

7th Sea™



Game Masters' Guide
~1668~

Discover the New World.

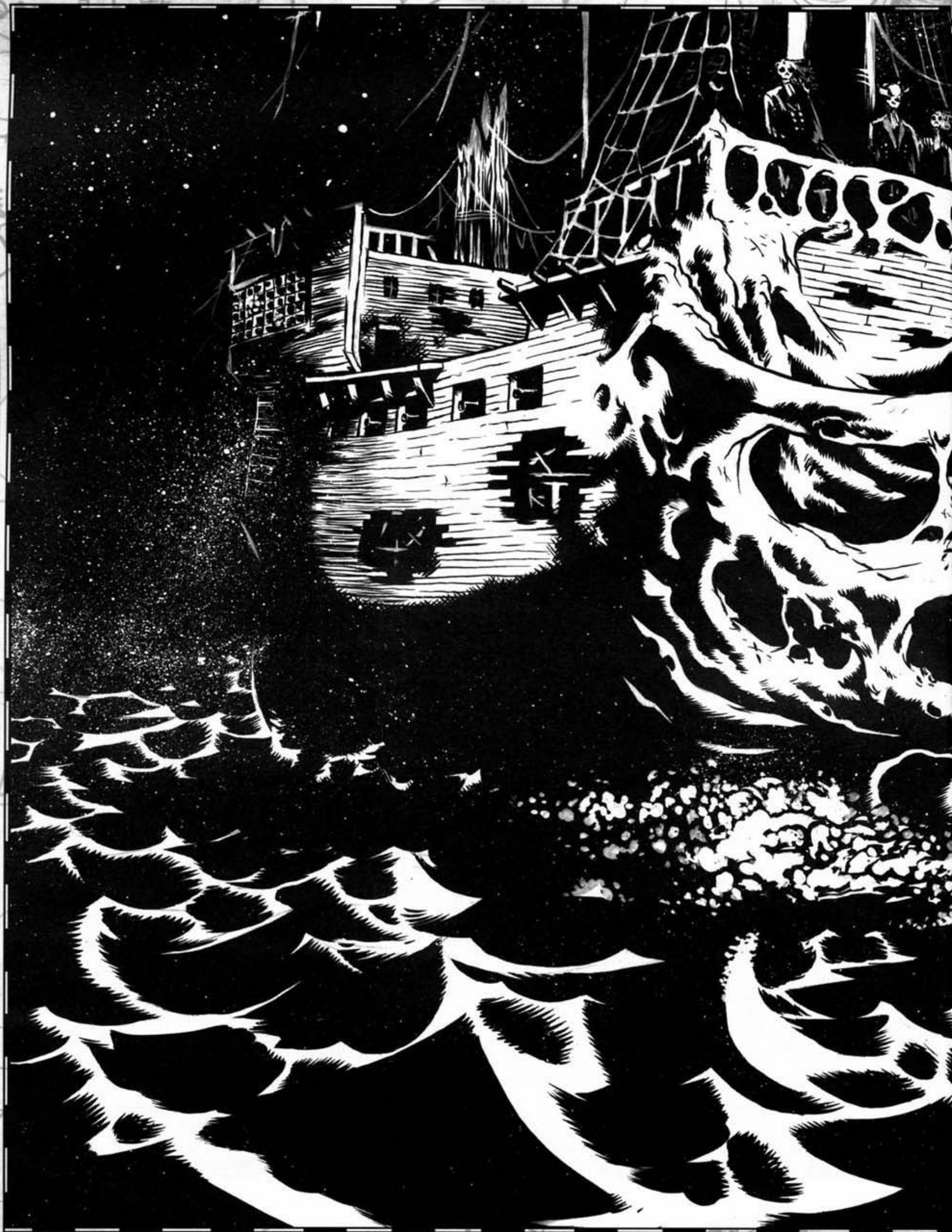


ALDERAC ENTERTAINMENT GROUP presents •7th SEA•
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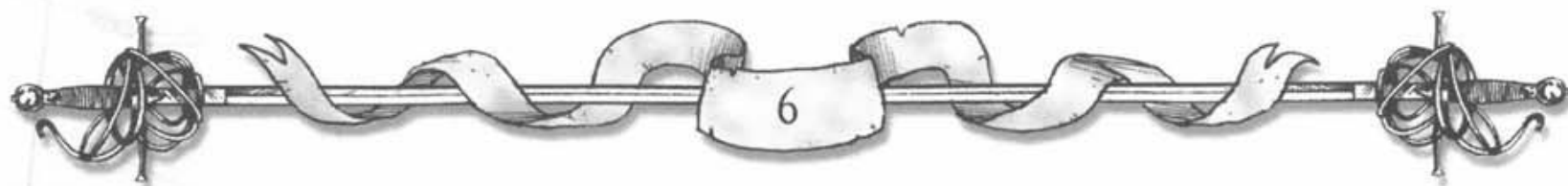


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Théah



Introduction

GM Rule #1:

There Are No Rules.

GM Rule #2:

Cheat Anyway.

Welcome to the *7th Sea Game Masters' Guide to Théah*. Within these pages, you'll discover everything you need to run a game of *7th Sea*. It's set up just like the *Players' Guide*. Chapter One is all about Théah, filling in the blanks from the *Players' Guide*. Chapter Two gives you some advice on how to help your players make Heroes and how to use the Heroes' Advantages, Arcana and Backgrounds in your campaign. Chapter Three talks about the game system itself and includes a whole slew of optional rules. Finally, Chapter Four details the fine art of Game Mastering, including how to write stories and campaigns and gives you some tricks (dirty and otherwise) to use on your players.

The Obligatory Player Warning

If you are not going to be playing the role of the Game Master, here is our friendly warning. Don't be surprised if somehow, in some way, when you least expect it, while you're playing the game, the information you read in here completely ruins any chance of suspense or surprise your GM has prepared for you. This book is meant solely for GMs and not for players. Players, read further at your own risk.

One More Warning Sign

We assume you know what a GM is because you've read the *7th Sea Players' Guide to Théah*. If you've skipped that book, stop reading right now, go back and read that book first. The *Players' Guide* contains information that is

essential to understanding the stuff you're going to learn in this book.

A Peek Behind the Curtain

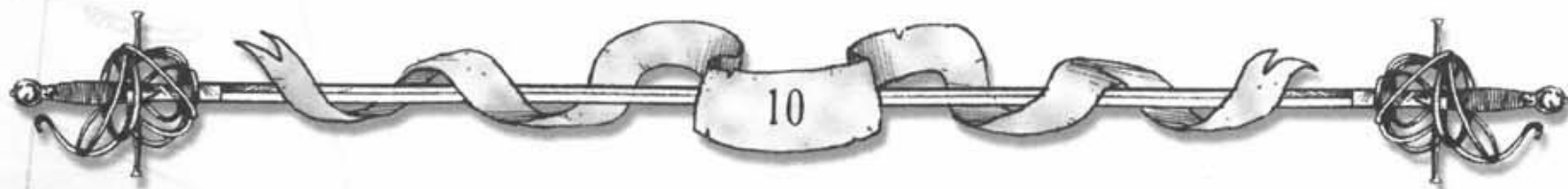
This book is your peek behind the curtain of world and game design. We're all in the same boat now — you GMs and us game designers — and we've got to stick together. Not only are we going to show you how we designed the world and the system, but we're also going to show you why we did the things we did. Understanding why we did the things we did will make it easier for you to pick and choose from our designs and modify them to fit your own. You'll know why we designed something the way we did, so you'll know exactly why you want to change it.

Knowing how and why we designed things the way we did will also make it easier for you to find things you like and emphasize those aspects of the game over others. If you like fantastic faerie tale swashbuckling, run your game in Avalon. On the other hand, if you prefer the tales of Alexandre Dumas, set your stories in Montaigne. Finally, if you just want a good old fashioned sword-swinging rumble, throw your players into the middle of Eisen and let 'em go.

The GM Rules

Like everything else we will publish for the world of *7th Sea*, everything in this book is a guideline. It's optional. If you don't like something, throw it out. If a rule just doesn't go down right, don't put it in your game. If you want to make someone else the monarch of Avalon, kick out Elaine and put someone else on the throne. It's just that easy.

We'll be keeping track of official Théah at the AEG office, but as far as your game goes, you are always right. You're the boss. Get used to it.





Points of View: Archæologist

From the Memoirs of Dr. Edward Hollingsworth, Avalon Archaeologist:

4, 16, 1668

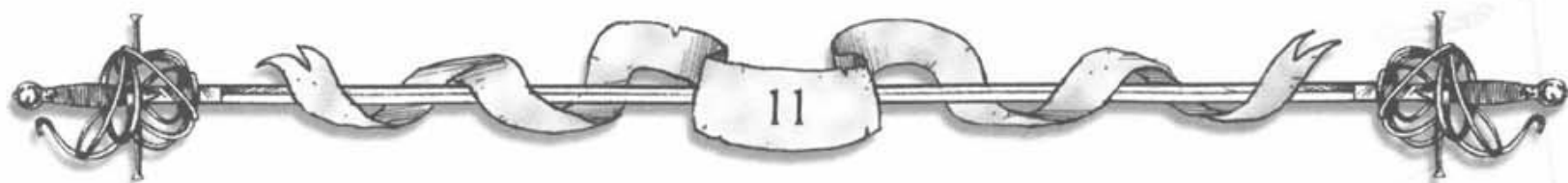
I rose with the dawn this morning, eager to continue my previous night's studies of the Surneth artifacts brought back from the expedition to the Thalussian Isles.

First Item: catalog #352110W/260915N/0043. The artifact is made of a substance similar to brass, roughly spheroid, approximately 3 inches in diameter. There is a silvery rod somehow driven through the middle of the sphere which is impossible to remove. There seems to be a slice taken out of one end, running roughly parallel to the rod. The flat surface created by the slice is highly reflective. The sphere can be spun on the rod with almost no applied pressure and continues spinning for a long time after being spun, but to what end, I am uncertain.

Second Item: catalog #352110W/260915N/0044. This artifact appears to be one-quarter of a large cogwheel made from a strange bluish metal, and is approximately 1 foot in width, measuring along the curvature. At intervals of approximately 2 inches, tiny holes are drilled through its side, and fine golden wires strung through the holes. These wires lead down to and wrap around a small greyish orb approximately 1 inch in diameter. The wires are somehow held at an incredible tension. Perhaps the orb exerts a repulsive force on the cog similar to that of two similarly aligned lodestones? Again, the purpose of the device is unknown. I have an audience with Lord Weberly this afternoon; perhaps I will show him item #0044.

* * *

This afternoon's meeting was a fiasco. Lord Weberly very nearly had me thrown to his dogs. It started out well enough, with Lord Weberly showing a keen interest in item #0044. He offered me sixteen Guilders for it, but I explained that it was promised to the Hadley Museum of Natural History, and he relented. We theorized on what its function could have been, until Lord Weberly's six-year-old niece made the observation that it looked very much like a harp, and indeed, when strummed, the strings emitted a gentle, but high-pitched tinkling sound, very pleasant to our ears. Lord Weberly dropped the object in surprise as every one of his hunting hounds began a most mournful howling, as if the fiends of Hell themselves were riding them with fiery spurs. Upon striking his desk, the accursed thing snapped every one of its strings, releasing the orb, which shot forward like a tiny cannonball, blasting a three foot wide hole in his Lordship's wall and narrowly missing his niece. As for the strings, they completely lashed through his desk, and one of them detached itself, flew across the room, and bored a narrow hole through my right arm, near the wrist, fortunately missing the bone. It was only this injury which convinced his Lordship not to throw me to his mastiffs for endangering his niece's life with "my" carelessness. Hopefully, by making restitution for the damage to his desk and wall, I will be able to return myself to his good graces.





How do you pronounce it?

Théah is pronounced THAY-uh. The “th” is aspirated like “thought” or “thesis”, not hard like “themselves” or “therefore.”

The players only got a glimpse of her in their book, but we’re going to look at Théah from the top to the bottom. Not just her mountains, rivers, lakes and forests, but also the major themes rumbling under her surface, at her past and we’ll take a wee peek at her future.

We’ll start with the nations, move on to the Church, then finish off with the Secret Societies. We’ll present them much the same way we designed them, starting with the theme we wanted to express with that nation, then spend a moment or two looking at her past. We’ll move forward into her present, see who’s in charge of her these days, then finally show you which direction we’ll be heading with future products.

But before we get into all of that, let’s take a look at Théah herself.

Europe’s Distant Cousin

To design Théah, we looked at Europe between the years 1650 and 1750. There are a few exceptions, but that was the rough timeframe.

Théah’s current year is 1668. Almost all of Théah’s scientific discovery and knowledge is based on that year. Of course, Théah has made a few discoveries that Europe hasn’t, but these advances proved convenient for an adventuring world, so we stuck them in.

The most notable differences between Théah and Europe are the developments in medical theory and practice. Théan doctors no longer use leeches to bleed out the “bad blood” of their patients. They know to clean

medical instruments between patients (but they still aren’t certain why) and they’ve figured out that removing a bullet helps the patient heal. Believe it or not, European doctors wouldn’t figure those two simple but important facts out until the nineteenth century. We thought we’d give Théans a little head start.

What is Restoration?

“Restoration” describes the period in English history after the fall of Oliver Cromwell’s commonwealth. The rightful king – Charles II – reclaimed England’s throne, and a period of incredible decadence began. This lush lifestyle was in reaction to the puritanical time that Charles dispelled with his excesses and eccentricities.

People began to turn away from the doom and gloom perpetuated by puritanical thought toward a more humanistic mindset. The concepts of romantic love and freewill were all the rage in the courts and passion was once again a virtue rather than an unforgivable sin.

What does all of this historical/sociology stuff mean?

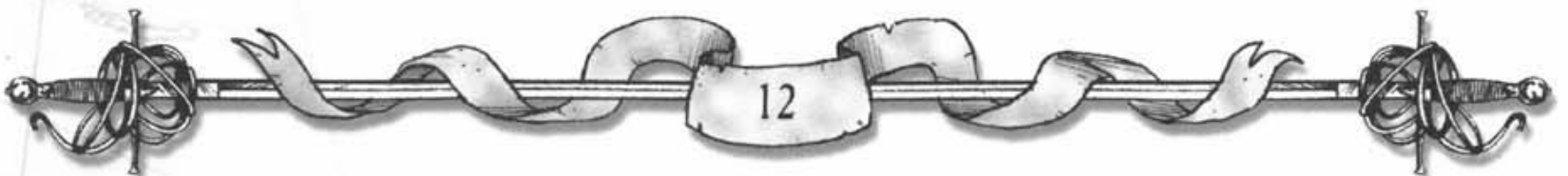
In Théah, it means that heroes are back in style.

Time Marches On

Time does not stand still in Théah. While the current year is 1668, it will change in the very near future. Soon enough, you’ll be seeing products with the date 1669. Stay tuned for further developments.

The Nations

What follows is a more detailed look at each of Théah’s nations (including the piratical Brotherhood of the Coast). Each section begins with a short essay on the themes and events that we’re going to be focusing on while Théah develops and changes. Then we’ll talk about the nation’s people, including culture, economy and government.





Finally, we'll spend a spell talking about the land, including sections on geography, population and important cities.

Avalon

"I am sorry to decline your offer, my lord. Unfortunately, I am already married to Avalon."

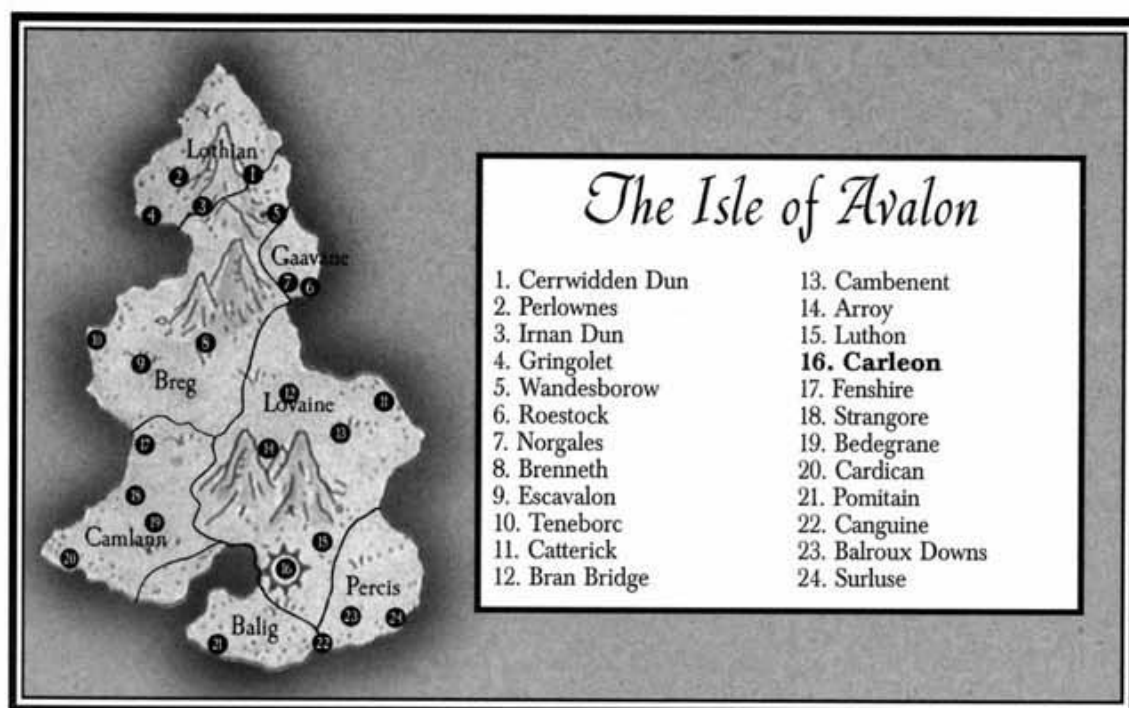
— Queen Elaine

Introduction

When you look at the Queen of Avalon, there are two things that should pop into your mind. The first is that she looks a whole lot like Elizabeth I, the Queen of England during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Of course, such a remarkable image carries a lot of baggage with it. We've done our best to parallel her rise to power, taking familiar and famous elements from her rule, and giving them a firm Théan twist. Even her mercenary privateers — the Sea Dogs — are drawn right out of history.

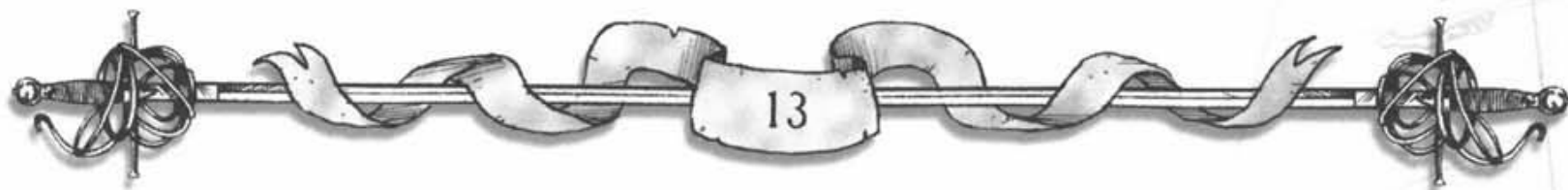
However, there's another figure of English myth that we've used to help define Avalon, and that is her sleeping king. If you recognized Elaine as an Arthur figure and Derwyddon as Merlin, then there's no doubt in your mind what's down the road for Avalon. Elaine is going to be betrayed by a beloved friend and everyone but Elaine is going to see it coming. It's this inevitable march toward disaster that will help you build stories within Avalon's rules. Your players will think they know what's coming... but do they?

Right now, only a few of the players are in place. We recognize Arthur and Merlin, but where are Gwenevere and Lancelot? Where are Morgana and Mordred? Trust us, they will show up (you may know them by name already), but even recognizing who's who won't give away the whole story to the players. There are so many different tellings of Arthur's story that it could be told from any direction, from any angle. Will the Lancelot/Gwenevere betrayal be a traditional romantic betrayal, or will it be something completely different? When Mordred shows up, will he be Elaine's nephew, her son, or someone unrelated?



We've given the players just enough information to make them believe they can protect the Queen from anything. They're wrong, of course. Even if they are right, Elaine will never believe them. Not until it is too late.

With Elaine on the throne, it seems as if all of Avalon has awakened from a horrible dream. The Sidhe have also awakened, and their presence is noticeable. Anyone who visits Avalon returns telling how the grass is greener, the sky is bluer





and the calm wind is always just enough to cool the heat of the midday sun. However, when a storm falls over Avalon's shores, it is like no storm they have ever seen before. Great, terrible and merciless, it claws at rooftops, rips trees from the ground and whips a wind that sounds like a thousand women weeping for their lost husbands.

Avalon's magic has indeed returned.

The People

In no other country is the nobility so close to its common folk than in Avalon. Elaine takes regular rides through the countryside, stopping at villages and hamlets, where it is said a single touch of her pure, white hand can heal any ailment. The people know, recognize and love their queen. Likewise, if a noble is good and pure, he can expect great devotion and loyalty from his subjects. On the other hand, if he is villainous and cruel, he can feel their hatred from leagues away.

Social Strata

While Avalon's social structure — peasant, clergy and noble — is almost identical to the rest of Théah, two new classes — the merchant and the sailor — have recently found their way into the mix.

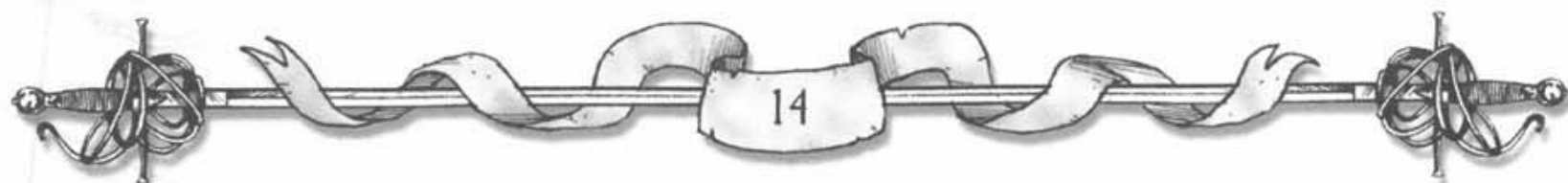
In the last two centuries, the merchant guilds have gained a great deal of wealth in Avalon, but as any Théan scholar will tell you, money means nothing without land. Knowing this, the merchants turned to the land-rich but cash-poor nobility, and a deal was struck. The nobility sold title and land in exchange for cash, thus thrusting the merchant class into the middle regions of social structure.

Avalon's second new step on the social ladder found his place only recently. When Elaine took the throne, her need for a navy superseded protocol. She announced that any man who sailed under the Avalon banner would be called "noble sailor", a title equivalent to an Avalon knight. In addition to this honor, all noble sailors own a percentage of any plunder taken while under the Avalon

flag — no matter how that plunder was acquired. Needless to say, Avalon's navy soon outgrew even her lofty goals.

Clothing

One can expect to see a peasant dressed in simple trousers, a shirt and a belt and a hat. Tied to the belt is a purse and any tools the peasant or craftsman may want to carry with him (always including a cutting knife). Shoes are soft-soled and made of leather. Pants and shirts are cotton, sometimes with a heavier smock or leather apron thrown over, or if the peasant can afford it a fine tunic. The hat is usually wide-brimmed and pinned on one side. Avalons tend to grow thin mustaches and beards and grow their hair long. There aren't many who wear make-up and wigs, and those who do are regarded as effete.





Avalon sailors have brought a new innovation to style: an innovation called “pockets.” The pouches are sewn into the inside of the trousers, freeing the sailor’s belt from hanging tools that can get caught in the rigging. Sailors usually go barefoot and toss the tunic in favor of a smock. Both trousers and smock are almost always made of canvas.

Women generally wear two skirts (one hitched up under the belt), a cotton blouse, tight bodice and a hat. A woman’s hair is either kept up under the hat or braided, depending if she’s married or a maiden, respectively.

Diet

Avalons love to drink and when they do, it’s usually stout dark beer. They are also fond of mead or whiskey (from their neighbor to the west), although they seldom drink wine. The chief vegetable on an Avalon’s plate is almost always cabbage. They also eat a great deal of other vegetables, including carrots and beets. Avalons eat meat when they can get it, although most of the best meat (notably venison) is illegal to hunt. However, rabbit makes a fine substitute. Fishing is Avalon’s chief source of food, and her people have invented many ways to prepare all the fishes caught off her coast.

This diet — combined with a healthy workout of farming every day — makes Avalons a sturdy and healthy folk. At least it makes the lower classes sturdy and healthy. The nobility, however, is a different story. The nobility is known to partake of many delicacies, and it is well-known that Elaine adores the fine oysters she has shipped from Vodacce. No matter how expensive their meal may be, it is always followed up with a stout beer or ale.

Customs

Avalons are known for their hospitality, but they are even better known for their superstitions. Far from the Castillian universities, it’s easy for the Avalons to scoff at “scientific evidence” when they can hear the wail of the Banesidhe over the hills. Avalons cling tightly to their

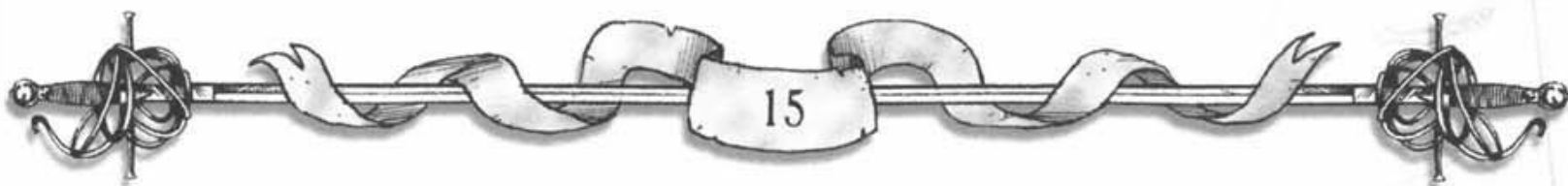
superstitions, knowing that a single slip could cost them dearly. Whenever salt is spilled, it’s thrown over the shoulder. Whenever a baby is in the home, a pair of iron scissors is hung above the crib. Windows are always shut tightly before sunset, everyone covers their mouth when they yawn and every left shoe has a copper penny in the heel.

All of these beliefs come from Avalon’s very tangible relationship with the Goodly Folke, the Sidhe. An ancient and powerful race, the Sidhe are like a thunderstorm: beautiful, terrible, wrathful and blameless. With that kind of power wandering about Avalon demanding respect, it’s easy to see why the Avalons are so polite to strangers; you just never know when you’ll run into a Sidhe lord in disguise, ready to turn anyone who treats him with disrespect into a tree.

Art and Music

The Avalons love to sing and tell stories. For the last four hundred years, the peasant class of Avalon has had its native religion and culture repressed by the Church. However, instead of fading away, the beliefs and traditions transformed into ballads and folk tales. Ancient gods turned into kings, heroes into knights, villains into monsters and old planting and harvesting rites became dances. The old ways may have lost a little of their meaning, but they are there for those who are willing to look for them.

There are patterns in the stories the songs tell, and those who are familiar with the patterns can usually sing along with the chorus, even if they’ve never heard the song before. The melodies always seem familiar and set feet tapping. The songs are bawdy and boisterous, telling tales of maidens happily giving up their virtue as if it were a weight, and of young men who trust such ladies, much to their chagrin. The songs appear to be morality plays, but just under the surface the singer seems to be laughing at the morality he’s preaching. It is a strange dichotomy, but one that makes Avalon folk music unique.





Names

During the Montaigne occupation, no one in Avalon was speaking her native tongue, Cymru (kim-ree). Avalon words and names were replaced with their Montaigne equivalents. Names such as "Dyffid" were changed to "David", "Ieuan" to "Ian" and "Gwillim" to "William." Even the food changed nomenclature; a cow was called "boif", a sow was called "pork" and a deer was called "venison."

There is a great nostalgia in Avalon since Elaine's ascendance to the throne and the one place it shows most is in the changing language. Men and women are changing their modern names back to their more traditional versions and children are being named after the great heroes of Avalon's history.

Religion

Religion is a difficult subject in Avalon. For centuries, Avalons have fought for the restoration of their native faith since its usurpation by the Vaticine Church. "Traditionalists" (those who follow the Old Ways of Avalon) have found themselves persecuted for hundreds of years, forcing their faith underground. But even the Avalon Vaticines cannot agree on articles of faith, for when the Objectivist movement hit Avalon's shores, it hit hard. Much blood has been spilled over religion, and Elaine has wisely chosen to deal with it forthrightly.

She has chosen to side with the Objectivists, allying herself with Montaigne and Eisen, but her choice has also further infuriated Castille (as if the Sea Dogs weren't doing enough). However, Elaine has also turned religious tolerance into policy, caring little if an Avalon is Reformed Vaticine, Objectivist or Traditionalist. "We are all Avalons," she once said to her court, "no matter how we pronounce Theus' name." When the Reformed Vaticines hissed softly, she turned to them, took one look at their tall hats and said, "No matter what hat we choose to wear."

Elaine's policies have led to a resurgence of the Old Ways to Avalon's homes, a trend that the Queen seems happy to see. "We have ignored the Goodly Folke for far too long," she said. "Let us invite them back to our shores with open arms and open hearts." Despite Elaine's religious reform, there is still brooding among Avalon's faithful. The Traditionalists seek to complete Avalon's transformation, removing the influence of the Church entirely, while the Church seeks to do the same to their Traditionalist cousins.

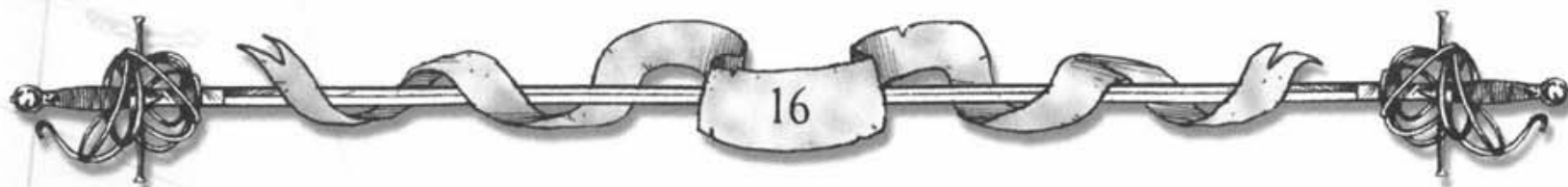
While almost all loyal Vaticines have left Avalon, the Church universities have remained. Elaine offered the scholars the opportunity to stay, assuring them that she would not be looking over their shoulders as the Inquisition had been doing for years. The scholars agreed, and almost all of them are now devout followers of the Church of Avalon.

Government

Avalon's government is a constitutional monarchy. It's had a Parliament for nearly six hundred years, but its power is still wrapped around the monarch's little finger. Elaine had a great deal of trouble gaining the confidence of the distinguished gentlemen, but in the end her moderate stance on nearly every subject won her support from the silent majority, while the vocal minorities ended up shouting at one another.

Avalon is divided into seven regions: Balig, Breg, Camlann, Gaavane, Lothian, Lovaine and Percis.

Each of these regions was once a kingdom, but the unification of Avalon created a single High King, making all other Kingdoms "regions." The Queen's region, Lovaine, holds the two most important cities in Avalon: Luthon and Carleon (see "Towns and Villages" below). Luthon was the capital of Avalon during the Montaigne rule, but Elaine has moved her capital to Carleon in the southwest, the traditional stronghold of Avalon nobility.





Economy

Avalon's economy is based on the pound sterling (£). Each pound is divided into twenty shillings ("s"). All Avalon currency is in coin form, although banks are using paper notes for large exchanges.

Towns and Villages

Avalon is rich with folklore and tradition, and each city, town and village has its own collection of tales. Listed below are four of Avalon's most important regions, including a mysterious island off the western shore that Elaine dares not claim to be her own.

Luthon (Loo-tun)

Elaine may have moved her throne from Luthon ten years ago, but it remains the single most important trading port in Avalon. Situated on the Grand River, almost all imports and exports wander through her walls. Nigel Bester, the Lord Mayor of Luthon, is one of the island's richest men and highly influential in the House of Lords. He has been Lord Mayor for almost two decades and shows no sign of relinquishing his title in the near future.

Carleon

The capital of Avalon, Carleon was recently restored by Elaine's chief advisor, Derwyddon. It is whispered that he performed the restoration in a single night, using spirits from the ocean and creatures of smoke and fire. The castle's appearance certainly lends credence to the rumors of sorcerous methods. The walls glisten like moonlight and towers reach to the sky with impossible strength. At the center of the castle is the Queen's audience hall, with the throne set at the back of the room in front of a giant tapestry of the graal. Situated in a semicircle around the Queen's throne are the twelve seats of the Queen's Guard, the men who have sworn to protect Elaine no matter the cost.

Wandesborow

Wandesborow ("Wan-ber") is the "Sailor's City." More sailors hail from Wandesborow than any other town in Avalon. Nearly every sea shanty makes some sort of reference to Wandesborow or the areas that surround her, and she boasts the richest fishing waters in the land. Sailors who hail from Wandesborow call themselves "Wanber Men" and are the proudest sailors on the six seas.

Cardican

The city of Cardican is the home of the Garloise family, which rules Camlann county. For centuries, the Garloise fought against Montaigne rule, supported by the Inish to the west and fueled by their claim to Avalon's throne. The Garloise have always been the most ambitious Avalon noble family, but when Elaine took the throne, they knelt before the new Queen with enthusiasm and honor. The current ruler of Cardican, Mark, is married to Rhiannon, a beautiful young woman who possesses gifts of sorcery and cunning rivaling even the Fate Witches of Vodacce.

The Isle of the Grey Queen

Off the eastern shores of mainland Avalon is a small island known as the Isle of the Grey Queen. In a tall tower that overlooks the bay, a woman who has never aged looks down on Avalon as she sits at a loom and spins. Sailors have reported the island all around Avalon, though it never disappears from its location off the coast of Lovaine and Percis. No man who has sailed to the island has ever returned, and in the last one hundred years none have tried. It is said that the Grey Queen may be a banesidhe or something even more terrible, although none can say for certain.

Military

One of Elaine's first concerns when she came to the throne was rebuilding Avalon's military. Years of civil war





exhausted her armies, leaving the island defenseless to invasion. Instead of conscripting Avalon's young men to shed blood for their nation, she turned to her court and demanded they build ships. "If we have the most powerful navy in the world," she said, "we shall have no fear of any army." Also, she promised that any noble who added a vessel to her navy would share in any profit that vessel brought back home. Needless to say, Avalon's beleaguered nobility jumped at the chance to bring new revenue to their coffers. Avalon's new navy was built in record time.

Once Avalon's shores were secure, Elaine turned her attentions to her interior. She sent messengers to Eisen, urging the landless warlords to come to Avalon and teach her people to fight. Many Eisen were too proud (or superstitious) to go to the "Glamour Isle" to serve under a foreign crown, but some Objectivist Eisen had no problem leaving behind their war-torn land for a new start.

Once the Eisen were on her shores, she ordered the dismantling of every standing army in Avalon, thus taking the opportunity for a military coup away from the nobility. The only standing army in Avalon would be her own, while the nobility were each afforded small garrisons (about ten to twenty men) to protect their own homesteads. When the nobles complained, she reassured them that if their navy was strong, there was no need for an army. She also informed them that the crown coffers could afford an army or a navy, not both. Faced with the option of losing the profits the navy brought to Avalon's shores, the nobility soon lost its argumentative tongue.

Fighting Style

While the rest of Théah is turning to smaller, faster weapons, Avalon still teaches its Swordsmen the old smallsword/buckler technique that Théah left behind fifty years ago. However, Théans who believe the Avalon fighting style antiquated have never seen the sheer speed

with which they use it. The Donovan style is highly respected by continental Swordsmen for its unorthodox strategy and the damage it can deal to the unwary.

Current Relations with the Rest of Théah

Castille

"Thank Theus the heart of the Vaticine Church is at war with Montaigne, otherwise they would be seeking our heart on a silver platter. We know they plot against us, but are unable to enact their machinations. Let them continue their plotting. The more they split their attentions, the less they focus on us."

Eisen

"The wasteland that was once the proud kingdom of Eisen has provided us with a militia to defend our borders. We agree with half of their philosophies, but disagree with none of them. Someone must help them regain their power, but, unfortunately, it cannot be us."

Montaigne

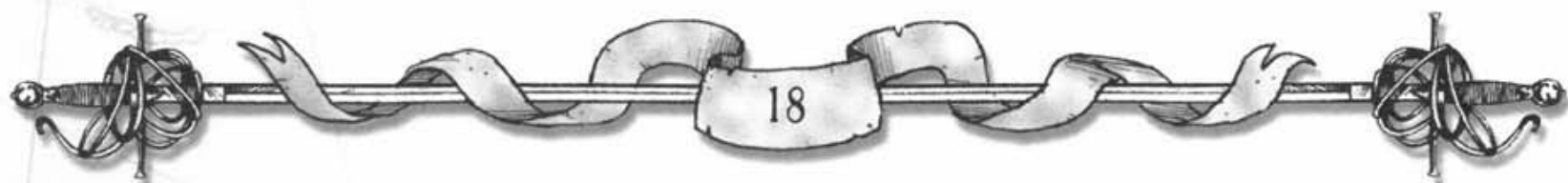
"For a period longer than we wish to discuss, the Montaignes ruled our land. Never again. We know them well, and their blood-magic tricks are of no use here any longer. But as long as they keep their attention turned south, we will maintain our cordial relationship with our flamboyant cousin."

Pirate Nation

"The Brotherhood of the Coast is just an excuse for criminals to run rampant on our seas. The sooner they are captured and put down, the better."

Ussura

"Distant and silent, Ussura is a mystery to us. We have heard and seen little of them, but understand there is deep magic in their blood, magic tied to their land. One



of our explorers has told us that their magic is very much like Glamour, and the woman they worship has many characteristics similar to the Sidhe. Perhaps we are cousins after all?"

Vendel

"It is difficult to say anything of the land to the east, for a single mispronounced syllable will gain you a cold look at best. Calling them 'Vendel' will get you dropped in a frigid lake with a rock tied to your leg, while using the proper language will not earn you any points with the merchant guilds. A tricky situation, and we choose to stay on the far fringes of it to avoid any conflict."

Vodacce

"Treachery is the word of the day as far as the Vodacce are concerned. Speaking with any Vodacce prince is like walking through a display of glass vases, all filled to the brim, sitting on thin pillars with a floor covered with eggs. They have been trained since birth to pierce any veil, and they wait with their sorcerous eyes to see any secrets, no matter how cleverly hidden. They are talented villains, but villains all the same."

Inismore

"They are a rowdy, lusty, drunken bunch, and the chief reason their culture has remained intact despite centuries of invasion and occupation is stubborn Inish pride."

— Warren Davie-Brody

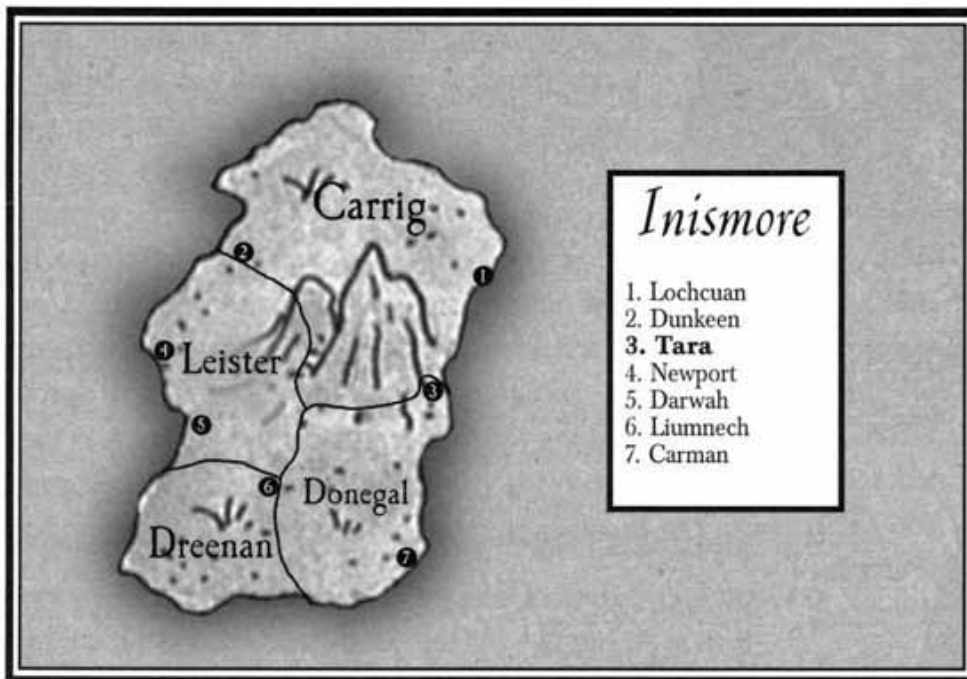
Introduction

Inismore (in-NIS-more, or ih-NISH-more) is further from her Earth counterpart than any of the other nations. She is independent, allied with Avalon and the Marches, and has her own immortal and strong-willed High King. Ireland in the 1600s could only wish to have it so good.

Her High King, the O'Bannon, may be just what he claims to be, or he could be a sorcerer out to deceive the people. Personally, we think he's the real thing, which makes him all that more dangerous to his nation. Sooner or later, the O'Bannon is going to do what he always does: pack up his little bag, hang his crown on his throne and wander away, leaving his people in chaos. At least, that's what the folktales say about him. The truth may be much darker.

O'Bannon may be Elaine's most dangerous ally, however. As long as she has the Graal, he'll fall in line with Avalon. If she ever loses it — or betrays Inismore, which is even worse — he'll turn his wrath on her, leaving blood and bones in his wake.

Also, keep an eye out for the O'Tooles (O'Bannon's chief rivals; you'll meet them soon enough). They're a crafty lot, and they're looking for any opportunity to steal back the throne. The O'Tooles don't believe that the O'Bannon is what he claims to be, and sooner or later they're going to put the High King's claims to the test. The



outcome of that little firecracker will shake up the Avalon Alliance more than people think.

The People

The Inish are slightly smaller than the average Théan. While they are famous for their “fiery redheads”, most Inish have black hair and dark eyes.

It is said that when the world was born, the greatest sorcerers in the world cast a *gesa* (GAY-sah, compelling

spell) upon Inismore. This spell created a code of conduct that has remained within Inish blood for almost two thousand years, a code that seems strange to those not native to the land. Once one sets foot on the Emerald Isle, it is easy to understand. It all boils down to reputation.

An Inish would rather cut his own throat than commit an act that would disgrace him in the public eye. Of course, what behavior constitutes “honorable” and “dishonorable” is very strictly defined by the *gesa* set upon Inismore and her people. No one is above the *gesa*, not even the King. In fact, the Inish see the King as “the best among equals,” a very un-Théan attitude.

The sorcerer’s *gesa* created the Three Great Laws in Inismore: the Law of Hospitality, the Law of Bravery and the Law of Loyalty. There is a fourth Law, but it is only invoked when the first three are broken. We’ll discuss that one at the end.

Hospitality

Much like her Avalon cousin, Inish hospitality to both friends and strangers is very important. So important, in fact, that all along the King’s roads travelers can sleep and eat at the King’s hostels for no charge. Because the hostels are owned by the King, the “King’s Peace” is invoked. No weapons of any kind are permitted within the hostel, and any act of violence is a crime whose only punishment is death. A host who turns away guests or treats them poorly greatly endangers his reputation. Word spreads quickly among the Inish, especially if a bard is present. Likewise, those who abuse the hospitality of their guests also put themselves in great danger.

Another aspect of hospitality is generosity. In many ways, a man is judged by the kindness of his heart and the





generosity of his purse. Those with little need have a duty to aid those with great need, and woe to the man with full pockets who doesn't spare a coin for the man who has nothing. There are countless Inish folk tales that concern these issues and the fates that befall those who ignore the needy.

Bravery

It is better in Inish eyes to die a painful, horrible and courageous death than to live a long, blissful and cowardly life. How an Inish is remembered after his death is more important than anything else, for he is only immortal as long as he is remembered. Tales abound of heroes who give up their lives with a laugh and a smile because they know they will be remembered.

Inish are proud people, too proud to show pain, doubt or fear. This aspect of their culture can be reflected in their casual attitude toward violence. A fist fight is always a respectful affair, sometimes even a friendly one. One man accidentally says the wrong thing (or perhaps the right thing), steps on someone else's foot or just exchanges a look, and a fight breaks out. No weapons are ever involved, only two men and their fists. The pummeling continues until one man just can't get up; then his opponent lowers his hand, helps him to his feet and buys him a pint. The winner always buys his opponent a drink; it's a sign of respect. After all, he fought until he couldn't get up — but he never gave up. That's an important part of the fight, one that shows he is a man who is willing to fight until he just can't fight anymore. His body may have given up, but his will to fight never did.

Loyalty

Loyalty is important to the Inish; when a man makes a promise, he keeps it, no matter the cost. However, no man is ever expected to keep a promise that would compromise his honor (make him break the Three Laws).

While a man owes loyalty to his lord, his primary loyalty is always to his own honor. This is seen as strange by

many Théans — after all, the concept of vassalage has been in existence since the days of the Old Republic — but it is very important to the Inish. An Inish's first and most important concern is always keeping his honor intact. While this trait may be seen as troublesome by other cultures, it is only the Inish trying to preserve his honor and his family's status. In a world of serfs and servants, this stalwart cry of individualism is seen by many Théans as arrogant, but it is, in fact, the one trait that best defines Inish pride.

Justice

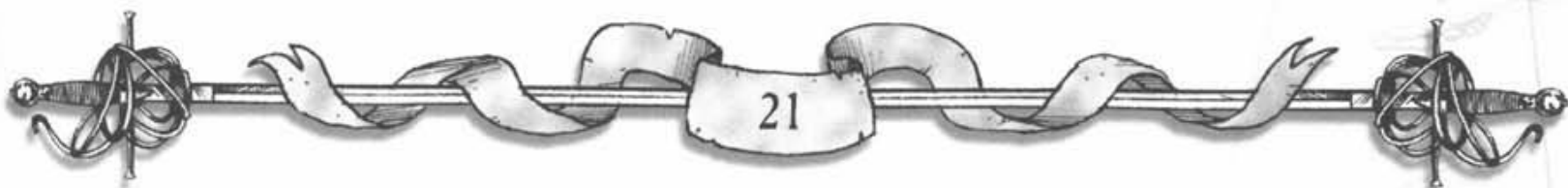
The fourth Law, the one that is only invoked when the other three are broken, is that of Justice. Inish law (as we will see below) is not designed to prohibit crime, but to punish it. The gesa that was cast upon Inismore put into motion a force that brings the unjust to justice, no matter how fast or far they run. "What comes around, goes around," is not a phrase native to Inismore, but it may as well be. While justice may not be swift, it is inevitable. When foreigners to the isle see this power act, they call it "coincidence", but the Inish know better.

The Inish see justice as a responsibility. When they witness a transgression, it is their duty to set it right. After all, they say, there are already enough people who turn away and say, "It's not my problem."

The only way to rectify a wrong is atonement, a quest that clears the offender's name. Often, a quest includes three impossible tasks, all of which any good-hearted Inish is more than willing to try to accomplish, even if it means death. In fact, dying while trying to clear one's name is the best way to do so.

Clothing

Inish fashion has not changed much over the centuries. They still wear long leggings (a strange sight for the ancient invading Empire soldiers, all dressed in robes and tunics), long-sleeved shirts and heavy cloaks, all made of wool. Leather boots and belts are common, but buttons





are not. However, jewelry is very popular among the Inish. Pins and broaches are seen everywhere, as are armbands, ankle-bands, rings and necklaces all adorned with the traditional intricate knotwork patterns that have become a staple of Inish fashion.

Diet

Thanks to steady rainfall coupled with a long, warm summer, Inismore has one of the longest growing seasons in northern Théah. In fact, in southern Inismore, some farmlands can be maintained all year long. Farms cover two-thirds of Inismore. Her most important crops are barley, dairy products, hay, potatoes, poultry, sugar beets, wheat and some of Théah's finest livestock (cattle, horses and sheep). Fishing is also very important to Inismore's economy. Inish fishermen pull cod, herring, lobsters, mackerel, salmon and whiting fish out of Inismore's shallow waters.

Art and Music

"All Inish songs are about one of two things: whiskey and Nancy. The best are about both."

The Inish love to sing. A scholar could learn everything he ever needed to learn about Inish history, custom and tradition from their songs. The subjects vary from "rebel" songs (rebellion against tyranny, be it Avalon or Montaigne) to war songs to love songs to "whiskey" songs (singing of the complicated love-hate relationship the Inish have always had with drink).

The most important part of Inismore's musical tradition, however, is the bard. A bard is part of the Inish learned class, called *filid* (more detail on the *filid* can be found in the Holy Men section, below). Bards are so unique to Inismore that there really is no cultural comparison. They are found in the courts of nobility, telling stories of days gone by and writing songs that will be sung by a hundred generations to come. They are the living history of Inish culture, and how a man or woman treats him greatly influences how they will be remembered.

Religion

The native religion of the Inish has remained relatively untouched by the Church of the Prophets. They recognize the wisdom in the Prophets' words, but they never gave up their gods, chiefly because their gods never gave up them. Even in the darkest days of Montaigne occupation, the Inish knew that one day the O'Bannon would return. Return he did, and he covered the Emerald Isle with crimson Montaigne blood.

The Inish gods live in worlds far beyond Théah. These Shadowworlds can be reached by magical means, although the gates have been closed for many centuries. The Inish aren't very concerned about their gods. They know to worship them during the right times (on certain nights when the seasons converge), but otherwise the Inish gods have very little to do with everyday life.

The most important thing to understand about Inish gods is that anyone can become one — if his glamour is strong enough. The Inish believe that reputation (glamour) has a direct link to the afterlife. The greater one's legend becomes, the more the land blesses him with glamour. Some of the Inish's most powerful deities were once heroes who passed into the Shadowworlds because their names are still spoken long after they left the world of flesh. It is this belief that makes the Inish so devoted to the concept of reputation, and why it is always a mistake to call an Inish a coward; you've just told him he has to prove he isn't.

Holy Men

The keepers of the Inish ways are her holy men, or druids. The druids were silent over the last century, practicing their rites under the cover of darkness. But with the O'Bannon's return, their rituals and teachings have returned to the open, sun-covered fields.

Druids are not necessarily sorcerers, but teachers and wise men who understand the world's most secret truths. Because of this understanding, they recognize world-





patterns that occur over and over again, and are able to avoid pitfalls and capitalize on opportunities.

The best way to illustrate a druid's secret wisdom is by comparing him to a farmer. A man who grows up on a farm knows when a storm is on its way because of the smell of the rain and the stillness of the air. He knows that foxes raid the henhouse after the first frost because all the food is gone. He knows when to collect roots and herbs at their peak of potency because his father's father's father learned to do it a few hundred years ago and passed the knowledge down to his son. To an outside observer, such knowledge — without an accompanying reasonable explanation — may seem magical. In fact, it is only practiced intuition. As it is true of the farmer, so it is true of the druid.

Initiate druids are called bards. A bard's life is spent learning the secret knowledge their masters have already gained, and they learn it by wandering the countryside telling stories and picking up new ones. As they wander, they see the same patterns popping up in different counties, slowly contributing to the druid's understanding of the world. They also act as messengers between the distant Inish townships, walking with their "seven-league striders" (magical boots that can walk across the island in one day) over Inismore's fens and forests.



The Land

Inismore lies just north of Greater Avalon. Over two hundred islands make up the country of Inismore, but the main island (from which the country takes its name) contains nearly all of the country's population. It is divided into twenty-six counties, each with a representative in the country's parliament. The High King of Inismore — called the *árd ri* (*ORD-ree*) — rules from the

country's capital of Tara. On a tall hill, just outside the town, can be seen the Fál Stone, a holy artifact that weeps and sings whenever the *árd ri* kisses it.

Lowlands cover most of Inismore, dotted with dense woods and rolling farmland. Spotted across her lowlands are peat bogs (swamps covered in dying vegetation). Inismore's mountainous regions are located mostly at the coast. Because the ocean cuts deeply into Inismore's coast, no place on the island is more than seventy miles from water. Most of the coast is high cliff wall, so two ports (Tara and Carman) located on her eastern shore are her most populated areas. Hundreds of small islands are to the west.

Inismore's largest river — Shanagary — begins in the northwest and flows two hundred and thirty miles to the southwest until she spills out into the ocean. The Shanagary River begins in the northwest mountains and runs east seventy-five miles, spilling into the channel through Tara, the largest bay on the island.

Inismore has a mild, wet climate and winters are warmer than one would suspect. However, that warmth also brings a great deal of rain. Average rainfall is between 60 and 100 inches per year, making flooding a serious problem throughout the island. Because of all the rivers and flooding, Inismore has a great deal of bridges and fords. No Inish army has ever dammed or blocked a river; to do so invites horrible consequences from the Sidhe who reside in the waters. In addition to many rivers and streams, Inismore also has a great many lakes, all of which are considered sacred. The most sacred lakes of all are those with an island in the middle, for every Inish knows those are gateways to the land of the Sidhe.

Strangely enough, the most prominent buildings in Inismore were built by invaders. The island's shoreline is peppered with foreign castles and fortresses, all of which now belong to the people they were designed to keep out.





Government

The O'Bannon may be the High King of Inismore, but he still has to deal with the Inish Parliament, a governing body put into place by the occupying Avalons hundreds of years ago. The O'Bannon has made it very clear that he doesn't have the time or patience to quibble with nobility. He is the O'Bannon, and his authority will not be questioned.

Economy

Inismore's economy has been linked to Avalon's economy for centuries. Pounds and shillings are everyday sights in Inish marketplaces and guild shops. The Vendel guilds do not have the same presence in Inismore as they do in Avalon, but you can find more guild houses in her cities every day.

Towns and Villages

When compared with the rest of Théah, Inismore's largest cities are nothing more than towns and villages. Her capital city, Tara, is little more than a township and one tenth the size of Avalon's Carleon or Montaigne's Chareux.

Tara

Tara is the largest of Inismore's cities, chiefly due to the fishing and trade with Avalon. It is where the Fâl Stone rests. The city fell under a curse in 600 AV, but when the O'Bannon returned years later, he broke the curse by spilling his own blood on the Fâl Stone. The city has ramparts reaching over sixty feet high, surrounded by moats and other fortifications.

Carman

Long the site of Avalon rule, Carman is now a city of commerce. The city is the home of many ancient trade routes, including a few that begin and end in Montaigne and Vodacce. Tara may be the capital of Inismore, but

no one can argue that Carman is the face she shows the rest of the world.

Lachcuan

Lachcuan is Inismore's second largest city, trading almost exclusively with the Highland Marches. She falls under the purview of the O'Toole family, the dynasty the O'Bannon removed from the throne upon his return.

It is no secret that the O'Tooles bear "mixed feelings" regarding the O'Bannon's return, but they have done nothing to sabotage his reign. So far.

Military

"Fear not an army of wolves led by a sheep, but the army of sheep led by a wolf."

— Inish proverb

It's often been said that what the Inish lack in skill, they make up for in passion. Inismore's military is 90% untrained soldiers and 10% professionals. It's that last ten percent that concerns Inismore's enemies. The typical Inish army is a mass of wild-eyed madmen led by a few dedicated fanatics, using tactics that even the most unconventional generals would have difficulty anticipating. Any general facing an Inish army knows that he will undoubtedly outnumber his opponent, but he also knows that he will lose at least half his force to the unpredictable, bloodthirsty horde.

The Inish have no standing navy, but have sent hundreds of marines to serve in Elaine's Sea Dogs. Armed with generations of sailing knowledge and their savage reputation, Inish marines are the menace of the waves.

Current Relations with the Rest of Théah

As far as the rest of Théah is concerned, Inismore is Avalon's foul-mouthed little brother. She is Avalon's appendix and nothing more. She has no navy, no army



and no freestanding economy, so she is of little military or economic threat. There are no embassies for diplomats, but even if there were, her king is such a boor, who would want to visit anyway?

The Highland Marches

Introduction

The seemingly insignificant Highland Marches have played a pivotal role on the world stage for centuries. While neither politically powerful nor overly rich in resources, their allegiance with Queen Elaine and potential to disrupt her rule make them key players in Avalon's bid to become a great power. Because of that, Avalon's enemies have turned to them when seeking a weak link in the United Kingdoms. The Highlanders — led by their king, James II — have their own ideas, however, and have turned their status into a potent political weapon.

The Land

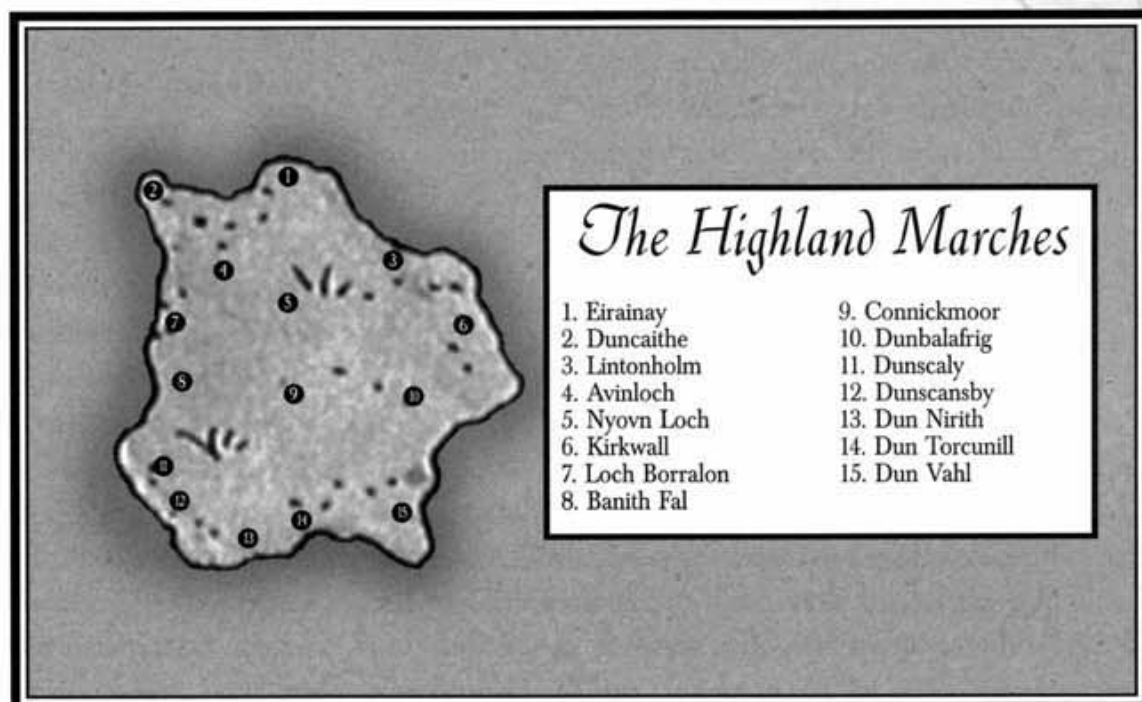
The Highland Marches are a wet, foggy land, dominated by rocky hills and constant rain. Travel in the Highlands is difficult at best. The rural roads are poorly maintained, and bandits and wild animals are fairly common. Most travelers prefer to travel overland by horseback, while the nobility will make use of carriages and other wheeled vehicles. There are few major rivers in the Highland Marches, so boat travel is limited

to fishermen and others who make their living on the waterways.

The weather in the Highlands is far from pleasant. Rain and fog dominate the country for most of the year, with snow covering the land for most of the winter months. There are few extremes, however, and the Marches are rarely troubled by severe frosts or heat waves. As in Avalon, the Highland weather is stolid, gloomy and pretty much the same month in and month out.

Food

The food in the Highlands is like the weather — heavy, dull and unchanging. Sheep meat is a staple of the country, with national dishes consisting of mutton, haggis, and lamb chops. Vegetable growth is root-based, so most meals include potatoes, carrots and the like. Boiling is a favorite method of meal preparation, for it keeps the food longer and is easy to conduct in the wild countryside. Most Highlanders prefer stews and other mixed dishes, which are simple and add a little variety to the cuisine. They disdain the fanciful preparations of other countries





as wasteful. "It's all the same when it's in your stomach" is a common saying among the Highlanders.

The People

Highlanders are generally taller than the average Théan. Like their Inish cousins, their red-heads are more famous than their typical appearance: black hair and blue eyes. Highlanders spend almost all their time out of doors, but because the sky is usually overcast, their skin tones are not overly tanned or pale.

Clothing

The natives' clothing reflects the practical necessities of their land, designed for warmth and comfort rather than display. Men traditionally wear kilts, woven from sheep's wool and decorated in the tartan colors of their ancestral family or Clan. The kilts form a sash which worn over the shoulder, and can be unpinned to cover the entire body in a sort of blanket. The nobility eschews rapiers and other weapons in favor of the great claymores of their past, an intimidating sight within the halls of Parliament. The remainder of their clothing is similar to the Avalon nobles', with buttoned waistcoats and buckled shoes.

Women favor dresses and pleated skirts, but Highland fashion is much less decorative than the mainland counterparts. Like the men, their clothes are woven of strong fabrics, able to withstand the cold of the Marches. They rarely wear hats, instead favoring ribbons or floral decorations in their hair — a remnant of the nation's pagan past.

Customs

Clan identity is very important to the Highlanders. While their sense of nationhood and allegiance with Avalon keeps the Clans from having much political effect beyond the Highland shores, they have come to dominate the cultural and social scene. Highlanders prefer wearing their ancestral Clan tartans in public, and dances and folk songs spring from the regional allegiances of time

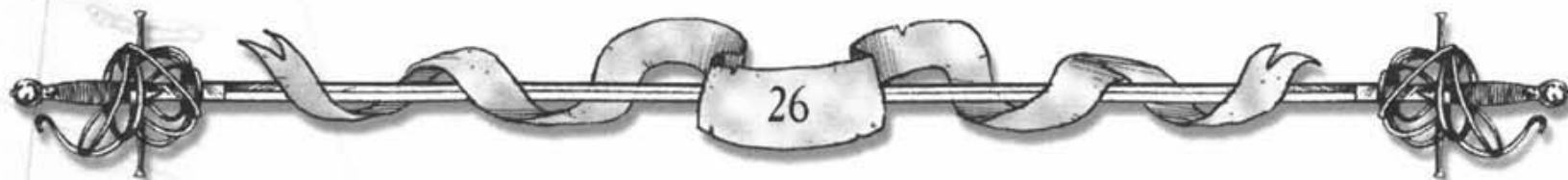
immemorial. While similar in nature (such that a foreigner traveling in the Marches would be hard-pressed to tell them apart), the natives can differentiate such songs easily. Many commoners separate counties and fiefdoms by the kind of shanties sung at bars, or the particular steps in a May Day dance.

One might ask how the Highlanders can flaunt such affiliations without falling back onto old rivalries and reigniting civil war. To the Highlanders, there is a difference between their cultural identity and their national pride. The effect is similar to college football fans in contemporary America. One can proudly wear a Clan's colors and sing a family anthem at the top of one's voice, but that affiliation doesn't override the sense of national unity or greater brotherhood among one's fellow islanders (beyond the occasional barroom brawl, that is). Six hundred years of common subjugation under the Montaignes has limited Clan rivalries to the verbal arena alone.

Highlander Women

On the surface, women are second-class citizens in the Highlands. They cannot own property, hold political office, or otherwise carry themselves in public as equals. No women sit in the national Parliament and the idea of a female Clan head is unheard of.

From a practical standpoint, however, things are much different. Most Highland houses depend upon the wife or eldest woman to run them and much of the country's day-to-day business would not be completed without them. Financial matters are also the domain of the fairer sex, and banks and other institutions usually address bills to "the lady of the household." Noblemen often defer to their wives' counsel over the advice of others, and while none hold elected office, many are respected as informal leaders in their local communities. The national army admits women as soldiers (although their numbers are tiny in comparison to men) and some of the country's most famous heroes have come from their ranks. One of





Queen Elaine's most notorious privateers, "Bloody" Bonnie McGee, originally hails from the Highlands.

Noble Life

The Highland nobility has begun a slow process of integration with its counterpart in Avalon, as the two kingdoms come closer together. Most of the aristocrats from the Marches hail from large agrarian estates, dominated by civilized gardens and wild, untamed moors. Noble children are educated by tutors or governesses at home, although a few emigrate to Avalon for schooling in a proper institution. While they embrace the sophisticated trappings of culture and enjoy the refined subtleties of hunting, philosophical debate and so on, many Highland nobles eschew such passive practices for immersion in national politics. The well-being of the nation is paramount in many of their minds and they usually work to better those under them or further their own ends rather than fritter away the time in mindless diversions. Their counterparts in other countries consider them quaint and a little backward, as is typical for such an isolated nation.

Peasant Life

Peasant life in the Highland Marches is hard, but the emergence of a middle class has alleviated things somewhat. The majority of the peasantry work on farms owned by the nobility or *nouveau riche* landlords. As education flourishes and the advances of science make their way inland, their lot has begun to improve. More and more of them have begun leaving the countryside to seek their fortune in urban centers, and a class of merchants and shopkeepers has slowly taken hold. For the most part, Highland peasants keep to themselves, respect their betters and try to make the most of their opportunities life gives them. For all of that, they can be very cheerful; they love their songs and their beer, and conduct social gatherings with a boisterous *joie de vivre*.

Etiquette

Honesty is very important among the Highlanders. Opposition to another is not a sin as long as it is openly stated, and the concept of "a good clean fight" dominates most political arguments. Promises are rarely given, but when they are, they are sacred; a Highlander considers his oath essential to his good name, and will never consciously break his word. This honesty, however, rarely spreads beyond the Avalon Kingdoms. Foreigners can be deceived with impunity, and often are, much to the chagrin of visiting dignitaries. More than a few foreign politicians have been lulled into believing a Highlander's solemn word... only to have that word broken at the worst possible moment.

Other points of etiquette are similar to Avalon's. One always tips one's hat to a lady and pays proper deference to those of a higher standing. While the national penchant for honesty has made manners coarser here than elsewhere, the Highlanders still expect a modicum of politeness from their fellows, and won't tolerate crude behavior without a good explanation. They are also quicker to come to blows than other countries; duels among the nobility are considered appropriate ways to end disputes.

Politics

Historically, the Highland political scene has been dominated by the Clans, who jockeyed for position and dominance even after the coming of the Montaignes. That is gradually changing as the country weds itself to Avalon, and Clan loyalties give their way over to broader political parties.

The Highland Parliament consists of all of the heads of the major Clans, who inherit their seats. Political boundaries are drawn by ancient rivalries, as the old school of bloodletting takes new shape in arguments and policy debates. They are overseen by the High King, the direct descendant of Robert I, who oversees all Parliamentary meetings and acts as an executor of their





edicts. He serves as the shaper of national policy, and often controls the Parliament's agenda. As the leader of the nation, the High King can technically act without Parliament's approval, but to do so he risks open censure and the inability to enforce his decrees. An unspoken agreement exists between king and Parliament whereby he respects their final decisions and in return receives their approval on issues he puts forth. As with most Théan nations, this balance shifts as both sides gain and lose strength.

Currently, the parliament is divided between the Unifists, who support the triple crown of Queen Elaine, and the Separatists, who want a fully independent nation. The Unifists have a substantial majority, but the Separatists are slowly gaining ground and may prove dangerous in the near future. The powerful and charismatic James MacDuff, an ardent Unifist, has kept them in check since becoming High King. James believes that the Highlands can attain great strength — while still maintaining their autonomy — under the flag of the United Kingdoms. Independence would leave them weak and bereft of the protection of Avalon's privateers — opening the door for an invasion by Montaigne or Castille. He is loath to throw his country's new-found freedom away for the sake of some nebulous concept of independence.

Towns and Villages

Kirkwall

Kirkwall is one of the oldest standing fortifications in the Marches. Built when the Vestenmannavnjar invaded many centuries ago, it has withstood siege after siege from both Highlanders and the foreign raiders. Now it serves as the keep of the High King and the Marches' official embassy. The MacDuff's court can be found here and the Clans meet within his grand hall once a month. During that week, the population of Kirkwall triples, and a huge fair springs up around her walls.

Connickmoor

The home of the MacBride Clan, Connickmoor is also home of the Marches' Separatist Movement. MacBride's dreams of an independent nation have been stymied by the unyielding support for the Elaine/MacDuff alliance. So far, MacDuff's political maneuverings have brought fortune to the Marches, but MacBride is patient.

Relations with Other Nations

Much like Inismore, the rest of Théah considers the Highland Marches to be nothing more than an appendix of Elaine's country. However, the Highlanders have maintained diplomatic connections with both the Vendel and the Vestenmannavnjar, connections that allow wealth and prosperity to trickle into the Highlander borders from time to time.

The Sidhe (shee)

In Inismore, they are called the Tuatha de Dannan (TOO-ah-thah day dan-non). In the Highlands, they are called the Doine Sidhe (dah-oen shee). In the tongue of Old Avalon, they are called the Tylwith Teg (til-ooeeth teg). In Montaigne, they are called færies — a term that even the dimmest Avalon knows they despise. But in

Iron

In her book, Lady Mary refers to "cold iron" as something that causes the Sidhe "discomfort." What exactly cold iron is and why the Sidhe loathe it is never quite explained. Those with knowledge of the Sidhe ways always assume that wearing or presenting iron to the Sidhe is an unpardonable blunder, and make certain to hide or remove such items before dealing with the Goodly Folke.





nearly every culture, they are referred to as “the Goodly Folke” out of fear that one of them may be listening.

It is not easy to define the Sidhe. They are like walking dreams: manlike in so many ways, but completely alien in so many others. Their mannerisms are difficult to discern, but once one understands them, they are as predictable as the rising and setting of the sun.

Although they have an unspoken allegiance to Avalon, the Sidhe are ubiquitous. They can be found in the furthest reaches of Ussura, riding the canals in Vodacce or even sailing a ship toward the setting sun.

What follows is a discussion of these most curious creatures, but remember that just as anything that can be said of mankind cannot be said of a single man, so it is with the Sidhe.

Bryn Bresail

“The ghost island” is what sailors call it, the island that appears in the crimson light of dawn and disappears just as dusk claims the sky. The Sidhe call it Bryn Bresail, and it is their home... or at least it is one of the doorways to their home.

The Sidhe live in a world of frozen springtime. The grasses and trees are green and the flowers bloom, all covered in a thin layer of frost as delicate snowflakes fall from the crystal blue cloudless sky. It is a land where beauty is frozen forever. Green and plush, and yet so very cold.

First Impressions

“It can be said that there are as many shapes and forms of Sidhe as there are flowers or fishes. Once you think you have catalogued them all, you find another that makes your recordings antiquated.”

— Lady Mary Katharine, *Booke of the Goodly Folke*

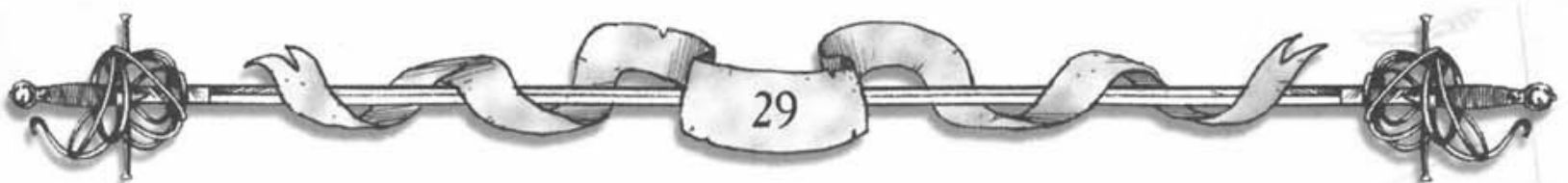
While it is true that many Sidhe are “human-like” in appearance, there are many important differences. Lady Mary Katharine, in her famous *Booke of the Goodly Folke*, classifies the Sidhe into various classifications that she calls “families.”

The Noble Sidhe

Much like humans, Sidhe seem to have an upper class or “nobility.” These noble Sidhe are taller than humans, ranging from six and one half feet to seven or even eight feet tall. They are majestic and beautiful, as slender as cobwebs and as sleek as silk. They dress in flowing robes of a material that any mortal seamstress would ruin if she tried to sew it. Their eyes are wide and bright and their faces gaunt and angular. Their fingers are long and delicate and they move with the alacrity of shadows.

Lady Mary goes on to say that only those the Sidhe trust have ever seen them eat or drink. She also notes that they avoid looking into mirrors. In one terrifying passage, she writes of seeing a Sidhe lady accidentally catching sight of a looking glass and screaming with such terror that she was certain the lady saw her own death. She also mentions that when she tried to ask why, the Sidhe gave her such a look that Lady Mary was certain she was seeing her death as well.

They refer to themselves as “lords” and “ladies”, and they are ruled by a king and a queen. However, it appears that the Queen of the Sidhe has much more political power than her husband (who, as Lady Mary notes, has never been seen by human eyes). As are all Sidhe, the Nobility are shape-changers, and it appears as if the Queen has mastered the craft. According to Lady Mary, the Queen has never been seen in the same guise twice, and she has even referred to her appearance as her “costume.” Whatever guise she chooses to take, she is always tall, magnificent and beautiful.





She is always seen with a mortal male counterpart whom she calls her knight. He is usually young (sixteen at the oldest) and striking. However, it is rumored that some horrible fate is in store for the young man on the longest night of the year.

Beautiful and Terrible

The Sidhe are not to be trifled with. They are ancient creatures who are tolerant of mankind. At best, they are fascinated with his naivete, but they do not indulge rudeness. Mankind is a small, fragile creature. The Sidhe are not. To treat them with disrespect is to invite one hundred thousand dooms, each one more impossibly awful than the last.

— Lady Mary Katharine

While Lady Mary painstakingly details the beauty of the Sidhe, she also makes certain to remind the reader that these are creatures of terror. To watch the angelic face of the impassionate Queen of Sidhe twist and contort into that of inhuman rage is a sight that will haunt the dreams of the viewer until their last days.

The Sidhe are like thunderstorms: terrible, powerful and unaccountable. They are capable of incredible beauty, and at the same time, horrible revenge. There is a vast history of Sidhe curses lasting not only through one man's life, but through generations. Their magic is mighty, but it pales when compared to their wrath.

The Two Courts

According to the Lady, the Noble Sidhe were divided into two grand Courts: the Blessed, or "Seelie," and the "Unseelie," whom the Lady kindly refers to as "the Unforgiven." These two courts seem to be interrelated, although there are subtle differences — chiefly in temperament — that should be noted.

The Seelie are the Sidhe that have been described above. Cold and distant, they live in a world of perpetual snow-covered spring. The Unseelie are much different. Sometimes described as beings of living fire, other times

described as burning shadows, the Unseelie are as passionate as the Seelie are distant, and although the Seelie can be equated with the dispassionate storm, the Unseelie know exactly what they are doing with the terror they carry.

The Lower Class

While nobility are the most common Sidhe (or, at least, the most visible), there are countless others who inhabit the world. They are the "lower class", or, as Lady Mary calls them, the "common breeds."

Creatures such as goblins, boggins, bogeys and brownies are all members of the Sidhe race, each with his own peculiarities and passions. However, only those who are familiar with the Sidhe will be able to recognize them and their ways.

Manners

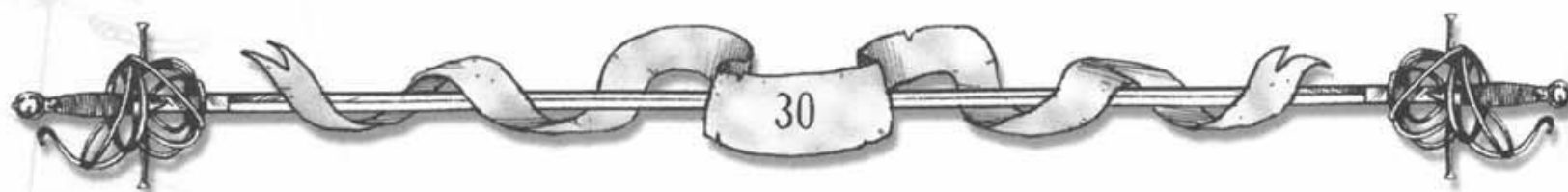
"If there is anything true about the Sidhe, it is this. They care nothing for anything in the world but manners, and a human child who is well behaved is the most wealthy in the eyes of the Goodly Ones."

— Lady Mary Katharine

Manners are as good as gold.

If that statement is true for mortal men, it is ten times as true with the Sidhe. Treat a Sidhe Lord with the respect he feels he deserves and you've won a prize more valuable than any treasure trove.

This next section deals with the proper manner in which mortal men and women should treat the Sidhe (as prescribed by the Good Lady Katharine, of course) Those who do not pay attention now will be paying much more later.





Title and Address

To begin with, you must learn to speak properly in the presence of the Goodly Ones. There is a distinct difference between the address for a Sidhe Lord or Lady and the Common Sidhe, however.

Sidhe Nobility

Just as there are proper ways to address those of mortal noble stations, so there are ways to address Noble Sidhe. The rules, however, are much easier to remember. Any member of the Sidhe nobility is called “Lord” or “Lady” under all circumstances, regardless of the mortal’s status or position.

Many Sidhe have additional titles. Knowing such titles and using them in proper address (such as “His Lord of the Shadow of Winterbute Mountain”) is also entirely proper and may even win you some favor.

Common Sidhe

“When he approached me from the woods, I spied the smile on his lips and said, ‘Dear fellow, I hope that I will be able to call you “Hobgoblin” by this evening.’”

— Lady Mary Katharine

Any member of the common breed of Sidhe who is generally beneficial to mankind (at the very least, not malicious) is considered a hob. The term is also generally used as a prefix to the creature’s name. For instance, Bollin is a local goblin who scares away crows from one farmer’s corn. When the farmer speaks of him, he calls him “Hob Bollin.”

Any of the common Sidhe consider the title to be a compliment, but look down upon those who do not use it properly. A Sidhe cannot be called a hob unless he has done something to gain the title. In other words, calling Dunnel a hob when he has done nothing to deserve the title offends the other Sidhe, who will now make certain you know the difference between a kindly Sidhe and a

troublesome one. It also shows Dunnel that you are a fool and deserving of some mischief...

The Glamour of the Sidhe

The people of Avalon learned the art of Glamour from the Sidhe, and as powerful as the Avalons may be, the Sidhe are even more so. They use Glamour without effort, and, it seems, without limit. Practitioners of Glamour know better than to challenge a Glamour of the Sidhe, for to do so is of grave insult, one punishable by something far worse than mere death.

No stats are provided for the Sidhe; they are too powerful to be harmed by most mortals. They should be used as conduits of information or as untouchable non-player characters; no Hero should have to sign his own death warrant by confronting one directly. More information on the Sidhe appears in the *Avalon* sourcebook.

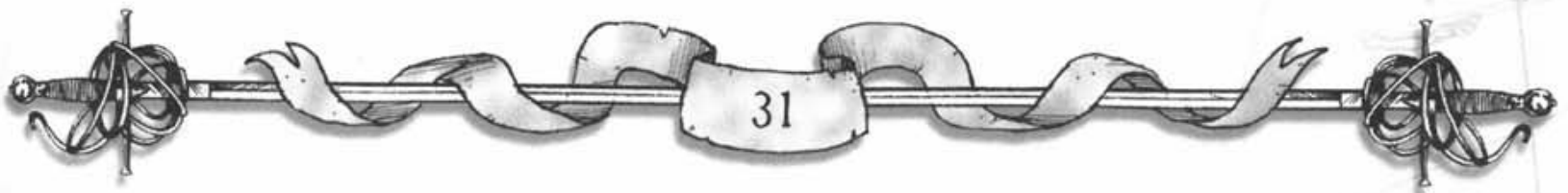
Sidhe Folklore

“There is so much of the Goodly Folke that could be said, but there is much more that cannot be said, and even more that should not be said.”

— Lady Mary Katharine

What follows is a list of superstitions and folklore regarding the Sidhe. Some of it may be true. Go through this list, pick the ones you like and disregard the rest. Then hand the list to your players and let them find out the truth the hard way.

- Turning your clothes inside out protects you from Glamour.
- Learning a Sidhe Lord or Lady’s name gives you power over them.
- Pieces of bread spread across the entrance to your house will keep the Sidhe from entering your home.





- Spread salt on your windowsill and below your door, and the Sidhe may not enter.
- A four-leafed clover shatters Glamours.
- St. John's Wort heals Sidhe wounds.
- Children wearing daisy-chains are protected from Sidhe kidnapping.
- The Sidhe cannot swim and fear running water.
- A cross of rowan wood protects from Sidhe magic.
- Cold iron protects you from Sidhe magic.
- Hanging a pair of scissors (iron and a cross) over a child's bed will protect it from wicked Sidhe.
- If you can woo (or trick) a Sidhe Lady into marrying you, she can never leave your side until you strike her three times.
- The Sidhe can only be seen between the blinking of eyes.
- The hounds of the Sidhe can never be outrun. They run just behind you, no matter how far or fast you run, then catch you just when you fall.
- On the longest night of every year, the Sidhe spill the blood of one of their own to satisfy the hunger of a dark enemy they vanquished long ago.
- If a Sidhe offers you a gift or a loan, you must return it with equal value — no greater and no less. To do otherwise will draw misfortune and misery.
- There is a mixture that you can drink that allows you to see through Sidhe Glamour.
- The Sidhe only accept gifts made from oak, ash and thorn.
- Bells frighten the Sidhe, and may even harm them.
- The Sidhe steal the "goodness" of food, leaving behind only a cold shell of a meal.

Avalon NPCs

Queen Elaine

"We are Avalon."

Elaine takes her role as the Queen of Avalon very seriously. She is careful, always paying attention to detail and watching her step. When she became Queen, she put away her childish tendencies and has kept them locked up since. She honestly loves her people, but detests intolerance of all kinds. She watches James MacDuff and the O'Bannon very closely, trying to maintain the Avalon alliance.

Image: Elaine is always immaculate. She wears white, black or red, but her features are always porcelain perfect. She is very regal in her bearing, moving slowly across a room in much the way a galleon crosses the sea.





Goals: Elaine must maintain the alliance. She can't afford to lose either of her allies. As a secondary goal, she wishes to continue to sanction the Sea Dogs privately, but officially keep her connection to them hidden.

Roleplaying Elaine: Use the royal "We." Speak using large words, and try to give the impression that you know more than whomever you're speaking to. Don't use contractions. Sit up straight. Smile. You're the Queen of Avalon and the twelve men standing around you are willing to die at your command.

Derwyddon (dair-ooee-then)

"Your brother will betray and murder you, then marry your wife and raise your son as his own. Is that the future you were so eager to hear?"

Derwyddon is Elaine's primary advisor. He claims to see the future and the past, but he can't see himself in either. Because of this, among other things, he doesn't know

how old he is. He is known to be a master of Glamour, although he also possesses powers beyond those of mortals. It could also be said that nobody really wants to know what he knows.

Image: Derwyddon has one red eye (which sees the past) and one blue eye (which sees the future). He is an old man who appears to be lost in thought most of the time, and he has a certain ragged, disreputable look to him that makes him unpopular with most of the nobility.

Goals: Keep Elaine in power. He's not sure why, but he knows it's vitally important.

Roleplaying Derwyddon: Answer questions with another question, or a riddle, or tell them exactly what they want to hear. Make the players regret speaking to you.

Sir Lawrence Lugh (Loog)

"Once, I might have let such an injustice take place. But that was a long, long time ago."

Lawrence is the leader of Elaine's knights. He is known to be the strongest, most loyal, and bravest of her knights. However, he has a number of dark secrets. First, he's actually a full-blooded Sidhe, cursed by a witch. He was her lover for a time, but when she found out that he intended to leave her, used long-forgotten magics to place him in an enchanted sleep, cut off his hand, and replaced it with one of iron to destroy his magic. Since then, he has been no more powerful than a normal mortal man, and he has started to age, which holds a particular horror for him. The Sidhe cast him out rather than keep a useless cripple around. After wandering for a few years, he heard of Elaine's knights and joined their ranks, eventually rising to the rank of Captain through determination and valor. He has never quite conquered his terror of dying, though he has learned to hide his fear from others. Lastly, if all that weren't enough for him to deal with, he's fallen in love with the Queen.



