Academic Exorcise – Notes

It has come to the attention of the governments of various cities that other cities besides Ankh-Morpork have recently acquired colleges of magic, and this is being tolerated. Therefore, it has become desirable. Therefore, the Sto Kerrig College of Agriculture has just been re-established as the Sto Kerrig College of Thaumaturgical Arts. Of course, it needs a properly qualified faculty. That's where the PCs come in. It also needs better facilities than a cabbage farm.

***Sto Kerrig**:* A small city-state and protectorate of Sto Lat, with just enough ambition in the past to have its own agricultural college. Now, though, the **Council of Merchants** is getting ambitious. Okay, *quietly* ambitious… But they've rounded up an assortment of wizards, signed them on as teachers at the old **College of Agriculture**, and then announced the plan to promote that to a magical college.

However, the College of Agriculture was being run out of an old farmhouse, which obviously won't do for the new purpose. On the other hand, funds are finite. Therefore, they've bought the **Old Crockmaroon Place,** on the edge of town, and handed it over to the wizards. It's known to be haunted, but wizards can deal with something like *that,* surely. The builders will be in next week, so the PCs have until then to get the place safe for persons of a non-paranormal persuasion.

Setup

The players are informed that their character have all been signed up by the Council of Merchants in Sto Kerrig as part of this scheme to set up a new magical college – and they've all gone for it, mostly as a way of getting into academia on the ground floor with fast promotion prospects. However, they all have their own agendas. Introduce them to each other with descriptions of what little they know about each other. Then mention that they currently share cramped offices in an old farmhouse, but they've been promised better. Well, without as many pigs.

This morning, they get a visit from **Master Arbuthnot**, the Council's Secretary for Higher Education. He gives them the background above, mentions **Mr [Morgan] Cheesefire** (the chairman of the council) as wanting this to go off without any trouble and to reflect well on the town, wishes them good luck, and reminds them to file expenses claims with his under-secretary in triplicate.

This will presumably lead to them visiting The Old Crockmaroon Place, which turns out to be a crumbling "gothic" pile which is a total maze inside. (Navigation is by dice roll, not by map.) The place is also amazingly unsafe inside…

Secret Background

Actually, technically speaking, the Old Crockmaroon Place isn't haunted. It has a gargoyle, **Roddy** (short for Lightning Rod – he's tall and thin and looks oddly metallic) living on top of the tallest tower, and goblins in the basement, but the rest is neighbourhood kids' stories.

However, one of those kids has grown up to be a city councilman – or rather a former councilman, as he was voted out last year by some complicated shenanigans:

Former Councilman Fergus Skerrig

Traits: Total ass; Competent cabinet-maker; Vengeful.

So Skerrig has decided to sabotage the College project, making the current Council look like idiots, and then weasel his way back in. He knows how to saw through a joist where it'll do the most damage, and he's also bribed a few local kids to try and scare anyone arriving at the house, and to

tell some spine-tingling tales about the place if anyone asks, “as a joke”. But not being stupid, he dressed in heavy black garb, with a scarf over his mouth, while dealing with those kids.

However… He doesn’t know about the last scion of the Crockmaroon line, now a wild-eyed vagrant but still sure that the house is rightfully his:

Parquar Crockmaroon

Traits: Conspiracy nut; Knows this place like nobody else; Infected with the Purple Shakes.

Parquar has been secretly establishing himself in the house for years, making a nest of salvaged soft furnishings in the old walk-in wardrobe in the master bedroom in the tower. He’s repurposed that bedroom, which he reaches by an old, hidden servants’ staircase (which isn’t quite as likely to collapse as the mains staircase, especially since Skerrig started sabotaging that); the walls are covered with bits of paper, held on by pins and home-made glue, and linked by assorted strings and ribbons of various colours. If anyone takes the time to study them, these do actually prove that his family was defrauded and driven into poverty – nearly 100 years ago. It’s too late to do anything about that, but the fraudster was the ancestor of Morgan Cheesefire, giving the information a little blackmail value.

BUT – Parquar has lately gone down with a case of the Purple Shakes, a disease unique to Sto Kerrig, which causes him to shiver in fluorescent colours. He’s being nursed in **St. Maliciomaximus’ Hospital for the Lurid,** a local charitable institution of dubious reliability, where **Dr Calamari**, who is obsessed by the study of the disease, is interpreting all his detailed ramblings as metaphors for the progress of the infection. This is leading Calamari to an insanely complex theory, but he’s got some good notes. He also believes (wrongly) that the disease is highly infectious in its early stages, and he’s working out that Parquar was based out at the house. So he’ll turn up at some point in the course of events.

Dr Calamari

Traits: Obsessed with his theories; Terrified of infection; Wears all-enveloping black “sanitary” robes, complete with a pointy mask full of alchemical filters that gives his rather squeaky voice a lot of echo.

Oh, and while Calamari is distracted, Parquar will escape from the hospital, make his way back to the house, get into the more obscure back passages, and scurry around, occasionally popping from behind curtains to accuse Calimari of being in league with the Cheesefires. As the Cheesefires make fairly generous donations to the hospital, this may not sound like news.

The Disease Spreads

Actually, the Purple Shivers is caused by the spores of an obscure mould, which grows in the cellars and wall-spaces of the house, and which has been stirred up by Fergus’ carpentry efforts. Late in the course of events, Fergus goes down with a case himself, concludes that the wizards have cursed him, and makes his way to the house, shivering violently purple all the while, to demand that they remove the curse. He is accompanied by Constables **Reft** and **Bellmonger** of the local Watch, whose controlling Trait is “Don’t want any trouble”. If told that the disease is infectious, they will at least step backwards smartly, and possibly decamp several rooms away.

The Purple Shivers mould spores may be flushed out of someone’s lungs with the right sort of magic. The difficult bit is working out what causes it. The goblins know the mould as “Fancy Sneezes”, and can recognise the smell on a sufferer’s breath.

The Goblins

Oh yes… **Elucidations Of The Elegance Of Melody**, his wife **Colours Of The Leaves In Autumn,** and their children, **Dreams Of Shadows In Moonlight** and **Proof Of Sorrow And Encouragement,** have been camped in the basement for a long, indefinite time now. They try to keep out of the way, and are good at it; they are of course aware that there's a human often hangs around the place, but as he curses them (like most humans), they tend to keep out of his way. They've noticed more human activity up there lately, and Dreams of Shadow, being bright and curious, thinks that it's involved a *different* human.

Goblins

Traits: Creature of the Shadows; Sordid Claws; Nervous as all heck.

The Gargoyle

In case it matters…

Roddy actually only took up residence a couple of years ago. He hasn't paid any attention to what goes on in the house, but if offered any sort of half-decent deal, he'll happily act as a spotter.

Roddy

Traits: Tall, thin, and pointy; Born to be an architectural feature; Doesn't sweat the small stuff, or for that matter the large stuff.