

Hearken now all you men of this forgetful age! Listen now you brave men, mindful of the courage of your sires of old; listen now you sluggards, ignorant of the deeds of those that came before you! For long ago, in a land far away, was the land of Trel. It had the bravest knights, the fairest maidens, the sturdiest peasants, yet their lot was naught but endless woe. Listen now to the days of high adventure, to the final days of Trel, listen now to

THE TWILIGHT OF TREL

The Emperor's Eunuch

What happened to the missing Eunuch?

*The
Emperor's
Eunuch is
missing*

In the final days of Trel, the Emperor woke one day and found himself alone in his bed. He looked under the bed, he looked in the canopy, he looked in the closet. His favorite Eunuch was missing! Hurriedly he called his advisers; he called his Wazirs; he called his Chamberlains; he called his High Chamberlains; he called his Viceroy; he called his Grandees; he called his Governors; he called his Nabobs. He called all his watchmen, and even a host of idlers that loitered outside his palace.

Together they searched the land high and low. But alas, there was no sign of the Eunuch! However they did find a large cave underneath the Imperial Palace, filled with treasure! Not since the days of Aladdin had eyes seen such a huge hoard, enough to glut the worm of greed. It was full of pearls and jacinths and beryls and emeralds and corals and carbuncles and all manner of precious gems and jewels, such as tongue of man may not describe.

*The
reason for
the
treasure.*

As the starving peasants gathered around the cave, the Emperor addressed them. "We have been keeping this treasure, as a bounty to pay mercenaries for attacking other countries. Alas, the High-Emperor-Over-The-Sea had decreed that Telcordia was too big, and forbade me to invade them".

But the Wise responded: "Oh Great Emperor, now that we have discovered the treasure, won't other countries try to attack us?"

And the Emperor responded
"Fear not, for we shall send all the treasure for safe keeping to Our Royal Brother, the Emperor of Ch'in."

And the Wise retorted. "Oh Great Emperor, did you not send a mission of gold before? And was it not waylaid by thieves?"

“Fear not,” quoth the Emperor, “for Our Royal Astrologers have studied star-lore and the entrails of sheep and the leaves of tea. They do declare that that the thieves will not expect another caravan of gold so soon after the first. And besides, there is so much treasure here they can not hope to take all of it.”

So all the horses, mules, dromedaries, camels and donkeys in the land were gathered up, and the Kingdom’s treasure piled upon it.

What happened to the treasure.

As the caravan receded into the distance, the Emperor turned to his advisers. “We have left Our best silk slipper on one horse. We will go and fetch it. Waiteth for me. We shall return soon”.

The Emperor rode off. Hours turned into days; days into months and soon the land realized that Emperor had vanished as well. Heralds then went throughout the land, proclaiming that the Emperor and his Eunuch were not dead, just in an enchanted asleep, and would return again when the land needed them the most.

Then the un-Holy un-Roman Emperor came, and summoned the College Of Elders. They sat in closed conclave, to choose a new Emperor. The peasants waited for the presence of white smoke to come from the chimney set in the towers of Telcordia, but there was no such sign. One peasant crept up to the assembly and saw on the door a sign that said :

“Position Vacant. Peons need not apply.”

The Peasants of Trel

The Geste of the Peasants driven from the land.

The recycling of waste products.

So it was written in the book of King Harbold, so that it did happen, that all waste products from the Knights’ horses were to be recycled. To this end, each Knight had several peasants following him with brush and pan. All the horses’ manure was placed in small bins. Once a week the bins were carried out and the contents shoveled onto passing carts. From there the manure was distributed across the fields. Not only did this lead to a bountiful crop of leeks, it also provided gainful work for many peasants.

But the Knights woke one day to find a foul stench around the citadel. They saw

the ground full of horse droppings, and the bins overflowing. They looked for their peasants, and behold! There were none to be seen. It was then that they remembered that during times of decimation, or a call for volunteers for missions of certain death, that the peasants were pushed to the front, whilst the Knights lingered behind, tying their shoelaces and adjusting the stirrups on their horses.