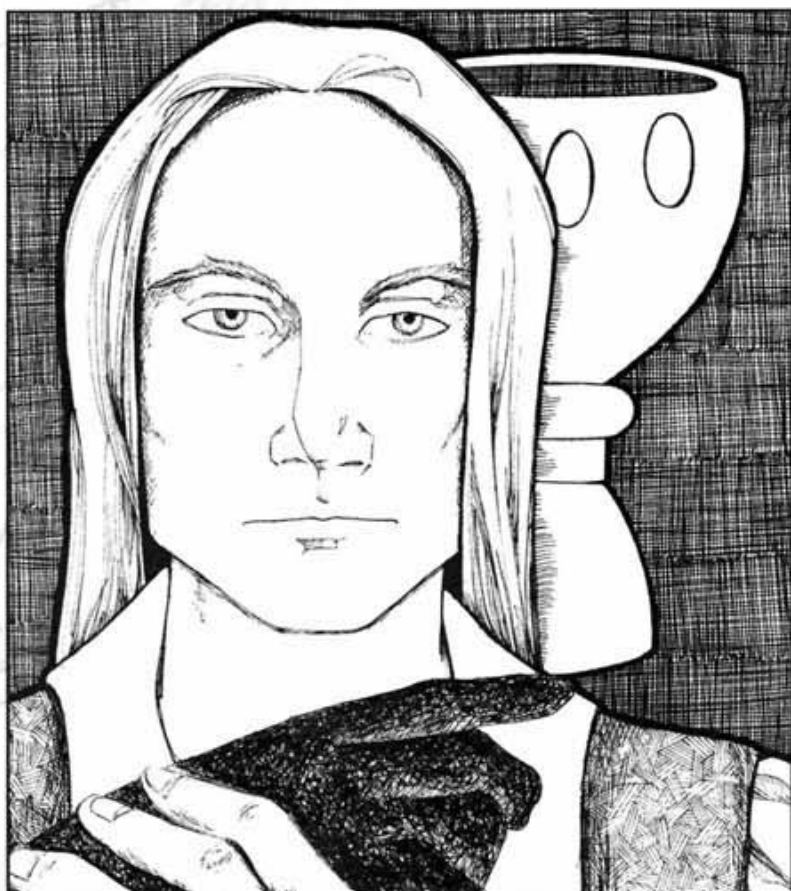


Image: Lawrence is stunningly handsome. He is tall and powerfully built, and he keeps a glove on his iron hand at all time. He can use the hand without difficulty (it moves and otherwise acts like a normal hand); it just keeps him from accessing his magic. He has hazel eyes, sandy brown hair, and a winning smile.

Goals: Lawrence is in love with the Queen, and he devotes himself completely to her safety and well-being. He's given up any hope of returning to the Sidhe and turned all of his devotion to Avalon.

Roleplaying Lawrence: The sight of elderly people disturbs you, because it reminds you of your own enforced mortality. Derwyddon is doubly unnerving, since he's both old and immortal. You are quiet and very perceptive. Watch carefully for anyone who might present a danger to your beloved Elaine, and strike quickly if such a threat arises.

The O'Bannon

"The only immortality, boy, is having your name spoken after you're gone."

The O'Bannon, the High King of Inismore, claims to have been around for hundreds of years, though nobody knows where he came from. One moment he can be smiling and laughing, while the next he could be drawing his sword to strike down an insolent courtier. He doesn't take lip from anyone; talking back to him is perhaps the quickest way to get killed. Wise courtiers choose their words carefully when the King is in earshot.

Image: The O'Bannon is a tall man with long white hair and a small white goatee. His arms are covered with old scars, while his eyes have an unsettling quality to them. He dresses however he wants, but usually goes barefoot.

Goals: The O'Bannon loves his island more than anything else. Any alliances he makes are to protect the





island. Ultimately, he wants things to return to the way they were before the Avalons arrived on Inismore shores.

Roleplaying O'Bannon: Have other NPCs act nervous and speak carefully around him, even when he's in a good mood. Smile and laugh a lot, but if someone says something stupid, become abruptly serious and either give him a reprimand, or, if the comment was particularly idiotic, kill him where he stands.

James MacDuff II, High King of the Highland Marches

"Surely you must realize that our two countries can only benefit from such an arrangement?"

Shrewd and canny, James MacDuff has always been a skilled politician. He descends from noble stock, and knows how to play the game. Elaine provides the alliance with leadership, and the O'Bannon contributes fire, but

James keeps the alliance stable. It was his support that enabled it to come into being in the first place.

Image: James presents a distinguished figure with his medium build, long brown hair, and handsome face. He often dresses in a finely made kilt, and normally carries a large broadsword for his own protection.

Goals: James wants to preserve the alliance as long as it's convenient. He feels that it can't last forever, however, and he wants the Highland Marches to come out on top when things go sour.

Roleplaying James: Speak formally. Make sure that you are neat and well groomed when you appear in public. Appearance is very important to you. Look for openings that you can turn to your advantage.

Castille

"Castillians live their lives as they play their guitars: with unbridled passion and relentless precision."

— Lady Sophie du Lac

Introduction

At a glance, Castille is a land of contradictions. It is the home of the Vaticine Church, the spearhead of science and technology, and at the same time it harbors the Inquisition, the spearhead of ignorance and fear. Its people are passionate and devoted to family and romance, but their faith is one of reason and logical observation. They are a peaceful people who are currently engaged in a bloody war with Montaigne. Castille is certainly a land of dichotomy, and that's the stuff of high drama.

When your Heroes walk through Castille, the lack of urgency is overwhelming. From noon to three in the afternoon, nothing happens. Everything shuts down; everyone brings out food and eats. Then everybody



sleeps. There's nothing you can get done today that can't get done tomorrow in Castille. Of course, over that hill, there's a war blasting men to pieces, but that's over there and not over here.

However, if your Heroes enter a monastery or university, the tone changes dramatically. Scholars who have been awake for seventy-two hours prepare for the next stage of their experiment. They don't have time to sleep. They don't have time to eat. They know better than to drink on an empty stomach, so they keep a bottle of boiled water at hand to wet their whistles.

There are a few things you should look out for in Castille. First off, pay close attention to Good King Sandoval; he's not as temporary as he seems. Sandoval's going to be in charge for a while, despite what his enemies believe. Right now, he has the potential to be one of the best Kings Castille has ever seen. However, he also has the potential to turn into a tyrant. It all depends on which advisors he trusts the most.

You should also know that Sandoval's brother is still alive. In fact, his brother is that pirate fellow calling himself

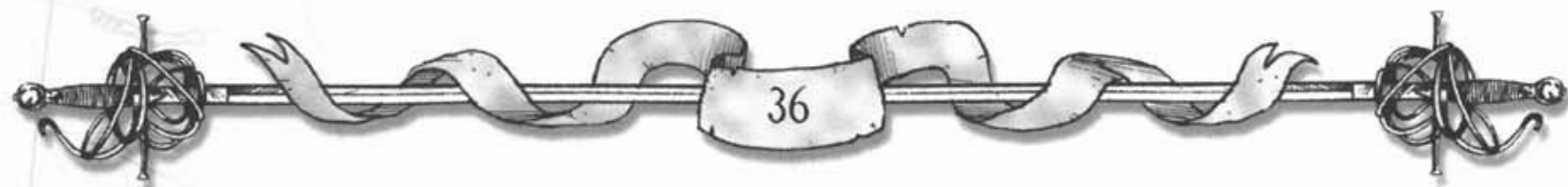
"Allende." The Pirate King has no intention of taking the Castille crown, but he has *every* intention of protecting his brother. Allende is also in close contact with El Vago. In fact, it was Allende who assigned El Vago the duty of watching his brother.

As you may have suspected, Verdugo is indeed behind all those assassination attempts on the Good King. El Vago can't prove it, but he's got enough evidence to try.

Castille opens up many campaign options to you. You can run a military campaign against the Montaignes, an action campaign with El Vago or even an espionage game with the Church and the Invisible College. Some players may even want to play loyal Vaticines trying to put the Church back on the proper path.

The Land

Castille's land is some of the richest and most productive in all of Théah. Not a single acre of land goes to waste, and under the careful guidance of the Church, the natural resources of the country have been parlayed into a





flourishing trade economy. Every locale provides something of value to the nation.

Castillian society is predominantly rural. Since the formation of the monarchy centuries ago, the land has been controlled by a large number of noble families, each rancho governed by a family Don. The Don is held to a strict annual production quota, as dictated by the resources he has in his charge. These quotas are proportional, so a Don who controls a larger or more prosperous rancho than another is accountable for more yearly output.

Upon the ranchos (which are essentially large farms), livestock can be found in abundance, including sheep, cattle, hogs, donkeys, mules, and some of the best-bred horses in all of Théah. Many of these animals are also exported to other countries; Castillian horses are in particular demand for their fine health and incredible strength, even over great distances.

The country can largely be divided into five basic regions. The eastern flatlands break down into twelve ranchos, centered around El Camino del Sol, a large and very well-maintained road which leads from the southern tip of the western peninsula to the northern trade river. Mostly now under the control of Montaigne, this land is some of the most verdant of all Castille, with heavy rainfall throughout the year. The consequent high annual crop yield includes most of their exported items, such as olives, oranges, lemons, grapes and a host of other fruits and vegetables. The fishing done off the coast contributes more than sixty percent of the country's yearly catch.

The southern central region is likewise fertile, though its occupation by the Empire of the Crescent Moon (and the long-term effects of their poor agricultural skill) hurt its productivity. Only in recent decades has it started to recover. Crops and animals raised in this region differ little from those to the west. Fishing is conducted here as well, though *la Boca de Cielo* provides a different range of catch than the Frothing Sea. Due to its varied geography,

this area suffers from widely variable weather, and a common phrase among the Dons who live and visit there is that "if you are unhappy with the weather in one rancho, all you need do is visit a neighbor." Generally, however, summers there tend to be dry and hot, while winters are mild and comfortable.

This region has more rivers than anywhere else in the nation; they wind through many marshes and swamplands. These areas, primarily along the *Rio de Delia*, have been relegated to rice paddies, which the Dons of least rank tend to. It is also noteworthy that — except for the Rio de Delia — these rivers are far too small to allow ship traffic, so travel within Castille is mostly limited to ground transport.

Northern Castille is almost entirely forested land and low, rough hills. Not very pleasant to traverse, they are a welcome natural border between Castille, Montaigne, and Eisen. Conversely, they are one of the most picturesque locales in all of continental Théah, and proud Castillians regularly show them off to visitors. Summers there are cool and very pleasing, though winters are damp and sticky. Outside the obvious value of its lumber trade, this region helps Castille's economy with profitable fishing villages in and around the river city of Altamira.

The central strip of forest here is called *La Selva de Fendes*, which translates to "The Forest of Fiends." The Castillians have adopted the word "Fendes" from the Eisen language, because the forest is only half of a large belt that extends across the river and well into the northern country. Regardless of the reason for the title, it is an apt one. Every Eisen knows the forest is haunted by the demons of Unterwelt (OON-ter-velt), the realm of Legion. Since the Castillians have recovered the land, many wayfarers moving through the forest have vanished, and a few have seen things that cannot be human. Those not unhinged by the experience have described beings of Eisen legend, lending some credence to the myth.





Sierra de Hierro (the “Saw of Iron”), the only mountain range in Castille, skirts the Vodacce border in the east. Its peaks and canyons are constantly assaulted by harsh weather, from bitter snowstorms in the winter to blasting winds and sudden, radical changes in temperature during the summer. Consequently, very little can be grown or raised here, and animal life is limited to eagles, burros, and a host of scavengers. But the mountains themselves are riddled with very old caverns containing rich gold and silver deposits, so even the Dons in charge of these areas are wealthier than would otherwise be expected.

Very early in the exploration of modern Castille, these caves were also found to contain a host of stylized paintings, depicting the lifestyles and superstitions of both the early hunter-gatherers of the area and a group of fire-wielding sorcerers that walked among them. It is said that more of these were found in sunlit surface places as well.

The People

Castillians are patriots, first and foremost. Though this often translates as a quiet refusal to accept those of other cultures, it also has secured several benefits for them. Castille’s people are immensely prideful, determined and efficient, which sets them apart from others in Théah.

On average, Castillians are tall and lithe, with predominantly straight and dark hair, and dark eyes. Their swarthy skin, high cheek bones and rounded noses are remnants of the Crescent influence in their past. They are well known for their nimble fingers and thin hands.

Social Strata

At the pinnacle of the Castilian social ladder are the King and Church, which are considered equal (although there is currently some debate about this among the Dons, as many refuse to acknowledge the rule of a boy over the Church). Next come Dons who retain land (and therefore produce for the country’s economy), and then

those without land. Merchants and the common folk fall, in that order, below roving Dons.

Castillians do not consider social status (save that of such folk as the High King or Hierophant) to be of much concern. They are hospitable and grateful to one another for their company, regardless of their title, wealth, or accomplishments.

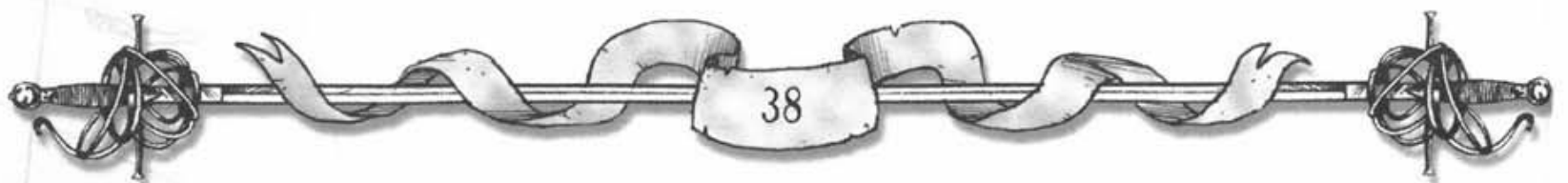
The most important aspect of Castille’s social structure is *la familia*, or “the family.” There is no such concept as “extended family” in Castille. Cousins are family. Uncles are family. Second cousins twice removed are family. The family traces its heritage back to a single founder – almost always a matriarch – and keeps a picture of her in the house. Those with the means usually purchase smaller portraits to wear around their necks.

The Castillians know, deep in their hearts, that as long as a person has the blood in his veins, he is a member of the family. No matter what his sins, he will always have a place in the family. Only the most unforgivable sins – the murder of a family member or the like – will force a family to use its most dreaded punishment: ostracism.

Etiquette

Castillians are generally a happy group, kind and considerate to one another. When introduced into a foreign (read: unpredictable) environment they grow less amiable, their demeanor waning by the day or week, until eventually, they become dour and resentful. The Castillians refer to this as *la nostalgia* – “the longing” – and it is akin to a form of congenital homesickness.

This is only natural in a country which prides itself for ignoring the rest of the world. “They have all had their way with our fine land,” one Castilian poet wrote, “and now it is time for her to rest a while.” Watching Castillians during their long siestas may make one think passion has fled the Castilian heart, but it is not so. Passion is an important part of Castilian culture, and it shows when their honor has been threatened. Insulting a Castilian is





one sure way of finding out that everyone in Castille is related.

Clothing

Black and fiery colors form the basic theme for all Castillian clothing. This results in a dark base color with trim, sigils, and other adornments in passionate shades of yellow, orange, and red. The Castillians consider dress a badge of honor and deportment, so style and pattern tend to change from one rancho to another. Even the poor regularly acquire small amounts of dyed cloth to stitch into their outfits somewhere. In their case, this is not meant to imply royal status or flair, but simply that they are proud to be Castillian.

Traditional Castillian male garb includes the sombrero (a hat, usually wide-brimmed), short, close-fitting vests, snug pants, and a cummerbund. Leggings are often worn on ranches, where the legs must be better shielded. When traveling or at social gatherings, scarves, gloves, cuffs, and collars are also worn. Embroidery, metal studs, buttons, and buckles are the main decorative accents. Kerchiefs are common among women, whose clothes are mostly white or cream (for young and unmarried women) or a powerful mix of brilliant designs (when older).

Married women wear a great deal of color. Crimson, bright blues and dark greens are common, accented (by the nobles) with black. The skirts are full with strands of colored beads draping downward. They tie their hair in elaborate coifs with many small and medium-sized braids, hanging down over their necks in woven loops.

Diet

Castillians eat what they grow. Castille imports very little food, largely due to the abundance they produce themselves. Common meals include both seafood and meat, with more of the latter eaten inland and less at the shores. Vegetables are a diverse staple, and coupled with heavy spicing (garlic and peppers, mostly) are the source of nearly all flavor in Castillian cuisine.

Grapes, oranges, and a host of other fruits form a regular morning meal for most Castillians, supplemented later in the day by rice, beans, radishes, onions and potatoes. Wines are very popular in Castille, which exports much of Théah's wine supply. Children commonly take their first taste of wine at a young age during festivals and siestas, and most adults drink wine regularly.

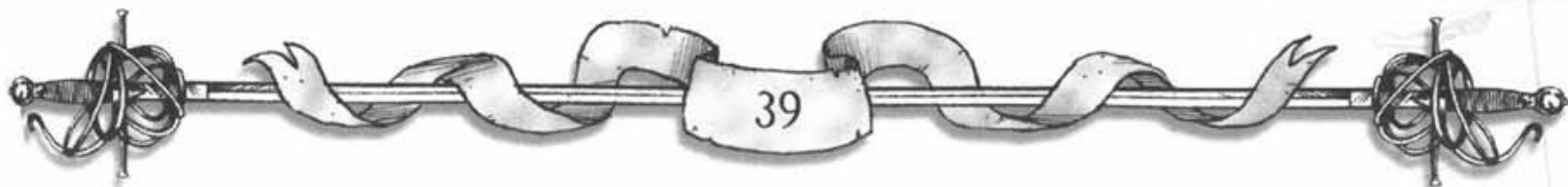
Customs

Until the Montaigne invasion, the two classes of people in Castille (peasants and nobility) carried themselves in very different ways. The peasants are typically very happy and outgoing, which can be seen in the zest of their daily festivities. Unless directed differently by their employers, they only work four or five hours at a time, taking a long break in between shifts for siesta, a time for rest and friendly sport. Though many in Théah point to this as a sign of sloth, few doubt the Castillians' fervor. Horse parades, street dancing, sermons, bands, and contests of skill and daring dot the streets of Castille's cities and villages during siesta.

While the nobility have always remained above such activity, they have the same Castillian blood burning in their veins. They are known to be very regimented and proper, dedicated to appearances. They are well educated, and have always spent their time appreciating fine art and listening to fine music. Though they have consorted with the peasantry before, they have never joined in their celebrations.

Never before now.

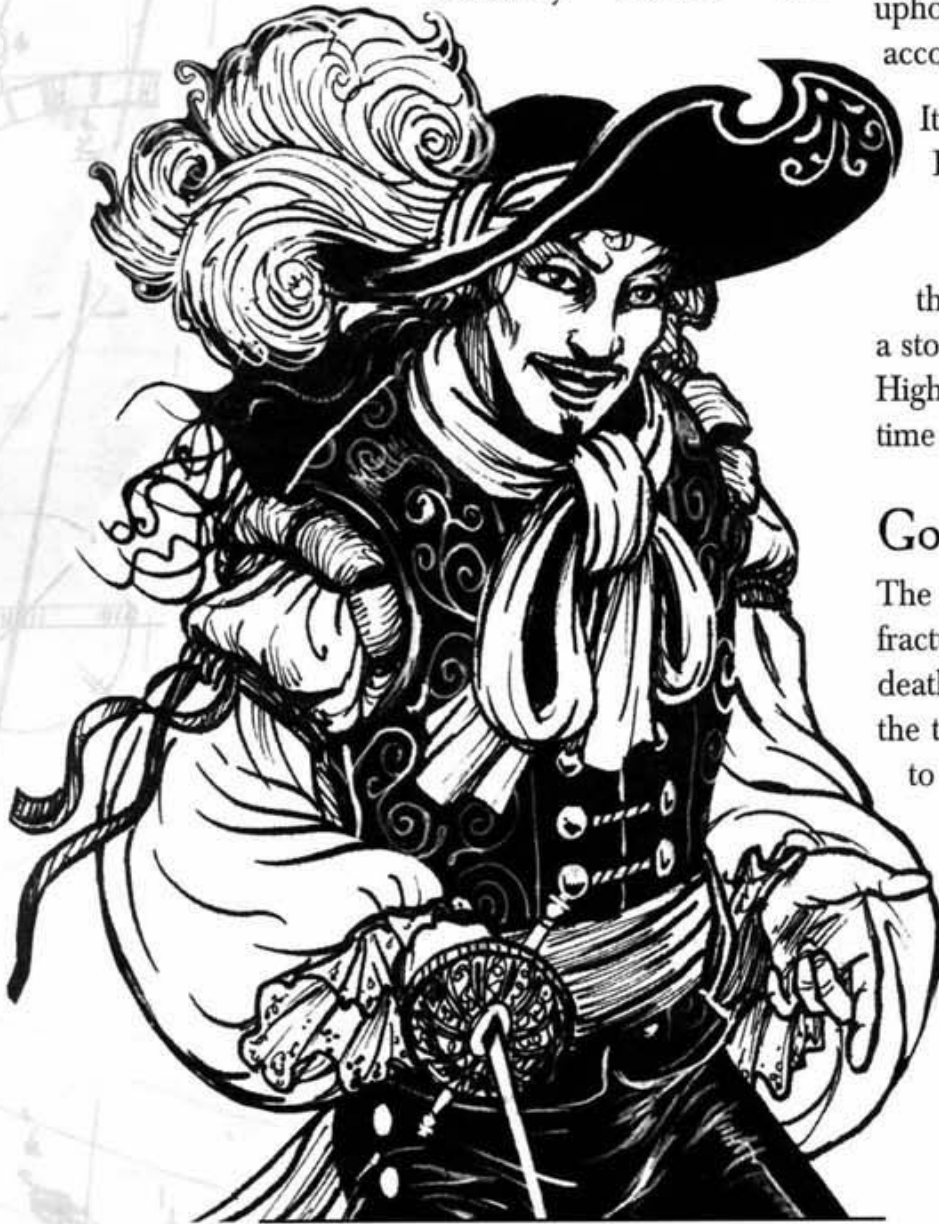
The inordinate number of displaced Dons within Castille (driven from their homes by the war) find it hard to adapt to their new circumstances, and many find the lifestyle of the lower classes appealing. Those in a position to entice their land-holding brothers and sisters arrange private gatherings of the nobility, but others have even been found enjoying the company of their lessers within their own homes.



The Church has so far remained quiet about this odd situation. This is mostly due to the fact that they are unsure how it affects the Castillian public as a whole. History has bred the instinct that mixing the classes is wrong, but the spirits of the people seem to be at an all-time high since the invasion, as if it were a blessing in disguise.

The Guitar

Castillian music can be summed up with a single instrument: the guitar. The sheer brilliance of this invention cannot be emphasized enough; it has single-handedly defined the



Castillian sound. To the Castillian mind it is the perfect instrument, both passionate in its playing and precise in its discipline. The guitar can sing, weep and rejoice just as easily as the human voice.

Religion

Since the seat of the Church of the Prophets was moved to Castille in 1257, the country has been the example for piety in modern Théah. It brings the Castillians a great amount of political influence, and granted additional diplomatic posts in all the major cities of the world. Along with those benefits came a great responsibility — to uphold the blessed image of the Prophets, and act in accordance with the many edicts of their Church.

It has not been easy. Since the time of the Third Prophet, the Church's stance on forgiveness and mercy has shifted. As the years passed, that stance shifted even more. Finally, within the last ten years, the gathering threat of the Inquisition has turned into a storm. Castille is held firmly within its grasp, a fact that High Inquisitor Verdugo does not want to change any time soon.

Government

The present state of Castille's government is — at best — fractured. At worst, it is slipping into utter chaos. With the death of King Salvador Aldana in 1664, the sole heir to the throne — a sixteen-year-old boy — is hardly prepared to handle the affairs of a world power.

For the first time since the whole of the royal family was stricken down by the plague in 1386, Castille's ruler has been denied his due title of *Rex Castilium* ("The King of Castilles") by El Concilio de Razon — the council of Cardinals who act as the King's advisors. Sandoval's every decree is scrutinized and reworded by the Cardinals in an effort to maintain the illusion of



strength at the head of Castille. They have instituted a conditional monarchy within the country, ignoring the absolute rule of their King in favor of their own judgment, and for all intents and purposes are currently running Castille.

This has not helped the already overburdened sovereign structure of the nation, mired in a bureaucratic process left over from the time of the Old Republic, and made worse by the early influence of the Vaticine Church. The Montaigne invasion has caused even more confusion, with the heads of the military clamoring for orders that, in the past, have always come directly from the King.

There are simply too many voices in Castille right now, and El Concilio's choice of solutions is far from adequate. As of the loss of territory in the present conflict, they have sequestered the King within Vaticine City and are conducting the war in his name. While these men are well versed in the ways of the Creator, they are woefully ill-prepared to manage the subjects of His creation, and have made several disastrous decisions in the last eighteen months. With the Council firmly in charge and no one in a position to challenge them, the lamentable state of Castille's government does not look to improve in the near future.

Economy

The Castillian economy is supported mainly by its prolific farming, lumbering, and mining efforts. Together they represent better than ninety percent of the export revenue for the country, and supply nearly all of the resources required by those within its borders. The excess is either tithed to the Church, stored within the King's coffers, or devoted to projects of national interest.

This highly productive situation stems mostly from the Church of the Prophets and their methodical administration of Castille's natural resources. All lands

are studied and all resources catalogued; they track flora, fauna, and mineral deposits with painstaking precision.

Recaudadores, or "tax collectors", interact directly with the Dons. Should any fail to provide their required minimum, the *recaudadores* must both report it to the King and find a way for the Don to make amends. This can take the form of a percentage of the Don's lands, or a gift of equal value to the Crown (such as the hand of a favored daughter or a service to either the King or the Church). It is rare that a Don refuses to accept the terms of a failed contract with the *recaudadores*, but when it happens, "armed reconciliation" may be used (soldiers arrive at the Don's rancho and demand compensation or the immediate surrender of his lands).

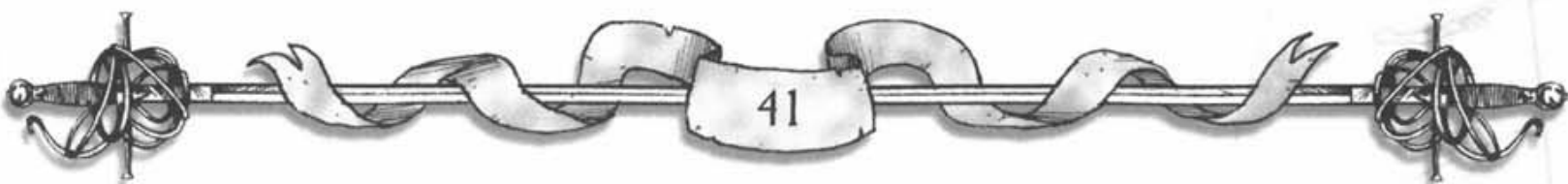
Lastly, over one-third of the country and its rich farmland has fallen to Montaigne in the last two years. The forethought of the Church has staved off crisis, but they did not plan for the sudden influx of disenfranchised Dons streaming across the new Montaigne border. Once past Rio de Delia, these impoverished nobles have found themselves at the mercy of their landed brothers and sisters. Coupled with new quotas imposed on the remaining land-holding Dons to support the war effort, it has proven a substantial strain.

The national coin is the doubloon, which is highly regarded for exchange in all nearby countries. The Guilder is also becoming a standard within the country — much to the chagrin of neighboring Vodacce merchants.

Towns and Villages

Barcino

There are fifteen major sea-ports in Castille, two of which (Barcino and San Juan) have been captured by Montaigne. Of the losses, the most important was Barcino, located along the southern bank of the mouth of the great trading river that cuts through the continent. Consolidating the two ports has given Montaigne control





over traffic through the mouth of the river, a significant financial and military boon.

Castille has always relied on Barcino as a source of commerce with the rest of Théah. While Montaigne and Eisen built up sizable trade routes along the northern shores of the River, Castille retained as much of the natural border along their side as possible. Now only one well established Castillian city – Altamira – can be found along its banks, the rest of its shores protected by rolling hills or dense forests.

Altimira

Altamira is nearly a nation on its own, complete with its own governing council and a permanent military garrison. Many of Castille's most open-minded citizens live here, including a large number of its artists and philosophers. It is perhaps the most cultured, welcoming place in all of modern Castille.

Vaticine City

Located along the *Rio de Dios*, ("River of the Creator"), the Church capital is where the Third Prophet appeared in Castille three hundred years ago. The seat of power moved there after the last of the Crescents were driven out. It has remained the religious, scientific, and political power for the nation ever since.

San Cristobal

San Cristobal, formerly known as *Hil'al* (or "The New Moon" in the tongue of the invaders), was only a small fishing village when the first Crescents arrived. They stressed construction, building within the first fifty years much of what still stands today. It traditionally houses the Castillian national government, but with the onset of the war and Good King Sandoval's continued presence in Vaticine City, it serves mainly as a bureaucratic headquarters. Of all the Castillian cities, San Cristobal has the most radically different architectural style, matching the towers and minarets of its former occupants.

San Tropal

San Tropal, located at the Rio de Delia in the Yañez rancho, now falls under Montaigne jurisdiction, though this has not prevented its peasantry from blatantly ignoring the commands of their new rulers. Across the embattled waters of their river, they can see their countrymen, huddling together behind the ramparts of *El Moro* (see **The Military**, below). This provides them with the necessary inspiration to resist. Some have even attempted to swim through the deluge of falling cannon balls, though with only moderate success. The constant volleys between El Moro and the impromptu Montaigne garrisons never cease, and the bombardment can be heard for many, many miles.

Finally, there is *La Bucca*, the former prison colony established on the island between Castille's peninsulas. For more on this location see *The Brotherhood of the Coast*, page 117.

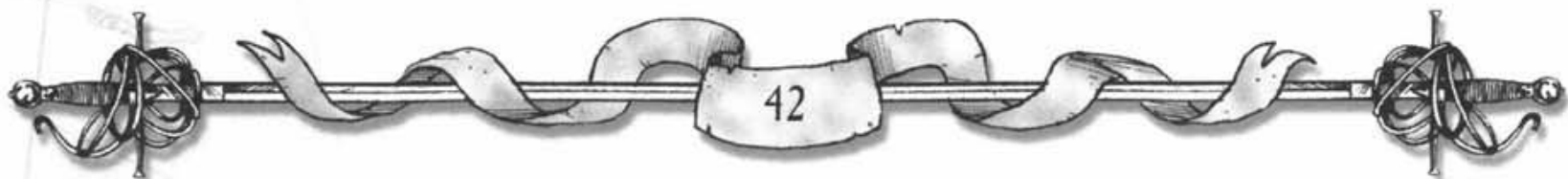
The Castillian Military and Their Fighting Style

The State of the War

The Montaigne invasion has stalled. The majority of the western peninsula has been taken, save for the lands of the two southernmost Dons (see below). Within the hills to the north, the Montaignes have begun to construct outposts and erect additional bridges to aid their continued efforts. Along the Rio de Delia, Montaigne forces, unable to obtain a beachhead across the swift waters, have dug in for a long winter of fighting. For now the war has stabilized, but how long that condition will remain is anyone's guess.

The Castillian Army

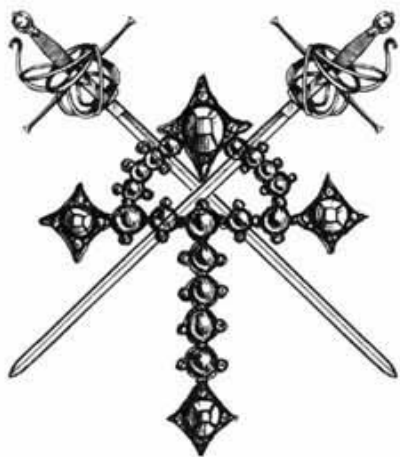
Once upon a time, Castille's standing army was immense. However, their recent failures in the war have whittled it down. When hostilities with Montaigne flared, an





unprecedented number flocked to join their ranks, but even their numbers have been sorely tested.

Before the war, the standing army spread evenly across the country, but with most of the active fighting going on along the Rio de Delia and northern hills, forces have been diverted there until conscription can be instituted. It is well known that Castellians fight with their hearts and souls as much as their bodies and minds, and the forces they will gain from a draft will likely be sent to rear posts and auxiliary positions where their discontent will not be affected.



Outposts and Fortresses

Castille has been the most militarized nation in Théah for centuries. Dozens of garrisons dot its borders, especially along southern coastlines, where they can monitor the trade routes. These fortresses lie in defensive patterns along former battle lines and current needs, as close together as every 400 yards where heavy assaults are expected. Typically, the intervening territory is cleared of any cover, creating "kill zones" in which invading forces can be eliminated.

Various innovations from Castilian military thinkers are utilized to maximum effect. Recently, for example, river and coastal garrisons have begun to design cannon emplacements that allow the weapons to swivel along grooves in the floor or pivot up and down, allowing far

greater arcs of fire. Many are even able to fire on their neighboring emplacements should they be captured.

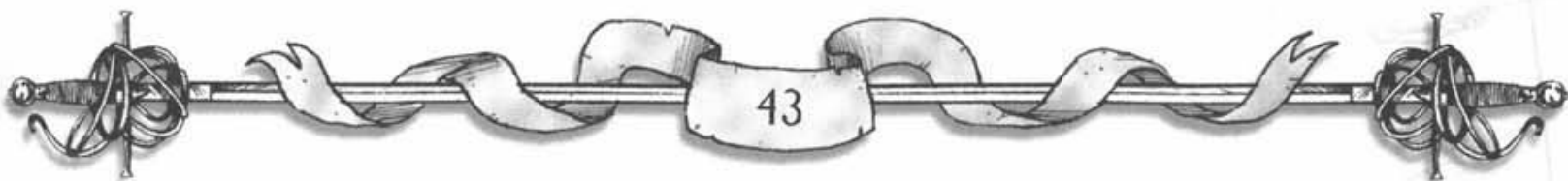
One example of profitable forethought that has proven invaluable against the Montaignes is El Moro, located at the confluence of Rio del Delia and Rio de Dios. Supplemented by troops led through both the Grijalva and Guzman rancheros (after the forces of those Dons ran dry), this river fortress wages a bitter defense of Castille's current western border and holds Montaigne river traffic in check. El Moro's walls are lined with cannons. As long as it remains, the Montaignes will be denied the use of the delta at the Gulf, or access to Rio del Dios.

The structure at the southern end of El Camino del Sol, which bisects the eastern flatlands from north to south, has been cut off from the rest of the army, and more importantly from Castille itself. This is the location of heaviest and most desperate fighting in Castille. It has come to be called *la Muralla al Ultimo* ("The Last Wall"), though only by those not posted there; none of the soldiers who fight along its length will even speak this name aloud, for fear that the blessing that has guided their efforts will be broken.

Somehow, against all odds, the makeshift barriers built about the aging outpost formerly known as Falcon's Point continue to hold, even against the constant reinforcement of the Montaigne troops along El Camino del Sol. Though many point to the fervent prayers of General Montoya (who holds the fort), the soldiers themselves know that Castille's knowledge of defensive fortifications and superior tactics have so far been the reason they are still alive. Of course, without Theus' help, they may not last much longer...

The Scientific Revolution

The High King and the Vaticine Church have spent a great amount of effort supporting Church scholars. Much time and money was spent establishing academies to





foster humanity's need for discovery, and to gain enlightenment by discovering Theus' many truths hidden within the mysteries of nature. By observing dissected cadavers, a map of the human body was published in 1610. Using this map, Church surgeons began to experiment with removing the bullets from gunshot wounds and stitching the wounds back together with cotton thread. Furthermore, in 1613, when the threat of the Plague was again felt in Castille, *La Ciencia* – the Academy of the Sciences – created a method of quarantine to isolate carriers of the disease from the populace. This in turn is now used during outbreaks of all perceived communicable diseases.

The Castillian fortresses gained wheeled cannons and tracked cannon rings used to change the direction of the gun (which was much faster than lifting and carrying it into position). Advances in chemistry had developed a higher grade of gun powder, allowing for a greater explosive charge using less powder. By far the greatest innovation of the military, however, was the recent use of prepacked powder charges for muskets. These charges allow Castillian musketeers to do away with their clumsy powder horns. They can now load and fire significantly faster than other Théan soldiers. Further experiments are being conducted to create measured powder charges for cannons.

Castille's Current Relations with the Rest of Théah

Avalon

Due to the "heathen" activities of the present Queen of Avalon, Elaine, there is a great deal of animosity between Castille and the island kingdom. But even the spiteful Concilio de Razón are not willing to act against her at this time, content instead to support her enemies and wait for her to fall from grace.

Eisen

The armored lunatics of Eisen have proven themselves a threat in the past, but one look at their ruined lands and teetering rulership is enough to dispel the possibility for another invasion from the north. Next to Ussura and Cathay, the Castillians are least mindful of this blasted nation.

Montaigne

The Montaigne currently bear the brunt of Castille's scorn for foreigners of all sorts. Prior to their invasion, no military troops except those directly controlled by the Castillians themselves had set foot upon Castillian soil for six hundred years – a very long time for hatreds to brew, as many Montaigne soldiers upon the front would attest.

Pirate Nation

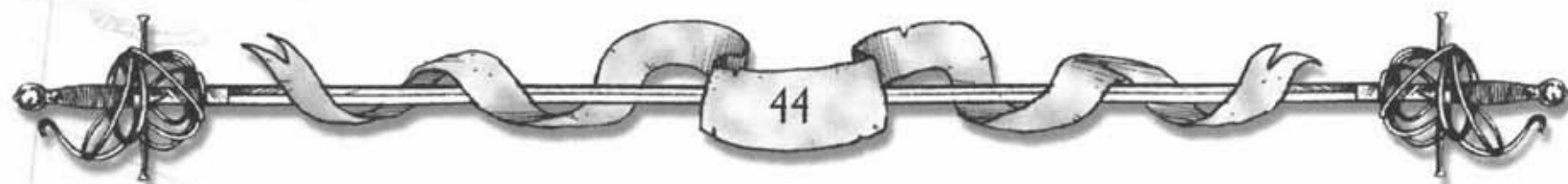
With the destruction of the Castillian Armada and little hope in sight for the nation to put another fleet to sea, the Pirate Nation is of little consequence to them. Castille has not suffered at the hands of the Pirate Nation as its neighbors have. In fact, it would appear that their only contact with them has been through the Brotherhood of the Coast, who have taken up residence upon the former prison island at the mouth of their Gulf, and even that seems to be limited.

Ussura

Castillians travel far less than most, and those who do are rarely interested in the vast plains and deep forests of the Ussurans. Outside of standard diplomatic relations, religious pilgrimages, and matters of continental war, the two countries have had very little to do with one another.

Vendel

"Of all the crooked con men of the world, we hate the Vendel the least." Beyond this statement – made by the late King of Castille – nothing can be gleaned of the relationship between these two distant nations.



Vodacce

Between the animosity of the Church divisions and the constant quarreling between the pompous nobles of both countries, Castilian relations with Vodacce are at an all-time low. The most recent demands by Vodacce merchants and inflammatory statements of their Cardinals have only served to worsen the tension along this border, and the Dons have begun to call for additional patrols to ensure their safety.

Castille NPCs

Good King Sandoval

"I'm sorry, Andrés. I'm afraid that His Holiness makes a very good point. In this instance, the army must come before the peasants. The Montaignes are simply pressing us too hard right now."

King Sandoval has been thrust into a position of power at a young age. Only 16, he has to rule a country at war with the most powerful nation in the world. Naturally, this has forced him to make some difficult decisions and to grow up very quickly. He is hoping his older brother will someday return and take the throne. Sadly, he has received no word of his brother, and he fears that he is dead. Sandoval has managed to rule so far with the help of his two main advisors, Andrés Bejarano del Aldana and Esteban Verdugo. They have opposing viewpoints, and by listening to them argue about affairs of state Sandoval has learned something about how to be a king.

Image: Sandoval is growing into a handsome young man. He has long wavy brown hair, and usually wears a thoughtful expression. When he gets confused, he has a habit of chewing his lower lip.

Goals: Sandoval wants to keep Castille in one piece until his brother returns (if he's still alive) and reclaims the throne. In the meantime, he's concerned with being the best king he can be.

Roleplaying Sandoval: When confronted with a difficult decision, withdraw to another room and listen to your advisors' counsel before coming to a decision. Chew your lower lip if you get confused. If violence threatens, stand still and look unsure what to do.





El Vago

"If you don't mind, Señor, don't bother drawing your sword. That will save me the trouble of putting it back for you."

The mysterious vigilante El Vago seems to be the king's personal savior. He has foiled assassination plots against the king on three separate occasions. He has a commanding tenor voice and is amazingly fast, particularly with a sword. Besides protecting the king, he has also rescued people from the hands of the Inquisition, easily evading his pursuers. He is so adept at vanishing into thin air, in fact, that some people think he must be a Montaigne sorcerer.

Image: Dressed in an outlandish purple outfit and wearing a grinning white mask, El Vago draws attention whenever he appears. Behind the mask, his eyes focus with unnerving intensity on whomever he's talking to. He fights left- or right-handed as the mood takes him.

Goals: El Vago's only apparent goals are to protect King Sandoval and to oppose the Inquisition. If he has anything else up his sleeve, he hasn't told anyone.

Roleplaying El Vago: Be flamboyant. Take every opportunity to mock your opponents. Act supremely confident in your ability to handle any situation. Always be prepared with at least one back-up plan.

Ésteban Verdugo

"Why don't you let one of my surgeons tend to that eye while we talk about the speech you made on the 13th of Tertius. Frankly, given the things you said that day, I'm concerned for your soul."

The head of the Inquisition, Verdugo is always the perfect host. He's gracious, he's quiet and polite, and he offers you tea and cakes while his torturer leers from the corner. He isn't malicious; he is honestly concerned with saving souls. He just happens to believe that the soul is more important than the body, and if torture is the only way he can get people to recant their heresies, then that's what he'll do. Once they've recanted and are in a state of grace, if they seem likely to slip back into their old ways, he'll have them killed to prevent their souls from going to Legion.



Image: Verdugo doesn't look unusual, certainly not like the head of the brutal Inquisition. He seems like anyone you might pass on the street: medium build, dark brown hair, and a plain face. There is nothing particularly sinister about him until he begins talking theology, at which point his face distorts into a look of such manic earnestness that even the most rabid Vaticine begins to worry for his own safety.

Goals: Verdugo's goal is to save as many souls from being absorbed by Legion as he possibly can, using whatever means necessary. The ends justify the means in all cases, as far as he's concerned. If his actions cost him his own soul, he feels that the thousands of people whose souls he has saved are more than worth the price.

Roleplaying Verdugo: If you see the opportunity to gain another convert to the Vaticine faith, do anything it takes to seize that chance, no matter how ruthless. Show that you honestly regret the harm and pain you inflict in order to achieve your goals. Never raise your voice. Never lose your temper. Never give anyone an opening to kill you. Never cause more suffering than you absolutely have to.

Andrés Bejarano del Aldana

"Your Majesty, I know a peasant woman who is very sick. Her sons are on the front line, and she is dearly loved in her village. It would mean a lot to her and her village if you would grant them a week's leave to visit her."

Andrés provides a good counterpoint for Verdugo's overly emotionless advice to King Sandoval. He is an excellent statesman, concerned with the well-being of his people (although he sometimes overlooks the impracticalities of his own suggestions). He is known to be a competent swordsman, and once fought side by side with El Vago to defend the king against an assassin. Where Verdugo gives advice that helps to keep the country in one piece, Andrés gives advice that helps to keep its soul intact.



Image: Andrés is modestly handsome, with long dark hair, a thin moustache and gray eyes. He has a medium build, with broad, muscular shoulders. He always dresses in the finest clothing, and his movements are slow and deliberate.

Goals: Andrés is concerned with the welfare of the people of Castille. He sees the draining effect of the war, and petitions the King for things that will make it an easier pill for them to swallow. Verdugo naturally argues against these "unnecessary expenditures," leading Andrés to believe that Verdugo simply doesn't understand people very well. A bitter rivalry has sprung up between the two, but so far it has remained professional.

Roleplaying Andrés: Smile easily. Let it reach all the way up to your eyes. Use your hands to talk with broad gestures. When asked for advice, think of the heart and

soul of the people first: that is most important to you. A broken and dispirited people cannot hope to win a war.

Salvador Garcia

"Yes, I said that the Church is failing in its duties. I may only be a senile old man, but I can still see what is placed in front of my nose."

After the death of the Hierophant, Headmaster Garcia was placed in charge of La Ciencia, the famous Castillian University. He was a bishop in Castille at the time, but the political scrambling he saw after the Hierophant's death sickened him, and when the Headmaster position opened up, he used his considerable pull to step down from his title and take it over.



Over the last few years he has become convinced that the Church no longer does its job. He and his students often secretly release inventions from members of the Invisible College, and he has been much happier since leaving the Church.

Image: Garcia is an elderly man, about 55 years old. He has deeply creased worry lines on his face, and his hair is rapidly turning white. Since becoming Headmaster, however, he has smiled more often, and the years don't weigh as heavily on his shoulders. Garcia usually dresses neatly in respectable and durable clothing. His hair and moustache are always well-groomed.

Goals: Garcia simply hopes to live out the remainder of his years in peace and quiet, avoiding Church politics. He happily helps out members of the Invisible College because they hark back to the days of his youth, before the Inquisition arose and experimentation was banned.

Roleplaying Garcia: Speak calmly and keep your wits about you. Nothing is worth getting upset over, and you're an old man whom they can't do anything to anyway. When the chips are down, you possess a quiet bravery and the conviction necessary to do the right thing.

Eisen

"The priests keep telling me that the Prophets will bring us all together in the next life. I find this hard to believe, since they've torn us apart in this one."

— Nicklaus Trägue, Eisenfürst of Freiburg

With all the talk of Eisen (EYE-zon) being a wasted nation, folks have overlooked the fact that not all of her people look wasted. Some of them just look angry.

Don't count Eisen out. Not by a long shot. She's got a long history of coming back from disaster, and the worse the disaster, the bigger her comebacks tend to be. Right now she's disjointed and disagreeable, but in their hearts,



the Eisen all want one thing: a unified nation. The land isn't as pretty as Avalon, nor is its nobility as dignified as in Montaigne, but they are a proud people who won't let a little mud stain their dignity.

The people who say there's no magic in Eisen don't know where to look for it. Eisen holds stories of desperate daring, where you don't use words like "hero" and "courage" unless you mean them.

More than any other nation, Eisen has learned the importance of national unity — chiefly because they've had it stripped from them in the name of religion. The War of the Cross wasn't about Eisen fighting Montaignes or Castillians, it was about Eisen Vaticines fighting Eisen Objectionists. However, after all the blood was spilled and all the cities burned to ash, it became clear that it was just Eisen killing Eisen.

Because of this internal dissent, the Eisen are now viewed with faint scorn by the rest of Théah. However, their battlefield skills remain superior to any others in Théah; even the mighty Montaigne General Montegue has an Eisen sergeant as advisor.

Like every other nation in Théah, Eisen stands at a crossroads. The most important people are her princes, who must be the unifying force that the nation needs. Which prince wins the faith of the people will determine what role the nation plays in the theater of world politics for the next two hundred years.

Théah is about to embark on the path that Eisen has been treading for three decades. She's on the edge of realizing that national pride can unify a people more than religion ever could. The Eisen are already there. And they're rebuilding.

But for now, Eisen is not a fun place to be. It's a mess. The people know it and they don't like being reminded. It's kind of like walking into someone's house and saying, "What a pit." The Eisen may complain about their land, but they still love her. A Montaigne who wanders into a

village and says something scornful about the land will find himself tarred and feathered by the end of the day.

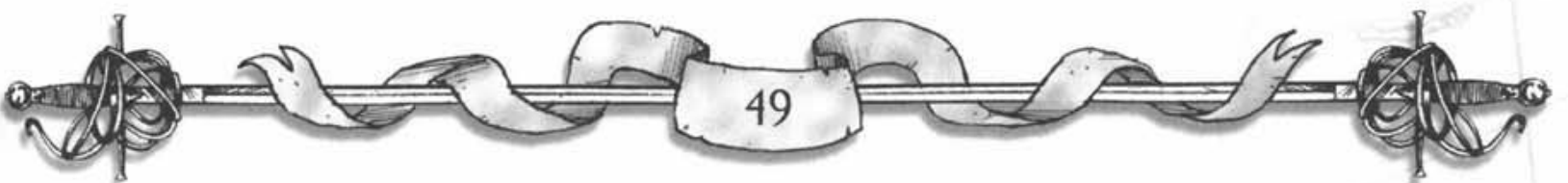
The Land

Eisen is a mountainous region nestled in the middle of Théah that borders on almost every major continental country. The winters are long and there is a chill in the air even in the midst of summer. Eisen gets plenty of rain and snow, contributing to muddy roads all year round.

In the southern half of Eisen are the foreboding black forests, or *die schwarzen Wälder*. People know not to walk the forest paths at night for fear of the *Schattenmann*, or "Shade Man." The stories describe him as a giant creature with thin, stick-like limbs who carries an enormous pair of shears to dismember his victims, snipping them apart with precise strokes.

In the center of Southern Eisen stands *das Südlache*, a huge lake that was once teeming with schools of freshwater fish. Due to heavy fishing, it is no longer as bountiful as it once was. Just to its northeast is *der Unsterblicher Sumpf*, or "The Undying Swamp," which is thought to be cursed.

Northern Eisen is heavily forested, with broad flood plains on either side of *das Rotstrom* (a wide river with pockets of clay that turn its waters red). *Freiburg* (FREYEBERG), the famed capital of trade, straddles the midpoint of *das Rotstrom*. There are two large forests in northern Eisen: *der Angonem Wald*, and *der Liebliche Wald*. Unlike the rest of Eisen's landscape, these forests are known to be safe, pleasant places to travel through. Of course, with all the desperate refugees found in Eisen, that may not be true for much longer. Eisenfürst Pösen is considering regular patrols through the forests to flush out any would-be bandits. Still, she is reluctant to take these troops off the patrols in *der Salzsumpf*, the salt marshes near her castle, Insel; sirens have found their way into the swamp





and waylay fishermen and other travelers. Pösen doesn't want them venturing into her territory.

In the mountains that border Eisen to the north and east lurk the *drachen*, enormous creatures revered by the Eisen, and sometimes hunted by the nobility as proof of valor. In fact, the image of the *drachen* has become synonymous with the concepts of strength and power. No noble has actually encountered one of the beasts in living memory. But tales survive of *drachen* rending entire cities to pieces with their enormous claws.

The iron mines of Eisen are also found in the mountains. Aside from mercenaries, iron is the country's primary export. *Dracheneisen*, the seemingly magical iron that the *drachenschuppe* are forged from, is never sold.

The People

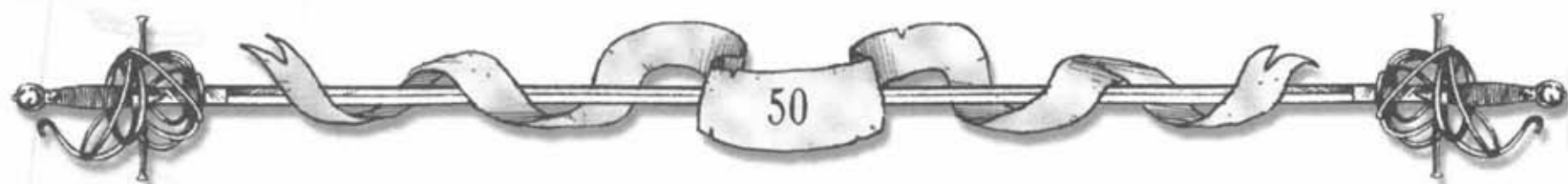
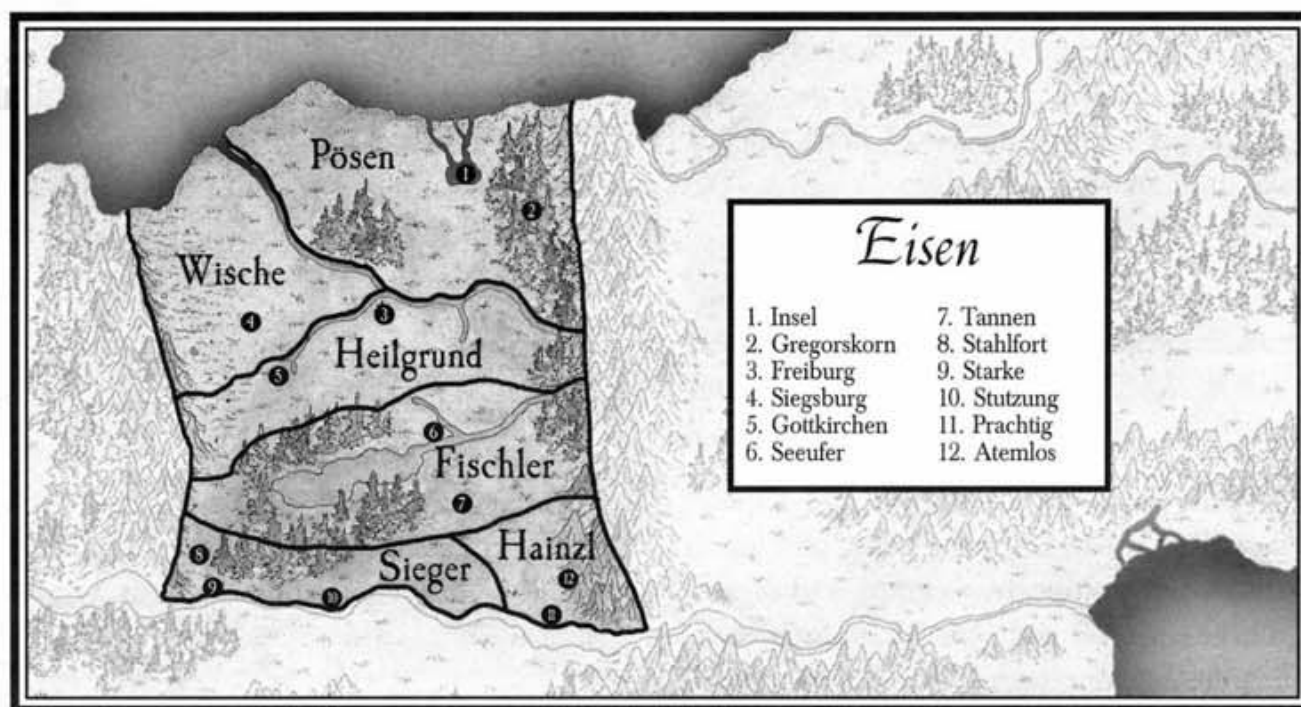
Thirty years ago, there were 24 million people living in Eisen. Today, there are 10 million. Nearly 6 million have fled to other countries. The rest are dead. Most died not in battle but through starvation and the plagues bred by festering bodies.

This has transformed the Eisen into a grim, shattered people. Families have been torn apart by death, disease, and raiders over the years, leaving many alone in the world. Some have retreated into catatonia rather than deal with the horror. Others have taken to the bottle to dull their pain. Even those Eisen who show no external sign of the War of the Cross are apt to explode in anger with no warning. It may take generations for these scars to heal.

The Eisen are tall and muscular, with a peculiar genetic quirk that sometimes combines brown or black hair with a red beard. Their eyes can be of any color, with a predisposition towards the lighter shades. The men keep their hair and beards short, in a military fashion, while the women grow their hair to shoulder length and sometimes tie it in braids. They have sharp aquiline noses and a light complexion.

Social Strata

There are four classes in Eisen. The first is the nobility, or *Adel* (*AH-del*). They live in grand castles left to them by their forefathers and continue to squabble among





themselves, arguing over each acre of land as though it were an entire kingdom.

The second class is the mercenaries, or *Sölden* (ZOEL-den). Next to the adel, the sölden are the wealthiest men in Eisen. They often form academies to train young sölden when they grow too old to battle any longer.

The third class is the peasants, or *Bauern* (BOW-ern). They still cling to their lifestyle, eking out a living on Eisen's increasingly infertile land. They have weathered a great deal of hardship and pain, and there is an undercurrent of anger among them that steadily grows stronger.

The last class in Eisen was created during the War of the Cross. They are called *der Waisen* (VEYE-zon), or "the orphans." Their homes were destroyed and their families killed by the soldiers fighting in the War of the Cross. They wander the ruined fields of Eisen with walking sticks, searching for edible roots and other meagre supplies. Most of them die of disease or starvation before long, and those who survive are often slain for trespassing on the lands they once called home. The Adel say, "You can identify them easily. They don't shield themselves when you beat them."

Etiquette

Eisen are straightforward. They understand the need for tact, and are careful what they say, but they tell those whom they don't like exactly how they feel. The Eisen have great respect for the truth and consider a secret or a lie to be a burden on their spirit. They'll bear this burden for a friend, or if it's necessary in order to keep their head in its proper place, but see no reason to spare the feelings of someone they don't like to begin with.

If an Eisen forms a strong friendship, he may refer to a friend as his *Rücken* (ROO-ken), or "Back." This means that the Eisen would trust him or her to defend his back in a battle. An Eisen never expects to be abandoned in battle by his Rücken unless he has asked him or her not

to interfere, such as a duel of honor. During a fight in which an Eisen is back to back with his Rücken, he will not look behind him. He trusts his Rücken to cover him.

The Eisen show a certain roughness in their customs that many foreigners are unused to. Friends hug each other roughly when meeting again after a long separation, and most Eisen have difficulty speaking with a soft voice in social situations, since their own gatherings tend to be loud and boisterous.

Clothing

Bauern and waisen dress in whatever they can get, typically coarse linens. Often the waisen allow their clothing to fall to rags on their backs. The richer baueren wear feathered caps, while the women wear aprons.

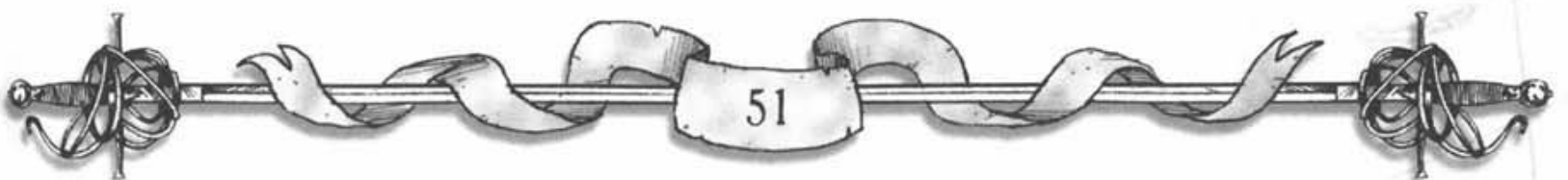
Sölden dress in fine leathers dyed in bright colors. Their shirts have distinctive sleeves with slits cut lengthwise in them. A wide-brimmed, feathered hat provides a bit of shade in the sun or protection from the rain.

The Adel men follow the fashions of nobility elsewhere with certain unique distinctions. They wear long leggings with thigh-length skirts tied with a single band and flat, wide-brimmed hats. The women also follow international fashions, but prefer small lace collars to the ruffled collars that are popular in so many places. They prefer bright colors on their clothing.

Diet

The diet of the waisen consists of anything they can find: old tubers, dead rats, gnawed cabbages, and whatever they can steal (including the household pets of the sölden and adel).

The bauer is somewhat better off, relatively speaking. He gets to keep a portion of whatever crop he grows in Eisen's "mud fields": typically grains and tubers. They drink water (beer has long since become too expensive for all but the richest baueren). If they're lucky, the water is clean and doesn't carry any diseases. Although





somewhat more expensive than it used to be, butter remains the centerpoint of any meal. It is typically served in a bowl into which bread can be dipped. Often the bread serves double duty as an eating utensil, herding peas onto forks and the like.

The sölden and adel have a more varied diet. They import vegetables and fruits for their tables, and maintain cattle and sheep on their share of the bauer's grain, ensuring that they have a reasonably steady supply of meat. Much of this meat is dried or turned into sausage to prevent spoilage. A great deal of alcohol flows into the country to feed the soldiers' tireless thirst.

Customs

This is an unusual period in Eisen history, as long-standing traditions and customs are abandoned as impractical. Often, holidays go uncelebrated while the men toil on endless public works projects to rebuild the country. Gift-giving has become an exchange of handmade crafts, since manufactured goods are entirely out of the bauer's price range.

Due to the recent shortage of food, children always eat first in Eisen. Even honored guests wait politely until all the children have been served before eating themselves. A guest who does otherwise would be rebuked, and probably not invited back.

In addition, it has become a custom for guests to bring enough food to feed themselves and their hosts as a "gift." In reality, it's merely a way to make sure that your hosts aren't going hungry while they serve you the best food they have to offer.

The bauer believe that it is bad luck to hurt or even touch a waizen, as if somehow their misfortune were contagious. The only way to avoid this ill luck, or so it is believed, is to bathe thoroughly in order to wash it away.

Art and Music

Eisen art and music has less to do with the military than one might expect. Many of their most famous works depict scenes of idyllic beauty, and some of the most spectacular landscapes in all the world. Perhaps the Eisen see enough war in their day-to-day life.

Names

Most Eisen have three names: a first name, a surname, and an *ehrenname*, or "name of honor." The surname passes down from the child's father, as most family names do. Lastly, the *ehrenname* is given to the child to honor a friend or relative of the parents. Typically, it is the honored person's first name. For an Eisen to name his first-born child after a friend is the greatest compliment he can give. In rare cases, men have received a woman's name as their *ehrenname*, and vice versa. While this can be somewhat amusing, laughing at an Eisen's *ehrenname* is a deadly insult.

When an Eisen introduces himself, he states his first name, his *ehrenname*, and then his surname. For instance, if a man introduces himself as "Gregor Himmel Damaske", he is saying that his first name is Gregor, his surname is Damaske, and his *ehrenname* is Himmel.

Religion

The Eisen are split between Vaticines and Objectionists. Their churches show an austerity typical to their culture. They don't believe in flashy, useless displays of wealth, but they are very religious nonetheless.

A bauer often discusses religion with his neighbors while building roads in the winter with them, and the typical adel can be expected to donate up to 50% of his yearly income to his church.

There is one practice unique to the Eisen branch of the Church of Prophets, and common to both Vaticines and Objectionists. The sölden all wear iron necklaces imprinted with the insignia of particularly pious Eisen





who were once sölden themselves. These necklaces are known as *Heiligen* (HIGH-lih-gehn). The Eisen believe that the spirit of the pious sölden will intercede with the Creator on the wearer's behalf to keep him safe from harm.

Four men are most commonly honored on heiligen. The most popular bears the insignia of the late Emperor Weiss, a man with a crown of stars around his head. Weiss is remembered for his policies of religious freedom. The next most popular bears the insignia of Emperor Gottschalk I, the cross of the Church of the Prophets. Gottschalk created the Vodacce papacy and gave it to the Hierophant to rule. Objectionists often wear a heiligen with a wolf imprinted on it. Although this is Stefano Wulf's insignia, and he wasn't actually an Eisen, many Objectionists consider him the holiest man since Mattias Lieber. The last of the four primary heiligen bears the insignia of General Stauss, a hawk in flight. Stauss was the champion of the Vaticines in Eisen while he lived and is very fondly remembered by them.

The Government

Since the War of the Cross, Eisen has been split into seven *königreichen*, each ruled by a different Eisenfürst. Governmental practices vary from place to place.

Freiburg

The first *königreich* is the most unusual of them all. It is known as Freiburg, or "Free City," ruled by Nicklaus Trägue, one of the first atheists to come to power in Théah. Trägue was a respected general during the War of the Cross. Over the course of the War, his beliefs went from "The Creator will protect us" to "How can the Creator allow this?" to "There is no Creator." He believes that anyone will betray him if offered the right price, and he has been known to get drunk and verbally abuse passing clergy. Despite all this, Trägue does his best for his people. He doesn't blame them for their moral

weaknesses; he simply uses those weaknesses to manipulate them into doing the "right" thing.

A tall tower stands in the center of the town, known simply as *das Wachturm*, "The Watchtower." Trägue only claims the land that he can see from the top of this tower, having no desire to rule over a larger *königreich*.

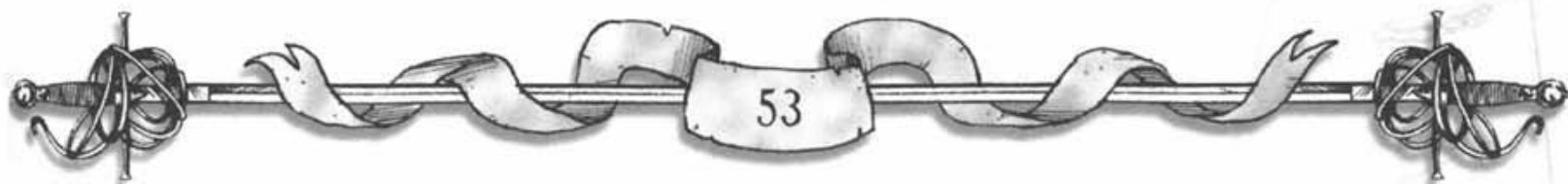
Freiburg's economy is based on free trade. Trägue levies no taxes and ensures that the source of certain questionable merchandise never reveals itself. In fact, Trägue does his absolute best not to govern the city at all. He simply makes it worth peoples' while to govern themselves, provide for their own protection, etc. Nonetheless, he is convinced that Freiburg will not survive to see its fifth anniversary. There are too many land-hungry Eisenfürsten nearby, and if there's one thing that the Vaticine and Objectivist clergy can agree on, it's that an atheist ruler is a threat to the Church's power.

Wische

The second *königreich* is ruled by Reinhard von Wische, an even-tempered man who lost his wife and three sons in the War of the Cross. Most who know him say that he has given up completely, letting his land go to ruin. Wische was utterly ravaged in the war. The mines nearby are played out, and the land groans from soldiers marching across it and salting or burning it so often. Almost all of its income comes from tolls collected from merchants sailing on the Rotstrom. Wische has more waisen than any other *königreich*.

Pösen

The third *königreich* is ruled by Fauner Pösen. Fauner is a large woman, immensely strong and a skilled warrior. She is also arrogant and unbelievably stubborn. Her *königreich* occupies the northeastern corner of Eisen and is the most prosperous of the *königreichen*, except for perhaps Freiburg. Pösen survived the War of the Cross virtually unharmed. It possesses fertile land and seemingly bottomless iron mines.





Heilgrund

Stefan Heilgrund rules the fourth königreich, and works steadily towards the day that Eisen will be re-united under his rule. The other Eisenfürsten see him as a brash young fool and have no intention of ever submitting to his rule. Nicklaus Trägue of Freiburg is the only one who will even talk to him, for he sees Heilgrund as a potentially useful tool. Rumors have spread that Stefan collects occult books and objects for some unknown purpose.

Fischler

The fifth königreich is ruled by Faulk Fischler, a dark, brooding man, who discovered a dracheneisen mine in the area in 1649. His königreich was formed from pieces of Sieger and Hainzl, a fact that Erich Sieger has never forgiven. Much of Faulk's depression comes from the fact that his newfound wealth has failed to ease his loneliness. Before, he was surrounded by nobles who sneered at him and looked down on him because he was poor. Now he's surrounded by fawning nobles who hang on his every word for no other reason than that he has power and wealth. Fischler surrounds the Südlache, and much of its income comes from fishing. Unfortunately, fewer fish are caught each year, and Faulk has pondered whether or not to prevent fishing for a few years to let the lake recover. Either way, it could mean economic ruin for his people.

Sieger

The sixth königreich belongs to Erich Sieger. Actually, it technically belongs to Castille, but when the envoys arrived to take possession of it, they saw a madman locked within the fortress, willing to fight to the death over a patch of burned, salted mud. They decided that the land wasn't worth the lives it was going to cost them and went home. Since then, Sieger has had difficulties feeding his people and keeps losing them to emigration across the river to Vodacce. He seems focused completely on the survival of his königreich, and his sheer bloody-minded stubbornness might actually pull it off.

Hainzl

The seventh and final königreich is ruled by Georg Hainzl, a pleasant, jovial man, virtually untouched by the savage War of the Cross. In fact, he is usually untouched by reality in general. He has made his land a place of beauty and art, and remains a generous patron to musicians. His castle contains rooms decorated in themes drawn from famous operas, and its exterior looks like it belongs in a fairy tale. Hainzl gets its income from its iron mines, the best in all of Eisen.

Public Works

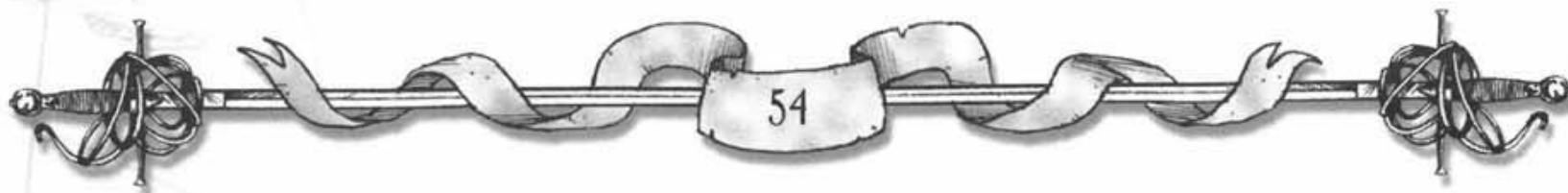
In the winter when the weather is too cold to farm, the Eisenfürsten put the bauern to work on roads, fences, and other projects of importance to them. Most of this labor is spent maintaining roads and walls for the defense of Eisen. Erich Sieger has apparently decided that idle bauern are wasted bauern, and has his people carting loads of dirt from one place to the next for no readily apparent reason.

Economy

Eisen's primary exports are iron, lumber, and coal, which demand high prices in foreign markets. This is fortunate, for Eisen must import 40% of its food due to the ravages of the War of the Cross. The Eisenfürsten control trade everywhere except in Freiburg.

Under the Emperors, Eisen's coinage was the *mark*, a small silver coin approximately the size of the Emperor's smallest fingernail. Eight marks equals one Guilder. However, only certain Eisenfürsten still accept marks as currency.

After the Treaty of Weissberg, Freiburg began using the Guilder as its standard currency, and also began minting *pfennigs* (FEN-igz), equal to one-tenth of a Guilder, with





he Vendel League's permission. Since then, Wische, Pösen, Fischler, and Hainzl have followed suit.

Heilgrund and Sieger both continue to use the mark, but for different reasons. Heilgrund hopes to use the currency as a rallying point for Eisen, reminding the people of more glorious days. Why Sieger continues to use the mark is unknown: probably just another symptom of the madness that made him defy Castille. He seems to defy people for no other reason than because he can.

The Guild money changers in Freiburg continue to buy marks in exchange for Guilders, but no longer sell them. They are attempting to take the mark out of circulation since it isn't backed by a stable government.

Towns & Villages

Freiburg

In 1267, a military base named *Stein* sprung up where Freiburg stands today. It was built around a well known remnant of the Syrneth race, an enormous watchtower. The military base was unusually large, since it guarded an important point of the river, and needed to house several hundred soldiers' families. The Stein formed a key element of Eisen defense for several hundred years, until the Vendel armies finally overcame it at the Last Battle of the Stein in 1637.

After the battle, its ruins stood as a reminder to the Eisen of their defeat. Nicklaus Trägue, a soldier who had seen

too much fighting, took refuge in a cave in the mountains near the Stein and stumbled across a rich vein of dracheneisen. He convinced the Emperor to give him the ruins of the Stein as his *königreich*.

Since that day, Trägue has worked to rebuild the Stein as the center of a neutral city named Freiburg. It has become a refuge to those uprooted by the war, and a source of trade income for all of Eisen. Freiburg will survive, simply because it is too valuable to destroy.

Insel

Built on a peninsula that becomes an island when the tide comes in, Insel is a fortress-town that benefits from the best natural defenses in the world. Insel also has one of the most beautiful chapels in Eisen. At dawn, the sun shines in through a stained glass window depicting the First Prophet leaping into flames.

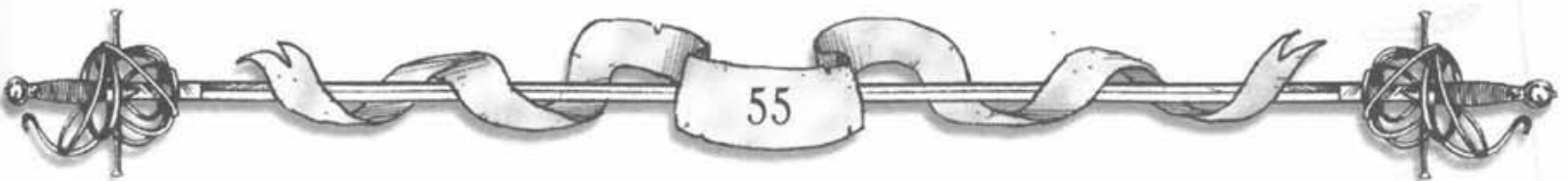
In other ways, Insel represents a typical Eisen fortress-town. It provides efficient cover for the defenders while denying it to the attackers, who must breach multiple gates under withering fire in order to gain entry. Insel serves as Pösen's primary fortress, and doubles as a training ground for her new troops.

Stahlfort

Where Insel possesses natural defenses, Stahlfort's were carved piece by piece from unforgiving stone. The fortress is perched atop a hill whose sides have been cut away to sheer cliffs. The only approach that an army could reasonably take leads them through fourteen gates, one after another. While a nearby switchback offers a tempting place for siege engines, Sieger has a number of catapults of his own already aimed at that spot. Should that fail to discourage enemy engineers, he has several cannons aimed at buried support beams beneath the switchback, ready to collapse the entire structure if need be.

Miners in Eisen

Since the miners of Eisen are so important to its economy, the Eisenfürsten are careful not to upset them. They and their families are treated nearly as well as the sölden. They are not too heavily worked, they get much better food than the baueren ever receive, and their profession is respected and admired among the Eisen.





Stahlfort is as utilitarian as a fortress can be, with a fresh water spring bubbling up into cisterns in the basement, and over a year's dried rations stored away as well. These rations can be supplemented by fresh eggs from chickens and pork from the pigs kept under a stone roof in the courtyard. Most experienced generals who have

appraised Stahlfort believe that it cannot be taken from the outside.

Tannen

Tannen is a small town, interesting only for two reasons. The first is that it houses and supports the Kippe Military Academy, the finest academy in all of Eisen. The second reason is an interesting historical note. The Kreuzritter, or "Knights of the Cross," were nominally wiped out in a battle that took place here in 1411. The villagers still maintain the graveyard, a sea of black crosses arranged to form a much larger Cross of the Prophet. Students from the Kippe Academy come out occasionally to view the price of failure.

The Legend of Gregorskorn

Deep in the Drachenberg mountains lies a maze of canyons shrouded in a perpetual fog. It is said that long ago, St. Gregor, the greatest of the Eisen saints, heard tales of a drachen living there that menaced the countryside. Donning his suit of armor and taking up his dracheneisen shield, he rode into the maze to find and kill it. The fog was thick that day, and his horse, scenting the drachen, reared and bolted, leaving St. Gregor to face the beast on foot.

It was nearly dark when he came across a cave. From within, he heard the breathing of an enormous creature, so he drew his sword and shouted, "In the name of Theus, come forth and fight me, beast!" There was silence for a moment, and then the drachen burst out of the cave, as large as a building, with jaws so wide it could swallow a man in a single bite.

Gregor fought the drachen through the night, struggling against the weariness that threatened to overtake him. Only his shield kept the beast's claws from tearing him open. Finally, as his strength began to fail, Gregor prayed to Theus to give him strength to slay the monster. When the prayer left his lips, the fog parted, and a single ray of sunlight shone down on a spot on the drachen's head. Gregor stabbed his sword into that spot with all his might, and the beast was slain. In its death throes, its thrashings knocked away his shield, which has never been recovered. Since then, the canyons have been known as Gregorskorn, or "Gregor's Maze."

The Military

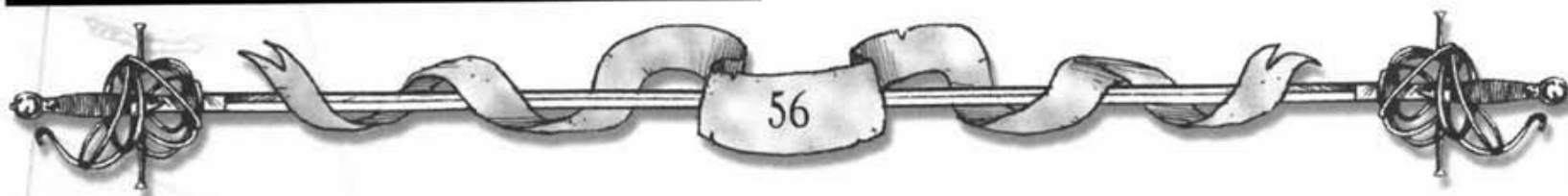
Mercenary Bands

Most of the military presence in Eisen consists of mercenary bands and the private guards of the Eisenfürsten. Since the private guards, consist of no more than ten or twenty members, the mercenary bands will decide the military future of Eisen.

Most of the bands predate the War of the Cross. Many of them fought on both sides of the war at some time or another. Each can be recognized by its distinctive banner and war cry on the battlefield. Most companies also have a charter that sets down rules of conduct and divvies out shares of the pay.

One of the most famous Eisen warbands is Die Blutgeist, or "Blood Spirits", whose battle-cry, "*Fleigt Geisten!*", which translates into "Spirits, fly!") strikes fear into the hearts of those they face.

As for the private guards of the Eisenfürsten, only two are of particular note. Fauner Pösen's guard is noteworthy because of their extreme loyalty and ability. The second, the guard of Erich Sieger, is the most brutal and callous group of sölden in all of Eisen.





Style of Fighting

The Eisen fight with a very distinctive technique known as Eisenfaust. In their main hand they carry a broadsword, while on their off hand they wear a heavy iron gauntlet known as a *panzerhand*. This gauntlet is armored on the back and front, and can be embellished by claws or knuckle-weights built into it. Most have a small half-buckler attached to their back side. The *panzerhand* extends all the way up to the wearer's elbow and can be tied in place with leather straps. A *panzerhand* can swat away sword blows or grab the blade of an opponent's sword in order to gain a split-second opening in which to attack.

Eisenfaust is a very patient style of fighting. Its practitioners maintain a stolid defense while waiting for a hole to develop in their opponent's technique. When the opening occurs, they strike as quickly and savagely as possible. Because of this, it often appears that an Eisen is losing in the early part of a fight. Once the opportunity presents itself, however, the Eisen lashes out, and usually leaves his opponent crippled or dead.

"Show me your fist!"

A *sölden* will not wear his *panzerhand* unless he is about to enter battle, keeping it in a pouch tied to his belt the rest of the time. Thus, while most fighters of the day take off their gloves to fight, an Eisen puts his on. This has led to an Eisen challenge "Show me your fist!" meaning literally, "Put on your glove."

Typically, when peace knots are required on weapons, the Eisen tie their *panzerhand* pouches shut, but leave their swords free to draw. This is accepted in most places since the Eisen give their word of honor not to draw steel while the knot is in place, and if there's one thing about the Eisen, they keep their word.

The Military Academies

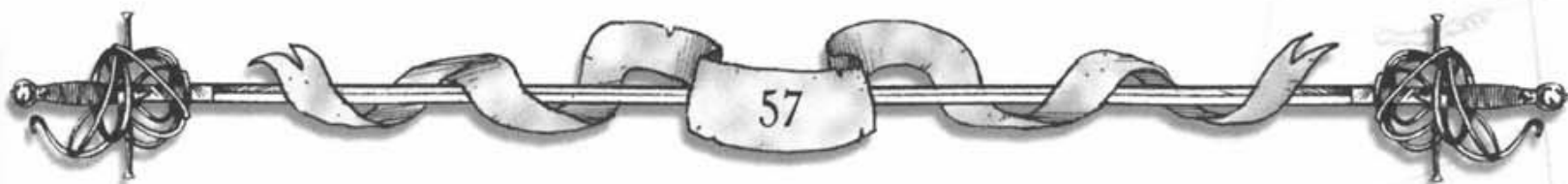
The Eisen schools of tactics are acknowledged as the greatest of their kind in the world. Not only do the students learn how to fight at them, they learn how to show others how to fight. Four of these schools are acknowledged as the best of the best: Steil, Unabwendbar, Kippe, and Gelingen.

Steil is located in Gottkirchen and was founded only seven years ago by a cousin of the late Emperor Riefenstahl. Since then it has seen phenomenal success, turning away more than half of the students who apply for admission. The curriculum emphasizes cavalry maneuvers and infantry drills.

Unabwendbar is in Stärke, and serves primarily as a tactical school, with little emphasis on combat training. It teaches a philosophy known as *Unwiderstehlich*, or "Irresistible." Students learn to embrace the inevitable rather than struggle against it. Their focus shifts to the things that they can make a difference in, both on the battlefield and in life. They can sometimes seem a little cold-hearted, but if they ignore a collapsing cavalry charge, it's because there's nothing they can do to save them.

Kippe is based in the town of Tannen. The students take strict vows of secrecy the first day they arrive at the school, and indeed, attendance is by invitation only. Kippe is considered the best of all the Eisen military academies, and its students often receive the best positions once they graduate. Sadly, there is a high mortality rate among these graduates, leading some to believe that the school is cursed.

Gelingen is founded on the shore opposite Insel. The students learn in the field, often accompanying patrols into der Salzsumpf. These patrols ferret out poachers, watch for invading armies, and hunt down monsters that find their way into the swamp. The motto of the school is *Machen bekannt*, or "Know by doing."





Current Relations with the Rest of Théah

Avalon

"The only thing good about the Avalons is that we know they can't be trusted." As far as the Eisen are concerned, any Avalon has to be watched cautiously. Still, accusing a man of being a thief or a liar is a serious matter, so Eisen usually keep their opinions to themselves unless they have absolute proof of an Avalon's dishonesty.

Castille

The Castillians are somewhat odd, but mostly good religious folk. If an Eisen is an Objectivist, he will definitely keep this a secret around the Castillians. They aren't known for their open-mindedness.

Montaigne

The Montaigne prefer style over substance, which greatly upsets Eisen sensibilities. Eisen see the Montaignes as wasteful, arrogant children. Still, they often have plenty of money to throw around, so it's worth being polite to them, just in case.

Pirate Nation

There's nothing wrong with men making a living through force of arms. The threat of pirates keeps many Eisen employed, and their trade often goes to Freiburg, where it helps the Eisen economy even more. The Eisen will not profit if something happens to the pirates.

Ussura

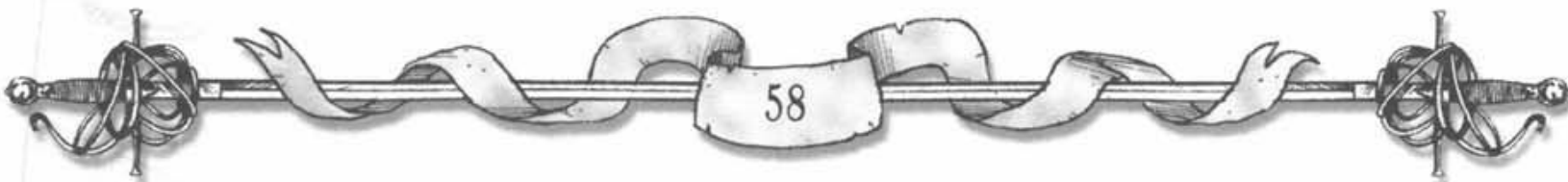
The Ussurans are strong, quiet people, if a bit skittish. An Eisen could scarcely ask for a better traveling companion, since they keep to themselves unless there's a fight (in which case they're perfectly capable of holding their own).

Vendel

Although the Vendel are partially responsible for the War of the Cross, they are stout fighters, and the Vestenmannavnjar are able craftsmen. Therefore the Eisen look at them with grudging respect.

Vodacce

The Vodacce weave a web of lies around their victims and then descend to feast upon their helpless bodies. If there's a Vodacce around, always keep an eye on him, or he's bound to stick a dagger in your back.



Eisen NPCs

Stefan Heilgrund

"It is evident to me from my studies of the other nations that true power – and thus the glorious rebirth of our nation – can only be gained through the acquisition of sorcery."

As the newest in a long line of Eisenfürsten in Heilgrund, Stefan is a young man infatuated with the past. He longs for the glories of the Holy Republic and a reunited Eisen. The other Eisenfürsten treat him like a joke, which has made him bitter. He has come to believe that only force of arms will reunite Eisen. He is somewhat infatuated with Fauner Pösen, but she shows nothing but contempt for him and his dreams of conquest.

Image: Stefan is short for an Eisen, with dull brown hair and bright blue eyes. His face creases with frown lines, even at his young age, and he shows a certain boredom and lethargy when faced with anything not directly related to his goals.

Goals: Stefan's single driving goal is to become the new Emperor of the Republic, which means reuniting Eisen and getting the Hierophant to recognize his claim. He has come to believe that his armies will never be great enough to conquer Eisen, so he has begun to research the occult in the hopes of acquiring sorcery powerful enough to make the difference.

