



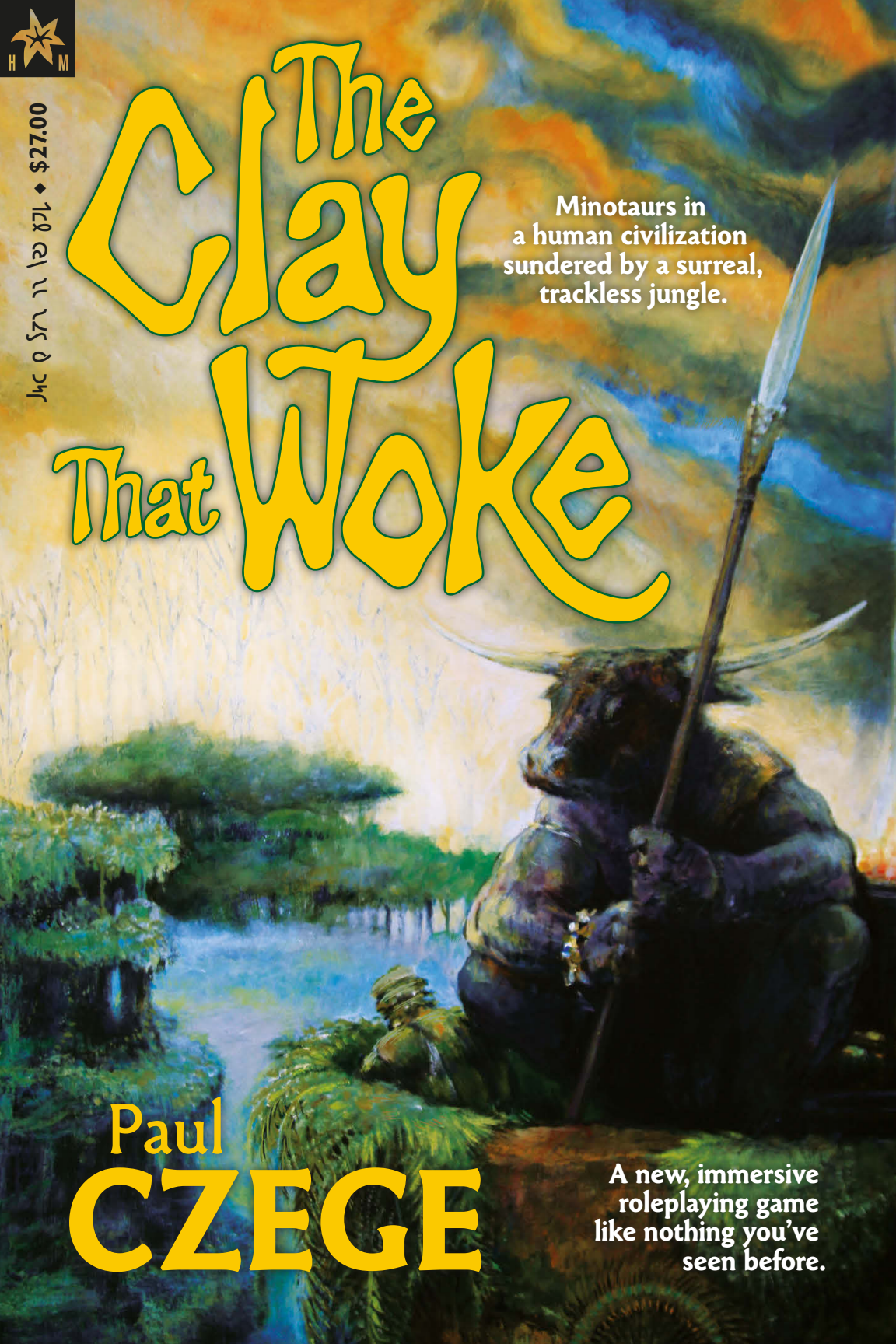
הכר פ סדר ה בל ע גל ♦ \$27.00

The Clay That Woke

Minotaurs in
a human civilization
sundered by a surreal,
trackless jungle.

Paul
CZEGE

A new, immersive
roleplaying game
like nothing you've
seen before.





These are my courage tokens. As icons they look like 🗡️. They help me succeed physically and dramatically in the face of threats and dangerous opposition. My archetype tells me how I get more of them when I've run low.



These are my mind tokens. As icons they look like 🧠. They help me achieve clever successes against threats and opposition. My archetype tells me how I get more of them when I've run low.



These are my name tokens. As icons they look like 🕯️. They give me stature in society, and I can spend them to help gamemaster characters in their efforts, or to shift unfavorable outcomes onto them if I discredit myself. My archetype tells me how I get more 🕯️ when I've run low.



These are my silence tokens. As icons they look like 🦋. They help me understand the world and change how other characters think. I lose them when I break silence, the minotaur code of life conduct. I get more 🦋 when I'm in the jungle.



These are my gift tokens. As icons they look like 📦. They represent unusually useful objects or abilities I might possess, and can be treated as other types of tokens to give me options and control over outcomes. I may get more 📦 from encounters with Voices or if one of my useful objects or abilities is lost, destroyed, or expires before I return from the jungle.



This is my life token. As an icon it looks like 🧬. It can help me succeed physically and dramatically in the face of threats and dangerous opposition, but if I lose it I might die. I get my 🧬 back when the jungle comes for me in the Dégringolade, or the Dégringolade comes for me in the jungle.



These are the gamemaster's no tokens. As icons they look like 🙌. They represent adversity in situations that won't cause me physical harm.



These are the gamemaster's skull tokens. As icons they look like 💀. They represent adversity in situations that may cause me physical harm.



These tokens represent the Red, Bright, and Still Voices, supernatural entities in the jungle that are known to take an interest in minotaurs. As icons they look alike: 👁️.



THE CLAY THAT WOKE



"The floridien begged us to help it get revenge on its murderer."

The Clay That Woke

PAUL CZEGE



Half Meme Press

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For Nash



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A NAMELESS MINOTAUR guards from the roof of a wealthy estate as the sun rises over jungle in the background. Sunlight refracts brightly from the bronze head of his spear.

His city is the Dégringolade, an ancient coalescence of once separate urbs, a vast and unplanned, unmapped sandstone city now in its late years, crumbling and penetrated by the encroaching jungle. For millennia it had thrived, improbably the cultural and economic center of the world without an organizing religion or central government. Instead an extended family, the hereditary bloodline of Empyreus, ruled its neighborhoods and districts like local nobility and made it great.

Though now they are much less than they once were. They and their city both wane with no sense of time's progress—the doings of men lost to the city's vast size, to its social inertia, and to the swelter and sameness of the weather.

Massive, expressionless stone faces front the Dégringolade's tallest structures, and no one alive knows their purpose. The sky darkens over the jungle every afternoon, as it has for a thousand years, for a great monsoon storm that soaks the streets and floods the rivers and canals. Stories from hundreds of years ago still circulate among people as if they happened just this season.

Today you may hear of the deaf gladiator Veturro who won the Tournament of the Scarabae. After twelve rounds, unable to hear the shouts and applause of the crowd, he defeats the final challenge—three dogs, unarmed—and the beautiful Sulunia Empyreus presents him with the prize, an iridescent scarab beetle that can play what it hears into his mind, to be his ears from then forward. *It happened fifteen hundred years ago.*

The city that invented steel and sold it to the world for its wars and murders has forgotten its secrets and now knows only bronze. The people who created a poetry of touch no longer understand its syntax.

Still, there is magic yet if you know where to look. The ghosts still come to the Tower of Heroes to act out great doings from their lives, and the dolphins of the Vadhmr river, males and females both, sport glorious curling moustaches and play and shift the mottled patterns of their skin for the entertainment of crowds. Indeed the Dégringolade, though sundered and admitting now of primordial jungle, still harbors these and other wonders, and still might hope for new glory in the future.

Above the city, for more than three millennia, rising through the jungle canopy to nearly a hundred and fifty cubits, dark and with few leaves now for twenty generations, have been the watchers. They are more than trees. They are a part of things somehow. It is said they will fully frondesce and bloom again when the city below enters a new age of greatness.

The minotaur guarding that estate is a descendent of four infant minotaurs who were pulled from the mud of the great river a dozen generations ago, who live now among the people of the city as a menial underclass. Often they are drawn, sometimes for weeks by urges they struggle to control, out into the jungle. Perhaps the city's future will be found in those whose lives span the two realms?

The Clay That Woke is a roleplaying game. You play nameless minotaurs living and working among the people of the Dégringolade and the dangers of the jungle. A gamemaster brings the world to life by creating your employment circumstances and creating and roleplaying all the beings of the Dégringolade and jungle. You'll try to uphold the difficult, stoic minotaur philosophy of silence, and you'll earn a name.



Gerdotesa, the caretaker of the Tower of Heroes watches dung bats returning to the jungle at dawn.

THE LONGHORN I'D FOLLOWED was gasping, and lathered. As was I. We faced each other across an expanse of deep underbrush, regaining ourselves, when something jerked him beneath the leaves. He sprang back to his feet, but missing his ear, blood pouring from the hole. And all the denizens of the primeval jungle towering over us went quiet. The longhorn flicked his gaze over the concealing underbrush, searching for a sign of what had brought him down.

In the Dégringolade, as I waited to deliver a message to his empyrei employer, this minotaur had protested an assignment to help skin and process river dolphins for market. "I don't want to. I will hear their voices in my sleep if I do. I wish you hadn't decided to sell dolphin delicacies." He'd broken silence—and I was sympathetic; we all have our lapses—but this time it would overwhelm him, and get me as well.

Generations ago, four infant minotaurs were pulled from the mud of the eternal river. Wild and fatherless they didn't naturally find a life in the society of men—not until they achieved *silence*. Silence is the minotaur philosophy of life conduct: pursue the social good, and pursue justice; do not want; do not use the names of women. From commitment to silence we live well with men. It is not always easy. And this is what happens when a minotaur gives in to his wants; he loses his self to a wildness entering his body. He goes frantic and runs for the jungle without awareness or regard for anything else.

The Empyrei was oblivious as she spit angrily at her contrary employee. But I could smell the frantic risen in him. His nostrils flared. His stance lowered. His head pulled down between his shoulders and his breathing got fuller and more powerful.

“Watch out,” I blurted. But the longhorn had already gripped his employer’s shoulder and, as the woman gaped, hurled her aside.

Then we were off, free of the market stall and crashing through the streets, free of our senses and driven by some primal force to seek the jungle, as people screamed.

Sometimes a run such as ours will grow to include a half dozen or more minotaurs, with children and people trampled or gored. Human society accepts no excuse for it, and men will try to kill a frantic minotaur. On this run a dirty young man tried to end me for the social good with a battered and dull bronze sword. I remember tearing it from his grasp, the sound of his fingers and wrist breaking, and his long, long howl of pain fading behind me as I ran on.

Now, lost together in a jungle gone quiet, the longhorn and I faced an unknown attacker. We were not kept waiting. A snake-thing reared up in front of me, taller than a man, thick around, and with a disturbing, human-like head. And there was two of it. The jungle erupted; birds and arboreal mammals screamed. The creature was a scourge. They knew it as a stealer of eggs and offspring; a cunning killer that hunted in pairs.

I screamed with them. The face of a scourge is a rictus of exposed teeth—and this one’s teeth were red with the blood and flesh of my companion. From the scourge’s forehead jutted a stony horn it could use to kill a man with a single rearing strike.

I barely dodged my death. The thing shoved me back with its chest, and snapped its head forward like a whip. I twisted aside, evading the horn by a hairsbreadth and taking the impact of its cheek on my shoulder. I still gripped the young man’s bronze sword, and turned my body’s twist into a swing at the creature’s head as it drove past me. It was like striking a plinth. The blade snapped just above the hilt and spun through the air so close it tugged at my hair.

The creature and I circled each other. It bobbed its head and used its long body beneath the foliage to try to trip me. It faked a bite lunge, and then a head-butt to measure my reaction speed. I was outmatched, yet since the initial clash and shattering of the sword all my fear had somehow drained away.

I stepped into strike range, still clenching the hard bronze sword hilt, but the powerful uppercut I threw hurt me more than the scourge. My next blow, full into its face, was no less painful than the first, though it did produce a satisfying spray of liberated teeth.

Then it tripped me. I rolled hard, desperate to avoid the death I knew it would bring down on me, and felt myself roll over the sword blade.

I tried to defend by kicking upward just as the creature drove its deadly head down at me, and managed to redirect the attack. The dirt next to me exploded from the impact of the scourge's head. But blinking wildly, blinded by the rotting humus, still it rose again and reared for another blow. I snatched up and raised the bronze blade to meet it, and it slipped into the creature's mouth. Then the power of the scourge's attack did all the work, forcing the blade into and through its own brain.

The dead weight of the thing collapsed onto me, forcing me to thrash out from under it to gain my feet before I could see the plight of my companion. The other scourge had managed to trip and maul him. What remained of his right thigh was crimson, wet, and gushing; his right arm was shredded, locked in the thing's jaws as it pulled him to the trees. He was trying to free himself, prying at the creature's jaw with his other hand. But I saw what was coming. Sheltered by the exposed roots of the massive tree to which he was being dragged was an earthy basin of collected rainwater. The scourge would drown him in it.

I ran to them and locked an arm around the creature, high enough to keep it from turning back and savaging me with its teeth, and put all my remaining strength into pulling it back from the water. My body trembled with the effort, betraying my true exhaustion, but somehow I managed. Bucking, rippling, working to throw off my grip, the scourge released its bite and the longhorn scrambled backward. Unsteadily, improbably, he gained his feet, favoring his horribly injured leg, and then lunged back in, gripping the head of the snarling scourge with both hands. I don't know where he found the strength. A moment before, it seemed the horrific thing thrashing in my arms would drag me to my own doom, but now my companion's attack inspired me to match his spirit; I tightened my arm lock and immobilized the creature, if only for a breath. The longhorn planted his unsteady right foot at the base of the tree, his left foot up on its trunk, and launched himself in an arc, legs over head, twisting with all his strength and weight to snap the creature's neck.

I fell to my knees, aching, trembling, lungs burning, mouth slack from exhaustion. My companion's legs had buckled when he landed and he'd collapsed to the ground, but—showing again an impossible reserve of strength—he struggled to his knees in front of me, his eyes on mine, and steady.

"Kin," the longhorn said, "do you have a name?"

"No," I shook my head.

He placed his mauled hand on my shoulder, the full weight of his injured arm resting on me. "You will."

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AS A MINOTAUR PLAYER you'll have a supply of **name** tokens that reflect your status in society and your influence, and a supply of **silence**

tokens that represent your adherence to the minotaur philosophy of silence. Your name tokens will sometimes help you elide conflicts with likely opponents, change their minds, or will cause useful objects or abilities to come to you. You'll use your name tokens to ensure others are successful in their endeavors, and you'll increase the size of your supply when other minotaurs take note of your doings.

Over the centuries minotaurs have developed their cultural philosophy of silence: be contemplative, do not want, do not use the names of women, and do not express your emotions, for breaking silence in these ways is an expression of need. Your silence tokens will sometimes help you see the world's truths and they'll keep you involved in the business of the Dégringolade.

And you'll play until it's clear whether the watchers will frondesce and bloom again for society's entrance into a new age of greatness or not.

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A MINOTAUR'S TEMPERAMENT is seated in his digestive system, where one of his four stomachs exerts influence beyond the others. And so there are four minotaur personality archetypes: the **leader**, whose reticulum is dominant, the **philosopher**, whose rumen is dominant, the **advocate**, whose omasum is dominant, and the **soldier**, whose abomasum is dominant. The archetype isn't a minotaur's job. It's his core personality and potential role in minotaur society.

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A MINOTAUR'S RETICULUM works closely with his rumen. It sorts undigested food and either delegates it for fermentation by the rumen or passes it on for filtering and digestion by the omasum and



MARCEL 2013

A minotaur and his girlfriend shopping at the market in Municipal Fecha-goela.

THE CLAY THAT WOKE — MINOTAUR SHEET

A LEADER MINOTAUR



These are my **courage** tokens.
As icons they look like 🗡️.

I refresh to three 🗡️ when we see me learn again the value or greatness of, or be impressed by my herd.

I have a herd



These are my **mind** tokens.
As icons they look like 🧠.

I refresh to three 🧠 by having a conversation with a philosopher minotaur about civic or cultural issues.

I have abiding gifts



These are my **name** tokens.
As icons they look like 🔥.

I can spend two 🔥 to ensure a gamemaster character will be successful in a planned future action for which no player minotaur will be present.

I have essential gifts

I refresh to ____ 🔥 when we see my herd being impressed with me. I also get 🗡️ from several Krater outcomes.



These are my **silence** tokens.
As icons they look like 🔥.

I get more 🔥 while I'm in the jungle.

Silence

Be courageous. Act with wisdom. Work for justice and the social good. Do not use the names of women. Do not want. Do not express your emotions.



These are my **gift** tokens.
As icons they look like 📦.

I get more 📦 when I leave the jungle and I've had a gift lost, destroyed, or expire recently.

I have broken silence












This is my **life** token.
As an icon it looks like 🦋.



I get my 🦋 back when the jungle comes for me in the Dégringolade, or the Dégringolade comes for me in the jungle.



abomasum. A minotaur whose reticulum is dominant is a leader. Leaders have a wider social network and appreciation for individualism in their friends. They have a close relationship with rumen-dominated philosophers.