*The pure
of heart
find the
CeSSpool!*

The Knights then wondered what happened to the many peasants driven from the land. For a great desert surrounded the kingdom, and surely certain death awaited those wandered in it. Yet many perished not, for those that were pure in heart, and those who chose wisely, could find the CeSSpool.

It was said that pilgrims bearing the true Grail rested it on a rock one night, and in the morning an impression of the Grail had been left on the ground. From it swelled a wondrous font of water that had this most remarkable property: for regardless of how much water was drawn before, each pilgrim found that the CeSSpool gave them a steady flow of water that diminished not, but actually increased as the years passed. And the flow depended only on the years of thralldom they had suffered before.

*Beware
the
TeSSpool!*

But those who were not pure of heart, and who chose not wisely, did not find the CeSSpool, nay they found instead the TeSSpool. A wicked mockery it was, for those who went to drink of it were met with a torrent of water. Many stood by helplessly as a life-time's supply of water slipped through their open hands into the thirsty sands below, or were washed away by the fury of the flood.

Then the Knights heard rumours of a small hairy hobbit-like man, who build a ship to flee, for his voice and appearance was deemed most uncouth to the Lords of the Land. He escaped across the briny sea, and by accident came across the back way to the Isle of Avalon. Not only did this grieve the Knights, who had searched the land for many years without a single sighting of the Grail, but to add insult to injury, he began to give guided tours to other peasants. There, amongst the blessed apple-blossoms of the Forgotten Realm, they put aside the tears and travails of their labour and learnt to fear not their feudal lords.

As the Knights tossed and turned in their dank cells, the open window brought the sound of women laughing and children playing. And the Knights slept uneasily, knowing full well that in the morn they would rise - only to argue over whose turn it was to roll out the bins of manure that they had produced.

The Rankers of TREL

The knights discover that ranking in public does not make their sausage any bigger.

The need to rank

It was declared from upon high, that all Knights of the Quest were to be ranked, from highest to the lowest. This was the process, as dictated to the scribes and told to us by the poets. Each Knight, when the Ranking approached, busied themselves in their presentation. All labours and duties were put aside, and the Knights preened themselves, polishing their armour to the utmost, and wearing their most colourful tights and biggest plumage. Upon their chests they arrayed all their medals and badges of honour, no matter how small or old they may be. Then the Knights stood in a line, from smallest to highest. Those that had seen sightings of the Grail then moved to the right, and the sinners who had seen none then moved to the left. After this all Knights were blindfolded, and their order rearranged. For it was said that only the Lieutenants of Trel could tell the difference between true and false sightings of the Grail.

The AWA

Now there were two oaths of Fealty that the Knights took. Knights of the New Order took a temporary oath that lasted only two years. This was called the **All Winners Are** agreement. In exchange, they were said to be rewarded by a bonus paid each year. Before each bonus though, each Knight had to drop their pants and bend over to receive it.

The Oath of Three

But the older Knights belonged to the Old Order, and they swore the ancient Oath of Three. For if they were false or misleading, they called on the Earth to crush them; the Ocean to swallow them; and for the Sky to fall on them. No bar would they have of bonuses, for was a man's word not his bond, and did not all strive equally for the Quest?

But the Lieutenants of the Land scorned those of the Old Order. They placed them apart from the other Knights, and rode their horses around them, mocking them with great contempt. "Verily" quoth-they, "you show no or trust respect for your leaders, if you do not swear the new oath and drop your pants and bend over. And if we do find the Grail, you shall not receive any extra bonus with your antiquated bonds".

What some Knights received.

Despite their protestations, all the Knights were then blindfolded and arranged in order. And the Knights of the new oaths then dropped their pants and bent over. And behold! Each Knight had a moldy sausage placed in their outstretched hands.

The Knights removed their blindfold and examined their sausages. Some were bigger than others: some had more fat: and others had more gristle. In this way they worked out their true ranking.

