

# SANCTUM DECORUM

Episode #02

## THE LAST CASTLE

COMPATIBLE WITH  
**DCC  
RPG**

# Sanctum Secorum Podcast

## Episode #02 Companion

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# Character Classes

## The Mek

Judges wishing to run an adventure based on Jack Vance's "The Last Castle" may wish to allow players to play one of the bronze insect men, or have the entire group assume the role of an escaped band. There is also the option of allowing a rescue party of Mek's landing on the planet to investigate. The dependency on syrup sacs is no longer a hindrance should players choose this option.

**Weapon training:** Pellet rifle, sword, club

**Armor:** The Mek are born with a sturdy carapace that gives them a natural AC 12. They are highly resistant to pain and this translates to blunt and slashing weapons doing one less die of damage on the dice chain, unless a called shot is made for the face, or sensory organ.

**Telepathy:** The Mek all have a series of highly conductive antennae that can be used to mind-link with others of their species, in addition to intercepting various frequencies made by technological items used for communication. A Mek may effectively communicate telepathically with any member of its species within a one mile radius. This same range applies to intercepting communications from mechanical devices. Should the Mek ever have its spines damaged, or purposefully removed, the creature will be cut off from its network and loses this ability until healed. A called shot dealing a sum total of half the starting hit points of the Mek will successfully remove the spines. The spines will regrow and become functional once the creature reaches its max total.

**Mechanical aptitude:** The Mek are gifted problem solvers and have the innate ability to build or repair mechanical devices. They are often used to maintain systems put in place to transport and care for their owners. Any roll involving creation or repair of technological items results in a Mek making the roll as skilled (1d20 as opposed to unskilled 1d10). If the Mek has access to proper tools it may add +2 to any related rolls.

**Food dependency:** Slave Mek's are fed a nutrient-dense syrup by their captors. This syrup is the only means the species has to gain sustenance after being taken away from its home world. Should the syrup become unavailable, the Mek must make DC 15 Fortitude checks each day after having gone 48 hours without feeding. Failing results in 1d4 Stamina damage as it undergoes the effects of starvation each day. **If the Mek is being used as a player class and is not indentured to slavery, ignore the food dependency.**

**Languages:** Mek communicate naturally through telepathy, but also speak common and the language of their captors.

**Action dice:** Mek use their action die for skill checks and combat.

| Level | Title (All Alignments) |
|-------|------------------------|
| 1     | Oothecae               |
| 2     | Nymph                  |
| 3     | Molter                 |
| 4     | Blattodea              |

**Progression Table**

| Level | Attack | Crit Die/Table | Action Dice | Ref | Fort | Will |
|-------|--------|----------------|-------------|-----|------|------|
| 1     | +1     | 1d6//          | 1d20        | +1  | +1   | 0    |
| 2     | +1     | 1d8//          | 1d20        | +1  | +1   | 0    |
| 3     | +2     | 1d8//          | 1d20        | +1  | +2   | +1   |
| 4     | +2     | 1d10//         | 1d20        | +2  | +2   | +1   |
| 5     | +3     | 1d10//         | 1d20+1d14   | +2  | +3   | +1   |
| 6     | +3     | 1d12//         | 1d20+1d14   | +2  | +3   | +2   |
| 7     | +4     | 1d12//         | 1d20+1d16   | +3  | +4   | +2   |
| 8     | +5     | 1d14//         | 1d20+1d16   | +3  | +4   | +2   |
| 9     | +5     | 1d14//         | 1d20+1d20   | +4  | +5   | +3   |
| 10    | +6     | 1d16//         | 1d20+1d20   | +4  | +6   | +3   |



by JST  
02/07

## Bird, Vancian (#1)

*"They were garish garrulous creatures, pigmented red, yellow, blue, with long necks, jerking inquisitive heads, an inherent irreverence which no amount of discipline or tutelage could overcome."*

-*The Last Castle*, by Jack Vance

Their original racial name having been lost to history, these multi-winged creatures are simply referred to as "birds." Insufferable, odious, and insulting in their mannerisms, the birds are an intelligent and gregarious race of roughly humanoid appearance, but bearing three sets of wings with which to propel them through the air. Despite their disagreeable nature, they are quite clever and can carry out a multitude of tasks. The birds of earth are bound by the presence of a "syrup sack," which replaces their normal digestive process with one specially engineered for man-made nutritional syrup.

