

# TOWN ENCYCLOPEDIA

An encyclopedia penned and illustrated by the most prestigious historiorator Charum Diniael, with additional sketches by Chloe Bunson, age 7, in the year 22.

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## ▲ Timeline of Progress

Offered here is a timeline of major events in the area.

<i>World Created(it is assumed)</i>	<i>Wood</i>	<i>Tom Bean</i>	<i>First known trade with Da Luth</i>	<i>Notebook</i>	
<i>Food</i>	<i>Granary</i>	<i>Inn</i>	<i>Bacon</i>	<i>Experimental tech</i>	<i>Grilled ham and cheese sandwich</i>
<i>Clothing</i>	<i>Fire</i>		<i>The Flood</i>		
<i>Plants establish</i>	<i>Metal</i>	<i>First known human</i>	<i>Soap</i>	<i>Pocket watch</i>	<i>Diniael encyclopedia</i>
<i>Hotfood</i>	<i>Grilled Cheese Sandwich</i>	<i>Chem</i>	<i>Ancient Tech</i>	<i>Screen</i>	
<i>First farmstead near the well</i>	<i>Wheel</i>			<i>The Green</i>	
<i>Cheese Sandwich</i>					
<i>Year: BT (Before Time)</i>	<i>  1 -5</i>	<i>  6-10</i>	<i>  11-15</i>	<i>  16-20</i>	<i>  21+</i>

It's not lost on the author that the cheese sandwich was invented before fire, and thus before bread. The concept of the sandwich in the BT era was much more open to interpretation due to the primitive state of sandwich research at the time.

## The Area and its Denizens

Let it be said in the year 22 the plants are mobile and grumpy, gangster fish run protection rackets and at times the dead roam. The area near Town is at times a place both can be found. There are many groups and factions, for some reason these have taken an interest in our town recently.



The world is a tough place full of odd relics, and has been that way as long as anyone remembers. That's enough for many to go on. There are others who have more curiosity about them. It remains an open question whether curiosity is a positive trait so far as survival. I think yes, but it's hotly debated.

Surviving in the woods isn't a great environment for intellectual endeavors of the kind to answer big questions, and few have bothered to make much of an attempt that we're aware of. Town does seem to have a few people interested in trying, so maybe that will change. I intend to humbly continue to do my part.

There are also those scientists found wandering in the woods, a relatively recent phenomenon. It's a strange sight and while not many of them survive long there seems to be a steady if small supply. Some do survive for a time, here and there, living in the wild or Town. Maybe one of them knows something. They look like they'd know



lots of things and they look like they know nothing at all, at the same time.

**FOREST EDGE:** bordering Plant controlled territory west of Town, sometimes crossing into it, Forest Edge comprises an area with a few dozen lean-tos, spread across several square miles, under an ever-threatening canopy. People here live like mice in the underbrush, foraging what they can, avoiding large threats, always under a watchful eye.

**THE GRAVELANDS:** northeast of Town is a dry grassland with sparse trees and brush. Named for its ceaseless pockets of undead, this is a harsh and uninviting place. Some inhabitants dig small burrows to escape its numerous threats. Because the dead never lack in persistence and tenacity, people of the area spend a good amount of time clearing them from their immediate area. This is usually accomplished with physical force, though some use clever tricks to lead them away.

**SINKING BOG:** not hard to find as you move southeast from Town, you'll smell it miles before you see it. Finding a suitable dry spot without imminent danger is truly difficult, and not many have. Those that do live here overcome numerous challenges on a daily basis. Plants here are particularly twisted. The plentiful water is brackish and foul. Lights dance in the fog at night, luring many to their doom. One false step often leads to a quick end by any number of means.

**CAVE DWELLERS:** dotted all around are caves, natural or otherwise, and there are those who have found ways to live at least some of the time in them. These caves can be extremely dangerous, and people aren't the only ones interested in them.

## THE ECONOMY

Live bullets are the de facto currency of the land. Anyone able to scrape together 10 of them would be considered to have a nice little hoard going, enough to make a career change at least.

Sometimes throwing money at a problem really is the best solution. As they say, you can't take your bullets with you, though you might take someone else's.

