

# Flolad's Nephew

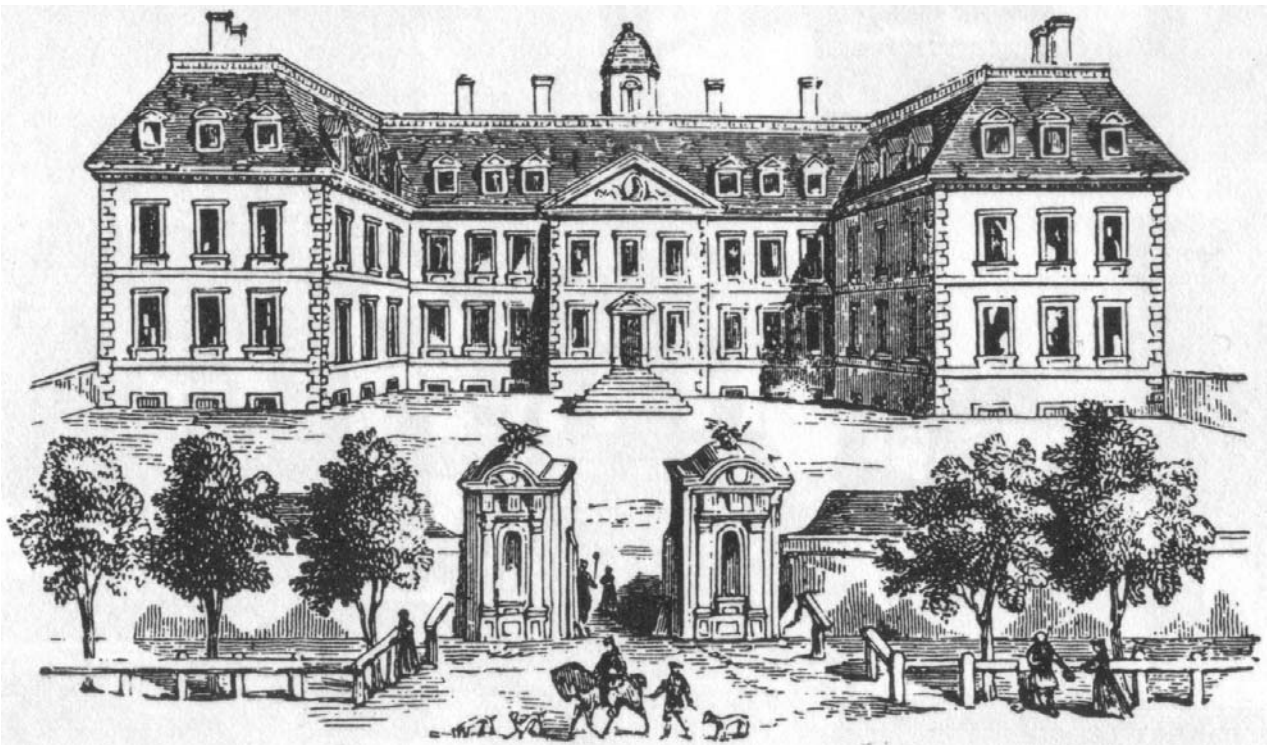
## A Detailed Adventure Outline for Cugel-Level D&D RPG

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**Cover Art: Dover Books (Flolad's Manse)**

**Inspiration: *The Kaiin Player's Guide* by Robin Laws (Pelgrane Press, 2002)**

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### Origins of this Work

This scenario was an experiment; a challenge to myself. I have wanted for a long time to set one more adventure in Kaiin, feeling that I hadn't put enough of them in the original *Footsteps of Fools* series before the PCs were sent to Azenomei (and from there are catapulted into the distant north). I had a few ideas, and a day off, and set myself the target of writing the entire thing from start to finish in a single day – hence the free-flowing format off of which GMs will need to improvise according to PC actions and motivations. My suspicion is that a GM would rather spend an hour or so adding in incidental material to an otherwise well-formulated adventure outline than several hours inventing and writing something from scratch. So here it is: the Adventure of Flolad's Nephew. You will need to devise necessary GMC ratings according to the strengths and capabilities of your campaign PCs.

(GMs do not technically need to own the *Kaiin Guide* in order to run this scenario, but without it will need to spend more time inventing details of Kaiin around the things/people/places that are mentioned/referenced in this piece.)

## Scene 1: Introduction

This scenario continues after the *Adventure of the Kaiinese Drakeling* (also available for free at the Violet Cusps page). The PCs have succeeded in gaining better lodging conditions at the Odkin Prospect Hotel (or possibly failed in their enterprise and are still living there in uneasy alliance with its owner and his friends). You might choose to start this scenario by describing the intervening weeks since the end of that previous adventure, how the PCs have tried to make an honest living or tried to ingratiate themselves with their new neighbors (and failed because they lack sufficient breeding). If the PCs did fail in the case of the Drakeling then it's easier to railroad them into this scenario by setting them up with local criminals to perform a daring theft that goes wrong. However, if they are quite well-off and successful in their own fashion they will arrive at the manse of Flolad in a different fashion<sup>1</sup>. (Receiving a special invitation delivered by uniformed flunky, rather than dragged beaten and bleeding by a crowd of vigils.) This meeting will take place mid-evening.

Flolad (KPG: p78) is the richest and most influential of the great aristocrats that live in Odkin Prospect. He is magically-protected in some unknown way, slightly sinister, and is probably the most powerful and influential person in Kaiin outside the Palace (and even more powerful than most people inside the Palace). PCs will at least have heard of him, and may have met him briefly in a previous scenario of mine – or so my memory vaguely mentions. However, they will have no major relationship with him. If they have recently moved into their grand apartments at the Odkin Prospect Hotel, they may suspect that he wishes to assess their quality, and so may go to great pains to present themselves well.

