

# CHARM WARS

by Dan Lutts

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## Death, Mourning, and Burial

Over the centuries, the ancient Romans' burial practices switched back and forth between burial and cremation, and not everyone followed whichever was the current practice. Caldonians aren't as flexible. In the early days, they buried their dead. Nowadays they cremate them. One belief that hasn't changed over the centuries is that their dead must be buried in their family tombs outside the city walls. If not, the dead person's spirit is doomed to wander the earth, halfway between the afterworld and the underworld, for eternity.

Caldonian nobles' and commoners' death practices have a lot in common with the ancient Romans'. Like Rome's patricians, Caldon's noblesse men have magnificent sendoffs to the afterworld in an ostentatious public ceremony. The deceased is brought to the public square on a bier. If the deceased was a magistrate or former magistrate, actors wearing his death mask and the death masks of the rest of his family's former magistrates lead the procession. The deceased family, dressed in mourning gray, walk behind the bier bearers. Professional mourners and musicians in mourning gray follow the family. All the family's clients attend the funeral celebration because not attending would be a serious offence to the family, the deceased, and the family's ancestors.

Noblesse women aren't mourned in public but attend a special ceremony of the clan's family matriarchs, followed by a private cremation ceremony.

Like Rome's lower classes, if Rill's Uncle Kald had died in Caldon, his memorial service would have been a simple one. His body would be taken to a „pyre man“ who arranges for the funeral, including cremation. The family can chose between an individual cremation or a much less expensive group cremation. Many commoners hold pyre men in low esteem, and consider them on the same level as snake oil salesmen in 19th-century America.

Caldonians believe death to be impure, so they built their cemetery outside the city walls. The cemetery itself resembles a city of the dead because every family, rich and poor alike, has a mausoleum in which they place their loved one's urn of ashes. Ancient Romans offered drink and food to their dead, sometimes through a tube directly into the burial chamber. Caldonians follow a similar practice. Each year on Ancestors' Day, they go to their family sepulcher and make a food offering, which they drop through a pipe into the tomb.