To play a leader minotaur you'll need a copy of the leader minotaur sheet, and a starting supply of tokens that looks like this:








Those are **courage** , **mind** , **silence** , and **life**  tokens. Take what you need from the gamemaster's set. At some point you'll also have **name** , and maybe **gift**  tokens as well. You will see later, from the game's mechanics, how  helps a minotaur succeed physically and dramatically in the face of threats and dangerous opposition,  helps him achieve clever successes against threats and opposition,  helps him understand the world and change how

others think,  gives him stature in society, and  is his ultimate gamble for cultural relevance.

Also, at some point you'll need to specify your herd. This is a generalized group of minotaurs with whom your leader has some affinity or contentious association. Ex: "The minotaurs who hunt the dangerous iguanas that prey on humans." Don't name your herd right away. Wait at least until after you've had your first scene, and maybe even until you need to refresh your  or .

As you play the game you'll deplete your supply of tokens. But you can restore your supply by doing refreshes. See the numbers on your minotaur sheet? Those are how many tokens you're restored to when you do a refresh. Every minotaur archetype has different ways of refreshing , , and .

- ♦ A leader minotaur refreshes his  when we see him learn again the value or greatness of, or be impressed by his herd.
- ♦ He refreshes his  by having a conversation with a philosopher minotaur about civic or cultural issues.
- ♦ He refreshes his  when we see his herd being impressed by him.

Write a 0 in the blank for your  refresh. This is your  number. It will go up, and maybe down during play, but will never go below 0.


Also, your minotaur doesn't actually have a name at the beginning of the game, and won't until he accepts one from another minotaur after a specific shared experience that I'll explain in a bit. Until then, human characters mostly call him "you," or derogatorily, "beast," and other minotaurs call him "friend" or "kin," or with affection, "beast."



Haweshad's herd are twins whose skin condition is from a poison given to their mother when they were in the womb.

So, you're a nameless minotaur—and you start the game in employment circumstances which are dangerous or menial and determined by your gamemaster. Some example starting employment circumstances for a leader:

- ♦ Part of a group of minotaurs that hunt large, dangerous iguanas that prey on humans.
- ♦ An independent net fisher of dirty public rivers in the Dégringolade.
- ♦ Assistant to a hired champion for duels.
- ♦ Pulling a rickshaw for fares.

As you increase your  number you'll find yourself in increasingly higher status employment circumstances. Some possible future employment circumstances for a leader:

- ♦ Assisting the makers and apprentices in a bronzecasting foundry.
- ♦ Foreman on a canal dredging project.
- ♦ Leading a small group of minotaurs who hunt dangerous iguanas that prey on humans.

¹⁷: The sheets have space for player minotaurs to record times they've broken silence. "I called Vayperphai by name." "I asked to accompany Mantrique on the hunt." The open circles are for noting quantities of tokens in a minotaur's supply at the end of a game session, so the gamemaster can collect them and then restore them correctly next time.

¹⁸: A good starting set for running a game with four player minotaurs is 90 tokens, as follows: 14 courage, 14 mind, 12 name, 18 silence, 11 gift, 6 life, 6 skull, 6 no, and one each for the Red, Still, and Bright Voices. To cover up to six players, add: 7 courage, 7 mind, 6 name, 10 silence, 4 gift, and 2 life.

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A **MINOTAUR'S RUMEN** is a teeming colony of diverse bacteria, fungi, protozoa, and yeasts that slowly ferment and break down ingested food. A minotaur whose rumen is dominant is a philosopher. Philosophers concern themselves with the civic and cultural problems of society, and are proponents of the minotaur cultural philosophy of silence. And they greatly value their friendships with leaders.

To play a philosopher minotaur you'll need a copy of the philosopher minotaur sheet, and a starting set of tokens that looks like this:



THE CLAY THAT WOKE — MINOTAUR SHEET

A PHILOSOPHER MINOTAUR



These are my **courage** tokens.
As icons they look like 🚧.

I refresh to two 🚧 when we see me having
a conversation with a leader minotaur
about a civic issue.

I have abiding gifts



These are my **mind** tokens.
As icons they look like 🧠.

I refresh to four 🧠 when we see me
reacting emotionally to a cultural problem.

I have essential gifts



These are my **name** tokens.
As icons they look like 🗣️.

I can spend two 🗣️ to ensure a gamemaster
character will be successful in a planned future
action for which no player minotaur will be
present.

Silence

Be courageous. Act with
wisdom. Work for justice and
the social good. Do not use the
names of women. Do not want.
Do not express your emotions.

I refresh to ____ 🗣️ when we see me tell
an advocate or leader minotaur a **truth** or
possible truth. I also get 🗣️ from
several Krater outcomes.



These are my **silence** tokens.
As icons they look like 🤫.

I get more 🤫 while I'm in the jungle.

I have broken silence






These are my **gift** tokens.
As icons they look like 📦.




I get more 📦 when I leave the jungle
and I've had a gift lost, destroyed, or expire
recently.





This is my **life** token.
As an icon it looks like 🦋.

I get my 🦋 back when the jungle comes for
me in the Dégringolade, or the Dégringolade
comes for me in the jungle.


Every minotaur archetype has different ways of refreshing , , and .

- ♦ A philosopher minotaur refreshes his  when we see him having a conversation with a leader about a civic issue.
- ♦ He refreshes his  when we see him reacting emotionally to a cultural problem.
- ♦ He refreshes his  when we see him tell an advocate or leader a **truth** or **possible truth**.

Write a 0 in the blank for your  refresh. This is your  number. It will go up, and maybe down during play, but will never go below 0.

Your minotaur starts the game nameless and in dangerous or menial employment circumstances determined by your gamemaster. Some example starting employment circumstances for a philosopher:

- ♦ Working for an entomemporos in the market, caring for the wares.
- ♦ A message courier for illicit lovers.
- ♦ Working as a snake handler for tips.
- ♦ A butcher.

As you increase your  number you'll find yourself in increasingly higher status employment circumstances. Some possible future employment circumstances for a philosopher:

- ♦ A midwife.
- ♦ A music teacher.
- ♦ An assistant to a freelance empyrei judge.

THE CLAY THAT WOKE — MINOTAUR SHEET

AN ADVOCATE MINOTAUR



These are my **courage** tokens.
As icons they look like 🗡️.

I refresh to three 🗡️ when we see me
help another minotaur's effort to avoid
breaking silence.

I have abiding gifts



These are my **mind** tokens.
As icons they look like 🧠.

I refresh to three 🧠 when we see another
minotaur tell me a **truth** or **possible truth**.

I have essential gifts



These are my **name** tokens.
As icons they look like 🗣️.

I can spend two 🗣️ to ensure a gamemaster
character will be successful in a planned future
action for which no player minotaur will be
present.

I refresh to ____ 🗣️ when we see me publicly
get someone to admit they were wrong. I also
get 🗣️ from several Krater outcomes

Silence

Be courageous. Act with
wisdom. Work for justice and
the social good. Do not use the
names of women. Do not want.
Do not express your emotions.



These are my **silence** tokens.
As icons they look like 🤫.

I get more 🤫 while I'm in the jungle.

I have broken silence



These are my **gift** tokens.
As icons they look like 📦.

I get more 📦 when I leave the jungle
and I've had a gift lost, destroyed, or expire
recently.



This is my **life** token.
As an icon it looks like 🌳.

I get my 🌳 back when the jungle comes for
me in the Dégringolade, or the Dégringolade
comes for me in the jungle.




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A **MINOTAUR'S OMASUM** processes the fluids he's ingested and that his rumen has extracted from his solid food. A minotaur whose omasum is dominant is an advocate. Whereas the philosopher is concerned with minotaur society, advocates have the interests of individual minotaurs at heart. They are confidants and advisors, and they are critics who use their criticism to draw a minotaur toward his true potential.

To play an advocate minotaur you'll need a copy of the advocate minotaur sheet, and a starting set of tokens that looks like this:




Every minotaur archetype has different ways of refreshing ♡, 🦋, and 🖐.

- ♦ An advocate minotaur refreshes his  when we see him help another minotaur's effort to avoid breaking silence.
- ♦ He refreshes his  when we see another minotaur tell him a *truth* or a *possible truth*.
- ♦ He refreshes his  when we see him publicly get someone to admit they were wrong.

Write a 0 in the blank for your  refresh. This is your  number. It will go up, and maybe down during play, but will never go below 0.

Your minotaur starts the game without a name and in employment circumstances determined by your gamemaster. Some example starting employment circumstances for an advocate:

- ♦ An assistant to a physician.
- ♦ An attendant at a spring-fed baths.
- ♦ A hostage-taker on a team of freelance blackmailers.
- ♦ A funeral mourner.

As you increase your  number you'll find yourself in increasingly higher status employment circumstances. Some possible future employment circumstances for an advocate:




- ♦ A harem guard.
- ♦ A ghost hunter.
- ♦ The personal assistant of a talented singer.




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THE ABOMASUM IS THE MINOTAUR'S "TRUE STOMACH." It applies acids to the digestion of solid food. A minotaur whose abomasum is dominant is a soldier. The soldier is a guardian and a doer within minotaur society.

To play a soldier minotaur you'll need a copy of the soldier minotaur sheet, and a starting set of tokens that looks like this:



Every minotaur archetype has different ways of refreshing , , and .

- ♦ A soldier minotaur refreshes his  when we see him commit to not using violence in addressing a specific upcoming situation.
- ♦ He refreshes his  when we see him make a choice on instinct and act on it, when the best choice isn't clear.
- ♦ And he refreshes his  when we see him say “yes” to a dangerous request when it's clear he'd rather say “no”.

Write a 0 in the blank for your  refresh. This is your  number. It will go up, and maybe down during play, but will never go below 0.

THE CLAY THAT WOKE — MINOTAUR SHEET

A SOLDIER MINOTAUR



These are my **courage** tokens.
As icons they look like 🗡️.

I refresh to four 🗡️ when we see me commit
to not using violence in addressing a specific
upcoming situation.

I have abiding gifts



These are my **mind** tokens.
As icons they look like 🧠.

I refresh to two 🧠 when we see me make
a choice on instinct and act on it, when
the best choice isn't clear.

I have essential gifts



These are my **name** tokens.
As icons they look like 🔥.

I can spend two 🔥 to ensure a gamemaster
character will be successful in a planned future
action for which no player minotaur will be
present.

I refresh to ____ 🔥 when we see me say "yes"
to a dangerous request when it's clear I'd
rather say "no". I also get 🔥 from several
Krater outcomes.

Silence

Be courageous. Act with
wisdom. Work for justice and
the social good. Do not use the
names of women. Do not want.
Do not express your emotions.



These are my **silence** tokens.
As icons they look like 🔥.

I get more 🔥 while I'm in the jungle.

I have broken silence



These are my **gift** tokens.
As icons they look like 📦.

I get more 📦 when I leave the jungle
and I've had a gift lost, destroyed, or expire
recently.



This is my **life** token.
As an icon it looks like 🧛.

I get my 🧛 back when the jungle comes for
me in the Dégringolade, or the Dégringolade
comes for me in the jungle.

You're a nameless minotaur and you start the game in dangerous or menial employment circumstances determined by your gamemaster. Some example starting employment circumstances for a soldier:

- ♦ Pulling a plow and planting and harvesting rice for a human family's rice farm.
- ♦ Pit fighting against other minotaurs, savage animals, or better-armed and -armored human men for the betting entertainment of men.
- ♦ Partner to a dangerous burglar.
- ♦ An employed mercenary.

Possible future employment circumstances, in somewhat increasing order of status:

- ♦ A household guard for a human family that can afford one.
- ♦ A palanquin bearer for the wife of a wealthy man or for a woman of significance.
- ♦ A known mercenary leader.

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IT WAS IN THE QUIETEST HOURS of my employment as a household guard for the estate of Saemauug Empyreus that I began to understand myself. Alone upon my section of wall and roof as the first rays of sun raced across the eastern sea, I was all but invisible. Dawn would sear its way over the ancient, crumbling architecture of the Dégringolade, over the woven rooftops, over the implacable stone faces, and into the living jungle. Only then would I see the watchers who had been my unseen companions the whole night.

A thousand years ago the Dégringolade was a dozen or more separate coastal city states. With unchecked prosperity and the kind of sweltering climate that deflates nationalistic dispositions, they grew together into one sprawling metropolis with a single common language and an improbable lack of central governance.

That era of greatness is past. The secret of making steel has been lost, and so we resort to bronze. We live in crumbling structures built by men long dead, and drape them with woven roofs to replace collapsed tile and stone. No one knows the meaning of the massive stone faces adorning towers throughout the city. And the jungle encroaches. As I stood watch—an hour before my spearhead would shine red-gold in the first light of the sun—the insects and small amphibians did my work for me. In the darkness a silence from the crickets and cicadas and clicking frogs would alert me to the presence of a threat well before my eyes could pick it out.

But when the sky began to lighten, then would the watchers and I have our audience to the spectacle of life.

First, the dung bats that had hunted the dark streets for insects returned to their fecal dens in the jungle's upper canopy. And below me, in the afteryard of the villa, the dancers gathered to practice in the pre-dawn.

Though the Saemauug Emphyreus had been dead for more than forty seasons, his estate remained. It was a cultural institution in Municipal Rhomoon before his passing and had only grown since. His talented wives were dancers and choreographers, singers and songwriters, musicians, actresses and playwrights. When one of them died the competition among young women to marry into the household was fierce. So the number of wives was maintained at exactly one hundred. And in the evenings people came to the estate from all around to see their theatrical and dance productions and musical performances.

As the dancers stretched and chatted and began to writhe through a practice of their coming performance, the birds of the jungle called to one another—and above this all stood the watchers, occasional stark, almost leafless trees rising above the jungle canopy. It was said the watchers would bloom again when the civilization below enters

a new age of greatness. As the sun warmed my hide I looked down across the streets and alleys of the Dégringolade, innumerable and stretching as far as the eye can see, my thoughts carried aloft by the avian chorus to the watchers, my kin. I too was a watcher of life.

My thoughts were broken by screams and a call of alarm from below. Distracted by the scene of a silver apeling trying to defend an armful of poached fruit from three motivated crows I had not seen the intruder who'd provoked the alarm drop into the courtyard from the far wall. A young woman herself, in a white veil and wearing white cesta, she had surprised one of the elder wives bathing in the estate's pond and proceeded to beat her brutally—a young woman who would teach me I was not a watcher at all.

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The old cities that coalesced geographically and culturally to become the Dégringolade had names like Lehekhes and Rhomoon and Khosthalush. Those names still remain as the names of neighborhoods and districts, but centuries of man and nature have made the ancient cities all but unrecognizable today to the Dégringolade's spirits and immortals. For a thousand years the neighborhood taxes and leadership of the empyrei promoted trade and the arts and kept the jungle at bay and the walls and streets and canals in repair, and the city was great like no other in the world. But this hasn't been the case now for generations. The jungle has penetrated the Dégringolade. Epiphytes are everywhere. Strangler figs and banyans sunder buildings and warp and shade the streets. When roofs or upper storeys collapse, they are replaced with thatch, or a lattice and vines. Streets that were once paved are now dirt, with the original stones scavenged for new construction or buried by flood sediment.

And the empyrei, though they still levy taxes and operate hyper-local governments and sometimes settle disputes their power is eroded and their glory tarnished. They are for ages now turned inward, into family politics, ruthlessness, and pettiness, an intrinsic reification of a culture unfavorable to its own rebirth.

The Clay That Woke is a traditional style roleplaying game in important ways. Players each have a single character, and never roleplay or decide the actions of other characters. The game is intended to be played campaign style, for a series of plot arcs over many play sessions, and the player minotaurs will advance in effectiveness and significance in the society of the Dégringolade during the course of play. And like most traditional roleplaying games *The Clay That Woke* is run by a gamemaster who creates and roleplays all the other characters and the situations that bring the world to life for the players.

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CULTURE IN THE DÉGRINGOLADE is characterized by subjective, self-serving ideas about justice, and strange beliefs about causality. So among the larger cast of characters the gamemaster creates should be three whose personalities and behaviors are informed by some combination of **quid pro quo thinking** and/or **weird beliefs**. Having such **intrinsic** characters active in the lives of the player minotaurs, even sometimes just tangentially, gives the world the right feel.

When you create intrinsics with quid pro quo thinking, make their planned actions motivated by jealousies or grudges, or by self-serving and subjective ideas of justice; make them problematic for acts of nepotism, or for self-justified decisions with effects that others have to deal with; or have shocking revelations of them committing unrespectable acts, which they rationalize. Quid pro quo thinking in



Empyreis are still sometimes relied upon for leadership and for resolving disputes when some stamp of authority seems necessary. Pakhrym Empyreus charges a small fee for her judicial services.

the Degriogolade is about the consequences you think others deserve, and how you rationalize to yourself that you don't deserve consequences for your actions.

Weird beliefs is mostly just belief in unlikely causality, like perhaps a belief that a road construction will lead to less childhood disease. For example, an intrinsic character I created with weird beliefs was Volaterra Empyreus, who believed he'd seen his doppelganger several times, and once saw it leaving his beloved wife's bedchamber. He believed if he could kill it through his own agency he would accrue health and power, because he'd heard a fable about a man having health, enduring youth, and uncommon physical and mystical talents after meeting and killing his own doppelganger on a nighttime swim.