Great was the wrath of the Knights. They turned on each other and bickered, decrying each other's achievements. Such was the raucous that Sir Not-A-Lot came down to address them.

What Sir Not-A-Lot said

“The Emperor only gives us one small sow each year. There is only one heart, and it goes to the First Knight in the Land. The animal has only two lungs, and these are sheared amongst the next two Knights. There are three cubits of intestine, and four legs, and so on, which in turn are given to the Knights of lower order.

“Besides, it is not enough that you are the Flower of Virtue and the Paragon of Chivalry. Each year you must extend yourselves.”

The Knight waxed wrathful, “How does thou extend thouself? For when it is time for jousting practice, thou are not there; when it is archery practice, thou are not there; for times of fasting and self denial, thou sendeth a page-boy to write a full report.”

Then Sir Not-A-Lot responded, “Are we lovers that you ‘thee’ and ‘thoust’ me? A hero can hit a target that no one else can hit, but it takes a genius to hit a target that no body else can see. Till then, learn to be humble, for you certainly have every reason to be.”

The Knights were not happy and continued to complain and moan. So much so that a passing merchant passed and sniggered “Are all the Men of Trel loud-mouth braggarts?” In the glory days of Trel such insults would have met instant death by single-combat, but now no one had even heard him.

Sir QualityCheck

Finally Sir QualityCheck returned. The First Knight in the land, he had spent a year errant throughout the kingdom, searching for proud deeds of manly courage to perform. When he saw the Knights fighting amongst himself, he tore the Insignia of Trel from his arms and went to the Hospice of St Peter. Truly it was deemed better to spend your life tending to the sick and wounded, than comparing the size of your sausage.

Prometheus Unleashed

How new reinforcements arrive, whilst monsters are unleashed upon the land.

*The arrival
of the
General
Infantry.*

The citadel of Trel had stood alone for many years against terrible storms and dreadful sieges. So much so that the complement of Men had waned terribly, through natural attrition and losses caused by mortal combat. Conditions were so strait that dummies stuffed with straw were dressed as men and placed at the battlements, to provide the illusions of greater numbers.

Then the Lords of the Land summoned the hosts of Trel and announced: “Ring the bells with joy. Let the trumpets sound loud! For the siege of Trel is lifted, and a score of General Infantry (G.I.) troops will arrive, with enough supplies to last till Midsummer.”

The assembly of Trel cried with joy, but a few had misgivings, and asked “Where are the G.I. troops coming from? For the practice of Knighthood is not in favour in the land, and it takes many years for a squire to be trained as a full Knight. And what weapons shall we give them, for the Gnomes of Telcordia count all arrows and swords that we have, and will supply us no more? Nor can we manufacture any, for all the Blacksmiths have been banished. And when Midsummer comes, and the supplies run out, what shall happen to the troops left behind?”

*A bridge, a
basket and
an acorn.*

No answer did the Lords give, but instead they summoned the young monk Petros into the land. He did kill a small kid, and beat the skin into the finest vellum. Then with inks and colours most strange and curious, he did make a parchment. The Knights looked at the illuminations, and were astounded. For on it, drawn with incredible artistry, was a bridge, a basket and an acorn.

“What meanest this?” enquired the Knights. “Knaves!” cried the Lords of the Land, “Can you not see that we shall build a mighty bridge to span the chasm between Trel and Telcordia. And the basket we shall fill with low-lying fruit, easy to pick. And from the tiny acorn shall grow a mighty oak.”

Then the Wise retorted. “Where is this bridge? How wide should it be? What tolls shall we charge? Should it be extended at some time in the future? What signals shall we use to indicate the presence of foes or friends?”

”And why should we pick only low-lying fruit? Have we not the skill and manhood to make a ladder, to pick fruit higher off the ground, so that it will not be eaten by passing wild animals? Then we can leave gleaners to grab the lower order fruit as well.