Roleplaying Stefan: Act overly concerned with tradition and ceremony. Never take offense visibly, simply let your smile fade a bit and narrow your eyes ever so slightly for just a moment. If a discussion of the occult takes place within earshot, become animated and excited, and grill the participants for everything they know about sorcery. Otherwise, act bored with the proceedings.

Georg Hainzl

"Dear friend, Horatio, bring forth the players and let the revelry begin!"

"But my Lord, my name isn't Horatio."

"Whatever you say, Horatio."

Georg Hainzl is an old man with a problem distinguishing fantasy from reality. Every morning, he decides that he's a character from a play or book, and then dresses and acts the part for the rest of the day. Unhappily, he's also the Eisenfürst of Hainzl, so his edicts bear weight, however insane they may be. His servants have learned to deal with his idiosyncrasies, but visitors to his castle are often surprised by them. Georg's main advisor, Marcus Stefan Adolfo, usually handles affairs of state.

Image: An overweight but muscular man, Georg is slightly taller than the average Théan. His hair has begun





Fauner Pösen

"That may be all well and good for the rest of Eisen, but the people of Pösen have no interest in continuing to fight a thirty-year-old war."

Fauner Pösen's family has a strong military history, and she is no exception. She is taller than the average Eisen woman, quite strong, and extremely skilled with a blade. She is also a very astute tactician. Suitors typically meet with extreme disinterest tempered with faint scorn. She simply doesn't have time for romantic nonsense — she has a kingdom to run.

Image: Fauner has short blonde hair and piercing gray eyes. She often appears for formal gatherings in a full suit of drachenschuppe armor, with a gleaming sword at her side. Her expression rarely changes from a stern frown, and she never laughs.

Goals: Fauner's primary goal is to ensure the prosperity of her kingdom. She is willing to go to whatever lengths necessary to do so, including entering into a political marriage, if unavoidable.

Roleplaying Fauner: Make sure your posture is absolutely straight. Think carefully a moment before saying anything. Pointedly ignore any romantic advances. If someone causes you to lose face, challenge him to a duel.

Erich Sieger

"You idiots couldn't find your own arses with both hands. I'm going hunting."

Erich Sieger is the Eisenfürsten of one of the oldest königreichen in all of Eisen. His family has a long, proud tradition, and he carries it on as well as he can under the circumstances. He has always been outspoken, but since the Emperor signed over his lands to Montaigne and Castille in the Treaty of Weissberg, he's become even more rude and obnoxious. He burned and salted the land to be turned over to Castille in order to retain

to gray at the edges, giving him a distinguished look that he is rather proud of (it lets him assume the roles of famous rulers more easily). Georg smiles easily unless he has assumed a very grim role for the day.

Goals: Georg is insane as far as anyone knows. His only goals seem to be staying in character from day-to-day.

Roleplaying Georg: Select a character from an opera or a book of the time period, and play the role to the hilt. Georg never slips out of character, and nobody has seen his own personality manifest in over twelve years. Georg has lost his own identity, so you should alternate comic scenes with quieter moments that show his confusion and loss.



possession, and he's been trying to restore it ever since. He had one illegitimate son years ago, and sent him away to a military academy in Freiburg when he was six. The boy disobeyed his instructions and attended university instead. When Erich found out, he continued to send money, but when the boy graduated, he wrote him a letter telling him to stay in Freiburg and seek employment there. He wants nothing to do with the rest of the world, and would cut off all diplomatic relations if he thought he could safely do so.

Image: Erich is a man of great height with broad, stocky shoulders. He wears his dark brown hair in a short military cut. He rarely appears without his dracheneisen panzerhand, and he often wears his family sword, which bears the family motto on its blade, "Surrender is death."

Goals: Erich served the Emperor loyally for years and was rewarded by having his lands taken from him. Now

he serves no one, kneels to no man, and says whatever he wants. As abused as his poor little piece of land is, it's still his home, and he means to keep it, no matter what. That means he's going to have to repair the damage that he caused in order to retain possession of it. He's been working towards this goal by dredging the river bottom in order to replace the salted earth. Aside from this repair work, his main goal in life is to be left alone.

Roleplaying Erich: Say what you want, and don't worry about what anyone else thinks. You've said what you want for so long that you don't even care if anyone takes offense any more. Respect those people who speak their mind without reservation or fear, and take things one step at a time. Just imagine being right all the time and you've got Sieger down pat.

Nicklaus Trägue

"Theus is a fable created so that those fools who think the world will end when they die can sleep at night."

Nicklaus Trägue could be described as bitter and brooding. By the same logic, a diamond could be described as "firm." He likes to sit on top of the Wachturm in Freiburg and dangle his feet over the edge while watching people go about their lives far below. He has virtually no interest in ruling Freiburg, so he tries to arrange things so that it mostly runs itself. This leaves him free to work on his book and drink himself into a stupor.

Image: Nicklaus is tall, thin, and bald, with a dark goatee and thick black eyebrows. He often sits deep in thought with the tips of his fingers pressed together. He dresses in dark, somber colors.

Goals: Nicklaus is writing a book of philosophy with the help of his scribe, Logan Gottschalk Sieger (Erich Sieger's only son). It will put forth a number of controversial ideas, such as the possibility of having ethics without religion. He hopes to finish this book before someone attacks and conquers Freiburg, since he knows that both the Vaticines and the Objectionists want him dead.

Roleplaying Nicklaus: Frown a lot. Speak quietly, unless you're drunk, in which case act as though everyone is hard of hearing. Show disdain for anyone who obviously has strong religious beliefs. If someone attacks you physically, snap into sobriety while your bodyguards descend upon the aggressor in a swarm.



Montaigne

"Montaigne is like a grand old dame. If she decides, on a whim, to wear an antique hat to a party, she sets fashion back one hundred years."

— Val Mokka

Montaigne is another nation on the brink of an all-too-familiar tragedy. You only need a brief peek to know that it won't be long before Madame Guillotine starts collecting noble heads. You can smell it in the air... if you're on the streets, that is.

If you're not, then you don't smell anything at all. It's all covered up by the perfume.

The Montaigne nobility are decadent to the extreme. They've got so much money they don't know what to do with it, so they build extravagant manor houses and pay starving artists to paint seventeen-foot-tall portraits and sponsor archaeologists to dig up Syrneth artifacts they can wear to next week's party.

The nobility have nothing better to do with their time than watch each other make mischief. The entire country has been excommunicated from the Church, and while that may not sound like a big deal to the nobility, it has shattered the starving Montaigne peasants. They may be willing to kill over it.

There are a couple of people to keep an eye on in Montaigne. The first, of course, is the peasant General Montegue. He's done more to change the face of Théan military theory than anyone else in a few hundred years. At the drop of a hat he invented the rifle line, an innovation that didn't hit Europe until the mid-1700s. He's also the first commoner to command an army in Théah's history, another significant accomplishment. However, unlike the Heroes, Montegue is not a very idealistic man. In fact, he's the exact opposite. Montegue is willing to do anything — *anything* — for victory. His sharpshooters take out the enemy commanders. He'll gun down a retreating army. He'll cut off supply lines so his enemy will starve. He is a relentless, ruthless man who will protect his army at any cost. Montegue is not a Hero, but he's not a Villain, either. He's got the potential to be one or the other, teetering right on the edge.

The other person to keep an eye out for is Empereur Léon Alexandre's youngest daughter, Montegue's wife Dominique. She has shown absolutely no potential for sorcery whatsoever, and thus has been ignored by her father. However, others are very interested in the young woman for entirely different reasons.



As is the tradition for any child born in Montaigne, Dominique went through a ritual when she was born. The ritual, performed by three Vodacce Fate Witches, foretold the girl's future. When the Witches reported she showed no sign of sorcery in her blood, the Empereur stormed away. What the Witches *didn't* tell the Empereur was that the little girl would give birth to the most powerful sorcerer the world has ever seen. The discovery remained secret until very recently, when Dominique discovered the truth herself. This little revelation has triggered a series of events that will shake the foundations of Théah's destiny. Pay close attention to this one.

Land

To outsiders, the nation of Montaigne is beautiful; some might say "perfect."

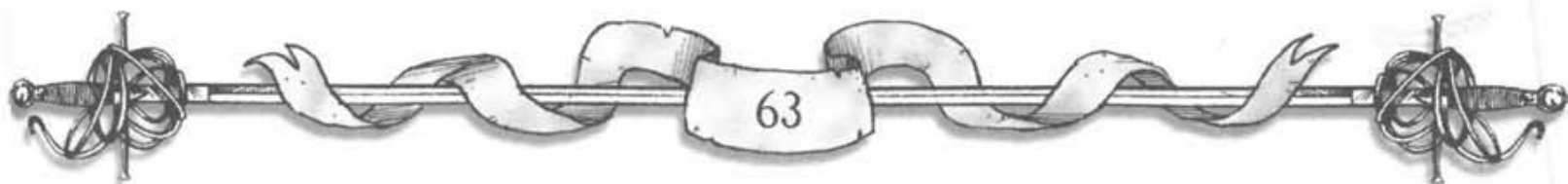
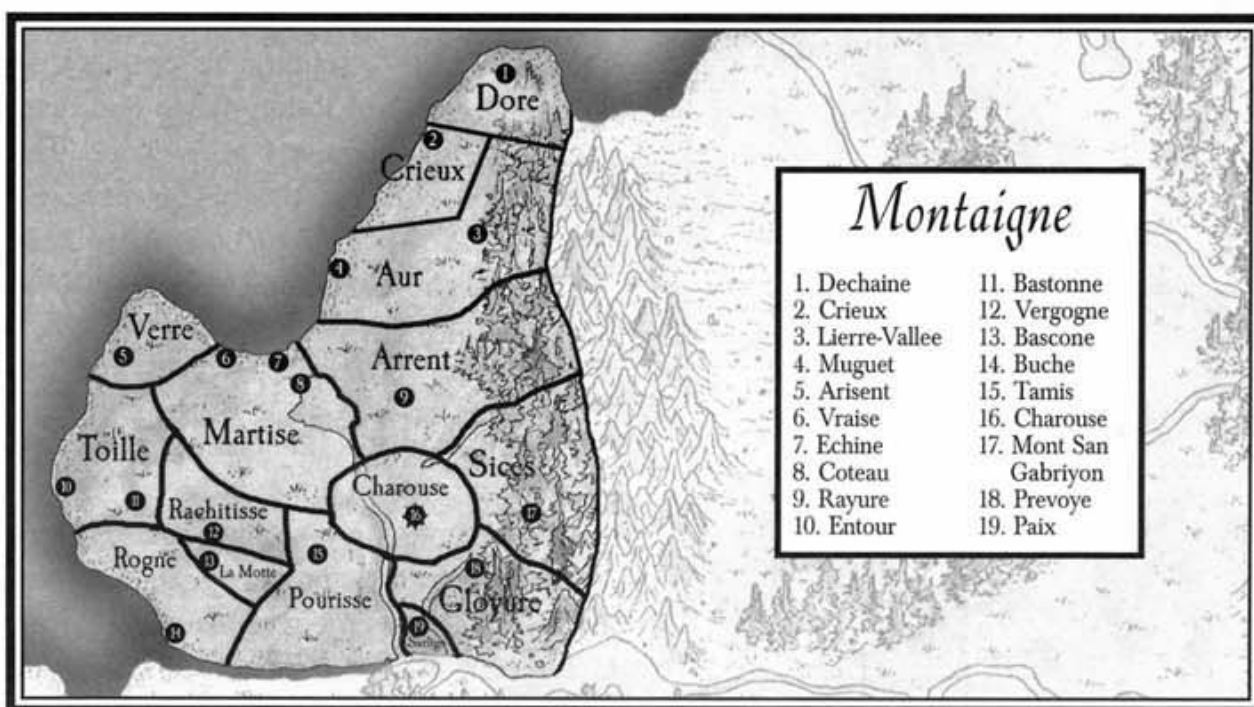
The Montaigne call her "most glorious nation in Théah." Her terrain is bountiful, verdant, and lush. Her soil is fertile, her mountains rich in ore, and her farmlands extend for miles. Her cities mirror Paradise itself, stretching so far in all directions that they cannot be navigated by foot in a single day. Her ports bustle with

activity and trade, and the opulence of her courts and palaces dwarf anything else Théah has to offer.

From the northern Avalon Channel to the city of Buché in the south, from the Frothing Sea in the west to the newly acquired Lock-Horn forest in the east, Montaigne is a cultivated and civilized nation, a land of plenty. Every acre that can be farmed is harvested to the inch, every deposit of ore that can be mined — no matter how rich — is dredged up and smelted into iron and steel and any lumber deemed strong enough to build with is cut down, leaving room for more farms.

Unlike Castille, though, which benefits from the careful guidance of the Church, the people of Montaigne have not maintained their land while they draw from it. Visiting Church scholars have warned them more than once about the probable consequences if they do not slow down production and begin rotating the use of their land. As yet there is no evidence that the scholars are right, and the pressure to build caused by their twin war efforts have conspired against such action.

Montaigne is a flat land, consisting almost entirely of level grasslands well suited for farming. With the only sizable



mountain range located in the Doré province of the far northeast, the climate is moderate year-round, unbroken by temperature extremes, drought, or violent weather. Winter temperatures rarely drop below freezing, and many regions of Montaigne vary little more than twenty degrees over the course of an entire year. Sparse seasonal forests dot the landscape and a large collection of lowland rivers meander through her countryside. The combined effect is enchanting, further lending to the atmosphere that draws so many to her.

Montaigne can be roughly divided among five regions, centered around the capital province of Charouse. Charouse itself is the center of an immense basin, one of

the lowest altitudes in all of Montaigne. To the west, a gradual incline creates a series of rolling hills cut into the graceful pasture, while a man can march a day or more to the east before seeing the horizon shift. This region contains some of the most highly prized farmland in the entire nation, rich in the minerals and nutrients necessary for her most valued crops. It is also the most easily defended part of the country, making it the ideal location for her capital.

North of Charouse are Montaigne's most exceptional features, including her only significant mountain range, Les Somme Blancs ("The White Mountains"), whose snow-capped peaks reach ten thousand feet, and the Sinueuse River, which opens into the Avalon Channel through the city of Crieux. Everything here is grand; Crieux itself is the largest port city of Montaigne, and the province is possibly the most well known in Théah. It is not uncommon for the Duke of Crieux, Douard Allais, to countermand the advice or even commands of all but the royal line, and this attitude has attracted many of the most free-willed Montaignes, and some from abroad.

The province of Doré has acquired a similar reputation by the actions of Pierre Flaubert de Doré, who recently converted all of his farmland into grazing territory for cattle. The beef provides his province with a level of income unmatched in the nation and directly challenges Charouse for supremacy in livestock. Though courtiers and nobility across the nation have expressed open hostility at this decision, the royal family has yet to respond, being occupied with affairs of war.

To the east of Charouse, beyond the Montaigne flatlands, is the Eisen territory gained through the Treaty of Weissburg, a vast forest that remains in good condition. Wood lumbered from this forest has proven an invaluable resource, though it has come at a high price: nearly two dozen people (including two Porté sorcerers) who entered its shadowed canopy have vanished, never to return. All that remained in their stead were a series of bizarre blood





trails leading up tree trunks and into the highest branches before disappearing as well.

The western provinces remain the most consistent example of the uniformity of Montaigne's land. They are flat and simple, picturesque and enticing. At their end lies the Frothing Sea, beyond which no man has ever crossed.

Lastly, to the south, Montaigne abuts the massive Trade River, its main point of contact with the rest of continental Théah. At one time, Montaigne — like most other nations — focused a great deal of attention on this pebble-laden coast, but today it has been ravaged by war and clouded by the suspicious nature of Montaigne's border patrols. Buché alone remains a free trade port, now combined with the former city of Barcino, taken of late from the Castillians.

People

Called Montaignes, or "Sunflowers" behind their backs, the people of Montaigne are very fit and — by comparison — very clean as well. The average male noblesse is well groomed, while noble women keep their hair and cosmetics in the proper style for the current season. Brown hair and eyes are standard, though a few with hazel eyes or blond hair appear as well. Montaigne men often hide their soft features behind a short beard or trim mustache, while females accentuate their gentle cheekbones with long hair that borders their faces.

Peasants cut their hair once a year at the beginning of spring, so they have a full head of hair and a thick beard to keep them warm in winter. There is not a great deal of variation in the way they dress, though whether this enhances or stifles their diversity is a topic for debate. Some argue that the nobles, not their lesser countrymen, share a common face, as each strives continually to maintain whatever look is in fashion at any time.

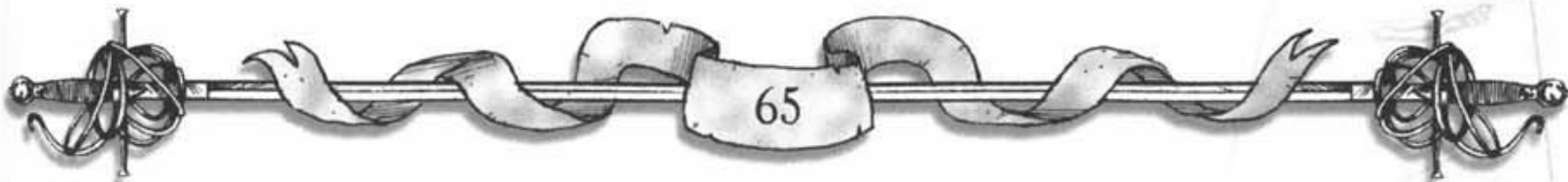
"Chaffing"

Within the nobility, a complicated, almost laughable practice persists. Children of the noblesse beyond the first (*i.e.*, who are not heirs and receive no land at their parents' deaths) must find their own place to live once their eldest sibling inherits the family title. Their elders often lobby to find them suitable homes with other noblesse, or may even take on a number of errant children as marquis if they have none of their own. The end result is a long history of swapped bloodlines within Montaigne that has — with the exception of the *naitre-premier* ("first born") — obscured their lineages in the extreme. This practice, called "chaffing", dates back over three hundred years, which explains much of the confusion between the bloodlines.

Social Strata

Montaigne is easily the most broadly divided nation in Théah, economically and philosophically. Under a rigid caste system, the people of Montaigne easily separate into a series of identifiable classes. A broad description of each follows, descending from the royal line to the nearly invisible peasantry.

The uppermost crust of Montaigne's nobility (La Famille Royale) are few in number but wield absolute power in her lands. Only *l'Empereur* (a title recently changed from "King") Léon Alexandre du Montaigne, his wife, the Imperatrice, their immediate family, and the parents of the former monarchy can accurately claim to be of this class. At present, the Empereur has nine daughters but no sons, a sore point with the royal line. Morella Alouse Giacinni, a Vodacce Fate Witch and the Empereur's third wife, has been unable to provide him a suitable heir. She gave birth to their daughter, Dominique, who shows no talent for sorcery at all. The Empereur's previous wife, a





Castillian and mother of three, died of “feminine ills” some time ago.

Below the royals are the *noblesse* (or nobility proper), the Dukes and Marquis of Montaigne. Highest among them are the Dukes, the landed nobles, who share the names of those who have ruled since Montaigne’s foundation. But the Marquis, their siblings, command the bulk of the wealth and manage the majority of the resources of the nation. They may live within a remote part of the provinces they administer in return for their services, tending to the details of each. Sometimes, a Duke will have several Marquis beneath him, dividing the duchy into several individual marquisates. This sort of extravagance is reserved only for Dukes with the highest degree of wealth, however.

Next are the *petite noblesse*, or, as they are more commonly known, the “gentry” of Montaigne. These people are nobles by virtue of affluence alone, being without land or the associate responsibilities it brings. They are a by-product of the staggering amount of wealth within the nation. Some have inherited it, others have swindled it — in their class, all that matters is that they have it. They maintain an extravagant life and attend all of the functions of the nobility, while avoiding the politicking and infighting so common among the elite. The obvious advantages to being gentry are commonly outweighed by the fact that most do not have a permanent home, and must constantly move from one estate to another, much like the sons and daughters of Dukes who cannot be made Marquis.

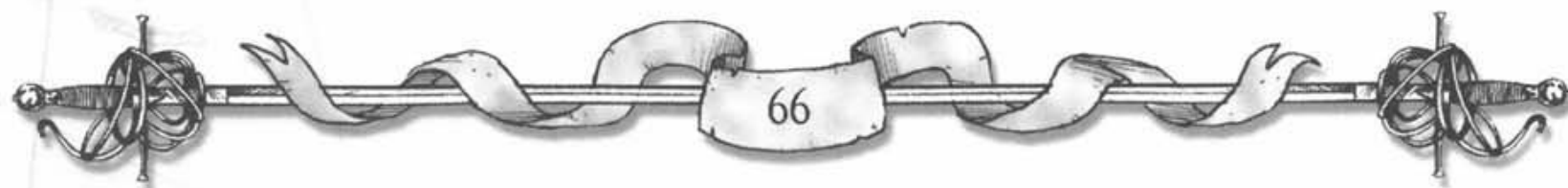
The present trend in Montaigne considers gentry fashionable, and having infamous *petite noblesse* staying at your estate is *avant-garde*, especially if they are somehow “gifted” (in dance, music, poetry, opera, or literature, for example). Many of these “well received” gentry have taken to writing memoirs at the end of their lives, or to establishing libraries, museums, art houses, or some other monument to their existence before they die.

Also below the proper nobility (and ranking just beside the gentry) are the *noblesse errante*. These are nobility that have somehow become disenfranchised and have chosen to become courtiers, emissaries, or dignitaries to the throne. Paix and Buché are flooded with hundreds of bureaucrats, and each new generation adds more. The duty of many errant depends upon the level of noble to which they have linked themselves; one’s patron also determines the level of respect one receives. The desire to acquire one with magic or ambition is high.

Courtesans — talented commoners — tend to have an easier time of things. Their exist mainly to entertain the nobility, to impress them with their skill. Poets, jesters, jennys, actors, writers, artists, and charlatans all belong to what has become a broad social stratum. Merchants or clergy with enough coin can earn the respect of courtesans as if they were nobility. However, without a proper understanding of the “rules” it is very easy for someone to insult the integrity of the court, and thus insult the power of the reigning noble.

The first of the classes outside the nobility are scholars, who have gained newfound popularity with the recent increase in exploration. Although scholars (especially philosophers) have traditionally been highly regarded in Montaigne, acceptance into the developing study of archæology is quickly becoming a badge of distinction. Many *noblesse* keep several scholars on retainer, including an archæologist, and most — realizing that their lack of outward interest has cost them dearly — struggle to build private libraries to entice scholars to them as well.

Merchants and craftsmen have also received special consideration in Montaigne of late. By and large, these workers belong to the Vendel League, ensuring them a level of income above most “freelance” agents in their field. Those Montaigne with money can sway them to ply their trade within their country exclusively, creating the air of superiority they crave and drawing increased





revenue to support them along the way. To the nobility, these people are an asset too valuable to neglect.

The last rung on the Montaigne social ladder is that of the peasantry. Though the immense walled cities and elaborate chateaux present the beauty and peace of the nation, all have been built upon the backs of her peasants. The life of the common man in Montaigne is hard, particularly when measured alongside the tales of luxury afforded the peasantry of other nations (such as the farmers of Vodacce, for one). A 60-hour work week consumes their lives, as old men, daughters, and mothers too infirm to give birth any longer tend to the millions of acres of land owned by the Montaigne nobility.

Etiquette

"Faire tout petit." ("Make yourself inconspicuous.")

– Anonymous

The Montaigne nobility avoid confrontation. Rather than engage anyone directly, they speak through assistants, envoys, messengers, and courtesans, and in court settings they use metaphor and witticisms to circumvent conversation. They often avoid your gaze if cornered. Subtlety has replaced the need to actually say anything, and is considered a far more noble skill than honesty.

The fine art of blending with consensus is pervasive in Montaigne; few nobles have the fortitude to start trends. So many fashions are popular in the nation because so many are told how to act and what to wear. The organization of parties – though common – is a trying experience for them, and most Montaigne would rather fund someone else's function than host their own. For this reason, an entire year can pass with parties held nowhere but in Paix, Charouse, and Crieux, where those bold enough to become pace-setters have migrated.

Citing precedent is also very common among the nobles. When dealing with foreigners, the Montaigne often say

things that seem out of context, confusing or annoying their visitors. This has led to numerous disastrous situations for them; were it not for the Paix Embassy's lush surroundings and convenient location, many ambassadors – once offended in such a way – would not return.

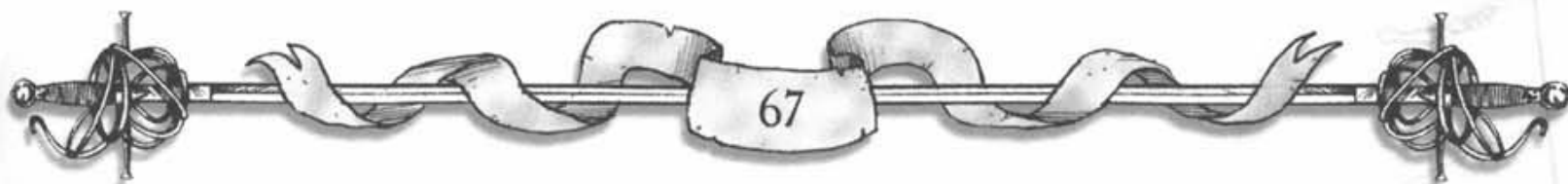
The peasants of Montaigne do not wilt so easily. They are kind and inviting, despite their rough lifestyle. Through years of humility they have learned not to complain about their plight, and so even though they live in squalor, they remain clean and confident. People who have visited Montaigne often complain that the people were rude or vulgar, but those who avoid the cities have nothing but good things to say about their visit.

Clothing

While peasants are lucky to afford a second suit of clothes before they die, the nobility wear whatever is in style, and quickly double their wardrobe within a single season if others speak highly of a new designer. Excessive gowns, expensive jewelry, and an entourage to carry their train are all integral parts of Montaigne fashion. Experienced *Porté* sorcerers can usually be identified by gloves and cosmetics, used to cover up the unsightly blemishes that eventually form upon their hands and arms.

Montaigne apparel comes from a variety of materials, including brocades, velvets, silks, laces, sheer linen, and satin. Although royal blue and gold are the colors of the nobility, all things vibrant can be seen among the elite. Rococo floral patterns shine on coats and gowns, giving the Empire of the Sun the gleam and sparkle associated with its regal luster. Dark colors are considered hideous, and many patriotic Montaigne consider it an insult for visitors to wear such colors in their court.

Montaigne dictates style to most other nations of the world, and the focus of this thrust is the *Mode du Lac* (the Fashion Society), a high-society art house who set major fashion trends. In recent years they have grown close to





the Vendel League, which has helped to spread their message in return for a choice of annual styles. Men generally follow the dictates of the *Mode du Lac*, but women's wardrobes diverge shortly into the season if the queens across Théah have followed another path.

Diet

Nobles of Montaigne enjoy imported meats, fish, cheese, milk, butter, wine, grains, vegetables, spices, and a host of exotic foods from all over Théah. Vodacce cuisine is particularly popular at the moment. Montaigne cooking is the most inventive method of food preparation in the world right now, and its cooking schools are renowned for their creativity and exotic measures. The nobility have recently discovered a love for grapefruit and cantaloupe, and have begun importing exotic fruits from Vodacce and Ussuran traders. Truffles are considered a delicacy in Montaigne, and the chefs have begun hiring people to train pigs to seek out the tidbits.

Merchants are not accustomed to the pampered diet of their noble superiors, but they enjoy their meals nonetheless. Fresh vegetables, wines, meats, cheeses, and breads form their daily rations. Castillian crops are also becoming more affordable as well, with the acquisition of lands south of the River.

The diet of the Montaigne peasantry is simple — old beans, moldy bread, rotted lettuce, turnips, cabbage, over-aged wine, and dirty water. Every day, farmers harvest decent food which winds up filling the bellies of the nobility or being exported to the rest of the world, while the men, women, and children who labored for it starve. As expected, peasants often keep some extra from what they reap each month, but they must be careful — too much and the tax collectors will notice.

Customs

Montaigne revel in ridiculing others, as long as the games remain fun. Nearly all Montaigne embrace the importance of humor, even at their own expense, but

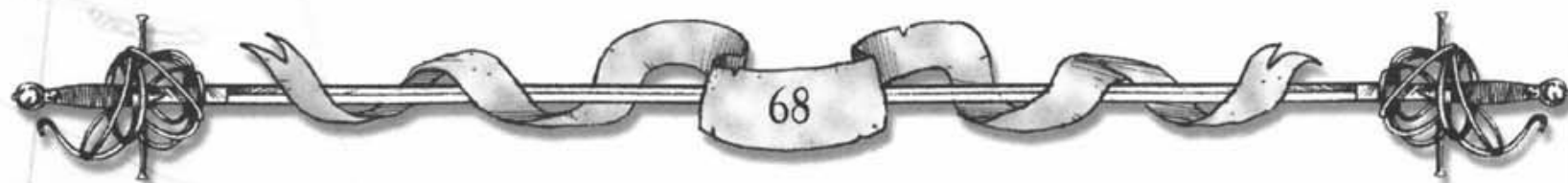
there is a fine line that must not be crossed. When derision goes too far (and intuitive Montaigne know when this has happened), the *blaguer* ("offender") is quickly ousted from polite society. It is not uncommon to find someone gifted in ridicule to be very popular until an indiscretion; many courtiers specializing in social critiques find themselves without a patron mere moments after inflaming a delicate situation. Ironically enough, however, if a situation is so delicate as to be considered explosive, most everyone is expected to engage in "the game" in order to lessen the load on their neighbor, a nuance many outsiders never understand.

Touching is another ambiguous custom in Montaigne. Montaigne do not touch their wives or husbands while in public (except, perhaps, when dancing), but it is not uncommon for them to embrace a courtesan or friend in the company of others, whether married or not. Fanning one's face while laughing and touching a friend's hand or chest is also acceptable.

Art and Music

Just as they stand in the forefront of modern philosophy, the Montaigne also remain the most influential in the fields of art and music. Some believe that greatness is attracted to the nation by its patron-worthy nobility. Regardless of the reason, Montaigne has become a breeding ground for all things creative, and churns out artists almost as quickly as society's collective eye can wander.

Montaigne music is played on strings and harps, with little percussion. It is very slow and stale, reminiscent of funeral music, though one person is trying to change that. His name is Wolffrond von Hazel (*HOTS-el*), he is seven years old and he is perhaps the greatest musical talent of the last one hundred years. Born in Eisen ("where all the best composers hail from"), von Hazel has come to Montaigne with his parents on an extended tour showcasing his talent, and to adopt a suitable (read: wealthy) patron for him. He has spent the last several





months in Paix and garnered critical support among the Montaigne lords.

Names

Like the rest of Montaigne society, naming revolves around one's social status. For instance, the proper names of nobility are preceded by a title, then the first name and surname, followed by the word "du" and the province they govern. (Members of the royal line are the only ones permitted to use the province of "Montaigne" for this purpose.) For example, Lady Jaqueline Riché du Pourisse is a lady from the Pourisse province.

In keeping with their unconventional methods, gentry may keep whatever name they choose for themselves. Nor are the clergy bound to the naming process of the nobility; most in fact lose their birth name when they take their station, with Bishops and Cardinals taking on five or more names in some cases. For example, the Bishop Jules Corinne du Auguereau Crepin d'Agenau served under High Cardinal Michel Desaix Jean-Claude du Mirielle Sarnin.

Members of the merchant class have a first and last name, while the peasants have very simple name. Peasant children, for instance, receive only a first name, as they rarely leave their villages. In cases like these, the name of the village, town, or province they are from usually becomes a surname if necessary. As a final example, Paul Arrent denotes the peasant Paul from the province of Arrent.

Religion

Up to the early 1600s, the Montaigne people were resolute in their spirituality, and many found solace in the words of the Church's representatives. With the abysmal lack of moral leadership during the reigns of King Léon XII and Léon XIII, the spiritual fiber of the nation began to decay. Since then, it has become evident that any influence the Church had upon the Montaigne nobility is



fading fast. This caused the attempted Church coup which blossomed into the war between Montaigne and Castille, and may yet rip both nations apart.

Today the nobility of Montaigne openly opposes the Church, promoting banned books and secular movements. Financial support has halted and the Churches are being taxed. A climate of sin prevails across the nation. With fewer and fewer Montaignes following the Church, the number of clergy in the nation has dwindled as well.

The peasants of Montaigne (with the exception of most servants) have noticed the shift of their nobility's religious views, as well as the climate of frustration evident amongst the remaining spiritual leaders, and many fear that they are damned. The church has done all it can to keep them happy while petitioning the courts to alleviate the strain upon their lives, but many Church officials turn a blind eye to the conditions of the peasantry when coffers of gold arrive at their homes as "gifts from the people."

There is presently no Cardinal in Montaigne, and all of the Bishops are missing or in seclusion, leaving the monsignors and priests alone with the responsibility of leading their misguided flocks. Between the rampant fear among the peasants, and the hedonistic excess of the Montaigne nobility, the role of the remaining Vaticine clergy is a difficult one indeed.

Government

"The Empereur is an angry drunk and he is never sober."
— Common saying among the Montaigne peasantry

Outsiders often find Montaigne politics confusing. Even ambassadors familiar with its structure sometimes lose track of who to talk to and who to elude. The dizzying number of political clichés to avoid and the immense network of connections (each with an associate — and

often explosive — emotional attachment) can rattle the best-trained Fate Witch.

The result is a fully functional system in which — somehow — everything gets done. Eventually, when the knives are put away, the blood dries, and everyone has set aside their death-writs, results can be achieved, though rarely unanimously. "Show me a law in Montaigne and I'll show you someone who disagrees with it," the proverb goes.

Since the War of the Cross ended and the Empereur's war with Castille began, Montaigne has doubled its size. The need for rulers has become increasingly more important, and the wealth of the nobility has expanded proportionately.

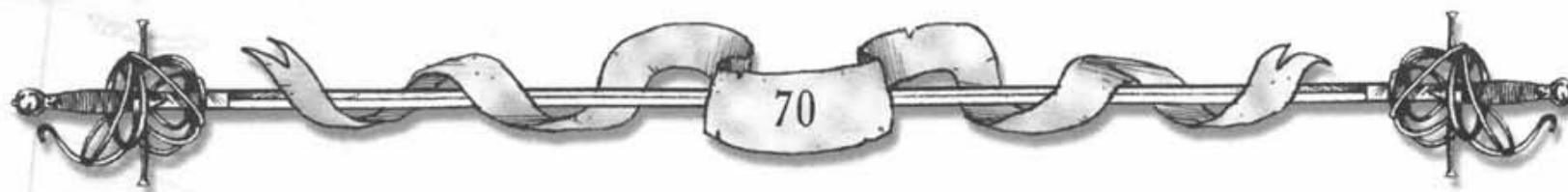
Economy

"When the gentry dresses as well as I, then our nation is full, lush, rich, and strong. When one sees a merchant do it, it is time for higher taxes."

— Empereur Léon XIV

Montaignes enjoy the highest standard of living in Théah. The tariffs that the royalty imposes on merchants also ensures that the Montaigne treasury is always full. Montaigne consumes and imports more goods, food, and raw iron than any other nation. The nobility purchase so much food, crafts, labor, and stone that their rate of consumption far exceeds their production and export, thus leaving them in a precarious situation if economic peril should befall them — which has never happened.

Montaigne uses both the *solei* (called so because of the imprint of the Montaigne sun) and the Guilder. On newer coins, the back has an impression of the Empereur in silhouette, while older coins (which are becoming increasingly scarce) have the crossed sword crest of the musketeers. Throughout Montaigne, merchants and craftsmen accept Guilders and soleis equally; most





merchants accept the Guilder but give out sols whenever making change.

Towns and Villages

All cities are walled. The great cities of Montaigne house impressive feats of architecture, and every building is a marvel. Within the cities, many may find it odd never to see a slum or a peasant walking the streets; most attribute it to proper planning on the nobles' part, while others believe that the peasants are so wealthy they merely blend in. In truth, servants are the only peasants allowed within the city walls; other peasants must remain in the farmlands and small villages where visiting dignitaries cannot see them. This ensures the healthiest levels of respect and envy from visiting members of the court, and keeps people's attention on the wealth of Montaigne and not on the blight of the peasantry.

The sewers beneath the cities are another marvel. Built many feet beneath the well maintained streets, rats are free to feed on Montaigne's garbage. Even with so many vermin feeding, however, the levels of trash must be maintained by humans. This is the only time a peasant gets to see the city. Once a year, a team of thirty or so peasants climbs down beneath the city carrying large shovels and rakes, while mules pull large cartfuls of trash through a portal opened by a master mage. The trash goes somewhere, but what Montaigne really cares where?

The Military and Their Fighting Style

"Young men think nothing more than to give their lives for their nation. And we were young."

— Epitaph written on the Great Tomb outside of the Pierre Leveque War College in Charouse

Years ago, the military of Montaigne was revered as noble and austere, the fighting arm of a world power. In recent years, however, its size has nearly tripled due to conscription, which has subsequently weakened the

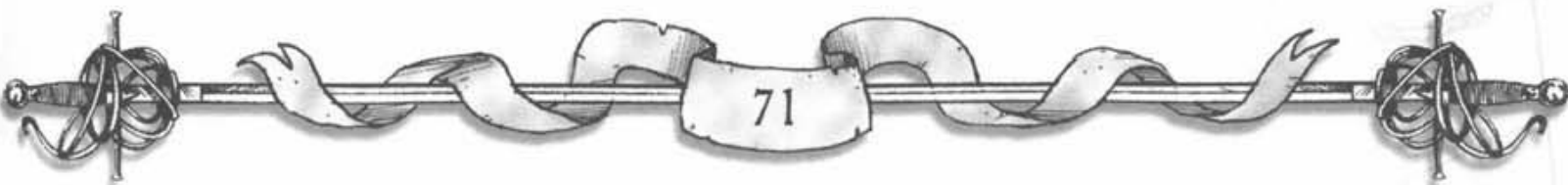
families (mostly peasants and farmers) that support the nation. At the same time its command structure dwindles, and more inexperienced military leaders (including many peasants with natural talent, but no practical knowledge) are being fielded. The devastation of the current war and the growing popularity of Montegue have caused the military to fall "out of fashion" with the nobility of Montaigne, and so few noblesse errant bother to enlist, making the situation worse.

The concurrent invasions of Castille and Ussura have stretched Montaigne's ability to manage its military to the limit, and the generals argue over the simplest logistical situations. With Montegue's reassignment to Ussura, both offensives seem to be losing impetus now, and the three generals left in his stead are both less competent and less bold.

The High Admiral of the Navy is another issue altogether. His name is Alazais Valoix Praise III, and he is without a doubt the most ostentatious military leader in recent years. Born into nobility, he continues to live a lifestyle of that station. Alazais spends more time in the courts and homes of the other nobles than doing his duty, somehow making appearances at all the best parties, while assuring the Empereur that there are no pirate threats nearby. Recently, he has ordered the mighty Montaigne fleet out to patrol "safe" waters, leaving the bay north of Crioux unguarded against plunder or illegal traffic.

Fighting Style

The Montaigne are arrogant swordsmen. While they might be quiet in court, a noble who "takes the fight outside" becomes a very different person. The cape and coat come off, the gloves and vest thrown to the ground, the feathered hat and wig are set aside, the sword is drawn, and the fighting stance is taken. The smile leaves his lips as he readies his main-gauche and poses, ready to show the might of a gentleman swordmaster.





Montaigne Swordsmen are adept with the épée, rapier, and saber, and are not afraid to humiliate their opponent. If a Montaigne does not take the time to disgrace his opponent, than he has not won the duel. It should also be observed that Montaigne duelists do not find it necessary to kill their opponent. Musketeers, for instance, are trained to disarm a criminal and bring him to trial instead.

The *main-gauche* (left-handed dagger), invented by the Vodacce, has become a new addition to the Montaigne duelist philosophy. It is mainly used to stab or parry, and the Montaigne have grown used to knocking an opponent's sword away with it, giving another chance to strike.

The Musketeers

The elite soldiers of Montaigne's military, the Musketeers, fulfill many important roles in the nation, from upholding the law of the king or escorting nobles through dangerous territory, to performing any of a number of tasks for royalty. They swear an oath to the Empereur of Montaigne upon enlistment and receive a rapier, tabard (front-facing cloak), and musket that establish their authority. The rapier's hilt is specially forged and fitted by royal blacksmiths. The tabard has a royal crest on the front and back, and the musket is made of fine steel and inlaid with pure silver markings and the *fleur de lis* on the shoulder stock.

Musketeers are chosen by a council of twenty of their prospective peers. The number of Musketeers always remains one thousand. In order to stay fresh, well trained, and efficient, old soldiers retire and new soldiers join at the beginning of each spring season.

Each Musketeer will fight to the death to defend the honor of another. Because the Musketeers are so tightly bound to one another, they must have a great deal of trust in the judgment and loyalty of those around them.

The Lightning Guard

The Empereur's personal guard is known as the Lightning Guard, formed from the greatest Montaigne soldiers and swordsmen. The guard lasted for over 600 years, serving the Empereur exclusively. Today the guard serves as the most elite of the Empereur's Musketeers. They are devoted and righteous, incredible swordsmen and staunch defenders of the royal sovereignty. When necessary, they can also act as couriers, escorts, bodyguards, investigators, or regal ambassadors.

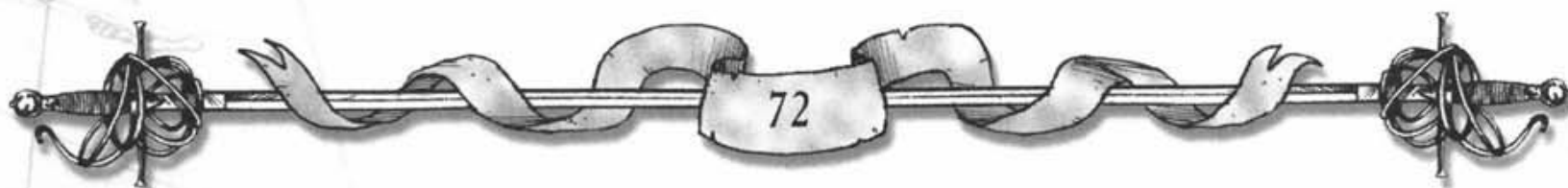
Membership in the Lightning Guard is the highest military position a Montaigne can achieve; even generals and admirals fall beneath them on Montaigne's intricate social ladder. Considered knights by the nobles, the Empereur's Guard is the finest example of duty and honor. To hold the station is the sheer personification of valor, and none dare question the validity of the men and women who serve in the Empereur's elite guard.

Knights of the Lightning Guard can be appointed only by the Empereur himself; only he may "sire" soldiers (commonly drawn from the Musketeers) to this rank. Only one hundred Swordsmen may be members at any one time.

Current Relations with the Rest of Théah

Avalon

Though the constant shuffling of government between Montaigne and Avalon has long since settled and commerce across the Trade Sea is at an all-time high, long-standing grudges continue between the two nations. Montaigne and Avalon have both moved on to new conflicts, however, and internal struggles within both nations serve to keep these hostilities buried for the moment.





Castille

The people of Montaigne have never respected the Castellians, resenting their booming agriculture and export business and holding the four-hour daily siesta in contempt. The current war with Castille is considered a righteous cause — a rebellion of sorts against a totalitarian Church — but it is really an excuse for the Montaigne to work off some of their aggressions.

Eisen

The Treaty of Weissburg ended open hostilities between Montaigne and Eisen, but the emotions beneath those angry blows remain. The Montaigne have made an enemy of the Eisen, though it may not appear that way to those outside the conflict. Both sides have made a very public display of trading resources with one another (including employing several Eisen generals at the Montaigne training grounds).

Pirate Nation

Montaigne's navy currently divides its time between the war with Castille (which many think should have been won at sea months ago) and defending its trade ships from the Pirate Nation. The Vendel League has recently offered to supply additional mercenary ships to escort the trade vessels for the duration of the war, but the Montaigne have been mysteriously silent.

Ussura

Outside the arrival of General Montegue and his forces at the end of the Trade River, there has been little contact between Montaigne and Ussura. They are distant from one another, for one thing, and it is simply easier to negotiate with other nations that are closer to each other. The Montaigne have no more respect for the Ussurans than they do for any others, however, or they would not have sent troops into the nation (though it has been posited that the Empereur's orders hide ulterior motives).

Vendel

Montaigne maintains contact with Vendel primarily through the League and its economic charters, which regularly strain their resources. Were it not for a series of tariffs set in place by the Empereur and his council, the constant machinations of the Vendel League might have caused tension between these nations. Also, it is quite obvious that Montaigne's capture of Barcino and its consolidation with Buché is profitable (and therefore acceptable) to the League.

Vodacce

Montaigne's trade relations with Vodacce are certainly more agreeable (and profitable) than those with any other nation in Théah, for many reasons. First and foremost, the Montaigne people love items produced by the Vodacce, whom they consider "larger than fashion." Rumors abound, however, that the Empereur — who has made an enemy of, or alienated, everyone else — is laying the foundation for a future political alliance.

Montaigne NPCs

Empereur Léon Alexandre du Montaigne XIV

"Of course the Empereur believes in Theus. He looks in the mirror each morning, doesn't he?"

— Lady Jamais Sices du Sices

Empereur du Montaigne is quite possibly the most powerful man in the world, and also the most arrogant. He cares little for his people, beyond seeing them as a source of income. The Empereur is his own true love. Every year on his birthday, he sends a goose to every peasant family in the kingdom, more for his own self-aggrandizement than out of any desire to keep them from starving. In addition, he is flighty and eccentric. He will one day decide to renovate a theater in Charouse, and for that day all his considerable power comes to bear on the project. The next day, he'll dump it off on a subordinate, not really caring whether it ever gets done or not. His





subordinates have learned this, and often pass these projects along to ambitious young nobles looking to win the Empereur's favor.

Image: The Empereur is showing his age. His hair, when it isn't concealed by a white powdered wig, is almost completely gray. His cheeks threaten to sag into jowls, and he is somewhat overweight. The Empereur dresses only in the finest, most fashionable clothes, and is usually accompanied by at least one pretty young lady.

Goals: More than anything, the Empereur wants a son. He's gone through two wives and is on his third, and has nine daughters to show for his trouble. The impertinence of his wives to give him only daughters has driven him to the limits of his patience. Beyond this, he only cares for his own pleasure and comfort.

Roleplaying the Empereur: Do what you want. No one would dare take offense at anything you do. Take anything you want. Your subordinates will take care of the details of payment later. Expect to be praised for even the slightest show of effort.

Imperatrice Morella du Montaigne

"Come here, young man. I have a proposition for you..."

A powerful Fate Witch, Morella married the Empereur as a political maneuver for her father. So far, she's had only one child with him, Dominique. Never close to her husband to begin with, she worried that he would have



her killed when he grew tired of her since she bore him a daughter. Only her political ties to Vodacce have kept her alive for so long, but she suspects that the Empereur is simply waiting for his chance to kill her without being caught.

Two months ago, she woke up to find a black strand attached to her. According to Fate Witch lore, the black strand indicates impending death. So far she has been unable to find the other end of the strand, but she has begun making plans to run away from Montaigne before her fate can catch up with her.

Image: Hand-picked by the Empereur twenty years ago, the Imperatrice is a fading beauty. Her dark hair has lost some of its luster, her green eyes some of their shine, but she can still turn heads. How much longer she'll be able to do so, however, is a question that haunts her.

Goals: Her first and foremost goal is to get out of Montaigne in one piece. The black strand that has recently appeared haunts her dreams like a python around her throat. All her efforts go towards arranging a flawless escape. Of secondary importance is to keep the Empereur happy with her. If she angers him before her escape is ready, she may never get the chance to flee.

Roleplaying the Imperatrice: Act as if you haven't had enough sleep. Keep staring off into the distance with your eyes unfocused. If you see something that could be useful in the escape from Montaigne, sit upright and start paying more attention.

Dominique du Montaigne

"Umm...excuse me, please."

The youngest of the Empereur's nine daughters, Dominique has always known that she is a disappointment to her father. Not only was she not a boy, she also lacked all but the barest hint of sorcery. Until her recent marriage to Montegue, her father has ignored her, or treated her as an inconvenience. Despite this, and



despite the shy facade she puts on, Dominique is a very clever, capable young woman, making the most of her place in life. She has a grudging admiration for Montegue's honesty.

Image: Dominique is 19 years old. She has large blue eyes, and is thin, pale, and delicate, as if a strong hug could break her into pieces. She has curly light brown hair, which gives her a mousy appearance. Her pregnancy has just started to show.

Goals: Dominique is torn between loyalty to her husband General Montegue, and her father. She isn't sure which side to take, if any. She has her own agenda as well. She's been placed in charge of sending gifts and other social niceties out to nobles that the family wishes to make a good impression on. Secretly, she's sent



Montaigne maids out as spies, who update her on much of what's happening in Théah.

Roleplaying Dominique: Twist the rings on your fingers while you speak. Speak softly. Dart your eyes around the room a lot.

Montegue du Montaigne

"Actually, madam, I think your hairstyle looks rather silly, and those candles are sure to set your head on fire."

Although his recent heroism has elevated him from the peasantry, Montegue carries his heritage like a brand. He doesn't follow fashion trends, sometimes he forgets to comb his hair, and worst of all, he often expresses his true feelings when asked his opinion. In the Montaigne courts, this is usually followed by an embarrassed silence, and then a change of topic. Montegue has discovered that he doesn't like courtly life very much. Still, he is a loyal soldier and has no intentions of disrupting the system.

Image: Montegue is of medium build and height. He has thick black hair, and while he tries to stay clean-shaven in light of his new status, he still sports a five o'clock shadow by half past ten. He has a penetrating gaze, and he always looks people directly in the eye when talking to them.

Goals: Montegue joined the military with the vague idea of making things better for the peasantry, but he's finding that even his new status doesn't give him that authority. He isn't sure exactly what it is that he wants to do next.

Roleplaying Montegue: Think things through to the end, but only explain things to your subordinates one step at a time. Assume that they can follow your reasoning from there unless they state otherwise. Speak confidently and look people in the eye. Never believe that something is beyond your capabilities, but have a backup plan just in case you're wrong.

Jean-Marie Rois et Reines

"Whether your words about the Empereur are true or not, they will never be spoken again."

Jean-Marie is the head of the Musketeers. He knows about the unrest among the peasants, but he has sworn to protect *l'Empereur*, and his word is his bond. He still presses the Empereur with pleas for the people when he can (more food, pardons for those unjustly imprisoned) but has come to realize that Léon simply doesn't care about their welfare. So he does what he can for them with his limited authority. The only thing that might make him break his vow is if the Empereur were to turn traitor to his own people. He married the Empereur's sixth daughter, Anne, for love, and received his current position as a dowry.

Image: Jean-Marie cuts a dashing figure with his precisely trimmed moustache and beard. His hair is dark, and his eyes are gray. His clothing is always neat and clean, and he never dresses out of uniform.



Goals: Jean-Marie's main goal in life is to do his job as well as he can, treat the people as nicely as his job allows him to and then go home to his loving wife at night.

Roleplaying Jean-Marie: Once you've given your word, never go back on it. You love your country and your people, but you are bound by honor to follow your Empereur's orders. If you dislike your orders, make a half-hearted complaint, then capitulate without a fight.

Ussura

"Tall the mountains, and wide the rivers lie. If Théah has a soul, a heart, then surely it rests in Ussura's green fields..."

– Xavier du Doré, Ambassador of Montaigne to the Gaius of Ussura

Introduction

From its high and snowy peaks to the inland sea and the rolling lowland, the common folk of Théah look out across Ussura (oo-SOO-rah) with pity and contempt. Her religion is backwards, they say, and her people uneducated. They dance under a blazing moon beside wide rivers, and never give a thought to civilized codes of conduct. Furthermore, the nobles act as poorly as their peasants. Even the great Knias Council is no better than the serfs and merchants – why, their Gaius, leader of the forgotten land, is a half-witted commoner! Beneath their wealth and arrogance, it is certain: Ussura has no future.

But as they speak, their eyes fill with fear, and when they pass within sight of the snow-filled landscape, even the bravest merchant lowers his voice. For the forests of Ussura can hear every word.

The Land

Ussura is a land of chilly forests and frozen taiga; the monotony is unbroken except by sparse hills. The summer is short, with the temperature rarely exceeding 70 degrees, while the winters are long and severe, in some places reaching temperatures as low as 90 degrees below zero. Still, these are extremes for Ussura, with temperatures averaging 20 degrees in the winter and 50 degrees in the summer.

Ussura's broad variety of trees and plants can withstand the cold weather, and Ussurans trap a great abundance of fur-bearing animals. Furs are in fact the country's greatest export. While this may seem unusual in a culture so in tune with nature, Ussurans see life and death as all part of the process, and never waste the meat of the animals they trap.

Flora in Ussura is very similar to that of the rest of Théah, with birch trees, pine, and the occasional oak. The birch is the most prominent, and the Ussurans have learned to make boxes, shoes, and paper from its bark.

To those not native to Ussura, the land can seem actively malicious. Wild game is never found. Berries and mushrooms inevitably make the trespasser ill, and landmarks seem to change of their own accord. Meanwhile, Ussurans walk through all this chaos, blithely unaware of its existence. In fact, Ussurans wonder why people of other nationalities consider theirs a harsh, inhospitable land. After all, Matushka provides everything they need, and if she is sometimes hard, it is only because she wants her children to be strong.

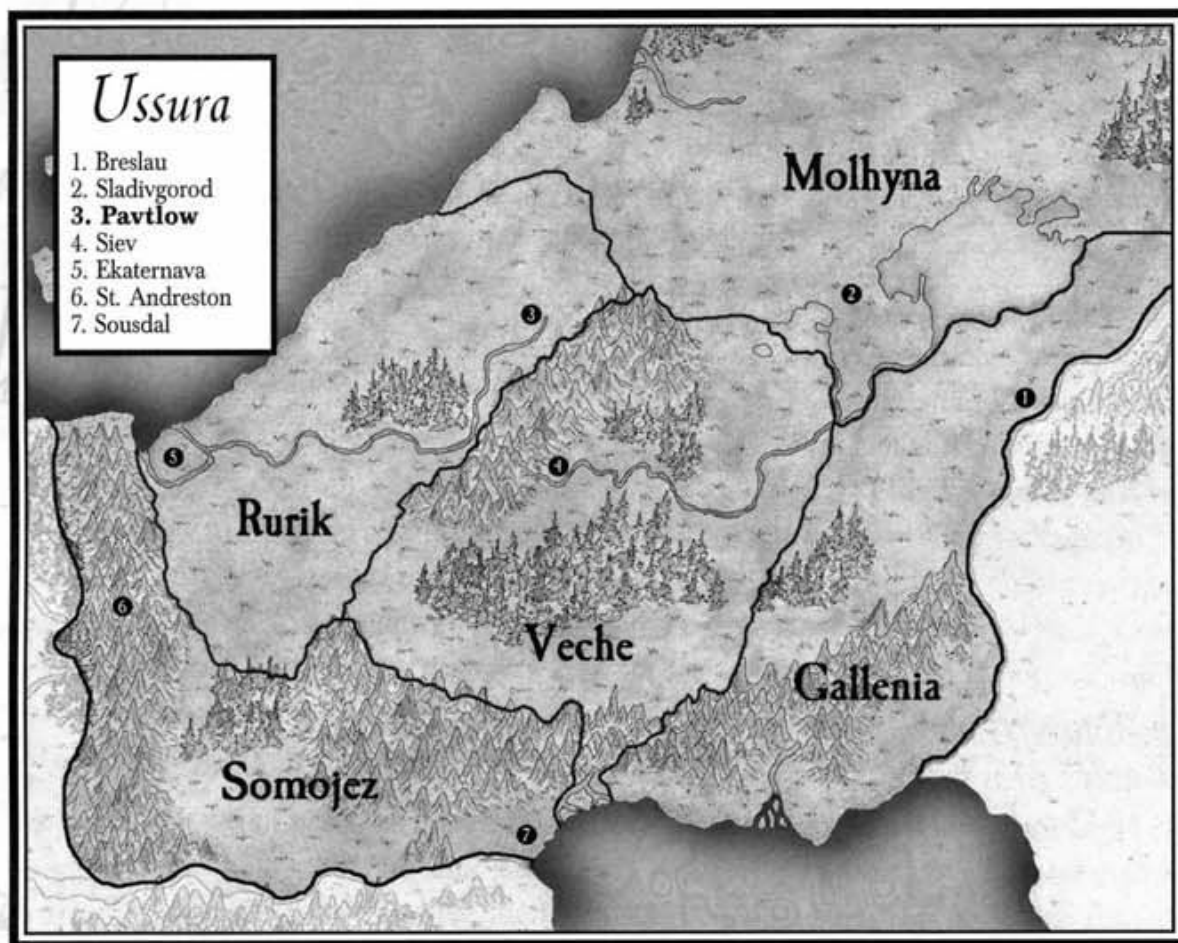
Ussura is divided into five provinces, each overseen by a member of the Knias Council. These provinces range in size, but even the smallest is larger than the entire island of Avalon. Novgorov, Vladimirovich, Pietrov, Riasanova and Pskov are the surnames of the five great Knias, and

their provinces are respectively named Rurik, Veche, Molhyna, Gallenia, and Somojez.

Molhyna (*mole-YEE-nah*), the northernmost province of Ussura, is composed of miles of flat, featureless tundra, dotted occasionally by forests and scattered hills. Its one major terrain feature is Lake Vigil, a massive inland sea. This bitter ocean is stagnant, but long ago, rivers or channels connected it to the eastern seas.

Rurik (*ROO-rik*), in the northwestern portion of Ussura, is not as cold as Molhyna, and it is occasionally possible to grow food there. Most of Rurik's livelihood depends on the fur trade, and trappers come from as far away as Chelevok for the high prices offered in Pavtlow. These furs are often then shipped downriver to Ekatnava, then traded to the merchants of the Vendel League. Rurik is also known for the large packs of wolves, who often hunt deer and caribou, but somehow never molest the livestock of the muzhiks.

Veche (*VAY-chay*) lies in central Ussura. It borders the tall Sorivdgrastov mountains in the northwest, which are particularly deadly during Ussura's long winters. Even in the summer, the only reasonably safe way to cross the mountains is through Pyotyr's Pass, located just to the west of Siev. Bear Lake lies nearby, named for the numerous bears who arrive at it every year during spawning season. Ussurans have been known to fish right next to them without incident as long as they throw the bears a fish every so often. The southern





portion of Veche is comprised of a massive and ancient forest, forbidden to lumberers and farmers. Although a few roads lead through the forest, they are rarely traveled, and most traders prefer to travel up the Ekaterina River or along the Volog channel to Gallenia.

The southwestern province of Ussura is known as Somojez (*soh-MOH-yehz*), famous for the massive trees within its forests. It is said that Matushka has expressly forbidden cutting down any tree that the woodcutter can't stretch his arms completely around.

Gallenia (*gah-LEN-ee-uh*) is the name for the southeastern province of Ussura. It is bordered on the east by a massive wall of fire that prevents most interaction with Cathay. The wall runs all the way around Cathay, though rumors persist of an entry somewhere within the Corridors of Flame. Gallenia is a heavily forested land, rich in game and fur-bearing animals. To the south is "The Mirror", an enormous sea that remains perfectly calm most of the time. Several thousand Ussurans live along its shores in small fishing villages and venture out onto its waters in order to make their living.

The People

Ussurans are a gentle, content people. They receive everything they need from the land, and haven't needed to protect themselves from any invading armies in centuries. The only conflict they find themselves involved in is the occasional barroom brawl. These brawls are themselves a symptom of another aspect of the Ussuran personality. They express their emotions very openly and are often seen as large children by people of other nations. They lack restraint and guile, which can be misconstrued as immaturity.

At the same time, they are deeply religious and superstitious. They never doubt the existence of Matushka; they can feel her all around them, loving but

stern. They know that she will be there for them in their hour of need.

They are a short, broad people, typically possessing dark hair and eyes. Their complexion is pale, and they quickly redden after a few drinks. Their noses are bulbous, and they have thick, stubby fingers which callus easily.

Social Strata

The people in Ussura form two primary classes: the muzhik (*MOO-zhek*) and the boyars (*BOY-arz*). The muzhik are the peasants, while the boyars are the landowners in Ussura: they collect a portion of the muzhik's crops in return for letting them use the land.

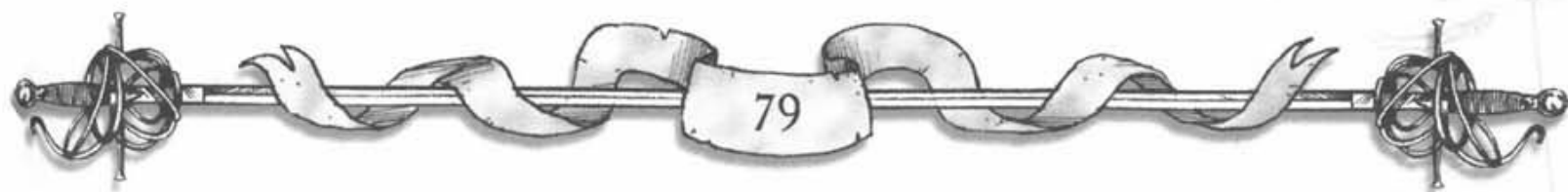
Among the muzhik, the largest and strongest typically receive the most respect from their peers. Contests of physical prowess often occur in rural villages: everything from arm wrestling to foot races to tug-of-war. Women are not excluded from these contests by any means, but they tend to prefer games where their superior stamina helps make up for their lack of brawn.

The status of a boyar has more to do with how much land he owns than how strong he is. Certainly, there is status to be won at the local fairs by winning a contest or two, but a boyar who owns only a small parcel of land will never be as powerful as one who owns hundreds of acres.

Etiquette

Ussura is deadly cold, and villages are often separated by walks of two weeks or more. As a result, no Ussuran refuses hospitality to anyone who enters the village except under the most extreme circumstances. Refusing to give a traveler some food and let him warm himself up by the stove is tantamount to murdering him. This gives rise to the Ussuran reputation for generosity.

An Ussuran will not hesitate to share his food, camp, liquor, or even tent with a fellow traveler in need. He will be gravely insulted if not shown similar courtesy, however; it would be like telling him that you don't care





whether he lives or dies. Ussurans traveling in other countries have often been gravely insulted when asked to pay for a meal they assumed was hospitality. Such arguments often end in fist fights, giving the Ussurans a reputation of hot-headedness.

Table manners are casual, and the Ussurans have a relaxed attitude towards nudity. Their steam baths are communal. Bathers strip before entering, rush inside out of the cold, sweat in the heat as long as they can stand it, and then run outside again to rub themselves down with handfuls of snow or jump in an icy stream before drying off and redressing. People from other nations who witness this ritual often stand open-mouthed in astonishment, not only at the casual attitude towards stripping in front of strangers, but also at their tremendous ability to withstand such brutal treatment.

Clothing

The Ussurans wear long, warm clothes called “caftan”, tightly buckled around the waist and often layered to keep out the cold. Their hats come from furs, while the men usually grow long beards and wear their hair long. The women pull their hair back, with the married women covering their hair with a cloth wrap known as a *babushka*.

Those who can afford luxuries (*i.e.*, the boyars) are inclined to dye their clothing in bright oranges and reds. Boyars who actively own and manage land always wear bright red boots to show their station.

Diet

The typical muzhik diet includes foods such as cabbage soup, turnips, garlic, pickled cucumbers, and jams. Bread is served at every meal. Nearly 40 percent of an Ussuran’s diet consists of unleavened bread; the most popular type is known as *khleb*.

Eggs and milk are far more plentiful than meat, which is typically eaten only when the muzhik has time to trap or

hunt. Mushrooms are highly valued, and dried and preserved for use through the long winters.

The Ussurans drink weak beer and mead (fermented honey) along with alcohol they distill from the grains of the region. The favored brew is vodka, as well as a drink called *kvass*, derived from bread. The boyars supplement this diet with wild game, a few imported foods such as salted fish and exotic liquors.

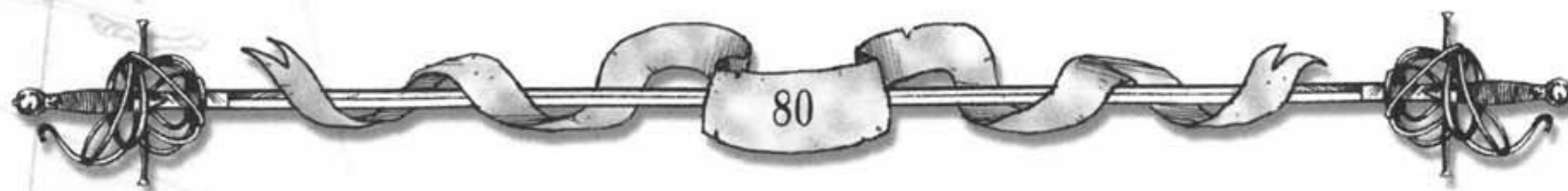
Customs

The short summers and long, inhospitable winters dictate the Ussurans’ lifestyle. They work feverishly in the summer, trying to bring in their harvest before the first frosts settle on the fields. In the winter, they spend most of their time inside their small houses, seated on or near the stoves that form the center of their households. They possess a great love of alcohol, and spend much of the winter in the drunken revelry that makes these long periods of isolation bearable.

Most “heavy” or important talking is done over spiced tea (called *zvetochy*) at the kitchen table, the undisputed center of the Ussuran home. Most Ussurans have a central, wood-burning stove in the kitchen called a *pechka*, and a guest is often invited to sleep on its upper reaches to keep warm.

On the last day of the week, all the muzhik take two hours out of their daily schedule in the morning to worship Matushka (while giving thanks to the Prophet) at the village altar. Typically, the most learned man in the village leads the ceremony; most villages can’t afford actual priests.

The most important day of the year for any Ussuran is Rebirth Day, the third day of Corantine. It celebrates the anniversary of their bargain with Matushka. On this day, every Ussuran, even the smallest child, has his or her left thumb pricked with a needle and spills a drop of blood on the ground to help nourish Matushka. The day is then usually spent in prayer and song.





During the winter, families stay indoors most of the time, relaxing, telling stories, visiting neighbors, drinking, and playing games. Since Squares was introduced to Ussura, it has become very popular, allowing a bored family to while away several hours at a stretch.

Art and Music

"Listen, child, to the stories that the wind tells..."

- Koshchei

Ussurans are famous for their wooden miniatures. They have been known to spend days crafting a single hand for a doll that stands no bigger than a man's thumb. Their work is minutely detailed, and often so precise that foreigners cannot see the seams where the tiny parts join

together. Every year in the town of Siev an enormous contest is held and wood carvers from all over Ussura enter their finest pieces in the competition. The prizes are donated by the boyars attending the contest, and while they vary wildly from one year to the next, they are always worth the trip. Last year's grand prize was an exquisite sleigh with four fine dogs to pull it. The year before that, the winner received twenty acres of land and was made a minor boyar.

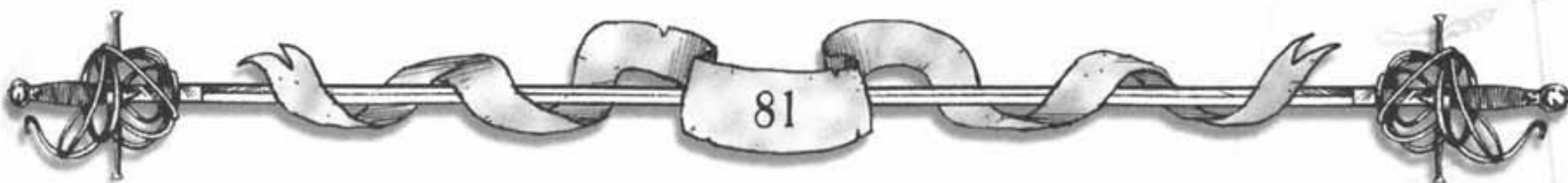
Ussuran music is loud and boisterous, and often a bit off-key. Everyone is expected to sing along, and the communal experience is more important than the beauty of the song itself. Most of the songs are spirituals that praise the land. A few children's songs tell stories about

some of the most common fairy tales told in Ussura, such as the tale of the head of the Riasanova family who acquired the ability to transform into the Firebird. The truth of the song remains to be seen.

Names

In Ussura, family names may be long, convoluted and peculiar. When a common muzhik's child is born, he or she receives a first (or "Prophet's") name, such as Pavel.

Each child's last name is a modification of the father's name (in this case, Ivan). The ending -ova (or -ovna) on a surname denotes a daughter, such as Ivanova (daughter of Ivan). In a similar fashion, the name ending -ov denotes a first son: Ivanov. The ending -vich denotes a second, or lesser, son.



It is common practice to add the name of the town or village as a middle name for the child, so that his or her home becomes part of his or her identity.

Using the fictional Ivan of Ekatnava as an example, his children might be named:

First Son: Pavel • Ekatnava • Ivanov

Second Son: Nikolay • Ekatnava • Ivanovich

Any Further Sons: First Name • Ekatnava • Ivanovich

First Daughter: Makhaia • Ekatnava • Ivanova

Any Further Daughters: First Name • Ekatnava • Ivanova

When Pavel marries, his wife, Iviana Breslau Petrovna, adds his name to her own, using the additional surname ending -tova, and would become Iviana Breslau Petrovna Paveltova.

The firstborn son of Pavel, Aleksei, would use his own father's name as his surname, and thus would be Aleksei Ekatnava Pavelov.

Boyers use a simplified variant of the common naming practice. While they alter their surname to conform to their parent's name, they sometimes use their mother's first name as their surname instead. They almost always choose the parent with the higher social standing.

No matter who the parents are, each boyar's child uses their familial title at the end of the surname, noting that he or she descends from one of the five leaders of the original Knias. Appropriately, the surname created by the original Knias member (Novgorov, Vladimirivich, Pietro, Riasanova and Pscov) has become the familial surname, prefixed by the modifier 'v' (of). Thus, a wealthy boyar's child of good lineage might have the name Mikhail Ekatnava Elizavetov v'Riasanova.

Religion

The Ussuran Orthodox Church is the state religion, combining the First Prophet's words with the native Ussuran worship of Matushka, the Earth Mother.

Matushka is said to appear as an ancient, matronly woman with iron teeth and nails. Children must be polite if they should encounter her, for she devours rude little boys and girls. She brooks no impertinence, but generously rewards those who treat her with respect. Ussurans feel that nature serves as a guide to proper behavior, and visitors who don't understand this aspect of their religion often find themselves utterly confused by some of the Ussuran customs.

The Orthodoxy ignores the Second and Third Prophets entirely, feeling that their messages went against the intent of the First Prophet. After all, things had been going so well; what reason was there for them to change? This decision put them at odds with the rest of the Vaticine



Church, so there has been little contact between them since the coming of the Second Prophet.

Government

The Gaius

The Gaius, Keeper of the Knias Council, rules Ussura and his word is law. It is believed that Matushka will not allow a Gaius to remain in power unless she approves of his actions. When the Gaius dies, Matushka selects the new ruler from among the muzhik (*not* the noble boyars), identifying her choice by turning the new Gaius' hair white. The population of Ussura has no indications of Matushka's choice of the next Gaius until the day the old Gaius dies, so the only true stability in the country is the five great boyar families.

The current Gaius is a young man named Ilya Sladivgorod Nikolovich, a deadly serious ruler. When one of the boyars insulted him after he came to power, Ilya had the man thrown to his own dogs, and sat calmly drinking a glass of vodka while they tore him apart. Ilya formed a group of musketeers that he calls *stelets*, who perform the less savory deeds he needs to have done.

The Knias Douma

The Knias Douma is technically a council of advisors to the Gaius. Of course, since the Gaius is a muzhik and rarely has any prior political experience, the Douma usually holds the real power in Ussura. The boyar families have become quite adept at manipulating the Gaius over the years. There are five positions on the Knias Douma, each permanently held by a powerful boyar family.

The first position goes to the Novgorov (*NOHV-goh-rohv*) family, leaders of the province of Rurik. They control much of the trade in the far northwestern portion of Ussura, primarily conducted with the Vendel League. The head of the family can assume the form of the Great Wolf, king of all wolves. This is the most prestigious

position on the council, given to the descendant of ancient Arch-Duke Novgorov (the man who created the Knias Douma and unified the Ussuran city-states). As the premier family, the Novgorovs always have leave to cast their vote last when the Council makes a decision. Their province, Rurik, is the most populated region of the country and contains the Ussuran capital, Pavtlow.

The current leader of the Novgorov family is young prince Aleksi Pavtlow Markov v'Novgorov. Because of his lack of ambition and his unpredictable mood swings, he does not currently lead the Knias.

The second position goes to the Vladimirovich (*vlahd-ee-MEER-oh-vich*) family of Veche. The head of the family can assume the form of Grandfather Bear, the largest and fiercest bear alive. The principality of Veche is the second-largest region in Ussura, but one of the most sparsely populated. Its largest city, Siev, is a hub of political and mercantile activity. Both Veche and Somojez conduct limited trade with the Empire of the Crescent Moon; this rivalry has strained relations on the Knias Douma in the past.

The third seat on the council goes to the Pscov (*PIS-kov*) family of Somojez. They control a lengthy portion of Ussura just to the east of Eisen, although they have a few highly valued trade routes into the Empire of the Crescent Moon. They've absorbed a bit of the Eisen culture into their family, and the head of the family can assume the form of a drachen. Their province contains some of the most beautiful monasteries and reliquaries in all of Ussura, although many lie within the mountain range *Sorivdgrastov* just to the north of the province, and are fiercely guarded by the Pscov. Many of the Pscov nobility also descend from Grand Duke *Vsevolod*, sainted for his work with the Church in Ussura. The Pscov family prefers the title of "*Tabularius*", or "Guardian of the Faith." The Orthodoxy is very strong in this region of Ussura, with many churches, holy sites and loud festivals celebrating the Ussuran religion.



The Riasanova (*REE-ah-sah-noh-vah*) family of Gallenia holds the fourth seat of the Knias Douma. They control the southeastern portion of Ussura, and trade occasionally with the few Cathayans who emerge from the flaming wall that surrounds their empire. The head of the family can assume the form of the legendary Firebird, an enormous hawk whose feathers glow more brightly than any candle. Although the Riasanova are the smallest family in the Knias, their members are known for their ferocity and tenacity.

The Pietrov (*pee-EH-trohv*) family of Molhynia holds the last seat of the Knias Douma. They control all of northernmost Ussura, and conduct only a small amount of trade. The head of the family is a disturbing figure known as Koshchei. His shapeshifting abilities seem quite ordinary, apparently limited to the form of a large raven. However, his flesh has a waxy pallor to it that reminds some of a corpse. Add to this the whispers that he has held the Molhynia family seat since the creation of the council centuries ago, and it's easy to see why so many wild rumors surround him.

Economy

As stated above, most of Ussura's exports are furs. There is also a strong trade in honey and beeswax. As for imports, Ussurans mostly purchase spices, various types of alcohol, and steel. The boyars oversee this trade and have an income comfortably greater than even the hardest-working muzhik.

Most of the commerce inside Ussura is conducted in barter, since no centralized coinage has yet been adopted. The Guilder has started to worm its way into the country, but unscrupulous traders often misrepresent its value, leaving the Ussurans a little distrustful. As they are wont to say, "My family cannot eat money."

Towns & Villages

Villages, or *izba*, in Ussura usually support a single trade, whether it be trapping, tanning, or farming. They are utilitarian in design, the houses small, floored with peat moss, and easily heated. The village itself is shaped like a wheel, with spokes extending outwards from the village church (often nothing more than an altar exposed to the sky).

The larger towns tend to be trade centers, with many imported goods available for sale. Several architectural features originate from the Empire of the Crescent Moon, including the bulbous domes that often adorn the Ussuran churches. There is usually a fortified center to the town, known as a *kremlin*, to which the townsfolk can retreat in the event of an attack.

Cities

The seven principal cities of Ussura are Breslau, Ekatnava, Pavtlow, St. Andresgorod, Siev, Sladivgorod, and Sousdal.

Breslau

Breslau is a small city built near the fiery wall of Cathay. Night never truly falls on Breslau, thanks to the light of the wall. The Ussurans who live here have attached heavy shutters to their windows in order to sleep at night. The city thrives almost solely on the slow but steady trade of marvels coming from Cathay. Visitors who come to view the Cathayans are warned not to speak to them or molest them in any way, on pain of death. If the Cathayans were somehow offended, it would spell the end of Breslau.

Ekatnava

Ekatnava is the only major port city on the northwestern coast of Ussura. It lies on the mouth of the Ekaterina River, the largest in Ussura. Ekatnava depends upon the city of Pavtlow for its continuing financial health, since





almost all Ussuran goods travel down the river to Ekatnava from Pavtlow.

Pavtlow

Pavtlow is the capital of Ussura, where the Knias Douma gathers to meet with the Gaius three times a year. It is heavily involved in trade with Ekatnava. The two cities form a critical link for the distribution of trade from the northern and western borders of Ussura.

St. Andresgorod

This city is named for the greatest of all Ussuran saints, St. Andre. It is said that he once came upon two woodcutters chopping down an ancient tree that was known to be holy to Matushka. He tried to get them to spare the tree, but they refused. Finally, unable to stop them in any other way, St. Andre stepped in the way of one of their axes and was martyred. Ever since then, the tree's bark has been stained red by his blood. It has come to be known simply as "Andre's Tree."

Siev

Located in the center of the massive nation, Siev lies near two large rivers — the Volog and the Ekaterina — making it one of the largest trade hubs in Ussura. It brings prosperity, wealth, and trade to its Ussuran brothers. There are frequent craft competitions, culminating in the annual woodcarving competition, which draws competitors from all over Ussura.

Sladivgorod

The largest of the ancient city-states of Ussura, Sladivgorod lies on the banks of Lake Vigil. It remains true to Ussuran customs and "folkways." Some say that the city resists coming out of the past, holding tightly to outdated traditions, but many disagree, saying that the simple life is peaceful, honorable, and filled with charm and rural blessings.

Sousdal

The home of the Ussuran Orthodox Church, Sousdal is the largest city in southern Ussura. Here, Duke Vselvod defied the Vaticine Church, renouncing any worship of the Second Prophet. Reputedly, he did so because the Second Prophet had forbidden his worshippers to drink alcohol. A church built in Vselvod's honor here, houses the remains of all the rulers of the Knias. The soil here is said to be especially blessed by Matushka.

The Ussuran Military

Invasions

"Ten feet into a river, it swelled into a sea. I've seen men die, but never swallowed by the land upon which they stood. The forests move and the mountains hurl rocks upon a poor man's head. What were we to do but flee?"

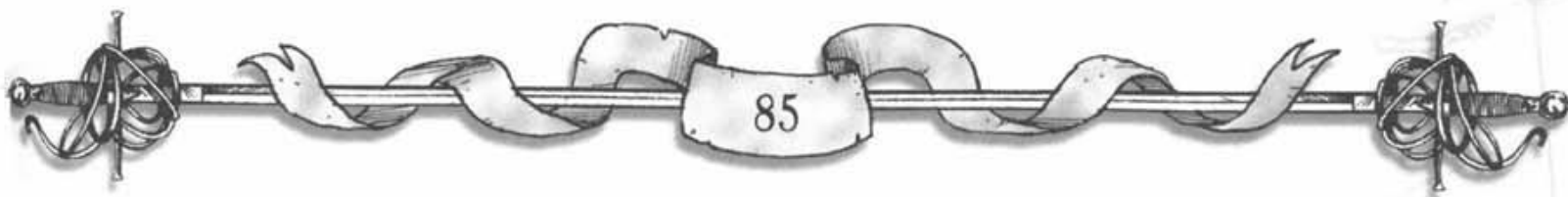
— Hauptmann Kurt von Rosen

No invasion has ever made it farther into Ussura's lands than the first river. Barbarian hordes from the Empire of the Crescent Empire died of plague and starvation. Enterprising Eisen warriors speak harshly of General Idun von der Velde, who led them in an attack on Ussura's southernmost province in the year 523. The army was found after the winter snows melted — snows that began in the middle of the summer.

The Castillians say that the Church has conquered Ussura, but they are wrong. All "missionaries" and "Inquisitors" who visit Ussura find themselves treated with polite courtesy, but their words are lost in the windstorm of solid Ussuran belief.

No Standing Army

Ussura hasn't needed a standing army for centuries. Most boyars still maintain small home guards, and the Gaius has his stelets, but otherwise there is no Ussuran army. There isn't a navy, either, unless you count the fishing fleet that sails the Mirror.





Fighting Style

Ussurans are most comfortable with a good solid hatchet in one hand and a shield on the other. A hatchet doubles as a life-saving tool in the cold wastes of Ussura, since it can chop down wood to start a fire, and a clever Ussuran can create sparks by striking a flint against its blade.

When Ussurans fight in groups, they line up, using their shields to protect one another. There isn't a lot of finesse or strategy involved; it's just a simple shield wall. This tactic is often laughed at by foreigners since the shield wall stopped being used over 100 years ago.

Where the Ussurans truly excel is bowmanship. They've used the bow to hunt for so long that they've become remarkably skilled in its use. The way to spot an Ussuran archer is to compare the lengths of his arms. An archer using the powerful Ussuran longbows for all of his life will have one arm significantly shorter than the other.

Superstitions

Despite their practical bent and solid intelligence, Ussurans are plagued by numerous superstitions, designed to remove bad "blessings" and other plagues. For years the Ussuran people have practiced simple, native cures to their ills, both mental and spiritual. This often leads to ridicule from other nations, but the people of Ussura hold their beliefs dear.

A list of common superstitions includes:

The birth of a child is celebrated by planting a tree. This tree grows as the child does, and if it flourishes, Ussurans believe the child will flourish as well. An old Ussuran legend tells of a mother whose son went to war, and on the day of his death, his child-tree instantly withered and died.

In Somojez, the children throw their baby teeth on the roof of their cottage and ask Grandmother Winter to give them an iron tooth in exchange.

Flowers in even numbers are reserved for funerals or tragedies. Odd numbers suffice at all other times. Hence, the Théan tradition of giving a young lady a dozen roses would scare an Ussuran greatly, and even be considered a threat against her life.

On their wedding day, Ussuran brides wear a fishing net over their garments. They believe that the knots on the net will keep her from harm. In a similar fashion, knots are considered a defense against sorcerers.

Ussurans will not have their silhouettes cut because they believe it is an omen of death.

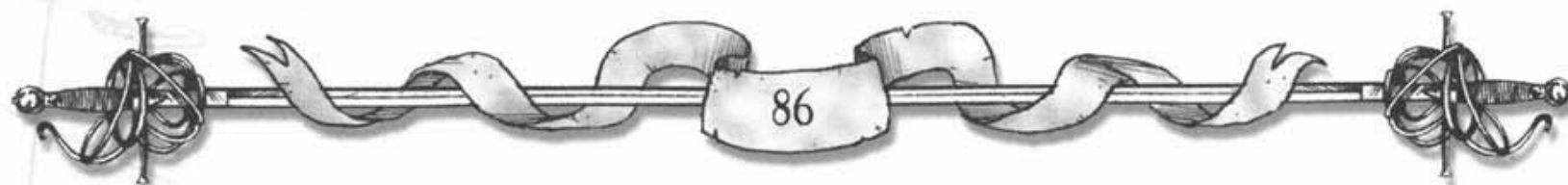
On New Year's Day, in order to get rid of "evil spirits", Ussurans beat every inch of their homes and yard with sticks split in nine different places. They then throw the sticks into the nearest river, where they float downstream to the next village (which repeats the procedure).

Every home in Ussura is believed to have a *domovoi*, or gentle spirit who guards it. Many times, this spirit is as much a prankster as a friend, and it lives in the pechka oven at the center of the home. The domovoi bothers the house's inhabitants, steals an occasional sock, and sometimes misplaces the knife, but it is generally a friendly spirit.

Ussura's Current Relations with the Rest of Théah

Avalon

As far as the Ussurans are concerned, the Avalons are great fun to have around. Their tricks delight them like few other things. Of course, an Avalon who uses his abilities to rob or cheat an Ussuran is liable to gain a more persistent enemy than he anticipated. Ussurans have long memories.





Castille

"Although you Castillians are somewhat pig-headed, you seem to have your hearts in the right place," a minor boyar once said to a visiting Castillian Bishop. It sums up the Ussuran opinion of the Castillians quite nicely.

Eisen

"There is something wrong with their land," is the general consensus among Ussurans on the Eisen people. Since they tend to equate a people's land with the people themselves, the Ussurans keep a careful watch on any Eisen they meet, half-convinced that he could go mad at any moment and start lopping off heads.