The birds are amazingly fast in the air and are capable of prolonged flight at speeds of 50 mph or more. This is reflected in their MV attribute as the second number. For ordinary combat and close maneuvering, their speed is greatly reduced by the need of finer movement versus sprinting through the sky.

**Bird, Vancian:** Init +0; Atk claw +4 melee (1d6); AC 14; HD 1d8+1; hp 6; MV 20' or fly 60'/700'; Act 1d20; SP syrup dependent; SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +0; AL C.

*Syrup Dependent:* Having been transformed and now bred as a servant race for humanity, the birds are reliant on man for their nutritional needs. The genetically-spliced "syrup sacks" on their backs allow them to digest the nutritional syrup to the exclusion of all things and the natural digestive processes of the creatures have long since atrophied away. While birds do not need to eat any more or less often than most creatures, their diet is wholly centered around the syrup and, without a source of the syrup, they will starve.

## Bird, Vancian (#2)

Vancian Birds are a peculiar sight. While undoubtedly flying creatures, their nearly-skeletal forms could be mistaken for humanoids, if not for the wings...the wings that hoist them airborne with but a single step of momentum...the wings that make scratching sounds with every flexion...the wings that, when fully expanded, appear to have multiplied. Able to carry the weight of two humans (or one with medium armor), a single Bird has considerable strength in its hind legs, its musculature plain to the eye. When assigned in groups of up to six, larger cargo can be rigged together with multiple leads.

These Birds have a peculiar temperament; while cocky and bantering with each other and passer-by, they are quick to obey the humans who feed them. They are also unbelievable cowards. No amount of food can lure them into small spaces or underground, and humans have yet been unsuccessful in training Birds for any land-based combat. They are likely to take to the skies and wait — while hurling insults — for melee to sort itself out. Their talons appear to be deadly weapons, but Birds will only attack if cornered. They are exceptionally jovial when tasked with aerial strikes, and are skilled at targeting from above, often hurling simple objects such as rocks.

**Birds:** Init +4; Atk talons +2 melee (1d6) or aerial strike +5 missile fire (1d6+2); AC 13; HD 3d10; MV 30' or fly 60'; SP aerial assault; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +0; AL N.

*Aerial assault:* Birds gain a +3 to ranged attacks, as when carrying large objects to drop upon targets. However, when Birds are assigned to groups, they act as one unit (no separate initiatives or attacks until they drop the object or rigging).

## Mek (#1)

Whisked away from their home planet in the Etamin system, the insect-like race known as The Mek have been used for slavery for close to a century. The creatures stand upright at close to six feet in height and are covered in a bronze carapace that offers superior protection from the elements and most melee weapons.

The Mek are often thought to be bereft of emotions, but those who have studied the race find they do indeed have the capacity for emotion. These feelings are all geared towards “The One” and all Meks find comfort in the constant mental chatter of the brethren of the hive.

Meks have several spine-like antennae sprouting from their back, scalp, and neck. These growths are coated with an organic copper film that is also conductive. Meks use these growths to communicate telepathically at a range of 1 mile.

Meks who have been taken from their native land are no longer able to subsist on their natural diet of decayed swamp vegetation. They are fitted with syrup sacs, which are sewn under the skin in the shoulder area. The syrup is a man-made substance fed to “lower” life forms and is fortified with nutrients designed to keep the species thriving.

**Mek:** Init +1; Atk short sword +1 melee (1d6) or pellet gun +2 ranged (+1d8) ; AC 12; HD 1d8; hp 6; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP telepathy, food dependency (syrup sac), mechanical aptitude, armor; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.

*Armor:* A hard exoskeleton wraps the Meks and with the exception of their faces, they are highly resistant to pain. This translates to blunt and slashing weapons doing one less die of damage on the dice chain, unless a called shot is made for the face or sensory organ.

*Telepathy:* The Mek all have a series of highly conductive antennae that can be used to mind-link with others of their species, in addition to intercepting various frequencies made by technological items used for communication. A Mek may effectively communicate telepathically with any member of its species within a one mile radius. This same range applies to intercepting communications from mechanical devices. Should the Mek ever have its spines damaged, or purposefully removed, the creature will be cut off from its network and loses this ability until healed. A called shot dealing a sum total of half the starting hit points of the Mek will successfully remove the spines. The spines will regrow and become functional once the creature reaches its max total.

*Mechanical aptitude:* The Mek are gifted problem solvers and have the innate ability to build or repair mechanical devices. They are often used to maintain systems put in place to transport and care for their owners. Any roll involving creation or repair of technological items results in a Mek making the roll as skilled (1d20 as opposed to unskilled 1d10). If the Mek has access to proper tools it may add +2 to any related rolls.

