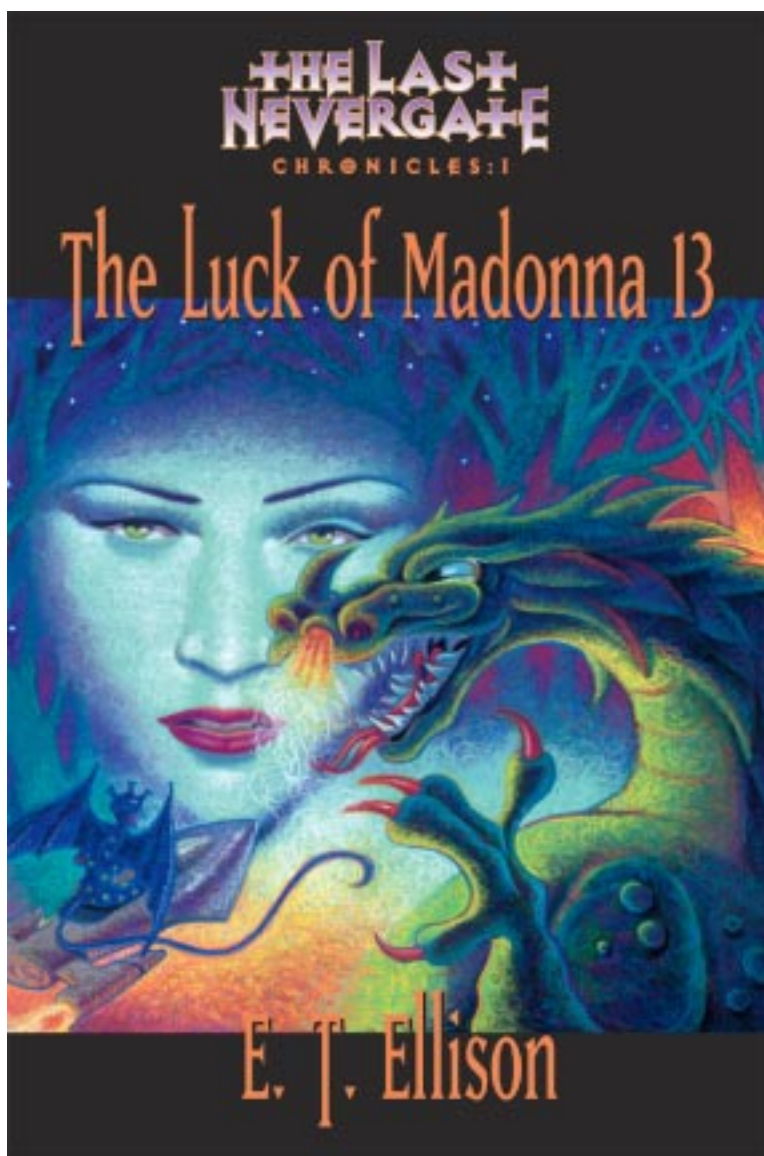


A SAMPLER



INTRODUCTION + GENESIS

This special kickoff section contains the complete text of Chapter 27 of Dr. Lavendra Cortioli's 2183 history of the IsoTown Movement, *Oddballs, Cults and Worldchangers*. It's not exactly a preface, but it's not an appendix item either. It's the history of St. Coriander, its origins and, to a lesser degree, its neighbors, the Clans Dunnigan, whose Nevergates and other marvels changed life on the planet Earth forever. At least up through the year 2182. In case you never liked history, you may be interested to know that Lavendra Cortioli is thought to have also written in the Erotic Thriller genre under a pen name. Even historians have to eat.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and beyond the intent of either the author or the publisher.

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IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT QUINCUNX ICONS



In the margins of *The Luck of Madonna 13* you will occasionally encounter an arrangement of five dots like the one above (in this sampler of *Genesis*, you'll find the first one on page 11). This cryptic "sign of the quincunx" (pronounced "kwinkess" by most of us, including residents of St. Coriander) is your signal that additional information pertaining to the topic at hand may be found at **www.lastnevergate.com**. This is the Chronicler's Site and it contains a growing collection of miscellaneous content of possible relevance to the time and place of *The Last Nevergate*...and of possible interest to you, the reader. Enjoy the sample...and the Chronicler's Site, too.

The Chronicler



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GENESIS



*There are seeds and
there are Seeds.
We of the Clans must
never shirk the quirky
poetry of truth. Thus
we should smile when
we tell that our own
Seeds first took root in
the strange soil of St.
Coriander. Great seed
is stronger than soil.*

INGA LYRUS MARLENA DUNNIGAN
GENEMASTER, DUNNETIX LLC

Ed. Note: We thank the Hooligan Central Free Archive for their gracious permission to reprint portions of the introduction and the complete text of Chapter 27 of Dr. Lavendra Cortioli's 2183 history of the IsoTown Movement, Oddballs, Cults & Worldchangers. Dr. Cortioli was awarded the Living Dustbin Society's prestigious Durant in 2185 for her exhaustive 2,640 page work.

Chapter 27 pertains exclusively to St. Coriander, the one IsoTown that is inseparable from the Last Nevergate saga and thus of some relevance to these Chronicles.

ODDBALLS, CULTS WORLDCHANGERS



by Lavendra Cortioli

Ed. Note: The following background information on IsoTowns has been condensed from the author's introductory chapter.

Between 2038 and 2138, nearly 7,000 IsoTown[®] franchises were awarded to a great variety of special interest groups. The IsoTown was a hybrid nonprofit-entrepreneurial response to a convergence of certain technological advances with what has been called by some the Evolving Movement, and by others as “just another round of neo-tribalism.” IsoTown LLHC’s product offerings were pre-engineered, highly self-sufficient, “just add water” town kits designed to support isolated populations of three hundred to five thousand individuals.

For technically-inclined readers, first generation IsoTowns were constructed from prepackaged kits using Fanuc Autobuilds and were usually powered by GE-Berkeley Hydrons interfaced with Burpee GroPond systems. AgTekka Cornucopias were available as an option for larger towns wishing to have a more complete control over food supply. After 2095, a second generation infrastructure was launched, with Universal Converters supplying energy and elemental feedstocks, Fabrax Nanobuilds supplying complex material goods and family-sized Chan-Singha MenuMaster units handling the biomaterials and foodstuff preparation. Infrastructure upgrades for first generation communities were a popular retrofit.

In 2138, exactly one century after the organization’s founding by Aimee Semple Kawasaki, demand for Earth-based IsoTowns had slowed to a crawl and the assets of IsoTown LLHC were acquired by Gatewide Cultural Exporters, which had developed a set of rapid adaptation exobiological algos for colonization in compatible parallax universes identified by Nevergate Ambassadors.

ST. CORIANDER

✦ ORIGINS ✦

St. Coriander was founded in 2061 by Merritt Frank Orwell, Ph.D., and his followers, collectively called the Orwell Society. A theoretical physicist of some note, Orwell's professional scientific career was derailed shortly after the publication in 2049 of a controversial paper outlining a theoretical basis for human "Planar Elevation" as he termed transcendence from the "vale of tears," the normal plane of human existence. Orwell was sharply criticized by both the scientific and spiritual establishments, but gained a following of would-be "transcendental adventurers" who were to later coalesce into the Orwell Society.

Orwell's dream was to construct a device that would demonstrate the viability of his theories, but he was able to garner little financial support from traditional sources. His early followers, however, included one Estelle Faunibeune, Ph.D., the lavishly wealthy heiress to the Nanoset-Viebel fortune, mathematician, vegetarian and occasional comedian. Dr. Faunibeune urged Orwell to pursue scientific and spiritual freedom away from the taunts and jeers of lesser talents. With her generous financial support, the Orwell Society acquired an IsoTown Franchise.

After an extensive site search, the Society acquired acreage in the San Juan Mountains of northern New Mexico (a sparsely populated western state of the pre-WorldGov United States of America). Society documents suggest that this high-altitude locale was selected in equal parts for its remoteness and for the geomagnetic vortices along the Vittergauss Fault, which bisects the townsite. The vortices were thought by Orwell and others (ironically, as we shall see) to possibly facilitate intentional Planar Elevations.

Faux sainthoods and funnybones

The origin of the name St. Coriander has long been a matter of curiosity. Sainthood records in the Vatican reveal no such personage and numerous data searches have disclosed not even so much as a single reference to such a saint, in fiction or non. Dr. Orwell reputedly de-

clined to provide explanation, even though his signature was affixed to the IsoTown franchise agreement in which the name was specified. The only hint in published sources is the following quotation from Estelle Faunibeune in a 2072 interview recorded in *Grandammel* magazine: “Frankie has always loved traditional Mexican seasonings. Need I say more?” Evidently we must be satisfied with ambiguity.