Montaigne

Ussurans have nothing but contempt for the Montaigne nobles. The use of Porté near an Ussuran causes him physical pain, and the Montaignes' callous disregard for others disgusts the Ussurans. Of course, having General Montegue show up as an unexpected guest doesn't help.

The Pirate Nation

Ussurans are singularly unbothered by the Pirate Nation. The only fleet they have to speak of is a fishing fleet that sails on the Mirror. Not only are the pirates somewhat afraid to sail the Mirror, they have yet to stoop to stealing fish from poor fishermen.

Vendel League

The Ussurans are very pleased with their relationship with the Vendel League. Through their interactions with the League, they have been able to acquire so many new things such as steel and spices.

Vodacce

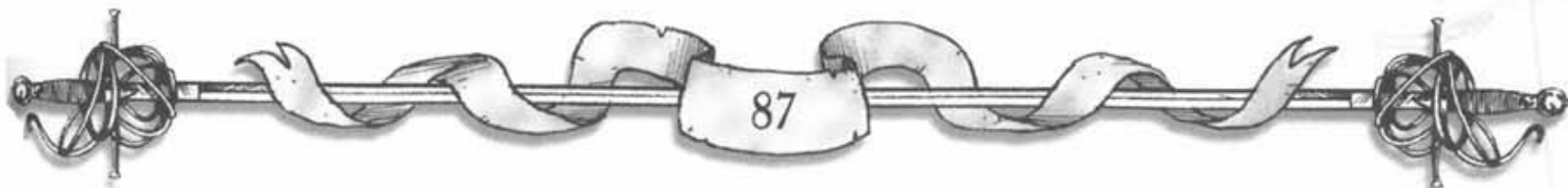
Vodacce is a confusing and dangerous place for an Ussuran to find himself, and the Fate Witches are not to be trifled with. Thankfully, the Vodacce don't seem to have taken an interest in Ussura...yet.

Ussura NPCs

Ilya "Grozny" Sladivgorod Nikolovich

"Since you were so eager to beat that muzhik until he couldn't walk, you can help his sons bring in the harvest until he is well. Next time, I'll make him the gift of a fine new horse, and you can help bring in his harvest until you die."

Ilya became the Gaius when he was nine years old. The boyars took him away from his family and began to run the country in his name. In the meantime, they locked him away and treated him cruelly in an attempt to break his will and control him before his sixteenth birthday, when he would gain legal control of the country. If their gamble had worked, they would have controlled the country unhindered through the Gaius. Unfortunately for them, their plan failed. On Ilya's sixteenth birthday, he



had the primary boyar behind the plot brought before him and fed him to his own dogs while his family was forced to watch. On that day he earned his nickname: *Grozny*, or “the Terrible.”

Since then, Ilya has become very popular with his people. He keeps the boyars on a short leash, overseeing their activities so that they don’t overstep their boundaries. Ilya, as the Gaius, has the power to strip the gift of *Pyeryem* away from any boyar, whenever he wants, even while they are in animal form.

Image: Ilya is a big man with sturdy muscles and a powerful frame. His long white hair, the mark of his office, hangs free down his back like a horse’s mane. He habitually has a very serious expression, even in the midst of a wild celebration, as if he never allows himself to have fun.

Goals: Ever since the boyars attempted to break his will, he has had nothing but contempt for them. His primary goal is keep them in their place and to remove those boyars who abuse their power from office.

Roleplaying Ilya: Don’t smile. In fact, try not to let any emotions show at all. Emotions are tools that others can use to control you. When you look at your wife, it’s all right to let a little smile show. She is the only person you’ve allowed close to you.

Koshchei Molhynia Pietrov

“So, Pietro, I saw you kissing Natasha Perenkova in the woods the other night. Do you like that girl? Yes? Well, I’ll see what I can do.”

Koshchei, sometimes known as “the Undying”, is a mysterious figure living in Ussura for several hundred years. He has, in fact, held a seat on the Knias Douma since its creation. He is a frequent visitor to Cathay, striding through the wall of fire without concern. Mostly he keeps to himself, living among his family in northeastern Ussura. He is obsessed with their well-being,

and “tends” his descendants the way a gardener tends his garden. Some of them have fled the country to avoid this smothering attention, but Koshchei somehow still manages to visit them occasionally, showing no hurt feelings at their flight. He is known to possess the spirit skin of a raven, and seems to have some other, more unusual magics at his command.

Image: Koshchei has a waxy pallor to his skin, and smells slightly of damp earth, which gives people the vague impression that he’s a walking corpse. For all that, he’s full of life and vitality. He moves through a room like an avalanche with a purpose. He dresses in fine clothing, as his station demands, but he wears less than most Ussurans, as though the cold doesn’t bother him.



Goals: Koshchei is utterly loyal to his family. He has a certain sense of pride in all his descendants, since he helped to create them. His main goal is to keep them safe and watch them grow and change. Unlike the other boyars, Koshchei isn't afraid of the Gaius at all. If Ilya tries to harm his family, Koshchei will turn on him in a second.

Roleplaying Koshchei: Ignore anyone who's not a member of your family. When talking to a family member, act very solicitous. See if there's anything they need. Pry into their personal lives. Ask questions you already know the answer to and don't wait for a response. Act like an old man talking to his favorite dog.

Ketheryna Fischler Dimitritova

"You cannot wait for the world to change around you; you must change the world."

Ketheryna is the daughter of an Eisen bauer. When her brother Faulk discovered a dracheneisen deposit, he was elevated to the status of Eisenfürst. She was six years old at the time and raised as a noble after that. She is well read, intelligent, and very perceptive. Recently, as part of his efforts to let the Südlache recover from overfishing, Faulk Fischler married off his sister Katerina to the Gaius' young son. Her new husband, a sickly boy who needs a lot of attention, is rather younger than her 25 years. Since she has been in Ussura, she has impressed the Gaius with her insightful suggestions.

Image: Ketheryna's looks are distinctive because of the sharp contrasts she presents. She has pitch black hair, pale white skin, and lips as red as blood. This combines to give her a delicate beauty unusual among the coarser Ussurans.

Goals: Katerina, who changed her name to the Ussuran equivalent "Ketheryna" when she came to Ussura, was initially confused by her new role in life. She thought that the Gaius position was hereditary, but has since learned that it passes almost at random from one person to the next. Aside from the food-for-arms trade her family

received as a result of the marriage, she has come to find that it wasn't as large a political coup as they first believed. Now, she busies herself taking care of her husband and taking walks in the woods and among the villages. The primitive conditions she has seen concern her greatly, and she often speaks to the Gaius about the muzhiks. This slow improvement of the Ussuran's lot in life has become her primary goal, though she would still like to help her brother if she can.

Roleplaying Ketheryna: Don't speak much. Watch your surroundings as though you are looking for something. Smile happily when you meet another Eisen and begin speaking to him or her rapidly. Make sure to ask for news of your brother. If you are talking to several people, be sure to look in each person's eyes in turn as you speak.





Aleksi Pavtlow Markov v'Novgorov

"When the wolves howl at night, they are singing to me. Their words are meant for no one else."

Aleksis is the current head of the Novgorov family and possesses a seat on the Knias Douma. His father was fed to his own dogs in front of him years ago, which was a traumatic experience. At least, that's what he implies publicly. Privately, the death of his father furthered his own ambitions. He gained the spirit skin of the Great Wolf, and the ability to make wolves obey his will. He has sent them looking for objects of power that he can use to achieve his ultimate goal: godhood.

Image: Aleksis is a young man, about twenty years old. He has dark brown hair, a thin beard, and the brilliant green eyes that mark an Ussuran with the gift of Pyeryem. He has a slight build and looks much more frail than he actually is.

Goals: His father wanted to rule the country through the Gaius, which is all well and good, but Aleksis has even bigger delusions of grandeur than that. He wants to find a way to usurp power from Matushka herself.

Roleplaying Aleksis: Everything is a play for power. Take pleasure in manipulating others. Keep your dreams of godhood to yourself – Matushka can hear everything that is said in Ussura.

Pyotyr Siev Andropovich

"I've always been big for my size."

Pyotyr comes from sturdy peasant stock. He was the son of a woodcarver named Andropov. One year, during the woodcarving festival, he managed to foil an attempt on the Gaius' life, and Ilya made him one of his stelets. Since then, he has risen to be their leader. Pyotyr is methodical in everything he does. He's not the quickest at getting things done, but he plans ahead and covers every





possible angle. If he had to search a house for someone, he'd have his men take it apart piece by piece, and then dig into the foundation looking for hidden tunnels. In addition, Pyotyr is a very religious man and devoutly attends church, but he doesn't let it interfere with his duties to the Gaius. Pyotyr is one of the few people allowed to call the Gaius "Ilya."

Image: Pyotyr is a very large, muscular man. He doesn't look or sound very bright because he moves and speaks very slowly. On the other hand, he is a very capable man, and he has yet to fail in any of his duties. He keeps his head shaven, but cultivates a long salt-and-pepper beard.

Goals: Pyotyr is very grateful for the position that Ilya has given him. He is incredibly loyal to the Gaius and watches out for his safety very carefully. Anyone who tries to injure Ilya or his family will have to answer to Pyotyr.

Roleplaying Pyotyr: Act very deliberately. Speak slowly and use small words. Take your time and plan things out. You have the power to make others wait for your decisions; take advantage of it.

Vendel • Vestenmannavnjar

"Wealth is Power. Power is Wealth."

– attributed to Val Mokka

"Hell has no banks."

– Gjæving Haludan Thordarson Yngwarsen

Introduction

You don't need to be a political scientist to know that there's trouble brewing in Vendel (VEHN-dehl). The Vestenmannavnjar (VES-ten-mahn-NAH-ven-yahr) look at the people who call themselves "Vendel" and feel is a deep, burning hatred in their hearts. The Vendel, on the

other hand, have thrust their nation into world politics, making them the rising economic power in Théah. And all of it is due to little pieces of paper called "Guilders."

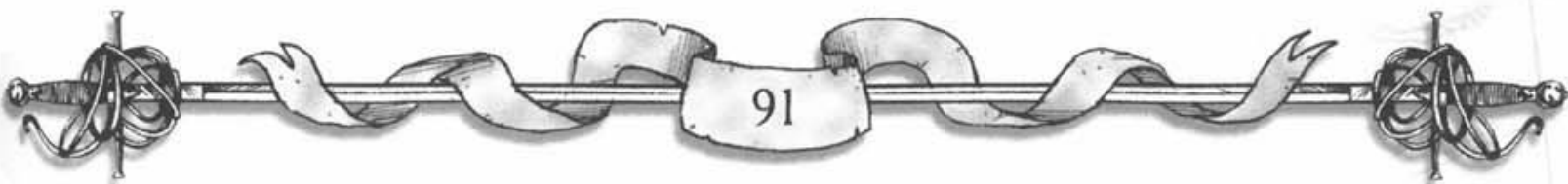
The Guilder may very well be a GM's best friend. After all, there's no need for your Heroes to fill their pockets with pounds, marks, republics and soleis when all they need is the Guilder. (If your players want to deal with smuggling, then fussing around with exchange rates can be half the fun.)

If you want to know why the Vestenmannavnjar are so upset about all of this "renaming" business, think of your favorite relative or a close friend. Now imagine that you are entrusted with a sacred stone that has his or her name etched into it. As long as that stone remains intact, your friend or relative is safe and unharmed. But if you accidentally break it, he'll die a horrible, painful death... for the next million years. Now imagine one of the Vendel trying to buy that stone so he can smash it into pavement for a parking lot. He'll charge people to park there and you'll get part of the profit. See?

Every time the middle class changes a name, the spirit of a Vestenmannavnjar dies. At least, that's what the Vestenmannavnjar tells you. The Vendel shakes his head and mumbles something about "superstition" and "nonsense." He'll tell you that Vendel efforts have brought their little country into the forefront of world politics. The Guilder is the single most influential force in Théah; it has changed more lives than any famine or war in history. Before the Vendel transformed their nation, the Vestenmannavnjar were on the edge of ruin. Now they stand on the brink of controlling Théah's economy.

The Land

The nine islands of Vestenmannavnjar are collected together into a single country. The nation itself splits politically between the Vendel League and the disassociated Norvik tribes. The Vendel League is based

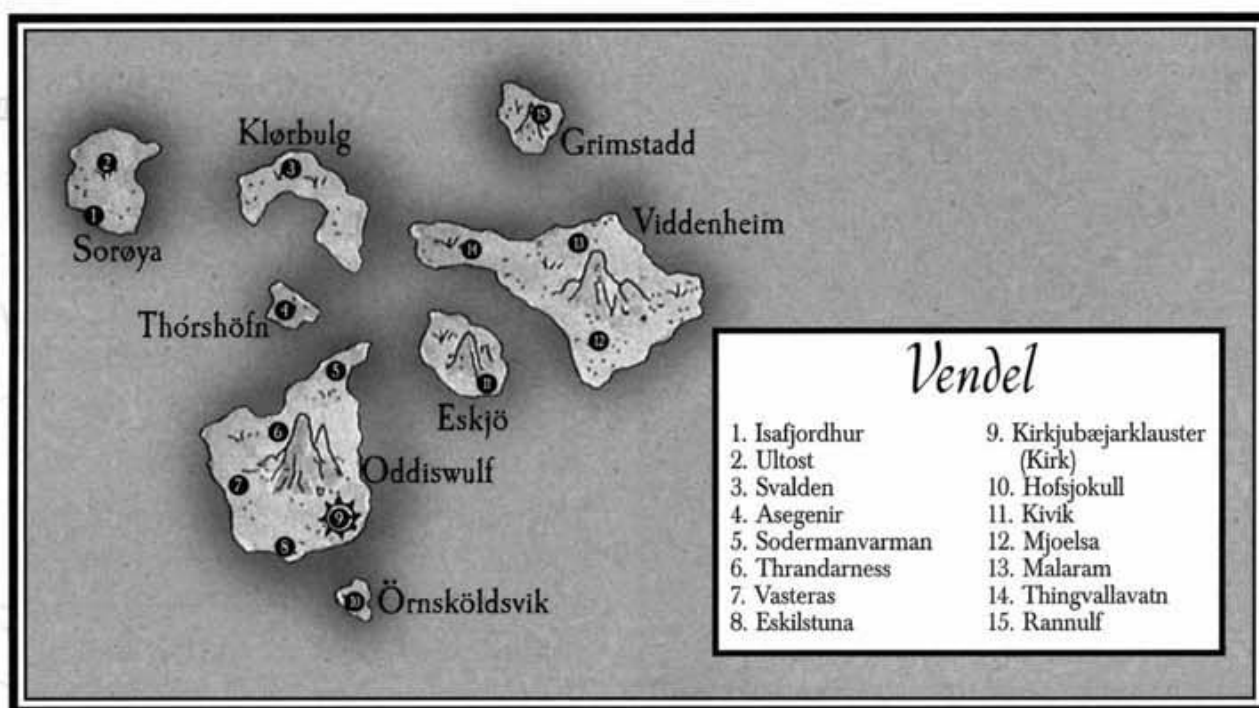


on the largest island, known as Oddis (or “Oddiswulf”). The most important city is Kirk (*Kirkjubæjarklauster*), where the embassies, Guild Halls, and palatial estates of the League are centered. The League itself is a collection of Guilds that control all manner of trade and craft throughout most of northern Théah. The Vendel League is comprised of nine Chairs and 91 Seats. A Chair is a permanent position, held only by the founders of the League. The Seats, however, can be bought. Twenty-five seats are sold — cash only — every year, for a three-year period. Every Seat receives a single vote on issues brought before the League but only Chairmen may bring issues to the floor. Meetings within the League are held weekly, and wealthy merchants who wish to sway the powers of the League must stay in Kirk’s lavish hotels... all owned by the Chairs.

Västeras is also another important city to the Vendel League, and visitors to Oddis may find themselves traveling between the two cities with great frequency. Some of the richest men and women in Théah make their homes in *Västeras*.

The remainder of Oddis outside of the major cities consists of farmlands and grazing land for sheep and cattle, all bringing more coin to the Vendel leaders. Flat and arable near the coast, the land quickly becomes rocky in the interior of the island. The large, obtrusive central mountain range of Oddis is known as the Hjalmar Mountains, and it takes up more than half of the land’s area. It is impassable; a single road has been built to connect the cities that circumnavigate its girth.

The Vestenmannavnjar living on the other eight islands are a throwback to the traditional values of the land. With absolute disregard, and in many cases outright contempt, for the League, the Vestenmannavnjar are proud, tribal, rural people. With no overbearing government or bureaucracy, the “barbarians” have sustained a way of life that all of Théah, except the Ussurans, have lost. Up until the year 818, the islands warred constantly, especially during the brutal winter months.





People

While they may be divided by politics and philosophy, the Vendel and Vestenmannavnjar are identical in build and color. They are tall, blond and blue-eyed, every last one of them. Any other traits are anomalies. Their cheekbones are high, their lips thin and their skin pale. They burn (and freckle) easily and use hats and cloaks to hide their tender flesh from the sun.

Social Strata

The Vestenmannavnjar and Vendel are distinctly divided in their opinions of status. The Vestenmannavnjar recognize a king who sacrificed blood and pain for divine wisdom. The Vendel do not recognize any authority other than personal affluence.

In the past, the Vestenmannavnjar divided into three distinct social groups: the warrior caste (*jarl*), the farming caste (*carl*) and the serf caste (*thrall*). The jarls ruled the islands for centuries until the farming caste took a look across the water at the merchants of mainland Théah. They displaced the jarls as the center of political power and took away the warlords' thralls. Within a decade, the face of Vestenmannavnjar changed... and so did its name.

All that remains in the areas still called Vestenmannavnjar are scattered provinces (called "herdings") filled with jarls, ruled over by a High King. The king of Vestenmannavnjar has been missing for longer than anyone cares to remember. Since then, there have been no High Kings in Vestenmannavnjar; no one has dared to fill the role.

Meanwhile, in Vendel, all authority falls under the shadow of the League. Each of the three Vendel cities has a token police force more interested in order than law. Both have a very high price: everything is for sale in Vendel, and justice is no exception.

Clothing

Vestenmannavnjar clothing is almost exclusively wool, fur, leather and linen. Typical male dress includes a long shirt, knee-length long leather tunic and linen or wool pants tied off with a leather belt. Their hats are tall, pointed and made of leather. Boots are usually made from leather or fur and tied tightly with a long leather thong. Women replace the shirt with a floor-length, sleeveless chemise, but otherwise wear outfits similar to their male counterparts.

The Vendel, on the other hand, dress however contemporary style dictates. Whatever Montaigne wears this season, you can count on the Vendel to wear the same. They usually have a more conservative appearance, however, and distinguish themselves with stylized "top hats" (a rather recent Vendel fashion innovation, based on Avalon flat caps).

Diet

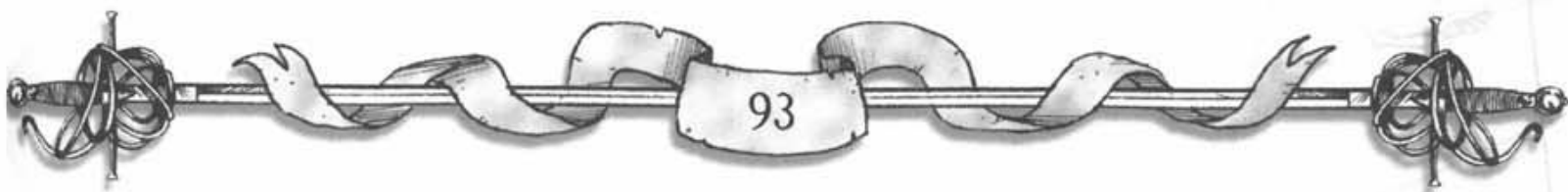
The Vendel diet consists almost exclusively of foreign delicacies. In addition to food from native fisheries, the Vendel import Vodacce wine, Castillian fruits, Montaigne bread and Avalon veal.

The Vestenmannavnjar rely chiefly on fish, although they also dine on game meats such as rabbit and venison.

Culture

There are many similarities between Vestenmannavnjar culture and the culture found on the Avalon isles. More than any other nation, the Vestenmannavnjar trust the Avalons, even if their queen appears to have turned her back on them.

The Vestenmannavnjar value four virtues: courage, loyalty, honesty and luck. Courage, of course, is valor in the face of danger. However, the Vestenmannavnjar understand that blind courage is nothing more than dressed-up stupidity. Loyalty to the family comes first. In a land that remains in the dark and covered in snow for





most of the year, a man must rely on his family or die alone. Honesty goes hand in hand with the previous virtues. A man must be honest with himself to be courageous and must be honest with his family to honor them. Finally, the Vestenmannavnjar believe that every man begins life with a measure of luck. Some men have a great deal of it, others none at all. Some men are born with the wrong kind of luck, even if it is just a little.

Another important aspect of Vestenmannavnjar culture is the almost mystical relationship between mead and a good story. Both can make a man feel light-headed. Both can make a man believe he can do things he didn't think possible that morning. And, in the end, both can get a man into a whole lot of trouble.

The Vestenmannavnjar value courage and honesty. The Vendel value cunning and resourcefulness. The Vestenmannavnjar speak of tradition and preserving their way of life. The Vendel look at the world and realize that they must adapt or be swallowed by the past. Neither of them are incorrect, a fact that infuriates them both.

Art and Music

The most important piece of Vestenmannavnjar literature is *The Grumfather Cycle*, a collection of epic poems that tell of the creation of the world, the rise and fall of its gods and heroes, and the destruction of the universe in one final, massive battle. The men who tell and remember the tales are called *skalds*. A skald keeps the tales in the memory of the Vestenmannavnjar, for they believe that a soul only lives on if the living remember his or her name. The music played by the Vestenmannavnjar is primitive to the modern Théan ear, involving a great deal of drumming and primitive lutes. They use the music not for amusement, but for ritual.

Meanwhile, in Vendel, the most beautiful sculptures, paintings and carvings in the world can be found in halls of the guildhouses. The most prestigious artists in Théah submit their work to the Vendel guilds to gain sanction,

prestige and patrons. Only Montaigne can claim an equal collection.

Religion

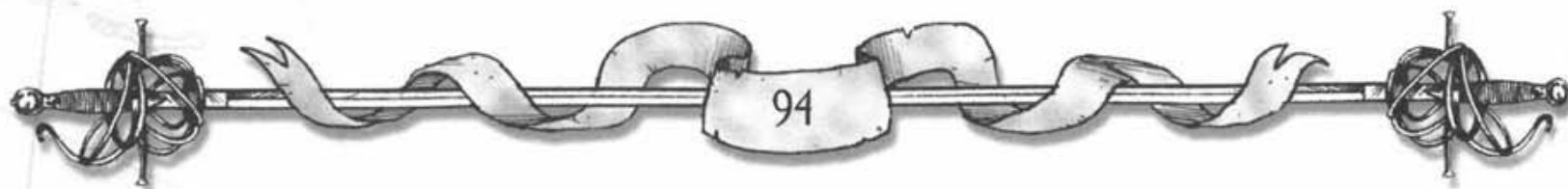
While the rest of Théah bickers over the message of the Prophets, religion is not a debatable subject for the Vestenmannavnjar. Their belief in their gods and ancestors is not a matter of faith, but of fact. Their priests can see their ancestors and summon the powers of Creation itself. The "rune magic" the Vestenmannavnjar use is not magic at all, but a miraculous gift, given by the gods. They believe that a great hall awaits them in the afterlife, and only those who die in battle will pass on into that hall. There, their spirits await a great serpent that they must fight, lest it devour the world.

The Vestenmannavnjar religion is a living mythology; a spirit world that surrounds them in constant interaction with the living world. The spirits of their forefathers live on today, and by naming landmarks after people who have passed their "myth" lives on as well. As long as their names are still invoked, they remain in the Afterlife.

Those that have mastered the art of runes are called *Ypperste Prest* (high priest). They can see the Living Mythology around them at all times. The Vendel, on the other hand, have accepted the Objectionists into their country and sponsor some of the most impressive Churches and universities ever built. A three-decade-long plan has been put into motion to build the tallest, most incredible cathedral in Théah, a rival even to the great cathedrals in Montaigne.

Government

The Vestenmannavnjar recognize a High King, the physical representation of the Grey Wanderer, king of all the gods. But the High King of Vestenmannavnjar is not simply crowned; he must undergo an incredible ordeal that re-enacts the very creation of the world.



In a hidden place, somewhere in the wastelands of Vestenmannavnjar, stands a cave. In the center of the cave is a tree and at the roots of the tree is a well. The young king must find this well, rip out his own eye and drop it within. Then, and only then, will the well reveal its wisdom to him and make him worthy to rule the Vestenmannavnjar.

The Vendel method is a little less bloody. It involves small slips of paper, a pencil and a box. They tally votes and the person with the most becomes the Lord Mayor of the city. The Lord Mayor appoints a Lord Sheriff who appoints deputies. No blood is involved.

Vestenmannavnjar Law

The Vestenmannavnjar legal code is simple, but it appears backward to other Théans. An impromptu court (called a *thing*, pronounced “ting”) is convened and decides what punishment shall be dealt out to the offending party. Things only convene when families cannot resolve conflicts and require a higher authority.

When the thing reaches its decision, it is up to the family to enforce it. This precedent leaves weaker families little chance of finding justice, and is exactly how the carl class broke from Vestenmannavnjar’s social system: by brute force.

The Vendel League

The largest building in the city of Kirk is the Guild House where the Vendel League meets. The bodies that fill those nine Chairs and 91 Seats control Théah’s economy, and some say, her destiny.

The League accepts only Guilders at their auctions; no other currency has a voice in Vendel. The men and women who sit in the League’s nine Chairs bought their positions at the birth of the League. A Chair cannot be purchased, only inherited. The men and women who gave birth to the Guilder almost four years ago currently hold all nine Chairs.

The Nine Chairs

1. Merchant’s Guild – Master Val Mokka (Sigvald Mjølkke) (Vendel)
2. Sailor’s Guild – Master Allen Trel (Arvor Troelsen) (Vendel)
3. Carpenter’s Guild – Master Joris Brak (Joris Braakenjor) (Vendel)
4. Blacksmith’s Guild – Mistress Sela Cole (Selma Colbjorsen) (Vendel)
5. Jenny’s Guild – Madame Lorraine Weller (Avalon)
6. Usury Guild – Master Red (Reidar Engnestangen) (Vendel)
7. Brewer’s Guild – Master George Skard (Jorgan Skaardal) (Vendel)
8. Miner’s Guild – Master Eladio Ballesteros (Castille)
9. Joseph Volker, Butler of Emperor Riefenstahl

Economy

Other than trade, the Vestenmannavnjar have no economy to speak of. The Vendel, however, are another story.

The Vendel Guilder has single-handedly changed Théah’s economy. Merchants only have to use one currency and never have to deal with exchange rates. When it was introduced, the Vendel Guilds announced that it would have a set value that would never change.

While many national leaders were slow to realize the effect this would have, merchants picked up on it quickly. Guild houses would accept Guilders or the nation’s coin, but the Guilder was so easy to use, merchants flocked to the exchange houses, eager to pay the five percent



exchange rate. International trade exploded. Merchants began keeping track of prices from one nation to the next and captains soon found themselves paid to transport fresh fruit and vegetables, leather, furs and spices.

The Guilder is now the most popular currency in Théah. It has created a world market economy, and made Vendel the home of commerce and trade. When visitors arrive in Vendel, they are treated like nobility, no matter what their station. Vendel has become a full-service economy – the first in the world – and business is booming. Everyone takes a holiday in Vendel... if they can afford it.

Towns and Villages

Kirk

Home of the Vendel League, Kirk was once known as Kirkjubæjarklauster (kirk-yub-aer-yark-lau-ster), but the conversion of the carl caste into the merchant class has caused many changes. Once the home of the Vestenmannavnjar High King, it now hosts vacationers from all over Théah. Its hot water springs are famous for their invigorating properties, the food is prepared by the most renowned chefs and everywhere you turn, someone asks you, “How can I help you?”

Thingvallavatn (*TING-va-la-va-ten*)

The Vestenmannavnjar have no capital, only a common meeting place. Thingvallavatn (which means “meeting place by the lake in the valley”) is a large fortress located on the island of Viddenheim. The High King held his court there, even though the Vendel do not recognize any Vestenmannavnjar authority. They continue to ignore all announcements from Thingvallavatn, although the island is supposed to be bristling with spies to keep an eye on any “patriotic activity.”

Military

Vestenmannavnjar’s military is primitive compared to Théah’s modern armies. They still use clubs and axes, although rune magic augments their weapons. Many of Théah’s more technologically advanced nations find it quite troublesome to fire a hundred muskets into a charging Vestenmannavnjar force only to see them rise back up and resume their charge. Vestenmannavnjar armies are almost always all-volunteer forces, looking for plunder and glory.

Vendel forces, on the other hand, are made up entirely of mercenaries – the best that money can buy. “The Vendel Irregulars” are chiefly Eisen, Avalons, Inish and



Highlanders, all paid top Guilder to protect Vendel from dangers both external and internal.

Vendel relies upon mercenary forces for its navy as well. There has been a great deal of speculation regarding the Avalon Sea Dogs and their reluctance to attack Vendel fleets, but no one doubts the Vestenmannavnjar pirates who terrorize the northern waters. At least one incident a month has been reported to the Vendel League regarding these raiders, but so far the Vendel navy has been unable to put an end to their piratical acts.

Relations with Other Nations

Avalon

When Queen Elaine took the throne, she needed allies, and Vendel was in the right place at the right time. On the other hand, Avalon cannot help but be appalled by Vendel's treatment of the Vestenmannavnjar. Rumors of Inish sailors on Vestenmannavnjar ships have found their way back to Elaine, but when she questions the Inish King, he only shrugs.

Castille

A war with Montaigne doesn't help her relationship with Vendel. Suspicion has made Castille reluctant to adopt the Guilder into her economy despite Vendel assurances of neutrality. Needless to say, Castillians are highly suspicious of the Vendel, but the Vendel need Castillian support if they wish to remove Vodacce from the international picture. The Vestenmannavnjar, on the other hand, are very aware of the Inquisition and wouldn't trust a Castillian even if the fate of their nation depended on it.

Eisen

Eisen is an opportunity that the Vendel have not overlooked. The Eisen economy has collapsed and one of her Eisenfürsten has already accepted the Guilder in lieu of the near-worthless Eisen mark. Slowly but surely,

Vendel influence is being accepted within Eisen's borders and the Eisen are coming to respect the Vendel. However, the Vestenmannavnjar have privately warned many of the Eisenfürsten to beware of Vendel intentions. "Sooner or later," they warn, "they'll ask you for the secret of your steel, and when they do, you'll know the true nature of their hearts."

Montaigne

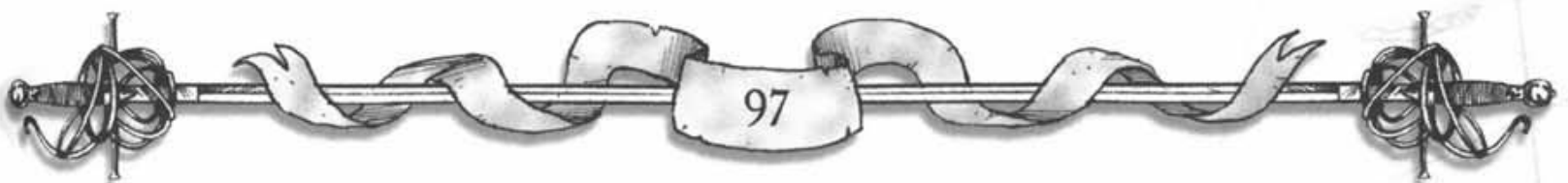
No two nations could be more chummy than Montaigne and Vendel. The two have used each other to make themselves very, very wealthy. On the other hand, the Vestenmannavnjar have heard and seen how Montaigne treats its peasant class, seen the Montaigne Empereur march their children into warfare with Castille. They know the peasants cannot free themselves from the Empereur's shadow, and they would do something about it, if only they could free themselves from the Vendel.

Ussura

As far as the Vendel are concerned, Ussura is a large kingdom with limited potential. Ussuran crops are always plentiful, but when Vendel try to exchange currency for produce, the farmers reply, "You expect me to feed my family with paper?" On the other hand, the Ussurans have a great deal of respect for the Vestenmannavnjar, which may explain their reluctance to trade with the Vendel.

Vodacce

If the Vodacce see the Vendel as usurpers, the Vendel look upon the Vodacce as cranky old men who refuse to look progress in the eye — even if it's holding a gun to their heads. The Vendel no longer consider Vodacce a threat to their power, which may explain why many Vestenmannavnjar pirates are seeking Vodacce funding.





Vendel NPCs

Val Mokk

"We cannot let a few throwbacks stand in the way of Vendel becoming a world power."

Val is a man of vision. He is the most important person in the Vendel League and he is trying to drag his country kicking and screaming into the 17th century. He hates the rebel Vestenmannavnjar with a passion, particularly the pirates. He believes that they want to tear apart everything that he has done for his country and plunge the Vendel back into the savage poverty they've only recently escaped from. Val is confident in his abilities, but selfish as well. He lives in opulence, and has a need to be the center of attention, which he accomplishes through his impressive public speaking skills. He tells entertaining

stories, using a deft phrase here and a carefully chosen word there to evoke strong emotions in his listeners.

Image: Val is a distinguished-looking gentleman who wears the latest Montaigne fashions. He's somewhat shorter than the average Vendel, with a slight build. He's usually wearing a frown or a scowl unless he's giving a speech, in which case he has a smile at the ready for his listeners.

Goals: Val wants Vendel to become the leading political power in the world, and he wants to be in charge when that happens. He also wants to live in pampered luxury. Nothing is too good for him, as far as he's concerned.

Roleplaying Val: If you see something you want, buy it. You have money to burn. When you meet new people, pay close attention to their wants and needs until you determine whether or not they can be of any use to you. If they can, stay on their good side, bribe them, do whatever it takes to get what you need from them. If they can't, then get rid of them and never allow them further contact with you.

Joris Brak

"Carpentry is a circle of destruction and creation. Every woodcutter, on some level, is a philosopher."

Joris is the master of the Carpenter's Guild. He is a quiet, introspective man. When the subject of war comes up in the League meetings, he always violently opposes it. In the evenings, he can often be found sitting in the bough of an old yew tree near his house in Kirk, staring to the northwest. He greatly enjoys woodcarving, and possesses a tiny golden egg that contains an entire miniature house. He claims that he won the egg at the annual woodcarving contest in Siev, Ussura, though no one remembers him ever actually traveling there.

Image: Joris looks about 35 years old, and he always seems to have about two days' worth of stubble on his chin. His beard grows in patches of black and gray, giving



it a salt and pepper appearance. His hair is streaked with gray, and he normally wears the clothing of a carpenter, though he does bow to tradition enough to wear fancier clothes to the meetings of the Vendel League. There are lines around his eyes that suggest he's seen things that no man should ever have to witness.

Goals: Joris wants to keep Vendel out of any major wars. At some time in his past, he has seen a great deal of suffering, and he wants to spare others the experience. He knows that most of the League have never fought in an actual war, and they don't really understand the suffering it brings about.

Roleplaying Joris: Listen quietly when someone else talks to you. When he or she has finished, reply with as few words as possible. If someone supports the idea of starting a war around you, suddenly speak up, raise your voice, and start painting pictures of the horrors of battle.

Whenever you aren't otherwise engaged, sit and whittle quietly.

Boli Kollsson

"I will show them the power of faith."

Boli Kollsson is an Adept of Lærdom, but he works for the Vendel. He is a strict believer in the Objectionist Movement and as a result looks upon the Vestenmannavnjar religion as a heresy. He sees Lærdom as just another type of sorcery, and he feels that sorcery itself is neither good nor evil. He tries to use the magic to benefit his people. As a result, Vendel's navy has been able to call upon some of the rune-engraved items that Kollsson and his students have created, making them a force to be reckoned with upon the sea. A year ago, however, Kollsson had a most unsettling encounter with a Vestenmannavnjar Lærdom Master. The Master told him,





"Since you don't believe in the gods, you will never master their magic. Faith is the final step to mastery."

Image: Kollsson dresses in the latest fashions, usually with a Cross of the Prophets somewhere on his person. He is a large man, and his huge hands are callused from inscribing runes on so many items over the years.

Goals: Kollsson wants to bring Lærdom to the Vendel so his people can assume their rightful place among the other nations. After their integral role in the War of the

Cross, Kollsson is convinced that the Vendel are the chosen people of Theus.

Roleplaying Kollsson: Do not associate with people who aren't of the Vaticine faith. Devote yourself entirely to your work. Speak curtly to others, even your students. Show the stress you are under because of your failed attempts at crossing the last barrier of the runes.

Vestenmannavnjar NPCs

Gunrud Stigandsdottir

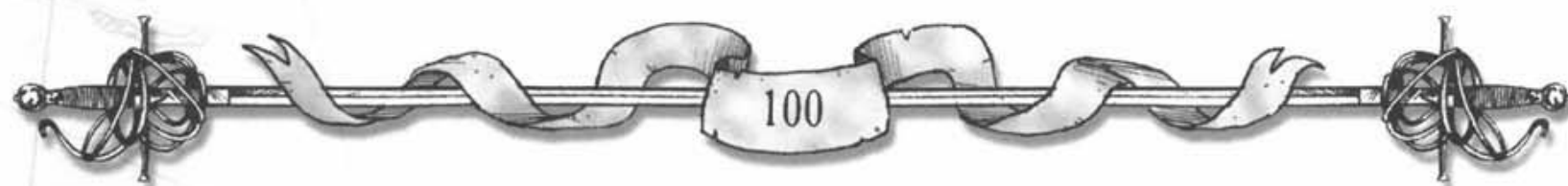
"Nothing ever dies. It is only forgotten."

Some say she's been alive for one hundred and fifty years. Those who have actually seen her think that number is too low. However old she is, Gunrud Stigandsdottir has been sitting in her cave overlooking Kirk longer than anyone can remember. The Vendel would remove her... if the last three men who tried didn't come back blind, deaf and dumb. To the Vestenmannavnjar, she is a seer and holy woman. To the Vendel, she is a nuisance taking up valuable real estate.

Image: Gunrud is an old, old woman. She's lost all of her teeth and hair, and her bones poke against the inside of her almost transparent skin. Her eyes are milky white, and her fingers are long and slender. She dresses in heavy cloaks and eats stew from a cauldron that seems never to empty.

Goals: Gunrud doesn't have goals; she is the mouthpiece of the Gods, a seer who provides wisdom when it is needed. Of course, mortals have a funny habit of ignoring advice they ask for.

Roleplaying Gunrud: Gunrud doesn't even know how old she is. When she speaks, her body shudders. When she sips her stew, she giggles. She's the oldest woman in the world, and knows more than any mortal ever should.





Gjæving Asbjornsson

"Unless it rears up and bites you, I don't want to hear you say anything about 'Destiny.'"

It happened only six months ago. Running from Vestenmannavnjar officials, a young thief fell down a hole that opened up into what may be the oldest cave in northern Théah. Deep within that cave was a tree, and at the roots of the tree was a well. The thief made a promise, ripped out his eye and dropped it into the well. He has never been the same. In the span of a breath, young Gjæving Asbjornsson became the High King of Vestenmannavnjar.

Gjæving suffers from visions, hears voices and occasionally drops into deep trances. Occasionally he

gains glances of the future, but they cause his head to pound and his nose to bleed. The voices in his head tell him that he has a destiny he must fulfill, but right now Gjæving just wants things to be the way they were before he fell down that cave.

Image: Gjæving is only twenty-five years old. He is an accomplished robber and swindler with a handsome face and dashing smile. He is also missing his left eye. His hair and beard are quickly turning gray and his remaining eye is doing the same.

Goals: Gjæving knows what has happened to him and he is worried. Despite what the voices tell him, he knows if the Vendel discover what he's done, they will kill him. He has to hide until he can convince the voices in his head that they picked the wrong Vestenmannavnjar.

Roleplaying Gjæving: You are the victim of fate and you don't like it. You can tell people's futures if you look at them long enough. When your head hurts, you know your in danger and it's time for you to leave. You just want to be left alone and prove to the voices that you're not the High King of Vestenmannavnjar.

Vodacce

The most remarkable sight in Vodacce is not her impossible architecture, reaching up to the stars. It is not the great canals that make one's heart wax romantic, or the food, or the wines, or even the poets who wander the streetsides, improvising songs for their suppers.

No, I must say, the most remarkable sight in Vodacce is her daughters.

— from Lord Algernon Blakely's *Guide to Vodacce*

Introduction

"Watch your step" is a phrase that finds its origin in Vodacce (voh-DAH-chay). One look at the architecture is



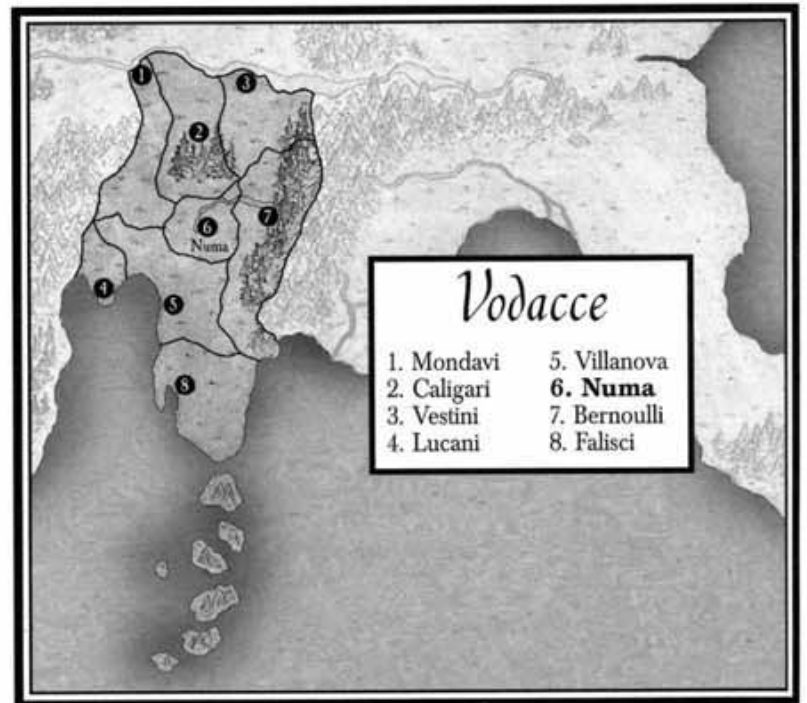
convincing enough, but a glance at its politics hammers the point home. The streets of Vodacce's cities are jovial and carefree, symbolized by their revered poets and playwrights and beautiful courtesans. The thin islands are covered with tall, slender buildings, utilizing every inch of the land. A treacherous system of bridges runs between each building, connecting the whole island like a giant web. It doesn't take an architect to see that a single misplaced sneeze could send the whole system tumbling into the sea. Watch your step, indeed.

While Vodacce's architecture may appear unstable, it is a pleasant afternoon stroll compared to its political environment. The seven Merchant Princes who rule Vodacce are the most ruthless men in all of Théah. Stuck in the middle of a trade war with the Vendel League, the Princes have struck a reluctant alliance to combat the competition from the north. At the same time, however, each of the Vodacce princes knows his cousin would take any opportunity to stab him in the back and steal his land and his business. There have not always been seven princes; there have been as many as twelve and as few as three. Today there are seven, but who can say anything about tomorrow?

The Land

It could almost be said that Vodacce is really two separate nations divided up by seven princes. Because continental Vodacce is covered with swamps and flood plains, the princes have built their castles on the southern islands while maintaining provincial control over the mainland.

Life is very different in northern and southern Vodacce. On the mainland, farmers work the land, producing the trade so valuable to the Vodacce economy. Large permanent structures (castles, towers and forts) dot the land, built on the intermittent hard earth between the swamps and fields of soft soil.

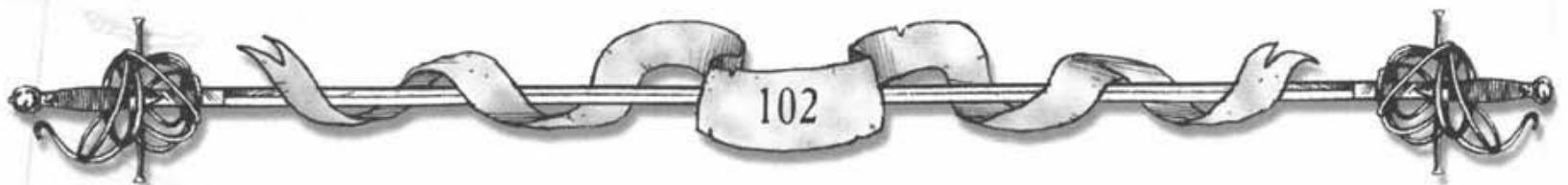


Temperatures in Vodacce range from below freezing to about 80 degrees. Winter lasts about three months, with temperatures occasionally dipping down below zero, but usually hovering around 40–50 degrees. The long, warm summers are ideal for growing crops, with plenty of rain and temperatures averaging about 70–80 degrees.

Vodacce farms produce grapes, rice, wheat, and (near the southern tip of the mainland) olives. They also breed goats, cows, poultry, and swine. From its scant mines, Vodacce produces lead, zinc and silver.

Seven main islands *appear* to adorn Vodacce's coast, but that is incorrect. Actually there are many more islands, but the noble families have spent many generations linking them together until only seven "clusters" remain. The islands house the center of Vodacce's trade, industry and society, as well as the most incredible feats of architecture in all of Théah. With so little land to build upon, the towering palaces of Vodacce reach high into the sky, teetering on an incredible and elaborate system of counterweights and balances.

Almost all trade to and from the Empire of the Crescent Moon moves through this chain of islands. They also





control nearly all southern trade in Théah. The islands are responsible for less than twenty percent of Vodacce's production, but all of its trade.

The People

The Vodacce are a prideful people. Their tempers are as quick as their blades, and the last man standing is right. A man in the islands is judged not only by his wealth, but also by the way he spends it. A proper man has enough money not to have to worry about spending it, but only a fool lets himself be taken advantage of.

The women of Vodacce are a different matter. Although you seldom see them acting publicly, they support their husbands and their fathers through craft and their arcane fate witchery.

The Vodacce have a slender build and are of about average height. Their hair is black and straight. Their eyes are dark and mysterious, ranging from black to gray. The Vodacce have straight, proud noses, and their complexion runs the gamut from pale to swarthy.

The Peasantry

Only in Montaigne is the distinction between noble and peasant more distinct than in Vodacce. However, the life of a peasant is not as harsh in Vodacce as in other countries. In fact, a Vodacce peasant's life could be seen as luxurious when compared to an Eisen or Montaigne peasant.

The day begins at sunrise and ends after sunset. The first duty for a Vodacce peasant is farming, which continues until around noon. Lunch is an elaborate affair that lasts for as long as an hour and a half, followed by a long, restful nap. The peasantry sleeps away the hot hours of the day, rises at four and continues its work until long after sunset. Then, when the daily chores are done, dinner is served and the farmers set themselves to sleep.

There is little else in the peasant's daily routine. Seasonal festivals and feast days take place, of course, but other than the hard work of maintaining the noble class' appetite, there is little the Vodacce peasant does other than work and rest.

Middle Class

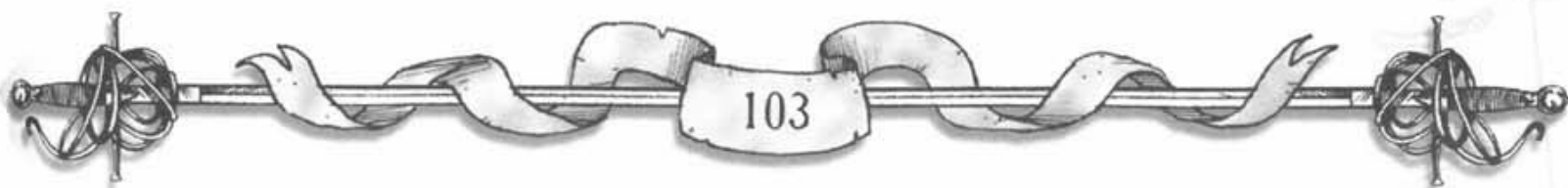
Vodacce's middle class consists primarily of artisans and merchants. Vodacce boasts some of the most talented craftsmen in Théah. Even the simplest items are often decorated to the point of being distracting. Much of the economy is based on the trade of these elaborate and decorative luxury items.

Bartering is as much a pastime and a source of pride in Vodacce as athletic events are in other kingdoms. Sessions can last for hours in the bustling streets. After all, a man who cannot make a good deal is hardly a man at all. A woman who cannot shop properly for her house should be scorned.

Visiting Vodacce

Here is a brief list of customs to observe when visiting Vodacce.

- Never meet a woman's eyes. It's an offense to her husband.
- Never fail to meet a man's eyes. It means you're a coward.
- If anyone does you a service, tip him generously. If you don't, it means you can't afford to.
- Never let your sword touch another man's, even when passing on the street. It means that you think his blade is poorly made, and it obligates him to draw it and prove you wrong.
- Never refuse a challenge.





The social structure in Vodacce is clearly apparent in her architecture. The lowest classes live nearest to the water, and, by default, the filth of the streets. The more money one has, the higher (literally) up the social structure one can go. The middle class can afford accommodations further up, often built directly on the roofs of their poorer neighbors. The nobility and the very wealthy live high in narrow buildings constructed with a combination of brilliant architecture, elaborate suspension, and a little magic. It is said that a party in the Prince's home may wake the rats that live under the floor of his poorest peasant. For similar reasons, it is also said that you can tell a lady because her feet have never touched the ground.

The Nobility

The noble class of Vodacce springs from its roots in the Old Republic to families that held seats in the Senate. The merchant princes, or "Signore", are not as extravagant as the nobility of Montaigne, nor are they as dignified as the nobility of Avalon. Vodacce poets write that the Vodacce have two hearts: one that beats for duty, and the other that beats for love.

The Seven Princes of Vodacce take their titles very seriously. Wealth and pride stand side by side as cornerstones in Vodacce culture; the former is a tool to satisfy the latter. The Princes seldom gather together except to determine matters of policy, or for very formal social occasions, such as weddings of state and funerals.

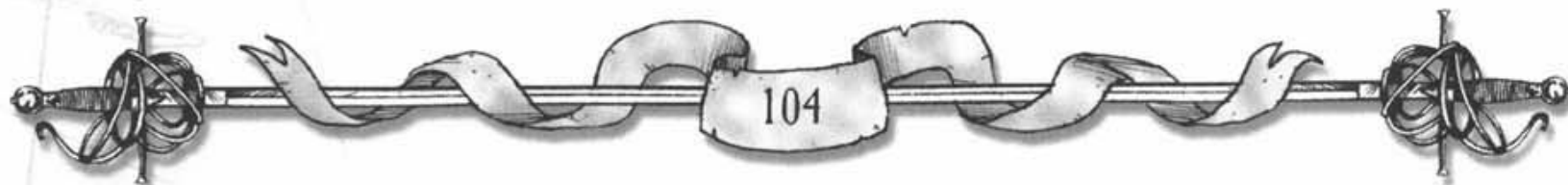
When they convene for policy, it is at a neutral estate located on the mainland. This avoids useless bickering about who should host the gathering. Also, it ensures that no one prince has a tactical advantage. Since the fall of the Old Republic, when poison and treachery were considered reasonable and fair means to negotiate succession, the Princes have never trusted one another, and with good reason.

The Princes do visit each other's homes for weddings and funerals. It is tradition that the family responsible for the

event should likewise host it on their native soil. It is also a tradition, of a most sacred sort, that no Prince does violence, directly or indirectly, to his kin on these occasions.

Because of these arrangements, the Princes have little opportunity to show off their wealth for each other. Therefore, a less conspicuous method has developed. The Vodacce Princes take turns hosting elaborate feasts for the lesser nobility. These minor nobles travel throughout the year between one island and another, telling the tales of their most recent host's excesses, with the understanding that their present host will go out of his way to surpass his cousin's decadence.

It has been said that wine flows through Vodacce's noble houses like water through her canals; similarly, food, gold,





jewels and women. It is also rumored by some skeptics that the Princes' habits may be a detriment to their power base, and that more wealth flows through the streets of Vodacce than through her trade routes.

Courtesans

Along with fine wine and exquisite cuisine, there is one more commodity enjoyed in the southern islands. Nobles from throughout Théah covet an invitation to the Vodacce feasts, not for their culinary offerings, but for their carnal ones.

In Vodacce, romance is a virtue. Men are expected to court women, even though their wives inevitably come to them through arranged marriages of state. By contrast, women of good breeding learn to be modest and shy. The profession of the courtesan specifically bridges this gap. A man can speak about things with a courtesan that he cannot with his wife. He can take her places where proper women are not allowed to go. He can praise her as a goddess of love, an ideal image. And when he is finished, he can go on about his business without giving the matter any further thought.

The courtesans of Vodacce are renowned throughout Théah. Although there are schools for basic etiquette, music, and other various arts, the best courtesans train primarily with private tutors. Similar to blacksmithing, winemaking, and other professions, this one is often handed down from mother to daughter. There are, in fact, a handful of "courtesan families" scattered across the islands.

Courtesans are not bound by the rules that keep most Vodacce women illiterate and quiet behind their tapestried curtains. They have access to libraries, universities, public forums and, anywhere else that their male clientele choose to pass their time. They train in the arts of acting, poetry, song, and dance, and in some cases in politics.

Still, there are disadvantages to this way of life. Although Vodacce noblewomen are limited in what they may and may not do, they are unquestionably protected, their security assured. A courtesan must rely on her wits and skills to determine her fortune. A wise woman will take care to gain the favor of nobility who are in a position to defend her should she find herself in difficulty in the future. Society and politics in Vodacce are bedfellows.

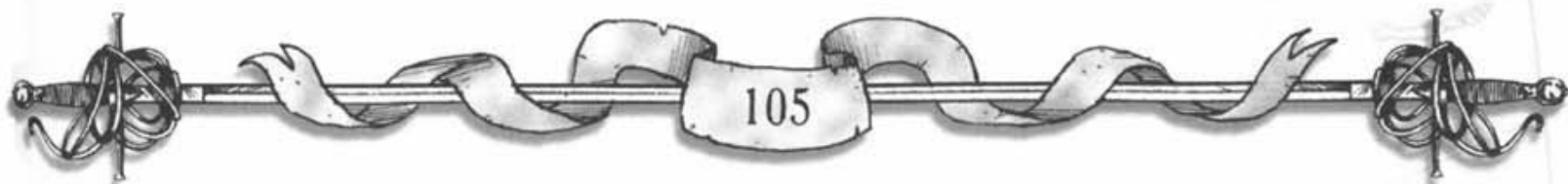
Vodacce courtesans are easily recognizable. They walk the streets like brightly plumed exotic birds, decked in brilliant colors, glittering jewels, and styles of dress that would disgrace proper women. There are few limitations as to what they may wear and to what they may do, although like everyone else in Vodacce, those inept at predicting whom they may anger don't last long.

The final detail to their costuming is the elaborate decorative masks they wear in public. Glittering affairs that usually cover only part of the face, these masks may mimic animals or birds, or may be entirely abstract. Ostensibly these masks add an element of excitement and festivity to the courtesan's image. In reality they have a more pragmatic purpose: to protect the woman's identity from her clients' wives.

Noblewomen

If the courtesans of Vodacce are some of the most educated women in Théah, then the wives of her nobles are the least educated. Women born with the gift of Sorte are never taught to read. Reading and writing are activities of vulgar women, certainly not for ladies of breeding and stature. This strange dichotomy has been commented on by many of Théah's scholars (primarily those in the Church) as an ideal example of the price mortals must pay for sorcery. After all, enlightenment comes from knowledge, and if a soul is not permitted to gain knowledge, how can it find the Creator's grace?

"Sorte" is the ability to see and manipulate the fate strands that bind all of humanity together. Only





Vodacce's women possess it, much to the chagrin of Vodacce's men. So enraged were the original men who bargained for the power that they set traditions in motion that remain even to this day.

The measures they put in place ensured their women could not wrest control of Vodacce's destiny from male hands. When a child is found to have the gift, her father makes certain she never learns to read or write, nor may she gain access to any other forms of education. Her duty to her father (and later, to her husband) is to serve him, his family, and Vodacce, not her own vanity. Vodacce wives wear modest black dresses and their faces are covered with thick, black veils (so a witch's eyes cannot meet the eyes of a man who is not her husband).

Noblemen

Vodacce men of all ranks are known for their pride. Most of the sons of better families have studied at some of the most renowned fencing schools of Théah, and they are always on the lookout for an opportunity to demonstrate their skill. The least offense can provoke a duel. What's more, Vodacce schools teach more than proper technique. Many of them have adapted the practical elements of streetfighting into their techniques, giving many an outsider a nasty surprise.

Etiquette

The ultimate breach of etiquette in Vodacce is to show yourself a coward. With the political climate as tense as it is, and pride such an important aspect of the national character, it is not uncommon to observe three or more duels in the course of an afternoon. Men call each other out for minor or imagined slights. Dishonor comes not from picking a fight, but from declining one. Of course, not all of these fights are fatal. Many are scarring matches (who can give his opponent the most scars), or even just shows of skill.

A promise in Vodacce is also a very important thing. A man who breaks his word shames himself and his family.

If this occurs, the patriarch of his family must punish the offense. To openly doubt another man's word when he has social stature equal to or greater than your own is cause for a duel to the death.

However, two things should be mentioned to strangers in Vodacce. The first is that a man's word, while absolute, is also precise. If a Vodacce ever promises you anything, pay close attention to the way he phrases it. He's bound only to the letter of his promise and will not be held to your inaccurate or loose interpretation of it. The second is that in a country as politically and socially ambiguous as Vodacce, it's rare for one man to ask another for his word on anything, and rarer for him to give it.

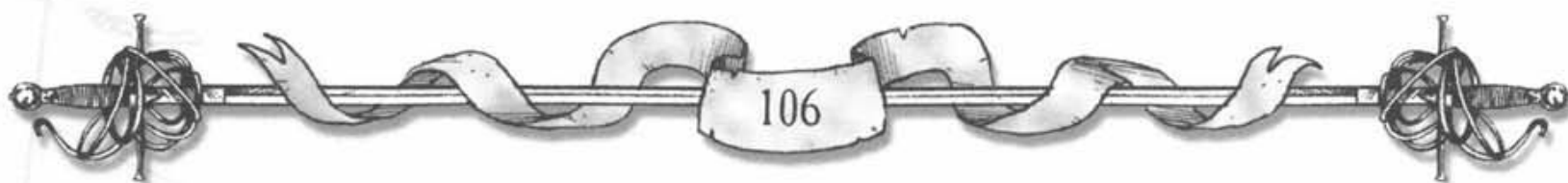
Clothing

The shapes and cuts of Vodacce clothes are similar to those popular in Montaigne, but they have a unique flavor. Their outer garments, dresses, coats, etc. are made up of panels of fabric laced together. This is especially common in the coats and dresses.

Shirts and underdresses are usually a lightweight fabric. Brocade, velvet and tooled leather are favored for outer garments. Rich dark shades are popular among the nobility.

Vodacce noblewomen favor simple jewelry, usually pearls or polished stones. The noblemen, like their courtesans, prefer to wear their wealth on their person. Almost no one in Vodacce wears faceted stones, or mirrored items of any kind. It's unlucky to see your reflection in more than one place at a time.

A typical nobleman's outfit consists of trousers, not baggy but loose enough for easy motion, and linen shirts with loose sleeves and flaring cuffs, embroidered with shimmering threads. Often, tall, supple boots that come up to the knee are worn, although a man in his own house or visiting friends may wear shorter shoes. Vodacce men favor frock coats with a slight flare below the waist. Sleeves can be removed before a duel, giving more





freedom of movement, while a vest remains, providing an ideal hiding place for extra weapons.

Noblewomen wear primarily black dresses, sometimes ornamented with small pearls sewn to the fabric. The waistlines of their dresses come to a low point from which their skirts fall in straight lines, as opposed to the full bustles of the Montaigne.

They wear their hair back from their faces, and may be straight in the back or else braided and bound up. They usually veil their faces when in public. This serves a dual purpose. It indicates an appropriate modesty, and also allows them to look where they please unobserved, preventing others from noticing the unfocused look in their eyes when they practice Sorte.

Diet

The Vodacce mainland is mostly marsh, limiting what can be grown there. Grapes grow in the low rolling hills, but the main crop in most of the rest of the country is rice. The diet of a Vodacce peasant consists largely of rice, pasta (which has made its way from the Crescent Empire), and seafood. A wide variety of fish make their homes in the waters surrounding Vodacce, as well as lobsters and crabs. Although some vegetables and citrus fruits grow in the mild, moist climate, most are imported from Castille.

The middle classes and nobles have more variety in their diets. Anyone who can afford it imports beef and venison as well as a host of other foods. Oysters are also a popular delicacy. Although they are not hard to come by in the sea surrounding Vodacce, almost all of what the nobles don't eat is exported to other Théan courts.

Customs

Family is very important to the southern islanders, high and low-born alike. Professions often pass down from father to son. The father's reputation in his profession is often as important as the son's. A fisherman can be proud that his father was the best fisherman ever, and a merchant whose father has a reputation as an honest man will receive more trade than a merchant whose father is not as respected.

Another peculiarity is the way the Vodacce treat their dead. The dead deserve absolute respect from friends and enemies alike. No one in Vodacce speaks ill of the dead, no matter how hated they were while still among the living.

There isn't room for many cemeteries on the islands, and the continental Vodacce isn't suited to it either, so most Vodacce seal their dead in stone coffins and vaults. Well-to-do families usually have private crypts built into or alongside their homes. For everyone else, there are the catacombs.



As complex as the tiers of buildings above ground are, a web of natural tunnels runs through the foundations of the islands. Niches have been carved into the sides of the walls to hold the generations of Vodacce's dead. The more you pay, the more accessible section your relations occupy. Along with the inconvenience of visiting someone encased further down, there's an additional risk: occasionally, the sea waters rise up, and the lowest levels of the catacombs will flood, washing away many of the dead in the lower levels.

Art and Music

The Vodacce are especially fond of well-crafted items. Although a handful of celebrated painters live on the southern isles, their favored styles of art include fine weaving, intricate gold work, exquisitely prepared food and any other item that adds a little extra grace to their lifestyle. The Vodacce are hedonists to the core.

Although they appreciate grand productions, orchestras, and operas, the Vodacce prefer more romantic and dramatic music. The songs of the troubadours are still popular. Part of being a proper man is the ability to sing and play an instrument. The most popular ballads are either romantic or witty. Women also sing love songs, but only in private, either for other women or for their husbands. They seldom sing in public, except the occasional historical or familial ballad.

Names

Vodacce nobles still derive their names from two of the three Old Republic senators who founded their nation: Gallili, Lorenzo, and Delaga, who became Vodacce's first king. Nobles today trace their line back to one or more of these senators, and their names reflect this, ending in the same vowel as the original senator's name. All of the princes share a lineage through Delaga, but only the closely related Villanovas use the "a" ending of their name. The rest have taken their name endings from Gallili.

Nearly 400 years ago, the closest descendant of Lorenzo fell into financial ruin. No other family has used that name ending since then.

Most members of Vodacce society, at least those who are not noble, have no surname. One Roberto is differentiated from another by his profession. Roberto the fishmonger is obviously different from Roberto the wine merchant.

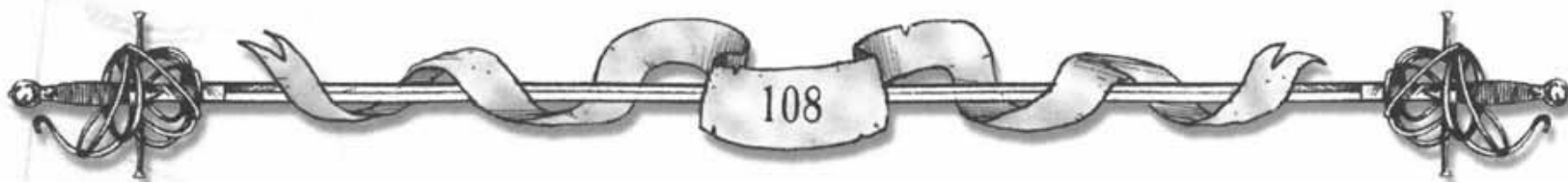
A Prince may honor his closest courtiers and advisors by letting them use the first portion of his name for their own. For example, Salvador the Chamberlain, servant to Villanova, may be promoted to Salvador Vilangela, Chamberlain to Villanova. Salvador's children would get to use this name as well, making the bestowal of a name a very high honor in Vodacce.

Religion

"If a Vodacce is not a devout Vaticine, he's quiet about it."
—Benedict the Farmer, Vodacce Peasant

Religion in Vodacce is a strange subject. Every church fills with Fate Witches and with husbands devoted to women who are not their wives. The bishops in Vodacce do not turn a blind eye to vice; they have simply defined it in a manner that does not interfere with the Vodacce lifestyle. These rigorous definitions apply mainly to sin. The Vodacce Church has spent a great deal of time defining what is sin and what it is not. The most decadent men in Vodacce are said to belong to the clergy, but if such rumors are true, they have never been proven. Needless to say, the blood-red robes of the Inquisition are seldom welcome in Vodacce.

To the Vodacce, religion is first and foremost a political tool. The noble houses have always been closely tied to the Church, and this relationship has strengthened over time. Vodacce controls five of the ten Arch-diocese seats of the Reformed Vaticine Church, a powerful position from which to forge Church policies. In fact, in order for



any policy to be made official, the favor of “the Vodacce Five” must be won; if a Cardinal (or even a Hierophant) disregards their authority, none of his policies will come to fruition. The princes have used this position on countless occasions, and their activities have not diminished since the Church moved to Castille.

The Vodacce church has gone to great lengths to create a compatible relationship between its religious tenets and its people’s way of life. Although the seven sins of the Vaticine church are consistent between Castille and Vodacce on the surface, the definitions vary somewhat. The primary difference is that the Vodacce believe that sin is seldom the action, but the corresponding inaction.

Sloth – The most reviled sin in a culture where a man is judged on the fortune he makes.

Envy – To envy what another man possesses is folly. You seek only to be equal with your neighbor. Instead, go out and get something that will make him envy you.

Greed – Wanting what you have no right to. If you have it within your capacity to earn that which you desire, then you are a fool for not doing so.

Lust – To the Vodacce the sin of lust is not in the wanting, but failure to act upon it. If you have feelings for a woman, pursue her. The sin to you and her is if you allow your desire to fester into a spiritual impotence.

Vanity – The fault here lies not in pride in your own appearance, but in unjustified pride. Know yourself. Don’t be fooled by your own ego.

Wrath – If you feel fury toward someone, you must challenge him and justify yourself. It is only a sin if you cower in your home and do not address the harm you believe he has inflicted upon you and yours.

Gluttony – Gluttony is the sin of consuming more than you should. However, to a hedonistic people, the definition of “what you should consume” may be different than it is elsewhere.

Government

There are seven princes ruling Vodacce at present. Each one controls a different aspect of trade and commerce. Each of them dreams of the day when he can gain supremacy over his cousins, uniting Vodacce under his own rule. Of these seven, three – Bernoulli, Falisci, and Villanova – have gained enough influence to try. The result is a political see-saw as each of the three attempts to manipulate his weaker cousins.

So far, all three have been hesitant to attempt a coup without some backing. Therefore, the minor princes play out a perpetual game, maneuvering for greater advantage in the relationship.

Each prince is the patriarch of his own family. By tradition his oldest son succeeds him when he dies. If the son is under the age of thirteen, the closest adult male relation acts as his advisor until he comes of age.

Bernoulli

The Bernoulli family has always staunchly supported the Church. As a reward, when general contact with the Empire of the Crescent Moon ended in the 1250s, the Church granted the Bernoulli family sole trading rights with the Empire. Since then the Bernoullis have prospered greatly, and are, not surprisingly, the most generous contributors to the Church.

Gespucci Bernoulli, the family patriarch, is personally devout. However, as he grows older (he’s in his early sixties already), his sons have taken on more and more of the active duties of trade. They make frequent trips across the waters to the Empire of the Crescent Moon, and are more than willing to indulge in the pleasures and vices to be found there. So far, the church has turned a blind eye to their decadence (extreme even by Vodacce standards), but once old Gespucci has passed on, there may be serious repercussions.



The Bernoulli family specializes in exotic and luxury goods. They are the only source in Théah for goods from the Empire of the Crescent Moon.

Falisci

Donello Falisci believes in doing one thing and doing it exquisitely. For him, and for his father and grandfather before him, that one thing is the making of great wine. Bottles of Falisci wine have been traded for small estates. The family possesses the most fertile part of the mainland, and the island is dedicated to creating new and marvelous flavors.

Men have missed their own weddings for the chance to attend a gathering at Donello Falisci's home. Wine pours from golden fountains. It runs in crimson and purple streams from flutes high up in the walls, cascading into great marble bowls. The central court of the Falisci palace is known as "The Great Chamber," a sea of voluminous cushions, where revels go on for days a time.

Villanova

One of the oldest and most powerful families, the Villanova are known for their deadly deals and treacherous methods. Outsiders have referred to them as the blackest snakes in a nest of vipers.

Giovanni Villanova took control of the family when his father Allegro died. Allegro was only thirty-two when he suffered an unlucky fall from a tall flight of stairs. His brother Giam stepped in as advisor for the ten-year-old Giovanni, but his health began to deteriorate soon after. It continued to worsen over the course of the next two years, and shortly after Giovanni took over the family affairs, Giam expired.

Since then, Giovanni has ruled with an iron hand. He controls the only major university in Vodacce. The Dionna University includes colleges in the arts and histories, but is primarily known for its work in the sciences. The doctors at Dionna are less squeamish than

their Castilian counterparts, and Giovanni Villanova has driven them hard to make discoveries and devices he can use for a profit.

Lucani

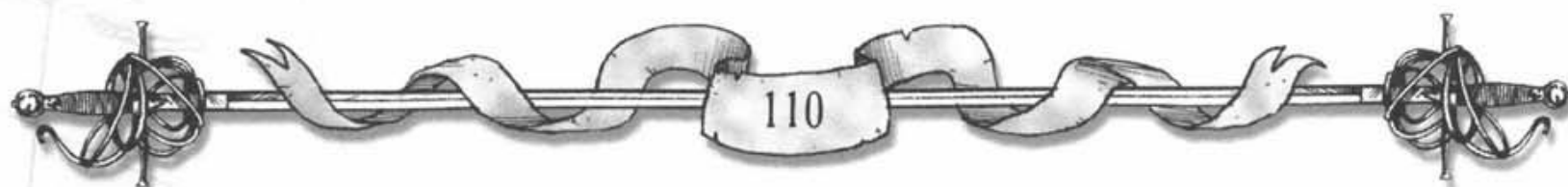
The Lucani family has only held its present land for about one hundred years. Prior to that it was owned by the Villanova family. One century ago, as payment for loyalty, or perhaps for some service (the histories are vague about the specifics) the Villanova patriarch awarded this small island holding, along with a portion of his mainland territory, to his lower-birthed cousin, Mikel Lucani. Since that time, the Lucani have struggled to keep the land they were given.

Four years ago, Alberto Lucani took control of his family's holdings. Since then, it has become painfully clear to him that the small income they eke out from their own wine trade is utterly eclipsed by the work of the Faliscis. However, Lucani boasts some of the most coveted embroidered cloth available anywhere in Théah.

Needlework is one of the few arts available to the noblewomen of Vodacce, and the ladies of the Lucani family have an exceptional knack for it. Alberto has taken further advantage of this one asset by giving gowns made of the splendid fabric to notable ladies of Montaigne. His strategy has paid off, as Lucani embroidery has become the height of fashion in the courts. Of course, what he'll do when the fickle Montaigne noblewomen move on to a new fad is anyone's guess.

Mondavi

With the exception of the Faliscis, Mondavi is the only Vodacce family making its living from agriculture. The family's mainland holdings are marshy, but ideal for producing rice. Although this does not bring an extraordinary income, it is a stable one, and Mondavi seems to be content with maintaining the status quo.



Unlike his cousins, Alcide Mondavi prefers to have his home on the mainland, nearer to his farms. However, a history of truces and compromises prohibits any of the princes from keeping a permanent residence there. Ironically, Mondavi's island is one of the furthest from its holding, but Alcide makes frequent trips. Of all the cousins, he is the least social. The decadent parties that flow through most of Vodacce are relative strangers to the Mondavi island, alone at the end of the long chain. In spite of this, a few people notice that Alcide's trips to the continent have become even more frequent recently.

Vestini

Although the Bernoulli family controls the trade of foreign luxuries, the Vestini dominate the manufacture of domestic ones. More than two centuries ago, Tonelli

Vestini offered a substantial sum to fine craftsmen throughout the Vodacce islands, provided they move to his island and produce their crafts for him. At the time, the Vestini family had sufficient military and political power to keep most of the other Princes from challenging them. The one prince who did found his youngest son dead in a canal. If it had been his eldest, there might have been war.

In the years since then, those craftsmen — glass blowers, metal workers, weavers, tailors, and so forth — have taught their sons and their sons' sons their trade, creating a population of experts. Vestini rewards his people well, and he can afford to do so with the prices he receives from exporting their work.





Caligari

Vincenzo Caligari was an old man ten years ago, but he shows no signs of relaxing his grip on power. Steeped in tradition, his home is modeled on the senate building of the Old Republic. He keeps a council of advisors who wear medallions similar to the senators' seals of that period.

His private chamber is a small museum, filled wall to wall with tomes, scrolls, boxes and bags excavated from ruins across Théah. Vincenzo Caligari is obsessed with these bits of older lives. For most of his days, since the lingering death of his father, Vincenzo has been convinced that he was not destined for such a common demise. He believes that the right artifact, or combination of artifacts, will keep him safe from sickness and aging.

He keeps a private team of explorers whom he pays very well to find his treasures for him, although he's also been known to bargain for pieces from other nobles' collections. He personally sorts through all of his prizes. Those he believes may have arcane properties he keeps. The rest he sells, at a great profit, to other noble members of Théan society.

Vincenzo Caligari believes with all his heart that the relics he's surrounded himself with are the reason he's lived so long. Whatever the cause, his eldest son, now over forty himself, curses it daily. It may only be coincidence, but Vincenzo hasn't been ill in over thirty years.

Economy

Vodacce continues to use the currency of the Old Republic, a bronze coin called, appropriately enough, a "republic." They also smaller copper coins called *sedilo*, or "seats." There are ten *sedilo* to a republic, since there were ten seats on the Senate of the Old Republic. Unlike most other currency on Théah, republics and *sedilos* are not exchangeable for Guilders.

In Vodacce, most public works such as the gondolas, maintenance of the bridges, and government buildings are paid for by the Princes. However, the people who use these amenities are expected to tip the workers. In this way, the cost of maintenance is defrayed. In the long run, the people of Vodacce only save a little money in this manner, but the poorer citizens are spared much of the burden.

Military

There is no standing army in Vodacce. Each prince keeps a personal house guard, and young men who are trained and able may serve at the garrisons which guard traffic to and from the Empire of the Crescent Moon.

However, almost all noblemen learn to use a sword, a tradition stemming from the days following the fall of the Old Republic, when each house was responsible for furnishing a suitable number of young men to fight for the nation. This hasn't been a necessity in centuries, but the law remains.

The Vodacce "Navy"

There is no official Vodacce navy. However, the merchant ships that travel back and forth from her are owned by loyal men and heavily armed, with a contingent of mercenary marines on board to repel pirates. In a pinch, these ships could serve as a very respectable navy, though it would hurt Vodacce's economy in the short run.

Fighting Style

The nation is full of young men who have learned to fight out of custom, even though there is no standing army. Therefore, an unspoken etiquette of fighting has developed. To begin with, everything is fair, as long as you win. Vodacce don't call foul if one opponent trips another and then strikes him when he's down. They call it resourceful. Most of the truly excellent Vodacce schools of fencing teach their students about sensitive and





vulnerable parts of the body, as well as ways to get at those parts and do them harm.

Vodacce's Current Relations with the Rest of Théah

Avalon

Officially, the Vodacce want nothing to do with the Avalons, and vice versa. However, there are rumors that the two countries are carrying on trade in secret using the Sea Dogs as an intermediary.

Castille

Vodacce's relation with Castille is strained at times, almost the way feelings between siblings sometimes run hot. The two nations are more similar to each other than to any other country, but they often butt heads, mostly regarding their shared religion.

Eisen

The Vodacce keep a careful eye on the Eisen. With the country in the shape it's in, the Vodacce are afraid that a desperate mob of Eisen may attempt an invasion in order to claim more fertile lands for themselves.

Montaigne

The Montaigne people are Vodacce's largest market for luxury goods, and the two peoples have a lot in common with one another. This makes for very good relations between the two countries.

Ussura

The Fate Witches are afraid of the Ussurans, warning of a dark shadow that looms over them protectively. This has made the rest of the Vodacce very cautious around them. They are very careful not to do anything that might insult or upset them, or their mysterious protector.

The Pirate Nation

Thanks to the predictions of the Vodacce Fate Witches, the merchants of Vodacce suffer from less piracy than might be thought. They still keep a close watch for pirates, and hang any they capture, but it isn't as much of a concern as it could be.

Vendel League

The situation with Vendel is strained. The two nations are already engaged in a trade war which could quickly become a shooting war. In the last few years there have been several instances of a Vodacce prince sending a trade group too far north. More than one of these groups were politely returned home in chests. The main reason that no serious action has been taken by the Vodacce is that no single prince has sufficient power alone to attack the Vendel. Besides, if he did, he'd have to explain his actions to his cousins, and admit to them that he'd attempted to trade outside his borders and behind their backs as well.

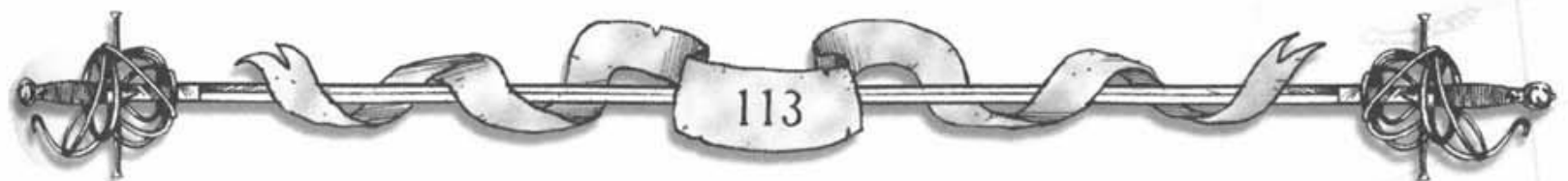
Vodacce NPCs

Giovanni Villanova

"You have only yourself to blame, Milo. You knew better than to trust me."

The Villanova family has traditionally produced black-hearted beasts that barely have the right to call themselves men. Giovanni, the latest in the line, has no right at all. He pushed his father down a flight of stairs and poisoned his brother over a period of two years in order to take over the family. He drives the scholars at Dionna University to seek darker secrets, always hoping for the discovery that will give him the ability to control Vodacce.

Image: Giovanni is tall and slender, with a hook nose and a dark, sinister look to his face. He has black hair, and a goatee. In short, he looks like a villain.





Goals: Whatever Villanova wants, Villanova gets. Those who stand in his way... he *might* pay for their funerals.

Roleplaying Giovanni: Act like you're smarter than everyone else. Smirk when you have the upper hand. Enjoy yourself – you're a villain, and you don't mind being one.

Juliette

"Of course, Lord Villanova. Whatever you desire."

Juliette is the daughter of Veronica, the creator of the Ambrogia style of fighting. For the last three years, she has been the personal courtesan of Giovanni Villanova. She is well educated, and Giovanni relies on her for advice more than anyone else. Secretly, she's smuggling

fate witches out of Vodacce with the aid of someone with powerful connections, and Giovanni doesn't know a thing about it.

Image: Juliette has long curly black hair. She's nearly six feet tall, with a slender, athletic build. She has dark eyes and pretty features, but isn't the shining beauty that some of the other courtesans are – Giovanni likes her sharp wit.

Goals: Her first goal is to continue helping Fate Witches without getting caught. Her second is to maintain herself in the lifestyle to which she is accustomed. Both of her goals require that she stay on Giovanni's good side, so she is very careful not to make him angry.

Roleplaying Juliette: Speak pleasantly and precisely. Use big words. If you are helping a Fate Witch to leave the country, then put a harder edge to your voice and dialogue.





Vincenzo Caligari

"Don't touch that. On second thought, don't touch anything."

Vincenzo Caligari is possibly the foremost expert on Syrneth artifacts in all of Théah. This isn't because he has any scholarly ambitions. Rather, he wants to live forever, and he's convinced that the Syrneth held the secret to immortality. He will do anything and kill anyone necessary to find his fountain of youth.

Image: Vincenzo looks old. He is wrinkled, balding, and somewhat hard of hearing. However, talking to him, visitors find that he's full of life and energy, and he gives the impression that he isn't going to die any time soon.

Goals: Vincenzo wants to live forever. He's seeking the artifact or combination of artifacts that will keep him from growing any older — or perhaps even give him back his lost youth. Everything else is of secondary importance.

Roleplaying Vincenzo: Speak in a cheerful voice with a strained edge to it. Forget to finish some of your

sentences. Never apologize. Don't look at someone when you're talking to him.

Beatrice Caligari

"You can get away with a lot when no one's looking."

Beatrice is the sister of the Imperatrice of Montaigne. It is rumored that she has figured out how to control the mysterious black strands, a rumor that keeps every fate witch in Vodacce (and her husband) on the other side of the street. No one wants to talk to her, or even walk past her on the street, because they are all terrified of her, even her own uncle, Vincenzo Caligari. Among the Fate Witches, it is believed that she tangled up all of her own fate strands, but they aren't sure why.

Image: Beatrice wears a heavy veil decorated with black pearls. Nobody ever sees her face. Other Fate Witches see a number of black strands attached to her with their ends flailing around in the air, making her resemble some sort of sinister black octopus.



Goals: Beatrice wants to push her Sorte magic further than anyone else has ever managed before. She is following in the footsteps of her ancestor, “Mad Queen” Marietta. She believes that Marietta was on to something important, but proceeded too quickly and overreached her power.

Roleplaying Beatrice: Don’t speak unless you have to. If you must speak, talk softly, in almost a whisper. Make the players strain to hear you and don’t repeat yourself. If someone offends you, reach your hand towards your veil. If that doesn’t frighten them off, use your Sorte to ensure that they have other things to worry about.

Donello Falisci

“Hmm. Spicy bouquet, with a hint of sunshine. The taste is fruity, yet light. It slides off the tongue without burning on the way down. I wouldn’t give this slop to a pig.”

Donello is a vintner, like his father, and his father’s father. He feels that everyone should learn how to do one thing really well, and he makes truly great wine. A thirty- or forty-year-old bottle of Falisci can bring a small fortune from the right buyer. Donello is easily the most generous of the Vodacce Princes. He loves to give gifts to his guests, and he loves to throw huge, extravagant parties. It is generally accepted that his parties are sacrosanct from the petty poisonings that often take place elsewhere in Vodacce, since the poisoner would likely find himself banned from further parties — a fate worse than death. Lately, Donello has been feeling ill, but he has been hiding this from everyone else.

Image: At the age of 30, Donello has finally grown into his features. Where he used to look long in the face, he now has a handsome dignity that the ladies find very attractive. It seems that the older he gets, the better he looks.

Goals: Donello is less ambitious than the other princes, but no less protective of his property. He’s concerned



with increasing his influence, not his land. As he often says, “It’s harder to steal friends than land. Friendship is the most important thing.”

Roleplaying Donello: Don’t use the word “friend” unless you mean it. Expect the same from others. Make the players feel as if you are the one man in Vodacce they can trust. You probably are.



Brotherhood of the Coast

Just off the coast of Castille is an island called Bucca. It is surrounded by sharp coral reefs, treacherous shallows and deadly leviathans. For centuries, Castille and the Church used this island as a prison. Recently, it has become much more than that. It has become a nation unto itself. A nation of pirates.

Calling themselves “the Brotherhood of the Coast”, these sea bandits have preyed on Théah’s richest merchant vessels, capturing plunder and returning it to their leader, the infamous King of the Pirates, “Allende.”

The story begins with reports of the plague breaking out on the island. What actually occurred is known only to those who were on the island at the time. Before anyone could act, however, the inmates had overcome their wardens, captured a supply ship and set sail. Before long, the pirates had captured three of Castille’s mighty galleys, two Montaigne ships and a Vodacce merchantman.

Two years later, Allende’s Brotherhood has become the scourge of the southern seas. They’ve captured a ship from nearly every seafaring nation and recruited sailors from across Théah, and the reason for their success can be attributed to one thing: their thirst for freedom.