## TOWN AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

To the people of the area things generally remain as they have their whole lives – a hard-scrabble struggle to survive. Until recently they could be found living in the wild, scraping by at best, but now there's something new, a tentative beginning.



We find ourselves near a place called Town in the year 22 (someone decided to start counting 22 years ago and it caught on). Town consists of three farmsteads, shacks really, a stone hearth, a very fine looking well, a primitive inn and a primitive granary.

A local porcupine sheds quills often enough they're collected for needles and writing utensils. Between the sheep and spider silk thread can be had. Fat from the dead, rumored to be friend and foe alike, enables one oddly clean farmer abundant soap production. Best not to ask if you want cheap soap, or any soap.

It's as civilized as things get around here. Surviving in the wild is brutal, it's amazing anyone manages, though many do. At least in Town there's relatively consistent food and a few solid walls for those

willing to contribute. And soap, needle, and thread, in relative abundance.

Town hasn't existed for long, but some aspects of having a town became almost immediately important.

### **Mayor: Snob Fluger**

Mayor Fluger came into prominence on the local political scene with his daring 'food for votes' campaign, followed by his even more effective 'bullets for votes' follow-up. Flashy, controversial, fantastically wealthy, impeccably dressed, he won the last vote with a crushing 13-2 victory.

In addition to all those things, Snob has lived up to the hype, creating the first office of Sherriff, supplying 13/15ths of the militia with bullets, and continuing the recent mayoral tradition of not burning the granary down, all highlights of his tenure.

### **Sherriff: Mindy Mork**

Another position filled by the will of the people. Mindy won in a landslide with her 'I have more bullets than you' ad campaign.

Since becoming Sherriff of Town, Sherriff Mork has run a tight ship. According to public record, sheep bleating reports have been cut by more than half and no spider has killed anyone within Town proper.

### **Fire Marshal: William Bunson**

Appointed by the mayor, the Fire Marshal's main role is to stare intently at the granary to ensure it doesn't catch fire. With his installation of a nearby hammock and dark shaded glasses so that he can observe 'at all times of day', Fire Marshal Bunson has shown real dedication and aptitude for the position.

### **Director of Commerce: Lavvy Dovesquatch**

No one knows how Lavvy became Director of Commerce. Or when. Or how the position is filled. Or why. Or what it does. But Lavvy does run a successful soap business.

## The Beginnings of Governance

One farmer said something. Another farmer said something back. Someone died. Further detail is unimportant.



The surviving farmer came up with the idea that if there were a way to not risk death during disagreements it would be a better way. The thought that if they controlled that way they wouldn't ever lose an argument quickly followed.

Roughly a month later, the first mayor, Mayor Town, was elected by a count of 5 to 4, having now a larger family than their neighbor.

Mayor Town followed up this victory with sweeping reforms. No longer would people kill each other when they disagreed, but they would instead respectfully listen to the mayor that at least some of them had voted for.

And progress would continue. Town was named, after its first mayor. Cheese research hit an all-time high. And grievances were laid to rest. The two farming families became the lifeblood of the community we see today, their food fueling our recent expansion.

## The Granary Fire

A glance at the Timeline of Progress shows that the first Granary was built just before Fire was invented.



By all accounts the invention of fire was accomplished in the middle of the room. The spread of progress was rapid and all consuming. A few days later plans for the new and improved granary were created.

No one knows who invented fire. Luckily they left the tools of its creation in place as they fled the scene. Since then further methods have been developed.

## ***The Unknown Inventor***

With mask and cape, travelling the land inventing things wanted and unwanted alike. Are they good, evil or other? What pronoun do they use? Did they set the granary on fire, or was it an accident? Or were they framed!?



So mysterious. Terribly mysterious.

## **Fire and Cheese**

The combination of fire and cheese has marked civilization's progress over the ages. While the Cheese Sandwich, as defined within the looser sandwich morals of its era, came to us BT, fire arrived in town in the year 4. It did not take long for these powerful forces to be combined into the Grilled Cheese, a development with few rivals.