There is also the matter of the naming of nearby Mt. Faunibeune. Twentieth- and twenty-first century maps of the region show no Mt. Faunibeune for the simple reason that its official name remains Brazos Peak. Over the years it came to be called Mt. Faunibeune (or Mt. Funnybone) by residents of St. Coriander, evidently in honor of Estelle Faunibeune. However, records do not indicate whether the “Funnybone” nickname that the mountain acquired is a simplification of Ms. Faunibeune’s name, a reference to her comedic talents, or both.

An outlandish juxtaposition

The physical environment of St. Coriander was originally an IsoTown® Model 1955, a radial WalkingTown design using mid-twentieth century suburbia-styled architectural skins on its single-family residential components. According to the original brochure, a copy of which is now on display in the Museum level of the Holy Quincunx, the Model 1955 is a “self-sustaining, zero-growth design incorporating all necessary infrastructure and sustenance-provision mechanisms.”

Tucking an IsoTown called St. Coriander into a lightly populated primitivist outdoor recreation area was not a popular idea at the outset. A number of environmental groups — in Chama Valley and elsewhere — opposed the project, particularly for its “outlandish juxtaposition of failed whitebread suburbiforms” with the rugged aesthetics and Spanish cultural roots of North Central New Mexico; yet in the end, the project was developed and St. Coriander began its functional life. To the local populace it was virtually invisible in any case, and when Chama Valley residents referred to it at all it was with expressions like “those crazy, rich spiritualists out there” accompanied by a baffled shake of the head.

What architectural critics have called the “insufferable blandness”

of the IsoTown Model 1955 aesthetic was, according to Orwell Society records, a part of the Society's strategy: it was believed — or at least fervently hoped — that an intentionally stultifying physical environment would stimulate residents to focus on enhancing their individual “transcendent moments” which would lead toward widespread “spontaneous Elevations.”

♦ **PLANAR ELEVATION** ♦

Numerous belief systems incorporate the metaphysical concept that the Universe contains various “planes” of existence, many of these being undetectable to humans on this Earthly plane. Heaven, Hell, and Nirvana, for example, all represent alternate non-Earthly planes. Physical death has typically been the mechanism by which an individual moves from the Earthly to some other plane — typically a “higher” one — which represents a venue for achieving continued spiritual growth of one's “soul.”

Various spiritual/metaphysical traditions prescribe methods by which a devotee might intentionally move toward higher planes. However, no incidents of an individual intentionally, and in plain sight, disappearing (Elevating) from this Earthly existence (presumably, to some other plane), had been scientifically documented as of the mid-twenty-first century.

Psychon meets psyfrac

Orwell did not believe in metaphysical phenomena. Like many scientists throughout history, he believed that such fuzzy ideas as “metaphysics” exist, in the long term, only where science has yet to evolve satisfactory phenomenological explanations backed by testable hypotheses and theories. His discovery of the so-called “psychon” quasiparticle, which he believed was the “electron of the soul,” led him to believe that by manipulating psychon vibrational frequencies, one might “elevate” one's soul (and the physical body it was inhabiting) out of this physical plane at will. His so-called Psychon Frequency Accelerator (Psyfrac) was designed to do just that. The Orwell Society — and St. Coriander itself — was built around this idea.

In Orwell's mind, the viability of his Psyfrac technology was both inevitable and "just around the corner," and thus he felt the process of achieving Elevation should be deeply integrated into the design of St. Coriander's culture. From the outset, Orwell was dissatisfied with a purely voluntary approach to Elevation, feeling that even the true believers who founded St. Coriander would "dillydally with this-plane life" rather than "move up the ladder." Fear of the unknown, after all, has been a fairly universal hallmark of human behavior throughout its history. Thus, he insisted that St. Coriander's "Rules" (common parlance for the *Guiding Principles of Governance and Comportment* that served as laws in St. Coriander) include "encouragements" such as a remarkable financial and social safety net for offspring (one of Estelle Faunibeune's "contributions to the cause").

Curvaceous and thrice sixteen

Perhaps the most radical of St. Coriander's Rules was the Elevation Curve, which established severe "economic disincentives" (Orwell's somewhat parental approach to "encouragement") for excessive longevity past Handoff. According to "The Book" (Merritt Frank Orwell's compact but pithy *The Evolutionary Case for Rule Delimited Planar Elevation*), Handoff (or "passing the torch downstream") was optimally to occur shortly after the time at which offspring were officially ready to reproduce. The Rule, while not specifically requiring Elevation at a particular age, did set Coming of Age at age 16. Elevation for the parenting generation was suggested at "thrice sixteen, more or less," to allow for a reasonable period of "convenience grandparenting" before moving up the ladder. While one was ideally supposed to achieve Elevation via non-technological means, the Psyfrac would "enforce" it, if necessary. No one would die of senile dementia in St. Coriander.

Orwell was a lifelong bachelor and felt strongly that "thrice sixteen" was too long to remain Unelevated. However, he was ultimately persuaded to go along with the Thrice Sixteen Principle by a group of Society members with children and grandchildren who made a strong case for the value of limited grandparenthood in "smoothing the spikes of upgrowing."

Once the inevitability of technologically assisted Planar Elevation had taken root in his mind and the initial Psyfrac prototype tested (on whom it is not known), Orwell became impatient with life as we know it. The idea of continuing on the Earthly plane past forty now felt “superfluous, slothful and a reflection of spiritual bankruptcy” according to his personal journal, which also records that he frequently felt a “strong pull toward the next plane.” He himself was age thirty-nine when he and a dedicated team of “psyfracticians” completed the original Psyfrac prototype in 2073. According to his notes, he planned to be the first Society member to “ride it up the ladder.”

◆ EARTHQUAKE ◆

Ironically, neither Orwell’s Elevation nor his vision for St. Coriander were realized during his lifetime: the original St. Coriander was obliterated by a magnitude 8.8 earthquake on the morning of Orwell’s fortieth birthday, July 14, 2074. As a direct result of the quake and subsequent fires, Orwell, Estelle Faunibeune and 2,487 other St. Coriander residents were killed, plus the entire twenty-seven-person entourage of Madonna 13, plus several thousand residents of other small communities in Chama Valley. According to best estimates, approximately 670 persons in St. Coriander survived, including five visitors, one of whom was the aforementioned Madonna 13. More will be said about these visitors shortly.

An unwelcome mat

Visitors to St. Coriander were then — as now — a rarity, for a variety of reasons. In the town’s early years, it attracted little media attention. Its location was another factor: a remote part of an already remote area that was a “dead-end” destination, without significant economic or recreational assets and accessible only by a single private road and a private vertiport. For another, tourists and the casually inquisitive were actively discouraged: a Certified Guest Pass was required and could only be issued at the specific behest of a Bonded Resident. St. Coriander was, at least in the minds of its initial populace, a serious and important experiment in the spiritual evolution of the species.

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A further deterrent to unauthorized visitation was — and still is — the Township Fence, a tall, thick, attractive, and thoroughly unpleasant affair of impenetrable, living thornmesh which circumnavigates the entire town. For those unfamiliar with this marvel of bioengineering, it is the living equivalent of poison-tipped razorwire married to a nest of high voltage electric eels. It can entangle, slash, poison and electrocute. Wise folk give it a wide berth. Finally, there was the matter of lodging: no motels, hotels, flytels, floatels, inns, bed and breakfasts, campgrounds, RV parks or other public lodging have ever been built within the town.

Two pair ace the arms

All five nonresident survivors of the devastating earthquake have played significant roles in the evolution of St. Coriander and adjacent areas. Madonna 13's presence in St. Coriander at the time of the Quake will be discussed later. The other four survivors consisted of two pairs of identical twins, all four engineers, all four having recently enjoyed remarkable winnings at famed Las Vegas (Colorado franchise — formerly the town of Grand Junction) themecity resorts.

Estelle Faunibeune, whose interest in improbable probabilistic phenomena has been well documented elsewhere, extended an invitation to the Igan sisters and the Dunn brothers to “visit the St. Coriander experiment before you fritter away all your winnings on gewgaws, joysticks, bodyguards and nonsense.” The two pairs of twins¹ were formally introduced to each other at a dinner party hosted by Estelle two weeks before the Quake. According to Dr. Faunibeune's journal, “the erotic charge between the Iigans and the Dunns was so potent that one could experience an orgasm just walking past them.” The rest, of course, is (as we historians are wont to say, perhaps in excess) history. Estelle Faunibeune sent for her brother, a priest, to immediately preside over a somewhat unusual dual matrimony.

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1 The Igan and Dunn twins were born during the Twinning Craze which peaked around the middle of the last century. This extremely popular fad was thought to be spawned by Delilah Fannish's 2041 bestseller *Twin It: Double the Fun and Half the Trouble*. Between 2050 and 2080, nearly a fourth of the children born in the USA were eugenic twins.