One reason the Brotherhood has survived so long is its geography. The waters surrounding it are filled with sharp coral reefs and dangerous shallows. There are only three maps; two of them are currently held by the Brotherhood. The third was stolen from the office of the High Admiral of Castille by an unknown party and has never been recovered.

There is only one safe approach to the island, and Allende had the foresight to install man-made dangers to rip through the hulls of any approaching ships. Because only his men know the location of the snares, he can pass

safely through. And because he knows there is only one safe passage, he can guard it.

The island itself is completely self-sufficient, with crops and fresh water for all her residents. The island was chosen for its ability to feed and water its inmates, and with hundreds of skilled hands (all taught by years of hard labor), Allende’s men remain well fed.

Another peculiar feature of the island is its large leviathan population. Many scholars have speculated on why the beasts school near the island, but the area is a little too dangerous for even the bravest Church scholar or archæologist.

The Brotherhood of the Coast is Théah’s first true democracy. “We’re all in this together now,” Allende said when they took over the island. “All our fates wrapped up into one. We stand together or we fall together.” When decisions must be made, every man and woman on the island has a voice. Public forums are commonplace, and after all the talking is through, there’s a vote. Everyone, regardless of nationality, religion or station, gets one vote. The Brotherhood has tripled in size since it first began, and its store of loot has also increased. What was once a sad collection of robbers, thieves and brigands has become a nation.

The most common name for members of the Brotherhood is “buccaneer.” The name comes from the pork jerky — *bucca* — the men made from the island’s native pig population. The men often kept a hunk of jerky in their cheek, thus earning the nickname “buccan.” When the prisoners turned pirate, the name stuck and transformed into “buccaneer.”

However, the term applies only to those who were originally prisoners on the island. Any man who claims to be a buccaneer and cannot prove it is swiftly punished for his presumption. Those who have recently joined the cause are called “brethren.” In short, all buccaneers are brethren, but not all brethren are buccaneers.





Pirate NPCs

Below are five NPC pirates for your campaign. Only Allende belongs to the Brotherhood; the rest have their own political axes to grind. *All* the pirate factions are detailed in the *Pirate Nations* sourcebook.

Allende

"Don't trifle with me. I know more about inflicting pain than you can imagine."

Reports of the man known as "Allende" (or the "Pirate King" as the shantymen have dubbed him) are wide and varying. The truth of the matter is that he is Castillian. He is also clever, resourceful, cunning and ruthless. He knows how to look into the hearts of men and push them beyond their limits. He also knows the waters surrounding Castille as if his mother were a mermaid.



Image: Allende is tall and dark with a noble bearing. His long, curly hair flows down over his shoulders and it is said that looking into his black eyes is like looking into a bottomless well.

Goals: Allende's goals are difficult to fathom. His ship has been known to attack Castillian vessels, but in general he avoids them and has even been known to protect them. His most notable targets have been Montaigne war vessels, a dangerous hobby at best.

Roleplaying Allende: Unlike many other captains, Allende is very verbal with his men. He seldom uses lieutenants (unless in the heat of battle), but speaks directly to the crew. One sailor who served under him commented, "He knows every man's duty better than they do."

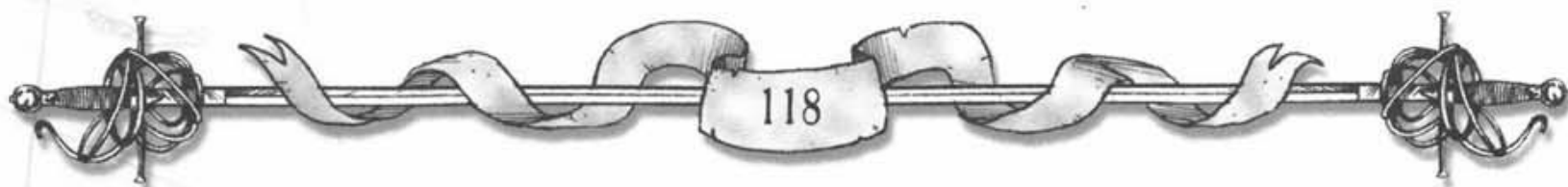
Jeremiah Berek

"If you send half your forces to attack from the flanks, then you'll inflict far more damage... and I won't have to leave this lovely woman to babysit you."

When Queen Elaine called for her nobles to build ships for Avalon's navy, Berek immediately put carpenters and shipwrights to work on his own merchant ship. It was finished within weeks and renamed the *Black Dawn* in keeping with its new purpose. Then, instead of protecting Avalon's shores, he directly attacked the navies of Castille and Montaigne. Some say that Berek's success has more to do with daring than cunning, but none can deny his success at thwarting the enemies of his Queen.

Image: Berek is not a tall man. His blond hair falls just above his shoulders and his blue eyes can be both charming and piercing. While the ladies of Avalon's court describe him as "rakish", it is only his wicked smile that has earned him such a reputation.

Goals: Berek's goals are simple: continue to add Castillian and Montaigne gold to the Queen's treasure trove as long as possible.





famous for) is his ancient, enormous scythe. The two eyewitness reports of Reis tell that the weapon cut through iron and bone as if they were paper.

Goals: Reis is concerned with one thing: money. Someone is paying him to capture Syrneth artifacts and paying him very well. Reis' greed swallowed his mercy a long time ago.

Roleplaying Reis: Reis is a merciless, bloodthirsty man who had his remorse removed when he was a child. He is a cold-hearted psychopath who kills anything in his path.

No banter.

No barter.

No quarter.

Roleplaying Berek: Berek's "daring dolt" reputation is only a little more exaggerated than one might think. He is a noble, not a sailor. However, his unfamiliarity with sailing life allows him to find options that his opponents would have never considered. He has employed Castillian expatriates as pilots to lull his prey into a false sense of security, set fire to captive ships and sailed them into enemy harbors, and even used Vestenmannavnjar Rune mages to do battle with Avalon's enemies.

Reis

"Your flesh will make a fine addition to my sailcloth."

Of all the pirates who sail the six seas, the one known as "Reis" is, by far, the most feared. When sailors see the bloody Jolly Roger above his sails, they know that they must now fight or die. One crew abandoned their ship to save themselves from his merciless band.

Image: Reis is a huge man, standing nearly seven feet tall. His features are marked by wild, bloodthirsty eyes, a hook nose and a thick black beard. However, the one feature that is most prominent (and that he is most





Kheired-Din

Kheired-Din is a Crescent whose reputation has spread as far as Avalon and Vendel. His thirst for bloodshed is matched only by his devotion to the teachings of the Second Prophet, and he has often been seen praying in thanks to the Creator after a long, bloody battle. He has captured entire villages, leaving the buildings empty and burning, bringing the plunder back to the unknown East.

Image: While reports of Kheired-Din have made him out to be a giant, in truth, he is wider than he is tall: his huge frame seems made of muscle. His bald head, tattooed face and goatee only add to his exotic features.

Goals: Kheired-Din's raids seem to have only one purpose: to bring slaves back to the Crescent Empire. He seldom preys on ships, keeping close to the shoreline and attacking small villages after nightfall.

Roleplaying Kheired-Din: Kheired-Din does not speak any of the western languages, not even Old Théan. Despite his size, he is as quick as a cat and has the deliberate moves of a trained killer.

Yngvild Olafssdottir (ing-vild oh-lafs-daw-ter)

"To the seas with your filthy money, and to Valhalla with your soul! Pray that our ancestors have more mercy than I."

Born twenty-two years ago to Olaf Arninbjorn, who died when she was only five, Yngvild grew up a fisherman's daughter and, when she showed promise, learn to master the runes of her ancestors. But when the Vendel moved her family and destroyed her village to create a new commerce port, she turned to a life of piracy. Her ship, the *Revensj*, has sunk or captured seven merchant ships on their way to or from Vendel ports, making her the League's number one concern.

Image: Those who meet her are often surprised to find that Yngvild is not the towering warrior-woman her





reputation suggests: she is only five and a half feet tall, slender and slight.

Goals: More than anything else, Yngvild wants to hurt the Vendel. Not just irritate them, not just inconvenience them, but *hurt* them.

Roleplaying Yngvild: Yngvild is no warrior, but the men who serve her definitely are. They look to her for spiritual guidance, but when the spears are drawn, they rely on their own strength, wits and fortune. She is the heart of the ship and the men who serve her protect her as such. She is soft-spoken, but when angered, her quiet words drip with poison.

The Vaticine Church

"If it can be reasoned, it must be true."

– The First Prophet

The Vaticine Church has performed more good in Théah than any other single world power. It is almost single-handedly responsible for Théah's technological level, her understanding of nature and science and some of the most beautiful literature and philosophy ever written.

Unfortunately, many believe the Church is also responsible for the gravest crimes ever committed against humanity. Those who condemn the Church fail to see that it is not the organization that committed those crimes, but individuals within the Church who took advantage of their position and authority. The Church still maintains hostels, helps cure the sick and feed the hungry, provides spiritual guidance for those who need it and works tirelessly toward discovering Theus' riddle.

This section contains more details on the Church, its organization and philosophy.

The Inquisition

This section gives you a better idea of the mindset driving the Inquisition. No villains ever believe they're doing evil and Cardinal Verdugo's forces are no exception.

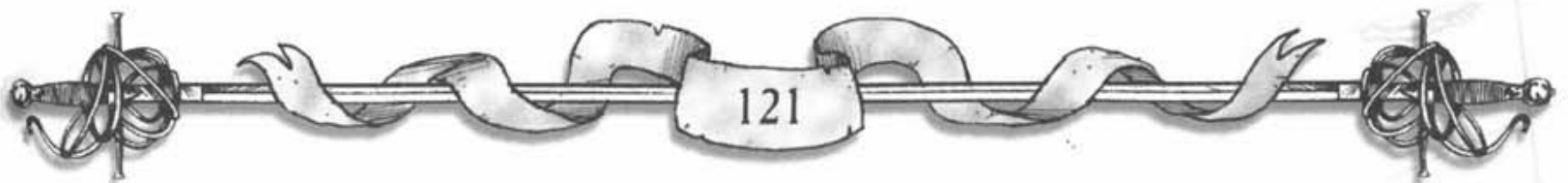
The Inquisition may be the most dangerous force in Théah today: a ruthless band of power-mad fanatics running unchecked through the ranks of the Vaticine Church. But they don't see it that way. In fact, they see themselves as Théah's last hope for salvation. Fanaticism can be blinding and the Inquisition is so caught up with saving everyone's soul that they don't realize how dangerous they've become.

The average Inquisitor doesn't believe he's abusing his power. He sees the world's wickedness tearing lives apart, destroying good souls, and strengthening the forces of Legion. Wickedness has claimed the Empereur of Montaigne, thrown the true faith out of Avalon and shattered Eisen into tiny pieces. Against such fearsome acts, the Inquisitor must take extreme measures. He must use whatever leverage he has to save as many souls as he can from Legion. If that means killing a man in the middle of the night, he'll do it. If it means burning a library to the ground, he'll do it. If it means abusing his position and manipulating the power of the Church to achieve his ends, he'll do it. The alternative is unthinkable.

In that light, the terrible things the Inquisition does become understandable, even justifiable. The Inquisition is all about using the ends to justify the means. GMs should keep that in mind when throwing Inquisitors at their players.

The Big Questions

A Church exists to give answers to the faithful. Below is a list of questions and the official answers from the Vaticine Church.





What is Sin?

Sin is the failure of one's character, when a person falls short of the potential he has been given. Humanity is constantly given the choice of doing something honorable but painful, and dishonorable but pleasant. When someone chooses the pleasant, he has failed his own sense of rightness and committed sin.

The Creator endowed within us a sense of right and wrong. Whenever we feel the urge to do right, we feel the Creator's hand guiding us. Whenever we do wrong, and feel the pangs of moral pain in our chest, we also are feeling the Creator's hand. Failure to follow that innate guidance — not to give in to temptation — is sin. When we ignore the soft voice of the Creator within our souls, his whispered guidance can fade. That is why the Church prescribes penance for those who have sinned, so that we may retain the voice of the Creator within ourselves and not become lost to the urgings of sin.

As lost as a sinner may be, we must all remember that the Creator gave us sin so that we might learn the greatest virtue of all — the virtue of forgiveness. We must always remember that any one or all of us is susceptible to the allure of sin, and — intentionally or not — we may cause injustice upon one another by way of our indiscretions. We must be forthright in our accusations, but also merciful in our judgments.

Why is sorcery a sin?

Because it was not bestowed by the Creator, but the enemy, Legion. All those who die with the sin of sorcery in their veins will fall to the Abyss, where the sleeping Legion waits. Every soul that falls to Legion brings the enemy one day closer to awakening and devouring the world.

How can I cleanse my soul if I have committed a sin?

The First Prophet said that Theus' creation is a puzzle to be reasoned out, and that through this process comes

enlightenment and glory in the eyes of the Creator. When we have suffered impurity and become tainted by sin, it is an opportunity to learn from our failure. Insight from failure leads us closer to the Creator.

Those who have tainted their souls with sin must seek guidance from the Church. The men and women of the clergy have been taught to counsel those who have fallen from the Creator's grace and help lead them back to the proper path. Counseling usually entails discussion, meditation and a slight penance.

What is our Creator like?

Theus is just. He is forthright and noble, though not as we humans are used to seeing in one another. He is not human, we must remember, and is therefore difficult — though by no means impossible — for us to understand. He is neither harsh nor gentle; He is demanding, though never to punish us, but to educate us.

Theus is rarely active within our world, being instead the sum total of Terra and all beyond. He is neither male nor female, as we would understand them, for both the sexes are derived from Him.

Theus is All and One with All. He is Creation itself.

Can man become closer to the Creator?

Yes. You have everything you need.

The Prophet said, "You can see the face of the Creator in his works." In other words, the Creator gave us the world so that we may observe it and learn from it. All around us, nature is the Creator's lesson, and in every field, in every forest, in every river, there is something to be learned. If we learn the way of the world, we may learn the mind of the Creator and his wisdom. The world is indeed a perfect creation, and by studying it we may even gain a glimpse of the divine.





Why did the Creator make an imperfect world?

The world is not imperfect. We only *perceive* it to be so through our limited understanding of the Eternal Puzzle – the Great Creation. Whenever we find ourselves adrift and confused about our role or why we are being tested, we need only look back within. “Life is a journey,” the First Prophet said. By this, he meant that we should strive to perfect ourselves every day and view each day as a smaller part of a greater journey. The longer we walk the path the Creator has laid out for us, the more we understand the world, and the closer we come to the Creator.

Why is there evil in the world?

There is no evil in the world, but there is sin. This is the prime lesson of the First Prophet. There is no such thing as evil – only the illusion of evil. When the hawk kills the rabbit to feed its young, is it evil? When the mother kills to protect her children, is she evil? The world is as the Creator made it, and it is only when humanity applies judgment upon the Creator’s work that words like “evil” are born.

Why is the world unjust?

The Second Prophet said, “Mankind is the only creature capable of injustice. But he is also the only creature capable of justice.” At the beginning of time, the Creator bestowed a gift upon all creatures. To mankind, he gave the gift of free will, which not only gave him the capacity to fail, but also the capacity to be greater than he believes himself to be.

Injustice is man’s burden. With the capacity to see injustice, it is mankind’s duty to set right where things have gone wrong. Dogs can’t do that. Cats can’t do that. Only men can make justice, and therefore they have a duty to see that it is done. The Creator gave us this gift so that we might learn duty.

Why does Theus allow famine and disease?

Famine and disease are all a part of Creation. Famine is a byproduct of gluttony, and therefore the result of man’s effect upon the world. Disease is due to overpopulation and sinful activities, and so the same can be said again. The Creator’s lesson, then:

The price for gluttony and lust are famine and disease, which man must atone for himself.

Why do bad things happen to good people?

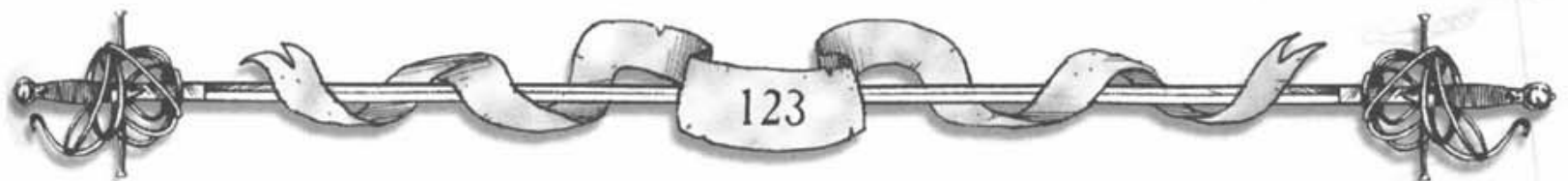
As shown above, the results of sin are not always felt only by those responsible for the sinful act. Often, those close to the sinner, or sometimes those unconnected, can be affected. Though unfair, this is not the fault of the Creation, nor Theus himself, but of the sinner.

When we are hurt by sins committed by others, it is our duty as part of the Grand Creation either to show the malefactor the error of his ways or to excise him. This is one of the opportunities that has been set aside for us, so that we may serve our Lord. This is why the Creator gave us heroes.

Remember also that all pain, regardless of the intensity, is transient, and therefore unimportant before our ultimate goal. Do not be dissuaded by the illusion of pain. We must not allow travesties, heresies, or temptation to draw us into sin’s dark embrace, lest we suffer the same fate upon others that consumed us.

What happens after I die?

The Church of the Prophets teaches belief in the immortal soul. All creatures (not just humans) have a soul, and when the body expires the soul is lifted from the body and passes into a waiting place where it sleeps. The Church calls this place “Elæthorum.” It also teaches that those who practice sorcery in sinful ways are the pawns of the Adversary – demons who seek to overthrow the Creator and steal His Creation. Legion (as they are





collectively known) seeks to do this by stealing the souls of mortal men.

Sin contaminates and corrupts the soul, pulling it away from the light of the Creator. When the corrupted die, their souls do not rise up to Elæthorum but sink deep into Abyss where Legion awaits, to feed their hunger. Every soul Legion devours grants them power, until one day they will have the strength to face the Creator and steal Creation away from him.

For every soul that falls to the Abyss, there is one fewer day of waiting for the Adversary. The First Prophet also said, "There will come a day when the Enemy no longer needs to wait, and that day is coming soon. Woe to man when the Day of Awakening shall come, for all of Creation shall be lost." This phrase has alarmed many Church scholars, for it indicates that if enough souls go to Abyss, Legion may gain the strength to claim Creation before the souls in Elæthorum awaken.

The Third Prophet went on to say, "And when the souls in Elæthorum awaken, there shall be a great song, and they shall take up strange weapons and make war on those who have fallen from the Creator's Grace." Church scholars have taken this to indicate that some great catastrophe awaits mankind. They have further estimated that this catastrophe will occur when the Fourth Prophet – the Armageddon Prophet – arrives. The Church has not released any formal announcement on when that day may occur.

Do we have free will or is everything already determined?

In response to this, we must say that there is a difference between knowing the exact events of the future, and knowing simply that "some things will come to pass." Statements from the Prophets and visions of the blessed have proven that glimpses of the future can be gleaned through supernatural intuition, though this is not an

indication that our destinies are already written for us to fulfill. Far from it, in fact.

Theus necessitates free will, citing that we are all born innocent, with roles to play, but not a set path to follow. The Eternal Grace of the Creator allows us to pursue whatever choices we desire.

Yet our efforts are constantly thwarted by Legion and its agents. These agents are just as powerful as those of the Creator, though in a vastly different way. They and their infernal masters come from a realm where the laws of nature are different. They are ultimately useless against the instruments of light, but not against us.

The same can be said for Theus and his angelic servants. Their gifts can be used to help us, but cannot affect the actions of Legion. The two are simply too alien from one another to connect – for now. This struggle continues every day in every city of the world, with both touching us periodically, subtly influencing our lives. It will persist until the arrival of the Fourth Prophet, when the two will clash for the first and last time.

What are miracles and how are they possible?

Miracles are a blessing reserved for those who have achieved a conscious understanding of the Eternal Puzzle. The path toward this goal is different for each person, and very few make it within the span of their lifetimes, though the First Prophet proclaimed that "any whose fervor for the Creator be vehement enough shall receive his holy caress."

Those truly committed to deciphering the Puzzle and their role within it include the Prophets themselves and a handful of the devoted, chief among them the Witnesses each Prophet has gathered to document his message.

Are there angels and demons?

The Third Prophet said, "Even now, there are messengers of the Creator, invisible to the mortal eye, bearing





weapons we dare not comprehend.” Angels are the Creator’s hands, helping shape and repair the corrupted elements of Creation.

Demons are the servants of the Enemy, who go into the world in mortal and spirit form, looking for souls weak enough to corrupt. Only those with faith and the Creator’s Grace may resist these demons; those who do not have the willpower or do not stand in the Creator’s Grace are vulnerable to their temptations.

Secret Societies

Religion has been the most powerful motivator in Théah since the dawn of mankind. Religious wars have slain millions, divided families and torn nations in two. After the War of the Cross, however, the flame of religious fervor has dimmed a bit, replaced by the new fire of nationalism.

Théah’s various clandestine organizations are recent additions to her political spectrum. The concept of men and women bound by a philosophical belief, not by religion or nationalism, is completely unlike anything that has come before.

Listed below are Théah’s most powerful and influential secret societies. One of these organizations was not mentioned in the *Players’ Guide*. We did that on purpose. We’re also going to give you a little bit of an inside look at the secret societies. We suggest that you reveal this information to players only if they join the club.



The Emblem of the Explorer’s Society

The Explorer’s Society

Since its founding, the Explorer’s Society has dedicated itself to the search for Théah’s true history. True to their name, they explore the ruins of ancient Surneth, collecting and cataloging what they find in the hopes of learning more about man’s place in the scheme of things.

Not only do members have to guard against the dangers native to the places they search, they must struggle to stay one step ahead of noblemen’s hired “diggers.” These are ruthless men who see the ancient civilizations as great treasure chests whose owners have wandered off.

Fully aware of the perils intrinsic to their work, Explorers seldom work alone on a serious expedition. Instead, they move in teams of at least three. A team includes a Full Scholar — someone dedicated to searching scrolls and tomes as well as studying the actual devices left by the Surneth; a Field Scholar — someone familiar with the basics of academic research, but also trained to navigate potentially dangerous regions; and a Shield Man — a fighter trained not only in conventional fighting styles but also the art of improvisation. There’s no way of knowing precisely what may lie in ruins untouched by man. Shield Men protect their team by whatever means necessary.

Although the Explorer’s Society is known throughout Théah for their scholarly dedication, another quality identifies them as well. Not all of the artifacts the Explorers find are cataloged and stored. The Scholars need only so many of a certain item to investigate. Surplus supplies pass on to ranking members of the Society, giving them a pool of resources unlike that of any other group in Théah.





The Emblem of the Invisible College

The Invisible College

The Invisible College was an inevitable reaction to the Inquisition. Having heard all their lives that the path to Ultimate Truth is research, not every Vaticine scientist was going to step off that path on the say-so of a mere Cardinal. Those who openly defied Verdugo became martyrs to their studies. Those who obeyed him escaped his wrath, at the cost of sacrificing their core beliefs. Those who clandestinely continued their studies, however, became the Invisible College.

The College has few secrets beyond its anonymous membership. It exists solely to further scientific discovery and keep important knowledge from the fires of the Inquisition. It is almost entirely Vaticine in membership; Objectionists can be more open about their research, since the Inquisition is less of a threat to those over whom it has no authority. Indeed, some of the College's greatest allies are Objectionist researchers who can look past their religious differences to help their colleagues.

Knightly Order of the Rose and Cross

The Knightly Order of the Rose and Cross is a perfect tool for Game Masters who have no idea how to make their Heroes get along. United by a common cause, the Knights may bicker and quibble among themselves, but when it

comes time to make right what once went wrong, they point all that hostility at the Villains and mow them down.

Joining the Order is not difficult; they are equal opportunity star-makers. All you need is a donation and a promise and they'll let you wear their seal. The size of the donation depends on the individual, but the promise is always the same. The Knights promise to wear the seal with dignity and honor and to bring glory to the Order. They swear to obey those who hold rank above them, to serve the Order and to protect those who also wear the seal. That last bit is where things get interesting.

Many nobles (and wealthy merchants) have purchased nominal memberships in the Order for the sole purpose of protection. They know the Knights vow to protect anyone who wears the seal, so they buy the protection of Théah's most prestigious adventurer's club.

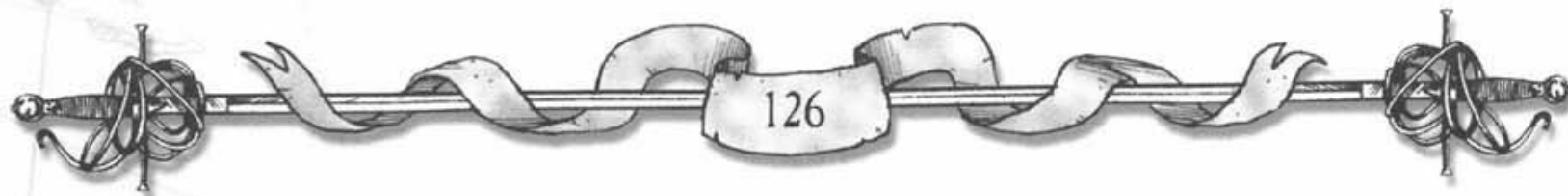
On the other hand, Knights can rest assured that if they ever find themselves in trouble, they can find sanctuary in the homes of some of the richest and most powerful families in Théah. Abusing the right of hospitality is a serious offense in the Order, which can cost a Knight (or Patron) his membership.



The Emblem of the Knights of the Rose and Cross

Die Kreuzritter

The Kreuzritter, also known as the Black Crosses, were once an order of Eisen Knights who loyally served the Hierophant, building hospitals, giving alms to the poor, and fighting in the Crusades. However, a greedy





The Emblem of the Black Crosses (Kreuzritter)

Imperator decided that he wanted their wealth and property, and called upon the Hierophant (considered a puppet of the Holy Republic at the time) to excommunicate the Black Crosses. Publically, the Hierophant did so, but he secretly sent them a letter of warning. When the Emperor's army showed up to destroy them, only a token force remained to fight – the rest had already snuck out of the country to Castille, where they could serve the Hierophant personally. Thus, while the world thinks that the Kreuzritter were wiped out in 1411, in reality, they went into hiding and became the Hierophant's personal guard.

Over time, the Black Crosses have evolved into a highly elite, very secretive organization, choosing new members either from the children of previous members, or from graduates of the Kippe Academy in Eisen. In either case, they often fake their own deaths in order to devote themselves fully to their new duties. They have served as bodyguards, trusted messengers, and even assassins over the years, answering only to the Hierophant himself.

Of course, there is no Hierophant right now, so they have no one to answer to. But where the Inquisition has abused its power, the Black Crosses, led by a kindly old man named Gunther Schmidl, have used theirs to help further the gentler goals of the Church. They have quietly funded the construction of many places of learning, dozens of hospitals, and thousands of hostels for weary travelers all over Théah. In addition, they have used their keen fighting skills to help out those who they feel exemplify the tenets of the Church. The attention and aid of the

Black Crosses could be one possible benefit of *Faith*, at your discretion.

Members of the Kreuzritter are often quietly alerted to their latest mission, given a small stipend, and left to their own devices, which is the way they prefer it. Each Black Cross is expected to be self-sufficient and honorable, although they can request aid from their fellows in extreme circumstances.

Los Vagos

Moving through the shadows, leaping from rooftop to rooftop, is the masked figure known only as El Vago – The Vagabond. Adored by the people, reviled by the nobility, El Vago has made his intentions clear: to protect Good King Sandoval from those who would endanger his life and his crown.

The most important thing for you to know about El Vago is that he's not alone in his efforts. The Vagabond has gathered a few trustworthy men and women around him to help carry out his daring missions. The Vagabond's allies have managed to foil three assassination attempts against the young king, and with each one Los Vagos have taken one more step toward discovering who is behind the foul treachery.

Los Vagos have done a great deal to aid the Vagabond, including impersonating the masked man himself. Two members of the league have fallen in the line of duty, but El Vago has no time to mourn. He is constantly trying to outguess the invisible conspiracy aligned against Castille's crown.

His mysterious appearances and disappearances have led many to believe the masked man is a Montaigne sorcerer. Sorcerer or not, he is a brilliant swordsman and strategist who has somehow managed to outmaneuver every attempt to capture him.





The Emblem of Los Vagos

If the Heroes get an opportunity to meet El Vago, it is never an event of happenstance. The Vagabond does not reveal himself to anyone he doesn't completely trust. There are currently twenty-two members of Los Vagos, and only three of them know who El Vago really is. The group observes those who have proven their loyalty for many months before contacting them through a fringe member, and even then they learn only that El Vago is watching them. Over the months their loyalty is tested until the Vagabond feels he can entrust them with deeper secrets and more important duties. Only after the League is sure the candidate is true will they allow him to participate in missions that also involve El Vago.

We will reveal El Vago's identity in the *Castille Sourcebook* but until then, you'll have to settle for guessing.

The Rilasciare

The Rilasciare are a very important movement: the beginning of Théan humanism. For as long as history can remember, humanity has divided into two camps: those with sorcery and those without. Because sorcerers are — by definition — more capable than mundane human beings, the concept of equality is nonexistent in Théah. A sorcerer is a better person than someone without sorcery because he was born with something the other was not. This philosophy has been a part of human nature forever, and will probably continue forever... unless the Rilasciare have something to say about it.

The Free Thinkers have a very different attitude toward equality. Most people accept the folk tale that the Old Republic Senators struck bargains for their power. If this is true, then they surrendered something to get sorcery. The Rilasciare have many theories on what the sorcerers may have surrendered. Some believe they gave up their free will. Others believe they exchanged their souls for power. The most radical say they didn't give anything up at all, but introduced a disease into the human bloodstream: a disease called sorcery.

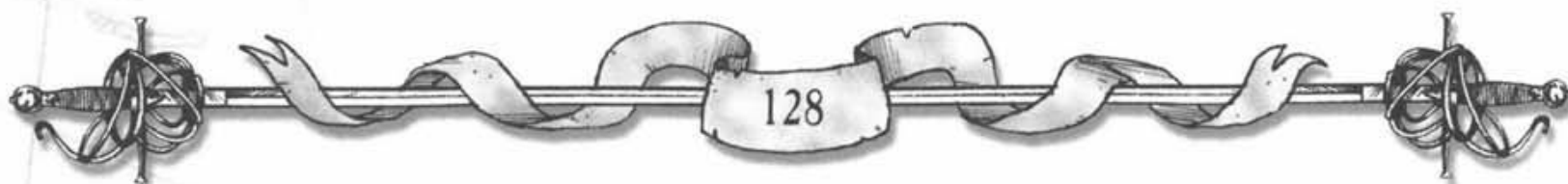
In addition to sorcery, the Rilasciare have a second — some say, more important — enemy, an enemy they call Dominion. The Rilasciare believe that laws were created by the weak to protect themselves from the willful. In other words, positions of authority were created by those who did not have the ability to lead by example alone; it is only the costume that gives the weak authority, not any kind of quality of character.

The purpose of the Free Thinkers is to liberate humanity from the illusion of authority and to teach that the only true authority comes from within. The Creator provided each man and woman with an inner voice of ethics, to guide them toward enlightenment. Dominion seeks to undermine that voice and replace it with its own.

While the Free Thinkers are united in philosophy, they are divided by purpose and method. Some believe that violence is the tool of the weak and use only nonviolent means to accomplish their goals. Others will use whatever means necessary to overthrow Dominion.



The Emblem of the Free Thinkers Society (Rilasciare)





The Emblem of Sophia's Daughters

Sophia's Daughters

As the *Players' Guide* suggested, the Daughters have attained the secret to immortality, or at least increased longevity. They achieve it through a mystical potion which only the highest-ranking members of the Daughters have access to. The potion can reverse the aging process as well as extend life, granting those who drink it a youthful appearance. The potion only works on women, however; men who drink it instantly die.

The Daughters give the potion to those they feel are truly worthy; only a handful of people in history have tasted it. Their leadership apparently has some long-term plan that requires specific women to be around centuries beyond their normal lifespan. Why they require these people — and what they've done to merit such a gift — is one of the order's most closely guarded secrets.

Novus Ordum Mundi

Remember when we said there was one secret society the players don't get to know about? This is it. This is the club that the Heroes don't get to join. Only Villains are allowed here. We didn't mention it in the *Player's Book*, so the only way they know about it is if they're reading about it right now.

Novus Ordum Mundi has a history so deep, we just don't have the space to go into it right now, but we'll let you in

on a few of the secrets. It was founded by a small group of senators in the Old Republic. They put together a plan to make certain their families would always be on top of the world. A few unlucky individuals have discovered the existence of *NOM*, and have been summarily murdered to protect its existence.

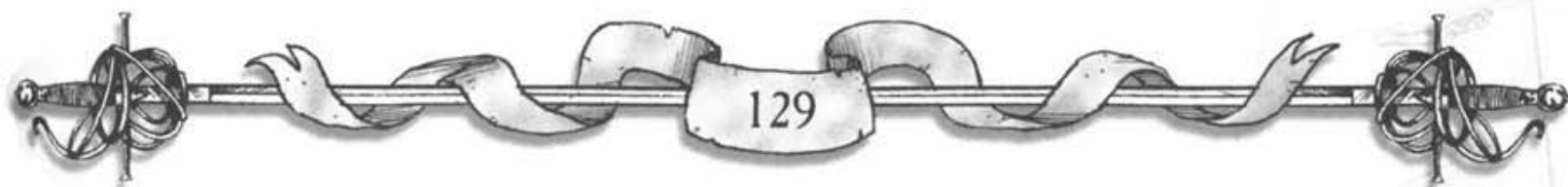
NOM's membership is very exclusive. It consists of only thirteen members. The seats are inherited, but not always through family lines. Some members have surrendered their seats to those they felt worthy of replacing them. *NOM* employs the most skilled assassins, thieves and criminals to carry out missions, but never reveals its hand in any of its work. As far as Théah is concerned, *NOM* never existed, and that's just the way *NOM* wants it.

How does *NOM* work? Like this.

One man steals a shipment of oranges. Because that shipment never arrives, the merchant who ordered it is short for the month. Unfortunately, guild taxes are due that month. The merchant has to find a way to make up for the loss quickly. He stumbles across a large shipment of lumber that needs to be sent from Montaigne to Vodacce. He picks it up and hauls it across the seas. Because he's a trusted merchant who's never done anything illegal in his life, his movements go unquestioned by authorities. Little does he know that Syrath artifacts stolen from the Explorer's Society lie under that lumber, artifacts that *NOM* wants smuggled into Vodacce.

That's now *NOM* works. Nobody ever knows exactly what happened. Nobody ever knows that they're working toward a higher purpose. Nobody ever knows.

You've already met a few of those thirteen men and women. They were in the Who's Who sections. Who they are and what they intend for Théah will be revealed in the fullness of time.







Villain



Points of View: Merchant

From the private diary of Vincenzo Lucani, Vodacce Merchant:

The 5th day of Primus, in the year of the Prophet, 1668.

This morning was spent in conference with the Bishop of Carleon, who apparently feels that I have nothing better to do with my monies than build him a new church, as if the old one weren't ostentatious enough. He reassures me that any donations I make to the Church will be returned to me tenfold in the afterlife. What I am supposed to do with all that money while lying in my grave, I know not. Still, I begin to see the benefit of keeping him well-paid. When I finally capitulated, the old fool stopped talking, and left with only a curt 'thank you'. My ears are still enjoying the blessed silence after such a long diatribe.

After that, I joined an old friend, the learned Dr. Johann Pösen, for a midday meal. We lunched upon some excellent slices of rare beef, garnished with a hint of cherry chutney, and accompanied by some exquisite spiced potatoes. While we ate, we discussed his latest theories in the chemical sciences. Really, the man has a remarkable brain. I could listen to him talk for hours, and still hang on every word.

Then, this afternoon I received word from a ship of mine, the *Grinning Shark*. She had returned from the Thalusian Isles with a load of Syrneth artifacts and some preposterous story about a pirate attack. The crew keep going on about some 'black cloud' that engulfed the pirates, apparently when they fired one of *my* artifacts at the pirate ship. I docked their pay the appropriate amount, which, given the testified weight of the artifact, was considerable. Don't the fools realize what such an artifact, made of silver, would be worth on the open market? It staggers the mind, the ignorance of these

sailors. I know at least three nobles that would have paid 100 Guilders, easily, just to fool their friends at parties with the immense weight of the sphere. The captain complained most bitterly at this treatment, so I told him to take his anger out on the sailor who destroyed my property. He left, vowing never to do business with me again. Truly, their thoughtlessness knows no bounds.

Points of View: Noble

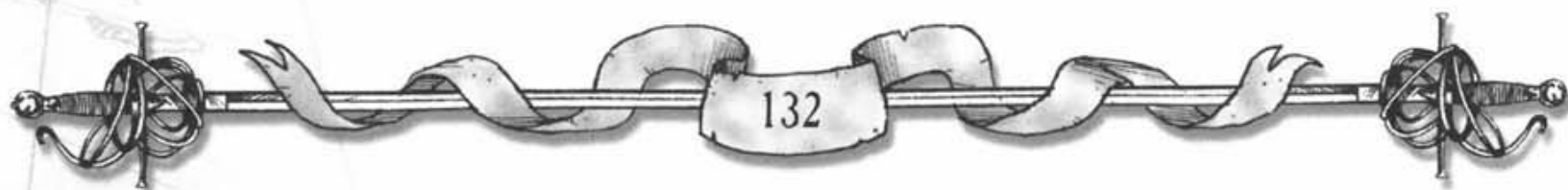
Awareness returned to me slowly, the dull pulsing of my temples drowning out my first thoughts of the day, an unpleasant reminder of last night's revelry at the Worthingham party. Growling at the painful light shining in through the thoughtlessly unshuttered window, I rolled over carefully and tipped out a snifter of brandy from the decanter next to my bed. Taking a healthy pull, I smiled as I felt the hangover slowly begin to fall back before my morning "reinforcements."

I pulled the cord next to me as I stood up, and within moments, my faithful servant, Godfrey, was at my side, informing me of the day's schedule as he dressed me, neatly and efficiently as always. Good man, Godfrey. Loyal to the end of his days.

"My Lord, you have an appointment to meet with the good Dr. Hollingsworth this morning after breakfast, in regards to reparations for that lamentable 'incident' last week," spoke Godfrey in his deep, deadpan voice.

I frowned, "Gods, what a boring man. I should have fed him to the hounds while I had the excuse."

"As you say, my Lord. Your afternoon is free after that, but you have a formal dinner at Lady Halsingly's. A gift might be in order for her, since you plan to seek her support in next week's vote on grain tariffs. She has a particular affection for Syrneth artifacts from the Thalusian Isles, if you recall." Godfrey smiled ever so





slightly, and I laughed, his dry wit cheering me up, as always.

"Of course, Godfrey. An excellent opportunity for the good Doctor to make himself useful to me. I don't know what I'd do without you."

I turned to the mirror to reassure myself that my collar was straight, even though Godfrey has never yet failed in his duty there. As I thought this, I glanced over at him in the mirror, and I was shocked to find a look of utter hatred on his face as he gazed at my back.

"Godfrey? Are you alright?" I asked, with some concern. He eyes jerked up to meet mine, and for an instant, I thought I saw fear in them. Then his usual emotionless demeanor slipped back into place like an old coat.

"My Lord?" he asked, innocently.

"Nothing, Godfrey. Good job on the collar, as usual." I smiled at him, careful to hide my suspicions.

"I am pleased it meets your standards, my Lord." He seemed to have trouble meeting my gaze. My heart sank within me, and I wondered who had gotten to him. Good help is so hard to find.

Introduction

When players sit down to make Heroes, they have many things to consider. Should they spend their points on Traits or Skills? Should they purchase Sorcery or attend a Swordsman school?

As a Game Master, one of your most important duties is helping the players make their Heroes. Giving your players direction and

advice helps them create Heroes they'll enjoy playing and helps you do your job.

This chapter has two purposes. The first is to show you how to use a Hero's Traits, Skills and Knacks, Advantages, Backgrounds and Arcana to help you be a better Game Master. We're going to show you some different ways to use a Hero's Skills and Knacks to make the game system even more dramatic. Finally, we're going to look at Villains, including their own version of Arcana: Flaws and Wiles.

Optional Hero Creation Rules

Here are a few optional ways to create Heroes in *7th Sea*.

Ensemble-style

Here's one way to make sure your players make up an ensemble that works together. Instead of giving each of them 100 points to make their Heroes, give them one lump sum of points to work with. However, make sure that the sum you give them isn't easily divisible. For example, count up how many players you have, then use the chart below.

Ensemble-Style Character Creation

# of Players	Total # of Points	Points per Player
2	175	87.5
3	275	91.6
4	375	93.7
5	475	95
6	575	95.8





The base number of points they get is exactly 25 points short of what they need to make 100-point Heroes. If you're feeling generous, you can adjust that number upwards, but don't give them exactly what they need; if they have a shortage, then they have to share.

Some groups may take offense at getting shorted points in this way, but others will take the opportunity to make Heroes that work together. The lesson: know your group.

Henchmen and Brutes

Another way to make your Heroes really work for their points is to start them off as Henchmen and Brutes.

Henchmen begin the game with 75 points. Brutes start with 50. Remember that Henchmen can only take a number of Dramatic Wounds equal to their Resolve before being Knocked Out, and Brutes are Knocked Out with a single hit.

Hook your players up with a Hero they know and trust (like El Vago, Allende or Montegue) and let them go. As soon as your Brutes earn 75 Points, they're considered Henchmen; as soon as your Henchmen earn 100 Points, they've become Heroes.

This technique is also useful for a "one-shot" player: someone who can only play once in a while.

Additional Points

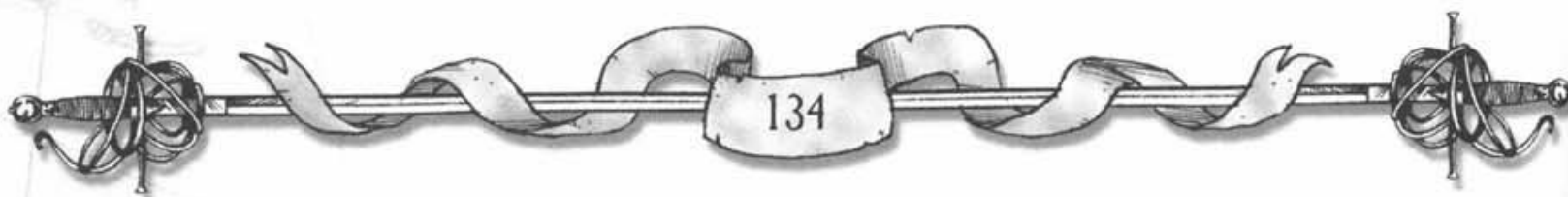
Giving your players more than 100 points to make their Heroes is a dangerous option. One Hero Point is roughly equivalent to 3 Experience Points. Figure that a player gets about 5 Experience Points every session (on average), and you've just put that Hero four gaming sessions ahead of the game.

The Other 100 Points

An important thing to remember is that your players outnumber you. That means that you should let them choose the direction of the campaign. One good way to do this is to give each player 100 points to divide among the types of campaigns you are interested in running. The table below is an example of several players' responses.

Looking at these results, you get several important bits of information. The totals, highs, and lows tell you where you should focus of your campaign. Intrigue is definitely out, while Exploration looks like the clear winner. Romance is out even though it scored decently, because Sue's 50 is balanced out by the 0s that Tim and Hank gave it. Both Military and Action seem to be solid

<i>Campaign Interest</i>								
	Tim	Bill	Joe	Hank	Sue	Total	High	Low
Intrigue	0	30	20	10	15	75	30	0
Action	10	20	20	40	10	100	40	10
Romance	0	20	20	0	50	90	50	0
Exploration	50	20	20	20	15	125	50	15
Military	40	10	20	30	10	110	40	10





choices, since no one hated them enough to give them a 0.

Your best choice is to make a campaign in which the characters are in the military, and usually on exploratory missions, but occasionally get caught up in big battles and pirate-hunting expeditions. To take another angle, you could make the characters members of a pirate crew out exploring the seas and seeking Syrneth artifacts.

What about Bill and Sue? Bill put more points into Intrigue than anything else, and Sue really had her heart set on some Romance. You can either work some subplots into the story to satisfy them, or you can schedule one-on-one sessions where Sue's character falls in love and Bill's character gets entangled with one of the less wholesome Secret Societies. That way, everyone's happy.

Traits

There are only five Traits in the *7th Sea* system, and it can get rather tricky figuring out where and when to use them. Let's look at each one in turn.

Brawn

A Hero uses his Brawn whenever his action draws upon raw strength. Whenever he's lifting, pulling, tearing or pushing, he's making a Brawn Test. A good example of when to use Brawn is climbing a rope; that's almost all sheer power.

Brawn doesn't match with many Skills well, but if you pause and think about it, you can find a way to use a Hero's Brawn in almost every Knack that involves physical action. It's difficult to use Brawn with Knacks like Natural Philosophy or Strategy, but remember, it takes just as much Brawn to be a good dancer as it does Finesse.

Finesse

Finesse is not a Hero's speed, but his ability to move with coordination, poise and composure. It's a Hero's ability to control his own movements, so it almost always comes into play whenever he has to get physical with an opponent.

Finesse is the easiest Trait to match up with Skills and Knacks because it involves action. If a Hero has to catch, grab, throw, or dance, or his hand-to-eye coordination is called upon, use Finesse.

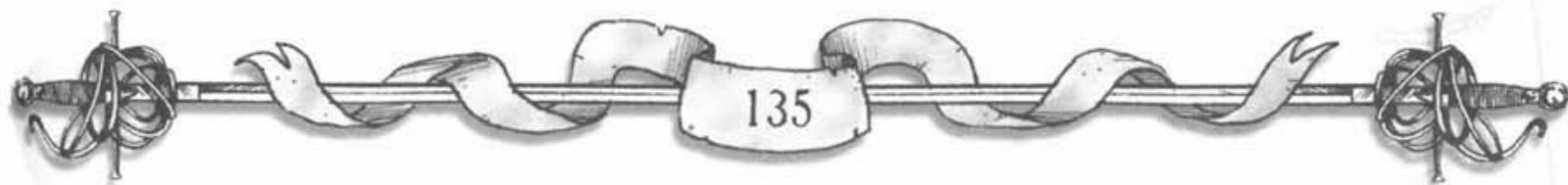
Resolve

Quite simply, Resolve is a Hero's ability to say, "No." After hours of climbing, when his hands are bleeding and raw and his shoulders are ready to fall off and his body begs him to give up, his Resolve keeps him going. When the beautiful seductress urges him to betray his best friend, it keeps him from giving in to carnal temptation.

Resolve can be used in any Knack Test that involves prolonged activity. For instance, a scholar who has spent two days and nights researching obscure facts in a candlelit library and needs to find one more reference makes a Resolve + Natural Philosophy Test. After ten minutes of swordplay, instead of having the opponents make Finesse + Attack, have them roll Resolve + Attack instead. Resolve is the great equalizer, the one Trait that almost everyone overlooks... except the last man standing, of course.

Wits

Thinking quickly is the domain of Wits. Whenever a Hero has to jump out of the way of sudden peril or come up with a witticism to save face in front of nobility, he's using his Wits. But Wits is also dredging up information from memory; whenever a Hero has to remember an obscure fact, he's making a Wits Test.





Wits are also used for Lore Tests (see below). Whenever a player asks you “What do I know about thirteenth-century strategy?”, have him make a Lore Test. All he does is roll his Wits + the appropriate Knack against a TN. If the fact is obscure, make it a 20 or 25. If it’s well known, make it a 10.

Panache

Heroes seldom roll Panache, but when they do, it’s because someone is trying to cramp their style... or they’re trying to cramp someone else’s.

Skills and Knacks

Listed below are all the special mechanics suggested in the Player’s Guide. Remember, all of these systems are optional and modular; pick the ones you want and forget the rest.

Animal Training

Training an animal depends on two things: the skill of the trainer, and the native intelligence of the animal being

trained. The first is represented by the trainer’s Animal Training Knack. The second is represented by the animal’s Rank in Wits. For every Rank the animal has in Wits, roll once on the chart below, noting everything you roll. This is the animal’s potential for training. The animal gets all its bad habits immediately, but must be trained in order to receive its tricks and talents.

Minor Tricks vary from species to species, but include such simple things as bearing a rider, obeying reins, heeling, rolling over, barking at strangers, jumping an obstacle, or coming when called. You should simply assign the tricks as you see fit.

Major Tricks also vary by species, and are more difficult than Minor Tricks, but are not unusual for animals of that type to learn. This could include playing dead, attacking on command, rearing on command, etc.

Talents are very unusual or complex tricks. These can include a horse stomping a hoof until its owner smiles, a monkey tipping a hat, or a horse staying to protect a fallen rider.

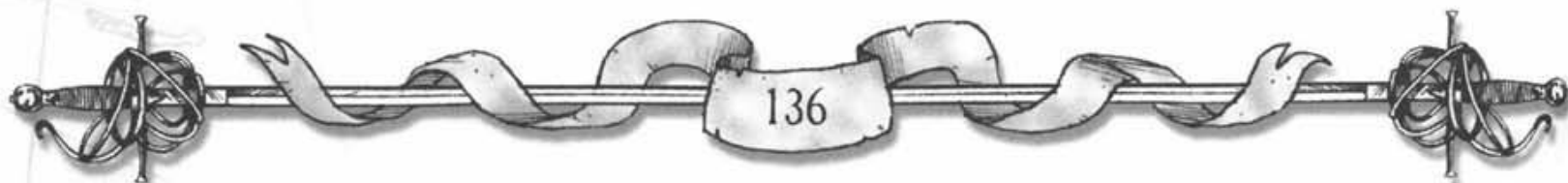
Bad Habits are problems that the animal has that make it unpleasant to be around. This might include biting,

Animal Training

Goal	TN	Time	Animal’s Value
Minor Trick	15	1 week	+10%
Major Trick	20	3 weeks	+20%
Talent	25	1 month	+50%
Remove Bad Habit	20	3 weeks	+10%

Animal Talent Chart

Roll	Result
1-2	Bad Habit
3	Bad Habit, Minor Trick
4	Minor Trick
5	Minor Trick, Major Trick
6	2 Minor Tricks, Major Trick
7	2 Major Tricks
8	1 Minor Trick, 2 Major Tricks
9	2 Minor Tricks, 2 Major Tricks
0	Talent



scratching, skittishness, flatulence, mean-spiritedness, noisiness, stubbornness, or anything else you can dream up to inflict on the animal's owner. Each Bad Habit an animal has lowers its value by 10%.

In order to train an animal to perform the tricks it is capable of learning, the trainer must roll Resolve + Animal Training against a TN on the chart above. An animal may be trained out of a Bad Habit it has, but this counts as one of its Major Tricks. A failed roll simply wastes the trainer's time, but he can always try again.



Appraising

Appraising helps a Hero determine the value of an object. In order to use this Knack, the Hero rolls Wits + Appraising against a basic TN of 15, modified by the chart below. If the roll fails, he gains no information.

A successful roll gives the Hero the first digit in the object's value as well as the number of digits in the value. For instance, if an object was valued at 5,250 Guilders, a successful roll lets the Hero know that the value is somewhere between 5,000–5,999 Guilders. If its value was 630 Guilders, he would know the value was between 600–699 Guilders. Raises can increase the accuracy of this estimation by one digit place per Raise.

Appraisal Chart

Knowledge Required Raises

Know next digit	+1 Raise
Know of a likely Buyer	+1 Raise
Object is exotic	+1 Raise

Forgeries

When attempting to forge a piece of art, jewelry, etc; the TN equals to the original TN needed to create the object in the first place. The forger rolls Wits + Forgery, but cannot get more dice from his Forgery Knack than he has in the Knack that would normally be used to create the object being forged. Thus, if he were trying to forge a famous painting (TN 40, in this case) and he had a Wits of 3, a Forgery of 5, and a Painting of 3, he would treat his Forgery Knack as a 3 and roll 6k3 against a TN of 40.

A successful forgery can fool Appraisal Checks. Secretly raise the TN of the Appraisal Check by 5, plus 5 for each Raise made when creating the forgery. If the appraiser makes his check, but fails to beat this secret TN, he is taken in by the forgery and believes it to be worth whatever the original is worth. For instance, if the forger above succeeded with one Raise, then an appraiser would need to roll a 25 or higher to detect the forgery. If the appraiser rolls anywhere from 15 to 24, he is taken in by the deception. If he rolls less than 15, he receives no information, as usual.

Gambling and Cheating

There are two Knacks related to games of chance: Gambling and Cheating. Gambling allows the Hero to get better bets. Thus, he might be gambling for a payoff of 20 Guilders instead of 10 Guilders. It's just a matter of understanding human nature and having a good poker face. Cheating, on the other hand, allows the Hero to bend the odds in his own favor. He might use weighted dice, slip a card out of his sleeve, etc. We encourage you to actually play the game that the characters are playing in order to determine the outcome.

Normally, in *7th Sea*, gambling pays off at a 1:1 ratio. A 1:1, you "break even;" that is, for every Guilder you bet, you win 1 Guilder, leaving the table with the same amount you arrived with. In order to make a profit, you

Payoff Scale

Payoff	TN
1:1	Automatic
3:2	10
2:1	20
5:2	30
3:1	40
7:2	50
4:1	60

have to raise the risk a little bit. If make a Wits + Gambling roll against a TN of 10, you can raise your odds to 3:2. Thus, for every 2 Guilders you bet, you win 3 Guilders, so your bet of 10 Guilders would win you 15 Guilders (a 5 Guilder profit). For every 2 Raises you make beyond the initial TN of 10, you increase your payoff by 50%. Failing a roll means you lose any of the money you bet with.

As for Cheating, simply look on the chart below to see what it is you'd like to do, and then roll Finesse + Cheating against the TN on the chart. Failure means you were caught cheating. You can do more than one thing (or one thing multiple times) on the chart for a single hand (or round, or bet), but you must add the TNs together for all of the actions you want to take and make a single roll against the total.

Cheating Chart

Action	TN
Change the suit of one card	15
Adjust the value of one card by +/-1	10
Adjust the value of one die by +/-1	15



Whist is a popular card game in Théah at this time. 4-5-6 (also known as Ship, Captain, Bosun) is a popular dice game (using 6-sided dice, of course).

Land Management

If your players are playing nobles and wish to manage their properties in more depth, then use the following system.

The basic properties a noble receives include:

- 500 Guilders a month in taxes (above and beyond expenses)
- 6 General staff (butlers, maids, stableboys, etc. They may be considered Threat 1 Brutes with no combat Skills and a TN to hit of 10.)

Noble properties can also be augmented with character points by purchasing the following things:



Farm: 1 Point

Each manor house has at least one farm, but for 1 HP, or 3 XP, the manor has an additional farm, which provides more income and thus, more taxes.

Holding: 2–4 Points

There are many kinds of Holdings, and each provides the manor with new taxes. A noble who governs a manor with a blacksmith has an exploitable resource for new armor and arms. Creative nobles can find a benefit in any kind of Holding, from wineries to brothels.

Holdings are either Basic (2 HP or 6 XP), Fine (3 HP or 9 XP) or Excellent (4 HP or 12 XP). For each additional point spent on the Holding, the quality of merchandise they provide is just that much better. Basic Holdings provide just what they promise: merchandise that sells. Fine Holdings have a bit of a reputation for providing memorable and striking quality. Excellent Holdings, on the other hand, provide merchandise that is known throughout the country, and perhaps throughout the world. Some examples of Holdings include: Blacksmith, Mine (gold, silver, copper, etc.), Winery, and Brothel.

Followers: 2 Points

Sometimes, nobles acquire a retinue of soldiers to assist them in managing a particularly difficult area. Characters can build a retinue of soldiers, commissioned to their service. These soldiers will serve the noble's commands faithfully. Every 2 Hero Points, or 6 Experience Points spent on Followers gains the noble 6 followers (Threat 1 Brutes with a Rank 2 in one weapon Skill). Followers can also include house staff such as maids, butlers, etc. The player can divide his followers up as he sees fit.

Harvest and Taxes

At the beginning of each month, the noble collects income from his holdings and taxes.

Expenses

Expenses are normally already deducted from the noble's income.

Events

Before rolling for income, nobles roll once on this table to determine any events that may affect the month's income:

Harvest Event Chart

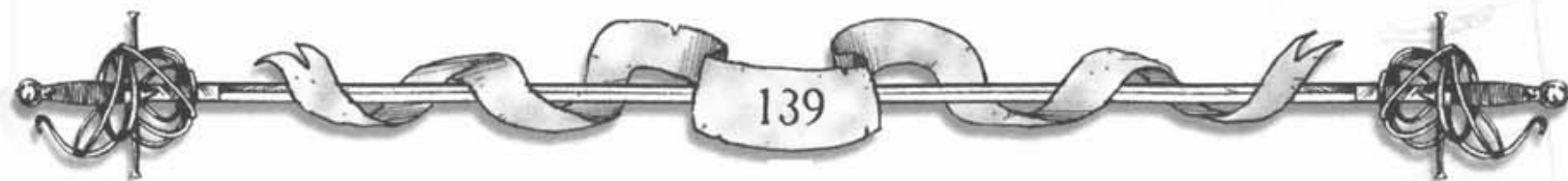
Roll	Result
1	Catastrophe! (receive no income this year and roll below): 1–9 Death (lose 1 follower to illness, an accident, etc.) 0 Famine (lose 1 farm)
2–3	Bandits! (lose (100 X 2 dice) Guilders)
4–7	No Event
8–9	Supernatural (A monster moves in, a ghost shows up, etc.)
0	Good Harvest (Roll 2 dice for each farm, keeping one.)

Income

The noble rolls 1 exploding die for each farm on his land. Multiply the result by fifty. Add 300 Guilders to the result for each Basic Holding, 400 for each Fine Holding and 500 for each Excellent Holding.

Using Poison

If your Heroes use poison a lot, there's a good chance they could poison themselves while handling the stuff, either through a careless mistake or through long-term exposure. Feel free to call for Poison or Sleight of Hand checks when they handle poison or drop it into someone's drink. If they mess it up, then let them reap what they've sowed.



Sailing

Sooner or later, your Heroes are going to want to sail a ship of their own around Théah. You will need to know who is piloting the ship and who's doing the navigation. In *7th Sea*, the simple way to do this is to make a single roll for the entire trip, and then add in any encounters you want along the way. The *Pirate Nation* sourcebook has a more in-depth method of handling sea journeys (page 106). For now, use the system below.

First, have the navigator show you the course he's plotting on the map. If he stays within sight of land (up to about 25 miles out), the course is plotted automatically. If the ship leaves sight of land at any time on its projected course, the navigator must roll Wits + Navigation against a TN of 5 to plot it out successfully. For every 200 miles (or portion thereof) the ship must cover out of sight of land, add 5 to the TN. For every Raise the navigator makes above and beyond this, the pilot's TN lowers by 5 in the next step. If the navigator fails his check, the ship is automatically lost. Make the piloting roll below, and use the lower of the two rolls when determining where the ship got lost (see below).

Now the pilot must make a Wits + Piloting against the same TN. If the pilot succeeds, the ship makes it to where it was going. If the pilot fails, the ship is lost (see below).

Ship Deviation Chart

Roll	Result
1	30 degrees left
2-3	15 degrees left
4-5	10 degrees left
6-7	10 degrees right
8-9	15 degrees right
0	30 degrees right

Getting Lost

When either one of the rolls above is failed, the ship gets lost. How much the roll is failed by determines where the ship gets lost. For every 5 the roll was failed by, the ship got lost 50 miles from its destination. Trace the course backwards, roll on the Ship Deviation Chart below and move the ship the remaining distance along the course, making the planned turns in relation to the new course. If at any time the ship comes in sight of land that shouldn't be there, or reaches a spot where land should be in sight, but isn't, stop the ship and let the crew react to the situation.





Scrounging

The Scrounging Knack should not allow Heroes to acquire an endless supply of free equipment. The Hero is looking through the refuse and garbage of the city in order to find something useful. He's not going to find a sword or a pistol in someone's trash. He might find such things as old rags, rope, rotten food, worn clothes, shelter for the night, etc. Typically, anything worth more than a Guilder or two should not be available using the Scrounging Knack.

Swimming

When your Heroes use their Swimming Knack, you'll need to consult two charts (see below). The first lists the water temperature and determines how often the characters must make Brawn + Swimming Checks while in the water. The second lists water conditions and determines the TN for their Checks. Every Check reduces the character's Brawn by 1 Rank until he's had a chance to rest for one day. The first time a character fails a Swimming Check, he begins to drown (see page 174).

Other Swimming Modifiers

- Clinging to floating object subtracts -5 from TN.
- For every 5 lbs. of equipment the character is carrying adds +5 to TN.
- For every drowning person the character is trying to save adds +15 to TN.

Water Conditions Chart

Condition	TN
-----------	----

Calm	10
Choppy	15
Stormy	20
White Water	25
Typhoon	30

Survival

A character using the Survival Knack to find food and water must roll Wits + Survival against a TN on the chart below. If he attempts to do more than one of the tasks on the chart in the same day, he must add all the TNs together and make a single roll.

Finding Water: TN 15

Finding food (each person): TN 10

Starvation

Every day a character goes without food, he suffers a die of Wounds that can't be healed. This damage heals automatically as soon as he gets a chance to eat and rest for a full day.

Every day a character goes without water, his Resolve falls by 1 Rank. When it reaches -1, the character dies. His Ranks of Resolve are restored as soon as he spends a full day resting and drinking.

At your option, you may allow a character dying of starvation or thirst to be rescued by a passing good Samaritan by spending two Drama Dice.

Trail Signs

When your Heroes use the Trail Signs Knack, they have a limited vocabulary of signals they can leave for others to find. They make a Wits + Trail Signs check against a

Water Temperature Chart

Temp.	Check Every...
-------	----------------

Hot	Brawn Hours
Warm	Brawn times 30 minutes
Cool	Brawn times 15 minutes
Cold	Brawn times 5 minutes
Freezing	Brawn minutes



TN of 15. Success with it means that the person the Hero is signaling automatically sees the trail signs. Other people may spot the signs by making a Perception Check against a TN of 15. If the signaler wants, he can hide the signals more carefully by making Raises. Each Raise increases the TN to find the message (for those that the message isn't intended for) by 5.

Lore Checks

In the *7th Sea Player's Guide*, we encouraged your players to ask you questions that their Heroes would reasonably know. You have two options when they do so. Either you can decide that the information is obvious and just tell them, or you can require a Lore Check.

A Lore Check uses Wits + the Knack that you decide is most relevant to the question being asked. You should set the TN according to the obscurity of the information that the player is asking for (See the chart below for examples). If the roll is successful, the Hero knows the requested piece of information. If not, he is left to his own devices to discover it.

Perception Checks

A Perception Check is made whenever you want to see if your Heroes spot something that isn't readily visible, such as a hidden catch, far-off ship, or a dust-obscured hieroglyph. A Perception Check is a straight Wits roll, only adding dice for Advantages such as Keen Senses, which specifically add to Perception Checks.

Faith

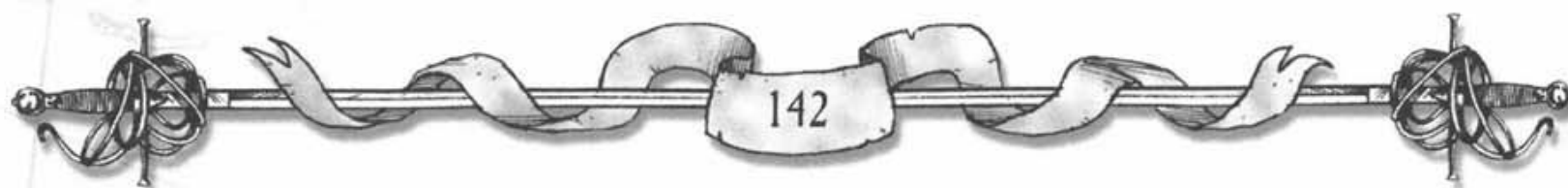
When your Heroes purchase the Faith Advantage, they invest several of their 100 Hero Points into it without even knowing what it might do.

That's exactly how faith really works. We're not talking about the people who believe in a religion because of its rewards, but because they truly and honestly believe. They don't know anything for certain. All they have to go on is their faith.

In order to maintain the fog of uncertainty, we've provided you with five mechanics for the Faith Advantage. All of the effects occur outside the players' scope of vision, so they'll never know if their investment of points is paying off or not. They'll just have to trust in the Creator's wisdom and hope that they're right.

Lore Checks

Level of Obscurity	TN	Sample Question & Knack
Elementary	10	Who is the current Duke of Valroux? (Politics)
Slightly Obscure	15	What's the best ground to fight on here? (Tactics)
Unusual	20	How do you keep cobalt blue glass from turning too dark? (Glassblower)
Esoteric	25	What's the melting point of Dracheneisen? (Blacksmith)
Very Obscure	30	What is the gestation period of an asprey? (Zoology)
Almost Unknown	35	Who was the secret mistress of the 32nd Old Republic Emperor? (History)





We suggest that you pick one of the five mechanics suggested below (or one of your own) and stick with it for the rest of the time you play *7th Sea*. That's fairer to the players than jumping from effect to effect, and while the players will never know if you're dropping one effect and picking up another, it is the right thing to do. Isn't that what faith is all about anyway?

Option #1

Heroes with Faith have an aura of power around them that is palpable to the forces of evil. If a Villain – or any

of his cohorts – directly opposes a Hero with Faith, he loses two dice from every die roll (*i.e.*, 6k3 becomes 4k3).

Option #2

Faith in the Prophet's message bestows protection against the evil effects of sorcery. When Villains attempt to use any sorcery against the Hero, it requires two extra Raises.

Option #3

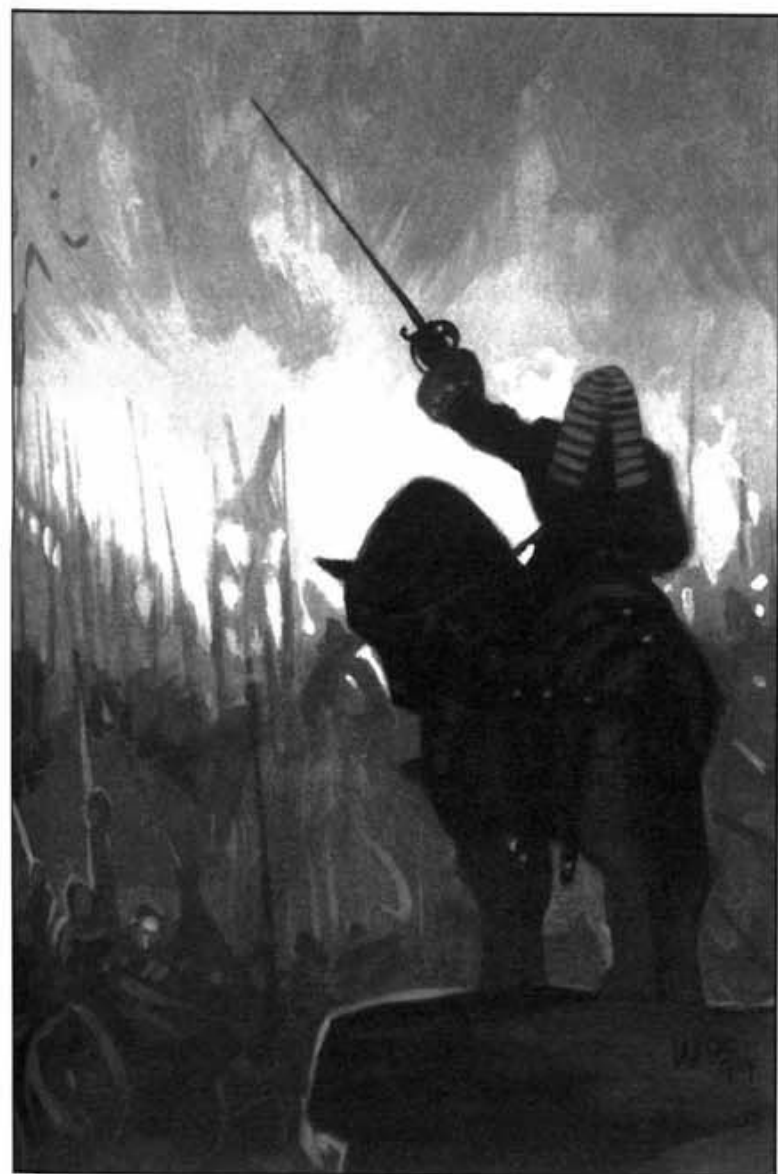
Faith bestows a powerful confidence that no horror can shake. Whenever the Hero confronts a Fear effect, the TN to overcome it is always 10 points lower.

Option #4

The world has a funny way of working out, almost as if the Creator planned it that way. Those with Faith always seem to find a way to thwart evil and promote good. Whenever the Hero performs an altruistic or selfless act, the GM must discard one of his Drama Dice (without the players seeing it, of course).

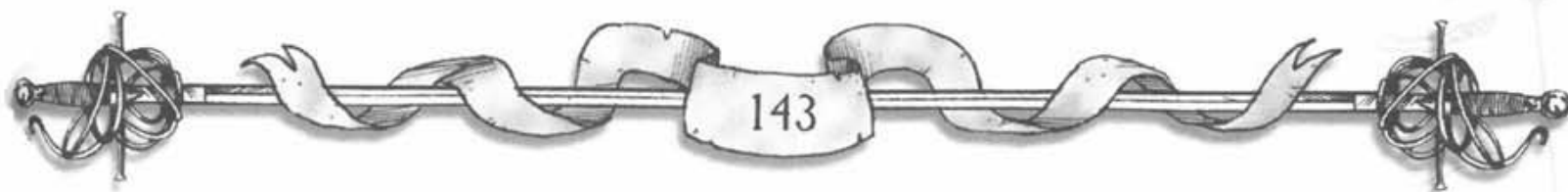
Option #5

Heroes who take Faith gain no special mechanics or advantages at all.



Villain Arcana

Villains aren't like normal people. They do things that others would never dream of doing. There is often a trace of madness lurking within them that makes them do unpredictable things. Sometimes this helps out the Heroes, such as when the Villain feels the irrational need to talk about his evil scheme. Other times it can seal their doom, such as when a Villain is perfectly willing to die in order to see his plans fulfilled.





Arcana for Villains

Arcana	Flaw	Wile
0 Fool	Rash	Ruthless
1 Magician	Ambitious	Willful
2 High Priestess	Extravagant	Prudent
3 Empress	Lecherous	Regal
4 Imperator	Hot-headed	Commanding
5 Hierophant	Merciful	Brilliant
6 Lovers	Squeamish	Seductive
7 Chariot	Overconfident	Victorious
8 Strength	Cowardly	Hateful
9 Hermit	Cruel	Focused
10 Fortune	Misfortunate	Fortunate
11 Justice	Paranoid	Honorable
12 Hanged Man	Scheming	Fanatical
13 Death	Talkative	Adaptable
14 Temperance	Envious	Self-controlled
15 Legion	Megalomaniacal	Charismatic
16 Tower	Arrogant	Uncanny
17 Star	Stubborn	Careful
18 Moon	Careless	Deceitful
19 Sun	Proud	Beguiling
20 Judgment	Misled	Resourceful
21 Terra	Greedy	Recurring

Flaws

A Flaw works a little differently than a Hubris does. Heroes can activate a Villain's Flaw by spending a Drama Die. Unlike a Hubris, the Villain (that's you) can't spend his own Drama Dice to stop it. Once a Villain's Flaw is activated, there's nothing anyone can do to stop it.

When the players activate a Villain's Flaw, there are a couple of ways to handle it. If they simply spend a Drama Die to activate it, you shouldn't give them much of an advantage. However, if they roleplay a bit and *then* spend a Drama Die, you should give them the full benefit of the Villain's Flaw.

Ambitious

You crave power. Money is nice, but being in charge of other people is your favorite thing. You are likely to be brought down by attempting a risky grab for power and failing. *The players can activate your Flaw in order to get you to chase after power, even if the deal you're getting is risky.*

Arrogant

You firmly believe that you are better than anyone else. Your ideas are the best, your clothes are the most stylish, and you have to let everyone else know how much better than them you are. *The players can activate your Flaw in order to get you to show contempt or disdain for someone else.*

Careless

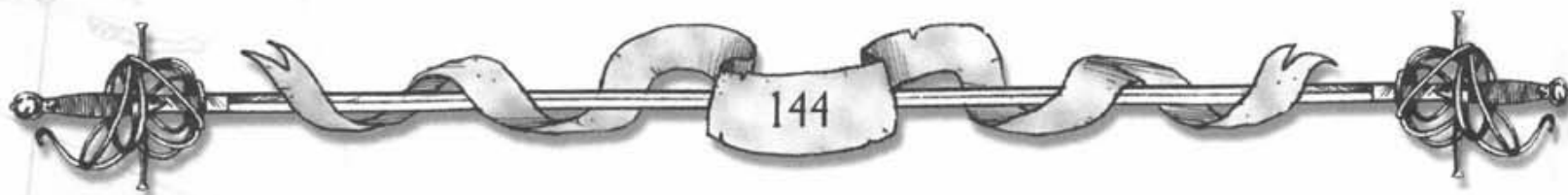
For some reason, Heroes always seem to escape your clutches. You don't understand how that's possible. After all, you throw them into your easily escapable deathtraps before leaving them alone with your bumbling guards while you wander away for no apparent reason. *The players may activate your Flaw in order to succeed automatically at a Simple Check during an escape from one of your traps or prisons.*

Cowardly

You have a strong sense of self-preservation. You often hesitate to put yourself at risk, even if there's a good reason to do so. *Whenever you're about to do something dangerous, such as swing across a spiked pit on a fraying rope, the players can activate your Flaw in order to talk you out of putting yourself in danger.*

Cruel

You have a sadistic streak that causes you to perform acts of cruelty for no good reason. Of course, this doesn't endear you to your followers. *The players may activate your Flaw in order to have a Henchman, sick of the treatment he receives at your hands, betray you. Maybe not this very second, but as soon as it's feasible. If at all possible, you will kill the Henchman the moment you find out about his betrayal.*





Villain

Envious

Everyone else seems to have it better than you. They have more money, better toys, and a prettier wife. You tend to get envious over the smallest things. *The players can activate your Flaw in order to get you to covet something belonging to someone else. You either attempt to get it for yourself, or, failing that, destroy it.*

Extravagant

You enjoy living in the lap of luxury. Ale is never good enough if you can get fine wine instead. You aren't happy with anything less than the finest room in the inn. *The players can activate your Flaw in order to get you to focus on your own comfort instead of your job or plans.*

Greedy

Money makes your eyes light up with joy. *Pecuniae obediunt omnia!* ("All things yield to money!") Whenever you're divvying up shares of the loot, being offered a hefty bribe, or catching wind of some fabulous treasure, *the players can activate your Flaw to convince you to grub for as much money as possible.*

Hot-headed

You have a chip on your shoulder, a big one. Your fuse is short, and you're ready to get in a scuffle at the slightest hint of an insult. *The players can activate your Flaw to get you to fly off the handle and lose your temper.*

Lecherous

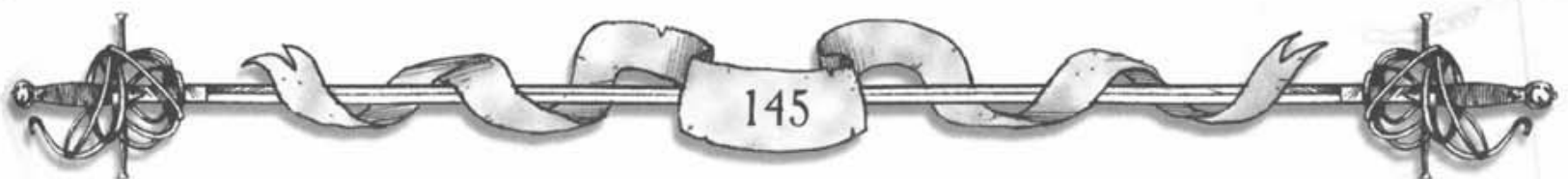
You have a lusty nature and a tendency to pursue the pleasures of the flesh. A pretty woman or a handsome man (however your tastes run) is an almost irresistible temptation to you. *The players can activate your Flaw in order to convince you to give in to temptation.*

Megalomaniacal

You want to rule the world. You believe that you are the only person on the planet worthy of possessing power. You are quite willing to play your Henchmen along for saps, but you would never actually let them share in your victory. *The players can activate your Flaw in order to get you to admit in front of your Henchmen that you don't plan on sharing power with them.*

Merciful

For a Villain, you have a terrible weakness – you don't like to hurt people. Given the choice, you'd rather exile



your deposed brother to another country than do him in. Whether this is because you want him to live knowing that you beat him, or whether you just have a small soft spot down in your heart somewhere, the result is the same: your enemies keep coming back again and again. *The players can activate your Flaw in order to stop you from having someone killed.*

Misfortunate

Lucky breaks happen to other people, not you. Your luck isn't terrible; you wouldn't have survived as long as you have if it were. It just isn't very good. If you need some blind luck to get you out of a sticky situation, expect to be stuck for a while. *The players can activate your Flaw to cause you to reroll a successful test whose TN was 25 or higher. Luckily for you, the players can only do this once to any given test.*

Misled

You don't know that you're a Villain. You honestly believe that you are a Hero, that you are doing the Right Thing. Sometimes, though, you have your doubts... *The players can activate your Flaw in order to cause you to doubt your actions for one crucial moment (one Action).*

Overconfident

Nothing is beyond your capabilities. If you wanted, you could defeat the best swordsmen in all of Théah; you just haven't had any reason to do so yet. And surely that chasm isn't too wide for you to leap across. *The players can activate your Flaw in order to squash any doubts you may have had about your own capabilities.*



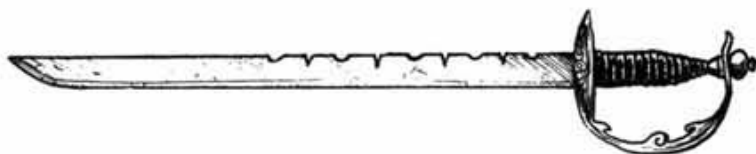


Paranoid

Everyone is waiting for their chance to betray you. Make sure you get rid of them before they get the chance. *The players can activate your Flaw in order to make you believe that one of your Henchmen has betrayed, or is about to betray you.*

Proud

You don't like accepting help from others. If a gift or offer of aid smacks of charity or pity even the slightest bit, you grow indignant and refuse it. *The players can activate your Flaw to get you to refuse an offer of aid.*



Scheming

You like big, complicated plots. The more convoluted, the better. In fact, sometimes your schemes are so hard to grasp that your Henchmen screw them up entirely. It's so hard to find good help these days. *The players can activate your Flaw in order to prevent you from doing things the easy way. It's not enough to kill an enemy; you have to lower him into a deadly maze, complete with lethal traps.*

Squeamish

You don't want anyone's blood on your hands. It's perfectly okay to get blood on your Henchmen's hands, but you don't like to do the deed yourself. Of course, you don't always follow up on things to make sure the job actually gets done – after all, the sight of blood has always disturbed you. *The players can activate your Flaw in order to get you to pawn off the task of killing someone on a Henchman.*

Stubborn

You don't change your mind very often, if at all. Once you've decided on a course of action, you follow through no matter what. Attempts to convince you that you're wrong roll off your back with no impact. *The players can activate your Flaw in order to prevent you from changing your mind.*

Talkative

You have a problem keeping your plans to yourself. Your ideas are simply so clever that you tell them to other people, so that you can watch the astonishment creep across their faces just before they tell you just how smart you are. *The players can activate your Flaw in order to get you to tell them your evil scheme. There's nothing preventing you from dropping them into a deathtrap afterwards, but should they survive, then you've got problems.*

Wiles

Just as a Hero has a Virtue, so may a Villain have a Wile. Wiles work exactly like Virtues in every way; a Villain spends a Drama Die and it's turned on. Players cannot spend Drama Dice to de-activate them.

Adaptable

You react to changing situations with lightning-quick mental reflexes. When someone leaps off of a balcony at you, you calmly step aside. When scything blades whip out of the floor and attempt to cleave you in two, you retain the presence of mind to dive out of the way. *You may activate your Wile in order to cancel the effects of Surprise. This Wile only applies to you; no others can benefit from it.*

Beguiling

You sure don't look like a Villain. In fact, most folks would trust you with their grandmother's pension. Play your cards right and the Heroes may never discover that you're a Villain... until it's too late, of course. *You receive*



a Drama Die every time you help the Heroes in some significant manner. Whenever you make a roll that helps the Heroes, you receive one Free Raise.

Brilliant

Do the words "Criminal Mastermind" ring a bell? Elaborate plots and plans are your bread and butter. Your plots are so deep, not even your Henchmen can keep track of where they're going. Whenever it seems the Heroes have you figured out, you pull some twist out of your pocket and throw them off-guard. *You may spend a Drama Die to cause a Hero to fail a roll in a Phase in which you have an Action. You must spend the Drama Die before the Hero rolls.*

Careful

Your plans are extremely well thought out and you design exceptionally deadly ambushes and traps. Your plans always have a back-up contingency, and there are never obvious flaws in them. *Whenever you spend a Drama Die, if you roll a 5 or less on it, it doesn't count as spent.*

Charismatic

You are an exceptional public speaker. Your men will follow you to the death. It annoys you to have to pretend to care when they die, but it helps keep morale up. *You may activate your Wile in order to have one of your followers die fearlessly for you, whether it furthers your cause or not.*

Commanding

You exude confidence and composure. This has a tendency to unnerve your opponents, since they feel that you must know something they don't. *You may activate your Wile to gain a Fear Rating of 1 for one Scene. Rules for Fear are on page 175.*

Deceitful

You don't strike others as a Villain. They never suspect you until it's too late. Even the dread Fate Witches have trouble identifying you. *Your Wile is always on; you do not need to activate it. When someone else attempts to view what Arcana you have, you may choose what Arcana she sees.*

Fanatical

Your cause means everything to you. Death is acceptable if it helps you accomplish your goals. The most dangerous man in the world is the man who isn't afraid to die. *You may activate your Wile in order to ignore your injuries for one Phase.*





Focused

You can concentrate all of your energy on a single task. Your world narrows until only the thing you are working on remains. This allows you to accomplish a great deal using limited resources. *You may activate your Wile to transfer one Rank in any of your Traits to any other of your Traits for the duration of the Scene (for example, a Resolve 4 and Brawn 2 could become a Resolve 3 and Brawn 3). You may exceed your normal maximum Trait Rank with this Wile. This transfer expires at the end of the Scene and cannot be canceled prematurely. This Wile may only be used once per Scene.*

Fortunate

Those little annoying quirks of misfortune that haunt other people seem to always overlook you. Horses don't run underneath low branches when you're riding them; you never fall into the water when making an easy leap aboard ship. *You may activate your Wile to reroll any failed test whose TN is 20 or less. However, you may only do this once for any given test: your luck is good, but even the luckiest people sometimes have a bad day.*

Hateful

You know how to hold a grudge. When someone makes an enemy of you, he doesn't know what he's gotten himself into. You are capable of devoting your entire being to the destruction of another individual. *You may activate your Wile in order to declare someone who has just foiled one of your schemes to be your enemy. From now on, you are immune to any attempts by him to use the Repartee System on you. In addition, you always roll one extra unkept die when personally fighting your enemy. You may only have one enemy at a time, and you cannot declare a new enemy until you have killed the first one.*

Honorable

You're not the ruthless type. In fact, there's a very well-defined line that you just won't cross. You've subscribed to some of those romantic ideals that are going around

the courts these days. Some of them. *Whenever you have an opportunity to gain or profit from a "dishonorable act" and you refrain, you gain a Drama Die.*

Prudent

Some Villains go after Heroes with reckless abandon. Not you. You carefully consider each and every step you take toward your goals. Every move you make is deliberate and designed. *You do not need to activate your Wile. Whenever Heroes spend a Drama Die directly against you or your Henchmen or Brutes, add two Drama Dice to your own pool (instead of one).*

Recurring

You're a slippery fish. Whenever the Heroes think they've killed you, you return to torment them another day. If they burned your bloated corpse, then it wasn't really you, it was someone else that looked like you. If you fell off a waterfall while battling them, then of course you survived the fall. *You may activate your Wile to get away, no matter how impossible that may seem.*

Regal

Most Brutes couldn't care less about who they work for, but your Brutes are different. You've so impressed them with your majestic demeanor, they draw strength from your own confidence. *You may spend a Drama Die to increase the Threat Rating of any of your Brute Squads by one (see Brute Squads, page 167) until the end of the Round.*

Resourceful

Heroes have a tendency to underestimate you. Too bad for them. You've spent a lifetime becoming what you are now, and no bunch of idealistic fools will keep you from achieving your goals. *You may spend a Drama Die to have Rank 2 in any Knack you don't already have a Rank in.*

Ruthless

You never hesitate to do whatever it takes to accomplish your goals. Nothing is too evil for you, as long as it serves





the purpose you desire. This often leaves your enemies reeling with shock while you finish them off. *You may activate your Wile in order to try to shock your enemies. You must first perform an evil act of a shocking nature. Then, you make an Intimidation attempt against each Hero who witnessed the act. Any Hero that you manage to Intimidate is affected by Surprise rules (see page 190 of the 7th Sea Players' Guide) for the rest of the Round.*

Seductive

With whispered words of evil, you can convince even the most honest man to lie, cheat, steal, or kill. Your slippery arguments can twist a man's head around and make him believe that he's doing evil for a good cause. *You may activate your Wile in order to attempt to convince an NPC to commit an evil deed that he normally wouldn't perpetrate.*

Self-controlled

The verbal slings and arrows hurled by others roll off your back. Seduction attempts are seen through and laughed away. And of course, nobody ever intimidates you. *You may activate your Wile to cause anyone's use of the Repartee System upon you to automatically fail.*

Uncanny

Some people think that you have a little bit of sorcery in your blood, while others just think that you have sharp eyes and keen ears. The truth is, you've always had feelings that you don't quite understand. You just know that they mean trouble is coming, and coming quickly. *At any time, you can spend a Drama Die to activate your Wile. The next time the Players are about to spring an awful surprise on you, you get some warning just before they do so. Once you've received one warning, you have to spend another Die if you want to re-activate this Wile.*

Victorious

You are the darling of the gods of War. Somehow, when it seems like you are doomed to fall in battle, you can summon up incredible reserves of strength to strike your

opponent down. *You may activate your Wile after you hit your opponent, but before you roll for Damage. Instead of rolling for damage, your attack automatically inflicts one Dramatic Wound.*

Willful

Your force of will is so great, no one may stand against you. The world is yours for the taking, and nothing – not even chance – is going to stand in your way. *If Willful is your Arcana, no Hero may use Drama Dice when facing you in direct combat.*

Advantages

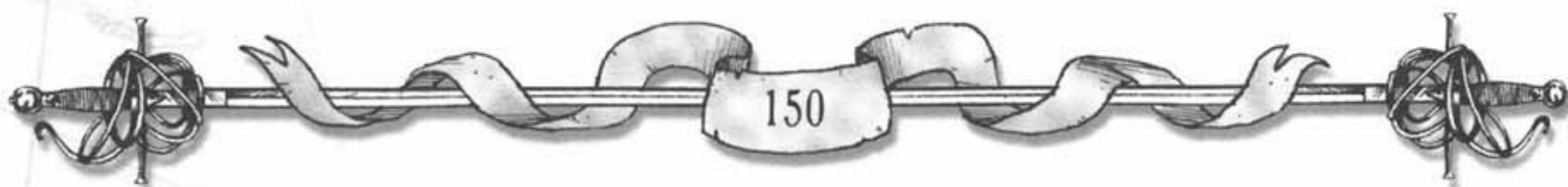
The players' Hero sheets are good sources of adventure ideas. Looking at the Advantages, Skills, and Backgrounds they took can inspire plots that wouldn't have occurred to you otherwise. We've listed some ideas below, suggesting how to turn a Hero's Advantage into an Adventure hook.

