

THE ALMANAC AND THE ATLAS

SELECTED EXCERPTS

The catalog of forms is infinite. For as long as forms have yet to find their city, new cities will continue to be born. The end of the city begins at the point where forms exhaust their variety and come apart.

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

Whenever you're directed to roll for an Event or a Stop, consult the Almanac or the Atlas and roll 1d6. Then roll another 1d6 on the indicated table. If you have access to more than the twelve tables contained in this document, swap them between games to shape the vistas you'll encounter.

For example, if your conductor has the Atlas Obscura ability, replace one of these Stop or Event tables with one you created with your fellow travelers. Likewise, if you have an additional Stop or Event table from the Internet, this is the place to use it.

ALMANAC (EVENTS)

1. Weather
2. Wildlife, Normal
3. The Rails
4. Junctions
5. Strange Travelers
6. Uncommon Geographies

ATLAS (STOPS)

1. Oases
2. Bones of the Earth
3. Underground
4. Cities of Inspiration
5. Uncanny Technology
6. Libraries and the Like

EVENTS III — THE RAILS

■ The rails gleam in the sunlight, the ivory of tempered bone running towards the horizon. This section is maintained by the Order of the Bone Rails; those anonymous penitents who devote their time to the integrity of the journey upon which they failed.

Each former traveler reveres the journey to Cerebos; it is transformative and holy. To this end, travelers are often assisted by the hooded figures. Food and drink is provided, and although silent, many report sleeping more soundly on the Bone Rails than before or since. Dreams on the Bone Rails are revealing; each traveler must face their reasons for undertaking this journey, and those who are found wanting are either taken by the Order or – especially the well-boned – are asked to demonstrate their sincerity with a small “donation” to the rails.

Danger: 3; **Keepsake:** Healthy bones worth a one-time reroll of any die when making a Trait check or releasing a touchstone.

■ One of the strangest things about this strange journey is the maintenance of its rails. There is no company tasked to their care. It's as though nature Herself is assisting in the journey. The worms that reside next to the tracks slide slowly, forming orderly queues. Though more than two feet long, it is easy to get the impression they are harmless.

Although most travelers make it through the area with no incidents, once every seven years, the worms will climb into a train car and drag someone off. Nothing bad happens, per se: The worms just lack opposable thumbs and need to borrow a traveler's in order to fix the rails. Heavens, would you look at the time.


Danger: 2; **Keepsake:** Invigorating worm resin, still wet, worth a one-time reroll of any die when making a Trait check or releasing a touchstone.

■ Trees are not railroad tracks. This is common sense. Trees grow upwards and don't like lumberjacks, whereas railroad tracks grow horizontally and are neutral as to one's vocation. So it is a bit odd to see ironwood knotting itself together and growing off the track, even being so polite as to size itself in accordance to the track's gauge. (Though it takes no position on the validity of switching to the New Imperial System).

Such an oddity raises many questions. Was the wooden track made by someone, or did it grow that way? And perhaps more importantly, where is it going? Will the end of this new track lead to a Stream of Laughter, or perhaps a Hole of Mild Self-Loathing?


Danger: 1; **Keepsake:** A vague map carved on a spar of ironwood that allows a one-time reroll on the Almanac.

EVENTS III – THE RAILS (CONTINUED)

 The smooth singing of the train's movement is interrupted with a series of jostles and oddly timed metal squeals, which the knowledgeable traveler may be able to recognize as the Course Mode. Oh, there are such promises hidden in the high-pitched message. Joys, delights, and gorgeous days await those who follow the message's instructions. Unfortunately, the actual instructions are encoded or otherwise garbled.


There is no danger in attempting to decode the message. At least not directly. Unfortunately, the message tends to find its way into the mind whether the listeners desire it or not. All who hear the Message carry the Message. Those who wish to contain the Message must stop the journey of any who hear it – or at least confirm they've reached the correct interpretation.

Danger: 5; **Keepsake:** A rattled-out tale of the road ahead that allows a one-time reroll on the Atlas.

 Most people agree that trains should not be on fire, as it makes traveling rather uncomfortable. In fact, this is so universally agreed upon that any proper train will have measures to prevent unexpected spontaneous combustion. They are rarely as prepared for planned combustion.

The trackside mirrors are just another oddity until the sun reaches its height, where it aligns perfectly to reflect such light and heat to create rails of solid luminescence. And where there's smoke, soon enough there's fire. Sure enough, flames begin leaping throughout the train.


Danger: 5 **Keepsake:** A flash of insight mixed with panic that provides a new rank 1 Trait.

 Passengers aren't the only ones tested on this trip. Conductors have their own challenges, stories of which are whispered at stations between passing trains. The Rail Labyrinth looms over the flat plains, bare of potential landmarks. Criss-crossed in every conceivable direction, the rails contain no direction markers, only unmarked and worn switches (with no indicators as to which rails they control). The sun does not move overhead, and the train jostles as it abruptly shifts paths to avoid the perils of the maze.