Some say the discovery of the Grilled Ham and Cheese is worthy of consideration, and so is included in the timeline despite the clear inferiority of the product and its derivative history.

## **The Black Hat Militia (Black Hats)**



A local militia that does its part to keep order in the area. Known for wearing their best clothes during combat, including distinctive black hats, to expedite their inevitable funerals.

The Black Hats can be seen performing various tasks and duties on behalf of locals and Town. They do not have the resources or numbers for major operations.



## Bacon

In perhaps the most inspirational spurt of genius of the middle era, bacon was discovered in the year 13, now considered one of the luckiest numbers. No more need be said on this topic.



## Bacon, Fire and Cheese

This subject is not something I'm willing to discuss in mixed company. I shudder at the possibilities.

## The Flood of 14

In the year 14 a terrible shaking and gurgling arose from the center of town. Many people gathered (or fled) to what they assumed was a safe distance from the well, as it heaved to and fro, making the most awful noise (the well, not the people). The noise could be heard from miles away: I know, as I heard it from miles away.

With a rush and bellow water erupted from the well. It poured out as a great geyser hundreds of feet into the air and continued for what is claimed several hours. Due to this outpouring the street was flooded a full 6 feet, the mark of which can be seen on the timbers of certain buildings. Damage was otherwise light, and the shower was simultaneously invented.

As the water receded it is said there were a number of treasures left behind, and it is thought these must have been ejected from the well at the time. Such treasures have never been verified and if they did exist would have been grabbed up immediately by the locals, and later bought up by Well Wishers.

## HOTFOOD

The nearby Plant controlled area is known for producing steaming hot fertilizer, thus the name. Until recently Hotfood was a small food production center. Then in the year 18 the sky turned green and tasted funny.

### The Green

‘How can I taste the sky’ many wondered, yet they did. Earthy. The sky had turned green. Most woke the next morning with a taste in their mouth and stickiness on their clothes. Furniture. Entire world.

People and non-people started sprouting, and it became apparent that the green sky had brought with it a twist toward more plant-based mutation. Sprouts became limbs, antennae, or other nubs of power. For some skin turned green. Plants became stronger.

Now Hotfood is a thriving center of local Plant culture. Not that they have much culture, being grumpy, distrustful, feudal and violently protective of the status quo, or ‘maintaining their roots’. But what culture they have, it seems to be there.

To the average person outside the towering thorny hedge walls separating Plant territory from the rest of the world it boils down to increased and larger patrols, more steam emanating from the center and a much stronger floral smell. Leafy cheers echo from behind the walls.

For a sense of scale, looking at the regional map, Hotfood is ‘the big city’ (someone else’s to be fair) and is a place few non-plants have ever been, about 3 days walk from Town if the many Plant guard posts would let you through.



# Factions

There are countless factions in this world. Below are the more common and well known to anyone surviving in the nearby wilderness or living in Town.

## PLANTS

The Plants live in feudal enclaves with high hedge walls and intense defenses, and though each enclave speaks roughly the same Plant language their shared borders are highly militarized. A typical Plant enclave is anywhere from a few acres to potentially hundreds of square miles or more. It's hard to say exactly, but some are clearly enormous.

Rumors abound of Plant Champions hundreds of years old, described as huge, brutal plant-beasts with hordes of smaller plants scrapping for bits of sunlight from between their dense canopies.



Due to their ubiquitous nature Plants are often seen patrolling, tending to unknown errands and tasks, keeping to themselves on the fringe of Town's population for the most part. Most eye Town suspiciously from afar, perhaps wary of encroachment, though some have traded with those of the wild in the past, and shared stories when language wasn't a barrier. It's not unheard of for Plants to get aggressive.

Given their ability to blend in with the surroundings, it would be reasonable to assume Town is often watched by unseen eyes.

## BEAST

Beast mutants near Town have lived mostly in the wild until recently. Most are not related to a specific faction or common theme, and some live in town, at times holding important positions.

There are also many beast-related factions comprised of specific themes, and individuals may visit Town to trade.

## **UNDEAD**

The living dead can be found scattered in the wilderness. The Plants to the west seem to have no problem dealing with any that come near them, and so when the dead roam into Town they tend to come from other directions.