Able Drinker

The Hero is challenged to a drinking contest, and the betting gets pretty heavy. Eventually he wins, but his opponent doesn't have the cash on him and offers to go get it. He leaves his young daughter with the Hero as his "marker" and then leaves town in a hurry. The Hero is stuck with the little girl unless he can find someone to take care of her.

Academy

The Hero's old sergeant from the academy shows up and needs a favor. It seems that there is a plot underway to discredit and shame the academy, and he needs the Hero's help in order to stop this from taking place.





Appearance

A famous Théan painter is taken with the Hero's looks and decides that he wants to paint a portrait of him or her. When he's finished, he makes a present of the painting to the Hero. However, paintings by this artist sell for hundreds of Guilders, and it is stolen soon after he finishes it. If the Hero wants it back, he'll have to track down the thief.

Church Education

While going through an old trunk of his belongings, the Hero rediscovers a forbidding (and locked) book that he came across while he was in school. He could never get it open before, but now it falls open at his touch...

Citation

The Hero's reputation exceeds his capabilities, and he is called upon to perform a task that he is utterly unprepared to deal with. Only with the help of his friends can he handle the situation.

Connections

One of the Hero's connections dies, and his child must step into his shoes. The Hero should feel some sort of obligation to show him the ropes as a favor to his dead friend. If he does a good job, he'll get a new connection to replace the old one.

Combat Reflexes

The Hero reacts without thinking to a sudden attack by pushing a man out of the way. Later on, that man turns out to be the Villain of the adventure, but he's grateful to the Hero for saving his life. Of course, depending on his personality, that could just mean that he gives the Hero a quicker death.

Commission

The Hero is temporarily put in charge of a Brute Squad and told to keep the men alive on the mission they're being sent on. Depending on how he performs, he could

be considered for a promotion in the near future, or his military career could come to an abrupt halt.

Dangerous Beauty

A powerful admirer of the Hero begins using his or her influence to put pressure on the Hero to become intimately involved. He or she puts the Hero's friends in awkward political and financial situations, and then threatens to destroy them unless the Hero gives in.

Dracheneisen Items

The Hero hears rumors about a non-Eisen who apparently possesses a dracheneisen item. Since no Eisen would sell or give such an item to any foreigner, he must have stolen it. It is the Hero's duty as an Eisen to investigate the matter and ensure that his claim on the item is valid, or return it to its proper owners.

Faith

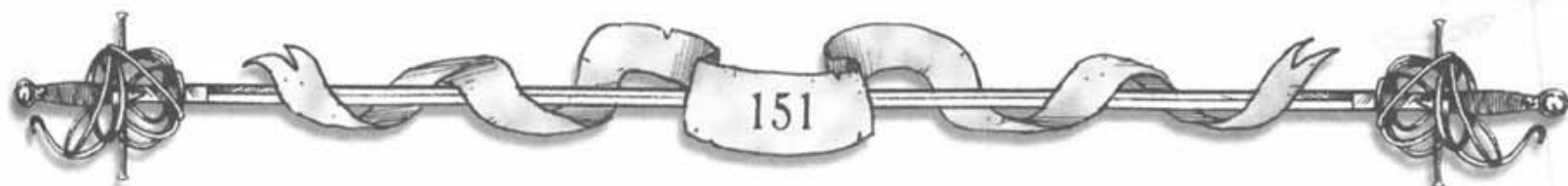
The Hero witnesses what he believes to be an actual miracle, but later evidence calls its validity into question. Was it real, or wasn't it? Is the Hero too eager to believe or does he doubt it and try his best to discredit it?

Indomitable Will

There is a corridor in a Syrneth ruin that causes intense pain to anyone who walks down it. Only someone with the Indomitable Will advantage can bear the pain long enough to make it through. On the other end is a useful artifact guarded by a monster which the Hero must – of course – fight alone.

Inheritance

Another person shows up with a claim on the Hero's inheritance. If the Hero isn't careful, and doesn't prepare a good court case, his inheritance could be taken away from him.





Keen Senses

The Hero detects the faint taste of poison in the food at a party he is attending. If he warns the other guests, then he foils the plans of a fairly powerful Villain, who will look for revenge.

Language

The Hero must translate a book from one language into another. Stuck between the pages of the book is a long-forgotten sea chart that shows an uncharted island. The Heroes might find anything on the island – from well-preserved Syrneth ruins to a lost civilization.

Large

A person with the Small advantage comes up to the Hero and challenges him to a duel. It seems that he has taken personal offense at the Hero's height. For all his small size, he's quite an effective duelist.

Left-handed

A masked man has been burglarizing the area, and he fights left-handed. The Hero – as the only left-handed man in the area – is mistaken for the burglar and wrongly arrested. He or his friends will have to try to clear his name.

Legendary Trait

A contest takes place that uses the Hero's legendary trait, such as an archery contest if the Hero took Finesse. The people who have seen him shoot (or whatever) pressure him to enter the contest. Of course, another one of the contestants wants to win a little too badly and attempts to assassinate the Hero before the contest takes place.

Linguist

The Hero discovers some samples of an unknown language. However, because of his advantage, he can attempt to decipher it over time. The potential this could unlock for him is endless. He could well be the first

person to decipher this language, which ought to be good for his reputation.

Membership

One of the Hero's acquaintances seems to be a good candidate to recruit into his secret society and, when approached, is eager to join. This gives the Hero a chance for the player to witness the society's initiation rites "first hand", so to speak. Perhaps his acquaintance is having trouble making the grade, or perhaps he's a spy for another secret society.

Noble

An unknown force has been carrying the Hero's peasants off in the night. They disappear one a night, and those still around are getting ready to pack up and leave if he doesn't do something about it. Perhaps a monster is carrying the peasants off to be eaten, or maybe there's a more nefarious explanation behind the disappearances. The only way the Hero is going to find out for sure is to stake the village out at night and watch.

Ordained

The Hero is approached by a man and a woman from politically opposed families who want to be married in secret. To do so without their parents' blessings would certainly put the Hero in an awkward position, but the marriage might help to end the feud between the two families.

Patron

The Hero's patron has him create a work of art for his amusement. Later on, the patron begins to pass the artwork off as his own creation, even going so far as to paint (or chisel) over the Hero's signature. If the Hero raises too much of a fuss, he could find himself without a patron.





Scoundrel

Someone who resembles the Hero is ruining his bad reputation. He keeps coming across people who thank him for good deeds he never performed. If something isn't done soon, the Hero is going to lose his reputation as a dangerous man, and people are going to start coming to him for help.

Servants

One of the Hero's servants gets sick. Unless the Hero shows some concern for him and sees that he receives proper (and possibly expensive) medical attention, he's going to die. Of course, if he takes care of his servant, he may be rewarded with increased loyalty.



Small

The Explorer's Guild discovers a very small side passage in a Sryneth ruin that's only big enough for the Hero to fit through. Anyone larger would get stuck. The passage could collapse behind him, forcing him to find another way out. Perhaps he discovers a valuable artifact that is too big to carry back outside.

University

Since the Hero has a bit of a reputation as a scholar, the Invisible College approaches him and asks him to help sponsor an invention for them. He would gain credit for the invention and could profit from its manufacture if he so desired, but would also bear the brunt of any attention from the Inquisition that might come about.

Bestiary

Creatures abound on Théah, both the mundane and the supernatural. Below is a list of the most prominent species, including game stats and a brief description. It also includes their relative strength (Villain, Henchman, Brute).

Asprey

Henchman

TN: 25 (15 on Ground)

Brawn: 1

Finesse: 3

Resolve: 1

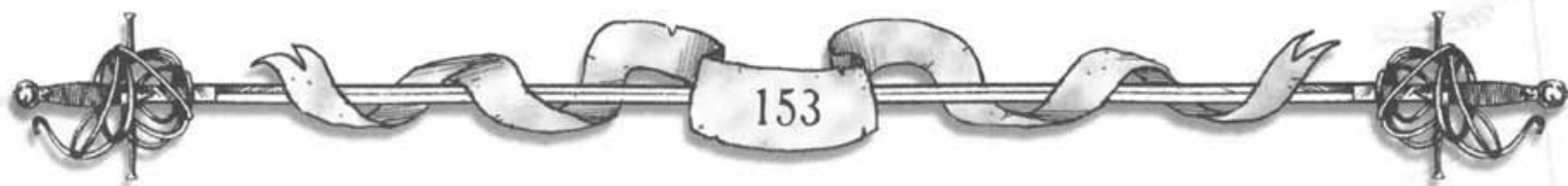
Wits: 4

Panache: 3

Attack Roll: 5k3 Bite

Damage: 1k1 Bite

Skills: Footwork (Flying) 4, Footwork (Ground) 2



Description: Aspreys are small, winged snakes. They come from the Isle of Syrne, and live in small communities. Occasionally, one of them will take a particularly liking to a human (often when fed regularly by that human) and follow him around. They can make very affectionate, clever companions, and will often act to protect "their" human if they perceive him to be in danger.

Special Abilities: Flight. Once per Round, an asprey may attack the face of another creature in order to distract them. This is a Contested Wits roll. If the asprey wins the contest, then its target adds 1 to its lowest Action Die plus 1 for every Raise. If this raises the Action Die above Phase 10, then it is lost.

Avians

Brute-Henchman

TN to be hit: 25 (10 on Ground)

Brawn: 1

Finesse: 1

Resolve: 1

Wits: 1

Panache: 1

Attack Roll: 3k1 Claw

Damage: 1k1 Claw

Skills: Footwork (Flying) 4, Footwork (Ground) 1





Description: Avians are birds, ranging from tiny sparrow to huge Eagles. Here are some common types of avian for your use:

Songbird (1 pt): -1 Brawn, No Claw attack

Falcon (5 pts): As above

Hawk (10 pts): +1 Brawn, Claw Damage 2k2

Osprey (pts): +1 Finesse, Claw Attack Roll 6k2

Eagle (pts): +1 Brawn, +1 Finesse, Claw Damage 2k2, Claw Attack Roll 6k2.

Special Abilities: Flight. When an avian (except the songbird) uses its Claw attack, it strikes for the face, typically. This is a Contested Wits roll. If the avian wins the contest, then its target adds 1 to its lowest Action Die plus 1 for every Raise. If this raises the Action Die above Phase 10, then it is lost.

Bear

Villain

TN to be hit: 15

Brawn: 5

Finesse: 2

Resolve: 3

Wits: 1

Panache: 2

Attack Roll: Claw 4k2, Bite 4k2

Damage: Claw 5k3, Bite 4k2

Skills: Grapple 2, Bear Hug 4

Description: Bears usually leave people alone, but sometimes they are used in cruel sports such as bear baiting (in which a pack of dogs are encouraged to tear a bear apart). Needless to say, any Ussuran witnessing such an act would fly into a terrible rage.

Special Abilities: None.

Boca

Brutes

Threat Rating: 0 (See Below)

Usual Weapons: Bite (Small)

TN to be hit: 15 (20 while Leaping)

Skills: Leaping 3

Description: Boca are small, hopping rodents with large teeth that travel in swarms of 1,000–20,000. They move around the countryside like a plague of locusts, devouring crops, livestock, and anyone too slow to get out of their way.

Special Abilities: Boca Brute Squads consist of ten Boca each. For every two Boca that participate in an Action, the Boca get to roll 1 Die, as per the Brute Squad rules. While normally only one Brute Squad can attack a Hero at the same time, up to ten Boca Brute Squads can attack at once, adding 1 to their Threat Rating for every two Boca Brute Squads attacking the same target, up to a maximum of 5. Thus, if ten Squads of ten Bocas attack a single target, he suffers five 5k5 attacks.

Boca cannot use Active Defense.

Canines

Henchmen

TN to be hit: 15

Brawn: 2

Finesse: 1

Resolve: 1

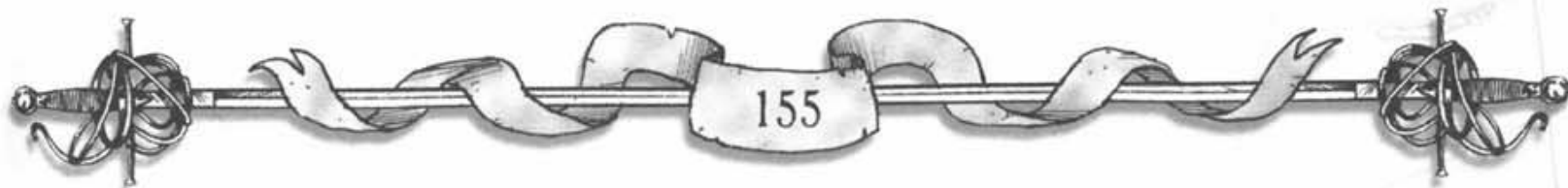
Wits: 1

Panache: 1

Attack Roll: 4k1 Bite

Damage: 2k2 Bite

Skills: Footwork 2





Description: Here are some common types of canine for your use:

Lap Dog (5 pts): -1 Brawn, Bite Damage 1k1, +1 to owner's Ambush Knack when accompanying him.

Hunting Dog (10 pts): Tracking 4

Guard Dog (10 pts): +1 Brawn, Bite Damage 3k2

Wolf (15 pts): +1 Brawn, Bite Damage 3k2, Tracking 3, travel in packs of 5-15. If multiple wolves attack the same victim in the same Round (maximum of 6), reduce the victim's TN to be hit by 5 for each additional attack. Thus, if the TN to hit is 25 for the first wolf, it will be 20 for the second, 15 for the third, etc.

Fox (10 pts): -1 Brawn, Bite Damage 1k1, -2 to Tracker's Tracking Check

Special Abilities: None.

Felines

Henchmen

TN to be hit: 20

Brawn: 1

Finesse: 2

Resolve: 1

Wits: 1

Panache: 1

Attack Roll: 4k2 Claw

Damage: 2k1 Claw

Skills: Footwork 3, Stealth 3

Description: Felines are cats, ranging from domestic house cats to huge lions and tigers. The more exotic specimens are found only in the far-flung reaches of the continent, or on the western islands. Here are some common types of feline for your use:

House Cat (5 pts): -1 Brawn, Claw Damage 1k1, Break Fall 1

Mountain Lion (10 pts): Climbing 4

Lion (10 pts): +2 Brawn, Claw Damage 3k3, Bite 4k2 (3k2 Damage)

Tiger (15 pts): +3 Brawn, Claw Damage 4k3, Bite 4k2 (4k3 Damage)

Special Abilities: None

Ghoul

Brute

Threat Rating: 3

Usual Weapons: Claw and Bite (Medium)

TN to be hit: 15

Skills: Stealth 4, Shadowing 4, Tracking 6

Description: Ghouls appear to be an offshoot of apes. They have exaggerated fangs and claws, but walk more upright than their simian cousins. They are quite cowardly around healthy animals, but will attempt to drag any sickly or wounded animals (including humans) that they encounter off into the bushes, where they are torn apart and eaten. Firearms frighten them, but the lure of blood is irresistible, and they will inevitably return to harass the wounded once again.

Special Abilities: Ghouls can smell blood and sickness within a radius of two miles. They are attracted to wounded Heroes, and will only attack someone who has suffered a number of Dramatic Wounds equal or higher than their Resolve, otherwise using their Stealth and Shadowing to stay out of sight.

Ghost

Villain

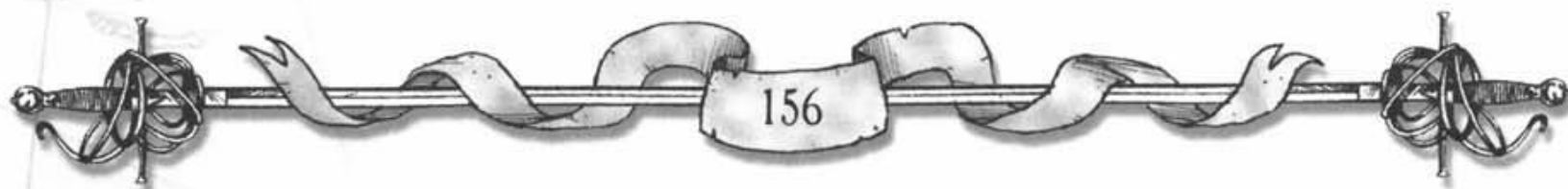
TN: -

Brawn: -

Finesse: -

Resolve: -

Wits: -





Panache: —
Attack Roll: —
Damage: —
Skills: —

Description: Ghosts are the restless spirits of men and women who have died unnaturally. They haunt houses, ships and other locales, searching vainly for respite from their tormented existence. Some haunt their killers, others haunt family members or lovers. The motivation of each ghost is unique, depending upon the circumstances of the spirit in life. Ghosts are incorporeal (thus the lack of stats) and cannot be harmed by ordinary weapons. Some can hurl objects at mortals (1k1 damage, dodge at TN 15), but most can only moan their bereavement to the living, relying on guilt and the horror of their presence to gain the desired effect. Ghosts can manifest to whoever they wish, allowing only one or two people to be aware of their presence if they so desire.

Montaigne is famous for a unique type of ghost called a "mirror ghost." Montaigne ghost hunters have developed a method (a highly protected trade secret) for trapping specters in mirrors. More information on Théah's mirror ghosts appears in the *Montaigne* sourcebook.

Special Abilities: Mirror ghosts have a strange effect on Porté: it doesn't work in their presence. Any Porté mage trying to open doorways while a mirror ghost is in the direct area (same room) will not be able to do so.



Griffon

Henchman

TN: 25 (15 on Ground)

Brawn: 2

Finesse: 2

Resolve: 2

Wits: 1

Panache: 2





Attack Roll: 5k2 Diving Claw (Flying), 3k2 Bite (on Ground)

Damage: 4k2 Diving Claw, 2k1 Bite

Skills: Ambush 3, Footwork (Flying) 4, Footwork (Ground) 2, Tracking 4

Description: Griffons are quadrupedal birds about the size of wolves with white feathers everywhere except their chest, where their feathers are bright red. They live in the gold-rich mountains near the Empire of the Crescent Moon, and are very territorial. They tend to hunt in packs of 5–15, harrying their prey from the sky until it dies of fear and blood loss.

Special Abilities: Flight. Griffons cannot be domesticated.

Hinde

Henchman

TN: 30

Brawn: 3

Finesse: 5

Resolve: 1

Wits: 1

Panache: 5

Attack Roll: 7k5 Goring

Damage: 3k1 Goring

Skills: Footwork 5, Leaping 5, Long Distance Running 5, Sprinting 5

Description: The hinde is a thin deer-like creature capable of running at incredible speeds. It shines with a faint golden glow when it is exerting itself. Its horn is known to retain some of the hinde's speed, and if worn, allows its wearer to move slightly faster than he normally could.

Special Abilities: At the start of each Round, you may change one of the hinde's Action Dice to a 1. Add

20 to its Initiative Total at all times. Anyone who wears a necklace or bracelet made from the horn of a hinde adds 5 to their Initiative Total at all times. There is only enough material in a hinde's horn to make one such piece of jewelry. A hinde dies if its horn is cut off.

Horse

Henchman

Points: 35

TN: 10 (25 while Galloping)

Brawn: 4

Finesse: 2

Resolve: 1

Wits: 1

Panache: 1

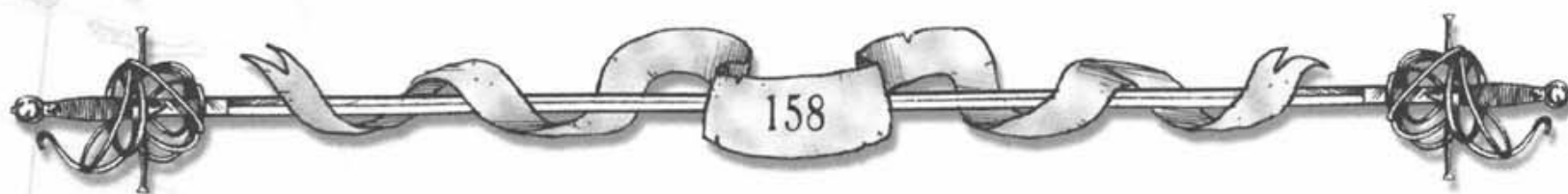
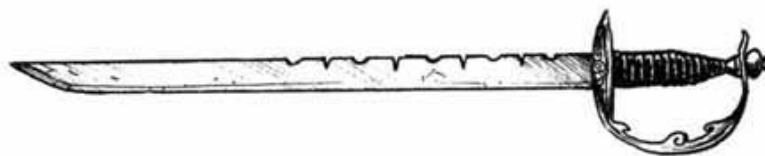
Attack Roll: 3k2 Bite, 3k2 Kick, 3k2 Trample

Damage: 0k1 Bite, 4k2 Kick, 4k3 Trample

Skills: Footwork 1, Long Distance Running 2, Sprinting 4

Description: Théan horses are somewhat stronger than our horses. The breeds vary from nation to nation. Montaigne purebreds are very beautiful, but not so strong or fast as other breeds. Castillian racers have a reputation for being very fast, while Ussuran draft horses and Eisen warhorses are very strong. Avalon quarterhorses are a good all-around breed, while the Vendel don't have any good breeds to speak of. The Crescent windrunners, however, have speed and endurance that put all other breeds to shame.

Special Abilities: Horses can carry twice the normal encumbrance for their Brawn if properly loaded.





Leviathan

Villain

TN: 5

Brawn: 10

Finesse: 2

Resolve: 25

Wits: 2

Panache: 1

Attack Roll: 2k1 Ram, 3k2 Bite

Damage: 10k10+50 Ram, 8k8 Bite

Skills: Piloting (Self) 3, Navigation (Self) 3

Description: The bane of whalers everywhere, leviathans protect the pods of whales that roam the oceans of Théah. They are approximately three times the size of a normal whale of their species, and are more clever than ordinary whales. They go to any length to protect their pods, and have sunk entire fleets in their rage.

Special Abilities: Leviathans may hold their breath ten times as long as the drowning rules say they may.

Night Terrors

Villain

TN: —

Brawn: 4

Finesse: —

Resolve: 3

Wits: —

Panache: —

Attack Roll: —

Damage: —

Skills: None

Description: Night Terrors are living wisps of greenish fog that slip into a Hero's mouth and haunt him with nightmares while he sleeps. They live on the fear that these nightmares create. Gradually, the Hero becomes

weaker, sleeping more and more often each day. Finally, if nothing is done, the Hero falls asleep and doesn't wake up, trapped in his own nightmares until he starves to death.

There are only two ways to fight off a night terror. The first is for the Hero to confront his fears and overcome the nightmares. The other option is for another person to take in the night terror (and suffer its effects) by kissing the Hero and willing it to exchange bodies. The terror has no choice but to enter the new body if this occurs.

Special Abilities: Night terrors can cause horrific nightmares that exhaust and traumatize their victims. Once each night, the night terror tries to Intimidate its victim (a Contested Resolve check against the victim). If it succeeds, its victim loses one Rank of Brawn, otherwise it loses one Rank of Brawn itself. If the victim reaches -1 Brawn, then he falls asleep and dies of starvation unless someone kisses him and takes the night terror into him- or herself. If the night terror reaches -1 Brawn, it dies, and its victim will never suffer another nightmare for the rest of their life, making them immune to the effects of further night terrors. Whenever a night terror leaves its victim (or dies), the victim regains their lost Brawn after a single night of restful sleep.

Ruin Monsters

Villain

TN: 20

Brawn: 3

Finesse: 3

Resolve: 3

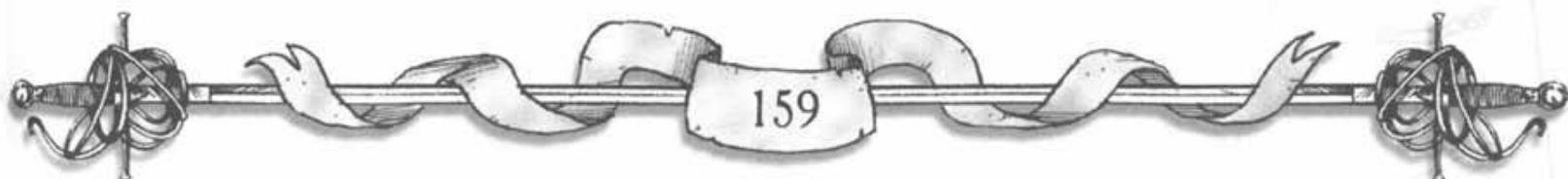
Wits: 2

Panache: 2

Attack Roll: See Below

Damage: See Below

Skills: Footwork 3 or Swimming 3 or Leaping 3





Description: Whenever you need a quick monster to throw at your Heroes when they are poking around some dank Sryneth ruin (typically some ball of teeth, claws, and tentacles), simply select (or roll) one ability from the Offensive Chart, one from the Defensive Chart, and one from the Miscellaneous Chart, under Special Abilities below. Next to each ability is its effect, and its point cost.

Special Abilities: Select (or roll) one ability from each chart below.

Offensive Chart:

1-2: Bite (10 pts): One 3k3 damage bite. Monster rolls 4k3 to hit.

3-4: Claw (10 pts): Two 3k2 damage claws. Monster rolls 4k3 to hit.

5-6: Poison (25 pts): Poison stinger or dart. Either Knock-out Drops or Arsenic would be appropriate. Attack Roll is 3k2, and damage is according to the poison.

7-8: Tentacles (20 pts): Monster has multiple tentacles, Grapple 2, and Bear Hug 2.

9-0: Roll twice on this chart, ignoring 9-0.

Defensive Chart:

1-2: Armor (15 pts): All Damage Rolls against the monster are made at -1 Die.

3-4: Defense Skill +1 (5 pts): Increase the monster's Defense Knack by 1. This increases its TN to be hit by 5.

5-6: Quick Witted (5 pts): Increase the monster's Wits by 1 Rank.

7-8: Tough (5 pts): Increase the monster's Resolve by 1 Rank.

9-0: Roll twice on this chart, ignoring 9-0.

Miscellaneous Chart:

1-2: Fast (5 pts): Increase the monster's Panache by 1 Rank.

3-4: Climbs (5 pts): The monster automatically succeeds at any Climbing Test it needs to make.

5-6: Breathes Water (5 pts): The monster ignores the rules for drowning.

7-8: Flies (15 pts): The monster can fly.

9-0: +1 to any Trait (5 pts): Increase one of the monster's Traits (your choice) by 1 Rank.

Sea Serpent

Villain

TN: 5

Brawn: 7

Finesse: 3

Resolve: 6

Wits: 1

Panache: 2

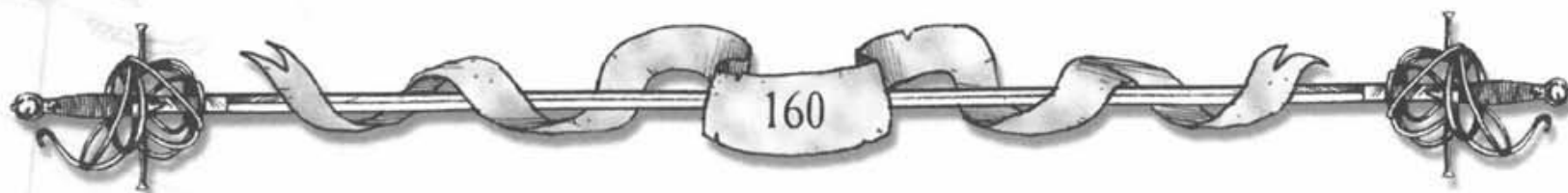
Attack Roll: 5k3 Bite, 5k3 Grapple

Damage: 7k4 Bite

Skills: Grapple 2, Bear Hug 5

Description: Rarely sighted, but always aggressive when encountered, sea serpents are enormous snakes that roam the open seas. Ranging in length from thirty to eighty feet, sea serpents are known to wrap themselves around ships and crush them in their coils.

Special Abilities: After making a successful Grapple attack in the water, the sea serpent may drag its victim underwater. A Hero who is bitten by a sea serpent while holding his breath must make a Resolve test against the amount of damage he just took (in addition to his normal Wound Check) or open his mouth and begin to drown immediately. Sea serpents may ignore the drowning rules, but are unable to move on land.





Siren

Henchman

TN: 25 (5 on Ground)

Brawn: 2

Finesse: 3

Resolve: 2

Wits: 3

Panache: 2

Attack Roll: 5k2 Grapple, 4k3 Bite

Damage: 3k3 Bite

Skills: Acting 3, Swimming 4

Description: Sirens appear to be human females if seen from a distance while their mouth is closed. In actuality, they are vicious predators who feed on human flesh. Found in cold waters, they often swim up beside ships and pretend to drown. Although they aren't particularly intelligent, they have learned that occasionally this will entice a sailor into attempting to "save" them. When a human is in the water with a siren, she will open her mouth, revealing rows of shark-like teeth, and attack. Sirens attempt to drag their victims underwater in order to drown and eat them, although they sometimes take ghoulish delight in feeding on still-living victims in front of their friends aboard ship. In this case, they make an otherworldly, keening sound of pleasure that sailors refer to as the "siren's song." Few sailors will pass up the opportunity to kill a siren.

Special Abilities: After making a successful Grapple attack in the water, the siren drags its victim underwater. A

Hero bitten by a siren while holding his breath must make a Resolve test against the amount of damage he just took (in addition to his normal Wound Check) or open his mouth and begin to drown immediately. Sirens ignore drowning rules, but move very awkwardly on land.





Squid, Giant

Villain

TN: 5

Brawn: 8

Finesse: 3

Resolve: 8

Wits: 1

Panache: 3

Attack Roll: 4k3 Bite, 7k3 Grapple

Damage: 8k6 Bite

Skills: Grapple 4, Bear Hug 4

Description: These enormous beasts have been known to prey on shipping, rising out of the depths to drag a boat and her crew to a watery grave. The giant squid's only natural predators are larger whales and the leviathans. Sailors who are missing limbs often tell tales of how they fought off a giant squid, only to lose an arm or a leg to the monster's enormous beak. More than likely, the squid simply didn't like their taste.

Special Abilities: After making a successful Grapple attack in the water, the giant squid may drag its victim underwater. A Hero bitten by a giant squid while holding his breath must make a Resolve test against the amount of damage he just took (in addition to his normal Wound Check) or open his mouth and begin to drown immediately. Giant squids may ignore the drowning rules, but are unable to move on land.

Succubus

Villain

TN: —

Brawn: —

Finesse: —

Resolve: 2

Wits: 2

Panache: —

Attack Roll: —

Damage: —

Skills: Oratory 4

Description: Succubi live in the mists that Montaigne sorcerers walk through while using their Walk Knack. They whisper things in the sorcerers' ears in order to convince them to open their eyes. If a Hero falls for their enticements, take his character sheet away. That character is as good as dead. Optionally, you may attempt to use the Charm or Intimidate mechanics from the Repartee System to get them to open their eyes, but Succubi may make only a single roll to do so. Since they are so deadly, it is recommended that you use them sparingly.

Special Abilities: Heroes who open their eyes to look at a succubus are removed from the game. Consider them dead. Succubi cannot be harmed by any force known to man.

Zombie

Villain

TN: Varies (See Below)

Brawn: Host +1 (0)

Finesse: Host -1 (4)

Resolve: Host +1 (1)

Wits: Host -1 (0)

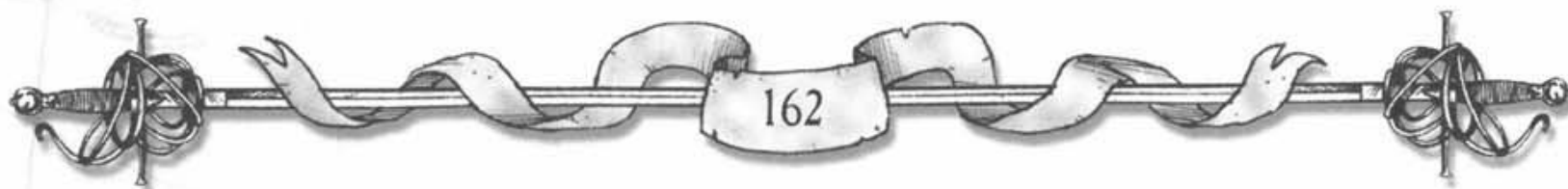
Panache: Host -1 (3)

Attack Roll: 5k3 Claw, 5k3 Claw (None)

Damage: 0k2 Claws (None), and See Below

Skills: Whatever Skills the Host had while alive, Grapple 3 (Leaping 3, Sprinting 5)

Description: In its natural form, the zombie appears to be a small, deformed rat with tentacles for limbs and grey tendrils hanging from its mouth. The zombie looks for a host to inhabit (typically a human corpse no more than a few weeks dead). Only then does it truly become dangerous. It enters through the corpse's mouth





Villain

(prompting the sailor's tradition of placing corpses on barges for burning if they are to be buried at sea), and settles down in its brain cavity, feeding on the brain tissue there. After a day, the grey tendrils in its mouth swell up and extend throughout the corpse, giving the zombie the ability to move its host around, and allowing it to seek additional hosts. In addition, its host's hands develop sharp claws.

The zombie then stalks about, using its host's Skills to sneak up on an unsuspecting person, who it attacks with its claws, seeking to seize them by the throat. Its grey tendrils then extend from underneath its host's fingernails to burrow into its new victim's throat, seeking out the spinal cord. Once contact is made, the victim can be controlled just like the original host; the grey tendril must remain embedded in the victim's spinal cord for this to occur. If it is severed before the victim is fully absorbed, the victim regains control of their body. Otherwise the zombie's grey tendril falls off, no longer needed to control them.

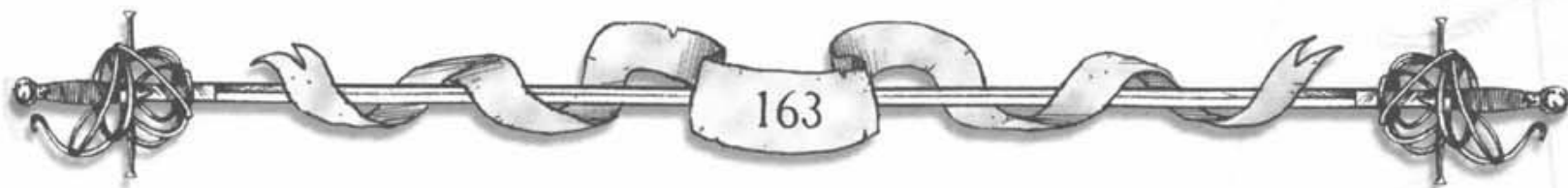
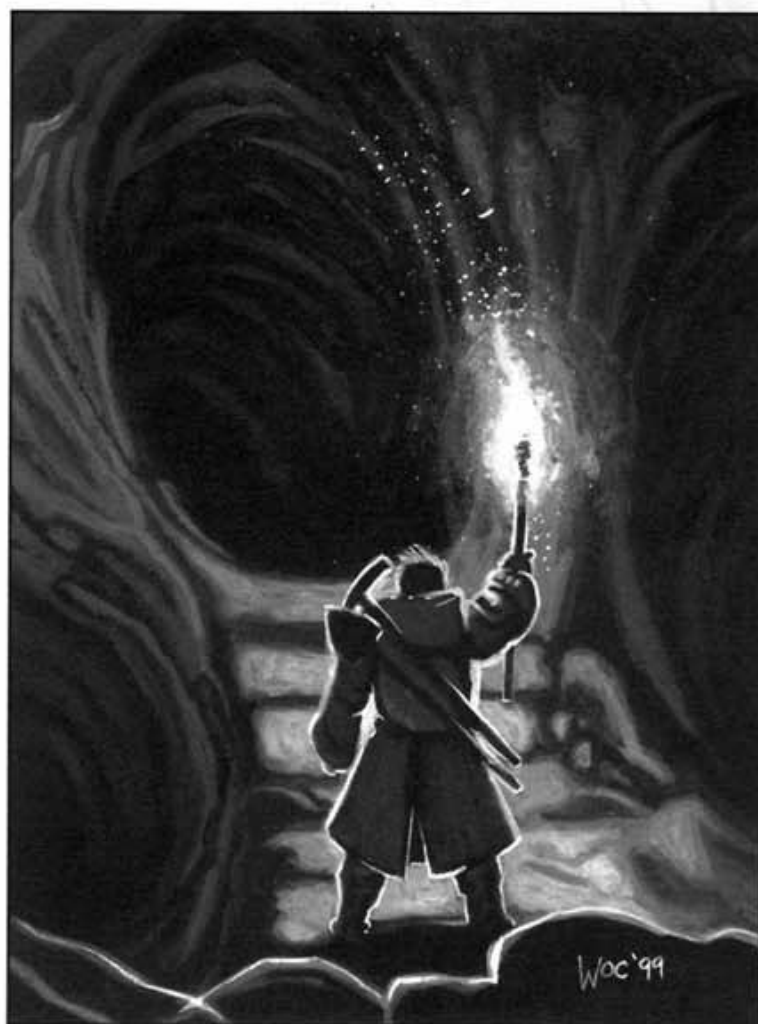
Special Abilities: When the zombie has no host, it uses the attributes in parentheses. Otherwise, it uses its host's Traits and Knacks, making the changes noted above.

When it hits with both of its claws, it has grabbed the victim by the throat, and its tendrils are burrowing into the victim's neck. Consider the victim to be Grappled. Unless the hold is broken within two Rounds (twenty Phases from the Phase the victim is Grappled), the tendrils will reach the spinal cord and take over the victim's body.

While a Hero is controlled by a zombie, make the modifiers noted above to his Traits (to a minimum of 1). The victim is still consciously aware of his actions, he simply cannot control them. Roll a separate initiative for each body the zombie controls, remembering the -1 modifier to Panache listed above. The zombie can only use Skills it has absorbed; it cannot use the Skills of newly controlled bodies.

A grey tendril attaches the victim to the zombie's hand. It has a TN of 20 to be hit, and takes 5 Wounds to sever, which breaks the zombie's control over its victim. If he has taken enough Dramatic Wounds to kill him normally, but his modified Resolve has been keeping him up, he Falls Down at this point, and his Dramatic Wounds are reduced to twice his Resolve.

When a Hero has remained under a zombie's control for a number of days equal to his (unmodified) Ranks in Resolve, he is considered dead. The zombie absorbs his Skills (only adding 1 Rank to any Knacks it already has, maximum of 6), and the tendril falls away, but the victim remains under the zombie's mental control. At this point, he cannot be revived through normal means, although a powerful Syrneth artifact might do the trick.







Drama



Points of View: Sailor

"There we were, off the coast of the Thalussian Isles. I was aboard the *Griming Shark*, a fine three-masted ship with a crew of 50 men. We were getting ready to weigh anchor and return to Avalon with a hold full of Syrneth artifacts, when we caught sight of an unknown ship off our port bow.

"We hailed her, and in response, she hoisted the dancing Jolly Roger, the flag of that madman Allende, the blackest pirate known to sail those waters. The captain ordered us to put on full sail, and to prepare for a fight. Being a gunner, I had to report below decks to man the guns, so I didn't see much of the fight, nor did I want to. You could hear the screams of our men as the pirates fired wave after wave of grapeshot across our decks. We answered them as well as we could, but the *Shark*, despite her name, was only a merchant vessel, and not particularly suited to the task. Then, to make matters worse, we discovered that the quartermaster had decided to save some Guilders by skimping on cannonballs, may he burn in the blackest pits.

"The pirate ship began to close to board us, and we knew we were lost if they did so. Many of our crew were still green, and the sight of the pirates waving their cutlasses would be enough to make them surrender.

"The master gunner yelled at us to find something else to fire, or he'd cut off our heads and shoot those at the pirates. I scrambled into the hold, looking for something among the Syrneth artifacts that we could shoot. Underneath what looked like a pile of vomit made out of bronze, I found a silver sphere just exactly the right size. When I picked it up, I nearly threw out my back, it was so heavy.

"Well, I staggered back to the gundeck with it, and told the gunner that we'd better use a double charge of

powder since it was so heavy, so we loaded it up and fired it at the pirates.

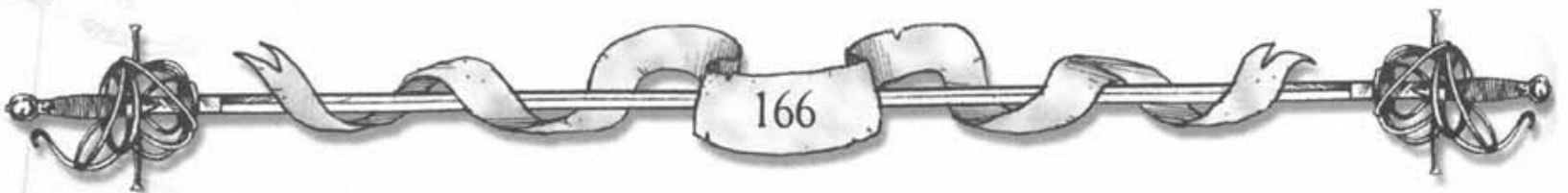
"When it struck the side of their ship, there was a bright flash of light, and then a fog of inky blackness settled over the pirate ship. We could hear the confused yells of the pirates fade away as though they were falling into a chasm that had opened beneath them. After a moment, their faint yells turned to bloodcurdling screams, and we heard strange wails coming from the black cloud, like a hundred screaming dogs. We turned around and sailed out of there as fast as we could, and let me tell you, you never saw a crew of men so eager to get away from a place before.

"The worst part of the tale, however, the part that will wake me screaming from my sleep for the rest of my life, was that the inky blackness never faded as we sailed away. It kept hanging over the spot where the pirate ship had been, and until we lost sight of it over the horizon, we could still hear that horrible wailing. I swear, though the rest of the men angrily told me to keep my peace about it, that I saw the cloud pulse, and grow a little bigger, right as we lost sight of it."

Introduction

This chapter is about rules. A whole lot of rules. We've got rules for falling, burning, drowning, ship-to-ship combat, battles, poisons, Brute Squads, chases, explosions and just about anything else you can think of. The rules are organized in alphabetical order. Of course, any of these rules should be used only at your discretion. We've made them all modular and independent, so you can pick the ones you like and throw out the rest.

However, before we go diving off the deep end, let's spend a moment or two talking about rules and their context in a roleplaying game setting. We're going to get





rather subjective in a moment, so if you want to skip the next few paragraphs, feel free.

In a roleplaying game session, a certain momentum builds up that takes hold of the player's suspension of disbelief and keeps it rolled up tight. Unfortunately, that momentum can be smashed when the Game Master "shifts gears" from storyteller to referee in order to determine if an action (or more) is successful.

Here's some advice: Only force a player to roll dice when his Hero's ability is in doubt. If you and the player are certain the Hero can make the action without rolling, don't make him roll. Sure, there's a small chance of failure, but is checking for that chance worth breaking the momentum of the story? It's an important question you're going to have to consider carefully.

Can I pick up my hat without making a roll? Sure. No roll, no problem. Can I pick up my hat while swinging from a rope, hanging from my feet in a windstorm while the rope is on fire? That's a little tougher.

Aging

As the Heroes grow older, their abilities change. Their physical Skills weaken over time, but their mental Skills increase with experience. In *7th Sea*, this is simulated by

age categories. Each category has an Age Range, a Martial Modifier, and a Civil Modifier. The Martial Modifier gives a modifier to the Hero's Traits whenever he is attempting to use a Martial Knack. Thus, if the Hero is Middle-aged and must make a Finesse + Attack (Fencing) roll, his Finesse is reduced by 1, since Attack (Fencing) is a Martial Knack. The Civil Modifier works the same way, only for Civil and Sorcerous Knacks. Note that for purposes of Aging, the Commander Skill is considered to be a Civil Skill. To determine the age a Hero will expire from old age, roll one exploding die and add the result to 65.

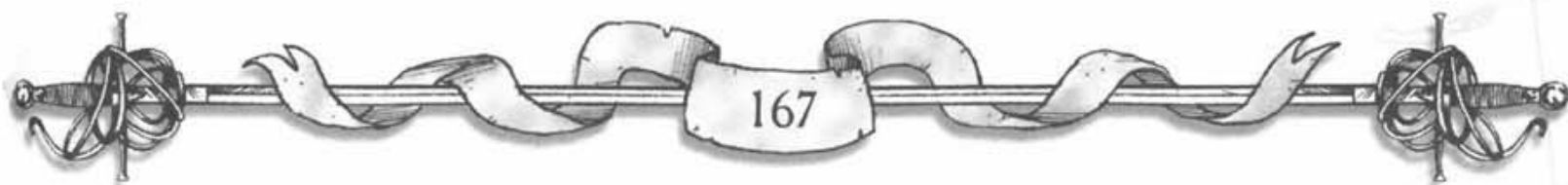
Brute Squads

Not every NPC can be the focus of your campaign. Some of them simply present the Heroes with someone to fight. In *7th Sea*, these supporting NPCs are referred to as "Brutes." Consider them your workhorses.

Brutes come in groups of up to six, since it's hard for more people than that to attack a single person at once. These groups are referred to as "Brute Squads." Brutes do not attack the same way as everything else in *7th Sea* does. Since they appear in large groups, they use a much more streamlined version of the game system that allows

Aging Modifiers

Category	Age	Martial Modifiers	Civil Modifiers
Young	0-15	-1	-1
Spry	16-25	0	0
Middle-aged	26-40	-1	+1
Old	41-55	-2	+1
Death	65+One Exploding die		





them to act *en masse*. Brute Squads are described in the following format:

Cardinal's Men

Threat Rating: 3

Usual Weapons: Rapiers (Medium)

TN to be hit: 20

Footwork -1, Sprinting 1

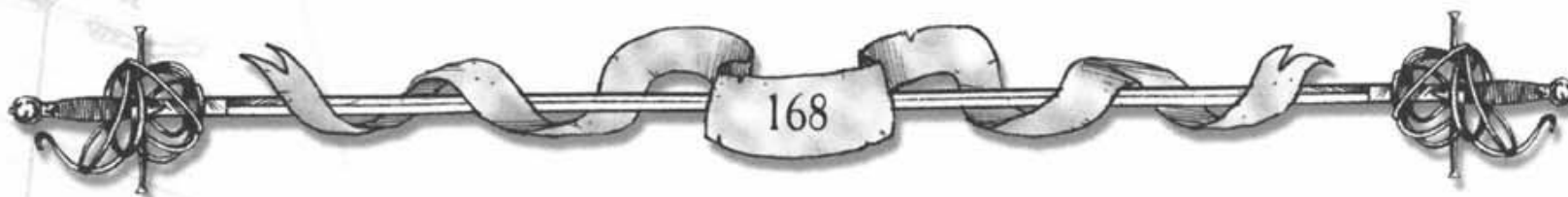
First, each Brute Squad has a Threat Rating from 1 to 4. This represents their general competence and ability. The higher their Threat Rating is, the more dangerous they are. Peasants and untrained militia would have a Rating of 1, while only highly trained professionals would have a Rating of 4. A Brute Squad's Panache is equal to its Threat Rating. In addition, when a Brute Squad makes any combat-related roll, they act as a group, Keeping a number of dice equal to their Threat Rating. The number of dice rolled is equal to the number of Brutes involved in the act; remember that you cannot Keep more dice than you Roll.

Example 3.1: The Cardinal's Men have a Threat Rating of 3 and six of them attack our friend Rodriguez, so they roll 6k3 for their Attack Roll. If only two Cardinal's Men attack him, then they roll 2k2 for their Attack Roll. The Cardinal's Men are a lot more dangerous when they can gang up on someone.

"Usual Weapon" is the typical weapon carried by this sort of Brute Squad. It's merely a suggestion, so change it if you like. Listed in parentheses is the weapon's size (see Brutes Attacking Heroes, below).

Next, each Brute Squad has its TN to be hit. This is the number the Heroes must roll in order to hit and Knock Out a Brute. It is normally equal to their Threat Rating + 1, multiplied by 5. For each additional Brute the Heroes wish to Knock Out with a single Action, they must make one Raise.

Example 3.2: Normally, to Knock Out one of the Cardinal's Men, Rodriguez has to roll a 20 or higher on his Attack Roll. If he wants to Knock Out three of them at once, however, he must make two Raises, one for each Brute beyond the first. Thus, he must roll a 30 or higher or he misses the Brutes entirely.





Whenever Brute Squads use non-combat Skills, they are assumed to have a Knack Rating of 0, so they almost always simply roll and Keep their Threat Rating. Exceptions are listed in the Squad's Knack List; when the Brute Squad uses a Knack from their Knack List, roll their Threat Rating + Knack, and Keep their Threat Rating.

Example 3.3: The Cardinal's Men have very little skill in dodging, so they have a Footwork of -1. When they are attempting to dodge something (like a wagonload of barrels rolling towards them) they roll only two dice (Threat Rating of 3 minus their Knack in Footwork), Keeping both. However, if they're chasing Rodriguez through the street (or running away), they roll 4 dice (Threat Rating of 3 + Sprinting Knack of 1) and Keep 3 (their Threat Rating).

Brutes Attacking Heroes

In order to keep die-rolling to a minimum, Brutes inflict damage based on their Attack Roll. When they succeed in an attack, they inflict one "Hit" plus an additional "Hit" for every 5 by which they beat their target's TN to be hit. A "Hit" does a certain number of Wounds according to the size of the Brutes' weapons (use the weapon type that most of the Brutes in the group are using), as shown below:

Small Weapons (Knives, Belaying Pins): 3
Medium Weapons (Clubs, Fencing Weapons): 6
Large Weapons (Broadswords, Battle Axes): 9
Very Large Weapons (Two-handed Swords): 12
Firearms (Pistols or Muskets): 15

Example 3.4: Four Cardinal's Men attack Rodriguez with rapiers. They need a 20 to hit him, and they roll a 26. Therefore, they inflict 2 Hits worth of damage. Since they are wielding medium weapons, this translates into 12 Wounds. If they had fired at him with pistols, he would have taken 30 Wounds instead.

Brutes Supporting Heroes or Villains

Brutes can team up with a Hero, Villain, or Henchmen instead of acting as a Brute Squad. In fact, Henchmen aren't usually very threatening unless they've got a few Brutes backing them up. Every Brute teamed up with a more significant character adds his Threat Rating to every roll the character makes, except Wound Checks. If the character is doing something that the Brutes have a Skill listing for, use the Skill Rank instead of their Threat Rating. A character cannot benefit from more Brutes than his Wits. Brutes teamed up in this way must be targeted separately from the character, but multiple Brutes may still be Knocked Out for one Raise per Brute beyond the first.

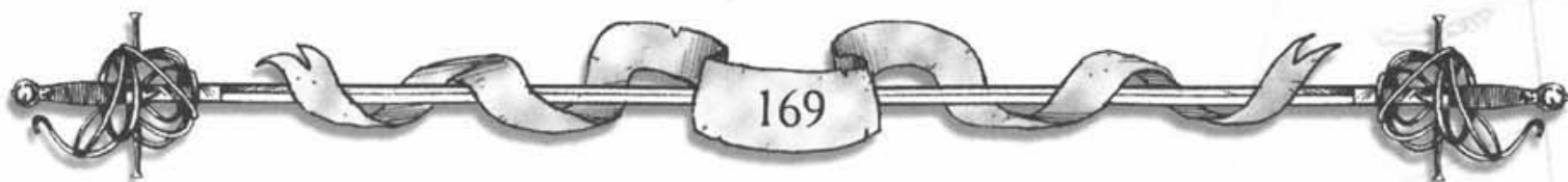
Example 3.5: Roquefort is one of the Cardinal's Henchmen, and he has two of the Cardinal's Men helping him fight Rodriguez. Thus, he adds 6 (two Brutes of Threat Rating 3 each) to all of his rolls (including damage) while they are helping him. Rodriguez would be well advised to kill those Brutes first, since they are easier targets, and their loss will make Roquefort that much less threatening.

Chases

Eventually, any good swashbuckling campaign will have a chase across moonlit rooftops or down darkened alleyways. The Heroes might be galloping after the Villain on horseback, or it could be a carriage chase. When that happens, this is the system to use.

Starting Distance

The first thing to do when a chase starts is to determine the distance between the pursued and their pursuer. In *7th Sea*, we measure this distance in Raises. For every Phase that the pursued has as a head start, there is one Raise between the two groups.





Example 3.6: Rodriguez is up against ten Inquisitors. He feels that he's outclassed in this fight, so he starts to flee on his first Action, which occurs in Phase 3. The Inquisitors start after him on their first Action, which happens during Phase 7. Rodriguez has four Raises between himself and his pursuers at the start of the chase.

Shooting during a Chase

If either party fires a missile weapon at the other group during a chase, he needs to make a number of Raises equal to the distance between the groups in order to hit. This represents the distance involved as well as the difficulty of aiming a weapon while under such conditions.

Example 3.7: If Rodriguez tries to shoot at the Inquisitors while they are four Raises away from him, then he must Raise four times in order to hit.

Conducting the Chase

Once you have determined how many Raises there are between the two groups, you are ready to begin. Place

some kind of marker on the table between you and the players, one for each Raise of distance. In the example above, the GM would place four dice (or peanuts or pennies) on the table.

Next, you begin the chase. Every Round, the pursuer and the pursued make a Contested Roll using their Finesse + whatever Knack they are using to move with, such as Sprinting, Long Distance Running, Carriage Driving, Riding, etc.

If the pursuer wins the roll, remove one marker for every 5 points he won by. If you remove the last marker, the pursuer has caught his prey. He receives one free Action that he can perform before the pursued may attempt to flee again. Grappling is a common choice.

If the pursued wins the roll, add one marker for every 5 points he won by. If there are ten or more markers on the table, the pursued gets away.

If the Roll results in no Raises being added or removed, then something unusual happens. Roll a die and consult the appropriate chart below. Feel free to make up your own charts once your players get too familiar with these:

What Knacks Do I Use?

Here are some sample chases and the Knacks we recommend you use during them:

- Chase through city streets (Street Navigation)
- Chase through crowded areas (Footwork)
- Chase over open ground (Sprinting)
- Chase through the woods (Long Distance Running)
- Chase through water (Swimming)
- Chase on horseback (Riding)
- Chase across moonlit rooftops (Leaping)
- Chase in carriages (Carriage Driving)

Uneven Chases

If one of the two groups involved in a chase has a clear advantage in speed, such as being on horseback when the other group is on foot, then that group automatically wins the chase.

If one of the two groups has a slight advantage, such as a very fast horse in a horseback chase, then that group receives one Free Raise every Round. In this case, roll on the random event chart only if the **net** result of the Round is no Raises added or removed.





Chase Random Event Chart

Street Chase

1-2: The pursued overturns a cart filled with apples as he runs past. The pursuer must roll Finesse + Balance (TN 20) or trip, allowing the pursued to escape.

3-4: A carriage crosses the road behind the pursued, and the pursuer must wait while it passes. Add 1-5 markers.

5-6: Nothing happens.

7-8: The pursued bumps into an innocent bystander and nearly falls. Remove 1-5 markers.

9-0: The pursued tries to duck under an obstacle and gets snagged on it. Remove all markers from the table.

Riding Chase

1-2: There is an obstacle ahead, such as a fence, that first the pursued, then the pursuer, must jump using his or her Riding Knack (TN 20) or fall off the horse, ending the chase.

3-4: There is a low branch ahead that threatens to knock the riders off their horses. First the pursued, then the pursuer, must duck under the branch (Riding Knack, TN 10) or fall off his horse, ending the chase.

5-6: Nothing happens.

7-8: The pursued has ridden into a dead end (either a box canyon or a cliff up ahead) unless he can make a Wits + Street Navigation roll with a TN of 15.

9-0: The pursuer's horse throws a shoe and stops running. The pursued gets away.

Rooftop Chase

1-2: The roof collapses under the pursuer's weight. The pursuer takes falling damage and the pursued gets away.



3-4: The pursued has come upon a wide jump. He must make a Finesse + Leaping roll with a TN 20 or fall to the ground. He may choose to give up, instead.

5-6: Nothing happens.

7-8: The pursued cannot continue along the rooftops any further, but there is a ladder leading down to the street. Continue the chase as a Street Chase.

9-0: A loose tile slips out from under the pursued person's feet. He must make a Finesse + Balance Roll against a TN of 25 or slip off the roof to the street below.

Carriage Chase

1-2: A wheel comes off the pursuing carriage. The carriage skids to a stop.

3-4: There is an innocent bystander in the way of the pursued carriage. The driver must choose whether to stop (Finesse + Carriage Driving Roll against a TN of 15) or to run the person over (he dies).

5-6: Nothing happens.

7-8: The pursued carriage hits a deep hole. Everyone hanging on the sides or standing on top must make a Finesse + Balance Roll against a TN of 15 or fall off the carriage and suffer one die of damage.

9-0: The pursuing carriage has its hitch come loose. The horses begin to separate from the carriage. Someone must leap down between the horses (Finesse + Leaping Roll against a TN of 25) and put the hitch back in place (Wits + Carriage Driving Roll against a TN of 20) or the carriage will roll to a stop, ending the chase.

Example 3.8: Continuing the example above, Rodriguez flees the Inquisitors. They start at a distance of four Raises, and they're going to be racing across the rooftops. The Inquisitors have a Finesse of 2 and no Leaping Knack at all, so they'll be rolling 2k2 every Round. Rodriguez has a Finesse of 3 and a Leaping Knack of 1, so he rolls 4k3 every Round.

Round 1: Inquisitors: 8, Rodriguez: 21. (+2 Raises, for total of 6.)

Round 2: Inquisitors: 7, Rodriguez: 18. (+2 Raises, for total of 8.)

Round 3: Inquisitors: 14, Rodriguez: 18. (+0 Raises)

Since Round 3 has resulted in no Raises being added or removed, the GM rolls on the Rooftop Chase chart and gets a 9, which means Rodriguez must make a Finesse + Balance Roll against a TN of 25 or fall off the roof. He rolls and gets a 13. Uh oh...guess his GM needs to read the rules for Falling Damage.

Drama Dice

In this section, we're going to discuss the hows and whys of the Drama Die system so that you can make informed changes to it if it isn't meeting your needs. Here are the things it was designed to do:

1) It lets you (and your players) overcome bad die rolls in order to save the plot.

First and foremost, Drama Dice put control of the Heroes' destinies in your players' hands. If they really need to make a roll, and they have a few extra Drama Dice, they will. There is no limit on how many Drama Dice they can spend, and there's also no limit on how many Raises they can make. That should tell you something. It's not uncommon for a player to save every single Drama Die he earns during a game, then spend them all on a single roll... just to make sure he does it right.

If players are failing at important die rolls, encourage them to use their Drama Dice more carefully. Spending Drama Dice on style is a lot of fun, but if they're short Drama Dice when they really need them, make sure they know why.



2) It makes it easier to hand out rewards for good roleplaying.

Handing out “good roleplaying awards” at the end of a session can lead to bad feelings. After all, everyone felt they did a good job during the session. Instead of having to give out a good roleplaying award at the end of the session, Drama Dice allow you to reward a player at the moment of his brilliance. That way, everyone has a chance at the carrot.

3) It makes penalizing players for poor roleplaying less personal.

Instead of the GM penalizing a player for poor roleplaying, the Drama Die system keeps them out of the reward. This encourages him or her to roleplay well while sitting next to his or her buddies who are getting all the rewards.

4) It encourages well rounded Traits.

Heroes start with a number of Drama Dice equal to their lowest Trait. Each of those dice is a free Experience Point. All players have to do is buy up their lowest Trait, and at the beginning of the next story, they’ll earn a bonus Experience Point... for free!

5) Drama dice are a reward your players can hold in their hands.

Go to your game store and find special dice for your Drama Die rewards. Make them gold or silver or some other spectacular color that no one else is using. Or, if you’re really into reward, when you hand out a Drama Die, make it a piece of candy instead. However you do it, make Drama Dice special.





Drowning

Once a Hero has begun to drown, he is no longer able to swim on his own, and sinks under the surface of the water. He may hold his breath for a number of Rounds equal to his Resolve. After that, he loses one Rank of Resolve per Round. When he reaches -1 Resolve, he dies. (You might allow him to spend two Drama dice to be later washed ashore, weak but barely alive.) His Resolve returns to normal after one day of rest out of the water.

Explosions

In the movies, heroes spend a lot of time outrunning explosions. Explosions that catch Heroes just lift them into the air and throw them around. In *7th Sea* we wanted to encourage this, while at the same time preventing the players from becoming too complacent about explosions. Explosions should scare them without killing them out of hand.

Explosives are rated on a scale of 1-10. They do a number of dice of damage equal to their rating. For

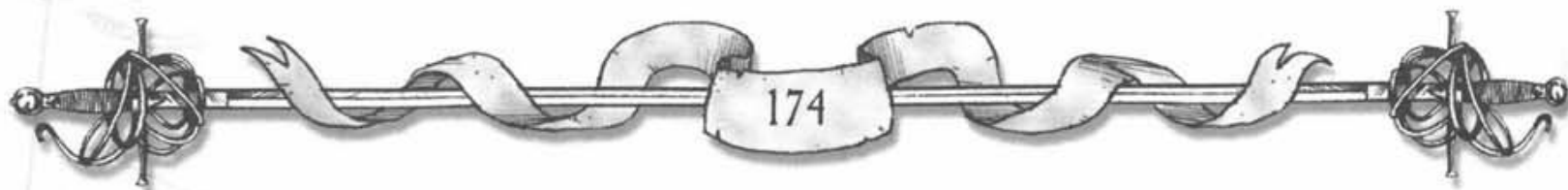
instance, an explosion rated at 6 does 6k6 damage. This damage translates into one Dramatic Wound for every 10 points the character fails his Wound Check by. Obviously, that gets deadly very quickly, but Heroes and Villains have a chance to avoid any explosion that goes off near them. They roll Panache + either Leaping or Sprinting (whichever you think is appropriate in the situation) against a TN of 5 times the explosion's rating. If the character succeeds, he takes no damage and is only incidentally singed.

Below is a chart showing the different ratings of explosions, the damage they do, the TN to outrun them, the radius out to which the explosion is dangerous, and an example of an explosion of that rating. Characters standing in the outer half of the explosion radius take only half damage (rounding down) if they get caught in the explosion.

Falling

The amount of damage a Hero suffers from a fall is determined by two things: how far he falls, and what he lands on.

Explosions				
Rating	Damage	TN	Radius	Example
1	1 die	5	5 feet	Misfiring Pistol
2	2 dice	10	10 feet	Sack of Gunpowder
3	3 dice	15	15 feet	Small Keg of Gunpowder
4	4 dice	20	20 feet	Medium Keg of Gunpowder
5	5 dice	25	25 feet	Large Keg of Gunpowder
6	6 dice	30	30 feet	Crate of Gunpowder Sacks
7	7 dice	35	35 feet	Barrel of Gunpowder
8	8 dice	40	40 feet	Stack of Gunpowder Kegs
9	9 dice	45	45 feet	Fully Loaded Gunpowder Wagon
10	10 dice	50	50 feet	Ship's Powder Room





A Hero suffers one die of damage for every ten feet he falls (up to a maximum of 200 feet). However, how this damage translates into Dramatic Wounds depends on what the Hero lands on:

Soft surfaces (haystack, water, horse, another person, garbage) negate all damage from a fall.

Firm surfaces (ground, gravel) inflict a Dramatic Wound for every 20 damage the Hero fails his Wound Check by.

Hard surfaces (stone or metal) inflict a Dramatic Wound for every 10 damage the Hero fails his Wound Check by.

Example 3.9: Continuing the example from the Chases section, Rodriguez falls forty feet onto a cobblestone road (hard surface). This inflicts four dice of damage. Rolling, that's 47 Wounds. Making his Wound Check, Rodriguez rolls his two dice for Brawn and gets a 6. Since he failed his check by 41, he suffers four Dramatic Wounds. That's going to leave a mark.

If the situation is reversed, and an object falls onto a character, look at the height it fell from, the material it's made of, and its weight.

For every ten feet (up to 200 feet) the object falls, it will deal one die of damage per "man-weight" (150 lbs.). If the object weighs less than a man, then it does no damage when it hits (but it could sting).

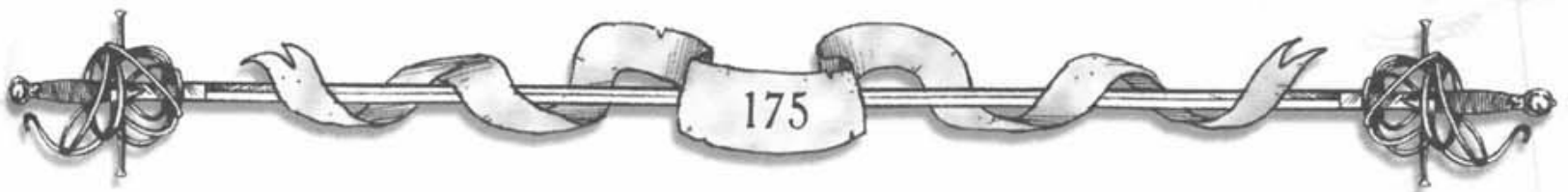
You then look at the chart above for the type of material the object is made of to see how many Dramatic Wounds it inflicts.

Example 3.10: While Rodriguez is staggering back to his feet after surviving that fall, he happens to look up just as the Inquisitors push a 500-lb stone gargoyle down on him. It too falls forty feet, and since it weighs as much as three men, it inflicts three dice of damage for every ten feet it falls, for a total of twelve dice of damage. Rolling, his GM tells him that he's suffered 99 Wounds. Making his Wound Check, he rolls a 17. Since he failed the Wound Check by 82, and the

gargoyle is a hard surface, he suffers 8 Dramatic Wounds. Good thing for him this is only an example.

Fear

When Heroes encounter a creature with Fear, all who view the creature must make a Resolve Roll against the Creature's Fear Rating x 5. Those who fail lose a number of unkept dice from each roll equal to the creature's Fear Rating while facing it.





Example 3.11: Georges du Blanc encounters a ghost. The ghost has a Fear Rating of 3, meaning Georges must make a Resolve Test against a TN of 15 (3 x 5). If he succeeds, there is no effect. If he fails, he loses three dice from all of his rolls while facing the ghost (because the ghost has a Rank 3 Fear effect).

Mass Combat

There comes a time when every Hero is called upon to defend his country. The system below gives you a simple mechanic for determining the course of large battles. It is not intended to simulate “realism,” but rather to allow you to determine the outcome of a battle with a minimum of bookkeeping.

Much like skirmishes, large battles are resolved in Rounds. Rounds are much longer in a battle than in a skirmish. Each Round, the Heroes will decide where they are fighting in the battle, and they’ll make a roll to determine their success. Heroes are not ordinary men, and they can make significant contributions to the outcome of a battle.

Set-up

Many battles are lost even before they’ve begun, either because of a lack of supplies for the men or because the other side has received a more rousing speech from their general. In *7th Sea*, this is simulated by a Wits + Logistics check from the quartermaster of each army, and a Wits + Incitation check from the general of each army. These checks earn the army one Free Raise for every 10 points (or fraction thereof) rolled. These Free Raises are used during the combat itself, but once they’re spent, they can’t be used again.

Combat

Each Round, the Heroes involved in the battle have to choose how heavily they want to be engaged with the enemy. They can choose from Reserves, Disengaged, Engaged, or Heavily Engaged.

Once all the Heroes choose their Level of Engagement, determine which army wins the battle by making a Contested Roll between the two generals of Wits + Strategy. Apply modifiers from successful Heroic Opportunities during the previous Round. Spend Free Raises generated during Set-up before the Contested Roll is made. Remember that once they’re spent they can’t be used again. This roll determines the current Tide of Battle, with a tie resulting in an “Even” outcome.

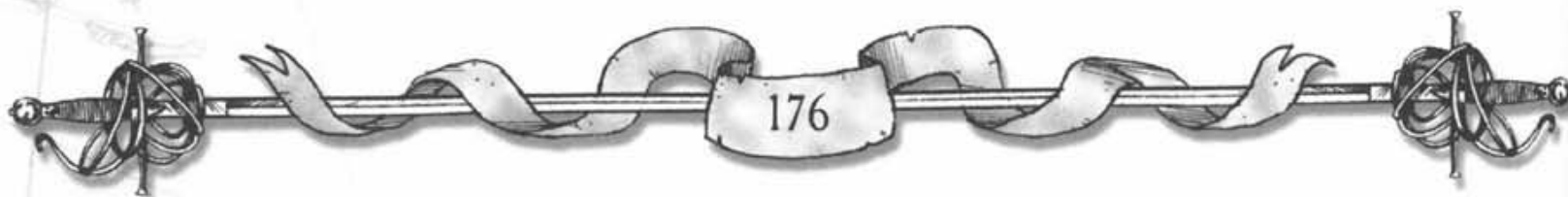
The generals’ subcommanders (anyone with the Rank of Lieutenant or higher) can add his Rank in Leadership to the general’s Strategy roll, but this forces him to subtract 2 from his Personal Results Roll later in the Round.

Personal Results Roll

Each Hero rolls a die, adding the sum of his Wits and Tactics to the roll. He then consults the table below, finding the result on the left column and reading across that row until the column is found that corresponds to the Tide of Battle for his army and his Level of Engagement. The result arrived at will tell the Hero three things:

Wounds taken this Round

In each Round, the Heroes will take a certain amount of Flesh Wounds (e.g. 2 dice). They must roll a number of dice equal to the damage taken. Subtract the Hero’s Brawn plus a valid Defense Knack of his or her choice from the total. The final result is how many Flesh Wounds the Hero takes during this Round. The Hero must immediately make a Wound Check if he suffered any damage. Dracheneisen armor reduces the number of dice rolled for damage as usual.



Your

You are in this part of the fighting:

Winning Even Losing	Reserves		Disengaged Reserves		Engaged Disengaged Reserves		Heavily Engaged Engaged Disengaged		Heavily Engaged Engaged	
1-3	2 dice of Wounds 0 Reputation Points	3 dice of Wounds 0 Reputation Points	4 dice of Wounds 1 Reputation Point	4 dice of Wounds 2 Reputation Points	4 dice of Wounds 3 Reputation Points <i>Heroic opportunity</i>	5 dice of Wounds 4 Reputation Points	6 dice of Wounds 5 Reputation Points			
4-6	2 dice of Wounds 0 Reputation Points	2 dice of Wounds 1 Reputation Point	3 dice of Wounds 1 Reputation Point	4 dice of Wounds 2 Reputation Points <i>Heroic opportunity</i>	4 dice of Wounds 4 Reputation Points	5 dice of Wounds 5 Reputation Points				
7-9	1 die of Wounds 1 Reputation Point	2 dice of Wounds 1 Reputation Point	2 dice of Wounds 2 Reputation Points	3 dice of Wounds 3 Reputation Points	4 dice of Wounds 4 Reputation Points <i>Heroic opportunity</i>	5 dice of Wounds 5 Reputation Points <i>Heroic Opportunity</i>				
10-11	1 die of Wounds 1 Reputation Point	2 dice of Wounds 1 Reputation Point <i>Heroic opportunity</i>	2 dice of Wounds 2 Reputation Points <i>Heroic Opportunity</i>	3 dice of Wounds 3 Reputation Points <i>Heroic opportunity</i>	4 dice of Wounds 5 Reputation Points <i>Heroic Opportunity</i>	5 dice of Wounds 6 Reputation Points <i>Heroic opportunity</i>				
12-14	0 dice of Wounds 1 Reputation Point <i>Heroic opportunity</i>	1 die of Wounds 1 Reputation Point <i>Heroic opportunity</i>	2 dice of Wounds 2 Reputation Points	3 dice of Wounds 4 Reputation Points <i>Heroic Opportunity</i>	4 dice of Wounds 5 Reputation Points <i>Heroic Opportunity</i>	5 dice of Wounds 6 Reputation Points <i>Heroic Opportunity</i>				
15-17	0 dice of Wounds 2 Reputation Points	1 die of Wounds 2 Reputation Points <i>Heroic Opportunity</i>	1 die of Wounds 3 Reputation Points	2 dice of Wounds 4 Reputation Points	3 dice of Wounds 6 Reputation Points <i>Heroic opportunity</i>	4 dice of Wounds 8 Reputation Points <i>Heroic opportunity</i>				
18+	0 dice of Wounds 2 Reputation Points <i>Heroic opportunity</i>	0 dice of Wounds 3 Reputation Points	1 die of Wounds 4 Reputation Points <i>Heroic opportunity</i>	2 dice of Wounds 5 Reputation Points	3 dice of Wounds 7 Reputation Points <i>Heroic opportunity</i>	4 dice of Wounds 10 Reputation Points <i>Heroic Opportunity</i>				

Dracheneisen (1-12 Armor Points): -1 die of Wounds
Dracheneisen (13-24 Armor Points): -2 dice of Wounds



Reputation Points this Round

The Heroes accumulate a certain number of Reputation Points during the battle each Round, and should keep a tally of their total.

Heroic Opportunities

The Heroes may have the chance to make a significant contribution to the Tide of Battle. Reputation Point awards from Heroic Opportunities are collected at the end of the battle, as described under Reward. Select one of the Heroic Opportunities that you feel is appropriate for that Hero, or roll on the chart provided:

- 1 - **Medic**
- 2 - **Pick Up the Banner**
- 3 - **"Hold This Ground!"**
- 4 - **Break the Line**
- 5 - **A Clear Shot**
- 6 - **Draw the Line**
- 7 - **Save a Wounded Comrade**
- 8 - **Take the Enemy Banner**
- 9-0 - **Duel**

Medic

Next Round, the Hero has the opportunity to see a medic to tend to his wounds. He doesn't get to make a Personal Results Roll for that Round, nor can he add his Leadership to his general's roll, but all his Wounds are healed, as well as one Dramatic Wound.

Pick Up the Banner

The Hero sees the banner carrier of his army fall to missile fire. He has the opportunity to carry the army's banner during the battle, bringing one extra Reputation Point each Round. However, the Hero has a -1 unkept die penalty to all rolls while carrying the banner (usually only important during a duel or other Heroic Opportunity).

"Hold This Ground!"

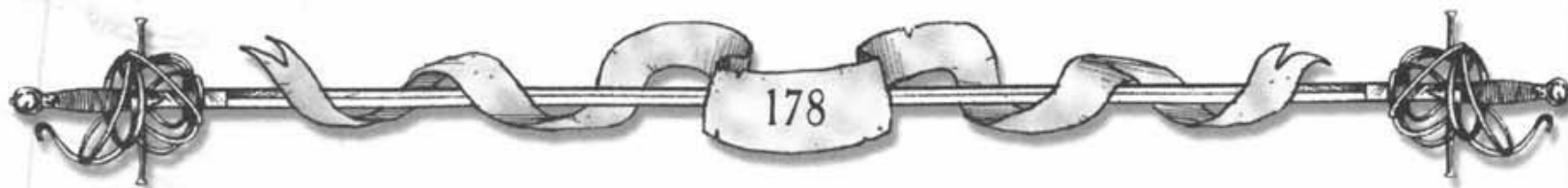
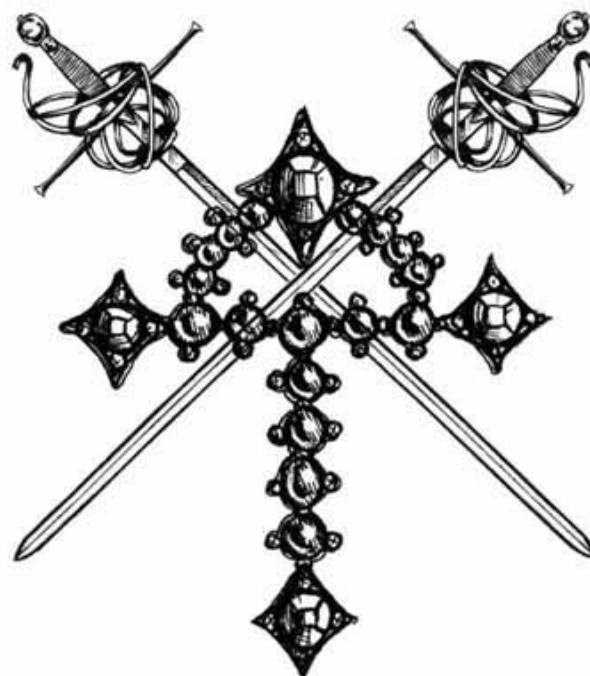
The Hero's leader tells him to hold the line. He must remain in his current Level of Engagement for the next two Rounds, but he gains 1 extra Reputation Point per Round if Engaged, and 2 extra Reputation Points per Round if Heavily Engaged. Add 3 to the next Wits + Strategy roll for that Hero's general if the ground is held for both Rounds.

Break the Line

The Hero is given the command to charge. Next Round, he subtracts 2 from his Personal Results Roll, but gains an extra 2 Reputation Points. Add 1 to the next Wits + Strategy roll for that Hero's general if the Hero isn't Knocked Out during the attempt.

A Clear Shot

The front lines break and the Hero has a clear shot at the commander of the opposing army with a Ranged Attack. The shot is at Long Range (with commanders typically having a TN to be hit of 20 or more). A successful hit is worth 3 Reputation Points. Subtract 3 from the next Wits





+ Strategy roll for the opposing general if the shot is successful.

Draw the Line

The Hero has been commanded to try to draw the opposing army's front line further away from their reserves. Next Round he is Heavily Engaged, but he gains an extra 2 Reputation Points. Add 1 to the next Wits + Strategy roll for that Hero's general if the Hero isn't Knocked Out during the attempt.

Save a Wounded Comrade

The Hero notices that a fellow countryman has fallen in battle. He has the opportunity to save him, but he will be Heavily Engaged for the next two Rounds if he does so. He gains an extra 2 Reputation Points for each Round spent pulling his countryman to safety (and his ally may bestow gifts upon him in return for saving his life, as well).

Take the Enemy Banner

The Hero has the opportunity to take the enemy's banner. First, he must kill the bearer in a duel to take it. If he takes the banner, he must try to get it back to his army's Reserves. He may move only one step closer to Reserves each Round, and the increased attention means that his Personal Results Roll is reduced by 4. He gains 3 extra Reputation Points each Round, and a bonus of 5 Reputation Points if he makes it back to the Reserves with the banner. Add 5 to the next Wits + Strategy roll for that Hero's general if the enemy's banner is successfully captured.

Duel

The Hero has encountered a Hero (or Villain) of the opposing army and must face him in single combat. Another Round doesn't occur until one of the two is Knocked Out. Refusing the duel is an act of cowardice and results in a loss of Reputation Points. Subtract 3 from the next Wits + Strategy roll for the opposing general if

the Hero wins the duel, otherwise the penalty applies to his own general.

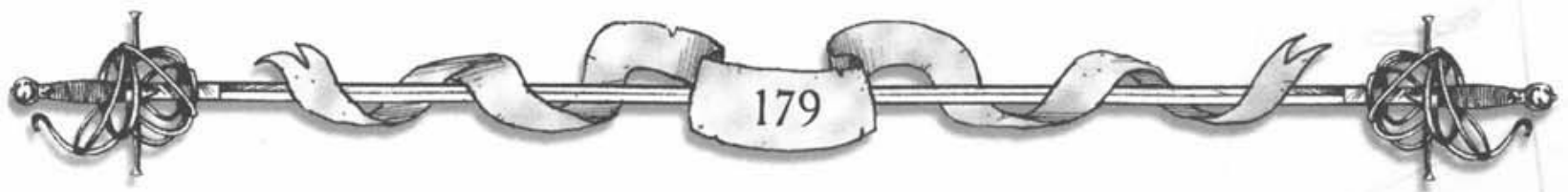
Reward

After one side has won the Tide of Battle roll three times in a row, they win the battle. The other side breaks away and retreats, or surrenders if there's nowhere to go. At this point, the Heroes of the winning side collect the Reputation Points they've been accumulating throughout the battle (including those acquired through Heroic Opportunities). Heroes on the losing side receive only half of their accumulated Reputation Points, rounded down.

In addition, the winners have the chance to loot the other side. Each Hero receives one roll on the chart below, adding 1 for every Rank in the Commission Advantage he has (assuming he has rank in the army he was fighting with). Any Hero who killed an enemy in a duel is entitled to the enemy's possessions, as well.

Loot Chart

- 1: 5 Guilders
- 2: 10 Guilders
- 3: 15 Guilders
- 4: 25 Guilders
- 5: 40 Guilders
- 6: 50 Guilders
- 7: 50 Guilders and a pistol or sword
- 8: 75 Guilders and a pistol or sword
- 9: 85 Guilders and a pistol or sword
- 10: 100 Guilders and a pistol or sword
- 11: 100 Guilders and a fine pistol or sword (Attack Roll is increased by 1 point)
- 12 : 200 Guilders
- 13+: 200 Guilders and an unusual item of the GM's choice



7th Sea Ship Record Sheet

Duty Leads

The positions below are the men who may add their Knacks to the ship's Trait rolls.

- Brawn:** No bonus
- Finesse:** Master Gunner
- Resolve:** Ship's Carpenter
- Wits:** Pilot
- Panache:** Master of the Tops

Wits (Rudder)

Brawn (Cannons)

Panache (Sails)

Brawn (Cannons)

Finesse (Crew)

Resolve (Hull)

Drama



Naval Battles

The following rules are not realistic; the ship templates do not represent actual ship designs of the seventeenth century. Instead, we hope to create exciting and dramatic ship-to-ship combat and boarding actions.

A ship-to-ship Scene works almost exactly like regular Scenes. Ships roll to hit against opposing Target Numbers, roll for damage and take damage. Of course, the terms are a little different for ships (ships having Wounds is a little silly), but the mechanics are the same. Let's start with the make-up of a Théan ship, then talk about movement and finally look at combat and the boarding action.