Flolad receives them according to the manner of their arrival. Even if they are prisoners he is still unfailingly polite; however, if so the following mission overview will not then be presented couched in terms disguising it as a choice - since they will be otherwise bound for the deodand pits. Four days from now a private function is being held at the Palace, in which young eligible men of the Prospect have been invited to meet the belles of the nobility for a pageant of impressive grandeur. Flolad's adopted nephew Spolizzista has been invited (invitation probably bought secretly by Flolad), and Flolad is keen for him to make an impression. The only problem is that Spolizzista is a loutish scion (KPG, p76), prone to bouts of heavy drinking, whoring, and getting into fights with vigils. Flolad despairs of the boy ever making his mark in polite society, what with coming from a wealthy merchant family rather than any kind of true nobility. However, Flolad is keen to set the boy up for possible marriage to one of the numerous penniless (but otherwise eligible) young aristocratic women from Odkin Prospect. The pageant will be first real opportunity for him to associate with such women, and Spolizzista has said he is happy to be on his best behavior and remain sober and out of trouble with the vigils until that time.

Spolizzista is actually the son of merchant grandee Yakethese (KPG, p82) and is the bane of his father's life. For the last two years he has been away attending an education in Romarth. The reasons for this were primarily to remove him from the city whilst various suspicions of drunken manslaughter had time to blow over. Also, there was some hope that he might gain some degree of civilized decorum<sup>2</sup>. Whilst the first objective was achieved, the second was not. A few weeks ago Spolizzista arrived back, having recently achieved his majority. Straight away he defied his father, began drinking the wine-cellar dry, made advances to the serving wenches, and broke the nose of a vigil who tactfully reminded him that urinating in the middle of the street was less than socially acceptable. Yakethese disowned him, and Flolad adopted him as a nephew. (There is no unusual connection between Flolad and Spolizzista; the reasons for this adoption were socio-political – Flolad and Yakethese despise each other. Flolad wishes to set Spolizzista up as a person of nobility so as to annoy Yakethese.) Flolad has been able to talk a degree of sense into the boy, convincing him that a lifetime of moderate debauchery is far preferable to a few weeks and months of major revels followed by an agonizing final few moments in Prince Kandive's deodand pits. Spolizzista has come to understand that mending his ways somewhat is a good idea, and has agreed to look for an eligible woman and at least take on more of a respectable appearance.

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<sup>1</sup> Note for the GM: This is an adventure outline. Don't just tell the PCs all of this, not likewise other parts that are written later in summary. Expand wherever possible into actual role-playing opportunities.

<sup>2</sup> Another good example of such things – the PCs will not automatically know all of this information, and may need to research it, or Spolizzista might allude to some of it, etc.

## Flolad's Ulterior Motivations

Flolad does not believe that Spolizzista is capable of this, and this whole adventure is part of a grand plan to set Spolizzista up for a massive fall from grace so that Yakethese will suffer massive embarrassment and the loss of his son. (Flolad plans to slowly distance himself – at least in the public eye – from Spolizzista, as soon as they boy finds himself a wife and new home. Then he wants to set him up for massive ruination, of such a nature that his downfall will destroy Yakethese as well.) In the meantime, the PCs are erb-in-the-middle.

## The Job Offer

Flolad explains that he thinks the PCs are by far the best people to look after Spolizzista for the next three days until the Pageant. He 'offers' them the job of making sure his nephew remains only moderately drunk at best, is sobered up the day before the pageant, doesn't get disfigured in any street brawls, and generally arrives in one piece and fully presentable on the day. He also wants them to give the boy something of a cultural education, as much as possible in the circumstances, show him some of the famous landmarks of the city. He says that those who successfully manage this will be expected to also accompany him to the Pageant as his retainers. During this 'offer' of employment Flolad might well refer to previous activities of the PCs that some might consider 'crimes'. In such a circumstance Flolad subtly explains that he is not in the habit of long-term blackmail. That is to say, that if they perform well in the next few days his 'terrible memory' will entirely and permanently forget that he ever learned such things – and he will officially welcome them as neighbors. (GM Note: we are setting up huge motivations here for PCs with ambitions of social acceptance, presumably all or most of them. Resistance rolls might be called for.) Prior to this the PCs might have no idea why they are here. Flolad may instill great fear in them by claiming he has uncovered their criminal pasts and is about to expose them to Kandive's justice: leaving the PCs quaking in fear of imminent execution before hearing the alternative.

PCs will have heard some rumors about Spolizzista despite his being out of town for so long, and can learn more. This is not a job 'offer' as such, but a demand that Flolad expects obeyed. Subtle and not so subtle threats will be raised if they do not comply. Their precise brief is to accompany Spolizzista wherever he wants to go as guides/bodyguards, with the authority to curb only his wilder excesses. They are not permitted to bluntly restrain him, though Flolad says that he will look favorably on reasonable actions that Spolizzista may complain about, and Spolizzista himself has reluctantly agreed to this. To this end, Flolad grants 300t spending money and says that he may proffer more, but only on the production of receipts and reasonable explanations of spending requirements. If the PCs are still ragamuffins he will also give them sufficient money to buy decent clothes.

## Spolizzista

At the end of the interview they will be introduced to Spolizzista. This young man (21) is an arrogant cad, but in terms of the milieu of the Dying Earth this is not so socially terrible. In fact he has determined that he might as well get on with his bodyguards for the next three days, after all, his 'uncle' has employed them to help him. So, instead of the PCs meeting a rude drunken fool, Spolizzista shakes hands, and seems abashed at the wildness of his youth. He thanks them for agreeing to help, admits he has a bit of a problem with wild ways, and says that he looks forward to spending time with them. He will act rakishly and offhandedly to any female PCs, but not to such an extent that he is a total boor, just embarrassingly frankly. He admires women of spirit, though culturally he doesn't know how to address them as associates or equals. Of course he does not see any of the PCs as equals, but has sense enough to accept them as useful companions. His demeanor towards them, though friendly, leaves no doubt that he considers them a few rungs below him on the ladder of social respectability. The meeting ends when Flolad instructs the PCs to return at noon the following day. (Spolizzista routinely arises late, and Flolad wishes to spend some time in his final instruction.) The first task will be to assist Spolizzista in choosing suitable clothes for the Pageant.