Being so slow and unintelligent the undead are more of a nuisance than a threat, though they can pose a problem if they catch someone in a compromised position unaware.

## **COD-A NOSTRA**

The schools of Cod have expanded their range, which now includes land; and their endeavors, which now includes organized crime. The wilds abound with stories of people disappearing, or worse. Legend says their code of honor is brutally enforced by their leader.

Their range tends to the south, though rivers are like roads to them, used to spread their influence further and further inland. Generally they have kept a reasonable distance from Town.

## **DA LOOTH TOOTH TRADING COMPANY**

Being a merchant in this land requires durability and quick thinking. Known for being tradespeople who can be counted on and who negotiate fairly, but who are in no way naive. Their way of trading has kept them around a while in a dangerous world.

Da Looth Tooth traders are at times seen passing by the area and have stopped near Town to trade before, as is their way.

## **UNKNOWN**

Flickering lights can be seen sometimes in the depth of the forest. A distant clank, the jingling of far off bells. A flash of light and a muffled explosion. Who or what causes these things? Stories are of magical creatures with wings that live in the forest and flit about. Others speak of goblins laying traps, gnome-like and cruel.

Or it could be the random clank of some object moved by the wind. Someone walking around with a flashlight. Swamp gas and a flame.

## Religions

Why is the world the way it is? Who or what created it? Is alliteration more important than eating tacos whatever day you want? Timeless questions. Perhaps the religions have some answers.

It's rare to find more than a few worshippers of any given thing in any one place, as it's rare to find more than a few of anyone anywhere. Except plants. Those seem to be everywhere.

Outside Plant dominated areas can be found the worship of a diverse collection of deities and concepts. You may see the word sacrifice here: it refers to a wide spectrum, from material to spiritual, resources to emotion, but does not include the wasting of life in any of the established religions of the area.

## THE PLANT PANTHEON

Plants worship multiple gods at different times for different reasons. Other creatures also worship the Plant gods, though it's doubtful many if any have been to an official Orthodox Plant service.

## Sun



‘Provider. Destroyer. You are the giver and taker of life.’

Plants have a deep spiritual connection to Sun as ‘the everlasting provider’, and a respect as ‘the one who makes it far too hot’.

Within the Plant origin story Sun is a powerful force for growth and change that arrived last within the collection of deities. Sun

disrupted the harmony that existed prior, cold and lifeless though it may have been, and brought life from what was there before.

Too much Sun can burn, even plants, so the balance with Night is considered fundamental to Plant religion.

## Water



Worship of Water boils down to the sustenance it provides and its role as partner of Dirt in the Story of the First Seed. Water is respected for what it is, but also looked at a bit distrustfully as it left Dirt in the beginning.

## Dirt



Dirt is the foundation, the center of all things. Strong, consistent, always there for Plants.

## Night



‘Sun will destroy you if it can catch you, but first it must catch you, darkness with a thousand lights.’

Eternal, endless, first. Night has existed always, and where there is nothing else, there is Night.

While it's important that Sun remain in balance with Night, plants view Night as primordial and cold, an endless darkness that cannot sustain and only tolerates life.

## **The Story of the First Seed**

Dirt first existed in a world of Night, cold and barren. No things lived upon Dirt, and Water and Dirt were as one.

One day Sun appeared in the sky and chased away Night, and its rays landed upon Dirt. At first Dirt was pleased with the warmth but Sun was unrelenting and before long Dirt began to dry and crack, and Water shrank away.

Soon so much moisture had been driven out that Water broke from Dirt, forced into the sky as clouds. As the clouds passed overhead casting their shadows, Dirt was reminded of how things were before Sun. Dirt searched within the deepest caves and found Night hiding there. To open the caves Dirt began to shake and heave, until great cracks appeared, letting out Night.

As Night came out, the First Seed fell out onto Dirt. It had become stuck in Night's cloak. In the bright light of Sun, Night ran to hide on the other side of Dirt, angering Sun and starting the daily cycle as Sun chases Night across the sky. Night is just as persistent and is never caught.