The Ship

Just like a Hero, a ship has 5 Traits:

Brawn (Cannons)

A ship's Brawn is its Cannons. When you roll for damage, you roll the ship's Cannon dice.

Finesse (Crew Skill)

A ship's Finesse is its Crew's Skill. When you roll to hit another ship, you make a Finesse roll.

Resolve (Hull)

A ship's Resolve is its Hull. Resolve is how many hits the ship can take before it begins to sink.

Wits (Rudder)

A ship's Wits is its speed. When another ship tries to fire a cannon volley at your ship, the Target Number is determined by its Wits.

Panache (Sails)

A ship's Panache is how quickly it can move and turn.

Drama Dice

Ships also have Drama Dice. A ship has a number of Drama Dice equal to its lowest Trait.

Cost

The point cost for Traits is the same for ships as it is for Heroes. Each die costs 8 Points. Ships may have Traits as high as 10.

Ship Anatomy

The Ship Sheet is on the facing page. Place all of your ship's Trait dice in their appropriate places.

Brawn dice are placed on the ship's Port (left) and Starboard (right) sides. Where you place your cannon dice is important, so consider it carefully.

Finesse dice are placed by the side of the ship; they represent the crew running along the deck and climbing through the rigging.

Resolve dice are placed at the bow (front of the ship), representing the hull reinforcements you've put into your ship.

Wits dice are placed at the aft (rear of the ship) to represent the ship's rudder.

Panache dice are placed in the center of your ship to represent the ship's sails.

Anatomy of the Ship

The front of the ship is its Bow.

The back of the ship is its Aft or Stern.

The left of the ship is its Port side.

The right of the ship is its Starboard side.





Movement

At the beginning of each Round, roll a number of dice equal to the ship's Panache. Just as in normal combat, the dice tell you which Phases you get to act in. Ships may use Interrupt Actions and Held Actions just as Heroes do.

Ship-to-ship combat takes place on a hex grid. All ships on the hex grid face an edge of the hex they're in, not a corner. A ship may move a number of hexes equal to its Wits in each Phase it has an Action, without spending any Action dice. However, the ship may only move directly forward in this manner. In order to turn, it must spend at least one Action die. Ships may spend one Action to make a single 60° turn. In order to do so, it must use Action dice whose Phases add up to its Hull size (Resolve dice) or higher. A ship can either move or turn, not both.

Example 3.12: A ship with a Hull of 7 and a Panache of 3 rolls 3, 8 and 9 for its Initiative. In order to turn, it must spend a number of dice whose facings equal or exceed its Hull. With a Hull of 7, the ship cannot move with just its Phase 3 die; it must also spend the Phase 8 die as well. $3 + 8 = 11$, which is larger than its Hull of 7, so it may make one 60° turn.

Using Cannons

When you purchase cannons for your ship, you must list on your Ship Sheet where they are. A ship may only have cannons on its starboard and port side (right and left). You may only fire cannons that are facing your opponent.

Firing Cannons

Firing Cannons works like Hero combat, without Active Defense. The ship rolls a number of dice equal to its Finesse (Crew Skill). The TN is the opposing ship's Wits (Rudder) x 5. If the firing ship hits, roll the firing ship's Brawn (Cannons) for Hits. The opposing Ship must make a Hit Check against a Target Number equal to the Hits it took. If it succeeds, the ship writes down how many Superficial Hits it took and suffers no penalty. If it fails,

the ship erases all Superficial Hits it has taken so far and takes one Critical Hit. For every 10 Points the ship fails its roll by, it takes an additional Critical Hit. For each Critical Hit a ship takes, one of its Traits is reduced by one.

Example 3.13: A ship takes 3 Critical Hits. It must now lose three Trait dice. The captain decides to lose two Sail (Panache) dice and one Cannon (Brawn) die.

Hero Knacks

If Heroes are manning the cannons, sails or have any other Skills that complement a ship's actions, their Knacks help. If a Hero has the Gunnery Knack, he adds a number of unkept dice to the ship's Finesse roll equal to his Knack. These bonus dice apply only if the Hero is in charge of the duty. In other words, only the Master Gunner adds his Gunnery Knack to the ship's Finesse. Only the Master of the Tops adds his Rigging Knack to the ship's Panache dice.

Sinking

When a ship takes twice as many Hits as it has Hull, it begins to sink. Subtract the ship's Hull size from 20; the total is the number of Actions it takes for the ship to go under.

Duty Leads

The positions below are the men who may add their Knacks to the ship's Trait rolls.

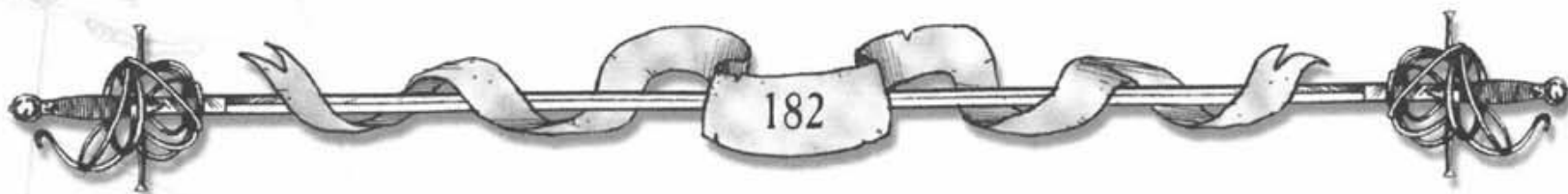
Brawn: No bonus

Finesse: Master Gunner

Resolve: Ship's Carpenter

Wits: Pilot

Panache: Master of the Tops





Knocked Out

When a Hero or Villain has a number of Dramatic Wounds equal to or greater than twice the character's Resolve, he is Knocked Out. At this point, the character is unconscious, and any additional Dramatic Wounds of damage left over are ignored.

After a character has been Knocked Out, anyone can kill him automatically by spending one Action to do so. He stays unconscious until either someone uses his Doctor Skill to heal one or more Dramatic Wounds, or he spends a Drama Die in order to get up.

If the character spends a Drama Die to get up and do something, it takes an entire Round for him to recover enough to stand, and after that, he is still terribly vulnerable. A single Wound (just an ordinary Wound, not a Dramatic Wound) will kill him. This weakness persists until someone uses the Doctor Skill on him to heal one or more Dramatic Wounds.

The implications of all this are pretty easy to see. In order to kill a Knocked Out Hero, a Villain has to walk up to him, spend an Action and declare that he's killing him. Within the boundaries of these rules, Heroes cannot die unless they are deliberately killed.

So You've Just Taken Sixteen Dramatic Wounds

Sometimes, Heroes take so much damage from a single blow that you really can't justify them simply falling unconscious — there's just no way the Hero can survive a 16-ton weight falling on him. If a Hero reaches a number of Dramatic Wounds equal to or greater than three times his Resolve before being Knocked Out, then you can rule that he dies. No muss, no fuss. If the player complains, show him this page.

Don't sweat it. We designed it that way.

The game system presented in this book does not mimic reality, it mimics drama. In swashbuckling literature and films, Heroes and Villains are never killed by random, arbitrary forces. Death always has meaning. When a Hero dies, it must be deliberate. It must have meaning. Otherwise, all of his courage doesn't mean a thing.

Locks & Lockpicking

Typically, a locked door in a *7th Sea* adventure will be described like this:

"On the north wall is a heavy oak door (Locked: 25) that has a Prophet's Cross carved into it."

The number in parentheses is the TN the Hero needs to beat in order to open the lock using a lockpick using Finesse + Lockpick Knack. It takes five uninterrupted Actions to pick a lock. If the Hero is interrupted, he must start over. Unless the Hero has some sort of lockpick, he cannot attempt to pick a lock. The following modifiers may be applied to this TN:

Using an improvised lockpick (hairpin, etc.): +5

Using a high quality lockpick: -5

Reduce the number of Actions required by one: +5

Making a Lock

When a lock is first created, the locksmith rolls a Finesse + Locksmith Check against a TN of 5. This creates a lock with a TN of 5 to pick. For every 5 the locksmith wishes to raise the lock's TN, he must make one Raise. Thus, if the locksmith wishes to create a lock with a TN of 25, he needs to roll 25 or higher. If he wants to add a trap of some sort to the lock, he must make two Raises.





Poisons

The hard part about using poisons in a roleplaying game is that you either have to weaken their potency considerably (most poisons in real life are deadly, and the medical science of the time period is utterly unprepared to deal with them) or control their availability tightly (which often angers players). In *7th Sea*, we weakened poisons considerably. There is almost always plenty of time to run around looking for an antidote after being poisoned, and most poisons result in unconsciousness rather than death. Still, there are a few exceptionally deadly poisons in Théah, which are hard to get and dangerous to handle. Heroes with any degree of skill in the Poison Knack will have heard of them, but few Théans ever actually encounter these dread toxins.

Poisons will appear in the following format in *7th Sea* adventures:

Ten-second Beetle Venom

5 Dramatic Wounds / 1 Phase / Unlimited

The ten-second beetle is found only on the Thalusian Isles. It is so named because its venom inevitably slays within ten seconds. There is no known antidote, and even if there were, the rapid onset of the poison would make all but the swiftest treatments useless.

Notes: The poison must be injected by the beetle to take effect. It loses its potency if removed from the beetle.

The three factors under the name tell you the injury done by the poison, the interval at which it injures the victim, and its total duration.

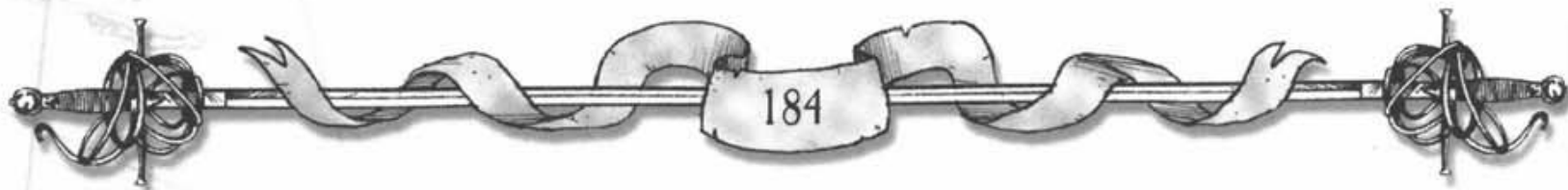
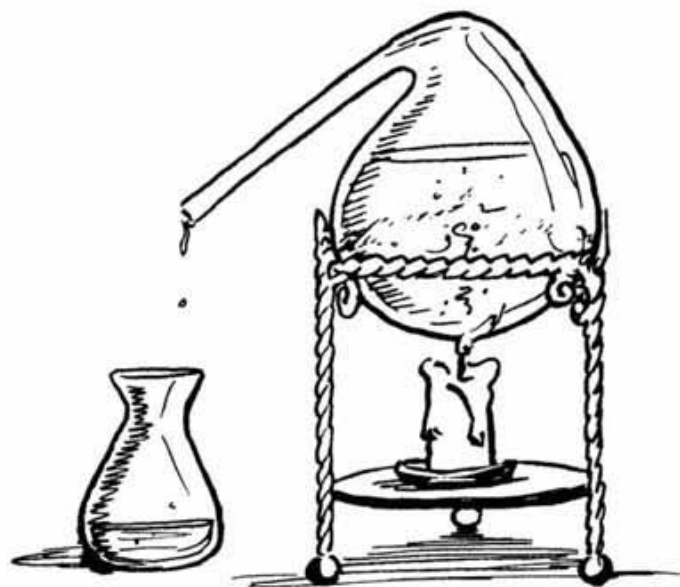
The injury done by the poison can be Wounds, Dramatic Wounds, temporary loss of Trait points, unconsciousness, or anything else you can come up with. Brutes are automatically slain by any poison that is not intended to cause unconsciousness. Henchmen get a chance to survive just like Heroes and Villains.

The interval is how often the poison attacks its victim. It does not affect him until after one full interval has passed since he was exposed to the poison. Thus, if the interval is one hour and the injury is 1 Dramatic Wound, then the victim suffers 1 automatic Dramatic Wound one hour after first being poisoned. Note that damage from poison cannot be healed until the poison has been flushed from the victim's body.

The duration is how long the poison will affect the victim after being taken. This counts the initial interval before the poison first begins to affect him. After the duration is up, the poison ceases to injure him and is considered flushed out of his system.

Next is a brief description of the poison and its origins, followed by any notes which affect the use of the poison during gameplay. This can include chances to detect the poison with a Perception Check, any known antidotes, etc.

Example 3.14: Rodriguez has been bitten by a ten-second beetle. After one Phase (the listed interval), Rodriguez automatically suffers 5 Dramatic Wounds (the listed injury). Since the duration is "Unlimited", if he doesn't take an





antidote by next Phase, he'll suffer another 5 Dramatic Wounds. Unfortunately for him, there is no known antidote. If the duration had been 1 Phase, then he would have suffered the injury only once before the poison was flushed out of his system. The moral? Don't get bitten by a ten-second beetle.

Note that these descriptions are meant for a normal dose of the poison. For an exceedingly heavy dose of a poison, you may double its injury or duration, or halve its interval, as you please. Such a heavy dose of poison should be correspondingly easier to detect, however.

Below are four more sample poisons, ranging from the knock-out drops a bartender might slip in a Hero's drink all the way up to the deadly poison an assassin might use to kill a king.

Arsenic

1k1 die of Flesh Wounds/ 30 minutes / 3 days

Usually found as a white powder, arsenic is a fairly common poison. It begins to take effect about 30 minutes after ingestion, and causes stomach pain. Death can be as quick as one hour later, or it can take up to three days.

Notes: Arsenic has a bitter taste that can be easily detected with a Perception Check against a TN of 10. Strong tastes may help to disguise this. There is no known antidote for arsenic, though drinking plenty of milk will increase the interval to six hours.

Knock-out Drops

Unconsciousness / Varies / Varies

This is not the name of a particular poison, but rather a collection of poisons that are designed to cause unconsciousness through ingestion.

Notes: These poisons cannot cause death, only unconsciousness. They often have a bitter taste that can be detected with a Perception Check against a TN of between 10 and 20, at your discretion. You may also

choose to allow Heroes a Brawn Check against a TN of 25 to shake off the effects if you are feeling generous. Most knock-out drops have an antidote, though some can be overcome only by time. No knock-out drop should last more than a day, except through repeated doses.

Vagabond Root

-1 Brawn / Special, see below / 1 hour

The roots of a vagabond tree, when boiled down, form a red, syrupy fluid that can be smeared on weapons. When this fluid enters the body through a wound, it causes a lingering weakness that is sometimes capitalized upon to capture a dangerous enemy. A large enough dose of the poison causes a death-like sleep that lasts for approximately 24 hours.

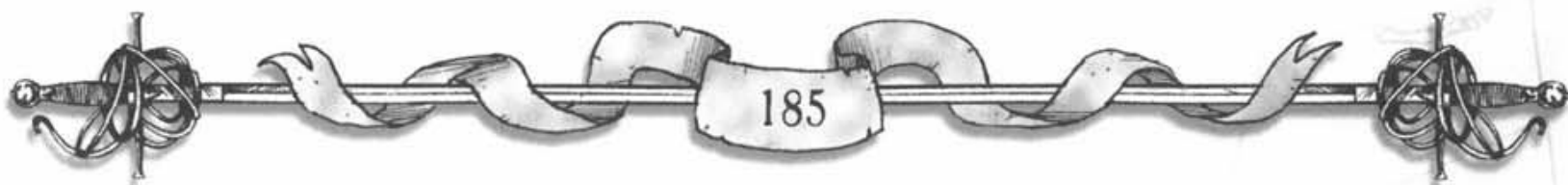
Notes: Vagabond root causes injury only once, one Phase after the poison is introduced through a wound. Each fresh exposure causes the loss of another Rank of Brawn. No Ranks of Brawn return until the latest dose of vagabond root has expired, after which they return at a rate of one Rank every ten minutes. When a Hero is reduced to -1 Brawn, he falls unconscious for one day. A weapon must have vagabond root reapplied to its blade after every strike in order to remain effective. A salve of vagabond tree leaves rubbed on the wounds serves as an antidote to the poison.

Yellow Lotus

2k2 dice of damage / 20 minutes / 1 hour

Occasionally imported from mysterious Cathay, these blossoms enhance magical abilities in sorcerers for a short period of time, but they are harmful to anyone who partakes of them.

Notes: Anyone of sorcerous blood who eats the blossom of a yellow lotus increases his or her Sorcery Knacks by one Rank while the poison lingers in the blood (one hour). Two blossoms have a cumulative effect, but increase the injury to four dice of damage. Further





blossoms add two dice of damage to injury, but result in no further bonus.

If a sorcerer (even half-blooded or twice-blooded) gains Rank 4 in four Sorcery Knacks temporarily as a result of the use of this flower, he may use Adept-level magic while the poison's effects linger. If he isn't normally able to perform Adept magic, he suffers a -1 penalty to his Resolve that lasts for one day each time he does so. Should this lower his Resolve to 0, or bring his number of Dramatic Wounds to two times his current Resolve, the sorcerer overextends himself and dies. Yellow lotus blossoms may not be used to gain Master-level abilities temporarily, and any Adept-level abilities that have lingering effects end as soon as the poison wears off.

There is no beneficial effect on those without sorcerous blood.

Raises

The *7th Sea* game system is pretty straightforward: you assign a Target Number and the players try to roll that number. However, Raises add another level of drama to the game. Whenever a player feels his Hero can not only meet the Target Number, but exceed it, he can call for a Raise.

We all know that a Raise increases a Hero's success, but in what way? Let's take a look at a few examples of how Raises work in *7th Sea*.

Combat

Additional Wounds

The easiest place to see the effect of a Raise is in combat. Whenever a Hero is trying to hit his opponent and calls for a Raise, if he's successful, he'll roll one additional unkept die when he rolls for damage.

Called Shots

A more specific use of Raises comes into play when the Hero wants to make a "called shot", or hit his opponent in a specific way. The GM looks at the TN to Hit the Villain, then modifies that number by the chart below.

Called Shot	# of Raises
Arms/Legs	2
Chest	2
Face	4
Feet	3
Hands	3

Heroes who use Raises to hit a specific body location do not receive extra damage dice, nor is there any generalized special effect for hitting specific body locations. However, it can be useful to bypass a partial suit of drachenschuppe, or to knock a Sryneth artifact out of a Villain's hand.

Non-combat Actions

Raises are a little trickier to use in non-combat actions, chiefly because there is no "effect roll"; the Action is either successful or it fails. However, Raises can be used to affect the Action roll itself. Here are two examples.

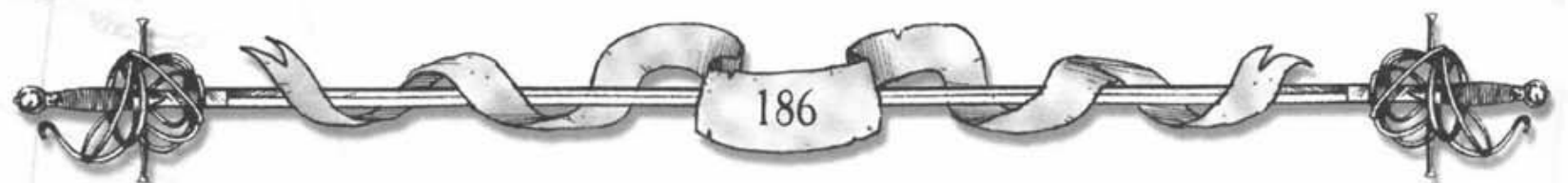
Time

Raises can decrease the amount of time it takes to perform an Action. If a thief is trying to pick a lock and needs to spend five Actions to do so, each Raise decreases that time by one Action.

Details

If a Hero is looking through an old book for some obscure information, Raises can modify his search. A Raise could result in more information, more reliable information, more relevant information, and/or more detailed information.

Note that a Hero has to use a Raise for each modification, so if he wants to decrease the time it takes him to find an





obscure book, that's one Raise. If he also wants to find any books referenced by the first book, that's an additional Raise, for a total of two.

Reputation Awards & Losses

The awards and losses listed below are suggestions for the Game Master. It's impossible to give a complete lists of rewards; every Hero is an exception to the rule. Use these awards as guidelines.

Remember, Heroes gain Reputation only when others hear about their acts of courage. In other words, you don't get Reputation for killing a dragon unless you cut off its head, bring it back to court and tell the tale.

Gaining Reputation

Battles

A soldier's Reputation soars when he performs well in a battle. See Mass Combat (page 176) for more information.

Craftsmanship

When a Hero makes a sword, pistol, painting or even writes a poem, he has a chance to increase his Reputation. Heroes gain 1 Reputation Point for making items of quality, plus 1 RP for every Raise above the original Target Number to create the item. The Target Number to create an item of quality is 40. A Hero can gain no more than 10 Reputation Points per year in this manner.

Chivalrous Acts

Whenever a Hero does something that falls within the code of chivalry (see boxed text), he gains Reputation. If the action put him in danger, he gains an additional Reputation Point. If the action cost him a significant

amount of money, he gains an additional Reputation Point. For a list of "chivalrous behavior", see the boxed text below.

Marriage

Both the bride and the husband earn a number of Reputation Points equal to their partner's Reputation Rank.

Romance

Théah courts are in love with romance. Lovers who maintain successful (and discreet) romances can earn themselves a great deal of fame. Lovers gain Reputation when they declare their love and show signs of devotion. Writing poems or songs that are devoted to a lover is worth 1 Reputation Point. Riskier actions (such as rescuing a loved one from a jealous villain's clutches) are worth an additional Reputation Point. The extra benefit

Théah's Code of Chivalry

Originally written only for men, Théah has recently recognized that women are also capable of having chivalrous hearts. This code of conduct was codified by the bards of Avalon in the eleventh century.

A Knight is Just

He cannot allow any injustice to go unavenged.

A Knight is Humble

He is a servant of Theus, an agent of his Grace.

A Knight is Merciful

Only a merciful heart can hear that the world is weeping.

A Knight is Forgiving

A Knight sees others' faults in himself.

A Knight is Courageous

A man who is with Theus is never alone.



of having a lover is that both parties gain any Reputation their partner earned.

Keeping Your Word

A gentleman's word is not given lightly. When a Hero swears to do something and follows through, he gains 1 Reputation Point. If the promise involved personal risk, he gains an additional Reputation Point. If the promise involves financial risk, he gains an additional Reputation Point. If the act violates the Hero's fundamental beliefs – but because he gave his word, he goes through with the act anyway – he gains an additional Reputation Point.

Skill Success and Performance

The simple use of Skills and Knacks does not bring a Hero Reputation, but when that one roll saves the life of the Emperor of Montaigne, some reward is in order. A spectacular success is always worth 1 Reputation Point. Acts of derring-do that are performed in front of famous folks (or even for famous folks) earns a Hero 1 Reputation Point. Every Raise he made on that roll earns him an additional Reputation Point.

Vendetta

When a Hero settles a vendetta, word of his courage spreads quickly. The Reputation he gains depends on the target and nature of his vendetta.

Losing Reputation

It may be difficult to gain Reputation in Théah, but it is incredibly easy to lose it. If she's not careful, a woman's reputation can be ruined with a single well-placed word from a jealous lover. If a man breaks even a single promise, his integrity will be questioned for the rest of his life.

Breaking a Vow

If a Hero swears he will do something, then later refuses to follow through on his promise, he loses Reputation





Points equal to his own Reputation Rank plus the Reputation Rank of the person he made the promise to.

Breaking Things

Breaking famous and/or expensive objects costs a Hero a number of Reputation Points equal to the Reputation Rank of the owner.

Cowardice

A public act of cowardice costs a Hero a number of Reputation Points equal to half his current Reputation Rank.

Romance

Just as men and women can gain Reputation for being true to romantic ideals, so can they lose points for abusing them. The following acts all have the same punishment: the Hero loses a number of Reputation Points equal to the Reputation Rank of his lover. Remember, these penalties apply only if word of the action becomes public.

- Letting an affair end without cause or provocation
- Bringing an affair to an end in a public or scandalous manner
- Striking a lover
- Failing to protect a lover from danger

Unchivalrous Acts

Heroes can lose a lot of Reputation if they participate in “ungentlemanly” or “unlady-like” behavior. A list of such behavior can be found below.

Gentlemen

- Striking a lady
- Public drunkenness
- Striking a social inferior
- Unkempt/dirty appearance
- Rudeness

Ladies

- Swearing
- Overt flirting
- Striking a social inferior
- Unkempt/dirty appearance
- Rudeness

Sorcery

The magics that we have chosen to include in Théah can become troublesome, but don't panic. Certainly, they're powerful, but the players must pay a proportionate cost to gain them. Their effects are limited and the information they provide is often vague or puzzling. If you find that your players are abusing a specific kind of magic, then the suggestions below may help you rein them in enough to preserve game balance.

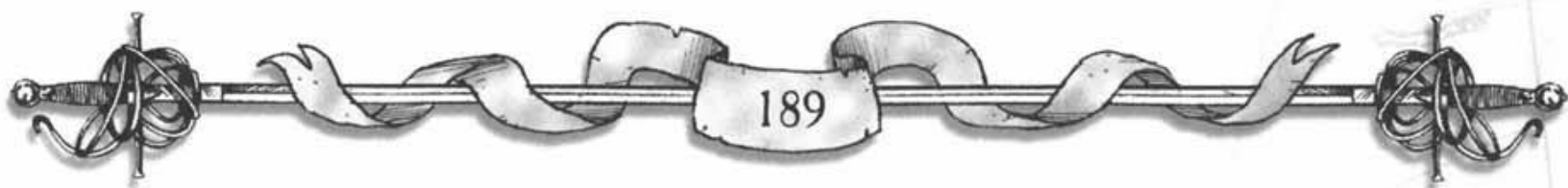
Keeping Magic in Check

Each form of sorcery has built-in weaknesses that you can exploit if the players get out of hand. It's important not to make the players feel like they've wasted their points when they bought sorcery, however, so use a light touch.

Glamour

Glamour summons the living power of legend, not the spirits of dead heroes. Avalon is the land of legends and myths, and Glamour is the energy that feeds them. The land needs legends, so it provides its people with the legacy of greatness. Those who abuse this power for evil or selfish needs quickly discover that Glamour bears a heavy toll.

Glamour has obvious combat applications. On the other hand, each use of any Sorcerous Knack costs the character a Drama Die. In addition, like Lærdom and Pyeryem, Glamour is a gift and should not be abused. Any Glamour mage who thinks he can run rampant will





find that the Sidhe are not tolerant of those who abuse their presents. Perhaps they will turn the sorcerer into a tree for a few hundred years.

Lærdom

Lærdom is the least subtle of the sorceries. Its effects are flashy, but not precise. The sorcerer can start a thunderstorm, but he can't command a lightning bolt to strike a particular person. Worse, the sorcerer isn't immune to his own magic. If he starts an earthquake too close to himself, he could kill himself in an avalanche or with a falling tree or building.

There is a social drawback to using Lærdom as well. It is considered a very crude magic – too obvious, and too blatant. Other sorcerers sneer at those who use this magic.

Lastly, there is the spirit world to consider. The more powerful a practitioner of Lærdom becomes, the more likely that a spirit (or even one of the Vestenmannavnjar gods) will come to him seeking aid. Seeing and talking to forces that are invisible to everyone else can earn you a very peculiar reputation.

Porté

Being able to teleport any distance is incredibly powerful. That's why the concept of blooded items is so important: it forces the character to leave "anchors" in places he might want to teleport to, and allows us to avoid the whole messy question of appearing 10 feet too low or 100 feet too high.

In addition, the concept of there being no actual physical connection when a portal is opened is important. It prevents the players from doing things like flooding a building by opening a portal at the bottom of the sea.

Here are some other important points to consider:

- Porté requires the sorcerer to use his hands to tear open the portal. If he is tied up, this is impossible.

- There is no Send Knack. Players cannot do things like teleporting bombs into someone's room unless they go along and leave the bomb there themselves.

- Items stored using the Pocket Knack can disappear into the mists for good. The denizens of the mists particularly like to steal bright shiny gold coins and jewelry.

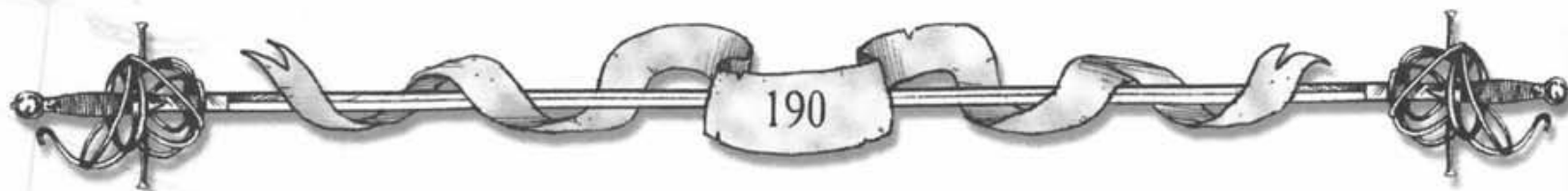
When the Heroes decide to try teleporting themselves, they're in for a rough time. As mentioned in the Player's Guide, it's a really bad idea to open your eyes while walking through the mists. The act of opening your eyes somehow takes the final step in making you "really there" in the mists, and the denizens of the mists waste no time in handling anyone they can get their claws on. Any Hero who opens his eyes is dead.

Worse yet, the things living in the mist try to trick sorcerers into opening their eyes. Feel free to use any low-down trick at your disposal short of actually prying their eyes open in order to get them to look around. To be fair, before they try teleporting for the first time, make it abundantly clear that people who open their eyes never come back.

Pyeryem

This magic is perhaps the simplest to control. Each animal form has a number of built-in checks to prevent it from becoming too powerful. In addition, to assume an animal form, the sorcerer must spend a Drama Die. Still, this cost is in place because of the versatility of Pyeryem. A character with this magic can have a Brawn of 9 or 10, fly, breathe water, or even grow claws and teeth. Remember that when your players complain that a Drama Die is too expensive to change form.

Besides the cost of transforming, each animal form has problems associated with it, such as being slow, weak, or lacking hands. Along with these stated disadvantages, there are size considerations to remember. A bear has





trouble fitting through a door, while a mouse can't climb a staircase. A hoofed animal will find stairs an imposing obstacle as well, not to mention the odd stares that a horse is likely to get in a noble's house.

Lastly, the Ussurans are sworn to keep their magic a secret. They don't feel that the rest of Théah is ready to handle it. This means no transforming in front of foreigners. By all means, if the other Heroes figure out that the bear that keeps helping them just after Pyotyr runs off into the woods is Pyotyr himself, then you can relax the transformation rules in front of the other characters. Still, there are many people who would be terrified by the sudden transformation of man to bear, and frightened people do odd things like shooting bears or having heart attacks.

Sorte

The key to controlling Sorte magic is to remember that all the character sees is strands. She doesn't necessarily know what to make of the information. Don't tell her more than is listed under the Composition of a Strand in the *Players' Guide*. Let her draw her own conclusions.

Moreover, if the Fate Witch in your party starts slowing the game down by looking at every single strand around, give out more information than she can handle, or throw in a self-fulfilling prophecy and see if that makes her think twice about using her power carelessly.

Another aspect of Sorte is that it does what you want it to do, but not necessarily how you want it to do it. If a Fate Witch severs a Passion strand between a man and a woman, any number of things could happen. The woman could fall in love with another man, or she could die or receive a disfiguring scar that disgusts her lover, or he could be sent to the front lines and killed in battle. The Fate Witch may be getting into more than she can handle.

How Does Magic Taste?

Théan magic is more effective when you, as the GM, describe it carefully and allow the players to feel and taste it. They begin to see it as more than just a tool, and hopefully see the roleplaying possibilities.

Glamour

When a mage summons the power of Glamour, he is literally touching pure legend. He doesn't channel Robin Goodfellow or True Thomas, but he is calling upon the same power that they did. A Hero with Glamour is a part of a living myth, a continuing legend that their own lives contribute to with every step they take.

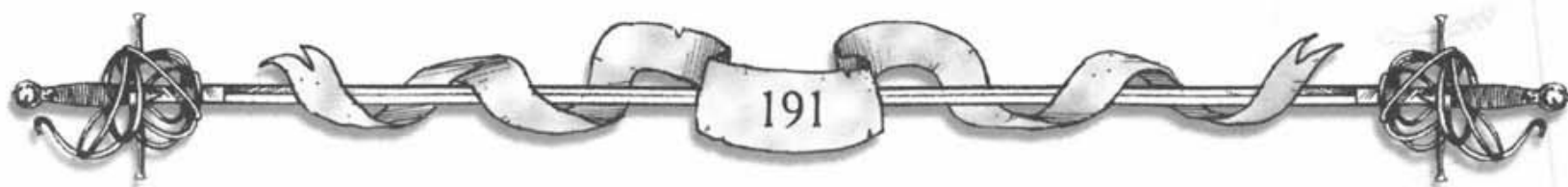
Touching the Robin Goodfellow Legend

You pull back the bowstring, feeling the tension in your fingers. As you do, you feel something brewing in your stomach. It flows upward, into your chest, filling it with a hundred thousand butterflies. It pulses through your veins into your arms and legs, fingertips and toes. Then finally, up through your neck and into your head. There's a fire behind your eyes as you let the arrow go and it follows the shaft through the night air, trailing stars behind it. You smile, only half-knowing why, as you string another arrow, anxious to feel the power again.

Lærdom

Lærdom lacks subtlety. It is awe-inspiring to watch the very forces of nature move according to the whims of a man. Moreover, it frightens those who have never seen it before.

For the sorcerer, using a rune is like a burst of adrenaline. There is a rush of energy and euphoria that he rides as long as he can before he loses his grip on the power.





Lærdom is very much a magic of touch, smell, and taste. When he summons up a wind, he smells the oppressive tang of an oncoming hurricane, feels the winds swirl around him, and tastes the salt spray of the sea. Here are some descriptions that you can use to explain Lærdom's battering of the senses:

Invoking the rune of hatred

Gently tracing the rune in the air, you catch hold of its power. Your eyes roll back slightly, and for a moment you feel as though you're flying through the air. The feeling fades as a deep chill settles into your bones and you smell the crisp cold air of a winter morning. Your fingers grow pale with frost as the temperature around you plummets and the cold taste of snowflakes melting on your tongue fills your mouth. You hold the rune as long as you can, but are forced to let go when its icy force becomes so cold that it burns your fingers. You feel tired and somewhat saddened as the energy leaves your body, but looking at the thin coating of ice on your hands, you decide that it's just as well you weren't able to hold on any longer.

Inscribing the rune of ruin

You finish inscribing the rune's physical form on the hammer's head, and reach out to attach a line of power to it. Seizing the line, you begin to shiver uncontrollably, and the scent of sulfur fills your nostrils. The line is torn away from you as you manage to gasp out the hammer's new name, Kyørdin. There is a dull ache at the back of your head which you know will diminish, but never completely vanish. At least, not for a year.

Becoming the rune of anger

As the knife's hot blade finishes the final stroke, you fall to the ground, gasping as your senses are overloaded. The roar of a hurricane echoes in your ears. You can feel the wind howling through your bones, filling you up inside. When you open your eyes, it is a different world that greets you, one filled with horses racing across the sky, their manes trailing behind them in white vaporous trails. You know that the ceremony was a success. You can see the wind.

Porté

Porté sorcery is frightening. It should scare the players to use it. The sorcerer literally tears a hole in the fabric of the universe and reaches in. The universe screams and bleeds when this happens, and the blood stains the character's hands red. Here are several descriptions of Porté in action that you can use with a few minor alterations:

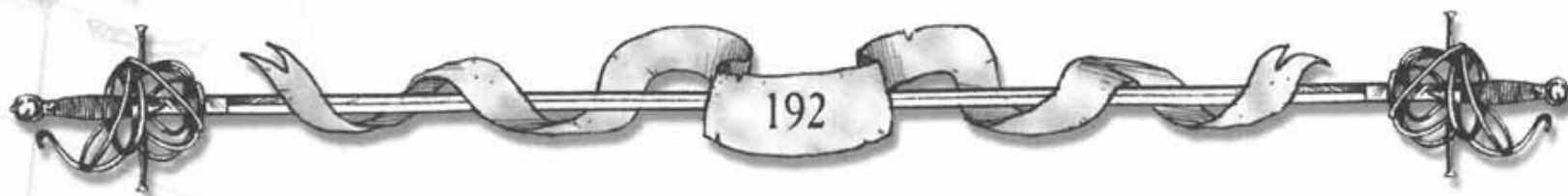
Bringing a blooded object using Porté:

You feel about in the air for cracks that you can tear open. It's like digging your hands around in a big pile of raw beef. The smell of a charnel house assaults your nose, and you can taste blood at the back of your throat. Finding a spot that stretches easily, you pull your hands apart and there is a tearing sensation, as though you were ripping a rare steak in half. A high-pitched wail accompanies the motion.

Reaching into the hole you have made, your arm passes through the wet warmth of the opening into the clammy chill of the mists beyond. You grope about for a moment, finally feeling the tug of your knife off to the right, then you reach into the portal up to your shoulder, the moist heat right next to your face, and some strange liquid running down your neck. The smell of blood is overpowering, and you hurriedly grasp the dagger in your hand and pull your arm out of the portal. As you allow the portal to close, a rising whisper, like the raving of a dozen madmen, is silenced. Breathing heavily, you notice that the blade of the knife has cut your hand where you grasped it. But then, blooded objects are always thirsty for another taste of you.

Walking in the Mists:

You tear the portal open with a meaty rip, close your eyes and carefully step through into the cool clammy air of the mists. The bustling noises of the city abruptly stop, and you stand, adjusting to the silence for a moment. You can sense your locket off to the left, so you begin moving forward, one cautious step at a time, while the fear of walking with your eyes closed nags at you with increasing insistence. You begin to



sweat with the strain, and a woman's sultry voice, partially muted by the mists, whispers in your ear. "Watch out. There's a pit in front of you." The urge to open your eyes and look almost claims you at that moment, during the surprise of hearing a woman's voice, but your training pulls you through. It's only a succubus, you think. Still, there is a nagging doubt as you consider for the first time if there really are pits waiting in the mists.

The woman repeats her warning, adding, "Please believe me. The others, they wouldn't open their eyes, and they fell. They died on the rocks below because they wouldn't look and see the bridge."

Shivering, you take a step forward, longing to see what lies before you.

"Don't move. One more step will kill you."

You pause with your foot hanging in the air. Above what, you don't know. Your blood roars in your ears and your instincts scream for you to open your eyes. You must look. You have to know. What if the other sorcerers were killed by their own stubbornness? What if the succubus is telling the truth?

No, your master always warned you that a succubus never tells the truth. Your foot plunges downwards onto firm ground. Laughing, you stride forward more confidently, until you reach the spot where your locket calls to you. Tearing open another portal, you step out into the world as noise explodes all around you. After a moment, you open your eyes.



Pyeryem

Pyeryem is a comfortable magic. Slipping on a spirit skin is like climbing into a warm bed on a cold day. There is no popping of joints nor stretching of flesh. Pyeryem sorcerers are often reluctant to return to their human form, since the smells and sounds they perceive as an animal are so strong. Becoming human once more is like putting on earmuffs, stuffing cotton in your nose, and wearing mittens on your hands. Here are some descriptions that you can use to describe Pyeryem in action:

Transforming into a bear

Reaching behind you, you murmur a quiet prayer to Matushka as you feel the soft wisp of Brother Bear's spirit skin. The skin feels like a handful of moist earth as you draw it forward and across your shoulders. A feeling of warmth and comfort spreads from your back as you are enfolded in your mother Matushka's arms. You lean forward to allow your brother to

lend you his strength and his size. There is a moment of dizziness as your nose opens up to allow you to smell for real – not this faint awareness of scent that humans call smelling, but the ability to close your eyes and still see everything around you by sniffing the air. Brother Bear has answered your call, as you knew he would.

Transforming back into a human

Thanking Brother Bear for his aid, you stand back up on your legs, throwing back the spirit skin with a casual motion. The warmth leaves you as Mother Matushka turns her aid to someone else in need. You thank her, and hope that you did not keep her from her business too long. There is a slight wrench, and it is as if you had suddenly plugged your nose with cotton. You miss Brother Bear's sense of smell almost immediately, but you know better than to use the gift for frivolous purposes.





Sorte

Sorte is a glimpse of the future, a window into a world hidden to most people. The things your Heroes see in that world won't always make sense to them, at least not right away. Using Sorte should leave them a little frustrated, as though they've just finished a jigsaw puzzle to find one piece missing. There is often a moment of clarity that accompanies the use of this sorcery, like suddenly noticing the impossibility in an Escher drawing.

The world of a Fate Witch is a place of glowing, pulsing threads hanging in the air, each no thicker than a strand of spaghetti. Yet these fragile-looking strands represent the futures of great kings and the fates of countries. No one understands more clearly than the Fate Witch just how precious and fragile life truly is. Here are several descriptions that you can use for Sorte:

Looking at a fraying strand

The thin red strand coils and uncoils as you watch. Tiny flakes of energy crackle away from it madly as the strand loses power, slowly but surely.

Tugging on a strand

You grasp the strand between your fingers, feeling its dry warmth, like a tiny serpent in your palm. It squirms slightly and you tug twice on it, always gently, fearing the snapping lash of a broken strand. It pulses, softly, and you know that you have achieved your goal.

Receiving a Fate Lash

The strand suddenly pops between your fingers and cracks like a whip. You flinch backwards as a burning line of pain sears across your cheek. Out of the corner of your eye, you see energy still crackling across your face in wisps, but the strand is gone. You reach a hand up to your face, and it comes away from your face damp with blood.

Having a strand Cut

Suddenly a shiver races down your spine, and your breathing quickens. You feel an instant of panic, your eyes darting here and there, and then the moment passes, leaving you puzzled as to what has just happened.

Having a strand Created

Abruptly, the world snaps into focus. You feel a rush of excitement, as though you were half-dozing and had just woken up. The moment passes, but you remain almost painfully aware of your surroundings.

Traps

The deadliest threat on Théah is not the teeth of the drachen, nor the seductive allure of the sirens. Rather, it is the collection of traps that guard the palaces and treasure rooms of kings; it is the assortment of long-forgotten devices found in the Surneth ruins that have been waiting centuries for the opportunity to catch an unwary explorer in their mechanical jaws.

Traps are typically only found in places that are off-limits to most people. Places like the treasure rooms of the monarchs of Théah combine elite guards and deadly mechanisms to great effect. Other places where traps might be found include the prisons and dungeons of Théah, where they prevent escapes.

In addition, the strange devices found in the ruins of the Surneth have killed more than one would-be archaeologist. This isn't always because the designers built them to kill — sometimes the explorers just don't know how to use them safely.



The Format of Traps

A trap in a *7th Sea* adventure appears in this format:

Scything Blade

Once triggered by stepping on a certain stone in the floor, a scything blade rakes out of the left wall, sweeping across the entire corridor at a height of three feet. The trap then resets itself.

TN to Spot: 20

Disarm: Wedge trigger stone in place or foul blade with obstruction.

Avoid Roll: Wits + Rolling, TN 25

Effect: When triggered, all those within five feet of the trigger stone must Avoid or suffer 6k3 wounds.

Salvage: Scythe Blade (3k2 Heavy Weapon)

There is a brief explanation of what the trap does, followed by the Heroes' TN to Spot the trap, and suggestions for methods to disarm it. Next follows the Avoid Roll, which is a Simple Check the Heroes can attempt after setting off the trap in order to avoid some or all of its effect. If this says "None" there's no way to avoid the trap once it's triggered. Effect lists the game mechanics for what happens to those caught in the trap, and Salvage lets you know which parts of the trap might reasonably be removed and made off with by the Heroes.

GMing Traps

In *7th Sea*, Heroes have two opportunities to avoid most traps. First,

when they are moving towards a trap, the Heroes get an opportunity to spot some tell-tale sign of it before they unknowingly set it off. If they are showing a reasonable amount of caution as they approach the trap (i.e., they aren't running through the corridors), make a Perception Check for each person in the front rank, using the TN to Spot found in the trap's description. If they succeed, the trigger mechanism is spotted, but nothing else is known about the trap.

Example 3.15: Professor McMullin and Wulf, an Eisen Monster Hunter, are leading a group of Heroes through a trapped catacomb and come across the scything blade listed above. The GM makes a secret Perception Check for each of them. If any of their rolls are 20 or higher, they spot the





trigger mechanism. At this point, all the Heroes know is that they've spotted a stone that has no mortar around it, or is discolored, or slightly raised.

Further investigation will tell them more about the trap, but if they want to disarm it, then they'll have to explain to you exactly how they're going to do so. Heroes experienced with traps may ask you questions about the trap's operation, but deadly traps are much more thrilling if there is no "magic skill" that they can roll to disarm them. You should allow any reasonable course of action to disarm the trap. Several ways to disarm each trap are listed in its description. Once a trap is disabled, the items listed under Salvage may be removed from it if the Heroes wish.

Example 3.16: Once the stone is spotted, Wulf looks carefully around the corridor and spots a narrow horizontal slot in the left wall about six feet long and three feet about the ground. If Wulf blocks this slot with something hard and sets off the trap, the blade will be stopped before it can hurt anyone. Alternatively, he could hammer a spike into the crack around the trigger stone, preventing it from sinking and setting off the trap. After this is done, Wulf could take the blade and use it as a weapon later in the adventure.

If the Heroes don't spot the trap, or if they set it off while attempting to disarm it, they have one last chance to avoid its effects. Those within the trap's area of effect must make the Simple Check listed under Avoid Roll or suffer its effects. This Check varies from trap to trap, but it is usually a use of the Athletics Skill. Note that there are some particularly deadly traps that list "None" as their Avoid Roll. In these instances, once the trap is sprung, all those within its area of effect are automatically affected. A Hero may decide to help another character avoid a trap (before anyone in the group has rolled) by making two Raises on his Avoid Roll. If the Hero succeeds, both characters are considered to have avoided the trap. If he rolls lower than the adjusted TN, he is caught by the trap, and the person he was attempting to help is on his own.

Example 3.17: If Professor McMullin and Wulf fail to spot the trap, they set it off. The blade shoots out, requiring each of them to make a Wits + Rolling Check against a TN of 25. Wulf, with his 3 Wits and 2 Rolling, rolls a 32 and dodges out of the way easily, but Professor McMullin, with a 2 Wits and no Rolling Knack at all, rolls a 17 and is caught by the blade for 24 Wounds.

Example 3.18: Wulf decides to try to knock Professor McMullin out of the way of the trap, so he'll need to roll a 35. This might be a good time to spend a Drama die.

Designing Traps

In *7th Sea*, traps are built out of a few simple components. Select from the list below, or make up new components of your own.

The Trigger

There are only a few devices that are used to activate traps. Which method is used determines how easy it is to perceive the trap before setting it off, as well as how simple it is to bypass the trap. The following triggers are commonly used:

Lever

"Lever" is the catch phrase for anything that is purposely pulled, pushed, or twisted in order to activate a trap. It isn't placed somewhere that passersby will accidentally trigger it — they must actively seek it out and activate it. This is a common trigger in the lairs of Villains, where levers open trapdoors, momentarily open secret doors, etc. The TN to Spot a lever can range from automatic success, such as for an obvious lever sticking out of a wall, up to 25, for a well-concealed button designed to open a secret door. The easiest way to disarm a lever is simply to ignore it.

Pressure Plate

A pressure plate is a spring-loaded surface that activates the trap when weight is placed on (or removed from) it.



Most pressure plates can only work in one direction, but some are balanced at a precise weight, and either adding or removing weight will set off the trap. Pressure plates are more difficult to spot than tripwires, and the TN to Spot a trap using one of them is 20. The simplest way to disarm a pressure plate is to wedge it in place with a spike or other tool.

Tension Wire

A tension wire looks exactly like a tripwire. However, placing tension on it does not trigger the trap. Instead, cutting the tension wire triggers the trap. This is designed to catch those clever Heroes who think they have everything figured out. Since a tension wire is just as obvious as a tripwire (q.v.), the TN to Spot a trap using one is 15. The simplest way to disarm a tension wire is to secure both ends of the wire on the sides of the corridor, and then cut the wire.

Timer

A timer involves some sort of time delay, and then the automatic triggering of a trap. It might be that the trap simply goes off by itself every hour or so, or perhaps the timer is rigged to go off ten minutes after another trap has been triggered. There is no way to notice a timer from simple observation. If the Heroes didn't notice the original trigger, and they are in the wrong place at the wrong time, then they have to make an Avoid Roll. As a game balance issue, it's not a good idea to attach deadly, unavoidable traps to a timer, as Heroes caught in such a beast have no opportunity to save themselves.

Tripwire

A tripwire is a thin wire placed in a spot where someone is likely to trip across it or otherwise tug on it. When tension is put on a tripwire, the trap is sprung. Tripwires are the most obvious trigger, and the TN to Spot a trap using a tripwire is 15. The simplest way to disarm a tripwire is to cut it.

The Delivery System

The delivery system is the mechanism by which the threat is brought to the victim. The delivery system typically determines what sort of Avoid Roll is necessary.





Set the Avoid TNs between 10 and 30, depending on how hard you want it to be for the Heroes to dodge the trap.

Bladder/Bellows

Typically used to squirt liquid or gas at its intended target, a bladder or bellows is operated by dropping weight onto it suddenly, forcing a rapid expulsion of its contents. Traps of this nature must be reset manually. This sort of trap is usually Avoided with the Footwork Knack.

Counterweights

When a trap must use a good deal of force, but at the same time be able to reset itself for reuse, counterweights are used. The trap has two positions, and typically some sort of timer that resets itself. This sort of trap is usually Avoided with the Rolling or Leaping Knack.

Gravity

This sort of trap usually involves a large heavy object being dropped on the victim. The object is simply released from a recess in the ceiling or wall and falls down. Most traps like this must be reset manually. This sort of trap is usually Avoided with the Leaping or Rolling Knack.

Hinged Floor

A portion of the floor drops away, dumping the Heroes into a pit, chute, or other inconvenient location. Hinged floor traps may reset themselves automatically using a weight system. This sort of trap is usually Avoided with the Balance Knack.

Sloped Incline

Typically, a recess is opened, and a large object is allowed to roll down towards the victim. These traps must be reset manually. This sort of trap is usually Avoided with the Rolling or Leaping Knack.

Spring

Spring-loaded blades and darts are not unusual. Such designs are typically designed horizontally so as to be more difficult to avoid. A system of weights and flywheels may reset spring traps. This sort of trap is usually Avoided with the Rolling Knack.

Water Pressure

With this delivery system, air or water is forced quickly through a narrow aperture, building force rapidly. These traps need to be set manually. This sort of trap is usually Avoided with the Rolling or Leaping Knack.

Threat

Ultimately, the threat is the point of any trap. Whether it is a poison-coated blade or a sudden spray of weak acid at eye level, the purpose of a trap is to maim, kill, frighten, or imprison someone. If it fails to do this, then it has served no purpose. If a trap is disarmed, sometimes the threat can be salvaged and used later.

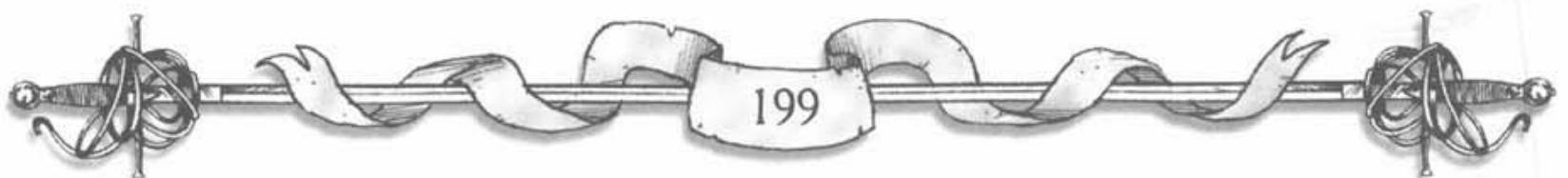
Acid

Being doused in acid is similar to being set on fire (q.v.). The Hero suffers from two to eight dice of damage in the first Round, depending on how potent the acid is. Every Round afterwards, the Hero suffers half the initial number of dice in damage until the acid is washed off. Thus, if the Hero suffers six dice in the first Round, he suffers three dice each round thereafter until the acid is rinsed off. If the Hero has acid sprayed in his eyes, you may decide that he loses his sight temporarily (permanent blindness is a possibility, but it puts a real crimp in the character).

If disarmed properly, the Heroes may be able to salvage the acid from a trap that uses it.

Blades

Whether this refers to a scything blade or spikes in a pit, any sharp implement that pierces the skin is considered a





blade. Typically, blades do from 1k1 to 3k2, depending on their length. This is adjusted by the strength of the delivery system. A particularly powerful spring-loaded scythe might do as much as 6k3 or even 8k4.

If the Hero is falling onto a bed of blades, use the normal falling damage rules (see pg. 174), but add two dice of Wounds and treat the blades as a “Very Hard” surface, inflicting a Dramatic Wound for every 5 by which the Hero fails his Wound Check.

Blades can be removed and salvaged.

Fire

When a Hero is set on fire, he suffers from two to eight dice of Wounds in the first Round, depending on how hot the fire is. Every Round afterwards, the Hero suffers half the initial number of dice in Wounds until the fire is extinguished. Thus, if the Hero suffers 6 dice in the first Round, he suffers three dice each round thereafter until the fire is extinguished.

If not ignited, the Heroes may be able to salvage some oil or other combustible material from a fire trap.

Imprisonment

If the designer was feeling particularly nice, the trap may be designed to imprison rather than kill. Since there are so many ways to imprison a Hero, the details will be left up to you, although it's probably a good idea to decide on a TN to bend the bars (or whatever) in advance.

The Heroes might be able to salvage parts of an imprisoning trap.

Poison

Poison is a very serious matter when it is inflicted upon a Hero miles away from the nearest medical aid. It is sometimes used in traps that are guarding very valuable things. It can be injected through a spring-loaded needle (which inflicts no damage except for poison; metal armor will block the needle), smeared onto a blade (which

inflicts poison damage in addition to blade damage), or simply squirted or blown into the Hero's face (which inflicts poison damage, as well as temporarily blinding the Hero, at your discretion).

Please see the rules on Poison (page 184) for details on how poison damage works.

Suffocation

Any trap that confines a Hero to a certain area that fills up with water, sand, or dust (or anything the Hero can't breathe) uses the drowning rules (see page 174). Briefly, the Hero can hold his breath for a number of Rounds equal to his Resolve. After that, for every Round he goes without air, he suffers three dice of Wounds (at the end of Phase 10).

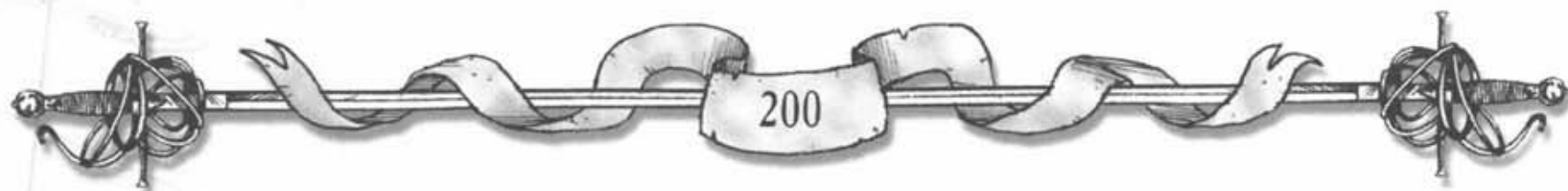
When sand or dust is pouring onto a Hero, it is difficult for him to prevent himself from being buried. He must make a Brawn Roll against a TN of 20 every Round or he begins to suffocate.

Unless the Heroes have a pressing need for large amounts of sand, dust, or water, there won't be much to salvage from this trap.

Weight

A heavy weight falling on a Hero is a simple but effective way to maim or kill. When this happens, use the rules for falling damage (see page 174). Weights cannot be salvaged.

Example 3.19: The scything blade described earlier is composed of a pressure plate, a spring, and a blade. The pressure plate sets the TN to Spot the trap at 20. The spring determines that the Rolling Knack will be needed to Avoid the trap, and it is decided to make the trap pretty hard to dodge, with a TN of 25. Lastly, the blade starts out as a 3k2 Heavy Weapon and is increased to 6k3 by the incredible force behind it. Thinking about reasonable ways to disarm the trap, it seems likely that the Heroes could prevent the trigger from functioning, or ensure that the blade is unable to function.





Lastly, the Heroes might want to pull the blade out of the trap and use it, so it is listed as Salvage.

Example 3.20: In order to make a simple spiked pit, you might choose a pressure plate, a hinged floor, and blades. The pressure plate means that the TN to Spot the trap is 20. The hinged floor means that the Balance Knack will be used to Avoid it (you decide upon a TN of 15, not nearly as deadly as the scything blade), and the blades determine that anyone who falls in will suffer three dice of damage (one for the fall of 10 feet, and two for the spikes) and then take one Dramatic Wound for every 5 by which they fail their Wound Check. Logically, if the Heroes want to pry some of the blades out of the pit, they should be able to do so, and they ought to be able to disarm the trap by wedging the pressure plate in place (assuming it's too much trouble to just walk around it). This trap looks like:

20 foot Spiked Pit

Once triggered by stepping on a certain stone in the floor, the floor folds downwards, dumping everyone within ten feet of the trigger onto a bed of spikes at the bottom of a 20' deep pit. The lid of the trap then closes.

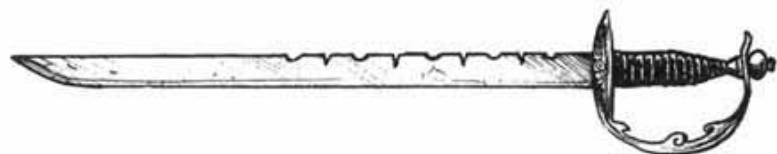
TN to Spot: 20

Disarm: Wedge trigger stone in place.

Avoid Roll: Wits + Balance, TN 15

Effect: When triggered, all those within ten feet must roll to avoid or fall in, suffering three dice of damage, with one Dramatic Wound for every 5 they fail their Wound Check by.

Salvage: Spikes (1k1 Knives)



Weather

What would a game of sailing ships and exploration be without the occasional hurricane or blizzard? This is represented in *7th Sea* with the Weather Effects chart (page 253). Ordinarily, the weather is benign and doesn't hurt anyone. Only when the GM (or a Hero using Lærdom) decides otherwise does the weather take on a more sinister role.

Let's examine the Weather Table first. Each box on the table contains a damage code, a damage interval and sometimes a description of the weather caused by that box as well. So, in the upper right-hand corner, there is a box marked "5k5/1Hour". That means that Heroes who wandering around unprotected in those conditions suffer 5k5 Wounds every hour.

At the start of every game session, place a coin in the bottom center box of the Weather Table ("0k0/1 day"). It can only be moved in two ways: either through GM intervention, or the use of Lærdom.

GM Intervention

You may spend one of your Drama Dice to move the weather one box left, right, up or down. You may spend as many Drama Dice in this manner as you desire. The change lasts for one damage interval, and then the weather moves one box towards the bottom center, moving down until it reaches the bottom, then left or right towards center. You may spend a Drama Die to prevent this from happening until another damage interval has passed.

Lærdom Sorcery

A successful use of Lærdom can move the weather as well. The runes that can do this are Nød, Stans, Lidenskap, and Kjølilig. These runes move the weather in the direction indicated by the arrow next to their name



on the Weather Table. An Apprentice can move the weather only one box, while an Adept can move it up to two boxes, and a Master up to three. Once the sorcerer has affected the weather, it will remain in the new box until the duration of the rune expires, or the GM or another sorcerer modifies it again. A sorcerer cannot affect the weather again with the same rune while its effects linger.

Special Weather Effects

These are up to you, but they could include penalties to Ranged Attacks, treacherous footing, poor visibility, etc. A more complete list of weather effects will be provided in the *Vendel* sourcebook.

Avoiding Weather Damage

Heroes who are outside but taking appropriate measures against the weather (wearing heavy clothes in the cold, or drinking lots of water in the heat) suffer one fewer Kept

die of Wounds per damage interval. Heroes who are sheltered from the weather (inside a warm house, in a storm cellar, etc.) suffer no Wounds.

Brutes in a Storm

Brutes are at the mercy of your whims in bad weather, since technically even a single Wound will knock them out. Still, it's usually bad form to kill off more than one or two Brutes in a storm unless the conditions are severe, particularly if they're a Hero's Servants.

Ships in a Storm

Ships have Traits, much like Heroes (see Naval Battles on pg. 181), and they handle storm damage the same way. After each damage interval, damage is rolled against the ship as usual, and then the ship's Pilot rolls the Ship's Panache + his Piloting with a TN of the damage suffered. If he succeeds, the ship suffers no damage; otherwise it loses one die of the pilot's choice, plus one more die for every by which 5 he failed his check.





7th Sea Probability Chart

Trait	+Knack	TN = 10	TN = 15	TN = 20	TN = 25	TN = 30	TN = 35	TN = 40
1	0	9%	5%	<5%	...	...	...	...
	1	19%	12%	<5%	...	...	...	...
	2	27%	17%	<5%	...	...	...	...
	3	34%	21%	<5%	...	...	...	...
	4	41%	27%	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%
2	0	64%	29%	12%	6%	<5%	...	...
	1	84%	48%	20%	9%	<5%	...	...
	2	93%	61%	29%	14%	5%	<5%	...
	3	>95%	72%	37%	21%	8%	<5%	...
	4	>95%	81%	44%	25%	11%	<5%	<5%
3	0	90%	67%	37%	16%	9%	<5%	...
	1	>95%	84%	56%	29%	15%	6%	<5%
	2	>95%	93%	70%	42%	24%	10%	<5%
	3	...	>95%	81%	54%	31%	15%	7%
	4	...	>95%	88%	62%	37%	18%	9%
4	0	>95%	90%	70%	42%	24%	11%	<5%
	1	>95%	>95%	84%	61%	40%	23%	11%
	2	...	>95%	93%	76%	53%	31%	18%
	3	...	...	>95%	86%	64%	39%	22%
	4	...	...	>95%	92%	71%	48%	28%
5	0	>95%	>95%	89%	70%	48%	30%	16%
	1	...	>95%	>95%	85%	66%	47%	27%
	2	...	...	>95%	93%	80%	60%	39%
	3	...	...	...	>95%	88%	70%	50%
	4	...	...	...	...	94%	78%	57%
6	0	...	...	>95%	89%	74%	53%	34%
	1	...	...	>95%	95%	87%	70%	50%
	2	...	...	...	>95%	94%	81%	65%
	3	...	...	...	...	>95%	90%	75%
	4	...	...	...	...	>95%	94%	81%

This chart is intended to aid GMs who don't yet have a feel for assigning Target Numbers. "OK, an average-difficulty roll ought to have a TN of 15 – but how often will the character succeed?"

To use this chart, find the number of dice corresponding to the character's Trait in the first column, and then the number of dice corresponding to his Knack in the second column. Read across on that line; the percentages indicate how often the character will succeed at various Target Numbers.





The background of the image is a detailed, aged map. It features a prominent compass rose in the upper right quadrant, with numerous lines radiating from its center. The map includes various geographical features, such as coastlines, rivers, and islands, rendered in a classic, hand-drawn style. The overall tone is sepia or light brown, giving it an antique appearance. The title "Game Master" is centered over the map in a large, elegant, black serif font.

Game Master



Points of View: Swordsman

I wake in my bed, my limbs sore from the last evening's work, my head pounding from the wound across my brow. I shut my eyes against the bright morning light and clench my teeth. The bed is soft and warm and I rise reluctantly into the cold morning air. It is a struggle unlike any other in the world, with agony all its own.

The maid has my breakfast ready for me: a jug of steaming hot wine. I remind myself to pay her a special compliment this morning. Money only goes so far, after all. I pour the liquid into a cup and sip it softly. It burns, but warms me well. By Theus, I hate the cold.

I wash quickly, then tend to the wound on my brow. It is a deep one, a close call. I go to the cupboard and pull down the jar with Archibald's medicated cloths. I squeeze the cloth tight, letting the excess liquid spill back into the jar. Applying the cloth to the wound, I wince at the sting. I may need stitches. Damn. Another expense.

When I'm done with the wound, I fall back into the bed, my body urging me to stay still, at least for today. My fingers are sore, my left knee aches and my head won't stop screaming at me. Mary complained last night; she says my hands are like stones. "Calluses covered with calluses," she says. I shrug. Complaining is not one of the sounds I pay her to make.

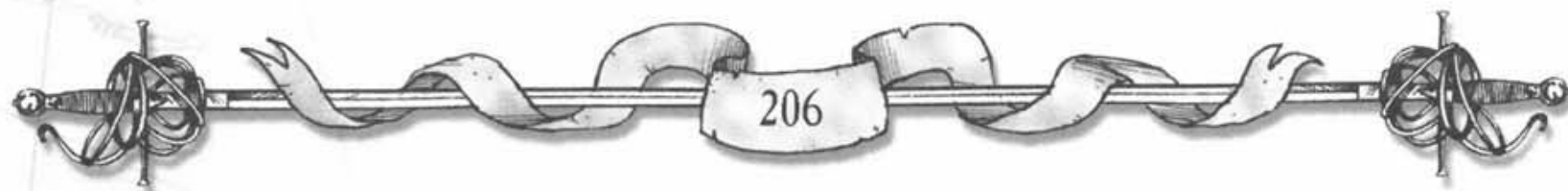
It's with Mary in mind that I spot the note that sits under my door. My body tells me to stay still. It begs me to stay still. I lurch up, cross the floor and pick up the note.

I don't recognize the seal or the perfume. I'm more surprised by the second fact than the first. I break the wax and read the careful and elaborate hand. She needs my help. She'll do anything – *anything* – to be free from his grasp. I run my callused hands through my dirty hair and wonder when a woman will offer me something other

than her virtue to help her. I do have to eat every once in a while.

I throw a shirt over my head, pull up some trousers, slide on the boots and gloves and put my arms through the vest. I wish I owned a coat. Then, the belt. I strap it on and shove the sword in place. It falls down into the sheath with that familiar heavy certainty. When I was young, my heart found more joy in that sensation. I'm older now.

Locking the door behind me, I start down the stairs. They creak under my footfalls, fourteen all the way down. I stand for a moment in the entryway, remembering the warm, soft bed. I shudder when the wind reaches up from under the door and gives me a hint at just how miserable it is out there. Then, I smell the perfume of the note in my shirt and my stomach grumbles. If she owns





perfume, she owns a stove. I'm out the door before any other doubts can seize me.

The hole in my left boot lets the snow ooze in. I hate squishy socks. The streets are all but bare, only the merchants scooting back and forth. A boy with a torch takes one look at me, knows I haven't a single copper, then turns away. The snow covers the rooftops and streets five fingers deep. Once again, I wish I owned a coat.

Around a corner, down a street then across another and round one more corner. I'm in a bad part of town. The buildings seem to sag under winter's weight. I duck down an alley. That action will cost men their lives today.

They cut me off at the end of the alleyway. Two behind me, one ahead of me. They smile. I shake my head. No words are spoken. They draw swords. I draw my own. The first one to move is the first one to die. He tries a cut to my left. I counter so fast, he's dead before he even knows he's been hit.

I spin the body on my sword into the one who charges me from behind. The weight of his friend and the slickness of the snow drop him fast. A jump and I'm over both of them and in the face of the third. His eyes shine with surprise, but he recovers quickly. This one knows what he's doing.

Then again, so do I.

I can't waste too much time. The second one will be up in seconds. A parry and a riposte tell me I'll need to spend time on this one, time I don't have. Out of the corner of my eye, I see movement. My ears tell me feet are moving on snow. I duck. A sword thrusts over my head, cutting through the third fellow's heart. A quick kick behind me knocks him back down on the corpse of the first one. A turn puts my blade at his throat.

I've seen the look that's shining in his eyes before. His left hand – the empty one – twitches, threatening to move to his jacket.

My eyes tell him exactly what he needs to know.

You are not fast enough.

His hand doesn't twitch again. He drops the sword. I nod. He gets to his feet. So do I.

He backs up a step.

I shake my head.

His eyes show his confusion. My sword reaches forward, lifting his coat from his left shoulder. He blinks. He shrugs twice and hands me the coat. I nod and he runs, stumbling over the snow.

I put the sword back into its resting place and put the coat over my shoulders.

It's a little too big in the shoulders, but I'm never one to complain.

Introduction

Players have it easy. A player has only a single character to keep track of. You – the GM – have an entire world. Not only that, you are also the arbiter of all the rules, the settler of disputes, an improvisational actor and the voice of a cast of thousands. It's your job to make sure that everyone is happy all the time. In other words, you have to please everybody all the time. Sound impossible? Relax, it's easy.

Okay, maybe it isn't easy, but this book is intended to make your job easier. While previous chapters have been all about the world, the game system and the characters, this part is about you. How will you run your game? What kind of stories will you write? What's your own Game Mastering style? These are questions you'll find answers to in this chapter.

We'll start out by looking at the three hats a GM has to wear. Then we'll discuss a few more of the basics of





Game Mastering, including how to be fair, using dice, showing and not telling and how to use the five senses. Then, when we're done with the basics, we'll move on to some more advanced techniques.

The 7th Sea Golden Rules

We said this in the Player's Guide, but it's worth mentioning again. And again.



There is really only one rule in *7th Sea*, and here it is.

The 7th Sea Golden Rule: Have Fun.

Now, there's one thing we haven't told the players, and that there is a *second* golden rule, but it applies only to Game Masters.

The Second 7th Sea Golden Rule: If someone isn't having fun, fix it.

Feel free to show your players the second rule if it's necessary. We hope it isn't, but if it is, there's the rule in black and white, clear as crystal.

The Three Hats

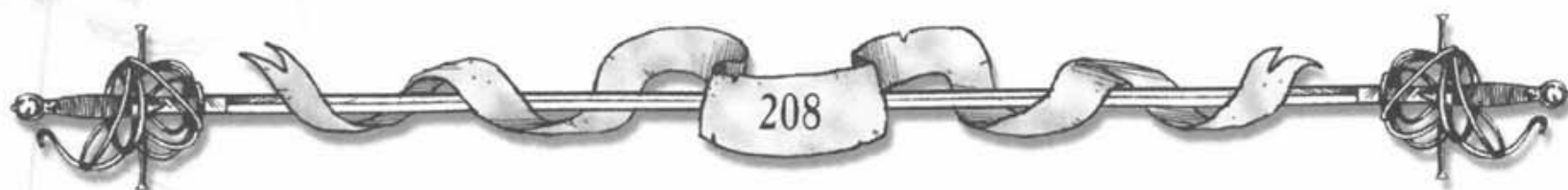
When you play the role of the Game Master, you're really playing three roles: the author, the referee and the storyteller. Let's take a quick look at each of those hats and see how they fit.

Author Hat

Before he does anything else, the Game Master is an author. He helps the players create characters and creates plots around those characters that he believes the players will enjoy. When writing stories, the GM has to take many factors into play, the most important of which is his audience. What kind of stories do they want to participate in? What kind of opening will catch their attention and hold it for the rest of the campaign? What kind of plot twists will catch them off guard? Lastly, what kind of ending will be satisfying? All of these are important questions for the GM to consider before he even gets to the gaming table.

Storyteller Hat

Once the game begins, the GM shifts modes from author to storyteller. Now he is the entertainer, bringing to life a cast of characters that were only words and numbers a few short hours ago. He has to describe a world he has never seen before and maintain a suspension of disbelief





for hours at a time. He has to change voices and mannerisms, and keep the pacing of the story alive while improvising details when his Heroes go off in a direction he never counted on. Calling a GM an improvisational actor isn't right. An actor has only to maintain a single character at a time. A GM has to maintain an entire world.

Referee Hat

It is the GM's responsibility to make sure everyone at the table is having a good time. When the GM puts on his referee hat, he's making sure that everyone gets a fair shake from the rules of the game. He clarifies the rules he'll be using during the game, makes decisions quickly, and moves on.

Decision-making

While running the game, you're going to have to make a lot of decisions, usually on the spot. How you handle situations when they arise is very important. If you make decisions well, you will build confidence in your players and in yourself. If you fumble, your players' suspension of disbelief will begin to fail and arguments will become more frequent. Arguing slows down the game, and in a game like *7th Sea*, slowing down is almost always a bad thing.

So, here's some advice on how to make decisions. It could be said that knowing how to make decisions is the best skill a GM can have. Make sure you're prepared when your time comes.

The Final Word

When you make a decision, it stands, no matter what. Your word is law and it doesn't bend.

When you're running the game, don't let yourself get caught in decision-making. Make a quick decision and move on. If your players want a voice in the decision, let them make a quick argument, evaluate their words, make your decision, then get the game going again. Make it

plain to the players that you've listened to their advice and you've made your decision. Don't argue with them and don't let them argue with you. You have the final word and that's it. No questions, no arguments, no appeals.

If you find out later you've made a mistake, don't go back and try to fix it. Just make sure that you never make it again. In fact, make sure your players know that you'll never do it again.

Be Fair

We didn't say "arbitrary", we said "fair." If a GM were arbitrary, every decision he made would have to discount the players' interests in their characters. A judge is arbitrary; he can't allow his decisions to be influenced by compassion. He has to be concerned with the rules, the whole rules and nothing but the rules. Likewise, an arbitrary GM doesn't care about the consequences of his decisions, as long as he follows the rules. Dice are arbitrary, and because of that, you have to be fair.

A fair GM always takes things into consideration when he makes decisions. He has to consider the consequences of his decisions and how they will impact the players and his campaign. Of course, this means that sometimes the GM has to break the rules in the book to maintain the *7th Sea* Golden Rule.

That's not arbitrary, but it is fair.

Using Dice

Whenever a situation arises that involves dice, the GM is faced with a decision. It's the GM's duty to interpret the outcome of that die roll, and often, it can mean the difference between life and death. There are really two schools of thought when it comes to rolling dice, and most GMs fall somewhere in between.

The *Dice GM* regards the dice as law. Every result is set in stone and he never "fudges" dice rolls. The dice provide a necessary element of drama in his game. As we





discussed before, dice add an arbitrary force to the game world, a force that doesn't care if the Heroes' actions succeed or fail. It's blind fate, a force that no one – not even the GM himself – can manipulate.

With this arbitrary force hanging around watching every move, every die roll is important. When the players pick the dice up, they know they are literally putting their Heroes' fate in the hands of something they just can't control. No matter how well they've manipulated the odds of success, there is *always* a chance that those dice will turn against them and bring disaster to their Heroes, snatching defeat right out of the jaws of victory. On the other hand, when all the odds are against them, there's an equal chance of the dice rolling all tens, turning a certain disaster into a surprising and dramatic triumph.

The *Story GM*, on the other hand, uses dice only as a guideline. (Some don't even play with dice at all!) Every die roll is a *suggestion* of success or failure of an action. In other words, a failed Leaping roll doesn't necessarily mean the archaeologist didn't make his jump; it could mean he fell just inches short, slams into the side of the pit and is now hanging onto the edge with his fingertips.

The Story GM is more interested in telling a good story than in playing a game. Certainly the dice can indicate surprise failures and successes, but more often than not, he doesn't let them ruin a good story just for the sake of surprise. On the other hand, players who play with the Story GM know that he's fudging dice behind his GM screen, thus removing a little of the drama from die rolls.

“I'm a Beginner, Too!”

The first time you sit down to run *7th Sea* for your players, be sure to remind them that this is the first time you've run the game – perhaps even the first time you've *ever* been a Game Master. You're bound to make mistakes, but you'll be sure to correct them quickly and

keep the game moving. Remember, these are your friends. They'll understand.

Preparation

While Game Mastering requires a healthy dose of improvisation, the other important ingredient for a successful game is preparation. Let's go through some steps, looking at how a little bit of consideration before the game begins can help you avoid dangerous pitfalls.

Your Group

Before you begin writing stories, take a moment to think about your group. Your players had to answer Twenty Questions, and now it's time for you to answer a few of your own.

What kind of group do you have?

Every group dynamic is different and it's up to you to gauge your players' temperaments. Every gaming table has a set of unwritten rules; even if you have a brand new group, they'll develop their own “code of laws” soon enough.

Some groups are very regimented about their roleplaying, while others are less formal. Some allow books and sketch pads at the table, while others demand that you bring nothing but your Hero sheet. Think about your own group for a moment. What rules do they operate under? If you have a new group, what rules do you *want* to bring to the table? In a very real way, the table is your domain, and the rules you set down at the beginning of the game will dictate your players' attitudes and behavior.

Come up with your own set of rules that you want followed. Here's a few questions to go over while thinking over the rules you want at your table.

For example, many GMs feel that *any* distraction from the game snaps the suspension of disbelief, so they forbid non game-related books and drawing from the table. On



the other hand, some GMs encourage players to draw and sketch while they play, as long as the artist is drawing Heroes, settings, scenes and NPCs. Some GMs even encourage character journals to be kept during the game. These journals are written from the character's perspective and document his adventures in your game.

Finally, some GMs encourage a "table researcher" of sorts, someone who keeps a stack of encyclopedias, foreign dictionaries and other books to look up obscure facts when the players ask the GM questions he can't answer.



However you want to handle the question is up to you, but remember, table rules are like any other GM ruling. Once you've made a decision, stick by it.

The Chorus

Think of your gaming group as a chorus, and yourself as the director. As long as everybody sings in harmony, you've got something beautiful going on. But nearly everyone wants to sing solo every once in a while.

The more players you add to your group, the more time you're going to have to allocate to each Hero. Everybody wants a moment to shine in the sun. Okay, most of them want more than a moment, but it's still *your job* to make sure everybody at the table gets what he wants. The more people you have sitting at the table, the more difficult it becomes to accommodate everybody.

The best way to allocate time to players is with their Backgrounds. Backgrounds tell you a lot about a player and his Hero, including what kind of stories he wants to get involved with. Lay out all the Backgrounds in front of you and take a good look at them. Figure out which ones work together and which ones don't. Then, once you have a few pairings figured out, write stories around them.

The Heroes with similar Backgrounds are going to be the center of some stories while the other Heroes take a backseat – or at least a passenger's seat – while those stories are building and resolving. Then, when it comes time for their turn, everyone switches seats.

Remember to explain your method to your players. Communication is your most powerful tool. If your players don't know what you're doing, they'll become impatient because they think you're ignoring them in favor of another player. If you explain to them how the round-robin storytelling works, they'll sit back and provide some colorful backdrop until it's their turn to stand in the spotlight.

Your Players

Now that you've taken a look at the group as a whole, let's spend a few moments looking at your individual players.

Everybody plays roleplaying games for different reasons, but there are a few "archetypes" that tend to reoccur.

Leaders

"Don't worry, lads. I'll take care of this."

The first kind of player is the Leader. Whether he's a good natural leader or not, he tends to end up in the



leader role, mostly due to the fact that he'll push for the role whether the other players want him there or not.

Quite honestly, it doesn't matter if he's a good leader or a bad one, because either way, he makes stories. A bad leader usually walks around with his foot in his mouth, getting the wrong people angry at the Heroes. This is a great excuse to seed that all-too-necessary component of plot: conflict!

The one unfortunate aspect of the foot-in-mouth leader is that he can get everybody else into a good deal of trouble, which can lead to bad blood between players.

The other players will want to remove the Hero from his position and elect a new leader. This is a tricky situation to handle, but the best way to do it is to defuse the situation before it happens. The leader may say the wrong thing to the wrong person – a king, let's say – and instead of taking it poorly, the king sees the slip as courage. After all, only a man of great courage would ever think to talk to a king that way. The king becomes charmed by the young leader and decides to take him aside and give him some healthy advice about leadership.

This accomplishes two things. It lets the player fulfill the leader role while you give him leader advice through the lips of an NPC. If a player wants to fill the role of leader, don't discourage him. Instead, help him along. He'll become a better leader and you'll have plenty of opportunities to get the Heroes into trouble as he learns the tricks of his trade.

Natural leaders, on the other hand, are almost always a boon. They have the skills to keep the players thinking in one direction (even if it's the wrong direction) and hold a disparate band of Heroes together. He can be inspirational and motivational, but he can also demand more than his fair share of the spotlight.



Problem-solvers

"Well, if I can do that, then logically, I should be able to do this..."

Some players are less interested in plot, characterization and storytelling. In fact, the only reason they're at the table is for the intellectual challenge that you're throwing their way. These ladies and fellows are the ones who deconstruct your elaborate tricks and traps and figure out a back door into your problems you *never* counted on. They are clever and cunning and always come up with options that throw you off balance.

Blowing holes in your plots, traps and schemes is a *good thing*. It shows he's taking interest in your game. That guy falling asleep in the corner? *He's* a problem, not this guy. As long as you throw him what he wants, the problem-solver will be happy with your game.

The Newbie

"Hey, these dice have too many sides!"

A new player or a player who isn't sure of the genre will often slide back in his chair and watch for a while. It's all right to let him get comfortable with the situation, but make sure he knows that you're paying attention. It's easy to lose interest when you feel like a part of the scenery.

The best way to get an uncertain player involved is by hooking him up with a buddy, be it an NPC or another player. If it's another player, pick someone you trust. If it's an NPC, make it an established one the other players respect. That way, when he has a question, he can ask it in character. If he has a buddy player, he can write notes or whisper when he has a question about mechanics. Also, having someone next to you during combat (both in character and at the table) can be reassuring.

Ambitious Players

"Nice castle, yer lordship. What's the upkeep?"

Finally, we have the fellow whose sole interest is ruling the world. Of course, he's going about it the long way, but that's all right. Sooner or later, his Hero will be propelled into the upper echelon of politics and be in line for the crown. Or he'll set sail for some tiny island and set himself up as a god-king... until he gets bored and moves on to higher aspirations.

The ambitious player is the easiest to GM because, like the leader, he makes his own stories. He knows exactly what he wants and exactly what he has to do to get it. He expects you to throw obstacles in his way and is glad when you do. However, it's very easy for him to forget those who helped him get where he is, and even disregard others' goals in lieu of his own. Don't let him forget that he isn't the only one playing at your table. Sure, he's going to get what he wants from your game, but so is everybody else here. In fact, the more he helps them achieve their own goals, the more opportunities he has to make allies to help him achieve his own. Helping rescue another Hero's sister may lead to a powerful political marriage. Saving another Hero's father from bankruptcy may establish a few economic ties as well. And don't forget that the Knights of the Rose and Cross are connected to nearly every crown in Théah, so gaining their attention certainly won't hurt.

Conclusion

Obviously, there are more than just a handful of player-types out there, and everybody has a little bit of each type in his or her blood. Hopefully, the examples above have given you an idea of how you can prepare for your players even before you sit down to write a single word of story. Keeping them all in mind as you get ready for your game will help you know to do when situations and problems arise.





The Author Hat

A story is a lot like a machine: it's made up of parts (moving and fixed) that make the whole thing work. If one part is broken the whole machine suffers, so you've got to make sure that you have your story well-oiled and maintained. It takes a little work, but as we said above, if you're clever, you can find ways to get your players to do a lot of the work for you.

The most important parts of a story are Scope (how big your story is), Theme (what the story says), Plot (what's happening in the story), Character (who the story is happening around), Narrative (the voice you use to tell the story) and Setting (where the story takes place). There are some bells and whistles you can install, but for now, let's just look at the basics.

Scope

When you sit down to decide what kind of story you want to tell, one of the first considerations is the story's scope. Just how big do you want your story to be? Do you want it to span the entirety of Théah, or do you just want to focus on a single tavern house and its regular customers? Both tight-angle stories and sweeping epics have their advantages and disadvantages, so let's quickly look at both.

Epics

The Iliad, *The Odyssey*, *Lord of the Rings* and *Dune* are all examples of the Epic. The story isn't focused on just one perspective, but many. We don't see one person's struggle, but the struggles of many. With dozens of characters, all with their own complicated stories and motives, you've got a lot to keep track of.

The good part about Epics is that you can tell a story with wide brush strokes. With so many different viewpoints, you can show players bits of information in flashes to give

them impressions rather than details. In fact, Epics that give too many details tend to drown their pacing, leaving the players feeling like it's taking forever to get to the point of the story.

Personal Stories

Smaller stories have the opposite problem. A personal story focuses on only a few characters who seldom leave one geographical area. Most murder mysteries or private eye novels are stories of a single Hero in one area trying to get to the climax of the story as quickly as possible. However, because there is only one viewpoint character, the author can spend a few pages here and there on details. The challenge in telling personal stories is that anything you present suddenly becomes set in stone. Once you've started presenting details, you have to keep track of them. Presenting two different descriptions of the tavern house your Heroes frequent endangers your players' suspension of disbelief, so you've got to make sure to get a handle on details.

Story Modes

You can tell almost any kind of story in Théah, be it swashbuckling adventure, court intrigue, high romance or even dungeon crawl hack-and-slash. We call these different flavors of *7th Sea* "story modes." These include all the different ways to tell stories in Théah. Here's a brief list of story modes with a couple of examples to show you how to make them fit your Heroes.