So Volaterra framed his wife for a murder, so she would be arrested and he could dismiss all the household staff and set about trying to entrap his doppelganger. He had no idea how he would get his wife back afterwards, but had great faith that his new powers would enable him to get it done.

And like Volaterra your intrinsic characters should be more than their quid pro quo thinking and/or weird beliefs. They should have desires and hopes and aspirations. They should be full and complex characters in the decline of their culture.

And to be clear, the Dégringolade is a place of strangeness; someone with weird beliefs isn't always wrong.

სიჩუმე ან სიჩუმე

JUST THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO four infant minotaurs, a found species, all male, were pulled from the mud of the Vadhmrivier into the abeyance of the Dégringolade. No one knows where they came from. Untamed and troubled they didn't easily find a life in the society of men. Though now their descendants are a sixth of the population.

How? They achieved *silence*.

Over decades they developed a philosophy of life conduct: pursue justice and the social good; be courageous; act with wisdom; do not want; do not use the names of women. This is silence.

It enabled them to live well among men—although it is not an easy path. Human society employs them for menial and dangerous and brutal work. So, not surprisingly, they often fail to live up to the ideals of their philosophy. But they are determined.

Silence is contemplative. In an ancient and complex world it is how you understand the forces in play. When you have no power but your own mind and sinew, facing danger without complaining about it and acting with integrity are your only hope of making a better future.

To avoid using women's names minotaurs instead come up with descriptive nicknames: "Fiery Tresses," perhaps, or "She of the Shimmering Scarves." There are no female minotaurs, so nicknames are an effort to create distance from want. And if a minotaur does use a woman's real name it is a breaking of silence and the gamemaster will take a single 🎲 from him.



*Apatrula counsels silence to a friend who has
fallen in love with a married woman.*

The offspring of mating between minotaurs and human women are always male minotaurs. And though there's stigma, it's not just women with nothing to lose who've entered romantic relations with

minotaurs, but also lonely wives, rebellious daughters, and in fact, women of all circumstance for reasons of their own.

Though to actually marry, or otherwise publicly be the mate of a minotaur would take a dangerous personality—the woman would be seen as more than just herself shamed, but as a social offender.

A gamemaster will also take a 🐾 from a minotaur for expressing want. When a minotaur is driven by emotion to ask for something, like: "Let me be your champion for this challenge, Lord," or "I love you, Daliskhe, and this exile will break my heart," it is a breaking of silence.

An act of cowardice, or willful injustice, might also warrant the gamemaster taking a 🐾 from a minotaur. But when I run the game I usually ask what a player is thinking before taking one for such things. "Really? You know she confessed to her husband's crimes. You're going to let them stone her?" And then maybe the player's perspective convinces me not to take the token.

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THE WOMAN DUSAIA, whom I called Caledew, the one from the south, smiled and clutched the stolen bottle of wine to her chest. She stood in a doorway across the narrow alley from me. The storm had stopped and the sun was already back—afternoon thunderstorms during the later high season in Municipal Lehekesh were short lived—but it could take time for the wash of rainwater and detritus from the upper city to make its way down to the waterfront. When it came, you gave it the street.

The high season in Lehekesh is when the empyrei arrived. Families of them owned or rented houses. They hosted each other for late dinners, talked politics and arranged marriages. They hired palanquins to carry them down the steep streets and across the many lovely but treacherous root bridges to the docks, where merchants sold exotica

right from the decks of their barges. They fought duels by proxy. Last season I'd worked as a proxy duelist.

This season I worked carrying a palanquin, and Dusaia had become my regular partner. Most of us were minotaurs, but there were a few men. Dusaia was the only woman.

Each day before dawn we left the overgrown and partly collapsed colonnade Rhespugan Empyreus rented for the night storage of his palanquins, heading to finer neighborhoods. We worked all day and late into the evening, carrying over two dozen passengers in that time; to the baths, to the docks, to parties and dinners; throughout all of Lehekhes. But not this day. Dusaia and I had hidden our palanquin and then spent the morning among banyans, gasping, and grappling, and bringing each other to trembling sexual release. Ultimately she'd fallen to exhausted sleep on my lap.

I had never met a woman her equal. Day and night I gloried at her skin—a sun-burnished brown—and the sinew that shaped it. Sweat was the story of the work we did; it traveled upon her as we traveled upon the paths of Lehekhes. And there was a world of erudition and wonder in her like that of a primal god.

On this day, after waking among the banyans, we used the afternoon storm as cover for our theft of a young wine, passing the bottle back and forth as we wandered the streets, cherishing our easy friendship. We visited the Tower of Heroes, clothed in its flowered vines, but it was still too early. Later, when the sun set, the streets would be crowded with people hoping to see the spirits of heroes reenact their great triumphs. We watched the Tower's caretaker tend the vines for a while. His elaborate butterfly tattoos were very beautiful. Dusaia stole a man's small purse so we'd have seeds for Rhespugan Empyreus.

Along the river, we came upon the funeral celebration for an Empyreus. He lay upon an unlit pyre, women whirling around him.

The sitar player, a minotaur, told us what was happening. The deceased was Kwiehmo, the son of an Empyreus named Ontethrukh, who had escaped a secret prison with a list of names of other empyrei inmates and organized a rescue operation; it's a famous event in recent history. The sitar played a winding, extended theme. The last dancer standing earned the right to apply a special beetle to Kwiehmo's scrotum to extract his semen for her own use, and then light the pyre.

"Do you want to try?" I asked Dusaia.

A strange expression came over her face, which I did not understand. Her voice lost the easy fun of our conversations from earlier in the day.

"I do not want his semen," she said.

Later, Dusaia and I sat together against a great exposed earthroot at the river, looking up at the stars, and she told me a story of her country.

"The people had risen up and formed a Parliament of Commons," she said. "The royal family was killed by treachery. Only the prince Dima and his sister escaped, traveling northward in hopes of finding a powerful entity who had been a teacher and mentor to one of their ancestors. They hoped for its help restoring them to their rightful place. They never expected to find a vast civilization."

The two escaped siblings were only teenagers. Dusaia told of harrowing events they experienced before they lost hope and became separated.

She was silent for a while after the story. Then she reached among the fullness of her untamed hair and un-knotted two of the carved metal beads she wore.

“In my country we use bead cylinders like these to sign our names. They are carved with symbols that represent us. We put a little colored paint on them and press them to whatever we’re signing.”

She tied the two cylinders into my hair. And my heart was pounding, but I didn’t know why.

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THE KRATER OF LOTS is a small, polished bowl carved from the wood of a fallen watcher. It has a short inward lip and is eternally clouded with mist as if it harbors the atmosphere of a primal rainforest. It is used with the game’s tokens as an oracle in circumstances called **inflections**, and also when a minotaur finds himself with no 🐉 left in his supply, to inform how events play out.

When the gamemaster removes a minotaur’s last 🐉 for breaking silence, or when a minotaur plays his last one into the Krater during an inflection and it isn’t returned to him, leaving him with no 🐉 in his supply, he enters an animal state of lost self-control; lathered and frantic he breaks for the jungle, likely leaving some destruction in his wake.

If he passes near other minotaurs, they must each test their own silence or be swept up in the same frantic state and join the same uncontrolled run for the jungle. In this way a minotaur who has 🐉 in his supply may still find himself in the jungle.

A minotaur tests his silence by a special consultation of the Krater. He places all of his 🐉 and 🐉 in the Krater and draws out just one. If it’s a 🐉, he goes frantic and breaks for the jungle on the heels of the minotaur who activated him. If it’s a 🐉 he keeps control of his actions. In either case, all 🐉 and 🐉 are returned to his supply.

The frantic state is very dangerous, with children and people sometimes trampled or gored. Human society accepts no excuse for

it, and men will try to kill a frantic minotaur. So minotaurs are careful about their silence. Those who feel their silence is low will sometimes go to the jungle in groups, proactive to going frantic, to restore themselves.

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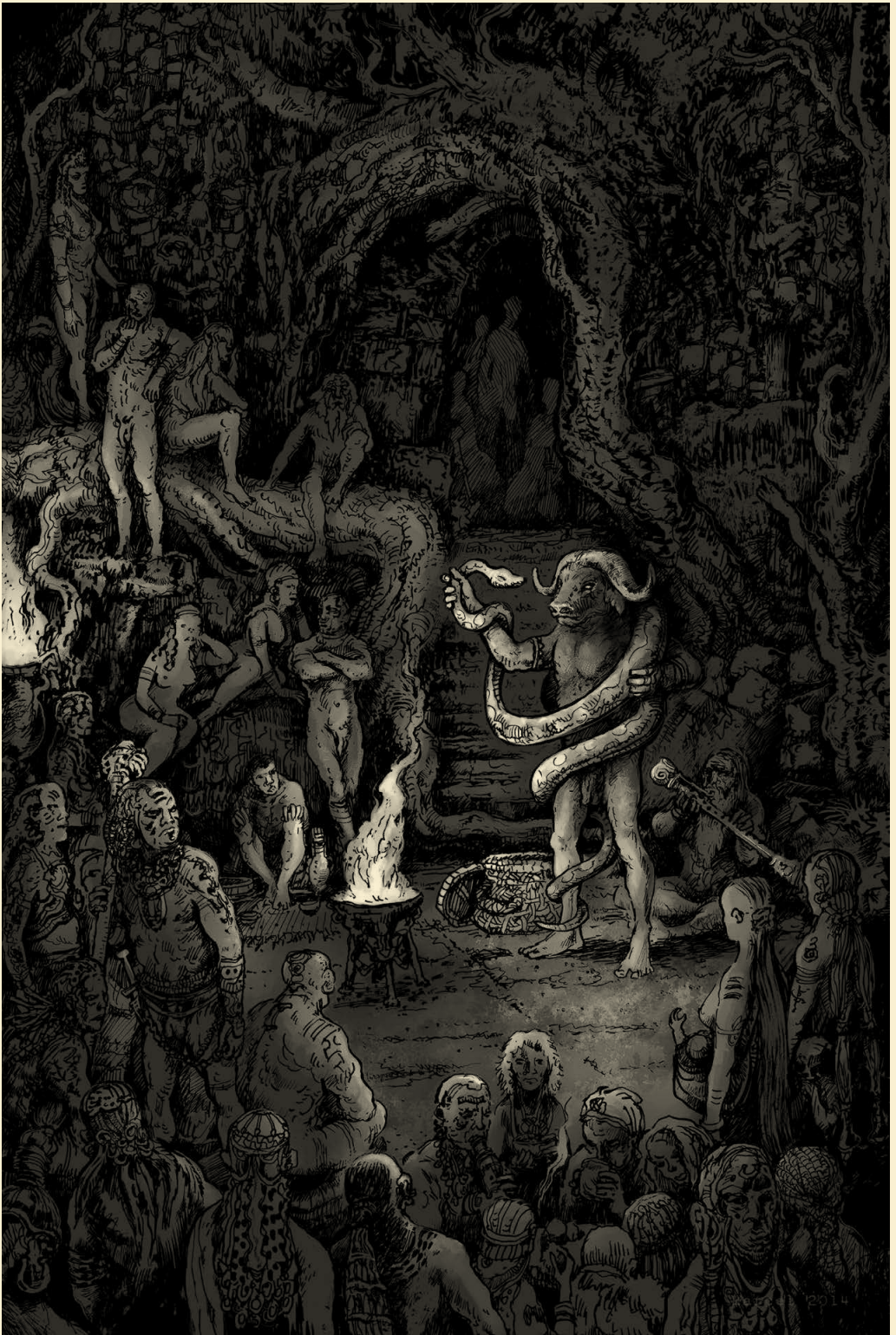
SEVERAL WEEKS LATER there was an accident. One of the carriers stumbled in the rain on an uneven path along a slope of weepfruit erosion, and lost his grip on the palanquin. It fell, and rolled splintering downslope. The passenger suffered a broken leg, and broken ribs.

The next morning Rhespugan Empyreus, with one less palanquin to rent, rid himself of two employees. He fired the minotaur who'd stumbled, and with a vague comment about passengers not feeling at ease with a female carrier, he fired Dusaia.

Her eyes reddened, but she didn't cry. Her lip curled in contempt, but she said nothing. She looked at me for a long minute, and then turned and walked away. For a moment I thought of going after her, but probably she didn't want anyone around.

The day was long, working with the minotaur whose partner had been fired. I was eager to be done, and to find Dusaia. But when I did it was a mess. The sun was long gone and carriers and various other hangers-on were sprawled around the regular campfire in the yard next to the colonnade. Dusaia lay alongside a swarthy, handsome slug eater named Pu'da, who sometimes did paint detailing on palanquins or for boat owners or signage for shopkeepers, but who mostly just got fried and loafed around.

The slugs were a favorite drug of the wealthy, and a complicated addiction. You had to cultivate an environment for them, a damp garden of specific plants, and waged a constant battle against roaches and fungus bringing ruin to the careful ecology. You never took the



A nameless minotaur working as a snake entertainer.

drug alone, only with other connoisseurs. You “hunted” the underbrush of your small garden with a tiny fork and small silver tray. Your goal was a slightly injured slug, arching and twisting upon the tray—an uninjured or too injured slug remained still. Then, pinning the rampant slug with your fork, you used a tiny knife to cut it open and remove the “emerald necklace”—actually a portion of the gut—that contained the most exquisite, active, and powerful concentration of the drug. This went to the guest of honor or the senior person present, who swallowed it whole. The rest of the animal was cut into thin strips with the knife, spiced and rolled in fresh green *irrlhu* leaves, and delicately consumed.

Dusaia was with Pu'da, but her gaze through the campfire was on me, and it flayed me. I wanted to talk to her, but she was with him. He had a handsome smile he used to advantage in campfire conversation. I wondered how he did not see her destroying me. After a time he took her away into the darkness and I heard their sex.

The next morning they were gone.

I would be burned again and again by the fire of her stare in my sleep. Years later I recognized the message in it. “Why didn’t you defend me?”

Q 272c

THE JUNGLE THAT VERGES and infixes the Dégringolade is home to unthinkable dangers. Though to minotaurs it is restorative and furthering, within it they will be hunted by large and also inscrutable predators, on the trails, in the swamps, and in the trees. They will be challenged by insects, diseases, and treacherous natural hazards and supernatural beings. They will encounter groups of men and maybe a few minotaurs fighting a strange war that factions on neither side

seem to understand. The Dégringolade has no name for the jungle, but the externals call it Pujrbith, which means “madness.”

It is a dense, sweltering monsoon jungle. At ground level is a loose underbrush of shrubs, ferns, some deadfalls, and leafy and flowering plants, cut by occasional streams, rivers, and trails. Just overhead it's more open; there are taller shrubs, the crowns of smaller trees, some vines and epiphytes. Higher still is a dense canopy of tree crowns, vines, strangling figs, and epiphytes at a height of 40-55 cubits. And finally, the top of the jungle is a sparse upper canopy of isolated emergent deciduous trees that thrust upward to 100-130 cubits. The trees of this upper canopy, the watchers, are known to be sentient and keen to the turnings of man.

Many trees and plants in the jungle produce few, but impressive seeds that are large and dense with stored nutrient energy. These seeds, and artful duplicates of them made of precious metals are the natural coinage of human commerce in the Dégringolade and in the jungle's shadow. And they are effective travel rations and a powerful and culturally significant foodstuff.

The amity is a river fish that gathers seeds which have fallen into the water. By rubbing against the seeds it pushes them into pockets under its skin. And when it needs to it can flood the pockets with acids that quickly dissolve the seeds for energy that can be used for a burst of speed to flee predators. Amities are a prized food. There's a tradition of preparing them when a human and minotaur will express respect and friendship by dining together, as the dish will have elements digestible by both.

Other seeds have unnatural properties. There is an ambulatory plant in the jungle that looks like a large stag. Its “antlers” are its exposed roots. Its “fur” is leaves like pine needles. It moves around, rustling, looking for a place to plant its roots in the ground, selecting nutrient rich soil, often where a corpse might be buried and decaying



Marcel 2013

Minotaurs in the jungle are surprised by a terrifying root god.

below. In encounters it will aggressively try to drive its “antlers” into living creatures, and is sometimes seen with the food source of a decaying corpse in its rack.

It produces rare seeds in its “belly fur,” storing in each one the personality of a dead person it consumed while forming the seed. If you eat one of these rare seeds your brain then plays host to the personality of the stored person for as long as the seed persists in your digestive system. The personality doesn’t take over; it just communicates and tries to influence you. And it knows things. These seeds are highly valued in the Dégringolade as a form of edgy entertainment.

Another jungle creature is the lentic lion. It is a great fishbelly white and fleshy eel-like creature with an enormous symbiotic seaweed ruff. During the day they float just under the surface of a stagnant lake with their “manes” spread out, sluggish and torpid, performing photosynthesis. This is when you might hunt them, for their flesh is considered a delicacy. So you go out onto the lake in your piragua and try to find the body of one among the seaweed and the manes. You try to cut it free of its mane quickly, without disturbing its torpor and pull it into your boat. If you fail it will shake its mane, and the others nearby will shake theirs as well. This will throw up the slugs that live on the manes, and the poisonous slime of the slugs will numb you, and maybe narcotize you enough that you can’t fight back and are easily devoured by even the still mostly torpid lions. Don’t even attempt to hunt them at night, as then they are ferocious and not at all torpid or sluggish.