As Sun rose it heated the clouds and Water ran back to Dirt in the form of rain. Over the course of the day Water was separated again from Dirt by Sun, and so the rain cycle was born.

When the First Seed was greeted by Sun it absorbed Water and Sun's power and began to change. It grew roots and embraced Dirt, trying to get back to its origins, as it also sprouted and began to reach for Sun's warmth. Just as Sun was getting to be too much for the sprout it went around the other side of Dirt chasing Night, which then appeared above the sprout. With Night above dew formed and

the sprout continued to drink and grow stronger, but soon the sprout began to shiver in the cold and wish for the Sun. In the morning Sun appeared and the cycle began anew. All Plants are related to this First Sprout.



So it is that we reach to Sun as the life-giver, embrace Dirt as the foundation, cherish Water as life giving essence and an original part of Dirt, and respect Night as an original and necessary balancing force.

## **Numerous Ancient and Powerful Plants**

When a plant's power is sufficient it begins to attract followers, who grow within its canopy and contribute everything they have to its glory. Some ancient and powerful plants are worshipped in this way as local deities, cults in a sense.

Few of these deities would claim to be the equal of any of the Orthodox Plant gods, but within their realm their power over their subjects seems absolute. No mighty oak, never mind an average tree, would dare cross such a creature, lest they be cut off from light and water, their roots mercilessly crowded to be withered away.

It's assumed not all ancient plants behave this way, but the limited experience of locals provides only rumors of such things. They undoubtedly hold considerable power.



## **THE COD GOD - THE KRAKALAKIN**

Woe to you, oh earth and sea,  
as this mountain moves with crushing wrath,  
because no equal can there be.

Let those who know reckon the power of the Krakalakin,  
For it is immeasurable power.

## **COMBAT**

Many worship combat as a sort of feral and primal force, while others worship the more collaborative aspects of teamwork and tactics. Groups get closer when facing danger and overcoming tense situations, opportunities to do so being common here.

Adherents tend to be gritty, hardened, often particular about their weapons and loyal to and protective of their group. Scars are both avoided as a measure of skill and revered as ultimately unavoidable badges of honor. Unwarranted self-sacrifice is considered disgraceful, while dying outside of combat is seen as wasteful.

## **DEATH**

There's more than one way to worship death. To some it's a universal truth deserving of respect, others a great equalizer. Some wish to honor past loved ones with ritual and sometimes sacrifice.

Over the years strange semi-coherent individuals in cowls and flowing robes have appeared in the area claiming to worship a god that can bring death to all. These individuals never stick around long, leaving, dying or disappearing as abruptly as they show up. Regardless how it's worshipped, or isn't, death visits us all.



## **FARMING / THE HARVEST**

Knowledge and hard work lead to survival. If you put forth the effort in the right way at the right time you will be rewarded.

Consistent results have made this a popular faith. Reward follows ritual. Strict adherence to calendars and portents have kept the flock well fed, alive, and thus able to return.

## **THE HUNT**

Respect for the hunted, knowledge and skill for the kill. Worshippers of The Hunt are likened to a sect of The Harvest as they share some of the ritual aspects, eschewing others, as is practical given their differences, while adding a stealthy and respectfully violent aspect.

## **STORIES**

Yanaibo is the keeper of stories.

Originally stories were kept by Anuky the Wise Crow, but Yanaibo deceived Anuky and took her stories for their own. The other creatures didn't respect Yanaibo, and some still don't, while others now begrudgingly do.

### **The Story of Yanaibo, Badger and Anuky**

Yanaibo the mushroom was friends with Badger and they were often found together. One day Badger invited Yanaibo to join him collecting spores. "Please come to my place at dawn and we will hunt spores and make spore soup" Badger said to Yanaibo.

The next morning they met and went out in search of spores. Badger had some idea where the spores could be. Every time he would go out into the field and, using his antennae, could tell roughly where they might be. Yanaibo would immediately get low to the ground and grab up the spores before Badger could get to them.

Yanaibo collected many spores but did not give a single one to Badger. When Badger asked, Yanaibo said they had collected the



spores first so they belonged to them. After some time Yanaibo was tired of carrying the sack full of spores and could barely move, and still wouldn't share. Badger, who was annoyed with Yanaibo's selfishness, ran away, leaving Yanaibo alone in a brightly lit field.