*NB: If it helps make more sense of this set-up, Kaiin law is such that despite Spolizzista being disowned by his father, he still (being the only son) will inherit his father's wealth and property upon his father's death. That is providing he (Spolizzista) is not a criminal at that time – in which case his father's estate would be forfeit to the crown, or possibly be transferred after some legal wrangling to another family member – say Spolizzista's 'uncle'. PCs may suspect – in fact the GM should assure that this at least crosses their minds - that Flolad is setting them up, that this is all part of a grand plan for Spolizzista to perish in some fashion and for the PCs to take the fall – literally: into the Prince's deodand pits.*

## Scene 2: The First Day

The PCs hopefully arrive at noon as asked. Spolizzista has been drinking, but is only slightly tipsy, not even yet staggering when he walks. Clearly he is able to hold his liquor. The first duty is to accompany Spolizzista to his tailors<sup>3</sup> on Golden Walk (KPG: p94). As mentioned above, money will be provided if necessary for the PCs to upgrade their own wardrobe for the purposes of accompanying Spolizzista – so that neither Spolizzista nor Flolad will be embarrassed by gossip that Spolizzista is attended by ruffians or lower-standard types.

### Golden Walk

On the way, Spolizzista invites the PCs to join him for a drink. This is the first opportunity in what the GM should maintain as an ongoing theme. Spolizzista likes his drink, but he also likes other things. The PCs can at any stage attempt to divert one of his numerous impulses to 'stop somewhere for a drink' with Persuasion contests. (Providing that they suggest some other amusing diversion as the alternative, whether it is fine dining – it is after all nearly time for luncheon<sup>4</sup>, wenching, gambling, abusing the yeomanry or whatever else they can think of.) They might even manage to convince him of the vibrant interest of some Kaiin landmark, although Persuasion might need to be oblique references to how Seduction attempts against women of the higher classes are so much easier if you at least appear to have some kind of cultural/historical pedantry.

In Golden Walk the cost of clothing is phenomenally high, and yet it is after all phenomenally fashionable. ("Never mind the quality, look at the number of sequins!") PCs may well have a field day dressing themselves more ostentatiously than ever before. Flolad after all does have an account at two of the shops, and any PC with a little imagination could have their purchases added to Spolizzista's extravagant acquisitions. The flunkies here are used to all manner of abuse and deal with it extraordinarily well. This will be a good place to make it clear to the PCs that whilst Spolizzista seems to have accepted them as being vaguely within his social sphere, he is casually offhand to those of the servile classes. Mind you, many (or indeed perhaps all) of the PCs feel the same way, and this may merely cement their bond with Spolizzista even further. (In my game a sturdy vat-grown bodyguard PC stubbornly clung to the view that pompous behavior is nothing to be admired or desired.) It might be fun in the game to have Spolizzista lead by example and involve the PCs in severe servant-baiting. The servants will always respond with cool disdain and thinly-veiled sarcasm, adding sudden inexplicable surcharges.

### Cultural Edification

After getting a new suit of clothes (Spolizzista gets two – one for the Pageant and one to wear over the days before the Pageant so that he can 'be seen') their charge wants to show off. Thus he is open to whatever the PCs want to do for the rest of the afternoon. Tonight he wants (and nothing will deter him from this) to go to the dhejatar races (KPG: p162) but these start late, so the PCs are free to suggest cultural diversions until then. Anything within the KPG that draws your attention qualifies as a cultural diversion – the Fringe, the mudflats, The Vlark. The only proviso is that the PCs must convince (Persuasion) Spolizzista that it is interesting enough to make the effort to hire a carriage to take them there. Being unused to such things, Spolizzista is prepared to believe that whatever the PCs say is interesting is in fact so. He will listen with rapt attention, and whilst such things might not exactly be his mug of Tatterglass, he is eager to learn. Thus, so he hopes, he will soon appear to be a paragon of nobility, and have cultural acceptance by his peers and well-to-do wealthy young women.

### Fine Dining

Dinner in the early evening should be an impressive affair of grandiose gluttony in some massively overpriced establishment. Spolizzista will once again convince the PCs (most likely) that his uncle's expense account can bear the strain. The PCs may attempt to get Spolizzista so drunk that he is unable to go to the races. This is not

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<sup>3</sup> PCs who begin this scenario destitute may wonder why Flolad considers them suitable for the task of advising Spolizzista on his wardrobe. In such a case he will not, they will be expected merely to bow to the judgment of the professional *costumiers* of Golden Walk.

<sup>4</sup> Yet another example of the need for GM elaboration. GM must decide where they go for luncheon, the gluttonous details of the high cuisine how badly Spolizzista offends the staff, whether the PCs are thrown out as their charge laughs good-naturedly at the offense he has caused.

wise, as Spolizzista can hold a lot of alcohol. Also, he prefers not to drink more than two or three glasses of wine with large meals – the serious drinking comes later. The only downside to the meal is when Spolizzista upsets a minor nobleman<sup>5</sup> by making advances on his wife, and is challenged to a duel tomorrow at dawn outside the Scaum Gate. Spolizzista is totally unfazed by this, refusing to believe that one of the PCs won't be his champion. Even if convinced that this is not to be the case, he truly does not care, being convinced of his own superiority. As far as he's concerned, dawn is the likely time they'll be coming back from the Tracks anyway, and so is the ideal occasion to meet someone outside the Scaum Gate - to give him a sound thrashing before going back to Odkin Prospect to fall into bed. Note that it is up to the challenged person to choose the weapons. The PCs may know this, or may seek legal advice before the group heads off to the Tracks. The usual end of a duel is first blood or first fall, but if the sleight was severe enough, then 'to the death' might be offered. Any weapon is permissible and the usual one is rapiers. This is what is culturally expected and anything else is frowned upon. PCs might wish to make the most of this loophole. Download the 'Exotic Weaponry' article from the Violet Cusps page; Kaiin is enormous and many things are available here if you have the money. ("Darts of Diambroid at Fifty Paces!" – a wild idea like this might even make the challenger forfeit and flee.)