The jungle is also the battlefield of a strange war, the *Everwar*, that groups of men, and some minotaurs have been waging for hundreds of years. No one knows how it started. A physician of the Dégringolade who was helping refugees went to war to try to end it by fighting his way to the top. He now believes the war is run by generals who’ve

lost their names, and fights the war to lose his name. Then, he believes he will be among the movers of the war, and can end it.

Its battles are sometimes abrupt, unprovoked, and surreal. There is a big insect called the urwicga that has been domesticated as a war mount. It has a ruddy brown carapace, membraneous wings, and terrifying, powerful hind forceps pincers that can clip off a man's limbs, sever his head, or sometimes, cut him in half. If you are an urwicga "rider," it stings you and ingests you and you can control it from the inside with your mind, see through its eyes, and flit from tree to tree waging war as your body lies torpid in its stomach. You can eject any time, but you emerge torpid. And if you're a long time pilot your skin turns somewhat translucent from the digestive juices of the thing.

טוֹכְרֵסֶרֶס סוֹחֵרִיף

SO WHENEVER, IN THE JUNGLE or in the Dégringolade, a minotaur finds himself in a dangerous situation, violent conflict with a beast or one of the gamemaster's characters, unnatural encounter, or interpersonal disagreement with one of the gamemaster's characters, it's called an *inflection*, and you'll use the Krater of Lots to inform how the situation plays out. But when you use the Krater for an inflection in the jungle, because the dangerous drama of vulnerability and peril in the jungle specifically is somehow restorative to minotaurs, every player minotaur in the situation of the inflection is given a 🌀 into his supply by the gamemaster. So when a player minotaur clashes in the jungle with a huge, mouldy bat creature under an overgrown bridge hanging with moss, or when his worst injuries are unexpectedly healed by naked, burrowing vermin that lick his wounds clean, or when he counsels a lost, semi-translucent minotaur who's in love with the woman urwicga pilot who trained him, somehow he's restored to some of his silence.

It is this effect of peradventure and peril in the jungle that enables his return to business in the Dégringolade.

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ANOTHER THING THAT WILL HAPPEN in the jungle is encounters with externals, and with the Voices. When minotaurs find themselves in the heart of an inflection—a dangerous situation, violent conflict, unnatural encounter, or interpersonal disagreement with one of the gamemaster’s characters, either in the jungle or the Dégringolade—a player minotaur draws tokens from the Krater of Lots from a mix contributed by himself and the gamemaster, to inform the outcome of the situation. Ordinarily the gamemaster’s contribution to the Krater is limited to **no** 🖐 tokens and **skull** 🦴 tokens. But when Voices or the gamemaster’s intrinsic characters are in the situation of the inflection, and externals are always intrinsic characters, the gamemaster will contribute other tokens too.

The externals are a fierce strain of humanity in the jungle who paint themselves with a burnt orange colored paint made from certain seeds. They’re always intrinsics, so they always have weird and quid pro quo beliefs. And they’re liars. They lie because they don’t trust language or the motives of those who use it. But they’re human. They fall in love. They have hopes and dreams. And they hate the Everwar and fight fiercely against both sides. In some ways they’re the ultimate revolutionaries, impassioned and pathological, gorgeous and vigorous. It’s said they’re the descendants of young men and women of the Dégringolade who escaped from a military reform school in the jungle a hundred years ago. And the seed paint, when freshly applied, gives them enhanced endurance, faster reaction time, and sexual energy.

When an intrinsic character with weird beliefs, an external perhaps, is in the situation of an inflection, the gamemaster will put a 🧠 into

the Krater along with his contribution of 🖐️ and/or 🧠 tokens. When an intrinsic with quid pro quo thinking, but without weird beliefs is present, so probably not an external unless you don't think their lying and distrust of language isn't weird, the gamemaster will put a 🧡 into the Krater along with his contribution of 🖐️ and/or 🧠 tokens.

The Voices are three supernatural entities in the jungle that are known to take an interest in minotaurs. They can speak ambiently and you can know their presence by effects in the environment. They are known to inhabit men and other creatures. They each have their own specific token and they're all insane.

The Red Voice's token depicts a throbbing red sunrise over the jungle. It looks like this:



The Red Voice is known by either an uncommon amount of red in the environment, as red flowers, red birds, or red insects, or by red where you wouldn't expect it, perhaps as someone with glowing red eyes. The Red Voice is arrogant. It gives unsolicited advice. It tells you you're not good enough. It tells you how to live your life. It sometimes orchestrates encounters it wants you to have. But the Red Voice also sometimes gives aid when you need it, and then it almost feels like it cares. In running *The Clay That Woke* myself I have seen it as a herd of naked, red-eyed vermin, lick and heal the wounds of a grievously injured minotaur, and as a woman with wild red hair in the jungle, an

escapee from an abusive marriage wanting revenge on her father for arranging it.

The Bright Voice's token depicts the glare of an unforgiving sun through the trees. It looks like this:



The Bright Voice is known by brightness in the environment; commonly by glaring, radiant beams of light punching through the jungle canopy and reflecting from metallic surfaces, light colored objects, and from the surface of the river. Some say it is a megalomaniac, but myself I've only seen occasional flights of grandiosity. In running *The Clay That Woke* I've seen it as a man always lost within radiant light that an unscrupulous herbalist planned to sedate as a light source for growing immortality herbs, and as a possessor spirit who won the love of a lonely widow while inhabiting a man who had betrayed his best friend into prison for money.

The Still Voice's token depicts a miasma of stillness in the jungle. It looks like this:



The Still Voice is known by utter stillness and silence; the breeze and water are still, and there is no sound of birds or insects. It is fond of inhabiting jungle raptors, which then fly completely silently. It is very soft spoken when it uses its voice. And it is suicidal. It will inhabit a human or minotaur as a way of associating with player minotaurs, influence them to take specific actions, dangerous actions, and then in the heat of things it becomes clear that it's committed to dying or killing itself in an exotic or dramatic way. In play as a possessor spirit I've seen it provoke an attack by externals and grin and then announce to its minotaur companions, "We shall die gloriously!" And along the banks of an utterly still river, as a thin mist crawled and twisted over the smooth mud and the surface of the river, as a boy plastered in mud I've seen it challenge a minotaur, "What is the most important thing you've ever done?"

All of the Voices are manipulative and might claim to know great secrets, like the nature of the watchers, or the politics of the Everwar. They might claim to know how the original four minotaurs came to be in the river mud, or to have personally known the Progenitaur. The Voices are difficult godlings, indeed often infuriating, but they're also givers of great *gifts*. When a Voice's token is in the Krater for an inflection it may play out that a minotaur receives a gift. And without the Voices and their strange enterprises and without the externals and their fervour the jungle would be just a disconnected series of natural and unnatural dangers and deadly beasts.

So as gamemaster you should use them early and often. Seriously consider using the Everwar or externals at some point for an encounter during the very first player minotaur excursion into the jungle, and absolutely use a Voice for the second or third encounter in that first excursion.

I SHOULD HAVE enjoyed my view of the gala. That evening the remains of Saemauug Empyreus would take a new bride, replacing a wife who'd passed the previous year. Hundreds of girls had pursued the opportunity in months of talent competitions, judged by the elder wives and voted on by the audience, all leading up to a glorious and emotional night when the other ninety-nine wives performed for Saemauug and his wife-to-be and the union was made. Instead, I stewed in my own thoughts.

"Do you know of the Hecatomb?" he had asked.

Ciclatoun, one of the other roof guards, had come to me for a favor. "It is this evening."

With the remaining stubby fingers of his burned left hand he lit a green, hand-rolled cigar from the one already smoldering in his mouth and offered it to me. Making and smoking the things was a fetish from his military years.

"Don't ask me," I said.

"What?" he smiled. "You wound me."

"The Hecatomb!? A herd of minotaurs breaking silence at the same time? That's not a recipe for disaster!? And it is an insult to everything our ancestors aspired to."

Adherents of the Hecatomb believed by sacrificing themselves they could compel the Red Voice to do something for them. Tonight a sprawling herd of them would gather in the river and let blood from their veins until the flow ran red.



The Bright Voice as a swarm of winged insects gives Khaph the power to see when a human is lying to him.

“We mean to put an end to the Everwar,” he said. “Will you cover for me?”

“You cannot ask me. Even asking me is a breaking of silence. I will not.”

“Is it?” He locked my gaze. “You will.” He flicked the butt of his cigar down over the outer wall. It trailed a thin line of white smoke into the lumiflora. I watched his long urwicga scar—another legacy of years in the Everwar—move and twist over the muscle in his back as he walked away.

Now I had the best seat in the house and couldn’t enjoy the festivities. I paced along my section of wall and did not notice the woman with the white cesta, the one people now call Veil and Fist, until she had already cut me.

Gak.

The needle blade of her bronze poisoning dagger sliced neatly across the skin of my throat, paralyzing my vocal cords before I could even shout an alarm. She watched as I clutched my throat, my eyes bulging, then collapsed at her feet.

She sat herself at the edge of the roof to watch the celebration below, and after a time started to talk.

“You don’t know what happens here, do you? The senior wives preserve the younger wives from full womanhood by feeding them something cut from male corpses. It fixes them in the talents of youth. No breasts, no pubic hair, but their never tempered emotions reach out through their art and make us feel life like we haven’t in years. And it makes them doubtful, earnest, easily manipulated, and not capable of expressing their own identities as artists. The senior wives write the songs and ballets and operas. The younger wives bleed for them.

“Let me tell you about the wife who’s being replaced today. Her name was Erclea. The thing they were feeding her comes from an apothecary named Feru. Erclea stopped taking it. And they were brutal to her, the senior wives and the younger wives they enlisted in the brutality. She started to develop pubic hair. ‘Clearly you didn’t want it,’ they told her. ‘You’re throwing away your talent.’ She wanted to be a woman. To love like a woman. To have breasts and a lover. But she killed herself.

“So here’s what’s going to happen tonight.” She unfolded a dark, oily leaf to show me the large seed wrapped within.

Below, the bones of Saemauug Empyreus, assembled and ornamented with clay and metal joints and musculature and a large clay phallus, and stylized with a dozen garish colors of paint, sat in the place of senior honor next to the twelve-year-old wife to-be. Within arm’s reach was a small table with dishes holding several delicacies for the nuptial couple to share. Before them the ninety-nine wives would perform in turn. When the new wife tasted her third delicacy, the union would be made and the celebration would turn raucous. But she would hold off, prolonging the night of performance as long as she could.

“It is of the stag,” said Veil and Fist. “It contains the spirit of a prior wife, one who knew how the senior wives forestall the womanhood of the others. I have roasted it in light oil and will slip it onto one of the plates near the girl. She will consume it, have her eyes opened to the life in store for her in this house, and can decide for herself if she wouldn’t rather have a different life elsewhere.”

At that, she seemed to take a keener notice of my state, at my grimace of distress and trembling, sweat-soaked hide. “You are big. There wasn’t enough poison in that scratch to kill you.” She gripped



Pieo must defeat two opponents to advance to the semi-finals of the Tournament of Songs.

my calf to reassure me. "But I have to go." And then she slipped silently down into the yard below.

I watched the stars turn in the sky above. I watched it lighten as dawn approached. No one came looking for me. The activity of the house was consumed by a search for the new wife. She and her family—her ridiculously over-protective father—seem to have disappeared in the night.

I lay on the roof for many hours. A magpie took an interest, and went to work on my hair, ultimately fretting out and carrying away both of Dusaia's cylinders.

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THE KRATER OF LOTS is an oracle you use in *The Clay That Woke* to inform how you play out certain situations. As a player you're mostly just saying what your minotaur says and does and maintaining shared imagination and enthusiasm with the play group by talking out-of-character. But during this you and the gamemaster are also paying attention for four types of situations occurring in the storylines of the minotaurs and then using the Krater when players in one of them get to a point of uneven or uncertain creative momentum.

The four types of situations are called *inflections*. They are: dangerous situations, violent conflicts with beasts or with the gamemaster's characters, unnatural encounters, and interpersonal disagreements with the gamemaster's characters.

A dangerous situation is anything from being caught in a deadly mudslide, to trying to leap a gorge, to entering an area of known contagion. Basically, if there's drama in a situation because a player minotaur might end up dead or suffer physical harm, and it's not because of conflict with a person or beast, then that's a dangerous situation.

A violent conflict inflection is anything from an attack by big jungle lizards, to a player minotaur attempting to lure a wary external into a pit trap, to a deadly battle against a human gladiator before an arena of spectators. Basically, if there's fighting or attacking between a player minotaur and a beast or one of the gamemaster's characters, it's a violent conflict.

It should be noted that you never use the Krater for violent conflicts or disagreements between player minotaurs. Other factors will determine the outcomes of those situations.

An unnatural encounter is when player minotaurs interact with inscrutable, unnatural entities. They may be of unknown intelligence and purpose, such as will-o'-the-wisps, or of superior intellect and astonishing power, such as the Voices. The key is just that some supernatural entity of unknown power and motives is present in a situation involving a player minotaur—no danger or conflict necessary.






Note also that the world of *The Clay That Woke* is populated by occasional strange and unique individuals who may or may not be fully human and unnatural organisms who may or may not have intelligent motives. Beyond the Voices it is up to the gamemaster whether any of these beings is supernatural and possessed of intelligent, if inscrutable motives—whether an encounter is an “unnatural” encounter and involves a Krater draw.

An interpersonal disagreement inflection is a conversational disagreement between a player minotaur and one of the gamemaster's characters over a future course of action. Conversational disagreements over perceptions or past actions aren't interpersonal disagreement inflections and are roleplayed without use of the Krater. The Krater may say that someone's beliefs or perceptions are changed, but the change won't start from an argument about beliefs or perceptions, only from a disagreement about future action.











And also don't force situations another roleplaying game might use its resolution mechanics for into these situation types. Healing a minotaur you encounter in the jungle, gasping with two arrows in his chest isn't an interpersonal disagreement or something, and doesn't require a Krater draw if a player minotaur decides it's what he's doing.

Then once you've recognized an inflection situation you need to determine when to use the Krater. What you're looking for is a point of unevenness or uncertainty in the creative momentum of the players in the inflection. Sometimes you may use the Krater right away. If you recognize a violent conflict from an abrupt attack by gheanas, or a dangerous situation when a rotten bridge collapses under you, then maybe there's already a lot of uncertainty about how things will play out and you use the Krater right away. But generally you should let yourselves get into the situation a bit. Roleplay into your interpersonal disagreements and unnatural encounters; and in physical situations, even an abrupt attack by gheanas, you can do a little positioning, strike a few blows, and play out the early encounter before things are truly uncertain enough that you need the Krater.

You know you're using it too soon if your situations don't feel dramatic; it's a cue that you should push yourselves further. Remember the first scene in the story where they're fighting the two scourge? Probably if I'm running the game there was no actual Krater draw until the narrator was pulling on the second scourge, trying to keep the other minotaur from being drowned.

When it's time for the Krater the gamemaster thinks about the situation of the inflection and primes it by secretly putting into it some combination of no  and/or skull  tokens, Red, Still, and/or Bright Voice  tokens when the specific Voices are present, a silence  token for any intrinsic character in the situation with weird beliefs, and a courage  token for any intrinsic in the situation with quid pro quo thinking, but without weird beliefs. Then it's sometimes fun


to shake the Krater a bit to give players a sense for how many tokens you've primed it with.

Your supply of  and  tokens is theoretically unlimited, but in practice you probably don't want to prime the Krater with more than six or so of either type. The number of  and/or  tokens you prime the Krater with should reflect your measure of how outmatched the player minotaur at the heart of the inflection is by the forces active in the situation. So fairly often you'll find yourself priming the Krater with one or two  or  tokens. Priming with more than four of either type would indicate a minotaur may be seriously outmatched. If the situation might result in physical harm, your priming should include some number of . If physical harm is improbable, then  should not be included. Priming with both  and  tokens could reflect a social disagreement which might turn unexpectedly violent, or a player minotaur's possibility of talking his way out of an already violent situation, but makes it harder on players than priming with just one type, and more likely results in unfavorable outcomes. Do it infrequently.

It should be obvious from roleplaying prior to using the Krater which of the player minotaurs is at the heart of the inflection. It is this player minotaur who will be drawing from the Krater. If it is not obvious, the gamemaster should make it explicit. Then, without inspecting what's inside the Krater, this minotaur may add any tokens from his supply to it. And whereas the gamemaster's priming of the Krater should reflect the situation of the inflection, the player minotaur's subsequent token contribution is unconnected to any actions he may have taken, and is wholly about aiming for desired outcomes. Then any other players whose minotaurs are present in the situation may add tokens to the Krater from their supplies if they wish. Generally they do this by offering specific tokens to the player













Now would be a good time to consult the Krater of Lots.









who will draw. "What are you going for? I can put in ?" And the drawing player accepts or rejects these offers.



The gamemaster should make sure the tokens are well mixed; then the drawing player reaches into its concealing mist and pulls out four at random. If there are fewer than four tokens in the Krater the player draws them all.



The player then works down the menu of outcomes looking for a match to the drawn combination of tokens. Not all outcomes will use the full set of drawn tokens. If the icon for a token type on the menu is grey, then the token is used if you have it in your draw. But you fully satisfy the outcome even if you only have tokens in your draw for the black icons. Then if you have tokens you drew that weren't used to satisfy an outcome you work down the menu with them to see if you satisfy one or more additional outcomes.