“And it takes many years for an acorn to grow to a mighty oak. So why do you have plans for a fully functional lumber industry by Yuletide?”

No answer was given, for the ground shook, and all rushed to the battlements. From

afar they saw Governor Bear approach, and could hear his voice booming across the land.

“A Knight of Trel for my very own... I am going to hug and kiss him and hug and kiss him, all for the love of him. Each Knight shall be empowered, so that they can be free –free to obey orders without question. And I have brought Prometheus, Giver of Fire, so that we may free him from his bonds; and in return he will rekindle the fires of passions in our weary hearts.”

What the creatures did.

But the Knights of Trel did not see Prometheus behind the Governor. They saw no Titan. They saw no giver of gifts. For in their horror all they beheld was a coven of swamp hags, imprisoned by iron collars and thick metal chains. Then the order was given, and the beasts were unleashed. The hate-filled harpies flew into the air, and sought out black caves, and dark eaves and shadowy rooms, where brooding thoughts and bitter memories lingered. For these things were their food and drink, and they did suck upon them with great delight. Then their shrill voices filled the air, “Unmutual, unmutual, your behaviour is unmutual”. And those who met the horror of their eyes fell immediately in a deep swoon. “Checking-in” they cried, as their beaks tore at naked flesh. “Checking-out” they screamed as they grabbed the livers and entrails and swallowed them whole.

After the creatures had passed, leeches ran to the fallen, and place silver mirrors in front of their mouths. Lo! The mirrors steamed up, and it was proven that they were not dead. Their condition confused the Wise, for they were not asleep, nor were they awake, but in some unholy state in betwixt. In this mode they stayed till midnight, when they all awoke and said as one “We are all individuals, and we are all 100% happy”.

The Green Knight

The Knights learn that it is not always a good idea to make things grow.

The pods of a plant are greatly desired.

In those days, there lived a powerful sorceress in the land. She came to address the assembled Knights of Trel. Men were enamored of her beauty, and captivated by her voice. For it trickled like honey, every sound an enchantment, and all but the strongest of minds believed that what she spoke was wise and reasonable; and desire rose in the Men’s hearts that they too appear wise and reasonable by agreeing. Indeed, all who gainsaid her sounded rough and vulgar. “Behold,” quoth she, “the Grail can not be found by normal means. For I have discovered a certain plant which produces seeds of unusual size. These pods can be ground into powder, and then burnt on a silver censor, and those that inhale the fumes can see

the Grail.”

“Where are these plants,” cried the Knights of Trel, “for we do desire to take the pods, grind them into powder, burn it on a silver censor, and then see visions of the Grail.”

So the Sorceress reached into her girdle and pulled forth an ivory whistle. After she blew on it, two slave boys in azure raiment came, pulling a cart. On this cart there was an orange pot; and in the pot was a green shrubbery. As the Knights approached, the plant reared up above them and cried “FEED ME!”

*The arrival
of the Green
Knight.*

Great was their amazement. Never before had they encountered a talking shrubbery, and knew not what one fed it. One Knight found this his impatience overcame his wisdom, and picked up some excrement at the end of his spear (it is described elsewhere how there was much of this waste around). However as he rode near, the plant reached down and swallowed him whole.

The assembled Knights drew their sword and made to attack the plant. However the Sorceress intervened and such was the power in her voice that their anger was assuaged and they sheathed their weapons. These were the words, although afterwards none could understand the meaning of them.

“Fear not, for the Knight and the pod are leveraging off mutual synergies. This will last for 12 weeks, no more, no less. And at the end of that time the Knight shall be released unharmed.” So a prayerful vigil was kept by the plant, for inside it people could hear dreadful gurgling and burping sounds, like the sounds a peasant might hear from the stomach of a pestilent sheep.

Surely enough, at the beginning of the 12th week, the pod tore open, and the Knight stepped forth. The Knights of Trel took a step back, for the Knight, his armour, his horse, and his weapons, were all Green. Was not Sir Gawain confounded by a Knight of this particular hue?

