

FOR THE SAKE OF CHANGE

NOCD ADVENTURE 2

Adventure Overview

Part One begins with a hurried chase through the streets of Cardican, a port city on Avalon's south-western shore in Camlann County. The Heroes are after a thief who has snatched a Symbeth sphere away from their companion, an Explorer scholar named Theodore Lipton. This adventure works best if one of the Heroes is an Explorer or has ties to the Explorer's Society. However, Theodore Lipton could just as easily be a family member or friend of one of the Heroes.

Part Two involves studying the strange relic and discovering that another artefact from the same dig site may unlock the first one's secrets. The only problem is that this companion piece is now part of the Duke Mayor's collection...

Part Three has the Heroes visiting the Duke Mayor's estate where a party is taking place. There are several options on how to obtain the piece from the Duke Mayor.

Part Four occurs once the Heroes bring both the first artefact and its companion piece together. A dramatic encounter takes place and dark secrets are revealed.

Scene 1 : Streets of Cardican

Begin by explaining that the Heroes have been casually strolling through the streets of Cardican with the Explorer, Theodore Lipton. They have just

finished lunch and are returning to Theodore's home when a black shape blurs past them, jerking a metallic, sphere-shaped artefact from Theodore's grasp. The Heroes must now chase the thief through the city streets.

This hectic pursuit is designed to draw the Heroes right into the adventure. Use the chase rules on pages 169-172 of the Game Masters' Guide. Make sure to describe the over the top chaos involved. The thief, a cur named Edward Standish, knocks over produce carts, pushes women and children out of his way, and uses a variety of other nasty tactics to put distance between himself and the Heroes.

The Heroes catch up with Edward as he ducks into a dark alley. Just as they think they have finally caught him, the alley fills with large, unsavoury looking characters. These Brutes are in cahoots with Edward and were told to meet him here. Unless the Heroes were specifically on guard for such an event, give the Brutes a Free Raise to ambush them. There is one Brute Squad for every two Heroes (rounded up), with the following traits: Threat Rating 3, Small Weapons (knives, bottles, fists), TN 20, +1 Ambush. Chances are, Edward manages to escape the alley. If the Heroes block his retreat, he will fight until he is unconscious. When taken to the proper authorities, he will simply escape from jail. The important thing is that the artefact falls from his digger's coat for the Heroes to recover. Once



Edward's escapes or is captured, the Brutes left standing make a run for it.

When the Heroes pick up the sphere, it collapses in upon itself, Mists a few times, and alters itself into a new shape: a perfect pyramid with razor sharp edges. A triangular hole appears in one of the facets. As the Heroes examine the pyramid closer, Theodore comes panting around the corner with three members of the city guard. The guards remove any fallen bad guys and briefly question the Heroes.

After seeing such a radical change in the artefact, Theodore wants to know which Hero picked it up and what he did to alter it. After he is satisfied the Hero has no idea, he concludes that the impact on the ground must have sparked the transformation. He then insists that they all return to his house and examine it further.

Scene 2 : Research Time

The Heroes accompany Theodore back to his home, a small cottage just out of town. His beautiful young assistant, Isabella Peruva, is practising her fencing routine under an apple tree when they arrive.

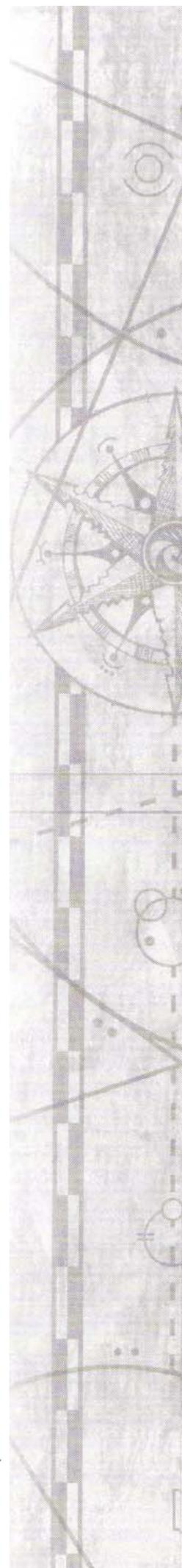
The wine cellar has been converted into a library / workshop and is littered with books, tablets, tools, and other odds and ends. Theodore clears all of the work off the wooden table in the centre of the room and gives the artefact a close inspection. Some of the Heroes will be allowed to participate, others are told to comb through field journals and sketches with Isabella. This scene is designed to let Heroes use their research skills and problem solving abilities, giving the more cerebral members of the group a chance to shine. The cellar is a complete disaster area, and some comic moments can be had with falling books,

scattering papers, and the like. Isabella is the very model of efficiency, while Theodore is almost like a mad scientist in his methods.