♦ **DUNNIGAN BEGINNINGS** ♦

The infamous Quake intervened. “Father” Elvern Faunibeune arrived on schedule the day after the Quake but the urgent press of the emergency matters caused the parties to postpone the big event for a week. Finally, on July 28, 2074, the twin marriage ceremonies were conducted. Donella Viola Igan (a paragenetics design engineer) was married to John Aurelius Dunn (a nanomechanical systems engineer); Victoria Kathleen Igan (an axodymic software engineer) was married to Michael Julius Dunn (a cyborganic sensors engineer). On a whim, the two identical couples elected to adopt a new surname: Dunnigan. Thus began the illustrious Clans Dunnigan and their remarkable influence on future events.

Newlyweds get busy

The new Dunnigan pairs shared more than wealth, names and genetics. All counted themselves Extropians by philosophical inclination; all were determined activists by temperament; all were impatient builders by nature; all were bored with their prior careers. These qualities combined to radically reshape their futures. A first step was deciding to stay in St. Coriander to participate in the rebuilding. Perhaps they felt, in addition to the psychic electricity of new challenges, some moral obligation to the newly deceased Estelle Faunibeune. For a fact, their diaries reveal that all four viewed Orwell’s ideas and theories as “scientific quackery at best” but had almost instantly become exceedingly fond of the “gray tornado,” as Dr. Faunibeune was often called.

The newlywed Dunnigans proposed that this rebuilding occur along somewhat less stringent philosophical lines, including temporary abandonment of the Zero Population Growth principle which had guided the Society since St. Coriander’s founding. Much acrimonious debate ensued, which commenced a series of philosophical conflicts between the energetic and flamboyant Dunnigans and the “bruised-but-steady” surviving Society members who comprised the leaderless remnants of the original St. Coriander. In the end, sentiments of the survivors that the Dunnigans were “power-hungry interlopers” and “shameless opportunists” prevailed and St. Coriander was

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rebuilt in somewhat different layout and physical form, but nonetheless in strict accordance with the original precepts.

Perhaps as an expression of their collective irritation, the newly-wealthy, newlywed Dunnigans promptly began to acquire substantial landholdings in the region. Within five years they assembled more than 120,000 acres, which ultimately became known as the Dunnigan Reserve. These lands completely surrounded St. Coriander. Early purchases included the thickly forested hills bordering St. Coriander on the south, an area they romantically dubbed Kissever Ridge. Here they immediately commenced to build the first wing of Kissever House, a fanciful, rambling hodgepodge of quaint styles. Architecturally speaking, it was totally at odds with the reigning suburban paradigm of St. Coriander, which it overlooked with a somewhat whimsical majesty. The residents of St. Coriander hardly viewed Kissever House as majestic, nor even whimsical: numerous uncomplimentary descriptions, including “a sneering mess of architectural trinkets,” “a ghastly affront to proper civic values” and “that godawful blight of addled pokes and juts” found their way into *St. Coriander Times* editorials of the time.

The Dunnigans’ prodigious output of offspring — some have said it was only to flaunt St. Coriander’s “replacements-only” population control principles — rapidly established what became known as the Clans Dunnigan, one clan line deriving from each of the pairs of twins.² While various protests were submitted by St. Coriander, the Dunnigans argued that since all their plenteous offspring were grown in artificial wombs from engineered genestocks, they contributed no “births,” which was how the popcon principles had been described in *The Rules*. A *St. Coriander Times* editorial in 2080 referred to the Dunnigan attitude as “both facetious and overly legalistic.”

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2 A number of St. Coriander residents from time to time exercised their moral indignation at the Dunnigans’ offhand comments about the difficulties of Kissever House residents in correctly identifying their spouse. “Long live mistakes” was one of Donella Viola Dunnigan’s favorite provocatives, always delivered with a sly wink. Victoria Kathleen Dunnigan favored the coy expression: “They really *are* identical, you know.” The former Dunn brothers wisely kept their own counsel on this matter and rarely expressed more than a raised eyebrow in public discourse.

One serious economic puppy

Another tangential Dunnigan influence on early St. Coriander was economic. Founded in 2074 and headquartered in the newly built Kissever House, the fledgling Dunnetix LLC — the epitome of the virtual corporation — became an instant success with its first in a line of “appliance lifeforms:” the ubiquitous PuppyVac®. With the profits from the PuppyVac, Dunnetix invested heavily in a project that had been initially conceived by the Dunns and the Igans during their first meeting at Estelle Faunibeune’s dinner party. This led to the first of the Nevers line of hypercreative nanorganic intelligences in 2082.

These remarkably inventive new “minds” were responsible for a cascade of technological advances kicked off by the 2087 invention of the Universal Converter (by Nevers 1.4.5 which was then under Universal Panergy sponsorship). This was followed in 2091 by the first so-called Nevergate, an invention of the venerable Nevers 1.2.0 (under Dunnetix sponsorship). It is doubtless unnecessary to mention that Nevergates radically altered life on Earth; they also made Dunnetix and the Clans Dunnigan wealthy to a degree hitherto unimaginable.³

Paradoxically, although Nevergates have had an indelible influence on Planet Earth, they have had little direct influence on St. Coriander, whose populace eschews “all things Earthly and crass,” at least as they have conveniently (and often quixotically) defined Earthly and crass.

◆ TEMPLE OF FORTUNE ARRIVES ◆

An angular counterthrust against the Dunnigan influence was a new cultural force which also took root right after the Quake: the pacifist Temple of Fortune church, as it was then called. Few would dispute the notion that the Temple of Fortune, founded by “Father” Elvern Faunibeune (the elder, equally wealthy brother of Estelle Faunibeune),

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3 The current list of historical treatments of the Clans Dunnigan could easily fill several bucksters. R. W. Raxler’s recent five volume *Compleat History of the Clans Dunnigan* is perhaps the most exhaustive...and also the most daunting. The casual reader might best pursue specific areas of interest with Transpoint Independent Archive or another resource of similar scope.

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was the most pervasive influence on the unique chance-centered governance modality of present-day St. Coriander.

A charismatic psychotherapist, former PanCatholic priest and AllPlanet Lottery winner (he donated his winnings to various charities), Father Faunibeune's profession drew to him a surprisingly large number of other winners of major lotteries. The similarities among many of his "lotterian" patients led him to coin the term Paraspirtual Wealth Trauma (PWT) to describe a condition he believed was triggered by his patients' perceived exclusion from "normal" society after acquiring their winnings.

Book therapy and taxing philosophies

The surprising success of his 2066 book *Winning Big, Winning Ugly* prompted him to abandon his individual psychotherapy practice and form the Temple of Fortune to provide "victims" of PWT with a healthy venue for "respiritualization." Before long the Temple's dues-paying membership had grown to some two thousand certified lottery winners, all of whom had pledged twenty percent of their assets to the organization as an initial membership fee.

Though brought to the IsoTown of St. Coriander to join together the Igans and Dunns, Elvern Faunibeune stayed, no doubt tantalized by the opportunity presented by the Quake: the need to rebuild and repopulate a smitten and freshly leaderless community. This political/spiritual vacuum, coupled with the isolation of St. Coriander, suited his Temple of Fortune church just fine. The survivors of the Quake judged the Temple, with its decidedly "average American" membership, the lesser of two evils. They almost unanimously preferred the wealthy lotterians who followed Father Faunibeune to St. Coriander to a quartet of equally wealthy, but all-too-bright and "rather full of themselves" Dunnigans. The extent to which Elvern's blood ties to the Orwell Society might have impacted their preference is not known. Certainly his own financial independence must have soothed suspicions that he remained in St. Coriander for economic motivations.

For Elvern Faunibeune, the migration to St. Coriander also mitigated a potential threat: the former U.S. Internal Revenue Service.

The IRS had filed suit against the Church, arguing that mere pecuniary motivations were at the root of the Temple of Fortune’s philosophy and that it did not meet the IRS definition of a religion. However, in an alleged under-the-table deal, the perennially beleaguered agency would abandon attempts to “disveil” the Church as long as the Church confined itself to St. Coriander and made no further attempts to recruit lottery winners or otherwise propagate its ideas. The stage was now set for the Temple of Fortune Church to dominate the political, cultural and economic environment of St. Coriander.

That’s edifice with a “q”

The 2083 completion of the Holy Quincunx (pronounced “kwinkess” in St. Coriander), the Church’s lavish edifice of worship, governance and Elevation symbolized the ascension of the Church to full dominance in this IsoTown. The sternly majestic cluster of five obelisks in a quincunx⁴ configuration is clad in dull silver solar transpaque and dominates the town center of the reconstructed St. Coriander. The remaining Orwell Society members did not strenu-



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⁴ The creation of a quincunx-shaped structure can be seen, in one sense, as a sort of lavish architectural drollery or play on meanings propagated by Elvern Faunibeune. Why? Geometrically, a quincunx is merely an arrangement of five objects so that four occupy the corners of a rectangle with the fifth in the center. This is the familiar layout of the dots on the fifth side of a die and is the basic footprint of the Holy Quincunx. Less well known, but equally valid, is a very different quincunx which is a mechanical apparatus for statistical observation.

