

Cora of the Two Appetites

By Oliver Bernuetz

'And what lesson is it that we learn from the example of Cora?', asked the teacher.

The students murmured and looked to each other. Their teacher smiled, for this was not an easy question to answer.

'The lesson we learn from the example of Cora is that the Empire is right to accept all peoples. Anyone, even someone who would be as despised in other places, individuals such as Cora or Danfive Xaron, can serve the Empire in ways we cannot even begin to imagine.'

'What Lesson is it we Learn from the example of Cora?'

The Life of Cora

Blessed Cora was born the daughter of a impoverished peasant family in Doblian in the forty-ninth year of the Second Wane (1350 S.T.). The gods blessed her with exquisite beauty, and at a young age she attracted the attention of a local noble, who purchased the girl from her family and saw that she received training from the cult of Uleria in the sacred arts of that goddess.

Cora was found to be naturally gifted in the arts of courtesan and hostess. She was also found to be blessed with an amazing appetite for food and drink. Both these abilities she soon put to good use in the service of her noble master.

The young woman caught the eye of a visiting lord of great status and was presented to him as a gift. This happened several times, always to nobles of ever greater status, until the young courtesan was owned by the Satrap of Doblian, who eventually included her among the gifts bestowed upon Moonson during an Imperial progression.

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Cora was a prize that stood out even among the rich gifts given by the Satrap to Moonson. She soon became a favourite of the Emperor, and remained by his side from that time on. Cora used Uleria's arts to provide Moonson with great pleasure. The Emperor also found amusement in her ability to consume vast amounts of food and drink. He won many a wager from unsuspecting nobles through her amazing ability to clear whole banquet tables. Moonson also found the young courtesan to be a capable intelligence-gatherer, as few courtiers were able to resist her persuasive and gentle talents in obtaining information.

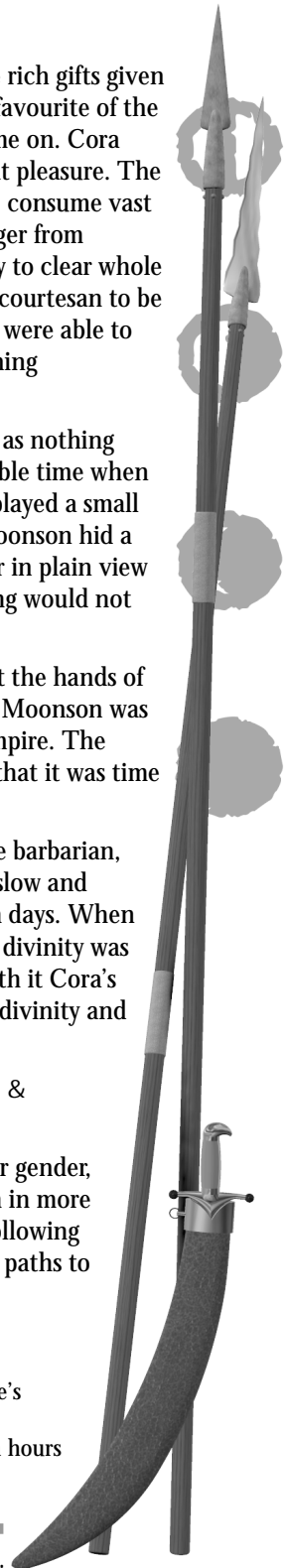
These services to Moonson, while worthy, were as nothing compared to her greatest role. During that terrible time when the Empire struggled with Sheng Seleris, Cora played a small but important role in preserving the Empire. Moonson hid a portion of his divinity within Cora, then left her in plain view for Sheng to find. The Emperor knew that Sheng would not kill her before Moonson himself was dead.

Cora spent many years in degrading servitude at the hands of Sheng. Finally, the time came when the hidden Moonson was ready to reassert his divinity and reclaim the Empire. The portion of the Emperor within Cora whispered that it was time for her to die.

Brave Cora taunted Sheng before his court. The barbarian, shamed and angry, ordered his slave's death by slow and public torture. The torments endured full seven days. When brave Cora finally breathed her last, Moonson's divinity was released. It returned to the Emperor, bearing with it Cora's soul. The faithful courtesan was rewarded with divinity and worship.

The Place of the Cult in the World & Role of Courtesans in the Empire

Courtesans in the Lunar Empire can be of either gender, though female courtesans are far more common in more backward or patriarchal regions. (Most of the following applies to female courtesans, as men have more paths to power than women).