Yanaibo was scared and staggered around, disoriented by the bright light of noon. They had no idea which direction to go. Suddenly, while staggering about, they came across a shack. They wanted to stay under the shack for the rest of the day, but feared whoever might live there, and so thought of a plan.

"Dear friend, can I come in?" asked Yanaibo, unsure of who the shack belonged to. "Who is it?" came a voice in return.

"It is Yanaibo, your friend" Yanaibo replied.

It was Anuky in the shack. Anuky was angry to hear Yanaibo's voice as she had been deceived several times in the past by Yanaibo, and did not consider them her friend. Anuky wanted to teach Yanaibo a lesson and called them inside the shack.

Anuky took the spores from Yanaibo and boiled them in a kettle. Once the spores were cooked Anuky's family sat and ate them hungrily. Anuky offered some to Yanaibo, but Yanaibo was distrustful and scared and refused the offer.

Then secretly Anuky put a bunch of nettles in with the remaining spores and stirred it all together. She told Yanaibo there were more spores in the kettle and they could eat them if they felt hungry.

Later, when everyone was asleep, Yanaibo went slowly to the kettle and took a large spoonful of the spores into their mouth. The nettles stung painfully and Yanaibo screamed out loud.

"What's the matter Yanaibo?" asked Anuky. "Nothing at all" Yanaibo replied.

Yanaibo was very hungry and so took another large spoonful. This one hurt even more, and Yanaibo screamed even louder.

“Are you alright?” asked Anuky. “I am fine, I was just having a nightmare” Yanaibo replied.

Anuky turned on a light and rose up in front of it, creating a large and ominous shadow on the wall next to Yanaibo. “Are you saying you’re scared in my house? Are you distrustful?”

Between the stinging pain and scary shadow Yanaibo was terrified and ran for their life, never looking back. Anuky crowed to herself and gave a small cackle as she had taught a lesson to Yanaibo for trying to deceive her.

Yanaibo never again went in the direction of the shack or ate spore soup. They visited Badger a few times, but Badger’s wife would always ask them to come later, saying Badger wasn’t home.

## **LUCK**

Random chance can be cruel, why not tip the scales? A favorite of scavengers, you never know what you’ll find in one of those caves. Could be a bear, could be a bunch of traps, maybe some treasure, often all three. It never hurts to have luck on your side.

## **SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING**

Two fields that often work closely together. Embodied by the concepts of ingenuity and industriousness as represented in imagery by two crows, Anuky (science) and Kwaah (engineering). Adherents often have a small representation of the crows on their person.



Those worshipping Science and Engineering either create or support creation of items of great power, useful or otherwise.

## **CHANGE**

Change here is a powerful constant. Those looking to influence its direction often appeal to the great forces of change in hopes of bending its path, an often fruitless endeavor. Sometimes, though, change goes the way of hope.

Did the sacrifices help? Who can say?

## **THE WELL**

Arising after the Flood of 14, a cult-like following of The Well, or what they presume lies within, has arisen. Powerful symbols include the Geyser, the Flood, various perceived monsters, and Ancient Tech (treasures of the well).



Adherents are known to throw offerings into the well and make wishes upon doing so, and so are known as Well Wishers.

If you seek them out you can probably obtain a holy relic, treasure from the original geyser they say. Sure, it's a bit expensive, but that's the price of getting this close to your faith.

## **Local Myths and Legends**

One persistent myth that spreads through the area in waves is varying versions of fish people stealing children, though sometimes it's replaced with fairies stealing children, or zombies, plants, travelling merchants, the story is generally the same with a different child-stealing antagonist.

Other local myths are quite numerous. People living in a harsh land trying to keep their children safe come up with the most fantastic tales, not to say they aren't true. Here is a sampling of local myths.

## **THE MONSTER IN THE WELL**

When people first chose to live here one of the reasons was the well, a monolith sitting in a grassy field. Solidly built, nicely decorated with runes, well located and unclogged. The water from it pure, unspoiled. Some prior residents must have made it and did a beautiful job.