So, for example, if you draw , then you work down the menu of outcomes and find the first one you satisfy is "You act with physical confidence or skill for a dramatic outcome in your favor." You match it using all four of your tokens. But what if the fourth token you drew was a  instead? Well, you still match that physical confidence outcome, because the fourth  in it is grey, so you can match the outcome with just . And then you keep going down the menu with only your remaining , to see if you match an additional outcome. And you do, "A momentary delay as you and the opposition learn to respect each other."


In practice you probably show your drawn tokens to the group and everyone has fun figuring out what they indicate against their own copy of the menu.

And any outcome that says "treat as" means just for matching for the current Krater's outcomes. So if you draw , the first one you satisfy, with your , is "Treat these multiple  as a single .

 And then continuing down the menu with your 

and that “single ” and you match “Your cleverness brings an outcome in your favor, and get a .

Note that you’ll sometimes get to the bottom of the menu with one or more tokens that don’t contribute to matching an outcome. This usually happens after you’ve matched one with a couple of tokens and you’re trying to match what you have left to see if another one is also indicated. If one of these unmatched tokens is being treated as another type of token, take them through the menu a second time to see if you match something. But if not, don’t worry about it. The Krater can make its intentions known even without matching all four tokens. Though if you find you’ve drawn a combination of tokens that doesn’t match even a single outcome, then the outcome is a **foreshadowing**, which I’ll explain shortly. But usually you match at least one outcome.

The drawing minotaur assigns the individual outcomes indicated by the Krater to himself and/or to other player minotaurs who contributed tokens to it for the draw, or optionally also to gamemaster characters present in the situation, including gamemaster characters who might be considered opposition. However, if the drawing minotaur wishes to assign an unfavorable outcome to a gamemaster character he must give a  from his supply to the gamemaster’s set and roleplay some discreditable action on his part that contributes to how the outcome plays out.

When it’s clear to everyone how the outcomes are allocated to the characters everyone returns to roleplaying, aiming to collectively satisfy them with their actions. To be clear, you don’t negotiate how the outcomes will be satisfied. You don’t discuss possibilities or options at all. You just return to roleplaying, and informed by the outcomes and how they’re allocated you try to give each other what you need to satisfy them. Usually things fall together without trouble, but sometimes it takes a little back and forth before a player sees an

MENU OF KRATER OUTCOMES



Treat these multiple 6 as a single 6.



Treat the token as a 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10, your choice, and if appropriate, one of your abiding or essential gifts is involved in how things play out.



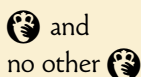
A possible truth.



A truth.



Your efforts change the mind of the opposition.



Treat as a 4 if you had no 4 in your supply prior to this inflection.



You act with physical confidence or skill for a dramatic outcome in your favor and get a 6 token left in the Krater

You act with physical confidence or skill for a dramatic outcome in your favor and get a 6.



You act with physical confidence or skill for a dramatic outcome in your favor.




A likely threat or opposition ducks out or doesn't materialize.



Your cleverness brings an outcome in your favor, and get a 9.




Your cleverness brings an outcome in your favor, and get a .



You come to a compromise with the opposition.




An abiding gift and a .




You are harmed directly or from betrayal by a Voice.





If you had no  in your supply prior to the inflection, then death; otherwise your caution, fear, inability, or self-doubt brings an unfavorable outcome.



The outcome is humiliating, decrease your  number by one.



and no .

You are reckless, decrease your  number by one.




One of your abiding gifts becomes an essential gift.



A momentary delay as you and the opposition learn to respect each other.



Treat as a  if you've been impressive in a dangerous or contentious inflection recently; otherwise you sustain a grievous or permanent injury.



You make a dramatic mistake, an error.

Treat these multiple 🌀 as a single 🌀.

Our endeavors are most fragile when we over rely on often fickle gifts and not our native capacities.

Treat the token as a 🌀, 🌀, 🌀, 🌀, or 🌀, your choice, and if appropriate, one of your abiding or essential gifts is involved in how things play out.

The favored often find they have options.

A truth

As followers of silence we know the world will reveal its secrets if we're open to them and attentive. Sometimes one of the gamemaster's characters will trust or confide in us. Sometimes the gamemaster will just tell us of a truth we've perceived about people we're with. "There's something about the way she says his name. You know she just lied and she really is having an affair with her half-brother." Sometimes he will tell us something of the workings of the world or the wider doings of men, women, or other entities that have affected us.

"The young, second wife of the Governor of the Market in Municipal Kantairon has drugged and abducted him, and is on the run, and will hide on your barge tonight if you leave it dark."

"If you pass through the Gate of Bari-Ein with an unrecognized enemy, the reliefs may warn you of the danger."



A possible truth.

When the outcome is a truth, we know what the gamemaster reveals is true. When it's a possible truth, what the gamemaster reveals is still true probably half the time.

Your efforts change the mind of the opposition.

When our aspirations or needs are at odds with those of others we don't often find reasons to change our important views to theirs or align ourselves with their interests. But in this case the efforts of a player minotaur do persuade or activate a favorable change in the mind of one of the gamemaster's characters.


And yes, it could roleplay out as a change to an intrinsic character's weird beliefs or quid pro quo thinking. If it happens the character no longer qualifies as an intrinsic then they're no longer an intrinsic, and the gamemaster should just create a new intrinsic character so there are always at least three active in the lives of the player minotaurs in some way.

Treat as a  if you had no  in your supply prior to this inflection.

It is clarity that sustains us when we're most committed.

You act with physical confidence or skill for a dramatic outcome in your favor.

Whether a turn of events is favorable or unfavorable depends on our immediate goals and circumstances and our broader aspirations. The Krater knows it can rely on our collective awareness of these things when it specifies that an inflection should play out in our favor, and that we can naturally and collectively roleplay to a right and dramatic outcome without needing to negotiate or script our actions.

You act with physical confidence or skill for a dramatic outcome in your favor, and get a .

Sometimes when our abilities and actions are strong and committed in turning events in our favor it changes how the world sees us. The Krater knows we can perceive the world's reappraisal when our doings have risen to this level.



Amateus tells his friend Eqa-pilloc that his employer's decisions are cruel and blundering lately because he ate unreal urge-flesh.

A likely threat or opposition ducks out or doesn't materialize.

Survival in this world requires a keen intuition about forces that may threaten our lives or efforts. The Krater knows it can rely on us to know which of the landscape of our immediate threats will give us a reprieve in the current inflection.

Your cleverness brings an outcome in your favor, and get a 🖐️.

Sometimes it's our cleverness or forethought that turns events in our favor and, whether the opposition is dangerous or only difficult, this always changes how the world sees us.

You come to a compromise with the opposition.

It becomes clear a half loaf of bread is better than no bread.

An abiding gift and a 🌀.


Sometimes an inflection involving a Voice will result in a minotaur taking an abiding gift—some unusually useful and rare object or new unnatural ability, either bestowed directly by the Voice, or claimed or discovered somehow in the play-out of events.

For example, a minotaur finds himself confronting a massive predatory beast with the fighting ally of another strange minotaur with glowing red eyes—a minotaur possessed by the Red Voice. The player's draw from the Krater is 🖐️👁️🌀👁️. So as the two minotaurs give ground to the predator the possessed one calls to the player minotaur to throw over the carpenter's adze he carries as a weapon. And he does. And when the possessed minotaur catches it the bronze head starts glowing red and spins loosely on the shaft, twisting and spinning out into heavy barbed metal flails. The possessed minotaur wields the new weapon to smite the predator and drive it off when the beast gets the better of the player minotaur and injures him roughly. And then the metal flails wrap themselves back onto the shaft of the weapon.

As the possessed minotaur leaves the clearing he hands the metal shod cudgel to the player minotaur, “Try not to bring shame on your people like that again,” and the player is left with the gift of a badass weapon that will behave in unnatural ways when he uses it.


Always the nature of an abiding gift is determined by the gamemaster. Some examples:

- ♦ Can withstand excruciating pain or torture.
- ♦ Can levitate to the height of the tallest surrounding trees or structure.
- ♦ Your fur darkens in a way that now, in darkness, you could be mistaken for a man.
- ♦ Can refresh a specific stat like a different minotaur archetype.
- ♦ An ancient steel sword.
- ♦ Can father a female child. She will be human.
- ♦ Pakhelkon, an intelligent, talking scarab who loves romance and wants to help lovers.

There is space on your minotaur sheet to record the abiding gifts you’ve taken. In play a minotaur may use any of his abiding gifts as often as he wants in the interests of others, as long as he has at least one  in his supply or in the current draw from the Krater.

You are harmed directly or from betrayal by a Voice.

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; they crush us for their sport.

If you had no  in your supply prior to the inflection, then death; otherwise your caution, fear, inability, or self-doubt brings an unfavorable outcome.

As followers of silence we know that death is sometimes the reward of a committed life.

The outcome is humiliating, decrease your 🖐 number by one.

When dangers expose our weaknesses, our fears, our inabilities, the outcomes are unwelcome, frustrating and unfavorable. When intractable agendas or circumstances bring unfavorable outcomes they're all those things and lessen the future's assurance in us as well.

You are reckless, decrease your 🖐 number by one.

Heedlessness and misjudgements lessen the future's assurance in us.

One of your abiding gifts becomes an essential gift.

In roleplaying out the inflection we see one of the minotaur's abiding gifts play an important role in the outcome, and he moves it then on his minotaur sheet from the abiding gift list to the essential gift list. Now, as an essential gift, he may use it as often as he wants in the interests of others, and in his own interests as well, as long as he has at least one 🖐 in his supply or in the current draw from the Krater. And the essential gift is now strongly associated with him in the eyes of the world.

A momentary delay as you and the opposition learn to respect each other.

Great titans take care not to lose before they can win.

Treat as a 🖐 if you've been impressive in a dangerous or contentious inflection recently; otherwise you sustain a grievous or permanent injury.

You may be the only one who doesn't notice the momentum of your past accomplishments.

You make a dramatic mistake, an error.

You'll hear about it from your companions, or play it back in your own mind later, assuming you survive.



MARCEL 2013

Alm-Khera accepts the surrender of the ghost slayer Eivas.

SIDS

I SPENT FITFUL DAYS on a mat of rushes behind the gardener's shed, under the thatch awning we called "the barracks." The flies quickly learned I couldn't fight back and conspired to aggravate my discomfort. The gardener, an old grey with dark eyes and still-dark ears, hand-fed me twice a day and held my head so I could drink from a cracked clay pot. My thoughts were occupied by Veil and Fist.

Why?

She'd told me what she knew, how the senior wives maintained the neoteny of the younger wives. She'd told me what she planned for the new bride at the wedding. But she hadn't told me why. For months she'd been harassing the senior wives and their consorts. Her attacks were brutal. She'd splashed hot tar on the back of one wife and the chest of her lover as they took wet pleasure in each other among the moss and clover of a shaded riverbank. With an iron hammer she'd smashed the feet of another wife who'd once been a dancer.

Why?

I couldn't believe it was vengeance, that she actually knew the wife Erclea, or that she or someone she knew had been wronged by the senior wives. There was nothing in her words or personality or in her raw, white cesta to suggest any affinity for the kind of girls who lived for the arts. But her attacks were too extreme, too intimate, and too personally hazardous to be work for hire or economically motivated.

During my third morning it came together for me. She did it because she knew of the wronging. Knowing of a wrong *is* an affinity, because accepting *wrong* binds us. And knowledge is then obligation.

Because rejecting the obligation of *wrong* is a rejection of affinity, a detonation of society. There can be no watchers from within.

Days later, recovered to aching mobility, I went to Feru's shop in the remaining circular storey of a mostly collapsed tower. The man himself stood at a concave marble table, rolling pills. Customers chatted amongst themselves and he chatted with them as they waited. Two homunculi flew amongst the racks on black crows' wings, retrieving ingredients for him. An urn of sulphurous black mud boiled slowly.

"Do not leave, sir." Feru flashed me an oily smile as he wrapped each of the pills he'd just made in a flower petal. "I can assuredly treat your joint pain."

This was his style, a constant dialogue with customers as he worked to keep them from becoming frustrated. He brashly named their ailments and promised treatments. He tempted with descriptions of his aphrodisiacs, beautifying oils, and love potions. He told of unlikely adventures procuring exotic ingredients and creating cures for improbable afflictions.

Then it was my turn. "A salve for your joint pain?" he smiled. "A scar cream?" he gestured to his throat.

"I was paralyzed." He raised an eyebrow, but nodded for me to go on. "It gave me a lot of time to think about what I know about you."

He looked puzzled. "What... do you know?"

"I am a roof guard at the estate of Saemauug Empyreus. My job is protecting the girls. I have seen you many times. You come and take conjugal pleasures with the wife Vevakhma, and you treat the younger wives with something that prevents their womanhood. I've realized I've been doing a bad job... of protecting."

For a moment my attention fixed on another customer, a minotaur in a leather mask. We made eye contact.

“Your job,” Feru countered, “is to do what you’re told by the wives who employ you. Now, let me make something to flush the rest of that poison from you.”

“No,” I said. The attention of the other customers was on us, their own conversations forgotten. “You’re a victimizer.” My tongue was dry in my mouth. “Go elsewhere. Take your taints and go.”

“You,” Feru asked, working my discomfort, “speak for yourself?”

“Hhkk,” I struggled, my head pounding. “Ffhor them!, shpeek.”




But I was lost. I stumbled backward, my heart racing, tipping over the urn of mud. I whipped around, shoulders hunched. A woman screamed. I bolted for the door.









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BUT THE KRATER IS SILENT on violent conflicts or disagreements between player minotaurs, and about the deaths of gamemaster characters, and what happens if you draw a combination of tokens that doesn’t match even a single outcome, or if you lose your 🎲 in it how do you get another one?


If player minotaurs have a disagreement, the Krater has nothing to say about the outcome; whatever the players roleplay is what happens. But if there's violence between them that's different. Then, if there's a leader involved, the winner is the minotaur with the highest 🎲 number. But if there's no leader in the conflict, or there's a tie for highest 🎲 number, and there's a soldier in the conflict, then the minotaur who had the closest previous brush with death wins.


Otherwise the minotaur with the most powerful friendship or most intimate relationship with a non-minotaur wins.

A player minotaur only ever dies if they match the death outcome when drawing from the Krater, don't have a  in their supply, and are either alone in the situation, or don't have a  in their supply or choose not to shift the outcome to another character—or I suppose at any time if the player decides the minotaur kills himself. But with gamemaster characters, though there are several “favorable” outcome possibilities a player could match from the Krater in a violent conflict, or though a player could use a  to shift a death outcome to a character, these never mean the death of a gamemaster character unless the gamemaster decides that's what they mean. And a gamemaster character can die at any time otherwise if that's what the gamemaster decides happens.

When you find you've drawn a combination of tokens that doesn't match even a single outcome—perhaps you drew , or you drew —then the outcome is a foreshadowing: the Krater exerts no specific requirements about the details or regarding the favorability or unfavorability of the outcome for those who played into it—that is, just whatever the minotaurs and the gamemaster naturally roleplay as an outcome is what happens—but in addition, the gamemaster tells everyone of an undesirable consequence that comes to pass in the near- to medium-term future for gamemaster characters not present in the current situation, but as an effect of what just played out.

And to be clear, these consequences are not speculative. They do indeed come to pass. It's just that through the power of the Krater we hear about them beforehand.

And if ever the jungle comes to the Dégringolade for a minotaur in some way, and the minotaur is currently without a  token, the gamemaster should give him one for his supply. Also, if ever the

Dégringolade comes to the jungle for a minotaur who's without a  token, the gamemaster should similarly give him one for his supply.

Setup

FOR A FEW DAYS IN SPRING the Ehn flowers scream throughout Municipal Lehekhes. At its peak the noise is so earsplitting it drives everyone from the streets. That year, the morning the screaming crested, three nameless minotaurs, stumbling and clutching their skulls, sheltered themselves in a granary.

"Ahhhh," groaned the bronzecaster. "I swear it's worse every year."

"It is." The gardener wiped blood from his nostril. "As the plants spread they must become louder to lure the specific birds to carry off their seeds."

"They are pretty flowers, but something should be done. They should be culled. Last time a minotaur was so disoriented he walked off a bridge."

"Nothing will be done," said the wormer.

"Yes," said the gardener. "Nothing will be done."

The gardener shared his plug of black chew with the others and then the bronzecaster asked, "Are you the gardener from the Estate of Saemaug Empyreus?"

"Yes."

"Aha," said the wormer with interest. "What can you tell about the guard who broke silence at the apothecary Feru?"

Ssssthiitt, the gardener spat a stream of black into the dirt. “There’s nothing to tell. He believed injustice was being done. There’s no shame in that.”

“What injustice?” probed the wormer. “I have heard stories, but you know the truth?”

“I know it,” said the bronzecaster. “The apothecary is a source of drugs with terrible side-effects. Some of the wives of Saemauug Empyreus use them. The minotaur wanted to defend these women.”

“What is wrong with that? There is nothing wrong with that,” argued the gardener.

“Well,” countered the wormer, “only that some of us have lives far more wretched and needful of concern than wealthy wives devoted to stage and song.”

“No, I know these young wives,” said the gardener. “The drugs make them fragile, and ever subject to emotions and talents that never mature. It is not so different than us. Society has no interest in the maturation of our talents either.”

“Yes,” said the bronzecaster. “It is no different. There is no shame.”

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PROBABLY YOUR SESSIONS of playing *The Clay That Woke* will be three or four hours long. In that amount of time the stories of the player minotaurs will have involved some consequential actions and interactions with gamemaster characters and everyone will have played out good creative energy and will be feeling ready to stop.