### **The Tracks**

This area just outside the city is covered in the Kaiin Player's Guide (starting KPG: p142). One gambling establishment is elaborated upon in the free adventure "The Exasperating Cadaver" available at Violet Cusps. Spolizzista will wish to go to the Races themselves (which the GM should describe at length especially if – as in my campaign – they haven't been experienced in game before). The bustle, excitement, disappointment, accusations of rigging and pickpocketing attempts should be set against the backdrop of at least three races – using the suggested rules – on which Spolizzista will wager huge sums, claiming that he has been tipped. (Whether or not this is true for any or all of the three races is up to the GM.) After this he will wish to go to one of the more dangerous gambling establishments (opportunity for the PCs to convince him to go to a less dangerous one). There he will wager huge sums again, and the PCs may become aware that whatever he thinks he wants, he is a self-destructive wastrel (if a charming one) on the inevitable path of self-destruction. They may also witness his incredible skill with a rapier, when he disarms someone who he has offended and who tries to retaliate by introducing a long-knife to one of Spolizzista's kidneys. (PC may see the assassin approach – someone whom Spolizzista offended earlier and was ejected from the premises for belligerence - and try to get across the crowded gambling hall, only to be too late.) The evening would not be complete without a bit of couching, though since much drinking has gone on Spolizzista is unlikely to be as capable as he thinks he is. If PCs try and emulate his casual rakishness (he departs upstairs with a woman on each arm) have them come across all kinds of amusing difficulties. Nonetheless, this too might be on Flolad's expense account – though how will they explain this later? Or, unknown to the PCs, Spolizzista might have offered a body-part to Mirejater (KPG: p156). If he loses he will be expected to pay, or provide a replacement – perhaps he wagered the limbs of one or more of his retainers? How will they get out of this problem? Maybe a convenient corpse?

### **The Dual**

The offended party has had spies trailing them and will find them if they try to avoid him. But Spolizzista himself wants to duel. Several dozen spectators will be there, and a city personality has been chosen as adjudicator. Spolizzista, as the PCs may well know, is an expert with a rapier, although his opponent might be too. But, by the time of the dual Spolizzista has imbibed massive quantities of alcohol and is at least at a -1 penalty, which the PCs will see as his disco-ordination. If Spolizzista fights, describe the event, using only a few rolls (and not using pools for GMCs actions). If things have degenerated to such an extent that the duel is 'to the death', some authority will step in (this action being paid for by Flolad) and decree that the duel is illegal – but will be permitted to first blood/fall only 'for the sake of honor'. PCs will not know of this escape clause until the last possible moment. If a PC fights make this a neck and neck event, making allowances for whatever trickery they have come up with. Match their opponent carefully. But ideally he will win, overcoming whatever trickery the PCs come up with, and pause at the end, knowing he could kill the PC, but deciding not to. Unless PCs come up with an excellent plan/trick.

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<sup>5</sup> If any of your players are familiar with the DE stories, make this Ulan Dhor (DERPG: p160. KPG: p94)

## Scene 3: The Second Day

The aftereffects of drunkenness take care of the morning and the beginning of the afternoon as far as Spolizzista is concerned. The young man and the PCs may wake in a ditch on the edge of Odkin Prospect, or back at the Odkin Prospect Hotel, or somewhere highly amusing, depending on how things went the night before. You may have had the few remaining sober PCs role-play the safe return of Spolizzista and fellow PCs of highly-inebriated state. Kaiin at night can be an extremely dangerous place; even in the early hours of the morning footpads may loiter – specifically hoping to come across hopeless drunks. Perhaps they had to heave their drunken comrades onto a hastily commandeered night-soil cart! Improvise!

PCs may by now begin to wonder how their charge will fare on the day of the Pageant, and may wish to visit apothecaries in search of hangover cures of unusual efficacy. Such a quest might be inspired if Flolad finds out the state his nephew is in this morning and calls the PCs to him for a 'little chat'. In such a chat he will 'insist' that the PCs must deliver his nephew sober and in full-faculty to the Pageant (which begins at noon in two days). If the PCs get desperate and try to imprison Spolizzista, the young man WILL be freed or escape. One option in such a case is to have his allies arrive, in the shape of various other loutish scions who have bribed a vigil force to accompany them. They will all go off and get drunk and Spolizzista will appear very apologetic later. He has no wish to be incarcerated, and refuses to accept it, but is nonetheless understanding/forgiving of the motivations of the PCs being in his own best interests. (If they agree not to try it again.) He will abscond for good if the PCs insist on trying to render him unconscious and other such unfriendly acts, and one of his friends will approach the PCs later with details of the kidnapping (see below).

Spolizzista is open to more cultural exploration in the afternoon (anything quiet and low-key, as his head throbs so), as well as fine-dining for luncheon and dinner (though nothing too heavy today). But as the day progresses he will somehow be reminded about the Undercity (KPG: p165 and described in lesser detail in the free adventure of the *Kaiinese Drakeling* available at Violet Cusps). Once it is recalled to his mind nothing will do other than he go there and visit this strange place, which he has never seen before. He can be made to understand the dangers and will accept various provisos from the PCs, but cannot be deterred. (The legendary wines at the Last Amphora [KPG: p175] are not to be denied, no matter what the risk.) Even Flolad will uphold any wish for Spolizzista to go there. (It is entirely possible that Flolad is getting a bit sick of his nephew and won't be too heartbroken if the young man vanishes or perishes. Though Flolad will never admit this.)



### The Undercity

GM must roleplay the PCs getting into the Undercity, the stories they make up to explain their presence, any disguises needed if they had troubles there on previous occasions etc. Spolizzista says that he understands the dangers, but treats it all as a bit of a game. He will on more than one occasion say things that make Undercity residents suspicious - making deadend noises etc. The PCs will need to clear things up using Persuasions, and this will be the tense theme of this visit. One option in the free *Kaiinese Drakeling* scenario is the possibility that the PCs might be thrown into the Pit. If this did not happen in that adventure it should happen here. If it

did happen in that adventure, it is up to the GM as to whether a re-occurrence will be fun role-playing. (Tag-Line possibilities: "Once is an inconvenience, twice is intolerable. Damnation to you all and your ludicrous notions!" & "Take your hands off me; I am no more a deodand than you are a striped mermelant!")