The “bead board” was originally created by Sir Francis Galton (cousin of the inestimable Charles Darwin) in the 1870s. Dalton’s quincunx worked by dropping a series of identical spherical objects (Dalton used beads) through rows of equally spaced pins protruding through the vertical board. Each bead, as it hits a pin, has a 50-50 chance of falling to the left or right. When the beads pass through all the of pins they fall into a slot or cell. The shape of the beads’ distribution forms what looks like a bell-shaped or “normal” curve. Part of the utility of quincunx bead boards is to illustrate certain aspects of probability theory.

Elvern Faunibeune, it is believed, selected the quincunx in honor of his late sister’s interest in randomness and probability and, with tongue firmly planted in cheek, designed the “culture of chance” which has reigned in St. Coriander throughout nearly all of its history. A central implement in his design concept for the Holy Quincunx was the eighty-foot-tall polyplanar quincunx sculpture — the Grand Quincunx — which continues to play an important role in ceremonies, rituals and community decisionmaking.

ously object to the construction of this icon once they were persuaded that the structure was far more magnificent than the Dunnigans’ detestable “Kissever Eyesore” and all its “overbusy comings and goings.”



An additional persuasion was that they would be awarded full shares in the Church’s Offspring Security Fund (which also had substantial assets) if they “rolled their vows” and became converts. In 2077 the Temple of Fortune and the Orwell Society formally merged and officially adopted a new name: the Church of the Holy Quincunx. Merritt Frank Orwell and Estelle Faunibeune were elevated to sainthood status and Planar Elevation was formally integrated with the Temple’s “minimalist theisms.”

While some analysts have expressed surprise that the Church agreed to adopt St. Coriander’s Rules as their own, the exclusion of the Fatherhood (which pass for “clergy” in the Holy Quincunx organizational model) from Elevation Strictures for “purposes of spiritual continuity” has been regarded as ample explanation by more worldly — perhaps cynical is the more apt term — observers. Kairvoss Fairfellow’s comment in a 2095 issue of *The Global Interdependent* was not atypical: “Although the religious masses have always set themselves up for servitude by allowing their leaders special privileges, the situation with the ludicrous Temple of Fortune/Holy Quincunx cult in St. Coriander sets a new low standard.”

♦ THE MADONNA 13 PHENOMENON ♦

No discussion of early St. Coriander is complete without at least a mention of Madonna 13.⁵

Lured by the fabulous success of Elvis Presley 2 in 2036, and Bing Crosby 3 in 2041, a series of promoters acquired three-year cloning



5 The Institute for Nomenclatural Standards in Cloning (INSIC) was established to help provide the public and investors with a reliable and consistent way of identifying various clonal generations of an original genestock. The INSIC Board of Genestock Examiners was subsequently established to mediate competing claims pertaining to original genestocks and to establish and certify such original genetic materials. Only INSIC-certified original genestocks can use the Lifemark (LM) designation.

The case of Madonna 13 provides an interesting footnote to this footnote. ▶

and marketing licenses from the Original Madonna^{LM} DNA holders at various times, but were unable to establish any of these Madonnas as viable entertainment products during their respective license terms. Madonna 2, while remarkably adept at creating scandals during her three-year “reprisal,” was never a “star” to the degree accomplished by Original Madonna. None of these Madonna asset licenses were renewed beyond their original license period, and the “assets” themselves were all “retired” on schedule, according to media accounts, if not INSIC records. It is believed that as many as eight or nine licenses were skipped entirely, perhaps for marketing reasons.

Madonna 13, however, was a different phenomenon. With her Dunnigan sponsorship, and by virtue of what a member of her press corps described (off the record, of course) as her “un_____ingbelievable luck,” she accomplished a degree of celebrity perhaps even exceeding Original Madonna. This, however, is only conjecture since the Parventer Multi-Vector Scale of Celebrity had not come into widespread use during Original Madonna’s long career.

A wet and ironic beginning

Madonna 13’s impact on St. Coriander began with the simple fact of her remarkable survival during the Quake. She and her entourage had been secretly brought into St. Coriander by Estelle Faunibeune to provide surprise entertainment for Merritt Frank Orwell’s fortieth birthday party (according to his journal and unknown to Estelle Faunibeune, he had planned to publicly demonstrate his pioneering Psyfrac on his birthday, using himself as the experimental subject). The “Pandemonium” (as the original Community Center building was called, perhaps owing to the sometimes chaotic town meetings held there) where Madonna 13 and her entourage had been housed was totally destroyed

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Whether or not she was actually the 12th clone of Original Madonna^{LM} may never be known with absolute certainty, due to the INSIC “bodybag” scandal of 2053 in which 21 years of certified holorecords (including those of Madonnas 3 through 11) were stolen from INSIC headquarters, allegedly secreted in the abdominal cavity of a mutilated cadaver that had been used for training purposes. The manner in which all known backups were simultaneously corrupted remains unknown to this day. It is believed the original holorecords were subsequently sold to collectors.

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by the Quake. Of the group, only Madonna 13 survived, saved by the strength of the antique cast iron bathtub in which she was enjoying an early morning soak. Sales of Original Cast Iron Bathtub Company bathtubs skyrocketed shortly thereafter.

The Dunns and the Igans, who themselves had survived the Quake by virtue of being on a “romantic moonlight hike” in the wilds of South Park, found her under the overturned tub. Ever the opportunists, the Dunnigans scurried her off to a turkeyshoot shelter in the northern foothills before she could be tallied and identified by rescue workers. They immediately bought out the remaining two months of her rather lackluster license period.

Although terms of the deal have never been made public, the subsequent lawsuits suggest they acquired her Genecopy Asset License for a bargain sum. The Dunnigans then negotiated full DNA ownership from the longsuffering Master DNA holders. Two weeks later the “Only the Lucky” vid had been recorded, released and was on its way to becoming the only Triple Novinium hit of the 2070s. Thus began Madonna 13’s association with luck, as well as her long relationship with the Clans Dunnigan. These events, combined with time-tested good looks, sex appeal and attitude, a sufficiency of musical talent and an “off-the-scale” knack for self-promotion, have been pivotal in securing her place on the scrolls.

Madonna 13’s surprise appearance on the Holy Quincunx Elevation Stage on April 1, 2166, closed out a remarkable chapter in entertainment history. Her endlessly repeated “finals” are placed here only for historical accuracy: “You have called me lucky and I can’t deny it. But even luck grows old. With a final appreciation to all my faithful fans and loved ones, I give you this short kiss goodbye.”

◆ THE UCEY ERA BEGINS ◆

In 2105 St. Coriander acquired its first central Universal Converter (what uceys were originally called). Uceys had recently become affordable by small special-purpose districts, and the town purchased the full upgrade package from IsoTown LLHC. With the ucey to supply virtu-

ally limitless cheap energy as well as an almost unlimited variety of material goods (as long as they could be described in HESSOL⁶ axodymes and thus be constructible by the ucey's companion Fabrax units), the stage was set for even greater insularity in St. Coriander.

As in other communities all across the Earth, the ucey revolutionized daily life in St. Coriander, although to a lesser extent due to the preexisting wealth and security of its citizenry. Still, "work for pay," which had already become optional, further diminished in importance as leisuretainment became endemic. The LT revolution was accelerated in St. Coriander, some say, by the unusual wealth of recorded entertainment media available at the St. Coriander Library (reportedly over 100 million titles by the turn of this century and over 500 million titles at this writing). Curiously, these expansions were effectuated through periodic media donations from the Dunnigan Foundation, which also provided funds for the continued expansion of the Library's facilities (the Library was required to grow downward into the bedrock due to prevailing height restrictions on all structures except the Holy Quincunx).

An issue which has at times been hotly debated is the motivation of the Clans Dunnigan in making such periodic donations to a community which had, in effect, long ago exorcised them from the town. Some wags hang their hats on an alleged statement by the Dunnigan Foundation president, the brash young Carlos Magnus Peter Dunnigan, that the Library gifts would "give the sheep something less annoying to do than harass energetic and productive Dunnigans." Various conspiracy theories were also advanced from time to time, the most

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6 For the technically disinclined, the development of HESSOL (Holometric Extensible Solid State Output Language) software in the 2060s provided a standardized system for the automated description and delivery of complex molecular fabrication/assembly instructions for Daimler-TRW Fabrax Nanobuild™ systems. Few would argue that it spawned the greatest spurt of creative economic activity since the first "dotcom spike" at the turn of the millennium. By the time St. Coriander acquired its Universal Converter and Fabrax, the Fabrax Free Object Library comprised more than 100 million items in a thousand different substance categories, any of which could be instantly licensed through VAST.

popular being that at least one particular “donation” was a bribe to lubricate the construction of Dunnigans Gate to replace the unlucky original Township Gate along Outbound Road (see the following section). The approval of this “token of esteem” by Father Faunibeune was never popular and was generally seen as yet another example of “Dunnigan egotistic excess” even though its security capabilities were vastly superior to those of the old gate.