*Food dependency:* The Mek are fed a nutrient-dense syrup by their captors. The syrup is the only means the species has to gain substance from after being taken away from its home world. Should the syrup become unavailable the Mek must make DC 15 Fortitude checks each day after having gone 48 hours without feeding. Failure results in 1d4 Stamina damage from the effects of starvation each day.



## Mek (#2)

*"The Mek, standing as if a specimen in a museum case, was a man-like creature native, in his original version, to a planet of Etamin. His tough rusty-bronze hide glistened metallically as if oiled or waxed. The spines thrusting back from scalp and neck shone like gold, and indeed they were coated with a conductive copper-chrome film. His sense organs were gathered in clusters at the site of a man's ears; his visage—it was often a shock, walking the lower corridors, to come suddenly upon a Mek—was corrugated muscle, not dissimilar to the look of an uncovered human brain. His maw, a vertical irregular cleft at the base of his 'face', was an obsolete organ by reason of the syrup sac which had been introduced under the skin of the shoulders, and the digestive organs, originally used to extract nutrition from decayed swamp vegetation and coelenterates, had atrophied. The Mek typically wore no garment except possibly a work apron or a tool-belt, and in the sunlight his rust-bronze skin made a handsome display. This was the Mek solitary, a creature intrinsically as effective as man—perhaps more by virtue of his superb brain which also functioned as a radio transceiver. Working in the mass, by the teeming thousands, he seemed less admirable, less competent: a hybrid of sun-man and cockroach."*

*-The Last Castle, by Jack Vance*

**Mek:** Init -1; Atk claw +3 melee (1d4+2) or pellet ejector +1 ranged (1d10) or throw knife +1 ranged (1d4); AC 18; HD 3d8+2; hit points 15; MV 30' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP hive mind, radio-telepathy, syrup dependent, telepathic; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; AL L

**Hive Mind:** Meks, so long as they can connect to the collective via their radio-telepathy, are in constant communication with one another. This allows them to act in complete unison and a single Mek can speak on behalf of all of its kind.

**Radio-Telepathy:** The brain of the Mek operates much like a technological radio. The Meks can "tune" their reception in to varying wavelengths and can use this ability to communicate amongst themselves or to intercept more traditional radio communications. Their reception is dependent on coarse spines which grow from the backs of their necks which, if severed, disable this communication until regrown.

**Syrup Dependent:** Having been transformed and now bred as a servant race for humanity, the meks are reliant on man for their nutritional needs. The genetically spliced "syrup sacks" on their backs allow them to digest the nutritional syrup to the exclusion of all things and the natural digestive processes of the creatures have long since atrophied away. As their diet is wholly centered on the syrup, without a source of the syrup, most Meks will starve. There have been recent rumors of non-syrup dependent Meks.

## Peasant

Not known for their intelligence so much as their strong backs and ability to handle menial tasks, the “peasants” are small andromorphs originally from the world of Spica Ten. Taken as a servant race during the human occupation of the Altair colonies, these creatures are almost incapable of hostile action without strenuous training.

**Peasant, Vancian:** Init +0; Atk club +0 melee (1d4-2); AC 10; HD 1d6; hp 4; MV 30'; Act 1d16; SP harmless, slow to anger, suggestible, syrup dependent; SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +0; AL C.

*Harmless:* So docile are the peasants that, without special training, they are not capable of offensive action other than in the defense of their own lives. Peasants that have been specifically trained for combat may disregard this penalty only.

*Slow to anger:* Because of their docious and obliging manner, peasants are slow to engage in combat. As a result, no matter their initiative result, they will always act last in the first round of combat. They act in their normal initiative order in all subsequent rounds.

*Suggestible:* Complacent and near child-like, the peasants are especially prone to mental and emotional manipulations. Successfully cast spells that influence behavior (*charm person*, *word of command*, et al.) are treated as one degree of success greater. In addition, attempts to manipulate them via the Personality attribute are made at +2.

*Syrup dependent:* Having been transformed and now bred as a servant race for humanity, the peasants are reliant on man for their nutritional needs. The genetically spliced “syrup sacks” within their bodies allow them to digest the nutritional syrup to the exclusion of all things and the natural digestive processes of the creatures have long since atrophied away. While peasants do not need to eat any more or less often than most creatures, their diet is wholly centered around the syrup and, without a source of the syrup, they will starve.