Make sure the target numbers for all research rolls are challenging but not impossible - in the 15-25 range, depending on how skilled the Heroes are. If they fail, have them find some arbitrary fact and then be ridiculed by Isabella for thinking such a thing was important. After some trial and error, the party discovers that the hole in the artefact is actually some kind of lock. When anything is stuck in the hole, it receives a painful shock of blue electricity (1k1).

Looking through the field notes reveals the piece was uncovered at a Setine dig in Vodacce. It was simply noted as "metal sphere," and the accompanying sketch confirms it as the same artefact. The list of other items found at the dig are rather mundane (a few hollow bones, a broken Ether compass, random metal fragments), but one stands out among the rest. The notes describe it as a "miniature sundial," a black metal disk with a small pyramid rising out of its centre. Comparing measurements, this pyramid would fit perfectly in the triangle slot of the transformed artefact. Theodore immediately begins to write a letter to the Explorer House in Carleon, where most of the artefacts from the dig were sent to be catalogued. A sharp Hero (or Isabella, if no one makes the roll) notices a hastily scribbled note that the disk did not go off with the other artefacts. It went to the Duke Mayor of Cardican, Mark Garloise, as a token of appreciation for his financial backing of the expedition.

Theodore remembers that Mark is having a gala ball this very evening which should provide the perfect opportunity to retrieve the artefact.



Scene 3 : Having a Ball

After a bit of searching, Theodore finds his invitation to the party, which he gladly gives to the Heroes. He will not accompany them, saying he wants to prepare the first artefact for their return. Isabella, however, will go along if invited.

The gala is Duke Mark Garloise's engagement celebration for his only sister's daughter; a rather plain and portly woman named Sybil Wilder. She is to wed Cedric Riche du Paroisse, the third son of the Marquis du Paroisse. The Duke's family has a long history of hating everything Montaigne so Mark is less than thrilled with the union. Only after much pleading from his sister and out of respect for Lord Wilder did he break down and host the event.

Sybil is extremely excited, a bouncing blushing bride. She is always smiling and flittering about, chatting with all of the guests, including ones she does not know. Her fiancé Cedric, on the other hand, doesn't seem to care one way or another. He is incredibly dispassionate about everything, the stereotypical bored fop. Careful observers notice that he and his betrothed do not exchange a word or glance for the entire evening, though not from the latter's lack of trying.

If the Heroes attend the party, this is the perfect time to drop gossip, rumours, and clues about what else is going on in Theah. Feel free to create a few interesting side events if you wish. Some examples include a Hero coming into possession of a lurid love letter by mistake, an intoxicated swordsman demanding satisfaction over a real or imagined slight, or taking part in a witty poetry contest.

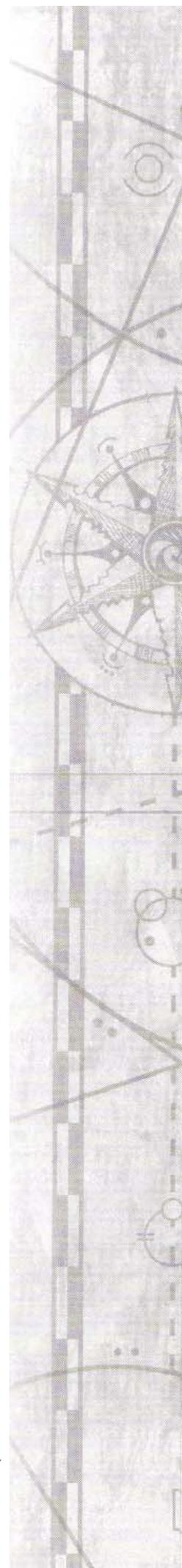
Particularly assertive Heroes may simply ask Mark

for the artefact. His answer will vary depending when the query is made. Early on, he refuses, saying that a party is no place to discuss business and adding that, since he paid for the silly expedition, the piece is rightfully his. The gala has obviously put him into a foul mood. Later in the night, after he has been "celebrating" for a while, he will consent to let the Heroes borrow it if asked. Of course, he first wants a detailed story as to why they need it, a dance with any female Heroes, and a host of any other good natured requests. Heroes could quickly become a source of cheap (and possibly very amusing) entertainment.