If they do get taken to the Dais of Judgment (KPG: p176), the most likely cause will be that Spolizzista forgets not to ask for something to be put on Flolad's Expense Account. (The Undercity is the only place where the name of Flolad does not generate credit, because as everyone knows Flolad perished a decade ago when the sun went out. After a suitably tense trial, and the opportunity to defend themselves, PCs and Spolizzista will be thrown into the Pit (KPG: p176). One or two PCs may escape this fate if they use highly convincing Persuasions of the kind that establish that they merely "met these fellows outside the door on our arrival from the planet Zolt" or some such transference of blame. A bonus will be given for someone making such a claim and embellishing it with tales of having seen the targeted person exhibiting subtle signs of being a deodand. PCs can be encouraged to get into a battle of Persuasions to transfer guilt, with the GM allowing people to believe that anyone thrown into the Pit will be automatically assumed to be slain. Spolizzista can be used to enhance this idea, as he wails that he doesn't want to perish in such a manner – that he is too young and fashionable for this fate. Use the notes again from the Kaiinese Drakeling. If they did get thrown into the Pit before, and barely escaped with their lives, make this whole thing equally as horrifying. If necessary, have someone try to defend them at their trial, a well-meaning pair of gentlemen: "These fellows entered with us; they are not deodands, I can assure you of that!" For this ill-considered burst of altruism, he and his companion will also be ruthlessly branded deodands and suffer the same fate. The GM may need to fudge things so that most PCs get thrown in. The biggest problem will be to retain a weapon when they do so. Since PCs are disarmed, then one will need to grab the rapier of one of the patrolmen and throw it in, or leap in with it. (Or the insanely well-prepared may have thrown in a dagger earlier, just in case.)

If you decide not to use the Pit option give the PCs a hair-raising time diverting Spolizzista's faux pas. Make them sweat in fear of their lives. Have to defend themselves from accusation at least twice. Eventually they may have to make their own call, and 'accidentally' club Spolizzista into unconsciousness, then leave claiming that he is ill and needs treatment on his home planet.

### **The Kidnapping**

Whatever way they reach the surface world once more, it will be fairly late in the evening. Spolizzista ideally wants to go somewhere and have a few drinks, but since he's still somewhat fragile due to the night before can be Persuaded to retire early. So, sooner or later the PCs will accompany Spolizzista to wherever he intends to spend the night. Alert PCs may realize that they are being followed, but the GM should not make too much of this if they do. Allow the Players to think that common footpads are at large, even if they may suspect a more major plot device. At the most convenient (few observers, no-one to help) the PCs will be attacked by a band of thugs. At first this may seem like just another gang of robbers, and the PCs may try to defend/escape. But this is not a robbery, but a well-orchestrated kidnapping<sup>6</sup>. The group (which may be led by Dothand and his cronies if their presence is realistic/amusing considering how your previous Kaiin adventures ran) has nets, and possibly even exotic tranquilizing blow-darts. (Such things by the way definitely will point a finger of suspicion towards a backer with plenty of cash.) The main kidnapers will subdue Spolizzista and escape with him, whilst the PCs are assailed by the other brigands. Possibly the PCs may pursue running footsteps into the night. If so perhaps a hidden cart drawn by some beasts capable of a burst of speed will be the way their pursuit is foiled.

The PCs may begin their investigation/recovery attempts at night, but most people will be asleep, and although the criminal element will be up and about their business the PCs will have few clues. If Dothand was recognized, the PCs might search try and discover the gang's new hideout, but these things will all come to naught this evening. Any captured thugs will know very little – all the ringleaders will escape.

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<sup>6</sup> PCs may have suggested all kinds of security measures to Flolad, or to Spolizzista, but no major ones will have been allowed. IE there will be no squad of vigils released to escort them. Flolad has no reason to suspect any direct foul-play, and neither do the PCs (until the kidnapping attempt). The PCs are being hired to protect Spolizzista from himself.

## Scene 4: The Third Day

Spolizzista has been kidnapped; the Pageant begins midday tomorrow. What are the PCs to do? Flolad knows: they must find Spolizzista and recover him unharmed, or else they will all be sent to the deodand pits. Flolad is in a high rage (a highly charged 'interview' should be role-played out), but will allow the PCs whatever reasonable resources they need to get Spolizzista back. This includes a small squad of vigil bodyguards if the PCs argue convincingly for them. But remember that although the Prospect Vigils (from whose ranks these GMCs will come) will prefer to retain Flolad's good favor, they will not risk the chance of severe injury or losing their lives. Their sergeant will be the person whom the PCs communicate with. Also note again that Flolad is starting to regret his impulsive decision to engage in this convoluted plot to destroy his enemy Yakethese. So, whilst he will certainly aid the PCs with anything clearly and concretely useful and (for him) inexpensive he is not so concerned that he will cater to the PCs' every paranoid request. He will not allow them to sense any disinterest though, and will phrase things in a way that puts the onus back on them to recover his 'nephew'.

### The Search

The PCs should be able to work some of this out. The most logical person to kidnap Spolizzista is his father. Crafty GMs might well have set up the affronted party in the dual to shout (or coldly state) vows of revenge. Thus a visit to this personage and an unfriendly interview might be on the cards. Another option is a pursuit of various underworld 'snouts' to find out who was hired recently to perform a kidnapping. The ring-leaders are the targets. It will be relatively easy (wandering across town for most of the day spreading cash, sorting out the genuine snouts from those just trying to pocket coins) to find one or two of the thugs who were hired. Then it will require some serious bribery or Persuasion to convince them to rat out those that hired them.

(Note that if a thug was somehow captured last night – something which the kidnapers would have been at great pains to prevent happening – then ideally he will be very much a junior, hired by one of the other lesser thugs. And this other lesser thug will have gone to ground to avoid any possible difficulties caused by his employee being captured.)