♦ A CENTURY OF SLUMBER ♦

St. Coriander’s physical isolation and cultural strictures combined to make it virtually an island of languid calcification in a world characterized by staggeringly rapid change and perennial idea shock. Naturally, these conditions were spawned by the Nevergate Era which, at this writing, seems to be coming to a rather abrupt and chaotic close. Very little of note occurred in St. Coriander during the century spanning the late 2080s through the present. Two incidents stand out for their thematic connection. An unrelated third straddles them timewise.

The gory Wilhelm Daniel Henry “murder” of 2133 was the first. As unprecedented and shocking as it was at the time, this event may not, as we will speculate, be through creating significant ripples in St. Coriander history. Only the future will know for certain.

Don’t try this at home

The event itself went something like this, according to an eyewitness account of one of the participants. A group of West Academy (Westac) sixteeners conducted an ill-conceived “prank:” a late night raid on the Dunnetix Lifeform Prototype Center in Fairdester Hollow, not far from Kissever House and on the “wrong side” of the Township Fence. The prank went afoul when Wilhelm Daniel Henry, the Westac student body’s Number One and a noted rowdy, allegedly taunted one of Dunnetix’ early prototype wyverns with a “fryball” launcher.

The wyvern, a female, was said to be innocently working a *HESSOL 57.0 for Smarties* exercise in its apartment when the group, with Wilhelm Daniel Henry in the lead, burst through her door. Henry trig-

gered a spray of highly charged fryballs, apparently intending to immobilize the raiders' "prey" for reasons that have never been specified by the perpetrators. To the group's surprise, the wyvern was unfazed by the splatter of high energy gelllets, but nevertheless reacted violently and with incredible speed; whether out of self defense, outrage or some other reason is not known.

Wilhelm Daniel Henry died almost instantly, but in an extremely messy fashion: his body was later recovered from the room as a scatter of disconnected parts, some of which had apparently been clawed apart and gnawed as if by a large, hungry carnivore.

The other raiders, barely able to believe the instant carnage which exploded before their eyes, nonetheless had the wit to escape before meeting their leader's fate. Although the *St. Coriander Times* described it initially as a "shockingly unlucky incident," pressure was brought to bear on Dunnetix and a month later the hapless creature that a *Times* editorial now described as an "unholy devil-spawn cannibal" was destroyed.



Political pressure continued until Corwin Davis Rice Dunnigan, the then-CEO of Dunnetix, announced cancellation of the already controversial Wyvern Project and ordered the Prototype Center razed. Still the incident was not quite ended.

Thinking perhaps to extract a large cash settlement from Dunnetix, Daniel Wilhelm Henry (Wilhelm's identical twin brother) publicly vowed revenge against the Clans Dunnigan and began to recruit a "vigilante force" of Westac sixteeners. Fearing that St. Coriander and the Church would not fare well in a direct clash with Dunnigan economic and political might, Father-Mayor Faunibeune persuaded the extremely bright, charismatic and shamelessly opportunistic Daniel Wilhelm Henry to opt out of St. Coriander and accept a very generous "enhanced" scholarship to Harvard. Calm returned gradually to normally placid St. Coriander.

The buzzard invasion

You may recall the so-called Pulp Revival of the 2140s. Lowbrow printlit was back with a vengeance and the Dark Mystery genre reigned

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supreme over even Sordid Lust, the distant second, with Tawdry Romance bringing up the rear. Among the dark mysteries was a short-lived series called *Flickers in the Attic*. The first book in the series was *Treasure of the Holy Quincunx* by Timothy Falkenridge and took place in a ruined IsoTown called St. Cumin. *Treasure's* popularity flared briefly when the *Village Global* reported that the fictional St. Cumin was actually the real, unruined St. Coriander with a real and towering Holy Quincunx. Father-Mayor Faunibeune deftly deflected or absorbed the spike of media attention and the storm passed. Almost.

Several years later, the October 2148 issue of *Soldier of Fortune* featured a detailed plan for an assault on St. Coriander in search of treasure. The raids began. Most casual adventurers were turned back by the forbidding realities of the Dunnigan Reserve's park rangers and the Township Fence (both of which were trivialized in the article). In the vicious winter of 2151, one group calling themselves Bilko's Buzzards managed to penetrate the Holy Quincunx itself. First they braved a blizzard to reach the Gate. Then they entered St. Coriander by befuddling the Township Gate, the single breach in the entire Township Fence. Somehow, it let them in and then, recognizing its error, committed the smartgate equivalent of hara-kiri: it blew itself to shards. During this distraction they used a still unrevealed method to enter the Fatherhood Zones of the Holy Quincunx.

All five Bilko's Buzzards were captured in a slidewell near the top of the Centrisk, the central obelisk in the Holy Quincunx. A quick, quiet St. Coriander-style trial was held and the fates of the guilty parties were rolled by Father Faunibeune himself. A visit to the Holy Quincunx Elevation Stage and the Buzzards were promptly "deplaned" (sent to a plane of lesser vibrational frequency than even the present). All very nonviolent.

A month later, the WorldGov Jurisdictional Rights Commission landed at the St. Coriander vertiport and St. Coriander was back in the news. The Fatherhood received a stern warning for improper procedures involving aliens, a number of pages were added to the Rules and things returned to a somnolent normalcy for more than a decade.

A footnote to this episode is the subsequent reconstruction of the Township Gate (mentioned earlier in connection with donations to the St. Coriander Library) at the behest of the Dunnigan Reserve Stewardship Office which at that time was headquartered in Kissever House. Embarrassed that raiders had successfully trespassed the Dunnigan lands surrounding St. Coriander completely unmolested by the redoubtable park rangers, the Clans proposed to donate a new, advanced security portal. This new gate was to be crafted in the medievalist architectural modes of North and South Castle.

The *St. Coriander Times* originally offered no opposition conceptually, but later vigorously opposed the design, the inclusion of the Dunnigan clanmark and its official renaming as Dunnigans Gate. A concurrent donation to the Library by the independent Dunnigan Foundation was probably only coincidental as the matter ultimately went to independent arbitration. The case was settled in favor of the Dunnigan interests based on a legal principle known as the Greater Trespass Rule.

Kisseverness all over again

The third event of interest during the Century of Slumber is the so-called Reunification, the reincorporation of a spur of the Clans Dunnigan back into St. Coriander proper, along with the entirety of the area known as the Kissever Lands. This occurred in 2161. Although no official Clans Dunnigan statement was ever made, a number of sources have described essentially the same series of events.

The triggering stimulus was apparently the so-called Wyvern Controversy, where a cache of 641 “escaped” wyverns were discovered living in an abandoned uranium mine on Navajo lands. At the annual Gathering of the Clans at North Castle on Dunnigans Wall, the Pitley Dunnigan Line, led by the fiery and passionate young William “Billy the Kid” Bonham Pitley Dunnigan, formally opposed continued Dunnigan support of wyverns, and most particularly, the establishment of a proposed “Wyvern Home” in the vicinity of Hillerman in the vast Navajo Nation. Wyverns had, they argued, become a potentially serious political liability.

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The Pitley faction miscalculated. Seriously underestimating their clanfellows' quasi-parental sympathy for their wyvern creations, the Pitley line was unable to garner significant support for their position. In an apparent show of defiance (some have referred to it as petulance) they voted themselves out of the Clans. They had just enough support to negotiate a sort of "favorite son" treatment — Clans Dunnigan style — and were granted the Kissever Lands and Kissever House as Just Compensation for agreeing to abandon the Dunnigan surname and guarantee the security of Dunnigan family secrets in perpetuity.

Since that time, Kissever House has been occupied solely by members of the Pitley family, who, upon moving in, gifted a tract of their holdings to St. Coriander as a "gesture of faith in the town's spiritual principles." Ultimately the Township Fence was rerouted and extended to include St. Coriander's only annexation. Most of the donated lands were added to the popular recreational area known as South Park.

Inclusion, inshmoosion

The full inclusion of the Pitleys into St. Coriander life has, to this date, not yet occurred. The reasons are doubtless complex, but three factors stand out by virtue of their obviousness: 1) decades of frequent, incendiary editorials in the *St. Coriander Times* by Editor in Chief Fusillia Krebs and others; 2) the consistent and emphatic disinterest of the Holy Quincunx Church in serving as an intercessor or at least a moderating influence; 3) the overenergetic tendencies of the Pitleys compared to run-of-the-litter St. Cories.

Of these factors, the first was probably most important in keeping an uncomfortable distance between the people of Kissever House and those of "proper" St. Coriander. Of particular import was Editor Krebs' persistent accusation that the whole Reunification was a thinly disguised ruse to facilitate spying on the good people of St. Coriander. Her standard tirade: "Pitleys Schmitleys! They're all damnable, Elevation-sneering Dunnigans to me...and far, far too busy for their own good." Through persistent repetition, these simplistic memes seem to have been gradually adopted as truth by most St. Cories.