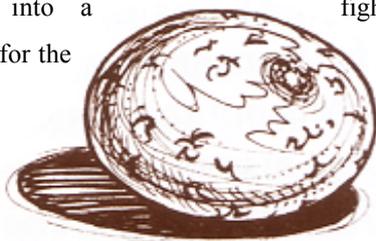
Sneaky Heroes may want to swipe the artefact. Even though he has a room filled with rare and exotic exhibits (Syrneth and otherwise), Mark is using the artefact as a paperweight on the desk in his study. The exhibit room is a great red herring and the actual location will only be found, most likely, by accident. Perhaps a Hero with the Lecherous Hubris uses the study for a liaison or a Hero with the Fortunate Virtue just happens to be rifling through correspondence in Mark's desk. In the unlikely event that Heroes try to take the artefact by force (or if they are very careless and are caught snooping around in places they do not belong), the house guard is ready for a fight. They have the following traits: Threat Rating 3, Medium Weapons (Rapiers), Firearms (Pistols), TN 20. The Heroes need to leave with the artefact and return it to Theodore for the adventure to continue.

Scene 4 : Secrets Revealed

After the Heroes return the artefact to Theodore, he and Isabella begin the arduous process of preparing to use it. After almost three hours of preparation, Theodore is finally ready to see if the new artefact will unlock the pyramid. Slowly, dramatically, he holds the two up and gently slides them together.



Nothing happens. Taking a deep breath, he wiggles them. Nothing happens. Carefully, he turns the disk in a counter-clockwise direction. Something happens. The pyramid begins to vibrate and grow hot. Yelping from the burn, Theodore wisely sets it on the table. An odd tingling sensation travels around the room, like the feeling right before a lightning strike. Without further warning, the razor-sharp sides of the pyramid fall open and illuminate the cellar in a soft, bluish light. Another pyramid stands inside the opened artefact, but this one is crystal clear and seems to contain some kind of thick, milky liquid. Warning everyone to stand back, Theodore attempts to touch it. He receives a powerful bolt of blue electricity that sends him flying backwards into a bookcase. He will be unconscious for the rest of the adventure.



A rush of warm air, the smell of fresh blood, and a horrible ripping sound announces the arrival of Cedric, who has apparently blooded the disk. He brings Edward Standish through the portal with him for protection. Cedric is wearing peculiar, metallic devices (clearly of Setine origin) on every finger of his left hand. Seconds later, the cellar door is smashed down by a number of Brute Squads equal to the number of Heroes, plus one more for Isabella. These are some of the same guys the Heroes encountered in the alley, and they have brought along friends to settle the score. They have the same traits as before, but carry swords this time (Medium Weapons).

If the Heroes activate Cedric's Talkative Flaw, he will proceed to tell them his life's story and how he came to know of the strange artefact. If the Heroes do not activate the Flaw, he thanks them for their hard work, picks up the clear pyramid with his left hand, and

prepares to open another portal to make his exit. Edward and the Brutes attempt to hold off anyone that tries to stop him.

The cellar is an interesting place for a fight. Improvised weapons can be made out of burning candles, table legs, books, even the remains of the pyramid and disk. Chances are at least one of the Heroes will make it to Cedric before he completes his magic (this is highly recommended). At this point, the Montaigne draws his sword and tries to fight his way out of the house. Edward and the others follow his lead, causing large amounts of collateral damage in their wake. At a properly dramatic moment during the fight, Cedric decides to shift the odds more

in his favour. He twists the top off of the pyramid, drinks it dry, and promptly collapses to the ground, clutching his throat. If a sadistic Hero decides to finish him off in this time of weakness, let him try (but remind him that this is not a very Heroic thing to do).

The round after Cedric takes his drink, he leaps to his feet. He is now incredibly robust and healthy, almost glowing. His muscles grow larger and more powerful by the second, bulging and ripping through his clothing. His teeth become longer and sharper as well. In short, Cedric has changed into a powerhouse of primal strength, a fact which he is happy to demonstrate by tossing around both the Heroes and any of his own lackeys that are still around. As he points out with a rabid growl, a god needs no mortal friends or witnesses.