Getting close to it sets off some alarm, and staying for too long isn't wise, bad things happen. About a minute is all you have to grab your water and get out. But that's the price of clean water it seems.

And sure, it seems to be possessed at times. There are times when it gives no water. It never lasts more than a day. During this time there can be a strange gurgling, but it's too deep to see what's going on from above.

Other strange noises come from the well sometimes, screeching or groaning as if water is being forced through a loose pipe.

A myth persists about one brave young man the name of Tom Bean. It's said he climbed down and never returned.

Perhaps it's no surprise that some locals believe a monster lives in the well. They say you can hear it sometimes, and it ate Tom Bean. Children of the area grow up with this story.

Others say Tom Bean left town to seek his own fortune, or that he's not even a real person and it's a made up name. Longtime residents who can remember way back when Ned (just Ned) started counting years might say they knew old Tom Bean, he'd be about.. well, more than 30 years, real old now. Or it could be Tom's the monster, living down there all these years.

Sensible folk say there's no monster, but sensible folk also don't linger around the well.

## **HUMAN**

Often a person is found lacking tentacles or antennae or any of the things that make people who they are. They can be seen here and

there – your barber might be one, or the farmer down the road. They still usually find a way to survive and contribute somehow.

These are known as the ‘Human’. It’s assumed they have some mutation, it’s common to have one that doesn’t show as much. Maybe theirs don’t show and will show later. Late bloomers.

It’s important to treat them like anyone else. It’s not their fault they were born different, and a good person is accepting of those different than them. But some locals think the Human have supernatural powers or blame them for things that go wrong.

## **THE IMMORTALS**

A mythical pack of Gunslingers who wander the world fighting for justice, profit, sometimes both, often neither.

Tales of The Immortals are known by most children, and they are often a point of conversation among friends. Are they good? Bad? Either? Everyone has their opinion. There are as many stories of them saving the day as there are tales of murder and thievery.

## **Tales and Notes**

Excerpts from the past and present, relayed as spoken stories.

### **SCREEN**

Found on a screen in a particular cave in the year 20. This is what was reported:

A mass of text flashed and scrolled too quickly to read on the screen, then disappeared. Video went live, showed a person in a lab coat with long bushy hair. They seemed startled. They stopped what they were doing and turned to the camera with a wild look.

‘Is someone there? I’m not getting any visual or audio. Your side must be broken. Ta..’

Then the screen went dark and would not come up again.

## **MOST FOUL**

Based on a tale told by a local fisherman who wishes to remain nameless

The small boat drifted silently. It spun quietly on an eddy and stuck briefly on the shore until the water gently leveraged it back into the current, where it slowly regained speed and headed further downstream.

It reached a small pool, spun some more, and finally settled firmly onto shore. It is here the boat was found.

As the fisherman approached they took out their knife. Can never be too careful around here. They put away their knife and brandished a shotgun. Smart. Peering over the edge of the dingy brought a vision of horror and sudden recognition of a smell most foul.

Not so much a pile of bodies as a mound of parts. Dead is an understatement, but dead at least a week. They secured the boat and alerted the soap-maker.

Who would do such a thing? And why? How is perhaps less interesting a question.

## **NOTEBOOK**

Pieced together from a tattered notebook found under a concrete slab in 19:

‘... then she said I ... and it was blue so ... if it looks like a duck and it smells ... so many times. It’s exhausting. We tried to ... results are promising. There has to be a way. In ... of doubt ... is posterity all we ha ... uch less. The door held, ... ully the f ... erse polarity and overcha ... e door opened ...’

## **GONE WRONG**

Mission debrief of a recent unspecified operation

How had we ended up there? It was a simple mission to find out a little more about the surrounding area. Now the woods themselves rustled with a thousand leafy eyes, and massive, plodding, pounding steps circled and closed in.



We stumbled into a small depression, a crack between two large rocks devoid of plants. For once I was glad food is scarce, and most of us were able to shimmy in far enough to at least think we'd be hard to find. Luen lost the game of musical hiding spots, glanced over and with a nod and a wry smile, and without hesitation, stood straight up and began running.