There are many types of courtesan, from the lowly village Ulerian to hostesses serving the merchant or military class to highly trained and prized Imperial courtesans serving the nobility and court.

The highly skilled courtesans serving the Emperor in Glamour play an important part in the life of the Empire. These men and women are honoured members of Lunar society, the subject of gossip and adoration, often acquiring great wealth and titles. The women of their number are among the most powerful in the Empire.



Courtesans serve as diplomats, messengers, patrons of the arts, and trusted representatives of their masters. They are consummate in matters of etiquette, entertainment and diplomacy as well as the sensual and carnal arts. Many are also skilled entertainers, musicians and poets. Their training is intense and ongoing, with much of it taking place at the sprawling Temple to Love in Glamour. Every courtesan is taught a series of regimens that serve to keep their physical and mental abilities at peak levels.

It is considered among the greatest honours and privileges to employ or own an Imperial courtesan. Many noble families wait years to receive such a courtesan from the Imperial court. As befits their status, these men and women normally travel with a large retinue of servants, guards and followers.

Every courtesan is taught mental, physical and magical means of contraception. Occasionally these fail, or conception is allowed for some ulterior purpose. Many noble families have cadet branches born of the offspring of courtesans and nobles. There is no shame in this except in Dara Happan and Yelmic circles.

Among the many courtesans of Uleria and the Ninety Five Powers of the Ecstatic Soul will also be found the followers of Cora. In addition to their usual training, Coreans also receive instruction in the arts of espionage. It is very rare that a follower of Cora will be identified as such—for the most part they travel in the guise of 'normal' courtesans, or in disguise as travellers or pilgrims. Only the most-trusted advisors of the Imperial Court know of the special tasks Coreans fulfil.

The training required to be a follower of Cora is incredibly demanding. All Coreans exist to serve Moonson in whatever fashion he deems fit. They might spend their entire career in Glamour serving only him, or alternatively

travel to the very ends of Glorantha. No task is beneath a Corean. They learn to endure great pain and humiliation without complaint.

Characteristics of the Cult

Name and Epithets: Blessed Cora, Cora of the Two Appetites, Cora of the Two Mouths. Blessed Cora is the 'official' title but Cora of the Two Appetites is the name by which most remember the saint. Her followers are called Coreans.

Entry Requirements: Most followers of Cora, like other courtesans, tend to be sold to the cult by their parents or are themselves the offspring of courtesans. It is very rare that an adult joins the cult. The offspring of high nobility and Coreans, though rare, are highly prized members. There is no gender requirement. Non-humans may join the cult, and specialise in exotic rites and diplomacy.

Physical Skills: Courtesan, Play Instrument, Dance, Silken Ropes.

Mental Skills: Diplomacy, Know Literature, Etiquette, Flirt, Endure Pain, Speak Language, Read/Write Language, Entice Information, Coryllic Seduction.

Virtues: Loyal to Moonson, Shameless.

Affinity:

Two Appetites (Devour Food, Pleasures of the Mouth, Swallow Anything)

Secret: Hidden Sanctuary. A follower of Cora can swallow and hide anything of a physical or spiritual nature that Moonson or his representative instructs them to. The object may be of a size equal to the courtesan. This object cannot be detected by normal means and only one such object can be held at a time.



Sacrifices: Followers give up everything for the Emperor and live at his beck and call and sufferance.

Worshippers: Members of the cult. The cult is very small in numbers. Most members are based in the Imperial Court in Glamour or wherever the Emperor may be.

Manifestations: Cora's love of Moonson and her sacrifice for him exists as an example for members of the cult and the Empire itself.

Other Side: Cora resides on the Moon in Moonson's palace.

Other Connections: Members of Cora's cult have good relations with other cultic courtesans, of which there are many in the Empire. Members can belong to the cult of Uleria or any of the Ninety Five Powers of the Ecstatic Soul, but are forbidden to progress beyond initiate level in these cults.

Disadvantages: Coreans' lives are not their own, and despite their status and wealth they are slaves to Moonson.

Notes: The present high priest of the Cult, Fresser, a parthenogenetic descendant of Cora, is presently in exile from the Empire due to an inappropriate comment during an orgy. He has been cursed by Moonson with a wanderlust spirit that forces him to wander Genertela, never spending more than a few days in any one place. Some of his letters and writings have been collected as *Fresser's Gourmet Guide to Genertela*.