Adventure

More than anything else, *7th Sea* is about heroes and their adventures. It is a fast-paced game of action, with men and women performing amazing feats of daring, because that's what heroes do. Adventure stories involve lots of Brutes, a few Henchmen and a chief Villain who is confronted only at the very beginning and at the very end of the story, when he's put to rights.



Stories that best emulate the Adventure mode are the novels of Alexandre Dumas, such as *The Three Musketeers* and *The Man in the Iron Mask*. Each includes tons of fighting scenes, death-defying jumps and leaps, lots of chases and beautiful swooning women (and men – we endorse equal opportunity-swooning in Théah).

Conspiracy

7th Sea is also a game of global conspiracy. Who are O'Bannon and MacDuff really fighting for? Is the Empereur of Montaigne really as dumb as he looks or is he plotting on some level that we just can't even comprehend? How about all of those Vodacce princes, each conspiring to seize control from the others? And then we have the Secret Societies. Each one is a treasure trove of adventure hooks just waiting to happen.

The best resources for looking at how a *7th Sea* Conspiracy game might work are Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum* and Arturo Pérez-Reverte's *The*

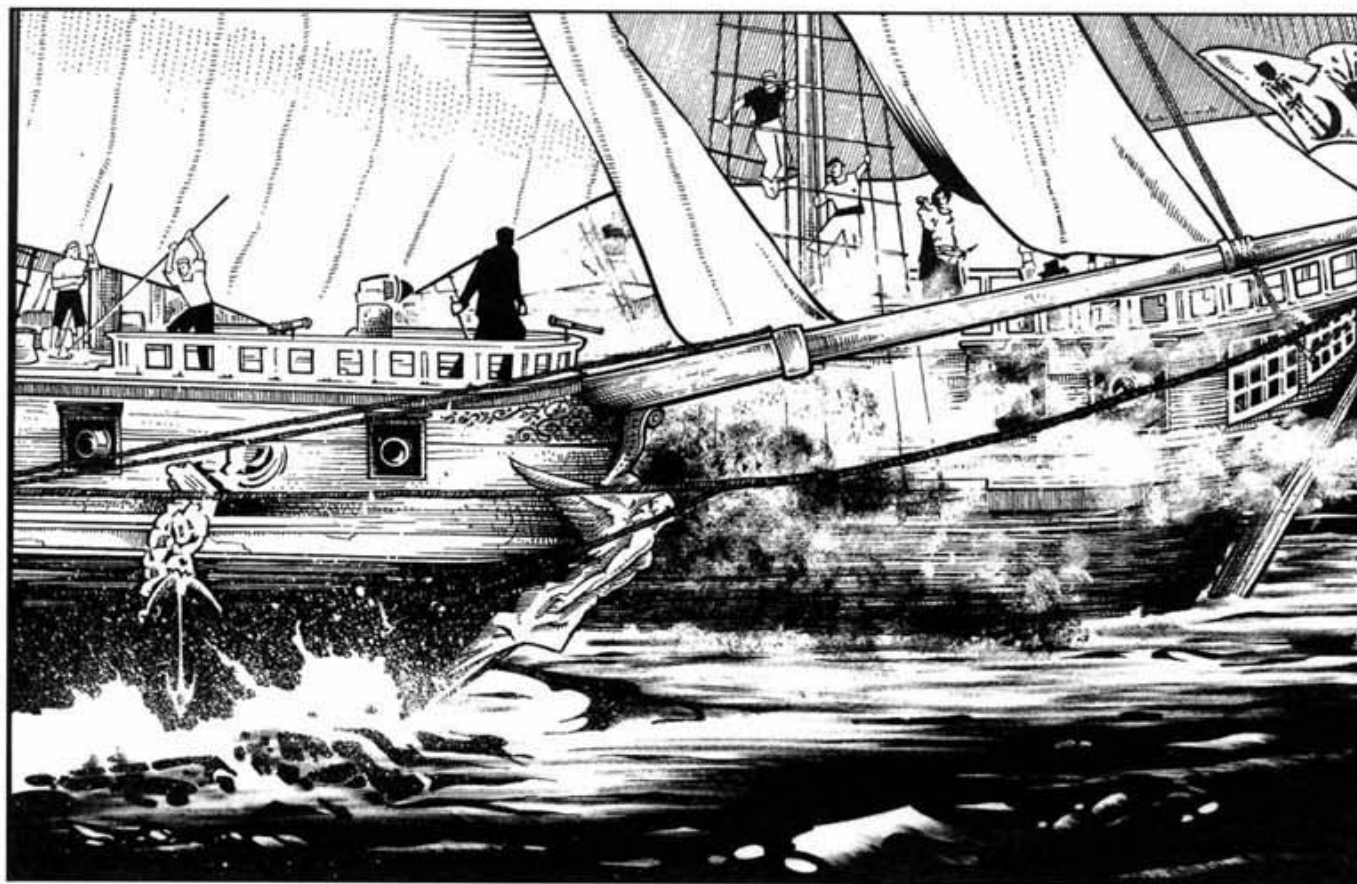
Dumas Club. The first deals with the issue of the Templar conspiracy on such a global level that you have to read it to believe it. *The Dumas Club*, on the other hand, is more of a murder mystery/conspiracy story involving a few handwritten pages of Dumas' work and what happens to every soul who touches them.

Conspiracy mode games usually unfold at a much slower pace than adventure games; the lighting is darker, the voices are more hushed and the danger is much closer.

Espionage

The beginning of the sixteenth century is the birth of modern espionage. The most famous spy of the 1500s was Queen Elizabeth's own John Dee, who successfully stole charts, maps and nautical instruments and brought them back to England.

In an espionage game, the threat of discovery is often more dangerous than death. If a spy is discovered he





brings shame, disgrace and loss of face to his nation. He also leaves his nation in a highly compromising situation. Remember, this is still an age when nations may be willing to pay ransom for a spy; it all depends on whether your nation's ruler is a Villain or a Hero.

Espionage campaigns are all about smuggling information, a commodity that is always in demand. Whether it's rival technology, Invisible College research journals, maps and charts or even love letters, people will always need to have information smuggled across unfriendly borders, and your Heroes are just the ones to do it.

Hack-and-slash

Players who are aren't interested in witty banter, clandestine maneuvering or sneaking technology out of foreign nations may demand a good old fashioned hack-and-slash campaign.

There's a whole lot of beasts out in the wilds of Théah. Remember, Théah hasn't reached the concept of mass production yet, so there are still huge, dense forests filled with critters just waiting to descend on some village and wreak terror on its inhabitants. Nearly every noble in Théah is looking for a good sheriff to maintain his lands and make certain that never happens. Sheriff campaigns are perfect for players who just want to go out into the wild and bash monster heads. In addition, the Shield Man division of the Explorer's Society is always looking for recruits.

Horror

There is definitely something creepy going on with a few of the sorceries in Théah. What lies between the boundaries of the portals, and what happens to those who dare to open their eyes and take a look? How willing would your Heroes be to use their Porté Knacks in a house filled with mirror ghosts? And who says a mirror ghost can't get out of its prison? Who says the mirrors aren't showing something we can't see? Perhaps the

ghosts are wandering the hallways and we can only see them in the mirrors? Don't forget that there are a lot of unexplored regions in Théah, all with slaver horrors just begging to be discovered.

Lastly, there are the black magic cults in Théah's shadows worshipping dark, hungry gods. Legion's minions are not to be trifled with, and they believe they can awaken the sleeping horrors from beyond and bring about the end of the world. Ain't that enough to just ruin your day?

Intrigue

An intrigue campaign is a game of politics, either on a personal or national level. Make no mistake: the political games played are just as deadly as any other. To the men and women in the courts, Théah is a great chessboard, and the armies that fight over her hills and fields are only there to back up their threats.

In the game of politics, the most valuable resource is verisimilitude (the ability to appear truthful). The purpose of political games is to damage your enemy's credibility and build your own, so a single misstep can prove fatal. When a carefully constructed bluff goes bad, the game is over and the victor claims the spoils.

Intrigue campaigns are best when the players are willing to leave their sabers and flintlocks behind and practice their wit and panache. Style is everything in the court; how you say something is more important than what you say. Until you start whispering in dark corners, that is. Promises are the gold bullion of politics, and to break a single one of them is to question every single promise you make in the future.

Military

Théah just emerged from a thirty-year-long war that changed everything about politics. The War of the Cross destroyed Eisen to such an extent that no one wanted to claim the spoils — not even Eisen. It was a war of religion, and many scholars say this will be the last religious war





Game Master

fought in Théah. Still, even if the War of the Cross was Théah's last religious war, it was certainly not the last time nations will throw armies at each other.

There are two wars currently raging in Théah, and one nation is waging both of them. Montaigne troops occupy sections of Castille and another Montaigne army is marching on Ussura. The first action was successful. Castille's western coast has been captured and the mouth of the Great River now belongs to Montaigne. While Montaigne's armies haven't been able to move further east, they have held their positions against Castille counterattacks with great success. A steady stream of supplies from the north has ensured Montaigne controls the river for some time to come.

In a way, Montaigne's second military campaign has also proven successful. Montegue has found no success in invading Ussura, and if he returns (there is a likelihood he will not) he will have to report to the Emperor that he failed in his mission to capture the eastern half of the River, ensuring Montaigne control over riparian trade. The great Montegue will then be publicly disgraced, ensuring the Emperor's political position. The campaign is going exactly as the Emperor planned.

Playing in a military campaign involves a great deal of player accountability. Some Heroes will outrank others, which can cause tension between players. This requires that all participants recognize the importance of military procedure and protocol. Those with rank over others must not abuse their positions, while those in lower positions must obey orders. In other words, the two have

to work together or the whole system falls apart. Just like a real military.

A military campaign is also an opportunity to show the raw, unbridled courage that the human spirit is capable of summoning. Films like *Saving Private Ryan* are perfect examples. Soldiers are trained to obey orders without question, for even a moment's hesitation will – not could, but *will* – cost someone his life. They are trained to stay alive and, at the same time, to throw away their lives if it means saving another.

On the other hand, those in command have a dual duty: to keep their men alive, and to complete missions, no matter what the cost. This dichotomy is a powerful one, and can provide for dramatic and moving roleplaying sessions.

Theme

The first thing to consider before you do any other plotting or preparing is to consider your story's theme. The theme of a story is usually a single word or a phrase that sums up the main action of the story. It is not what





happens within the story (that's plot, and we'll talk about that next), it's the idea behind the story. For example, if you said that *Hamlet* is the story of a man enjoined by his father's ghost to murder those who murdered him, you would be describing the plot. But if you said it was a story of revenge, then you would be speaking about theme.

Picking a theme helps you fill in the details of your story. For instance, a story about revenge will have a very different tone of voice from a tragic love story. Characters will relate to each other differently, events will unfold in a different manner and the setting may even look different, all to emphasize that this is a story about revenge.

Dramatic Situations

It has been said that there are only seven stories in the world. Georges Polti wrote that there were thirty-six and dissected each one in brisk detail. We're not going to list all thirty-six here, but we are using his work to detail a list of a dozen "dramatic situations" for you to peruse and pick from. These are not exactly plots, nor are they precisely themes, but something in between. They're story archetypes from which you can pull ideas when your well has run a little dry (or you just don't know what to run tonight!). Take a look, have fun, and pick up Mr. Polti's *The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations* if you get a chance.

Abduction

Basic Concept: The Heroes are abducted, held against their will and must escape.

Important Questions: Who are the abductors? Why have they chosen to abduct the Heroes? What do they have to gain from the abduction and what do the heroes have to lose?

Examples: *The Great Escape*

Rather than rescuing the fair maiden, the Heroes find themselves needing rescue. Sometimes, the Heroes must only survive long enough until the rescue, but more dramatic stories involve escape. Escape stories are wonderful opportunities to see the Heroes operating at their finest with no equipment, no allies, nothing but their wits. Escape stories demand a lot of preparation, although you generally do not need to come up with an escape plan for the players – those clever rats usually come up with something all on their own.

Ambition

Basic Concept: The struggle for position and/or power and the price it brings.

Important Questions: Who is rising in power and what is he willing to do to get it? Whom must he topple to gain his goal? Who will halt his plan or stand against him when he achieves his goal?

Examples: *Richard III, Wall Street, Macbeth*

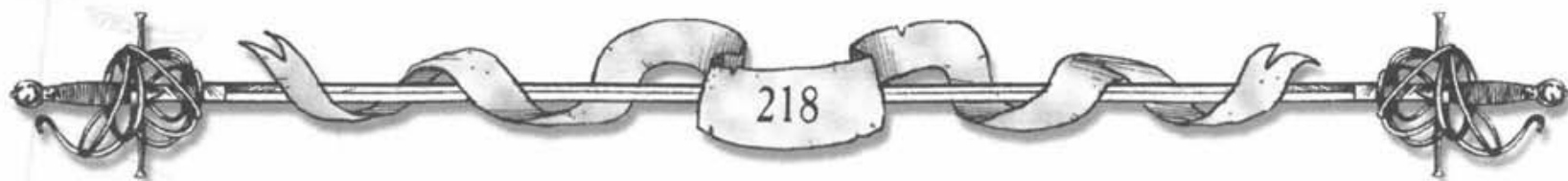
Usually this story is told from the perspective of a villain with the heroes attempting to thwart his bid for power. The more ruthless the villain, the better. It's all a question of whom you are willing to step on to get up the next rung of that ladder, and whom you're willing to shove off. Once the heroes discover the underhanded deeds of the villain, it becomes their duty to dispense justice on behalf of those who have suffered for his rise.

Daring Enterprise

Basic Concept: A dangerous undertaking.

Important Questions: What is the undertaking: a theft, preparation for conflict, expedition? Who are the men and women who choose to put their lives at risk in this way? What is the prize/goal of the expedition and what are the consequences?

Examples: *The Indiana Jones trilogy, The Usual Suspects, Mission: Impossible*





Game Master

Any journey that ends with the recovery or discovery of something lost is great material for *7th Sea*. Archaeological expeditions to lost cities have enough adventure for even the sternest of hearts. There are other kinds of daring enterprise, of course. Daring thefts, daring rescues and daring romance are just a few examples.

Deliverance

Basic Concept: The hero rescues a condemned friend or delivers another from captivity.

Important Questions: Who was captured? Who captured them? Who wants the victim rescued? What consequences will follow if the victim is not rescued?

Examples: *The Man in the Iron Mask* (film), *Aliens*

The story of a Hero rescuing someone unjustly imprisoned or condemned to death is great swashbuckling material. The greatest mythic story in the world – the Hero's journey – involves the Hero going into the underworld to save a comrade or friend. Perhaps someone's father or patron has been captured by an enemy and will die when the sun rises tomorrow. A daring escape attempt must be made to save the victim, or serious consequences will follow. Perhaps the prisoner is of significant political importance, such as a king's first-born son or a daughter who has been engaged to marry to settle a border dispute. Lots of espionage and action are involved in this plot, one of the best for the genre.

Disaster

Basic Concept: Great power gone wrong; nature turns against man.

Important Questions: What manner of disaster? Who are those that will be affected by it? How will anyone survive?

Examples: *Titanic*

Disaster stories remind us of the power of nature and how indomitable the human spirit can be when things are at their darkest. In the modern day, our technology keeps us (at least partly) sheltered from storms, earthquakes, fires and floods, but in Théah such technology is still centuries away. Théans do not have storm sewers to protect from heavy rains, insulation and electric heaters to protect from bitter winter storms or flexible architecture to protect against earthquakes, and while they may have water pumps, they do not have firehoses or fire-retardant suits or even professional firemen. Théans are highly vulnerable to disaster, which offers them great opportunity for heroism when it shows up.

Enigma

Basic Concept: A mystery that must be solved.

Important Questions: Who did it, where did they do it, what did they do it with, how did they do it and why did they do it?

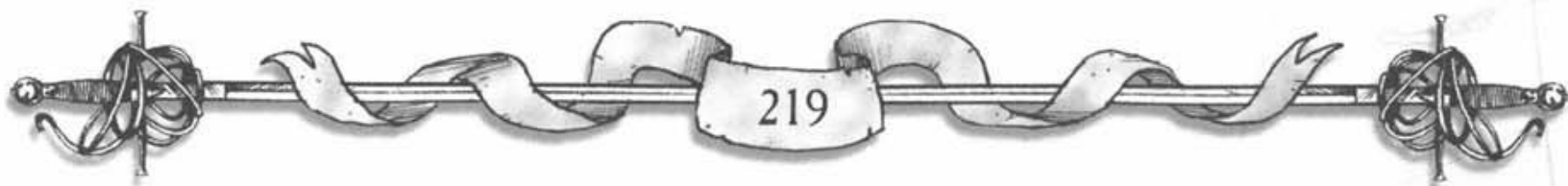
Examples: *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, *North by Northwest*, *The Dumas Club*

There are many different kinds of mysteries, and not all of them involve a body slumped over a table in a locked room. Mysteries also include puzzles that must be solved, tests that must be passed and identities that must be discovered. All stories contain elements of mystery, but this situation revolves solely about the Five Questions (who, where, what, how and why).

Feuding Families

Basic Concept: Two (or more) families are involved in a feud that will lead to the ruin of one or both.

Important Questions: What is the character of each family? Do all family members seek to ruin the other, or are there those who are reluctant? What manner of power or influence do these families have that allows them to make such a conflict?



Examples: *Romeo and Juliet*

There are hundreds of stories involving two families who wish to do each other harm for reasons that even the eldest in the family have forgotten. Old Greek tragedies center around the concept of family pride and honor, reiterating the importance of a son or daughter's duty to the family, despite the cost. Many of the other dramatic situations in this list can be coupled with feuding families: revenge against a rival family, love within two rival families, deliverance from a rival family, etc. Stories about families tend to deemphasize the importance of the individual, or at least show how a willful son can bring down a powerful family if he puts his own needs above those of his kin.

Love

Basic Concept: Two lovers must survive in a troubled sea of circumstances beyond their control.

Important Questions: What virtues do these lovers have that gives them the strength to survive? What do their families think? Who wants to split them apart and why?

Examples: *Tristan and Isolde*

The concept of "romantic love" (willful love between a man and a woman) is not new in Théah, but it is a concept that has been suppressed for nearly four centuries. Romantic love first found a voice in the Avalon romances of knights, ladies and chivalry. These stories were vastly popular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but faded from popularity soon after. Just recently, these works have been restored by the romantic authors of modern Théah, reviving the ancient debates on love and its effects on the human body and soul. Love is not a popular concept; it is a dangerous one. Men and women are to marry for family, not for each other. Marriages are arranged for money, property, influence and position, not for love. Eloping is a crime in nearly every country and harshly punished. Love stories are

popular in the courts, but true love is dangerous, scandalous and punishable by torture.

Pursuit

Basic Concept: A fugitive is threatened with capture and punishment.

Important Question: Who is the fugitive and why is he pursued? To what means are those who pursue him willing to go to be successful? How will others respond to the fugitive if they discover his identity?

Examples: *Les Miserables*, *The Fugitive*, *The Incredible Hulk* (TV program), *Nowhere Man*





Perhaps the most popular theme on television, the pursuit is one of the most intriguing dramatic situations. When using pursuit, be sure to emphasize the fact that the fugitive is always running ragged and those who pursue him never tire. Another important consideration is the justness of the pursuit. Is the fugitive falsely accused of a crime, or is he being pursued for an entirely different reason? The fugitive does not have to be running from the law; he could be on the run from criminals who seek knowledge he has obtained, or he could be on the run from something entirely unnatural, such as a horror from between the Portals...

Revenge

Basic Concept: A great wrong must be avenged with blood.

Important Questions: What wrong was committed and why was does it demand revenge? Why was it committed? What were the consequences of the action?

Examples: *Hamlet, The Count of Monte Cristo, Othello*

Revenge is the “great motivator” of literature. Nearly all the most famous stories revolve around it. It’s important to note that justice is very different from revenge; the former is an impersonal punishment while the latter is a personal payback in pain. When using revenge, it must be something so foul that justice will not provide the proper personal satisfaction. Remember, it is considered honorable to gain revenge in many Théan circles and cowardly to let despicable acts go unavenged.

Revolt

Basic Concept: Conspiracy or revolt against authority or convention

Important Questions: Who are the authority figures and what do they represent? Who are the revolters, and is their revolt just or selfish? What is the cost of removing the authority figures? How is revolt justified at all?

Examples: *V for Vendetta, The Caine Mutiny, Animal Farm*

Rebelling against authority can be handled on two levels: political and personal. Political revolt involves questioning the authority of the state, while in a personal revolt, the hero questions the authority of those over him, such as his family or peer group. The important element of this situation is to show the heroism of the lone individual against a power that is far greater than he – or at least appears to be greater.

Heroes can also play the other side of revolt, trying to keep the status quo while those under them strive to remove the Heroes from power.

Scene, Act, Story and Epic

In contemporary usage, an “epic” is a long tale that takes three or more books to finish. However, within the epic, smaller stories begin, grow, evolve and resolve. Within those smaller stories, memorable scenes help push the story along toward its conclusion.

Stories are a collection of Scenes and Acts that work toward a common resolution. An Act, on the other hand, is a number of Scenes that are linked by a common purpose. A Scene usually takes place in a single room or building. As soon as the Heroes move from one place to another, the Scene changes.

All official *7th Sea* adventures will follow a very specific format. Each adventure contains one or two Stories. Each Story is broken down into Acts and each Act is broken down into Scenes. The Stories will be coded to indicate which Epic they belong to. For example, the first *7th Sea* Epic begins in the Game Master’s Screen. It is a 3 Story Epic, beginning with a Story that sends the Heroes from Montaigne all the way out to Ussura.



Plot

"Plot" is the engine of the story; it pushes the story along toward its conclusion. The plot's beginning establishes the direct problem at hand and sets the rules for your players. The middle of the plot is where those problems become compounded with even more problems and we learn a little bit more about the characters. The climax of the story is where the characters learn the real source of their troubles (even if the players have known all along). The source of danger revealed in the climax is finally resolved in the conclusion. Sound confusing? Let's take a plot that everybody knows and have a look at its parts.

The Opening: Presentation of the Problem

Once upon a time, there was a young boy named Jack who lived with his mother. They lived on a dry farm in a

poor county and had very little to eat. But they weren't always poor. When Jack was just a little baby, a giant came to the county, burned down the crops, salted the earth, and stole the county's wealth. The giant also killed Jack's father and stole his magic harp that could restore the land to prosperity.

The Middle: Complication/Development of the Problem

Jack's mother told him to take their last cow to town and sell it for seed, but on his way to town, Jack met a man who convinced him to trade him the cow for three magic beans instead. When Jack returned with the beans, his mother cried, "You fool! You traded our last cow for three beans?" and tossed the beans out the window. He and his mother had nothing to eat that night and went to bed hungry.





The Climax: The Source of the Problem is Presented

When Jack awoke in the morning, he saw the beans had grown into a tremendous beanstalk. He climbed the beanstalk and saw a castle high above the clouds. When he crept into the castle, he discovered the castle belonged to the giant who had killed his father and stolen his magic lute.

The Conclusion: Resolution of the Problem

Jack crept into the castle and recovered his father's lute. However, the giant smelled Jack out ("Fee, Fi, Fo, Fum!") and chased him down the beanstalk. When Jack reached the bottom, he took his father's old ax and chopped down the beanstalk. The giant, clinging to the enormous vine, fell to his death. Jack restored the plenty of his county with the magic lute, became the hero of the land, married the mayor's beautiful daughter, and lived happily ever after.

This is the classic formula for building a story. There are other methods of story-building, but this one's used in nearly every classic swashbuckling tale. Take a look at some other stories with this formula in mind. However, when stories try to fit the formula, but fall down with the presentation of one of the pieces, they fall flat. Let's look at each section piece by piece with a little more detail.

The Beginning

At the beginning of a story, you are making a promise to your players and their characters. With every opening, you dictate the tone of the story (we'll talk about that later when we get to Narrative) and show some implicit rules. For instance, with "Jack and the Beanstalk", by even mentioning the phrase "Once upon a time" you are telling your audience that this is a fairy tale. The first words out of your lips when you and your players meet for the first time – whether they are dynamic, cryptic, mysterious, boisterous, epic or even sedate – will tell

them a lot about the kind of game they are about to play. Chose your words carefully.

When writing your beginning scene, be certain you've made your beginning explicit to the players. This can be as simple as saying:

"Jack is poor, but by the end of the story, he'll be rich."

Or it can be said with more subtlety:

"Jack turned his eyes to the night sky. He watched the clouds tumbling across the moon and sighed. 'Oh well,' he thought. 'Maybe someday I'll get the chance to make things right.'"

The other essential element of a good beginning is the introduction of important characters. This is the spot you get to point at someone and say, "Watch this woman! She's important!" In the beginning of Jack's story, we introduce three main characters: Jack, his mother, and the giant (we could argue that Jack's father is another important character – one who appears off the page, of course, but still very important). In fact, all the characters are introduced in the first paragraph. Of course, there are a lot of ways to point out important characters:

"As Jack finally fell to sleep, a dark figure moved by his bed. 'Tomorrow, little one,' the figure whispered. 'Tomorrow you will inherit your birthright.'"

With the above example, we've made a hint of someone important later in the story. By shrouding his identity, you're saying, "It's not important to know who this person is now, but you'd better remember to look out for him anyway."

Once again, beginnings are important for two reasons. First, they make a promise to the reader. That promise dictates the direction, speed and tone of the story, almost like a compass. It's your way of saying, "Hey! This is where we're going, this is how fast we're going and this is how we're going to get there." Secondly, the beginning introduces all the important characters, or at least gives you hints at who will be important later on.





In Medias Res

This Latin phrase means "in the middle of things." One of the best ways to begin any story is not at the very beginning, but when things have already gotten started and the plot is in full swing. *Star Wars* begins with a spaceship battle. *Raiders of the Lost Ark* starts off with our hero diving into an underground death-trap. Begin with a bang and don't let up. Ever.

Start your Heroes off with a carriage chase scene. They're riding away from some Villain's thugs (they've just stolen – ahem – acquired an ancient artifact for the Explorer's Society) and there's fighting on horseback, on the top of the carriage and bodies flying everywhere. How did they get into this situation? No time to consider that now, you've got ten men trying to kill you. Fight now, ask questions later!

Or start things in the middle of a sea battle. It can be with another ship, a leviathan or even a bunch of marooned sailors in a dinghy trying to hold off a school of mermaids with nothing but oars.

However you choose to do it, make sure that when the game begins, the Heroes have discovered they're starting out in the fire, wondering how they fell out of the frying pan.

Old Uncle William

Let us tell the story of Old Uncle William. This story can take place in any country you like. Old Uncle William is a close relative of one of the characters who once was one of the most powerful and influential men in the court. He tells the characters about his failure, and about the man who took his position from him in a dastardly and deceitful way. When the characters go to the court, they





find it quite delightful, especially the dark gardens that allow them to hide away with beautiful and handsome courtiers for extended periods of time. While they are there, however, they overhear a discussion over a hedge. Two voices speaking in hushed tones discuss a plot to overthrow the King's high advisor and take the position for themselves. While the characters gain a glimpse of one of the fellows (naturally, they only get to see one) they notice it is the same Villain who took away Old Uncle William's position so many years ago.

That's a good beginning. It has a personal hook (the guy who messed up Uncle William's life) and it invokes a sense of justice; the Heroes not only have the chance to stop a great wrong, but they also have the chance to set an old wrong right. Depending on how you want to handle it, the theme of Uncle William's story could be Revenge, but it could also be Feuding Families, Rivalry (one of the heroes could be the King's advisor!), Enigma (solving how the Villain plans to put his plot into motion and carry it to its conclusion), or even a tale of Ambition (the Villain's fall from power). It all depends on how you – the Author – want to tell the tale. Telling the story with a different theme presents it from different perspectives, and each perspective makes the story that much different.

The Middle

The middle of the story further develops the situations and problems that were presented in the beginning. In other words, this is where things go from bad to worse. Problems degenerate through complication, misunderstanding or simple villainous maliciousness.

The middle is also where it's easiest for the story to get lost. Writing a story is like walking through a dark wood. In the beginning, the most difficult choice is choosing a place to make your first step. Once that's over and done with, the next few minutes are easy. It's when you look back and can't see the edge of the woods anymore that things start getting scary.

Stories have no trouble getting started, but when they reach the middle, they tend to lose the excitement and momentum they had at the beginning, and trickle down into petty plots and dead ends. Don't let this happen! Don't lose sight of your objective! How do you do that? Remind yourself what you promised your players at the very beginning.

If you promised them a story of love between two Heroes from feuding families, stay focused on that. If you promised them an action-packed tale of espionage and intrigue, then keep that in mind. Don't let yourself or your players get distracted. If you make a strong assertion at the beginning that the story is going in one direction, your players will follow it. If, however, you do not, they'll wander wherever they want to, and sooner or later they'll wander right out of the story you've developed into uncharted waters that you are not prepared for.

Don't get lost. Keep an eye on your intended ending and you'll do just fine. Everything depends on making sure you are clear with your beginning's intent, or your players won't know which bread crumb trail to follow.

Moving toward the Conclusion

The middle of the story moves the players toward the conclusion. In movie terms this is called the "throughline," a summation of all the events that happen to the protagonists of a story. These events put the heroes in proper position for the story's climax and resolution. The throughline for Old Uncle William could be "Three friends thwart the plans of the man who wronged an elderly relative." Of course, there's more to the story than just that, but the throughline explains in brief detail the course of the story.

Whenever you get lost, remember the throughline. Whenever your players get lost, remember the throughline. It will keep you on course, right to the other side of that forest.





More of Old Uncle William

At the beginning of the story, your Heroes realized that the man who is plotting the downfall of the King's advisor is also the man who caused the ruin of their beloved Uncle William. All they have to do is expose his plot and they kill two birds with one stone. Sounds easy, doesn't it? Well, let's make things a little bit more complicated.

First off, our Villain isn't just any ordinary thug; he's got power, resources and influence. In fact, he's got enough to knock out the King's current advisor and take the position himself (players tend to ignore details like that). He holds high rank in the military, owns a great deal of land, is so wealthy he pays other people to count his money for him, and holds favors over half the King's council. This is the fellow your players are going to be tackling.

Not only that, but remember that raven-haired beauty that your Castilian is romancing? She's our Villain's daughter. Yeah, we know they don't have the same last name; that's because she's adopted. I guess they shouldn't have trusted her with their plans.

Not to mention the fact that the Villain's lieutenant happened to be on the other side of that hedge, watching the Heroes watch the Villain. Vodacce duelists are always tricky to dispatch this time of the season.

The capstone on the whole thing is halfway through the middle when the Heroes discover that the other fellow the villain was talking to... is Old Uncle William. But we're jumping ahead of ourselves, because that little discovery is the climax of the story.

Climax

The climax is the most important part of a story. It is when the true evil is revealed, the Hero finds that he is so far into the plot that there is no chance to go back and all action that happens in the story now is directed towards the climax. All the energy of your story has been

building toward this revelation. It is a moment that requires a great deal of thought and preparation. Once the climax reveals itself, there's no more time for muddling around. The most famous climaxes of all time still bear an emotional impact. When Hamlet's vengeance is sprung; when the man in the iron mask is revealed to be the king's twin; when Darth Vader reveals to Luke what really happened to his father – all of these moments reverberate through our minds when we see them for the first time, and continue to shake us up even after we've seen them a hundred times.

The climax is like a hidden objective. At the beginning of the story, you make a promise to your players. At the beginning of the Uncle William story, you promised your heroes: "You will be involved in a story of justice and revenge." By revealing Uncle William as a coconspirator, you haven't changed your promise. This is still a story of justice and revenge, it's just that the target has grown a little wider – or perhaps they just have to be more careful about where they point their pistols.

A climax must be true to the promise you made at the beginning and it must deliver an emotional impact. If you break the first rule, the Heroes will feel like they paid for one thrill ride and got rerouted onto another. If you break the second rule, the heroes will look at you from the other side of the GM screen and say, "Why am I supposed to care?" We never want that to happen.

Putting Uncle William in league with our Villain accomplishes both goals. First, it keeps the original promise. Second, it leaves the Heroes feeling betrayed. What's more, they must now face the prospect of turning in their favorite uncle as well as the Villain. Which brings us to the very last part of the story.

Resolution

This isn't "the end" of your story, it's the moment when you make good on the promise you made at the



beginning. All the plot complications are tied up and all mysteries are made clear. In short, everything is resolved.

There are many popular authors who seem to have a problem with this part of the story. A lot of them also happen to be fantasy authors (who can't seem to tell a story in less than 800,000 words), so perhaps we should spend some time talking about how to resolve a story properly so your heroes will gain a feeling of satisfaction when everything's said and done.



Keeping Your Promise

There are many ways to end a story, but when you look at all the possibilities, there are usually only one or two good ways to do it. Let's take a look at the ending of the *Star Wars* trilogy as an example.

There are a lot of different ways to end the saga, but the one that made it onto the screen was perhaps the most satisfying. It kept the promise made at the beginning of the series: "I want to learn the ways of the Force and

become a Jedi like my father." All the way through the series we are told time and time again that the Light Side is all about peace, reaction (as opposed to aggression) and love. We are told that if Luke keeps to these principles, he will be victorious. The Force will guide him, and if he trusts his instincts everything will work out. When Luke discovered that his father is not dead, he refuses to destroy him, refuses to let his love for his father turn into hate and thus ends up redeeming his dad – in fact, he ends up giving his father the opportunity to redeem himself.

Sure, Luke could have killed his father, turned to the Dark Side of the Force, and let his friends on Endor die horrible deaths, but that ending wouldn't be very satisfying. The audience would have probably stormed up to the Lucas Ranch and lynched the poor fellow. Not a good way to end the story.

Uncle William, One Last Time

Here we are at the end of our Uncle William story. We started out learning about the man who betrayed him, set plans in motion to stop the same man from betraying someone else, then



learned that Uncle William was in on the deal from the beginning.

Let's assume for the moment that Uncle William is really on the up-and-up. He learned about the Villain's plans as well, and has gotten close to the Villain to try and stop him. The Heroes have misunderstood Uncle William's role in all of this, and if they handle things poorly, it could spell tragedy for him. This is a great way to show how revenge can really backfire on you if you're not careful.

On the other hand, what if William is here to make the Villain stumble, then gain the position for himself? Or worse, he's used the Heroes to trip up the Villain while he takes the credit and inherits the Villain's position. Sure, nobody got hurt (except for the Villain, but they always get hurt), but Uncle William betrayed the Heroes' trust. Do they seek revenge for the slight on their honor? Stories like this show the cyclical nature of revenge and how once it gets started, it never seems to go away.

All Done

We've gone through how to start stories, how to develop them and how to end them. We've shown you a couple tips on how to start your story with a bang, how to make sure you don't get lost in the middle and, finally, how to make your story end with a satisfying resolution.

The Referee Hat

This next section is dedicated to your role as arbiter of the rules. Every decision you make influences the destinies of the Heroes and the enjoyment of your players. With this hat on you must be analytical and observant, making sure that your decisions are quick, decisive, and well thought-out. It isn't easy, but hopefully, this section will make things a little easier.

We'll start out with some friendly advice, show you what we've found while playing *7th Sea* and wrap the whole thing up with some dirty tricks... um, we mean optional rules.

Firm, Fair and Friendly

The thought that should be in the front of your head when you're running a game is that you and your players are here to have fun. Unfortunately, part of your job as GM is to tell your players the one thing they hate hearing most:

"No."

When you make a decision regarding the rules, remember the "Three Fs": Firm, Fair and Friendly.

Firm

Stand by every decision you make, even if it's wrong. Assure your players at the beginning of the game that you are going to be making quick decisions. Sometimes you'll make mistakes. How you handle your mistakes is important. You can correct them during game play or wait until the game is over, but however you decide to do it, be consistent. If you tell your players you're not going to be stopping to correct mistakes until after the game, don't do it. Don't be wishy-washy on this. Do it and don't back down. If you are firm on your decisions, your players will know that arguing wastes time and cramps everybody's enjoyment.

Fair

We've talked about this before, but it's worth talking about again. You aren't the only one who's thinking on your feet, and the players are going to make mistakes, too. Just because they made a mistake doesn't necessarily mean their Hero did. A scholar knows better than to mix two volatile chemicals, but your buddy Jim may not. Don't punish the Hero because his player happened to have a momentary case of the stupids. Give the Hero a





Wits roll in order to whack his player in the face and say, "Hey! Stupid! Don't make me do that!" Taking advantage of a player who doesn't know any better isn't fair; it's mean.

Friendly

Don't forget that you are among friends. If tempers are getting a little high, do whatever you can to calm things down. If that means everybody has to take a ten-minute break, then call for one. Turn the lights back up, kill the music, turn on the TV and let everybody chill out for a while. If a player is getting out of hand, don't smite his Hero, but take him aside and talk the matter out with him. If you're playing with friends, this is pretty easy, but

when you're playing with strangers, things can get prickly. With strangers, it's more important to be firm than friendly, so you can set the rules down clearly. However, it never hurts to smile when you're laying out the rules.

Consequences

When you bury your enemies, bury them deep. A good rain can dig them back up again.

– Berek's Proverbs

People can argue about free will and destiny all day long if they wish, but one thing no one can escape is the fact that every action has an equal and opposite reaction.





In other words, consequences are attached to everything your Heroes do. This is one of the most important parts of running a roleplaying game. In swashbuckling literature, any mistakes a Hero makes, any secrets he tries to keep, no matter how hard he tries to bury them, they always come back to haunt him. Sure, they don't show up in the very next game session, but they do show up when they're least expected... and when they can cause the most amount of trouble.

Every Brute your Heroes throw from a rooftop, every beggar they turn away, every hopeful lover they scorn is a new story seed waiting for you to harvest. Pay attention to everything your Heroes do. Take notes. Remember names and faces. Your players may have short memories, but you cannot. After all, you are Fate herself, watching over the Heroes, plotting out their destinies step by step.

Death

The *7th Sea* game system reflects the metaphysics of the swashbuckling genre: happenstance doesn't kill Heroes, Villains do. Okay, sometimes boulders kill Heroes, but there's always a Villain on the other side, pushing it on top of him.

Random events can't kill Heroes; otherwise their deaths would have no meaning. Heroes die on deathbeds, surrounded by friends and family, or they die kicking on the end of a Villain's blade, just within sight of other Heroes (who then purchase the Villain as a Revenge Background).

Death Scenes

Killing a Hero should be a very deliberate act. In fact, you should go out of your way to do it. We recommend bringing the Hero's player in on the action.

After you've run the game a few times, go to each player individually and ask him, "How do you want your Hero to die?" Listen carefully, take notes and, when you're done talking, go back to your GM planning room and

think about what you just heard. You don't have to enact your plans right away, but you can still use your little talk in more ways than your players may suspect.

Let's use Rich and his Vodacce Swordsman, Constanzo, as an example. Rich put a lot of work into his Hero, making him the twin brother of a Fate Witch (another Hero, by the way). Rich revealed to the GM that if his Hero has to die, he wants to die saving his sister's life. In fact, not only will Constanzo die for his sister, but he'll die protecting her from their father. The GM wrote that down and made preparations.

After a few months (and a few dueling scars), Constanzo has grown as a character and his sister has gained quite a reputation. Unfortunately, she's attracting the wrong kind of attention. Bounty hunters from Vodacce are looking for the pair, hoping to bring them back home. Every time one of these bounty hunters shows up, Rich remembers what he told the GM about Constanzo dying while protecting his sister and he sweats a little. And if you think bounty hunters make him sweat, just wait 'til their father shows up on the shores of Avalon, armed to the teeth with six Fate Witches in tow, each scanning the strands for their lost sister.

Death scenes can be a lot of fun, but they aren't for everyone. Players who like playing the same character for years may find them a bit intimidating at first, but if you present the idea in the proper light, they'll warm up to it right away. After all, you are removing the random element from their Hero's final moments. They know exactly when, how and why their Hero is going to die. That should warm the cockles of even the most skeptical player's heart.

Punishment and Failure

Contrary to popular belief, death is not the ultimate failure, nor is death always the ultimate punishment. As the cliché goes, there are things far worse than death, and





Game Master

if you plan things right, your players will learn this the hard way.

Villains don't always kill defeated Heroes (especially when they have the Talkative Hubris). Sometimes they're content to lock them away in an impenetrable prison and let them rot there for twenty years.

Think about that for a moment: locked in a ten foot by ten foot prison cell for twenty years. Nothing but you, the rats, rotten water, moldy bread and a little hole in the corner where you do your dirty business. That's it. Twenty. Long. Years.

Now imagine locking a Hero in that tiny little cell.

For twenty long years.



Could you imagine coming to your weekly roleplaying session, knowing your Hero was locked up in prison, hoping that someone breaks in to rescue you. Otherwise, when the GM asks you what you're doing today, you reply, "I'm dodging the rats. They're really hungry this morning."

Villains also sell off Heroes to the Crescent Empire as slaves.

Or they cut out your eyes.

Or they shove your face in a brazier of red-hot coals.

Or they murder your father and marry your mother.

Or they steal away your True Love when you aren't looking.

Or, when you've gained that last Scoundrel die, they turn the rest of the Heroes against you, forcing you to join up with him because you have nowhere left to turn.

Don't think for a moment that death is the worst thing that can happen to a Hero. Don't think that when a Hero completely screws up you have to kill him. You can do all sorts of nasty stuff to him. All you need is a little imagination. And if a player ever complains about what you did to his Hero, you can say, "Hey, don't complain. I could have killed you."

Action Scenes

The next few entries talk a little bit about running action scenes, the bread and butter of the swashbuckling genre. We're going to be hitting these fast and furious, so hang on.

Running Action Scenes

Combat is two or more fellows throwing punches at each other or swinging swords, inflicting Wounds, checking for Dramatic Wounds, rerolling Initiative, and attacking again.

How dull is this?





Any Game Master can run a stock combat scene. We want you running *action* scenes. Fast and furious, action scenes involve two groups – Heroes and Villains – fighting life and death struggles in the middle of a burning barn. While the Hero is being strangled over the edge of the loft, he looks down and sees that the flames are about to reach the explosives the Villain is smuggling across the countryside. He tries to tell the Villain, but he's a bit busy being strangled at the moment. He looks down again, and sees the flames will reach the explosives in five seconds... four... three... two...

In order to show you how to run effective action scenes, we're going to have to teach you a few important ideas.

Improvising the Details

First and foremost, don't be afraid to "improvise the details" when an action scene starts. More importantly, encourage your players to improvise. For example, your Heroes are sitting at a tavern when a fight breaks out. One of them turns to you and says, "I pick up the bottle on the table behind me and smash someone over the head."

Now, you didn't say there was a bottle on the table behind them, but they are in a tavern house; there should be a bottle behind them, shouldn't there? Or how about grabbing a flaming log from the fireplace. Was the fireplace lit? Sure! Why not? Can the Hero grab one of the serving wenches and swing her around, throwing a pile of skirt in some Brute's face? Sure!

If the players' actions add flavor and drama to the scene, reward their ingenuity with a positive response. All they're doing is filling out the details of the scene. Don't cramp their style – especially if it makes the scene more exciting.

Pacing an Action Scene

The first thing to know about action scenes is that they never give the Heroes a moment to breathe. Things happen at a breakneck pace, and if the players don't think quickly, they won't be keeping up. Let's take a look at three examples of how to pick up the pace during your action scenes.

Reckless Abandon

When your players look at the *7th Sea* game system, one of the first things they'll probably say will be, "Hey! I can't get killed in this game! I'm going to be jumping off the walls!"

If your players have this response... well then, good for them, because they're right. That's exactly what we designed the game to do. Heroes can't get killed by a bunch of Brutes, but they can get overwhelmed, held down and konked on the head. They can jump from tabletops to chandeliers without effort and they can survive incredible falls with nary a scratch. The game system encourages them to act with reckless abandon, to act in haste and repent at leisure.

Don't worry if they bounce around Brutes like nobody's business; that's what the Brutes are there for. It's when they bump into Villains and Henchmen that things start getting complicated. By the way, the first time they pull out a sword and slash at someone they think is a punk Brute and the punk Brute touches the scar on his face, slowly pulls his own sword from its sheath and looks at the Hero like he's a side of beef, make sure you're looking right into the player's eyes. That's a memory to carry around for a while.

"Give me a minute to think!"

When the Heroes jump into battle, they don't have time to look over a map, look at their Action Dice, count their Drama Dice, consider which weapon to use, talk to the other Heroes about strategy or ask which Brute is by the door and which is by the bar. They have scant



seconds to scan the area, come up with a game plan and leap into action.

In other words, if their Heroes don't have time to think, neither should the players. After initiative has been rolled and you're about to ask everybody what they're going to do, give them a few seconds to look over the map, consider their options and shout out a couple of instructions to each other.

Then, clap your hands look them in the eye and start demanding actions.

Don't ask 'em. Demand 'em.

Let them know if they don't bark out the Action right now, they'll lose their Action for this Phase.

If they hesitate, they lose their Action.

If they balk, they lose their Action.

If they turn to someone else for instruction, they lose their Action.

Things are happening fast and there's no time for doubt. They've got to act now or lose. That's it, end of discussion.

Now, the only way to make this work is to put yourself under the same roof. That means that all of your Brutes, Henchmen and Villains have only a few moments to act. If you hesitate, they lose their Actions. It's only fair.





Speed, Speed, Speed

With Action Dice, Drama Dice, Initiative totals, TN to Hit, Wounds, Wound Checks, Dramatic Wounds and Knock Outs, combat can slow down right quick. Here are a couple of things to consider to kick it back into high gear.

1) *Don't count more than you have to.*

Remind your players that when they're rolling to hit a TN, they can stop counting once they've hit it. If a player is rolling for a TN 20, we don't care if he's rolled a 99. Once he hits 20, he stops counting. Rolling higher than your TN only counts if you've made Raises, and then, once you've hit the TN you Raised to, you can stop counting.

2) *Don't dally.*

When combat starts, cut off any conversation that isn't related to the combat. Don't let anyone start a story about the last time you were in combat. Don't let anyone make Monty Python jokes. If someone says, "This reminds me of the time...", cut him off before he gets started by taking away an Action Die. Of course, don't discourage banter between Heroes and Villains. That's all part of the fun.

Also, don't ask twice for Actions during Phases. Ask once, wait a moment, and if no one speaks up move on to the next Phase. If the player hesitates, congratulate him on gaining a Held Action.

3) *The Team Leader*

Designate one player to be the Team Leader (not the player archetype). During combat, the only player you listen to is the Team Leader. Nobody else talks to you but him. The other players hand off their movements and Actions to him, and he hands them off to you. This option reduces the verbal spaghetti that goes on during combat, reducing the active voices to just two: you and the Leader.

The Storyteller Hat

You've learned how to prepare for a game, how to write long-term and short-term stories for your players and how to run the game smoothly. Now we're going to show you how to bring those stories you've written to life. We're going to use that most important storytelling rule – "Show, Don't Tell" – and show you how to make *7th Sea* come to life for your players.

Every GM has his own unique voice. We don't want you to think that the suggestions we make below constitute the "official" or "correct" way to run *7th Sea*. Like





everything else in this book, the suggestions that follow are just that: suggestions. These tools and hints have helped us, and we hope they'll help you.

Good luck!

Techniques (Literary and Otherwise)

The following essays discuss a whole bunch of high-brow literary techniques. You know, stuff like theme, narrative, scope, mood and all that kind of thing. The kind of techniques that "real" writers use.

These techniques are in a modular format. You can go through, check one out, see if you like it, then throw it into your game. Some Game Masters may feel this kind of stuff just doesn't fit into their game, but we urge you to take a look anyway. At the very least, you'll get a couple of adventure ideas out of it!

The Three Fives

This section details "The Three Fives": three very important groups to remember whenever you are writing or running a game. First, we'll talk about the five questions: "who", "where", "what", "how", and "why." Second, the Five Senses, teaches you the sacred storytelling law of "Show, Don't Tell." Finally, the Five Voices shows you how to give players information using different methods of narrative.

The Five Questions

Whenever you are writing up an NPC, writing the adventure for the evening or considering an NPC's response, there are five questions you should always ask yourself: How, What, Where, Who and Why. Asking yourself these five questions will help you fill in details you never even knew existed.

For example, let's make up an NPC. He's a Castillian swordsman with high Finesse and Panache, and he's also got a Nemesis: Scorned Lover. That's enough to begin with. Now all we do is start asking questions.

How did he gain a scorned lover? What will he do when she confronts him for the first time? When did he begin his training as a swordsman? Who is the woman who is looking to take revenge against him? Finally, why did he decide to become a swordsman? Every question reveals a little bit more about our faceless fellow.

Whenever you come up with a new plot twist or NPC, throw the five questions at it and see what happens. You may be surprised at what you find.

The Five Senses

There are two ways to describe a scene to a group of players. You can tell them about it, or you can show it to them. Let's look at both examples.

(Telling)

The doors open and the air is stale. The room is big, fifty feet by fifty feet. There are red curtains hanging over the six windows. There are twelve chairs and three tables. One man, dressed in black leather, and wearing a swordsman's pin, is sitting in a chair. His hair and beard are black. He looks over six feet tall. He is looking at you across the room and says, "Come in and sit down." His accent is Castillian.

The players have all the important information to react properly to the scene. They are being invited into a large room filled with chairs and tables by a Castillian swordsman dressed in black. But there's so much more information you can give them. Let's take a look at another example.

(Showing)

The doorways open and a stale wind rushes out, making your faces frown and your noses itch. The light from outside tries to make its way through the dusty windows, but the corners are still filled with shadows. The red dye in the draperies hanging over the six windows has faded to a dull pink and the edges have been torn by ambitious rats. Among the scattered tables and chairs sits a man who does not belong in this room... or perhaps he does. His limbs are long and his fingers are fine.





His black eyes flash in the dim light under his flowing dark curls. He raises a hand of welcome. "Come in and sit down," he says, his voice as smooth as a jenny's silk dress. His smile widens just as you catch a glimpse of the swordsman pin on his jacket and you wonder what is more dangerous, his sword or his smile.

The second paragraph conveys the same information as the first. It tells the players about the room, the draperies, the chairs, the tables and the Castilian swordsman, but it also gives them a sense of foreboding as they step into the room. The musty smell, the ruined tapestries, the trapped sunlight, the darkened corners all point toward one thing: Something in this room is as rotten as three-week-old fish.

Whenever you describe scenes to your Heroes, remember the oldest storytelling rule: Show, Don't Tell.

The Five Voices

When we say "the Five Voices", we're talking about narrative: the voice the author uses to communicate information. Whenever you convey information to the players – which is just about whenever you open your mouth – you are using narrative.

In a nutshell, when you pick up a book, the voice of the author is the narrative. There are five narrative voices, or methods of communicating information to your players. Each has a strength and a weakness, and we'll talk about each one, in turn, below.

Action

Sometimes, action does speak louder than words. When an NPC slams his fist into the wall after being told that his sister is missing, you are showing the players his anger without him ever saying a word. Of course, you don't tell them he throws his fist into the wall, you walk over to the wall and do it yourself. (A stage punch, that is. Don't go telling people we told you to put your fist through a wall, okay?)

Two rival courtiers – a man and a woman – argue endlessly in court, but when the Heroes see them steal away into the gardens for secret, midnight kisses, you show the players a lot without either of them saying a word. When the lord of the manor learns that his son is scheming to have him killed and he grasps the hard-boiled egg on his breakfast plate and gets ready to squueeeeeeze... then places the perfect, unbroken egg back on the plate, you've shown the players something about the character that words just can't convey.

Action gives you a lot of opportunity to show emotion and thought without any words being spoken at all – other than your own, telling the story, that is. It's a powerful tool, and often underutilized.

Description

When the Heroes awaken on a bright summer's morning on the side of a hill, with the gleaming dawn warming their skin, and they feel the crisp dew on the backs of their necks and the thick taste of sleep in their mouths, they hear a cock crowing in the farm at the bottom of the hill... you are using description.

Description is simply conveying information through the Heroes' senses. Don't forget to use every last one of them: sight, sound, touch, taste and hearing. The paragraph above uses all of them to convey the sensation of awakening. We could adjust the sensations to give a different impression of the morning. We could have used the crusty sleep in the Heroes' eyes, the wet, soggy feeling in their clothes, the smell of cow dung in the pasture below, the bright light of the morning sun flashing in their eyes, and the alarming sound of approaching horsemen, but that wouldn't have been as pleasant.

Dialogue

As Game Master, you will have to fill every role that is not being filled by the players. This means you are going to have to learn a thousand different voices – okay, maybe only five or six – in order to bring your NPCs'



dialogue fully to life. Whenever you are playing a character, you are conveying information through dialogue.

The most important thing to remember here is that everyone sees things differently, and then has his own way of communicating it. A sailor sees a bar fight differently than a swordsman. The sailor sees fists flying,

chairs breaking across backs and hears bottles breaking over heads. The swordsman has a much more analytical approach to the situation. If you were to talk to both of these fellows about the same fight, you'd get two very different stories in two very different voices. Learn to master all of them.

Exposition

Exposition is conveying information directly from you to the players. No voices, no flash, no poetry, just plain explanation. Obviously, this is the most boring use of narrative ever invented. But there is a way to spice it up: turn it into dialogue. In other words, make them speak to the world.

If they want to know the circumference of the world, quote the answer from one of Théah's scholarly texts. If you don't know one, make one up. If they need to know something their Heroes don't, make them look it up or find an expert on the subject. Of course, if they want to know something their Heroes would know, relate the information in a story. "Ah, yes. You remember now. The circumference of the world was listed in Barneby's *Red Primer*. You remember it well from your early school days. You traded the book for a rabbit." Don't settle for telling when you can dazzle them with showing.

Thought

The final form of narrative is the hardest to show to players. Communicating information through another character's thoughts can be tricky, and if you aren't careful, can come off as awfully corny.

Showing thoughts through actions – as we demonstrated above – is usually a cleaner way of demonstrating what's going through a character's head. However, sometimes showing the actual thought process, literally letting them inside a character's head, can show them more about the character than actions can. A character's thoughts may be erratic, showing madness, or they can be quite disturbing, showing something even darker.



Using Narrative

How you choose to present information to your players is important. Players are going to assume that everything you show them is important, and in a way they are right. You can use narrative to misdirect your players or throw them into plot twists so mean they spin their heads around. They will pay close attention to almost everything you show them, and you know what that means, right? That means *you* have to pay attention to everything you show them.

Be very deliberate with your narrative voice. How, when and why you show them things will influence their behavior down the road. If you throw them in the middle of a murder mystery and don't show them the proper clues, you'll have some disgruntled players. On the other hand, if you do show them everything they needed to know, but present it in a way that they don't notice unless they're looking for it, you can go back and point at the information and say, "Here! See this? You guys missed it!" How you show your players information is just as important as what you show them.

The Storyteller's Toolbox

As a storyteller, you have two very important tools: your voice and your body. Here are some examples of how to use these two all-important tools.

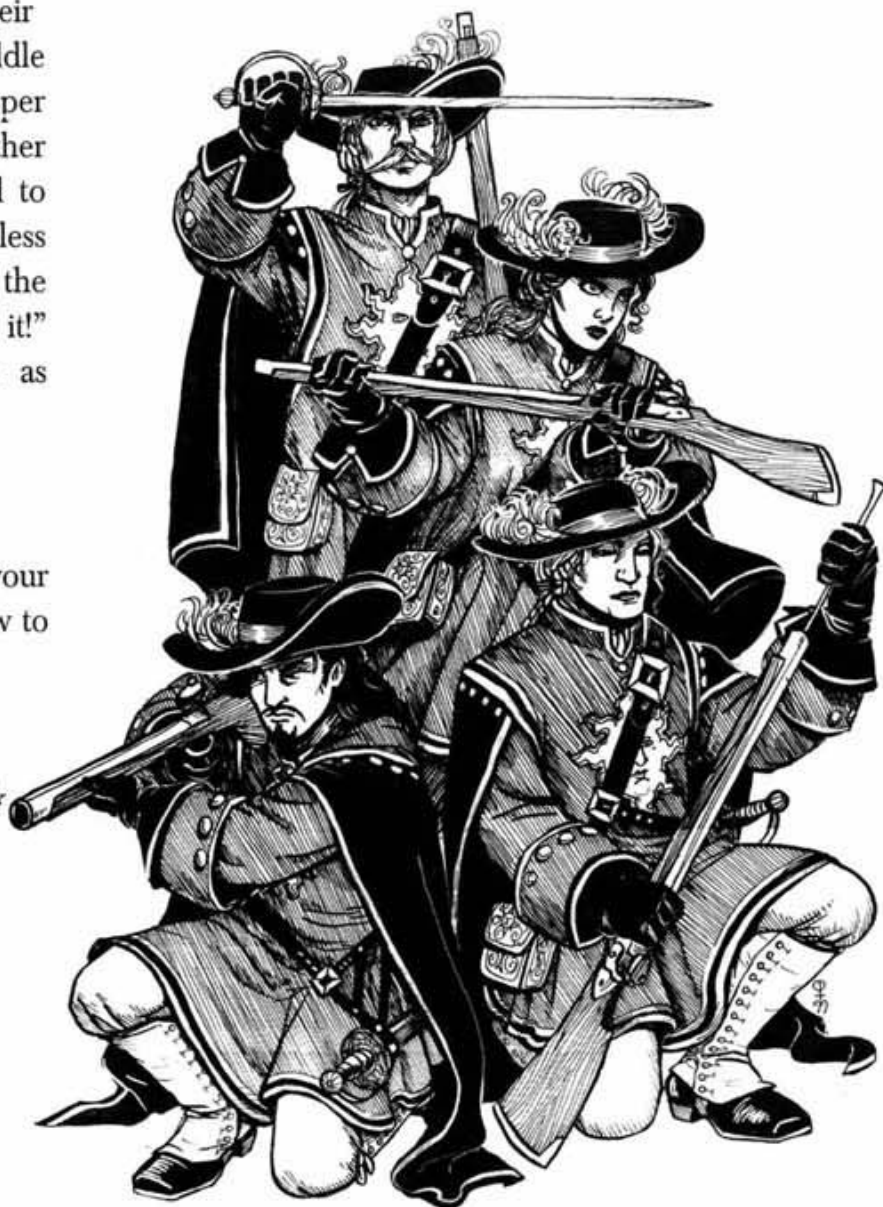
Voice

Whenever you speak as an NPC, whenever you invoke a thunder crash, whenever a Villain runs a cold knife along a helpless victim's skin, you can use your voice to make the moment come to life.

Whenever you design an NPC, make some notes about his voice. Is it gravelly or high-pitched? Is his accent so thick that the players can only barely make out what he's saying? Does he speak so fast that you have to ask him to repeat everything he

says? The more distinct you make each voice, the easier it will be for your players to recognize prominent NPCs by their voices alone.

Likewise, when describing a thunderstorm, don't settle for saying, "And the thunderstorm rages outside." Do the raging yourself! Make thunder with your voice, make the lightening flash across the sky. When the waves rush up over the side of your Heroes' ship, let your players hear it in your voice.





Body

If every NPC has a distinctive voice, then he must also have distinctive body language. When you make the sound of thunder streaking across the sky, let your body show it as well. Waves washing over the side of the ship don't just make sounds, they push over the side with the power of the ocean.

Using your body in concert with your voice can make magical effects. A young, brash Castillian swordsman and an old Church scholar walk very differently; show that to your players. When the boatswain storms during a battle barking orders, storm right up to the players' faces and bark orders. When your Montaigne courtier steps between doorways, walk just behind him, whispering desperate pleas for him to open his eyes.

After the Game

So you've just finished your first session and everyone is still sitting round, chewing on cold pizza and downing the last sodas. This is the perfect time to hand out Experience Points and get a little feedback on your game. Let's spend a moment or two on how you can make the most of your players' downtime.

Rewards

The first thing to do when a game ends is hand out the rewards the players have earned. Most of the time, that'll be Experience Points. However, sometimes you'll be handing out rewards that don't involve direct game benefits.

Experience Points

At the end of each story, your players will turn their unspent Drama Dice into Experience Points. However, each story should also have an Experience Point rating, giving a slight indication of how difficult the story was to

accomplish. Stories have a XP rating of 1 to 5. These XPs are given in addition to any Drama Dice bonus the players receive.

Difficulty	XP Rating
Routine	1
Easy	2
Hard	3
Challenging	4
Epic	5

Experience Point Options

Occasionally, Heroes will receive benefits that are directly linked to the story rather than any XP advancement. A Hero who saves a famous noble's son from a villainous witch has obviously made some high-powered friends. There are a few ways to handle this situation.

The first option is to direct the Hero's Experience Points that he earned toward the noble and his son. They both become Allies, and the Experience Points the Hero earned are spent there, rather than on increasing Traits or Knacks. Although this takes XP control out of the players' hands, it makes certain that everyone progresses at an equal rate and in a similar direction.

The second method is simply to declare that the Hero has earned the noble and his son as Allies, and the player does not need to expend XP to include them on his Hero sheet. This option is less number-intensive, but makes for a quicker Hero progression. Because the Hero didn't need to spend the XP for Allies, he can spend them on other parts of his Hero sheet.

A compromise may look something like this: Allow players the option of spending XP on the noble and his son to gain them as Allies. Even still, allow the players to invest in the option. All they have to do is spend one XP this time, and they may continue to spend XP until they've purchased both characters as Allies. You may even want to give them the first XP for free, as a bonus.





Spending Experience Points can be one of the most exciting parts of the game for players. They get to watch their Heroes grow and evolve, just like the Heroes in books and film. Have fun with it, experiment with different methods and find out what works best for your players. Don't ruin their fun with rules, make the rules fun to use.

Evaluation

After the players are done with their Experience Points, it's time to take a moment or two to look at what happened, look at what went right and look at ways to fix what went wrong.

Evaluating Style

The first thing to do is talk to your players about the game. Don't ask, "Did you have fun?" In fact, don't ask any Yes-or-No questions at all. Ask questions that they have to think about. Go around the table and ask these two questions.

- 1) What was the most memorable moment of the game for you?
- 2) What would you like to do differently next time?

If you don't feel comfortable asking these questions in public, take the players aside and ask them individually. Just make sure that they tell you what they liked and what they would want to see different. Mark down their answers and take some time to think about them. Your players are your best feedback when it comes to improving your Game Mastering style. Remember, you are here to entertain them. If you're doing something they don't like, find out what it is, and why they don't like it and make the appropriate changes.

Evaluating Story

Your players can also help you plan for next week's session. All you have to do is ask them about the game and where they think it's heading. Ask them about the

ambiguous or mysterious parts of the plot. "Who do you think the real Villain is?" and "Where do you think Madame Reneaux hid her diamonds?" are a good start. Your players' feedback will give you options you never even considered. And remember, anything they haven't seen is part of the plot that you can change.

Retroactive Continuity

Occasionally, player input will throw your plot a wild curve ball. For example, sometimes the players will bump into an NPC who has absolutely nothing to do with your intended plot, someone you had to make up off the top of your head to fill in a gap you hadn't counted on, and the players cling to him like a life preserver. Now you have to go back and look at your story and make it fit this NPC your players just won't let go of. Suddenly he's a very important part of your plot, the linchpin of your plans, and when the players come to you at the end of it all and say, "Wow! How did you know that Jack the Butcher was really our contact with the Rose and Cross?" you smile to yourself and say nothing.

This is called "retroactive continuity." It's the ability to make last-minute changes look like long-term plans.

In order to use retroactive continuity, you must be able to improvise quickly and keep all the details of your story as close to your chest for as long as possible. Keep your secrets close to you. The less you reveal up front, the more you can change at the last minute.

Conclusion

Remember to keep your ideas flexible. Don't get married to any concepts that you may have to change. All too often, authors start with an ending, but no beginning and no middle. When they start the novel they know where they want to go, but not how to get there. Unfortunately, halfway through the writing process, they discover the story they're writing doesn't fit the end they've planned, so they wrench the story back in the right direction... along with the reader's suspension of disbelief.



Don't get attached to a single ending. Give your players a few options that they can reach and count on them coming up with a few that you never counted on. This is cooperative storytelling, after all. If the players wanted to march their way through a preplotted, preplanned story that gave them no choice on which way to go, they'd go

home and read a novel or watch a movie. In a very real way, this is their game, not yours.

Just don't let them know that, and you'll do fine.





Advanced Storyteller

The techniques below are tricky to use, so we saved them for last. Dream sequences, parallel plotlines, non-linear plotlines, and flashbacks are all used by authors to help them build the drama and suspense of their plots, but they can cause problems within the medium of cooperative storytelling. Each requires a bit of preparation on your part and also a bit of practice, so look them over and use them with care.

Dream Sequences

When the Heroes settle down to sleep, their minds and imaginations go into overtime. Authors and directors use dreams in their works; why can't we? You can use dreams to foreshadow events, as omens and portents, or even use them to remind players of events and hints you've dropped but they've forgotten. Here are a couple of hints for using dream sequences.

Remember the Setting

Ever notice that your sleeping environment has a profound effect on your sleep? Where a Hero settles down for a good night's rest will influence his dreams. If he's in an cold alley with nothing more than a coat thrown over his head to keep off the rain, his dreams will be affected by that. If he's in a warm, cozy bed, chances are he'll have very different dreams.

Symbolic Language

The problem with dreams is that they always seem to be trying to tell you something, but they never just come out and say it. When you use dream sequences, remember to keep them cryptic. In a dream a Hero isn't told exactly what he needs to know, he's shown a stream of images that only make sense if he sits down and tries to put them together.

Nonlinear Chronology

Dreams don't happen in order. In fact, sometimes they happen backwards. When you present a dream sequence, there's no rule that says you have to do it in a linear fashion. As a matter of fact, it feels more like a dream if everything happens at once, out of proper sequence.

Parallel Plotlines

This technique is used when you want to show your players the "wider scope" of their actions. It's like telling two stories at once, showing the players that their decisions have consequences out of their direct line of sight.

Let's say that one of Empereur Léon's nine daughters is staying at a mansion (owned by a friend of the Heroes) for the summer. Unfortunately, the daughter is kidnapped. Of course, the friend asks the Heroes for help, but there's a catch. You see, *l'Empereur* is arriving in two nights to visit. Imagine his dismay when he discovers that his daughter has been kidnapped while under the protection of our friend! The Heroes have a deadline, but in order to emphasize that deadline, show them scenes of the Empereur's journey toward the mansion.

At the end of each Scene, you give them a brief peek at the advancing Imperial train. When the Heroes discover the identity of the kidnappers, he's only a day away. When they find out that the kidnapper was hired to do the job, he's only a few hours away. When they find out that the daughter hired the kidnapper to snatch her away, he's at the gate. Each step towards the resolution of the story moves the Empereur another step closer to our friend's front door.

Using parallel plotlines can evoke an additional sense of drama to your stories and remind your Heroes that they aren't alone in the big, bad world.





Flashbacks

A flashback sequence is also called a “memory sequence.” A flashback can be in the head of a single Hero, or be in the collective memory of the entire group, or could even be stories from the past that have effects on the current campaign.

When a flashback occurs, a Hero remembers events from the past as they relate to his current situation. In this way, you can show the Hero there’s a reason that old “history repeats itself” cliché is still around. On a meaner note, you can demonstrate the “those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it” cliché as well. Let’s say a Hero has purchased a Revenge Background against the man who killed his father. When he finds the Villainous Swordsman, he remembers when he saw his father get skewered by the crum-bum, and he knows every move, every parry, every riposte. Then, as he’s fighting the fellow, he sees the same moves, parries and ripostes unfolding. He’s so obsessed with the previous duel that he can’t fight any other one, and if he doesn’t snap out of the spell, he’ll end up just like his old man: kicking on the end of the Villain’s sword.

You can even use flashbacks and parallel plotlines together, showing the Heroes an event from the past as they deal with their current situation. Instead of showing them how the events worked out in one viewing, you string out the events, so they learn about the twist in the past just when it’s too late.

Dirty Tricks

Warning!

The following section is not meant to be read by the squeamish or weak of heart! Enter at your own risk!

The ideas below are radical. They are dangerous. They may frighten or confuse you (or both!), but they are very real tactics and techniques that Game Masters all across the world are using, even as you read these words.

We’re going to take a look at some very nasty Game Master tricks of the trade, and if you aren’t prepared for it, you can skip the entire section. But for those of you who have the courage to see what folks on the front line are doing, then take a gut check, make your Coolness Under Fire roll (see below) and come along for the ride.

One last note. We should mention that you should be very careful when using these techniques. Roleplaying is a very personal activity, and it’s too easy to bruise people’s feelings. Be sure your players are ready for such underhanded techniques, and don’t say we didn’t warn you!

Cheating

There are a lot of different words for it. Some GMs call it “fudging.” Other GMs call it “bumping.” We aren’t so polite.

It’s cheating.

Game Masters cheat all the time. When a Villain rolls enough damage to kill a Hero outright and the GM looks up over his screen and says, “He missed!”, that GM is cheating. When the GM lowers the TN to hit a Villain so the Heroes have a chance to succeed, he’s cheating. When the GM has to beef up the Villain by a couple of dice to make him a little more of a challenge for the Heroes, he’s cheating.

Don’t worry. It’s okay to cheat. In fact, we like cheating so much, we put it right at the beginning of this book. Go ahead, open up the front cover and tell us what you see. Uh huh. There it is. In black and white.

The only rule you ever need to follow in this game is the Golden Rule. Are your players having fun? Yes? Then you’re not breaking any rules.

If you ignore a die roll every once in a while to make the game go more smoothly, that’s your prerogative. If you tell the Hero not to bother to roll to hit or damage because his description of the attack is just perfect and





makes everybody at the table go “Ooo!”, then you haven’t broken any rules.

Go on and cheat. Forget die rolls when they aren’t necessary. Change the ones that don’t fit your story or your players’ destinies. It’s all right. We’re not looking, and even if we were, we won’t tell if you don’t.

The Die Hard Effect

“That which does not kill me better get the hell outta the way.”

– Anonymous player

During the course of this book, we’ve told you to be fair to the players.

We lied a little bit.

The fact of the matter is, your players don’t want you to be fair. They want you to be as downright nasty as you can get. They want you to hit them below the belt. They want an eye-gouging, ear-biting, knock-down, drag-out fight, and they won’t be happy unless you give it to them.

In other words, players want you to hurt their Heroes as badly as you can. They want the worst that you can throw at them.

Never let them up for a breath of fresh air.

Never give ’em a break.

Kick ’em when they’re up and kick ’em when they’re down.

The fact of the matter is, the players want you to pummel their Heroes until they’re nothing more than bloody pulps. They want to be taking Dramatic Wounds all the way through the story, fighting through firefights, jumping off buildings, catching themselves by their fingertips as they look down... all the way down... and swimming for their lives through mermaid-infested waters.

However – and this is the tricky part – they also want to win.

If you’ve ever seen the *Die Hard* movies, then you know exactly what we’re talking about. John McClane goes through hell in each of those movies. He’s walking barefoot on broken glass, jumping out of the way of explosions at the last possible second, dodging bad guys with machine guns when all he has is a pistol, and at the end, when he finally has to face the bad guy, all he’s got are two bullets, a little tape and a ton of ingenuity.

That’s what your players want. They want to be beaten to hell all through the story until their Heroes are so sore they can hardly move, so when they do beat the Villain at the end, they can feel like they did it by the skin of their teeth.

If your Heroes come through an adventure looking the same way they did at the beginning, they aren’t going to be happy. In fact, they’ll feel cheated.

Hit them everywhere they turn.

If they make a mistake, make ’em pay for it with blood.

Don’t be kind, be cruel. Be heartless. You are totally prepared for them (you’ve seen their character sheets, after all!), and they are totally unprepared for you. You’ve got your notes and your GM screen and all they’ve got is their wits. If you don’t make them work for a victory, they’ll go away unhappy, and that’s the last thing we need.

Give the players what they want.

Beat ’em to a pulp.

They’ll thank you for it.

Two Dirty Dice Tricks

Dice Trick #1: Coolness Under Fire

“Coolness Under Fire” is a Trait from another roleplaying game called *Twilight: 2000*. It represents a Hero’s ability





Game Master

to go running into the middle of a firefight and take actions, even though everything around him is blowing to hell and back, bullets are whizzing past his head and his best friend just got three rounds through the neck and is bleeding to death beside him.

You can use Coolness in your *7th Sea* game in many ways. The best way to use it is when a Hero is acting less than heroic. If a particular Hero is not carrying his own weight during combat, give him a black "Coward Die." When he asks what the black die is for, just snicker and tell him, "You'll see."

The next time he runs for cover when combat breaks out, give him another one. When it happens again, give him another one. Just keep giving him black dice every time he hides his head when he should be helping out.

Finally, when he does try to do something during a fight, shake your head and tell him, "Roll one of your black dice." If the die rolls higher than his Resolve, he can go ahead and do whatever he planned on. However, if he fails, he stays in his little corner, shaking uncontrollably. Tell him, "You'd like to grab that jewel sitting in the middle of the floor, but you might get hurt!"

That'll learn him.

Dice Trick #2: Karma Dice

At the beginning of the game, put a bowl of dice in the center of the table. Make sure they're all the same color. Tell your players these are the "karma dice." At any time during the game, a player can pull a karma die out of the bowl to save someone else's life, kind of like a "player veto." In other words, if a Villain gets a really good shot on one of your Heroes, another player – not the player controlling the Hero who just got whacked – can pull one of the dice out of the bowl to save his life. The player has to explain how and why this happened; the die doesn't do the trick itself. In other words, the player becomes temporary GM for the moment, explaining that the Villain's shot went wide, or how a

crate from the ship fell just in time to knock the flintlock out of the Villain's hand as he squeezed the trigger.

As the game moves along, whenever someone breaks the mood by making Monty Python quotes, turning on the TV or otherwise being a nuisance, throw a black die into the pool. Explain that this is also a karma die, but a "bad karma die." Don't tell them what it's for. Then, whenever one of them – not the nuisance player, but another one – gets a fantastic roll or is doing something so routine it doesn't require a roll (like swinging from the balcony to a tabletop), pick the black die out of the bowl, look at the player and tell him, "You fail."

That's right, the black bad karma die makes the Heroes fail. Specifically, when a player starts getting out of line, the entire group earns some bad karma that's going to fall on someone's head. You'll be surprised how quickly they snap to attention when one of those black dice hits the bowl.

Perspective Tricks

You are the Heroes' senses, and in a very real way they have to trust everything you present to them as truth.

See where this one's going?

We all know the stories about five people telling five different stories about the same event. Well, why not do the same thing to the players? All of their Heroes have different motives and perspectives. Why describe the scene the same way for everyone?

If the Heroes are talking with a captain, trying to convince him to sail them to Montaigne, why does he appear the same way to every Hero? The Castilian will definitely see him very differently than the Vodacce. The Avalon will probably have his own opinion as well.

Be up front with your players that you are specifically messing around with their perspectives, but don't be afraid to do it. Everyone has prejudices and it takes a lot of willpower to get over them. Heroes are no different.





The background of the page is a detailed, faded map. It features a coastline on the left side, with several islands and peninsulas. Two prominent compass roses are visible: one in the upper right quadrant and another in the lower left quadrant. The map is overlaid with a grid of latitude and longitude lines, and various navigational markings and symbols are scattered across the surface.

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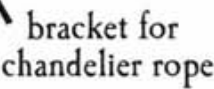
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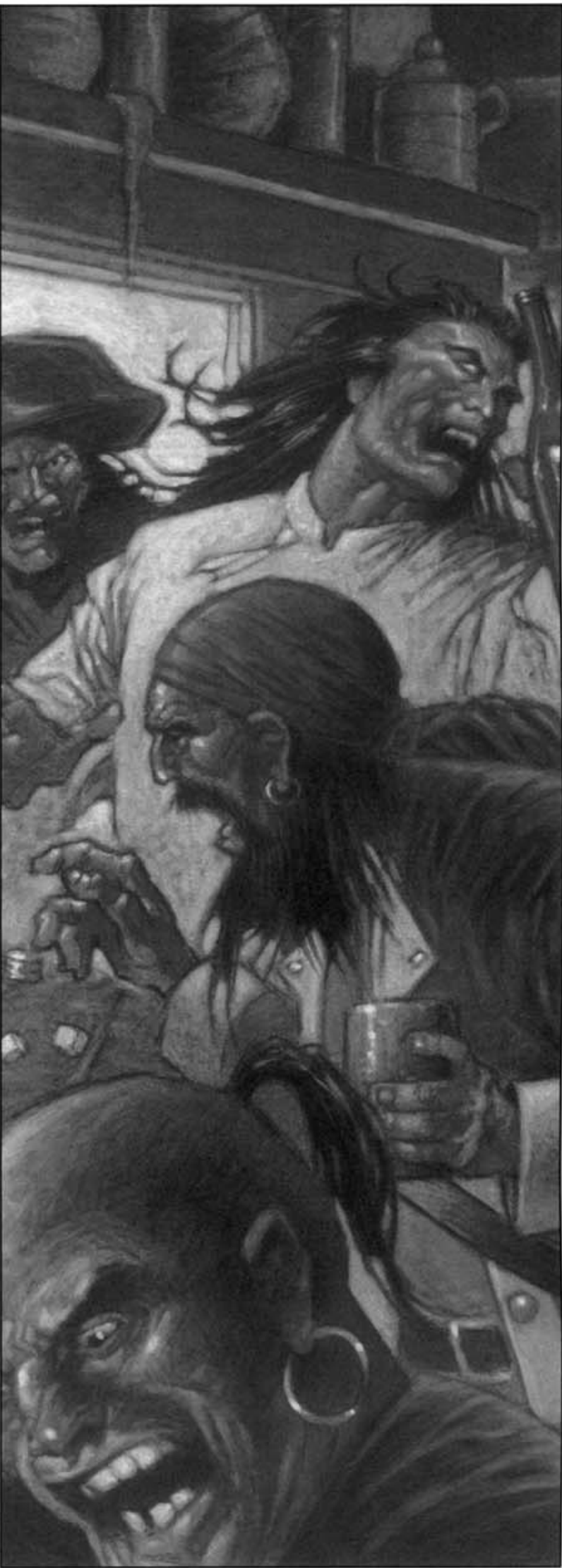
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A black and white illustration of three pirates in a tavern. In the foreground, a man with a large, dark beard and a wide, toothy grin is laughing. He has a large hoop earring and is holding a glass. Behind him, another man with long, dark hair and a beard is shouting or laughing with his mouth wide open. To the left, a third man wearing a hat is partially visible, also looking towards the right. The background shows shelves with various items, including a teapot and some bottles. The style is detailed and expressive, with strong contrasts and a sense of movement.

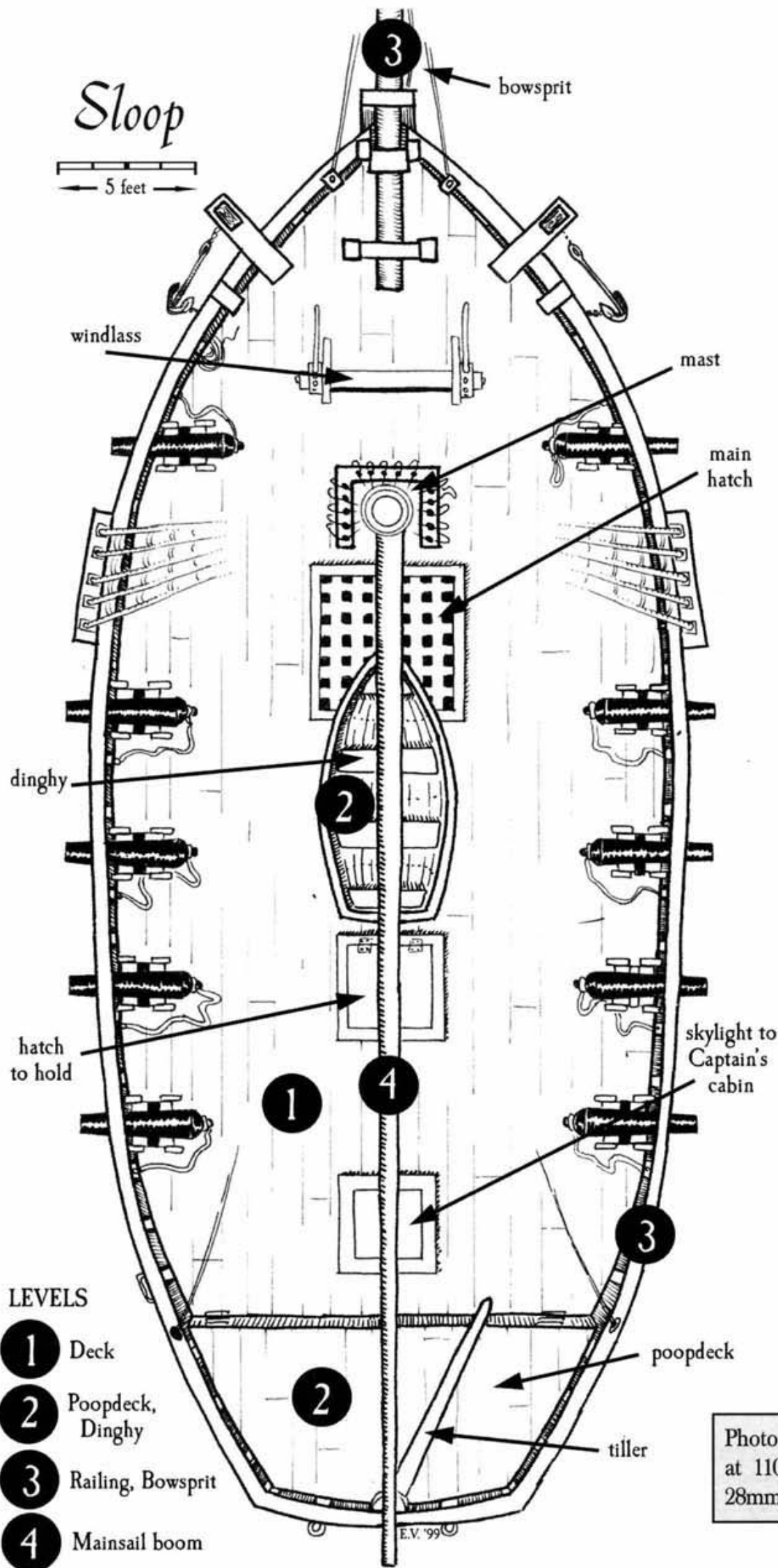


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A black and white illustration of three pirates in a tavern. In the foreground, a man with a large, dark beard and long hair is laughing heartily, his mouth wide open showing his teeth. He is wearing a dark jacket and a large hoop earring. Behind him, another man with long hair and a beard is shouting or singing, his mouth open and eyes closed. To the left, a third man wearing a hat is partially visible, looking towards the other two. The background shows shelves with various bottles and a teapot, suggesting a tavern or a similar setting. The style is detailed and expressive, with strong contrasts and a sense of movement.

-
- A black and white illustration of three pirates in a tavern. In the foreground, a pirate with a large hoop earring and a wide, toothy grin looks towards the viewer. Behind him, a pirate with a long beard and a small hoop earring holds a mug. In the background, a pirate with long hair and a wide-eyed, screaming expression is visible. The setting includes shelves with various bottles and a teapot.



Photocopy this page at 110% for use with 28mm scale figures.



7th Sea Weather Table

	← Colder				Hotter →	
↑						↑
Rougher	5k5 1 hour	4k4 1 hour	2k2 1 day	4k4 1 hour	5k5 1 hour	Nød "Intensity"
	4k2 1 hour	3k3 1 hour	1k1 1 day	3k3 1 hour	4k2 1 hour	
	2k2 1 day	1k1 1 day	1k1 1 day	1k1 1 day	1k1 1 day	
Calmer	2k2 12 hours	2k1 12 hours	1k1 1 day	2k1 12 hours	2k2 12 hours	"Calm" Stans
	2k1 12 hours	1k1 12 hours	0k0 1 day	1k1 12 hours	2k1 12 hours	
↓						↓
	← Kjølilig "Hatred"			Lidenskap "Passion"	→	





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Novus Ordum Mundi

Treachery

Wealth

Power



Traits

Brawn ○○○○○○ ○○
Finesse ○○○○○○ ○○
Wits ○○○○○○ ○○
Resolve ○○○○○○ ○○
Panache ○○○○○○ ○○

Character Information

Name _____
 Player _____
 Nationality _____
 Profession _____
 Memberships _____
 Experience _____

Backgrounds

Arcana _____

Advantages

Reputation

Total Dice

Civil Skills

Sorcerous Heritage

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Sorcerous Heritage

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Swordsman School

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Skills: 2, Basic Knacks: 1, Advanced Knacks: 3, Local Swordsman School: 25, Other Nation's Swordsman School: 35

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