Although this is all covered in brief, the PCs will need to pull out the stops in terms of role-playing, making serious attempts to track down a handful of thugs from the many hundreds that are for hire. They may have descriptions to go on, and useful Contacts from the Kaiin Player's Guide. Several chains of investigation will need to be followed. Here's an example of pursuing the underworld contacts:

- 1) PC2 noticed that one of the thugs had a white scar across his forehead
- 2) PC3 has a criminal contact whom they approach with this man's description. The contact has never heard of him, BUT either puts them onto someone else or else the PCs have access to another contact<sup>7</sup>.
- 3) Small chain of contacts that lead to the man in question, who has heard they are after him and has arranged to ambush the PCs with a bunch of local cut-throats. Quite likely the thugs were all hired from the Builders' Union – KPG: p28. This means that much of the investigation will be in Canal Town<sup>8</sup>. The Canal Town folk stick together and the Prospect vigils are afeared of their wrath. Perhaps disguises are in order?
- 4) Finally this man, or another associate of his whom the PCs have discovered he did a job with recently will point them at the foreman who hired them for this particular kidnapping. This foreman is a Canal Town big-wig (perhaps Antelo himself – KPG: p29), someone who has a number of burly assistants. He will need to be threatened to reveal the information since he knows that Dothand (or whomever the chief kidnapper is) is a very tough person likely to enact revenge for betrayal. PCs may need to kidnap him or find some other strong leverage. Eventually he may admit that Dothand lives (nowadays) somewhere in Canal Town near the Well-Hammered Nail (KPG: p34), which is where he seeks 'assistants' for his various jobs.

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<sup>7</sup> The PCs will need to use different methods with different people to get the information that they want: bribery, threats (of violence or of vigils or of deodand pits), Imposture. Money will usually be enough, but wherever possible the GMCs will provide false information in return for cash, then go into hiding. Money is not enough when it comes to revealing information about truly dangerous people like Dothand.

<sup>8</sup> Canal Town is available as a sample chapter of the KPG via a Pelgrane Press website link at Violet Cusps and other pages.



5) The last contact (Antelo?) actually knows exactly where Dothand (or whomever) lives, and will go there to warn him about the PCs, as soon as he thinks the PCs have departed. Either the PCs will somehow get this information out of him, or they will follow him, or they will go to the Well-Hammered Nail, be beaten up, robbed, and thrown into the street (perhaps after initial attempts at subtle investigation). In this latter case a low-life (or The Vlark if they are on friendly or neutral terms with him) will volunteer the information they want. (The low-life will of course seek compensation of a monetary nature.)

6) The PCs at last arrive at the house where Dothand (or whomever) has as his gang HQ now. Drunken singing comes from upstairs. The kidnapers unwisely decided to keep Spolizzista happy and quiet with beer. PCs may recall that this is one of the missing nephew's drinking songs, or recognize his voice. The task of breaking in and retrieving their charge is made easier by the fact that the main gang members are out on another job and the secondary gang members there are all drunk as lords. Play this out exactly as is most fun. (The Prospect vigils may have deserted the PCs after their beating at the Well-Hammered Nail.)

As insinuated earlier, confronting Yakethese or the duel opponent will not be directly productive. The opponent in the dual has nothing to do with it. Yakethese is behind it, and ordered his son kidnapped because he did not know what else to do to assuage his affrontedness. During the afternoon he has an enormous ransom demand delivered to Flolad's house. The delivery boy is a regular courier who received it through the normal channels, but the return information is bogus. It basically says to come up with the money in used centurms and deliver it to a hollow stump in the woods on the edge of the Threek by tomorrow night if they ever want to see Spolizzista alive again. Most likely this ransom demand will not be known of by the PCs until after they have rescued their charge. It is incidental information. Yakethese's plan is a win-win situation. Either he gets an enormous heap of cash from Flolad, and then has Spolizzista released (or perhaps then ups the ante) or he will himself arrange to have Spolizzista found and rescued, and then show proof that his new uncle didn't care enough about him to ransom him. At this stage he would prefer to embarrass Flolad – either financially or personally – and doesn't really care about Spolizzista's circumstances. However, if approached, Yakethese will be most angered by any insinuations – and his general servants are too loyal to be bribed. Possibly they could be tricked, but only know that Yakethese was in unusual good humor these last three days and was out until late last night, accompanied only by his coachman at two guards. These too are fiercely loyal, but again might be tricked/forced into revealing that Yakethese last night went to an inn in the West Threek near to Canal Town. The driver waited in the yard, the guards went inside but were at the bar whilst Yakethese met with two men (descriptions match Dothand – or whoever led the thugs – and Antelo).

### **Taking the Night Off?**

By the time all this is over, the evening is at least beginning. Spolizzista is drunk, and thinks that it was all uncommon fine larks. At this juncture, Flolad will consent to his 'nephew' being restrained for the evening. Spolizzista will at first complain, but then will be overcome with tiredness (in the sense of being 'as tired as a newt') and retire for the evening. If the PCs do not organize special precautions Spolizzista will escape late at night and return to the Tracks by carriage (which he will take from the stables and drive himself). This will be discovered and the PCs alerted. If you want a carriage chase, they are alerted in time to catch up with him on the edge of Odkin Prospect (at that point he is not travelling fast). If you want the PCs to frantically scour the Tracks and Gambling Dens for him, then they aren't alerted until later. In the latter instance they will find carriage casually parked (or possibly in the process of being stolen from a lackadaisical carriage-park attendant). Spolizzista himself will be found in the most compromising position that adds to general scenario amusement. Whether this is being rolled by a couple of trollops, being ejected from a Gambling Den covered in his own regurgitation, or being soundly thrashed at the High Hells by Madam Lash is up to the sensibilities of the GM. Certainly 'rescuing' him will involve offending the sensibilities of some burly chucker-outers. The PCs themselves might well be beaten and ejected from the premises, but Spolizzista will be thrown out with them (eventually – if the PCs are persistent enough).

## Scene 5: The Day of the Pageant

At long last. The PCs have (hopefully) kept Spolizzista alive and relatively well and sober for this day. Spolizzista himself will have to be roused mid-morning (very early for him) so as to be prepared in all his finery for the Pageant. This may happen at the PCs' residence if they have insisted on keeping him there, or perhaps they have all been put up at Flolad's House for the whole of this time? Flolad will be attending but doesn't want to be seen arriving with Spolizzista, so the PCs will travel with the nephew and a driver and couple of guards.

