



# Revitalization in DERP

By Ian Thomson

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*"The restoration of vitality is a small task"* Pharesm the Sorcerer (TDE, p215)

## Introduction

With the advent of Turjan-Level gaming, various traditional RPG topics rise in importance. At first glance this one may seem an unlikely issue to be included into the DERP. However, its introduction is stimulated through mention of the topic in Jack Vance's own text. Specifically, Pharesm the Sorcerer told Cugel that it was so easy to bring him back to life that: "A variety of deaths by contrasting processes" might feature as part of his punishment. Also, Turjan's Tome itself notes (p73) the possibility of recreating a deceased vat creature from the salvaged brain of the original.

## Divine Act

The ancient deity Ethodea (mentioned in the Guide to Azenomei available at 'Violet Cusps' and in the forthcoming 'Deities of the Dying Earth' article) is technically capable of raising the dead, though only in exceptional circumstances. Long ago her Priestesses had access to great hospitals and the very best in medicinal and herbal treatments. Through prayer and application of their skills and these resources they could routinely revive those who were very recently deceased from disease, poison or injury. Such things are still possible, but healers these days are barely comparable in skill level to their predecessors. A far more likely situation is that a healer would save the life of a character that was dying from one of those causes, rather than actually being able to revive them from beyond the veil.

Ethodea herself is capable of raising the dead, but would only be likely to do so under extreme circumstances. Only one sufficiently meritorious circumstance comes to mind - if the characters disrupted a demonic ceremony designed to defile an ancient site sacred to Ethodea, and one or more of them were slain in the process, but they still succeeded in overcoming the demonists. In gratitude for protecting her sacred precincts, Ethodea might restore life to any largely-intact bodies of characters remaining within her temple. (NB: Should characters return in future circumstances with a deceased companion this act would not be repeated, though they might feel Ethodea's compassion wash over them as the body of their deceased friend is transformed to pure energy by the power of her divine sentiment.)

## The 'Physician' Skill

From time to time a character may be slain by injury or other means in a situation where they fought valiantly and almost resisted, or where the injury was relatively minor (a sword thrust or explosive backlash - rather than decapitation or a 500ft fall from a cliff). One of their companions sufficiently versed in the skills of the Physician might try to revive them so as to be able to apply Edan's Thaumaturgic Poulitice (which only works on the

living). This is of course 'CPR', and some GMs may wish to ignore such a modern-feeling circumstance. Still, other GMs (perhaps those running particularly bloodthirsty campaigns) may allow such attempts to be made. When using the standard ratings pool method, of course an Illustrious Success is required. If maximum tension is required this attempt may also be extrapolated into a single die roll – again requiring an Illustrious Success as the result. (In this latter case, the GM applies a bonus or penalty as described in the 'Enhanced Action' ruling – also available at the 'Violet Cusps' page.)

## Sorcery

Although he is not an arch-magician, Pharesm appears to be somewhere in the league of Pandelume, and thus can be numbered amongst the mightiest of regular magicians mentioned in the Dying Earth stories. (It certainly seems that like Pandelume he has an advanced grasp of Mathematics.) Therefore, it is conceivable that for him the 'restoration of vitality' truly is a 'small task' - as this does not disrupt game balance by making it an easy duty for any decent magician. (In some campaigns arch-magicians in any case do not exist.)

### Game Option 1: Special Use of the Vats

If a magician specializes in Vat Mastery (see "Turjan's Tome", p82 & pp119-124) and also knows the extremely rare spell - 'Blessing of Earthly Fortitude', they may remove the brain of a freshly-deceased human and attempt to use it to grow a new body around. This first of all requires a successful Physician roll (PS or IS) from someone with a minimum Physician rating of 10. NB: *Anyone with a superbly outfitted laboratory may add a further bonus of 1 to the attempt, OR if their Physician rating is 7-9 they do not gain the bonus but are able to make the attempt.* Then the long process (usually several weeks) of attempting to grow a new body is calculated - as if the magician were attempting to grow the temporary simulacrum of a deceased individual ("Turjan's Tome" - p82). Needless to say, the magical, chemical and herbal compounds required for this very special process are rare and/or expensive in the extreme. (GM decides - based on how common, or uncommon, they wish such processes to be in their game.)

In the final stages of this creative process, the magician attempts to stabilize this regrown being so that it will live for several decades (rather than a single day). The magician must have a Magic rating of 20 or more, must successfully cast the Blessing, and then must roll on the table below (to equate with their skill at vat-chemistry manipulation). This table assumes the use of the 'Enhanced Action' ruling - with a single 'do or die' dice roll required. However, it is equally possible merely to use the normal Rating pool points system in the quest to achieve an Illustrious Success. In this more traditional fashion, we suggest applying a levy or penalty of 1 to the attempt, in order to emphasize the difficulty of the task.

