

Talante



A Hesperan Fable

One day, by a great river, a serpent met a frog. The serpent said to the frog, "Carry me across the river, and I shall reward you, for I cannot swim so great a width."

Said the frog, "How do I know you will not try to bite me with your fang?"

Said the serpent, "If I bite you, will we not both perish?"

So the frog carried the serpent, but half-way across the river, the serpent bit the frog. Feeling death drawing near, the frog asked, "Why do you do this, for will we not both perish?"

*"No," said the serpent, "for I can swim **half** so great a width. I need you no longer."*

But the river was wider yet than the serpent knew, and so the serpent drowned before reaching the other side.

Too much ruthlessness is a danger to one's own self, as well as to others.

That Talante of the Serpent Soul rose up and overthrew **the queen damned to memory** is well known to those who study the history of **Hespera**. That she truly never wanted to do so, despite the disgust that the queen inspired in her, is not as well known. She was even then an elder, and desired only to complete her duty and then retire. It is likely that, had she not been egged on by her followers, she might have held back and supported whoever eventually *did* lose their patience with the madwoman, and the history of Hespera would have taken a different turn.

Having slain the false queen before her own throne, Talante was proclaimed queen by the Oracles. That was where the trouble began. As a soldier and commander, Talante was first rate; as an administrator and negotiator, she was decidedly sub-par. Furthermore, many policies of the fallen queen did *not* offend her, such as those meant to reduce the power of the Great Houses, and she tried to continue them, making enemies of the Great Houses and all but ensuring the start of another civil war.

That did not happen, however, for instead she was drawn out of her proper time and place, brought forward some six hundred years to a Hespera much changed, where the Great Houses she knew were only memories and perversions of nature -- *male soldiers* -- were common. Those who brought her revealed that their history claimed she had vanished, and that they had speculated that might have been because of time manipulation. So, they had fulfilled the causal chain, and now asked her to take up the Queenship she had never formally vacated and make Hespera great again.

Talante should have known better. Just as with her followers back then, they were only using her to pursue agendas of their own, like the blasphemous notion that the Oracles should be thrown down! But she closed her mind to her own suspicions and brought civil war to her homeland, and it fell to outsiders -- *aliens*, of all things -- to fix the mess that she helped to start. In the end, she walked away from Hespera, swearing that she would kill any who dared to follow her. None tested that, and so she escaped.

Of course, she now had nowhere to go. If Hespera had changed greatly from how it had been in her time, the world outside the barrier was even more unlike her knowledge of it. Avoiding contact with outsiders as much as possible, Talante made what she believes to be a valiant effort to understand their world. She failed, and deep down always knew that she would fail. The outsiders just are not interesting enough to merit her understanding. And of course, she is old even without years added by time-screwiness, and suspects that her life is ending.

Passing through Africa, and then Arabia, and then India, she began to hear rumors of a great martial competition. Battle, at least, was something that she would always understand, and the prospect of worthy opponents intrigued her. But far more so was the claim that **the alien ruler**

who began this exhibition would grant a wish to the one who was victorious. If he *is* an alien, and allows other aliens safety in his domain, then perhaps, if she triumphs, he might grant her the ability to leave this fallen world behind and seek out the distant world where her people had their origins, if the legends are true. That would be an interesting end to her story.

If nothing else, at least she can take out her frustrations on some deserving targets. Or deserving enough. She just hopes that the river is only as wide as she thinks.

Talante - PL 12

Abilities:

STR 8 | STA 9 | AGL 4 | DEX 5 | FGT 12 | INT 3 | AWE 4 | PRE 2

Powers:

Hesperan Biology: Immunity 2 (disease, poison) - 2 points

Hesperan Telepathy: Mental Communication 3 (regional) - 12 points

More-Than-Hesperan Strength: Enhanced Strength 4, Limited to Lifting (100 tons) - 4 points

More-Than-Hesperan Swiftness: Leaping 7 (900 feet); Speed 6 (120 MPH); Swimming 6 (30 MPH) - 19 points

Orichalcum Spear: Strength-based Damage 3, Improved Critical, Reach; Easily Removable (-2 points) - 3 points

Soulgaze: Cumulative Sight-Dependent Mind Reading 10 - 20 points

Advantages:

Accurate Attack, All-out Attack, Close Attack, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll, Improved Defense, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Ranged Attack 4, Set-Up, Skill Mastery (Intimidation).

Skills:

Acrobatics 5 (+9), Athletics 5 (+13), Deception 8 (+10), Expertise: History 6 (+9), Expertise: Military 9 (+12), Insight 4 (+8), Intimidation 9 (+11), Perception 6 (+10), Ranged Combat: Throwing 4 (+9), Stealth 4 (+8), Vehicles 6 (+11).

Offense:

Initiative +8

Unarmed +13 (Close Damage 8)

Orichalcum Spear +13 (Close Damage 11, Crit 19-20, Reach 1)

Defense:

Dodge 10, Parry 12, Fortitude 11, Toughness 11/9, Will 10.

Totals:

Abilities 94 + Powers 63 + Advantages 14 + Skills 33 + Defenses 14 = 212 points

Offensive PL: 12

Defensive PL: 12

Resistance PL: 11

Skill PL: 8

Complications:

Vengeance--Purpose. Honor (must not be *too* ruthless.) **Intolerance** (outsiders, especially males.) **Old Wounds. Temper.**

Update 2021: Talante has been persuaded to join forces with **the Emperor** as one of his **Hwarang**, convinced that this is the best way to achieve her vengeance. She likely plans to betray and dethrone him, which he surely will not see coming. With his assistance, she also learned of the continuing existence of **Nocticula**, and fought against her and her rival **Nzarde** in a less-conclusive manner than she would have wished. Despite herself, has begun to develop a greater respect for the latter-day Hesperan than she would have expected. Still wants to kill her, though.

Update 2022: Talante was surprised to be contacted by a telepathic speaker who claimed to be the goddess **Metis**, though disclaiming divinity. Metis urged her to return to Hespera and rejoin her sisters for a great struggle that was to come upon the whole solar system shortly. Talante responded to this by completely ignoring it, while warning the Emperor of what she had been told. (She briefly wondered why she had done that, but decided it was unimportant at the moment.)