In addition to the changes in Cedric's stats, he is now impervious to normal weapons. He takes the damage as usual, but will succeed in every Wound Cheek he

makes. Heroes do have an option for shortening his lifespan, however. All four sides of the original pyramid, can be used as sharp, improvised weapons. Each time Cedric is successfully struck by one of these pieces, he takes one Dramatic Wound. This can be alluded to in several ways, from mentioning of how knifelike the edges look, to having Cedric seem uncomfortable around the pieces. If your players fail to get your hints, you can have Isabella strike him with the first piece. They will catch on when they see Cedric's pain.

When Cedric has taken 5 Dramatic Wounds, he attempts to flee on foot, taking the disk with him. On foot, he is much faster than the Heroes. If he can get past them and make it outside, then he escapes with ease. If the Heroes manage to kill him, he will combust in a pillar of fantastic blue flame.

Once the smoke clears the Heroes will literally have a lot of cleaning up to do. Theodore's house is a ruin and filled with bodies, something the Sheriff of Camlann will have questions about. Sybil Wilder's fiancé is either gone, or a pile of foul smelling ash (Duke Garloise secretly thanks the Heroes for that one), and she will be quite upset. Then there is the fact that a powerful Synchronism artefact has been snuffed out of existence. The Explorer's Society will not be pleased and some members will raise the troubling question of whether the artefact was truly unique.



Important NPCs

Cedric Riche du Paroisse

Brawn 1 [6], *Finesse* 3, *Wits* 3, *Resolve* 3 [5], *Panache* 3
Arcana: Talkative

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Thean (R/W), Left-handed, Noble, Small

Archaeologist: Synchronism Lore 5, Artefact Evaluation 5

Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 5, Fashion 5, Oratory 1
Scholar: History 5, Mathematics 2, Philosophy 2, Research 3, Occult 4

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 5

[*Dirty Fighting*: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 3, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 3]

[*Wrestling*: Grapple 4, Bear Hug 3]

Porte (Master): Attunement 5, Bring 5, Bleeding 5, Catch 5, Pocket 5, Walk 5

Note - The numbers and skills in brackets reflect Cedric's change

Cedric is a fop: painfully thin, effete, and covered from scrawny neck to heeled shoes with ruffles, velvet, and lace. He speaks with a practised lisp and constantly takes sniffs out of a little tin box he carries with him. When one looks in his eyes, however, all previous perceptions change. They are dark and cruel, windows to an almost tangible rage. They make people nervous.

Cedric became fascinated with the work of the Explorer's Society early on. As he grew older, he secretly began to give donations to the Chapter House in Charouse. In return, he was allowed to read selected archives about recently discovered artefacts. He eventually developed a friendly rapport with a few of the field scholars, which led to a moment that would shape the course of his life. In gratitude for his contributions, Cedric received four metallic cylinders that were found in Vodacce (the very ones he is

wearing when he arrives in Theodore's cellar). These cylinders closely resemble the fingers of a glove, so he decided to try them on. That night, and every night since, he dreamt of a strange metal artefact of many shapes: sometimes a sphere, sometimes a pyramid. No matter its guise, it always contained the same prize: liquid Ether. The dreams showed the power that Ether held and how it could be harnessed and used.

Cedric's father, the Marquis du Paroisse, laughed in his face when Cedric asked for money to fund a dig in Vodacce. However, Lord Edgar Wilder of Avalon, a business contact, was looking to marry off his daughters, starting with the oldest and largest, Sybil. Cedric was ordered to begin correspondence with Lord Wilder immediately with the intent of matrimony. With their children married, the Marquis knew he would be able to increase his exports to the Triple Kingdoms.

Through his letters, Cedric learned that Lord Wilder's brother-in-law, Duke Garloise, actively supported the Explorer's Society. After weeks of elegant writing, concealing his true motive under the promise of marrying Sybil, Cedric managed to have Lord Wilder convince the Duke to sponsor the Vodacce expedition. Dizzy with his own cunning, he agreed to wed Sybil. It would give him the perfect reason to be in Avalon when the Explorer ship returned with his artefact. Upon hearing the news, the Marquis took Cedric and his rowdy brothers to Charouse for a week of non-stop merry-making. The delicate Cedric was not up to the challenge and wound up sick and bedridden for almost six months. By the time he finally made it to Avalon, the Explorers had already returned with the sphere and given it to a local Society scholar, Theodore Lipton, to study.