The Green Knight spoke: “Fear not, for I have seen the Grail!”

“Hurrah!” cried the Knights of Trel.

“And it’s a metaphor for a paradigm shift in drinking utensils.”

The Knights of Trel screamed and ran in terror, but the voice of the Green Knight followed them.

“In addition, each construct requires the central Knights to engage deeply with the concepts that underpin each of the initiatives and a range of processes that have been used to explore issues and gather feedback from different stakeholder to inform our thinking...”

The Knight ran willy-nilly, trying to escape, like a nest of ants stirred by an

intruder. Some ran to their rooms and tore up sheets and stuffed them in their ears, but unlike mighty Ulysses, no help did they find.

“We need performance enhancing silo-functionality strategic thrusts with commercially imperative consultative processes, with right-sized stakeholder-oriented integrated facilitated intervention customer-intimate end-user Grail-directed proactive legacy cultures.”

The world began to unmake before the Knights’ eyes. There was not just a Green Knight, but a Blue and a Red one appeared as well, all moving in such a blur that Knights of all colours appeared. The Knights of Trel tried to seize them but found that their limbs were enspelled, and all they could do was stare at their outreached hands. However succour came from an unlikely source, for the Great Wym Sigma was passing nearby and heard the insane ravings of the Green Knight. Some say it was in the shape of a giant snake that slithered into the citadel. Others say it was a white rabbit that hopped over the walls and swallowed the Green Knight whole. “Yummy”, it burped, “I’ll be back for more.”

What had changed?

When dawn came, the Knights of Trel crept out of their rooms and found the courtyard empty. The Sorceress and the pods were not there, but the first foolish Knight was found asleep. He had been returned to his normal colours, with no memory of all that had unfolded. For all the sound and fury, absolutely nothing had changed, and everything was exactly how it was before. And in the silence, Men whispered to themselves, wondering if it all had been a dream.

[Translator’s Note. There is an official stamp in the margin, bearing the Great Seal Of Telcordia. It proclaims that Green Knights were to be welcomed in the land. On Green Knight Friendship Day, tournaments and fairs were to be held throughout the land, acknowledging the contribution they make to Chivalry and adventure.]

The Voice of G.O.D.

How a talking head brings much attention; the new clerics try to help.

The Oracle is revealed.

Alarms sounded, trumpets blazed. The Knights of Trel rushed to the battlements to find the entire citadel surrounded by a horde of foreign invaders. The portcullis was raised, the drawbridge was down, and Men gripped their weapons and waited for the end.

Captain Courageous came down and addressed the defenders. "Fear not, for these strangers were invited here by us to purchase new weapons we have developed." Everyone looked at Sergeant Pepper, who was working on a Disposable Mobile Pike, which only worked for the individual pike man. However Captain Courageous replied, "Nay, our wise men and sages and philosophers have been deep in thought, and after many years they have brought into being the art of imbuing the power of human speech into inanimate objects. We call this the Greater Oracular Device, or G.O.D. Not only can it understand human speech, it can answer questions faithfully, vibrating once for 'yeah' and twice for 'nay'."

The barbarians entered the citadel, and made no sign of obeisance or greeting. They walked right up to the oracle, which was an effigy of a human head, and spoke to it.

"Are ve fierce barbarians from afar?"

And the Oracle did say. "BUZZ"

And the barbarians asked a second time. "Vill possession of the Oracle give us fame and glory in var?"

And the Oracle did say. "BUZZ"

And the barbarians asked for the third and final time. "Shall ve kill everyone and take the Oracle without payment?"

There was a long silence, and again the Knight gripped their weapons, fearing the worse.

"BUZZ. BUZZ" went the Oracle.

*The Knights
are
suspicious.*

Great was the joy from the crowd, and Captain Courageous and the Barbarian King were taken away by a cheering mob. But the Knights of Trel were not happy.

"Verily," they spoke to themselves, "there is some trick here. A small child, or a large dwarf, is hidden in the effigy."