What at first looked like a path quickly narrowed as the weeds crowded in and began to lash at her feet, finally tripping her up. The ponderous plodding became a quick, deep drumbeat, moving away from the lucky few who were hidden, quickly approaching her.

She dragged herself a few feet, backing away in the dirt. Then the thumping rhythm and rustling of leaves came. She fired a pounding volley and the bullets bit into the wood loud and hard. Not nearly enough to stop that monstrosity. Her scream still echoes in my mind and ended with a sickening crunch and incomprehensible thud.

She did her job though and bought us some space and time. We managed to slip away.

## **DYING TREE**

Claimed to be the last statement of an ancient tree on its deathbed in 03:

'I can see.. the flash of light in my rings. And.. then the decade.. without summer. It was during that time I awoke. Cold.. not forever. How long ago? Let me.. count.. rings.. 1.. 2..' The tree was cremated as per its last wishes.

## **BACON**

From the notes of the inventor known as Francis in the year 13:

'Until from the midst of darkness a sudden light broke upon me. A light so brilliant and wondrous, and yet so simple. Of the thickness of the slice I had little doubt. Now I placed the fatty meat upon the fire, and the fire upon the fatty meat. I alone succeeded in discovering the secret of creating bacon, of life itself.'

## **THE GRILLED CHEESE CHRONICLES**

A Brief History of Grilled Cheese, by Esteban Birdsley, the year 21

‘..as some have stated the part of the current calendar depicting ancient times could rightly and fairly be changed to BC, or Before Cheese (of a Grilled Nature).

As my studies have shown the Cheese Sandwich of those times consisted of cheese held between two further slices of cheese, the progenitor of the classic configuration. Soon after fire came bread, and then the modern Cheese Sandwich, critical to enable grilling to be certain, but a step on a path that had already begun.

Are we to tear down the edifice of the original Cheese Sandwich and relegate it to merely a tri-cheese snack? In the opinion of this scholar this is revisionist history. The original sandwich of three cheeses laid the foundation for what was to come and cannot be ignored.

It is in light of this noble heritage that we scholars of the grilled cheese sciences are united in our recommendation that a statue be erected, depicting the original cheese sandwich, in the center of Town.’

## **THE INFAMOUS POETRY RENDING**

‘Quoth the Ducky-Face’ by Edna Ellen Prose

“Infamous, it’s when you’re MORE than famous.” - unknown

Once upon a midnight mopey, while I bathed, all wet and soapy,  
Rubber ducky lost among the bubbles o’er my toes.

While I grasped at ducky blindly, said I aloud ‘Come hither kindly’,  
Ducky lost in stygian foam, mounds of foam as deep as snow.

“’Tis lost” said I, “in foam through which I cannot see below”.

Heard I faintly then, “Oh noes.”

The foam it then was shifting, forward slowly ducky drifting,  
Moving towards the space where is my face and thus my nose.

“Tell me fiend of your intention, most diabolical invention”,

Ignoring waves as if a stanchion, sailing forth though no wind blows.

My heart fills with apprehension as my trepidation grows.

Think me to myself, "Oh noes."

And the ducky, is it gloating? Still is floating, *still* is floating,

On the gray and murky water waves a-lapping at my toes.

By the candle beak is gleaming, beady dead black eyes still beaming,

Here I face its silent screaming in the bath that I have chose.

Silent screaming rubber ducky with a face that's fully froze.

Quoth the ducky-face, "Oh noes."



## Message from the Author

At this moment the bleating of a sheep, recently procured and raised by my not-quite-far-enough-away neighbor in a fit of industriousness, reminds me both of our rustic way of life and the inexorable march of progress currently underway. Not since the invention of fire in the year 4 has growth in the area moved so quickly, and someone simply must record the incredible goings-on.

Anyone reading this and wishing to procure this text is a liar and a fraud, as they clearly already have a copy of this text, which they are reading, and is asked to stay away from me.

This being the first of what is to be many encyclopedic creations by Charum Diniai, created (the encyclopedic creation, not Charum) in this the year 22.

Special thanks to Chloe Bunson for her inspired art.