The importance of the second factor, however, cannot be mini-

mized: the Fatherhood has found little utility in defending the widely disliked and distrusted Dunnigans and Pitleys. Its complete silence has undoubtedly been interpreted as a form of unspoken — and politically shrewd, at least in local terms — support for Krebs and her varied and seemingly numerous supporters.

Coincidentally or not, the Reunification — and Editor Krebs' first accusations — came hot on the heels of the brief 2160 return of Daniel Wilhelm Henry to St. Coriander after a nearly quarter century's absence. Although nothing remarkable happened during this visit,⁷ it is not unlikely that Dunnigan leadership felt that Daniel Wilhelm Henry was a person worthy of some continued scrutiny. This scrutiny may, in fact, have prevented untoward events. The Clans Dunnigan had learned to leave no threat untended, a strategy they have demonstrated numerous times in large and small ways.

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7 Certain circumstances bracketing Daniel Wilhelm Henry's brief and quiet 2160 return to St. Coriander are of some interest to a historian, particularly one interested in the historical vortices created by certain singular individuals who seem to act as "event magnets." Whether or not Daniel Wilhelm Henry turns out to be one of these sorts, only time will tell. As we see below, his odd lifepath has gotten him off to a good start. Some tidbits may illuminate this notion.

In 2056, Henry, after an early "career" which seems guided more by whimsy and caprice than by plan or strategy, was hired by Ferdinand "Lord" Bellicarie to serve on Ommergard — his one-of-a-kind and justifiably famous floating castle — in two capacities: as Master Illusionist and Chief Scientist. Castle Ommergard had been presenting provocative live entertainments to audiences all over the globe and in August of 2060 was in St. Coriander, about halfway through a yearlong tour of such IsoTowns as could afford to book top-drawer acts. St. Coriander marked Henry's return as a celebrated artiste with a gala parade organized by the Theater Arts Guild and supported by a generous donation from Father Faunibeune. St. Coriander's infatuation with Henry was short-lived: the celebrity refused to appear at his own parade, averring that he was, in fact, no longer Daniel Wilhelm Henry.

Upon signing with Bellicarie four years earlier, Henry had permanently assumed the name Exeter, most likely as an expression of his fondness for the role of the Red Sorcerer Exeter in one of The Great Vondini's marginally successful "magic operas." Henry had played this role with verve and panache (and to reasonably good reviews) some years earlier while touring and studying prestidigitation with Vondini, who expected his students to earn their keep by performing. Thus did Henry first try his hand at dramatic performance.

This odd turn of career occurred immediately after Henry abandoned his postdoctorate studies at the Santa Fe Institute and immediately preceded his two years ►

◆ **SEPTRIQ – THE UNSECRET SECRET** ◆

Septriq is an obscure slatedoc “game” that has enjoyed several brief spikes of popularity over the past two centuries. Its origin is unclear, but Manchester⁸ believes it was originally designed and marketed in the early twenty-first century. Septriq is still “played” regularly and with some fervor in St. Coriander, although apparently in a somewhat different manner than was originally intended.

Some of the credit for Septriq’s staying power must go to a little slatedoc called *The Secret Oracle* by Dabney Fanneraq (2091-2139), which is also thought to have spawned the game’s use as an oracle. Little is known about Ms. Fanneraq: she apparently garnered no particular distinction during her forty-eight years between birth and Elevation. In fact, *The Secret Oracle* existed only in slatedoc form during her lifetime and was only distributed beyond her small circle of “septrologists” after it became known that she had used her Septriq interpretive paramodels to predict Wilhelm Daniel Henry’s death at the hands of a wyvern. Or so it was widely believed at the time.

According to Gideon Alvernock, the current Father-Mayor, *The Secret Oracle* consists of a variety of interpretative schemes that allow

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as an Adjunct Fellow of the Arthurian Institute in Cornwall, during which time he became enamored of “all things Merlin.” Apparently the stint with Vondini was also the period during which he first made the acquaintance of Vondini’s pet dragon Emmishak. It is widely believed that this is also where Henry learned that Cametto-5 dragons can communicate with each other over long distances by a process they call “tooth music.”

Tooth music played a key role in the highly publicized “Dragon Revolt” of 2158, which is believed by some observers to have been reluctantly instigated by Lord Belli-carie — and at Exeter’s relentless prompting — as a way of obtaining the services of thirteen live dragons for Exeter’s proposed extravaganza “Aerial Ballet for Dragons, Sky Monkeys and ‘34 Ford.”

Seven years later (and five years after Henry’s visit to his hometown) the Aerial Ballet became an “instant success a lifetime in the making” and was launched at a gala premiere in New York Harbor on Labor Day of 2165. Coincidentally or not, Madonna 13 was in the celebrity audience in the company of Robert Orville Miles Dunnigan, who at that time had just begun his reign as Master of North Castle on Dunnigans Wall.

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8 *Puzzling Commerce: A Business History of Games* by Eliot R. Manchester, 2172.

“players” to use the game as an oracle, fortuneteller or decisionmaking aid. Although Father-Mayor Alvernock assured the author that the instructive tract is currently in widespread circulation and that Septriq is in widespread daily use, no copies of *The Secret Oracle* could be found in the St. Coriander Library. “We all need out little secrets, don’t we?” was his cryptic response to a question about the Church’s lack of enforcement of Septriq’s official Disapproved Status. Its “underground” popularity on St. Coriander slates should be no surprise in a community built around luck and spiritualism.

Fanneraq apparently believed that the number seven and its geometries — including the heptagram (around which Septriq is devised) and the heptahedron — have arcane mystical significance. Historically speaking, she was not alone in this belief.

◆ GOVERNANCE ◆

“To govern Paradise,” said Father-Mayor Elvern Faunibeune in an interview just before his Elective Elevation in 2164 at the age of 136, “is to make Chance earn her keep.” It is believed that the “Paradise” he referred to was St. Coriander.

The tradition of Father-Mayor began with Elvern Faunibeune, arguably a canny fellow supplied by Dame Fortune with heavy doses of charisma, intelligence, political savvy and a tidy inheritance. What he found upon his arrival in St. Coriander immediately following the Quake was a convenient leadership vacuum into which he stepped with graceful ease. As we have seen, the merger between the Temple of Fortune and the Orwell Society locked his power into place. But the weaving of Chance into the decisionmaking processes of St. Coriander is perhaps his most remarkable legacy.

Chancy criticism

It has been centuries since Chance has been given so heady a role in human governance. Yet Elvern Faunibeune encountered little resistance to the idea of replacing rational argument and scientific evidence with raw chance. In *Lotto Loonies*, Ursula Fandergilt laid most of the burden on the uniquely skewed St. Coriander populace: a preponder-

ance of lottery winners who clearly owed much to Chance. “Just what should we expect from lotterians? Intelligence? Hardly. The masterful Father Faunibeune has played these gullibles like a six-fingered card sharp. Yet, when all is taken with all, what have they lost in his game? Nothing. They are indeed the world’s luckiest sheep.”

Free range critic Ferris McShee, in *The Village Idiot Speaks Again*, is slightly more generous: “In a comfortable, prosperous, passive and essentially like-minded community like St. Coriander, governance has few real responsibilities. Life is automated abundance. With precious little to strive for and death a certainty by age forty-eight, who cares if a roll of the dice is used to decide this little thing or that? No one. Absolutely no one. In this Nevergate Age, maybe they’re onto something. Let them roll.”

Many observers over the years have derided St. Coriander under Father-Mayor Faunibeune as an example of the emasculative power of great wealth, pointing to the consistent lack of conflict among the townfolk as evidence. Nathaniel Hassim Argent’s view⁹ is representative: “Competition and conflict are as essential to evolution as water and air. St. Coriander is a completely artificial socioeconomic construct and should be tossed into the dustbin of cultural history without a second thought: they have contributed nothing.”

Another camp, perhaps best represented by Dolores Hope Costaigne,¹⁰ may deserve equal consideration: this group believes that scarcity has been at the root of most human conflict throughout his-

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9 Argent’s slim 2161 volume, *On the Essential Dynamics of Cultural Evolution*, basically posits that until human genes change along some new vector, human culture will continue to be characterized by lust, greed and tribal consciousness, in that order. His subsequent columns in the *Tradewinds Gatewide Weekly* have earned him a substantial following among the curmudgeonly New Contrarians as well as with a number of respected public figures, including the recently “retired” WorldGov Secretary General, Nafez Gamal Shah, himself.

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10 Costaigne is Chairperson Emeritus of the Society to Outlaw Poverty. Her scholarly *System Dynamics of Strategic Poverty in a Ucey World* is widely seen as an indictment of WorldGov’s shabby performance, which she claims is more a matter of strategy than complacency, incompetence or mere chance.

tory and that, as perhaps one of the first examples of a community in which scarcity has been banished, St. Coriander has pointed toward a “kinder, gentler” kind of future for humanity.

Rolling backbones and backing throwbacks

What are the practical realities of St. Coriander governance? There is a hierarchy (or a bureaucracy depending on one’s perspective), of course. Curiously, the bureaucracy of the Holy Quincunx Church remains minimal, unobtrusive and reasonably efficient, judging from the persistent lack of crises over this IsoTown’s 121-year history.