### The Pageant

The Pageant consists of a large buffet luncheon, followed by an afternoon of dancing. Not only are the young eligibles invited, but numerous other well-to-do folk, couples and singles are there. It is primarily a big social event for the upper classes, organized by Blaphena (KPG: p89), though fashion rules are relaxed somewhat for such festivities. Virtually every other personality from the Palace is also present. In my game, and perhaps yours too, this is the first time the PCs have been inside the Palace. Thus, interesting play can be made merely by describing the various areas and buildings of the Palace that are seen, the security measures to gain entrance<sup>9</sup>, the personalities observed, the fashions, the opportunities to impress (or offend) through use of Etiquette... The PCs will quickly realize that they are the only people of low (possibly only lowish if they are established in the Prospect) status here. This has come about through Flolad's influence, having them included as associates of his 'nephew'. Their job today is to see that Spolizzista does not perform too many social gaffes. The environment is a large hall and plaza with numerous rooms and passages leading off into the Palace itself. Of course guests are not supposed to stray too far from the general area of festivities.

Resistances might come into play, especially when presenting opportunities for the PCs to embarrass themselves. Any noble personalities the PCs have previously encountered will be here, including Petrij, Twegg, and Ulan Dhor (whether he was Spolizzista's dueling opponent or not). He and the other Delaphasians present a noble body of individuals, very unlike our foppish PCs. The PCs should be made to feel the measure of their ridiculousness compared to proper adventurers like these. Yakethese will also be here, though he will not wish to speak to his son, and they will snub each other. Yakethese might reserve glances of anger for the PCs that busted his kidnapping plan though. Part of his revenge was to have been denying Flolad the chance to display Spolizzista as his adopted 'nephew'. And Flolad will do this, though with perhaps somewhat less so than he expected (after the trials Spolizzista has just put them all through). He acts almost embarrassed, but carries it well. Whether it is actually possible to prevent Spolizzista from being an utter uncouth embarrassment is up to the GM. It might be that Spolizzista quickly teams up with some other rakes and goes off carousing.

One of the big high-lights will be the entrance of Prince Kandive and his primary concubine. Describe the awe and nervousness of the crowd, and the aura of power and prestige. Kandive ignores Spolizzista and the PCs – they are beneath his notice – as are many other people here. Devise social and gourmand activities for the PCs, as many as cover the afternoon and into the evening in a manner that remains entertaining. It is widely assumed that anyone who is admitted is of sufficient status to be seen associating with; this is normally the case. So, apart from the few that know them (Twegg and Petrij for instance) who in any case might not even recognize them, other guests assume that the PCs are actually up and coming merchants or wealthy and/or noble foreigners or such like. Many unique opportunities will thus present themselves. Dancing with rich ladies of the hill, forging business deals with merchants, whatever the PCs think of. Of course Persuasion, Imposture, or Etiquette (or possibly Seduction) will be required to pull off any specific deception.

### The Surprise Event

As the evening progresses a general call for silence is made. Prince Kandive has an announcement. Here today is his good friend Grashpotel of the Scholasticarium (KPG: p111), a magician of great renown. Grashpotel makes a pretence of humbleness, but he is clearly a conceited popinjay. Kandive goes on to say that Grashpotel recently uncovered an artifact of great magic and that it will be utilized for the first time tonight in public.

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<sup>9</sup> The PCs will join the queue to be announced, and will notice that everyone who's invitation doesn't contain sufficient details (as is the case with the PCs) is asked to state who they are. This gives ample opportunity for the PCs to invent grad titles etc.

Guards drive the crowds gently back from the plaza, and Grashpotel goes to its edge. With a shouted incantation he points at the open area, and there at once appears the most massive of Kandive's jeweled river barges, resting before the promenade. This is as wide as a sea-going vessel (though not as tall), and roomier because it does not need to be as sturdy. Nonetheless it cannot take everybody. Kandive announces that Grashpotel<sup>10</sup> is going to take invited guests on a magical journey. Those who will come, he says, are of course the eligibles for whom the pageant is being held, plus a number of others selected by Kandive and Grashpotel. PCs may notice if they pay close attention, that Grashpotel does not seem 100% confident. They might (correctly) suspect that Kandive has ordered him to do this, rather than him offering.

The PCs may initially think that does not include them, but a flunkey reads out the names of the eligibles, and somehow the PCs have been included in this. Around 100 people are asked to step aboard the barge (plus a dozen of Kandive's toughest palace guardsmen), which is still by no means crowded. Grashpotel stands at the prow and makes another enchantment and the vessel rises into the air. PCs may wish to refuse this privilege, but Flolad is going, as is Spolizzista and a young lady that seems to be quite impressed with him. Whilst the majority of invitees seem to be delighted by this amazing opportunity, a few appear reluctant. The PCs will overhear Petrij (KPG: p92) complaining to a friend that to refuse this gift will certainly arouse Kandive's ire, therefore he has no choice but to go along. The only reassuring factor, he says, is that Kandive himself is going along, therefore it is less likely to be some obscure way of disposing of his enemies and city undesirables in one fell swoop. Any PCs who attempt to avoid going will be found by Palace guards and brought along: "Now then, sir, no need to be modest; all who are invited are worthy. Come along; you don't want to keep the Prince waiting."

Once all are aboard, Grashpotel lights a taper and applies it to a tall silver incense burner that has been mounted on the fore-deck. Kandive stands next to him. The barge is then surrounded by a very faint silver glow, and rises slowly into the air. Kandive claps his hands with excitement; others do likewise, or cheer, or groan in fear, as is their manner. Spolizzista thinks this is all fantastic, though much of his attention is given over to the buxom beauty on his arm. Both of them are somewhat affected by strong drink. What happens next is most disconcerting: the vessel rises several hundred feet into the air, as Grashpotel chants under his breath, and the passengers can see Kaiin laid out around them. Then, even more worryingly, Kaiin fades away, and in its place is a sickening gray void. Anyone looking intently at this void becomes nauseous; Grashpotel and Kandive discuss something under their breath and Grashpotel waves his arms and shouts out arcane words. The surroundings reappear, but not the same surroundings. About the barge now are flickering eerie lights. After a few moments the perceptive can begin to discern a landscape – this is some kind of world, a world very different from our own, but with a luminous terrain, and drifting clouds (or possibly beings). Kandive is well-pleased and some of the initially fearful passengers are struck with wonder and appreciation.