But there’s one last scene you do first. At the end of every session, for a final scene, two or more of the players invent nameless minotaurs

and frame and have a conversation among them about a civic or cultural issue related to the storyline of a player minotaur. If these nameless minotaurs focus on your minotaur's storyline, and you're down to two or fewer 🧠, increase your 🧠 number by one.

↪1

WE CIRCLED, almost invisible to each other. The duel was madness; a game played by psychotic employers with consequences only to the employed.

I'd gone frantic from my dispute with the apothecary. His customer, the minotaur with the mask, had heard everything, and when I ran he followed me.

Six days later, I knew him well. He'd fought for years in the Everwar. As a platoon leader he was captured and tortured. They'd put insects on him that ate away his face. His name was Sahnu. He had a son.

The previous evening we'd come upon two young men, Emous and Sero, and the young woman Pohie who'd been sleeping with both of them. The two had perpetrated brutal attacks against each other over the past few weeks, and had finally agreed to settle things for once and all with a formal duel to the death. They would race to collect usable shieldleaf, fabricate shields, and face each other with broadswords at dawn. But predictably, Pohie had intervened. It was this disagreement Sahnu and I had happened upon. Pohie had followed her lovers into the jungle. She didn't want a duel to leave her with no man at all.

Somehow, the situation had turned into Sahnu and me fighting the duel as proxies. The two young men had raced through the nocturnal jungle to find suitable leaf and make our shields. They had insisted on this so there would be no doubt the winner had actually earned



*An incomplete sculpture titled Birth, made by an unknown minotaur artist
from an abandoned block of flawed marble.*

Pohie's favor. You had to search a lot of leaves to find the right ones, turning the underside of each to the moonlight and looking for a telling shimmer. You could search hundreds to find just one that reacts to the moonlight, and you needed nine for a complete shield.

In the dawn light, with the duel begun, the value of a complete shield was clear. Mine, from Emous, had seven leaves. Sahnu's, with a full nine, parted the visible plane to render him almost invisible. I strained to perceive his movements from the displacement of vines and underbrush and only just managed to deflect his attack from splitting my skull. His blade tore skin from my shoulder and forearm as it scraped away from my late parry. With my flawed shield he wasn't having the same difficulty seeing me.

The girl screamed in excitement. Sero cheered. And for a moment I glimpsed my friend's tense expression before he was again invisible.

Sahnu and I circled, sliding between trees and vines, over roots and deadfalls, and across and among ancient stone remnants of some prior age. His second attack destroyed my right hand and sent my sword spinning away. The pain snuffed out my vision for a moment and left me huddling behind my shield.

In all my prior duels I'd never been so outdone. Now unarmed, surely I should have yielded. The observers couldn't but see the outcome was certain and valid.

But, I didn't see fingers missing; Sahnu's strike must have been turned and flat. Sloppy. How could I yield to that?

No circling this time. I rushed, driving his shield upward with my own to open him for a groin strike. Emous shouted from wherever. I missed my intent and fumbled my shield to the ground, but landed a solid blow with my left fist to Sahnu's inner thigh that would cramp and slow him up. He grunted and dropped his shield low, letting me follow with my forearm to his face.

He clouted me hard with the pommel of his sword, setting my ears ringing and driving me back. And then I was an unarmed minotaur facing one with both shield and sword.

But a pommel strike? Then I realized my friend hadn't been dueling to the death at all, but fighting for a way for me to credibly yield. I would have shattered his nest if I could, and he'd turned his blade so I wouldn't lose fingers.

I kneeled then among the trumpet mushrooms and bared my wrists to my friend. But the look of shock on his face stopped me before I could raise my arms, and I followed his stare back to the open space before me. A strange beam of blue-black energy cut the air less than an arm length from my chin, warping the air with its heat, its terminal end skipping across the surface of a partly sunken pillar stone.

The stone moaned under the cruelty of the beam and then, as we all stood transfixed, exploded. A million shards flung misery and death through the air.

Pohie and Sero were thrown to the ground. She was protected by his sheltering embrace, but he died quickly, gasping for air with pink froth spurting from awful wounds in his back. I suffered a thousand cuts but was not slain. Emous collapsed with his head bashed in by a large fragment of the stone. Sahnú took some bruises and cuts, but was largely protected by an ancient cypress.

We saw then the source of the murderous beam: a hovering, barrel-sized carving of an implacable human head with an open mouth—ancient, scarred, water-logged and crawling with insects. An *insuperable*. Crafted thousands of years ago, carved from a single massive nut, it must have lain here, buried among these stones, dormant until now.

The insuperable rotated in the air to fix its rotted gaze upon me. Pohie, cut and stained with Sero's blood and her own, stood over her dying lover's body and screamed. The insuperable was horrific—during

its long burial the nut had sprouted a number of nasty roots from its carved face, and there was a feral desperation in its eyes as it released a second blue-black beam from its gaping mouth.

I had lost track of Sahnu. Somehow he had gotten near me. When the insuperable again poured forth death, my friend intercepted it with his shimmering shield. The beam was bent away from us, but passing so close I heard sound within it—a word, drowned just seconds later by a woman’s dying shriek. The turned beam had seared Pohie where she stood—a horrible death.

Sahnu and I ran in separate directions. Another blue-black beam tore through the jungle after me. I heard the word again.

“Daddy.”

It became clear the insuperable had foregone Sahnu and set on me. I ran, lunging over deadfalls, splashing madly along a mostly dry creek bed until another blue-black beam drove me back into the trees.

“Daddy.”

My run ended at a gorge, too deep to jump over. All the vines I tried to use to swing across pulled free when I put weight on them. And the insuperable found me.

But there was something about its desperation, its repeated cry. It was a child, somehow. I opened my arms to it. “*Boy*,” I guessed. The creature came close, into the circle of my arms. I reached up among its sharp roots and pulled it into a hug. “Hello, boy,” I murmured.

After some time I felt the animating consciousness leave the insuperable and the massive thing dropped to the ground.

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WHEN A GROUP OF MINOTAURS find themselves in the jungle, voluntarily or involuntarily, they install one of themselves as a decisionmaker called the *foremost*. But first the gamemaster gives each of them a 🍀 for their supply if they don't have any, a 🍀 if they don't have any, and a 🍀 if their 🍀 number is greater than zero and they don't have any.

Then, if the excursion into the jungle was brought on by a minotaur going frantic, and includes a gamemaster character who's a philosopher, he's installed as the foremost. Otherwise the player minotaur with the most 🍀 in his supply who's not a philosopher is installed as the foremost. The foremost will determine how long a group of minotaurs who entered the jungle together stays in the jungle, and when together they leave, and he may offer another minotaur a name when they return to the Dégrolade.

If a minotaur is in the jungle alone, then there really isn't a foremost. He can't get a name from this excursion, and he can leave whenever he wants as long as he has at least one 🍀 in his supply. If there's a tie for most 🍀, figure something out. You could have no foremost, more than one, or the gamemaster could introduce a philosopher to be foremost.

When minotaurs leave the jungle the gamemaster gives each of them a 🍀 for their supply if they don't have any, a 🍀 if they don't have any, a 🍀 if their 🍀 number is greater than zero and they don't have any, and three 🍀 if they don't have any and they've had a gift lost, destroyed, or expire recently; which happens simply by the player establishing the fact of its loss, destruction, or expiration somehow during play, and then crossing the gift off on his sheet.

Also, at this point, the foremost may offer names to other minotaurs in the returning group who don't yet have a name and who

now have at least two 🖐️ in their supply. And a player minotaur who accepts an offered name should increase his 🖐️ number by one.

And finally, any minotaur returning with at least two 🖐️ in his supply comes back to the Dégringolade with more confidence, effectiveness, and stature, and life will find a higher purpose for him. The gamemaster will assign any such minotaur higher employment and life circumstances, and will set them up with the same kind of framing description as when putting him into his first employment situation. If a player minotaur doesn't have at least two 🖐️ in his supply he persists in his former employment and life situation.

Though if he does have two or more 🖐️, but would actually rather return to his prior employment and life situation—because it's still important to him, or he's still vexed by it—he can forfeit all his 🖐️ back to the gamemaster's set so he has none upon leaving the jungle. Or really, he could just plan ahead by using **regard** beforehand so he doesn't have more than one in his supply when the foremost decides it's time to go back.

So the only real consequence to minotaurs who are low in 🖐️ going to the jungle voluntarily, proactive of going frantic, is that if they're planning to return to prior life and employment circumstances in the Dégringolade, the situation will have progressed while they were gone.

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SEPARATED FROM SAHNU, I wandered alone for two days. It began to rain. The jungle canopy diffuses a rain into an ambient wet chill. When the shivering got difficult I took shelter and tried to doze under a low canopy of flukes among durians on a muddy slope.

I don't know how much time passed before I woke to notice a snake rolling and moving among the scrub. The rain had lasted long



Marcel 2014

Ehkrax rescues the tears of the widows.

enough to reveal a dead culture. Potsherds with script, skulls, bones, shells of eaten mollusks, all laid bare in the slurry with the snake weaving among them.

Then flames danced among the potsherds and bones. The snake alternately fought the flames and played with them. I was transfixed. The tableau was only visible to me in the darkness because of the flames. A goat joined the dance, rearing and stamping at the snake and the flames; then a lion as well, who tore at the goat's flanks and drew a vicious bite to the throat from the snake. It was . . . beautiful.

After a time, a humanoid creature joined me under the flukes, a naked goat-headed man with a lion's mane and snake's eyes. "Evening, friend."

"Evening," I said.

"Lovely seats," he enthused, looking out on the terrible, playful fray.

"Yes," I said. "Though I fear they're all losers when it's said and done."

"Oh," said the creature. "Don't you see? They've already won."

Out among the remains of a dead culture the beasts had become joined to one purpose, unified in essence, goat head biting and tearing at lion head, snake tail writhing and spitting venom, lion head roaring with a gout of flame upon its breath, shaking its mane and clawing through the bones of the past.

"They are the Chimera," said my companion. "They are here so you may learn their way of legacy. They know you know only the Gargoyle's way."

His snake eyes smouldered, impossibly red, like rubies before flames.

"You see," he continued, "the Gargoyle is a moment in time, a fabricated thing. It fights time for its existence. The Chimera *is* time. The beasts come together as an expression of shared self-imagination, self-realization, heterogeneous but gloriously, committedly permeable throughout. The beasts test and prove the identities of one another, penetrate and define each other. And the secret is we can all do this. We can bring into existence a shared self that expresses more about ourselves than any of us could say individually. It is a triumph of becoming time. Consider the Gargoyle and the Chimera. The Gargoyle is a made thing that fights time for its legacy. It must be perfect to even exist. We aspire to its perfect fabrication, but we cannot achieve its lofty, impossible perfection. The Chimera brings itself into existence and has no shame for its imperfections. At any given moment in time the Chimera is a triumph. Its imperfections are throughout its existence, and throughout time before and after, and not within any moment of its triumph. You might say the Gargoyle is an artifact of a triumph, and the Chimera is the anecdote of *its* triumph."

When my companion finished his eyes were a duller red, and the Chimera was gone. "Here," he said, holding open his palm to reveal Dusaia's cylinders. "You misplaced these once. It won't happen again. Wherever you place them they will remain. No one but you can move them from where you put them."



Two days later I found Sahnu. "My friend," he said, "it is time for us to return to the civilization of men. And you, will you let me and our kind, and all men if they choose, name you Eshmoteth?"

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF the chimera that Eshmoteth sees in the jungle? I'm not sure I fully understand it myself, but it's clearly important. The goat, the lion, the snake, and the flames are like a group of roleplayers coming together to play *The Clay That Woke*. Your starting minotaur character seems undefined, but he's really not, because you the player are present within him, just the way the essences of the goat, lion, snake, and flames are present in their play among the jungle slurry of history and culture. Your interests drive his actions. This game isn't about hacking together a narrative within some defined story structure. And it isn't about unwinding drama from a made snarl of inter-character stress. It's about submitting to the mechanics of an alien world and engaging a primordial ability to communicate across the boundaries of your human differences with other players to find progressively the mutual incitement of your essences. Accept no substitutes. You're going to have a great time.

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WARDWORK WAS GOOD WORK. The streets of Municipal Lhleshrys were halcyon and arboreal. There were no biting flies, rats, or mambas, and almost no crime. The trees and villas were hung about with Saiana's wards, which was why.

The wards were clay pots carved by Saiana without and within and taught to care for some aspect of Lhleshrys.

In the mornings I cared for the clays. Sometimes Saiana's wife Immbhanne, whom I called Engraven, helped me. The pots which would be wards, holding clays which would be pots, were carried to the stream. One-by-one we opened the lids to water and kneaded the clay within, teaching its pot to care.

Wards are different than charms. Charms try to make desired things happen. Wards try to prevent the undesirable.

Immbhanne was many seasons younger than her husband. Her skin was marred everywhere by a horrific tracery of fine scars, worst on her limbs. I thought she was lovely, but perhaps men other than Saiaama couldn't look beyond her scars. She decorated her arms and legs with intricate henna artwork, which concealed much of the worst scarring. And she became so expert, women came from beyond Lhleshrys and Lehekesh to be beautified by her.

Saiaama and I were opening a ward to its caring for Lhleshrys. When he shapes a ward, Saiaama includes pieces of sandstone that can later be broken out to give the carved interior a view of the outer world. This ward would counter a certain leaf blight. The warder was removing the stone pieces from our blight ward with a small hammer and chisel when the creature FriendBeast entered the yard.

"You have company!" shouted FriendBeast.

The creature looked like a hairless, anatomically perfect, human male, clean and pink skinned with sparkly gold eyes and periwinkle blue lips, nipples, fingernails and toenails.

"I am here to share compensation with valued Immbhanne."

I could see Saiaama clenching his jaw as his wife appeared in the doorway. The creature brokered animal breedings and product swaps among the women of Lhleshrys for a fee, and spread gossip and scandal at no cost.

"Talented Immbhanne," said FriendBeast, "you have been instrumental in several sheep breedings. I am here because a lamb from Foeremant is yours to be claimed."

Immbhanne grinned. “Husband, we shall roast it with spices and serve it with yoghurt and dill.”

“Yes you shall,” said FriendBeast, taking her by the arm. She only just managed to blow her husband a kiss as the creature swept her out through the arch and into his world.

“I truly hate that thing,” muttered Saiama, still working at the ward.

“I know,” I say.

“Not because it takes her from me like this either, if that’s what you’re thinking.” He tapped at the chisel. “Because of the gossip. The horrible stories they tell. Corsalla, the surgeon’s wife, spends evenings with a hunky minotaur winemaker. Hemeque won the women’s run by sleeping with Swolea’s brother if he would slip his sister cramping herbs before the race. They’re disgusting. No violence can be done in these streets because of my wards. But this too is human destruction, and I am mystified why we aren’t protected from it, why this teller of secrets isn’t kept out the same as the burglars and murderers.”

Saiama was my best friend. I could feel the depth of his frustration. His hands were shaking from it. And when we looked down there was a ruinous crack through the clay of the blight ward from imperfect use of the chisel.

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VISIBLE FOR SCHOENI above the rooftops and old mounds of Municipal Lehekhes is a crumbly, wrought stone tower covered with flowering vines, the Tower of Heroes. It is managed by a quiet, handsome, middle-aged human gardener named Gerdotesa, who himself has elaborate and beautiful vine and butterfly tattoos. Its apartments are

expensive, but much desired by those who aspire to renown, because while you live at the Tower the flowers develop an attachment to your spirit, and if you die while they still remember you and your story is worth knowing they will bloom at night and draw your spirit back to act out scenes from your life, with the others in your scenes played by shadows thrown from the lamps of spectators who come to see.

And the Tower is just one of the great entertainments that once made the Dégringolade the artistic and cultural center of the world. Two hundred seasons ago in Municipal Rhomoon the great Saemauug Emphyreus, a lover of the arts, began marrying talented young women—dancers, actresses, musicians, playwrights. He used his wealth to build out the grounds of his estate for them with studio facilities and a theatre. And their songs, their plays, their ballets and operas became known throughout the Dégringolade and beyond. Today, though the Emphyreus and his original wives are long dead, his legacy persists with a life of its own. When a wife dies the others hold auditions for her replacement, always to keep their number to a full hundred. They create new productions and revive old ones, and fullness and laurels redound upon their Estate.

But there is another living source of great stage drama in the Dégringolade. Completely separate from the main of the city by nine days of jungle is Municipal Fesula, a squalid urbanized area of residences and businesses in the shadow of the prison Chelziod. The prison wardens have published visceral and dramatic stage plays for nearly four hundred seasons. They “interview” accused criminals—called contributors—for months, and sometimes for years, directing assistants in the use of physical torture, and two staff herbalists in the application of disinhibitory herbs, and herbs that make certain things more painful or terrifying, and by using psychological power, they collect their stories. They subscribe to rigorous journalistic standards for the stories they collect, requiring corroboration from independent

sources, and then they write and publish plays about them. Vice Warden Udroke's play about the betrayal of the mercenary general Caelest by his friend and trusted Captain, Phlega was adapted this year by the wives of Saemauug Empyreus and produced with an all female cast to great acclaim.