The Fatherhood is the backbone, the organs and the sinew of the St. Coriander bureaucracy. It is a male-only “throwback” institution that mirrors the orders of the old Roman Catholic Church in at least some superficial aspects. At any given time, its membership numbers exactly fifty individuals, all of whom are unmarried, all of whom are domiciled in the Holy Quincunx towers. In addition to their duties as “spiritual functionaries” they serve as the “City Hall” and the “Public Utilities Department” did in traditional communities. And, not to be forgotten, there is Chance to be administered. This ceremonial or judicial “invoking of the Fates” via a number of devices (ranging from ordinary dice to the Grand Quincunx) is typically the Father-Mayor’s province. However, a broader reliance on the mechanism of probability is amply reflected in the decisionmaking behavior of the populace who, on any given day, can be seen seeking the counsel of Chance via the One-Armed Oracles in the Grand Arcade that wraps around the entry level of the Holy Quincunx.

In his early days in St. Coriander, Elvern Faunibeune was careful to distance the Fatherhood from “matters of enforcement” of the Rules, claiming that this ran contrary to the spiritual nature of the Order. Thus, the office of Sheriff was established to be a “volunteer” position with no connection to the Holy Quincunx Fatherhood. In practical terms, however, it appears that the Fatherhood and the Office of Sheriff work hand in glove. The procedure for selecting “volunteer” Under Deputies (the entry level of Sheriff), for example, is instructive: only such young men as are nominated by the Fatherhood may volunteer.

Refurbs, tubbies and other minor details

It is widely believed that one or more Opus Refurburators¹¹ reside somewhere within the mysterious Holy Quincunx complex. Interestingly, the laity apparently do not begrudge the Fatherhood the extended lifespans made possible by such devices. It is difficult not to see this as a particularly poignant example of the mysterious shepherd/flock symbiosis that has characterized religious aspects of the human condition over its known history.

Another curiosity pertaining to the Fatherhood is their virtually universal physiotype and temperament: all are portly, jovial and gentle. During several visits to St. Coriander, the author found the men of the Fatherhood to be archetypally affable, jolly fat men who wear their not insubstantial power as an afterthought, not as a helmet. Oddly, the St. Coriander laity seem to find the stereotypical physiotype more comforting than remarkable.

Equally mysterious, nothing is known of the early lives of those men who belong to the Fatherhood, a curiosity which the folk of St. Coriander seem uninterested in pursuing.

The current Father-Mayor, Gideon Alvernock, is a relatively unknown quantity, having presided over St. Coriander for only eighteen years at this writing and having encountered no major challenges. There may be a stormcloud brewing, however: the reflected attention St. Coriander is receiving in the wake of the Nevergate closures and the collapse of WorldGov. Only time will tell.

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11 There are no known public records documenting the purchase or installation of any model of Opus Refurburator[®] by or for the Holy Quincunx Church. However, since neither the records of Opus Geneering Labs LLC nor the Church are open to deep levels of public scrutiny, this is not a conclusive datapoint. Because of the Opus/Dunnetix connection (the original Refurburator was designed by Dunnetix' Nevers 3.1.9 under sponsorship of Opus Geneering Labs), there is a history of rumors (the author found a number published as *St. Coriander Times* editorials) suggesting some form of covert linkage between Clans Dunnigan and the Holy Quincunx Church. It should be noted, however, that Refurburators have historically never been marketed as standalone equipment, but as components of Opus Refurburator Clinics, beginning with the company's simultaneous launch of Clinics in 874 popcenters in 2100. Opus Refurburator is a registered trademark of Opus Geneering Labs LLC for its technologies, equipment and business systems pertaining to human life extension.

◆ EDUCATION ◆

When it comes to educating their young, St. Coriander is a study in contradictions. In its formative period, the town's founder, Merritt Frank Orwell, engaged Quintessence Learning Models LLC to develop a so-called “fresh sheet of paper” scheme for education in St. Coriander. Their program was modeled on the venerable Meridian PTP (Processes-Tools-Projects) paradigm that had been successfully deployed in a variety of “fringe” settings but which had never seriously penetrated mainstream urban edumarkets. Given the unique IsoTown setting, QLM developed the competitive two-academy system which has now been in place for more than a century.

Duelling directionals

The directionally named East Academy and West Academy are designed to educate the youth of St. Coriander from age two to sixteen and today continue a tradition of “friendly competition” that began in 2061, the year of the town's founding. Since St. Coriander participates in no extra-jurisdictional testing or other normative programs, there has been no way to “scientifically” compare educational performance there with other localities.

However, if one judges performance based on post-graduation scholarship, the system has produced more than its share of remarkable — if somewhat insular — minds. The works of advanced scholarship generated at the St. Coriander Institute of Additional Knowledge (SCIAK), the town's functional equivalent of a university, are thought to be quite remarkable for a community as minuscule as St. Coriander.

Critics of St. Coriander's educational scheme (and there have been many) tend to focus on its lack of a traditionally structured curriculum. Given the town's emphasis on spiritual development and its isolation from world events, there has been a tendency over the years to de-emphasize traditional subjects like world history, comparative political science, geography and classical literature, in favor of topics of local interest which have been woven into the Academies' project schema.

Since only rarely are St. Coriander residents “outplaced” from their IsoTown, this “selective ignorance” is probably not a serious handicap.

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Further, with the universality of compulsory Elevation at age forty-eight, there are broader questions of educational philosophy that have surfaced on a somewhat cyclical basis, but which are beyond the scope of this brief history.

Another criticism has been the lack of vocational components in the Eastac/Westac curricula. However, since a comfortable level of economic sustenance is a virtual guarantee due to the town's wealth, this criticism rarely generates much heat. In addition, SCIAK offers an extremely diverse range of "avocational studies." These offerings tend to change with changing local interests, but currently popular topics are generally well-attended. In a sense, avocations and the arts are the real "business" of St. Coriander and are well supported by the town's educational systems.

♦ ARTS ♦

Artists of all stripes abound in St. Coriander. While this is not exactly a surprising fact in a place where folk are comfortable and have plenty of spare time on their hands, the range and quality of artistic expression is, in many instances, remarkable. We will focus here on forms of artistic expression which originated in St. Coriander, or which have taken on unusual amplitude or spawned novel variations unique to this IsoTown.

Fruit for the eyes

Sculpture is the artform most visible to the casual observer, since sculptural works adorn virtually every available public space. The most remarkable exhibition venues are the Linear Orchard Sculpture Galleries, those narrow linear parks that traverse the residential districts of the townsite. A standard element of the IsoTown Model 1955 design, the linear orchards originally served as both components of the food supply and as recreational and aesthetic amenities. However, since the turn of the century, their utility as a source of fresh fruit has diminished due to the universal acceptance of MenuMasters.

Recognizing their potential for artistic display, in 2114, Marsha Su Ching organized the Dimensional Arts Society, which urged the

redevelopment of the orchard as a sculpture garden. Shortly before her Elevation in 2117, Father-Mayor Faunibeune rolled a propitious triple 7-11 triune during the dedication ceremony and the first sculpture was placed: Ching's own "Dance of the Five Winds." Since then, more than nine hundred sculptures spanning extremely diverse artistic modalities have been installed in these picturesque parks.

Psychon time and other local rhythms

While a vast range of musical styles are represented in St. Coriander, two unique genres stand out. It is perhaps noteworthy that St. Cories seem to value spontaneity and improvisation in musical expression: these qualities are showcased to a high degree in the forms known as "psaoltri" (or "soul-trapping" in the vernacular) and "quintriphonia" (popularly known as "tone-dancing").

In psaoltri, the audience contributes "dynamic significance" to the performance via the mechanism of psychon accumulators which provide input and feedback to the ensemble. Ensembles vary radically in instrumentation and size, from traditional acoustic string quartets to "peedoes" (percussion dozens). Perhaps the most common ensemble is the "twodle," a pair of musicians using traditional 88-key controllers.

Tone-dancing is a hybrid artform combining dance, tone generation and lightplay. The traditional format is two male-female pairs of tone-dancers playing the spatial tracking arrays and one lightplayer at the visbox. Performances are often erotically charged and explicit and may not be suitable for small children. Holos of historic performances by famous ensembles like the Crimson Gash, Nolo-Bolo, Lower 48, Eye Soiree and others are available in the St. Coriander Library.

Of the myriad other forms of creative artistic expression, only the language arts appear to have withered rather than flourished in St. Coriander. The possible exception to this is haiku, which, perhaps because it was favored by Father Faunibeune, continues to be produced in significant quantity. The competitive nature of the town's two venerable haiku clubs — the Syllabic Savants and the Nissantics — may have played a role in keeping this form alive.

