

Bokengard

A FATE One-Shot

Basic Premise

Two city states fight a cold war in a highly romantic landscape of steep cliffs, rich forests and sunny meadows. Bokengard is a city where books are considered holy. The Archons of the various houses are politician-priests who guard the master copy of *their* specific book.

Their opponents are a culture that has long left behind the written word and relies on paintings and heralds instead. The Autodeity of Auram is ruled by the church of fire which enjoys burning heretics piles of their own literary works.

This adventure describes the secret struggle between word keepers from Bokengard and the secret agents from Auram.

Realm of Bokengard

Bokengard is a foggy city that combines ancient gothic buildings with the metallic neo-Classicism of a Victorian age, often with book-shaped ornaments. Art is mostly calligraphy-based, pictures of living beings are not illegal but seen as extremely tasteless, almost pornographic. People dress in muted colors – men preferring suits and top hats, women wide dresses. For formal religious ceremonies, people tends to wear black togas and tunics. Speaking in loud voices is extremely frowned upon – Bokengard has the atmosphere of a giant outdoor library.

Religion and politics are closely intertwined. Each family send its senior member and head to the House of Archons were the fate of the city is stirred by consensus. These Archons are also the high priests of each family, keeping the original copies of the family books in custody. While the houses are theoretically all peers, the literary quality of their books is really a major factor in their social standing.

The family books are Victorian literary works of our Earth that have somehow found their way

into this other dimension. They are seen as gospel and ideal state and members of the house try to emulate the characters in the story. House Austen for example is based on the writings of Jan Austen and many young men chose to live their lives as Darcies, with more or less success. House Shelley on the other hand is known for its gangs of *creatures*, young members who practice creative surgery on themselves, often with magical aid, to look like monsters assembled from corpses. The poorest houses have to make do with penny dreadfuls, or even worse with American dime novels, and are both pitied and reviled by the Wildes and Austens.

Magic in Bokengard is mostly book-based and requires reading from a good (or even better the master) copy of a family book. It allows to emulate some of the reality of the fiction in it for a short time. The closer one is to the spirit of the book (i.e, strengths and weaknesses implied by the plot), the easier it is to use this magic.

Auram

Auram is a city that is built into a deep and still-running open pit mine. It is a noisy place of machines and bombastic socialist-realist art meets gothic horror. The local ruling class has pointed teeth and large bald heads. These features also exist in their subjects but are often far less pronounced, so they can easily pass for a Bokengarder. Clothing is typically flamboyant and loud colors dominate.

Even though a Soviet nominally rules over the country, the real power lies with the priests of the Church of Fire. They see books a a threat as what is written once can be multiplied anywhere. Their concerned and emotional sermons are depicted in murals, oil paintings and other visual media but more importantly constantly repeated by the heralds around the city. The priests wear red asbestos robes and carry large staffs with burning cages or censers on top.

Heralds are a cornerstone of Auram society. They are slaves but considered extremely valuable, having been trained and alchemically conditioned to have perfect memory. They store the facts and history of Auram and also repeat public messages in a loud, singing voice so that

they can be heard about the constant noise of industry. Other highly regarded people are painters, dancers and other visual artists.