Make no mistake: passengers are not necessary for the traversal of the Rail Labyrinth. This is the Conductor's journey. All the same, should you not wish to be trapped for eternity, it may be wise to assist the Conductor. Scouting? Perhaps persuading her to not test the Labyrinth at all? In any case, watch out for unsecured baggage.


Danger: 3; **Keepsake:** A newfound respect for infrastructure engineers that provides a new rank 1 Trait and a knowing smile from the conductor.

STOPS I — OASES

 We soon found ourselves at Corval, a bustling oasis hunched within the ruins of a once-great city. Great Corval's obsolescence was planned. Its rulers knew destruction is the fate of all civilizations, so they planned its end down to the minute. We encountered the descendents of these forward-thinkers by the ponds, where they traded water and coal. For a donation to the New Corval Benevolent Fund, they guided us to the water's source.


Even if you care not for New Corval, the pools are worth the visit. At night, the linked waterways capture the stars. The pools' tenders tell us these miraculous waters can burn away maladies of the flesh or fuel many a wondrous device. However, they caution against diving too deep. One of their number availed herself too greatly of the water and is now a constellation. The world's concerns must look so small from her view.

Danger: 3; **Keepsake:** A vial of star-infused water that allows the traveler to re-narrate a single Trait check for any traveler. The check must still stick to the rules established in the roll's category (e.g. Success, Failure, etc.)

 Crystalline boulders litter this crater, whose high walls protect against the elements. The locals cut and facet this empyrean debris to create useful goods, including Highcrater lachrymosas: hexagonal pendants filled with funeral tears. As the tears evaporate, the pendants emit a shrill whistle unrecognizable save to the cleverest of dogs. Subconsciously, it soothes bereavement, agitates ghosts, and discomfits the deceased's creditors.

A funeral has entered its third day. The deceased's will stipulates a visiting traveler must carry their tears. Sometimes only a stranger will listen to the heart's deepest sorrow. Naturally, there are also those among the living who care little for the wishes of the dead.

Danger: 1; **Keepsake:** A lachrymosa that allows its owner to deal a traveler 1 Damage and change one of that traveler's rank 1 Traits after a short conversation.

 The rail doesn't cross into the domed oasis of Mirram, but no one from within its frosted glass border helps passengers disembark. Nothing exists outside of Mirram; anyone that claims otherwise must be disoriented by the side effects of spontaneous generation.

Splendid Mirram glitters like an emerald, from its vine-enrobed central pillar to the broad-leaved ferns that regulate its water cycle. Mirram spans a crater that was once a sea of diamonds. On occasion, subterranean gas breaches the miners' seals, and klaxons send citizens rushing for their masks. What deeds go unavenged and scores are settled in the yellow haze?

Danger: 5; **Keepsake:** A lungful of subterranean gas that allows a one-time reroll on the Almanac.

STOPS I — OASES (CONTINUED)

☐☐☐ At the oasis of Pyppe, a massive stone pipe runs parallel to the track for several kilometers before turning south. Ooze seeps from the pipe's bevelled joints. The Disorder of Hands depend on the pipe for sustenance, as do the stunted goats they tend. The goats know the ebb and flow of the choicest liquids, while the mystics' lives of hardship have inured them to the worst of the oozes' side effects.

The mystics are known for their mastery of the vriduz, twinned pipes of horn and ivory. To hear a master perform is to hear an argument's thesis and antithesis as co-conspirators. The resulting composition rejuvenates the will, just as the oozing pipe sustains failing flesh. Acolytes interpret their masters' singular duets, but invite visitors to try their hand at particularly thorny passages.

Danger: 3; **Keepsake:** A haunting vriduz duet that reduces the traveler's Momentum by 1.

☐☐☐ No stop is scheduled, but when a mute giant blocks the track, needs must. Fresh water trickles between the gargantuan creature's toes, supporting a band of chitin-robed nomads. They raise nourishing cacti in the giant's shade and hunt the insects that swarm his heights. The bolder nomads have begun scraping fungus from the giant's graffiti-covered legs for sale as fuel.

When the giant finds heaven's answer, his tribe will pack their tents and follow him. Where the train goes from there is its own business.

Danger: 2; **Keepsake:** An alien tale of uncertain meaning provides a one-time reroll of any die when making a Trait check or releasing a touchstone. The Coronation of the Broodwhite loses something in translation, but it gains new purpose.

☐☐☐ What little water remains along Shell Beach is a mix of salt, scum, and runoff from the bitter seltzer plant. This is the home of sky manta, who can never forget the sea as it was. Intellectuals from a distant city seek to revive Shell Beach. They've started many projects in nominal support of the manta, including a sensory deprivation tank, a radio tower for extending the aquifer ("more a thought experiment than a radio") and the Sestina Promenade.

A bleached bull manta skeleton sits outside the radio tower, surrounded by a field of trouble melons. "Have some troubles!" No one in Shell Beach would be so gauche to drink the distilled seltzer. It's literally a source of misery and woe, but some people have a real taste for it.

Danger: 3; **Keepsake:** A taste of bitter seltzer that causes 1 Damage and provides +1 rank in an existing philosophical or conceptual Trait.