Numbers for the faithful

As we have seen, St. Coriander has spawned several artistic innovations over its history. However, it would be unfair to gloss over another form of artistic expression that has flourished to a remarkable degree in the town. The Faithful Replication Society has taken the venerable paint-by-the-numbers concept to new extremes of precision. With the aid of a vast library of Paint-o-Gram matrices interfaced to an Exacula paint formulator, Faithful Replicators have produced some remarkably accurate reproductions of famous canvases.

Too accurate, some would say, particularly after the so-called Lost Rembrandt Scandal of 2139, in which three members of the Society were implicated in an art forgery ring of planetary scope. All three took Early Elevations and the Society shrank below one hundred members immediately thereafter. It has surged to more than five hundred in recent years, attributable in part to the influence of *The Zen of Precision*, a highly memetic anonymous slatetext which is thought to have arrived in St. Coriander via a Fabrax-borne slatevirus. This particular slatetext is a branch of a family of hypermemetics that has been widely implicated in the Nirvana Exodus elsewhere on the planet.



Backyard fortran for hookers

Is it art? Members of the Olden Arts Club don't seem to care. Founded by Kurtis and Rosetta Oldenham in 2172, the club is a spinoff of the ever-popular Horticultural Society, an organization which has operated a variety of community gardens in the Northern Fields since the AgTekka Cornucopias were dismantled in 2109. Olden Arts has recently surged in popularity among neo-traditionalists of all ages. Members choose a "lost" art, craft, skill, trade or activity and take on the task of "devestigiation," the Club's term for preservation or revival. Members are currently working in such diverse areas as fortran programming, spelling bees, backyard poultry raising, plumbing, moonshining, violinmaking, wage slavery and prostitution. Needless to say, some avocations have become controversial and intervention by the Fatherhood has occurred more than once.

◆ **S P O R T** ◆

Olympian, it's not. Still, sport is an intriguing window into St. Coriander psychology. As one might expect from a vegetarian, pacifist, static society, daily life is typically an endless sequence of placid events. Children are born, grow to adulthood and, by the age of forty-eight, are Elevated.

Youth is heavily spiced with sport and all the traditional forms have been represented at one time or another. Currently, bangerball is the dominant sport for females, while sandhockey is dominant for males. Both originated in St. Coriander. Naturally, neither sport is a "contact" sport, per se, although as we shall see in the case of sandhockey, St. Coriander seems oblivious to how far it has managed to distort the notion of contact.

Bangerball

This unique sport's origin is attributable to Consuela Kim Vartabedian, a collegiate volleyball letterperson whose serves almost never fell inside the back line. Ms. Kim was more fortunate in other dimensions of her life: in 2071 she won the Northern Polunes LifeStar Lottery, which both enriched and depressed her. After being diagnosed with Paraspiritual Wealth Trauma by Elvern Faunibeune in 2072, she decided, as part of her prescribed "passion therapy," that she was going to invent a sport with no foul lines. After moving to St. Coriander with "Dr. El's Fortunatos," the recently married Mrs. Monty Vartabedian got her chance. Elvern Faunibeune liked her ideas and the first courts were built in 2080. Bangerball was an instant hit.

Bangerball is perhaps best described as volleyball with a ten-foot-high net played on a racquetball court with translucent walls, and with a hint of pinball inserted into its scoring paradigm. The floor is always black, but the five "containing walls" change color at random and scoring is dependent upon the color of the "last hit" wall before a "miss."

Wall colors are weighted as follows: red = 5; orange = 4; yellow = 3; green = 2; blue = 1. Ceiling, side walls and back walls are playable; the black floor is "dead."

GENESIS ~ ST. CORIANDER HISTORY

Bangerball is a very fast, chaotic-seeming game in which the ball can be hit with any part of the body and in which there are no foul lines, except for the net: any surface is “fair” and points are won when one team fails to return the ball back over the net. The game demands quick reactions and quick calculations to avoid being “chanced out,” meaning victimized by the factors of randomness which are built into the scoring paradigm.

St. Coriander is the only place in the known world that plays bangerball, but it is extremely popular, as are its star players. As one might expect of a chance-oriented microculture, some players seem to be luckier than others. The pivotal position is the so-called “upbanger,” who is not unlike the “setter” position in volleyball. The characteristics of a topnotch upbanger are outstanding peripheral vision, fast reactions, precise body control, and a difficult-to-isolate ability called “lightsense.” Lightsense involves the ability to guess the most favorable outcome of an array of factors, including the probability of which wall is likely to switch to a high score color. A stellar upbanger appears prescient to rabid spectators. Unlike in its predecessor sport, volleyball, spiking the ball in a bangerball game is an exceedingly rare accomplishment, partly due to the ten foot high net, partly due to the game’s scoring scheme.

West Academy holds the records for both consecutive Town Championships (14) and most “perfect 75’s” (97). East Academy has the edge in overall Town Championships (63-39).

There are currently twenty-five post-Academy teams playing in the year-round Lady Bangers League.

Sandhockey

Because St. Coriander’s young males considered bangerball a “girlie” sport, they invented their own sport, with considerable support from a sympathetic Father Faunibeune. Although hefty and not overly athletic, the good Father F was nonetheless a creditable offensive guard on his St. Lilliput College football team. His fascination, however, was with the wild world of Sportsman Class racing cars. Think of sandhockey as a combination of destruction derby, motocross, soccer,

billiards and bumper cars: all *à la nerf* for safety reasons. Curiously, two schemes of propulsion exist side-by-side.

There are seven “helmets” to a team (or “side”) and three sides play against each other in a game (or “heat”). In the leg-powered version of the game, each helmet is powered by two to four pedalists, depending on the class of competition. In the motorized version, one driver pilots a “quad” (a balloon-tired, four-wheeled, electric vehicle controlled via handlebars like a motorcycle). In either version, the helmet form factor is similar: a six-foot-diameter truncated spherical cage of inflated “smackertubes.” The helmet is both a protective shell for the occupant(s) and the contact surface for propelling the “sixball” and “relocating” other players’ helmets. The sixball is a six-foot-diameter inflated ball that weighs three hundred pounds and is marked with a three-foot-diameter circle displaying the numeral six. By virtue of an internal electromagnetic weighting scheme, the sixball always displays eccentric rolling behavior, which contributes substantially to the game’s difficulty and unpredictability.

Junior Leagues (up to age nine) use four-foot-diameter helmets and four-foot diameter “fourballs.”

For all classes, the course is the same: a three-hundred-foot diameter field sandwiched between Central Park, South Park and the Town Center. It is comprised entirely of sand, but contoured into dunes and hazards, such as “snakepits” (depressions too steep for a quad to exit) and “waterhazards” (ponds). Each game’s course is different, shaped by robotic machinery according to a semi-randomness algorithm, but each course has three “pockets,” one owned by each “side” in the contest.

The goal is simple: defend one’s own “pocket” while simultaneously getting the sixball into one of the two opponents’ pockets, earning a score. Action is fierce and fast, strategy is complex, contact is frequent, injuries are negligible. Academy Leagues are structured by age. In the motorized game, the helmets are horsepower and speed-regulated.

For adults, there are the Unlimited Leagues, both man-powered and electric-powered. Both are popular, but the “MotorUn” has evolved into a sport where speeds upwards of a hundred miles per hour in

short bursts and four-gee accelerations are not uncommon.

Powered vehicles competing in the Unlimited League must fit the same basic form factor and safety criteria as the Academy League, but any other innovations are allowable. At this writing, there were nine independent Unlimited League sandhockey clubs (one in the leg-powered class, eight in the electric-powered class) in St. Coriander, which make it the most popular avocation for the town's adult males. The Unlimited League's official monthly zine, *The Unlimited Sandhockey Journal*, is second only to the *St. Coriander Times* in local circulation.


♦ A TYPICAL ISOTOWN? ♦

As readers of this volume will surely attest, there are no “typical” IsoTowns, except in the sense, perhaps, that the one common thread is “difference.” St. Coriander provides yet another example of the diversity possible in human communities. And it may be the one of the few towns in human history to live and die without a cemetery.

As one of the richest IsoTowns, it has experienced few of the privations that many others have suffered at one point or another in their histories. This wealth may also explain its durability: only sixteen others have survived past the century mark.

St. Coriander is also remarkable in other ways, including the durability of its unique mode of “evolutionary spirituality” — Planar Elevation — and the institutions which have grown up to nurture and protect this tradition. This ability to remain unsullied by external influences is perhaps even more remarkable considering the fact that so much media attention has been focused so near and for so long. Dunctix and the Clans Dunnigan have been continually in the spotlight for nearly as long as St. Coriander has been in existence and only occasionally has this light spilled over into the IsoTown.

The future? The Nirvana Exodus, the disappearance of the Nevergates and the collapse of WorldGov are likely to send ripples far into the future of this dear ball of dirt we call Earth. How will St. Coriander fare against these ripples? If its history is any indication, this IsoTown is a survivor. ♦



TW⊕ HUNDRED
AND FIFTY-⊕NE
YEARS LATER,
IT IS THE YEAR
2434 AND...