Note that only one attempt may be made per brain, and upon failure the brain is rendered useless for further such experiments. Also, note that if the magician fails their roll on the table below by only one degree, they manage to bring forth an unstable recreation that lasts for only one day. (To avoid recriminations, it is advisable that the player of the character that is hoping for reanimation makes the following roll - even if the magician is also being run by another player.)

Vat Mastery Rating	Success Level Required
11-13	Illustrious Success
14-16	Prosaic Success
17-19	Hair's-Breadth Success
20+	Exasperating Failure

If you decide to use this option as the sole ruling on sorcerous revitalization in your game, then it is conceivable that Pharesm was boasting of his prowess, and in reality faced the possibility that his attempts might fail. However, it seems to the author of this piece that Pharesm was making a casual claim without undue concern to the chances of failure - see Option 2.

### Game Option 2: Pharesm's Process

For the sake of simplicity, we shall use a conjectural description of the process Pharesm might have used repeatedly to achieve Cugel's revitalization in between his 'variety of deaths'. Firstly, Pharesm takes the corpse

and places it in a bath of magically-enhanced organic substances (a secret vat-recipe of extremely rare and expensive ingredients that Pharesm has collected piece by piece over several centuries) for a full day. (During this time all tissue damage is regenerated.) Secondly, the magician electrifies the brain of the deceased for an hour using a number of fine silver rods to transfer current from a strange device recovered from a ruin dating back to the previous aeon. (Any damage to the memories or the delicate sensorium itself is rectified.) Finally, the rare and jealously guarded 'Blessing of Earthly Fortitude' is cast upon the body, which then (unless a Dismal Failure is rolled) jerks gasping back into life.

In any campaign, clearly such knowledge is rare in the extreme. Specifically, it is likely to be known only by a handful of magicians, each several centuries old and somewhat more than sick and tired of the pathetic antics of lesser mortals. Such are the very folk likely to be preoccupied with great projects the nature of which others find problematic even to comprehend at the most basic level. In short, such a person would provide this service only in return for a similarly exceptional obligation being fulfilled. Quoting the Law of Equipoise, this magician might send adventurers travelling far across the world and facing numerous hazards. He or she might perform the reanimation prior to this, but would then have the power to evoke terrible curses, which would activate upon the adventurers if they were to renege upon their part of the deal. (Or might simply be able to end the effect any time within the first few months.) Likewise, this magician would have sufficient power to be able to easily fend off any attacks by these adventurers, or to annul any threats. Repeated requests for a new application of this capability may simply be refused, or may be the catalysts for further world-spanning scenarios devised by the GM. To end this possibility in the game, the GM need simply describe that the adventurers return to the magician's locale only to find that the person has departed forever; perhaps to another dimension, perhaps to a distant star, who knows?

### *Game Option 3: Reviving Vat Creatures*

Vat creatures themselves may be recreated in two ways. Either from the original matrix (in which case no memories of the life since the original creation are retained: the creature is 'born' as new), or with a combination of matrix and brain (taken from the deceased specimen within a few hours of the onset of morbidity). In this second case the personality and memories of the original specimen are retained. This latter option is worth exploring here, because vat creatures may occasionally exist as player-run characters. Use the details in Option 1 as a template, except the magician need only have a Magic rating of 15 and the Blessing spell is not required as part of the process. Note that in all cases, the brain must be secured as soon as possible (within a few hours at most). It must also be preserved in some way (such as packing in ice or via magical stasis) if it will not be presented at a suitable laboratory within another 2-3 hours (or if the day is uncommonly warm).

## **The Blessing of Earthly Fortitude**

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** Instant

**Difficulty:** Complex

**Style Affinity:** Forceful

The caster calls upon the powers of the ancient divine being 'Ethodea'. This spell, if successfully cast, then has one of two results. If used as part of a reanimation process, it cements the soul back into the repaired body, allowing full restoration of personality. Otherwise, it acts as a superior version of Edan's Thaumaturgic Poultice – being capable of curing magical poisons and diseases from any source – even those applied by curses. However, if the person deserved the curse/affliction (possible judged by whether or not they have a negative Sympathy rating) Ethodea may withhold her mercy and the spell simply fail to work. (If the GM rules that it fails for such a reason, the caster does not suffer the Spell Failure result.)

**Spell Failure:** The caster must make a series of Health rolls, looking for an Illustrious Success. (NB: For every four points of Magic rating they have, 1 point from any remaining in the Magic pool may be used to assist this series of rolls.) If they succeed, they are merely stunned for several rounds. On any other result (except a DF) they lose all of their Health points except one and fall into a coma for several hours. On a DF they drop dead.