Despite the similarity in their names, the cult of Cora has no known connection to the cult of Gorgorma. Some courtesans believe that a connection exists, but if so is presently concealed among the Higher Mysteries.

Coryllic Seduction

While most courtesans are masters of seduction and sex, Coreans have developed their own unique skills and techniques. Coryllic Seduction employs a mixture of sex, food

and danger to entice and extract secrets from sexual partners. The same technique can also be used to induce devotion to themselves or to Moonson. Successfully applied, this technique can overcome a client's better judgement and existing loyalties—persuade them to say or do things they otherwise would not. The level of victory achieved determines how successful the seduction and/or how powerful the implanted compulsion will be. It can be frighteningly easy for a Corean to destroy their victims using Coryllic Seduction.

The technique is not without danger. For some Coreans the desire to dominate their partners becomes too strong. This overwhelming desire is called 'Coryllic treason' or 'the appetite of destruction'. When it occurs, the courtesan becomes unable to escape the vortex of their own sensuality and appetite. Many find themselves enslaving as many clients as possible. Their myriad appetites become insatiable. If discovered, these rogue Coreans are always sent to the Moon, where their dark powers cannot harm the Empire.

From 'The Death of Cora'

(This fragment was written by a Dara Happan noble of unknown identity. The author tries to overcome the prurience and Yelmic disdain of his upbringing, but does not entirely succeed).

Moonson hid many of the immortal parts of his soul beyond the sight of Sheng. One part though he hid in Sheng's plain view.

Before they parted, Moonson secreted part of his divinity in Cora. This he did through the courtesan's sensual gifts. They laboured together long in shameless ways, a ritual forbidden to lesser souls.

Cora fell prey to the troops of Sheng. Recognising her craft, they did not deal with her as they did with others captured, but instead took her to their master most depraved. Rich was their reward.

Eleven long years was Cora slave to Sheng, eleven long years while Moonson watched and waited. Cora was Sheng's toy, his slave, his plaything to do as he wished. Great was the depravity of Sheng, and great was the licentiousness of this drunken fool. Cora endured long suffering in silence, never once speaking out or saying 'hold'.

When the time was ripe for Moonson to reclaim his divinity and Empire, Cora knew. She carried part of the God-Son within, she knew. And Cora spoke.

Cora spoke. In front of the entire court of tents she spoke. Long she spoke, and loud. Laughing, the saint taunted Sheng. She spoke of his manhood and its lack, she laughed at his false divinity. She spoke of Moonson and his many gifts, and of Sheng, who was a mud-groping wader by comparison.

Sheng burned with shame. His anger grew. 'Let this one know the rack', he bellowed, 'and the iron, and the pin, and the thousand pains of the dark craft. Let her suffer long, and let all watch, and so fear Sheng. Not even death will free her from torment unending, for my generals have power in all the burning hells.'

So Cora was stretched, and her beauty torn. The crowds they laughed, and mocked, for they feared Sheng. And Cora said nothing. Her fingers and toes were torn, but Cora said nothing. Her ears and eyelids were cut, but Cora said nothing. Much more did they do, for many a day and night without cease.

And Sheng sat, and watched, but his heart was afraid. The torturers took Cora's eyes, but she said nothing. They would next take her tongue. Silent no more, Cora laughed. As the burning pincers approached again, Cora laughed. And Sheng was sore afraid.

'Why do you laugh?', he asked. 'Have I not taken everything you have from you?' Sheng used his dark art to speak to direct Cora's soul. He heard her soul laughing as well, in rapture of great joy.

Sheng was sore afraid, and trembled. 'Why do you laugh?', he asked again.

'I laugh at your blindness, Oh Master of Mine! What you sought for eleven long years that I have carried safely within me!'

And Cora released the divinity of Moonson she had carried and treasured within. The bright thing soared up past Sheng's head and beyond his feeble grasp. And it carried with it the soul of Blessed Cora. It flew to where Moonson waited.

And Moonson knew all, and Moonson wept for Cora. He wept for all that had befallen his Empire. He rose in anger, and power, and in great glory, and he set forth to destroy Sheng and all his evil.

And Cora's soul he cherished, and blessed, and bestowed with divinity. And so we this day worship with joy for all that she did.