Municipal Rhomoon is also home to The Silk, a high end whorehouse where you can sometimes see a will-o-wisp and where the minotaur activist Ashtavede lives and whores. The Silk is an open courtyard where the sex workers entertain clients with transgressive and political conversation and libations, spanned above by overhead trellises. The flowered trellises draw in will-o-wisps at night. It's said if you can catch a will-o-wisp it will lead you anywhere you ask it to, as long as you're not inebriated—but if you are it will lead you astray. Ashtavede is a gorgeous, tattooed minotaur whose activism is The Chorus. He gathers men and minotaurs to walk the streets and sing of politics and corruption, inspired by the conversations of whores and politicians at The Silk.

Another available transgression, though some distance away, is The Fountain of Trust, in which you can wash away your inability to trust others. You wade out into the basin at the foot of the waterfall. You do it to feel what it's like to be trusting. It's risky, and transgressive—and it's easy to be taken advantage of when you trust others—but it is also thrilling, and sometimes has good results. And the effect wears off in a few days. It's also a crime to force someone into the water so they trust too much.

And there are marvelous creatures as well. In the rivers are the nightfish, that wear a human skull as a defensive shell, and glow eerily in the darkness. And there is the terrifying soft grappler, a multi-tentacled cephalopod you only ever see in the most brutal of beast fight entertainments; you'll know a fighter who's battled one by the horrifying circular and elliptical burn scars it marked him with.



A game of five-bug.

And in the Vadhmrivier are dolphins with moustaches and bushy eyebrows. They crawl out of the water to bask in the mud of the shore and sing. They sing of the past, of their great deeds when they assumed human shapes and lived in the ocean in the reflections of the great cities of men.

And in fact even the dolphins themselves don't exist anymore. They went extinct decades ago, but no one realized it because a massive, aquatic whale-like entity named Belugha, who lived among them in the reflected cities, and who remembers them, dreamt them back into existence.

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DEEP IN THE NORTH JUNGLE is Gameke, the serene lake source of the great Vadhmrivier, and deep in Gameke is a white clay Saiama had asked me to find. After forty-six days I was close, wading at dusk among the aerial roots of hydrophytic trees on the flooded margins of Gameke when I was blinded by the pop/flash of a gheana.

I became panic. Gheanas are canines men bred for hunting river dolphins, but the effort produced such unequalled and unmanageable predators that they quickly slipped the bonds of domestication to become a feral affliction on society. They are powerful runners and swimmers, and amphibious, with gills between their shoulder blades. At night they come from the river among sleeping homes to steal and feed on human children. They have a hundred needle sharp teeth, and their eyes can emit a blinding flash of light to freeze a quarry for the kill.

The creatures made no vocal sound, but I heard the splashing of their approach, nearly as fast vaulting from root to root and knifing through the water as they were on dry land. The only good aspect of the terrifying situation was I had to be close indeed to the white clay.

I'd need to dive for it near a feeder river of Gameke inhabited by a dolphin pod. Being surprised by gheanas meant it was nearby. I'd been looking forward to the dolphins. They are glorious to watch. The ones who live near Lehekheshe sport large curling moustaches, males and females both, and decorate themselves for spectators by shifting the mottled patterns of their skin. It is said that by night they transform themselves into aquatic men and play out human stories in the river's moonlit reflection of the Dégringolade.

For a moment I was lost in remembrance; then wildly I blinked away my blindness and flailed to find a tree snarled with creepers. But before I could pull myself to safety one of the creatures hit my free arm. A hundred needle teeth punched through to the bone.

I screamed.

But I found enough strength in my arm to lift the gheana by its bite and expose its belly to my horns. Then barely did I clamber up the creepers into safety. The gored gheana, gasping quietly at the base of the tree, was torn apart by the rest of the pack.

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THINK OF A MINOTAUR'S 🐾 number as representing his stature in society, and his actual supply of 🐾 as what he can do with it. Used in the Krater a 🐾 can cause your opponents to measure you with respect or bring useful and rare assets into your possession. But there's another option as well. During play you can spend two 🐾 to ensure a gamemaster character is successful in a planned, future action for which no player minotaur will be present. This is called **regard**. All you do is tell the character about your confidence in what they plan to do and spend your two 🐾 back to the gamemaster's set, and then when that character takes the planned action they're successful.

TWO DAYS LATER, my forearm bandaged with myrtle leaves and eel skin, I was ready to dive for Saiama's clay. I spent the morning sinking inflated bladders into Gameke's depths, all strung together with cord, so I'd have air during my hunt. The lake surface glinted in the noon sun as I waded out from the shoreline along my cord, wearing a harness of heavy stones. The dolphins, though obviously aware of my presence, had kept their distance after earlier playing and leaping failed to distract me from my task. It would have been fun to meet them, but I had stayed focused.

The work wasn't easy. Gameke was an incredibly clear and serene lake, but even so, little light penetrated its depths. I was forced to grope along the lake bottom, searching for a deposit of the white clay by its texture; it would be distinctively solid and heavy, with sharp, flinty inclusions Saiama would have to carefully winnow out.

The water was cold, and the air in my bladders tasted terrible. Being cold started to feel like fear. Fish startled me by appearing right in front of my eyes. My fingertips grew so numb I doubted my ability to recognize the clay if I did find it.

And then I did.

My head was pounding as I scraped as much as I could into the sack I'd brought, and then shrugged off my harness of stones to rise to the lake surface. From the sun I could tell what seemed like hours of work hadn't been much more than an hour. A look into my sack confirmed the clay. I was elated. I swam easily toward the shore, glorying in the warmth penetrating me from the sun and the lake surface. But as I walked off among the trees, imagining my return to the wardyard, something went wrong. My joints burned—hips and shoulders at first, then my wrists and elbows, knees and ankles. I was queasy and dizzy.

I turned back to the lake. *What happened to me?* The whole world was narrow and dark; I stared at the lake down a long tunnel.

The dolphins had come right up to the shore. I could hear them shouting.

“Come back!”

“You swam up too fast! Come back!”

My knees buckled.

“No! You can do it!”

“Do it! Do it! Do it! Do it!”

My chest was burning. I collapsed.

“No!!!”

I lay there. Dying, I knew. Barely able to breathe. My lips pursed tight from the pain.

And then there was a woman above me. She was brown. At first I thought it was Dusaia, and I gasped, but then I saw this woman’s skin was mottled. She lifted me with unrealistic strength. Her touch was cool. She carried me back to the lake and she and her people took me down again to the depths. They pressed close, keeping me warm with their bodies. They let me breathe from them, and my symptoms gradually subsided.

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DON’T COME TO THE GAME as a player with the goal of authoring a drama with your minotaur that other players will appreciate. Come to it to discover your minotaur in the context of the game. If your scenes don’t seem fun, try to make gamemaster characters important

by the things your character does. And take the game's advice about roleplaying further into situations before going to the Krater.

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I MIGHT HAVE RETURNED to Lhleshrys via Main Street, taking pleasure in its lush canopy and the inscrutable carved reliefs of its reconstructed residences. But my eagerness to be back took me down High Street—a shorter route, still ancient, but less manifold than Main Street.

Something was wrong when I arrived at the wardyard. Two large wards against fevers and diseases were shattered out front. In the yard were more shattered wards and Imbhanne working frantically on herself with henna.

“Esh!”

Her eyes were wide. And then I saw my urwicga sword on the table in front of her. The creatures are piloted in battles in the Everwar. I'd cut a pincher from one my companions and I had slain during my war employment a year ago, and copying other soldiers had made it into a fearsome curving weapon.

“Where is Saiama?”

“Esh, do you know what happened to me?”

I saw again the fierce tracery of needle-fine scars that define her—and my left arm throbbed. “You . . .” it came together for me, “were torn apart by gheanas.”

“Yes. And killed.”

She told me the rest. A decade ago she and Saiama had hardly just met when she was killed. For years afterward he foundered and



Malamenas and Sure discuss a troubling pattern of recent suicides by Myrjidu tongue painters.

suffered, unable to stop thinking about what could have been. It had felt so charged, inevitable, but absent of haste, something to play out over a lifetime.

Then it was gone. He'd barely known her, but her death had hollowed him out.

But six years later, she was back, with no explanation, and she didn't remember a thing. Neither of them questioned it. They married within months and their wardwork transformed Lhleshrys.

"When I saw the yard I knew. At the market today FriendBeast told me a story about the tea he had for swapping. It had come from a grower whose wife was dying, who was maybe already dead back home. FriendBeast had convinced him to swap it for leeches he'd collected. 'These are the #1 leeches if you think she's dead,' FriendBeast had told him.

"She'd been poisoned. The leeches absorbed the poison and she's recovering. It was incredible; I was so overwhelmed I told him about my own recovery from real death.

"I swore him to secrecy, but truly FriendBeast isn't the most trustworthy of friends. When I saw the shattered wards I knew he must have told my story and it had got back to Saiama."

"You're painting name runes on yourself?"

"Pick up your urwicga sword."

I did—and the sensation was a damp cloth swaddling my heart.

"Feel the dread?"

I nodded.

“Surely he intends violence against FriendBeast. He’s never liked him. But you can tell from your sword he hasn’t yet destroyed the ward against violence. I can find him at the ward. Seeing the community he’s built, written upon me, will transform his emotion.”

“Immbhanne,” my voice rasped, “the sword has calmed.”

But then Saiama was there, returned to the yard. He looked on his wife and her effort of name runes and shook his head, *No*.

“I have need of that, Esh,” he said to me, holding out his hand.

I hesitated.

“You refuse, *friend*?”

“You may have it,” I said, “but hear me, first.” Immbhanne gripped his forearm with both hands and her whole love, but I knew I was the only one now who might stop this killing.

“You’ll murder FriendBeast?”

“Do you know what he’s done?”

“He’s been telling people Engraven is returned from death.”

“Yes! And do you know what it was like to see her die? We were holding hands on a bridge with our feet in the water, and then she was gone. They came up from below, so fast it was like they appeared from the bloom of blood itself. I didn’t do anything. I *should* have gone in after her.” He clutched at Immbhanne. “I was wrecked. The years are a blur.

“Four years ago I found her in the stream. A second chance. We made this municipal what it is and now we can’t have it? That shite

thing tells everyone she's a corpse?! Ashtafies' wife comes and asks me to make a ward against the undead?! Yes! I'm going to murder it!"

"Saïama." My chest ached. "This vengeance will be the end of you. The people will descend on you like the gheanas that killed Engraven. *You* taught me wardwork is about care and patience." He shook his head, but I pushed on. "Friend, you can kill him, but I think I can make him a lesson to others—a living ward. Let me?"

I don't know, maybe it was the squeeze Immbhanne gave his hand that sealed the deal, but I didn't give him a chance to change his mind. I was out the gate in search of FriendBeast, save only a moment's detour to throw the urwicga sword in the canal.


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BY NOW YOUR HEAD IS SPINNING with all you've read about the world of the minotaurs—the Dégringolade and the jungle—about insects and seeds and silence, about empyrei and intrinsics, and about the mechanics of playing *The Clay That Woke*. And maybe you're thinking, "How could I possibly gamemaster this game?" Well, stop that. I wouldn't have designed it this way if I didn't have faith in you.

Which isn't to say that running *The Clay That Woke* won't challenge your talents—just that I'm going to tell you how to do it so you can be successful. And it's worth it, believe me. You're going to have a great game.

The first thing you need to do is wrap your head around prominent elements and themes of the game world. Had you noticed the prominence of insects before me calling it out just now? You need to help yourself see the game's themes and prominent elements more explicitly. One playtest gamemaster did this by going back through the text and making a mind-map diagram of everything that stood

out to him. I don't think you need to go that far. I think you just need a short list, of less than ten items. You can probably write down a few that stood out to you without even flipping back through the book. Then, go through the book and the fiction and the art and flesh out your list. If I were to do it, my list would include insects, the fatherlessness of the minotaurs, various ways in which characters try to have a legacy, seeds, quid pro quo thinking, weird beliefs, and death that isn't death. So either do your own list, or add just a few to my list, and you're good.

Then, you need to create life and employment circumstances for however many player minotaurs you'll have in your game, plus a couple extra, which you might need if a minotaur goes to the jungle and returns with enough  to be put into a new one. And your purpose for them is to bring social problems of the Dégringolade into the minotaurs' lives.

Base the Dégringolade's problems on social problems in our world—but not the big ones like unemployment or terrorism or health care that dominate the national and global conversation. Find ones that are more personal to you. Pay attention to your gut reactions to news stories and movies, to stuff that plays out via the social media you use, to public interactions you have and witness among strangers, and to the interactions within the social sphere of your family and friends. Watch for things that trigger your gut that seem like social or cultural problems.

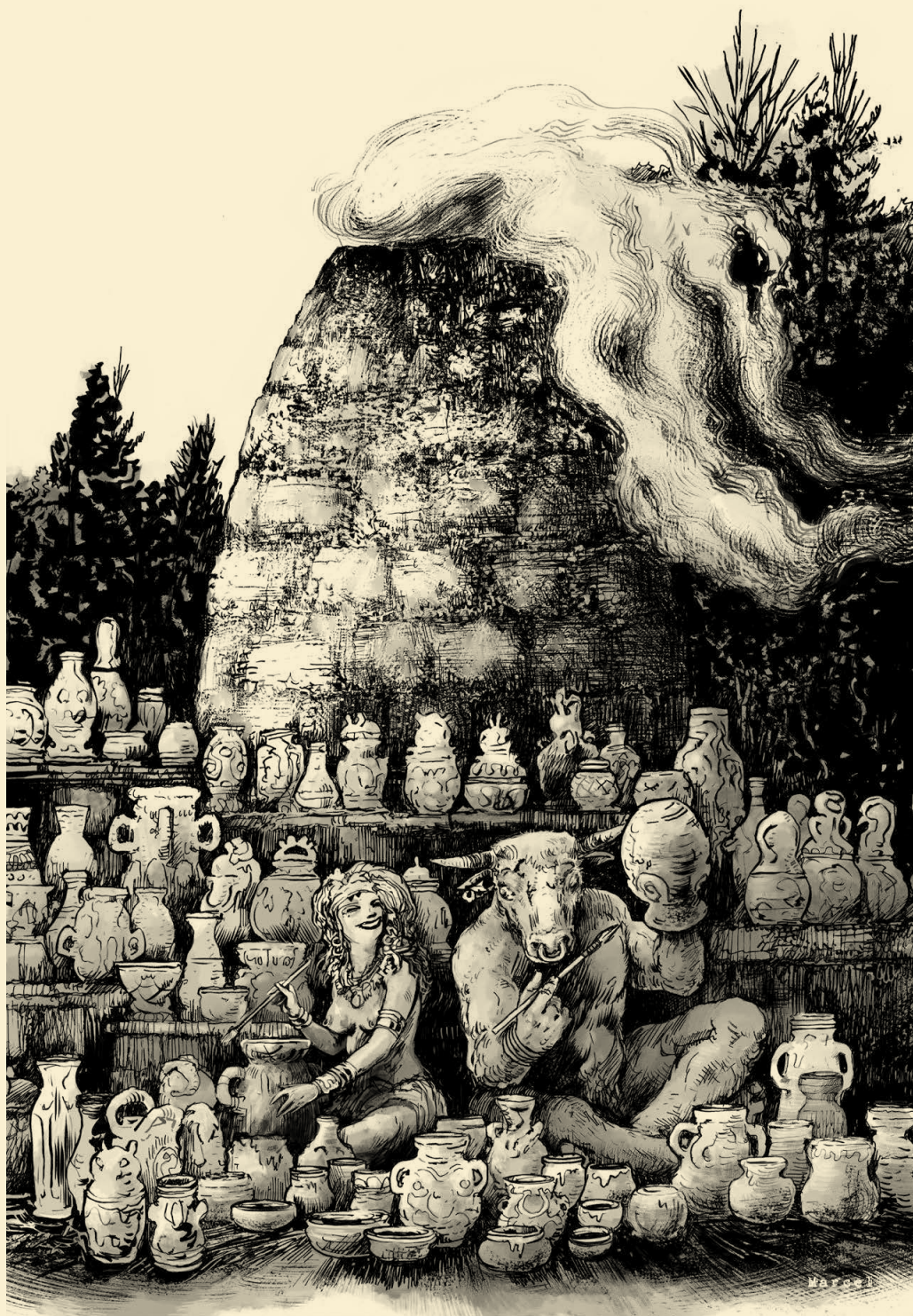
Then take these social and cultural problems and reshape and reimagine them as a problem for gamemaster characters in the Dégringolade. Include some weirdness like what you've read here, unique individuals like Veil and Fist, strange entities like FriendBeast, strange cultural conventions like the women dancing for a chance to collect Ontethrukh's son's semen, vows taken under unusual circumstances that have magical effects, characters who desire

impossible things. Include things from your list of prominent elements and themes.

FriendBeast comes from my frustration with an institution in our society that pretends to be about friendship but lives by selling our privacy. If you think about it you'll figure it out. I usually write 150-300 hundred words of notes to myself, everything I want to tell the players about each life and employment circumstance I come up with. Here's one based on my own personal gut frustration with *Jerry Springer, Dr. Phil, Dateline*, and other TV shows that turn real human and family tragedy into lurid, broadcast entertainment:

Incarcerated now for seven months in the prison Chelziod is the mercenary warlord Caelest, judged guilty of violating a flag of truce. The prison and its wardens are a unique institution. The wardens "interview" the prisoners using physical torture, which is performed by assistants, psychological power, and the application of disinhibitory herbs, and herbs that make certain things more painful or terrifying. They subscribe to rigorous journalistic standards for the stories they collect, requiring corroboration from independent sources. And then they write and publish plays about them. The wardens are artists, really. Their plays are widely known and performed.