## Phane (#1)

Phanes are delicate, butterfly-like creatures, native to the caverns of Albireo Seven's moon. They are naturally vain and preen their delicate gauze covering, affixed to them at points behind their ears, along their arms, and down their backs; the remainder of their form is covered in a fine, soft pelt. Normally docile, playful, and affectionate, the females of this race have been selectively bred by humans to serve as platonic companions during the first twenty years of the insectoid-womens' lives. If used in a lower-common "companionly" manner, their gauzes droop and discolor, automatically a tell-tale sign of misuse by their human.

**Phane, young:** Init +1; Atk claws -2 (1d4); AC 11; HD 2d8+2; MV 40' or glide (special); SP entrancing movement, glide; SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +1; AL N.

*Entrancing movement:* To watch a Phane dance is to watch art itself. In the presence of such beauty, a DC 14 Will save is required to remain focused on one's surroundings, else be entranced into a stupor for 2d6 rounds.

*Glide:* While Phanes cannot fly, *per se*, they may avoid being damaged if falling from any considerable height. For every 10' of height above 20', a young Phane may reduce 1d4 from the normal falling damage of 1d6 per 10', as her gossamer gauze buffets the force of gravity on her light frame. (Ex: Falling from 40 feet = 4d6 falling damage - 2d4 gliding benefit = total damage, for a minimum of 1 point.)

As Phanes mature, their joints begin to stiffen, their luxurious pelts become coarse, and their once-majestic gauze "wings" turn a pale gray. No longer a Dionysus-esque pleasure to touch or behold, they are commonly set to menial tasks, away from the public eye. Such treatment harbors moderate resentment toward humans.

**Phane, mature:** Init: -2; Atk claws +1 (1d5); AC 12; HD 3d8+2; MV 30' or glide (special); SP advanced glide; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +3; AL N.

*Advanced glide:* Mature Phanes have gained experience in the art of gliding from heights. For them, a DC 12 Reflex save can negate all falling damage from heights up to 100', and falling from a mere 20' results in no damage.

## Phane (#2)

*"These were creatures native to the caverns of Albireo Seven's moon: a docile race, both playful and affectionate, which after several thousand years of selective breeding had become sylphs of piquant beauty. Clad in a delicate gauze which issued from pores behind their ears, along their upper arms, down their backs, they were the most inoffensive of creatures, anxious always to please, innocently vain..."*

*Their life-span was perhaps thirty years, during the last ten of which, after they had lost their beauty, they encased themselves in mantles of gray gauze and performed menial tasks in boudoirs, kitchens, pantries, nurseries and dressing rooms."*

*-The Last Castle, by Jack Vance*

**Phane:** Init 0; Atk claw +0 melee (1d3); AC 8; HD 1d6+1; hp 5; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP delicate, syrup dependent; SV Fort -1, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N.

*Delicate:* So delicate and fragile are the phanes that they are filled with fear by the idea of conflict. Morale checks for phanes are made at a -4 penalty.

*Syrup Dependent:* Having been selectively bred as a servant race for humanity, the phanes are reliant on man for their nutritional needs. As syrup sacks would destroy the aesthetics of the creatures, they are forced to ingest small amounts of syrup, lapping delicately from small saucers of the nutrient solution.



# Transportation

## Power-wagons

*“Power-wagons, like the Meks, were originally swamp-creatures from Etamin 9. They were great rectangular slabs of muscle, slung into a rectangular frame and protected from sunlight, insects and rodents by a synthetic pelt. Syrup sacs communicated with their digestive apparatus, wires led to motor nodes in the rudimentary brain. The muscles were clamped to rocker arms which actuated rotors and drive-wheels. The power-wagons were economical, long-lived and docile, and so they were principally used for heavy cartage, earth-moving, heavy-tillage, and other arduous jobs.”*  
-The Last Castle, by Jack Vance

Versatile and near tireless (if kept fed), the power-wagon is the primary form of ground transportation of the nobility. In addition to their normal cargo, they may also be fitted to carry weapons of war, such as a mounted energy cannon. A fumble result of a 1, on a cannon mounted thusly, is fatal to the wagon itself.

## Vancian Bird

Should one wish to be carried in so rough a manner, a human may be carried aloft by a Vancian Bird, although their stamina for personally carrying such a load is much less than when they are able to share the burden. The Bird may only carry such a burden a short distance, perhaps 5 miles, before needing to stop to rest. As such, there are many alternatives for distance travel, all of them being better.

