slaughter of their foes.

Three Certainties

The great-ax Ribcleaver.

Scents of lush women and fine wine.

Fear in the foe's bowels.

Name

Zanzya

Crux

Dark woman of Llasa, bold daughter of warriors, proud thief of hearts and jewels.

Three Certainties

Fierce passion and unfamiliar lovers.

All that glitters to make the greedy eyes of merchants gleam.

Sharp knives wrapped in soft silk.

Name

Culthar Three-Rings

Crux

A scarred and unwilling brigand, for whom victory in far Va-Yael brought naught but the bitter taste of ashes.

Three Certainties

The hawk's cry that calls the traveller from afar.

The long-dead foe who haunts dreams and memories.

Scaled armour of Va-Yael, each gleaming shard a shield.

Powers

Name

Z'thol Akar

Crux

Priest of pre-human Gods, a half-breed blessed by the blood and sorcery of mighty fish-men.

Certainty

Great will be Kathuul woken!

Drowned will be the cities of men!

Name

Bal Ephram

Crux

A merchant of means, a remorseful coward, and a man too loyal to his friends for his own good.

Certainty

That war of regrets made between the wealth of deceit and the poverty of honesty.

Name

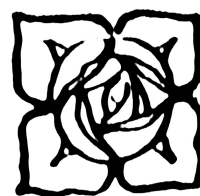
Peerless Yinzeel

Crux

Beauteous ruler of Shining Thallay, unchallenged queen of all she surveys.

Certainty

None shall disobey without suffering - at length - for their temerity.



Name

The Lich-King Rul

Crux

A lord amongst ancients, left doomed and dead,
cursed and undying for his acts in life.

Certainty

Death is too kind by far for tomb-
thieves.

Name

Formless Balug

Crux

A God spawned of the primal ooze, fearsome,
terrifying, and inscrutable.

Certainty

Endless time passes, but men will
one day sacrifice to Balug again.

Name

Prince Amoth

Crux

The last bronzed young scion of a faded dynasty,
set forth from his lands to find greatness.

Certainty

The Gods judge a new-crowned
King by the magnificence of his
past deeds.



Places

Name

The Tomb-City beyond
Llisa

Crux

A place of death and scorpions at the desert edge, where gold lies buried and old sorceries await to trap the unwary.

Name

Basalt Temple

Crux

A fearful structure, crumbling walls and great blocks to hide the form of Balug from the eyes of man.

Name

Drowned Mazathe

Crux

A city long claimed by the sea, where adherents of primal Gods gather, and darker things sport in the greasy waves.

Name

Cursed Uttar

Crux

A land made dead and ruined, scourged by foul sorcery and vile beast-demons.

Name

Shining Thallay

Crux

Jewel of the ragged Varre coast, a port of riches, decadent thieves, strange bazaars, and wonders built atop rags and filth.

Truths

To love is to live, but to love too long - that is to die.

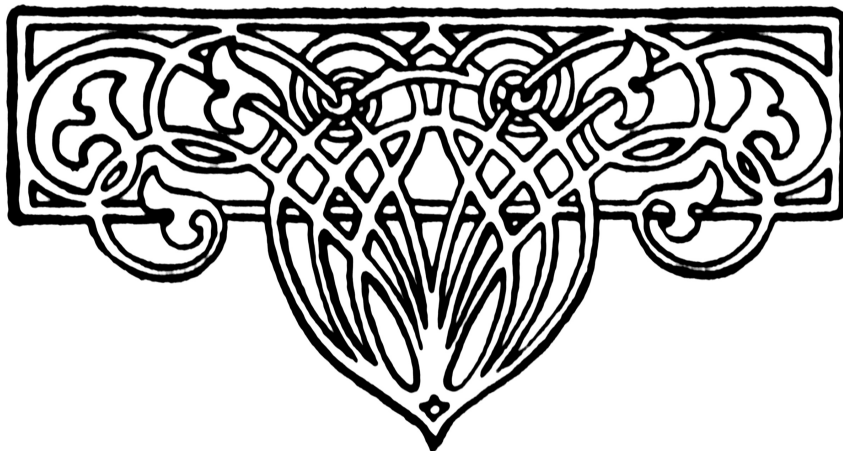
Words caged by ink and parchment are broken and have no value.

Men and women lie to others and themselves until such time as the shadow of death is upon them.

Well-forged steel and stern hearts may stand against sorcery and prevail.

All works of man are destroyed by man - or by the Gods, when men forget.

Live for today, for even the Gods know not what comes tomorrow.



V. A Tale Told, a Dream Dreamed

But after this point, all else is lost and torn, made invisible by fate. We hold but fragments of the whole transcription, and from these fragments we may do little other than extrapolate or build anew. Let us ponder this, and close with one later, disconnected splinter, a hint at how the Logic of Tales and Dreams unfolds for Circles of Taletellers.

"Did I mention that I was invited to an evening's telling with Desiree and Euripide's Circle last week?" asked Amaryth.

"You might have," replied Corinthine. "What became of it in the end?"

"Well - I must say that they are quite charming and clever, but so very adversarial as Taletellers," Amaryth related. "Polite applause given when leaping from ambush to unexpectedly sway the Tale or whilst pulling the rug out from under one, that sort of thing. I was entirely at sea the whole time, and the Circle's panoply of unwritten rules quite drown the few that are in fact written. It was an interesting experience, there is that to be said for it, but I am not sure that I would do it again."

"Beware of Greeks," cautioned Balthazar.

"Come now! Each to their own," said Corinthine, charitably.