So in secret they tested the Oracle. They banged it with spears – it rang not hollow. They kept a watch on it – they saw nothing leave or enter. Finally they took it to a pond that lay between two towers of Trel. In earlier days, witches were tested for heresy here, and they did dunk the Oracle. No bubbles did they see.

They returned the Oracle and did test it themselves.

"Are we the Knights of Trel?"

"BUZZ."

"Will we ever find the Grail?"

"BUZZ, BUZZ, BUZZ".

"Was that three 'yeah's', or a 'yeah' followed by a 'nay'?"

"BUZZ"

The Knights never did find out what the Oracle meant, for their leaders returned

and addressed them.

“Our friends here have decided to buy the Oracle from us. Besides a share of all booty in all future conquests, they have offered us three magic beans. When planted, they will grow to a giant size, allowing us to venture into the clouds, where we are told there is a goose that lays golden eggs.”

The Barbarian King then spoke. “Indeed, you strike a hard bargain, my wife Brunhilda will surely kill me. Verily these beans are magic and ..”

Then a strange fit overcame the King. His face turned red, his breaths came in short sudden bursts, and tears rolled down his face. Then he collapsed on the floor, making dreadful braying sounds, like an ass.

“He is possessed!” cried the Knights, who ran on mass to their chapel.

*The
departure of
the
chaplains
and the new
clerics.*

In the days of King Harbold, wise and saintly chaplains did tend to the spiritual needs of their flock. However they were banished from the land, and replaced with new clerics. These men wore white robes, and walked around with parchment attached to small boards, making marks with their quills.

“Can ye perform an exorcism?” panted the Knights of Trel. “Nay”, replied the new clerics. “We follow the philosophy of Post-Antiquitism, and believe not in moral absolutes. But we can ask the possessed how they feel about it.”

So they attended the visiting King, who was now punching the ground, crying “Stop it. Magic Beans. It’s all too much...”. As he rolled over his dagger fell from his scabbard. The clerics were shocked and reported this to the crowd, who then noticed that all the visitors were heavily armed.

“Are those weapons sharp?” they inquired?

“Ve certainly hope so.” came the reply.

“But you do not *know* so, and by the immutable laws of our land, they must be checked.”

There were no more blacksmiths in Trel, so one was fetched from a neighboring land. He set up a portable whetstone, and did check each and every weapon for sharpness. Those that were sharp had a small tag tied around them, reminding them to check the weapons again in a year’s time.

The visitors’ mace provided a complex problem. For it was clearly a weapon designed to hurt and maim enemies, yet there were not clear or sharp edges on it. The Knights pondered this, and solved the problem by welding on sharp spikes to the mace, which could be verified as being keen. The visitors were mighty pleased indeed, as their weapons were sharpened and enhanced without cost to them, and

years later people were still copying the design. For centuries that followed, all of Christendom was threatened by the new weapon.

Then the visitors were addressed again; “Now we know that your weapons are sharp, can you prove that you have been trained in their usage?”

“We have considerable practical experience, which we will show you now” they responded. The day would have gone ill indeed but their King awoke from his fit and wiped the tears from his eyes.

“Look how you have changed and grown since our intervention.” cried the new clerics. “Just as well, for our time is up for today. Indeed, all your free sessions are over. We will return in a year and a day to check on your progress.”

Then the visiting King did say. “Indeed, these are magic beans, and a portion of our future spoils of war will be given to you. For we are fierce barbarians from Gaul, and always keep our word, by Toutanis.”

“That is good news indeed,” said the Lords of the Land. “Do you think you can do us a small favour? We have been troubled by many raids from the Goths –Visi, Ostro, Moeso and Vandals. Could you make it across the Rhine and subdue a few tribes?”

“Nein.”

“Nine? You are keen. Well let’s not keep you.”

So the Oracle was placed on a cart. Part of the main gate had to be demolished to make space for it to leave. The barbarians left, and the magic beans were placed in a glass cabinet in the main courtyard. People came from far and wide to see them and wonder with great wonder.