Caelest and his mercenaries, in the employ of General Larthru in the Everwar, were defeated by General Hamphna. When the Generals and their subordinates met under flag of truce, Larthru noticed Hamphna had the eye for Caelest's wife Echora, and tried to contract with Caelest for her to seduce and assassinate Hamphna. But Caelest declined, deeming it too dangerous, and out of true love for Echora. Then that night Hamphna had his men murdered Larthru and his warriors and mercenaries while they slept. Echora escaped with Caelest's friend, Captain Marale, who suffered a



Joking around at the end of a long day.

grievous arm injury in the escape. But Caelest himself was captured, and most of his mercenaries were killed—though one of his captains, Phlega, survived to bear false witness against him as the truce breaker. So, accused by Hamphna, and framed with the paid false testimony by Captain Phlega, Caelest was sent to Chelziod where for seven months now he has undergone interviewing by Vice Warden Udroke.

See how I've reshaped and reimagined a real social problem around fantastical, unusual, dramatic gamemaster characters involved in big endeavors and with big emotional drives? See how the prominent theme from my list of having a legacy might be important to a character like Udroke? Also, notice how I use romantic, fraternal, and familial love as complicating factors? You'll need to prep stuff that puts the setup in motion, but starting with situations like this you can see how easy it'll be.

Now I need a second one. I often put multiple player minotaurs into different jobs in the same situation. It can get players interacting with each other, and feeling invested in each other's stories. But it's also important from the outset to show more than just the inner workings of a single household, or a single institution, like Chelziod, so your game is about the future of the Dégringolade itself and not just one situation. I usually default to one situation for every two player minotaurs, at first—and then the mechanics of returning from the jungle tell me when and which player minotaurs to put into new ones.

So you're going to devise lots of life and employment situations over the course of your game sessions, with all their nuances creating the aggregate culture and problems and sometimes fantastical nature of life in the Dégringolade. So when you make a new one, think about it relative to the others, and to your list of prominent elements and

themes, and to everything you've read about the world in this book, and give it details that contribute to the whole.

When I look at the Chelziod situation I think the second one should have some empyrei, and more weird. But not a cult, or hordes of zombies, or a vast supernatural or political conspiracy. There isn't religion or politics in the Dégringolade anyway, and its weirdness is always more about strange characters and creatures and weird doings that are unique to themselves and structurally important to your reimagining of a specific cultural problem.

So from another personal frustration, but with a little more weirdness, I prep this:

A nameless minotaur was hired by aging, Joitraw Emphyreus to read his whole life's journals and writings. Somehow after a time of this the personality of the old Emphyreus was in his head, and then the old man himself was dead. Now at night the minotaur plays host to Joitraw's personality among his own thoughts—but during the day the Emphyreus controls the minotaur's body and the minotaur's own personality is just a passenger within.

Well, Joitraw had a young wife Awlreien. He told her that when he died he'd come back for her, but she either wasn't interested or didn't believe him. She ran off with his apprentice, Lampha.

And probably I prep at least one more situation, so if a minotaur returns from the jungle and the mechanics say to put him into new life and employment circumstances I have something ready to go.

Then I need to figure out where the player minotaurs fit in, who exactly they work for and what their jobs are. For the Chelziod setup I think the most interesting position for a player minotaur is as a bodyguard for Echora, hired by Marale because his arm injury makes him unconfident of his own ability to protect her. To fit a second player minotaur into the prison I add a different Warden interrogating

another prisoner who has fallen in love with her, and a second player minotaur working for the prison herbalist in that situation. For the second situation I decide the player minotaur works for Joitraw, and part of his job is to tie him up at night when the minotaur regains control of his own body.

And then I prep the “movings” that put everything in motion. They’re usually three to five sentences each about what various gamemaster characters might do, sometimes including a snippet or some sentences of something an NPC might say. I probably need three or four per player minotaur to get me through a whole game session. And if I already have unused life and employment circumstances prepped and ready to go the movings might be all I need to prep for a session, taking me probably forty minutes to do. I might go several sessions where all I prep are movings, and maybe some jungle encounters. Here are some movings:

Vice Warden Udroke is absolutely not motivated to release Caelest. Not until he corroborates Caelest’s story by interrogating the mercenary who bore false witness against him. He may suggest that Echora or her friends bring in Captain Phlega to clear Caelest’s name. Udroke will welcome an offer by Echora to submit to interrogation herself, but it won’t result in Caelest’s release; he really wants Phlega. Though potentially a good draw from the Krater could convince him to release Caelest.

Echora is an intrinsic, with weird beliefs. Her true motivation for pleading for Caelest’s release is because she cannot take a new husband if he’s still alive, and she believes she needs a new husband. If Caelest is released, or escapes, Echora will try to murder him with a surprise knife blow to the chest. “He dishonored me. He did not believe in me. As a minotaur you couldn’t understand. But that is the most important thing between a man and a woman. I needed



Employed mourners at the funeral of Sirigusa Empyreus.

a new husband.” Possibly General Hamphna knows what became of Captain Phlega, but Echora is doubtful, and isn’t very interested in going that route. She may ask a player minotaur to confess to a crime, so as to be arrested, and to then try to help Caelest escape.

Also incarcerated for years under the oversight of Vice Warden Fawn is a prisoner named Shelvashl. Improbably, for two years he has managed to resist giving up the names of empyrei that Fawn wants from him. Now he asks a player minotaur herbalist for a poison that will enable him to commit suicide. He asks if you know the story of Mhua Empyreus, who was lonely and suicidal, and so covetous of the friendship of a group of young servant women that she stole a green copper bracelet from one so she could pretend she was friends with them.

“You know the story, right? They realize it was her and lure her away to where they’ve set up a party for her, and now lonely people sometimes find a green copper bracelet and then Mhua herself comes and leads them to a party she’s arranged for them. You’ve heard this, I’m sure. Except it never really happened. I wrote it. For ten years I wrote fictional events like this for a group of empyrei who paid me to do it, to accrue grandeur to the empyrei. In the events there is always somewhere a great empyreus. But also they do it to create the illusion that life is wondrous. They believe people need hope.

Vice Warden Fawn wants to reveal it all. She is writing a play. But I have resisted the worst of her torture; I have not told her the names of the empyrei I worked for. I think people do need hope. Giving them hope is my life’s work. But I know I won’t hold out against her much longer. She is lovely. And like me, she is a writer. A great writer. She has read me her plays. And in the years she has managed my interrogation I have fallen in love with her.

“So I ask you for a poison that will enable me to end my life with dignity. Please.”

Joitraw is an intrinsic with weird beliefs and quid pro quo thinking. He and his player minotaur employee have tracked Awlreien and Lampha to a floating island in Lake Atiph. The best time to swim out and retrieve her would be at night, when the toothy white worms that hunt the lake are torpid, but because Joitraw only controls his host's body during the day he's decided they'll swim out at sunrise and hope to make it before the white worms are fully roused and dangerous. Of course they probably won't. And of course he plans to kill Lampha when he finds him.

Then you need to prep some truths and possible truths, in case the Krater says to give one out. Sometimes you'll come up with one in the moment, when there's something obvious the player minotaur needs to know. But you want to have two or three prepped for the other times.

And finally, you need to prep some possible jungle encounters. You never know when a player minotaur might bottom out his supply of 🐉. It can happen that a minotaur loses two, or even three 🐉 in a quick sequence of roleplaying, so you need to be prepared with a handful of encounters that can happen in the jungle even for the very first session of play. They're short, like movings, often strange, though not always, and often dangerous, though not always. You want at least one Voice encounter for the player minotaurs' first jungle excursion, and Voice encounters in no fewer than two out of every three subsequent excursions. And you want situations across all inflection types. Here are some example jungle encounters:

The Bright Voice has possessed Caelest's false witness Captain Phlega. The minotaurs come upon him at the top of a muddy riverbank near a bridge overgrown and hanging with moss. Lots of brightness in the environment, glaring from the surface of the river, and beams of light through and around the bridge, backlighting it.

Around his chest and over his shoulder he wears a cloth with thirty pieces of silver twisted in it. The Bright Voice believes his wife is under the bridge, but can't figure how to get down the treacherous muddy slope. He believes they had money problems, but he's "going to make it right." Actually under the bridge is a monstrous, heavy, hairy bat creature with a tail like a flexible saw blade.

An utterly still river. No sounds. No insects. Smooth mud on the banks, and a thin mist that crawls and twists over the surface of the mud and the river. And a boy sitting on the bank, plastered in mud. He asks, "What is the most important thing you've ever done?"

A minotaur soldier, an urwicga pilot in the Everwar, semi-translucent from its digestive environment, trembling and addled. His urwicga lies dead from battle wounds nearby. He's close to breaking silence. He's done it before. He's in love with the human woman who trained him to be an urwicga rider. During his training they were inside the same urwicga and their thoughts mingled. He recently made an advance and she rejected him, but he can't get over her. He's really messed up.

The semi-translucent woman urwicga pilot who trained the distraught minotaur pilot. She has come to believe the rumors of nameless generals behind the Everwar, and has taken it upon herself to stop the Everwar if she can. She is stalking someone she believes knows of the generals, worked with them. If she can get her and herself ingested by her urwicga, their memories will stew together and she will know of the nameless generals.

While walking through a clearing blanketed in scarlet flowers, the ground begins to flow and draw the players towards the center. Is it a sinkhole, or something weirder, more sinister?

A boy, Pavakru, who was raised to his teenage years by Haesh and the oracle Misama, roams around with three red-eyed dogs, wearing a red cape, and healing the sick. His powers come from hosting the Red Voice, but it's a mutual relationship. The dogs help him and protect him. They don't sleep at night. They are actually young women whom the Red Voice has given the ability to shape change. Possibly have an attack by a giant owl, or pterosaurs, so if there's an injury the boy and his dogs can arrive and do a healing. Alternately, have an encounter with the mothers of two of the young women, who are following the boy, believing they need to kill him to free their daughters from his spell.

And that's it. Two out of three sessions it's less than an hour of prep work, never prepping exactly what will happen, just enough detail to inspire you and help you communicate a situation to players.

Then, when you run the game, use the movings and focus on hooking the player minotaurs on the doings of gamemaster characters. Players won't have figured out much about their minotaurs to start, and so are often noncommittal in their early interactions, and also often interpret silence as calling for disinterest or outright rejection of the doings of gamemaster characters, so you'll have to work a bit and use various methods to provoke them to get involved.

Treat them like their archetypes. Have a gamemaster character ask an advocate for life advice about an emotionally or morally difficult life problem. Have a gamemaster character give a leader additional, possibly problematic job responsibilities. Have a philosopher discover a covert, hurtful social inequity. Have a gamemaster character in a dangerous situation turn to a soldier for help.

Be substantial and whole-hearted in telling players what's going on in their life and employment circumstances. You created situations you'd be drawn into if you were the player, so don't just tell what

nameless minotaurs might plausibly know—tell the whole of what you'd need to hear yourself to provoke your own initial interest. For the Chelziod situation I'd tell players all of what happened between Caelest, Echora, Hamphna, Larthru, and Phlega, even though actually no one, even Echora, knows all of it. And if they don't already know about the Prison Chelziod, I'd tell them about it as well.

Start with action for at least one of the player minotaurs, to get them excited about and thinking about the Krater and their token resources. Put one into a dangerous or violent encounter, under a massive stone block in a bog, trying to lift it with a block and tackle for some empyrei's grandiose construction project, or sparring with real weapons prior to a scheduled pit fight.

Use your gamemaster characters across the separate storylines of the player minotaurs, to create player interest in each other's doings—have the details and characters of their separate storylines cross into each other, at least once or twice per game session in small ways, and sometimes in big ways.

As the game goes on, use and re-use your gamemaster characters in new and changed contexts. Let separate timelines be somewhat loosely defined, so it's easier to have them intersect. Use the names of women a lot, so maybe a player minotaur accidentally breaks silence. Have intrinsics try to enlist others in their weird beliefs and/or quid pro quo thinking.

If jungle scenes fizzle keep them from being wasted creative detours by reincorporating them into future events somehow. Don't send players back to the same basic encounter they avoided the first time, but show that the story arc of the prior scene has advanced somehow. A seed contains the personality of General Larthru; after meeting some edgy dude with a scourge horn the players discover a corpse with a scourge-crushed forehead; or maybe even something good happens—a creature they avoid later pulls a drowning child from

the river. The world always moves forward. Keep a list of stuff you need to reincorporate.

And have a good time.

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I FOUND FRIENDBEAST heinously in his element, surrounded by crass adherents at an impromptu mushroom roast on the ancient tile patio next to East Gate. Saiama's ward against the formation of cults hung in the arch above, shadowy and flickering from the firelight of the roast. The same light made FriendBeast's blue lips look black.

I edged myself into the small group of men and women in the creature's circle.

"Aha," said FriendBeast, "the servant of our beloved warder. Welcome!" The creature put a piece of seared mushroom into my mouth. "You return after many months away, and with impressive new scars. You must have quite a story for us!"

But I was of no mood. "Stop it, and listen. All of you."

FriendBeast made a moue. "I sense a lecture coming."

"No. Not a lecture. I don't expect words would change anything. Your gossip has been a pox on Lhleshrys for too long. It has to end. Relationships are just an affectation to you, a way for you to push your blue tongue into our soft parts and serve them up for the consumption of others. You sunder us. You open us to the manipulations of others. If your tongue weren't dripping with anesthetic we'd gasp from the injuries. Real relationships are corrective. Interactions create a fine appreciation of each other. You make us less than the whole mesh of who we are. We're more than our giblets."

FriendBeast smirked at his followers. "That's not a lecture?"

“*This*, is not a lecture.” I stepped into him, locked my left hand behind his head, and pushed Dusaia’s cylinders into his ears: first the right, then the left—slow, and as deep as they would go. The screaming went on for some time but he, at least, could not hear it.

In the morning the watchers looked out again on this same civilization of men, but I think they were thinking about me.

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The Clay That Woke is inspired by RPGs with rich, troubled settings like *Jorune*, and *Earthdawn*, and *Ruby*, by Greg Saunders, by *Finite and Infinite Games*, by James P. Carse, and by weird, ancient civilizations in Gene Wolfe’s *The Book of the New Sun* and Paul Park’s *The Starbridge Chronicles*.

I most need to thank my wife Danielle, for her love, and for her support of my projects and for being my greatest sounding board. I love you lady. Also I need to thank Jamey Crook for indefatigable consulting over the years I’ve been working on the game, and for the minotaurs’ naming convention for women, and Nate Marcel for blowing my and all y’all’s minds with his illustrations.

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Malcolm Sheppard’s “Toy Dogma” articles inspired the chimera in the fiction, and the “What Is a Roleplaying Game?” section following it. George Hammond created the slugs and their usage as a drug. Also, when I floundered at designing the soldier archetype refreshes, Luke Crane suggested I look at Jake Norwood’s *The Riddle of Steel* to better wrap my head around the psychology of fighting men, and it was exactly the right recommendation. Thank you Malcolm, George, Luke, and Jake.

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The game would not have become what it is without you. Thank you so much.



*"Even though I was terrified the creature would dash me to my death
I still marveled at what these people could yet find the will to do."*

Here's some beginning advice on what to put into the Krater.

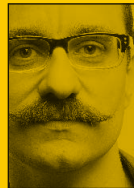
In a dangerous situation you want your minotaur to overcome try putting in two or three 🗡️ or two or three 🧠. Alternately you could put in your 🗡️, along with one or two other tokens that you'd hope to not draw, but if you don't draw your 🗡️ your minotaur will be at risk of dying in the future.

In a social conflict you want your minotaur to overcome put in two or three 🧠. If you're comfortable with your minotaur maybe coming to a compromise with the opposition put in one or two 🧠. If you want to maybe change your opposition's mind about something put in a 🗡️ and a 🧠. If you'd rather learn things about the world or the current situation put in just a few 🧠.

In any situation, or if a situation seems uncertain, like it could easily get violent but you're not sure, you could try for an outcome where the likely threat or opposition doesn't even materialize by putting in two or three 🗡️ and one or two 🧠.

If you think you're in the presence of a Voice, put in a 🗡️ or two and you could get the gift of a unique object or power.

And if you have a 🌀 token it works like a limited wild if you draw it, making it easier to get some of the other outcomes. But probably don't put in more than one of them.



Author Photo by
Errant Knight
Photography

Paul Czege is an artful and iconoclastic designer of roleplaying and storytelling games, a game content innovator, and community builder. He has been awarded the prestigious Diana Jones Award for Gaming Excellence, the Indie RPG of the Year Award, and the Out of the Box "Best Sui Generis RPG" award. His game *My Life with Master* is profiled in *Hobby Games: The 100 Best*, and has been licensed and translated into multiple languages. He is an occasional guest and panelist at game gatherings internationally.

PULLED FROM THE MUD

Generations ago four infant minotaurs were pulled from the mud of the eternal river. You are one of their descendents, a nameless minotaur living in a human civilization that may never again be as great as it was.

The Clay That Woke is a roleplaying game set in a richly-imagined world, with immersive character play guided by an inspiring, unique, token-based oracle.



It's a world sundered by an eerie, perilous jungle, dangerous work, injustice, and strange, disembodied entities. It will find its future in your doings.