## Vancian Bird Sky Chair

Referred to as a chair, this device is more akin to a wicker basket containing a seat than anything so grandiose as the conveyance sounds. Carried aloft, it hangs suspended from ropes attached to a framework over the passenger area. With the chair removed, the basket may be used to carry small cargo aloft. The sky chair requires from 4-6 birds to safely and swiftly carry it aloft.

It is well known that the birds, while not careless when carrying humans, provide a much smoother ride to cargo than to their masters.

|                          | Hourly Speed | Daily Distance |
|--------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Power-wagon (low speed)  | 5 mph        | 120 miles      |
| Power-wagon (high speed) | 8 mph        | 192 miles      |
| Vancian Bird             | 10 mph       | 30 miles       |
| Vancian Bird Sky Chair   | 50 mph       | 300 miles      |

# Weapons

## **Energy Cannon**

Range: 500'

Damage: 2d16

The energy cannon holds twin mounted barrels that spit massive bolts of plasma over long ranges. The drain of the weapon is so great that it must be hard-wired into a power system for any sort of prolonged use, although it can be used for small engagements using rechargeable solar cells that allow 2d4 shots before being fully expended and requiring 4 hours of sunlight to recharge.

In the world of The Last Castle, these devices are old and ill-maintained. On an attack roll of 1-3, the device malfunctions or breaks down. It is out of operation for a minimum of 1d3 days should this happen. The repair of energy cannons is rather specialized and it is possible that there may be no one available with knowledge of how to repair the weapon.

## **Fire Grenade**

Range: 20'

Damage: 20

This fearsome weapon explodes into a rain of hot burning fire and fuel that cover an area in hungry flames. Shooting forth a fiery spray of over 1,000°C, the grenade's spray covers everything in a 10' radius of detonation. Targets within the radius must make a Reflex save (DC 18) to rush to safety and away from the explosion. Stationary targets are allowed no save. The fire continues to burn for half damage until fully extinguished. This weapon fumbles on a 1-2.

## **Pellet Ejector**

Range: 40'

Damage: *Varies*

The pellet ejector fires spherical ammunition stored in an attached hopper (holding 10 pellets) or backpack (holding upwards of 200 pellets), and is very versatile in the types of ammunition it is capable of using. The diameter of the "pellets" is .5", and the majority of ammunitions are fragile, coated in a thin membrane to contain the delivered ordnances.

## **Pellet Gun**

Range: 50'

Damage: 1d6

The pellet gun is a modern weapon capable of firing small balls made of advanced composite with great accuracy. The guns are used as a means to hunt small game, and in rare cases for self-defense. The pellet gun uses cartridges that are capable of holding 20 rounds and are fueled by small cylinders of compressed gas. Each cylinder is good for 100 shots.

## **Sport Rifle**

Range: 75'

Damage: 2d4

Used primarily for the hunting of small game animals, the sports rifle is a small-bore relative of the pellet ejector which sacrifices flexibility of ammunition for range and accuracy. The rifle is so finely made, and is so intuitively used, that attacks made with the rifle enjoy a +1 accuracy bonus on any shot taken where the shooter may take a round to aim prior to firing. The rifle holds a clip of 5 shots.

### Steel Sling-Whip

Range: 15'

Damage: 1d5

Most often used as a symbol of human authority over the subjugated races, the steel sling-whip is a wicked weapon when used against living flesh. Consisting of a flexible coil made of the same blue steel alloy found within the protective walls around the castles, the whip itself is nearly indestructible and, in an emergency, can be used in a number of creative ways.

|                  | Damage  | Range            |
|------------------|---------|------------------|
| Energy Cannon    | 2d16    | 500'/1000'/1500' |
| Fire Grenade     | 20+burn | 20'/40'/60'      |
| Pellet Ejector   | Varies  | 40'/80'/120'     |
| Pellet Gun       | 1d6     | 50'/75'/100'     |
| Sport Rifle      | 2d4     | 75'/150'/225'    |
| Steel Sling-Whip | 1d5     | 15'              |

### Pellet Ejector Ammunition

| Ammunition | Damage      | Special                                                                                           |
|------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Explosive  | 2d7         | -                                                                                                 |
| Incendiary | 1d10 + burn | Fire continues to burn for 1d5 damage until it is extinguished.                                   |
| Marker dye | -           | Various dyes may be used, ranging from visible paint to dyes only visible through special optics. |
| Solid shot | 2d5         | -                                                                                                 |
| Stun gas   | -           | Target must succeed on a DC 15 Fort save or succumb to the gas emitted from the pellet.           |

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