The Monoliths

The strange circle of stone. The Library of Trel.

*The dark
bourne and
its Druids.*

Next to the citadel of Trel was a fast flowing river. The waters of this dark bourn were dangerous to cross, but there were several fords nearby. Across the river lived a tribe of Druids. The Knights of Trel had little time for their pagan religion, although some took walks amongst their pleasant groves.

However late one night the Druids crossed the river in force in boats made out of skins and intertwined sticks, all sealed with animal fat. They took up residence on a large plain next to Trel. Once it had belonged to the Kingdom, but had been sold

during the great blizzards years before. There they began to erect a large circle of stone monoliths.

These stone monoliths greatly disturbed the Knights, for weird and unexplained phenomena occurred there. Slaves would suddenly drop their tools and run screaming; fires broke out unawares; and at night a sickly blue glow surrounded the worksite.

A representation of Knights went to address their concerns to the Druids. “Fear not,” quoth they, “for we are just using the stones to harness the power of the Sun into a tiny beam. With it we can illuminate the darkness of ignorance and reveal many things.”

“Will it reveal the location of the Grail?” asked the Knights.

“Nay!” cried the Chief Druid. “It can only reveal useful things, like when to sow our crops..”

“Yeah, verily yeah” chanted his followers.

“..When to reap our crops.”

“Yeah, verily yeah” chanted his followers.

“...and when to let the blood of our enemies flow on our altars”

“Yeah, verily yeah” chanted his followers, all pulling out their sickles.

The Knights beat a hasty retreat, but as they went, they noticed great caves had formed in the earth, like some giant convulsion had torn the land itself. Then they passed the Library of Trel.

*The Library
of Trel*

Once the Library had been a beacon of light in the darkness. The Sons of Kings went there to learn of all manner of books; and held disputations of their contents with the doctors and men of science. They studied star-lore and fair sayings of poets, and they exercised themselves in all branches of learning until they surpassed the people of the time. Their skill in calligraphy exceeded that of scribes and their fame was bruited abroad over all climes and cities.

The Lords Of Telcordia were jealous of their success and fearful of the learning of books. The librarians had been banished, all books and scrolls imprisoned in strong metal coffins, whose lids were so heavy that Atlas himself would have trouble lifting it.

Instead, the Wizard Dimmy was brought in, and he created a number of foul constructs –deep wells in which all scrolls and illuminations were to be stored. Let those with understanding harken, for the dimension of the wells was this: they were 80 feet wide and 20 cubits deep, and were known as the 80 times 20. All denizens of Trel were ordered to throw their documents into these wells, and were told that

they could be recalled at any time. This promise proved not to be true, for when the Knights called on the well to return their documents sometimes the wrong ones were returned. Other times they could find no matching documents, and the dark waters of the well did not stir at all. Some were even more frustrated by finding the documents arrive in the wrong order.

Now the destruction of Trel had been prophesized for many years. Indeed, every hooting owl, reading of the leaves of tea, or the examination of the entrails of cattle seemed to portend the end. But still Trel survived. However the Wise remembered Homer's stories of the proud walls of Ilium, and of Cassandra's warnings. Fearing some catastrophe might overcome the citadel, they decided to commission a true and accurate history of the times, and to hide these in caves outside the walls. In this way records of the time could be passed to future generations should the citadel be overwhelmed by some catastrophe.

The Twilight of Trel

The fall of the Dark Tower; The Ghosts of Trel; The End is Foretold;

*The fall of
the Dark
Tower.*

The Dark Tower of Telcordia held many captives in slavery, but one day it collapsed and fell. Some say that the titanic struggles of the Emperor weakened it; others say that the foundations were sold by the Emperor to a passing merchant. Nonetheless it fell, taking down with it its tall towers, mighty leaders and proud ladies. From the pits imprisoned Knights emerged, blinking in the sunlight. First in ones and twos, and then in a great rush, they returned unto the citadel of Trel. There a large white building lay empty, thanks to so many Knights falling in the Quest.