Cedric was both devastated and furious, immediately planning ways to steal the artefact for himself. A dream revealed that Duke Garlois's disk was the key to unlocking the sphere's secrets, so he blooded it for easy retrieval at a later date. He then hired Edward Standish to steal the sphere...

Edward Standish

Brawn 4, *Finesse* 3, *Wits* 2, *Resolve* 4, *Panache* 3

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne, Toughness

Hunter: Stealth 5, Survival 3, Tracking 4

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Sprinting 4, Throwing 4, Leaping 4, Lifting 5, Swinging 3

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 4, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 3, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 3, Throat Strike 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5

Born in the slums, Edward dreams of one day being as rich as the nobles he sees riding around in fancy carriages. In the meantime, he specialises in dirty work, doing anything for a price. Robbery, kidnapping, arson, even murder are his stock and trade. He is Cardican's one-stop connection to the darker side of human nature.

Theodore Lipton

Brawn 2, *Finesse* 2, *Wits* 5, *Resolve* 3, *Panache* 2

Arcana: Creative

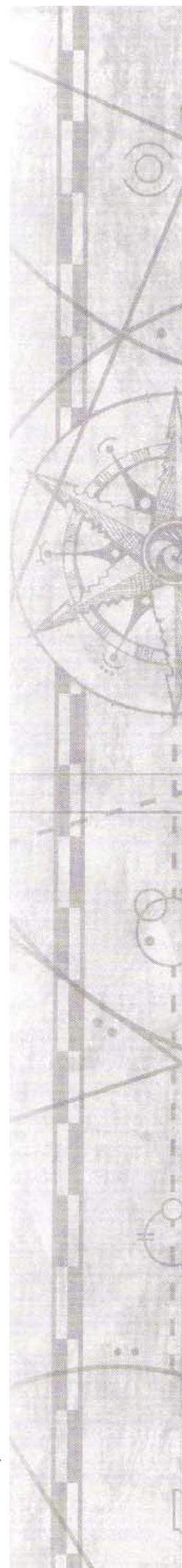
Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Thean (R/W), Explorer's Society, University, Keen Senses

Archaeologist: Occult 4, Research 5, Society Lore 3, Symbeth Lore 5, Artefact Evaluation 5

Artist: Drawing 3 Merchant: Scribe 3, Appraising 4

Scholar: History 4, Mathematics 4, Philosophy 2, Research 5, Natural Philosophy 4

Theodore is a kindly old gentleman with thick glasses, a thick moustache, and a thick middle. A



scholar for the Explorer's society with a seemingly limitless quantity of patience, he often receives artefacts to study after everyone else has given up on them. This is why he is in possession of the Setine sphere at the beginning of the adventure. His carefully documented methods of trial and error are occasionally unconventional but regularly lead to breakthroughs. His motto is, "You never know until you try."

Isabella Peruva de Altimira

Brawn 2, *Finesse* 3, *Wits* 4, *Resolve* 3, *Panache* 3

Arcana: Intuitive

Advantages: Castille (R/W), Avalon (R/W), Crescent (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Thean (R/W), Vendel (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Ussura (R/W), Appearance (Stunning), Castillian Education, Explorer's Society, Linguist

Archaeologist: Occult 3, Research 4, Society Lore 2, Synchrony Lore 2, Artefact Evaluation 3

Artist: Drawing 4

Courtier: Dancing 4, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Oratory 2, Seduction 4
Scholar: History 3, Mathematics 3, Philosophy 2, Research 4

Spy: Shadowing 1, Stealth 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 3

Isabella is a charismatic and witty delight, with a tongue as quick as the sword her father insisted she learn how to use. She tends to be very frank and honest, with little patience for fools or incompetents. She travelled to Avalon to perfect her skill with the language, but Montaigne invaded Castille while she was away, leaving her home destroyed and her family dead. Having nothing to return to, she threw herself into scholarly work and caught the attention of Theodore Lipton as a talented linguist. She works for the Explorer's Society now, providing translations when needed and assisting Theodore with his research.

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