After some minutes staring in wonder and clapping his hands with excitement Kandive becomes bored, and orders Grashpotel to take them somewhere else. Grashpotel chants again and the vessel re-enters the gray void. In this way the barge and its passengers pass from one strange place to the next (that should be described in wondrous details). Suggestions: a place that is almost entirely dark; a world inhabited by fearful porcelain beings that run at the sight of the vessel; a demonic subworld (not one of the most horrible, but definitely unpleasant); a barren rocky world whose inhabitants wear only rags and loincloths and look more like oasts than true humans; an underwater environment where keaks dress in clothes and live in rocky dwellings; a world of crystalline structures, whose inhabitants are held together with lines of force (these beings seem to have some magic capacity and one of them sends urgent lines of force towards the barge, which Grashpotel seems hard-pressed to defend against, though after some effort he does so and moves the vessel onwards). At last a dimension is found that approximates our own.

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<sup>10</sup> Scuttlebutt or other knowledge may reveal that whilst Grashpotel is a mighty magician, his field trips to observe the fauna of the Dying Earth sometimes come back with less pupils than set out. That is to say he is no stranger to incidental loss of life. Note also that in my game arch-magicians per se do not exist. This makes little practical difference from the point of view of Cugel-Level PCs mind you. Grashpotel in my game has his most major powers from control of lesser daihaki and possession of a few powerful artifacts. In this case he has temporarily mastered control of an ancient daihak of transportation.

Close at hand is a large limpid pool. Blue flowers grow around it, and on its far side is a wide grove of tall blue-green Earth-like trees, the leaves blurring into mist at their upper extremities, other woodlands are nearby. The sky is a mesh of vast ripples and cross-ripples, that refract a thousand shafts of colored light, rays which weave wondrous laces, rainbow nets, in all the jewel hues<sup>11</sup>. Kandive is pleased again; it seems that this is the kind of thing he was looking for. Anyone listening to him confer with Grashpotel will realize that Kandive is about to achieve a long-held goal – to set foot in another dimension. Grashpotel in turn says that he is glad to use this ancient artifact to assist Kandive to achieve his dreams. Those who listen even more carefully may suspect that Grashpotel would rather have conserved the force of this new magic for his own purposes. The barge is put down on the surface of the pool, and the gangplank lowered onto the grasses. The PCs may at this moment suspect that their inclusion was not an accident. Flolad steps forward to Kandive's side and the two men confer in whispers. Then Kandive calls out the names of each PC and asks them to step forward. "To you," he says, "goes the singular honor of setting first foot into this new world." Being Kandive he brooks no disagreement. His guardsmen support his wishes with cold steel if necessary. The Prince produces a Kaiin Flag on a pole, and hands it to the lead PC – asking them to plant it in the soil of this new world. If they delay Spolizzista himself will lead the charge, snatching the flag. PCs that do not follow him quick-smart will be condemned to death.

Perhaps contrary to expectations, nothing tries to eat them, the grass is not poisonous, the air is breathable, the lake placid. After Kandive observes for a while he has another discussion with Grashpotel, who nods. A huge picnic is brought from within the barge and all travelers descend. The guards carry the large hampers, then set themselves up in a wide perimeter. The guests serve themselves from a marvelous selection of viands and beverages. Time passes and viewers comes to realize that all of nature reflects the strange colors of the sky - beams of claret, topaz, rich violet, radiant green. It really is most beautiful/otherworldly; this should be made apparent to the PCs. Various guests also wander off across the grasses and explore the beautiful woodlands. The PCs themselves will be the targets of amorous attentions, as well as the distractions of Gourmandistical delights. If it suits the tone, or the character of any PCs, then several lesser magicians are amongst the passengers and will wander around collecting samples, taking measurements, and engaging in Pedantic discourse.

Even if the PCs keep an eye on Spolizzista<sup>12</sup> he wanders off with his companion. There are no couches in this world, but he intends to explore the activities associated with that item of furniture, and does not welcome being spied upon. When the time comes for everyone to pack up and depart, Spolizzista and his companion do not reappear. Kandive, through Flolad, sends the PCs to find them. If the PCs argue exceptionally well for this then a couple of Palace guards are sent along to back them up. They can follow his trail, finding a site where 'congress' occurred, then the couple wandered on, clearly exploring. The PCs will cross a beautiful brook, an area of magnificent forest fungi, a pretty section of shallow woodland marsh, and go up a small rise – at the top of which they can overlook a wide valley. Camped in the valley (something less than a mile away) is a small army of insectoid warriors, with bizarrely-angled tents, and carrying peculiarly twisting pole-arms. A quick estimate will put their number at around 600. At various intervals the PCs might observe pairs of sentries. None are at this point because around a quarter of the way to the camp the pair are escorting two prisoners – the missing couple from the barge. The couple are protesting and being dragged along. Very close to the PCs are two of the peculiar pole-arms; these are in fact web-guns, devices that fire entangling webs. They are simple to use.

What happens now is up to the PCs (and the GM). A daring rescue (there looks to be enough time/distance) a craven retreat; a failed rescue (insectoids slay their prisoners); a headlong escape, pursued by scores of insectoids; the guards/rescued prisoners falling behind and being slain; a last second leap into the barge (aided by Grashpotel's magic only if absolutely necessary)... Although Flolad no longer cares if Spolizzista lives or dies, he will still have to pretend he does in the face of Kandive, but may still stick to his bargain with the PCs. Kandive is another story; the PCs will be jailed for days and after that may be put on trial (KPG: p19), or just thrown out of the Palace. If this scenario is to lead on to "All's Fair At Azenomei" Spolizzista (or whoever it is) **will** die and the PCs will be tried, then expelled from Kaiin for the period of one year for failing to protect one of Kandive's subjects.

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<sup>11</sup> Some words in the description taken from Jack Vance's work.

<sup>12</sup> If the PCs keep a close eye on Spolizzista, then all of this happens to someone else; PCs are still chosen to put things right.