However their time in the dark tower had changed them all. They became secretive and furtive, speaking only in codes and signs. This distrust spread like fire around Trel, so much so, that instead of openly passing news of sightings of the Grail, Knights would leave saying "We are searching for an ephemeral object the exact nature and position of which we are not authorized to tell you."

*The
haunting of
Trel. What
happened to
the
Strawman.*

The citadel of Trel had fallen on hard times indeed. The buildings had crumbled and faded, and were dark and dismal. The peasants who cleaned the straw in the buildings refused to walk there alone, as they claimed it was haunted. Sometimes the walls would shake and moan, as if the spirits of the damned were trapped inside. They brought reports of some rooms that were as still as a tomb, whilst others felt like a storm was raging through them. Some rooms were as hot as the fires of Hades; others were as cold as the deathly North wind. Some rooms were as dry as the Saracen desert, yet others again were as moist as Satan's spittle.

Then a young squire got lost and came across a strange room indeed. Men there sat

around a round table, and spoke in a weird tongue and wore antique clothes. They feasted and drunk and talked without fear, for they claimed that they had wrestled the great Pretender from the throne. After the feasting, they grabbed a scarecrow from the field, filled it with straw, and threw javelins at it. This sport was called “Sticking it to the man.”

Yet when this squire left the room, though only a few hours had passed, it appeared that he had been gone missing for months, although none had noticed his absence. People went searching for this room, but they found nothing. A late straggler emerged, claiming to have seen a similar room, but the hearth was cold and the dust of centuries lay upon it.

Whilst the folk of Trel pondered the meaning of this, a man in a purple toga rode up. It was great Caesar, and he addressed the crowd.

“The citadel of Trel doth diminish Caesar’s glory, and the ghosts do mock him. Therefore Caesar shall tear it down.”

The assembly was shocked and could not speak. Finally a few raised the courage: “But where shall we live, Oh Great Caesar?”

“Caesar needs a new citadel, one capable of boldly taking us forward into the Fourth century. Behold!”

*The new
Tower.*

The plans were revealed, and all were dismayed. For like the Tower of Babylon, the new citadel presumptuously rose so high into the skies as to anger the Gods. It was also built on the shifting sands of the Swamp of Despair, from which came foul miasmas to sicken the very air. The Knights were to be chained to long benches, overlooking a large campus, where Lions, Tigers, Crows, Bears and Swans did tear themselves to pieces in gladiatorial combat for the bread and circuses of the masses.

“Great Caesar,” cried a few, “our heavy siege engines and weapons of war will sink in the swamp”.

“Then they can stay for a little while,” replied Caesar, “but if we find the Grail, then we will not really need them any more.”

“Have mercy,” cried the people, “for our lame and sick will have trouble moving there, and the graves of our kin are nearby.”

“Caesar is constant as the northern star, of whose true-fixed and resting quality there is no fellow in the firmament. Let me have men about me that have a lean and hungry look, not sleek-headed men that sleep well at nights. For you are all too fat, dumb and happy.”

In so saying Caesar took a flaming torch and flung it into the first building of Trel. Built before the days of King Harbold it was, and it had withstood siege, war, flood and dragon's fire. But now the Knights saw it being torched, not from external foe, but from within.

The flames rose to a blood-red sunset. It looked like the very heavens were burning. Birds flew backwards: the river flooded: comets appeared: trees did uproot themselves and walk amongst men. However as quickly as the flames built, so did they subdue. For some inner property in the building resisted the fire and it burnt not.

Great Caesar saw this and cursed the citadel of Trel, swearing the Oath of Three that it will be destroyed; calling on the Earth to crush him; the Ocean to swallow him; and for the Sky to fall on him, should he fail.

And as Caesar rode away, naught could be heard but the lamentation of the women and children.

[Translator's Note: The original manuscript is torn here, but it appears that Trel survived longer, and more stories of this time may yet come to light.]